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ORIENTALIA LOVANIENSIA

ANALECTA

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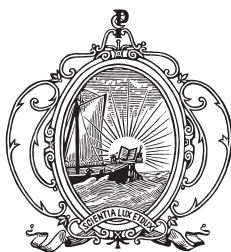
COPTIC SOCIETY, LITERATURE AND RELIGION FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO MODERN TIMES

Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of
Coptic Studies, Rome, September 17th-22th, 2012
and
Plenary Reports of the Ninth International Congress of
Coptic Studies, Cairo, September 15th-19th, 2008

Volume I

edited by

PAOLA BUZI, ALBERTO CAMPLANI and
FEDERICO CONTARDI



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ETHIOPIC LITERARY PRODUCTION RELATED TO THE CHRISTIAN EGYPTIAN CULTURE*

Alessandro BAUSI

As everyone knows, this report can not resume the conclusions of previous ones, since this theme has been, if at all, rarely or sporadically dealt with in the past congresses of Coptic Studies.¹ Four years ago, at the last International Congress of Coptic Studies in Cairo, I presented new and fresh Ethiopic documents that have come to light in a recently discovered manuscript from Ethiopia. I have called them the *Aksumite collection*, with reference to the time of its possible translation. Alberto Camplani thoroughly underlined that these documents are of great interest to the history of Christian Egypt, because they shed new light on its history as well as its historiography. This is particularly true for a text dealing with the first centuries of the episcopate of Alexandria, that we have called the *History of the Episcopate of Alexandria*.²

* I would like to warmly thank the organisers and the Board of the International Association of Coptic Studies for having invited me to talk in a plenary session of the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies on “Ethiopic Literary Production Related to the Christian Egyptian Culture”.

¹ For an exception, cp. Theofried Baumeister’s report on history and historiography for 2000-2004, cp. TH. BAUMEISTER, *Geschichte und Historiographie des ägyptischen Christentums: Studien und Darstellungen der letzten Jahre*, in A. BOUD’HORS – D. VAILLANCOURT (eds.), *Huitième congrès international d’études coptes (Paris 2004). Bilan et perspectives 2000-2004 (Cahiers de la Bibliothèque copte 15)*, Paris: De Boccard, 2006, p. 37-67: 41-42 (§ 3. *Äthiopische Quellen zur Kirchengeschichte Ägyptens*). This peculiarity also explains why the bibliography prepared on the occasion of the Congress has been arranged to provide a general panorama of the present day possible contribution of the Ethiopic cultural and literary heritage to Coptic Studies. As stated in the foreword, this did not intend to be an *exhaustive* bibliography or survey. An updated, reasonable and reliable bibliographical information on each branch of Ethiopian Studies can be found in the relevant articles of the five-volume *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (henceforth *EAE*), cp. S. UHLIG (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Volume 1: A–C; Volume 2: D–Ha; Volume 3: He–N; S. UHLIG — in cooperation with A. BAUSI (eds.), Volume 4: O–X; A. BAUSI — in cooperation with S. UHLIG (eds.), Volume 5: Y–Z *Supplements, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014, which consists of articles (a total number of more than 5,000 in the five volumes), appendices and most of all a complex index.

² These documents consist of Ethiopic texts (in Ge’ez language) that were apparently translated from the Greek, in all likelihood during the Aksumite period, and have been indicated as the *Aksumite collection*. The Greek originals were produced in Late Antique and Early Byzantine Christian Egypt and are only partially known in the original language. These documents also appear to provide evidence relevant to Aksumite civilization and institutional history as well as literary and scribal practices and linguistic history. Some aspects of this research have been presented in several papers, notes and articles since 2000, dealing with both philological (text-critical) and linguistic aspects. I can repeat what we said in 2008, that in recent years we have made progress in our research, even though a plethora of other commitments has prevented us from accomplishing as much as we would have liked. But in the last years, besides various contributions, Alberto has

I have mentioned this case-study now because it is functional in terms of the topics of Ethiopic literary production related to the Egyptian culture. The *existence itself* of a relationship between the Ethiopian and Christian Egyptian cultures was actually acknowledged early. The first point is to highlight *how* this was perceived by a number of scholars and the general hypothesis that became standardized in the course of time. A second point is to shortly revise the recent developments in the field of Ethiopian Studies: a summarily comparison with Coptic Studies helps to understand the objective distance under various points of view between the two fields and to look at future perspectives under the present circumstances.

1 ETHIOPIA AND CHRISTIAN EGYPT

1.1 Ethiopian and Christian Egyptian Culture: Some General Observations

The question of the relationship between Ethiopian and Christian Egyptian culture can be easily solved by the formal dependence of Ethiopian Christianity on the Egyptian Monophysite (or Myaphysite, or Anti- or Non-Chalcedonian) Church (of Alexandria) since the early conversion of king ‘Ēzānā, the first Christian ruler of the kingdom of Aksum, and the subsequent institutionalization of the episcopate of Aksum in the middle of the fourth century CE with the first bishop Frumentius, known as Ferēmnāṭos *kaśātē berhān*, that is ‘Frumentius The Revealer of Light’, in the Ethiopian tradition. As a consequence,

the metropolitan bishops — or simply ‘metropolitans’ — of Ethiopia have, for sixteen centuries, been chosen from Egyptian monks. The first consecration of an Ethiopian metropolitan, *abuna* Qērellos (though *pāpās* is the Ethiopic technical term to designate his office, the term *abun* was also traditionally used) dates to 1951; in 1959 *pāpās* Bāselyos was first consecrated by the Coptic patriarch Yosab as Ethiopian metropolitan and subsequently by Coptic patriarch Cyril VI as the first Ethiopian patriarch of an autocephalous Church, officially “Ethiopian Orthodox Tawāḥedo Church”, *tawāḥedo*, meaning ‘union’ in Ethiopic, signifying the profession of perfect union of ‘divine’ and ‘human’ in the Son.³

provided an impressive commentary on the text, and I have given a first edition of the new Ethiopic version of the *Traditio apostolica*, which is one of the most interesting texts contained in this manuscript, cp. A. BAUSI, *The ›so-called Traditio apostolica‹: preliminary observations on the new Ethiopic evidence*, in H. GRIESER – A. MERKT (Hrsgg.), *Volks Glaube im antiken Christentum. Prof. Dr. Theofried Baumeister OFM zur Emeritierung*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009, p. 291-321; ID., *La “nuova” versione etiopica della Traditio apostolica: edizione e traduzione preliminare*, in P. BUZI – A. CAMPLANI (eds.), *Christianity in Egypt: literary production and intellectual trends. Studies in honor of Tito Orlandi (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum 125)*, Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2011, p. 19-69. Once more, the full publication of more documents is forthcoming. For a first presentation with further references, see A. BAUSI – A. CAMPLANI, *New Ethiopic Documents for the History of Christian Egypt*, in *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum. Journal of Ancient Christianity* 17/2-3 (2013), p. 195-227.

³ Not for its importance and quality, but only for the sake of convenience, I will quote short passages from this contribution that summarizes some obvious points: A. BAUSI (ed.), *Languages*

If the formal head of the Ethiopian Church was an Egyptian for sixteen centuries until the twentieth century, the extremely powerful and influential monastic institutions certainly enjoyed a considerable freedom and autonomy from the central Church. In the words of Enrico Cerulli:

In terms of hierarchy, all Ethiopian convents recognise as their head the abbot of Dabra Libānos, the great Convent of the Shoa north of Addis Ababa, who bears the title of Eḡagē and is nowadays the recognised leader of Ethiopian monasticism. The Eḡagē is an Ethiopian monk who is responsible for the Abbey of the Monastery of Dabra Libānos. Dabra Libānos being the resting place of Takla Hāymānot, venerated as the founding saint of monasticism in the Shoa, the Eḡagē's connection with it also gives him jurisdiction over the entire regular clergy of Ethiopia. However, alongside the Eḡagē there is the Metropolitan, who is the head of all the secular clergy. [...] We thus have at the head of the Ethiopian Church and of Coptic [Ethiopian] monasticism two prelates with different attributions: one with regard to the regular clergy, the other with regard to the entire Ethiopian Church. The relative importance of those two offices varied through time, especially during the centuries when one of them, the head of monasticism, was a native Ethiopian and the other a foreigner appointed by the Egyptian Patriarch. This made the relations between monasticism and the Metropolitan jurisdiction particularly delicate. This delicate situation became historically significant over the centuries [...].⁴

The enormous consequences of these institutional connections, dependence and subordination are the lack of cultural production and intellectual life of Ethiopian Christianity that was not deeply shaped, marked or influenced by Egyptian Christian culture (which does not mean that Ethiopian Christianity has not developed a culture of its own in the course of time). The obvious way in which this influence and dependence was expressed was by a number of translations of texts, in which at least two stages must be clearly distinguished between:

- (1) translations carried out directly from the Greek dating to the Aksumite period from the fourth to the seventh century CE, limited to the Bible and a few other texts, and
- (2) a second stage of massive translations from the Arabic starting from the post-Aksumite period; Ethiopic versions directly translated from the Coptic are usually considered non existent (see below).

Translations of Egyptian Greek texts directly into Ethiopic possibly only appeared in the Aksumite period, when the strong relationships with the then Grecophone Christian Egypt made translations necessary for institutional and religious needs.

and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Ethiopian (Variorum, The Worlds of Eastern Christianity (300-1500) 4), Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012, p. xvi-xvii.

⁴ E. CERULLI, *Il monachismo in Etiopia*, in *Il monachesimo orientale. Atti del Convegno di Studi Orientali che sul predetto tema si tenne a Roma, sotto la direzione del Pontificio Istituto Orientale, nei giorni 9, 10, 11 e 12 aprile 1958 (Orientalia Christiana Analecta 153)*, Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1958, p. 259-278: 261-262; Engl. transl. *Monasticism in Ethiopia*, by A. Papaconstantinou, in BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. 355-370 (no. 19): 356-357.

Indeed, from the very beginning of Ethiopian studies, the importance of such a corpus has always been recognised at least in theory, thus according to Carlo Conti Rossini:

In the fourth century, Ethiopia is related with a new bond to Egypt: a very strong one, that has survived the vicissitudes of centuries. This is Christianity. First professed by narrow colonies of foreigners in Adulis, in Aksum, in the most important commercial centres, where it was probably preceded by Judaism, in turn professed by small groups of Jews immigrated from South Arabia, it was adopted in the fourth century by the royal court, by means of a Syrian, Frumentius. Since its early steps, the Abyssinian Church was a branch of the patriarchate of Alexandria. It is true that in the course of time, in the sixth century, and probably in the preceding and following decades, also a Syriac stream turned to Ethiopia, through Yemen, to the extent that old missionaries were Syrian, as retold by the tradition; to the Syrian church belongs the text upon which the Abyssinian version of the Gospels was conducted, certainly one of the first Christian books translated into the language of the country; Syrian poets like Simeon of Gešir and Saint Efrem, seem to have been known in the land of Aksum in remote times. But actually from the religious point of view Ethiopia can not be considered but as a derivation, an annex of Christian Egypt. From Alexandria it received the metropolitans; from there it had bishops and priests, who divulged and strengthened the new faith, through the stubborn resistance of the pagan cults of its various races; following the Egyptian clergy, it passed to monophysitism; and from the Egyptian church it received almost all the books translated into its own language. What the Ethiopian literature was in pre-Christian times we do not know, since absolutely nothing has survived: certainly it had to exist, as the scanty epigraphic texts of this period can not even explain the passage from the script of South Arabian kind to the so-called *ge'ez*; the Christian literature mainly consists of translations from the Greek of works common in Christian Egypt.⁵

The purported “Syriac stream” deserves more elaboration, since it is or has been a matter of controversy and appears to limit to some extent the imprint of the Egyptian on Ethiopian Christianity. Based on the initiative of monks of Syrian provenance, purported “Syriac influences” between the end of the fifth and the first half of the sixth centuries were put in relation with the *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic Bible, also related to other aspects of the religious and cultural life of Ethiopian Christianity (including liturgy, architecture, art, and language). Yet, Hans Jakob Polotsky’s linguistic analysis of the Aramaic loan-words in Ethiopic, the philological ones of Rochus Zuurmond and Michael A. Knibb of the New and Old Testament texts respectively, and the contributions made by Paolo Marassini, Stuart Munro Hay and Antonella Brita who argue for a more critical consideration of the hagiographic materials in reference to the “Nine Saints”, have substantially ruled out the hypothesis that there is any evidence of *direct*

⁵ C. CONTI ROSSINI, *Egitto ed Etiopia nei tempi antichi e nell’età di mezzo*, in *Aegyptus* 3 (1922), p. 3-18: 13-14 (my translation).

Syriac influences.⁶ Notwithstanding this, the question still tends to surface again, which is due to the fundamental confusion between *origin* and *provenance* and the disregard for the profound influence of Christian Arabic as a mediator.⁷

The “Aksumite” label, however, has in fact been applied to very few titles (the Bible, some major apocryphal writings, the patristic collection of the *Qērellos*, and a few other monastic and hagiographic texts), which have come to constitute the rather limited and special canon of the early Ethiopic, Aksumite literature.

The main corpus of the Aksumite literature came to consist of the Bible (probably gradually translated between the fourth and sixth century AD, with biblical quotations definitely appearing in several sixth-century inscriptions) as well as some major apocrypha of the Judaic and inter-testamental literature, which are relatively few and very well known, such as the *Book of Enoch*, the *Book of the Jubilees*, *Baruch* (or the *Rest of the Words of Jeremiah*), *Fourth Ezra*, and the *Christian Ascension of Isaiah* and *Pastor of Herma*. For some of the major Old Testament apocrypha (*Book of Enoch*, *Book of the Jubilees*, *Baruch*) the Ethiopic version still remains the most important textual witness. [...] The most important patristic collection is the work known as the *Qērellos* (from the Ethiopic name of Cyril of Alexandria), mainly composed of homilies and treatises originating in the context of the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) and its immediate aftermath, with the later addition of a few patristic writings, even though other homilies not included therein must have also been translated in the Aksumite period. Along with the *Qērellos* the recently discovered *Aksumite collection*, of canonical and liturgical character, preserved in a *codex unicus*, seems to be of great importance. There must also have been indigenous production of original texts (probably homilies at least) of which only a few examples seem to have survived, if they are even to be attributed to this period.⁸

⁶ H.J. POLOTSKY, *Aramaic, Syriac, and Ge'ez*, in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9 (1964), p. 1-10; repr. in BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. 187-196 (no. 11); R. ZUURMOND, *Novum Testamentum Aethiopicum: The Synoptic Gospels*, I Part: *General Introduction*; II Part: *Edition of the Gospel of Mark* (*Äthiopistische Forschungen* 27), Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989; P. MARRASSINI, *Ancora sul problema degli influssi siriaci in età aksumita*, in L. CAGNI (a c.), *Biblica et Semitica. Studi in memoria di Francesco Vattioni (Series minor 59)*, Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, 1999, p. 325-537; Engl. transl. *Once Again on the Question of the Syriac Influences in the Aksumite Period*, by C. Franchi, in BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. 209-219 (no. 13); M.A. KNIBB, *Translating the Bible. The Ethiopic Version of the Old Testament (The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1995)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 1999; ST. MUNRO-HAY, *Saintly Shadows*, in W. RAUNIG – ST. WENIG (Hrsgg.), *Afrikas Horn. Akten der Ersten Internationalen Littmann-Konferenz 2. bis 5. Mai 2002 in München (Meroitica 22)*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005, p. 137-168; repr. in BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. 221-252 (no. 14); A. BRITA, *I racconti tradizionali sulla “seconda cristianizzazione” dell’Etiopia (Studi Africanistici Serie Etiopica 7)*, Napoli: Università degli studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”, Dipartimento di studi e ricerche su Africa e Paesi Arabi, 2010.

⁷ For example, recent hypotheses of connections between the Ethiopian literary production and Efremitic literature have not considered this aspect sufficiently, see R. LEE, *Symbolic Interpretations in Ethiopic and Efremitic Literature*, PhD Thesis submitted for Degree of PhD in the Study of Religions, Department of the Study of Religions, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2011.

⁸ BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. xxix-xxx. Excluding the epigraphical texts and besides the (1) Bible (Old and New Testament), the following texts can be ranged among the

Several centuries after the decline — starting from the seventh century — and the eventual fall of the kingdom of Aksum, in the so-called Post-Aksumite age and in a completely different political situation, probably immediately after or even during the little known period marked by the phase of the so-called Zāg^{wē} dynasty in the twelfth and thirteenth century, a new phase of translations from Arabic took place:

The main impulse for the large-scale production of translations of Christian Arabic texts was the re-established and strengthened relationship with the Patriarchate of Alexandria during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. [...] This translation activity is proven by copious evidence in the subscriptions and colophons of manuscripts and texts as well as philological and linguistic analysis. In contrast, due to the asynchronous development of the Christian Ethiopian and Christian Egyptian literary movements, there is no evidence of any direct translations from Coptic, though it cannot be definitely excluded. What is to be stressed is that Arabic translations into Ethiopic conveyed texts of different origin and provenances, originally composed in different languages (Greek, Syriac, Coptic), in different areas and by different religious communities (Copts, Jacobites, Melkites, Nestorians and so on), which had been previously translated into Arabic. This explains the variety of textual traditions sometimes attested within Ethiopic redactions, which do not necessarily imply direct and privileged connections with a specific area, though Egypt remained the main immediate provenance. Translations from Christian Arabic into Ethiopic are documented from the second half of the thirteenth century at the latest, climaxing in the middle of the fourteenth century during the period of metropolitan Salāmā (1348-1388 AD).⁹

The importance of Ethiopic versions for recovering Medieval (Copto-)Arabic Egyptian traditions has been acknowledged for a long time. Carlo Conti Rossini for example asserted early on this in the last century:

Aksumite works at present: (2) works of the apocryphal and inter-testamental literature: *Book of Enoch*, *Book of Jubilees*, *Rest of the words of Baruch* or *Fourth Baruch*, *Third and Fourth Book of Ezra*, *Ascension of Isaiah* and *Pastor of Hermas*, and maybe the *Lives of the Prophets*; (3) the *Qērellos*; (4) at least two recensions of the monastic *Rules of Pachomius*, as well as other scattered pieces of monastic literature; (5) the *Physiologus*; (6) the *Treatise on the Antichrist* by Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235); (7) a recension of the *Ancoratus* by Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403), a recent, but important acquisition; (8) a number of hagiographical works, among which the *Life of Paul the first hermit*, the *Life of Anthony* — see now R. ZARZECZNY, *Some Remarks Concerning the Ethiopic Recension of the "Life of Antony"*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 79/1 (2013), p. 37-60 — and *Acts of Christian martyrs*: St. Mark, Arsenofis, Euphemia, Tēwoflos with Tātroqyā and Damālis, Emrāyes, maybe Cyprian and Justa, and Peter patriarch of Alexandria, Phileas bishop of Thmuis, and certainly others; (9) at least some of the texts which are witnessed by archaic homilies, such as mss. EMMI nos. 1763 and 8509 and London, Brit. Libr. Or. 8192 (the presence in an ancient Old Testament manuscript of a fragmentary homily attributed to John Chrysostom [d. 407] can be a clue to this hypothesis): among these, some texts devoted to celebrate indigenous saints could be the only original Aksumite texts preserved up to now; (10) probably also the apocryphal *Infancy Gospel* and the *Testament of Our Lord*, of which the *Doctrine of the mysteries* is a part; (11) several exegetical works attributed to Philo of Carpasia (for example, the commentary on the Song of Songs).

⁹ BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. xxxii-xxxiii.

I will not repeat here what I already sketched concerning this literary movement, that reached its climax in the fifteenth century, and that is characterized by translations from the Arabic, that had completely replaced Coptic: suffice it to say it that, thanks to this, the Abyssinian literature supplies an important contribution to the studies on Christian Egypt.¹⁰

It was Ignazio Guidi, however, who stressed the enduring paradigm of an *almost exclusively Arabic-based Ethiopic literature* in his praxis.¹¹ In a number of detailed contributions (for example, on the *Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, on the *Canonical collections* etc.), he examined the development of textual transmission through Greek and/or Coptic, Arabic and Ethiopic versions and recensions. Building upon this paradigm, valuable and well known “classical” contributions have been made until very recently — just consider, for example, those by P. Devos on the *Miracles of Saint Menas*,¹² or those of Joseph-Marie Sauget on the monastic literature,¹³ and many other scholars who have studied several Christian Oriental dossiers in their Coptic, Arabic and Ethiopic stages.¹⁴

In this perspective, the Ethiopian literary heritage was canonically considered almost exclusively dependent upon (Copto-)Arabic texts: with a strictly limited number of exceptions, it would have been the terminal, ancillary stage of a transmissional chain with a (Copto-)Arabic *Vorlage* as its immediate antecedent. Ethiopic versions were therefore deemed useful for the retrieval of Christian Egyptian traditions and their importance was thus strictly determined by the preservation or by the loss of their Arabic *Vorlage*. This is indeed the case for very important works preserved in Ethiopic, such as the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu,¹⁵ which was undoubtedly translated directly from Arabic, or for the Greek *Apocalypse of Peter*, which has been thoroughly studied by Paolo

¹⁰ CONTI ROSSINI, *Egitto ed Etiopia*, p. 17 (my translation).

¹¹ I. GUIDI, (*Breve*) *Storia della letteratura etiopica*, Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1932.

¹² P. DEVOS, *Un récit des Miracles de S. Ménas en copte et en éthiopien*, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 77 (1959), p. 451-463; 78 (1960), p. 154-160; ID., *Les miracles de saint-Ménas en Éthiopien*, in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma 2-4 aprile 1959) (Problemi attuali di scienza e di cultura 48)*, Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1960, p. 335-344; ID., *Le Juif et le Chrétien. Un miracle de S. Ménas*, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 78 (1960), p. 275-308.

¹³ J.-M. SAUGET, *Un exemple typique des relations culturelles entre l'arabe-chrétien et l'éthiopien: un Patericon récemment publié*, in *IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma, 10-15 Aprile 1972) (Problemi attuali di scienza e di cultura 191)*, Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974, I (Sezione storica), p. 321-388.

¹⁴ For a more refined typological perspective on hagiography, cp. P. MARRASSINI, *Gadla Yohannes Mesraqawi. Vita di Yohannes l'Orientale. Edizione critica con introduzione e traduzione annotata (Quaderni di Semitistica 10)*, Firenze: Istituto di Linguistica e di Lingue Orientali, Università di Firenze, 1981, p. lxx-lxxvii (§ 10. *L'Egitto*), lxxxiv-lxxxvii (§ 12.2. *Il deserto*); ID., *The 'Egyptian Saints' of the Abyssinian Hagiography*, in *Aethiopica* 8 (2005), p. 112-129.

¹⁵ G. FIACCADORI, *John of Nikiou*, in D.R.TH. – B. ROGGEMA (eds.), *Christian-Muslims Relations. A Bibliographical History*, Volume 1: (600-900), Leiden: Brill, 2009, p. 209-218; PH. BOOTH, *Shades of Blues and Greens in the Chronicle of John of Nikiou*, in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 104 (2011), p. 555-602.

Marrassini.¹⁶ Proposals of more complicated transmissional patterns, for example, that were advanced by Delio Vania Proverbio in his work on the (pseudo-) Chrysostomic corpus¹⁷ and the intermediate role played therein by Syriac, do not change the general frame of an Ethiopic tradition perceived as essentially and almost exclusively Arabic-based.

The general theory was completed with the postulate — once again, mainly based upon historical and institutional reasons — for which no substantial counter evidence has emerged so far, with some unsolved case-studies: *there never were direct translations from Coptic into Ethiopic*, because when Coptic literature was flourishing, the relationships between Egypt and Ethiopia were at their minimum, and when they were actively resumed Arabic was already the main language of Christian Egypt, and translations and revisions of Ethiopic texts were then made on the basis of Arabic.¹⁸

This situation is the one that is correctly presented in the best syntheses on the matter, among which colleague Heinzgerd Brakmann deserves a place of honour for his excellent contribution *Die Entwurzelung der Kirche im spätantiken Reich von Aksum*, where an informative and extremely balanced evaluation of the facts is provided.¹⁹ More recently, in 2008 Steven Kaplan summarised this picture with a reasonable conclusion:

the study of Ethiopic literature, and in particular works that were translated into Ge'ez, is important not only in and of itself, but because it is crucial to a broader understanding of Egyptian-Ethiopian relations. Even scholars who have little interest in the content of many of these texts can glean valuable lessons from the processes they reveal. The record of translation warns against simple oppositions of pro-Egyptian/anti-Egyptian and even more so, anti-Muslim/anti-Arab. It offers a picture of transmission of sources, some of which originated in Egypt and others that originated in distant lands but reached Ethiopia through Egyptian mediation. The record also indicates that the initial reception by the Ethiopian Church may not have been the final stage in the process, as some works (most notably the

¹⁶ P. MARRASSINI, *L'Apocalisse di Pietro*, in YAQOB BEYENE et al. (a c.), *Etiopia e oltre. Studi in onore di Lanfranco Ricci (Studi Africanistici. Serie Etiopica 1)*, Napoli, 1994, p. 171-232; ID. – R. BAUCKHAM, *L'Apocalypse de Pierre*, in FR. BOVON – P. GEOLTRAIN (éds.), *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens, I (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 442)*, Paris, 1997, p. 745-774; P. MARRASSINI, *Gli apocrifi etiopici: alcune osservazioni*, in N. DEL GATTO (a c.), *Corso di perfezionamento in Storia del Cristianesimo Antico diretto da Luigi Cirillo e Giancarlo Rinaldi. Atti. Napoli marzo-giugno 1996 (Serie Didattica 2)*, Napoli, 1999, p. 238-266: 246-251; ID., *Scoperta e riscoperta dell'Apocalisse di Pietro fra greco, arabo ed etiopico*, in G. BASTIANINI – A. CASANOVA (a c.), *I papiri letterari cristiani. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi in memoria di Mario Naldini. Firenze, 10-11 giugno 2010 (Studi e Testi di Papirologia n.s. 13)*, Firenze: Istituto Papirologico "G. Vitelli", 2011, p. 147-160.

¹⁷ D.V. PROVERBIO, *La recensione etiopica dell'omelia pseudocrisostomica de ficu exarata ed il suo tréfonds orientale (Aethiopistische Forschungen 50)*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998.

¹⁸ S. however R.-G. COQUIN, in R. BEYLOT, *Sermon éthiopien anonyme sur l'Eucharistie*, in *Abbay 12* (1983-1984), p. 79-116: 116.

¹⁹ H. BRAKMANN, *ΤΟ ΠΑΡΑ ΤΟΙΣ ΒΑΡΒΑΡΟΙΣ ΕΡΓΟΝ ΘΕΙΟΝ. Die Entwurzelung der Kirche im spätantiken Reich von Aksum*, Bonn: Borengässer, 1994.

Bible) were translated from Greek and then transmitted to other religious communities, most notably the Beta Israel. In fact, even the distinction of translated works/original compositions is not a clear one as texts were indigenized through the addition of original material after being translated.²⁰

1.2 Ethiopian and Christian Egyptian Culture: Precising Some Points

This general scheme of acquisition of the Egyptian literary heritage might be better explained if the focus is with some observations of the double translation process:

- (1) it is undoubtedly true that Egyptian Christianity played the most prominent role in shaping Ethiopian Christianity and that literary, liturgical, and institutional practices of Christian Ethiopia derive largely from Egypt.²¹ Yet, precisely as a consequence of this, due to asynchronous historical developments, as well as institutional and consequent linguistic updating in Egypt, one would reasonably expect that *not all that is attested in Ethiopic is redundant and superfluous to a better understanding of the history of Egyptian Christianity*;
- (2) whereas the older layer of Christian tradition may have been lost in the more advanced and culturally rich “metropolitan” Egyptian area — naturally exposed to continuous updating, revising and selecting —, it could have been more likely retained in the more backward and “provincial” Ethiopia. It is in this regard that, for example, the Latin versions parallel to Ethiopic texts of the *Aksumite collection* I mentioned in the opening should also be considered. The twofold survival of the same texts in marginal areas, as it happens for the *Traditio apostolica* and the *History of the Episcopate of Alexandria*, is — like in linguistics — a strong clue to archaic character. Genuine character, however, is also attributed to survivals in one single area that is more conservative and exhibits less sociocultural dynamism, as happened, again, for Ethiopia, and not for the Latin area.²² In particular, Ethiopia did not undergo the manifold linguistic changes of Egyptian Christianity through Greek, Coptic and Arabic, which have naturally affected the manuscript tradition with distortion and loss of texts and documents.
- (3) concerning the translations from Arabic,

²⁰ ST. KAPLAN, *Found in Translation: The Egyptian Impact on Ethiopian Christian Literature*, in I. GERSHONI – M. HATINA (eds.), *Narrating the Nile: Politics, Identities, Cultures. Essays in honor of Haggai Erlich. A tribute to Professor Erlich on the occasion of his retirement from Tel Aviv University*, Boulder, Colorado – London: Lynn Reinner, 2008, p. 29-39: 36.

²¹ H. ERLICH – G. FIACCADORI, *Egypt, relations with. Cultural and political relations in early times*, in *EAE* 2, p. 240a-241a.

²² S. TIMPANARO, *The Genesis of Lachmann's Method*, Edited and Translated by Glenn W. Most, Chicago – London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 87-88, on lateral and marginal areas in linguistics and philology.

[t]he process also affected texts already translated in the preceding Aksumite period — predominately the Bible, but also “corpora” of other genres (patristic, liturgical, hagiographical and canonical texts), which were in the course of time revised and organized according to new criteria and emerging needs (canon law prescriptions, a new liturgical calendar, literary affinity, but also royal, feudal and monastic patronage).²³

- (4) in quantitative terms, besides the aforementioned titles which enjoy a “canonical acknowledgment” the “constellation of patristic texts including hagiographies, liturgical and canonical texts, monastic rules, minor apocryphal writings, lists and other texts of various nature”,²⁴ as well as a not yet clearly disentangled cluster of liturgical texts that could be ascribed to the Aksumite period still needs to be evaluated;
- (5) there are several factors that have obscured the obvious expectation that the Ethiopian tradition might preserve archaic remnants of early Egyptian Christianity (just as the indigenous Ethiopian ecclesiastic tradition has always and in fact quite rightly claimed, exactly as Ancient Ethiopic has remained the only institutional language of written culture for about fifteen centuries): three of them merit a special mention here:
 - (a) *the large preponderance of translations from Arabic remains a matter of fact*: yet this remains a prevalent trend: in presence of appropriate evidence alternative hypotheses remain possible;
 - (b) *the scanty survival of ancient Ethiopic manuscripts which predate the fifteenth century tends to predetermine scholarly hypotheses*: late manuscripts seemingly testify to their being far removed in time from the period when translations from Greek into Ethiopic were performed, and provide objective evidence for the period when translations from and revisions on the basis of Arabic were flourishing (even though nothing implies that at the time only Arabic-based texts were being used and copied); the unconscious *ante litteram* “new philology temptation” of identifying text and manuscript has certainly not played a positive role in this;²⁵
 - (c) the process of graphic and linguistic updating, as well as that of the reworking and rearrangement of the ancient Aksumite translations from Greek into Ethiopic has been largely underestimated: the real question — as the eloquent case of the *Aksumite collection* clearly shows — is that of disentangling older layers from within larger *corpora*, where the

²³ BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. xxxii.

²⁴ BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. xxix.

²⁵ Without entering into a detailed discussion, it is apparent that a (so-called) “new philology” approach might be proposed, exclusively for specific purposes, only for textual witnesses originated within a relatively limited and consistent chronological context. When approaching the study of *texts* transmitted by witnesses spanning many centuries, languages and versions, a “new philology” approach is almost meaningless.

coexistence of Arabic-based and Greek-based texts blurs the evidence. Coexistence of older and later layers in the *Sinodos* might probably explain Guidi's reluctance in accepting that archaic Ethiopic liturgical texts be Greek-based²⁶ — even though in the same years and later on philological and liturgical studies (by Eduard Schwartz, Hugh Connolly, Bernard Botte, Jean Michel Hanssens, Ernst Hammerschmidt) have played a very positive role in stressing the archaic character of Ethiopian tradition.

1.3 Relationship between Ethiopian and Christian Egyptian Culture: Old, New and Peripheral Questions

A few years ago, a keen paper delivered by Philippe Luisier in 2008 and eventually published in 2010 on *Les voies de pénétration du Christianisme et de l'Islam en Éthiopie. Une comparaison*, has called attention to traces of Christianity of Upper Egypt in Ethiopia. Ruling out briefly the question of the Syriac influences, Luisier has collected evidence, starting from the possibility that already Frumentius had some contacts with Upper Egypt on his travel back from Alexandria to Aksum after the appointment to bishop by Athanasius.²⁷ He mentions a New Testament variant reading (“after they resurrected”) at Matthew 27:53, which is shared exclusively by late Greek manuscripts, but also by the *P. Bodmer XIX* of the second half of the fourth century containing the Gospel of Matthew in Saidic, and therefore liable to have circulated in Upper Egypt — not in the Delta — at the time when the Ethiopic New Testament was translated into Ethiopic. A second evidence is the mention in *P. Sorb.* II 69 from Hermopolis, dating to 618/619 or 633/634, of a μοναστήριον τῶν Αἰθιοπῶν (ἔσῳϣ in Coptic), that could attest a presence of Ethiopians, although the meaning of αἰθιοϣ is quite generic for ‘black’. Based upon Jean Doresse's large study of the Egyptian monasteries, Luisier also connects the devotion for Henochic traditions in the monastic communities of Bāwīt and Saqqāra, which could give account for the large fortune of the *Book of Jubilees* and the *Book of Henoch* in Ethiopia, that have disappeared in the Coptic Church and are well present in the Ethiopian tradition. Also popular in Upper Egypt are apocryphal traditions transmitted in Ethiopia on Pontius Pilate as well as the so-called *Book*

²⁶ I. GUIDI, review of G. HORNER, *The Statutes of the Apostles or Canones Ecclesiastici*, London: Williams & Norgate, 1904, in *Bessarione* ser. 2^a, 8 (9) (1905), p. 341-343; cp. now BAUSI, *The ›so-called Traditio apostolica‹*; ID., *La “nuova” versione etiopica della Traditio apostolica*.

²⁷ PH. LUISIER, *Les voies de pénétration du Christianisme et de l'Islam en Éthiopie. Une comparaison*, in *Civiltà del Mediterraneo* 16-17 (2009-2010) = A. GORI – B. SCARCIA AMORETTI (a c.), *L'Islam in Etiopia. Bilanci e prospettive*. [Atti del Convegno, tenutosi presso l'Università degli Studi di Napoli “Federico II”, il 18 e 19 giugno 2008], Napoli: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010, p. 59-87: 69-74.

of the Cock — the latter, however, also attested in the Copto-Arabic tradition.²⁸ Even more popular are the traditions connected to the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, and an Ethiopian monastic presence is well attested in related monastic sites located along the land routes from Ethiopia through Egypt to Jerusalem. Luisier ends his list of evidences by quoting the case of the enigmatic Cyriac of Bahnasā, dated by a terminus *post quem non* to the fourteenth century, but probably a name under which a series of different apocryphal pieces earlier attributed to the legendary Cyriac of Jerusalem have been put together and eventually augmented. Far from maintaining that Upper Egypt was the main way of penetration of Christianity in Ethiopia, Luisier's intention was that of stressing the complexity of components of Ethiopian Christianity, ranging from the questioned Syriac influences to Egypt and Palestine, where an early presence of Ethiopians was likely. Not to leave unremarked is that besides the Egyptian Church, *but mainly through the intermediary of the former*, Ethiopian Christianity has also known other traditions — exegetical traditions of Antiochian origin, monastic texts of Syriac origin, hagiographic texts of European origin with the great collection of the *Miracles of Mary*. Luisier makes a last important point that concerns the confutation of J. Spencer Trimingham's statement that "The controlling factor in her [Abyssinia] recognition of herself as a nation was Semitic blood and Semitic-Christian tradition",²⁹ with the conclusion that

Actually, Christianity in Ethiopia is not of Semitic tradition, or very little, because notwithstanding its originality and the Ge'ez language of expression, it remains deeply bound to the Alexandrian tradition, either of Greek, Coptic or Arabic language.³⁰

²⁸ PH. LUISIER, *De Pilate chez les Coptes*, in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 62 (1996), p. 411-425; P. PIOVANELLI, *Marius Chaîne, Joseph Trinquet et la version éthiopienne du Livre du coq*, in *Transversalités. Revue de l'Institut catholique de Paris* 85 (Janvier-Mars 2003) = *Études bibliques et éthiopiennes en hommage à M. Joseph Trinquet*, p. 51-62; ID., *Exploring the Ethiopic Book of the Cock, An Apocryphal Passion Gospel from Late Antiquity*, in *Harvard Theological Review* 96/4 (2003), p. 427-454; ID., *D'un récit de la Passion (Marc 14-16) à l'autre (Livre du coq). De la quête d'un sens théologique à la recherche d'un effet dramatique*, in D. MARGUERAT *et al.* (éds.), *La Bible en récits. L'exégèse biblique à l'heure du lecteur. Colloque international d'analyse narrative des textes de la Bible*, Lausanne (mars, 2002), in *Le Monde de la Bible* 48 (2003), p. 431-441; ID., *Pre- and Post-canonical Passion Stories: Insights into the Development of Christian Discourse on the Death of Jesus*, in *Apocrypha* 14 (2003), p. 99-128; ID., *The Book of the Cock and the Rediscovery of Ancient Jewish Christian Traditions in Fifth Century Palestine*, in I. HENDERSON – G. OEGEMA (éds.), *The Changing Face of Judaism, Christianity and Other Greco-Roman Religions in Antiquity (Studien zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit 2)*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006, p. 306-320; ID., *Livre du Coq*, in P. GEOLTRAIN – J.-D. KAESTLI (éds.), *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens*, II (*Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* 516), Paris: Gallimard, 2005, p. 135-203; E. LUCCHESI, *La Vorlage arabe du Livre du coq éthiopien*, in *Orientalia* n.s. 74 (2005), p. 91-92; G. COLIN, *Dorho: Mäshafä dorho*, in *EAE* 2, p. 193b-194a.

²⁹ J.S. TRIMINGHAM, *Islam in Ethiopia*, London – New York – Toronto: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 143.

³⁰ LUISIER, *Les voies de pénétration*, p. 74.

It might be interesting to remark that Luisier did not regard as worthwhile not even to mention the purported “gnostic influences” — evoked and emphasized by Enrico Cerulli and Jean Doresse (“survivances gnostiques”) — a consequence of a more precise definition of the phenomenon of “gnosticism” on the one side, and a better understanding of the context of origin of the Ethiopian texts under scrutiny on the other.

One might add that the perception of the relative complexity of Ethiopian Christianity has increased in the course of time: Gianfranco Fiaccadori has advanced the hypothesis that at the turn of the fifth and sixth century Nestorian communities settled on the Red Sea shores of the Eritrean coast, even though it remains an open question to what extent these presences might have exerted any influence on the later Ethiopian Christianity.³¹

Even the apparently simple process of translation from Arabic into Ethiopic in later medieval times through the linguistic transmission chain Greek-Coptic/Syriac-Arabic-Ethiopic is little known, not only in its detailed linguistic dynamics (there is no space here, unfortunately, for a detailed review of the state of the art), but also in its *Sitz im Leben*: where were the translations carried out, by whom, how were these translations disseminated etc. Moreover, recently researched case-studies — Ethiopic texts translated from Arabic concerning the expedition of King Kālēb in South Arabia such as the Ethiopic version of the *Martyrium of Arethas* and the recently discovered and summarily described *Acts of Kālēb*, the *Martyrium of Athanasius of Clysma*, but also the Ethiopic version of a treatise of John Climacus — seem to point to a non-Coptic based Arabic stream, rather connected to Sinai than to Egypt: to stress that Arabic *Vorlage* for Ethiopic texts is not always synonymous of a Copto-Arabic *Vorlage* is definitely not a minor point.³² Related to this conclusion is also the increasing awareness that not much different from Christian Arabic tradition, the Ethiopian one is also characterised by a number of translated texts with multiple recensions. This is

³¹ G. FIACCADORI, *Di alcune fonti islamiche per la storia del medioevo etiopico*, in *Civiltà del Mediterraneo* 16-17 (2009-2010) = GORI – SCARCIA AMORETTI (a c.), *L'Islam in Etiopia*, p. 183-209.

³² A. BAUSI – A. GORI, *Tradizioni orientali del “Martirio di Areta”*. *La Prima recensione araba e la Versione etiopica. Edizione critica e traduzione... Presentazione di Paolo Marrassini* (*Quaderni di Semitistica* 27), Firenze: Dipartimento di Linguistica, Università degli Studi, 2006, p. 16-17, 143; R. BEYLOT, *Un témoin éthiopien inédit du Gradus 5 de Jean Climaque*, *Collegeville EMMI* 1939, *Folio 102r^o-113v^o*, in M.A. AMIR-MOEZZI et al. (éds.), *Pensée grecque et sagesse d'Orient. Hommage à Michel Tardieu (Histoire et prosopographie. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études. Sciences Religieuses* 142), Turnhout: Brepols, 2009, p. 89-107; G. FIACCADORI, *On the place of composition of the Martyrium of Arethas*, in J. BEAUCAMP – FR. BRIQUEL-CHATONNET – CHR. ROBIN (éds.), *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux V^e et VI^e siècles. Regards croisés sur les sources. Le massacre de Najrân II* (*Collège de France — CNRS, Centre de recherche, d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance, Monographies* 32), Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2010, p. 191-196: cp. also ID., *Ad Martyrium Arethae*, in *La Parola del Passato* 67 (2012), p. 277-278; A. BAUSI, *The Massacre of Najrân: The Ethiopic Sources*, in BEAUCAMP – BRIQUEL-CHATONNET – ROBIN (éds.), *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie*, p. 241-254.

not a consequence of the internal development of the Ethiopian textual tradition, that as far as it has been investigated results in being extremely stable and conservative, but as the outcome of a plurality of source texts (see the case-studies of the *Synaxarium*, the *Faws Manfasāwi*, the *Testaments of the Patriarchs*, the *Nicaean lists*,³³ the *Traditio apostolica*, and many other texts, all attested in more recensions).³⁴

The contribution of a more thorough study of the Ethiopian manuscript practice — that is in particular being carried out by the project Ethio-SPaRe (Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia. Salvation, Preservation, Research), European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant (2009-2014), Hamburg, directed by Dr Denis Nosnitsin — is extremely promising, even though we will be able to acquire important data on the relationships between Egypt and Ethiopia that only focuses on the more ancient period. For example, the recent acquisition of the evidence of papyrus material in the binding of one of the Abbā Garimā Gospels has posed once again the question of the origin of the most ancient Ethiopian manuscripts known so far.³⁵

Particular attention shall be turned to those texts which are more explicitly related to the ideological and institutional heritage of the episcopate and patriarchate of Alexandria: I have already mentioned the very specific case of the *Aksumite collection*, that contains a *History of the Alexandrian Episcopate*; but important are also the traditions concerning the apostle Mark,³⁶ Peter of Alexandria³⁷ and Melitius and the Melitians, the latter once deemed by Ugo Monneret

³³ A. BAUSI, *Liste etiopiche di vescovi niceni*, in P. BRUNS – H.O. LUTHE (Hrsgg.), *Orientalia Christiana. Festschrift für Hubert Kaufhold zum 70. Geburtstag (Eichstätter Beiträge zum Christlichen Orient 3)*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013, p. 33-73; the important contribution by R.W. COWLEY, *An Ethiopian List of the Nicene Fathers*, in *Abba Salama* 4 (1973), p. 40-57, has passed almost completely unnoticed.

³⁴ For all the latter cases — apart from the *Nicaean lists* — cp. the respective entries in the *EAE*.

³⁵ L. CAPON, *Extreme Bookbinding — A fascinating Preservation Project in Ethiopia*, in *Skin Deep* 26/2 (2008), p. 2-11: 7; J. MERCIER, *Restoration of holy treasures & installation of a new museum*, in J. MERCIER – DANIEL SEIFEMICHAEL FELEKE (eds.), *Ethiopian Church — Treasures & Faith*, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church [Archange Minotaure], 2009, p. 107-124: 112; A. BAUSI, *Intorno ai Vangeli etiopici di Abbā Garimā*, in *La Parola del Passato* 65 (2010), p. 460-471; Engl. abridged version: *The “True Story” of the Abba Gärīma Gospels*, in *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* 1 (2011), p. 17-20.

³⁶ GETATCHEW HAILE, *A new Ethiopic version of the Acts of St. Mark (EMML 1763, ff. 224^r-227^r)*, in *Analecta bollandiana* 99 (1981), p. 117-134; G. LUSINI, *Les Actes de Marc en éthiopien: remarques philologiques et histoire de la tradition*, in *Apocrypha* 13 (2002), p. 123-134; Id., *Ethiopia in the 4th Century: The Apocryphal Acts of Mark between Alexandria and Aksum*, in S. UHLIG et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies. Hamburg July 20-25, 2003 (Aethiopistische Forschungen 65)*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006, p. 604-610; Id., *Gli Atti apocrifi di Marco*, in *Aethiopica* 12 (2009), p. 5-47.

³⁷ GETATCHEW HAILE, *The Martyrdom of St. Peter Archbishop of Alexandria (EMML 1763, ff. 79^r-80^v)*, in *Analecta Bollandiana* 98 (1980), p. 85-92; A. BAUSI, *The Aksumite background of the Ethiopic ‘Corpus canonum’*, in UHLIG et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, p. 532-541; A. CAMPLANI, *Pietro di Alessandria tra documentazione*

de Villard³⁸ to have played some influence on Ethiopian Christianity. One clear example is that of the bishop Phileas of Thmuis, the publication of the Ethiopic version of the *Acts* of which³⁹ has anticipated the redating of his martyrdom to 305 CE, recently confirmed by a Coptic text identified and published by Gesa Schenke.⁴⁰ The emergence of the latter, however, invites us to be as cautious as possible in assuming “missing links” and the non-existence of Coptic intermediaries to the Ethiopian tradition, even though even in this case the *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic is likely to be Greek.

But the amount of Ethiopic materials that could be of some interest to Coptic Studies is still incalculable: to give an example, in the old catalogue of Ethiopic manuscripts of the once Kärän Catholic mission, Conti Rossini mentioned a manuscript containing notices on the ecclesiastic history of Ethiopia from Arabic sources, among which is the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*.⁴¹ These literary documents have not been investigated any further since, while in the meanwhile the manuscripts of the Kärän Catholic mission have been dispersed. Other materials can certainly be drawn from a careful scrutiny of the Ethiopic literary heritage as reworked in later times: one example is that of the *Book of the mystery* by Giyorgis of Saglā (d. 1424 CE), where the memory of historical traditions on the episcopate of Alexandria clearly surfaces and is utilized as a polemic weapon in the topicality of contemporary controversies.

This rapid survey of aspects of interaction between Egyptian and Ethiopian Christianity can not be ended without mentioning two of the major, still unsolved

d'archivio e agiografia popolare, in GRIESER – MERKT (Hrsgg.), *Volksglaube im antiken Christentum*, p. 138-156; O. RAINERI, *Il Gadl di san Pietro patriarca di Alessandria e ultimo dei martiri. Edizione del testo etiopico e traduzione italiana (Patrologia Orientalis 51/5 [230])*, Turnhout, 2010; A. BAUSI, review of RAINERI, *Il Gadl di san Pietro*, in *La Parola del Passato* 66 (2011), p. 233-240; A. CAMPLANI, review of RAINERI, *Il Gadl di san Pietro*, in *Aethiopica* 16 (2013), p. 266-270.

³⁸ U. MONNERET DE VILLARD, *Di una possibile origine delle danze liturgiche nella chiesa abissina*, in *Oriente Moderno* 22 (1942), p. 389-391.

³⁹ A. BAUSI, *La versione etiopica degli Acta Phileae nel Gadla Samā'tāt (Supplemento n. 92 agli Annali 60-61 [2000-2001])*, Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 2002.

⁴⁰ G. SCHENKE, *Ein koptischer Textzeuge der Acta Phileae*, in H. KNUF – CHR. LEITZ – D. VON RECKLINGHAUSEN (Hrsgg.), *Honi soit qui mal y pense. Studien zum pharaonischen, griechisch-römischen und spätantiken Ägypten zu Ehren von Heinz-Josef Thissen (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 194)*, Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters and Department of Oosterse Studies, 2010, p. 609-615; EAD., *P.Köln 492: Das Martyrium des Phileas von Thmuis*, in CH. ARMONI et al., *Kölner Papyri (P.Köln)*, Vol. 12 (*Papyrologica Coloniensia* 7/12, *Abhandlungen der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*), Paderborn – München – Wien – Zürich: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010, p. 188-192. The edition of the Coptic text, however, needs revision.

⁴¹ C. CONTI ROSSINI, *I manoscritti etiopici della Missione Cattolica di Cheren*, in *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* ser. 5^a, 13 (1904), p. 233-255, 261-281: 262-268, ms. no. 21; cp. also R. BEYLOT, *Trois notes: sur le bois de la Croix, sur Grégoire l'Illuminateur au Concile de Nicée dans la Gloire des Rois et sur une source arabe du Livre des Mystères du Ciel et de la Terre*, in *Aethiopica* 14 (2011), p. 210-214.

problems of this relationship. The first concerns the actual role played by Egyptian craftsmen in the realisation of the churches — rock-hewn, such as those in the town of Lālibalā and its surroundings (for example Gannata Māryām), as well as of other kind (for example Yemreḥanna Krestos) — and the paintings related to the Zāg^{wē} period starting from the twelfth century, for which an increasing amount of evidence seems to emerge. Moreover, the structure of the churches has been put in closer relationship with the development of the liturgy and its specific needs (in the researches carried out by Claude Lepage, and then by Emmanuel Fritsch and Michael Gervers), which also would require a careful comparison with the Coptic and Copto-Arabic context.⁴²

The second point concerns the colophon or *subscriptio* transmitted in the manuscripts of the universally acknowledged, most important Ethiopian literary composition, that is the *Kebrā nagašt*, or the *Nobility of the Kings*, where the theme of the Israelite descent of the Ethiopian Christian monarchy and the nature of its kingship is at the core of the narrative:

In the Arabic text it is said: ‘We have turned [this book] into Arabic from a Coptic manuscript [belonging to] the throne of Mark the Evangelist, the teacher, the Father of us all. We have translated it in the four hundred and ninth year of mercy in the country of Ethiopia, in the days of Gabra Maṣkal the king, who is called Lālibalā, in the days of Abbā George, the good bishop. And God neglected to have it translated and interpreted into the speech of Abyssinia. And when I had pondered this—Why did not ‘Abal‘ez and Abalfarog who edited (*or*, copied) the book translate it? I said this: It went out in the days of Zāguā, and they did not translate it because this book says: Those who reign not being Israelites are transgressors of the Law. Had they been of the kingdom of Israel they would have edited (*or*, translated) it. And it was found in Nāzrēt.’ ‘And pray ye for me, your servant Isaac the poor man. And chide ye me not because of the incorrectness of the speech of the tongue. For I have toiled much for the glory of the country of Ethiopia, and for the going forth of the heavenly Zion, and for the glory of the King of Ethiopia. And I consulted the upright and God-loving governor Yā‘ebika ‘Egzī’ē, and he approved and said unto me, ‘Work.’ And I worked, God helping me, and He did not requite me according to my sins. And pray ye for your servant Isaac, and for those who toiled with me in the going out (*i.e.* production) of this book, for we were in sore tribulation, I, and Yamharana-‘Ab, and Ḥezba-Krestōs, and Andrew,

⁴² E. FRITSCH – M. GERVERS, *Pastophoria and Altars: Interaction in Ethiopian Liturgy and Church Architecture*, in *Aethiopica* 10 (2007), p. 7-51; M. GERVERS, *Quand la liturgie modèle les églises*, in *Religions & Histoire* 17 (2007), p. 50-59; E. FRITSCH, *The Churches of Lalibāla (Ethiopia) Witnesses of Liturgical Changes*, in *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* ser. 3^a, 5 (2008) = *Acts of the First International Congress of the Society for Oriental Liturgies (SOL) held at Collegium Orientale, Eichstätt, Bavaria, Germany, 23-28 July 2006*, II: *Communications and Seminars*, Grottaferrata, 2007, p. 69-112; *Id.*, *Ethiopian Liturgy and Church Architecture*, in *Ethiopian Review of Cultures* 14 (2011), p. 75-103; E. FRITSCH, *The Altar in the Ethiopian Ethiopian Church: History, Forms and Meanings*, in B. GROEN – ST. HAWKES-TEEPLES – ST. ALEXOPOULOS (eds.), *Inquiries into Eastern Christian Worship. Selected Papers of the Second International Congress of the Society of Oriental Liturgy. Rome, 17-21 September 2008* (*Eastern Christian Studies* 12), Leuven – Paris – Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2012, p. 443-509.

and Philip, and Maḥârî-'ab. May God have mercy upon them, and may He write their names in the Book of Life in the kingdom of heaven, with those of all the saints and martyrs for ever and ever! Amen.⁴³

To the interpretation of this colophon, which is made even more difficult and controversial by the ambiguity of some expressions, many scholars have devoted their efforts and the most different hypotheses have been advanced, ranging “from complete truthfulness to complete falsity”.⁴⁴ Since, however, the historicity of some characters quoted in the colophon can be considered ascertained (Isaac, that is Yesḥaq *nebura* 'ed of Aksum, and Yā'bika 'Egzi'), the problem still remains in understanding which models (*Vorlage*) were used for the redaction of this work, and in such a case which materials either in Coptic or Christian Arabic could have circulated and could have been used and reworked in Ethiopia to arrange the vast composite work of the *Kebra Nagašt*. This is what has been attempted in some of the most recent contributions on the theme.⁴⁵

2. ETHIOPIAN STUDIES AND COPTIC STUDIES: AN INCREASING DISTANCE

A couple of words might be said to comment on the similarities and divergences between Coptic and Ethiopian Studies. I think I can repeat here, once more, the few concluding words premised to a collection of reprinted essays intended to give a panorama of the most crucial questions in Ethiopian Christian culture and literature:

The once natural premises of philological and linguistic investigation into Ethiopian Christian culture — presupposing competency not only in Ethio-Semitic, but also in Semitic, Classical and possibly other eastern languages — are now sometimes considered of minor importance, or even disregarded as optional, in contrast to strongly emphasised “new approaches” and “innovative perspectives”. Even in the study of manuscripts, imitating the practice of other fields with radically different scholarly traditions, the last thing that scholars seem to study is the text.⁴⁶

⁴³ E.A.W. BUDGE, *The Queen of Sheba and her only son, Menyelek*, London: The Medici society, 1922, p. 228-229.

⁴⁴ P. MARRASSINI, *Kəbrä nəgəšt*, in *EAe* 3, p. 364a-368a: 366b.

⁴⁵ Cp. in particular R. BEYLOT, *La Gloire des Rois ou l'Histoire de Salomon et de la reine de Saba. Introduction, traduction et notes (Apocryphes. Collection de poche de l'AEAC 12)*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2008; P. PIOVANELLI, *The Apocryphal Legitimation of a “Solomonic” Dynasty in the Kebra Nagašt — A Reappraisal*, in *Aethiopica* 16 (2013), p. 7-44, with critical reappraisal of the recent contributions by G.W. BOWERSOCK (among the last ones), *Empires in collision in Late Antiquity (The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures)*, Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press — Historical Society of Israel, 2012; Id., *The Throne of Adulis: Red Sea Wars on the Eve of Islam (Emblems of Antiquity)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

⁴⁶ BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. xxxvi-xxxvii.

To verify this statement it is enough to have a look at the sixteen *Proceedings* of the International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies published so far, for the seventeen conferences that have taken place from 1959 in Rome at the initiative of Enrico Cerulli, at the time President of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, to 2009 in Addis Ababa, with the eighteenth conference now forthcoming in six weeks in Ethiopia again,⁴⁷ and the proceedings of the seventeenth that are still unpublished. It will be easy to realise that the space allotted to Ethiopian Studies as the study of the Ethiopian Christian culture within the broader frame of Christian Orient, especially taking into account the Christian Egyptian connections, has been dramatically reduced in the course of time. Albeit with relevant exceptions, it is most of all the question of the *approach* which causes concern, not so much that of the allotted space. Apart from the lack of any systematic periodical review or report in plenary sessions on the matter, substantiated by a corresponding broad and reliable bibliographic information, Ethiopian Christian culture tends to be more and more considered *exclusively* or *chiefly* as an autonomous phenomenon in its cultural and literary manifestations. In a way, the study of the written tradition of Ethiopia has conformed to the trend in the other branches that is strongly dominated by the so-called social sciences approach while the ground shared with Coptic and Christian Oriental studies has substantially decreased. One may well understand that it is a welcome development of political circumstances, that all people of Ethiopia and Eritrea claim that all the cultures, languages, religions of the countries be represented on a pair level along with the for-long hegemonic Christian culture at one and the same International Conference. This attitude, however, has come to project even the study of the Ethiopian Christian culture as an essentially self-sufficient object of study, with a strong stress on social, anthropological, contemporary, post-colonial, gender, women studies approach — sometimes useful to understand and enlighten phenomena so far known only from a single perspective, yet insufficient — to the point that the necessary apparatus of erudition, methodology broad cultural context has been disregarded. This means a profound change in the scientific framework, from the first conferences, where for example the topics of the Ethiopic translations or that of the hagiographic literature was dealt with by Arnold van Lantschoot, Paul Devos, Enrico Cerulli, Michel van Esbroeck and so on, and the last ones, where for example *not a single paper* considers Ethiopian literary phenomena in their possible connections with the Christian Egyptian or the broader Christian Oriental background.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ In the meanwhile, the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies has taken place in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, October 29th-November 2nd, 2012. An assessment of methodology and attitudes prevailing in this conference is out of scope here.

⁴⁸ Cp. the case of the proceedings of the 2007 conference, see H. ASPEN *et al.* (eds.), *Research in Ethiopian Studies. Selected papers of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007* (Aethiopistische Forschungen 72), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011.

It is no surprise, as I remarked above, that the question of the relationship between Ethiopian and Christian Egyptian literary production has been posed in the last decades most fruitfully by Coptologists who have also cultivated an interest for Ethiopia: I have quoted the case of Philippe Luisier and I can quote here again that of Heinzgerd Brakmann or Ugo Zanetti, and possibly others.

Of course, it will be up to the Coptologists to decide whether Ethiopia as a structural, albeit peripheral, domain of Coptic and Christian Egyptian Studies, deserves a steady tribune in the International Conferences of Coptic Studies. I have tried to show that this is the case and can strongly recommend this mutual collaboration as a way of promoting exchanges of information and perspectives on a regular basis, which is probably of joint interest. As a scholar in Ethiopian Studies, I will do everything at the best of my limited possibilities to promote a corresponding attitude and openness from within the International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies.

I will conclude by quoting some words of Enrico Cerulli, a scholar who uniquely embraced and combined the Humanities of East and West, albeit a complex figure to say the least, deeply involved at the highest level in the Italian colonial administration in Ethiopia, from 1937 as Vice-Governor of the Africa Orientale Italiana and then Governor confirmed by Benito Mussolini, Governor of Harar from 1939 to 1940 and functionary at the Ministry of Colonies till 1943, when he deserted his office. Cerulli actually spent the last years of his service writing some works exemplary for the study of Egypto-Ethiopian relationships, *Il libro etiopico dei Miracoli di Maria e le sue fonti nelle letterature del Medio Evo latino* and *Etiopi in Palestina. Storia della comunità etiopica di Gerusalemme*.⁴⁹ Cerulli was eventually accused of active participation in the fascist regime policy and of fascist factiousness, but like another scholar with a similar career such as Martino Mario Moreno, never convicted, and considered an “independent personality”, “a real scholar”, “not loyal to the fascist regime”. He claimed on his part — what Moreno could not — to have never expressed in his numerous writings not even a single word of praise or appreciation for fascism or racist policy⁵⁰ — which is actually true and quite exceptional given the circumstances — even though the question of his objective responsibility in repressions can not be ruled out so simply: in Ethiopia he was initially considered a war criminal, yet allowed in the course

⁴⁹ E. CERULLI, *Il libro etiopico dei Miracoli di Maria e le sue fonti nelle letterature del Medio Evo latino* (R. Università di Roma. Studi orientali pubblicati a cura della Scuola Orientale 1), Roma: Dott. Giovanni Bardi Editore, 1943; Id., *Etiopi in Palestina. Storia della comunità etiopica di Gerusalemme*, 2 vols. (Collezione scientifica e documentaria a cura del Ministero dell'Africa Italiana 12, 14), Roma: La Libreria dello Stato, 1943, 1947.

⁵⁰ CH. GIORGI, *L'Africa come carriera. Funzioni e funzionari del colonialismo italiano* (Studi storici Carocci 176), Roma: Carocci, 2012, p. 130, 184, 187-190.

of time to contribute to the prestigious *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*.⁵¹ The lasting legacy of Cerulli's contribution is once more demonstrated by the substantial chapter devoted to him in Karla Mallette's *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean. Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism*,⁵² where the complex figure of the scholar is presented as an exemplary model of post-Saidian Orientalist.

At the end of his paper *Punti di vista sulla storia dell'Etiopia* (that is, *Perspectives on the History of Ethiopia*) delivered in Rome at the First International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in 1959 at the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Cerulli talked about the theme of the divine Law preceding or following the Creation:

We see [...] a theme [...] that is a subject of theological and philosophical controversy in Islam at Baghdad at the peak of the Abbasid Caliphate's flowering; the theme is also taken up, in Jewish garb and adapted to the structure of Judaism, in the controversy for and against the Qaraites in Baghdad and in Egypt. In Coptic Egypt, Severus of Ashmūnayn assimilated it and discussed it in Christian garb, preserving however the memory of its Islamic and Jewish sources. From the Egypt of the Copts, the theme, readapted again, but always with traces of its preceding formulations, entered the religious culture of Ethiopia, where it received new original input and returned after centuries to cause, under the reign of Zare'a Yā'qob, the struggles and repression it had already provoked elsewhere during its long wanderings in the various regions of the East. Here once again we have not only generically in the community of ancestral Christianity, but also in the assimilation of single religious issues, yet more proof of those links between Ethiopia and Mediterranean civilisation, that are [...] a characteristic feature of Ethiopian historical and cultural development.⁵³

In this community we can see one of the strongest links between Christian Egypt and Ethiopia, in turn part of the vast late antique and medieval mediterranean world, which remains the unavoidable context for any serious investigation and proper understanding of the single cultures therein included in their mutual interconnections.

⁵¹ E. CERULLI, *Two Ethiopian Tales on the Christians of Cyprus*, in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 5/1 (1967), p. 1-9.

⁵² K. MALLETTE, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean. Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010, p. 132-161 (Chp. 5. *The Life and Times of Enrico Cerulli*). See now also A. CELLI, *Dante e l'Oriente. Le fonti islamiche nella storiografia novecentesca* (Biblioteca medievale Saggi 30), Roma: Carocci, 2013, p. 19-69 (*Gli studi di Enrico Cerulli su Dante: tra colonialismo e unità del Mediterraneo*); ID., *Gli studi di Enrico Cerulli su Dante*, in *Doctor Virtualis* 12 (2013), p. 35-73.

⁵³ E. CERULLI, *Punti di vista sulla storia dell'Etiopia*, in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici*, p. 5-28: 27; Engl. transl. *Perspectives on the History of Ethiopia*, by A. Papaconstantinou, in BAUSI, *Languages and Cultures: Ethiopian*, p. 1-25 (no. 1): 25.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Premise

The report on “Ethiopia and Coptic Studies” intends to review major points concerning the relationships between Ethiopia and Christian Egypt from the perspective of Ethiopian Studies. It is based on evidence attested in Ethiopia and in languages of Ethiopia (mainly Ethiopic). It considers in particular the religious history of Aksum and the emergence of the medieval Christian Kingdom, as well as some aspects of the Ethiopian literature. It also generally considers the interaction with the Copto-Arabic world and the phenomenon of translation and linguistic interference. General methodological questions and potential developments are also considered.

This is not, of course, an *exhaustive* bibliography and survey, even in my intentions. A sound, updated and reliable bibliographical information on each branch of Ethiopian Studies can be found in the relevant articles of the five-volume *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (see below). Out of it, I have dressed an extensive list of entries of some interest for Coptic Studies. The *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* is going to be finalised in the coming months with the publication of volume five and will consist of a total of more than 5,000 articles plus a 600-page detailed index. The articles included in volume five, however, are not considered here.

The *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* contains in particular single articles on all metropolitans for Ethiopia, who actually were in their majority Egyptian monks: these articles have not been included in the list, with a few exceptions (for example *abbā* Salāmā, that is Saint Frumentius, the first bishop). A select general introductory bibliography on the literature and culture of Christian Ethiopia, together with an anthology of essays, is found in the volume *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Ethiopian (Variorum, The Worlds of Eastern Christianity (300-1500) 4)*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012, p. xxxix-lxiii (see below).⁵⁴

Particularly noteworthy is that the bibliography does not include titles on linguistics (apart from the question of translations), epigraphy, numismatics, but also ancient history of Ethiopia in its relationship with South Arabia, the question of Judaic and Syriac influences, modern relationships between the Ethiopian and the non-Chalcedonian (or Miaphysite) Churches, magical literature, traditional exegetical literature, art history, documentary and archival texts and other related issues. All of these subjects are of minor importance in relation to the Christian Egyptian culture, even though essential for a precise understanding of Christian Ethiopia. For manuscript studies only a few titles have been mentioned, and earlier titles are easily retrievable. Recent developments on manuscript studies and text criticism in Ethiopian Studies are monitored and detailed within the framework of the European Scientific Foundation Networking Programme COMSt — Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies (see <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/ethiostudies/comst.html>). Further information is also listed in the bibliography.

⁵⁴ Further extensive bibliography on the Aksumite period in P. MARRASSINI † (a c.), *Storia e leggenda dell’Etiopia tardoantica. Le iscrizioni aksumite*, con un’appendice di R. FATTOVICH su *La civiltà aksumita: aspetti archeologici* e una nota editoriale di A. BAUSI (*Testi del Vicino Oriente antico, Letteratura etiopica* 1), Brescia: Paideia, 2014, p. 296-361.

Abbreviations

CSCO = *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*.

CE (1991) = A.S. ATIYA (ed.), *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1991.

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Gk. *ktȳma*?; 10. Eth. *nipilobonos*, *nīpilobānos* / *nīpolibonos* — Lat. *plebanus*?; 11. Eth. *pāpa/pappās* — Gk. *páppas*; 12. Eth. *pārāhi* — Coptic?; 13. Eth. *ṗarqwama* — Lat. *pergamena*?; 14. Eth. *ṗəryonin* — Gk. *períodos*?; 15. Eth. *zapidibdiq* — Gk. *hypodiákonos*?; 16. Eth. *zərāmā*, sing. *zərmā*?).

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