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JONAS KARLSSON, University of Hamburg

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by Aaron Michael Butts

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ludwig Gerhardt, Hewan Semon Marye,
Susanne Hummel, and Alexander Meckelburg

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Miscellaneous

On *zəyāqon* in *Dəgg^{wā}*-Type Antiphonaries*

JONAS KARLSSON, University of Hamburg

Introduction

Among the noteworthy features that characterize early Gəʿəz, the attestation of the form ብዮቅን፣ *zəyāqon*, ‘deacon’, for Standard Medieval Gəʿəz¹ ብዮቅን፣ *diyāqon*, has been noted on several occasions.² Supported by similar forms in the papyrological evidence, it has been suggested that the form might have its roots in a Greek pronunciation of the word δίακονος, *diákonos*, in which δι > ζ(ι) (*di* > *z(i)*).³ Simultaneously, it has been pointed out that comparable forms are attested in several modern Ethiopian Semitic languages.⁴ Occasionally, such forms appear to have influenced also the written language.⁵ Starting one and a

* I want to express my gratitude to Aaron Michael Butts, Michael Hensley, Dorothea Reule, and Solomon Gebreyes Beyene, who in different ways have helped with this note.

¹ By ‘Standard Medieval Gəʿəz’, I mean the variant of the Gəʿəz language that was established as the standard at some point in the medieval period, perhaps around the thirteenth–fourteenth century, and has remained as such until the modern period (cf. Bausi 2005, 149–150; Nosnitsin 2016, 87, fn. 10). The establishment of a linguistic and, to some extent, orthographic standard at this time does not necessarily entail the emergence of a *new* variant; it may rather have been the result of a decrease in linguistic and orthographic variation. See Butts 2020, 506–507, and, specifically for an example of orthographic development, Karlsson forthcoming a. Broadly speaking, Standard Medieval Gəʿəz is the variant of Gəʿəz described in classical and modern grammars and dictionaries.

² Bausi 2005, 159–160; Villa 2019, 208–210; Bausi 2023, 165. Examples of *Sinodos* manuscripts attesting this spelling are listed in Bausi 1995, I, xl–xli. The form *zəyāqon* is mentioned, without any remarks about its limited attestation, in *Sawāsəwa gəʿəz* 1999/2000, 151a (where ብዮቅን፣ is given as the word’s Amharic translation), and Deschler 2022, 139 (note that the word is missing in previous editions of this work).

³ Bausi 2005, 160, fn. 33. For Greek examples, see Gignac 1976–1981, I, 75–76. Alternatively, one could imagine that a pronunciation [ð] would have been rendered with <# > by Gəʿəz speakers.

⁴ Referring to Leslau 1991, 642, Bausi cites Təgrəññā *zāq^{wā}ana*, ‘become a deacon’, and Amharic *zāqq^{wā}ana* (Bausi 2005, 160, fn. 32).

⁵ See, for example, Dege-Müller 2020, 25, fn. 89.

half centuries ago, the derived verb *zəyāqʷana*, ‘serve as a deacon’, and/or the noun *zəyāqon* have been recorded in dictionaries,⁶ generally without any discussion of the diachronic attestation of these variants.

In addition, several scholars have rightly remarked that *zəyāqon* is not the only attestation of the fricativization of Greek dentals in ancient Gəʿəz loanwords. Villa has drawn attention to the forms **ዚዮንሲስ** : *Ziyonsis* (or, perhaps, *Ziyonāsis*), ‘Dionysius’, and **አፍራዲት** : *Afrāzīt*, ‘Aphrodite’, both attested in the Gəʿəz *Martyrdom of Anicetus and Photius* (CAe 6501).⁷ Examples of the perhaps related affrication of voiceless *ti* (*ti*) in prevocalic position are found, for example, in **ለንጽ** : *lanṣ*, ‘linen cloth, napkin’, from Greek *λέντιον*, *léntion*, and in **አንጾካያ** : *Anṣokayā*, ‘Antioch’, from Greek *Ἀντιόχεια*, *Antiókheia*, both attested in biblical texts translated during Aksumite times. A transcription in the opposite direction, from Gəʿəz to Greek, is represented by the rendering of the toponym **ጸያሞ** : *Ṣəyāmo*, as *Τιαμω*, *Tiamō*, in several Aksumite inscriptions.⁸

The Form *zəyāqon* in *Dəggʷā*-Type Antiphonaries

Against this backdrop, this brief note aims to point to a contemporary survival of the spelling *zəyāqon* in *Dəggʷā*-type antiphonaries, recorded already in Kidāna Wald Kəfle’s Gəʿəz–Amharic dictionary from 1955/1956.⁹ Within the corpus of *Dəggʷā*-type antiphons, the form *zəyāqon* occurs regularly within antiphons for the commemoration of Stephen the Protomartyr, celebrated on 17 Ṭəqəmt (27/28 October).¹⁰ As an example, consider the following *śalast* antiphon.¹¹ The spelling

⁶ Dillmann 1865, 1063; Leslau 1991, 642a–642b, 647a; Kidāna Wald Kəfle 1955/1956, 419a–419b. Kidāna Wald puts the the variation *d* ~ *z* in connection with the Arabic variation between *dāl* (د) and *ḏāl* (ذ). He furthermore derives the name of the liturgical book *Ziq* from *zəyāqʷan*. I am grateful to Solomon Gebreyes Beyene for helping me understand Kidāna Wald’s Amharic.

⁷ Villa 2021, 210. The reading **ዚዮስ** : *Zews*, for **ዲያ** : *Diyā*, and **ዘዲዮስ** : *za-Diyos*, in Acts 14:12 and 14:13, respectively, in the manuscript London, Private collection, Ms 2345, should probably also be mentioned in this context. See Niccum 2014, 171, and, for an introduction to this manuscript, Niccum 2008.

⁸ On these forms, see Weninger 2010, 79–80, and Soldati 2015, 423.

⁹ Kidāna Wald Kəfle 1955/1956, 419a.

¹⁰ For an introduction to the *Dəggʷā* and collections of *Dəggʷā*-type antiphons, see Karlsson 2024. The following discussion is based on the corpus of manuscripts used and presented in detail in Karlsson 2024 (see especially Chapter 2 on pages 130–327).

¹¹ For an introduction to *śalast* antiphons and antiphons of other types, see Karlsson 2024, 65–93.

has been adopted without change from the print edition of the *Dəggwā* published in 2015/2016 CE, itself based on a manuscript completed in 1962/1963 CE.¹²

እስመ፡ ዘዝያቆን፡ ሥርዓተ፡ አቀበ፡ እስከ፡ ፍጻሜሁ፡ ኢተአደወ፡ ወኢተአተተ፡ እምዘዘአሁ፡
አቅም፡ ብፁዕ፡ እስጢፋኖስ፡ ሰማዕቱ፡ ለክርስቶስ፡ አክሊለ፡ ስምዕ፡ ዘመዊዕ፡ ነሥአ።¹³

For he kept the order of the deacon (*zəyāqon*) until the end. He did not overstep nor depart from his station. Blessed Stephen, the martyr of Christ, received the victorious crown of martyrdom!

The form *zəyāqon* appears immediately in the second word. In manuscripts from after the sixteenth century, this word is uniformly spelled as either *zəyāqon* or *ziyāqon*.¹⁴ However, in the earliest attestation of (a variant of) this antiphon—in the single-type collection of *śalast* antiphons¹⁵ in the fifteenth-century MS *Ṣərḥa Ṣəyon Beta Ḥawāryāt*, Ethio-SPaRe SSB-002 (fol. 50ra)—we find instead the word **ዘዲያቆን፡**, *za-diyāqonāt*, with the standard spelling with <ዲ>.

Interestingly, a similar diachronic pattern is attested in other antiphons. Consider the following, grammatically somewhat opaque *’arbā’*t antiphon for the same commemoration:

ኢተረክበ፡ ዕደ፡ ኅበ፡ አንበረ፡ ወኢምሥዋዕተ፡ ኅበ፡ አዕረገ፡ አላ፡ ዘዝያቆን፡ ሥርዓተ፡ አቀ
በ፡ ብፁዕ፡ ሰማዕት፡ እስጢፋኖስ።¹⁶

There was no hand that he placed (?), and no sacrifice that he offered (?),¹⁷ but he kept the order of the deacon (*zəyāqon*). Blessed is Stephen the Martyr!

¹² On this printed edition, see Karlsson 2024, 321–323. It should be pointed out that the spelling is not a special characteristic of this print edition but also appears, for example, in *Maṣḥafa Dəggwā* 1966/1967, 75c, and *Maṣḥafa Dəggwā* 1994/1995, 39b, 40b.

¹³ *Maṣḥafa Dəggwā* 2015/2016, 65a–b.

¹⁴ It appears in the twentieth-century MS *Romānāt Qəddus Mikā’el*, EAP254/1/5, fol. 36va (**ዘዝያቆን፡**); the nineteenth-century MSS *’Aṣatan Māryām*, EMMML 7285, fol. 47rb (**ዘዘያቆን፡**) and *Moṭā Giyorgis*, EMDA 00111, fol. 37vc (**ዘዝያቆን፡**); the seventeenth-century MSS *Ḥayq ’Əstifānos*, EMMML 2053, fol. 37rc (**ዘዝያቆን፡**, *sic*); *Qalāqəl Māryām Ṣəyon*, Ethio-SPaRe QS-006, fol. 38rb (**ዘዝያቆን፡**); *Dabra Koreb waQarānəyo Madḥane ’Ālam*, EAP432/1/10, fol. 38rc (**ዘዝያቆን፡**); and *Uppsala, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek*, O Etiop. 36, fol. 39rc (**ዘዝያቆን፡**); the fifteenth–sixteenth-century MS *Dāglā ’Əstifānos* 61, Ṭānāsee 172, fol. 24ra–b (**ዘዝያቆን፡**); and the fifteenth-century MSS *Kəbrān Gabrə’el*, EMMML 8678, fol. 12vb (**ዘዝያቆን፡**) and *Game Giyorgis*, EMMML 8070, fol. 3vb (?), the folios are out of order in the available microfilm; **ዘዝያቆን፡**).

¹⁵ On the concept of single-type collections, see Karlsson forthcoming b.

¹⁶ *Maṣḥafa Dəggwā* 2015/2016, 67b.

¹⁷ While syntactically opaque, the antiphon clearly depends on Acts 7:41–42, where Stephen mentions how the Israelites offered a sacrifice (**ወአዕረገ፡ መሥዋዕተ፡**) to idols and rejoiced in the works of their own hands (**በግብረ፡ እደዊሆሙ፡**) in his speech to the Sanhedrin. I am grateful to Michael Hensley for pointing out this parallel.

In manuscripts postdating the sixteenth century, the forms *zəyāqon* and *ziyāqon* uniformly appear.¹⁸ However, out of the six attestations in single-type collections of *ʾarbāʿt* antiphons, dating from between the twelfth–thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, the word in question appears twice as ሥያቅን፣, *zəyāqon*,¹⁹ twice as ዲያቅን፣, *diyāqon*,²⁰ once as ሥያቅና፣, *zəyāqonā*,²¹ and once as ሥያቅኝ፣, *zəyāqʷən*.²² The variation in the early manuscripts is striking. Cases like these may suggest that the spelling of the word in these antiphons was relatively fluid up to the sixteenth century, then fossilized—surprisingly, in its ‘non-standard’ form!

In the examples we have looked at so far, the spelling *zəyāqon* was always encountered as part of the same phrase: *za-zəyāqon šərʿāta* ‘*aqaba*, ‘he kept the order of the deacon’.²³ This is the case in an overwhelming majority of the attestations of this spelling in the printed *Dəggʷā* edition of 2015/2016: thirteen out of fourteen.²⁴ The lone exception, where *zəyāqon* is attested in another phrase, is found in the following *ʾaryām* antiphon:

¹⁸ It appears in the twentieth-century MS Romānāt Qəddus Mikāʿel, EAP254/1/5, fol. 38ra (ሥያቅን፣); the nineteenth-century MSS ʾAšatan Māryām, EMMML 7285, fol. 49ra (ሥያቅን፣); Moṭā Giyorgis, EMDA 00111, fol. 39va (ሥያቅን፣); and Dabra Dāmmo, Ethio-SPaRe DD-019, fol. 28vb (ሥያቅን፣); the seventeenth-century MSS Ḥayq ʾEṣṭifānos, EMMML 2053, fol. 39rc (ሥያቅን፣) and Dabra Koreb waQarānəyo Madḥane ʿĀlam, EAP432/1/10, fol. 39vc (ሥያቅን፣); and the sixteenth-century MSS Dabra Bərḥān Šəllāse, EMMML 1894, fol. 43rb (ሥያቅን፣) and Dabra Tābor Waratā Giyorgis, EMMML 8804, fol. 39r (later addition in the lower margin; ሥያቅን፣).

¹⁹ See the fourteenth–fifteenth-century MS Ḥayq ʾEṣṭifānos, EMMML 2095, fol. 4r (ሥያቅን፣) and the fourteenth-century MS Gunda Gunde, GG-187, fol. 100vb (ሥያቅን፣).

²⁰ See the fourteenth–fifteenth-century MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien 92, fol. 4ra (ዲያቅን፣) and the fifteenth-century MS Šərḥa Šəyon Beta Ḥawāryāt, Ethio-SPaRe SSB-002, fol. 2rb (ዲያቅን፣).

²¹ See the fourteenth-century MS Ṭānā Qirqos, EMMML 7618, fol. 117va–b (ሥያቅና፣).

²² See the twelfth–thirteenth-century MS Lālibalā Beta Giyorgis, EMMML 7078, fol. 51r (ሥያቅኝ፣).

²³ The same phrase, including the spelling *zəyāqon*, is also encountered in other chant collections. For example, it appears in two of the *zəmmāre* antiphons for Stephen in the printed *Zəmmāre waMawāsəʿt* 1993/1994, 20a, 21a (in the *Zəmmāre* part), and in two *mawāsəʿt* antiphons for Stephen on page 4b (in the *Mawāsəʿt* part) in the same book. The phrase is also found in two chants attested in MS Gunda Gunde, GG-083 (fifteenth–sixteenth century?), fol. 30va, one of which is clearly marked as a *kəbr yəʿti* chant. I am currently preparing a study of the collection in MS Gunda Gunde, GG-083. It may be surmised that these attestations depend on the *Dəggʷā*-type antiphons, or at least hail from the same literary milieu.

²⁴ The standard spelling *diyāqon*, which is also attested in the commemoration for Stephen in *Maṣḥafa Dəggʷā* 2015/2016, appears in a total of 18 cases.

ሃ: እስመ: በስነ: ትእግሥት: ዘዝያቆን: ተሰይመ: ሃ: እንዘ: ይፈኢ: ኃዋሕወ: ሰጣያት: ር
 ጎወ: ሃ: ሃ: ጸለየ: ወሰአለ: ወይቤ: ሥረይ: ሎሙ: ዘንተ: ወኢትረሲ: ጌጋየ።²⁵

Hallelujah! For he who was ordained a deacon (*zəyāqon*) in the beauty of patience—hallelujah!—while seeing the gates of heaven open—hallelujah, hallelujah!—prayed and beseeched and said: ‘Forgive them this and do not consider it an offence!’

In this case, a look at the diachrony reveals a markedly different pattern. While a few attestations of the forms *zəyāqon* and *ziyāqon* appear also in manuscripts from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries,²⁶ an overwhelming majority of the pre-print witnesses (from the fourteenth up to the twentieth century) have the standard spelling *diyāqon*.²⁷ Due to this markedly different attestation pattern compared to the two antiphons above, one wonders if the spelling *zəyāqon* might have entered the transmission of the *ʾaryām* antiphon at a

²⁵ *Maṣḥafa Dəggwā* 2015/2016, 66a. The variant reading **ዘኢቆን**; *ziʾaqona* (*sic*), is recorded in the margin.

²⁶ It appears in the eighteenth-century (?) MS Māy Rāzā Takla Hāymānot, Ethio-SPaRe THMR-008, fol. 55ra (**ዘዝያቆን**); the eighteenth-century MS Dabra Dāmmo, Ethio-SPaRe DD-019, fol. 28ra (**ዝያቆን(?)**); the seventeenth-century MSS Qalāqəl Māryām Ṣəyon, Ethio-SPaRe QS-006, fol. 38vb (**ዝያቆን**) and Uppsala, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, O Etiop. 36, fol. 38rb (**ዝያቆን**; seemingly corrected from **ዝያቆን**); and the sixteenth-century MS Ğarr Šəllāse, EMLL 7174, fol. 36rc (**ዘያቆን**).

²⁷ It appears in seventeen out of the twenty-two manuscripts in the corpus (see fn. 10) that attest this antiphon, specifically, in the twentieth-century MS Romānāt Qəddus Mikāʾel, EAP254/1/5, fol. 37ra (**ዲያቆን**); the nineteenth-century MSS ʾAṣatan Māryām, EMLL 7285, fol. 47vb (**ዲያቆን**) and Moṭā Giyorgis, EMDA 00111, fol. 38rc (**ዲያቆን**); the eighteenth–nineteenth-century MS Lālibalā Naʾakkʾəto Laʾab, EMLL 7529, fol. 37ra (**ዲያቆን**); the eighteenth-century MSS ʾAnkobar Madḥane ʿĀlam, EMLL 2431, fol. 35vb (**ዲያቆን**) and Ğamaddu Māryām, EMLL 6994, fol. 34vc (**ዲያቆን**); the eighteenth–seventeenth-century MS Dabra ʿAbbāy, EAP704/1/36, fol. 26va (**ዲያቆን**); the seventeenth-century MSS Ḥayq ʾEṣṭifānos, EMLL 2053, fol. 37vb (**ዲያቆን**) and Dabra Koreb waQarānəyo Madḥane ʿĀlam, EAP432/1/10, fol. 38vc (**ዲያቆን**); the sixteenth-century MSS Dabra Bərḥān Šəllāse, EMLL 1894, fol. 42rb (**ዲያቆን**); ʾAnkobar Giyorgis, EMLL 2542, fol. 26va (**ዲያቆን**); and Dabra Tābor Waratā Giyorgis, EMLL 8804, fol. 37va (**ዲያቆን**); the fifteenth–sixteenth-century MSS Dāgā ʾEṣṭifānos 61, Ṭānāsee 172, fol. 25rb (**ዲያቆን**) and Quro Gadal Šəllāse, EMLL 4667, fol. 22vb (**ዲያቆን**); and the fifteenth-century MS Ṭānā Qirqos, EMLL 8488, fol. 25ra (**ዲያቆን**). It also appears in the single-type collections in the fifteenth-century MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien 92, fol. 137va (**ዲያቆን**) and the fourteenth-century MS Ṭānā Qirqos, EMLL 7618, fol. 74rb (**ዲያቆን**).

later stage, perhaps influenced by the frequently occurring phrase discussed above. This would not be the first time one antiphon has been influenced by the readings of others.²⁸

Conclusion

In this brief note, several attestations of the spelling *zəyāqon* in modern print editions of the *Dəggwā*, exemplified by the edition of 2015/2016, have been introduced and contextualized with references to earlier manuscript evidence. While mostly tied to a specific phrase—*za-zəyāqon šər'āta 'aqaba*, ‘he kept the order of the deacon’—the spelling is also attested in one other context, which, however, may arguably have been influenced by the quoted phrase.

Why is the spelling *zəyāqon* found in modern *Dəggwā*-type antiphonaries? Within the transmission of these antiphons, it appears that an early medieval scribal practice (maybe with even earlier roots) that fell out of use elsewhere has managed to survive. This may perhaps be connected to the particular transmission context of Ethiopian-Eritrean chant collections, characterized by an important oral component and the circumstance that such texts are generally learnt by heart and then performed from memory. Both of these factors may have favoured the survival of a form that in other contexts fell out of use.

In light of this observation, previous statements about the archaic nature of the spelling *zəyāqon* may need to be nuanced. Albeit certainly a marginal case within the broader Ethiopic writing culture, there exist contexts in which the spelling *zəyāqon* is neither a sign of antiquity nor the result of interference from the spoken language. Rather, in these specific contexts, it is simply a part of the form of *Gə'əz* that has been transmitted through the centuries. In contrast, I have not encountered any attestations of the form *ዝያቅዓን*, *zəyāq'ən*, with a labiovelar <ቅ>, in collections of *Dəggwā*-type antiphons postdating the twelfth–thirteenth century.²⁹ Perhaps, this spelling can thus be seen as an archaism, also within the context of chant manuscripts? The distribution patterns of the different spellings of the word for ‘deacon’ might become clearer if our corpus of early collections of *Dəggwā*-type antiphons were to increase through new manuscript discoveries. Nonetheless, the survival of the form *zəyāqon* in *Dəggwā*-type antiphonaries up to the era of printed books is remarkable.

²⁸ For an example, see my discussion of the variant reading *šenāhu la-Ḥanṭalewon* in some attestations of the antiphon *Ḥanṭalewon mazmur ('abun)* 009 in Karlsson 2024, 449.

²⁹ This form is also mentioned by Villa 2019, 208.

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Summary

This note draws attention to the survival of the spelling ዝያቆን, *zəyāqon*, ‘deacon’ (for Standard Medieval Gəʾəz ዲያቆን, *diyāqon*) in *Dəggʾā*-type antiphonaries up to modern print editions. The phenomenon is interpreted as an isolated survival of an early linguistic variant, which appears to have established itself as the standard form in a specific phrase in antiphons only by the sixteenth century.