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‘Paleografia quale scienza dello spirito’: Once More on the Gə‘əz Inscription of Ham (*RIÉ* no. 232)

Abstract: First published by Giorgio Brunetti in 1927 and re-edited by Carlo Conti Rossini in 1939, the inscription of Ham (*RIÉ* no. 232) has since received attention from several scholars in Ethiopian and Eritrean studies, from Ugo Monneret de Villard to Enrico Cerulli, Sergew Hable Selassie, and, in the last twenty-five years, Gianfranco Fiaccadori and Manfred Kropp. The latter author has proposed a precise dating to 873 CE, before the recent appearance of the posthumous contribution by Abraham Johannes Drewes, who is the last one to have systematically discussed the inscription. Without pretending to solve all problems that arise from the inscription, the scope of the present note is to provide a fresh re-examination of some of the palaeographic and linguistic features of the Ham inscription, which remains a Gə‘əz epigraphic document of exceptional importance for the Ethiopian and Eritrean Middle Ages, and to propose a dating to 23 December 974 CE.

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grato dicatum animo*

1 Introduction

The quotation ‘*Paleografia quale scienza dello spirito*’ (‘Palaeography as a science of the spirit’) refers to the title of a well-known contribution by the great classical philologist Giorgio Pasquali, where he praises palaeography as a ‘spiritual science’ that transcends its assumed auxiliary role becoming *ante litteram* an all-encompassing *history of a given manuscript culture*.¹ The present study, in reconsidering the evidence afforded by the inscription of Ham, does not set out to provide an exemplary application of this approach to palaeography, nor will

¹ See Pasquali 1931; the essay was republished several times in Pasquali’s *Pagine stravaganti* (1934, 1968, 1994).

this be the last word on a much debated issue – since I am not proposing here a fully satisfactory explanation of the most debated passage. Nevertheless, I would argue that these considerations have at least the merit of not only spotting some weaknesses in the previous proposals, but also developing previous intuitions towards a still unexplored direction, and highlighting some overlooked palaeographic and linguistic features of the inscription, also in the light of new manuscript evidence.

The Gə'əz inscription of Ham (*RIĖ* no. 232, here Fig. 1), with its fifty-four words, or better, orthographic units marked by vertical word dividers, that are distributed in fifteen lines of text, is a true milestone of Ethiopian epigraphy, since it provides – according to the hypothesis advanced by Manfred Kropp – a precise date: the 27 (፳፯) of the month of Taḥsās² of 590 (፮፻፲) of the Era of Diocletian (or Era the Martyrs, or Era of Mercy according to the Ethiopian denomination), which corresponds to 27 Taḥsās 866 of the Ethiopian calendar (or Era of the Incarnation), and to 23 December 873 CE in the Julian calendar (Figs 2 and 3).³ This dating would be essential for placing the inscription in its precise historical context as well as for providing an exactly dated term of comparison for palaeographical and linguistic features.

The inscription was once placed on the façade of the old church of St Mary (Beta Māryām) in the village of Ham, in the Eritrean region of 'Akkala Guzāy, although we have no certain evidence that this was its earliest and original

² Since the name of the month is given in this form in the inscription, and since there is no apparent binding etymological reason to write Tāḥsās (see Leslau 1987, 573a) as normally given by the later tradition, for the sake of simplicity I will always write the name of the month according to the orthography of the inscription, that is, Taḥsās.

³ See Kropp 1999, who, following Facciadori 1993, 325–331, provided the bibliographical state of the art to date. One might observe that Uhlig 1988, 155, 159, 166, 170–175 does not provide any decisive consideration for dating the inscription; and that this, more than rare, unique written artefact from the Post-Aksumite time, is not even mentioned in the comprehensive overview offered by Phillipson 2012; in this respect, the synthesis on Aksumite history by Munro-Hay 1991, 247–248, which provides more than just a tentative translation after Carlo Conti Rossini and Ugo Monneret de Villard (for which see below), is still worth reading, even if it does not propose any new hypothesis, as noted by Kropp 1999, 165, n. 7. A short mention with due importance given to the site of Ham provides Schmidt et al. 2008, 324–325. The exercise of translation and commentary drafted by Damien Labadie (to which Manfred Kropp kindly drew my attention), a 'Travail effectué dans le cadre du cours d'épigraphie sémitique de l'Institut Catholique de Paris, dispensé par M. Axel van de Sande', available for some time on a blog (<<http://damienlabadie.blogspot.com/>> in the 'Série Byzance et l'Orient chrétien') and apparently now removed from the internet, misses the bibliography of the last thirty years and has the stand of a term paper. Hatke 2020, 324, attributes the inscription of Ham all importance it deserves as one of the few evidences available from the dark phase of the early Ethiopian Middle Ages.

location. The inscription was later removed from the old church and incorporated into the inside wall of the new church of St Mary in the same village, where it was documented, to my knowledge, for the last time in 1993 and 1994, a few years after the new church had been built. The village of Ham is located on the highland next to an escarpment where the historical monastery of Dabra Libānos is located. The latter monastery, which lies opposite to other historical sites in Təgrāy and is located above a valley that marks the Eritrean-Ethiopian border, is at the centre of an area that was prominent from the late Aksumite period (at the latest) to the Post-Aksumite period.⁴

First published by Giorgio Brunetti in 1927 and re-edited by Carlo Conti Rossini in 1939, the inscription of Ham has since received attention from a number of well-known scholars, including Ugo Monneret de Villard – who keenly observed its material relationship with Nubia given its peculiar shape resemblance to Meroitic offering tables –, Enrico Cerulli – who discusses it in his history of Ethiopian literature –, and Sergew Hable Selassie.⁵ In the last twenty-five years the three most important contributions on this inscription are those by Gianfranco Fiaccadori, who tried to re-examine the whole question from a new point of view;⁶ Manfred Kropp, who dated the inscription to 873 CE, as reported above, within a comprehensive interpretation of the inscription that set out to tackle all the problems posed by its most difficult passage (ll. 4–5);⁷ and Abraham Johannes Drewes, whose contribution appeared posthumously.⁸

4 See Bausi and Lusini 1992, 26–31, pls 4–7, figs 7–15; fig. 10 is reproduced also on the cover of Lusini 2018; to my knowledge, my field trips to Ham in 1993 and 1994, within the framework of the Missione Italiana in Eritrea (1992–1997) led by Irma Taddia, were the last visits carried out within a research programme by a non-Eritrean who documented the site; as I remarked, the lack of the technical equipment unfortunately prevented me from taking pictures of the inscription in its new placement; on the site of Ham (not 'Ḥam' as given by some authors), see 'Däbrā Libanos (in Šəmāzana)', *EAE*, II (2005), 28a–29b (Alessandro Bausi); 'Ham', *EAE*, II (2005), 980b–981b (Alessandro Bausi); see also Derat 2018, 96–98, on the inscription (following Kropp's proposal), and *passim*, for the historical context; for the nearby ecclesiastic and monastic context on the Ethiopian side of the border, see Nosnitsin 2013. The geographical coordinates of the old church of Ham are 14°30'53.2"N 39°18'24.2"E (14.514775, 39.306726), those of the nearby new church are 14°30'54.0"N 39°18'24.3"E (14.514985, 39.306747).

5 See Conti Rossini 1939; Monneret de Villard 1940; Cerulli 1968, 18–19; Sergew Hable Selassie 1972, 198–199.

6 See Fiaccadori 1993, 325–331, § 1 'Sull'iscrizione di Ḥam'; in addition to the criticism by Kropp 1999, see the further arguments against Fiaccadori's hypothesis by Drewes, in *RIĖ* IIIB, 328–332.

7 See Kropp 1999, who remarks that a picture of the inscription of Ham, photographed by Guy Annequin, is available also in van der Stappen 1996, 219, n. 4. I note here that Manfred Kropp must have written this important article 'ganz in der Eile', as Germans would say, with the

2 The state of the art up to Manfred Kropp's interpretation

To sum up the state of the art: there is a general agreement that the text of the inscription is clear and plainly understandable, with the only exception of a passage in lines 4–5 that poses serious problems. Aside from Fiaccadori, who had suggested a new reading as well as a new interpretation – and whose hypothesis I will not discuss here in detail, because I think, along with others, it cannot be accepted for reasons of palaeography and linguistic plausibility – there is agreement on the reading of the text that I give here, which is based on the edition in transcription by Abraham Johannes Drewes and Roger Schneider,

intention of revealing a breath-taking true interpretation of the dating of the inscription. This results in a few inconsistencies that affect the flow of his argument. I note the following: Kropp 1999, 169, ll. 14–19: 'Nach Ende des ersten großen 532-Jahreskalenderzyklus im 9. Jhdt. kam es beim linearen Durchzählen der Diokletian-Ära, im Gegensatz zum Neubeginn mit dem Jahre 1 im Zyklus der Jahre der Gnade, zu einer häufigen Gleichsetzung "Jahre der Gnade" = "der Märtyrer" = "Diokletians", für die wir in der Inschrift von Ḥam den ersten äthiopischen Beleg haben, nämlich aus dem Jahre 690 Diokletians': correct '690' to '590'; Kropp 1999, 169, n. 18: 'Zu dem Aufkommen und Gebrauch der Ära Diokletians als Ära der Märtyrer im christlichen Nubien vgl. nun MacCoull/Worp 1997. Die ältesten Belege stammen aus den Jahren 502 (785/6 n. Chr.) und 600 (833/4 n. Chr.); vgl. Łajtar 1997: 107 f. Ich danke Herrn Kollegen Łajtar für wertvolle Auskünfte und eine – notwendige! – Kontrolle der Datumsumrechnungen.': correct 'MacCoull/Worp 1997' to 'MacCoull/Worp 1990'; 'Łajtar 1997' is not in the bibliography, where there is only 'Łajtar 1993', which does not contain any page 107; in the same title, the pages '243–247' must be corrected to '245–247' (pp. 243–244 in the same journal contain another separate note by Łajtar, with a different title); Kropp 1999, 170, n. 20: 'Eine erste Vermutung, es könne sich um nubische Zahlzeichen handeln, zunächst geboren aus einer falschen Identifizierung des Datums mit dem Jahr 690, scheidet nun aus': here too, correct '690' to '590'. In a previous contribution (Bausi 2019a, 87, n. 37) I had already noted one more inconsistency, probably connected with the wavering between 590 and 690 noted above, concerning the parallelism established by Monneret de Villard 1940, 67, with the Nubian inscription of 'Alwa dated to 897: 'Damit ist sie lediglich 125 Jahre jünger als die Inschrift aus Ḥam', where '125' should be first corrected to '25' and then also to '24' (897 – 873 = 24). Also note that in Kropp 1999, 176, the line numbers are wrong ('Zahl "27" Zeile 1' refers to line 2 and 'Zahl "590" Zeile 2' refers to line 4), see here Figs 2 and 3. I must instead withdraw my observation concerning Kropp's transcription of 'ʿala', without gemination, which in fact corresponds, in the edition (Kropp 1999, 167), to the general criterion (also adopted in *RIÉ* I) not to render morphological gemination, whereas gemination is noted elsewhere as expected (see Kropp 1999, 168, 'ṣārrā-nā 'əllā-sahl', this latter so written in order to highlight that they form a noun phrase, even though 'əlla ṣahl are clearly separated by the word divider in the inscription).

⁸ See *RIÉ* IIIB, 326–333.

with the only addition of morphological gemination in round brackets where required, the corresponding text in Gə‘əz script, and my English translation of the lines where there is agreement, whereas the end of line 4 and the entire line 5 are not translated:⁹

9 See *RIĒ* I, 134. The first editor, Brunetti 1927, 82, reads: ⁽¹⁾ **ሞተት ፡ ጊሐ ፡ ውለተ ፡ መንገሣ ፡ በወር** ⁽²⁾ **ጎ ፡ ታሕሳስ ፡ አሜ ፡ ሸፍ ፡ ለሠርቅ ፡ አ** ⁽³⁾ **ሚ ፡ መኃትዊሁ ፡ ለጌና ፡ በዕለተ ፡ ረ** ⁽⁴⁾ **ቡዕ ፡ ወዓርፋ ፡ ዓመተ ፡ እኔን** (but suggesting **፳፻፲**) **ጸረ** ⁽⁵⁾ **ኔ ፡** (but suggesting **ጸርኑ ፡**) **አለ ፡ ሣህል ፡ ...**, and translates: ⁽¹⁾ *Morì Gihä, figlia di Mängäsa, nel me-* ⁽²⁾ *se di tähsäs, addì 27, all'alba, nel-* ⁽³⁾ *la vigilia del Natale, in giorno di mer-* ⁽⁴⁾ *coledi e riposò l'anno, 790. Io procla-* ⁽⁵⁾ *mai tuttavia la Misericordia [di Dio], with 'vigilia' for either 'veglia' or more likely 'vigilia' in the text.* Conti Rossini 1939, who is the only scholar working on the inscription of Ham who was able to use a calque of the inscription provided by Antonio Mordini (cf. p. 7, n. 2), does not provide an edition, but his readings can be deduced and reconstructed from his commentary and translation (pp. 11–13): ⁽¹⁾ *È morta Giho figlia di Mangašä nel me-* ⁽²⁾ *se di tähsäs, addì 27, all'alba, nel* ⁽³⁾ *di precedente la vigilia di Natale, in giorno di mer-* ⁽⁴⁾ *coledi, e la sua ...* ⁽⁵⁾ *... Ella Sähel', with the following presupposed readings:* ⁽¹⁾ **ሞተት ፡ ጊሐ ፡ ውለተ ፡ መንገሣ ፡ በወር** ⁽²⁾ **ጎ ፡ ታሕሳስ ፡** (or **ታሕሳስ ፡**) **አሜ ፡ ሸፍ ፡ ለሠርቅ ፡ አ** ⁽³⁾ **ሚ ፡ መኃትዊሁ ፡ ለጌና ፡ በዕለተ ፡ ረ** ⁽⁴⁾ **ቡዕ ፡ ወንሪፋ ፡ ዓመተ ፡ እኔን ፡ ጸራ** ⁽²⁾ **ኔ ፡ አለ ፡ ሣህል ፡ ...** Cerulli 1968, 18, translates: ‘*Morì Ghiho figlia di Mangasciä nel mese di “tähsäs”, il giorno 27, all'alba, il giorno precedente alla vigilia di Natale, giorno di mercoledì; essendo questo l'anno ... Ella Sähel'.* Sergew Hable Selassie 1972, 198, reads as follows: ⁽¹⁾ **ሞተት ፡ ጊሐ ፡ ወለተ ፡ መንገሣ ፡ በወር ፡** (sic) ⁽²⁾ **ጎ ፡ ታሕሳስ ፡ አሜ ፡ ሸፍ ፡ ለሠርቅ ፡ አ** ⁽³⁾ **ሚ ፡ መኃትዊሁ ፡ ለጌና ፡ በዕለተ ፡ ረ** ⁽⁴⁾ **ቡዕ ፡ ወንሪፋ ፡ ዓመተ ፡ እኔን ፡ ጸረ** ⁽⁵⁾ **ኑ ፡ አለ ፡ ሣህል ፡ ...**, and translates: ⁽¹⁾ *Giho the daughter of Mengesa died in the mon-* ⁽²⁾ *th of Tähsas (Dec.) on the 27th day, on* ⁽³⁾ *The (sic) eve of Christmas on the day of We-* ⁽⁴⁾ *nesday. And died a year later after we had (conquered?) Our en-* ⁽⁵⁾ *emy Ella Sähl'.* Fiaccadori 1993, 325–327, reads as follows: ⁽¹⁾ **ሞተት ፡ ጊሐ ፡ ውለተ ፡ መንገሣ ፡ በወር** ⁽²⁾ **ጎ ፡ ታሕሳስ ፡ አሜ ፡ ሸፍ ፡ ለሠርቅ ፡ አ** ⁽³⁾ **ሚ ፡ መኃትዊሁ ፡ ለጌና ፡ በዕለተ ፡ ረ** ⁽⁴⁾ **ቡዕ ፡ ወንሪፋ ፡ ዓመተ ፡ እኔን ፡ ጸረ** ⁽⁵⁾ **ኑ ፡** (as suggested by Brunetti) **አለ ፡ ሣህል ፡ ...**, and translates: ‘*È morta Giho figlia di Mangašä nel mese di tähsäs (sic), il 27, all'alba, nel di precedente la vigilia di Natale, in giorno di mercoledì; e l'età sua (era di) un anno. “Ahimè” – gridarono quanti furono mossi a pietà [o: al compianto], supposing an Amharism (‘änen, ‘said if a child falls – i.e. if only what happened to you had happened to me instead’, see Kane 1990, 1211a, based on Guidi 1901, 460) and a reading ጸረኑ ፡ that is not supported by palaeography.* Kapeliuk 1997, 494, discussing the possibility that *ḥarifu* might be a gerund, translates ‘a year having elapsed from [the time of] Ella Sähl the Šarane’. Finally Kropp 1999, 167, follows faithfully *RIĒ* I, safe for **ጸረኑ ፡** instead of **ጸረኔ ፡** (ll. 4–5, for which variance I did not find any explanation in his article, see below), in turn emended to **ጸርኑ ፡** and, as we will see, **፳፻፲ ፡** (l. 5) instead of **እኔን ፡**. Concerning other contributions, Mordini 1959, 48 accepts a dating to the eighth century. No further light comes from the short entry by Irvine 1975, who places Giho in the seventh century (‘in the reign of Emperor ‘Ellä-Šähel, but the King Lists record several rulers of this name in the century or so before Emperor Gäbrä-Mäsqäl’) and the inscription in the seventh or eighth century. Out of focus are the sparse remarks on the inscription by Ricci 1991, 196, 200, and 203 (dating dubitatively the inscription between the fifth and seventh century),

⁽¹⁾ *motat giḥo wəlatā mangašā bawar*⁽²⁾ *ḥa taḥsās 'ame 27 lašarq 'a*⁽³⁾ *me maḥātəwihu lagen(n)ā ba'elata ra*⁽⁴⁾ *bu' waḥarifu 'āmat 'ənen šara*⁽⁵⁾ *ne 'əl(l)a šahl ...*

⁽¹⁾ ሞተት ፡ ጊሐ ፡ ወለተ ፡ መንገሣ ፡ በወር⁽²⁾ ፡ ተሐሳስ ፡ አሜ ፡ ፳፯ ለሠርቅ ፡ አ⁽³⁾ ፡ መኃትዊሁ ፡ ለጌና ፡ በዕለተ ፡ ረ⁽⁴⁾ ቡዕ ፡ ወኅሪፉ ፡ ዓመት ፡ እኔን ፡ ጸረ⁽⁵⁾ ኔ ፡ እለ ፡ ሠህል ፡ ...

⁽¹⁾ Giḥo, the daughter of Mangašā, died on the mo-⁽²⁾nth of Taḥsās, on the 27, at dawn, on ⁽³⁾ the day before the eve of Christmas, on Wednes-⁽⁴⁾day; and the present year was the year ... ⁽⁵⁾ ...

While the text is overall quite legible, the words 'ənen šarane 'əl(l)a šahl require additional explanation or emendation. The first editor of the inscription of Ham, Brunetti, had a fundamental intuition that was rejected by all following interpreters, from Conti Rossini to Fiacadori, until Kropp resumed his idea. His intuition was that the stonemason who worked on the inscription must have tried to reproduce some numerical signs with which he was not familiar and which he did not understand completely: in Brunetti's hypothesis, the day of the month was 28 ($\overline{\text{N}}^{\text{N}} = \overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} :$) and the year was 790 ($\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} : = \overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} :$, but he wrote $\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} :$, that is, 690).¹⁰ No doubt Brunetti committed several trivial mistakes in his reading and interpretation, but most of all he did not consider that 28 Taḥsās 790 was a Sunday, and even 28 Taḥsās 690 would have been a Monday, while the inscription mentions a Wednesday.

Resuming Brunetti's idea, Kropp defined very precisely which calendrical parameters needed to be matched in order to have a consistent hypothesis that would explain with certainty the date hidden under the enigmatic 'ənen ($\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} :$), which the preceding words presupposed. In doing so, however – and this is a key point – Kropp had to start from a firm basis rooted in some indisputable evidence. This firm basis consisted in two points: the first is that the mention of an 'eve' before Christmas night made it necessary to read '27' in the first numerals ($\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} :$), since Christmas is 29 Taḥsās and the Christmas night

commenting on the remarks by Zuurmond 1989, 37–38; and Lusini 1999, 414–415, suggests a dating to the tenth/eleventh and finally opts for the twelfth/thirteenth century.

10 In Brunetti's own words (Brunetti 1927, 81), 'La parola $\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} :$ della linea 4, che, a prima vista, ci richiamerebbe all'amarico, deve essere intesa come l'errata trascrizione del numero $\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} :$ fatta da chi non era molto pratico ancora delle nuove forme numerali. Anche a linea 2 il lapicida scrive $\overline{\text{N}}^{\text{N}}$ invece di $\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}$ (28) riattaccandosi ai numeri dei monumenti più antichi'. Number $\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{X}} :$ corresponds to 690, while Brunetti gives '790' in his translation; he is in fact uncertain on this point, see Brunetti 1927, 80, 'La data 790 che leggo sull'iscrizione può anche non essere esatta, potendo alcuno leggere 690 od 890, ma credo sia la più verisimile, sia per il complesso di indizi che ci dà l'iscrizione, sia per la maggior affinità tra le lettere $\overline{\text{X}}$ ed $\overline{\text{X}}$ che vennero confuse dal lapicida, il quale ha commesso diversi altri errori di scrittura'.

(*gennā*) starts on 28. In leap years, however, Christmas is 28 Taḥsās, the Christmas night (*gennā*) starts on 27, and its eve is on the 26.¹¹ The second firm point was the identification of the letter *n* (𐤎) with the numeral ‘90’ (𐤍), on the basis of an apparent similarity. However, the belief that the date had to end with ‘-90’ led to a sort of inexorable line of reasoning, which, in my opinion, ended up overlooking the graphic and palaeographic evidence afforded by the inscription itself. Kropp thus supposed that *ne* (𐤎) had to be interpreted like a ‘100’ (𐤏) turned upside down to express the hundreds, and looked for all possible combinations of ‘-90’ years with a 27 Taḥsās on Wednesday. This led him to conclude that 590 of the Era of Diocletian (or Era of the Martyrs or Era of Mercy), which corresponds to 27 Taḥsās 866 of the Ethiopian calendar (= 23 December 873 CE), was the fitting solution to the problem and one that worked quite well.¹² In fact, the year 750 CE would also work, but such a date would be too early because at that point in time the first great cycle of 532 years has not yet ended and because the Era of Mercy, with this designation, is not yet attested.¹³

11 Important in this regard is Drewes’s (for whose hypothesis see below) explicit comment on line 2 (*RIĖ* IIIB, 328): ‘3: *gennā* veut dire “*nativitas Christi*”, et “*parasceue festi natalitii*”, “Noël”, et “veille de Noël”, with references to Dillmann 1865, 1175, and Leslau 1987, 196; ‘*Maḥātaw*, pluriel de *māhtot*, “lampe”, signifie “*vigilia*”, “la veille”, with references to Dillmann 1865, 604, and Leslau 1987, 258; ‘Le passage ‘*ame maḥātawihu lagennā* est ambigu. Au lieu de “la vigile de Noël”, C. Conti Rossini l’a traduit par “nel di precedente la vigilia di Natale”, ce qui correspond à la date du 27 Taḥsās; nous l’avons suivi’. On *gennā* see also ‘Lādāt’, *EAE*, III (2007), 538b–540a (Steven Kaplan, Emmanuel Fritsch, and Gianfranco Fiaccadori), where *gennā* is interpreted as the eve of Christmas (either on 28 or 27 Taḥsās). An unclear comment by Sergew Hable Selassie 1972, 198, n. 94, refers to the same point: ‘From the picture of the inscription it is not clear whether it is 𐤎 or 𐤏. Historically both are possible. The former indicates that it was a leap year and the latter that it was a normal year’. Concerning the leap year, one has to observe that the leap year in the Ethiopic calendar, with six days in the thirteenth month of Pāg^wmen, is year of Luke, that *precedes* the Julian and Gregorian leap year with a February of 29 days, which corresponds for the most part to year of John in the Ethiopic calendar; see very clearly on this point Cody 1991, 433b, ‘in the Alexandrian system the extra day is intercalated at the very end of the Alexandrian year preceding the one in which the Julian calendar’s 29 February will occur’.

12 A pioneer in the use of digital tools, Kropp was able to use digital devices which facilitated this search. Among other useful tools available at present, see the recently released Ḥassāba Zaman (<<https://cal.ethiopicist.com/>>, accessed on 11 Febr. 2021), developed by Augustine Dickinson, which I used for the preparation of this note.

13 The Era of Diocletian, introduced already in the first half of the fourth century in Egypt and probably also in Ethiopia, began to be called ‘Era of the Martyrs’ in Egypt from the end of the eighth century at the latest (785/786), see Luisier 2015, 306, who rightly stresses that the origin of the name of ‘Era of Diocletian’ has nothing to do with the role of Diocletian in persecution; cf. also Kropp 1999, 169, with n. 18. Concerning Luisier’s remark on the occurrences of the Era

Consequently and without any doubt, the first two signs of 'ənen (𐩦𐩺𐩨) had to mean 500, and hence the equivalence 𐩦𐩺 = 𐩧𐩺, that is 5 (×) 100, was necessarily established.

3 The open questions after Manfred Kropp's hypothesis

To suppose that the number 590 is hidden under 'ənen brings about a number of difficulties and does not consistently explain the way of rendering numerals in the inscription. Furthermore, other difficulties arise from the interpretation, required to support Kropp's hypothesis, of *ṣarane 'əlla šahl* as an expression that designates the Era of Diocletian (or Era of the Martyrs or Era of Mercy),¹⁴ as Kropp translates lines 1–5 as follows:

of Diocletian in the *Gadla Panṭalewon* recorded by Brita 2010, 80, 105–106 and 'Pänṭälewön', *EAE*, IV (2010), 111a–113a (Antonella Brita) (noted by Luisier 2015, 302, nn. 22 and 23), in the first passage three manuscripts, attesting to the majority of the families, bear the date of 111 of the Era of Diocletian, while four (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien, d'Abbadie 110, i.e. the one adopted by Conti Rossini, plus three manuscripts depending from the subarchetype ε) have 1001 (one manuscript cannot be read); for the second date, all manuscripts which have it (subarchetype ε omits the date and one manuscript cannot be read) have 236, including d'Abbadie 110: Conti Rossini's reading (246) is erroneous (see Conti Rossini 1904, text 43–44 and 60, transl. 40 and 56). Also note that Kropp's remark concerning an early occurrence of the Era of the Martyrs (inscription from Meroe dated to 613 = 897 of the Common Era), 'Dies ist wichtig für die Verwendung der Ära des Diokletian, aber mit der neuen Benennung "der Märtyrer" [...]. Äthiopien scheint nach Ausweis der Inschrift von Ḥam diese Benennung später übernommen zu haben, ohne daß sich die vorherige, alternativ christliche "Jahre der Gnade oder Erbarmung" gänzlich verdrängen ließ, wie auch die Ambiguität der Bezeichnung (entweder auf Geburt Christi oder Diokletian bezogen) weiter bestand' (Kropp 1999, 164, n. 4), is not so clear: in fact, there is no non-Ethiopian evidence for the designation of the Era of Diocletian or Era of the Martyrs as 'Era of Mercy'. In view of this latter point it is also necessary to review some other statements (Kropp 1999, 171, 'Die Verbindung zum christlichen Nubien ist nun auch aufgrund der Datierung und der Kalenderbezeichnungen wie auch der Zahlzeichen klar geworden'). Still essential are the contributions by Bagnall and Worp 2004, and the earlier contribution by MacCoull and Worp 1990, with important *addenda et emendanda*, MacCoull and Worp 1995; see also the monograph on calendar and computus in Nubian evidence by Ochała 2011. Lastly, see the monograph by Hidding 2020, which mostly focuses on the perception of the 'Great Persecution'.

¹⁴ I already listed and commented upon some of these difficulties in a previous contribution, see Bausi 2019a, 85–89.

⁽¹⁾ Es starb Giḥo, Tochter des Mängäša, im ⁽²⁾ Monat Täḥsas am 27. des morgens am Vorabend ⁽³⁾ des Weihnachtsfestes, an einem ⁽⁴⁾ Mittwoch und das (laufende) Jahr war das Jahr 590 'unseres Feindes' ⁽⁵⁾ (= Diokletian) (d.h. aber auch) 'der Gnade'. ...

[⁽¹⁾ Giḥo, daughter of Mängäša, died in ⁽²⁾ the month Täḥsas on the 27th of the morning the eve before ⁽³⁾ Christmas night, on a ⁽⁴⁾ Wednesday and the (current) year was the year 590 'of our enemy' ⁽⁵⁾ (= Diocletian) (but also) 'of Mercy'. ...]

This translation obscures a number of linguistic difficulties: on the syntactic level, the supposed genitive 'unseres Feindes' is not expressed, since there is no genitival construction in the text and one does not see how the noun phrase holds. Equally problematic is the value of 'alla, taken as the plural of the relative pronoun, of which the function and construction are also not clear. There are also serious lexical problems: Kropp maintains that the inscription of Ham contains a reference to the year of the Era of the Martyrs, indicated by the term *šahl* (also read by some editors as *šāhl*, but that is irrelevant here). This would be a manifestation of the well-known alignment of the Era of Mercy with the Era of Diocletian, from which it originally differs by 76 years, in turn renamed in time 'Era of the Martyrs'. However, while the phenomenon of the overlapping of the two systems and denominations is well known in Ethiopia, the term *šahl* (or *šahl*, 'clemency'), although synonymous, is never attested in this function, because the technical term used exclusively is *məḥrat* ('grace, mercy'). Kropp, who was well aware of this issue, tried to solve it by suggesting a possible interference of a Greek Nubian model, that was literally followed, but without providing other elements.¹⁵ Although the possibility of a change in technical and even administrative terminology between the ancient and more recent periods must always be taken into account, this is not a minor problem.¹⁶ Another significant

¹⁵ See Kropp 1999, 170, 'So ergibt sich die Gewißheit, daß im spätaksumitischen Reich nach Jahren "der Gnade" datiert wurde – wenn auch, als zusätzliche Information, bezeichnet in einer später aufgegebenen Terminologie, die sich aber als direkte Übersetzung aus dem (alt-nubischen) Griechisch erweist: "unseres Feindes" = Diokletian; vgl. die ständigen Epitheta Diokletians in der äthiopischen Übersetzung des Synaxars), aber auch "der Gnade", statt später mit dem Quasi-Synonym "der Erbarmung", that is *məḥrat*; yet Kropp himself translates *məḥrat* with 'Gnade' and not with 'Erbarmung', see for example Kropp 1988, 11. As is often the case, the authors are prodigal in explaining what is quite certain from the point of view of their hypothesis, much less so from the point of view of the arguments against it. Yet it would be unfair and ungenerous to place this responsibility on Kropp alone, who has the great merit of having proposed a complete explanation.

¹⁶ See for example, the *unicum* of the use of the verb 'aksama 'to give as feud', for the oldest feudal acts of the Zāg^we period, which never occurs at a later date, cf. lastly Derat 2018, 30–61, with extensive commentary; but on the other hand, consider also the surprising continuity of

issue is the occurrence of Diocletian, which would be related to the epithets attributed to him in the *Synaxarion*: the name of Diocletian is not in the inscription, and the emperor would be simply evoked by the epithet ‘our enemy’, that is, ‘the enemy of the Christians *par excellence*’.¹⁷ Yet, this reading is dubious, because both *RIĖ* I and Conti Rossini read this term as *ṣarane* or even *ṣarāne*, rather than *ṣarrāna*, which would be required for interpreting the passage as ‘our enemy’.¹⁸ Moreover, even if the reading *ṣarrāna*, ‘our enemy’, was accepted, the concerned etymological root *ḍrr* is well attested in the Aksumite epigraphy always with *ḍ* and not *ṣ*. Therefore, this would precisely be one of those cases where there has been a graphic confusion between *ḍ* (𐩌) and *ṣ* (𐩨) as is common in later manuscript tradition. However, Kropp himself quite rightly argues that, for what concerns the orthographic peculiarities of our inscription, the discrepancies from standard orthography are not of the kind of uncertainties otherwise found in manuscripts regarding the writing of laryngeals and *ḍ* as well.¹⁹

some formulas that in medieval times seem to resume Aksumite ‘protocols’, cf. Bausi 2013, 173–175.

17 See Kropp 1999, 168, n. 17, ‘Es genügt hier, auf die stehenden Epitheta bei der Nennung des Namens von Kaiser Diokletian im äthiopischen Synaxar hinzuweisen’, but after a cursory analysis undertaken on the edition published in the *Patrologia Orientalis* I could not trace any occurrence of ‘enemy’ as an epithet used for Diocletian, see the index in Colin 1999, 35.

18 See Kropp 1999, 168, ‘*ṣärrä-nä allä-ṣahl* “unseres Feindes, der Gnade”’, with footnote 16 (‘Hier ist die für sprachliche Nachlässigkeit der ganzen Inschrift nicht unangemessene Konjekture *Ḥ* anstatt *Ḥ* angenommen’) takes into account only the conjecture *rä* instead of *ra* (*rä* in Kropp’s transcription), while he has nothing on *na* (*nä* in Kropp’s transcription) instead of *ne*, and states that the alternative forms in ll. 8 (*ṣəḥuf*) and 12 (*ṣəḥəf*), l. 6 (*yätwällädä*, instead of the expected *yätwälläd*), and l. 1 (*wälättä* instead of the expected *wällättä*), ‘lassen *ṣärränä* statt *ṣärränä* (Z. 4.) als ganz in der “Norm” dieser Inschrift erscheinen’. In fact, also in *RIĖ* IIIB, the only alternative reading discussed and rejected regards the possibility of reading *ṣarani* instead of *ṣarane* (see *RIĖ* IIIB, 333, ‘Le mot *ṣarane*, lecture bien préférable à *ṣarani*’). Having said this, Kropp 1999, 165, in fact and with good reasons, criticizes the edition provided by *RIĖ* I, ‘Im *RIĖ* No. 232 und pl. 165 ist nur die Bibliographie, eine materielle Beschreibung und eine neue Umschrift (die freilich in einzelnen Punkten zu verbessern ist) zu finden’. There is little doubt, however, that the inscription reads *ṣarane* (see Fig. 1), as clearly appears from the picture taken by Mordini and here reproduced with a better resolution than in the article by Conti Rossini 1939, a reading, of course, for which one might always invoke an error of the stonemason.

19 See Kropp 1999, 167–168, ‘Diese Abweichungen betreffen weniger die sonst in Handschriften anzutreffenden Unsicherheiten in Bezug auf die Schreibung von Pharyngalen und *ḍ*’. For the root *ḍrr* in Gə‘əz inscriptions, see *RIĖ* IIIB, 611–612. This is a serious point, since the etymological coherence of the orthography of the inscription is apparent; see Nosnitsin and Bulakh 2014 for an exemplary evaluation in this regard of an archaic manuscript fragment.

4 The interpretation of Abraham Johannes Drewes

Before coming to the crucial point of how it is possible to interpret the numerals of the inscription of Ham in a different way, it is worth considering the recently and posthumously published proposal by Drewes in *RIÉ* IIIB, who translates lines 1–5 as follows:

⁽¹⁾ Est morte Giḥo, fille de Mangašā, le mois ⁽²⁾ de Taḥsās, le 27 de ce mois, ⁽³⁾ l'avant-veille de Noël, le jour de mer-⁽⁴⁾credi; l'année <de sa mort> est l'an ⁽⁵⁾ 807 (?).

Drewes thinks that the whole expression 'ānen šarane 'al(l)a šahl has no meaning, and that it is simply a way to express a number, in consideration of the fact that every letter would have a numerical value, as is also customary in Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and even in Greek, with the so-called isopsephic system. Thus, assuming that ' = 1, n = 50, š = 90, r = 200, l = 30, ś = 300, and h = 5, one would get the sum of 807.²⁰ We can note, however, that 27 Taḥsās 807 (= 23 December 814 CE) would be a Saturday, while 27 Taḥsās 807 of the Era of the Diocletian (= 23 December 1083 of the Era of the Incarnation and Ethiopian Calendar, and 1090 CE) would be a Friday. Aside from this, the main problem with Drewes's hypothesis is the lack of parallels for this way of expressing numerals, and the apparent internal inconsistency: the inscription has other numerals (the '27' of the month of Taḥsās) that are not expressed according to the system he suggests was adopted for the year.²¹ Drewes himself actually advanced this hypothesis as one among others, since he also proposed an alternative explanation according

20 See *RIÉ* IIIB, 329, 'Il est donc vraisemblable que les mots énigmatiques 'ānen šarane 'ala šahl précisent l'année de la mort de Giḥo, comme C. Conti Rossini l'a vu, et que les lettres qui les composent ont une valeur numérique, d'autant plus que ces mots ne forment pas de phrase compréhensible. Malheureusement nous ignorons quelle était la valeur numérique des lettres éthiopiennes, mais si elle était identique à celle des alphabets hébreu, syriaque et arabe, ce qui est probable, l'inscription date de l'an 807. Dans ces alphabets la valeur numérique de l'aleph est 1, du n 50, du š 90, du r 200, du l 30, du ś 300 et du h 5'. In fact, Drewes has completely misunderstood Conti Rossini, who argues the other way around precisely against Brunetti's hypothesis, praised by Drewes, that the letters represent numerals (see Conti Rossini 1939, 12, whereas Conti Rossini 1944–1945 has nothing on this).

21 On the possible use of a comparable, cryptographic way to express numerals in short inscriptions from the Coptic necropolis of Karanis, see the interesting considerations by Buzi 2004, 101.

to which, in keeping with Conti Rossini's suggestion, 'ānen šarane were personal or ethnic names.²²

5 A fresh look at the numerical signs

Let's now turn to the major point in Kropp's hypothesis. Without listing all the possible minor observations, the crucially unsolved problem is the ratio underlying such unusual graphic and palaeographic correspondences, so that the first two of the three signs in 'ānen (𐭠𐭡𐭢) should represent 𐭠𐭡, that is 5 (×) 100 + 90 (𐭡) in order to get 590 (𐭠𐭡𐭢 𐭣). Again, Kropp is obviously aware of the issue and hence he puts forth some explanations to justify the strange and acrobatic distortions suffered by the numerals that would be required for a passage from 𐭠 to 𐭠, and even from 𐭡 to 𐭡.²³ But, going by this argument, it is hard to see why the third numeral was also not distorted, at least to some extent; or why the other numerals (the '27' of Taḥsās) were not twisted as well. There is clearly a problem here. If the change 𐭠 > 𐭠 is particularly astonishing, the representation of the 'hundred' (𐭡 > 𐭡) is no less problematic and cannot be easily explained by suggesting that the shape of the sign was simply turned. This latter sign, in fact, also has some wavering along its vertical axis, as well as on the head, besides an otherwise arbitrary vertical rotation; the sign seems to have a sinusoidal shape.

²² See *RIÉ* IIIB, 333, 'Le mot *šarane*, lecture bien préférable à *šarani*, est probablement à identifier avec le nom d'un peuple, mentionné dans l'inscription 188, ligne 6. L'identification du premier mot est problématique, mais étant donné que les autres mots dans ce passage paraissent être des noms propres, de personne ou de peuple, on peut se demander si 'ānen n'en est pas un autre, hypothèse que C. Conti Rossini avait déjà avancée sous toutes réserves'. For the passage of *RIÉ* no. 188, l. 6, see *RIÉ* IIIB, 229–231. I wonder whether Drewes's two hypotheses in *RIÉ* IIIB are the reflex of a redactional stage of his work where this point was still undecided. The translation, however, presupposes undoubtedly the first hypothesis.

²³ See Kropp 1999, 169 ('𐭡 ist als gedrehtes 𐭡 "100" zu deuten'), 169–170 ('Das erste Zeichen 𐭠 ist somit als eine auch bei den anderen Zahlzeichen des Textes zu beobachtende Umdeutung der Standardform durch Achsendrehung in den formnächsten Buchstaben zu sehen (𐭠 → 𐭠): but in fact, the rotation is along the vertical and horizontal axes in '5' (𐭠 → 𐭠), while it is along the horizontal axis in '100' (𐭡 → 𐭡); and in '27' (𐭠𐭡) one wonders whether there is any rotation at all.

Kropp himself, after wondering whether one shouldn't consider Nubian numerals, rules out such a hypothesis.²⁴ But what about Greek numerals? Well, if one takes into account how it might be possible to explain the enigmatic 'anen (𐤀𐤍𐤍) in terms of Greek numerals, by considering the forms attested at this point in time, one finds a very simple and apparent correspondence between: anen (𐤀𐤍𐤍) and ϠΞΖ (non-capital Ϡ ξ ζ), that is Ϡ (900) + ξ (60) + ζ (7), which gives 27 Tahsās 967 Era of the Incarnation (= 23 December 974 CE), which is a Wednesday. For the shapes of the *sampi* (*parakýisma*, as it should be called), Ϡ (non-capital Ϡ) representing '900', there are palaeographic parallels likely to have inspired a rendering by an archaic 𐤀 ('ə) of the particular archaic shape as attested in the inscription, with a prolonged horizontal stroke over the head.²⁵ Note in fact that in Nubian Greek inscriptions the *sampi* has a pointed top (↑), with a slightly more extended left arm and a tighter and shorter right arm, that could definitely resemble the peculiar archaic form of alef in the sixth order in the inscription (see ll. 5 (Fig. 3), 6, 7, 14).²⁶ The imitation of a cursive form, as

24 See Kropp 1999, 170, n. 20, 'Eine erste Vermutung, es könne sich um nubische Zahlzeichen handeln, zunächst geboren aus einer falschen Identifizierung des Datums mit dem Jahr 690, scheidet nun aus'.

25 See the contribution by Soldati 2006, which focuses on papyrological evidence, but provides exhaustive references to date, and the further integrations in Soldati 2009 and Dobias-Lalou 2017, 187–190, exclusively on the attestation from the Hellenistic period on *sampi* used to express the thousands; note that p. 111 of manuscript St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 459, ninth/tenth centuries, that is one of the several Latin manuscripts with a complete set of Greek numerals, is now accessible at <<https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/0459/111/0/Sequence-562>> (accessed on 12 Febr. 2021). For general contributions, that provide useful insights and corresponding palaeographic examples, see Wattenbach 1895, 92–93 (on Ζ), 97 (on Ξ), and 103 (on Ϡ); Foat 1905, 1906; see also Gardthausen 1913, 358–363 (on letters as numerals), and 368–370 (on Ϡ), for further details; and the examples in Canart 1980, 89; for epigraphic evidence in general, see Larfeld 1914, 225–226. The Wikipedia entry on *sampi* also provides rich and reliable information <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sampi>> (accessed on 12 Febr. 2021). Essential evidence on *sampi* was collected in the dissertation by Woisin 1886, 38–40.

26 See Łajtar 2003, 9 (inscription no. 1, Khartoum, Sudan National Museum, inv. 23377, Epitaph of Kollouthos, Bishop of Faras, l. 6; see already Kubińska 1974, 32–34, no. 5, pl. 6 on p. 33), who notes that 'the form of the sign for 900 (↑) in the number of the year according to the era from the birth of Christ which, as far as Nubia is concerned, occurs only in the epitaphs of Faras bishops Kollouthos and Stephanos'. The same form is in fact attested in the inscription no. 107, Warsaw, National Museum, inv. 234646, Epitaph of Stephanos, Bishop of Faras, l. 7, see Łajtar and Twarddecki 2003, 290–293, where the presence of the *sampi* for a typographical slip is not in the edition (p. 291), but its presence and its shape were kindly confirmed to me by Adam Łajtar (see already Kubińska 1974, 34–36, no. 6, pl. 7 on p. 35, where the *sampi* is particularly marked by a longer and more extended left arm and a tighter and shorter right arm).

from later attestations (from the ninth century), characterized by two straight parallel lines (Ϡ), would be even more likely, but is not necessary. Even though the hypothesis of a cursive model is not corroborated by any attestation in Nubia, where all Greek texts transmitted to us appear to be in uncial script, we cannot exclude, as we will see, that the minute from which the inscription of Ham was engraved also contained at least Greek cursive numerals.²⁷ This hypothesis has two advantages. First, it gives a coherent explanation for the enigmatic 'anen ϠϠϠ Ϡ = Ϡ ∃ Z. Second, it also explains why in '27' (l. 2) the numeral is also so distorted, and why the two sevens '7' (in '27' and '967') are different from one another: the two forms could reflect two equally possible cursive forms, imitated by someone who did not have a clear idea of the letters to be represented.²⁸ The correspondence Ϡ = Ϡ (but the same can be said for Ϡ = ∃ and Ϡ = Z, and in '27' for 20 = K as well) is a perfect manifestation of the phenomenon so well described by Brunetti: when the stonecutter was unable to catch the precise shape of the numeral, he represented it with the most resembling letter, without having to resort to any sort of upside rotation, since the adjustments and the rotation are minimal. Yet, the shapes of the Greek numerals are recognisable.²⁹

6 Implications of a different interpretation of the numerical signs

The hypothesis I have presented is based on a series of presuppositions that make it clear that the inscription of Ham presents us with an extremely complex

²⁷ Numerical notes from Greek and Coptic documents from Egypt and more to the South along the Nile valley, generally always retain their uncial shape, and this is valid also for *sampi* (personal communication by Agostino Soldati). For new evidence, however, see below.

²⁸ The alternative reading of the first '7' as a cursive '8' (η), interpreting 'on the 28, at dawn, on the eve of Christmas night', is palaeographically unlikely.

²⁹ The Gə'əz numerals are obviously also derived from Greek numerals, see Hallo 1926, 61–63; the article 'Script, Ethiopic', *EAE*, IV (2010), 580b–585a (Serguei Frantsouzoff), does not deal with numerals, which are also disregarded in the quite disappointing entry 'Numbers, numerals, numeric systems', *EAE*, III (2007), 1201b–1204a (Thomas Zitelmann), that, for what concerns this discussion, only has a cross-reference to Dillmann 1907, 33; Uhlig 1988 has several paragraphs on numerals in the different periods, but no special section, which would have been quite useful for a narrowly-meant palaeographic study, and no entry on numerals in the index.

body of evidence. These presuppositions are the following: the existence of an early dating system based on the Alexandrian Era of the Incarnation (corresponding to the Ethiopian Calendar) in the tenth century; the palaeographical plausibility of the misread Greek numerals; the knowledge and circulation of Greek numerals alongside or even within written documents in Gə'əz at the time; the possible significance of a trace of Greek influence for the relationship between medieval Ethiopia and Nubia.

With regard to the Alexandrian Era of the Incarnation, which corresponds to the Ethiopian calendar still currently used, the perspective is exactly the same as required by the hypothesis that the inscription of Ham attests the earliest Ethiopian evidence for the Era of Diocletian, and the earliest dated document with a day, a month, and a year. The evidence offered by Nubian epigraphy is an important parallel. As noted by Adam Łajtar and Grzegorz Ochała,

Apart from Egypt, the country of their origin, both the Alexandrian eras and the 532-year cycle were adopted in Ethiopia for computistic purposes. In such circumstances, it should not be surprising that they also found their way to Christian Nubia, which was, at least theoretically, part of the same Church. Unusual in the Nubian use of such dates is their funerary context, which is otherwise unattested in the eastern Christian world [...] It is interesting to observe that the Christian eras occur in Nubia only in Greek sources.³⁰

It is difficult to say precisely which is the earliest attestation in Ethiopia of the Era of the Incarnation, since the references and research has been vague so far,

30 See Ochała 2011, 185–186, 190, with lists of chronological and topographical distribution of designations (p. 191, table 29b), and attestations of the Era of the Incarnation (p. 203, table 30b). See also the useful observations by Łajtar 2003, xxv, and 8, 'It is difficult to say why in 8th-10th century Nubia the redactors of epitaphs made use of such a complicated system of indicating the year. Possibly they followed the orders of church or state authorities, otherwise unknown to us. One cannot exclude, however, that it is a show of pure erudition'. The Era of the Incarnation does not appear to have been used in Saidic manuscripts, whereas Bohairic manuscripts provide a few attestations: I thank Agostino Soldati for having provided the following evidence from manuscript Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Copt. 58, fol. 23^v, with dating to 1025 Era of the Incarnation, 'Year of the World 6517, (of the) Crucified 1017, of the Martyrs 741, the 135th year of the 24th period (περίοδος)'; and manuscript Copt. 66, fol. 313^v, with dating from the same year 1025, 'year of the Martyrs 741, (of) the Christ one thousand (and) 17, 134 of the 13th period (περίοδιον), the (year) of the Creation 6017th and 500th'. The only reference provided by Chaîne 1925, 13, n. 2, refers to a miracle from the Life of St Macarius, in manuscript Copt. 59, fol. 124^v, 'And it was the day 25 of Pharmouthi that day, of the 82nd year of Diocletian, and it is 362 years from the Incarnation (οἰκονομία) of Christ, according to (κατὰ) the way the learned (σπουδαῖος) servants of God teach us'.

but it appears that this is definitely much later than the earliest attestation of the Era of Diocletian.³¹ As far as Nubia is concerned, the earliest attestation comes from a Greek inscription of 29 April 799, while the latest attestation dates from the second half of the twelfth century, in a non-epigraphic context.³²

It is however this Nubian connection, and, in particular, its use of Greek expressions, that we have to consider. A possible derivation from Nubian models in the inscription of Ham was first noted by Monneret de Villard, who compared the shape of the inscription with Meroitic inscribed offering tables.³³ A recently published thirteenth–fourteenth-century graffito from the Nubian church of Sonqi Tino seems to mention an archbishop of Aksum and thus adds an important element to the little-known medieval relationships between Nubia and Ethiopia, as well as provides evidence of the role held by the Greek language as a communicative medium in this relationship.³⁴ In this regard, the presence, on

³¹ See ‘Chronography’, *EAE*, I (2003), 733a–737a (Siegbert Uhlig), without any precise references to the evidence, whereas ‘Calendar: Christian Calendar’, *EAE*, I (2003), 668a–672b (Emmanuel Fritsch and Ugo Zanetti), for the historical evidence exclusively relies on Cody 1991; Chaîne 1925, Mauro da Leonessa 1943, and even Neugebauer 1979, are also of little help in this regard. The earliest evidence in colophons based on the data in the Beta maṣāḥaft corpus (<<https://betamasafeft.eu/>>) gives a date of the Era of the Incarnation for relatively late attestations, from the sixteenth century on. While this era is not used in the documents in the Golden Gospel of Dabra Libānos, an end-leaf in an archaic homiliary from Dabra Ḥayq ʿEṣṭifānos (Collegeville, MN, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library no. 1763, on which see Getatchew Haile and Macomber 1981, 218–231; Bausi 2019b, 74–75), fol. 280ra, has a document from the month of Gənbət of 1436 CE: ‘In 6928 from the creation of the World, in 1428 from the birth of our Saviour, in 1152 Year of the Martyrs, in 12 Year of Grace’, see text and translation in Taddesse Tamrat 1970, 106.

³² See Ochała 2011, 191, 203, tables 29b and 30b, with nine attestations from 29 April 799 to 17 September 1186, including the Epitaph of Kollouthos, Bishop of Faras, cf. Łajtar 2003, 9 (inscription no. 1), dated to 13 August 923.

³³ See Monneret de Villard 1940; Conti Rossini 1944–1945, 29–30, who praises the proposal, albeit being in favour of a South-Arabian connection. But see Łajtar 2003, xv–xvii (inscription no. 1, pl. I) for comparable ruling in Greek Nubian inscription, and pp. 84–85 (inscription no. 18, Epitaph of Mariankouda, Tetrarch of Makouria, pl. XVII) for the reuse of offering trays in funerary inscriptions in Nubia (also previously noted by Kropp 1999, 166, ‘Ebenso auffällig ist die Gestaltung der Zeilen mit oberer und unterer Begrenzungslinie und die Worttrenner, die alle direkt aus nubischem Vorbild übernommen scheinen’), and even before by Monneret de Villard 1940, 65–66. In fact, even in the inscription of Ham the ‘Worttrenner’ do not exactly consist of vertical lines, but of two vertically opposed wedge-like incised segments which touch one another in the middle of the line (see Figs 2 and 3).

³⁴ See Łajtar and Ochała 2017, 259 (graffito DON51), ‘[---] ἀρχ(ι)επίσκο(σ)ος Ἀξούμ(ε)ος [...] archbishop of Axum’, or: ‘[---] ἀρχ(ι)επίσκο(σ)ος Ἀξουμ(ειτῶν) [...] archbishop of the Axumites’). It is interesting to note that the letter ξ has two loops, as it is typical in Nubian

the façade of the church of Ham of a Greek inscription with what appears to be a peculiar arrangement of the two Greek letters Ω and Α in the form of monograms, on the two sides of a cross, has to be put in connection with the inscription of Ham, with which, we could hypothesize, it shared at least the same context at some earlier point in time (Fig. 4).³⁵ We can take for granted that the inscription has the Α and Ω which recur in epitaphs.³⁶ However, instead of reading the sign to the right as a ∇ placed over an Ω, I wonder whether the inscription might have been placed upside down in the façade of the old church of Ham where it was documented. It seems likely that originally the Λ was placed under the Ω, since the longer arm of the cross is usually the bottom one, while in our inscription, as it was placed, the longer arm is the top arm.³⁷ The collocation of the Ω to the left would be peculiar, but with parallels in one of the most praised Latin examples of the early Middle Ages, the early seventh-century *Codex Valerianus*.³⁸

inscriptions, cf. p. 260, 'There is, however, little doubt as to the *ksi*, read as a *sigma* by Laisney: it assumes a typical Nubian shape with the line forming a loop at the top and descending in two curves, first to the left and then to the right'; and for the Greek context, cf. p. 263, 'In this context it is important to observe that the text was apparently edited in Greek and was executed by someone using Nubian-type majuscules, a type of script characteristic of Christian Nubian literacy of the time. This suggests that the *abun* (or a member of his entourage) was only a commissioner of the inscription, the writer of which was a local, probably a cleric', the term *abun* here being used to indicate the archbishop.

35 See a picture of this Greek inscription in Conti Rossini 1939, 8 ('L'iscrizione è al fianco sinistro della porta della chiesa, entro il primo recinto. All'altro lato della porta è stata murata un'altra pietra quadrata che porta scolpita in rilievo una croce, fra le cui braccia superiori sono due monogrammi. Quello di destra porta un ∇ sovrapposto a un Ω; non dubito siano le lettere greche Α e Ω, ben noti simboli su iscrizioni sepolcrali: la loro apparizione, per quanto sformata, in un monumento etiopico ci è indizio dell'antichità di questo'), with fig. 9. See also Bausi and Lusini 1992, pl. 6, fig. 11. This point was well present to Kropp 1999, 166, n. 12, who also stresses the similarity with Nubian parallels. For updates on Nubian funerary inscriptions, see Stroppa 2019.

36 See the commentary by Lajtar 2003, 5, on the epitaph of Kollouthos, Bishop of Faras quoted above. For Coptic examples, see the report on the necropolis of Karanis, by Buzi 2006, 121, which confirms the frequent use, even if of modest realization, of the '*ankh* con funzione di croce, dai cui bracci penzolano l'α e l'ω', with references to well-known more monumental examples.

37 One could read the two signs as the two consecutive numerals '800' (ω) and Λ '900', the latter sign being an epigraphic variant of a *sampi* (↑ or ς). And one wonders whether the Λ was simply added to the ω, that paired the Α, but I have no explanation why this should have been done.

38 See Garipzanov 2018, with rich documentation on the subject, and pp. 232–233 on the early seventh-century Latin *Codex Valerianus*, or Four gospels of St Corbinian (Munich, Bayerische

The unusual numerical notation of the inscription of Ham – for which I admit that there are points for which I still cannot provide satisfactory explanations – could only be explained by suggesting an attempt to imitate Greek script, which, in turn, requires us to postulate that Greek numerical signs circulated in medieval Ethiopia, possibly also in their different graphic variants, including cursive forms. This would have been pure speculation without any ground before the discovery of manuscripts which offer certain evidence of a knowledge of the Greek script at a time that is not too distant from that of the inscription of Ham, and that is, at the latest, *ante* thirteenth century and in all likelihood earlier. An archaic manuscript containing a Gəʾəz treatise on chronology and computus, recently brought to scholarly attention by a contribution of Denis Nosnitsin, definitely has, in the arch of the incipit folium, a series of signs that must be interpreted as a list of Greek numerical signs from 1 to 1000, with a few omissions and possibly one repetition (Fig. 5): units – A (1, ?), B (2), Γ (3), Δ (4), E (5), Ç (6), Z (7), | H (8), Θ (9) – tens – I (10), K (20), Λ (30), M (40), N (50), Ξ (60), | Ξ (60, i.e. one number is repeated), O (70), Π (80), Q (90) – hundreds – P (100), Σ (200), T (300), Y (400), Φ (500), <X (600), Ψ (700), Ω (800) missing, > Ṛ (900) – and 1000 – ,A (1000, ?).³⁹ Note that the form of the *sampi* corresponds to the cursive forms (Ϡ, ϡ, more than to the so-called *as de pique* form, Ϡ) and provides an important evidence for the circulation of this variant and in general of Greek minuscule forms of numerical signs.

7 *Ṣarane* and *ʿalla šāhl*

Even more than *ʿalla šāhl*, the real *crux* in the following passage of the inscription of Ham is the word: *ṣarane*. Once established that the reading is certain,

Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 6224), fol. 202^r, with a ‘jewelled cross with a suspended alpha and omega at the end of the Gospels’; a picture of the leaf is accessible at <<https://app.digitale-sammlungen.de/bookshelf/bsb00006573>>: in fact, the Ω is placed on the right and the A on the left. I owe this reference to Jacopo Gnisci. On the Coptic crosses in general, see Spalding-Stracey 2020, to which more could be added. For the evidence of Egyptian funerary stelae from the Byzantine and Arab period, see Tudor 2011, 90 and 96. It is really surprising that, while other inscribed crosses from the site of Ham are usually considered in the literature (see for example Hahn 1999, 451, fig. 19), there is no mention of this cross with Greek letters in the reference works on Ethiopian crosses, see Chojnacki and Gossage 2006 and Di Salvo 2006.

³⁹ See Nosnitsin 2021. The fragmentary manuscript is only known through the uncatalogued pictures preserved in Addis Ababa, Casa Provinciale dei Padri Comboniani, Emilio Ceccarini collection, for which see Raineri 1993, who does not mention this specific item.

our first task is to see if there is a possible explanation for the reading as it is, without supposing any textual error or orthographic solecism by the stonecutter.⁴⁰ The first consideration is that *ṣarane* appears exactly in this form in an Aksumite inscription attributed to the fourth-century King 'Ezānā (*RIĖ* no. 188 = *DAE* no. 10, ll. 6–7): ⁽⁶⁾... *ḍab'u ṣarane mangəṣtomu 'a*[⁽⁷⁾*fā*]n, translated by Drewes as: ⁽⁶⁾... a fait la guerre aux Ṣarane, – leur royaume étant 'A|[⁽⁷⁾*fā*]n'.⁴¹ The translation, however, is not certain, and other scholars have made Ṣarane the subject of the verb (⁽⁶⁾... they waged war, the Ṣarāne, whose kingdom is 'A-|[⁽⁷⁾*fā*]n').⁴²

The two interpretations have a minor bearing for the interpretation of Ṣarane. There has been a consensus among all scholars in interpreting Ṣarane in the 'Ezānā inscription (*RIĖ* no. 188) as an ethnonym, which remains, however, an enigmatic name and without any parallel: no convincing identification has been suggested so far.⁴³ The syntagm *ṣarane mangəṣtomu 'a*[*fā*]n in the inscription is not less challenging:⁴⁴ the distinction of an ethnonym (Ṣarane), which in itself should be related to a minor polity, with a kingdom ('Afān) is something that only in the realm of Ethiopian epigraphy does not raise any

40 Both these conditions – textual error (*-ne* instead of *-na*) and non-etymological orthography (*ṣar-* instead of *ḍar-*) – are presupposed in the hypothesis advanced by Kropp 1999.

41 See text in *RIĖ* I, 260; translation in *RIĖ* IIIB, 230, with a commentary on pp. 230–231.

42 See the different interpretation and translation by Marrassini 2014, 229, ⁽⁶⁾... Mossero guerra gli Ṣarāne, il cui regno è 'A-|[⁽⁷⁾*fā*]n', who follows Enno Littmann, in *DAE*, 29, ⁽⁶⁾... Es zogen zu Felde die Ṣaranē, deren Reich 'A-|[⁽⁷⁾*fā*]n ist'. Drewes justifies his interpretation of *ṣarane* as object, and not subject of the sentence, in consideration of the parallelism with other inscriptions ('E. Littmann tenait le mot *ṣarane* pour le sujet grammatical de la forme verbale précédente, *ḍab'u*; à notre avis, c'est une erreur. Comme dans les autres grandes inscriptions royales axoumites, c'est le roi mentionné au début de l'inscription qui est le sujet de la première phrase principale du texte', *RIĖ* IIIB, 230–231). The verb *ḍab'a* is constructed in most cases with the object or subject immediately after the verb (see *RIĖ* IIIB, 610–611), but not always; see for example *RIĖ* no. 191, l. 15 (*w'nh ḍb'k msl s[r]wt hgry wmsl rḍkn*), where a complementary expression immediately follows (*RIĖ* IIIB, 249, 'Et moi, j'ai fait la guerre avec les régiments de mon pays et avec le régiment Dāken').

43 See Marrassini 2014, 229, n. 2, who proposes, in the commentary, to identify this site with a river Ṣarāna, 'a circa 25 km a nord di 'Ēntiçço, sulla via da Aksum ad Adulis', as previously suggested by Huntingford 1989, 55. A place named Ṣaronā, 'a village in Akkele Guzay', is listed in Kane 2000, 2565a.

44 As honestly recognised by Littmann, in *DAE*, 30, 'Freilich ist die Konstruktion auf jeden Fall etwas prägnant und hätte klarer sein können'.

concern. 'Afān, at least, reappears in the same inscription, but there is no further mention of Šarane.⁴⁵

On the other hand, *mangəštomu* is a common noun ('kingdom, royalty, government'). If we look at the morphological pattern of the word *šarane*, the only possible parallel is to think of an *-e* form of a noun of pattern *1a2a3-*, to be compared, for example, with *maṭan-* ('measure'), which is used as preposition and conjunction in the grammaticalised *status constructus maṭana*, widely attested also in the archaic *-e*-form *maṭane*.⁴⁶ This hypothesis requires a root *šrn from which the noun *šarane* is derived. Obviously, this root is not attested so far in Gə'əz: which does not mean that this hypothesis must be immediately discarded. It is common knowledge that one of the most challenging aspects of Aksumite and generally Gə'əz epigraphy is the obscurity of its lexicon.⁴⁷ The full exploration of this possibility requires more research.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ See *RIÉ* IIIB, 229 (transl. of *RIÉ* no. 188, ll. 17–18), ⁽¹⁷⁾ ... <Le nombre des> tués des hommes de 'A[fā]n était ⁽¹⁸⁾ 503, des femmes 202; c'était <au total> 705'. No light on this point comes from the modest contribution by Hoffmann 2014, 230–231 and 241, who does not note the inconsistency and makes the Šarane the main subject of the inscription, and even lists them under 'Hauptfeinde' (p. 230).

⁴⁶ See Tropper 2002, 51–69, for an overview of nominal patterns in Gə'əz. For *maṭan*, see Leslau 1987, 372b–373a, s.v. '*maṭana* (construct state and the accusative used adverbially) "during, according to, about, at a distance (of), as long as, as large as, as often as, for the space of (a certain time), of the size of, as much as, as great as, so great, to such a degree"'. For the *-e* forms as an archaic feature of Gə'əz, see Bausi 2005a, 2005b, and 2016, 76–77, n. 92; Bulakh 2009, 402, n. 19; summary in Villa 2019, 204–206; for the epigraphic evidence, see Bulakh 2013, 211. The form *maṭane*, which is not attested in Aksumite inscriptions, is widely attested in ancient manuscripts, as already observed by Dillmann 1865, 223, 'Denique nota, hoc መጠኑ ፡ in st. c. positum [...] in libris antiquioribus crebro መጠኑ ፡ sonare'. Abundant evidence is also provided now by the manuscript of the *Aksumite Collection* ('Urā Masqal, C₃-IV-71/C₃-IV-73 = Ethio-SPaRe UM-039), for which see Bausi, Brita, et al. 2020. Note that at least archaic *-e*-forms are attested in the inscription of Ham (ll. 2 and 3, 'ame), although standard forms are also present.

⁴⁷ This goes well alongside the hypothesis suggested by Kapeliuk 1997, 494, that 'A possible explanation would be that the kind of Gə'əz known to us from the Axumite inscriptions and from the early translations from Greek was only one, namely the written and standardized variant of the language, beside which there existed another variant or other variants from which the modern languages evolved'. Yet, for what we know at present, we can certainly say that at least some of the early translations from Greek were quite at variance with the standardized variant of the language. These assumptions, to which I have contributed in the past (see Bausi 2005b and 2016), seem to have become a recognized acquisition (see for example Butts 2019, 118: 'Research on the most ancient Ethiopic manuscripts, especially those that contain Axumite period texts, has shown that these preserve certain archaic linguistic features, some of which are also attested in Epigraphic Gə'əz [...]) These archaic features probably represent the

Quite different is the case for *'əlla šahl*: if we set aside the complex and extremely problematic reconstructions offered by Kropp and Fiaccadori, this is a well attested ruler name, present in the Ethiopian king lists as well as in literary sources, namely *'Əlla Šāhl*.⁴⁹ Without any absurd pretention at identifying the ruler, what matters here is that this is a plausible name built with an *'əlla* element (probably the plural relative pronoun) that can perform quite well in a phrase introduced by *šarane* the same grammatical role as the noun *mangəstomu* in the aforementioned Aksumite inscription: in the latter inscription (*RIĖ* no. 188, l. 6) *šarane mangəstomu* could mean 'by/in the sovereignty of their/his reign',⁵⁰ while in the inscription of Ham (*RIĖ* no. 232, ll. 4–5) *šarane 'əlla šahl* would mean 'under the sovereignty of *'Əlla Šāhl*', and would then offer a further chronological indication. I am well aware that we do not have any positive evidence for interpreting *šarane* as 'sovereignty' in this way – with 'sovereignty' I just gave an example of a possible meaning to highlight its possible grammatical function and to clearly indicate what the context needs, but even 'period, time,

proverbial tip of the iceberg of an earlier variety (better: varieties) of Gəʿəz that has been mostly standardized in the Solomonic period'). For another example of interaction between epigraphy and philological manuscripts studies, see Bausi, Harrower, et al. 2020, 42–44, on the term *gəbgab/gəbgāb*, 'corvée'.

48 Within Ethiopian Semitic, the Gurage *ṭārānā*, 'strong, powerful, vigorous, hard (object)', and the related *ṭārāñā*, and the derived verb *ṭirāñne*, are obviously no possible comparison, since Leslau 1979, III, 631–632, reconstructs a root **tr* and the nasal consonant is part of the adjectival suffix (but the correspondence of Gurage *ṭ* for Gəʿəz *ṣ* is regular). Possible traces of nouns derived from a **šrn* root in other Ethiopian Semitic languages do not convey any plausible meaning.

49 As we have seen and as clearly summarised in the informative entry '*Əllä Šāhəl*', *EAE*, II (2005), 263b (Stuart Munro-Hay), Kropp suggests to consider the words *'əlla šahəl* as a part of another – otherwise unknown – designation for the Era of Diocletian, while Fiaccadori considers them a genitive of abstraction ('those of mercy/compassion'). The development *sahl* > *šāhl* is the result of phonetic and orthographic developments: the names *'Əlla Šāhl*, *'Əlla Šāhl*, or even *'Əlla Šāhəl*, are the same. For the king lists, see 'King lists', *EAE*, V (2014), 376b–379a (Alessandro Bausi), with consideration of *'Əlla Šāhl* on p. 378b; see also Derat 2019. A remarkable confirmation of the importance of the king lists as repositories of ancient, authentic materials have provided the recently discovered inscriptions of King Ḥafilā (HFL, previously known only in the Greek form ΑΦΙΛΑC from numismatic evidence), whose *'əlla*-name 'L 'YG (probably *'Əlla 'Aygā*) perfectly matches names attested in the king lists, see Bausi 2018, 289.

50 The expression could work in both syntactical interpretations of the sentence, either 'he waged war to the *Šarāne*', or 'they waged war, the *Šarāne*', and *mangəstomu* could refer either to King *'Ezānā* (with the plural suffix *-omu* with the value of third person respect form, see the detailed commentary by Marrassini 2014, 207–208, to the inscription *RIĖ* no. 186) or to the *Šarane* (with the same *-omu* with the value of real plural).

jurisdiction', could work quite well – yet singling out *desiderata* on the basis of hypothesis is a legitimate and productive conjectural exercise: something like this is what would be required.

8 Conclusion

Despite its modest appearance, the Gə'əz inscription of Ham is an extremely complex object. It was a stone shaped like a Meroitic offering table, reused to write a Gə'əz funerary inscription which was probably copied from minutes containing Greek numerals expressing a date according to the Incarnation era. It was first placed at an undetermined location and only eventually incorporated in the façade of a church where it was first documented. It was subsequently moved to the inside of a new church, where it is still today. It is no wonder, then, that this object calls for complex explanations and that there are still *loci* and aspects of it that resist our interpretation. Material, palaeographic, and linguistic evidence, as well as the hypotheses advanced by our predecessors, to whose efforts we owe so much and to whose conclusions any alternative proposals are deeply indebted, need a profound re-examination.

Despite the many and obvious limits of this small and inadequate exercise in Gə'əz epigraphy, I offer this contribution to Michael Friedrich as an attempt at having the same fresh mind and applying the same fundamental radicalism in research he always gave me an admirable and inspiring example of, in over a decade of fruitful cooperative work in the rewarding realm of Manuscript Cultures at Universität Hamburg.

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Abbreviations

DAE	Enno Littmann, <i>Deutsche Aksum-Expedition</i> , IV: <i>Sabäische, Griechische und Altabessinische Inschriften</i> , Berlin: Reimer, 1913.
EAe	Siegbert Uhlig and Alessandro Bausi (eds), <i>Encyclopaedia Aethiopica</i> , I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; IV: O–X; V: Y–Z: <i>Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index</i> , Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003–2014.
RIÉ	Étienne Bernand, Abraham Johannes Drewes, and Roger Schneider, <i>Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite</i> , I: <i>Les documents, Introduction par Francis Anfray</i> ; II: <i>Les Planches</i> , Paris: de Boccard, 1991; Étienne Bernand, III: <i>Traductions et commentaires</i> , A: <i>Les inscriptions grecques</i> , Paris: de Boccard, 2000; Abraham Johannes Drewes, III: <i>Traductions et commentaires</i> , B: <i>Les inscriptions sémitiques, Introduction par Roger Schneider</i> , ed. Manfred Kropp and Harry Stroomer (Aethiopistische Forschungen, 85 / De Goeje Fund, 34), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019.

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Manuscripts

- Addis Ababa, Casa Provinciale dei Padri Comboniani, Emilio Ceccarini collection, Gə'əz treatise on chronology and computus (no inventory)
- Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Copt. 58
- Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Copt. 59
- Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Copt. 66
- Dabra Ḥayq 'Ēstifānos, Homiliary (Collegeville, MN, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library no. 1763)
- Ham, Dabra Libānos, Golden Gospel (no inventory)
- Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 6224 (*Codex Valerianus*, or Four gospels of St Corbinian)
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien, d'Abbadie 110
- St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 459
- 'Urā Masqal, C3-IV-71/C3-IV-73 = Ethio-SPaRe UM-039 (*Aksumite Collection*)

List of inscriptions

- Aksum (Ethiopia), Māryām Šəyon, *RIÉ* no. 188 = *DAE* no. 10
- Aksum (Ethiopia), Māryām Šəyon, *RIÉ* no. 191
- Aksum (Ethiopia), Museum of Aksum, *RIÉ* no. 186 = *DAE* no. 8
- Ham (Eritrea), Beta Māryām, *RIÉ* no. 232
- Khartoum (Sudan), Sudan National Museum, Greek inscription no. 1 (inv. 23377, Epitaph of Kollouthos, Bishop of Faras)
- Khartoum (Sudan), Sudan National Museum, Greek inscription no. 18 (inv. unknown, Epitaph of Mariankouda, Tetrarch of Makouria)
- Sonqi Tino (Sudan), Greek graffito DON51
- Warsaw (Poland), National Museum, Greek inscription no. 107 (inv. 234646, Epitaph of Stephanos, Bishop of Faras)

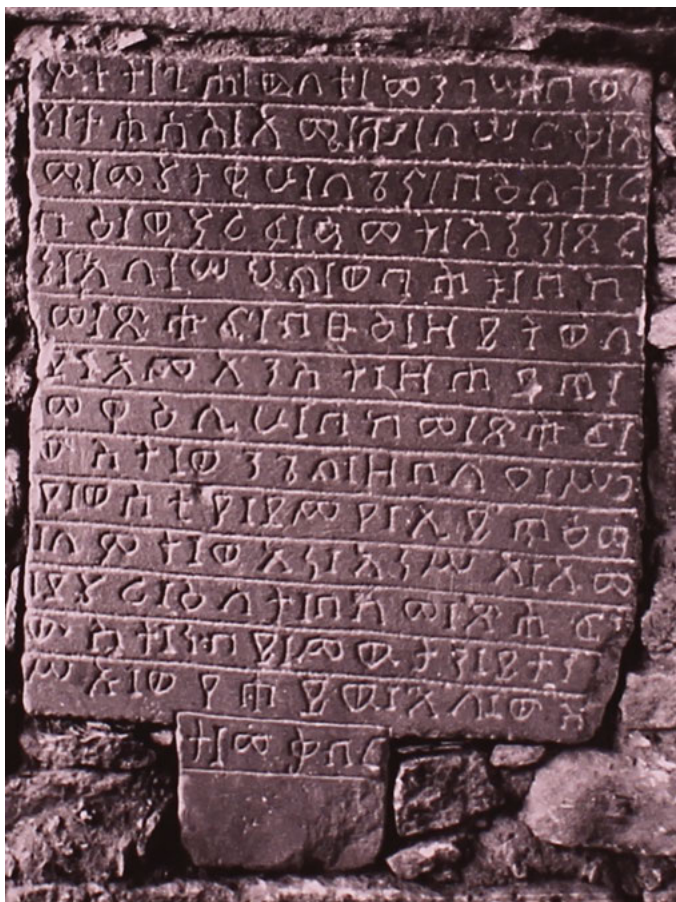


Fig. 1: The inscription of Ham (*RIÉ* no. 232). © Roma, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, archivio Carlo Conti Rossini, busta 11, fasc. 93, ‘Marazzani’. Already published in Conti Rossini 1939, 9 (fig. 10).



Fig. 2: Inscription of Ham: left, l. 2
(𐤀𐤌 / K Z).



Fig. 3: Inscription of Ham: right, l. 4
(𐤀𐤌𐤌 / 𐤀𐤌𐤌 / 𐤀𐤌𐤌).

Figs 2 and 3 © Roma, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, archivio Carlo Conti Rossini, busta 11, fasc. 93, ‘Marazzani’.



Fig. 4: Inscription placed on the façade of the church of Ham, turned upside down from its presumable original orientation. The picture here printed is turned 180° in order to show the inscription as it presumably originally was. © Roma, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, archivio Carlo Conti Rossini, busta 11, fasc. 93, 'Marazzani'. Already published in Conti Rossini 1939, 8 (fig. 9); cf. a colour picture in Bausi and Lusini 1992, pl. 6, fig. 11.

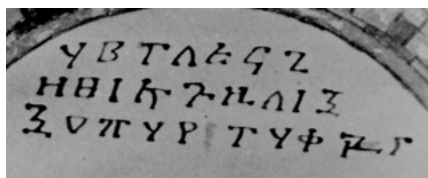


Fig. 5: Addis Ababa, Casa Provinciale dei Padri Comboniani, Emilio Ceccarini collection, Gə'əz treatise on chronology and computus, fol. 4^r (title page). From Nosnitsin 2021.

