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978-0-521-10527-9 - 'Codex Climaci Rescriptus Graecus'

Ian A. Moir

Excerpt

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INTRODUCTION

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A. HISTORY

THE manuscript which forms the subject of this study is one of those bequeathed by Mrs A. S. Lewis to the Library of Westminster College, Cambridge, in which it is now housed. Mrs Lewis named this palimpsest after Johannes Climacus, Abbot of the Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai c. A.D. 600, who is the author of the two Syriac treatises contained in the upper writing.

C. R. Gregory assigned to the MS. the number 1561: 1(?) in his *Textkritik des N.T.* (vol. III (1909), pp. 1374–5), where he speaks of 'dieses hoch interessante Buch'. The MS. is not mentioned by H. von Soden in his *Die Schriften des N.T.* Rahlfs numbers it 2011 in his list of O.T. Greek MSS. (*Verzeichnis der griechischen HSS. des A.T.* (Göttingen, 1914), p. 43), and in his introduction to the Psalms volume of the Göttingen Septuagint (vol. x (1931), pp. 14, 71). There is no record of the MS. in Otley's revision of Swete's *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge, 1914), nor in the same writer's *Handbook to the Septuagint* (London, 1920). I am not aware of any other reference to the MS. in other lists of O.T. or N.T. MSS. A letter in Westminster College Library shows that the MS. was known to the Rev. P. L. Hedley who examined it in 1931.

Mrs Lewis tells how she came into possession of the MS. in the preface to her volume *Codex Climaci Rescriptus (Horae Semiticae, VIII, Cambridge, 1909)*,¹ where she edits those pages which contain underwriting in Palestinian Syriac. One leaf was purchased in Cairo in 1895, eighty-nine were received from a Berlin scholar² in October 1905, and forty-eight further leaves were purchased at Port Tewfik in April 1906.

¹ References to contemporary reviews of this volume are given in the Bibliography, p. 21.

² This might have been H. von Soden. The late Dr R. Bell, Lecturer in Arabic at the University of Edinburgh, suggested that the name of Dr Sachau, then head of the Oriental School in Berlin, would fill the gap. Another very probable name seems that of Karl Schmidt. This scholar's travels in Egypt were frequent and extensive (cf. also F. G. Kenyon, *Recent Developments in the Textual Criticism of the Greek Bible*, p. 95).

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Mrs Lewis numbered the leaves of the MS. in Semitic fashion according to the contents of the upper Syriac and I have retained her numeration throughout for reference purposes. To Mrs Lewis's leaves must now be added an odd leaf, identified by Principal Black of St Mary's College, St Andrews, and to be found in the Mingana Collection of MSS. at Selly Oak, Birmingham.¹ Examination shows this to be the conjugate leaf of Mrs Lewis's fol. 131, and it would form fol. 138 of the book as it is at present constituted. The coincidence of the edges of the tear which separated the leaves is evident even in photographs. The leaves with Greek underwriting are made up of thirty-six which came into Mrs Lewis's hands via Berlin, together with a single leaf (the Joshua leaf) which was purchased at Port Tewfik.

There is no hint in the MS. as to the former owner, and the place of origin can only be guessed at. The *locus* of Mrs Lewis's purchases suggests Egypt, Sinai or, perhaps, Palestine as likely places. Mingana states that his finds were made in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and the Sinai Peninsula,² and he expresses the belief that this and other MSS. came from the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai.³ I feel certain that this MS. was there in the course of its travels whether or not it was written there.

B. PALAEOGRAPHY

The vellum of the MS. throughout is of very variable quality and thickness. A good proportion of the leaves are stout and heavy while others are so thin as to be almost transparent. A micrometer yielded the following results:

(Average measurements)

Leaves 47–55, 0.01 in.

Leaves 64–72 and 81–96, 0.01 in. (variations from 0.006 to 0.013 in.).

¹ Mingana Syriac no. 637. Cf. also *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. xxiii (1939), pp. 201–14.

² *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of MSS.* (Cambridge, 1939), vol. III, p. xxv.

³ *Ibid.* p. xxi n.

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In general there is a tendency to brittleness and the first few leaves of the MS. are much worn. Here and there are traces of worm-holes. Many of the leaves have turned distinctly yellow in colour, while others, such as those with the Psalms text, are more definitely grey. Not a few have been considerably damaged by the application of chemicals. There are occasional holes, probably flaying marks, in the vellum, which have been allowed for by the scribe at the time of writing (e.g. fol. 93a recto, col. ii). Many of these holes and also certain damaged spots at the edges of various leaves have been patched over with very thick and carelessly trimmed material.

Except in the case of foll. 47–55, the process employed to remove the underwriting was not a very thorough one and the writing can be deciphered with a large measure of certainty by the aid of ultra-violet light. Reading has been made more difficult by the action of damp, by chemical damage and by the presence of dirt which is not readily removed.

The average size of the sheets is now about 23 or 24 cm. × 18 or 19 cm. or $9\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in., but there is evidence that at least some parts of the MS. were upwards of an inch longer and also broader and that they have been trimmed to suit the present format.¹ Many of the pages have thus lost one or two lines of text either at the top or bottom, and in some the sides of columns have been cut away.

There are now extant 138 leaves or 276 pages, all of which contain some form of underwriting.² No trace has been found of any quire numbers, though these may have appeared on the trimmed edges of the leaves. The existing MS. is composed of quires of eight leaves. Reconstruction of the remaining leaves of Greek text shows an arrangement of leaves which is illustrated by diagrams in Table 1, p. 97. These diagrams will indicate

¹ Cf. also *Horae Semiticae*, viii, p. xvi. (This work is hereafter referred to as 'Lewis'.)

² Cf. Lewis, p. xi. Here it is stated that four leaves have no underscript. This is questioned in a MS. note by the Rev. P. L. Hedley. Ultra-violet examination shows that the pages in question did contain Greek, but this does not appear clearly enough or with sufficient continuity to permit of decipherment. Lewis, p. xi, par. 3 should thus read 'thirty-six' for 'thirty-two'.

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how much the leaves of the original manuscripts have been scattered in the making up of the existing MS.

From the diagrams it will be seen that the top leaf in each group has been the innermost leaf of its quire. The broken nature of the text makes it very difficult to estimate the placing or the number of intervening leaves which are missing, and this difficulty is increased by the fact that in no case does the text of one group of leaves immediately follow on that of the previous one.

It is certain that at least one sheet lay between 67–70 and 84–85 in Group I, for fol. 84 starts off at the δ of $\sigma\kappa\alpha\nu\delta\alpha\lambda\iota\zeta\epsilon\iota$. There may be a sheet missing in Group II between 83–86 and 68–69, but this cannot be established from the text. The two sheets of Group III are contiguous. At least one sheet stood between 92–93 and 72–65 in Group IV. The three sheets of Group V were adjacent.

It appears that the leaves were arranged with the recto side uppermost. Two exceptions to this are noticeable. In Group II, foll. 87–82, and in Group III, foll. 91–94 are reversed. I suspect that both these leaves had already been written on when they came to be used for the Greek text and their being turned over to receive the new writing would account for the reversal.

The MS. shows traces of binding and glue at various places. Small portions of brown twine remain here and there and I have been advised that this is contemporary with the MS.¹ Foll. 47–55 are bound together with blue twine sewn in cross-stitch and this binding is believed to have been executed during the last century.¹ Mrs Lewis does not say that between foll. 52 and 53 there is bound a small piece of vellum with Syriac writing which appears to have been clipped from the foot of fol. 108.

The following leaves still remain unseparated:

84–85	92–93	68–69
83–86	91–94	67–70
82–87	90–95	66–71
81–88	89–96	65–72

There is no trace of any covers belonging to the MS.

¹ I owe this information to the staff of the Bookbinding Department of the National Library of Wales.

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INKS. The ink used for the Greek writing is generally of a yellowish colour with a tendency to turn brown. Some leaves have no ink left at all; others show only the imprint of the pen; the majority have ink of a yellow colour, while some are almost turned black where chemical reagents have been applied.

WRITING. Ultra-violet light reveals that foll. 47–55 have two columns to the page, and this applies also to foll. 64–72 and 81–96 which contain the N.T. Greek text. The number of lines per column is very varied. The average is about thirty-one, but several gaps are left, especially on the pages which contain excerpts from more than one gospel. Here the number varies between twenty-one and twenty-five. Fol. 66 has an insertion by the first hand closely packed in small letters at the top of the page. It forms part of the context.

RULING. (a) *Horizontal.* Most of the leaves show traces of having been ruled to take the original Greek. Lines are drawn about $\frac{5}{16}$ in. apart from edge to edge of each double leaf. In most cases the ruling appears on the recto side of the sheet. There is no trace of any pricking to guide the ruling, but this may easily have been obliterated as the edges of most of the sheets are in rather poor condition. The writing rests upon the lines, but they are not very carefully observed. The tendency to rise above the lines is noticeable and occasionally the writing passes right through the lines.

(b) *Vertical.* Vertical lines were inserted to leave average margins of about 1 in. at the edges and $\frac{7}{8}$ in. in the centre of the sheets. The space allowed for the line of writing is about $2\frac{1}{16}$ in., though this is not constant and the breadth of the two columns on the same page is frequently different. In all sheets the guide lines are frequently overstepped in order to complete a word, and there is also evidence of crushing in not a few places in order to fit the words to the given space.

The number of letters per line is very variable and on any one page runs between twelve and seventeen. In general, it may be said that the MS., though not the work of a careful writer, observes the accepted conventions with regard to the division of words at the end of lines.

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HAND OF WRITING. All the leaves containing Greek are written in uncial script. The undeciphered pages and the N.T. pages are written in uncial with a considerable angle of slope. The writing is careless. The letters tend to be fairly thick and their height is about $\frac{1}{4}$ in. I append a description of the characteristics of some of the letters used:

- Δ has a heavy down stroke and a small loop. The loop is generally placed well down the stroke.
- Β tends to degenerate towards a minuscule letter.
- Δ generally has a very light cross-stroke and is easily confused with λ.
- Ε much compressed laterally. Cross-stroke is almost invariably medial and not high.
- Η has very light cross-stroke.
- Θ much compressed laterally. Easily confused with ε and ο.
- Κ generally wide gap between the downstroke and the two diagonal strokes.
- Μ left transverse stroke shows a tendency to curve downwards.
- Ο laterally compressed. Very like c.
- Π very light cross-stroke. Easily confused with η.
- ϸ laterally compressed and clubbed at the top.
- Τ cross-stroke clubbed at both ends.
- Υ made in two strokes of the pen. The right hand and down strokes form one.
- Χ short strokes.
- Ω very round. Strokes all the same height.

DATE. The *terminus ad quem* for dating the Greek text is necessarily fixed by the dating of the upper writing. Mrs Lewis states that G. Margoliouth and A. G. Ellis assigned this script to the beginning of the ninth century,¹ but Mingana dates the leaf which is at Selly Oak as late as A.D. 1100.² Working from the upper Syriac, Mrs Lewis dates the Greek underwriting as eighth

¹ Lewis, p. xi.

² *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of MSS.*, vol. III, p. 78.

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century,¹ and Rahlfs gives this date for the Psalms pages, though this is probably not an independent judgment.²

Gregory puts the date as '8 Jhd. (oder früher)'.³ Examples of this so-called 'Slavonic' uncial do not appear to be very frequent, and the signposts for comparative dating are not very well marked, but I believe that such evidence as can be obtained by this method would place our MS. in the seventh century.

The hand used is very similar to that of the fragments which make up Cod. 0106 of the Gospels.⁴ Both MSS. show occasional breathings and both have the same lateral compression of the letters E Θ O C. In general our MS. shows a more cramped and less regular hand. Codex 0106 is dated in the seventh century by Tischendorf, Gregory and Hatch. Another similar hand is to be found in Codex 095,⁵ a MS. of Acts assigned to the seventh century by Tischendorf, Gregory and Hatch. There is a considerable slope of the letters in both MSS., but those of 095 are much thicker than the hand of our MS. In both initial ι and υ are found indicated with a double dot. Both MSS. lack accents.

Our MS. is not dissimilar in style to the hands of the Washington MS. (W) of the Gospels which is dated in the fifth century.⁶ The hand has a closer resemblance to that which wrote the bulk of W than it has to that of the first quire of St John. This latter hand is assigned by Kenyon to the seventh or eighth century, though this view is not accepted by H. A. Sanders, who prefers a considerably earlier date.⁷ Along with W must be mentioned the Akhmim Enoch whose third quire, in particular, is similar to, but evidently earlier than our MS.⁸ It is noticeable that the letters

¹ Lewis, p. xii.² *Verzeichnis der gr. HSS. des A.T.*, p. 43.³ *Textkritik des N.T.*, vol. III, p. 1374.⁴ For facsimile see W. H. P. Hatch, *The Principal Uncial MSS. of the New Testament* (Chicago, 1939), pl. XXXVI. (This volume is hereafter referred to as 'Hatch'.)⁵ See Hatch, pl. XXXVII.⁶ See *Facsimile of the Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, ed. H. A. Sanders (New York, 1912). Cf. also Hatch, pl. XXI and New Pal. Soc. Facsimile, series 1, pl. 201.⁷ *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels* (New York, 1912), pp. 135, 137.⁸ *Ibid.* p. 137. Here Sanders refers to Plates XI–XXIII in *Mém. de la Miss. Arch. Fran. au Caire* (Paris, 1893), vol. IX, fasc. 3. I have not been able to obtain access to this publication.

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here are compressed laterally to a much smaller extent and the hand appears to represent an intermediate stage between that of the great fourth- and fifth-century uncials and MSS. of the type under consideration. The other parallels to W mentioned by Sanders are also comparable to a greater or less degree with our MS.¹

The hand also bears a resemblance to fragment Λ^a of the Washington Psalter² which is placed by Sanders in the eighth century and is compared by him with Codex 0106 referred to above.

Our MS. must, I think, be dated prior to such codices as 041 (Π) of the ninth century and 054 (Υ) of the eighth century,³ both of which seem to show a return to the more upright hands which culminated in the upright ornamental style which is characteristic of the late ninth and tenth centuries. There is also some similarity to the underwriting of the Cambridge University Library MS. No. Add. 4489, containing a Martyrology, which was dated by F. C. Burkitt around A.D. 800 and is written in a hand which he describes as 'a sloping uncial of not the latest style'.⁴

Somewhat similar in style to our MS. are the underwritings of the palimpsests shown in New Pal. Soc., 2nd series, pl. 138*b* and *c*. These are assigned to the ninth century. I believe our MS. may be written in a hand akin to the underwriting of certain palimpsests in the British Museum,⁵ but wartime conditions made it impossible to consult the originals and there are no published facsimiles. The same may be said regarding the MSS. from Mount Sinai published

¹ *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels* (New York, 1912), pp. 138–9.

² H. A. Sanders (ed.), *The Old Testament MSS. in the Freer Collection*, Pt. II, 'The Washington MS. of the Psalms' (Univ. of Michigan Studies, Humanistic Series, vol. VIII), p. 123 and pls. IV and IX. Cf. also *Biblical World*, vol. XXXIII (1909), pp. 343–4. Here Sanders says, 'Further examination of the style of writing of this fragment tends to associate it with the early examples of Slavonic uncial rather than with the imitative ornamental hands of the 9th century.' Sanders then goes on to place this Psalms fragment in the same century as 0106, and thereafter refers to the British Museum Papyrus Psalter of the fourth or fifth century (Pal. Soc. Facsimiles I, pl. 38), which he describes as 'a forerunner of the style of our Psalms fragment and similar specimens which are tentatively dated in the seventh or early eighth century'.

³ Facsimiles in Hatch, pls. LII and XLIX respectively.

⁴ *J.T.S.* vol. XI (1909), p. 61.

⁵ Cf. E. Maunde Thompson, *Introduction to Greek and Latin Palaeography* (Oxford, 1912), p. 211. Examples of such MSS. are nos. DCLXXXVII, DXXIII and DCCXVIII in Wright's *Catalogue of Syriac MSS.*

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by Rendel Harris,¹ for Harris gives no facsimiles and this defect has not been remedied by W. H. P. Hatch's *Catalogue of the Greek MSS. at Mount Sinai*, which only quotes Gregory's numbers for the various items.²

The Psalms fragment is written in an upright uncial whose affinities will be discussed elsewhere.³ Except for the fact that the letters of the Joshua leaf are made with a somewhat thicker pen, the writing has the same general characteristics as that of the New Testament portions, so that what has been said of them applies here also. Though one would like to believe that the Joshua leaf originally formed part of the same codex as the gospel leaves, there seems no case for establishing this on palaeographic grounds.

In general, all three fragments appear to belong to the same palaeographic age group, though it is not easy to establish within very close limits what that group is. From an examination of photographs of some parts of the New Testament, Sir Frederick Kenyon expressed the opinion that 'the hand is of the type which is generally assigned to the ninth century, though one cannot date it very closely'. Professor Souter, again on the evidence of photographs, was inclined to favour a somewhat earlier date. Professor Ellis Minns, who very kindly examined the originals, was in general agreement with my finding that the MS. could be dated in the period A.D. 650–700.

In the light of the available evidence, I conclude that our MS. cannot be earlier than the latter half of the seventh century, but it may be somewhat later. The small number of contractions and the lack of breathings and accents would seem to point to an earlier rather than a later date.

ABBREVIATIONS. There are remarkably few abbreviations to be found in the MS. They are almost entirely confined to Nomina Sacra together with the occasional use of compendia for α and ω . Table 2 (pp. 99–100) contains a list which shows the number of times various contractions, singular and plural, are used, and also the number of cases of failure to contract which I have observed.

¹ *Biblical Fragments from Mount Sinai* (Cambridge, 1890).

² The numbers quoted by Hatch are Gregory 073, 074, 077, 092, 0112, 0118, 0119, 0137 and 0140.

³ See p. ix.