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The “Egyptian Saints” of the Abyssinian Hagiography

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Literally, an “Egyptian saint” – quite apart from the fact that this word can also indicate every kind of “occidental” or “white” Mediterranean person – in the Abyssinian hagiographical texts is one who appears, and who was born, or lived, in Coptic Egypt (or even in “Rom”), so being also part of the hagiographical tradition of that country. So, hundreds of saints “of Egyptian origin” can be found in the Abyssinian tradition, to be elicited from the more than 1000 non-Abyssinian saints quoted in the current editions of the Abyssinian Synaxary, and among the nearly 130 in the *Gadla Samāʾtāt*¹ or similar compositions (not all of these Lives are included in the Synaxary, and anyway they often appear in a different version): our task is to identify not so much those saints who hold a traditionally important place in Abyssinia, but those whose ideological influence was still alive and discernible in this country in a recent past.

A group which can be easily identified is that of Bulā/Abib, Cyrus, Gabra Krestos/Alexius, Latṣun, Nob, and, for those who act in Abyssinia proper, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Yoḥannes Meṣrāśqāwi (John the Oriental), and maybe Tādēwos of Dabra Bārtārwā, Yoḥanni of Dabra Aṣā, and some others, to which the “Axumite” saints must be added.

The clearest indication for such a selection, and such associations, comes from the materiality of the manuscript tradition itself; the basic – and very elementary – assumption is that, if two or more saints are present in the same manuscript, there must be some similarity felt between them by the tradition.

First of all, among the hundreds of saints of Egyptian and Coptic origin, only few in the Abyssinian manuscript tradition have also an *independent life*, i. e. independent from the big collections of Lives quoted above: they are always included in them, but they can be also extant separately, in mss. which contain other works, and frequently in an enlarged version. Without

¹ Of course understood here only as a kind of text typologically defined; the main mss. are the BL Or 686 = W CCLVII (1755–1769; BL Or 687–688 = W CCLVIII, 18 c.; BL Or 689 = W CCLIII, 15. c.; BL Or 690 = W CCLIV, 15. c.; BL Or 691 = W CCLV, 15. c.; BL Or 682 = W CCLVI, 15. c.; BN Z 131, 13. c.; d'A 92 = N 129, 15. c.; d'A 110 = N 164, 1509; Berl Or. fol. 117 = D 66, 14/15 c.; Vat264 (vL), 1362/3; E 141, 1904/5; E 1479, 1459/60; E 1766, 14./15. c.; E 1824, 1414–1429; E 1826, 14./15.s; E 1827, 15. c.; E 1834, 16. c.; E 1840, 1400; E 1844, 16. c.; E 1939, 14./15. c.; E 2514, 1382–1388; E 2796, 14. s.

aiming at completeness, but only to get some general indications after consultation of many Catalogues,² this seems to be the case of:

a. Bulā/Abib, which, outside the *Gadla samāʾtāt*, is extant at least in:³

1. BL Or 694 = W CCLXX ff. 5r–(55r), ff. 115, 18. c.; 2. BL Or. 702 = W CCLXXVIII ff. 143v–(168v), ff. 183, 18. c.; 3. BL Or. 711 = W CCLXXXVI ff. 81r–(101r), ff. 102, 15. c.; 4. BN Z 132 ff. 14v–(25r), ff. 43, 19. c.; 5. d’A 123 = N 175 ff. 2r–(16r); ff. 197, 18./19. c.); 6. Mus. d’hist. naturelle1 = Chaine Coll. priv. n. III, 1 p. 8 ff. 45, 19. sc.; 7. Vat 32 ff. 24v–42v, ff. 43, 15. c.; 8. Berl Or Quart 1012 = Chaine 43 ff. 86–109, ff. 109, 17. c.; 9. Preuss. Kult. 132 ff. 86v–108v, ff. 109, 17c.?.; 10. Ṭānāsee 164 (vol. III ms. 53 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 53), ff. 110r–123v, ff. 171, 18. c.; 11. Ṭānāsee 170 (vol. III ms. 59 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 59) ff. 19r–46v, ff. 46, 15./16. c.; 12. E 890 ff. 46, 20. c.; 13. E 1344 ff. 41r–70v, ff. 78, 18. c.; 14. E 1960 ff. 7r–28v, ff. 108, 16./18. c.; 15. E 2610 ff. 58r–65v, 38r–41v, ff. (79), 17./18. c.; 16. E 4002 ff. 47r–67v, ff. 119, 18./19. c.

b. Cyrus, whose Life exhibits a long version (for example the ms. Or 701 of the British Library, the ms. d’Abbadie 103, maybe also the d’Abbadie 123, and others), and a shortened one (frequently made by merely omitting passages of the larger version, at regular intervals). Outside the *Gadla samāʾtāt*, and without making here a distinction between the long and the short versions,⁴ the Life of Cyrus is extant at least in:

1. BL Or. 701 = W CCLXXVII ff. 2r–(53v), ff. 125, 18. c.; 2. BN Z 136 ff. 96–(109), ff. 109, 15. c.; 3. d’A 94 = N 170 ff. 22r–(34r), ff. 62, 15. c.; 4. d’A 103 = N 167 ff. 51r–(87r), ff. 87, 18. c.; 5. d’A 123 = N 175 ff. 36r–(65r), ff. 197, 18/19. c.; 6. Vat 142 ff. 102r–113v, ff. 114, 17. c.; 7. Comb 205 ff. 5r–80r, ff. 86, 19/20. c.; 8. Comb 206 ff. 4r–93r, ff. 98, 20. c.; 9. Berl Orient. Quart. 1011 = Chaine 42 = Preuss. Kult. 131 ff. 2r–34v, ff. 137, 17c.?.; 10.

² Abridged indications: *British Library* Wright; Dillmann and Strelcyn; *Bodleian Library* Dillmann; *Cambridge* Ullendorff – Wright; *Wellcome* Strelcyn, *Dublin* Cerulli; *India Office* Cerulli, *Windsor Castle* Ullendorff, *Bibl. Nat.* Zotenberg, *d’Abbadie* Conti Rossini, *Coll. Privées* Chaine, *Bruxelles* Cerulli and Strelcyn; *Bollandists* Zanetti; *Berlin* Dillmann and Chaine, *Preuss. Kult.* Hammerschmidt – Six, *Bayer. Staatsb.* Six., *Privatbesitz* Six; *Stuttgart* Euringer, *Vatican Library* Grébaut – Tisserant – van Landschoot; *Combonians* Raineri, *Ambrosiana* Galbiati; *Bergamo* Raineri, *Arm. Patr. in Jerusalem* Isaac; *Athens* Cerulli; *Sinai* Kamil; *Wilbeorce* Eames Goodspeed; *Evanston* Macomber, *Tanasee* I–III Hammerschmidt – Six; *EMML* I–X Getatchew – Macomber (here: E instead of EMML); *Cheren* Conti Rossini.

³ In the following list the brackets for the final folio mean that, failing the indication by the Catalogue, the folio is that of the beginning of the following work.

⁴ We also do not take into consideration here, for the moment, the question of the other saints with the same name, like Cyrus and Jean, Cyrus and Julitta, etc.

Ms. Orient. Oct. 1288 = Preuss. Kult.. 60, ff. 32, 17/18 c.; 11. Bayer. Staatsb. 49 = Cod. Aeth. 49 ff. 3r–38r, ff. 94, 18. c.?.; 12. Ṭānāsee 143 (vol. III ms. 32, Daga Eṣṭifanos 32) ff. 1r–74v, ff. 75, 16. c.?.; 13. Ṭānāsee ms. 164 (vol. III ms. 53 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 53) ff. 124r–170v, ff. 171, 18. c.; 14. E 319 ff. 50, 19. c.; 15. E 1834:6 ff. 44r–55r; ff. 131+1, 16. c.; 16. E 2107 ff. 67r–96r; ff. (98), 19. c.; 17. E 2504 ff. 75r–110r; ff. (112), 17. c.; 18. E 2610 ff. 1r–37v (incomplete at the end); ff. (79), 17/18 c.; 19. E 3418 ff. 51v–65v; ff. (65), 19/20. c.; 20. E 3554 ff. 1r–38r 16/17 c.; 21. E 4002 ff. 68r–108r, ff. 119, 18/19 c.; 22. E 4679 ff. 5r–31v, ff. (113), 19. c.; 23. E 4683 ff. 1r–38r; ff. (40), 19. c.

c. Gabra Krestos/Saint Alexius, with 15 mss. in Cerulli's edition,⁵ to which must be added at least, outside the *Gadla samā'tāt*:

1. Orient. Oct. 1270 = Preuss. Kult 42, ff. 2r–16v, 19r–24v , ff. 41, 14. c.?.; 2. *ibid.* Ms. 77, ff. 66r–102v; ff. 104, 18 c.?.; 3. Privatbesitz. 1 (now lost, see OrChr 67 (1973), pp. 212–217); 4. Ṭānāsee 164 (vol. III ms. 53 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 53) ff. 2r–18v, f. 171, 18. c.; 5. Ṭānāsee 170 (vol. III ms. 59 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 59) ff. 1r–17r, ff. 46, 15/16 c.; 6. Comb 275 ff. 106r–139r; ff. 147+5, 20. c.; 7. E 612 ff. 46r–69r, ff. 71, 19. c.; 8. E 863 ff. 55r–87r; ff. 87+6, 20. c.; 9. E 890 ff. 7r–42r; ff. 46, 20. c.; 10. E 912 ff. 50r–74v; ff. 75+12, 19. and 20. c.; 11. E 1122 ff. 47, 1931/2; 12. E 2039 ff. 52v–85r, ff. (91), 20. c.; 13. E 2134 ff. 169v–182r, ff. 189, 19 c.; 14. E 2266 ff. 4r–30v; ff. (34), 19/20. c.; 15. E 2504 ff. 46r–71r; ff. (112), 17. c.; 16. E 2610 ff. 42r–57v, 66r–72v, 74r; ff. (79), 17./18. c.; 17. E 2795 ff. 55v–86r; ff. (86), 17/18. c.; 18. E 4002 ff. 26r–46r , ff. 119, 18/19 c.; 19. E 4280 ff. 150r–164r; ff. (164), 19. c.

d. and possibly Nob, for which a Life much longer than the passages in the *Gadla samā'tāt* is extant at least in:

1. BL Or. 706 = W CCLXXXII ff. 134r–(200); ff. 202, 1478–1494; 2. d'A 54 = N 169 ff. 1r–(26r); ff. 125, 15. and 16. c.; 3. Comb 290 *Gadla abbā Nob* (now lost), ff. 158, s. d.; 4. E 5 ff. 58r– 96r, ff. 144, 16. c.; 5. E 1496 f. 60v, ff. 61r–98r, ff. 145, 14./15. c.

An entirely different situation is that of Tādēwos of Dabra Bārtārwā, for whom only one ms. is known until now,⁶ that of Yoḥannes Meṣrāqāwī,⁷ who

⁵ E. CERULLI, *Les vies éthiopiennes de Saint Alexis, l'homme de Dieu*, CSCO 298/29, SAe 59/60, Louvain 1969, pp. II–III: mss. Vat Et Cerulli 33, 19. c.; id. 59, 22. c.; id. 96 , 19. c.; id. 282, 18. c.; id. 298, 19. s.; Lincei Fondo Conti Rossini 5 (isolated f.); BL Add. 16.198 = D XLVIII, 18. c. BL Or 709 = W CCLXXXV, 18. c.; BN Z 132, 19. c.; d'A 46 = N 176, 18. c.; d'A 103 = N 167, 18. c.; d'A 110 = N 164, 18. c.; d'A 123 = N 175, 18. c.; Berl Or. Petermann II Nachtrag 28 = D 71, 16. s.; Lady Meux now lost, in Budge's edition.

does not appear in the great collections, and perhaps of Yoḥanni of Dabra Aśā,⁸ whose relationship with the others Yoḥanni of the tradition is not clear.⁹

But this criterion is not completely sure. For example, the Life of Latṣun does not appear in the *Gadla samāʾtāt*, and it is extant only in ms. E 1939, dated 14/15 c.¹⁰ But what is significant in this respect, and in fact very surprising, is that Gabra Manfas Qeddus, who is surely an “Egyptian” saint, does not show any important connection at all: out of nearly 70 codices listed in the Catalogues quoted above, only nine contain also the Life of another saint: BL Or. 701 = W CCLVII, Vat 142 and E 4679 that of Cyrus (see above); BL Or. 711 = W CCLXXXVI that of Abib (see above); BL Add. 16, 198 = D XLVIII that of Alexius (see above); E 1734 and E 3445 (see above) that of Yoḥanni of Dabra Aśā; d’A 126 = N 174 that of abbā Sānudyos (Schenute) and Besoy; BN Z 137 that Takla Hāymānot.

A second phenomenon is that, as far as these saints are concerned, the content of many codices reveals frequent associations with that of others; as it has been said, this testifies to a certain traditional affinity between some of these saints. Many of their Lives appear very frequently in the same manuscript together with some of the others; there is also a connection with “Axumite” saints, many of them, as it is well known, stayed for some time

⁶ D’A 177 = N 187 ff. 4r–(59r) *Gadla Tādēwos*, preceded by a hymn to him, and followed by a *malke*’ of him, hymns to his nephew Filmonā and to him, and a Homily on Filmonā, ff. 127, 18. c. Acts edited and translated by M. ALLOTTE DE LA FUÏE, *Actes de Filmona*, CSCO 181/182, SAe 35/36, Louvain 1958.

⁷ Mss. Vat Cerulli Et 6 (cf. P. MARRASSINI, *Su un nuovo codice del Gadla Yohannes Meśrāqāwī*, RSE 31 (1987), pp. 248–251); Vat Cerulli Et 175, ff. 122, 20 c., ed. and transl. by P. MARRASSINI, *Gadla Yohannes Meśrāqāwī – Vita di Yohannes l’Orientale*, Firenze 1981 (henceforth: *GYM*); E 119 ff. 169, 19 c.; E 1303 ff. 170+19, 20. c.; E 4165 ff. (162), 20. c.

⁸ The mss. are BL Add. 16, 230 = D XLVII, ff. 5, 6–8 s. d., *Vita et Miracula Abbatis Johanni* p. 51 n. a: “Notus est Abba Joanni, Abbatis Técla-Haimanot in praesulatu monachorum predecessor. An noster sit idem, dubium est. In eius vita nihil de illa dignitate memoratur; sed Ammonii Eremitae discipulus et sectator fuisse, et tanta castitate excelluisse dicitur, ut ne sexus quidem discernere posset, et mulierem, quam aliquando conspexit, daemonem esse existimaret.”; BN Z 132 ff. 39r–(43) (see above; this is the ms. edited and translated by R. BASSET, *Vie d’Abba Yohanni*, “Bulletin de Correspondance Africaine” 2 (1884), pp. 433–453; cp. also M. L. Virgili, *Note testuali all’Abba Yohanni di Dabra Asa*, “Egitto e Vicino Oriente” 6 (1983), pp. 309–323); E 1734 ff. 106r–110r, ff. 43, 19. c.; E 1763:10 ff. 37v–48v, ff. 280, 14. c.; E 3445 ff. 21r–26r, ff. (73), 18. c.; E 4268 ff. 82r–83v, ff. 94, 16. c.

⁹ See also the problem of Cyrus and Yoḥanni above.

¹⁰ ff. 24r–48v; the whole ms. ff. 174. Edited and translated by P. MARRASSINI, *Il Gadla Latṣun*, “Egitto e Vicino Oriente” 10/2 (1987), pp. 121–149.

in Egypt;¹¹ besides, some of these saints appear together in the same *malke*^o or *salām*, or in the same illumination, but much more frequently in a *malke*^o or *salām* in a ms. which contains a *malke*^o or *salām* of some of the others, or their entire Life, or viceversa in various combinations. Finally, these texts frequently quote each other: for example, Latṣun is quoted whenever a sinner has to be saved from hell,¹² and many times a pact “given to Kiros” is found, as a model for the pact that the protagonist will receive in the near future.¹³ In detail, it is easy to identify a first group which includes the Life of Abib, that of Alexius and that of Cyrus, already quoted above:

D’A 123 = N 175; Vat Cerulli Et 59; Ṭānāsee ms. 164 (vol. III ms. 53 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 53); E 2610; E 4002. One can also add the mss. BN Z 132 (only Abib and Alexius), d’A 103 = N 167 (only Alexius and Cyrus), and Ṭānāsee ms. 170 (vol. III ms. 59 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 59; only Alexius and Abib).

In this group, the inclusion of Axumite saints in the same ms. is rare, and it occurs only in the mss. BN Z 132 above (ff. 1r–/14v/ Garimā) and Ṭānāsee 164 above (ff. 70r–95v Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi); the former contains also the Life of Yoḥanni of Dabra Aśā (ff. 39–/43/), but in consideration of the extreme rarity of this latter text, this fact could not be very significant.

A second group is made by those mss., which contain only one (two in one case, three in another) of the aforementioned saints, but invariably one or more Axumite saints (usually Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi):

– Abib, Alexius and Cyrus in Ṭānāsee ms. 164 (vol. III ms. 53 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 53) above, with Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi ff. 70r–95v;

– Abib and Alexius, in BN 132 above, with Garimā and Yoḥanni of Dabra Aśā;

– Alexius and Cyrus, in E 2504 above, with Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi ff. 2r–41r;

– Abib alone in mss. BL Or. 702 = W CCLXXVIII above, with Garimā ff. 108r–(143v);

– Alexius alone in mss. BL Or 709 = W CCLXXXV above, with Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi ff. 74r–(193); d’A 46 = N 176 above, with Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi ff. 1r–(34v); Berl Peterm. II Nachtr. 28 = D 71 above, with Garimā ff. 2–67; Preuss. Kult. 77 above, with Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi ff. 5r–75v; Comb 275 above, with Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi ff. 2–67, E 612 above, with Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi ff. 2r–46r; E 863 above, with Za-Mikā’el Aragāwi ff. qr–51v; E 912

¹¹ For the sake of brevity cp. P. MARRASSINI, “Vita”, “Omelia”, “Miracoli” del santo *Gabra Manfas Qeddus*, CSCO 597/598, SAe 107/108, Louvain 2003 (henceforth: *GMQ*; the pages with the Roman numerals refer to the II volume, those with the Arabic to the I and the II), pp. XXXVIII–XL, and below.

¹² E.g. *GMQ*, pp. 58/21.

¹³ Cp. *GMQ*, pp. 168/56.

above, with Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi ff. 1r–44v, E 2039 above, with Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi ff. 4r–52r, E 2795 above, with Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi ff. 3r–55v;

– Cyrus alone in mss. Bayer. 49 = Cod. Aeth. 49 above, with Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi ff. 43r–88r, and E 1834 above, with Garimā ff. 11r–15v, 96r–v, 16r–20r.

Nob is completely different, and his Life does not show any significant association: apart from the *Gadla samāʾtāt*, it appears always with different saints, and in mss., which contain also very different works: with the Acts of Basilides in the BL Or. 706 = W CCLXXXII, with the Acts of Yeṣṣos, Aboli and Tawkliyā, but above all with important homilies in the famous dʾAbbadie 54 = N 169,¹⁴ with the Acts of Abunāfer, and again with important homilies, in the EMMML 5;¹⁵ with stories and homilies by and on Macarius in the Comb. 290,¹⁶ and with a story on the life of the ascetics in the desert, but again with other very different texts, in the EMMML 1486;¹⁷ so, judging from the associations of his Life in the codices, Nob seems to stay at a different, and maybe more elevated, level than that of the hagiographic texts.

The situation of Tādēwos of Dabra Bārtārwā is very simple, because there is only one ms. known until now (see above), but also the connections of Yoḥānni of Dabra Aṣā are not very significant, because of the very rarity of the texts about him. He is associated with Gabra Manfas Qeddus in the ms. E 1734 and 3445 (see above), but, perhaps interestingly, he is associated with the Axumite saints (Fruementius, Libānos, the Nine Saints) in E 1763 above (a Homiliary of the 14. c.),¹⁸ and, together with Abib and Alexius, in

¹⁴ Where it is said that the text had been translated from Arabic thanks to Abbā Salāmā: *tafaṣṣama zeya gadl zaburuk abbā Nob watargwamo 'em'arābi bage'ez 'emnewāya abuna teruf kokaba kebr beruh abuna abbā salāmā pāppās za'ityopyā hagar*. The texts are: Nob, Acts of Yistos, Aboli and Tawkliyā (also translated thanks to Abbā Salāmā), Homily by Johannes Chrisostomus on the Four Beasts, Homily on the Lord, Homily of Basilus on the angels, the divinity and the religion, Acts of John the Baptist and Homily of the Orthodox on him, Homily by the metropolitan Minās on the Cross.

¹⁵ Preceded by a Homily by Athanasius on the assumption of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and followed by the *Gadla Abunāfer*; by a Homily by Basil of Caesarea for the building of a church for Mary (cp. *GMQ* p. 67 fn. 286?), and Paenitential Canons from the *Maṣḥafa Qedār*; ff. 144, 16. s)

¹⁶ Comb 290 *Gadla abbā Nob* “irreperibile; traduzione dall’arabo” (I. *Zena abu Maqar*; II. Discorsi di S. Macario; III. N; ff. 158, s. d.)

¹⁷ EMMML 1496, whose contents are very similar to those of EMMML 5; the *Gadla Nob* is preceded by a Homily of Athanasius on the departure of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a Homily by Saint Ephrem on Abraham and Sarah; and followed by a Narrative by Babnuda on the life of the ascetics in the desert, a Homily by Basil of Caesarea for the building of a church for Maria (see above), and the *Maṣḥafa Qedār*.

¹⁸ With the saints Aṣbeha (not Abreha), Minās, Peter patriarch of Constantinople, Fruementius/abbā Salāmā, Stephen, abbā Maṭāʾ/Libānos, George, the Nine Saints.

BN Z 132 above. Yoḥannes Meśrāqāwī is a complete solitary, in all the four mss. of his Acts.

Outside of the connections indicated above, it is important to note that our saints either do not form other significant groups, or stand alone (i. e. without other saints in the same ms). The Life of Abib is with that of Gabra Manfas Qeddus in BL Or. 711 = W CCLXXXVI (see above); with that of Bagge'u in E 1960; with that of Eustathius in BL Or. 702 = W CCLXXXVIII, in Berl Or. Quart. 1012 = Chainé 43, and in Preuss. Kult. 132; with various compositions on John the Baptist in Vat 32, E 1344, the same E 1960, E 4002; with different works in BL Or 694 = W CCLXX. Alexius stands with Gabra Manfas Qeddus in BL Add. 16, 198 = D XLVIII (see above); with Takla Hāymānot in E 2134 and E 4280; with Samu'el of Gadāma Wāli in Privatbesitz 1; he is alone in Orient. Oct. 1270 = Preuss. Kult. 42, E 890, E 1122, E 2266. Cyrus appears with Gabra Manfas Qeddus in BL Or. 701 = W CCLXXVII, Vat 142, E 4679 (see above); with Takla Hāymānot in E 3418; with Takla Hāymānot and Samu'el of Gadāma Wāli in BN Z 136; with Abunāfer and works on Melchisedek in d'A 94 = N 170; with different philosophical and theological works in Berl Orient. Quart.= Chainé 42 = Preuss. Kult. 131.; he is alone in Comb 205 and 206, Preuss. Kult. ms. 60 = Ms. orient. oct. 1288, Ṭānāsee 143 (vol. III ms. 32, Daga Eṣṭifanos 32), E 319, E 2017, E 3554, E 4683. Yoḥanni of Dabra Aśā stands with Gabra Manfas Qeddus in E 1734 (see above), and without other saints in BL Add. 16, 230 = D XLVII (see above) and E 4268 (see above). As said, no connections for Yoḥannes Meśrāqāwī.

Much more complicated is the situation as far as hymnography is concerned. Nevertheless, a clear picture seems to emerge which corresponds in part to the groups of the Acts. In the following list we give also a short summary of the contents of the ms, in order to give an idea of the more general affiliation of these saints. Apart from the connections of Gabra Manfas Qeddus, to which a hint has been made in my recent edition of his Life,¹⁹ the couples are:

Abib-Cyrus:

BL Or 535 = W CXIII ff. 1r–(3v), 3vv–(5r) *Psalter*; hymns and prayers; ff. 231, 17. c.; Ṭānāsee 116 (vol. III ms. 5 = Daga Eṣṭifanos 5) 26:ff. 83v–85v 41:ff. 130r–132v Collection of 53 hymns, among which the saints Gabra Manfas Qeddus (x2), Cyrus, Hiruta Amlāk, Martyrs, Saints, Cyriacus, Stephen, George, Basilides, Abib, Iyasus Mo'a, Takla Hāymānot, Eustatius, Afqaranna 'Egzi', Samu'el of Gadāma Wāli; ff. 164, 17. c.?: E 1060:20 ff. 99r–101r 24: ff. 11v–112v *Haṣura masqal* and 37 hymns, among which the saints Takla Hāy-

¹⁹ *GMQ*, pp. LV–LXVIII.

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mānot, Eustathius, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Basilides, Claudius, Mercurius, George, Abib, Cyrus, Qirqos; ff. 153, 17–18. c.; E 1950:44 ff. 100v–102r, 113r–114 r, 119r–122r, 122r–123v Book of Enoch and Collection of 48 hymns, among which the saints Takla Hāymānot, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Honorius, Claudius, Malke^o Krestos, Za-Mikā^oel Aragāwi, Stephen, The 40 Martyrs of Sebaste, Qirqos and Iyyaluṭā, Abib, Basilides, Mercurius, Cyrus, ff. 49, ... c.;

or Alexius-Cyrus:

BL Or 575 = W CLXXXVII 15: ff. 90v–(96r) 16: ff. 96r–(100r) *Gubā^oē malke^o* with 16 hymns, among which the saints Claudius, Cyrus, Gabra Krestos; ff. 109, 16. c.;

or Alexius-Abib:

Vat 29: III ff. 14v–15v Prayers in a convolute of fragmentary manuscripts; in the same fragment also a *salām* to Abib; 16.c.

Larger groups are

Abib, Alexius and Cyrus:

BL Or 573 = W CXC 47: ff. 201v–(204r) 48: ff. 204r–(206v) 49: ff. 206v–(208v) *Gubā^oē malke^o* with 54 hymns, among which the saints George, Basilides, Claudius, Theodore, Cyriacus, Victor, Stephen, Sebastian, Philip, James the son of Alphaeus, Matthias, Antony, Abib, Cyrus, Gabra Krestos, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Takla Hāymānot, Eustathius, Samuel; ff. 243, 17.c. ff. 243, 17. c.

or Abib, Cyrus and Latṣun, where the insertion of this latter is particularly important, given the rarity and isolation of his Acts:

BL Or 590 = W CXCVI (ff. not indicated) *Ṭabiba ṭabibān*; various hymns to angels, martyrs and the saints George, Basilides, Stephen, Eustathius (x2), Minās, Behnām, Mercurius, Arsimā, Arwā, Cyrus, Abib, Milki, Aaron, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Alēf and Ṣeḥmā, Takla Hāymānot, Theodore, Claudius, Sebastian, John of Asyut, Victor, Latṣun; the 2 Macarii, Antony, Macarius, Anbas, Demetrius, Moses, Theophilus, John the dwarf (*baṣir*) ff. 73, 18.c.

The Aksumite saints are connected with

Abib:

BL Or 574 = W CLXXXIX 13: ff. 37v–(40r) 14: 40r–(44r) *Gubā^oē malke^o* with 35 hymns, among which the saints Antony, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Libānos, Philip, Samuel, Eustathius, Takla Hāymānot, George, Basilides, Victor and Claudius, Stephen; ff. 140, 17. c.; Chester Beatty Dubl 949 ff. 39r–(41v) 43r–(47r) *Gubā^oē malke^o* with 19 hymns, among which the only saints are Abib, Mercurius and Za-Mikā^oel Aragāwi, ff. 47, 18.c.; Cambr. Or. 1798 = UW XXVIII ff. 27v–(32r) 32r–(34v) *Gubā^oē malke^o*, with 18 hymns, among

which the saints Antony (x2), Takla Hāymānot (x2), Samuel (x2), Eustathius (x 2), Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi; Abib, other texts; ff. 107, 18.c.

with Alexius, and, three times out of seven, also with a Yohanni who could be that of Dabra Aśā:

BL (not indicated in the Catalogue) = D. XXIX 10: ff. 10–(12) 13: ff. 13v–(14v) 30–31: ff. 30–(32v), 58–59: ff. 465r–(46v) *Mawaseʾet*, with 71 antiphones, among which the saints Martyrs, Alexius, Stephen (x2), abbā Yoḥanni (the fn. refers to ms. XLVII, Yohanni of Dabra Aśā), Minās, Mercurius, Nagrān, the Infants, Stephen, Maṭāʾ, George, Garimā (x 2), Cyriacus; 37 hymns, among which the saints Eustathius, Martyrs, Just, George, Salāmā, Takla Hāymānot; ff. 103, “recent”; BL Add. 14, 227 = D. XXX 10: ff. 7–(8) 13: ff. 9v(10v) 30: ff. 22v–(23v), 31: ff. 23v–(24v) 56–57: ff. 35r–(35v) 35v–36v 68: 44–(45) *Mawaseʾet* with 71 antiphones, among which the saints Just, Martyrs, Alexius, Stephen (x2), abbā Yoḥanni (no reference in the Catalogue), Minās, Mercurius, the Saint Martyrs, the Infants, Stephen, Maṭāʾ, Libānos (Maṭāʾ), Congregation of Martyrs, George, Garimā (x2), Cyriacus, Libānos (x2); ff. (50), s. d.; (BL Or 709 = W CCLXXXV ff. 72r–(74r) 180v–(193) in the Acts of Alexius and Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi above, hymns to them; d’A 46 = N 176 ff. 41v–(43v) 43v–(44r) in the Acts of Alexius and Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi above, passages, nearly always with a hymn, on the saints Moses Romanus, Alexius, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Ṭarākwā; Uppsala 22. A. 8: f. 20r–v 10: f. 21v 15: f. 26v B. D. 29: f. 60v 33: f. 62r–v *Mawaseʾet* and *Zemmārē*, where the saints are the Just (x2), the Martyrs, Alexius f. 21v, Maṭāʾ/Libanos, George (x2), Cyriacus (x2), Stephen, Garimā, abbā Salāmā; ff. 67, 18. c.; Uppsala 24:A. 15: f. 25v 21: f. 36v 23: f. 40r 23 (sic) f. 40v2 24: f. 40v 37: f. 60v B. 10: f. 82r 20: f. 93r–v C. 23: f. 149r 27: f. 156v *Deggwā*; where the saints are Stephen, Eustathius, Pantaleon, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Stephen, Yemʾatā, Abāydo, Yoḥanni, Minās, Qozmos, Mercurius; Alexius, abbā Salāmā (x2), Infants killed by Herodes, Stephen, Maṭāʾ/Libānos, Qirqos (x2), Georges, Yoḥannes of Ḥawit(?), Garimā, Sofyā; ff. 191, 17. c.; (E 612 above ff. 69r–71r hymns to Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi and Alexius); E 4825 ff. 58v–64v 77r–79v *Sayfa Šellāsē*; and 21 hymns among which the saints George (x2), Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Alexius, Takla Māryām/Mabāʾa Šeyon; ff. (140), 20.c.

with Cyrus:

E 3997 ff. 86r–90v 123r–127r Collection of 34 hymns, among which the saints Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Fiṭṭor (other than Victor), Basilides, Theodore, Claudius, Stephen, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Takla Hāymānot; ff. (189), 17. c.; E 4089 ff. 74r–77v 77v–82r Collection of 19 hymns, among which the saints Takla Hāymānot; Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Cyrus, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, George; ff. (103), 18.c.

with Abib and Alexius:

Griaule 381:2 ff. 47v–(48r) 48v–(49r) 49r–(50r) Book of the Hours, hymns to the saints George, Basilides, Theodore, Takla Hāymānot; Eustathius, Abib, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Libānos, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Gabra Krestos and Moses, Afqaranna ʾEgziʾ; ff. 121, 18/19. c.;

with Abib and Cyrus:

Bayer. Staatsb. 49 = Cod. Aeth. 49 ff. 38r–41r 88v–93v2 94r–v above, hymns to Cyrus (x2), Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi (x2) and Alexius; E 2637:37 ff. 108v–111r 123v–126v 128r–131r *Maṣḥafa nuzāzē* (am.) and 38 hymns, among which the saints Basilides, Stephen, George, Theodore, Ciryacus, Abib, Iyasus Moʾa, Takla Hāymānot; Zēnā Mārḳos, Cyrus, Maqāres, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi; ff. (131), 18. c.; Bergamo 14 f. 21r–v *Eʾ nagśa* with hymns to the Saints, Martyrs, Yohannes of Dabra Bizen, Minās, Ezra, Victor, Honorius (x2), Sinoda (x2), Eustathius (x2), Barbara and Juliana, George, Mercurius of Rome, Takla Hāymānot; Antony, Macarius, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Iyasus Moʾa, Abib, Cyrus; other texts, ff. 78, 20. c.; E 2706 ff. 122r–123v 127r–128v 128v–130r 133r–134r *Argānona Weddāsē*; *Mazmura feśśuhān*; *Māḥlēta šegē*; *Saqoqāwa Dengel*; various hymns in between, and subsequently 21 hymns, among which the saints Claudius, Libānos, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Cyrus, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, emperor Yoḥannes I, Takla Hāymānot, Abib, Iyasus Moʾa, Mercurius, Menās, Cyriacus, Stephen (x2), George; ff. 156, 18. c.

with Abib, Alexius, Cyrus:

BL Or. 577 = W CXCI 8: ff. 32r–(37r) 9: ff. 37r–(40), 11: ff. 43v–(48r), 12: ff. 48r–(50r) 14: ff. 53v–(59a) 16: ff. 60r–(63r) 17: ff. 63r–(66v) 18: ff. 66v–(69v) 24: ff. 93r–(99r), 25: ff. 99r–(102r) 30: ff. 116r–(117v) *Gubāʾē malkeʾ* with 49 hymns, among which the saints Pantaleon, Garimā, Samuel, Salāmā, Cyrus, Madhanina ʾEgziʾ, Liqānos, Antony (x2), Libānos, Šehmā, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Sarabamon, Takla Hāymānot, Eustathius (x2), Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Abib, Batra Māryām, Yohannes Kama, Gērellos, Alexis, The Saints, Stephen, George, Basilides, Claudius, Victor, Theodore, Mercurius, The Martyrs, Sebastian, Cyriacus, Isidore, Arsimā, Aboli, Dioscorus, Jacob Intercisus, Minās, Behnām, The Just; ff. 196, 1721–1730; E 2096 ff. 146r–(v), 150r–(151r) 151r–(152r), 152r–(152v) *Horologium* with 44 hymns, among which the saints Martyrs and the Desert Fathers, Stephen, George, Basilides, Claudius, Theodore, Cyriacus, Mercurius, Libānos, The Desert Fathers of Egypt and Ethiopia (including the Nine Saints), Takla Hāymānot, Eustathius, Iyasus Moʾa, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Samuʾel of Waldebbā, Abib, Samuʾel (of Wali?), Alexius, Cyrus, Yāfqaranna ʾEgziʾ (x2), Taṭamqa Madhen, Māʾqaba Egziʾ, Lessāna Krestos, Walatta Peṭros, Arsimā, Za-

Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Lālibalā; ff.186, 17. c.; (E 2504 above ff. 71r–74v); E 2810 ff. 74r–(75r) 80v–(81v) 88r–(v) 88v–(89v) 99v–(100r) Prayer Book with hymns to the saints Martyrs, Desert Fathers, the Holy women, and in a special section (ff. 72r–108r) Libānos, Gabra Manfas Qeddus; Mattias, Cyrus, Basilides, Claudius, Theodore, Samuʾel of Waldebbā, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Alexius, Stephen, Minās, Eustathius, Ciryacus, Theodore, Antony, George, Takla Hāymānot, Abib, Mercurius, Sebastian, Victor, the Innocents, the Fathers of the desert, Prayer of St. Simeone Stilites; ff. 112, 18. c.

with Abib, Alexius, Cyrus, Nob; in one case (E 659) also Yoḥannes Meśrāqāwī, and possibly Yoḥanni of Dabra Asa:

d'A 170 = N 89 XXVIII ff. 59r–(61r) LI–LII–LIII ff. 78r–(81r) LIV–LV ff. 81r–(82v) LVI–LVII ff. 82v–(3r) LVIII–LIX ff. 85r–(86v) *Gubāʾē malkeʾ* with 49 hymns, among which the saints George (x3), Stephen, Mercurius, Cyriacus, Claudius (x3), Basilides (x2), Theodore, Victor (x3), Minās, Julius, Filotheus (x2), the sons of Tāwkādā, Nob (x2), Sebastian (x2), Sarapamon (x2), the Infants (x2), Pilatus (x2), Theodore (x2), the martyrs of Akhmim (x2), Hor (x2), Irāy and Abādir, Aboli (x3), Justus and Thecla, Theodore (2), Abib (x3), Alexius (x2), Cyrus (x2), Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi (x2); ff. 87, 18./19. c.; E 659:71 ff. 30r–32r 61r–63v 110r–111v 177r–178v 184r–186r 217r–219r Collection of 98 hymns, among which the saints Naʾakweto Laʾab, Zena Marqos, Libanos, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, Cyrus, Baršumā, Victor, Basilides, Claudius, Theodore, Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi, Alexius, Marbehnām, Stephen, Yoḥannes (sic) Bāhtāwi (Yoḥanni of Dabra Aśā?), Minās, Walatta Peṭros, Eustathius, Cyriacus, Yemreḥanna Krestos, Antony, George (x3), Takla Hāymānot, Nob, Mercurius, Heḏan Moʾa, Abib, Iyasus Moʾa, Ečā Yoḥannes; ff. 243, 18/19. c.

with Yoḥanni of Dabra Aśā and Alexius:

BL (not indicated in the Catalogue) = D. XXIX ff. 10r–(12v) 13v–(14v) above; most probably BL Add. 14, 227 = D. XXX ff. 7–(8) 8–(10); Uppsala L 24 A. 324: f. 40v 37: f. 60v above (where he is preceded by abbā Abaydo, 23: f. 40v, his master in the *Gadl*); a much wider general context should be taken into account (Abib, Alexis, Kiros, Nob, Axumite saints, Ečā Yoḥannes) if the Yoḥannes (sic) Bāhtāwi of E 659 ff. 118r–120r above, is our Yoḥanni.

Of the remaining saints the connections are very poor indeed. Latšun seems to be connected with Abib and Cyrus in BL Or 590 = W CXCVI only, above (ff. not indicated by the Catalogue). Nob is connected with Abib, Alexius, Cyrus (and Yoḥannes Meśrāqāwī) in E 659 only (quoted above); otherwise he seems to be mainly associated with St. George.²⁰ Of no

²⁰ E 3077 f. 58v; ff. 125, 1813–1847; E 3966 f. 71v; ff. (127), 19. c.; E 4031:20 f. 66r–v; ff. 143, 20. c.

significance at all the hymnography of Tādēwos of Dabra Bārtārwā, completely isolated in its only manuscript, like the corresponding Life,²¹ nor is that of Yoḥannes Meśrāqāwī, limited to the same E 659 of Nob.

Common to these groups of texts there are also less significant details, like the presence of rare angels, like the angel Yonāʾēl, who appears in Gabra Manfas Qeddus bringing three cups and three breads from heaven for three visiting saints,²² and in Cyrus, where he brings a cup and a bread from heaven to abbā Bābnudā;²³ or also the angel Abdelmākos (or Ṭ/Demlākos and other variants), who is surely less rare, and appears in the Acts of Gabra Manfas Qeddus and Latṣun driving away from the hell those who were pardoned thanks to the intercession of the saint,²⁴ and sporadically also in the apocryphal tradition (e. g. in the *Apocalypse of Peter*),²⁵ where he is the guard of the damned (his name comes from Gr. *tēmeloúchos* “guardian”). Another secondary element is the presence of a Mount Ērār, or Ērārā,²⁶ of course not the same as the mountains Ērar (with the I order), Ērēr (with the V order) or Ērārā in Shoa and Tigray. In the Acts of Gabra Manfas Qeddus our mount Ērār(ā) is located near the Garden of Eden, it is made of gold and silver, and it drips milk and honey;²⁷ in the Acts of Cyrus an old man, who in fact is Jesus Christ (as the text later tells us) declares to come from Mount Ērārā, which, he explains, “is not from this earth”, and which Kiros will see only at the moment of his death; at that moment, the text does not mention Mount Ērārā, but the soul of Cyrus is transported near the Garden of Eden.²⁸

But if we look for a less formal, and a more substantial definition which could unite in some way these “Egyptian” saints among themselves, and with the Axumite, we have to take into consideration many different elements of content.

First of all, a negative element, if we may say so, i. e. the fact of being Egyptians without being martyrs. In fact, the most striking feature which characterizes an Egyptian saint is perhaps that of being very frequently a martyr; instead, this is almost never the case in Abyssinia; where the

²¹ Ff. 1r–(4r), 59r–(62v), 62v–(63r), 63r–(67r) hymns (*melṭān*) to T. and his nephew Filmonā.

²² *GMQ*, pp. XIX, 88–89/31.

²³ *Gadla Kiros*, ms. d'A 123 = N 175, f. 37v ; in ms. BL Or 701 = W CCLXXVII f. 3v the angel is Michael.

²⁴ *GMQ*, p. LX.

²⁵ P. MARRASSINI, *L'Apocalisse di Pietro*, in: *Etiopia ed oltre. Studi in onore di Lanfranco Ricci*, Napoli 1994, p. 206.

²⁶ *GMQ*, pp. LXI–LXII.

²⁷ *GMQ*, pp. 99/34.

²⁸ *Gadla Kiros*, ms. BL Or 701 = W CCLXXVII ff. 34r–v and 43r.

Church has always taken part in the political power, and the martyrs, if any, were the others. So, this feature could not be imitated, or really sincerely felt as a genuine national tradition, in Abyssinia, and we know of very few Abyssinian saints who were also martyrs, like the Šādeqān²⁹ or Anānyā.³⁰ Instead, in Abyssinia we usually find a process of substitution of the martyrdom by penances³¹ or equivalent situations, like the conflict with the emperor,³² or the punishment of the young saint by the hand of his father, as in Bašalota Mikāʿel.³³ This is the normal process which has also taken place in Europe, when the saint martyr becomes, after the end of the great persecutions, the saint confessor.

This very process has brought a further element, more or less connected with the preceding one, that is the absence, from this type of texts, of the period of childhood. Childhood is a very important period for native Abyssinian saints, whose Acts describe in detail the birth of the saint, his christening, his first years and his precocity, his adolescence and the relationship with his parents, and so on.³⁴ There is no important place for childhood in the account of the martyrs, because the only relevant element is the martyrdom itself. But also in the texts of our group childhood is not important as compared with the “adult” achievements: Cyrus, Latšun, partly Abib, and in a different context, the Nine and other “Axumite” Saints, have no childhood

²⁹Text in C. CONTI ROSSINI, *Ricordi di un soggiorno in Eritrea*, Asmara 1902, p. 14; transl. in O. RAINERI, “*Gadla sadqan*” o “*Vita dei giusti*”, “*Nicolaus*” 6 (1978) p. 152.

³⁰G. Lusini, *Il Gadla Anānyā*, “*Egitto e Vicino Oriente*” 13 (1990), pp. 162/180; O. Raineri, *Atti di Anania, santo monaco etiopico del 16.o secolo*, “*Ephemerides Liturgicae*” 104 (1990), p. 90.

³¹The famous penances of the Abyssinian monks; cp. e. g. E. CERULLI, *Atti di Krestos Šamrā*, CSCO 164, SAe 34, pp. IX–X; E. CERULLI, *Gli Atti di Zēnā Māryām, monaca etiopica del secolo XIV*, RSO 21 (1946), pp. 131–132; ALLOTTE DE LA FUÏE, *Filmona*, cit., pp. VIII–IX; MARRASSINI, *GYM*, pp. XCVII–XCVIII; *GMQ*, pp. XLIV–XLV.

³²Cp. the well-known group of the saints against the king (Fileppos de Dabra Libānos, Bašalota Mikāʿel of Dabra Gol, Samuʿel of Dabra Wagāg, Anorēwos of Šegagā, Aron Mankerāwi of Dabra Darēt), and also e. g. the Stephanites, abbā Sinodā of Dabra Šemmunā and Zar'a Buruk.

³³Where the father wants to compel his son to marry: K. CONTI ROSSINI, *Vitae sanctorum indigenarum. I. Acta Bašalota Mikaʿel et S. Anorēwos*, CSCO 28, 28/SAe 11, p. 8: *qaddama kawina sem' ba'eda abuhu*.

³⁴*GYM*, pp. LX–LXIII; *L'infanzia del santo nel Cristianesimo orientale: il caso dell'Etiopia*, in A. BENVENUTI PAPI – E. GIANNARELLI (eds.), *Bambini santi*, Torino 1991, pp. 147–181; S. KAPLAN, *Seen but not heard: children and childhood in medieval Ethiopian hagiographies*, “*International Journal of African Historical Studies*”, 30 (1997), pp. 539–553.

described. The childhood which is present in Gabra Manfas Qeddus and John the Oriental only indicates the insertion of an otherwise common element.

A third element seems also to be typical of this kind of hagiographical production, i. e. the “Roman” origin, or anyway the “Roman” connection. This is part of the general phenomenon of the noble origin of the saint,³⁵ the so-called “beata stirps”, very accurately investigated for European hagiography.³⁶ In Abyssinia the Roman origin, or the Roman connection, is typical of the “Axumite” saints: Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi is “from the Roman dynasty”, and his first name was Gabra Amlāk, according to his mother ʾAbd al-Masiḥ, i. e. Gabra Krestos/Alexis;³⁷ Garimā is the son of Mesfiyānos, king of Rome;³⁸ Panṭālēwon’s father was an official of the king of Rome;³⁹ Libānos was “the son of the kings of Rom”, and his mother’s name was Negešt;⁴⁰ Afṣē was of royal family.⁴¹ The case of Buruk Amlāk, who is not “Axumite” but who nevertheless is the son of the king of Rome and of a Milidāmā, niece or granddaughter of the king of Chalcedon,⁴² is clearly a secondary borrowing. In the case of our “Egyptian saints”, Cyrus, whose original name was Dilāsor, is the son of a king Abyā, who in turn was the son of a king Yonān (“Greek?”), and he is the brother of the heir apparent Tewodosyos;⁴³ Gabra Manfas Qeddus is the son of a prefect of the king of Rome, and, by the way, of one Aqlēsyā whose grand-father was of the tribe of Benjamin (and this connects her at the same time with Israel and with Saint Paul);⁴⁴ John the Oriental is the son of Dilāsor, and this, as we have seen, is the first name

³⁵ GYM, pp. LIII–LVII; *Infanzia*, cit., pp. 149–155.

³⁶ A. VAUCHEZ, “Beata stirps”: *sainteté et lignage en Occident aux XIII^e et XIV^e siècles*, in: G. DUBY – J. LE GOFF (eds.), *Famille et parenté dans l’Occident Médiéval. Actes du Colloque de Paris (6–8 Juin 1974)*, Roma, 1977, pp. 397–406; ID., *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age*, Roma 1981, pp. 204–215.

³⁷ I. GUIDI, *Il “Gadla Aragawi”*, ANL–M, ser. v, 2 (1894), p. 57 (summary p. 66); M. A. van den Oudenrijn, *La vie de saint Za-Mikāʾel Aragāwi*, Fribourg 1939, p. 38.

³⁸ C. CONTI ROSSINI, *L’Omilia di Yohannes, vescovo d’Axum, in onore di Garimā*, in: *Actes du Onzième Congrès International des Orientalistes, IV^e Section*, Paris 1898, p. 149 (transl. in B. DUCATI, *La grande gesta di Amda Siōn, re d’Etiopia*, Milano 1932, p. 101).

³⁹ K. CONTI ROSSINI, *Vitae sanctorum indigenarum. I. Acta Yārēd et Panṭālēwon*, CSCO 26/27, SAe 9/10, Roma – Paris – Leipzig 1904 = Louvain 1961, pp. 21/20.

⁴⁰ See now the impeccable edition by A. BAUSI, *La “Vita” e i “Miracoli” di Libānos*, CSCO 595/596, SAe 105/106.

⁴¹ Not in the text described by C. CONTI ROSSINI, *La leggenda di Abba Afṣē in Etiopia*, in: *Mélanges syriens offerts à M. René Dussaud*, Paris 1939, pp. 151–156, but in that summarized by R. SCHNEIDER, *Les Actes de Abba Afsé de Yeba*, AE 13 (1985), pp. 115–118.

⁴² C. CONTI ROSSINI, *Un santo eritreo: Buruk Amlāk*, RAL–R, ser. vi, 14 (1938), pp. 6, 16.

⁴³ Cp. e. g. ms. BL Or. 701 = W CCLXXVII (quoted above) ff. 2r–v.

⁴⁴ GMQ, pp. XXXVII–XXXVIII.

of Cyrus; besides, the text indicates him as being *’em-zamada nagašt*.⁴⁵ Nothing, of course, can be added to the royal ancestors of Alexius.

All these three points clearly indicate the connection existing between these saints. But this is only the result of a given ideological conception. What is the cause? Above a hint has been made to the presence of Egypt in both categories, but this is only an external datum, however important it can be; there must be some more substantial element of content. Now, the important “adult” achievement which eliminates the narration of childhood from the majority of these texts, and approaches them to those of the martyrs, is clear: in the lives of the Axumite saints is the introduction of the Orthodox faith, but in the case of the others the most important element is *asceticism realized through the presence of the desert*.⁴⁶

Of course, the desert is present in almost every Life of the Abyssinian saints (a bibliography would be here superfluous), but it appears for relatively short periods, and above all it is flanked by other *major* activities, different from mere heremitism. For example, Filmonā practises his asceticism and his privations together with his work in several monasteries (Dabra Māryām, Dabra Ta’aminā);⁴⁷ immediately after his arrival at Kebrān, Za-Yohannes builds a hut, and immediately after he begins to collect

⁴⁵ GYM, pp. XVI–XVII e 16/17.

⁴⁶ Among the essays on this topic see at least A. GUILLAUMONT, *La conception du désert chez les moines d’Egypte*, RHR 94 (1975), pp. 3–21; *Die Wüste im Verständnis der ägyptischen Mönche*, “Geist und Leben” 54 (1981), pp. 121–137; afterwards, S.P. BRATTON, *Christianity, wilderness and wildlife. The original desert solitude*, Scranton 1993; M.-E. BRUNERT, *Das Ideal der Wüstenaskese und seine Rezeption in Gallien ...*, Münster 1994; U. CRISCUOLO, *Itinerarium mentis: sulla teoria e la prassi dell’anacoresi e dell’ascesi nei Padri di Cappadocia*, “Studi Tardoantichi” 8 (1989), pp. 355–376; M. DAVY, *Le thème du désert dans le monachisme chrétien*, “Cahiers de l’Université St. Jean de Jérusalem” 8 (1982), pp. 45–70; J.E. GOEHRING, *The encroaching desert: Literary production and ascetic space in early Christian Egypt*, “Journal of Early Christian Studies” 1 (1993), pp. 281–296 (cp. BZ 1996/II, p. 507); *Ascetics, society, and the desert: Studies in early Egyptian monasticism*, Harrisburg 1999 (a collection of essays); R. KIRSCHNER, *The vocation of holiness in Late Antiquity*, “Vigiliae christianae” 38 (1984), pp. 105–204; N. ŠEVČENKO, *The hermit as a stranger in the desert*, in: D.C. SMITHE (ed.), *Strangers to themselves. The Byzantine outsider, Papers of the XXXII Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex ... 1998*, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, Publication 8, Aldersot 2000, pp. 75–86; R. TRAINA, *L’espace des moines sauvages*, “Quaderni catanesi” 9, n. 18 (1987), pp. 353–362. For Ethiopia cp. GYM, pp. LXXXIV–LXXXVII and GMQ, p. XLII.

⁴⁷ ALLOTTE DE LA FUÏE, *Filmona*, cit, pp. 25–26/24, 37/34 ff.

people to create a *māḥbar*.⁴⁸ In other words, in the “normal” Abyssinian saints heremitism is never complete, and heremitical and coenobitical life are well integrated. This of course corresponds in some way to the development of monastic ideology in Egypt.⁴⁹ Besides, the “desert” is frequently placed at no great distance from a monastery, as in the case of Zēnā Māryām, who lives in a hermitage, but has continuous contacts with the pilgrims, the monastery, and the abbot;⁵⁰ Yārēd is also retired *westa gadāma samēn medra šallamt*, but this does not prevent him from teaching singing to the local people;⁵¹ Baṣalota Mikāʿēl practises his ascetic life in the *dabr* of Anorēwos, i. e. Dabra Gol, after a period of loneliness and asceticism;⁵² Takla Hawāryāt goes to Dabra Darbā to meet other monks, in a *menēt* where he again subjects himself to fasting and privations.⁵³ In fact, also our translation of *gadām* by “desert” could be frequently erroneous; it should be translated by “hermitage” or the like, and sometimes more or less by “monastery with particularly rigid rules”.⁵⁴

On the contrary, the activity of our saints develops *only* in the desert. This desert is, if I may say so, “absolute”, and pervades their life in its entirety. The main peculiarities of this desert are almost universally widespread:

1. It is a *real* desert, faraway from monastic communities and, even more, from villages and cities.⁵⁵
2. This desert is also populated by other monks, who periodically pay a visit to each other, but who otherwise live quite independently. This is of course the same motif of the *desertum civitas*, studied among others by Chitty.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ M. SCHNEIDER, *Actes de Za-Yohannes de Kebrān*, CSCO 332/333, SAe 64/65, Louvain 1972, pp 18/17–18.

⁴⁹ Cp. e.g. J.É. GOEHRING, *Withdrawing from the desert. Pachomians and the development of village monasticism in Upper Egypt*, “Harvard Theological Review” 89 (1996), pp. 267–285.

⁵⁰ CERULLI, *Zēnā Māryām*, cit., p. 131.

⁵¹ Conti Rossini, *Yārēd et Pantalēwon*, cit., pp. 21/20.

⁵² K. CONTI ROSSINI, *Vitae sanctorum indigenarum. Acta S. Baṣalota Mikāʿēl et S. Anorēwos*, CSCO 28/29, SAe 11/12, Roma – Paris – Leipzig 1905 = Louvain 1962, pp. 14/13. The place of Anoryos (sic), specified as Dabra Gol, is called here *dabra sem-monā la'anoryos*, and therefore it could also mean simply “the mountain of the retirement of A.”; but I think that the indication of Dabra Gol was meant really to indicate the monastery.

⁵³ K. CONTI ROSSINI, *Vitae sanctorum indigenarum. I. Acta Sancti Abakerazun. II. Acta Sancti Takla Hawaryat*, CSCO 56/57, SAe 25/26, Louvain 1954, pp. 109/92.

⁵⁴ RICCI, RSE 23, p. 195

⁵⁵ Cp. the problems raised by C. WYPSZYCKA, *Le monachisme égyptien et les villes*, “Travaux et mémoires” 12 (1994), pp. 1–44 (cp. BZ 1996/I, p. 230)

3. Sometimes this desert may be “fertilized”⁵⁷ by the virtuous monk. This is also the case of the so-called *desertus floribus vernans* found in St. Jerome. An example is found in Gabra Manfas Qeddus. Here, the desert in which the saint had left his teeth smells of musk and frankincense, and in the place in which he had left his bowels and his blood a vineyard grows, on which the hermits feed.⁵⁸
4. This desert is obviously populated by demons,⁵⁹ but not in the same way as the other hagiographical texts. In these latter this demoniac presence is scattered in several *short episodes*, frequently with *the same demons*, which are driven away by the saint each time. Instead, in the “Egyptian saints” the presence of the devil is much stronger, if we may say so, *in quality*, i. e. in episodes which are much longer and articulated. In the Life of Latṣun, for example, there is a long episode in which the devil tries to deceive the saint by appearing to him as a beautiful woman, who invites him to a gallant banquet, seduces him, and reveals herself only at the crucial point;⁶⁰ in Gabra Manfas Qeddus the fairly common theme of the devil who tries to convince the saint into coming back home, is developed to a length of several *folios*.⁶¹
5. Also the presence of the wild beasts is much more marked in this kind of desert. In this case also it is no question of the simple presence of a motif, because it is well known that the relationship (good or bad) with the wild beasts is one of the most classical *topoi* in Abyssinian and universal hagiography.⁶² Here it is again a question of focus and of *literary development*, up to the case of Gabra Manfas Qeddus, against whom the wild beasts organize themselves in a long struggle, under the leadership of the hyena and of the

⁵⁶ D.J. CHITTY, *The desert a city: An introduction to the study of Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism under the Christian empire*, Oxford, B. Blackwell 1966 (repr. Crestwood, St. Vladimir Seminary Press 1978); French transl. *Et le désert devint une cité*, Bégrolles-en-Mauges, Abbaye de Bellefontaine 1980. Cp. also G. GOULD, *The Desert Fathers on monastic community*, OUP 1993, and GOEHRING, above.

⁵⁷ GUILLAUMONT, *cit.*, p. 14.

⁵⁸ GMQ, pp. 108–109/37.

⁵⁹ See. GYM, pp. LXXVI–LXXVIII. In general cp. the volume *Santi e demoni nell’Alto Medioevo* (sec. V–XI), Spoleto, Centro di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo 1989, and e.g. P. BOULHOL, *Hagiographie ancienne et démonologie*, AB 112 (1994), pp. 255–303; A. NUGENT, *Black demons in the desert*, “American Benedictine Review” 49 (1998), pp. 209–222; A. VIVIAN, *Daniel and the demons. The battle against the devil as central to the authorities of the monk*, in: *Studia Patristica XXXV ... Papers presented to the XIII International Conference of Patristic Studies, ... Oxford 1999*, Leuven 1991, pp. 191–197.

⁶⁰ MARRASSINI, *Latṣun*, *cit.*, pp. 130–132.

⁶¹ GMQ, pp. 286–290/86–98.

⁶² E.g. GUILLAUMONT, *cit.*, pp. 11–12.

hedgehog;⁶³ and this, in turn, has inspired the similar struggle in the Life of John the Oriental,⁶⁴ in which again the hedgehog plays an important role.

This difference in the conception of the desert is in turn a direct consequence of a different conception of monasticism. In fact, it is clear that we are faced with two conceptions of monasticism which are entirely different: at the risk of simplyfying the matter too much, we could say that there is an Abyssinian one, which could be defined as “active”, and the “Egyptian”, almost entirely “passive”. But Abyssinian culture did not accept both conceptions without posing the problem of their contrast. In fact, this problem has been clearly felt, as testified by an important passage in the Life of John the Oriental,⁶⁵ where the archangel Gabriel says to the saint: ሐር ፡ ወስብክ ፡ ሃይማኖት ፡ ወምግባር ፡ ጽድቅ ፡ ትንበርኑ ፡ ዝየ ፡ ውሳጢ ፡ ገዳም ፡ ፈነወከ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ ዳእሙ ፡ ትንግር ፡ ስብሐተ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ ወትግበር ፡ ምግባር ፡ መንፈሳዊ ፡ በቅድመ ፡ ኩሉ ፡ ሰብአ ፡ በለሳ ፡ ከመ ፡ ይእመኑ ፡ ቦቲ ። (*hur wasebek hāymānota wamegbāra šedeq tenbarenu zeya wesāṭē gadām fannaṭwakka ʾegziʾabhēr. dāʿemu tenger sebhata ʾegziʾabhēr wategbar megbāra manfa-sāwi baqedma kwellu sabʾa balasā kama yeʿmanu bottu*), “go and preach the Faith and the righteous deeds. Has the Lord sent you to stay here inside the desert? On the contrary, to pronounce the praise of the Lord, and to accomplish spiritual deeds before all the people of Balasā, so that they [can] believe in Him”. Of course, to shed more light on this contrast in monastic ideology could be another important task in the study of Abyssinian hagiography.

Summary

It seems possible to isolate a group of saints born in Egypt (or living there for a long time), different from the traditional saints of that country mainly because they were not martyrs, and substituted the martyrdom by penances and absolute asceticism; the presence of the desert is much more pronounced than in the rest of Abyssinian hagiography, and nearly absolute; the activity of the devil is also very heavily marked; almost all of them are of “Roman” birth or connection. They are Bula/Abib, Gabra Krestos/Alexius, Latšun, Nob, Gabra Manfas Qeddus, John the Oriental, maybe Tadēwos of Dabra Bartarwa, Yoḥanni of Däbrä ʿAśā, and some others, to which the “Aksumite” saints must be added. The relationship of these saints among themselves is also demonstrated by the codices, in which the “Life” or the hymnography pertaining to one or more of them occur together with those of some of the others, in different combinations.

⁶³ In the Homily, *GMQ*, pp. 301–305/105–107.

⁶⁴ *GYM*, pp. 78–89.

⁶⁵ *GYM*, pp. 266–267.