

EPHRAIM IN CHRISTIAN PALESTINIAN ARAMAIC

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- [1] Christian Palestinian Aramaic was a language used in Palestine, Transjordan and Egypt during the Roman, Byzantine and Arab periods till the thirteenth century. It was the language spoken by the people to such an extent that it became necessary to translate Christian texts from Greek into Aramaic for the use of the Melkite Church. Documents in Christian Aramaic appeared in or just before the Justinianic period. They are written in a kind of uncial Estranghelo till the ninth century onwards (I call these documents “texts of the ancient period”), then in a cursive handwritting (I call them “mediaeval texts”). Places where these documents have been elaborated are not exactly known; one can say only that some parchment leaves have been found in the Byzantine laura of Khirbet Mird in the Judean desert and that books have been kept and probably written in Saint Catherine’s monastery in Sinai. It is also probable that some books were written in the area of Jerusalem and in Samaria. Because all of the texts in the so-called Christian Palestinian Aramaic were written and used by the Melkite Christians, I have proposed to call the language and the writing “Melkite Aramaic” to distinguish the language clearly from the Syriac, which is a very near cousin but another language. Some Melkite Aramaic texts have survived, most of them in fragments.

They consist mainly of biblical books of the Old and New Testament, liturgical lectionaries, liturgical rituals (marriage, ordination, benediction of the waters, hymns, prayers, with the exception of anaphoras), Christian apocryphal and hagiographical books. There are also few fragments from the patristic literature since from this last category, some texts of only three Fathers have been preserved in Melkite Aramaic, by Athanasius (*Vita Antonii*), Cyril of Jerusalem (*Katecheses*) and fragments of homilies (*Mimre*) by Ephraim and Pseudo-Ephraim.

- [2] My aim here is not to give a full critical study on the texts by Ephraim preserved in Melkite Aramaic. This duty would be better done by Andrew Palmer and Bernard Outtier who are the specialists in Ephraim. I wish only to give a little contribution to the conference and congratulate Palmer for his work in the field. I think it is worth making known to the admirers of this enlightening and holy figure of the Syriac culture—I mean Ephraim—that he was translated also into Melkite Aramaic. So I limit my contribution and give the evidences, for the sake of further studies.

EPHRAIM MIMRO DE POENITENCIA

- [3] The only text in Melkite Aramaic surely attributed to Ephraim was published by P. Kokowzoff in 1906, *Nouveaux fragments syropalestiniens de la Bibliothèque impériale publique de Saint-Petersbourg*.¹ Kokowzoff presents a manuscript bought by the Imperial Library in 1883, from the collection of Mgr Porphyrius Ouspenski.
- [4] According to a handwritten note, this manuscript came from Sinai. It is composed of two leaves and now bears the reference, 'Saltikov Shchedrin Library, syr. ns. 21.' Kokowzoff gives a detailed description of the folios, makes a comparative study of the use of the punctuation of some letters and of the orthographical peculiarities and a lexicon. He gives an account of the text identifying one passage on folio 2 r–v with a *mimro de poenitencia* by Ephraim, according to the explicit statement of the text. This text

¹ P. Kokowzoff, *Nouveaux fragments syropalestiniens de la Bibliothèque impériale publique de Saint-Petersbourg* (Imprimerie de l'Académie impériale des Sciences; Saint-Petersbourg, 1906) 39 p. & 4 pl. A review of this book has been made by F. Schulthess in *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 61 (1907): 206–7.

corresponds to the Greek text edited by J.S. Assemani² During Bernard Outtier's seminar in the Section *des sciences religieuses, École pratique des hautes études*, we have studied this passage known also in Georgian, Armenian, Old-Slavic, Arabic and pre-Carolingian Latin. The comparison made by B. Outtier leads to the conclusion that all the versions were translated from a versified heptasyllabic Greek text, itself translated from a now lost original versified Syriac text. The Melkite Aramaic text is a very tight version which follows the Greek text word for word; it is thus very helpful in ascertaining the original Greek readings. At the end of the Ephraim *mimro*, on the foot of vb, begins a text called "Doctrine from the Egyptian fathers." The Ephraim *mimro* belonged to a manuscript containing various ascetic sayings. The dating of this Aramaic manuscript cannot be precise. According to the script, it must be situated during the "ancient period" (sixth to ninth century); I would be inclined to place it in the eighth century, but one knows the uncertainty of paleographical dates. It would be important to find other leaves of the manuscript; long enquiries are required in comparing the folio to other Melkite Aramaic manuscripts. I have been happy to discover other leaves from the same original manuscript. As a matter of fact, measurements of the Ephraim folio show the same codicological characteristics as the five fragments of the manuscript Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Syr. 17a–e, and the fragment of Princeton, codex Garrett 24, which contain also texts of the *vitae patrum* edited by Hugo Duensing³ in 1906 and revised by Duensing⁴ in 1944. One can see that the Ephraim *mimro* in Melkite Aramaic was transmitted together with other sayings of ascetic literature. Nethertheless, the study realised during B. Outtier's seminar confirms the general characteristics of nearly all the Christian Palestinian Aramaic texts: they belonged to a translated

² J. S. Assemani, *S. patris nostri Ephraemi Syri Opera omnia*, t. I, graece et latine (Rome, 1732) (CPG 3915) 153.

³ H. Duensing, *Christlich-palästinisch-aramäische Texte und Fragmente nebst einer Abhandlung über den Wert der palästinischen Septuaginta* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1906) 40–1.

⁴ H. Duensing, *Neue christlich-palästinisch-aramäische Fragmente*, (Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse Jahrgang 1944, Nr. 9; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1944) 223–7.

literature from Greek, used in the Byzantine Greek church, for the sake of people whose vernacular language was Aramaic. Liturgy was performed in Greek, but lessons from the Holy Scripture and Hymns were translated into the vernacular. *Mimre* by Ephraim have been used in that way, translated not from the Syriac (another dialect of Aramaic), but from the Greek.

TWO MIMRE ATTRIBUTED TO EPHRAIM

- [5] In the same 1906 edition, Hugo Duensing published some palimpsest fragments⁵ that he completed and reconstructed in 1955,⁶ as passages of Ephraimian literature. Three folios and one upper part and one lower part of cut folios contain fragments of a *mimro de timore animarum* and two folios and half contain fragments of a *mimro de anticristo*. The first one is identified with the Greek text in Assemani, series graeca I, 183 sq. The upper Georgian text indicate that the leaves have been re-used in the so-called codex sinaiticus zosimi rescriptus and measurements of the folios show also the same codicological characteristics as the CSZR IV⁷ whose text has remained unidentified till now! It seems also that both writings are from the same hand. This has to be confirmed by a new examination. My studies in Melkite Aramaic paleography are actually in progress ... If this hypothesis is confirmed, that means that the text of CSZR IV could be identified with Ephraimian or pseudo-Ephraimian literature.

- [6] In any case, all these folios that we have presented are good testimonies of the success of Ephraim's work among the Aramaic-speaking people of the Palestinian Melkite church in the post-Justinianic period.

⁵ Duensing, *Christlich-palästinisch-aramäische Texte und Fragmente*, 63–71.

⁶ H. Duensing, *Nachlese christlich-palästinisch-aramäischer Fragmente*, (Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen 1. Philologisch-historische Klasse; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1955) 120–45.

⁷ A. Desreumaux, *Codex sinaiticus Zosimi rescriptus* (Lausanne: Éditions du Zèbre, 1997). New edition, including all codicological characteristics.

APPENDIX I:

Codicological description of the Ephraïm leaf:

Saint-Pétersbourg, Public Library Saltikov Shtchedrin, Syr. NS 21, f. 2.

Catalogue:

H. Goussen, *Über die syrischen Handschriften in Leningrad-Petersbourg* (Oriens Christianus, 3. Ser., Bd. I; Leipzig, 1927) 169–73, no. 21.

N. Pigulevskaya, “Katalog Sirijskikh Rykopisei Leningrada,” *Palestinskij Sbornik* 6 (1960): 109, fig. 5, p. 111.

Dimensions:

haut. : 25,8 a gauche; 25,4 a droite x larg. : 19,6 cm.

2 colonnes mal justifiées a gauche; 22 lignes

r côté chair:

col. a: haut. 19,4 x larg. 6,5 a 7 cm

col. b: haut. 19 x larg. 6,3 a 8 cm

réglure: chacune des 22 horizontales et les 4 verticales

distance des verticales: 6,6 cm (col. a) et 6,3 cm (col. b)

traçage de la première réglure: a 3 cm du bord supérieur ;

traçage de la dernière réglure: a 4 cm du bord inférieur ;

marge droite (ie interne) = distance entre la première réglure

verticale et la pliure de la feuille: 1,1 cm;

marge d'intercolonnement: 1,9 cm;

marge gauche (ie externe) = distance entre la dernière réglure

verticale et le bord de la feuille: 2,8 cm.

interligne moyen: 8,8 mm.

v côté poil:

col. a: haut. 19,3 x larg. 6,5 a 6,9 cm

col. b: haut. 19,3 x larg. 6,3 a 7,2 cm

a la ligne 18, le premier mot commence par une lettrine (de même taille que les autres lettres, mais écrite dans la marge d'intercolonnement et de couleur orangé).

APPENDIX II:

Codicological description of the leaves containing two *mimre* attributed to Ephraïm

Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Syr. 23, f. 1; 2+3; 4; Syr. 22, f. 1+5; 8; 7+6; 2. Catalogue: J. Assfalg, 1963, no. 89, 90, p. 191–3.

Dimensions:

23,5 x 15,5 cm

2 col.: haut. 17,3 cm x larg. 5,5 a 6 cm

22 lignes / col.

interligne: 8 mm

marge sup.: 3,4 cm au moins

marge inf.: 3,5 cm au moins

marge d'intercolonnement: 1,5 a 1,8 cm

module de l'écriture: 4 mm

réglure côté chair; toutes les rectrices horizontales