
Still on the Sources of the Complutensian *Septuagint*: Old Certainties, New Approaches¹

Más sobre las fuentes de la *Septuaginta* Complutense: viejas certezas y nuevos planteamientos

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Abstract.— This paper delivers a synthesis of the latest news about the Greek sources of the Old Testament text edited in the *Biblia Poliglota Complutensis* (1517), focusing on the new data and textual reconsiderations motivated by the final recovering and online edition of ms. 442 (Madrid, BH UCM 22), the *Greek Bible* sent by the Venetian Senate at Cisneros' petition.

Keywords.— Septuagint; *Biblia Poliglota Complutensis*; Marcus Musurus; Aldine Bible

Resumen.— En este trabajo se recopilan las últimas novedades respecto a las fuentes griegas del texto del Antiguo Testamento editado en la *Biblia Poliglota Complutensis* (1517), destacando los nuevos datos y planteamientos textuales resultantes de la recuperación y edición digital del ms. 442 (Madrid, BH UCM 22), la *Biblia Griega* enviada por el Senado de Venecia a petición de Cisneros.

Palabras clave.— *Septuaginta*; *Biblia Poliglota Complutensis*; Marco Musuro; Biblia Aldina

1. A Codex Finally *Redivivus*—Crossroads between Venice and Alcalá

Cardenal Cisneros, who was to die in November 1517, could perhaps have seen the printed result of his *Biblia Poliglota Complutensis*, the most wanted and carefully executed of his editorial projects. But the work, in five volumes, although printed in July of that year (the colophon date

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of vol. IV is 10 July), had to wait for Papal sanctioning, after Erasmus' privilege of exclusivity had passed, in 1520. That is what we all know, and it would be enough to justify the attention given to that *opus magnum* at least since the nineteenth century. But there is more, there is much more. One must be aware of the rigorous philological work of the entire team of Cisneros' experts², the best ones of the time, among Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaean scholars. As the philological work on the Greek text of the *Polyglot* is a never-ending task, each paper that comes to light stresses its high level, placing Alcalá at the center of the cultural Europe of the early sixteenth century.

As far as the Greek column of the Old Testament is concerned, the last five years provided a series of novelties, confirmations, and also the invalidation of hypotheses previously advanced³. That is due, mostly, to the digital release of the last recovering of ms. 442⁴ (Madrid, BH UCM 22), the codex long time ago (Delitzsch 1886: 23–28) identified as the rich parchment sent by the Venetian *Serenissima* to Cisneros, and also a textual testimony for long missed by scholars. It was described in the nineteenth century⁵, before being damaged in the Spanish Civil War⁶, and still Schenker (1994: 177–186) and even O'Connell (2006: 89, n. 53⁷) consider it *deperditus*. The truth is the codex's restauration started in the mid-seventies of the last century, a very slow process that, at the beginning of the 2000^s, was able to produce a first set of 58 digitalized folia (recto and verso), stored in a CD-ROM available for consultation at the Historical Library Marqués de Valdecilla⁸. As one reads this paper, the final digital edition of the codex—by which Professor Felipe G. Hernández Muñoz

²The most recent extensive work on Cisneros' team and its work methodology is that of Martínez Manzano 2021: 273–329.

³They are summarized in the works of O'Connell 2006, Fernández Marcos 2009: 302–315 and 2014: 125–142; Domingo Malvadi, 2014: 270–272; Gil Fernández 2015.

⁴The biblical codices discussed are cited according to the classification of Rahlfs (1914). These are the main ones: ms. 442 (Madrid, BH UCM 22), ms. 1670 (Madrid, BH UCM 23), ms. 108 (Vat. gr. 330), ms. 248 (Vat. gr. 346), ms. 670 (Vat. gr. 348), ms. 29 (Venice, Marc. gr. 2), ms. 121 (Marc. gr. 3), ms. 120 (Marc. gr. 4), ms. 68 (Marc. gr. 5), ms. 122 (Marc. gr. 6), ms. 731 (Marc. gr. 16), ms. N (Vat. gr. 2106), ms. V (Marc. gr. 1). Apart from Rahlfs' list, but important in what follows, are London, BL Add. 10968 (L), and Paris, BNF, Coisl. gr. 2 (Par.).

⁵Villa-Amil y Castro (1878: 5–6 [no. 22]); Graux and Martin (1892: 125–126). The most recent description, after the final recovering of the codex, belongs to Hernández Muñoz and Martínez Manzano 2019.

⁶For the (tragic) history of the Library, this and other codices, and those who risked their lives to save them, see Torres Santo Domingo 2005: 261–285; eadem 2013: 261–269, 432–433; Valero 2013; Domingo Malvadi, 2014: 278–280.

⁷“The ms. was severely damaged during the Spanish Civil War. At the time of writing, it is in restoration, but it is doubtful if it can be successfully restored”.

⁸On the restoring process of this first stage, see Fernández Marcos 2005: 72–77.

and myself were responsible⁹—is available online, as an open-source tool, at the website of the Historical Library¹⁰. A true example of a *recentior, sed non deterior* (Hernández Muñoz: 2022).

In what must be considered its final stage of conservation¹¹, with 224 out of the original 307 folia partially recovered and replaced in order (73%)¹², these are the portions of text preserved (with internal lacunae, of course): Jdc (1r–8r); Ruth (8r–10v); 1Reg (11r–36v); 2Reg (36v–46r); 3Reg (46r–47v); 4Reg (48r–54v); 1Par (54v–76r); 2Par (76r–103r); Prov (103v–120v); Eccl (120v–126r); Cant (126r–129r); 1Esd (129r–137v); 2Esd (138r–153r); Est (153r–161v); Sap (161v–171r); Judith (171r–182v); Tob (182v–189r); 1Mac (189v–202v); 2Mac (203r–217v); 3Mac (218r–224v). As the codex must have been hit by a bullet and afterwards partially incinerated, the first and final folia are the most damaged, while the inner ones are almost fully preserved.

Scribe A has been previously identified with John Severe, the Lacedaemonian¹³, already known working in Venice from 1518 to 1525, but not in an earlier date, when the copy of ms. 442 must have occurred¹⁴. Its model of copy was ms. 68 (Venice, Marc. gr. 5), as stated already by Delitzsch (1886: 23–28) after a close examination of Bessarion's Biblical codices (later transferred in to the Marciana). Nonetheless, that identification, soon confirmed and accepted by other critics¹⁵, has always faced a problem: the fact that ms. 68 does not seem to fit the description made of it by Cisneros, in the Prologue of vol. 1 of the *Polyglot* (1515), as a *cas-*

⁹ It is only fair to reinforce how thankful we are to the Directive Board and the technical staff of the Historic Library, who shared so many hours with us and the manuscript, offering us, mere textual critics, their experience on paleographic and laboratorial techniques.

¹⁰ http://dioscorides.ucm.es/proyecto_digitalizacion/index.php?doc=5309456614&y=2011&p=1. Last access 27/07/2022.

¹¹ In only a few fragments that are also reproduced in the digital edition (from the hundreds that last from the codex) could the copied text not be read (frs. 1–36 Dubia).

¹² The digital edition gathers only the folia with legible text. Among the several losses of the codex, two charts of 10 pages each are preserved united by the inner binding, but with no intelligible text. In one of them must have been, for instance, the text of 2Reg 1.16–16.13, missing between fols. 36v and 37r.

¹³ As Bravo García 2008: 160, Ángel Espinós 2009: 177–184 (at 180–181, n.14), an opinion soon accepted by all scholars. On John Severe, Canart 1977: 117–134.

¹⁴ Scholars are mostly unanimous on placing the copy of ms. 442 in the early years of the sixteenth century, with no year in concrete ever suggested. In fact, as Hernández Muñoz and Martínez Manzano 2019: 142, “no hay constancia de que la Señoría veneciana haya mandado copiar expresamente este códice en torno a 1515 para mandarlo al Cardinal Cisneros, sino que pudo obrar en poder del Senado de la Serenísima desde años antes.” Only Eguren 1859: 17 considers the codex much older, mentioning having seen, in fol. 1, a decoration “previous to the fourteenth century”. This is both hard to believe and impossible to prove or dismiss.

¹⁵ E.g. Revilla Rico 1917: 98; Fernández Marcos 2005: 78–80.

*tigatissimus*¹⁶, as it looks like a clean and careful copy where one can barely find any corrections or annotations¹⁷. As I see it, there are three possible solutions for this: one, that Cisneros uses *castigatissimus* as a synonym of *emendatissimus*, i.e. referring to a codex whose mistakes and gaps of text had been supplied before the copy by means of a wide collation of sources¹⁸; two, that he is referring to another codex (or to no manuscript in concrete), easy as it is to accept that he might not be aware of the source of the codex he was receiving; and three, that he was describing the very codex sent to him (ms. 442), itself a good example of a *castigatissimus*—even if the syntax of Cisneros' words (note 16) makes this last hypothesis more difficult to accept¹⁹.

Whatever the case is, the very belonging of ms. 442 to the family of Greek Biblical *Marciani*, before being sent to Alcalá, makes it a serious candidate to have been used, at some point, within the Aldine Biblical process, finished and published in 1518; therefore, it also stands for as a material testimony of the Aldine-*Polyglot* collaboration, suggesting a continuous exchange of codices and other information between Aldus' and Cisneros' scholars²⁰.

And the main textual link between Venice and Alcalá, as far as the *Septuagint* is concerned, has actually a name: Marcus Musurus (1470–1517). Indeed, notwithstanding its clean and elegant aspect, the Madrid codex is deeply annotated²¹. First by Scribe A, afterwards by at least two unidentified scribes—who mostly marked and corrected chapter numbers—and Musurus, a Cretan considered by many the greatest Greek scholar of his time, a close collaborator with Aldus between 1493 and 1516²². His handwriting had already been identified in the *marginalia* of fol. 94r of the Madrid codex²³, and now that it is fully available anyone can confirm that the entire codex was reviewed by him²⁴. A large number of *marginalia* found in the different Biblical books, adding portions of text mistakenly

¹⁶ *Quibus etiam adiunximus alia non pauca, quorum partem ex Bessarionis castigatissimo codice summa diligentia transcriptam Illustris Venetorum senatus ad nos misit.*

¹⁷ For the description of ms. 68, see Mioni 1981: 9–10.

¹⁸ As Fernández Marcos 2009: 303–304.

¹⁹ See Hernández Muñoz 2020a: 231, n. 9.

²⁰ See Hernández Muñoz 2020a, esp. 237, n. 25; Martins de Jesus 2020a and 2020b.

²¹ See Martins de Jesus 2020a and 2020b on more about the several annotations and marks of the codex.

²² Among others, he was responsible for the text of the Aristophanic *Scholia* (1498), Athenaeus (1514), Hesychius (1514) and Pausanias (1516). See Geanakoplos 1962: 111–166, Bietenholz and Deutscher 1986: 472–473, Wilson 1992: 148–156, and Speranzi 2013.

²³ In concrete by Bravo García 2008: 160 and Speranzi 2013: 271, who mention “fol. 92v”, following a pencil numbering of the folia (still readable in the codex) that must reflect an inverse order.

²⁴ We even know some of Musurus' annotations not preserved in the codex, as they were transcript by

not copied by Scribe A, as well as endless corrections and *graphetai*, both *in textu* and *in margine*, are definitely to be ascribed to him²⁵, in the context of a work of revision close (although apparently less intensive) to the one he performed upon a part²⁶ of ms. L (London, BL Add. 10968)²⁷, a *cartaceo* where he corrects and supplements the text of 1Reg 30.12 – 2Reg 23.16–17 (fols. 2r–28v). It has been proved that L is a *Druckvorlage* of the Aldine edition (Cataldi Palau 1998: 451–459), but it was hardly the only one.

In a still unpublished paper I studied Musurus' interventions in both codices, particularly in the text of Kings they share (1Reg 30.12 – 2Reg 2.15 + 2Reg 16.14 – 20.18), searching for the material sources of his revision. The first conclusion was the smaller number of interventions found in ms. 442, when compared to L, probably because its first-hand text was already better, but also because of the direct editorial purposes of L. Nonetheless, it is interesting to notice how Musurus, in the books of Maccabees, supplies some lines left in blank by the Scribe of ms. 442 (e.g. 1Mac 15.10–11 [201r], 1Mac 15.28 + 15.29 [201v], 2Mac 5.14 [208r] e 2Mac 12.27 [216r]), lines that are not copied in ms. 68 (the first model of both codices), but are still edited in the Aldine and the *Polyglot*. Together, the collation performed by Professor F. G. Hernández Muñoz and myself seem to prove the influence of *lectiones antiquissimae* in Musurus' revisions, as it seems to be the case for ms. V (Marc. gr. 1) and N (Vat. gr. 2106), ms. 29 (Marc. gr. 2), and even ms. 64 (Paris, BNF gr. 2), to which family Musurus somehow had to turn.

One must remember that Musurus worked for Aldus Manutius, not the Venetian Senate. Therefore, no other context might explain his revision upon ms. 442 besides Aldus' Biblical project²⁸.

a Librarian of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid for F. Delitzsch (apud Hernández Muñoz 2020b: 256, n. 29).

²⁵ See Martins de Jesus 2020a: 727–729. Once again I would like to thank to Professor D. Speranzi for confirm my suspicions about Musurus' handwriting in a group of samples I sent to him.

²⁶ In the six fasciculi conserved, only a part of the entire codex, three scribes are responsible for copying the partial text of 1–2 Kings, Chronicles, Jeremias, Baruch, Lamentations, Letter of Jeremias, Ezequiel, Daniel, Wisdom of Salomon, Ecclesiastes, Judith, Tobit and 2 Maccabees. The codex was later reviewed by, at least, two other scribes, who introduced hundreds of corrections and supplements to the first-hand copy. The result was a complex and very corrupt manuscript, about which already Erasmus complained, in a letter from June 1529, when commenting the Biblical codex used by Aldus' printer. Apud Kranz 1985: 63–64.

²⁷ For its most complete description, see Cataldi Palau 1998: 451–459 + 610 and Speranzi 2013: 270–271. For the consultation of the codex online, in open access, see http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_10968 (last access 17/01/2022).

²⁸ An ancient project, actually, as we conserve two printed folia of the beginning of what was supposed to

2. Textual Approaches: New Possibilities

The formal study of the sources of the Complutensian *Septuagint* goes back as far as Delitzsch (1886), who was the first to identify mss. 108 and 248 (the two Vatican codices lent by Pope Leo X) as the preferred sources for the books they transmit—a conclusion that keeps being accepted in the most recent studies (Hernández Muñoz 2020a, 2020b). He was also the one who identified ms. 68 as the model for the copy of ms. 442, when it was still possible to consult the Madrid codex. Of no less meaning was Delitzsch's acknowledging of the lack of any known sources for the Complutensian text of the books printed in volume IV, what led him to suggest the use of ms. 442 as the main (and, as far as he could know, the only²⁹) source for the text of Maccabees.

The final recovering of the text preserved in ms. 442 is able of (and already is) revealing exactly in what measure was that codex used by the Complutensian editors. Aiming to offer a sample of such an investigation, F. G. Hernández Muñoz (2020a) collated portions of text from volumes II, III, and IV, with very interesting conclusions relating the use of ms. 442 and, moreover, some textual connections between the *Polyglot* and the Aldine that might have their explanation in that manuscript.

As for volume IV of the *Polyglot* (colophon 10 June 1517), the monograph of O'Connell (2006) says very few on its Greek sources, as he was not able to collate ms. 442, still being repaired³⁰. It goes back to the research previously done on the Greek text of Twelve Prophets (Revilla Rico 1917: 103; Ziegler 1944: 297–310; Fernández Marcos 1979, 2009, and 2014), stressing the inclusion of very old readings (possibly came from *hexaplaría*) and the use of codices yet to identify. In the aforementioned study of Hernández Muñoz (2020a: 242–246), the collation of book 3 of Maccabees showed that the *Polyglot* version (and sometimes also the Aldine) agrees with ms. 442 *post correctionem*, i.e. *post Musurum*—even if, at several points, the edited text seems to be the result of the editor's

be an Aldine trilingual Bible, dated almost for sure of 1501, that never came to light. See Martins de Jesus 2022.

²⁹ Hernández Muñoz 2020b: 255, n. 28 suggested the possibility, to be tested by further collation, that also ms. 671 (Vat. gr. 348) had been borrowed by Cisneros from Rome, as this codex, that transmits only the books of Maccabees, seems to share meaningful readings with the Complutensian text.

³⁰ Above, n. 7. It is nevertheless surprising that the author is unaware of the 58 folia of the first stage of restoration, he that, in relation to other volumes, hypothesized the readings of ms. 442 via its model, ms. 68, and mentioned more than once the work of Fernández Marcos 2005.

creative work, the so-called *Complutensian Greek*. That, or we must still consider the use of other so-far unidentified codices.

The on-going work of textual collation has been confirming the use of ms. 442 also in the case of the books published in volume III of the *Polyglot*. Hernández Muñoz (2020a: 238–241), after collating the beginning of Judith, concludes that the preferred reading is actually the one given by ms. 248 (Vat. gr. 346), even if, when there is a discrepancy, the editors followed the reading of ms. 442, not ms. 108 (Vat. gr. 330), the other codex lent by the Pope, that also transmits the book of Judith. And I was able to confirm directly (Martins de Jesus 2020a: 733–734), now that the codex is available, O’Connell’s suspicions of the influence of ms. 442, namely in some *loci* from the books of Wisdom (O’Connell 2006: 142–143), Tobit, Judith, and Esther (O’Connell 2006: 131–132)³¹.

A separated commentary is required by the book of Psalms, also edited in vol. III, as much as its manuscript Greek sources are concerned. It has been a *locus communis* to accept the exclusive use of ms. 1670 (Madrid, BH UCM 23, early sixteenth century)³². But the codex, that T. Martínez Manzano (2021: 318) convincingly hypothesizes to have been brought from Venice by Demetrius Ducas, is no longer sufficient for the source of the Complutensian Psalms. First, it lacks a line (Ps 138.23) edited both in the *Polyglot* and the Aldine (Hernández Muñoz 2020a: 138, n. 30); furthermore, ms. 1670 shows other textual discrepancies with the Complutensian edition (detected by O’Connell 2006: 136–138), which again Martínez Manzano (2021: 320–321) was able to trace in the incunable BH I-281, a specimen of the Aldine *Psalterium*, edited ca. 1496–1498³³. If this is truth, as it seems, we stand in face of yet another material example of the Venetian-Alcalá collaboration, with Demetrius Ducas as the main agent, but also an example of the use of printed sources (not only manuscript ones) in the early sixteenth century.

From the Complutensian Greek text of volume II, in 1917 Revilla Rico

³¹In a very interesting case (surely one among many others), what O’Connell considered an editorial correction, the text gets a material testimony in ms. 442: Jdt 4.3 *συνελέλεκτο* (Ald., *Polygl.*, ms. 442), *συνέλεκτο* (sic) ms. 248.

³²De Andrés 1974: 230–232; Domingo Malvadi 2014: 278–280; Martínez Manzano 2019.

³³The author noticed, after the colophon in the last folium (fol. [150]r), that someone wrote the date M.IIID (1497), suggesting as its author the very Demetrius Ducas, Aldus’ collaborator by those years that might have witnessed the publishing of the *Psalterium*. This would ultimately provide a concrete date to the Aldine *Psalterium*, normally dated ca. 1496–1498. As I write these pages, I am aware of a full on-going collation of the text of Psalms in the *Polyglot*, ms. 1670, the Aldine *Psalterium*, and another edition, the one by Alexander, the Cretan (1486 = incunable BH I-280), that might also have been available for the Complutensian editors.

published the collation of a small excerpt (2Reg 23.1b–5e) and concluded the influence of both mss. 108 and 442, besides some personal corrections apparently close to the Hebrew text (Revilla Rico 1917: 95–111). And very recently Hernández Muñoz (2020a: 233–234) subscribed the same opinion, by working with the book of Judges and detecting several discrepancies in relation to ms. 108, the Vatican codex preferably used, that now manage to have a source in ms. 442. In a wider context, the same author (Hernández Muñoz 2020a: 232, n. 29) dismisses ms. 56 (Paris, BNF, gr. 3) as the main source of the Complutensian *Septuagint*, as once pretended by Margolis (1931)³⁴.

3. Conclusions

Both the ancient and recent history of ms. 442, from its composition in Venice in a still undefined date until its almost full destruction during the Spanish Civil War, after 400 years quietly resting in the old Alcalá, means a lot for textual critics, paleographers, and historians of the book and the libraries. As we have just seen, the latest data and on-going researches tend to relate it to the Aldine Biblical process, as Musurus' deep work of revision upon it cannot be understood otherwise.

Much work is to be done. A closer paleographical analysis of the remains of the codex, attentive to its several hands, *marginalia*, corrections, chapter numerations, inks, and other marks, must be able to provide new conclusions. At a textual level, the direct collation of the entire text within the best-preserved books (2 Chronicles, Proverbs, 1–3 Esdras, Esther, and Wisdom) shall provide new information on the issue of both the Complutensian and the Aldine *Septuagint*, as it illuminates the very nature of the Complutensian text, its collaborators and the way they worked. After all, the world gained much more than yet a new parchment of the Greek Bible; it gained a material testimony of the two greatest editorial monuments of the early-sixteenth century, capable of increasing our knowledge on the editorial (globally, cultural) intercommunication between Venice and Alcalá.

³⁴ *Non vidi*. Apud O'Connell 2006: 15 n. 15, 78–80; Fernández Marcos 2014: 132–133; Gil Fernández 2015: 294.

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