The Hebrew Bible

Volume 1C
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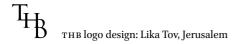Pablo Antonio Torijano Morales (Vetus Latina)
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Christian Brady

13–17.1.4 Peshitta

13–17.1.4.1 Ruth
13–17.1.4.1.1 Background

Translated by the end of the second century C.E., the original text of the Peshiṭta version of Ruth (s-Ruth) – as far as such can be retrieved – represents a generally faithful rendering of the Hebrew text as represented by MT (→ 13.2.2); relatively minor adjustments away from a strictly "literal" rendering are evident throughout, attesting a consistent overarching desire to produce a version of the book that is both conceptually and idiomatically comprehensible to the Syriac reader as well as in which any semantic difficulties in the Hebrew *Vorlage* are resolved. At several points, the translator(s) appear to have taken recourse to LXX (→ 13–17.1.1.1), and in at least two instances (*ad* Ruth 1:21 and 2:4; see below) their word choice may suggest Jewish exegetical influence.

13–17.1.4.1.2 Text and Editions

As of 2016, the book of Ruth has not yet appeared in the Peshiṭta Institute's *Vetus Testamentum Syriace* (Leiden: Brill, 1977–); it is expected to be published before too long, thus fulfilling the urgent *desideratum* for a critical edition of this first in the series of four books otherwise comprising the Syriac canonical subdivision known as "The Book of

Women."[1] The *editio princeps* of s-Ruth was published in Le Jay's "Paris Polyglot" of 1645,[2] based primarily on manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque nationale syr. 6 (Ancien fonds 1 = s[17a5]), a relatively late (seventeenth century) and textually unreliable West Syriac witness.[3] This initial edition of Ruth was subsequently reproduced without any significant improvement by Walton (1655),[4] Lee (1823),[5] and Hübsch (1866; in vocalized Hebrew transcription),[6] though Walton did take the significant, albeit small, first step towards a critical presentation of s-Ruth by including Herbert Thorndike's scanty collation of variant readings (accompanied by a few brief text-critical comments) drawn from two manuscripts furnished respectively by James Ussher and Edward Pococke.[7] The text of s-Ruth appeared again in the editions of Urmia (1852)[8] and

Mosul (1887),[9] which were based generally (i.e., for the Bible overall) on more reliable East Syriac witnesses; yet because these manuscripts are unspecified, and the method of their editing clearly uncritical, the text-critical value of these editions is insignificant.[10] The two giant steps that have been taken so far towards the presentation of a critical edition of s-Ruth (aside from the preparatory work currently being undertaken by the Peshiṭta Institute) are: 1) Ceriani's publication in 1883 of the second volume of his photolithographic reproduction of ms B. 21 Inferiore of the Ambrosian Library (Milan),[11] containing the oldest complete witness to s-Ruth (on folios 213ʳ–214ʳ);[12] and 2) Diettrich's publication in 1902 of a collation of all the variant readings in Ruth attested in five manuscripts dating from the ninth to the twelfth centuries.[13] Additional, potentially significant testimony to the text of s-Ruth are the quotations in pre-modern Syriac literature (→ 21.9), first and foremost in exegetical works containing specific treatments of the book, such as the commentary of Isho'dad of Merv,[14] the *scholia* of Gregory (Abu 'l-Faraj) Barhe-

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[1] I.e., Ruth, Susanna (→ II.3.3), Esther (→ 13–17.1.4.5), and Judith (→ II.9.4), the order generally attested in those manuscripts (originally) containing the complete Peshiṭta Old Testament as well as in the separate Book of Women represented by the important early manuscript London, British Library Add. 14,652 (Peshiṭta Institute no. 6f1; the other separate Book of Women represented by manuscript Add. 14,447 [s[10f1]] of the same library lacks Ruth, strangely); see the Peshiṭta Institute's *List of Old Testament Peshiṭta Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), *passim*, and the supplement in *VT* 18 (1968): 130–32; and Haelewyck, "Le canon de l' Ancien Testament," 147.

[2] Le Jay, **Biblia*. While almost all the books of the Peshiṭta included therein were prepared by the Maronite Gabriel Sionita, s-Ruth was prepared by the Maronite Abraham Ecchelensis (see Bloch, "The Printed Texts," 136, n. 4).

[3] See Bloch, "The Printed Texts," 137–38.

[4] This is the date given in the colophon of vol. 2 of Walton, **Polyglotta*, in which s-Ruth appeared, pp. 181–93.

[5] S. Lee (ed.), *Vetus Testamentum Syriace: Eos tantum libros sistens qui in canone hebraico habentur, ordine vero, quoad fieri potuit, apud Syros usitato dispositos* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1823), 477–80.

[6] A. Hübsch, *Die fünf Megilloth nebst dem syrischen Thargum genannt "Peschito": Zum ersten Male in hebräischer Quadratschrift mit Interpunktation edirt, ferner mit einem … Kommentare zum Thargum, mit sprachlichen Erläuterungen, Nachweisungen der verschiedenen Lesarten, Vergleichung mit andern alten Versionen, Erklärungen vieler thalmudischer und midraschischer Wörter und Sätze u. s. w.* (Prague: Druck von Senders und Brandeis, 1866), 1a–9a [Hebr.].

[7] In Walton, **Polyglotta*, vol. 6 (dated 1657), 21–22. For a critique of this collation, however, see Bloch, "The Printed Texts," 138 and the additional literature there cited.

[8] ܟܬܒܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܗ̇ܘ ܕܐܬܩܪܝ ܥܬܝܩܐ: ܣܘܪܝܐܝܬ

[9] *Biblia sacra juxta versionem simplicem quae dicitur Pschitta*, vol. 1, 358–63.

[10] See, e.g., the assessments of Bloch, "The Printed Texts," 140–42, and Haefeli, *Die Peschitta des Alten Testamentes*, 66–70.

[11] A.M. Ceriani, *Translatio Syra Pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex codice Ambrosiano sec. fere VI, photolithographice edita*, vol. 2, *Epistola Jeremiae–ad finem* (Monumenta sacra et profana 6; Milan: Impensis Bibliothecae Ambrosianae, 1883).

[12] One *possibly* earlier witness to the text of s-Ruth is contained in manuscript London, British Library Add. 14,652 (= s[6f1]), folios 8ʳ–24ᵛ, though the text of Ruth 4:11–22 is missing. Aside from these two, forty-seven additional manuscript witnesses to s-Ruth are enumerated in the Peshiṭta Institute's *List of Old Testament Peshiṭta Manuscripts*, 104–5, with eleven more manuscript witnesses being identified in subsequent "Communications of the Peshiṭta Institute" published in *Vetus Testamentum* (i.e., manuscripts s[8g1, 10c4, 14c2, 14h1, 15a3, 16a1, 17m1, 19a1–4]; see *VT* 18 [1968]: 142; 27 [1977]: 509; 31 [1981]: 358).

[13] Diettrich, "Die Massora der östlichen und westlichen Syrer." The five manuscripts are s[9m1, 10m3, 11m2, 11m5, 12m2].

[14] In van den Eynde (ed.), *Commentaire d'Išo'dad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament*, 224–33; C. van den Eynde (trans.), *Commentaire d'Išo'dad de Merv sur l'Ancien Testament*, Vol. 3.2:

braeus,[15] the anonymous East Syrian commentary in manuscript Diyarb.-Mos. 13 of the Chaldean Patriarchate of Mosul,[16] and the anonymous East Syrian *scholia* (viz., glossary of difficult words) edited by Hoffmann.[17]

13–17.1.4.1.3 Translation Character[18]

s-Ruth has been considered paraphrastic by previous scholars,[19] yet this assessment, in our view, is not quite fair. Generally speaking, the Syriac text – as represented by manuscript s7a1 and the collation of Diettrich – represents a close and faithful rendering of the Hebrew text as attested by MT (→ 13.2.2). Any deviations from a strictly "literal" rendering do not, for the most part, introduce absolutely "extraneous" information, but rather reflect the consistently applied strictures of good Syriac idiom and style, as well as the desire to present the

reader with a semantically precise and logical text in which any ambiguities or difficulties in the Hebrew *Vorlage* have been resolved.[20] Hence, in addition to more intuitive – and, indeed, grammatically requisite – adjustments, such as in the gender of verbs (e.g., *ad* Ruth 1:8: ܚܕܒܕܬܘܢ "you have dealt," fem. pl., over against MT עֲשִׂיתֶם, masc. pl.) and pronominal suffixes (e.g., *ad* Ruth 1:8: ܥܡܟܝܢ "with you," fem. pl., over against MT עִמָּכֶם, masc. pl.; Ruth 1:13: ܠܗܘܢ "for them," masc. pl., over against MT לָהֶן, fem. pl.), the Syriac text also exhibits one-to-one *specification* (i.e., adopting a more specific lexeme where such may be reasonably inferred from the semantic range of a more general Hebrew lexeme, as *ad* Ruth 3:3:[21] ܘܐܬܩܠܠܝ "and adorn yourself" over against MT וְשַׂמְתְּ "and put on"), minimal *expansion* (likewise for the sake of specification or explanation, as *ad* Ruth 1:8: ܥܡ ܬܪܝܗܘܢ ܒܢܝ ܕܡܝܬܘ "with my two sons who died" over against MT עִם-הַמֵּתִים "with the dead" [masc. pl.]), and *condensation* or *reductive substitution* (as *ad* Ruth 1:7: ܐܪܥܐ ܕܡܬܘܬܒܘܬܗܝܢ "the land of their sojourning" over against MT הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה-שָׁמָּה "the place where she was," in the rendering of which s-Ruth also attests *specification* [i.e., "land" for "place"] and contextual one-to-one *substitution* [i.e., fem. pl. for fem. sg.]).

More substantive adjustments than the aforementioned are relatively few, and in almost every instance they reflect a desire to avoid ambiguity and/or maintain logical consistency with the perceived context, as in the *omission* in Ruth 2:13 of the negative particle (s-Ruth: "I shall be as one of your servants," over against the contextually inconsistent reading of וְאָנֹכִי לֹא אֶהְיֶה וכו׳ as "and I

Livres des sessions (CSCO 230/Syr. 97; Louvain: Peeters, 1963), 267–76.

[15] Assuming that his *scholia* on Ruth – which, being so far unedited, we have not personally examined – are introduced by biblical citations, in keeping with his practice when introducing *scholia* on other books. The one brief *scholium* on Ruth offered by Theodore bar Koni contains no biblical citation; see A. Scher (ed.), *Theodorus bar Kōnī: Liber scholiorum, pars prior* (CSCO 55/Syr. 2.65; Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1910), 359.

[16] See the description of van den Eynde (trans.), *Commentaire d'Išoʿdad de Merv*, xxxv–xxxvi.

[17] In G. Hoffmann, *Opuscula nestoriana* (Paris: Maisonneuve et soc., 1880), 85–122. The *scholia* on Ruth are on 99 (l. 22)–100 (l. 2), the citations being: ܚܕܒܬܟܝ "your sister-in-law" (Ruth 1:15 [*bis*]), ܐܒܟܒ ܫܒܩܬ "(who) has (not) removed his kindness" (Ruth 2:20), ܩܪܝܒܢ ܗܘ "he is our kinsman" (Ruth 3:2), and ܚܣܕܟܝ "your kindness" (Ruth 3:10). The published editions agree with all of these (though we have been unable to check the Paris Polyglot), with the exception of manuscript s7a1 *ad* Ruth 3:2, which has the clearly erroneous form ܩܪܝܒܢ. The anonymous Syriac chronicle edited by J.-B. Chabot (Chronicon ad annum Christi 1234 pertinent [CSCO 81 Syr. 36; Paris: Gabalda, 1920]) also contains the complete text of Ruth (on which see M.D. Koster, "Peshitta Institute Communications 11: Second Supplement of the List of the Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts," VT 12 [1962]: 237–40 [237–38]).

[18] All citations from the text of s-Ruth are from Ceriani's photolithographic edition of manuscript s7a1, unless otherwise indicated.

[19] See Haefeli, *Die Peschitta des Alten Testamentes*, 28, and the sources cited there.

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[20] On this perspective of the translation technique in the Peshiṭta generally and the text of Ruth in particular, see Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament*, 15–62, and in particular the examples from Ruth on pp. 23, 28, 34, and 121 (from which several of our own following examples are derived).

[21] So, as in all the printed editions, whereas in manuscript s7a1: ܘܐܬܩܠܠܝ "and adorn yourself," from which the omission of the silent *yod* (ܝ) is not necessarily an error (see T. Noldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar* [trans. J.A. Chrichton; London: Williams & Norgate, 1904], § 50B).

shall *not* be,"[22] etc.), the *addition* in Ruth 3:15, 17 of "measures" (ܡܟܝܠ) and in Ruth 2:8 of the phrase "in a proverb" (ܒܡܬܠܐ),[23] and the *expansion-substitution* in Ruth 1:22 of the seemingly redundant phrase הַשָּׁבָה מִשְּׂדֵי מוֹאָב ("who returned from the countryside of Moab"; s-Ruth: "who consented wholeheartedly to return [ܠܡܗܦܟ] with her, and they came [ܘܐܬܝ] from the land of Moab"). Theological sensitivity also seems to have had some influence on the Syriac translator(s), as in the *substitution* at Ruth 1:15 of "the house of her people" (ܒܝܬ ܐܢܫܝܗ) for "her gods" (MT אֱלֹהֶיהָ) – apparently to avoid the notion that Orpah was still a pagan – and at Ruth 2:4 of "Peace be with you" (ܫܠܡܐ ܥܡܟܘܢ) for "The LORD be with you" (MT יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם), in all likelihood reflecting both contemporary aversion to the use of the divine name in casual greeting as well as the early rabbinic tradition identifying "Peace" as a valid substitute.[24] In at least two instances, moreover, the extant text of s-Ruth attests a *doublet*, i.e., *ad* Ruth 1:13 ("for it is very embittering to me on your account *and* it is more bitter for me than for you") and *ad* Ruth 4:4 ("I said, 'I will open your ears and say to you: "Make the purchase in the presence of these who are seated!" ' *and* I have presented myself to speak and to make the purchase in the presence of these

elders of my people who are seated"). Rather than representing *double renderings* by the translator(s), however, these doublets may well reflect scribal interpolation of alternative renderings either drawn from the margins of their Syriac exemplar(s) or as known to them from other sources.[25]

The translator(s) also appear to have taken sporadic recourse to LXX (→ 13–17.1.1.1), as, e.g., in the rendering of שער "gate" by ܫܪܒܬܐ "tribe" (corresponding to φυλή in LXX) in Ruth 3:11 and 4:10[26] but not in Ruth 4:1 and 11 (rendered literally by s ܬܪܥܐ and LXX πύλη), and, *ad* Ruth 4:15, in the rendering ܡܕܝܢܬܟ "your city," where MT has שֵׂיבָתֵךְ "your old age," reasonably suggesting the misreading of LXX πολιάν as πόλιν.[27] A thorough assessment of LXX influence on s-Ruth must, nonetheless, await the publication of a proper critical edition of the latter (→ 1.3.4.9).

13–17.1.4.1.4 Text-Critical Value

The text of s-Ruth as represented by manuscript s7a1 and the collation of Diettrich offer no clear evidence of a consonantal Hebrew *Vorlage* that – notwithstanding non-semantic orthographic differences – was any different from that represented by MT (→ 13.2.2). Of the twelve *Ketiv-Qere* distinctions in MT-Ruth, s-Ruth supports seven (i.e., *ad* Ruth 3:3 [*bis*], 4, 5, 12,[28] 17; 4:5) and offers no evidence either way for the remaining five (i.e., *ad* Ruth 1:8; 2:1; 3:14; 4:4, 6). In no instance, however, can one infer *consonantal* sup-

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[22] Such appears to be the illogical alternative as perceived by the translator(s) of s-Ruth; the Hebrew text can also be understood in the contextually consistent sense: "*though* I *am* not as one of your maidservants."

[23] Weitzman (*The Syriac Version*, 34–35) considers this an example of "faulty translation," yet it seems to us just as reasonable – if not more so – to view this as an instance wherein the translator(s) sought to resolve a Biblical Hebrew idiom that, if translated literally, would have made little or no sense to the Syriac reader.

[24] See *b. t. Šabb.* 10b and Maimonides' comment on *m. Ber.* 9:5. In this instance we take a decidedly contrary view to that of Weitzman ("From Judaism to Christianity," 159; *The Syriac Version*, 238), who cites *m. Ber.* 9:5 as proof that the Syriac translator(s) here adopted a rendering that was clearly "sectarian" and forbidden by the rabbis. Yet this is a far too narrow reading of the mishnaic passage, for at no point therein do the rabbis actually *forbid* the substitution of "Peace" for the divine name; the validity of this substitution is in fact borne out by, *inter alia*, the aforecited talmudic tradition and Maimonides' comment ad loc.

[25] See J. Perles, *Meletemata peschitthoniana* (Breslau: W. Friedrich, 1859), 10–11.

[26] In this instance ܫܪܒܬܐ "tribe" also appears to encompass the following *nomen rectum* מקום "place"; this broader substitution is also attested in several minor LXX witnesses (*contra* the majority rendering of מקום "place" by either λαοῦ "people" or τόπου "place"; see Brooke–McLean, *The Old Testament in Greek*, Part 4: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* [1917], ad loc.).

[27] See Abramowski, "Eine spätsyrische Überlieferung des Buches Ruth," 14–17; Weitzman, "From Judaism to Christianity," 159; Weitzman, *The Syriac Version*, 71–72.

[28] With respect to this instance we are somewhat tentative; we have included it insofar as the text of v. 12a in s-Ruth reads affirmatively, which *may* correspond to the omission of אם, yet s-Ruth offers no clear equivalent of the preceding כי, and it may be that the translator(s) simply ignored the troublesome collocation כי אם "(but) rather" entirely.

port for the *Qere* in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of s-Ruth, since all of those readings that support the *Qere* are reasonably implied by either context (Ruth 3:3 [*bis*], 4, 12; 4:5) or normative idiom (Ruth 3:5, 17). At least one possible vocalization variant, on the other hand, is suggested by the rendering of שדי in Ruth 1:21 as ܡܢ ܕܡܟܠ ܟܘܡܬܐ, "The One who is Sufficient" (= שַׁדַּי over against MT שַׁדַּי "The Almighty"), which may well have been influenced by the LXX rendering ὁ ἱκανός "the Sufficient One," if not also by the early rabbinic tradition regarding this divine title as attested in (*inter alia*) *Gen. Rab.* 46.3.[29]

Abramowski, R., "Eine spätsyrische Überlieferung des Buches Ruth," in *In piam memoriam Alexander von Bulmerincq: Gedenkschrift zum 5. Juni 1938, dem siebzigsten Geburtstage des am 29. März 1938 Entschlafenen, dargebracht von einem Kreise von Freunden und Kollegen* (Abhandlungen der Herder-Gesellschaft und des Herder-Instituts zu Riga 6.3; Riga: Ernst Plates, 1938), 7–19.

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Michael G. Wechsler

13–17.1.4.2 Canticles
13–17.1.4.2.1 Manuscripts of s-Cant
The oldest manuscript of s-Cant is manuscript s[6h17] (sixth century C.E.). This manuscript, together with the complete Bibles, s[7a1] and s[8a1], probably preserves the oldest stage of the text to which we can gain access. The majority text or *textus receptus*, which is later, is attested by a large number of manuscripts of the Nestorian tradition, the best representatives of which are manuscripts s[9c1, 9h1, 10c1, 11c1] (ninth through eleventh centuries C.E.). Many of these manuscripts bring together the collection of books known as *Beth Mawtebhe* "Book of Sessions" (c in the nomenclature of the *Peshitta Institute*): Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings (→ 3–5.1.4), Proverbs (→ 12.3.4), Qohelet (→ 13–17.1.4.3), Ruth (→ 13–17.1.4.1), Canticles, Sirach (→ 11.4.4), and Job (→ 11.3.4). s-Cant is not preserved in s[9a1], which is important for other books due to the uniqueness of its variants.

13–17.1.4.2.2 Critical Edition
The critical edition of s-Cant is found in Vol. 2.5 of the collection *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta*,[1] published by the *Peshitta Institute*. Its editors are J.A. Emerton and D.J. Lane. It is a diplomatic edition of manuscript s[7a1], accompanied by a critical apparatus that takes into account the manuscripts prior to the twelfth century.

Dirksen has offered a series of *corrigenda et addenda* to the critical edition of s-Cant on the basis of a study of the Syriac manuscripts.[2] In addition, he presents seven variants that are found in the critical apparatus and which should be preferred to the main text of the edition: Cant 1:7 (ܘܐܝܟܐ "and where"); Cant 2:5 (ܣܡܟܘܢܝ "sustain me"); Cant 2:8 (ܐܬܐ "he comes"); Cant 2:15 (ܐܚܘܕܘ "catch"); Cant 5:4 (ܙܥܠ "are moved"); Cant

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[29] Cf. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version*, 51, 70, 121.

[1] Emerton and Lane, *Canticles*.
[2] Dirksen, "The Peshitta Text of Song of Songs," 171–83.