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HEXAPLARIC MATERIAL IN THE ALBANO-ARMENIAN PALIMPSESTS FROM MT. SINAI

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Among the many treasures that are concealed in the library of St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mt. Sinai, the palimpsest manuscripts Sin.georg. N 13 and N 55 of the “New collection” represent an outstanding jewel. It is Zaza Aleksidze’s merit to have detected that their lower layer contains the only manuscript remains of the Caucasian “Albanians” of the Middle Ages\(^1\) and to have initiated a fruitful international cooperation of scholars that resulted in the edition of the “Albanian” texts in 2009.\(^2\)

Apart from the “Albanian” layer, the two palimpsests – which have been proven to represent one codex from the point of view of the Georgian upper text\(^3\) – contain a total of 84 pages (42 fols.) that are remnants of two different Armenian manuscripts.\(^4\) The first of them, written in considerably slanted majuscules, contained the Pauline Epistles together with the so-called “Euthalian” material. Of the 10 fols. that have survived as bifolates in Sin.georg. N 13 and 55, two pertain to the works of Euthalius of Sulca, one to the Prolegomena, an introductory chapter depicting the life of the Apostle,\(^5\) and the other one, to the list of testimonies, i.e., the register

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\(^5\) The bifoliate consisting of N 13 fol. 71 and 72 contains the passage where Euthalius, basing himself on the chronological data established by Eusebius, relates St. Paul’s persecution of Christians, his conversion on his journey to Damascus, his capture in Rome and his trials; it corresponds to par. III of the edition of the Greek text by Zacagni (Laurentius Alexander Zacagnius, Collectanea Monumentorum Veterum Ecclesiae Graecae, ac Latinae. Tomus I, Romae 1698, pp. 529-530, reprinted in Jean-Paul Migne’s Patrologia Graeca, vol. 85, col. 708-709), to the Armenian text as edited by Aristaces Vardanian (Euthalius Werke.
of quotations from Old Testament texts and other sources within St. Paul’s letters.⁶ On the other three bifoliates we find one passage each of three of the epistles (I Cor. 6.10-20, Heb. 11.35-12.7, and Phile. 10–25 with subscriptum).⁷

The second Armenian original, written in rounded majuscules (bolorgic erkat’agir) as well but in a totally different style, comprises 32 fols. whose original arrangement as conjugates has been preserved in the palimpsests. In the remains of Sin.georg. N 13 and 55, its contents are clearly confined to the three Old Testament books of Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and Sapientia Solomonis; it is well possible, however, that the original codex pertained to the well attested type of manuscripts styled Bank’ Solomoni which contain the same set of books preceded only by Proverbs,⁸ the fourth work attributed to king Solomon,⁹ albeit there is no trace of the latter book in the palimpsests.¹⁰

Even though the state of preservation of most of the 64 pages is extremely bad and the decipherment was further hampered by the fact that the upper script was applied horizontally over the lower script here so that many of the original lines have been covered to a large extent, the identification of the individual passages and the restoration of the original text has been possible in most cases due to the close affinity of the wording to that represented in Zohrab’s Bible edition. This has also enabled us to calculate the extent of the original manuscript. Assuming that it contained just the three books of Ecclesiastes, Canticum, and Sapientia Salomonis, it must

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⁶ What we have in the bifoliate consisting of Sin.georg. N 55, fol. 28 and 29, is the final list of the chapter which summarises the quotations that occur in more than one letter. Of the eleven items constituting this list, the bifoliate contains all but the first; it represents an extremely important ancient witness to the rather divergent tradition of this part of the original manuscript even though the bifoliate was badly affected by the fire. Cf. A. Zeytounyan, Mayr cowca hayerēn eragrac Maštoc i, pp. I–XXXI, pp. 117 and 298 in Danelia’s edition.


⁸ Cf. S. Peter Cowe, A Typology of Armenian Biblical Manuscripts, Revue des Études Arménienes N.S. 18, 1984, p. 60 as to the type. One example is the XIVth c. minuscule ms. no. 76 of the Matenadaran, cf. the description in Ō. Eganyan, A. Zeytounyan, P’ Ant’a abyan, Mayr c’ owc’a hak hayerēn jēagrac’ Māstoc’i anow n Mātenadarani / General’nyj katalog armjanskix rukopisey Mātenadarana imeni Māstoc’o, h. A / t. 1, Erevan 1984, col. 307–310. The specimen displayed there represents Eccl. 9,11, the image of the majuscule fly leaf, Ps. 20,10.

⁹ The fifth book attributed to Solomon, the so-called Psalmi Salomonis, seems never to have existed in Armenian just as it was not contained in the oldest Greek codices such as the Codex Alexandrinus, cf. Alfred Rahlf, Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum grace iuxta LXX interpretes, Stuttgart ³ 1949, vol. I, p. XXXII); it is not contained in the Zohrab Bible, not even in its appendix (after p. 836) which contains other apocrypha such as the book of Sirach or the third book of Esdras.

have comprised 12 gatherings consisting of 4 conjugates each, i.e., a total of 48 conjugates (96 folios), one third of which (16 conjugates) have survived in the palimpsest. Albeit no gathering has been preserved in toto, the distribution of the palimpsest folios within the original gatherings and the sequence of the three books can be determined with certainty, given that one conjugate (Sin.georg. N 13, fol. 87–80, gathering IV) extends from Ecclesiastes into Canticum and another one (the first conjugate of gathering V, now lost) must have extended in a similar way from Canticum into Sapientia.\(^{11}\)

In spite of the close similarity of the Armenian text in the palimpsests with the textus receptus as represented by the Zohrab Bible, the Sinai original, which must antedate the manuscript perused by Y. Zōhrapean by at least four centuries,\(^ {12}\) is an extremely important witness to the development of the Old Testament in its Armenian version, not only because it is likely to represent the oldest specimen available of the texts in question but also because it has preserved at least one immediate trace of a close relationship to the Syro-Hexapla\(^ {13}\) in using Origenic asterisks to mark a passage as an addition.\(^ {14}\) The passage in question is Cant. 4.6bc, which appears in the first three lines of Sin.georg. N 13, fol. 80v (by the way, the first passage of the Song of Songs present in the palimpsests); cf. Img. 1 showing the lines with the asterisks highlighted and the transcription added below.

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\(^{11}\) Cf. the edition (vol. III of Gippert-Schulze-Aleksidze-Mahé), pp. IV-1–2 for a detailed account.

\(^{12}\) The Zohrab Bible relies upon the Venice ms. no. 1508 dated A.D. 1319; cf. Claude Cox, The textual character of the manuscript printed as text in Zōhrapean’s Bible, *Revue des Études Arméniennes* N.S. 18, 1984, pp. 69-83. For the Armenian palimpsest, which is undated, the upper layer constitutes a terminus ante quem; this layer is not dated either but can hardly be older than the X\(^{\text{th}}\) or XI\(^{\text{th}}\) century (cf. Z. Aleksidze, M. Shanidze, L. Khev suriani and M. Kavtarava, Catalogue of Georgian Manuscripts discovered in 1975 at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai / Katalogos geōrgianōn xeirographōn eurethentōn kata to 1975 eis tôn ieran monēn tou theobadistou orous Sina Agias Aikaterinēs / bofob ἀρχαίοι χρόνοι ἄρχοντας ἐκ τῶν παλαιώτερων Τουριστικού Περιπλάνητα της Αγίας Αικατερίνης, Athens 2005, p. 385 / 68 / 257 as to Sin.georg. N 13). On the basis of its paleographical features, the Armenian palimpsest may be dated to the VII\(^{\text{th}}\)-IX\(^{\text{th}}\) cc.; cf. the forthcoming edition, pp. I-15 ff.


\(^{14}\) Cf. S. Peter Cowe, An Armenian Job Fragment from Sinai and Its Implications, *Oriens Christianus* 76, 1992, pp. 123-157 as to another fragment from Mt. Sinai showing such traces.
(Until the day will dwindle and the shadows will bustle,)

*Ե Ս Ի Ն Ձ Է Ն Գ Ի Ա Ց Ի*

* I shall go myself

* to the mountain of myrrh and
to the hill of frankincense. * You are all beautiful, my friend, and there is no spot in you.

The purpose of the Origenic marks we have here is clarified by the Syro-Hexapla where the same marks relate to a marginal note stating that the two verses ‘I shall go myself to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense’ following after the beginning of Cant. 4,6 (‘Until the day will dwindle and the shadows will bustle’, identical with Cant. 2.17) were not even found in the Theodoticon; cf. Img. 2 displaying the passage as contained in the Codex Ambrosianus in detail.¹⁵

![Img. 2: Cant. 4,6–7 in the Syro-Hexapla (fol. 71ra)](image)

Not present are, even in Theodotion’s work,
not these two verses.

It may further be noted that by its wording, too, the Armenian text we have in the palimpsest is closer to the Syro-Hexapla than to the Peshitta in that only the former has an equivalent of Arm. բու ինձէն ‘I myself’ in էնա էնա էն here, matching both Greek (πορεύσομαι) ἐμαυτῷ of the Septuagint and էնա էնա էն (էնա էնա էն) of the Oshki Bible. In this connection, there is no difference as to the later Armenian tradition as represented by the Zohrab Bible; here, however, the three initial words are arranged in another order, քաղաք բու ինձէն vs. բու ինձէն քաղաք.

Other relations of the Armenian text to the Syro-Hexapla are noteworthy as well. This is true, e.g., for Cant. 7.13/14 where both the palimpsest (Sin.georg. N 13, fol. 95r, ll. 9-10, cf. Img.

¹⁵Cf. the facsimile edition by Antonio Maria Ceriani, Codex Syro-Hexaplaris Ambrosianus, photolithographice editus (Monumenta Sacra et Profana ex codicibus praesertim Bibliothecae Ambrosianae, t. VII), Mediolani 1874, p. 71r, and Fridericus Field, Origenis Hexaplarum quae supersunt; sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta, t. II: Jobus – Malachias, Oxonii 1875, p. 417. – The two verses in question (4.6b and c) were instead taken from Aquila’s translation; cf. Field, ib. n. 17.

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and the Zohrab Bible exhibit the clause զոր են մայր իմ ‘which my mother gave me’ the equivalent of which is missing in the Septuagint as well as the Syriac Peshitta and the Georgian texts of the Bakar Bible and the Austrian Cod. Vind. georg. 4, only the first Georgian redaction, represented by the Oshki and Mcxeta Bibles, having a matching phrase (ռոմելի մոս ռոմելի իմ) դեդաման Կեմի ու առաջադրանքը). The source for this can be found in the Syro-Hexapla where a corresponding clause appears inserted into the text, marked as an addition from Symmachos; cf. Img. 4 showing the passage in question.

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16 Note that the two lines in question are extremely damaged, only զոր են մայր իմ having been preserved of the clause in question (highlighted in the image).

17 Cf. ջերմու հայ երկր բանակության առաջադրանքը, հաճախ առաջադրանքը索取, թմբարգո 10, 1983, p. 85

18 Cf. the facsimile edition by Ceriani, fol. 71v, and Field, Origenis, p. 422 with n. 26.
Another agreement with the Syro-Hexapla is found at the end of Eccl. 3.16 where both the palimpsest (Sin.georg. N 55, fol. 46r l. 8, cf. Img. 5) and the Zohrab Bible use the word երիտասարդ  "pious" (highlighted in the image), matched by Georgian ღორღოძოლი ‘id.’ in the Oshki Bible and ღორღოძოლი ‘devout’ in the Bakar Bible. These terms agree with Gk. εὐσεβής, the reading attested for all major codices, while the established text of the Septuagint has the antonym ღორღოძ ‘ungodly’, in its turn matched by the Peshitta (ʿawwālā ‘wicked person’) and the Mcxeta Bible (ღორღოძ ‘wrangler’). The “positive” alternative is confirmed by the Syro-Hexapla again which has спешיר דֶהָלְתָא ‘pious’, lit. ‘of good piety’ (cf. Img. 6 below).

All images of the palimpsest provided in the present context exhibit a peculiar feature of the original manuscript, which consists in the letters of the first line of each page being considerably enlarged. This feature has not occurred to me in any other majuscule manuscript of Armenian provenance; however, it does have an interesting counterpart in another Georgian codex of St. Catherine’s monastery, viz. ms. Sin.georg. N 48, one of the two manuscripts revealed by Zaza Aleksidze as containing parts of ოქრაჭეჭორაჭი ‘wrangler’. In this manuscript, of which but 14 leaves have survived, the first line of a majority of pages is written in majuscules while the rest of the page is written in minuscules. It remains one of the many riddles that have still to be solved on Mt. Sinai whether there is any causal relation between these two phenomena or not.

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20 Cf. the facsimile edition by Ceriani, fol. 67r.
21 The images are based on ultraviolet photographs recorded by Z. Aleksidze and D. Tskhadadze in the course of the ARMAZI project in 2000 (i.e., within the project “Caucasian Languages and Cultures: Electronic Documentation”, which was kindly supported by the Volkswagen Foundation from 1999 to 2002; cf. http://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de and http://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de/armaz3.htm). The photographing was undertaken within the sub-project “Digitization of the Albanian palimpsest manuscripts from Mt. Sinai”). For the purpose of displaying the lower layer in the edition, the photographs were digitally processed by the present author. Unfortunately there was no opportunity to provide a full set of multispectral images for the Armenian parts of the palimpsests during the sojourn of the members of the edition project in the monastery in October, 2003.
23 Cf. the image of fol.13v-14r printed in the catalogue by Aleksidze / Shanidze / Khevsuriani / Kavtaria, p. 565. During a sojourn in the monastery in May, 2009, the present author had the occasion to inspect the ms.; according to this inspection, the following pages have a first line in majuscules: 2rv, 3rv, 4rv, 5rv, 21v.
6rv, 7v, 11v, 12v, 13v, 14r; the following pages have minuscules throughout: 1rv, 7r, 8r, 9r, 10rv, 11r, 12r, 13r, 14v. Fol. 9v has the first three lines in majuscules, fol. 8v, the first five lines. In accordance with the running text, the pages must be arranged in the following order: 1rv, 4rv, 5rv, 6rv, 2rv, 3rv, 7rv through 14rv.