

R.P. Gordon in collaboration with P.B. Dirksen, *Chronicles*, Vol. IV, 2 of The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version, general editors K.D. Jenner and A. van der Kooij. The Peshitta Institute, Leiden/New York/Köln, 1998.

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[1] This is one more of the splendid OT-Peshitta volumes prepared by the Peshitta Institute at Leiden and one of the final steps towards the completion of the edition which started to appear in 1972.¹ In 1997 a first volume of the Concordance (the Pentateuch) based on this OT-Peshitta text was published.²

[2] The Introduction starts with general remarks (I.) followed by a description of the five oldest manuscripts (II.); next, a list of post-twelfth century manuscripts is given (III.), an *index nominum* (IV.) and a list of *section division* (chapters) of the Syriac text (V.). The number of manuscripts used for the edition is twenty-nine, only four of them are from the first millennium. According to the general principles of the edition, the text is based on *Ms B 21 Inferiore* of the Ambrosian Library (*siglum*: 7a1), but “emended” in many instances and in the missing portions (I xii:18–xvii:25; II xiii:11–xx:3) replaced by *Ms syr. 341* of the National Library at Paris (*siglum*: 8a1). Not only clerical errors of the Ambrosian manuscript are emended (and recorded in the first *apparatus*) but also its readings not supported by at least two other manuscripts up to and including the tenth century. This is the improved editorial policy which is in effect since 1976 when the Book of Kings was published (vol. II, 4). But with regard to the small number of manuscripts from the first millennium in Chronicles, here the

¹ For general information about the editorial policy see P.B. Dirksen, *The Leiden Peshitta edition*, in: R. Lavenant (ed.), *V Symposium Syriacum 1988* (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 236; Rome, 1990) 31–8, and the *Peshitta progress report* by A. van der Kooij in P.B. Dirksen and A. van der Kooij (eds.), *The Peshitta as a Translation* (Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden 8; Leiden 1995) 219–20.—In the same volume on pp. 17–23 P.B. Dirksen writes about *Some Aspects of the Translation Technique in P-Chronicles*.

² *The Old Testament according to the Peshitta version*, Part V: *Concordance*, vol. 1: The Pentateuch, prepared by P.G. Borbone, J. Cook, K.D. Jenner, D.M. Walter in collaboration with J.A. Lund, M.P. Weitzmann (Leiden/New York/Köln, 1997). See my review in *Hugoye* vol. 1, no. 2.

required support for the Ambrosian readings is reduced to *one* manuscript up to the tenth century. There is a detailed list on page xiii with all places where the readings of the Ambrosian manuscript are not retained ("rejected though possible readings" and "obvious clerical errors»).

- [3] This formal procedure of emending the *Ambrosianus* derives from the editorial policy to avoid as much as possible any textual idiosyncresies but to present "the majority text of the ancient manuscripts which together preserve the relevant textual material" (P.B. Dirksen in *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, vol. 236, p. 35). The edition has no claim to give the original text of the Peshitta, "but in general the new edition does make it possible to reconstruct the text which underlies the ancient MSS" (P.B. Dirksen, *ibidem*, p. 37)—this probably means to reconstruct their Archetype. The theory behind this edition surely is to offer a "majority text», a text established by the majority of the manuscripts and thus representing a text current and dominant in the time of the 5/6th to 10th century. But it is not quite clear if the editors hope to offer a supposed "historical" text or a mechanically constructed one which is suitable for avoiding a much too extended critical apparatus but is nothing more than an arbitrary presentation of the textual material. This editorial policy is open to criticism and the editors themselves (especially P.B. Dirksen in his paper presented to the 5th *Symposium Syriacum*) are well aware of its advantages and disadvantages.

- [4] In principle there is no reason to abstain from printing a "historical" majority text of the first millennium, as the impressive conformity of the OT-Peshitta text cannot put in doubt the historical view of this compactness. The variations within this compactness primarily are appropriate for tracing the history of this majority text (and the Archetype) rather than for tracing the "original" Peshitta text. It is difficult to believe that the Archetype behind this text will be *substantially* different than the one printed in the Leiden edition. The term "majority text" depends on its obvious conformity which does not need any improvement by preferring one or another variant reading. Especially in Chronicles—due to the small number of old manuscripts—no real improvement is possible and no danger of textual idiosyncrasies is evident. The general impression (also with regard to the preceding volumes) is that the editors give too much priority to the avoiding

of textual idiosyncrasies. The result is a “better” text not preserved in a single manuscript and which is *not* the Archetype. The deeper problem behind this editorial policy is to put the main text (preferred readings) on a different level than the critical apparatus (rejected readings). But in practice scholars will put both on the same level to look for the text of the Archetype.

- [5] The variations of the proper names are listed in a separate *Index nominum* (p. xxiii–xlv). This is a praiseworthy method to manage the vast material. The twenty-two pages of this *Index* (printed in two columns) make clear that especially in Chronicles it would have been impossible to present these variations in the second apparatus of the edition.

- [6] A remarkable feature of Chronicles in the OT-Peshitta is the substitution of II xi:1—xii:12 by I Reg xii:21–30; xiii:34; xiv:1–9.

- [7] Comparing I xxviii–xxix of S. Lee’s editon (1823) with the Leiden edition, thirty variations can be found, nearly all of them present in the apparatus of the latter and mainly supported by 9a1*fam* and 12a1*fam*. Chapter xxviii: variants are in vers 1. 4. 7 (twice). 9 (twice). 10. 11. 15. 17. 20. 21 (three times).—Chapter xxix: variants are in vers 1. 2 (twice). 4. 9. 11. 16. 17. 18. 21 (twice). 24. 26. 30 (three times).