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UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI "L'ORIENTALE"

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RASSEGNA DI STUDI ETIOPICI – RIVISTA FONDATA DA CARLO CONTI ROSSINI

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Cover image: Pottery cup decorated with painted frogs and lotus flowers. Detail. Faras (Sudan), 1st–2nd cent. AD. British Museum EA 51448.

GREEK GODS AND CHRISTIAN MARTYRS: TEXT-CRITICAL REMARKS ON THE ETHIOPIC *PASSIO* OF ANICETUS AND PHOTIUS (12 *TAḤṢAŚ*)

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Abstract

Among Carlo Conti Rossini’s many merits it should be recalled that he was the first to recognize traces of an early layer in the textual history of the *Gädlä Säma‘tat* (or “Acts of the martyrs”), a well-known collection of *Vitae* of foreign saintly martyrs mostly translated from Arabic, and to connect this layer to the Greek-based translational phase that characterized the Askumite age (4th–7th cent.). In the wake of Conti Rossini’s contribution, this study intends to carry out a text-critical survey of the Ethiopic *Passio* of Anicetus and Photius, commemorated in Ethiopia on 12 *Taḥṣaś*. A large amount of textual evidence, including faithful transcriptions of Hellenistic god names and numerous instances of misinterpretation and preservation of the Greek word order, make a strong case for a direct Greek *Vorlage* at the root of the Ethiopic version. In accordance with the thesis advocated in this paper, the Ethiopic *Passio* of Anicetus and Photius is added to the increasing number of hagiographic sources reasonably datable to the Aksumite age.

Keywords

Anicetus and Photius – *Gädlä säma‘tat* – Hagiography – Aksumite literature – Text-criticism – Greek-to-Ethiopic translations

A profound specialist of the Eritrean and Ethiopian hagiographical traditions and a restless reader of the ‘secolari pergamene’ (‘centuries-old parchment documents’, Conti Rossini 1938a: 409), Carlo Conti Rossini did not neglect incursions in the field of the translational hagiography, i.e. the body

of *Vitae* of foreign saints and martyrs.¹ In 1938 he published the edition and translation of the *Passio* of the martyr Arsenophis and his companions in the castle of Diospolis (Conti Rossini 1938*b*), a text customarily transmitted in the corpus called *Gädlä sämaʿtat* (henceforth GS) or ‘Acts of the martyrs’.² We will return further down on Conti Rossini’s contribution. As is well known, the GS is a sizable collection of *Passiones* (or ‘agons’ in the sense of the Greek *ἀγών*) of foreign martyrs, mostly from the Eastern Christianity. More than 140 texts are traditionally related to the GS, but each manuscript exemplar only contains a varying number of them, up to several dozens, and usually arranged according to the commemorative day of the saint. Although the genesis of the corpus is still largely unfocused, there is consensus that the GS developed via layering of multiple translational processes occurred at different times. A significant impetus was given in the 14th cent., more specifically under *abunä Sälama* ‘the Translator’, metropolitan in ca. 1348–1386, who actively promoted translations from Arabic.

The relevance of the GS is complex and multifaceted, and the reasons of interest in investigating it are many. Firstly, the GS is a literary typology appropriately labelled as a ‘corpus-organizer’, i.e. a coherent continuum of textual units which work as interchangeable yet homogeneous modules in the economy of the bookmaking.³

Secondly, the intricate transmissional history of the GS texts paradigmatically embodies the close relationship among the eastern Christian literatures, in particular Greek, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic. The presence of

¹ In a time of growing interest for the *Vitae* of Eritrean and Ethiopian saintly figures, Carlo Conti Rossini promptly recognized the need to investigate the *gädlät*, i.e. the ‘religious novels’ *par excellence* of the Ethiopic literature, for a deeper understanding of the history of the places and the peoples of the Highlands.

² On the GS, see Bausi (2002, 2005*a*). The corpus has been the object of the sub-projects “Cross-Section Views of Evolving Knowledge: Canonico-Liturgical and Hagiographic Christian Manuscripts as Corpus-Organizers” (2011–2015), later “‘Parchment Saints’ – The Making of Ethiopian Hagiographic Manuscripts: Matter and Devotion in Manuscript Practices of Medieval and Pre-Modern Ethiopia” (2015–2019), headed by Alessandro Bausi and decisively conducted by Antonella Brita at the “Sonderforschungsbereich 950 – Manuskriptkulturen in Asien, Afrika und Europa”, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), Hamburg.

³ Bausi (2010, 2017*a*: 224). The term GS is clearly perceived as a precise label by the community, as demonstrated by the fact that clergymen never hesitate to describe a certain manuscript as a GS. Other archaic hagiographical-homiletic compilations also belong to this typology.

multilingual versions of numerous *Passiones* reflects a far-reaching and sometimes unexpected circulation of such texts, as well as of a long-lasting translational activity aiming to spread devotional practices related to non-local saints in vast areas of the Mediterranean and Oriental world.

Furthermore, the emergence of the GS, lying at the junction between the preservation of the earlier Aksumite textual heritage and the fresh incorporation of an Arabic-based written knowledge, documents the phenomenon of renovation and reshaping of the local literary culture which took place in parallel with the strengthening of the political relationships with the Patriarchate of Alexandria (Bausi 2017a).

Again, as Conti Rossini himself claimed, the *Vitae* of the foreign saintly martyrs represented a stylistic model which was later adopted by native hagiographers.⁴ Specialists agree that the Gəʿəz hagiographical genre experienced an extraordinary popularity from the 14th century onwards, in parallel with the expansion of the coenobitic phenomenon and the subsequent cult of the local saints, and remained prolific even after the rise of the Amharic literature. An in-depth inquiry into the stylistic correlations between the GS texts and the native *gädlät* might prove highly helpful in tracing the early development of the original literature in Gəʿəz.

Lastly, specialists in linguistics might also benefit from a proper analysis of the GS textual corpus, since the latter is seemingly rife with lexical, morphological and semantic data which have been only moderately explored.⁵

The first scholar to postulate the non-mediate dependence of a GS text from Greek was William Wright, who, as far back as in 1883, proposed the

⁴ Conti Rossini (1937: 404–05). This model can be considered as alternative to, though ultimately reliant upon, the biblical one, viz. the so-called ‘scriptural model’ (see Marrassini 1981: lxii–lxiii).

⁵ It is notable to mention Sylvain Grébaut’s numerous notes, periodically appeared on several specialistic journals between the late 1910s and the 1930s (*Revue de l’Orient Chrétien*, and later on *Aethiops* and *Aethiopica*), in which the French scholar collected a plethora of forms which had remained unrecorded in Dillmann’s *Lexicon*. Grébaut’s years-long efforts ultimately resulted in his *Supplement au Lexicon Linguae Aethiopicae de August Dillmann*, and more specifically in the section «Addenda. Liste de vocables éthiopiens (morphologie et sémantique) complétant le *Lexicon* de Dillmann recueillis par Sylvain Grébaut» (Grébaut 1952). Needless to say, an initiative like that undertaken by Grébaut cannot but be considered as pioneering, for there is no question that any critical linguistics-related inquiry on texts handed down on parchment cannot be separated from a preliminary reconstruction of the presumably primary textual shape based on a reliable philological methodology.

Greekness of the *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic *Passio* of the martyrs Zenobius and Zenobia.⁶ Yet, Wright supplied no diagnostic evidence in favour of his claim, nor he fully appreciated the historical implications of such a derivation. It was Conti Rossini who properly focused on the historical multilayering of the GS corpus and for the Ethiopic *Passio* of Arsenophis and his companions proposed a dating within the Aksumite horizon, between the late 4th and the 6th centuries, congruently with the text-critical data.⁷

In the subsequent decades research on this topic has been largely unsystematic and has led to a minimal increase in the number of texts reasonably attributable to the early translational phase. Lanfranco Ricci published and commented the *Passio* of Tewofēlos, Patriqa and Dāmālis (Ricci 1947); Alessandro Bausi critically edited the *Acts* of Filōyas, bishop of Thmuis (Bausi 2002); more recently the present writer has proposed an Aksumite background for the Ethiopic *Passio* of Sophia and her daughters Pistis, Elpis, and Agape (Villa 2018).⁸ Starting therefore from a trend inaugurated by Conti Rossini, the present contribution intends to examine in detail the Ethiopic *Passio* of Anicetus and Photius, commemorated on 12 *Tahśās* (21 December).

The martyrs Anicetus and Photius

According to the legend Anicetus, a military official (*comes*), and his nephew Photius were martyred in the early 4th cent., soon before Diocletian's abdication (305), in Nicomedia, which was at that time the eastern capital city of the Roman empire. Anicetus (Gr. Ἀνίκητος, lit. «unconquerable»)

⁶ In the introduction to his Latin translation for the *Acta Sanctorum*, William Wright wrote that «non itaque temere conjectatur Acta græca æthiopicis præluxisse. Imo et hæc ipsa videntur primitus græco sermone fuisse conscripta, tum ob alias rationes, tum quia plura verba græca æthiopicis figuris in eis reperiuntur» (Wright 1883: 271a). Curiously, Wright's contribution has systematically escaped the attention of scholarship up to date (see also Villa 2019: 34 n. 14).

⁷ Conti Rossini (1938b). Already in his 1899 'Note letterarie per la storia abissina' Conti Rossini evidenced a certain formal incompatibility with a derivation from Arabic in the *Passio* of Euphemia and particularly in that of Arsenophis (Conti Rossini 1899: 210–11). The latter was predicated as Greek-based in 1937 (Conti Rossini 1937: 404).

⁸ Hypotheses about the Aksumite circulation of some of the GS pieces have also been raised for other texts, namely those on Euphemia, Ἐμράϋς, Cyprian and Justa.

publicly objected to Diocletian, denounced the latter's paganism and presented himself as a Christian. The angered emperor tried to persuade him to worship the idols and, to Anicetus' adamantine refusal, ordered him to be tortured. The excruciating torments are invariably ineffective: cast into the amphitheater, Anicetus is licked by a lion miraculously tamed; condemned to beheading, he prodigiously saves himself. After several tortures with fire, iron hooks, and in a heated bath house, Anicetus and Photius, who had joined and comforted his uncle, are thrown into a furnace. They eventually gave up their souls, while their unharmed bodies received secretly a Christian burial. Few years later, after the end of the great persecution, a chorbishop named Dulcitus had a sacrary built on the place of their tombs at Daphnusa, an island of the Aegean Sea. The wicked emperor Diocletian, according to a widespread Late Antique tradition, was punished by God with the terrible illness which ultimately led him to death.⁹

The dossier on Anicetus and Photius' martyrdom is not scanty. Their *Passio*, originally written in Greek, knew multiple redactions in a variety of languages. The surviving Greek tradition is mostly represented by BHG no. 1542 and no. 1543, which transmit the same story yet with a substantial degree of variance, especially in the second half of the text.¹⁰ BHG no. 1542 is preserved in the well-known ms. Vatican City, BAV Gr. 1671, fols 134–143, an early-10th–century menologion written in the so-called Studite minuscule (see Fig. 1).¹¹ On the other hand, BHG no. 1543 is represented by ms. Paris, BnF Suppl. Gr. 241 (fols 81v–95r). Both versions were made available to specialists by Vasilij V. Latyšev more than one century ago (Latyšev 1914). In his eclectic edition, the prominent Russian scholar followed a combination of two criteria: for the first part (§§1–11) he reconstructed the text on the basis of the two witnesses, while the second part (§§12–28) was repro-

⁹ On the legend, see Koren (1961).

¹⁰ Socii Bollandiani (1909: 215), *sub voce* Photius; see also the paragraph dedicated in the *Acta Sanctorum* (Sollerius *et al* 1735: 707b, §12).

¹¹ According to the subscription on fol. 393, the manuscript was copied by the deacon Dorotheus in the monastery of St John Prodromus at Stoudios, Constantinople. Scholars agree that BAV Gr. 1671 belongs to a set of Vatican manuscripts brought to the monastery of Grottaferrata, near Rome, at some point between 1018 and the early 13th century, perhaps as a consequence of the dramatic 1204 sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade, or even before (Giannelli 1950: 421–25; Canart 1982). On the paleographic features of the codex see also Perria (2011: 75).

duced according to the text of the Paris manuscript and footnoting in full that of the Vatican manuscript. As the Ethiopic version has salient and persistent similarities to the two text types mentioned above, in the present article only BHG no. 1542 and no. 1543 have been taken into consideration.¹²

As to the Latin tradition, at least two versions are extant (BHL 481–482),¹³ the latter being an abridged version reported by Laurentius Surius in his *magnum opus*, first edited in the second half of the 16th cent. and repeatedly revised in the following centuries.¹⁴ The Greek *menologia* and the Roman Martyrology commemorate Anicetus and Photius on August 12.

Visible traces of the veneration of the two saintly martyrs are broadly disseminated in the literary heritage of several Eastern Christian communities. The Armenian tradition commemorates them on 2 *Navasard* (August 12), as attested by the Synaxarium of Ter Israel (Bayan 1910: 361–64). The 10th–cent. Georgian-Palestinian calendar commemorates them on October 16 (Garitte 1958: 358), while the Georgian *Passio* transmitted in ms. Gélathi no. 1 indicates the date of August 12.¹⁵ Anicetus and Photius seem to find no place in the Coptic and Arabic traditions: to the writer's knowledge no version has been hitherto discovered either in Coptic or in Arabic, nor they are mentioned in the local Alexandrian Synaxarium.

Given such a spread of devotional literary evidence in the Eastern Christianity, it is hardly surprising that the two martyrs received some share of interest in Ethiopia as well. In addition to the *Passio*, Anicetus and Photius are remembered in the Ethiopian *Sənkəssar* with a commemorative notice for 12 *Tahśaś* belonging to the second recension of the work and basically reliant upon the text of the *Passio*.¹⁶

¹² Additional Greek recensions (upon which see Halkin 1984: 180) include BHG no. 1544, summarily published in the *Acta Sanctorum* (Sollerius *et al* 1735: 707–09), and BHG no. 1544f, a late encomium compiled by Constantine Akropolites in the early 14th cent. and presently available to scholars (Kalatzi 2003).

¹³ Socii Bollandiani (1899/1900: 80). The incipit and the explicit of BHL no. 481 (cp. Sollerius *et al* 1735: 706, §7) agrees with the text of BHG n. 1542 from the Vatican manuscript.

¹⁴ Surius (1581: 681–82). For all editions, see Socii Bollandiani (1899–1900: 80; 1911: 23).

¹⁵ Kekelidze (1957: 209, no. 465). A German translation of Kekelidze's contribution, which is in Georgian, is supplied in Tarchnišvili, Assfalg (1955: 467–97).

¹⁶ Edition and French translation in Grébaud (1927: 742–46 [200–04]). An English translation is provided in Budge (1928: 369–70).

The *Passio* is available in multiple manuscript copies, all of them belonging to the GS corpus. The following list enumerates the textual witnesses known to the present writer. Each witness is introduced by a siglum and presented with minimal information. For reasons of internal consistency and in accordance with a scholarly practice aiming to facilitate comparison among contributions, sigla already assigned to specific GS manuscripts in previous papers and critical editions have been kept throughout.¹⁷

A London, BL Orient. 686 (Wright no. 257), second half of the 18th cent., from Wällo, fols 266^{vc}–269^{vb} (Wright 1877: 166–69).

B London, BL Orient. 687/688 (Wright no. 258), 18th cent., from Wällo, fols 163^r–169^r (Wright 1877: 169–70).

C London, BL Orient. 689 (Wright no. 253), 15th cent., from Wällo, fols 186^v–198^r (Wright 1877: 159–61)

F EMLL 1479, copied in 1459/60 AD, from Abba Säyfä Mikaʿel, Kärän (Eritrea), fols 255^v–266^v (Getatchew Haile 1979: 593–98).

H EMLL 6903, uncatalogued, 15th cent., from Țigor Maryam, Šäwa, fols 109^{va}–117^{rb}. The leaf sequence is perturbed with loss of text: after fol. 109 one leaf, corresponding to §§2–4, is missing and one more leaf, corresponding to §§4–7, has been mistakenly placed after fol. 115 and is currently counted as fol. 116.

J EMLL 6951, uncatalogued, 15th cent., from Betä Gäbräʿel, Wällo, fols 113^{ra}–119^{vb}.

K EMLL 6965, uncatalogued, 14th cent., from Däbrä Zämmädo, Wällo, fols 167^{va}–176^{vb}.

L Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung, Țānāsee 121 (= Dāgā Eṣṭifānos 10), 15th cent., from Däbrä Daga Eṣṭifanos, fols 173^{ra}–183^{ra} (Six 1999: 89–96).

B Ethio-SPaRe UM-018, 14th–15th cent., from ʿUra Mäsqäl, Təgray, fols 182^{vb}–193^{vb}.¹⁸

¹⁷ On this practice, see Bausi (2017b: 346–47).

¹⁸ The codex was in poor state of preservation and utterly dismembered when digitized for the first time. The undertaking of conservation work and the reconstruction of the original sequence of the leaves was possible thanks to the joined efforts of the projects Ethio-SpaRe (see note 19 below) and Sonderforschungsbereich (SFB) 950, both hosted at Hamburg University (Brita 2015). Surprisingly, the text on Anicetus and Photius is unmentioned in the content description of the manuscript: it is found between texts no. 27 (on Țālasəs and Alʿazār, 10 *Tahśas*) and no. 28 (on Märbəhnam, 14

C Ethio-SPaRe KY-001, 16th cent., from Koholo Yoḥannəs, Təgray, fols 137^{va}–145^{vb} (Nosnitsin 2013: 261); see Fig. 2.

R EAP 704/2/28, 15th cent., from Mär^cawe Krəstos, Təgray, fols 228^{rb}–240^{vb}.¹⁹

T EMMML 8431, uncatalogued (14th cent.?), from Ṭana Qirqos, Bägemdər, fols 196^{vb}–206^{vb}.

U Ethio-SPaRe AQG-005, copied in 1463, from ^cAddi Qolq^wal Giyorgis, Təgray, fols 2^{ra}–13^{rb}.²⁰ The initial leaves are severely stained with water and barely legible.

V Savona, Archivio Diocesano, uncatalogued, 15th–16th cent., fols 174^{vb}–182^{rb}; see Fig. 3.²¹

At least one further manuscript witness is known, namely ms. Däbrä Libanos 12, 15th cent., from Däbrä Libanos, Ham (Eritrea), text no. 33 (Bausi 1997: 23–24). Although known to specialists for more than two decades, the

Tahśas), on fols 182^{vb}–193^{vb} according to the third and last foliation (Brita 2015: 16). Manuscripts BCU have been digitized by the project *Ethio-SPaRe*, EU 7th Framework Programme, ERC Starting Grant 240720, PI Denis Nosnitsin, 2009–2015, <<http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/ethiostudies/ETHIOSPARE>>. I am deeply grateful to Denis Nosnitsin for making the photographic documentation available to me.

¹⁹ The manuscript has been recently digitized by project Endangered Archives Programme (EAP), The Melvin Seiden Award: Digitisation of the monastic archives of Marawe Krestos and Däbrä Abbay (Shire region, Tigray Province, Ethiopia) (EAP 704). Images are available online at the following webpage: <http://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP704-2-28>. Foliation does not reflect the original sequence of the leaves, which are extensively misplaced and some are possibly missing.

²⁰ A description of the textual contents is supplied in Pisani (2015: 180–82). The text on Anicetus and Photius is no. 1. The date of completion of the book, properly 6955 year of mercy, is supplied in the colophon, which is contained in a loose leaf originally belonging to the codex and later incorporated into another manuscript of the same collection, i.e. ms. ^cAddi Qolq^wal Giyorgis, AQG-007 (also digitized by the Ethio-SPaRe project), *Senodos*, 15th cent., catalogued by Vitagrazia Pisani, description lastly accessed on 10 March 2020.

²¹ The manuscript, still uncatalogued, is a sizable codex (49 x 37 cm) containing 40 texts to be read from 1 *Müskäräm* to 1 *Ṭərr*. It was brought to Savona, Italy, from an unknown locality and under unknown circumstances by Maresciallo Mario Urbano, who was involved in the 1935/36 war. Deposited since 2019 at the Archivio Diocesano of Savona, the manuscript has been surveyed and photographed within the frame of the project *CaNaMEI: Catalogo Nazionale dei Manoscritti Etiopici d'Italia*, The project, headed by Gianfrancesco Lusini, Naples, aims to the identification, cataloguing, textual analysis and undertaking of conservation measures of still unstudied Ethiopic manuscript collections preserved in Italian institutions.

Däbrä Libanos GS is currently still inaccessible due to the difficult work conditions in the area. Additional copies are certainly in existence, and their number is expected to grow due to the recording and/or digitization initiatives conducted in the last few years or still under way.²²

An Analysis of the Ethiopic Version

At what time was the *Passio* of Anicetus and Photius translated into Ethiopic? Since none of the witnesses provide a colophon, we only can narrow the time range prior to the 14th century, date of the earliest copy. This notwithstanding, we can make some assumptions about the *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic based on a collation of the latter with the Greek version published by Latyšev. Our analysis will be considered under the following headings:

1. Occurrence of theonymic forms;
2. Cases of mistranslation due to the misinterpretation of the text;
3. Cases of hyper-literal translation;
4. Preservation of the Greek word order;
5. The relationship between the Ethiopic and the Greek recensions BHG no. 1542 and no. 1543;
6. Possible presence of Arabic-based forms.

1. Theonymic forms

A survey of the theonymic forms is based on the assumption that the way proper names are transcribed might be revealing important clues as to the origin of the Ethiopic version. Having summoned Anicetus to his presence, Diocletian enumerates at various times a lengthy series of Hellenistic divinities in an attempt to persuade the Christian official to offer sacrifices to them. These lists are also paralleled by the Ethiopic version with a surprising formal accuracy. A first list of theonyms is the following:²³

²² Momentous efforts have been tirelessly spent by Antonella Brita in the last decade to increase considerably the photographic documentation at disposal and study the transmission aspects of the GS within the context of the sub-projects mentioned above in note 2. I have not been able to take into account these materials in the present survey.

²³ The Ethiopic portions of text have been reconstructed after collation of ten witnesses and without articulating a complete *stemma*, even though a genetic proximity between some witnesses appears

[§7] Διοκλητιανὸς ἔφη· «Οὐ δο-
κοῦσι σοι θεοὶ εἶναι ὁ Ζεὺς καὶ ὁ Πο-
σειδῶν, Ἀσκληπιὸς καὶ Ἑρμῆς,
Ἀπόλλων καὶ Σκάμανδρος, Διόνυσός
τε καὶ Σέραπις καὶ τῶν θηλειῶν
Ἀθηνᾶ τε καὶ Ἄρτεμις, Ῥέα καὶ Μή-
δεια, Ἥρα τε καὶ Γοργώ, Ἀφροδίτη τε
καὶ Παλλὰς καὶ πάντες ὅσοι κατ'
ἐκείνους γεγόνασιν θεοί» (Latyšev
1914: 97.27–98.3).

Diocletian said: «do not you be-
lieve that the gods are Zeus and Po-
seidon, Asclepius and Hermes, Apol-
lo and Scamander, Dionysus and Ser-
apis? And amongst the goddesses
Athena and Artemis, Rhea and Me-
dea, Hera and Gorgon, Aphrodite and
Pallas, and all the deities who are like
them?»

[§7] ዲዮቅልጥያኖስ ፡ ይቤ ፡ ኢኮኑሁ ፡
አማልክት ፡ ዜውስ ፡ ወጸሲዶን ፡ አስቅልጲዮ
ስ ፡ ወሂርሚስ ፡ ሊጳስ ፡ ወአጵሎን ፡ ሰቀማን
ድሮስ ፡ ወዚዮንሲስ ፡ አቴና ፡ ወአርጤምስ ፡
ሲራጲስ ፡ ወሬያ ፡ ወሚድያ ፡ ሄራ ፡ ወጎርጎ
ን ፡ አፍራዚጥ ፡ ወጸላስ ፡ ወኮሎሙ ፡ እለ ፡
ከማሆሙ ፡ እሙንቱ ።

Diocletian said: «Are perhaps not de-
ities Zews and Ṗosidon, Asqələpyos and
Hermis, Līpas and Ṗəllon, Sāqā-
mandəros and Ziyonsis, Atena and
Arteməs, Sirāpis and Reya, and Midəya,
Hera and Gorgon, Afraziṭ and Ṗallas and
all those who are like them?».

The formal correspondence between the two version is striking. Names in the two passages match each other almost completely, with the two following exceptions. Firstly, Ethiopic Līpas lacks a Greek equivalent. Secondly, the Greek voiced dental followed by a front vowel, i.e. δι, is equaled in two cases by Ethiopic *il*, *zi*: Διόνυσος corresponds to Ziyonsis (sporadically vocalized *zə*, as in *HRV*, or *zä*, as in *U*) and Ἀφροδίτη is rendered in nearly all copies as Afraziṭ. This consistency proves that the equivalence between δι and *il* is at least pre-archetypal, if not original, and adds a plus of evidence to the occasional distribution of *z*-forms in early manuscripts.²⁴

somewhat clear, namely between J and L and between C and V. It follows that the text represented here and below is but a highly preliminary work hypothesis. However, in the context of the theonymic forms, notwithstanding the lack of a *stemma* and the unsurprising proliferation of *variora* (not always void of interest, see further down) and corruptions, the proposed forms are quite likely to be prior to the archetype of the examined tradition.

²⁴ The most representative specimen of this phenomenon is the oft-quoted form *zəyaqon* “deacon”, which alternates with the standard form *diyaqon*. It is still disputed whether this specific rendering

Παρ' ἡμῶν ἄκουε σαφέστατα· δο-
κίμασον τὰ κρείττονα, πῶς θεὸς Ζεὺς ὁ
ἔρωτομανής, πῶς Ποσειδῶν ὁ
πειρατής, ὁ γόης Ἀσκληπίος, ὁ φαρ-
μακὸς Ἑρμῆς, Ἄρης ὁ πολέμιος, Διό-
νυσος ὁ κυνικὸς βακχευτής, Ἀκταίων ὁ
μοιχός, Σέραπις τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ὁ τό-
ραννος, Απόλλων ὁ τῆς ἀπωλείας συ-
νήγορος, ὁ μαγευτικὸς Ἡρακλῆς, ἡ ὁ
Ζεὺς, οὗ ἐν Κρήτῃ ὁ τάφος, ἡ Ἥφαι-
στος ὁ γοιητεύων τὸ πῦρ, ἡ Ἥλιος ὁ ἐν
πολλοῖς ἀδικώτατος, ἡ Κρόνος ὁ τὸν
Δία σὺν τῇ Ῥέα γεννήσας, ἡ Ἄδωνις ὁ
τῆς Ἀφροδίτης μοιχός, ἡ Ἴσις καὶ Ὀσί-
ρις οἱ τῆς Αἰγύπτου οἰκήτορες, ἡ Τύ-
φων καὶ Ὀρος οἱ τὴν ὑπερφάνειαν
νοσήσαντες, ἡ Ἀθηνᾶ ἡ τοὺς τῆς ἐλαί-
ας καρποὺς ἐαυτὴν αἰτίαν τοῖς βαρβά-
ροις φημίσασα, ἡ Ἄρτεμις ἡ κυναγός, ἡ
Διόσκοροι οἱ ἱππόδρομοι, ἡ Ἴοστας καὶ
Θοίας, ὧν αἱ κεφαλαὶ τῶν νεφελῶν
προσήπτοντο, ὥς οἱ καθ' ὑμᾶς μῦθοι
εἰρήκασιν, ἡ Ἴας καὶ Σκάμανδρος, οἱ
υἱοὶ τοῦ Βρότα, οἱ ἀνθρωποφάγοι καὶ
ἀκόρεστοι, ἡ Βρότας ὁ δρομεύς, ἡ
Ἀσσοῦρ καὶ Ἀρφᾶθ οἱ οἰκοδομήσαντες
Σοῦσσαν καὶ Μηδίαν, ἡ Ἴκαρος ὁ πο-
ντικός, ὃς ἐρρίφη ἐν τῷ τοῦ Πόντου

anticipates later phonetic developments or, on the contrary, is inherited by a local (Egyptian?) pronunciation of the Greek voiced dental, as shown by the comparatively frequent exchange between $\delta\iota$ and ζ in Late Antique Greek papyri. The forms *Ziyonsis* and *Afraziṭ* illustrated above, directly or indirectly coming from Greek forms, seem to speak up for the latter hypothesis. On this topic, see Bausi (2005*b*: 159–60) and Villa (2019: 208–10) for a survey from an occurrence in the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

πελάγει, καὶ λοιπῶν δε [...] (Latyšev 1914: 98.13–28)

Listen from us the most truthful things, judge who is the most powerful: the lovesick god Zeus, Poseidon the corsair, Asclepius the sorcerer, Hermes the magician, Ares the warlike, Dionysus the cynical bacchant, Actaeon the adulterer, Serapis the lord of the Egyptians, Apollo the advocate of the perdition, Heracles the charmer, or Zeus whose tomb is in Crete, Hephaestus the fire-enchanter, Helios the most iniquitous amongst many, Cronus who begot Zeus together with Rhea, Adonis the lover of Aphrodite, Isis and Osiris who dwelt in Egypt, Typhon and Oros who are sick with arrogance, Athena who proclaimed to the Barbarians to be at the origin of the olives, Artemis the huntress, the Dioscuri the horse riders, Iostas and Thoias whose heads touch the clouds, as your myths claim, or Ias and Scamander, Brotas' anthropophagous and insatiable sons, Brotas the runner, Ashur and Arfath who built Susa and Media, Icarus Ponticus who Pontus, who fell into the Pontic sea, and of the others [...]

ሰሌዎሙ ፣ ተገብሩ ።

Listen from us and judge who is the best as a god: Zews insane with lust, Apāsidon the seafarer, Asqlipyos the sorcerer, Hermes the magician, Ares the slayer, Diyosos the orator and dancer, Aqṭewon the fornicator, Sərapis the rebel from the country of Egypt, Apəllon the master of perdition, Heraqlis the diviner who plundered the tombs and slayed his mother, Efəstos the fire-enchanter, Fares the deceiver and the oppressor of many, Qəronos who begot Diyos together with Hera, Adonəs the lover of Afrazuṭ, Isis and Osiris the lords of Egypt, Ṭifos and Aros whose sickness is the arrogance, Atena who told the Barbarians about the creation of the *eləyas*-tree, Arṭemis the huntress, the Diyosqori the horse riders, Iyyas and Iyoyyas whose heads adhere to the clouds, as your fables claim, Iyas and also Asqāmānderos, the beast slayers and never-satiable man-eating sons of Boṭər, Broṭos the runner, Assur and Arfaṭ who built Sosan and Midya, Qarews *pāntawi* who threw himself into the abyss of Pāntos, and the other deities who were created together with them.

In the above sequence the hagiographer's intention seemed that to cover, not without virtuosity, the entire Hellenistic pantheon known to him. We do not know how much familiar the author of the Gəʿəz version was with the elaborate repertory of myths alluded to in the Greek text. However, it is out of question that the passage posed numerous challenges to the translational skills of the interpreter. That being so, the faithfulness of the Ethiopic in

terms of contents and formal conservatism is even more striking. Nearly all Gəʿəz theonyms are easily recognizable, except for few hardly explainable discrepancies.²⁵ An exhaustive discussion of all the correspondences lies outside the scope of the present paper. Nevertheless, a few aspects deserve a comment. Firstly, the two versions do not match each other throughout: the Ethiopic contains at least one passage missing in or deviating from the Greek text published by Latyšev. This is clear if we compare the Greek ὁ μαγευτικὸς Ἡρακλῆς, ἧ ὁ Ζεύς, οὗ ἐν Κρήτῃ ὁ τάφος, «Heracles the charmer, or Zeus whose tomb is in Crete» with the Ethiopic ወሂራቅሊስሂ : ማሪ : ሰራቁ : መቃብር : ወቀታሌ : እሙ ። «Heraqlis the diviner who plundered the tombs and slayed his mother». The Ethiopic tradition displays no relevant variance which might imply some kind of corruption down the line of transmission. The passage might stem from a possibly old redactional variant which had arisen at some point before the *Passio* reached Ethiopia, though no tradition on Heracles' matricide is known to the present writer.

Secondly, and more eloquently, a handful of Gəʿəz wordforms do retain the Greek case endings. Thus, Sosan continues the accusative form Σοῦσσαν, «Susa»; the loanword *elāyas* continues the genitive form ἐλαίας, «olive-tree»²⁶; the pair Zews and Diyos lexicalizes the morphological opposition between the nominative Ζεὺς and the accusative τὸν Δία «Zeus». The last example, in which the two forms are not harmonized into one, shows

²⁵ Namely Fares, Iyyas, and Iyoyyas, respectively coming from the Greek Ἥλιος, Ἰούσας, and Θοίας. The Ethiopic forms are nearly unanimously attested over the manuscript tradition: Iyyas has no variant readings, while Fares and Iyoyyas are displayed nearly everywhere except for *R* Ferās and Iyodas. It is reasonable to assume that, if not resulting from a very early corruption at a pre-archetypal stage, these wordforms must be primitive.

²⁶ The cultivated olive (*Olea europaea europaea*, i.e. the Greek ἔλαια) is not native to the Horn of Africa, where the wild olive (*Olea europaea cuspidata*) rather grows. The latter subspecies, whose fruits are not edible, is indicated in Gəʿəz as *awlāʿ*, a word common to Tigrinya and possibly borrowed from Cushitic (Leslau 1987: 48a). Well-aware of this botanical differentiation, the early translators of the Old Testament books currently rendered the Greek ἔλαια with the word *zäyt*, of Arabo-Aramaic origin (e.g. Ex 27:20, Dt 24:21, Ps 51:8, Ps 127:4, Is 17:6). Interestingly, in Rm 11:24 the distinction between ἀγριέλαιος and καλλιέλαιος survives through the opposition between *awlāʿa gädām*, lit. «wild olive» (also in Rm 11:17), and *zäyt*, «[good] olive». Also the translator of the *Passio* of Anicetus and Photius possibly felt *awlāʿ* as inadequate and, perhaps under influence of the copious Grecisms, simply transliterated the form keeping the genitive ending. The form *elāyas* has no variants in the considered manuscript tradition.

that the translator failed to associate the two Greek forms with one and the same deity and is broadly indicative of his defective knowledge of the Classical pantheon. Also, all the above examples of literal transcription of inflected nouns make it far-fetched to assume the existence of a linguistic intermediate between the Greek and the Ethiopic.

Finally, it is worth remarking that minority or corrupted variant readings (not shown in the above synopsis) are not deprived of interest *per se*. For instance, the abovementioned form *Diyos*, i.e. *Zeus*, is predominant except for *BCV* *Dəyos* and *R* *Zəyos*. Due to a set of circumstances, the latter *z*-form is very unlikely to be primitive. Therefore, there is some basis for assuming that *z*-forms are not always recessive and occasionally develop as a late departure from *d*-forms.²⁷

The last passage under scrutiny is taken from Anicetus' reply to Diocletian. In his apology to the Christianity, Anicetus juxtaposes each idol with a biblical figure. The result is a rhetoric collection of vices and virtues intended to seal the moral high ground of the new Christian faith over the polytheistic practices.

[§8] «τίνα τοίνυν προκρίνεις, εἰπέ· Πέτρον τὸν κλειδοφύλακα, ἢ Ποσειδῶνα τὸν πειρατὴν; Παῦλον τὸν τῶν δογμάτων ῥήτορα, ἢ Δίαν τὸν γόητα; Ἰωάννην τὸν εὐαγγελιστὴν, ἢ Διόνυσον τὸν βακχευτὴν; τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου τὴν ἄσκησιν, ἢ Σκαμάνδρου τὸ ἄπληστον ῥεῦμα; τί βέλτιον τιμᾶν, τῶν προφητῶν τὸν χορόν, ἢ τῆς Ἥρας καὶ Παλλάδος τὸ θέατρον; τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ μαρτύρων τὴν σύγκλητον, ἢ τὰ Ἑρακλέως καὶ Ἀντέως παλαιίσματα; Μαρίαν τὴν Θεοτόκον, ἢ Μήδειαν τὴν μυθεύτριαν; Ἡσαΐαν τὸν τῆς οἰκουμένης κήρυκα, ἢ Σέραπιν τὸν ἐν πολλοῖς ψευδομάντην; Ἠλίαν τὸν ζηλωτὴν, ἢ

[§8] መነ፡ እንከ፡ ታብድር፡ እምጲጥር ስ፡ ጸዋሬ፡ መር፡ፍ፡ ዘሰማያት፡ ወእምጲሲ ዶን፡ ፈያት፡ ወኖትይ፡ እምጲውሎስ፡ ነጋሬ፡ ሕገገ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ወእምድዮስ፡ መስብዕ፡ እምዮሐንስ፡ ወንጌላዊ፡ ወእም ቶይያስ፡ ዘፋኒ፡ እመጥምቅ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ ጸዋሚ፡ ወእምሰቃማንድርስ፡ ሥሠ-ዕ፡ አይ፡ እንከ፡ ይኒይስ፡ አክብር፡ እማኅበር መ፡ ለነቢያት፡ ወማሕሌተ፡ ዘፈኖመ፡ ለሄራ፡ ወጳላስ፡ እምኢሳይያስ፡ ሰሳኪ፡ በእንተ፡ ሕይወት፡ ወእምሰራጺስ፡ ርከ-ስ፡ ወእምኤልያስ፡ ቀናኢ፡ ወእምኤፌስመስ፡ መሠርየ፡ እሳት፡ ወእምሳሙኤል፡ ንጹሕ፡ ወመስተዐግሥ፡ ወእምሱር፡ ወእምአርፋድ፡ መስሕታኅ፡ ዓለም፡ እምያዕቆብ፡ ጸላይ፡ ወእምአርያን፡ ጳንጣዊ፡ ማሪ፡ እ

²⁷ The same phenomenon is shown by the spelling form *ዛግማዊ* ፤ instead of *ዳግማዊ* ፤, «second» in the 15th-cent. ms. EMMML 3515, *Senodos*, cp. Bausi (1995: xl–xli).

Ἡφαιστον τὸν γοητευτὴν; Σαμουὴλ τὸν ἐγκρατῆ, ἢ Ἀσσοῦρ καὶ Ἀρφατ τῆς οἰκουμένης τὰ σκάνδαλα; Ἰάκωβον τὸν εὐκτήριον, ἢ Πᾶνα τὸν δαίμονα; Ἀβραάμ τὸν πιστότατον, ἢ Ἄρεα τὸν τῶν πολέμων γεννήτορα; Ἰερεμίαν τὸν συμπαθέστατον, ἢ Ἰεζάβελ τῶν προφητῶν τὴν φονεύτριαν;» (Latyšev 1914: 99.22–100.4)

«Who do you prefer, now tell me: Peter the keeper of the keys or Poseidon the corsair? Paul the preacher of the dogmata or Zeus the sorcerer? John the Evangelist or Dionysus the bacchant? The ascetic of John the Baptist or the insatiable stream of the Scamander? Who is worthier of honor? The multitude of prophets or the theater of Hera and Pallas? The gathering of the apostles and the martyrs or the combats of Heracles and Antaeus? Mary the mother of God or Medea the teller of tales? Isaiah, the herald of the world, or Serapis, the false seer among many? Eliah the zealous or Hephaestus the enchanter? Samuel the disciplined or [As]sur²⁸ and Arfat, snares of the world? Jacob the prayer or Pan the demon? Abraham the most devoted or Ares the father of the wars? Jeremiah the most compassionate or Jezebel the murderess of the prophets?²⁹».

ምእብርሃም ፡ መእመን ፡ ወእምኣሪስ ፡ ወልደ ፡ ቀታሊ ፡ ወእምኤርሚያስ ፡ መሓሪ ፡ ወእምኤልሳቤል ፡ ቀታሊተ ፡ ነቢያት ፡ እምነ ፡ ማኅበሩሙ ፡ ለሐዋርያት ፡ ወለነቢያት ፡ ወለቅዱሳን ፡ ወለኄራን ፡ ሰማዕት ፡ ወእምነ ፡ ገድሎሙ ፡ ለአንጤያስ ፡ ወለሄራቅልስ ፡ እማርያ ፡ ወላዲተ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ ወእምድያ ፡ መሠሪት ፡

«Then, who do you prefer? Peter the keeper of the keys of the heavens or Pōsidon the robber and seafarer? Paul, the preacher of the laws of God, or Dəyos the magician? John the Evangelist or Toḡəyyas the dancer? John the Baptist, the ascetic, or Sāqamandəros the insatiable? Who, then, is worthier of honor? The multitude of the prophets or the choral songs of Hera and Pallas? Isaiah the preacher of the salvation or Sārapis the impure? Eliah the zealous or Efəstos the fire-enchanter? Samuel, the pure and disciplined, or Sur and Arfad, the deceivers of the world? Jacob the prayer or Oryan the diviner of Pontus [*sic*]? Abraham the faithful or Aris the son of the slayer? Jeremiah the compassionate or Elzabel the murderess of the prophets? The multitude of apostles, prophets, saints and noble martyrs or the combats of Anteyas and Heraqləs? Mary the mother of God or Mədəya the enchantress?»

²⁸ Instead of Ἀσσοῦρ, ms. Paris, BnF Suppl. Gr. 241 has σοῦρ, which might be at the root of the Ethiopic Sur.

²⁹ The reference is to king Achab's wife, who persuaded her husband to worship the Phoenician idols, cp. 1Kgs 18:4.

As compared to the Greek, the Gəʿəz version displays one syntactical deviation and two mistranscriptions of proper names. The first one is a minor textual transposition of two sentences which are appended to the end («The multitude of apostles, prophets, saints and noble martyrs or the combats of Anṭeyas and Heraqləs? Mary the mother of God or Mədəya the enchantress?»). The two mistranscriptions of the theonyms are more problematic. Διόνυσον, «Dionysus» was transcribed in a way that is difficult to reconstruct due to the proliferation of scribal variants (Toyəyyas is a tentative spelling form), but doubtlessly marked by initial *t*- in correspondence of δ.³⁰ Likewise confusing is ኦርያን : ጳንጣዊ : ማሪ ።, «Oryan the diviner of Pontus», which equals Πᾶνα τὸν δαίμονα, «Pan the demon»: while it remains uncertain how best to vocalize the beginning of the first name,³¹ the epithet *pāntawi*, lit. *Ponticus*, may be somewhat reminiscent of the name of the famous goat-like god.

Are these wordforms reflective of a Greek-to-Gəʿəz translation? Despite the attractiveness of this solution, other options must be evaluated before drawing a conclusion. One possibility is that the Greek wordforms may have eventually survived through an Arabic intermediate along the transmission trajectory. However, one would look in vain for the kind of mistranscriptions which are way too customary in Arabic-to-Gəʿəz translations, such as confusion between *b/t/y/n*, or between *f/q*, or again between *r/z*, voiced rendering

³⁰ The Ethiopic tradition shows a considerable degree of internal deterioration, included various nonsensical expressions reflecting an awkward attempt to give meaning to the text: *R wä-ʾəm-Tonəyayyas*, *U wä-ʾəm-Toyayyas*, *J wä-ʾəm-Toyyənas*, *L wä-ʾəm-Tiyoyyas*, *H wä-ʾəm-Toyay*, *KB wä-ʾəm-moto Yəyyas*, *C wä-moto Yəyyas*, *V wä-motä Yəyyas*. In some manuscripts the reading is split into two words, the first being reinterpreted as *mot*, «death». One should note that Ethiopic *t* in correspondence of a Greek δ is quite unconventional, the classical phonetic equivalences being δ > 𐌲, θ > 𐌱, τ > 𐌹. Departures from this traditional tripartition are observed in this text also in correspondence of Arfat, which appears twice in the Greek: once as Ἀρφάθ, rendered as Arfaṭ with unusual passage θ > 𐌹, and once as Ἀρφάρ, rendered as Arfad with unusual passage τ > 𐌲. Such an instability is probably connected to some graphical fluctuations already existing in the Greek and in their turn caused by phonetic assimilation to the following word in the text sequence (Ἀρφάθ is followed by aspirated οἱ, Ἀρφάρ is followed by τῆς).

³¹ In this paper the seventh order, witnessed by *U* Oryan and *B* Oriyan, has been tentatively preferred over the more common first (HJCR Aryan, *K* Ariyan, *V* Areyan) and fourth orders (ms. *L*).

of *p*, and so on.³² Given the total absence of all these changes, the orthography of proper names in our *Passio* would be very hard to explain if one were to assume an Arabic version at the root of the Gəʿəz. Another possibility to be considered is that of interferences and contaminations coming from other Gəʿəz works and occurred either in the translational process or down the line of transmission. Indeed, our text is obviously not the only Ethiopic piece to make mention of Classical Greek gods. A tangential circulation of Classical theonyms can be appreciated in both the Aksumite and Post-Aksumite literature, e.g. in the *Acts of the Apostles*,³³ in the *Life* of Giyorgis,³⁴ in the *Life* of Antony,³⁵ in several *Passiones* of the GS as well as in the corresponding *Sənkəssar* entries,³⁶ in a short mythographic piece uniquely transmitted in

³² Disfigured wordforms are found in the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu, where Cronus becomes Aroksəs via misreading of اکرونس, Rhea is rendered Awrən, Zeus becomes Raʿon (due to confusion between زائون and زائوس) or even Birus and Nirus (from بزيروس, *bi-Zīyūs*), Hephaestus becomes Qäštōs or Aqayəs due to confusion between ق and ف, Apollo and Poseidon are rendered Ablon and Busiṭon with regular transcription of *p* as *b* (Zotenberg 1883: 28–34, 241–51).

³³ Artemis, Zeus, and Hermes. It is worth remembering the passage in which Barnabas and Paul are thought by the Lycaonians to be Zeus and Hermes respectively (At 14:12), an association which will determine the erroneous identification of Paul as the author of the *Shepherd* of Hermas in the well-known *subscriptio* of ms. Paris, BnF Abb. 174 (Villa 2019: 89–90).

³⁴ The version of the *Life* of Giyorgis composed by Pasicrates contains in three distinct passages the names of Apollo, Poseidon, Heracles, Scamander, Athena, and others (English transl. in Budge 1930: 80, 82, 84). Interestingly, the second passage was embedded in the *Mäṣḥafä məṣtir*, or ‘Book of the mystery’, written down by the learned theologian Giyorgis of Säglä in the early 15th century. The passage runs as follows: አእምሮ ፡ ጊዮርጊስ ፡ ከመ ፡ አጵሎን ፡ ሰማያተ ፡ ገብረ ፡ ወኤራቅሊስ ፡ ምድረ ፡ ሳረረ ፡ ሰቀመድሮስ ፡ ወኣቴና ፡ ፀሐየ ፡ ሠርዑ ፡ ወእርጅውስ ፡ ወሶፎ ፡ ባሕረ ፡ አቀሙ ፡, «Know, o Giyorgis, that Apəllon created the skies, Eraqlis established the earth, Säqämändros and Atena placed the sun, Arpewəs (Orpheus?) and Sofo laid the sea» (text in Yaqob Beyene 1990a: 29; Italian transl. in Yaqob Beyene 1990b: 19–20).

³⁵ Most likely translated in Aksumite times, it contains the names of Kore, Hephaestos, Hera, Apollo, Artemis, and Poseidon (Zarzeczny 2013: 56).

³⁶ For instance, the *Gädlä Nob* (translated from Arabic in 1362/63 AD according to its *subscriptio*) contains the names of Apəllon (Apollo), Rədamis (Artemide), Zeus, and Athena. Besides, Heracles and Asclepius are called upon in the *Passio* of Cyprian and Justa (Goodspeed 1903: 14 [text], 20 [tr.]). Asclepius is also found in the *Passio* of Pantaleon the Physician and, along with Apollo, Zeus, and Hephaestus, in the unpublished *Passio* of Theocritus the Reader. Further names are certainly attested in other texts of the GS.

the 18th-cent. ms. Vatican City, BAV Comboni Et. S 12,³⁷ and even in some lexical lists embedded in *sāwasaw*-books.³⁸ However, the presence of *hapax legomena* and of inflected and non-harmonized forms (e.g. the pair *Zews/Diyos*) in our *Passio* reveals that such interferences, though sporadically documented,³⁹ did not play a decisive role.

We shall now examine other textual aspects of the Ethiopic version.

2. Cases of mistranslation due to the misinterpretation of the text

Here are presented and commented some passages of the Ethiopic text showing peculiar readings that can be explained assuming a misinterpretation of the original Greek.

1. Diocletian's epistle to the subjects of the empire (§2) concludes as follows: **ወለእሉኒ ፡ አማልክት ፡ ዐበይት ፡ እንዘ ፡ ታስተፈሥሕዎሙ ፡**, «offering salutations to the great gods». The last verb, literally «to gladden, to delight» and also «to greet» (Dillmann 1865: 1349–50), badly matches the Greek καὶ τοῖς θεοῖς τὰ μέγιστα χαριζόμενοι, «showing great favour unto to the gods» (Latyšev 1914: 94.10–12), unless one conjectures that χαριζόμενοι, «show favour» was read or intended as χαίρομενοι, «rejoice» also used in formulas of salutation.

2. It would seem at first confusing why the Greek κρουσθητω ξίφει τὴν κεφαλὴν ὁ ἀνόσιος, «may the impious be struck in the head with a sword» (Latyšev 1914: 105.1, §16) becomes **በድኑ ፡ አነብሮ ፡ ለርእስክ ፡ በሰይፍ ፡**, «corpse^{acc} / I shall put your head / with a sword».⁴⁰ This equivalence becomes less cryptic if one assumes a misreading between κρουσθητω (imperative aorist passive of κρούω «hit, strike») and a syntagma νε]κρου στήτω

³⁷ Namely Zeus, Cronus, Aphrodite, and Hermes from ms. Vatican City, BAV Comboni Et. S 12, p. 159 (Raineri 1997: 190–92). The short text perhaps traces back to a Greek Ps.-Nonnus' commentary (6th cent.), though at least one (secondary?) Arabism is observable in the sentence **ወኮነ ፡ እምኔሁ ፡ አፍሮዲጣ ፡ እንተ ፡ ይእቲ ፡ ዝኖራ ፡**, «and Afroditā, who is Zəhōra, was begotten by it [the seed of Cronus]», since Zəhōra derives from Zuharah, the Arabic name of the planet Venus.

³⁸ Namely Apəllon, Atena, and Ardāmanos (Artemis) *sub voce* 'names of the impure deities' (cp. ms. Paris, BnF Éth. 150, fol. 40vb).

³⁹ For instance in the form Abəllon (ms. K, fol. 169va), clearly influenced by an Arabic-based transcription.

⁴⁰ The sentence is not void of variants, such as **R በእማን ፡**, «in truth» instead of **በድኑ ፡**.

(imperative aorist passive of ἵστημι «set, set up, make sb stand»), translated into Ethiopic with **በድን** : «corpse, dead body» and the verb **አንበረ** : «place, put, set».

3. Before being martyred, Anicetus admonishes Diocletian with these words: σὺ δὲ διὰ τὴν μαιφονίαν σου καὶ ἄδηλον πρόθεσιν, «but you, because of your murderousness and your obscure nature» (Latyšev, 1914, p. 110.11–13, §24). The Ethiopic version reads **ወአንተ ሰጸንተ ፡ እከይከ ፡ ወሐብልከ ፡**, «but you, because of your viciousness and your deceit». Since a consistent translational equivalence exists between **ሐብል** : and δόλος «deceit»,⁴¹ it is tempting to assume a sight error or a Greek corruption from ἄδηλον, lit. «unseen, invisible, obscure».

3. Cases of hyper-literal translation

As is often the case with Greek compound names, these are translated into Ethiopic via a one-to-one rendering of the single constituents. For instance, **በአፍቅሮ ፡ ክብር ፡** = τῇ φιλοδοξίᾳ, «desire for glory, ambition» (Latyšev 1914: 93.9, §1); **ዘነፍስ ፡ ያሐጉል ፡** = ψυχοφθόροις, «soul destroyers» (Latyšev 1914: 94.28, §3); **ሐሳውያን ፡ ስም ፡** = ψευδωνύμων, «with false names» (Latyšev 1914: 99.14–15, §8); **ዘብዙኅ ፡ ሤጡ ፡** = πολυτελεῖ, «high-priced» (Latyšev 1914: 112.8, §26). More interestingly, the verb **ፈተነ** : «inspect, investigate» accompanied by **ንበረት** : «position, situation, state» renders twice the Greek λογοθετέω, «bring into account», the latter being separated in its constituents λόγος and τίθημι.⁴²

A further example is found in the Ethiopic **ይእዘኒኬ ፡ ኩነኔ ፡ ማሕመሜ ፡ በላዔ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ አምጽእ ፡**, «and now proceed with the painful punishment that devours the flesh», that corresponds to the Greek καὶ νῦν τὰς σαρκοφάγους τιμωρίας προκόμιζε, «now proceed with the flesh-eating punishment» (Latyšev 1914: 107.5, §19). The above passage is particularly telling because, in addition to the equivalence σαρκοφάγους = **በላዔ ፡ ሥጋ ፡**, one can appreciate two other common features of the Gəʿəz version: the preservation of the word order OV (on this point see below) and the two-for-one transla-

⁴¹ As further down in the same text, δολίω δὲ φωνῇ (Latyšev 1914: 111.7, §25) is rendered **ቃለ ፡ ሐብል ፡** «deceitful voice».

⁴² Cp. Latyšev (1914: 95.30, 96.2, §4).

tional technique, i.e. the presence of two quasi-synonymic elements in correspondence of one single reading of the Greek.⁴³

One more example reflects a case of misinterpretation of the original text due to hyper-literal translation. In the Greek καὶ τούτους περώσας τοῖς τῶν ἀνόμων προστάγμασι, «and inciting them with wicked commands» (Latyšev 1914: 93.22–23, §1) the verb περώω, lit. «furnish with wings or feathers» is used in the figurative meaning of «incite, spur». The author of the Ethiopic version retained the primitive meaning of the verb: **ወአስረሮሙ ፡ በክነፈ ፡ እከየ ፡ ሥርዐቱ ፡**, «and he made them fly with the wings of his wicked dispositions», by using the verb **አስረረ ፡**, «make fly» and further adding **በክነፈ ፡**, «with the wings» to clarify the passage.

4. Preservation of the Greek word order

A recent study has shown that the word order in G^εaz was somewhat flexible and pragmatic-sensitive, that is governed by the principle that the

⁴³ In the example under scrutiny, **በላኔ ፡ ሥጋ ፡**, «that devours the flesh» is supplemented by **ማሕመጫ ፡**, «painful». The same technique, probably employed to add a semantic emphasis to the sentence, is not rare in our text: e.g. **ለምስል ፡ ወለጣዖት ፡** corresponding to τῶν εἰδώλων (Latyšev 1914: 93.11, §1); **አምጽኡ ፡ ወአቅርቡ ፡** corresponding to παρστήσαντες (Latyšev 1914: 94.9, §2); **ጠቢብ ፡ ዐቃቤ ፡ ሥራይ ፡ ለሊክ ፡** corresponding to ἰατρὸς δι' ἑαυτοῦ, «physician of yourself» (Latyšev 1914: 111.14, §25). One example deserves special attention as it reflects the interference of the Ethiopic version of the New Testament: the expression ὁ λύσας τῇ οἰκονομίᾳ σου τὸ τῆς ἔχθρας μεσότοιχον, «[you] who under your guidance dissolved the dividing wall of hostility» (Latyšev 1914: 102.16, §12) obviously alludes to Eph. 2:14 («[who] has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility»). The Ethiopic counterpart **ወዘፈትሐ ፡ ወኅዖት ፡ በምስረቱ ፡ አረፍተ ፡ ማእከል ፡**, «who dissolved and destroyed with his compassion the dividing wall» has two verbs, i.e. **ፈትሐ ፡** «dissolved» and **ኅዖት ፡** «destroyed», in place of the single Greek reading ὁ λύσας «who dissolved», the first one being the faithful translation of the Greek and the second being evidently borrowed from the Ethiopic version of Eph. 2:14 **ወኅዖት ፡ አረፍተ ፡ ማእከል ፡ እንተ ፡ ጽልእ ፡** (Uhlig, Maehlum 1993: 107) and inserted by someone who recognized the allusion. Since **ወኅዖት ፡** is exhibited by all witnesses, it is difficult to say whether it was introduced by a copyist in a pre-archetypal stage or by the translator himself. The latter circumstance, which seems more plausible, would have consequences in terms of relative chronology, namely in establishing that the translation of the *Letter to the Ephesians* predated that of our *Passio*. It is, however, out of question that the biblical text exerted its own interference repeatedly over time: ms. *U* concludes the sentence adding **እንተ ፡ ፀልእ ፡**, «that is hostility», thus making the text conform even more closely to that of the Bible.

marked topic typically occupies the first position (Bulakh 2012). Statistically, epigraphic Gəʿəz displays a certain preference for the V-S and particularly V-O orders. In addition, adjectives, genitive complements and relative clauses predominantly follow the head noun, as in many Semitic languages (i.e. N-Agg, N-G, and N-Rel orders; cp. Gai 1981, Bulakh 2012). Specialists also agree that among the many factors that tend to blur the data pool one cannot rule out the influence of the Greek substratum in translated texts. Evidence resulting from a comparison between the Greek and the Ethiopic versions of the *Passio* is, despite some general difficulties,⁴⁴ in agreement with this statement. In fact, as the following examples show, the Ethiopic often displays an unusual or non-neutral word order that is reflective of a one-to-one rendering of the components of the underlying Greek phrase.

1. An O-V word order, statistically uncommon and generally featured by a marked focus onto the pre-verbal object, is shown in **ሰደተ ፡ አዘነ ፡ ወሥርዐተ ፡ እኩየ ፡ ወርከሰ ፡ ሠርዐ ፡**, «he ordered a persecution and issued wicked and immoral commands» in accordance with (and reasonably inherited by) the Greek O-V order τὸν διωγμὸν ἐπενόησε καὶ νόμους ἀνόμους ἐκθέμενος, «he devised a persecution, and having issued wicked laws» (Latyšev 1914: 94.24–25, §3).

2. Anicetus' admonishment **ወኢተኅፍርሁ ፡ ዘረድኤተ ፡ እምኅቢሆሙ ፡ ትሰእል ።**, «you are not ashamed to seek help from them» reproduces the same order as οὐκ ἐντρέπῃ βοήθειαν παρ' αὐτῶν ζητῶν (Latyšev 1914: 108.7, §21), with a pre-verbal object (**ረድኤተ ፡**) and the verb of the subordinate clause in the last position.

3. The Gəʿəz syntax looks systematically reversed in the passage **እንዘ ፡ ይሬእየክ ፡ ለጽሙማን ፡ ለእለ ፡ አልቦሙ ፡ ልበ ፡ ጣዖታተ ፡ ቀዋሜ ፡ በማእከሊዝ ፡ ኩሉ ፡ እንዘ ፡ ትኅብር ፡**, lit. «while seeing you, of the mute and inanimate idols protector, sitting in the middle of all this». As can be seen, the verb occupies the end position and the qualifier precedes the qualified head noun (e.g. Adj-N and the G-N periphrastic construction via the preposition *lä-*). These ex-

⁴⁴ Obviously, some caveats must be considered: first, it is far-fetched that the Greek text published by Latyšev is fully identical to the lost *Vorlage* of the Gəʿəz; secondly, a reliable edition of the Ethiopic version is still lacking. The first flaw can be in theory extended to any Greek-to-Gəʿəz translation; the second one can to some extent be mitigated by taking into consideration examples with trivial or no textual variance.

amples of unconventional order descend from the Greek original κωφῶν καὶ ἀναισθητῶν εἰδώλων ὑπέρμαχον ἐπὶ τοσούτου πλήθους ὁρῶν σε νυνὶ καθήμενον, «while seeing you sitting right now before this crowd and defending the deaf and insensitive idols» (Latyšev 1914: 96.25–26, §5).

4. In his eulogy to God before his martyrdom, Anicetus says **ወሰብኦ ፡ እመሬት ፡ ዘእምድር ፡ ነሢኣኦ ፡ በአጽብዒኦ ፡ ለሐኩ ፡**, «and having taken the man from the clay coming from the earth, You molded him with Your fingers» with the object in the first position and the verb at the end. The word order faithfully reflects the Greek ὁ ἄνθρωπον ἐκ γῆς χοῦν λαβὼν καὶ τοῖς δακτύλοις διαπλάσας (Latyšev 1914: 111. 4–5, §25).

However, non-neutral or unconventional word orders are not restricted to the interference of the Greek syntax. Thus, for instance, the sentence **ወሶበ ፡ ርእይዎሙ ፡ ለቅዱሳን ፡ አሕዛብ ፡ እሱራነ ፡ ከመ ፡ አንተ ፡ እንስሳ ፡ ይስሕቡ ፡**, lit. «when the people saw the saints tied up and dragged along like cattle», with a V-O-S word order and the intervening subject «the people» between the object «the saints» and the latter's complement «tied up»,⁴⁵ does not match exactly the Greek τότε πλήθη ὠλόλυξαν, θεασάμενοι δεσμίους ὡς θηρία, «then the people cried out, having seen them tied up like animals» (Latyšev 1914: 105.15, §17). Again, in a few examples the periphrastic genitive construction with the preposition *lā-* undergoes reversed word order (Gen-N) or insertion of an element between the head noun and the nominal complement. Thus, **ወናሁ ፡ እስሕቀክ ፡ አነ ፡ ዐቢዩ ፡ እስመ ፡ ቀዋሚሆሙ ፡ አንተ ፡ ለምስለ ፡ ጠዖት ፡**, «now I laugh much at you because you are the defender of the images of the idols» splits the *status constructus* by inserting **አንተ ፡**, «you» between «defender» and «images».⁴⁶ A further example of Gen-N order is **ዘካልኣንኒ ፡ ሰማዕት ፡ አዕጽምቲሆሙ ፡**, «they extracted the bones of the other martyrs too» (§26, not in the Greek), where the complement precedes the head noun «bones». What is crucial for the question under scrutiny is that

⁴⁵ Not by chance ms H omits **አሕዛብ ፡**, «the people» and ms. K has the inverted order **አሕዛብ ፡ ለቅዱሳን ፡**.

⁴⁶ It corresponds to Greek διόπερ λεγῶ σε μεγάλως ἐγώ, πῶς τῶν εἰδώλων ὑπερμαχεῖς, «therefore I tell you [but the Γεῖαζ here follows the variant reading γεῶ, «I laugh», of ms. Paris, BnF Suppl. Gr. 241; cp. further down in this paper] vehemently: how can you act in defense of the idols?» (Latyšev 1914: 104.16–17, §16). The Ethiopic passage is not void of variants: in mss JCRV **አነ ፡**, «I» is placed in the first position; in others **ቀዋሚሆሙ ፡** «the defender of» is corrupted into **ቀዳሚሆሙ ፡** «the first of» (mss LU) or **ቅድሚሆሙ ፡** (mss JV).

such non-linear orders would be very difficult to explain if one were to assume an Arabic source at the root of the Ethiopic translation, because in the Arabic *status constructus* the only possible order is N-Gen and no intervening element between them is tolerated. The possibility remains that such deviating constructions, especially those involving a qualifier-qualified order, are reflective of a ‘Cushiticizing tendency’, traditionally explained as an effect of the centuries-long linguistical coexistence and clearly visible in many modern Ethiopian languages (Hoffmann 1977: 251, Kapeliuk 2014: 337).

5. The relationship between the Ethiopic and the Greek recensions BHG no. 1542 and no. 1543

In addition to the previous analyses, one can further compare the Ethiopic version with the two Greek text types considered by Vasilij Latyšev, namely the recension BHG no. 1542, represented by ms. Vatican City, BAV Gr. 1671, and the recension BHG no. 1543, represented by Paris, BnF Suppl. Gr. 241. As shown in the following examples, the Ethiopic more often follows the latter, though not exclusively.

1. Et. ይስሕብዎሙ ፡ ገጸሙ ፡ ጎሡረ ፡ ለምስል ፡ ወለጣዖት ፡ አምላክ ፡ ይብልዎሙ ፡ ወያጌብርዎሙ ።, «they were coerced to praise the ignominious aspect of the image(s) and of the idols and call them deities» parallels τὰς ἀτίμους μορφὰς τῶν εἰδώλων θεοποιεῖν ἡναγκάζοντο, «they were coerced to deify the ignominious image of the idols» (Latyšev 1914: 93.10–11, §1). Ethiopic አምላክ ፡ ይብልዎሙ ፡ does not render θεοποιεῖν, «to deify», printed by Latyšev according to the recension BHG no. 1542, but θεολογεῖν, «to call sb a deity», as provided by the recension BHG no. 1543.

2. On the contrary, it would be unclear why the Greek χεῖρας χαλάσαντες σιδηρᾶς, «while taking down iron hands (i.e. claws)» (Latyšev 1914: 112.6, §26) becomes መትሥሠ ፡ ጎጂ ፣, «iron hook» if it were not for the precious testimony given by the Vatican codex (BHG no. 1542), which reads κρεάγρας χαλάσαντες σιδηρᾶς. Again, the name of the saint met by Anicetus and Photius is Phronton in BHG no. 1543 (κατὰ τοῦ ἁγίου Φρόντωνος) and Lucianus in BHG no. 1542 (κατὰ τοῦ ἁγίου Λουκιανοῦ). The Ethiopic ለቅዱስ ፡ ሉቃ፡፡ is congruent with the latter.

At present the above correspondences cannot be used to determine the genetic position of the Greek version underlying the Ethiopic: lacking a clear

picture of the Greek tradition, it cannot be ascertained whether the above correspondences are archaisms or innovations, i.e. whether they are useless or not for genetic subgrouping. A further point to be considered is that it remains questionable whether at least some of the alleged misinterpretations in the Ethiopic are indeed a good translation of an already corrupted, yet unrecorded, reading of the Greek source. This is evidenced by at least one example. The Greek ὃς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ ὕψους ὡς στῦλον ἐκρέμασε καὶ πλήθει ἄστρων σαφῶς ἐκαλλώπισεν, «He who suspended the heaven on the top like a pillar and manifestly embellished it with the multitude of stars» (Latyšev 1914: 97.2–4, §5, no variance between the two Greek recensions) is rendered in Gəʿəz as follows: **ዘሰማየ፡ ዘእንበለ፡ ዐምድ፡ ሰቀለ፡ ዘበጥበቡ፡ በብዙኅ፡ ከዋክብት፡ አሰርገወ፡**, «He who suspended the heaven without a pillar, He who with his wisdom embellished it with many stars». The reading «with his wisdom» in correspondence of «manifestly» remains unexplainable unless one assumes a confusion between the attested σαφῶς (from φῶς, «light») and σοφῶς «wisely». One might well think of a misreading occurred during the translation process, but it is surprising to see that the same corruption or at least alternation was independently proposed by Latyšev himself, who preferred σοφῶς over the attested σαφῶς.⁴⁷ Now, to restore what the primary Greek text looked like lies beyond the scope of this paper. What is important here is to observe that the testimony of the Ethiopic retains a not-yet-found (or perhaps even lost) Greek reading and independently confirms Latyšev's conjecture.

6. Possible presence of Arabic-based forms

In our survey we also must consider any possible evidence pointing to different directions than those so far followed. More specifically, we shall now examine two traces of a potential Arabic origin.

After several ineffective tortures, Diocletianus orders a certain Βιβῖνος or Βιβιανός (Latyšev 1914: 103.12, §14) to behead Anicetus. The name of the executioner in charge is handed down in Ethiopic in multiple ways, all

⁴⁷ «Pro σαφῶς praetulerim σοφῶς» (Latyšev 1914: 97 *apparatus* 2–3).

stemming from an original form *Niq(i)yanos* or *Liq(i)yanos*.⁴⁸ While the Ethiopic appears to diverge considerably from the Greek, one might suspect an Arabic predecessor via *بييانوس* (*Bībiyānūs*) > *نيقيانوس* (*Nīqiyānūs*) through confusion between initial *bā* (ب) and *nūn* (ن), i.e. two letters that only differ from each other for one dot below or above. However, this reconstruction becomes much less definite than it may seem *prima facie* if other options are taken into consideration: in fact, no Arabic source is required if we imagine that the concurrent variant reading *Liq(i)yanos* might in theory reflect a internal paleographical corruption of the Ethiopic transmission *Bt*- > *Ḍ*- > *Ḍ*-. As a matter of fact, both assumptions are based on speculation since we cannot assess which *Gəʿəz* reading, *Niq(i)yanos* or *Liq(i)yanos*, is genuine or at least more ancient without a full knowledge of the transmission history of the Ethiopic version. Our judgment is therefore suspended.

Another question pertains to the lexical domain and in particular to the translation of τὰ νεῦρα ‘sinews, nerves’. The word is attested several times in our text and is variously rendered in *Gəʿəz*. Along with the expected plural **ሥረው ፡** and the cryptic form **መጌር ፡**,⁴⁹ the text once displays the very rare singular term **መትን ፡** (in correspondence of Latyšev 1914: 96.3, §4) and once its plural form **አምትንት ፡** (Latyšev 1914: 103.21, §14), in both cases with no variance. The presence of this word in a putative Aksumite translation raises some perplexity due to a combination of several circumstances: undoubtedly linked to Arabic متن, the word **መትን ፡** was classed by Wolf Leslau as an Arabic loanword (Leslau 1958: 159). Besides, it belongs to an unproductive nominal root, as is often the case with loanwords, and is referenced in Dillmann’s *Lexicon* in Post-Aksumite texts only.⁵⁰ Everything

⁴⁸ More specifically, *BU* *Niqiyanos*, *HK* *Niqəyanos*, *JL* *Niqiyas*, *C* *Liqəyanos*, *R* *Liqayanos*, *V* *Liqiyanos*. The variant reading *Niqiyas*, i.e. ‘Nicaea’, is a trivialization no doubt encouraged by the immediately preceeding **ሀለዉ ፡ ይጸግውዋ ፡ ለሀገር ፡**, «they shall bestow their favor upon the city» (cp. ἐστάναι τὴν πόλιν χαρίσονται, Latyšev 1914: 103.11, §13), which concludes Diocletian’s order of decapitation.

⁴⁹ The Ethiopic **ወአዘዘ ፡ ይቅሥፍዎ ፡ በመጌረ ፡ ላህም ፡**, «he ordered him to be flagellated with a ተ...ተ of ox» renders νεῦροις ταυρείοις «with bull’s tendons» (Latyšev 1914: 101.11, §11). Unattested elsewhere, the wordform **በመጌረ ፡** is transmitted in multiple variants: **K** **በመጌረ ፡**, **L** **በመጌረ ፡**, **CRV** **በመጌራ ፡**.

⁵⁰ Namely *Filkəsyos*, *Zena Ayhud*, *Mäṣḥafä məṣṭir* (cp. Dillmann 1865: 185). The Aksumite equivalent is usually **ሥረው ፡**, which in our text is used once to render τὰ νεῦρα (in correspondence of

seems therefore to point to a late Arabism. It should be noted, however, that some of the previous statements are predicated on incorrect or *ex-silentio* arguments. First, both term have broken plurals, but the morphological Gəʿəz pattern sing. *mätñ* – pl. *amtənt* does not fully correspond to the Arabic pattern sing. *matn* – pl. *mutūn/mitān*, a circumstance which implies some sort of morphological productivity on the Ethiopic side. In addition, Dillmann's Aksumite corpus is fundamentally reliant upon the biblical books only, and the absence of a given word in the latter is little or no informative about its real distribution in spoken Late Antique Gəʿəz. Finally, given a certain semantic discrepancy between Gəʿəz መትን ፤, «sinew, nerve» and the same-sounding Arabic متن, «half or side of the back», one might wonder whether the linguistic loan, if any ever occurred, was due to other Semitic-speaking communities and to non-literary iterations.⁵¹ Again, the dependence from an Arabic textual source is less definite than one would expect at first sight.

Conclusion

Each piece of evidence treated in the previous pages is diagnostic of an underlying Greek source at the root of the Ethiopic. The crucial question for the dating of the translation is whether an in-between version took place down the line of the Greek-to-Ethiopic transmission. One has to keep in mind that each piece of evidence might in fact survive through one or more intervening stages along the transmission trajectory. At this point, what comes to help is only a condition of strong possibility, that is the circumstantial combination of positive elements (namely, the overabundance of phonological, morphological and syntactical *loci* pointing to a Greek *Vorlage*) and negative elements (namely, the complete absence – except one rather doubtful example – of those changes that are inevitably introduced in any textual transmission via the Arabic, and more in general the absence of an Arabic version, included in the Alexandrian Synaxarium). That being so, it is arduous to presume the existence of a linguistic filter between the Grek and the

Latyšev 1914: 113.6, §28) and once to render φλέψ, «blood vessel» (Latyšev 1914: 96.4, §4) immediately after the occurrence of መትን ፤.

⁵¹ By way of example, the root *mtñ* has the meaning of «nerve» in Ugaritic and *matnu* means «sinew» in Akkadic, like in Ethiopic (Leslau 1991: 372a).

Ethiopic. The most preferable option is that the text was translated directly from Greek during the Aksumite Era, at some point between the late 4th and the 6th centuries and most likely towards the end of this timeframe, if we admit that priority was understandably given to the translation of the canonical and some liturgical books.

The *Passio* of Anicetus and Photius can be therefore added to the modicum of hagiographical writings dated to the Askumite age. The limited number of these sources seems *prima facie* to suggest that few hagiographies were translated at that time, the great majority being acquired several centuries later. Yet, it remains open to question whether such an impression is largely dependent on other circumstances, *in primis* the fact that the GS texts are still by and large a *terra incognita*. In view of this, it is hardly surprising that future surveys on this topic will re-adjust to some extent the ratio between the Aksumite and the Post-Aksumite literature and will add fresh elements to the picture inaugurated decades ago by Carlo Conti Rossini.

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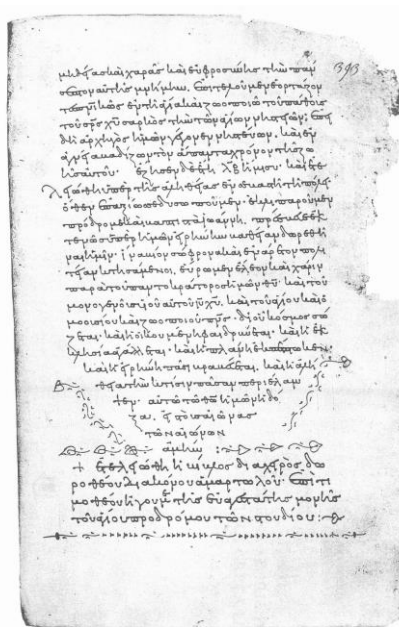
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Fig. 1 – Ms. Vatican City, BAV Gr. 1671, an early-10th-century menologion written in Studite minuscule (image from Perria 2011).

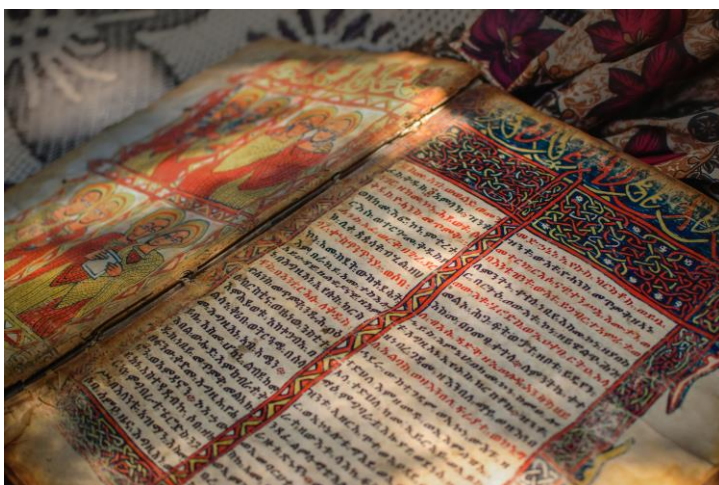


Fig. 2 – Ms. Ethio-SPaRe KY-001, 16th cent., from Koholo Yohannēs, Təḡray. Incipit page of the *Passio* of John the Baptist for 1 *Mäskäräm* (photo: Massimo Villa).



Fig. 3 – Ms. Savona, Archivio Diocesano, uncatalogued, 15th–16th cent., ff. 174v–175r. Incipit page of the *Passio* of Anicetus and Photius (photo: CaNaMEI).

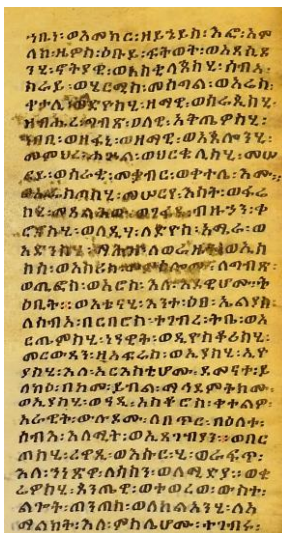


Fig. 4 – Ms. Savona, Archivio Diocesano, f. 176b. Diocletian's enumeration of the Hellenistic god names (photo: CaNaMEI).



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