Karrer, Martin, and Wolfgang Kraus, eds., with the assistance of Martin Meiser


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This voluminous, comprehensive, and valuable book with twenty-four German and twenty-one English contributions is the result of an international conference held at Wuppertal, Germany, in July 2006. Esteemed Septuagint scholars from all around the world participated. The outcome was both a state-of-the-art of Septuagint research as well as incentives for further research. The conference was organized by Martin Karrer (Wuppertal-Bethel, Germany) and Wolfgang Kraus (Saarbrücken, Germany) within the framework of the project Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D; http://www.septuaginta-deutsch.de/). The main goal of this project was a translation of the Septuagint into German, which has already appeared. An accompanying handbook to the Septuagint is in preparation.

The articles in the congress volume are subsumed under the following five headings: (1) “Die Septuaginta als Textsammlung, ihre Edition und Übersetzung”; (2) “Umwelt und Kontexte”; (3) “Lexikographie und Grammatik”; (4) “Schriften und Schriftengruppen in der Septuaginta,” the largest part by far; and (5) “Wirkungen” of the Septuagint in early Judaism and Christianity.
The arrangement of the part about lexicography and grammar after the part about the “Umwelt und Kontexte” is remarkable. One could surmise that the editors seem to find contextualization more important than the exegetical “handicraft”; the subtitle of the book, “Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten,” could also lead in this direction. The fact, however, that the editors announce the two parts in reverse order in the preface (vi) shows that there must have been a longer process of reflection about the arrangement. I would have welcomed the editors to substantiate their considerations for the book’s arrangement (which is, admittedly, rather complex with so many and manifold contributions).

From these many papers I would like to single out the programmatic “Umfang und Text der Septuaginta: Erwägungen nach dem Abschluss der deutschen Übersetzung,” by the two editors, Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus. In this lengthy contribution (fifty-six pages), they address the prolegomena of the translation of the LXX into German or any other translation of the LXX. Which writings belong to the Septuagint, and, accordingly, which “Septuagint” forms the foundation for the translation? The answer to this question is rather complex and depends on the historical and socioreligious perspective (early Jewish, early Christian, humanistic, etc.). The different perspectives obviously result in diverse text bases. For practical reasons, the LXX.D follows the extent and arrangement (with the exception of the Psalms of Solomon) of the LXX edition of Alfred Rahlfs. Besides, the possible Jewish original LXX writings are taken as a basis. An exception is the Christian collection of the Odes. These original writings, however, are produced over a few centuries and are of different provenance and character. In short, the Septuagint as such did not emerge as a whole at one single point but was the outcome of a longer process. This is, of course, a well-known insight, but it has great consequences for the definition of the text base for a translation.

The same accordingly applies to the arrangement of the books. Evidence of many other alignments exists, and the arrangement in LXX.D, following almost entirely the edition of Rahlfs, is no less and no more than the least common scholarly denominator. Nevertheless, the authors plead for an ongoing reflection of the various text bases and arrangements of the Septuagint in Jewish and Christian traditions. Comprehension of Scripture and the definition of a canon is a hermeneutical process elucidating the comprehension of the various socioreligious traditions.

This article alone already makes this congress volume a valuable one. It is not possible to look into the many and interesting articles, so I will only list them:

Übersetzung” (8–63); Siegfried Kreuzer, “Papyrus 967—Bemerkungen zu seiner buchtechnischen, textgeschichtlichen und kanongeschichtlichen Bedeutung” (64–82); Martin Rösel, “Schreiber, Übersetzer, Theologen: Die Septuaginta als Dokument der Schrift-, Lese- und Übersetzungs culturen des Judentums” (83–102); Benjamin G. Wright, “The Septuagint and Its Modern Translators” (103–14).


The book closes with thirty-four pages with useful appendices: a list with Internet sites relating to Septuagint research as well as five indices (ancient sources, modern authors, subjects and ancient persons, Greek words, Hebrew words). Unfortunately, not all the titles in the table of contents match the exact titles in the book.

To sum up, Die Septuaginta—Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten is, almost throughout, a book of high standard. It is very informative and rich as it deals with many various aspects of LXX research. This includes the “prolegomena,” such as questions about the basic and/or authoritative text, the extension, and the arrangement of the so-called Septuagint. I can therefore without any hesitation recommend this volume, and I trust that it will find many interested readers.