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Review

OSVALDO RAINERI, *Il Gadl di san Pietro patriarca di Alessandria e ultimo
dei martiri*

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Reviews

is regrettable that such variants have not been translated and analysed. The *andāmtas* privilege a synchronic and allegorical reading of Scripture; thus, the Trinity, the sacrifice of the Cross, Mariology are introduced from the first verses of Genesis on. People, animate and inanimate creatures, events, sayings and objects of the Old Testament are taken as *amsal mǎrgäf/mässale* “*typoi*” of the New Testament. Last but not least: the language of the *andāmtas* is a treasure in its own right. For people familiar with Amharic there is plenty to enjoy while reading: passionate attention to single words and their ensuing elaboration, irony, humorous puns, rhymed prose, subtle syllogisms, popular sayings (such as: “the sheep spends its days with its butcher”, p. 82), touching examples from daily life to draw up analogies are some of the stylistic features that fascinate the reader. The interpreter is not a scholar dissociated from real life: on the contrary, he is in constant dialogue with a wider spectrum of interlocutors, from the farmer to the royal household. The above observations do not disavow the sheer volume of the material work Mersha has carried out, the long time dedication to this monumental work which will benefit researchers in the field of the *andāmta*. Mersha’s book is a doctoral thesis. It would be unfair to lay the criticism only at his doorsteps. Perhaps the work should have been monitored better by the field specialists who followed the candidate. The author is kind enough to thank me in the preface (as he has done in his article, recently published in *Aethiopica*).¹¹ I would have been happier had he forgotten the acknowledgements and paid heed to some of the advice I gave him after I read some parts of his book.

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OSVALDO RAINERI, *Il Gadl di san Pietro patriarca di Alessandria e ultimo dei martiri*. Edizione del testo etiopico e traduzione italiana = PO 51/5, fasc. 230, Turnhout: Brepols, 2010. Pp. 61 [= 583–643]. Price: € 30.00. ISBN-13: 978–2–503–54158–7.

If we take into account both the number and the variety of Christian texts still unpublished in oriental languages, we are confronted with two contradictory requirements: on the one hand there is a need to produce preliminary editions of a great amount of unpublished manuscripts, so that scholars may become aware not only of unknown texts, but also of the manuscript tradition of known texts; on the other hand, the main task of the scholar is to edit texts in a philological manner, an activity which includes a study of their collocation in the manuscript tradition, in the plurality of recensions and versions from

¹¹ MERSHA ALEHEGNE, “For a Glossary of Ethiopian Manuscript Practice”, *Aethiopica* 14, 2011 [2012], pp. 143–160, here 143, footnote *.

one language to another, and finally in the textual traditions that have made possible their existence. This study, however, because of the energy and the time it requires, often hampers the primary need felt by the scientific community to know as soon as possible what is not yet known. Raineri has chosen the faster way, by providing a transcript and translation of a textual portion of a manuscript, titled “Book of the (Spiritual) Combat and of the Martyrdom of the Blessed and Saint Peter”, preserved in the Casa provinciale dei Comboniani in Addis Abäba, with the immediate goal to present a composit set of textual materials which, although known in their general contents, are unknown in the peculiar form they take in this manuscript. Understandably, issues related to the text and the content are given the space of a set of short notes and a brief introduction. Consequently important questions concerning the prehistory of these texts have not been touched, as it will be clear from our provisional analysis of this interesting material.

What texts are contained in this manuscript? In the final section there are the *Homily on the Sabbath* attributed to James of Sarug (foll. 34ra–52ra), the *Mäšḥafä ṭomar* (foll. 52ra–58va) and the *Šer‘atä betä krəstiyān* (foll. 58va–61ra); in the initial section there is the dossier on Saint Peter, and in particular: the *Gädl* (Acts) of Peter (foll. 1–16r), and, without a title, the Miracles of Peter (foll. 16r–25r), and a Hymn about him (foll. 25r–29r); in the middle section there are two more texts concerning the saint, which Raineri has not published: the synaxarial text, and the antiphons with musical notation. The *Gädl* is a composite writing, which in its surface is apparently a new text. Its constitutive elements are generally well known: (a) a prologue, introducing the dossier on Saint Peter: it is a free composition, without parallels, concerning the celebration of the 29th of Ḥədar and its sotoriological effect; (b) a section about Peter’s education and youth, known both in the Ethiopic/Arabic synaxarial tradition and in the Coptic homiletic texts. The *Gädl* explicitly quotes the Ethiopic *Synaxarium* (29th of Ḥədar), which gives in turn a summary of the *Encomium of Peter of Alexandria* attributed to Alexander of Alexandria, originally written in Greek, but preserved today in two Coptic versions.¹

After the words “We begin the history of the combat of the blessed and holy Peter, the Patriarch and the last of the martyrs”, a new text begins (pp. 596–614), the famous *Martyrium of Peter*. It is to be noted that also in the *Synaxarium* there is a résumé of the *Martyrium*, but the redactor of the *Gädl* prefers to report an extensive quotation of the “original” text itself,

¹ See bibliography and English translation in T. VIVIAN, *Saint Peter of Alexandria*, Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988, pp. 78–84; E. LUCCHESI attributes ms. M664B (41) of the Pierpont Morgan Library to this text: “Pierre l’Apôtre ou Pierre d’Alexandrie?”, *Analecta Bollandiana* 117, 1999, pp. 285–288.

although, until that moment, he has followed the *Synaxarium*.² – On pp. 614–626 Raineri edits 12 miracles of the saints, which tell once more the history of Peter from his birth to his martyrdom. This is a hagiographic literary exercise, which has in common with the *Gädl* a number of elements, but also some peculiarities. – In pp. 626–636 another textual unit is edited: a poetic encomium of Saint Peter with 33 strophes, which can be qualified as another hagiographic exercise on the life and death of Peter, exhibiting some elements not mentioned in the preceding texts.

One of the critical questions posed by this series of texts, which Raineri's short introduction does not address, is that of their reciprocal relationship: are the Miracles an elaboration of the *Martyrium*? is the Hymn a translation in poetical form of the text of the *Martyrium*?

Before discussing these issues, we must take a quick look at the ancient texts mentioning Peter of Alexandria, so as to obtain a wide range of sources in which we may trace the history of some details contained in Raineri's texts.³ In Ethiopic literature there are both hagiographic and historiographic works, originally composed in Greek and subsequently translated in Ethiopic, either directly or through the mediation of Arabic. If we look outside Ethiopic literary tradition, we have to observe that beside the *Martyrium* and the *Encomium*, to which is to be added a cycle of *Letters* (in Coptic), the main sources concerning the life of Peter of Alexandria are the *Coptic Ecclesiastical History* edited by T. Orlandi and the Arabic *History of the Patriarchs*. Both, however, depend not only on the *Martyrium*, but also on other traditions concerning Peter: one of them is preserved in a work on which Alessandro Bausi and myself are working, the *Historia episcopatus Alexandriae*.⁴ This is possible thanks to a group of textual units preserved in an ancient Latin manuscript, the Cod. Veronensis LX (58), and other historiographical and hagiographical sources,⁵

² On the different versions of the *Martyrium*, see T. VIVIAN, *Saint Peter of Alexandria*, pp. 64–78.

³ See for the editions and the bibliography T. VIVIAN, *Saint Peter of Alexandria*, and A. CAMPLANI, "Pietro di Alessandria tra documentazione d'archivio e agiografia popolare", in: H. GRIESER – A. MERKT (Hg.), *Volks Glaube im antiken Christentum: Prof. Dr. Theofried Baumeister OFM zur Emeritierung*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009, pp. 138–156.

⁴ = *HEpA*, see, *inter alia*, A. BAUSI, "La Collezione *aksumita* canonico-liturgica", *Adamantius* 12, 2006, pp. 43–70; A. BAUSI – A. CAMPLANI, "New Ethiopic Documents for the History of Christian Egypt", *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 17, 2013, pp. 195–227.

⁵ *Inter alia* Sozomenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* I 15; the introduction written by the hagiographer Guarimotus, at Naples in the second half of the 9th century, to his Latin translation of the *Martyrdom*, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* nos. 6692–6693; a strange hagiographical text in Ethiopic, which is titled *The Martyrdom of St. Peter Archbishop of Alexandria*, edited by GETATCHEW HAILE, "A new Ethiopic version of

in which the modern scholarship has discovered the scattered remnants of an official history of the Alexandrian church concerning the period corresponding to the 3rd and 4th centuries, composed most likely in the last quarter of the 4th century, certainly before the activity of the historian Sozomenus. Thanks to the Ethiopic text identified by A. Bausi and the Verona codex, we have a coherent idea of the contents of the *HEpA*. After a long prologue about the bishops of Alexandria and Egypt from the beginning until the Diocletianic persecution, a textual unit begins about Peter I, Melitius and Arius. This unit reviews Peter's life: his education under Theonas, his election, some episodes of his episcopate. Amongst these last figure: the ransom of prisoners coming from the Marmariké; the revolt of Melitius of Lycopolis against the bishops of the Delta; the letter that four bishop-martyrs wrote to Melitius to invite him to cease his illegal ordinations of presbyters; the historical narrative describing Melitius' arrival in Alexandria; the letter written by Peter to the Alexandrians in which Melitius is temporarily excommunicated; the ordinations of bishops accomplished by Melitius throughout the whole of Egypt; the vicissitude of a young layman named Arius, who, abandoning the Melitians, returns to the church of Peter and is ordained deacon; the excommunication of the Melitians; the protest of Arius against Peter's excommunication of the Melitians; the definitive expulsion of Arius from the clergy. In the *HEpA* there follows a period of peace, followed by the martyrdom of Peter: then the final episodes of persecution are registered. The text relates how Arius is readmitted to the clergy by Achillas and Alexander and gives rise to his heresy. So, the *HEpA* contains a rich tradition regarding Peter of Alexandria. It is precisely on the base of the last episodes of the *HEpA* that the *Martyrium* of Peter is built.

Three elements of Raineri's texts should be analysed on the base of this documentation. At p. 607 l. 31, the successor of Mark is not called "Abilios" as in Eusebius of Caesarea (*h.e.* III,14.21), but Malyos/Mályos. Notwithstanding the translation provided by B. Evetts,⁶ the Arabic text of *History of the Patriarchs* (both the Hamburg recension and the Vulgate) and different versions of the *Martyrium* give the form "Melios". This is also the form given by the *Synaxarium*. The first attestation to this form is that of the *HEpA* (the passage is still inedited).

On pp. 619–621 within the Miracles, Peter announces to Achillas that he will sit on the episcopal throne after Peter, but adds that he will die soon for

the Acts of St. Mark (EMML no. 1763, ff. 224^r–227^r), *Analecta bollandiana* 99, 1981, pp. 117–134; the historical text that Bausi has identified in the Ethiopic collection, which is the most important of the surviving fragments.

⁶ B. EVETTS, "Abilius", *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria. Peter I to Benjamin I (661)*, PO 1/4, 4, p. 149.

having accepted Arius into the clergy. The tradition of the readmission of Arius in the clergy was present in the *HEpA*, as witnessed by Sozomenus (*b.e.* I, 15): “After the martyrdom of Peter, Arius asked forgiveness of Achillas, and was restored to his office as deacon, and afterwards elevated to the presbytery”. Here, however, it is not said that Achillas’ premature death was caused by his act of forgiveness towards Arius, nor this idea occurs in the *Coptic Ecclesiastical History*. It is also absent from the various recensions of the *Martyrium* and from the first part of the *Gädl*. Only later do we find this idea in the *History of the Patriarchs*: “But since Achillas received Arius, and thus disobeyed the command of his father Peter, he only remained in the see six months” (Evetts, p. 401), as well as in Guarimpotus’s introduction to his translation of the *Martyrium*. Therefore this tradition arose during the centuries between the composition of the *Coptic Ecclesiastical History* (5th–6th century) and the older layers of the *History of Patriarchs*.

Also the final hymn has a connection with traditions regarding Peter not preserved in the *Martyrium* and in the *Gädl*. In stanza 23, p. 633, we read: “Before, the men Mormonqe (Marmarica) made the peace with you”. This is an obscure sentence, whose context can be clarified by comparing it with a text published and translated by Getatchew, which, as has been demonstrated by A. Bausi, is in turn a quotation from the lost *HEpA*: “Once, after he (Peter) celebrated Easter, there happened the captivity of Marmarica and the deportation which took place by Diocletian. While the captives of Marmarica were driven and deported through Alexandria, he redeemed five hundred captives of Marmarica and sent them to go back to their country”. As far as I know, there are no other ancient texts quoting this episode. The deduction is very simple at this point of our inquiry: the poet was aware of this tradition, which was in circulation in Ethiopic language, and which comes ultimately from the *HEpA*. Or, better, he reworked and combined the *HEpA* and the *Martyrium*. That this combination was not so original is shown by the fact that we find it in Giyorgis of Säglā’s *Māṣḥafä məṣṭir* (accomplished by 1424 A.D.), in the third treatise against Arius.⁷

These examples show how problematic the texts are that are published by Raineri. Each of them comes from a textual prehistory which is not easy to discern, but seems to be very rich.

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⁷ See YAQOB BEYENE, *Giyorgis di Säglā: Il libro del Mistero (Maṣḥafa Məṣṭir)* = CSCO 515–516, *Scriptores Aethiopici* 89–90, Lovanii: In aedibus Peeters, 1990, pp. 47–50 [text], 30–32 [transl.].