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Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

- AE* *Annales d'Éthiopie*, Paris 1955ff.
- ÄthFor* Äthiopistische Forschungen, 1–35, ed. by E. HAMMERSCHMIDT, 36–40, ed. by S. UHLIG (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (1–34), 1977–1992; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (35–40), 1994–1995).
- AethFor* Aethiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLIG (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011); 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLIG (*ibid.*, 2011f.); 76ff. ed. by A. BAUSI (*ibid.*, 2012ff.).
- AION* *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'*, Napoli: Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale' (former Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), 1929ff.
- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London, 1917ff.).
- CSCO* Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.
- EAE* S. UHLIG, ed., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; in cooperation with A. BAUSI, eds, IV: O–X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); A. BAUSI in cooperation with S. UHLIG, eds, V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).
- EMML* Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
- JAH* *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge 1960ff.
- JES* *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
- OrChr* *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
- PdP* *La Parola del Passato. Rivista di studi classici*, Napoli 1946ff.
- PICES 8* TADDESE BEYENE, ed., *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Addis Ababa (26–30 November) 1984*, I–II (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies–Frankfurt am Main: Frobenius Institut, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, 1988–1989).
- PICES 10* C. LEPAGE and É. DELAGE, eds, *Études éthiopiennes: Actes de la X^e Conférence internationale des études éthiopiennes, Paris, 24–28 août 1988* (Paris: Société française pour les études éthiopiennes, 1994).
- PO* *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1903ff.
- RIÉ* É. BERNAND, A.J. DREWES, and R. SCHNEIDER, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite*, I: *Les documents*, II: *Les planches* (Paris: (Académie des inscriptions et belle-lettres) Diffusion de Boccard, 1991).
- RRALm* *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Roma, 1892ff.
- RSE* *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma, 1941–1981, Roma–Napoli, 1983ff.
- SAe* *Scriptores Aethiopici*.

Ethiopian Manuscripts in the State and Private Collections of St Petersburg: An Overview

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For more than two centuries St Petersburg, the capital of the former Russian Empire, has been famous for its collections of Ethiopian manuscripts, objects of art and documents concerning Ethiopian history. At present they are concentrated in three state institutions and in several private collections of African art. The funds of the Russian National Library (formerly the Imperial Public Library), of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (formerly the Asiatic Museum of the Imperial Academy of Sciences) and of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (commonly known as the *Kunstkammer*) of the same Academy contain more than 300 manuscripts,¹ letters and other materials of different kind and origin.²

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Russian officials, doctors, clerics, travellers and researchers acquired specimens of Ethiopian manuscript culture, which they later delivered to public (mostly state) institutions and made them available to those who wished to study them. Some of these items are real masterpieces of the Ethiopian manuscript tradition and of book production. The collections include typical Ethiopian texts many of which are known. Most of them are biblical and liturgical books, but there are also some containing texts of a hagiographic or historiographic character.

¹ It is rather difficult to give an exact number of the manuscripts as some of them are still not catalogued and the descriptions are missing.

² The three main institutions have been listed. The fourth collection of Ethiopian manuscripts of St Petersburg had been preserved in the Theological Academy. After the October Revolution it was transferred to the Public Library (now the Russian National Library). Its items as well as the only Ethiopian book (a Psalter) from the library of the Imperial Society of Amateurs of Ancient Writing are now kept among the manuscripts in other, non-Oriental (mostly Church Slavonic and Greek), languages in the Russian Sector of the Manuscript Department of the Russian National Library. The Psalter from the library of the Imperial Society of Amateurs of Ancient Writing, purchased in Egypt by Vladimir Bock, was donated to the Society in 1889. The Imperial Society of Amateurs of Ancient Writing was established in 1877 and existed till the thirties of the twentieth century. Its manuscript collection was transferred to the Public Library in 1932 after a fire in its building.

One of the most outstanding manuscripts of the Russian National Library, bearing the shelf-mark Ef. n.s. 22,³ is the sizable Four Gospels book (31.5x23.5x8 cm)⁴ consisting of 294 folios, made of high quality parchment. It is kept in a slip case made of fine red leather covered with colourful silk, probably of Chinese or Indian origin. According to the colophon, the manuscript was copied by *aläqa* Kaša in the monastery of Maḥdärä Maryam (Bägemdär) in 1895. The round seal of Mənilək II is imprinted in it three times: following the Canon tables (f. 38^r) as well as the Gospels of Luke (f. 228^r) and John (f. 291^v). The codex was manufactured by order of Mənilək II for the Russian Emperor, Nikolaj II. The members of the Ethiopian embassy donated the book together with a golden cross⁵ to the Emperor, most probably on 30 June 1895, during an audience of the Royal family. Lieutenant Nikolaj Leontiev⁶ was present at the event and brought a letter for the Emperor from the Ethiopian Metropolitan Peṭros.⁷ The location of the letter is for the moment unknown. The manuscript indeed bears an old shelf mark that indicates that it was originally preserved in the Museum of the Anichkov Palace in St Petersburg. Then, in 1928, it was transferred to the Public Library.⁸

The history of the formation of collections of Ethiopian manuscripts in St Petersburg

In 1906 there were some 178 Ethiopian manuscripts and letters in five public and two private collections⁹ in St Petersburg. In 1996 there were 318, but they belonged only to three state collections. The increase in number was due to the growing interest in the Russian Empire for Christian Abyssinia, as that country was called in the various documents of that time, and to increasing Russian diplomatic activity in Africa and the Middle East. The faith of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was commonly considered as very

³ 'Ef' stands for 'Ethiopian'. It is a generally accepted abbreviation in the Russian language; 'n.s.' means the new series.

⁴ Here and below for codices: height x width x thickness.

⁵ Its current location is unknown.

⁶ N. Leontiev (1862–1910), Russian explorer, diplomat and adventurer, participated in expeditions to Ethiopia and Mahdist Sudan, organized by the Russian Geographical Society in 1895. Afterwards he returned to Ethiopia and Mənilək II offered him the governorship of so-called Equatorial provinces. Concerning these facts there exists an interesting documentation in the Russian State Navy Archive in St Petersburg—fund 3-1-80, ff. 43–46.

⁷ See Hrenkov 1998.

⁸ Platonov 1996, 3–4, no. 3.

⁹ Collections of N. Lihachev (6 manuscripts) and B. Turaev (5 manuscripts).

close, nearly identical, to that of the Russian Orthodox Church, despite differences in basic dogmatic principles. New manuscripts increased the size of these collections until today.

Strictly speaking, the manuscript collection of the Imperial Public Library started in 1795; however, at that time, the number of manuscripts amounted to no more than 15. The Ethiopian collection of the Library came into being in 1805, when the Russian diplomat Petr Dubrovskij¹⁰ presented his rich collection of manuscripts to Emperor Alexander I; this collection was a result of his twenty-five year-long service at Russian embassies and missions in Western Europe, mostly in France.¹¹ At present the number of West European, Greek, Russian and Oriental manuscripts in the Library's keeping amounts to thousands.¹² In spite of the fact that the Manuscript Department occupies spacious quarters, it is in constant shortage of space for preservation facilities.

Seven of the Ethiopian manuscripts were part of P. Dubrovskij's collection.¹³ On 2 April 1820 one more manuscript from the Library of the Patriarch in Jerusalem was presented by Michael, Metropolitan of Petra in Arabia, to Prince Georgij Avalov.¹⁴ Twelve manuscripts were brought by Constantin von Tischendorf.¹⁵ In 1883 the Public Library purchased the collection of Bishop Porphyrij (Uspenskij), which contained two Ethiopian manuscripts.¹⁶ In 1896 one manuscript came from the collection of the historian and archaeologist Pavel Savvaitov.¹⁷ In 1899 two other manuscripts were acquired from Antonin, the Archimandrite of the Russian Mission in Jeru-

¹⁰ Thompson 1984.

¹¹ Manuscripts of that collection were described by B. Dorn in his catalogue in French (see Dorn 1852) and then in the Russian catalogue of B.A. Turaev (see Turaev 1906).

¹² Olga Vasilyeva, the Head of the Oriental Sector of the Manuscript Department, is an expert in the history of the Oriental manuscripts' collections of the Russian National Library, including the early stage of their formation; see, for instance, Vasilyeva and Rishar 2006; Vasilyeva 1996.

¹³ Turaev 1906, I, nos 1–3, 5–8 (same as Vost. 609–611, 613–616). Here and below: as far as the catalogue by Dorn is concerned, the shelf marks of the manuscripts started with 'Vostochnaja' (abbreviated 'Vost'-'Oriental') and were then numbered. Later they were labelled 'Dorn', with a corresponding number. Then, in the Catalogue by Turaev the 'Dorn' manuscripts received new numbers, and the other numbers were added subsequently.

¹⁴ Turaev 1906, I, no. 4 (Vost. 612). On f. 163^v there is a note in the Georgian language made by Avalov.

¹⁵ Turaev 1906, I, nos 9–20 (Ef. 1–12).

¹⁶ Turaev 1906, I, nos 21–22 (Ef. 13–14).

¹⁷ Turaev 1906, I, no. 23 (Ef. 15).

salem.¹⁸ In the same year one more manuscript was bought¹⁹ and later the final manuscript described by Boris Turaev was purchased from Boris Lukyanov.²⁰

The Ethiopian fund of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Kunstammer) was created at the very end of the nineteenth century. The manuscripts came from private collections of Russians who had stayed and worked in Ethiopia. In particular, one codex and two magic scrolls were left (in his will) by the retired Lieutenant N. Leontiev, famous adventurer, to the Russian Museum as part of his rich ethnographic collection. In 1925 his manuscripts were transferred to the Kunstammer where they are preserved at present. It is also necessary to note here the rich collection, mostly ethnographic, that was brought in 1913 from Ethiopia by Nikolaj Gumilev.²¹

As far as the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts is concerned, seven precious Ethiopian manuscripts were purchased from the private collection of Athanasius Papadopulo-Keramevs, a scholar of Greek origin. At the end of the nineteenth century he lived in Jerusalem, where he gathered a vast collection of manuscripts in different languages. A. Papadopulo-Keramevs had obtained the manuscripts from different people. For instance, one of them was bought from an Italian, Giuseppe Scapellato,²² and three others from an Ethiopian, Daniel Besuneh (Danə'el Bəzunäh).²³ The choice of items indicates that A. Papadopulo-Keramevs was a careful collector interested in particular books of high quality, and in their production. He arrived in Russia where he joined the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society. As a highly religious person he selected manuscripts that include the Gospel of John, the Psalter, an Amharic Catechism, prayer books etc. In financial difficulties, in 1897, he decided to sell the oriental part of his collection. The manuscripts were purchased by the

¹⁸ Turaev 1906, I, nos 24–25 (Ef. 16–17).

¹⁹ Turaev 1906, I, no. 26 (Ef. 18).

²⁰ Pharmacist at the court of Mənilək II.

²¹ On 22 March–5 April 2008, the Kunstammer carried out an expedition dedicated to the memory of N. Gumilev. Its members visited the places in Ethiopia where Gumilev travelled 95 years ago, in 1913. The collection acquired by Gumilev consisted of a vast number of different local objects, pictures of local artists, precious photographs and records of local folklore.

²² Turaev 1906, III, no. 9 (Papadop.-Keram. 5 = Ef. 49). This is the only manuscript of A. Papadopulo-Keramevs' collection that bears the owner's note written by black ink on the reverse of its back cover.

²³ Turaev 1906, III, nos 7 (Papadop.-Keram. 1 = Ef. 17), 8 (Papadop.-Keram. 2 = Ef. 31), 4 (Papadop.-Keram. 3 = Ef. 35).

Imperial Academy of Sciences for a modest sum of 170 rubles in silver²⁴ (the average salary of a worker at that time was c.30 rubles per month).

The history of the collection of Ethiopian manuscripts in St Petersburg is closely connected with the 1895–1896 Russian Red Cross mission to Ethiopia.²⁵ The Russian Empire supported the struggle of the Ethiopians for independence at the end of the nineteenth century. The friendly relations between the two states were strengthened by the feeling of religious fraternity between the Russians and the ‘Orthodox Ethiopian brothers’.

There was an urgent need for medical assistance for wounded soldiers during the Italian–Ethiopian war of 1895–1896 and this was a significant reason for sending the Russian Red Cross mission. Although European diplomats strongly suspected that those activities disguised a Russian attempt to increase its political influence in Ethiopian territory, the mission was welcomed by Mənilək II. The members of the mission landed in Djibouti on 1 May 1896, and soon a temporary military hospital was established in Addis Abāba.

The mission was founded by the Russian Red Cross thanks to 100,000 rubles assigned for that purpose. In Russia, the medical staff of the mission was recruited from the people of high culture; the breadth of their interests contributed much to the formation of a future collection of Ethiopian manuscripts and documents in Russia. The members of the mission had very good professional training. The majority of physicians graduated from St Petersburg Military Academy of Medicine, the famous Russian institution which still maintains its traditions. The mission included the following doctors: K. Goltsinger, K. Bykovskij, R. Bobin, B. Rodzevich, N. Brovtsin, D. Glinskij, L. Perfiljev. Major General Nikolaj Shvedov was at the head of the mission.

The second mission was sent in 1897, and in 1898, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established. The sending of the third medical mission coincided with the establishment of the permanent Russian diplomatic mission in Ethiopia. The diplomatic mission and the hospital were active till 1906. Later, in 1909, in the former premises of the Russian hospital, the first Ethiopian hospital was opened.²⁶

Doctor Aleksandr Kohanovskij arrived in Ethiopia as a member of the diplomatic mission of the Russian Empire and by 1910 he was the only offi-

²⁴ Proceedings of 7 May 1897, § 85.

²⁵ See ‘Russian Red Cross Mission’, *E Ae*, IV (2010), 421b–422b (E. Morozov). At the end of the nineteenth century the Ethiopian manuscript making tradition was still very much alive.

²⁶ The Russian *Däğgazmač* Balča Hospital, opened in 1946, still exists in Addis Abāba.

cial representative of Russia in Ethiopia. He was a person of broad interests. He returned to Russia in 1913 after three years spent in southern Ethiopia, bringing a vast collection of various cultural items, among them pictures, art objects and manuscripts (two codices and six magic scrolls). A. Kohanovskij gave his collection to the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in 1913. Most of the manuscripts contained magic texts, common for magic scrolls, and excerpts from the Gospels, since the doctor was interested in popular beliefs and traditional medicine, widespread and actively applied in the Horn of Africa. This is understandable given the fact that Russian doctors were dealing with sick people who had initially sought a cure with the help of traditional, popular medicine; when they proved ineffective, they consulted the physicians. Thus it was easy for the staff of the Russian Hospital to obtain that kind of manuscript from their patients or from members of their families.

Numerous notebooks, filled by hand, often hardly readable, contain important data connected with the personal experience of doctors.²⁷ Looking through the diaries of the doctors who stayed with the mission in Ethiopia we found no mention of manuscripts or other art objects acquired in Abyssinia and then brought to the Russian Empire. The notebooks that were used by the doctors in Ethiopia are of a different kind. Those of debits and credits contain lists that include sums of money for purchasing medicine, food, everyday articles, such as clothes or payments for transport, but there are no references to art objects or manuscripts.

For those reasons the history of the majority of items conserved in the museums and libraries of St Petersburg is known only partially. Some of the archives of Russian doctors and officials who were active in Ethiopia at the end of the nineteenth century are preserved in the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography and in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, others are scattered among other state archives. They are rich in photographs of a cultural and medical character, there are private and official letters, certificates of honour as well as descriptions of the country and its cultural, ethnographic and anthropological details. Apart from medical notes those accounts contain interesting detailed descriptions of journeys and meetings with Ethiopian high officials, including the Emperor,

²⁷ Doctor D. Glinskij, together with a few other members of the Russian Red Cross mission, worked in Harär, under the auspices of the governor *däggazmač* Mäk^wännən Wäldä Mika^ʿel. When reading Glinskij's memoires kept in the archives of the *Kunst-kammer*, we found information about a common practice of curing in the sense of medical treatment by means of cauterization with a metal staff. Therefore the bodies of local people were often covered with scars. In addition he described the structure of that city and the natural life around it (see Glinskij 1899).

and on the customs of different peoples of Ethiopia, as well as on features of its cities and countryside. The reports of Russian officials concerning the general situation inside the missions and the activities of their members submitted directly to the government of Russia are of special importance.

It is more difficult to explain the interest of Russian doctors and diplomats in purchasing the manuscripts, oriental in general and Ethiopian in particular. As far as P. Dubrovskij is concerned, there is no information about his interests in oriental culture. It is clear that he could not read the oriental manuscripts (that constitute about 15 % of his collection), since they are on different subjects and in different languages (Arabic, Syrian, Coptic, ጊዳዝ (Ethiopic) and Amharic, various Indian languages). It seems that the choice was occasional and the manuscripts were obtained by chance. We can suppose that the composition of his collection reflects the actual situation at antiquarian markets in France at the end of the eighteenth century.

As has already been noted, in 1906 the Ethiopian manuscripts of St Petersburg could be found in five public and two private collections. By the end of the twentieth century manuscripts had been transferred from one collection to another. Both the private collections described by B. Turaev (of P. Dubrovskij and of Bishop Porfirij) now belong to state institutions, but over the course of time new private collections have been made.

The great majority of letters and postcards conserved in the above mentioned archives and three state collections are compiled in Russian and Amharic, but some of them are written in other languages too.²⁸ Quite often these letters are stamped with various Ethiopian seals, including those used by the Ethiopian monastic community in Jerusalem.²⁹ The inscriptions on the seals are usually bilingual, in Ethiopic and Arabic script. The certificates of honour written by a fine hand on parchment are decorated with fine colourful ornaments and are also imprinted with seals. They were given to the Rus-

²⁸ An interesting letter in French constitutes a part of the archive folder of Nikolaj Ashinov in the Manuscript Department of the Russian National Library no. 1950-20(4), ff. 263–265. The letter was written by N. Ashinov in Constantinople in 1888, in the course of his preparations for the second mission to Ethiopia, and is addressed to the Coptic Patriarch, Cyrill.

²⁹ The Ethiopian monastic community in Jerusalem was founded many centuries ago and succeeded in collecting a considerable library of manuscripts. Interesting research on this topic was carried out by B. Turaev at the beginning of the last century (cf. Turaev 1903). The archives of N. Ashinov in the Manuscript Department of Russian National Library No 1950-20(4) contain a letter of Archimandrit George (*abba* Wäldä Säma^ᶜət) in Amharic (ff. 2–3), written in Jerusalem in 1880, according to the Ethiopian calendar (1887/1888 CE), to the Russian Emperor. Archimandrit George was evidently the head of the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem at that time.

sians who stayed in Ethiopia serving their country; some were even awarded the *Cross of Solomon* by the Ethiopian government.³⁰ Their activities were of different kinds, mainly military or medical.

Catalogues

In 1837 Prof. Bernhard Dorn, a member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences,³¹ published a description of twelve Ethiopian manuscripts kept in St Petersburg at that time: five from the Institute of Oriental Languages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,³² that is now part of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts collection, and seven from the Imperial Public Library.³³

It is worth mentioning that, at that time, the general approach to the description of the manuscripts was not what it is today. For example, letters and some other documents were described side by side with manuscripts since they were written ‘by hand’. That approach has been rejected: letters and documents are no longer considered as a part of the manuscript collection and are no longer included in the archival documentation. The principles of compiling catalogues have also changed significantly.

Pavel Kokovtsov made a description of all Ethiopian manuscripts which had entered the Library’s collection before 1889, i.e. twenty-three items,³⁴ and which included those previously described by B. Dorn in French.³⁵ But by 1906, the most important—and still widely used—catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts in St Petersburg, in Russian, was issued by B. Turaev.³⁶ Ninety

³⁰ Russian State Navy Archives in St Petersburg, fund 417-5-4760, f. 10.

³¹ This famous Russian orientalist of German origin (1805–1881) was the second Director of the Asiatic Museum. He started teaching the classical Ethiopic language (ግዕዝ) for the first time in the Russian Empire at Kharkov University, where he was the Head of the Department of oriental languages from 1829–1835. He became famous for his studies of Islamic and oriental Christian manuscripts. His tomb is in the Smolenskoe Lutheran cemetery in St Petersburg.

³² Dorn 1837; these manuscripts were donated to the Institute by Emperor Nikolaj I in 1836 as part of the collection of oriental manuscripts. Before that they belonged to Count Suhtelen. They bear interesting notes in Arabic that indicate that they were the property of the monastery of St Stephen, near St Peter’s in the Vatican. This must be the Ethiopian community ‘Santo Stefano dei Mori’.

³³ Dorn 1838.

³⁴ Kokovtsov 1889.

³⁵ Apart from the description of the manuscripts published by P. Kokovtsov and the Ethiopian section (V) of the manuscript catalogue in French compiled by B. Dorn (1852, 549–558).

³⁶ Turaev 1906.

years later, another catalogue in Russian was compiled by Vjacheslav Platonov.³⁷

It is remarkable that, in B. Turaev's 1906 catalogue, the central problem appears to have been the dating of the manuscripts. A very limited number was dated following the mention of a king or a metropolitan in the text, or on the basis of palaeographic criteria. The author felt secure in assigning ten manuscripts to the fifteenth century, but in most of the cases, to avoid a mistake, he did not attempt any dating.

All in all, B. Turaev described fifty-three Ethiopian manuscripts, which are now preserved in the Russian National Library.³⁸ As for V. Platonov, he added five items, including one which came from the private collection of Prof. Ignatij Krachkovskij, Member of The Russian Academy of Sciences, in 1974.³⁹

Some of the catalogues' descriptions feature particular details about the manuscripts,⁴⁰ but, compared with modern cataloguing standards, the information provided about the items' physical shape and content is quite insufficient. Consequently, a new general catalogue of all Ethiopian manuscripts preserved in St Petersburg state collections needs to be made.⁴¹

Damaged and lost manuscripts

Today the conditions for preserving manuscripts are good and the keepers' records are precise, but it was not always like that. In the 1852 catalogue of manuscripts of the Imperial Public Library, B. Dorn described nine Ethiopian manuscripts (numbers 609–617). The same number of manuscripts was described by P. Kokovtsov in 1889.⁴² However, in the 1906 catalogue of B. Turaev, one of the manuscripts, a collection of protective prayers (Dorn 617⁴³), is missing. Its loss is probably due to its size. However, this small codex was not necessarily stolen; it may have been misplaced or lost during a renovation of the Library's building and storage facilities.

³⁷ Platonov 1996.

³⁸ Twenty-eight manuscripts as a part of original collection of the library, twenty-four manuscripts from the Theological Academy and one manuscript from the Imperial Society of Amateurs of Ancient Writing.

³⁹ Platonov 1996, 12, no. 5 (Krachkovskij 78).

⁴⁰ For example, MS Dorn 612 described in Turaev 1906, 11–13, no. 4, which contains in f. 163^v an additional note in the Georgian language by Georgij Avalov, and the date of its receipt (20 April 1820) from the Patriarchal Library in Jerusalem.

⁴¹ Not only of those described in the catalogues listed here, but also some of the manuscripts found in non-Ethiopian collections.

⁴² Kokovtsov 1889.

⁴³ See no. 13.

There were cases of disappearance of, or damage to manuscripts of the Public Library and other institutions of Leningrad in the course of the Second World War and evacuation. Parts of the bindings of a few manuscripts (usually wooden boards) went missing.⁴⁴ Thus the actual physical appearance of several manuscripts differs from the description in the catalogue. Among the manuscripts conserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, the binding of the manuscript Ef. 4 (Orlov 17) is described by B. Turaev⁴⁵ as follows: two wooden boards with a leather spine, with no information about any damage. At present each of the two wooden boards is split into three parts. This seems to have occurred long ago. But elsewhere in the catalogue, we read about a binding that consists of two damaged wooden boards of which only one half is preserved.⁴⁶ In his catalogue V. Platonov describes the binding of the manuscript Ef. 50⁴⁷ in the following way: wooden boards without spine; upper board and the first two folios are detached from the codex. There is no mention of the fact that two upper corners of the upper board are missing; one of them is still preserved together with the manuscript, the other one is lost.

A special case is represented by the fine manuscript of the Gospel of John (Dorn 613) that most probably arrived in the Library already damaged. In the catalogues it is described only very briefly.⁴⁸ It bears an old well done binding of wooden boards covered with brown leather, for the most part destroyed.⁴⁹ It consists of 147 folios, the last 20 of them were damaged, quite possibly burned so that the upper part (almost a half) of folios with the text is lost. According to the note in the lower part of f. 144, signed by a member of the Library staff and dated by 3 May 1905, it is possible to conclude that those folios were damaged before the arrival of the manuscript in the Library. F. 3 is only partly extant (this was mentioned in the description of the manuscript by B. Dorn). It once bore a fine miniature, most probably of St John the Evangelist, a big portion of which (some 70 %) was cut off for an unknown reason, and at an unknown moment (fig. 1). Now it is difficult to draw any

⁴⁴ As far as binding is concerned see Platonov 2003.

⁴⁵ Turaev 1906, III, 73–74, no. 27.

⁴⁶ Turaev 1906, III, 85, no. 44 (Ef. 25 = Orlov 38).

⁴⁷ Platonov 1996, 24.

⁴⁸ Dorn 1852, 557; Turaev 1906, I, 13–14, no. 5 (Vost. 613).

⁴⁹ For all of them good original bindings, or bindings manufactured in European manner are attested.

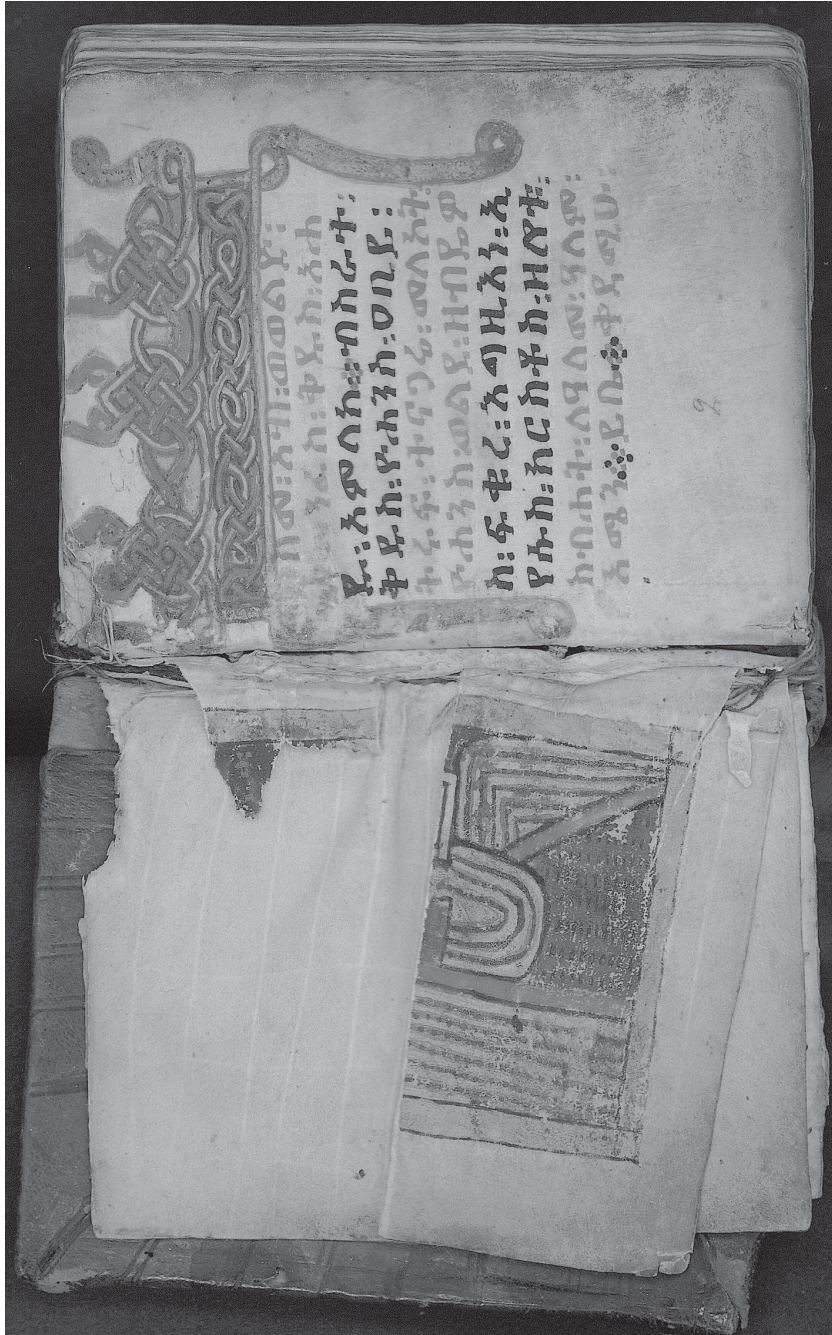


Fig. 1: Dorn 613, ff. 1^v-2^r

conclusions about this miniature. All that can be seen is its yellow frame and a figure dressed in yellow, blue and red, against a background of yellow and black lines.

Among the Ethiopian manuscripts in St Petersburg which disappeared or are no longer accessible to the public, a magic scroll from the private collection of Prof. Fedor Uspenskij, a Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which was described in detail by I. Krachkovskij,⁵⁰ should be mentioned. At present it cannot be found in any of the three collections of Ethiopian manuscripts kept in the institutions of St Petersburg, nor in the personal collection of Prof. F. Uspenskij in the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences. We can only guess that it was retained as a souvenir by the relatives of F. Uspenskij or sold by them to a collector. One line of enquiry did not exclude the possibility that the scroll might be one of the manuscripts recently bought from an antiquarian bookshop,⁵¹ together with Ef. n.s. 28 (see below). However, after a thorough analysis and comparison of that scroll with the description made by I. Krachkovskij in 1928 it became obvious that this possibility can be ruled out. Thus the present location of the scroll from the private collection of F. Uspenskij is unknown.

Six manuscripts recently acquired by the Russian National Library

Six manuscripts (three codices, two scrolls and an ‘accordion book’ (cf. Fig. 4)) have been recently acquired by the Russian National Library; five of them are not included in the catalogues mentioned above (apart from Ef. n.s. 30). Three were purchased in an antiquarian bookshop in 2006 (Ef. n.s. 27, Ef. n.s. 28, Ef. n.s. 29) and three others (Ef. n.s. 25, Ef. n.s. 26 and Ef. n.s. 30) belonged to the late Sevir Chernetsov.⁵² Two manuscripts from Chernetsov’s collection entered the Library in 1998 (Ef. n.s. 25, Ef. n.s. 26). The last one was bought from Milena Rozhdestvenskaja, the widow of S. Chernetsov, in 2006, after the death of her husband (Ef. n.s. 30).⁵³

Here and below, the following parameters are given in brackets, after the current shelf mark: (height, width, thickness, number of folios) for codices and (height, width) for scrolls.

Ef. n.s. 25 is a codex (17x12x4.2 cm, 122 folios) kept in a traditional slip-case (*maḥdär*), dating to the nineteenth century. The Gəʿəz text, written in two columns, seventeen lines (ff. 7^r–115^r), is *Säyfa šällase* ‘Sword of the

⁵⁰ Krachkovskij 1928.

⁵¹ The bookshop ‘Terzija’ in the Italjanskaja Street in St Petersburg opened in 1994.

⁵² See ‘Chernetsov, Sevir’, *EAE*, V (2014), 291b–292b (S.A. Frantsouzoff).

⁵³ As for the printed books on Ethiopia from his rich private library, she generously donated them to the library of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts.

Trinity'. The codex also contains some additional notes. A note on f. 5^v has been erased; in the lower margin, there is a frame with two signatures: finger-prints of the size of c.3.5–4.0x3.0 cm. On ff. 115^v–121^v there is a supplication mentioning *abunä Wäldä Śällase*. On the last page, in f. 121^v, the name of the owner was written twice and then erased.

The beautiful ornamental designs filled with plant motifs, birds, human heads and buildings are executed by a skilled artist with many tiny details, on ff. 7^r, 51^r, 64^v, 70^v, 87^r (fig. 2), 97^v, 106^r (fig. 3).

Ef. n.s. 26 is a codex (14.5x10.5x1.5 cm) written on paper and produced in the mid-twentieth century. It contains the book of chants with musical notation.

Ef. n.s. 30 is a parchment magic scroll (148x6.5 cm), dating to the late nineteenth–early twentieth century. It became part of the collection of the Russian National Library after the death of its owner, S. Chernetsov. The scroll contains 197 lines of text. A short description of this manuscript is included in the catalogue of V. Platonov.⁵⁴ The scroll includes rather simple ornaments



Fig. 2: Ef. n.s. 25, f. 87^r

⁵⁴ Platonov 1996, 83, no. 144.



Fig. 3: Ef. n.s. 25, f. 106^r

at the beginning and at the end, as well as one in the central part, with a cross and some lines of magic letters. Some such letters are inserted into two special tables and inside the ornament at the end of the scroll.

Three other manuscripts were bought by the Russian National Library in the antiquarian bookshop (see above). Thus it is hardly possible to trace the provenience of these items.

Ef. n.s. 27 is a parchment manuscript (13.5x11x3.0–3.5 cm; 44 folios) dating to the late nineteenth–early twentieth century. It contains *Ṣälot zä-’əgzə’tənä Maryam bä-Däbrä Golgota* ‘The prayer of our Lady Mary on the mount of Golgotha on the twenty-first of Säne’ on ff. 3^r–42^v (incomplete). It has fine wooden boards covered with light-brown leather bearing a typical tooled ornament with a cross in the centre. Most quires are numbered.

It contains eight miniatures (four couples) and one ornamental band at the beginning of the text depicted in a very interesting and unusual palette in delicate pink, dark green, cream and black. Each pair of miniatures is elaborated in an unnumbered binion-quire inserted between regular text quires. The first miniature (f. 1^v) is a magic picture showing a face in a square surrounded by heads of birds and ornaments. On the right (f. 2^r), is a half-size archangel with wings and a kind of staff, and two heads of angels with wings on the left and right. The miniature on f. 15^v shows an archangel with a sword

and wings, and on f. 16^r, the Virgin with Child and two angels above. Under both figures beautiful ornaments are drawn. On ff. 29^v–30^r there are two figures of clerics inside a decorative frame, one holding a cross and the other a book, each with a staff. The last miniatures (ff. 43^v–44^r) represent two human figures with crowns (?) on their heads, the one on the left with a musical instrument.

Ef. n.s. 28 is a scroll (201 x 10.4 cm). On the bottom of the scroll there is a leather strip, to tie it. It can be dated to the end of the nineteenth–early twentieth century and contains 218 lines of text that can be identified as prayers against *Šotäläy* and *Šotälawit* (e.g. ‘demons’), the legend about St Susənyos and Wərzəlyä etc.

It is decorated with three pictures. The first represents a full size angel with a sword in his right hand and a sheath in his left. The second miniature bears a magic ornament with a face in the central section and with four eyes and four snakes around it (‘The captured demon’). The last is drawn on the bottom of the scroll, under the text, and represents an angel cutting the head of a devil, whose height is half that of the angel.

Ef. n.s. 29 (fig. 4) is a parchment ‘accordion book’ (parchment (length x width): 135 x 5.5 cm; wooden plates (width x height x thickness): 6.2–6.5 x 4.8 x 0.9; thickness of the amulet: 4.5 cm; each segment (width x height): 5.5 x 4.2; thirty-one segments in total); the two wooden plates attached to the extremities of the parchment with white threads. It can be dated to the late nineteenth–early twentieth century. It contains 247 lines of text. The end of the text is difficult to read.

The manuscript includes nine tiny miniatures, by a skilled artist. The first one represents the Holy Trinity above a rectangular net with ornaments, and eyes and a face in the middle. The second one shows an oval net with a face in the central square. The third one is a face in the middle of an ornament. The fourth miniature is a net of nine equal rectangular sections with faces depicted in five of them. The fifth also consists of nine sections with ornaments, and a face in the central section, but the angles of this net are rounded. The sixth miniature is the most interesting. Its palette is enriched with blue. There is a full size angel with a sword and two wings. He is carrying a large chain in his left hand, with the devil attached to the other end of the chain, which is fastened around the devil’s left leg (fig. 5). The seventh miniature represents two faces of angels with wings. The eighth one is an image of three crosses: two of them, very simple, are drawn in black on the left and right, while the largest, more refined, is depicted in black and red in the centre. The last miniature represents two heads of angels with wings, one under the other, as a kind of mirror, decorated with crosses and other motifs.

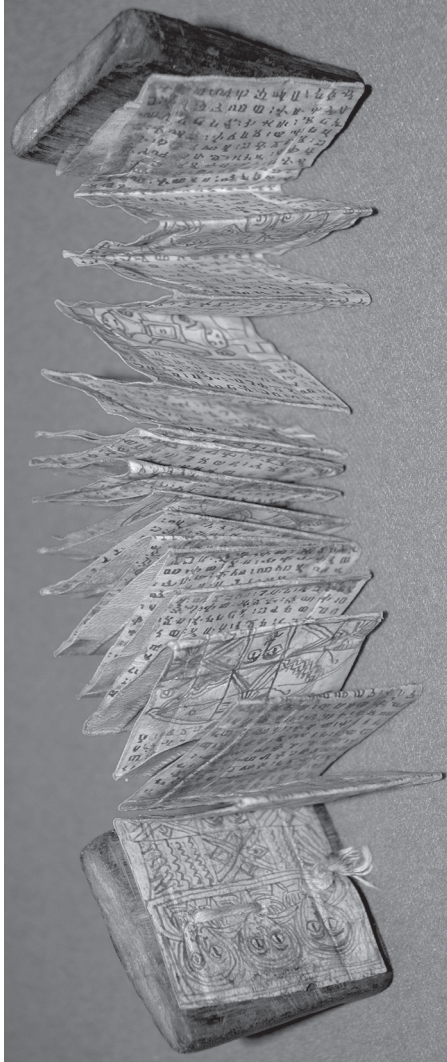


Fig. 4: Ef. n.s. 29



Fig. 5: Ef. n.s. 29

The private collection of Mihail Zvjagin

Any description of the private collections of Ethiopian manuscripts in St Petersburg cannot ignore the vast collection of African art belonging to the St Petersburg painter, Mihail Zvjagin and, among the many objects of artistic value, the eight Ethiopian manuscript books constitute an important part of his collection. The owner selected the manuscripts, paying careful attention to their decorative elements.

The Ethiopian manuscripts purchased by M. Zvjagin are significant among the other collections of that kind currently found in St Petersburg. In contrast to the three manuscripts, which belonged to S. Chernetsov, the Ethiopian codices in M. Zvjagin's collection are older, dating to the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries.

One of M. Zvjagin's manuscripts is a Psalter (23 x 20,5 x 6,8; 201 folios). It is decorated with six miniatures (ff. 37^v, 38^r, 105^v, 106^r, 200^v, 201^r), which are not connected directly to the contents of the Psalter. The miniatures depict scenes of the Annunciation, of Jesus with his disciples, and of Jesus with two Apostles. All the miniatures are finely executed in red, yellow, black and green.

A further manuscript belonging to M. Zvjagin is a collection of religious works, among which the *Dārsanä Mika'el*, Homiliary for the feasts of Archangel Michael, occupies a central place. It includes six miniatures that seem to be executed by the same hand and in the same manner as in the previous manuscript (Psalter).

Two smaller codices, one of which is in poor state of preservation, contain respectively six and five miniatures that resemble those described above. Some of these images were recently published by Sergej Frantsouzoff.⁵⁵

Conclusion

The history of the collections of oriental manuscripts in St Petersburg is very long and interesting, sometimes obscure and not always easy to trace. The study of archival materials takes much time and does not always yield the expected results. However, at times, outstanding and unexpected items can be found.

The Ethiopian manuscript heritage conserved in St Petersburg is rich and includes very interesting samples of codices, scrolls and letters. Even a quick look reveals the competence of their collectors and the efforts they made in selecting the items.

⁵⁵ Frantsouzoff 2009.

However, some valuable samples of the Ethiopian manuscript tradition have still to be described.⁵⁶ The available descriptions are outdated and sometimes miss important details. There is a strong need for the creation and publication of a new detailed catalogue correctly describing the physical features and content of the manuscripts, and tracing their history when possible. It seems reasonable to divide such a catalogue into two parts, one for codices and one for scrolls. Inside each section, the manuscripts should be arranged in strict accordance with their shelf marks. A new catalogue should be exhaustive and embrace all Ethiopian codices and scrolls now preserved in the St Petersburg collections. It should be compiled in English, since the Russian language of the existing catalogues is a barrier for foreign scholars.

The St Petersburg collections of Ethiopian manuscripts are still evolving: new items, here and there, emerge in state institutions and in private hands, in shops and markets. It is an important task of Russian scholars to register them in good time and to make their descriptions available to Ethiopianists all over the world.

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⁵⁶ For instance, two codices (Ef. 107, 108) and two scrolls (Ef. 118, 119) from the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts have not been included in any catalogue and still need to be described.

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Summary

For more than two centuries St Petersburg, the capital of the former Russian Empire, has been famous for its collections of Ethiopian manuscripts, objects of art and documents concerning Ethiopian history. They are concentrated in three state institutions and in several private collections of African art. This article provides a short history of formation of Ethiopian manuscript collections of Russia and describes the process of their description and study. Some interesting and unpublished items were generally described and their miniatures published.