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***Filekseyus, the Ethiopic Version of the Syriac Dadisho Qatraya's
Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers***

Abstract

An Ethiopic text of monastic literature entitled *Filekseyus* is a translation from Syriac (via Arabic) of the *Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers* by Dadisho Qatraya, an East Syrian monk (7th century). It contains stories of the Egyptian monks composed in the form of questions (asked by “brethren”) and answers (given by an “interpreter” or an “old man”). The text was adopted by the West Syrians, who deleted the name of the author and attributed one of the answers to Philoxenus of Mabbug, a Syrian anti-Chalcedonian theologian. An abbreviated version was translated into Arabic and subsequently, in 1365, into Ethiopic (by the renowned metropolitan Abba Sälama).

In the appendix one entry is translated and compared with a translation of Dadisho's Syriac original.

The *Filekseyus* (*Filəksəyus*) is an important text of monastic literature in Ethiopia. However, notwithstanding its importance and popularity, as measured by the number of manuscripts, the text has so far not attracted the attention of scholars, and has been neither published nor translated into any Western language. The reason for this may be its title, which – as in the case of the *Qerällos*, indicating Cyril of Alexandria – seemed to suggest that it was a translation of a treatise by Philoxenus of Mabbug, the famous Syrian anti-Chalcedonian theologian (c. 450–523): Ethiopologists may have thought that the work was more interesting to Syrologists than to themselves.

The Monastic Literature in Ethiopia in General

Monastic literature in Ethiopia forms quite a voluminous group of texts. As far as I can see the general works on monasticism or the extant encyclopaedias on Christianity (or early Christianity) do not, with few exceptions,¹ do justice either to this genre of literature or to Ethiopian monasticism in general. Therefore a few words on this topic may not be out of place.

As is well known, among the earliest texts (as early as the Axumite period) to be translated from Greek into Ethiopic there was a monastic rule. It was the *Rule of Pachomius* for the cenobitic life (ሥርዐት: ዘ... ጳኮሚክ), which imposed on monks not only prayer and fasting but also work and reading of the holy books. The Ethiopic *Rule* is however not a simple translation from the Greek (only the first two parts are), but it is augmented by the so-called “Third rule”, an Ethiopic addition of the 14th or 15th century, containing apocalyptic visions of the vicissitudes of bad and good monks.² In the 15th century a new rule appeared, the so-called *Rule of Saint Antony*. The attribution is however apocryphal, the rule in fact being an original Ethiopic composition (as yet unpublished).³ However neither of these is “the” rule of Ethiopian monasticism. Rather we find notes or specific *ad hoc* rules which were agreed upon by the monks in this or that monastery. Moreover the rules were never compiled into codes, but were recorded as additional texts in various codices containing other compositions.⁴

There are also rituals for the rites of entering monastic life, as for instance the “Order of monasticism” (ሥርዐት: ምንክስና) of the 14th century, attributed to Jacob of Serug,⁵ and another attributed to Antony, combined with the rule mentioned above.⁶

These rules do not however comprise the entirety of monastic literature in Ethiopic. There are, to begin with, numerous texts describing the lives of famous monastic saints, texts usually entitled *zena* (‘news’ or ‘story’) or *güdl* – lit. ‘combat’ (a calque of the Greek ἁγών) or simply ‘life’. These are often full of folkloristic and legendary mate-

¹ E.g. Getatchew Haile’s entry on ‘Ethiopia’, in: *Encyclopedia of Monasticism*, vol. I, ed. W.M. Johnston, Chicago, 2000, pp. 454–460; and *idem*, ‘Ethiopian Monasticism’, in: *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. A.S. Atiya, vol. 3, New York 1991, pp. 990–995.

² Published by A. Dillmann, in his *Chrestomathia Aethiopica*, Lipsiae 1866, pp. 57–69; repr. in: *Anthologia Aethiopica*, hrsg. v. E. Hamerschmidt, Hildesheim 1988. *The Rules of Pachomius*, transl. from the Ethiopic by G.H. Schodde, *Presbyterian Review*, 6 (1885), pp. 678–689. For any further philological work on the rule O. Löfgren’s work ‘Zur Textkritik der äthiopischen Pachomiusregeln I, II’, *Le Monde Oriental*, 30 (1936), pp. 171.187, should be consulted.

³ E. Cerulli, ‘Il monachesimo in Etiopia’, in: *Il monachismo orientale: Atti del Convegno di Studi Orientali che sul predetto tema si tenne a Roma, sotto la direzione del Pontificio Istituto Orientale, nei giorni 9, 10, 11 e 12 aprile 1958*, (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 153), Roma 1958, p. 265 (259–278); the mss are listed there in note 16.

⁴ *Ibid.*; Cerulli published a series of such rules spread among the Ethiopian monks in Egypt and Palestine; *Etiopi in Palestina: storia della comunità etiopica in Gerusalemme*, I, Roma 1947, pp. 380–481.

⁵ E.g. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, D’Abbadie 71, C. Conti Rossini, nr. 78, Notice sur les manuscrits éthiopiens de la collection d’Abbadie [part 3], *JA*, 10:20 (1912), p. 465.

⁶ Ricci, *LettEt*, p. 816.

rial and tell of extraordinary deeds and miracles. The genre thus actually borders upon hagiography. Notwithstanding their miraculous contents some of them are valuable as historical sources for events beyond the monastic milieu, since famous monks often maintained contacts with rulers.

As a separate genre one can mention here the “genealogies of monks” tracing in more or less legendary manner the filiation of Ethiopian monks from Antony the Egyptian (ልደተ፡ አበዊ፡ መከላት፡).⁷ A similar type is represented by the lists of the abbots of more important monasteries.⁸

Probably in the 15th century a translation was made of a collection of apophthegmata and stories of the Egyptian Desert Fathers, which in Ethiopic is called *The Paradise* or *The Story of the Fathers* (ገነተ፡ or ዜና፡ አበው፡). This is a vast collection mainly derived from ᾿Αποφθέγματα τῶν ἀγίων γερόντων but also from the ten books of the *Lives of the Fathers*, and partly from other collections,⁹ besides works of Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Ephrem, Isaac of Niniveh, Macarius and Cyril. The second part of the work is an abbreviated paraphrase of the *Spiritual Meadow* (*Pratum Spirituale*; Λειμὼνάριον) of John Moschus (550–634).¹⁰ However in the Ethiopic version it is attributed to Sophronius the patriarch of Jerusalem, as is also the case in some Greek manuscripts and at the end of the *Acts of the Second Council of Nicaea*.¹¹

The monastic readings include also the three *Books of the Monks*: (መጻሕፍተ፡ መከላት፡), to which we shall return, and the *Garden of the Monks* (ገነተ፡ መከላት፡), also known as the *Story of the venerable fathers* (ዜና፡ አበው፡ ክቡራን፡), published with a Latin translation by Victor Arras under the title of *Forty Stories of the Monks* (፻፡ (አርባ፡) ዜና፡ ዘትሰመዶ፡ ገነተ፡ መከላት፡).¹² Although this work deals with non-Ethiopian Fathers, it seems – according to C. Conti Rossini – to be an original Ethiopian work, a collection of ascetical teachings in imitation of Palladius's *Historia Lausiaca*. It was composed before 1425.¹³

Another text of this genre is entitled *Lives of the Holy Fathers* (ገድለ፡ አበው፡ ቅዱሳን፡) or again *The Paradise* or *Garden*¹⁴ of the Monks (ገነተ፡ መከላት፡). The text was edited with a Latin translation by the same Victor Arras under the title *Geronticon*.¹⁵ This is

⁷ Cp. e.g. J. Perruchon, ‘Deux notes indiquant les tribus auxquelles appartenaient les apôtres, le seconde donnant la généalogie des moines d’Abyssinie depuis S. Antoine’, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 12 (1897–98), pp. 403–408.

⁸ Cp. e.g. Getatchew Haile, ‘The monastic genealogy of the line of Tāklā Haymanot of Shoa’, *RSE*, 29 (1982–83), pp. 7–38.

⁹ C. Conti Rossini, ‘Note per la storia letteraria abissina’, *RRAL*, 5:8 (1899), p. 266.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Quadragesima historiae monachorum*, ed. [transtulit] V. Arras, (CSCO vol. 505–506, SAc 85–86), Lovanii 1988.

¹³ I. Guidi, *Storia*, p. 36.

¹⁴ The Ethiopic ገነተ፡ can be translated in either way. As can be seen from the examples quoted above, this word is often met in the titles of Ethiopic monastic literature.

¹⁵ *Geronticon*, ed. [latine reddidit] V. Arras, (CSCO 476–477, SAc 79–80), Lovanii 1986.

a translation of apophthegmata of the Desert Fathers taken mostly from the Alphabetical collection, supplemented with excerpts from Pachomius, Evagrius, *Historia Lausiaca*, Daniel of Scete, Anastasius Sinaita and others. The oldest manuscript is from the year 1586/87.

Yet another collection of monastic texts is that preserved in British Library manuscript Oriental 764, lacking any particular title. It was published by V. Arras under the simple appellation *Collectio Monastica*,¹⁶ and contains treatises and apophthegmata of Macarius the Egyptian, Evagrius, Pachomius, Ammonius, Ephrem and others. The oldest manuscript is from the 17th century.

The last collection to be mentioned here is yet again called the *Garden or Paradise*. Its descriptive title is *The Story of the Fathers and their Sayings, which they asked each other ... and it is called the Paradise* (ዜናሆሙ፡ ለአበው፡ ወነገሮሙ፡ ዘትስእሉ፡ በበይናቲሆሙ፡ ... ወይሰመይ፡ ገነት፡). This was also published by Arras, but to differentiate it from other similar collections he called it *Patericon*.¹⁷ It contains pronouncements of the Desert Fathers as well as stories taken from John Moschus, Athanasius Sinaita and others, and, as in other cases, accompanied by some fragments from Ephrem, John Chrysostom, Macarius, John Saba, Isaac of Niniveh and others. The oldest manuscript is from the 15th century.

The extant editions that we have noted do not exhaust the richness of monastic literature in Ethiopic. It is a pity that although some of them were published as early as the 1960's almost no studies have been produced on them.¹⁸ This is perhaps not surprising given the small number of active Ethiopologists with competence in Ge'ez. On the other hand those who do work on Ethiopic literature tend to concentrate on original Ethiopic writings, rather than on translations. Therefore little is known about the relation of these texts to each other,¹⁹ or to similar collections in other languages.²⁰ One may however venture an opinion that they entered Ethiopic literature some time between the 14th and 16th centuries, and were consequently most probably translated from Arabic (not from Greek or Coptic).²¹

¹⁶ *Collectio monastica*, ed. [interpretatus est] V. Arras, (CSCO 238–239, SAe 45–46), Louvain 1963.

¹⁷ *Patericon aethiopice*, ed. [interpr.] V. Arras, (CSCO 277–278, SAe 53–54), Louvain 1967.

¹⁸ The exception is: J.-M. Sauge, 'Un exemple typique des relations culturelles entre l'Arabe-Chrétien et l'Éthiopien: un *Patericon* récemment publié', in: *IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma, 10–15 Aprile 1972)*, t. I: *Sezione Storica*, (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Problemi Attuali di Scienza e di Cultura, Quaderno, N. 191), Roma 1974, pp. 321–388.

¹⁹ V. Arras in his edition of the *Patericon* (above, n. 17) provided a comparative table of contents of the apophthegmata found there, listing their counterparts in other non-Ethiopic collections; *Versio*, pp. 184–191.

²⁰ For which see M. van Esbroeck, 'Apophthegmata Patrum', *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. by A. Di Berardino, vol. I, Cambridge 1992, pp. 60–61 (here further literature is provided).

²¹ Incidentally, no research on the monastic literature in Arabic has been done either, and the state of publication of the relevant texts in that language is much worse.

The Filekseyus: Title and Origin

Its short title suggested that its author was Philoxenus of Mabbug, an anti-Chalcedonian theologian (ca 450–523) who wrote in Syriac. This impression was confirmed by the Ethiopian (full) title: ተስጋለሎታተ፡ ዜናሆሙ፡ ለአበው፡ መነሳሳት፡ ግብጻውያን፡ ወጸሐፎ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ፊልክሰዩስ፡ ሶርያዊ፡ ኤጲስ፡ ቆጶስ፡ ዘመንበግ፡ – “The Questions concerning the stories of the Fathers, Egyptian monks. Holy Filekseyus, the Syrian, bishop of Mānbäg, wrote it” (Ms. British Library, Oriental 759, f. 81ra, 5–9). A short title, present for example in the ms. BL Orient. 760, reads at the beginning of our text on the upper margin፡ ፊልክሰዩስ፡ ዘቅዱስ፡ መድኃኔ፡ ዓለም፡ – “Filekseyus of the Holy Saviour of the world”. It is the first word of this short title by which the text is known in Ethiopia.²²

The short title or rather its pronunciation, accepted in the present paper, is conventional. Due to the ambiguity of Ethiopic writing it can be pronounced *Filkasayus*, *Filkasyus*, *Filaksyus*, *Filakasyus*, *Filakasayus*, and *Filaksayus*. I use the latter here, because of its resemblance to the name of its supposed author, Philoxenus of Mabbug (450–523). The ending *-yus*, instead of the supposed (*Filaksä*)-*nus* comes from the error, or rather deficiency, of Arabic writing at this time seldom making use of diacritical points. When deprived of their respective diacritical points, Arabic letters *Ya* and *Nun* look the same, and the Ethiopic translator had no clue as to which was the right pronunciation.

Philoxenus of Mabbug had however nothing to do with our text,²³ and in fact it is somewhat surprising to find the Philoxenian authorship of our text being propounded in 1968 by Enrico Cerulli, the author of the influential monograph on the history of Ge‘ez literature.²⁴ It is even more surprising to find the same assertion being set forth by Lanfranco Ricci as recently as in 1991.²⁵ The correct attribution had already been established by Anton Baumstark in 1922, its context being however his *History of Syriac literature*,²⁶ a work Ethiopologists do not read often.

In fact, *Filaksayus* is a translation of a work by Dadisho Qatraya (Syr. Dādhišōʿ Qatrāyā, i.e. of Qatar), an East Syrian (“Nestorian”) monk of the monastery of Rabh Kennārē (otherwise unknown),²⁷ who lived in the seventh century. Entitled *Explanations of the Exploits of the Fathers which are written in the Book of Paradise*,²⁸ but usually referred to as *A Commentary on the Paradise of the Fathers* it is a commentary on another work of Syriac monastic literature, namely the compendium made by Enanisho (ʿĒnānīšōʿ,

²² The addition ‘of the holy Saviour of the world’, which can be found in many other short titles of Ethiopic texts, simply points out the religious importance of the text in question.

²³ N. Sims-Williams, ‘Dādhišōʿ Qatrāyā’s Commentary on the *Paradise of the Fathers*’, *Analecta Bollandiana*, 112 (1994), pp. 38–39 (33–64).

²⁴ Cerulli, *LettEt*, 1968, p. 140.

²⁵ L. Ricci, ‘Ethiopian Christian Literature’, in: *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. A. S. Atiya, vol. 3, New York 1991, p. 976b. On the other hand L. Ricci in his *LettEt*, p. 817, seemed to be aware that the attribution was wrong “... *Filksyōs* (dal nome del suo presunto autore, il siro Filosseno di Mabbugh)”...

²⁶ A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, Bonn 1922, pp. 226–227.

²⁷ N. Sims-Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²⁸ As in the ms. BL Add. 17264, quoted by Sims-Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

also an East Syrian, seventh century) of early Egyptian monastic texts, called *The Paradise of the Fathers*.²⁹ This consists of four parts: (1) *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius, (2) another collection of the stories of monks also attributed to Palladius, (3) *History of the monks* by Rufinus of Aquileia, but attributed to Jerome, and (4) apophthegmata. Dadisho Qatraya's *Commentary* is in its turn divided into two books (the first paralleling parts 1–3 of Enanisho's work, and the second paralleling part 4). It is however composed in the form of questions and answers.

Its Transmission – the Manuscripts

Since we already know that our text is actually a work of an East Syrian ("Nestorian") author, whereas the Ethiopian Orthodox church is a sister of the Syrian Orthodox Church (West Syrian, Jacobite, Miaphysite, i.e. what used to be called "Monophysite"), a word of explanation is called for.

The text must have been quite popular, at first among the East Syrian monks, but over time coming to be known on the other side of the ecclesiastical border of the Syriac speaking Churches. Being of a non-dogmatic character it could easily be adopted by the West Syrian monks, and in fact was. From the evidence of the manuscripts we know that the name of its author, Dadisho of Qatar, and that of his monastery – Rabh Kennārē, was removed by the translator or a copyist, in order to make the reading more palatable to Jacobite readers. At the same time the answer to one of the questions in the complete work was attributed to Philoxenus,³⁰ instead of an "Old Man",³¹ and this seems to be the reason why the whole work was subsequently attributed to this champion of Miaphysitism.

Apparently when Dadisho's text came into the hands of the West Syrian editors, an abbreviation of this voluminous text³² was made. It is this abbreviated version, and not the original, which was subsequently translated into Arabic and from this language eventually into Ethiopic. As David Phillips' research has shown,³³ there are two Syriac versions or sets of excerpts, and the relation of the Syriac abridgement to the Arabic and Ethiopic text seems rather complicated. The solution to this problem must however be put aside until the Syriac texts of Dadisho's *Commentary*, the full and the abbreviated, and the Arabic and /or Ethiopic are published.

Although the attribution of Dadisho's *Commentary* to Philoxenus may have already been present in the Syriac Jacobite version, we cannot be sure of this since the extant

²⁹ Not published.

³⁰ Not extant in the Ethiopic version.

³¹ Sims-Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41.

³² In 4 volumes, Sims-Williams, *op. cit.* pp. 34–35.

³³ D. Phillips, 'The Syriac Commentary of Dadisho Qatraya on the Paradise of the Fathers: towards a critical edition', read at the 14th International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford 2003, forthcoming in *Studia Patristica*.

Syriac manuscripts are acephalous. In any case the attribution is present in the Arabic version, appearing in a number of manuscripts, for instance in two manuscripts of Alphonse Mingana's collection at Selly Oaks, Birmingham, Mingana 174 of c. 1840 A.D., and 403, of c. 1500 A.D.³⁴

The Arabic (Garshuni³⁵) title as quoted in Mingana's *Catalogue* reads:

B-ʔihṭiṣār kitāb ʔaḥbār al-rahbān al-Miṣriyyīn wa-ṣarḥuhu li-Filaksīnūs al-Suryānī ʔusqf Manbiḡ – “An Abbreviated Book of the Stories of the Egyptian monks and the Commentary by Philoxenus the Syrian, the bishop of Mabbuḡ.”

Moreover Ms. Mingana 174 states that the work was translated into Arabic from Syriac.³⁶

According to the colophone in at least four Ethiopic manuscripts the work was translated (from Arabic³⁷) into Ethiopic by Abba Sālāma.³⁸ Abba Sālāma (II) is a well known name in the history of Ethiopic literature. He was a metropolitan of Ethiopia in the years 1348–1388. The metropolitans, selected by the patriarchs of Alexandria from among the Coptic monks, seldom managed to learn the language of the country. However there were exceptions, and Abba Sālāma II was the most famous. Although nothing is known about his life before he became the head of the Church of Ethiopia it is clear that he was a child of the literary renaissance of the Coptic Church in the 13th–14th centuries. He soon realised that the Ethiopian Church lacked many books of religious literature which the Coptic Church already possessed at that time in Arabic translations. Therefore he either translated some books into Ethiopic himself or stimulated other monks to do so, either Copts who had accompanied him to Ethiopia and who had also learned Ethiopic, or Ethiopians who knew Arabic: he regarded the works in question as indispensable. At least 14 texts are known to have been translated by this extraordinary metropolitan or under his influence, for which he is known as the ‘Translator’ (መተርጉሞ).³⁹

Some manuscripts state the date of the translation of *Filekseyus* to be the year 1021 of the Era of the Martyrs⁴⁰ (which started in 284 A.D.), which gives us the date 1304–05 A.D. Since however the pontificate of Abba Sālāma falls within the years 1348–1388, Oscar

³⁴ A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts now in the possession of the Trustees of the Woodbrooke Settlement, Selly Oak, Birmingham, vol. I: Syriac and Garshuni manuscripts*, Cambridge 1933, coll. 382–383, 718–719, respectively. Two other manuscripts in the same collection which contain the text (Mingana 370, of 1688, col. 682, and 457, of 1843 A.D., col. 813) do not provide that attribution. N. Sims-Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 38, lists some other Arabic manuscripts.

³⁵ I.e. written in Arabic language, but in Syriac script.

³⁶ Mingana, *op. cit.*, col. 382.

³⁷ BL Orient. 760, W. Wright, *Cat BM*, p. 178a, Ethiopic text.

³⁸ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, D'Abbadie 37, C. Conti Rossini, 'Notice sur les manuscrits éthiopiens de la collection d'Abbadie', *JA*, 11:2 (1913), p. 6, and EMMML 1387; Getatchew Haile, *Cat EMMML IV*, 1979, p. 450; BL Or. 761, Wright, *Cat BM*, p. 178b.

³⁹ A. van Lantschoot, 'Abbā Salāmā, métropolitaine d'Éthiopie (1348–1388) et son rôle de traducteur', in: *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma 2–4 aprile 1959)*, Roma 1960, pp. 399–401.

⁴⁰ E.g. BL Orient. 760, f. 493, lower margin; Wright, *Cat BM*, p. 178; BN d'Abbadie 172, C. Conti Rossini, 'Notice', *JA*, 11:2 (1913), p. 7, no. 122.

Löfgren suggested that the date found in those manuscripts should be corrected to 1081 of the Era of the Martyrs (that is the sign for 20 (Ⲫⲟ) should be replaced by that for 80 (Ⲫⲟⲩ), which would give us the year 1365 A.D.⁴¹

The attribution to Abba Sālāma reads:

አስተሐመመ፡ አዕልዎ፡ ኀበ፡ ግዕዝ፡ ሊቀ፡ ኢጲስ፡ ቆጶሳት፡ ዘአዜብ፡ አባ፡ ሰላማ። – “Abba Sālāma, the head of the bishops of the South [= Ethiopia], took care of translating it into Ge‘ez”.⁴²

That the translation was done from an Arabic text is not surprising, since in the epoch in question this was the case with all the translations, including the works of the monastic literature that we have already named.

Its Literary Context: *The Books of the Monks* (መጻሕፍተ፡ መክሳት፡)

Filekseyus belongs to a group of three monastic writings called in Ethiopic the *Books of the Monks* (መጻሕፍተ፡ መክሳት፡). These are ascetic writings which until the modern epoch seem to be basic works for the religious and spiritual education of the country's monks.

Interestingly all three of them are works by Syrian authors. The translations were however done through the intermediary of their Arabic versions in use in the Coptic Church. The works in question are:

The Spiritual Old Man (አረጋዊ፡ መንፈሳዊ፡), which contains the ascetic writings of John Saba (Yōḥannān Sābhā). This is an Eastern Syrian ascetic, better known under the name of John of Dalyāthā (8th century).⁴³ It is interesting to see that in this case the name *Sābhā*, which in Syriac means ‘old man’, was translated into Ethiopic as ‘old man’ (Eth. *Arāgawi*; አረጋዊ፡) rather than being retained as a personal name. The Ethiopic version was made in the epoch of the emperor Ləbnā Dəngəl (1508–1540).⁴⁴ It consists of 32 or, in other manuscripts, 37 homilies (ፎርሳፍት፡) on spiritual perfection. Moreover there are appended 48 (or 45) letters written by the same author and finally a collection of apophthegmata grouped into three homilies.⁴⁵

The second work in the group is called *Mar Yəshaq* (ማር፡ ይስሐቅ፡), i.e. *Mar Isaac*. In the word *Mar* we see the Syriac honorific title spelled *māry* – lit. ‘my lord’, but pronounced *mār*, which in the Ethiopic version has been kept untranslated. In any case the work is a treatise on asceticism by the East Syrian writer Isaac of Niniveh (7th century).

⁴¹ O. Löfgren, *Katalog über die äthiopischen Handschriften in der Universitätsbibliothek Uppsala: sowie Anhänge über äthiopische Handschriften in anderen Bibliotheken und in Privatbesitz in Schweden*, Uppsala 1974, p. 106.

⁴² A. van Lantschoot, *op. cit.* (in note 39), p. 400.

⁴³ S.P. Brock, *A brief outline of Syriac literature*, (Mōrān ʾEthʾ Series; 9), Kottayam (Kerala), 1997, p. 60. Previously he was believed to have lived in the sixth century.

⁴⁴ Perhaps even at his request, Guidi, *Storia*, p. 68.

⁴⁵ Conti Rossini, *op. cit.* (in n. 9), pp. 271–272.

These two texts must have travelled the same way as the *Filekseyus*, i.e. from the East Syriac realm to the West Syriac and further via Arabic translation into Ethiopic.⁴⁶ In Ethiopia we often find them copied in the same manuscripts together with the *Filekseyus*. Out of the 17 manuscripts containing the text of *Filekseyus* whose existence is known to me (see below), four contain the other two works in addition to *Filekseyus*, and four more at least one of them. Moreover we know of a letter from the year 1919 written by *Ras* Tafari (the future emperor Haile Sellassie) to a *ras* of Wale (in the Wällo province) asking him to provide copyists and parchment for *mämhar*⁴⁷ Akale Wäld for copying both *Filekseyus* and *The Spiritual Old Man*.⁴⁸

The manuscript containing *Filekseyus* are as follows:

London, British Library:

1. Orient. 759; (Wright 266, p. 177): 17th or the beginning of 18th century, 3 coll., f. 81ra–128vc;
2. Orient. 760; (Wright 267, p. 178): 18th century, 2 coll., f. 4ra–50r;
3. Orient. 761; (Wright 268, p. 178): 18th century, 2 coll., f. 3ra–94vb.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale:

4. Zotenberg 157,⁴⁹ of the 17th C., fol. 4, only the beginning of *Filekseyus*.

Paris, BN, Coll. d'Abbadie:

5. D'Abbadie 37 (Conti Rossini⁵⁰ 121), 18th or 19th century, f. 18r–66r;
6. D'Abbadie 172 (Conti Rossini 122), 18th or 19th century, f. 102r–193v;
7. D'Abbadie 23 (Conti Rossini 123), 18th or 19th century, f. 147r–219.

Germany:

8. Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Orient. quart. 42 (UB Stuttgart), not dated: 18th century (?), f. 3ra–82va.⁵¹

Sweden, Uppsala:

9. O Etiop 7, Löfgren⁵² 33, p. 105–106: 17th or 18th century, in four parts, f. 1–91.

USA, Collegeville, Minnesota and Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML), Addis Ababa:⁵³

10. EMML 15, 17th or 18th century, f. 183r–247v;
11. EMML 418, 18th or early 19th century, f. 3r–80v;

⁴⁶ None of them has been published.

⁴⁷ A title of a learned man in the traditional Ethiopian scholarly system.

⁴⁸ Ms. EMML 3628; Getatchew Haile, *Cat EMML IX*, 1987, p. 76.

⁴⁹ H. Zotenberg, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens (gheez et amharique) de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris 1877, p. 287.

⁵⁰ C. Conti Rossini, 'Notice sur les manuscrits éthiopiens de la collection d'Abbadie [pt. 4]', *JA*, 11:2 (1913), pp. 6–7 (5–64).

⁵¹ V. Six, *Äthiopische Handschriften, Teil 3: Handschriften deutscher Bibliotheken, Museen, und aus Privatbesitz*, hrsg. v. E. Hammerschmidt, (VOHD, 20:6), Stuttgart 1994, p. 458. A short fragment was identified by Veronika Six in Cod. Orient. 412 of the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg, fol. 1r, *ibid.* p. 325–326.

⁵² See above note 42.

⁵³ The catalogues of the Addis Ababa and Collegeville collection by W.F. Macomber and Getatchew Haile, vol. 1–10, Collegeville, MN, 1975–1993,

12. EMLL 1387, 18th century, f. 1r–81r;
13. EMLL 1836, 17th century, f. 112r–203v;
14. EMLL 1848, 20th century (1951/52), f. 2r–112r;
15. EMLL 2100, 17th century, f. 163r–223r;
16. EMLL 2127, 19th–20th century, f. 10r–162v;
17. EMLL 2837, 17th or 18th century, f. 4r–81v.

None of the manuscripts in the Western collections seem to be older than the 17th century, the majority – nine – being from the 18th or 19th century; one is from the 20th century.

Its Morphology

Filekseyus is written in the form of questions and answers. The questions are introduced with the words: **ይቤ: አካው:** (*yābelu ʾaḥaw*) – “The brethren said”, and the answers with the words: **ይቤ: መተርጉም:** (*yābe mätärgwəm*) – “The Interpreter said”. Some of the questions have additional explanations or comments introduced with the words: **ይቤ: አረጋዊ:** (*yābe ʾarägawi*), or **ይቤ: አረጋይ:** (*yābe ʾarägay*) – “The Old Man said”.

These initial words are written with red ink. The scribe quite often used to write first the text with black ink leaving free space for the initial words to be written later in red. When it turned out that the place would not suffice he abbreviated them, writing for instance only **ይቤ: መተርጉ:** (*yābe mätärgwə*), or **ይቤ: አረጋ:** (*yābe ʾaräga*).

In some of the manuscripts the questions are numbered. The numbers, however, seem in each case to have been provided by the copyists, since there is no agreement between them as to how many the questions are. One Collegeville manuscript (EMML 15) counts 251 entries⁵⁴ (one entry: a question and the accompanying answer), another (EMML 1387) 245,⁵⁵ and yet another (EMML 418) has only sporadic numbers, providing instead a sort of index which however shows the sum of 175 entries only.⁵⁶ The Uppsala manuscript has 244 entries and the British Library Orient. 760 has 191, whereas its Ethiopic index lists 234 items.⁵⁷

Yet the text of the last two, as far as I can see, is the same.⁵⁸ It seems that the differences are due partly to different counting systems: some manuscripts (e.g. BL Or. 760) count the comments of the Old Man (Arägay / Arägawi) as separate entries, others (e.g. Upps. O Etiop. 7) do not. One can also observe simple arithmetic errors which, I suppose, are responsible for most of the differences in the quantity of the counted entries.

⁵⁴ W.F. Macomber, *Cat EMLL I*, 1975, p. 17.

⁵⁵ Getatchew Haile, *Cat EMLL IV*, 1979, p. 450.

⁵⁶ W.F. Macomber, *Cat EMLL II*, 1976, p. 136.

⁵⁷ Tanasee 53 / Kebran 53 has 176 entries, but the manuscript is not complete, E. Hammerschmidt, *Äthiopische Handschriften vom Tānāsee, 1: Reisebericht und Beschreibung der Handschriften in dem Kloster der Heiligen Gabriel auf der Insel Kebran*, (VOHD, 20:1), Wiesbaden 1973, p. 205.

⁵⁸ I have only had access to three mss.: Uppsala, O Etiop. 7, British Library, Oriental 759 and 760.

A more important division system, partly numbered, partly not, is that into chapters or sections (**ክፍላት**). This system bears the traces of the division of material into parts corresponding to the four books of the full version of the *Paradise of the Fathers* by Enanisho (^c*Enanīšō*), that is the one on which Dadisho Qatraya wrote his *Commentary*. Consequently chapter 1 of the *Filekseyus* corresponds to the first book of Enanisho, based on the *Historia Lausiaca* of Palladius. In Ethiopic this part is introduced with the following words:

“This is the first chapter of the questions concerning the stories of the Fathers, the Egyptian monks” (**ወውእቱ፡ ክፍል፡ ቀዳሚ፡ ዘእምተስእሎታተ፡ ዜናሆሙ፡ ለአበው፡ መነኮሳት፡ ባብዳውያን፡**).⁵⁹

The beginning of the second chapter is marked only by its number, but at its end we find the following remark: “What has been abbreviated in chapter two is completed” (**ዘተፈጸመ፡ ዘአኅፅር፡ ኪያሁ፡ ውስተ፡ ክፍል፡ ካእብ፡**).⁶⁰ This part corresponds to the second collection of Enanisho, also attributed to Palladius.

More informative is the colophon of section three, which says: “The third chapter, in abbreviation, is completed, (the chapter) by Jerome who put down the questions, and two (previous) chapters of Palladius. This one (= Jerome) wrote in the epoch of Theodosius the Great while Palladius wrote in the epoch of Arcadius, his son.” (**መልእክ፡ ክፍል፡ ሣልስ፡ በአኅፅር፡ ለይሩሚስ፡ ዘአንበረ፡ ተስእሎታተ፡ ወ፪፡ ክፍላት፡ ዘጵላድዮስ፡ እስመ፡ ውእቱ፡ ጸሐፊ፡ በዘመነ፡ ቴዎድሮስ፡ ዘዩባሲ፡ ወጵላድዮስ፡ ጸሐፊ፡ በአዝማነ፡ አርቃድዮስ፡ ወልዱ፡**).⁶¹ This section corresponds to the third part of Enanisho's *Paradise*, being the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, attributed to Jerome.

Directly after this comes the incipit of the fourth part:

“The fourth part, that is the last of the stories of the hermits, which was written in the *Book of Paradise* (taken) from the last part written by Palladius, the enquiries of the brethren” (**ክፍል፡ ራብዕ፡**⁶² **ወውእቱ፡ ደኃሪ፡ ዘእምዜናሆሙ፡ ለባሕታውያን፡ እንተ፡ ጽሕፍት፡ ውስተ፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ገነት፡ እምክፍል፡ ደኃሪ፡ ዘጸሐፎ፡ ጵላድዮስ፡ ተስእሎታ[ት]፡ አኅው፡**).⁶³

The fourth part in Enanisho's *Commentary* is divided into two sections, but in the Ethiopic we have nine sections (**ክፍላት**) which are sometimes numbered (as in BL Or. 760), sometimes not (as in EMMML 1836, and Upps. O Etiop 7). In both cases they have short captions:

[5] On prayer and vigilance (**በእንተ፡ ጸሎት፡ ወትጋህ፡**).⁶⁴

[6] On the rules of (spiritual) combat (**በእንተ፡ ሥርዐተ፡ ተጋድሎት፡**).⁶⁵

[7] On love and compassion (**በእንተ፡ ፍቅር፡ ወምሕረት፡**).⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Ms. BL Or. 759, f. 81ra, 5–7.

⁶⁰ BL Or. 760, f. 12 vb, 15 from the bottom; Upps. O Etiop 7, f. 18 va,

⁶¹ BL Or. 760, f. 14 rc, 5–11.

⁶² My italics mark the text in the manuscript written in red.

⁶³ BL Or. 760, f. 14 rc, 13–17.

⁶⁴ BL Or. 760, f. 20 vc, 3.

⁶⁵ BL Or. 760, f. 23va, 11.

⁶⁶ BL Or. 760, f. 27vb, 11 from the bottom.

- These sections are of varying length and contain from 7 to 34 entries. At least one manuscript known to me has in the end a sort of table of contents or index,⁷³ which lists the entries by providing short captions.

Finally, as an illustration of how *Filekseyus*, an abbreviated version of Dadisho Qatraya's commentary, is related to the latter's full text, I have provided below, the Ethiopic form of one entry of our text, edited on the basis of three manuscripts (Upps. Etiop. 7, London BL Or. 759 and Or. 760), together with a translation from Ethiopic of the entry juxtaposed synoptically with a translation from the Syriac full text of Dadisho Qatraya's *Commentary* by Nicholas Sims-Williams published in his paper of 1994.⁷⁶ The brethren ask here why Mar Awgin, a half-legendary East Syrian *proto-monachos* was not mentioned by Palladius.

ለምንትኑ፡ ዘኢጸቀፈ፡ ጵላድዮስ፡⁷⁸ ውሰተ፡ መጽቀፈ፡ ገነት፡ ዜናተሁ፡ ለቅዱስ፡ ማር፡ አውኪን።

⁷⁸ Upps. O Et. 7: ጵላንድዮስ:

ይቤ፡ መተርጉም፡⁷⁹

እስመ፡ ኮነ፡ ውእቱ፡ እምቅድመ፡ አዝማኑ፡ ወበመዋዕለ፡ ቈስጠንጢኖስ፡ ንጉሥ፡ መጽአ፡ ጎበ፡ ደወለ፡ ፋርስ፡ በመዋዕለ፡ ሳፎር፡⁸⁰ ንጉሥ፡ ውጎደረ፡ ቅሩበ፡ እምንጽቢን፡⁸¹ ውስተ፡ ወግረ፡ መግራ፡ ወመርደን፡⁸² ወገበረ፡ መንክራተ፡ ብዙኃተ፡⁸³ በውስተ፡ ደወለ፡ ሮም፡ ወፋርስ፡

አንሥአ፡⁸⁴ በጸሎቱ፡ ለወሬዛ፡ ዘቀተሎ፡ አንበሳ፡ በጊዜ፡ ዘኮነ፡ ያስተጋብ[Upps Et. 7,68va]እ፡ ዕፀወ፡ በውስተ፡ ገዳም፡ ወሰመዮ፡ አልዓዛር፡ ወአልበሶ፡ አስኬማ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ወረሰዮ፡ ባሕታዊ፤ ወኮነ፡ ሎቱ፡ ረድአ፡⁸⁵

ወበአዝማን፡⁸⁶ ካልእኒ፡ ቦአ፡ ማእከለ፡ እሳት፡ መውዕይት፡⁸⁷ ወገብረ፡ ስግደተ፡ ዘበጸሎት፡

ወበምድረ፡ ፋርስኒ፡ አውፅአ፡ ሰይጣነ፡ እምወልደ፡⁸⁸ ንጉሥ፡⁸⁹ ሳፎር፡ ወተዋቀ[Or 759, 116vb]ሠ፡ ምስለ፡ ሰብአ፡ ሰገል፡ በቅድመ፡ ንጉሥ፡ ወሞኦሙ፡

ወበእንተ፡ ጥያቄ፡ ሃይማኖቱ፡ ገብረ፡⁹⁰ [Or 760, 37ra]እሳተ፡ ዐቢዮ፡⁹¹ ውስተ፡ ዐጸደ፡ ንጉሥ፡ ወዐተቦ፡ ለ፩፡ እምአርዳኢሁ፡ ፲፡ ወአዘዞ፡ ከመ፡ ይባእ፡ ወይቁም፡ ውስተ፡⁹² ማእከለ፡ እሳት፡⁹³ እስከኔ፡ ጸውዖ፡ ወተጎፍሩ፡ ሰብአ፡ ሰገል፡ ወሰብሕዎ፡ ለእግዚአብሔር፡ ኩሉ፡ ፩፩፡ ወውእቱ፡⁹⁴ ወሀቦ፡ ንጉሥ፡ ሳፎር፡ ሥልጣነ፡ ወሐነጸ፡ እንከ፡ አብያተ፡ ክርስቲያን፡⁹⁵ ወምኔታተ፡ ብዙኃተ፡⁹⁶ ውስተ፡⁹⁷ አድዋለ፡ አሕዋዝ፡

ወገድሎ፡ አንበረ፡ ፩፡ እምነ፡ አርዳኢሁ፡ ድርሳነ፡ ነዋኅ፡⁹⁸ ወበእንተዝ፡ ጎደገ፡ [Upps Et7, 68vb]ካዕበ፡ ጽላድዮስ፡ ዘክሮታ፡

[BL Or 760, 37ra,15; BL Or 759, 116vb,15; Upps O Et 7, 68vb,1];

⁷⁹ Upps. O Et. 7: መተርጉ፡

⁸⁰ BL Or. 760: ሳፎር፡

⁸¹ Upps. O Et. 7: እምንጽቢን፡

⁸² BL Or. 760, Upps. O Et. 7: ወማርደን፡

⁸³ መንክራተ፡ ብዙኃተ፡] BL Or. 759: ብዙኃተ፡ መንክራተ፡

⁸⁴ BL Or. 759: ው-፡

⁸⁵ Upps. O Et. 7: ረድኦ፡

⁸⁶ Upps. O Et. 7: ወበአዝማን፡

⁸⁷ BL Or. 759: መውዕይት፡

⁸⁸ Upps. O Et. 7: እምወለተ፡

⁸⁹ Upps. O Et. 7: ንጉሥ፡

⁹⁰ Upps. O Et. 7: ገብሩ፡

⁹¹ BL Or. 759: ዐቢዮ፡

⁹² BL Or. 759: om.

⁹³ BL Or. 759: + መውዕይት፡

⁹⁴ BL Or. 759, Upps. O Et. 7: om.

⁹⁵ BL Or. 759: ክርስቲያናተ፡

⁹⁶ ወምኔታተ፡ ብዙኃተ፡] BL Or. 760: ወምኔታት፡ ብዙኃት፡

⁹⁷ BL Or. 759, Upps. O Et. 7: + ኩሉ፡

⁹⁸ BL Or. 759, Upps. O Et. 7: ነዋኅ፡

Ethiopic (BL Or. 760, BL Or. 759; Upps. O Et. 7)	Dadisho‘ Qatraya (according to N. S i m s - W i l l i a m s’ translation, <i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>, 112 (1994), pp. 45–47)
[Chapter] 148: The brothers said: Why Palladius did not write the story of the holy Mar Awkin [= Awgin = Eugenius] in the <i>Book of Paradise</i>? The Interpreter said: Because he was before his time, and in the days of king Qwəṣṭāntīnos (= Constantine) he came to the region of Persia in the days of the king Safor (= Shapur) and lived in the vicinity of Niṣibin (= Nisibis) in the mountain(s) Magra and Marden. And he worked many wonders in the countr(ies) of Rome and Persia. By his prayer he resuscitated a young man who was killed by a lion while gathering wood in the wilderness. He called him Al‘azar (= Lazarus) and clothed him in the holy <i>schema</i> and made him a monk, and he became his disciple. And on another occasion he went into a burning fire, and fell on his face in prayer.	“Brothers: How is it that, although the blessed Mār Eugenius [= ʾAwgīn] was a contemporary of Saint Anthony and of (revered) memory amongst the saints, and the emperor Constantine gloried in these three, (namely) the blessed Anthony, the holy Mār Eugenius, and the illustrious Alonis, above the rest of the monks of his time, (nevertheless) Palladius in the ‘Book of Paradise’ does not mention Mār Eugenius together with Abbā Anthony and Abbā Alonis and the rest of the Egyptian fathers?” “Teacher: Because before the time of Palladius, in the days of the emperor Constantine, the saint came with ten brothers to the land of Persia at the time of king Shapur and dwelt near Nisibis, in the caves on the mountain called Marde, that is, the monastery of Izlā, and it was he that began taking up abode there before all the monks of the land of Persia. For this blessed man performed many signs in the Roman Empire in the days of the emperor Constantine and in the land of Persia in the days of king Shapur, and amongst the many deeds which he performed he even raised the dead. For in the land of the Romans he once raised a dead man to life, a youth who had been killed by a lion as he was cutting wood in the wasteland. He revived this man by means of his prayer, and named him Lazarus, and clothed him in the garb of holiness, and made him a monk; and he became his attendant. On another occasion he went into the midst of a burning fire and knelt in prayer.

In the country of Persia he drove Satan from the son of king Safor, and disputed with the magi in the presence of the king, and he prevailed over them. And as a prove of his faith he made a great fire within the king's court, and signed one of his ten disciples with the sign of the cross, and ordered him to stay in the midst of the fire until he would summon him, and the magi were put to shame. And everyone praised God, and king Safor gave him authorisation, and so he built numerous churches and monasteries in the region of Ahwaz (= Khuzistan). One of his disciples wrote his life, a long homily. And therefore, again, Palladius did not mention him.	And in the land of Persia he cast out a devil from the son of Shapur, astounding the king and his nobles; and he disputed with the magi in the king's presence and vanquished them, and in confirmation of his faith he kindled a great fire in the midst of the king's court, and traced the sign of the Cross on one of the ten disciples who were with him, and commanded him to enter into the midst of the fire and stay there until he should call him; and all the magi and mobeds were confounded and put to shame, and everyone praised God, and king Shapur gave him a position of authority, and he built many churches and monasteries throughout the land of Khuzistan. And when the emperor Julian the Apostate wedown to Persia to do battle with king Shapur, the emperor Jovian – for at that time he was the commander of the army of Julian the king and emperor – went up to the mountain of Marde near Nisibis and the holy Mār Eugenius prophesied to him that Julian would be killed and that Jovian himself would become emperor; and so it came to pass, and after a few days Julian died and Jovian succeeded him as Caesar. This is the history of Mār Eugenius in brief. And this is the reason why Palladius did not mention him in the 'Book of Paradise', and also because the history of Mār Eugenius had been set out in full by one of his disciples.
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As can easily be seen the Ethiopic and consequently Arabic (and abbreviated Syriac?) text, as compared to the Syriac full text, is abridged in two ways: by removing some narremes (lemmata) totally and abbreviating the material in the other lemmata.

To conclude this rather sketchy presentation of *Filekseyus*, I would like to state my opinion that the text is definitely worth publishing and translating, both for its provision of the entire text of the abbreviated version of Dadisho's *Commentary*, of which the Syriac transmission preserved only excerpts, and for its intrinsic value as an important work of monastic literature in its Ethiopian context.