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Vignette:

Gold coin of King Aphilas, early third century CE, as drawn by A. Luegmeyer after the coin in Rennau collection. Weight 2.48 grams, diameter 17 mm.

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Editorial

The present issue of AETHIOPICA is the twenty-fifth since the journal's founding in 1998. It is also the thirteenth issue I have worked on as editor-in-chief, one more than that of founder Siegbert Uhlig. The present time, however, does not lend itself to celebrations of any sort. The global political crisis and the situation in the Horn of Africa are having a deep impact on the scholarly community, which appears divided and radicalized on opposite or increasingly diverging positions as never before. The growing influence of diaspora communities is at times marked by waves of resurgent nationalism. The challenge posed by main-stream policy in countries of established scholarly traditions gives less and less space to small fields—as is the case of Ethiopian and Eritrean studies. The consequent lack of resources triggers the fragmentation of the scholarly scene. New balances based on mutual legitimation and acknowledgement of a common scholarly method are not obvious. The consequence of this complex situation, which reflects global changes, is that scholarly and academic freedom can be put at risk. Of all priorities envisaged in the mission of AETHIOPICA, preservation of academic freedom along with scholarly quality has been, is, and will remain the top priority of the journal.

I regret that in the past, and still now, the lack of available qualified authors has prevented AETHIOPICA from duly commemorating distinct colleagues and researchers recently passed away who were more than deserving of an obituary. I would like to remember at least some of them here, by name, as a very modest tribute to their work and memory: Johannes Launhardt (1929–2019), Mesfin Wolde Mariam (1930–2020), Steffen Wenig (1934–2022), Girma Fisseha (1941–2020).

To end on a positive note, three colleagues active in Ethiopian and Eritrean studies have received important awards this year, and we would like to mention them here: Samantha Kelly (Professor of Medieval History at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, also on our International Editorial Board), has won the Choice Outstanding Academic Title 2020, and the African Studies Review Prize for the Best Africa-focused Anthology or Edited Collection 2021, for her *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Leiden–Boston, MA: Brill, 2020); Verena Krebs (Junior-Professorin für Mittelalterliche Kulturräume at Ruhr-Universität Bochum) has received the Dan David Prize for her *Medieval Ethiopian Kingship, Craft, and Diplomacy with Latin Europe* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); and Massimo Zaccaria (Professore Associato in Storia e Istituzioni dell'Africa at Università degli Studi di Pavia) has received the Giorgio Maria Sangiorgi award of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 'per la Storia ed Etnologia dell'Africa'. To all of them—the warmest congratulations from AETHIOPICA!

Miscellaneous

Once Again on *'bk wdm* in Ethiopian Sabaic

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In the extant Ethiopian Sabaic corpus,¹ the collocation *'bk wdm* occurs five times:²

RIÉ 1, ll. 4–7: *ywm hmlkhw s'tr whbs' w'lmqh wdthmym wdtb'dn w'bk wdm*, ‘when they made him (viz. W'RN H̄YWT) king, (they being) ‘Astar, Hobas, 'Almaqah, dat-Ḥamim, dat-Ba'dan *w'bk wdm*'

RIÉ 2, l. 2: *wdtb'dn w'b[k wdm]*, ‘dat-Ba'dan *w'bk wdm*'³

RIÉ 10, ll. 13–15: *bs'qt s'tr whbs' w'lmqhy wdthmym wdtb'dn w'bk wdm bn kl⁴ mr'm*, ‘by the protection⁵ of 'Astar, of Hobas, of 'Almaqah,

¹ Abbreviations follow the Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions (DASI), with the addition of Kh-al-Ḥarāb 1 edited in Noman 2012. We adopt the usual scholarly convention in using ‘Ethiopian Sabaic’ (or the like) to refer to the Sabaic inscriptions found in Ethiopia and Eritrea that exhibit linguistic features different from the Sabaic attested in the Arabian Peninsula (see Drewes 1980; Schneider 1971–1972; Robin, *apud* Robin and de Maigret 1998, 782–787).

² Note that the collocation *'bk wdm* has also been reconstructed at the end of RIÉ 5 and 6.

³ This is the reading of RIÉ; Nebes 2010, 182, n. 5 is also confident about the reconstruction of *'bk wdm* in this inscription.

⁴ RIÉ reads *km*. Robin, *apud* Robin and de Maigret 1998, 784, n. 41, however, proposed to read *kl*, which we follow here (so also Nebes 2010, 184).

⁵ The Ethiopian Sabaic verbal noun *s'qt*, ‘protection’, derives from the root *wṭq*, which in Sabaic means ‘versichern’, ‘bestätigen’ (for which, see Stein 2010, 734, as well as the online *Sabäisches Wörterbuch*). For the realization of **t* as *s* in Ethiopian Sabaic, see Drewes 1980, 36; Schneider 1971–1972, 23; Avanzini 1989, 473; Robin, *apud* Robin and de Maigret 1998, 784; Gajda and Yohannes Gebre Selassie 2009, 52—the latter two publications comment specifically on this etymology of *s'qt*. For the status of *s'qt* as a verbal noun, see n. 22 below.

of *ḏat-Ḥamin*, of *ḏat-Baʿdan wʿbk wdm* from everyone who is malicious⁶

Addi Akaweh 1, ll. 5–8: *bsʿqt sʿtr whbsʿ wʿlmq[y w]ḏt-ḥmn wḏtb [dn] wʿbk wḏ[m] bn tkm*⁷, ‘by the protection of ʿAstar, of Hobas, of ʿAlmaqah, of *ḏat-Ḥamin*, of *ḏat-Baʿdan wʿbk wdm* from an adversary’⁸

RIÉ 9, ll. 5–7: *bsʿqt sʿtr w[h]wbsʿ wʿlmqy wḏt-ḥmn wḏt-bʿdn wʿbk wdm [b]n tkm*⁹, ‘by the protection of ʿAstar, of Hobas, of ʿAlmaqah, of *ḏat-Ḥamin*, of *ḏat-Baʿdan wʿbk wdm* from an adversary’.

The first analysis of the collocation *ʿbk wdm* belongs to Roger Schneider, who in the *editio princeps* of RIÉ 1 considered *ʿbk wdm* to continue the list of deity names.¹⁰ This analysis has been adopted over the years, including by Christian Julien Robin and more recently by Iwona Gajda and Yohannes Gebre Selassie.¹¹ An alternative analysis was proposed by Abraham J. Drewes, who suggested that *ʿbk wdm* begins a new sentence that should be analysed as a verbless clause, that is, ‘your father is Wadd’.¹² This analysis has also been invoked over the years, including most recently in the 2019 publication of *RIÉ* IIIB, which provides translations and commentaries for the pre-Aksumite and Aksumite inscriptions in Semitic languages. While scholars adopting each of these two options differ in how to analyse *ʿbk wdm*, they share in common that they have generally had no viable solution for the words that come after *ʿbk wdm* in

⁶ As proposed by Robin, *apud* Robin and de Maigret 1998, 784, n. 61, and adopted by Nebes 2010, 184–185, *mrʿm* is a derived stem participle of the verbal root *rġm*, which is attested in the Sabaic noun *rġm*, ‘illwill’, ‘disfavour’, ‘spite’ (for which, see Beeston et al. 1982, 22; Nebes 2010, 185, n. 17; see also the online *Sabäisches Wörterbuch*). For the realization of *ġ as ʿ in Ethiopian Sabaic, see Robin, *apud* Robin and de Maigret 1998, 785–786; Nebes 2010, 185, n. 17—both comment specifically on this etymology of *mrʿm*.

⁷ The reading of *tkm* is all but certain, even if the lower half of *t* is partly damaged. Compare also the duplicate in RIÉ 9.

⁸ Robin, *apud* Robin and de Maigret 1998, 784, n. 61, compared *tkm* with the preposition *tk*, ‘opposite’, ‘confronting’ (for which, see Beeston et al. 1982, 22; Nebes 2010, 185, n. 21; cf. the online *Sabäisches Wörterbuch*). Nebes 2010, 185–186 took the comparison further, proposing that *tkm* here is a noun, from the same root as the preposition, with the meaning ‘Gegner’, ‘Widersacher’, citing *mrʿm* as a semantic parallel.

⁹ The reconstruction of the end of this inscription only became evident after the publication of the duplicate Addi Akaweh 1 (see Gajda and Yohannes Gebre Selassie 2009, 52–53). Compare the earlier reading in *RIÉ*: *wʿbk wdm .. tkm*.

¹⁰ Schneider 1976, 85: ‘la série se termine avec ces deux mots’.

¹¹ Robin 1996, 1157; Robin, *apud* Robin and de Maigret 1998, 789; Gajda and Yohannes Gebre Selassie 2009.

¹² Drewes 1980, 39.

RIÉ 10 and Addi Akaweh 1 = RIÉ 9.¹³ This can be exemplified, on the one hand, by Gajda and Yohannes Gebre Selassie, who follow Schneider's interpretation, and, on the other hand, by *RIÉ* IIIB, which naturally adopts Drewes's proposal: the words after *'bk wdm* in RIÉ 10 and Addi Akaweh 1 = RIÉ 9 are left unanalysed in both of these publications.¹⁴

The proverbial exception that proves the rule is Robin, who made several important interventions in understanding the words after *'bk wdm* in RIÉ 10 and RIÉ 9 (Addi Akaweh 1 had not yet been discovered at the time of Robin's writing).¹⁵ Robin clarified the meaning of the words after *w'bk wdm* in RIÉ 10 with two crucial interventions: first, he proposed the reading *kl*, whereas *RIÉ* had read *km*. Second, he translated *mr'm* as 'individu malveillant' connecting it with the Sabaic noun *rǧm*, 'illwill', 'disfavour', 'spite'. In RIÉ 9, Robin suggested that the final noun *'tkm* be compared with the preposition *'tk*, 'opposite', 'confronting'. He was, however, unable to arrive at an entirely satisfactory solution to the understanding of the end of this inscription since the word before *'tkm* had not yet been resolved, at least partly due to the fact that Addi Akaweh 1 had not yet been discovered.

Building on the work of Robin, Norbert Nebes convincingly showed that the text after *'bk wdm* in RIÉ 10 should be understood as *bn kl mr'm*, 'from everyone who is malicious', and that in Addi Akaweh 1 = RIÉ 9 as *bn 'tkm*, 'from an adversary'.¹⁶ Nebes then argued that *'bk wdm* is an apotropaic formula that can be translated, for instance in the case of RIÉ 9, as 'und Waddum ist dein (göttlicher) Vater als Schutz vor einem Widersacher'.¹⁷ Nebes's argument has been adopted (tentatively?) by the Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions, which renders the same inscription as 'and may your father Wdm (save you) from any opponent (?)', explicitly referencing Nebes.¹⁸ Nebes's argument for the apotropaic formula is not, however, without its problems, including especially how a simple verbless clause 'Wadd is your father', as already proposed by Drewes, can be apotropaic in such a way: note 'als Schutz' in Nebes's translation as well as '(save you)' in DASI, neither of which seems to be motivated—certainly not explicitly—by the Sabaic text itself. Despite this obvious grammatical difficulty, Nebes considers his proposal for understanding *'bk wdm* as an apotropaic for-

¹³ The exception is Robin, whose analysis is discussed in the next paragraph.

¹⁴ Gajda and Yohannes Gebre Selassie 2009, 52 and *RIÉ* IIIB, 43, 45, 46 ('les trois derniers mots de l'inscription nous sont incompréhensibles').

¹⁵ Robin, *apud* Robin and de Maigret 1998, 784, n. 61.

¹⁶ Nebes 2010.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁸ See http://dasi.cnr.it/index.php?id=dasi_prj_epi&prjId=1&corId=0&colId=0&navId=336216217&recId=7554.

mula all but assured by the presence of the prepositional phrases *bn kl mr'm*, 'from everyone who is malicious', and *bn 'tkm*, 'from an adversary', in RIÉ 10 and Addi Akaweh 1 = RIÉ 9, respectively. Thus, Nebes concludes his article writing, 'Dass es sich um eine solche mit apotropäischem Charakter in der Tat auch handelt, ist jetzt durch die Erweiterung des Wortlauts um die Präpositionalangaben *bn kl mr'm* und *bn 'tkm* in den äthio-sabäischen Königsinschriften aus dem abessinischen Hochland zweifelsfrei erwiesen'.¹⁹

Like Nebes, we consider the two concluding prepositional phrases to be key to solving the long-standing *cruces interpretum* at the end of these inscriptions; nevertheless, departing from Nebes, we think that these two prepositional phrases should be understood in conjunction with *b-s'qt*, 'by the protection of', earlier in the inscriptions. In our view, Nebes has failed to account for the distribution of the prepositional phrases *bn kl mr'm*, 'from everyone who is malicious', and *bn 'tkm*, 'from an adversary' only in RIÉ 10 and Addi Akaweh 1 = RIÉ 9, respectively, but not in RIÉ 1.²⁰ It is no coincidence, we think, that the two concluding prepositional phrases are found only in inscriptions that contain *b-s'qt*, 'by the protection of'. We propose that the concluding prepositional phrases *bn kl mr'm*, 'from everyone who is malicious', and *bn 'tkm*, 'from an adversary', complement the earlier prepositional phrase *b-s'qt*, 'by the protection of', to form the following formula: *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, 'by the protection of divine name(s) from X'.

The proposed formula *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, 'by the protection of divine name(s) from X', can be compared with two well-known formulae in Sabaic. The first involves a deity or deities saving, protecting, and so on, a person or persons from ill effects, as the following representative example illustrates:

Ja 651: *wlh 'nn wmt'n whryn 'lmqh 'bdhw 'bd'm dmdrhm bn b's'tm wnkym*, 'and may 'Almaqah help, protect, and deliver his servant 'BD'M, of the family MDRHM, from any evil and mischief'

The formula in this inscription differs from the proposed formula *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, 'by the protection of divine name(s) from X', in that the former has a verb in the first position whereas the latter has the Ethiopian Sabaic verbal noun *s'qt*, 'protection', headed by the preposition *b-*. The second formula with which the proposed formula *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, 'by the protection of divine name(s) from X', can be profitably compared takes the structure 'by the

¹⁹ Nebes 2010, 187.

²⁰ The same will be the case with RIÉ 2 (as well as 5 and 6) if the reconstructions are correct.

help/power/etc. of DN(s)', as illustrated in the following representative example:²¹

Kh-al-Ḥarāb 1: *brd' 'ttr s²rqn w-'ttr d-zhr ys¹r w-b-dt b'dn w-dt ḥm[ym]*, 'by the help of 'Attar S²ariqan and of 'Aṭtar ḏu-Zahr Yas¹ar and by (the help of) dat-Ba'dan and of dat-Ḥamim

In this inscription, there is an initial verbal noun followed by a list of deity names just as in the proposed formula *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, 'by the protection of divine name(s) from X'. Together, these two well-known Sabaic formulae provide the building blocks for our proposed Ethiopian Sabaic formula. Thus, the proposed formula *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, 'by the protection of divine name(s) from X', seems perfectly at home in (Ethiopian) Sabaic, even if the exact formulation is not yet attested elsewhere.²²

To conclude, we want to stress that it is the distribution of the various phrases in the Ethiopian Sabaic inscriptions that is ultimately decisive for us in proposing the formula *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, 'by the protection of divine name(s) from X': the final prepositional phrases *bn kl mr'm* and *bn 'tkm* are found only when *b-s'qt* occurs earlier in the inscription. RIÉ 1, in contrast, does not have *b-s'qt*, and thus there is no final prepositional phrase *bn X*. This distribution suggests to us that we are dealing with a formula *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, 'by the protection of divine name(s) from X'. If the proposed formula is accepted, then *'bk wdm* must continue the list of deity names, as proposed initially by Schneider. This is necessarily the case for RIÉ 10 and Addi Akaweh 1 = RIÉ 9, since the two prepositional phrases *b-s'qt* and *bn X* bracket the list of deity names. The relevant portions of RIÉ 10 and Addi Akaweh 1 = RIÉ 9 should, then, be translated as follows:

²¹ It should be noted that PNs can also occur in this formula.

²² Lest there be any doubt, it should be pointed out that the proposed formula is grammatical in (Ethiopian) Sabaic. Compare, for instance, the morpho-syntax of the following Sabaic inscription: *wḥmrhw 'lmqḥthwnb l'wm h'nhw wḥrynhw bn b's'tm wqd' ws²sy s²n'm*, 'and may 'Almaqah Ṭahwan Lord of 'Awwam grant him his protection and his safety from any evil as well as maleficence and malice of an enemy' (Ja 587). Here the infinitives *h'm* and *ḥryn* (for the morphology of the infinitive in Sabaic, see Stein 2002), with pronominal suffixes and governing a concluding prepositional phrase headed by *bn*, have almost exactly the same morpho-syntax as the verbal noun *s'qt* in the proposed formula. In this regard, it should be noted that Ethiopian Sabaic *s'qt* may not only be a verbal noun, but even more specifically it could be an infinitive. Compare the *maṣdar* of I-w roots in Arabic, for instance *'idat-* (root *w'd*) and *da'at-* (root *wd'*) (Wright 1896, 118–119, §206) as well as the situation in Semitic more broadly (Brockelmann 1908, 338, §121d).

RIÉ 10: ‘by the protection of ‘Astar, of Hobas, of ‘Almaqah, of dat-Ḥamin, of dat-Ba‘dan, and of ‘Abuka Wadd from everyone who is malicious’

Addi Akaweh 1 = RIÉ 9: ‘by the protection of ‘Astar, of Hobas, of ‘Almaqah, of dat-Ḥamin, of dat-Ba‘dan, and of ‘Abuka Wadd from an adversary’

The remaining inscription(s) without the proposed formula will, by implication, follow the same pattern with *'bk wdm* concluding the list of deity names. The relevant portions of RIÉ 1 should, then, for instance, be translated as follows:

RIÉ 1: ‘when ‘Astar, Hobas, ‘Almaqah, dat-Ḥamim, dat-Ba‘dan, and ‘Abuka Wadd made him (viz. W‘RN ḤYWT) king.’

Thus, the pantheon of the Ethiopian Sabaic corpus will have been slightly different from that of the Sabaeans in that the former includes Wadd, with the unique epithet ‘Abuka,²³ among the deities ‘Astar, Hobas, ‘Almaqah, dat-Ḥamim, and dat-Ba‘dan.²⁴

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²³ Nebes 2010, 186 rightly draws attention to the importance of the second personal pronominal suffix in *'bk* as the earliest attestation of the form (cf. Stein 2003, 132). We are not, however, convinced by either of the possibilities that Nebes proposes as referents of the pronominal suffix, namely, the reader or the patron. It seems just as likely to us that *'bk* is a fixed epithet of Wadd in this cultural milieu and that, therefore, the second person pronominal suffix is frozen without necessarily having a single, fixed referent. We have attempted to reflect our understanding in the translations above with ‘Abuka. The proposed scenario can be compared with the use of *abuna* among various Christians (Ethiopian, Copt, and Syriac) or *rabbi* among Jews, though of course in both of these cases the pronoun is first person, whereas in the proposed Sabaic case it would be second person.

²⁴ Contrast Nebes 2010, 183: ‘Diese Auffassung [...] hat zur Konsequenz, dass die Gottheit Waddum als zum offiziellen Kanon der von den äthio-sabäischen Herrschern angerufenen Gottheiten zählend zu gelten hätte, was einen signifikanten Unterschied zur sabäischen Kultpraxis darstellt’.

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Summary

In an article published in this journal in 2010, Norbert Nebes argued that *'bk wdm* is an apotropaic formula, which can be translated, for instance in the case of RIÉ 9, as ‘und Waddum ist dein (göttlicher) Vater als Schutz vor einem Widersacher’ (*w'bk wdm [b]n 'tkm*). In contrast, it is proposed here that *'bk wdm* continues the previous list of deity names, as already suggested in 1976 by Roger Schneider. Key to this argument is the distribution of the concluding prepositional phrases *bn kl mr'm*, ‘from everyone who is malicious’, and *bn 'tkm*, ‘from an adversary’, which only occur in inscriptions that have *b-s'qt*, ‘by the protection of’. Thus, the following formula is proposed: *b-s'qt DN(s) bn X*, ‘by the protection of divine name(s) from X’.