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RASSEGNA DI STUDI ETIOPICI – RIVISTA FONDATA DA CARLO CONTI ROSSINI

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Ai lettori

Con questo volume la *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, fondata nel 1941 da Carlo Conti Rossini, riprende le proprie pubblicazioni, interrotte nel 2013 dopo la scomparsa dell'ultimo direttore, Paolo Marrassini. La concretizzazione del nuovo progetto editoriale si deve a un gruppo di studiosi di cose etiopiche che gravita intorno all'Università di Napoli "L'Orientale", e che in questi anni ha perseguito con caparbia e convinzione il raggiungimento di un risultato non scontato, anche se chiaro fin dagli inizi. Così, questa "3ª Serie" di un periodico nato settantacinque anni fa intende riproporre ai suoi potenziali lettori uno strumento di studio scientifico delle comunità umane e delle civiltà storiche di quella porzione dell'Africa orientale che comprende regioni e Paesi oggi inclusi nella definizione corrente *Orbis Aethiopicus*. Nella riaffermazione di questa parte del programma originario della rivista trovano naturale collocazione tutte le discipline e le metodologie d'indagine che ai giorni nostri caratterizzano le scienze umane: dall'archeologia all'etnografia, dalla filologia alla linguistica, dalla storia all'antropologia, dallo studio delle letterature a quello delle arti, delle scienze e delle religioni.

Eppure, accingendoci a restituire regolarità alle uscite annuali della *Rassegna*, non possiamo fare a meno di ricordare anche le difficoltà e le sfide cui andiamo incontro. Se il contesto storico e culturale dell'Europa di oggi non sembra offrire sponde rassicuranti a quanti intendono dedicarsi alla ricerca scientifica in generale e agli studi umanistici in particolare, nella tumultuosa realtà contemporanea la maggior conoscenza delle comunità dell'Africa nel loro divenire storico s'impone come un'esigenza non più rinunciabile. L'emergere di nuove soggettività politiche, i conflitti per il possesso di risorse essenziali, i fenomeni migratori transcontinentali – in sé oggetto di altri studi e di altre competenze, che non rientrano tra le finalità di questo periodico – risultano pienamente comprensibili solo a prezzo di una conoscenza non superficiale dei processi storici che han portato al costituirsi delle situazioni attuali. E ciò vale in particolar modo per una regione storico-geografica, quella 'etiopica' appunto, che vanta una storia lunghissima e un'articolazione culturale e linguistica fra le più complesse e variegata esistenti al mondo.

Sulla soglia di questa ripresa di un discorso di antica data, adattato e aggiornato secondo esigenze proprie del nostro tempo, piace esprimere l'auspicio che questo strumento di approfondimento e condivisione delle conoscenze scientifiche contribuisca a consolidare rapporti paritari e amichevoli fra l'Europa e i Paesi le cui culture sono oggetto dei nostri studi. Di ciò saranno testimonianza il numero e la costanza dei contributi di studiosi africani che saranno pubblicati sulla rivista, non meno che il bollettino delle attività didattiche e scientifiche dei centri accademici in cui si coltivano gli studi di etiopistica, ivi inclusi quelli del Corno d'Africa.

Infine, sia permesso rendere un omaggio intenso e sincero a quanti, da Carlo Conti Rossini a Martino Mario Moreno, da Lanfranco Ricci a Paolo Marrassini, con insuperata competenza e capacità han diretto la *Rassegna* nell'arco di tre quarti di secolo, e insieme ringraziare i vertici delle due istituzioni culturali e accademiche, Istituto per l'Oriente e Università di Napoli "L'Orientale", che in questi anni non hanno mai cessato di confidare nella ripartenza testimoniata dall'uscita di questo volume.

Il Direttore

To the readers

Starting from this issue, the *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, established in 1941 by Carlo Conti Rossini, resumes its publication interrupted in 2013 after the demise of its last Director, Paolo Marrassini. The current editorial project is headed by a group of researchers in Ethiopian studies pivoting around the Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”. In the past years, these scholars have stubbornly and whole-heartedly sought to achieve a demanding, but well defined result. The objective of this “3rd Series” of a periodical born seventy-five years ago is to provide potential readers with an instrument for the scientific study of regions and countries belonging to the East African sector, today referred to as *Orbis Aethiopicus*. By reaffirming this part of the original programme of the journal, all the disciplines and research methodologies typical of the humanities are followed: from archaeology to ethnography, from philology to linguistics, from history to anthropology, and from the study of literature to the history of art, science and religion.

Yet, as we prepare the regular publication of the *Rassegna*, we cannot help but recognize the difficulties and the challenges we are facing. Even though the historical and cultural context of today’s Europe does not always support those who devote themselves to scientific research (particularly in the field of humanities), in this day and age knowledge of African communities and civilizations in their historical development is an unavoidable necessity. The emergence of new political subjects, conflicts for the control of basic resources, trans-continental migrations – topics reserved to different studies and competencies, and therefore not covered by this periodical – are fully comprehensible only through an extensive knowledge of the historical processes which have led to the present situations. This inclusiveness is particularly true for the ‘Ethiopian’ region, boasting a very long history and a very complicated cultural and linguistic articulation.

On the eve of revisiting a longstanding matter, adapted and updated according to the necessities of our times, we hope that this instrument of deepening and sharing scientific gains will contribute to the strengthening of equal and friendly relationships between Europe and the countries whose cultures are the object of ‘Ethiopian’ studies.

Proof of this expectation will be the number and the regularity of the contributions from African scholars, together with the bulletin of didactic and scientific activities from academic centres, including those of the Horn of Africa, where these studies are nurtured.

Finally, we want to pay a sincere and intense tribute to those – from Carlo Conti Rossini to Martino Mario Moreno, from Lanfranco Ricci to Paolo Marrassini – who previously directed the *Rassegna* with unsurpassed competence and capability, while at the same time thanking the leaders of the two cultural and academic institutions, the Istituto per l'Oriente and the Università di Napoli "L'Orientale", which have never wavered in providing their dedicated support to the new beginning witnessed by the publication of this volume.

The Director

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THE STEMMATIC METHOD AND ETHIOPIAN PHILOLOGY: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

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Abstract

Since the Eighties of the 20th cent., the studies in Ethiopian philology entered a new phase. The edition of Aksumite and Medieval Gə‘əz literary works according to the universally accepted rules of the textual criticism (the stemmatic method) is now a commonly admitted practice. Moreover, the preliminary knowledge of the manuscript traditions, starting from the restoration of their lost archetypes, allows one to establish solid bases for the historical reconstruction too. Here two 14th-15th cent. case studies (the so-called *Christian Romance* of Alexander and the *Vita* of Ewostatewos) are presented to show the pivotal role of this philological approach in the contemporary research.

Keywords

Ethiopic manuscripts – *Romance of Alexander* – *Vita* of Ewostatewos – textual criticism

The philological enquiry into the Gə‘əz manuscripts, namely the analysis aimed at detecting and emending the orthographic and grammatical mistakes every codex unavoidably transmits, traces back to the first times of the systematic study of the ancient Ethiopian literature. Since the second half of the 19th to the first half of the 20th cent., the hard work done by scholars like Hermann Zotenberg, William Wright and August Dillmann (just to mention a few) in cataloguing the manuscripts kept in the libraries of Paris, London, Berlin and Oxford allowed the development of refined linguistic competencies. On account of this, the founders of the Ethiopian philology in its broader sense succeeded in correcting the texts in some passages requesting a critical intervention for the re-establishment of the sense.

This emending activity, most often limited to the critical work upon the unique manuscript adopted case by case, has fully characterized the first phase of the Ethiopian studies, particularly the researches of scholars like Ignazio Guidi and Carlo Conti Rossini (just to mention two representatives of the Italian studies). Indefatigable editors of texts, they wisely practiced the art of *emendatio ope ingenii* to reconstruct what they considered to be hidden behind the disfigured and corrupted aspect of the codices put at the basis of their researches. In some cases, these indisputable masters of the late 19th and early 20th cent. Ethiopian studies took into account also the *emendatio ope codicum*, every time the quality of the base manuscript could be verified through the comparison with a second or a third witness, in order to reconstruct the original text by their own sagacity. Thus, until relatively recent times, the mental horizon of the editors of the Gə'əz literary works didn't include the phases of the *recensio* and *collatio*, namely the two operations of the 'Lachmann's method' which, leading to the building of the *stemma codicum*, could make the re-establishment of the original text partially mechanical.

We can still recognize a pre-Lachmannian procedure in several modern editions prepared without opening to the methodology of textual criticism, particularly leaving out the crucial phase of the *recensio-collatio*, and consequently gaining unsatisfactory results even at the level of the *emendatio*, both mechanical or by conjecture. The limits of the planning of these editorial works are rather serious. Those who follow over-simplified ways of treating the ancient texts, like the 'base manuscript' or the 'best manuscript' methods, fail in catching that the core of a critical edition doesn't consist in selecting and evaluating the single witnesses, but in detecting the relationships among the manuscript families. Only through this approach we can apply to the selection of the variants a real majority criterion, and – according to logical rules – we can give some reliability to the reconstruction, even when the established text doesn't necessarily coincide with that of one of the survived codices.

As long as one keeps to the level of the correction *ope ingenii*, or of the choice *ope codicum*, selecting a pretended good variant on the basis of the analysis of some witnesses, without the effort of reconstructing the stemmatic relationships (as it was a question of checking the quality of a number of mass-produced items to detect their manufacture defects), there is

no other tool of investigation but the scholarly skill of distinguishing case by case (*iudicium*). Only applying rules reasonably allowing to recognize the innovations introduced by unfaithful scribes in the various stages of the tradition, and received by groups of manuscripts because of their dependency from common modified ancestors, we have the opportunity of selecting among the variants on the basis of less subjective criteria.

As universally acknowledged, the Ethiopian philology in its text-critical meaning is a discipline which took its first steps in the second post-war period and progressively reinforced its foundations since the Eighties of the 20th cent., chiefly under the impulse of the late Paolo Marrassini, to whom the present generation of scholars is greatly indebted (Bausi 2013; Lusini 2014). Those who in the past decades coherently applied the principles of textual criticism to the Gə'əz texts have the merit to have shown that the reconstruction of the archetype on the basis of the comparison among groups of genetically related codices is the one and only way of preparing reliable editions in the Ethiopian case too. This procedure is the heart of the stemmatic method, starting from the identification of the manuscript families on the basis of the shared errors and culminating with the application to them, not to the separate codices, of the majority criterion. In other words, there is no valid reason to prepare editions of Ethiopic texts leaving out of consideration universal principles and rules related to the phenomenology of the manuscript tradition of the ancient texts, all the ancient texts, quite apart from the linguistic and cultural context to which they belong (Marrassini 1981: XIX-XX). For the same reason the modern Ethiopian philology shares with all the world philologies a series of problems, upon which scholars are obliged to reflect, as it happens since many decades in the framework of Classical, Romance, German philology, and so on.

First, it is necessary to distinguish between the tradition of the Ethiopic texts produced in the Late Antiquity (4th-7th cent.), and therefore to be called simply 'Aksumite', and that of the works composed after the rise of the Solomonids (13th cent.), conventionally referred to as 'Medieval'. Having different intrinsic features, the two textual *corpora*, separated by a space of time of at least six hundred years, have been shaped by two different historical processes greatly influencing the state of the manuscripts. The tradition of the Aksumite texts (essentially those which proved to be depending from Greek models) presents a full analogy with the transmission

of the Classical texts, both for the space of almost one thousand years separating the composition of the works from their surviving witnesses, and for the existence of a wide and long interruption heavily conditioning the preservation of the texts. As far as we can judge on the basis of the empirical data, between the 7th and the 13th cent. the copying activity underwent a dramatic slowing-down, and this stoppage allowed a very limited number of codices from Late Antiquity to survive and to serve as a model for the Medieval archetypes. After the rise of the Solomonids the resumption of the writing activity must have been frantic, in proportion to the number of ecclesiastic institutions established on the initiative of the sovereigns of the new dynasty. As a matter of fact, a huge part of the 13th-15th cent. material production was lost because of the 16th cent. events, but before this second historical caesura occurred, the flourishing of manuscript witnesses must have been very intensive, together with the display of a series of interesting phenomena appearing through the study of some sample texts.

As Alessandro Bausi pointed out in several occasions, the tradition of the Ethiopic texts presents considerable elements of stability, and this circumstance creates the best conditions for the application of Lachmann's reconstructive method, based on the evaluation of errors and shared innovations. First of all, the Ethiopian copyists applied a rather conservative attitude toward their models, most often renouncing to change or to correct the received text. Then, in the Medieval Gə'əz one cannot distinguish remarkable diachronic variations, because the language remained considerably uniform through the historical phases. Finally, even when different recensions of a work can be isolated, is rather clear to which of them every manuscript belongs (Bausi 2006: 547-8; 2008: 31-32; 2010: 143a; 2014: 59-60; cf. Marrassini 1987: 354-5).

However, if we consider that in several cases between the archetype of an Ethiopic text and its witnesses of the first generation (and till now available) apparently a very short time elapsed, sometimes no more than a few decades, we can understand the strong and almost irresistible temptation to give an ancient manuscript (particularly in case it is the most ancient of the whole tradition) a special trustworthiness and reliability. Instead, the study of the Ethiopic texts confirms not only Giorgio Pasquali's argument *recentiores, non deteriores* (Pasquali 1934: 43-108) but also Sebastiano Timpanaro's demonstration that *disturbances of the manuscript tradition* (Timpanaro

1981: 157-87) and various phenomena of contamination took place since an early age, with considerable consequences on the reconstruction of the archetype's text.

As an example, let's consider the 10 mss. transmitting the text of the so-called *Christian Romance* of Alexander, a 14th cent. original Ethiopian account of the fabulous deeds accomplished by the Christianized Macedonian king, possibly composed during the reign of 'Amdä Šəyon (1314-44), well before the translation from Arabic of the better known Pseudo-Callisthenes' work (Lusini 1989 [1991]; 2004). It has been suggested that all the witnesses depend on one and only archetype because of a long repetition occurring at the end of § 5 and at the beginning of § 7 (Fig. 1).

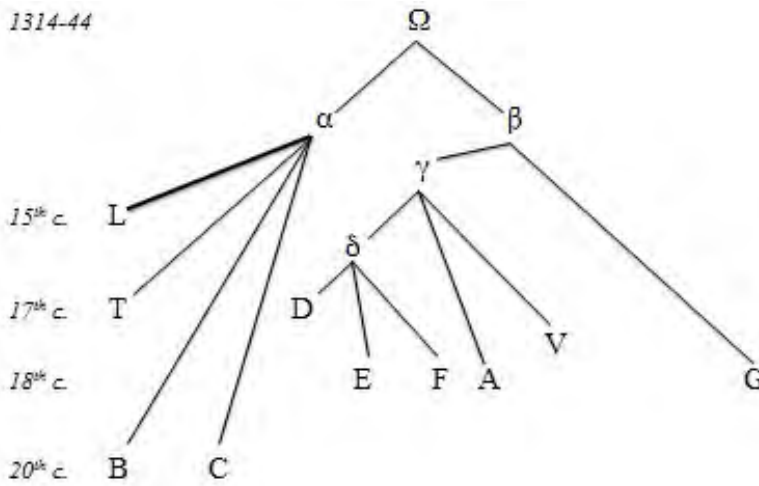


Fig. 1 - A hypothesis for the *stemma codicum* of the *Zena Askandər*

From this archetype a bipartite stemma derives (sub-archetypes α and β). The branch starting from β counts 6 mss. dating back to the 17th and 18th cent., characterized by two ramifications (sub-archetypes γ and δ) easily recognizable through the presence of frequent and univocal conjunctive errors. The branch starting from α counts 4 mss., of which two very recent (BC), one dating back to the 17th cent. (T) and only one rather old (L), the well-known Rome, Accademia dei Lincei C.R. 5, coming from the Ḥamasen region (Eritrea), to be dated – thanks to the colophon and the paleographic

evidence – to the years of the reign of Zār'a Ya'eqob (1434-68), possibly to 1443-44 (Strelcyn 1976: 17-21).

The position of L within the stemma is guaranteed by some conjunctive errors shared with BCT, to be attributed to the sub-archetype α . At the same time in many passages this witness shows high-level variants unexplainable with its stemmatic position and putting it aside within both the branch to which it belongs and the whole manuscript tradition. Particularly, along the whole narration there are frequent passages in which L is the only one reporting 1) textual segments accidentally skipped by all the remaining manuscripts, 2) cases of *lectio difficilior*, and 3) genuine variants completely misunderstood by the rest of the tradition. Although some of these variants and errors have a typical polygenetic nature, their frequency is amazing. Their systematic presence on both branches of the manuscript tradition imposes to attribute them to the archetype. Since – as we said – L certainly depends on the branch starting from α because of the conjunctive errors already commented, a crucial problem arises (Fig. 2).

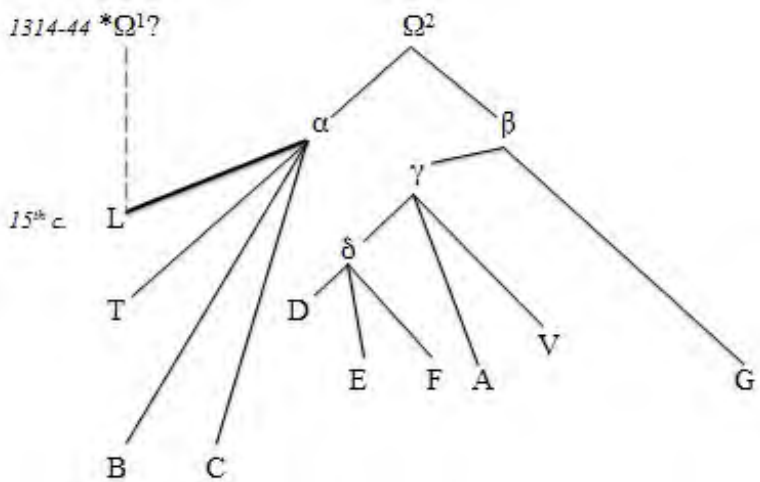


Fig. 2 - A new hypothesis for the *stemma codicum* of the Zena Āskandār

To explain how L could depend on α , though keeping by itself a number of genuine variants already corrupted by the archetype, we have to call upon the effects of an old and wide *extra-stemmatic contamination*, defined by Sebastiano Timpanaro as a ‘contamination deriving from manuscripts that do

not form part of the tradition that has survived more or less completely', or 'the possibility that a copyist [...] might have healed errors or filled lacunas not by conjecture and not even by checking one of the other witnesses that have survived to our day, but by collating a manuscript of a completely different branch or tradition which was later lost' (Timpanaro 1981: 179). Through this process the errors and the inconsistencies of the archetype (and consequently of the sub-archetype α) were indirectly remedied by L, whose copyist repaired them thanks to the collation with the text of a lost model of high quality, possibly a second source of tradition (a different archetype?), whose existence must be postulated because of the frequency of the good variants reported by L.

A picture like that leads to some reflections over a phenomenon which possibly affected several medieval traditions, chronologically concentrated in the time space separating the rise of the Solomonids (1270) from the reign of Ləbnā Dəngəl (1508-40), with a special frequency in the period going from 'Amdä Šəyon (1314-44) to Zär'a Ya'əqob (1434-68). At the beginnings of some traditions, especially in the case of hagiographic texts, more than one copy of the original manuscript could have been written, with the aim of giving to the text a rapid diffusion, particularly when the new work was composed in the *scriptorium* of a prestigious monastic center, willing to impose its authority over other institutions. Thus, one could find a better explanation for the fact that some witnesses, though belonging to a well-defined branch of the tradition, still keep good variants apparently disappeared not only in the sub-archetype on which they depend, but even in the rest of the tradition, because they were attainable through the collation with a second archetype of higher quality.

A different phenomenon, yet well documented, is represented by the rewriting of the works, involving the fulfillment of several recensions of the same text. We are not referring to the survival of a more or less residual Aksumite text flanked by the medieval one (*post* 1270), namely a work originally translated from Greek, to whom a second version from an Arabic model was added (a process thoroughly investigated in some fundamental essays by Alessandro Bausi, pivoting particularly on the synodic and the hagiographic literature). Here we are mentioning the fact that in the Middle Ages a number of texts were several times re-elaborated and rewritten, in coincidence with relevant historical and religious events requesting a rethinking of the textual form at that time circulating.

In a case like that we must take into consideration a pluralistic and dynamic concept of the archetype, namely the idea that the text tradition pivots around several starting points following one another. An emblematic case is given by the *Gädlä Ewostatewos*, the hagiographic *Vita* of the Tigrean monk born in 1274, who raised a dramatic doctrinal controversy about the Two-Sabbaths observance (Saturday and Sunday). To him the metropolite, a part of the clergy and the same king strongly opposed. By an order of 'Amdä Şəyon, Ewostatewos was forced to take shelter in the regions north of the Märäb (Eritrea) and finally to abandon Ethiopia, in 1337. After a long journey through Egypt, Palestine and Cyprus he ended his days on the southern costs of Turkey (Little Armenia), in 1353.

The 9 mss. which have been investigated up to now clearly proved to belong to one of the three separate recensions of the text, R α , R β and R γ , differing both in form and content, and they show significant changes in some key-episodes of the narrative (Lusini 1993; 1990 [1996]). The first editor (Turaiev 1905), immediately caught the complexity of the situation (Turaiev 1906), but he renounced a correct Lachmannian approach, namely the phase of *recensio-collatio*, and he reached the conclusion that the three recensions had a common origin (*tribus modis ex uno fonte fluentibus, sed haud parum inter se discrepantibus, acta sancti in illis [sc. codicibus] narrata sunt*), even if admitting that each of them was deserving a separate translation (*quae cum ita sint, tres recensiones separatim latine vertendas esse censeo*).

The systematic analysis of the available manuscripts allows one to reconstruct a well-defined picture of the steps through which this hagiographic text was several times re-elaborated and consequently an hypothesis of the relationships among the three recensions. An attempt to summarize and schematize the relationships among manuscripts and recensions is given in a diagram, from which it clearly appears that we are dealing with three different texts generated in completely different historical moments (Fig. 3).

All the mss. of R α derive from one and only archetype and the tradition is clearly divided in two different branches. A considerable amount of conjunctive errors allows one to reconstruct the two sub-archetypes: α as the ancestor of London, BL Orient. 702, 18th cent. (A) and Rome, Bibl. Ap. Vaticana, Aeth. 46 (B), 15th cent.; β as the forefather of EMMI 1636, 17th

cent. (C) and Veroli, Bibl. Giovardiana, Et. 9, 18th cent. (D). All the mss. of R β contain the erroneous repetition of several lines of text narrating the meeting between the saint and the Armenian patriarch (before and after the episode of the appearance of Ewostatewos to Sälome), where R α has a text without the same repetition. This proves that R α predates R β . Moreover, whenever between the two branches of R α an opposition of variants occurs, the mss. of R β agree with C and D. This allows one to conclude that the latter branch was the textual model from which R β issued. Finally, all the mss. of R γ show a lot of abbreviations of the text of R β , from which R γ is clearly derived.

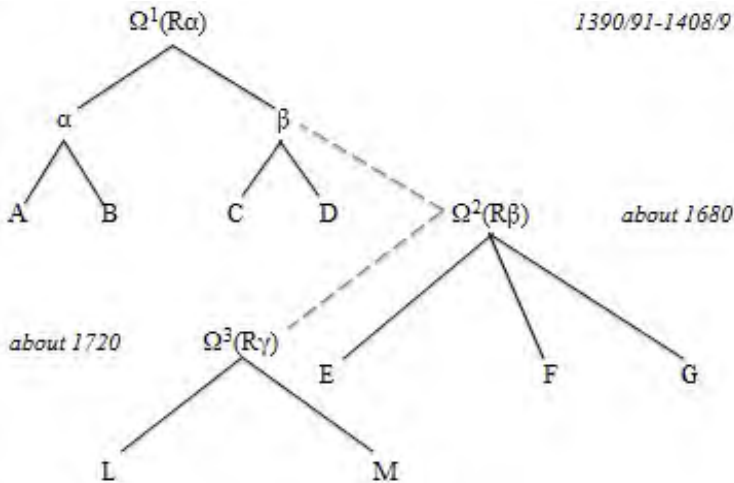


Fig. 3 - The three recensions of the *Gädlä Ewostatewos*

It is a well-known fact that the followers of the pre-Lachmannian (i.e. anti-stemmatic) Ethiopian philology often expressed their aversion for the conceptual framework here exploited. By the way, this has nothing to do with the solid reasons inspiring the anti-Lachmannian Joseph Bédier in the first half of the 20th cent. (Bédier 1928). Yet, it was an attitude dictated by both the prejudicial intention of rejecting every methodological updating of the Ethiopian studies, and the not too hidden desire of making their researches a field totally immune from a fresh wind of rationalism. In any case, that refusal must be pushed away not only because methodologically unmotivated, but also because it is harmful to the historical reconstruction.

In a case like the *Gädlä Ewostatewos* the textual criticism is the unavoidable premise for the study of the history of the tradition, and the latter offers the only trustworthy path through which one can proceed toward the reconstruction of the facts.

As a matter of fact, each of the three recensions of the *Gädlä Ewostatewos* can be dated specifically to a crucial moment of the Ethiopian history between Middle Ages and Modern Times. *Ra* (*recensio antiqua*) was certainly composed in the Eritrean monastery of Däbrä Maryam (Särawe), the religious center where the followers of the saint built up their first hagiographic traditions, and it is to be dated between 1390/91 and 1408/09, when the abbot was Täwäldä Mädhən. They were the last times of the Eritrean exile of the *däqiqä Ewostatewos*, begun in 1337 with the ban pronounced by ‘Amdä Šəyon against the Tigrean monk, and closed by the return of Filəppos to Däbrä Bizän, during the reign of Dawit II (1379/80-1413). In this delicate phase of the relationships between the Ethiopian Crown and the most radical part of the Tigrean clergy we can set the first attempts toward the overcoming of the rift tracing back to ‘Amdä Šəyon. Therefore, the building of the *Gädlä Ewostatewos* offers a literary reflection of the new mood established during the reign of the nephew Dawit. In Rβ we recognize the traces of a rewriting owed to the *revival* of Ewostatewos’ cult, when the controversy between Täwaḥədočč and Qəbatočč reached its apex, in the last quarter of the 17th century. Ry can be dated later, in the first quarter of the 18th cent., when the doctrine of Qəbatočč, having Ewostatewos as their spiritual model, ultimately prevailed.

Although the two case studies here presented have their own specificities, the same could be said for many other text traditions. The record of cases is now growing, thanks to the multiplication of data allowed by impressive research projects, particularly those undertaken by the scholars affiliated to the University of Hamburg. Consequently, it would be instructive for both the philologists and the historians to know more and more the behavior of the different Ethiopic traditions. Typifying the tendencies one could reach also a higher level of awareness about the text transmission in the Ethiopian context, and this would be of the greatest importance for the improvement of the editorial technique too.

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