New Test. Stud. 47, pp. 262–266. Printed in the United Kingdom © 2001 Cambridge University Press

SHORT STUDY

Seven Stades to Emmaus

S. REECE
Dept of Classics, Saint Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057, USA

Luke 24.13–35 narrates the story of how the recently crucified and risen Christ meets up with two of his perplexed and despondent disciples as they are walking from Jerusalem to the town of Emmaus, how he explains to them as they walk together that it had been foretold long ago by the prophets that Christ would suffer and die, how he is persuaded by them, when evening has come, to break his journey at their home in Emmaus, how he reveals himself to them at dinner in the breaking of the bread, and, finally, how the two disciples return immediately, even at this late hour, to Jerusalem in order to report these miraculous events to the 11 apostles.

The town of Luke's Emmaus has not been securely located. The difficulties of identification are exacerbated by the variations in the readings of the NT manuscripts as to the distance of Emmaus from Jerusalem:

> Καὶ ἰδοὺ δύο ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἦσαν πορευόμενοι εἰς κώμην ἀπέχουσαν σταδίους ἑξήκοντα [some MSS ἑκατὸν ἑξήκοντα; one MS ἑπτά] ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλήμ, ᾗ ὄνομα Ἐμμαοῦς, καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡμίλουν πρὸς ἀλλήλους περὶ πάντων τῶν συμβεβηκότων τούτων.[1]

The most reliable reading is 60 stades (σταδίους ἑξήκοτα, i.e., 7½ Roman miles), which is supported by many ancient and diverse manuscripts.[2] This reading led some of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century pilgrims to locate Emmaus in the town of Abu Ghosh, about 73 stades west of Jerusalem on what was in the first century the primary (southern) road to Lydda and Jaffa. But when the regular route for pilgrims was transferred in the middle of the thirteenth century to a parallel road to the north, through Beit Nuba and Biddu, they began to locate Emmaus in the town of al-Qubeiba, about 75 stades west of Jerusalem on what was in the first century the secondary road to Lydda and Jaffa.[3]

1 Luke 24.13–14 (text of the Fourth Revised Edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament).

2 P^{75}, A, B, D, K^2, L, W, X, Δ, Ψ, 063, 0124, f^1, f^{13}, along with most other Greek minuscules and most of the ancient versions.

3 For details, see M. Fischer, B. Isaac, and I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea II: The Jaffa–Jerusalem Roads* (Oxford: Tempus Reparatum, 1996) 113–120 (Abu Ghosh), 237–41 (al Qubeiba). I have based all distances, both in stades and in Roman miles, not on literary

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688502000188 Published online by Cambridge University Press

A somewhat less reliable reading is 160 stades (σταδίους ἑκατὸν εξήκοντα, i.e., 20 Roman miles), which is supported by fewer and less diverse manuscripts.[4] This reading led to the very early identification – advocated by some of the Church fathers (Eusebius, Jerome, Sozomen) – of Ammaus/Emmaus, later called Nicopolis, about 146 stades west of Jerusalem on the primary (southern) road to Lydda and Jaffa, as Lucan Emmaus. Or, perhaps more likely, it was the early acceptance of this site as Lucan Emmaus that led to this reading in the manuscripts.[5]

But I am interested here in a third, even less reliable, reading – 7 stades (*stadia septem*) – that is found in but one NT manuscript: the Old Latin Codex Palatinus (it^{e}). No town of Emmaus has ever been located this close to Jerusalem. And if 160 stades (20 Roman miles) is much too far from Jerusalem, given the circumstances of the story (i.e. for travelling from Jerusalem to Emmaus in the course of one day, and then back again to Jerusalem after the evening meal to find the 11 and those with them still gathered together and awake), surely 7 stades (less than one Roman mile) is much too close (i.e. for the substantial conversation – 'beginning with Moses and all the prophets' [v. 27] – that takes place between Jesus and the two disciples). How did such an absurd reading arise? And how did it come to reside, without any explication, in one of the earliest and most important codices of the Old Latin NT?

Since this variant, limited though it is to a single manuscript of a Latin version, is displayed quite prominently in the apparatus criticus of the United Bible Societies' Greek NT, placed even before the much more reliable variant 160 stades, it has often caused much perplexity among my students of NT Greek. It deserves more explanation than has hitherto been offered.

Codex Palatinus (it^{e})

The Old Latin Codex Palatinus (it^{e}), a fourth- or fifth-century deluxe manuscript on purple parchment with silver ink and gold initials containing the four gospels (with some substantial lacunae), records at Luke 24.13–14:

---

sources, which are notoriously inaccurate, but on the actual measurements by excavators of the physical remains of the old Roman roads as reported in M. Fischer, *Roman Roads*, 296–97.

4 א, K*, Θ, Π, 079, 1079*, along with a few ancient versions and some of the patristics (Eusebius, Jerome, Sozomen).

5 For details, see Fischer *et al.*, *Roman Roads*, 151–9 (Emmaus/Nicopolis [Imwas]). On the identification of Ammaus/Emmaus, later called Nicopolis, as Lucan Emmaus, see also F.-M. Abel, 'La distance de Jérusalem à Emmaüs', *RB* 34 (1925) 347–67; L.H. Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Emmaüs: sa basilique et son histoire* (Paris: Leroux, 1932) 403–30.

There are other sites that have been proposed as the Lucan Emmaus, even though they are located neither 60 nor 160 stades from Jerusalem, most convincingly the site of biblical Motzah, later called Colonia (and apparently called Ammaus by Josephus), which is about 34 stades west of Jerusalem on the primary (southern) road to Lydda and Jaffa. On the identification of Motzah/Colonia as the Lucan Emmaus, see Fischer *et al.*, *Roman Roads*, 222–9 (Motza); R. M. Mackowski, 'Where is Biblical Emmaus', *Science et Esprit* 32 (1980) 93–103.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688502000188 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> fuerunt autem duo ex illis euntes ipsa die in castellum quod est ab hierosolymis stadia septem. nomine ammaus et cleopas fabulabantur autem ad invicem de omnibus quae accederant.[6]

Codex Palatinus surprisingly records the distance from Jerusalem to the town as 7 stades (*stadia septem*). Even more surprisingly, it uses the name Ammaus not as the designation of the town but as the name of one of the two travellers (i.e. Cleopas's comrade – cf. v. 18); but that is another story, only loosely related to the problem at hand.[7]

Codex Palatinus is absolutely unique among all NT manuscripts, not only Greek but also Latin, in its reading '7 stades'. Other Old Latin versions have *stadia/stadiorum sexaginta* or *stadia/stadiorum* LX, and the later Latin Vulgate versions are divided, like the Greek, between *in spatio stadiorum sexaginta ab Hierusalem* (so most MSS) and *in spatio stadiorum centum sexaginta ab Hierusalem* (so Codices F and G).

In other contexts Codex Palatinus transmits the distance in Greek stades correctly and literally: John 6.19 ὡς σταδίους εἴκοσι πέντε ἢ τριάκοντα is transmitted as *ad viginti quinque vel triginta stadia*; and John 11.18 ἦν δὲ ἡ Βηθανία ἐγγὺς τῶν Ἰεροσολύμων ὡς ἀπὸ σταδίων δεκαπέντε is transmitted as *erat autem bethnia prope hierosolyma fere stadia quindecim*. So how can we account for the absolutely unique reading *stadia septem* here in Luke 24.13?

The simplest answer is that this is an unintentional and mechanical error of transmission. The editorial committee of the United Bible Societies' Greek NT, for example, attributes it to a 'scribal blunder'.[8] Because of the way that numerals are sometimes denoted in Greek, errors regarding quantity are not uncommon in many ancient Greek manuscript traditions, including that of the NT. In this case the numeral Ξ (60) of the exemplar – thus designated, for example, in P^{75}, the earliest extant manuscript of this passage – was presumably mistaken for Z (7) and either so transcribed (Z or ἑπτά) in a Greek copy (that has not survived) or so translated (VII or *septem*) in a Latin copy (perhaps even Codex Palatinus, if it is indeed a direct translation of a Greek manuscript).

But, as letters, Ξ and Z are not commonly mistaken for each other – at least not

6 The text of the Codex Palatinus is most readily accessible in C. Tischendorf, *Evangelium Palatinum Ineditum* (Lipsiae: F.A. Brockhaus, 1847).

7 So also in the Old Latin Codices Corbeiensis II (ff^2) and Veronensis (it^b), in the latter with the names inverted. Hence the early church tradition that Cleopas and Emmaus were the names of the two disciples: see A. Souter, '"Emmaus" mistaken for a Person', *ExpT* 13 (1901–2) 429–30; E. Nestle, '"Emmaus" mistaken for a Person', *ExpT* 13 (1901–2) 477; A. Bonus, '"Emmaus" mistaken for a Person', *ExpT* 13 (1901–2) 561–62.

8 B. Metzger, ed., *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) 185.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688502000188 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in the post-Classical period[9] – as are, for example, T and Γ; A, Δ, and Λ; or E, Θ, O, and C. And, as numbers, I can find no other instance in any manuscript of the NT of Ξ (60) being confused with Z (7), in spite of the many occurrences of these two numbers (a total of over 100 times in the NT).[10]

I propose that something a little less mechanical and unintentional, and a little more complex and deliberate, has taken place here: namely, that at some point in the manuscript tradition there was an effort not only to *translate* the Greek measurement into Latin but actually to *convert* it into units of measure more intelligible to a Latin-speaking audience. That is to say, the common Greek measurement in stades (στάδιοι) was converted into the common Latin measurement in miles (*milia passuum*), just as is commonly done in many English translations today ('about 7 miles from Jerusalem').

One Greek stade (στάδιον) was equivalent to 625 Roman feet (*pedes*), 125 Roman paces (*passus*), or about ⅛ of a Roman mile (*mille passus*). Sixty stades, then, the reading in the most ancient and diverse Greek manuscripts, was equivalent to about 7½ Roman miles.

It does not seem at all unlikely that at some time someone would have thought to write in the interlineation or the margin of a NT Greek text, or perhaps even a Latin text, that σταδίους ἑξήκοντα or σταδίους Ξ, or perhaps *stadia sexaginta* or *stadia* LX, was equivalent to *septem milia passuum* or VII *milia passuum*. The *septem* or VII then made its way into the actual text of Luke 24.13, either in Codex Palatinus or its archetype, as an erroneous modifier of *stadia*. That is to say, the preposterous reading found in Codex Palatinus (*stadia septem*) arose from a contamination of a gloss (*septem milia passuum*) and the text that it was glossing (*stadia sexaginta*).

I prefer to think that the conversion took place in a gloss in the interlineation or margin of the text rather than in a formal translation of the text itself – i.e. that the erroneous reading began as a gloss and was only later inadvertently inserted into the text. For the Codex Palatinus – and the Old Latin and Vulgate versions of the NT in general – does not normally translate Greek terms of measurement into

9 But the similarity of the two letters *zeta* and *xi* in the early East Ionic script may account for some variations in the manuscript tradition of the Homeric epics, where, for example, the present and future tenses of the verb 'to do battle' – π(τ)ολεμίζω / π(τ)ολεμίξω – frequently appear as variants (e.g. *Il.* 10.451, 13.644, 15.179, 20.85, 21.477). This confusion of *zeta* and *xi* in early Ionic has perhaps caused some scholars to assume that a similar situation pertained in the Hellenistic and Koine periods, but the shapes of the letters had evolved markedly by this time, and there is no evidence of any confusion resulting from their scripts.

10 The closest candidate is the manuscript variant of Rev. 13.18, where for ἑξήκοντα (Ξ) some manuscripts – including a recently published third or fourth century papyrus (P.Oxy. LXVI 4499) – read δέκα (I); but the variant here is probably due to an intentional change resulting from different spellings of the name 'Nero', to whom the number '666' or '616' was attached, rather than to inadvertent scribal error. So Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 749–50.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688502000188 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Latin ones (e.g. στάδιον = *stadion*, μνᾶ = *mina*, τάλαντον = *t(h)alenton*, μετρητής = *metretes*); and when it does translate a term of measurement, it resorts to a Latin term that is so close in value that no actual numerical conversion is required (e.g. John 21.8 ὡς ἀπὸ πηχῶν διακοσίων = *fere ad gubitis docentis*, Luke 15.8 Ἢ τίς γυνὴ δραχμὰς ἔχουσα δέκα = *aut quae mulier habens denarios decem*; cf. a modern English version's 'from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs').[11] However, even if the formal translation of the text lacked numerical conversions of Greek units of measure into Latin ones, it is not difficult, given the supposed origin of the Old Latin Versions – i.e. as interlinear and then marginal translations of the Greek for the purpose of public reading of the Scriptures in both languages during church services, first in Greek and then in Latin[12] – to imagine a gloss of just this sort creeping into the Latin text of Codex Palatinus or its archetype.

11 But very rarely an actual numerical conversion is made in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Greek Septuagint (e.g. Num 35.4, where δισχιλίους πήχεις is converted to *mille passuum spatio* – though in the next verse the same Greek term is translated without conversion as *duo milia cubiti*).

12 On the role of interlinear translations in the origin of the Old Latin versions, see B. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) 285–93, esp. 286.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688502000188 Published online by Cambridge University Press