An acrostic soghitha by Isaac ‘the Teacher’ in Sinai 
Syr. 10

[Una soghitha acróstica por Isaac ‘el Maestro’ en Sinaí sir. 10]

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For Shafiq Abouzayd
Founder and Director of Aram

Resumen: El artículo ofrece una edición y traducción de una soghitha atribuida a ‘Isaac el Maestro, que se encuentran en el Sinaí siriaco 10. A la vista de la gran cantidad de memre inéditos atribuidos a uno u otro de los tres poetas siriacos de los siglos V y VI de nombre Isaac, un apéndice proporciona una lista alfabética de los incipits de todos los memre atribuidos a un Isaac que se encuentran en manuscritos tempranos datables en los siglos VI y VII.

Abstract: The article provides an edition and translation of a soghitha attributed to ‘Isaac the Teacher’, to be found in Sinai Syriacus 10. In view of the large number of unpublished memre attributed to one or other of the three fifth- and sixth-century Syriac poets name Isaac, an Appendix provides an alphabetical list of the incipits of all memre attributed to an Isaac which are to be found in early manuscripts datable to the sixth and seventh centuries.

Palabras clave: Isaac el Maestro. Manuscrito sinaítico. Siriaco.

Key words: Isaac the Teacher. Sinai manuscript. Syriac.
Sinai Syriac 10, written in an estrangelo hand of the eighth or ninth century, contains a very miscellaneous collection of texts, as can be seen from the recent inventory of them provided by Paul Géhin. Among the verse texts, beside various works by Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh, there is a single soghitha attributed to ‘Isaac the Teacher’. This soghitha, with an alphabetic acrostic, is of particular interest in that is rare case of a soghitha attributed to ‘Isaac the Teacher’, almost all his other works being memre or madrashe.

As is well known, the attribution of texts attributed to ‘Isaac’ remains extremely problematic; already in the seventh century it was recognized by Jacob of Edessa that there were at least three different poets working in the fifth and sixth centuries with this name, whom he distinguishes as Isaac of Amid, Isaac of Antioch (but from Edessa), and Isaac of Edessa. Jacob, in

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2 Especially important is the list of qale for Ephrem’s madrashe (ff.165v-178r), published by A. de Halleux, “Un clé pour les Hymnes d’Éphrem dans le ms. Sinai syr. 10”, Le Muséon 85 (1972), pp. 171-199. For the other texts under Ephrem’s name, see my “Éphremiana in Sinai Syr. 10” (forthcoming).

3 Of these, the memra on Priesthood (ff.54r-59r) has been published by M. Albert, “Mimro inédit de Jacques de Saroug sur le sacerdoce et l’autel”, Parole de l’Orient 10 (1981/1982), pp. 51-77. The various madrashe attributed to Jacob (ff.75v-80r, 189r-190v) will be included in an edition of Jacob’s madrashe which is in the course of preparation.

4 It does not feature in the useful inventory of Isaac’s works provided by E.G. Matthews, “The works attributed to Isaac of Antioch: a preliminary checklist”, Hugoye 6:1 (2003), pp. 51-76. Bickell, no. 7 is a soghitha (taken from Add. 17141, which contains five further soghyyatha attributed to Isaac (see Bou Mansour, “La distinction” [see note 6], pp. 35-38); one of these is edited in my “A soghitha on the Daughter of Jephtha, by Isaac”, Hugoye 14:1 (2011), pp. 3-25. For a further soghitha, attributed to ‘the blessed Isaac’, see Add. 14,591, f.59r (attached to a memra on the Crucifixion); this manuscript also contains teshbhaitha by Isaac, as well as madrashe (all be three of these were edited by Bickell, nos. 16-31). Fragments of madrashe on the Nativity by an ‘Ishaq ihidaya’ are to be found in Sinai Syr. New Finds, Sparagma 34.
common with the earliest manuscripts of Isaac’s poems, describes
introduces Isaac as ‘the Teacher’, or ‘Doctor’ (malpana)\footnote{Thus Add. 14,529, 14,592, 14,612; likewise Zacharias Rhetor, Hist. Eccl., I,9. In Add. 14,591 he is ‘the blessed’, and in Vat. Syr. 120 ‘the Syrian’; Wright’s Catalogue does not give the epithet for Add. 12,166, 14,607, 17,158 and 17,164. Gennadius, in his de viris illustribus 66, describes the dyophysite Isaac as presbyter Antiochenae ecclesiae, living in the mid fifth century and author of a poem on the ruin of Antioch (evidently the earthquake of 458); according to J.A. Assemani, Bibliotheca Orientalis. I (Rome, 1719), pp. 211, 230t, this poem will be Vat. Syr. 120, no. 5 (ܒܒܥܝܢܢ ܘܡܢܟ...), though this might instead refer to another serious earthquake in 526.}
The problem of trying to sort out these different Isaacs is further complicated by the fact that the two editions of works attributed to Isaac, by Bickell and Bedjan,\footnote{G. Bickell, S. Isaei Antiocheni Doctoris Syrorum Opera Omnia, I-II (Giessen, 1873, 1877); P. Bedjan, Homiliae S. Isaei Antiocheni (Paris, 1903). For the problem, see especially T. Bou Mansour, “Une clé pur la distinction des écrits des Isaac d’Antioche”, Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses 79 (2003), pp. 365-402, “La distinction des écrits des Isaac d’Antioche: les oeuvres inédites”, Journal of Eastern Christian Studies 57 (2005), pp. 1-46, “Les discours à caractère christologique et leur appartenance aux Isaac d’Antioche”, Oriens Christianus 89 (2005), pp. 8-42, and “Les écrits ascétiques ou ‘monastiques’ d’Isaac, dit d’Antioche”, Journal of Eastern Christian Studies 59 (2007), pp. 49-84.} combine materials from mostly later sources, and make very little use of the earliest surviving manuscripts; it is true that Bickell drew on the sixth-century manuscript British Library, Add. 14,591, for his edition of the madrashe (his nos. 16-31), and, in a few cases, for that of his memre (his nos 15 (= Bedjan, no. 65), and nos. 35-36 (= Bedjan, nos. 66-67)).\footnote{Bedjan based his text for these memre on other manuscripts, but gave a collation with Bickell’s edition on pp. 838-42. Bickell used another sixth-century manuscript (among three others) for his no. 37.} What is needed is an edition of those homilies to be found in manuscripts prior to the eleventh-century collection which Yuhanon bar Shushan started to put together;\footnote{See Vatican Syr. 119, with 60 memre.} especially important for this purpose would be the sixth- and seventh-century manuscripts, British Library, Add. 12,166 (with 4...
memra), 9 14,591 (with 12 memre), 10 14,592 (with 8 memre), 11 14,607 (with 5 memre), 14,612 (with 2 memre), 17,158 (with 2 memre), 12 17,164 (with 9 memre), 13 and Vatican Syr. 120 (with 27 memre); 14 to these there should now be added Deir al-Surian Syr. 21B (6th/7th cent.; with 4 memre) 15 and 27A (6th cent.; with 9 memre), 16 and Sinai New Finds Syr. M9N (with one memra). 17

Text 18

Sinai Syr. 10, f.187v-189r

[Scripture text]

9 Three of these have been published, but from other manuscripts: BEDIAN, nos. 2, 6, and 34.
10 Besides the three mentioned above, one further one has been published by C. Moss, “Isaac of Antioch, on the Royal City”, Zeitschrift für Semitistik 7 (1929), pp. 295-306, and 8 (1932), pp. 61-73.
11 Two of which have been published, one by BICKELL (no. 8; = BEDIAN, no. 61) from this manuscript, the other by Bedjan (no. 9), but from a different manuscript.
12 One of these has been published by BEDIAN, (his no. 6), but from a different manuscript.
13 Eight of these have been published by BEDIAN, (his nos. 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 11, 25, and 51 [=BICKELL, no. 37]), but from other manuscripts.
14 Eight of these have been published by BEDIAN (his nos. 2, 9, 11, 25, 26, 35, 51, and 58), but from different manuscripts. Editions of some of the unpublished ones are in preparation by E.G. Mathews and one by myself (on Abel and Cain).
15 Three of these have been published by BEDIAN from other manuscripts (his 2, 4, and 17).
16 Three of these have by published by BEDIAN from other manuscripts (his nos. 6, 9, and 35).
17 On Antichrist. Although the catalogue inadvertently attributes the memra to Jacob, the photograph indicates clearly that the author is Is'haq Malpana.
18 Published by kind permission of Saint Catherine’s Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt.
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Translation

Next, a soghitha of Mar Ishaq the Teacher [ ] of Repentance

1. Alaph O God, have pity on my sinful state
   When You judge creation,
   And when You summon me to the Law Court
   Make me to stand at Your right hand.
2. *Beth* In Your Cross I have taken refuge,  
   Let not Your Grace deny me,  
   And because I have confessed You like the Thief,  
   Spare me when You come.  
   (Luke 23:42)

3. *Gamal* The world enticed me and I relied  
   On its possessions that are transient,  
   But at my death, O Lord,  
   I learnt that You alone remain for ever.

4. *Dalath* Judge me in Your compassion,  
   And not in accordance with the multitude of my sins;  
   And because You have allowed me to consume Your Body,  
   Hold back the fire from my limbs.

5. *He* Look how the fragrance of Your living Body  
   Wafts through all my limbs;  
   Let Gehenna quake at it  
   And let not its burning touch me.

   At the blows (inflicted by) Your Justice,  
   But because of Your Grace  
   Spare me, although I am unworthy.

7. *Zayn* May the resplendent who minister before You  
   In purity and holiness  
   Reconcile Your Majesty  
   On behalf of my sinful self, so that it perish not.

8. *Ḥeth* You are merciful and full of compassion  
   For You have pity on whosoever invokes You;  
   Have pity, O Beneficent One, on my feeble state  
   When You judge created beings.
9. *Teth* You are good, for You do no hold back Your compassion
   From either the good or the bad;
   Do not avert Your pity from me,
   For in my limbs are Your Body and Blood.

10. *Yodh* You are an Ocean full of merchandise,
    Whosoever travels on You becomes rich in You.
    As for me, who have sought refuge in Your Cross,
    May it become for me the Steersman.\(^{19}\)

11. *Kaph* Hold back, Lord, the (recording) books of Your Justice
    So that they do not read out the accusations against me,
    But let Your Grace stand up for me
    when Your Justice judges me.

12. *Lamadh* Whom do I have to ask, O my Judge,
    To supplicate concerning my wrongdoings
    – apart from the Pledge of Life\(^{20}\)
    Which I have received from Your holy altar?

13. *Mim* O Fountain of Life from Mary
    Which has been granted to human beings,
    Which has lowered itself for my sake,
    Restore me to life for Your own sake.

14. *Nun* Let Your compassion come upon me, Lord,
    On the day of Your (Second) coming with the Watchers,

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\(^{19}\) For *kubernētēs* in Isaac of Antioch, see ed. Bedjan, p.9.

\(^{20}\) For *rabbona*, ‘pledge’, in a eucharistic context, cf. Isaac of Antioch, ed. Bedjan, p.184, ‘See, he has given us as a wage his Body, and as a pledge, the Cup of his Blood’, ܗܐ ܝܗܒ ܠܢ ܐܓܪܐ ܦܓܪܗ ܘܪܗܒܘܢܐ ܟܣܐ ܕܕܡܗ. The term is commonly found later in this context.
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And may Your salvation stand up\textsuperscript{21} for me
When Your Justice is judging me.

15. \textit{Semkath} O Medicine of Life which humans have consumed
And their wrongdoings have been forgiven,
Sprinkle Your pity on my limbs
Which have been submerged in Your baptismal font.

16. ‘\textit{e} May the Watchers of fire and spirit
Urge You in the case of my sinful self,
And because of Your image which is with me, \textit{Gen. 1:26}
Mingle my spirit with their gatherings.

17. \textit{Pe} This would be appropriate to Your Majestic Being
Not to allow Your image to perish,
For a painter is very much concerned
That (his) image should not be destroyed.

18. \textit{Sadhe} May Your Cross be a bridge\textsuperscript{22} for me
And may I cross over that region of terror
And be delivered from the torment
That is reserved for those who are ungrateful to You.

19. \textit{Qoph} My thoughts are the accusations against me, Lord,
Recalling to my mind my misdeeds;
I beg of You, O God,
Show pity, with compassion, on my sinful state.

\textsuperscript{21} The non-standard spelling \textit{n’qwm}, with \textit{alaph}, is evidently deliberate, in order to indicate that the \textit{shwa}, normally treated as silent, is here, for metrical reasons, to be taken as representing a full vowel.

\textsuperscript{22} For the Cross as a ‘bridge’ in Isaac of Antioch, cf. ed. \textit{BEDJAN}, pp. 740, 786.
20. *Resh* May the spit which You received on Your face
   For the salvation of Adam
   Provide moisture for me
   And let not the burning take hold on me.

   Matt. 27:30

21. *Shin* May the ‘Peace’ which Gabriel gave
   To the ears of Mary who bore You
   Receive me, O Lord, in Your mercy
   At the crossing place of Judgement.

   Luke 1:28

22. *Taw* May my soul live and praise You
   In that world that has no end,
   And may I see Your mercy and acknowledge to You
   That You are the one who has pity on sinners.

   Appendix

*Memre* by Isaac in sixth- and seventh-century manuscripts

In view of what was said earlier about the need for an edition making use of manuscripts earlier than the edition by Yuḥanon bar Shushan, it may be helpful here to list, in alphabetical order of *incipits*, those to be found in the earliest manuscripts available, all dated to the sixth and seventh centuries.

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23 For some slightly later manuscripts, along with these, see BOU MANSOUR, “La distinction”, pp.16-21.
<table>
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<th>ed. Bedjan, number</th>
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<td>ed. S.Kazan, OC 45 (1961), pp. 31-53</td>
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$^{26}$ Although this ms. dates from 903/4, this *memra* on Sergius and Bacchus is included here, since the incipit in the only other witness, Vat. Syr. 117 (no.227), is lost, and so is absent from my “The published verse homilies of Isaac of Antioch, Jacob of Serugh and Narsai: Index of incipits”, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32 (1987), pp. 279-313, and Mathew’s index in *Hugoye* 6:1 (2003), pp. 51-76. For Vat. Syr 117, see BOU MANSOUR, “La distinction”, pp. 21-23.
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