

*Sonderdruck aus/Offprint from*

# AETHIOPICA

International Journal  
of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut  
Hiob-Ludolf-Zentrum für Äthiopistik  
der Universität Hamburg  
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

by Alessandro Bausi  
in cooperation with  
Bairu Tafla, Ludwig Gerhardt,  
Susanne Hummel and Alexander Meckelburg

25 (2022)

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

Vignette:

Gold coin of King Aphilas, early third century CE, as drawn by A. Luegmeyer after the coin in Rennau collection. Weight 2.48 grams, diameter 17 mm.

AETHIOPICA. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHIOPIAN AND ERITREAN STUDIES is an internationally refereed academic journal, edited at the Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian Studies and at the Department of African and Ethiopian Studies of the Asien-Afrika-Institut at Hamburg Universität, Alsterterrasse 1, 20354 Hamburg, Germany, Tel: +49 40-42838-7730/8380; email: *aethiopica.aai@uni-hamburg.de*.

The journal focuses on philology, linguistics, archaeology, history, cultural anthropology, religion, philosophy, literature, and manuscript studies with a regional emphasis on Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa, and related areas. The editors welcome contributions on relevant academic topics as well as on recent research in the respective field. Each issue of AETHIOPICA contains reviews of books which form a substantial section of the journal.

AETHIOPICA is published mainly in English. Articles in French, German, and Italian are also accepted for publication. An English summary for all articles in any language is provided.

A series of Supplements of monographic or occasional character is also published.

Opinions expressed in articles and reviews in AETHIOPICA are the views of the authors, and not those of the editors, the publishers, or the editorial board.

**Editorial Team**

Sophia Dege-Müller

Francesca Panini

**International Editorial Board**

David Appleyard, London

Maria Bulakh, Moscow

Christina Gabbert, Göttingen

Jacopo Gnisci, London

Alessandro Gori, Copenhagen

Olga Kapeliuk, Jerusalem

Samantha Kelly, USA

Andrea Manzo, Naples

Alain Rouaud, Paris

Shiferaw Bekele, Addis Abäba

Rainer Voigt, Berlin

Publication of this journal is partially supported by the project Beta maṣāḥaft: Die Schriftkultur des christlichen Äthiopiens und Eritreas: eine multimediale Forschungsumgebung, funded by The Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities through a project of the Academy of Hamburg, and includes immediate Open Access.

© Otto Harrassowitz GmbH & Co. KG, Wiesbaden 2022

This journal, including all of its parts, is protected by copyright.

Any use beyond the limits of copyright law without the permission of the publisher is forbidden and subject to penalty. This applies particularly to reproductions, translations, microfilms and storage and processing in electronic systems.

Printing and binding by Memminger MedienCentrum, Memmingen

Printed on permanent/durable paper

Printed in Germany

<https://www.harrassowitz-verlag.de/>

ISSN 1430-1938

eISSN 2194-4024

## Table of Contents

Editorial .....	6
<b>Articles</b>	
STÉPHANE ANCEL, <i>Yohannās IV and the Patriarchate of Alexandria: Obtaining Four Coptic Bishops while Ceding Nothing on Jerusalem Issue (1876–1882)</i> .....	7
MICHAEL KLEINER, <i>Disputed Translations from The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros (2015) Reconsidered: Some Notes on Gə'əz Philology</i> .....	36
SOPHIA DEGE-MÜLLER, JACOPO GNISCI, and VITAGRAZIA PISANI, <i>A Handlist of Illustrated Early Solomonian Manuscripts in German Public Collections</i> .....	59
HAGOS ABRHA, <i>The Gə'əz Manuscripts Collection from the Monastery of Däbrä Şəyon (Abunä Abrəham, Təgray, Ethiopia)</i> .....	99
MARIA BULAKH and YOHANNES GEBRE SELASSIE, <i>New Readings and Interpretations on the Inscribed Stele from Hənzat (HS1)</i> .....	125
SOLOMON GEBREYES, <i>The Confession of King Gälawdewos (r.1540–1559): A Sixteenth-Century Ethiopia Monophysite Document against Jesuit Proselytism</i> .....	160
MARIA BULAKH, MAGDALENA KRZYŻANOWSKA, and FRANCESCA PANINI, <i>Bibliography of Ethiopian Semitic, Cushitic, and Omotic Linguistics XXV: 2021</i> .....	182
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
AARON BUTTS, SIMCHA GROSS, and MICHAEL HENSLEY, <i>Once Again on 'bk wdm in Ethiopian Sabaic</i> .....	193
ALESSANDRO BAUSI, <i>I manoscritti etiopici della Biblioteca Statale di Montevergine a Mercogliano, Avellino</i> .....	201
MICHAEL WALTISBERG, <i>Nachträge zur Edition einer syrischen ṭablītō in Aethiopica 24 (Bausi und Desreumaux 2021)</i> .....	215
ALAIN DESREUMAUX, <i>Le texte syriaque de la ṭablītō éthiopienne : une réponse aux remarques du Pr. Dr. Michael Waltisberg</i> .....	220
<b>Personalia</b>	
Academic News .....	223

## Table of Contents

### Review Article

- BITANIA ZE'AMANUEL and PETER UNSETH, *Amharic Folkloric Oral Traditions: Collections for Insiders and for Outsiders* ..... 226

### Reviews

- ZEMENFES TSIĞHE ET AL., eds, *International Conference on Eritrean Studies, 20–22 July 2016: Proceedings, I–II* (DENIS NOSNITSIN) ..... 241
- INGVILD SÆLID GILHUS, ALEXANDROS TSAKOS, and MARTA CAMILLA WRIGHT, eds, *The Archangel Michael in Africa: History, Cult, and Persona* (SOPHIA DEGE-MÜLLER) ..... 246
- MERON T. GEBREANANAYE, LOGAN WILLIAMS, and FRANCIS WATSON, eds, *Beyond Canon: Early Christianity and the Ethiopic Textual Tradition* (CALUM SAMUELSON) ..... 250
- ABRAHAM JOHANNES DREWES, eds MANFRED KROPP and HARRY STROOMER, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite, III: Traductions et commentaires, B: Les inscriptions sémitiques* (ALESSIO AGOSTINI) ..... 253
- MICHAEL LAUSBERG, *Geschichte und Kultur Äthiopiens* (SIEGBERT UHLIG) ..... 257
- MARIE-LAURE DERAT, *L'énigme d'une dynastie sainte et usurpatrice dans le royaume chrétien d'Éthiopie du XI<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (NAFISA VALIEVA) ..... 258
- VERENA KREBS, *Medieval Ethiopian Kingship, Craft, and Diplomacy with Latin Europe* (SAMANTHA KELLY) ..... 261
- SHIFERAW BEKELE, UOLDELUL CHELATI DIRAR, ALESSANDRO VOLTERRA, and MASSIMO ZACCARIA, eds, *The First World War from Tripoli to Addis Ababa (1911–1924)* (NICOLA CAMILLERI) ..... 264
- MELAKU GEBOYE DESTA, DEREJE FEYISSA DORI, and MAMO ESMELEALEM MIHRETU, eds, *Ethiopia in the Wake of Political Reforms* (SARAH HOWARD) ..... 266
- ANNEGRET MARX, *When Images Travel to Ethiopia ... Impact of the Evangelium Arabicum printed 1590 in Rome on a 17th Century Ethiopian Gospel: Documentation and Synoptic Presentation of their Images* (JACOPO GNISCI) ..... 269
- JOSEF TROPPEL and REBECCA HASSELBACH-ANDEE, *Classical Ethiopic: A Grammar of Ge'ez, Including Sample Texts and a Glossary* (MAIJA PRIESS) ..... 272

Table of Contents

DERIB ADO, ALMAZ WASSE GELAGAY, and JANNE BONDI JOHANNESSEN, eds, <i>Grammatical and Sociolinguistic Aspects of Ethiopian Languages</i> (MARIA BULAKH) .....	273
MARLENE GUSS-KOSICKA, <i>Die Verbalsysteme des Amharischen und Tigrinischen: Eine vergleichende Analyse</i> (MAGDALENA KRZYŻANOWSKA) .....	279
<b>Dissertation Abstracts</b>	
HAGOS ABRHA ABAY, <i>Critical Edition (with translation) and Textual Analysis of Gädlä Yəmṣatta</i> .....	284
CARSTEN HOFFMANN, <i>Das geographische Traktat in der Weltgeschichte des Wäldä `Amid – Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar</i> .....	286
SISAY SAHILE BEYENE, <i>A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Treatise: Tārik Zamədra Gondar (The History of the Land of Gondar)</i> .....	288
LEAH MASCIA, <i>The Transition from Traditional Cults to the Affirmation of Christian Beliefs in the City of Oxyrhynchus</i> .....	292
JONAS KARLSSON, <i>The Diachronic Development of the Dəggwā: A Study of Texts and Manuscripts of Selected Ethiopic Antiphon Collections</i> .....	295

## Editorial

The present issue of AETHIOPICA is the twenty-fifth since the journal's founding in 1998. It is also the thirteenth issue I have worked on as editor-in-chief, one more than that of founder Siegbert Uhlig. The present time, however, does not lend itself to celebrations of any sort. The global political crisis and the situation in the Horn of Africa are having a deep impact on the scholarly community, which appears divided and radicalized on opposite or increasingly diverging positions as never before. The growing influence of diaspora communities is at times marked by waves of resurgent nationalism. The challenge posed by main-stream policy in countries of established scholarly traditions gives less and less space to small fields—as is the case of Ethiopian and Eritrean studies. The consequent lack of resources triggers the fragmentation of the scholarly scene. New balances based on mutual legitimation and acknowledgement of a common scholarly method are not obvious. The consequence of this complex situation, which reflects global changes, is that scholarly and academic freedom can be put at risk. Of all priorities envisaged in the mission of AETHIOPICA, preservation of academic freedom along with scholarly quality has been, is, and will remain the top priority of the journal.

I regret that in the past, and still now, the lack of available qualified authors has prevented AETHIOPICA from duly commemorating distinct colleagues and researchers recently passed away who were more than deserving of an obituary. I would like to remember at least some of them here, by name, as a very modest tribute to their work and memory: Johannes Launhardt (1929–2019), Mesfin Wolde Mariam (1930–2020), Steffen Wenig (1934–2022), Girma Fisseha (1941–2020).

To end on a positive note, three colleagues active in Ethiopian and Eritrean studies have received important awards this year, and we would like to mention them here: Samantha Kelly (Professor of Medieval History at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, also on our International Editorial Board), has won the Choice Outstanding Academic Title 2020, and the African Studies Review Prize for the Best Africa-focused Anthology or Edited Collection 2021, for her *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea* (Leiden–Boston, MA: Brill, 2020); Verena Krebs (Junior-Professorin für Mittelalterliche Kulturräume at Ruhr-Universität Bochum) has received the Dan David Prize for her *Medieval Ethiopian Kingship, Craft, and Diplomacy with Latin Europe* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); and Massimo Zaccaria (Professore Associato in Storia e Istituzioni dell'Africa at Università degli Studi di Pavia) has received the Giorgio Maria Sangiorgi award of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 'per la Storia ed Etnologia dell'Africa'. To all of them—the warmest congratulations from AETHIOPICA!

# The Gə‘əz Manuscripts Collection from the Monastery of Däbrä Şəyon (*Abunä Abrəham, Təgray, Ethiopia*)\*

HAGOS ABRHA, Mekelle University and Universität Hamburg

## 1 Introduction

The article is a general survey, and report of the digitization, of the Däbrä Şəyon (Gär‘alta, Təgray)<sup>1</sup> manuscripts, a monastery dedicated to *Abunä Abrəham*, a saint from Təgray,<sup>2</sup> said to have been the founder of the monastery in the latter half of the fourteenth and early half of the fifteenth century (during the time of *Aşe Dawit II* and *Aşe Yəşhaq*).<sup>3</sup> It is also called monastery of *Abunä Abrəham*. The manuscripts were not inventoried and catalogued; only some have inventory marks made by the Tigray Culture and Tourism Bureau (TCTB) but have not been digitized.<sup>4</sup> The digitization project was carried out under the initiative of the St Yared Center for Ethiopian Philology and Manuscript Studies (SY-

\* This article has been written within the framework of a postdoctoral fellowship featuring a project on Non-Codex Gə‘əz Manuscripts of Təgray: Archiving and Usage at Universität Hamburg as a guest of the Cluster of Excellence 2176 Understanding Written Artifacts: Material, Interaction and Transmission in Manuscript Cultures, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) under Germany’s Excellence Strategy, project no. 390893796. The research was conducted within the scope of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) at Universität Hamburg, with the unreserved support of Prof. Dr Michael Friedrich and Prof. Dr Alessandro Bausi.

<sup>1</sup> The monastery is named after the concept of Christian eschatology (known as ‘banquet of Däbrä Şəyon’) by the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahədo Church; even though it is clearly shown in the *Miracles of Mary*, ‘the first detailed exposition of this doctrine can be found in the *Mäşhafä məstir* of Giyorgis of Gasəçça’, see ‘Däbrä Şəyon’, *E Ae*, II (2005), 43b–44a (Getatchew Haile), here p. 43b. See also ‘Gär‘alta’, *E Ae*, II (2005), 697b–698b (N. Finneran and Red.).

<sup>2</sup> Said to have been descended from Amhara region (according to his hagiographic tradition).

<sup>3</sup> ‘Dawit II’, *E Ae*, II (2005), 112a–113a (M.-L. Derat). See ‘Abrəham of Däbrä Şəyon’, *E Ae*, I (2003), 48a–b (G. Lusini).

<sup>4</sup> The manuscript of *Gädlä Lalibäla* was also digitized, some months before, by Nafisa Valieva with the support of Orin Gensler and Hagos Abrha.

CEPMS) of Mekelle University and is the result of collaborative efforts of many people from the centre and the TCTB.<sup>5</sup>

The local administrative members and priests of the monastery were most collaborative during the fieldwork. Mekelle University funded the project in the budget year of 2017/2018, and the fieldwork took place in February–April 2018. As philology is the science of delivery,<sup>6</sup> one of the missions of the SYCEPMS is preserving Gəʿəz manuscripts and making the documents available to other researchers. The project is part of this mission and has managed to digitize the monastery's entire manuscript collection. In addition to collecting the manuscripts, a special kind of non-codex manuscript has been examined.<sup>7</sup>

## 2 The Monastery

The monastery of Däbrä Şəyon (also known as *Abunä Abrəham*) is a rock-hewn church at the top of a mountain. After almost a half-hour drive on a dirt-track road from the centre of Ḥawzen, a district (*wärāda*) of over ten thousand inhabitants, in the East Təgray zone, an hour-long uphill walk takes you to the monastery.<sup>8</sup> As often observed, Ḥawzen was part of the historical region of Gärʿalta and the name is reminiscent of the South Arabian place name Hawzan; at times it was thought to be a Təgrayan highland influenced by the South Arabian presence. However, the idea of South Arabian 'migration' or 'colonization' to northern Ethiopian areas should be carefully reinvestigated, as there are also attestations that Aksumites were present in South Arabia from the early Aksumite period.<sup>9</sup> Some linguistic cognates or ethnonyms reveal societal contacts but do not necessarily indicate migration or colonization.

<sup>5</sup> Hagos Abrha, the founder of SYCEPMS, and director of the centre at the time, as principal project coordinator, and members of the project, Esayas Tajebe, Yideg Alemayehu, Gebretsion Mehari, Alemayehu Hafta, all from SYCEPMS, and Yibrah Baraki from the TCTB.

<sup>6</sup> See Marrassini 2008, 4.

<sup>7</sup> This manuscript is a peacock (according to some, fan-) type manuscript; its binding was damaged; it has been conserved with project funding and the help of a local expert.

<sup>8</sup> The phrase 'situated in the West Təgray Zone' by Gianfrancesco Lusini ('Ḥawzen', *EAE*, II (2005), 1054a–1055a (G. Lusini), here p. 1054a) is probably a slip of the pen.

<sup>9</sup> See also Hatke 2020, 296, with reference to a 'Sabaic inscription dating from ca. 160–190. By this time, so the inscription tells us, the Aksumites already penetrated the Yemeni highlands and had started threatening the local tribes, who in response formed an alliance for mutual protection'.



There are also reflections of Aksumite culture including inscriptions.<sup>10</sup> Old hagiographic traditions of Şadqan and/or the Nine Saints (at the very least Yəm'atta and his confession father Gubba)<sup>11</sup> have been well established.<sup>12</sup> The most well-known non-codex manuscript from Däbrä Şəyon (see Fig. 4) contains thirty-six images of saints (the Nine Saints feature among them). 'The monastery of Däbrä Şəyon is found in the Gär'alta province of eastern Təgray, which was probably established by the monk Abrəham at the end of the fourteenth century, during the reign of *Aşe Dawit II*'.<sup>13</sup> Mentioning the *Mäşşafä Aksum* as a source, Lusini added that a land charter of Ləbnä Dəngəl referred to Däbrä Şəyon, stating that it was among other six Təgrayan monasteries, namely Däbrä Halleluya, Däbrä Aysäma, Däbrä Bänk'äl, Däbrä Bäk'wər, Däbrä Bärbäre, and Däbrä Mä'ar, to which the emperor awarded the renewal of the previous *g'əlt* grant.

However, in the *Mäşşafä Aksum*, other places (which may also be monasteries) are mentioned, including their respective *gäbäz*:

*Abba Gäbrä Mär'awi* of Halleluya,<sup>14</sup> *Abba Tənsə'a* Mädhən of Däbrä Bänk'äl,<sup>15</sup> *Abba Ma'əqäbä 'Əgzi'* of Däbrä Bäk'wər and Däbrä Bärbäre, *Abba Täklä Giyorgis* of Däbrä Şəyon, *Abba Nəftalem* of Däbrä

<sup>10</sup> There are non-vocalized Gə'əz inscriptions in the vicinity of Gär'alta not far from Həwzen, for example at Maryam Dəngälat (Təgrəñña proper name for the church and the area surrounding it). An unvocalized Gə'əz inscription was found there recently (during research work by Luigi Cantamessa and Anaïs Lamesa); a first attempt at a full transcription and analysis of the unvocalized inscription has been assigned to Hagos Abrha about which an article is to be published.

<sup>11</sup> Hagos Abrha 2011 and 'Yəm'ata', *EAE*, V (2014), 49b–50b (A. Brita).

<sup>12</sup> The idea of 'Şadqan' has various patterns of narratives and has been attested in several Təgray churches and monasteries; the tradition is also known in 'Əndärta (like the narrative of one hundred Şadqan in *Abunä Yasay*, 'Yasay', *EAE*, V (2014), 31b (P. Marrassini); 'Yasay', *EAE*, V (2014), 32a–b (D. Nosnitsin), although he is known as Asay, not Yasay, by the local community of 'Əndärta, Tämber (monastery of 'Əndda Şadqanat) and other parts of East Təgray (mainly the oral tradition of the one thousand Şadqanat who preceded the Nine Saints, in 'Addi Qoşšo Däbrä A'əlaf Mika'el church).

<sup>13</sup> 'Däbrä Şəyon', *EAE*, II (2005), 41b–42a (G. Lusini). According to local tradition, the monastery was established at the time of Lalibäla; it is also one of the few monasteries of Təgray to preserve a philologically remarkable witness of *Gädlä Lalibäla*.

<sup>14</sup> It is known that Däbrä Dammo is also called Däbrä Halleluya, but this one is a different monastery around Aksum. 'Also known as Däbrä Hallelu, 'Allelo was an important monastery in the district of 'Addi 'Arba'ətä (Torat, Təgray), about 30 km north-west from the city of Aksum', see 'Däbrä Halleluya', *EAE*, II (2005), 22a–b (D. Nosnitsin), here p. 22a.

<sup>15</sup> A monastery, west of Aksum, dedicated to *Abunä Mädhəninä 'Əgzi'*. It is also believed to be the place to which Bahərä Nəgaş Yəşhaq belongs.

Mä'ara,<sup>16</sup> *Abba Bäk<sup>w</sup>uräşəyon Nəgadi* of Däbrä Aysäma,<sup>17</sup> and of *Abba Fəlimona*, *Abba Šärdädəngəl* of Dammo,<sup>18</sup> *Abba 'Eštifanos* of the place of Yakəs, *Abba Ásratä Şəyon* of Lägaso, *Abba Tewodros* of Dänba [?] Tämbuk,<sup>19</sup> and [...] Təwäldä Hədan of Mayä K<sup>w</sup>ik<sup>w</sup>i.<sup>20</sup>

Lusini talked of a Gospel in the monastery with a note (fols 4v and 5v),<sup>21</sup> endowing the monastery with land and other gifts, during the time of *Aşe Iyasu I*. Three Gospel manuscripts (the fourteenth-century Gospel, the Gospel of John,<sup>22</sup> and another recent Gospel) have been preserved in the monastery, and also digitized during this project. Both complete Gospels have descriptions of donations. Mainly the recent manuscript (fols 1r–v, 2r–v, 3v), with the texts that follow the colophon at its end, contains many notes about land and other donations. However, all these texts were written in modern ink and Amharic; and fol. 3v mentions the exact year (12 Ṭərr 1951 EC); the colophon of the Gospel also says 6 Hədar 1938 EC.<sup>23</sup>

Some of these manuscripts' physical condition, largely their front folia, is not good; they look damaged, and in some folia some texts are invisible, probably caused by humidity. Other manuscripts are also damaged in their original fascicles, rendering their quire structure unclear. The quire structure of the manuscripts of *Rətu'a Haymanot* (YC-01), *Dərsanä mahyāwi* (YC-32), *Mäşhafä ziq* (YC-42), *Mäşhafä Orit* (YC-69), *Mäşhafä Ṭobit* (YC-70), for instance, is mixed up and the number of quires difficult to discern. Two copies of the hagiography of *Abunä Abrəham*,<sup>24</sup> a major text for land granting, have also been preserved in the monastery. The manuscript has a colophon clearly describing land granting

<sup>16</sup> Däbrä Mä'ara or Mä'ar (lit. 'Mount of honey') is a place with two rock-hewn churches on mountain top above a wide valley on the Dəgum (Gär'alta), 'Däbrä Mä'ar', *EAE*, II (2005), 29b–31a (E. Balicka-Witakowska).

<sup>17</sup> *Nəgadi* is an adjective to describe the monk and means *traveller*.

<sup>18</sup> The correct word is 'Dammo', not 'Damo'; see 'Däbrä Damo', *EAE*, II (2005), 17b–20b (Tsegay Berhe G. Libanos and Red.). On this point see Bausi 2020.

<sup>19</sup> See 'Däbrä Halleluya', *EAE*, II (2005), 22a–b (D. Nosnitsin). Däbrä Tämbuk is also mentioned as the monastery of a monk called Eštifanos.

<sup>20</sup> Conti Rossini 1909, 39–40 (doc. no. 44).

<sup>21</sup> 'Däbrä Şəyon', *EAE*, II (2005), 41b–42a (G. Lusini), here p. 41b. It is fol. 4r, rather than fol. 4v.

<sup>22</sup> It is highly damaged and some folia have certainly been lost.

<sup>23</sup> It is, at least palaeographically, clear that the additional notes were written centuries after the manuscript production.

<sup>24</sup> This hagiography has also been attested by other copies (one copy from Mika'el Barka for example) and is still unpublished.

during the time of *Aşe Yəsəhaq*;<sup>25</sup> more than thirty-five places are mentioned, specific to some Təgray districts, mainly from 'Agamä and Ĕndärta provinces. Two churches existed under the administration of Däbrä Şəyon; one of them, now out of use, is dedicated to *Abunä Abrəham*. The main rock-hewn church, with *tabots* dedicated to Kidanä Məhrät,<sup>26</sup> St Mary, and *Abunä Abrəham*, hence it being named after both saints (St Mary and *Abunä Abrəham*) as monastery of *Abunä Abrəham* or monastery of Däbrä Şəyon. Occasionally, but not often, it is known as the monastery of Kidanä Məhrät.<sup>27</sup>

The church of the monastery of Däbrä Şəyon is an entirely rock-hewn church with some additional building elements. The interior part of the church is decorated with paintings, some with patterns like those of other Gär'alta churches (for example Yəm'atta of Guḥ and Däbrä Mä'ar of Dəgum). Several local saints (also Coptic saints according to some sources) are said to have been subjects of the painting programme. The locals believe the church has forty pillars including some false pillars on the rock wall; but in reality there are fewer. Only six cruciform pillars remain, and many false pillars of different degrees of visibility are part of the rock wall. The monastery of Däbrä Şəyon is not only the home of a precious manuscripts collection but is also situated on a beautiful mountain, with natural vegetation (mainly olive trees) that create a fresh wind and make it one of the most well-known tourist destinations in Təgray.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The son of Emperor Dawit II and Ethiopian emperor himself (1414–1429/1430) bearing the royal name Gəbrä Mäsqäl; see 'Yəsəhaq', *EAE*, V (2014), 59a–60a (S. Kaplan).

<sup>26</sup> Also called Kidana Məhrät, which is a common dialectical variation in Təgray.

<sup>27</sup> Tribe 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Many foreigners (including George W. Bush) have visited this place.



Fig. 1 The north-east side of the monastery from a distance, rock-hewn church of Däbrä Şəyon (*Abunä Abrəham*), photograph by Hagos Abrha, March 2018.



Fig. 2 The rock-hewn church of Däbrä Şəyon (*Abunä Abrəham*) from outside, photograph by Hagos Abrha, March 2018.



Fig. 3 Some interior parts of the rock-hewn church of Däbrä Şəyon (*Abunä Abrəham*), photograph by Hagos Abrha, March 2018.

### 3 Fieldwork Activities

The monastery and its historical collection were surveyed some months before the actual fieldwork. Among other significant cultural heritage items, seventy-two Gəʻəz manuscripts have been preserved in the monastery.<sup>29</sup> Even though the fieldwork carried out a full digitization of these seventy-two manuscripts, the work was not as comprehensive as it should have been and some tasks remain to be done (mainly the material analysis of the manuscripts).<sup>30</sup> The following were the main duties carried out by the fieldwork:<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> It is quite clear that the monastery had more than seventy-two manuscripts, but some manuscripts were half-destroyed, making them difficult to take into account. As can be seen in Fig. 12, the museum monastery features a glass box full of parchment leaves on a variety of subjects. Thus, seventy-two manuscripts have been calculated aside from the bundle of leaves. They were not deemed worthless, but were impossible to examine without ‘damaging’ them further, and is to be considered a limitation of the project.

<sup>30</sup> We do not have a laboratory for material analysis.

<sup>31</sup> Identifying which manuscript had a colophon, and the colophon’s language were also noted after the fieldwork. It is common for manuscripts, also in this collection (YC-63), to

– *Oral tradition*: the team collected oral traditions of and about the monastery and observed and took note of some of the current practical activities (such as church services and traditional education), through audio- and video-recording.

– *Foliation*: all the manuscripts were foliated (with careful notation of the number of written and unwritten folia) during the fieldwork. Each manuscript was also identified, noting whether the scribe started to write on the recto or on the verso, which may assist in further study of the manuscript culture.

– *Quire number and structure*: the number of quires and the quire structure of all the manuscripts were noted. Alongside digitization this was an exhausting activity, but essential for the study of manuscripts from a codicological point of view;<sup>32</sup> the data collected will simplify future inventorying and book conserving.<sup>33</sup>

– *Sigla*: after identifying the manuscripts and the labels applied to them on their covers,<sup>34</sup> sigla were given to them after the SYCEPMS. They were digitized in random order, and sigla as YC-1, YC-2, YC-3, up to YC-72 were given according to their digitization sequence.

– *Physical condition*: outer cover, binding hard cover, size (length, width, and thickness), number of columns, format, illuminations, damage status of the manuscripts was also described. Their preserving method (whether on a shelf, in a box, or in a case) was also noted.

– *Digitization*: all seventy-two manuscripts were digitized using two Canon 300 cameras inside a suitably lit room serving as a small museum for the manuscripts, built by TCTB.<sup>35</sup> During digitization, all involved used gloves to prevent damage to the manuscripts from sweat.

have colophons in languages other than Gəʿəz (Amharic and Təgrəñña). It is common in eastern Təgray for a colophon to be in a different language; the monastery of Kidanä Məḥrät of Wägräzḥi (lit. ‘Plateau of basalt’) in eastern Təgray (along the way to Däbrä Dammo) also has a similar tradition.

<sup>32</sup> See Balicka-Witakowska et al. 2015.

<sup>33</sup> After the fieldwork and having manually counted and investigated the quire number and structure, the application of a basic mathematical principle helped clearly display the quire structure and check the manuscript’s integrity. A quire skeleton clearly shows the number, the structure, and the pattern set for each manuscript, and will be presented in the full catalogue. All manuscripts will be dated.

<sup>34</sup> Some of the manuscripts have been wrongly named in the label or title on their outer cover and are thus not what they seem; the manuscripts need careful checking during digitization.

<sup>35</sup> The manuscripts were not preserved in the museum; they were inside the main church on two shelves and one box.

– *Conserving a manuscript*: a fifteenth-century manuscript, with a special circular format and thirty-six images of saints was damaged: the fascicles were not in good condition. This precious manuscript underwent some conservation measures during the fieldwork.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4 Manuscript Collection

The manuscripts of the collection are preserved in the monastery of *Abunä Abrəham* (Gär'alta): some preserved on shelves inside the church itself and others in a separate library constructed by the TCTB. The seventy-two manuscripts preserved in the monastery of *Abunä Abrəham* represent a typical collection of the usual religious texts of different genres: biblical books (Old and New Testaments and Book of Psalms), hagiographical books, liturgical books, and so on. Every manuscript was digitized by the project of SYCEPMS of Mekelle University.

The digital copies are preserved in the centre. Generally speaking, the manuscripts' physical condition is not good: most of the manuscripts have been damaged by moist, eaten by mice, torn, and affected by other conservation problems. The manuscripts were indicated by the digitization number (YC-33 means, for example, Yared Center number 33) and categorized into eight main genres. As mentioned above, the assigned code is just a random code given during digitization with no other meaning. The *Clavis Aethiopica* identification number (CAe ID), attributed by the project *Beta maşāḥəft: Die Schriftkultur des christlichen Äthiopiens und Eritreas: eine multimediale Forschungsumgebung*, of the names of these manuscript works were also represented; few manuscript works/names not yet given CAe ID by *Beta maşāḥəft* have been left blank in the table.

<sup>36</sup> It is the main part of my project *Non-Codex Gə'əz Manuscripts of Təgray: Archiving and Usage*.

Table 1 List of Digitized Manuscripts from the Monastery of Däbrä Səyon

No.	Genre	No. of MSS	Content/Work	Proj. Code	CAe ID	Colophon
1	Homiletics	11	<i>Dərsanä kidanä məhrät</i>	YC-33	CAe 1290	Colophon
			<i>Dərsanä mädhane 'aläm</i>	YC-10	-	Colophon
			<i>Dərsanä mädhane 'aläm</i>	YC-61	-	Colophon
			<i>Dərsanä mahyäwi</i>	YC-32	CAe 1291	
			<i>Dərsanä mäsqäl</i>	YC-04	-	
			<i>Dərsanä Mika 'el</i> <sup>37</sup>	YC-11	CAe 1295	Colophon
			<i>Dərsanä Mika 'el</i>	YC-28	CAe 1295	Colophon
			<i>Dərsanä Mika 'el</i>	YC-56	CAe 1295	
			<i>Dərsanä sänbät</i> <sup>38</sup>	YC-34	CAe 1298	Colophon
			<i>Dərsanä Ya 'qob Zäsərug</i>	YC-53	CAe 1617	Colophon
			<i>Rətu 'a Haymanot</i> <sup>39</sup>	YC-01	CAe 2090	
2	Hagiography	19	<i>Gädlä Abrəham</i>	YC-35	CAe 1410	Colophon
			<i>Gädlä Abrəham</i>	YC-20	CAe 1410	Colophon
			<i>Gädlä Arägawi</i> <sup>40</sup>	YC-17	CAe 1526	
			<i>Gädlä Kiro</i> <sup>41</sup>	YC-18	CAe 1488	Colophon
			<i>Gädlä Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus</i>	YC-31	CAe 1451	Colophon
			<i>Gädlä Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus</i> <sup>42</sup>	YC-51	CAe 1451	Colophon
			<i>Gädlä Lalibäla</i> <sup>43</sup>	YC-21	CAe 4970	
			<i>Gädlä qəddusan</i>	YC-13	CAe 1406	
<i>Gädlä Şəyon (?)</i> <sup>44</sup>	YC-14	-	Colophon			

<sup>37</sup> See 'Dərsanä Mika 'el', *E Ae*, II (2005), 139a–140a (G. Lusini) and *Dərsanä Mika 'el mälk 'a Mika 'elanna Rufa 'el* 1997/1998.

<sup>38</sup> See 'Dərsanä sänbät', *E Ae*, II (2005), 141a–142b (D. Nosnitsin).

<sup>39</sup> See 'Rətu 'a Haymanot', *E Ae*, IV (2010), 382b–383b (Getatchew Haile).

<sup>40</sup> See Guidi 1894.

<sup>41</sup> See Krzyżanowska 2015 and Marrassini 2004.

<sup>42</sup> See 'Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus', *E Ae*, II (2005), 619b–622a (P. Marrassini).

<sup>43</sup> In the colophon of this copy of the *Life of Lalibäla*, fol. 130v, reads that *Abunä Fəre Maḥəbär* commissioned this manuscript for 'this monastery' and someone called Maksimos wrote it.



The Gə'əz Manuscripts Collection from the Monastery of Däbrä Şəyon

No.	Genre	No. of MSS	Content/Work	Proj. Code	CAe ID	Colophon
			<i>Gädlä Täklä Haymanot</i> <sup>45</sup>	YC-52	CAe 4115	Colophon
			<i>Sənkəssar</i> <sup>46</sup>	YC-03	CAe 2375	
			<i>Sənkəssar</i>	YC-06	CAe 2375	
			<i>Sənkəssar</i>	YC-58	CAe 2375	
			<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i> <sup>47</sup>	YC-19	CAe 3585	Colophon
			<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	YC-12	CAe 3585	Colophon
			<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	YC-38	CAe 3585	Colophon
			<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	YC-05	CAe 3585	Colophon
			<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	YC-57	CAe 3585	
			<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	YC-60	CAe 3585	Colophon
3	<i>Mälkə'</i>	3	<i>Mälkə'a Abrəham</i>	YC-36	-	
			<i>Mälkə'a Abrəham</i>	YC-71	-	
			<i>Mälkə'a kidanä məhrät</i>	YC-47	CAe 3082	
			<i>Mäşhafä Orit</i>	YC-59	CAe 2083	
			<i>Mäşhafä Orit</i>	YC-69	CAe 2083	
			<i>Mäşhafä Tobit</i>	YC-70	CAe 2472	
4	Bible, Apocrypha, and Exegesis	19	<i>Nəbəyat and Nəgärä Maryam</i> <sup>48</sup>	YC-44	-	
			<i>Mäzmurä Dawit</i> <sup>49</sup>	YC-22	CAe 2000	
			<i>Mäzmurä Dawit</i> <sup>50</sup>	YC-26	CAe 2000	
			<i>Mäzmurä Dawit</i>	YC-27	CAe 2000	
			<i>Mäzmurä Dawit</i>	YC-07	CAe 2000	
			<i>Mäzmurä Dawit</i>	YC-08	CAe 2000	Colophon
			<i>Mäşhafä Wängel</i>	YC-63	CAe 1560	Colophon

<sup>44</sup> In the Ethiopian manuscript tradition, *Gädlä Şəyon* is not common; see also *Dərsanä Şəyon*, Amsalu Tefera 2011.

<sup>45</sup> See also 'Täklä Haymanot', *E Ae*, IV (2010), 831a–834b (D. Nosnitsin).

<sup>46</sup> See 'Sənkəssar', *E Ae*, IV (2010), 621a–623a (G. Colin and A. Bausi).

<sup>47</sup> See 'Tä'ammərə Maryam in art', *E Ae*, IV (2010), 793b–795b (E. Balicka-Witakowska).

<sup>48</sup> See 'Nəgärä Maryam', *E Ae*, V (2014), 456a–457a (W. Witakowski).

<sup>49</sup> See Täsfä Gäbrä Şəllase 1966/1967.

<sup>50</sup> It is also part of the Bible, but not listed in the 'Bible genre' simply to minimize redundancy.

No.	Genre	No. of MSS	Content/Work	Proj. Code	CAe ID	Colophon
			Andəmta Wängel	YC-15	CAe 2456	
			<i>Wängelä Yohannəs</i>	YC-46	CAe 1693	
			<i>Mäl'əktä Pəwlos</i>	YC-50	CAe 3505	Colophon
			<i>Mäl'əktä Pəwlos</i>	YC-68	CAe 3505	
			<i>Mäl'əktä Pəwlos</i>	YC-25	CAe 3505	
			<i>Mäl'əktä Pəwlos</i>	YC-24	CAe 3505	
			<i>Tä'ammərə İyäsus</i> <sup>51</sup>	YC-29	CAe 2382	Colophon
			<i>Nägärä Maryam</i>	YC-16	CAe 2051	
			<i>Gädlä hawaryat</i> <sup>52</sup>	YC-02	CAe 1461	
			<i>Mäşhafä gənzät</i> <sup>53</sup>	YC-37	CAe 1931	Colophon
			<i>Mäşhafä gənzät</i>	YC-39	CAe 1931	Colophon
			<i>Mäşhafä gənzät</i>	YC-64	CAe 1931	
			<i>Mäşhafä krəstənnə</i> <sup>54</sup>	YC-40	CAe 1940	
			<i>Mäşhafä qəddase</i> <sup>55</sup>	YC-66	CAe 1960	Colophon
			<i>Mäşhafä qəddase</i>	YC-23	CAe 1960	Colophon
5	Liturgy	13	<i>Mäşhafä qəddase</i>	YC-45	CAe 1960	Colophon
			<i>Mäşhafä qəddase</i>	YC-09	CAe 1960	
			<i>Mäşhafä täklil</i>	YC-67	CAe 1970	
			<i>Mäşhafä təmçät</i> <sup>56</sup>	YC-54	CAe 1975	
			<i>Şälotä 'ətan</i> <sup>57</sup>	YC-41	CAe 2252	
			<i>Şälotä 'ətan</i>	YC-43	CAe 2252	Colophon
			<i>Şälotä mäba</i> <sup>58</sup>	YC-55	-	
6	Hymnography	2	<i>Mäşhafä zəmmare</i> <sup>58</sup>	YC-30	CAe 2610	
			<i>Mäşhafä ziq</i> <sup>59</sup>	YC-42	CAe 1979	

<sup>51</sup> See 'Tä'ammərə İyäsus', *E Ae*, IV (2010), 788a–789b (W. Witakowski).

<sup>52</sup> 'Hawaryat: Gädlä hawaryat', *E Ae*, II (2005), 1049b–1051a (A. Bausi).

<sup>53</sup> See Getatchew Haile 2005.

<sup>54</sup> See 'Krəstənnə: Mäşhafä krəstənnə', *E Ae*, III (2007), 439a–441a (E. Fritsch, Habtemichael Kidane, and Tedros Abraha).

<sup>55</sup> See *Mäşhafä dəgg'a qəddus Yared zädäräsaw* 1966/1967; *Mäşhafä qəddase* 1969/1970; 'Qəddase: Mäşhafä qəddase', *E Ae*, IV (2010), 279b–281b (A. Bausi).

<sup>56</sup> See 'Təmçät: Mäşhafä təmçät', *E Ae*, IV (2010), 917a–918a (A. Bausi).

<sup>57</sup> See also '‘Ətanä mogär', *E Ae*, II (2005), 392a–b (Habtemichael Kidane).

<sup>58</sup> See also 'Zəmmare', *E Ae*, V (2014), 175b–176b (Habtemichael Kidane).

No.	Genre	No. of MSS	Content/Work	Proj. Code	CAe ID	Colophon
7	Other	4	<i>Ləfafä şədq</i> <sup>60</sup>	YC-48	CAe 1758	
			<i>Mäşhafä bərhan</i> <sup>61</sup>	YC-62	CAe 1921	
			<i>Təmhərtä həbu'at</i> <sup>62</sup>	YC-49	CAe 2444	
			<i>Zəna şəllase</i>	YC-65	CAe 2623	Colophon
8	Non-Codex	1	<i>Ṭawos</i>	YC-72	-	

#### 4.1 Physical Features of the Manuscripts

The manuscripts' physical features refer to the number of folia (written and unwritten), parchment, binding, cover, type of ink, number of columns, number of quires and quire structure, colophon (which can sometimes give information and affect the physical feature), the overall condition of the manuscripts, and so on. Most of the manuscripts (fifty-three manuscripts) are bound with wooden boards covered by leather. Three manuscripts have neither hard cover (usually wood) nor a cover (potentially leather). Thirteen manuscripts have a wooden hard cover, but no leather cover; only two manuscripts (*Şəlotä 'ətan* (YC-41) and *Mäşhafä Ṭobit* (YC-70)) have a leather cover without a hard cover. The manuscripts' size varies from *Sənkəssar* (YC-58) at 44.5 × 34.3 × 8.9 cm (length × width × thickness) followed by *Mäşhafä Orit* (YC-59) at 40.6 × 27.9 × 10.2 cm and *Rətu'a Haymanot* (YC-01) at 43.2 × 27.9 × 8.9 cm, up to the smallest manuscript of *Ləfafä şədq* (YC-48) at 8.9 × 7.1 × 5 cm.

The manuscripts usually have two columns; however the two large manuscripts containing the *Sənkəssar* (YC-58 and YC-03) contain three columns. Twelve manuscripts bear just one column. Thus a total of fifty-seven manuscripts have two columns. The number of quires vary from *Mäşhafä bərhan* (YC-62), with twenty-nine quires, up to *Mälkä'a Abrəham* (YC-71) with just one quire. There are also six manuscripts with the quires all mixed up due to the degree of damage to the manuscripts. The number of manuscripts' folia vary from two hundred and twenty-one folia of *Gädlä qəddusan* (YC-13) to the six folia of *Mälkä'a Abrəham* (YC-71). Aside from eleven manuscripts, all the other sixty manuscripts have blank/unwritten folia in the back-and-forth folia of the

<sup>59</sup> See 'Ziq', *EAE*, V (2014), 191b–192a (Habtemichael Kidane).

<sup>60</sup> See 'Ləfafä şədq', *EAE*, III (2007), 542a–543a (B. Burtea).

<sup>61</sup> See 'Bərhan: Mäşhafä bərhan', *EAE*, I (2003), 533a–534a (Getatchew Haile).

<sup>62</sup> See 'Təmhərtä həbu'at', *EAE*, IV (2010), 914b–915a (B. Burtea).

manuscripts. Thirty manuscripts have colophons. As discussed above, some of the colophons<sup>63</sup> were written much later than the actual manuscript production in either of the three languages (Gə‘əz, Amharic, Təgrəñña).

Thirty-nine manuscripts (YC-01 to YC-15, YC-24, YC-26, YC-29, YC-34 to YC-37, YC-39, YC-41, YC-42, YC-44, YC-50, YC-51, YC-59, YC-60, YC-62, YC-63, YC-66, YC-68, YC-69, YC-70, YC-71) have marginalia, while the other thirty-two manuscripts do not. All the manuscripts are written in Gə‘əz with black ink, with, as usual, some red ink for emphasis; many manuscripts have decorations and wonderful layouts. The overall condition of the manuscripts is not good; after being placed on the shelves they appear to have been neglected. Their physical features are summarized in Table 2 below. Under the column with the number of folia, the number of both written and unwritten folia has been sorted through. The scribes may have left some unwritten folia in the first and back pages of a manuscript for different purposes; infrequently, however, blank leaves are still to be found somewhere in the middle of a manuscript. Thus, the following table also shows the number of these unwritten folia under three categories: F (unwritten folium in the front), M (unwritten folium in the middle), and B (unwritten folium at the back). The quires column denotes the number of quires; the blank space in the column indicates manuscripts whose quires are mixed because of a certain disruption in the quire structure of the manuscript.

<sup>63</sup> To determine whether they are really colophons or pseudo-colophons needs careful attention during cataloguing, at least for the moment, however, they can be considered colophons.

Table 2 Physical Descriptions of the Manuscripts of Däbrä Şəyon

C o d e	Ms	No. of folios				Q u i r e	Col. No.	Parchment (L × W × B cm)	Binding H. Cover	Outer Cover	
		Writ- ten	F	M	B						Total
YC -01	<i>Rətu'a Haymanot</i>	169	1	-	-	170	-	2	43.2 × 27.9 × 8.9	wooden	leather
YC -02	<i>Gädlä hawaryat</i>	204	-	-	-	204	25	2	35.6 × 25.4 × 7.4	wooden	-
YC -03	<i>Sənkəssar</i>	202.5	4	-	2.5	209	22	3	38.1 × 27.9 × 10.4	wooden	-
YC -04	<i>Dərsanä Məsqäl</i>	80.5	2	-	3.5	86	13	2	30.5 × 23.6 × 6.8	wooden	leather
YC -05	<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	118	1	1	2	122	14	2	27.9 × 22.8 × 8.9	wooden	leather
YC -06	<i>Sənkəssar</i>	107.5	2	-	0.5	110	16	3	38.1 × 30.5 × 10	fibre wood	leather
YC -07	<i>Məzmurä Davit</i>	154	3	0.5	1.5	159	21	1	22 × 17 × 7.6	wooden	-
YC -08	<i>Məzmurä Davit</i>	165.5	1	-	1.5	168	17	1	23.9 × 20.5 × 6.9	wooden	-
YC -09	<i>Məşhafä qəddase</i>	119	4	-	3	126	17	2	27.9 × 22.4 × 7.6	wooden	leather
YC -10	<i>Dərsanä mädhane 'aläm</i>	95.5	3	-	2.5	101	9	2	23.9 × 22.9 × 6.4	wooden	leather
YC -11	<i>Dərsanä Mika'el</i>	84	2	-	2.5	88.5	13	2	25.4 × 20.3 × 6.6	wooden	leather
YC -12	<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	34	2	-	2.5	38.5	8	2	21.8 × 17.8 × 5	wooden	-
YC -13	<i>Gädlä qəddusan</i>	219	1	-	1	221	28	2	34.3 × 26.7 × 12.7	wooden	leather
YC -14	<i>Gädlä Şəyon (?)</i>	51	4	-	3	58	15	2	30.2 × 23.9 × 10.2	fibre wood	leather
YC -15	<i>Andəmta Wängel</i>	162	-	1	1	164	22	2	35.6 × 22.9 × 9.1	wooden	leather
YC -16	<i>Nägərə Maryam</i>	104.5	4	-	3.5	112	15	2	29.2 × 22.9 × 6.4	wooden	leather
YC -17	<i>Gädlä Arəgawi</i>	60	4	-	4	68	17	2	25.4 × 20.3 × 6.4	wooden	leather
YC -18	<i>Gädlä Kiros</i>	84.5	2	-	0.5	87	13	2	26.7 × 21 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -19	<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	28	5.5	-	1.5	35	6	2	16.5 × 12.7 × 4.6	wooden	leather
YC -20	<i>Gädlä Abrəham</i>	65.5	2	-	0.5	68	9	2	24.1 × 20.3 × 6.4	wooden	leather
YC -21	<i>Gädlä Lalibäla</i>	131	2	-	1	134	19	2	25.4 × 17.8 × 7.6	wooden	-

Hagos Abrha

C o d e	Ms	No. of folios				Q u i r e	Col. No.	Parchment (L × W × B cm)	Binding H. Cover	Outer Cover	
		Writ- ten	Unwritten								Total
			F	M	B						
YC -22	<i>Māzmurā Dawit</i>	150.5	0.5	-	-	151	16	1	22.9 × 12.7 × 6.6	wooden	leather
YC -23	<i>Māšhafā qəddase</i>	124	2	-	2	128	17	2	25.4 × 20.3 × 7.6	wooden	leather
YC -24	<i>Mälkä`a Pawlos</i>	54	0.5	0.5	2	58	8	2	25.4 × 20.3 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -25	<i>Mälkä`a Pawlos</i>	31	2	-	1	34	6	2	22.9 × 15.2 × 3.8	wooden	-
YC -26	<i>Māzmurā Dawit</i>	142	0.5	-	2.5	145	21	1	15.2 × 11.4 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -27	<i>Māzmurā Dawit</i>	146	4	-	8	158	22	1	12.7 × 10.2 × 6.4	wooden	leather
YC -28	<i>Dərsanā Mika`el</i>	106.5	1	-	0.5	108	15	2	25.4 × 20.3 × 6.6	wooden	leather
YC -29	<i>Tā`ammərə Iyäsus</i>	126.5	0.5	-	0.5	128	15	2	22.9 × 20.3 × 6.6	wooden	leather
YC -30	<i>Māšhafā zəmmare</i>	104	-	-	-	104	14	1	25.4 × 17.8 × 3.8	-	-
YC -31	<i>Gädlä Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus</i>	66	-	-	1	67	-	2	20.3 × 15.2 × 3.8	wooden	leather
YC -32	<i>Dərsanā mahyāwi</i>	48.5	2	0.5	2	53	9	2	25.4 × 20.3 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -33	<i>Dərsanā kidanā məhrät</i>	35.5	4	-	4.5	44	6	2	29.2 × 20.3 × 3.8	wooden	leather
YC -34	<i>Dərsanā sänbät</i>	26	2	0.5	0.5	30	5	2	24.9 × 22.9 × 3.8	wooden	leather
YC -35	<i>Gädlä Abrəham</i>	57	2	-	1	57	8	2	21.6 × 20.3 × 5	wooden	-
YC -36	<i>Mälkä`a Abrəham</i>	3.5	1	-	0.5	6	1	1	19 × 12.7 × 1.3	-	leather
YC -37	<i>Māšhafā gənzät</i>	138	3	0.5	1.5	143	18	2	-	wooden	leather
YC -38	<i>Tā`ammərə Maryam</i>	61.5	3.5	-	2	69	9	2	23.9 × 18.3 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -39	<i>Māšhafā gənzät</i>	131	2	-	2	135	16	2	9.9 × 22.7 × 8.9	wooden	leather
YC -40	<i>Māšhafā krəstənnä</i>	26	2	-	2	30	5	2	16.5 × 15.2 × 1.3	wooden	-
YC -41	<i>Šälötä`ətan</i>	17	2	-	0.5	20	4	1	14 × 11.4 × 1.3	-	leather
YC -42	<i>Māšhafā ziq</i>	72	-	-	-	72	-	2	19 × 14 × 3.8	wooden	-
YC -43	<i>Šälötä`ətan</i>	43	2	-	1.5	47	7	2	18.8 × 14 × 3.8	wooden	-

The Gə'əz Manuscripts Collection from the Monastery of Däbrä Şəyon

C o d e	MS	No. of folios				Q u i r e	Col. No.	Parchment (L × W × B cm)	Binding H. Cover	Outer Cover	
		Writ- ten	Unwritten								Total
			F	M	B						
YC -44	<i>Näbəyat and Nägürä Maryam</i>	168.5	2		1.5	172	17	2	35.6 × 27.9 × 10.1	wooden	-
YC -45	<i>Mäşhafä qəddase</i>	111	2	0.5	1.5	114	-	2	20.3 × 15.2 × 6.4	-	-
YC -46	<i>Wängelä Yohannäs</i>	12	-	-	-	12	3	1	22.9 × 14 × 1	-	-
YC -47	<i>Mälkä'ä kidanä məhrät</i>	25	1	1.5	0.5	27	5	1	12.7 × 8.4 × 2.54	wooden	-
YC -48	<i>Ləfafü şədq</i>	22	2	-	4	28	5	1	8.9 × 7.1 × 5	-	leather
YC -49	<i>Təmhərtä həbu'at</i>	37.5	2	-	0.5	40	7	2	22.9 × 20.3 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -50	<i>Mäl'əktä Pawlos</i>	41	2	-	1	44	6	2	22.9 × 22.9 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -51	<i>Gädlä Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus</i>	78.5	2	-	1.5	82	12	2	25.4 × 20.3 × 6.4	wooden	leather
YC -52	<i>Gädlä Täklä Haymanot</i>	102	2	-	2	106	15	2	27.9 × 22.9 × 7.1	wooden	leather
YC -53	<i>Dərsanä Ya'qob Zäsərug</i>	40	4	-	2	46	7	2	20.3 × 17.8 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -54	<i>Mäşhafä təmqät</i>	47.5	2	-	2.5	52	7	2	19 × 17.8 × 3.5	wooden	leather
YC -55	<i>Şälotä Mäba'</i>	16	2	-	1	19	3	1	15.2 × 12.7 × 3.5	wooden	-
YC -56	<i>Dərsanä Mika'el</i>	77	2	0.5	1.5	81	11	2	24.1 × 19 × 6.35	wooden	leather
YC -57	<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	112	1	0.5	0.5	114	17	2	43.2 × 29.2 × 6.35	wooden	leather
YC -58	<i>Sənkəssar</i>	160	1	-	-	161	25	2	44.5 × 34.3 × 8.9	wooden	-
YC -59	<i>Mäşhafä Orit</i>	190	1	-	-	191	26	2	40.6 × 27.9 × 10.2	wooden	-
YC -60	<i>Tä'ammərə Maryam</i>	58.5	2	-	1.5	62	9	2	24.1 × 19 × 4.6	wooden	-
YC -61	<i>Dərsanä mädhane 'aläm</i>	80	2	-	1	83	12	2	22.9 × 17.8 × 6.6	wooden	leather
YC -62	<i>Mäşhafä bərhan</i>	208	1	2	-	211	29	2	38.1 × 27.9 × 10	wooden	-
YC -63	<i>Mäşhafä Wängel</i>	204	1	-	1	206	23	2	26.7 × 25.4 × 7.6	wooden	-

Hagos Abrha

C o d e	Ms	No. of folios					Q u i r e	Col. No.	Parchment (L × W × B cm)	Binding H. Cover	Outer Cover
		Writ- ten	Unwritten			Total					
			F	M	B						
YC -64	<i>Mäṣḥafä gənzät</i>	155	3	0.5	1.5	160	17	2	27.9 × 22.9 × 8.9	wooden	-
YC -65	<i>Zena šəllase</i>	113.5	1.5	-	2	117	16	2	26.7 × 20.3 × 7.6	wooden	leather
YC -66	<i>Mäṣḥafä qəddase</i>	136	2	-	1	139	16	2	25.4 × 19 × 7.6	wooden	leather
YC -67	<i>Mäṣḥafä täkil</i>	40	2	-	4	46	7	2	15.2 × 11.4 × 5	wooden	leather
YC -68	<i>Mäl'əktä Pawlos</i>	161	-	-	-	161	17	2	20.3 × 17.8 × 8.9	-	-
YC -69	<i>Mäṣḥafä Orit</i>	75	-	-	-	75	-	2	26.7 × 19 × 3.5	-	-
YC -70	<i>Mäṣḥafä Ṭobit</i>	92	-	-	-	92	-	2	48.2 × 36.8 × 7.6	-	leather
YC -71	<i>Mälkä`a Abrəham</i>	17.5	3	-	2.5	23	4	1	14 × 10.2 × 2.54	wooden	-

#### 4.2 Special Manuscript (YC-72)

The seventy-second manuscript from the collection is a special manuscript, of high artistic relevance, with a peculiar layout showing a deep background in manuscript tradition. It has a circular-shaped format; Ewa Balicka-Witakowska dubbed this manuscript-form *märäwəḥ*. In Gə`əz, *märäwəḥ*, *märwḥt*, *märäwaḥt* (cf. Syriac *marruḥa*, *marruḥata*, Arabic *mirwaḥ*, *mirwaḥa*) means ‘liturgical fan’.<sup>64</sup> *Märäwəḥ* can also have another meaning (in Amharic, Gə`əz, and Təgrəñña) such as ‘ring a bell’ or ‘be loud’. Kidanä Wäld Kəfle has discussed it in detail;<sup>65</sup> however, I doubt that *w* is not geminated. Nicknaming people (who can sound longer) with *märäwwa(h)*, meaning ‘strident’ is quite common in Ethiopia. Balicka-Witakowska claims ‘the fan type manuscripts’ were named after the liturgical fan, which she states is also mentioned in the Book of Didache.<sup>66</sup>

However, we are to think beyond a liturgical fan whenever confronted with such venerated large manuscripts. This fifteenth-century manuscript has a 130

<sup>64</sup> Balicka-Witakowska 2004; ‘Märäwəḥ’, *E Ae*, III (2007), 775b–777a (E. Balicka-Witakowska).

<sup>65</sup> Kidanä Wäld Kəfle 1955/1956, 14.

<sup>66</sup> ‘A 14<sup>th</sup>-cent. Gospel Book, decorated with unfinished Canon Tables and archaic portraits of standing evangelists and a very well-preserved liturgical fan (*märäwəḥ*) are housed in the D.S. treasury’, ‘Däbrä Şəyon: Churches of Däbrä Şəyon’, *E Ae*, II (2005), 42a–43a (E. Balicka-Witakowska), here p. 43a.



cm diameter circle spread between two wooden boards fastened in a thick shaft. The purpose of the shaft is also to hold the manuscript while stretched. Its main body contains thirty-six images of saints with eighteen folds from outside and seventeen folds from inside. The whole manuscript, from inside, has four levels of circles: the emerging/centre (navel), the body, *ḥarägä dərāgon* (lit. 'tendrils of dragon'), and *ḥarägä əgzi* (lit. 'tendrils of the Lord').<sup>67</sup> The images of God/Jesus, St Mary, angels, people (saints), and the serpent (or dragon) are well depicted; it is a wonderful summary of the Bible or the Christian world. This content is formed in a circular design resembling a peacock; both the content and form recall the phrases in the Bible (Ezek. 10:44, 18:20). The entire form, content, and colour code clearly indicate it is not merely a liturgical fan. It obviously demands more research, I suggest calling it preliminarily a 'ṭawos manuscript'.



Fig. 4 *Ṭawos* manuscript from the monastery of Däbrä Şəyon, photograph by Hagos Abrha, March 2018.

<sup>67</sup> *Ḥaräg* means 'vine branch', 'dense and tangled trees'; it can also mean 'clause', which is a grammatical expression created by Märṣə'e Ḥazän (Leslau 1987). However, *ḥaräg* in case of Ethiopian manuscript illumination is about 'tendrils' that are mostly ribbon-shaped ornaments applied to the frontispiece and incipit pages of manuscripts. They divide the textual unit and are used to decorate the margins or titles in addition to the miniature frames, 'Ḥaräg', *EAE*, II (2005), 1009a–1010b (E. Balicka-Witakowska).

*Tawos*, so in Gə‘əz (from Greek ταῶς, *ta'os*) and in other Semitic languages, can be translated as ‘peacock’ or ‘pheasant’.<sup>68</sup> Jean-Claude Corbeil, in his visual Amharic dictionary, also used *ta'os* to name the peacock star constellation of the southern hemisphere.<sup>69</sup> In spite of the remarkable studies on Ethiopian manuscript culture, the names of manuscript categories (specially the non-codex) based on their formats have not been well researched: the names of different forms of scrolls and circle type manuscript are not consistent. *Tawos* could be an appropriate name for categorizing manuscripts whose form and content are peacock-like, of which this manuscript from the monastery of Däbrä Şəyon is a good example. The parchment of the manuscript is also strong and different to the usual parchment, derived either from a camel or horse.<sup>70</sup>

**5 Pictures of Sample Manuscripts from the Monastery Library of Däbrä Şəyon**

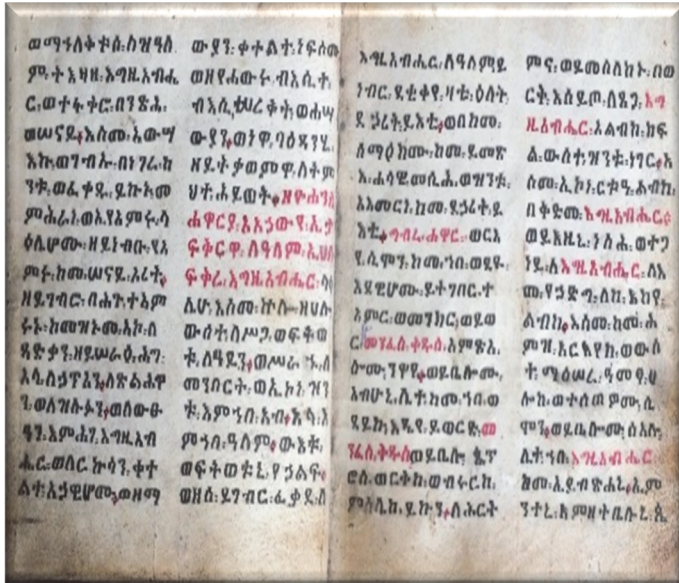


Fig. 5 YC-50, fol. 9r–v: *Mäl'əktä Pāwlos*.

<sup>68</sup> Leslau 1987, 599.

<sup>69</sup> Corbeil 1991.

<sup>70</sup> Material analysis of this manuscript will also be part of my exclusive research in my current project Non-Codex Gə‘əz Manuscripts of Təgray: Archiving and Usage.



Fig. 6 YC-38, fols 3v–4r: *Tä'ammärä Maryam*.



Fig. 7 YC-15 fols 3v–4r: *Andämta Wängel*.



Fig. 8 YC-06 fols 2v–3r: *Sənkassar*.



Fig. 9 YC-70, fols 38v–39r: *Məshafā Ṭobit*.



Fig. 10 YC-57, fols 4v–5r: *Tä'ammərä Maryam*.



Fig. 11 Cases for the manuscripts in the library.



Fig 12 Mixed-up manuscripts.

### List of References

- Amsalu Tefera 2011. ‘Dərsanā Səyon: Philological Inquiries into the Text’, *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Nuova Serie, 3 (2011), 141–166.
- Balicka-Witakowska, E. 2004. ‘The Liturgical Fan and Some Recently Discovered Ethiopian Examples’, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, 57/2 (2004, pub. 2005), 19–46.
- Balicka-Witakowska, E., A. Bausi, C. Bosc-Tiessé, and D. Nonsnitsin 2015. ‘Ethiopic Codicology’, in A. Bausi, P. G. Borbone, F. Briquel-Chatonnet, P. Buzi, J. Gippert, C. Macé, M. Maniaci, Z. Melissakis, L. E. Parodi, W. Witakowski, and E. Sokolinski, eds, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction* (Hamburg: COMSt, 2015), 154–174.
- Bausi, A. 2020. “‘Däbrä Dammo”, Not “Däbrä Damo””, *Géolinguistique*, 20 (2020), 10.4000/geolinguistique.1918.
- Conti Rossini, C. 1909. *Documenta ad illustrandam historiam, I: Liber Axumae, Textus*, ed., *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptorum Aethiopicum, Series Altera*, 8 (Parisii: E Typographeo Reipublicae–Carolus Poussielgue Bibliopola, Lipsiae: Otto Harrassowitz, 1909).
- Corbeil, J. C. 1991. *ሰፍራት ስእላዊ መዝገበ ቃላት*. *The Stoddart visual dictionary* (n.p.: Educational Materials Production and Distribution Agency, 1991).

- Dərsanä Mika'el mälk'a Mika'elanna Rufa'el* 1997/1998. **ድርሳነ፡ ሚካኤል፡ መልክእ፡ ሚካኤልና፡ ሩፋኤል፡ ስጋዕዳና፡ በአግርኛ፡** # (*Dərsanä Mika'el mälk'a Mika'elanna Rufa'el, bāgə'əzanna bāamarəñña*, 'Homiliary of Michael, image of Michael and Raphael, in Gə'əz and in Amharic') (Addis Abāba: Täsfa Gäbrä Šəllase, 1990 EC = 1997/1998 CE).
- EAE. S. Uhlig, ed., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; ed., in cooperation with A. Bausi, IV: O–X; A. Bausi, ed., in cooperation with S. Uhlig, V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).
- Getatchew Haile 2005. 'The *Māšhafä Gənzät* as a Historical Source Regarding the Theology of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church', *Scrinium*, 1 (2005 = D. Nosnitsin, ed., in collaboration with S. Frantsouzoff, L. Kogan, and B. Lourié, *Varia Aethiopica: In Memory of Sevir B. Chernetsov (1943–2005)* (Saint Petersburg: Byzantinorossica, 2005)), 58–76.
- Guidi, I. 1894. 'Il «Gadla 'Aragāwi»', *Atti della R. Accademia dei Lincei, Memorie della Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Serie quinta, 2 (1894, pub. 1896), 54–96.
- Hagos Abrha 2011. 'Philological Analysis of the Manuscripts of *Gädlä Yəmšata*', *Ityōpis*, 1 (2011), 62–76.
- Hatke, G. 2020. 'The Aksumites in South Arabia: An African Diaspora of Late Antiquity', in J. Preiser-Kapeller, L. Reinfandt, and Y. Stouraitis, eds, *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone: Aspects of Mobility between Africa, Asia and Europe, 300–1500 C.E.*, Studies in Global Social History, 39, Studies in Global Migration History, 13 (Leiden–Boston, MA: Brill, 2020), 291–326.
- Kidanä Wäld Kəfle 1955/1956. **መጽሐፈ፡ ሰዋሰው፡ ወግስ፡ ወመዝገበ፡ ቃላት፡ ሐዲስ፡ ገባብ፡ በግእዝ፡ ፍቺወ፡ ባግርኛ፡** # (*Māšhafä säwasəw wägəs wäməzɡäbä qalat ḥaddis: nəbabu bāgə'əz fəččəw bamarəñña*, 'A book of grammar and verb, and a new dictionary: reading in Gə'əz and translation in Amharic') (Addis Abāba: Artistik mattämiya bet, 1948 EC = 1955/1956 CE).
- Krzyżanowska, M. 2015. 'The *Gädlä Kiros* in Ethiopian Religious Practices: A Study of Eighteen Manuscripts from Eastern Təgray', in D. Nosnitsin, ed., *Veneration of Saints in Christian Ethiopia: Proceedings of the International Workshop Saints in Christian Ethiopia: Literary Sources and Veneration, Hamburg, April 28–29, 2012*, Supplement to *Aethiopica*, 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 95–136.
- Leslau, W. 1987. *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic): Ge'ez–English/English–Ge'ez, with an index of the Semitic roots* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987).
- Marrassini, P. 2004. 'Il Gadla Kiros', in V. Böll, D. Nosnitsin, T. Rave, W. Smidt, and E. Sokolinskaia, eds, *Studia Aethiopica: In Honour of Siegbert Uhlig on the Occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 79–90.
- 2008. 'Salient Features of Philology: The Science of Establishing Primary Sources', *Ethiopian Philology*, 1/1 (2008), 4–12.
- Māšhafä qəddase* 1969/1970. **መጽሐፈ፡ ቅዳሴ፡ በግዕዝና፡ በአግርኛ፡** # (*Māšhafä qəddase: bāgə'əzanna bā'amarəñña*, 'Book of the Missal: in Gə'əz and Amharic') (Addis Abāba: Täsfa mattämiya bet, 1962 EC = 1969/1970 CE).
- Māšhafä dagg'a qəddus Yared zädäräsəw* 1966/1967. **መጽሐፈ፡ ድን፡ ቅዱስ፡ ያሬድ፡ ዘደረሰው፡** # (*Māšhafä dagg'a qəddus Yared zädäräsəw*, 'The Book of *Dəgg'a* composed

by Saint Yared') (Addis Abäba: Bərhanənnä sälam mattämiya bet, 1959 EC = 1966/1967 CE).

Täsfa Gäbrä Šəllase 1966/1967. መዝሙረ ፡ ዳዊት ፡ ወጸሎታት ፡ ዘነቢያት ፡ (*Mäzmurä Dawit wäšälotat zänäbiyat*, 'Songs of David and the prayers of the Prophets') (Addis Abäba: [Täsfa Gäbrä Šəllase], 1959 EC = 1966/1967 CE).

Tribe, T. C. 2009. 'Holy Men in Ethiopia: The Wall Paintings in the Church of Abunä Abrəham Däbrä Šəyon (Gär'alta, Təgray)', *Eastern Christian Art*, 6 (2009), 7–37.

### Summary

The monastery of Däbrä Šəyon (*Abunä Abrəham*), situated on a peak of the eastern chains of the Gär'alta mountains, is one of the well-known medieval Ethiopian monasteries. It is said to have been established in the fourteenth century by St Abrəham of Təgray. According to his own *gädl*, *Abunä Abrəham* was not only the founder of the monastery, but was also known to be an active participant and director of the architectural work of the rock-hewn church. It is known that Gär'alta is endowed with reflections of Aksumite culture, and the monastery of Däbrä Šəyon also seems to have had its own share in its continuation. Many places and monasteries (in Təgray) are linked to this monastery in terms of shared monastic culture and land granting. Däbrä Šəyon is a rock-hewn church in which many Christian historical artefacts have been preserved. Among the non-codex written artefacts, it has preserved, in particular, a *ṭawos* manuscript. Seventy-two Gə'əz manuscripts, most of which of hagiographical and liturgical genre, are kept in the church. All were digitized, foliated, with quire number and structure sorted out in 2018, via a project carried out by the St Yared Center for Ethiopian Philology and Manuscript Studies (SYCEPMS) of Mekelle University. Material, physical, and chemical analysis of the manuscripts was not applied due to a lack of equipment and skill. The manuscripts are now in the process of being catalogued and examined for dating, and the article provides a synthetic survey of the whole collection. The *ṭawos* manuscript, that is, a peacock-type manuscript from the fifteenth century, is part of the collection; its format calls for consideration regarding the definition and significance of a special style of Ethiopic manuscript culture. As a result, this article aims at introducing the monastery and its manuscript collection.