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Dissertation Abstracts

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survey, Textkritik und Übersetzungsanalyse*

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Dissertation Abstracts

DOROTHEA REULE, *Übersetzung und frühe Überlieferung des äthiopischen Synaxars. Handschriftensurvey, Textkritik und Übersetzungsanalyse*, PhD Dissertation in Semitic Studies, Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures at Marburg University, defended on 3 July 2025.

This dissertation studies how medieval translators shaped the transmission of texts between Egypt and Ethiopia by analyzing the early Ethiopic Synaxarion, *Sənkasar*—a work consisting of commemorations that are arranged and read according to the liturgical year—codicologically, philologically, and linguistically and by comparing it with the Copto-Arabic Synaxarion, *as-Sinaksār(i)*. Amongst the main results of this study are:

(1) The transmission of the Copto-Arabic Synaxarion, attested in manuscripts from the fourteenth to the twentieth century, is marked on the level of the attestation of commemorations both by general stability and continuous variation, and on the level of the text itself by great uniformity. In both areas, it is possible to identify manuscripts or manuscript groups that are closer to the Ethiopic tradition than others.

(2) The early Ethiopic Synaxarion is attested in two recensions that were more widespread than previously assumed, with now four codices identified as witnesses to what I call the First Recension A (CAe 4032, translated by Səməʿon of the monastery of St Anthony), and nine codices witnessing the First Recension B (CAe 4033). While the First Recension A has been edited (together with the later Second Recension) in the *Patrologia Orientalis* by Ignazio Guidi, Sylvain Grébaud, and Gérard Colin, the First Recension B had previously received very little attention.

(3) An analysis of the two First Recensions' content and language has revealed their individual profiles. The translator of the First Recension A, Səməʿon, integrated many new commemorations not present in the Copto-Arabic Synaxarion (c.80) from various sources into the text, and similarly added much—from single words to entire narrations—to the shared commemorations. He valued consistency of rendering over semantic precision. The unknown translator(s) of the First Recension B produced a work that is in many regards closer to its Copto-Arabic *Vorlage*: The newly added commemorations amount to only c.10, and the text of the shared commemorations contains far fewer additions as well. This translation valued semantic precision, thus exhibiting a lesser degree of consistency of rendering. It seems likely that the First Recension B made use of both Copto-Arabic manuscripts and the First Recension A.

The dissertation is divided into eight chapters together with seven appendices (four printed and three digital). After an introduction and a literature review, chapters 3 to 5 deal with the manuscript transmission of the Copto-Arabic and early Ethiopic Synaxarion, and chapters 6 to 8 study the textual transmission of, and translation strategies employed in, the early Ethiopic Synaxarion.

Chapter 3, a manuscript survey of the Copto-Arabic Synaxarion, lists and describes all currently known manuscripts. This survey yielded 98 manuscripts of which 28 were accessible digitally or through library visits. Each manuscript description contains basic codicological data, known facts about the manuscripts' origin and provenance, any information on colophons, subscriptions or later additions, and notes on any peculiarity in the attested commemorations, especially any similarities to the early Ethiopic transmission. The basis for this analysis is the index of commemorations, a table that lists all commemorations of all accessible Copto-Arabic and early Ethiopic manuscripts. On the level of attestation of commemorations, all Copto-Arabic manuscripts exhibit a certain degree of variation, with a significant amount of commemorations being attested in ever-changing groups of manuscripts and a few commemorations proper to single manuscripts.

Chapter 4, a manuscript survey of the early Ethiopic transmission, describes the four codices of the First Recension A and nine codices of the First Recension B. All of these manuscripts can be dated palaeographically to the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries, with MSS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien d'Abbadie 66A and 66B of the First Recension A probably dating to the very beginning of that range. In addition to providing basic codicological data, the descriptions list all known information concerning the manuscripts' origin and provenance, their palaeography, and any peculiarities in their attested commemorations. These descriptions are print versions of manuscripts' descriptions that are found in the digital research environment Beta maṣāḥəft, where they can also be accessed with a greater level of granularity. The commemorations of each manuscript are listed in the commemoration index together with those of the Copto-Arabic witnesses. The comparison of attested commemorations of both First Recensions shows that they differ so greatly in this regard that it is possible to assign witnesses to either First Recension based on their commemorations: The First Recension A contains far more commemorations than the First Recension B (and the Copto-Arabic Synaxarion). Within each First Recension, there is much less variation in attested commemorations than within the Copto-Arabic transmission—single manuscripts, such as MS Addis Abäba, Qes Zewde Tachbele, EMMML 6458, stand out due to their inclusion of more commemorations and will be important for future studies of the emergence of the Second Recension (CAe 4968). This analysis also points to a complex history of transmission of both First Recensions that probably did not always happen in separate currents of transmission. This is shown by the

fact that two commemorations are contained in both First Recensions, but not in the Copto-Arabic transmission, and that one witness (MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien 677) changes recension in the middle of the text, switching from the First Recension A to the First Recension B.

Chapter 5 studies the ‘*proprium*’ of each First Recension, that is, those commemorations that are only attested in a particular recension. The *proprium* of the First Recension A consists of c.80 commemorations, for nearly all of which sources or parallels could be adduced from liturgico-calendaric lists, the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* (in particular, parts of it dealing with events concerning Ethiopia), the Melkite Synaxarion, and the *Acts of St Basilides* (*Gadla Fāsīladas*, CAe 1893). Carlo Conti Rossini had already hypothesized that Səm‘on, the translator of the Synaxarion (to be more precise, of the First Recension A), was the same as the translator of the *Acts of St Basilides*, who is also called Səm‘on, on the basis of the colophons of translation that can be found in both works (Conti Rossini 1912, p. 371). This analysis now provides textual evidence for this identification. Səm‘on most likely included the commemorations of the *proprium* during his translation, thus adapting his *Vorlage* on the level of the content to a new context. The *proprium* of the First Recension B, in contrast, is much smaller, consisting of c.10 commemorations, and contains mostly short commemorations noting traditions of celebration that are proper to Ethiopia.

On the foundation of these analyses of the manuscripts’ codicology and content, the second part of the dissertation then studies the text and language of the Ethiopic Synaxarion in depth.

Chapters 6 and 7 propose a *stemma codicum* for each of the First Recensions. The analysis of the First Recension B, which had never been studied philologically, is based on four subcorpora consisting of the complete text of 5–10 days each spread throughout the year; each of these subcorpora were transcribed, collated and analyzed. This showed that all existing manuscripts derive from one common source, that none of them is copied from another existing manuscript, and that several branches within the transmission of the First Recension B can be identified based on common innovations. The analysis of the First Recension A is based on a re-evaluation of relevant text-critical passages mentioned in the secondary literature, and the transcription, collation, and analysis of a corpus of four days. This also yielded the result that all existing manuscripts derive from a common source and that none of them is copied from another existing manuscript. One branch could be identified within the transmission of the First Recension A based on common innovations.

Chapter 8 analyzes the text of three commemorations, comparing the Arabic with the Ethiopic versions to understand the translators’ techniques and characteristics. The lexicon, morphosyntax, and additions of each First Recension are

placed on a spectrum of literality regarding their consistency of rendering, semantic equivalence and quantitative additions. This analysis allows us to state that the First Recension A is more literal than the First Recension B in the area of consistency of rendering, while the First Recension B is more literal than the First Recension A in the areas of semantic equivalence and quantitative additions. This analysis also unearthed textual evidence for a common origin of the text of the First Recensions A and B. I propose that the First Recension A was used, in addition to Copto-Arabic manuscripts, by the translator(s) of the First Recension B.

The dissertation's appendices, which are also digitally accessible, make the index of commemorations, collation tables and all XML records created in its course available for further research.

This dissertation illustrates the great potential that studying translated literature on its own terms has to offer. In addition, it highlights how we must take translators seriously as creative intellectuals if we hope to understand better the development of Ethiopic literature.

AUGUSTINE DICKINSON, *Malkə'a Gubā'e Manuscripts and the Development of Malkə' Anthologies*, PhD Dissertation in Ethiopian Studies, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Hamburg, defended on 4 July 2025.

Long overdue, this dissertation marks the first systematic survey of available manuscript and print anthologies and collections of *malkə'* and related Gə'əz poetry. While nearly all studies of the genre to date have focused on selected case studies with little concern for chronology or manuscript evidence, the primary goal of this dissertation was to assemble the largest possible corpus of manuscripts with due consideration given to issues of dating, circulation, and para- and metatexts.

The introduction (Chapter 1), after laying out the framework of the dissertation, presents critical reviews of the relevant secondary literature starting from Ludolf (1691) to the present. This is followed by a section on terminology which includes some terms that have not previously been defined in scholarship (such as *tarafa malkə'* and *māsgabbiyā*), some of which have not been sufficiently defined (like *nagś* and *ārke*), and others which were prudent to define within the context of the dissertation (particularly *malkə'*, *quasi-malkə'*, and *malkə'*-adjacent poetry). Here also are treated the various attested titles given to anthologies (*malkə'a gubā'e*, *gubā'e malkə'*, *māzɡaba malkə'*, *maṣḥafa malkə'*, and *maṣḥafa gubā'e*).

Chapter 2 describes the corpora used in the study and the selection criteria. With respect to manuscripts, the dissertation focused on anthologies, defined as