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Article

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in British Public Collections*

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A Handlist of Illustrated Early Solomonic Manuscripts in British Public Collections*

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Introduction

This is the second in a series of two contributions devoted to the identification, description, and cataloguing of illustrated Ethiopic manuscripts from the Early Solomonic Period. The first contribution,¹ which was published in the previous volume of *Aethiopica*, focused on public collections in Germany, whereas the present one deals with objects found in the United Kingdom. For a discussion on the ideas behind this set of two publications and an overview of the aims of the AHRC-DFG project Demarginalizing medieval Africa: Images, texts, and identity in Early Solomonic Ethiopia (1270–1527), we refer the reader to the previous contribution. Our earlier contribution also provides a detailed rationale for our approach to cataloguing.² One addition that we have made to the cataloguing scheme applied in the first handlist is the introduction of the additional sub-category ‘illuminated tables’.

The forty-one manuscripts included in this handlist were viewed between 2022 and 2023 by one or more of the contributors to this essay. The most significant

* Research for this contribution was supported by the AHRC-DFG project Demarginalizing medieval Africa: Images, texts, and identity in Early Solomonic Ethiopia (1270–1527), co-directed by Jacopo Gnisci, Alessandro Bausi (2021–October 2023), and Aaron Butts (since November 2023), grant ref. nos AHRC AH/V002910/1 and DFG 448410109. The authors are particularly indebted to Vitagrazia Pisani, who was part of the ITIESE project until February 2022, and to Dorothea Reule for her TEI XML advice and for granting access to some of the Bodleian Libraries manuscripts that she had digitized together with Jacopo Gnisci. Additionally, we would like to thank Alessandro Bausi, Antonella Brita, Ted Erho, and Theo M. van Lint. Special thanks for support are also due to library staff and museum curators, including Eleanor Lucy Deacon, Eyob Derillo, Yasmin Faghihi, Ulrike Hogg, Luisa Elena Mengoni, and César Merchán-Hamann. Images of manuscripts in the Bodleian Libraries, including the one published as Fig. 4, were obtained through the support of the ERC project Monumental Art of the Christian and Early Islamic East: Cultural Identities and Classical Heritage.

¹ Dege-Müller et al. 2022.

² Dege-Müller et al. 2022, 59–67.

UK libraries for the purposes of this contribution are the British Library in London, the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford,³ and the University Library in Cambridge. Other relevant manuscripts were viewed at the library of the University of Edinburgh, the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh, and the library of the University of Leicester.⁴ Most of this handlist's manuscripts have been catalogued previously, but with varying degrees of depth and often insufficient interest in their visual features. Our aim here was to expand and collate the available data for the study of the history of book illumination in Ethiopia and Eritrea between c.1270 and 1527 AD. The results published in the German handlist have already proven that more information about this history can be gleaned by approaching collections of manuscripts from a different angle and by looking more closely at codicological features and traces of use. The discussion and descriptions set out below, that continue and refer to our previous contribution, should serve to confirm this point.

Preliminary Findings of the Data to Highlight

Many of the Ethiopic manuscripts in the UK described here have been known to specialists for a number of years, but they had not been examined as a corpus and in some cases their significance had been overlooked by previous scholars.

One of the best examples is Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Ms 1894. This important manuscript, which we date approximately to the second half of the fourteenth or the first quarter of the fifteenth century based on its palaeography and iconography, is decorated with a set of arches destined for a copy of the Eusebian canon tables and the *Letter to Carpianus* and with a prefatory cycle of three miniatures showing the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus. The significance and early date of these illuminations, which bear comparison to those found in better-known manuscripts such as MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (= BnF), Éth. 32 and the Dabra Ma'ār Gospels (MS Dabra Ma'ār Giyorgis, EMDA 00463), have hitherto been overlooked. The manuscript is important for

³ A number of relevant uncatalogued manuscripts at the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford were described primarily on the basis of photographs taken by Jacopo Gnisci and Dorothea Reule in 2020 through funding provided by The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities and the Beta maṣāḥəft project. A catalogue of these and a number of other uncatalogued Ethiopic manuscripts in the Bodleian Libraries, which will appear in the Aethiopica Supplements series, is being authored by Dorothea Reule, Jacopo Gnisci, Massimo Villa, Eliana Dal Sasso and Jonas Karlsson.

⁴ All three project members visited the British Library in May 2022, Jonas Karlsson and Jacopo Gnisci visited the libraries in Cambridge and Oxford in May 2022. Jonas Karlsson visited the National Library of Scotland and the University of Edinburgh Library in November–December 2022.

its notes, discussed below, and because it offers an example of the diffusion of the ‘short cycle’ in Ethiopic Gospel books of the period.

Focusing on the colophons and notes in the manuscripts yields precious information on their owners, makers or holding institutions. This is evidenced by MS London, British Library (= BL), Or. 597, which was commissioned by an abbot of Dabra Libānos in Šawā, and MS London, BL, Or. 692, which contains information about the translator of its text. Particularly noteworthy is the case of MS London, BL, Or. 480, which was most probably owned and used by a member of the Beta ʿĪsrāʿel community (Ethiopian Jews) and seems to have switched owners on more than one occasion.⁵ An equally interesting set of data comes from a group of manuscripts acquired by the British and Foreign Bible Society (= BFBS), which contain notes attesting to the presence of Ethiopians and Eritreans in Egypt and the Holy Land, e.g. MSS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 169 and BFBS 177.

Comparison of the visual, textual, and material features of the UK manuscripts with manuscripts from other collections, including those scrutinized in Germany, also yields valuable information. Perhaps the most remarkable example is MS Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Aeth. e. 33, which contains miniatures we believe to have been painted by the same artist who worked on one of the manuscripts described in the previous handlist (MS Munich, Museum Fünf Kontinente, MfVK 86-307646). Through a similar process, we associate MS London, BL, Or. 706 (an imperial commission by Emperor ʿĪskəndər, r.1478–1494) with a group of seven other manuscripts listed below. Some of these appear to be the work of the same scribe and artist, as they contain stylistically identical headpieces (*harags*) and are similar palaeographically. One of the manuscripts belonging to this group, a copy of the *Four Gospels* kept at Dabra Warq Māryām and produced under the patronage of Mārtā, daughter of Emperor ʿĪskəndər, contains a set of evangelist portraits attributed by several scholars to the Italian artist Brancaleone.⁶ Jacques Mercier appears to take for granted that the arabesques and portraits in this manuscript are the work of different individuals by discussing them separately in his recent monograph, but further investigation is required here.⁷ It is quite possible that the texts and headpieces in this group of manuscripts were made by the same individual, who, like Brancaleone, surely had connections to the imperial court. This would rule the Italian out as author of the headpieces, as no existing evidence suggests he had the skills necessary to copy a text.

There are instances where we are less confident about our dating and identifications. This is the case with the headpieces in MS London, BL, Add. 11,621. Based on their placement in relation to the text, we believe that they are

⁵ Dege-Müller 2020, 33.

⁶ Mercier 2021, 281; Chojnacki 1983, 387.

⁷ Mercier 2021, 243, 281.

not coeval with it. The headpieces have been placed in the upper margin of three folios and partly within a psalm, and not, as one would expect, in between two psalms. This suggests a lack of coordination between scribe and artist. However, a comparison of their style with that of other examples indicates that they are not much younger than the rest of the manuscript. Such observations make it necessary to include the manuscript in the handlist, but obviously, such a decision rests on a set of assumptions about the diffusion of particular approaches to illuminating manuscripts in the Ethiopian Empire.

More generally, we are aware of the challenges involved in dating a manuscript or codicological unit on the basis of its palaeography or the style of its miniatures. Therefore, as in the previous handlist, some proposed dates bear a question mark, indicating a higher degree of uncertainty (see e.g. MS London, BL, Harl. 7629). An emblematic case is that of a loose leaf, hitherto largely overlooked in art historical scholarship, inserted in MS Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Library, Or. 651. Although we have opted to include it in the handlist, it remains uncertain whether or not it belongs to the period focused on in our project, and our proposed dating interval reflects this.

Attempts to associate manuscripts to a region, site or institutional network based on features such as their style and text are still in their infancy. Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe that a manuscript (MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 169) that can be associated to Jerusalem presents visual elements not typically found in Ethiopic manuscripts from the Early Solomonic period. Rather, it has closer parallels with manuscripts produced in other Oriental Christian languages, such as Syriac. This manuscript also stands out for the presence of ‘negative script’ in which the letters are formed with blank ink outlines that could have been painted or, less probably, executed with a woodblock.⁸ With regard to possible provenance, it is also worth noting that the headpieces in MS London, BL, Or. 794 recall ones seen in manuscripts associated with the Stephanite movement,⁹ including examples digitized and catalogued by the Ethio-SPaRe project (e.g. MSS ‘Addi Qolqʷāl Giyorgis, Ethio-SPaRe, AQG-003 and Ethio-SPaRe, AQG-004).¹⁰

⁸ This type of script is also attested in MS London, BL, Or. 650 (see the description below). Another example is found on fol. 5r in MS Qalāqəl Māryām Şayon, QS-007. Full reference: MS Qalāqəl Māryām Şayon, QS-007 (digitized by the Ethio-SPaRe project), *Tazkāra maṣḥafa sa ʿātāt*, ‘Commemoration of the Horologium’ / Computation for the hours of each month, fifteenth century (?), catalogued by Vitagrazia Pisani, description accessed on 15 June 2023, <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/ESqs007/main>.

⁹ ‘Stephanites’, *EAE*, IV (2010), 746b–749a (S. Kaplan).

¹⁰ Full references: MS ‘Addi Qolqʷāl Giyorgis, AQG-003 (digitized by the Ethio-SPaRe project), *ʿArbā ʿtu Wangel*, ‘Four Gospels’, first half of the sixteenth century, catalogued by

As noted in the previous contribution, some manuscripts contain evidence that allows us to trace their movement from Ethiopia and Eritrea to the UK or to identify some of their owners or readers. For instance, several manuscripts contain notes indicating that they were kept at Maqdalā, from where they must have been taken in 1868 after the battle between the armies of Emperor Tewodros II (r.1855–1868) and the British Empire (e.g. MSS Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Library, Or. 651; London, BL, Or. 480). In terms of ownership, a note on fol. 163r in MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 177 states that Lā'əka Māryām, son of Yosef, bought it from a *rāyās* named 'Abbā Fəre Krəstos. This purchase was witnessed by all the pilgrims in Ḥārat Zuwaylah and by the patriarch 'Abuna Gabrə'el, and took place when Yəshaq, son of Bizan, was *qāyām* in 'Abū Mīnā and Takla Haymānot was *qāyām* in Ḥārat Zuwaylah.

Investigating the manuscripts *in situ* has also improved our understanding of their production process. For example, in a few cases (MSS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 172; London, BL, Or. 794 and Or. 13156) we could observe that the pages featuring illustrations and text have different ruling patterns. This remarkable feature, which has attracted limited attention in art historical scholarship up to now, attests to careful planning of the layout of the manuscript to obtain visually distinct pages. Similarly, the presence of unfinished headpieces (MSS London, BL, Or. 706 and Or. 480) provides insight into the stratigraphy of the illumination process.

In some instances, we came across interesting data that was not, however, directly relevant to our project. MS London, BL, Or. 641, for instance, contains codicological units from different periods. In addition to an Early Solomonian miniature of the Virgin and Child on fol. 180r, discussed here, the manuscript also features a younger miniature of the same subject on fol. 8r which bears traces of gold pigment on the halo and garments of Mary. Equally noteworthy is the use of a reflective, silver-coloured ink over some letters of several other manuscripts: MSS London, BL, Add. 11,678 and Harl. 7629.¹¹

Finally, it is worth pointing out that, with regard to codicology, a majority of manuscripts preserved in UK collections were rebound at some point in time be-

Vitagrazia Pisani, description accessed on 15 June 2023, <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/ESaqg003/main>; MS 'Addi Qolq'āl Giyorgis, AQG-004 (digitized by the Ethio-SPaRe project), *Maṣḥafa gəbra ḥəmāmāt*, 'Book of the Rite of the Holy Week', early sixteenth century (?), catalogued by Vitagrazia Pisani, description accessed on 15 June 2023, <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/ESaqg004/main>. Cf. the reproductions in Nosnitsin 2013a, 69–71. For additional discussion of this style, see Heldman 1989 and Nosnitsin 2013b.

¹¹ Similar practice can be observed in MS Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Library, Or. 461, which likely dates from around the eighteenth century.

fore the twenty-first century. This inevitably creates limitations for the study of their original bindings. The order of the folios may also have been affected by these processes, as is possible regarding MS London, BL, Add. 11,678.

Handlist

I

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 169

Physical features: 314 × 202 × 72; 3 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–6v, 9r–285v; Unit 2, fols 7r–8v; Unit 3: fol. 286r–v); parchment (Units 1, 3), paper (Unit 2); ii + 286 folios,¹² 2 columns.

Dating: 1400–1500 (palaeography, Unit 1); 1600–1700 (palaeography, Unit 2); 1474–1475 (internal evidence, Unit 3).

Major works: (1) *Octateuch* (CAe 2083), fols 2ra–283vb.

Miniatures: (1) eagle, fol. 56vb; (2) St Peter the Apostle, fol. 285r (drawing); (3) St Peter the Apostle, fol. 285v.

Comments: the two apostles, one drawn, the other faintly coloured, appear to have been executed by different hands. The image on fol. 285v appears to be the older one. The one on fol. 285r, seemingly a direct mirroring of the image on the verso, was most likely traced from it. Both are shown holding keys and might be identified as Peter.¹³ This is a visually idiosyncratic manuscript and it is difficult to understand the relationship between images and text. Its table, discussed below and possibly executed by a different hand, as well as the eagle are uncommon features in Ethiopic manuscripts of the Early Solomonic period.

Headpieces: none.

¹² The folio number has been adopted from Cowley 1982, 70.

¹³ There are several layers of secondary captions and notes. In the image on the verso, the words ‘Image of <Pe>ter’ (*Sə’la <Pe>tron* (sic)) have been written in the halo. On the book held by the saint, the words ‘The Gospel in which he preaches through his word’ (*wangel za-yasabbək bātti ba-qālu*) have been written. Both could be interpreted as references to St Peter, taking the caption on the book as a hint to the tradition that the Gospel of Mark is based on oral reports by St Peter. The beginning of a genealogy for the apostle Andrew, ending with a supplication formula (‘*Āndəryās hawāryā ’əm* (sic) *nagada Robel walda Yonā* [...] *Ṣalotu wa-barakatu* [...]), has been written next to this figure. There is also a Latin caption that identifies the depicted saint as ‘S. Andreas Apostol<us>’ (cf. Cowley 1982, 72). The image on the recto has a secondary caption in Ge’əz identifying the figure as Peter (Ṣə’l (sic) ‘*Abuna Pētros*), as well as a Latin caption with the same identification (‘*Imago S. Petri*’).

Illuminated tables: fol. 1v (Fig. 1).

Comments: the frontispiece to this manuscript features an elaborate table of interlocking rows of circles that form crosses in the void areas between them. The folio has been ruled as if it was meant to receive two columns of text, but the space left between the two columns is wider than that of fol. 2r. About two thirds of the circles are filled with an excerpt from *Qalemāntos* (CAe 1957), which ends abruptly and, as noted by Cowley 1982, also appears as a reading in *Sa'ātāt* manuscripts.¹⁴ This frame is quite unlike anything found in other Ethiopic manuscripts and is possibly a reflection of the manuscript's diasporic context of production: fol. 1 was sown onto fol. 2 and it cannot be excluded that it originally derives from another manuscript.¹⁵ The closest parallels to its frame are found in Syriac manuscripts where the *capitula lectionum* are inserted in interlocking circles which recall the example from this manuscript.¹⁶

Additiones: fols 1r, 3v (intercolumnar space), 214va–b, 253va–b, 283vb–284vb.

Observations: this manuscript contains a series of different secondary notes. Liturgical instructions, written by various hands, are found in the upper margin of several folios (e.g. fols 2ra, 4va, 12va). In the intercolumnar space of fol. 3v, there is an Arabic note—while the major part is difficult to read but is clearly of Christian content, it seems to identify the writer (of the note?) as a Rābi' ibn Ilyās.¹⁷ A note on fol. 253va–b contains a Gə'əz list of books and items in the possession of a Church of John and a 'place' of Mary (*Beta Yoḥannəs wa-Məqwāma (sic) Māryām*), beginning with 'this Octateuch' (*zə-'Orit*). Fol. 253vb also contains a note in a younger hand that mentions a Takla Wald, who was 'appointed *qāyām* among the pilgrims' (*qāyām ba-mā'kala nagadəyān (sic) za-tasayma*), and repeats the previous list of books and items with certain variations. The lower part of fol. 283vb contains a Gə'əz note where the manuscript is presented as a donation by a Yəšḥaq to Jerusalem.¹⁸ The upper part of fol. 284r contains an Arabic

¹⁴ Cf. Cowley 1982, 70.

¹⁵ It is, however, worth noting that comparable geometric patterns are found carved in some pre-Solomonic churches; see, for instance, the examples in Salvo 2006, 93–95, figs 3–10.

¹⁶ See e.g. the example in MS Paris, BnF, Syr. 40, fols 3v–4r. A table reproduced in Leroy 1964, II, pl. 12.4, is especially similar to the Ethiopic example.

¹⁷ We extend our thanks to Farid El-Ghawaby, who assisted us in reading the Arabic note.

¹⁸ Fols 283v–284r, which contain several of the most important notes, have been reproduced in Cowley 1982, 70b. Yəšḥaq is also mentioned in a note on fol. 228r (cf. Cowley 1982, 71). As noted by Rahlfs 1918, the note on fol. 283vb was copied by Johann Michael Wansleben (cf. Rahlfs 1918, 177) into his manuscript copy of this manuscript, now MS Paris, BnF, Éth. 2, p. 122. For an edition and full English translation of the Ethiopic notes on fols 283vb–284vb, see Pisani forthcoming.



Fig. 1: Table of interlocking rows of circles. MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 169, fol. 1v, reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

note where the writer asks for prayers for Iṣḥaq (sic)—presumably the same person as the Yəṣḥaq mentioned in the preceding Gə‘əz note—and prays that his body be buried at Mount Zion, thus indicating another connection to Jerusalem. Then follows a note in Gə‘əz, which Cowley 1982 interprets as a continuation of the note on fol. 283vb,¹⁹ and a note in ‘negative’ script, for which we cannot exclude it having been executed using a woodblock, where (the same?) Yəṣḥaq says that the manuscript had been finished in the cathedral at Aksum (*beta gabaza ‘Aksum*) and expresses his wish not to be placed anywhere else than ‘the city of Zion, the city of Christ, the Church’. On fol. 284va–b, there is a note in Gə‘əz concerning books donated to Jerusalem, to Barya²⁰ and to the ‘children of Abyssinia’ (*daqiqā ḥabasi*) in Q^wəsq^wām (the latter to be handed on to *Qarānəyu* (sic) *la-Māryām* in Jerusalem, should the community in Q^wəsq^wām return to Ethiopia (*bəḥerəna*) or move to another place). The note ends abruptly on fol. 284vb. It does not mention the name of the donor, but as the hand is similar to that of the preceding notes, it was probably also written by Yəṣḥaq. Palaeographically, these notes seem to be coeval with the main text. Although the contents of the notes on fols 283vb–284rb are not always completely clear, they indicate that the manuscript travelled from Aksum to Jerusalem. Later, the manuscript evidently travelled from Jerusalem to Rome (where it was in the year 1651²¹) and from Rome to London, from whence it was transferred to Cambridge.²² Unit 3, currently a flyleaf, is a mutilated reused executive warrant granting Gundisalvus Fernandi de Eredia a church in the diocese of Agrigento (Sicily), which was vacant due to the death of Johannes Yciagyes (sic), former titular of the church. On the verso, the signature of the scribe appears as ‘Je de Calatambio’. A Veronese cleric by the name of Hieronimus de Calatambio is attested as *scriptor litterarum apostolicarum* from 1476 to 1478, thus during the pontificate of Sixtus IV.²³ Considering

¹⁹ The contents of these three lines, ignored by Cowley 1982, 71–72, cannot be easily connected to the preceding or the following notes and read as follows: ‘Lest our enemies say to (about?) us: “We have defeated them!”’, be wise! We have given you oxen—tend to the tilling, sow with labour and harvest in peace’ (ከመ፡ኢይበሉነ፡ጸላእትነ፡ሞእናሆመ፡ኩኑ፡ለባዊያነ፡ወሀብናካመ፡አባዕሪ፡ተገበሩ፡ሐሪሰ፡ወዘርኡ፡በጉዕትያ፡ወ(?)ተአርሩ፡በፍሥሐ< >).

²⁰ This toponym is also attested, again together with Q^wəsq^wām, in a note recording donations by Emperor Zar‘a Yā‘qob (r.1434–1468) in MS Saint Petersburg, Rossijskaja Nacionalnaja Biblioteka (= RNB), Dorn 612, fol. 162v; for the Gə‘əz text of the note, see Turaev 1906, 13.

²¹ Cf. Rahlfs 1918, 163–165.

²² The manuscript was used for the edition of Ruth by Nisselio 1660 (cf. Rahlfs 1918, 183) and the editions of Genesis by Petræo 1660 (only Gen 1–4), Dillmann 1853, and Edele 1995. As noted by Rahlfs 1918 (cf. also Zotenberg 1877, 1a), a copy of this manuscript in two volumes was produced in 1666 by Wansleben in Rome—these are currently kept in the BnF in Paris under the shelf-marks Éth. 1 and Éth. 2. For further details, see Bausi 2015.

²³ Frenz 1986, 346 (no. 936).

that the document states that it was written in the fourth year of a pontificate, it can thus be dated between 25 August 1474 and 24 August 1475.²⁴

Bibliography: Cowley 1982, 70–72; Edele 1995, 15–16.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BSLet169/main> (principal encoder Dorothea Reule).

II

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 171

Physical features: 335 × 230 × 14; 1 unit; parchment; 52 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1425–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Gospel of Luke* (CAe 2713, incomplete), fols 1ra–12rb; (2) *Gospel of John* (CAe 2715, incomplete), fols 14ra–52vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fol. 14r.

Comments: a curvilinear bichrome braid is enclosed in a simple rectangular frame with small loops on its corners. In most other manuscripts from this period, these loops end with split palmettes and the frame is crowned with additional elements. This example bears distant resemblance to some headpieces in the Psalter manuscript Paris, BnF, Éth. 12, copied during the reign of Emperor Zar'a Yā'qob (r.1434–1468).²⁵

Additions: fols 12r–14r.

Observations: the manuscript is incomplete at the beginning and at the end. The originally blank folios between the end of the *Gospel of Luke* and the beginning of the *Gospel of John* have served as space for several notes and records. On fols 12rb and 12vb, there is a note, slightly younger than the main text, that appears to refer to a conflict within the Ethiopian–Eritrean community of Jerusalem, urging the 'children of 'Abbā 'Ewostātewos' not to quarrel about Beta Qarānəyo and the guesthouse (*beta mə 'rāf*) and telling of an injustice that the 'Ewostāteans suffered during the celebration of the Eucharistic service. The part on fol. 12rb ends with

²⁴ We are grateful to Serena Ammirati and Marco Maiorino for providing us with this information.

²⁵ Cf. fols 46r, 151v.

apparent references to monasteries in Ethiopia and Eritrea.²⁶ Another note (fol. 12vb), older than the preceding one and whose beginning has been erased, is dated to the year ‘95’, presumably corresponding to AD 1442/1443 (according to the *‘Āmata samā ‘tāt*) or to AD 1518/1519 (according to the *‘Āmata məḥrat*).²⁷ It mentions Cyprus (*Qōpros*), Qayāmā and Qarānayo (the latter two in Jerusalem), as well as the following persons: *Rāyəs ‘Abbā ‘Abib*, *Maḥābus ‘Abbā ‘Asrāta Māryām*, and *Maggābi ‘Abbā Takla Hāymānot*. A third note (fol. 13ra–b), of similar age to the second one, records donations by Teyogolos, ‘son of ‘*Abuna ‘Ewostātewos* and ‘*Absādi* of Dabra Māryām’, to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the Mount of Olives (*Dabra Zayt*), Melchizedek (*Malkāsedeq*), the grave of St Mary (*maqābərə Māryām*), Beta Yoḥannəs, Q^wəs^wq^wām (*Q^wəs^wq^wam*, sic), Beta Ḥawāryāt, and the grave of Our Lord (*maqābərə ‘Igzī ‘ana*).²⁸ A fourth (fol. 13rb) records a transaction involving ‘*Abbā* Gabra Mikā‘el, Magdalāwit, Gabra ‘Amlāk, and (the community of) Qayāmā, witnessed by pilgrims and a series of named people: *Rāyəs Nəwāya Māryām*, Zamada Lewi, Şewā, Tewodros Mā‘tabo, ‘*Amata ‘Abib*, *Maḥbus ‘İndrəyās*, Takla ‘Iyasus, *Maggābi Tawalda Madḥən*—the language in parts of this note is difficult to understand. A fifth note (fol. 13va) was written by Fəre Madḥən and is directed to the pilgrims of Jerusalem; a sixth note (fol. 13va) records a donation of liturgical items to Qayāmā and Beta Yoḥannəs by Yoḥannəs, ‘son of ‘*Abuna Marqorəyos*. A seventh (fol. 13vb), also written by Fəre Madḥən but apparently in another hand, mentions a church constructed by ‘*Barsomā the Christian*’ (*Barsomā krəstiyānāwi*) in ‘Abū Mīnā in Cairo (*Dabra qəddus samā ‘t Minās ba-Məsṛ madinā*) and consecrated by the patriarch ‘*Abuna Yoḥannəs* in the name of St Mary, as well as the donation of a guesthouse (by the same Barsomā). The construction of the church took place in the year ‘147’ according to the *‘Āmata məḥrat* (i.e. AD 1570/1571),²⁹ said to have been the year of St Mark, and the consecration on 21 Ḥḍār. This could mean that the mentioned Coptic patri-

²⁶ The toponym **ሕዳጅ፡አባ፡** (*Ṣā ‘ād ‘abbā*) in the text could be identified with one of the monasteries named Ṣā ‘ādā ‘əmbā (cf. ‘Ṣā ‘ada Ḕmba’, *EAE*, IV (2010), 425a–425b (E. Sokolinskaja)); **ሃሌሎ፡** (*Hāllelo*) could be the monastery of Dabra Halleluṃyā in today’s Eritrea (cf. Cerulli 1947, 368); **ቃሮዳ፡** (*Qārodā*) could be the monastery with the same name in the vicinity of Gondar (cf. Huntingford 1989, see ‘Qaroda’ in the index); and **ማይ፡ምእራፍ፡** (*Māy Mə ‘rāf*) could perhaps be related to the saint ‘*Abbā Mātewos* of Dabra Māy Mə ‘rāf.

²⁷ The first date seems more likely, given the mention of a Təyogolos of Dabra Māryām in a subsequent note. See the following footnote.

²⁸ A Təyogolos of Dabra Māryām, ‘son of ‘Ewostatewos’, probably the same person mentioned, appears in a note in the manuscript MS St Petersburg, Rossijskaja Nacionalnaja Biblioteka, Dorn 612, fol. 162v, where he is said to have made a donation in Jerusalem during the reign of Emperor Ba ‘ada Māryām (r.1468–1478). See Turaev 1906, 13.

²⁹ Chaïne 1925, 165. According to this table, 147 ‘*Āmata məḥrat* was the year of St Luke.

arch was John XIV (in office 1570–1585).³⁰ The sixth and seventh notes appear to have been written by the same hand.

Bibliography: Cowley 1982, 73–74.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BSLet171/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

III

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 172

Physical features: 208 × 146 × c.35; 1 unit; parchment; iii + 79 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1350–1450 (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Didascalia* (CAe 1309, incomplete), fols 2r–79v.

Miniatures: (1) interlace cross, fol. 1v.

Comments: the cross, apparently damaged by water, has stepped arms and base, as well as a square at its centre. Arrowhead motifs, similar to those seen in Coptic manuscripts, radiate out from its corners. The page has a distinctive ruling pattern. In terms of shape, this cross can be compared with the empty jewelled crosses from Crucifixion scenes found in two illuminated Gospels from Dabra Ḥayq ʿĪstifānos and with some processional crosses, such as one documented by Michael Gervers in the church of Wəqro Māryām Nabalat.³¹ As a motif, interlace crosses appear in several Ethiopic manuscripts and in a number of Coptic and Syriac manuscripts, where they generally function as frontispieces.³² The earliest

³⁰ ‘John XIV’, *CE*, IV (1991), 1347a–1347b (S. Y. Labib).

³¹ For a reproduction and description of the two examples from Ḥayq ʿĪstifānos, see Balicka-Witakowska 1997, 9–11, reproduced as figs I–II. For an image of the processional cross, see Mazgaba Səəlat reference number: MG-2004.075:003.

³² A Coptic example, Paris, BnF, Copte 13, fol. 13, and the leaf from a Syriac manuscript in the Mar Saba monastery in Hah have been reproduced, together with an example from an Ethiopic codex (Paris, BnF, Éth. 15, fol. 126) in Balicka-Witakowska 1997, figs 28a–b. Other comparable, and earlier, Coptic examples are in New York, The Morgan Library & Museum, Ms M.593, fol. 1v, and Ms M.602, fol. 1v. Among the most noteworthy examples of such crosses, is a Coptic example that appears to have been inserted, at an undetermined point in time, at the beginning of Ethiopic Gospel book manuscript Paris, BnF, Éth. 34, fol. 6v, produced in Cairo in 1489–90. This latter manuscript exemplifies the circulation of people between Egypt and Ethiopia that contributed to the spread of similar motifs across the two regions. For other Ethiopic examples, see MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. or. fol. 117, discussed in the handlist for Germany (cf. Dege-Müller et al. 2022, 73), and MS St Petersburg, Rossijskaja Nacionalnaja Biblioteka, Dorn 609, fol. 150v.

examples of this motif in an Ethiopic manuscript may be the one found at the beginning of the Gospel book of Dabra Libānos of Ham.³³

Headpieces: fol. 2ra.

Comments: the simple interlace chain that fills this rectangular headpiece appears to have been executed by the same artist that painted the cross on fol. 1v.

Additions: fols 1r, 1v, 38va.

Observations: on fol. 1r, the title of the work is written in Greek (Διαταγὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων, ‘Constitutions of the Apostles’) and there is an erased note in Arabic (illegible) and some Gə‘əz scribbles. On both sides of the lower part of the cross on fol. 1v is a poorly legible note in Gə‘əz, which provides a version of the Ten Commandments that does not seem to agree perfectly with any of the biblical attestations. In the upper margin of fol. 38va, the following names have been written by a secondary hand: ‘*Abbā* Bak^wra Nədəngəl (sic), Pāwlos, Pēroṭros (sic). The manuscript has been paginated (156 pages, starting from fol. 3r) and every fifth folio has been foliated. According to Platt 1834, this was one of the manuscripts brought by William Jowett from Jerusalem to London ‘about ten years since’, i.e. around 1824.³⁴

Bibliography: Cowley 1982, 74–75.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BSLet172/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

IV

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 173

Physical features: 231 × 163 × 75; 1 unit; parchment; 197 folios; 1–2 columns.

Dating: 1300–1400 (palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Sa ‘ātāt* (CAe 1961, incomplete),³⁵ fols 1r–197v.

³³ Discussed in Bausi 1997, 16. It is difficult to date this image based on style alone for lack of comparative material in the Ethiopian context. The cross appears to have been executed by a different illustrator from the one who painted the arch above the *Epistle to Carpianus* (CAe 1349) on the opposite page, and which may date to the twelfth or thirteenth century.

³⁴ Platt 1834, viii.

³⁵ This *Sa ‘ātāt* includes, among other things, biblical readings, prayers entitled ‘*anbāro ‘əd* and ‘*ṣalota ḥaymānot*, a saint’s calendar (fols 189rb–193va), and the ‘*Ḥassāb rātu*’ (CAe 6291, incomplete, fols 193va–196vb). For a fuller description of the contents, see the catalogue.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: none.

Illuminated tables: fol. 4r–v.

Comments: a set of shadow tables (tables containing the measurement of shadows at different hours), one for each of the twelve principal months of the year, are enclosed in simple frames surmounted by red triangular arches.³⁶ The lines of the frames are unsteady and do not appear to have been executed with aid of any kind of instrument. It is difficult to ascertain whether the idea behind this visual arrangement may have been inspired by the Canon Tables found in Gospel books,³⁷ but the tradition of including calendrical data in tabular form in Ethiopia antedates the Early Solomonic period and is attested also in another of the Cambridge manuscripts (MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 177), as well as in other Ethiopic manuscripts from the Early Solomonic period.³⁸

Additiones: none.

Observations: it is unclear if fol. 1rv belongs to the same production unit as the rest of the manuscript. The manuscript contains numerous supplications for G^wāśāna 'Ēgzi' (e.g. fols 37va–b, 156rb, 168vb, according to the intercolumnar foliation).³⁹ Ethiopic quotation marks are used (e.g. fols 144vb–145va, 146va) and the word 'Ēgzi' *abəher* is written as two words: 'Ēgzi' *a bəher* (e.g. fols 126vb, 130va–131vb, 161va).

Bibliography: Cowley 1982, 75–82.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BSLet173/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

³⁶ For an introduction to Ethiopic shadow tables, see Neugebauer 1979, 209–215.

³⁷ Cf. the shadow tables fitted into what appear to be tables intended for the Eusebian Canons in the fifteenth-century (?) manuscript Qalāqəl Māryām Şeyon, Ethio-SPaRe, QS-007. For full reference, see fn. 9.

³⁸ See, for instance, the example presented in Nosnitsin 2022, the tables in MS Dabra Ḥayq 'Ēstifānos, EMMML 2063, fols 49r–50v, 54r–55r (AD 1495, on the dating see Getatchew Haile and Macomber 1982, 125), or those in Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, Ms Eth. 6, fol. 196r–v.

³⁹ The manuscript has been foliated twice: every fifth folio has been numbered with pencil in the upper right corner, and every folio has been numbered most often in the intercolumnar space. In the intercolumnar foliation, the number '139' has been given twice, and the subsequent folios lag one behind in comparison with the other foliation.

V

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 176

Physical features: 195 × 130–150 × ?;⁴⁰ 2 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–191v; Unit 2, fols 192r–225v); parchment; 225 folios; 1 column (fols 1r–101v, 220r–225v), 2 columns (fols 102r–219v).

Dating: 1400–1450 (palaeography, visual evidence, Unit 1); 1350–1450 (palaeography, Unit 2).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Mazmura Dāwit* (CAe 2000, acephalous), fols 1r–91r; (2) *Canticles of the Prophets* (CAe 1828), fols 92r–101v; (3) *Ḥassāb rətu* (CAe 6291), fols 102r–103v; (4) *Sa 'ātāt* (CAe 1961, incomplete), fols 105r–142rb.⁴¹ Unit 2: *Sa 'ātāt* (CAe 1961, incomplete), fols 192–225.⁴²

Miniatures: (1) half-page cross, fol. 10v.

Comments: the cross found after the end of Ps 30 in this manuscript may represent a later variation of the motif of the interlace crosses that appears in manuscripts such as MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 172.⁴³ Here too, a central cross is filled with interlacing, but it is less elaborate than that found in examples before the fifteenth century and the braiding is inserted in a non-interlaced cross with curvilinear angles at the intersection of the arms. Pointed patterns, like those seen in MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library,

⁴⁰ These measurements have been taken from the catalogue.

⁴¹ The *Sa 'ātāt* includes a series of prayers, biblical readings, including prayers entitled *'anbəro 'əd, šalota haymānot*, the prayer commencing *Rassəyanna 'Əgzi 'o dalləwāna nəksət 'afuna kama nəsabbəhakka ba-ləbb nəsuḥ* (CAe 3992, fols 145ra ff.), *liṭon* prayers (fols 156vb–159vb), the *'Anqaša bərhān* (CAe 1113, fols 169ra–173vb), similar Marian praises (fols 174ra–177va), the *Wəddāse 'əm-qāla nabiyāt* (CAe 4026, fols 177va–179ra), the *Qāl 'əm-wangela Luqās* (fols 179ra–vb), and the *Wəddāse Māryām* (CAe 2509, fols 181ra–191ra).

⁴² The collection, which appears to make up part of a *Sa 'ātāt* manuscript, includes, among other things, what appears to be *za-yənnaggəs* and *mastabq'ə* litanies (the *mastabq'ə* for the departed on fols 196ra–197ra corresponds to Velat 1966, 19–21; the *za-yənnaggəs* for the departed on fol. 194ra–vb is also found in the fifteenth-century *Sa 'ātāt* manuscript Miṭāq Takla Haymānot, EMMML 2109, fols 80rb–81ra, cf. Bahr 2023, 20–23), *Wəddāse Māryām* (CAe 2509, fols 205ra–216vb), *Wəddāse 'əm-qāla nabiyāt* (CAe 4026, fols 216vb–218va), *Qāl 'əm-wangela Luqās* (fols 218va–219va), a saints' calendar (fols 219vb–223v), and the *Ḥassāb rətu* (CAe 6291, incomplete, fols 223v–225v). For incipits of many of the texts, see the catalogue.

⁴³ A series of comparable crosses, executed by a much steadier hand, appear in a homiliary, variously assigned by authors to a period between the second quarter of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, kept at Bərbər Māryām, and discussed in Bureau 1976, 297 (pl. XLV); Chojnacki 2006, 134, figs 81a–b; and Mercier 2021, 149.

BFBS 172, appear around the corners of this example reinforcing the impression of a visual relationship between these types of crosses.

Headpieces: fols 11r, 31r, 54r, 78v, 79r, 92r, 101v, 105r, 114va, 123va, 129vb, 137ra, 145ra, 174ra, 175va, 176va, 177va, 180vb, 182rb, 190ra, 191ra.⁴⁴

Comments: the number of interlace patterns with which the manuscript is decorated is extraordinary. Many of the crosses set in the margins of the page have been decorated with finely executed interlace patterns, each one bearing a unique design.

Additiones: none.

Observations: the manuscript appears to consist of two units, both containing texts of the *Sa 'ātāt* genre and whose contents partly overlap. The use of yellow in the *cruces ansatae*, next to black and red, is noteworthy. The *Ḥassāb rātu* ' on fols 102r–103v appears to have been written by other hands. In the first unit, the name Yoṣṭinos is mentioned in supplications (e.g. fols 130va, 145rb–va, 152va), as well as the name Tanṣə'a Madḥən (fol. 152vb). Fols 142va–144vb, which contain a creed attributed to the 318 (Nicene) Fathers, are written by another hand and lack rubrication—at its end (fol. 144vb), it is said that the text was written by 'Abuna Bartalomewos (*zanta maṣḥafa ṣaḥafa 'Abuna Bartalomewos*) and the scribe Muse asks for the intercession of Marqorəyos, probably the patron. The text ends abruptly on fol. 152vb and a new text begins on fol. 153ra. Unit 2, which is possibly slightly older than Unit 1, is incomplete both at its beginning and its end.

Bibliography: Cowley 1982, 87–92.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BSLet176/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

VI

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 177

Physical features: 200 × 145 × ?; 2 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–164v; Unit 2, fols 165r–181v); parchment; 181 folios; 1–2 columns.

Dating: 1380–1400 (palaeography, internal evidence, Unit 1); 1350–1450 (Unit 2).

⁴⁴ Additionally, there are a number of small decorations at the beginning or near the end of the texts (fols 14r, 19r, 25r, 35r, 46v, 58v, 69r, 78r, 83v, 86v, 91r, 101r) and smaller cross-shaped decorations (fols 4r, 37v, 42v (bis), 58r, 72v, 75v, 81r, 90r).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Sa 'ātāt* including the Book of Psalms (CAe 1961, acephalous),⁴⁵ fols 1r–164v. Unit 2: (1) *Wəddāse Māryām* (CAe 2509), fols 165ra–180va; (2) *Wəddāse 'əm-qāla nabiyāt* (CAe 4026, incomplete), fols 180va–181vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 3r, 20r, 24r, 44v, 102r, 146va.

Comments: the borders of interlace in the manuscript have been executed with black and red and embellished with combinations of crowns, crosses, and quatre-foil elements that sometimes break the band up in two (e.g. fols 20r, 44v). Some strands of the interlaces have been left uncoloured. This was probably an intended effect, but one cannot rule out that the illustrator may have planned to add a colour at a later stage.

Illuminated tables: fols 163v–164r.

Comments: this volume features a series of twelve shadow tables. Each table is set within a red frame surmounted by a semicircle that encloses the name of a month. These tables have been more carefully executed than those in MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 173. Their frames are closer to examples found in some Syriac manuscripts rather than Ethiopic pieces.⁴⁶

Additions: fols 116r, 163r, 164v.

Observations: several hands were involved in the production of Unit 1 (see e.g. fols 21r–23v, where two hands have taken turns). The name Saraqa Bərhān is mentioned in supplications (fols 140va, 141rb, 142va–b, 143va) and on fol. 146rb, there is a colophon directed to Šaraqa Bərhān from the copyist, saying that he has written according to his ability and asking for the former's prayers. Perhaps, this

⁴⁵ The manuscript, clearly intended as a horologion, contains a combination of psalms taken from the Book of Psalms, biblical canticles, biblical readings, and prayers (including *mas-tabq'ə 'āt* and *liṭon*). Contrary to the situation in MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 176, described above, the psalms have been distributed in groups throughout Unit 1.

⁴⁶ E.g. MSS Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 1.40, fols 10v–16r; Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 1.58, fols 3v–11v; Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. sir. 268, fols 4r–5r; and, especially, Paris, BnF, Syr. 27, fol. 92r, where three rows of four tables frame the *capitula lectionum*. For reproduction of these and more similar examples, see Leroy 1964, II, figs 17.1–2, 18.1–4, 19.1–2.

could be the influential ‘*aqqābe sa ‘āt* of Dabra Ḥayq ‘Eṣṭifānos (d. 1403),⁴⁷ which would support the palaeographical dating of Unit 1 to the second half of the fourteenth century. Fol. 116r contains a secondary commemoration note (*tazkār*) about an ‘Emmēna Ṣəyon. The *additio* on fol. 163r calls the manuscript a ‘Psalter’ (*Dāwit*) and says that Lā’əka Māryām, son of Yosef, bought it from a *rāyās* named ‘*Abbā Fəre Krəstos* for ‘3 gold’ (3 *warq*). The purchase was witnessed by all the pilgrims in Ḥārat Zuwaylah (*Ḥarəzawelā*) in Cairo and by the patriarch ‘*Abuna Gabrə’el*, and took place when Yəṣḥaq, son of Bizan, was *qāyəm* in ‘*Abū Mīnā* (‘*Abu Minā*) and Takla Haymānot was *qāyəm* in Ḥārat Zuwaylah (*Ḥarəzawelā*).⁴⁸ *Rāyəs Fəre Krəstos* might be identified with the person mentioned in a note in MS Paris, BnF, Éth. 80 (fols 87v–88r), dated to 1515.⁴⁹ Taking into account that Fəre Krəstos may have been in office for more than a decade, this could mean that the patriarch mentioned in the note may be identified as Gabriel VII (in office 1525–1568).⁵⁰ Fol. 164v contains a secondary calendar in which the month names are given only in Arabic written with Ethiopic characters. Both the *additio* on fol. 163r and the calendar suggest that the manuscript passed through the Ethiopian community in Egypt at one point in its history. Unit 2 is separated from the first part of the manuscript by a shift in quire, in hand, and in content, but judging from the palaeography, it appears to be of approximately the same age as Unit 1 and it cannot be excluded that they belong to the same production unit.

Bibliography: Cowley 1982, 92–96.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BSLet177/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

VII

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 178

Physical features: 168 × c. 150 × 52; 2 units (Unit 1, three flyleaves; Unit 2, fols 1r–104v); parchment; ii + 104 + i folios; 2 columns.

⁴⁷ Cf. ‘*Šaraqa Bərhan*’, *EAE*, IV (2010), 537a (M.-L. Derat).

⁴⁸ Other references to the Ethiopian monastic community in Ḥārat Zuwaylah are found, for example, in MSS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Aeth. 25 and Paris, BnF, Éth. 78.

⁴⁹ Cf. Cerulli 1947, 420. *Rāyəs Fəre Krəstos* also appears in a secondary note in MS Paris, BnF, Éth. 35, fol. 2rb. On this note and, more generally, on the Ethiopian community in Cairo in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Ambu forthcoming.

⁵⁰ ‘Gabriel VII’, *CE*, IV (1991), 1133b–1135a (K. S. Samir).

Dating: 1600–1800 (palaeography, Unit 1); 1500–1550 (palaeography, Unit 2).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Miracles of Mary* (fragments of the miracles CAe 3613 and CAe 3920, incomplete), three flyleaves. Unit 2: (1) *Gospel of John* (CAe 2715), fols 1r–104v.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 6vb, 7rb, 9vb, 12rb, 14rb, 18vb, 20rb, 25vb, 26va, 27va, 33va, 39ra, 46rb, 55va, 62vb, 63vb, 64vb, 69ra, 80rb, 104v.

Comments: some of the headpieces are monochromatic, with outlines in red ink, while others are decorated with red, black, and yellow pigments.

Additions: none.

Observations: Unit 2 is profusely decorated with marginal ornaments and occasional *crucis ansatae*, mostly in red ink. Weekly readings are indicated in the upper margin of some folios. The flyleaves which make up Unit 1 (one bifolio at the beginning of the manuscript and one leaf at the end) derive from a younger manuscript and have been cut to fit the size of the manuscript. The end leaf is bound at a ninety-degree angle.

Bibliography: Cowley 1982, 96.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BSLet178/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

VIII

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 179

Physical features: 152 × 124 × 39; 1 unit; parchment; 110 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1500–1550 (palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Gospel of John* (CAe 2715), fols 1ra–110ra.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fol. 1r.

Comments: a tall rectangular headpiece has been placed above the text and filled with two sequences of monochrome interlace patterns. Split palmettes sprout from the top of these designs reaching the upper margin of the page. At the centre, a cross emerges among the efflorescence. Three vertical bands and a horizontal one filled with tendrils frame the two columns of text of the Gospel of John on all sides. We find comparable frames in manuscripts from the second half

of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In particular, some manuscripts in Gunda Gunde are decorated with monochrome frames bearing comparison with this example.⁵¹ It remains to be established whether these frames were supposed to be painted and whether there is any connection between this example and the monastic network of Gunda Gunde.

Additiones: fols 109v, 110r–v.

Observations: fol. 110r–v contains a calendric note with information about *matqə* ‘ and *’abaqte* (epact). Fol. 110r also contains, as an addition postdating the calendric note, a short paratext related to the Gospel of John, which is found regularly in later manuscripts, that provides information about where and in which language the Gospel was first written. Fol. 109v contains a description in French, erroneously stating that a note at the end of the manuscript provides the name of the copyist and the location where the manuscript was copied and qualifying its orthography as ‘fautive’. The upper part of fol. 110v contains another note in French: ‘Evangile (sic) de St Jean, no 10’.

Bibliography: Cowley 1982, 96–97.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BSLet179/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

IX

Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Ms 1894

Physical features: 341 × 204 × 104; 1 unit; parchment; i + 202 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1350–1425 (visual evidence, palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Four Gospels* (CAe 1560), fols 1r–202vb.

Miniatures: (1) Crucifixion without Crucified, fol. 5v (Fig. 2); (2) Holy Women at the Tomb, fol. 6r; (3) Ascension, fol. 6v; (4) Cross, fol. 8r; (5) St Matthew the Evangelist, fol. 8v; (6) St Mark the Evangelist, fol. 64v; (7) St Luke the Evangelist, fol. 107v; (8) St John the Evangelist, fol. 161v.

⁵¹ Cf. e.g. MS Gunda Gunde, GG-180, fol. 1r. Other monochrome headpieces are found, for instance, in a multiple-text manuscript dated to the reign of Emperor Zar’a Yā’qob and kept in the Dabra Māryām monastery in Eritrea (EMML 1480, fols 20r, 53r, 84r, 106r), catalogued in Getatchew Haile 1979, 599–603.



Fig. 2: Crucifixion without Crucified. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Ms 1894, fol. 5v, reproduced with the kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, accessed at the National Library of Scotland.

Comments: this manuscript provides valuable evidence for the circulation of the ‘short cycle’ in Ethiopic Gospel books. Despite its significance, it has received remarkably little scholarly attention.⁵² This may be due to a lack of detailed description and mistaken views about its dating; Richard Pankhurst, for example, mentions the manuscript in his survey of secular themes in Ethiopian art and attributes it to the fifteenth or sixteenth century.⁵³ In fact, it seems more likely that the manuscript is of the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, with its miniatures being both stylistically and iconographically close to works associated with those earlier centuries.⁵⁴ The evangelists Matthew and Luke stand before a pattern of crosses in squares framed by octagons that were drawn with the aid of a chequered ruling pattern, used only for these two images. Mark is shown seated under an arch, while John stands within a trefoil shape.⁵⁵ The monochrome interlace cross probably predates the sixteenth century but may not be contemporaneous with the miniatures.

Headpieces: fol. 14r.

Illuminated tables: fols 1r–5r, 7r–v.

Comments: the manuscript contains a sequence of arches resting on columns with curtains tied to them that were clearly meant to contain the Eusebian prefatory materials; however, the expected texts were never added, and instead, they have either been left blank or secondary notes have been added (see Observations below). The arches are surrounded by floral and animal elements with some accompanying captions. The sequence, now in disorder, would have probably

⁵² For instance, its illuminations are not mentioned in the list of ‘Short-Cycle Gospels’ in non-Ethiopic collections recently provided in Mercier 2021, 88, fn. 6, nor in the list of Ethiopic miniatures of the Tempetto given in Gnisci 2020a, 202, nor in the in-depth study of the motif of the Crucifixion without the Crucified by Balicka-Witakowska 1997.

⁵³ Pankhurst 1991, 48.

⁵⁴ Iconographically, the miniatures share certain features with the other known examples of the short cycle in Ethiopic Gospel manuscripts; see, for instance, the examples discussed in Heldman 1979, Lepage 1987, Balicka-Witakowska 2017, and Mercier 2021, 88–92. Stylistically, the closest parallels are those found in the Gospel book of Dabra Šarābi, which has not been the object of an in-depth study but has been ascribed to the late fourteenth century, see Gervers 2013, 56; Gnisci 2015a, 568; Gnisci 2020a, 72.

⁵⁵ A comparable sequence of backgrounds for the Evangelist portraits is found in the Dabra Ma’ār Gospels (MS Dabra Ma’ār Giyorgis, EMDA 00463), reproduced in Lepage 1987, 162–63, figs 13–17, though in this manuscript both Mark and Luke are placed under an arch.

started with the frame on fol. 7r, which has a pair of peacocks (*tawos*, sic) in profile, and ended with the Tempietto currently on fol. 5r.⁵⁶

Additiones: fols 1r–v, 2v, 4r–v, 7v, 12r–14r, 73r, 74r–v.

Observations: several secondary notes (fols 1v, 4r–v, 7v, 74r–v) connect the manuscript with the monastery of Māryām Māy ʾAbʾa in Təgrāy and with its founder, the fourteenth–fifteenth-century ruler ʾAkḥadom.⁵⁷ The note that appears on fol. 4r and repeated in part on fol. 1v is also found on fol. 64v in a *Four Gospels* manuscript currently kept at Māryām Māy ʾAbʾa and digitized by the Ethio-SPaRe project in 2011 as BQM-004⁵⁸—this might suggest that the Edinburgh manuscript was still in Māryām Māy ʾAbʾa in the middle of the nineteenth century, when it was in all likelihood purchased by Charles McInroy, a member of the British expedition to Ethiopia of 1867–1868.⁵⁹ The note on fol. 2v mentions the name ʾAmata Ləʾul. The note on fol. 4v contains blessings for *Daḡḡ ʾazmāč Sabʾa Gādəs / Sabʾa Gādās*, i.e. Sabāgādis Waldu, governor of Təgrāy from 1822–1831, another indication of the manuscript’s presence in Təgrāy in the early nineteenth century. The note on fol. 7v mentions the name Takkā Krəstos. Fols 73–74 constitute a loose, misplaced bifolio, containing, on fol. 73r–v, the *Synopsis of Classes* (CAe 1548), which often belongs to the materials collected at the beginning of Gospel books, and, on fol. 74r–v, a series of commemoration notes (*tazkār*). The long, bipartite note on fol. 74v, which, among other things, includes instructions for the commemoration of ʾAkḥadom, was written by ʾAmata Ləʾul, daughter of Fəre Mikāʾel. Fol. 74v also contains a note written in the first person, purportedly by ʾAkḥadom, but due to its placement on the folio, it appears to be later than the notes ordering the celebration of his commemoration (this may be a copy of an earlier note found elsewhere).

⁵⁶ There are numerous examples of this motif in Ethiopic Gospels of this period. In the Edinburgh example, instead of a curved line, used to represent the domed roof of the tholos, the artist has painted an entablature. The most similar parallel is the one in the Dabra Šarābi Gospel book, reproduced in Gnisci 2020a, 80, fig. 9.

⁵⁷ On ʾAkḥadom, see ‘Akḥadom’, *EAE*, I (2003), 166b (Tsegay Berhe G. Libanos). A reference to him is also found in the fifteenth-century (?) manuscript Bərbar Māryām, EMLL 9092, fols 10va–11ra. In the colophon of the manuscript ʾAstit Kidāna Məhrat, EMLL 2514, fol. 234va, ʾAkḥadom is described as being active during the reign of Emperor Dāwit (r.1382–1413). Cf. Dege-Müller forthcoming.

⁵⁸ Cf. Nosnitsin 2013a, 152. Full reference to the manuscript: MS Māryām Māy ʾAbʾa, BQM-004 (digitized by the Ethio-SPaRe project), ‘*Arbāʾtu Wangel*, ‘Four Gospels’, first half of the nineteenth century, catalogued by Stéphane Ancel, description accessed on 12 January 2023, <https://betamasasheft.eu/manuscripts/ESbqm004/main>.

⁵⁹ Cf. Laing 1871.

Bibliography: Laing 1871; National Library of Scotland 1966, 14.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/NLSms1894/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

X

Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Library, Or. 651

Physical features: 237 × 212 × c.80; 2 units (Unit 1, fol. i (loose leaf before fol. 1); Unit 2, fols 1r–217v); parchment; i + 217 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1500–1650? (visual evidence, palaeography, Unit 1); 1600–1800 (Unit 2).

Major works: Unit 1: none. Unit 2: (1) New Testament Epistles (CAe 1352), fols 3ra–145vb; (2) *Acts of the Apostles* (CAe 1019), fols 147ra–193rb; (3) *Revelation of John* (CAe 3179), fols 194ra–215vb.

Miniatures: (1) King David playing the *baganā*, fol. i.

Comments: the image on the loose folio may have come from a leporello. On the right-hand side, possible traces of sewing stations are visible. It is difficult to date this image: some features of the image, such as the poses of the figures, point to an earlier date, while others, such as the patterns on King David's tunic, to a later one. The handwriting of the caption, which may have been added at a later stage, suggests a post-1500 date. It is also possible that an early miniature was retouched at a later stage, possibly when the miniature was inserted in its current context.

Headpieces: none.

Additions: fols 2v, 3r, 146v.

Observations: it is unclear how and when Unit 1 ended up within the codex. The shelf-mark 'OT Ms 651' is written on the back of fol. i, indicating that it belonged to the manuscript when it received the current shelf-mark. A note on fol. 3r indicates that at least Unit 2 at one point in its history belonged to the Church of Madhane 'Ālam at Maqdalā. Notes on fols 2v and 146v indicate that the manuscript has also belonged to the Church of Ba'atā in Gondar. According to an unpublished handlist of the collection, the manuscript was transferred from the New College library to the university library in August 1991.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Edinburgh University Library n.d., accessed on 19 October 2023.

Bibliography: Edinburgh University Library n.d., 19 (accessed on 19 October 2023); Pankhurst 1991b, 48, 58.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/EULorMS651/main> (principal encoder Eugenia Sokolinski).

XI

*Leicester, University of Leicester Library, Ms 210⁶¹

Physical features: 172 × 140 × 40; 1 unit; parchment; 90 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1400–1480 (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Gadla Qirqos* (CAe 1488), fols 2ra–26ra; (2) *Gadla Gabra Krastos* (CAe 1450), fols 27ra–52vb; (3) *Homily by Yoḥannas of Aksum on the life of St Yəshāq* (CAe 1285), fols 53rb–86va; (4) *Prayer of the Ninth Hour* (CAe 3128), fols 87ra–89vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r–v, 2r, 27r, 53rb.

Comments: the bands are filled with an interlace braid and surmounted by split palmettes intertwined with rhomboid and triangular elements. The opening band also has three vertical bands that frame the text. This type of decoration is attested already in manuscripts dating to the mid-fifteenth century, including MS London, BL, Or. 650, discussed below, and MS Dabra Ḥayq ʿĒṣṭifānos, EML 1827 (containing the *Gadla samāʿtat*) dated to 1447–1448.⁶²

Additions: fols 26rb, 26va–b, 89vb.

Observations: original supplications mention the name Bak^wra Ṣəyon (fols 52vb, 70vb, 72rb, 86va) and the scribe Nəwāya Māryām (fols 26rb, 86va). A subscription partly written over an erasure on fol. 26ra mentions the name of an owner Krastos Sənā. She is also mentioned in a secondary ownership note on fol. 89vb, where it is said that she acquired the book by her own means ([...] *za-ʿatrayatto ba-nəwāyā*). An *additio* on fol. 26va–b contains a genealogy of the tribes of the Apostles (CAe 5849), similar, but not identical, to those published by Perruchon 1897 and Grébaud 1913. According to a sticker on the back wooden board, the manuscript was part of the Robjohns bequest to the University of Leicester Library, which took place in 1929.⁶³

⁶¹ We thank Vitagrazia Pisani for her contribution to the description of this manuscript.

⁶² Cf. MS Dabra Ḥayq ʿĒṣṭifānos, EML 1827, fols 2r, 10v, 20v, 48v, 67r and 141v.

⁶³ On the Robjohns bequest in general, see Simmons 1959, 119–120.

Bibliography: Pearson 1971, 117–118.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/Leicester210/main> (principal encoder Vitagrazia Pisani).

XII

London, British Library, Add. 11,621

Physical features: 157 × 115 × 53; 2 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–159v; Unit 2, fol. 160r–v); parchment; 160 folios; 1–2 columns.

Dating: 1450–1550 (palaeography, visual evidence, Unit 1);⁶⁴ 1550–1700 (palaeography, Unit 2).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Mazmura Dāwit* (CAe 2000), fols 1r–123r; (2) *Canticles of the Prophets* (CAe 1828), fols 123r–136r; (3) *Song of Songs* (CAe 2362), fols 136v–144r; (4) *Anqaša bārḥān* (CAe 1113), fols 144va–149rb; (5) *Waddāse Māryām* (CAe 2509), fols 149rb–159vb. Unit 2: (1) readings from the *Gospel of Mark* and the *Gospel of John*, fol. 160ra–va.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 41r, 81v, 123r.

Comments: the headpieces appear to have been executed by the same hand and are unfinished. The ones on fols 41r and 123r are only partly coloured in red, that on fol. 81v (which is placed in the upper margin, although space was left for it within the text block) is only outlined in black. The band on fol. 123r is compressed in a small amount of space in the upper margin, so it is possible that the addition of this type of decoration had not been planned by the scribe and was added at a slightly later point in time.⁶⁵ Yet another set of crude secondary headpieces has been added to some folios (fols 39v, 40r).

Additions: fols 9r–18r, 160va, 160vb.

Observations: at one point in its history, at least part of the manuscript belonged to Nəwāya Šəllus, as witnessed by a secondary possession note on fol. 160ra (Unit 2). The same fol. 160v additionally contains two brief notes, one of which includes the name ʿElyās ʿəbn Gewārgis (ኤልያስ፡ ሕብ፡ ጊዮርጊስ፡) and one which

⁶⁴ Gleave 1951 dates the manuscript to the seventeenth century (Gleave 1951, xxxi); however, such a late date is not supported by our palaeographical analysis.

⁶⁵ They can be compared with some of the headpieces—which are more elaborate but similarly executed—in MS Gunda Gunde, GG-094, fols 123r, 151r (<https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/138152>; accessed 31 May 2023), containing 1–2 Chronicles and 2–3 Ezra.

seems to mention Germany and London (ጥርግጊ፣ ለገዳ፣). The other *additiones* consist of a series of computational notes in the upper margin, partly erased (fols 9r–18r) and an incomplete prayer for expelling demons (fol. 160vb). According to a note on one of the front paper flyleaves, the manuscript was purchased at Evans's on 5 July 1839 (lot 1345).

Bibliography: Dillmann 1847, 2b–3a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasheft.eu/manuscripts/BLadd11621/main> (principal encoder Massimo Villa).

XIII

London, British Library, Add. 11,622

Physical features: 160 × 122 × 23; 3 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–4v; Unit 2, fols 5r–51v; Unit 3, fols 52r–65v); parchment; 65 folios; 1–2 columns.

Dating: 1600–1700 (palaeography, Unit 1); 1450–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence, Unit 2); 1600–1700 (palaeography, Unit 3).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) excerpt of a praise to Our Lady Mary (incomplete), fols 1ra–2rb; (2) short rhymed poems to Our Lady Mary, fols 3r–4v. Unit 2: (1) end of the *Canticles of the Prophets* including a standard stichometric note concerning the Psalter (CAe 1828, incomplete), fol. 5r; (2) prayer to Jesus Christ, fols 5va–9va; (3) a version of the *Dates of the Martyrdoms of the Apostles* (CAe 5835), fol. 9va–b; (4) *Song of Songs* (CAe 2362), fols 10r–17v; (5) *Waddāse Māryām* (CAe 2509), fols 18r–42vb; (6) *Ta`amməhotā la-Māryām* (CAe 4298), fols 43ra–51va. Unit 3: (1) hymns to Jesus Christ, beginning with the ‘*Nə`u nəbki*’ (CAe 6445), fols 52ra–63va; (2) *Malkə`a həməməta masqal* (CAe 2741, incomplete), fols 63vb–65va.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fol. 10r.

Comments: red monochrome band filled with irregular interlacing.

Additiones: fols 51vab, 61rb, 63va.

Observations: the name Səmə'on is mentioned in supplications in Unit 2 (fols 43va, 45ra, 46ra, 47va, 48va, 50va, 51va). Fol. 51va–b contains the beginning of a prayer by a secondary hand. Unit 3 contains a colophon stating that the manuscript belonged to Takla Hāymānot and that it was written by Mazgaba Dāwit (fol. 63va). Latin translations of the titles of the texts have been written in the upper margin of each incipit page. Fol. 61rb, furthermore, contains an incomprehensible

note, possibly in Latin. According to a note on an unfoliated front parchment fly-leaf, the manuscript was purchased at Evans's on 5 July 1839 (lot 1346).

Bibliography: Dillmann 1847, 52b–53a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLadd11622/main> (principal encoder Massimo Villa).

XIV

London, British Library, Add. 11,678

Physical features: 190 × 150 × 20; 2 units (Unit 1: fol. 1r–v; Unit 2: fols 2r–17v); paper (Unit 1), parchment (Unit 2); 17 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1434–1468 (internal evidence).

Major works: (1) Collection of prayers (incomplete), fols 2r–17v.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 5rb (almost erased), 13vb, 14ra, 14rb, 14vb, 16ra.

Comments: each headpiece consists of a frame filled with a single braid of interlace. They are inserted between the lines (the one on fol. 16ra takes up just half a line). Spaces in between the text might have been reserved for additional headpieces (fols 2vb, 7rab).

Additions: fol. 3ra.

Observations: as noticed by Dillmann 1847, fols 2–3 (a bifolio that currently makes up the first quire) originally constituted the middle bifolio of the current second quire (fols 4–9) and thus belong between fols 6v and 7r. As fols 4r and 17v have been most strongly affected by dirt, it may be presumed that the misplacement of these folios took place relatively late in the manuscript's history. A supplication in the first person singular (fol. 6ra) suggests that Emperor Zar'a Yā'qob (r.1434–1468) was the owner or patron of the manuscript; on fol. 16rb, there is another supplication for the same emperor in the third person. A marginal note on fol. 3rb, of similar age as the main text, states 'Of 'Āmdəḥəṣān (sic)', which might indicate a (later) owner of the manuscript. Rubricated letters, and part of the headpieces, have occasionally been covered with a reflective, silver-coloured coating (e.g. fols 3vab, 6ra, 9vb–10ra, 10va, 16ra).⁶⁶ A note in Latin on

⁶⁶ A similar feature is found in MS London, BL, Harl. 7629 (see below) and in MS Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Library, Or. 461, the latter likely dating from around the eighteenth century.

fol. 1v states that the manuscript derives ‘[e]x codicibus Joannis Angeli Ducis ab Altaemps’ (Giovanni Angelo d’Altemps, d. 1620) and erroneously identifies it as a psalter manuscript. According to a note on the recto of the front paper flyleaf, the manuscript was purchased at Evans’s in 1840 (lot 213).

Bibliography: Dillmann 1847, 53a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasheft.eu/manuscripts/BLadd11678/main> (principal encoder Massimo Villa).

XV

London, British Library, Add. 16,192

Physical features: 224 × 165 × 450; 4 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–2v; Unit 2, fols 3r–22v; Unit 3, fols 23r–94v; Unit 4, fols 95r–101v); parchment; 101 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1375–1450 (palaeography, Unit 1); 1600–1700 (palaeography, Unit 2); 1400–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence, Unit 3); 1400–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence, Unit 4).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) Introduction to the *Miracles of Mary* (CAe 3584), fols 1ra–2vb. Unit 2: (1) *Canon of al-Mu’allaqa* (CAe 1968), fols 3ra–8vb; (2) *Mysteries revealed by Jesus Christ to John son of Zebedee before his Assumption*, fols 8vb–21r. Unit 3: (1) *Miracles of Mary* (CAe 2384), fols 23ra–94vb. Unit 4: (1) *Homily in honour of the Archangel Gabriel* (CAe 1284, incomplete), fols 95ra–101vb.

Miniatures: (1) Virgin and Child, fol. 94v.

Comments: the Virgin and Child are flanked by two angels holding swords. The hand betrays several uncertainties. The scene has only partly been painted (e.g. the wings and swords of the angels are just outlined) which raises the question of whether this colouring is later than the actual drawing. Stylistically, the image is comparable to paintings attributed to the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁶⁷

Headpieces: fols 23r, 95r.

⁶⁷ Cf. Chojnacki 1983, 210, 214, figs 75–76, 81–82, but also MS London, British Library, Or. 507, discussed below. Christ’s nimbus is similar to no. 24 in the list of types published in Chojnacki 1990, 18, assigned to the seventeenth century.

Comments: the headpieces may not have been painted by the same hand and may not have been created by the artist of the miniature. On fol. 23r a simple red frame outlined in black is topped by a rhomboid shape framed by two small split palmettes. The interior of the frame is filled by four intertwined strands of interlace (red and unpainted), while the voids between them are coloured in black. Some additional decorative elements have been added at a later stage (possibly when the miniature was drawn).

Additiones: fol. 94rb.

Observations: a secondary ownership note mentions a Tawalda Madḥən and his wife (fol. 94rb). According to a stamp on one of the front paper flyleaves, the manuscript was presented by the Church Missionary Society in 1846, presumably to the British Museum.

Bibliography: Dillmann 1847, 47b.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLadd16192/main> (principal encoder Massimo Villa).

XVI

London, British Library, Harl. 5471

Physical features: 112 × 86 × 24; 1 unit; parchment; i + 58 + ii folios;⁶⁸ 1 column.

Dating: 1400–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Fəṭḥat za-wald* (CAe 1398), fols 1r–3v; (2) Ps 119 from the *Mazmura Dāwit* (CAe 2000), fols 4r–14r; (3) *Song of Songs* (CAe 2362), fols 14v–26r; (4) *ʿAnqaša bərḥān* (CAe 1113), fols 26v–38v; (5) *Prayer of Mary on Golgotā* (CAe 2246), fols 39r–58r.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 4r, 14v, 16v, 18r, 21v (secondary?), 25r, 26v, 39r.

Comments: the headpieces appear coeval with the text. They consist in simple horizontal bands filled with two or three strands of interlace. The one on fol. 18r is left uncoloured. The one on fol. 21v is the only band to be filled with a pattern of broken lines rather than interlace. It could be posterior and the work of a different illustrator.

⁶⁸ Foliation was only carried out to fol. 58, ignoring one leaf in the beginning and two at the end.

Additiones: none.

Observations: the name ʾArməyās is mentioned in a supplication note (fol. 58r). The front parchment flyleaf features a date: 7 February AD ‘1723/4’ in Latin.

Bibliography: Dillmann 1847, 52a–52b.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLharl5471/main?hi=Harl> (principal encoder Massimo Villa).

XVII

London, British Library, Harl. 7629

Physical features: 184 × 175 × 55; 3 units (Unit 1: fols 1r–7v (Latin); Unit 2: fols 8r–191r; Unit 3: fols 191v–194v); paper (Unit 1), parchment (Unit 2, Unit 3); i + 194 folios; 1 column (fols 1r–7r, 191v–194v), 2 columns (fols 8r–191r).

Dating: 1800–1900? (Unit 1); 1414–1429/30? (internal evidence, Unit 2); after 17 June 1555 (historical evidence,⁶⁹ Unit 3).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) Latin translation of the beginning of ʾArgānona wəddāse, fols 1r–7v. Unit 2: (1) ʾArgānona wəddāse (CAe 1146), fols 8r–191ra. Unit 3: (1) *Confessio Claudii* (CAe 1252), fols 191v–193v.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 8r, 102ra.

Comments: the elaborate monochrome frame on fol. 8r is filled with irregular interlace patterns and surrounds the text on all four sides. It may have been trimmed at the top. It recalls examples from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁷⁰

Additiones: none.

Observations: the name Yəṣṣḥaq, possibly the emperor (r. 1414–1429/30), is mentioned in supplication notes (fols 18vb, 19ra (bis), 20ra, 41va, 58va, 104ra, 104va, 105ra, 190vb–191ra). The rubrication is occasionally overlaid with an unusual and unidentified pigment, which could possibly be silver ink (compare e.g.

⁶⁹ See Observations.

⁷⁰ E.g. MSS ʾAnkobar ʾAgāmarat ʾAbbo, EMMML 2264, fol. 3r; ʾAnkobar (Qobbo) Gʾəguf Mikāʾel, EMMML 3515, fol. 2r.

fols 10va, 43rb, 153rb).⁷¹ On the history of this manuscript, see Ullendorff 1987. Unit 3 could be the original manuscript of the *Confessio Claudii* by Emperor Galāwdewos (r.1540–1559). According to one interpretation of his royal chronicle, Galāwdewos had a religious treatise written and bound into an existing manuscript;⁷² this could be taken as a reference to the present manuscript. The colophon of the *Confessio Claudii* (cf. fol. 193v in this manuscript) dates the text to 23 Sane (= 17 June) of the year 1555 ‘after the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ’, which has been interpreted as a reference to the Common era (AD). Unit 1 is a Latin translation of the beginning of the *ʿArgānona wəddāse* (the translated text corresponds to the Gəʿəz text on fols 8ra–21va), which might have been written by August Dillmann, who catalogued this manuscript.

Bibliography: Dillmann 1847, 52a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLharl7629/main?hi=Harl> (principal encoder Massimo Villa).

XVIII

London, British Library, Or. 480

Physical features: 461 × 354 × 97; 1 unit; parchment; ii + 243 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1400–1450 (palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Octateuch* (CAe 2083), fols 2ra–241vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 50r, 88r, 120r, 160r, 196r, 218rb.

Comments: some of the elaborated headpieces seem to be unfinished (fols 2r, 50r, 196, 128rb). The finished headpieces have been trimmed at the top (fols 88r, 120r, 160r). On fols 2r and 196r, liturgical indications for reading have been inserted into the ornaments.

Additions: fol. 119va–b.

Observations: an additional note on fol. 119va–b indicates a Beta ʿĪsrāʿel (Ethiopian Jewish) ownership of this manuscript.⁷³ In addition to the liturgical indications for readings in the headpieces, others are found in the intercolumnar space

⁷¹ A similar feature is found in MS London, BL, Add. 11,678 (see above) and in MS Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh Library, Or. 461, the latter likely dating from around the eighteenth century.

⁷² Ullendorff 1987, 163; Solomon Gebreyes 2019, I, 84.

⁷³ Cf. Dege-Müller 2020, 33.

(e.g. fols 11r, 16r, 21r, 26r). At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ʿĀlam at Maqdalā (fol. 2r). According to a stamp on fol. ii.r, this manuscript was presented, presumably to the British Museum, by the Secretary of State for India in August 1868.

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 1a–b.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient480/main> (principal encoder Eugenia Sokolinski).

XIX

London, British Library, Or. 501

Physical features: 374 × 266 × 95; 1 unit; parchment; 195 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1400–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Book of Isaiah* (CAe 1672), fols 1r–61vb; (2) *Ascension of Isaiah* (CAe 1271), fols 62ra–69vb; (3) *Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets* (CAe 1315), fols 70ra–122vb; (4) *Book of Ezekiel* (recension Eth I, CAe 5801), fols 123ra–176rb; (5) *Life of Ezekiel* (CAe 4334), fol. 176rb–vb; (6) *Book of Daniel* (CAe 1259), fols 177ra–194vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 62r, 70r, 79v, 86vb, 92rb, 97r, 99rb, 101va, 104rb, 109rb, 119va, 123r, 177r, 194va (secondary?).

Comments: the manuscript contains a set of lavishly decorated frames that are filled with a combination of interlace, floral and geometric patterns and embellished with crosses and/or split palmettes. Some of the bands frame the text on all four sides and have small eyes drawn into the empty squares at their bottom (e.g. fols 1r, 70r; cf. also fol. 123r).

Additions: fols 194v–195r.

Observations: the use of *cruces ansatae* varies depending on the parts of the manuscript: whereas they mostly appear profusely, they are used much more sparingly in the *Ascension of Isaiah* (fols 62r–69v) and the *Book of Daniel* (fols 177r–194v, although these texts also include some pages with a profuse use of *cruces ansatae*), perhaps reflecting the usage of the *Vorlage*. At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ʿĀlam at Maqdalā (fol. 2r).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 19b–20a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient501/main>
(principal encoder Eugenia Sokolinski).

XX

London, British Library, Or. 507

Physical features: 357 × 274 × 85; 1 unit; parchment; 149 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1480–1530 (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Four Gospels* (CAe 1560), fols 3ra–147va.

Miniatures: (1) St Matthew the Evangelist, fol. 1v; (2) St Mark the Evangelist, fol. 46v; (3) St Luke the Evangelist, fol. 73v; (4) St John the Evangelist, fol. 114v.

Comments: the portraits of the Evangelists are painted against the neutral background of the parchment. A secondary hand added their names next to their portraits. Their style is comparable to that of MS London, BL, Or. 641 (see below) and other artworks produced after the arrival of European artists in Ethiopia. This suggests that the miniatures belong to a period around or after the 1480s.⁷⁴

Headpieces: fols 2r, 47r, 74r, 115r.

Comments: the elaborate headpieces on fols 2r, 47r and 115r surround the text on all four sides. A cross filled with interlace divides the text block into four squares. The headpieces on fols 74r and 115r appear to be unfinished.

Additions: fols 1v, 45vb, 73v, 114v, 147va–b, 148ra–149va.

Observations: at the end of the manuscript (fol. 147vb), there is an ownership note by Takla Giyorgis, which might be coeval with the production of the manuscript. There are also several later notes, including an ownership note by Māḥtama Krəstos, who donated the manuscript to a church named Mikā'el (fol. 45vb), and later notes by Mātewos and Kənfā Mikā'el (fols 1v, 73v, 114v, 147vab). The *Gospel of John* has secondary marks for daily readings in the upper margin. According to a stamp on fol. 1r, this manuscript was presented, presumably to the British Museum, by the Secretary of State for India in August 1868.

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 23ab.

⁷⁴ For some comparable examples, see Chojnacki 1985, 192, 204–205, figs 180, 184, 188.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient507/main> (principal encoder Eugenia Sokolinski).

XXI

London, British Library, Or. 525

Physical features: *c.*165 × *c.*137 × 62; 3 units (Unit 1: fols 1r–47v; Unit 2: 48r–107v; Unit 3: fols 108r–109v); parchment; 109 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1500–1600 (palaeography, Unit 1); 1425–1500 (palaeography, Unit 2); 1800–1900 (palaeography, Unit 2).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Sayfa Šəllāse* (CAe 2296), fols 1ra–45vb. Unit 2: (1) *Gospel of John* (CAe 2715), fols 48ra–107v. Unit 3: (1) unidentified prayers, fols 108v–109r.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 45rb (tailpiece), 48r.

Comments: the headpiece on fol. 1r has a pattern of interlocking diagonal lines. The one on fol. 48r, in the older unit, is elaborate and consists of thin bands filled with a single twist. It frames the text on all four sides and has a pseudo-curtain hanging between the two text columns.

Additiones: fols 45va–46va, 46va–47rb, 47v, 48r.

Observations: Unit 1 has been heavily redacted and many words, even phrases, have been scratched out. Fol. 44 was cut in half. On several folios (fols 18rb, 24ra, 28rb, 29ra–b, 42va–b, 45rb), the name has been scratched out of the supplications. The *additio* on fols 45va–46va is an excerpt from Ps 90, followed by a *Prayer for the Eucharist* (CAe 4912) on fols 46va–47rb. Fol. 47v contains several *additiones*, including the *Nicene Creed* (CAe 3308). Above the headpiece at the beginning of Unit 2 (fol. 48r), there is a supplication note mentioning the name Masanqo Dəngəl. Unit 3 is younger and bound into the codex upside down. At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ‘Ālam at Maqdalā (fol. 47v).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 30b–31a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient525/main> (principal encoder Dorothea Reule).

XXII

London, British Library, Or. 543

Physical features: 236 × 167 × 61; 1 unit; parchment; 112 folios; 1 column.

Dating: 1450–1500 (palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Gəṣṣāwe* (CAe 1932), fols 1r–112r.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 12v, 19v, 27r, 34v, 40v, 47r, 59r, 64v, 70v, 90r.

Comments: the headpieces present different features with some being more elaborate than others. They may have been executed by several hands. Small decorative elements occasionally appear within the text block (e.g. fols 53r, 77r, 82v).

Additiones: fols 2r, 89v.

Observations: part of the original text on fol. 89v, most probably a colophon, has been erased and an Amharic note has been added in its place, mentioning a transaction between *Liqa Ṭababt* Gabra Šəllus and *Blättengētā* Kidāna Māryām. Only parts of supplicative formulas and personal names can be reconstructed from the original text. At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ʿĀlam at Maqdalā (fol. 2r).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 85a–86a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient543/main> (principal encoders Solomon Gebreyes and Dorothea Reule).

XXIII

London, British Library, Or. 597

Physical features: 416 × 313 × 114; 2 units (Unit 1: fol. 1r–v; Unit 2: fols 2r–262v); parchment, 262 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1400–1475 (palaeography, visual evidence, Unit 1); 1450–1497 (internal evidence, visual evidence, Unit 2).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) fragment of *Revelation of John* (CAe 3179), fol. 1r–v. Unit 2: (1) *Gabra ḥəmāmāt* (CAe 1544), fols 2r–259va.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1va, 2r, 14va, 17r, 21ra, 27va, 34rb, 42r, 46r, 55vb, 66rb, 67va, 68va, 76vb, 77vb, 79vb, 85vb, 87vb, 88va, 91vb, 92vb, 94vb, 96vb, 101r, 122rb, 124rb, 131ra, 133ra, 137vb, 143v, 158va, 169r, 178vb, 192vb, 201ra, 215rb, 224rb, 225r, 225ra, 248ra, 259ra,

Comments: all headpieces have been executed in a skilled and very colourful fashion. Some of the headpieces are more elaborate than others and show some unique features, such as the presence of figures, that characterize a group of manuscripts associated with the monastery of Dabra Libānos in Šawā. The headpieces can be compared with those in MS Dabra Libānos, EMMML 6533 (= Tweed Codex 150) and the Psalter manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Aeth. d. 19.⁷⁵ Small decorative elements of various sizes frequently appear within the text block (e.g. fols 10ra, 15va, 26rb).

Additions: fols 143v, 260vb, 261r, 262rb.

Observations: a lengthy colophon and note (fols 259v–260v) at the end of the manuscript mentions its donor: 'Iččage Marḥa Krəstos (c. 1408–1497), ninth abbot of the Dabra Libānos monastery in Šawā. He is also mentioned in a prayer integrated into the headpiece on fol. 2r. Based on an excommunication note on fol. 260v, one can conclude that he was also known by the name Yəmṛəḥanna Krəstos. This abbot was also the commissioner of MS Dabra Libānos, EMMML 6533 (= Tweed Codex 150, cf. fol. 167rb). The scribe was Gabra Krəstos (fol. 260va). At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane 'Ālam at Maqdalā (fol. 1v).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 136a–138a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient597/main> (principal encoders Solomon Gebreyes and Daria Elagina).

XXIV

London, British Library, Or. 641

Physical features: 387 × 342 × 117; 2 units? (Unit 1, fols 1r–179v, 181r–278v;⁷⁶ Unit 2, fol. 180r–v); parchment; 278 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1667–1800? (internal evidence, visual evidence, Unit 1); 1480–1530 (visual evidence, Unit 2).

⁷⁵ Gnisci 2020b, 11–14.

⁷⁶ The manuscript is codicologically complex; for some of the underlying reasons, see the two following footnotes. Since only Unit 2 is relevant for our study, no detailed codicological analysis of the remaining unit(s) has been carried out.

Major works: Unit 1: (1) various texts, fols 1r–29v, 181ra–278vb;⁷⁷ (2) *Miracles of Mary*: 'Akko-nu bə'əsi collection (CAe 5673), fols 30ra–179va.⁷⁸ Unit 2: none.

Miniatures: (1) Virgin and Child, fol. 180r.⁷⁹

Comments: the miniature shows the Virgin and Child against a bright red background with blossoming vines. An inscription in the upper margin reads 'Image of our Lady Mary, traveller to Q^wəsq^wām' (Ṣə'la 'əgzə'təna Māryām nagādita Q^wəsq^wām). The miniature originates from another, older manuscript, and is of much smaller size than the rest of the codex, measuring 275 × 224 mm. It is stylistically comparable to those in MS London, BL, Or. 507 and to other artworks produced in response to European images between the 1480s and 1530s. It must have been added to the manuscript during its production (see Observations).

Headpieces: none.

Additions: 180v.

Observations: according to the extensive colophon (fol. 258r–v), this manuscript was commissioned during the first year of reign of Emperor Yoḥannəs I (r.1667–1682). His name is written throughout the manuscript in supplication formulas, sometimes together with that of his empress Sabla Wangel (d. 1690). Parts of the

⁷⁷ The manuscript contains a large collection of texts of various length and nature, many with a Marian connection. They fall outside the time period relevant for this study and are therefore not described in detail. Examples include *Gadla Səbətəyānos* (CAe 1499), fols 1ra–4vb; 'Udata bāhr (CAe 3073), 5ra–6rb; 'O-rəḥrəḥta ḥəllinā (CAe 3088), fols 6rb–vb, 8v; *Canticles of the Prophets* (CAe 1828), fols 261va–264vb; *Māḥleta šəge* (CAe 1834), fols 181ra–231vb; and *Malkə'a fəlsatā* (CAe 2932), fols 232ra–236vb. For a more detailed description, see the Beta maṣāḥəft entry.

⁷⁸ This is a specific type of *Miracles of Mary* which is fixed in content and sequence in the manuscript transmission: after the introduction to the *Miracles*, follow a fixed sequence of 33 miracles, each of which is followed by a stanza of the 'Akko-nu bə'əsi hymn and, sometimes, a miniature illustrating the miracle. Other examples pertaining to the same scribal tradition are MSS London, BL, Or. 634 and Or. 639. The scribal features have been described for the first time by Dorothea Reule as follows: '[these manuscripts] share a peculiar composition: introductory texts and hymns, followed by several pages of miniatures, followed by the *Miracles of Mary* proper. There is often a discontinuity in layout between the introductory texts (often three columns) and the miracles (on a new quire, sometimes numbered 1, often with two columns and fewer written lines, bigger and more calligraphical script),' <https://github.com/BetaMasaheft/Documentation/issues/2162> (accessed 20 April 2023).

⁷⁹ The manuscript is extensively decorated with over 80 miniatures from different periods. These are all posterior to the period relevant to this study and are thus not described in detail. One miniature worthy of mention is that of the Virgin and Child on fol. 8r, where a type of gold pigment appears to have been used.

manuscript were apparently begun during the reign of his predecessor, Emperor Fāsīladas, as indicated by the appearance of that name (erased but still legible) in some supplications (e.g. fol. 112ra). The verso of the folio with the Early Solomonic miniature (fol. 180r) features the end of a text in a seventeenth-century hand, possibly a version of the *Prayer of Mary on Bārtos*. The verso of this leaf also includes a supplication mentioning a translator named Yoḥannēs with the names of Emperor Yoḥannēs and Empress Sabla Wangel added secondarily. This suggests that the miniature was inserted into the manuscript during its production. At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ʿĀlam at Maqdalā (fol. 1r).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 48a–49a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient641/main> (principal encoder Dorothea Reule).

XXV

London, British Library, Or. 650

Physical features: 304 × 255 × 70; 3 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–7v, 12r–16v, 18r–148v; Unit 2, fols 8r–11v; Unit 3, fol. 17r–v); parchment; 148 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1441–c.1458 (internal evidence, Unit 1); 1750–1868 (palaeography, historical evidence, Unit 2); 1700–1800 (palaeography, Unit 3).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Rā ʿāya Māryām* (CAe 1124), fols 1ra–7ra; (2) *Canon of al-Mu ʿallaqa* (CAe 1968), fols 12ra–15vb; (3) Introductory Prayer to the *Miracles of Mary* (CAe 6052), fols 15vb–16va; (4) *Miracles of Mary* (CAe 2384), fols 18ra–147vb. Unit 2: (1) unidentified miracle of Mary, fols 8ra–11rb; (2) *ʿṢaggəd laki ʿṣaggəd laki ʿṣaggəd laki wa-ʿəweddəsakki* (CAe 3058), fol. 11va–b. Unit 3: inventory list and land grant, fol. 17ra–vb.

Miniatures: (1) St George of Lydda, fol. 7v.

Comments: the unfinished drawing of St George of Lydda might be secondary to the production of the manuscript but appears to date to the fifteenth century.

Headpieces: fols 11vb (tailpiece), 18r, 39ra, 66rb.

Comments: the headpieces in Unit 1 have been executed in red ink only. Yet their elegant design, including split palmettes and arrowheads, does not suggest an unfinished state. Some empty lines may or may not have been intended for additional headpieces (e.g. fols 19vb, 21vb, 23rb).

Additions: see Observations.

Observations: Emperor Zar'a Yā'qob is mentioned at the beginning of most miracles in Unit 1 and in the supplication formulas at their end, suggesting the manuscript to have been commissioned by him. Moreover, the second text of Unit 1, the *Canon of al-Mu'allaqa*, was translated on his behalf 'in the seventh year of his reign' (fol. 12rb), thus 1441. This manuscript could be one of the very first copies of this text in the absence of any known, older examples. Additionally, the note on fol. 12r mentions the metropolitans Mikā'el and Gabrə'el. As the latter died around 1458,⁸⁰ we have a date range for the production of Unit 1. On fol. 102ra, Zar'a Yā'qob is mentioned together with his father Emperor Dāwit I and his mother Empress 'Īgzi' Kəbrā. Miracle 54 (CAe 5652) relates to the people of Dāmot and provides information on the construction of the church in Dabra Bərhān by Zar'a Yā'qob. The word *salām* ('peace') is written in negative script on fols 105ra, 106va. There are many additional notes in Units 2 and 3, containing land grants and donations from different kings, all written after the production of Unit 1.⁸¹ At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane 'Ālam at Maqdalā (fol. 12r).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 46ab.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient650/main> (principal encoder Dorothea Reule).

XXVI

London, British Library, Or. 652

Physical features: 225 × 170 × 95; 1 unit; parchment; 198 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1450–1530? (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Miracles of Mary* (CAe 2384), fols 2ra–198va.

Miniatures: (1) Virgin and Child, fol. 1v (Fig. 3).

Comments: an unidentified donor figure is prostrated before the Virgin. He may be identified as an ecclesiastical figure since he holds a hand cross and a book and appears to have a halo.⁸² The angels at the sides of the Virgin and Child

⁸⁰ 'Gäbrə'el and Mika'el', *EAE*, II (2005), 632a–632b (S. Chernetsov).

⁸¹ The notes are described in the Beta maṣāḥəft entry for the manuscript. Many of the notes are also treated in Merid Wolde Aregay 1985.

⁸² Budge 1922, iv, fig. 1 (where the illumination has been erroneously identified as deriving from MS London, BL, Add. 16,192, fol. 94v), identifies this figure as the 'Abuna Luqās mentioned in the supplication note.



Fig. 3: Virgin and Child. MS London, British Library, Or. 652, fol. 1v, reproduced courtesy of the British Library Board.

hold swords, a motif that became more widespread in Ethiopia after the mid-fifteenth century.

Headpieces: fols 2r, 4va, 15rb, 26rb, 36rb, 49rb, 63ra, 77vb, 90vb, 103vb, 113vb, 120va, 131ra, 138ra, 190va.

Comments: the decoration of fol. 2r consists of a full-page polychrome frame with a headpiece composed of geometric elements. A short plea for Mary's protection has been written into its loops. All other headpieces cover just one column.

Additions: fols 1r, 4v, 24va, 198vb.

Observations: the names for Mary ('Māryām' and 'Mārihām') are framed in dotted red and black lines on fol. 5ra–vb. There are supplication notes for Luqās (fol. 24va)—who in other places is called 'Abuna Luqās *Qasis*, sometimes without the *qasis* (e.g. fols 34va, 49ra, 72rb, 86rb)—and for Zenā Gabrē'el (fol. 66va), Fəre Həṣṣān (fol. 75rb), Gabra Hāwāryāt (fol. 77vb), Takla Mikā'el (fols 81ra, 82rb, 127vb), Tomās (fols 82rb, 124vb), Ṣəyon Kəbrā (e.g. fols 99va, 114ra, 141ra, 178vb), Fəre Krəstos (fol. 122ra), Malka Ṣedeq (fol. 123rb), and for 'Abuna Tewodros (e.g. fols 150ra, 156va, 172ra). Two scribes worked on the production of this manuscript: the first (fols 2v–150ra), named Robel (fol. 86rb), has a well-trained hand and his part of the manuscript includes elaborate headpieces; the second (fols 150rb–198va), named Śarṣa Libānos (fol. 195vb), has a less trained hand and his part of the manuscript contains almost no headpieces. In some places, the names of Walda Giyorgis, Walda Śəllāse and Walatta Kidān have been added at a comparatively recent period. There is a secondary ownership note on fol. 1r. At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane 'Ālam at Maqdalā (fol. 3r).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 46b–47a; Uhlig 1988, 378–382.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient652/main> (principal encoder Dorothea Reule).

XXVII

London, British Library, Or. 678

Physical features: 392 × 265 × 92; 1 unit; parchment; 171 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1400–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Gadla hawāryāt* (CAe 5816), fols 1ra–171vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 52r, 111r, 116r.

Comments: very elaborate and well-executed monochrome headpieces in red with pendants. The horizontal bands are filled with crosses and interlace. In all likelihood, there were supposed to be more headpieces, as some folios have several empty lines at their top (e.g. fols 29r, 33va, 55rb). There are no visible signs of the use of a compass for drawing the crosses in circles on fol. 52r.

Additions: fols 2r, 51v.

Observations: the name 'Abuna Gabra Mar'āwi is rubricated on fol. 89ra (and nowhere else), and he is mentioned again in the lengthy original colophon on fols 137vb–138rb.⁸³ In the same colophon, Sāfonyās, Darātewos and Məḵhəna Krəstos are listed as patrons, and Fiḳtor as scribe (fol. 138rb). An Amharic note mentioning 'Abuna Yosāb (II, d. 1803) and 'Jččage Tasfā (Giyorgis) was added on fol. 51v. Walatta Madḥən was a subsequent owner of the manuscript (e.g. fols 1ra, 11vb, 18va), and perhaps also donated it (fol. 171vb). At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane 'Ālam at Maqdalā (fol. 2r). A brief note on the paper flyleaf after fol. 171 references the year 1896.

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 59a–62a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient678/main> (principal encoder Dorothea Reule).

XXVIII

London, British Library, Or. 689

Physical features: 480 × 375 × 100; 1 unit; parchment; 237 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1450–1525 (palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Gadla samā'tāt* (CAe 1493), fols 1ra–237ra.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 37vb, 70va, 79r, 85ra, 155ra, 211v.

Comments: several headpieces are uncoloured, e.g. on fols 70va, 79r, 211v. Commemoration dates are indicated next to the headpieces. A headpiece, seemingly of later date, has been outlined on fol. 212r.

⁸³ There is a local late-fourteenth-century saint by the name 'Abuna Gabra Mar'āwi, who might be identified with the person commemorated here; see Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke 1975, 74. He is depicted on a fifteenth-century icon in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa (IESMus6996B), together with St George (Krebs forthcoming).

Additiones: fols 236vb–237ra.

Observations: the supplication formulas mention a Yoḥannəs (fols 70rb, 82ra, 94ra, 154vb, 211rb), as well as ‘Tawalda Madḥən and his children Takla Giyorgis and Galāwdəyos’ (fol. 94rb) and ‘Filəppos and his brother Yəshaq’ (fol. 154vb).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 159a–161a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient689/main> (principal encoder Daria Elagina).

XXIX

London, British Library, Or. 690

Physical features: 470 × 313 × 70; 1 unit; parchment; 108 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1450–1525 (palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Gadla samā’ tāt* (CAe 1493, incomplete), fols 1ra–108vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1ra, 7rb, 12rb, 21rb.

Comments: on fol. 1ra we find a simple interlace band with split palmettes with red outlines drawn along the vertical and horizontal ruling lines (two lines). The headpiece on fol. 7rb contains a similar pattern but on one line, while those on fols 12rb and 21rb again cover two lines.

Additiones: fol. 31v.

Observations: the manuscript is incomplete at both its beginning and end, starting with what appears to have originally been the fifth quire (the second quire is quire marked ‘6’ on fol. 9r). An ‘*Abuna* Yoḥannəs is mentioned in supplication formulas. On fol. 60r, the name of the owner ‘*Abuna* Māḥṣanta Māryām is given in the same hand as the main text. An *additio* on fol. 31v, much later than the main text (eighteenth or nineteenth century?), lists an ‘*Abuna* Yawəṣṭātewos and a series of his (spiritual?) sons as the owners of the manuscript and claims that it was written during the reign of Emperor Nā’od (r.1494–1508).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 161a–162a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient690/main> (principal encoder Marcin Krawczuk).

XXX

London, British Library, Or. 691

Physical features: 350 × 224 × 105; 2 unit (Unit 1, fols 1r–2v, 242r–243v; Unit 2: fols 3r–241v); parchment; 243 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1800–1900 (palaeography, Unit 1); 1292 (colophon, Unit 2).

Major works: Unit 1: none. Unit 2: (1) Collection of hagiographic texts and homilies, fols 3ra–241vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 20va (tailpiece), 51r.

Comments: if the band on fol. 51r is coeval with Unit 2, and there is nothing to suggest otherwise, it offers one of the earliest firmly dated examples of this type of decoration in the Ethiopic tradition. The band itself is extremely simple: two concentric rectangles outlined by a black and red line, respectively, are filled with a single interlace braid outlined in black with red and uncoloured bands.

Additions: fols 218va–b, 241vb, 243r.

Observations: the colophon of Unit 2 on fol. 241vb gives the date ‘18 Ṭəqəmt in the 477(nd) Year of Grace’ (‘*Āmata məḥrat*’), which corresponds to 15 October AD 1292, during the reign of King ‘Yāgbā (sic) Ṣəyon’.⁸⁴ Noteworthy punctuation marks are found on fols 27rb, 28vb. A secondary note on fol. 218vb records the purchase of the manuscript by a Ṣaggā Krəstos (based on the late palaeography of the note, he cannot be identified with the homonymous military commander of Emperor ‘Amda Ṣəyon, r.1314–1344). Unit 1 consists of flyleaves of a later date, some of which carry secondary notes. At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ‘Ālam at Maqdalā (fol. 2v). According to a stamp on fol. 1r, this manuscript was presented, presumably to the British Museum, by the Secretary of State for India in August 1868.

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 162a–164a; Bausi 2002, 7–10.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient691/main> (principal encoders Marcin Krawczuk and Solomon Gebreyes).

⁸⁴ For a discussion of this colophon, see Bausi 2002, 7–10.

XXXI

London, British Library, Or. 692

Physical features: 374 × 253 × 115;⁸⁵ 1 unit; parchment; 202 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1400–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) Collection of hagiographic texts and homilies (incomplete), fols 1ra–202vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 14ra (tailpiece), 96r, 139r, 174r.

Comments: the first two bands are monochrome. The others present considerable variety in ornament and shape. The one on fol. 96r, topped by a stepped element, flanked by two sets of horns, is surrounded with arrowhead motifs like those that decorate the cross in MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, BFBS 172.

Additions: fols 83vb, 173va–174r.

Observations: the manuscript ends abruptly in the middle of a text. The name Baṣalota Mikāʿel is mentioned in the supplication formula on fol. 47rb. Commemoration dates are indicated in the upper margins of every new text. Several hands appear to have been involved, and changes of hands can be observed on fols 71vb, 133ra, and 138vb. At the end of *Gadla Piḡāmon* (CAe 6346), there is a colophon mentioning that the text was translated from Arabic into Gəʿəz by one ʿAbdal Masih/Gabra Krəstos (fol. 116ra).⁸⁶ Fols 83vb and 173va–174r contain a genealogy and historical notes regarding rulers of Šawā.

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 164a–166a.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient692/main> (principal encoders Solomon Gebreyes and Dorothea Reule).

XXXII

London, British Library, Or. 706

Physical features: 272 × 235 × 97; 1 unit; parchment; 202 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1478–1494 (internal evidence, visual evidence).

⁸⁵ We thank Vitagrazia Pisani for providing us with these measurements.

⁸⁶ See, more in detail and with a list of further manuscripts, Bausi 2002, 12, n. 45.

Major works: (1) *Gadla Fāsīladas* (CAe 1893), fols 3ra–132va; (2) *Gadl za-’Abbā Nob* (CAe 5631), fols 134ra–199rb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 3r, 134r (unfinished).

Comments: this manuscript does not feature the sort of interlace bands that appear in most illustrated Ethiopic manuscripts of the fifteenth century. Instead, an elegantly executed arabesque decorates the upper margin of fol. 3r. It features a chain of circular and almond-shape tendrils topped by foliate elements and linked by beads. Small flowers fill the interior of the circular tendrils. The pattern on fol. 134r has been outlined but is unfinished. Similar arabesques, some of which could be the work of the same artist, are found in a small group of at least eight manuscripts from the second half of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Three manuscripts in this group can be connected to the Ethiopian imperial family: the British Library example, discussed here, to Emperor ’Āskändər (r.1478–1494), MS Dabra Ḥayq ’Āstīfānos, EMLL 2063 to the same emperor, and a *Four Gospels* manuscript kept in Dabra Warq Māryām to his daughter Mārtā.⁸⁷ The other five examples are: (1) MS Dāgā ’Āstīfānos, Ṭānāsee 113; (2) MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Petermann II Nachtrag 42;⁸⁸ (3) MS Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Parm. 3839 (olim Mordini 192, ex Gunda Gunde);⁸⁹ (4) MS Qarānəyo Madḥane ‘Ālam, EMDA 177;⁹⁰ (5) an unknown Gospel manuscript, auctioned by Timeline Auction House in 2021.⁹¹ The Dabra Warq Māryām Gospel also features miniatures of the Evangelists that have been attributed to Brancaleone, as recently argued by Mercier 2021, 281, who seems to take it for granted that the arabesques and portraits are not the work of the same individual—a matter which requires further investigation.⁹²

⁸⁷ This manuscript, which has not been fully digitized, is discussed in Mercier 2021, 243, where one headpiece is also reproduced.

⁸⁸ This manuscript containing the *Book of Isaiah* should have been included in our previous handlist, but see Reule forthcoming.

⁸⁹ This manuscript containing the *Wəddāse ’Amlāk* is discussed in Mordini 1953, 43, and one folio is furthermore reproduced as fig. 13.

⁹⁰ We are grateful to Ted Erho for drawing our attention to this example.

⁹¹ We are indebted to Ted Erho for the information on this auctioned piece. To the above list of examples, one may add MS Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, IES 2084, fols 3r, 11vb, 91r, 120ra, 145rb, which presents similar arabesques but by a different hand; as well as some icons, such as IES no. 3980, that are also decorated with comparable arabesques that we do not attribute to the same artist identified above; on this icon, see Heldman 1994, 42–43, figs 16–17.

⁹² Mercier 2021, 243, 281 does not explicitly state this, but discusses the portraits and the arabesques in different sections of his book without associating them. Evangelist portraits

Additions: fols 1r–2v, 200ra–202ra, 202rb–va.

Observations: this manuscript was a imperial possession of two emperors. Since Emperor ʾĒskändər is mentioned in the colophon (fol. 132vb) and in the supplication formulas in the text (fols 4r, 134rb, 115rb), he probably commissioned the manuscript. It was later owned by Emperor Nāʾod (r.1494–1508), ʾĒskändər's brother and successor, who, according to a donation note on fol. 2r, donated this and other manuscripts to the church Dabra Bərḥān Māryām in the first year of his reign (1494). Another donation note, also mentioning the name of Emperor Nāʾod, is found on fol. 1r. *Šəllāse* poems, possibly composed by Nāʾod, have been added on fols 200ra–202ra.⁹³ At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ʿĀlam at Maqdalā (fol. 3r).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 186b–187b; Turaev 1904.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient706/main> (principal encoder Solomon Gebreyes).

XXXIII

London, British Library, Or. 711

Physical features: 237 × 207 × 62; 1 unit; parchment; 102 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1500–1550? (palaeography, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Gadla Gabra Manfas Qəddus* (CAe 1119), fols 2ra–67vb; (2) *Ta ʾamməra Gabra Manfas Qəddus* (CAe 3977), fols 69ra–80vb; (3) *Gadla ʾAbbā Bulā* (CAe 4050), fols 81ra–100vb.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 2r, 69r, 71ra, 72rb, 75rb, 77vb, 78rb.

Comments: the bands appear to have been executed by the same hand, but those from fol. 71ra onwards appear to have been sketched more hastily. The interlace in the first two bands is curvilinear with some angular breaks and has unsteady lines that form ribbons of irregular width, left blank or filled with red. The band on fol. 2r is topped by a cross and hut-shaped elements.

Additions: fols 1r–v, 68rb–vb, 80v, 84vb–86vb, 98r–v, 100va, 102r–v.

and headpieces stylistically similar to those found in this manuscript can be found in MS Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Aeth. c. 14 (see below), but they are not as close to the manuscripts listed above to suggest that they are the work of the same illustrator.

⁹³ For an edition and Russian translation, see Turaev 1904.

Observations: in the colophons on fols 67rb, 80r–v, and 100vb–101rb, the names of the scribe and the patron have been erased. The colophon on fol. 67vb mentions that the manuscript was produced ‘in the time of King Dāwit’ (*ba-zamana Dāwit nəguś*). The colophon on fols 100vb–101rb mentions that the monastery of the scribe was Hagara Şəblā. A curious scribal feature, in which each letter is written partly in red, partly in black, appears on fol. 81rb. Other noteworthy scribal features include numerals decorated by a double red line above and below throughout the manuscript and the loop of the numeral ‘1’ (፩) being filled with red ink (e.g. fols 3va, 4ra, 69r). On fol. 68rb–vb, a hymn to Mary (‘*Ἐσαγγəd laki*’, CAe 3058) has been added. At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ‘Ālam at Maqdalā (fol. 1v).

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 189a–b.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient711/main> (principal encoder Solomon Gebreyes).

XXXIV

London, British Library, Or. 794

Physical features: 342 × 257 × 90; 1 unit; parchment; 203 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1400–1500 (visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Senodos* (CAe 2317), fols 4ra–203ra.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 4r, 6r, 45rb, 47r, 54r, 63v, 71vb, 78r, 88vb, 99va, 103vb, 108r, 109r, 116r, 120vb, 125rb, 132r, 136vb, 151v, 194v.

Comments: the headpieces cover either one or two columns and are brightly coloured. Some folios (fols 4r, 6r) have special ruling patterns designed to accommodate the bands (i.e. additional vertical and horizontal lines to outline the frame and its decoration). The frame on fol. 6r is topped by a sequence of concentric circles executed with a compass and surrounded by crosses and split palmettes.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Concentric circles of this sort are found in a *Gəbra ḥəmāmāt* manuscript from Quşat Māy Rāzā photographed by Michael Gervers (Mazgaba Səəlat reference number: MG-2004.106:001). The motif may have been inspired by the lunettes of the Canon Tables. The style recalls that seen in manuscripts from Northeast Təgrāy and associated with the Stephanite movement.

A seemingly Early Solomonic headpiece has been drawn on the front flyleaf (fol. 1r).

Additions: fols 1r, 2r, 3v, 63rb, 71va.

Observations: on fol. 63rb, there is a secondary note saying that the manuscript belonged to the monastery of Dabra G^wædbā. It contains an unclear reference to a ‘son of King Dāwit’, said to have left the kingdom of his father to pursue the heavenly kingdom. At one point in its history, the manuscript belonged to the Church of Madḥane ‘Ālam at Maqdalā (fol. 5r). According to a stamp on fol. 1r, this manuscript was presented, presumably to the British Museum, by the Secretary of State for India in August 1868.

Bibliography: Wright 1877, 266a–269a; Bausi 1995, I, xvii (with references to previous editions, where this manuscript was used).

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient794/main> (principal encoder Daria Elagina).

XXXV

London, British Library, Or. 2198

Physical features: 110 × 93 × 16; 1 unit; parchment; 32 folios; 1 column.

Dating: 1400–1600 (palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Miracles of Mary* (CAe 3585, incomplete), fols 1r–13v; (2) *Miracles of Michael* (CAe 5066), fols 14r–20v; (3) benedictions based on biblical and non-biblical saints, fols 21r–23v; (4) unidentified creed, fols 23v–27v; (5) *salām* hymns to places connected with the life of Jesus (incomplete), fol. 27v; (6) predications about the birth of Christ made by the Prophets (incomplete), fols 28r–30r; (7) *Anaphora of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (CAe 1100, incomplete), fols 30v–32v.

Miniatures: none.

Headpieces: fols 14r, 30v.

Comments: the headpiece on fol. 14r is very different from that on fol. 30v and was probably added at a later date by a different illustrator. The former features lozenge elements, the latter, s-shaped elements inserted in a sequence of rectangular compartments. Additional, red monochrome sketches of headpieces are found on fols 3v, 19r, and 21r.

Additions: fols 29v, 30r.

Observations: *cruces ansatae* are used profusely as a means of decoration. The name Səbhāt La'ab is mentioned in supplication formulas (fols 3v, 5r–v, 7r, 10r, 13r, 14r, 15v–19r, 20v, 22r–v, 23v, 26r). A few Eastern Arabic numerals have been written in the outer margin of fol. 29v vertically. A note on fol. 30r, written in between the *cruces ansatae*, mentions the contents/title of the preceding work (*Tənbīt ba-`anta lədatu la-Krəstos*, ‘Prophecy about the birth of Christ’). A note on the front paper flyleaves states that the manuscript was presented by Claude Erskine Esq. on 29 November 1879. The manuscript was repaired in the British Museum, at which stage additional flyleaves were added to it.

Bibliography: Strelcyn 1978, 16–19.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient2198/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

XXXVI

London, British Library, Or. 13156

Physical features: c.113 × c.98 × 63; 1 unit (?); parchment; 161 folios; 1 column.

Dating: 1380–1450 (visual evidence, palaeography).

Major works:⁹⁵ (1) *Prayer of Mary on Bārtos* (CAe 1201), fols 5r–41v; (2) *ʿAnqasha bərhān* (CAe 1113), fols 47r–62r; (3) *Prayer to Our Lady Mary* (CAe 4309 or CAe 4536?), fols 63r–95r; (4) prayer of the Virgin Mary to her Son, ‘to be recited over the water in which a sick person is to bathe and over the oil with which he is to be anointed for healing’, fols 96r–111v;⁹⁶ (5) *Prayer of Our Lady Mary to Jesus Christ, for 21 Miyāzyā* (CAe 4520), fols 113r–126v; (6) *Prayer of the blessed Virgin Mary, ‘Nəgəranni səmaka’* (CAe 3138 or CAe 5699?), fols 128r–131r; (7) *Prayer of Our Lady Mary to Jesus Christ at the sepulchre* (CAe 4299), fols 132r–143v; (8) *Magic Prayer of the Virgin Mary* (CAe 5010?), fols 145r–158v.

Miniatures: (1) Virgin and Child, fol. 4v; (2) St Michael the Archangel, fol. 46v; (3) Virgin in an orans pose, fol. 62v; (4) St Ezekiel the Prophet, fol. 95v; (5) *ʿAbbā*

⁹⁵ The description of the major works is based on the catalogue description by Strelcyn 1978. For three of the texts (nos 3, 6, and 8), it was not possible to connect the incipits provided in the catalogue to CAe numbers without ambiguity.

⁹⁶ Cf. Dege-Müller et al. 2022, 75.

Kiros, fol. 112v; (6) St Cyricus, fol. 127v; (7) St Gabriel the Archangel, fol. 131v; (8) 'Abbā Onuphrius (*Wanāfār*), fol. 144v.

Comments: the illustrated folios have a different ruling pattern from the written ones. The former have more visible ruling impressions forming a grid of parallel vertical and horizontal lines used by the illustrator for outlining the miniatures (e.g. the horizontal line of the lower hem of the tunic is drawn onto one of the horizontal ruling lines, the vertical line of the nose dorsum follows the vertical ruling). Compass marks for drawing the halos placed at the intersection of ruling lines are visible on some of the folios (e.g. fol. 46r). The miniatures have been executed in a style already convincingly attributed to the early fifteenth century.⁹⁷

Headpieces: fols 5r, 47r, 63r, 96r, 113r, 128r, 132r, 145r.

Comments: most bands are topped by stepped elements. They vary in appearance, but the use of colours similar to those employed in the miniatures suggests work by the same illuminator.

Additiones: fols 1r–3r, 4r, 159r–161r.

Observations: name of the owner is given as Ḥəzqə'el, although on certain folios (e.g. fols 88v, 90r) it has been erased. The name of the scribe is given as 'Abunāfār. On fol. 119r, both of these persons are mentioned and, additionally, the names Gabra 'Iyasus and Zakkāryās. A Latin note on fol. 1r, not fully legible, mentions Naples, the date of '26 maij 1618', and the names 'Andreas', 'Michaelis Abissini', and 'D. Persii vitalis'. The latter also appears in an Italian note on fol. 4r and can be identified with the individual discussed in Erho 2023, who observes that this manuscript 'reached Naples at the beginning of the seventeenth century and was subsequently acquired by the famous vellomaniac Sir Thomas Phillips (his no. 1053)'.⁹⁸

Bibliography: Strelcyn 1978, 53–55; Uhlig 1988, 251–253 (reproducing three folios with headpieces: fols 47r, 128r, 145r); Mercier 2000, 79 (reproducing illumination 3).

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient13156/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

⁹⁷ See Uhlig 1988, 251–253; Heldman 1994, 121; Mercier 2000, 79.

⁹⁸ Erho 2023, 207–208, fn. 90.

XXXVII

London, British Library, Or. 15421⁹⁹

Physical features: 228 × 152 × 70; 1 unit; parchment; 107 folios;¹⁰⁰ 1 column.

Dating: 1425–1475 (visual evidence, palaeography).

Major works: (1) *Mazmura Dāwit* (CAe 2000), fols 2r–81v, 90r–97v, 82r–v; (2) *Canticles of the Prophets* (CAe 1828), fols 83r–89v, 98r–100v; (3) *Song of Songs* (CAe 2362), fols 101r–106r.

Miniatures: (1) St John and St Jacob the Apostles, fol. 24v; (2) St Philip and St Bartholomew the Apostles, fol. 40r; (3) St Thomas and St Matthew the Apostles, fol. 40v; (4) St Jacob, brother of the Lord, and St Paul, fol. 68v; (5) St Mark the Evangelist, fol. 78v; (6) Moses receiving the Ten Commandments, fol. 82v; (7) King Solomon, fol. 100v.

Comments: all figures are identified by captions. Some of the figures feature elaborate designs on their clothes. Stylistically, the images have some elements in common with MS Oxford, Bodleian Libraires, Aeth. e. 33, but are clearly a different artist's work. The apostles hold crosses, books, or liturgical handkerchiefs. Solomon is shown seated and has a royal headband and a long staff. Some parts of the illustrations have been left uncoloured (e.g. fol. 78v). Moreover, the illustrations appear stained and have suffered pigment loss. It is possible that some miniatures were repainted later. There are drawings of unidentified holy men on fol. 1r–v that appear to date from the Early Solomonic period.

Headpieces: fols 2r, 12r, 17v, 25r, 34r, 55r, 59r, 69r, 79r, 83r, 94r, 101r.

Comments: the headpieces vary considerably in appearance. In most cases they feature a band filled with different kinds of interlace patterns, topped by a variety of elements including split palmettes and stepped elements. Those on fols 34r and 55r are monochrome.

⁹⁹ This manuscript, acquired by the British Library in recent years (see below), was brought to our attention independently by Eyob Derillo and Ted Erho. It has not been described before. The information given here was largely provided by Ted Erho, to whom we extend our gratitude (his research in the British Library was funded by the European Union, ERC, consolidator grant agreement no. 101044300, project BeInf – Beyond Influence: The Connected Histories of Ethiopic and Syriac Christianity, 2022–2027, Universität Hamburg). Having consulted the manuscript, the authors contributed some additional information about the manuscript's visual features, physical description, and dating. The publication of a more detailed description of this item has been planned by Eyob Derillo and Sophia Dege-Müller.

¹⁰⁰ The manuscript is foliated to 106 with the leaf following fol. 32 unfoliated.

Additions: fol. 106rv.

Observations: the quire following fol. 82 (fols 83–89) has been displaced from after fol. 97, i.e. fols 90–97 belong before fols 83–89. It is likely that quires are missing from the end. The manuscript was accessioned by the British Library either in 2007 or perhaps earlier, but based on the information available in the library records the provenance and accession date remain unclear.

Bibliography: none.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BLorient15421/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

XXXVIII

Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Aeth. c. 2

Physical features: 348 × 252 × c.40; 1 unit; parchment; 98 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1438–1458 (internal evidence, visual evidence).

Major works: (1) *Four Gospels* (CAe 1560, incomplete), fols 1r–98v.

Miniatures: (1) St Mark the Evangelist, fol. 32v; (2) St Luke the Evangelist, fol. 58v; (3) St John the Evangelist, fol. 97v.

Comments: the miniature of Matthew must have been lost. The third illumination lacks a caption, but the preceding page (fol. 97r) contains the end of the Gospel of Luke, leaving little doubt that it depicts John; the note on the book in his hand (*Wangel za-Yohannās*) is secondary but supports this identification.¹⁰¹ Stylistically, the exaggeratedly stout proportions of the figures, with unnaturally curved arms, is comparable to examples found in manuscripts dating from around the mid-fifteenth century.¹⁰²

Headpieces: fol. 33r.

Comments: only the headpiece for Mark has survived. In all likelihood the openings of each Gospel featured a similar headpiece, but for the remaining three Gospels the incipit pages are lost.

Additions: fol. 32rb.

¹⁰¹ Gnisci 2019, 34–35, fig. 4.4.

¹⁰² Cf. the numerous miniatures in the Psalter manuscript Paris, BnF, Éth. d'Abb. 105, discussed in Balicka-Witakowska 1984–1986, and the fragmentary Gospel manuscript Uppsala, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, O Etiop. 2, fols 1r–4v.

Observations: a secondary but near contemporary colophon on fol. 32rb (partly erased, but still legible) mentions that the manuscript had been commissioned by Krəstos 'Amlākəna and 'Erməyās in the time of Emperor Zar'a Yā'qob (r.1434–1468) and 'Abuna Mikā'el (in office from 1438, possibly dead before 1458).¹⁰³ The manuscript shows extensive signs of redaction, including erasures, cancellations, interlinear additions, and also explicatory notes, partly in (Old) Amharic.¹⁰⁴ The manuscript was acquired by the Bodleian Libraries in 1883, after having been brought from Ethiopia in 1868.¹⁰⁵

Bibliography: Madan 1905; Ullendorff 1951, 3a–b.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BDLaethc2/main> (principal encoder Dorothea Reule).

XXXIX

Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Aeth. c. 14

Physical features: 313 × 265 × 95; 2 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–123v; Unit 2, fols 124r–130v); parchment; 130 folios; 2 columns.

Dating: 1480–1530 (visual evidence, palaeography, Unit 1); 1700–1800 (palaeography, Unit 2).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Four Gospels* (CAe 1560, incomplete), fols 1ra–123vb. Unit 2: (1) *Gospel of John* (CAe 2715, incomplete), fols 124ra–130vb.

Miniatures: (1) St Matthew the Evangelist, fol. 1vb; (2) St Mark the Evangelist, fol. 35vb; (3) St Luke the Evangelist, fol. 61vb; (4) St John the Evangelist, fol. 100va.

Comments: that the evangelists only occupy one column begs the question of their addition being an afterthought. All of the evangelists are shown standing, save for Mark seated under an unusual canopy held up by sticks. Matthew has a tiara and holds a hand cross. Luke holds a closed Gospel and a cross, wearing an unusual crown or hat. John has a halo and holds up an open codex with the begin-

¹⁰³ On the dates of 'Abuna Mikā'el's presence in Ethiopia, see Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 228, 245.

¹⁰⁴ Among the features suggesting the language to be Old Amharic are: (a) the conjunction 'ənd(ə) has been written as a separate word (e.g. fols 70va (bis), 76va) and (b) etymological laryngeals have been written in non-Gə'əz words, such as አሰላየ: , 'ashayya, 'show' (fol. 70va). Also noticeable is that (c) the first person singular suffix has been regularly spelled -ኺ, -ኸ (e.g. fols 59vb, 76va).

¹⁰⁵ Madan 1905, 608.

ning of his Gospel. The evangelists have been executed in a style similar to that associated with the Italian painter Brancaloneone, but are in all likelihood the work of a different artist.¹⁰⁶

Headpieces: fols 2r, 36r, 61v, 101r.

Comments: the headpieces touch the upper border of the page. It is unclear if they are the work of the same artist responsible for the evangelist portraits. Some features call to mind manuscripts produced during the reigns of Emperor ʾĪskəndər and Emperor Ləbna Dəngəl, although the inclusion of plants and animals (including snake-like creatures, strange fishes, and ground hornbill birds) is unusual for the period.¹⁰⁷

Additions: fol. 64rb.

Observations: the manuscript was previously owned by Bent Juel-Jensen (= MS Juel-Jensen 46) who referred to it as the ‘Mikael Zata Gospels’.¹⁰⁸ This name is based on a colophon found on fol. 130va that belongs to Unit 2 and was partly published by Juel-Jensen.¹⁰⁹ In this colophon, the manuscript is said to belong to (the church of) St Michael in the region (*hagar*) of Zātā and to have been written during the period of office (*śimat*) of ʾAkālu. The colophon also identifies the scribe as Walda Həṣān and the patron as Walda Mikāʾel. Nothing in the colophon suggests its information to be valid also for Unit 1—though a secondary note in Amharic on fol. 64rb (Unit 1) indicates that this part of the manuscript at one point in time also belonged to a ‘Monastery of Michael’ (*Dabra Mikāʾel*). This Amharic note also names two ecclesiastics, ʾAlaqā Tasammā and ʾAbbā Walda Śəllāse, as owners of the manuscript. The manuscript contains numerous liturgical notes by different hands. Its front board has been lined with a textile that appears to come from South Asia dating from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.¹¹⁰

Bibliography: Juel-Jensen 1996.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BDLaethc14/main> (principal encoders Massimo Villa).

¹⁰⁶ Gnisci 2015b, 35.

¹⁰⁷ The portraits and headpieces are discussed in Gnisci 2019, 32–34; a more detailed discussion of related manuscripts is given above in the description of MS London, BL, Or. 706.

¹⁰⁸ Juel-Jensen 1996.

¹⁰⁹ Juel-Jensen 1996, 44.

¹¹⁰ A more detailed study of this and other textiles in Ethiopic manuscripts is being carried out by the project Textiles in Ethiopian Manuscripts (TEM), co-directed by Sarah Fee and Michael Gervers.

XL

Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Aeth. d. 19

Physical features: 280 × 200 × 90; 2 units (Unit 1, fols 1r–147v; Unit 2, fols 148r–165v); parchment; 165 folios; 1 column (fols 1r–147v), 2 columns (fols 148r–165v).

Dating: 1450–1500 (palaeography, visual evidence, Units 1–2).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Prologue to the Psalms attributed to Eusebius of Caesarea* (CAe 6719), fols 1r–4v; (2) *Mazmura Dāwit* (CAe 2000), fols 7ra–125v; (3) *Canticles of the Prophets* (CAe 1828), fols 126r–138r; (4) *Song of Songs* (CAe 2362), fols 139r–146v. Unit 2: (1) *Gospel of John* (CAe 2715, incomplete), fols 148ra–149vb; (2) *Waddāse Māryām* (CAe 2509) with *'Anqaša barhān* (CAe 1113), fols 150ra–165ra; (3) Introduction to *'Ēgzi' abəḥer nagsā* (CAe 6763, incomplete), fol. 165rb–vb.

Miniatures: (1) Job and Samuel, Ezra and Ezekiel, fol. 4v; (2) Asaph, Ethan, child of Qore, child of Qore, fol. 5v; (3) Daniel and Jeremiah, Gad and Nathan, Enoch and Elijah, Elisha and Joshua the Judge, Simeon and Isaiah; Zerubbabel (ዘጥ{n.l.}ል።) and the second Ezra, fol. 6r; (4) King David, fol. 6v; (5) Moses and Aaron, fol. 126r; (6) King Solomon, fol. 138v; (7) Isaac, Abraham, and Jacob, fol. 146v; (8) St Matthias and St Thaddeus, St Jacob, son of Alphaeus, and St Jacob, son of Zebedee, St Nathanael (ፍ{n.l.}ኤል) and St Luke, St Philemon and St Clement, St Joseph and St Nicodemus, St Prochorus and St Barnabas, fol. 147r; (9) Jesus kissing St John the Disciple next to St Michael the Archangel, St Peter and St Paul, St John the Baptist and St Andrew the Apostle, St Jacob, brother of the Lord, and St Mark, St Bartholomew and St Matthew, St Thomas and St Philip, fol. 147v.

Comments: this manuscript belongs to a group of extensively illustrated psalters from the mid-fifteenth century. Most miniatures take up a full page, but some half a page or less (cf. fols 4v, 146v). Curtains protect the miniatures on some folios (fols 6r–v, 138v, 147r). In all likelihood, this manuscript was scribed and decorated by Gabra Krəstos, who produced at least two other manuscripts, both commissioned by Marḥa Krəstos (c.1408–1497), abbot of the monastery of Dabra Libānos in Šawā.¹¹¹ One of these manuscripts is MS London, BL, Or. 597, discussed above.

¹¹¹ MSS London, BL, Or. 597 (see above) and Dabra Libānos, EMMML 6533 (= Tweed Codex 150). Cf. Gnisci 2020b, 12–13.

Headpieces: fols 1r, 1v, 4v, 7r, 8r (bis), 8v, 9r, 9v, 10v, etc. (headpieces appear profusely throughout Unit 1; here, only the ten first have been listed); fols 150r, 151va, 156ra, 156vb, 158va, 160rb, 162va, 164ra.

Comments: all new texts and psalms have been marked by a horizontal border filled with interlace or other geometrical patterns, of a kind not frequently seen in Ethiopic manuscripts from this period. Stichometric information is placed in smaller frames with split palmettes. More elaborate borders mark the Prologue to the Psalms, the beginning of the Song of Moses (where the frame unusually incorporates a double portrait of Moses and Aaron) and the Song of Songs. Elongated crosses are sometimes placed in the margins (e.g. fols 1v, 2v) and sometimes between lines (for example, marking the sections of Ps 118, fols 102v–109r). A short text, partly illegible, has been written above the headpiece on fol. 150r.

Additiones: none.

Observations: the manuscript appears to consist of two production units, which are very close in terms of palaeography and artistic features. They could well have been produced by the same scribe. Unit 1 contains the Psalter and some associated texts. Unit 2, with the *Wəddāse Māryām* and the *ʿAnqasha bərḥān* at its centre, clearly derives from another manuscript, and it stands to reason that it was added to Unit 1 to complement it in a time when these Marian texts were perceived as an integral part of a Psalter manuscript.¹¹² The illuminations all form part of Unit 1, although, noticeably, the folio containing Illuminations 8–9 (fol. 147) is currently the first leaf in the first quire of Unit 2, with a stub after the end of the quire. The *Wəddāse Māryām* (in Unit 2) begins with the portion for Sundays, followed by the *ʿAnqasha bərḥān*, after which come the portions for Monday, Tuesday, and so on. The Introduction to *ʿĪgzi ʿabəḥer nagsa* appears to be written in another hand and it is unclear whether it was originally an integral part of Unit 2 or, possibly, a secondary addition to Unit 2, prior to its dismemberment. The manuscript was formerly owned by Bent Juel-Jensen (= MS Juel-Jensen 40).

Bibliography: Juel-Jensen 1987, Juel-Jensen 1994, Gnisci 2020b.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaeft.eu/manuscripts/BDLaethd19/main> (principal encoder Jonas Karlsson).

¹¹² See Karlsson and Dege-Müller forthcoming, Dege-Müller 2015.



Fig. 4: St Nathanael and unknown apostle. MS Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Aeth. e. 33, fol. 48v © Bodleian Libraries under CC-BY-NC 4.0 license.

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Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Aeth. e. 33¹¹³

Physical features: 179 × 153 × 77; 3 units (Unit 1, fol. 1r–v; Unit 2, fols 2r–17v, 19r–47v, 49r–103v, 105r–131v; Unit 3, fols 18r–v, 48r–v, 104r–v); parchment; 131 folios;¹¹⁴ 1 column (fols 1r, 2r–131v), 2 columns (fol. 1v).

Dating: 1700–1800 (palaeography, Units 1–2); 1400–1525 (palaeography, visual evidence, Unit 3).

Major works: Unit 1: (1) *Səbhata fəqur za-Giyorgis* (CAe 4957, incomplete), fol. 1r–vb. Unit 2: (1) *Mazmura Dāwit* (CAe 2000, incomplete), fols 2r–131v. Unit 3: none.

Miniatures: (1) St Mary, fol. 18v; (2) unknown apostle (possibly St Andrew, {*n.l.*} ር.ፆ.ከ፡) and St Jacob, son of Zebedee, fol. 48r; (3) St Nathanael ({*n.l.*} ት(?) ርኤል፡) and unknown apostle, fol. 48v (Fig. 4); (4) St Bartholomew and St Thaddeus, fol. 104r; (5) St Jacob, son of Alphaeus, and St Thomas, fol. 104v.

Comments: the illuminations all belong to a separate production unit (Unit 3) and the depicted figures are identified by inscriptions. The miniatures bear unusually clear evidence of how they were created: compass prick holes are visible on fol. 48r at the centre of the apostles' halos and the ruling lines were followed to draw the lines of the frames. The only other visible ruling line divides the folio into two vertically. This straight line goes from the shoulder of the apostles down to the lower hem of their tunic, e.g. on fol. 104r. The vestments of the various figures are decorated with a pattern of vertical lines which are occasionally enhanced by small dots painted with an unidentified pigment donating a metallic shine. Since the paint of the horizontal lines often spills over the black outlines of the figures, we can determine that the latter were executed before the former. The painter thus appears to have: first, outlined the frame and halos in red; second, outlined the figures in black; third, filled in the resulting areas and then decorated these with the horizontal lines (possibly also adding the inscriptions at this stage); finally, painted the areas of the frame in black while avoiding the halos. These miniatures show a striking resemblance to those in MS Munich, Museum Fünf Kontinente, MfVK 86-307646, described in the previous handlist, where they were, however, not identified as secondary additions.¹¹⁵ Since the miniatures in

¹¹³ This description is partly based on an unpublished description of this manuscript by Massimo Villa.

¹¹⁴ The manuscript is foliated to 130 with the leaf following fol. 27 unfoliated.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Dege-Müller et al. 2022, 86–88.

these two manuscripts are almost identical in terms of execution and iconography and the folios that house them are of virtually the same physical dimensions, it is possible that they originally belonged to one and the same manuscript, from which they were extracted and inserted into their present contexts.¹¹⁶

Headpieces: none.

Additiones: fol. 18r.

Observations: the Book of Psalms (Unit 2) is almost complete, missing only Ps 1 and the beginning of Ps 2, as well as the end of Ps 151. Fol. 120v is written by another hand than the rest of Unit 2 and the text (end of Ps 135, Ps 136) is partially repeated on fol. 121r. The manuscript was formerly owned by Bent Juel-Jensen (= MS Juel-Jensen 42).

Bibliography: Juel-Jensen 1987.

URL to BM entry: <https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BDLaethe33/main> (principal encoder Massimo Villa).

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¹¹⁶The miniature from this manuscript have been reproduced in Chojnacki 1983, 211, fig. 78. The same artist probably painted a Gospel book in the Church of Yoḥannəs Ma'āquddi in Təgrāy (cf. Mazgaba Səəlat reference numbers: RF-2007-010-001, RF-2007-010-002, RF-2007-010-003, RF-2007-010-004, RF-2007-010-005, RF-2007-010-006, RF-2007-010-007, RF-2007-010-008, RF-2007-010-009). A number of stylistically similar works, which appear to have been executed by different illuminators, are found in Mercier 2004, esp. 124–125.

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Summary

As material objects bearing textual and visual information, illustrated Christian manuscripts from the Horn of Africa are among the most valuable sources of data for scholars specializing in this field. This article is the second handlist produced within the framework of the AHRC-DFG project Demarginalizing medieval Africa: Images, texts, and identity in Early Solomonic Ethiopia (1270–1527). It focuses on illustrated Early Solomonic manuscripts housed in public libraries in the United Kingdom. This is the first time that this body of illuminations has been comprehensively analysed. The resulting work sheds new light on the history of book illustration in Early Solomonic Ethiopia and provides insights into the connected histories of the Christian empire of the Ethiopian-Eritrean highlands and the wider Mediterranean world. Moreover, it showcases the movements of manuscripts and the development of collections of Gə'əz manuscripts in Europe.