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HEXAPLARIC MATERIAL IN THE ALBANO-ARMENIAN PALIMPSESTS FROM MT. SINAI

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Among the many treasures that are concealed in the library of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mt. Sinai, the palimpsest manuscripts Sin.georg. N 13 and N 55 of the "New collection" represent an outstanding jewel. It is Zaza Aleksidze's merit to have detected that their lower layer contains the only manuscript remains of the Caucasian "Albanians" of the Middle Ages¹ and to have initiated a fruitful international cooperation of scholars that resulted in the edition of the "Albanian" texts in 2009.²

Apart from the "Albanian" layer, the two palimpsests – which have been proven to represent one codex from the point of view of the Georgian upper text³ – contain a total of 84 pages (42 fols.) that are remnants of two different Armenian manuscripts.⁴ The first of them, written in considerably slanted majuscules, contained the Pauline Epistles together with the so-called "Euthalian" material. Of the 10 fols. that have survived as bifoliate in Sin.georg. N 13 and 55, two pertain to the works of Euthalius of Sulca, one to the Prolegomena, an introductory chapter depicting the life of the Apostle,⁵ and the other one, to the list of testimonies, i.e., the register

¹ For the first publication of the discovery cf. Zaza Aleksidzé / Jean-Pierre Mahé, Découverte d'un texte albanien: une langue ancienne du Caucase retrouvée. In: *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année 1997*. Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 141^e année, N. 2, 1997, pp. 517-532.

² Cf. Jost Gippert, Wolfgang Schulze, Zaza Aleksidze, Jean-Pierre Mahé, The Caucasian Albanian Palimpsests of Mount Sinai, vols. I-II, Turnhout: Brepols 2009 (Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi / Series Ibero-Caucasica, 2). – The edition project was generously supported by the Volkswagen Foundation with several successive grants since 1999.

³ Cf. ib., vol. I, pp. 1-3-25.

⁴ Cf. ib., vol. I, pp. 1-25. – The edition of the Armenian layer will be published as vol. III of the same work in 2010.

⁵ The bifoliate consisting of N 13 fol. 71 and 72 contains the passage where Euthalius, basing himself on the chronological data established by Eusebius, relates St. Paul's persecution of Christians, his conversion on his journey to Damascus, his capture in Rome and his trials; it corresponds to par. III of the edition of the Greek text by Zacagni (Laurentius Alexander Zacagnius, *Collectanea Monumentorum Veterum Ecclesiae Graecae, ac Latinae*. Tomus I, Romae 1698, pp. 529-530, reprinted in Jean-Paul Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 85, col. 708-709), to the Armenian text as edited by Aristaces Vardanian (Euthalius Werke.

of quotations from Old Testament texts and other sources within St. Paul's letters.⁶ On the other three bifoliate we find one passage each of three of the epistles (I Cor. 6.10-20, Heb. 11.35-12.7, and Phile. 10-25 with subscriptum).⁷

The second Armenian original, written in rounded majuscules (*bolorgic erkat'agir*) as well but in a totally different style, comprises 32 fols. whose original arrangement as conjugates has been preserved in the palimpsests. In the remains of Sin.georg. N 13 and 55, its contents are clearly confined to the three Old Testament books of Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and Sapientia Solomonis; it is well possible, however, that the original codex pertained to the well attested type of manuscripts styled *Bank' Solomoni* which contain the same set of books preceded only by Proverbs,⁸ the fourth work attributed to king Solomon,⁹ albeit there is no trace of the latter book in the palimpsests.¹⁰

Even though the state of preservation of most of the 64 pages is extremely bad and the decipherment was further hampered by the fact that the upper script was applied horizontally over the lower script here so that many of the original lines have been covered to a large extent, the identification of the individual passages and the restoration of the original text has been possible in most cases due to the close affinity of the wording to that represented in Zohrab's Bible edition. This has also enabled us to calculate the extent of the original manuscript. Assuming that it contained just the three books of Ecclesiastes, Canticum, and Sapientia Salomonis, it must

Untersuchungen und Texte. Anhang: Brief des Eusebios von Caesarea an Karpianos / Matenagrowt'iwñk' Ewt'ali. K'nnowt'iwñ ew bnagir. Yawelowac Ewsebeay Kesarac'woy t'owlt' af Karpianos, hratarakec' H. Aristakēs Vardanean. Wien / Vienna 1930, pp. 93-95, preprinted in *Handēs Amsōreay* 1926 / 1-2, pp. 1-6; the text agrees with that printed in the so-called Zohrab Bible, cf. Y. Zōhrapēan (ed.), *Astowacašownč' matean hin ew nor ktakaranac'*, Venētik 1805/ repr. Delmar, N.Y. 1984, col. 765), and to the Georgian text as edited by Kōrneli Danelia (ვეთაღეს სტიქომეტრიის ძველი ქართული რედაქციები, in: ძველი ქართული ენის კათედრის შრომები 20, თბილისი 1977, pp. 102-103).

⁶ What we have in the bifoliate consisting of Sin.georg. N 55, fol. 28 and 29, is the final list of the chapter which summarises the quotations that occur in more than one letter. Of the eleven items constituting this list, the bifoliate contains all but the first; it represents an extremely important ancient witness to the rather divergent tradition of this part of the material even though the bifoliate was badly affected by the fire. Cf. ზაზა აღუქსიძე, კავკასიის აღბანეთის დამწერლობა, ენა და მწერლობა აღმოჩენა სინას მთის წმ. ეკატერინეს მონასტერში, თბილისი 2003 / Zaza N. Aleksidze, Caucasian Albanian Script, Language and Literature. Discovery in St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai, Tbilisi 2003, pp. 159-166 for a first account of this bifoliate. The text corresponds to pp. 568-569 in Zacagni's edition (~ col. 745 in PG 85), pp. 127-128 (~ HA 1926, cols. 295-298) in Vardanian's, and pp. 121-122 in Danelia's edition.

⁷ For details cf. the edition (vol. III of Gippert-Schulze-Aleksidze-Mahé), pp. I-1-8 and III-1-22.

⁸ Cf. S. Peter Cowe, A Typology of Armenian Biblical Manuscripts, *Revue des Études Arméniennes* N.S. 18, 1984, p. 60 as to the type. One example is the XIVth c. minuscule ms. no. 76 of the Matenadaran, cf. the description in Ō. Eganyan, A. Zeyt'ownyan, P'. Ant'abyan, Mayr c'owc'ak hayerēn jeřagrac' Mařtoc'i anown Matenadaran / General'nyj katalog armjanskix rukopisej Matenadaran imeni Mařtoca, h. A / t. 1, Erevan 1984, col. 307-310. The specimen displayed there represents Eccl. 9,11, the image of the majuscule fly leaf, Ps. 20,10.

⁹ The fifth book attributed to Solomon, the so-called Psalmi Salomonis, seems never to have existed in Armenian (just as it was not contained in the oldest Greek codices such as the Codex Alexandrinus, cf. Alfred Rahlfs, Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes, Stuttgart ³1949, vol. I, p. XXXII); it is not contained in the Zohrab Bible, not even in its appendix (after p. 836) which contains other apocrypha such as the book of Sirach or the third book of Esdras.

¹⁰ Cf. the forthcoming edition (vol. III of Gippert-Schulze-Aleksidze-Mahé), pp. I-8-9.

have comprised 12 gatherings consisting of 4 conjugates each, i.e., a total of 48 conjugates (96 folios), one third of which (16 conjugates) have survived in the palimpsest. Albeit no gathering has been preserved *in toto*, the distribution of the palimpsest folios within the original gatherings and the sequence of the three books can be determined with certainty, given that one conjugate (Sin.georg. N 13, fol. 87–80, gathering IV) extends from Ecclesiastes into Canticum and another one (the first conjugate of gathering V, now lost) must have extended in a similar way from Canticum into Sapientia.¹¹

In spite of the close similarity of the Armenian text in the palimpsests with the *textus receptus* as represented by the Zohrab Bible, the Sinai original, which must antedate the manuscript perused by Y. Zōhrapēan by at least four centuries,¹² is an extremely important witness to the development of the Old Testament in its Armenian version, not only because it is likely to represent the oldest specimen available of the texts in question but also because it has preserved at least one immediate trace of a close relationship to the Syro-Hexapla¹³ in using Origenic asterisks to mark a passage as an addition.¹⁴ The passage in question is Cant. 4.6bc, which appears in the first three lines of Sin.georg. N 13, fol. 80v (by the way, the first passage of the Song of Songs present in the palimpsests); cf. Img. 1 showing the lines with the asterisks highlighted and the transcription added below.



Img. 1: Sin.georg. N 13, 80v, ll. 1–3 (Cant. 4,6–7; Origenic asterisk highlighted)

¹¹ Cf. the edition (vol. III of Gippert-Schulze-Aleksidze-Mahé), pp. IV-1–2 for a detailed account.

¹² The Zohrab Bible relies upon the Venice ms. no. 1508 dated A.D. 1319; cf. Claude Cox, The textual character of the manuscript printed as text in Zōhrapēan's Bible, *Revue des Études Arméniennes* N.S. 18, 1984, pp. 69-83. For the Armenian palimpsest, which is undated, the upper layer constitutes a *terminus ante quem*; this layer is not dated either but can hardly be older than the Xth or XIth century (cf. Z. Aleksidze, M. Shanidze, L. Khevsuriani and M. Kavtaria, Catalogue of Georgian Manuscripts discovered in 1975 at St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai / Katalogos geōrgianōn xeirophōn eurethentōn kata to 1975 eis tēn ieran monēn tou theobadistou orous Sina Agias Aikaterinēs / სინის მთაზე წმ. ეკატერინეს მონასტერში 1975 წელს აღმოჩენილ ქართულ ხელნაწერთა აღწერილობა, Athens 2005, p. 385 / 68 / 257 as to Sin.georg. N 13). On the basis of its paleographical features, the Armenian palimpsest may be dated to the VIIth-IXth cc.; cf. the forthcoming edition, pp. I-15 ff.

¹³ Cf. Claude E. Cox, Hexaplaric Materials Preserved in the Armenian Version, Atlanta / Ge. 1986 (*Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series*, No. 21), and id., Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion in Armenia, Atlanta / Ge. 1996 (*Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, vol. 42), pp. 9-15.

¹⁴ Cf. S. Peter Cowe, An Armenian Job Fragment from Sinai and Its Implications, *Oriens Christianus* 76, 1992, pp. 123-157 as to another fragment from Mt. Sinai showing such traces.

(Until the day will dwindle and the shadows will bustle,)

✱ ԵՍ ԻՆՉԷՆ ԳՆԱՅԻՑ

* I shall go myself

✱ Ի ԼԵԱՌՆ ԶՄՌՆԵՆԵԱՅ ԵԻ

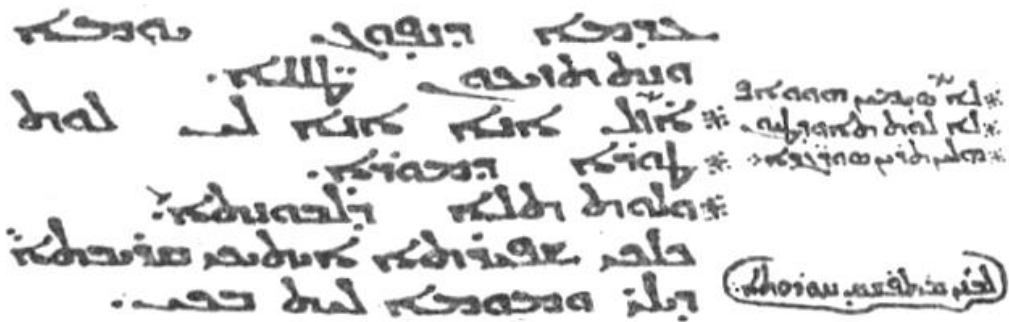
* to the mountain of myrrh and

Ի ԲԼՈՒՐ ԿՆԴՐԿԻ ✱ ԶՄԵՆԵԻ

to the hill of frankincense. * You are all

beautiful, my friend, and there is no spot in you.

The purpose of the Origenic marks we have here is clarified by the Syro-Hexapla where the same marks relate to a marginal note stating that the two verses ‘I shall go myself to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense’ following after the beginning of Cant. 4,6 (‘Until the day will dwindle and the shadows will bustle’, identical with Cant. 2.17) were not even found in the Theodoticon; cf. Img. 2 displaying the passage as contained in the Codex Ambrosianus in detail.¹⁵



Img. 2: Cant. 4,6–7 in the Syro-Hexapla (fol. 71ra)

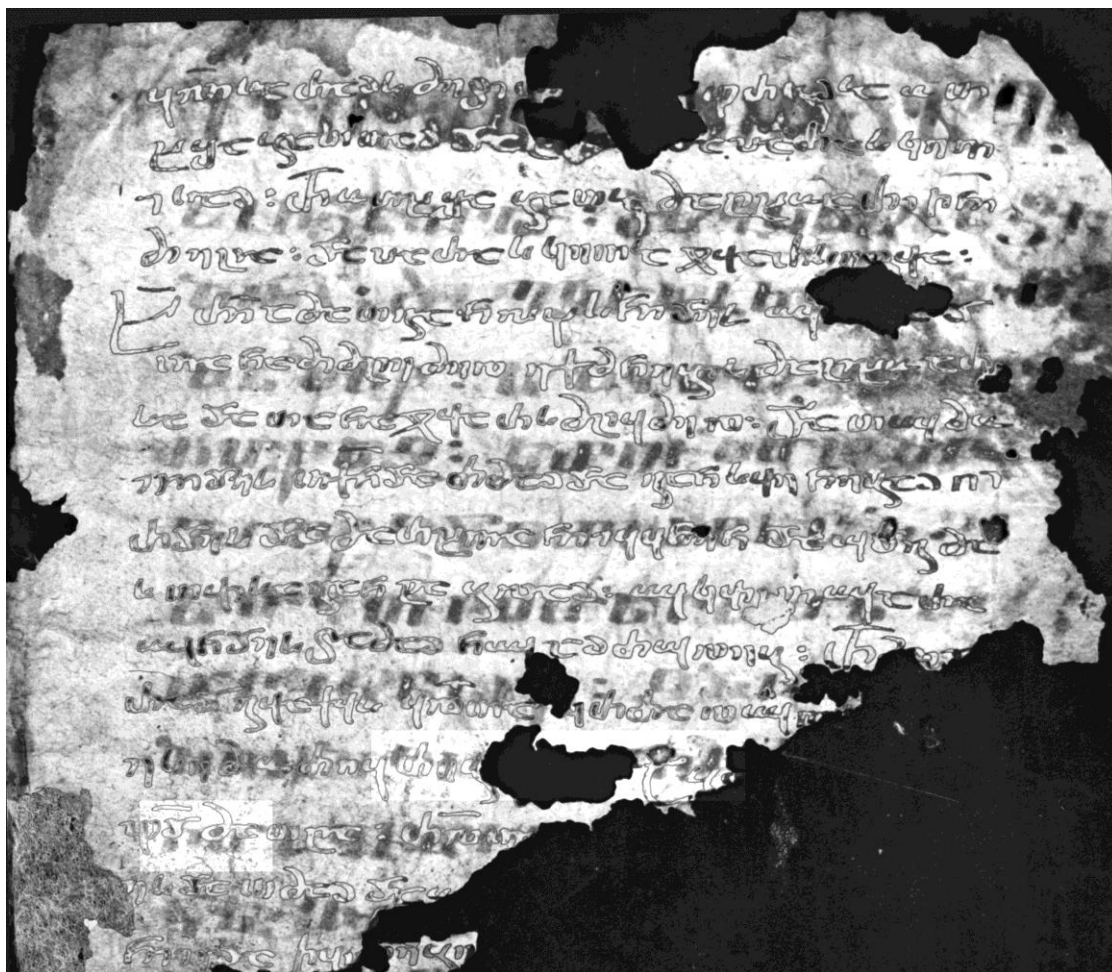
Not present are, even	✱ ԵՍ ԻՆՉԷՆ ԳՆԱՅԻՑ ✱
✱ not in Theodotion('s work),	✱ Ի ԼԵԱՌՆ ԶՄՌՆԵՆԵԱՅ ԵԻ ✱
✱ these two verses.	✱ Ի ԲԼՈՒՐ ԿՆԴՐԿԻ ✱
✱	

It may further be noted that by its wording, too, the Armenian text we have in the palimpsest is closer to the Syro-Hexapla than to the Peshitta in that only the former has an equivalent of Arm. *ես ինձէն* ‘I myself’ in *enā enā lī* here, matching both Greek (πορεύσομαι ἐμαυτῷ of the Septuagint and ԹՅ ԹՅԹ (ԹՅՅԹԵՅ) of the Oshki Bible. In this connection, there is no difference as to the later Armenian tradition as represented by the Zohrab Bible; here, however, the three initial words are arranged in another order, *զնացից ես ինձէն* vs. *ես ինձէն զնացից*.

Other relations of the Armenian text to the Syro-Hexapla are noteworthy as well. This is true, e.g., for Cant. 7.13/14 where both the palimpsest (Sin.georg. N 13, fol. 95r, ll. 9-10, cf. Img.

¹⁵Cf. the facsimile edition by Antonio Maria Ceriani, Codex Syro-Hexaplaris Ambrosianus, photolithographice editus (*Monumenta Sacra et Profana ex codicibus praesertim Bibliothecae Ambrosianae*, t. VII), Mediolani 1874, p. 71r, and Fridericus Field, Origenis Hexaplarum quae supersunt; sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta, t. II: Jobus – Malachias, Oxonii 1875, p. 417. – The two verses in question (4,6b and c) were instead taken from Aquila’s translation; cf. Field, ib. n. 17.

3)¹⁶ and the Zohrab Bible exhibit the clause *ჟოი ხო ჰნა მასე ჰა* ‘which my mother gave me’ the equivalent of which is missing in the Septuagint as well as the Syriac Peshitta and the Georgian texts of the Bakar Bible and the Austrian Cod. Vind. georg. 4,¹⁷ only the first Georgian redaction, represented by the Oshki and Mxeta Bibles, having a matching phrase (რომელი მომცა [მე] დედამან ჩემმან). The source for this can be found in the Syro-Hexapla where a corresponding clause appears inserted into the text, marked as an addition from Symmachos; cf. Img. 4 showing the passage in question.¹⁸

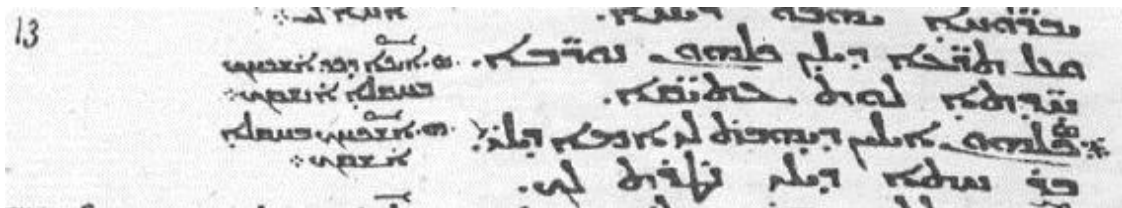


Img. 3: Cant. 7.13/14 in the palimpsest (Sin.georg. N 13, fol. 95r)

¹⁶Note that the two lines in question are extremely damaged, only *ჟო ... ჰნ ... | ჰა* having been preserved of the clause in question (highlighted in the image).

¹⁷Cf. ზურაბ ხარჯველაძე, ვენაში დაცული “ქება ქებათაჲს” ტექსტისათვის, *მრავალთავი* 10, 1983, p. 85

¹⁸Cf. the facsimile edition by Ceriani, fol. 71v, and Field, Origenis, p. 422 with n. 26.



Img. 4: Cant. 7.13/14 in the Syro-Hexapla (fol. 71vb)

Another agreement with the Syro-Hexapla is found at the end of Eccl. 3.16 where both the palimpsest (Sin.georg. N 55, fol. 46r l. 8, cf. Img. 5) and the Zohrab Bible use the word *բարեպաշտ* ‘pious’ (highlighted in the image), matched by Georgian *მოღმრთე* ‘id.’ in the Oshki Bible and *კეთილმსახური* ‘devout’ in the Bakar Bible. These terms agree with Gk. *εὐσεβής*, the reading attested for all major codices, while the established text of the Septuagint has the antonym *ἀσεβής* ‘ungodly’,¹⁹ in its turn matched by the Peshitta (*’awwālā* ‘wicked person’) and the Mxeta Bible (*მოღალე* ‘wrangler’). The “positive” alternative is confirmed by the Syro-Hexapla again which has *šappīr dehlā* ‘pious’, lit. ‘of good piety’ (cf. Img. 6 below).²⁰

All images of the palimpsest provided in the present context²¹ exhibit a peculiar feature of the original manuscript, which consists in the letters of the first line of each page being considerably enlarged. This feature has not occurred to me in any other majuscule manuscript of Armenian provenance; however, it does have an interesting counterpart in another Georgian codex of St. Catherine’s monastery, viz. ms. Sin.georg. N 48, one of the two manuscripts revealed by Zaza Aleksidze as containing parts of *მოქცევაჲ ქართლისაჲ*.²² In this manuscript, of which but 14 leaves have survived, the first line of a majority of pages is written in majuscules while the rest of the page is written in minuscules.²³ It remains one of the many riddles that have still to be solved on Mt. Sinai whether there is any causal relation between these two phenomena or not.

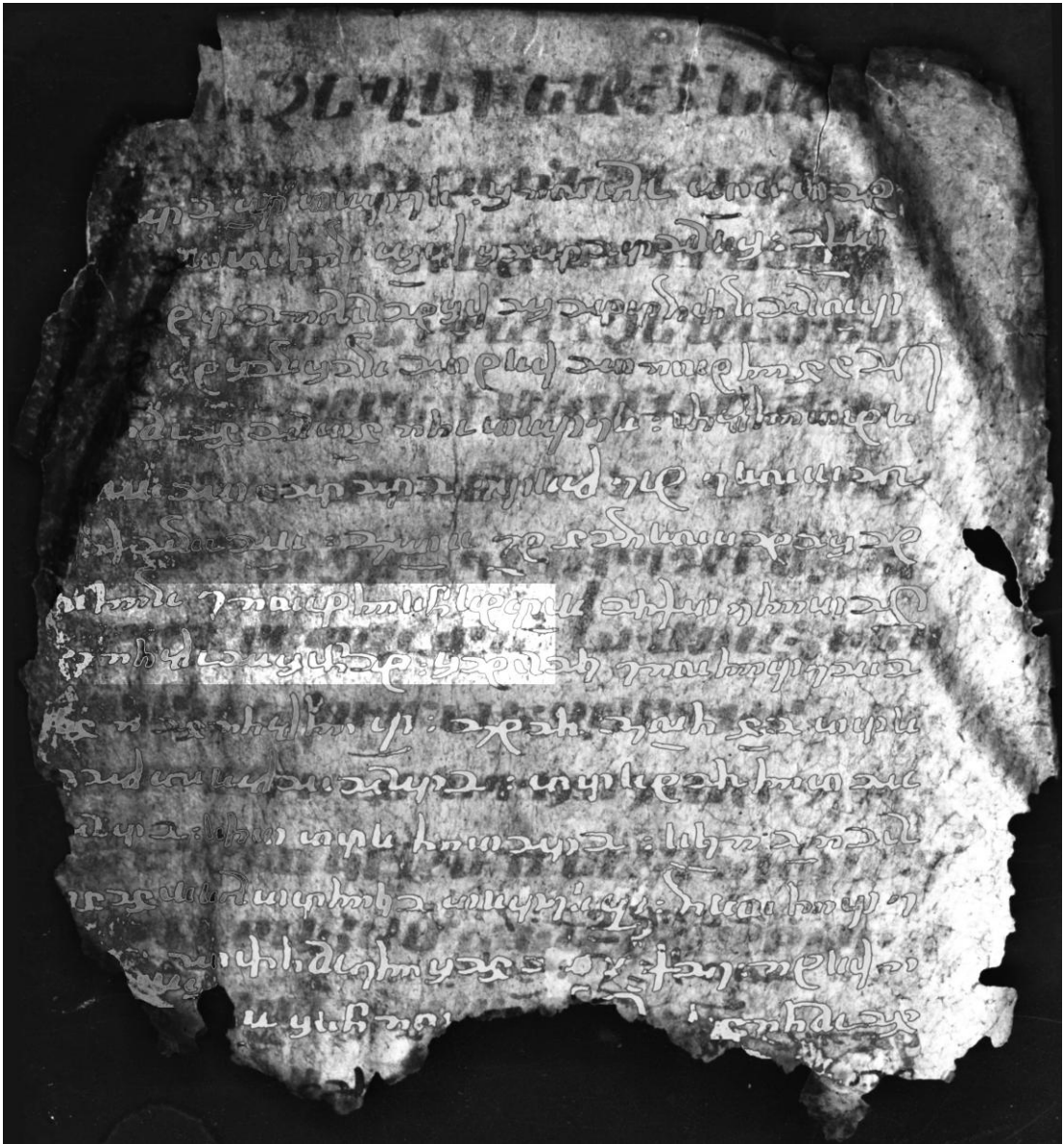
¹⁹ Cf. Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, Stuttgart ³1949, vol. II, p. 244 app. with reference to former editions.

²⁰ Cf. the facsimile edition by Ceriani, fol. 67r.

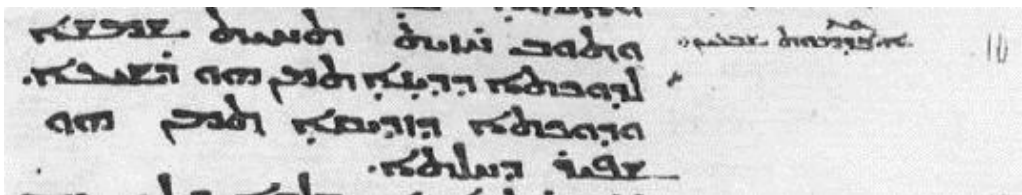
²¹ The images are based on ultraviolet photographs recorded by Z. Aleksidze and D. Tskhadadze in the course of the ARMAZI project in 2000 (i.e., within the project “Caucasian Languages and Cultures: Electronic Documentation”, which was kindly supported by the Volkswagen Foundation from 1999 to 2002; cf. <http://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de> and <http://armazi.uni-frankfurt.de/armaz3.htm>. The photographing was undertaken within the sub-project “Digitization of the Albanian palimpsest manuscripts from Mt. Sinai”). For the purpose of displaying the lower layer in the edition, the photographs were digitally processed by the present author. Unfortunately there was no opportunity to provide a full set of multispectral images for the Armenian parts of the palimpsests during the sojourn of the members of the edition project in the monastery in October, 2003.

²² Cf. Zaza Aleksidzé, Jean-Pierre Mahé, *Manuscripts géorgiens découverts à Sainte-Catherine du Sinaï. In: Comptes-rendus des séances de l'année 1995, Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 139e année, N. 2, 1995. pp. 490-491 et Le nouveau manuscrit géorgien sinaïtique N Sin 50. Édition en fac-similé. Introduction par Z. Aleksidzé, traduite du géorgien par J.-P. Mahé, Lovanii 2001 (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 586 / Subsidia, 108), pp. 8-9. The latter edition displays only the second ms. containing *მოქცევაჲ ქართლისაჲ*, Sin.georg. N 50.*

²³ Cf. the image of fol.13v-14r printed in the catalogue by Aleksidze / Shanidze / Khevsuriani / Kavtaria, p. 565. – During a sojourn in the monastery in May, 2009, the present author had the occasion to inspect the ms.; according to this inspection, the following pages have a first line in majuscules: 2rv, 3rv, 4rv, 5rv,



Img. 5: *barepaštn* in Eccl. 3.16 in the palimpsest (Sin.georg. N 55, fol. 46r)



Img. 6: Eccl. 3.16 in the Syro-Hexapla (fol. 67ra)

6rv, 7v, 11v, 12v, 13v, 14r; the following pages have minuscules throughout: 1rv, 7r, 8r, 9r, 10rv, 11r, 12r, 13r, 14v. Fol. 9v has the first three lines in majuscules, fol. 8v, the first five lines. In accordance with the running text, the pages must be arranged in the following order: 1rv, 4rv, 5rv, 6rv, 2rv, 3rv, 7rv through 14rv.