Trails of a Different Vorlage and a Free Translator in LXX-Proverbs: A Text-Critical Analysis of Proverbs 16:1-7

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ABSTRACT

In recent Septuagint scholarly debates, a great deal of attention has been given to the Book of Proverbs. This book, unlike others, has not been extensively studied regarding translation techniques or text-critical research. Nevertheless, the textual witnesses of Proverbs demonstrate some variants, particularly many minuses and pluses, which are relevant to our understanding of the text. This article presents a text-critical analysis of Prov 16:1-7 using the methodology proposed by Bénédicte Lemmelijn presented in her book A Plague of Texts? A Text-Critical Study of the So-Called “Plague Narrative” in Exodus 7:14-11,10. The results of this analysis led to the conclusion that the LXX translator, who translated freely, had a different Vorlage, which had another verse order than MT and 4QProvb. This essay makes a contribution in terms of arriving at a better understanding of the translation technique of LXX-Proverbs.

KEYWORDS: LXX; Proverbs; Text Criticism; Translation Technique

A INTRODUCTION

In recent scholarly debates, much attention has been paid to the Book of Proverbs.¹ This book, unlike others, has not been extensively studied regarding translation techniques or text-critical research. Nevertheless, the textual witnesses of Proverbs demonstrate several variants, more particularly many minuses and pluses relevant to our understanding of the text. In this contribution, I will make an attempt to analyse Prov 16:1-7 in a text-critical way.

The methodology used in this article is the one proposed by Bénédicte Lemmelijn in her book A Plague of Texts? A Text-Critical Study of the So-

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¹ Especially the scholars Michael V. Fox and Johann Cook have given a lot of attention to the Book of Proverbs.
Beyond “Plague Narrative” in Exodus 7,14-11,10. Her methodology consists of three parts: the collection of variants in a synoptic survey (i.e. registration), the description of variants, and the evaluation thereof.

Before I start our own text-critical investigation, a brief state of affairs is offered regarding text-critical issues in Prov 16:1-7. Afterwards, I present an analysis of the verses, in three stages, using Lemmelijn’s methodology. In the first part, I register all the variants by comparing the Masoretic Text (MT), Septuagint (LXX) and 4QProv, by means of a textual synopsis. In the second part, I describe the variants in detail. Every variant is described in an objective way without offering an interpretation at this stage. In the third and final part, I evaluate all the different variants based on the results of part 1 and part 2. At the end of this contribution, some concluding remarks are offered as well as a number of suggestions for further research.

B PROVERBS 16:1-7: THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

Before performing my own text-critical analysis and describing the textual problems concerning Prov 16:1-7, it would be helpful to explore what has already been written about it. This succinct outline sets out to present the scholarly debates concerning Prov 16:1-7.

A number of classical Biblical commentaries on Proverbs suggest that no explicit mention is made regarding textual problems relating to Prov 16:1-7. However, when one looks at the Hebrew version as well as the Greek version of the text itself, a couple of major minuses in the LXX becomes clear. Some verses are completely missing in the LXX. When one looks at the specif-

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3 Lemmelijn, Plague of Texts? 13, 22-27.
4 For these specific verses, no Dead Sea manuscripts have been found bearing witness to Prov 16:1-7. There are, however, some discoveries that have preserved other fragments of the Book of Proverbs namely “4QProv (= 4Q102), preserving parts of 1:27-2:1, and 4QProv (= 4Q103), with parts of 13:6b-9; 14:6-10; 14:15-15:8 and 15:19b-31.” See Michael V. Fox, “LXX-Proverbs as a Text-Critical Resource,” Text 22 (2005): 95. 4QProv can be of some interest to our analysis with regard to Prov 15:27-28 (see infra).
5 The following commentaries have been consulted: Crawford H. Toy, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1959 [repr. 1899]), 319-323; Robert B. Y. Scott, Proverbs, AB 18 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 104-107; Bruce K. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005), 3-15. Although the latter does not mention the text-critical problem thoroughly, it does mention the different versions of the LXX and their minuses. The other two, however, do not mention the LXX version and take MT as a starting point for their analysis.
ic literature regarding text-critical problems in the Book of Proverbs, it is notable that Emanuel Tov, Johann Cook and Michael Fox described the textual issues regarding Prov 16:1-7 more thoroughly than the commentaries did.

Tov describes ch. 16 as demonstrating one of the major visible differences between MT and the LXX, namely “transpositions of verses and group of verses.” He disagrees with de Lagarde, who argues that the reason for these transpositions is connected to textual transmission. De Lagarde argues that the Hebrew Vorlage, which the translator would have known, did not contain vv. 16:6-9, nor vv. 1-3 and 5. The translator read the chapters, which were presented next to each other in adjacent columns, incorrectly and miscopied the verses. De Lagarde writes:

[M]it 15,27-29 lief ein nach semitischer anschauung [sic] rectum folium aus, und auf dem linken rande [sic] desselben war 16,6-9 so nachgetragen, dafs [sic] 16\(^6\) neben 16\(^27\), 16\(^7\) neben 15\(^28\), 16\(^8\) neben 15\(^29\) zu stehe[n] kam, w\(\ddot{a}\)rend 16\(^9\) seine stelle [sic] unter 16\(^8\) am untern rande [sic] fand. [D]er übersetzer [sic] nahm nun an, dafs [sic] 16\(^6\) hinter 15\(^27\) gehöre, und so fort.

Contrary to De Lagarde, Tov argues that MT and the LXX “represent recensionally different traditions.” In this regard, Tov states that:

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10 Tov, “Recensional Differences,” 427. See also note 13.


12 De Lagarde, Anmerkungen, loc. cit.

The sequence of most sayings in these chapters is loose, and as each one is more or less independent, two different editorial traditions could have existed concerning their sequence [...] Furthermore, the type of parallelism of the verses in the arrangement of MT does not make it a more coherent unit than that of the LXX.14

Cook, in turn, pointed out that text-critical reflections on Proverbs are very scarce in OT/Septuagintal research. Therefore, he published a modest article in 2000,15 in which he listed some textual problems concerning the Book of Proverbs. In that article, ch. 16 is also mentioned, although not as thoroughly as ch. 15. Cook argues that ch. 16 of Proverbs contains the same kind of textual problems as ch. 20.16 The Hebrew version of both chapters contains many verses that have no equivalent in the LXX.17 Except for quite some pluses, it contains many apparently inner-textual corruptions.18

Although Cook and Tov explored the issue quite profoundly, they did not consider the Qumran fragment 4QProv b, whereas, I think, this could offer more insight and lead to an even more in-depth analysis of the matter. Fox, however, did take this fragment into account in his analysis of the verses. He argues that the relocation of verses in Prov 16:1-7 is due to “a single person, be it a scribe in the Hebrew transmission, or the Greek translator, or a scribe in the early Greek transmission.”19 According to Fox, “scribes in the proto-MT transmission [who] were inspired by the context to add additional relevant proverbs”20 can explain the absence of verses in the LXX. Fox also concurs with Tov that Prov 16:1-7 can be explained due to different recensions of the text.21

Having described the scholarly debate with regard to Prov 16:1-7, I now proceed with my own analysis.


19 Fox, Proverbs, 240.
20 Fox, Proverbs, 240-241.
21 Fox, Proverbs, 241.
REGISTRATION OF THE VARIANTS

There are not many variant texts of Prov 16:1-7. The only ones are MT and the LXX, since there are no manuscripts in the Judean desert in which Prov 16:1-7 is extant.22

Nevertheless, although no Qumran scrolls have been discovered for the verses discussed in this article, it is important to look at 4QProv.23 This fragment contains parts of “13,6-9; 14,5-10; 14,12-13; 14,31-35; 15,1-8 and 15,19-31; and possibly 7,9-11.”24 In this respect, Prov 15:19b-31 can be significant. Indeed, vv. 27a and 28a of ch. 15 are attested in the LXX as vv. 6 and 7 of ch. 16 in MT.25

In the synopsis below, the same symbol register is used as in Lemmelijn’s book: “a combination of three short hyphens (---) designates a minus. Exclamation marks (!) point to a different location of words in the respective columns.”26

22 For MT, BHS (Karl Elliger, Wilhelm Rudolph, et al., eds., Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, 5th ed., [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977]) is used, and for the LXX, Rahlfs’s edition (Alfred Rahlfs, Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX Interpretes [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006]). With regard to the latter I want to make the remark that there is still no edition available for Proverbs in the Göttingen Septuagint Series. Peter J. Gentry is currently editing the volumes of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs for the Göttingen Septuagint Series.


24 Tov, Psalms to Chronicles, 183. For a full overview of the text see pp. 184-186.

25 We will not examine the MT version of 16:9, which would lead us too far astray.

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D  DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIANTS

On the basis of the synopsis presented above, one can describe all the different textual variants of Prov 16:1-7. This description is exhaustive, and smaller textual differences are also discussed.

In terms of the textual differences, I use the same format as the one suggested by Lemmelijn.27 In the left hand column, the biblical reference is noted, followed by a definition of the relationship between the textual witnesses for the respective variant.28 In some instances, the chapter of the text is indicated in superscript (e.g., MT$^{16,6}$ = MT Prov 16:6) in order to clarify a specific variation concerning transposed words. In the right column, the variant is described and

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27 See Lemmelijn, Plague of Texts?, 33-34.
28 Lemmelijn, Plague of Texts?, 33.
discussed. Whenever a variant represents a plus, a plus sign will be placed next to the siglum in which the variant in question is found. The description follows the same order as the synopsis set out above. In the process, parts of Prov 15 are also inserted in the analysis.

Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT/4QProvb

Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT/4QProvb

Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT/4QProvb

Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT/4QProvb

Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT/4QProvb

Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT16:6

Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT16:6

Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT16:6

Prov 15:28 LXX ≠ MT/4QProvb

Prov 15:28 LXX ≠ MT/4QProvb

Prov 15:28 LXX ≠ MT/LXX

Prov 15:28 LXX ≠ MT/LXX

29 Lemmelijn, *Plague of Texts?*, 34.

30 ἀποκαθαίρωντω occurs four times in the LXX: Tob 12:9; Prov 15:27; Job 7:9; Job 9:30.
f. pl., whereas the Hebrew versions present a preposition ל + a verb qal inf. construct (root: הענ). The meaning of the two are different: the Greek word means “faithful” while the Hebrew word means “to answer.”

The Hebrew and LXX versions differ: whereas the LXX presents a plus here, the MT presents these words (except δεκταί, δικαίων, δὲ) in 16:7.

δεκταί = LXX+: adjective feminine plural.

Prov 15:28 MT ≠ LXX

שי = LXX+: This word occurs in 15:28 (LXX) and 16:7 (MT). The LXX word is slightly different than the MT word in 16:7. The Greek שְׁיָאִים is a plural form, whereas the Hebrew שְׁיָא is singular.

Prov 15:28 MT ≠ LXX

דיקאֵי = LXX+: adj. gen. m. pl.

Prov 15:28 MT ≠ LXX

דר = LXX+: conjunction.

Prov 15:28 LXX ≠ MT16:7

חי = LXX+: noun dual עין + suffix per. pron. 3rd per/m.

Prov 16:1 MT ≠ LXX

לאדם μετρικὴν μέτρηται θυμόν = MT+: larger plus

Prov 16:2 MT ≠ LXX

τοῦ ταπεινοῦ/איש: a different word is used in Greek. It specifies the Hebrew use of “man” (איש) to “a humble man” (τοῦ ταπεινοῦ).

Prov 16:2 MT ≠ LXX

ענ = MT+: noun dual עין + suffix per. pron. 3rd per/m.

Prov 16:2 MT ≠ LXX

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32 Cook, “Proverbs,” 635.
EVALUATION OF THE VARIANTS

Now that I have described all the variants, it is possible to evaluate them. Some variants listed above do not present any textual problems. These variants concern a different rendering of the number of nouns (e.g., Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT / πίστεσιν; Prov 15:28 LXX ≠ MT4QProv / δικαίων, etc.), an addition of a conjunction (Prov 15:28 MT ≠ LXX δὲ; Prov 16:7 MT ≠ LXX δὲ) or a variant vocalisation method (Prov 15:27 MT ≠ 4QProv / בהשע). The registration and description suffice for the present purposes. However, some other variants do present textual problems. I divide them into two categories: “minor” and “major” variants. I first discuss the “minor” variants. The “major,” or using Lemmelijn’s label, “text-relevant” variants, are evaluated thereafter.

1 “Minor” Variants

If one considers the minor variants, it is clear that most of these can be explained by the translation technique of the LXX translator. Most scholars concur that the LXX translator of Proverbs rendered his Vorlage in a “free” way. Although there is general consensus concerning the “free” character of

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33 See Lemmelijn, Plague of Texts?, 96.

34 By “translation technique,” we refer to the way(s) in which the translator translated his Hebrew Vorlage. However, this does not imply that the translator consciously used one specific technique. By using this definition of translation technique, we follow the “Finnish school” where Anneli Aejmelaeus plays an important role. In her article “What We Talk about when We Talk about Translation Technique” she states what she understands under the term “translation technique”: “I suggest that ‘translation technique’ be understood as simply designating the relationship between the text of the translation and its Vorlage. What is needed is a neutral term to denote the activity of the translator or the process of translation that led from the Vorlage to the translation, and I think that the term ‘translation technique’ actually suits this purpose very well. But ‘translation technique’ should not be thought of as a system acquired or developed or resorted to by the translators,” See Anneli Aejmelaeus, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Translation Technique,” in On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays, ed. Anneli Aejmelaeus, CBET 50 (Leuven, MA: Peeters, 2007), 205-206 (= Anneli Aejmelaeus, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Translation Technique,” in X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies. Oslo, 1998, ed. Bernard A. Taylor, SBLSCS 51 [Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001], 531-552). In German, the neutral word “Übersetzungsweise” is used to refer to “translation technique.” Aejmelaeus has borrowed this term from her teacher, Soisalon-Soininen. See Aejmelaeus, “What We Talk About,” 205.

35 See Johann Cook, “Translation Technique and the Reconstruction of Texts,” OTE 21/1 (2008): 63: “[...] [I]ts translation technique can be defined as extremely free in some instances”; Cook, “Proverbs,” 621: “Elsewhere, I have characterized its modus operandi as often extremely free, while in other cases the parent text was rendered in
the translation, there are still on-going discussions with regard to the “faithfulness” of the translation.36

36 Lemmelijn, Plague of Texts? 114, n. 83. On the faithfulness of a translation see Anneli Aejmelaeus, “The Significance of Clause Connectors in the Syntactical and Translation-Technical Study of the Septuagint,” in On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays, ed. Anneli Aejmelaeus, CBET 50 (Leuven; Peeters, 2007), 278: “Changing the structure of a clause or a phrase, and by so doing replacing an un-Greek expression by a genuine Greek one closely corresponding to the meaning of the original, is quite a different thing from being recklessly free and paying less attention to the correspondence with the original. A distinction should be made between literalness and faithfulness. A good free rendering is a faithful rendering”; Ilmari Soisalon-Soininen, “Die Auslassung des Possessivpronomens im griechischen Pentateuch,” in Studien zur Septuaginta-Syntax, ed. Ilmari Soisalon-Soininen, Anneli Aejmelaeus, and Raija Sollamo, AASF B/237 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiekeakatemia, 1987), 88: “Sie haben den Text möglichst getreu wiedergegeben wollen, nicht aber wortwörtlich [...]”. In this context, Bénédicte Lemmelijn and Hans Ausloos have introduced a new category that goes beyond faithfulness i.e. creativity. See also Hans Ausloos and Bénédicte Lemmelijn, “Faithful Creativity Torn between Freedom and Literalness in the Septuagint’s Translations,” JNSL 40 (2014): 59-62. This creativity becomes evident in a “content- and context-related” approach (based upon content- and context-related criteria such as Hebrew wordplay in the context of parallelism, Hebrew absolute *hapax legomena*, and Hebrew wordplay in the context of aetiologies), which can be seen as “an artificially created laboratory situation in which a specific test is set up in order to elicit a reaction.” Cf. Ausloos and Lemmelijn, “Faithful Creativity,” 62-63. The way in which the LXX translator dealt with these difficult situations can, sometimes, be seen as being very creative. An example of a creative
The following variants can be explained by looking at the LXX translator’s translation technique.

1a Proverbs 15:27 LXX ≠ MT (דשא/ἐλεημοσύναις)

It is clear that the number of words differs. The Hebrew word is singular, whereas the Greek word is in a plural form. As mentioned in the description (see supra), the meaning is also different. MT uses a more general term, namely “goodness/kindness” which differs from the LXX. The Greek version conveys a more specific meaning, namely “kind deeds.” The LXX translator rendered this word in a rather free manner as he attempted to specify the meaning of the Hebrew word. Still, he remained faithful to his Vorlage, and the meaning of the verse remains the same.

1b Proverbs 15:28 LXX ≠ MT (ספכן/φίλοι γίνονται)

One can gauge that the LXX presents a stronger expression than MT. The translator seems to have made the expression stronger and contrasted ὁι ἔχθροι with φίλοι. This contrast is less obvious in the Hebrew text. One gets the impression that the translator attempted to suggest more than mere forgiveness, which is attested to in the Hebrew text. He speaks of reconciliation with ene...

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37 Cook argues that LXX Proverbs, as well as LXX Job, is less faithful to his Hebrew Vorlage, Johann Cook, “Were the LXX Versions of Proverbs and Job Translated by the Same Person?,” HS 51 (2010): 134: “It should be clear that both LXX Proverbs and Job are less faithfully translated units.” There are some scholars who have underlined the faithful character of the translation. See, e.g., Fox, “LXX-Proverbs,” 95-96: “Still, the freedoms the translator takes are not anarchic, and when he has the MT or something like it, he almost always tries to address its essential meaning as he understands it,” and Bénédicte Lemmelijn, “The Greek Rendering of Hebrew Hapax Legomena in LXX Proverbs and Job: A Clue to the Question of a Single Translator?,” in In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes: Studies in the Biblical Text in Honour of Anneli Aejmelaeus, ed. T. Michael Law, Kristin De Troyer, and Maritza Liljestrom, CBET 72 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 149: “However, we have repeatedly observed that his translation in Prov 4:24, even though not ‘literal,’ remains very ‘faithful.”’

38 According to Fox, this “refinement” of words is a typical characteristic of the LXX-translator of Proverbs. See Fox, Proverbs, 45-46.


This pertains to the renewal of a relationship that was broken by the reality of evil.

1c Proverbs 15:28 LXX ≠ MT/4QProv

The LXX notes a noun f. pl., which the Hebrew text does not. MT and 4QProv contain a verb in the inf. form. The meaning of the two are completely different: “faithfulness” (Greek) vs. “to answer” (Hebrew). Here, it is clear that the translator attempted to correct the poetical structure of the Hebrew. The Greek word forms a better word pair with κακά than لوين with רעות. Word pairs are often used in poetry to create parallelism. The parallelism works better in the Greek version than it does in the Hebrew version. The LXX-translator was a “creative” translator by improving the poetical structure of the verse.

1d Proverbs 16:2 MT ≠ LXX

In this case, it can be seen that the translator dealt with his Vorlage in a free and creative way. ישא covers a very broad meaning, whereas תpeeve (the humble) conveys a more specific quality of ישא. In Prov 15:28, he translated ישא by ἀνθρώπων, which conveys a more general meaning than תpeeve. In Prov 16:2, the translator probably wanted to specify ישא by translating it to תpeeve and to contrast it with ἁσβεῖς (the impious). In so doing, he created a word pair תpeeve/ἁσβεῖς, which results in a type of parallelism in the verse.

1e Proverbs 16:4 MT ≠ LXX

The Hebrew verb used here conveys the same semantic meaning as the Greek noun (tautology). The translator changed the verb into a noun in relation to his plus μετὰ δικαιοσύνης φυλάσσεται. I discuss this plus greater in detail below.

1f Proverbs 16:5 MT ≠ LXX

The use of ἁκαθαρτος as a rendering of תועב can be regarded as an alternative rendering that the LXX-translator uses in the book as a whole next to βδέλυγμα, which is the more common LXX equivalent. In this rendering, the LXX translator “softened” the meaning of the Hebrew. The Hebrew noun means “something detestable/abominable,” which has a stronger meaning than

41 The enhancement of parallelism by the LXX-translator is something that is typical of the LXX version of Proverbs. See Fox, Proverbs, 52-54.

42 Cf. n. 36.

43 The word ἁκαθαρτος occurs 5 times in Proverbs (Prov 3:32; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10 and 21:15). In 4 of them it is used as an equivalent of the Hebrew word נ 못ב, i.e. in Prov 3:32; 16:5; 17:15; and 20:10. See Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint and other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (including the Apocryphal Books) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998).
the LXX adjective “unclean/impure.” It is possible that the translator found the Hebrew word too harsh, and therefore he changed it to a Greek synonym that has a less charged meaning.

1g Proverbs 16:5 MT ≠ LXX (בל לבב / ὑψηλοκάρδιος)

The Greek translator rendered the idiomatic expression בל לבב by means of an idiomatic Greek word, instead of translating it literally to ὑπερήφανος ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ.

1h Proverbs 16:5 MT ≠ LXX (ἐμβαλὼν ἀδίκως)

This specific variant is (a) due to a different Vorlage or (b) due to the translator who handled his Vorlage in a free manner. I suggest that the latter is the case. The Hebrew text reads “an abomination to God are all who are high-hearted, hand in hand will not be unpunished,”44 whereas the Greek text reads “everyone who is arrogant is impure with God, and he who unjustly joins hands will not be deemed innocent.”45 The translator might have considered that the Hebrew Vorlage did not make sense or was too vague. Therefore, he specified the Hebrew text by clarifying the holding of hands.

1i Conclusion

In my evaluation of the minor variants, I analysed the translation technique of the LXX translator. I found that the translator rendered his Hebrew Vorlage in a free manner. He attempted to soften, strengthen or specify the meaning of the Hebrew language in specific instances. The translator also corrected the poetical structure by improving the parallelisms by means of contrasting.46 In this way, he can be seen as a creative translator. Nevertheless, he remained faithful to his Vorlage by not changing the context or content of the verses.

44 My own translation.
45 Cook, Septuagint of Proverbs, 635.
46 Ruth Scoralick agrees on the fact that the LXX translator was a kind of poet who tried to enhance the poetical structure of the text. See Ruth Scoralick, “Salomos grießische Gewänder: Beobachtungen zur Septuagintafassung des Sprichwörterbuches,” in Rettendes Wissen: Studien zum Fortgang weisheitlichen Denkens im Frühjudentum und im frühen Christentum, ed. Karl Löning and Martin Faßnacht, AOAT 300 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2002), 72: “Der Verfasser der griechischen Übersetzung tritt uns in all den genannten Beispielen als ein poetisch begabter Gelehrter gegenüber, der erstaunlich frei mit dem Text umgeht, gleichzeitig jedoch in den meisten Fällen die Aussagen und Orientierungen des hebräischen Textes zum Leitfaden nimmt.”
2 “Major” Variants

Many major pluses are found in Prov 16:1-7; some of which are transposed verses. If one looks at the various textual witnesses, it is clear that 4QProv$^b$ has the same sequence as MT in Prov 15:27-28. The plus attests to the LXX version of ch. 15 that does not occur in the Hebrew versions of the text.

On the one hand, Tov ascribes the differences in verse order found in the whole book of Proverbs to a different Vorlage. This Vorlage “differed recensionally” from the one of MT. According to Tov, the Vorlage used by the LXX translator of Proverbs reflects another editorial stage than the one of MT. On the other hand, Scoralick argues that there were no different versions of the text existing side by side, and does not suggest a different Vorlage. She argues that the transpositions can be explained by the translator’s freedom. Cook also regards the transposition of verses as an act of the creative mind of the translator. According to Cook, there is not a different Hebrew Vorlage, because there is not tangible historical evidence of such a Vorlage.

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47 See Tov, “Recensional Differences,” 431. It seems to me that Tov, when using the word “recension,” sees the LXX version as a revision/rewriting (which carries a rather negative connotation) of the, according to him, original Hebrew text, which would be attested in MT. In my view, this thesis can no longer be maintained. I would like to argue for different versions of the text that existed next to each other and were of equal value. I want to consider all the textual witnesses as valuable witnesses since the different manuscripts can no longer be seen as deviations or errors from their “original.” See e.g., Bénédicte Lemmelijn, “Textual Criticism,” in Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint, ed. Alison G. Salvesen and T. Michael Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).


50 See Scoralick, “Salamos griechische Gewänder,” 58: “Eine abweichende hebräische Vorlage, die für heute in keiner Weise (außer durch die Septuaginta) mehr greifbar wäre, ist demgegenüber die unwahrscheinlichere Annahme.”


I concur with Tov who holds a contrary view to that of Scoralick and Cook. The LXX-translator had a Hebrew Vorlage. This Vorlage differs from MT and 4QProv in verse order. The larger plusses attested in Prov 16:1-7 can thus be ascribed to this different Vorlage. It would be difficult to see them as the work of the translator. In my opinion, it seems highly improbable that the translator shifted a large number of verses from one chapter to another. When one takes note of the writing and copying methods in Antiquity, one has to take into account that papyrus scrolls were used in this period. These scrolls lent themselves to a continuous reading intended for a “start-to-finish”-reading that made it difficult to proceed from one chapter to another. Therefore, it is unlikely that the translator shifted entire verses from one chapter to another. In my opinion, this would have demanded a huge amount of time and effort. It is more convincing to claim that the translator remained faithful to the structure of the chapters and verses as attested in his Vorlage. The following variants could then be explained due to this different Vorlage:

2a Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT/4QProv (עֵר בֵּיתוֹ בֹאְכֶר
2b Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT/4QProv (ἐξολλυσιν ἑαυτὸν ὁ δωρολήμπτης)
2c Prov 15:27 LXX ≠ MT/4QProv (ἐλεημοσύναις καὶ πιστειν ἀποκαθαίρονται ἁμαρτίαι, τῷ δὲ φόβῳ κυρίου ἐκκλίνει πᾶς ἀπὸ κακοῦ)

54 These transpositions are not only observed in chs. 15 and 16, but also elsewhere, e.g. the difference in chs. 25-31 (LXX: 31:1-9; 25:1-29:27; 31:10-31).
55 So far no research has been done concerning the way on how the LXX-translators translated their Vorlage and on how this Vorlage physically looked like. Nevertheless, some historical research has been performed on the material and the position the scribes and copyists used in Antiquity. Scholars of the field of the Synoptic Problem have integrated these results in their research. See, e.g., Robert A. Derrenbacker, Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 30-39; Eric C. S. Eve, “The Synoptic Problem Without Q?” in New Studies in the Synoptic Problem: Oxford conference, April 2008: Essays in Honour of Christopher M. Tuckett, ed. Paul Foster, et al., BETL 239 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 565-569.
56 See Derrenbacker, Ancient Compositional, 31: “[…] [A] ‘book roll’ or scroll allowed the reader continuous or sequential access (as opposed to random access) to a particular document, with its design being most conducive to start-to-finish reading.” Codices, in the contrary, lent themselves perfectly to a random reading of a text. These codices were, however, only introduced in the first centuries A.D. after the LXX was written. See Derrenbacker, Ancient Compositional, 32.
2d Prov 15:28 LXX ≠ MT/4QProv (δεκταὶ παρὰ κυρίῳ ὁδοὶ ἀνθρώπων δικαίων, διὰ δὲ αὐτῶν)

2e Prov 16:1 MT ≠ LXX (לְשׁוֹן מְנוּנָה מְנוּנָה לְבֵּן מֵעִרְבֵּי לָasjon)

2f Prov 16:2 MT ≠ LXX (οἱ δὲ ἀσεβεῖς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κακῆς ὀλοῦνται);

2g Prov 16:2 MT ≠ LXX (ועין)

2h Prov 16:2 MT ≠ LXX (תןב)

2i Prov 16:2 MT ≠ LXX (רָחָת)

2j Prov 16:3 MT ≠ LXX (מותשכימי יוון מעשייה יהוה אל נל)

2k Prov 16:4 MT ≠ LXX (μετὰ δικαιοσύνης φυλάσσεται)

2l Prov 16:6 MT ≠ LXX (16:6)

2m Prov 16:7 MT ≠ LXX (16:7)

2n Prov 16:7 MT ≠ LXX (ἀρχὴ ὁδοὶ ἀγαθῆς)

2o Prov 16:7 MT ≠ LXX (μᾶλλον ἢ θύειν θυσίας)

Smaller variants, on the other hand, can often be explained due to the creative mind of the translator as argued supra.

F CONCLUSION

Having presented a detailed text-critical analysis on Prov 16:1-7, we can draw a twofold conclusion.

Firstly, the translator of the LXX-version of Proverbs tried to handle his Vorlage in a free and creative way by softening, strengthening or specifying the Hebrew language. He also corrected the Hebrew text to improve its poetical structure. Nevertheless, and although he moved from his Vorlage in a free way, he remained faithful to it. He did not change the content to the extent that it changed the context in a dramatic way.

Secondly, I noted that there are many transpositions of verses in the different versions. These can be explained by the different Hebrew Vorlage used by the LXX-translator. This Vorlage had another verse order than MT and 4QProv. Explaining these transpositions as the work of a creative translator seems to be improbable when taking the ancient method of writing and copying into account. Shifting from one chapter to another was difficult when working with papyrus scrolls.

To conclude, Prov 16:1-7 is, of course, a very small fragment of a whole corpus. Therefore, and most probably, this preliminary study is rather limited. Nevertheless, I hope that my suggestions may stimulate other scholars to explore Proverbs in a more profound way and to engage in an exhaustive text-critical analysis of the entire book. It is worthwhile checking and testing
whether text-critical research of the book of Proverbs can yield similar insights as the ones presented in the present article.

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