
The present book is a revised version of the author’s PhD dissertation entitled *La versione etiopica del Pastore di Erma. Riedizione critica del testo (visioni e precetti)* which was prepared under the supervision of Gianfrancesco Lusini and defended at the University of Naples “L’Orientale” in 2016. It should be of interest to at least two types of audiences (who unfortunately do not meet as often as they should), i.e. Ga’až philologists and historians of early Church and its literature.

The book consists of bibliography (pp. xi-xxxv), 9 chapters, and indexes of: personal names, toponyms and ethnonyms, authors, quoted works, and manuscripts (including inscriptions).

In Chapter 1 (pp. 1-30) the author presents general information about Ποιμὴν τοῦ Ἑρμᾶ (Greek *Poimēn tou Herma* ‘The Shepherd of Hermas’), an early Christian work, dating to the 2nd century and usually classified as an apocalypse. After summarizing the main findings concerning the internal structure of the work, he presents the current state of research concerning its textual transmission in Greek (pp. 16-23), Latin (23-26), and Oriental languages excluding Ga’až (pp. 27-30).

Chapter 2 (pp. 31-47) contains two subchapters. The first one, entitled “The recovery of Aksumite literary heritage” (pp. 31-42) is of great importance, as it provides an up-to-date survey of the oldest layer of Ga’až literature which consisted of translations from Greek and includes i.a. also Ποιμὴν. The second subchapter (pp. 42-47) offers tentative hypothesis on how Ποιμὴν reached Aksum/Ethiopia stating that “the picture which emerges on the basis of the few available data is extremely lacunose” (p. 45). In the same subchapter the author expresses his disagreement with previous opinions on the Ethiopic version of Ποιμὴν as being a free paraphrasing rather than a reliable translation.

In Chapter 3 (pp. 49-78) the author presents meticulously analyzed textual examples which prove that the Ethiopic Ποιμὴν is indeed a direct translation from Greek, the fact already suggested in the 19th century but without providing firmly based philological evidence. Additionally, he compares the Ethiopic text with the previous editions of Greek, Latin, and Ethiopic texts, as well as with the
manuscript documentation, thus contributing to the issue of transmission from Greek into Ethiopic.

While Chapters 1-3 may be of interest to a reader unfamiliar with Gaʿaz philology, Chapters 4-9 will require a certain competence in Gaʿaz and a knowledge of Ethiopian tradition.

The Ethiopic textual tradition of Ποιμήν is presented in Chapter 4 (pp. 79-127). This tradition is rather small as it consists of “six manuscript copies of which only three are relevant from the text-critical point of view” (p. 79). Each of the six manuscripts is generously described including textual features pertaining to the relation between them. The textual tradition is bi-fold (cf. the *stemma codicum* on p. 127) and consists of “Gundä Gunde branch” and “Ṭana Qirqos branch” (so named after the monasteries from which the text witnesses originate). It is very important to note that the “Ṭana Qirqos branch” (consisting of EMML 8508 and its two *descripti*) was unknown to any previous editor of the Ethiopic Ποιμήν. Furthermore, EMML 8508 appears to be older than both main witnesses of the “Gundä Gunde branch”, i.e. BnF Éth, Abb. 174 and ms. Parm. 3842.

Chapters 5 (pp. 129-143) and 6 (pp. 145-172) describe what the author calls “the indirect tradition”, i.e. the indigenous Ethiopian book inventories which contain the mention of Ποιμήν (Chapter 5) and quotations from Ποιμήν in Gaʿaz literature (Chapter 6). A particularly interesting fragment concerns the presence of passages inspired by Ποιμήν in the lives of monastic figures associated with the monastery of Däbrä Maryam Qoḥayn, a clear testimony of the Ποιμήν’s importance for this community. The two chapters show how the circulation and influence of Ποιμήν might have been wider than the three surviving witnesses would suggest.

In Chapter 7 (pp. 173-186) the author tackles the question why the textual transmission of Ποιμήν is so limited and why it ceased altogether. Without offering any definitive answer, the author mentions several factors which contributed to the decline of the textual transmission, some of them of strictly philological nature, others connected with certain historical developments within the Ethiopian Church.

In this reviewer’s opinion Chapter 8 (pp. 187-221) is the most important in the entire book and should be carefully studied by anyone interested in the Gaʿaz language. The author’s attempt is, taking Ποιμήν as a case study, to highlight the linguistic features of the “Aksumite” Gaʿaz (i.e. the language of the translations from Greek in the Aksumite times) as opposed to the “Classical” Gaʿaz attested from 1270 onwards. Some of the most distinctive features include:
the lack of the final -ā in the accusative forms, particularly when these are an element of *status contractus*, a noun preceded by a demonstrative pronoun, a noun with a possessive suffix or a nominal phrase consisting of a noun and an attribute,

- the phonetic law /aLa/ → /āLa/ (where L stands for any laryngeal consonant) does not apply to the conjugation of the imperfective verb,
- conjunctions ending in -e instead of –a,
- oscillation uw/aw and iy/ay.

The handy compilation of such features will be an indispensable aid to researchers who will try to distinguish the “Aksumite layer” from within the vast body of translations into Ga’az.

Finally, Chapter 9 (pp. 230-261) contains a new critical edition of a portion of *Ποιμὴν* (Vision 3) together with an Italian translation. The edition has been prepared “according to the neo-Lachmannian” method (p. 223) and is based on the three manuscripts mentioned above. The critical apparatus consists of three levels. The first describes the testes of particular text portions, the second registers the important variants between the three manuscripts, the third records variants in the interpunction. The orthography has been normalized according to the August Dillmann’s lexicon.

To summarize, while this reviewer is not qualified to assess the importance of Villa’s study for the general research on *Ποιμὴν*, it is beyond doubt that the book is a very important step for Ethiopic philology. No other Aksumite text (perhaps with the exception of the Biblical books which, however, pose a whole different set of problems) had been before a subject of a book-long philological and historical scrutiny. One should hope that this contribution will stimulate further research of this type.

Marcin Krawczuk
GUIDELINES FOR THE AUTHORS

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