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**Review**

GÉRARD COLIN, *Vie et miracles de Madhanina Egzi'*

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GÉRARD COLIN, *Vie et miracles de Madhanina Egzi*, Texte éthiopien et traduction par Gérard COLIN = *Patrologia Orientalis* 51, 4, PO 229, Turnhout: Brepols 2010. 190 pages (389–528 [1–194]). Price: € 100.00 [excl. tax]. ISBN 978–2–503–54136–5.

The present edition of the Life and Miracles of *ʾabunä Mādhaninä ʾEgzi* by Gérard Colin fills a significant gap in our knowledge of the Ethiopic hagiography. *ʾAbunä Mādhaninä ʾEgzi*, a “spiritual son” of St. Täklä Haymanot, was known as a prominent 14<sup>th</sup>-century monastic leader in northern Ethiopia (Təgray), the founder of the big and important monastery Däbrä Bänk<sup>wäl</sup>, and, in turn, the “spiritual father” of the famous St. Samuʾel of Waldəbba. Scholarly research aimed at reconstructing the 14<sup>th</sup>-century history of Ethiopia has been impeded by inaccessibility of the hagiographical works dedicated to Mādhaninä ʾEgzi, the problem which the edition of Colin has effectively solved. As follows from a short preface, the edition was prepared on the basis of manuscripts which became available thanks to the field research of François Le Cadre carried out in 2008 and 2009. One of them, designated in the edition as manuscript **A**, was used as the basis manuscript. It has been dated to the time of King Iyasu II (r. 1730–55) following an indication in a marginal note, and on paleographic grounds (p. 7; also s. below). Remarkably, manuscript **A** has been preserved in the houses of the local priests living around Däbrä Bänk<sup>wäl</sup>, “to secure it from theft”, as it is probably considered as one of the most revered items of the monastic collection. Manuscript **B**, of an unknown age, is preserved in Däbrä Bänk<sup>wäl</sup> itself and was used by the editor only for filling a lacuna in manuscript **A**. No further details are provided on manuscript **B**. For the time being the editor’s strategy of using the text from the best and most important manuscript among those known is understandable, but the reader is left in uncertainty as far as variance between manuscripts **A** and **B** is concerned. One may assume differences are insignificant, however the editor’s clear statement on this is missing. The small apparatus contains variants marked as **A** (obviously furnishing those original readings of **A** which are corrected in the printed text).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Obviously, the present edition became possible thanks to acquisition of the new indigenous materials. Formerly, the only really accessible witness of the hagiographical collection of Mādhaninä ʾEgzi was manuscript Conti Rossini 13, Rome, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei (see S. STRELCYN, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens de l’Accademia nazionale dei Lincei* ..., Roma: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1976, 37–43; over a long period, the developed description was one of the main sources on the saint). The fact that it was not consulted for the edition is difficult to explain. Even if one could argue that this is a recent “colonial codex” prepared for C. Conti Rossini (in 1938) and of secondary importance as compared to the indigenous manuscripts, one could still consider a possi-

Apart from **A** and **B**, other manuscripts are reported to exist in Däbrä Bänk<sup>wäl</sup> and collections in its vicinity (“dans les monasteries voisins”)<sup>2</sup> and a few others may be found in the future. But on the whole the hagiography of Mädhāninä ʾĒgziʾ appears to have been transmitted in a very limited number of manuscripts. Contrary to what is said in the preface (p. 7, no. 4), the article of O. Raineri on Mädhāninä ʾĒgziʾ in EAE III (pp. 624b–625b) mentions manuscript IES 34 (not 24). The 18<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript might originate from the area around Gondär (Goḡḡam or Bägemdär), and contains only a short hymn to the Saint (fol. 44va–vb)<sup>3</sup> included into the large poetic collection of *sälam*-hymns. The current location and the content of microfilm IES 102 as well as a manuscript in “Sihat-Maryam, Addi Gulti, Eritrea”, reported in the article of Kinefe Rigb-Zeleke,<sup>4</sup> cannot be verified for the moment.

The lack of the cumulative and detailed descriptions of the used manuscripts creates a certain inconvenience for the reader. Such a description would be necessary, since the editor apparently deals with the crucial witnesses which are of great importance to understand how the formation of the hagiographical dossier of Mädhāninä ʾĒgziʾ took place. Here below I present a synthetic summary of the information extracted from the preface (following the text division used in the edition), emphasizing key data and adding some analytical remarks:

bility that its copyist might use an ancient or archaic specimen, or a witness representing a different branch of the tradition (or manuscripts **A** or **B**, as we know that Conti Rossini 13 was copied from an “exemplar in Däbrä Bänk<sup>wäl</sup>”). Even if recent, manuscript Conti Rossini 13 is an interesting witness which also contains, among others, *mälkä*<sup>c</sup>-hymns for Mädhāninä ʾĒgziʾ (absent in both manuscripts **A** and **B**). In fact, it is a pity that the editor did not attempt to produce a critical text using all witnesses available for the moment.

<sup>2</sup> The monastery of Samuʾel of ʾTarāta, mentioned in this context as the owner of yet another copy of the Vita, is located some 5–6 km northwest from Aksum.

<sup>3</sup> The author encountered this text in at least one Synaxarion-manuscript (in Däbrä Dammo, during a field research in the frames of the project Ethio-SPaRE), added in a margin under 3 ʾḤōdar (12 November), his commemoration day. That manuscript includes no commemorative notice; neither is there a commemorative notice for Mädhāninä ʾĒgziʾ in any of the edited Synaxarion-versions (but the recent edition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has, after a short notice only mentioning the name of the Saint, the same hymn, here labelled as *ʾarke*). One cannot exclude a possibility that a commemorative notice for Mädhāninä ʾĒgziʾ may show up in a Synaxarion preserved in Däbrä Bänk<sup>wäl</sup> or in the church libraries in its vicinity. The researchers will then face a difficult question of the type of the connection between the long and short hagiographical accounts.

<sup>4</sup> KINEFE-RIGB ZELLEKE, “Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions”, *JES* 13/2, 1975, 57–102, here p. 81 no. 102.

- I) Vita (ff. 1r–77v): §§ 1–164; §§ 163–164 (after the Vita) indicate the commissioner Bätträ Maryam. Hand a.<sup>5</sup>
- II) Miracles, first series (ff. 78r–88v): §§ 165–184; § 184 indicates that the one who “took and brought back” (?) (*wässädkəwwa wä-metkəwwa*) the book is Wäldä Giyorgis, the scribe is Täklä Haymanot. Hand b. A blank folio is placed before the next text.
- III) Miracles, second series (ff. 89r–93v): §§ 185–193. Hand c.
- IV) Monastic genealogy (f. 94r): §§ 194–195. Hand d.
- V) Miracles, third series (ff. 95r–125r): §§ 196–267. Hand e. Starting from § 198 (“Miracle of the trees in the time of Fasilädäs”), “our father Yämanä Krəstos” (a prominent monk or abbot of Däbrä Bänk<sup>wäl</sup>) is mentioned. In § 218 and elsewhere King Dawit (III, r. 1716–21) is mentioned. The colophon (§ 267) mentions 7210 “year from the creation of the world” (= 1717/18 A.D.), King Dawit, Yämanä Krəstos, governor of Təgray *däggəzmač* Mika<sup>el</sup>, the author and scribe (*därsi wä-šəḥafi*) of the Vita *abba* Təwäldä Bərhan of Gundä Gunde (!) “while he was a *däbtära* in Queen Däbrä Bərhan, the sanctuary of King <sup>o</sup>Iyasu”.<sup>6</sup> The identity of *däggəzmač* Mika<sup>el</sup> of Təgray, who was on the scene during the reign of King Dawit III, is unclear.<sup>7</sup> Record concerning remuneration of Təwäldä Mädhən (§ 268), in the time of King <sup>o</sup>Iyasu (II, r. 1730–55), during the tenure of *abba* Rə<sup>o</sup>sä Haymanot must have been written at least nine years after the completion of the last of the main texts.

Thus, in manuscript **A** we have five distinct scribes, two of them mentioned by name; also it would be important to make sure that the record concerning the remuneration of the author, Təwäldä Mädhən, was inserted in the manuscript by one of those of the main text. The composite structure of manuscript **A** is obvious, with possibly four of the so-called “production units” hinting to the gradual growth of the hagiographical collection. In this context, the information on a special orthographical feature recurrent only in the Vita (p. 8) is significant, but the reader misses observations concerning the layout and ruling or the quire structure and condition of the binding which would be helpful for establishing the exact borders between the “units” and defining the “strata” of the codex. If the information in the colophon (§§ 267–68) is correct, then the third (last) series of the Miracles was added into the manuscript by one of the Gundä Gunde *literati* in the

<sup>5</sup> Distinction of hands follows the most important remark of the editor: “Il se compose de plusieurs développements écrit par des mains différents” (p. 8).

<sup>6</sup> The church Däbrä Bərhan Šəllase of Gondär was founded by King <sup>o</sup>Iyasu I in 1694.

<sup>7</sup> We know that the famous *däggəzmač* Mika<sup>el</sup> Səḥul emerged on the political scene only later, in the late 1740s.

capital city of Gondär, not in Təgray (also the parchment for his part could originate from the area of Gondär). 1717/18 A.D. should be considered the year when only the ultimate part of the collection was added and the extension of the codex stopped. The properties of manuscript **A** are suggestive of a rare opportunity to pose the most important question: whether the witness may be considered the autograph for at least a part of the textual tradition, e.g., the miracles written by Tāwäldä Mädhən, and also for other texts. All these questions underscore the necessity of a manuscript description in a more detailed manner, now outside the edition of the *Patrologia Orientalis* type. Another problem is that the format of the *Patrologia Orientalis* series does not admit plates with sample photos of the manuscripts. In the case of such a rare and complex structure of the manuscript, the reader would like to have a chance to see at least the handwriting samples.

The translation of G. Colin, a well-known connoisseur of Ethiopic language, is smooth and clear. The approach to the reproduction of the original orthography is exposed on p. 8: “L’orthographe adoptée est celle de A, à une exception près”. The decision of the editor was not to reflect the tendency, noticeable in the Vita only, of using predominantly the 4<sup>th</sup> order of <sup>ʾ</sup>a, but keep that for the 4<sup>th</sup> order of *ha*. Also other variations mostly concerning the labial consonants occur and they remain unexplained; the reader can only guess if these are misprints, or scribal mistakes, or orthographic variations caused by the influence of the vernacular language pronunciation. Cp., e.g., **ሰከወ** for **ሰከመ** (p. 14, l. 6); **አቡነ፡ ወድኃኒነ** for **አቡነ፡ መድኃኒነ** (p. 14, l. 20); **ኅብስቶ፡ መሀበ** for **ኅብስቶ፡ ሀሀበ** (p. 20 l. 14), **መኢያኃፍር** for **ወኢያኃፍር** (p. 52 l. 21), **ሰከውር** for **ሰከቡር** (p. 54 l. 30) and a number of other similar cases.

As works of the Ethiopian hagiography and historical sources, the Vita and Miracles of Mädhəninä ʾƏgziʾ will not disappoint the reader. Irrespective of the issue of the exact composition time, all texts contain a lot of interesting details and historical material that covers a long span, starting from events linked to the Saint directly (the reign of Säyfä ʾArʿad, 1344–71) to posthumous miracles with rare appearance of 16<sup>th</sup>-century *baḥər nägaš* Yəṣḥaq before his rebellion and fall, and a story from the time of King Fasilädäs (r. 1632–67). The reader might wish for more explanations in the footnotes, but the editor’s decision to avoid extending the footnotes is also understandable; even though the need for deeper commentaries upon different features of the texts in whatever form is obvious. While the present edition provides a good tool, it is only the beginning; the incorporation of the hagiographical tradition into the discussion on the Ethiopian medieval literature and history has largely been left to other scholars.

Three more points can be mentioned to conclude the review. The native place of Mädhəninä ʾƏgziʾ, Biḥat (§ 8), is a historical region located around

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Šəmāzana, in ʾAkkälä Guzay (Eritrea). In the praise to God, after the “Miracle of the tree”, the words *nəsebbəho ʾəgzīʾabəher səbbuḥ zä-täsəbbəha ...* (§ 201) is the initial line from the (First) Prayer of Moses (Ex. 15:1), from the “Songs of the Prophets” in the Ethiopic Psalter. The edition indicates rhyming only for § 160; however, the hagiographer stylistically emphasized also some other passages, rhyming a few lines elsewhere, s. e.g., § 51, ll. 22–26 (rhyme on *-tu*) § 72, ll. 7–10 (rhyme on *-ra*), almost entire § 80 (rhyme on *-hu*); § 89, ll. 5–9 (rhyme on *-wwa*).

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ESTELLE SOHIER, *Le roi des rois et la photographie. Politique de l'image et pouvoir royal en Éthiopie sous le règne de Ménélik II*, Paris: Publication de la Sorbonne, 2012. 378 pp. Price: € 35.00. ISBN: 978-2-85944-717-5.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, photos taken in Africa by Europeans did not only reflect their colonial desires or only their wish to promote a European look at peoples which they considered as inferiors. Photos were also used by some African rulers as instruments to promote their own power and legitimacy. After the introduction of photography at the Ethiopian courts during the 1880s, Ethiopian rulers quickly understood the political functions of photos and the advantages of using them. At first, these documents permitted them to promote their power throughout the country and to counter political claims of local lords. For example, a photo of the king, staged in majesty with all political and ideological signs and symbols was a powerful mean, easily printed, to convince the population that the royal power is not vacant and kept by powerful and legitimate people, particularly when the king was sick or even dead. But these images allowed them also to promote their country outside Ethiopia, particularly in Europe. By permitting Europeans to take photos of Ethiopian leaders and by allowing them to publish these images in European newspapers, the Ethiopian royal power could promote and insure its independence.

Divided in nine chapters (gathered in four parts), the book of Dr. Estelle Sohier (University of Geneva) perfectly highlights these two aspects of the use of photos by the Ethiopian rulers at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her study focuses on the political use of images by the aristocracy of Šäwa. The historical period studied here is not only Mənilək II's reign time as king of kings (1889–1913), contrary to what the title suggests. The author studied a longer period, from Yoḥannəs IV's reign (1872–89) to the coronation of Ḥaylä Šəllase I (1930). In fact, this choice is particularly wise