

# The relation of the Septuagint of Proverbs to the Septuagint of Psalms<sup>\*1</sup>

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The Greek version of Hebrew books that in time came to be regarded as canonical in rabbinic Judaism manifests unity and diversity all at once. Each book appears to have been translated by a different person,<sup>2</sup> and some books by more than one.<sup>3</sup> The translation technique varies between books from very free to very literal with many nuances in between. The dates of the Greek translation units stretch out from the early third century BCE to some point in the second century CE. Most of the translation would seem to have been done in Egypt, but some books were likely translated in Palestine. Nevertheless, there is a distinct family relationship among them. Some of the agreement is due no doubt to the impact of the Greek Pentateuch. The Pentateuch was in all likelihood translated before the other books, and seems to have become authoritative very soon. Later translators adopted much of its vocabulary, style, and translational attitude.<sup>4</sup> But the resemblances among the post-Pentateuchal books of the Septuagint extend beyond the common Pentateuchal heritage. An intertextual web of connections can be recognized, showing up in common vocabulary, shared interpretations, and inner-Septuagintal borrowings. Some of these similarities are striking enough to have led some scholars to postulate that different books—the Minor Prophets and Ezekiel, say, or Job and Proverbs—were translated by the same person.<sup>5</sup> But the multiplicity of connections, coupled with undeniable differences between translation units, rather suggests a type of “school” consisting of different circles that knew of one another’s work.

Much research remains to be done on the intertextual links between Septuagint books. Many connections have been observed in passing, but few studies have attempted to gather all the material. The nature of the phenomenon remains to be defined more precisely. Establishing the direction of borrowing is often very hard to do. On the basis of a large

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1. \* This paper benefited much from a close reading of an earlier version of it by Lorenzo Cuppi. I thank him for his generous comments.

2. Throughout this paper the Septuagint translators will be referred to as individuals, although it is just as likely that different books were translated by small teams.

3. See the handy overview in M. Harl, G. Dorival, O. Munnich, *La Bible grecque des Septante. Du judaïsme hellénistique au christianisme ancien* (second edition; Paris: Cerf, 2003), 83-111.

4. See e.g. Emanuel Tov, “The Impact of the Septuagint Translation of the Torah on the Translation of the Other Books,” in *Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy* (ed. Pierre Casetti, et al.; OBO 38; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag/ Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 577–92; reprinted in Emanuel Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (SVT 72; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 183–94.

5. For the Minor Prophets and Ezekiel, see H. St. J. Thackeray, “The Greek Translators of the Prophetical Books,” *JThS* 4 (1903): 578–85; for Job and Proverbs, see G. Gerleman, *Studies in the LXX. III Proverbs* (Lund: Gleerup, 1956).

collection of examples, it may be possible to determine the relative chronology of the version. This would be enormously helpful. In the present paper a small contribution will be proposed to the question of intertextual connections between Greek Psalms and Greek Proverbs.

### 1. A review of potential evidence

Different types of evidence can be, and have been, brought to bear on our question.<sup>6</sup> There are many similarities between Greek Psalms and Proverbs. A question that always needs to be asked is what can be learnt from the data. Not all similarities necessarily indicate a direct connection, and some of the most impressive signs of contact may not go back to the earliest stage of the translation. As in regard to other important questions, research on links between Septuagint books is hampered by a “triple ignorance”:<sup>7</sup> we do not possess the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint, we do not know the details of its translation technique, and we cannot be certain that the text that has come down to us is the original Greek version. Nevertheless, the combination of different types of evidence appears to allow a conclusion.

#### *Shared vocabulary and translation equivalents*

In assessing the possible connection between two translation units, no importance should be given to features that may be attributed to common dependence on the Pentateuch or other early translations. The translation of Hebrew תורה “instruction” as νόμος “law” is found in both Proverbs and Psalms. It not only implies a definite interpretation on the lexical level, but also witnesses to a “nomistic” view of Judaism.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it should not be used to argue for a connection between the two translation units. Indeed, in both Psalms and Proverbs, the lexical equivalence and the wider tendency to valorize divine law may simply reflect influence of the Greek Pentateuch.<sup>9</sup>

Also to be excluded are common Greek words and expressions that may have been used in both corpora by chance, even if they are found only in these two books of the

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6. See e.g. J. Cook, “Intertextual Relationships between the Septuagint of Psalms and Proverbs,” in *The Old Greek Psalter. Studies in Honour of Albert Pietersma* (ed. R.J.V. Hiebert, C.E. Cox, and P.J. Gentry; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 218-28; T. F. Williams, “Toward a Date for the Old Greek Psalter,” *Old Greek Psalter*, 248-276, in particular 268-70; L. Cuppi, “Concerning the Origin of the Addition Found in Prov<sup>LXX</sup> 1:7,” in *XIV Congress Of The IOSCS, Helsinki, 2010* (Melvin K. H. Peters, ed.; Septuagint and Cognate Studies 59; Atlanta, SBL, 2013), 93-103.

7. A. Aejmelaeus, “What Can We Know about the Hebrew Vorlage of the Septuagint?” in *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays* (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 77-115, in particular 79.

8. See, for Proverbs, M. Flashar, “Exegetische Studien zum Septuagintapsalter,” *ZAW* 32 (1912): 81-116, 161-89, 241-68, in particular 165-73; F. Austermann, *Von der Tora zum Nomos: Untersuchungen zur Übersetzungsweise und Interpretation im Septuaginta-Psalter* (MSU 27; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2003). For Proverbs, see J. Cook, “The Law of Moses in Septuagint Proverbs,” *VT* 49 (1999): 448-61.

9. *Pace* Cook, “Intertextual Relationships,” 221-23.

Septuagint. The adjective ὀργίλος “quick-tempered” is found once in the Psalms and three times in Proverbs, but nowhere else in the Septuagint.<sup>10</sup> It is, however, a common Greek word, and the natural way to express the idea of irascibility.

Rare words are more significant. The adjective γλωσσώδης “talkative, quarrelsome” seems to be unattested in Greek literature before the Septuagint. It is attested once in Psalms and once in Proverbs.<sup>11</sup> The word also occurs three times in Ben Sira, but this translation unit is almost certainly later than Psalms and Proverbs.<sup>12</sup> The attestation of the word in Psalms and Proverbs suggests that there is a link between the two units.<sup>13</sup>

Shared equivalents exclusive to our two translation units are suggestive as well. The verb συκοφαντέω and its derivations are found twice in the Pentateuch and once in Amos, but as a rendering of the Hebrew root קשע “to oppress” the Greek words are limited to Psalms, Proverbs and translation units belonging to the kaige-Theodotion-Aquila group.<sup>14</sup> Another striking similarity (although not identity) is the rendering of Hebrew פלגים “streams” as ὀρμήματα “rushings” in Ps 45/46:5 and ὀρμή “rush” in Prov 21:1.<sup>15</sup> Like the shared vocabulary, these renderings make it likely that there is a connection between the translations of the two books.<sup>16</sup>

The features more probably show that one of the two translations influenced the other. But the direction of the influence cannot be determined on their basis.

#### *Phrases from Psalms borrowed in Greek Proverbs?*

Occasionally, an entire phrase is translated similarly in Psalms and Proverbs. Both Ps 61/62:13 and Prov 24:12 have the expression ἀποδίδωμι ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ “to

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10. M. D’Hamonville, *Les Proverbes* (La bible d’Alexandrie 17; Paris: Cerf 200), 281. In Ps 17/18:49 the Hebrew equivalent is קָח; in Proverbs, other equivalents are found: קָח in Prov 22:24; 29:22; כָּעַן in Prov 21:19.

11. D’Hamonville, *Proverbes*, 281. Again, the Hebrew equivalents are not the same.

12. The “other writings” mentioned in the prologue to Greek Ben Sira line 25 almost certainly included both Psalms and Proverbs.

13. For an additional example, the verb κληροῶ “to lend,” see below.

14. The influence of Greek Psalms on the kaige-Theodotion group is well known. See e.g. O. Munnich, “La Septante des Psaumes et le groupe *kaige*,” *VT* 33 (1983), 75-89; S. Olofsson, “The Kaige Group and the Septuagint Book of Psalms,” in B. A. Taylor, ed., *IX Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies: Cambridge 1995* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 189-230; P. J. Gentry, “The Greek Psalter and the καίγε Tradition,” in *Old Greek Psalter*, 74-97.

15. F. W. Mozley, *The Psalter of the Church* (Cambridge: CUP, 1905), xiii.

16. Another striking equivalence limited to Psalms and Proverbs is קָח - λίθος τίμιος, see Ps 18/19:11; 20/21:4; Prov 8:19.

give to each according to their deeds,”<sup>17</sup> a phrase not found elsewhere in the Septuagint. The implication is not necessarily that one translator followed the other. The identical phrase may have been used independently.

The case is different where a phrase from Psalms is added in the translation of Proverbs, in excess of the attested Hebrew text. In the Septuagint of Prov 1:7, two extra lines corresponding to Ps 110/111:10 are added before the translation of the Hebrew text of Proverbs:<sup>18</sup>

Ἄρχὴ σοφίας φόβος θεοῦ,  
σύνεσις δὲ ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιούσιν αὐτήν·  
(cf. Ps 110/111:10  
ἀρχὴ σοφίας φόβος κυρίου,  
σύνεσις ἀγαθὴ πᾶσι τοῖς ποιούσιν αὐτήν<sup>19</sup>)  
εὐσέβεια δὲ εἰς θεὸν ἀρχὴ αἰσθήσεως,  
σοφίαν δὲ καὶ παιδείαν ἀσεβεῖς ἐξουθενήσουσιν (translation of Prov 1:7)  
Beginning of wisdom is fear of God,  
and understanding is good for all those who practice it,  
and piety unto God is the beginning of perception;  
the impious, however, will despise wisdom and discipline (NETS).

The additional lines undoubtedly have their origin in Psalms. The problem is that it is hard to know at what stage the addition was made. It is possible that the translator was the one who borrowed the addition from the Greek version of Psalms.<sup>20</sup> But other scenarios can be imagined as well. The additional lines may have been present already in the Hebrew source text of Prov 1:7. If so, the Greek translation could be original in Proverbs and borrowed in Psalms.<sup>21</sup> Another possibility is that the additional lines were added into the Greek text of Proverbs secondarily, in the course of scribal transmission.<sup>22</sup>

In Prov 13:11c the words δίκαιος οἰκτίρει καὶ κηρῶν “a just person is compassionate and lends” are freely added after the translation of the Hebrew verse. As many scholars have recognized, the vocabulary of the addition is close to that of the Greek version of Ps 111/112:5a, χρηστὸς ἀνὴρ ὁ οἰκτίρων καὶ κηρῶν “one who is compassionate and lends

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17. Note that the Hebrew of these two verses is rather different.

18. See notably Cuppi, “Prov<sup>LXX</sup> 1:7” (with extensive discussion of earlier literature).

19. There are a number of differences between the Psalms text and Proverbs, see the discussion in Cuppi.

20. So Cook, “Intertextual Relationships,” 227 (with reference to earlier publications); Williams, “Toward a Date,” 269-70.

21. So Cuppi, “Prov<sup>LXX</sup> 1:7.”

22. See P. de Lagarde, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1863), 6. According to Cuppi, this was already the opinion of I. Drusius.

is a good man.”<sup>23</sup> This phrase corresponds to the Hebrew source text in Psalms. The issue is complicated somewhat by two additional facts: firstly, the thought expressed in the addition in Prov 13:11c is paralleled more closely in Ps 36/37:21b, ὁ δὲ δίκαιος οἰκτίρει καὶ διδοῖ (again a reasonable rendering of the source text in Psalms); secondly, the addition in Prov 13:11 resembles an added line in verse 9: δίκαιοι δὲ οἰκτίρουν καὶ ἐλεῶσιν “but just people are compassionate and have pity.”<sup>24</sup>

In spite of these complications, the use of the rare verb κυχράω makes a connection between Prov 13:11c and Ps 111/112:5a likely.<sup>25</sup> The easiest way to explain the facts is to suppose that the original translator of Proverbs borrowed a thought from the Greek version of Psalms and reformulated it slightly.<sup>26</sup> As in the preceding example, other scenarios are no doubt possible, but they do seem less probable.

### *Words from Psalms borrowed in Proverbs*

In a few passages, the Greek translation of Proverbs has been assimilated to the text of Psalms through the addition of a word. This type of evidence may be significant. Where an entire verse was added in the Septuagint of Proverbs from Psalms (as in Prov 1:7), some scholars argued that the addition may have been made secondarily, not by the original translator. However, where a single word is added, the explanation of secondary importation becomes less likely.<sup>27</sup>

“But the counsel of the Lord remains forever”

Ps 32/33:11a

עֲצַת יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תַּעֲמֹד

ἡ δὲ βουλή τοῦ κυρίου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα μένει

Prov 19:21b

וְעֲצַת יְהוָה הִיא תָקוּם

ἡ δὲ βουλή τοῦ κυρίου εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα μένει

In the Greek version, these half verses are identical.<sup>28</sup> Their Hebrew equivalents diverge,

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23. Cook, “Intertextual Relationships,” 220-21; Williams, “Towards a date,” 269-70.

24. Note that “to have pity,” “to lend” and “to give alms” are more or less synonymous notions in these contexts.

25. The verb is found also in 1 Sam 1:28, in a very different context.

26. As is argued by Cook, Williams and others, see note 22 above.

27. Muraoka points to a similar case establishing a connection between the Septuagint of Isaiah and the Minor Prophets, in J. Joosten et al., *Osée* (La Bible d’Alexandrie 23.1; Paris, Cerf, 2002), XI.

28. In Prov 19:21b, instead of κυρίου adopted by Rahlfs, Lagarde prefers the reading θεοῦ. This may well be correct, but it would change nothing for the question of dependence. The Septuagint of Proverbs often has “God” for the Hebrew Tetragram, see Cuppi, “Prov<sup>LXX</sup> 1:7.”

however, and only the Psalms text corresponds to the translation.<sup>29</sup> The rendering in Proverbs differs from the Hebrew text in Proverbs in that the third person pronoun הִיא “it” is omitted and the phrase “forever” added.<sup>30</sup> The Greek of Proverbs conforms to the Hebrew text of Psalms.<sup>31</sup>

There are several ways the Greek translation of Prov 19:21b could be explained. One might argue that the identity with Ps 32:11a is due to accident. The translation of עֲצָה with βουλή, of קוּם with μένω, the omission of a pleonastic pronoun and the addition of the phrase εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα are all attested elsewhere in Septuagint Proverbs.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, to postulate chance coincidence seems far-fetched. One might also argue that the half verse was conformed to the parallel in Psalms secondarily. However, in this case it must be supposed the assimilation to Greek Psalms did away with the original rendering in Proverbs, which seems unlikely. The best explanation, then, would be to accept that the original translator of Proverbs adapted his rendering to the parallel in Psalms.

“A person’s steps are directed by the Lord”

Ps 36/37:23a

מִיְהוָה מְצַעְדֵי יִגְבֵּר כּוֹנֵנוּ

παρὰ κυρίου τὰ διαβήματα ἀνθρώπου κατευθύνεται

Prov 20:24

מִיְהוָה מְצַעְדֵי יִגְבֵּר

παρὰ κυρίου εὐθύνεται τὰ διαβήματα ἀνδρός

Although in this case the Greek renderings are not entirely identical, they resemble one another more than do their Hebrew equivalents. Notably, the Greek text in Proverbs has a verbal form that finds no equivalent in the Hebrew of Proverbs, but corresponds to the verbal form in Psalms.

Again the rendering in Proverbs could be held to resemble Psalms by accident. The addition of a verb in the translation of a nominal clause of the type “from the Lord (is) X” is attested in Prov 29:26. Yet, as in the preceding example, it is more plausible that the similarity between the two half verses in Greek is due to the Proverbs translator, who—consciously or not—adapted his version to the Greek text of Psalms which he knew. Secondary adaptation is in this case less likely in view of the slight differences between the

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29. D’Hamonville, *Proverbes*, 271.

30. The verb μένω “to remain” for Hebrew קוּם “to stand” is attested also for Isa 14:24 and Prov 15:22.

31. Note that the particle δέ is added in both passages. It hardly looks out of place in either passage. In both Psalms and Proverbs, δέ is often used without formal equivalent in Hebrew.

32. For עֲצָה - βουλή, see Prov 8:14; for קוּם - μένω, see Prov 15:22; for the omission of the pronoun, see Prov 28:26; and for εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα freely added see Prov 6:33.

two texts.

### *Differences between Septuagint Psalms and Septuagint Proverbs*

Having looked at different types of similarities it is not superfluous to end with a reminder of some differences between the two translation units. Psalms is generally a rather literal translation, with every Hebrew word rendered by a corresponding Greek one, most often respecting the same word order. Proverbs is freer, less respecting of one-to-one correspondence. Another way of looking at this is that Proverbs is more oriented toward making the goal text acceptable in the host culture, while Psalms is more “foreignizing.” An interesting difference illustrating the two tendencies is the grammar of the proper noun Solomon, which in Psalms is indeclinable Σαλωμων (Ps 71/72:1; 126/127:1), but in Proverbs takes a Greek genitive ending, Σαλωμωντος (Prov 1:1; 25:1).

The different translational attitudes might be explained from the subject matter of the two books. The same translator might decide to render national-religious hymns according to a different method than a more universalist wisdom book.<sup>33</sup> But the rendering of some individual words and phrases shows rather clearly that Psalms and Proverbs were not translated by the same person. The rare Hebrew verb הרה hithpael, “to heat oneself in vexation” (BDB) is rendered, defensibly, with παραζηλόομαι “to envy” in Ps 36/37:1, 7, 8, but with the highly remarkable χαίρω “to rejoice” in Prov 24:19,<sup>34</sup> even although the phrases in which the verb occurs are similar in meaning. Other examples of words translated differently in the two units include כסא “full moon,” מעגל “path,” שקוי “drink” and תוחלת “expectation.”

These data plead strongly against common authorship of the Septuagint of Psalms and Proverbs.

## 2. Conclusions

While it is unlikely that the same person translated Psalms and Proverbs, the various types of shared features suggest some form of connection between the translation units. Shared vocabulary and similar renderings show that one of the translators linked up with the work of his colleague, although they do not reveal who borrowed from whom. Whether the contact was purely textual or involved personal acquaintance is hard to say. If the contact was exclusively mediated by texts, it must have involved the Hebrew source text as well as the translation. Shared equivalents cannot be explained on the basis of familiarity with the Greek translation only.

Whole lines taken over from Psalms in Proverbs suggest that the latter was on the receiving end, but the unknowns in the textual history of Proverbs do not allow a definitive

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33. The freer approach in Proverbs does not, therefore, necessarily indicate an earlier date, *pace* Cuppi.

34. This equivalence may be due to a kind of homophony.

conclusion in each case. Perhaps the assimilation happened not in the original translation but secondarily in the textual history.

Finally, the borrowing of single elements from Psalms in the Greek translation of Proverbs confirms that a link existed between the two units, but also that Proverbs was probably on the receiving side.

Taking all the evidence together, the priority of Psalms seems rather likely. The case is cumulative, and no line of argument is entirely conclusive. All the specific data point in the same direction, however. The translator of Proverbs knew the Greek translation of Psalms and linked up with it in various places. Although his own translation was freer than that of his colleague, and more oriented toward the Hellenistic world of his intended readership, he nevertheless viewed his work as a continuation of the version begun in the Pentateuch and developed in Psalms. Although he was not afraid to introduce diversity into the Greek version, and made some very singular choices (such as giving the name of Solomon a Greek ending), he also manifested respect for the unity of the expanding corpus. He wanted his version to belong to the same family as the units translated earlier.

Although the result is reached here on the basis of a fresh investigation and includes some previously overlooked data, it is not new. Johann knew it all along. Johann Cook concluded an investigation into the relationship between the Septuagint of Psalms and Proverbs in the following way: “To me it is evident that the translator of Proverbs had prior knowledge of the Septuagint of Psalms.”<sup>35</sup> I’m happy to find myself in agreement with the honorand of the present volume, a faithful friend of many years and a co-worker in the field of textual studies.

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35. Cook, “Intertextual Relationships,” 228.