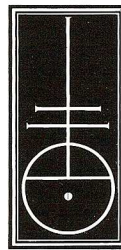


RITUAL AND ART
BYZANTINE ESSAYS
FOR
CHRISTOPHER WALTER

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St. Catherine of Alexandria and Mount Sinai

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THE Sinai peninsula was an important destination for pilgrims of any time visiting the Holy Land. What served to separate the experience of the early Christian pilgrim to Sinai from that of the medieval visitor, however, was not only the existence of the walled monastery erected in the sixth century by Justinian, but also the presence of the relics of St. Catherine of Alexandria, introduced into the monastery apparently in the twelfth or early-thirteenth century. This short study on Sinai and St. Catherine is offered to Father Walter in gratitude for his exceptional kindness to me when I was a graduate student and for his many sympathetic studies of saints of all seasons.¹

¹ The bibliography on pilgrimage to Sinai is enormous. Two useful introductory works in English are Lina Eckenstein, *A History of Sinai* (London/New York 1921), and Jill Kamil, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine in Sinai: history and guide* (Cairo, ca. 1991). See also K. Amantos, *Σύντομος ιστορία τῆς ἱεῶς μονῆς τοῦ Σινᾶ* (Thessalonike 1953); M. H. L. Rabino, *Le monastère de Saint-Cathérine au Mont Sinai* (Cairo 1938); Mahfouz Labib, *Pèlerins et voyageurs au Mont Sinai* (Cairo, 1961), and now Andreas Külzer, *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam. Studien zur Pilgerführern und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palästina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main 1994). Helpful for this study has been the unpublished dissertation of Sister Joan Mary Braun, 'St. Catherine's Monastery Church, Mount Sinai: Literary Sources from the Fourth through the Nineteenth Centuries,' (University of Michigan 1973), which assembles pilgrim accounts for each of the many holy places on Sinai. Her chapter II is devoted to St. Catherine, and includes material on her tomb. For a list of other relatively recent publications dealing with Sinai, see Spyridon Dem. Kontogiannes,

The legend of St. Catherine of Alexandria runs as follows: St. Catherine, a highly educated princess of Alexandria, objected to the emperor Maxentius' decree around the year 300 that everyone sacrifice to the gods in the arena of Alexandria. Catherine confronted the emperor directly, unnerving him so much with her wit and wisdom that he summoned all the philosophers of his realm and ordered them to counter Catherine's arguments, to persuade her to recant or suffer death themselves. Though the rhetors protested that the job was so easy it was best left to their students, they nonetheless came together and faced Catherine in a debate, in the course of which the names of many a pagan philosopher and magician were invoked. Catherine won the debate hands down, the rhetors were all converted and promptly thrown by Maxentius into the pyre. He then imposed many tortures on Catherine, and when she still failed to recant, he had her beheaded.

This much is thought to be the core of the original story. Added to it are elements such as the conversion of Maxentius' wife and of his general, the torture of Catherine on the wheel, and two episodes occurring at the death of the saint: the first being that when Catherine was beheaded, her veins spurted milk instead of blood (a hagiographic topos), the second being that angels straightway took up her body and laid it to rest on a mountain peak on Sinai.²

There are four main types of evidence for the Byzantine veneration of St. Catherine: the church calendars, Byzantine hymnography, the *Vitae* and works of art. From the church calendars – from the *Typikon* of the Great Church for example – we see that Catherine had been given a feastday in the calendar on November 24 or 25 by the tenth

¹ 'Συμπλήρωμα εἰς τὴν γενικὴν περὶ Σινᾶ βιβλιογραφίαν,' *Theologia* 43 (1972), 773–91, esp. 784–91.

² On the Greek textual tradition (*BHG* 30–32b), see above all J. Viteau, *Passions des saints Écaterine et Pierre d'Alexandrie, Barbara et Anysia* (Paris 1897), 5–65, and G. B. Bronzini, 'La leggenda di S. Caterina d'Alessandria. Passioni greche e latine,' *Memorie dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Classe di scienze morali, storiche et filologiche*, 8th ser. 9 (1960), 257–416. For particular aspects of the *Vitae* texts, see J. Armitage Robinson, 'The Passion of St. Catharine and the Romance of Barlaam and Joasaph,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 25 (1923), 246–53; J. Bidez, 'Sur diverses citations, et notamment sur trois passages de Malalas retrouvés dans un texte hagiographique,' *BZ* 11 (1902), 388–94. See also note 6 below.

century at the latest.³ From some surviving fragments of church poetry – kontakia and canons, less easily datable, unfortunately, than the calendars – it can be argued that she was already being venerated in the ninth century.⁴ The texts of her life – there are four Greek versions – survive in manuscripts as old as the tenth century, and the original Passio text is thought by an editor to go back as far as the seventh to eighth century.⁵ Vita D, the Metaphrastian version, became of course the best known of all. It, like all the extended Greek versions of the Vita of St. Catherine, ends the tale with her body being taken to Sinai.⁶

Artistic evidence confirms that St. Catherine had been established as a saint by the 10th century. There are portraits of Catherine in Cappadocian churches that must be 10th century; in these, she is royally dressed, even crowned, and often paired with St. Barbara or St. Irene.⁷ She appears on the West wall of the narthex of Hosios Loukas in the early-eleventh century, in the company of Barbara and Irene, and then quite commonly alongside other female saints, echoing the pairings of military saints or of Anargyroi in the traditional Byzantine hierarchy of images.⁸ Portraits of Catherine preface the text of her Vita in eleventh-

³ Juan Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église*, 2 vols. (Rome 1962), vol. I, 112, 114.

⁴ José Grosdidier de Matons, 'Un hymne inédit à Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie,' *Travaux et mémoires* 8 (1981), 187–207.

⁵ Bronzini, 'Leggenda,' *op. cit.* (note 2), 257. See also P. Peeters, 'Une version arabe de la Passion de Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie,' *AB* 20 (1907), 5–32.

⁶ *PG* 116:275–301, esp. 301B (= *BHG* 32). The Menologion of Basil II (Vat. gr. 1613, p. 207), one of the earliest attestations (ca. 1000), does not include her burial on Sinai, nor does the Synaxarion entry for November 24: Hippolyte Delehay, *Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris: Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* (Brussels 1902), 254.

⁷ El Nazar (Göreme 1); Tokali kilisse 2; Theotokos Chapel (Göreme 9); Marcell Restle, *Byzantine wall painting in Asia Minor*, 3 vols. (Shannon 1969), vol. II, figs. 13, 83, 129–130. See also Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce* (Paris 1991), 106–07.

⁸ Carolyn L. Connor, 'Female Saints in Church Decoration of the Troodos Mountains in Cyprus,' in *Medieval Cyprus. Studies in Art, Architecture, and History in Memory of Doula Mouriki*, ed. Nancy Patterson Ševčenko and Christopher Moss (Princeton University 1999), fig. 2. For more on the pairings of Catherine and Barbara or Irene, see Maire Aspra-Bardabake, 'Οι τοιχογραφίες του Αγίου Νικολάου στην Κλένια της Κορινθίας,' *Δίπτυχα* 4 (1986), 123–24, and for Georgian examples, Antony Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia* (University Park, PA 1998), 83–84, 115–118.

century manuscripts of the Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes.⁹ Her future was assured.

But none of this material, literary or visual, offers evidence for the existence of any special cult of St. Catherine in the Byzantine East. There is not a single Byzantine church dedicated to her listed in either volume of Janin (except for a Dominican one in Constantinople founded 1299).¹⁰ Except for one passage in the tenth-century *Life* of Paul of Latros about a monk who was devoted to her,¹¹ St. Catherine of Alexandria seems to have been one of the many essentially neutral saints of Byzantium whose presence is welcomed, who slip easily into a hierarchy of images, but who are unmoored, so to speak, without a developed cult site.¹² The fact that angels had absconded with her remains and taken her to such a remote spot was tantamount to saying her place of burial was unknown. There is no mention of St. Catherine in sources relating to the monastery at Sinai earlier than the thirteenth century.

The situation in the West is quite a different matter. There is an early Carolingian manuscript that indicates a Latin *Passio* of St. Catherine existed before the year 840¹³, and interest in Catherine appears to have risen rapidly in the eleventh century and from the beginning to have been connected not vaguely to somewhere out in the Sinai, as in the East, but specifically to the monastery itself.¹⁴ This

⁹ Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, *Illustrated Manuscripts of the Metaphrastian Menologion* (Chicago/London 1990), 21, 58, 90, 102; fiches 1A12, 1F1, 2G7, 3C6.

¹⁰ R. Janin, *Le géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. I. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique. III. Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1969), 586–87.

¹¹ Hippolyte Delehaye, 'Vita S. Pauli Iunioris in Monte Latro,' *AB* 11 (1892), 33

¹² Cf. my 'The *Vita* Icon and the Painter as Hagiographer,' *DOP* 53 (1999), 149–65, esp. 151, 156.

¹³ A table of contents on fols. 1r–1v of the *Passionary* Munich, Staatsbibliothek 4554 (eighth to ninth century) lists a '*Passio Ecatarine virginis dei*' though the text itself no longer exists: Bronzini, 'Leggenda,' *op. cit.* (note 2), 259; Beatie, 'Saint Katherine,' (as in note 14 below), 788.

¹⁴ On the western literary tradition, see Hermann Knust, *Geschichte der legenden der b. Katharina von Alexandrien und der b. Maria Aegyptiaca nebst unedirten texten* (Halle 1890); A. P. Orbán, *Vitae Sanctae Katharinae*, 2 vols. [= *Corpus Christianorum* 119–119A] (Turnhout 1992), and, to cite only the most recent studies: Annegret H. Hilligus, *Die Katharinenlegende von Clemence de Barking: eine anglo-normanische Fassung aus dem 12. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen 1996) (with extensive bibliography); Katherine J. Lewis, *The Cult of St. Katherine of Alexandria in Late Medieval England* (London 2000). For medieval French

sudden spurt is often attributed by modern authors to the persuasive powers of one man, a Greek monk by the name of Symeon, who is said to have imported the cult of St. Catherine single-handedly (to be precise, with bones from her hand) into the West in the first quarter of the eleventh century. But if we look at this story in detail, we find that though there was indeed a Symeon, and he indeed came from Sinai, he himself had nothing to do with St. Catherine.

Symeon of Trier, alias Symeon of Sinai, came to the West and ended his life as a recluse in Trier in June of the year 1035. He was proclaimed a saint by the Pope before the year was out, on the basis of a *Vita* composed by his close friend and former travelling companion, Eberwin, the abbot of St. Martin in Trier. This *Vita* is a splendid text, savored by Robert Lee Wolff but not exploited sufficiently by Byzantinists, for although a Latin text, it has many elements that ring true, which Eberwin must have heard directly from his friend.¹⁵

According to Eberwin's *Vita*, Symeon was born in Sicily (his father was Greek), and went to Constantinople to be educated. Restless in the

versions, see William MacBain, *De sainte Katerine: an anonymous Picard version of the life of St. Catherine of Alexandria* (Fairfax, VA 1987); for Middle English, Saara Nevanlinna and Irma Taavitsainen, *St. Katherine of Alexandria: the late Middle English prose legend in Southwell Minster Ms 7* (Cambridge 1993); for German, see B. Beatie, 'Saint Katharine of Alexandria. Traditional Themes and the Development of a Medieval Hagiographic Narrative,' *Speculum* 52 (1977), 785–800; for Italian, Anne Tordi, *Festa et storia di Sancta Caterina: a medieval Italian religious drama* (New York 1996).

¹⁵ For the *Vita* and other Latin texts relating to Symeon see *AASS* for June (I), 85–104. On Symeon of Trier, see Robert Lee Wolff, 'How the News was brought from Byzantium to Angoulême; or, The Pursuit of a Hare in an Ox Cart,' *BMGS* 4 (1978), 139–89. See also Peter Thomsen, 'Der heilige Symeon von Trier,' *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 62 (1939), 144–61; Maurice Coens, S.J. 'Un document inédit sur le culte de S. Syméon moine d'orient et reclus à Trèves,' *AB* 68 (1950), 181–96; Franz-Josef Heyen, 'Simeon und Burchard-Poppo. Aus den Anfängen des Stiftes St. Simeon in Trier,' in *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (Sigmaringen 1984), 195–205, esp. 196–200; and *Porta Nigra* (as in note 18 below), vol. I, esp. 107–110. Thanks to the 'hagiomail' listserv of the Bollandists, I learned that Tuomas Heikkilä was preparing a Habilitationsschrift in Helsinki on Symeon of Trier. His important study, *Vita S. Symeonis Treverensis. Ein hochmittelalterlicher Heiligenkult im Kontext* (*Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*), appeared in 2002; I am unfortunately unable to include proper reference to it here, though it will now be by far the best source for information on Symeon. Dr. Heikkilä has very kindly shared references with me, including one I was unable to locate: Wolfgang Schmid, *Poppo von Babenberg († 1047). Erzbischof von Trier – Förderer des hl. Simeon – Schutzpatron der Habsburger* (Trier 1998).

capital, he soon headed for the Holy Places, and became a disciple of a stylite living on the banks of the Jordan. The stylite betrayed him, however, by vanishing one night from his column and never coming back. Symeon then made his way to Mount Sinai, where he lived outside the monastery as a hermit; interesting details about his days on Sinai reveal a certain knowledge of the site, and add to the credibility of this tale. Then Symeon was appointed by the abbot of Sinai to travel that year to France to collect the monies that were contributed annually to the monastery by the Dukes of Normandy. Symeon's ship from Cairo was attacked by pirates while still in the Nile, so Symeon made his way instead to Antioch, where he served for a time as a tour-guide for visiting Latin pilgrims. One of these, the nobleman Richard of St. Vannes in Verdun (a well-known historical figure, incidentally),¹⁶ suggested Symeon travel to Normandy with him, and though they parted company at the Bulgarian border, and Symeon went via Rome instead, he did reach France in August 1027, only to find that Richard II, Duke of Normandy, had just died. So Symeon went to Trier in search of his friend Eberwin, who had been one of Richard of St. Vannes' party, and there he remained. Though he took one trip back to the Holy Land with Poppo, the archbishop of Trier, he returned to Trier and set himself up in the Porta Nigra, the ancient Roman city gate, quite possibly atop a column like his old Syrian master (at least there is a column in what has been determined by archaeologists to be his cell, and they are puzzled what to do with it).¹⁷ Stoned and abused for this exotic behavior, Symeon was eventually accepted as a holy man; at his request he was virtually walled up in his cell, and he lived there from around 1030 until his death in 1035. A huge church was built in his honor, incorporating much of the Porta Nigra.¹⁸

The tale is colorful, but not implausible. In Trier, in fact, with his bones were found his camelhair cap and vestments, his shoes, and an

¹⁶ Hubert Dauphin, *Le bienheureux Richard, abbé de Saint-Vanne de Verdun* (Louvain/Paris 1946).

¹⁷ See below, note 21.

¹⁸ On Symeon and the Porta Nigra, see *Die Porta Nigra in Trier*, ed. Erich Gose, 2 vols. (Berlin 1969). See also Nikolaos Irsch, *Der Dom zu Trier* (Düsseldorf 1931), 323.

Old testament Lectionary of the tenth century.¹⁹ A portrait in a Trier manuscript gives him a Greekish inscription.²⁰ The cell itself has been excavated and published in a volume on the Porta Nigra.²¹

From this story we learn, among many other things, that money was being sent from Normandy to Sinai as early as the first quarter of the eleventh century. This confirms the statement of the local chronicler Rodulfus Glaber (ca. 980–1046) that ‘Thus each year, monks came to Rouen even from the famous Sinai in the East, and took back with them many presents of gold and silver for their communities’.²² But Eberwin’s Vita of Symeon does *not* mention St. Catherine at all, either at Mt. Sinai or in Europe.

The association of Symeon with St. Catherine was to come slightly later, after his death, in a Latin Miracle text written to enhance the fame of an abbey of the Holy Trinity in Rouen which claimed, from around the middle of the eleventh century, to have relics of St. Catherine. The Miracle text presents us with a far more fanciful story about our Symeon, saying he lived up on a mountain at Sinai, where he tended the tomb of Catherine and collected the oil it produced. One day Symeon found that little bones had flowed out with the oil. These he took straight to France where he presented them to the founders of this abbey of the Trinity in Rouen. Nothing quite works in this story, unlike the other one, but the story of Symeon bringing little bones from Sinai served well to authenticate the relics of Catherine at Rouen. By the

¹⁹ Albert Heintz, ‘Der heilige Simeon von Trier. Seine Kanonisation und seine Reliquien,’ *Festschrift für Alois Thomas* (Trier 1967), 163–73, and figs. 37–42. On Symeon’s ‘psalter’, see Carl Kammer, *St. Simeonsbüchlein. Zum 900jährigen Todestag 1035 – 1. Juni–1935* (Trier 1935). I owe reference to this publication (which I have not seen) to the kindness of Dr. Haikkila.

²⁰ *Porta Nigra op. cit.* (note 18), vol. I, fig. between pp. 106 and 107. See also Nikolaos Irsch, ‘Das Bildnis des hl. Simeon von Trier,’ in *Trier. Ein Zentrum abendländischer Kultur. Rheinischer Verein für Denkmalpflege und Heimatschutz* (Trier 1952), 175–79 (unavailable to me).

²¹ *Porta Nigra op. cit.* (note 18), vol. I, esp. 130–36.

²² Rodulfus Glaber, *The Five Books of the Histories*, ed. and tr. John France (Oxford 1989), I.V.21 (pp. 36–37)

twelfth century, the abbey had changed its dedication and was no longer called the Holy Trinity but the monastery of St. Catherine.²³

The cult of St. Catherine, enhanced by additional relics, had spread throughout Western Europe by the end of the eleventh century. Soon her life was being recounted in illustrated manuscripts and in stained glass and in Italian panel painting and her *Vita* translated into a dozen vernaculars.²⁴ Sanctuaries abounded.²⁵ By contrast, except for a thirteenth-century icon on Sinai (fig. 1)²⁶, we do not have a single illustrated *Vita* of Catherine anywhere in the East.

The West clearly believed that her relics were accessible on Sinai, and by the thirteenth century, Latin pilgrims were showing up at the monastery of Sinai seeking to venerate the relics and to see the place where the saint had been buried by the angels.²⁷ Magister Thietmar in 1217 suggests this was the very reason he had come to Sinai from Ulm.²⁸ At the top of Mount Catherine (Djebel Katrin), a peak South of the monastery and the highest in the area, pilgrims were shown the impression her body had made in the rock; inside the monastery they viewed her relics which were housed in a marble sarcophagos placed at right angles to the main altar in the bema of the Justinianic basilica (fig.

²³ R.-R. Poncelet, 'Sanctae Catharinae Virginis et martyris. Translatio et Miracula Rotomagensia saec. XI,' *AB* 22 (1903), 423–38, esp. 426–38; R. Fawtier, 'Les reliques Rouennaises de Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie,' *AB* 41 (1923), 357–68.

²⁴ On representations of St. Catherine in the west, see the entries in the *Lexikon der Christlichen Kunst* (VII: 289–97), and the *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* (III: 954–78). See also Judith Oliver, 'Medieval Alphabet Soup: Reconstruction of a Mosan Psalter-Hours in Philadelphia and Oxford and the Cult of St. Catherine,' *Gesta* 24 (1985), 129–40. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Oliver for her kind assistance with some of the problems raised in this paper. On the textual tradition, see note 14 above.

²⁵ See most recently Johanna Maria van Winter, 'Les seigneurs de Sainte Catherine à Utrecht, les premiers Hospitaliers au nord des Alpes,' in *Autour de la première Croisade*, ed. Michel Balard (Paris 1996), 239–46.

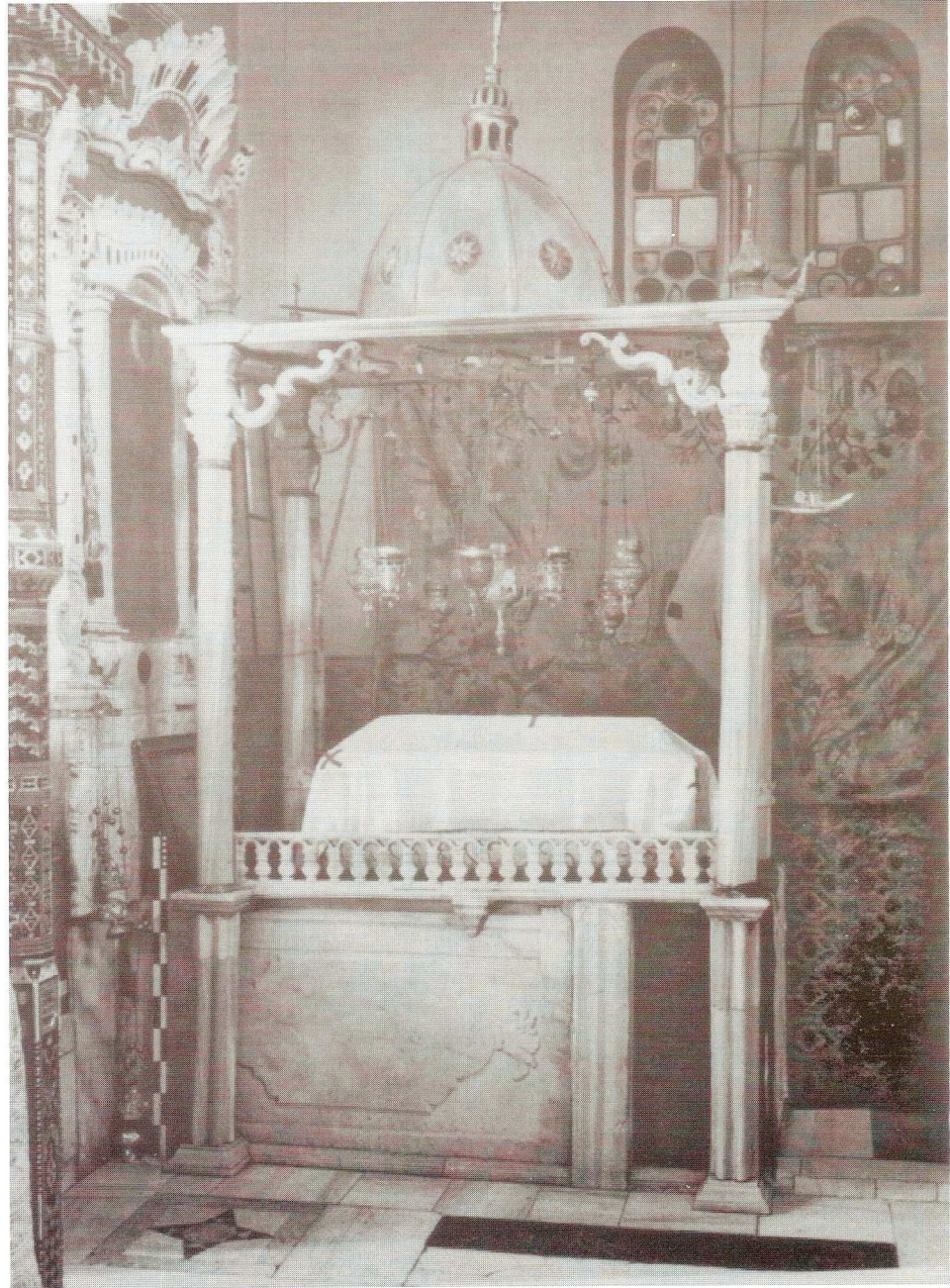
²⁶ Doula Mouriki, in *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, ed. K. Manafis (Athens 1990), fig. 46 p. 173. See also Kurt Weitzmann, 'Icon Programs of the twelfth and thirteenth Centuries at Sinai,' *Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας* Ser. 4: 12 (1986), 95–97, and Ševčenko, '*Vita* icon' *art. cit.* (note 12), 153; fig. 6.

²⁷ Braun, 'Literary Sources,' *art. cit.* (note 1), Chapter II; Thietmar, *Peregrinatio*, in *Peregrinatores Medii Aevi Quatuor*, ed. J. M. C. Laurent, 2nd ed. (Leipzig 1873), 42–45.

²⁸ Thietmar, *Peregrinatio op. cit.* (note 27), 43.



1. Vita icon of St. Catherine. Mount Sinai.
After K. Manafis, Sinai. *The Treasures of the Monastery of St. Catherine*



2. The tomb of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai.
After George Forsyth and Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint
Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian*



3. Icon of the Virgin, St. Catherine and Moses. Mount Sinai.
Reproduced through courtesy of the Michigan-Princeton-Alexandria
Expedition to Mount Sinai

2).²⁹ The relics dwindled over time: where Thietmar saw in 1217 a full body, soaked in oil, with its sinews still attached, Felix Fabri in 1484 venerated mainly the skull and left hand covered with its many rings, essentially what is displayed today.³⁰ According to Rabino, no prelate went away empty-handed.³¹

When then were the relics of St. Catherine first 'discovered' and first displayed in the monastery? Probably already by the twelfth century, and surely by the early thirteenth, as they are described by Magister Thietmar, and figure in a Greek Typikon for the use of Sinai dated 1214.³² How much earlier is hard to say. The local story – unconnected with the Western tales of Symeon of Trier – told how an unidentified hermit saw strange lights emanating from the mountain peak and how he persuaded the abbot and brethren to come up and remove the precious body they found.³³ Incidentally, Thietmar is already referring to the Justinianic church as the church of St. Catherine, not that of the Virgin.³⁴

The artistic evidence for the association of Catherine with the monastery at Sinai points to roughly the same period. Weitzmann included icon portraits of Catherine in his study of *loca sancta* iconography.³⁵ In some cases he is probably stretching the point – icons

²⁹ For the setting, see George Forsyth and Kurt Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (Ann Arbor, Michigan 1968), pls. LXXXIV–LXXXV.

³⁰ Thietmar, *Peregrinatio*, *op. cit.* (note 27), 43; *The Wanderings of Felix Fabri*, tr. Aubrey Stewart (London 1893–97), vol. II:2 (= *PPTS* vol. X), 601. Fabri saw 'some of the ribs, shin-bones and many other members of the holy virgin lying in the coffin'.

³¹ Rabino, *Monastère*, *op. cit.* (note 1), 26 note 3, citing Ludolph von Suchem, although my reading of the Ludolph passage (see note 41 below) suggests that the presence of a bishop in the party could induce the archbishop of Sinai to rub the bones to produce oil, but that then all pilgrims in the party, regardless of rank, could obtain phials of the oil. Rabino's statement may however be based on further sources which he fails to name.

³² A. A. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgičeskii rukopisei*, 3 vols (Kiev, 1895–1917, reprint Hildesheim 1965), vol. III, 394–418, esp. 409, 411. The manuscript in question is Sinai 1097.

³³ Cf the version told by Fabri, *Wanderings*, *op. cit.* (note 30), 604–607.

³⁴ Thietmar, *Peregrinatio*, *op. cit.* (note 27), 50; cf. 45, where he speaks of the monastery of St. Catherine.

³⁵ Kurt Weitzmann, 'Loca Sancta and the Representational Arts of Palestine,' *DOP* 28 (1974), 54; figs. 51–55, and 'Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom,' *DOP* 20

on Sinai showing her paired with St. Marina, for example, do not have to be any more directly connected with Sinai than are the panels found there with other pairings of saints, such as St. Theodore and Demetrios.³⁶ But in the case of an icon such as the one of Moses, Catherine and the Virgin as the Bush (fig. 3), the particular grouping indicates beyond doubt a Sinai provenance or destination.³⁷ This particular icon probably dates from the thirteenth century, by which time we know from other sources that the cult of Catherine on Sinai was fully operational. Nonetheless earlier icons may still be found, which could provide evidence for her cult at Sinai already in the twelfth century.

When we combine the evidence of both Greek and Latin texts we get some idea of how the relics of Catherine were usually approached. Thietmar in 1217 comments on the way the monks preface the display of the relics by the lighting of candles, with censers and the singing of hymns.³⁸ The Greek Typikon of 1214 confirms this, as it includes the incipits of several hymns to Catherine not connected with her feast day: these are presumably the ones heard by Thietmar and Fabri.³⁹ The pilgrims observe that everyone participated in the veneration of the relics, even the Bedouin guides and camel drivers who had escorted them across the desert from Cairo or Jerusalem, and there was apparently no concern about foreign visitors being admitted to the bema.⁴⁰

There, in the presence of the abbot, and sharply monitored, the visitors were allowed to peer inside the sarcophagos and even to kiss the relics; in with the bones was a pool of oil into which the abbot dipped a special spoon, and he filled a glass phial with this oil for the

(1966), 73; fig. 50, both articles reprinted in his *Studies in the Arts at Sinai* (Princeton 1982) (II and XII).

³⁶ Kurt Weitzmann, Gaiané Alibegavili, et. al, *The Icon* (New York 1982), 206–207; fig. p. 235.

³⁷ Weitzmann, 'Loca Sancta,' (as in note 35 above), fig. 51.

³⁸ Thietmar, *Peregrinatio* (as in note 27 above), 43. The same elements characterized the ritual in the time of Felix Fabri, in the fifteenth century (*Wanderings, op. cit.* (note 30), 600).

³⁹ Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie, op. cit.* (note 32), vol. III, 418.

⁴⁰ Thietmar, *Peregrinatio, op. cit.* (note 27), 43. Fabri, *Wanderings, op. cit.* (note 30), 600, says that after the pilgrims worshipped the relics, 'our ass-drivers did the same'.

pilgrim to take away.⁴¹ The relic-viewing ceremony remained roughly the same in 1484, when Fabri arrived, although he says the bones no longer produced oil, and cotton wool or pieces of silk, after contact with the bones, were dipped into the oil of the lamps of the Bush chapel instead. Fabri brought with him into the bema jewels belonging both to the noblemen in his travelling party and to friends back home: these were put in contact with the relics and were then to be restored to their owners. Coins dropped by the pilgrims directly into the coffin were removed later by the monks.⁴² Fabri had with him a book, his 'Processional', which contained texts of the prayers he should recite at each holy spot, including the tomb of St. Catherine, and for each visit to her tomb he obtained plenary indulgences.⁴³

In short, the monastery, in response to the inquiries of Latin pilgrims, had, by the early thirteenth century, brought the remains of St. Catherine, miraculously discovered on a mountain peak nearby, down the mountain and into the basilica. The remains were enclosed in a marble sarcophagos near the main altar, and could be viewed only with the permission of, and in the presence of, the abbot. There are no healing miracles associated with this tomb, no incubation, no miraculous appearances of the saint. It is treated as a holy site, but not as an active shrine: the pilgrim accounts make it quite clear that the oil produces miracles only long distances away, once it gets back home. The monks of Sinai were in no sense managers of an active healing cult,

⁴¹ *Ludolph von Suchem's Description of the Holy Land (written in the year A.D. 1350)*, tr. Aubrey Stewart (PPTS XII) (London 1895), 86. A good number of these phials can apparently still be found in Western European church treasuries.

⁴² *Wanderings, op. cit.* (note 30), 599–607.

⁴³ *Wanderings, op. cit.* (note 30), 602. Fabri defies his hosts, whom he calls schismatics and heretics, to interfere with the indulgences which the Pope had granted to Sinai years before, granted, he says, 'when it was still under the Pope': *Wanderings, op. cit.* (note 30), 623. On protection offered to Sinai and its properties by the Pope over the centuries (far more effective than anything offered by any Byzantine emperor after Justinian), see G. Hoffmann, 'Sinai und Rom,' *Orientalia Christiana* IX:3 (37) (1927), 218–99; idem, 'Lettere pontificie edite et inedite intorno ai monasteri del Monte Sinai,' *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 17 (1951), 283–303; Ševčenko, 'Vita Icon' (as in note 12 above), 163 note 58. See also Nicholas Coureas, 'The Orthodox Monastery of Mt. Sinai and Papal Protection of its Cretan and Cypriot properties,' in *Autour de la première Croisade* (as in note 25 above), 475–84.

as were the monks at Hosios Loukas in Greece, for example.⁴⁴ Their job was primarily custodial, to be sure the relics were protected and properly approached, and to apportion the holy oil. Though evidently a high point for visitors to the monastery, the monks themselves, to judge by the Typikon of 1214, gave the saint no more or less veneration than they did their various other holy relics, such as those of the martyrs of Sinai and Raithu. The structure of the Typikon makes it quite clear that the display of the relics of St. Catherine was a somewhat irregular event put on for the benefit of visitors and not a regular or traditional part of Sinaitic monastic ritual.⁴⁵ It would be still a century or so before Greek sources would begin referring to the monastery as that of St. Catherine.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ On Hosios Loukas, see Carolyn L. Connor, *Art and Miracles in Medieval Byzantium. The Crypt at Hosios Loukas and its Frescoes* (Princeton 1991).

⁴⁵ The 'para-liturgical' relic ceremonies, Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie, op. cit.* (note 32), vol. III, 418, were evidently something different from the traditional feast day service of November 24 (shared with St. Merkourios), also outlined in the Typikon (*loc. cit.*, 411). Of equal or greater importance in this Typikon was the celebration of Moses, Aaron and Elisha, of Elijah, of the earthquake of 1201, and of various other saints.

⁴⁶ According to André Guillou, 'Le monastère de la Théotokos au Sinai,' *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 67 (1955), 217–58, esp. 222–25, the official change in dedication occurred in the fourteenth to fifteenth century. It is likely to have been a gradual process from the thirteenth century on. Eventually the monastery's metochia in other lands, especially those in the hands of the Latins, would be routinely dedicated to the saint, but the chronology of these foundations has yet to be systematically analyzed.