



Review

Reviewed Work(s):

Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels, Aligning the Sinaiticus,
Curetonianus, Peshîttâ and Harklean Versions

by G. A. Kiraz

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Anyone with a professional interest in the history, art history and archaeology of the Near East from roughly 900 B.C. through Seleucid times will either wish to consult or, better, to own this book, and will make his own judgments on the value (considerable) of its several parts.

The subject is introduced by a thoughtful and wide-ranging introductory essay by Margaret Cool Root discussing the issues of continuity and change up to, during, and after Achaemenid times. There follow ten articles that deal primarily with continuity from pre-Achaemenid into Achaemenid times, nine articles that deal with the Achaemenid impact on the Hellenistic Near East, and only three articles (perfectly good) that do not, it seems to me, really address the subject of the Workshop. The organizers deserve high praise for succeeding in having so many participants toe the thematic mark. The emphasis throughout is on continuity.

Root's discussion, if a bit turgid at times, is of great value. It focuses in large part on how issues of continuity and change during most of the first millennium B.C. in the Near East might be viewed differently if Western scholars could break out of their classical-Hellenistic academic traditions and view the role and lasting impact of the Achaemenids more on their own terms in their own world. With the coming of Alexander our focus tends to shift westward, and we become interested only in continuities from Greece to Rome to later Europe. This problem, of course, has been exacerbated by the fact that the study of the Near East has usually been divided formally in Western universities into departments of ancient Near Eastern Studies and Islamic Studies, with the Hellenistic Near East often falling betwixt and between. The correction of this prejudice is a goal patiently pursued in previous publications of the Achaemenid History Workshops, and is a historiographical issue which needs constant, conscious attention. This challenge to, and weakening of, our Eurocentric attitude toward the Achaemenids and ancient Iran in general is one of the very important long-term contributions of the Achaemenid Workshops. Parenthetically, I found it interesting that no one writing in this volume mentions what may be the single most important continuity linking the Achaemenids with the modern Iranian world: the fact that the principal language of the Iranian cultural area today is the direct descendent of the language Darius I and Atossa used in their pillow talk.

One value of this volume for students of the ancient and not-so-ancient Near East can be highlighted in a brief bibliographical analysis. A total of 1095 titles is found in the bibliography of vol. VIII. Of these, 335 are titles published in or after 1985. Vol. VIII, the largest of the Workshop volumes, naturally has the largest bibliography. Each volume, however, contains in one form or another extensive and up-to-date lists of references cited. It would be a noble task for the publisher of these important volumes to combine all of these titles on a single computer disk, and make that disc available. The eight Achaemenid History Workshop publications themselves contain 131 titles, all dating between 1987 (the publication date of vol. I) and 1994, and the

listing of all these titles in vol. VIII is a useful research tool. Would that such a cumulative bibliographical treasure had been available when I did my research and wrote my chapters on the Achaemenids for the *Cambridge Ancient History* (1988).

Anyone who teaches a graduate course involving the Medes, Achaemenids, or Seleucids; or who wants to do research in the relevant time ranges of the ancient Near East; or who simply wishes to remain informed about current research on these subjects will always be deeply indebted to those who have organized and contributed to these workshops, and to the Netherlands Institute for the Near East for their prompt, elegant, and nearly flawless publication.

The format of the Achaemenid History Workshops is one that could be used profitably in other subjects. How about a series of similar efforts over a number of years on, for example, Assyria, Babylonia, Sumer, or the Hittites?

How could one not be sad that this project has ended?

T. CUYLER YOUNG, JR.

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Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels, Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshîttâ and Harklean Versions. ܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐܝܘܨ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐܝܘܨ. By G. A. KIRAZ. Four Volumes. Leiden: E. J. BRILL, 1996. Vol. I: Matthew, pp. lxxxv + 454 + 7 plates; vol. II: Mark, pp. 256; vol. III: Luke, pp. 514; vol. IV: John, pp. 369 + vii.

G. A. Kiraz is well known to scholars for the tools that he has prepared for understanding the Syriac New Testament, including a six-volume Key Word in Context concordance to the Peshîttâ.¹ Now he has published the present work, which will greatly facilitate using the various Syriac versions of the Synoptic Gospels.

The best-known and most-available Syriac version of the Gospels is, of course, the Peshîttâ version, which is used not only by the Syriac-speaking church but by most scholars as the only representative of the Gospels in this language. Yet the Peshîttâ version was not the first translation of the Gospels to be made into Syriac. It was preceded by another translation known today as the Old Syriac version, the native name of which is ܩܘܪܕܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܕܢܐܝܘܨ, "the Gospel of the Mixed," which has been preserved in two differing fragmentary palimpsest manuscripts known as the Sinaiticus and Curetonian texts. Since these were discovered in the last century they have been published several times, though because of the difficulty of reading the lower script, establishing

¹ See this reviewer's evaluation in *JAOS* 117 (1997): 727–29.

a final text is still a difficult task. The latest version of the Syriac Gospels is known as the Ḥarklean version, after Thomas of Ḥarqel (Heraklea), who lived in the seventh century. This version, a sort of Syriac Aquila, is an extremely literal translation of the Greek text. The author utilized the asterisks and obeli known from Origen's *Hexapla* as critical signs and indicated variant readings in the margins. This version was popular among Syriac Christians for some time after it was composed, but it fell into disuse afterwards. Up until now the only version of this text available to scholars was published by White in the eighteenth century. Since the Christian Palestinian Aramaic version is composed in a different Aramaic dialect, the author has rightly chosen not to include the remnants of this version in this work.²

The four volumes before us thus serve a double purpose. First, the author has made available to the scholarly world several important Syriac translations accessible hitherto mainly in a few research libraries. Particularly notable is the edition of the Ḥarklean text, which was especially prepared by A. Juckel for this edition from a Vatican manuscript. Additionally, the entire text of the Gospels is now presented to the reader in the form of a score in which each line of text is aligned as well as possible according to the versions in the order: Sinaiticus, Curetonian, Peshitta, Ḥarklean. This was done with the aid of a specially written alignment program that took the input from the electronic editions of each text, which was prepared by its author with the aid of a group of cooperating researchers. When there is text missing in one version, this is indicated by printing a series of x's. As can be seen by comparing the text on the plates included in the first volume with the printed text, the work has been printed with great accuracy.³

In his introduction, Kiraz explains in a rather cursory fashion the manner in which the computer aspect of the work was carried out. Noteworthy is his statement that the actual alignment was done manually since this was a more efficient method than using a program for such a complicated task.

² For the remnants of the Gospels from the Old Period (i.e., sixth–eighth centuries C.E.), see C. Müller-Kessler and M. Sokoloff, *The Christian Palestinian Aramaic New Testament Version from the Early Period: Gospels. A Corpus of Christian Palestinian Aramaic*, vol. IIA (Styx: Groningen, 1999). The fragments of the later version of these Gospels are conveniently published by P. de Lagarde, *Bibliothecae Syriacae* (Göttingen 1892), 257–404.

³ It should be noted, however, that the author has not indicated all of the details of his originals. Thus, e.g., the half brackets which indicated partially visible letters in the Sinaiticus text have been left out; the diacritical points in the Ḥarklean version have also been eliminated. The user should also be aware of the fact that the vocalization of the Peshitta text was added by the editor and does not occur in the manuscripts.

In sum, all scholars are in debt to Kiraz for having put at our disposal this handsome scholarly tool, which will be of aid to all those interested in all aspects of the transmission of the Gospels in the Syriac tradition.

* * *

At the end of the fourth volume of this work is an addendum, written in classical Syriac, which includes a reminiscence about the author's father, Anton Kiraz, who was involved in negotiations with E. L. Sukenik for the purchase of several scrolls that eventually were taken to the United States. Since this account appears in a less than obvious place and differs in some details from the account given by Y. Yadin from his father's notes, the following translation of it may be of some interest:

The two of them [viz., Anton Kiraz and Mar Athanasius Samuel] were partners in the finding of the Qumran scrolls of the Dead Sea. And here for you is the narrative of the finding of the scrolls: In the year 1945, my late father built a large house on the Jerusalem road near Bethlehem. He found there a cave below the garden of the house. He contacted a professor whose name was [E.L.] Sukenik to excavate the cave. When they excavated the cave, they found in it graves from the time of our Lord on which were affixed the sign of the cross. . . . In that year [i.e., 1947], Arab shepherds found the scrolls of Qumran in a cave near the Dead Sea. They sold them to His Eminence [i.e., Mar Athanasius Samuel] for the price of 24 Palestinian dinars, i.e., 97 American dollars. His Eminence showed them to the deceased [i.e., Anton Kiraz] and asked him to help him decipher these scrolls. They began to work in order to learn something about these scrolls. On September 5, they travelled together to Lebanon and from there to Ḥoms, and they showed them to his eminence, Mar Ignatius Ephrem Barṣom. A few days later the patriarch gave the pious one aid. His Eminence at that time let him spend several days in the house of the patriarchate. The deceased returned to Jerusalem and brought the aid with him to the monastery. A few days later, His Eminence also returned to Jerusalem.

About October 3, His Eminence called the deceased and informed him that it was necessary to sell the scrolls in a short span of time in order to get out of his dire straits. He asked the deceased if he would buy them for the price of 100 dinars. My father paid him 75 dinars and said to him: "We will be equal partners." He thanked him for helping him in his dire straits, and they became equal partners.

In January 1948, the deceased recalled the discovery of the cave of his house and met with Prof. Sukenik. On February 4, he showed him the scrolls. They met for a second

time two days later, and the professor wished to buy the scrolls for 100 dinars, viz., 450 dollars. This was not acceptable to the deceased, and he said to the professor: "I have a partner and have to speak with him." A few days later they met a third time, and the professor asked to pay 500 dinars, viz., 2,025 dollars. He said to the deceased: "If your partner also accepts, I will give you an additional 500 dinars." After the meeting, the deceased took the scrolls home and showed them to him. On the 7th of that month, his eminence asked him to bring them to the monastery because he wanted to show them to the American professors. But at that year the war between the Arabs and the Jews began, and in May the deceased traveled to Lebanon and was unable to return until the end of the war. His Eminence travelled to Jordan and from there to America.

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The Amarna Scholarly Tablets. By SHLOMO IZRE'EL. Cuneiform Monographs, vol. 9. Groningen: STYX PUBLICATIONS, 1997. Pp. xii + 160, 51 pls. Hfl 125.

After the English translation of the Amarna letters by W. A. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), a new critical edition of the school texts from Amarna had become a desideratum. Despite a number of recent articles on the subject, especially by P. Artzi (see the bibliography on pp. 101f. of the book under review), the scholarly texts had not yet been treated as a group. This new book fills the gap. Some texts are published here in copy for the first time (EA 343 and 349). The new edition of the tablets is preceded by a short introduction in which the author discusses the findspots of the tablets and adds a few pages on scribal education at Akhetaton (Amarna). As to the findspots, the large majority of the tablets were recovered from two rubbish pits in the so-called Records Office (p. 6). However, which tablets had been found where and the exact relationship to the walls and the rubbish pits remain unclear. Nevertheless, it appears likely that both the letters and the school texts were stored in this building (pp. 8–9).

As for scribal training (pp. 9–13), the author does not go into a detailed discussion of the curriculum taught in the local school. (A reference to A. Demsky's interesting article on the education of Canaanite scribes, in *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology Dedicated to Pinhas Artzi*, ed. J. Klein and A. Skaist [Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990], 157–70, would have been appropriate.) This is understandable, but it should be added that more can be said than is written on pp. 11f. on the literary texts. In Ugarit, for example, the curriculum can be recon-

structed with some certainty (see my "Babylonian Lexical, Religious and Literary Texts and Scribal Education at Ugarit," *Ugarit: Ein ostmediterranes Kulturzentrum im Alten Orient* [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995], 171–212). The order probably was: Tu-ta-ti—Silbenalphabet/Vokabular A—Sa Syllabary/Vocabulary—(paradigms)—Weidner God List—(?)—Ḫar-ra ḫubullu—Lu—Izi—Diri. Unclear is the place of Ea, the Table of Measures, the Grammatical Texts, Nigga, and Erimḫuš. The school texts found in Amarna are part of the same curriculum that we find at Emar (M. Civil, "The Texts from Meskene-Emar," *Aula Orientalis* 7 [1989]: 5–35, and the edition by Arnaud [1987], cited p. 101). The number of texts suggests that only a small portion of the Amarna school texts are actually preserved (Izre'el, p. 11). According to Artzi, in *Studies Artzi* (1990), 143f., EA 350 (Izre'el, p. 31) combines Tu-ta-ti and Silbenalphabet A on one tablet, as we find at Ugarit (Artzi, *ibid.*; van Soldt, *op. cit.*, 193). However, the three signs preserved on the reverse cannot be identified with any part of Silbenalphabet A and the identification, although possible, remains uncertain. Since we also have tablets with the Sa Syllabary (EA 348 and 379), the Weidner God List (EA 374), and Diri, we could have the following possible order for the texts from Amarna: Tu-ta-ti—(Silbenalphabet A?)—(?)—Sa Syllabary—Weidner God List . . . Diri. Conspicuously missing are Ḫar-ra ḫubullu, Lu, and Izi. As for the literary texts, they also formed part of the curriculum and were written after the student had completed the lexical texts. The western schools favored relatively short compositions which could be written on one tablet (van Soldt, *op. cit.*, 176f., 207f.).

The rest of the book contains transliterations of the texts, followed by copies and photos, both of excellent quality. I conclude this review with a few remarks on individual texts.

EA 346 (p. 25): The author is certainly correct in his reading of lines 8' and 9'. Both ḫābilu and šā'idu refer to vagrants, see *CAD*, s.v. Both words are attested in texts from Ḫatti (*ibid.*).

EA 348 (pp. 28–29): The transliteration of the obverse does not match what can be seen on the photo on pl. IX (p. 118). I would read the signs as follows: (1') 'TUM¹, (2') TUM, (3') EGI[R], (4') 'MAR¹, (5') DIB², (6') 'GÍR¹/'TIM², (7') 'TAB²'. For line 6', compare perhaps the Emar recension, line 435'.

EA 350 (p. 31): See my remarks on scribal training above.

EA 356 (pp. 43–50): *Line 3'*, the author has dropped his restoration proposed in *The Raphael Kutscher Memorial Volume* (1993), 56. Since the line can hardly be separated from line 53', I prefer to retain Knudtzon's reading despite the awkward ending -u in *bi-i-[u]*; see also C. Wilcke, *Archiv für Orientforschung* 23 (1970): 85, note 3. *Line 4'*, the restoration [ša-a-]ra-ni is doubtful; a plural with -āni is only attested once in a Nineveh text; otherwise the plural is šārū or šārātu (the latter only occasionally in Neo-Assyrian, cf. *CAD*, s.v. šāru A). *Line 13'*, Picchioni's restoration seems to require more room than is available on the tablet. *Line 29f.*, cf. H.-P. Müller, *Archiv für Orientforschung* 29–30 (1983–84): 84f.