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Dissertation Abstract

Das hagiografische Werk zu Šarša Petros. Werkgenese und Teiledition

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Even though hagiography is a substantial genre of Gəʿəz literature, almost nothing is known about the process of creation of hagiographical texts. This PhD dissertation examines a hagiographical work whose genesis is documented in a way that is unique among Ethiopic hagiography. Thanks to solid manuscript evidence it was possible to reliably reconstruct the creation process of this indigenous hagiography. It is the hagiography of the monk Šarša Petros, who lived in the second half of the fifteenth century and who is venerated as a saint in Dabra Warq (East Goğğām, Ethiopia).

The hagiography of Šarša Petros comprises several texts including two versions of his *Life*, the short (i.e. the commemorative notice for the *Sənkəssār*) and the long *Life* (i.e. the *gədl*), each in two redactions (I and II). Most of the text witnesses and other valuable materials were photographed during my own field trips to East Goğğām, ʾƏnfrāz, and Bagemdər. These field trips led to the discovery of two long-forgotten crucial text witnesses.

The oldest text layer of the work is the *Short Life* I, contained in a manuscript that was originally written down in Dabra Warq and, according to its subscription, sent to Dabra Sān (ʾƏnfrāz) around 1900. Its *Vorlage* must be considered lost. The lifetime of Šarša Petros defines the earliest possible date for the creation of the *Short Life* I. Its transmission prior to 1900 remains unknown. In-depth analysis of the work's genesis strongly indicates that the *Short Life* served as source text for the creation of the long version of the *Life* (the *gədl*). The *Short Life* I is almost fully included verbatim in the *Long Life* I, the latter in addition expanded with new material. It appears very plausible to attribute the creation of the *gədl* to a highly skilled hagiographer in Dabra Sān who designed and crafted the long version around 1900. The historical content of the *Life* revolves around the establishment of three monasteries in East Goğğām: (1) Marṭula Māryām founded by Queen ʾƏlleni and Takla Māryām; (2) Getesemāni founded by Šarša Petros and Robel (his spiritual brother); and (3) ʾIyarusālem (an alternative name for Dabra Warq) founded by Šarša Petros.

The hagiographer in Dabra Sān surprisingly chose a machine-produced paper account book (a ledger) as a text carrier for the *gədl*, in contrast to the Ethiopian manuscript tradition (note that such account books were rare objects in Ethiopia at the turn of the nineteenth–twentieth century). While the expert hagiographer was clearly solely responsible for the creation of the text, the production of a parchment codex suitable for the saint's veneration

tion and rituals was left to the place of veneration. A short letter written in the paper book reveals that Dabra Sān not only sent the book to Dabra Warq (shortly after completing the writing of the *Long Life I*), but at the same time even appointed the abbot of Dabra Warq—a clear indication of Dabra Sān’s authority over Dabra Warq. This documents a particularly striking case of a geographical division between the work of literary creation and the craft of producing a manuscript (done elsewhere, at the place of the saint’s veneration). If this division of labour was deliberate, it would explain the otherwise mysterious writing of a holy text in an account book: to the composer of the text, the physical carrier of the text was irrelevant.

In Dabra Warq, the paper book was not simply copied ‘as is’. Rather, it served at first as a ‘workbook’ for rewriting the *Long Life*, resulting in a second redaction. The complex rewriting process involved four redactors who made dramatic alterations in the *Long Life I* in form of deletion (of letters, words, lines), substitution (chiefly the replacement of names of persons and places), transposition (of sentences or shorter text passages), and additions written interlinearly, in the margins, or on blank pages with meticulous instructions for inserting. In this way a second redaction was created which consists of the rewriting layer (all alterations and additions) and of all unchanged parts of the base layer. As a result, Śarṣa Peṭros in the *Long Life II* is now associated not with two churches (Getesemāni and ʾIyarusālem) but with three: (1) Məṣhala Māryām (a new name for Dabra Warq) refounded (!) by Śarṣa Peṭros; (2) Getesemāni founded by Śarṣa Peṭros and Robel; and (3) ʾIyarusālem (now referring to Maqḏasa Māryām in southern Bagemdər) founded by Śarṣa Peṭros.

The key objective of the rewriting process was the creation of a new founding narrative for Dabra Warq, its original founding now being attributed to ʾAsfāḥ, the son of the first Christian kings of Ethiopia, ʾAbrəhā and ʾAṣbəḥā, and thus backdated to the fourth/fifth century. In addition to the incorporation of this founding myth, the *Long Life* was enriched with further hagiographical motifs and *topoi*, as well as with many allusions to biblical and various other books. The paper account book was ultimately given to a professional scribe who produced a beautiful parchment codex and copied therein the *Long Life II* in 1910 at the latest. The paper ‘workbook’ lost its function from that moment on and was stored in the ʿəqā bet. Sometime afterwards, a three-volume *Synaxarion* was produced in Dabra Warq, in which the *Short Life II* of Śarṣa Peṭros was copied or written down for the first time. It follows the plot of the rewritten narrative and includes an entirely new episode about a king’s daughter Mārtā resurrected by the saint.

The rewritten *Life* had a considerable impact on the writing or rewriting of other texts in Dabra Warq and affected even the wall paintings, where a few scenes from the saint's life as narrated in the rewritten version are depicted. It becomes clear that the monastery did not spare any effort to promote its new founding narrative and to fix it in the community's memory. Witnessed in books and depicted on murals, the story constructed around 1900 is today considered as 'authentic' and as a historically 'true' event by the local community in Dabra Warq.

The dissertation consists of two parts. The first part is divided into nine chapters and, after the Introduction, opens with the presentation of the current state of research (Ch. 1) and the state of transmission (Ch. 2). The longest chapter comprises the detailed descriptions of all relevant text witnesses (Ch. 3) and forms the basis for the following reconstruction of the work's creation process through a chapter-wise comparison of the long and short version of the *Life* in both redactions (Ch. 4), as well as for discussion of the questions concerning the place of writing and the time of creation of the texts and its witnesses (Ch. 5). The contemporary context and the historical factors that influenced the creation of the work are presented next (Ch. 6). Finally, the historicity of the three founding narratives is examined (Ch. 7), and the reception and impact of the rewritten *Life* are outlined (Ch. 8). The first part ends with a description and justification of the editorial technique I used (Ch. 9). An Index to the first part of the dissertation, two tables, a map, and fifty-eight figures are intended to facilitate the reader.

The detailed and comprehensive examination of the work's genesis did not allow a complete edition of the work. All parts of the texts that are relevant for the understanding of the work's creation process are presented in a synoptic edition accompanied by a German translation and a detailed commentary. This partial edition forms the second part of the dissertation.

Form and results of the dissertation are to a large extent due to the multiple field trips during which most of the material was collected, but the project exists at all only thanks to the unflagging efforts of the guardians of the manuscripts in Ethiopia, to whom the dissertation is dedicated.