

The first Spanish Translation of the Septuagint?*

Natalio Fernández Marcos

CENTRO DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS Y SOCIALES. CSIC
MADRID

RESUMEN Guillermo Jünemann Beckschäfer tradujo en los años veinte del siglo pasado un texto de la LXX. Pero no puede llamarse estrictamente una versión de la Septuaginta porque: a) no respeta el orden de los libros de LXX, y Esdras y Nehemías están traducidos del hebreo o de la Vulgata, no de Septuaginta; b) Jünemann no dice, ni podemos deducir, qué edición o texto griego sigue en su traducción, y c) la traducción es tan literal que en muchas ocasiones es ininteligible. Por tanto, la nueva traducción de Septuaginta publicada por el CSIC y Ediciones Sígueme a partir de 2008 es la primera traducción científica de la Septuaginta al español.

PALABRAS CLAVE Jünemann, Septuaginta, versión española.

SUMMARY *Guillermo Jünemann Beckschäfer translated in the twenties of the past century a text of LXX. But it cannot be called a Septuagint translation because: a) the order of the books is different, and Ezra and Nehemiah are translated from Hebrew or Vulgate, not from Septuagint; b) Jünemann does not say nor can be deduced which edition or Greek text follows in his translation, and c) the version is so literal that in many occasions it is unintelligible. Therefore, the new translation published by the CSIC and Ediciones Sígueme since 2008 is the first scientific translation of the Septuagint into Spanish.*

KEY WORDS *Jünemann, Septuagint, Spanish version.*

The first volume of the Spanish translation of the Septuagint together with the Pentateuch has been published by Ediciones Sígueme of Salamanca in 2008. The second volume with the Historical Books will see the light in 2011. They are the result of the work of a team of experts in Trilingual Biblical Philology, members of the research group “Filología y Crítica Textual Bíblicas” of the CSIC in Madrid. In the Leuven Congress of 2006 on *The Septuagint and Its Mod-*

* Ponencia leída en el Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature en Boston el 24 de noviembre de 2008.

ern Translations I read a paper with the title “A New Spanish Translation of the Septuagint”¹. My aim now is to show that the recently initiated New Spanish translation project can properly be considered the first Spanish translation of the Septuagint.

Spain has the honour of having produced the *editio princeps* of the Septuagint as the Greek column of the Alcalá Polyglot, printed in 1514-1517. If we exclude the preserved fragmentary Old Latin versions of the Greek Bible, the first modern translation of the Septuagint into Latin is the interlinear version of the Septuagint printed in the Complutensian Polyglot. It is a very literal version carried out by the philologists responsible for the restoration of the Greek text: Diego López de Zúñiga, Hernán Nuñez de Guzmán and Demetrio Ducas with the collaboration of Juan de Vergara. The main purpose of this interlinear translation was didactic. It tended to reproduce faithfully the base text even at the cost of losing the syntactic structure of the target language, in this case the Latin². Moreover, the Complutensian Latin translation of 3 Maccabees is the first ever Latin translation of this book. It is not attested in the Old Latin neither was it translated by Jerome nor was it included later in the Vulgate³.

If you consult the web of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS), among the Useful Resources on the Internet (The Septuagint Online, Texts & Translations) you will find a Spanish translation of the Septuagint by Guillermo Jünemann Beckschäfer, a translation completed in 1928, but only published in 1992 with the authorisation of the Bishops' Conference of Chile. Freely available for Windows or Palm / Pocket PC. As can be easily deduced from the family names, the author was a German priest born in Welver (Westfallen) the 28th May 1855. As he was 8 years old he moved

1 Now published in H. AUSLOOS – J. COOK – F. GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ – B. LEMMELIJN – M. VERVENNE (eds.), *Translating a Translation. The Septuagint and its Modern Translations in the Context of Early Judaism* (BETL 213; Leuven 2008) 283-291.

2 See J. FERNÁNDEZ VALLINA – L. VEGAS MONTANER, “El texto latino”, in: *Anejo a la edición facsímil de la Biblia Políglota Complutense* (Valencia 1987) 53-60, and *Id.*, “Lengua y Literatura en las Biblias Políglotas españolas: traducciones latinas y modelos subyacentes”: *Sefarad* 42 (1982) 129-139.

3 “An alten Übersetzungen is nur die syrische und die armenische vorhanden. Eine altlateinische Übersetzung besteht nicht”: R. HANHART, *Septuaginta. IX/3 Maccabaeorum Liber III* (Göttingen 1960) 8.

with his family to Chile where he settled for the rest of his life. He studied in the Conciliar Seminary of La Concepción, was an outstanding scholar in classics and also translated the Iliad into Spanish.

In 1920 he started the translation of the New Testament from the Greek, and then went on to translate the Old Testament, apparently from the Greek of the Septuagint, for the next seven years until 1928. This same year the translation of the New Testament was published by the Diozesan Publisher of La Concepción. However, his translation of the Old Testament, preserved in handwritten small notebooks, will see the light only 64 years later, in 1992 in Santiago de Chile⁴. This is the text that can now be consulted on line.

Since 1928 until its publication in 1992, the manuscript underwent an odyssey of incidents passing from one hand to another. The small handwritten copies were inherited by Benedicto Guíñez who transmitted them to Ambrosio Villa who typed up a good deal of the manuscript. The responsibility for the work was passed on to another disciple of Jünemann, Eleazar Rosales Rojas who continued with the work of producing a typed version. In the early seventies Rojas passed the manuscript to Gustavo Leiva Carrasco, who with the support of Mons. Antonio Moreno Casamitjana, Archbishop of Concepción finally succeeded in fulfilling the dream of Jünemann, the publication of his translation of the Old Testament.

Jünemann was a good Hellenist and his translation was very literal, even to the extent of following the order of the Greek words and syntax in the manner of Aquila following the Hebrew text. This extreme formal equivalence makes the translation into the target language unintelligible in many cases⁵. It could be useful as a didactic instrument to learn Greek in the same way as the interlinear translations of the Polyglot Bibles were useful, but only if we were able to ascertain the source text from which Jünemann was translating. It has an historical interest, but, as I shall try to show, its value as a translation separated from the Greek base text is very poor. I would not recommend

4 *La Sagrada Biblia. Versión de la Septuaginta al español*, Pbro. Guillermo Jünemann Beckschäfer (Centro de exalumnos del Seminario Conciliar, Santiago de Chile 1992).

5 *Dum enim verbum e verbo exprimitur, plurimis in locis prorsus nullus sensus redditur*, says Martin Bucer on the literal translation, see R. GERALD HOBBS, "Pluriformity of Early Reformation Scriptural Interpretation," in: *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of Its Interpretation II: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. Edited by Magne Saebø (Göttingen 2008) 452-511 (468).

this translation to the Spanish reader for three reasons: a) It is not a translation of the Septuagint at all; b) we do not know the Greek or Hebrew text source of the translation, and c) it is for the most part unintelligible in the target language without consulting the unknown source text.

A) The order of the books from Esra to 2 Maccabees is that of the Vulgate not of the Septuagint, with 1-2 Maccabees at the end of the Old Testament as in the Vulgate. The order of the Prophets in general and of the Minor Prophets in particular is that of the Hebrew and the Vulgate, not the order of the Septuagint. Esra and Nehemiah are translated from the Hebrew or the Vulgate (10 and 13 chapters respectively), not from the Septuagint (1 Esra has 9 chapters with the story of the three young men of Darius's bodyguard included, and 2 Esra has 23 chapters). 3-4 Maccabees are lacking from the translation. The Psalms do indeed include Psalm 151 but the Odes and Psalms of Solomon are also lacking. For Tobit Jünemann follows the short texts of mss. BA, for Judges the text of B in general but at times he follows the text of A or the Hebrew. In Proverbs he follows the order of the Masoretic Text. In Sira, the celebrated Prologue, one of the most important documents for the history of the Septuagint, is lacking. Moreover, the translation itself is especially misleading, because we do not know which Greek text is underlying and Jünemann puts part of the translation between brackets saying that it is apocryphal or that it does not appear in the main Greek manuscripts. In Jeremiah it follows the order of chapters of the Hebrew. In Daniel he follows in general the text of the Septuagint with some variants of Theodotion appearing from time to time in the notes.

B) Mns. Moreno Casamitjana in his Preface to Jünemann's edition states explicitly that we do not know which was the base text followed by the author of the translation⁶. He suspects that it could be one of the editions by Tischendorf-Nestle. It is quite possible that in the early twenties, when Jünemann started the translation of the New and Old Testament, one of the editions of Tischendorf-Nestle was available to a scholar trained in the German

6 "No sabemos exactamente qué texto empleó el señor Jünemann. El 'Diccionario Biográfico del Clero Secular Chileno', de don Raymundo Arancibia, habla de una traducción hecha por don Guillermo Jünemann, 'según los Códigos (sic!) Vaticano, Sinaítico y Alejandrino', lo que permitiría pensar que usó alguna de las ediciones de Tischendorf-Nestle": Preface to Jünemann's edition of 1992, 21.

tradition of Biblical studies. Certainly, the manual edition of Rahlfs (Stuttgart 1935) was not available at that time. Swete's edition, *The Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge 1894) with the subsequent editions or reprints, based on the Codex Vaticanus, certainly was not the source text of Jünemann, since Swete's edition prints the Letter of Jeremiah after Lamentations, and not as chapter 6 of Baruc, as Jünemann does following the Vulgate. Be that as it may, if he had followed Tischendorf's edition for the Old Testament, published in two volumes in Leipzig in 1850⁷, it is worth remembering that, according to Jellicoe, this edition is "merely of historic interest today"⁸. In contrast to Tischendorf's edition of the New Testament, his edition of the Old Testament is the Sixtine text revised with an apparatus of variants of codex Alexandrinus and leaves of Codex Sinaiticus which he had secured from the Convent of St. Catherine in 1844.

The Greek text underlying the translation is not the only problem of Jünemann's translation. The main problem is that there are variants, full sentences or omissions that do not belong to the tradition of the Septuagint, that is, that cannot be found in the text or apparatus of the Göttingen edition. The proper names are those of the Hebrew, not the specific denominations or translations of the Greek text (see Gn 3:20 'Eva', gr. **zwh**; 11:9 'Babel', gr. **Sugcusij**; 22:2,19,21-23). Other translations are taken from Aquila (see Gn 2:6,23; 3:6,20; 6:6: 'arrepintióse', **aVnetemelhqh**, **oVejnequmhqh**, and 6:13, 'fin de toda carne ha llegado a faz mía', **aVtetoj**, **oVkairoj**). In the Exodus narrative Jünemann follows the Hebrew text, very different from that of the Septuagint, especially in the account of the Tabernacle.

C) It is not the best context in which to analyse and underline the difficulties of comprehension of the Spanish language employed by Jünemann, a Spanish belonging to the beginnings of the 20th century on the one side, and on the other, a sort of 'copy language' (in Spanish *lengua-calco*) which, with its extreme literalism, cannot properly transmit the meaning of the original. A few examples will suffice to underline the lack of communication of meaning. As I said earlier, Jünemann is a good Hellenist, and his translation

7 F. C. VON TISCHENDORF, *Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX Interpretes*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1850). The 6th and 7th editions, with a Supplement by Eb. Nestle, were published in 1880 and 1887 respectively.

8 S. JELlicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford 1968) 5.

would be very valuable as a lexicon to follow the original Greek, if we could be sure which was the underlying Greek text of the translation. But as a correct translation into modern Spanish is not acceptable.

In Gn 1:7 it is said: ... “las aguas, las por sobre el firmamento”. In Spanish two prepositions cannot be employed in juxtaposition, nor was their use necessary for the literal translation of **tou/ejpanw tou/sterewmatoj**; 2:6 “y niebla ascendía de la tierra” (mist was ascending from the earth), at the outmost is the translation of Aquila (**ejpiblusmoj**, ‘gushing forth’), not of the Septuagint which reads **phgh**; 2:9, “y el leño de ver lo cognoscible de bello y malo”; 49:19 “Gad, probación probará; pero él probará por los pies de ellos”, and 50:2 “Y mandó José a sus niños, los embalsamadores...” **Paij** in Genesis can be translated, according to the context by ‘niño, esclavo, siervo, criado’. Jünemann has recourse, as does Aquila, to the formal equivalence and translates **paij** always by ‘niño’ with the strange correspondence in this passage of the children embalming Jacob’s corpse instead of the physicians. In Judges Jünemann follows the Vatican literally, in spite of representing the *kaige* revision with the following unintelligible results in Spanish for Deborah’s song 5:3: “Cantaré –yo soy – al Señor: - yo soy” (for the Greek *kaige*: **egw, eimi tw/ kuriw**(**egw, eimi ašonai**), or 5:28 ¿Por qué se avergonzó (**hšcunqh**) su carro?, an inner-Greek corruption instead of **hšcatisen**, the reading of the rest of the mss.: “Why is his chariot so long in coming?”

The proper names are those of the Hebrew text but following the Castilian pronunciation. For instance in Gn 22:19 “Y habitó Abrahán en Bersabé”, and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba”, while the Septuagint translates “and Abraam lived at the Pozo del Juramento (**epi. tw/ freati tou/ofkou**)”, with the proper name translated not transliterated.

Some books of the Septuagint have been translated into Spanish and included as Deuterocanonicals in the Catholic Bibles. As far as I am concerned, I have already translated the Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Ben Sira, Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah, Judith, Tobit and the Supplements of Esther for the *Sagrada Biblia. Versión Crítica sobre los textos hebreo, arameo y griego*, by F. Cantera and M. Iglesias (3rd edition, Madrid 2009). But it can be said confidently that our project is the first complete scientific and reliable translation of the Septuagint into Spanish. Attempts like this of Jünemann are pioneering for their time, but for the present day, they have only an historical value.

Over the last decades, many factors have brought about an enormous increase in the interest for the Septuagint: the renovation of Biblical studies in general, and particularly due to the impact of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the history of the Biblical text and the growing interest in the study of the pseudo-epigraphic or intertestamental literature. Nowadays the history of the Biblical text cannot be traced without the contribution of the Old Greek as one of the main witnesses of the textual pluralism in the two centuries that preceded the change of era. As a result of this renaissance, the Septuagint has been translated or is being translated into the principal modern languages: English, German, French, Italian, Japanese or Korean. Over the many years that I have devoted to the study of the Greek Bible, the idea of a modern translation of the Septuagint into Spanish has been at the back of my mind. But it was only a few years ago that the right conditions presented themselves and I felt that I could carry out the project with both enthusiasm and realism. Apart from our research team in the research group "Filología y crítica textual bíblicas" of the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC), a young generation of philologists, who had followed a higher education in Trilingual Biblical Philology, in Classics and Semitics was able to competently undertake the translation of the different books. On another level, given the ever-increasing prestige and expansion of the Spanish language in South America, Brazil and especially in the United States, the translation of one of the Classics, the Septuagint, was considered to be a cultural advance. If the Jews of Alexandria were brave enough to translate the Scriptures into the common language of their time, the Hellenistic Greek, we, in a similar way, had the responsibility of translating this legacy into our common language, the Spanish, the language of a numerous community, and to transmit it to posterity. Finally, a combination of circumstances contributed to bringing the project to fruition: the institutional support of the CSIC and the enthusiastic cooperation of a prestigious Publishing House, Ediciones Sígueme of Salamanca, which was ready to publish the translation. The project, guidelines and schedule have already being set out. The Greek Bible will first be published in four separate volumes: Pentateuch, Historical Books, the books of Wisdom and Prophetic Books, and then will be finally published together in a single volume. The first volume on the Pentateuch has already seen the light two years ago.

The philosophy and characteristics of the Spanish translation can benefit from the other translation projects which have been the subject of dis-

cussion in a series of periodical meetings held by the research group of the CSIC directed by N. Fernández Marcos and M^a V^a Spottorno Díaz-Caro.

The base text of the Spanish translation will be the critical editions of the maior series of Göttingen for the books already published. For the rest of the books, the minor edition of Rahlfs (Stuttgart 1935)⁹ will be followed. In the books edited with a double text or redaction, both texts will be translated in a synoptic presentation. For the historical books (Samuel-Kings-Chronicles), the Antiochene text edited by the Madrid team will be translated, given that it is more homogeneous and perhaps more genuine, since it was not revised as was the text of Vaticanus in the *kaige* sections to approach it to the Masoretic Text.

The Spanish translation tries to be faithful to the Greek original because only in this way can the specific features and peculiarities of the Greek Bible emerge. In some books of the Septuagint the translators follow a Hebrew text, no more extant and different from the Masoretic Text. Qumran is a true witness of this phenomenon (think of the books of Samuel and Jeremiah, for example). Therefore, in several cases the Septuagint represents the oldest form of the Biblical text preserved. But at the same time our aim is that the product of the translation be readable, literary and even stylistic as far as is possible. We will try to maintain the arcaic or hieratic aura specific to the sacred texts in Antiquity and more concretely to the Biblical texts, as can be perceived in the translation of the Septuagint. However it is fitting to remember that to translate is not to transliterate, nor to keep the word order of the source language, but to find in the target language the adequate equivalences in order to communicate the meaning of the original. Our goal is that the cultivated reader, ignorant of the Greek, should have access to the Greek Bible, not only to its content, but also, as far as is possible, to its form and style. Translation is a dialogue between the source and the target language in order to achieve three kinds of transferences: the linguistic, historical and of cultural references. Only with this threefold transference can the polyphony of the Greek Bible be heard in the target language and that of the different translators with their own styles.

9 In the last edition revised by Hanhart, see *Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes edidit Alfred Rahlfs. Editio Altera quam recognovit et emendavit Robert Hanhart* (Stuttgart 2006).

We think of the Septuagint as an independent literary work, in spite of it being for the most part a translation, a fundamental text of the Hellenistic Judaism and of nascent Christianity. This first translation of the Hebrew Bible is also its first interpretation. The translators are working with an unvocalized text, although they have a tradition of reading. Consequently, the Hebrew consonantal text is an open text, at times, susceptible to different readings and interpretations. Some years ago I thought of the possibility of printing the differences of the Septuagint to the Masoretic Text in italics, just as the translators of the Aramaic Targumim to the French and English have done, or the translators of the Septuaginta-Deutsch. It is common knowledge that the New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) follows the Revised Standard Version for all the cases where the Septuagint agrees with the Hebrew Bible. However, we finally decided against this kind of indicators in the text, since the specific features of the Greek Bible emerge in a series of details which are very difficult to reproduce graphically, such as omissions and re-elaborations, different aspects of the verbal system in Greek and Hebrew, semantic shifts, the new net of meanings created within the Greek system, etc. The Septuagint was produced to supersede the Hebrew Bible not as a Targum subservient to the Hebrew text. As the translator translates, he is a creative scribe who is producing, perhaps unconsciously, his own literary work.

It is our intention that the language of the translation be new and fresh, a far cry from the Biblical translations that have come through the secular use of the Vulgate in the West or the modern Spanish translations from the Hebrew. It is indeed essential, in the difficult passages, to consult the source language as part of the context. But the translation should be made from the Greek restored in the critical editions, not from the Hebrew that is behind it. It is our purpose to translate what the Greek says, not what the Hebrew says. In contrast to the NETS which emphasises the Septuagint as produced, and the French translation which emphasises the Septuagint as received, in a manner of speaking, our translation considers the Judaeo-Hellenistic context in which the translation was produced as the most fitting framework for the interpretation of the Greek text, not the Hebrew background nor the reception history.

The translation of each book will be preceded by a short introduction and accompanied by the essential notes for the comprehension of the text. The Spanish reader or addressee basically wants to know what the Greek text say. On the other hand there is *La Bible d'Alexandrie* for the wealth of

notes in the apparatus concerning the reception of the Septuagint mainly in the Christian tradition, and the projected English Commentary to the Septuagint for its relationship with the Masoretic text. There is no need to repeat work which has already been done well elsewhere. However, we do not exclude the publication of a Companion volume of the translation with the collection of notes or erudite articles to elucidate the problems which arose in the process of the translation into Spanish. The main chapters of the short introductions to the different books will embrace the following issues: title of the book in Greek, place and time of the translation; literary character, structure and content; outline of the translation, translation technique or level of the Greek language in the frame of the koiné, in the case of a book composed in Greek; main editions of the Greek text with indications of the concrete edition followed in the translation; a brief reception history of the book in Hellenistic Judaism, New Testament, the Fathers and the Christian tradition, together with a reference, according to the different books, to the reception of the Septuagint in the Jewish tradition especially Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion; the characteristics of the Spanish translation, the main problems encountered and the way they were solved; and a specific bibliography related to the Greek text of the book.

It is a privilege to have the opportunity of translating into Spanish, the common language of a great community, this classic of Western culture, the Bible of Hellenistic Judaism and of the first Christians. And it is an honour to present this translation in the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in the U.S.A, where the number of Spanish speaking people is constantly increasing, at the moment the second Spanish speaking community in the world. May God grant us the time and health needed to carry out this dream and be able to put in open access in the web a right and scientific translation of the Septuagint into Spanish.