Targum Onkelos and Torah Scroll from the Collections of Francesco Petrarch: a Paleographic and Linguistic Background

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Abstract: This article contains a brief description of the Codex of Petrarch, which is located in the Czartoryski Library in Kraków. Preliminary analysis proves that the Codex comes from Italy or France. The Czartoryski family bought it in the nineteenth century. The Petrarch Codex contains two incomplete biblical books: Genesis 23:8 – Exodus 14:28, i.e. Hebrew text and Aramaic translation. The analysis is focused on three main aspects: historical, paleographical and linguistics. The detailed analysis proved that the Aramaic text was in some aspects very similar to Targum Onkelos, and in others it was very similar to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. Most importantly, the text contains an unknown version of Targum Onkelos. Therefore the article also shows morphological and grammatical differences between the official edition of the Targum Onkelos and the text.

The discovery of the manuscript

In autumn 2007, along with several scholars from the Jagiellonian University, I founded a research team to work on Hebrew manuscripts. One of the PhD students and I headed to the Department of Archives and Manuscripts collection of the Czartoryski Museum. We wanted to see and photograph scrolls in Hebrew that were to be researched by Prof. Judith Szlanger-Olszowy from Paris. We knew about the existence of a few Hebrew manuscripts, but we did not know their contents. The Head of Archives, Mr. Janusz Nowak, provided us with two out of seven Hebrew texts. These were the text of the Pentateuch in the form of a codex and the scroll of the Book of Esther. I am a specialist in ancient texts, and thus I was not interested in these two manuscripts at the time. Several years later the scroll of the Book of Esther was compiled by one of our PhD students as part of her doctoral dissertation.

It was not until the summer of 2014 that I was looking through one of the manuscripts and noticed that the frontispiece in the style of an incunabulum located in the outer part of the text of the codex contained the name *Hebraice Bibliae Fragmentum* in Latin, but the text was not one from the Hebrew Bible. The text began with Genesis 23.8 and contained alternating single sentences in Hebrew and Aramaic.
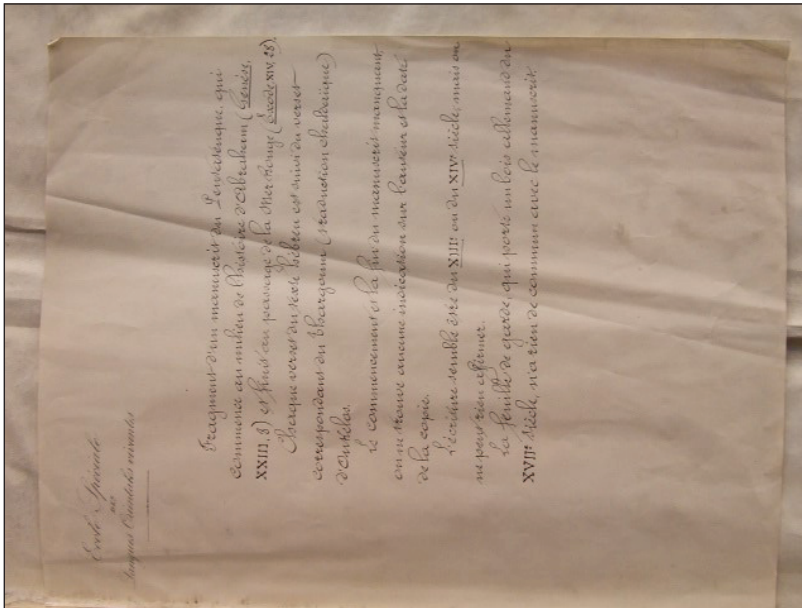
Fig. 2. Incunabula (Property of the XX. Czartoryski Foundation in Kraków)

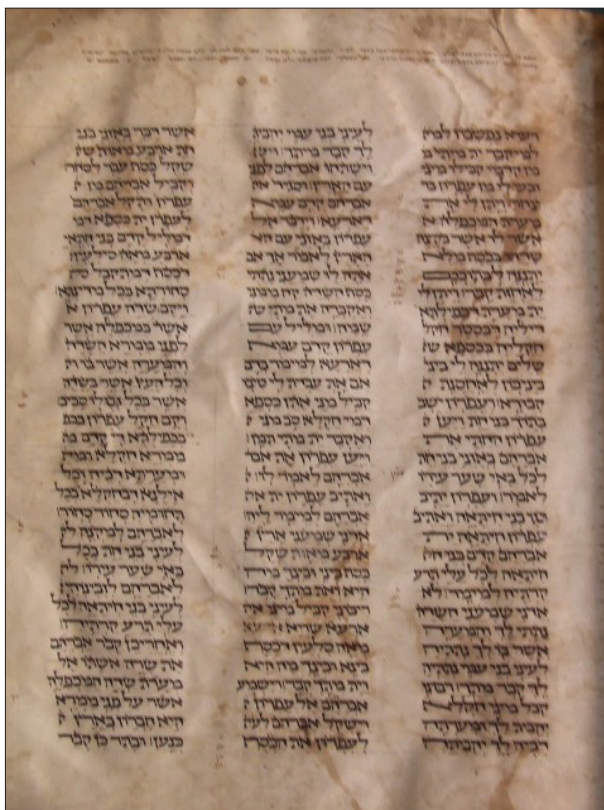**Fig. 1.** Alexander Chodźko opinion (Property of the XX. Czartoryski Foundation in Kraków)

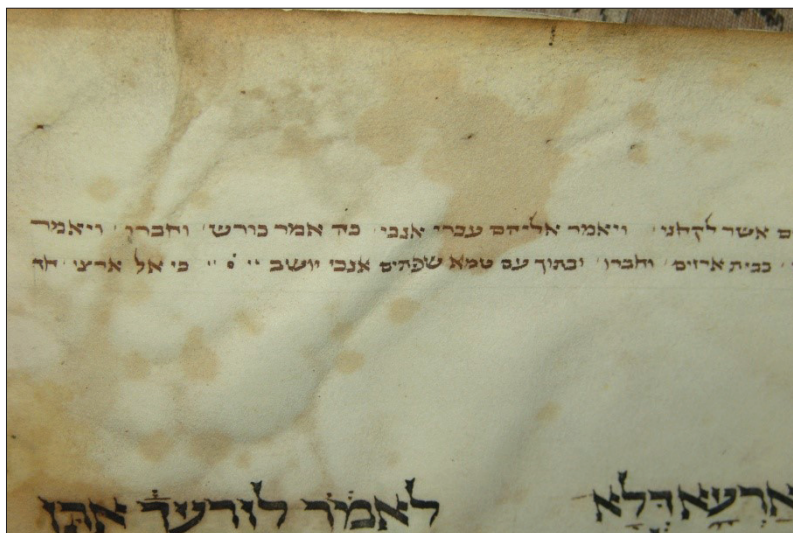**Fig. 3.** Genesis 23 (Property of the XX. Czartoryski Foundation in Kraków)

Fig. 4. Masorah magna and masorah parva details (Property of the XX. Czartoryski Foundation in Kraków)

My detailed analysis proved that the Aramaic text was in some places very similar to Targum Onkelos, and in others it was very similar to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.[1] The differences between "Petrarch's text" and the two Targums are so great that one should take a closer look at the translation of the Aramaic texts.

The appearance and content of the manuscript

The manuscript contains an incomplete text of the Torah, i.e. part of the Book of Genesis and part of Exodus, encompassing Genesis 23:8 – Exodus 14:28. It is a bilingual text, in Hebrew and in Aramaic, written by hand; first the sentence is written in Hebrew, then the same sentence is written in Aramaic.

The manuscript consists of 74 parchment cards, each about 55x25 cm in size, recorded on one side. The text was written in a three-column format; with each column 6 cm wide. The manuscript contains explicit marked interline spacing. The vertical spacing between each of the interlines is approx. 8-10 mm. The spacing between the margins of all the columns on the inner side is 3 cm. The letters are always written along the top line spacing.[2] The scribe did not divide the words. If there was no space left for the word, he wrote it again in the next line.

According to a description by Adam Homecki, an archivist at the Czartoryski Museum in 1986, "the manuscript is formed as a codex, with plates of the parchment framed in silk cloth stretched over boards."[3] This means that the cards were sewn and glued into the back of the cover. The text also contains a scribe's comments, i.e. the Masorah Magna and Masorah Parva. The Masorah Magna is subsequently entered at the top and bottom of each card, always written over the entire width of the page from the right to left margin, in both Hebrew and Aramaic. The Masorah Parva contains small remarks in the margins. These are usually other variants of the text or synonyms of words that are reported in the text. The manuscript is missing a colophon since a part of the text is missing. It can be assumed that the manuscript was already incomplete when the parchment cards were sewn together.[4]

Three columns of text, and the Masorah Magna and Masorah Parva in the upper and lower margins, indicate that we are dealing with the release of the Western Bible. Both are written in Aramaic.[5]

Therefore, it is impossible to determine the exact age of the manuscript, the place where it was written, and the identity of the scribe. In a conversation we had, Prof. Judyta Szlanger-Olszowy dated the manuscript to the thirteenth century. The manuscript is of Ashkenazi origin and may have come from southern Germany or northern Italy.[6]

Yet the title page contains a frontispiece in the style of an incunabulum which originally did not belong to the manuscript. It was added after 1500, as this type of matrix

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[1] Reif 1994, 30-50.
[2] See Sirat 2002, 55-57 – about Bible commentaries in Middle Ages.
[3] *Czartoryski Museum and Library* # 3156.
[4] See folding of paper sheets and vertical lines limiting short horizontal lines: Sirat 2002, 131.
[5] Sirat 2002, 44-45; cf. also Glazer 1988, 167-176.
[6] Yardeni 1997, 101-103.

was used regularly after that date.[7] The parchment card is slightly smaller and is made from skin that had been prepared at a different time and place. The frontispiece was created by using a matrix containing a medieval coat of arms of bishops. The matrix was stamped twice; hence its trace is on both sides of the recto-verso. On the verso we have only a trace of the matrix, and the recto has the Latin inscriptions *Hebraice Bibliae Fragmentum* in capital letters in red ink, and in the top part in capital letters in black ink *Neutro sed ad interna interni ornamenta* (without interior ornaments), as well as the text at the bottom – the most important *Fragmentum Bibliothcae Petrarchae*.

The codex contains another card, which is pasted in. It was written in French and it is possible that it belonged to its author or client, Aleksander Chodźko, an Orientalist and Slavist of the French Academy of Sciences who worked on it briefly in the nineteenth century. It includes expertise notes regarding the text's content. In it, Aramaic is called, in accordance with the then prevailing trends in terminology, the language of the Chaldeans.[8] It also contains the first scientific expertise known to us on the age of the manuscript, dating it to the thirteenth-fourteenth century. Chodźko stated that the manuscript arrived in France in the seventeenth century.

After the codex was taken to Kraków it was never investigated by scientists – until now, at least. This is indicated by the inaccurate description of it being in the collection as a "Fragment of the Pentateuch."

Hebrew & Aramaic interlinear editions of the Bible

Interlinear translation was one of the most popular forms of multi-language editions of the Bible in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Very often these editions were called Polyglotte, which meant the biblical text was released in several versions at the same time. The first edition of the biblical text was the Hexapla of Origen.[9] These served contemporary scientists who wanted to study the text of the Bible in many different languages. The text was placed in separate columns or the translation was done in an interlinear manner. First the sentence was written in the original language, followed immediately by its translated part. Such interlinear translations were often used as textbooks to learn languages.[10]

However, the specific text layout (one sentence in Hebrew and then the Aramaic translation) indicates that the text can also be called a bilingual edition of the Pentateuch. This type of editing took place in Jewish communities, especially in Europe, although it was extremely rare. More often the Aramaic text was recorded in a separate manuscript. I am not a specialist in the Middle Ages, so I will limit myself to stating that at the current stage of research I cannot say with certainty that the present manuscript is exceptional, but it certainly is unique.

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[7] See Fig. 1.
[8] See Fig. 2.
[9] Albrecht 2015, 10-20, and col. 1000-1002.
[10] Würthwein 1995, 57-58.

The text: orthography and morphology

A closer analysis of the language of Aramaic which I conducted indicates a dependence on Targum Onkelos.[11] However, the spelling and morphology show that the Aramaic is slightly different than that in Onkelos. Here are the most important features of the Aramaic text in Petrarch:

1. Targum Onkelos often has a longer text, and Targum Petrarch has a *lectio brevis*.[12] In addition, Targum Onkelos includes phrases and expressions that do not exist in Targum Petrarch; see the Aramaic text below.

2. Targum Petrarch has more *mater lectionis* with *yod* as a semivowel than Targum Onkelos, e.g. דליה *versus* דיליה, סילעין *versus* סלעין, מיני *versus* מני, מיתי *versus* מתי, and דיליה *versus* דליה חתאה *versus* חיתאה.[13]

3. Sporadic elision of nasal sounds at the ends of words, e.g. כנע instead of כנען.

4. A variant that is often found in Palestinian Aramaic, i.e. adding aleph nouns in the final forms, e.g. כספא instead of כסף.[14]

5. Doubling the sonorant sounds, e.g. *nun* in יתננה instead of מתנה.[15]

6. The yod is omitted in the *pi'el* conjugation, e.g. קבל instead of קביל.

7. The yod semivowel is omitted when the ṣērē sound is used, e.g. מתך instead of מיתך.

8. The use of he at the end of nouns and verbs, as in Qumran, e.g. יהביתה instead of יהבית.[16]

9. Longer forms of the genitive, e.g. בני ית ישראל instead of בני ישראל, and בני ית לאה instead of בני לאה.

10. The interchangeable use of two forms of the genitive in masculine nouns, e.g. אילני and אילנא.

11. Specific forms of nouns, e.g. מלכא instead of מליך.[17]

12. Subordinate clauses are introduced by the conjunction design די לא, i.e. the longer variant דלא "who do not,"[18] "do not" for the Hebrew אשר לא.

13. The lamed is omitted in proper nouns, e.g. ישרא instead of ישראל.

14. Omission of the yod semivowel where it is used in Onkelos,[19] e.g. עם instead of עים.

15. Shorter forms of some of the pronouns than in Onkelos,[20] e.g. אתן instead of איתין.

16. Frequent use of the את participle before a direct object.[21]

17. Misspellings or leaving out the consonants in the middle of a word, e.g. ארעה "four" instead of ארבע.

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[11] Grossfeld 1994, 228-233.
[12] Cook 1994, 142-156.
[13] Klein 1993, 73-77.
[14] Cook 1994, 142-156.
[15] Kosovski 1929, 49-50.
[16] Cook 1994, 142-156.
[17] Sperber 1959, 23-66.
[18] Kaufman 1994, 118-141.
[19] Cook 1994, 142-156.
[20] Kaufman 1994, 118-141; Cook 1994, 142-156.
[21] Sperber 1934-35, 310-311; Cook 1994, 142-156.

The history of Petrarch's codex

As is clear from the frontispiece, the codex was part of the Francesco Petrarch collection. The frontispiece includes information which Adam Homecki interpreted as follows: "probably the manuscript was originally owned by Petrarch, and later, along with the other manuscripts belonging to his library, it remained in the library of an unknown bishop. This is indicated by the *exlibris* at the beginning of the manuscript."

In my opinion, one should reject the notion, which appeared in discussions with other researchers, that the frontispiece was forged in order to increase the value of the manuscript on the antique market in later centuries. The frontispiece is confirmed by two items: it assigns the codex to Petrarch, who was widely known to not be particularly interested in Hebrew texts, and it dates the second event, which was a change in ownership, by commemorating the previous holder of the text. This is connected, in general, with the history of Petrarch's entire library after his death.

The codex arrived in Poland and is now in the Czartoryski Museum along with several other Jewish manuscripts written in Hebrew. Some of them are owned by the National Museum in Kraków, but the entire collection has been archived in one place. It is not known when Petrarch's codex came to Poland, but it is known when it was catalogued. The economic records of the Princes Czartoryski Foundation show that manuscripts with signatures from 3156 to 3956 were purchased in the period 1830-1870. This does not mean that the Czartoryskis came into possession of this set only then. It is possible that this happened during the period of their greatest political activity and travels through the countries of Europe, i.e. in the seventeenth century. If Chodźko's expert opinion allows one to locate the text in France roughly in the middle of the nineteenth century, then the Czartoryskis brought the codex most likely from there, not from Italy. It is also possible that Chodźko's expertise was connected with the text's sale and with passing it on to the Czartoryski family.

Petrarch's library

Francesco Petrarch was a Venetian writer who lived in the fourteenth century. He was a poet and cosmopolite with extensive linguistic interests. Venetian histories recorded him as a collector of approx. 200 significant works in various languages. In those times this constituted a huge collection.[22]

The highly accurate catalogue of Petrarch's library was drawn up by the Italian philologist Giuseppe Billanovich. It is known that the first attempt to catalogue the library took place in the late nineteenth century. The catalogues make no mention of any Hebrew manuscripts.[23] It is possible that the part of the Torah was no longer in the collection immediately before this date.

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[22] Kohl 1978, 25-78.
[23] Billanovich 1947, 8-15 – no mention of Hebrew collection.

After Petrarch's death the library collections found their way into various places in Europe. The Billanovich catalogue is based on collections from Venice, the Vatican and France. Other places are not mentioned.[24]

If we assume that the manuscript came from the Petrarch collection and came into it during his lifetime, this must have been during a time when Jews enjoyed relatively high freedom. Coming into possession of the manuscript was not associated with the persecution of Jews or with their resettlement, which occurred only in 1541. However, no catalogues of Petrarch's collection confirm the existence of Jewish manuscripts.

Dating the manuscript

Determining the place of creation of the manuscript, despite the lack of a colophon, does not cause any major problems. The system according to which the interlines are made, the placement of the columns in the text, as well as how the Masorah were placed prove that the manuscript probably came from Italy. As for the date of creation, the *terminus ante quem* must have been before Petrarch's writing activity, i.e. approx. 1325-1335. Petrarch could not have come into possession of a new manuscript. Probably for a long time it was owned by a Jewish community somewhere in Italy or even in Venice itself. Given the appearance of the codex, it cannot be dated to earlier than the thirteenth century. The type of writing, and more precisely the way the down-strokes of the diagonals were written, i.e. thin down-strokes, with the horizontals being clearly thicker, as well as other characteristics, also point to the thirteenth century.

Targum Onkelos and its manuscripts

The circumstances of how Targum Onkelos was created are not known. Onkelos was a convert to Judaism and a student of the famous Tannait Gamaliel II. He was supposed to have lived in the years 35-120 C.E.[25] Talmudic tradition assigns to him the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic. Onkelos' text is considered to be one of the most important translations of the Bible in Judaism.[26]

Also, little is known about the history of this text from antiquity to the Middle Ages. One of the oldest surviving versions is a manuscript located in the Bodleian Library (1299).[27] The most common version is the edition from Bologna (1482), containing the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible with Rashi's commentary.[28]

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[24] Billanovich 1947, 15-50.
[25] Grossfeld – Aberbach 1982, 13-15.
[26] Katash 1962, 329-342.
[27] Klein 1995, 101-105.
[28] Klein 1993, 73-88.

Targum of Petrarch and Targum Onkelos texts (Gen 23:8-20)[29]

23,8

רעוא נפשכון למיקבר ית מיתי מן קדמי קבילו מיני ובעו לי מן עפרון בר צחר

רעוא עם נפשכון בנפשכון לנפשכון למקבר ית מיתי מן קדמי קבילו מיני ובעו לי מן עפרון בר צחר

"If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me and entreat for me Ephron the son of Zohar."

23,9

ויתן לי ית מערת דכפילתא דיליה דבסטר חקליה בכספא שלים יתננה לי ביניכון לאחסנת קבורא

ויתן ויהב לי ית מערת כפילתא דליה דבסטר חקליה בכסף שלים יתנה לי ביניכון לאחסנת קבורא

"That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns, it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as property for a burying place."

23,10

ועפרון יתיב בגו בני חיתאה ואתיב עפרון חיתאה ית אברהם קדם בני חיתאה לכל עלי תרע קרתיה למימר

ועפרון יתיב בגו בני חיתאה ואתיב עפרון חיתאה ית אברהם קדם בני חיתאה לכל עליל תרע קרתיה למימר

"And Ephron was sitting among the Hittites, and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city."

23,11

רבתן קבל מיני חקלא יהבית לך ומערתה דביה לך יהביתה לעיני בני עמי יהבית לך קבר מיתך

לא ריבוני קביל מני חקלא יהבית לך ומערתא דביה לך יהביתה לעיני בני עמי יהביתה לך קבר מיתך

"My lord, hear me: You've got the field from me, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the sight of the sons of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead…"

23,12

וסגיר את אברהם קדם עמא דארעא

וסגיר אברהם קדם עמא דארעא

"Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land."

23,13

ומליל עם עפרון קדם עמא דארעא למימר ברם אם את עבדת לי טיבו קביל מני אתן כספא דמי חקלא סב מני ואקבר ית מתי תמן

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[29] Knudsen 1981, 19-26.

ומליל עים עפרון קדם עמא דארעא ברם אם את עבדת לי טיבו קביל מני איתין דמי כספא סב
קביל מני ואקבר ית מיתי תמן לתמן

"And he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, 'But if you will, hear me: I give the price of the field. Accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there.'"

23,14
ואתיב עפרון ית את אברהם למימר ליה

ואתיב עפרון ית אברהם למימר ליה

"And Ephron answered Abraham."

23,15
ריבוני קביל מיני את ארעא שויא ארעא מאה סלעין דכסף בינא וביניך מה היא וית מתך קבר

ריבוני קביל מני ארע שויא ארבע מאה סלעין דכסף בינא וביניך מא היא וית מיתך קבר

"My lord, listen to me: a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."

23,16
וקביל אברהם מן עפרון ותקל אברהם לעפרון ית כספא דמליל קדם בני חתאי ארבע מאה סילעין דכסף
דמתקבל סחורתא בכל מנינתא

וקביל ושמע אברהם מן עפרון ותקל אברהם לעפרון ית כספא דמליל קדם בני חיטאה ארבע מאה סלעין
דכסף מתקבל דמתקבל סחורא בסחורתא בכל מדינא

"And Abraham listened to Ephron, and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver that he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants."

23,17
וקם חקל עפרון בכפילתא די קדם ממרא חקלא ומערתא דביה וכל אילנא דבחקלא בכל תחומיה סחור
סחור

וקם חקל עפרון דבכפילתא דקדם ממרא חקלא ומערתא דביה וכל אילני דבחקלא דבכל תחומיה סחור
סחור

"So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave that was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout its whole area, was made over."

23,18
לאברהם לזבינוהי לעיני בני חיתאה לכל עלי תרע קרתיה

לאברהם לזבינוהי לעיני בני חתאה בכל לכל עלי עליל תרע קרתיה

"To Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city."

23,19

ובתר כן קבר אברהם ית שרה איתתיה למערתה חקל כפילתא דעל אפי ממרא היא חברון בארעא דכנע

ובתר כין קבר אברהם ית שרה איתתיה למערת חקל כפילתא על אפי ממרא היא בארעא דכנען

"After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre, that is, Hebron, in the land of Canaan."

23,20

וקם חקלֹא ומערתא דביה לאברהם לאחסנת קבורא מן בני חיתאה

וקם חלקא ומערתא דביה לאברהם לאחסנת קבורא בני חתאה

"The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites."

Conclusions

The text is an accurate translation of the Hebrew text and shows a strong dependence on Targum Onkelos. It differs in this respect from the Neofiti Targum, which most probably came from Italy and is a very loose paraphrase, not a translation.[30]

At the present state of research, Petrarch's codex should be regarded as unique mainly because of the rare bilingual text and the specificity of the Aramaic text.[31] These types of properties have been certified in Aramaic literature and are therefore not new. It would also be worth taking interest in the rest of the collection at the Czartoryski Museum. The codex from Petrarch's library will be published in full, together with a commentary, in English in either 2017 or 2018.

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[30] Diez Macho 1968, 62-78.
[31] Diez Macho 1975, 217-236; Sperber 1993, 5-8.

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