

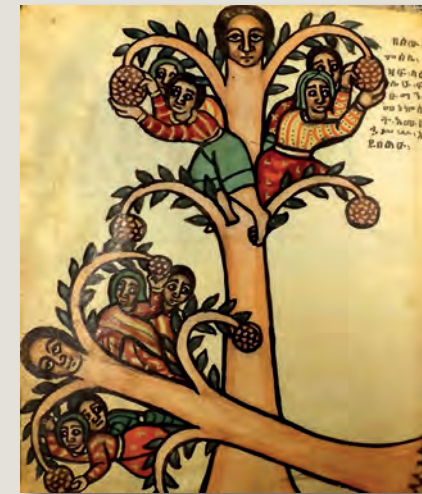
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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI "L'ORIENTALE"

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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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In copertina: Biblioteca Forteguerriana (Pistoia), ms. Martini etiop. 5, *Apocalisse di Maria* (*Ra'ayä Maryam*), f. 134v (gentile concessione; foto L. Mazzei)

FRUMENTIUS IN THE ETHIOPIC SOURCES: MYTHOPOEIA AND TEXT-CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS¹

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Abstract

The widely known account on the Christianization of Ethiopia by Frumentius is transmitted in a variety of Ethiopic sources. Among these, the homily *De Frumentio* for 18th Taḥṣāś (so far preserved in two manuscripts only, neither of which is later than the 14th cent.) is here explored in a text-critical perspective. A set of peculiar readings and instances of misreading confirms that the literary core of the homily originates from an Aksumite translation made upon Socrates Scholasticus’ Greek version of the account. In addition, the relationship between the homily and the *Sənkəssar* commemorative notice for 26th Ḥamle, composed in the 16th cent., is here investigated and interpreted within the context of reuse and reworking of the earlier textual heritage under new literary forms and for different expectations.

Keywords

Frumentius – Ethiopic manuscripts – Christianization of Ethiopia – textual criticism

The present article focuses on the well-known account of the official introduction of Christianity in Ethiopia² in the 4th cent. AD and how it was accomplished by Frumentius, or *abba* Sälama Käsate Bərhan, the ‘Revealer of Light’. The account is habitually treated in each general presentation of the history of Christian Ethiopia, and many valuable scholarly contributions have been devoted to the issue. This study aims to give a text-critical look at the available documentation and to face a

¹ I am grateful to Prof Alessandro Bausi for his helpful comments on a preliminary draft of this paper.

² Also known amongst scholars as the ‘first Christianization’ of the country, the second having proceeded from the missionary activity of the Nine Saints during the 5th-6th cent.

number of questions concerning the mutual relationships between the Ethiopic versions of the story.³

The narrative is widely known. Meropius, a philosopher from Tyre on the Lebanese coast, is travelling through the Red Sea with two young brothers belonging to his own family, Frumentius and Aedesius. The scope of the journey is to visit the land of India in competition with the philosopher Metrodorus, who had previously sojourned in the region. On their way back home, while laying over on the African shore of the Red Sea, Meropius and the two brothers are assaulted by ‘enemies’ or ‘barbarians’, variously labelled in the sources, as it was usual whenever the truce between the Romans and the ‘Indians’, i.e. the Ethiopians, was broken⁴. The entire crew, including Meropius, is killed. The two youths are spared by virtue of their age, and brought to the local king. They enter the royal court and are assigned specific duties: Frumentius is given the charge of keeping the royal archives, Aedesius is appointed cupbearer. After the king’s death, they are asked by the widow queen to educate her little child, designated as the new ruler, i.e. ‘Ezana. During this time, Frumentius manages to find Christian merchants in the ἐμπόριον on the Red Sea, which is in all likelihood to be identified with the trading-station of Adulis. An oratory for praying is built and some locals are successfully catechized. When the king is grown up, Frumentius and Aedesius are allowed to make their way back to their homeland. So does Aedesius, who reaches Tyre and is eventually ordained priest. Frumentius heads to Alexandria and urges the archbishop Athanasius to have a bishop consecrated and missionaries sent to Ethiopia. Athanasius appoints Frumentius himself bishop and sends him back to Ethiopia. Once returned to the land he had long sojourned, Frumentius converts many Ethiopians and propagates Christianity throughout the country.

³ The subject has been in the focus of scholarly attention since the 19th cent.; see Dillmann (1880: 13 ff.), Conti Rossini (1928: 146 ff.), Hennig (1944), Ullendorff (1949), Sergew Hable Sellassie (1972: 98 ff.), Thelamon (1981), Dombrowski (1981), Brakmann (1994: 67 ff.), Fridman (2015). A detailed presentation of the versions of the tradition is provided by Marrassini (2014: 53 ff.).

⁴ On the nature and the violation of the *foedus* with the Romans see Fiaccadori (2004: 119 f.) and Fiaccadori (2010: 485b).

The literary sources

The tradition is transmitted by numerous authors, whom I shall briefly introduce here.⁵ A first category of literary sources is represented by the Latin and Greek ecclesiastical histories. As often recognized, the oldest account, in which the others are grounded, is reported by Rufinus of Aquileia.⁶ His version of the Christianization of Ethiopia is perhaps based upon the corresponding passage in the lost chronicle of Gelasius of Caesarea, or not unlikely directly upon Aedesius' words, whom Rufinus met in Palestine.⁷ Rufinus' version is considered as the source of other 5th-cent. Byzantine *Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. The most pre-eminent are those of Gelasius of Cyzicus (*Hist. Eccl.* I; Schwartz, Mommsen 1908: 971 f.), Socrates of Constantinople or Socrates Scholasticus (*Hist. Eccl.* I, 19; Périchon, Maraval 2004: 188 ff.), Sozomen (*Hist. Eccl.* II, 24; Festugière *et al.* 2004: 328 ff.), and Theodoret of Cyrrihus (*Hist. Eccl.* I, 23; Martin, Canivet 2006: 288 ff.). One more document of crucial importance is the letter sent by emperor Constantius II to the Ethiopian kings 'Ezana and Sazanas in 356/357 and embedded by archbishop Athanasius in his *Apologia ad Constantium* (Brennecke, Heil, Von Stockhausen 2006: 304 f.; cf. Szymusiak 1958: 125 f.).

A second category of sources is represented by the Ethiopic versions of the story. The most relevant are the following:

1. The commemorative notice encompassed in the Ethiopic *Sənkəssar* (Synaxarium) for 26th Ḥamle, first published and recalled to attention by August Dillmann.⁸ The *Sənkəssar* was translated from the Copto-Arabic Synaxarium at the end of the 14th cent., but the entry at issue is only extant in the manuscripts of the second recension of the work (the so-called 'Vulgate'). Accordingly, it must have been added to the hagiographical-liturgical collection during the second half of the 16th cent., at the time the *Sənkəssar* was revised.⁹

⁵ A presentation of the documents is exhaustively given in Marrassini (2014: 53-60).

⁶ *Hist. Eccl.* I 9-10; English translation in Munro-Hay (1991: 203 f.).

⁷ Sed ipso Edesio Tyri presbitero postmodum facto (...) referente cognovimus (Rufinus, *Hist. Eccl.* I, 10).

⁸ Dillmann (1866: 33 f.), German translation in Dillmann (1880: 14 f., n. 2). Edited by Guidi (1910: 427-29) with French translation. English translation in Budge (1928: 1164 f.).

⁹ The second recension of the *Sənkəssar* was compiled between 1563 and 1581, see Colin (1988).

2. The homily in honour of Frumentius for 18th Taḥśás (in short *De Frumentio*). The text, only transmitted in a very small set of archaic homiliaries, has been edited by Getatchew Haile (1979). I shall extensively present this source further down.

3. The *Gädlä Abrəha wä-Ašbəha* (hereafter GAA), containing the legendary *Vita* of the two saintly brothers kings Abrəha and Ašbəha. The existence of this still unpublished work was first signalled by Carlo Conti Rossini (1922: 3). The hagiography, preserved in few witnesses, amongst which ms. Rome, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, C.R. 19 (Strelcyn 1976: 67 ff.) is of uncertain dating, but an early proposal has been convincingly questioned.¹⁰

4. The *Mäšhafä məštir* ('Book of the Mystery', hereafter MM), completed by Giyorgis of Sägla in 1424.¹¹ It is maintained that the Ethiopian author made use of ancient literary material for his theological work. An exemplar of this book has to be the 'livro muito antigo, que se guarda na igreja de Agçum' collected by the Portuguese Jesuit Pedro Páez.¹²

5. The Däbrä Libanos redaction of the *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot* ('*Vita* of Täklä Haymanot', hereafter GTH), composed in the Shoan monastery in 1515.¹³ The version included in the *Vita* assigns a special role to the priest Ĕnbarim, ancestor of the famous Ethiopian saint.

6. The *Gädlä Abunä Sälama* ('*Vita* of Abunä Sälama', hereafter GAS). A synopsis of this work (Schneider 1987) is to date available from a 20th-cent. codex from Ĕnda Abunä Sälama (Tamben, Təgray). A second witness has been recently collected in the church library of Romanat Qəddus Mika'el (Ĕndārta, Təgray).¹⁴ Moreover, the text of the *gädl* has been lately edited in Addis Ababa with an Amharic translation (N.K. 2005/06).

¹⁰ See Hummel (2016), who has shown that the *Vita* was composed in the mid-19th cent. A summary of the plot of the *gädl* is provided in Marrassini (1999).

¹¹ Text in Yaḳob Beyene (1990a: 120f.); translation in Yaḳob Beyene (1990b: 72f.). The passage concerning Frumentius had already been translated by Conti Rossini (1948: 27 f.).

¹² Páez's *História da Etiópia*, written in 1622, is edited in Beccari (1905: 351 f.). An Italian translation of the passage is given in Conti Rossini (1928: 152). On the identity of Páez's account with the MM see Marrassini (2014: 54).

¹³ Esteves Pereira (1899: 9 f.). Edition by Budge (1906: 242), from ms. London, BL Orient. 723.

¹⁴ Ms. Ethio-SPaRe RQM-042. The manuscript has been digitized within the frame of the Ethio-SPaRe project (2009-2015), ERC Starting Grant 240720, headed by Dr. Denis Nonsitsin and operating at the Hiob Ludolf Center for Ethiopian Studies (HLCES), Hamburg University.

7. A version of the story is also reported in the so-called ‘Book of the legends’ of *əččäge* Filəppos, a manuscript from the church of Maḥdärä Maryam (Bəgämdär), recited by memory by a blind *däbtära* to Antoine d’Abbadie and later published by Carlo Conti Rossini.¹⁵

Other works briefly mention Fruventius or *abba* Sälama and his role in the conversion of Ethiopia, for instance the 18th-cent. *Short Chronicle* of the kings of Ethiopia and the *Vita* of Märqorewos of Däbrä Dəmaḥ. However, these documents provide too scarce information for the period at issue, and have not been taken into consideration here.¹⁶

The homily *De Fruventio*

As the preceding overview shows, the Ethiopian dossier is fairly intricate. Even though the account substantially agrees with the Greek and Latin sources, a number of aspects remain unsolved, and an adequate understanding of the mutual relationships amongst the versions is still far from being achieved.

The present contribution will privilege the homily *De Fruventio* as a starting point. The scope of this section is to explore the structure of this piece of literature in a text-critical perspective. Criteria currently applied in text criticism, like the crucial pre-eminence given to the non-polygenetic shared innovations, have been implemented as key devices in order to provide a genealogical contextualization of the sources under analysis.

The homily *De Fruventio* is extant in two witnesses only, both microfilmed by the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library project. Both are collections of homilies arranged according to the commemoration day in which the readings are publicly recited.

¹⁵ Conti Rossini (1917: 704), from ms. Paris, BnF Abb. 270, col. 187.

¹⁶ *Abba* Sälama is also recorded and commemorated in the Ethiopian liturgical chant tradition. The veneration towards the ‘Revealer of Light’ must be old, since hymnodical compositions dedicated to him are extant in the earliest exemplars of chant books known, i.e. ms. EMMML no. 7078 from Betä Giyorgis (Lalibäla), ff. 10v, 16r, and in the pre-14th century manuscript fragments preserved in Däbrä Šahl in Gära’alta. On these leaves, particularly valuable also for their palaeographical features and orthographic deviations, see Nosnitsin (2016). I express my gratitude towards Dr. Denis Nosnitsin for having shown me his photographic documentation.

1. Ms. EMMML no. 1763 is the renowned homiliary from Däbrä Ḥayq Estifanos (Wällo), dated 1336/37 or 1339/40 (Getatchew Haile, Macomber 1981: 218 ff.). The text of the homily is contained on fols. 84^{va}-86^{ra} and is the source of Getatchew Haile's edition in 1979. In the present contribution the witness will be given *siglum* A.

2. Ms. EMMML no. 8509, still uncatalogued, is another archaic homiliary preserved in Ṭana Qirqos (Bägemdär). The codex, dated to 14th cent. by Gianfranco Fiaccadori¹⁷ and largely unexplored, has not survived undamaged. The script exhibits palaeographical features that support an early dating, as well as a variety of orthographic peculiarities. The homily, contained on fols. 22^{rb}-23^{rb}, is unedited. It is given *siglum* B.

The history of this work is unknown. Its origin has never been properly investigated. A direct reliance upon later sources, e.g. the MM, the GTH or the *Sənkəssar* notice, has to be ruled out for apparent reasons, since the latter were composed one or two centuries after the dated witness of the *De Frumentio*. A cursory look at the text arrangement licenses to ask whether a special connection with one of the Latin or Greek authors can be singled out. Although a certain proximity to Socrates Scholasticus' account has been observed (Getatchew Haile 1979: 310), a distinctive correlation has never been demonstrated.

Firstly, a link to another Byzantine historiographer, i.e. Theodoret of Cyrillus, has to be dismissed, since the latter omits crucial details such as the name of philosopher Meropius and the duties bestowed by the king to Frumentius and Aedesius, which both occur in the *De Frumentio* and in a number of other versions. In fact, these omissions play the same role of separative errors in the text-critical reconstructive approach. As one can not reasonably expect a later copyist to successfully rectify those omissions by conjecture, it seems most unlikely that Theodoret's account was the predecessor of those versions where such narrative elements are extant.

Accordingly, a systematic collation of the Ethiopic text and that of the other church historiographers has been undertaken. This operation has resulted in identifying a set of readings uniquely shared by the homily *De Frumentio* and Socrates' version.

¹⁷ Fiaccadori (1989 [1993]: 150). On the manuscript see also Sergew Hable Selassie (1987) and, more recently, Nosnitsin (2012: 30, n. 38).

The homily *De Frumentio* states that the king died after ‘a few time’ Frumentius and Aedesius had entered the royal court: **ወእምድኅረ፡ ገዳጥ፡ መዋዕል፡ አዕረፈ፡ ንጉሥ፡**. The reading ‘a few’ is basically encountered in Socrates only: Rufinus has *at vero moriens rex*, Sozomen reads ‘much’ (ἐπὶ πολὺν δὲ χρόνον χρησίμους σφᾶς καὶ πιστοὺς παρασχομένους, τελευτῶν «after much time they had showed themselves useful and faithful, [the king] dying»), Socrates has μετ’ οὐ πολὺ δὲ τελευτῶν ὁ βασιλεύς «after not much, the king dying».

More significantly, in the Ethiopic source Athanasius is said to have been just appointed archbishop:

ወኤዴሴዮስ፡¹⁸ ጸህቀ፡¹⁹ ሐዊረ፡ ብሔረ፡ ጢሮስ፡²⁰ ከመ፡ ይርአይ፡²¹ ወላዲሁ፡ ወአዝማዲሁ፡ ወፍሪማንጥዮስ፡²² በጽሐ፡²³ እልስክንድርያ፡ ወለሊቀ፡²⁴ ጳጳሳት፡ አትናስዮስ፡²⁵ በሐዲስ፡²⁶ ሢመቱ፡²⁷ ዜነዎ፡ ከሱሉ፡²⁸.

The same information is given in Rufinus, who reads *Athanasius, nam is nuper sacerdotium susceperat*, and in Socrates: Αἰδέσιος μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ τὴν Τύρον ἐσπουδάξεν ὀψόμενος γονεῖς τε καὶ συγγενεῖς, Φρουμέντιος μέντοι καταλαβὼν τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ Ἀθανασίῳ τότε νεωστὶ τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀξιοθέντι πᾶν ἀναφέρει ‘Aedesius hastened to go to Tyre and see his parents and his relatives, Frumentius came to Alexandria and reported everything to the archbishop Athanasius, who had been recently deemed worthy of the episcopate’. Sozomen simply has Ἀθανασίῳ τῷ προῖσταμένῳ τῆς Ἀλεξανδρέων ἐκκλησίας «to Athanasius, chief of the Church of Alexandria».

Finally, the entire conclusion of the narrative slavishly follows Socrates. The Ethiopic homily reads:

¹⁸ **ወአድሴዮስ፡** A.

¹⁹ **ጸህቅ፡** B.

²⁰ **ጢሮስ፡** B.

²¹ *Om.* B.

²² **ወፍሪ፡ ምናጥዮስ፡** A.

²³ **በጽሐ፡** B.

²⁴ **ወላዲ፡ ሊቀ፡** A.

²⁵ *Om.* B.

²⁶ **በሐዲስት፡** B.

²⁷ *Add.* ረከቦ ። ወበዊአ፡ ገቤሁ፡ A.

²⁸ **ከሱሉ፡** B.

ወተሠይመ፣ ፍሪሚንጥዮስ፣²⁹ በከመ፣ ይደልዎ፣³⁰ ጳጳስና፣³¹ ወፍጡነ፣ በጽሐ፣
 ብሔር፣ አግዓዜ፣³² ወሰባኬ፣ ኮነ፣ ለሃይማኖት፣³³ ክርስቶስ፣ ብዙኅ፣ አንደቀ፣³⁴
 ምጽላዮ፣³⁵ ወተደለዎ፣ በሞገሥ፣³⁶ እግዚአ፣ ብሔር፣³⁷ ብዙኅ፣ ተአምራት፣³⁸
 ገብረ፣³⁹ ወብዙኃን፣⁴⁰ ድውያን፣⁴¹ ወፅውሳን፣ ወሕሙማን፣ ፈውሰ፣ እግዚአ፣
 ብሔር፣⁴² በእዴሁ፣ ። ወዘንተ፣⁴³ ኩሎ፣⁴⁴ ዜነው፣⁴⁵ አሐዱ፣ ዘስሙ፣ ሮፊኖስ፣⁴⁶
 በእንተ፣ ፍሪሚንጥዮስ፣⁴⁷ አቡነ፣ ሰሚዖ፣ እምአዴሴሲዮስ፣⁴⁸ ካልኡ፣⁴⁹ ዘንተ፣⁵⁰
 ኩሎ፣ ዜነው ።

«Frumentius was appointed as one who was worthy of the episcopate. He then came at once to the land of Ag‘aze and became a preacher of the religion of Christ. He had many oratories built and he deserved the favour of God. He worked many miracles. He healed many sick people; the needy and the sick God healed through him. All this narrated someone called Rofinos, about our Father Frumentius, having heard [it] from Aedesius, his companion, [who] narrated all this».⁵¹

29 Om. B.

30 ይደልዎ፣ B.

31 ጳጳስ፣ B.

32 አጋዕዜ፣ B.

33 ለሃይማኖት፣ B.

34 Om. B.

35 ምጽላዮት፣ B.

36 ሞገስ፣ በኀብ፣ A.

37 እግዚአብሔር ። A.

38 ታአምራት፣ B.

39 Om. B.

40 ወብዙኃን፣ B.

41 ድውያን፣ B, add. ፈውሰ፣ A.

42 እግዚአብሔር፣ A.

43 ወእንተ፣ A.

44 ኩሎ፣ B.

45 ዜነው፣ post ሮፊኖስ፣ B.

46 ሮፍኖስ፣ A.

47 ፍሪ፣ ምንጥዮስ፣ A.

48 እምአድስዮስ፣ A, እምአዴሴሲዮስ፣ B.

49 ከመ፣ B.

50 ዘንቲ፣ B.

51 The translation follows Getatchew Haile (1979: 318) with minimal amendments.

Thus reads Socrates: Γίνεται δὲ τοῦτο, καὶ Φρουμέντιος ἀξιωθείς τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς αὐθις ἐπὶ τὴν Ἰνδῶν παραγίνεται χώραν, καὶ κήρους τοῦ χριστιανισμοῦ γεγονῶς εὐκτήρια {τε} πλεῖστα ἰδρύεται, ἀξιωθείς δὲ καὶ θείας χάριτος πολλὰ μὲν εἰργάζετο σημεῖα πολλῶν δὲ σὺν τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ τὰ σώματα ἐθεράπευεν. Ταῦτα δὲ ὁ Ῥουφῖνος παρὰ τοῦ Αἰδεσίου (...) ἀκηκοέναι φησὶν «this happened, and Frumentius, deemed worthy of the episcopate, came back again to the land of Indians and, having become a herald of Christianity, many oratories were built, and he was deemed worthy of the divine grace. He worked many wonders; he healed the minds and the bodies of many. This said Rufinus to have heard from Aedesius». Not only the two versions parallel each other, against, e.g., Sozomen who revises the entire passage,⁵² but they also share a crucial allusion to the Aquileian historiographer, which is lacking in any other Greek chronicle. This reference unambiguously enables us to feel confident that the Ethiopic text is descended from Socrates' version.

The Vorlage of the homily *De Frumentio*

Once a special link to Socrates Scholasticus has been established, the next question to deal with is whether this connection is direct or rather filtered by an intermediate version, i.e., whether the linguistic ancestor of the text can be confidently assessed. Unfortunately, the text brevity does not provide an abundant amount of data. Nevertheless, an in-depth look at the Gə'əz reveals that some deviations from Socrates' chronicle can be accounted for as instances of misreading of an underlying Greek text.

A probable misinterpretation of Socrates' text is found in the following passage: παρεκάλει τόπους καταλαμβάνειν ἰδιάζοντας ἐπὶ τῷ τὰς χριστιανικὰς εὐχὰς ἐκτελεῖν «(Frumentius) asked (the Christian Romans he found in the trading-station) to find places suitable for celebrating the Christian prayers». The Gə'əz equivalent of the passage is

⁵² Ὁ δὲ Φρουμέντιος πάλιν εἰς Ἰνδοὺς ὑποστρέψας λέγεται τοσοῦτον εὐκλεῶς τὴν ἱερωσύνην μετελθεῖν, ὡς ἐπαινεθῆναι παρὰ πάντων τῶν αὐτοῦ πειραθέντων, οὐχ ἦττον ἢ τοὺς ἀποστόλους θαυμάζουσι, καθότι καὶ ἐπισημότατον αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς ἀπέφηνε, πολλὰς καὶ παραδόξους ἰάσεις καὶ σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα δι' αὐτοῦ δημιουργήσας. Ἡ μὲν δὲ παρ' Ἰνδοῖς ἱερωσύνη ταύτην ἔσχεν ἀρχήν.

ወሰአሎሙ፣⁵³ ከመ፣ ይሖሩ፣ ውስተ፣ መካን፣ ፅምው፣⁵⁴ ጎበ፣ ይትቀነዩ፣⁵⁵
 «(Frumentius) asked them to come to a quiet place in which they might
 recite the liturgical chants». A discrepancy between the two emerges in
 the rendering of ἰδιάζοντας ‘suitable’ as *dəmw* ‘quiet, peaceful, lonely’.
 In fact, the Ethiopic reading seems to rely upon the double meaning of
 the Greek verb ἰδιάζω: ‘to be alone, secluded, isolated’, as the Gə‘əz
 interpreted, and ‘to be peculiar, special, peculiarly adapted to’, as
 Socrates originally meant.

An additional possible mistranslation is likely to be met with in a
 subsequent passage, in which Socrates narrates that Frumentius and the
 Christian traders εὐκτήριον οἶκον κατεσκεύασαν καὶ τινας τῶν Ἰνδῶν
 κατηχούντες συνεύχεσθαι αὐτοῖς παρέσκευσαν «built a house for praying and,
 while catechizing some Indians (i.e., Ethiopians), they set them pray». Here
 the text of the *De Frumentio* has ወነደቁ፣ ምጽላዩ፣ እንዘ፣ ይሚህሩ፣ ወያለምዱ፣
 ብዙኃን፣ ወአስተጋብኡ፣⁵⁶ ጎቤሆሙ፣ ብዙኅ፣ እምሰብእ፣ አግዛዚ።⁵⁷ «they built an
 oratory while teaching and training many and they gathered to themselves also
 many of the people of the Ag‘azi». No reference is made to the prayers.
 Instead, the Ethiopic text speaks of ‘gathering’. A likely explanation is that the
 translator misread συνεύχεσθαι ‘to pray together’ as its quasi-homograph
 συνέχεσθαι ‘to be held together, kept together’.

The word arrangement of some Ethiopic sentences is also worth
 mentioning. A typical specimen is the following: ወአትናሱስ፣⁵⁸ ሊቀ፣
 ጳጳሳት፣ ጎለዩ፣⁵⁹ ዘይሤኒ፣ ኪያሁ፣ ፍሪሚንጥዮስ፣⁶⁰ ይህም፣⁶¹ ጳጳስ፣⁶² «and the
 archbishop Athanasius thought that Frumentius himself was the best to be
 ordered bishop», which overlaps the Greek Ἀθανάσιος δὲ λαβὼν εἰς ἔννοιαν
 τὸ λυσιτελοῦν αὐτὸν Φρουμέντιον τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν ἀναδέξασθαι

53 ወይሰአሎሙ፣ B

54 ጸምው፣ B.

55 ይትቀነዩ፣ መዘመረ። A.

56 አስተጋብኡ፣ B.

57 አጋዕዜ፣ B

58 ወአትናሱስ፣ B.

59 ሕለይ፣ (sic) B.

60 ፍሪ፣ ምናጦስ፣ A.

61 ህም፣ B.

62 ጳጳስ፣ B.

προετρέψατο. The parallel wording in the two versions is particularly evident with respect to the placing of the pronoun αὐτὸν/ኪያሁ ፡.

The text-critical elements here examined, though not numerous, are not meaningless. They speak, together with the absence of Arabisms throughout the text,⁶³ in favour of a Greek ancestor behind this literary tradition. A Greek *Vorlage* would presuppose that the translation into Ethiopic was executed in Late Antiquity, during the Aksumite age. Such a conclusion confirms the reconstruction already proposed with caution by Getatchew Haile and endorsed by other scholars.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, it is impossible from the data at hand to deduce more on the place and the time in which this translation was made, as is most often the case with the Aksumite literary heritage. We do not know whether a complete translation of Socrates' *Historia Ecclesiastica* was ever executed in the Aksumite period. Alternatively, and more economically, we could suspect that this very extract concerning the conversion of Ethiopia was selected in view of its significance for the local history. However, the background behind the composition of the homily is not wholly undocumented.

It has already been observed that the conclusion of the *De Frumentio* alludes to certain 'diptychs' as a source of information concerning the consecration of Frumentius.⁶⁵ The text of A (fol. 85vb) reads:

**ዝንቱ ፡ ውእቱ ፡ ፍሬ ፡ ምናጦስ ፡ አቡነ ፡ ቀዳማይ ፡ ጳጳስ ፡ ለብሔረ ፡ አግዓዚ ።
ወብብሔረ ፡ ጽራእ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ሀሎ ፡ ተሠይመ ፡ ለብሔረ ፡ አግዓዜ ። ወበዝየኒ ፡ ውስተ ፡
ድብዲቆን ፡ ረከብናሁ ፡ ልከዑ ፡ ከመ ፡ ቀዳማይ ፡ ውእቱ ።**

«This is Fəre Mənaṯos our Father, the first bishop of the land of the Aga'zi. It was while he was in the land of Şəra' (i.e., Egypt) that it was

⁶³ No positive value should be given to the Arabic-based spelling Ἐλλᾶσκᾶνδῶρυα. The form can be the outcome of a process of linguistic update over the text transmission. A parallel case is well attested, e.g., in the Aksumite patristic collection *par excellence*, the *Qerellos*; see Weischer (1971: 89). On this issue, see also Bausi, Camplani (2013: 229).

⁶⁴ Getatchew Haile (1979: 313) and, after him, Brakmann (1994: 64), Fiaccadori (2010: 485a). A different opinion was expressed by Marrassini (2014: 55).

⁶⁵ No remnants seem to have survived in the Ethiopic tradition of these *dəbdiqon*, i.e. the δίπτυχα or double lists of dead and alive pronounced by the deacon during the Eucharist; see Bausi (2008: 553, n. 151).

appointed for the land of the Aga‘zi. Here too we have found it recorded in the diptychs that he was the first». ⁶⁶

On the other hand, text from B (fol. 23ra) is supplied with a longer conclusion which deviates from that of A:

ዝንቲ፡ ውእቲ፡ አቡን፡ ፍሪሚንጤዮስ፡ ቅዳሜ፡ ጳጳስ፡ ዘተሰይመ፡ ለብሔር፡ አጋዕዜ፡ ወለብሔር፡ ጽራእኒ፡ ረከብነ፡ ውስተ፡ መጽሐፍ፡ ከመ፡ ቅዳሜ፡ ዘተሰይመ፡ ለብሔር፡ አጋዕዜ፡ ወበዝሞኒ፡ በውስተ፡ ድብዲቆን፡ ረከብናሁ፡ ልከዑ፡ ከመ፡ ቅዳሚዊ፡ ውእቲ፡

«This is our Father Frimenteyos, first bishop to be appointed for the land of Aga‘ze and for the land of Şəra’ (i.e., Egypt) too. We found in a book that he was the first to be appointed for the land of Aga‘ze, and here too we have found him inscribed in the diptychs that he was the first».

The statement that Frumentius was the first bishop to be appointed also for the land of Şəra’ looks improbable and ultimately unsatisfactory. A minimal amendment could quite well be applied by replacing the quasi-homograph *lä-* with *bä-* and thus restoring *wä-bä-bəherä Şəra’*, which tallies with the *lectio* of A in the same position. This enables us to obtain a more acceptable sentence **ወበብሔር፡ ጽራእኒ፡ ረከብነ፡ ውስተ፡ መጽሐፍ፡ ከመ፡ ቅዳሜ፡ ዘተሰይመ፡ ለብሔር፡ አጋዕዜ፡** «we found in a book that *in* the land of Şəra’ he was the first to be appointed for the land of Aga‘ze». The preceding formulation is further corroborated by the parallel arrangement of the two sentences *bä-bəherä Şəra’-ni ... wä-bä-zäyā-ni*, which establishes a clear correlation between the two ‘sets of action’ for which the documentation is available. The author claims that on the one hand it was in the land of Şəra’ that Frumentius was ordained, as found in a *māṣḥaf*, and, on the other hand, that here in Ethiopia he was the first bishop, as inscribed in the *dəbdiqon*. ⁶⁷ The passage makes an open reference to an extra document unrecorded elsewhere and perused by the author of the homily. This mysterious written tradition would have contained a version of Frumentius’ story and would have played, according to the author himself, a key role in the genesis of the homily.

⁶⁶ Translation by Getatchew Haile (1979: 318) with minor amendments. On the rendering of Şəra’ as Egypt, see further down.

⁶⁷ On the correlative use of *-ni*, see Dillmann (1865: 629a, 3). It is my intention to thank Prof Alessandro Bausi for having drawn my attention upon this point and expressed valuable suggestions.

This leads us to a problematic issue. As a matter of fact, our understanding of the process of formation of the early homiletic literature in Gə‘əz is largely deficient. A limited number of pieces have been published to date, and in no case it has been possible to successfully reconstruct their textual background. However, one exception is represented by the so-called *Martyrdom of St. Peter of Alexandria*, or *Acta Petri Alexandrini*.⁶⁸ This original composition is transmitted in the same collections of homilies that also include the *De Frumentio*: ms. EMMML no. 1763, fols. 79v-80r, and ms. EMMML no. 8509, fols. 21r-22r. A third witness to the *Martyrdom* has been recently collected by the Ethio-SPaRe project in ‘Ura Qirqos (Təgray, Ethiopia) and registered as UM-037.⁶⁹ It has been observed that the *Martyrdom* substantially depends upon excerpts of the Ethiopic version of the *History of the Episcopate of Alexandria*. The latter, translated from Greek into Gə‘əz in the Late Antiquity, is of outstanding significance for the historiography of the Christian Egypt in the years from St. Mark to St. Peter of Alexandria, and is the sole Aksumite text of historical content thus far come to light.⁷⁰ The fortunate finding of this exceptional document has provided us a decisive evidence to reconstruct the genesis of the *Martyrdom of St. Peter of Alexandria*. It has been possible to assess that the latter was in fact composed by making use of ancient material taken from an Aksumite historical text nearly fallen into oblivion. The discovery was indisputably outstanding but to a certain extent not unexpected, as the same *Martyrdom* explicitly reveals its literary

⁶⁸ First edited by Getatchew Haile (1980).

⁶⁹ UM-037 is an extensive collection of fragments originating from several manuscripts tentatively dated to the 14th-15th cent. It mostly contains homilies, *passiones*, and excerpts from a gospel book. Many leaves are misplaced or have been bound to other manuscripts belonging to the same collection. The text of the *Martyrdom of St. Peter of Alexandria* is on fols. 125v-126v (beginning) and fol. 105r-v (end).

⁷⁰ The *History of the Episcopate of Alexandria* is only preserved in the manuscript Ethio-SPaRe UM-039, fols. 5ra-13va. This manuscript, a veritable *unicum* for many respects, is in all likelihood prior to the 14th cent. and most probably the oldest non-biblical Ethiopic manuscript. It contains the so-called *Aksumite Collection*, a set of thirty-six Greek-based pieces of which the *History* is part. On the dramatic scarcity of the historiographical literature of Aksumite age before the discovery of the *Aksumite Collection*, see Lusini (2001b: 543ff.). On the *Aksumite Collection*, see at least Bausi (2006) and Bausi (2015). On the *History of the Episcopate of Alexandria*, see Bausi, Camplani (2013) and the edition of the text by Bausi, Camplani (2016).

debt towards a work called the *sinodos zä-həgg*, or ‘Synodicon of the Law’, most likely the name by which the *Aksumite Collection* was known (Getatchew Haile 1980: 88, Bausi 2006: 49 f.).

The story of the *Martyrdom* calls attention to a textual phenomenon that has been lately receiving proper consideration, namely the preservation and reuse of pieces of the oldest heritage of the Ethiopic literature through their rework in later texts or collections of texts (Bausi 2006: 53). If the redactional process positively documented for the *Martyrdom of St. Peter of Alexandria* can hardly be considered a *unicum*, it is tempting to extend it to the literary context of the homily in honour of Frumentius. In both cases, original compositions were written down for homiletic purposes by employing old material of historical content, namely the ‘Synodicon of the Law’ for the homily in honour of St. Peter of Alexandria and an unidentified ‘book’ for the homily in honour of Frumentius.

At the present state of the research, it is not easy to assess whether these brief works were intentionally composed to be parts of extensive *corpora* of homilies, or were grouped together at a later stage and arranged according to their commemoration day. As a matter of fact, homiliaries like EMMML no. 1763 and no. 8509 not merely are amongst the most pre-eminent representatives of this typology of text-carrier,⁷¹ but also embody the only praxis of circulation thus far known for the homilies at issue.

The *Sənkəssar* entry for 26th Ḥamle

The present inquiry can now be extended to another outstanding document, the *Sənkəssar* entry for 26th Ḥamle. Called by Conti Rossini (1928: 151) «la forma classica della tradizione indigena», the *Sənkəssar* entry has received much attention by scholars since the 19th cent., as demonstrated by the numerous translations into European languages. Two hypotheses have been formulated upon the origin of this version. According

⁷¹ Other homiliaries belonging to the same typology are ms. London, BL Orient. no. 8192 (= Strelcyn 1978: 89-92, no. 56), 14th cent., and ms. EMMML no. 7062, uncatalogued, 14th-15th cent., on which see Fiaccadori (1989). New evidence is likely to come to light from the codicological material digitized by the Ethio-SPaRe project in the library of ‘Ura Qirqos (Təgray, Ethiopia).

to Paolo Marrassini, it was «sicuramente tradotto dall'arabo», as the spelling *Merobopygos* for Μερόπιος would prove.⁷² On the other hand, Getatchew Haile suggested that the compiler of the *Sənkəssar* had largely relied upon the homily *De Frumentio*, sometimes even verbatim.⁷³

There is no doubt that some connection between the homily *De Frumentio* and the *Sənkəssar* notice is extant. The textual arrangement strongly suggests it. Accordingly, two options are legitimate: either the two accounts derive from a common undocumented source, or the homily is the (direct or mediate) source of the *Sənkəssar* entry. A third option, namely that the homily originates from the *Sənkəssar* notice, is inconsistent with chronological data at hand. In order to have a more in-depth look at the two versions, a collation of the two witnesses of the *De Frumentio* A and B, the *Sənkəssar* entry as well as the Greek text of Socrates' *History* has been carried out, and a set of peculiar readings has been recorded.

Socrates' opening statement concerning Meropius' desire to visit the 'land of Indians' (Μερόπιός τις φιλόσοφος τῷ γένει Τύριος ἰστορήσαι τὴν Ἰνδῶν χώραν ἔσπευσεν «Meropius, a philosopher of Tyrian origins, yearned to observe the land of the Indians, i.e. Ethiopians») is paralleled by B አሐዳ-እ፡ ብእሲ፡ ዘሰሙ፡ ማረጸዮስ፡ ሊቅ፡ ጠባብት፡ ጸሀቀኣ፡ ይርአይ፡ ኩሉ፡ ብሔረ፡ አጋዕዜ፡,⁷⁴ whereas both A and the *Sənkəssar* notice revise the sentence by introducing *mäs'a* 'came'.

An additional syntactic reworking affects the passage in which Frumentius meets the Alexandrian archbishop Athanasius. Socrates reports that Φρουμέντιος μέντοι καταλαβὼν τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ Ἀθανασίῳ τότε νεωστὶ τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀξιωθέντι πᾶν ἀναφέρει «Frumentius came to Alexandria and reported everything to the archbishop Athanasius, who had been recently deemed worthy of the episcopate». The same wording is preserved in B: ወፍሪሜንጦዮስ፡ በጽሕ፡ እልሰክንድርያ፡ ወለሊቀ፡ ጳጳሳት፡ በሐደሰት፡ ሢመቱ፡ ዜነዎ፡ ኩሉ፡ «Frumentius came to Alexandria and to the newly-appointed archbishop he narrated everything». On the other

⁷² Marrassini (2014: 54). An Arabic or even Coptic intermediary was also postulated by Conti Rossini (1922: 18, n. 1).

⁷³ Getatchew Haile (1979: 310). See also Fiaccadori (2010: 485).

⁷⁴ The text of B is characterized by a variety of idiosyncrasies such as lacking vowel marker of the *status constructus*, lacking accusative vowel and other unconventional spellings.

hand, both A and the *Sänkəssar* notice slightly amend the sentence. A reads **ወፍሬ፡ ምናጥዮስ፡ በጽሐ፡ እልስክንድርያ፡ ኀበ፡ ሊቀ፡ ጳጳሳት፡ አትናስዮስ፡ በሐዲስ፡ ሢመቱ፡ ረከቦ ። ወበዊኦ፡ ኀቤሁ፡ ዜነዎ፡ ኩሎ፡** «Frumentius came to Alexandria in the presence of the archbishop Atnasyos, he found him newly appointed and, presented before him, he narrated him everything». The *Sänkəssar* has an analogous arrangement: **ወፍሬምናጥስ፡ በጽሐ፡ እስክንድርያ፡ ኀበ፡ ሊቀ፡ ጳጳሳት፡ አባ፡ አትናቴዎስ፡ ወረከቦ፡ በሐዲስ፡ ሢመቱ፡ ወዜነዎ፡ ኩሎ፡** «Frumentius came to Alexandria in the presence of the archbishop *abba* Atnatewos, he found him newly appointed and narrated him everything». In both sources the preposition *lä-* is replaced with *habä* and an extra sentence is built upon the verb *räkäbo*.

Even though neither numerous nor particularly forceful on text-critical grounds, the previous shared innovations point to a special connection between the text of A and that of the *Sänkəssar* version. A reasonable explanation for this textual proximity is that the latter stems from the perusal of a lost exemplar of the *De Frumentio*, and that this exemplar was genetically closer to the text of A than to that of B. This is hardly surprising, for it is assumed that the 16th-cent. revision of the hagiographical work was due to an editorial initiative undertaken in the important monastery of Däbrä Ḥayq Ḥestifanos, which is also the place of provenance of A.

Although mostly depending upon the homily, the commemorative notice included in the *Sänkəssar* is also supplemented with further elements taken from at least one different tradition. The active involvement of this or these underlying source(s) has been recurrently stressed over time and is detectable in some additions appended to the main account.⁷⁵ The name Sidrakos is amongst these additions. While introducing Aedesius, the *Sänkəssar* adds **ወቦ፡ እለ፡ ይሰምዶዎ፡ ሲድራኩስ፡** «and some call him Sidrakos». The parenthetical formulation of the remark makes it plain that the compiler attempted to balance two competing versions of the story. The name is for the first time attested in Giyorgis of Säglä, who wrote in the first half of the 15th century.⁷⁶ It is later met with in the GTH and in ‘Book of the

⁷⁵ Getatchew Haile (1979: 309f.), Fiaccadori (2010: 485), Marrassini (2014: 65).

⁷⁶ For the MM, see Yaqob Beyene (1990a: 120) and Yaqob Beyene (1990b: 72).

Legends’ of the *ᾗḫḫäge* Filḗppos.⁷⁷ The meaning and the origin of the variant Sidrakos are to date unanswered. As it is lacking in non-Ethiopic sources, the name Sidrakos is suspected to rely upon a local tradition, which substantially still escapes us. Another equally autochthonous addition is the mention of the two saintly kings Abrḗha and Aṣbḗha, at whose time Frumentius returned to Ethiopia as a bishop.⁷⁸ In conclusion, whatever the provenance of these extra elements is, the impact of an Arabic tradition seems, according to the previous interpretation of the available evidence, ultimately unneeded.⁷⁹

Additional remarks

In this section, I would like to take concisely into account some additional narrative elements concerning the remaining Gə‘əz versions of the story, i.e. the MM, the GTH, the GAA, the GAS, and the ‘Book of the Legends’ of the *ᾗḫḫäge* Filḗppos. Those versions betray in many respects innovations that mark the progressive development of a ‘living’ tradition. Some elements were gradually marginalized and faded from the focus of the attention, other received a growing consideration. The role of Meropius belongs to the set of themes that became less and less important in the frame of the narrative. Meropius, a *liqä ṭäbäbt* in the *De Frumentio* and the *Sənkəssar* (tantamount to the primitive φλόσοφος), is termed *näggadi* ‘traveller, merchant’ in all the remaining sources, a reading which is clearly *facilior*. Some versions, i.e. the MM, GAA and GTH, even leave out his name.⁸⁰ The apex is reached in the MM and the GTH, in which the fatal raid

⁷⁷ For the GTH, see already Esteves Pereira (1899: 9) and Conti Rossini (1928: 153). For the ‘Book of the Legends’ of *ᾗḫḫäge* Filḗppos, see Conti Rossini (1917: 704). On this problem, see also Marrassini (2014: 65).

⁷⁸ ወበጸሐ፡ ብሔረ፡ አግዓዚ፡ አመ፡ መንግሥቶሙ፡ ለአብርሃ፡ ወአጽብሐ፡፣ see Guidi (1910: 429 l. 4).

⁷⁹ The spelling *Merobopyos* with voiced labial does not appear cogent. As to the treatment of the labials, Arabic-like spellings for Greek-based proper names are in fact sporadically attested in the manuscript tradition. For instance, the name Pātrəqya from the presumably Aksumite *Passio* of Tewofəlos, Pātrəqya e Dāmalis is replaced with the minority reading Baṭriqa in few witnesses, e.g. in ms. Paris, BnF Éth. Abb. 110, see Ricci (1947: 172 l. 19). On this problem, see also Grébaut (1935: 58).

⁸⁰ However, the name Mārāpawos is clearly mentioned in another version of the story appended to the text of the GAA in a 20th-cent. manuscript originating from the church of Aksum Şəyon at

undertaken by the enemies is left out and Meropius' death is attributed to a disease,⁸¹ through a narrative interpolation seemingly intended to overlook an embarrassing episode of the story.⁸²

An opposite tendency surfaces in the treatment of other themes. I shall only mention the problem of the duties assigned by the king to Frumentius and Aedesius, leaving the other numerous questions untouched.⁸³ Only four Ethiopic sources parallel the Latin and Greek authors in recording these offices: the *De Frumentio*, the *Sənkəssar*, the GAA, and the GAS.⁸⁴ The two latter versions develop a religious characterization of these functions which is unattested in the Latin and Greek chronicles. As known, Frumentius's competence was rewarded with archival duties. Socrates reports that he was ordered τῶν βασιλικῶν γραμματοφυλάκων φροντίζειν «to take care of the royal archives»; in *De Frumentio* and in the *Sənkəssar* he is appointed 'aqqabe həgg wä-šähafe Aksum «guardian of the law, that is secretary of Aksum», and approximately the same in the GAA šähafe tə'əzaz. Yet, an extra ecclesiastical office is provided in the GAS 'aqqabe həgg wä-'aqqabe betä krəstiyān «guardian of the law and guardian of the church». Aedesius is appointed as a οἰνοχόον 'cupbearer' in Socrates and unvaryingly made mäggabe betä qätṭin «steward of the royal household» in three of the four Ethiopic versions. Only in the GAA he is also entrusted with the

Aksum. The passage says: ወበዓመተ፡ መንግሥቶሙ፡ (of Abrəha and Aṣbəha) ፲ወ፳፡ መጽአ፡ ጅነጋዲ፡ እምብሔረ፡ ጢሮስ፡ ዘስሙ፡ መረጳዎስ፡ ምስለ፡ ጀደቁቁ፡ ለጅስሙ፡ ፍሬ፡ ምናጦስ፡ ወስመ፡ ካልኡ፡ ሲድራኮስ፡ ወንድሩ፡ በሀገረ፡ አክሱም፡ በውስተ፡ ቤቱ፡ ለእንበረም፡ ሊቀ፡ ካህናት ቁ. My sincere thanks go to Dr. Antonella Brita and Susanne Hummel for having drawn my attention to this witness and for sharing the material in their possession with me.

⁸¹ MM: ወእምዝ፡ ደውዩ፡ ውእኑ፡ ነጋዲ፡ ወሞተ፡ በውስተ፡ መርሶ፡ ሐይቀ፡ ባሕር፡ ዘጽንፈ፡ ብሔረ፡ ኢትዮጵያ ቁ, Yaqob Beyene (1990a: 120 ll. 6 f.). In the GTH Meropius falls ill in the house of the priest Enbarim, where the three were sheltered, see Esteves Pereira (1899: 9). An additional correspondence between the theological work of Giyorgis of Säglä and the 16th-cent. Shoon hagiography also surfaces with respect to the replacement of the name Aedesius with the variant Sidrakos.

⁸² Marrassini (2014: 63).

⁸³ As, for instance, the challenging question of the name of the young king ፬፯፻ Azg^wag^wa, or the frequent statement that Frumentius and Aedesius were surprised that the Ethiopians had the faith in Christ and the circumcision because they knew the Levites and the eunuch of Kandace but neither baptism nor Eucharist because no Apostle came to them. A thorough overview of these and other issues is in Marrassini (2014: 62 ff.).

⁸⁴ The topic has been recently discussed by Fridman (2015: 54f.).

religious office of *mäggabe mak^wrab* «manager of the synagogue» or «manager of the temple». These religious titles can be reasonably regarded as secondary additions inserted in order to fulfil the canons of the hagiographic genre.

Lastly, I shall focus on a third class of textual variants. It is worthwhile to note that whereas the Greek sources agree in indicating Tyre on the Lebanese coast as Meropius' homeland (e.g., Socrates has τις φιλόσοφος τῷ γένει Τύριος),⁸⁵ the text of the homily *De Frumentio* and the *Sänkəssar* display a peculiar rendering of the place-name in the opening passage of the account: A has እምብሔረ፡ ጽርእ፣, B omits, the *Sänkəssar* reads እምብሔረ፡ ፅርእ፣. The correspondence between Tyre and ሻር' has already been observed in scholarly contributions and opens up a reflection, since the place-name *Ṭiros* is not unknown in Ethiopic. It is, in fact, met with further down in the text of the homily as well as elsewhere, e.g. in an eschatological work of Aksumite origin, the *De Antichristo*.⁸⁶ One may claim that, even though not accurate, the employment of the term ሻር' is not necessarily erroneous. It is known from the literary evidence that this place-name is associated with multiple geographical references: not only Greece, as traditionally assumed,⁸⁷ but more specifically, and perhaps originally, also the Hellenized Egypt,⁸⁸ as well as, in a more broadly meaning, the entire territory under the Roman Empire.⁸⁹ In compliance with this meaning, ሻር' might have been used to designate the Mediterranean world. However, at least two other texts do exhibit the expected place-name. One is the MM (ወልኦ፡ ነጋዲ፡ እምጢርስ፡ ምስለ፡ ክልኦ፡ ደቂቁ፡ «a traveller from Tyre left with his two sons»),⁹⁰ the other

⁸⁵ Gelasius of Cyzicus has Μερόπιον τοῦνομα τινὰ ἄνδρα Τύριον; Sozomen reads Μερόπιός τις φιλόσοφος Τύριος τῆς Φοινίκης; Theodoret of Cyrillus has τις Τύριος τῆς θύραθεν φιλοσοφίας μετέχων. Rufinus equally has Meropius quidam Tyrius filosofus.

⁸⁶ Caquot (1965: 186, § 52 l. 6): ደቤ፡ ጢርስ፡ ወሲዶና ።, where *yəbe* is a scribal error for *dibä*, in all likelihood occasioned by misreading of the *e*-form *dibe*.

⁸⁷ Praetorius (1919).

⁸⁸ As in the archaic recension of the *Acta Marci*, where *bä-Ṣar' bä-Ḫlləskəndərya* translates ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τῇ πρὸς Αἴγυπτον, see Getatchew Haile (1981: 129 l. 1), Fiaccadori (2004: 141 f.), and Lusini (2009: 36 l. 8).

⁸⁹ So it is intended in the abovementioned *De Antichristo*, where *mängəstä Ṣəra'* renders βασιλεία Ῥωμαίων, see Caquot (1965: 184, § 49 l. 9) and Lusini (2001a: 47).

⁹⁰ Yaqob Beyene (1990a: 120). See also the remarks by Marrassini (2014: 62 f.)

one is the GAA (፩ብእሲ፣ ነጋዲ፣ ውስተ፣ ምድረ፣ ጢሮስ፣ «one traveller in the land of Tyre»)⁹¹. The Greek and Latin reading ‘Tyre’ is therefore retained in part of the Ethiopic tradition, whereas other sources have ሻሩ’. A reasonable explanation for the *varia lectio* under analysis is to consider Ṭiros as a *lectio difficilior*. The primitive character of the reading is corroborated by the Greek and Latin evidence; its difficulty proved by the fact that a number of sources failed to preserve it. The reading presumably underwent trivialization into ሻሩ’ in A and in the *Sənkəssar* notice (not unlikely already in the copy used by its compiler) and was merely omitted in B. This example shows that sources like the MM and the later GAA reportedly rely upon a textual stage of the original account which is, for this particular information, better than that of A, B, and the *Sənkəssar*.

Conclusion

The well-known account on the conversion of Ethiopia by Frumentius is transmitted in a number of Gə‘əz versions, most often embedded within works belonging to different genres and written down for different purposes.

The earliest surviving version is the homily *De Frumentio* for 18th Taḥśaś, a recessive text extant in two witnesses only, neither of which copied later than the mid-14th cent. A not insignificant amount of text-critical data substantiates the assumption that this homily, or at least its literary core, originated from a translation of Socrates Scholasticus’ account of the story directly executed from Greek at Aksumite times, as other scholars already suspected. Notwithstanding this, we lack reliable evidence that the homily at its present form traces back to the Aksumite period. In fact, it cannot be excluded that the work was composed by making use of historical material of Aksumite age, as has been proved for the *Acta Petri Alexandrini*. Both cases would therefore mark a phase of rearrangement of the earlier textual heritage into new literary forms and for different expectations. What we know from the conclusion of the text in ms. EMMML no. 8509 is that the compiler of the homily had at disposal an unidentified written source probably coming from the land of ሻሩ’. No conjecture can be safely made upon the process of textual transmission over time, since the unique

⁹¹ Ms. Rome, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, C.R. 19, fol. 22rb.

attestation of the work is within large collections of homilies, like the abovementioned *Acta Petri Alexandrini*, arranged according to the calendric order.

A further reuse took place in the second half of the 16th cent., when the primitive recension of the *Sənkəssar* underwent an extensive revision, most likely in the monastic milieu of Däbrä Ḥayq ʿIṣṭifanos in Wällo. New commemorative notices for local saints were added, among which the one in honour of *abba* Sälama for 26th Ḥamle. We can assess with sound confidence that the compiler of the entry on *abba* Sälama had a deep acquaintance with the text of the *De Frumentio*. Besides, textual evidence testifies a proximity between the version of *Sənkəssar* and that transmitted in ms. EMMML no. 1763, also coming from Däbrä Ḥayq. In compliance with the all-embracing attitude of the editorial initiative, the *Sənkəssar* version also hosted deviating traditions, like the name Sidrakos instead of Aedesius and the fictitious statement that Frumentius returned to Ethiopia at the time of Abrəha and Aṣḃəḃa. Strikingly, both additions are already attested in the *Mäṣḃafä məṣṭir*, as early as the first half of the 15th cent.

There is no doubt that the *Sənkəssar* played a major role in spreading the account far and wide, due to the great circulation enjoyed by the work throughout the country. The tradition in its slightly divergent versions provided narrative material for a number of hagiographical compositions, like the *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*, the *Gädlä Märqorewos*, the *Gädlä Abrəha wä-Aṣḃəḃa*, and the *Gädlä Abunä Sälama*. During its uninterrupted process of adaptation, the story was not exempt from later innovations. These innovations proceeded both towards a trivialization of some elements, e.g. Meropius' role in the story, and towards a further characterization of others, e.g. the religious duties assigned to Frumentius and Aedesius. Sometimes they led to anachronistic results, as is the case of the meeting between Frumentius and the bishop Minas in the *Gädlä Abunä Sälama*, or the decision to entrust two scribes to translate books from Arabic in the *Gädlä Abrəha wä-Aṣḃəḃa*. At the same time, however, some versions have occasionally retained archaic readings that had already disappeared in the surviving textual stage of the *De Frumentio*, e.g. Tyre as the place of origin of Meropius.

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