

Concerning the origin of the *Codex Angus*

Jean-Marie Olivier

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Abstract: The paper about *Codex Angus* by Gerber (2017) traced its history from 1929 when it came into the possession of Adolf Deissmann. This paper explores its history prior to that, and proposes a later date for it.

Introduction

In an article published in *Buried History*, Gerber (2017) traces the recent history of the codex now held in Sydney: *The University of Sydney, Rare Books and Special Collections Library*, RB Add. Ms. 40 (*Codex Angus*). This New Testament Lectionary was deposited in 1936 at the Nicholson Museum of the University of Sydney by Samuel Angus (1881-1943).

After the publication of Gerber's article, The University of Sydney Library loaded a digital colour reproduction of this manuscript on to its website (<http://hdl.handle.net/2123/17789>). Gerber adopts an 11th century date for the manuscript. Although I know it only from the digital reproduction and cannot propose a precise dating, I would rather suggest a 13th century date.

The codex contains readings for the days of the week between Easter and Pentecost and Saturdays/Sundays of the other weeks (*l* 2378¹). It had been sold (or given) in 1935 to Samuel Angus by Adolf Deissmann (1866-1937) who had been his teacher (Markschies 2005a; Markschies 2005b; Gerber 2010). He, in turn, had received it as a gift, in September 1929, from the Bulgarian archpriest (protopresbyter or dean) and theologian, Stefan Stančev Zankov [Стефан Станчев Цанков] (1881-1965).

According to the information provided by Samuel Angus himself, this manuscript had for centuries been the property of the Bulgarian Church. Despite several requests, Gerber could not obtain any information on the history of this manuscript from the Ecclesiastical Historical and Archival Institute of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria, Sofia [Църковно-исторически и архивен институт при Българската Патриаршия] (Gerber 2017: 13, n. 5).

This short note is intended to provide information that could shed further light on the history of this manuscript prior to 1929.

The Notation

From the digital reproduction, it is possible to see on the lower inside cover, in red ink, the initials *M.K.* (Figure 1). This notation is well known (Atsalos 1992: 67). It was affixed to manuscripts taken away from the Monastery of

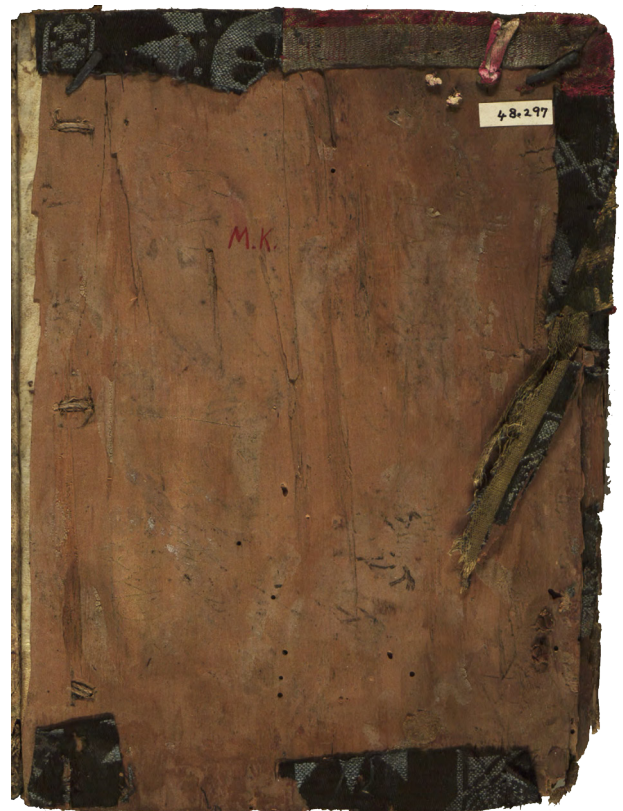


Figure 1: The inside cover of *Codex Angus* showing the initials *M.K.* Image: courtesy The University of Sydney Rare Books and Special Collections Library.

Kosinitsis (Μονή Κοσινίτης),² located near the city of Drama in north-eastern Greece, by the Czech Vladimír Sís, who was the commander of a detachment of Bulgarian troops, on 27 March 1917.³ Vladimír Sís (Figure 2) was an extraordinary character: a warlord, Hellenist, journalist, author of many books, politician, resistance fighter during the Nazi occupation and friend of the Masaryk family. He was born in Mařov u Tišnova on June 30, 1889, died on July 2, 1958 in the prison of Leopoldov where he had been interned after being arrested on 3 January 1949 and sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment for 'treason'. He was 'rehabilitated' on 11 April 1969.⁴



Figure 2: Photo of Vladimir Sís in about 1913 when he was a war correspondent for the *Národní listy* paper of Prague. A film entitled *Citizen Sís: From Maršov to Leopoldov via Bulgaria* and directed by *Gospodin Nedelchev* was released in 2019.
Image: Wikicommons.

Contrary to the belief of B. Katsaros (1995a: 211 n. 82), it is known that at least two manuscripts stolen from the Monastery of Kosinitsis arrived in the collections of the Ecclesiastical Historical and Archival Institute of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria, Sofia⁵, codices *Kosinitsa* 232, today ЦИАИ 949 (Olivier 2003: 240; Getov 2017: 240-242) and *uncatalogued Kosinitsa*, today ЦИАИ 906 (Olivier 2003: 240 n. 27; Getov 2017: 223-224).⁶

There was no complete catalogue of the manuscripts preserved in this monastery before the raid by the Bulgarian troops. The New Testament manuscripts had been reported by Athanasios Papadopoulos-Kérameus (1886: 13-56), Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener (1894), Hermann von Soden (1902-13) and Caspar René Gregory (1900-9). The information — first-hand or second-hand — provided by these authors was, more or less correctly, synthesized by Atsalos (1990) and Papazoglou (1991). If we neglect the eccentric identifications proposed here and there, the publications describe four Evangelia (Gospel Lectionaries) formerly preserved in the Monastery of Kosinitsis but not retrieved today (*l* 1246-*l* 1248, *l* 1257: *Kosinitsa* 117, 119, 12, 205). I did not find any of these manuscripts to have physical characteristics comparable

to those of *Codex Angus*, (122 folios of parchment, measuring about 264 x 200 mm, two columns about 80 mm wide, and between 27 and 33 lines long) [Gerber 2017: 16].

Was Vladimír Sís mistaken when writing *M.K.* on the lower inside cover? Indeed, on September 28 and 29, 1917, under the command of Vladimír Sís, the Bulgarian troops also looted the Monastery of Timios Prodromos of Serres (Μονή τοῦ Προδρόμου), removing all its manuscripts (Papazoglou 1993b; Katsaros 1995b). Initials, *Μ. Σβ. Ιβ.*, *Μ. Σβ. ΙΙ.*, *Μ. Σ. Ιβ.*, *Μ. Σ. ΙΙ.*, *Σβ. Ιβ.*, *Σ. ΙΙ.*, were written on these manuscripts usually in the hand of Vladimír Sís (Atsalos 1992: 69). These notations of origin were certainly not affixed on the days of the raids, so I wondered if the current *Codex Angus* could have come from the Monastery of Timios Prodromos. There is at least one manuscript probably coming from the Monastery of Timios Prodromos now held at the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies Prof. Ivan Dujčev, in Sofia, the *Codex Научен център за славяно-византийски проучвания Иван Дуйчев към Софийския университет Св. Климент Охридски* 219 which bears (on its lower pastedown) the initials of both *M.K.* and *Μ. Σβ. ΙΙ.* I therefore examined whether the current *Codex Angus* could be one of the Gospel Lectionaries of the New Testament on parchment described by Christophoros Dimitriadis.⁷

Concluding Comments

In these circumstances, one may doubt whether the *Codex Angus* ever belonged to the Monastery of Kosinitsis, but I do not believe that. The indications of origin affixed by Vladimír Sís are generally trustworthy and, since the manuscripts of the Monastery of Kosinitsis had not been the subject of a complete inventory, it would not be surprising to encounter a manuscript not previously described. Moreover, Vladimír Sís himself provides evidence that he had the current *Codex Angus* in his hands. The Ivan Dujčev Centre in Sofia houses a Catalogue of manuscripts of the Academy (*Περγαμηνι ρῆκονισι на Академия*) (Katsaros 1995b). That catalogue reads at page 386, under number 98 (115) [correcting 166 (115)], the description of a 14th century Gospel Book, made of 122 folios of parchment measuring 265 x 200 mm, written on 2 columns measuring 60 mm, bearing 33 lines of writing. Except for the column widths, the physical characteristics correspond to those of the *Codex Angus*. The content indicated by Vladimír Sís is exactly that of the Sydney manuscript and the folios indicated for the different texts by him are exactly those where the texts appear in *Codex Angus*. Of course the dates proposed by Gerber (11th century) and Vladimír Sís (14th century) do not match the actual date of *Codex Angus*. I have already said that *Codex Angus* is probably not from the 11th century and, having compared at length the descriptions of Vladimír Sís to the manuscripts of the Monastery of Kosinitsis and the Monastery of Timios Prodromos, I can attest that many of the dates proposed by Vladimír Sís are to be treated with caution.

It is my considered view, therefore, that *Codex Angus* — far from having belonged for centuries to the Bulgarian Church — passed through the hands of Vladimír Sís and came from the Monastery of Kosinitsis.⁸

Jean-Marie Olivier
Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes (CNRS)
[retired]
jean-marie.olivier6@wanadoo.fr

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Endnotes

- 1 Aland et al 1994: 369; also <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/liste>.
- 2 For other names of this monastery, Μονὴ Κοσινίτισης, Εἰκοσιφοινίσσης, Εἰκοσιφοίνισσας, Κοσινίτσας, Κόζνιτσας etc. see Atsalos 1996.
- 3 On this episode, see for example, from the Greek point of view, Papazoglou (1988: 3-30 pagination of the print separately), anastatic reprint in Papazoglou (1993a, n^o Δ'); Papazoglou (2017).
- 4 *Rudé právo*, 12.04.1969 (<http://archiv.ucl.cas.cz/index.php>). Vladimír Sís deserves a biographical study. Waiting for his biography, see *Ottův slovník naučný nové doby*, vol. V, 2: *Rón-sl*, Praha, 1939 [Reprint: Praha, 2002]1254; *Československo biografie*, vol. III: *S-Z (Archivní Část*

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- 5 Now cited as ЦИИИ.
- 6 The cod. ЦИИИ 907 may also come from Kosinitsa if we believe a note in f. 62^v (Olivier 2003: 241).
- 7 See GERMANOS <STRINOPOULOS>, Κατάλογος τῶν χειρογράφων τῆς παρὰ τὰς Σέρρας ἱερᾶς καὶ σταυροπηγιακῆς μονῆς Ἰωάννου τοῦ Προδρόμου, *Ὁ Νέος Ποιμὴν*, 2 (1920) 193-208, 338-353; 3 (1921) 83-93, 325-334, 459-466, 717-726 [revera 728]; 4 (1922) 40-49. (<http://pc-3.lib.uoi.gr:8080/jspui/> except for vol 3 [1921] 459-466).
- 8 I must here explain why I won't go further in the identification. Katsaros mentions twice (1995b: 123: Broj. 115, Κτ. 98 and 237: A/A 18) the manuscript described by Vladimír Sís, which identifies as being the former *Μονὴ Κοσινίτισης* 117. This is known only by the brief description published by Gregory (1990-9) according to Kirsopp Lake indications that he had seen the manuscript in 1902 in the monastery, vol. III, 1271 (*l* 1246): «13, Jhd, 27, 8 x 21, Perg, ? Bl, 2 Sp, 27-34 Z: *Evl.*». The *Kurzgefasste Liste* (Aland et al 1994) and its digital version reproduce the information of Gregory, but indicate that it is a Praxapostolos, not a Gospel Lectionary. Even if the content was that of a Gospel Lectionary, I find it difficult to identify the manuscript seen by Vladimír Sís in *Kosinitsa* 117. The dimensions given by Gregory (278 x 210 mm) are quite different from those given by Vladimír Sís (265 x 200 mm), whereas in general on this point we can place our trust in Vladimír Sís. It should also be noted that the dimensions given by Vladimír Sís are those of the *Codex Angus*. The number of lines indicated by Gregory (27-34) is not the same as that given by Vladimír Sís (33) who, according to his custom, gives the maximum number of lines. Finally, Gregory does not specify the number of folios, which is a determining factor in identifying a Lectionary because the format and number of lines are fairly banal.