The Development of the Tiberian Vocalisation Tradition after the 11th Century: Evidence from the Cairo Genizah Samuel Blapp

The use of the Tiberian vocalisation signs in Bible manuscripts to represent other pronunciation traditions than Standard Tiberian (ST) increased greatly after the early 11th century CE. In this paper, which is a summary of my PhD thesis, I shall present data from manuscripts of this nature from the Cairo Genizah. Previously, these manuscripts, which were written in Oriental handwriting between the 11th and 12th century, have been classified as relying on the Palestinian pronunciation tradition or even reflecting the ben Naftali tradition. The diversity of features found in these manuscripts, however, suggests that the Palestinian tradition is just one possible source and that the ben Naftali tradition is too close to the ST tradition and ben Asher, so that these classifications are appropriate. Thus, I shall show, that among these manuscripts with non-standard Tiberian vocalisation, also manuscripts with predominantly Babylonian pronunciation features can be found. Across all the manuscripts, which have been examined for this paper, ST pronunciation features are also reflected. The distribution of these different features varies heavily in each manuscript, so that it is not possible to classify them as representing one single pronunciation tradition. It is rather likely that each manuscript reflects the pronunciation of the respective scribe.