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*Ms Ethiopic 4 of the Collection of the India Office: A strayed Manuscript of
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Ms Ethiopic 4 of the Collection of the India Office: A strayed Manuscript of *Gadla Lālibalā**

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Introduction

Ms Ethiopic 4 (London, British Library, Ms Ethiopic 4)¹ is an Ethiopian paper codex of 163 leaves, 237 mm in height and 170 mm in width. It is, according to some captions, composed of eight quires, whose structure can be reconstructed as six quinions, one senion and nineteen leaves the quire structure of which could not be determined (i.e. ${}_{1-6}V^{\text{fols } 1-120} + {}_7VI^{\text{fols } 121-144} + 19^{\text{fols } 145-163}$).

It is one of around thirty-five manuscripts which contain the so-called *Gadla Lālibalā*,² meaning the *Life of Lālibalā* or better the *Life and the Miracles* of Lālibalā.³ These texts are the main source about the life and deeds of

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¹ 'Il codice n. 4' according to Cerulli 1946, 116 and 'India Office 4' according to Derat 2016, 103.

² The number thirty-five is a rather rough estimation of manuscripts which were registered in a more or less systematic way. Hagiographic texts about King Lālibalā have already been published twice by Baqəddus Lālibalā Dabra sabakā gubā'e 2007/2008 and 2010/2011. Thanks to this activity, the texts became widely known and new manuscripts were copied from the printed editions. Outside Ethiopia the texts are known partly from J. Perruchon's edition, which was later complemented by S. Kur. For the present state of the art and all related publications see Derat 2006; Derat 2016, 101–103.

³ This distinction is based on the working hypothesis that the text, known as *Gadla Lālibalā*, results from the merging of several independent texts which were eventually

King Lālibalā of the so-called Zāg^we dynasty, who ruled in the twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE, and who is credited with the construction of the renowned rock-hewn churches in the town of Lālibalā, named after the king.⁴ The Zāg^we kings have sometimes been dubbed usurpers, but the Ethiopian Orthodox Church venerates some of them as saints.

For many years it was unclear as to whether Ms Ethiopic 4 was part of the collection of the India Office.⁵ In February 2016, thanks to the collaboration of the British Library team,⁶ the manuscript reappeared and has now been included into the online catalogue along with five other Ethiopic manuscripts from the India Office. The main peculiarity of Ms Ethiopic 4 is the unexpected manuscript support, namely the paper, ‘which was not used to any extent in Ethiopia before the twentieth century, with the exception of Islamic manuscripts’.⁷ Thus, paper characterization and identification was one of the core tools of this research. The aim of this article is to present Ms Ethiopic 4 in all its complexity as well as to trace the itinerary of this manuscript to its source.

Six Ethiopic Manuscripts of the India Office

Up to the present, people working with manuscripts in the British Library have produced their documents and catalogues in manuscript form rather than digital records. Thus, catalogues of manuscripts are themselves manuscripts. One such catalogue, the *Catalogue of Ethiopic and Syriac M.S.S.*, was written by William Wright in 1886. This catalogue was not printed and can be found in the British Library under the shelf mark Mss Eur. B. 106.⁸ In this catalogue Wright described four Ethiopic manuscripts of the India Office Library, but he did not record Ms Ethiopic 4. Arthur John Arberry, during his employment as assistant librarian at the library of the India Office (1934–1939), invited Enrico Cerulli to study a small collection of Ethiopic manu-

transmitted as a single work. This distinction between the *Life* and the *Miracles* of Lālibalā was already noted by Enrico Cerulli for MSS Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cerulli Etiop. 37 and 223, see Raineri 2004, 39 and 178 respectively.

⁴ See ‘Lalibāla’, *EAE*, III (2007), 477b–480a (M.-L. Derat); cf. Derat 2016, 101.

⁵ See Derat 2016, 103.

⁶ I would like to thank Mr Eyob Derillo for finding the manuscript on the shelves of the library.

⁷ Balicka-Witakowska et al. 2015, 155. See Gori 2015.

⁸ I am grateful to Mr Hedley Sutton for helping me to find this catalogue. Without him I would probably never have found it.

scripts which ‘consisted of four codices’.⁹ According to Cerulli, this collection was still unknown to scholars at that time.¹⁰ It can be inferred that neither Arberry nor Cerulli knew about the catalogue put together by Wright.

If we follow the current shelf marks and examine the two catalogues, by Wright (*Catalogue of Ethiopic and Syriac M.S.S.*, 1886) and Cerulli (‘I manoscritti etiopici della biblioteca dell’*India Office* in Londra’, 1946), we will see that the first three manuscripts in both catalogues match each other:

- Ms Ethiopic 1: ሃይማኖት ፡ አበው ፡ *Hāymānota ʾabaw* (‘The faith of the fathers’);
- Ms Ethiopic 2: አርጋኖን ፡ ድንግል ፡ *ʾArgānona dāngəl* (‘Harp of the Virgin’);
- Ms Ethiopic 3: ቁርሎስ ፡ *Qerallos* (‘Cyrill’).

However, when it comes to the fourth manuscript, the catalogues differ:

- Ms Ethiopic 4: ገድለ ፡ ላሊበላ ፡ *Gadla Lālibalā* (‘Life of Lālibalā’), described only by Cerulli, but not mentioned by Wright;
- Ms Ethiopic 5: *Books of Medical Recipes* (amulets and magical prayers), described by Wright, but not mentioned by Cerulli;
- Ms Ethiopic 6: given the title *Magic*, recorded neither by Cerulli nor by Wright. There is a note attached to the back of the cover, which says, ‘Books prohibited magic and ob. 4073 scene’. Ms Ethiopic 6 is a parchment manuscript of ten folia; its cover is 165 mm in height and 125 mm in width and its folia have 150 mm height and 107 mm width. On the left side of the cover a note is attached describing the content of the manuscript. Its text is as follows:

Contents

1. 150 propositions, out of which the fortunes of marriages can be foretold: in Ethiopic.
2. ‘Book of Deliverance’ being a medical treatise: in Amharic.
3. The story of an Apparition of Christ to a dying man, named Boko; in Ethiopic and written with red inks.

As one can deduce from the two catalogues, there was no clear idea of how many Ethiopic manuscripts the collection of the India Office housed and of what their expected content was. For some unknown reasons Wright and Cerulli agreed that there were four. In fact there are at least six manuscripts, one of which, Ms Ethiopic 6, was not mentioned at all. All the MSS from the

⁹ Cerulli 1946, 109.

¹⁰ Ibid.

India Office, except Ms Ethiopic 4, preserve their original binding and are in fairly bad condition. Of the six Ethiopic manuscripts, Ms Ethiopic 4 is the only one written on paper. This manuscript varies from other Ethiopian manuscripts with Christian content, but shows striking similarities to other manuscripts commissioned by Johann Ludwig Krapf and at present in the Universitätsbibliothek of Tübingen.¹¹

Manuscript Workshop of Johann Ludwig Krapf

Johann Ludwig Krapf was, after Hiob Ludolf, the second most important collector of the Ethiopian literary heritage.¹² Krapf commissioned manuscripts to be copied first in Šawā and a few years later in Təgrāy.¹³ The MSS thus commissioned were sent to England and to Tübingen.¹⁴ Ethiopic MSS sent to Tübingen share some characteristics with Ms Ethiopic 4. The similarities cover different aspects of the manuscripts:

- Layout: the title of the text is written at the top of the first folium recto; the text is written in one block, no columns; incipits, names and numbers are rubricated with reddish inks; a ‘non-economic’ way of writing is employed (space between letters equal to almost one single letter).
- Writing style: from its general appearance the script in Ms Ethiopic 4, M.a.IX 1, M.a.IX 2, and M.a.IX 27 is rounded, broad; markers of vowels are long; the fifth vowel marker is not closed; the legs converge.
- Quire structure: around twenty folia in each quire, every first folium of the quire is ruled with pencil, each folium is pricked. It is worth pointing out that to treat paper as if it were parchment is rather exceptional for Krapf’s workshop: generally paper is not pricked for ruling, as it is too fragile for this.
- Material: paper used for Christian texts. Von Ewald writes that ‘Herr Krapf entschuldigt seine Wahl der Papierhandschriften damit, dass er zur Abschrift eines einzigen etwas stärken Werkes nach der Landessitte sonst wohl

¹¹ It was Alessandro Bausi, who suggested that Ms Ethiopic 4 could be one of those commissioned by J. L. Krapf. On the manuscripts I am referring to, see Ewald 1844. Three manuscripts were chosen for more detailed paper analysis (Tübingen, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek, M.a.IX 1, M.a.IX 2, and M.a.IX 27); other manuscripts commissioned by Krapf did not undergo this analysis as this was out of the scope of my research.

¹² Ewald 1844, 167–168.

¹³ See ‘Krapf, Johann Ludwig’, *EAE*, III (2007), 436a–438b (G. Gräber and W. Smidt).

¹⁴ Krapf was sent to Ethiopia by the London Church Missionary Society. The major part of the manuscripts was sent to London, not to Tübingen. See Ewald 1844, 168–169.

30 Ziegenfelle nötig hätte, wodurch denn auch die Kosten sehr bedeutend steigen'.¹⁵ What kind of writing paper was used?¹⁶ The paper that Johann Ludwig Krapf used for his workshop was likely brought from Cairo.¹⁷ Although Egypt was still a distribution centre for paper at that time, in the first half of the nineteenth century the 'local Egyptian economy failed to produce paper in sufficient quantities to maintain its age-old paper industry'.¹⁸ The Egyptian paper market relied on the import of European paper (mainly Italian paper) as well as on imports from Syria, Turkey, and India.¹⁹ Italian paper for the Eastern market was 'sized and burnished according to Middle Eastern custom'.²⁰ English industrial paper started to circulate and slowly replaced handmade paper.

The watermark and countermark constitute key parameters for European manufactured paper. Recent data on watermarks, collected after Briquet and not included by Piccard,²¹ continues to increase, though it is not available as a single work, but rather as separate enlightening articles or as small catalogues. But if one comes upon paper without any watermarks, there are three possibilities for identification:²² (1) If chain lines and laid lines look straight and regular, it is most likely Western handmade paper. Here, normally, we have watermarks, but they could be in bifolia that are not present in the book we are looking at or deep in the fold. Alternatively, it could be European industrial paper 'imitating' handmade paper. (2) If chain lines and laid lines are visible but not so straight and regular, it must be 'Oriental' paper, which can be better defined through an analysis of the specific characteristics of these lines. (3) If laid and chain lines are not present at all, it will mean that the paper is woven, handmade or industrial.

¹⁵ Ewald 1844, 168. Translation: 'Mr. Krapf excuses his choice of paper manuscripts, explaining that otherwise, according to the local [manuscript] tradition, he would probably need 30 goatskins for a single copy of a larger manuscript which would increase the price significantly'; translation my own.

¹⁶ I am grateful to my colleague, Claudia Colini, who introduced me to the world of Oriental paper, explained methodology, recommended literature, and discussed anything relating to paper with me.

¹⁷ See 'Krapf, Johann Ludwig', *EAE*, III (2007), 436a–438b (G. Gräber and W. Smidt).

¹⁸ Walz 2011, 75, cf. Loveday 2001, 26.

¹⁹ Walz 2011, 77.

²⁰ See Loveday 2001, 26.

²¹ Briquet 1907. Watermarks collected by Gerhard Piccard are available online at http://www.wasserzeichen-online.de/wzis/projekt/oeaw_de.php, accessed on 27 September 2017.

²² For a better understanding of 'all things paper' see Hunter 1978.

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The paper analysis of four dated Ethiopic MSS (all from the same workshop), including three manuscripts currently in Tübingen (M.a.IX 1, M.a.IX 2, M.a.IX 27)²³ and Ms Ethiopic 4 from the India Office, demonstrates that Krapf's workshop used Italian paper with no native marks from the production areas, which means without any Christian motifs for watermarks, but rather paper specially designed exclusively for the Islamic world (see Table 1 and the pictures in the Appendix).²⁴ Some of the motifs are present in Ethiopian Islamic manuscripts at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Abäba.²⁵

Table 1 Manuscripts Comparison

Ms shelf mark	Provenance	Watermark	Countermark
M.a.IX 1	Italy (Venice)	Tre lune	VC (= Valentino Crescenti) ²⁶
M.a.IX 27 (quires 1–8)	Italy (Venice or Friuli?)	Tre lune	VC or VG (= Valentino Crescenti or Valentino Galvani)
M.a.IX 27 (quires 9–10)	not identified	Coat of arms with a crown	not identified D.I.C.
M.a.IX 2	Italy (Pistoia)	'La stella' in slanted lettering with a six-point star inside a coat of arms above two branches	G. & C. Cini inside tabula ansata (= Giovanni Cosimo) ²⁷
Ms Ethiopic 4	Italy (Friuli?)	Tre lune with faces ²⁸	

As for the binding, here no conclusion could be drawn: Ms Ethiopic 4 is bound in a Western-style binding dated to 1967 with a burnished paper text-block.²⁹ There is no evidence of the original binding or sewing. Manu-

²³ See Six 2000.

²⁴ See Wiesmüller 2013, 467.

²⁵ See Regourd 2014.

²⁶ Walz 2011, 84–85. Cf. Regourd 2014.

²⁷ Kanakari and Giannikou 2011, 265; Walz 2011, 88.

²⁸ The interpretation of this watermark was suggested by Claudia Colini. Cf. Wiesmüller 2013, 477.

²⁹ I would like to thank Sarah-Jane Hamlyn and Mariluz Beltran de Guevara of the British Library's Collection Care Monitoring Conservation, who checked almost 10,000

scripts in Tübingen are bound in their original bindings, with a text-block cover.

Manuscripts in Tübingen have a note, indicating that they were commissioned by Johann Ludwig Krapf in ᵑAnkobar in Šawā to be handed to the University of Tübingen.³⁰ Even if Ms Ethiopic 4 from the collection of the India Office does not have such a note, the material analysis proves that Ms Ethiopic 4 belongs to the copying work organized by Krapf in Šawā between 1839 and 1841.

Also the *recensio* shows a direct connection of the text written in this manuscript with two other manuscripts from Šawā: Collegeville, MN, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (= EMMML), 6770 from Dabra Libānos and EMMML 6451 from Qofitu Lālibalā,³¹ both containing the *Gadla Lālibalā*. In these three manuscripts a portion of text amounting to approximately eight folia was placed differently. Transposition occurs in the middle of the page, which excludes the possibility of a codicological change (e.g. due to rebinding) within these preserved MSS, but proves that it was copied from a common antigraph. We can find this displaced text respectively in fols 34rb–42va (EMML 6770), while one would expect it from fol. 10va; in fols 41va–49va (EMML 6451), while one would expect it from fol. 15va; and in fols 51–62 (Ms Ethiopic 4), while one would expect it from fol. 17r.³² The working hypothesis is that in this so-called ‘Šawānic’ version these eight folia were displaced, although the grammar was still correct and the narrative not completely implausible. Still, this transposition is unique to the ‘Šawānic’ tradition, it affects the narrative logic and its correctness is not supported by the qualified majority of the manuscript families. Therefore, these three manuscripts appear to belong to a local version of *Gadla Lālibalā* that was attested up to now only in Šawā, that shares a common sub-archetype.

cards for me in order to see whether anything related to the conservation was recorded. As yet, no records were found.

³⁰ See Six 2000.

³¹ This must refer to Qofitu *qabale* in Šawā in ᵑAdᵑā *waradā*, which is in Oromiyya, where the monastery of Gabra Manfas Qəddus is situated.

³² Perruchon’s edition of excerpts (Perruchon 1892) does not consider this passage, while MS London, British Library, Orient. 718, used by Perruchon, has these folia in its expected order. The Beta Maṣāḥəft project will provide the reader with a complete transcription of the text of *Gadla Lālibalā* from MSS EMMML 6770, EMMML 6451, Ms Ethiopic 4, as well as from Orient. 718, which will help to understand the phenomena described above.

Thus, the material evidence, palaeography, textual criticism, and historical data all suggest that Ms Ethiopic 4 should be attributed to the copying activity of Johann Ludwig Krapf in Šawā around 1839–1841. In 1842 Ms Ethiopic 4 was sent ‘from Massawa to the India Company’³³ and was eventually used by August Dillmann for his *Lexicon linguae aethiopicae*. Thus, it is exactly that *Gadla Lālibalā* ‘qui quondam in Bibliotheca Societatis Indiae Orientalis asservabatur: ex hoc varia vocabula architectonica hausimus’.³⁴

Conclusion

Ms Ethiopic 4, part of the collection of the India Office, containing the *Gadla Lālibalā*, was most probably commissioned by Johann Ludwig Krapf in Šawā around 1839–1841. The text might have been copied in Dabra Libānos, probably at the request of a third person from London who remains unknown. Italian paper was used as support material. Through Māssāwā the manuscript reached London and, in 1842, entered the collection of the India Office as Ms Ethiopic 4. It was introduced to the scholarly world by August Dillmann who used it as one of the sources for his *Lexicon linguae aethiopicae*. William Wright did not include this manuscript in the first handwritten (and never printed) catalogue of the collection of the India Office, because, probably by that time (1886), Ms Ethiopic 4 had already been lost. A century later, in the late 1940s, the manuscript reappeared and was described by Enrico Cerulli. About thirty years after Cerulli’s visit, in 1967, the manuscript was rebound, but no records of conservation work have been found in the conservation department, though there is a note attached to the manuscript itself, which records the restoration and the date. Thereafter Ms Ethiopic 4 disappeared again. In 2016 it was found and included in the online catalogue of the British Library. What Helen Loveday said regarding an Armenian manuscript is also true of the manuscript in question: to see a Christian text, similar in all respects to a Western codex, written on Italian paper, traces of which are more likely to be found in the realm of Islamic studies, ‘is a potent reminder of the complexities and intricacies of the study of manuscript production’.³⁵

³³ Cerulli 1946, 109.

³⁴ Dillmann 1865, x-xi. Translation: ‘that was once in the Library of the East India Company: from this we extracted several lexical items related to architecture’; translation my own.

³⁵ Loveday 2001, 5.

Appendix: Some Watermarks in the Manuscripts under Review

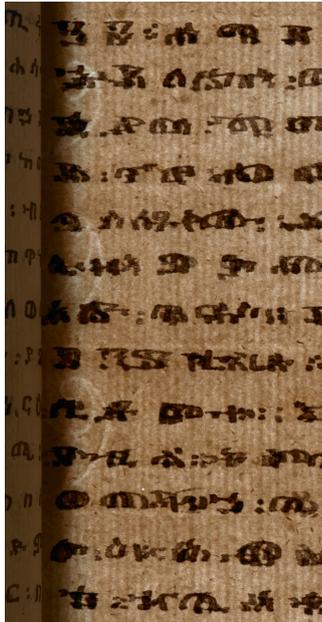


Fig. 1 Ms Ethiopic 4: three crescents with faces. Photo courtesy of the British Library.

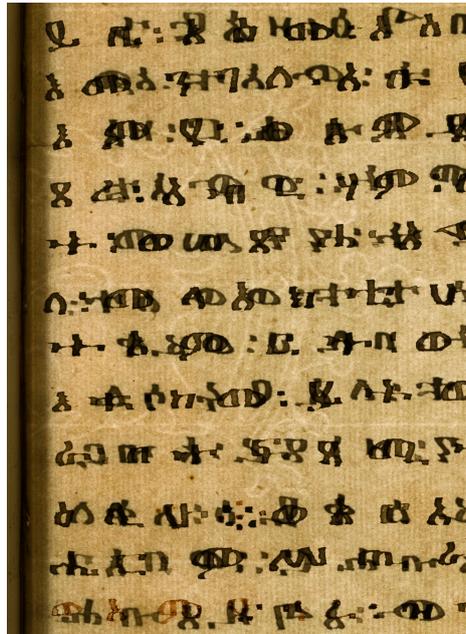


Fig. 2 M.a.IX 27: D.I.C. and coat of arms with a crown. Photo courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen.

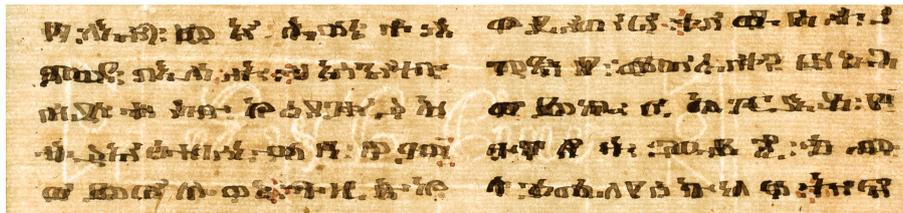


Fig. 3 M.a.IX 2: G. & C. Cini inside tabula ansata and 'La stella' in slanted lettering with a six-point star inside a coat of arms above two branches. Photo courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen.

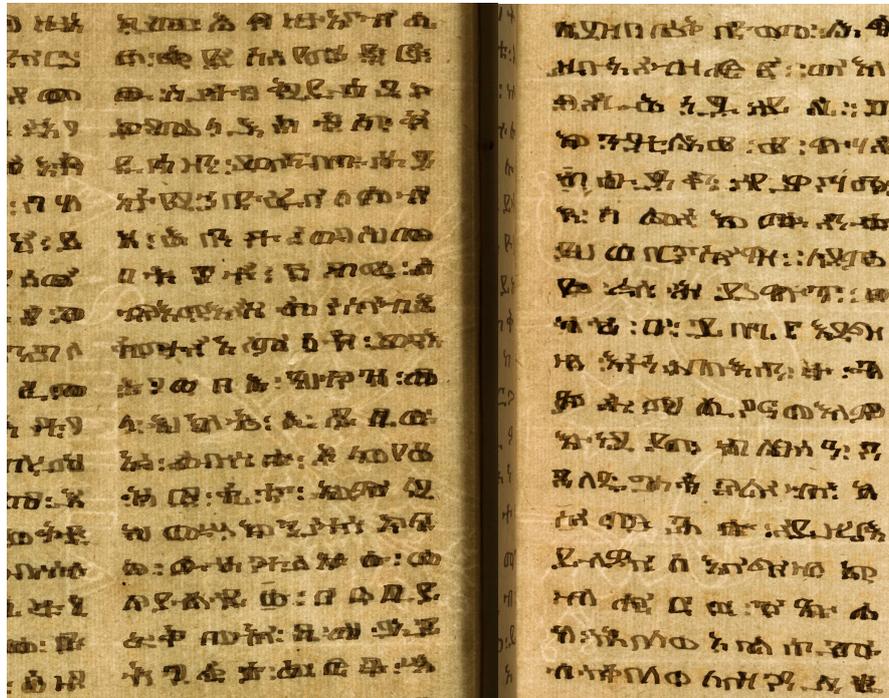


Fig. 4 M.a.IX 2: G. & C. Cini inside tabula ansata and 'La stella' in slanted lettering with a six-point star inside a coat of arms above two branches (possible shape of the watermark reconstructed through adjoining two non-continuous folia). Photos courtesy of Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen.

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Summary

In all likelihood it was the German missionary Johann Ludwig Krapf who commissioned a manuscript with hagiographic texts about King Lalibalā in the first decade of the nineteenth century, in Šawā. This manuscript was eventually used by August Dillmann for his *Lexicon linguae aethiopiae* published in 1865. More than eighty years later, the manuscript was catalogued by Enrico Cerulli in 1946 and was later lost somewhere on one of the numerous shelves of the collection of the India Office. It has recently been traced and is now to be found in the British Library under the shelf mark Ms Ethiopic 4.