

## IDENTIFICATION OF NEWLY DISCOVERED SLAVIC MANUSCRIPTS IN ST.CATHERINE'S MONASTERY IN SINAI

Moshé ALTBAUER, Jerusalem

Since the year 1975 many rumors spread of the sensational discovery of more than 220 old manuscripts, among them some in Slavic, set aside in a chest and buried in the ground of an ancient Sinai Monastery (about 150 years ago).

The Sinaitic monks kept the discovery as a great secret, but a scholar from Athens, who was invited to help in segregation of the anew discovered monuments, was less cautious. American scholars, who had good relationships with the scholar from Athens, got information on the manuscript finds made in Sinai, and even pictures of some of them.<sup>1</sup>

The reaction of the Sinaitic monks to this information was rage and wrath.

After many years (since 1968) of my working in the Sinai Library, I was very excited and wanted to know details of the newly discovered Slavic manuscripts. The only information I got was from Father Sophronius, who discovered the manuscripts while digging foundations for a new building after a fire in the Monastery. He informed me that among the new finds there were more than twenty codices and fragments in Slavic.

This information did not satisfy me. I wrote an official letter to the Archbishop of Sinai, Damianos, the head of St. Catherine's Monastery and asked to give me the possibility to see and examine the new Slavic finds.

In his answer (August 1978) he promised that they shall examine my request after the completion of the first stage of the restauration of the newly discovered manuscripts.

It was not before the second half of May 1979 that I was allowed to visit the Monastery where I saw the new Slavic finds for the first time – very limited (only a few hours) and examined the newly discovered Slavic manuscripts.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. J. H. Charlesworth, *The Manuscripts of St. Catherine's Monastery*. *Biblical Archaeologist* 43, no. 1 (Winter 1980), 26-34 (for earlier mentions of the 1975 finds in that journal, cf. fn. 5 on p. 33).

During those nine months of very patient waiting, I understood the real meaning of the saying: »ad Kalendas Graecas«. But the prize of this waiting was magnificent.

First: I identified fragments of 4 codices which I edited during my work in the Sinäi Monastery (1971-1978):

(1) An additional fascicle of *Evangelium Dobromiri*.<sup>2</sup> This new find, together with the previous Sinaitic<sup>3</sup> and Paris<sup>4</sup> fragments – added to this Old Slavic Codex 66 new pages in comparison with the contents of the Sinaitic Codex (previously no. 2), acquired about 90 years ago by Jagić.<sup>5</sup> But even today the entire Codex is not complete. Only a miraculous discovery, like the one that happened in 1975 in the Sinai Monastery, may complete the entire Codex. Secondly, can a very laborious examination of various catalogues of Slavic collections in Europe (esp. in Eastern Europe) lead us to the track of the still lost fascicles of *Evangelium Dobromiri*. It is very dangerous to consider another possible reason why the rest of the still lacking folios of this so important Codex have perished.

(2) Two quaternions of the Old Russian Psalter.<sup>6</sup> The newly discovered 32 pages of the previous Sinaitic Codex no. 6 enlarged the contents of the entire Codex, including the so-called »Psalter of Byčkov«, but did not complete it. 64 pages are lacking in the text of the Psalter (those lacking pages were completed in the about mentioned edition) by the corresponding psalms from the so-called »Harvard Psalter«, – as well as several pages of the lacking Biblical Canticles (IV – to the end).

<sup>2</sup>Добромирово Евангелие, Кирилски споменик од XII век. Том I. Приредил М. Алтбауер. Македонска академия на науките и уметностите, Скопје, 1973.

<sup>3</sup>M. Altbauer, *Slavic Manuscripts and their Study in Israel and Sinai*. Полата књигописна, II (1979), 6-10. Cf. also M. Altbauer, *An Ancient Slavonic Manuscript anew Discovered in the Monastery of St. Catherine's*. The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, *Proceedings*, Vol. V, No. 5 (Jerusalem, 1974), 126-135. (in Hebrew).

<sup>4</sup>К. Станчев, *Неизвестные и малоизвестные болгарские рукописи в Париже. Palaeobulgaria – Старобългаристика*, V, 1981, 3, 85-97.

<sup>5</sup>V. Jagić, *Evangelium Dobromiri – Ein altmacedonisch Denkmal der kirchenslavischen Sprache des 12. Jahrhunderts. Grammatisch und kritisch beleuchtet*. (Mit drei Tafeln.) Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien 1898, CXXXVIII, II. Abhandlung, I. Hälfte, 80; 1899, CXL, III. Abhandlung, II. Hälfte, 122. Cf. also: V. Jagić, *Spomeni mojega života*. II. (1880-1923). SKA. Posebna izdanja knj. CIV. Društveni i istoriski spisi, knj. 45. Beograd, 1934, 215 and 284-285.

<sup>6</sup>*An Early Slavonic Psalter from Rus'*, Vol. 1. Edited by M. Altbauer with the collaboration of H. G. Lunt, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. Sources and Documents Series. Distributed by Harvard University Press, 1978.

(3) Sixty anew discovered pages of the oldest Serbian Psalter<sup>7</sup> (Sin. Slav. no 8). The Codex begins with the XII fascicle, i.e., with several lacking Canticles at the end of the Psalm, – more than 120 pages of the previous Codex may be considered as lost.

(4) Moreover the list of Slavic manuscripts in K. W. Clark's *Checklist*<sup>8</sup> includes also a very ancient *Latin Psalter*. Because of its importance textological as well as palaeographical, I edited this Latin manuscript.<sup>9</sup> Among the anew discovered manuscripts I identified a third of the estimated entire *Latin Psalter*, brought to Palestine by the crusaders. It was later presented by a Christian Arab monk to the Sinai monastery (in the year 1230).

The identification of the anew discovered fragment of the ancient *Latin Psalter* (no. 5) – helps to find the right answer to my question in the Introduction to the edition of this Sinaitic codex:

»Es läßt sich unmöglich feststellen, ob die fehlenden Lagen in Europa verlorengegangen waren, bevor Kodex ins Heilige Land gebracht wurde, oder erst in Jerusalem, beziehungsweise noch später (*op. cit.*, p. VI).

After this »big shot« which was the discovery of the fragments, and it was connected with my previous work in Sinai (1968–1979), we proceedad examine about 15 Cyrillic codices and bigger and smaller fragments (the numbering of the fragments is temporary);

1. *Oktoichos*, 13.5 x 9 cm, 48 folios, XV century. Serbian.
2. *Homilia*, 22.5 x 15 cm, 41 lines in the column, 67 folios. Southern-Slavic.
3. *Liturgical fragment*, 17.5 x 12.5 cm, 8 folios, XV/XVI. Serbian.
4. *Liturgical Greek-Serbian*, 16 x 11 cm, 24 folios, XIV/XV c.
5. *Evangelium Dobromiri* (see above).
6. *Horologion* (fragment) 17 x 12 cm, 4 folios, Serbian, XV/XVI c.
7. *The Old Russian Psalter* (Slav. Sin. no. 6) – see above.
8. *Homilia*, 14 x 11 cm, 120 folios. Bulgarian, writer in 1370.
9. A small *liturgical* fragment, 10 pages, Serbian.
10. *Horologion* (fragment), 17.5 x 12.5, size of column 13 x 8 cm, 12 pages, Serbian, XV. c.

<sup>7</sup>*Der Älteste Serbische Psalter*. Herausgegeben von M. Altbauer, Böhlau Verlag, Köln–Wien, 1979 (appeared in 1980).

<sup>8</sup>K. W. Clark, *Checklist of Manuscripts in St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai*. Washington, 1952.

<sup>9</sup>*Psalterium Latinum Hierosolymitanum*. Eine frühmittelalterliche lateinische Handschrift, Sin. Ms. no. 5. Herausgegeben von M. Altbauer. H. Böhlau Nachf. Wien–Köln–Graz, 1978.

11. *Liturgical fragment*, small size; 10.5 x 8.5, size of column 8.5 x 6.5 cm, 40 pages, XVI c.

12. *Oktoichos*, 19.5 x 16, size of column 13.5 x 11, parchment, 12 folios, XIII c., Serbian.

13-14. Two joined fragments: (a) A *Russian Oktoichos* (XV c.) and (b) a *Serbian fragment*, 6 folios.

15. Two parchment fragments: (a) 4 folios of so-called »Questions and Answers«, a kind of non-apocryphal catechism Russian. Another folio of this catechism (2 pages added as folio 46r-v to the Slavic Sinaitic codex no. 39,<sup>10</sup> which contains an Old Russian Praxapostle; – the pages 45r-v contain also a Glagolitic palimpsest<sup>11</sup> which I newly discovered. For some examples of those »Questions and Answers« see in my article in the »Festschrift« to F. V. Mareš.<sup>12</sup>

»Vъprosъ(ъ). Čto sę slyšatъ jasli ideže leža g(ospod)ъ. Otvět(ъ). Jasli sutъ ljudije ihъže radi sъnide i povitъ vъse věroju.«

One can postulate, that the 4 anew discovered folios of the »Questions« belong to their beginning, because at the end of folio 46v of the Codex 39 there are other additions, not belonging to the »catechism«. In the anew discovered fragments there are examples similar in style: »kako že mi podobajetъ prěbyvati ...« (fol. 1v); »kako podobajetъ ispytati pomyslъ i uběžati plěnenija« (folio 2r), etc.

At the end of the fragment some pages of a Russian »*Lěstvica*«.

16. A Serbian »*Oktoichos*«, small in size. Many pages are unreadable.

17. Concerning the additional *s i x t y* pages of the Oldest Serbian Psalter (cod. no. 8), see above fn. 7.

18. A paper *scroll* of 10 parts containing liturgical items. Russian. XV. c.

As noted above, the time I was given by Archbishop Damianos and Father Sophronius was very limited (only a few hours) and the result of this was that the above descriptions of the anew discovered manuscripts are only *t e m p o r a r y*, without any pretension to be final, I may add: with the exception of those newly discovered fragments which belong the Slavic codices (see above), I edited.

<sup>10</sup>M. Altbauer, *One Pericope from an Old-Russian Praxapostle*. Litterae slavicae medii aevi. F. V. Mareš sexagenario oblatae. Sagner's Slavistische Sammlung, Bd. 8. München 1985, 19–25. + 4 plates.

<sup>11</sup>M. Altbauer and F. W. Mareš, *Fragmentum glagoliticum evangeliarum palaeoslovenici in codice Sinaitico 39 (palimpsestum)*. Anzeiger der phil.-hist. Klasse der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 117. Jahrgang, 1980, 139–152 + 2 plates. F. W. Mareš, *Das Palimpsest-Fragment eines glagolitischen Evangeliums im Codex Sinaiticus 39 – ein neues altkirchenslavisches kanonisches Denkmal*. Wiener Slavistischer Almanach, VII (1981), 253–258.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. fn. 10, p. 20, fn. 6.

The next goal of scholars in Slavistic centers which had microfilms of all Slavic Sinaïtic manuscripts before the great discovery in the last years – is to acquire microfilms of the anew discovered fragments for their precise examination and then to join them to the corresponding codices in the Sinai Library. All this written above – refers to the Cyrillic fragments and codices.

The most exciting and dramatic moment of this May-night came later. When we finished the examination of the new Cyrillic finds, I asked Father Sophronius:

»Please, Father Sophronius, how is it possible, that we have identified only Cyrillic manuscripts, and nothing in Glagolitic script among the new finds?«.

»No, no, no!« was the answer of Father Sophronius.

»Please, Father, think about it«.

Again an absolute: »No?«.

Then I asked the Archbishop to bring from the Monastery Library the oldest two Slavic Glagolitic manuscripts: *Psalterium Sinaïticum*<sup>13</sup> and *Euchologium Sinaïticum*.

I showed the manuscripts to Father Sophronius and he became nervous. He hesitated and then he showed several manuscripts on a shelf facing us. Then he murmured: »Yes, but these are Georgian manuscripts.«.

»Never mind. Let us see them« was my reaction.

At this moment the tension rose rapidly and I got enthralled.

The »would be« Georgian manuscripts were Glagolitic!:

(a) a fragment of 4 pages from the *Euchologium Sinaïticum* 3 of them in colour wonderfully preserved and one damaged.<sup>14</sup>

(b) a big Glagolitic codex, containing a complete homiliary.

(c) a complete Glagolitic Psalter (?).

This question-mark is because I was given only 20 minutes at the end of the session and I was unable to give a complete answer to this important discovery, unique for many, many years in the history of Slavic studies.

But the very fact that I identified two unknown Glagolitic codices and a fragment of *Euchologium Sinaïticum* saved those Glagolitic finds as if by a miracle for Slavistic studies, and enriched the so-called Old Church Slavonic Canon.

<sup>13</sup>PSALTERIUM SINAÏTICUM. *An 11th Century Glagolitic Manuscript from St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai*, ed. M. Altbauer. The Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Skopje, 1971.

<sup>14</sup>Prof. I. Ševčenko of Harvard University got photos of the new fragments of *Euchologium Sinaïticum* via Athens and published a very interesting article: *Report on the Glagolitic Fragments (of the Euchologium Sinaïticum?) Discovered in Sinai in 1975 and Some Thoughts on the Model for the Make-up of the Earliest Glagolitic Manuscripts*, Harvard Ukrainian Studies, VI (1982), 110-151.

As I promised Archbishop Damianos and Father Sophronius, in a short time I prepared a temporary synopsis of all new finds and sent it to the Sinai Monastery.

Thus ended my work in the Sinai Library, which started in November 1968.

One can hope that in the future it will be possible to have copies of the 108 additional pages which belong to the 3 Slavic Sinaitic Codices which I edited: *Evangelium Dobromiri* (16 pages), *The Oldest Serbian Psalter* (60 pages) and *An early Psalter from Rus'* (32 pages) – and I shall be able to finish my work.

### Summary

The paper informs how about 20 newly discovered (in 1975) Sinaitic Slavic codices and fragments were identified by the author.

### Sažetak

#### IDENTIFIKACIJA NOVOOTKRIVENIH SLAVENSKIH RUKOPISA U MANASTIRU SV. KATARINE NA SINAJU

U članku autor opisuje kako je identificirao oko dvadeset novootkrivenih (1975) sinajskih slavenskih kodeksa i fragmenata.

Izvorni znanstveni članak

Primljeno: 24. rujna 1987.

Autor: *Moshé Altbauer*

*The Hebrew University,  
Jerusalem*