

A HOMERIC FRAGMENT:
Cambridge University Library Add. 7872*

In his recent edition of the *Iliad*, M. L. West counted more than 1500 extant papyrus and parchment fragments of the poem, more than half of them unpublished.¹ In this paper, I describe one such fragment and discuss its upper and lower scripts.

In 1969, the Cambridge University Library acquired a single palimpsest leaf, now shelf-marked Add. 7872, containing Homer in lower script and John Chrysostom in upper script. It was bought from the Cambridge book dealer G. David, and nothing is known about its previous whereabouts. The manuscript was described and its texts deciphered and identified by R. Kerr in the 1970s;² and it seems to have escaped any scholarly attention thereafter.

It is a leaf measuring ca. 346×226 mm; the parchment is thick but smooth, and is now covered by some traces of mould and blue stains from chemicals; at the bottom of the folio there is a round-shaped cut with uneven outlines.

The upper script contains a fragment of the John Chrysostom homily *In faciem ei restiti* 4–6 (*PG* LI, cc. 371–388), beginning on the recto with Ἰμόνον. ἀλλὰ καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκονομίαν, ending on the verso with ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τότε ἀπλῶς[. After ἀπλῶς, there is a trace of something having been rubbed off, possibly of the beginning of the next word ἀποκριθεῖς.

The text is written in two columns of 30 lines each, in a brown ink, in an elegant swift minuscule with accents and breathings. The hand, assigned by Kerr to the 10th century,³ is regular and upright, with frequent ligatures and *nomina sacra*. The frequency of the majuscule-shaped letters (for example K, Λ, Ν) suggests a date in the second half of the century. The hand can be paralleled in such specimens of the 10th century minuscule as Patmos St. John's Monastery 136 (dated 962),⁴ Venice Mar-

* I thank P. E. Easterling and J. J. Leifer for their comments and suggestions.

¹ M. L. West (ed.), *Homerus Ilias* I (Stuttgart – Leipzig 1998) viii–ix.

² R. V. Kerr, *Descriptions of Greek Manuscripts Add. 679–7872* (Cambridge s. a.), a handwritten inventory kept in the Cambridge University Library Manuscript Room. I thank G. Waller for pointing it out to me.

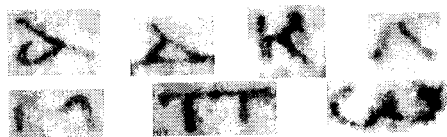
³ *Ibid.*

⁴ K. Lake, S. Lake, *Dated Greek Minuscule Manuscripts to the Year 1200* (Boston 1934–1945) I pl. 35.

cianus Gr. 454 (dated 968),⁵ Milan Ambrosianus B. 106. sup (dated 966),⁶ Paris Bibliothèque nationale Gr. 492 (dated 942),⁷ Messina Biblioteca universitaria Gr. 133 (dated 963),⁸ and Florence Laurentianus Conv. soppr. 191 (dated 984).⁹ Similar rapidly written hands are asserted by Follieri as being common for the 10th century and as “announcing” the appearance of *Perlschrift* style;¹⁰ the superscript of Add. 7872 falls into this category.

The lower script, running in the same direction as the upper script and written in one column, contains *Iliad* XVII verses 214–271.¹¹ The text, compared to the West edition,¹² shows some minor peculiarities, namely v. 216 ΘΕΡΜΙΑΛΟΧΟΝ, v. 218 ΧΡΟΘΕΟΝ, v. 218 ΤΟΣΣΟΗ, and v. 270 ΗΧΘΕΙΡΕ.

The upper script is a Biblical majuscule, slightly inclined to the left and roughly written. Among its particularities, one can notice A with a round soft loop; Δ triangular-shaped; K with its arms attached to the stem; Λ with equal height arms standing wide apart; M broad with a high middle-stroke; Π with a horizontal stroke prolonged over the ends of the vertical ones and with ornamental serifs decorating its ends; Ω low and broad (see figure).



Cambridge University Library Add. 7872 verso: details (greyscale, magnified)¹³

Kerr dated the hand to the 6th or possibly 7th century,¹⁴ but did not suggest any supporting parallels; moreover, the examples of the 6th–7th centuries Biblical majuscules given and discussed in Cavallo display different features (for instance, marked contrast between thin and thick strokes, decorative elements, mannerisms)¹⁵ from those of the lower script of Add. 7872.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II pl. 83.

⁶ *Ibid.*, III pl. 211.

⁷ *Ibid.*, IV pl. 235.

⁸ *Ibid.*, IX pl. 626.

⁹ *Ibid.*, X pl. 687.

¹⁰ E. Follieri, “La minuscola libraria dei secoli IX e X”, in *Paléographie grecque et byzantine. Paris 21–25 octobre 1974. Colloques internationaux du Centre national de la recherche scientifique* 559 (Paris 1977) 148.

¹¹ See a full diplomatic transcription in Kerr, *Descriptions*.

¹² Homerus. *Ilias*. Ed. M. L. West. II (Stuttgart – Leipzig 2000) 147, 149.

¹³ By permission of the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library. The original digital photo was taken by L. Goodey.

¹⁴ Kerr, *Descriptions*.

¹⁵ G. Cavallo, *Ricerche sulla maiuscola biblica*, Studi e testi di papirologia editi dall’Istituto papirologico “G. Vitelli” di Firenze 2 (Firenze 1967) 76–107.

Therefore H. Maehler dates the hand to not later than the 5th century,¹⁶ based on such features as the lack of contrast between vertical and horizontal strokes and the older form of K with the arms to the stem. He suggests the following fragments of parchment manuscripts as parallels: P. Amh. II 24 (the second half of the 4th century),¹⁷ PSI II 129 (the second half of the 4th century)¹⁸ and PSI X 1166 (4th century).¹⁹

They all, however, unlike Add. 7872, display more calligraphically accomplished hands – as was common for late antique parchment manuscripts. As G. Cavallo pointed out, parchment codices of Classical authors written in majuscule were normally connected with high level calligraphy.²⁰ The use of parchment (as opposed to papyrus), the large size and the spacious page layout of Add. 7872 may imply that the original manuscript was designed as a splendid book, though this hypothesis is contradicted by the rather careless script of the fragment. However, the lack of information on this fragment does not allow us to account for this discrepancy.

The lower script does not provide any clues as to its possible place of origin. Fragments of Homeric manuscripts from late antiquity have survived in large numbers, both on papyrus and parchment,²¹ many of them with peculiar readings. The task of their geographical and (to a lesser extent) chronological identification still remains to be attempted.

The upper script, too, is written in a generic script that was used throughout the Greek-speaking world, and does not allow us to deduce where the

¹⁶ Personal communication. I thank H. Maehler for his help in dating the hand and finding parallel examples.

¹⁷ G. Cavallo – H. Maehler. *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period A. D. 300–800*. Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 47 (London 1987) 34 and pl. 13 c.

¹⁸ G. Cavallo – E. Crisci – G. Messeri – R. Pintaudi (eds.), *Scrivere libri e documenti nel mondo antico. Mostra di papiri della Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana 25 agosto – 25 settembre 1998*. Papyrologica Florentina 30 (Firenze 1998) pp. 123–124 nr. 43 and pl. 35.

¹⁹ Cavallo – Crisci – Messeri – Pintaudi (eds.), *Scrivere*, pp. 121–122 nr. 41 and pl. 34.

²⁰ G. Cavallo. “Libro e pubblico alla fine del mondo antico”, in G. Cavallo (ed.) *Libri, editori e pubblico nel mondo antico. Guida storica e critica* (Bari 1977) 88: “Se ci volgiamo alla produzione membranacea di testi greci profani, essa si presenta piuttosto esigua nei secoli IV e V, più abbondante nel VI: e quel che si può con immediatezza rilevare è la stretta connessione ch’essa mostra con le scritture calligrafiche, canonizzate e rigidamente legate alle norme che ne sono alla base (specialmente stretta è la connessione tra pergamena e maiuscola biblica, la scrittura nata “laica” ma man mano riservata alle sacre scritture). A parte l’uso pressoché costante delle scritture calligrafiche, il codice di pergamena rivela ... formato quadrato o quasi nel IV e fino all’inizio del V secolo, moderatamente oblungo più tardi, preferenza per la *mise en page* in due o più colonne, architettura compatta della pagina con margini di regola stretti ... Si tratta di prodotti di alto livello librario o almeno molto accurati, i quali si incontrano a partire dal IV secolo”.

²¹ See a list in D. F. Sutton, *Homer and the Papyri*, <http://eee.uci.edu/papyri/>

original manuscript was reused. John Chrysostom was definitely one of the most widely read Church Fathers in the Middle Ages, and his texts have survived in numerous manuscripts, including palimpsests, where they occur both as upper scripts and as lower scripts. However, to my knowledge, there is no other palimpsest with Homer in lower script and John Chrysostom in upper script. It would be desirable to compare this fragment to other palimpsests with John Chrysostom in upper script, but this undertaking has to be postponed until there are more convenient ways of comparing large numbers of Greek palimpsests.

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Нижний слой палимпсеста Cambridge University Library Add. 7872 содержит отрывок “Илиады”, написанный *библейским маюскулом*. На основании палеографического анализа текст датируется IV–V вв. н. э.; однако вопрос контраста между небрежностью написания и роскошным оформлением (использование пергамента, размер листа, широкие поля) остается открытым.