

## The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)

cordially invites you to the workshop

### **Removed and Rewritten: Palimpsests and Related Phenomena from a Cross-Cultural Perspective**

Thursday, 7 October, 10:00 am – 07:00 pm CEST  
Friday, 8 October, 10:00 am – 06:15 pm CEST

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/register-workshop11>

One of the most fascinating features of manuscripts is their openness to different types of transformations introduced by their users. More often than not, manuscript books acquire ‘layers’ of annotations, corrections, or other modifications at some point during their ‘life’. The phenomenon known as palimpsesting is one of the most radical ways in which a manuscript can be transformed. It not only implies the erasure of one or all parts of a manuscript’s contents but may even result in its complete disintegration. Instead of ceasing to exist, however, the dismembered parts usually find their way into other manuscripts, hence establishing a mostly hidden and fortuitous connection between two or even more written artefacts.

In recent years, the development of new technologies has provided more accurate methods to study palimpsested manuscripts, rendering accessible the otherwise invisible *scriptio inferior*. At the same time, refinements in the concept of manuscripts as evolving entities (Andrist/Carnart/Maniaci 2013 and Friedrich/Schwarke 2016) provide further analytical tools for a better understanding and conceptualisation of palimpsests as complex written artefacts (re)created in the course of a special production process. With the present workshop – a continuation and expansion of a smaller virtual event on palimpsests organised by the Cluster in December 2020 – we aim to bring together experts from different fields and disciplines and encourage discussion on the essentials of palimpsests and related phenomena from a cross-cultural perspective.

## Programme

**7 October 2021**

**Session 1: 10:00 am – 01:00 pm CEST**

**Chair: Jost Gippert (Hamburg)**

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| 10:00-10:15 | Welcome and opening remarks   |
| 10:15-11:00 | Felix Albrecht (Göttingen): <i>Greek Psalter Palimpsests: An Overview</i>           |
| 11:00-11:30 | Coffee break  |
| 11:30-12:15 | Jana Grusková (Vienna/Bratislava): <i>Editorial Approaches to a Palimpsest</i>      |
| 12:15-01:00 | Kaja Harter-Uibopuu (Hamburg): <i>Palimpsests in Greco-Roman Funerary Epigraphy</i> |
| 01:00-02:30 | Lunch break   |

**Session 2: 02:30 pm – 04:00 pm CEST**

**Chair: José Maksimczuk (Hamburg)**

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| 02:30-03:15 | Elena Trifilova (Moscow): <i>The Experience of Studying a Paper Palimpsest from the Collections of the Department of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library</i> |
| 03:15-04:00 | Halle O'Neal (Edinburgh): <i>Intentional Erasures: Memorial Palimpsests of Medieval Japan</i>   |
| 04:00-04:30 | Coffee break  |

**Session 3: 04:30 pm – 07:00 pm CEST**

**Chair: Thies Staack (Hamburg)**

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| 04:30-05:15 | Andreas Janke (Hamburg): <i>Advances in Music Palimpsest Research</i>  |
| 05:15-06:00 | Ivan Shevchuk (Hamburg) and Kyle Ann Huskin (Hamburg): <i>Poking and Prodding the Pixels: Struggling to Recover Text in the Most Difficult Palimpsests – and When to Give up</i> |
| 06:00-06:15 | Break  |

- 06:15-07:00 Michael Phelps (Rolling Hills Estates): *The Sinai Palimpsests Project Five Years Later: Status Report and Recommendations*
- 07:30 Conference Dinner

## 8 October 2021

### Session 4: 10:00 am – 12:45 pm CEST

#### Chair: Andreas Janke (Hamburg)

- 10:00-10:45 Bernard Outtier (Lavau): *The Richest Source of Georgian Palimpsests*
- 10:45-11:15 Coffee break
- 11:15-12:00 Dali Chitunashvili (Tbilisi): *Arabic-Georgian Palimpsests from Dagestan*
- 12:00-12:45 Jost Gippert (Hamburg): *Palimpsests and Codicology: Reconstructing Disintegrated Codices*
- 12:45-02:00 Lunch break

### Session 5: 02:00 pm – 06:15 pm CEST

#### Chair: Caroline Macé (Hamburg)

- 02:00-02:15 Gurgen Gasparian (Yerevan): *The Matenadaran Palimpsests Project*
- 02:15-03:00 Erich Renhart (Graz): *The Palimpsests of Graz University Library (Ms. 2058/2). On the Way to its Full Edition*
- 03:00-03:45 Christa Müller-Kessler (Jena): *The Trials and Tribulations of a Palimpsest Reader*
- 03:45-04:15 Coffee break
- 04:15-05:00 Grigory Kessel (Princeton): *Two Palimpsest Fragments of Sinai Geo. 49 and Their Four Syriac Undertexts*
- 05:00-05:15 Break
- 05:15-06:00 Axel Malik: *Intervention Palimpsests*
- 06:00-06:15 Closing remarks

## Abstracts

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**Felix Albrecht (Göttingen):** *Greek Psalter Palimpsests: An Overview* (7 October, 10:15-11:00)

**Abstract:** Palimpsest manuscripts are particularly interesting textual witnesses: frequently, they transmit texts or text forms that are no longer directly attested. So it is in the case of the Greek Psalter. The most important witnesses to the Hexapla of Origen are the Mercati Psalter (Ra 1098), which is a Catena manuscript that provides excerpts from the Hexapla in its original columnar layout, and the Taylor-Schechter fragment of the Hexapla (Ra 2005) from the seventh century AD. One of the earliest witnesses to the Lucianic recension is Codex Zuqninensis rescriptus (Ra Z) from the sixth century AD. Another quite interesting example is the so-called “Pantocrator Psalter” (Ra 1032): this manuscript was modernised by washing off the old Psalter text in majuscule script (9th century) and replacing it with a new Psalter text in minuscule script (13th century), in which the Odes were not modernised. For the “Editio critica maior des griechischen Psalters”, a long-term project of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities, which started in 2020, it is necessary to evaluate and describe afresh all textual witnesses. In my paper, I give an overview of the Greek Psalter Palimpsests and describe how these manuscripts have been made available in facsimiles and digital images so far, using different examples (Ra Z Vatican Library, Ra 1205 Sinai Palimpsest Project, Ra 1098 Schrift-Bilder.org), and how these manuscripts are catalogued in Göttingen (using Ra 1100 as an example).

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**Jana Grusková (Vienna/Bratislava):** *Editorial Approaches to a Palimpsest* (7 October, 11:30-12:15)

**Abstract:** When accessing dismembered parts of a manuscript, which found their way into another manuscript as a palimpsest, scholars have to conduct a palaeographical, codicological, and textual analysis to identify and describe the surviving *membra*. This presupposes rendering accessible the otherwise invisible writing and the other details of the original manuscript by any means available (UV lamp, digital imaging, and image processing). One of the fundamental questions that needs to be answered is what value the manuscript holds for the text it contains. If the palimpsest preserves an important version of a text or is the only witness (‘codex unicus’), it is desirable to carry out additional editorial work, including further decipherment etc. Especially in cases of unique texts, the editors have to perform a range of research activities in order to reach the ultimate goal of preparing a complete and comprehensive critical edition. This also includes close cooperation with the library and experts in the digital recovery of erased writings. The works can take several years and often have to be conducted in several stages. The paper will illustrate the editorial approaches drawing on long-year experience gathered in projects focused on unique Greek textual witnesses preserved in palimpsests of the Austrian National Library in Vienna.

**Kaja Harter-Uibopuu (Hamburg):** *Palimpsests in Greco-Roman Funerary Epigraphy* (7 October, 12:15-01:00)

**Abstract:** At first sight, inscriptions on stone, metal or other durable materials do not seem suitable for removal to allow all or part of the writing support to be put to a new use. Nevertheless, numerous examples of this can be found in the epigraphic evidence from antiquity. The range extends from small corrections intended to mend mistakes made by the stonemasons or errors in the conception of the text, to the well-known *damnatio memoriae*, which often also had to be covered by new text, and to engraved media whose texts were completely removed, and which could thus form a new surface for the placement of a text. The last case in particular shows that the valuable material (bronze, marble) was not wasted if, for example, the text on it was no longer relevant or worth keeping. The practice is of greater interest, however, where mass production of inscriptions is to be expected: in the sepulchral realm. Epitaphs are by far the most extant group of inscribed written artefacts from Greco-Roman Asia Minor and they allow an assessment of epigraphic habits far beyond the official settings of public inscriptions. Commissioned and financed by private individuals, there are examples of complex and artistically valuable tomb inscriptions as well as of simple and brief texts. From the imperial necropoleis of the provincial capital Ephesus numerous grave slabs have been found which, on closer inspection, show shaving and re-inscribed texts. Not only were the stones regularly reused, but parts of the texts had been preserved and placed in new contexts. A precise analysis of the complex evidence needs to include the handwritten records (*schedae*) from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which often provide more information than the modern editions and themselves show traces of multi-layered use.

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**Elena Trifilova (Moscow):** *The Experience of Studying a Paper Palimpsest from the Collections of the Department of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library* (7 October, 02:30-03:15)

**Abstract:** Traditionally, the concept of palimpsest (from the Greek palimpsestas and Latin palimpsestus – ‘erased’) is associated with manuscripts on parchment whose original text was cleaned off, and then another one was applied. The repeated use of writing base is often explained by its high cost and strength. The use of the palimpsest technique in relation to paper is quite rare and, as practice shows, is not always associated with saving money for the purchase of the writing base. In 2016, the restoration workshops of the Russian State Library received a handwritten ‘Life of Peter and Fevronia of Murom’ from the Manuscripts Department, dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The manuscript was in a ruined state: the paper crumbled in the text and on miniatures, had an unnatural brown colour, and traces of repair were visible on the sheets. During the restoration, traces of an unknown text were found under the text and the miniatures of the ‘Life’. The appearance of this text through the colourful layer of miniatures and the lines of the ‘Life’ could not be explained by the migration of ink from other sheets, since the miniatures are written on both sides of the sheet and occupy more than half of it. A careful study of the manuscript allowed us to determine that the sheets from the 16<sup>th</sup> century were previously part of another, more voluminous manuscript from which they were torn, as evidenced by the

characteristic traces on the folds of the sheets as well as partially preserved numbering of pages. The deleted text was almost impossible to read. The exception was two small fragments. These excerpts allowed us to assume that the deleted text belonged to the corpus of legal monuments of Medieval Russia. The conducted laboratory studies allowed us to hypothetically restore the sequence of creation of this unusual palimpsest, to determine the solution with which the original text was removed, and to determine the composition of the pigments used in colouring of the miniatures. In the process of paleographic and codicological research of the manuscript, an assumption was made about the place and purpose of this exemplar. It was possible to trace its migration through private collections before entering the Department of Manuscripts of the Russian State Library. The only question that remained unanswered is the name of the creator of this unusual palimpsest.

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**Halle O'Neal (Edinburgh):** *Intentional Erasures: Memorial Palimpsests of Medieval Japan* (7 October, 03:15-04:00)

**Abstract:** This talk explores the textuality and materiality of Buddhist memorial palimpsests written in medieval Japan. These textually layered compositions were produced at cataclysmic moments of loss: upon the death of a loved one, family members gathered the dead's letters and other remnants of handwriting and transformed them through material reconstructions, via the copying of sacred scripture as a new textual layer, into embodied palimpsests. This paper advocates for the inclusion of Buddhist examples into the wider discussion of palimpsests as an avenue for understanding the visuality and intentionality of this peculiar form. Like most medieval material culture, much of their histories have been erased or forgotten. But through an object biographical approach that traces the moments of transformation marking the manuscripts' materiality, we can come closer to understanding the afterlives of these letters through the prism of medieval reuse and recycling. Doing so also recovers the manuscripts as ritual objects and performances of mourning and prayers for salvation.

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**Andreas Janke (Hamburg):** *Advances in Music Palimpsest Research* (7 October, 04:30-05:15)

**Abstract:** Past research on individual music palimpsests has enabled the study and performance of previously unknown European music of the Middle Ages. However, the basic phenomena and circumstances of the creation of such written artefacts remain to be understood. Such an understanding is indeed necessary in order to choose and develop the appropriate techniques for recovering lost music, but also to be aware of and discover music palimpsests in the first place. Therefore, a comprehensive approach is needed that allows for a fuller understanding of the materiality of preserved music palimpsests. The aim of my paper is to investigate and compare highly different scenarios of the creation of music palimpsests. To this end, I will present three case studies of Medieval and Renaissance parchment manuscripts from which musical notation and text were erased and then overwritten or painted over in the 13th, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 19th century, respectively. Where possible, connections between the first and subsequent layers of writing will

be shown. On the basis of this research, I will address some current issues concerning the different expectations of scholars, editors and performers with regard to the techniques of restoration and the way in which the results may be published. Finally, I will point out some suggestions that I think are relevant for future research.

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**Ivan Shevchuk (Hamburg) and Kyle Ann Huskin (Hamburg):** *Poking and Prodding the Pixels: Struggling to Recover Text in the Most Difficult Palimpsests – and When to Give Up* (7 October, 05:15-06:00)

**Abstract:** Multispectral imaging (MSI) has been used for over two decades to non-destructively reveal damaged and erased texts, with some exceptional results coming from Western medieval palimpsests. Revealing text that has been hidden for centuries, MSI can produce results that scholars compare to ‘magic’, evoking what we call a ‘spectral gasp’. These successes are, understandably, the images that usually appear in conference presentations, articles, and websites to demonstrate MSI’s potential. As a result, scholars often approach new MSI projects with the unrealistic expectation that they will receive a single image that fully reveals the desired text on each page. Unfortunately, MSI will not be successful on all manuscripts. In order to give a more realistic expectation of MSI’s capabilities, this presentation will discuss a representative manuscript from three categories of difficult texts to recover using MSI.

The first manuscript will be Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, MS Aug. perg. 112, a 9<sup>th</sup>-century palimpsest to which a chemical reagent (oak-gall tincture) was applied in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in an effort to reveal the undertext, leaving large brown stains throughout the manuscript. Although it temporarily enhanced the ink, the tincture’s tannic acid corrodes the ink underneath, especially if written in a reaction-prone iron-gall ink, ultimately making MSI recovery very difficult, if not impossible. The second manuscript will be Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, MS Codex Guelf. 125 Gud. lat., a 12<sup>th</sup>-century palimpsest whose overtext conceals not an earlier text but a collection of ornate drawings. The metalpoint drawings left only faintly visible traces on the parchment, and most pure metals do not readily respond to MSI. The third manuscript will be Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, MS CHJN-002, fol. 109v, from an Ethiopian manuscript written in a carbon-based ink, whose colophon has been thoroughly scraped and later overwritten in an iron-gall or plant-based ink. Unlike their counterparts, carbon-based inks do not penetrate the parchment, and consequently, once scraped, these inks leave almost nothing for MSI to reveal. Although partially legible/visible results were eventually obtained in the first two cases, the carbonaceous text of the third was completely unrecoverable, reiterating the material limitations of MSI technology.

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**Michael Phelps (Rolling Hills Estates):** *The Sinai Palimpsests Project Five Years Later: Status Report and Recommendations* (7 October, 06:15-07:00)

**Abstract:** The Sinai Palimpsests Project, 2011-2016, is among the most ambitious efforts to date to use scientific imaging to recover cultural heritage. Five years after its conclusion, scholarly and

scientific work continues on both the spectral data and the descriptive metadata. The presentation will review ongoing work and offer recommendations for future spectral imaging programmes in the Sinai and more broadly.

The Sinai Palimpsests Project was a collaboration of St. Catherine's Monastery of the Sinai, the Early Manuscripts Electronic Library (EMEL), and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) to use spectral imaging to recover erased texts from the Monastery's many palimpsests and publish the results online as a digital library. The project spectrally imaged 74 palimpsest codices (6,800 pages), among which scholars have identified 307 erased texts that range in date from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and include eleven languages.

Ongoing work with project data includes:

- New identifications of undertexts
- Application of new image processing methods to existing spectral data
- Study of the overall corpus of Sinai's palimpsests as evidence for the transmission of texts and the circulation of manuscripts in the Eastern Mediterranean
- Ongoing work by the UCLA Library to develop a new Sinai Data Portal that will support more sophisticated explorations of project metadata

Broader recommendations include:

- Digitization programmes should extend the use of spectral imaging beyond a niche technology, so that they collect quantifiable data from manuscripts.
- End-to-end workflow management tools are needed to support the application of spectral image to entire collections.

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**Bernard Outtier (Lavau):** *The Richest Source of Georgian Palimpsests* (8 October, 10:00-10:45)

**Abstract:** In 2017, the K. Kekelidze Georgian National Center of manuscripts of Tbilisi published *Georgian Palimpsests at the National Centre of Manuscripts: Catalogue, Texts, Album*, a heavy volume of 808 pages in-4°. You may find there the description of more than 10,500 pages of palimpsests manuscripts, for the first time described together. I shall present this work, introducing briefly the history of the discovery of Georgian palimpsests in Georgia, then presenting the works kept in the underlayer/layers, and offering some new identifications.

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**Dali Chitunashvili (Tbilisi):** *Arabic-Georgian Palimpsests from Dagestan* (8 October, 11:15-12:00)

**Abstract:** The Georgian Palimpsest preserved at the Makhachkala Institute of History, Ethnography and Archeology in the capital of Dagestan became known to the general public in 2016 as a result of a lecture by a researcher of the same institute, Shahban Hafizov, at Tbilisi State University. On the basis of this talk and the two photos provided to him by a Dagestani scholar, Teimuraz Gvantseladze co-authored a paper that identified the palimpsest as a text containing the

*Khanmeti* Gospels and dated it to the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century. In 2018, within the framework of an expedition organised by the National Center of Manuscripts, I had the opportunity to work on the palimpsest preserved in Dagestan.

The analysis of the manuscript and a full transcription of the palimpsest text led me to the following conclusion: The upper layer of the 83-page Arabic-Georgian palimpsest containing the Sufi text is dated by Dagestani colleagues to no later than the 17<sup>th</sup> century; the manuscript had been moved to Makhachkala from the Lak district village of Ubri in the 1960s. One page of the Arabic manuscript represents one fourth of the Georgian manuscript; therefore, we have fourteen full pages of the Georgian manuscript, fourteen half pages and also one fourth of one page (pages 40, 41, and 42 of the manuscript are indecipherable). The surviving margins on some pages of the manuscript allowed us to reconstruct the original page size of the Georgian manuscript. Its size must have been 340 × 210 mm. The Georgian text is executed in a refined *Asomtavruli* script – the graphemes B, Q, Š, W, Ž are concise, which confirms the early dating of the manuscript. The copying of the palimpsest confirmed that we have a hitherto unknown manuscript of the *Khanmeti* Gospels here. Excerpts from the Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John are present in the palimpsest.

We have studied the manuscript textologically and some interesting characteristics were revealed. Mark's and John's Gospels presented in the palimpsest are versions of the protovulgate *Khanmeti* Adishi Gospels redaction, while Luke's Gospel totally differs from all versions of Georgian translations of the Four Gospels known until today. It is known in scientific circles that in the Adishi Gospels the text of St. Luke's Gospel consists of two layers, and it has been suggested that the scribe of the Adishi Gospels added it from another manuscript unknown to us yet. Thus, for today we have three different redactions of Luke's Gospels: the one that originates from Opiza, the so called Opizuri Gospels, second the so called Adishuri Gospels (from Adishi), and third the redaction from which the Adishi Gospels are supplemented. Among these redactions the one from Dagestan is especially interesting. It attracts scholars' attention to study and research the principles conducted by the translator or editor of the manuscript.

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**Jost Gippert (Hamburg):** *Palimpsests and Codicology: Reconstructing Disintegrated Codices* (8 October, 12:00-12:45)

**Abstract:** Parchment codices that were prepared for being re-used as palimpsests were often disintegrated in the sense that existing quire structures were dissolved, bifolios were cut in two and resulting folios were turned by 90° or 270° and folded in the middle, thus yielding new bifolios of smaller size. Nevertheless, there may be clear indications of the original quire structure preserved, e.g. if the overall text sequence can be restored and there are remnants of the original quire numberings. Even without these indications and with bigger lacunae, the reconstruction of an original codex may turn out possible if the method of re-use that was applied in the creation of the new (overwritten) codex is discernible. In the present paper, the respective considerations will be illustrated on the basis of the Caucasian Albanian palimpsests of Mt Sinai (mss. Sin. georg. NF 13 and 55).

**Erich Renhart (Graz):** *The Palimpsest of Graz University Library (Ms. 2058/2) On the Way to Its Full Edition* (8 October, 02:15-03:00)

**Abstract:** Graz University Library holds a bundle of four manuscripts and manuscript fragments, which derive from the St Catharine Monastery on Mount Sinai. One of them, our number 2058/2, is a palimpsest. The first text in Armenian characters was effaced around the year 800. The parchment came to be rewritten with the text of the Psalms and some biblical cantica in Georgian language and script. The original text has been studied and identified, being a book of 'embedded oracles'. It was probably this formally forbidden category of text that caused its eventual removing. Anyhow, our manuscript is palimpsest throughout, except the first four folios. From the original manuscript of 320 folios we are lacking only twenty and a half folios. The palimpsested manuscript is of some interest in view of the oracles it transports. Additionally, it provides an ancient version of the text of the Gospel of John. After a first edition of all oracles and a paradigmatic section of the Gospel text, together with a meticulous codicological description of the codex in 2015 (in German), we are on the way of preparing the full text edition in English. The presentation introduces the manuscript and the state-of-the-art along with the most relevant research questions.

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**Christa Müller-Kessler (Jena):** *The Trials and Tribulations of a Palimpsest Reader* (8 October, 03:00-03:45)

**Abstract:** There is not one single approach to the reading and decipherment of palimpsests. Ever since the first attempts at reading the underneath script in palimpsests, a multitude of methods has been developed and still has to be deployed. One should not be under the mistaken impression that modern multispectral digital imaging is the definite solution to a perfect reading result. It is still dependent on the state of preservation of the material, although it can be quite convenient not having to travel to remote places to check single folios or individual philological questions. Secondly, this highly expensive device is not available in every institution, nor can it be used in every instance. This paper will deal with my experience of forty years of studying palimpsests in various institutions and at times under unorthodox conditions. Despite usually producing satisfactory results in the end, the path has been and is still paved with obstacles of different kinds. Apart from profound philological knowledge, it requires innovative and ad hoc solutions to be able to read a palimpsest. This is especially true when one comes across them by chance or under time pressure.

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**Grigory Kessel (Princeton):** *Two Palimpsest Fragments of Sinai Geo. 49 and Their Four Syriac Undertexts* (8 October, 04:15-05:00)

**Abstract:** 10th-century Georgian manuscript Geo. 49 preserved at the monastery of St. Catherine on Sinai is not a regular codex. What distinguishes this manuscript is that the Georgian scribe

made use of a large amount of reused parchment material that originally belonged to the manuscripts copied in Arabic, Coptic, Georgian, Greek and Syriac. Some of those, in turn, were made from the parts of other manuscripts that had been palimpsested earlier. The codex Geo. 49 is – as it is often the case with Sinai manuscripts – not complete and many of its leaves are wanting. Besides, the fragments identified among the Sinai New Finds and also at the National Library in Paris, one of its disjecta membra has been kept since the mid-20th century at the Vatican Library and another has recently resurfaced among the holding of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library. Not unlike the main part of the codex preserved at St.Catherine's, the two fragments – at the Vatican and at HMML – display the presence of the undertexts, and sometimes even two layers of them. In my talk, I will present the identification of the Syriac undertexts in two fragments and discuss their significance.

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**Axel Malik:** *Intervention* Palimpsests (8 October, 05:15-06:00)

**Abstract:** The works of art introduced at this workshop manifest artistic strategies and motivations, which explain why palimpsests play a significant role in my art project *The Scriptal Method / Library of Unreadable Signs*. These works, my considerations regarding 'palimpsest' as well as a writing performance will offer possibilities to encounter this subject matter on artistic terrain. It will be tantalising to see, but also to critically examine whether palimpsests are well-suited to be looked at on the axis between science and art. The intervention is part of the Artist-in-Residence programme of the Cluster of Excellence 'Understanding Written Artefacts'.