

**Nomination form
International Memory of the World Register**

**THE CODEX PURPUREUS ROSSANENSIS
(Italy)**

2015-05

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

The Codex Purpureus Rossanensis is a Greek uncial manuscript dating V-VI century. It is kept in the diocesan museum of sacred art in Rossano (Cs) . The text contains the gospels of Matthew and Mark. It is written in silver and gold inks and has a series of 14 illuminations, illustrating the life and teaching of Christ. The superb miniatures make it one of the oldest illuminated manuscripts of the new testament. The Codex Purpureus known world-wide for its peculiar reddish colour of its pages , written in silver and gold inks , is an interesting text on the biblical religious artistical and historical side. A one of a kind masterpiece, symbol of a region, Calabria, that has always been a crossroad between the east and the west.

The evangeliary is written on purple parchment just like other similar codexes Beratinus Sinopensis Petropolitanus.

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

Archdiocese Rossano-Cariati, (Cosenza), Italy

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

The manuscript belongs to the diocesan museum of sacred art of the Archdiocese Rossano-Cariati (Cosenza)

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

Father Nando Ciliberti, director of the diocesan Cultural Heritage Office

2.4 Contact details

Name: Father Nando Ciliberti

Address: Archdiocese Rossano-Cariati
(Cosenza):
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3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

The "Codex Purpureus Rossanensis Σ", also known as the Rossanensis, owes its title "Purpureus" to the reddish colour of its sheets (in Latin purpureus). It belongs to the diocese Rossano-Cariati and it is kept in the diocesan Museum of sacred art in Rossano (Cs) Italy.

It contains the whole gospel of Matthew and almost all the gospel of Mark, which only verses 14-20 are of the last chapter are missing. The codex is written in biblical capital letters, such forms were used since II c. This style was already regulated in the III c remaining in use up to the IX c, with geographical and chronological changes. In the Codex of Rossano the biblical capital letter is quite decorative, monumental with a strong chiaroscuro, indicating its period and the sacred-ideological use of it. Biblical capital letter is also used in the letter from Eusebio to Carpiano, but it is less decorative, in fact there is a moderate chiaroscuro and a quite sober style. As a mark of distinction we can see the uncial capital, that we can see in the illuminations, the incipit of the chapters and the colophone of Matthew's gospel, notes on the Eusebian canons, the letters and the division of the sheets. It is an ancient decorative writing, used in the V c and in use in the byzantine world much longer than the capital letter, up to XI c. We reckon that all the texts were written by one author. Take notice of the capital letter used on page 241, in the portrait of Mark and the scroll that the evangelist is writing: it is a very elementar capital letter, very decorative and artificial, which cannot be seen in ancient nor in other Byzantine manuscripts. The ink is a golden one for the first three verses of each gospel, while the remaining is written in silver. There are fourteen illuminations in the Rossanensis Codex. Twelve illustrating episodes from the life of Christ, another one was meant as the cover of the whole manuscript, the last one is a portrait of Saint Mark, which occupies the whole page. All the text and the illuminations were painted on purple parchment. The parchment is thicker in the pages used for the illuminations. The author divided the miniatures from the actual text.

3.4 History/provenance

Whether the codex came from east to us aren't still very clear. The most popular theory is that the codex was brought here by escaping monk in the second half of VIII c.

How the codex was brought to Calabria by the monks isn't still very clear. The most popular theory is that the codex was brought to byzantine Rossano by a group of monks during the iconoclastic persecutions, in the first half of the VIII c. Rossano at that time was a very important fortress-city and an important political centre in the south of Italy (540 - 1460) it was in fact known as Byzantine Rossano.

The codex probably had a huge influence in the copying of manuscript which was very popular in the IX-X c in Rossano. We can admire a lot of Greek manuscripts in the world written in capital and lower case letter, which were written in-loco in IX-X c. some Codexes were brought to Calabria in those times, just like the Rossanensis Codex, and some sheets of a Codex by Cassio Dione dating V c., Vat. Gr. 1288, this were a source of inspiration for monks, that were continuing the tradition of copying sacred manuscripts.

The copying of sacred manuscripts was practiced in the Pathirion abbey in Rossano and the rossanene-born St. Nilo was one of the main supporters of such tradition, in this abbey Greek manuscripts were kept, read and copied from XI c.

Anyhow it is nowadays still not very clear the provenance of the Codex, the precious text is still studied and admired by scholars of old manuscripts and byzantine art, new testament and biblical philology researchers. Some claim that the Rossanensis was written in the South of Italy. Some scholars even suggest that it was probably written in Rossano, but most of them agree that it was written in an eastern centre, probably Antiochia (Siria) or a centre in Minor Asia, like Efeso or Cappadocia or Costantinople, or Alessandria in Egypt. But all of them agree that the Codex dates VI c. Prof. Fernanda de Maffei from the University of Rome claims, in a series of studies and reports carried out between 1974 and 1978, that the Rossanensis was written in Cesarea in Palestine.

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Name: **Arcidiocesi di Rossano -Cariati** Address: Via Arcivescovado,5
87067 Rossano (CS)

Telephone 0039.0983.520282 Facsimile 00.39.0983-521750 Email naberti@alice.it

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name **Office for Cultural heritage of the diocese Rossano-Cariati - Diocesan museum of sacred art** Address Via Arcivescovado,5 - 87067 Rossano (CS)

Telephone 0039.0983.520282 Facsimile 00.39.0983-521750 Email naberti@alice.it

4.3 Legal status

The Codex Purpureus Rossanensis is a documentary heritage belonging to the archdiocese Rossano-Cariati. The diocese is responsible for the manuscript. It cannot be moved anywhere without the bishop's permission, along with the permission of the diocesan council and the cultural heritage commission of the diocese.

4.4 Accessibility

The codex is accessible only to scholars and students of antique christianity. All the studies are conducted on a copy of the codex or on digital reproductions, which are now possible after the restoration promoted by the ministry of cultural heritage. For what concerns fruitions by general public, the codex will be exhibited in the diocesan museum of sacred art. A digital fruition of the manuscript has been sponsored by the ministry of cultural heritage and region Calabria.

MULTIBAND AND 3D ACQUISITION OF THE CODEX PURPUREUS ROSSANENSIS

We would like to create a digital copy of the codex to allow scholars and public a better fruition of the codex . our project can be summarized in the following points:

1. Deepen the knowledge of the manuscript
2. Allowing the consultation without browsing the original text
3. Bettering the readability of the text,
4. Collecting scientific information on the documentary heritage in a non-invasive way
5. Guarantee a non-invasive knowledge of the documentary heritage

The following are the basic requirement to develop this project:

- 1 Acquisition of the images through digital multiband , this device can collect information which are not visible to the bare eye

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- 2 Tridimensional acquisition with scanner
 - 3 3D recreation of the documentary
 - 4 Creation of a data bank of the images and the 3D models of the Codex
 - 5 Providing of a software for the consultation of the data with harvesting possibility
 - 6 Non-invasive acquisition and analysis of the documentary heritage
 - 7 Creation of a scientific report to testify all the process concerning the acquisition of the digital data.

The output of the services are the following:

1. Multispectral images of the document (RGB, IR e UV) for an amount of over 6.016 multispectral images;
2. The images in high definition RGB 36,3 Mpixel for an amount of 752 images in high definition
3. 3D model of the codex for a total of 376 models in format .obj
4. software open source for consultation of the data with harvesting possibility
5. software for the visualisation of the 3D models in off-line mode. Loaded on external hard disc
6. 1 year hosting on virtual server (Linux/Windows) of the repository (extra service);
7. Teaching the staff on how to use the format (extra service)
8. scientific report

We will rely on modern technologies to do all this, such as multi band acquisition and 3D modeling. All this will guarantee the storage of important data about the Codex

Activities	WEEKS										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Digitalization activities											
Multispectral acquisition											
3D acquisition											
Creation of a data bank of the images scannerized											
Software for consultation of the data bank											
Scientific report											

4.5 Copyright status

The original document of the codex as well as its visual and photographic reproductions are protected under the laws of copyright, patents and other intellectual property.

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

The Codex Purpureus Rossanensi is kept in the diocesan museum of sacred art since 18 october 1952. Scipone Camporota was the first mention it in 1831, thus numbering in order the sheets. *Purpureus Rossanensis* In 1846 Cesare Malpica wrote about it in a book entitled Tuscany Umbria and Magnia Grecia l'Umbria . It was presented to Europe in 1880 by two German scholars Oskar von Gebhart and Adolf von Arnach in a booklet, published in Lipsia entitled "Evangeliorum Codex Graecus Purpureus Rossanensis",

Twenty years after the last exhibition of the Codex in Venice (Greeks in the west) ,the Codex has been recently exhibited in the sumptuous Quirinale state rooms during the official visit of Pope Francis to president Giorgio Napolitano on 14 November 2013.

The most precious witness about the authenticity of the Codex can be considered the report by dr. Cristina Misiti, director of the ICRCPAL (institute for preservation and restoration of book and archive heritage) where the codex has been restored.

CENTRAL INSTITUTE FOR THE RESORATION AND PRESERVATION OF ARCHIVES AND OLD MANUSCRIPTS

The central institute of restoration and preservation of ancient manuscripts had the role to restore and examine throughfully the Codex Purpureus Rossanensis, treating the 188 sheets to a careful analysis, whose main task was to restore , without altering, the precious manuscript.

Analyses made in the technology laboratory by stereomicroscope, have brought to the attention the animal origin of the manuscript, surely of ovine origin, as well as the technique used on the manuscript which can be considered quite detailed and homogeneous,

In the physics laboratory the x ray analysis has individuated the colours used in the illuminations.

The molecular and elemental analysis(XRF, Raman, IR) examined in the chemistry laboratory, as well as for microscope analysis (electronic microscope sem) in the biology laboratory, gave us a full glimpse of the codex's palette,

A constant in the manuscript is the presence of lapislazzuli and gold, and purple used to dye the manuscript, gold and silver inks , used for the writing of the text and the origin of the material used.

We have , in addition, observed that causes of deterioration of the Codex can be traced back to the last century, especially during the last restoration between 1917 and 1919 by Nestore Leoni, and other key factors such as exposure to light and humidity, that have somehow partly changed the perception of the object.

At the moment we have in front of us a purple codex, whose illuminations were covered with a shiny layer of animal glue, used to protect the miniatures and a layer of silk used to protect fragments of the silver inks.

Some fragments of the illuminations are quite transparent, due to a strong pressure during the second restoration so the beautiful purple colour, now results in an undefinable brown.

The restoration by Nestore Leoni in 1917 and 1919, was very careful and technical , the restorer used the techniques of those times, but through the years the glue turned yellow and the pressure used to fix it , caused damages which are not longer possible to restore.

Taking a look at the chromo-phototypes by Antonio Munos in 1907, one can clearly understand how the restoration of the last century was quite invasive

Nevertheless we are in front of an excellent manuscript, as for what concerns the style and the materials used.

The occasion of such a 'hospitalization' in our institute has given us the change to start a series of archive and photo researches, bringing to light those documents referring to the restoration in 1919.

We are now able to indicate some important stages, thanks to the photos preserved in National Photo Cabinet.

All the researches and restoration work carried out at the ICRCPAL institute confirm the authenticity of the codex, which is a manuscript dating VI century, this is a result of our analysis on the origin, techniques and colours used on the manuscript.

We have also carefully checked that there were not manumissions, re-paintings, erasings on the illuminations, which have to be considered of the same period of the manuscript, as stated in the studied by W. C. Loerke, G. Cavallo e J. Gribomont (Rome , 1987).

THE DIRECTOR
Dr. Cristina Misiti

5.2 World significance

The Codex Purpureus Rossanensis is truly a unique manuscript, aside from its antiquity , it is the oldest representation of the life of Christ existing in a Greek manuscript.

The Rossanensis is the most precious work of art kept in Calabria and is a witness of the link with the

Greek-byzantine civilization , who settled in Calabria in those times

The precious evangeliary is not an isolated proof of byzantine art in Rossano, in fact byzantine culture is present in countless monuments in the city. We should not forget the byzantine Oratoria of St Mark. Pilerio, the icon of the Madonna Achirópita, venerated in the local cathedral, the monastery of new Odighitria or Pathirion, as well as the general look of the old town. A sudden loss of the codex would signify an impoverishment, not only for Calabria but for the whole world.

5.3 Comparative criteria:

Time:

For what concerns time of the Codex , which is probably the oldest biblical manuscript of Christianity , many scholars agree that it dates back to the VI c. This point is summarized in the report by Mrs. Misiti that I have enclosed in the report

Subject and theme

The Codex testifies a perfect synergy between faith and science, religiosity and refined technique that we can admire in both the texts and the illuminations, it is a kind of summary of the platonic and Greek byzantine ideologies of 'beautiful' 'true' and 'good'.

It is a manuscript full of passion and pathos, imbued with deep spirituality. The attention of the observer is struck by the reddish colour of the purple parchment, reminding us of Byzantines emperors, and by the gold and silver inks used for the texts.

The structure of the manuscript suggest that we are in front of a manuscript, probably made up of two volumes, at the time being we can only admire one half of the whole documentary heritage.

The illuminated pages tell the earthy adventure of Christ, his encounters with humanity , his becoming a man in an ascending climax that will lead to resurrection .

Form and style

The attention of the observer is struck by the reddish colour of the purple parchment, reminding us of Byzantines emperors, and by the gold and silver inks used for the texts written biblical capital letters. The whole structure of the text suggests that it was a manuscript divided in two tomes, of the four gospels, with an introduction at the beginning. We can almost surely affirm that the part which is still kept is half of the whole manuscript

The Codex Purpureus Rossanensis is one of the seven illuminated codexes in the world, three of them are written in Syriac and four in Greek . The perfect synergy between the text and illuminations is peculiar to this masterpiece..

Global impact:

The Codex Purpureus Rossanensis is one of the seven illuminated Codexes in the world. It is probably the best preserved manuscript, considering that it was written in the VI c.

The codex has always had a massive impact on people, groups of visitors, art experts and tourist flock every year to Rossano to see this unique masterpiece.

For this reason we think that the Codex is a truly unique masterpiece of Byzantine book production, and at the same time it has all the needed qualifications to be nominated to the Memory of the World list of the UNESCO.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

The manuscript has to be considered an unicum (one of a kind) in the artistic production of byzantine manuscripts . it is indeed a unique book on the religious, documentary and political side.

6.2 Integrity

According to the analyses and the studies made at the institute for preservation and restoration of book and archive heritage, the Codex can be considered in good conditions
