The 125 homilies pronounced by Severus of Antioch in the course of the six years of his short-lived patriarchate (512–518) belong to the classics of Syrian Orthodox literature. The theological instruction and biblical interpretation found in them became the framework of reference for subsequent generations. The liturgical setting of the homilies greatly contributed to their use, while Severus’ vivid style and skilful use of rhetorical techniques continued to capture the listeners’ or readers’ attention.

Collected and edited at an early date, the homilies were available in a Syriac translation no later than the middle of the sixth century. A century and a half later, Jacob of Edessa produced a revised translation, which was completed in the year 700/701. Jacob’s work, almost entirely preserved and published with a French translation between the years 1906 and 1976, compensates for the loss of the original Greek version of the homilies and constitutes the basis for all modern research on Severus’ homilies.

Jacob’s work as a translator or reviser of Severus’ homilies has received considerable scholarly attention, whereby his indebtedness to the earlier translator(s) has been fully taken into account. As early as 1922, M.-A. Kugener and Edg. Triffaux published Homily 77—the only homily that survived in the Greek original—along with the two existing Syriac translations, the mid-sixth-century one and the one by Jacob of Edessa.

*While preparing this paper, I have benefited from the help and suggestions of Françoise Petit (Louvain-la-Neuve) and Andrew Jacobs (Duke University), while Bas ter Haar Romeny and Martin Baasten (Leiden) have been helpful in solving all kinds of technical problems. To all of them I would like to express my gratitude.

1 Cf. M. Brière, Les Homiliae Cathedrales de Sévère d’Antioche. Traduction de Jacques d’Édesse. Introduction générale à toutes les homélies (PO 29.1; Paris 1960), 39–40. The date is given in the colophon of Ms. Vat. sir. 141. Since this manuscript only contains the second part of the translation (homilies 44 to 91), the possibility cannot be ruled out that the date refers to the completion of the second part, not to that of the entire collection.

The juxtaposition of the three textual witnesses provides insight into their interrelationship. More recently, F. Graffin and C.J.A. Lash studied various aspects of Jacob’s working method, including the way in which he dealt with the earlier work. However, except for Homily 77 and one other homily (no. 52: On the Maccabees), the earlier translation, of which large portions have survived, has remained unpublished. Moreover, the nearly complete absence of the Greek original has seriously hindered the study of the relationship between the two translations.

In the past few years, a number of Greek fragments, mainly preserved in exegetical *Catena* manuscripts, have become available in critical editions. There is reason, therefore, to examine whether these fragments may shed new light on Jacob’s working method and on the way in which he dealt with the earlier version. It is my aim here to present the result of some first soundings. Before doing so, however, a few preliminary observations on the earlier, mid-sixth-century translation need to be made.

Portions of the mid-sixth-century translation have been preserved in four ancient manuscripts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Homily Ranges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. London, BL Add. 14599</td>
<td>AD 568/9</td>
<td>Hom. 31 to 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Rome, Vat. Syr. 142</td>
<td>no later than 576</td>
<td>Hom. 73 to 100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Rome, Vat. Syr. 143</td>
<td>AD 563</td>
<td>Hom. 101 to 125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Rome, Vat. Syr. 256</td>
<td>sixth century</td>
<td>Hom. 101 to 125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In none of the manuscripts is the translator’s name mentioned. It is far from certain, therefore, that we are dealing with the work of Paul

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6 A number of Greek fragments were previously known in uncritical editions, while in the most recent fascicles of the *Patrologia Orientalis* edition, Greek fragments were published in the footnotes. With the new critical editions, however, we have a more reliable basis for study (see note 12 below).

7 See the description of the manuscripts in Brière, *Introduction* (PO 29), 18–33. See the Postscript to the present article.