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Dissertation abstract

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VITAGRAZIA PISANI, *Il culto di San Qirqos nell’Etiopia storica: analisi storico-filologica, con edizione critica della “Passio” (Gädlä Qirqos)*, Ph.D. Dissertation in African Studies, Curriculum Literatures, Philology and Studies on African Antiquity and Middle Ages, Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”, defended on 26.03.2013.

The dissertation is principally dedicated to the philological reconstruction with critical edition, translation and concise commentary of the critically unpublished Ethiopic version of the *Passio* of Saint Qirqos (*Gädlä Qirqos*). This main part is accompanied by a historical introduction aimed at investigating through literary and historical evidence the fortune of St Qirqos veneration in Ethiopia, with also considering the universal Church tradition and the texts in languages other than Ethiopic.

Qirqos (ቂርቆስ) is the Ethiopian name also known in the form *Qurqos* or palatalized into *Çarqos/Ĉarqos* etc. for Quiricus or Cyricus, a saint native of Asia Minor who, according to the tradition transmitted in his *Passio* attested in several languages, was almost three years old when he endured the martyrdom at Tarsus, in Cilicia, together with his mother Julitta (in Gəʿəz ኢ.የሉ.ጣ Iyäluta) during the time of Diocletian’s persecution (early 4th century).

The original name of the saint is Κήρυκος or Κήρυκος, whence the Latin *Cyricus* (or *Quiricus*, also *Chiricus*). He is definitely not to be confused with Cyriacus (Greek Κυριακός; Latin *Cyriacus*; Gəʿəz ኢ.ራ.ኮስ, Kirakos, but also ህርያኮስ, Həryakos), the name of several other saints with whom he is sometimes wrongly assimilated.

The veneration of St Qirqos expanded soon in the whole Christian world immediately after his martyrdom, although his *Passio* (*Passio Cyrici et Iulittae*) was regarded as apocryphal by the *Decretum Gelasianum* at the end of the 5th/mid-6th century and therefore dismissed and banned in the Roman Church. His worship is particularly rich and popular in the Ethiopian Orthodox (*Täwahədo*) Church, in the calendar of which Qirqos is commemorated together with his mother on the 15th of *Tərr* (the Ethiopian *Synaxary* mentions also the dates 19th, 20th and 21st of *Ḥamle*). In the “historical” Ethiopia, where his worship seems to be extremely ancient and attested at the time of the Zagwe dynasty (12th–13th cent.), the name of Qirqos is widely attested in a huge number of placenames and church names, from Asmära in present day Eritrea to Addis Abäba to the islands of Lake Ṭana to various churches of Təgray: actually many historical places bear his name, some of them, e.g., Wəqro Çarqos in East Təgray, with evidence of pre-Christian settlements and South Arabian antiquity.

Extremely rich is also the Gəʿəz hagiographic literature written in his honor, testified by a multitude of *codices* transmitting translations and original compositions dedicated to him, like his *Passio*, the various collections with his posthumous miracles (*Täʿamrä Qirqos*) and hymns that praise his holiness (*Mälkäʿa Qirqos*, *Sälam lä-Qirqos*).

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter outlines the historical context of the Christian persecutions in the period of the martyrdom of St Qirqos, with some viewpoints on the modern historiographical debate. A second part of the chapter deals with the worship of the saint in general, in the East and in the West, and the literary tradition attested in hagiographic collections (*martyrologia*, calendars, *menologia*, *synaxaria*), and, more extensively and in detail, in the various versions of his *Passio* (Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic, etc.).

The second chapter deals with the fortune of the worship of St Qirqos in Ethiopia. In particular, it gives an account of important churches dedicated in his name, more in detail for those personally visited, followed by a presentation of the literary hagiographical Ethiopian tradition (*Sənkəssar* and *Gädlä Sämaʿtat*).

The third chapter lists and describes the manuscripts used in the critical edition of the *Passio*, with some remarks on the respective palaeographic features. Some of the manuscripts result from the field researches personally carried out in North Ethiopia within the Ethio-SPaRe project, headed by Denis Nosnitsin, whereas others come from European and North American libraries. The total number of 21 manuscripts considered here, dating from the 14th to the 20th century, come from different regions of Ethiopia and show a different arrangement of the texts. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the textual traditions on St Qirqos: in addition to the martyrdom (*Gädl*), here compared with other versions, his miracles (not less than 95, some of them performed in the Ethiopian regions) are inventoried, listed and shortly summarized, with detailed references to the manuscripts containing them. The chapter is enriched with a series of commented sample pictures illustrating the story of the saint taken from some of the manuscripts used in the edition.

The edited text of the *Passio* is the core of the dissertation and with its critical apparatus and some philological notes occupies the whole fourth chapter. It results from the work of text criticism on the basis of the 22 witnesses (in 21 manuscripts). The following fifth chapter contains the Italian translation with annotations.

The oldest attainable text has been philologically reconstructed by a comparative analysis of the 22 witnesses with the application of a neo-Lachmannian approach. Besides the preliminary finding of the *codices* and the systematic *collatio*, the *recensio* was long and laborious due to the length of the text and the number and physical state of the manuscripts, which were often incomplete, not clearly legible and sometimes disarranged. As a consequence of a quite complicated textual tradition, the textual choices, the *emendatio* and the translation of the text were fairly difficult at different points.