THE ETHIOPIAN TEXT
OF
2 PARALIPOMENON

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1. The Manuscripts

Altogether there are nine Ethiopic manuscripts containing 2 Paralipomenon in European libraries. They are:


C. Paris, Bib. Nat., Collection d'Abbadie, No. 35, 17th cent.\(^3\)

D. London, Brit. Mus., Or. 488, A.D. 1726.\(^4\)

E. London, Brit. Mus., Or. 489, A.D. 1730.\(^5\)

F. London, Brit. Mus., Or. 493, 18th cent.\(^6\)

G. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bruce No. 73, 18th cent.\(^7\)

H. Rome, Pontifical Biblical Institute, A. 2. 10, 18th cent.\(^8\)

* This paper is a report on a study of the Ethiopic text of 2 Chr. (Diss. Toronto, 1971) and was read at the meeting of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies in Uppsala on Aug. 8th, 1971.

1 H. Zotenberg, Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens (Gheez et Amharique) de la Bibliothèque National (Paris 1877), 6–9.


5 Ibid., 10.

6 Ibid., 16.


8 “Acta anni academicī 1933–1934, No. 15, Bibliotheca,” in Acta Pontificio Istituto Biblico, III, 10 (Rome 1934), 302–303. The existence of this manuscript was communicated to me by Dr. W. Baars, Leiden.
I. Frankfurt a.M., Stadtbibliothek, Cod. Aeth. No. 2, 18th cent.\(^9\)

Two of these nine manuscripts, A and C, were published in 1932 in an unreliable edition by Sylvain Grébaut,\(^{10}\) and in the same year the Larger Cambridge Septuagint presented a specimen collation of A and B for 1 Par 12:18–29. For this study all of them were collated except the last (I), which has been mislaid in the Frankfurt Stadtbibliothek and cannot be found at the present time.

It can be stated at the outset that the Ethiopic version of 2 Par. derives from a Greek text. This is shown by transliterations of Greek words such as λιθόστρωτον (7:3), Τρωγλοδύται (12:3), and λέβησιν (35:13). There are also a few mistakes that can only be explained satisfactorily by assuming a Greek Vorlage. For example:

4:6 — The verb ἀποκλωζεῖν — to rinse off — is translated as corresponding to the Greek ἀποκλαίειν — to close.

21:19 — The preposition ἕκ in the phrase ἐκ ἡμερῶν ἐς ἡμέρας — from days to days — is translated as “six” as if it were ἐς not ἐκ.

29:16 — The place name Κέδρων (MT qidrón) is translated as a genitive plural of the word Κέδρος — cedar.

30:2, 23 — The verb βουλεύεται — to agree, resolve — is twice translated by a verb corresponding to βουλευθαί — to wish.

30:12 — The verb καταγελάν — to mock, is translated by a verb corresponding to καταγέλλειν — to announce.

33:15 — The noun δρός — mountain — is mistakenly rendered as if it were δρος — boundary.

The evidence provided by mistranslations of a Greek original is supported by the hundreds of instances in which Eth agrees with the Greek text where G differs from MT. This is particularly noticeable in the passages where G has a longer text, as in 35:19a–d; 36:2a–c, 4a, 5a–d.

2. Manuscript Groupings

It has long been believed that the Ethiopic Bible manuscripts fall into three text types: the Old Ethiopic, the Vulgar Recension, and the Academic Recension.\(^{11}\) The Old Ethiopic is said to be the original translation of the Greek,

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9 L. Goldschmidt, *Die abessinischen Handschriften der Stadtbibliothek zu Frankfurt am Main (Rueppell'sche Sammlung)* (Berlin 1897), 2.


the Vulgar Recension is said to be a revision of it carried out with the aid of a Syriac text, or an Arabic translation of a Syriac text; and the Academic Recension is said to be a recension based on a Hebrew text. In fact the Vulgar and Academic Recensions have since come to be called respectively the Syro-Arabic Recension and the Hebrew Recension. Such is not the case in 2 Par. A careful study of all the available manuscripts has revealed no conclusive evidence of influence from either the Hebrew or the Syriac Bibles.

The Ethiopic text of 2 Par. has indeed undergone successive stages of revision. The earliest text form, which may be called the Old Ethiopic text, is contained in the two manuscripts A and B, respectively the oldest and the youngest of the manuscripts available. The results of a revision of this Old Ethiopic text appear in the C group (CEGH). That the C text is dependent on the AB text is shown by a number of errors, and a number of variants in which the C group contains a correction or change of the AB text which resulted in a reading further removed from the original Greek. The following three examples illustrate the dependence of the C text on AB.

31:3 — καὶ μερίς (MT) ἀσωλῆς (ἐθb) ἔθab; ἀσωλῆς (ἐθd) ἔθe·h.

The Greek word μερίς — portion — in the phrase “the portion of the king”, is translated in AB as ὀλευ — tithe. The letters are transposed in C-H and ἀσωλῆς is produced, so that the meaning changed from “the king’s portion”, to “the king arranged”.

32:8 — βραχίονες (MT ὀροφή)] ἄσωλής: ἔθabd·a; ἦσωλής: (πρὸςτὸ) ἔθed·a[mgl][mg].

The AB reading ἄσωλής correctly translates the Greek word βραχίονες — arms — but with the common graphic interchange of ἱ (ח) for ἰ (ד). Unfortunately, the change produced the normal spelling for the word “baskets”. This apparent mistake was corrected in C-H to ἦσωλής — seed — the nearest spelling that made sense in the context.

35:14 — τὰ στέκατα (MT) ἄσωλής (στέκατα): ἔθb; ἄσωλής: ἔθd·a; ἦσωλής: ἔθed·a·h.

The AB word ἄσωλής — fat — correctly translates the Greek τὰ στέκατα. The common graphic interchange of sāt (ש) for ʿawt (ע) seems to

*Dictionary of the Bible*, I (New York 1903), 792. The names of the text types were introduced by A. Heider, *Die aethiopische Bibelübersetzung*, 1, Heft (Leipzig 1902), 5, and were adopted by J. Schaefer, *Die aethiopische Übersetzung des Propheten Jeremia* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder 1912), 27.

have given rise to the C–H variant, the more common word ከክክት:— praise— instead of ኣስክክት:— fat.

Furthermore, the C text contains a number of doublets in which a correction is inserted alongside a faulty AB reading.

The C text itself has also undergone revision, and the results can be seen in the manuscript pair D and F. A number of changes introduced by the DF text betray its dependence on the C text, as the following three examples illustrate:


For the Greek ἔαν the AB text has እሆ: to which the C text has added the enclitic እ to make it እሆ, still keeping the same meaning “if.” The DF text has transposed the letters of the C reading and produced a new word እሆ:— because.

34:22 — ሚስርሱ (MT ብክር) እስር እ: (Ethb) Ethab; እስር እ: (Ethc) Ethcaegh; እስር እ: Ethd*F

The Greek reading ἡσσαρν is a transliteration of the Hebrew ṣḥṣ. The AB text in turn transliterates the Greek word into የስር. The Ethiopic Bible manuscripts are notorious for their confusion in names, and this passage is typical: for የስር እ: the C text has የስር እ: . This led to further confusion in the DF text when the ṣḥṣ (ח) was apparently regarded as an intrusive conjunction, and was left out. Thus የስር እ: in AB became የስር እ: in the C text, and finally just እ in DF.

35:19d — ይክ] ከሆም: Etha; ከሆም: Ethcaegh; ከሆም: Ethd*F

In the phrase “My name will be there,” the AB text has ከሆም:— forever— instead of the word “there.” The C text supplied ከሆም:— in it— for the missing word, but also retained the false word. The result is the sentence “My name will be for ever.” The DF text goes one step further than C and changes ከሆም: to ከሆም:— to eternity.

These three examples show that the DF text is descended from the C text. Usually, DF go with the C group in opposition to AB, but sometimes they revert to an AB reading.

Further revisions of these revisions can be seen in the corrections to D (Da), which consist of a number of erasures, marginal and interlinear corrections of the DF text; and in EH, a pair containing many variants and corrections of the C group, some reverting to AB or DF readings; and finally in G, the last stage in the manuscript tradition, which contains many unique variants, and readings adopted from all the earlier stages in the tradition.

The foregoing can be summarized as follows: AB represent the Old Ethiopic text, CEGH represent the first revision, and DF represent the second revision.
Further stages of revision are: in the DF text the alterations to D (Dₐ), and in the C text the pair E and H and, finally, G. All the manuscripts belong to a single tradition.

3. Characteristics

The Ethiopic in 2 Par. is a fairly close translation of the Greek, but as in all translations there are some minor differences. One of the most characteristic of these differences in Eth is the frequent use of doublets to translate one Greek word. There are also many small additions, mostly single words, which can often be ascribed to the effect of translation from one language to another. For example the words "land" or "town" are often inserted before place names, and titles such as "king" or "prophet" are added to personal names. Omissions are less common. Transpositions of word order are fairly frequent, but are often caused by the needs of the Ethiopic language. Some free translations and paraphrases occur, occasionally caused by misunderstanding, but often serving to make the general meaning more explicit to the Ethiopic audience. Readings corresponding to MT alone are rare.

The Greek manuscripts closest related to Eth are the Lucianic group β₂ (Rahlfs 19, 93, 108). Many of the agreements with the Lucianic manuscripts also involve the Old Latin Text (VL),¹³ and in a large number of instances Eth goes with VL alone. Since VL comes from a time earlier than Lucian himself, the affinity indicates that Eth derives from a text of the proto-Lucianic type. This inference is supported by the fact that Eth, like VL, does not contain any of the characteristic Lucianic doubtlets. Eth regularly goes with the majority in opposition to the Old Greek text as represented by Bε₂ (Cod. Vaticanus and Rahlfs 127).

The C revision of the Old Ethiopic text introduced various corrections and stylistic changes such as the substitution of synonyms, changes in verbal forms, and the interchange of prepositions and enclitic particles. There are many additions, some of them stylistic, involving the insertion of words such as "however," "moreover," or "therefore", and others influenced by familiar expressions or similar phrases in the immediate context. A number of explanatory glosses serve the purpose of making the meaning more explicit, or of forestalling possible misinterpretations. Omissions and changes in word order are less common.

In addition to the stylistic changes, a large number of C readings involve a correction towards the Greek. Of the Greek manuscripts the Lucianic group

be₂ stands out as closest to C. Again VL shares many of the agreements,
and none of them involves a Lucianic doublet. There are also a few instances
where C goes with VL alone. The fact that the large number of corrections
towards the Greek are drawn from the same proto-Lucianic text type as the
AB text, suggests that the C text represents an inner-Ethiopic revision, based
on an earlier more reliable Ethiopic text, rather than on external sources.
There is no convincing evidence of influence either from the Hebrew or the
Syriac versions.

The DF revision, like the C text, introduced a number of stylistic changes,
including numerous additions. There are fewer omissions, substitutions of
synonyms, and transpositions. In certain instances the DF text reverts to an
earlier AB reading. Some DF variants involve a correction towards the Greek.
These corrections, like those of the C text, derive from a proto-Lucianic text,
again indicating that the influence was exerted within the Ethiopic tradition
through the medium of an earlier, more reliable, Ethiopic text. Such reliance
on an older text can likewise be seen in the readings that revert to the AB
text. There is no conclusive evidence of Hebrew influence.

The corrections to D (Dⁿ) also consist of minor stylistic changes, and resto-
rations of the earlier AB text, or less often the C text. A number of Dⁿ variants
 correspond to the Greek but again it is a proto-Lucianic text that is involved,
and therefore probably an earlier Ethiopic authority.

EH often deviate from the C group. Many of the EH variants are the result
of textual corruption, others consist of minor stylistic changes or the restoration
of readings from DF or less often from the AB text.

G represents the last stage in this activity. It contains many relatively insigni-
nificant changes and a number of instances where it reverts to an earlier
text such as AB or DF, as well as EH or Dⁿ. Indeed, corrections that are
restricted to the margins in EH and Dⁿ have been incorporated into the text
of G. Occasionally such a correction has been inserted out of place. This
shows that G is, in fact, a copy of a corrected manuscript rather than the
authority for such corrections. An example of a misplaced correction occurs in
5:11 — ɓɔr ɓɔ: AB] ɓɔr ɓɔ: CD*EFH; ɓɔr ɓɔ: G; ɓɔr ɓɔ: Dⁿ

The AB reading ɓɔr ɓɔ: — named — and the C and DF variant ɓɔr ɓɔ:,
appear to be a scribal corruption of ɓɔr ɓɔ: — placed — which corresponds to
the Greek διαταγμένοι (MT ɓɔr ɓɔ:). The right word, ɓɔr ɓɔ:, has been
restored by the corrector of D (Dⁿ). Although G here follows the majority,
the same word, spelt with šawt instead of sāt, ɓɔr ɓɔ:, has been copied
into the text out of place in the preceding line. Thus, G is a copy of a manu-
script which, like D and EH, contained marginal and interlinear corrections.
It is not itself the source of such corrections. Some of the G variants correspond
to the Greek, and again the influence derives from a proto-Lucianic source, most likely within the Ethiopic manuscript tradition.

4. Conclusion

The Ethiopic text of 2 Par. is basically a single tradition that has been subjected to continual revision. Each successive stage of revision introduced various stylistic changes attempting to provide a smoother, clearer text, and each stage showed a tendency to restore readings of older texts within the tradition. This practice of reverting to earlier readings seems to be the best explanation of the corrections that correspond to the Greek, in particular the Lucianic and proto-Lucianic readings, and the Old Latin. It is more likely that older, more authoritative Ethiopic manuscripts were drawn on, rather than that Greeks texts of the same recension should serve as the basis of one revision after another.

In spite of being preserved only in comparatively late manuscripts, the Ethiopic text provides a useful witness to an early stage of the Greek text, and in particular serves as valuable evidence for the proto-Lucianic recension of 2 Par. when used together with the Lucianic manuscripts and the Old Latin fragments.