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Review

TEDROS ABRAHA, ed., tr., *Mäṣṣafä Sawiros zä-Esmunayn: la versione ge'ez del Kitāb al-īdāḥ di Severo di Ašmūnayn (X/XI sec.), Omelie I–III, Introduzione, edizione del testo etiopico con traduzione italiana annotata*

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Reviews

The final chapter surveys ten selected texts on which the author has carried out research in the last few years. It includes books dealing with the Holy Trinity, the Holy Cross, some of the works of Saint Ephrem, works of Saint Yāred and those books which were written for his honour, works written about Gabra Manfas Qəddus and those on Saint Ura'el and *Mawaddəs qəne*. Detailed descriptions are provided for each. In addition, the author also provides philological textual criticism on the *Rā'əya Māryām*, a text which has been hotly debated politically as it retains a pejorative ethnonym. However, it is to the author's credit that he addresses this issue (pp. 294–300) very nicely from the perspective of textual criticism in order to avoid the debate over pejorative ethnonyms emanating from the absence of any critical edition prior to its use as a historical source. However, some of the theological sermons (p. 294, Section 5.5.3) covered in this chapter are, in my opinion, irrelevant to the main purpose of this scholarly and scientific book and were therefore superfluous to it.

Before I conclude, I also suggest that some typographical errors are corrected in a future reprint of the book. For example, p. 45 (line 10) የሚገኝ ፡ is repeated; p. 53, ዩኒቨርሲቲ for ዩኒቨርሲቲ; p. 106, እነፈ ፡ for ክነፈ; p. 163, የተሠ for የተሠ; p. 285, ያደረሰው for የደረሰው; p. 285, በጾ for በጾም; p. 290, በደቡብ for በደቡብ; p. 318, እንዳተመለከተው for እንደተመለከተው.

Notwithstanding some of the above-mentioned shortcomings, the book is an indispensable work for teaching and researching Gə'əz literature. It fills a huge lacuna in Amharic scholarship, and it will be a major reference work for scholars in Ethiopian studies in relation to Ethiopic philology, theology, heritage studies, and history. Furthermore, the book will be of great interest to the wider Ethiopian public.

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TEDROS ABRAHA, *Mäṣḥafä Sawiros zä-Esmunayn: la versione ge'ez del Kitāb al-īdāḥ di Severo di Aṣmūnayn (X/XI sec.), Omelie I–III, Introduzione, edizione del testo etiopico con traduzione italiana annotata*, ed., tr., Patrologia Orientalis, 56/2 (247) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017). 216 pp. (133–348). Price: €95.00. ISBN: 978-2-503-58087-6.

This book contains the first edition of the first part (three out of twelve homilies) of the Gə'əz version of the Arabic *Kitāb al-īdāḥ* ('Book of the elucidation'), also known as *Kitāb al-durr al-īamīn fī īdāḥ al-dīn* ('Book of the precious pearls in

the elucidation of the faith')¹ by the tenth/eleventh-century CE Coptic author Abū al-Biṣr Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa', also known as Severus bishop of Ašmūnayn (*Sawiros zā Esmunayn* in Gə'əz). The Gə'əz version is known under the titles of *Kabrā haymanot* ('Dignity of the faith' or 'Glory of the faith'), *Fəkkare tāwahaḥado* ('Explanation of the unity (of the divine and human nature in God)'), *Māṣḥafā Hədar* ('Book of the (month of) Hədar'), or more commonly *Māṣḥafā Sawiros* ('Book of Sawiros'). This work is a large theological treatise arranged in the form of a dialogue between a master and a disciple. The work is of some importance for the literary and theological tradition of Ethiopian and Eritrean Christianity and the edition puts at disposal of the scholars the first portion of a long text that is often quoted in the exegetical tradition and was not accessible before in any form, unless directly from the manuscripts.²

The edition features an extensive Introduction (pp. [7–25]/139–157) dealing with several aspects of the work: the author; the Arabic model and its textual tradition (manuscripts and the two main printed editions), of which the Gə'əz text edited is a translation; the genesis and the structure of the Gə'əz text; the textual tradition of the Gə'əz text, and its witnesses, used (nine manuscripts) and not used (eight manuscripts) in the edition, and the reasons why; the methods of the edition and of the translation; the sigla used in the edition and in the commentary to the translation; a bibliography.

In some aspects, the edition reflects the standard (or lack of standard) of other editions of Gə'əz texts, but it also contains some progressive aspects that must be duly underlined as a positive development in the field. The most important and progressive feature of this edition is the abandonment of the base-manuscript method, followed by the author in other contributions, in favour of

¹ This latter work should not be confused with a homonymous treatise in fifteen homilies by the same author, also translated into Gə'əz, with the titles of *Māṣḥafā baḥrəy* ('Book of the pearl'), about which see Tedros Abraha, 'The Gə'əz version of "The Book of the Precious Pearl in the Illustration of the Doctrine of Faith": Preliminary notes and edition of the First Chapter', in F. P. Barone, C. Macé, and P. Ubierna, eds, *Philologie, herméneutique et histoire des textes entre Orient et Occident: Mélanges en hommage à Sever J. Voicu*, Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia, 73 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 289–320.

² The book was reviewed by M. Ambu, 'Review of Tedros Abraha, *Māṣḥafā Sawiros zā-Esmunayn: la versione ge'ez del Kitāb al-īdāh di Severo di Ašmūnayn (XXI sec.)*, *Omelle I–III, Introduzione, edizione del testo etiopico con traduzione italiana annotata*, ed., tr., *Patrologia Orientalis*, 56/2 (247) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017)', *Annales d'Éthiopie*, 32 (2018–2019), 319–322. A second fascicle of the edition of the work has appeared in the meanwhile: Tedros Abraha, *Māṣḥafā Sawiros zā-Esmunayn: la versione ge'ez del Kitāb al-īdāh di Severo di Ašmūnayn (XXI sec.)*, *Omelle IV–VIII, Introduzione, edizione del testo etiopico con traduzione italiana annotata*, ed., tr., *Patrologia Orientalis*, 57/2 (250) (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

an edition of explicitly reconstructive character. The reconstructive character concerns both the formal and the textual aspect. The editor, in fact, aims at achieving the Gəʿəz text, which is a translation from the Arabic, and he actually assumes, without declaring it, the Arabic text as the virtual archetype, as far as this is attainable (p. [23]/155). The editor also intends to provide a normalized orthography according to the spelling as canonized in August Dillmann's *Lexicon*,³ which has essentially an etymological base and distinguishes roots phonemes which in the course of time the scribal practice has merged, following the phonetic neutralization that took place in Amharic.

The editor does not always provide data on the manuscript witnesses in a clear form, which makes difficult to follow some of his considerations. A real *recensio* is missing, as is any comprehensive hypothesis on the relationship of the witnesses, even though some principles are discussed and applied, such as the *eliminatio codicum descriptorum*. As the editor presents his edition as a reconstructive one, it is to be assumed that he evaluated each single reading with a look at the proximity of the Gəʿəz text to the Arabic, although no general conclusion is drawn from this evidence, even *ex post*, aside from a vague evaluation of the value and tenor of the individual witnesses. Yet, the sequence of texts in some multiple-text manuscripts could have provided indications for a first hypothesis.

The *recensio* thus simply consists of two lists of used and non-used manuscripts (see above). In two previous contributions the editor had already provided preliminary lists. The first listed fifteen manuscripts,⁴ that is, all manuscripts mentioned in the Introduction aside from the manuscript in Qoma Fasilädäs and the manuscript UNESCO from Dima Giyorgis, plus an Amharic translation (without any details on its whereabouts) that is lacking in the list provided in the edition. The second adds the MS Ethiopia, Qoma Fasilädäs and again the Amharic version without any further detail.⁵ Little details are also found in a third con-

³ C. F. A. Dillmann, *Lexicon linguae aethiopicae, cum indice latino. Adiectum est vocabularium tigre dialecti septentrionalis compilatum a W. Munzinger* (Lipsiae: T. O. Weigel, 1865).

⁴ See Tedros Abraha, 'The Ethiopic Version of the *Māṣḥafā Sawiros*', in S. Uhlig, M. Bulakh, D. Nosnitsin, and T. Rave, eds, *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Hamburg July 20–25, 2003*, Aethiopistische Forschungen, 65 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 628–637, here 628.

⁵ See Tedros Abraha, 'Severos of Ašmunayn', in S. Uhlig, ed., in cooperation with A. Bausi, *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, IV: *O–X* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 640a–641b, here 640b–641a.

tribution.⁶ The editor finally seals the concise presentation of the Gə‘əz manuscripts remarking what an editor should never voice (p. [20]/152): ‘Ritengo che eventuali scoperte di altri codici non porterà [*sic*] novità che cambieranno sostanzialmente i dati sulla traduzione dall’arabo’. Honestly, who can say that?

There is no consistent statement concerning which manuscripts were consulted directly and those in digital, microfilm, or other surrogate forms, but, on the basis of the author’s remarks and acknowledgements, the following appears a realistic estimation. Of the nine manuscripts used in the edition (ABCDGHSTV), the editor directly examined two manuscripts (G, in Eritrea, Asmāra, and V, in Vatican City), and probably a third one (S, in Ethiopia, Addis Abāba). Of the others, there are some which are little or not accessible at all in their physical form, and it is likely that the editor, tacitly, examined digital or analogical surrogates. Of the further eight manuscripts not used in the edition, the editor directly examined two manuscripts (Jerusalem, Ethiopian Archbishopric, JE 342E, and Asmara, cathedral church of Maryam Šəyon).

The text is arranged in paragraphs of varying length, numbered separately for each of the three homilies (55 §§ in the first homily, pp. [32–79]/164–211; 92 §§ in the second, pp. [80–167]/212–299; 40 §§ in the third, pp. [168–211]/300–343), which is of some advantage for internal references. Punctuation also follows the Arabic tradition, which serves as reference (p. 23/155: ‘L’arbitrarietà della punteggiatura nei manoscritti ge‘ez ha reso necessario il ricorso ai manoscritti arabi e alle due edizioni arabe per la scansione del testo’). In some cases, however, the perfect parallelism between text and translation is not respected (see for example the lines 13–14 on page [40]/172, at the end of § 1 in the edition, which correspond to line 15 in the translation on page [41]/173, at the beginning of § 12).

The edition has a rich apparatus of alternative variants, but the editor does not discuss the ratio of the apparatus, which appears to be a negative one. The reference to the variant is not given according to line numbers, but with footnotes references in the text, numbered separately for each page, and, in case a variant includes more than one word, with additional signs in the text used to mark the beginning and end of the passage. The syntax of the apparatus is as follows: after the reference number (corresponding to a footnote) follow the siglum or sigla of the witnesses which have a variant reading, and then the variant reading; if more variants for the same reading are present, a single space after the first variant separates the following siglum or sigla, after which in turn the second variant follows, for example (p. [32]/164) ‘22 A T **ṣ** B **ṣ-ṣ**’. This wit-

⁶ See Tedros Abraha, ‘Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffā’ in Gə‘əz Literature: A Provisional Reappraisal’, *Le Muséon*, 130/3–4 (2017), 421–444, here 427–430.

ness-variant sequence does not appear to be convenient and is against the commonly used rules. Moreover, a longer space between variants to the same reading in the text, if not also a punctuation mark (just a comma), would be of great help. The same string would then appear in this form: ‘22 ያሙ” A T, ያሙ-ቶሙ- B’. Numbered notes are separated by an em rule (—). Also to be noted, not only in the apparatus, but in the whole book, is the practice of not putting the so-called word divider (፣) after the last (or an isolated) Gə‘əz word (if it were used, we would have had ‘ያሙ-ቶሙ ፣ B’). If this sign in origin was in fact used to separate words, it is true that the use in manuscripts prescribes that also the last word has it, so that there is no reason not to put it after every Gə‘əz word. The economy and clarity of the apparatus is not ideal. For example, in one case (p. [32]/164, n. 20), for the reading ወያበጥል ፣ (translated ‘rende vano’), the apparatus has ‘A T add. ቃሎ S ወያበጥል ፣ ቃሎ’; the translation also has a corresponding footnote (p. [33]/165, n. 5), ‘A S add.: la parola di’; however, ‘la parola di’ is present not only in A (ቃሎ ፣) and S (ቃሎ ፣), but also in T, which has the same reading as A. Moreover, the addition ቃሎ ፣ (‘la parola di’) with the resulting text ‘rende vana la parola di colui’ is found not only in A T, but also in S, which has ‘la parola di’, albeit in a different case (with nominative suffix pronoun ቃሎ ፣ instead of accusative suffix pronoun ቃሎ ፣), as required by the concurring variant ያበጥል ፣, ‘è vano’, instead of ያበጥል ፣, ‘rende vano’. Punctuation is not noted, unless some sporadic cases, the reason for which is not clear, see for example this erratical occurrence (p. [40]/172, n. 1): ‘1 T # # #’.

An annotated translation accompanies the edition, with explanations of some passages and in particular with consideration of the Arabic tradition, which is given *in extenso* in not a few cases (there are 148, 215, and 340 footnotes for the three homilies). A disturbing aspect, however, is that sigla used for the Gə‘əz witnesses (in the apparatus and in the notes to the translation) and sigla used for Arabic witnesses (only in the notes to the translation) have exactly the same aspect: ABCDGHSTV are used for the Gə‘əz witnesses and EMPQY are used for the Arabic witnesses; the use of additional signs or exponents (e.g. E^{AR}) would have made the notation more user-friendly.

There are patent inconsistencies between the data provided by the commentary and the apparatus: for example, the apparatus (p. [48]/180, n. 5) has ‘CDHV add. መከሪ’, but the corresponding translation (p. [49]/181, n. 44) has ‘v add. “misericordioso”’, while in fact, according to the apparatus, CDH also share the reading ‘misericordioso’ (መከሪ ፣); there are similar cases with other MSS on p. [48]/180, nn. 22–24 and p. [49]/181, n. 49.

The dating of the work is of course important in itself, as an essential element of cultural history. However, the dating of the work also has technical philological implications for all those cases, mentioned by the author, where the tradition shows conflicting evidence of more or less archaic forms. These forms should

be restored or not according to the hypothesis on the date of the work, in case, aside from content, aspects of form are also considered.

The editor mentions on various occasions evidence that points to a translation of the *Māṣḥafā Sawiros* at the latest from the fifteenth century, as the palaeography of the MS Qoma Fasilādās demonstrates. Yet repeatedly and without any firm ground, at the same time he hypothesizes that the work could reflect the cultural climate of the seventeenth century (p. [14]/146).

La maggior parte dei testimoni manoscritti del *Māṣḥafā Sawiros* descritti in questa sede, appartengono al periodo e all'area geografica gondarini. L'epoca gondarina iniziò con il trasferimento e stabilizzazione della corte imperiale etiopica a Gondar. Ciò avvenne nel quarto anno del regno di Fasil nel 1635–36, e si protrasse fino al regno di Tewodros II (1855–1868). Si tratta di un periodo durante il quale, insieme alle ben documentate turbolenze politiche e religiose, l'Etiopia conobbe una grande effervescenza culturale che giustifica l'ipotesi, se non di prima traduzione del *Māṣḥafā Sawiros*, almeno di una sua ampia copiatura e circolazione.

The editor takes the same position in an article (not mentioned in the edition) published the same year as the edition,⁷ suggesting that the *Māṣḥafā Sawiros* 'was probably translated around the end' of the seventeenth century, even though here the editor himself mentions that the pictures of the MS Qoma Fasilādās he was able to see reconfirm a dating of the manuscript from the fifteenth century. On these grounds, one does not understand the reiterated doubts or uncertainty concerning the dating of the work, which appear to be a repetition of previously presented outdated hypotheses, when, understandably, the evidence of the MS Qoma Fasilādās could not yet be considered: 'The translation and/or the spread of the *Māṣḥafā Sawiros* would fit well into the religious scenario of Ethiopia in the aftermath of the failed Catholic mission (1555–1634). The book would have supplied to the local Church the arguments to counter the "opponents of the Jacobite creed"'.⁸

There is also another evidence about which the editor is completely reticent, whatever position one is to take on the matter. As also mentioned by Anaïs Wion,⁹ the catalogue of MS C (Collegetown, MN, Hill Museum & Manuscript

⁷ Ibid., 428.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ A. Wion, 'The Manuscripts Library of Qoma Fasilādās Monastery', in Baye Yimam, R. Pankhurst, D. Chapple, Yonas Admassu, A. Pankhurst, and Birhanu Teferra, eds, *Ethiopian Studies at the End of the Second Millennium: Proceedings of the XIVth International*

Library, Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, 1195) gives a *subscriptio* to the *Māṣḥafä Sawiros* with a date to 1385/1396 CE,¹⁰ here fully edited and translated from the manuscript, now accessible online on the website of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library:¹¹

(p. 249a) ወውእቱ፡ ተፈጸመ፡ ፡ >በዕለተ፡ ዐርብ፡ ፡ አመ፳ለጥር፡ ፡ ወርኅ፡ ፡ ወበዓመተ፡ ፡ ፲፮ ወ፬፮ ወ፲ወ፪ ዓመት፡ ፡ ለሰማዕታት፡ ፡ ንጹሐን፡ ፡ በረከቶሙ፡ ፡ ተሀሉ፡ ፡ ምስለ፡ ፡ አቡነ፡ ፡ ኅብተ፡ ፡ ማርያም፡ ፡ ወምስለ፡ ፡ ንጉሥነ፡ ፡ ኃይለአ፡ ፡ ፡ >ሥላሴ፡ ፡ ወምስለ፡ ፡ >ጸሐፊ፡ ፡ >ገብረ፡ ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ፡ ለዓለመ፡ ፡ ዓለም፡ ፡ አሜን ። ወበዓመተ፡ ፡ ፲፮ ወ፫፫ ወ፹ወ፰ እምትሰብእቱ፡ ፡ >ለእግዚእነ፡ ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ፡ >ክርስቶስ፡ ፡ ሎቱ፡ ፡ ስብሐት፡ ፡ ወሃህሉ፡ ፡ ላዕሌነ፡ ፡ አሜን ። ወበዓመት፡ ፡ >፰፫ ወ፰፫ ወ፹ወ፰ ለ(p. 249b)፡ ፡ ፍጥረተ፡ ፡ አቡነ፡ ፡ አዳም፡ ፡ በረከቱ፡ ፡ ተሀሉ፡ ፡ ምስለ፡ ፡ ሕዝበ፡ ፡ ክርስቲያን፡ ፡ ለዓለመ፡ ፡ >ዓለም፡ ፡ አሜን ። ።

And that (work) was completed in the day of Friday, the 5 of ፐጥጥ and in the year 1412 (mistake for 1112) year of the pure Martyrs. Let their blessing be with *Abunä Həbtä Maryam* and with our king *Həylä Śəllase* and with the scribe *Gäbrä Iyäsus*, for ever and ever, amen. And in the year 1388 from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, to him glory, and (let) his mercy (be) upon us, amen. And in the year 6888 of the creation of our father Adam, let his blessing be with the Christian people, for ever and ever, amen.

The 5 ፐጥጥ 1388 (year of Mercy, that is 1 January 1396 CE) was a Saturday and not a Friday, thus something is wrong in this colophon; it is likely that the day refers to the copying of the manuscript. Wion correctly points out that as other *subscriptio*nes date Gə‘əz works to 1395/1396 CE, there may be a mythical element causing this fictitious attribution. Yet, there are two (and not only one, as noted by Wion) attributions to a period before the seventeenth century of the *Māṣḥafä Sawiros* in notes recorded by Ernst Hammerschmidt in his catalogue of the Lake ፐጥጥ manuscripts: the first one, on the inner side of the cover of MS T (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, ፐጥጥገጽ 65 = Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, Dabra Märyām 7), states, ደረ ። ደብረ ማርያም ። ሣዊሮስ ። በአፄ ። በዕድ ። ማርያም ።

Conference of Ethiopian Studies, November 6–11, 2000, Addis Ababa, I (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, 2002), 275–300, here 286–287.
¹⁰ See Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa, and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Microfilm Library, Collegeville*, IV: *Project Numbers 1101–1500* (Collegeville, MN: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, St. John’s Abbey and University, 1979), 152.
¹¹ <https://www.vhmdl.org/>.

ዘመን ። ('Dära. Däbrä Maryam. *Śawiros*, at the time of *Ade* Ba'ädä Maryam', that is, 1468–1478 CE); the second one, erroneously placed on the inner side of the cover of MS Ṭānāsee 59 = Dabra Māryām 1, but actually referring to Ṭānāsee 65 = Dabra Māryām 7, states, ደረ ፣ ደሴት ፣ ውስጥ ፣ ደብረ ማርያም ። ወንጌል ፣ ማርቆስ ፣ ሰዊሮስ ፣ በአጼ ፣ አምደ ፣ ጽዮን ፣ ዘመን ። ('In the Dära isle, Däbrä Maryam. Gospel of Mark and *Sāwiros*, at the time of *Ade* 'Amdä Şəyon', that is, 1314–1344 CE).¹² As Hammerschmidt points out, the content of the note matches MS T. Obviously, a palaeographic attribution of that manuscript to the fourteenth century is not possible.

The Italian translation is written in a clear and fluid language. The editor (and translator) has found brilliant solutions for the most difficult *tourneures*, and has rightly opted for rendering the sense rather than the letter; see an example (p. [40]/172.28–29), ቃልክ ፣ ሎሙ ፣ ዘይጤይቅ ፣, translated as (p. [41]/173.29–30) 'la tua parola sia per essi di convincimento', where the frequently used verb አጠየቀ ፣ receives the appropriate meaning, while the same verb is rendered differently in other contexts, for example (p. [39]/171.2–3) 'per assicurare', or (p. 171.22–23) 'Ci hanno dimostrato'. There might be cases when one disagrees, for example (p. [36]/168.3) አሐዱ ፣ ገጽ ፣, translated as (p. [37]/169.2) 'un solo volto', whereas one would expect 'una sola persona' ('only one person'); but the translation is definitely one of this edition's strong points.

The book is written in Italian, by an Eritrean-born author educated in the Italian school. Yet, still admiring the genius of a polyglot who can master several European, Ethiopian Semitic, and Christian Oriental languages, quite a few passages betray an exotic flavour: see for example (p. [8]/140) 'Accenni prosopografici sull'autore', for 'Cenni prosopografici'; (p. [10]/142) 'Pur non essendoci citazioni esplicite dei Padri della Chiesa [...] è chiaro che l'autore ne possedeva una loro [*sic*] ampia conoscenza', where 'loro' is superfluous and not acceptable in the written language; (p. [10]/142) 'Sawirus si dimostra a suo agio con la letteratura agiografica, ben percettibile nel retropensiero [*sic*] del *KĪ*, che per quanto concerne la pratica della vita cristiana riflette una forte impronta monastica', where 'retropensiero' seems to stand for 'retroterra', 'background', while 'retropensiero' (*arrière-pensée*) has a different meaning. Other examples are marked with '*sic*' in this review. In the case of the word (p. [36]/168.25) አጠስ ፣, rendered in the translation (p. [37]/169.24) with '*pātos*', and explained in the footnotes as a 'calco', one wonders if the author is not aware of what 'calco' means in Italian, or perhaps lacks understanding of linguistic interference: this is

¹² See E. Hammerschmidt, *Äthiopische Handschriften vom Ṭānāsee*, II: *Die Handschriften von Dabra Māryām und von Rēmā*, Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, 20/2 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1977), 63 and 52.

in fact not a ‘calque’, but exactly its opposite, that is, a ‘loanword’, or ‘borrowing’ in the narrow sense (p. [37]/169, n. 18: ‘*Patos* è un calco del greco βᾶτος, “roveto” (Es. 3,2)’).

Without being able to carry out a systematic check, I quote the following passage to exemplify where the translation does not reflect the Gə‘əz text, but is the result of an interpretation which is not made explicit in the *constitutio textus* or in the apparatus at least: (p. [38]/170.18) በውስተ ፡ ሃይማኖተ ፡ ጉባኤ ፡, translated as (p. [39]/171.20) ‘nel sinodo della fede’; as noted in the footnote (ibid., n. 21), the Arabic has في الامانة لاجامعة, which is explained as ‘nel credo comune’. In fact, the literal translation of the Gə‘əz is ‘nella fede del sinodo’ (‘in the faith of the synod’), which presupposes a slightly different Arabic text (for example, في امانة لاجامعة), whereas the translation ‘nel sinodo della fede’ is not grammatically justified.

The text is full of interesting passages that provide abundant material for the study of medieval (post-Aksumite) Gə‘əz: see for example (p. [36]/168.5) the construction እስከ ፡ ኩነ ፡ የዐጽቦሙ ፡, (p. [37]/169.4) ‘a tal punto che fu ad essi difficile’, with the auxiliary verb *konä* in the plural, in agreement with the suffix pronoun of the singular verb in the *konä*-periphrastic construction; the same *konä*-periphrastic construction (p. [34]/166.24) ወኩነ ፡ ኢይሰምዑ ፡, (p. [35]/167.26) ‘e non sentirono’, would be better translated as ‘e non stavano a sentire’.

The accuracy of transcription is an essential aspect of the quality of a work where several languages are used (besides Italian and other European languages, Gə‘əz, Arabic, and Amharic as well). There are a few errors, see for example from the first pages of the book (p. [8]/140, twice): ‘Abū al-Barākat Ibn Kabar’, instead of ‘Abū al-Barakāt Ibn Kabar’, and ‘Anbā Mīḥa’īl’, instead of ‘Anbā Mīḥā’īl’, but, as a rule, these errors do not seriously affect the work. The same for other mistakes such as (p. [11]/143, n. 13) ‘arabisher’ instead of ‘arabischer’; (p. [11]/143.6) ‘pontenziali’ instead of ‘potenziali’; and so also in the text (p. [34]/164.6) ዘገረ ፡ instead of ዘገረ ፡.

A fair overall evaluation of the critical edition with annotated translation by Tedros Abraha of the first three homilies of the *Mäṣḥafä Sawiros* of Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa‘ is difficult. The edition is the result of a considerable amount of work and has the merit of providing the first edition of an unpublished text established through the analysis of large part of the manuscript tradition and is furnished with a rich apparatus of variants. The careful translation makes the text accessible to non-specialists, and further to which is an essential complement to the edition, as it provides the ultimate *interpretatio* of the edited text. The systematic use of the Arabic text, documented in the footnotes to the translation, offers large material to clarify discrepancies, misunderstandings, and the

making of the Gə‘əz version. This is, all in all, an important and valuable contribution to the study of the Gə‘əz literary heritage.

The method of the edition, however, shows contradictory aspects. It should be noted firstly that the editor shows a surprising reticence—with a manuscript tradition dating from the seventeenth century, with the only exception being one manuscript, unfortunately not accessible, dating from the fifteenth century (MS Qoma Fasilādās)—in accepting that the *terminus non post quem* of the translation in Gə‘əz must be the fifteenth century. On the positive side, the editor has carried out an evaluation of the single witnesses, applied at least to some extent a correct *eliminatio codicum descriptorum*, even though the reasons for some eliminations are not specified, and has not assumed any ‘better’ or ‘older’ manuscript as base for the edition in the absence of convincing reasons for this choice. On the negative side—aside from the ample room for technical improvement of the apparatus—a clear *recensio*, at whatever level of the tradition, is missing: there is neither any attempt at making a sense of the sparse observations concerning common errors and conservations (the latter, observed for manuscripts AGTV, but also MS JE 342E) which would demonstrate the existence of an innovative family common to the non-conservative witnesses—nor any sense is made of the correspondence in the sequence of texts observed for other manuscripts (AS, but also MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopiens d’Abbadie 125, and MS Qoma Fasilādās), which cannot be accidental and could have suggested a first genealogical hypothesis to be proved on more substantial evidence.

Finally, the lack of distinction in the objective targeted between the Gə‘əz text translated from the Arabic, and the Arabic text as it is attested, which is used as a virtual archetype, risks justifying textual choices that calque the edited Gə‘əz text upon the Arabic model, also when the agreement with the Arabic is the result of a secondary development.

It remains, as already said, that this book, for its positive and in spite of its more problematic aspects, is an important contribution to a deeper and better understanding of the Gə‘əz textual tradition and literature, and of the intellectual heritage of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Tāwəḥədo Orthodox Churches.

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