

TWO GREEK *WARTETEXTE* FROM THE CAMBRIDGE GENIZAH COLLECTION

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The Cambridge University Library Taylor-Schechter collection contains a number of palimpsests with upper texts in Hebrew and lower texts in Greek¹. Although these palimpsests were subject of some of the earliest studies made with respect to the Genizah material at the turn of the 20th century, it was not until 1978 when the attempt to compile the full list was undertaken by Hebrew scholars Sokoloff and Yahalom². Three of the Greek fragments included in the list remained undeciphered, still were assumed by the authors to contain Christian texts. Recently, with the help of digital image enhancement I was able to read partly two of these fragments, namely UL Taylor-Schechter 12.185 and UL Taylor-Schechter AS.78.411³.

Taylor-Schechter 12.185 is a parchment scrap measuring ca. 165 x 141 mm. The Hebrew upper text is a fragment of Rabbinic literature (*Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer*)⁴, written in a square Oriental script that could be assigned to not later than the 11th century⁵.

The Greek lower script, obscured not only by the Hebrew upper script but also by the darkness of the parchment, is illegible to the naked eye. However, simple digital image enhancement increased dramatically its legibility. L.Goodey of the University Library Photography Service took a high resolution (600 dpi) digital scan of the fragment under visible light, using Kontron Progres 3012 digital camera. I manipulated the scan with Adobe Photoshop software, adjusting brightness and contrast in

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¹ Overview in Tchernetska 2002, 244-251.

² Sokoloff/Yahalom 1978, 109-132.

³ The third fragment, UL Taylor-Schechter F.4.17, contains a Biblical Hebrew-Greek glossary, which I am studying jointly with N.de Lange and J.Olszowy-Schlanger.

⁴ Sokoloff/Yahalom 1978, 125. The fragment is also briefly mentioned in de Lange 1982, 61 n.2; Reif 1988, 231.

⁵ I thank J.Olszowy-Schlanger for providing this information.

particular⁶. In the case of UL Taylor-Schechter 12.185, this technique alone was sufficient to decipher the lower text: the lower Greek script letters became more visible against the lighter background, and hence readable.

On both sides of the fragment, lines of Greek letters are preserved only in part, and the number of visible letters oscillates between 3 and 10. On the recto, we have the beginning of a column; on the verso, the end of a different column. It is impossible to establish the dimensions of the original Greek codex.

The diplomatic transcription of the text is as follows:

Recto	Verso
]ρσ.[	]ιψ[
καινυ[	]οισαν
μηφ[	]ρουσα
ουν.ου[	]μμαν
καιτου[	]ιφις
τηχν.[	]χοσεξαι
επε.[	]βιου
ουγαρ[	]εινεπ(εν)
εβου.[	]ιουδε(ν)
νοσ....[	]...ϊον
διαπ...[	]ν...σκαι
λογοιτου..[	]ομιανμεν
π..σπιρελυ[	]αζεσθα..(ν)
ημνωφ.[	]ειαναυτη
ινδουτ....[	]ηδι'ελλειψι(ν)

The hand is a beautiful Alexandrian majuscule with alternating broad and narrow letters⁷. Its features include A with a small round loop, in some cases with a prominent curled tail; narrow E, Θ, Ο, and Σ; Π and Τ with ornamental serifs only on the left end of their horizontal strokes; Ρ with a very small loop; Φ with large round loops; Ω broad. The final η is consistently abbreviated. There is some accentuation: rough breathings (ἥμιν on the recto), diacresis (ιν on the recto), and apostrophes (δι'ελλειψιν on the verso). A curvy line after the bottom row on the verso indicates possibly the end of a section (or the bottom of the page).

⁶ In Adobe Photoshop, the brightness and contrast of an image can be controlled by sliders: one adjusts them and sees the changes on the screen in real time. The speed of the feedback allows one to find quickly the optimal levels of brightness and contrast for reading a particular line or word: since any change can be undone, one can choose different levels for different parts of the image without fear of obscuring any part permanently.

⁷ For the main characteristics of Alexandrian majuscules, see Cavallo 1975, 30; Irigoin 1959, 44-45.

It is thought that Alexandrian majuscules were used predominantly in Egypt⁸. The vast majority of the specimens are of Egyptian origin. It is therefore plausible that the Greek text of TS 12.185 was written in that area; this hypothesis is consistent with the manuscript being reused for a Hebrew book in the Middle East and later finding its way into the Old Cairo Genizah. The heyday of the Alexandrian majuscule was in the 6th-8th centuries⁹, during which the script showed little variation¹⁰, making instances difficult to date¹¹. The crucial criterion to determine dating, discovered by Irigoin, is the narrowness of the oval letters *omicron*, *theta*, *sigma*, and *epsilon*¹². The narrow letters and the presence of accentuation in TS 12.185 point towards a late date. It is plausible that it was written in the 6th-7th centuries: the hand can be compared to such examples of the Alexandrian majuscule as Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Pap. G. 19899-19908, assigned to the 6th-7th centuries¹³, and P Louvre E. 10295, assigned to the middle of the 7th century¹⁴.

The contents of the Greek lower text defied all identification so far. The search in TLG for the occurrences of δι'ελλειψιν, the only complete expression read in the fragment, gave a list of Galen, Aristotle, Theophrastes, Pseudo-Galen, Themistius, Stobaeus, Michael Psellus, Simplicius, Johannes Philoponus, Proclus and Eustathius. Although some of the texts in which this expression is used are Christian, most can be qualified as technical literature: medicine, physics, grammar, philosophy, commentaries. It is therefore plausible that the Greek lower text falls into one of these genres, which is also consistent with the fact that the Alexandrian majuscule was used mostly for pagan texts¹⁵.

Taylor-Schechter AS.78.411 is a fragment measuring ca. 100 x 110 mm, with Mischna as a Hebrew upper text¹⁶, written in a square Oriental script probably slightly older than that of T-S 12.185¹⁷. Again, it is impossible to reconstruct the dimensions of the original codex.

The same digital imaging technique of adjusting the brightness and contrast was applied, to reveal 11 lines of Greek preserved on each side. On either side, the number of letters preserved varies between 3 and 15;

⁸ Cavallo 1975, 52, 53-54; Irigoin 1959, 47-48, 51; Porro 1985, 170.

⁹ Cavallo 1975, 45.

¹⁰ Some variations are described in Irigoin 1959, 45-46; Cavallo 1975, 45-46.

¹¹ Porro 1985, 170.

¹² Irigoin 1959, 46.

¹³ Irigoin 1959, pl.2.

¹⁴ Cavallo 1975, 47 and pl.13.

¹⁵ Porro 1985, 170 and n.4.

¹⁶ Sokoloff/Yahalom 1978, 124; the fragment is mentioned also in Reif 1988, 395.

¹⁷ I thank J.Olszowy-Schlanger for providing this information.

we seem to have intact the beginning of a column on the verso and the end of a different column on the recto.

A diplomatic transcription is as follows (the verso being of a darker hue and more damaged, hence the transcription is incomplete):

Recto	Verso
]νχεων	]α[
]ειεριδηχ.α	
]σπλαγγνον	]σεπ.[
]νταεπιστ..	]ιεση[
]εκνονκαιαρχ..ε	]ερω..υ[
]ο.δ[]αγιην	]οενσ[
]υφιλ[]ταιαυτου	]μαικ[
]..[]δ[]τωκατα	]αυτησ[
]λακαιταθυ[	]παντο[
]ωει.[	]α[
]ου[	]υε[

The script is a Biblical majuscule, probably of the late 5th or the 6th century, as supported by A with a round loop and descending tail; K with its arms detached from the stem; Π with horizontal stroke fitting between the two verticals; Υ with a short stem. The hand can be compared to such examples of the Biblical majuscule as the Freer manuscript of *Deuteronomy* and *Joshua* (Washington, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art 06.292) and the *Cureton Homer* (London British Library Add.17210)¹⁸, which are both representatives of the Egyptian-Nitrian style¹⁹.

In this case as well, the contents defy identification. None of the words provides sufficient hints to venture an intelligent guess. It is possible that the letters θυ on the recto are a *nomen sacrum* for θεοῦ and point to a Christian origin; σπλάγγνον was widely used both in Classical and Christian texts.

¹⁸ Cavallo 1967, 87, 91-93, pl.78 and 81 respectively.

¹⁹ Cavallo 1967, 87-93.

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