# Ethiopian Philology

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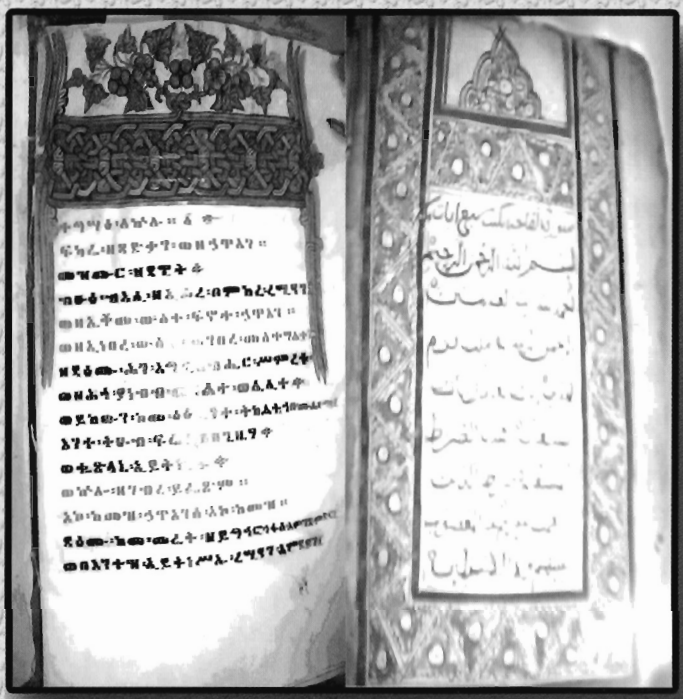

BULLETIN OF PHILOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF ETHIOPIA

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# Ethiopian Philology

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BULLETIN OF PHILOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF ETHIOPIA

# "Philology" as Textual Criticism
## "Normalization" of Ethiopian Studies*

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## 0. Introduction

### 0.1 The present meeting

According to the program of the present meeting—the first of its kind—I should propose something like a short paper on "Philology", where I would probably be expected to give a sketch of what constitutes the "state of the art" in the field, especially as far as the Italian contribution is concerned. Fortunately, it happens that a good deal of the not many Italian scholars, and almost all those of my generation working in Italy and who contribute to the subject, are present in this session; that will save me the embarrassing task, for which I also feel inadequate, of talking on their behalf. They will have time to present their own points of view and their own researches and prospects in their own ways.

It is generally and internationally acknowledged that at present there is a well established "Italian school" of Philology, represented also by a relatively "young" (now in its forties) generation of researchers, and with its own peculiarities. This is partially due to the contemporary decline—or weakening—of Ethiopian philological studies in other countries. While commenting upon what is being

* Paper presented at the *Bilateral and Multidisciplinary Symposium on Ethio-Italian Research*, Italian Cultural Institute, Addis Ababa, November 27-29, 2006.

done, I will also take the freedom of introducing some thematic remarks on specific points.

### 0.2 Philology in USA, United Kingdom and France

No evaluation is possible from a simply national perspective. In some countries, even of prominent cultural importance such as the USA, a real "Philology" applied to Ethiopian Studies has never existed as a school (unless one wants to include the work of Getatchew Haile, who cannot strictly be classified as a US scholar). There is virtually no more "Ethiopic Philology" (apart from "Septuaginta Studies" or as a minor field of study) in the United Kingdom either. Not exactly so in France, however, where some scholars (G. Colin and R. Beylot) are still editing, translating, and commenting on Ethiopic texts, and where also new important initiatives are being taken. Yet, one must clearly say that the resumption of the prestigious *Annales d'Éthiopie* seems to have marked a change of focus in favour of general "Historical Studies" within the framework of "Social Studies," which works to the disadvantage of the philological approach.

### 0.3 Philology in Germany

There are very important German projects presently underway—the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, the series *Aethiopistische Forschungen*, the journal *Aethiopica*—all based in Hamburg University. However, as far as Philology is concerned, Italian scholars are making a substantial contribution to these projects, even with personal engagement in delicate revision activities. On the other hand, the solid German philological tradition, as well as the great number of centres concerned with Oriental and Theological issues, *i.e.*, according to the German meaning, Patristic studies, meets this partial need. This includes a strong Christian Oriental component that is of great relevance to Ethiopic Philology. This is also normal in the case of big international projects. Moreover, Germany is the only country

in Europe where a general project for cataloguing Oriental mss. has been underway (by V. Six, cp. her vols. in the series *Verzeichniss der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*, as well as her articles). Within this project, the volumes dedicated to Ethiopic mss. have reached a level of absolute excellence.

### 0.4 Catalogues and mss.

The basic theoretical concept in "cataloguing mss." implies that each ms. is a *unicum* and that it must be briefly but correctly evaluated in every respect (textual, literary, codicological, paleographic, art-historical, documentary, etc.)—a task possible only if the relevant scientific debates to which that piece belongs are known to the cataloguer [cp. now BAUSI, 2007 for additional remarks]. This obvious remark is dictated by the hope that catalogues of mss. preserved in important Ethiopian libraries and institutions (*e.g.*, IES, National Archives and Library of Ethiopia, monastic and church libraries, etc.) are they prepared and published in a way that meets this standard, which is simply "the normal one" for the catalogues of "Western" and, in some cases, other "Oriental" mss. The wish to avoid "sub-standard" work in mss. catalogues derives from the somehow paradoxical observation that "normalization" is the most urgent task in all fields of Ethiopian Studies. In trying to remain within the parameters of ms. research, there is a risk that a comprehensive, but non-existing, discipline may emerge, a general "manuscriptology," which may comprise several distinct and very technical disciplines—Codicology, Paleography, Art history—in combination with a little bit of Philology and some Anthropology. The statement of the Latinist M. Reeve that «the last thing that many historians or codicologists study about a manuscript is its text» would hardly apply in this case—because, as a rule, Latin codicologists are able to read the text of their mss., and also because they are at least specialists in Codicology ....

## 0.5 Philology in Ethiopia—M.A. in Philology

The Department of Linguistics of Addis Ababa University, the most important Ethiopian university, invited some Italian scholars to collaborate in the running of its M.A. program in Philology—a demonstration of the Department's appreciation for their Italian colleagues' work. The need for their help—which is not simply a matter of money—is only out of the regard for their competence.

If it is true that every scholar concerned with Ethiopic Philology has only to learn from the encounter with Ethiopian institutions and persons, both within the academic and the religious and social environments, there is also much the memory of which has definitely vanished—which may have escaped the competence and understanding not only of academicians but also of what religious institutions have preserved in their traditional teaching. This past—a "classical past" as far as the Christian culture is concerned, may be located in the Aksumite period. It can be recovered only through a deep study of Ancient Christian and Christian Oriental cultures and languages—two crucially different cultural areas, for both of which Ethiopia is of extraordinary importance.

## 0.6 Italy

The "negative" factors listed above—also part of a global trend in the Humanities, which I hope we will be able to discuss later on—may have contributed a bit to the emphasis of the role of the Italian School of Philology. No doubt, the history of studies is also a history of people and individuals. I will limit myself to pointing out that the present Italian school of Ethiopic Philology has emerged with P. Marrassini and his pupils in the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Florence, where a long-established and extremely prestigious tradition of Philological Studies has flourished. But if certainly Florentine, this school is "Italian" only by accident, as Marrassini is a pupil of P. Fronzaroli—professor of Semitic

Philology (*i.e.*, comparative linguistics) at the University of Florence. Nonetheless, as far as general Ethiopian studies are concerned, Marrassini is a pupil of S. Strelcyn (in turn, a pupil of Marcel Cohen). Yet, if studies in Ethiopic Philology have survived in Italian universities, this has been made possible at an academic level by the long established tradition of Ethiopian Studies in Naples, at the former Istituto Universitario Orientale (now, University of Naples "L'Orientale"). This has also been renewed, thanks to the effort of A. Triulzi, through the institution of a Ph.D. course in "African Studies" (formerly, more specifically, "Philological and historical sciences of Northern and Eastern Africa"), through which most of the present Italian philologists have gained experience. As a matter of fact, in a couple of years (with the retirement of Yaqob Beyene [in 2008]) the whole of the Italian studies in Ethiopic Philology will be represented by pupils of P. Marrassini (G. Fiaccadori, P. Piovanelli, G. Lusini, D.V. Proverbio, A. Gori, and myself—all of us more or less involved at a professional level with Ethiopic texts). As a consequence of what I have exposed, this "Florentine" school is marked by characteristics of its own which clearly distinguish it from the preceding Italian tradition of studies on Ethiopic texts. The extraordinary achievements of the great founders (I. Guidi, C. Conti Rossini, E. Cerulli, with the later M. Mario Moreno and L. Ricci) obviously make any comparison impossible. Yet, their concept of "Philology" was rather primitive, with the exception of E. Cerulli, also editor of the *Gadla Gabra Krestos*, *i.e.*, the Ethiopic version of the *Life of Saint Alexius*—one of the texts on which important chapters of the history of Philology have been written.

### 0.7 Philology *vs.* History?

With particular regard to Philology, I would like to repeat what I said three years ago in a paper delivered at the "International Conference

of Ethiopian Studies" held in Hamburg in 2003,[1] which I still consider is of some interest. This paper is also marked by my personal views and I do not want to involve other colleagues in the responsibilities. However, part of it, or its spirit at least, may be largely considered, as I explicitly stated (cp. BAUSI, 2006*a*, p. 542, n. *), a reflex of the present views of the Italian school of Philology, as they were first clearly posed and applied by P. Marrassini in his critical edition of *Gadla Yohòannes Mes¢ra¯qa¯wi* in 1981 (cp. MARRASSINI, 1981; also ID., 1987; 1996). But before coming to the point, I would like to say a couple of words on a preliminary question that is likely to be a matter for discussion later on. This is about the relative importance which "Philology as textual criticism" and "Philology *lato sensu*" (meant, as reconstruction of the past, nothing else but "History") should have.[2] My personal opinion is that, in this very phase of Ethiopian Studies, text-editing by application of a rigorous text-critical method should come first, for a number of reasons: (1) because of many published texts—as it results from the overview on Ethiopic Philology as textual criticism which I have presented in Hamburg—we have only *hardly reliable editions*; (2) because text-critical work *necessarily implies and presupposes* deep historical research on all available sources, and the essential and profound historical character of text-critical Philology has been clearly stated many times (cp., *e.g.*, the still interesting pamphlet by

[1] Cp. the Summary (BAUSI, 2006*a*, p. 542): "Though the term "philology" often carries a range of meanings, it is considered in this paper as textual criticism. Basing on a short survey of the methodology used in some editorial series of Ethiopic texts, this paper examines the current trends in philology that specifically relate to Ethiopian Studies. The overall conclusion is that the standard of editions of Ethiopic texts is inadequate, and that the current use of a "base ms." should be abandoned in favour of critically reconstructed texts".

[2] *E.g.*, LUSINI (2005) looks at the traditional Philology ("historical science aimed at the criticism of the sources", *ibid.*, p. 91) as the first stage of the present "Philology *lato sensu*" ("today, the need to take into account all the chances given by the constellation of disciplines composing the philology *lato sensu* – namely the criticism of the sources starting from their material consistency up to the analysis of their ideological construction – has become stronger than ever", *ibid.*, p. 92).

PASQUALI, 1920, one of the most prominent Classical philologists of the 20th century); (3) because the (often exhausting) experience of editing a whole text from its beginning to the end—if correctly applied, a tremendous responsibility—has a strong formative and instructive potential, much needed, in my opinion, in this very phase of Ethiopian Studies: *it necessarily implies the effort to understand, explain and evaluate a traditional source in depth in its innermost characters and in all its aspects*, and this is a formidable remedy against superficiality as well as arbitrary and desultory use of sources taken out of their context and kept together by a purely ideological frame.

## 1. Philology

### 1.1 In Ethiopian Studies

The word "Philology" has been understood with a wide range of meanings corresponding to well established "philologies", in turn liable to very different interpretations, each one with its own tradition.[3] In Ethiopian Studies, Philology and Literature have both been used to indicate the study of Ethiopic (Ge'ez) in general.[4] However, in a broader sense (cp. KRAČÍKOVSKIJ, 1955), Philology refers to a rigorous methodology that gives prominence to the direct analysis of written textual evidences—integrated with oral and archaeological evidence—in line with the Wolfian tradition of

[3] Classical Philology, (*a*) as total reconstruction of the culture of Classical Antiquity, but also (*b*) as textual criticism of Greek and Latin Texts; Romance Philology, (*c*) as study of the Romance languages and literatures in all their aspects; Semitic Philology, first (*d*) as study of the oldest Semitic cultures and then, (*e*) as in the Anglo-Saxon use, as Historical and Comparative Linguistics. Other philologies would be much more difficult to define.

[4] There is no need to reaffirm that the study of the language remains the essential precondition of any philological practice.

Classical Philology,[5] but with the addition of strong positivistic components. All the great scholars in Ethiopian Studies (*e.g.*, H. Ludolf, A. Dillmann, I. Guidi, C. Conti Rossini, E. Cerulli, etc.) were *also* editors of texts. With a common background in Semitic Studies, they used very different approaches and were not particularly up-to-date with or sensitive to the text-critical methodology involved in editing texts. Generally speaking, methodological awareness in both linguistic and editorial activity has remained a rather unfrequent practice.

### 1.2 As textual criticism

As textual criticism, Philology focuses on written documents[6] and seeks to reconstruct the original or oldest form of the text through: analysis of the textual traditions, production of critical editions, and representation of the whole ms. tradition and its history. This task is achieved with the help of well defined auxiliary disciplines, such as codicology and palaeography by cataloguing—and by evaluating all the available evidence (historical, cultural, literary, linguistic, and stylistic). It is only by such evaluation that the basis of a well-founded analysis of the texts could be established.

## 2. Textual criticism

### 2.1 Application fields

In Ethiopian Studies, textual criticism is employed to find solutions to a wide range of scientific problems. In the African context,

[5] F.A. Wolf (1759-1824) conceived "Philology" as global science of the Classical Antiquity, in opposition to the "formal Philology" of G. Hermann (1772-1848).

[6] In oral texts, textual criticism coincides with the history of the tradition (cp. SANTOLI, 1961, p. 164; CONTINI 1977, pp. 47 f.); on written documents in general, cp. BAUSI (2004*a*).

Ethiopia and Eritrea have an exceptionally large volume of written evidence that consists of tens of thousands of mss. containing literary, artistic, documentary, and traditional records dating from the Middle Ages. If we include the epigraphic texts (a subject of Linguistics *in primis*, but with philological implications), then the distribution of the written evidence spans more than twenty-five centuries. It is only through the process of textual criticism that historians—who heavily depend on written sources that are handed down through ms. evidence and therefore subject to philological analysis—can fully acquaint themselves with the nature of the documents they are dealing with; and it is only through written evidence that Historical Linguistics is made possible.

## 2.2 Methodology

Modern textual criticism has refined a methodology that has been developing over the centuries, particularly during the middle of the 19th cent., and passed through a crisis and reaction between the end of the 19th and the middle of the 20th cent.[7] Its principles have now been generally accepted.[8] Many points are still being discussed, but some clear principles are considered definitive, such as: (*a*) the necessity of a complete survey of all the direct and indirect witnesses (mss., printed editions, quotations, allusions, versions, etc.) of the text under examination (*recensio*); (*b*) the definition of their relationship, possibly as a genealogical tree (*stemma codicum*), established on the basis of conjunctive errors (*Leitfehler*) common to the witnesses descending from the same sub-archetype;[9] (*c*) the

[7] Let us at least quote BÉDIER's (1913; 1928) "bon manuscrit" proposal, and the contributions by MAAS (1927; cp. MONTANARI 2003), PASQUALI (1934) and TIMPANARO (1981), esp. facing the problem of contamination and bipartite *stemmata*.

[8] For a first bibliography cp. MARRASSINI (2000, p. 46, n. 2); however, cp. VARVARO (1998, p. 14, n. 5), for current trends in German and English philologies.

[9] A principle first systematically applied by PARIS (1872), and not K. Lachmann, and explicitly formulated only in 1888, cp. REEVE (1998, pp. 453 ff.); FIESOLI (2000, pp. 359 ff., bibliography *ibid.*, pp. 454 ff.).

establishment of the text through the criterion of the majority of the families—strictly understood as immediate offsprings from the archetype; (*d*) the definition of concepts through technical terms;[10] (*e*) the individuation of phases and principles of the editorial work;[11] (*f*) the acceptance of the critical edition as a scientific hypothetical reconstruction of the original text as proposed by the editor.[12]

## 2.3 In Oriental Studies

The proper philological methodology has been developed mainly in the field of Classical (New Testament included) and Romance Studies. To my knowledge there is no specific contribution to the history of the editorial technique of Oriental texts (cp. MARRASSINI, 1987, pp. 348 ff.; 1996, pp. 371 ff.). Yet, one may pose as a real historical problem the question whether the still largely accepted method of the "base ms."—upon which DAIN [1964, p. 171] has expressed a very clear opinion ("Le concept de manuscrit de base, qui rencontre tant de faveur, est un concept antiphilologique") and which essentially antedates the reconstructive method—simply continues an established practice (cp. MARRASSINI 1981, pp. xix f.; 1987, pp. 354 f.; 1996, p. 375; for Arabic Christian Studies cp.

[10] *E.g.* direct and indirect tradition; recension; witness; archetype and subarchetype; conjunctive and separative, polygenetic and monogenetic errors; various and singular, characteristic and neutral readings; diffraction (*lectio media*); *textus receptus*; contamination (*contaminatio*); *editio variorum*; open and closed recensions; distinction of "textual criticism" (*Textkritik*) and "history of the text" (*Textgeschichte*); emendation (*emendatio*) through MSS (*ope codicum*) and conjecture (*ope ingenii*); elaboration on the relationship between philology and linguistics, etc.

[11] Recension (*recensio*) and collation (*collatio*); *eliminatio codicum descriptorum*; classification of the MSS in families and establishment of genealogical trees; *recentiores, non deteriores*; non mechanical criteria (*lectio difficilior, usus scribendi*), etc.

[12] At all equivalent to a scientific essay, to be ameliorated in the future and not established once and forever, cp. MARRASSINI (1996, p. 372); for the critical edition as "a working hypothesis", cp. CONTINI (1970, p. 74; 1971, p. 139)

SAMIR 1982, pp. 62 ff.), or follows more recent (now not so recent) critical rethinking of the reconstructive method.[13]

As an example, in 1922, A. Götze examined the ms. tradition of the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*;[14] he did not publish his own edition but limited himself to correcting BEZOLD's text (1888, who in turn did not use a base ms., cp. *ibid.*: vi f.); however, Götze did establish all the premises for creating a strictly reconstructive edition. On the other hand, R. Draguet has explicitly theorized the editorial method of the "base ms." for Syriac texts in a contribution (DRAGUET, 1977), where a simple reproduction of the best ms.'s text—taking into

[13] For reconstructive editions of two Ancient Near East texts cp. MARRASSINI (1987, p. 348, nn. 8-9); for the Old Testament cp. BORBONE (1990) and CHIESA (1999); MILIKOWSKI (1999) wonders if by "editing" rabbinic texts, simply "transcribing" is understood, and gives good examples of *eliminatio codicum descriptorum* (*ibid.*, pp. 147 f.; cp. also REEVE, 2000, p. 197).

[14] Cp. GÖTZE (1922, pp. 5 ff.): on the basis of the extant MSS, he supposed the existence of an archetype, reconstructed its physical structure (columns and number of lines), as well as that of a subarchetype; established subgroups on the basis of mechanical errors (loss of folios), and corroborated all this evidence by that of "various readings and shared innovations" ("verschiedene Lesungen und gemeinsame Neuerungen", *ibid.*, pp. 9 ff.), giving also a complex but clear *stemma codicum* (cp. *ibid.*, p. 12). Following in G. Paris' footsteps both in contents and method, in 1889 an earlier strictly Lachmannian edition had been applied to the Syriac Alexis' legends, with the appreciation of NÖLDEKE (1890, p. 253), by A. Amiaud: "Nous n'avons pas affaire ... à des compositions personnelles ... Si l'on entreprenait de publier une famille de telles oeuvres, où chaque auteur respectant seulement les grandes lignes de la légende l'à traitée pour tout le reste avec une liberté presque absolue ..., tout ce qu'on pourrait faire serait de donner chacune entièrement et séparément. Mais ici où nous n'avons ... que de copies plus ou moins exactes mais toujours sincères d'un même texte, le devoir de l'éditeur est de chercher à retrouver l'original ou à le restituer au moins dans la mesure du possible, et c'est là le but que nous allons poursuivre maintenant au moyen de la comparaison et de la classification de nos manuscrits" (AMIAUD, 1889, p. ix; cp. also *ibid.*, pp. xxvi f.; an explicit reference to PARIS, 1872 is found *ibid.*, p. x, n. 1); the editor posed also different positions in the two *stemmata* for those mss. which witnessed both recensions of the legend (*ibid.*, pp. x ff., xviii and xxv).

consideration its age and legibility—is recommended, with all its errors included,[15] and the best readings should be attested in the critical apparatus by a *lege* (and of course be followed in the translation).[16] The latest editor of the Syriac *Cave of Treasures* has enriched the number of mss. examined and produced a new *stemma codicum* (cp. *CSCO* 486, ed. SU-MIN RI [1987], p. xxiv), but the criteria for the classification of the mss. are totally unsatisfactory.[17]

## 2.4 In Ethiopian Studies

Considerations along the line Draguet proposed have been advanced in Ethiopian Studies and generally accepted, with a few exceptions.

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[15] The "meilleur en ce sens qu'il nous paraît le mieux adapté à la présentation de la forme" (*ibid.*: 14); it must be stressed that "the best ms." so understood is different from the *codex optimus*, *codex vetustissimus*, etc., of pre-Lachmannian philology (a "base ms." whose evident errors could be corrected *ope codicum* and *ope ingenii*); additionally, it differs from the "best ms." that results the one most similar to the critically established text (cp. CONTINI, 1971, pp. 139 f.).

[16] Cp. ORLANDI's (1994; 1997) remarks on similar editorial practices in middle-Latin philology.

[17] Once established that "le texte de la *Caverne des trésors* ne possède qu'un seule archétype, une seule version originale, en syriaque", the evidence is often evaluated on the basis of weak elements ("certaine parenté", "ancêtre apparenté aux témoins du premier groupe", "influence conjuguée des témoins du 1$^{er}$ et du 4$^{e}$ groupes sur les ms. *F*, appartenant au 2$^{e}$ groupe", "manuscrits ... plus proches du premier groupe", "Ces derniers ... doivent avoir subi des modifications au niveau de leur modèle", etc. (*ibid.*: text, xxiii-xxv); one of the two base MSS (but why two recensions, if there is only one original version ?) is chosen "parce qu'il est de la meme famille que *H* ..., qui est le plus ancien de tous nos manuscrits orientaux" (*ibid.*: text, viii); and finally, in the *stemma codicum*, MSS *c*, *a* and *b* are tied by vertical strokes, which indicate that they have been copied one from the other in turn; however the editor states that "Les trois manuscrits *a*, *b* et *c* (quatrième groupe) sont presque identiques. Le manuscrit *c* ... est le plus ancien de tous les manuscrits datés, mais nous sommes résolus à prendre plutôt comme base de notre édition de la recension occidentale, le manuscrit *a*, le second plus ancien témoin, car le manuscrit *c* comporte deux feuilles en blanc" (*ibid.*: text, xvii f.): if *a* has blanks, how can unabridged *b* and *c* be its copies ?

Additionally, the photographic reproduction of ms. texts has been recommended, instead of a critical edition.[18] Compared with this prevalent editorial practice, some of the presently available editions of the Old Testament, Apocrypha (cp. a full panorama in KNIBB, 1999), New Testament (cp. *AeF* 27 and 55, ed. R. ZUURMOND [1989; 2001]; *AeF* 29, ed. J. HOFMANN - S. UHLIG [1993]; *AeF* 33, ed. S. UHLIG - H. MAEHLUM [1993]; *AeF* 57, ed. TEDROS ABRAHA [2001]) and other texts, have been advancing quickly, and in some cases attaining excellence (cp. *AeF* 50, ed. D.V. PROVERBIO [1998]; on *AeF* 56 [2000], ed. M. HEIDE, cp. BAUSI 2003*a*); one may say, however, that these cases do not reflect the general editorial practices of Ethiopic texts. Besides, the Biblical texts exhibit their own peculiarities and need a particular methodology.

### 2.5 *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*

To understand the normal practice in Ethiopian Studies, it may suffice to look at the volumes published in two major series, the *CSCO* and the *Patrologia Orientalis* (*PO*), during the last 25 years.[19] In the *CSCO*, with some exceptions,[20] there are very few detailed

[18] Cp. ULLENDORFF (1960, pp. 174 f.; 1971); also HAMMERSCHMIDT (1990, p. 93); and the derisive words of RICCI (1995, pp. 217 f.) towards "gli innamorati dei grappoletti stemmatici", "those who are fond of the stemmatic bunches"; against the photographic reproduction cp. already PASQUALI (1920, p. 21).

[19] Many important Ethiopic texts have been published also elsewhere, of course, but just to show some examples, in the spirit of this presentation, I will limit myself to these. I would like also to underline that we do not have a sufficient number of thorough and detailed reviews of the edited texts, and therefore a satisfactory scientific control on this production.

[20] Cp. *CSCO* 503-4 and 538-39 (ed. M. KROPP [1988*a*; 1994]), *CSCO* 510-11 (ed. J.C. VANDERKAM [1989]), *CSCO* 515-16 and 532-33 (ed. YAQOB BEYENE [1990-93]), *CSCO* 597-98 (ed. P. MARRASSINI [2003]); I leave to others the judgment on my CSCO 552-53 [BAUSI, 1995] and 595-96 [BAUSI, 2003*b*]: LUSINI (2004, pp. 247 f.) has stressed that "anche in questa edizione di fatto viene riproposto il criterio del 'manoscritto guida', individuato nel codice 'migliore' (coincidente di fatto col ms. 'più antico')"; I would but recall that according to my analysis, in this very case "recensioni

discussions of the ms. tradition, and when they do appear, the criterion of the base ms. prevails.[21] In the majority of cases, the text simply reproduces that of a base ms., and is occasionally corrected with the help of other mss. This method is vaguely justified by the same repeated considerations (cp. *CSCO* 377, ed. R. BEYLOT [1976], p. v; *CSCO* 444, ed. G. COLIN [1982], p. vi),[22] possibly with few comments (cp. *CSCO* 557, ed. G. LUSINI [1996], p. v),[23] or with hardly more than a word (cp. *CSCO* 476, ed. V. ARRAS [1986], p. v; *CSCO* 505, ed. ID. [1988], p. v; *CSCO* 517, ed. GETATCHEW HAILE [1990], p. v).[24] In some cases the editor precisely reproduces the text

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e sottorecensioni risultano opere a sé", and that the choice of editing one particular subrecension was only instrumental ("discende unicamente da un criterio di opportunità") in offering "la griglia più efficace per la rappresentazione completa della tradizione" (cp. *CSCO* 595 [BAUSI, 2003*b*], pp. xiv and xxii f.); as for editing different recensions separately – a much "lazier" choice, and with its own inconveniences, after all –, this is a matter of controversy, and can not be considered "una prassi consolidata e già seguita comunemente".

[21] Cp. *CSCO* 515 [YAQOB BEYENE, 1990-93], p. ix; *CSCO* 503 [KROPP, 1988*a*], pp. xii f. and xxii f.; *CSCO* 538 [KROPP, 1994], p. xxxii; KROPP (1988, p. 52) indicates as "a third, independent, and rather distinct tradition" that of a ms. which bears a true reading, against all the other bifid ms. tradition; but cp. also ID. (2003), on the applicability of Lachmannian principles to a new reconstructive edition of *Kebra nagaśt*.

[22] "Le ms. ... nous étant apparu comme le meilleur en même temps qu'il est le plus ancien, nous l'avons pris comme base" (*CSCO* 377 [BEYLOT, 1976], p. v); "Ce manuscrit, que son ancienneté et son bon état de conservation recommandent par ailleurs, est le seul que nous ayons pu consulter directement, nous en avons donc fait la base de notre édition" (*CSCO* 444 [COLIN, 1982], p. vi).

[23] "Il testo riprodotto e assunto come base per la traduzione è quello di A, ma in molti punti il confronto con B ha permesso di rendere ragione di letture incerte" (*CSCO* 557 [LUSINI, 1996], p. v).

[24] "Vulgatur textus codicis A notatis variantibus in B" (*CSCO* 476 [ARRAS, 1986], p. v); "A ... fundamentum est editionis" (*CSCO* 505 [ID., 1988], p. v); "The text presented here comes from ... [A], with the few variants in ... [B] ... noted in the *apparatus criticus*" (*CSCO* 517 [GETATCHEW, 1990], p. v). Even in the case of a single ms. (*codex unicus*), the editors should inform the reader of the textual tradition, but

of the only extant ms.,[25] even if he is well aware that it is not the original text, and so may retain errors that should be emended (cp. *CSCO* 522, ed. GETATCHEW HAILE [1991], p. v).[26] Out of the chronological limits indicated above, there is also an example of a partial mechanical reconstruction, but without *stemma codicum*, based on the majority of the mss., and not of the families (cp. *CSCO* 250, eds. C. CONTI ROSSINI - L. RICCI [1964-65], pp. ix f.); and on the other side, a detailed reconstruction of the history of the text (cp. *CSCO* 299, ed. E. CERULLI [1969], pp. ix-xvi).

### 2.6 *Patrologia Orientalis*

A similar situation exists in the *PO*, where dependence on the base ms. underlies the prevalent method (cp., *e.g.*, *PO* 48/1, ed. O. RAINERI [1998], p. 10);[27] in one case there is a short text-critical introduction, but without any methodology and with terminological uncertainties (cp. *PO* 45/4, ed. R. BEYLOT [1993], pp. 8 f., where "fautes caractéristiques", "archétype", "fautes propres" are at risk of being meaningless, if no clear classification of the mss. is attempted). In other instances, there is an acceptable classification of the mss., but the text is not established accordingly (cp. *PO* 49/2 and 49/3, ed. G. COLIN [2001; 2002], and BAUSI, 2002; 2004*b*). The same method is found in the edition of the Ethiopic *Synaxary*. This work, first undertaken for the same series in 1905 by I. Guidi, was concluded in 1999 by G. Colin with the fascicule of indexes (*PO* 48/3 [COLIN,

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often nothing is found, cp. *CSCO* 410-11 (ed. R. BEYLOT [1979]), *CSCO* 458-59 (ed. V. ARRAS [1984]), *CSCO* 492-93 and 519-20 (ed. G. COLIN [1987*a*; 1990]).

[25] "It is reproduced here as exactly as possible, spelling and punctuation included ... Also letters, words, and punctuation marks given in square brackets are supplied" (*CSCO* 522 [GETATCHEW, 1991], p. v).

[26] "Due to the fact that we have only this copy, a few ambiguous Ge'ez expressions remain unelucidated. Fortunately EMML 1480 is the microfilm of a copy that is only a few generations removed from the original" (*ibid.*).

[27] *E.g.* "La nostra edizione del testo etiopico segue A, le cui lacune sono state integrate, quando possibile, da B" (*PO* 48/1 [RAINERI 1998], p. 10).

1999]). G. Colin founded his edition, "sur les mêmes manuscrits que les premiers éditeurs," by adding one ms., "dont la date de composition (1581) fait le plus ancien témoin connu de la «Révision»" (cp. *PO* 43/3 [COLIN, 1986], p. 6); consequently, the edition reproduces the text of three mss.[28] In the following fascicules, a new important ms. (EMML 6952) is noted: but this witness apparently is so defective and full of orthographic errors that it cannot be used in a critical edition (*PO* 44/1 [COLIN, 1987*b*], p. 5[29]—a statement which is not easy to understand. Moreover, the tradition of the *Synaxary* is generally acknowledged to be extremely "active" (cp. below), and therefore the examination of a large number of mss. would have been all the more important (for the Byzantine *Synaxary* cp., *e.g.*, E. FOLLIERI in FERRARI, 1998, p. 27).

## 3. Alleged peculiarities

### 3.1 An unsatisfactory editorial standard

It is taken for granted that any critical edition should distinguish clearly between ms. tradition and critically established texts, and should in particular allow the reader to easily recover the various readings of each witness. On the other hand, if the goal of a critical edition were the true reproduction of the text of a single ms. (but if

[28] "Dans l'établissement du texte, j'ai suivi A pour les parties communes, P pour la «Révision» et C pour ce que S. Grébaut, avec quelque emphase, appelle le «Propre» de l'Église éthiopienne ... L'orthographe suivie est celle des différents manuscrits de base, éventuellement corrigée dans le corps du texte et mentionnée en note quand elle est incorrecte ... Les variantes graphiques, de même que les fautes des autres manuscrits, ne sont pas notées dans l'apparat critique" (*ibid.*: 6; the same in the following fascicules).

[29] "il porte à quatre le nombre des manuscrits connus antérieurs à la «Revision». De surcroît, il diffère souvent des autres témoins et dépend beaucoup plus étroitement qu'eux du synaxaire arabe jacobite" and "ses très nombreuses lacunes et son orthographe défectueuse le rendent inutilisable pour une édition critique" (*PO* 44/1 [COLIN 1987*b*], p. 5; the same in the following fascicules).

more than one manuscript exists, why choose only one, and which), a good reproduction could now be easily obtained through various technological devices (microfilms, digital pictures, etc., that are easily available from libraries). One may wonder, then, whether the numerous abnormalities in the editions of Ethiopic texts are simply the reflection of an unsatisfactory standard, as I am inclined to think, or due to the peculiar status of the textual tradition.[30] This particularly applies to all the Ethiopic texts witnessed by a very manageable number of *available* mss. (very often no more than ten), which should be dealt with according to the current scientific editorial practice.

### 3.2 A few remarks on the tradition of Ethiopic texts

The adoption of the "base ms. method"[31] is supported by the "anti-reconstructionists",[32] who offer the same reasons as those in other philological disciplines.[33] To determine the number and types of the alleged phenomena that occur in the Ethiopic textual traditions, we should have a clear idea of their ms. traditions (cp., *e.g.*, the excellent

[30] Of course there are limits in the production of perfectly critical editions, and there are necessarily cases in which the first edition (*editio princeps*) may only be a preliminary one (*e.g.*, in case of a high number of witnesses which make an exhaustive *recensio* almost impossible or extremely difficult, cp., *e.g.*, *CSCO* 552 [BAUSI 1995], pp. xiv and xix; MARRASSINI 2000: 45; *AeF* 57 [TEDROS ABRAHA 2001], pp. 35ff.; this obviously happens in other areas in philology, and solutions vary, cp., *e.g.*, DE MENDIETA 1987).

[31] A "fetishism", in a way, as it has been observed (cp. MARRASSINI 1987: 355, n. 43; CANFORA 2002: 56), certainly favoured by its psychological capability of satisfying the immediate need of something material, but still a "working hypothesis": "anche quella conservatrice è un'ipotesi di lavoro", cp. CONTINI 1971: 139; in favour of the base ms., however, cp. KROPP 1989: 263; and the remark by MARRASSINI 1993: 2 f., n. 10).

[32] For those who think that editing consists of reproducing of a single base ms., emended, or even not, cp. above on R. Draguet's method.

[33] Cp. esp. REEVE (2000: 197, on the reasons alleged by Medievalists). I would like to thank my friend G. Agosti for having attracted my attention to this article.

monograph by KROPP, 1989), which is in itself difficult to ascertain because of the inadequacy of most of the editions (of course we should also have more concordances, better lexicographical tools for an improved evaluation of the style, the "usus scribendi", etc.). Consequently, the following considerations must be taken only as preliminary remarks.

Revisions of texts, rewriting (and even retranslating and conflating [cp. BAUSI, 2006*b*]), censures (cp. KROPP, 2001), contaminations ("horizontal transmissions of readings"), and different traditions for different parts of a work (cp. MARRASSINI, 2000), have all been described for Ethiopic texts. 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 medieval 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 ms. tradition comparable to that of the classical texts;[34] 2) concerning the texts produced from the medieval age onwards, no such gap exists: the ms. 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

[34] I suggest, *e.g.*, that palaeographic and linguistic characteristics peculiar to the archetypes of the Aksumite age should be sought.

to the age of their oldest preserved witnesses is far narrower, and the reasons of the antireconstructionists could find here a sound basis.[35]

Let's consider each point: autographs may well have survived, but to my knowledge this is rare; the same holds true for originals worked on by their authors. We know of certain presentation copies, but their textual importance varies (these may only be evaluated through a thorough collation of all the witnesses, cp. CONTINI, 1971: 139 f.), and their appearance is usually worse than one would expect.[36] Though the acceptance of texts as witnesses is an important process, it is still secondary to the main purpose of attaining the oldest textual form; moreover, the whole tradition should be retrievable from a good critical apparatus (not to mention that indirect traditions should be considered in turn as a witness of the text).

### 3.3 A "fluid" tradition?

A point worthy of attention is whether the difference between authors and scribes has been exaggerated, thus creating a degree of "fluidity", "variation", or "instability" in the Ethiopic textual tradition. As it has been noted (cp. MARRASSINI, 1987, p. 354), in Ethiopia there was nothing comparable to the perturbation of the ms.

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[35] Cp. REEVE (2000: 197), for a list of these reasons: "An autograph may have survived, so that no reconstruction is necessary ... or the witness may variously reflect an original that the author worked on over a long period, so that no single state of the text can be reconstructed; or a presentation copy may reveal so much about the context of composition, or have done so much to shape the later tradition, that its text acquires a historical importance independent of any editorial importance; or the reception of the work in medieval witnesses may be thought as interesting the work itself ... the difference between authors and scribes has been exaggerated ... or ... if there was a single original it cannot be reconstructed either stemmatically, because there was too much contamination ... or conjecturally, because the human intellect is fallible".

[36] *E.g.*, the famous ms. Vat. Borgiano etiopico 2, presented by King Zar'a Ya'qob to the monastic community of Jerusalem (cp. *CSCO* 552 [BAUSI 1995], pp. xxxii ff.).

tradition brought about by the Humanists in Europe. Consequently: 1) the case of different recensions of the same work (due to revision, rewriting, and even conflating, cp. above) is relatively frequent, but in this case each recension has its own well-defined ms. witnesses, whose relationships can be established; this applies also to hagiographical texts, where there is no free variation between ms. witnesses.[37] This means that 2) scribes do not *systematically* change the received text, and neither did they correct its errors (isolated counter-evidence, cp., *e.g.*, *CSCO* 552 [BAUSI, 1995], p. xxx, does not change this general principle); it is common for those who collate Ethiopic mss. to discover that copyists *usually* accepted and tolerated even extremely corrupted texts, or texts virtually impossible to understand (cp., *e.g.*, *CSCO* 595 [BAUSI, 2003*b*], p. xix; for the *New Testament*, however, cp. *AeF* 27, part I, pp. 39 f.). Of course there are also examples of corrections or changes due to "cultural and literary needs" (for the current phenomenon in Romance philology, cp., *e.g.*, VARVARO, 1998, p. 21), and these should be individuated, declared, and eventually interpreted according to their proper meaning. However, in the Ethiopic tradition such changes usually determine a new recension, and again (unless we have access to the original) it is necessary to examine all witnesses to reconstruct it. This phenomenon does not systematically apply each time a ms. is copied, and each ms. does not necessarily represent a different recension. Besides, one has to consider the fact that 3) the language of the Ethiopic texts is very stable (orthographic conventions vary, but this, though complex and important, is a distinct problem): there are adaptations and changes along the ms. tradition, especially in the case of literal translations from Greek and Arabic, and critical editions can produce useful material for linguistic study, but there is nothing comparable, for example, to the linguistic variation well

[37] Cp., *e.g.*, LUSINI (1993: 35-51); the Bible may be considered, up to a certain point, an exception, as it has many problems of its own, cp. above; also some magical texts have an undoubtedly peculiar tradition.

known in the tradition of the Romance texts.[38] As a preliminary conclusion, the tradition of the Ethiopic texts is substantially "quiescent", and not "active" (for this fortunate terminology, cp. VARVARO, 1970, pp. 156 f.), and I see no serious reasons not to produce editions of Ethiopic texts based on reconstructions of a critical text.

As a final point in these preliminary remarks, I would add that the need of reproducing a ms. exactly as it is can be considered as related to a particular "fetishist" (if not "voyeuristic") attitude according to which the highest pleasure is to contemplate the multiple products (each one important in itself) of a civilization thought (in such a relativistic perspective as to border on racism) to follow rules of its own and detached from all the others. Consequently, the method and practice developed for other philologies are not applied to the texts of those mss., and the importance of the reproduction of immediate and crude contents prevails. In my opinion, however, the only way to honour Ethiopian Studies is to look for the original contribution of this discipline as taking part in the development of all the fields (philology included) and all the methodologies used for the study of the human civilization (cp. PASQUALI, 1952, p. v, also on "bantu" texts).[39]

[38] Of course there are exceptions, *e.g.* the Amharic commentaries, which strictly reflect an oral teaching (for the first edition with an apparatus of readings, cp. *AeF* 57 [TEDROS ABRAHA 2001], pp. 144 ff.).

[39] "io almeno non saprei immaginarmi che l'originale, poniamo, di un testo cinese o bantu possa essere ricostruito dalle copie o da qualsiasi altra testimonianza, insomma dalla sua tradizione, se non sul fondamento delle considerazioni e conforme alle regole enunciate dal Maas" (PASQUALI 1952: v).

## 4. A case study: the *Martyrdom of Arethas*

### 4.1 The *Martyrdom of Arethas*

At the "Second International Symposium on Ethiopian Philology," held in Addis Ababa, January 16th-18th, 2006, also in the name of P. Marrassini and A. Gori, I presented (besides my own paper on the textual tradition of the Ethiopic *Qale¯ment,os*), a short note on "The textual tradition of the *Acts of Arethas* (or *Acts of the Martyrs of Nagĺra¯n*): the Ethiopic and the unpublished Arabic versions." The *Acts* or *Martyrdom of Arethas* belongs to the corpus of texts that can be considered expressions *par excellence* of the Late Antiquity and Byzantine Christian Orient, both because of the age to which it refers (the dramatic political and religious conflict in the first decades of the 6th cent. between Byzantium and Persia on one side, and between Aksum and South Arabia on the other), and because of the literary motifs on which it has been built. Moreover, the special interest of the text from the Ethiopianists' point of view lies in its being strictly concerned with personalities (King Ka¯le¯b, Saint Pñant,ale¯won, etc.) and crucial historical events of the Aksumite age (the Jewish persecution of the Christians in South Arabia, the Ethiopian invasion and occupation of South Arabia, etc.): in particular, those events are echoed in a number of literary sources of the postAksumite period, from the *Kebra nagas¢t* to the *Acts of Pñant,ale¯won* and others. Translated in the post-Aksumite age, and usually included in mss. of the large hagiographic collection known as *Gadla sama¯'ta¯t*, "Acts of the martyrs", the Ethiopic version comes at the end of a long linguistic traditional chain, as it is the case for most of the Christian hagiographic tradition transmitted in Ethiopic (but although most of texts of *Gadla sama¯'ta¯t* presuppose a linguistic tradition chain from Greek, through Coptic and Christian Arabic, a Coptic intermediary is to be excluded in this very case, and not by chance, to the advantage of a possible Syriac intermediary before Arabic, or even before Geek, according to some scholars). In consideration of its exemplarity and of its traditional and historical significance, while

a new critical edition of the Greek version has been announced by M. Detoraki [cp. now DETORAKI, 2007]—within the framework of a national research project led by P. Marrassini—A. Gori and myself have published a first volume with the critical edition of the First Arabic recension and of the (more or less) corresponding Ethiopic version (cp. BAUSI - GORI, 2006). Unlike what has been done in the past—the Ethiopic version was published by F.M. Esteves Pereira in 1899, on the basis of two mss.—the new critical edition has taken into consideration both all the still unpublished Arabic mss. (4 mss. for this recension) and all the available witnesses of the Ethiopic version (11 mss.). A second volume by P. La Spisa (University of Florence) will be dedicated to the Second Arabic recension and to the Karsĺu¯n$^{a°}$ version. As an appendix or as a separate volume, A. Brita (University of Naples "L'Orientale") will also publish a new critical edition of the strictly related Ethiopic *Acts of Pñant, ale¯won.*

### 4.2 The critical edition

The relevance of the Arabic versions must be particularly stressed: although their existence has been known for many years, nothing of these very important witnesses (at least three different recensions) has been neither published nor translated so far. (A. Gori will probably say more on this point). It is neither the intention of the authors nor a matter of presumptuousness on their part to present this edition as exemplary. However, we had tried to make it correspond, as much as possible, to what in our opinion a critical edition should be. This edition is much more "normal" than other editions of Ethiopic texts—and this is by itself a positive element—in that it applies standards and conventions normal in other philologies (Classical, Romance, etc.), and which should not be exceptional in the Ethiopic case. Apart from the central scientific fact that the edited text is a critically reconstructed text, and that both the Arabic and the Ethiopic texts are made available and have been considered in establishing each text, I would like to mention other elements too. Arabic, Ethiopic, Syriac and Greek writing has been encoded

according to the Unicode standard—which, in this case, will make the edited texts easily retrievable in digital form. In the case of the Ethiopic text, the edition is built up with four different apparatus: (1) one for the manuscript witnesses; (2) one for the parallel passages; (3) one for the textual variants; (4) and one for the punctuation marks: the need for this last kind of information has been evidenced once again by P. Marrassini (cp. MARRASSINI, 1992, pp. 513-20), and on this point, Philology applied to Ethiopic texts could well come before other philologies, where the importance of registering punctuation is only now being realized (cp., *e.g.*, MANIACI, 2002, pp. 122 f.). Apparatus references are not footnotes or exponents; references are done to paragraphs and lines. The text—as it is a prose text—has been divided in numbered paragraphs corresponding to the traditional division of the text in the editions of other versions, and each paragraph has been subdivided into verses to make every reference to the text easy and clear, and most of all, totally independent from the *mise en page*. This will also make easier the preparation of a comprehensive index of names, to be published in the second volume, and the eventual use of precise and economic references to the text for every use. All this may seem details, but—I repeat—it is not. On the contrary, it has to do with the establishing of a "normal" standard.

### 4.3 Final remarks

Getting out of the strictly philological questions and as a final remark, I would like to indicate some needs and some targets for the future. The main challenge—at present—probably also in other fields, but certainly in Philology—is, on the one hand, that of getting updated and taking advantage of a lot of facilities which the development of technology has put at our disposal, and on the other, that of being able to "keep in touch" with a long-established tradition of study that, although not always satisfactory, cannot certainly be ignored (this may happen in consequence of linguistic barriers which make, *e.g.*, the Italian scholars such as I. Guidi, C. Conti Rossini, E.

Cerulli no more accessible: translations could help, but the scientific substance must be preserved in any case). One may also remark that in the case of Ethiopian Studies—and especially in the case of Ethiopic texts, which are much less attractive than paintings, artifacts, or mss. simply conceived as "images-carriers"—this serious risk is not balanced by any development of digitized archives or really useful web-based data banks, etc. Of course even traditional tools, such as printed concordances of texts (we have them now both for the *Psalms* and for the *Ascension of Isaiah*) are very useful: but this is not enough, and a natural and easy development from the paper to the digital form should be considered since the beginning (this is what is normally done, *e.g.*, in the edition of Classical as well as Romance texts). If, *e.g.*, you look into the wonderful web-site TITUS of the University of Frankfurt, you will find thousands of digitized literary and epigraphic texts in a variety of language families (with focus on Indo-European languages), also including some texts in classical Semitic languages, such as Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac and Ethiopic. But if you click on "Ethiopian", you will be redirected to a depressing web-site where only few lines in unpleasant transcription are available. This is obviously not to be against the person who cared to make at least those few lines available—but to point out that there is a gap that must be overcome as soon as possible. With respect to digitized texts, I would like to mention a small project, funded jointly by the University of Naples "L'Orientale" and by the Italian Institute for Africa and Asia ("Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente", IsIAO), the scope of which is the digitization of the *Lexicon linguae Aethiopicae* by A. Dillmann (cp. DILLMANN, 1865), which still is the essential primary tool for the study of Ethiopic texts, in view of its updating and of building up a new comprehensive lexicon of the Ethiopic texts, with references to the texts published in one and half century after Dillmann's publication in 1865. The digitization is already being carried on: at present, of the 1434 columns of the Ethiopic section of the *Lexicon* (including the appendixes, but excluding the Latin indexes), some 677 columns (more than half) have been digitized, and 245 additional columns I hope will be ready in a few months.

## 4.4 Additional remarks

I cannot end this presentation without lamenting the scarcity of funds and resources for philological research, of which I wonder if our authorities are aware—which sharply contrasts with the appreciation that Italian philologists enjoy abroad. Although the projects on philological research based at the University of Naples "L'Orientale" and at the University of Florence have been funded for six of the last seven years with research funds from the Ministry of the University within the framework of the National Research Projects network (PRIN, *i.e.*, "Progetti di Ricerca di Interesse Nazionale"), with very little contribution from Universities and IsIAO, the funds have been hardly enough to cover some travel expenses to take part in a couple of International Conferences, not much more. One of the factors that contribute to this is certainly the low visibility of this kind of work and the fact that it must be conducted in a rather "traditional" way, spending many hours a day sitting at a table and possibly in a rich library. Also important is the fact that the presentation of preliminary reports of philological activities (lists of variants, etc.) may appear rather unpleasant and without any immediate aesthetic appeal. Probably someone who would like "to come soon to the point," may also find it simply "senseless" to spend such a long time on details ... But this is exactly what makes these Human Studies reliable and less arbitrary—in a word, "scientific". To neglect this aspect will open the way to people with no specific competence whose only ability is that of promoting themselves.

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