

Oi Alloi or Lost Anonymous Literary Editions of Sirach Preserved in the Georgian and Armenian Translations*

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The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira (Sirach), as with the apocryphal/deuterocanonical books in general, exhibits a greater degree of textual pluriformity than do the books of the Hebrew Bible. The question naturally arises as to whether deuterocanonical pluriformity tends to manifest itself in the earliest stages, in the history of transmission of the Hebrew writings, or whether it appears more in its later stages, as for example in the Greek witnesses or the daughter versions/redactions. Firm answers to this question are usually inhibited by a lack of Hebrew manuscript evidence. But this is not the case for the text of Sirach. Fragments of nine manuscripts from Qumran, Masada, and the Cairo Genizah, which together preserve 68% of the full text of Sirach,¹ witness a certain degree of textual divergence. However, the most complete picture of Sirach's textual plurality is drawn by its numerous versions in other languages, including Syriac and Greek, and in the daughter versions, mainly Latin, but also Armenian and Georgian.

Based on these sources, scholars have identified two basic text-types of Sirach. The first or "primitive" text-type, reflected in the Greek translation produced by the grandson of Jesus Ben Sira (Gr I),² is the more stable form, and

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- 1 For the most complete editions of these manuscripts, see P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew MSS and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VTSup 68; Leiden: Brill, 1997). For an edition of the newly discovered fragments, see S. Elizur, "Two New Leaves of the Hebrew Version of Ben Sira," *DSD* 17 (2010): 13–29, and S. Elizur and M. Rand, "A New Fragment of the Book of Ben Sira," *DSD* 18 (2011): 200–205.
- 2 We use the following abbreviations for this and the other sources: Gr I = Greek translation of Sirach made by his grandson; Gr II = expanded textual forms (see also *infra*, n. 6); La = Latin translation (viz., manuscript evidence of Sirach in *Vetus latina* and *Vulgata* witnesses); Ge = Georgian translation; Arm = Armenian translation; L = group of so-called Lucianic sources;

is widespread in the Greek manuscripts. The second or “complex” text-type of Sirach, which includes multiple variations and are usually characterized as “expanded,”³ are formed by lexical substitutions and essential and large additions to the base text (Gr I). Expanded texts are extant in Hebrew, Syriac, Greek (in biblical manuscripts as well as in quotations), and the daughter versions. Indeed, the most interesting witnesses for the “expanded text” represent Latin sources containing different strata originating from different textual forms of Sirach.⁴

It is worth restating, however, that each text-type and each version is “expanded” in different ways. For example, in the extant Hebrew sources the overall number of additions to the text is fewer than those exhibited in the Greek sources. Moreover, certain extensions to the text of Sirach are preserved in different forms in Greek and Syriac versions, while other extensions are similar in these two versions yet vary from those that are attested in the extant Hebrew manuscripts.⁵ The same can be said about the Greek sources. For example, texts of manuscripts *O* and *L*, which are the main representatives of the Greek “expanded text” (Gr II),⁶ differ from each other by number of additions: starting from the chapter 14 there are only few additions in *O* witnesses. In many cases the additions are not identical: the extensions of *O* and *L* often have no parallels

O = group of so-called Hexaplaric sources; GeO = Oshki (Athos) Codex of the Georgian translation; and Arm^Z = Zohrapian's edition of the Armenian translation.

- 3 P.W. Skehan and A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 57–59, and F.V. Reiterer, “Review of Recent Research on the Book of Ben Sira (1980–1996),” in P.C. Beentjes, ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Modern Research: Proceedings of the First International Ben Sira Conference, 28–31 July 1996, Soesterberg, Netherlands* (BZAW 255; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1997), 26–60.
- 4 W. Thiele, *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel 11/2: Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 1–24* (Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 1987–2005), and D. De Bruyne, “Étude sur le texte latin de l'Éclésiastique,” *RevBen* 40 (1928): 5–48.
- 5 C. Kearns, *The Expanded Text of Ecclesiasticus: Its Teaching on the Future Life as a Clue to Its Origin* (DCLS 11; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2011), 54.
- 6 We use this abbreviation in collective sense to designate the various text forms that are different from Gr I. Cf. Ziegler's two statements on this issue: “Gr II keinen einheitlichen Text, sondern verschiedene Formen darstellte, die als völlig oder teilweise neue Versionen und Revisionen des hebr. Sirach im Umlauf waren,” and especially: “Gr II ist nicht eine unabhängige Übersetzung. Der zweite Übersetzer hat die vorliegende griech. Hss. (Gr I) benutzt und dort neu übersetzt, wo er es für notwendig hielt”—J. Ziegler, “Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach,” *Septuaginta 12/2* (second ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 68 and 74–75, and Kearns, *Expanded Text of Ecclesiasticus*, 49–52.