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Matthieu Richelle

The Relevance of the Septuagint for Reconstructing the History of Ancient Israel

Most of the handbooks and reference works on the history of ancient Israel refer to the Septuagint only occasionally;¹ some of them never do. Their reconstruction of the events and of their sequence is almost exclusively based on the Masoretic text. And yet, the renewal of Septuagint studies in the last decades has shown that the Greek text quite often preserves an older stage of the transmission of biblical books than the MT. In the past, many exegetes were inclined to regard the diverging readings of the LXX as stemming from the liberty taken by the translators, but now, thanks in particular to the discoveries of the Judean desert, it is clear that a significant part of these readings faithfully reflects the Hebrew *Vorlage*. Hence the question: what difference does the LXX make to the biblical books as historical sources, at least at the level of their historical claims? Of course, taken as a corpus, the Septuagint includes books that are absent from the Jewish canon and prove to be important historical sources: this is obviously the case for 1 and 2 Maccabees and the Hellenistic period. But this paper will focus on the books that are present both in the MT and the LXX. To what extent do the numerous differences between the Hebrew and the Greek texts affect the historical information they convey? In order to give an idea of the potential ramifications of this question, this article will explore two situations:

– first, the “routine” textual variants, which concern only isolated words: this will be illustrated by differences in ancient names;

¹ E.g. J. ALBERTO SOGGIN, *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah*, trans. John Bowden, London, 1993; LESTER L. GRABBE, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, vol. 1: *Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah* (Library of Second Temple Studies 47), London/New York, 2004; J. MAXWELL MILLER, JOHN H. HAYES, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, London, 2006; ISRAEL FINKELSTEIN, NEIL ASHER SILBERMAN, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origins of Its Sacred Texts*, New York/London/Toronto, 2002; LESTER L. GRABBE, *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?*, London, 2007; MARIO LIVERANI, *Israel's History and the History of Israel*, trans. Chiara Peri and Philip R. Davies, Sheffield, 2005.

– second, the situation where we observe a web of textual divergences scattered in a passage which has been reworked in a textual tradition; it sometimes leads to a significantly different portrayal of the role played by a historical character in an important event.

It is necessary to emphasize that no attempt will be made here to assess the historicity of the events in question; the aim of this contribution is only to point out cases where the historical claims of the biblical writers are affected by textual criticism.

1. Preservation of names

The first area we are exploring is also the less spectacular, but it is very important for historical geography and may also have an impact on the identification of ancient historical characters. Indeed, the Septuagint sometimes preserves proper names better than the MT. This may concern notably anthroponyms, theonyms and toponyms, and this occurs in at least three cases: when the name has been altered in Hebrew due to a corruption or confusion during the textual transmission; when the Greek preserves an older vocalization²; when a name has been deliberately modified for theological reasons.

1.1. *Toponyms and historical geography*

Let us begin with toponyms and a very simple example:

Genesis 10,4

וּבְנֵי יָוֵן אֵלִישָׁה וְתַרְשִׁישׁ כְּתִים וְדָדָיִם

The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim (NRSV)

καὶ υἱοὶ Ἰωῶαν Ἐλίσσα καὶ Θαρσίς Κίτιοι Ῥόδιοι

Since this verse mentions people from the Aegean world, it is generally accepted that the last in the list is not the Dodanim (MT) but the Rodanim (hence the correction in the NRSV), i.e. the inhabitants of Rhodes. The confusion between D and R is frequent in the transmission of the Hebrew text, because these letters were virtually impossible to distinguish in the square script, and easily confused in Palaeo-Hebrew³. Here the Septuagint (Ῥόδιοι) reflects the correct name.

² See JAN JOOSTEN, “The Tiberian Vocalization and the edition of the Hebrew Bible Text,” in Innocent Himbaza (ed.), *Making the Biblical Text: Textual Studies in the Hebrew and the Greek Bible* (OBO 275), Fribourg/Göttingen, 2015, 19–32, in particular 28.

³ Another example would be 1 Ch 4.39, with Gerar (LXX) instead of Gedor (cf. SOGIN, *Histoire d’Israël et de Juda*, 296).

Of course the same situation also occurs the other way around, that is, the Septuagint sometimes translates (or transliterates) a Hebrew name which has been corrupted due to the same kind of palaeographical confusion:

2 Kings 23,33

יֹאסֶרְהוּ פָּרְעָה נָכַח בְּרִבְלָה בְּאֶרֶץ חֲמַת מִמְּלֹךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם וַיִּתֶּן-עָנֹשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ מָאָה
כֶּכֶר-כֶּסֶף וְכֶכֶר זָהָב

Pharaoh Neco confined him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and imposed tribute on the land of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. (NRSV)

Here the LXX^L mentions Δεβλαθα, but this is most probably a mistake, because the city is almost certainly Riblah, a city in the south of the kingdom of Hamath that is well known (LXX^B Αβλαα is corrupted).

In such cases, however, a modern scholar could have corrected the text without the help of the witness that exhibits the correct reading, because the confusion D/R is a well-known phenomenon in Hebrew epigraphy. There exists more interesting situations, however, as in the following verse:

2 Kings 15,16

אֲזַי יְבֵה־מִנְחָם אֶת-תִּפְסַח וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-בָּהּ וְאֶת-גְּבוּלֶיהָ מִתִּרְצָה כִּי לֹא פָתַח וַיֵּךְ אֶת
כָּל-הָהָרֹתִיָּהּ בַּקֶּטֶעַ

At that time Menahem sacked Tiphseh, all who were in it and its territory from Tirzah on; because they did not open it to him, he sacked it. He ripped open all the pregnant women in it. (NRSV)

According to the MT, Menahem sacked Tiphseh, a city located on the Euphrates. In the LXX^L, the city attacked by Menahem is Ταφωε, which most probably reflects a Hebrew תפוח. This town, mentioned five times in the book of Joshua (12,17; 15,34, 53; 17, 7–8), lies at the limit between the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh. In the LXX^B, the city is Θερσα, that is Tirzah, but this is clearly an assimilation due the other occurrence of this word in the same verse.

In the view of historians, it is unlikely that Menahem ever attacked a city situated on the Euphrates. Of course, one could object that the author may have made a mistake and that it is not a reason to correct the text. Also, Dubovsky prefers the MT reading because it is the *lectio difficilior*⁴. But there are times when a reading is not only *difficilior* but also so unlike-

⁴ PETER DUBOVSKY, "Menahm's Reign Before the Assyrian Invasion", in DAVID. S. VANDERHOOF, ABRAHAM WINITZER (eds.), *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, Winona Lake, 2013, 29–45.

ly that it could hardly have been the earliest text. Here, the immediate context (“and its territory from Tirzah on”) makes it clear that the author of this verse located the city in the Northern Kingdom. It is true that some exegetes have tried to understand מִתְרָצָה differently, but these attempts do not seem convincing. Klostermann translates the verse as follows: “Damals schlug Menahem Tappuah und ihr Gebiet, darum dass sie ihm, als er von Thirza kam, nicht aufgethan hatten”⁵, but this involves changing the sequence of words without any witness to substantiate this hypothesis. Becking tentatively and cautiously suggests that מִתְרָצָה means “more than Tirzah” or “because of Tirzah”. This would allude to the siege of Tirzah by Omri, as related in 1 Kgs 16,17–19⁶. In my view, this is improbable.

In fact, in the consonantal Hebrew text, the difference between תפוח and תפסח rests on a single letter, so it is not difficult to imagine that a confusion has occurred, perhaps because a scroll was damaged and/or because a copist had the mention of תפסח in 1 Kgs 5,4 in memory (whereas the sole other occurrences of תפוח are in Joshua). As a result, there are good reasons to think, with some commentators⁷, that the Septuagint preserves a better text here, which is also historically plausible.

1.2. Personal names and prosopography

What is true of toponyms is also true of anthroponyms, and it has already been demonstrated by some scholars that the Greek text preserves here and there a better form of some personal names⁸. Here I will give an example where the situation is more subtle.

Jeremiah 40, 14

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הֲיָדַעַתְּ דָּעַ כִּי בַעַלְיִם מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן שָׁלַח אֶת־יִשְׁמַעְיָאֵל בֶּן־נַתַנְיָה לְהַכּוֹתָךְ
נָפֶשׁ וְלֹא־הֶאֱמִין לָהֶם גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם

(...) and said to him, "Are you at all aware that Baalis king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to take your life?" But Gedaliah son of Ahikam would not believe them. (NRSV)

⁵ AUGUST KLOSTERMANN, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige* (KKHSAT 3), Nördlingen, 1887, 445.

⁶ BOB BECKING, “Menachem’s Massacre of Tiphshah: At the Crossroads of Grammar and Memory (2 Kings 15:16)”, in Ian Douglas Wilson/Diana V. Edelman (eds.), *History, Memory, Hebrew Scriptures: A Festschrift für Ehud Ben Zvi*, Winona Lake, 2015, 15–23.

⁷ E.g. already OTTO THENIUS, *Die Bücher der Könige* (KHAT), Leipzig, 1873; KLOSTERMANN, *Die Bücher Samuelis und der Könige*, 445. This reading is also accepted in some modern translations of the Bible (Pléiade, Bible de Jérusalem).

⁸ WILLIAM E. STAPLES, “The Hebrew of the Septuagint”, *AJSL* 44 (1927), 6–30, in particular 8; ANSON F. RAINEY, SHMUEL AHITUV, R. STEVEN NOTLEY, *The Sacred Bridge*, Jerusalem, 2014, 163.

The name Baalis (בַּעְלִיִּס) is puzzling, because at first glance it does not seem to be based on a Semitic root. However, an Ammonite seal bearing the legend MLKM'WR 'BD B'LYŠ' has been discovered at Tell el-'Umeyri in 1984 (it was found on the surface of the site)⁹. It is tempting to regard the possessor of this object, Milkom'ur, as an official of "Baalis king of the Ammonites" mentioned in the biblical text. A date in the 6th century fits the palaeography of this inscription, and as far as we know, when somebody bears the title "servant of X" on such a seal, X is always a king. On another seal¹⁰, the same name seems to appear, followed by the title MLK, but the end of the name is broken; it is possible that the 'ayin was present: B'LYŠ[.]. However, this latter seal is unprovenanced, so its authenticity is uncertain.

Although there is some discussion about the correspondence between Š on the seal and S in the biblical text, the identification is generally accepted¹¹. However, the absence of a final 'ayin in בַּעְלִיִּס seems to be a serious obstacle. It has been suggested that it is a case of deliberate mutilation of a personal name¹², but this is hardly convincing¹³. More to the point, in the Greek form of the name as encountered in the Septuagint, Βελισα, the last vowel may be a trace of the original presence of the letter 'ayin¹⁴. In this case, the LXX seems to provide a missing link which enables us to confirm an identification between two personal names, with an important implication in terms of prosopography.

⁹ WALTER E. AUFRECHT, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions*, Lewinston, 1989 (No 129); NAHMAN AVIGAD, BENJAMIN SASS, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals*, Jerusalem, 1997, 322 (No 860); HEINRICH HÜBNER, *Die Ammoniter: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Religion eines Transjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (ADPB 16), Wiesbaden, 86–87 (No 88).

¹⁰ ROBERT DEUTSCH, "Seal of Ba'alīs Surfaces: Ammonite King Plotted Murder of Juhadite Governor", *BAR* 25/2 (1999), 46–49.

¹¹ RONALD S. HENDEL, "Sibilants and Šibboleth", *BASOR* 301 (1996), 71; YIGAL BLOCH, "On Some Alleged Developments of the Proto-Semitic Phoneme /t/ in Iron Age Canaanite Dialects", *JSS* 53 (2008), 5, 8–9.

¹² WILLIAM H. SHEA, "Mutilation of Foreign Names by Bible Writers: A Possible Example From Tell El-Umeiri", *AUSS* 23 (1985), 111–115.

¹³ LARRY G. HERR, "Is the Spelling of 'Baalīs' in Jeremiah 40,14 a Mutilation?", *AUSS* 23 (1985), 187–191.

¹⁴ RAINEY, AHITUV, NOTLEY, *The Sacred Bridge*, 268; BLOCH, "On Some Alleged Developments of the Proto-Semitic Phoneme /t/ in Iron Age Canaanite Dialects", 5, note 10.

2. The depiction of role played by historical characters

A more impressive situation where it is worth taking into account the Septuagint is the representation of well-known historical characters, notably because they are liable to inflation: some of them may be glorified, others could serve as scapegoats, or be rehabilitated.

2.1 Solomon

A case in point is Solomon. Today, many historians regard the biblical account of this reign as heavily exaggerated, especially in view of the revision of the chronology of Iron Age IIA put forward by Finkelstein: according to this hypothesis, the remains traditionally attributed to his reign date, in reality, from the time of the Omrides (9th century B.C.E.) This debate is far from over, but what is striking is that the main participants are basing their ideas on the MT, whereas the proponents of a less impressive historical assessment of Solomon’s reign could fuel their arguments on the more modest portrayal of the son of David that appears in the Septuagint. Indeed, a comparison between the MT and the LXX^B in 1 Kgs 4,20–27 demonstrates that the former contains a series of plusses that enhance his prestige. They concern three aspects of his reign: the “quality of life” for the Israelites under Solomon (4,20 and 25 MT); the extent of the domination of this king on the southern Levant (4,21 and 24b); the number of horses and chariots (4,26 MT).

1 Kgs 4,20–5,7 (MT)	1 Kgs 4,20–27 (NRSV)	3 Kgdms 4,20–5,4 (NETS)	3 Kgdms 4,20–5,4 (LXX ^B)
		<i>5,1 And thus the officials would supply provisions for King Solomon and everything considered for the table of the king, each one in his month, they did not alter a thing,</i>	καὶ ἐχορήγουν οἱ καθεσταμένοι οὕτως τῷ βασιλεῖ Σαλωμων καὶ πάντα τὰ διαγγέλματα ἐπὶ τὴν τράπεζαν τοῦ βασιλέως ἕκαστος μῆνα αὐτοῦ οὐ παραλλάσσουν λόγον
		<i>and they also used to bring to the place where the king might be barley and straw for the horses and the chariots,</i>	καὶ τὰς κριθὰς καὶ τὸ ἄχυρον τοῖς ἵπποις καὶ τοῖς ἄρμασιν ἤρον εἰς τὸν τόπον οὗ ἂν ᾗ ὁ βασιλεύς

1 Kgs 4,20–5,7 (MT)	1 Kgs 4,20–27 (NRSV)	3 Kgdms 4,20–5,4 (NETS)	3 Kgdms 4,20–5,4 (LXX ^B)
		<i>each according to his charge.</i>	ἕκαστος κατὰ τὴν σύνταξιν αὐτοῦ
²⁰ יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל רַבִּים כְּחֹל אֲשֶׁר-עַל-הַיָּם לָרֹב אָכְלִים וְשָׂתִים וְשִׂמְחִים 5:1 וְשֹׁלְמָה הָיָה מוֹשֵׁל בְּכָל-הַמְּמָלְכוֹת מִן-הַנָּהָר אֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים וְעַד גְּבוּל מִצְרַיִם מִגִּשְׁיִם מִנְחָה וְעֹבְדִים אֶת-שֹׁלְמָה כָּל-יְמֵי חַיָּיו	²⁰ Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy. ²¹ Solomon was sovereign over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, even to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.		
²² וַיְהִי לְחֶם-שֹׁלְמָה לְיוֹם אֶחָד שְׁלֹשִׁים כֹּר סֹלֶת וְשֵׁשִׁים כֹּר קֶמַח ³ עֶשְׂרֵה בָקָר בְּרֵאִים וְעֶשְׂרִים בָּקָר רְעִי וּמֵאָה צֹאן לְבָד מֵאֵיל וְצִבִּי וַיְחַמֹּר וּבְרֵבִרִים אֲבוּסִים	²² Solomon's provi- sion for one day was thirty cors of choice flour, and sixty cors of meal, ²³ ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.	5,2 And these were Salomon's provisions for one day: thirty kors of choice flour and sixty kors of ground meal, 5,3 and ten choice calves and twenty pasture-fed oxen and one hundred sheep, besides deer and gazelles and choice birds, grain fed.	² καὶ ταῦτα τὰ δέοντα τῷ Σαλωμων ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ τριάκοντα κόροι σεμιδάλεως καὶ ἑξήκοντα κόροι ἀλεύρου κεκοπανισμένου ³ καὶ δέκα μόσχοι ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ εἴκοσι βόες νομάδες καὶ ἐκατὸν πρόβατα ἐκτὸς ἐλάφων καὶ δορκάδων καὶ ὀρνίθων ἐκλεκτῶν σιτευτά
⁴ כִּי-הָיָה רֹדֶה בְּכָל-עֵבֶר הַנָּהָר מִתִּפְסַח וְעַד-עֶזְהָה בְּכָל-מַלְכֵי עֵבֶר הַנָּהָר	²⁴ For he had do- minion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphra- tes;	5,4 For he was ruler across the river,	⁴ ὅτι ἦν ἄρχων πέραν τοῦ ποταμοῦ

1 Kgs 4,20–5,7 (MT)	1 Kgs 4,20–27 (NRSV)	3 Kgdms 4,20– 5,4 (NETS)	3 Kgdms 4,20–5,4 (LXX ^B)
וְשָׁלוֹם הָיָה לוֹ מִכָּל-עֲבָרָיו מִסָּבִיב	and he had peace on all sides.	And he was at peace on all sides round about.	καὶ ἦν αὐτῷ εἰρήνη ἐκ πάντων τῶν μερῶν κυκλόθεν
וַיָּשֶׁב יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְבֶטַח אִישׁ תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְתַחַת תְּאֵנָתוֹ מִדָּן וְעַד-בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע כָּל יְמֵי שְׁלֹמֹה ס וַיְהִי לְשְׁלֹמֹה ⁶ אַרְבַּעַיִם אֲלֶף אֲרוֹת סוּסִים לְמִרְכָּבוֹ וּשְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר אֲלֶף פָּרָשִׁים	²⁵ During Solo- mon's lifetime Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all of them under their vines and fig trees. ²⁶ Solomon also had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.		
וְכָל-כְּלוֹ הַנֶּצֱבִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶת-הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה וְאֵת כָּל-הַקָּרִב אֶל-שֻׁלְחָן הַמֶּלֶךְ-שְׁלֹמֹה אִישׁ חֹדֶשׁ לֹא יַעֲדְרוּ דָּבָר	²⁷ Those officials supplied provisions for King Solomon and for all who came to King Sol- omon's table, each one in his month; they let nothing be lacking.		

In particular, the description of Solomon’s regional domination in 5,1 MT has no counterpart in Greek, while 5,4 MT is reduced to a very simple statement in the LXX^B: “for he was a ruler beyond the river”.

How are we to explain all these differences? Of all the plusses contained in the MT, only one could be explained by accidental dropping of a clause: in 4,24 MT, “from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates” could have fallen due to the repetition of הַנָּהָר:

כִּי-הָיָה רֹדֶה בְּכָל-עֲבָר הַנָּהָר
מִתְּפֹסֶס וְעַד-עֶזְרָה בְּכָל-מַלְכֵי עֲבָר הַנָּהָר

It could also have happened in Greek if *πέραν τοῦ ποταμοῦ* was repeated. However, it is also possible to suspect that, on the contrary, this repetition marks the interpolation of the clause by *Wiederaufnahme*. This hypothesis

is rendered likely by the fact that the toponym Tiphshah does not seem attested prior to the Persian period¹⁵.

Generally speaking, it is difficult to imagine that a scribe would have transformed a glorious depiction of Solomon's reign into a sober one. In other words, it is far more likely that a shorter text, close to the *Vorlage* of the LXX, has been expanded in order to make Solomon's reign a golden age. Several considerations strengthen this hypothesis. First, the presence of the plusses creates an awkward separation between the list of officials (4,2–19) and the mention of their role in provisioning Solomon (4,26). Second, it is plausible that most of the additions made in this passage have been made at the same time, because they create a chiasmus:

A Happiness of Judah and Israel under Solomon (4,20)

B Regional domination of Solomon (4,21)

C Provisioning Solomon (4,22–23)

B' Regional domination of Solomon (4,24)

A' Happiness of Judah and Israel under Solomon (4,25)

Third, the tendency to make the reign of Solomon a golden age where Israelites were happy runs counter to the narrative logic of 1 Kgs 1–11, where this king is depicted rather as a Pharaoh-like tyrant, using his people as slaves for his building projects (see e.g. 5,13–16). Fourth, these plusses are absent from Chronicles.

In sum, this passage may well have been considerably augmented at some point in the Persian period or even later (Schenker thinks of the Hasmonean period, while I regard the Persian period as a more plausible *Sitz im Leben*, but it does not matter for the present discussion)¹⁶.

There is, however, a possible objection to this approach. Indeed, some of the verses that are unique to the MT in this passage do appear in the Septuagint, albeit elsewhere. This is the case, in particular, for the two verses that describe Solomon's regional domination. Thus 5,1 MT (ET 4,21) appears in a shorter form in 2,46b in the LXX^B (= 2,27 in the edition of LXX^L prepared by Fernandez Marcos and Busto Saiz), that is, in the Miscellanies:

καὶ Σαλωμων ἦν ἄρχων ἐν πάσαις ταῖς βασιλείαις καὶ ἦσαν προσφέροντες δῶρα καὶ ἐδούλευον τῷ Σαλωμων πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ

¹⁵ It is not attested in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian sources (RAINEY, AHITUV, NOTLEY, *The Sacred Bridge*, 164, 280) and, to the best of my knowledge, it appears for the first time in Xenophon's writings (WILLIAM S. W. VAUX, "Thapsacus", in William Smith [ed.], *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, London/New York, 2006, 1135).

¹⁶ For more details, see MATTHIEU RICHELLE, "Quel rôle a joué l'époque perse dans la diversification textuelle issue des livres des Rois?", *Transeuphratène* 49 (2017), forthcoming.

And Salomon was chief among all the kingdoms, and they were bringing gifts, and they were subject to Salomon all the days of his life. (NETS)

In addition, the first part of 5,1 MT also appears in the main text of the LXX^B, in 10,26 (= 10,30 in the edition of LXX^L prepared by Fernandez Marcos and Busto Saiz):

καὶ ἦν ἡγούμενος πάντων τῶν βασιλείων ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ καὶ ἕως γῆς ἀλλοφύλων καὶ ἕως ὁρίων Αἰγύπτου

Similarly, some form of 5,4 MT (ET 4,24) appears in 2,46f in the LXX^B:

ὅτι ἦν ἄρχων ἐν παντὶ πέραν τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἀπὸ Ραφὶ ἕως Γάζης ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν πέραν τοῦ ποταμοῦ

For he was chief everywhere across the river from Raphi to Gaza, among all the kings across the river. (NETS)

However, in the LXX^L it appears in a shorter form (2,31 in the edition prepared by Fernandez Marcos and Busto Saiz):

ὅτι ἦν ἄρχων ἐν παντὶ πέραν τοῦ ποταμοῦ

Regarding the Miscellanies, it is important to recall that their origins and their status in the textual history of the Books of Kings is much debated, although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this very difficult problem. It is possible to imagine that the Miscellanies result from the gathering of a choice of verses scattered in a form of the text similar to the MT. But according to a more attractive hypothesis defended by Treballe Barrera, it is the same material, originally absent from the Books of Kings, that has been dealt with differently: in LXX it appears as literary units in a few spots (mainly after 2,35 and 2,46), whereas in the MT it has been dispersed in many different places¹⁷. It is even possible that the Miscellanies were originally old and self-contained units; as pointed out by Piquer Otero¹⁸, they bear some resemblance to West-Semitic royal inscriptions in terms of contents and literary structure. In any case, this material seems to be secondary, and this is already an important information to take into account when discussing its historical value. In addition, this material may have been altered in the course of the textual history of the LXX. It is important to recall that the Greek witnesses attest two forms of the main verse about Solomon's regional domination (see just above), one which is "maximal-

¹⁷ JULIO TREBALLE BARRERA, "Kings (MT/LXX) and Chronicles: The Double and Triple Textual Tradition", in ROBERT REZETKO, TIMOTHY H. LIM AND W. BRIAN AUCKER (eds.), *Reflection and Refraction. Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (VTSup 113), Leiden/Boston, 2007, 497.

¹⁸ ANDRÉS PIQUER OTERO, "The Miscellanies of 3 Kgdms 2," in this volume pp. 273–287.

ist” about the extent of Solomon’s rule, the other “minimalist”. It seems plausible that the oldest tradition was the most “modest” one.

As for the parallel verse to 5,1 MT which appears in the main text of the LXX (3 Kgdms 10,26 in the LXX^B), there are at least two possibilities: (1) it may have been an integral part of a common ancestor to MT and LXX, that would have been subsequently moved to chapter 4 by a scribe behind the MT; (2) it may be a late addition to the LXX in chapter 10, made in light of the same material present in the Miscellanies. It is difficult to decide, but I think we should at least consider the possibility that it is a secondary material, especially since the Septuagint contains, again, a more modest description of Solomon’s rule. It is worth noting that Van Keulen thinks that the LXX has been expanded in chapter 10 in order to enhance the prestige of Solomon.¹⁹

To the very least, there is enough to raise doubts about the antiquity of the description of Solomon as it appears in all this material, and the main point is that this should be taken into account by historians.

2.2. Jeroboam and the Schism

Another important ruler in the overall perspective of the Books of Kings is Jeroboam I, because he is accused of having introduced the religious deviation that will ultimately lead to the end of the Northern Kingdom. The reader is constantly reminded that his successors continued in the same way, and the epilogue (2 Kgs 17) provides an etiology of the end of Israel based on this behavior. Although it goes beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the historicity of the United Monarchy and of the Schism, I would like to point out that in the Masoretic text, Jeroboam also bears the burden for the Schism, whereas it is not the case in the Septuagint.

1 Kgs 12 (MT)	1 Kgs 12 (NRSV)	3 Kgdms 12 (NETS)	3 Kgdms 12 (LXX ^B)
וַיִּשְׁכַּב שְׁלֹמֹה עִם־אֲבוֹתָיו וַיִּקְבֹּר בְּעִיר דָּוִד אָבִיו	⁴³ Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David;	And Salomon slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of his father David.	καὶ ἐκοιμήθη Σαλωμων μετὰ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔθαιψαν αὐτὸν ἐν πόλει Δαυιδ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ
		And it happened, when Ieroboam son of Nabat heard (and he was still in Egypt, since he fled	καὶ ἐγενήθη ὡς ἤκουσεν Ιεροβοαμ υἱὸς Ναβατ καὶ αὐτοῦ ἔτι ὄντος ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ὡς ἔφυγεν ἐκ

¹⁹ PERCY S. F. VAN KEULEN, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative: An Inquiry into the Relationship between MT 1 Kgs. 2–11 and LXX 3 Reg. 2–11* (VTSup 104), Leiden, 2005, 108–112.

1 Kgs 12 (MT)	1 Kgs 12 (NRSV)	3 Kgdms 12 (NETS)	3 Kgdms 12 (LXX ^B)
		<i>from before Salomon and settled in Egypt), he went straight and came to his city in the land of Sarira which is in the hill country of Ephraim.</i>	προσώπου Σαλωμων και ἐκάθητο ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ, κατευθύνει και ἔρχεται εἰς τὴν πόλιν αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν Σαριρα τὴν ἐν ὄρει Εφραιμ
וַיִּמְלֹךְ רְחֹבָם בְּנֵן תַּחְתָּיו	and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.	And King Salomon slept with his fathers, and his son Roboam ruled in his stead.	καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Σαλωμων ἐκοιμήθη μετὰ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν Ροβοαμ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἀντ' αὐτοῦ
וַיֵּלֶךְ רְחֹבָם שָׁכֵם כִּי שָׁכֵם בָּא כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַמְלִיךְ אֹתוֹ	1 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.	And King Roboam went to Sikima, for all Israel was coming to Sikima to make him king.	καὶ πορεύεται βασιλεὺς Ροβοαμ εἰς Σικιμα ὅτι εἰς Σικιμα ἤρχοντο πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ βασιλεῦσαι αὐτόν
² וַיְהִי כִשְׁמֹעַ יִרְבֵּעַם בֶּן־נֶבֶט וְהוּא עוֹדֵנוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר בָּרַח מִפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה וַיָּשָׁב יִרְבֵּעַם בְּמִצְרַיִם	² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt.		
³ וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ וַיִּקְרְאוּ־לוֹ (וַיְבֹאוּ) [וַיְבֹא] יִרְבֵּעַם וְכָל־קֹהֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּדְבֵּרוּ אֶל־רְחֹבָם לֵאמֹר	³ And they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam	And the people spoke to Roboam the king, saying	³ καὶ ἐλάλησεν ὁ λαὸς πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Ροβοαμ λέγοντες
¹² [וַיְבֹאוּ] יִרְבֵּעַם וְכָל־הָעָם אֶל־רְחֹבָם בְּיוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי	¹² So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day (...)	And all Israel came to King Roboam in the third day (...)	¹² καὶ παρεγένοντο πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Ροβοαμ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ (...)

1 Kgs 12 (MT)	1 Kgs 12 (NRSV)	3 Kgdms 12 (NETS)	3 Kgdms 12 (LXX ^B)
וַיְהִי כְּשָׁמַע כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־שָׁב יִרְבֹּעָם וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ וַיִּקְרְאוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל־הָעֵדָה וַיַּמְלִיכוּ אֹתוֹ עַל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא הָיָה אַחֲרָיו בֵּית־דָּוִד זֹלָתִי שְׁבַט־יְהוּדָה לְבָדוּ	²⁰ When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. There was no one who followed the house of David, except the tribe of Judah alone.	And it happened, when all Israel heard that Ieroboam had returned from Egypt, that they sent and called him to the gathering and made him king over Israel, and there was no one behind the house of David except the scepter of Ioudas and Benjamin alone.	²⁰ καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς ἤκουσεν πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ ὅτι ἀνέκαμψεν Ἰεροβοὰμ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου καὶ ἀπέστειλαν καὶ ἐκάλεσαν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ οὐκ ἦν ὀπίσω οἴκου Δαυὶδ πᾶρεξ σκήπτρου Ἰουδα καὶ Βενιαμὶν μόνοι

Several differences are worth noting (I am referring to the LXX^B, but the situation is the same in the LXX^L):

– First, 12,2 in the MT has its equivalent at the end of the previous chapter in the LXX^B, between the mention of the burial of Solomon and the mention of the accession of Roboam (11,43). As a result, in the MT it is the announcement of the assembly of Sichem and of the imminent crowning of Roboam that prompts Jeroboam to come back from Egypt. In the LXX, the reason is different: it is the death of Solomon.

– Second, there are two plusses in the MT involving Jeroboam: in 12,3, the people call him and he is present at the assembly of Sichem; in 12,12, he comes back with the people at the second session in Sichem. By consequence, Jeroboam is at the people's side during the assembly of Sichem, at the people's initiative; he is even mentioned first. This strongly suggests that he is a potential leader and alternative ruler.

These variants significantly affect the description of the involvement of Jeroboam in these events. In the LXX, Jeroboam comes back but plays no role at all in the revolt. At most, one could say that he makes himself "available" by being present in the country. In the MT, he comes back from Egypt because he hears about the Sichem assembly, and the fact that the people want him present during their negotiation with Roboam can hardly be innocent.

It is also important to note that there is a discrepancy in the MT between the plus of 12,3 and 12,20, because each verse claims that the people calls Jeroboam to the assembly, and in v. 20 the people seem to hear for the first time that Jeroboam is present in the country. In spite of Gooding's efforts

to find some coherence in the MT²⁰, most scholars recognize that there is a contradiction here²¹. Some exegetes also consider that the various mentions of Jeroboam are at odds with the verses where the people appear alone before Roboam (v. 5–7, 9, 10, 13, 16)²². Gooding argues that the mentions of Jeroboam have been removed in the LXX in order to suppress the tension²³. This is possible, but it would be very difficult to imagine that these mentions were present in the earliest redaction of the passage. Rather than imagining that the plusses have been added in the text and later removed in the LXX (or its *Vorlage*), it is simpler to think that they were never part of the latter.

In addition, there is a striking repetition in the LXX in 11,43.

And Salomon slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of his father David.

And it happened, when Ieroboam son of Nabat heard (and he was still in Egypt, since he fled from before Salomon and settled in Egypt), he went straight and came to his city in the land of Sarira which is in the hill country of Ephraim.

And King Salomon slept with his fathers, and his son Roboam ruled in his stead. (NETS)

This *Wiederaufnahme* can be interpreted in several ways. On the one hand, it could be the traces left by a scribe who displaced this material from 12,3 to 11,43 and marked by this repetition this insertion in a new context. On the other hand – and this is probably a more convincing explanation – it could mean that the LXX has kept the traces of the *earliest* insertion of this sentence in the Books of Kings by way of a *Wiederaufnahme*, a phenomenon already noted in the textual history of the Books of Kings²⁴. Still another possibility is that the interpolated material has been independently inserted in two different places in the LXX and the TM, and that the inser-

²⁰ DAVID W. GOODING, “The Septuagint’s Rival Versions of Jeroboam’s Rise to Power”, *VT* 17 (1967), 180–181.

²¹ JAMES A. MONTGOMERY, HENRY SNYDER GEHMAN, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings* (ICC), Edinburgh, 1951, 248; ERNST WÜRTHEIN, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11.2), Göttingen, 1984, 150. M. COGAN, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 10), New York, 2001, 353, regards v. 20 as independent from the previous narrative.

²² ZIPPORA TALSHIR, *The Alternative Story: 3 Kingdoms 12.24 A–Z* (Jerusalem Biblical Studies 6), Jerusalem, 1993, 227; BENJAMIN THOMAS, *Hezekiah and the Compositional History of the Books of Kings* (FAT II.63), Tübingen, 2014, p. 312.

²³ GOODING, “The Septuagint’s Rival Versions of Jeroboam’s Rise to Power”, 180.

²⁴ RICHELLE, “Revisiting 2 Kings 13.14–21 (MT and LXX): The Transposition of a Pericope and Multiple Literary Editions in 2 Kings”, in Himbaza (ed.), *Making the Biblical Text*, 72–73; ID., “Intentional Omissions in the Textual History of the Books of Kings: In Search of Methodological Criteria”, *Semitica* 58 (2016), 135–157, in particular 153–157.

tion in v. 2 in the MT has prompted the two plusses in v. 12 and 20²⁵. In any case, the tradition about Jeroboam's involvement in the Schism appears to be a secondary addition to the text.

Admittedly, the so-called Alternative Story, another version of the Schism which appears in chapter 12 in the Septuagint, claims that "Jeroboam went to Sikima which is in Mount Ephraim and gathered there the tribes of Israel" (3 Kgdms 12,24o in the LXX^B; 13, 14 in the edition of LXX^L prepared by Fernandez Marcos and Busto Saiz). But on the other hand, Jeroboam is absent from the rest of the narrative of the conflict between the people and Roboam. In fact, the Alternative Story may well be some sort of midrash²⁶.

All in all, it seems that in the earliest text we can reconstruct, Jeroboam did not played any direct role in the assembly of Sichem and is not regarded as responsible for the Schism, although it is clear that he is the first to benefit from it.

3. Conclusion

This article has pointed out two important areas where taking into account the Septuagint may affect the historical claims made by the biblical writers. With regard to the preservation of names, the Greek text sometimes reflects a more ancient form of anthroponyms or toponyms. While this may appear to concern only small details and discrete variants, it potentially affects the description of events, not least the location where they are supposed to have taken place, and the identification of some people. And yet, apart from works published in the field of historical geography, the Septuagint is far from being systematically checked when scholars work on primary sources for the history of ancient Israel. More impressive still is the difference that appear in some narratives, notably in the Books of Kings, when it comes to the portrayal of important characters. Tendencies to embellish or to degrade the representation of kings, for instance, are apparent in either the Masoretic text or the (*Vorlage* of) the Septuagint, depending on the case. Here again, we suggest that historians must take into account the diverse textual forms in which these narratives were transmitted. In particular, the Greek text of the Hebrew Bible may well yield new surprises.

²⁵ See FRANK UEBERSCHAER, *Vom Gründungsmythos zur Untergangssymphonie: Eine text- und literaturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1 Kön 11–14* (BZAW 481), Berlin/Boston, 2015, 70.

²⁶ As suggested by TALSHIR, *The Alternative Story*.