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## P.Vindob. G 26079: A Parchment Codex Fragment of LXX *Ecclesiastes* 1:14-17<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

Edition of a fifth-century fragment of a small parchment codex that contained (at least) the book of *Ecclesiastes* in Greek.

This triangular fragment (H x W = 4.5 x 3.5 cm) preserves the top corner of a page from a small parchment codex that contained the book of *Ecclesiastes*.<sup>2</sup> On the front side (hair side) the upper outside corner of the page is missing with the tear running diagonally from this corner down to the left margin about two thirds of the way down the page. No pagination can be detected on the front side of the fragment, although it is possible that it was placed in the upper outside corner that is missing. On the back side (flesh side) of the fragment in the upper inside corner an η is readily visible above the first line of text. Given its placement in the interior margin it is unlikely that it represents the page number since pagination was usually placed either in the center or outside edge of the upper margin.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore more likely that the η represents the quire number since such “gathering numbers” were placed in the upper inside margin.<sup>4</sup> However, given that most remains of miniature Greek codices

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<sup>1</sup> I studied the fragment from photos during the Papyrological Summer Institute at the University of Cincinnati in 2005. I would like to thank Dr. Cornelia Römer for looking at the original and providing help with the transcription.

<sup>2</sup> It was acquired by the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in 1881-1884.

<sup>3</sup> E.G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia 1977) 76-77. For a paginated fragment of a miniature codex of 6 *Ezra* with accompanying discussion of the page numbering see *P.Oxy.* 7.1010 (IV AD). In this fragment, the pagination is placed in the center of the upper margin and contains a supralinear stroke. If the η on the back side of the present fragment represents the page number it would mean that the preceding seven pages contained the first fifteen verses of *Ecclesiastes*, which is not unrealistic given that the codex appears to have contained about two verses per page.

<sup>4</sup> Turner (n. 3) 77-78. He notes that in instances where quire numbers are placed in the upper inside margins they may be accompanied by page numbers, which usually tend

are extremely fragmentary, only rarely containing more than just a fragment, page, or double page, generalizing about pagination and quire numbering is very speculative.

There are no signs of rulings or prickings on the fragment and the writing on the hair side of the fragment is quite worn and less discernible than the writing on the flesh side. For the most part the letters are formed regularly and written with a clear uncial hand, although in some cases the respective sizes of the letters vary at the end of a line. The letters are round and upright and appear to constitute a late form of biblical uncial. The hand is not earlier than Siniaticus or Vaticanus (ca. AD 350) and probably not later than the Vienna Dioscurides (ca. 513).<sup>5</sup> While it is difficult to assign a precise date to this fragment, given that certain letters display signs of transformation common in the fifth century – the diagonal strokes of Δ, K, M, Y, are conspicuously thicker than in other letters and decorative roundels appear at the ends of the cross bar on the T – a mid-fifth century date seems most probable.<sup>6</sup>

Another text from the Vienna collection that may have some bearing on the present fragment is P.Vindob. G 3077, which contains *Proverbs* 26:11, 17-18.<sup>7</sup> The handwriting on this fragment is remarkably similar, it comes from a small parchment codex, and it contains *eisthesis* (indentation) similar to that found in the present fragment. It has been dated to the mid-fifth century (ca. 475).<sup>8</sup> Despite the many similarities, which suggest that the two fragments may have come from the same codex (*Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* would have formed a nice pair), the writing on P.Vindob. G 3077 is slightly larger than the writing on the present fragment. This probably indicates that the two pieces did not actually come from the same codex, but it is possible that the present fragment has shrunk or that it came from the end of the codex or quire when the scribe knew he was running out of space and wrote in a smaller hand.

The average letter width in the fragment is 0.275 cm and the line spacing is consistent throughout at approximately 0.4 cm per line. The front side of

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to appear in the upper outside margin. If η is the gathering number and assuming that the codex was made up of *quaterniones*, then up to this point the codex contained some 128 pages (16 pages for every quire and at least 8 sets of quires). This would mean that some other work(s) preceded *Ecclesiastes* in this codex. For gathering arrangements in codices see Turner (n. 3) 55-66.

<sup>5</sup> G. Cavallo and H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period* (London 1987) no. 25b; G. Cavallo, *Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica* (Firenze 1967) 76-84.

<sup>6</sup> Cavallo and Maehler (n. 5) nos. 18ab and 24abc.

<sup>7</sup> P.Vindob. G 3077 = *MPER* NS 4.25.

<sup>8</sup> P. Orsini, *Manoscritti in maiuscola biblica. Materiali per un aggiornamento* (Cassino 2005) 255 (illustrated on Tav. XVII).

the fragment likely contained about 12 lines based on a reconstruction of the missing text between front and back side of the fragment. The left margin is periodically indented with short lines preceding full lines that mark the beginning of a verse or half verse. The same phrasing is also attested in a papyrus codex of the third century that contains the entire book of *Ecclesiastes*.<sup>9</sup> The top margin of the fragment is 1 cm and side margins 0.5 cm, so that the dimensions of the codex may have been approximately 7.5 cm x 5 cm. These dimensions place this codex within Turner's Group XIV of miniature parchment codices, where the closest parallel in size is *P.Mich.* 3.132 (*Psalms*, V AD?).<sup>10</sup> Given its very small size it is likely that this codex was manufactured and employed primarily for private reading.<sup>11</sup>

That this *Ecclesiastes* fragment is of Christian, and not Jewish, provenance, is confirmed by the occurrence of a *nomen sacrum* – apart from the fact that it is written on a codex and not on a roll. In ll. 1 on the front of the fragment the *nomen sacrum* for πνεῦμα (πνς) occurs. In ll. 3-4 on the back of the fragment the first and last two letters of the word “Jerusalem” are preserved with a lacuna in the middle; however, no supralinear stroke can be detected and based on the spacing of the lacuna it appears that the word was written out in full.<sup>12</sup>

The extant text of *Ecclesiastes* 1:14-17 preserved on the fragment accords with Rahlfs' edition of the LXX with no apparent text critical problems.<sup>13</sup> Line 1 on the front side preserves the last part of v. 14 and begins in the middle of προαίρεσις. Verse 15 then occupies most of the front side, and on the final line the first two letters of the first word in v. 16 are visible. While the first half of this verse is largely missing, the second half begins on the back of the fragment. In the final line on the back only one letter from v. 17 is visible.

<sup>9</sup> B.J. Diebner and R. Kasser, *Hamburger Papyrus Bil. 1* (Genève 1989). In this text two horizontal strokes (=) are typically inserted between words where the verse and half verse occurs.

<sup>10</sup> Turner (n. 3) 29-30.

<sup>11</sup> L.W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids 2006) 155-165; H.A. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven 1995) 231-237 (especially 236).

<sup>12</sup> In the Hamburg papyrus edited by Diebner and Kasser (n. 9), “Jerusalem” is contracted in *Ecclesiastes* 1:16. J. O'Callaghan, *Nomina Sacra in Papyris Graecis Saeculi III Neotestamentariis* (Rome 1970) 28-31, 48, notes that the word “Jerusalem” is peculiar and is abbreviated on some occasions but not on others.

<sup>13</sup> The Hamburg papyrus edited by Diebner and Kasser (n. 9), which was not used in Rahlfs' edition, contains no differences and agrees with the text of the present fragment.

Provenance unknown

Mid-V AD

Hair side

- αιρεσις π̄νς [ vacat ]  
 διεστραμμε[νον ου]  
 δυνησε[ται του επι-]  
 κοσμη[θηναι]  
 5 και υστ[ερημα ου δ-]  
 ηνη[σεται? του]  
 [αριθμηθηναι]  
 ελ[αλησα vacat ]  
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1:14

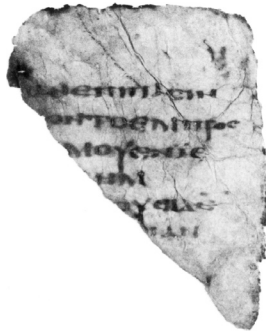
1:15

1:16

5-6 δυνήσεται (but note the odd hyphenation)

Flesh side

- η  
 [σοφ]ιαν επι πασιν  
 [οι εγε]γοντο εμπροσ-  
 [θεν ] μου εν ιε-  
 [ρουσαλ]ημ  
 5 [και καρδια μ]ου ειδε(ν)  
 [πολλα σο]φιαν  
 [και γνωσιν]  
 [και εδωκα καρδια]ν  
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1:17

5 ειδῆ Perg.