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EWALD WAGNER, *Islamische Handschriften aus Äthiopien. Afrikanische Handschriften, Teil 2 = Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Band XXIV 2*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997. XIX +200 S., 4 Abb. Preis Ln. DM 76,-. Reviewed by ALESSANDRO GORI

Professor WAGNER was and remains one of the very small group of scholars who, following the path traced by E. CERULLI in the 30s, has devoted all his energies to studying some of the most relevant aspects of Islam in Ethiopia. A major part of his work involves the collection and the publication of Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts, which is by far the most urgent task of those scholars who wish to study Islam in Ethiopia. The precious results of his scholarly activity are well known and we are grateful to Professor WAGNER for the long series of publications which have helped us discover the literary production of Islamic Ethiopia's capital city, Harar.

Now with the present work Professor WAGNER provides us with another tool to investigate Ethiopian Islamic literature. The catalogue belongs to the renowned «Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland» (VOHD). WAGNER's contribution represents the second part of the 24th volume of the VOHD series and, like its first part, was published under the general title «Afrikanische Handschriften». The first part of this 24th volume is in fact ERNST DAMMANN's «*Afrikanische Handschriften. Teil I*». WAGNER's catalogue reproduces also the cover of the first VOHD African volume which contains the Kiswahili text in Arabic script «Qisṣati yūsuf» on the usual VOHD black background. This text is actually the *incipit* of manuscript Or. Hs. 9893¹ which contains an *utenzi* in Kiswahili about the history of Yūsuf and Ya'qūb. It is our impression that the title «*Afrikanische Handschriften*» is a little bit too vague for WAGNER's catalogue and does not match precisely its contents.

As it is the first in its genre, WAGNER's work has a very strong attraction and a very intriguing character. The excited interest with which the reader approaches his catalogue is fully satisfied by its content, which reserves unexpected and delightful surprises for those who are interested in Ethiopian Islamic literature. The volume undertakes «the description of the Islamic manuscripts, or to be more exact, the manuscripts in Arabic alphabet from Ethiopia» (p. VII), preserved in Germany. The common distinctive feature shared by all the manu-

¹ See DAMMANN 1993, no. 375, p. 167; this ornamental text is also printed separately inside the catalogue at p. 166.

scripts of the catalogue is thus the use of the Arabic alphabet, irrespective of language (which may be Arabic, Selti, Harari and even Amharic).

The introduction to the catalogue (pp. IX–XIX) is rich in cultural, historical and technical content and immediately draws the reader's attention. WAGNER describes the rise and development of the book culture in Harar. It is true that most of the works preserved in beautiful leather-bound manuscripts are not autochthonous to Harar. In fact they are copies of general Islamic works in Arabic such as juridical and theological handbooks, Qur'ans, and religious poetry. This kind of literature is, however, very interesting for scholars as his account gives us very detailed information, not merely of statistical data, as WAGNER says, about the books and texts which the Harari learned élite had the possibility to study and allows us to discern the external influences which affected the Harari Islamic intelligentsia. In this connection we may ask how many of these manuscripts were actually written and bound in Harar and how many, on the contrary, were brought to Harar from the nearby Yemen. This doubt arises even more strongly when we consider that, as WAGNER himself says, the locally produced literature in Harar, both in Harari and in Arabic, is not contained in well finished bound manuscripts, but in loose sheets of paper and notebooks. The autochthonous Harari literature is however the only material taken into consideration in the catalogue.

WAGNER thus mentions in his introduction the names of the first Harari authors historically known to us: *šayḥ* Hāšim ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and *al-faqīh* Hāmid ibn Šiddīq. *Šayḥ* Hāšim was the author of the Harari «Mušṭafá» and of the famous Arabic collection of prayers and litanies entitled «Kitāb al-faṭḥ al-raḥmānī», which is recited on every important religious occasion in Harar².

The model which inspired *šayḥ* Hāšim's «Fath» may actually be al-Ğazūlī's «Dalāʿil al-Ḥayrāt» but the *tašliya* which WAGNER brings as evidence of this relationship between the two prayer-books (see catalogue p. 48) nevertheless originates from a well-known prophetic *ḥadīṭ* «... Qālū yā rasūl allāh kayfa nuṣallī ʿalayka fa-qāla (šlʿm) qūlū allāhumma ṣallī ʿalá muḥammad wa-āl muḥammad kamā ṣallayta ʿalá ibrahīm wa-āl ibrahīm ... innaka ḥamid mağīd».

Moreover, we think that the presence of a prayer composed by al-Sammānī inside the «Fath al-raḥmānī» may be interpreted as a sign of the influence of the

² See also manuscript no 51, catalogue pp. 47-48 and p. 64, manuscript no 72; these internal references are missing in note 1 p. IX. The «Fath al-Raḥmānī» was printed several times in Addis Ababa: after the 1967 edition quoted by WAGNER, it was once again published by «Maṭbaʿat Addis» in Addis Ababa in muḥarram 1401/Nov.–Dec. 1980.

Sammāniyya brotherhood. In fact the al-Sammānī to whom the prayer is attributed is most likely to be identical with Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Sammānī [1718–1775], founder of the Sammāniyya brotherhood. A decisive clue to this identification is the fact that the author of the prayer mentions Muṣṭafá [ibn Kamāl al-Dīn] al-Bakrī [1688–1749]; now, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Sammānī was a close disciple of Muṣṭafá ibn Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bakrī (see TRIMINGHAM 1971, p. 77). We then should not forget that the Sammāniyya is very well known in Ethiopia, where its branch, the Ṭayyibiyya, founded by Aḥmad al-Ṭayyib al-Bašīr [d. 1823], a Sudanese disciple of Muḥammad al-Sammānī, spread in the last century, especially in Wollo³.

As for the other early Harari author mentioned by WAGNER in his preface, *faqīh* Ḥāmid ibn Šiddīq al-Hararī was one of the last exponents of the *ḥanafī* juridical school in Harar before it disappeared. He was the author not only of the «Kitāb al-naṣḥatayn [sic! for al-naṣīḥatayn] li-salāmat al-dārayn», as WAGNER says, but also of the «al-Ādāb al-ḡāmiʿa» and the «Tanbīh al-nāʾimīn». All these three works are contained in the same Vat. Ar. 1791 manuscript⁴, of which we are preparing an edition.

As far as the description of the manuscripts is concerned, the author deserves the highest praise since he manages to accomplish his task in a very careful and meticulous way. First of all, he had to face the problem (also technical) of the transcription of the Arabic alphabet used to write Harari and Selṭi, languages for which there is not a standardized orthography. The correspondence between phonemes and graphemes is therefore always very uncertain (for instance the *yā* with three points, the *ḡīm* with two or three points, the *ṭā* with three points). In this connection, it should be emphasized that WAGNER did not find a Selṭi mother-tongue speaker to help him. His efforts are therefore truly heroic and all the shortcomings in the spelling of the Selṭi words are thus fully justified.

³ On the spread of the Sammāniyya brotherhood in Wollo see HUSSEIN AHMED 1990 pp. 63–64. In this connection we noted that manuscript Hs. or. sim. 5125, f. 5r, (catalogue no. 32, described at pp. 32–33) mentions a *šayb* Ḡawhar: we may identify him with *šayb* Ḡawhar ibn Ḥaydar of Šonke, a very famous Sammānī saint of Wollo (see on him HUSSEIN AHMED 1990, p. 64 and our GORI 1993, pp. 74 and 77). Also the author of the «al-Ḡāliya al-kurūb wa-ḡāliyat al-maṭlūb» (sic! for «Ḡāliyat al-kurūb wa-ḡalibat al-maṭlūb» contained in NL Schlobies 14a; catalogue no. 85 pp. 74-75), an al-A/I/Unnī unknown to WAGNER, may be identical to the renowned *šayb* Ḡamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Annī (see our GORI 1993, pp. 70, 71, 72 and 77).

⁴ See LEVI DELLA VIDA 1965 pp. 152–153 and BRUNSCHVIG 1974.

Another difficulty WAGNER had to overcome is that of giving a title to every work contained in each manuscript. In fact WAGNER decided to apply in his catalogue the method used by AHLWARDT in his «*Verzeichnis der arabischen Handschriften*», with some changes due to the peculiarities of these Ethiopian manuscripts. Accordingly, the catalogue is divided into 12 chapters. Each chapter corresponds to an Arabic literary genre (e. g. chapter I is devoted to «The Koran», chapter II to «The Tradition», chapter V to «Mystics, structure of the mystical orders and cult of the saints», chapter IX to «grammar»). The compound manuscripts (i.e. manuscripts which contain more than one work) to be described are then disassembled into their parts which come to be considered as independent works. Each work thus singled out is placed in the chapter referring to the literary genre to which it belongs and described together with other sections of other manuscripts containing works of similar contents. The general, physical and historical information about the whole manuscript is always given together with the description of the first part of it. In such a way WAGNER describes 88 manuscripts and 199 works altogether.

It is beyond doubt that, as WAGNER himself recognizes (p. XV), in this catalogue the concept of compound manuscript should be understood in a very specific way. What is presented by WAGNER as an individual work has almost always the extent and nature of what in other catalogues would be considered a marginal anonymous note. In many cases, nevertheless, these short writings contain very interesting information about the history and culture of Islamic Ethiopia. Wagner was thus induced to consider them as if they were real literary works. Also the fact that many manuscripts described in the catalogue are nothing but a compound of loose sheets or brief notes, made the application of Ahlwardt's method of cataloguing easier.

On the other hand, we cannot help feeling a little uncomfortable. The structure of the catalogue in fact may cause a certain degree of confusion in some users who may be disappointed since sometimes a page of a manuscript, considered as if it were a complete work, is described very far from another page of the same manuscript. In any case, a very well conceived series of indices included in the volume helps the reader to take advantage of the catalogue in a simpler way.

All the manuscripts described in the catalogue are part of two different collections: the Nachlass Schlobies of the Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin and Professor WAGNER's personal collection, which he donated to the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin in 1996. The Nachlass Schlobies collection, thirty-eight manuscripts of which are included and

described in the catalogue⁵, was put together by the German diplomat and Orientalist Hans Martin Schlobies, who was in Ethiopia during the 20s and the 30s.

Without a doubt the most interesting manuscripts preserved within the Nachlass Schlobies are those written in Selṭi. From the linguistic point of view, they are a precious written evidence of a still very little known language of the Gurage group. They also represent another fascinating example of the way the Arabic script was adapted to write an Ethiosemitic language spoken by a Muslim people. In this connection, we should firstly try to ascertain if the use of Arabic script to write Selṭi is an old tradition, as is the case with Harari, or if it is a sporadic practice. The content of these manuscripts, which will be fully understandable only when our knowledge of the Selṭi language is improved with the collaboration of local learned men, may prove a very useful tool to increase our information on the Selṭi Muslim society and culture.

Professor WAGNER does his best to describe carefully and precisely these Selṭi manuscripts in his catalogue. As he did not manage to find a Selṭi mother-tongue speaker in Germany, he was compelled to limit himself most of the time to an external description of the manuscript without going into detail on the content, which in some cases remains obscure. Of the 38 manuscripts of the Nachlass Schlobies included in the catalogue, eleven are written in Selṭi in Arabic script (NL Schlobies mss. 45, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107a, 108, 109, 110). Another one is written in Arabic but on the basis of information collected by a Selṭi Muslim learned man (NL Schlobies 86a). There is then an Amharic poetic text, written in Arabic script, which represents the translation of a Selṭi original (NL Schlobies 84a, pp. 48–49 of the catalogue)⁶.

⁵ NL Schlobies 8c, which is a German typewritten translation of the Arabic text contained in NL Schlobies 8a and NL Schlobies 8b, is not considered a manuscript by WAGNER. It is however mentioned in the description of NL Schlobies 8a (p. 164) and included in the list of the original library locations of the manuscripts (p. 198).

⁶ This is the only Amharic manuscript written in Arabic script brought to light to date. The author of the Selṭi original was an unknown Kenamu, while the translator into Amharic was *ṣayḥ* Muḥammad ṣArab. According to WAGNER 1983, p. 365 note 11, this interesting text was to be edited by Drewes, but as far as I know, this publication has not been realized yet. I propose here a first tentative transcription of the *incipit* and the *explicit* of the Amharic piece of poetry (Arabic words and expressions are in italic): «Tāmāllaw abbāṭāw wāddādāw *ilāh ḥātim al-anbiyā ḥayr rusul allāh*/tāhonut gize wādā arba amāt/*ḡalil* šomut ənnat/tāzziya *wahy māṭṭa ḡibril yəzot/bāḥiram* səmmət simāṭa tāsāmay bākkul nāw yāmmayəläy ṣuhāt»; «Yännita nāḡār *yāmuḥarrām nāw/Bayt al-miqdas* yāhedā yāburāq hono/*Isrān miṣrāḡən* əndāzzi lawārraw/*mašāʾih* hal *ḥādatā* əndalu aṣṭāqqa qāžžāt tečče yāčalkut nāw».

All the Selṭi texts were probably written down by *šaḃ* Muḥammad ʿArab for H. Schlobies, as COHEN 1931 p. 96, note 1, suggests (see also WAGNER's catalogue p. 104). A large part of the Selṭi manuscripts contains poetry (manuscripts NL Schlobies 101, NL Schlobies 102, NL Schlobies 103, NL Schlobies 104, NL Schlobies 105 and NL Schlobies 106 pp. 1–2). As far as concerns the prose texts (NL Schlobies 106, pp. 2–22, 107a, 109 and 110), they are all short tales, from two to thirteen pages long.

It seems very likely that the content of these manuscripts reflects directly the traditional corpus of Selṭi folkloric tales. If this hypothesis is true, then the supposed copyist, Muḥammad ʿArab, was the one who gathered the tales, probably by interviewing old men. The evidence of Selṭi traditional tales is in any case of major interest for all those who wish to study Gurage culture.

The considerable erudite activity of the Selṭi Islamic cultural milieu is well represented by four manuscripts described in WAGNER's catalogue (NL Schlobies 108 [see catalogue p. 32], which contains, as far as WAGNER could understand, a sort of Islamic prayer in Selṭi; NL Schlobies 106, pp. 16–22 and NL Schlobies 107a, p. 1, which contains a text with the Arabic title «Taʿrīḥ Manṣūr ibn Muḷḡam» [catalogue, pp. 165–166; WAGNER, who did not manage to grasp the content of this «story», surmises that it is a local tale]; NL Schlobies 106 pp. 6–16 [catalogue pp. 166–167] contains an undeciphered text, which, according to WAGNER, seems to have an historical character).

On the other hand, twenty-three manuscripts of the Schlobies Nachlass and all the manuscripts of WAGNER's collection originate in Harar.

In order to prepare the critical edition of the manuscripts he acquired in Harar, WAGNER looked for other copies of the same manuscripts in European libraries and at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa and had them microfilmed or photocopied. These copies were also given to the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin in 1996 to be kept in the Oriental fund. WAGNER decided to describe these photocopies and microfilms in his catalogue to give a more detailed picture of the Harari literature (catalogue p. XII). The description of these copies is in any case very useful because only six of the twenty original manuscripts they represent have been described elsewhere. In fact the manuscripts of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa and those of the private library of A. J. Drewes have not been catalogued yet. The three manuscripts collected by I. M. Lewis have on the contrary already been described in ANDRZEJEWSKI/LEWIS 1994, p. 44 and p. 51 and in ANDRZEJEWSKI/LEWIS 1994b p. 5 and p. 12 (in WAGNER's catalogue they are redescribed at pp. 13–14, no 10 and no 11 for Hs Or sim. 5118, Or. Sim. 5119, and at pp. 146–147 no 168 for Or. Sim 5117) but

the author fails to give the necessary reference to that first cataloguing. It is also to be underlined that these three manuscripts originate in north Somalia where I. M. Lewis had them copied from the originals in the second half of the 50s⁷. WAGNER received the copies of these Somali manuscripts from Lewis in 1972 and left them to the Staatsbibliothek in 1996.

In the Harari manuscripts described in the catalogue we find all the most important works of Harari literature, both in Arabic and in Harari, which WAGNER himself previously published and analyzed. Among the inedited ones however, the Harari *Zikris* attributed to Aw °Alī °Afif (manuscript no 75, Hs Or 10467, catalogue pp. 65–66) seem to be worth the attention of scholars. °Alī °Afif is in fact one of the Harari saints and the publication of a work he allegedly wrote may be of some interest.

Finally, four plates out of text give a visual idea of the appearance of the manuscripts described in the catalogue.

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⁷ The copyist of manuscript Or. sim. 5117 was šayḥ °Alī ibn šayḥ Ibrāhīm, a famous Islamic scholar from northern Somalia.

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