



# Aethiopia 20 (2017)

International Journal of Ethiopian and  
Eritrean Studies

---

VITAGRAZIA PISANI, Universität Hamburg

## Review

GERARD COLIN, ed., tr., *Vie et Miracles de Samuel de Waldebbā*

Aethiopia 20 (2017), 302–307

ISSN: 1430-1938

---

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut  
Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik  
der Universität Hamburg  
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ulrich Braukämper, Ludwig Gerhardt,  
Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg and Siegbert Uhlig

## Reviews

the forms found in the manuscripts sometimes has its own inconveniences: the form **ወናህህዮ** : (§ 14, reading of the Berlin manuscript, accepted in the edition and defended with good reasons as a Copticism on p. 106, as against **ወናህህዮ** : found in the EMMML manuscript) cannot be accepted, because **ወናህህዮ** : is simply a non-grammatical form; the expected form would be **ወና<ዘ>ህዮ** : (a clear case of *lectio media* or ‘diffraction’) and the editor should at least have added a comment and at best emended the reading.

Presented in Ugo Zanetti’s usual competent, fresh, participatory, and humble tone, this admirable new volume is actually a valuable and very welcome contribution to Egyptian (Copto-Arabic) and Ethiopian hagiography.

Alessandro Bausi, Universität Hamburg

GÉRARD COLIN, ed., tr., *Vie et Miracles de Samuel de Waldebba*, Patrologia Orientalis, 53/1 (235) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). 296 pp. Price: €150.00. ISBN: 978-2-503-55207-1.

In this publication, Gérard Colin presents his edition of the Ethiopic text of the *Gädl* and *Tä’ammər* (miracles) of Samu’el of Waldəbba, along with his French translation. The edition, divided into 341 numbered paragraphs, is structured into two main parts: the *Gädl* (§§ 1–184) and seventy miracles (§§ 185–338), followed by a final prayer (§ 339) and concluding exhortations (§§ 340–341). The work also includes a brief Introduction (pp. 1–5) in which the author, after a concise presentation of Samu’el’s life, gives consideration to the motives of his spiritual ‘success’. He then mentions the two recensions of the *Gädl*, identifying the manuscripts that contain them and providing other detailed information. Samu’el is one of the most famous monks and saints of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, who lived in the fourteenth/fifteenth century. Usually known as Samu’el of Waldəbba, in this *Gädl* (§ 183) and especially in the miracles (§§ 227, 239, and 314), Samu’el is referred to several times as ‘Samu’el of the desert of Wali (Gädämä Wali)’, the latter

(see A. Bausi and A. Camplani, ‘The History of the Episcopate of Alexandria (HEpA): Editio minor of the fragments preserved in the Aksumite Collection and in the Codex Veronensis LX (58)’, *Adamantius*, 22 (2016, pub. 2017), 249–302), the form *ḥəllinā* is completely absent and only *ḥəllinā* (over forty occurrences) appears, alternating with *ḥəllənā* (thirteen occurrences).

being an area in which he dwelt, and which he ‘sanctified’ (§ 73).<sup>1</sup> The Wali, in the Ethiopian tradition, coincides with the Waldəbba.<sup>2</sup>

According to the narration of the *Gädlä Samuʾel* (henceforth *GS*) edited by Colin, Samuʾel is born in Aksum to his father Ḥṣṭifanos and his mother ʿAmätä Maryam, both natives of the region of Şəraʿ. He enters the ‘monastery of Abba Adḥani, which is Bänk<sup>w</sup>äl’ (§ 26),<sup>3</sup> and receives the monastic habit from Abba Adḥani.<sup>4</sup> His father (as earlier his mother) also becomes a monk. Together they go to dwell in solitude in a nearby place. Then, they move to Wäyyna, greeted by the monks of the place, with Samuʾel fleeing several times into the desert. After seventeen years at Wäyyna, Samuʾel retires to more deserted places, feeding on tree roots and wild herbs. Afterwards, he welcomes his first two disciples: Zärufaʾel, the oldest of all his disciples (but at that time very young), and Niqodimos ‘son of his teacher’ (§ 48).<sup>5</sup> With them, he stays for a while in a cave, and later in a large cavern. Furthermore, Samuʾel digs a deep pit only for himself and he lives in it for

<sup>1</sup> In the Ethiopian *Synaxarion*, the short note dedicated to Samuʾel calls him, in line with tradition, ‘Samuʾel zäWaldəbba’; cf. S. Grébaud, *Le Synaxaire éthiopien. Les mois de Taḥschasch, Ter et Yakatit*, IV: *Le mois de Taḥschasch*, *Patrologia Orientalis*, 15/5 (Paris: Firmin-Didot et C<sup>ie</sup>, 1926, pub. 1927), 737–741. In the *Gädlä Samuʾel* edited by B. Turaiev, Samuʾel is called ‘Samuʾel zäGädämä Wali’, as in the text edited by Colin; cf. B. Turaiev, ‘Vita Samuelis Valdehani’, in B. Turaiev, ed., *Monumenta Aethiopiae Hagiologica*, II (Petropoli: Sumpitibus Caesareae Universitatis Petropolitanae, 1902), 1–33, in particular p. 1. All quotations from Colin’s edition were translated from French into English by the reviewer.

<sup>2</sup> In Colin’s edition, see p. 63, n. 35. Cf. also D. Nosnitsin, ‘Samuʾel of Waldəbba’, in S. Uhlig in cooperation with A. Bausi, eds, *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (= *EAE*), IV: O–X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 516a–518b, in particular p. 516b. On the Waldəbba, cf. ‘Waldəbba’, *EAE*, IV (2010), 1112b–1114a (D. Nosnitsin).

<sup>3</sup> The reference is to the monastery of Däbrä Bänk<sup>w</sup>äl, located in the region of Şire, in West Təgray (p. 27, n. 10).

<sup>4</sup> In our text it is said that Samuʾel receives the monastic habit from Abba Adḥani. In the *GS* edited by Turaiev, instead, Samuʾel receives it from Mādḥaninä Ḥgziʾ (cf. pp. 2–3 of Turaiev’s edition). On this difference between the two editions, cf. also ‘Samuʾel of Waldəbba’, *cit.*, in particular p. 517b. The same is found in the *Gädlä Mādḥaninä Ḥgziʾ*, cf. G. Colin, *Vie et Miracles de Madhanina Egziʾ*, *Patrologia Orientalis*, 51/4 (229) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), *passim*. Colin states that, in the *GS*, Abba Adḥani is the name with which Mādḥaninä Ḥgziʾ ‘is generally called’ (p. 1). About a certain Adḥani, Ethiopian monk and saint of the fourteenth century, cf. O. Raineri, ‘Adḥani’, in J. Nadal Cañellas, S. Virgulin, and G. Guaita, *Enciclopedia dei Santi. Le Chiese Orientali*, I: A–Gio, *Bibliotheca sanctorum orientalium* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1998), 57; see also ‘Adḥani’, *EAE*, I (2003), 95a–b (S. Kaplan).

<sup>5</sup> According to Colin, Niqodimos’ teacher was Mādḥaninä Ḥgziʾ (p. 45, n. 16).

three months, in strict fasting and persistent prayer. Again, he moves to Wədaka and then to Wali, ‘his desert’ (§ 116). Before he dies, Samu’el tells of his heavenly vision to his disciples: led to the divine throne, Jesus gives him the *kidan* and tells him that his departure is near. Samu’el dies when he is one hundred years old, on 12 Taḥśaś.

Numerous characters, religious or not, are mentioned in the *GS*. Many prodigious interventions, as predictions, healings, and exorcisms, are attributed to Samu’el. The *Gädl* also emphasizes his familiarity with wild animals—with lions above all, but also with leopards and elephants, although there are also foxes, hyenas, buffaloes, wild boars, and snakes—which he heals and makes harmless. They bow down before him and obey him as servants. Friendship with animals—a theme also found widely in Western Christian hagiography—is a feature that he shares with other Ethiopian saints. As Colin says, Samu’el and Gäbrä Mämfäs Qəddus are ‘the two most famous “wild animals’ friends” of Ethiopia’ (p. 3, n. 4).

According to him, the influence of Samu’el was due to this ‘symbiosis’ with wild animals, but also ‘to his clear spiritual direction and to his role as exegete of sacred texts’ (p. 3); also important was the rigour of his ascetic life (p. 3). Among the practices with which he mortified and weakened his body were deprivation of sleep and food, abstention from speaking, *statio*, isolation, flagellation, and wearing a cilice.

The seventy miracles (numbered in the Ethiopic text), of which some of the motifs mentioned in the *Gädl* are found, also emphasize the miraculous power of the dust of Samu’el’s tomb, as well as of his commemoration: those who do it reluctantly are punished, whereas those who perform it in faith are rewarded.

In the Introduction (p. 4), the editor refers to the presence of both a short and a long recension of the *GS*. The relationship between the two is difficult to determine, he says, meaning whether they both depend on an earlier and lost version or whether one depends on the other. The elements related to the life of the saint remain, however, almost identical.

Representative of the short version is MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (= BnF), Éthiop. 136 (*GS*: fols 45r–95r), the only witness to this recension so far known in Europe. In a footnote (p. 1, n. 1), and without additional details, Colin indicates the official shelf mark of this manuscript and the catalogue identifying it. It is a composite manuscript from the fifteenth century, which also contains a rare and rather short version of the acts of *Abunä Täklä Haymanot* (fols 1r–44r), defined by the editor Conti

Rossini as a witness of the ‘Waldäbba recension’.<sup>6</sup> Turaiev based his edition of the *Gädlä Samu<sup>3</sup>el* (1902) on this one manuscript, and did not provide a translation. The codices containing the long version of the *GS* (p. 4) are MS BnF Éthiop. d’Abbadie 32 (*GS*: fols 5r–93v) and MS BnF Éthiop. d’Abbadie 61 (*GS*: fols 1r–99r) from the fifteenth century.<sup>7</sup> To these, Colin adds MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cerulli, Cerulli et. 198 (*GS*: fols 3r–47r) of the eighteenth century. This latter however, like d’Abbadie 32, was not used for his edition. Colin says, without giving any explanation, that the two manuscripts can be ‘ignored for the arrangement of the text’ (p. 4). Older, and therefore considered by him more worthy of interest, is BnF Éthiop. d’Abbadie 61 (MS B in the edition).

The seventy miracles that immediately follow the *Gädl* extend the long *recensio* of the *GS*. One witness of this version, on which Colin bases his edition (MS A), is a codex preserved in the monastery of Däbrä Abbay. According to the description which he provides (p. 5), this codex contains 178 written folia and presents lacunae, both in the *Gädl* and in the miracles, as well as several transposed leaves.<sup>8</sup> Paleographic examination and the intercession to King Na<sup>c</sup>od (1494–1508), found at the explicit of miracle 64 (§ 327), suggest that the manuscript was completed in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

Another witness of the long version of the *GS*, or more precisely, as the editor states, ‘of an abbreviated version of the long recension’ (p. 4), and

<sup>6</sup> C. Conti Rossini, *Il “Gadla Takla Hāymānot” secondo la redazione waldebbana*, Reale Accademia dei Lincei, 5<sup>a</sup>, Memorie della Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, 2/1<sup>a</sup> (Roma: Tipografia della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1896), 3 (97)–49 (143), esp. 6 (100), 7 (101), 30 (124).

<sup>7</sup> On MS BnF Éthiop. d’Abbadie 32, see A. d’Abbadie, *Catalogue raisonné de manuscrits éthiopiens appartenant à Antoine d’Abbadie* (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1859), 40, no. 32. See also M. Chaîne, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens de la Collection Antoine d’Abbadie* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1912), 20, no. 32; cf. C. Conti Rossini, *Notice sur les manuscrits éthiopiens de la Collection d’Abbadie*, Extrait du Journal Asiatique (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1914), 194, no. 189. Concerning the dating of the MS, in d’Abbadie’s catalogue it is reported as 1700, in M. Chaîne’s it is 1704, and in Conti Rossini’s the seventeenth century. Colin reports (p. 4) that the codex dates from the eighteenth century. On MS BnF Éthiop. d’Abbadie 61 see A. d’Abbadie, 1859, cit., 71, no. 61. See also M. Chaîne, 1912, cit., 42, no. 61; and C. Conti Rossini, 1914, cit., 193–194, no. 188.

<sup>8</sup> Colin does not specify in which folia the lacunae are located or which are the transposed folia. The information about the lacunae is, however, easily deducible thanks to the indication given on the left side of the text in Gə<sup>c</sup>əz, of the folia’s number in MS A, which is replaced, in the case of lacunae, by that of MS B.

which also contains the miracles of the saint, is MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, orient. oct. 1303 (*GS*: fols 3ra–46ra), dating back to the nineteenth century. Colin did not consider it for his edition. In the Introduction, he indicates this manuscript in a footnote (p. 4, n. 8), with the catalogue number (75) and not with the official shelf mark. The miracles (fols 46rb–76rb) are numbered from 39 to 70: according to him an ‘accident of transmission’ (p. 4) deprived this manuscript of the first thirty-eight miracles.

In his conclusion concerning the literary sources on Samuʿel, Colin gives a short indication (p. 5, n. 10) about another edition of the *GS*, namely the work titled **ገድለ አባ ሳሙኤል በግእዝና በአማርኛ ፤ ተርጓሚ መሪኔታ ጽጌ ዘርዶሁን #** published in 1996 EC (2003/2004 CE) by *Märiqeta Şəge Zäryəhun*, with the Gəʿəz text and a translation in Amharic. In addition to the manuscripts mentioned in the book under review, I briefly signal here the existence of one more codex containing the *Gädl* of Samuʿel followed by fifty-five miracles. It is an eighteenth/nineteenth-century manuscript from the monastery of Gundä Gunde (East Təgray) and digitalized by the Gunda Gunde Manuscript Project.<sup>9</sup>

For the edition of the *GS*, Colin adopted the editorial criterion of the base manuscript: between the two manuscripts fully collated, A and B, he chose the readings and the orthography of the first, considering it to be superior (p. 5). MS B, of which the unused readings are shown in the apparatus below the Gəʿəz text, is however important for those parts of the text where MS A has lacunae due to material damage or long omissions; here the text of MS A is replaced by the text of MS B. In the case of obvious errors in A, the editor accepts the readings of B, and where errors are found in both codices, he presents the readings as emended by himself.

For the edition of the text of the miracles, Colin only used MS A (see p. 159, n. 80). The lacuna at the beginning of the MS (§ 185) leaves this text without its incipit.

I wish to emphasize the outstanding effort that Colin has made in translating this extremely long text, which is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of this *Gädl* and to the complete cycle of Samuʿel’s miracles. His numerous references to biblical quotations and to Ethiopian literary texts are highly appreciated, as well as his indications of linguistic forms not found in the dictionaries, and of uncertain translations. Furthermore, his

<sup>9</sup> More details and images of this manuscript (and other digitized manuscripts) are accessible at <http://gundagunde.digitalscholarship.utoronto.ca/islandora/object/gundagunde%3A12030#page/1/mode/2up>, accessed on 27 September 2017.

## Reviews

decision to include relevant French titles in this edition is a great help in understanding the text; they make the reading easier, especially of the miracles. However, more details in the Introduction about the available manuscripts concerning Samu'el, those used in the edition and those not, would surely have enriched this precious work, along with more commentary on the edition itself, at least on the most significant textual readings and corrections. It would also have been useful to have some more indications as to the editorial criteria adopted and about the apparatus.

Vitagrazia Pisani, Universität Hamburg

AMSALU TEFERA, *The Ethiopian Homily on the Ark of the Covenant: Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of Dərsanä Şəyon*, Text and Studies in Eastern Christianity, 5 (Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2015). xvi, 286 pp. Price: €114.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-28233-9.

The volume under review stems from the author's PhD Dissertation, submitted in 2011 at Addis Ababa University with the title *Dərsanä Şəyon: Philological Inquiries, Critical Edition and Annotated Translation* and prepared under the supervision of Prof. Paolo Marrassini and Prof. Baye Yiman. The dissertation is the first product of the recently launched philology programme at Addis Ababa University, and this initiative, strongly promoted by the late Paolo Marrassini, is a new landmark in the progress of Ethiopian studies.

The work offers a wide-ranging investigation into *Dərsanä Şəyon* (= hereafter *DŞ*) or the 'Homily on [the glory] of Zion'. The same author has already made other contributions on this text,<sup>1</sup> as well as on the related texts which constitute the corpus of literary pieces focusing on Zion. With this term, as the author meticulously illustrates, multiple meanings are intended: not only the Ark of the Covenant, widely glorified in the text, but also Mount Zion, as well as the Temple in the earthly Jerusalem, the new heavenly Jerusalem, the church of Aksum Şəyon as the repository of the Ark, and, by extension, the entire Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. A metaphorical connection, attested elsewhere, is further established with the Holy Virgin, pivoting on the parallelism of Mary and the Temple as 'wombs' where God dwelt and making *DŞ* one

<sup>1</sup> Amsalu Tefera, 'Dərsanä Şəyon: Philological Inquiries into the Text', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Nuova Serie, 3 (2011), 141–166; 'Mariology in the EOTC Tradition: Special Emphasis on Dərsanä Şəyon', *Journal of Ethiopian Church Studies*, 2 (2012), 71–96; 'Colophonic Reflections on Dərsanä Şəyon and Kəbrä Nəgəst', *Aethiopica*, 17 (2014), 78–89; 'Dərsanä Şəyon', *E Ae*, V (2014), 304a–305a (Amsalu Tefera).