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The Ethiopic *Homily on Holy Easter* attributed to John Theologos and its Arabic *Vorlage* (CPG 4163.2)*

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Introduction

In the medieval Ethiopic compilation dubbed the *Homiliary of the Fathers* (CAe 5856), a *Homily on Holy Easter* (CAe 1265) with the following *incipit* is transmitted:¹

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¹ The *Homiliary of the Fathers*, whose ancient Ethiopic title ‘Chrysostom’ (አፈ: ወርቅ) is preserved in the colophons to some exemplars (see e.g. MS London, British Library, Or. 774, f. 168v), is attested by approximately twenty manuscripts available in physical or surrogate forms, including some only partially preserved. Other copies are known to exist in presently inaccessible ecclesiastical collections in Ethiopia. A prototypical exemplar, and that first and best known to Western scholarship, is MS London, British Library, Or. 774, described in Wright 1877, 227–229. Due to possible confusion with the ubiquitous indigenous use of the title ‘Chrysostom’ (አፈ: ወርቅ) to denote the Church Father’s *Commentary on Hebrews* (CPG 4440) over the past several centuries, we eschew applying it to the homiliary under discussion in the present scholarly context in favour of the construct *Homiliary of the Fathers*.

ንቅሁ ፡ እለ ፡ ትነውሙ ፡ ወብርሁ ፡ በክርስቶስ ፡ ተንሥኡ ፡ እለ ፡ ትነብሩ ፡ ናሁ ፡
 አስተርአየ ፡ ብርሃነ ፡ ዓለም ፡ ጠዐዩ ፡ ሰካርያን ፡ እስመ ፡ ሠረቀ ፡ ፀሐየ ፡ ጽድቅ ፡ ናሁ ፡
 ተንሥኡ ፡ እግዚእ ፡ ከመ ፡ ይኩንና ፡ ለምድር ፡ ።

Awake, ones who sleep, and be enlightened in Christ!² Arise, ones who rest! Behold, the light of the world has appeared. Observe, o drunkards, that the sun of righteousness has shone forth. Behold, the Lord has risen to judge the earth.

At least five different authorial attributions are found for this homily among its accessible Ethiopic witnesses:

- John Theologos (ዮሐንስ ፡ ቴዎሎስ), e.g. in MS Ethio-SPaRe, UM-50, f. 205v;³
- Theologos (ቴዎሎስ, *sic*), e.g. in MS London, British Library, Or. 774, f. 111v;⁴
- Theophilos (ቴዎፍሎስ), e.g. in MS EMMML 8367 (= Tānāsee 131), f. 125r;⁵
- John Chrysostom Theophilos (ዮሐንስ ፡ አፈ ፡ ወርቅ ፡ ቴዎፊሎስ), e.g. in MS EMDA 338, f. 86v;
- John Chrysostom (ዮሐንስ ፡ አፈ ፡ ወርቅ), e.g. in MS Ethio-SPaRe, AP-005, f. 40v.

The first-listed attribution, John Theologos, should doubtless be considered the earliest recoverable layer of the Ethiopic tradition.⁶ This was seemingly reduced to Theologos in some manuscripts, which became corrupted into Theophilos in others, and elsewhere was turned into forms of John Chrysostom, perhaps occasioned not merely by his general fame, but by the fact that the rubric of the

² Ephesians 5:14.

³ Although John Theologos sometimes refers to the apostle John in certain Christian contexts, especially various New Testament apocrypha, such an interpretation is not tenable in this case since the work is not presented from such an authorial perspective and overtly contains a quotation attributed to Jacob of Serugh (on which see below).

⁴ The rendering of the sobriquet in MS London, British Library, Or. 774 contains an obvious transposition of letters, an error also transpiring elsewhere, e.g. MS Ethio-SPaRe, MGM-003, f. 94r: ዮሐንስ ፡ ቴዎሎስ.

⁵ The foliation is given here according to that written on the manuscript (national inventory no. G-IV-978) for its microfilming by the EMMML project, not that given for the Hammerschmidt copy in Six 1999, 129. Importantly, while the Hammerschmidt Tānāsee microfilm omits the final few folios of the codex, these are preserved in the EMMML surrogate, where a colophon dating the manuscript to 1406/7 can be found on f. 202r.

⁶ It is, for instance, the only widespread attribution and the one found in the earliest witness, MS Ethio-SPaRe, UM-50, ff. 205v–207v, 209rv, 199r–200v, 202r–203v, 188r–189r (thirteenth century). A few obvious errors derived from this form, such as that in fn. 4, are not included in the listing.

preceding text (CAe 2120 = CPG 5190.11) in the *Homiliary of the Fathers* begins identically with a more straightforward attribution to this better-known figure.

Previous Attribution and Identification

In the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Witold Witakowski attributes the homily in question to Gregory of Nazianzus and identifies it with one of Gregory's *Orations* (CPG 3010):⁷

Homily ... on the Holy Easter (ድርሳን፡ ... በእንተ፡ ቅድስት፡ ፋሲካ), Därsan ... bä'antä qaddäst fasika, extant in the Homiliary in BritLib Orient. 775 (fol. 111v–118v, from the 15th cent.), is either G.'s First or, more probably, Second *Easter Oration* (number 1 or 45 in the whole collection; s. CPG II, no. 3010); both *Orations* also exist in Arabic (Graf 1937:330)⁸

We begin with the proposed attribution to Gregory of Nazianzus. The text under consideration is never transmitted under the name of Gregory of Nazianzus in Ethiopic. Rather, the text is attributed to John Theologos, just Theologos, Theophilos, John Chrysostom, or John Chrysostom Theophilos in Ethiopic manuscripts, with the first to be preferred, as discussed above. The attribution to Gregory of Nazianzus found in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* is undoubtedly due to the fact that the Church Father is at times called Gregory Theologos (ጎርጎርዮስ፡ ቱዋሎጎስ, with variant spellings) in Ethiopic,⁹ as in the broader Christian tradition. In this regard, it seems that Witakowski may have been misled by Wright, who in his catalogue gives the author of the homily as '(Gregory) Theologus', with the parentheses thusly in the original.¹⁰ But the homily under consideration is never associated with the name of Gregory: not in MS British Library, Or. 774, which Wright is describing; not elsewhere in the Ethiopic manuscript tradition, as de-

⁷ 'Gregory of Nazianzos', *EAE*, II (2005), 891a–892b (W. Witakowski).

⁸ The ellipses are in the original (see fn. 11 below). Note that 'BritLib Orient. 775' seems to be a simple typo for MS British Library, Or. 774 for at least two reasons: 1. it is in MS British Library, Or. 774 that this text opens on f. 111v, whereas in MS British Library, Or. 775 it begins on f. 134v; 2. it is MS British Library, Or. 774 that Wright dates to the fifteenth century, whereas he assigns MS British Library, Or. 775 to the eighteenth (Wright 1877, 228–230).

⁹ To give but two examples, Gregory Theologos (ጎርጎርዮስ፡ ታኦጎሎስ) appears in the Ethiopic translation of the so-called 'Second Book' of Sāwirus ibn al-Muqaffa' (e.g. in MS Paris, Bib. Nat. Éth. d'Abbadie 155, ff. 118r, 133v, 146r, 147r, 150v), and some excerpts in MS EMMML 1956, ff. 57r–59r are attributed to Gregory Theologos (ጎርጎርዮስ፡ ታዋሎጎስ); see Getatchew Haile and Macomber 1981, 470.

¹⁰ Wright 1877, 228. Wright includes the pertinent section of the rubric in *fidäl*, from which the reconstructed character of the name Gregory is readily apparent.

scribed above; and not in the Arabic *Vorlage*, as will become clear shortly.¹¹ The misattribution of the homily to Gregory of Nazianzus is thus a scholarly invention, one initiated by Wright and perpetuated by Witakowski and others.¹²

The misattribution to Gregory of Nazianzus seems to have been the catalyst for a further error: The misidentification of the homily as one of Gregory's *Orations* (CPG 3010). In the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Witakowski suggests that the homily is either the first or second *Easter Oration* (number 1 or 45). Comparison of the Ethiopic homily to these Greek texts, however, definitively shows that it is not related in any way to either oration.¹³ Thus, the identification suggested in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* is also incorrect.¹⁴ In fact, excluding excerpts, the only *Oration* of Gregory of Nazianzus extant in Ethiopic translation is the thirty-eighth, *In Nativitatem* (CAe 1184), transmitted within the homiletical-hagiographical collection entitled *Bärbara* (በርባራ).¹⁵

A Methodological Interlude

Widely—and rightly—acknowledged as a useful stop-gap until a new, updated history of Ethiopic literature can be produced, the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* is, like all major reference works, not without flaws, and one of its shortcomings is its treatment of translated Ethiopic texts, which are by far the majority. In particular, such works are not systematically connected to their Greek and Christian Arabic *Vorlagen*.¹⁶ Moreover, even when translated Ethiopic texts are

¹¹ In this regard it must be mentioned how misleading the ellipses are in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*: The homily is never associated with Gregory of Nazianzus in Ethiopic, but the ellipses obscure this essential point by omitting the actual attributions found in the manuscript(s).

¹² E.g. Six 1999, 129. The misattribution from the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* is uncritically adopted by Beta maṣāḥəft: <https://betamasaheft.eu/works/LIT1265Dersan>, accessed 29 September 2023.

¹³ The first *Easter Oration* (number 1 in the general numbering) is edited with French translation in Bernardi 1978; for the Greek text of the second *Easter Oration* (number 45 in the general numbering), recourse must still be made to Migne 1858 (*PG*), XXXVI, 623–664, though a new edition is currently being prepared by G. Quarta (for preliminary remarks, see Quarta 2022). English translations of both are available in Harrison 2008, 57–60 and 161–190, respectively.

¹⁴ Again, the misidentification from the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* is uncritically adopted by Beta maṣāḥəft: <https://betamasaheft.eu/works/LIT1265Dersan>, accessed 29 September 2023.

¹⁵ As in e.g. MS Berlin, SbPK Ms or. fol. 117, ff. 152r–159r. The Greek text of *Oration* 38 is edited together with a French translation in Moreschini 1990.

¹⁶ To give a single example, in ‘Jacob of Serug’, *E Ae*, III (2007), 262a–263b (W. Witakowski), fourteen Ethiopic homilies attributed to this author are listed, but ‘suggestions for

connected with their purported *Vorlagen* in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, we are often dealing only with preliminary suggestions based, it seems, at least at times, only on similarities of authors and descriptions of content. The case under consideration serves as a prime example. A direct comparison of the Ethiopic text with the proposed Greek *Vorlage(n)* straightforwardly and definitively shows that they are not a match; the suggested identification, rather, seems to have been made on the basis of only two pieces of evidence: 1. the (mis)attribution to Gregory of Nazianzus, which it should be recalled was based solely on the sobriquet Theologos; 2. the description of the homily as concerning Easter.¹⁷ The present case is unfortunately not exceptional in being based only on author and description, but rather is found with other suggestions proposed in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*.¹⁸ The remedy to this problem is self-evident: Whenever possible, identifications should be made on the basis of a direct comparison of the texts themselves. In addition, and more broadly, an attempt should be made to identify *each and every* translated Ethiopic text with its extra-Ethiopic *Vorlage*.¹⁹

identifications with Syriac originals' are only proffered for five of them (one of these identifications is incorrect; see fn. 18 below). Nevertheless, it is possible to identify all but one of these homilies with Syriac originals, as we do in a work in progress on homilies attributed to Jacob circulating in Ethiopic homiliary and homiletical-hagiographical manuscripts (to be published by Brepols in their series *Eastern Christian Cultures in Contact*). For previous studies of Jacob of Serugh in Ethiopic, see Tedros Abraha 2015, Tedros Abraha 2019; Uhlir 1999.

¹⁷ That the latter was a factor in the misidentification can be established by the fact that Witakowski does not state with which of the *Easter Orations* of Gregory of Nazianzus the Ethiopic homily is to be identified: Even if preference is given to the second *Easter Oration*, the question is left open. This suggests that the texts in question were never consulted, since, if they had been, it would have presumably been possible to specify with which of the two proposed *Easter Orations* of Gregory of Nazianzus the Ethiopic homily is to be identified.

¹⁸ To give just one further example, consider the next text in the *Homiliary of the Fathers*: a 'homily on Thomas' attributed to Jacob of Serugh (CAe 1635). In the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Witakowski states that the Syriac original is edited in Strothmann 1976, see 'Jacob of Serug', *E Ae*, III (2007), 262a–263b (W. Witakowski). Strothmann's volume contains editions of several Syriac homilies on Thomas by Jacob, but not this specific one. Rather, this Ethiopic text is a translation from Arabic (for which, see Alwan 2019, 232–235, along with the suggestion in Butts and Erho 2018, 50–52), which in turn goes back to the Syriac homily 'New Sunday and Thomas' (B₂ 189 = B₁ 283 = A 57), which is edited in Bedjan 1905–1910, II, 649–669, superseded now by Forness 2022. So, once again an identification seems to have been based solely on author and description of content, without direct comparison of the texts themselves.

¹⁹ A potential model is provided by Sauget in his foundational studies of Syriac and Arabic homiliary manuscripts (see e.g. Sauget 1961, Sauget 1968, Sauget 1970, Sauget 1972, Sauget 1986a, Sauget 1986b, Sauget 1988): Sauget makes great effort to connect each homily

The lack of proper identifications of many translated Ethiopic texts reflects an unfortunate siloing of fields—in this case, particularly Ethiopian and Eritrean studies, on the one hand, and the history of Christianity, on the other—that negatively impacts both. Especially in comparison with other language traditions, many and perhaps even most Ethiopic translations have been overlooked, ignored, or otherwise insufficiently considered by standard reference works for ancient and medieval Christian literature, such as the indispensable *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (CPG), reinforcing the Ethiopic tradition's position on the periphery of the ancient Christian and modern scholarly worlds.²⁰ Only by connecting Ethiopic translations with their *Vorlagen*, in particular Greek and Christian Arabic, will it be possible to appreciate fully the Ethiopic literary tradition as well as the reception of late antique and medieval Christian literature in Ethiopia and Eritrea.²¹

to its broader Christian tradition, especially Greek and Syriac. Identifications are based on a comparison of the texts, with *incipit* and *desinit* often provided, along with the manuscript attestation in the source language. To such information, references should now be added to CPG, which was not yet available for all of Sauget's publications, as well as to other claves and similar tools, including the unique identifiers (UIDs) being established by digital projects for Syriac texts (by Syriaca.org, <https://syriaca.org>, accessed 29 September 2023) and Ethiopic texts (by Beta maṣāḥəft, <https://betamasasheft.eu>, accessed 29 September 2023). A similar project to establish UIDs for Christian Arabic texts is desperately needed; in the meantime, reference must still be made to Graf 1944–1953, of which Sauget made extensive use.

²⁰ While CPG Supplementum (= Geerard and Noret 1998) was intended to rectify many of the earlier oversights with lesser known traditions, such as Arabic and Ethiopic, it succeeded far more with the former than the latter due to the relative sizes of their scholarly bases. Indeed, the focus on publications, with the curious exception of manuscript catalogues, has led to the absence of the Ethiopic versions of many works, a product of both the diminutive size of the field of Ethiopian and Eritrean studies and the late arrival of indigenous printing in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Catalogues therefore form a greater proportion of the existing scholarship on Ethiopic literature, and so their lack of integration is regrettable, particularly that of Zotenberg 1877, which contains numerous identifications of *Vorlagen*, including some of whose Ethiopic versions still remain unrecorded in CPG (e.g. CAe 1914 = CPG 2257, as already identified in Zotenberg 1877, 257).

²¹ The ERC-funded project 'BeInf—Beyond Influence: The Connected Histories of Ethiopic and Syriac Christianity' (see <https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/beinf>, accessed 29 September 2023) aims to accomplish this task for a subsection of translated Ethiopic texts, namely those attributed to Syriac authors and/or which (could) go back to Syriac originals. Until a comprehensive, systematic effort can be undertaken, similar projects aimed at other sub-corpora, such as materials emanating from the Copto-Arabic milieu, or various authors, such as (pseudo-)Chrysostom (building upon Proverbio 1998 for Ethiopic), would prove equally valuable.

The Arabic *Vorlage* (CPG 4163.2)

The Ethiopic *Homily on Holy Easter*, as transmitted in the *Homiliary of the Fathers*, is a translation of an Arabic *Homily on Easter* (CPG 4163.2) with the following incipit:

استيقظوا ايها النيام واستنبروا بالمسيح انهضوا ايها الهاجعين فقد ظهر نور العالم
اقيموا ايها السكارى فقد اشرق شمس البر قد قام الرب ليدين الارض

Awake, o sleepers, and be enlightened in Christ! Arise, o ones who sleep! For, the light of the world has appeared. Get up, o drunkards, for the sun of righteousness has shone forth. The Lord has risen to judge the earth.

A comparison of the text of the Ethiopic *Homily on Holy Easter* with this Arabic *Homily on Easter* shows that they are clearly the same, as illustrated in brief with the *incipits*.²² The antecedent Arabic version is attested in at least two manuscripts.

The earliest known witness is the so-called Ambrosian homiliary, which was painstakingly reconstituted by J.-M. Sauge from MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, X.198 sup. with additional folios in London, Munich, and Birmingham.²³ This large homiliary, datable to the tenth or eleventh century, originally contained ninety-six homilies according to its list of titles, of which some seventy-four survive (to varying extents).²⁴ The Arabic *Homily on Easter* stands as homily no. 66 (67), preserved in part on ff. 224v–227v of MS Ambros. X.198 sup., where it is transmitted anonymously.²⁵ Unfortunately, the end of the text is lost in the Ambrosian homiliary, breaking off about two-thirds through the fully-extant Ethiopic version and that preserved in the other Arabic witness—to which we now turn.

The second known Arabic witness to the *Homily on Easter* is MS London, British Library, Arund. Or. 21 (= Ar. Christ. 25), a manuscript datable to 1252 via

²² See also the texts of the *desinit* given below at fn. 29.

²³ See Sauge 1970 along with Samir 1986, who added seven further leaves subsequently discovered at St Catherine's Monastery (NF Arab. Pg 46).

²⁴ In references to this manuscript, we follow Sauge 1970, 466, fn. 3 in giving each homily a double enumeration: The first refers to Sauge's numbers for the reconstituted manuscript, and the second, given in parenthesis, reflects that of the original manuscript as represented in the Greek letters that appear at times in the index and body of the homiliary. The total of seventy-four fully or partially extant homilies includes the three attested in the St Catherine's New Finds unknown to Sauge (see previous note).

²⁵ We thank Mons. Dr. Francesco Braschi and Mons. Dr. Federico Gallo (Ambrosiana Library and Accademia) for providing images of the relevant folios from MS Ambros. X.198 sup.

a scribal note.²⁶ Among its thirty-two homilies, a number of which are also found in the Ambrosian homiliary,²⁷ one finds the Arabic *Homily on Easter* on ff. 209v–221v, where the text is spuriously attributed to Ephrem, likely a secondary adjustment of an earlier anonymous homily.²⁸ In contrast to the Ambrosian homiliary, MS Arund. Or. 21 contains the complete text of the homily, ending with the following *desinit*:

وبدل تلك القرابين الجسدانية خلق لهم جسده المحي ودمه المشفى. ولا نسلك
طريقة اوليك يا احباي ولا نتشبه بهم. ونعلم ان الله قد فضلنا عليهم واعطانا ما
لم يعطيهم واختارنا ورفضهم وسائر امورهم انما كان ظل وخيال والذي لنا نحن
يفوق العقل نعمة ربنا يسوع المسيح الذي له المجد والكرامة الى الابد امين

... in place of those bodily offerings he created for them his live-giving body and his pure blood. Let us not travel the path of those, o beloved. Let us not be like them. Let us know that God has preferred us over them and has given us what he had not given them. He has chosen us and rejected them. All of their things have become nothing but a shadow and a specter. What we have surpasses understanding—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to whom belong glory and honor forever. Amen.²⁹

Thus, the complete Arabic text is only preserved in MS Arund. Or. 21.

²⁶ See Cureton 1846–1852, II/1, 33–35, as well as Graf 1944–1953, I, 425.

²⁷ A study comparing MS Arund. Or. 21 with other early Arabic homiliary manuscripts, especially the Ambrosian homiliary, would be worthwhile.

²⁸ For texts attributed to Ephrem in Arabic, see Graf 1944–1953, I, 421–433 and Samir 1978, with additional references.

²⁹ To which can be compared the *desinit* of the Ethiopic text, which we take from Ethio-SPaRe, UM-50, ff. 188v–189r (with some minor adjustments based on other witnesses): መሥዋዕተ፡ ዘሥጋ፡ ወሀብነ፡ ሥጋሁ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ወደሞ ፡ ክቡረ ። አፍቱራንየ ፡ ኢንትለው፡ ፍፍሎም፡ ለእኩያን ፡ አይሁድ፡ ወኢንትመስል፡ ከያሆሙ፡ ወኢንግበር፡ ምግባራ-ቲሆሙ፡ ንለቡ፡ እንከ፡ ከመ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ አፍቀረነ ፡ ፈድፋድ፡ እምኔሆሙ፡ ወጸገወነ፡ ክብረ፡ ዘየዐቢ፡ እምኲሉ። ሀብተ፡ ዚአሆሙስ፡ ጽላሎት፡ ውእቱ ። ወብዕለ፡ ጸጋሁ፡ ዘአሰፈወነ ፡ ሕይወተ ፡ ዘለዓለም፡ ዘዐይን ፡ ኢርእየ፡ ወእዝን ፡ ኢሰምዐ ፡ ወውስተ ፡ ልቦ ፡ ሰብእ ፡ ዘኢተሐለየ ፡ ዘእስተዳለወ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ለእለ፡ ያፈቅርዎ፡ ንጽናዕ፡ እንከ፡ በርትዕት፡ ሃይማኖት፡ ይክፍለነ፡ መንግሥተ፡ ሰማያት፡ በብዝኅ፡ ሣህሉ፡ ወምሕረቱ፡ ለእግዚእነ፡ ወመድኅኒነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ ዘሎቱ፡ ክብር፡ ወስብሐት፡ ወእኒዝ፡ ለዓለሙ፡ ዓለም፡ አሜን።

‘[...] in place of bodily offerings, he gave us his holy body and his noble blood. O beloved, let us not follow the path of the evil Jews. Let us not be like them, and let us not do their deeds. Let us know that God has loved us more than them, and he bestowed upon us a greater honor than all. Their gift is a shadow. The wealth of his grace is that he has promised us eternal life, which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor in the heart of humans it has been imagined what God has prepared for those who love him. Let us take strength in the orthodox faith. Let him make us a participant in the heavenly kingdom through the greatness of the grace and mercy of our lord and savior Jesus Christ, to whom belong honor, praise, and power forever and ever. Amen’.

Neither Graf, nor Sauget, nor CPG were able to connect the Arabic *Homily on Easter* (CPG 4163.2) to earlier texts, whether Greek or Syriac, and it has also not proven possible for us to resolve this issue. Nevertheless, some progress can be made. A Greek *Vorlage* of the Arabic can likely be ruled out since the homily contains a quotation of the Syriac author Jacob of Serugh (d. 521).³⁰ Halfway through the homily, one finds the following lines:

MS Ambros. X.198 sup.

قال السعيد مار ##### ان كانوا نيام كما ذكروا فما يدروا ان التلاميذ
اخذوه ام غيرهم وان كانوا منتبهين فلم تركوا من يتقرب الى القبر

The blessed Mār (erasure of several words) said, ‘If they were asleep, as they have mentioned, then how would they have any idea whether the disciples or someone else took him? If they were awake, then why did they allow someone to approach the tomb?’

MS Arund. Or. 21

ان كانوا نيام كما ذكروا فما ادراهم ان التلاميذ اخذوه او غيرهم وان كانوا منتبهين
فلماذا تركوا انسان يدنوا الى القبر

If they were asleep, as they have mentioned, then how would they have any idea whether the disciples or someone else took him? If they were awake, then why did they allow someone to approach the tomb?

Ethiopic (according to MS Ethio-SPaRe, UM-50, with some minor adjustments based on other witnesses)

ይቤ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ያዕቆብ ፡ ኤጲስ ፡ ቆጶስ ፡ ዘስሩግ ፡ እመሰ ፡ ንውግን ፡ እሙንቱ ፡ በከመ ፡
ይቤሉ ፡ ኢያእመሩ ፡ እንከ ፡ ዘነሥኦ ፡ እመሂ ፡ አርዳኢሁ ፡ አው ፡ ባዕድ ፡ እመሰ ፡
ትጉሃን ፡ እፎ ፡ ኅደጉ ፡ ይስርቅዎ ፡

Saint Jacob, bishop of Serugh, said, ‘If they were asleep, as they said, then they would not have known whether the disciples or someone else took him. If they were awake, how did they allow them to steal him?’

In the Ethiopic version, we encounter this quotation explicitly attributed to Jacob of Serugh. The situation is more complicated in Arabic: In MS Arund. Or. 21, no attribution is given, and the text is not even presented as a quotation. In the Ambrosian homiliary, by contrast, one finds the text introduced by ‘the blessed Mār’,

³⁰ For Jacob of Serugh in Arabic, see Graf 1944–1953, I, 444–452 and Samir 1983, as well as, more recently, Alwan 2019; Butts 2016, Butts 2019; Butts and Erho 2018.

followed by an erasure of several words. Undoubtedly, the name of Jacob of Serugh once stood there.³¹ Throughout the Ambrosian homiliary, Jacob of Serugh has been systematically excised, from entire homilies to individual occurrences of his name in the list of titles (*fihris*).³² Thus, the erasure of Jacob's name from the quotation in the *Homily on Easter* in the Ambrosian homiliary fits the general pattern of the manuscript, and the Ethiopic, as indirect witness (*Nebenüberlieferung*), confirms that the name of Jacob of Serugh should be reconstructed in that place.

As it turns out, the quotation is not merely ascribed to Jacob of Serugh in Ethiopic as well as in the reconstructed original of the Ambrosian homiliary, but it reflects lines attributed to Jacob in Syriac.³³ A very similar passage is found in a Syriac homily 'On the Centurions and the Resurrection of our Lord' (B₂ 320 = A 270) attributed to Jacob:

ܟܘܢ ܥܘܢܝܢ ܕܘܚܡܝܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

If truly you were sleeping, as you have said, from where did you discover that they (*viz.* the disciples)³⁴ stole him? [...] If they came while you were awake, why did you not cry out?³⁵

While there are some differences between the Syriac here and the Arabic and Ethiopic versions given above,³⁶ the similarities are striking. Moreover, a related passage is found in Jacob's prose homily (*turgāmā*) on resurrection:

³¹ Based on the faint traces of ink as well as the spacing, we can expect يعقوب اسقف سروج or something similar.

³² See Butts 2019, 98, with further references. In fact, the only traces of Jacob of Serugh that remain in the Ambrosian homiliary are found on folios that preserve other texts, which apparently the eraser of Jacob was loathe to destroy, along with Jacob's prose homily (*turgāmā*) *On Epiphany*, which survives as homily no. 15 (16) in the Ambrosian homiliary thanks to its misattribution there to Ephrem (an identification already made by Bernard Outtier, *apud* CPG 4161.2). Importantly, the same misattribution is found in Ethiopic (CAe 6821), such as in MS EMMML 7015, ff. 28v–31v, on which, see Butts and Erho 2018, 53, fn. 33. It should be noted that Jacob is also excised from other Christian Arabic manuscripts from Sinai, e.g. MS Sinai Ar. 457 (on which, see Sauget 1972). For the *damnatio memoriae* of Jacob at Sinai, see already Sauget 1972, 140 and, with more detail, Samir 1983, 243–244.

³³ We happily credit Archbishop Roger Akhrass with identifying the following two Syriac passages.

³⁴ This referent is clear from the context in Syriac.

³⁵ Akhrass and Syryany 2017, 222, ln. 204, 206 (Homily 27).

³⁶ Above all, an additional line of Syriac is hiding behind the ellipses here.

the Ethiopic literary heritage antedating the mid-fourteenth century is comprised of such translational material—apart from documentary texts, just some chants and a handful of indigenous homilies can currently be otherwise categorized—only as works are properly linked to their extra-Ethiopic *Vorlagen* will the true form of this tradition come into focus, allowing its full scholarly value to be leveraged and appreciated.

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Summary

In the standard reference works for Ethiopian and Eritrean studies, one finds a *Homily on Holy Easter* (CAe 1265) attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus and identified as one of his *Orations* (CPG 3010). Both the attribution and identification are, however, incorrect. Rather, this *Homily on Holy Easter*, which is actually attributed to an otherwise unknown John Theologos in the earliest recoverable layer of the Ethiopic tradition, is to be identified as an Ethiopic version of a homily, recorded as CPG 4163.2, attested in two Arabic manuscripts, one where it is attributed to Ephrem and the other where it is anonymous.