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Review

CURT NICCUM, *The Bible in Ethiopia: The Book of Acts*

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Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

- AE* *Annales d'Éthiopie*, Paris 1955ff.
- ÄthFor* Äthiopistische Forschungen, 1–35, ed. by E. HAMMERSCHMIDT, 36–40, ed. by S. UHLIG (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (1–34), 1977–1992; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (35–40), 1994–1995).
- AethFor* Aethiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLIG (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011); 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLIG (*ibid.*, 2011f.); 76ff. ed. by A. BAUSI (*ibid.*, 2012ff.).
- AION* *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'*, Napoli: Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale' (former Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), 1929ff.
- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London, 1917ff.).
- CSCO* Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.
- EAE* S. UHLIG, ed., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; in cooperation with A. BAUSI, eds, IV: O–X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); A. BAUSI in cooperation with S. UHLIG, eds, V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).
- EMML* Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
- JAH* *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge 1960ff.
- JES* *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
- OrChr* *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
- PdP* *La Parola del Passato. Rivista di studi classici*, Napoli 1946ff.
- PICES 8* TADDESE BEYENE, ed., *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Addis Ababa (26–30 November) 1984*, I–II (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies–Frankfurt am Main: Frobenius Institut, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, 1988–1989).
- PICES 10* C. LEPAGE and É. DELAGE, eds, *Études éthiopiennes: Actes de la X^e Conférence internationale des études éthiopiennes, Paris, 24–28 août 1988* (Paris: Société française pour les études éthiopiennes, 1994).
- PO* *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1903ff.
- RIÉ* É. BERNAND, A.J. DREWES, and R. SCHNEIDER, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite*, I: *Les documents*, II: *Les planches* (Paris: (Académie des inscriptions et belle-lettres) Diffusion de Boccard, 1991).
- RRALm* *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Roma, 1892ff.
- RSE* *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma, 1941–1981, Roma–Napoli, 1983ff.
- SAe* *Scriptores Aethiopici*.

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written, with many footnotes referring to sources and secondary literature, so that substance and nuances of information are committed entirely to an exemplarily clear and understandable text. There are a few, minor typos. A couple of passages are strange: instead of *terminus ante quem* one would expect *post quem* (for example p. 66); similarly, low (that is, *late*, as commonly understood) chronology is used instead of high (that is, *early*, see p. 192, ‘this chronology [450–880 CE] is now thought to be too ‘high’, and a revised ‘low’ chronology supported by Phillipson and Manzo redates the Middle Aksumite period to approximately 350–500/550 [CE]’).

Finally, one can share the author’s belief that the potential contribution of archaeological investigation in the Horn of Africa concerning the history of the Red Sea in the ‘long Late Antiquity’ is still at its very beginning. The Eritrean coastal archaeological sites, Adulis included, have been but marginally documented so far. This is probably the most urgent desideratum for the years to come.

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CURT NICCUM, *The Bible in Ethiopia: The Book of Acts*, Ethiopic Manuscripts, Texts, and Studies, 19 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014). xii, 354 pp. Price: US-\$: 40.00. ISBN: 978-1-61097-735-7.

This edition of the Gəʿəz text of the Acts of the Apostles, which represents a thorough revision of the author’s PhD dissertation completed at the University of Notre Dame, fills a further gap in the diminishing list of New Testament books for which no critical edition of the Ethiopic text exists. It comprises an introduction (pp. 1–88), the text and apparatus (pp. 89–267), three appendices providing statistical and textual evidence (pp. 269–330), a bibliography (pp. 331–343), and author and subject indices (pp. 345–354).

The focus of the introduction tends to be rather more on the significance of the Ethiopic version of Acts in the context of the textual history of the New Testament than on the details of the Ethiopic manuscript evidence. In chapter 1 Niccum outlines the history of the Gəʿəz version of Acts, which he argues was based on a Greek *Vorlage* and whose origin he dates between 350 and 525, most probably in the late fourth century. He discusses the use made of the version by Arthur Vööbus in relation to the Old Syriac and by Marie-Émile Boismard and Arnauld Lamouille in the identification of the ‘Western’ text of Acts, maintaining in both cases that their views were seriously misconceived. He concludes (pp. 15–19) by arguing that the earliest attainable text of Acts, the A-text, was revised towards the Arabic in two stages, the Ab-text and the B-text, the former most probably in the thirteenth century and

the latter in the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The distinction between Niccum's A-text and his B-text was already noted by Zotenberg in relation to the text of Acts in BN Éth. 41 and 42 (*Catalogue*, p. 40; both of these manuscripts are in fact used by Niccum).

In chapter 2 Niccum—much as other scholars have done in relation to other biblical texts, particularly Zuurmond in the introduction to his edition of Mark—argues that the way in which the names are transcribed in Acts suggests a Greek origin for the Ethiopic, that other versions (Arabic, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian) exercised only very limited influence on the A-text, and that misreadings in the A-text confirm the view that the Ethiopic version was based on a Greek *Vorlage*. He provides a list of such mistranslations, supplemented by further examples in Appendix A, where the misunderstanding in the Ethiopic can only be explained in terms of the Greek.

Niccum uses a number of different text-critical tools, particularly quantitative analysis and the Comprehensive Profile Method, in chapter 3 to determine the Greek text-type on which the Ethiopic version is based. For this purpose Niccum has compiled a valuable database of 822 variation units—of which, after taking account of difficulties in retroverting from Gəʾəz to Greek, 419 are thought to be usable—where variants in the Greek text of Acts are apparently supported by the A-text. In Appendix C he gives the Ethiopic text and the Greek texts of all the variation units, noting in each case the manuscripts and versions that attest the Greek variants. On the evidence of his analysis of these variation units, Niccum argues convincingly that the A-text of Acts belongs with the Alexandrian text, that there is very little evidence of readings influenced by either the Western or the Byzantine text, and that in terms of individual witnesses there are interesting connections with the third-century papyrus p45. The evidence is presented in tabular form in Appendix B, where Niccum sets out in percentage terms the extent of the agreement between the A-text and nineteen Greek manuscripts, representative of the Alexandrian, the Byzantine and the Western text, and between the A-text and ten Syriac, Coptic and Latin versions, some as representing the Western text and others for comparative purposes. However, he has also set out in percentage terms the extent of the agreement of all the manuscripts and versions with one another.

In the final chapter of his Introduction, which is entitled 'Critical Text and Apparatus' (pp. 69–88), Niccum focuses directly on the Ethiopic evidence and on his own edition. He discusses the deficiencies of the editions of Täsfa Şəyon (1548–1549) and of Thomas Pell Platt (1830), and of modern editions published in Ethiopia, and then devotes the remainder of the chapter to a description of the procedure he has followed in the construction of his text and apparatus. He has collated all known manuscripts of the Ethiopic version of Acts copied before the seventeenth century. His aim is to offer a recon-

struction of the oldest attainable text, and to this end his text primarily follows his manuscript 20, the fourteenth-century tetraglot Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana MS. B20b Inf., which he regards as the strongest witness of the A-text. But he notes that six other manuscripts also offer valuable testimony because they frequently preserve the A-text, including his manuscript 23, Vatican Library Aeth. 23 of the fifteenth century that was used for the edition of Täsfa Şəyon. In total he cites the evidence of 18 manuscripts throughout the apparatus that are representative of the A-, the Ab-, and the B-text, and in addition the readings of another 20 manuscripts in 243 verses where there are significant variants, and readings derived from quotations of Acts in liturgical texts. Chapter 4 also includes a list of all the manuscripts that contain the book of Acts, giving in parallel columns the location, the contents, the date and the classification (A-, Ab-, or B-text; pp. 75–84), a list of the liturgical manuscripts that have been used by Niccum (pp. 85–88), and a list of signs and abbreviations used in the apparatus (pp. 73–74).

Niccum's views about the Ethiopic text of Acts and its history fit into the broad consensus of views about the text of the books of the Ethiopic New Testament. But while the decisions he has taken about the establishment of the text make sense, it is much to be regretted that his discussion of the Ethiopic in chapter 4 does not include any description—of the kind that Zuurmond, for example, provided for his edition of Mark—of even the major manuscripts that have been used for the edition. It is also to be regretted that neither in chapter 4 nor in chapter 1 is there any discussion of the evidence on which the reconstruction of the textual history, and the distinction between the A-, the Ab- and the B-text, is based, and that no examples of the kind of changes that were introduced into the text are given. There is also no stemma. The desire to integrate the Ethiopic text of Acts firmly into the overall textual history of the book is a welcome feature of this edition and will no doubt be appreciated by New Testament textual critics, but it may be thought that much more deserved to be said about the Ethiopic evidence.

For the Greek witnesses, Niccum uses the abbreviations that are standard in New Testament textual criticism, but he does not provide a list of the abbreviations he mentions. The Ethiopic manuscripts that have been collated and used for the edition are identified, and cited in the apparatus, by numbers, usually the final element in the shelf mark or the EMMML number. The numbers of the relevant manuscripts are given in parentheses in column 1 of the list of Ethiopic manuscripts, but because of their random character it can be difficult to spot them in the list, and they do not stand out. It is also not obvious that, given their random character, it makes sense to list the manuscripts in the apparatus in numerical order.

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