

TWO SOLAR ECLIPSES AND THE DATE
AND LOCALIZATION OF THE KERASOUS GOSPELS
FROM THE MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM *

The Kerasous Gospel manuscript (New York City, Morgan Library and Museum, M.748) is an illuminated codex with abundant eclectic and imitative decoration¹. At first glance it looks just like many other provincial Gospel codices. But there is a rare and distinctive element in this manuscript: it has two notes about two different total eclipses of the sun. The manuscript's origin has been long debated. Although scholars agree that M.748 is the product of a provincial scriptorium, identifications of a particular locale or region have differed significantly. In 1929, when the Pierpont Morgan Library acquired the manuscript, scholars believed it was produced in Southern Italy². Indeed, some codicological features

* This article is an expanded and elaborated version of my paper presented at the Twenty-First International Congress of Byzantine Studies in London (August 21–26, 2006). I studied the Kerasous Gospels at the Morgan Library and Museum as part of a larger project to catalogue Greek manuscripts in the collections of the United States of America. I would like to express my gratitude to the Dumbarton Oaks Research Center of Byzantine Studies, the Bibliographical Society of America, and the American Philosophical Society for their support of this project with research grants and fellowships. Also, for fruitful discussions about this interesting and unusual manuscript I am grateful to many of my colleagues, especially Irmgard Hutter, Santo Lucà, Sylvie Merian, Stratis Papaioannou, Nancy Ševčenko, and Alice-Mary Talbot, and my husband Erik P. Hoffmann. And I wish to thank the staff of the Morgan Library and Museum for their assistance during my numerous visits.

¹ For a detailed description of M.748's contents, codicological data, provenance, and bibliography, see N. KAVRUS-HOFFMANN, *Catalogue of Greek Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Collections of the United States of America. Part IV. 2. The Morgan Library and Museum*, in *Manuscripta* 52/2 (2008), forthcoming.

² The Southern Italian hypothesis was put forward by Albert M. Friend in his unpublished description of the manuscript. The description is dated May 3, 1929 and is in the manuscript's file in the Morgan Library and Museum. Friend's localization was accepted and reiterated in *The Pierpont Morgan Library: A Review of the Growth, Development and Activities of the Library during the Period between its Establishment as an Educational Institution in February 1924 and the Close of the Year 1929*, New York, NY 1930, pp. 47–48; S. DE RICCI, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the*

(such as ruling systems 3 and 4) and decorative elements (such as intertwined initials³) seemed to point to that region. But this hypothesis was soon abandoned by art historians who favored Asia Minor as the place of origin of M.748. The manuscript's provenance and decoration were invoked as reasons for the new localization. For example, the manuscript was once the property of the Orthodox Church in Kerasous and later owned by the archbishop of Samsun⁴ in the Trebizond region on the Black Sea. And the manuscript was deemed to have decorative features in common with Armenian and Georgian manuscripts⁵.

The purpose of this article is to challenge both the Southern Italy and Asia Minor attributions and to provide unique evidence in favor of an entirely different locale as the place of production of this unusual and intriguing manuscript. Furthermore, I will present new evidence that establishes the codex's precise date.

United States of America and Canada, with the assistance of W.J. WILSON, II, New York, NY 1937, p. 1495; *Early Christian and Byzantine Art: An Exhibition Held at the Baltimore Museum of Art*, ed. by D.E. MINER, Baltimore, MD 1947, p. 138, cat. nr. 702, pl. c; D.S. BERKOWITZ, *In Remembrance of Creation. Evolution of Art and Scholarship in the Medieval and Renaissance Bible*, Waltham, MA 1968, p. 27, cat. nr. 45, fig. 45. Jean Irigoin and Julien Leroy remarked that pricking and ruling systems such as those in M.748 were predominantly used in Southern Italian manuscripts, but neither scholar commented on M.748's localization: J. IRIGOIN, *Pour une étude des centres de copie byzantins*, in *Scriptorium* 12/2 (1958), pp. 208-227 at 214-215; J. LEROY, *Quelques systèmes de réglure des manuscrits grecs*, in *Studia codicologica*, hrsg. von K. TREU, Berlin 1977 (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, 124), pp. 291-312: 300.

³ Kenneth W. Clark used the adjective «Lombardic» to describe M.748's initials, but he abstained from the debate about the manuscript's localization: K.W. CLARK, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Greek New Testament Manuscripts in America*, Chicago, IL 1937, p. 168.

⁴ Modern Giresun in Turkey.

⁵ The hypothesis of Asia Minor as the place of M.748's origin was first put forward by Josepha Weitzmann-Fiedler: J. WEITZMANN-FIEDLER, *Ein Evangelientyp mit Aposteln als Begleitfiguren*, in *Adolph Goldschmidt. Zu seinem siebenzigsten Geburtstag am 15. Januar 1933*, Berlin 1935, pp. 30-34 at 33. And Anatolia was suggested by Belle Da Costa Greene and Meta P. Harrsen in B. DA COSTA GREENE - M.P. HARRSEN, *Exhibition of Illuminated Manuscripts Held at the New York Public Library*, New York, NY 1934, p. 15, cat. nr. 26, pl. 25 (with reference to Sirarpie Der Nersessian, who noticed some similarity in decoration between M.748 and Armenian manuscripts). This hypothesis was further advanced by Carl Nordenfalk in C. NORDENFLAK, *The Apostolic Canon Tables*, in *Gazette des beaux-arts* 62 (1963), pp. 17-34 [repr. in ID., *Studies in the History of Book Illumination*, London 1992, pp. 30-40] and by Jeffrey C. Anderson in a catalogue entry for M.748 in *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections: An Exhibition in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. by G. VIKAN, Princeton, NJ 1973, pp. 92-95, cat. nr. 17.

The Morgan manuscript has been attributed to the tenth century (Seymour De Ricci), to the eleventh century (most scholars), and to the twelfth century (Kenneth W. Clark)⁶. The eleventh century is a widely accepted date because a non-scribal marginal note on f. 193v describes a total solar eclipse that took place on February 16, 1086 (fig. 1). The note reads: μη(νὶ) φε(β)ρ(ουαρίω) ις' ὥρ(α) θ' ἰν(δικτιῶνος) θ' ἔτους ,ςφςδ' | ἡμανρώθ(η) ὁ ἥλ(ιος) καὶ ἐγένε(το) σκώτο(ς) (sic) | ἕως ὥρας μίας («on February 16 at the ninth hour, in the ninth indiction, in the year 6594 [1086 CE] the sun became obscured and darkness fell and lasted for one hour»). The note was written in a grayish ink different from the ink in the main text and with a sharper pen and a sloppy cursive hand. All scholars who have studied the manuscript agree that this note is non-scribal and was added to the manuscript later. Thus the year 1086 was presumed to be *terminus ante quem* for the manuscript.

But there is a second note on the recto of the last folio (f. 194r), at the bottom of the first column and just below the end of the Gospel of John (fig. 2). The parchment of this folio is damaged and darkened, and the note is difficult to read. Ignored by previous scholars⁷, this note describes another total solar eclipse and reads as follows: μη(νὶ) αὐ(γούστῳ) β' ἡμέρᾳ τετράδ(η) ὥρᾳ | ζ' ἕως πρὸ(ς) ὀγδὼ(ην) (sic) ἰν(δικτιῶνος) ια' ἔτους | ,ςχμα' ἡμανρώθ(η) ὁ ἥλ(ιος) καὶ | ἐγένε(το) σκώτο(ς) (sic) | ἕως ὥρας μίας. | ὥστε ἀπ(ὸ) τ(ῆς) ἁγαν (sic) σκοτάσε(ως) (sic) ἐφάνησ(αν) καὶ οἱ | ἀστέρ(ες) («on August 2, on the fourth day [of the week], in the seventh hour, [and] up to the eighth hour, in the eleventh indiction, in the year 6641 [1133 CE] the sun became obscured and darkness fell and lasted for one hour. Therefore, because of the extreme darkness, the stars became visible»).

The details in this note (such as the day of the week and appearance of stars) suggest that it was written by an eyewitness⁸. Also, the note is written in exactly the same ink and pen as the main text. These two pieces of evidence persuade me that the note was written by the scribe himself. Although the script of the note is a little more casual than the script of the main text, this casualness is not unusual for scribal notes and colophons. In my experience, non-scribal notes invariably display tints of

⁶ DE RICCI, *Census* cit., II, p. 1495; CLARK, *A Descriptive Catalogue* cit., p. 168.

⁷ Kirsopp Lake noticed this second note but dismissed it as a later insertion (his comments in the library file for the manuscript).

⁸ For example, F. Richard Stephenson observed: «The description of the eclipse, whose date and weekday... are correctly assigned, is clearly that of an eye-witness»: E. R. STEPHENSON, *Historical Eclipses and Earth's Rotation*, Cambridge 1997, p. 393.

ink different from the original, and it is highly unlikely that the same ink was used in a note separated from the main text by approximately half a century. After the note, moreover, short supplementary texts (a fragment of *Adversus haereses* by Irenaeus⁹ and a treatise on the three Magi by an unidentified author) and a colophon were added by the scribe of the manuscript. Thus I conclude that the manuscript was copied in 1133 and that the note about the earlier eclipse was added after that date.

Paleographic features of the Morgan Gospels are consistent with the year 1133. The manuscript was copied for a *kyr*¹⁰ Michael by a scribe whose name is totally indecipherable in the original colophon. Written in red ink, the colophon is at the end of the supplementary texts on f. 194v, the last folio of the manuscript (fig. 3). The subscription is almost illegible, even with the help of an ultraviolet lamp, and was not noticed by previous scholars. Just a few words are discernable: ἐγγρά(φη) τὸ εὐ(α)γ(γέλιον) οὗτο διὰ χ<ειρὸς> ... | ἐξ ἐπ<ιταγῆς> τοῦ κυρ(οῦ) Μιχαήλ ... («this Gospel book was written by the hand of... on the order of *kyr* Michael...»)¹¹. I will have more to say about *kyr* Michael later on.

The Morgan Gospels' script is not especially calligraphic and looks provincial (fig. 4). It is a traditional and rather formal late *Perlschrift*, with a slight inclination to the right. Such script was widely used in the second half of the eleventh century through the first half of the twelfth, especially for Gospel manuscripts. But M.748's script lacks the fluency of eleventh-century *Perlschrift*. The scribe displays a deliberate, somewhat stiff, and imitative *ductus*, which points to a later date. Some letters are enlarged but not out of proportion. These letters include epsilon, zeta, xi, phi, and omega. The beginning of the Gospel of Mark on f. 62r is written in a large and ornate «epigraphic» distinguishing majuscule (fig. 5)¹².

The Morgan scribe's handwriting is especially similar to that of Arsenios Spastrikos, a monk who copied codex Mount Athos, Dionysiou Monastery, 83 in 1137¹³. The Morgan codex's script is also comparable to

⁹ In this manuscript the fragment was ascribed to Epiphanius of Cyprus (a.k.a. Epiphanius of Salamis).

¹⁰ The Greek word *κύριος* is difficult to translate precisely. The closest English equivalents are «sir» or «lord».

¹¹ I would like to thank Charalambos Dendrinos, Maria Litina, Stratis Papaioannou, and Manolis Patedakis for helpful suggestions about this note and previous notes.

¹² On epigraphic and other distinguishing majuscules, see H. HUNGER, *Epigraphische Auszeichnungsmajuskel*, in *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 26 (1977), pp. 193–210.

¹³ K. and S. LAKE, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts to the Year 1200*, III, Boston, MA 1934, p. 15, pl. 199.

those in Mt. Sinai, the Monastery of St. Catherine, Gr. Mss. 234 (copied in 1118/1119)¹⁴ and 44 (copied in 1122)¹⁵. Other similar scripts are found in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. gr. 2, which was attributed to the beginning of the twelfth century¹⁶, and in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, gr. 243, which was copied by a monk Theodoulos in 1133¹⁷. The latter manuscript contains a note about the same August 2, 1133 eclipse, which I will discuss later.

One of the most interesting and puzzling features of codex M.748 is its diverse decoration, which is incomplete because several folios are missing. Only two canon tables (of probably six) and two out of four full-page portraits of the evangelists (Matthew and John) remain. The Letter of Eusebius is adorned with two frames, each consisting of an arch resting on two columns. Also, there are five headpieces, three small marginal miniatures¹⁸, and numerous ornamented initials (some of which are anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or in the shape of a blessing hand).

The Morgan codex's canon tables and portraits of the evangelists have been extensively studied by art historians. Carl Nordenfalk has argued that M.748's canon tables show the influence of much earlier models, such as codex London, British Library, Add. 5111 attributed to the seventh century and produced most likely in Constantinople. And archangels on the top of one of the canon tables (fig. 6) reminded him of an Anglo-Saxon manuscript from the late tenth century. Nordenfalk concluded that both Greek and Anglo-Saxon artists used «early Christian Gospel books» as their models¹⁹. Between the two arches of M.748's canon tables there are round medallions with bust portraits that are still not positively identified. Most likely the medallions picture Old Testament prophets²⁰.

¹⁴ V.N. BENEŠEVIČ, *Pamiatniki Sinaja archeologičeskie i paleografičeskie*, II, Sankt Peterburg 1912, pl. 55; K. WEITZMANN – G. GALAVARIS, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Illuminated Manuscripts*, I, Princeton, NJ 1990, pp. 132–134, pl. CXXXVII, figs. 441–444.

¹⁵ BENEŠEVIČ, *Pamiatniki Sinaja* cit., pl. 56.

¹⁶ *I Vangeli dei Popoli. La Parola e l'immagine del Cristo nelle culture e nella storia*, [catalogo della mostra: Città del Vaticano, Palazzo della Cancelleria, 21 giugno–10 dicembre 2000], a cura di F.D'Aiuto – G. Morello – A.M. Piazzoni, Città del Vaticano–Roma 2000, cat. nr. 58, p. 260.

¹⁷ M. Vogel – V. Gardthausen, *Die griechischen Schreiber des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, Leipzig 1909 [repr. Hildesheim 1966 (Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen, Beiheft 33)], p. 134; Lake, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts* cit., V, p. 11, pl. 318.

¹⁸ These miniatures are described and analyzed by Jeffery Anderson in *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* cit., p. 93.

¹⁹ Nordenfalk, *Studies* cit., pp. 34–36.

²⁰ *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* cit., p. 93.

The two full-page portraits of Matthew and John have attracted the special attention of art historians because each evangelist is accompanied by a companion. As Jeffrey Anderson has noted, «portraits of authors accompanied by a second figure are rare in Byzantine illumination»²¹. Many of the manuscripts displaying such portraits are provincial – for example, a tenth-century codex Baltimore, MD, the Walters Art Museum, W.524, which was probably produced in Sinai or the Palestine region²², and the twelfth-century Gospels from Mount Athos, the Great Lavra, cod. A 104. Robert Nelson observed that the Lavra codex displays strong Italian influence and might have been produced in the monastery of Amaliphitans, which was near the Great Lavra²³.

The accompanying figures in such manuscripts are not always easily identifiable, and this is certainly true for the portraits in M.748. There are no inscriptions next to the figures, and, although John's companion can be viewed as a secretary (he is holding an inkpot)²⁴, Matthew's youthful companion is standing in a pensive pose but without apparent function or purpose (fig. 7). It seems that the illuminator himself was not quite sure who these companions were and what they were supposed to do²⁵. In any case, there have been many different interpretations and attempts to identify the companions of M.748's evangelists, but there is no consensus about the significance and identity of these two figures²⁶.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² For more on this codex, see K. WEITZMANN, *An Illustrated Greek New Testament of the Tenth Century in the Walters Art Gallery*, in *Gatherings in Honor of Dorothy E. Miner*, ed. by U.E. McCracken [et al.], Baltimore, MD 1974, pp. 19–38 [repr. in K. WEITZMANN, *Byzantine Liturgical Psalters and Gospels*, London 1980, nr. IX]; N. KAVRUS-HOFFMANN, *Tenth-Century Greek Gospels at the Walters Art Museum: Writing Styles and Ornamental Motifs*, in *The Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 62 (2004), pp. 21–34.

²³ R.S. NELSON, *The Iconography of Preface and Miniature in the Byzantine Gospel Book*, New York, NY 1980, pp. 80–82.

²⁴ John's companion in M.748 is almost certainly not Prochoros, who is typically pictured writing while John is dictating.

²⁵ I agree with Jeffrey Anderson that «in the Morgan Gospels the original *raison d'être* of the second figure seems to have been lost to the illuminator...» (*Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* cit., p. 93).

²⁶ WEITZMANN – FIEDLER, *Ein Evangelientyp* cit., pp. 32–33; G. GALAVARIS, *The Illustrations of the Prefaces in Byzantine Gospels*, Wien 1979 (*Byzantina Vindobonensia*, 11), pp. 56–58; NELSON, *Iconography* cit., pp. 84–85. For a general hypothesis about classical muses and philosophers as artistic prototypes of the evangelists' companions, see A.M. FRIEND, *The Portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin Manuscripts*, in *Art Studies. Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern*, ed. by A.K. PORTER – Ch.R. MOREY, Cambridge, MA 1927, pp. 113–147: 141–147.

The two portraits in the Morgan codex seem to have been executed by two different artists, one of them clearly more skillful and the other probably an apprentice²⁷. The portrait of Matthew (fig. 7) displays a rather dynamic figure of the evangelist and his companion, with sharp angles and elaborate draping. The background buildings and furniture are painted with attention to detail. The frame of Matthew's portrait is more sophisticated than John's and reminded me of Constantinopolitan manuscripts of the end of the eleventh century to the beginning of the twelfth – for example, the codex Oxford, Bodleian Library, Barocci 15, a Psalter executed in 1105²⁸. Unlike the portrait of Matthew, John's portrait displays static and somewhat awkward figures of the evangelist and his companion, heavy draping, and a simple frame with an interlace ornament. There are no buildings on the background – only two squares implying stylized windows. There is no lectern – only a plain chair and a footstool. John holds the Gospel in his left hand, while a companion holds an inkpot in his right hand, and the disproportionately large inkpot occupies an unduly prominent place in the picture.

The five headpieces of M.748 are quite ordinary. The first headpiece is small and pi-shaped, and it marks the beginning of the list of Gospel readings for the fixed feasts (*Menologion*). The first three headpieces are pi-shaped and somewhat squat, and they occupy about a third of a page. These headpieces are filled with geometric and vegetal ornaments, and there are rather large finials at the corners – for example, a headpiece to the Gospel of Mark (fig. 5). The headpiece to the Gospel of Matthew has a cross on the top. The headpiece to the Gospel of John differs from the first three and is in the shape of a wide square frame, occupying about a third of the first column. The frame is filled with encircled palmettes, and the inner field is left blank. The palette of all headpieces is simple and includes predominantly dark red and blue colors with some gold.

Now I will focus on the least studied element of M.748's decoration: the initials. There is a tremendous variety in the decorative elements and forms of the initials. Inside two omicrons, on f. 23v and f. 39v (fig. 8), are portraits of Christ. On f. 16r an initial omicron is formed by two birds

²⁷ See M.748's portrait of John in DA COSTA GREENE – HARRSEN, *Exhibition of Illuminated Manuscripts* cit., pl. 25; WEITZMANN – FIEDLER, *Ein Evangelientyp* cit., fig. 8; *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* cit., p. 94, fig. 28; and GALAVARIS, *Illustrations* cit., fig. 25.

²⁸ See I. SPATHARAKIS, *Corpus of Dated Illuminated Greek Manuscripts to the Year 1453*, II, Leiden 1981 (*Byzantina Neerlandica*, 8), fig. 230, nr. 120.

touching each other with tails and beaks. Similar zoomorphic initials are found in a Constantinopolitan manuscript of much higher quality: Mount Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine, Gr. Ms. 339, which was produced in the second quarter of the twelfth century²⁹. Some of the Sinai codex's initials are formed by herons or cranes³⁰, while M.748's herons and other birds touch an initial but are not a part of it – for example, on f. 9r, 52r, and 62r (fig. 5). In short, the anonymous Constantinopolitan artist of the Sinai codex depicted various animals and birds in the initials creatively and playfully, but the artist of M.748 was much less creative and playful.

The Morgan codex displays several epsilon initials in the shape of a blessing hand – for example, on f. 63v (fig. 9), f. 36v, and f. 19v – and the last initial includes a bust portrait of Christ with a blessing hand. Initials in the shape of a blessing hand were quite popular in the manuscripts produced in the provinces of the Byzantine Empire, especially in Southern Italy and Greece. Some of M.748's initials are similar to those found in manuscripts from Epiros – for example, a tall and narrow initial epsilon, with a large base and a rhomb on the top (fig. 10)³¹. Another example of possible Epirotan influence is an initial epsilon in the shape of a blessing hand, which extends not from the curved left side of the letter, but from a short vertical bar that creates a small loop inside the letter's body³². Such epsilon initials are also found in codex Moscow, State Historical Museum, Vladimir 8 (Synod. 485). The Moscow codex was copied by a monk Basileios in 1116 in the Great Lavra on Mount Athos and once was kept in the infirmary of the Great Lavra³³.

Many initials in the Morgan codex are formed by thick vines en-

²⁹ See, for example, an initial theta in WEITZMANN – GALAVARIS, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine* cit., pl. CLVI, fig. 501 and an initial omicron in J.C. ANDERSON, *The Illustration of Cod. Sinai. Gr. 339*, in *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979), pp. 167–185, fig. 16d.

³⁰ WEITZMANN – GALAVARIS, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine* cit., pl. CLIX, figs. 541 and 546.

³¹ A. CATALDI PALAU, *The Burdett-Coutts Collection of Greek Manuscripts: Manuscripts from Epirus*, in *Codices Manuscripti* 54–55 (2006), pp. 31–57, numerous epsilon initials on pls. 1–23.

³² *Ibid.*, pl. 5.

³³ LAKE, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts* cit., VI, p. 12, pl. 416. Erich Lamberz pointed out the Southern Italian influence in the Moscow codex's decoration: E. LAMBERZ, *Die Handschriftenproduktion in den Athosklöstern bis 1453*, in *Scrittura, libri e testi nelle aree provinciali di Bisanzio. Atti del seminario di Erice (18–25 settembre 1988)*, a cura di G. CAVALLO – G. DE GREGORIO – M. MANIACI, I, Spoleto 1991 (Biblioteca del «Centro per il collegamento degli studi medievali e umanistici nell'Università di Perugia», 5), pp. 25–78: 46–47.

twined around the body of a letter – for example, an initial alpha on f. 136v (fig. 11). Somewhat similar initials are found in manuscripts such as Mount Sinai, Monastery of St. Catherine, Gr. Ms. 234, which was copied in 1118/1119, possibly in Southern Italy³⁴; and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. gr. 482³⁵. But quite unusual for a Greek manuscript is the initial tau on f. 165v (fig. 12). This tau is very large (it stretches along 13 lines of the text) and consists of stylized vines that are tightly intertwined, interlaced, and knotted. One would expect to find such initials in Southern Italian manuscripts, and, indeed, very similar initials are found in Calabrian manuscripts written in Reggio writing style – for example, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 2290 copied in 1197; Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, Ms. 165, attributed to the end of the twelfth century; and Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III, cod. II C 21, attributed to the first half of the thirteenth century³⁶. Also, a similar initial is found in London, British Library, Add. 36751, executed in the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos in 1008 (the initial epsilon is in the shape of a blessing hand)³⁷. And a somewhat similar intertwined initial is found in codex Mount Athos, Monastery of Esphigmenou, 25, copied by Theodoros and illuminated by his son Basileios for one Leon in 1129³⁸. Thus the Kerasous Gospels display an eclectic decoration, and its artist was influenced by ideas and examples from many different sources and regions. Although lacking the refined artistic quality of the best examples of the Constantinopolitan illuminated codices, M.748 was an ambitious undertaking for a provincial artist.

Analysis of M.748's decoration would not be complete without discussing a single leaf with a full-page miniature (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Art Museum, y1932-14)³⁹. The miniature portrays a standing

³⁴ *Specimina Sinaitica. Die datierten griechischen Handschriften des Katharinen-Klosters auf dem Berge Sinai 9. bis 12. Jahrhundert*, [hrsg.] von D. HARLFINGER – D.R. REINSCH – J.A.M. SONDERKAMP, in Zusammenarbeit mit G. PRATO, Berlin 1983, pls. 95 and 96; WEITZMANN – GALAVARIS, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine* cit., pl. CXXXVII, figs. 441–445.

³⁵ LAKE, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts* cit., VIII, p. 11, pl. 566 (the date of the codex, 1121, is given with a question mark).

³⁶ *Codici greci dell'Italia meridionale*, [catalogo della mostra: Grottaferrata, Biblioteca del Monumento Nazionale, 31 marzo–31 maggio 2000], a cura di P. CANART – S. LUCÀ, Roma 2000, pp. 93–96 and 115 (cat. nrs. 34, 35, and 48).

³⁷ SPATHARAKIS, *Corpus* cit., I, pp. 17–18 and II, pl. 76.

³⁸ LAKE, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts* cit., III, p. 15, pl. 200.

³⁹ See detailed descriptions of this miniature and its reproduction in *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* cit., p. 96, cat. nr. 18; I. SPATHARAKIS, *The*

emperor identified in a caption as Constantine the Great⁴⁰. Nordenfalk convincingly demonstrated that this leaf was once glued to the folio 8r of the Morgan codex⁴¹. Both physical evidence, such as traces of glue on the back of the Princeton leaf and on f. 8r of M.748, and a description of the miniature made by Anthimos of Amaseia, archbishop of Samsun and previous owner of the Kerasous Gospels⁴², support Nordenfalk's identification. Although there is no direct evidence that the Princeton miniature was part of the original Morgan codex, the miniature's portrait of an emperor is similar to M.748's portrait of John in size, palette, and ornament⁴³. And, if the original M.748 included the miniature, it might well have been a frontispiece to the manuscript, as Nancy Ševčenko has suggested⁴⁴.

Scholars agree that the Princeton miniature represents a ruling emperor of the time of the manuscript production rather than a true portrait of Constantine the Great. But the identity of the ruling emperor is still the subject of debate. The Morgan manuscript was thought to have been produced before 1086, so Constantine VIII (1025–1028)⁴⁵, Constantine IX Monomachos (1042–1055), Constantine X Ducas (1059–1067), and Michael VII Dukas (1071–1078) have been proposed as possible models⁴⁶. The Princeton portrait, however, does not bear a close resemblance to the known portraits of these rulers.

The new date I have proposed for the production of the Morgan codex, the year 1133, was during the rule of John II Komnenos (1118–1143). Nancy Ševčenko has observed that the image on the Princeton

Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts, Leiden 1976 (Byzantina Neerlandica, 6), pp. 70–74, 115, 258, and fig. 41. Nancy Ševčenko has prepared a detailed description of this miniature in S. KOTZABASSI – N.P. ŠEVČENKO with the collaboration of D.C. SKEMER, *Greek Manuscripts at Princeton, Sixth to Nineteenth Century: A Descriptive Catalogue*, Princeton, NJ (forthcoming). I cordially thank Nancy for a copy of her catalogue entry for the Princeton leaf y1932–14.

⁴⁰ *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* cit., p. 97, fig. 30.

⁴¹ NORDENFALK, *Studies* cit., pp. 39–40.

⁴² See Anthimos's letter in the Morgan Library and Museum file for M.748.

⁴³ Such similarities were noted by Jeffrey Anderson in *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* cit., p. 96 and Nancy Ševčenko, catalogue entry for the Princeton leaf.

⁴⁴ Nancy Ševčenko, catalogue entry for the Princeton leaf.

⁴⁵ These and the following dates after the names of emperors are the dates of their rule.

⁴⁶ NORDENFALK, *Studies* cit., p. 230, n. 39; Anderson in *Illuminated Greek Manuscripts from American Collections* cit., p. 96; SPATHARAKIS, *Portrait* cit., pp. 72–74; Nancy Ševčenko, catalogue entry for the Princeton leaf.

leaf «bears a certain resemblance to the imperial figures thought to be Alexios I and John II Komnenos carved on two large early-12th-century stone roundels of unclear purpose (one at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, the other still on a wall in Venice)»⁴⁷. Also, the youthful and oval-shaped face with slightly slanted eyes in the image on the Princeton miniature somewhat resembles the portraits of Alexios I and John II in the codex Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Urb. gr. 2⁴⁸ and the portrait of John II on a mosaic from the Hagia Sophia⁴⁹. These resemblances support the case for an early twelfth-century date for M.748⁵⁰.

Let us now turn our attention to the localization of the Morgan codex. The mediocre quality of its parchment, average calligraphy, and decidedly non-Constantinopolitan style of decoration all point to the provinces of the Byzantine Empire as likely places of production. To date, two possible locations have been proposed by scholars: Southern Italy and the Trebizond region of Asia Minor. Advocates of both hypotheses have presented reasons that were based predominantly on the Morgan codex's provenance from Asia Minor and similarities in decoration with Southern Italian, Anglo-Saxon, Armenian, and Georgian codices. But even the early journey of a manuscript can take it far from its production site. Also, the decoration of M.748 does not seem to be Southern Italian, some similarities in decorative initials notwithstanding, and the comparisons with Armenian and Georgian manuscripts seem tenuous. And, crucially important, no scholar has linked the issue of localization with the two total solar eclipses described in M.748.

I have been able to verify that both eclipses indeed took place on the indicated dates: February 16, 1086 and August 2, 1133⁵¹. From the web site of the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) I obtained detailed maps tracing the «paths of totality» of

⁴⁷ Nancy Ševčenko, catalogue entry for the Princeton leaf, with a reference to G. VIKAN, *Catalogue of the Sculpture in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection from the Ptolemaic Period to the Renaissance*, Washington, DC 1995, nr. 40.

⁴⁸ See, for example, *I Vangeli dei Popoli* cit., cat. nr. 58, p. 263.

⁴⁹ See color reproductions of the mosaic in N. CHATZIDAKIS, *Greek Art. Byzantine Mosaics*, Athens 1994, fig. 39 and in W.E. KLEINBAUER – A. WHITE – H. MATTHEWS, *Hagia Sophia*, London 2004, p. 70.

⁵⁰ The anonymous artist was rather untalented. Thus any claim to have identified positively the man in the portrait should be taken *cum grano salis*.

⁵¹ V. GRUMEL, *La chronologie*, Paris 1958, pp. 465–466; *Five Millennium Catalog of Solar Eclipses*, on the web site of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA): <<http://sunearth.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse/SEcat5/catalog.html>>.

the two eclipses. Neither eclipse was visible in Kerasous or Samsun in the Trebizond area or on the entire Black Sea coast of Asia Minor. The path of the 1086 eclipse went through Sicily and the Reggio Calabria region and then through the Northern and Northeastern parts of Greece and along the middle of the Black Sea (fig. 13). The path of the 1133 eclipse went through England, Germany, Austria, the Northeastern part of Greece and through the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas. This eclipse was visible in parts of Greek Macedonia, including Thessaloniki and Mount Athos, as well as on most of the Aegean Sea islands, just touching the Southwestern coast of Asia Minor (fig. 14)⁵².

I superimposed the two maps and created an image with the two eclipses intersecting (fig. 15). The combined image clearly shows that the paths of the eclipses intersect in the Northeastern part of Greece. This is the only area from which both eclipses could be seen. The area is rather small (252 × 208 kilometers or 156 × 129 miles) but includes Thessaloniki, Mount Athos, and adjacent territory.

The August 2, 1133 eclipse is well documented in many sources from different parts of Western Europe⁵³. This eclipse was recorded not only in the Kerasous Gospels but in the colophon of another Greek manuscript in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, gr. 243⁵⁴. The scribe of the Paris codex, a monk Theodoulos, noted that the August 2, 1133 total eclipse occurred «in the eighth hour» – almost exactly the same time noted by the scribe of the Morgan codex («from the seventh to the eighth hour»)⁵⁵.

⁵² I would like to thank Fred Espenak of NASA for his kind permission to reproduce the maps of the two eclipses for this article.

⁵³ All Western European sources report extreme darkness in the middle of the day and many bright stars near the eclipsed sun. Some of these records were published in STEPHENSON, *Historical Eclipses* cit., pp. 392–394, 416–417, and 423–424.

⁵⁴ The Greek text of the colophon was published by Kirsopp and Sylva Lake: LAKE, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts* cit., V, p. 11 and pl. 318 and reproduced in Ph. EUANGELATOU-NOTARA, *Σημειώματα Ἑλληνικῶν κωδίκων ὡς πηγὴ διὰ τὴν ἔρευναν τοῦ οἰκονομικοῦ καὶ κοινωνικοῦ βίου τοῦ Βυζαντίου ἀπὸ τοῦ 9ου αἰῶνος μέχρι τοῦ ἔτους 1204*, Ἀθῆναι 1982, pp. 198–199.

⁵⁵ It is well known that Byzantines did not measure time precisely and did not have precise instruments. Moreover, their hours had different lengths depending on the seasons: GRUMEL, *La chronologie* cit., pp. 163–164; STEPHENSON, *Historical Eclipses* cit., p. 381. Thus the Byzantine «seventh hour» is approximately our noon, and the «eighth hour» is around 1:00 PM. According to NASA tables, the August 2, 1133 eclipse took place at 12:24 PM at the point of so-called «greatest eclipse», which was located just north of Greece. I refer those who are interested in scientific details to the NASA web site indicated above, n. 51.

Theodoulos also mentioned that the eclipse took place «during the reign of John the Porphyrogenetos [John II Komnenos] and Irene, with John serving as patriarch of Constantinople and Niketa as archbishop of Thessaloniki»⁵⁶. Theodoulos's reference to the archbishop of Thessaloniki is compelling evidence that the Paris codex was produced in a monastery located in Thessaloniki or in the vicinity of the city, as has been affirmed by Kurt Treu⁵⁷. And since two scribes observed the eclipse at about the same time, they must have been in the same geographic location or neighboring locations on the eclipse's «path of totality». Thus I conclude that central Greek Macedonia is the place of production of the Kerasous Gospels.

The Gospel manuscript was very probably produced in Mount Athos or Thessaloniki and in a monastic rather than independent scriptorium. Codicological and other evidence supports these hypotheses. For example, several manuscripts that were produced or received in Mount Athos contain script and decoration very similar to the script and decoration of the Morgan manuscript (as I discussed earlier).

Moreover, the scribe of the Morgan codex noted that he executed the Gospel manuscript «on the order of *kyr* Michael». Because the manuscript's colophon is now extensively flaked, many words are totally illegible, including the name (and possibly the social status) of the scribe. The text is also illegible immediately after the name Michael and at the end of the colophon. I have scrutinized the colophons in Lake's album and in Euangelatou-Notara's collection of colophons, and I have found only a few scribal notes with similar vocabulary, most of them in the twelfth-century manuscripts of exclusively monastic origin. These manuscripts were executed by monks «on the order of» or «at the behest of» a superior cleric, who was frequently a monastery's *hegoumenos* or *kathegoumenos* (abbot) and was respectfully and deferentially referred to as «*kyr*»⁵⁸.

For example, in codex Moscow, State Historical Museum, Vladimir 8 (Synod. 485) copied in 1115/1116 in the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, the scribe, monk Basileios, stated: ἐγράφη ἡ παροῦσα βίβλος αὕτη διὰ προτροπῆς τοῦ τιμοτάτου καὶ καθηγουμένου ἡμῶν κυροῦ Θεοδώρου... («this book was written at the behest of our most esteemed abbot *kyr* Theo-

⁵⁶ My translation from Theodoulos's colophon cited above.

⁵⁷ K. TREU, *Griechische Schreibnotizen als Quelle für politische, soziale und kulturelle Verhältnisse ihrer Zeit*, in *Byzantinobulgarica* 2 (1966), pp. 127–143 at 136–137.

⁵⁸ LAKE, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts* cit., I–X; EUANGELATOU–NOTARA, *Σημειώματα* cit.

doros...»)⁵⁹. And in codex Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, gr. 891 copied in 1136 in Constantinopolitan Petra Monastery, the scribe, monk Arsenios, stated: ἡ βίβλος αὕτη... ἐγράφη διὰ χειρὸς τοῦ μοναχοῦ Ἀρσενίου ἐξ ἐπιταγῆς καὶ συλλογῆς τοῦ καθηγουμένου τῆς αὐτῆς μονῆς μοναχοῦ κυροῦ Μαξίμου... («this book... was written by the hand of the monk Arsenios on the order of and by the choice of the abbot of this monastery, monk *kyr* Maximos»)⁶⁰.

The scribal notes cited above are fully legible, and such notes are very similar in structure and content to the legible portions of the Morgan colophon. These similarities strengthen my conviction that M.748's scribe was a monk working in a monastery and *kyr* Michael was the abbot of the monastery or some other ecclesiastical superior. I can only hypothesize about the exact location of the monastery in central Greek Macedonia. The Kerasous Gospel manuscript was almost surely produced in the region's major religious or urban center, but I do not have enough evidence to make a definite attribution to Mount Athos or Thessaloniki. Research on provincial scriptoria is scarce, and while there are some studies of manuscripts produced in Mount Athos⁶¹, to the best of my knowledge there are no studies of manuscripts produced earlier than the fourteenth century in Thessaloniki.

It is known, however, that laymen as well as clerics were referred to as *kyr*. Conceivably, *kyr* Michael was a layman who lived in Thessaloniki and who commissioned an illuminated Gospel book for his personal possession or for donation to a monastery. A commissioner had many monastic and commercial scriptoria to choose among in Thessaloniki, where he and his local scribe and artist could have worked together closely and adjusted any aspect of their ambitious project at various stages of its design and execution. Similar collaboration and adaptation could have been achieved between an abbot and his monks who were scribes and artists.

Indeed, the Morgan manuscript's eclectic and imitative decoration suggests that a sponsor and artist incorporated new ideas at various times and in various ways. The final product reflected the multiple and complex influences of artistic styles from different regions of the Byzantine

⁵⁹ EUANGELATOU-NOTARA, *Σημειώματα* cit., pp. 193–194.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁶¹ IRIGOIN, *Pour une étude des centres* cit., II, pp. 195–204; LAMBERZ, *Die Handschriftenproduktion in den Athosklöstern* cit., pp. 25–78.

Empire, including Southern Italy and Asia Minor. Also, this decorative melange fit well into Thessaloniki's multicultural milieu. And the production process was apparently syncretic. Original and borrowed ideas seem to have been grafted onto or intermingled with flexible plans and work in progress.

The monasteries in Mount Athos and Thessaloniki and the ateliers in Thessaloniki could have provided an artist with diverse examples of manuscript illumination. Artists from both locales were capable of producing the heterogeneous style of the Morgan manuscript, not merely the homogeneous style of their ethno-religious community or socioeconomic stratum. For example, artists in Mount Athos probably adapted innovative decorations in the manuscripts donated by pilgrims and wealthy patrons, and artists in Thessaloniki probably adopted imitative decorations in the manuscripts popular with customers. But such evidence and reasoning are not conclusive. Thus either Mount Athos or Thessaloniki could be the production site of the Kerasous Gospels.

A combination of traditional paleography and codicology and modern science and technology has helped me to draw four firm conclusions: the Kerasous Gospel manuscript M.748 was produced almost certainly in the year 1133, not in the eleventh or tenth century; almost certainly in Northeastern Greece, not in Southern Italy or the Trebizond region of Asia Minor; very probably in Mount Athos or Thessaloniki; and very probably in a monastic scriptorium, not an independent atelier. Different kinds of evidence strongly support the same general conclusion: a monastery in central Greek Macedonia was the source of this multifaceted twelfth-century manuscript.

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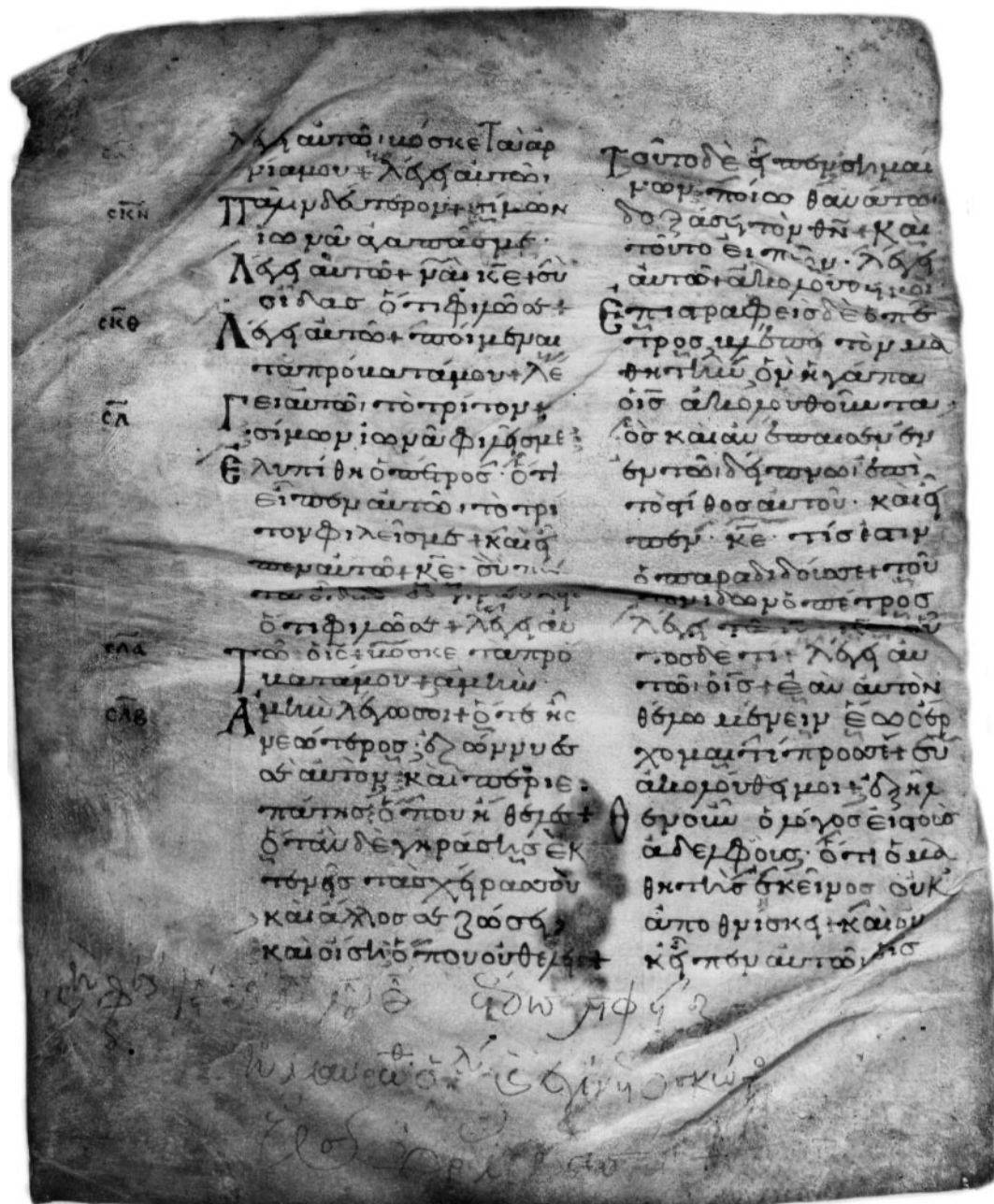


Fig. 1. MS. M.748, fol. 193v (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).



Fig. 2. MS. M.748, fol. 194r (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).



Fig. 3. MS. M.748, fol. 194v (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).

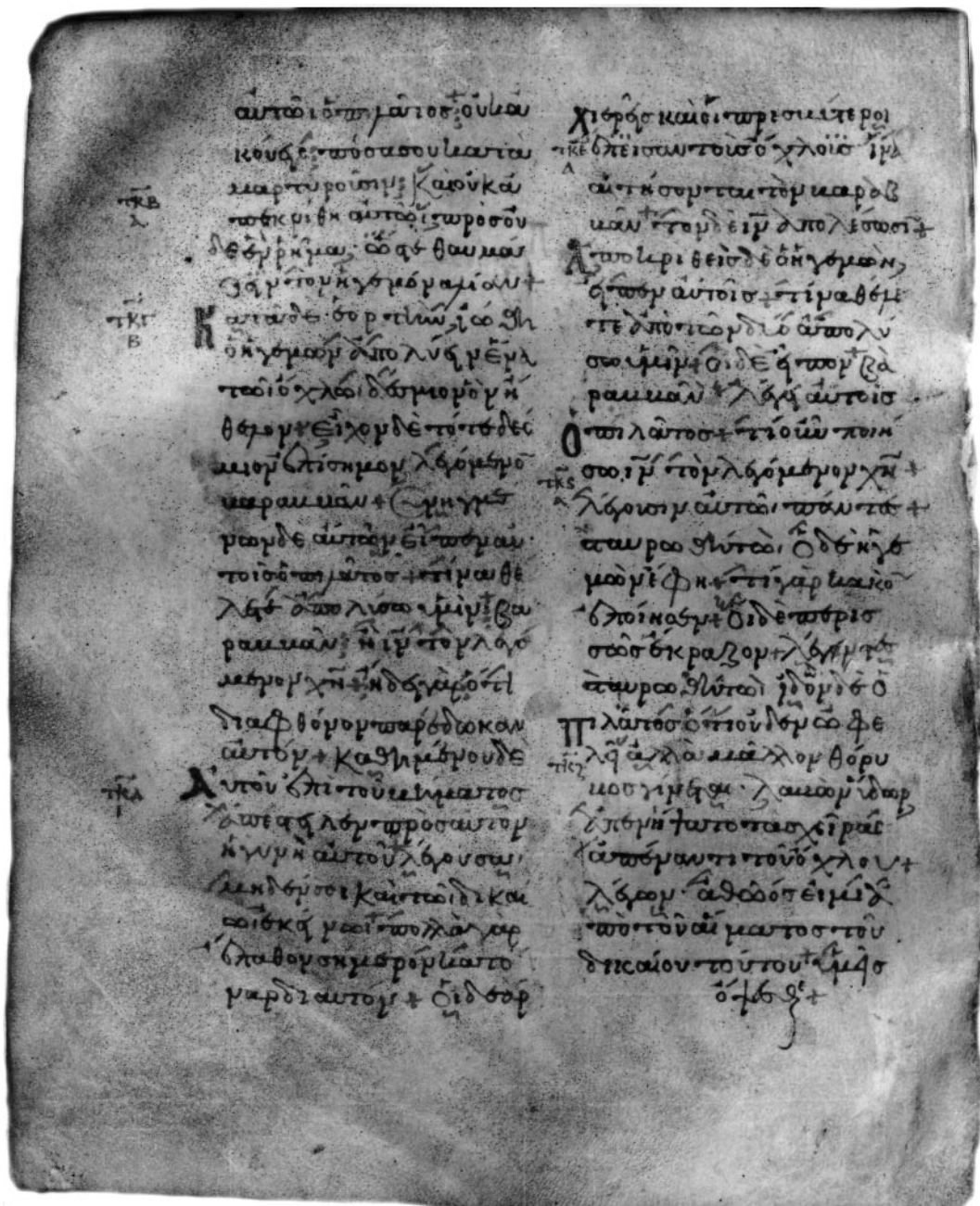


Fig. 4. MS. M.748, fol. 58v (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).

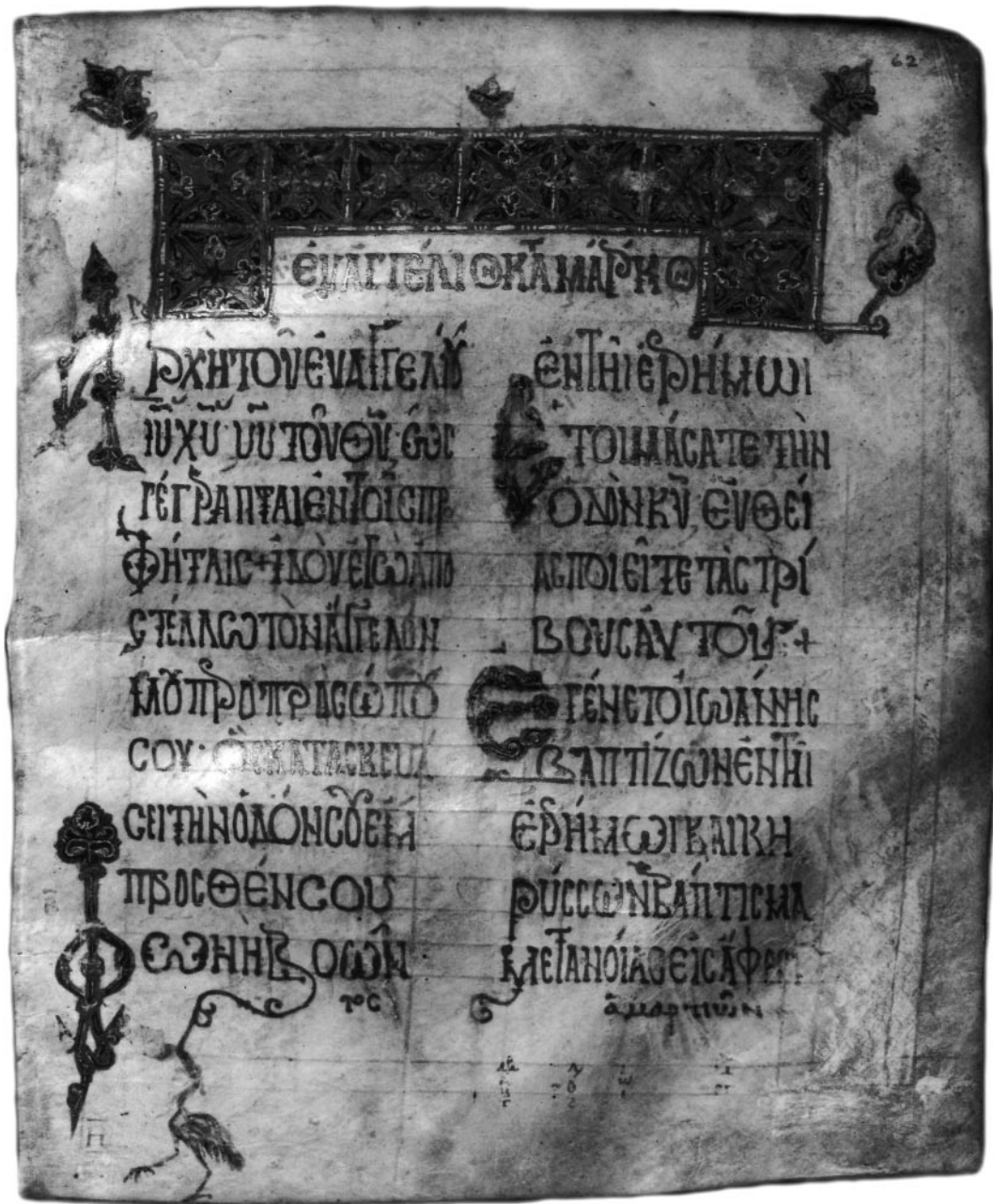


Fig. 5. MS. M.748, fol. 62r (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).

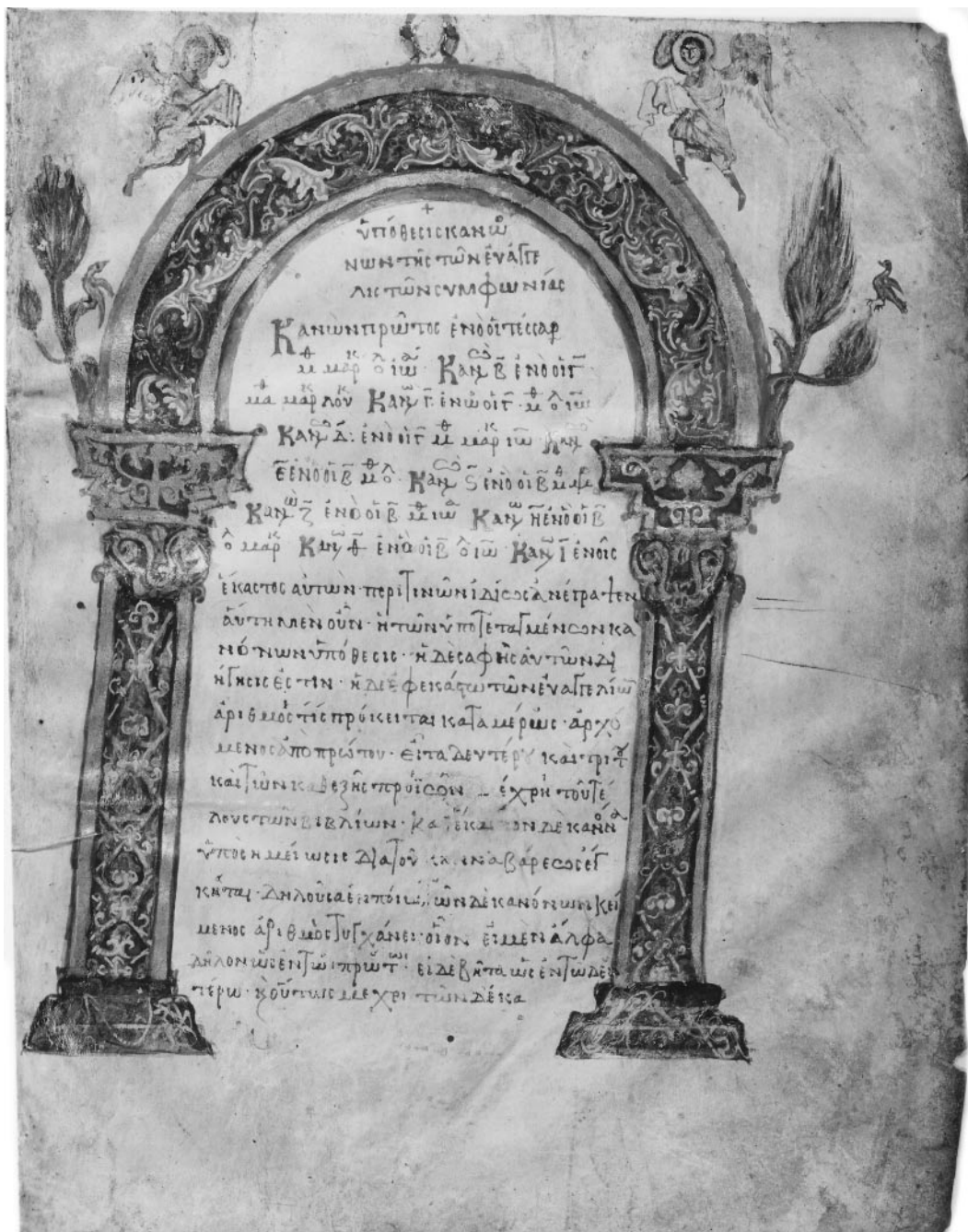


Fig. 6. MS. M.748, fol. 71r (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).



Fig. 7. MS. M.748, fol. 8v (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).

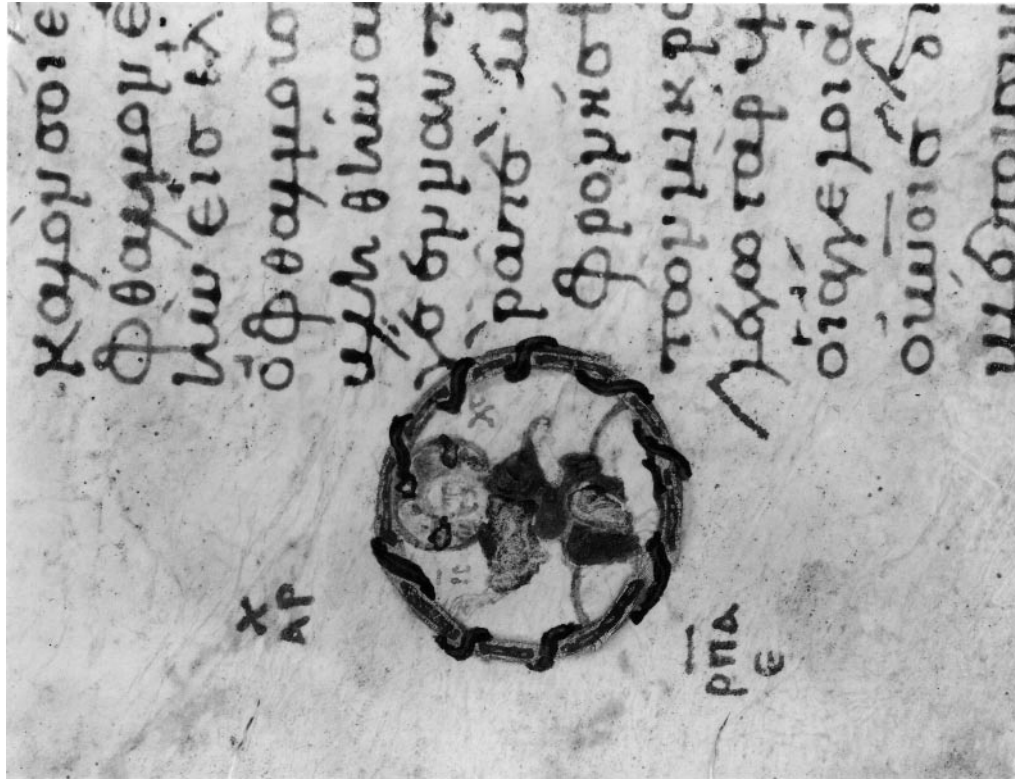


Fig. 8. MS. M.748, fol. 39v, detail.

(By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).

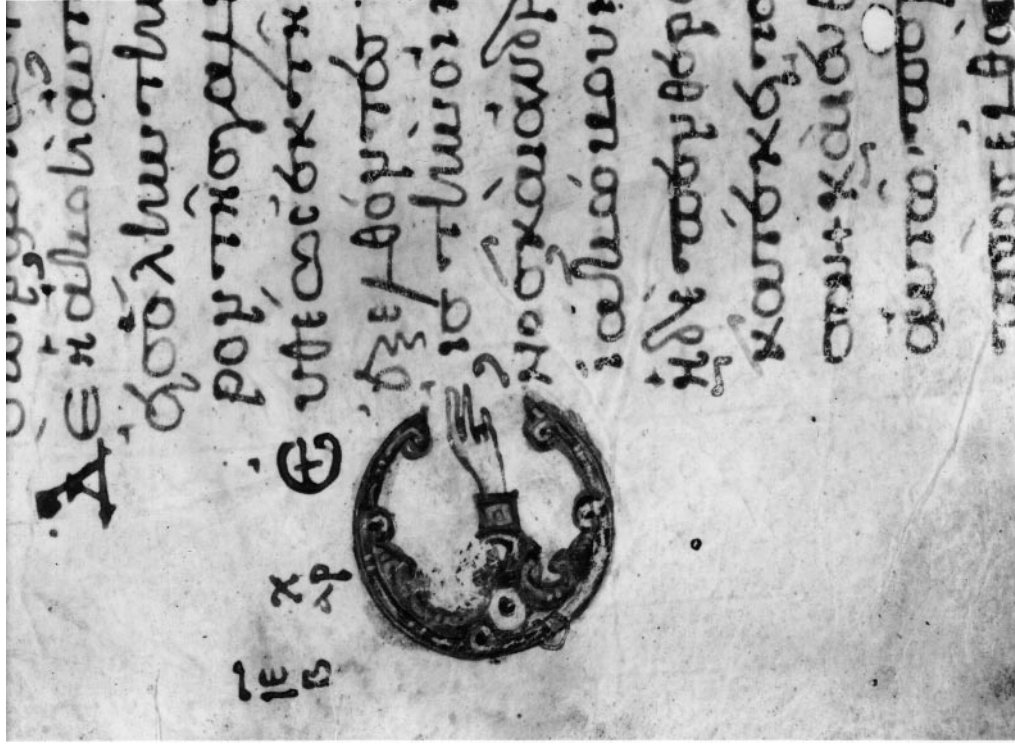


Fig. 9. MS. M.748, fol. 63v, detail.



Fig. 10. MS. M.748, fol. 50r, detail (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).

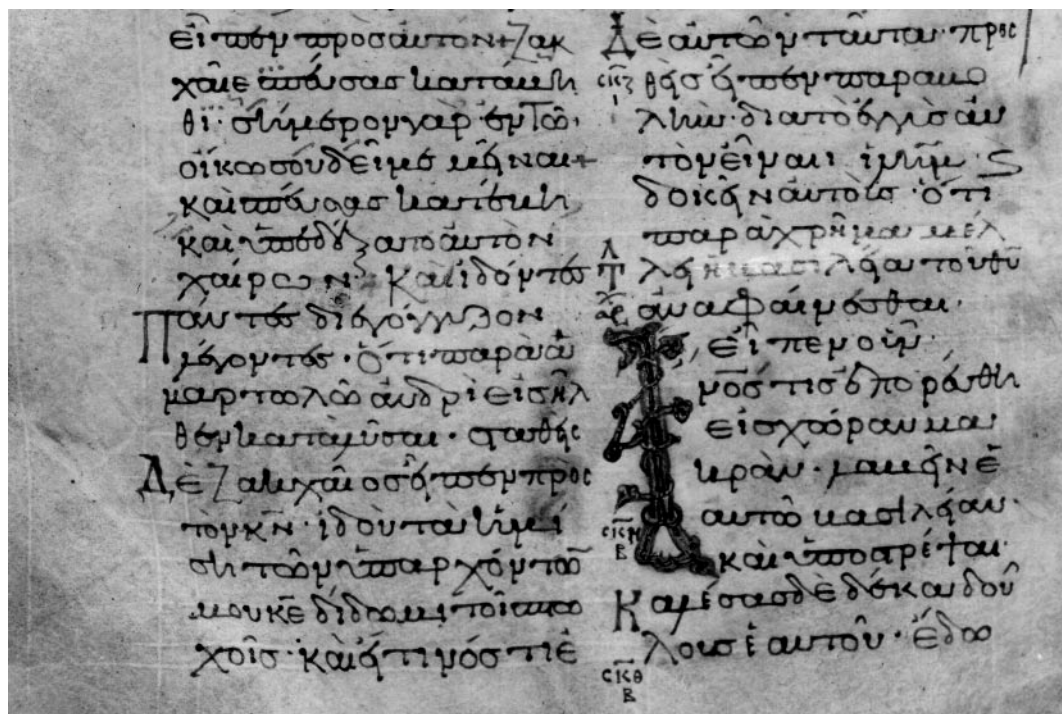
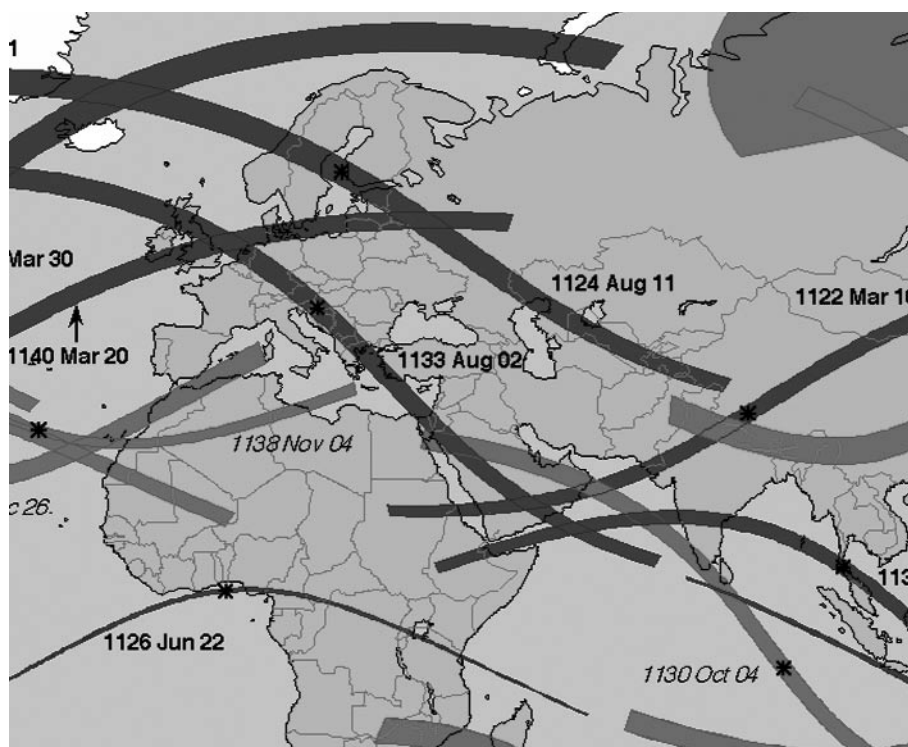
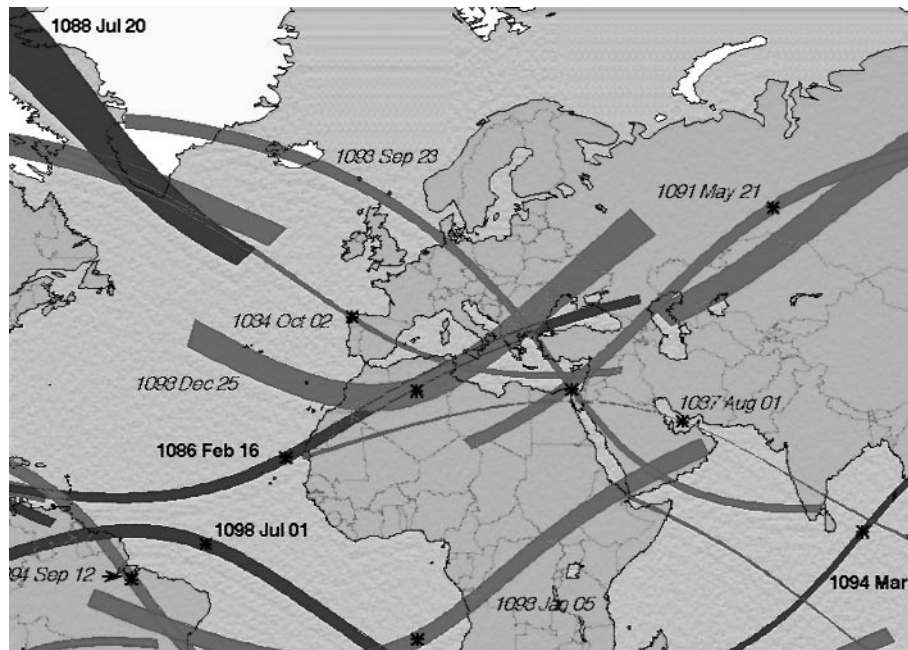


Fig. 11. MS. M.748, fol. 136v, detail (By permission of the Morgan Library and Museum, New York).



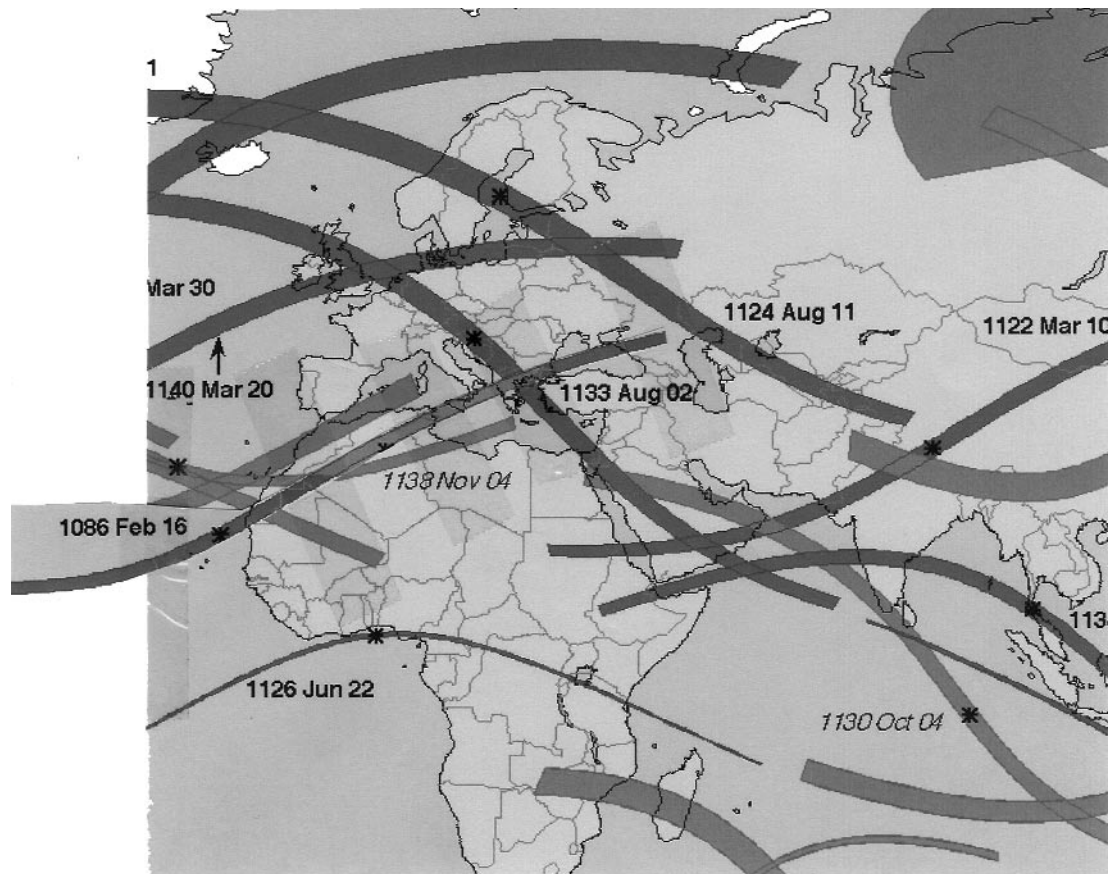


Fig. 15. Intersection of the two eclipses' paths of totality.