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Review

MARIA LUISA AGATI, *Il libro manoscritto da Oriente a Occidente: Per una  
codicologia comparata*

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## Reviews

Pour le terme *mrw* (racine RWY), le sens traditionnel de “Bewässerungsanlage” (YMN 9 = al-Mi<sup>c</sup>sāl 16/2, p. 17) convient sans doute, parce qu’il s’agit d’une vigne. Cependant, un examen de toutes les occurrences de *mrw* montre que ce terme n’est employé que pour des vignes. Ce substantif a donc, selon toute vraisemblance, un sens plus spécifique. Dans une conférence à l’Université de Yarmūk (Jordanie) en décembre 2006, j’avais proposé de le rendre par “pressoir”. Cette hypothèse se fonde également sur les petits bassins antiques cimentés qui peuvent être observés en aval des barrages du wādī dhū <sup>o</sup>l-Qayl qui servaient à irriguer une vigne (RES 4196 = SE 105 = MQ-Ḥayd Mūsà 1, p. 37).

Dernière observation, je ne crois pas que le sens donné à *mwr*, “entrée, accès (Zugang)”, d’après l’arabe *mawr* “chemin bien frayé et égal”, convienne aux deux nouvelles occurrences de ce substantif dans ZM 2263 + 2262 (= 300) + 2264/2, 4 (p. 24):

– ligne 2, ... *mḥjfdt w-gn<sup>o</sup> kwn b-mwr* (Zugang) *hgr<sup>n</sup> Zfr* [...]

“... les t]ours (Turm) et le mur (Mauer) qui était/étaient à l’entrée (Zugang) de la ville de Zafār [...].”

– ligne 4, ...] *w-ṣwbt w-ḥlf w-<sup>o</sup>hrr w-mḥjfdt* (Turm) *mwr* (Zugang) *hgr<sup>n</sup> Zfr* [...]

“... Jet l’escalier (Stufen, Treppe), la porte (Tor), les fossés (Graben) et les tours (Turm) de l’entrée (Zugang) de la ville de Zafār [...].”

Dans ce nouveau texte, un sens tel que “enceinte; système de fortifications” répondrait mieux au contexte.

Christian Julien Robin, Centre national de la  
recherche scientifique (CNRS)

MARIA LUISA AGATI, *Il libro manoscritto da Oriente a Occidente: Per una codicologia comparata* = Studia archaeologica 166, Roma: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2009. Pp. 528. Price: € 150.-. ISBN: 88-8265-513-X; ISBN-13: 978-8-882-65513-6 [1<sup>st</sup> ed.: *Il libro manoscritto: Introduzione alla codicologia* = Studia archaeologica 124, Roma: L’Erma di Bretschneider, 2003, repr. 2004. Pp. 501. ISBN: 88-8265-252-1].

Within the framework of a new flourishing of projects and research on Ethiopian manuscripts,<sup>1</sup> Christian as well as Islamic, it is apposite briefly to an-

<sup>1</sup> We may mention here the project “Ethio-SPARE: Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia, Salvation, Preservation, Research”, funded by the European Research Council and directed by Dr. Denis Nosnitsin, Hamburg; the Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Saint John’s University, Collegetown, Vermont.

nounce the publication of a comprehensive and exhaustive handbook devoted to codicology as a general and overall “study of the manuscript book”, in all its meanings. The work is the second, revised and enlarged edition of a previous handbook published in the same series, now out of print, but with a slightly different title (*Il libro manoscritto: Introduzione alla codicologia*). The new title, in fact (*Il libro manoscritto da Oriente a Occidente: Per una codicologia comparata*), explicitly underlines one of the two most important recent developments in manuscript studies, i.e. the “comparative approach” – the second one being quantitative analysis, which unfortunately can only be applied where the respective state of the art allows it.

Differently from recent contributions to manuscript studies, which are mostly oriented towards methodological reflection,<sup>2</sup> Agati’s work is a systematic scholarly presentation of all codicological subjects (accordingly excluding philology as text-criticism and palaeography as the study of the historical development of the script). The arrangement follows a traditional, yet still very rational sequence: preliminary history and definition of the discipline, materials, book formats (with special attention to the codex and its structure), ruling and layout, writing, scribal practices, decoration, binding and social aspects. Naturally starting from the Greek and Latin geo-cultural areas, as they are where the most advanced codicological approaches have been attempted, the work pursues the comparative perspective by providing, if not continuous and always consistent, yet frequent and rich insights – as far as this is possible in a single-author handbook<sup>3</sup> – into “reference areas” extend-

MN, directed by Prof. Dr. Steve Delamarter; the COMSt Project (Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies), funded by the European Science Foundation, and coordinated in Hamburg; also in Hamburg, a subproject on Ethiopic manuscripts, directed by myself, in the frame of the SFB 950 (Sonderforschungsbereich Manuskriptkulturen in Asien, Afrika und Europa)/CSMC (Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures) Project, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and directed by Prof. Dr. Michael Friedrich; several projects on the digitization of Ethiopic manuscripts funded by the British Library Endangered Archives programme: not to mention other established programmes, such as Māzgābā se’elāt (Mazgaba seelat), Deeds Project, Ethiopia Arts and Cultures, A Treasure of Ethiopian Images, University of Toronto, directed by Prof. Dr. Michael M. Gervers, Toronto, and Dr. Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, Uppsala. The new Philology Programme at Addis Ababa University, now providing courses at MA and PhD level, also deserves to be mentioned here in consideration of its high research potential, as appears from the first years of its activity.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., M. MANIACI, *Archeologia del manoscritto. Metodi, problemi, bibliografia recente, con contributi di Carlo Federici e di Ezio Ornato* = I libri di Viella 34, Roma: Viella, 2002 [repr. 2005].

<sup>3</sup> Though not actually comparable to Agati’s handbook, the much smaller *Lire le manuscrit médiéval*, Paris: Armand Colin, 2005, edited under the direction of P. GÉHIN, is

ing to Hebrew, Islamic (Arabic, Persian and Turkish, with obvious limitations to the Mediterranean and nearby areas), Coptic and Ethiopian, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic and Syriac manuscripts (pp. 40–45). Selected references to one or usually more of these areas are given in each chapter, according to the relevant topics, whereas the chosen areas correspond to those where the manuscript book in the form of the codex has arisen and later imposed itself as the dominant format. Although it may appear, and indeed be, limiting in respect of a so far unattempted global and typological comparative approach to the study of “manuscripts phenomenology”, the focus on the “area of the codex” has the great advantage of providing a sound historical guiding theme, the importance of which should never be underestimated.

Here follows a presentation of the table of contents, with an indication of sections where Ethiopian manuscripts play a special role: after the prefaces and introduction (pp. 13–23), ch. I: “Lo studio del libro manoscritto, o *codicologia*” (pp. 27–53), also including in § 4, “ms copto ed etiopico” (pp. 43–44); ch. II: “I supporti della scrittura prima della carta” (pp. 55–82); ch. III: “La carta” (pp. 83–121); ch. IV: “La morfologia del libro” (pp. 123–46); ch. V: “Il codice. Organizzazione materiale: il fascicolo” (pp. 147–74); ch. VI: “Allestimento della pagina. Operazioni preliminari” (pp. 175–215, also including in § 1.3.3, “[Posizionamento dei fori:] Nelle altre aree geo-culturali: ms. etiopico, siriano, slavo, armeno, georgiano, ebraico, islamico”, p. 185); ch. VII: “La *mise en page*” (pp. 217–40); ch. VIII: “La trascrizione dei testi” (pp. 241–75); ch. IX: “Leggere tra le righe: ‘tracce’ del copista, fonte preziosa di informazione” (pp. 277–97); ch. X: “La decorazione” (pp. 299–344); ch. XI: “La legatura” (pp. 345–81, also including in § 3.1, “Orientale: etiopica, islamica, armena”, pp. 354–57); ch. XII: “Per una storia del manoscritto: circolazione, fruizione, conservazione, catalogazione” (pp. 383–412); 16 full-page coloured “Tavole” (pp. 413–31); a very extensive “Bibliografia”, resuming the abbreviated bibliography appended to each chapter (pp. 431–88, websites on pp. 486–88); a very rich set of indices (pp. 489–528, “Indici delle testimonianze scritte”, “Indice dei nomi e dei luoghi”, “Indice delle cose e dei termini notevoli”, “Indice delle tavole a colori”).

The best concluding remark on Agati’s book is found in the preface by J. Peter Gumbert, one of the most outstanding codicologists worldwide, to the first edition of the present book (pp. 13–14). Whilst remarking that codicology is, of course, “the branch of scholarship that is concerned with manuscript books”, i.e. not only with codices, he concludes by saying that “now we finally have a ‘detailed treatment of all parts of *Handschriften-*

the result of teamwork; it includes summary, but systematic comparative information on Hebrew and Arabic manuscripts.

## Reviews

*kunde*’; detailed (within reason), complete, well thought out, balanced and up to date – it recognizes, and gives due weight to the two most striking modern developments, comparative codicology and quantitative codicology, without neglecting more traditional approaches ... It is no accident that this book appears in Italy, the country which now leads the field. The codicologists of the world can congratulate themselves; and, if they do not read Italian, they ought to learn”. An invitation that is all the more valid to scholars in Ethiopian studies.

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STEFAN BOMBECK, *Die Geschichte der heiligen Maria in einer alten äthiopischen Handschrift: Einleitung, kritischer Apparat, Übersetzung, Anmerkungen, Kommentar*.<sup>\*</sup> Dortmund: Verlag Praxiswissen, 2010. 294 pp., Paperback. Price: € 29.–. ISBN: 978–3–86975–029–3.

In this book, Bombeck delivers a most welcome German translation of a collection of the *Signs* or *Miracles of Mary* (*Tä’ammärä Maryam*) from a late 14<sup>th</sup>/early 15<sup>th</sup> cent. Ethiopian manuscript of Betä Ləhem church near Däbrä Tabor.<sup>1</sup> Along with the translation, the book features an introduction, a critical apparatus, annotations and comments. As most likely the second oldest manuscript containing the Ethiopian *Miracles of Mary*,<sup>2</sup> it is of great interest and while a critical edition of the text is yet to come, the current translation makes it accessible to a wider audience.

The book, *Die Geschichte der heiligen Maria* (hereafter GHM), is the sequel to a two-part publication by Stefan Bombeck, the first having been self-published in 2005.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately and quite surprisingly, the author does not mention his earlier publication in the current work, which has a number of negative implications (s. below). Familiarity with the first volume is crucial to understanding the GHM.<sup>4</sup>

Vol. 1 features the introduction (also on pp. 9–14 of GHM) and the original Gəʿəz text in facsimile, enhanced with line and page numbers. The translation fills vol. 2, it is now apparent, in a revised and corrected version on pp. 37–261. In his review Luisier concludes (p. 137) that “un troisième

<sup>\*</sup> Accessible online at the author’s own homepage: <http://www.bombeck.de/stefan.html>.

<sup>1</sup> C. BOSC-TIESSÉ, “Betä Ləhem”, in: *EAE* 1, p. 560.

<sup>2</sup> E. BALICKA-WITAKOWSKA – A. BAUSI, “Tä’ammärä Maryam”, in: *EAE* 1, p. 789.

<sup>3</sup> Reviewed by P. LUISIER in *Orientalia* n.s. 75, 1, 2006, pp. 137–138.

<sup>4</sup> A fact that the author seems to be aware of, since on page 14 he offers the reader the possibility of ordering a copy of the original text (s. also on the author’s website).