An Early Medieval Ethiopian Chronological Treatise: Presentation of the Document

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Ethiopia
“Comboni fragment”, ff. 2v-3r
“Comboni fragment”, ff. 20v-21r
Palaeographical evaluation possible?

Ancient shapes of the numerals
- Numerals without dashes (with the exception of the „tabularic arrangement“, f. 11v)
- Ancient shapes of ወ, ዐ, ዑ, ዡ, ዢ
- Most of the numerals‘ combinations for thousands and hundreds are linked together: የ፩፫, ዯ፫, ዯ፫, ዯ፫ (533), ዯ፫ ዯ፫ ዯ፫ (1596) usw.

Ancient letters‘ shapes:
- ው the lateral strokes reach the ruled line
- ዬ angular
- ኪ with two horizontal lines
- ካ the vowel marker in the middle of the letter‘s body
Palaeographical evaluation possible?

- ꜅ ꜇ the vowel marker attached directly
- ṅ, ṙ the vowel marker attached without overhanging line
- ḥ, ḡ, ᵒ, ᶫ, ᶪ etc., the right “leg” with the vowel marker is shorter
- ṥ, Ṧ opposition of the “ancient type”

- scribe’s tendency to direct strokes
- ṡ, ṣ; ṟ, ṩ etc. not always well distinguishable
- The word ḩ azi’abǝḥer is written in two words: ḩǝzi’abǝḥer
- In many cases the numbers are written out as words
Arrangement of the text

- Sense divisions: mostly through the sign := followed by blank space
- no paragraph signs
- simple sections dividers
- “old“ arrangement of the titles
- simple coronis-signs, crosses
- Small arches filled with the text – ancient feature?
- Scribal corrections: over erasures, the wrong word is “dotted out“ (f. 11vb)

Conclusion: prior to mid-14th century?
(Period of the “monumental script“ after S. Uhlig)
Cross in the “Comboni fragment”, f. 3v

Qälaql Şayon, MS QS-007, at least 14th cent. (?)

ˁAddigrat Bet Marya, cross in the shaft of a grave, late-Aksumite time (?)

Foqada Maryam, cross on a stone slab, late-Aksumite time (?)

ˁAddi Qolqwal Giyorgis, Acts of the Martyrs, second half of the 15th cent.

Däbrä Libanos of Ham (Eritrea), Four Gospel book, 13th cent.

Enda Abba Garima 1, front board
Content: collection of texts on computus and chronology

1. Clarifications of the computus basic elements
2. Guidelines and principles for calculating the feasts
3. Chronological treatises: up to 1065 year of Diocletian (1349 AD?)
4. Others (passages in big arches, explanations concerning climate, ff. 14va-15ra, etc.)

- Tables for calculating the dates of the Easter of the Christians and the Passover of the Jews, from 369 to 532 year of Diocletian (653 to 816 AD)
Content: chronological treatises

I) f. 14ra-b: ከስታረ አውደ መሰት (related to Esdras “the mathematician“)

II) f. 16r: ወመቱ ከካል (counting in cycles of 1596 years)

III) ff. 16va-19ra: ወመቱ ከካል ወልማ ወመቱ ወለም ወውደ በቀመር...

IV) f. 19rb-va: (Calculation of the 13 cycles) ከካል ወውደ በቀመር ወውደ ወለም ወውደ ወለም ወውደ...

V) ff. 20rb-21va: (World chronology) ወመቱ ከካል ከስታረ ከስታረ ወውደ ወውደ...

Chronological treatise V

- From Adam to Methuselah /Enoch who “lived in the inside of the earth” - 365 years.
- Adam to when God concealed Enoch - 1454 years.
- Adam to Flood - 2242 years.
- Adam to the Tower, the division of 72 languages - 2600 years.
- Adam to when Abraham became 75 years old - 3385.
- Adam to the birth of Isaac - 3413 years.
- Adam to the birth of Jacob - 3473 years.
- Adam to the birth of Lewi - 3556 years.
- Adam to the birth of Moses - 3736 years.
- Adam to Moses’ 80 year - 3815 years.
- Adam to Israel’s 30th year in the desert - 3856 years.
- Adam to King Käs - 3913 years.
- Adam to Judge Gäton’el - 3958 years.
- Adam to Judge Gideon - 4161 years, etc.
Time of the composition and author?

1) Tables go from 369 to 532 year of Diocletian (653 to 816 AD)
2) Treatises count chronology up to:
   the end of the 13th circle
   = 1065 year of Diocletian
   = 1349 AD (?)
   the 5th year of King Säyfā Arˁad (r. 1344-72)
   or
   6916 year from the creation of Adam
   = 1424 AD (?)
   the 10th year of King Yǝsḥaq (r. 1414–29)
Hints to an earlier composition time?

- Palaeographic features of the manuscript
- The name of the alleged author is eṗpisqoṗpos Elyas:

  (f. 19rb) መካከሱ: ሰኬት: ዓምራት: ይለት: በታወሚት: ዓሮምት:

  እለሽ: እለሽትሽ: ሲለም: ዓምራት: እግወት: እሸካል: ዓሮር: ...

  (f. 20ra) መካከሱ: ሰኬት: ኤለም: እጆምርትሽ: እስት: ይለት: ያስካ: እለሽለሽ: ...


  እለሽ: እለሽ: ያስካ: ...

- Elyas, the Bishop of Aksum, has been assigned the authorship for hagiographical texts dedicated to St. Mäṭaʿ/Libanos
- Elyas is said to be a contemporary of Libanos
Linguistic evidence for foreign background of the text/author?

Month names in the last unit (*muyyaṭe gizeyat*):

- 25 *Fǝmenot* (7th Coptic month, *phamenōt*)
- 25 *Payon* (10th Coptic month, *paōne*)
- 25 *Tot* (1st Coptic month, *thout*)
- 25 *Kiyak* (4th Coptic month, *koiahk*)

Transcribed non-Ethiopian month names in the round diagramm (f. 1r), poorly visible; mention of the calendars of Rom, Sor, Mäqedon, Gǝbǝ, Agaˁǝzi.
Secondary tradition? MS EMML 2063

- MS EMML 2063, Ḥayq Ṣṭifanos, second half of the 15th century; the so-called “Computus of King Zär’a Yaṣqob”:
  - a big part of the explanations for the basic elements are shared, mostly word by word
  - Part of III. Ṣdom: Ḥₐ₃₉ₐ₆: Ḥₐ₃₉₉₉辘₆ᵤ₉₉: Ḥₐ₃₉₉₉辘₆ᵤ₉₉ (biblical) is shared
  - world chronology for the most part different
  - diagramms and tables are different
  - the name of Ṣpisqopoḥ Elyas is missing
Secondary tradition in MS Vat. aeth. 1

MS Four Gospels and other texts, 16th cent., including chronological treatises on ff. 198r-212r (nos. 7-8).

Interpolated texts of the “Comboni fragment“:

I) obviously ff. 14ra-b: ማ_HOST: ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ ከፋፋ

II) F. 16ra: ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ (preceded by mention of Gäbrä Mäsqäl/11th cycle end /year 6384)

III) Ff. 16va-18ra: ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ ከፋፋ ከፋፋ ከፋፋ ከፋፋ (at least a part)

IV) F. 19rb-va: “Calculation of the 13 cycles“ (with some changes)

V) Ff. 20rb-21va: (World chronology) ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ: ከፋፋ:... (with shortenings and changes)

- Tables (?), some of the explanatory notes?
Parallel tradition in other MSS

- Berol 84 (Neuegebauer 1989, no. 5): “Computus for 13 cycles“ (IV, some similarity)
- EMML 215 (Neuegebauer no. 30): “Computus for 13 cycles“ (IV, some similarity)

- The chronological treatise in Vat. aeth. 61, ff. 2-8 (14th cent.) is **dissimilar** from the texts in the “Combony fragment“
Interpolation in the “Prophesy of Ezra”

- After a manuscript acquired from “un debtera falacha“, in Qabṭa, Wälqayt (West Tigray), in 1867
- Interpolated: somewhat revised *Treatise IV*, “Calculation of the 13 cycles“ (Halévy, pp. 67-68, text)
- The author introduces counting of weeks
- The Greek names still recognizable: “Ṭǝmlomeyos Filadulifa“, “Ṣǝˁǝkǝl Ṭemloyos“
Thank you for your attention!