## A note on the Manuscripts of the Syriac Geoponicon

by

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The Syriac translation of the Geoponicon was published by Lagarde in 1860, in an edition limited to 150 copies<sup>1</sup>. For this, Lagarde used a 9th century manuscript in the British Museum, B.M. Add. 14662 (Catalogue, no. MVI; p 1189), unfortunately incomplete at both beginning and end.

Although the identification was not made in the catalogues, two further manuscripts of this work in fact survive: Birmingham (Selly Oak Colleges Library), Mingana syr. 599, and Notre-Dame des Semences (near Alqosh, Iraq), no. 328. The former is described in Mingana's C a t a l o g u e (Vol. I, cols 1140-1142) as 'A work on botanics and horticulture'. The list of contents he gives makes the identification of the work as the Syriac G e o p o n i c o n both easy and certain. The manuscript is a modern one, copied for Mingana in 1932, and the colophon (f. 155b) states that the text was taken from a manuscript in the library of Notre-Dame des Semences, written in 1902 by the priests Elias and Gabriel. These details given in the colophon of Mingana syr. 599 make it clear that its V o r l a g e is in fact no. 328 in Vosté's C a t a l o g u e d e l a b i b l i o t h è q u e s y r o - c h a l d é e n - n e d u C o u v e n t d e N o t r e - D a m e d e s S e m e n c e s p r è s d' A l q o š, I r a q.

Naturally it might be hoped that these two manuscripts might supply the beginning and end of the work, missing in the London manuscript. Examination, however, of the text of Mingana syr. 599 reveals that this is derived ultimately (via Alqosh no. 328) from Lagarde's edition itself. Not only does Mingana syr. 599 have exactly the same lacuna at the beginning, but it also provides gaps in precisely the same places as in Lagarde's text, e.g. Lagarde p.38<sup>24</sup> = Mingana syr. 599 f. 50<sup>a</sup>; p. 48<sup>29</sup> = f. 63<sup>b</sup>; p 120<sup>3</sup> = f. 154b<sup>2</sup>. Finally, removing all traces of doubt as to its origin, Mingana syr. 599 also includes — for the first few pages only — Lagarde's emen-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Geoponicon in sermonem Syriacum versorum quae supersunt. Leipzig 1860.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The context, however, has led the scribe to fill in the gaps in Lagarde p. 13<sup>7-8</sup> (حكم ما عند ما المعاملة).

dations, printed in his edition in square brackets: these appear on ff. 1<sup>b</sup> and 2<sup>a</sup> bracketed in red.

Thus these two manuscripts are totally valueless as witnesses to the text of the Syriac Geoponicon. It is indeed surprising that a copy of Lagarde's rare edition was available in Iraq in 1902, and ironic too that a transcript of a text with such an origin should specially have been made for a Western Library (which, incidentally, possesses a copy of Lagarde's edition).