

# The Book of the Himyarites



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# The Book of the Himyarites

Fragments of a Hitherto Unknown Syriac Work

Edited and Translated by

Axel Moberg



2010

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## Series Foreword

This series provides reference works in Syriac studies from original books digitized at the ICOR library of The Catholic University of America under the supervision of Monica Blanchard, ICOR's librarian. The project was carried out by Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute and Brigham Young University. About 675 books were digitized, most of which will appear in this series.

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We are grateful to the head librarian at CUA, Adele R. Chwalek, who was kind enough to permit this project. "We are custodians, not owners of this collection," she generously said at a small gathering that celebrated the completion of the project. We are also grateful to Sidney Griffith who supported the project.



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VII.

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AXEL MOBERG  
THE BOOK OF THE HIMYARITES

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THE BOOK  
OF THE HIMYARITES

FRAGMENTS OF A HITHERTO UNKNOWN  
SYRIAC WORK

EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATION,

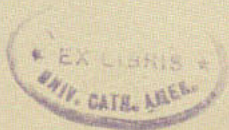
BY

AXEL MOBERG

WITH EIGHT FACSIMILES



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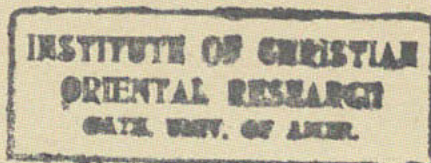
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## PREFACE

In the Årsberättelse 1920—1921 of Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapsamfundet i Lund, published in September 1921, I accounted for the discovery of the fragments of the Book of the Himyarites (see also below, p. xi). It is much against my wish that the publication of the text of those fragments has been delayed till now. My excuse is solely other work, that could not be postponed, the edition of the Greater Grammar of Bar Hebraeus, published 1922, and my university duties, which prevented me, over and over again, for weeks and months, from dealing with the fragments.

In offering now, at last, the present volume to the public it has been my main object to give an absolutely trustworthy edition of the text of the remains of the Book of the Himyarites. Before reading this text, however, it is necessary to take notice of the short introductory remark on pp. cxlix f.

The translation is intended to bring this text, in a practically speaking exact form, within the reach also of him who is not acquainted with the Syriac language. In this translation, therefore, the portions restored by way of conjecture, or the reading of which is doubtful, are enclosed between brackets. The lacunae in the text not conjecturally filled up are also indicated in the translation. It should be observed, however, that the notes "lines (or "one line") missing", inserted in the translation, refer to those lines of the MS. only of which no letter at all remains. Smaller lacunae, or even lacunae extending over the space of a line or more but not embracing an actual line of the MS., are marked only by . . . . . The actual space of the gap in such a case is to be found by consulting the Syriac text and the notes on it. As to the forms of the names of persons in the translation see the remarks on p. lxxx.

The Facsimiles are intended not only to convey an idea of the condition of the fragments but also to act as substitutes for the originals on some specially interesting points in the text. Unfortunately the size

of the volume did not allow them to be given in the full size of the originals. Only the facsimiles on Plate VIII are full-sized. The size of the other facsimiles can be estimated by comparing those on that plate and consulting the statements on pp. xiii f.

The Introduction contains first the description of the fragments together with other particulars necessary for the textual criticism. Further, I have collected there the materials, and indicated the principal points of view considered of importance for the critical appreciation of the narrative itself in its literary relations and historical value.

It was thus my endeavour to lay a sure basis for further investigation, and to facilitate the study of this new source to the history of Arabia and the struggle of religions and nations there. But I did not think myself entitled to delay the publication of that source by myself discussing, at first hand, all the questions involved. Many a problem is only touched in passing and the previous discussion of these questions is not recapitulated but, as a rule, taken as being known to the reader.

I am greatly obliged to Mr. H. Caudwell, English lector in the university of Lund, for correcting the English of my manuscript.

I wish to thank here my friend and colleague, Professor Martin P. Nilsson, for the interest he has taken, as Secretary of Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, in the preparation of this volume.

My heartiest thanks are due to the owners of the fragments edited, Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Wirén, of Stocksund, for the true scientific interest with which they readily granted permission to publish their precious manuscript, and for the confidence and courteous patience they have shown in placing it at my disposal and entrusting it to my care for several years.

Lund, *September*, 1924.

AXEL MOBERG.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	v
INTRODUCTION	
THE MANUSCRIPT	
A manuscript and its boards . . . . .	xi
The remnants of an old codex . . . . .	xiii
Table of fragments . . . . .	xxiii
THE BOOK OF THE HIMYARITES AND ITS RELATION TO OTHER NARRATIVES ON THE ABYSSINIAN- HIMYARITIC STRUGGLES . . . . .	xxiv
The ecclesiastical tradition . . . . .	xxv
The profane tradition . . . . .	xli
The Muhammadan tradition . . . . .	xliii
REMARKS ON THE NARRATIVE OF THE BOOK OF THE HIMYARITES . . . . .	xlvii
THE SOURCES OF THE BOOK OF THE HIMYARITES AND ITS AUTHOR . . . . .	lxiii
THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE BOOK OF THE HIMYA- RITES . . . . .	lxvii
APPENDIX. NAMES OF PERSONS AND PLACES	
Prefatory remarks on the Personal Names . . . . .	lxxviii
List of Names of Persons and Places . . . . .	lxxxiv
TRANSLATION . . . . .	xcix
NOTES ON THE SYRIAC TEXT . . . . .	cxlvii
ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS . . . . .	clxxi
FACSIMILES, Plates I—VIII	
SYRIAC TEXT . . . . .	1-61





INTRODUCTION



## THE MANUSCRIPT

### A MANUSCRIPT AND ITS BOARDS

In the spring of 1920 I received for examination a Syriac manuscript belonging to two Swedish bibliophiles, Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Wirén of Stocksund. The owners had themselves observed that the cloth-covered boards of the volume, which were ripped open, also contained a number of fragments in Syriac writing, and they were interested to know something about them as well as about the main manuscript.

Prying into the boards I happened to read on one of the many fragments there hidden the lines that are to be found in the present volume p. 54<sup>a</sup>, 15-25. As I was fairly certain, at the first glance, that those lines had not been met with, up to that date, in all Syriac literature, I proposed to the owners to let a competent person open the boards and take out the fragments of old MSS. of which the boards were composed. My proposal was accepted and in December 1920 I received for further examination a bundle of fragments, greater and smaller, that had been found in the boards together with some pieces of embroidered linen, possibly of Egyptian make of the thirteenth century. Amongst those fragments, the greatest part turned out to be the remnants of a work, the title of which was once "The Book of the Himyarites". It is the text of these fragments that is now edited for the first time in this volume.<sup>1)</sup>

Before going on to describe in some detail the fragments and the MS. of that work I think fit to make some remarks as to the MS. in the boards of which the fragments were found. As stated already in my note just cited, it contains a collection of liturgies for the celebration of the Eucharist in the Jacobite Church. The volume has lost many leaves, especially at the beginning and at the end. There are remains of 29 quires of 10 leaves each, of which however only 7 quires still retain all their original leaves; two further quires are made complete

<sup>1)</sup> Cf. Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund. *Årsberättelse 1920-1921*, pp. 30-40.

by means of additional leaves written by a second hand; all the rest are more or less defective. Several leaves are loose from the binding.

The first leaves existing contain the latter part of a liturgy of the Eucharist, which ends (fol. 18<sup>b</sup>)<sup>1)</sup> with a special note (ܘܡܫܘܠ ܘܡܫܘܠ ܘܡܫܘܠ) bearing the date 1781 of the Seleucidian era, *i. e.* A. D. 1469—70. On the next leaf but one (20<sup>b</sup>) begins an introduction to the solemn bringing in of the holy elements (ܘܡܫܘܠ ܘܡܫܘܠ). The leaf 25<sup>a</sup> brings an Index of liturgies of the Eucharist, which is in conformity with the contents of all the rest of the volume. It runs:

*Index of Liturgies.*

1. of James, the brother of the Lord, 2. of Simeon Kepha,
3. of the twelve Apostles, 4. ܘܡܫܘܠ, *i. e.* of Julius, 6. of Mar Thomas Ḥarqlāyā, 7. of Ignatius the "Igneous", 8. of Mar Philoxenos of Mabbogh, 9. of the same Mar Philoxenos, 10. of Mar Xystos (Sixtus), 11. of Matthew the Shepherd, 12. of Mar Dionysios, 13. of St. John the Evangelist, 14. of Mar Eustathios, 15. of Mar Kyrillos, 16. of Mar James the Doctor, 17. of Mar Philoxenos of Bagdad.

In the midst of this last liturgy the MS. ends abruptly, many leaves of the quire being missing. A colophon therefore is not to be found nor otherwise any statement as to the date or the provenience of the MS. apart from the year given above.

This kind of liturgical MSS. is well known amongst scholars and has many representatives in the libraries of Europe.<sup>2)</sup> It is not necessary therefore, I think, to dwell longer on this subject.

As to the leaves and fragments of which the boards were composed they belonged to three if not four different MSS. But by far the greatest part of them came from the MS. that contained once the Book of the Himyarites. The rest, about a dozen greater pieces and some small fragments from two (or three) different MSS., one of which is in two or three different handwritings, are in a very bad condition. The text in the few fragments from one of those MSS. is still tolerably legible; it contains some trifling lines out of medical or chemical recipes. The fragments of the second of those MSS. only by exception present a single line that is legible from end to end, notwithstanding the lines

<sup>1)</sup> The numbering of the leaves is a preliminary one. Originally this leaf belonged to the fourth quire of the MS.

<sup>2)</sup> See A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn 1922), Register s. v. *Anaphora*.

being only 9—9.5 centimetres in length and the comparatively large handwriting allowing only four or five words in each line. The size of the page of this MS. was 18 centimetres by 14; to be fitted in the boards the pages had to be pasted together to pieces of the size 21 centimetres by 16.5, which was the size of the boards. The book-binder has done his work very well and, as the leaves now are full of holes, decayed and brittle, it has been difficult, often impossible, to separate them from each other. This task has been brought about, therefore, only so far as to insure no fragment of the Book of the Himyarites being hidden in these pieces of paper pasted together. The contents of these fragments seem to be prayers.

From the same volume certainly is another piece in a quite different, though also West-Syrian handwriting, immediately taking up a line of what seems to be the first hand. Two more fragments are in a writing closely resembling this latter one though perhaps larger and stronger. They are written, however, in Karshūnī.

All these fragments thus are of no special interest as to their contents. And I have not been able to discover in them any hint as to the date when they were put in the boards. I think, however, one can take the date given above, the year A. D. 1469—70, as the approximate date of the liturgical MS. itself and probably at the same time it was bound in the boards which have up till now hidden in their interior the fragments in question.

#### THE REMNANTS OF AN OLD CODEX

By far the greatest part of the fragments in the boards and the best preserved of them, belong to the Book of the Himyarites and to another work, a theological compilation, originally contained in the same volume. These fragments are fifty-eight in number, forty-nine of which are from the Book of the Himyarites, six from the other work, while three small pieces (Fragm. XLV, L, LI) are not yet identified though they, probably, are from the Book of the Himyarites too. One of the fragments (Fragm. XXX) contains, besides a portion of the text of the colophon of that book, also the first part of the theological treatise.

The fragments of the Book of the Himyarites vary considerably in size and condition. Originally the page of the MS. was of the size 26 centimetres by 16 (or 16.5) or thereabout. The number of lines on the page varied from 25 to 31. To be fitted into the board this page

had to be cut down to the size of 21 centimetres instead of 26, cf. above, p. xiii. Of this size are the fragments I, II, IX—XVIII, XXVI—XXX (cf. Plates I and IV) and, originally, one more, which, however, now is torn in half lengthways giving in consequence the two *Fragm.* XXIII and XXIV. *Fragm.* XXV looks like these two, but is much damaged, and has, not to mention other defects, lost about one third of its length. The fragments VII—VIII, XIX—XXII represent respectively the upper and lower portions of leaves which have been cut right in half (cf. Plates III, V, and VI). The fragments III—VI offer specimens of a third type. Two coherent leaves have been trimmed down to one piece of the normal size (21 centimetres by 16) by cutting off the exterior parts all round the required shape (cf. Plate II). Fortunately some of the strips which had been cut off by this procedure likewise have been put in the boards, and are now the fragments XXXI—XLII, XLIV, LII, and, probably, XLV (cf. Plate VII). The fragments XLIII, XLVI—XLIX, finally, are small pieces broken off from some of the greater fragments and so, probably, are also the fragments L and LI, though I have not succeeded in replacing them (cf. Plate VII).

The fragments of the theological treatise are, besides *Fragm.* XXX, mentioned above, five leaves of the kind of the *Fragm.* I, II, and XXVI—XXX just described; the sixth one is a little fragment broken off from a greater leaf.

These works, the Book of the Himyarites and the theological treatise, have both formed parts of the same volume. The *Fragm.* XXX bears as just stated, in the first column of the leaf, what certainly is the end of the final note of the first work together with an introductory note to the second. The leaves belonging to this work are of the same size and of the same paper and the ink and the handwriting are the same. The only difference is that, though the pages of the Book of the Himyarites are written in two columns, some of the pages of the theological treatise—in all seven pages out of eleven and a half—are not divided in the same way.

All these fragments of the Book of the Himyarites are of course not in the same condition<sup>1)</sup>. *Fragm.* IX—XVIII are comparatively well preserved. They are clipped both at top and bottom: at the top without damaging the text, while at the bottom in some cases one line is missing,

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<sup>1)</sup> For details in every case see the corresponding page of the text and the notes on that page.

in other cases the text is intact, or at least can be reconstructed from the remnants of script still left. In other respects these fragments are in the best condition: the paper is not injured either by damp or by worms and the writing stands out clearly and distinctly. Small holes obviously made by the bookbinder for fixing the boards in the binding are quite harmless. The other fragments of the same size, viz. I, II, and XXIII—XXX, are in a much inferior state, torn and worm-eaten, with, in most cases, a considerable portion of one corner worn off. In very bad condition are the Fragm. XIX—XXII, while Fragm. VII and VIII are nearly as well preserved as Fragm. IX—XVIII. Of each of these two fragments, however, one border has been worn out, the result of which is that three or four lines are missing in the midst of the leaf of which they represent respectively the upper and the lower portions. On the other hand they give good specimens, as also the Fragm. XXXI—XXXIII, XXXVI, XXXIX do, of the original upper and lower margins of the pages otherwise cut away. In tolerably good condition also are Fragm. III—VI in themselves, though they have had their place in a corner of the board which has been much worn. But the manner in which they were adapted for the purpose of the bookbinder has led to a lamentable consequence for the conservation of the text of the leaves of which they form parts. As already stated, the upper and lower portions of these leaves are to be found in the strips Fragm. XXXI—XXXIII and others. But also the exterior parts of the leaves have been cut away with the result that the exterior columns of these leaves are missing nearly totally or, at the best, to the half of their breadth, as is to be seen pp. 7—22 of the Syriac text (cf. Plate II). In addition, Fragm. V has in its upper part a half-round gap, over portions of three lines, which, however, can be filled up by Fragm. XLVIII.

In some cases, not very many, a border or a corner of a fragment has got stained by damp and in consequence the script has become difficult to read if not illegible. Otherwise it is clear and distinct, and has very likely been better preserved in the boards than it could have been under ordinary circumstances.

The script is a regular old Jacobite hand. Had it not been for the date given by the MS. itself, viz. A. D. 932 (see *infra* p. xxi), I should have felt disposed to make it even a hundred years older. It shows a close resemblance to the Edessene Syriac script of the *Codex Climaci Rescriptus*, which has been ascribed by Rev. G. Margoliouth and

Mr. A. G. Ellis to the beginning of the ninth century.<sup>1)</sup> If anything, I should have been inclined to think it even slightly older than that script.

The MS. is most carefully written. The punctuation is of the same character as in the MS. just referred to. Especially the interpunctuation is consistently carried through; the diacritical points are used in the ordinary, not very clear way. It is somewhat striking that the upper and the lower point so often are placed respectively over and under the same letter thus producing, as it would seem, a sign — like the East-Syrian P<sup>e</sup>thāhā. In fact, such an interpretation of the sign seems reasonable enough in cases such as  $\text{ܣܡܥܝܐ}$  (p. 8<sup>a</sup>),  $\text{ܦܘܩܝܐ}$  (Perf. with suffix, p. 27<sup>b</sup>), and the personal names  $\text{ܚܝܝܐ}$  (Hāyya, p. 30<sup>b</sup>),  $\text{ܕܒܒ}$  (Dabb, p. 24<sup>b</sup>), and others. That, however, it would not be the true one is shown by the fact that the same sign occurs very often also in words that have no P<sup>e</sup>thāhā, e.g., not only in such cases as  $\text{ܐܘܪܝܝܐ}$  (p. 3<sup>a</sup>, 61),  $\text{ܐܘܪܝܐ}$  (p. 7<sup>b</sup>), but also in  $\text{ܐܘܪܝܐ}$  ( $\text{ܐܘܪܝܐ}$ , p. 27<sup>b</sup>),  $\text{ܐܘܪܝܐ}$  ( $\text{ܐܘܪܝܐ}$ , p. 27<sup>b</sup>),  $\text{ܐܘܪܝܐ}$  ( $\text{ܐܘܪܝܐ}$ , p. 6<sup>b</sup>).

Real vowel-signs do not occur in the MS. except, in three cases, a West-Syrian P<sup>e</sup>thāhā, viz. in the place-names  $\text{ܕܘܪܝܝܐ}$  (p. 7<sup>b</sup>),  $\text{ܕܘܪܝܝܐ}$ , p. 8<sup>b</sup>), and  $\text{ܕܘܪܝܐ}$  (p. 8<sup>a</sup>). This, in my eyes, looks just like an early instance of a new method of indicating the correct pronunciation of not commonly known words. These vowel-signs are all of the first hand-writing, no second hand being met with throughout the MS. But, of course, they may have been taken over from an older MS. and this is probably the case.

The headings are in red but the name of the tyrant Jewish king, Masrūq, is in black even in the rubrics. In red are also, in the Index of Chapters, pp. 3—6, the Syriac characters, giving the number of each chapter, as well as the first word (*i. e.*  $\text{ܐܘܪܝܐ}$ ) of each rubric.

On the top of some leaves the word  $\text{ܕܘܪܝܝܐ}$  (on the verso), or the word  $\text{ܕܘܪܝܝܐ}$  (on the recto), is written with red ink in Estrangelo characters, thus giving, as a running title, the title of the work  $\text{ܕܘܪܝܝܐ}$ . The sign  $\text{ܘܪܝܐ}$  is placed (with rare exceptions) at the beginning of the first line of every column (on Fragm. XXXI<sup>3</sup>, p. 13<sup>a</sup>, even at the beginning of the second line, obviously by a mistake). The name of the Virgin Mary, of a saint, or a bishop is marked with a little cross ( $\text{+}$  or  $\text{⋈}$ ) above the line, sometimes even below it, but the name Masrūq

<sup>1)</sup> See *Horae Semiticae*, No. VIII, Codex Climaci Rescriptus . . . . . ed. by Agnes Smith Lewis (Cambridge 1909), p. XI.

(with very few exceptions) is written upside down. The remnants of the running title occur on *Fragm.* II<sup>v</sup>, XXXIV<sup>2</sup>, XXXIV<sup>3</sup>, VII<sup>v</sup>, IX<sup>r</sup>, XVIII<sup>v</sup>, XXI<sup>r</sup>, cf. Syriac text pp. 6, 10, 11, 24, 25, 44, 47. As the text runs without interruption from p. 23 to p. 44, no leaf missing, there originally were, as there still are, from p. 25, which bears the word *ܠܘܣܘܢ*, to p. 44, with the word *ܠܘܣܘܢ*, (inclusive) just twenty pages, *i. e.*, ten leaves, or the whole of an ordinary quire, a quinion. Now it was a custom amongst Syrian scribes to write the running title, if they cared for one, on the first and last pages of the quire. If this has been the case here *Fragm.* IX—XVIII form a complete quinion of our MS., *Fragm.* VII and VIII (pp. 23f.) being the last leaf of the preceding one. I have detected no quire-marks; see, however, note on p. 47.

There is, however, a circumstance that makes it a question whether in the MS. of the Book of the Himyarites the running title was written in that way. For *Fragm.* XXXIV, which represents the top of a pair of conjugate leaves, bears again on two pages the two words of this running title. But, as can be seen from pp. 10 and 11 of the edition, these pages give a continuous text; thus they are not, as one might think from the fact that the running title is to be found on them, the outer pages of the exterior pair of leaves of the quire, but the inner pages of the interior pair of leaves of it. Hence, in this case, the running title was written in the middle of the quire. We cannot know for certain whether it was so placed instead of on the outer pages of the quire, or whether it was written in both places.

In consequence, when *Fragm.* II (see p. 6) bears the first word of the title, *ܠܘܣܘܢ*, it may be because it was the fifth leaf of a quire or possibly the tenth one. *Fragm.* I, thus, was either the fourth leaf or the ninth. If the last was the case I scarcely think it possible that the Book was the first work contained in the MS. For eight leaves certainly are too large a space for the introductory note that ends on *Fragm.* I.

And, in fact, the probability is that the running title even in this work was placed, ordinarily, on the first and last pages of the quire, and was only accidentally written in the middle of the quire of which *Fragm.* XXXIV is a portion. For it is more probable that the ten leaves *Fragm.* IX—XVIII, of which the first and the last ones bear each its portion of the running title, once formed a complete quire, than that they should have formed the last half of one quire and the first half of the following. Much the same is the case with *Fragm.* XXI—XXX,

of which the first one has the second portion of the title, and which, with the addition of two leaves of the theological treatise, may have formed, also, a complete quire. On the presumption, thus, that leaves bearing the portions of the running title are, as a rule, the first and last leaves respectively of a quire of ten leaves and only in one case the fifth and sixth ones, the following table of quires has been drawn up to show the original places in the MS. of the fragments still extant, as well as, to some degree at least, the extent of the lacunae and the contents of the different quires. In this table the sign (a) after the designation of a fragment denotes that the page of which this fragment forms part bears the first, the sign (b) that it bears the last word of the running title.

TABLE OF QUIRES

Quire	Leaf in the quire	Fragments or lacunae	Pages of the edition	Contents	
A	1	} missing			
	2				
	3				
	4				
	5				
	6				
	7				
	8				
		9	Fragm. I	3-4	Preface ( <i>continued</i> ), Index
		10	Fragm. II (a)	5-6	Index ( <i>continued</i> )
Quire (or quires) missing				Chapter I-VII	
B	1	Fragm. III, XXXI, XXXII	7-8	Chap. VII ( <i>end</i> ), VIII <sup>1)</sup>	
	2	} missing		Chap. VIII ( <i>continued</i> )	
	3				
	4				
		5	Fragm. IV, XXXIII, XXXIV (a)	9-10	Chap. VIII ( <i>end</i> ), IX
		6	Fragm. IV, XXXIII, XXXIV (b)	11-12	Chap. IX ( <i>continued</i> )
		7	} missing		Chap. IX ( <i>end</i> ), X, XI, XII, XIII
	8				
	9				
		10	Fragm. III, XXXI, XXXII	13-14	Chap. XIII ( <i>continued</i> )

<sup>1)</sup> It must be stated that no trace of the running title is to be seen on the fragment XXXI though it contains the upper margin of the leaves here supposed to have been the first and last ones of the quire. By supposing them, however, to be the second and ninth leaves too little space is left for Chapters X-XII.

Quire	Leaf in the quire	Fragments or lacunae	Pages of the edition	Contents	
C	1	missing		Chap. XIII ( <i>continued</i> )	
	2	Fragm. V, XXXV, XXXVIII, XLVIII	15-16	Chap. XIII ( <i>end</i> ), XIV	
	3	Fragm. VI, XXXVI, XXXVII, XLIV,	17-18	Chap. XIV ( <i>end</i> )	
	4	} missing	LII	Chap. XV, XVI	
	5				
	6				
	7				
	8				
		8	Fragm. VI, XXXVI, XL	19-20	Chap. XVI ( <i>continued</i> )
		9	Fragm. V, XXXIX, XLI	21-22	Chap. XVI ( <i>end</i> ), XVII
	10	missing		Chap. XVII ( <i>continued</i> )	
D	1	} missing		Chap. XVII (?), XVIII, XIX	
	2				
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		10	Fragm. VII, VIII (a)	23-24	Chap. XIX ( <i>continued</i> )
E	1	Fragm. IX (b)	25-26	Chap. XIX ( <i>end</i> ), XX	
	2	Fragm. X	27-28	Chap. XX ( <i>continued</i> )	
	3	Fragm. XI	29-30	Chap. XX ( <i>end</i> ), XXI	
	4	Fragm. XII	31-32	Chap. XXI ( <i>continued</i> )	
	5	Fragm. XIII	33-34	Chap. XXI ( <i>continued</i> )	
	6	Fragm. XIV	35-36	Chap. XXI ( <i>end</i> ), XXII	
	7	Fragm. XV	37-38	Chap. XXII ( <i>continued</i> )	
	8	Fragm. XVI	39-40	Chap. XXII ( <i>continued</i> )	
	9	Fragm. XVII	41-42	Chap. XXII ( <i>continued</i> )	
		10	Fragm. XVIII (a)	43-44	Chap. XXII ( <i>end</i> ), XXIII
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