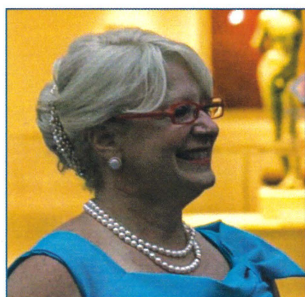




Hellenic Preservation Society

of Northeastern Ohio

President's Letter



Linda M. Glynias

Happy New Year!

Thank you so much for your membership in 2021. I'm happy to report that we reached the 100 member mark and raised \$10,000 in dues. We thank you very much for your generosity!

This year, with your support, we were able to sponsor the internationally recognized Byzantine Conference, which was held here in Cleveland at CWRU and the Cleveland Museum of Art. Additionally, we continue to put your donations to good use towards maintaining the Greek Gardens.

While we had programming planned for the Spring, but because of the uncertainty of live events, our 2022 schedule is still being developed. More details on our calendar will follow.

As the HPS, we have an important mission to promote our Greek heritage. I hope that anyone interested in this endeavor will join our HPS

group and HPS board to help. We are hoping to unfold some larger projects and would love the support! Our group encompasses NE Ohio, Akron and Lorain. We have many areas that we can use help: Greek Gardens, One World Day, HPS Collection/Archive, Education-Youth and Adult, Speaker/Author series. Please contact me if you are interested in participating at lglynias@gmail.com.

If you aren't a member yet, please sign up and send in the envelope included in this newsletter to join our organization!

Linda M Glynias
HPS President

HPS Sponsors International Byzantine Conference

By Effie Tsengas, Vice President

The 47th Annual Conference of the Byzantine Association of North America was hosted at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) and the Cleveland Museum of Art, Dec. 9 - 12, 2021. The event was chaired, planned and curated by Dr. Elizabeth (Betsy) Bolman who serves as the Elsie B. Smith Professor in the Liberal Arts, Professor and Chair of Art History at CWRU.

The conference is a very important annual event which is hosted in North America to foster knowledge about Byzantine Studies and associated fields. The most active scholars and graduate students attend and present their work at this prestigious event. As a matter of fact, Joe Glynias, Princeton PhD graduate student, the son of HPS President Linda and

husband Manuel J. Glynias, presented on "The Works of Nikon of the Black Mountain in Greek and Arabic Manuscripts at the Sinai." Bravo!

A lovely welcome reception, hosted by the Hellenic Preservation Society, in the Tinkham Veale University Center featured a talk on The Saint Catherine Foundation: The First Twenty Years and featured a video introduction by Dimitri Dondos, Chairman of the London Board of Trustees who spoke about the major renovations made at Saint Catherine's Monastery which is located in the heart of the Sinai Desert at the foot of Mount Sinai. The monastery is considered to be one of the best-preserved early Christian sites having been constructed by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century. The talk also including remarks by Hieromonk Justin Sinaites, who serves as the

monastery's librarian and the project's chief documenter of the newly expanded library. He has been very busy overseeing conservation efforts of the 3300 manuscripts and 2000 scrolls in eleven different languages which the library houses. Finally, the evening's talk was made complete by Dr. Helen Evans, a renowned American art historian and curator who specializes in Byzantine art. Dr. Evans provided a behind the scenes tour of St. Catherine's and fascinating details about the 2000 year old monastery including how the walter is built on the location of where the Burning Bush first addressed Moses. Dr. Evans has worked for the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 1991 and was co-curator along with William D. Wixom of the 1997 Byzantine exhibition there. She is a scholar devoted to the documentation of Byzantine art.

Viewing Saint Catherine's Monastery at Sinai
Sunday, September 26, 2021, 2:00 p.m.

By Holly Witcheby, Ph.D., Executive Director of Cleveland Philanthropy

Cleveland was lovely and sunny, the perfect Cleveland autumn on Sunday, September 26, 2021. Instead of gathering and greeting one another at the museum, sadly, loyal attendees of the Cleveland Museum of Art's Dr. John and Helen Collis Lecture had to gather online. Sadder still, was the knowledge in everyone's thoughts that this was the first year that the lecture would be given without the founder, Dr. John Collis in attendance.

This year's speaker, who joined from Greece was Maria Vassilaki, Professor Emerita, Byzantine Art History, University of Thessaly (Volos, Greece) and Member of the Benaki Museum Board of Trustees (Athens, Greece).

Bill Griswold, Director and President of the Cleveland Museum of Art, thanked everyone for coming to listen to this year's lecture about Sinai's legendary monastery. "We are deeply grateful to the family for their visionary support. It is thanks to their generosity that each year we are able to bring an outstanding scholar to the Cleveland Museum of Art. John Collis passed away last November, but he will always be with us in spirit, beloved by all those who had the privilege to get to know him. He was by profession a surgeon, and was one of the first neurosurgeons to limit his surgery to spinal care. John Collis was a pioneer, an innovator, a caregiver, a family man, and an active member of the Greek Orthodox Church," Griswold said.

There followed a video prepared to honor Dr. John Collis including former museum development office, Marjorie William, who expressed enduring love for the works of Dr. John Collis. Dr. D. Phil Stickney described Collis as "a gentlemen surgeon." Fr. Robert Stephanopolous Ph.D. described him as "a benefactor, patron of the church, and a good friend," and asked, "How could he have done

as much as he did?" Paulette Poulos, Executive Director of Leadership 100, commented on Collis' humility, saying "...whatever he did he did in a silent manner, it took years before I learned what a successful prominent surgeon he was. He never talked about his personal accomplishments. He lived his life through his church and family. He was a living example of what we all should be too. Stephen Fliegel, former Curator of Medieval Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art talked of Collis' warmth and devotion to the church, and his desire to provide a lasting gift. Dr. Thomas Strauss president & CEO of the Sisters of Charity Health System spoke about Collis's extraordinary 17000 surgeries and noted, "[Collis] is considered a pioneer and innovator who revolutionized the field of spinal care. My life is better for having had him in it."

Gerhard Lutz, who joined the Cleveland Museum of Art in May 2020, as the Robert P. Bergman Curator of Medieval Art served as the moderator for the day's event and noted that such a distinguished academic and historian really needed no introduction. He introduced Vassilaki as a teacher, professor emerita in Byzantine art and a member of the Benaki Museum board of trustees.

which will be published by Cambridge University Press.

Vassilaki then took the virtual dais announcing that she was honored to be giving the 2021 lecture and talked about her first meeting with Helen and John Collis in 2012. The Cleveland Museum had just acquired a Cretan Icon of the Virgin of Tenderness and she was able to give the lecture in person in Cleveland. She dedicated the day's lecture to the memory of Dr. John Collis. Vassilaki began the formidable task of re-introducing the audience to the historical significance of the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. Sinai, she noted, is the ultimate holy place. It was at Mt. Sinai that Moses saw the Burning Bush and heard the voice of God. It was also at Sinai that God appeared to Moses and delivered the Tablets of the Law to him. Mt. Sinai is such an important religious site that the Byzantine Emperor Justinian had a monastery built there in the mid-6th century on the sight of Moses' encounter with the Burning Bush.

Vassilaki showed images of the conservation of the 6th century mosaic of the Transfiguration in the Monastery of Saint Catherine in the Sinai undertaken by Roberto Nardi and Chiara Zizola and pointed out that

Sinai, Vassilakis noted, is the ultimate holy place. It was at Mt. Sinai that Moses saw the Burning Bush and heard the voice of God.

Lutz commented on her international activities as a fellow at Dumbarton Oaks and Princeton. He spoke of her research interests and her more than 40 essays and 6 books, including a forthcoming book that she is currently co-editing, "The Icon: From Late Antiquity to the Present"

Sinai also became the repository of St. Catherine's body, miraculously deposited by angels at Mt. Sinai after her martyrdom. Vassilaki noted that the earliest reference to the worship of St. Catherine dates from 1214 and the monastery's dedication was changed from the Virgin to

St. Catherine. Vassilaki then moved on to speak about her primary topic—the depictions of the landscape surrounding the monastery and how both the monastery and the landscape came to represent the holiness of the space.

Vassilaki illustrated how in the early mosaics and works the landscape (and particularly Mt. Sinai) is treated as less important than the event being depicted. Depictions of Moses standing before the Burning Bush, or untying his sandals, or receiving the tablets are given prominence while the landscape is depicted as less important than figural elements. This changed, however, during the 2nd half of the 15th century, probably due to the influence of Cretan icon painters who lived, obviously, in Crete—and primarily in the city of Candia (now Heraklion)—but who received important commissions from the Monastery of St. Catherine.

Vassilaki spoke about the strong ties between the Monastery of St. Catherine and Crete. The monastery owned a large amount of property on the island. In fact, its lands and imports were so significant that in 1212 when the Venetians secured Crete for the Serene Republic of Venice, the Symeon, the Abbot of Sinai appealed to the Venetian Doge to confirm Sinai's rights in Crete. Doge Pietro Ziani guaranteed Sinai's rights and granted the monastery immunity from export duties.

Vassilaki then provided the audience with an overview of what is known about Cretan icon painters of the 15th century and showed a series of works by known artists such as Angelos Akotantos (who many consider the greatest Greek painter of the 15th century) and Andrea Ritzos (1421-1492) before illustrating how the changes in how landscape began to be depicted—in the shape of the three mountains that characterize the actual landscape of the region.

One of the most fascinating images she discussed was a tiny polyptych—a painting with many (poly) parts. Each of the panels only about 3 inches tall and 2 inches wide. Though one wing is missing, the front of the polyptych

depicts Christ's nativity, while other scenes depicted include expected scenes: The Presentation in the Temple, The Annunciation, the Entry into Jerusalem, and the Crucifixion. On the rear of the polyptych however is a view of the Sinai landscape with the three mountains now dwarfing the religious scenes of the Burning Bush, and the Translation of St. Catherine's body. The mountains are also set against a blue background rather than the usual gold background. The style and iconography of polyptych suggest that it was painted in Venetian Crete in last decades of 15th century, possibly by Nikolaos Ritzos (1440-1507), the son of Andrea—until now only one icon is known to have been painted by Nikolaos and that resides today in Sarajevo, Bosnia.

Similar to Nikolaos Ritzos composition is a work, now in Modena and referred to as the Modena Triptych (a work with three panels)—which



many people accept as the work of Domenico Theotokopoulos (called El Greco, 1541-1614). Similar in composition to Ritzos tiny work, the Modena Triptych is five times larger in height and width. Vassilaki discussed possible models for the composition, including a published account of a pilgrimage to Sinai and Jerusalem undertaken by Bernhard von Breydenbach in the late 15th century with illustrations by Erhard Reuwich of Utrecht, including an image of the Monastery of St. Catherine dwarfed by the three mountains.

Vassilaki believes that well before copper plate engravings were circulated in the late 16th century, there were woodcuts available to artists in the final decade of the 15th century and that Domenico Theotokopoulos would have known them even before

he left Crete for Venice and eventually Spain. It is Vassilaki's contention that Cretan painters rarely (if ever) traveled to Sinai. Cretan icons created for Mt. Sinai were painted in workshops, many in Candia, and transported to Mt. Sinai. One of the problems facing Byzantine art historians is a well-known Cretan painter, Ioannis Kornaros (1745-1821) was invited to Mt. Sinai and executed panels for the back of the Abbots throne. Unfortunately, he also took the overpaint a large number of icons and triptychs adding the names of Cretan painters with spurious dates.

Vassilaki presented an extraordinary amount of visual evidence. She pointed out that in the 15th century icon painters introduced a new type of iconography as it related to the landscape of Mt. Sinai. This new iconography gave emphasis to the three mountains and embedded the key scenes within the mountain landscape. It was without a doubt Cretan icon painters who created the iconography of Mt. Sinai, turning the mountains into an independent composition. Her conclusion, it is beyond any doubt that the painters responsible for this new iconography were living and working in Crete. And, given that this is the case, Vassilaki asked, "Could this also be used as evidence that the painter of the Modena triptych was indeed by Domenico Theotokopoulos?"

After questions Vassilaki thanked a number of people who assisted her with her research, as well as the Bill Griswold, Gerhard Lutz, Seth Pevnik, others from the Cleveland Museum of Art, and all those who had joined the lecture from around the world (more than 300 in attendance). Though we could not all be together at the CMA, this year's Dr. John and Helen Collis Lecture was truly a tribute to a great man, and every year when we gather, we will remember the spirit of generosity that lives on in the lecture series that his name.



Hellenic Preservation Society
c/o Linda Glynias
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From the Collection



Photo of Hat:
1998.39
Costume Hat: Part of a costume belonging to
George Bate's grandmother, who was the wife of
the Greek hero General Theodoros Kolokotronis.
Donated by Irene Bates
Origin: Peloponnese, Greece
Date: Mid-19th Century

Theodoros Kolokotronis (Greek: Θεόδωρος Κολοκοτρώνης; 3 April 1770 - 16 February 1843) was a Greek general and the pre-eminent leader of the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829) against the Ottoman Empire.[1][2] [3] Kolokotronis's greatest success was the defeat of the Ottoman army under Mahmud Dramali Pasha at the Battle of Dervenakia in 1822.[4] In 1825, he was appointed commander-in-chief of the Greek forces in Peloponnese. Today, Kolokotronis ranks among the most prominent figures in Greece's War of Independence.

Theodoros Kolokotronis was born at Ramavouni (Ραμαβούνι), a mountain in Messenia, and was baptised in the village of Piana. He descended from a family of klefts, and grew up in the village of Libovitsi, Arcadia, in the central Peloponnese, where his family originated.[4] [5] The Kolokotroneoi were a powerful and respected clan in Arcadia in the 18th century.



Who is Dr. Elizabeth Bolman?

Betsy, as she likes to be called, currently serves as the Elsie B. Smith Professor in the Liberal Arts, Professor and Chair of Art History at CWRU.

For over fifteen years, Bolman directed the conservation of the Red Monastery Coptic church, described as "the most important early Christian monument in Egypt's Nile Valley, and one of the most significant of its period in the Mediterranean region." When Bolman first saw the church in the mid-1990s, its brilliant paintings and architectural detail were almost completely obscured by centuries of encrustation of desert dirt, incense and candle smoke. "I founded the Red Monastery project. My goal was to study the church, the historical context, and the paintings, and then to publish them after the eastern end, the old sanctuary, was conserved. Today, the interior of the church glows with remarkable late antique and early Byzantine period decoration.