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# The Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Church in Jerusalem during the Early Solomonic Period: Evidence from Ethiopic Manuscripts

**Abstract:** This article presents a few Ethiopic manuscripts coming from and around the so-called Early Solomonic Period (1270–1527), preserved nowadays in European institutions but presumably coming from Jerusalem, where they were produced or sent from the Ethiopian kingdom. They represent an additional witness of the historical presence of the Ethiopian Christian community in Jerusalem already during the fourteenth century, and the interest of some Ethiopian kings towards this centre, manifested through donations of copies of certain Ethiopic texts to enrich its book collection. The codices presented also help us conjecture the presence of an independent Ethiopic scribal production in the Holy City.

## 1 Introduction

Although Christian Ethiopians always perceived themselves to be very close to the Holy Land, passing down numerous traditional beliefs used to validate this connection,<sup>1</sup> we do not know exactly when the contacts between the two Christian churches started and Ethiopian Christian communities emerged in Jerusalem. Mention in Latin sources<sup>2</sup> regarding the presence of Christian ‘Ethiopian’ pilgrims in Bethlehem, together with the finding of the Aksumite coins<sup>3</sup> in Jerusalem, suggests early contacts between the Holy City and Christian Ethiopia and the existence of Ethiopian pilgrims<sup>4</sup> in Jerusalem already during the fourth century. Nev-

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1 Examples include the tradition that the Ethiopian kings of the Solomonic dynasty descend from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (Makedda), the identification of the Ethiopian city of ‘Aksum with Zion, or the tradition that Christianity came to ‘Aithiopia’ through the activity of an ‘Ethiopian’ eunuch (of Queen Candace) who was at the Temple of Jerusalem during the Apostles times. Cf. Stoffregen Pedersen 2007.

2 Mention given in two letters sent in the 380s CE by two disciples of St Jerome to friends in Rome; cf. Hilberg (ed.) 1910, 339–340; cf. also Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 1–2.

3 For a recent study on Aksumite coins, see Butts 2023.

4 Ethiopian pilgrimage abroad could be dated back to the foundation of the Ethiopian Church, i.e. to the fourth century, but a more regular movement of people between the Aksumite kingdom

ertheless, a more concrete picture of an Ethiopian Christian community in the Holy City, which began to flourish in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries, derives from a variety of sources dating from the fourteenth century onwards. These sources include letters from foreign missionaries in Jerusalem, from Ethiopian kings or nobles, legal documents, and colophons or additional notes in Ethiopic manuscripts.<sup>5</sup>

Many manuscripts were probably brought to Jerusalem by Ethiopian pilgrims for liturgical or monastic purposes; some were also plausibly sent to the monks by Ethiopian friends, benefactors and kings; others were probably produced in the Holy City itself. While the majority of the Ethiopic manuscripts preserved nowadays in Jerusalem in the Ethiopian archbishopric,<sup>6</sup> which preserves the largest number of Ethiopic manuscripts in the city, date from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, many codices from earlier times, namely, from the fourteenth/fifteenth century, have supposedly been destroyed or dispersed in various ways.<sup>7</sup>

This paper briefly presents some Ethiopic manuscripts that are nowadays kept in European institutions but which, presumably, were produced in Jerusalem or were sent there from the Ethiopian empire, and attempts to conjecture possible contacts, connections or even parallels between the scribal backgrounds of some of them. This investigation concerns manuscripts created within and around the time of Ethiopian history commonly known as the Early Solomonic Period (1270–1527),<sup>8</sup> particularly between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, with a special focus

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and areas of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, as envoys, merchants, bishops and pilgrims, happened most probably from the sixth century onwards. On this, cf. the recent important book on the monastery of Santo Stefano dei Mori by Kelly 2024, particularly 31–32.

5 Cf. Stoffregen Pedersen 2007.

6 Ephraim Isaac 1984 gives a short inventory (with the title of the main work and dating) of the manuscripts kept in this archbishopric, and in the Ethiopian monasteries of Dayr as-Sulṭān (on this monastery, see Stoffregen Pedersen 2005) and Dabra Gannat Kidāna Məḥrat (on this monastery, see Stoffregen Pedersen 2007). The number of the inventoried manuscripts is 764, of which 569 manuscripts are preserved in the main library of the archbishop's residence, 33 in the monastery of Dayr as-Sulṭān, and 162 in the monastery of Dabra Gannat (cf. Ephraim Isaac 1984, 57). Other repositories in Jerusalem holding Ethiopic manuscripts include the Jewish National and University Library, with twenty-seven uncatalogued manuscripts; the Armenian patriarchate, with eleven manuscripts and nine fragments (mostly dating before the sixteenth century; on them, see in particular Ephraim Isaac 1976); the Greek Orthodox patriarchate, with nineteen manuscripts. On these repositories and on the related bibliography, see the online database <<http://www.menestrele.fr/?-Jerusalem-&lang=fr#2190>> (accessed on 7 November 2022). For a recent study of some archival documents of the Ethiopian archbishopric in Jerusalem, see Anceel 2018.

7 Cf. Ephraim Isaac 1984, 54.

8 This is the time span considered by the ITIESE project.

on some of the copies investigated by the project ‘Demarginalizing medieval Africa: Images, texts, and identity in early Solomonic Ethiopia (1270–1527)’ (ITIESE).<sup>9</sup>

## 2 Ethiopic medieval manuscripts to and from Jerusalem

Vatican City, BAV, Borg. et. 3 is an early and renowned example of an Ethiopic manuscript created in the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Church at the court of an Ethiopian king but sent to Jerusalem, and from there moved to other destinations.<sup>10</sup> This is a fourteenth-century copy of the *Maṣḥafa nagašt* (‘Book of Kings’),<sup>11</sup> which was donated to the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem by the Ethiopian king ‘Amda Ṣəyon I (r. 1314–1344), especially as a votive gift to the church of St Mary of Golgotha for its own usage.<sup>12</sup> In a final colophon on fol. 188<sup>ra</sup> we read in fact:

ዘንተ ፡ መጽሐፈ ፡ ነገሥት ፡ በዓዕኩ ፡ አነ ፡ ዐምደ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ ወስመ ፡ መንግሥትዬ ፡ ንብረ ፡ መስቀል ፡ ንጉሠ ፡ ኢትዮጵያ ፡ ለእግዚእትዬ ፡ ማርያም ፡ ለኢየሩሳሌም ፡

I, King ‘Amda Ṣəyon, and my regnal name Gabra Masqal, king of Ethiopia, gave this *Book of Kings* as a votive gift to my Lady Mary,<sup>13</sup> to Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup>

The codex is nowadays preserved in Rome, in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, but before it was kept in the monastery of Santo Stefano dei Mori,<sup>15</sup> where it was

<sup>9</sup> On the illuminated manuscripts surveyed by the ITIESE project, housed in public collections in Germany and the United Kingdom, see Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022, 82–83 and Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Images of the manuscript are available here: <[https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Borg.et.3](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.et.3)> (accessed on 12 December 2022). The manuscript is described by Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 782–787. On the history of this manuscript, see Rahlfs 1918, 184–187, 198–200. See also Roupp 1902.

<sup>11</sup> Text with CAe 1719, edited by Dillmann 1853–1894, vol. 2/1 and vol. 2/2.

<sup>12</sup> On this note and this regnal donation, see Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 130–131.

<sup>13</sup> According to Cerulli (cf. Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 130), this church, dedicated to St Mary, should be identified with the church of St Mary of Golgotha, property of the Ethiopian Church at the time of ‘Amda Ṣəyon I. On this church, see also Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 120–121.

<sup>14</sup> Transcription and translation of the note made by myself based on the image available online.

<sup>15</sup> On Santo Stefano dei Mori, see Fiaccadori 2010. The Borgian manuscripts, that is, those manuscripts preserved at the Museo Borgiano, together with the remaining ones from Santo Stefano dei Mori, entered the Vatican Library in 1902 (cf. Fiaccadori 2010, 531; cf. also Grébaut and Tisse-

most probably present already before the year 1694.<sup>16</sup> In an additional and more recent note,<sup>17</sup> written at the bottom margin of the incipit page of the manuscript (fol. 3<sup>r</sup>), a certain 'Abbā Māḥṣanta Māryām from Māndāmbā writes that he himself brought this book, property of Jerusalem, in the year 1637, with the aim to bring it back again to the original place after having printed it. In the note, however, he does not specify exactly the place from where the manuscript was moved; we read: 'በ፲፫፻፯[sic]፻፴፯[ ] እምልደተ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ ለዝንቱ፡ መጽሐፍ፡ አምጸእከዋ፡ እነ፡ አባ፡ ማሕጸንተ፡ ማርያም፡ ዘማንዳምባ፡ በእንተ፡ አብነት፡[sic] ማሀ[sic]ትም፡ ንዋየ፡ ኢየሩሳሌም፡ ንሚጦ፡ እምድሕረ፡ ሀተምነ፡',<sup>18</sup> 'In 1637<sup>19</sup> CE, I, 'Abbā Māḥṣanta Māryām zaMāndāmbā brought this book as an exemplar for print. It is the property of Jerusalem. Let us return it after we have printed it'. The name of Māḥṣanta Māryām appears among the Ethiopian monks who repopulated the monastery of Santo Stefano dei Mori after 1634, also bringing other books and maintaining 'fruitful relationships' with several scholars of the time.<sup>20</sup>

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rant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 21, and 21, n. 1). Again, on this monastery, its origin, organisation and pilgrims, etc., see Kelly 2024 mentioned above.

**16** About this hypothesis, cf. Rahlfs 1918, 184.

**17** The note is already discussed by Roupp 1902, esp. 303, and 303, n. 2 (he gives the German translation and the transliteration).

**18** Transcription and translation made by myself directly from the manuscript, on the image available online. The same note is also found in the manuscript Paris, BnF, éthiopien 2, manuscript copied, together with manuscript Paris, BnF, éthiopien 1 by Johann Michael Wansleben from the manuscript Cambridge, CUL, BFBS 169 (on this manuscript see below), during his visit to Santo Stefano dei Mori, in Rome, in 1666 (on this copying cf. below n. 28). The note mentioning 'Abbā Māḥṣanta Māryām was copied by Wansleben on the paper manuscript BnF éthiopien 2 on p. 410 (note transcribed by Zotenberg 1877, 3b; it is also visible on the manuscript's images available on <<https://betamasafeft.eu/manuscripts/BNFet2/viewer>> (accessed on 14 June 2024)), but with the variant of the year at the beginning, that is, በ፲፫፻፳፯ instead of በ፲፫፻፴፯, as it appears in the manuscript BAV Borg. et. 3 (on the date, as it is written in BAV Borg. et. 3, cf. also below n. 19). On a discussion about the presence of the same note in both manuscripts, i.e. BnF éthiopien 2 and BAV Borg. et. 3, see Roupp 1902, 335–336.

**19** The date mentioned in the note is mistakenly written as 1736 but it should be read as 1637. This has already been reported by Rahlfs 1918, 185, where we read: 'Im Jahre 1637 nach Christi Geburt', and by Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 786, as 'በ፲፫፻፳፯ (in cod. በ፲፫፻፴፯ <=> perperam script.)'.

**20** On this cf. Fiaccadori 2010. Santo Stefano dei Mori was an Ethiopian establishment until 1680, with a peak of the Ethiopian population, autonomy and influence reached in the first half of the sixteenth century. The monastery was affected by a lack of population in 1680; the library was temporarily closed in 1628 and the books gathered there were transferred to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (cf. Kelly 2024, 1–2; cf. also Fiaccadori 2010).

In addition to BAV Borg. et. 3, another well-known manuscript sent to Jerusalem from the Ethiopian kingdom is Vatican City, BAV, Borg. et. 2,<sup>21</sup> a fifteenth-century witness (before 1442) of the *Senodos*.<sup>22</sup> We learn from a donation note on the first folios of the book (fols 3<sup>a</sup>–4<sup>vb</sup>) that this manuscript was donated to the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem by King Zar'a Yā'qob (r. 1434–1468) in the eighth year of his reign (i.e. 1441/1442), probably as a 'royal call to order, enjoining the community to use the standard text' of this work.<sup>23</sup> Alessandro Bausi hypothesises that a Coptic canonical collection was added to the first nucleus, after a first phase when the Ethiopic *Senodos* was composed only of Melkite canons, translated from an Arabic text circulating in the Melkite community of Egypt, creating an 'original mixture'. BAV Borg. et. 2, one of the manuscripts containing the Coptic addition, was, thus, sent by Zar'a Yā'qob to Jerusalem, where there was probably still a Melkite *Senodos*.<sup>24</sup>

The note, written in the first person of the king, starts with the following words:

(fol. 3<sup>a</sup>) በስመ ፡ አብ ፡ ወወልድ ፡ ወመንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ አሐዱ ፡ አምላክ ፡ = ፡ [...] ተጽሕፈት ፡ ዛቲ ፡ መልእክት ፡ ውስተ ፡ ዛቲ ፡ መጽሐፈ ፡ ሴኖዶስ ፡ እምነቢየ ፡ እምነብ ፡ ዘርእ ፡ ያዕቆብ ፡ ወስመ ፡ መንግሥትየ ፡ ቁስጠንጢኖስ ፡ እምአመ ፡ አንበረኒ ፡ አምላክ ፡ እስራኤል ፡ በብዝሃ ፡ ምሕረቱ ፡ ዲበ ፡ መንበረ ፡ መ(fol. 3<sup>b</sup>)ንግሥተ ፡ ኢትዮጵያ ፡ በ፰ዓመት ፡ እንዘ ፡ ሀሎኩ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ሀገረ ፡ ሴዋ ፡ እንተ ፡ ትሰመይ ፡ ተጉለት ፡ ትብጻሕ ፡ ኀበ ፡ ፍቁራዦ ፡ ማኅበረ ፡ ቅዱሳን ፡ እለ ፡ ይነብሩ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ኢየሩሳሌም ፡ ሀገር ፡ ቅድስት ፡ በሰላመ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ አሜን ።

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God. [...] This letter was written in this book of the *Senodos* by me, by Zar'a Yā'qob, and my name of reign Q<sup>w</sup>asṭanṭinos [Constantine], from when the God of Israel placed me, with the multitude of His Mercy, on the throne of the kingdom of Ethiopia, in the year 8, while I was in the [or 'in

21 For a description of the manuscript, see Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 767–782; see also Bausi (ed.) 1995a, XVIII.

22 The *Senodos* is the most important canonico-liturgical collection of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Church (CAe 2317), which includes various writings, for example, prayers, Biblical canons, moral teachings and rulers. This text has been critically edited by Alessandro Bausi (Bausi (ed.) 1995a and Bausi (tr.) 1995b), who also used the copy BAV Borg. et. 2 for the edition. On this work, see also Bausi 1990; Bausi 1992; and Bausi 2010b.

23 Bausi 1992, 19.

24 For this and other details cf. Bausi 1992, particularly 16, 18–19.

a'?) region of Sewā, which is named Tagwəlat.<sup>25</sup> Let it [the letter] arrive to my friends, the community of saints who live in Jerusalem, Holy City, with the peace of the Lord, Amen.<sup>26</sup>

The codex CUL BFBS 169 (= Cowley I)<sup>27</sup>, containing a copy of the Octateuch,<sup>28</sup> is another gift that the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem received most probably during the fifteenth century.<sup>29</sup> The manuscript has an extensive colophon (fols 283<sup>vb</sup>–284<sup>vb</sup>) (Figs 1, 2, 3), which follows the explicit of the text and a row of coronis; this long note, if it seems to be written by the same hand as the main text, codicologically it appears instead to be divided into four different subparts.<sup>30</sup> I entirely report and translate<sup>31</sup> the colophon hereafter, dividing the text (and respective translation) into four sub-notes, also arbitrarily numbered (= 1, 2, 3, 4) according to their sequence on the leaves:

25 Tagwəlat is a place name also mentioned in the *Chronicle of 'Amda Šəyon* (CAe 4275); cf., for example, in the critical edition of the text by Marrassini (ed., tr.) 1993, 52, l. 15. On this area see Ege 2010.

26 Note transcribed and translated by myself directly from the manuscript (pictures kindly shared with me by Alessandro Bausi); for the entire note, with a Latin translation, cf. Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 779–781. On other elements of the letter, cf. also Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 1, 237–238.

27 Cf. Cowley 1982, 68, 70.

28 CAe 2083. Copy, with siglum F, used in the edition of the text by Dillmann 1853–1894, vol. 1. Cf. also Cowley 1982, 70 and Rahlfs 1918, 166. As anticipated above (see n. 18), direct copies of manuscript CUL BFBS 169, reproduced in Rome by Johann Michael Wansleben, during his visit to Santo Stefano dei Mori, in 1666, are manuscripts BnF éthiopien 1 and éthiopien 2 (the description of both manuscripts is in Zotenberg 1877, 1a–4a). On Johann Michael Wansleben, see e.g. Bausi 2015; on the copying of these two manuscripts from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, cf. particularly Bausi 2015, 213, and Zotenberg 1877, 1a).

29 This is one of the manuscripts from the United Kingdom public collections which has been photographed by the ITIESE team (Sophia Dege-Müller, Jacopo Gnisci, Jonas Karlsson) during April 2022; for the description of the manuscript made by them, see Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023, 164–168. They have kindly shared the images of the colophon with me, in order to be analysed for the present paper. For one description of the manuscript, see Cowley 1982, 70–72. For details on the history of the manuscript, see Rahlfs 1918, 161–184, 200–203.

30 They consist of a first part (1) with a few initial lines on fol. 283<sup>vb</sup>, written at the bottom of the page, after the explicit of the text and a row of coronis; a second part (2) is represented by three lines written on fol. 284<sup>r</sup>, on one column, under a note in Arabic, and framed by two horizontal black lines, one above and one below. After these lines, another part (3), always on fol. 284<sup>r</sup>, is written in a bigger and white script ('negative' script) on a black background; this part in white script is preceded by a few lines (3?), which have been erased. The note also continues on a part (4), written on both columns of fol. 284<sup>v</sup>, and left disrupted at the end of the page.

31 Direct transcription and translation which I made from the images of the colophon.

(1) (fol. 283<sup>vb</sup>, at the bottom, after the explicit of the text and coronis) ጸልዩ ለእለ ጸ[sic]ው ነ ለዛቲ ሙጽሐፍ ወለይስሐቅ ገብርክሙ ዘወሀበ ዛቲ ለኢየሩሳሌም ቅድስት ፡= ፡<sup>32</sup>

(2) (fol. 284<sup>r</sup>, under the Arabic note)<sup>33</sup> ከመ ፡<sup>34</sup> ኢይበሉነ ፡ ጸላእትነ ፡ ሞእናሆሙ ፡ ኩነ ፡ ለባዊ ያነ ፡ ወሀብናክሙ ፡ አባዕረ ፡ ተገበሩ ፡ ሐሪሰ ፡ ወዝርኢ ፡ በገሥዕትያ ፡ ወታ[?]አርሩ ፡ <ወ>በፍሥሐ ፡ ፡<sup>35</sup>

(3) (fol. 284<sup>r</sup>, in ‘negative’ script) አነ ፡ ይስሐቅ ፡ ነዳይ ፡ በጸሎትክሙ ፡ ተፈጸመት ፡ በቤተ ፡ ገበ ዘ ፡ አክሱም ፡ በሰምክ ፡ እግዚአ ፡ ተከልኩ ፡ ከመ ፡ ኢትራስዩኒ < ፡ > ሊተ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ካልእ ፡ መካ ን ፡ ዘእንበለ ፡ በሀገረ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ሀገረ < ፡ > ክርስቶስ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስትያን ፡ ወኢትርስዑኒ ፡ በጸሎትክ ሙ ፡ እለ ፡ አንበብክሙ ፡ ወሰማዕክሙ ፡

(4) (fol. 284<sup>va</sup>) ተወከፍ ፡ እግዚአ ፡ ዛተ ፡ አምኃየ ፡ ሊተ ፡ ለገብርክ ፡ ነዳይ ፡ ወተወከፍ ፡ ከሎን ፡ መጸሐፍት ፡ እለ ፡ አቅረብኩ ፡ ከመ ፡ ይትናዛዙ ፡ አኃው ፡ እለ ፡ ይነበሩ ፡ ኢየሩሳሌም ፡ ወይጸልዩ ፡ ሊተ ፡ ወኢይርስዑኒ ፡ በቅዳሴ ፡ ወጸሎት ፡ እስመ ፡ ከሉልነ ፡ ንቀውም ፡ ቅድመ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ በግርምት ፡ ዕለት ፡ ወሰዓታትኒ ፡[sic]<sup>36</sup> ለአኩ ፡ ለክሙ ፡ ቀዳሚ ፡ ዘኢተጽሕፈ ፡ አመ ፡ ንፈቅድ ፡ ዘወሀብኩ ፡ ንበ ፡ ገድለ ፡ ሰማዕት ፡ ስረዩ ፡ ወባርኩ ፡ ፡ (fol. 284<sup>vb</sup>) ወዓዲ ፡ ለበርየ ፡ ዜና ፡ አበው ፡ ፡ ወለቀሱቷም ፡ ነገስት ፡[sic] ለደቂቀ ፡ ሐበሲ ፡ ከመ ፡ ይትናዛዙ ፡ ወእመሰ ፡ ገብኡ ፡ ብ <ሔ>ርነ ፡[sic] ወዓዲ ፡ ፈለሱ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ካልእ ፡ ብሔር ፡ ያግብኡ ፡ ለኢየሩሳሌም ፡ ለቀራንዩ ፡ ለማርያም ፡ ጸልዩ ፡ ሊተ ፡ ይትወከፍ ፡ በከመ ፡ ተወክፈ ፡ ጸሪቀ ፡ መበለት ፡ ለዓለመ ፡ ዓለም ፡ ኢይሲጡ ፡ ወኢወልጡ ፡ ወኢይምስጡ ፡ ወኢያቀምጡ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ካልእ ፡ መካን ፡ ወ[lac.]<sup>37</sup>

32 This note was copied into the paper manuscript, BnF éthiopien 2 (on p. 122), together with its main text (on this see above n. 28), by Johann Michael Wansleben in Rome in 1666. The Ethiopic transcription of this note is reported in Zotenberg 1877, 3b; on this information, cf. also Rahlfs 1918, 177). The images of the manuscript, with the note, are also available online on <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BNFet2/viewer>> (accessed on 16 June 2024).

33 This Arabic note, written on the upper part of fol. 284<sup>r</sup>, contains a supplication from the writer, who asks for prayers for a certain Ishāq (the same Yashāq mentioned in the Ethiopic colophon?) and that his body will be buried at Mount Zion (on these details on the Arabic note, see Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023, 165, 167).

34 From here and on the entire fol. 284<sup>r</sup>, the note, as anticipated above in n. 30, is written on one column and goes on after an Arabic note (also this on one column). Additionally, its first three lines (part 2) (from the word ‘ከመ ፡’ until the word ‘<ወ>በፍሥሐ ፡ ፡’) are framed by two horizontal black lines.

35 Here, as mentioned in n. 30, a few lines (probably corresponding to three written lines) have been washed out (*er.* = *erasit*).

36 For the word ሰዓታት ፡ the accusative case is missing; the same applies to the word ነገስት ፡ after it in the text.

37 The text is disrupted here (*lac.* = *lacuna*), it does not go on the following folio.

(1) (fol. 283<sup>vb</sup>, at the bottom, after the explicit of the text and coronis) Pray for us, who worked on this book, and for Yəṣṣḥaq, your servant, who donated this to the holy Jerusalem.

(2) (fol. 284<sup>r</sup>, under the Arabic note) So that our enemies do not tell us 'We overcame them!', be intelligent; we gave you oxen, work on the ploughing and seed with hard labour; you will reap with joy. [er.].

(3) (fol. 284<sup>r</sup>, in 'negative' script) I am poor Yəṣṣḥaq. By your prayer [the book] was completed in the house of the *gabaz* of 'Aksum.<sup>38</sup> I planted [myself?] in Your Name, o Lord, that You will not put me in another place other than the land of Zion, the land of Christ, the Church. And you who read and heard, do not forget me in your prayer.

(4) (fol. 284<sup>vb</sup>) Receive, o Lord, this present, for me, for your poor servant. And receive all books which I brought so that the brothers who live in Jerusalem might find consolation and pray for me, and do not forget me in the liturgy and prayer, because we will all stand in front of the Lord on the fearful day. And, moreover, I sent to you [the book of] the *Sa'ātāt* [Book of Hours], which had not [yet] been written before, when we need [it] (?), which I exchanged with [lit. 'gave for'] [?] a [book of] *Gadla samā't* [Acts of Martyrs] – forgive and bless –, [fol. 284<sup>vb</sup>] and furthermore, to Barya<sup>39</sup> [the book of] the *Zenā 'abaw*. And to Q<sup>w</sup>əsq<sup>w</sup>ām,<sup>40</sup> to the *daqīqa ḥabasi* [lit. 'the children of the Abyssinian', i.e. 'the Abyssinians'], the *nagast* [sic, biblical kings], so that they will find consolation, and if they will have returned to our region and, eventually, they will have moved to another region, let them bring back [the books] to Jerusalem, to Qarānyu [the Calvary], to Māryām. Pray for me, may it [the prayer] be accepted like the small coin of a widow<sup>41</sup> was received; forever and ever. Do not let them sell and do not exchange, and do not let them dismember, and do not hide [the books] in another place and [lac].<sup>42</sup>

38 On the *gabaz*, cf. below n. 43.

39 On this name, see below n. 56.

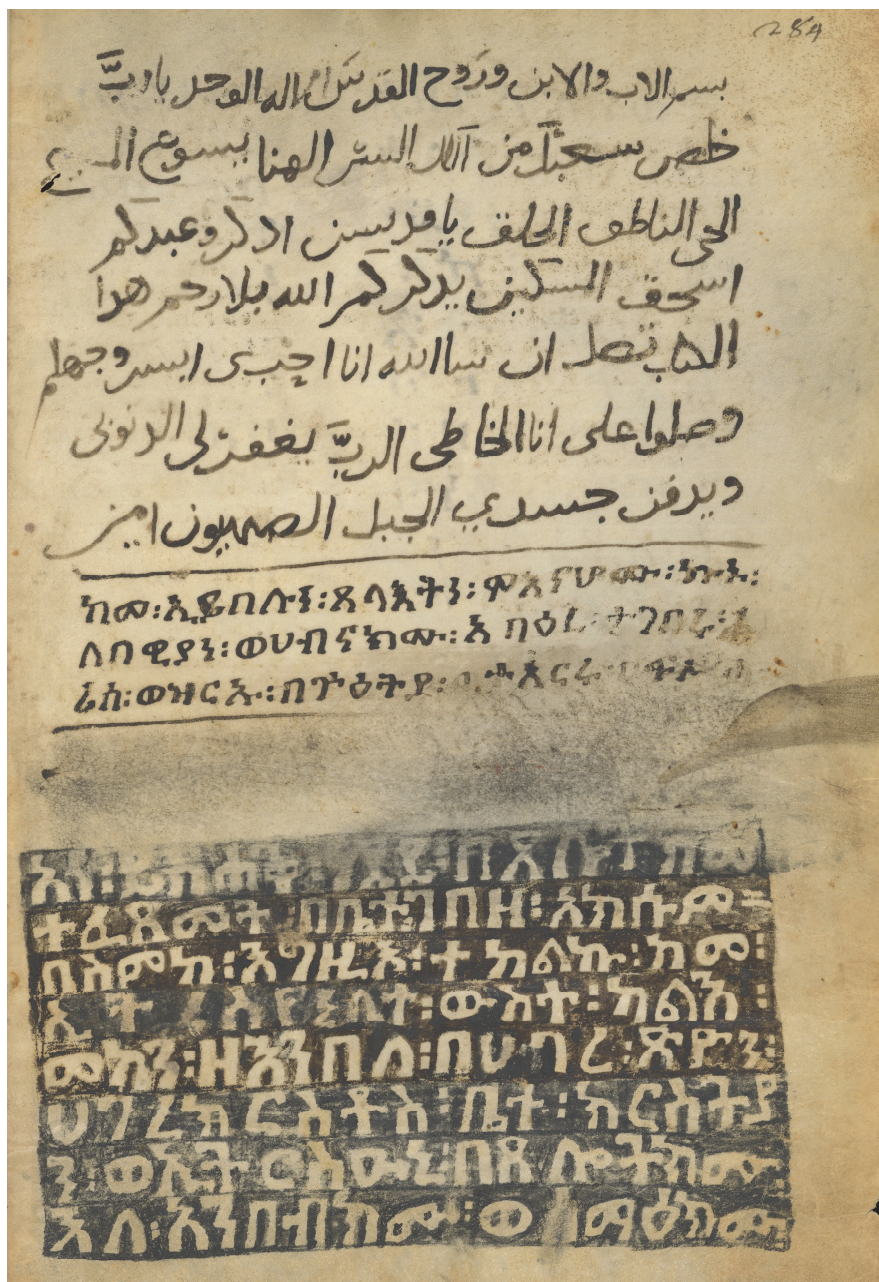
40 On this place see below n. 56 and n. 58.

41 On the biblical mention of the poor widow offering two coins, cf. Mark 12:42.

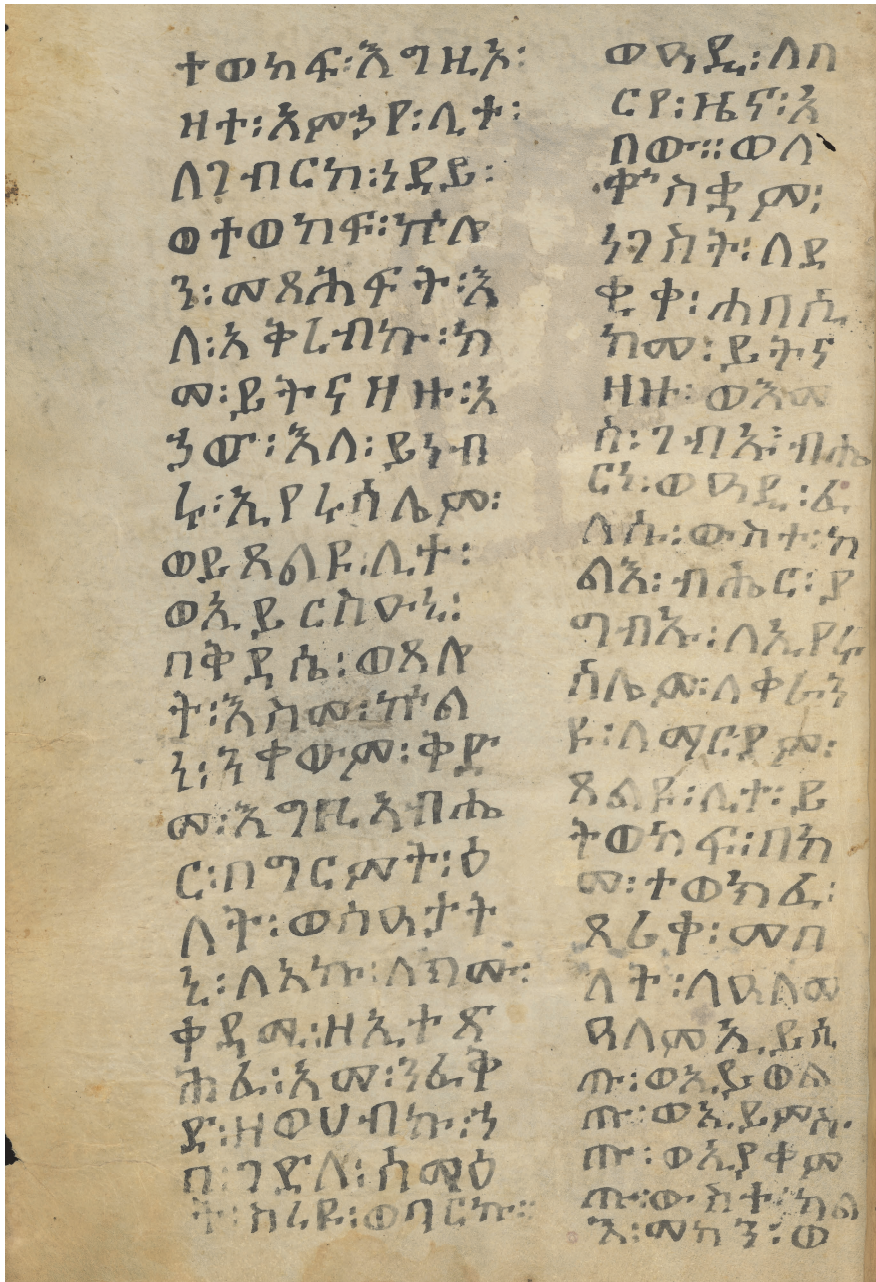
42 A few passages of the note remain of uncertain translation (interpretation); I thank Jonas Karlsson for his useful feedback on them, and especially Alessandro Bausi for precious remarks and suggestions.



Fig. 1: Explicit page and colophon (fol. 283<sup>v</sup>); CUL BFBS 169; fifteenth century; fol. 283<sup>v</sup>; © photo Cambridge, University Library.



**Fig. 2:** Colophon (fol. 284<sup>v</sup>); CUL BFBS 169; fifteenth century; fol. 284<sup>v</sup>; © photo Cambridge, University Library.



**Fig. 3:** Colophon (fol. 284v); CUL BFBS 169; fifteenth century; fol. 284v; © photo Cambridge, University Library.

We learn from the note above that the manuscript CUL BFBS 169 was originally written in 'Aksum (northern Ethiopia), apparently in the private house of the *gabaz* of 'Aksum (literally in the 'house of the *gabaza* 'aksum'),<sup>43</sup> a clergyman who administrated the cathedral of 'Aksum; the book was subsequently donated to the Ethiopian Christian Church of Jerusalem by a certain Yəṣḥaq, who writes the note in the first person. I am not sure this Yəṣḥaq can be identified with the homonymous Ethiopian king,<sup>44</sup> who reigned at the beginning of the fifteenth century (r. 1414–1429/1430);<sup>45</sup> I, instead, consider him to be an Ethiopian pilgrim-monk,<sup>46</sup> who was sent by the Ethiopian kingdom in order to bring some Ethiopic codices to the Holy City. The palaeography of CUL BFBS 169, however, also suggests the fifteenth century as the period of the manuscript's production.

According to the note, the Octateuch CUL BFBS 169 was brought by Yəṣḥaq, together with a few other manuscripts, namely, a *Maṣḥafa sa'ātāt* ('Book of the Hours'<sup>47</sup>), a copy of the *Maṣḥafa zenāhomu la-'abaw* ('Book of the History of the Fathers'<sup>48</sup>), and a copy of the *Maṣḥafa nagašt* ('Book of Kings'<sup>49</sup>). Additionally, regarding the *Maṣḥafa sa'ātāt*, the note says that this copy donated by Yəṣḥaq 'had not (yet) been written before', and this might refer to the second version of the *Book of Hours* attributed to 'Abbā Giyorgis of Saglā,<sup>50</sup> which came into use during the fourteenth century, starting to replace the older version.<sup>51</sup> Hence, the copy of the *Horologium* mentioned in the note might represent a witness of this new recension. Again, according to what we read in the note, it seems<sup>52</sup> that this *Maṣḥafa*

43 On the *gabaz* (Ethiopic ገበየሁ ፡; word with the meaning of 'guard, protector, tutor, custodian, keeper'), see Habtemichael Kidane 2005.

44 The identity of Yəṣḥaq as the Ethiopian king is already questioned by Rahlfs 1918, 179.

45 On King Yəṣḥaq, see Kaplan 2014.

46 In the colophon (on fol. 284<sup>va</sup>), Yəṣḥaq refers to the community of Jerusalem, to whom he brings the books, with the name 'brothers'. This reinforces the idea that Ethiopian pilgrims abroad were mostly monks, and for some supporting evidence, see e.g. Kelly 2024, 89–91.

47 CAe 1961.

48 CAe 2169.

49 As we have seen, another manuscript with the *Book of Kings* donated to Jerusalem is the manuscript BAV Borg. et. 3.

50 On Giyorgis of Saglā, cf. Colin 2005.

51 This old version of the *Book of Hours* was taken entirely from the Coptic-Arabic tradition and was the first one to spread in Ethiopia, probably from the thirteenth century onwards. It is not known exactly when the second version of the *Horologium* started to replace the first one; most probably this happened under the responsibility of Emperor Zar'a Yā'qob (on these and more details on the *Maṣḥafa sa'ātāt*, cf. Zanetti and Fritsch 2014).

52 This passage of the note does not have a clear interpretation.

*sa'ātāt* was exchanged with a copy of the *Gadla samā'tāt* ('Acts of the Martyrs',<sup>53</sup> lit. 'Combat of the martyrs'). This means, therefore, that this hagiographical-homiletic collection was already in use in Jerusalem and specifically that the witness mentioned in the note was already in the possession of this Ethiopic community, but assumedly it was needed, for some reason, in the Ethiopian kingdom.

Concerning the exact destination of the gifts mentioned in the colophon CUL BFBS 169, I assume that some of these manuscripts, i.e. the *Book of the Hours*, together with our Octateuch, were probably brought by Yəṣḥaq directly to Jerusalem, donated to the two places mentioned (at the end of the note): Qarānyu,<sup>54</sup> i.e. to Calvary, and the church of Māryām, identifiable with St Mary of Golgotha, a church also mentioned in the colophon of the manuscript BAV Borg. et. 3, and which the Ethiopian community was possibly occupying at the time. However, these books are not explicitly assigned to any of these places in particular in the note. On the contrary, the other two codices mentioned in the colophon were explicitly given by Yəṣḥaq to two other communities, or possible 'hostel-monasteries', using a Samantha Kelly's definition,<sup>55</sup> that is, places located outside the city of Jerusalem, also organised on the monastic model, where Ethiopian pilgrims could briefly find restoration on their traditional pilgrimage route to the Holy City. According to the note, the *Book of the History of the Fathers* was specifically donated to a certain locality named Barya,<sup>56</sup> a place which has so far remained unidentified, and the *Book of Kings* to Qwəsqwām, presumably the Egyp-

<sup>53</sup> CAe 1493. The title of this work is mentioned in the colophon as *Gadla samā't*, instead of *Gadla samā'tāt* (wherein the word *samā'tāt* is grammatically a plural of the internal plural *samā't*). On this collection in general, see e.g. Bausi 2002; Bausi 2019; Brita 2020.

<sup>54</sup> Qarānyu is also mentioned in a note (fol. 12<sup>vb</sup>) of the manuscript Cambridge, CUL, BFBS 171, dated to 1425–1500 (on this and other details on this manuscript and other notes, cf. Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023, 168–170).

<sup>55</sup> See Kelly 2024, 33. Among the 'hostel-monasteries', those in Jerusalem (as the chapel of St Mary of Calvary), Qwəsqwām, and Cairo (with a church dedicated to St George, close to Ḥarat Zawila, and the ascetic monastery of Wādī al-Naṭrūn in Egypt, centre famous from antiquity) are the most durable and had close contacts (on this and other details, cf. Kelly 2024, 32–33). On Ethiopian monastic communities in Cairo between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see, for instance, Ambu forthcoming.

<sup>56</sup> This is an unidentified place name, which is also attested, together with Qwəsqwām, in an additional note, regarding gifts from Emperor Zar'a Yā'qob (r. 1434–1468) to the community of Jerusalem, on fol. 162<sup>v</sup> of the Four Gospels manuscript Saint Petersburg, RNB, Dorn 612 (on the manuscript, see the manuscript description by Turaev 1906, 11–13. A description is also available online at <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main>> (cataloguer and encoder Denis Nosnitsin), accessed on 23 August 2023; see also below in the paper).

tian holy site where the Coptic monastery of Dayr al-Muḥarraḡ<sup>57</sup> is located, which was also the centre of an independent community of Ethiopian monks, existing since the fourteenth century.<sup>58</sup>

Alfred Rahlfs informs us<sup>59</sup> that the manuscript CUL BFBS 169, at an unknown moment, was moved from Jerusalem to Rome, together with other books; after being kept in Santo Stefano dei Mori and the Museo Borgiano, it was brought to London,<sup>60</sup> where, in 1817, it was sold by the bookseller J. Smith to the Church Missionary Society, then transferred to the British and Foreign Bible Society of Cambridge, and subsequently<sup>61</sup> it moved to the Cambridge University Library, where it is presently preserved.

It is interesting to compare the colophon of CUL BFBS 169 with an inventory of books and items (fols 161<sup>v</sup>–162<sup>r</sup>) included in the Four Gospels manuscript RNB Dorn 612,<sup>62</sup> codex preserved today in the Russian National Library, but once preserved in the library of the Jerusalem patriarchate.<sup>63</sup> The inventory, written at the time of King Yəṣḡaq, contains a long list of Ethiopic manuscripts and items preserved in a monastery supposedly located in Jerusalem<sup>64</sup> but whose name and

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57 On Dayr al-Muḥarraḡ, see Störk 2005.

58 The Ethiopian pilgrims had established a sanctuary in Qʷəsḡwām in honour of the Holy Apostles before the mid fourteenth century (cf. Kelly 2024, 32). On the existing of an Ethiopian community in Qʷəsḡwām, which was in contact with the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, cf. Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 2, 353, and 23, n. 2. See also Bausi 2010a. Qʷəsḡwām is mentioned, together with other communities of Jerusalem, in a donation note (fol. 13<sup>ra-b</sup>) of manuscript CUL BFBS 171 (on this manuscript and this note, cf. in particular, Karlsson, Dege-Müller and Gnisci 2023, 169).

59 Cf. Rahlfs 1918, 203.

60 It is not known when and how the manuscript moved to London, but it is certain that the book was still in Rome at the end of the eighteenth century (cf. Rahlfs 1918, 191).

61 The exact circumstance and moment are unknown.

62 On this manuscript and on another inventory contained in it, see n. 56 above. On this inventory, see the Italian translation in Conti Rossini 1923, 508–511, with some additional observations; the scholar particularly underlines the importance of this document in testifying to the circulation of some Ethiopic texts, those ones mentioned in the list, already before the time of Zar’a Yā’qob (cf. Conti Rossini 1923, 509).

63 The manuscript was given as a gift to Prince Georgij Avalov by Michael, metropolitan of Petra in Arabia in Jerusalem, on 2 April 1820. On fol. 163<sup>v</sup>, the manuscript contains a note in Georgian by Prince Georgij Avalov mentioning this donation. For an overview of the Ethiopian manuscripts in the state and private collections of St Petersburg, see Gusarova 2015.

64 As I say above in the text, the note does not reveal the name of the place hosting the collection of items and books listed, and it does not say explicitly that this place is a monastery and whether it is located in Jerusalem. However, some hints are given by note itself. This contains the description of the people living in the repository’s place, followed by the list of books and precious items;

precise place are, however, not disclosed.<sup>65</sup> This inventory starts<sup>66</sup> with the exact mention of the time of its writing: the year 1426 (‘በስመ ፡ ሥሉስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ መላኬ ፡ ሥጋ ፡ ወነፍስ ፡ ተጽሕፈት ፡ ዛቲ ፡ መጽሐፍ<sup>67</sup> በ፪ወ፰ ፡ ዐመተ ፡ ምሕረት ፡ በወርጎ ፡ የካቲት ፡’, ‘In the name of Saint Trinity, master of the body and spirit. This document was written in the Year of Mercy 78 (= 1426 CE), in the month of Yakkātīt), and, at the very end, it adds that this happened during the days of King Yəśhaq and the Metropolitan Bartalomewos (‘ወዘተጽሕፈ ፡ ዝንቱ ፡ በመዋዕለ ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ ይስሐቅ ፡ ስመ ፡ መንግሥቱ ፡ ገብረ ፡ መስቀል ፡ እንዘ ፡ ሊቀ ፡ ጳጳሳት ፡ አባ ፡ ገብርኤል ፡ ወእንዘ ፡ ጳጳስነ ፡ አባ ፡ በርቶሎሜዎስ ፡’, ‘And this is what has been written in the days of King Yəśhaq, and my regnal name [is] Gabra Masqal, while the archbishop [was] ‘Abbā Gabra’el and while our metropolitan ‘Abbā Bartolo-

it says: ‘ገብረነ ፡ ኩልነ ፡ ጽወጀካህናት ፡ ወጽዲያቆናት ፡ ወ፴ወጽመነሳት ፡ ወ፲ወ፯መበለታት ፡ እንዘ ፡ ራይስነ ፡ ኖብ ፡ ወእንዘ ፡ ናይብነ ፡ ገብረ ፡ ቂርቆስ ፡ ረከብነ ፡ ፯ወንጌለ ፡’, ‘Having all of us agreed, twenty-two priests and twenty deacons and thirty-five monks and seventeen nuns, while our *rāys* [was] Nob and our *nāyb* Gabra Qirqos, we have found seven Gospels’ (cf. the note on <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main>> (accessed on 20 September 2024)). As we read, the note uses *rāys* to indicate the head of the monastery, i.e. *Rāys* Nob, along with the term *nāyb*, apparently another office name in this note used in the monastery and for a certain Gabra Qirqos. The term *rāys* was used as title of the head Ethiopian administrator in not only Santo Stefano, but also the Ethiopian hostel-monasteries of Jerusalem and Q<sup>w</sup>asq<sup>w</sup>ām (on this see Kelly 2024, 51). The title *nāyb* is also attested (e.g. in the *Gadla Yonās za-Bur* (CAe 1522); see Tedros Abraha 2015, 380, §86, l. 18 (text), and 381, §86, 20 (translation)) to indicate the local official in charge of governing the Eritrean coasts and eastern areas from the sixteenth and seventeenth century; on this use of the term, see Miran and van Donzel 2007.

65 Conversely, the other two inventories contained in the same manuscript are a list of Ethiopic books and items, mentioning them as gifts explicitly donated to the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem: in the inventory on fol. 162<sup>v</sup> they are gifts from King Zar’a Yā’qob, in the inventory on fols 162<sup>v</sup>–163<sup>r</sup> they are from King Ba’ada Māryām I (r. 1468–1478). See the transcription of both inventories also here: <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main>> (accessed on 30 September 2024).

66 The images of the manuscript are not available: therefore, the note and the manuscript have not been visualised personally, and the exact points of this note on the folios of the manuscript is unverified. The Ethiopic transcription of the note, as well as the other notes present in the manuscript, is, however, available online <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main>> (accessed on 30 September 2024) and in Turaev 1906, 12–13. On this manuscript and the inventories contained in it, cf. also Platonov 2017, 120–123. The transcription and translation of the passages given in this article are made by the author based on the online transcription of the note.

67 According to Denis Nosenitsin (see at <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/RNBdorn612/main>> (accessed on 2 February 2024)), the word መጽሐፍ ፡ has here the meaning of ‘written document, writing’, not of ‘book’, thus, referring only to the inventory, not to the entire manuscript; on the difference meanings of መጽሐፍ ፡, see e.g. Leslau 2010, 225.

mewos').<sup>68</sup> Concerning the items and books listed in the inventory, we read among them a few titles of manuscripts which we have also seen appearing in the colophon of the manuscript CUL BFBS 169, as the Ethiopic books donated and sent from the Ethiopian kingdom to the community of Jerusalem. The note in the manuscript RNB Dorn 612 mentions, in fact, among many others, three manuscripts with the *Acts of the Martyrs*, one copy of the Octateuch, one *Book of Kings*, two copies of the *Book of the History of the Fathers* and fourteen copies of the *Book of the Hours*: ቸገድለ ሰማዕት ፤<sup>69</sup> ወጀኦሪት ፤ ጀነገሥት ፤ [...] ወጀዜና ፤ አበው ፤ [...] ወ፲ወ፳ሰዓታት ፤'. Whether the manuscripts mentioned in this inventory are the same exemplars mentioned in the colophon of CUL BFBS 169 remains a mere hypothesis.

As an example of a manuscript copied in Jerusalem, we have Munich, BSB, Cod. aeth. 1.<sup>70</sup> This is a multiple-text manuscript written by different hands and with a few ornamental bands. It contains not only the Ethiopic psalter but also several supplicative prayers, hymns and excerpts from various texts.<sup>71</sup>

The manuscript does contain any dating colophons or notes; nonetheless, the palaeography suggests that its writing took place between the end of the fourteenth and – or during – the fifteenth century. Furthermore, this most probably happened in Jerusalem, according to a short scribal note on fol. 258<sup>rb</sup>, placed after the formula of the completion and the stichometry of the *Maḥālāya maḥālāy* ('Song of Songs'). The colophon (Fig. 4) reads, in fact, ዝተጽሕፈት ፤ ዛቲ ፤ መጽሐፍ ፤

<sup>68</sup> On Metropolitan Bartolomewos, cf. Lusini 2003.

<sup>69</sup> Note here the title of the work, *Gadla samā't*, instead of *Gadla samā'tāt*, similar to that in the colophon of CUL BFBS 169 (see above n. 53).

<sup>70</sup> One of the manuscripts from the German public collections on which the ITIESE project came across in the first phase (which I was part of); on these manuscripts cf. Dege-Müller, Gnisci and Pisani 2022.

<sup>71</sup> The manuscript has not been examined and viewed entirely; the study here is limited to only a few digital images (i.e. the folios with *additio*, colophon and ornamental bands) that the project ITIESE had at its disposal (received from the library) and on the manuscript description (which includes a detailed description of the texts) by Six 1989, 20–26. According to Veronika Six's description, the psalter is on fols 6<sup>r</sup>–128<sup>v</sup>, 189<sup>va</sup>–204<sup>vb</sup>, 206<sup>vb</sup>–212<sup>vb</sup>, 251<sup>va</sup>–258<sup>rb</sup>, and appears with its usual parts (*Psalms of David*, CAe 2000; *Canticles of the Prophets*, CAe 1828; *Song of Songs*, CAe 2362; *Praise of Mary*, CAe 2509; and *Gate of Light*, CAe 1113), although these are not written in the usual sequence (Six also reports that 'Die Anordnung der einzelnen Stücke weicht in dieser Handschrift von der sonst üblichen ab', Six 1989, 20), and not on continuous folios. From the sequence of the leaves of the psalter, similar to the other texts included in the manuscript, it seems to me that the folios of the manuscript are misplaced, having probably been wrongly rearranged; however, this remains a speculation, and can be ascertained only by examining the entire codex. On the Ethiopic psalter see e.g. Dege-Müller 2015; Delamarter and Gnisci 2019.

በኢየሩሳሌም ፡ በመካን ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ስብሐት ፡ ለአብ ፡ ወወልድ ፡ ወመንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ለዓለሙ ፡ ዓለም ፡ አሜን ፡፤፤', 'This book was written down in Jerusalem, in the Holy Place. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Forever. Amen.'<sup>72</sup>

The book was, thus, originally accomplished in Jerusalem and then eventually brought to Germany. Here, as Veronika Six informs us,<sup>73</sup> the codex was acquired by Duke Albrecht V (1528–1579) in the year 1571 for the Royal Library of Munich from the private collection of Johann Jakob Fugger (1516–1575).<sup>74</sup> Approximately during the same period as the manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1, another Ethiopic psalter arrived in Germany. This is the manuscript Vatican City, BAV, Vat. et. 27,<sup>75</sup> which the French diplomat Guillaume Postel (d. 1581) brought from one of his travels in the East to Germany in the year 1555. The book was kept in the Bibliotheca Palatina of Heidelberg till it was moved during the seventeenth century, with many other codices, to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in Rome.<sup>76</sup> In the *Katalog zur Ausstellung vom 8. Juli bis 2. November 1986, Heiliggeistkirche Heidelberg*, the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 27 is presented as the first Ethiopic manuscript that reached Germany.<sup>77</sup> We have also seen that the manuscript from Munich must have arrived in Germany more or less in the same period. However, since we do not know when exactly Jakob Fugger acquired BSB Cod. aeth. 1 and brought it to Germany, we cannot state which of the two Ethiopic psalters, either manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1 from Munich or manuscript BAV Vat. et. 27, had the primacy to arrive in Germany.<sup>78</sup>

72 I transcribed and translated the note (followed by a washed-out text) directly from the available image of fol. 258<sup>r</sup>.

73 Cf. Six 1989, 25–26.

74 An ex libris from the library in Latin (copper print of Raphael Sadeler (1560–1632)) is on the internal side of the left wooden board (cf. Six 1989, 26).

75 Cf. the manuscript description in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 132–134; this description is also available online on the Beta maṣāḥaft's database, <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BAVet27/main>> (accessed on 30 September 2024; cataloguer and encoder Massimo Villa). The digital images are also available on the website of Universität Heidelberg, <[https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav\\_vat\\_etiop\\_27/0006/image,info,thumbs](https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav_vat_etiop_27/0006/image,info,thumbs)> (accessed on 27 January 2023).

76 On these manuscripts, see Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 9–20; on BAV Vat. et. 27 cf. in particular Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 2, 15. Cf. also Fiaccadori 2010.

77 Cf. Mittler 1986, 96.

78 Cf. Six 1989, 25–26.

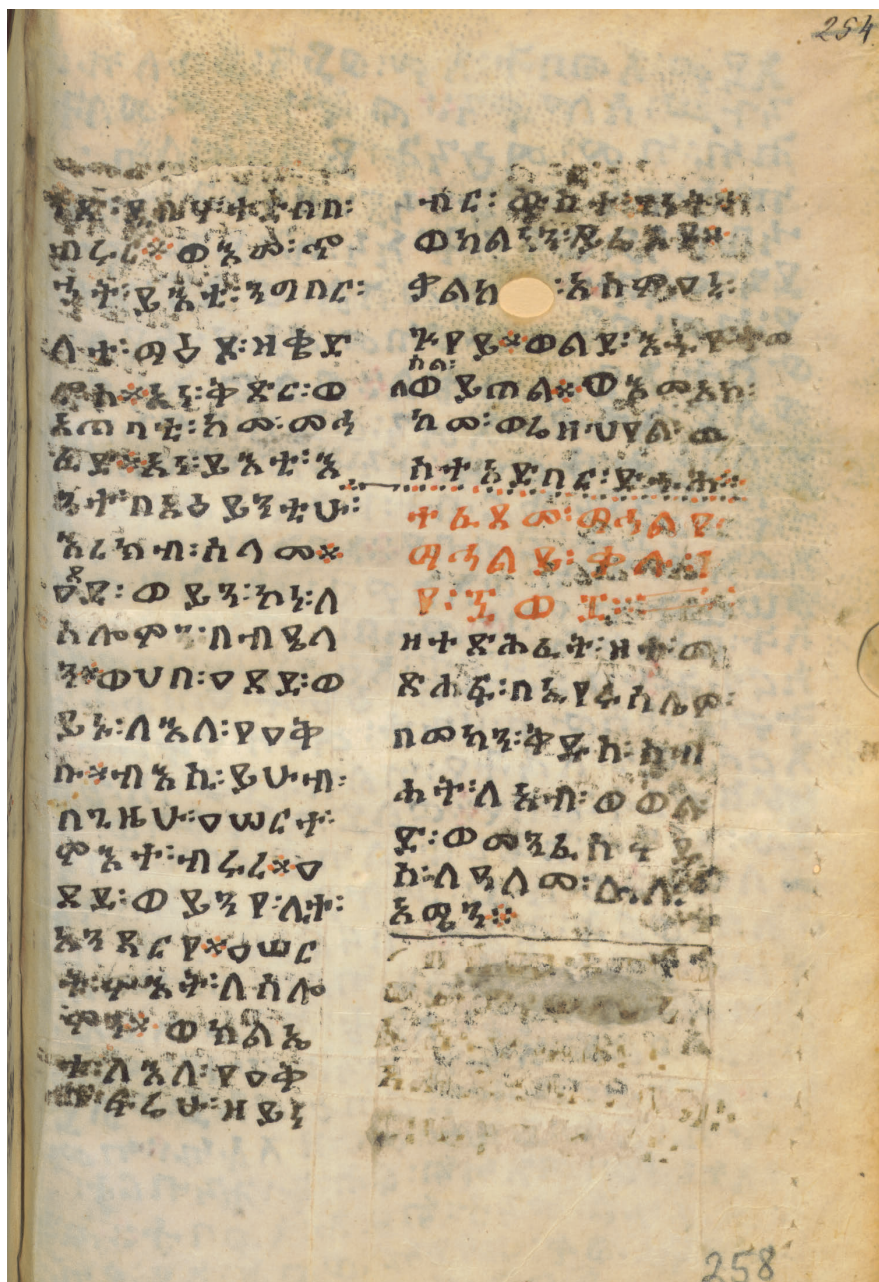


Fig. 4: Explicit of the Song of Songs and colophon; BSB Cod. aeth. 1; fourteenth/fifteenth century; fol. 258; © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

Comparing the psalter from Munich (e.g. fol. 6<sup>r</sup> (Fig. 5a) and fol. 128<sup>v</sup> (Fig. 6a)), with that of the Vaticana (e.g. fol. 6<sup>r</sup> (Fig. 7a)),<sup>79</sup> I notice that, beside a similar hand,<sup>80</sup> both manuscripts share the scribal practice of completing long verses of the Psalms on the remaining space of the lines above or below and to encircle them (Figs 5b, 6b, 7b),<sup>81</sup> but also the peculiar preference to place the extra text, when this is too long, on the ruled empty line after it, in the middle or at the end of the space (Figs 5a, 6a, 7a). Unfortunately, we do not know the origin of the Vatican psalter, that is, from which Eastern Church, whether from Jerusalem or not, the diplomat Postel had brought it to Germany. Furthermore, its psalter is incomplete, ending abruptly within the text with the Song of Songs (fol. 160<sup>v</sup>); hence, we do not know if there was a colophon informing us about its place of production on the missing folios, as is the case with BSB Cod. aeth. 1. However, at this stage, even though the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 27 was probably accomplished a little later, between the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century (before 1555),<sup>82</sup> I do not exclude a common scribal milieu and the same geographical origin of both manuscripts.

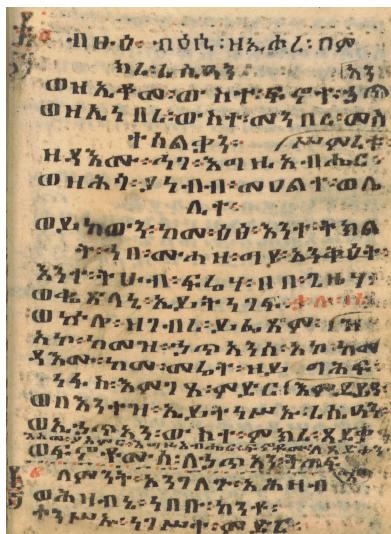
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79 Cf. this folio also e.g. on <[https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav\\_vat\\_etiop\\_27/0015/image,info,thumbs->](https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/bav_vat_etiop_27/0015/image,info,thumbs->) (accessed on 27 January 2023).

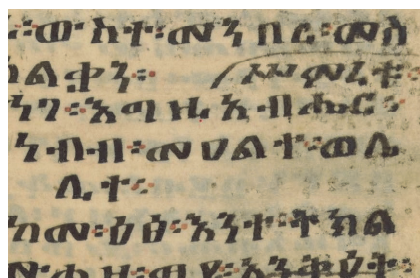
80 As said before, BSB Cod. aeth. 1 from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich is a multiple-text manuscript; in addition, it is also a codex written by different hands (this is also stated in Six 1989, 20) and with different textual layouts. I could verify this from the pictures available; these are, however, very few; the palaeographical and codicological analysis of the codex is, therefore, limited to the observation of the pictures available; the visualisation of the entire codex remains a desideratum. The fol. 6<sup>r</sup> and fol. 128<sup>v</sup>, containing the text of the psalter, show the same handwriting.

81 About this specific scribal tendency in the Ethiopic psalter, see Delamarter and Melaku Terefe 2009, 51.

82 Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 132, date the manuscript to the entire sixteenth century. However, I specify that the manuscript should have been produced before 1555 (*terminus ante quem*), the year when Guillaume Postel brought it to Germany.

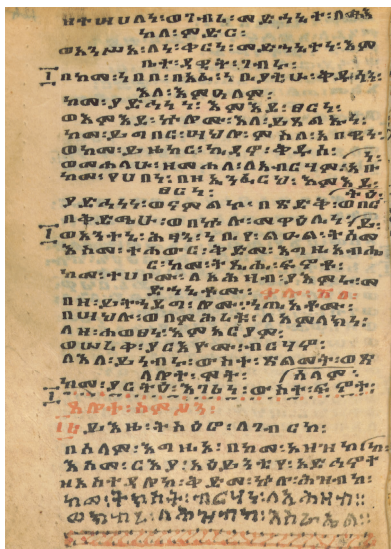


a

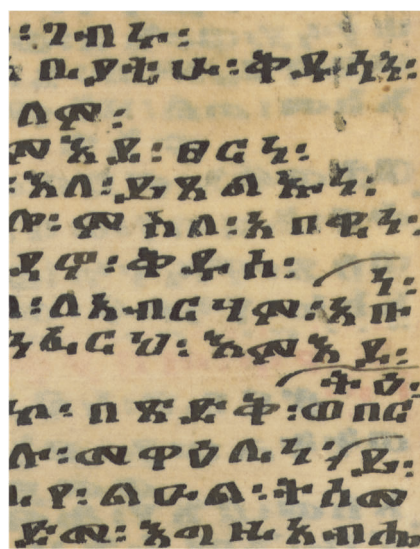


b

**Fig. 5a–b:** (a) BSB Cod. aeth. 1; fourteenth/fifteenth century; fol. 6<sup>r</sup>; (b) Particular of the handwriting on fol. 6<sup>r</sup> © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.



a



b

**Fig. 6a–b:** (a) BSB Cod. aeth. 1; fourteenth/fifteenth century; fol. 128<sup>r</sup>; (b) Particular of the handwriting on fol. 128<sup>r</sup> © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

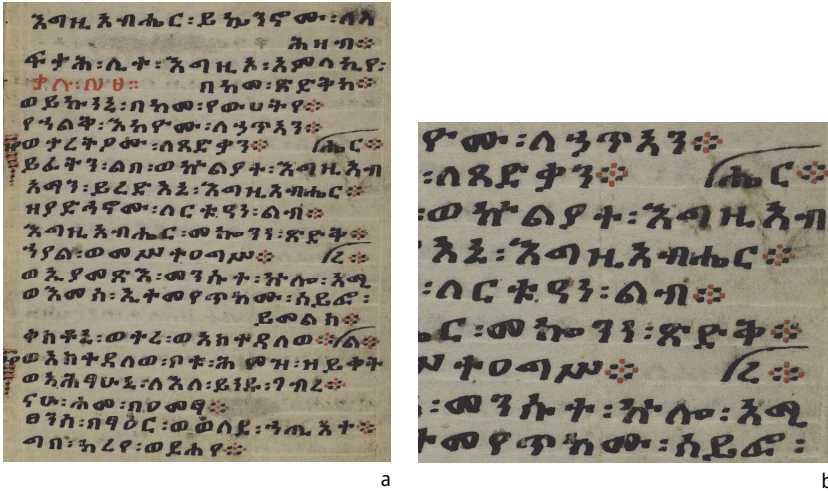


Fig. 7a–b: (a) BAV Vat. et. 27; fifteenth/sixteenth century (before 1555); fol. 6<sup>r</sup>; (b) Particular of the handwriting on fol. 6<sup>r</sup> © photo Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

One of the most ancient witnesses of the Ethiopic *Senodos*, seemingly written in Jerusalem and lastly moved to Italy, is Florence, BML, Or. 148.<sup>83</sup> This is a composite manuscript, consisting of four codicological units,<sup>84</sup> of which the second one, with the largest number of quires (twenty), comprises the folios with the canonico-liturgical collection (fols 5<sup>ra</sup>–165<sup>ra</sup>). This latter was possibly written by the same hand as a series of texts on computus and chronology (fols 174<sup>ra</sup>–203<sup>v</sup>)<sup>85</sup> included in the fourth unit, and which, according to a colophon on fol. 181<sup>vb</sup>, is dated to 1426.<sup>86</sup> The third codicological unit, also datable, from a palaeographical observa-

<sup>83</sup> On this manuscript, cf. the description by Marrassini 1987, 90–97. For a recent and updated study and codicological analysis of the manuscript, cf. Bausi 2016. The manuscripts images are available online at <<https://betamasasheft.eu/manuscripts/BMLor148/viewer>> (accessed on 6 February 2023). This codex of the *Senodos* was used by Bausi in his critical edition of some texts of the work (Bausi (ed.) 1995a and (tr.) 1995b; on it, cf. above n. 22).

<sup>84</sup> The composite structure of the manuscript has been identified by Bausi and described in Bausi 2016, 116–118.

<sup>85</sup> *Treatise on Computus and Chronology* is the title assigned to this collection by Nosnitsin 2022; as showed by the scholar, the *Treatise* is attested in manuscript BML Or. 148 and a few other manuscripts, such as the ancient ‘Comboni fragment’, which Nosnitsin described in detail in his study.

<sup>86</sup> The date reported is Year of Mercy 6462; on this date cf. in particular Marrassini 1987, 92.

tion, to the fifteenth century,<sup>87</sup> is, instead, occupied only by one text (fols 166<sup>ra</sup>–173<sup>vb</sup>), consisting of the fourteenth-century theological text known as *Treatise on Those who Deny the Resurrection of the Dead*,<sup>88</sup> Ethiopic version of the Syriac *Demonstration 8: The Resurrection of the Dead*, attributed to the writer Aphrahat,<sup>89</sup> and ‘a *unicum* in the Ethiopic literary and manuscript tradition’.<sup>90</sup> A short text (fols 4<sup>vb</sup>, 3<sup>ra-b</sup>) from an earlier period is written on the initial folios of the manuscript (first codicological unit) preceding the *Senodos*, which consists of an Ethiopic document,<sup>91</sup> dated probably to 1336/1337,<sup>92</sup> on several monastic rules issued by the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem. This last text, together with a Syriac script on fol. 182,<sup>93</sup> suggests, therefore, the Jerusalemite origin of this manuscript<sup>94</sup> besides being the most ancient document of the Ethiopian monastic community of the Holy City.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the copy of the *Senodos* transmitted by this codex may also constitute, according to Bausi,<sup>96</sup> the first phase of the Ethiopic *Senodos*, when it consisted only of Melkite canons.

<sup>87</sup> Marrassini 1987, 90, dates the entire manuscript, with the exclusion of the text written on the first unit, to the fifteenth century. At least seven different examples of handwriting have been identified and dated on the database <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BMLor148/main>> (accessed 25 June 2024). The dating of the handwriting of the *Treatise* on the third unit is also here dated to the fifteenth century, as it has been verified personally on the available images.

<sup>88</sup> CAe 2041. This has been edited and translated by Cerulli 1964.

<sup>89</sup> On Aphrahat, see Witakowski 2003.

<sup>90</sup> Bausi 2016, 117.

<sup>91</sup> Edited (with text and Italian translation) by Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 2, 380–382. This document has been newly edited (with French translation) by Martina Ambu in her dissertation, particularly Ambu 2022, 409–410, and commented, in particular, in Ambu 2022, 410–411, 426–429. I am very grateful to Martina Ambu to have shared with me her dissertation before its publication.

<sup>92</sup> The calculation of the year 1336/1337 has been proposed by Martina Ambu in her dissertation, in particular in Ambu 2022, 409, and 409, n. 34, and agreed upon by Butts 2024, 56; for additional details on this date and different hypothesis, see also Butts 2024, 56–58, n. 29. Cerulli, instead, proposed the year 1331/1332 CE, reading the Ethiopic dating written in the document as Year of Mercy 524, instead of 521 (cf. Cerulli 1943–1947, vol. 2, 381, n. 1). The Ethiopic dating present in the document, as I also verified, is ሰፈረጊዳ : ዓመተ : ምሕረት : ‘in the Year of Mercy 521’ (cf. the original dating in the manuscript on the image of fol. 4<sup>vb</sup>, containing the incipit of the text, here: <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BMLor148/viewer>> (accessed on 21 June 2024)), where the last numeral ፩ (‘1’) shows its archaic feature, looking very similar to the numeral ፬ (‘4’).

<sup>93</sup> This Syriac script has been identified, reconstructed and commented on by Aaron Butts in Butts 2024, 61–66.

<sup>94</sup> On this hypothesis, cf. Marrassini 1984, 83.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Bausi 2016, 116.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. e.g. Bausi 1992, 19; Bausi 1990, 34.

Possibly, but still debated,<sup>97</sup> the multiple-text codex Vatican City, BAV, Vat. et. 1 (Fig. 8),<sup>98</sup> another witness of the *Senodos*, also comes from Jerusalem,<sup>99</sup> being, as Bausi assumes, a direct copy<sup>100</sup> of the manuscript BML Or. 148. According to a final colophon (on fol. 198<sup>rb</sup>), this codex was completed ‘in the Year of ’Adām 6585’, i.e. according to a calculation made by Mauro da Leonessa, in the year 1549 CE.<sup>101</sup> We learn from the catalogue of the Ethiopic manuscripts in the Vatican Library by Sylvain Grébaut and Eugène Tisserant that another manuscript preserved in the same library, manuscript Vatican City, BAV, Vat. et. 2, containing the *Canons of the Council of Nicaea*,<sup>102</sup> was apparently written by the same scribe as manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1; we read in the catalogue description, in fact, ‘e cod. Vat. 1 ab eodem librario transscripta’<sup>103</sup> and this can be verified by comparing the two very similar

97 See e.g. the observations on this manuscript in Butts 2024, 69–74.

98 Cf. the manuscript description by Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 1–11; the description is also available, with images, on the Beta maṣāḥəft’s database <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BAVet1/main#i8>> (encoder Massimo Villa); the images are also on <[https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.et.1](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.et.1)> (both accessed on 30 March 2023).

99 The Vatican Library cataloguers refer in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 11, to a note on the final folio of the manuscript, i.e. fol. 219<sup>v</sup>, mentioning Jerusalem and Rome: ‘notula plumbo exarata et partim evanida: ... እምነበ< ፤> ለአክ< ፤> ... | ማርአም< ፤>(?) ዘሮማ ፡ ትብጽሕ ፡[sic] ኢ<የ>ሩሰሌ<ም ፡>[sic] “... deputavit ... a Roma (ut) perveniat ad Hierusalem”’; this note is, however, hardly legible on the image available online.

100 On the assumption that manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 is a *descriptus* (direct copy) of manuscript BML Or. 148, cf. e.g. Bausi 2015, 215. On the hypothesis that the former one also comes from Jerusalem, similar to the latter one, cf. Bausi 2015, 215, n. 64. The *descriptus* BAV Vat. et. 1, however, does not contain all the texts of its antigraph BML Or. 148, but only the texts of the second (*Senodos*) and fourth (computus) unit; the document with the monastic rules preserved on the first unit and the Ethiopic version of the Syriac *Demonstration 8* contained in the third unit are not present in BAV Vat. et. 1 (on this and other details, cf. e.g. Bausi 2016, 116, n. 13). Butts 2024 also underlines that the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 does not contain the Syriac line which is contained in its antigraph BML Or. 148 on fol. 182<sup>r</sup>; on this and a discussion about it, see Butts 2024, 74–82.

101 See the colophon at the end of the *Senodos*, on fol. 198<sup>rb</sup>, on the image available on <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BAVet1/viewer>> (accessed on 30 September 2024). The note states: ‘ወተፈጸመ ፡ ዝንቱ ፡ ሴኖዶስ ፡ በዋ[sic]ርኅ ፡ ግንቦት ፡ ፰ ፡ [...] ፯፻ ፡ ወፎ፻ ፡ ፹ወፎ ፡ ዓመተ ፡ አዳም ።’, ‘And this *Senodos* was completed on the 8th in the month of Gənbət [...] in the Year of ’Adām 6585’. According to Mauro da Leonessa 1943, 317, this date corresponds to the year 1541 Incarnation Era (= 1549 CE); for this and other systems used in the Ethiopic calendar, see Mauro da Leonessa 1943, 308. As also stressed by Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 409, the copying of most of the manuscript’s content was completed by April 1549. On the colophon after the *Senodos*, and the reference to the explanation by Mauro da Leonessa, see also Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 409, n. 56. The sixteenth century is the dating given in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 1.

102 For the manuscript description see Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 11–12.

103 Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 11.

hands.<sup>104</sup> As assumed by Samantha Kelly and Denis Nosnitsin,<sup>105</sup> both manuscripts, BAV Vat. et. 1 and Vat. et. 2, along with other few manuscripts from the Vatican Library,<sup>106</sup> were most probably copied by the same scribe, namely, a certain Yoḥannēs of Qanṭorāre,<sup>107</sup> an Ethiopian pilgrim who was already the prior at Santo Stefano dei Mori in Rome in 1531–1532.<sup>108</sup> The manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 is a *descriptus* of the composite codex BML Or. 148, therefore, it can be supposed that at least the copying of this Vatican manuscript happened while this Ethiopian monk was on a pilgrimage in the Ethiopian community of Jerusalem, at some stage during the mid sixteenth century. This, however, remains speculative and to be ascertained; the information provided by Grébaut and Tisserant in the Vatican catalogue, about the Italian origin of the parchment, namely ‘Fasciculi, ex membranis italicis’,<sup>109</sup> may also suggest that the copying of BAV Vat. et. 1 happened in Rome, after the BML Or. 148 had already been moved there.<sup>110</sup> However, it could also have happened while the scribe Yoḥannēs of Qanṭorāre was on pilgrimage in

**104** The description of the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 2 is also available, with images, online on <<https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/BAVet2/main>> (cataloguer and encoder Massimo Villa); the images are available also on <[https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.et.2](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.et.2)> (both accessed on 30 March 2022).

**105** Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017.

**106** On the manuscripts from the Vaticana mentioning Yoḥannēs of Qanṭorāre, cf. Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 405–410. Vatican City, BAV, Vat. et. 35 (cf. the description in Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 161–164) is the only manuscript with the explicit mention of this monk as scribe in a colophon on fol. 105<sup>vb</sup> (cf. Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 163–164). In the manuscripts Vatican City, BAV, Rossianus 865 (on it cf. Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 862), BAV Vat. et. 1 and Vat. et. 2 there is not any explicit mention; the hand has been attributed to Yoḥannēs of Qanṭorāre by the cataloguers Grébaut and Tisserant; on this observation, cf. Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, in particular 400.

**107** On him, see Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, in particular 405–410. About the toponym Qanṭorāre, its written attestations and identification with the Ethiopian region of ‘Angot, see in particular Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 411–415. On Yoḥannēs of Qanṭorāre, see also Kelly 2024, 99.

**108** Cf. Kelly and Nosnitsin 2017, 411. As added in Kelly 2024, the priorate of Yoḥannēs of Qanṭorāre started between February 1529 and July 1531 and is last surely attested in September 1551 (cf. Kelly 2024, 107). On a list of Ethiopic documents attesting the name of Yoḥannēs of Qanṭorāre, see Kelly 2024, 314–316 (Appendix B).

**109** Grébaut and Tisserant 1935–1936, vol. 1, 10.

**110** In particular, Aaron Butts suggests that the *codex descriptus* BAV Vat. et. 1 has been copied or completed by Yoḥannēs of Qanṭorāre when he was already in Rome, at Santo Stefano dei Mori (cf. Butts 2024, 78). The manuscript BML Or. 148, along with other codices, belongs to the group of Oriental manuscripts collected in Rome for the ‘Stamperia medicea’ established in Rome in 1584, by initiative of the Grand Duke Ferdinand I (1549–1609), and which was moved, in a second time, to Florence, first to Palazzo Pitti (1627), and afterwards to the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana (for this and other details on this history of the Ethiopic collection in the Laurenziana, cf. Marrasini 1984, 81–83).

Jerusalem, using a parchment of Italian manufacture previously sent to the Holy City or even transported by the scribe.<sup>111</sup>

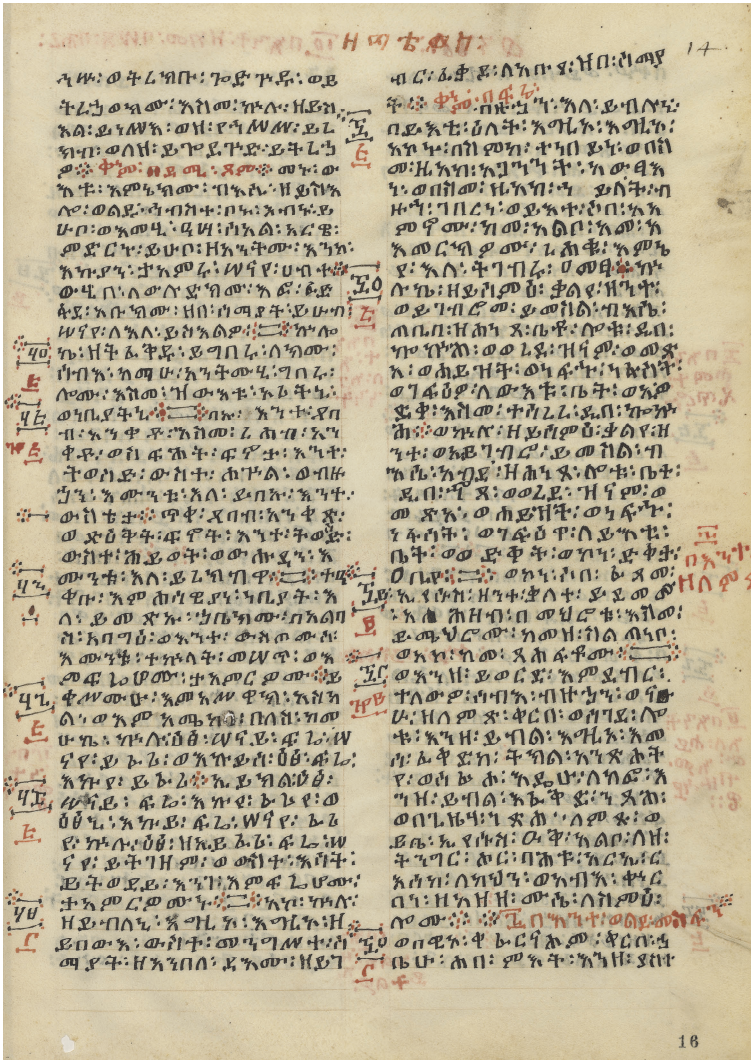
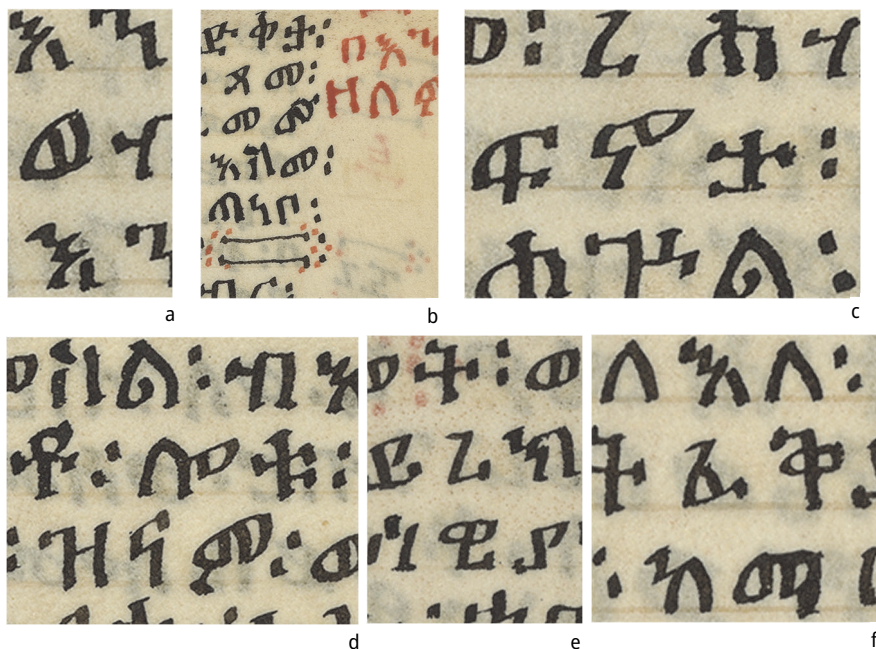


Fig. 8: BAV Vat. et. 1; sixteenth century; fol. 16<sup>r</sup>; © photo Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

<sup>111</sup> The manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 was first in Santo Stefano, and then in the Vatican Library, in 1665 at the latest (cf. Bausi 2015, 215, n. 63).



**Figs 9a–f:** Excerpts from fol. 16<sup>r</sup>; BAV Vat. et. 1; © photo Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Furthermore, I have compared the manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 with the manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1 and realised a certain resemblance between the hand of one of the final texts (excerpts from the Song of Songs) of the multiple-text manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1 (see fol. 258<sup>v</sup> (Fig. 10)), and the hand of BAV Vat. et. 1 (Fig. 8). Both hands look similar, even though the one in BSB Cod. aeth. 1 is probably a bit older than the one in BAV Vat. et. 1, namely, datable to the fifteenth century, as it still displays ancient features of the Ethiopic script, predominantly attested in manuscripts from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, such as the angular shapes of some letters (e.g. መ, ዕ (Fig. 11a)) and the trait of the loops still attached (as in the letter መ (Fig. 11a)). Despite a slight discrepancy in the time of production, the handwriting in both codices looks similar, likewise, very carelessly and irregularly produced, and with parallel peculiarities of some letters. It is possible to observe, for instance, in both manuscripts: the horizontal top line of some letters, especially of መ ዕ ጌ, slanted down to the left side (Figs 9a, 9b, 11a, 11b, 11c); a peculiar shape of the loop in a few letters, such as ለ ጌ, which appears sometimes very big compared to the main body of the letter (e.g. Figs 9c, 9d, 11d, 11e); and the hairlines extending from the top side of the letter toward the left side, visible

especially in the letters **ፈ**, **ፊ**, **ፋ**, **ፈ**, **ፊ** (e.g. Figs 9e, 9f, 11f), also characterises both hands. The palaeographical similarity between manuscript BAV Vat. et. 1 and manuscript BSB Cod. aeth. 1 (here particularly the hand of the final text, as visible on fol. 258<sup>v</sup>) may, thus, suggest that both BAV Vat. et. 1 and the manuscript from Munich were not necessarily written by the same scribes, nonetheless, within the same scribal context, wherein similar palaeographical and codicological tendencies were possibly spreading. The scribal milieu may, moreover, be identified with the Ethiopian Christian community of the Holy City, as is suggested by the afore-said colophon on fol. 258<sup>v</sup> of BSB Cod. aeth. 1, mentioning Jerusalem, and by the fact that BAV Vat. et. 1 is a *descriptus* of the codex BML Or. 148, which, as we have observed above, most probably also originated in this city.

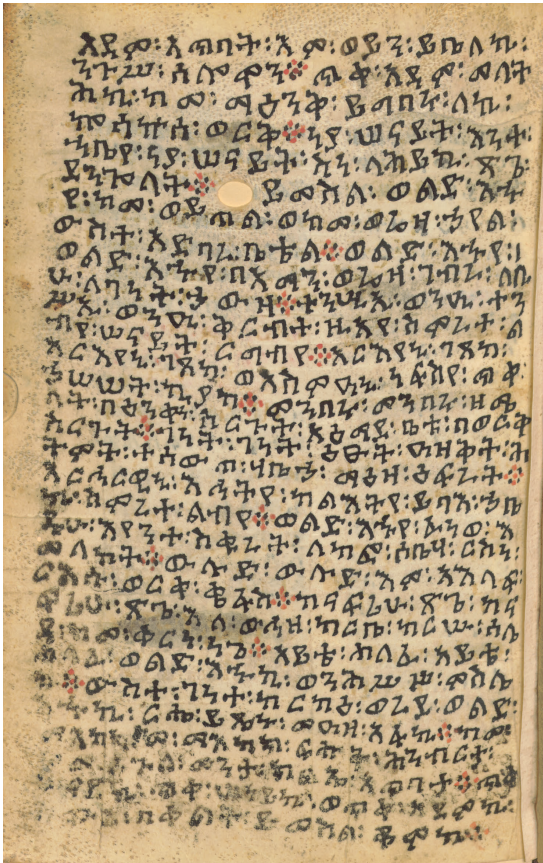


Fig. 10: BSB Cod. aeth. 1; fourteenth/fifteenth century, fol. 258<sup>v</sup>; © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.



**Figs 11a–f:** Excerpts from fol. 258<sup>v</sup>; BSB Cod. aeth. 1; © photo Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

### 3 Conclusions

We have seen in this contribution how colophons or short notes added by the scribe, and marginalia or additional notes from a later time conveying various contents, such as prosopographical, historical or geographical elements, can provide useful information about the history and origin of a manuscript and help to trace a manuscript tradition and the travel from place to place that a manuscript frequently undertook.

In particular, the codices presented in this study, although very few, represent significant witnesses of the historical presence of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Church in Jerusalem in the fourteenth century, and of the existence of specific places in which the Ethiopian community was located in the Holy City at the time, as well as of other probable locations, or ‘hostel-monasteries’, along the route of the Ethiopian pilgrimage. They also show the interest of some Ethiopian rulers, such as ‘Amda Šəyon I and Zar’a Yā’qob, towards this religious centre, and their concern to enrich the manuscript collection of this Ethiopian community with certain Ethiopic texts. During the period between the fourteenth and the

sixteenth centuries, we also witness a migration of manuscripts, through Ethiopian pilgrims or European travellers, between Ethiopia and the Holy City, and from the Holy City to some of the communities of the European Christian world, especially Rome, Germany, the United Kingdom and Saint Petersburg, and we see Jerusalem as a crucial channel across the Mediterranean Sea.

Additionally, we have observed that, besides manuscripts originating in the Ethiopian kingdom and sent from here to Jerusalem, we have evidence of a few manuscripts being produced in Jerusalem, approximately during the same period, some of which were probably copied by the same individuals or by scribes sharing the same context. This may bring us to guess that the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem might have also hosted an independent centre of manuscript production at that time.

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## Abbreviations

BAV = Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

BML = Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana.

BnF = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

BSB = Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

CAe = Clavis Aethiopica.

CUL = Cambridge, Cambridge University Library.

EAe = Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. 1: A–C; vol. 2: D–Ha; vol. 3: He–N; in cooperation with Alessandro Bausi, vol. 4: O–X; Alessandro Bausi (ed.), in cooperation with Siegbert Uhlig, vol. 5: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014.

RNB = Saint Petersburg, Rossijskaja nacional'naja biblioteka.

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