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Western travellers in search of Greek manuscripts in the Meteora monasteries (17th-19th centuries) *

Demetrios C. Agoritsas

*Δημητρίῳ Ζ. Σοφίανῳ
In Memoriam*

Byzantine and post-Byzantine manuscripts and printed books from the sixteenth century onwards, form an integral part of eastern orthodox monasticism. Orthodox monks following the hermitic, idiorrhythmic or coenobitic types of monasticism, use manuscripts for liturgical services, for prayer, study and as source of spiritual guidance. Many Church fathers, as well as monks, preferred the study of the inner wisdom (ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς σοφία) to secular (θύραθεν) learning. However, the contents of manuscripts in the monastic libraries refute this opinion, with many monastic *Typica* (foundation documents) showing respect for and recognising the value of books, both ecclesiastical and secular.¹

One well-known scriptorium was that of the Constantinopolitan monastery of Stoudios, which under the spiritual guidance of its abbot St. Theodore (759–826), became famous, primarily for the copying of theological manuscripts. The rules of the monastery were established by St. Theodore and formed a model for many other monastic establishments throughout the Byzantine Empire. In his *Typicon*, St. Theodore

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¹ See Wilson 1967.

introduced specific and strict rules for the operation of the monastic library, along with the study, copying and preservation of its books.²

Within Stoudios, as well as other important Constantinopolitan monasteries, scribal activity highly developed; with prominent scholars, most of them monks, living, teaching, and founding major libraries. Apart from Constantinople, there were other important monastic centres, known today for their valuable manuscript collections, including Sinai, Athos, Patmos and Meteora.

On the high rocks of Stagoi, modern-day Kalambaka in Thessaly, which formed the western extent of the Byzantine Empire, the monastic community of Meteora was initially formed in the twelfth century, by anchorites and small hermitages. Two centuries later, Hosios Athanasios formed the first organized community, that of the Great Meteoron. Athanasios arrived at Meteora in the early 1330s from Mount Athos, with his spiritual father Gregorios. It was he who named the largest of the rocks *Meteoron*, where he also decided to reside because as he stated, it looked as if it was suspended in the air. There followed the foundation or reorganization of other great coenobia such as Barlaam, St. Stephanos and St. Nicholaos Anapausas, while during the first half of the sixteenth century, the Meteora monastic communities reached their peak.³

There are references to book collections belonging to small monasteries and hermitages since the fourteenth century, when Meteoric monasticism experienced its first period of prosperity. One such example is the cod. *Meteora, Rousanou* 46, f. 19r-v (Anonymous, Commentary on Canons for the feasts of the liturgical year, mid-14th c.; Diktyon, 42119), in which there is a list of books owned by the former monastery of the Virgin on the Stylos (Rock) of Stagoi.⁴ The library of this monastery possessed a total of 31 volumes with mostly liturgical and hymnographic content (Four Gospels, *Apostolos*, Typicon, Psalter, *Triodion*,

² See the *Testament of St. Theodore Studites*, 119 (κς'), *PG* 99, 1713B (κς') as well his *Poenae monasteriales*, *PG* 99, 1740AB. See also Thomas & Constantinides–Hero 2000, 93, 108 (26).

³ Sophianos 1991; Agoritsas 2018b. On Gregorios and his relationship with the movement of Hesychasm, see Niphon 2020.

⁴ Sophianos 1994, 287.1–288.8.

Heirmologion, *Octoechos*, *Sticherarion*, *Paracletike*, as well as *Synaxaria*, *Menaia* and works of the Church Fathers). In another document of the 1340s, a hermit refers to the fire that burned down his wooden hermitage and destroyed, “τὰ χαρτία του” (“his papers”).⁵ We assume that the books of this anonymous hermit were needed only for his daily ecclesiastical services and therefore were mostly of liturgical content. Furthermore, in a parchment Gospel Lectionary of the twelfth century, cod. *Meteora*, *Metamorphosis* 556, f. 1v (Diktyon, 41966), 10 books, mostly liturgical, are recorded as follows: Four Gospels, Typicon, Psalter, *Prophetologion*, Liturgy, *Triodion*, *Synaxarion*, Funeral Service, and a Mytilenaios (perhaps Christophoros Mytilenaios’ book of iambic distichs on saints throughout the ecclesiastical year).⁶

All of these lists of books dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and a few more published by Bees, contained many spelling and other errors which are suggestive of poor levels of literacy in some monastic communities. The relatively few collections of recorded books were mostly from hermitages and small monasteries on the rocks of Stylos and Hypselotera and ranged from seven to 27 volumes. They mainly included books necessary for the holy services, various patristic readings beneficial to the soul, such as *Vitae sanctorum*, *Synaxaria*, and *Menaia*, amongst others, as well as an *Iatrosophion* or a *Physiologus*.⁷

Nevertheless, there are some exceptions, such as the small book list in cod. *Meteora*, *Metamorphosis* 374, f. 1r (dated in 1359, Diktyon, 41784), where eight volumes were recorded, which were thematically different to those which one would expect to find in a small monastic collection. Amongst other texts, are listed a series of volumes including the history of *Barlaam and Joasaph*, an unnamed *Chronicle*, the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil of Caesarea, Josephus, an *Iatrosophion* by monk Nikephoros and, the Epistles of Synesios of Cyrene, *Erotemata* (*Ero-*

⁵ Sophianos 2008, 22.19.

⁶ Bees 1912, 273. For this work of Christophoros Mytilenaios see Follieri 1980.

⁷ Bees 1912, 274. Another book collection is recorded in cod. *EBE* 175 [Gospel Lectionary, 14th c.; Diktyon, 2471] which is associated with the small monastery of Kallistratos in Meteora because of its ownership entry on p. 341. See Marava–Chatzinicolaou & Toufexi–Paschou 1985, 220–221.

temata grammatica by Manuel Moschopoulos?).⁸ Although the scribe, in this case, was illiterate, we may assume that the owner (the *ktetor*) of these books was a scholar-monk or teacher.

The foundation and substantial growth of the Meteora monastic libraries which began in the late fourteenth century reached its peak during the period of Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century and continued until the eighteenth century as a result of the following factors:

- a. The influx of monks from Mount Athos from the early fourteenth century onwards, as a consequence of the Turkish raids. Athonite monks brought to Meteora not only a different means of organisation, but also their books. They also appear to have encouraged a different perception of books and libraries, which was directly related to coenobitic monasticism.⁹
- b. The patronage of local elites, such as the Greek-Serbian rulers of Trikala and Ioannina.¹⁰
- c. The incorporation, mainly in the library of the Great Meteoron monastery, of other monastic libraries from earlier Byzantine monasteries, such as Zablantia and Lykousada, that ceased to exist during the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries.¹¹
- d. The desire of the founders of the monasteries and successive abbots to expand their libraries. Indeed, in the *Foundation Typica* of several monasteries such as Barlaam and Rousanou, the founders set strict rules for the protection and preservation of books, highlighting not only their spiritual value but also the high cost for their acquisition.¹² The need for the protection of books, mainly from theft is

⁸ Bees 1912, 275–276.

⁹ Agoritsas 2018b, 49–50.

¹⁰ Sophianos 1996. See also Sophianos 2009, 273–274.

¹¹ See cod. *EBE* 210 which was donated to the monastery of St. Nicholas of Zablantia by the *pinkernēs* Alexios Angelos Philanthropenos in the year 1378/79. The codex resulted later in the Great Meteoron library. See Evangelatou–Notara 1996, 222 n. 39.

¹² Agoritsas 2018, 92.234–237, 107–108; Sophianos 1992, 34.13. It should be noted that the founders of the monastery of Barlaam, Hosioi Theophanes and Nectarios Apsaras, as well as the founders of the Rousanou monastery, Hosioi Maximos and Joasaph, were descended from noble families of Ioannina.

revealed by the number of severe curses added in the colophons of most. An indication of the effort made during the sixteenth century to enrich monastic libraries is noted in cod. *Meteora, Barlaam* 38 (f. 128r) dated to 1518 in which the scribe, probably Leontios Dionysiates, states that he had travelled to many places without being able to find “an Acolouthia (sic) of St. John of Damascus better than this, neither in Ioannina nor in the Holy Meteoron, Mount Athos or even the Patriarchate (in Constantinople). Thus, I made a little effort, because of my great love and I copied them to increase the number of these books in the holy monasteries and in all the holy churches”.¹³

- e. The incorporation of the private libraries of highly educated monks and scholars, within that of the Great Meteoron as well as other monasteries, like St. Stephanos.¹⁴
- f. Donations by local scholars, bibliophiles, and prelates, like Joasaph metropolitan of Larissa (1382/3–1401/2)¹⁵ and later the bishop of Stagoi Parthenios (March 1751 – † 26 March 1784), who donated his valuable book collection and the entire archive of his diocese to the monastery of Barlaam, along with Paisios (12th May 1784 – 1808), who donated his library to the monastery of the Holy Trinity, consisting of manuscripts and printed books. One should add the donations by humble monks for their spiritual salvation and *in memoriam* of themselves and their parents. For example in the case of John Pestianetes, who devoted cod. *Paris. Coisl.* 203 (Theophylact’s *Commentary* on Four Gospels, 13th/14th c., Diktyon, 49343) to the monastery of Barlaam, “διὰ τ(ῆν) ψυχὴν τοῦ π(ατ)ρ(ό)ς μου καὶ τῆς μητρός μου, | κ(αὶ) διὰ τὴν ψυχὴν μου τοῦ ἁμαρτολοῦ (f. 435r)”, “for the soul of my father and of my mother, and for my own sinful soul”.

¹³ Bees 1967, 47–48.

¹⁴ On the operation of schools at the monasteries of Meteora during the Ottoman period and the presence of scholar monks, see Demetrakopoulos 1985, 79–106; Nemas 1995, 152–153 *passim*. More systematic research on the operation of schools will undoubtedly provide additional information.

¹⁵ The codices *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 2 (1383/4), 21 (1386/7), 51, 450 (1388/9) and *EBE* 551 and 629 are attributed to Joasaph, who donated to the monastery of Great Meteoron at least 15 volumes. See Bees 1967, 4–5, 23–24, 75, 456; see also Diktyon, 41413, 41432, 41462, 41860, 2847, 2925.

- g. It should be noted that for a long time the monasteries of Meteora served as places of exile for monks and hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Some were scholars, such as Gerasimos, former bishop of Raška, who was a well-known scribe of Nomocanons and whom the Swedish traveller J.–J. Björnståhl tried to help in various ways.¹⁶

During the early sixteenth century, hieromonk Ignatius listed his books twice in one of his personal volumes, i.e. cod. *Par. Coisl.* 292, ff. Br, 2r (Symeon the New Theologian, 14th c., Diktyon, 49433).¹⁷ His first entry of 1516 listed approximately 34 volumes, while six years later in 1522, his library had increased by 10 volumes, mainly of liturgical content with works by Church Fathers, amongst others. It is striking that despite the presence of the coenobitic system in the monastery of Great Meteoron, there were monks who held personal libraries. Soon after the books of hieromonk Ignatius had been incorporated within the library of the monastery, the following severe curse was written on folio 1v of the codex mentioned above:

+ Τῶ παρῶν βιβλῆων· συμεῶν ὁ νέως θεολόγος· ὑπάρχει τῆς βασιλεικοτάτης | μονῆς τοῦ ἁγίου μετεώρου· κ(αὶ) οἴτης· τῶ ἀπόξενώση ἐκ τῆν ρηθῆσ(αν) | μονῆν ἔστω αφωρη<σ>μένος, κ(αὶ) ἀσυγχώρετος· καὶ μεταθάνατον ἄλητως, κ(αὶ) | να ἔχη κ(αὶ) τῆς αρ<ᾱς> τῶν τριακοσίων· κ(αὶ) δεκοκτῶ θεωφώρων· κ(αὶ) ἀθανασίου | κ(αὶ) Ἰωάσαφ· κ(αὶ) τυμπανοιέως μενέτω.

This book of Symeon the New Theologian, belongs to the imperial monastery of the holy Meteoron; and whoever removes it from the afore-mentioned monastery, let him be excommunicated and unforgiven and after his death let his body be undecomposed, and let him have the curse of the 318 Church Fathers of Nicaea, and the curse of the Hosioi Athanasios and Joasaph (i.e. the founders of the monastery), and let his body stay swollen.

¹⁶ On the life of Gerasimos, former bishop of Raška, and his scribal activities see Agoritsas 2020.

¹⁷ Nau 1908.

To prevent any future removals of the parchment folios, the following severe curse was added to folio Iv of the same codex, “+ This volume consists of 18 folios, and if someone cuts any of them, let him be unforgiven”. In another Meteoritic volume, now in Paris, the present *Paris. gr.* 1075, f. 249r (Church Fathers, 14th c., Diktyon, 50671) there is the following interesting entry (see fig. 2):

+ ἐτοῦτο τὸ βιβλίον, ὑπάρχει τῆς βασιλικῆς κ(αὶ) θεί(ας) | μονῆς τοῦ μετεώρου· κ(αὶ) ἔτοις τὸ ἀπὸ ξενῶσι· ἐκ τῆς | μονῆς τούτης· ἢ αναλῶσι ἐκ τῆς ἀμαθειᾶς κ(αὶ) ἀπλη|στείας τῶν χειρῶν του· ἢ ρίψει αὐτῶ κάτωθεν ἀπό(νωσ) | ἔστω ἀφωρισμένος καὶ ἀσυχώρητος κ(αὶ) τὰς κατάρας | τῶν εὐρισκομένων ἐν τουτῇ τῇ μονῇ ἀσυγμέν(ων) | πατέρων, νὰ ἔχειο τὴν κειμένειν ἀπηλῆν εἶ.

+ This book belongs to the imperial and holy monastery of Meteoron and if someone removes it from this monastery, or destroys it by ignorance and because of the greed of his hands or even throws it down with heartlessness, let him be excommunicated and unforgiven and be menaced by the fathers who live in this monastery.

Curses or threats of excommunication which were written in almost all manuscripts, were not to be disregarded as they formed an ‘institutional’ legal code that set out to protect the manuscripts from all manner of threats. During the pre-industrial era, and considering a society of monks fearful of the final judgment by God and the possible loss of Paradise, curses written on books functioned as a deterrent. But as noted by Michaelares, the intimidating effect of these was dependent on the receptiveness of the potential pilferer and the degree of their reaction to such pressures and practices.¹⁸

It appears, however, that curses did not always have their intended result, when almost a century later the manuscripts referred to above arrived in Paris, as a result of the activities of the notorious Cypriot manuscript collector, Athanasios Rhetor (1571–1663). He travelled in Greece during the years 1643–1653, as an envoy of Cardinal Mazarin

¹⁸ On curses and their effects, see Michaelares ²2004, 168–175; Saradi 1994, 441–533; Morris 2002, 313–326.

and Chancellor Pierre Séguier.¹⁹ The supposed mission and activities of Athanasios at Meteora were mentioned by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Dositheos II Notaras, in his handsome volume *Historike Dodekabiblos* (Bucharest 1715; published 1721–1723).²⁰ It should be noted that Athanasios himself never actually visited Thessaly, but he coordinated his activities from Constantinople, having sent a priest as his representative to Meteora in search of manuscripts. The following is a well-known reference to his activities by Notaras.

Ἀθανάσιός τις Κύπριος, παπιστῆς ὄμως, καθ' Ἑλληνας ἠμφιεσμένος, καὶ ὑποκρινόμενος τὸν ὀρθόδοξον, ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ Ἄθωνος, καὶ εἰς ἄλλα μοναστήρια Θράκης, Θετταλίας, καὶ Μακεδονίας, καὶ ἐκλεξάμενος πολλὰ βιβλία τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων καὶ τῆς ἔξω σοφίας, ἠγόρασεν αὐτὰ ὀλίγου τιμήματος, τοὺς δὲ ἐν τῇ μονῇ τῶν λεγομένων Μετεώρων πατέρας τοσοῦτον ἠπάτησεν, ὥστε καὶ τρυτάνη ὅπερ λέγεται κοινῶς στατέριον ἠγόραζε τὰ τῆς μονῆς αὐτῶν βιβλία, ἐν ἐκάστη τριλίτρῳ, ἥτοι ὀκάδι δούς αὐτοῖς τὴν συμπεφωνηθεῖσαν ποσότητα τῶν ἀργυρίων.²¹

¹⁹ On Athanasios Rhetor, see Omont 1902, 1–26; Manousakas 1940; Manousakas 1993, 27–35; O'Meara 1977. On the looting mission of Athanasios in Cyprus see Constantinides & Browning 1993, 23–26 with further references.

²⁰ For the edition of the *Dodekabiblos* see Sarres 2005. Later, in 1779 the bishop of Stagoi, Parthenios, narrated to the Swedish traveller J.–J. Björnståhl the alleged activities of Athanasios Rhetor in Meteora, as relayed by Dositheos of Jerusalem. While Björnståhl was still in Meteora (in the monastery of Barlaam), Parthenios sent him the edition of the *Dodekabiblos* to which Björnståhl has referred extensively. See Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 73–74, 96–97 (Mesevrinos).

²¹ Dositheos of Jerusalem 1715, 1173. What Dositheos has said is repeated *mot-à-mot* by Komnenos Hypselantes, *Τὰ μετὰ τὴν Ἀλωσιν* 166 (Afthonides), while a few decades later in 1817, Oikonomou, *Τοπογραφία*, 136–137 (Spanos) noted that, “In these monasteries there are many libraries with valuable manuscripts, but the best of them were bought by Franks – the holy fathers, may their relics be sanctified! Such excess and useless things (i.e. manuscripts) were sold for 6 *parades* per oke (1.28 kg.)” (Εὐρίσκονται εἰς αὐτὰ τὰ μοναστήρια πολλαῖς βιβλιοθήκαις ἀπὸ ἀξιόλογα χειρόγραφα βιβλία, ἀλλὰ τὰ καλύτερα τὰ ἀγόρασαν οἱ Φράγκοι. οἱ πατεράγιοι, ν' ἀγιάσουν τὰ κόκκαλά τους! Τέτοια περίσσια καὶ ἄχρηστα πράγματα τὰ ἐπωλοῦσαν πρὸς 6 παράδες τὴν ὀκάν).

A Cypriot named Athanasios, loyal to the pope, but dressed as a Greek and pretending to be an Orthodox, visited Mount Athos and other monasteries in Thrace, Thessaly and Macedonia, and after he had chosen many books of the holy fathers and of secular wisdom, he bought them at a low cost. Indeed, the fathers of the monastery called Meteoron were greatly deceived, because Athanasios also used a *trytanē*, which is called in the common language *statērion* (i.e. scales), to buy books of the monastery, giving to the monks the amount of silver coins they agreed for every three litres of weight.

Despite the exaggerations of Notaras, the activities co-ordinated by Athanasios Rhetor in Meteora in 1643 resulted in a rich harvest. Of the large number of manuscripts that arrived in France in 1653, thanks to the zeal of Jean de la Haye, the French ambassador in Constantinople, nine ended up in Mazarin's library (*Ancien fonds grec*), while seven were added to the library of Séguier which were later acquired by his grandson, the second-born son of Duke Coislin (*Les fonds Coislin*).²² Most of the above manuscripts are not of secular wisdom, as Notaras claimed, or Athanasios would have wished. Their content was predominantly patristic, ascetic, hagiographic and canonical, as well as New Testaments, and texts of the Church Councils, amongst others.

The exaggerated story by Notaras regarding the supposed activities of Athanasios Rhetor at Meteora had negative consequences for the reputations of the Meteora monks in terms of their relationship with their collections of books. Repeatedly reproduced, it led to the assumption that the monks were uneducated, ignorant and unaware of the value of

²² See Kolia 1984; cf. Géhin 2005, 38–40. They include the following volumes in the *Bibliothèque nationale de France: Parisini graeci*, nos 506 (f. 2r, Meteoron; Diktyon 50081), 760 (f. 161 bis, St. Demetrios, Meteora; Diktyon, 50343), 876 (f. 1r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 50464), 880 (f. 4v, Meteoron; Diktyon, 50468), 1075 (f. 249r, Meteoron; Diktyon 50671), 1123 (f. 163v, Barlaam; Diktyon, 50719), 1134 (f. 1r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 50732), 1377 (f. 403r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 50989), 2748 (f. 190v, Meteoron, Dousikon, Anapausas; Diktyon, 52383), and *Coisliniani* 59 (f. 259v, Anapausas; Diktyon, 49201), 198 (f. 4r, Barlaam; Diktyon, 49337), 203 (f. 435r, Barlaam; Diktyon, 49343), 237 (f. 2r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 49378), 264 (f. 275v, Meteoron; Diktyon, 49405), 292 (f. 11r, Meteoron; Diktyon, 49433) and 378 (note on *verso* of front cover; Diktyon, 49519).

their manuscripts, which they destroyed and sold for worthless amounts. It should be noted, however, that Athanasios' emissary had obtained the books in dubious circumstances. It is probably the case that in the presence of an ostensibly Orthodox clergyman, the monks of Meteora were misled, particularly given the difficult financial condition many of the monasteries were in the early seventeenth century.

It is also noteworthy that approximately four decades before the activities of Athanasios Rhetor, Antonius Salmatius Montiferratensis, an emissary of Cardinal Fridericus Borrhomaeus, had travelled throughout Greece in 1607–1608 and especially in Thessaly, Epirus and Corfu, during which he was able to secure a large number of manuscripts for the newly established Ambrosian library in Milan (1607). A total of 44 manuscripts (mostly of patristic and hagiographic content) are listed in the Catalogue of Martini and Bassi with just the phrase, *ex Thessalia advectus*. Consequently, it is difficult to know which were taken from the monastic libraries of Meteora.²³ Despite this, recent work on the manuscripts by Annaclara Cataldi Palau, focusing on the notes but also their script, has pointed to only two Greek codices as having with some degree of certainty, originated from the Meteora monasteries of Barlaam (cod. 46, Hagiographical works and Church Fathers, 11th/15th c.; Diktyon, 42236) and St. Nicholaos Anapausas (cod. 308, Church Fathers, 12th c.; Diktyon, 42718), along with one from the nearby monastery of Dousikon (cod. 236, Church Fathers, 11th c.; Diktyon 42544).²⁴

²³ They include the following manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana: nos 42, 46, 63, 64, 70, 75, 79, 136, 189, 193, 214, 236, 240, 257, 307, 308, 313, 366, 367, 371, 372, 374, 375 (and frg. D 137 suss., 36), 412, 413, 500, 529, 684, 695, 810, 813, 825, 860, 861, 862, 872, 876, 878, 884, 996, 1001, 1003 (D. 545), 1011, 1041 (and frg. D 137 suss., 49). See Martini & Bassi ²1978; Kolia 1984, 74–75, n. 14, and Pasini 1997, 144–149, 176–181. From the above-mentioned manuscripts only codices 75 (14th c.) and 813 (15th c.) are of secular content (e.g. Procopius, *Gothic wars* and Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*).

²⁴ See Cataldi Palau 2008, 622; Cataldi Palau 2010. The author questions the origin of cod. *Ambr. C 95 sup.* (*gr.* 193) from St. Nicholaos Anapausas (Hagiographical works and Church Fathers, 11th/12th c.; Diktyon, 42432). The same scholar attributes as well cod. *Marc. gr.* 104 to Anapausas based on a list of books recorded on f. Ir (Church Fathers, 11th c.; Diktyon, 69575). See Mioni 1981, 148–150; Cataldi Palau 2009, 148; cf. the reference by P. Eleuteri in Cavallo 1998, 160–161.

In England, Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), Lord Protector and Chancellor of Oxford University donated his collection of twenty-two Greek manuscripts to the Bodleian Library in 1654. Amongst them is *Bodleian Cromwell* 6 (Church Fathers, 15th c.; Diktyon, 47796), with an ownership entry of the monastery of Meteoron [Τοῦ μετεώρου], p. 407],²⁵ and *Bodleian Cromwell* 26 (a September *Menologion* by Symeon Metaphrastes, 11th c.; Diktyon, 47816), which is associated with the monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas, because of an ownership entry on f. 1r and its characteristic binding.²⁶ Irmgard Hutter also attributed a Meteora provenance to cod. *Bodleian Cromwell* 13 (John of Damascus, *Dialectica, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, 10th c.; Diktyon, 47803).²⁷ How Cromwell acquired these manuscripts is still unknown.

The need for monasteries such as Great Meteoron and St. Nicholas Anapausas to sell some of their valuable books, can partly be attributed to the difficult financial conditions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In 1568 the Ottoman sultan, Selim II, confiscated monastic properties, while in around 1585 to 1586²⁸ the Ottoman currency was devalued, events that left many of the Meteora monasteries in poverty. In the case of the monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas, Cataldi Palau identified two periods during which manuscripts were sold or removed, during the first half of the seventeenth century and then again during the second half of the nineteenth century when the monastery was largely abandoned and fell victim to looting.

During the early seventeenth century, the abbot of Great Meteoron was forced to leave his cloister and to petition the Romanian Principalities for money (*zēteia*), as his monastery was in a serious financial condition.²⁹ The situation of Great Meteoron became even more diffi-

²⁵ Kolia 1984, 76; Nikolopoulos 1973, 195–197; Desprez & Rigo 2016, 335–336.

²⁶ Hutter 1982, 237; Cataldi Palau 2008, 622, 628, 636.

²⁷ Hutter 1982, 15–16.

²⁸ Alexander 1982, 99; Fotić 1994, 33–54; Pamuk 2000, 131–138.

²⁹ In the early 1580s the monks of Great Meteoron sent a letter to the Prince of Wallachia, Mihnea II Turcitul (1577–1583), asking for his economic support, while a few decades later the abbots of Meteora and Dousikon monasteries addressed the Prince of Moldavia, Vasile Lupu (1634–1653), asking for his protection. See Bees 1909, 236^{vi}–^{vii} (no 12), 294–297 (text), and 236^{vi}–^{vii} (no 9), 279–283 (text).

cult following an unforeseen natural disaster. In a still unpublished letter dated June 1641, Ecumenical Patriarch Parthenios I mentions that Great Meteoron had suffered a fire a few years earlier, resulting in the loss of many of the monastery's heirlooms, including books and imperial chrysobulls. For this reason, the Patriarch permitted the Meteoron monks to visit the ecclesiastical provinces (*mētropoleis*) of the Patriarchate to petition for *zēteia*.³⁰ Just over a century later in 1779, J.–J. Björnståhl first became aware of this event, noting that a fire had destroyed a large collection of manuscripts at the monastery of Meteoron, while later he found a codicographical note referring to the event, which recorded it as having taken place on the 26th of October, 1632.³¹ The fire and resulting difficult situation the monastery found itself in, probably explains how a few years later, Athanasios Rhetor was able to easily buy several of its manuscripts. As the manuscripts located outside of Meteora were mostly written on parchment and date from the Byzantine period, Cataldi Palau notes that “the Meteora monasteries sold their best and oldest parchment manuscripts, keeping the more recent liturgical texts which were more useful for the daily events of monastic life”.³²

Despite this and apart from the activities of Athanasios Rhetor, it is clear that during the seventeenth century the loss of manuscripts was

³⁰ See a letter of *zēteia* dated the 1st of February 1654, by three abbots from Meteora monasteries (Barlaam, Rousanou, St. Stephanos) as well as by the abbot of the Thessalian monastery of Lykousada to the Tsar of Russia, Alexis Mikhailovich, asking for his subvention in favour of the monastery of Great Meteoron. Another letter was written two days later (3rd of February) on behalf of the brotherhood of Great Meteoron and its abbot Damascenus. See Tchentsova 2009, 306, 312, 327–328 (figs 6–7).

³¹ See Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 74, 88 (Mesevrinos), who refers to the fire that broke out on the 26th of October 7141 or 1633. However, the year 7141 corresponds to the year 1632. According to Vapheides 2019, 123, Ottoman Turks plundered the monastery of Meteoron in 1609; Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 88 (Mesevrinos), says that a few years later, on Good Friday 1616, the monastery was plundered by Arslan bey, the Ottoman Pasha of Ioannina. Finally, a note in cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 454, f. 165r, records that in the year 1636/7 the Pasha of Ioannina on his way to Constantinople shelled the monastery, Bees 1967, 459. See also Bees 1967, 60, where in cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 39, f. 1v, it is mentioned that a fire burned the cells of the monks in 1639.

³² Cataldi Palau 2008, 620.

fairly minimal. Despite the claims of Dositheos Notaras of Jerusalem, the monks of Meteora clearly showed great concern for the preservation of their books. Thus, apart from the explicit references to the protection of manuscripts in monastic *Typica* and the protective curses which are recorded in most of the codices, we also have concrete examples of the efforts of the monks to protect their books and libraries. So, when the monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas was in serious financial condition during the late sixteenth century and its monks were forced to sell some of their manuscripts, the abbot of the Great Meteoron rushed to buy one of them, cod. *Paris. gr.* 2748, f. 3v (Church Fathers, late 14th c.; Diktyon, 52383), in order that it would not be sold outside of Meteora (see fig. 3).³³

+ κἀγῶ παπᾶ Γεράσιμ(ος) καὶ ἡγούμ(εν)ος τοῦ Μετεώρ(ου) μὲ τὸν πρωηγούμ(εν)ον | τὸν πν(ευματικὸν) π(ατέρα) κῦρ Νεκτάριον ὁποῦ ἔγινεν ἐπίσκοπος εἰς τὸ Ζητούνη, | {ᾶ} ἡγοράσαμ(εν) τὸ βιβλίον τοῦτο τὸ λεγόμε(εν)ον διόπτρα ἀπὸ τ(ὸν) ἄγιον Νικόλ(αον), | ἀπὸ τὸν γέροντα τὸν κῦρ Λαυρέντιον· καὶ ἀπὸ τ(ὸν) πν(ευματικόν) του τ(ὸν) [...] καὶ | ἀπὸ τοὺς καλογέρους του. διὰ ἄσπρ(α) φ' ἡγουν πεντακόσια· νὰ ἔναι, | τελίως εἰς τὸ μοναστήρι· ὅτι ἐπουλήθη δια χρέως· κ(αὶ) ἤθελαν | νὰ τὸ πουλήσουν εἰς τ(ὸν) κόσμ(ον)· κ(αὶ) εἶδαμ(εν) ὅτι χάνετ(αι) καὶ δια τοῦτο τὸ ἐπήραμ(εν):

Me, father Gerasimos and abbot of Meteoron, along with the former abbot (proegoumenos) and spiritual father kyr Nektarios, who later became bishop at Zetouni, we bought this book called Dioptra from the monastery of St. Nicholas, from the elder kyr Laurentios; and from the spiritual father [...] and from the monks for 500 aspra,³⁴ in order this book to be found exclusively in the cloister as it was sold because of the monastery's debt and the monks wanted to sell it to the people outside, and we saw that it would get lost, and for this reason we bought it.

A few years later on the 1st of November 1623, a sale document (ὁμολογία) from the monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas reveals that

³³ In 1608/9 the book was incorporated within the library of the monastery of Dousikon. See Cataldi Palau 2008, 637–638.

³⁴ The *aspron* (“white”) or *akçe* was a silver ottoman coin.

abbot Parthenios and the monks were compelled to sell to the nearby Barlaam, their large illuminated Gospel for 4,600 *aspra*, to partly cover the debts of their monastery.³⁵ In 1671, while on duties (*diakonēma*) away from his monastery, hieromonk Chrysanthos discovered a missing manuscript from Great Meteoron (cod. 178, *Panthehtë*, 16th c.; Diktyon, 41589) and paid 261 *aspra* to acquire it.³⁶

In fear of the Ottomans and the incursions of rebel Albanian Muslim troops, especially during the 1770s, the monks of Meteora occasionally hid their heirlooms, including holy relics, books and other documents in the crypts. The vivid description by of N.-A. Bees of his discovery during the early 20th century, of dozens of manuscripts in the crypts at the monastery of Great Meteoron, reminds us of the fictional Franciscan Friar William of Baskerville in the 1980 novel, ‘The name of the Rose’ by Umberto Eco.³⁷ Finally, there were even book-binders such as the monk Gabriel Hagiamonites (eighteenth century) in Meteora and the hieromonk Chatze-Gerasimos (nineteenth century) in Dousikon, who took care of several handwritten and printed books.

What is also clear is that the monks were sceptical of foreign travellers. The Englishman Robert Curzon, who visited Meteora in November 1834, noted that he did not find any manuscripts of outstanding value in the monastic library of Barlaam, apart from a Slavonic codex and a Gospel of the eleventh century, about which he stated, “It was of no use to the monks themselves, who cannot read either Hellenic or ancient Greek; but they consider the books in their library as sacred relics, and preserve them with a certain feeling of awe for their antiquity and incomprehensibility”.³⁸ In fact, the abbot was not swayed by the offer made by Curzon, who gave up his attempts to purchase manuscripts.

Over five decades prior to the visit by Curzon, in the spring of 1779 the Swedish orientalist and Hellenist J.-J. Björnståhl visited the monasteries of Meteora and the greater region of Trikala, hoping to obtain

³⁵ Theotekni nun 2018, 578–579. The document is now kept in the Archives of St. Stephanos convent.

³⁶ Bees 1967, 205.

³⁷ Bees 1910, 18–19.

³⁸ Curzon 1849, 290; Constantinides 2018, 179, 191 (no. VII).

biblical manuscripts. After his unexpected death of the 22nd of July 1779, his quest was continued during the spring of 1784 by the 27-year-old pastor A.-F. Sturtzenbecker, who also died unexpectedly a few months later on 14th of June.³⁹ Both left recollections of their journeys in manuscripts at the monasteries of Meteora and Dousikon.⁴⁰ Their visit to the monastery of Barlaam was recorded by the monk Christophoros Barlaamites (cod. *Petrop. gr.* 251), who was particularly impressed by the many languages that they knew. Reproduced below is the record of the visit as transcribed by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus.⁴¹

1780: κατὰ μῆνα ἀπρίλλιον. Ἦλθεν εἰς τὸ μοναστήριόν μας ἕνας Φράγκος ἀπὸ τὸ Βασίλειον τῆς σβετζίας ὀνομαζόμενος ἰάκωβος, πεπαιδευμένος καταπολλὰ εἰς τὴν ἑλληνικὴν γλῶσσαν καὶ εἰς ἄλλαις γλώσσαις [...] Αὐτοὶ οἱ δύο φράγκοι ἦσαν περιηγηταί:

1784: Κατὰ μῆνα μάρτιον Ἦλθεν ἄλλος φράγκος ἀπὸ τὴν σβετζίαν ὀνομαζόμενος Φριδέριχος, καὶ ἦτον πεπαιδευμένος εἰς ταῖς γλώσσαις, ἕως γλῶσσαις δεκαπέντε.

1780: in April. A Frank from the Kingdom of Sweden, named Jacob, came to our monastery; he was highly educated, and he knew very well Greek and other languages. These two Franks were travellers.

1784: in March another Frank from Sweden, named Frederick, came; and he knew very well up to fifteen languages.

Sturtzenbecker carefully recorded the content of the great monastic libraries he visited in Meteora and elsewhere, including at Barlaam. He even noted on *recto* of the front flyleaf of cod. *EBE* 65 (*olim* Dousikon), how he marvelled at the ancient manuscripts of Dousikon monastery (see fig. 4).⁴² It is likely that Sturtzenbecker, whilst living in Constantinople as pastor of the Swedish Embassy and during his travels around

³⁹ Stavropoulos 1982.

⁴⁰ Stavropoulos 1982, 436–448.

⁴¹ Papadopoulos–Kerameus 1902, 144; Uspenskij 1896, 482. See also Bees 1926, 70; Stavropoulos 1982, 444–446; Rigo 1999, 33–36.

⁴² See Diktyon 2361 (Four Gospels, 12/13th c.). A. F. Sturtzenbecker left another note in cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 545, f. 1r (Four Gospels, 13th c.; Diktyon 41855) in memory of his visit to the monastery on the 21st of March 1784. See Bees 1967, 545.

Greece, managed to acquire a large number of Greek manuscripts, which ended up in the collections of Uppsala University.⁴³

In the case of Björnståhl, his surviving possessions included 13 codices which were also transferred to the library of Uppsala University. Three of these (cods *Upps. UB gr. 12, 17 and 19*) contain evidence that indicates that they originated in the monastery of Dousikon.⁴⁴ Björnståhl does not state whether he bought the manuscripts or how they came to be in his possession. However, the manuscript with quotes by Hesiod and Sophocles, scholia and interlinear *glossae*, which Björnståhl claimed to have found in the monastery of Great Meteoron, was not found amongst his possessions.⁴⁵ In the monasteries of Meteora, Björnståhl was fortunate in that he met accommodating monks who allowed him to search for books in their libraries. His knowledge of Greek certainly contributed to this, as well as the fact that he had at his disposal letters of recommendation from senior Church authorities. He was also on friendly terms with the local bishop of Stagoi and the ex-bishop of Raška, Gerasimos, who lived in exile in the monastery of Barlaam. During his visit to the monastery of Dousikon, he noted the presence of a lot of manuscripts in poor condition outside a damaged cell. He commented disparagingly regarding the indifference of the monks, who allegedly said that they did not need them as they already had enough printed books in their Library.⁴⁶

⁴³ See Aurivillius 1814, viii: *Eodem anno (1787) Upsaliam tandem pervenit magni pretii collectio Arabicor. Persicor. Turcicor. et Graecor. Librorum (voll. 227) maximan partem manuscriptorum, quam et Constantinopoli et in Graecia fecerat, et Academiae Upsal. A. 1783. testamento addixit, legationi S. R. Majest. Sveciae ad Aulam Byzantinam a Sacris, Magister Adolph. Freder. Sturtzenbecher*. See also Annerstedt 1914, 497; Rudberg 1968, 182 and Sabatakakis 2017, 100, n. 17. The mss *Upps. UB gr. 9 and 10* belonged to A.-F. Sturtzenbecher. See Wasserman 2010, 92–94; Crostini 2018, 62–63 (and tab. 1).

⁴⁴ See Diktyon 64425, 64430 and 64432, and the website *manuscripta.se*; See also Rudberg 1977, 396–397 and Wasserman 2010, 96–97.

⁴⁵ Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 83–84 (Mesevrinos).

⁴⁶ Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 105–106 (Mesevrinos). It is noteworthy that the extensive borrowing of books from the library of the monastery of Dousikon resulted to the loss of many, both manuscripts and printed books. Therefore, in 1763 with the help of the metropolitan of Larissa (future Patriarch) Meletios II (1750–1768), a stone slab with

Cod. *Mingana gr. 3* (olim Salisbury) in Birmingham (New Testament, 14th/15th c.; Diktyon, 9663), which originated from Great Meteoron, appears to have had a connection with Sweden. The codex originally belonged to Jan Pieter van Suchtelen, who between 1810 and 1836, was intermittently the Russian ambassador to the Swedish Court.⁴⁷ Suchtelen was an avid collector of printed books and manuscripts. At an auction in 1816, he bought part of the book and manuscript collection of Björnståhl, including his diary which is now missing. After the death of Suchtelen, his collection was initially transferred to the city of Tambov in central Russia, after which parts were found in Moscow and the university library in St. Petersburg.⁴⁸

There is also an interesting reference by Björnståhl regarding the Prince of Moldavia, Nikolaos Gkikas, who asked the abbots of the monasteries to allow him to print their most valuable manuscripts, after which they would be immediately returned, a request which never materialized.⁴⁹ But Björnståhl confuses here the name of the supposed Prince Nikolaos Gkikas, with that of the other Phanariote Prince of Moldavia (1709) and Wallachia (1715), Nikolaos Mavrokordatos, who did manage to obtain manuscripts for his library, mainly from the monasteries of the Agrafa region in Thessaly.⁵⁰

inscription was placed to the right of the library entrance, threatening anyone who dared steal books from the monastery with excommunication. The inscription was published by Sophianos 1984, 57.

⁴⁷ The manuscript was successively housed in the collections of a nobleman of Dutch origin, the Russian ambassador to Sweden, the bibliophile Jan Pieter van Suchtelen (1751–d. 1836 in Stockholm), Christopher Wordsworth, bishop of Lincoln (1807–1885) and John Wordsworth, bishop of Salisbury (1843–1911). See Kolia 1984, 76 and Hunt [1997], 55–57.

⁴⁸ Sabatakakis 2021, 450–451 (in print).

⁴⁹ Björnståhl, *Οδοιπορικό* 74 (Mesevrinos).

⁵⁰ Mavrokordatos, who seems to have maintained contact with the archbishop of Canterbury and member of the college Aedis Christi, William Wake, probably gave him some of the manuscripts that he had acquired from monasteries in Thessaly. These manuscripts were received by the college library in 1737, a bequest by the archbishop. This is, for example, the case with cod. *Oxford, Christ Church, Wake gr. 66* (works of Antonios of Larissa, 15th/16th c.; Diktyon, 48588), which originated from the monastery of Dousikon. On this subject see Hutter 1993, XXXIX–XLI, and Karanasios 2014.

The visit by Björnståhl to Meteora and everything he recorded about the monastic libraries sparked the interest of future travellers, as indicated by the frequent mention of his name in their works. For example, W.–M. Leake (1777–1860), military officer, diplomat (as British representative in Ioannina) and traveller, visited Meteora on the 11th of January 1810 and briefly mentioned Björnståhl, though he himself showed no interest in manuscripts.⁵¹

In the spring of 1811, the well-known philhellene Frederic North, 5th Earl of Guilford (1766–1827), visited Meteora but avoided climbing up to the monasteries on the rocks, when he was able to persuade the monks to descend by net with manuscripts for him to inspect, although he found none of interest or value.⁵² However, his account is disproven by the presence of cod. *München, BSB, gr. 639* in his possession (Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Wars* and *Jewish Antiquities*, 11th c.; Diktyon, 45089).⁵³

During his sightseeing tour of Meteora in 1812, the British physician and writer Henry Holland (1788–1873) stated inter alia that,

Bjornstahl examined the libraries of four of the monasteries, but found nothing that was of very great importance, with the exception of a manuscript in the library of Great Meteoron containing fragments of Hesiod and Sophocles, but probably of recent date; ... In the monastery of Barlaam are the works of many of the Greek Fathers, and various manuscripts, but with none of them having any considerable value.

But like Leake before him, Holland was not particularly interested in manuscripts.⁵⁴

Another English clergyman, theologian and historian, Thomas Smart Hughes (1786–1847), briefly visited the monastery of Great Meteoron in 1813. In two volumes detailing his travels which were published in 1820, he referred to the unpublished description of another English clergyman, W. Jones, who visited Meteora in 1815. According to Hughes,

⁵¹ Leake 1835, 537–542 (chap. XLIII).

⁵² Angelomati-Tsougaraki 2000, 58, 202.

⁵³ Berger, 2014, 256–258.

⁵⁴ Holland 1815, 234–240, esp. 238–239 (were references to J. J. Björnståhl).

Jones stated that at the monastery of Barlaam, he had requested without success to see manuscripts, while he also noted that the elderly abbot still remembered the visit of Björnståhl.⁵⁵

The French consul in Ioannina, Fr. Pouqueville (1770–1838), also mentioned Björnståhl's visit to Meteora, as well as the excerpts of the works of Hesiod and Sophocles that Björnståhl discovered, noting however that these were already known about. The fruitless search by Björnståhl of the libraries of Meteora discouraged Pouqueville from climbing the rocks.⁵⁶ The precipitous climb was a common reason that many travellers avoided the ascent. Despite not actually having entered the monasteries, Pouqueville uncritically spread the rumour that the monks used old manuscripts as fuel to heat their ovens.⁵⁷ The comments in 1830 by the Scottish diplomat and politician David Urquhart (1805–1877), regarding this rumour are of interest. In response to his question, the monks of Barlaam monastery categorically denied that they did not respect their manuscripts and had burnt them.⁵⁸

Shortly after in November 1834, as previously described, the British bibliophile and collector of manuscripts, R. Curzon (1810–1873) visited Meteora, guided by the writings of Björnståhl. According to his account, at the monastery of Barlaam he attempted unsuccessfully to purchase two manuscripts, while at the monastery of Great Meteoron he searched in vain for the manuscripts of Hesiod and Sophocles mentioned by Björnståhl.⁵⁹ There, Curzon attempted to purchase a beautifully illuminated manuscript and a smaller one with silver binding (cod.

⁵⁵ Hughes 1820, 504–505.

⁵⁶ Pouqueville 1826, 333–336 and esp. 335–336.

⁵⁷ Pouqueville 1826, 336. A few decades later in 1860 a primary school teacher named Magnes repeated in his travelogue about Thessaly, what Pouqueville had previously stated, thus perpetuating the rumour and further tarnishing the image of the monks of Meteora. See Magnes 1860, 31.

⁵⁸ Urquhart 1838, 287: “The monks confessed themselves ignorant and barbarous, but they spurned the idea of having made use of their mss to heat their oven”.

⁵⁹ Curzon 1849, 289–290, 303. One year earlier another Englishman, Christopher Wordsworth (later Bishop of Lincoln, 1868) visited the monastery of Great Meteoron and noted that “the Codex of Sophocles, which is said to have been there, has now disappeared”; Wordsworth 1833, 284.

EBE 58), which was the personal copy of the second founder of the monastery, Hosios Joasaph, the former Greek-Serbian ruler of Trikala, John Uroš Palaeologos.⁶⁰ Even though the amount offered would have been of great use to the monastery, the idea was strongly opposed by the monks and the purchase fell through, much to the disappointment of Curzon. Although he does not mention acquiring any manuscripts, a 16th century codex from Meteora was found in his collection which was bequeathed to the British Museum (*BL ms Additional* 39618).⁶¹

Adolphe Napoléon (Ainé) Didron (1806–1867), archaeologist and professor of Byzantine iconography, visited the monasteries of Meteora in 1840. Although he did not seem to be interested in manuscripts, but rather the Christian architecture and iconography, he still managed to gain access to the library of Great Meteoron, where he counted 372 manuscripts. He was less successful at Barlaam and St. Stephanos, where he notes that they had no manuscripts, although it is quite possible that the monks there did not trust him.⁶²

During his stay at the French Archaeological School of Athens, another French archaeologist, historian and Hellenist, Léon Heuzey (183–1922), visited the monasteries of Meteora between July and August 1858, where he copied several inscriptions, documents and historical texts, such as the so-called *Chronicles of Meteora* and *of Ioannina*.⁶³ In his notebook, Heuzey noted that he saw several manuscripts, including a small parchment codex of the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI, written in gold characters and entitled “οιακιστικὴ ψυχῶν ὑποτύπωσις”, report on how the souls should be guided. The codex was removed a year later in 1859 by the Russian pilgrim and traveller, the clergyman (archimandrite) Porphyrios Uspenskij, eventually finding its way to St. Petersburg (cod. *Petrop. gr.* 205).⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Curzon 1849, 303–304; Sophianos 2018, 180–181. On the fate of this manuscript see Sophianos & Galavaris 2007, 44–45.

⁶¹ Constantinides 2018, 182–189, with a detailed description of the manuscript. See also Diktyon, 39197.

⁶² Didron 1844, 176–179.

⁶³ Heuzey 1927, 130–161, 173–190; Sophianos 2008b, 602–603.

⁶⁴ Granstrem [19] 1961, 218 (no. 230), and Olivier 2018, 781; cf. Sophianos 1997.

Uspenskij (1804–1885) visited Meteora and provides a detailed account of the monasteries, their history and relics.⁶⁵ However, upon leaving Meteora, Uspenskij took with him several manuscripts, fragments or folios of codices from the monastic libraries he had visited. There were donated to the library in St. Petersburg, now the Russian National Library, but so far, their study has proven problematic. We know that the following cods were from Meteora, *Petrop. gr.* 383 (9th c., Diktyon, 57455),⁶⁶ 73 (St. John Damascenus, 11th c.; Diktyon, 57143),⁶⁷ 205 (Leo's VI, *οἰακιστικὴ ψυχῶν ὑποτύπωσις*, 11th c.; Diktyon, 57277)⁶⁸ and 321 (*Praxapostolos*, early 12th c.; Diktyon, 57393);⁶⁹ cods *Petrop. gr.* 301 (1 leaf from cod. *Barlaam* 1, 12th/13th c.; Diktyon, 57373) and 235/235a (d. in 1337; Diktyon, 57307) originated from the monastery of Barlaam,⁷⁰ while cod. *Petrop. gr.* 251 (Diktyon, 57323) is miscellaneous, consisting of several gathered folios and fragments of manuscripts from Meteora.⁷¹ According to Granstrem, two more codices, *Petrop. gr.* 124 and 256 (Diktyon, 57196, 57328) originated from the Rousanou monastery.⁷²

Another noteworthy case is that of the 91 codices from Thessaly and Epirus that were acquired by the Anglican priest Reginald Barnes in around 1864 on behalf of Baroness Angelica Burdett-Coutts (1814–1906), from Constantine Tzimoures, an antiquary in Ioannina. The codices were auctioned in London by Sotheby's, initially in 1922 (62 cods) and later in 1987 (27 cods).⁷³ Manuscripts were acquired by the Univer-

⁶⁵ Uspenskij 1896, 103 et seq.

⁶⁶ On the relation between cod. *Petrop. gr.* 383 and cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 573 see Granstrem [16] 1959, 235–236 (no. 76); Kavrus 1982, 241–244; Kavrus-Hoffmann 2010, 105; See also Olivier, 1995, 538–539, and Olivier 2018, 780.

⁶⁷ Granstrem [19] 1961, 206–207 (no. 210).

⁶⁸ Ed. by Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1909, 213–253 (no XI); cf. Granstrem [19] 1961, 218 (no. 230).

⁶⁹ The codex comprising three leaves, depicting the apostles Jacob, Paul, and Judas, was originally part of cod. *Paris. Supp. gr.* 1262 (Diktyon, 53926). See Granstrem [23] 1963, 169 (no. 310), and Olivier 2018, 780.

⁷⁰ Granstrem [23] 1963, 190 (no. 363); [27] 1967, 278–279 (no. 529).

⁷¹ Granstrem [27] 1967, 287–288 (no. 552); Kolia 1984, 77–78; Sophianos 2008b, 603, and Olivier 2018, 775 [cf. Diktyon 57323].

⁷² Granstrem [25] 1964, 199–200 (no. 472) and [27] 1967, 294.

⁷³ Cataldi Palau 2008, 625–627; Cataldi Palau 2009, 144–145; cf. Constantinides 2018b, 91–92 (no. IV).

sity of Ann Arbor in Michigan,⁷⁴ the British Library,⁷⁵ the National Library of Greece,⁷⁶ and other smaller institutions.⁷⁷ From the collection of Baroness Burdett-Coutts approximately 10 manuscripts originated from Meteora, mainly from the monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas.⁷⁸ It is not known when and how these came into the possession of Tzimoures in Ioannina. However, it is most likely that they were stolen from the monastery of Anapausas, which had been almost abandoned during the nineteenth century.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ The 56 manuscripts acquired by the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, have not been described in detail yet. Of the total, seven are recorded as: *Ann Arbor Mich. Mss.* nos. 35, 38, 39, 44, 47, 78 and 79 originated from the monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas in Meteora (see Diktyon, 892, 895, 896, 901, 904, 933, 934). Recently, Annaclara Cataldi Palau, and Kavirus-Hoffmann & Alvarez reviewed all these manuscripts and they published descriptions of those codices considered to be of Thessalian origin. See Cataldi Palau 2009, 149–167, and Kavirus-Hoffmann & Alvarez 2021, xxi, xxv–xxvi, 102–104, 112–117, 129–132, 139–144 (nos 35, 38, 39, 44, 47). Another manuscript from the same Collection, *Ann Arbor Mich.* 10 [18th cent., Diktyon, 866], is attributed by Hoffmann & Alvarez 2021, 13–17, to one of the Meteora monasteries based on the binding and the type of its script.

⁷⁵ From the 1922 auction the British Library purchased cod. *BL Add.* 40655 (Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* and Theodoretus, *Historia religiosa*, 11th c.; Diktyon, 39204; orig. from Rousanou monastery). The British Library also purchased the palimpsest cod. 54 at auction in 1987, containing *Grammatike* of Manuel Chrysoloras (now cod. *BL Add.* 64,797, 15th c.; Diktyon, 39258) which belonged to the monastery of Great Meteoron. The British Museum acquired one more manuscript from the Burdett–Coutts collection in 1938 which was from Meteora, cod. *Egerton* 3154, of the 11th century containing *Geoponika* by Kassianos Vassos Scholastikos, a manuscript which was also seen by Porphyrios Uspenskij; cf. Cataldi Palau 2009, 145; Tchernetska 2005, 23, 26, and Olivier 2018, 781 (Diktyon, 39455).

⁷⁶ At the 1987 auction, the National Library of Greece purchased 21 codices. They are described in a typewritten catalogue by the former Director of the National Library of Greece, Prof. P. Nikolopoulos. See Tchernetska 2005, 22–25; Cataldi Palau 2009, 145.

⁷⁷ Of the rest of the manuscripts in the Baroness Burdett–Coutts collection, one is owned by Brown University, Providence, USA. Another was acquired by McGill University, Montreal, Canada; see Tchernetska 2005, 24; Cataldi Palau 2009, 145.

⁷⁸ Cataldi Palau 2009, 146.

⁷⁹ After the Vlachavas’ rebellion in 1808, all of the Meteora monasteries were shut down for some time on the orders of Ali Pasha of Ioannina, cf. cod. *Meteora, Barlaam* 106, f. 224r.

The case of the collection of Baroness Burdett-Coutts is not unique. During the second half of the nineteenth century more manuscripts found their way through auction houses to private collections abroad, such as cod. *Bodleian, Keble College 52* (Liturgies, written by hieromonk Ioannikios from Trikke AM ,ζρκς' = 1617/18), which originated from the monastery of Barlaam.⁸⁰ During the same time around 1864, cod. *Oxford, Bodleian liturg. gr. 3* (*Heirmologion*, late 12th to early 13th century) which was probably from Meteora was also sold by auction.⁸¹

Eighteen years later, the Greek State took on the role of protector of manuscripts. In 1882, a year after the cession of Thessaly to Greece, the government established a committee under Spyridon Findikles, Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Athens and the Archimandrite Nikephoros Kalogeras, Professor in the School of Theology. The aim was to collect and transfer to the National Library of Greece in Athens, the most precious and important manuscripts of the Meteora monasteries. According to Kalogeras, this yielded 1,200 manuscripts, which is certainly an exaggeration. In fact, the process was not completely successful as the abbot of Great Meteoron, Polycarpos Rammides, the monks and the residents of the neighbouring village of Kastraki protested and the whole operation had to be cancelled, as they considered the removal of the manuscripts sacrilege and a serious impiety. Eventually, Kalogeras and Findikles managed with the assistance of an entire army battalion and after a serious confrontation with the locals, to collect nine boxes containing more than a hundred manuscripts, which were brought to Athens. Amongst these was the personal *Tetraevangelon* (Four Gospels) of the second founder of Great Meteoron, Hosios Joasaph (now cod. *EBE 58*; *Diktyon*, 2354).⁸²

⁸⁰ Hutter 1997, 31–43 (no. 15) and pl. 98–109 (*Diktyon* 48653); see also the online catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts in Keble College by Dr. F. Spingou: <https://heritage.keble.ox.ac.uk/special-collections/greek-manuscripts/> (access on 15–10–2020). Ioannikios was a productive scribe in the monastery of Barlaam. See Politis & Politis 1994, 490.

⁸¹ Hutter 1982, 201–202 (*Diktyon* 47994).

⁸² Bees 1910, 13–16. For the seizing of manuscripts from the Meteora monasteries by the Greek state, see the detailed study of Sophianos 2004.

After 1882 and for the next few decades there were several allegations in the press about monks attempting to sell manuscripts; However, these reports were often incorrect and were considered to have been the result of anti-monastic sentiment.⁸³

Any discussion regarding the fate of Meteora manuscripts is not complete without reference to a group of manuscripts held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), the codices *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 928 (Church Fathers, 16th c.; Diktyon, 53612) and 1257–1281, which are recorded as having originated in Meteora.⁸⁴ In fact, the last 25 codices (1257–1281) were bought by a Parisian bookseller and entered the BNF on the 31st of October 1928. These were mainly patristic and monastic works, Nomocanons as well as patriarchal sigillia. Of the codices mentioned above, *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1258 (Four Gospels, 13th c.) was considered by Cataldi Palau, to have originated from the monastery of St. Nicholaos Anapausas based on its binding.⁸⁵ *Cod. Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1262, *Praxapostolos* written by Ioannes Koulix in 1101 (Diktyon, 53926), has now been broken up, with some of its folios (3 illuminations) comprising *cod. Petrop. gr.* 321, while another fragment forms *cod. USA (NY) Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Medieval Art and the Cloisters, mss. acc. no.* 1991.232.15 (Diktyon, 46612).⁸⁶ Finally, *cod. Paris. Suppl.*

⁸³ In 1881 the newspaper *Nea Ephemēris* (No 2, 2.12.1881: 2) stated that they had been informed that monks from the Meteora monasteries had stolen or donated manuscripts. The Ministry of Ecclesiastical affairs ordered an investigation; but the accusation turned out to be false. The same newspaper article informs us that ten of the most important parchment codices as well as the library catalogue for the year 1805 had been sent to the Ministry by the monastery of Great Meteoron. Two decades later a new scandal was reported in the press, the case of Parthenios Demetriades, abbot of Great Meteoron, who was wrongly accused of having stolen nine Byzantine codices before trying to sell them to antiquity smugglers; see the newspaper *Hestia* (no. 316, 15.01.1899: 3; no 317, 16–01.1899: 2; no. 327, 26.01.1899: 3), and Vapheiadēs 2019, 193.

⁸⁴ Astruc & Concasty 1960 *passim*; Kolia 1984, 78–79, and Géhin 1989, 59–61. According to Nicol 1975, 181, these manuscripts were “perhaps removed from their monasteries during the Greco–Turkish War in 1897.”

⁸⁵ Cataldi Palau 2008, 624. See also Diktyon, 53922.

⁸⁶ Kavrus-Hoffmann 2007, 90–94; Olivier 2018, 780–781. Regarding scribe Ioannes Koulix, see Constantinides & Browning 1993, 68–70, esp. 69 and n. 2 (no. 5); see also Parpulov 2017, 93–94.

gr: 1272 (Diktyon, 53936) is also associated with the monastery of Great Meteoron because of its ownership entry on f. 1v (see fig. 1), while cod. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1371 (Diktyon, 54028), which is a fragment of a *praktikon* (*diagnosis*) of the year 1163 (April) for the bishopric of Stagoi, was removed from the library of Barlaam monastery.⁸⁷

The depopulation of the monasteries in Meteora during the final decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as military action which affected the area up to the late 1940s, had an impact on the libraries of the monasteries, during which many manuscripts and printed books were lost.⁸⁸

Despite all of the events described above, what is clear is that the removal of manuscripts from the Meteora monasteries was not the result of the previously widespread view, that ignorant monks were deceived and sold their books, thus enriching foreign libraries and other collections with Greek manuscripts. On the contrary, it seems that the loss of

⁸⁷ The circumstances in which the manuscript originally came into the possession of the American collector Edward Perry Warren (c. 1859–1908) are unknown; and then into the possession of the English bibliographer and historian Seymour de Ricci on the 28th of October 1929. After his death in 1942 in France, the documents ended up together with other manuscripts in Bibliothèque Nationale de France on 29th of June 1944. They were then assigned to the collection of manuscripts *Supplément grec* in April 1958.

⁸⁸ In 1953 it was found that 36 codices had been lost from the Meteora monasteries, 16 from Hagia Triada, eight from St. Nicholas Anapausas and 12 from Rousanou. Regarding these losses, as well as the fate of the library of the Hagia Triada monastery and consequently the loss of the personal library of Paisios, bishop of Stagoi during WWII, see Nicol 1975, 173–174 and Sophianos 1993, κε'–κς', κθ'. It should be noted that an illuminated leaf from a Byzantine gospel with a depiction of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew (11th/12th c.), the cod. *Toronto, Univ. of Toronto. Art Centre. The Malcove Coll. M.82.450* (Diktyon, No. 75911), originated from cod. *Meteora, Metamorphosis* 540. In 1909, Bees examined *in situ* this codex and gave a short description of its miniature illustrations, including that of Matthew. Almost fifty years later during the inspection that was carried out in June 1965, it was found that the miniatures of the Evangelists Mark and Matthew were missing. See Bees 1967, 675; Bentein & Bernard 2011, 240, and Olivier 2018, 780. The University of Princeton purchased in 1998 a small music codex, containing *troparia*, written by the scribe Jonas in Stagoi (1663) (now cod. *Princeton, UL, MS. Greek* 8; Diktyon 55633); see Kotzabassi 2009, 179 (n. 26), 180 (fig. 9), and Kotzabassi & Ševčenko 2010, 168–170.

the codices was due to the dire financial conditions of the monasteries during the seventeenth century and the attempt by the monks to secure either money or help from influential people. There were many cases in which the monks actively prevented the sale of manuscripts or their removal from Meteora, as also indicated by their reluctance to allow foreign travellers and scholars to access their libraries. This also explains how, despite all the losses, N.-A. Bees was able to catalogue over 1,100 manuscripts at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸⁹

More than a century after the systematic investigations by the enthusiastic scholar N.-A. Bees, significant research progress has been made on the fate of the Thessalian manuscripts in foreign libraries.⁹⁰ However, a more systematic survey and recording of those Meteora manuscripts which have come to light since then is a *desideratum*. This will enable scholars to establish the true wealth of manuscripts derived from the second largest monastic centre after Mount Athos and to expand our understanding of the various ways in which these manuscripts ended up in libraries and collections abroad.

⁸⁹ See Bees 1967, *43; Sophianos 1988, 56–65.

⁹⁰ See Olivier 1995, 533–540; Olivier 2018, 771–782.

APPENDIX I

Summary of the current location of 87 Thessalian manuscripts in foreign libraries, from the monasteries of Meteora and Dousikon, based on their notes and ownership entries

Canada

Toronto (*Univ. of Toronto. Art Centre*)

1. *The Malcove Coll. M.82.450* (Meteoron)

France

Paris (*Bibliothèque national de France*)

1. *Paris. gr. 506* (Meteoron)
2. *Paris. gr. 760* (St. Demetrios, Meteora)
3. *Paris. gr. 876* (Meteoron)
4. *Paris. gr. 880* (Meteoron),
5. *Paris. gr. 1075* (Meteoron)
6. *Paris. gr. 1123* (Barlaam),
7. *Paris. gr. 1134* (Meteoron)
8. *Paris. gr. 1377* (Meteoron)
9. *Paris. gr. 2748* (Meteoron, Dousikon, St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
10. *Par. Coisl. 59* (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)
11. *Par. Coisl. 198* (Barlaam)
12. *Par. Coisl. 203* (Barlaam)
13. *Par. Coisl. 237* (Meteoron)
14. *Par. Coisl. 264* (Meteoron)
15. *Par. Coisl. 292* (Meteoron)
16. *Par. Coisl. 378* (Meteoron)
17. *Paris. Suppl. gr. 928* (Meteora).
18. [*Paris Suppl. gr. 1257–1281* (Meteora?)]
19. *Paris. Suppl. gr. 1258* (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)

20. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1262 (Meteoron)
21. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1272 (Meteoron)
22. *Par. Suppl. gr.* 1274 (Dousikon)
23. *Paris. Suppl. gr.* 1371 (Stagoi, Barlaam)

Italy

Milan (*Biblioteca Ambrosiana*)

1. *Ambr. gr.* 46 (Barlaam)
2. *Ambr. gr.* 193 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)
3. *Ambr. gr.* 236 (Dousikon)
4. *Ambr. gr.* 308 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)

Venice (*Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana*)

5. *Marc. gr.* 104 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)

United Kingdom

London (*The British Library*)

1. *BL Add.* 39618 (Meteoron)
2. *BL Add.* 40655 (Rousanou)
3. *BL Add.* 64797 (Meteoron)
4. *Egerton* 3154 (Meteora)

Oxford

5. *Bodleian Cromwell* 6 (Meteoron)
6. *Bodleian Cromwell* 26 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)
7. *Bodleian Cromwell* 13 (Meteora?)
8. *Bodleian, Keble College* 52 (Barlaam)
9. *Bodleian liturg. gr.* 3 (Meteoron)
10. *Christ Church, Wake gr.* 66 (Dousikon)

Birmingham

11. *Mingana gr.* 3 (olim Salisbury, Meteoron)

Sweden

Uppsala (*Uppsala University*)

1. *Upps. UB gr. 12* (Dousikon)
2. *Upps. UB gr. 17* (Dousikon)
3. *Upps. UB gr. 19* (Dousikon)

Germany

Munich (*Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*)

1. *München, BSB, gr. 639* (Meteoron)

Russia

St. Petersburg (*Rossijskaja Nacional'naja biblioteka*)

1. *Petrop. gr. 73* (Meteora)
2. *Petrop. gr. 124* (Rousanou)
3. *Petrop. gr. 205* (Barlaam)
4. *Petrop. gr. 235/235a* (Barlaam)
5. *Petrop. gr. 251* (Barlaam)
6. *Petrop. gr. 256* (Rousanou)
7. *Petrop. gr. 301* (Meteora)
8. *Petrop. gr. 321* (Meteora)
9. *Petrop. gr. 383* (Meteora)

Unites States

New York (*Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

1. *Department of Medieval Art and the Cloisters, mss. acc. no. 1991.232.15*
(Meteoron)

Michigan (*University of Michigan Ann Arbor*)

2. *Ann Arbor Mich 10* (Meteora)
3. *Ann Arbor Mich. 35* (St. Nicholaos Anapausas)

4. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 38 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)
5. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 39 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)
6. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 44 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)
7. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 47 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)
8. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 78 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)
9. *Ann Arbor Mich.* 79 (St. Nicholas Anapausas)

Princeton (*Princeton University Library*)

10. *Princeton, UL, MS. Greek 8* (Stagoi)

APPENDIX II

Historical events of the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries

1568: Confiscation of monastic property by the Ottoman sultan, Selim II.

c. **1581–1583:** The monks of Great Meteoron request economic support from the Prince of Wallachia, Mihnea II Turcitul.

c. **1585–1586:** Devaluation of the Ottoman currency.

1608/9: The abbot of Great Meteoron buys a manuscript from the monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas.

1609: Great Meteoron is plundered by Ottoman Turks.

1616: Great Meteoron is plundered by Arslan bey, the Ottoman Pasha of Ioannina.

1632 (Oct. 26th): Great Meteoron is partially destroyed by fire.

1634-1653: The monks from the Meteora monasteries request economic support and help from the Prince of Moldavia, Vasile Lupu.

1636/7: The monastery of Great Meteoron is shelled by the Pasha of Ioannina on his way to Constantinople.

Losses of manuscripts

1607–1608: Antonius Salmatius Montiferratensis' mission (Milan), 3 mss.

1623 (Nov. 1st): The abbot and monks of the monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas sell to nearby Barlaam, their large Gospel for 4,600 *aspra*.

1641: The monks of Great Meteoron are permitted by Ecumenical Patriarch, Parthenios I, to petition for *zēteia*.

1654: Three abbots from Meteora monasteries request economic support from the Russian Tsar, Alexis Mikhailovich, on behalf of the Great Meteoron monastery.

1643–1653: Athanasios Rhetor's mission (Paris), **16** mss.

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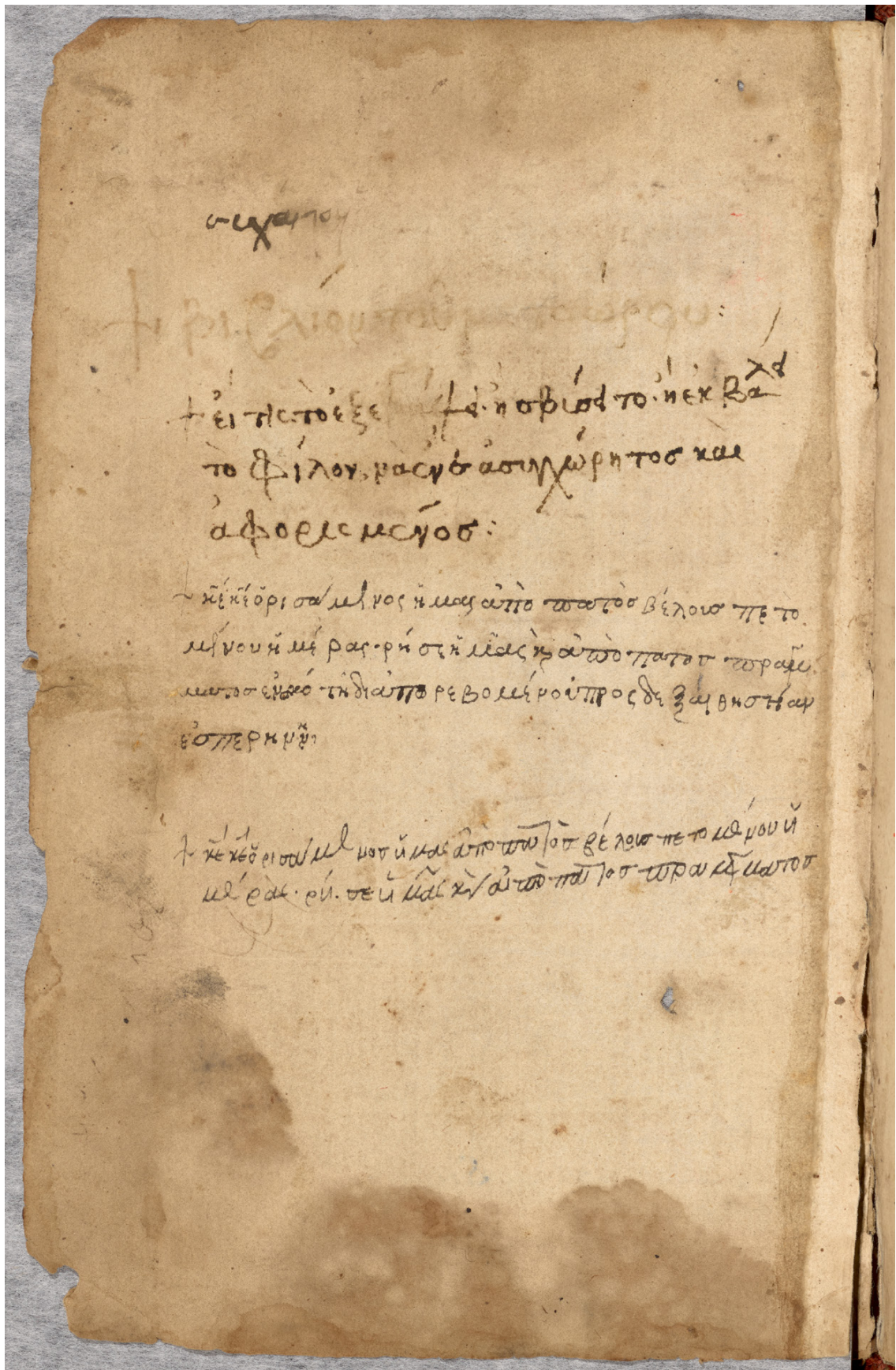
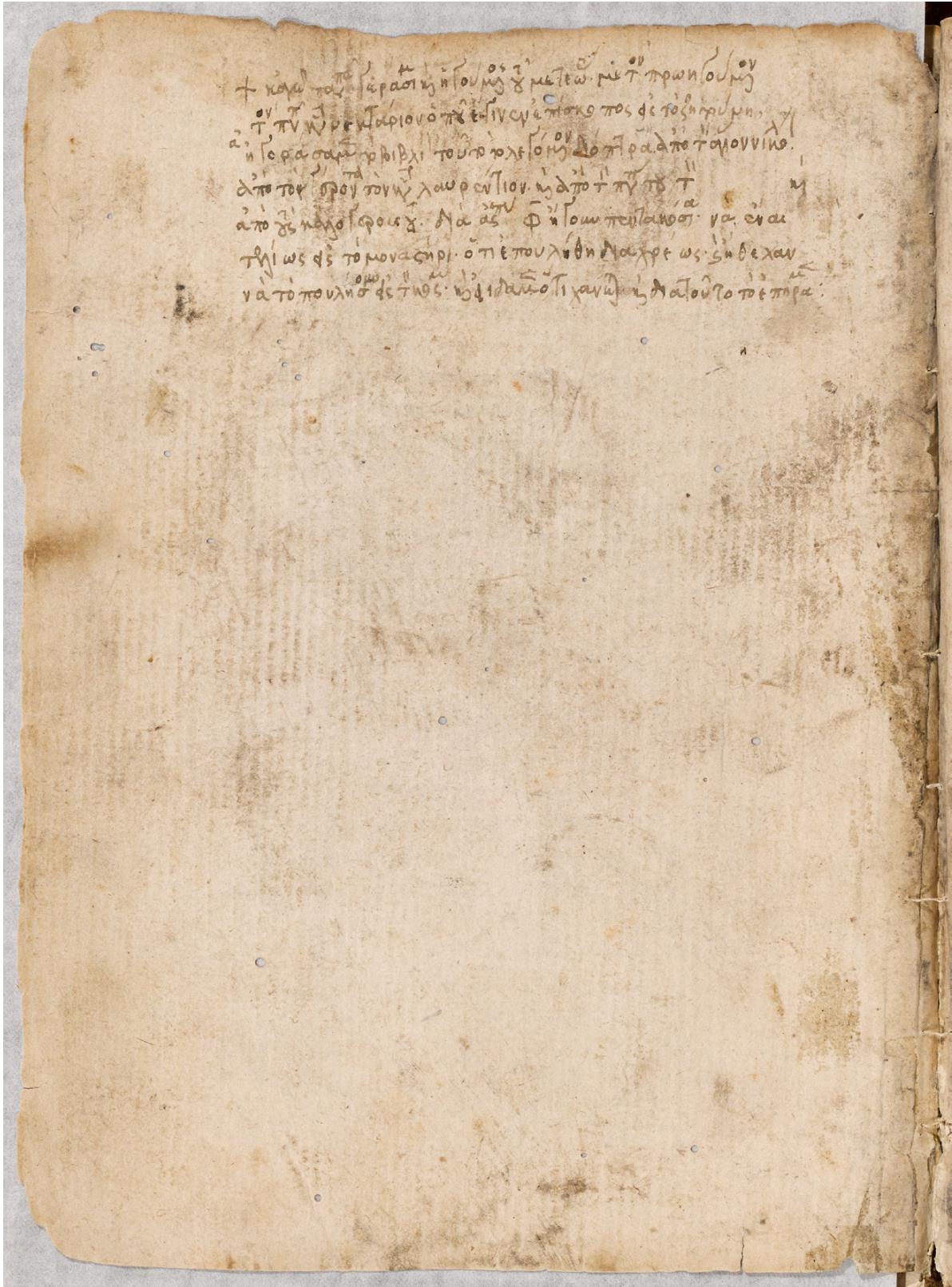


Fig. 1: Fifteenth century note on Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), cod. gr. suppl. 1272, f. 1^v.



† καὶ τοῦ ἱεροσολιμοῦ μετὰ τὴν ἁγίαν
 τὴν κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
 ἡ ἱεραρχία τοῦ ἱεροσολιμοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν
 ἀπὸ τῶν ἁγίων τῶν λαοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
 ἀπὸ τῶν ἁγίων τῶν λαοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
 τῆς ἐκκλησίας ὅτι ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν
 νὰ τὸ πούλησθε ὡς τὸ πούλησθε ὡς τὸ πούλησθε

Fig. 3: Late sixteenth-century note on Paris, BNF, cod. gr. 2748, f. 3v.

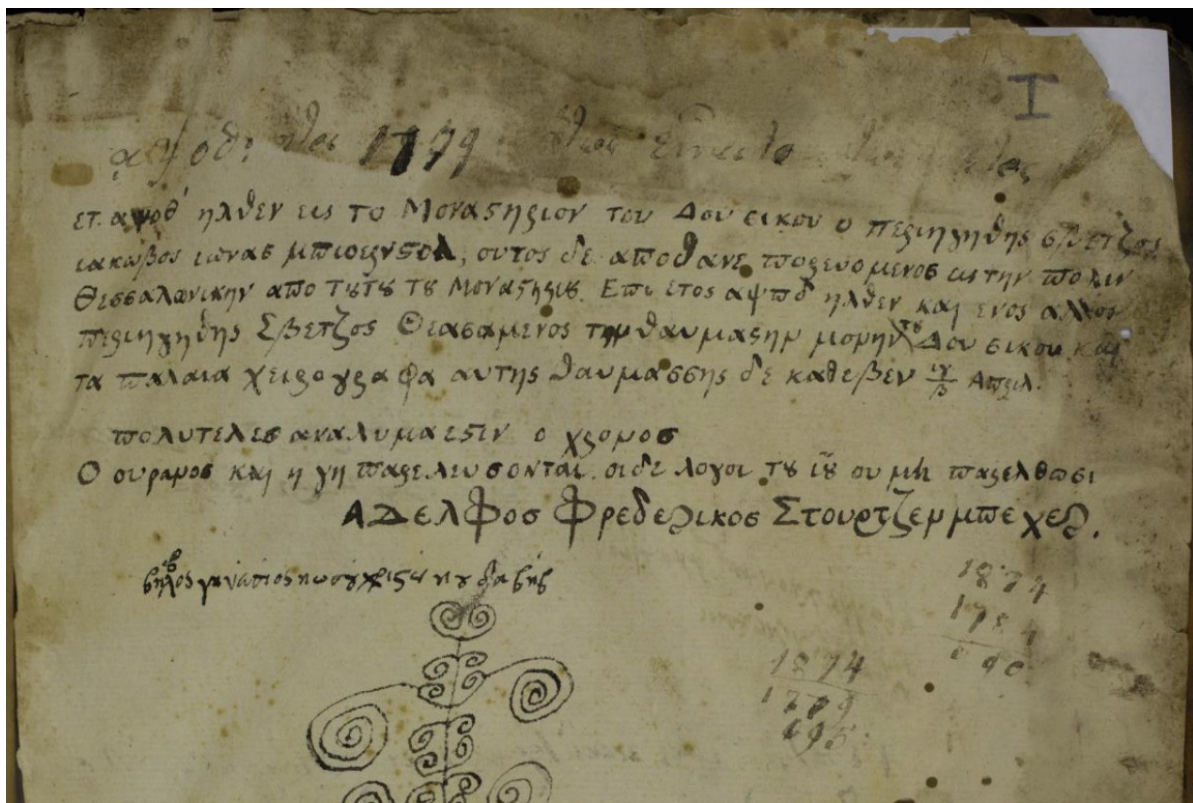


Fig. 4: Note by Swedish traveller A.-F. Sturtzenbecker on Athens, National Library of Greece, cod. 65, front flyleaf.