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Review


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Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

CSCO  Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientational, 1903ff.
EMML  Ethiopian Manuscript Micro film Library, Addis Ababa.
OrChr  Oriens Christianus, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
PO  Patrologia Orientalis, 1903ff.
RRALm  Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, Roma, 1892ff.
SAe  Scriptores Aethiopi.

Since the Pontificio Istituto Orientale in Rome, with Prof. Philippe Luisier, S.J., assumed in the last fifteen years the editorship of the renowned series Patrologia orientalis, there has been a substantial increasing in publications of Ethiopian hagiographical texts, with contributions by three scholars, Gérard Colin (aside from the Sankàssar-related publications, with Gãdlà Màdjhanà Ągzi‘, Gãdlà Basoy, Gãdlà Sàmu‘el of Waldóbbà), Tedros Abraha (Gãdlà Domyànos, and Gãdlà Tàwàldà Màdhòn together with Gãdlà Fìgòtòr), and Osvaldo Raineri (Gãdlà Màlkà Kràsto and Gãdlà Pètòs). All in all, these publications make a very important contribution for the study of Ethiopic texts and Aethiopica has tried to keep track of as many of them as possible in the last years. Yet it is apparent that they are all marked by the prioritization of producing a text edition, whatever it is, usually a base text edition, more than a real text-critical edition. In keeping with this, the analysis of the manuscript tradition is usually short and does not apply a clear text-critical method. This is not certainly the ideal approach and still reflects a state of the art—not limited to this series—which Ethiopian studies show some difficulty in emancipating from. With some features of its own, this edition is no exception to this trend.

The introduction deals with the biography of Yonas, mainly basing on his Gãdlà Yonas (c.1400/1403–1495/1498, depending on the problematic dating of the first year of King Dawit II’s reign) was an important fifteenth-century monastic leader from the Ewósàṭatàn movement to whom the foundation of six monasteries is attributed, in Sàraye, Eritrea, and in Tàñben, Tògráy (pp. 7–8 (303–304)). The introduction resumes efficaciously the general historical context, as it emerges from the narrative of the Gãdlà and of the Màlkà, highlighting among the main characters of the Gãdlà, King Zàr’a Ya’qòb (1434–1478), Bàlen Àsgàdà (or Sàgàdà), the nàbùrà àd Nob and the abbot Gàbrà Kràstòs, both involved in the Sabbath controversy, as well as the ‘pluralistic, itinerant, multi-ethnic, multi-religious human setting’ in the background. The editor also rightly identifies as a specific feature of the Gãdlà Yonas a “New’ area of conflict’ (p. 11 (307)), to be identified with the interactions with the Muslims from the Red Sea, the question of the interdiction of ‘Muslim meat’ being a crucial case in point. One would tend to agree with the editor that in this context, the absence of any reference to Aàhmad b. Ibràhîm al-Gàzî’s (Àhmad Grañ) campaigns is an argumentum ex silentio for the composition of the Gãdlà in the early sixteenth century at the latest. The editor also provides,
although a proper purely hagiographic analysis is missing, some attempt at distinguishing what is topical, with reference to specific features of the Ewostatian hagiography, and what can be more reliably connected to the historical background.

With the limitations I have mentioned, the editor makes an important contribution to our knowledge of this important text, editing it for the first time in its entirety from four manuscripts, as well as providing informations on several further previously unknown manuscripts. Tedros has distinguished two different recensions of this text: the earliest and shorter one, identified by archetype errors (p. 12 (308)), is the only one edited in this volume from four manuscripts (pp. 22–151 (318–447), editorially subdivided into 166 numbered paragraphs provided by the editor with a title). Among them, MS London, British Library, Or. 698 (MS B in the edition) was already known to C. Conti Rossini, when he edited some excerpts of Gâdlà Yonas in 1903 from a manuscript now in Rome, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Conti Rossini 92, copied from an exemplar in the church of Ṣinda Sadqan at Barâknaḥa, in Akkâlà Guzay, Eritrea. Conti Rossini’s copy is not mentioned by Tedros, who uses, however, an exemplar from the same church (MS C). The base manuscript (MS A), also the oldest (fifteenth/early sixteenth century), comes from the monastery of Dâbrà Daḥuḥan, in Sâraye, Eritrea, while the fourth manuscript is from ʿAddi Wâssak (MS D), in the district of ʿArrâza, also in Sâraye, Eritrea. It is a pity that the edition limits itself to the older recension, nor is it

1 For the motif of the ‘burning fingers’, detailed on p. 6 (302), n. 4, see for example A. Brita, I racconti tradizionali sulla «seconda cristianizzazione» dell’Etiopia. Il ciclo agiografico dei Nove Santi, Studi Africanistici Serie Etiopica, 7 (Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Oriente”, Dipartimento di Studi e Ricerche su Paesi Arabi, 2010), 45–46, 136, 203, this latter reference occurring just before the episode of Guba’s moving to Dâbrà Daḥuḥan.

2 Although one cannot exclude that the small misquotation of Phil. 3:13 simply belongs to the original and not to the archetype. Moreover, to say (ibid.) that ‘None of the collated manuscripts has emended the text of A’ presupposes that MSS BCD directly depend upon it: but when, where was this demonstrated by the editor? and if this were the case, why should they be used, provided they do not attest to a different recension?

3 It would have been obviously important to know if this manuscript served as an antigraph to the manuscript that Conti Rossini had had copied for his collection and is now preserved in the Lincei library. Yet Tedros makes some important corrections to Conti Rossini’s contributions as well as those who used his partial edition, including the present reviewer in his Eae article (see below): for example, Yonas was the nephew of his maternal uncle Domyanos (not of Dana’el) of Dâbrà Sina.

4 Note that these manuscripts are grouped as ‘Older witnesses’ (p. 13 (309)) as opposed to those listed under ‘B. Second recension’, p. 14 (310): but there is no point ‘A’ in this classification, and the opposition of ‘Old witnesses’ to ‘Second recension’ is inconsistent.
clear to the reviewer which is the ground for this (‘The wide semantic gap between the two sets of witnesses and the difference in the arrangement and contents of the material do not allow one to edit them together’, p. 12 (308)).

Manuscripts of a later recension, characterized by an expansion on the epithet ‘Gōnba Lṣ’ul’ as referred to Dābrā Ṣāgef (one of the three monasteries in Sāraye founded by Yonas), and by a Mālkā’ of Yonas also edited in the volume (pp. 150–172 (446–469), subdivided into 59 numbered strophes), come from Dābrā Dǒḥuḥan (MS D₀) and Dābrā Ṣāgef (MS S); yet the Mālkā’ is also attested by MS D, as well as by a rare printed edition published in Asmāra in 1962. Among the further manuscripts mentioned (p. 15 (311)), that testify to a much detailed field-research carried out by the editor in the field—besides manuscripts in Gundā Gunde, one in Dābrā Ṣāgef, two privately owned manuscripts, and one more—‘two undated manuscripts in the monastery of Dābrā Šahl’ are also mentioned. This monastery is mentioned in MSS B and C in a Letter of benediction and of absolution sent to Yonas abbot of Dābrā Šahl by a patriarch of Alexandria John and is shortly commented in the introduction (pp. 7–8), but no information on its present state is given.⁵

According to the editor (p. 8 (304)), the text at † 26 would be evidence that Tānś’ā Kṛstos is the author of the Gāḍīl: but the text, at best, indicates that he committed its composition (swallīlu ʾaṣḥafā māḥafā gaddī) and provided informations, there being no reason to identify him with the real author.

One of the most successful efforts in this work is the translation and the systematic identification of biblical echoes and quotations, which is an essential component of the hagiographic literary texture, although—as the editor is well aware of (p. 15 (311))—these might in turn go back to the immediate models of the Gāḍīl. In the commentary the editor has scrupulously tried to clear place and personal names, difficult or rare terms, also

⁵ This would be of some importance, since according to the reviewer and G. Lusini’s data—see especially the latter’s ‘Scritture documentarie etiopiche (Dabra Deḥuḥan e Dabra Ṣeqe, Sarā’e, Eritrea)’, RSE, 42 (1998 (1999)), 5–55, esp. pp. 18–19—already in the 1990s this monastery seemed to be no more extant. For a possible identification of the patriarch John as well as further details, including the mention of the Letter also in MS MIE (Misione Italiana in Eritrea) no. 22, see ‘Yonas of Bur’, EAe, V (2014), 92b–94a (A. Bausi). Lusini’s article is a fundamental documentary contribution to Yonas’ chronology, inexplicably neglected by Tedros and not even mentioned in the bibliography on pp. 17–19 (313–315); doc. no. 1 contains a chronology of Yonas’ ecclesiastical career, according to which he was born in the twenty-first year of King Dawit II’s reign (1400/01 or 1403), succeeded Domynos as abbot of Dābrā Sina in the seventh year of reign of King Zār’ā Ya’qōb (1441), founded Dābrā Ṣage in the twenty-first of the latter (1455), and Dābrā Dǒḥuḥan in the eleventh of Ḡskandar (1489), and died in the fourth year of reign of King Na’od (1498, 17 Māggabīt), having lived ninety-five years.
exploring the hypothesis already advanced by Conti Rossini of possible Tigrinisms in the text.  

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This book is a collection of papers presented at a workshop held in Hamburg on July 15–16, 2011. Edited by Denis Nosnitsin, it has been published as a supplement to Aethiopica. International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies. After the ‘Preface’ (pp. vii–x) and a ‘Presentation’ by Gianfranco Fiaccadori (pp. xi–xvii), one finds three sections. The first part is introductory, the second focuses on monastic networks and the last concentrates on case studies. Following the index, colourful plates give a picture of the various sites described in the articles.

In the preface, Denis Nosnitsin describes the workshop as part of a project called Ethio-SPaRe, which stands for ‘Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia – Salvation, Preservation and Research’. The project aims at studying Ethiopian manuscripts in the light of their ‘historical, geographical and social context’ and the concept ‘ecclesiastic network’ is used and explained in this connection. Following this Gianfranco Fiaccadori gives a summary of the various articles and an explanation of Ethio-SPaRe’s significance.

The main subject of the book is introduced by two articles. The first, by Denis Nosnitsin, ‘Ecclesiastic Landscape of North Ethiopia: Methodologies and Types of Approach’ (pp. 3–13), deals with practical issues for the study of historical Christian sites in northern Ethiopia. Valuable information in this field is given in a brief summary of previous research on the same geographi-

In keeping with the Aethiopica policy, I will limit myself to the minimum with regard to typos and minor errors: note however that on p. 19 (315) (also p. 43 (339), n. 48) the right name is (Ruffillo) ‘Perini’, not ‘Perilli’; and that some names are frequently misspelt, for example (p. 5 (301)) ‘Näwâyà’, instead of ‘Náwâyà’, ‘Dámýanos’ instead of ‘Dámýanos’; there is also an extensive vocalization of sixth orders (‘Barâknâha’, pas-sim, instead of ‘Báráknâha’, etc.), including laryngeals in final position (‘Ágzi’5’, etc.) that is not justified.

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