

Further Precisions Concerning the Mosul Manuscript of the Chronicle of Se'ert

by

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In an article that appeared in the 1970 volume of this periodical¹, Dr. Rainer Degen notes that, according to an *on-dit*, the precious Mosul manuscript of the first part of the Chronicle of Se'ert is now reduced to a bundle of loose leaves, some of which have disappeared since the edition of Addai Scher². I am inclined to wonder whether I may not myself be the ultimate source of this report. In any case, since Dr. Degen complains of the lack of precise information on this codex, it may be worth while for me to communicate here all of the information that I have at my disposal.

My information is based on notes that I took in the years 1964 and 1965, when I was graciously allowed by His Beatitude, Paul II Cheikho, the actual Chaldean Patriarch, to examine all of the manuscripts in the Patriarchal Library, now located in Baghdad. Judging from these notes, I would not be able to say that the codex is now a mere bundle of loose leaves. What is certain is that it lacks a cover and is, therefore, wrapped up in a newspaper. It is possible that some leaves may have come loose, but I am inclined to doubt it, for this type of detail would normally be included in my notes. As for the loss of some leaves since the edition, at least my impression of the size of the loss, I am happy to report, was based on an erroneous interpretation³.

The manuscript now consists of 130 leaves that measure 24.5 by 17.5 cm., with 13 lines of the page. These page measurements are substantially the same as those to the manuscript of the second part of the chronicle, Paris Arabic 6653⁴, which, therefore, was originally either part of the Mosul manuscript or at least a second volume of the same. One may also conclude that the very irregular amounts of text indicated in the edition for the

¹ R. Degen, *Zwei Miszellen zur Chronik von Se'ert*, in OC 54 (1970), 76-95.

² *Ibid.*, p. 89, n. 20.

³ I failed to note that most of the text of PO V, pp. 246-54, that is now missing from the Mosul manuscript, was supplied on the basis of loose leaves found at Se'ert.

⁴ Cf. R. Degen, *art. cit.*, p. 85.

pages of MS. A stem, as Degen rightly concludes ⁵, not from the Mosul manuscript itself, but from the copy which Scher made from it.

The leaves of the Mosul manuscript are numbered with Arabic ⁶ numerals from 8 to 137. Hence, seven leaves have been lost at the beginning since the time when this numbering was made. This must have occurred before Scher made his copy, for, although the present beginning of the codex does not quite correspond to the beginning of Scher's copy, the missing text amounts to 16 lines in the edition, which is the equivalent of only one leaf (allowing eight lines of printed text per manuscript page, as Degen indicates) ⁷. Thus, f. 8r^o begins with *inna*, as found in PO V, p. 254, line 8 (*Inn-Allāha qad-intahabaka...*), while f. 137v^o ends with *du'fihim*, as found in PO V, p. 246, line 4, where the manuscript ended at the time when the copy was made. We may conclude, therefore, that in 1902, when Scher made his copy, six leaves were missing at the beginning of the Mosul manuscript. Scher later found four of them (MS. S, pp. 1-8, corresponding to PO V, pp. 246-53) at Se'ert after his election as Metropolitan of that see. Hence, the lacuna indicated on p. 246 of the edition probably amounts to only two leaves.

It will also be of some value to indicate the precise point in our manuscript where the true beginning and end occur. PO IV, p. 219, where Scher's edition begins, corresponds in the manuscript to f. 68r^o, while PO V, p. 334, where his text ends, corresponds to f. 67v^o. This gives us the possibility of establishing a rough correspondence between the leaves of the manuscript, the pages of Scher's copy and the pages of the printed edition with regard to the amount of text contained. For, since the beginning of p. 1 in Scher's copy corresponded to the now missing f. 7r^o of the manuscript (PO V, beginning of p. 253), and since the text runs without a break to the middle of p. 38 of Scher's copy, corresponding to f. 67v^o (PO V, end of p. 334), we can calculate that 37 and a half of Scher's pages corresponded to 61 leaves in the Mosul manuscript and to 82 pages in the printed edition.

This raises the question whether the other 32 loose pages that Scher found at Se'ert (MS. S, pp. 9-40, corresponding to PO IV, pp. 261-74 and 303-11) may not also have been included in the 137 numbered leaves, in other words, whether there may not now exist lacunae in the sequence of ff. 8 to 137 that I failed to note when I examined the codex in 1964-5, for

⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

⁶ I.e. the numerals now in use among the Arabs.

⁷ Art. cit., pp. 87-9. It must be pointed out that Degen confuses pages and leaves. The division numbers in the margin of the printed edition for both A (Scher's copy) and S (loose leaves found at Se'ert) are everywhere preceded by a 'P', which clearly stands for 'page'.

the section ff. 68 to 137 ought to correspond to the remaining 37 and a half pages of Scher's copy (PO IV, pp. 219-61, 274-303, 311-2, plus PO V, pp. 221-46, for a total of 98 pages). If we had to judge by the pages of Scher's copy, we should be in doubt, since the 70 leaves that remain should have made roughly 42 pages in his copy, whereas, if we reduce the number of leaves by 16, corresponding to the 32 pages found at Se'ert, we would have only 54 leaves, which should have made only 33 or 34 pages in the copy. If we judge, on the other hand, by the printed edition, which by its very nature is more regular and, therefore, more reliable for our present purpose, it is clear that the loose leaves found in Se'ert were not included when the leaves were numbered. We have seen that 61 leaves of the manuscript correspond to 82 pages of printed text. Hence, 70 leaves should make about 93 pages of printed text, which falls only a little short of the actual 98. On the other hand, if the loose leaves found at Se'ert were to be subtracted, there would remain only 54 leaves, which should yield only 72 pages of printed text. Consequently, it seems clear enough that the 16 loose leaves of Se'ert that fill lacunae in the body of the Mosul manuscript, unlike the 4 that partially fill the lacuna at the beginning, were separated from the manuscript before its leaves were numbered. We may conclude, therefore, with reasonable confidence that there are now no breaks in the sequence of the leaf numbers.

It will be seen that many details of the checkered history of the manuscript can now be deduced. The entire manuscript of the Chronicle must once have been located at Se'ert, but at some time or other its binding was broken, so that the manuscript split into as many as four pieces, and a number of leaves were lost at both the beginning and end of the entire manuscript and perhaps, too, at the beginnings and ends of some of the sections. The first and second sections were then bound together in reverse order, while the third section was lost altogether. Before or after the binding of the first two sections, 16 leaves of the first section became separated, but fortunately remained in the library at Se'ert. Next, someone numbered with Arabic numerals the remaining 137 leaves of these first two sections. Afterwards, 6 of the numbered leaves became detached from the beginning, and the mutilated codex was transferred to the Chaldean Patriarchate, then located in Mosul. In 1902 Addai Scher found this codex in Mosul and made for himself a copy of it. Shortly thereafter he became Metropolitan of Se'ert, where he took his own copy, and found there the fourth section of the Chronicle plus the 16 unnumbered leaves that came from the body of the first section and 4 out of the 6 numbered leaves that had become detached from the beginning of the combined second and first sections. Next Scher sent off copies of all that survived for publication in the *Patro-*

logia Orientalis, and soon afterwards the Bibliothèque Nationale was able to acquire the fourth section of the original manuscript. In 1915 came the catastrophe that cost the life of the Metropolitan and destroyed, as far as can be known, the entire library of Se'ert; at least with regard to the 20 loose leaves there can be no reasonable hope for their survival. Finally, in 1959 or 1960 the first two sections, still bound together in reverse order, but now with a further leaf missing from the beginning, was transferred with the rest of the Patriarchal Library from Mosul to Baghdad.

The combined first two sections, which I have up until now been calling the Mosul manuscript, have been catalogued twice. The first cataloguing was done by Addai Scher and was published in 1907⁸. In this catalogue the codex bears the number 113, whether given by Scher himself or by some unknown predecessor. The second catalogue was prepared in Arabic by the actual Chaldean Bishop of Beirut, Mgr. Raphael Bidawid, in collaboration with the recently elected Metropolitan of Erbil, Mgr. Stephen Babeka, and Professor Isaac 'Isko⁹, but the text was destroyed by an unfortunate fire before it could be published. Nonetheless, the new system of numbering which was devised in connection with the cataloguing remains on most of the manuscripts of the library. The new number of our codex is 1001, which I would prefer to write 100.1, for it indicates that this is the first manuscript of class 100, the one which contains works of history, biography and miscellaneous subjects¹⁰. At the time that I examined the manuscripts of the Patriarchal Library I extended the Scher and Bidawid systems of numbering to all the manuscripts in the library, and it is my hope to publish a complete checklist soon. According to this list, therefore, the codex would no longer be called Mosul 113, as heretofore, but Chaldean Patriarchate 113/100.1.

⁸ In *Revue des Bibliothèques* 17 (1907), 257.

⁹ Cf. I. 'Isko, *Al-maktabat al-kaldāniyat al-baṭriyarkīya*, in *An-Naḡm* 11 (Mosul 1951), 127-21, 399-402.

¹⁰ The new system of numbering is explained by I. 'Isko, *art. cit.*, pp. 399-402. At that time, however, class 100 did not yet exist.