

On editing and normalizing Ethiopic texts*

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This paper deals with orthographic normalization and standardization in editions of Ethiopic texts.¹ It intends to show that, if taken rigorously, every normalization and standardization finally presupposes—whether explicitly or implicitly—more or less precise hypotheses of linguistic and text-critical character. Various approaches appear to be possible, provided that the editor declares the goal of the edition and which method determines his textual choices. The following elaboration is predominantly based upon representative cases of text editions of biblical Aksumite texts, meaning texts—mostly translations from Greek models—created in the earlier period of Ethiopic literature during the flourishing of the kingdom of Aksum (fourth to seventh centuries CE). A few editions of later texts are additionally considered because of their contribution to text-critical methodology.

Ethiopic Aksumite and biblical texts

The edition and study of Aksumite biblical texts, including Apocrypha²—leaving aside the absolute exceptions, like Hiob Ludolf and August

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1 The text is partly based upon the papers 'Some (Informal) Reflections for a Manual of Ethiopian Philology', presented at the workshop 'Ethiopian Philology: The State of the Art and What to Do', First Bilateral Naples–Hamburg Workshop, held at the Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale', Napoli, 9–11 March 2016, jointly organized by Gianfrancesco Lusini and myself, and the paper 'Should Ethiopic Orthography be Normalized in Editions of Biblical Texts, and How to Do It in a Reasonable Way? (With Some Thoughts on Electronic Editions)', presented at 'The Ethiopic Jeremiah-Cycle: A Critical Edition' Project Workshop, Universität Marburg/Lahn, 4–5 October 2016, convened by Martin Heide and Stefan Weninger. Since the paper definitely touches upon questions related to the legacy of August Dillmann's *Lexicon*, and particularly on the point of the role played by the *Lexicon* in normalization and standardization, which, against expectation, was not so much addressed in the conference, it has appeared reasonable to include it in this volume.

2 For a general comprehensive overview of studies on Ethiopic Bible and Apocrypha, see Piovaneli 1993, Knibb 1999, Marrassini 1999, Isaac 2012, Heide 2015; for the man-

Dillmann—was predominantly undertaken in the more recent period by specialists in biblical or Septuagint studies. These scholars devoted themselves *also* to the Ethiopic versions, without always making Ethiopian studies as a whole—whatever meaning we want to attribute to them—the main subject of their research. After Dillmann, this trend started early with the contributions by Robert Henry Charles and Johannes Flemming and continued with Hans Ferdinand Fuhs, to quote just a few names, yet alongside scholars who were mainly in Ethiopian studies, like Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira, Sylvain Grébaut, and others. As yet, the case provided by the Bible and Apocrypha, notwithstanding the great interest they attract, is not at variance, for the fundamental questions posed by the Ethiopic documentation, with what we observe for other Aksumite Ethiopic texts.³ These texts, *from the point of view of their textual transmission* and leaving aside for the moment the question of medieval redactional intentional revisions, share the same fate: they were translated—in the absence of any counterevidence, we assume exclusively—from Greek in the Aksumite period and, with the only exception of the Four Gospels and a few biblical quotations in inscriptions, are attested by mediaeval manuscripts only.

Manuscript studies, manuscript practices, palaeography, and philology

As is well known, there has been a lot of editorial activity in the last decades concerning Ethiopic texts, and as it happens, attitudes and methods can be best understood on the basis of the actual editions produced. In fact, if we look at the contributions dedicated to questions of critical editing, there are very few of general scope that can be listed for Ethiopian studies.⁴

uscripts, see especially Erho 2013 and Erho and Stuckenbruck 2013. See moreover Daniel Assefa 2011, 2015, Jost 2015, and the many relevant articles in *EAe*, which are impossible to quote here in detail.

3 I obviously refer here to the well-established distinction of the Ethiopic literature in different periods, for which it is sufficient to refer to Guidi 1932, 8, 'La letteratura etiopica si divide in due grandi periodi separati, uno dall'altro, da parecchi secoli. Il primo va dal IV o V secolo dell'era volgare alla fine del VII; in questo la letteratura fiorì nel nord di Abissinia, nel regno di Aksum, onde convenientemente è chiamato il «Periodo Aksumita»; similarly Cerulli 1968, 14 ff.; besides 'Aksumite', the earlier period is also called 'Greek period', see 'Gəʿəz literature', *EAe*, II (2005), 736a–741a (Getatchew Haile), here 736b–737a; for recent studies on Aksumite Hellenism, see Soldati 2015, Voicu 2015, Bausi forthcoming a. For a profile of history of the Aksumite period in general, see Marrassini 2014. The caution in applying the label of 'Aksumite' to the language is obviously justified, as clearly stated by Lusini 2009, 11, but the question of the survival of historical Aksumite phenomena and features in the later period remains.

4 In July 2003 I had the occasion on kind invitation of Siegbert Uhlig to deliver a paper at the 'Fifteenth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies' in Hamburg in a

Having a broader look at the present state of the art and searching for any substantial change or new trends, we can confidently say that if we understand Ethiopian philology as one, well characterized section of ‘Ethiopian manuscript studies’, all in all, Ethiopian manuscript studies have definitely gained much in the last years, both in terms of prestige and general acknowledgment of their importance in their relationship with other more or less related fields. This is particularly true for *data gathering*. Digitization field work and a lot of cataloguing are under way.⁵ This is also true for *Ethiopian manuscript practice* in general. It is something that can be clearly perceived in current contributions, of which maybe the *COMSt* handbook gives the most representative, yet not the only evidence.⁶ We do not need to dwell on this too long, in my opinion, yet remember that before Ethiopian studies can only try to come closer to the general consideration enjoyed by Syriac, Coptic, and also Armenian studies in the current perception of general scholars in

plenary session, on ‘Current trends in Ethiopian studies: philology’; this paper was printed in the proceedings (Bausi 2006), and in a slightly expanded form, where most of quotations and references which had been cut in the paper published in the proceedings volume, were restored: this version, unfortunately with several inconsistencies due to the publishing house, was printed in Addis Ababa in 2008 (Bausi 2008). To my knowledge, the following are the most relevant contributions of methodological character on Ethiopian philology: Marrassini 1987, 1996, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Lusini 2005; Bausi 2006, 2008, ‘Philology, research in’, *EAE*, IV (2010), 142a–144b (A. Bausi); Shiferaw Bekele 2008; see also ‘The *Aksumite Collection*. Ethiopic multiple text manuscripts’, *COMSt* 2015, 367–372 (A. Bausi); the methodological landmark remains Marrassini 1981.

- 5 See for example the work carried out by the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, the *Mäzḡäbü Səəlat* project, several Endangered Archives Programme projects, the *Ethiopian Manuscripts Imaging Project*, the work carried out in and with the Sonderforschungsbereich 950 – Manuskriptkulturen in Asien, Afrika und Europa in Hamburg, and mostly the *Ethio-SPaRe* project: since it is impossible to provide details on all single enterprises mentioned here, I refer to the information provided in ‘Ethiopic manuscripts’, *COMSt* 2015, 46–49 (A. Bausi), pp. 48–49. To be added is now also the new long-term project *Beta Maṣāḥəft* (<<https://www.betamasaheft.uni-hamburg.de>>, last accessed on 6 November 2016).
- 6 Besides ‘Ethiopic codicology’, *COMSt* 2015, 154–174 (E. Balicka-Witakowska, A. Bausi, C. Bosc-Tiessé, and D. Nosnitsin), see also Aldón 2013; Bosc-Tiessé 2014; Brita 2014, 2015; Winslow 2015; Ancel 2016; Bausi 2016a, 2016b; Gidena Mesfin 2016; Nosnitsin 2016. See also the many contributions included in Bausi, Gori, Nosnitsin, and Sokolinski 2015 (contributions by D. Nosnitsin, S. Dege-Müller, V. Pisani, Getatchew Haile, Solomon Gebreyes, M. Herman, Amsalu Tefera, Daniel Assefa, G. Jost, A. Martínez d’Alòs-Moner, and L. Cohen), and the monographic section in *Aethiopica: International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies*, 18 (2015), ed. by A. Bausi and D. Nosnitsin (contributions by B. Burtea, Daniel Assefa, E. Gusarova, S. Hummel, Mersha Alehegne, and Yosef Demissie).

Early Christianity, Late Antiquity, and Middle Ages—be this right or not—a long time has still to elapse.

Coming to *palaeography*, the state of the art is quite different: we have some attempts at going beyond the reference works currently available which, albeit decisive and path-breaking at their appearing, seem now to be affected by a few weak points.⁷ I will mention only the most evident: the new dating of two ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts to Late Antiquity—a position early maintained by Marilyn Heldman on stylistic ground for the decorations, and rejected by an estimation of centuries both by Siegbert Uhlig and other scholars⁸—definitely poses new questions and requires a substantial revision of the usual palaeographic coordinates. Particularly the palaeography of the period between Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages must be completely rewritten.⁹

7 Uhlig 1988, 1990; for a state of the art, see also ‘Palaeography’, *EAE*, IV (2010), 101a–104b (S. Uhlig and A. Bausi), and ‘Ethiopic palaeography’, *COMSt* 2015, 287–291 (A. Bausi and D. Nosnitsin). See now a recent attempt by Nosnitsin 2015 at going beyond this state of the art.

8 On the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts see the new comprehensive monograph by McKenzie, Watson, and Gervers 2016, with pp. 40–41 dedicated to a careful and detailed examination of the question of dating. The whole monograph is now an indispensable reference tool for the study of the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts, particularly for the art-historical aspects. For various dating of the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts see for example Kropp 1992, 262–266, particularly on ʾAbbā Garimā II; Lusini 1999, 416, against an early dating; I also expressed an opinion (Bausi 2010, 467 = 2011, 19b, ‘philological, linguistic and palaeographical elements still prevent—or cannot prove—an early ante 650 dating for the Ethiopic text of the Gospels of Abba Gärīma, which one, however, cannot exclude for the painted leaves’) to which I would not subscribe now in light of considerations developed in the present paper and taking into account a possible asymmetry between epigraphic and manuscript standards. Uhlig 1988 has dedicated a good portion of his substantial monograph to the question of the dating of the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts, in the end the whole chapter on the first period (‘Periode I: Monumentalschrift bis zweite Hälfte 14. Jh.’, pp. 73–176), concluding that ʾAbbā Garimā I can be dated at the earliest from the ninth to the eleventh century (p. 176), and ʾAbbā Garimā III perhaps to the twelfth or to the beginning of the thirteenth century (p. 176). The whole chapter on the most crucial period of Ethiopic palaeography shows that, before the new dating of the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts, we entirely lack certain data (either from manuscripts or late Aksumite inscriptions) to which any reliable hypothesis can be anchored.

9 Other points which should be better taken into account are: the phenomenon of the *composite manuscripts*; the systematic correlation between scribal, linguistic, and palaeographic phenomena; the exclusive consideration of *certainly dated* manuscripts; among the five ‘dated manuscripts’ provided by Uhlig 1988, 102–116 (EMML no. 6907; Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Borg. etiop. 3; Addis Ababa, National Archives and Library Agency 266; BAV etiop. 21; BAV etiop. 264),

Philology as textual criticism

As far as *philology as textual criticism* is concerned, I am afraid that the situation is much more difficult than in manuscript studies. If anything new is to be recorded of the last years, this is the launching of the Philology programmes at Addis Ababa University and recently also in other universities of the country.¹⁰ At the academic level, there is no doubt that the importance of this investment, in terms of general acknowledgment and status of the field, is a success of the highest importance. On the other hand, philology consists of a method and a set of competences, where experience, awareness of guiding principles and history of the discipline, and knowledge are absolutely necessary. This has been made icastically clear by Paolo Trovato, the author of an important book published in 2014, in a passage that deserves to be quoted in full:

Here I cannot help remembering [...] something that haunted me in the early years of my university education. Some of the first sections in Heinrich Lausberg's manual of Romance philology are gathered under the heading 'Requirements for the study of Romance linguistics'. In § 13, for example, the author states, with Teutonic thoroughness: 'The study of Romance linguistics presupposes good traditional training in the domains of language (knowledge of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, modern French, English, and German), history and literature, as well as logical faculties acquired through the study of mathematics'. In §§ 16 and 17, Lausberg adds that a good Romanist should strive for knowledge of the 'historical-geographic environment of the Romance languages'; that 'one can distinguish two environmental sectors (with fluid boundaries): 1) the linguistic environment [...]; 2) the cultural environment'. He then adds that 'the cultural environment of the Romance languages has three sectors (with fluid boundaries): 'primitive' folklore (1), 'profane' culture (2), Christian culture (3)', for which he recommends, among other things, 'regularly repeated reading of the Latin Vulgata (e.g., in the edition *Biblorum Sacrorum iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam nova editio*, ed. by A. Gramatica, Citta del Vaticano, 1951), the *Missale Romanum* [...], and the *Breviarium Romanum* [...], this last, however, with the old Psalter of the Vulgate (not the one in modern Latin, used optionally since 1945)'.¹¹

Mutatis mutandis, Lausberg's principles are valid for every philological field. But while the cultural environment will pose relatively less problems to an Ethiopian scholar formed in a traditional environment of Church ed-

the dating of the first is wrong (King Lālibalā is certainly later than c.1140–1180); for the second, third and fourth there is a reasonable *terminus non post quem*; but the fifth has simply an embedded colophon, that refers to the text, not to the manuscript, see Bausi 2012, 119–121, and forthcoming a, 243–244.

10 Once more, this is a historical merit of Paolo Marrassini (1942–2013), whom I had the opportunity of assisting when working on the programme, as well as of his Ethiopian colleagues, in particular Shiferaw Bekele and Baye Yimam.

11 See Trovato 2014, 249–250.

ucation—who will be able, ideally and in the best examples, to master the language, easily identify biblical quotations, understand the various levels of interpretation—the general linguistic requirements for a serious research work, like Christian oriental languages, European languages, Semitic studies background, can be a serious hindrance, in dealing with some kinds of texts at least.¹² In fact, the problem of the linguistic requirements is not exclusive of the Philology programme in Addis Ababa.¹³

Yet, having a closer look, even the latter aspect is not so unproblematic: the *traditional environment* of present day is not the same as that of one century ago and even less that of two or several centuries ago. The more backwards we proceed, the more dangerous is the assumption that the traditional cultural environment of reference is well known, familiar, linearly and faithfully transmitted to the present. It is in fact undeniable, as the textual history of the biblical text itself shows, that the Ethiopian literary expression has shown in the last centuries—one can probably take the Gondarine period of the seventeenth century as the decisive turning point¹⁴—an increasing tendency to literary, stylistic and linguistic standardization. Nothing prevents from considering this later layer in its own right, but it definitely represents an extreme stage in a long development. Along the same lines, the present-day Church editions themselves are a revealing and essential source under

12 To some extent, this is generally acknowledged. I happened to exchange some ideas on this point with the Ethiopian colleague Daniel Assefa, well provided with a European education, during the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Atlanta last November 2015. Daniel Assefa was complaining about the lack of offer in oriental languages at Addis Ababa University and criticized the weakness of the philology programme, so that, in his view, little was possible. This is in a way absolutely true, but with some additional caveats. I do not think that having attended or not one or two semesters of Syriac or Coptic can make the difference, because in the end these are not the fields where the philological method has been deeply discussed and elaborated, and for many original texts of Ethiopic literature a specific knowledge even of Syriac or Coptic or Christian Arabic is not always necessarily a requirement. Actually, it might be much more useful to approach the general questions of textual criticism coming from classical and Romance studies rather than from theological or Christian oriental studies or also Semitic studies *stricto sensu*—a philological field only in the sense of philology as historical linguistics, see very clearly on this point Marrassini 1987, 347–348, further commented below.

13 The so-called Bologna reform and even more so the profound changes in the school education systems have carried about a substantial weakening of all that Lausberg could assume many decades ago was a realistic starting point requirement for a Romance philologist: all these competences must now be acquired mostly at the university level for the first time.

14 See for example the sketch of history of the Ethiopian exegetical tradition in Mersha Alehegne 2013, 8 ff.

every point of view.¹⁵ Yet one must be aware that the process of transmission in these circumstances has tended to smoothen anomalies and has proceeded from variation to uniformity.

Definition of standards

This immediately brings us to one of the central questions that everyone reflecting on normalization and standardization of Ethiopic texts has to make clear, namely *the definition of the standard—linguistic, orthographic—we have to refer to*.¹⁶ To say it in one word, when normalizing and standardizing, there is always the risk of deleting any trace of anomalies which belong to the earliest and primary textual phase, specifically in the case of texts which are not born as *normal* ones: either in the case where from the very beginning there is a strong *formal* (linguistic) wavering, or in the case when the *formal* (linguistic) system is consistent, yet non-standard. This point has been thoroughly debated in mediaeval Latin studies. From the many possible contributions that could be considered from this field to exemplify the point, let us have a look at two quotations from a stimulating contribution by Michael W. Herren. The premise is that the pre-Carolingian mediaeval Latin literature is not marked by the respect of classical standards: therefore the question arises of determining whether the grammatical errors are the result of a corrupt transmission or of the assumption by the author of a non-classical standard, as it is likely:¹⁷

The obvious question every editor of works from this period should raise is this: are all or even most of the aberrations mentioned above authorial, or do they represent the scribbles of illiterate scribes [...]? Did eighth-century scribes ‘translate’ a correctly written text into their own unorthodox system of spelling and grammar, or did they simply copy what was in front of them? One might

15 The new edition of the *Gadla Qawstos*, after Raineri 2004, by *mambər* Ғәрүяә Ermyas, on the basis of additional manuscripts and with the application of a stemmatic neo-lachmannian reconstructive method, under the auspices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tawāḥədo Church, is a welcome novelty in the field of Church editions, see Ғәрүяә Ermyas 2014/2015, based on Hiruie Ermias 2014. For the analysis of a case study, see Bausi forthcoming b.

16 One of the most appropriate conceptualization of this question was offered by Cesare Segre with his concept of *diasistema*, see Segre 1979, 53–64 (‘Critica testuale, teoria degli insiemi e diasistema’, originally published in French in *Académie Royale de Belgique, Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, 62/10–11 (1976), 279–292, with the important appendix ‘Il testo come trascrizione’, pp. 64–70).

17 Other contributions that are exemplary for this problem are Chiesa 2012, 2016. For the comparable case of Middle Arabic texts, see ‘Middle Arabic texts. How to account for linguistic features’, *COMSt* 2015, 415–418 (P. La Spisa), with a good theoretical presentation of the question.

also ask: if the same work was also copied by ninth-century or later scribes, did these scribes correct and remove infelicities of spelling and grammar according to Alcuinian principles? I suspect that both types of intervention occurred, but I would wager that the impetus to remove error was considerably more powerful and more frequent.¹⁸

In an essay in a Festschrift for Tom Hill, I outlined my principles for editing the *Cosmography* [...]. In a nutshell it is this: keep all the specimens of bad spelling, bad morphology, and bad syntax that are sanctioned by the *consensus codicum*. Roger Wright needs them for his collection. Conversely, intervene aggressively in matters of sense. Accept a minority reading or a later correction, or the conjecture of an earlier editor, when it makes better sense than the archetype; emend without hesitation when necessary; fill in a lacuna if it can be done convincingly; excise double readings and interpolations. And don't forget to clarify punctuation so that the reader will know where a sentence is supposed to begin and end. *Keep in mind that the author, however crazy he may seem at times, was trying to say something.*¹⁹

I find particularly important in the quotation from Herren the role that is attributed to the *consensus codicum*—that necessarily presupposes a stemmatic evaluation of the respective weight of each witness—and that ‘the author, however crazy he may seem at times, was trying to say something’. In the light of how some texts are still edited, the remark by Paolo Marrassini comes immediately to our mind, who wondered if in the case of one current edition and translation of the *Apocalypse of Peter* the reader felt he was rather in a psychiatric hospital than in the hell—well aware that mis-translations also can cause absurdities.²⁰

Let me now quickly pull together some of the strands of this lecture. The notion of the paradigm into which an editor fits his author is supremely important. However [...] *one should be confident about the date and provenance of the work under edition*. It is not acceptable to say that because a given work is full of spelling and grammar mistakes it must therefore come from eighth-century Francia. Rather, date and provenance should first be determined independently of any such judgements.²¹

This latter remark brings us back once more to a fundamental principle, namely that the link between history and philology also consists in the fact that determining who, when, how, why created a text and transmitted it, is

18 Herren 2012, 91–92.

19 Herren 2012, 99–100 (emphasis in the final passage is mine).

20 See Marrassini 1994, 175.

21 Herren 2012, 101 (emphasis is mine).

part of the critical reconstruction, that is, *history of tradition* and *textual criticism*—as Giorgio Pasquali put it—are two aspects of the same problem.²²

Features of textual tradition of Ethiopic texts

If the question of the normalization of orthography can only be posed looking at some basic text-critical questions *in a more general perspective* and paying attention to the general tenor of the manuscript tradition of Ethiopic (Gəʿəz) texts, we have to introduce once again a well-known clear distinction between texts created—whether composed or translated—(1) *earlier*, namely in the Aksumite past far distant from the only extant manuscripts transmitting them, or (2) *later*, namely in the post-Aksumite period, and eventually transmitted in a milieu relatively consistent and coherent with that of their creation:²³

(1) *Aksumite texts*, meaning texts from the Aksumite period: for these texts no manuscript witnesses—or only two of the three ʾAbbā Garimā Gospel books—have survived from the period when the Ethiopic texts were created and we assume the Gəʿəz language was still spoken.²⁴ That is why the earliest textual witnesses of Ethiopic—inscriptions and the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts—are so important and decisive, albeit they pose their own questions in turn, in telling us something on the standard of earlier texts: unfortunately we have so few of them. In a way, this typology of the evidence and trans-

22 Pasquali 1952; in the same line, that textual criticism must be historical, see the classical contribution by Irigoin 1981.

23 The point is quite obvious, but still it retains all its importance. I have dealt with it in other contributions, see for example Bausi 2006, 547, here with a few editorial adaptations, ‘An essential distinction between the texts of the Aksumite and medieval periods is necessary: 1) as to the tradition of the Aksumite texts, we are facing a major historical problem; we do not know how much of the mediaeval literary culture is really rooted in the Aksumite and pre-medieval past. We can only assume that many translations from the Greek were lost and were later substituted by other independent translations from the Arabic (conflations on the basis of the older Greek texts apparently existed, but were probably limited to a specific period). I would guess that the previous translations were so literal that they could no longer be used (the Bible was constantly updated). This cultural gap between the age of the Aksumite kingdom and medieval Ethiopia produces a kind of manuscript tradition comparable to that of the classical texts; 2) concerning the texts produced from the medieval age onwards, no such gap exists: the manuscript tradition has developed through a more or less homogeneous cultural environment until today (contemporary printed editions of Ethiopic texts are the last reflection of this tradition). The time that elapsed from the production of the works up to the age of their oldest preserved witnesses is far narrower, and the reasons of the anti-reconstructionists could find here a sound basis’.

24 See Weninger 2010, and 2011, 1124–1125, Bulakh and Kogan 2013, and Bulakh 2013.

mission is perfectly comparable to the transmission of the classical Greek and Latin texts through mediaeval manuscripts. The consequence is that the oldest transmitted manuscripts witness to a text form (where this process was realized) that is centuries later than the text as it was first translated and written down, namely a form that can be very far from that of the *early* text. We must be always aware that, in the case of ancient Ethiopic translations, what we have is *centuries away* from the time of their early writing. In such cases, the fetishistic respect for the earliest manuscript witnesses, still by far postdating the creation, is not a definitive solution. It is not enough that the editor reproduces the *codices vetustissimi* as they are: besides *documenting* the witnesses to a text, the default target—or certainly: one of the targets—of the philological activity remains the text as it was composed or translated by its creator, that is author or translator.

Moreover, the processes of transmission also imply *breaks* and *changes*: from this point of view, all *formal* anomalies are particularly difficult to evaluate and demand a careful elaboration of a transparent and acceptable editorial method. That in many cases some of the earliest manuscripts exhibit formal aberrations cannot be always considered an archaism going back to the earlier phase. It can also well be the outcome of changing standards and loss of formal control, that is, it does not necessarily mean that the text was created in that very form. In the end, *these problems are not at all specific to Ethiopic texts* in particular: they surface in many other traditions and an important role in overcoming them is played by *shared conventions* in the field. For the case of translations in particular, there is a double process: the text under study is at the same time both the subject of our reconstruction and a witness to its model (*Vorlage*);²⁵

(2) *post-Aksumite texts*: for these texts manuscript witnesses from the period of their creation are extant. This is a different paradigmatic situation, which is comparable for the diachronic range of its transmission to the tradition of the Romance texts, but with a substantial difference: in the case of the post-Aksumite texts, the transmission is committed to copyists who do not speak the language of the texts they are transmitting. This marks a substantial gap in all matters which imply the adaptation of forms, which are so central to the question of Romance philology; a more appropriate comparison is therefore that to mediaeval Latin texts.²⁶

25 On this aspect, see *COMSt* 2015, 321–465, with many pages dedicated to the methodology of editing translations.

26 See Ferrari 1998, for several contributions on the main different features of classical and Romance philology; a fundamental contribution remains Varvaro 1970.

Selected examples of editorial practices

A series of selected examples may provide some insights into the solutions adopted in editorial practice regarding past and current uses of orthographic normalization. The examples are predominantly taken from editions of the Ethiopic Bible, but a few non-biblical texts are included.²⁷

The first non-obvious consideration is that if we are talking of a possible standardization we assume that the edition will not consist of the reproduction of a manuscript, or of a diplomatic edition: this important step, that is a progress in that it takes seriously the task and responsibility of the editor, is definitely not obvious, since the reproduction of one manuscript, even in the presence of many witnesses, was in fact the editorial method suggested and strongly recommended to their pupils not many years ago by scholars like Edward Ullendorff and Ernst Hammerschmidt. Documenting the evidence retains all its importance, but editing is in fact more and a different task.²⁸

Normalization and standardization

Orthographic normalization can be understood under various aspects. Two at least must be mentioned:

(1) orthographic normalization is usually understood as the adoption of the spelling according to August Dillmann's *Lexicon*²⁹ in all those cases

27 At times, also the notation of interpunction—a point which is usually disregarded in Ethiopic philology—and paragraphing and subdivision of text is considered.

28 The most basic version of this method is the simple reproduction of a manuscript, as in Six 1975—for which, however, a *codex unicus* is attested—and Dombrowski 1983; I am also in the number, since I published a reproduction of some portions of the *Qalemāntos* from a manuscript, yet never claimed nor stated that this was *pro editione*, see Bausi 1992. An example of a reproduction with an apparatus is the case of Knibb's 1978 edition of Enoch. This solution has been supported in the course of time, both within and outside Ethiopian studies with a series of arguments, see Ullendorff 1960, 174–175; 1971, 400–402; Hammerschmidt 1981, 93; but *contra*, see already Pasquali 1920, 21. A bit confusing on this point Jost Gippert, in *COMSt* 2015, 321, who rightly points out that a 'reason why critical editions concerning languages other than Greek or Latin have developed only gradually, is the fact that unlike the 'Classical' languages, which had been taught in schools since antiquity as artificial 'standards' to be followed, many of the varieties of 'oriental' languages that are represented in mediaeval manuscripts are characterized by the absence or scarcity of exhaustive studies concerning their grammar, lexicography and orthography, which renders choices as to the 'correct' wording (including its orthographical representation) much harder to make': yet, 'the practical problems that scholars faced in editing oriental texts', namely 'the necessity to cope in printing with the different scripts that are characteristic for the individual traditions', was peculiar only to some, particularly the very fragmentary traditions: yet definitely this was not the case of Syriac or Arabic texts.

29 Dillmann 1865.

where laryngeals (or gutturals) and sibilants, which were distinct phonemes in the earlier Aksumite period as attested in inscriptions by distinct graphemes, have merged in the course of time (**ሀ/ሐ/ኀ**, **አ/ዐ**, **ሰ/ሠ**, **ጸ/ፀ**, i.e. *h/b/ḥ*, *ʕ/c*, *s/š*, *ṣ/d*), with first and fourth orders of laryngeals further merging. Even though the etymological understanding has progressed since Dillmann's time and is given in Leslau's *Comparative Dictionary*³⁰ at least in a much more reliable form, the concept remains that orthographic normalization usually means: *etymological normalization, according to Dillmann's Lexicon or to a revised etymology, on the basis of the assumption of the linguistic (phonological) history of Gəʿəz*;³¹

(2) there are many other phenomena which are obviously reflected in the orthography which cannot be said to be of exclusively orthographic character, in that they imply to a major or minor extent real linguistic phenomena. It is not simple to distinguish what each editor understood under *orthography*, since some of them—for example Michael Wechsler, as it is detailed below—definitely understood under orthography phenomena of properly linguistic character.

But even for the more simple normalization of orthography, there might arise the question whether under 'normalization' a standardization according to more prevalent forms or spellings occurring for a given text is understood, also when the normalized forms are at variance with Dillmann's or an alternative etymological spelling. Moreover, in general, the understanding of what each editor did is complicated by the methodological assumptions which characterize their work: these are neither apparent nor simple to describe in many cases.

From Ludolf to Dillmann

In this passage from the introduction to his edition of the Psalter, Hiob Ludolf already applied an etymological normalization—which only partially anticipates the normalization according to Dillmann's *Lexicon*, that is based instead primarily on the forms as given by the manuscripts—following in fact

³⁰ Leslau 1987.

³¹ A clear synthesis with a hypothetical chronological arrangement of the linguistic phenomena is provided by Lambdin 1978, 13–14, who also draws his conclusions, *ibid.* 14, 'The cumulative effect of the preceding errors can be quite bewildering unless one has a firm grasp of the forms and lexicon of the older language as it has been recovered by Dillmann and other scholars. The failure of modern editors of Ethiopic texts to normalize spelling is puzzling (unless, of course, a word is unknown or genuinely ambiguous); even more reprehensible is the burdening of a critical apparatus with such trivial predictable pronunciation errors'. To these conclusions one can still subscribe.

the conventions of Ludolf's own *Lexicon* published two years before in the second edition:³²

Orthographia Æthiopica summæ curæ nobis fuit. Æthiopes ipsi in illa parum curiosi, multò minus certi sunt. Nam exoleta primâ & purâ linguâ exolevit etiam valor & quorundam elementorum pronuntiatio, quæ primo diversa, postea eadem facta est. Non enim sono differunt **ሀ** : **ሐ** : & **ኀ** : **ሐ** : et **ሰ** : **ሰ** : & **ሰ** : **ሰ** : & **ሰ** : **ሰ** : Inde sit, ut verba significatione differentia modò hoc, modò illo caractere exarata reperiantur. Nos praetulimus Orthographiam Hebraicæ vel Arabicæ scriptionis consonam, e.g. **ጸላ** : *Zelavit*, non **ጸላ** : tertia radicali Alf, non **ሀ** : Contra **ዘረዘ** : *Seminavit*, tertia radicali **ሀ** : non **ዘረዘ** : per Alf; & sic de reliquis. Quæ cum in *Lexico nostro* observaverimus, ideo in hac nostra Psalterii editione iisdem literis, ac ibi, vocabula expressimus. Propterea differentias literarum in notis nostris monere, aut eas inter varias lectiones referre, minime necessarium putavimus.³³

One could also add that the establishment of a standard is connected to the circumstances of the early prints of Ethiopic texts: during this phase—from the sixteenth century with Tasfā Šəyon's *editio princeps* of the New Testament to the seventeenth century with ʾabbā Gorgoryos acting as a consultant for Ludolf—the Ethiopians played some role and might have transferred to these editions the assumptions and standards of their contemporary traditions, which could be in several cases at variance with the standards occurring in much earlier manuscripts already available also in Europe at the time.³⁴

32 Ludolf 1699.

33 Ludolf 1701, 4v. My translation, 'Of *Ethiopic Orthography* we took the greatest care. Ethiopians themselves are not so careful in that, and much less consistent. In fact, once the earlier and purer language grew out of use, also the value and pronunciation of some elements went lost: what earlier was different, became later the same. In fact **ሀ**, **ሐ**, and **ኀ**; **ሐ** and **ሰ**; **ሰ** and **ሰ**; **ሰ** and **ሰ** cannot be distinguished phonetically. Therefore it happens that words of different meanings are found written either with one or the other character. We have preferred an orthographic spelling according to the Hebrew or Arabic script, for example **ጸላ** : *he was zealous*, not **ጸላ** : tertia radicali alef, not **ሀ**. On the contrary, **ዘረዘ** : *he sowed*, with third radical **ሀ**, not **ዘረዘ** : with alef; and so in the other cases. Having observed this rule in our *Lexicon*, we expressed therefore the words in our present edition of the Psalter as we did there. For this reason, we did not think necessary to indicate the differences of the letters in our notes or report them among the variant readings'.

34 This, again, adds more to Gippert's (see above) not perfectly focused statement on the non-existence of established traditions for oriental languages. On the two characters, see 'Tasfā Šəyon', *EAE*, V (2015), 524a–528b (A. Bausi and G. Fiaccadori); 'Abbā Gorgoryos', *EAE*, II (2005), 855a–856a (S. Uhlig).

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As far as I have seen, in his edition of the Bible started in 1853, Dillmann does not provide any positive remarks concerning the process of standardization he carries out: he applies a *de facto* standardization according to his *Lexicon*, which at the time was not even its making—it would be started several years later and published only in 1865. The only remarks can be found on one page, where a few archaic phenomena are mentioned, actually more or less those which will be later indicated by those who will follow him in editing Ethiopic texts, to state that nonetheless they will not be considered in the critical text. But an important point is that Dillmann intends to produce an edition that can also be used by Ethiopians.³⁵ Moreover, he is well aware that more ancient manuscripts provide an incorrect vocalization, which he interprets as a reflex of an uncertain stage of vocalization—a point that resurfaces in some later editors,³⁶ not always aware that this observation goes back to Dillmann:

His igitur subsidiis instructo quomodo mihi textus componendus esset, haesitare non potui. Antiquae enim versionis edendae quum propositum haberem, textum codicum F et H quam religiosissime ubi sequeretur et omnes emendationes corruptionesque senioris aetatis, quantum fieri posset, remotas haberem, ratio ipsa postulabat. At cum non tantum hominibus philologis et criticis satisfacere, sed etiam id efficere in animo haberem, ubi Abyssini ipsi meam editionem in suum usum vertere possent, omnibus omnino emendationibus supersedere non potui, et aliae quoque causae, ut emendarem, me adduxerunt [...]³⁷

Praeterea textus FH etiam lectionibus quibusdam falsis vel minus bonis deformatus est: non solum signa vel nomina numeralia et nomina propria saepissime miserum in modum depravata et perversa sunt, sed etiam aliae voces sententiaeque injuria temporis et scribarum sphalmate degeneraverunt, ut numerum lectionum malarum non exilem inveni, quae salvis literis consonantibus nonnisi perversa vocalium lectione ortae esse videntur, quod non mireris, si quod equidem aliis

35 See Dillmann 1853, 5 (from the ‘Prolegomena ad Octateuchum’); his statements were repeated by subsequent editors, see for example the references to the text edition for the single phenomena provided in Bausi 2005a; see a summarization of some of these and other phenomena in Villa 2016, 121–133, along with a remarkable new critical edition of a portion of the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

36 See for example a description of the phenomenon in Nosnitsin and Rabin 2014, 65–74.

37 My translation, ‘Based upon these premises, I could have no doubt how I should establish the text. Having in fact the intention of editing the ancient version, the method itself required that I followed as faithfully as possible the text of codices F [Cambridge, University Library, British and Foreign Bible Society, Mss 169] and H [Halle an der Saale, Universitätsbibliothek, Ya. 2] and that I removed all emendations and corrections of a later time. Yet, since I intended to satisfy not only scholars and philologists, but I also wanted that Abyssinians themselves could make use of my edition, I could not leave out completely all emendations, and other reasons too caused me to make emendations [...]’.

quoque argumentis fulcire possem consideraveris, antiquiore hujus sermonis aetate vocalium signa non satis constanter scripta esse [...]³⁸

The same view Dillmann expresses in his grammar:

At the same time we must keep in view that not even with the Abyssinians did such a system of Vowel-writing come into existence all at once, fully and symmetrically formed, but that it was perfected only in the course of a considerable length of time. This may farther be proved by manifold errors in the vocalisation of a number of words, especially of proper names which have been established and handed down in the Texts of the Bible from ancient times. Such errors can be explained only on the supposition that in the case of several words the vowel-marking was either entirely wanting, or was somewhat fluctuating and irregular in the use made of the various signs.³⁹

Obviously, this opinion concerning the existence of a phase of partial vocalization is contradicted by the presently available epigraphic (and probably numismatic) evidence, which do not offer ground for any speculation on a gradual introduction of vocalization, at least for the fourth century CE: to the extent at least that the conclusions drawn on epigraphy are valid also for manuscripts. The epigraphic evidence shows the emergence of a complete, fully fledged, coherent vocalization of Ethiopic in the fourth century CE at the latest:⁴⁰ which means that if any loss of control of standard occurred, this

38 My translation, 'Moreover, also the FH text is deformed by certain false and less good readings: not only digits, numerals and names are very often corrupted and miserably wasted, but even other words and sentences degenerated through the injury of time and fallacy of the scribes to the point that I found a not small number of bad readings which seemed to have emerged, in the presence of sound consonantal signs, with the corruption of the reading of the vowels; which should not cause any wonder, if you think that in the ancient time of this language the signs of the vowels were not well constantly written [...]'.
39 Dillmann 1907, 32, § 16.

40 It is enough, once and for all, to refer to Enno Littmann's well known pages, 'Die Inschriften in vokalisierter altabessinischer Schrift und in abessinischer Sprache', in *DAE*, 79–82: had the vocalization system attested in the fourth century inscriptions not been so consistent and reliable, no linguistic observations of that kind would have been possible. See moreover Schneider 1995, who is in favour of a vocalization even before the kingdom of 'Ezānā. In his posthumous edition of the last volume of the Bible, Dillmann 1894, n.n., precised once more his method and also mentioned the existence of epigraphic evidence, of which he could not avail himself, 'Nihilo minus ab hac versione in rebus criticis non omnis abjudicanda est auctoritas; justius eam testimoniis Graecorum codicum manuscriptorum, quales quinto vel sexto saeculo in Aegypto circumferebantur, in aequo posueris. Sed non de re critica tantum agitur. Si inscriptiones quasdam nuper adaptatas exceperis, monumentum Geez linguae ista versione antiquius non exstat [...] In constituenda editione id potissimum spectavi, ut antiquam versionis formam, sive e codicibus manuscriptis erutam sive emendatione

is to be dated to a later phase in the manuscript transmission. The early dating of the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts substantially supports this view, since, in keeping with the epigraphic evidence and still in presence of orthographic variants, no consistent evidence of any *partial vocalization* can be observed in these very early manuscripts.⁴¹

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If we take into account a text that is fully entitled to represent the questions posed by the Aksumite texts, namely the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*, it is important to contrast the position taken by Dillmann on it a couple of years before the publication of his edition of the Bible, with quite different conclusions on the question of standardization:

De ipsa autem eius editione pauca mihi restant dicenda. In constituendo textu ad fidem codicum manuscriptorum prorsus me applicavi, nec nisi quam rarissime ab eorum auctoritate mihi recedendum esse videbatur: has autem emendationes omnes in parte critica annotavi. Neque hunc libri textum ita esse corruptum, ut plures, qui leviter illum attigerunt, suspicati sunt, equidem in Germanica libri interpretatione, quam paucos post menses editurus sum, probare conabor. In orthographia deinde non eam, quae a I. Ludolfo constituta est scribendorum vocabulorum rationem secutus sum, sed quam in codicibus ipsis a me perlustratis, etiam in vetustioribus inveni: omnes enim, qui codices manuscriptos legere student, huic scriptionis generi assueti sint necesse est, nec est, quod nos scriptionem, apud Aethiopes iam dudum institutam, ad regulas grammaticae et ety-

restitutam, quantum fieri potuit, reficerem. Sed multa non poterant non vel incerta vel inextricabilia relinqui', (my translation), 'Nonetheless, the authority of this version in textual criticism [of the Bible] cannot be completely denied. It can rightly be ascribed to the Greek manuscript witnesses which circulated in fifth- or sixth-century Egypt. But its importance does not lie in textual criticism only. With the exception of some recently discovered inscriptions, there is no more ancient monument of Gə'əz language than this version [...] In establishing the edition I mostly paid attention as much as I could to render the old form of the version, either drawn from the manuscript codices or reconstructed by emendation. But many passages could not but be left as uncertain and inextricable'.

- 41 There is certainly a need to resume in a more systematic way the question on the basis of a better documentation now available, but this is what clearly emerges from the analysis carried out by Zuurmond 1989, II, 302–307. On the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts, as already said, see McKenzie, Watson, and Gervers 2016. The volume also contains an edition and translation of the *Epistle of Eusebius to Carpianus* (F. Watson, 'Appendix III. *Eusebius' Letter to Carpianus: Greek and Ge'ez*', pp. 221–227), but for a better and commented edition of the same text, also with consideration of the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts, see Bausi 2015b. The essential contribution was provided by Mercier 2000, 40, that has re-opened the whole question on the basis of a radio-carbon dating carried out in 1999 later confirmed in 2012 (ʾAbbā Garimā I was dated to 499 ± 40 / 547 ± 35 and ʾAbbā Garimā III to 359 ± 35 / 422 ± 35). For a concise history of the research and bibliography on the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts see Bausi 2010.

mologiae revocando corrigamus. Promiscue igitur in nostra editione usurpantur **ሀ** et **ሐ** et **ኀ**, **ሠ** et **ሰ**, **ጸ** et **ፀ**, **ኸ** et **ፀ**, item vocalium ordo primus et quartus cum in literis gutturalibus, tum in literis Contingentis⁴² et Subjunctivi praeformativis ante verba primae gutturalis.⁴³

From Charles to Hofmann

Still on the *Book of Enoch*, it is interesting to read what Robert Charles remarked, concerning his own edition:

This MS. has been made the basis, so far as any single MS. can, of my text. It exhibits much strange orthography and bad grammar, and many corruptions. Notwithstanding it is by far the best representative we have of the ancient text. It was this MS. together with *m* that I used when emending Dillmann's text for my translation and commentary which appeared in 1893.⁴⁴

There is nothing explicitly stated here on the question which is the reading to be adopted: but this implies that *the standardization according to Dillmann* (i.e. Dillmann's *Lexicon*) *was presupposed as the only possible way to deal with the problem*. But Charles' awareness of text critical procedure is impressive. If we take Charles' statement 'This MS. has been made the basis, so far as any single MS. can'⁴⁵ we will realize that Charles anticipates here, within a reconstructive approach, the concept of the 'best manuscript' *a posteriori*, namely as the outcome of a recensional analysis. It is also well appar-

42 Dillmann follows here the terminology introduced by Hiob Ludolf in his Grammar, see Ludolf 1702, 37, 'CONTINGENS tam Præsens, quam Futurum Indicativi (ut diximus) repræsentat'.

43 Dillmann 1851, iv. My translation, 'On the edition itself, I have little more to say. In establishing the text I have completely adhered to the letter of the manuscript codices, and only very rarely I deemed it right to deviate from their authority: yet, all these emendations I noted in the critical apparatus. That the text of this work is not so corrupt as many, who approached it superficially, have guessed, I will try to show in the German version of the book, that I am going to publish in months. *Therefore in the orthography I did not follow the way of spelling words established by H. Ludolf, but that which I found in the manuscripts themselves examined by myself, also in the more ancient ones:* in fact, all those who intend to read Ethiopic manuscripts, must be used to this kind of spelling, nor is it possible that we reduce spellings which are established by the Ethiopians to the rules of grammar and etymology. Therefore in our edition are used promiscuously **ሀ**, **ሐ** and **ኀ**, **ሠ** and **ሰ**, **ጸ** and **ፀ**, **ኸ** and **ፀ**, likewise the first and fourth orders both in laryngeals and in the prefixes of Imperfect and Subjunctive with first-laryngeal verbs' (emphasis is mine).

44 Charles 1912, xxv (*de facto* referring to his own edition, Charles 1906), on his MS g, that is London, British Library (BL), Or. 485. Dillmann's text had been published in 1851. For further details on manuscripts of the Ethiopic *Book of Enoch*, see the exhaustive study by Erho and Stuckenbruck 2013.

45 Emphasis is mine.

ent that Charles is aware of the clear distinction between textual *correctness in terms of substance* and *peculiarities of orthography and grammar*.

Nonetheless, Michael Knibb criticised Charles in his edition of Enoch not without reasons:

Although the Eth I manuscripts contain many valuable readings, they are none the less full of all sorts of errors, as Charles himself recognized, both by way of the omission or addition of odd words and phrases, and by way of mis-spellings and of carelessness in the use of case-endings. Most of the omissions and additions have been noted in Charles's text-edition, but a large number of the other mistakes have not, and there are far more copyists' errors in the Eth I manuscripts than is apparent from Charles's edition.⁴⁶

However, this has to some extent to do with the fact that the use that Charles made of a (so-called) base manuscript is by far different from what some later editors expected. The same Knibb hints at the same procedure in the *Book of Jubilees*, as remarked by Wim Baars and Rochus Zuurmond, who commented as follows on Charles' edition:

Our first doubts arose when we noticed how incompletely the evidence from Dillmann's edition was reproduced in Charles's critical apparatus, and that this happened not only where this evidence had been omitted deliberately in accordance with Charles's statement in the introduction to his edition, but also on occasions when the readings of the two MSS. used by Dillmann gave support to the readings of Charles's new authorities, and even when they supported his conjectural emendations. I hope that it is not too ungracious to say this in the country where we are guests, but in other respects too Charles's text leaves much to be desired. A microfilm of the British Museum MS. has shown us that the text printed by Charles is far from giving an adequate idea of the actual text of the MS. he claims to have adopted as the basis for his edition. On a rough estimate there are about fifteen unrecorded deviations from the text of his MS. on each page of his edition. I readily admit that a number of them are purely orthographical, though even some of these variants are important for grammatical and lexicographical purposes, but more important readings also have been left unrecorded.⁴⁷

But the point is that Charles (rightly) never claimed to have used one base manuscript for his own edition of *Jubilees*, in the sense of the 'base manuscript method', and to blame him for not being consistent with this is really too much. Here Charles in his own words:

The text that follows is based on A B, A, or B, unless in occasional instances where C D, C, or D may be preferable. In all cases the readings of A and B are given either in the text or in the notes. Those of C D are always cited when they are of any value, and often when they are merely curious. To obviate possible

46 Knibb 1978, II, 32.

47 Baars and Zuurmond 1964, 70–71.

misunderstanding, my method is as follows: when C is cited D is also cited, and vice versa. If a variant is given in a note followed by A, the reader is to understand that B is followed in the text. As a rule, account is not taken of C D; but should the variant in the note be followed by C, it would mean that A B D support the text, or by D that A B C support the text, or by C D that A B do so'.⁴⁸

Quite on the contrary, Charles was well aware of the problems and methods to be applied and behaved consequently:

The text represented in the following pages is based mainly on A B, or on A or B, and on the latter more than the former, but in a few isolated passages on C D, or on C or D. The respective merits and defects of these MSS. have been determined by an exhaustive comparison of each with the rest, as well as with the various critical materials enumerated in Section IV. In the process of criticism we have succeeded in discovering and eliminating the various instances in which they have been prejudicially influenced by the Ethiopic Version of Genesis. In the case of B, we have found that this influence has hardly been at work at all as compared with A C D. By the further application of the critical process we have been able to eliminate those instances in which all the MSS. have been tampered with, owing to the influence of the Ethiopic Version of Genesis (Section II.iii). Having thus discounted this source of corruption, and having further been able, as we became more thoroughly saturated with the idioms and modes of thought in the work and its kindred literature, to remove successively a large proportion of the corruptions native to the Ethiopic Version, we arrived at a stage where a fresh comparison of the text thus attained with the various critical materials already mentioned, at once issued in the most fruitful results, both as regards the primitive text of our Version and the relations of its Hebrew original to the Mass. and Sam. texts, the LXX, Syriac and Vulgate Versions, and the Targum of Onkelos.

In this fresh application of criticism to our materials we advanced steadily upwards through the centuries towards the primitive text of the Ethiopic Version, removing successively on our way the main part of the corruptions that in our earlier progress had defied solution, till at last in the ultimate stages of this process we could pass confidently beyond the limits of the Ethiopic, Latin, and Greek Versions, and determine with tolerable certainty the position occupied by the Hebrew original of Jubilees in relation to the best Texts and Versions of Genesis.⁴⁹

Baars' and Zuurmond's attitude is strongly emblematic of the character of tacit assumptions which were done on the methodology to be applied for critical editions: the two authors obviously expected that Charles would fol-

48 Charles 1895, xiv; MS A = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Éthiopien 51; MS B = BL Or. 485; MS C = Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, M. a. IX 4; MS D = BnF Éthiopien, d'Abbadie 117. After VanderKam, for further manuscripts of the *Ethiopic Book of Jubilees* see Erho 2013, 77–90.

49 Charles 1895, xvi–xvii.

low strictly one ‘base manuscript’; they reproached him for not having fully and precisely documented that manuscript. This latter might obviously be a crucial point of due criticism as far as the necessary documentary character of a critical edition is not sufficiently observed, but *documenting as clearly as possible* is only one point of critically editing.

Charles also goes further on with a strong, fierce criticism against Dillmann’s edition,⁵⁰ where he rightly addressed questions of method:

Possibly through inadvertence, Dillmann has left many ungrammatical passages untouched [...]. The list of corrigenda might with advantage have easily been enlarged; but I do not press these defects in execution, as accuracy is a thing so difficult to attain. It is the wrongness of his method that constitutes ‘the head and front of his offending’.⁵¹

To sum up. In this Article Dillmann’s treatment of the independent value of the Ethiopic text is good as far as it goes, but very inadequate, while as regards the text itself no real advance is made by means of B towards recovering a purer tradition. Thus the text is left pretty much as it stands in his edition of 1859. Such a neglect of evidence must naturally have its nemesis, and so we find Dillmann tracing textual affinities and divergencies in relation to the texts and Versions of the Pentateuch where none such exist, save in the corrupt MSS. on which his text is based.⁵²

Nonetheless, Charles also admitted later:

This edition is based on the only four MSS hitherto known. It is from this text that my translation is made. In some dozen or more passages, however, to which attention is called in the notes, I have withdrawn emendations which I had introduced into the text—some in deference to criticisms of Drs. Praetorius and Litmann and others as a result of further study of the text and subject-matter. On the other hand, I have been enabled, from the much larger knowledge I now have of the literature than I had in 1893–1895, to discover the true text underlying corruptions that had defied detection, and likewise to recognise the occurrence of many dittographies and not a few lacunae (see § 11). The criticism of the text has been further greatly advanced by my discovery of a large poetical element in the book (see § 12).⁵³

✱

From a position of a reasonable and clearly stated goal, Francisco Maria Esteves Pereira adopted for his edition of the *Book of Esther* one base manuscript,

50 Charles 1895, xvii–xx, although this was somehow emended by Dillmann’s own Latin translation of the virtually re-edited Ethiopic text in 1874 for Hermann Rönsch’s edition of the Latin fragments of Jubilees.

51 Charles 1895, xviii.

52 Charles 1895, xix.

53 Charles 1902, xxi (translation of Jubilees).

where only apparent grammatical errors and lacunae were emended in the edition, and additions were deleted.

Pour la version éthiopienne de la Bible, le but de la critique textuelle est, autant que faire se peut, de retrouver dans les copies de plus en plus anciennes le texte de la version primitive, aussi exempt de d'éléments étrangers que possible. Seul ce texte primitif, c'est-à-dire antérieur aux recensions et révisions qui ont été faites, pur, sans corrections, sans faire attention à sa légibilité ni à son adaptation à un usage quelconque, a de la valeur pour la classification des divers types de texte des LXX et pour la reconstitution de ce texte. Pour atteindre ce but, autant que les matériaux disponibles le permettent, nous publions le texte du Livre d'Esther d'après le manuscrit M, en y faisant seulement les modifications suivantes: 1° corriger les fautes grammaticales évidentes; 2° supprimer les additions; 3° remplir les lacunes: tout cela d'après les parties des textes des manuscrits N et P, qui n'ont pas été corrigées; cependant nous donnerons en notes les leçons du manuscrit M.⁵⁴

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The fundamental edition of the *Book of Daniel* by Oscar Löfgren did not provide a critically reconstructed text, because he thought that it was not yet the time to do that. Everything related to the reconstruction of the text is provided in the commentary. Löfgren only attempted at providing a careful rendering of the MS S.⁵⁵ There are only minor changes to the *text (substance) and form* of the manuscript, detailed as follows:

Die Abweichungen meines Textes von S beschränken sich auf die folgenden Fälle: 1. Unzweifelhafte Fehler sind berichtigt worden; dabei wurde das Unrichtige in den oberen Apparat verwiesen oder eingeklammert. 2. Lücken wurden nach anderen Hss. ausgefüllt, und zwar nach der dem griechischen Original am nächsten stehenden Überlieferung; 3. Die Orthographie wurde nach DILLMANN'S Lexikon normalisiert, mit Ausnahme der Schreibungen አወዋወ und አንበሳ. 4. Vereinzelt und inkonsequent vorkommende Archaismen wurden durch die geäußerte Schreibung ersetzt.⁵⁶

Even here, it has to be remarked concerning nos 1 and 2 that Löfgren adopted a series of measures to avoid *good* (close to the Greek), yet *secondary readings* (to be referred to the distinction between *authentic* and *true readings*),⁵⁷ as he clearly states, in n. 2, 'In den Fällen, wo eine unzweifelhaft

54 Pereira 1911, 10. MS M is BnF Éthiopien, d'Abbadie 55.

55 Löfgren 1927, li-lij. MS S is BnF Éthiopien 11.

56 Löfgren 1927, li.

57 In the sense of Havet 1911, 425–427, §§ 1623–1627, see also T'impanaro 2003, 54, n. 6 (Engl. transl. 2005, 85, n. 6), on this concept and its attribution to Havet. See also A. Conti, 'Havet, Pierre Antoine Louis', in Macé and Roelli 2015, s.v., 'His work is also known for distinguishing *true variants* (leçons vraies), and *authentic variants* (leçons authentiques). For textual criticism, the distinction is important in that it acknowl-

verdorbene Lesart auch in anderen Hss. vorkommt, ist sie nur da beseitigt worden, wo die richtige Lesart gute und alte handschriftliche Bezeugung hat', and n. 3, 'Wenn die ältesten Hss. in der Auslassung eines einzelnen Wortes übereinstimmen, habe ich aber die Ergänzung unterlassen'. It is important that these phenomena are said to be not consistently present.⁵⁸

Fuhs and the first stemma codicum of an Ethiopic text

In Josef Hofmann's edition of the *Apocalypse of John* it is not exactly clear which is the criterion adopted. However, the text seems to have been reconstructed and normalized according to Dillmann's *Lexicon* (and grammar):

Der folgende Apk-Text soll, soweit dies überhaupt möglich ist, dem äthiopischen Urtext nahe kommen. Ich stütze mich hier vor allem auf die alten Hss A B und C. Sie liefern im allgemeinen einen guten Text, der von arabischen Einflüssen noch fast ganz frei geblieben ist. Ich bin mir dabei natürlich bewußt, daß es an vielen Stellen unmöglich ist, den ursprünglichen Text zu erkennen. Wo die Lesarten in den alten Hss auseinander gehen, da habe ich diejenige ausgewählt, für die die besseren Gründe sprechen. Selbstverständlich kann es vorkommen, daß die alten Hss versagen, aber jüngere oder weniger einwandfreie Hss den besseren Text bieten. Wenn in solchen Fällen die Wahrscheinlichkeit besteht, daß die jüngeren Hss eine gute alte Lesart bewahrt haben, dann habe ich diese Lesart vorgezogen. Problematisch bleibt der Versuch der Rekonstruktion auf jeden Fall, da es eben ganz unmöglich ist, die stummen acht Jahrhunderte von der Übersetzung bis zur Niederschrift des ältesten erhaltenen Apk-Textes zu überbrücken.⁵⁹

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Hans Ferdinand Fuhs is credited with the first proposal of a *stemma codicum* for the edition of an Ethiopic text.⁶⁰ The very first *stemma codicum* for the tradition of an Ethiopic text was probably proposed by Louis Guerrier and Sylvain Grébaut in their edition of the *Testament of Our Lord in Galilee* in

edges readings that may be true without authenticity. For example, after a text has been altered in the distant past, the error is replaced by a felicitous correction, which appears to have restored the same word that the author had written, but is rather a conjecture from antiquity or the middle ages'.

58 Löfgren 1927, lxi.

59 Hofmann 1967, xiv, text.

60 See Fuhs 1968, 31, 'Schematische Darstellung der Gruppierung der Handschriften'. For him being credited with the record of the first critical edition of an Ethiopic text, apparently on the basis of the presence of the stemma, see for example Lusini 1988, 212, n. 3, quoting Fuhs' two editions along with Marrassini 1981, 26—all editions provided with a stemma, although the one in Marrassini erroneously drawn for a typographical error—as the only three available examples of critical editions of Ethiopic texts.

1912.⁶¹ One early *stemma codicum* was proposed also by Adolf Grohmann in his 1913 edition of several versions of the *Vision of Shenute*, particularly in the section dedicated to the Ethiopic tradition.⁶² Grohmann's contribution contains several interesting observations on the relationship of the manuscript witnesses with the application of a reconstructive method by determination of the mutual relationship among the witnesses as well as other observations concerning the establishing of the text and presupposes a reflection on the role of the introduction in a critical edition.⁶³

61 Guerrier and Grébaut 1912, 173 (33). The authors made use of three manuscripts of the collection d'Abbadie—BnF Éthiopien, d'Abbadie 51 (A), 90 (B), and 199 (C)—plus one manuscript from BL Or. 793 (L); but they also collated Or. 795 from the same library. The manuscript B is characterised by a series of corrections by a later hand, also of orthographic character, but not only—additions of prepositions *wa-*, conjunctions, prepositions, all in the attempt of ameliorating the text; less important corrections are interlinear, while more substantial ones are placed at the beginning of the line, with a reference sign in the shape of a *ha* (**ሐ**) turned upside down; deletions are marked with two lines or a stroke. The *stemma* is a bipartite one, with *x* as ancestor of AC and *y* as ancestor of B¹ and Or. 795; in *y*, however, the second hand B² is responsible for corrections which bring the text of B much closer to L, which is the most complete and correct witness, both orthographically and morphologically. L, however, appears partially descending from *y* and partly from an extra-stemmatic source—a Greek text—also responsible for the B² corrections, for example **እኅ** for **እኅ**. Obviously, the whole question must be completely re-examined. For a very summarily presentation, see also Pérès 1994, 57–58; 'Testamentum Domini in Galilee', *EAE*, IV (2010), 928b–929b (A. Bausi).

62 Grohmann 1913, 198.

63 Grohmann 1913, 194–199, and 200–206 ('Das Verfahren bei der Herstellung des Textes'). Grohmann, however, did not precisely understand a complicated passage which he discussed quite in detail on p. 195 and that provides an interesting phenomenon of diffraction that has already been noted in other texts. The passage is the following, p. 230, ll. 12–13: **ወ[ዲበ ፡] ሙቁሓንሂ ፡ ወሰኩ ፡ ነገረ ፡ ወአጽንዑ ፡ ሰሙ ፡ መዋቅሕተ ፡** (this passage was independently partially commented by Villa 2016, 128, n. 1). The tradition opposes *variae lectiones*: **ወይቤ ፡** (L¹ = BL Or. 818; P¹ = BnF Éthiopien 146) vs **ወለእለ ፡** (W = Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Aeth. 4, in the margin, but with **ወይቤ ፡** in the text; F = Frankfurt am Main, Stadt und Universitätsbibliothek, Rüpp. II,7) or **ወዲበ ፡** (P² = BnF Éthiopien 113; L² = BL Or. 827; T = Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, M. a. IX 13). Grohmann thinks that the erroneous **ወይቤ ፡** was inherited from a different branch of the tradition (with the reading **ወዲበ**) and remained in P¹L¹, but that it was emended in W, while the correct reading is **ወለእለ** ('S. 230, Note 25 ist das falsche **ወይቤ ፡** in P¹L¹ intakt, in W schon emendiert (nach P). Der Vorgang ist also folgender: F trägt die ursprünglich richtige Fassung **ወለእለ ፡**, L¹P¹W haben die Stelle verderbt, und zwar nach einem aus einen anderen Vorlagetyp als F (zu dem P²L²T gehört) stammenden **ወዲበ ፡**, in W aber ist bereits wieder nach einem F nahestehenden Exemplar nachkorrigiert worden'); see also p. 230, n. 25 ('So nach P²L²T, L¹P¹ hat das unbrauchbare **ወይቤ ፡**, WF **ወለእለ ፡**, W dies jedoch am Rande nachgetragen,

The edition of Micah by Fuhs is not a completely reconstructive edition.⁶⁴ Fuhs however adopts a full standardization according to Dillmann's *Lexicon*,⁶⁵ the interpunction in the manuscript is ignored.⁶⁶ There is also a process of reduction of variants in the apparatus, where only phenomena of relevance to textual criticism or linguistic interest are represented.⁶⁷

In the eventual 1971 edition of Hosea, Fuhs provides one more *stemma* for his edition;⁶⁸ for other aspects of orthography, interpunction and division, he simply refers to his own previous edition of 1968. Here it is again remarked that the edition cannot be based (*scilicet* as it was in the case of the 1968 edition) on a single better manuscript (*codex optimus* or *codex vetustissimus*).

im Text **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : und **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : durch zwei darüber und daruntergesetzte Striche (**ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : emendiert'). Grohmann translated the passage as follows, p. 231, ll. 16–17: 'und die, die gefangen sind, brachten sie in noch schlimmere Lage und schnürten ihnen ihre Fesseln fester'. What escaped Grohmann is the fact that **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : (in F and secondarily also in W), translated with 'und *die, die* gefangen sind', is here not the relative pronoun, but certainly stays for the preposition **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : (*walā'ala*, normal construction expected with **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : , see Dillmann 1865, 905, 'ⲉⲣⲏⲓ : [...] *addere, adjicere, accumulare*, c. Acc. rei additae, crebro omisso Acc., et c. **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : ejus cui additur'), as it frequently happens; thus also the *variae lectiones* **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : / **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : , postulating an archaic *lectio media* **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : of some linguistic interest, can be easily explained. The passage is to be translated: 'and also upon the prisoners they hardened their state and made firmer the chains to them'. For the series **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : / **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : / **ⲉⲣⲏⲓ** : , which is a very interesting case of interference between *form* and *substance* in textual criticism, see Bausi 2005a, 163.

64 Fuhs 1968, 38, where it is explained that only a comprehensive understanding of the manuscript tradition of the Twelve Minor Prophets will provide a certain guide for establishing a reconstructive edition.

65 Fuhs 1968, 39, 'Die Orthographie wurde nach den von Dillmann in seinem Lexikon aufgestellten Grundsätzen normalisiert'.

66 Fuhs 1968, 39, 'Die recht eigenwillige Interpunction der Handschrift blieb unberücksichtigt. Neben dem Worttrenner gebrauche ich das Zeichen : als Kolon, bzw. Semikolon. Am Versende steht immer der ʾⲉⲣⲏⲓ : . In der Kapitel- und Verseinteilung folge ich der Septuagintaausgabe von Ziegler'.

67 Fuhs 1968, 39–40, 'Die bei einer so großen Anzahl von Handschriften notwendigerweise anfallende Variantenmasse ist dadurch in – wie ich hoffe – erträglichen Grenzen gehalten worden, daß nur solche Varianten verzeichnet sind, die entweder textkritisch oder grammatisch-lexikalisch von Bedeutung, oder für die Gruppierung der Handschriften von Wichtigkeit zu sein schienen. Die Beschränkung gilt jedoch nicht für A [...]', thus, this limitation is not applied to his MS A (= Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Huntington 625), that has been taken as a guide to the establishment of the text, *not as a general method, but as a preliminary step to a critical reconstruction*; and, 'Die Orthographie der Varianten wurde nur da, wo es unbedingt nötig schien, normalisiert, z.B. wenn eine Variante von mehreren Handschriften in verschiedener Schreibweise geboten wird, ansonsten wurde die Schreibung der Handschriften beibehalten'.

68 Fuhs 1971, 25, again, 'Schematische Darstellung der Gruppierung der Hss'.

Yet, even in this case, Fuhs thinks that the conditions for a critical-eclectic edition are not fulfilled.⁶⁹ Therefore the procedure for the establishment of the text is particularly complex:

Basis für die Ausgabe dieses Textes bilden B-C K [...]. Unter Berücksichtigung der allgemein anerkannten Grundsätze der Textkritik wird näherhin folgendermaßen verfahren. Überliefern diese drei Handschriften eine bestimmte Lesart, wird sie regelmäßig in den Text aufgenommen. Weichen sie untereinander ab, gibt im Einzelfall die bessere Lesart den Ausschlag. Hilft auch das nicht, so bleibt nur noch der Rückgriff auf den griechischen Text. In diesen Fällen ist es natürlich fraglich, inwieweit der ursprüngliche Text damit getroffen ist.⁷⁰

This process, however, is not clear, since it is difficult to understand in which sense there is a *better reading* ('bessere Lesart') which is not in agreement with the Greek text.

Überliefern B-C K gemeinsam eine unzweifelhaft falsche Lesart, bleibt sie im Text stehen, wird aber durch eckige Klammern als solche kenntlich gemacht. Die (vermutlich) richtige Lesart wird dann regelmäßig im Apparat II mitgeteilt.

Obviously, the point is here, what should be exactly understood as 'falsche Lesart': innovation, secondary reading, error, in a certain sense; crucial is here again the distinction between *authentic* and *original* (that is, *primary*) reading.

From Weischer to Knibb (Book of Enoch)

With the edition of a yet important Aksumite text like the *Qerallos* by Bernd Manuel Weischer, started in 1973, there is little to observe, since the edition intended to reproduce strictly the text of one single manuscript.⁷¹ It has only to be remarked that no explicit justification for this choice is provided: and this is once more emblematic of many other editions which are not reviewed here.

69 Fuhs 1971, 26, 'Andererseits scheinen mir die Voraussetzungen für eine Rekonstruktion des Textes auf Grund des kritisch-eklektischen Verfahrens immer noch nicht gegeben zu sein, zumal bei einem so kurzen Text'.

70 Fuhs 1971, 26.

71 Weischer 1973 (*Qerallos* I), 30, 'Weitere orthographische Besonderheiten mögen aus dem unten folgenden äthiopischen Text entnommen werden, der unverändert abgedruckt ist, wie die Handschrift ihn bietet', that is MS Y = Kebrān (Qəddus Gabrə'el) 42 = Ṭānāsee 42. The same in Weischer 1993 (*Qerallos* II), 18, 'Die Handschrift Y dient als Textgrundlage und ist in ihrer jeweiligen Schreibung unverändert belassen', etc.; similarly Weischer 1977 (*Qerallos* III), 20; Weischer 1979 (*Qerallos* III), 28; Weischer 1979 (*Qerallos* IV/2), 16; Weischer 1980 (*Qerallos* IV/3), 14.

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The edition of the *Book of Enoch* by Michael A. Knibb, although presenting the reproduction of a single manuscript in facsimile, with a rich apparatus, reserves a considerable attention to the question of orthography for the material to be hosted in the critical apparatus:

Although I have not attempted, much less achieved, absolute consistency, I have normally left out of the apparatus all variants of a purely orthographic character, and particularly variants involving the following common phenomena:

(i) the formation of the imperfect (I 1 and II 1) of verbs whose first radical is a laryngeal or pharyngeal (cf. e.g. fol. 3rb, line 27 **ኢተዓርጉ** : for which the following variants occur: **ኢታዓርጉ** : , **ኢተዐርጉ** : , **ኢትዐርጉ** : ; note that for the I 1 imperfect the pattern **ይዐርግ** : is very frequently found in the Eth I manuscripts (particularly BM 485 and Berl) in the case of such verbs);

(ii) the occurrence of the vowels u and i with the corresponding semivowels w and y (thus variants of the type **ምዉቅ** : / **ምውቅ** : , **ቀዪሕ** : / **ቀይሕ** : have generally been ignored);

(iii) the spelling of names (here, particularly, I am conscious that I have often had to make arbitrary decisions);

(iv) alternative spellings and forms of words that occur frequently (e.g. the common variants **ኅልቀኡ** : / **ኅልቀኡ** : **መናፍሰት** : / **መንፈሳት** : **ይሐር** : / **ይሐር** : and related forms of this verb);

(v) the writing of the numerals (for which the Eth I manuscripts normally use words, the Eth II manuscripts signs).

I have also normally left out of the apparatus such variants as the following: **አልኩ** : / **አልኩ** : , **ዝ** : / **ዝን** : : **አሎን** : : / **አሎን** : : , **አለ** : / **አለ** : :

I have felt it necessary to treat Abb 55 differently from the other manuscripts. From c. 83 onwards Abb 55 has a much abbreviated text, and were its evidence for cc. 83–108 to be incorporated into the apparatus, there is a serious risk that the apparatus would become confused and overloaded. Since its evidence for cc. 83–108 is inevitably of very limited value, it seemed to me best to ignore it altogether for these chapters except in one or two cases of special importance.⁷²

Marrassini

In his reconstructive critical edition of the *Gadla Yohannēs Māsrāqāwi* published in a normalized transcription according to Dillmann's *Lexicon* as an

⁷² Knibb 1978, I (text edition), xii (with limitation to the observations on the Ethiopic text). Knibb 1978, II, 21–37, details on manuscripts and the Ethiopic tradition; yet, on p. 25, n. 9, concerning his base manuscripts (Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS 23), 'So far as orthography is concerned the only notable feature in the manuscript is a certain inconsistency in the use of **አ** and **ዐ**, but **አ** is used in place of **ዐ** more frequently than the reverse'. Knibb 1978, II, 36, n. 34, was informed of the existence of MS Tānāsee 9 too late to take it thoroughly into account. On the place in the textual tradition of the *Book of Enoch* of Tānāsee 9, see Piovanelli 1987, 1988; and now, again, Erho and Stuckenbruck 2013, 110–111.

assumed source for the original forms, Paolo Marrassini left little space to speculation and defined exactly and very much in detail how he intended to proceed.⁷³ He also introduced a normalized interpunction according to the sense of the sentences. While the basis for the system of transliteration was offered by Eugen Mittwoch's study of pronunciation, for non-morphological gemination Marrassini relied on Gabriele da Maggiora's lexicon, when the word did not already occur in Mittwoch's study:⁷⁴

1. Traslitterazione. Il testo è stato interamente traslitterato in caratteri latini. Questo è stato dettato da esigenze tipografiche, e come tale non avrebbe bisogno di ulteriori giustificazioni. È da notare comunque che, pur restando una stampa in caratteri etiopici forse ancora preferibile, se non altro perché tradizionale, non c'è ragione teorica che si opponga ad una traslitterazione sistematica del geez, dato che questo è il metodo ormai universalmente adottato per le altre lingue semitiche, compreso l'arabo; e che anche per il geez ne è stata sostenuta la validità da parte di certi studiosi, in particolare O. Löfgren. [...] Non abbiamo in alcun modo inteso fare opera di riflessione critica su questo o su qualsiasi altro sistema di traslitterazione, limitandoci ad adottare un criterio che fosse il più meccanico possibile. È importante ricordare che, in ogni caso, qualunque sistema di traslitterazione del geez è immediatamente trasformabile, da parte del lettore, in un altro analogo che egli reputi più conforme alle proprie opinioni, senza alcun ricorso al testo originale; la scelta di un sistema piuttosto che di un altro, perciò, non ha sul piano pratico alcuna importanza.⁷⁵

2. Interpunzione. I mss. portano un'interpunzione del tutto incompatibile con la suddivisione logica del discorso, almeno secondo le categorie linguistiche europee, e diversa in ciascuno di essi. Ne abbiamo perciò introdotta una nuova, che non coincide necessariamente con quella di nessuno dei testimoni, limitata al punto fermo, e ai due punti per il discorso diretto. Non è stato indicato il discorso diretto all'interno di altro discorso diretto.

In his later reconstructive edition of the so-called *Chronicle of ʿĀmda Šāyon*, Paolo Marrassini has a substantial introduction where many questions of language and grammar are dealt with, but the question of normalization is disposed of shortly with a few observations in an 'Avvertenza', from which it appears that he has tacitly normalized the text according to Dillmann's *Lexicon*: only for place names and ethnonyms are even purely graphic variants reported in the commented index at the end of the book.⁷⁶

73 Marrassini 1981, xi–xii, 'Avvertenza'.

74 See Mittwoch 1925; Gabriele da Maggiora 1953.

75 This point is very important in view of the observation of a perfect correspondence between signs of the transcription and spelling of the Ethiopic script: when considering the various systems for transcription and transliteration, this aspect should never be underestimated.

76 Marrassini 1993, 17–21 ('Particolarità linguistiche'), 48 ('Avvertenza', 'Nell'apparato critico la mancanza di ሃጥብ ፡ indica che la parola è legata a quella seguente. Per i nomi

From VanderKam to Zuurmond

Along with Michael Knibb's edition of the *Book of Enoch*, James C. VanderKam's edition of the *Book of Jubilees* provides a modern edition of a major apocryphal text. VanderKam provides a series of indications concerning his method of editing and addressing the question of orthography and others.

The apparatus which accompanies the Ethiopic text in volume one includes textual, not orthographic, variants. This means that the frequent interchanges of the gutturals (!) **ሐ** and **ኀ** or **አ** and **ዐ**, of the sibilants **ሰ** and **ሠ**, and of the emphatics **ጸ** and **ፀ** as well as the changes in length of the vowel *a* in the vicinity of gutturals (!) have not been recorded (unless another part of the word involved a textual variant). Also, if a word can be spelled in two ways in the manuscripts (e.g., **አኖሠ** / **አነሠ** : **እኖ** / **እኖነ** : **ይሐሩ** / **ይሐሩ** : **ተኖዐ** / **ተኖዐዐ** : **ሀሎ** / **ሀለወ**), no note has been made of this fact in the apparatus. Some of the manuscripts express numbers by numerals while others spell the word; such differences, too, have been omitted. The practice in the critical Ethiopic text is to employ words for numbers. Names pose special problems because there are so many relatively insignificant variations of them in the manuscripts, and even within a single manuscript (in some cases within a single verse) consistency is not maintained. In the apparatus only the more strongly attested forms appear, not the full range of the evidence. Two other words which figure prominently in the text—**እግዚአብሔር** : (always translated as *Lord*) and **ኢየሁዳዊ** (= jubilee)—(p. xvii) have been accorded special treatment. The former has been spelled in one way throughout, though the manuscripts show several possibilities. The latter is spelled in a variety of ways in the manuscripts, but as no textual significance attaches to these deviations, they have been omitted. The spelling of the word in ms. 25, which remains the best available copy (see the Introduction to volume two for a defense of this claim), has been reproduced in the text. The only variants to **ኢየሁዳዊ** that surface in the apparatus are instances in which one or several manuscripts read a plural instead of a singular form in the text or if a difference of suffix is involved. Finally, the punctuation in the critical text normally follows that of ms. 25.

The reader will observe that the writer has been extremely reluctant to emend the Ethiopic text. This approach stands in stark contrast to that of Charles who emended easily and often, at times brilliantly, at times regrettably. In the present edition, changes are proposed only in those passage (!) in which the texts made little or no sense and a reasonable correction suggested itself. These emendations have not, however, been placed in the critical text. They are marked in the English translation by italicizing the word or words in question. An accompanying textual note to the translation then explains the change which underlines the revised rendering. In a few cases (e.g., 13:25) words have been inserted into the

di luogo vengono riportate le varianti dei manoscritti, salvo quelle puramente grafiche, per uniformità con il resto dell'apparato; tali varianti puramente grafiche vengono riportate al completo nell'indice dei nomi di luogo alla fine del volume'), 193–223 (commented register of place and personal names).

critical text where a lacuna seemed exceedingly likely. Brackets surround these additions.⁷⁷

The quoted passage reflects and well represents current practices in editing Ethiopic texts. The interchanges between consonants have not been recorded, but it is not clear what the editor means by phenomena ‘in the vicinity of gutturals’: definitely, not all of them are so trivial and some of them could deserve more attention. In the end, for the spelling of names, one manuscript is taken as a guide.⁷⁸ Less acceptable is the fact that even in those passages ‘in which the texts made little or no sense and a reasonable correction suggested itself’ no correction was introduced in the critical text: actually, the virtual textual correction was the basis for the translation, given in italicized character.⁷⁹ This procedure can be hardly taken as a model.

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In his fundamental and rightly much appreciated editions of the Gospels of Mark⁸⁰ and Matthew, considering the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts, Rochus Zuurmond has detailed shortly, but very clearly on the point of orthography and standardization:

Among the frequently occurring *orthographic* and grammatical variants the following categories may be mentioned explicitly: 1°. Interchange of the aspirates **አ-ዐ** and **ዐ-አ-ኀ**. 2°. Interchange of the homophone consonants **ሠ-ሰ** and **ጸ-ፀ**. 3°. Interchange of aspirates of the first and the fourth order. 4°. Interchange of consonants of the second order with diphthonges of the sixth order. 5°. Interchange of certain consonants of the first and the fourth order: **ለ-ላ**, **ሰ-ሳ**, **በ-ባ**, **ጠ-ጣ**, **ዘ-ዛ**, **ከ-ካ**, **ጸ-ጸ**. 6°. Interchange of consonants of the third and the fifth order. 7°. Interchange of consonants of the first and the sixth order.⁸¹ 8°. Variant forms wherever radical *i* or *u* meets formative vowel *i* or *u* [...].

77 VanderKam 1989, I (text), xvi-xvii, under ‘A. Procedures’.

78 VanderKam 1989’s MS 25 is BL Or. 485.

79 Against my will, I had to accept the same system by editorial decision of the then director of the series ‘Scriptores Aethiopici’ of the ‘Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium’, Lanfranco Ricci. Fresh manuscript evidence that has later emerged has confirmed the validity of the conjectural reading I had proposed in an important passage of *Gadla Libānos*, see Bausi 2003 and 2014.

80 Zuurmond 1989, I, 133, presents a *stemma codicum*, and in the following pages (pp. 134 ff.) details on the meaning of the terms used (‘family’, ‘sub-family’, ‘revision’, ‘group’, ‘text’, ‘type of text’), the textual tradition in a substantially historical and genealogical way, to the extent that this is possible, and on the criteria used to determine the text. See some of the most important reviews to this book by Birdsall 1991, Ricci 1991 and Knibb 1992.

81 Zuurmond 1989, II, 28, n. 7 rightly observes that ‘This may be a consequence of the non-distinction of the first and the sixth order of some characters in early mss. See the description of mss. 2 and 3 below, pp. 50ff.’, and *ibid.* II, 302–303, ‘Some peculiarities

Among the grammatical variants that occur frequently the following three categories may be mentioned explicitly: 1°. Quasi stems of reciprocity in the case of verbs prim. asp. (such as **፪፯፻፶፱** [...]). 2°. Variant forms in some particular verbs, such as the impf. and subj. of **መሀረ**. 3°. Interchange of nom. and acc. (cf. above 7°), in particular at the verbs **ሀለወ** and **ከኔ**.⁸²

On this last point, Zuurmond further remarks phenomena which are at the limit between orthography and linguistics and which imply a chain of interference in textual transmission, in that a palaeographic feature determines in turn an apparent linguistic phenomenon:⁸³

Wherever manuscripts (in our case in particular manuscript 2 and manuscript 3, but to a certain extent also manuscript 37) do not distinguish between consonants of the first and the sixth order, the variant reading may in particular cases be either *orthographical* (above 7°) or *grammatical* (above 3°).⁸⁴

A statistical count might be usefully carried out, but there is no doubt that we can trust Zuurmond in that the phenomena of exchanges taking place in these very early manuscripts are ‘frequently occurring’ and not exceptional at all. This is a very important point to stress: starting from the oldest transmitted manuscripts, graphic exchanges took place to a certain degree.

in early manuscripts are so prolific that it does not make sense to mention their impact on *orthography* in every single case, not even in the lists. Yet they may be important in assessing the actual value of a variant. Many of these are a consequence of early Ge'ez *paleography*. In mss. 2 and 3 there is no difference between **ሐ** and **ሐ**, or **ሰ** and **ሰ**. Neither do these manuscripts clearly distinguish between **ተ** and **ተ**, or **ቀ** and **ቀ**. In manuscript 37 – quoted only rarely – **የ/ይ**, and **ሰ/ሰ** are indistinguishable. Particularly in manuscripts 1, 2, 3, and 37 – as in fact in many early Ethiopic manuscripts – one often wonders whether, in the case of a consonant of ‘two legs’ (**ሐ, ሰ, ሰ, ከ, ሀ, መ, ጸ, ጸ**), the scribe meant to write a consonant of the first, or a consonant of the fourth – or sometimes even the seventh – order. It proved to be practically impossible to indicate the degree of doubt in every single case’. Manuscripts 2 and 3 are respectively MS ṾAbbā Garimā II and ṾAbbā Garimā III (= AG 2 according to Jacques Mercier’s numbering), and 37 is EMMML no. 6942. For several archaic palaeographic phenomena see also Bausi 2013, 38–41; see also Voicu 2015.

82 Zuurmond 1989, II, 27–28 (emphasis by R. Zuurmond); see also *ibid.* II, 307 (‘Frequently Occurring Grammatical Variants’).

83 For concise but precise observations on these phenomena, see for example Bausi 2011b, 24–25, n. 20; for the usual exchanges, see also MS G, BAV etiop. 263, and the textually and palaeographically very similar bifolium of the *Ascension of Isaiah* (1:4–2:2), preserved in the codex of MSS ṾAbbā Garimā II–III, see Perrone and Norelli 1995, 19, with n. 2 (‘Comune a tutti e due i codici è l’indistinzione tendenziale fra le vocali del I e del VI ordine per le lettere **ተ, ሐ, ቀ** e occasionalmente anche per altre’); *ibid.* 4, with n. 2 on the fragment.

84 Zuurmond 1989, II, 28, n. 8. MS 37 is MS EMMML no. 6942.

From Tedros Abraha (Letter to the Hebrews) to Niccum

In the edition of Paul's *Letter to the Hebrews* by Tedros Abraha it appears to be impossible to understand *which method was followed*: the editor is so discouraged and discouraging as to state the following:

A note on the arrangement of the critical apparatus may be of some help to clear the ground from eventual misunderstandings. I have decided 'again' to put the variants of all the witnesses I used, below the body of the basic text. This is, in my view, an easy way to readily see the similarities and the differences. No serious scholar can pretend to impose 'his method' as a piece of academic dogma.⁸⁵

As yet, there is no statement concerning how the *base text*—which is evoked in his statement—was established, and what it exactly represents, unless it is simply understood as a sort of base text for collating. Besides the final remark, 'No serious scholar can pretend to impose "his method" as a piece of academic dogma'—addressed to himself or to whom?—we only know that the textual tradition of the Ethiopic *Letter to the Hebrews* can be distinguished in three *layers*, but we do not know how these layers are highlighted in the edition, nor which is the method followed by the editor:

This edition of Hebrews makes use of eighteen selected manuscripts, the earliest of which probably belongs to either the second half of the XIV or the first half of the XV century. [...] There is a first layer comprising seven manuscripts which have been designated as Group I. Its distinctive feature is that it has a concise and (p. 8) often rudimental text. The witnesses present a homogeneous text and this strongly suggests that they depend on a single *Vorlage*. It is clearly a set of manuscripts that has struggled to produce a faithful, literal translation from a Greek exemplar or exemplars. [...] The following layer, named Group II, is represented by four MSS. They date back to the period between the late XV and XVI centuries and reflect a phase of textual transition. In fact, some modest progress in the quality of the text can be discerned in these documents. Furthermore, they cast light on the process of restoring the missing parts in Group I, expansion of texts and polishing of otherwise impenetrable readings, and correction of morphological and syntactical mistakes. The new readings represent a better and more faithful translation from the Greek, though it is very unlikely that the translators have revised directly from a Greek text or texts. Probably the changes introduced by these witnesses have made their way through Arabic. [...] The third and last stage in the long and complex process of translating and revising the sacred texts is attested by an abundant number of manuscripts that date from the XVII century onwards. They have been classified as Group III. As their large quantity has made selection necessary, only eight have been included in the critical apparatus, whereas the great majority of them have been omitted. The manuscripts are absolutely homogeneous, an incontrovertible sign that the text had reached a phase of standardisation. Many of the omissions of Group I, and to a lesser degree those

85 Tedros Abraha 2004, 9.

of Group II, have been retrieved. Furthermore, the readings and words of the previous layers that are not intelligible or altogether wrong are systematically replaced or removed. The outcome of this initiative is the production of a grammatically sound text which is much closer to the Greek version.⁸⁶

As appears, there is an idea in Tedros Abraha of a gradual approaching of the text to a state of perfection, through various stages of revisions.⁸⁷ If this is somehow true from the point of view of the secular reworking of the text by the Ethiopian scholarship—a process that cannot be underestimated—it has obviously no meaning from the point of view of establishing the earlier text. The fact is—as normally happens in all cases of translations, including the single recensions, or even redactions, of a translation—that each single stage is at the same time *the goal of the text critical reconstruction* and a witness to the earlier text (*Vorlage*).

✱

In the edition of the Gospel of John, Michael Wechsler followed the method applied by Zuurmond and based on the text of the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts. He detailed on his method, under the paragraph ‘Orthographic Standardization’:

We have, in order to retain a certain measure of uniformity in the text, standardized the archaic and non-normative orthography of the Mss employed for the basic text—albeit only with regard to the particular order of the letter, rather than the form of the word itself—taking as our cue the standard verbal and nominal forms as presented in the lexicons of Dillmann and Leslau, as well as the *Grammar* of the former.⁸⁸

It is not perfectly clear what he assumes here, particularly ‘with regard to the particular order of the letter, rather than the form of the word itself’: but he probably only means the exchanges between first and fourth orders in laryngeals, or at most the same phenomenon also occurring in other letters, as pointed out by Zuurmond. Wechsler also provides a detailed list of ‘specifically corrected’ linguistic and orthographic practices. The practices specifically indicated are as follows:⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Tedros Abraha 2004, 7–9.

⁸⁷ The same also in his later edition of *Corinthians*, and already in his edition of the *Letter to the Romans*, see Tedros Abraha 2001, 35 and *passim*. Even in this latter edition there is *nothing*, as far as I can see, on the method employed to establish the critical text: the reader is simply left alone in front of a text and an apparatus. On MS Addis Ababa, Ethiopian National Archives and Library Agency 27, see now Yosef Demissie 2015, 166–171.

⁸⁸ Wechsler 2005, xxxii–xxxiii.

⁸⁹ Wechsler 2005, xxxii–xxxiii.

1° The use of first order forms rather than fourth order forms for personal prefixes of the (indicative and subjunctive) Causative and Causative-Reflexive Stems (cf. Dillmann, *Grammar*, §48.5 and p. 188, n. 3), e.g.: አስተዋድዳክሙ for አ”, ተጠምቅ for ታ”, ዘየአትት for ዘያ”, etc.

2° The use of first order forms rather than fourth order forms before aspirates of the sixth order (cf. Dillmann, *Grammar*, §46.3a), e.g.: መእረር for ማ”, ብለዕ for ብላዕ, ከዕበ for ካ”, etc.

3° The use of fourth order forms of aspirates rather than first order forms (except where the latter marks the accusative case or *status constructus*; cf. Dillmann, *Grammar*, §48.5), e.g.: ሃሎ for ሀሎ, ኃበ for ኅበ, ዚአሁ for ዚአሁ, ያአምር for ያአ”, etc.

4° Related to the previous, the use of the third order labialized form: ኃ (or ኅዋ) for the first order labialized form ኀ (or ኅወ), cf. e.g.: እኅዋሁ (= እኃሁ) for እኅወሁ (= እኀሁ), etc.

5° The use of sixth order forms rather than third order forms before various forms of the semivowel *y* (cf. Dillmann, *Grammar*, §52), e.g.: እይረከበ for ኣይ”, እየሱስ for ኣይ”, ሌዋውያን for ሌዋዊ”, ነበይ for ነበይ”, etc.

6° The use of sixth order forms rather than first order forms for personal prefixes of the (indicative and subjunctive) Simple Stems when placed before aspirates of the first or sixth order (except when the personal prefix is itself preceded by አ.; cf. Dillmann, *Grammar*, §44). e.g.: ይሐውር for የ”, ትኃሥሁ for ተኅ”, ትአምን for ተአ”, ዘይዓቢ for ዘየዐቢ, etc.

7° Related to the previous, the use of sixth order forms rather than first order forms in syllables preceding aspirates of the first or fourth order in substantives (cf. Dillmann, *Grammar*, §44 and p. 85, n. 2), e.g.: ብዓል for በ”, ውዓሊሆሙ for ወ”, ድኃሪ for ደ”, etc.

8° The use of sixth order forms rather than first order forms before a verbal suffix, except in the case of a second person suffix (singular or plural) attached to the subjunctive (cf. Dillmann, *Grammar*, §151.1), e.g.: ይጸውዕከ for ”ዐከ, ይኔይሱን for ”ሰኒ, etc.

9° The use of first order forms rather than fourth order forms before aspirates, which latter are consequently represented as first order forms rather than sixth order forms (cf. Zuurmond, *Mark*, p. 54), e.g., መሐየዊ for ማሕ”, ሰበሕኩሂ for ሰባሕ”, በሐቱ for በሕቱ, etc.

10° The use, in Ms. 2, of the sixth order form ም for መ in the first and second person perfect forms of (ተ)አምነ, e.g.: አምነክሙ for አመ”, ተአምነኪ for ተአመ”, etc.

11° The use of the first order form ከ for the fourth order form ካ in the various inflections of the adjective ካልእ (cf. Zuurmond, *Mark*, p. 27 [5°]), e.g.: ከልእት for ካ”, etc.

12° The use of the first order form አ for the fourth order form አ in the plural terminations -አን/ነ and -አት/ተ (cf. Zuurmond, *Mark*, p. 27 [3°]), e.g.: ጉቡአን for ጉቡአን, ካልአተ for ካልአተ, etc.

13° The metathesis of *alf* and *harm* in subjunctive forms of the root አኅዘ (cf. Dillmann, *Grammar*, p. 107 [§57], n. 6, and Zuurmond, *Mark*, p. 27 [7°]), e.g.: ይኅኅዘዎ for ይኅኅ”, etc.

14° The non-attachment of the preposition **Π** to the following word when prefixed by the singular relative pronoun, e.g.: **ΠΠ : ρρρρ** for **ΠΠρρρρ**, **ΠΠ : κκκκ** for **ΠΠκκ**, etc.

15° The non-attachment of the singular relative pronoun to the following word when prefixed by *wawē* or a preposition (excepting **λρρρ** [cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, cols 193–94, 1031]), e.g., **ωΠ : ἰκκκκ** for **ωΠἰ**, **ωΛΠ : κκκκκ** for **ωΛΠκκκκ**, **ΠΠ : κκκ** for **ΠΠκ**, etc.

Interchange between phonetically similar consonants—i.e., **κ/θ**; **ω/ῶ/η**; **λ/θ**; **υ/ϕ/γ**—has not been adjusted (though the proper etymological spelling has been noted in Appendix I), nor have we standardized the spelling of proper nouns beyond what may be reasonably ascribed to one of the archaic or non-normative orthographic practices enumerated above (though we have adopted spellings in Ms. 2 [°Abbā Garimā III] which correspond more closely to the Greek text, either basic or variant, over those in Ms. 1 [°Abbā Garimā I] [...]). In the apparatuses and Appendix I, moreover, the original orthography of variant readings—like that of the basic text—has been retained.

Many of the phenomena listed are of a marked linguistic character, in the sense that the script might reflect a non-standard linguistic substance and not simply an alternative spelling—at least in nos 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13. It is to be noted that MS °Abbā Garimā III is actually considered to be more archaic in comparison to MS °Abbā Garimā I. Besides this, there is a strange inclusion into phenomena of regular exchanges of **Π** along with the pair **ω/ῶ**—I assume meaning some alternations due to assimilation, which is a quite different phenomenon from the usual graphic exchange **ω/ῶ**—and the fact that many rules are very imprecisely described, since the required linguistic context is not provided; also note, for example for no. 13, that there is nothing on this phenomenon in the source quoted.⁹⁰

✱

The recent edition of Curt Niccum of the *Acts of the Apostles* provides a reconstructed text, which has resulted to be predominantly based on his MS 20.⁹¹ The editor has moderately normalized the text of the edition:

Some standardization of orthography and morphology has been introduced. For example, the older prepositional forms such as **ρρ** and **λλ**, which occur often in manuscript 20 have been “modernized”.⁹²

⁹⁰ See Dillmann 1907, 107, § 57.

⁹¹ This is a sort of *codex optimus a posteriori*, namely the ‘best manuscript’ that results as the one most similar to the critically established text: for this concept see the still fundamental observations by Contini 1971, 139–140. There is nothing on this in O.E. Haugen, ‘Codex optimus’, in Macé and Roelli 2015, s.v.

⁹² Niccum 2014, 71; see also Zuurmond and Niccum 2013, Knibb 2015b, and Simonet 2016. MS 20 is MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, B. 20 inf. II (*Tetraglotton*). Obviously, **λλ** is not a prepositional form—unless we use this as a label to define a phe-

From Tedros Abraha (Letters to the Corinthians) to Knibb (Ezekiel)

With the recent edition of the two *Letters to the Corinthians*, Tedros Abraha has added one more edition to his remarkable record of editorial activity. There is however little progress in terms of approach:

All the manuscripts with the surviving *Versio Antiqua*, are helpful in providing a glimpse of the *Urtext*'s character. Any ambition of resurrecting the *Urtext* would be misplaced since with the documentation available now, it is impossible to envisage a total recovery of the earliest textual type of 1 and 2 Corinthians.⁹³

There is no question of 'resurrecting' the *Urtext*—many people will agree that to believe in a resurrection is in any case an act of faith. The question here is to understand that every edition that does not intend to reproduce a single manuscript (yet also in these cases it will be so!), is always a working hypothesis, and, quite on the contrary, every edition to some extent intends to resurrect something, namely, to add a bit of truth to our understanding of the text: this is, in the end, the only task of a critical edition.

As in his former editions, Tedros Abraha proposes his classification of the manuscripts as follows:

Group I, which is chiefly recognized by its frequent omissions or *lacunae* has a fairly homogeneous, elliptic, and in several ways crude text. The Gəʿəz of these manuscripts too, is to a considerable extent, different from that of subsequent groups, especially from Group III, as far as orthography, vocabulary, morphology and syntax are concerned. [...] The second stratum shows a timid, incipient attempt at revising and improving the *Versio Antiqua*. Conflation is one of the main features of this group. The many double readings in the second layer are a plausible evidence of the attachment of Group II to the previous stratum, thus it can be excluded that layers I and II are parallel versions. [...] Finally, there is the last and most extensive revision of the received tradition, Group III, which did

nomenon—since it occurs in the plural form of the relative pronoun. On this form see Bausi 2005a, 2005b, Bulakh 2009, 402, n. 19; and Lusini 2004, 70–72, and 2009, 11–13 for a different point of view; for further evidence, see Bausi and Gori 2006, 96 and Bausi 2013, 40, n. 21, as well as in the editions of texts from the *Aksumite Collection*, for which see below. Also note that these peculiarities for the relative pronouns are not mentioned for the very similar manuscript Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, B. 20 inf. (*Pentaglotton*) by Tedros Abraha 2001, 2004, and 2014, who provides a description of the manuscript with a number of details concerning various other linguistic and palaeographic phenomena: this is probably an evidence of the extreme rarity of this form. Particularly interesting is the presence of forms with *yasta*-prefix (instead of the standard *yāsta*-), see Tedros Abraha 2004, 29; for these forms, regularly occurring in the manuscript of the *Aksumite Collection*, see Bausi 2005a, 161–162; such forms are also sporadically attested in some other manuscripts, see for example Bausi 1995 (text), 98, § 48, var. 12; *ibid.* 109, § 65, var. 25, etc.

⁹³ Tedros Abraha 2014, 9–10.

eventually assert itself as the *Textus Receptus*. The texts themselves show that the revision did not disavow the previous textual tradition: it rather worked upon it. It can be reasonably excluded that Group II and Group III were the outcome of a purely academic concern and activity: they were rather a response to practical needs, that is, to make the texts more readily accessible to the user, especially in the context of the liturgy.⁹⁴

The manuscripts are classified in ‘groups’, which are meant to correspond to what one would call ‘recensions’ in a proper terminology. The category of ‘group’ is as vague as possible. Here and in many passages the author presents the evidence of the secondary recensions as a movement towards the ‘improvement’: to some extent it is not clear whether a subjective or objective improvement is meant herewith.⁹⁵ His intention, however, is also that of documenting in detail possible relationships with other versions:

The editor has tried, as much as possible, to compare the Gəʿəz text of the three Groups with the Sahidic and Bohairic versions, as well as with the Peshitto. It is a move dictated by the historical fact that Ethiopian Christianity, right from the beginning of its existence, has kept up important relationships with the See of Alexandria and, at least in one case there is ample evidence of a massive influence of the Peshitto.⁹⁶

With the following statement, albeit in a bit confused form, the editor comes to the serious point of *innovations* (that is, *errors*, in terms of textual criticism aiming at the primary text) which are prompted by peculiar palaeographic phenomena, namely the dynamic relationship between the two aspects of the *substance* and *form* of variant readings, stating that ‘Palaeography, a relevant component of the history of the text, is another aspect to which this edition has tried to pay attention’.⁹⁷

In the following passage the editor explains the procedure applied and provides the ratio for adopting a base manuscript, used essentially as a refer-

⁹⁴ Tedros Abraha 2014, 10–11.

⁹⁵ It is little understandable on which ground Tedros Abraha 2014, 12, even wonders whether Gəʿəz is a Semitic language, ‘The main objective of this edition is to retrieve and draw up the textual lineage of Gəʿəz 1 and 2 Corinthians from its remote origins up to the stage of its stabilization. Whenever possible and necessary, the Gəʿəz texts have been compared with early New Testament witnesses. Special attention has been paid to the relationship between the Gəʿəz and Greek languages in the two Pauline Letters. It is an enterprise borne out of the conviction that it is important to assess how a Greek text has been transferred into Gəʿəz, which is generally classified as a Semitic language’.

⁹⁶ Tedros Abraha 2014, 12–13. This ‘massive influence from the Peshitto’—via Arabic, or how?—along with the other statements leaves us a bit lost, because it is decisive to establish if this influence took place in terms of *direct provenance* or *origin*.

⁹⁷ Tedros Abraha 2014, 14.

ence to ‘figure out the textual evolution of Paul’s Letters to the Corinthians in Gəʿəz tradition’. The appeal to ‘palaeography and the nature of the text’, however, is not clear:

The base text of this edition is MS A (Pentaglotto Ambrosiano). By base text I do not mean codex optimus in the sense intended by J. Bédier (1864–1983)⁹⁸ when he spoke about “bon manuscrit”. There are three main reasons for choosing MS A as the base text. Chronologically, MS A represents one of the few old texts of the Gəʿəz Pauline *Corpus* that are known to date. Palaeography and the nature of the text, namely, its relationship with the early New Testament witnesses and its (rough) Gəʿəz spelling and grammar, are the other factors that have determined the choice of MS A as the starting point in the effort to figure out the textual evolution of Paul’s Letters to the Corinthians in Gəʿəz tradition.⁹⁹

There is no detailed mention of phenomena reported before by other editors. Moreover, while Tedros Abraha does not note the contracted variants, he notes graphic variants of the first and fourth order, along with all other variants, in one and the same apparatus.¹⁰⁰

If Tedros Abraha presented his edition of the *Letter to the Hebrews* with the caveat that ‘No serious scholar can pretend to impose “his method” as a piece of academic dogma’, here he states that ‘no edition of Scriptural texts can claim to be the last word’.¹⁰¹

As a matter of fact, this statement is valid for every text, since every edition is a working hypothesis, and additional considerations could be advanced, instead. This does not imply that we assume that no ‘clear and distinct ideas’ should be present, quite the other way round: this hypothetical, motivated character is the proper of every critical edition and the only original contribution and scholarly responsibility of an editor.

Concerning the inconsistency of vocalization in particular, Tedros Abraha observes that ‘there are considerable traces of unvocalized or scarcely vocalized terms, often written in the first order only’, with a footnote, ‘Vocalization began in Ethiopia in the 4th century AD [...] Kidanä Wäld Kəfle maintains that vowels were introduced by Abba Sälama (Frumentius) in the 4th century in his effort of translating the books of the Old and New Testament from Greek’.¹⁰²

98 Sic: to be corrected into 1864–1938.

99 Tedros Abraha 2014, 14.

100 Tedros Abraha 2014, 15. Contracted vs non-contracted forms are for example ሀለ-ከ-መ፡ (sic) vs ሀለው-ከመ፡. Actually, his edition has only one critical apparatus.

101 Tedros Abraha 2014, 16.

102 Tedros Abraha 2014, 29, n. 1. In an analysis which is extremely rich in details and interesting observations on language, and translation technique (*ibid.* 57–100), there are many obscure passages, for example *ibid.* 82, under ‘Arbitrary use of the genitive

But what does this mean and imply, in the context of the textual criticism of the *Letter to the Hebrews*, aside from the fact that Kidanä Wäld Kəfle did not have at his disposal the evidence we have now? We know that early evidence of vocalization probably even antedates the fourth century—as pointed out by Roger Schneider.¹⁰³ But does this phenomenon in thirteenth/fourteenth century manuscripts reflect this ancient scribal attitude? As I said, I would be rather inclined to think that this might reflect a specific phase in the manuscript tradition. Our term of comparison for orthography and vowel marking system can be the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts, which have a fully fledged vocalization: where a few non-standard phenomena already surface, yet not to the extent as seems to be attested in the Ambrosiana manuscript.

✱

The most recent edition of a major Ethiopic text is that of the *Book of Ezechiel* accomplished by Michael A. Knibb. It must be stressed that this is a critical edition of a difficult text, where a clear editorial method is applied and the manuscript tradition is examined very much in detail, with a classification based upon innovations. While not each single editorial decision might be equally clear, the method is highly commendable and the presentation is crystal clear.¹⁰⁴ Observations on orthography are given while introducing the single manuscripts, but even if some phenomena are considered archaisms, none of these features has been received in the critical text.¹⁰⁵

specifier' (meaning the analytic genitive), 'The Gəʿəz versions appear to have a free hand in the use of the genitive specifier, even when it is not present in the Greek, 1 Cor 3:10 **ጸጋሁ ፡ ለግዚአብሔር ፡** for χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ; 2Cor 5:19 **ለመልእክተ ፡ ሣህሉ ፡** for τὸν λόγον τῆς καταλλαγῆς. In both cases, one genitive modifier would have been sufficient to render the original, namely, **ጸጋ ፡ ለግዚአብሔር ፡** and **መልእክተ ፡ ሣህሉ ፡**; but one does not see how the two cases can be assimilated (there is no analytic genitive in *la-mal'akta šāḥlu*) and the observation implicitly presupposes a precise function of the analytic genitive which is neither declared nor demonstrated.

¹⁰³ See above.

¹⁰⁴ Knibb 2015a, 26–33, with a stemma on p. 37. As a general remark, one can say, at the example of 'Family 3', on p. 28, that wherever there is an evidence for grouping, this is not necessarily a *family* directly depending upon the archetype: but as is well-known, it is much easier to identify and suggest groupings in the lower branches of a stemma, much more difficult is to identify relationships and dependences in the higher branches. On Ezechiel's textual tradition see also Knibb 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Knibb 2015a, 8–26: so for example (p. 12), on MS Berlin Petermann II, Nachtr. 42, 'There is the tendency to use the forms **ረእይ ፡** or **ረእይ ፡** (e.g. 1:27, 3:23), and **ሶቤ ፡** and **አሜ ፡** frequently occur for **ሶበ ፡** and **አመ ፡**'; (p. 13) on MS BL Or. 501, 'አ is used for **አ** in the divine name **እግዚአብሔር ፡**'; (p. 14) on MS BnF Éthiopien, d'Abbadie 55, 'For **ህየ ፡**, **ሰህየ ፡**, the forms **ሂየ ፡**, **ሰሂየ ፡** are frequently used'; (p. 19) on MS EMMML no. 2080, 'In the case of verbs with an initial laryngeal, forms like **ይህይድ ፡** (22:25), **ይሐንድ ፡** (21:22(27)), **ይኅልቅ ፡** (22:15), or **ይዓግቱ ፡** (23:22), sometimes occur for forms

Nosnitsin and Bulakh on palaeography and orthography

In the memorial volume for Paolo Marrassini, published in 2014, two related contributions—the first jointly authored by Denis Nosnitsin and Maria Bulakh and the latter by Maria Bulakh alone—elaborated on and thoroughly discussed new manuscript evidence from an undated, early fragment of the Gospel of Luke (6:37–6:43).¹⁰⁶ This paper fully confirms what we already knew about some features of the earliest extant Ethiopic manuscripts, but additionally provides a new and deeper degree of analysis.

The first article by Nosnitsin and Bulakh describes the palaeographic and orthographic peculiarities of the fragment.¹⁰⁷ The authors describe 64 deviations from the standard orthography of ‘Classical Ethiopic’ in 324 words employed in the fragment (c.18,5%) and consider that the ‘most remarkable feature of the text is the extensive use of the 1st order which is employed contrary to the demands of the standard Ethiopic grammar’, particularly in *t*, as well as *q*. The authors are quite certain that the form they are dealing with is the first order (‘we assume that we deal with the graphic shapes of the 1st order’), while I am in disagreement or at least in doubt on this latter point, for question of method and substance.¹⁰⁸

The careful analysis by Nosnitsin and Bulakh proposes two possible explanations, aware that the same phenomena, to some extent, were already

like የሀይዱ ፣ የሐንጽ ፣ የዐግቱ ፣. These forms have been recorded in the apparatus’; (p. 19) on MS EMMML no. 2082, ‘There are numerous omissions and mistakes in the text, which is characterized by some arbitrariness in the use of ሐ and ዐ, and of ሀ, ሐ and ግ’; (p. 20), on MS EMMML no. 1768, ‘The spelling ሂዮ ፣ is sometimes used for ሀዮ ፣’.

¹⁰⁶The fragment is a flyleaf in the MS MY-002 as catalogued by the Ethio-SPaRe project, provisionally dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

¹⁰⁷Nosnitsin and Bulakh 2014.

¹⁰⁸See ‘Palaeography’, *EAE*, IV (2010), 101a–104b (S. Uhlig and A. Bausi), p. 102a, ‘In very archaic manuscripts (such as the Abba Gärima Gospels manuscripts) the real value of these signs cannot be exactly perceived in terms of shape, neither rightly understood but in the context and within an opposition system; the same happens for other signs (*s*, *t*, *b*) in 1st, 4th, 6th orders opposing correlations’; also Bausi 2011b, 25, ‘La frequente oscillazione tra accusativo e nominativo è certamente connessa con—e accentuata da—una confusione propriamente paleografica in alcuni segni (in particolare ሰ/ሰ, ቀ/ቀ, ተ/ታ, *sa/se*, *qa/qe*, *ta/te*): in tal caso, la forma normale è stata restituita (sempre segnalando la correzione a testo)’; see also ‘Ethiopic palaeography’, *COMSt* 2015, 287–291 (A. Bausi and D. Nosnitsin), p. 290. In the case of *sa/s*, the fragment in MS MY-002 clearly opposes two graphic forms, but the sixth order occurs in three very frequent words only, namely *wəsta*, *ʾəsmā*, and *ʾIyasus* (see Nosnitsin and Bulakh 2014, 570, no. 3, and n. 88), where the scribe felt probably more confidence in marking the vowel order. This situation can at best be interpreted as an erroneous interpretation by the copyist of a slightly marked opposition.

recorded for the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts—but actually for other manuscripts as well: ‘1) Lack of (sufficient) graphic distinction between the 1st and the 6th orders of certain graphemes. This possibly concerns *k* and *t*, for which no 6th order is attested’, or ‘2) Intentional (?) employment of the 1st order instead of any other order’, or ‘(intentional) “non-employment” of other orders but the 1st one’.

For number (1) I would tend to think that the graphemes belonging to this category did not distinguish or only very slightly distinguished between the first and the sixth order and not that vocal markers for the sixth order did exist in the manuscript but did not occur in the fragment, although also the use of different palaeographic systems at one time should be admitted as a possibility. For number (2) the authors probably rightly connect the hypothesis of the ‘partial vocalization’, with the phenomenon well known from the epigraphic corpus, ‘where certain inscriptions are characterized by absence of the markers of orders (that is, indiscriminate employment of the 1st order) in some signs which appear side by side with the correctly vocalized graphemes’, typically in the so-called inscription of Ḥaḍānī Dānāʾel (*RIÉ* no. 193). This would also bring us straightforward towards the period (late Aksumite or early post-Aksumite) where these phenomena could have taken place, both in epigraphic and manuscript production. The formal control was fading, but the manuscript could have been nonetheless copied from an ancient good model; copying from a written model, not by oral dictation, might be responsible for the preservation of etymological sibilants and laryngeals.

The latter contribution by Bulakh investigates the orthography of the ancient fragment of the Gospel of Luke, more precisely ‘its most intriguing aspect, namely, the transmission of guttural and sibilant phonemes’. The conclusion is that the fragment ‘shows no examples of interchangeability between these graphemes’. It is obvious, in the light of what was said—but the author should have said it again, for the sake of clarity—that the graphemes are considered in their purely *consonantal contents* or *skeleton* (with the precisions that deviations from the grammar and/or vocabulary of Classical Gəʿəz is marked), and that the vocalic element is completely disregarded. Since this lack of interchangeability is reminiscent of early Gəʿəz inscriptions, ‘where the pertinent graphemes are spelled in a very consistent way’, Bulakh wonders whether we are ‘dealing with a true reflection of the original pronunciation’: for solving the question, she proposes to use the equivalence in Epigraphic Gəʿəz, when available, and the etymological data: according to her, we ‘can safely accept the spelling as the original one’, if the three sources agree.¹⁰⁹

109Bulakh 2014, 177–180.

The conclusion¹¹⁰ is that ‘the fragment under scrutiny contains no reliable cases of etymologically incorrect orthography and no cases of a spelling differing from that of early E[pigraphic] G[əʕəz]’ whereas ‘there are numerous reliable examples of etymologically correct spelling (63 cases) and of full agreement with the spelling of EG (46 cases)’, and that ‘comparison with C[lassical] G[əʕəz] orthography has yielded quite similar results: in the majority of cases (68), the spelling in the fragment is in full accordance with established CG orthography’. She also concludes—still, it is important to remind, on a piece of a very small evidence—that the standard Gəʕəz orthography is reliable, ‘in spite of the tendency to confuse the graphemes in question’. Not a phenomenon of preservation of phonological distinction—since a very early date of the manuscript is not ascertained—nor ‘an extraordinary persistence of the phonological features in question’ (as, I would add, is confirmed by the quite irregular rendering of the vowels), the phenomenon can be at best explained as ‘a very accurate preservation of the ancient orthography, going back to the period when each grapheme involved stood for a separate phonological entity’: in the end, going back to an accurate and conservative scribal tradition, which this fragment would attest.¹¹¹

Marrassini on ‘introduction’ and ‘critical text’

Paolo Marrassini has been a marking figure in the field of Ethiopic philology in the last thirty years, because he has been one of the few in Ethiopian studies, of his generation as well as of previous generations, who has programmatically made philology as textual criticism a precise point of research, both in *practice* as well as in *theory and method*. In 1987, on the occasion of a conference on the relationship between philology and linguistics, he dedicated a few, very clear pages to the question, simple in itself, of the relationship between *critical text* and *introduction* in a critical edition, not without stating first that the existence of a philology presupposes a cultural unity.¹¹² These pages, in light of subsequent editorial trends in textual criticism of Ethiopic texts, keep all their importance and some excerpts deserve to be quoted here:

Perciò, al di fuori della linguistica si può parlare solo di “filologie” relative alle singole lingue e letterature semitiche, con un’ultima precisazione: nella semitistica di queste “filologie” è bene evitare un’accezione troppo generale, perché

¹¹⁰Bulakh 2014, 205–207.

¹¹¹A thorough textual comparison should be carried out, keeping in mind—*recentiores, non deteriores*—that there is no predictable correlation between textual and material features of a manuscript, particularly for a period for which we know very little about institutional control: the institutional replacement of one text type by another one is still to come, or not yet documented for this time.

¹¹²Marrassini 1987, 347, ‘esiste una filologia là dove c’è una unità culturale individuabile’.

troppo spesso il semitista che ama definirsi filologo lo fa in senso puramente negativo, anti-wolfiano, cioè come colui che non è né linguista, né storico, né giurista, né antropologo, né niente. È perciò preferibile l'accezione di "filologia" come "critica testuale", più ristretta ma, in questo caso specifico, più concreta e impegnativa.¹¹³

È ovvio che essa deve contenere un'indicazione chiara dei fenomeni linguistici del testo, e quindi non deve essere troppo sbrigativa, come spesso succede. Per esempio, un'edizione recente e per molti aspetti benemerita come quella che il Weischer sta dando del *Qērellos* afferma che non vanno registrate in apparato le varianti che riguardano la sequenza aggettivo-sostantivo, la congiunzione *wa-* (che presenta notevoli varietà d'impiego), le particelle enfaticizzanti, e certe altre congiunzioni; inoltre, questi fenomeni non vengono descritti nell'Introduzione. Analogamente il Knibb, nell'edizione di Enoch, lascia fuori dall'apparato e dall'Introduzione le varianti che riguardano certi pronomi dimostrativi, alcune forme nominali, alcune forme di plurale, e tutti i nomi propri. [...] In altri casi, a delle affermazioni banali che potrebbero essere evitate (come quella dello scambio delle laringali, normale nei testi gheez) si affiancano dei veri errori.¹¹⁴

Trovato on 'core' and 'patina'

Two further quotations from the recent book by Paolo Trovato prelude to a few conclusions. Having perfectly understood which is the task of the reconstructive approach in the present global philological scenario, dealing with 'The criticism of linguistic features in multiple-witness traditions', Trovato opens his first point on the distinction of 'core' and 'patina' with a quotation from Gianfranco Folena:

Everybody knows that the first and essential difference between the medieval tradition of classical texts and that of vernacular texts lies in the radically different linguistic tradition the transcriber operates in. In vernacular traditions, scribal interventions on the language of their exemplars are in fact customary and organic procedures. The language is a living one and remains such for the whole course of the manuscript tradition, and also in the first printed books [...]. Today, the textual scholar is increasingly drawn to questions of linguistic and cultural history

113 Marrassini 1987, 348.

114 Marrassini 1987, 349. He goes on with noting particularly idiosyncratic remarks, *ibid.*, 'Nel vol. III del *Qerellos* si dice che dopo laringale si ha spesso a del IV ordine al posto di *a* del I (come è ovvio, essendo l'opposizione neutralizzata), aggiungendo poi: "man findet auch das Gegenteil" nel preformante dell'incompiuto causativo, p. es. in forme come *na'ammer* per *nā'ammer*. Ma "das Gegenteil" di *ā* per *a* dopo laringale è *a* per *ā* sempre *dopo* laringale, non *prima* come in questo caso. In altre parole, qui si tratta di un fenomeno finora poco notato (anche se presente in altri testi), e cioè che una *a* del IV ordine può essere resa da una *a* del I ordine se seguita da laringale + *a*'.

and increasingly forced to develop the required competence, and the historian of the language is increasingly involved in philological work.¹¹⁵

In the same chapter, Trovato summarizes his suggestions for addressing the question of linguistic variations, and in the end that of normalization or not, as follows:

‘Diverse historical situations’ ([Gianfranco] Contini), which change for each text, make it impossible, as the reader will have surmised, to provide a universally valid recipe for linguistic reconstruction. But manuals provide a vast range of examples of decisions made by the best editors on these matters. It is thus not difficult to adapt solutions that have already been tested, at least in part, to the peculiarities of the tradition one is studying.

Generally applicable criteria include, in my opinion: 1. No reconstruction of the linguistic character of a text based on the stemmatic distribution of forms is admissible; 2. It is advisable to hold in the highest regard, until the contrary is proved, the anomalies found in the manuscript which the scrutiny of tradition has reasonably induced us to select as our basic text as far as language is concerned.¹¹⁶

Tentative conclusions

This last quotation requires some comments: that *the early text* can be a subject of reconstruction in terms of *substance* through stemmatic procedure, whereas there is little possibility of precise reconstruction in terms of *form*, descends from a premise that is not necessarily valid for Ethiopic texts, since the tradition of all Ethiopic texts—Aksumite and post-Aksumite included—are better represented according to the model of the classical texts than to that of Romance texts: the transmission took place as of a dead, literary, petrified language, with little or no influence from spoken languages, aside from well-known phenomena such as the orthographic ones.

This point, however, needs to be further researched, particularly in the light of the emergence of fresh early evidence. More than that, the hypotheses on the reconstruction of the scribal context—which is crucial for taking reasonable positions on these points—are still in their infancy for Ethiopic texts. To take reasonable decisions, in fact, we should have a clear picture of the historical and cultural context in which the textual tradition takes place:

(1) at the moment, to my knowledge, for the Aksumite texts we do not have manuscript evidence antedating the post-Aksumite period (from thirteenth/fourteenth century on): the situation is exceptional only for the Four

¹¹⁵Folena 1961 (2002), 59–60, quoted in the English translation provided by Trovato 2014, 229.

¹¹⁶Trovato 2014, 236.

Gospels; but we know—for example from epigraphic evidence—that the Ethiopic Old Testament was probably accomplished at the latest in the early sixth century, since quotations are attested by a number of inscriptions;¹¹⁷ it also emerges that all manuscript witnesses go back to *one original translation*, namely, we do not have evidence for *more ancient translations of the same text at the same time*. These versions are disfigured or marked by common errors (innovations), which demonstrate the existence of *archetypes* (it does not matter here how far from the real ‘original’):¹¹⁸ these archetypes are the only possible subject of our philological reconstruction;

(2) there is no other way to carry out a philological reconstruction of the *substance* of the text (disregarding the aspects of form) than on the basis of the stemmatic method (unless we are editing one single manuscript, because this single manuscript is the only witness to a certain text); each redaction, particularly in the history of multiple-redaction texts (like the Bible) should be considered as a new text by its own; redactional variants can also be accommodated in form of apparatus from the practical point of view of the layout of the edition: this is a matter of presentation, but not of substance, and much can be done with respect to this with digital editing;¹¹⁹

117 These are the following, listed for example by Beaucamp, Briquel-Chatonnet, and Robin 1999–2000, 39, n. 98: Ex 14:14 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:21); Ps 17(18):38 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:32); Ps 17(18):40–41 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192: 32–34); Ps 17(18):148 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192: 19–20); Ps 19(20):8–9 (*RIÉ* I, no. 195: 26–28); Ps 23(24):8 (*RIÉ* I, no. 191:1–2); Ps 34(35):1–2 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:29–30); Ps 34(35):4–5 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:30–31); Ps 65(66):16–17 (*RIÉ* I, no. 195:21–23); Ps 117(118):15–16 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:34–35); Ps 117(118):10 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:25–26); Ez? (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:19; cp. Is 1:24?); Is 26:19? (*RIÉ* I, no. 195:29); Mt 6:33 (*RIÉ* I, no. 195:20–21); 1 Pt 5:10 (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:3–4); not identified (*RIÉ* I, no. 192:35–36). To add, as indicated by Piovanelli 2013, 22–24, Is 22:22 (*RIÉ* I, no. 191:24).

118 The case of the New Testament, as is well known, is more complex, due to the likely existence of more ancient versions: this at least is the opinion expressed by Rochus Zuurmond concerning in particular the text of Matthew, see Zuurmond 2001, 7, 10–17, and 2001b.

119 For the role that digital philology can play in the question of standardization, I had hoped to get much from the perspectives of digital editions for oriental studies: this was one of the important points in mind, even more than comparative codicology or cataloguing, when I intensively cooperated for the redaction of the application for the *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies (COMSt)* programme in 2008. I am now convinced that the field of digital editing—if we take it in its *most rigorous sense*—is still in its very infancy, at times for an extremely restricted community of scholars with little or no connection with the broader scholarly world. Moreover, for a part of the scholars at least, some of the basic questions have remained in the background. Even in the best cases—I know of remarkable scholars, for example from the *COMSt* network Tara Andrews, now Professor for Digital Humanities in Vienna, or Caro-

(3) many early manuscripts exhibit features which do not match those of the standard Ethiopic: to some extent, these also surface in the oldest manuscripts known so far, namely, the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts, which we assume to date from the Aksumite period and the only manuscript witness to the scribal context in which the Aksumite texts were created; dictation can be evoked as a reason for this as it universally happens for many other traditions. These precise features must therefore have emerged very early in the manuscript transmission, probably earlier than in the epigraphic evidence, which could be more conservative; but in a few cases, the reverse appears: for example, the only significant epigraphic occurrence of personal prefix before a laryngeal-verb form (*DAE* no. 9 [= *RIÉ* no. 187], ll. 13–14, *ya^calu*, subjunctive of *wa^cala*) shows that the *a*-vowel of the prefix is not preserved, while it is frequent in the ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts as well as in other early manuscripts. Other deviating features in early manuscripts, however, match in several cases phenomena of the epigraphic language;¹²⁰

(4) in Romance philology an important distinction is introduced between *core* and *patina*, to indicate primary (earlier) and secondary linguistic layer in a text: to take reasonable decisions, one should have clear ideas about the *linguistic layer* of the text he is working on, which is not always immediately *directly* documented for early Ethiopic texts. The danger is that archaisms—not only orthographic, but also linguistic—are standardized in the edition (that is, reduced to normal standard forms) and the language of the text is to some extent transfigured. A preservation of the presumably archaic forms, however, can only be defended when there is clear convergence of the evidence. This is what I argued, hopefully with some methodological awareness, when I compared aberrant phenomena in the manuscripts with the ancient Ethiopic of

line Macé, see hers and Philipp Roelli's *Parvum Lexicon Stemmatologicum* 2015—the ratio between output and effort in terms of processed text is astonishingly unfavourable. Once said this, investing time and energy in this seems still to be a rewarding challenge. The Research Networking Programme *COMSt*, funded by the European Science Foundation during 2009–2014, ended in January 2015 with the publication of a manual (*COMSt* 2015), but its network still exists, now under the umbrella of the Hamburg University Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures. Concerning the questions discussed here, for those who participated in it, it was a decisive experience in that it tried to bring together orientalists—with linguistic, yet not philological background (this is traditionally the case of Semitic philology, which is rightly a linguistically defined, not text-critical field), or a very weak one (understanding textual criticism as transcribing a base manuscript and translating and adjusting it with a bit of good sense)—with scholars in manuscript studies, including refined specialists in codicology and in textual criticism, with inputs from digital philology.

¹²⁰See Bausi 2005a, 159, and *passim* for other phenomena occurring both in manuscripts and in inscriptions.

inscriptions. Besides inscriptions, only extremely ancient manuscripts, which come closer to the time when the text was created, offer guidance:

from what we know of the Ethiopic manuscript tradition from the fourteenth century onwards, although we still lack a reliable statistical study, ancient features seem to become very sporadic (essentially limited to occasional *e*-forms and *a*-prefix in first-laryngeal verbs): it is clear that a certain tradition imposed, or even reasserted, its own standard on the others; it is also possible that ancient manuscripts with texts deviating from the prevalent standard were systematically substituted at a certain period, probably at the same time when a great number of new texts were translated from Arabic, and also revisions and/or replacements of ancient Aksumite translations from Greek took place. As a result, a number of ancient texts, as well as a variety of scribal and linguistic traditions, have gone definitively lost, and we can but hope to form some idea of them from relics surviving by chance;¹²¹

(5) as recently confirmed by the contribution of Maria Bulakh at the example of the New Testament fragment recently emerged, there is evidence that etymological orthography was observed in the earliest manuscripts. Having worked extensively on a collection of early texts, transmitted in a very early (non-biblical) manuscript, I have also the same impression, which is not yet corroborated by a detailed statistics, but relatively firmly grounded;

(6) on these premises, I see no reason why in the critical editions of Ethiopic version of early (Aksumite) texts (and for other reasons also of later texts)—in the case of a multiple-witness tradition in particular—the orthography of the spelling of the consonants should not be normalized and standardized according to the presumably ancient forms: these forms coincide at large with Dillmann's *Lexicon*, with corrections by Leslau and additional ones, when needed: since this is definitely, on the basis of all evidence we have, the form the text must have presumably had at the moment of its creation. Any deviation should be justified by the editor; *the definition of this ancient etymological standard is a research goal in itself, for which the evidence of very early manuscripts must be taken into account*;

(7) in the edition, the advantages of standardization are clear: this adds a lot in terms of legibility and makes also immediately and unambiguously clear which lexeme and reading the editor has selected for the critical text:¹²² for these reasons, a normalization should be applied also in the edition of later texts;

¹²¹ Bausi 2005a, 167, with some editorial adaptations.

¹²² It is possible today to collate automatically, once all manuscript witnesses have been encoded: there is no loss of documentation in normalization, when using a digital approach; and every correction not corroborated by manuscript tradition should be obviously marked as conjecture, though: but this goes without saying.

(8) to follow a *base manuscript* for the language is not applicable, since—at variance with the transmission of Romance texts—in their overwhelming majority, the Ethiopic manuscripts of Aksumite texts are very distant from the time of their creation, by a gap of several centuries;

(9) besides the spelling of consonants, also all *phenomena which are likely to be in continuity with the earlier period as positively documented by the (early) inscriptions and earliest manuscripts*, or coherent with phenomena of *linguistic evolution* within Ethiopic, should be taken into consideration for the critical text; *how to fine-tune this point is a matter that must be seen in detail for each phenomenon and each tradition* (examples of these phenomena can be the presence of assimilated forms, or prepositions and conjunctions with *e*-endings);

(10) other phenomena, which might be massively present in the earliest extant post-Aksumite manuscript tradition of single texts, but which are not so strongly attested by Aksumite evidence—for example, the systematic or extremely frequent neutralization of the nominative and the accusative case, also favoured by distinct palaeographic phenomena—should be considered *phenomena of scribal practices*: they can be studied and documented as such, but they should not be considered in the establishment of the critical text, since we have no evidence that this feature was actually attested in Aksumite time, when the text was created;

(11) this leaves to the editor to take position on the point: the case-study presented by Herren mentioned in the opening of this contribution was quite different. Herren¹²³ refers to texts *produced within a period when variability was accepted*: we cannot assume as likely that this was the case when texts were translated into Ethiopic in the Aksumite period—as quotations in inscriptions actually testify—even though *we cannot even rule out completely the hypothesis that some Aksumite translations experienced no other kind of transmission and that some texts were born in a non-standard form*. Yet, at the moment, inscriptions and ʾAbbā Garimā manuscripts are all we have to define the *Aksumite standard* and they do not authorize this position;

(12) for the latter case, we could advance the working hypothesis that Aksumite translations, in keeping with what is attested in the Syriac, but also Armenian and Latin domains, became ‘gradually more slavish, and then absolutely literal and formally equivalent (‘source-oriented’ and ‘mirror type’, in S. Brock’s terminology), no doubt also as a consequence of the Christological controversies’:¹²⁴ with the consequence that more obscure texts could undergo a faster corruption in the manuscript transmission;

¹²³ Like Chiesa 2012, 2016, with his ‘letteratura sbagliata’, ‘a wrong literature’.

¹²⁴ Bausi 2005a, 168; particularly for the Syriac, see Brock 1983, 12 ff., and 2005.

(13) we cannot rule out the hypothesis that in this latter case, as for other texts, either an oral tradition preserved—or a new tradition was responsible for—a re- or new standardization of the text, with all consequences implied by this crucial passage: this, in the end, would not be so different from what has happened in several other traditions (passage from Greek uncial to minuscule script, emergence of Carolingian minuscule script etc.);

(14) there are many speculations that can be done on the existence of different scribal traditions: they might have influenced orthography as well and favored the merging of phonemes, but also determined the emergence or the recession of features: concerning for example the prepositional *e*-forms, this is definitely a phenomenon that could be considered under the point of view of either dialectal or diachronic perspective; but there are certainly cases when it was inherited (or not) by a scribe. In the *Aksumite Collection* I have been studying,¹²⁵ only one text among more than thirty in the manuscript all written by the same hand, has no *e*-form: therefore *e*-forms were not introduced by the copyist, but only retained by him: in this case, all forms in the text where they are should be retained. This kind of discriminating opposition is exactly what we need to understand the nature of some phenomena and precise their nature and role in the manuscript tradition: our task is then to take them into account also in the phase of the edition;

(15) more rare and recessive formal phenomena, however, always deserve closer attention, since they have resisted the normalization trend; this can be done also when we are in doubt whether some phenomena can be hypothetically considered of dialectal or archaic character; but there must be some consistency and strong evidence in the documentation, and a thorough critical analysis of each of them.

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¹²⁵I have suggested this name in order to identify a collection of texts which appear to have been created (translated in this case) in the Aksumite period on the basis of Greek models: while *Aksumite* mainly indicates a chronological and a broad geographical and cultural specification, *Collection* also refers to a well-known terminology in the study of canonical liturgical texts, see the always useful overview by Gaudemet 1985. For general references on the *Aksumite Collection*, see 'The *Aksumite Collection*. Ethiopic multiple text manuscripts', *COMSt* 2015, 367–372 (A. Bausi), and Bausi 2016a, 134–138.

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