



A Symposium of the RESEARCH GROUP ON MANUSCRIPT EVIDENCE

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Friday and Saturday, 22 and 23 March 2013

McCormick 106, Princeton University

# Identity & Authenticity

## *Creating, Preserving & Transmitting Identities Across Time & Place*

The challenges of shaping, reshaping, maintaining, conveying, and validating identity, both personal and collective, are perennial human concerns. This symposium explores subjects, regions, and materials from the early medieval period to the present day and beyond.

**Sponsors:** James Marrow and Emily Rose  
John H. Rassweiler  
Index of Christian Art  
Barbara A. Shailor  
The Samuel H. Kress Foundation  
De Brailes Medieval Art LLC  
Committee for the Study of Late Antiquity

Friday 22 March

SESSION 1:30–3:00pm

Opening Remarks

**James H. Marrow**

(Department of Art & Archaeology Emeritus, Princeton University)

## Session 1. Investigating the Archives: Detecting Spheres of Influence

Moderator: **Celia Chazelle** (Department of History, The College of New Jersey)

**Alan M. Stahl** (Firestone Library, Princeton University), “*The Virgin in the Garden: The Making of a Pilgrimage Site in Medieval Venice*”

**Eleanor A. Congdon** (Department of History, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio), “*Who was Antonio Contarini? Solving the Prosopographical Riddle of a Venetian Merchant in the Datini Archives*”

**Ortal-Paz Saar** (School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study / Tel Aviv University), “*A Genizah Magical Fragment and Its European Parallels*”

BREAK 3:00–3:30pm

For information please contact Mildred Budny, Research Group on Manuscript Evidence: [mildredbudny@gmail.com](mailto:mildredbudny@gmail.com)

Friday 22 March

SESSION 3:30–5:00pm

## Session 2. Imaging or Imagining Identity: Recreating a Medieval Legacy

Moderator: **Colum Hourihane** (Index of Christian Art, Princeton University)

**Karl F. Morrison** (Department of History Emeritus, Rutgers University), “*Assimilating the Libri Carolini in the Seventeenth Century*”

**John H. Rassweiler** (The Rassweiler Collection, Princeton), “*Some Experiences with the Validation of Medieval Seal-Matrices of the Common People*”

**Martha E. Easton** (Department of Art History, Seton Hall University), “*Authenticity, Anachronism, and the Experience of the Past at Hammond Castle*”

RECEPTION 5:00–6:30pm

Lobby outside McCormick 106

Saturday 23 March

SESSION 9:00–10:30am

## Session 3. Shaping and Preserving Identity in the Syriac Church

Moderator: **Kathleen E. McVey** (Department of History, Princeton Theological Seminary)

**Philip Michael Forness** (Department of History, Princeton Theological Seminary), “*The Identities of a Saint: An Initial Inquiry into the Manuscript Tradition of the Homilies by Jacob of Sarug*”

**Jack B. Tannous** (Department of History, Princeton University), “*Syril of Scythopolis in Syriac: Observations on a Manuscript from the Sinai New Finds*”

**George Kiraz** (Editor in Chief, Gorgias Press / Department of Middle Eastern and South-East Asian Languages & Literature, Rutgers University), “*The Syriac Orthodox Patriarchal Archive of Mardin: Digitization and Challenges*”

BREAK 10:30–11:00am

Saturday 23 March

SESSION 11:00am–12:30pm

## Session 4. Creating Digitally-Enabled Manuscript Resources for Research & Teaching

Moderator: **James H. Marrow**

**Thomas A. Carlson** (Department of History, Princeton University / Beth Mardutho Research Library, Piscataway), “*Identity and Identification in the Digital Humanities: The Challenges and Experience of Syriaca.org*”

**Barbara Shailor** (Yale University), “*A Mellon Foundation Project at Yale University: The World of Digitally-Enabled Scholarship for Research and Teaching*”

LUNCH 12:30–1:30pm  
(by own arrangement)

Saturday 23 March

SESSION 1:30–3:00pm

## Session 5. Discovering, Recovering, and Evaluating the Source Materials

Moderator: **Colum Hourihane**

**David Sorensen** (Quincy, Massachusetts), “*Recent Studies in Islamic Paper and What They Can Tell Us About Texts (and Images)*”

**Mildred Budny** (Research Group on Manuscript Evidence, Princeton), “*A New Fragment of the Vitas Patrum from the Covers of an Early Printed Postille: An Early Case of Western Paper?*”

**Scott Gwara** (Department of English, University of South Carolina – Columbia / De Brailes Medieval Art LLC), “*Medieval Manuscripts in the Strangest Places*”

BREAK 3:00–3:30pm

Saturday 23 March

SESSION 3:30–5:00pm

## Session 6. Establishing or Re-Establishing Identities in the Byzantine World and Beyond

Moderator: **Mildred Budny**

**Henry D. Schilb** (Index of Christian Art, Princeton University), “*Serbian and Christian Identity in the Embroideries of the Nun Jefimija*”

**Rossitza B. Schroeder** (Visiting Fellow in Hellenic Studies, Princeton University, and Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California), “*The New Chosen People: The Old Testament in Late Byzantium*”

**Ida Sinkević** (Department of Art, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania), “*The Afterlife of the Rhodes Hand of St. John the Baptist*”

Concluding Remarks

Saturday 23 March

DEMONSTRATION/DISPLAY 5:00–5:30pm

Seminar Room, Index of Christian Art

## Demonstrating Original Sources and Database Resources

A hands’ on opportunity to view displays by:

**Scott Gwara** (De Brailes Medieval Art LLC)

**David Sorenson** (Specimens of Islamic Paper)

**Eleanor Congdon** (Specimens from the Datini Archive)

**Thomas A. Carlson** (the Syriac Reference Portal)

**John H. Rassweiler** (The Rassweiler Collection)

RECEPTION 5:00–7:00pm

Index of Christian Art

## Abstracts (Alphabetical order by speaker)

**Budny, Mildred** (Research Group on Manuscript Evidence, Princeton)

*“A New Fragment of the Vitas Patrum from the Covers of an Early Printed Postille: An Early Case of Western Paper?”*

Retrieved from reuse in the binding of a quarto copy of the liturgical *Postille per totius anni* (“Commentaries for the Whole Year”) printed in Lyons in 1527, a set of eighteen paper leaves now in a private collection preserves fragments of a single manuscript with Latin texts from the *Vitas Patrum*, reporting the “Lives,” deeds, and sayings of the Early Desert “Fathers” (plus a few women) in an excerpted version of this popular genre which circulated widely in various languages and compilations. Written and corrected mainly by a single scribe of the thirteenth or early fourteenth century, the decipherable text on these leaves contains portions of the *Vita Beati Antonii*, the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, and the *Verba Seniorum* (“The Life of Saint Anthony,” “The History of the Monks in Egypt,” and “The Sayings of the Fathers”) as well as the complete anonymous *Vita Sanctae Marinae* (“The Life of St. Marina” also known as Marinus the Monk), with a rare reading which matches the vernacular Italian version of her *Life* as a transvestite by the Dominican author Domenico Calvaca (circa 1270–1342). This tantalizing clue perhaps links with the challenging testimony of the paper itself, which does not appear to be of Islamic manufacture.

**Carlson, Thomas A.** (Department of History, Princeton University / Beth Mardutho Research Library, Piscataway)

*“Identity and Identification in the Digital Humanities: The Challenges and Experience of Syriaca.org”*

The growing field of digital humanities seeks to bring together research problems defined in the humanities with the amazing surge of computational power developed in recent technology. The result is a constellation of new tools being developed to enable humanistic research, while grappling with the theoretical issues distinctive to the humanities which resist the tidy definition of problems and answers in terms of mathematical formulae and computational precision. One such tool is the Syriac Reference Portal (*Syriaca.org*), a reference website for Syriac Studies currently being developed jointly by researchers at six institutions including Vanderbilt University, Princeton University, and the Beth Mardutho Research Library.

This talk will present an overview and partial demo of *Syriaca.org* which is collecting data about Syriac authors, saints, people mentioned in Syriac texts, and places, while enabling automatic linking of our data with existing tools such as online manuscript catalogs. The talk will consider challenges of “identity” and “identification” in relation to digitization. The problem of the identity of past persons, places, and objects (such as manuscripts) includes the question of how to represent multiple and/or ambiguous identification within the constraints of databases. The Syriac Reference Portal has worked to overcome these issues through collaboration between technical experts and humanities researchers, in order to develop tools useful for complex data discovery, authority control, and context-independent identifiers for computational use.

**Congdon, Eleanor A.** (Department of History, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio)

*“Who was Antonio Contarini? Solving the Prosopographical Riddle of a Venetian Merchant in the Datini Archives”*

One of the merchants who used the Datini personnel in Aragon/Catalonia as their resident agents handling ventures was the Venetian patrician Antonio Contarini. His first surviving letter to Francesco di Marco Datini of Prato dates from June 1397, his last from July 1406. All but four of his 210 surviving letters to Datini and his agents in five companies are signed as “Antonio Contarini son of Messer Marino of San Pantaleon.” Who was this merchant who used the Datini network to buy very large amounts of wool in Aragon/Catalonia?

The genealogical trees for major patrician Venetian families mention no Contarinis who lived in San Pantaleon. Examining the Datini archive establishes that not only was this one the Procurator of San Marco from 1420, but also that he rose to that high position through creating a fortune based on wool sales, which his son Marin used to build the magnificent Ca' d'Oro. This paper describes how the identity can finally be established beyond doubt, thereby highlighting a feature of Venetian merchant careers that even the great Frederic Lane did not discuss: the ability to move and live in different parts of Venice.

**Easton, Martha E.** (Department of Art History, Seton Hall University)

*“Authenticity, Anachronism, and the Experience of the Past at Hammond Castle”*

Hammond Castle in Massachusetts was built in the 1920's as a residence and laboratory for John Hays Hammond, Jr., the American inventor who developed radio-control and numerous weapons systems used by the American military. Hammond used the castle as a stage-set and public museum for his extensive collection of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance art and architectural components, while the building itself has various fanciful medieval-style spaces, including a Great Hall modeled on St. Nazaire at Carcassonne. This combination of the real and the reproduction at Hammond Castle served as inspiration for later museum design; in particular, Charles Collens, one of the architects who had worked on Hammond Castle, was hired to design The Cloisters, a structure renowned for its phenomenological presentation of works of art in contextually relevant, revivalist spaces.

**Forness, Philip Michael** (Department of History, Princeton Theological Seminary)

*“The Identities of a Saint: An Initial Inquiry into the Manuscript Tradition of the Homilies by Jacob of Sarug”*

This presentation asks what manuscripts can suggest about the authors whose works they transmit. The manuscript tradition of the homilies of Jacob of Sarug, a prominent figure in late antique Syriac Christianity, serves as a case study. The earliest manuscripts of Jacob's *Homilies* reflect his reputation as a preacher. But this is not the only identity the manuscript tradition assigns him. For example, one seventh-century manuscript (London, British Library, Additional MS 14,604) places Jacob in what has been described as a random assortment of authors. I will offer some initial suggestions about the coherence of this manuscript based on common themes and the status of the authors included. This inquiry will reveal another identity that Jacob takes on in the manuscript tradition.

**Gwara, Scott** (Department of English, University of South Carolina – Columbia /  
De Brailes Medieval Art LLC)

*“Medieval Manuscripts in the Strangest Places”*

Well known are the great medieval manuscript collections in the Ivy League establishments and at institutions like the Harry Ransom Center, UC Berkeley, Duke University, or UNC Chapel Hill. But medieval manuscripts are also found in odd corners: at Corning Community College and the Corning Museum of Glass, at Hammond Castle in Gloucester, MA, at the evangelical-bible colleges of California Baptist University and Bob Jones University — besides a host of public libraries nationwide. In this illustrated talk, I would like to share a few stories about the manuscripts which I have encountered at these locations and others. In addition, I will discuss manuscript collecting in the 21st century, highlighted by the manuscripts that I have sold, the Ebay market, and the kinds of materials that one can and cannot get anymore.

**Kiraz, George** (Editor in Chief, Gorgias Press /

Department of Middle Eastern and South-East Asian Languages & Literature, Rutgers University)

*“The Syriac Orthodox Patriarchal Archive of Mardin: Digitization and Challenges”*

The Patriarchal Archive in Mardin, Turkey, contains circa 10,000 documents (mostly letters) addressed to the various Syriac patriarchs who resided there from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries. The documents are mostly written in Syriac, Arabic (both Arabic and Syriac scripts), and Ottoman Turkish (both Arabic and Syriac scripts), with some written in Malayalam, English, and Armenian. During three trips, the collection was digitized and semi-organized. This paper will give a report on the project and its progress.

**Morrison, Karl F.** (Department of History, Rutgers University)

*“Assimilating the Libri Carolini in the Seventeenth Century”*

The *Libri Carolini* (“The Books of King Charles”) had a strange history. By virtue of its subject, conception, and execution, the nearly finished draft for a Frankish royal denunciation against Byzantium was a unique achievement in early medieval theology, unique too among the supreme achievements of the Carolingian Renaissance. It was suddenly abandoned in its last stages, and paradoxically kept carefully in the royal archives. It slumbered, forgotten, until it was discovered and published in the sixteenth century. Then it fell like a meteor from outer space into the ferocious warfare between Catholics and Protestants over the cult of images.

This paper is about the antithetic receptions of the *Libri Carolini* after debate had been roiling for a century without resolution. Even after a century, the assimilating context proved normative, rather than the medieval artifact. The protocols for assimilation or rejection did not uniformly include reading the text. Whether belligerent apologists accepted the *Libri* as genuine or rejected it as a forgery depended, not on the Carolingian text, but on the confessional allegiance of the writer, sharpened in the seventeenth century by generations of devastating religious warfare. My primary sources for this talk are treatises by four authors: two Catholics, one Lutheran, and one Calvinist, or, from another perspective, two Frenchmen and two Saxons.

**Rassweiler, John H.** (The Rassweiler Collection, Princeton)

*“Some Experiences with the Validation of Medieval Seal-Matrices of the Common People”*

The Rassweiler Collection began in the mid 1990’s, based on the founders’ mutual interest in a historical project which quickly focused on the seal-matrices of the common people produced in Northern Europe from 1000–1500 AD. The interest in the history and artistic value of these materials rapidly expanded to an appreciation of the close personal links between the objects and the lives and interests of the common people of the period.

In the last 40 years, metal detectors and increasing archeological activity produce a continuing supply of new samples. It was incumbent on the collectors to develop the skills necessary to authenticate the hundreds of samples seen and to validate their appropriateness to meet the collection criteria. Fortunately, a great deal of help was received from the very few academics regularly active in this field, but still one had to find one’s own way. This presentation will discuss the results of these efforts. As the collection and the endeavor are still ongoing, some unresolved conundrums will also be presented.

**Saar, Ortal-Paz** (School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study / Tel Aviv University)

*“A Genizah Magical Fragment and Its European Parallels”*

This paper will discuss a manuscript fragment from the fifteenth century uncovered in the Cairo Genizah. The fragment preserves several magical recipes in Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic, some of which have parallels in European sources. The paper will consider the transition undergone by such magical texts from Europe to Egypt, and from a Christian audience to a Jewish one.



**Schilb, Henry D.** (Index of Christian Art, Princeton University)

*“Serbian and Christian Identity in the Embroideries of the Nun Jefimija”*

Scholars traditionally attribute four embroidered textiles of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries to the Serbian nun Jefimija as both patron and artist. They include the famous shroud embroidered with the full text of Jefimija’s “Laud to Prince Lazar,” a curtain for the altar door of the Hilandar Monastery of Mount Athos, and a liturgical veil with a brief, formulaic inscription in Greek. The question of whether Jefimija herself actually made the textiles that name her must remain open. More interesting is what these textiles tell us about Jefimija and the context in which they were produced. For other patrons of embroidery in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the embroideries attributed to them assert the patron’s identity. In the case of Jefimija’s embroideries, whether or not a single person corresponding to the historical Jefimija was directly responsible for all these textiles as patron or embroiderer or both, the embroidered texts assert a Serbian and Orthodox Christian identity for “Jefimija.”

**Schroeder, Rossitza B.** (Visiting Fellow in Hellenic Studies, Princeton University / Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California)

*“The New Chosen People: The Old Testament in Late Byzantium”*

This paper explores the iconography and meaning of late Byzantine monumental cycles containing scenes from the Old Testament. It concentrates on the programs of the funerary chapel of the Chora Church in Constantinople (ca. 1316–1321) and the south ambulatory of the Church of the Holy Apostles in Thessaloniki (first quarter of the 14th century). The presentation relates the proliferation of such images in Palaeologan Byzantium to certain ideological trends in the West and Crusader East, as well as to developments in Byzantine political thought that defined the medieval Greeks as the new Chosen People and their capital city, Constantinople, as the New Jerusalem.

**Shailor, Barbara A.** (Department of Classic, Yale University)

*“A Mellon Foundation Project at Yale University: The World of Digitally-Enabled Scholarship for Research and Teaching”*

The Yale project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation aims to push against the boundaries that currently exist for scholars who are studying digital images of medieval manuscripts. For scholarly editing projects such as the recensions of Gratian’s *Decretum* (Professor Anders Winroth) the use of digital images side-by-side in a multi-up viewer permits a comprehensive study of textual variant readings, as well as the ability to annotate images of leaves and then to share the editorial questions and challenges among a global community of medieval canon law experts. For the researcher seeking both textual and decorative nuances within a corpus of medieval manuscripts, the English Books of Hours project (Professor Jessica Brantley) promises to break new ground through digital image-analysis tools and the first attempts to integrate a multi-up viewer with a tool for a more sophisticated identification of visual anomalies, whether script or images. The use of hyperspectral imaging to identify inks and pigments and their role in dating and attributing late medieval Middle English manuscripts (Professor Alastair Minnis) holds great potential for paleographers, codicologists, and art historians who are always seeking new methodologies for understanding the production and transmission of texts and cycles of illustrations in the Middle Ages. An overall goal of the project is the creation of interoperable digital environments where images can be shared by institutions for scholarly research.

**Sinkević, Ida** (Department of Art, Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania)

*“The Afterlife of the Rhodes Hand of St. John the Baptist”*

The *Rhodes Hand* of St. John the Baptist is the relic of the right hand and arm of the saint now located in the town of Cetinje in Montenegro. Currently enshrined in a sumptuous golden coffer, the *Hand* endured a turbulent and adventurous afterlife that spanned more than two thousand years of intense travels, political intrigues, mysterious exploits, and miraculous deeds. This paper examines the many peregrinations of the relic and analyzes the ways in which it was adapted and acculturated to suit diverse needs of its many owners.

**Sorensen, David** (Quincy, Massachusetts)

*“Recent Studies in Islamic Paper and What They Can Tell Us About Texts (and Images)”*

In this paper we examine the history and details of the paper used in manuscripts created in the Islamic world, from the beginnings of paper use until the sixteenth century, with the nearly complete replacement of the local product by imported paper from the Levant. While the emphasis will be on looking at varieties of paper and how they can help us in the study of documents and manuscripts, we will consider paper-production in “remote” places such as India, Central Asia, and the Yemen, and what it suggests regarding trade and literary transmission to and through these areas.

**Stahl, Alan M.** (Firestone Library, Princeton University)

*“The Virgin in the Garden: The Making of a Pilgrimage Site in Medieval Venice”*

A large parchment in the Archivio di Stato of Venice records an agreement made in 1377 between the monks of the Church of San Cristoforo and the brothers of the Confraternity of the merchants to buy a miraculous statue of the Virgin from its sculptor. This talk will trace the background of the parties involved in the transaction, the stake of each in the agreement, and the eventual fate of the church, the leader of the confraternity, and the statue.

**Tannous, Jack B.** (Department of History, Princeton University)

*“Syril of Scythopolis in Syriac: Observations on a Manuscript from the Sinai New Finds”*

The ninth-century Sinai Syriac New Finds M11N contains the only known example in Syriac of writings by Cyril of Scythopolis (525–558). Cyril, a Greek monk, priest, and historian of monastic life in Scythopolis (that is, Palestine) is known for his works on early developments in the practice of monasticism. The manuscript discoveries revealed in the major international project for digitizing and studying the rich manuscript materials in the Monastery of Saint Catherine continue to astonish and enrich our knowledge. As part of the project, this paper will report aspects of detailed work on this new material.