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4.12 Christian Palestinian Aramaic

4.12.1 Manuscript Evidence and Modern Editions

Christian-Palestinian-Aramaic fragments of Ecclesiasticus are preserved of three different manuscripts. The first fragment has been published by Duensing,¹ who says that it was a piece of parchment used to repair a Syriac manuscript, but he does not give any further information about this Syriac manuscript.² No more information is given about the physical aspect of this CPA fragment, which contains three short passages of Ben Sira: Sir 12:17-18; 13:3-4; and 13:7. The edition and the description suggest that what was published is a strip of parchment cut along the width and that the leaf contained three columns. This would hence be the first witness to a CPA manuscript written in three columns.

The second fragment is a leaf of palimpsest parchment found in Cairo Genizah (Cambridge, Univ. Library, T.-S. 12.191). It was published by Smith-Lewis and Dunlop-Gibson³ in 1900 and reprinted by the same two years later. It gives the text of Sir 18:18-19:1. The leaf presents various *lacunae*, notably on the upper and on the lower parts of the right column of the recto and, thus, on the left column of the verso. Because of this, few letters or words are readable in Sir 18:18; 18:21-22; 18:31-32; and 19:1. The text was reedited by Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff, who made emendations and numerous propositions to fill the *lacunae*.⁴

The third manuscript is a leaf cut in two parts, found in the store-room of the Great Mosque in Damascus. The two fragments were published in 1905 by Schulthess as II 4 and II 10.⁵ They belonged to a group of seven original parchment leaves, all cut in two parts, bound together, and reused for Arabic comments on the Quran.⁶ The CPA text was reedited by Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff, who have filled some of the *lacunae*.⁷ The present location of these fragments is unknown; thus, the last editors were not able to check the readings of Schulthess. It has to be noticed that the transcription of Schulthess presents an oddity: the recto side of the fragments contains together 24 lines of text, while the verso side contains 23 lines. The text though does not translate properly the Greek *Vorlage* on the verso side. Precisely around the cut of the two pieces, on the right column, the translation of *δυνάμειος κραταιῶς* “mighty power” (Sir 46:5) is missing. On the left column, the size of the lacuna – one line only – seems too short to contain the translation of *ἐναντι ἐκκλησίας* “oppose an assembly” (Sir 46:7), which

1. Duensing, *Christlich-palästinisch-aramäische Texte und Fragmente*, 126.

2. Duensing, *Christlich-palästinisch-aramäische Texte und Fragmente*, 86: “Nach dem über die Apokryphen Bemerkten dürften wir die kleinen Sirachfragmente, die auf einem Pergamentstreifen stehen, mit dem in einer syrischen Handschrift ein Riß verklebt war, einer Bibelhandschrift zuweisen” “Following what was said about the apocrypha, we may assign the small fragments of Ben Sira to a biblical manuscript; the fragments are written on a strip of parchment that was used to glue together a tear in a Syriac manuscript.”

3. Smith Lewis and Dunlop Gibson, *Palimpsests Fragments*, 81-82; reprinted in A. Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and Transitus Mariae: With Texts from the Septuagint, the Corân, the Peshitta, and from a Syriac Hymn in a Syro-Arabic Palimpsest of the Fifth and Other Centuries: With an Appendix of Palestinian Syriac Texts from the Taylor-Schechter Collection* (Studia Sinaitica 11; London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1902), ٤٣٤-٣٥ (= 434-35).

4. Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff, *The Christian Palestinian Aramaic Old Testament*, 203-04.

5. Schulthess, *Christlich-Palästinische Fragmente*, 39-40.

6. Schulthess, *Christlich-Palästinische Fragmente*, 11.

7. Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff, *The Christian Palestinian Aramaic Old Testament*, 205-06.

should be rendered by ܦܠܘܘܢܢ ܩܪܘܢܢ. It is therefore not impossible that Schulthess omitted one line of text on the right column and miscalculated the real size of the *lacuna* on the left column.

In Sir 46:5 (col. a, l. 11), Müller-Kessler and Sokoloff proposed to fill the *lacuna* as follows: [ܡܠܢ]ܩ “(heard) his voice”; but this *lacuna* could be also filled by [ܡܡ]ܩ “(heard) him,” which would fit better with the Greek text.

4.12.2 Relevant Variants towards LXX-Sir and Translation Technique

All fragments are remarkably close to the text of LXX-Sir (cf. 4.3), especially in the order of the words. Nevertheless, some differences can be noted. In Sir 18:26, *καῖρός* “condition” is not translated. In Sir 18:32, we find ܦܪܘܘܩܩܢܢ ܡܘܘܘܢܢܢ “by the contact of luxury,” where the Greek text has *συμβολῆ αὐτῆς* “by its contact”. In Sir 45:26, we have ܦܪܘܘܢܢ ܦܪܘܘܢܢ ܘܘܢܢ ܕܕܘܢܢܢ “may God grant to you wisdom,” whereas the Greek has “may he grant to you wisdom”. In Sir 13:3, as Duensing noticed it, the word ܩܘܘܩܢܢ certainly translates better the variant *προσαπειλήθη* “he will be disturbed” than *προσδεηθήσεται* “he will plead”.

It has also to be noticed that twice, the Greek verb *γίγνομαι* “to become,” is translated by CPA-Sir with the verb “to be,” although usually CPA prefers to use the passive form of “to make.” In Sir 18:33, we find ܦܪܘܘܢܢ “(don’t) be” instead of ܦܪܘܘܢܢܢ “(don’t) be made off” to translate *γίνου* “(don’t) become”; in Sir 46:1, we have ܦܪܘܘܢܢ “he was” instead of ܦܪܘܘܢܢܢ “he was made” to translate *ἐγένετο* “he became.”

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