A fragment of the Harklean version of St Matthew's Gospel in the Monastery of Mar Musa*

Sebastian BROCK
Oriental Institute, Oxford University

Resumen: El monasterio de Mar Musa (Siria) posee un pequeño fragmento en pergamino. El texto se corresponde con partes de Mateo 22, de acuerdo con la versión heráclea. El fragmento puede ser datado de mediados del siglo XII, por lo que representa el segundo manuscrito conocido más antiguo conectado con el monasterio. Se ofrece una edición y traducción del fragmento.

Abstract: The monastery of Mar Musa (Syria) possesses a small Syriac fragment on parchment. The text is identified as parts of Matthew 22 in the Harklean version. The fragment can be dated to the mid 12th century, and so it represents the second oldest known manuscript connected with the monastery. An edition and translation of the fragment is provided.

Palabras Clave: Heráclea (versión). Evangelios. Monasterio de Mar Musa. Mateo. Siriaco.

Key Words: Harklean (version). Gospels. Mar Musa monastery. Matthew. Syriac.

The Monastery of Mar Musa, near Nebek in Syria, possesses a small parchment fragment in estrangelo Syriac script, found some years ago in the south east corner of the monastery (in the area now used as a library). The fragment consists of the top and inner side of a single folio. The maximum dimensions (width x height) are 12 x 13

* My warm thanks to Father Paolo DALL'OGLIO, Superior of the Monastery, for permission to publish this fragment, and to Dr Emma LOOSLEY for providing me with excellent photographs to work from.

cm; the original width is probably almost preserved at the top, but the height must have been a certain amount more, since 2 or 3 lines have been lost at the bottom, along with the lower margin. The upper and inner margins measure about 2 cm.

The text can be identified with certainty as coming from Matthew 22, in the very literal seventh-century translation known as the Harklean (after Thomas of Harkel, who undertook this radical revision of the (now lost) Philoxenian version of 508, itself a revision of the standard Syriac biblical text, the Peshitta).

On the recto parts (sometimes only one letter) of twenty one lines are visible, and since the first line of the verso is preserved almost complete, it is possible to deduce that the folio must originally have had 23 lines. The recto opens in the middle of verse 4 of Matthew 22, and originally reached half way through verse 13. On the verso only twenty lines have something left of them (again, sometimes only one letter). Line 20 has the opening of verse 23, and so it is likely that the missing further three lines would have reached to the middle of verse 24.

The script is a neat later form of estrangelo where the letters *he*, *waw*, and *mim* all have closed forms, characteristic of serto; *rish* and *dalath* also have the rounded forms typical of serto; *alaph* is normally estrangelo, but occasionally a serto form is used for reasons of space. To judge from the evidence available in Hatch's *Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts*, the closed forms of *he*, *waw* and *mim* do not come in until about the ninth century. The closest parallels in Hatch to the script of the fragment are in fact rather later: Plates LXXXI (dated 1138), and LXXXII (dated 1149). Interestingly enough, both those are Harklean Gospel Lectionaries written in Jerusalem[1]. The Mar Musa fragment is definitely a straight Gospel manuscript, and not a Lectionary: this is clear from the fact that Paris Syr. 51 (= Plate LXXXI) has Matthew 22:1-14 as a Lent lection (no.33), but 22:15-22 is for Tuesday in Holy Week (no. 52).[2] The Mar Musa fragment

[1] Plate LXXXII = Jerusalem, St Mark's, ms 27, is described in Mar Filoksinos Yohanna DOLABANY's *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in St. Mark's Monastery*. «Syriac Patrimony» 8 (Aleppo, 1994), pp.136-143, where he gives the text of the long colophon which is of historical interest and has been translated by A.N. PALMER, "History of the Syrian Orthodox in Jerusalem", *Oriens Christianus* 76 (1992), pp. 85-87.

[2] The information is given in H. ZOTENBERG'S *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaites) de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1874), pp.16-19; the scribe was Romanos, a disciple of Mar Ignatius, metropolitan of Jerusalem (whose

indeed has a paragraph marker at the end of Matthew 22:14, but continues immediately with verse 15. It would seem very likely that the Mar Musa fragment belongs to much the same time as these two manuscripts, that is, a little before the middle of the twelfth century.

West Syriac vowels have occasionally been added by a later hand, e.g. to *absiw* in line 3 of the recto.

Virtually all the text can be reconstructed with virtual certainty. In order to distinguish clearly between what survives and what is reconstructed, the reconstructed text is given in italics in both the Syriac and the English translation. There are no variants from the text of the Harklean printed in G. Kiraz's *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels* (Leiden, 1996).

Although the fragment is so small, it is of considerable interest, being the second oldest manuscript associated with the Monastery of Mar Musa. The oldest is single folio of a manuscript once containing the Homilies of St John Chrysostom on Matthew;[3] on this there is a note to say that it was bought for the monastery of Beth Mar Mushe at the expense of George, Bishop of Tadmor (Palmyra), who is otherwise unknown. The folio is today bound with a sixth-century manuscript of the Homilies which was written in Palmyra and was among the manuscripts acquired by Abbot Moses of Nisibis for the Monastery of the Syrians in Egypt. If (as seems very likely, in view of the common link with Palmyra) the folio was already attached to that manuscript when they both came to Egypt, then Bishop George must have lived before 932, when Moses returned to Egypt from Mesopotamia; this is in fact likely on other grounds too, since there is no bishop of Palmyra known after the mid ninth century.

If the twelfth-century date for the fragment is correct, then the fragment antedates the next oldest manuscript associated with the monastery, by a century and a half; this is Paris syr. 47, containing Acts of the Apostles and the Catholic Epistles. This manuscript was actually written at the Monastery of Mar Musa (described as being 'on the mountain of smoke', *b-ṭuro d-tenono*), being completed on

biography he gives at the end). Its historical colophon was edited and translated by F. MARTIN, "Les premiers princes croisés et les Syriens jacobites de Jérusalem", *Journal asiatique* VIII/13 (1899), pp. 33-79; part is translated by A.N. PALMER, "History", pp. 82-84 (who promises a new edition and study).

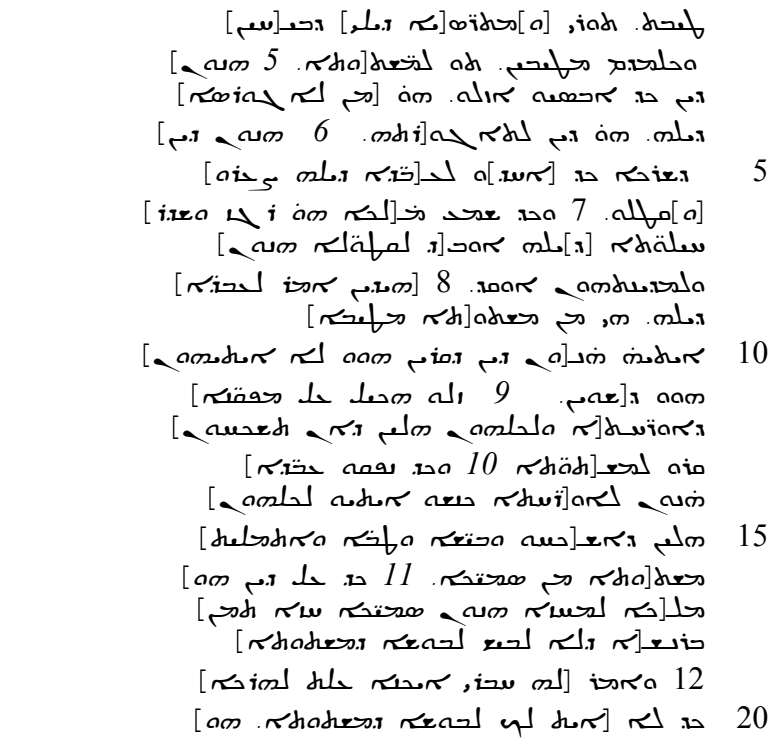
3 British Library, Add. 14559 (W. WRIGHT, *Catalogue*, no. 585, p. 468), f.1, for which see H. KAUFHOLD, "Notizen über das Moses-Kloster bei Nabk", *Oriens Christianus* 79 (1995), pp. 60-61.

Monday 9th Kanun AG 1709, that is 1397 or 1398, depending whether is was Kanun I (Dec) or II (Jan).

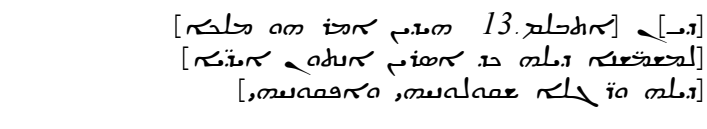
It is interesting to note, too, that the fragment also antedates, by about a half century, the painting programme in the church, described by E. Cruikshank Dodd in her article "The Monastery of Mar Musa al-Habashi, near Nebek", in *Arte Medievale*,[4] and more recently in her monograph, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi. A Study in Medieval Painting in Syria* (Toronto, 2001).

In the edition and translation of the text, in order to distinguish clearly what survives and what does not, the surviving parts are given in roman, and the restored in italic (within square brackets).

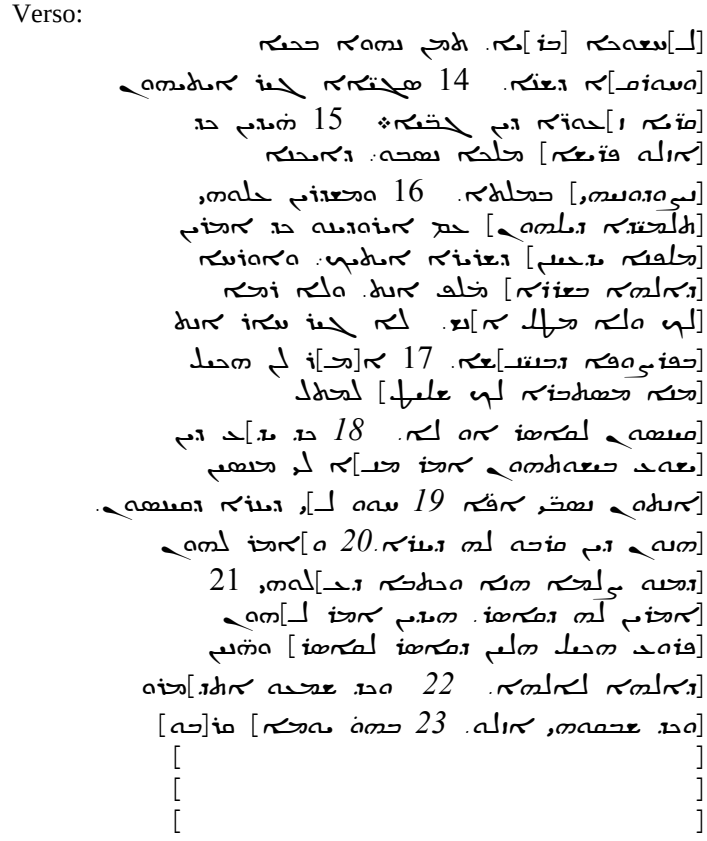
Recto:



[4] II Serie, Anno VI, n.1 (1992), pp. 61-132.



Verso:



Recto: Matthew 22:4-13

I have prepared: my oxen [*and my well*]-fed *(cattle) are*]sacri[*ficed*] and everything is ready. Come to the ban[*quets. 5 But those,*] having spurned, went off, one [*to*] his [*field,*] the other to [*his*] busi[*ness. 6 The*] remainder, having [*seized his servants, insulted and*] kil[*led (them).*] 7 And when [*that king*] heard, [*he was angry and sent*] his armies; he destroy[*ed those murderers*] and their city he burnt. 8

[*Then he said to*] his [*servants, The ban*[quet] is [*prepared, but*] tho[*se who were invited*] were [*not worthy*. 9 *Go therefore to the exits*] of the roa[*ds, and all those you should find,*] invite to the ban[*quets*. 10 *When*] those [*servants had gone out*] to the ro[*ads, they gathered* (*and*) *brought all*] those whom they fou[*nd, both bad and good, and the*] ban[*quet was filled with the guests*. 11 *Now when the*] ki[*ng entered to see those guests, he saw there*] a man [*who was not wearing a wedding garment*;] 12 and he said [*to him, My friend, how have you come in here*] without [*having a wedding garment?*] N[*ow he was speechless*. 13 *Then the king said to his servants, Binding his hands and feet, take him and cast him out*]

Verso: Matthew 22:13-23+

[*to ou*]ter darkness; there there will be weeping [*and gnashin*]g of teeth. 14 For many are (those) [*called*], but fe[*w*] are the chosen ⁘. 15 Then [*the Pharisees*], having [*gone*] took counsel how [*they might catch him out*] in word, 16 they send against him [*their disciples*] with the Herodians, saying, [*Teacher, we know*] that you are true, and the way [*of God in truth*] do you teach, and [*you*] are not concerned, [*not even about any*]one, for you do not look [*at the face of people*. 17 *Te*]ll us, therefore, [*what do you think, is it lawful*] to give [*tax to Caesar or not*? 18 [*Now Jesus,* know]ing [*their bad* (*intention*), *said, Wh*]y [*are you*] testing me, [*hypocrites*? 19 *Show m*]e the denarius for the tax. [*So they handed to him a denarius, and he said*] to them, [*Whose is this image, and the writing on*] it? [21 *They say to him, Caesar's. Then he said*] to them, [*Render, therefore, the things of Caesar to Caesar,*] and the things [*of God to God*. 22 *And when they heard, they were asto*]nished, [*and having left him, they went off*. 23 *On that day the Sadducees*] app[*roached ...*]