THE LAND IS FULL OF FOREIGN CHILDREN:
LANGUAGE AND IDEOLOGY IN LXX ISA. 2.6

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INTRODUCTION

It is well known that Isa. 2.6 is a challenge for those who try to interpret and translate the book of Isaiah.\(^1\) Over the years, several emendations of the Hebrew text have been proposed and the LXX has often been used as a resource for the clarification of the verse’s meaning and textual history.\(^2\) But in the light of recent developments in research, which have indicated that the form of the Hebrew Vorlage of LXX Isaiah was indeed very close to MT, a new set of questions can be asked with regard to the relationship between the MT and LXX of Isa. 2.6. Sweeney (1996: 101) is correct in his assessment that the ancient versions ‘represent the translator’s or scribe’s attempts to make sense out of a confusing text’.\(^3\) If the Vorlage of the Greek Isaiah is similar to MT, a comparison between the versions opens a window into significant aspects of the LXX translation process.

In the present contribution, I explore the translation technical aspects of LXX Isa. 2.6, focusing on questions of syntax, vocabulary, textual relationship between LXX Isaiah and other LXX texts, and ideological factors behind the rendering.\(^4\) I expect that this contribution

\(^1\) It is a great honour and privilege to offer this contribution in honour of my Doktorvater, Robert P. Gordon. In my years as a doctoral student at Cambridge, I learned from Robert Gordon well beyond academic matters.

\(^2\) Some of the proposed emendations have found their way into BHS and modern versions. See the surveys in Barthélemy (1986: 13), and De Waard (1997: 12–13). In this connection the work of Gray (1911; 1912) needs to be highlighted for his strong stance on the superiority of the LXX to MT as a witness to the original text of Isaiah.

\(^3\) See also Sweeney (1988: 139–41).

\(^4\) The notion of textual relationship is used here instead of intertextuality, as the latter term involves a series of complex principles and methodological presuppositions related to structuralist and post-structuralist literary criticism, represented by the work of authors such as Kristeva (1969; 1974). While the concept of intertextuality is valid for the study of texts (even within the LXX) it does not apply to the kind of simple relationship of direct influence envisaged here between LXX Isaiah and LXX
will advance our knowledge of the principles that oriented the translation of Isaiah in the LXX.

**The LXX Translation of Isa. 2.6**

First of all, here is a parallel translation of the MT and LXX of Isa. 2.6:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT</th>
<th>LXX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>מָלְאוּ֙ כִּ֤י יַﬠֲקֹ֔וב בֵּ֣ית ↘עַמְּךָ֙ נָטַ֗שְׁתָּה כִּ֣י וּבְיַלְדֵ֥י כַּפְּלִשְׁתִּ֑ים וְﬠֹֽנְנִ֖ים מִקֶּ֔דֶם יַשְׂפִּֽיקוּ׃</td>
<td>ἀνῆκε γὰρ τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ἰσραηλ ὅτι ἐνεπλήσθη ὡς τὸ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἡ χώρα αὐτῶν κληδονισμῶν ὡς ἡ τῶν ἀλλοφύλων καὶ τέκνα πολλὰ ἀλλόφυλα ἐγενήθη αὐτοῖς</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For you have abandoned your people, the house of Jacob. For they are filled from the east, and sorcerers like the Philistines, and with the children of foreigners they strike.</td>
<td>For he has forsaken his people, the house of Israel. Because their country has become filled, as at the beginning, with sorceries like that of the foreigners, and many foreign children have been born to them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Modern commentators tend to be bothered by the second person addresses in MT Isa. 2.6 and 9, while third person forms are overall privileged in Isa. 2.6–9. Instead of seeing these two instances as mutually supportive, scholars have sought to reconstruct alternative Hebrew texts. For instance, Duhm (1902: 39–40) argues that נָטַ֗שְׁתָּה possibly springs from a misreading of עמו יִנְטשׁ, occasioned by the joining of the first two words and the confusion of ו and י resulting in the second person possessive suffix we find in MT’s וּבְיַלְדֵ֥י. For Duhm, this is probably the reading of the LXX Vorlage, and the explanation for the third person rendering ἀνῆκε. However, if the translator had a text similar to the one reconstructed by Duhm, one would expect

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5 The portions in italics represent additions in the LXX.
6 As suggested by Williamson (2006: 190).
7 The *plene* spelling in MT agrees with 1QIsa".

Deuteronomy and Hosea, as we shall see below. For a succinct account of intertextuality, see Elam (1993) and Thiselton (1992: 38–42).