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LOST AND BOUND

RECONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES IN FRAGMENTARY MANUSCRIPTS
OF THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

ISRAEL MUÑOZ GALLARTE
MARZENA ZAWANOWSKA
(EDS.)

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Universidad
Pontificia
de Salamanca

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Sindéresis^{editorial}

**Lost and Bound. Reconstruction Techniques in Fragmentary
Manuscripts of the Jewish and Christian Traditions.**

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CONTENTS

Notes on Contributors	7
Introduction.....	11
<i>Israel Muñoz – Marzena Zawadowska</i>	
Two Cases of Textual Reconstruction in the Habakkuk Commentary of Qumran	19
<i>Luis Vegas Montaner</i>	
Restoration of <i>Lacunae</i> and Illegible Readings in Two Christian Palestinian Aramaic Bible Fragments from <i>Khirbet el-Mird</i> (8 th c. CE)	39
<i>Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala</i>	
Manuscript Sam 6 (C) and the Samaritan Pentateuch	59
<i>Abraham Tal – Moshe Florentin</i>	
Restoration of a <i>Lacuna</i> in the Greek Version of the <i>Apocryphal Acts of Thomas</i> Ms. Paris. Coisl. 121, fols. 9r-10v	73
<i>Israel Muñoz – Ángel Narro</i>	
The <i>Protevangelium of James</i>	93
<i>J. Keith Elliott</i>	
Text and Paratext in Antiquity: The Textual Framework of the Coptic Version of the <i>Apocalypse of Paul</i>	107
<i>F. Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta</i>	
Lost and Found: Christian Arabic <i>Membra Disiecta</i> in the Mingana Collection.....	125
<i>Miriam L. Hjälm</i>	
Wrestling With Sacred Trash: Reconstructing Fragmentary Judeo-Arabic Manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah.....	155
<i>Amir Ashur – Marzena Zawadowska</i>	

Index of Ancient Authors.....	171
Index Locorum.....	171
Index of Modern Authors	176
Bibliography.....	185

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Notes on Contributors

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Luis Vegas Montaner b. 1950, is Professor Emeritus of Hebrew at the Complutense University of Madrid (Spain) and has produced more than fifty specialized publications on Jewish Pseudepigraphy and Apocalypticism, Rabbinics, Qumran, and Hebrew verb syntax. He is the author of *Génesis Rabba I (Génesis 1-11)* (Estella: EVD, 1994) and co-editor of *The Madrid Qumran Congress* (Leiden: Brill, 1992) and of *Computer Assisted Research on the Bible in the 21st Century* (Piscataway, NJ, USA: Gorgias Press, 2010). For a number of years he has been the lead researcher of a project on Computer

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Lost and Bound: Reconstruction Techniques in Fragmentary Manuscripts of the Jewish and Christian Traditions

An Introduction

One of the most groundbreaking and significant moments in the history of mankind was the invention of writing, understood as a system of graphic signs representing the semantic units of a specific language. This invention occurred several times and in different places independently (in the Near East – Mesopotamia and Egypt – in the second half of the forth millennium BCE, in China towards the end of the second millennium BCE, and in Mesoamerica around the middle of the first millennium BCE) resulting in the emergence of various concepts of alphabets and distinct scripts, not all of which we are able to decipher today.

These alphabets were subjected to changes and evolved over time, as did the languages which they were to represent or which adopted them. As a result, the knowledge of the different stages of the development of a given language is necessary to correctly decipher a text written in that language. This knowledge, however, is insufficient when it concerns handwritten sources. For many centuries, until the invention of the printing press, texts had been copied by hand and circulated in manuscript form, while the styles of handwriting had been changing not only over time, but also from copyist to copyist, not all of whom were professional scribes. This poses a great challenge for anyone wishing to explore not printed sources.

An additional difficulty is caused by the fact that only rarely have we access to the first hand, autograph copies of ancient and medieval texts (Lat. *autographa*), or reliable (preferably second hand) copies that we could safely assume are identical or almost identical to the autograph. Most frequently, we know these texts only through copies which are the product of a long chain of other copies with an unknown number of links, whose faithfulness to the distant original is therefore questionable. Accordingly, the overall aim of preparing a critical edition of a text preserved in manuscript form is to reconstruct it so as it resembled the autograph as closely as possible (Lat. *constitutio textus*). The classical theory of editing divides this task into three major steps:

Recensio

The first step consists of establishing what can and should be considered as the transmitted version of a given text that we intend to critically publish (Lat. *recensio*). To this end, it is necessary to identify all preserved copies of this text, to compare them with other existing versions (Lat. *collatio*) in order to check the relationships between different transmission traditions, and to list different readings (Lat. *lectiones*). Of course, some texts (like for example the Genizah documents analyzed in this volume) are preserved only in one copy which, on the one hand, relieves the editor/s from the obligation to compare all the preserved sources, yet, on the other hand, makes the work harder, as there is no comparative material to refer to in order to establish the proper reading of a problematic passage.

Examinatio

The second step focuses on examining these textual traditions (Lat. *examinatio*) and on this basis considering which reading can be regarded as a faithful or authentic one (namely a tradition representing the original), and which is an innovation.

Emendatio

The third step is to amend the text (Lat. *emendatio*) by means of restoring those passages for which no authentic reading exists and reconstructing the original with the help of conjectures (Lat. *divinatio*), as well as indicating the places where the text is corrupted (Lat. *corruptela*).

Introduction

The present volume focuses on texts written in alphabets originating in the Middle East and is aimed to serve as a sort of a practical manual of how to navigate handwritten sources written in diverse Semitic and non-Semitic languages (Coptic, Greek, Hebrew, Judeo- and Christian Arabic, Christian [Palestinian] Aramaic) from the Jewish and Christian traditions. To this purpose, it describes, analyzes and discusses in a concise way different techniques and methods of reconstructing readings of fragmentary manuscripts produced in various scripts, illustrating the complexity of such an undertaking with sample editions of the explored sources.

Accordingly, each chapter focuses on selected example(s) of fragmentary texts representative of a given tradition and language, highlighting specific problems involved in their deciphering. It consists of four sections: 1. Contexts – describing historical, social and cultural backgrounds of the chosen excerpt; 2. Text(s) and reconstruction(s), including transcription of the chosen text(s) in the original language, its translation into Latin characters (if necessary) and analytical study explaining techniques of reconstructing the *lacunae*, unreadable words or missing passages; 3. Conclusions – offering some final remarks on the used sources and methods; 4. Bibliography – containing references to publications relevant to a specific field, arranged in alphabetical order.

The volume opens with a paper *Two Cases of Textual Reconstruction in the Habakkuk Commentary of Qumran* in which Luis Vegas Montaner (Complutense University of Madrid) offers a detailed textual analysis of the ancient Hebrew text of Habakkuk, as quoted in the anonymous sectarian work that provides a commentary on the book attributed to Habakkuk, known as *Pesher Habakkuk*. It had been composed in the second century BC and was found among numerous other manuscripts at the Judean Desert (the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls). Using textual criticism techniques, the author demonstrates that, on the one hand, in the last century BC the textual fluidity of the Hebrew Bible was extensive, and, on the other hand, that Qumran's variant readings usually find confirmation in other ancient textual sources. The first case analyzed (Hab 1:15-16) involves the task of reconstruction of the text that is lost in a *lacuna* of the manuscript, due to a severe decay of the parchment at the bottom of the scroll. The second case (Hab 2:5) deals with the possibility of reconstructing the original Hebrew text underlying the Septuagint.

In the second chapter, *Restoration of Lacunae and Illegible Readings in Two Christian Palestinian Aramaic Bible Fragments from Khirbet el-Mird (s. VIII)*, Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala (University of Cordoba) focuses on two Aramaic fragments from an excavation site called *Khirbet el-Mird* (in the Judaean Desert), written in a characteristic script resembling *estrangelo*, and dating to between the seventh and ninth centuries CE, which contain partial readings of some gospels (Matthew 21:30-32; 21:32-34 and Luke 3:1; 3:3-4). The author uses these fragments to demonstrate a common practice among the translators-revisers of biblical texts to adapt their works to current lexical and stylistic criteria and to illustrate the dependency of the new versions on their early predecessors.

The third chapter, *Manuscript Sam 6 (C) and the Samaritan Pentateuch*, by Abraham Tal and Moshe Florentin deals with the fact that, in contrast to the situation with MT, the Samaritan Torah does not have a *textus receptus*. The Samaritan manuscripts of the Torah differ from one another in manner of transmission, and there is no single manuscript which everyone agrees is superior to the rest. This extends to the manuscript the Samaritans have chosen to represent the Samaritan version in its English translation, which is in the final stages of preparation. To this purpose, they have used the Nablus 6 manuscript mainly because it is one of the oldest manuscripts of the Pentateuch (copied in 1204). In addition, it is relatively complete; among the manuscripts copied in the thirteenth century it is the most comprehensive. Furthermore, it carries distinctly Samaritan characteristics; for example, many of its spellings correspond to the Samaritan pronunciation tradition of reading the Torah. Lastly, it has relatively few copying errors. As the authors assert, presenting the complete text in a readable and clear way required collecting parts of the manuscripts scattered in libraries around the world; reproducing certain superlinear, interlinear and marginal letters; and creating an apparatus of notes that deciphers the unusual spellings of the manuscript.

The following article, *Restoration of a Lacuna in the Greek Version of the Apocryphal Acts of Thomas. Ms. Paris Coisl. 121, fols. 9r-10v*, written by Israel Muñoz Gallarte (University of Cordoba) and Ángel Narro (University of Valencia), is devoted to the study of a Greek manuscripts of the *Apocryphal Acts of Thomas*, dated to the end of the first or the second half of the third century and preserved in more than 80 copies offering different versions of the text. The authors explore the challenges related to editing

Introduction

sources of such a complex tradition of transmission, as testified to by a plethora of sources preserved. In this case, the researchers focus on the manuscript Coisl. 121 (BNF), dated to 1342, fols. 9r-v, and use it as an example for explaining how to deal with a severely damaged copy, due to the fact that the exemplar presents two *lacunae* in the lower part of the folios.

In his paper entitled *The Protevangelium of James*, our next author, J. Keith Elliot (The University of Leeds, UK), discusses one of the most important and influential of the apocryphal gospels, considered to be among the earliest elaborations of the canonical infancy narratives that have been preserved to our times. The article follows its influence through the ages, from its original composition in the late second century CE, to modern printed editions, especially of manuscript Z (i.e., Bodmer papyrus V).

In the following paper, *Text and Paratext in Antiquity: The Textual Framework of the Coptic Version of the Apocalypse of Paul*, Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta (University of Groningen) analyses the Coptic version of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, which survived in a large number of versions in different languages. Despite its importance, it has so far received relatively little attention, while its *editio princeps* included numerous and important errors, which gave a distorted impression of the text's length and the number and extension of internal *lacunae*. In an attempt to redeem this situation, the author demonstrates how to reconstruct the original Coptic version of this *Apocalypse* through a detailed comparison with its Latin version.

The article *Lost and Found: Christian Arabic Membra Disiecta in the Mingana Collection*, authored by Miriam L. Hjälm (Stockholm School of Theology, Sankt Ignatios College), examines fragments of anonymous early Christian Arabic manuscripts, dated roughly to the ninth century CE, originating from Palestinian monasteries and belonging to the Mingana collection. It provides three suggestions what to look out for in terms of codicological features in order to reconstruct *membra disiecta*, as well as to pair up fragments separated from their manuscripts, held in different libraries. In the first part of the study, special attention is paid to the size and original foliation of the codex. The second part, focuses on the structure of the texts in an attempt to find evidence of whether they once belonged to the same manuscript. In the last example a lexical comparison is used to support codicological findings. Such methods are not supposed

to replace thorough content-related studies, but to complement them and give us preliminary indications of possible interrelationships. By doing so, the author contributes to our understanding of the manuscript production and of the life and thought of Christian Arabic communities in early medieval times.

In the last chapter, *Wrestling With Sacred Trash: Reconstructing Fragmentary Judeo-Arabic Manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah*, Amir Ashur (Orot College Research Authority) and Marzena Zawanowska (University of Warsaw & Jewish Historical Institute) focus on sources preserved in the Cairo Genizah, subjecting to close analysis three fragmentary manuscripts written in Judeo-Arabic (i.e., dialect of Middle Arabic used by the Jews in the Middle Ages) and containing texts pertaining to different literary genres: 1. an agreement between husband and wife, regarding his taking a second wife; 2. a Karaite marriage agreement; and 3. a passage from a Karaite translation of Genesis 1:1-12, possibly authored by a tenth century Karaite scholar from Jerusalem, Yefet ben 'Eli. In addition to demonstrating how to decipher and edit texts which exist only in one copy, as well as how to work on fragmentary and damaged sources, the paper offers suggestions how to determine the religious identity of a given text on the basis of its vocabulary.

Technical comments

Abbreviations for biblical books follow *The SBL Handbook of Biblical Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies*, eds. Patrick H. Alexander *et al.* (Peabody Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999). In addition, we use standard abbreviations for the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX). All other abbreviations are explained in the texts in which they appear.

Introduction

Acknowledgements

We should like to convey our deepest gratitude to all the contributors of the present volume, without whom this work would have never seen the daylight. We also wish to thank Mr. Hugh Doyle for reading a final version of this volume and suggesting certain corrections and improvements, Dr. Lourdes Bonhome-Pulido for laying out the volume and preparing it for publication, and Mrs. Bárbara Serrano for helping us with the indexes.

The book was partially edited and prepared for publication within the framework of the research project *Hebrajska poezja złotego wieku w al-Andalus. Antologia* [The Hebrew Poetry of the Golden Age in al-Andalus. An Anthology] sponsored by the National Program for the Development of Humanities (NPRH; grant Uniwersalia 2.2) awarded to Dr. Marzena Zawanowska (2018-2023; No. 22H/18/0199/86).

Israel Muñoz Gallarte, Marzena Zawanowska
Summer, 2022

Two cases of textual reconstruction in the Habakkuk Commentary of Qumran

Luis Vegas Montaner
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Context

In 1947, almost seventy five years ago, an extraordinary archaeological event took place: the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that great deposit of ancient manuscripts which resulted in a radical modification of our understanding of Judaism in the Second Temple period.¹ For the first time, scholars got access to manuscripts from a period prior to the stabilization of the text form of the books of the Hebrew Bible and the closure of the canon.

Once apparently ancient scrolls were found in some Qumran caves, a frenetic search commenced in all parts of the Judean Desert for others. This search, in which both archaeologists and Bedouin treasure-hunters competed, produced several additional finds. Thus, the term ‘Dead Sea Scrolls’ is used here in a broader sense, to include all the Judean Desert sites in addition to Qumran *sensu stricto*.

Eleazar Sukenik, an expert in Hebrew and Aramaic paleography, was the first to attribute the scrolls to the Second Temple period, and even suggested that they should be ascribed to the Essenes. This theory, which is still the consensus among scholars, was soon challenged by others who suggested, variously, every one of the religious groups of that time as possible candidates.² With respect to the chronology, the consensus was

¹ A good outlook can be found in James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010²) and Frank M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (3rd ed. rev. and enl. rev.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). For an exhaustive approach see Lawrence Schiffman & James C. VanderKam (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. 2 vols. (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

² See Magen Broshi, ‘The Dead Sea Scrolls: Discovery and Identification’, *Israel*

that the Qumran scrolls were written (not necessarily composed!) between the latter half of the third century BCE and 68 CE. Nevertheless, some have suggested later dates, claiming that almost all Qumran sectarian texts date to the first century CE and that the scrolls were deposited in the caves after and not before 68 CE:³ a later date was crucial for the argument in favour of a Christian relation to the scrolls.

As none of the 800 Qumran manuscripts bears the date of its copying,⁴ they are dated primarily by archaeological and paleographical methods. The archaeological assemblage associated with the manuscripts (pottery, coins, etc.) provides a *terminus ad quem*, the latest possible date of their writing. Paleography is often a more accurate method of dating, and paleographers are able to ascribe dates within ranges of a half, or even a quarter of a century.⁵

In comparison, many of the manuscripts (over 400) found at other Judean Desert sites bear specific dates. Some of them have been examined with radiocarbon analysis.⁶ Radiocarbon dating was possible when the first discoveries were made, but this method could not be applied to determine the dates of the scrolls. Until recently, radiocarbon dating required more material than could be taken from the scrolls (1-3 gms) and it was impossible to find unwritten parts of sufficient size.

Museum Journal 9 (1990), pp. 31-41. For recent discussions and hypotheses on Qumran origins, see Florentino García Martínez & Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

³ See Robert H. Eisenman, *Maccabees, Zadokites, Christians and Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), pp. 29-31.

⁴ Only two have an internal *terminus a quo*, based on events that took place in the first century BCE.

⁵ The standard studies are Nahman Avigad, ‘The Palaeography of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Documents’, in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, «Scripta Hierosolymitana» 4, eds. Chaim Rabin & Yigael Yadin (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1958), pp. 56-87; Frank M. Cross, ‘The Development of the Jewish Scripts’, in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. G. Ernest Wright (London: Routledge & Paul, 1961), pp. 133-202; Solomon A. Birnbaum, *The Hebrew Scripts* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

⁶ See Georges Bonani, Magen Broshi, Israel Carmi, Susan Ivvy, John Strugnell, Willy Wölfli, ‘Radiocarbon Dating of the Dead Sea Scrolls’, *Atiqot* 20 (1991), pp. 27-32.