

## Catalogues and Digitization for Previously Uncatalogued Ethiopian Manuscripts in England and North America

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This article reports on the cataloguing and digitization of previously unknown Ethiopian manuscripts in England and North America. Twenty-three manuscripts are in England in the Bodleian, Cambridge and John Rylands University Libraries and a private collection in London. The nearly 600 manuscripts in North America reside mostly in private collections. The Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project has made images of the latter available online.

### Introduction

Thousands of Ethiopian manuscripts reside in countries outside Ethiopia. Many of these are in private hands, completely unknown, uncatalogued and unavailable for scholarly purposes. Even those held in public and university libraries often languish for lack of personnel with knowledge to catalogue the manuscripts. Preliminary to all other study is the work of locating, cataloguing, and (where possible) digitizing these manuscripts to make their existence known and to increase the opportunities for access.

In the following paragraphs, we will report on the work of cataloguing and digitizing previously unknown and uncatalogued Ethiopian manuscripts in England and in North America.

### Cataloguing Ethiopian Manuscripts in England

In the summer of 2005, *Ato* Demeke Berhane, head of manuscripts at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), and I traveled to England to make arrangements with Professor George Brooke of the University of Manchester and editor of the *Journal of Semitic Studies* to publish a catalogue of the manuscripts at the IES. As part of this trip, we made arrangements to tour some of the major libraries in England and study Ethiopian manuscripts. These included the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, the Cambridge University Library, the British Library and the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford.

In each location we were graciously received and quickly provided with manuscripts. In three of these, the Rylands, Cambridge and Bodleian libraries, we were shown previously uncatalogued Ethiopian manuscripts and asked if we might give some indication of their contents and dating. We produced reports for each library: Delamarter provided physical descriptions; Demeke identified contents and dates of copying. There were three such manuscripts in the Rylands Library, two in Cambridge and fourteen at the Bodleian.

While we were in London, Demeke made a presentation to the Anglo-Ethiopian Society on the IES's role in preserving Ethiopia's cultural heritage. One of the members

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of the London chapter is Dr. Ian Mac Lennan. Mac Lennan is a member of the Ethiopian Orthodox church (recently baptized Fekade Sellasie) and a friend of Ethiopia. He recently came to the attention of the popular press when he purchased from Maggs Brothers in London a tabot taken at Maqdala. This he promptly returned it to the church in Ethiopia in a ceremony with *Abuna* Paulos. While we were in London, Mac Lennan provided housing for Demeke and we spent many late nights drinking tea and talking about things Ethiopian. In the course of these conversations, Mac Lennan showed us his collection of four Ethiopian manuscripts. He immediately allowed us not only to catalogue the manuscripts but also to take a complete set of high-resolution digital images for deposit at the IES and in the Hill Museum and Manuscripts Library (HMML) in Collegeville, Minnesota, USA.

In the following months, we prepared a more-complete account of the manuscripts and published it as *A Catalogue of Previously Uncatalogued Ethiopic Manuscripts in England* (Journal of Semitic Studies, 21, Oxford: University Press, 2007). This includes a complete catalogue of the manuscripts, quire maps and notes on the physical features, and thirty-four colour plates. The manuscripts covered in this catalogue include:

1. Bodleian MS Aeth. b.2—seven loose folios with illustrations taken from one or two codices on the saints, mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.
2. Bodleian MS Aeth. d.9—Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, early-19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Bodleian MS. Aeth. d.11—Hymns (*Zəmmare*) and Anthems (*Māwas’ət*) for the Whole Year, with musical notation, 18<sup>th</sup> century.
4. Bodleian MS. Aeth. d.14—Antiphonary (*Dəgg<sup>w</sup>a*) with musical notation, 18<sup>th</sup> century.
5. Bodleian Ms. Aeth. e.22—Psalter with *mahdär*, 19<sup>th</sup> century.
6. Bodleian MS. Aeth. e.23—Psalter, 17<sup>th</sup> century.
7. Bodleian MS. Aeth. e.24—Antiphonary for Lent, ḵomä Dəg<sup>w</sup>a, with musical notation, 19<sup>th</sup> century.
8. Bodleian MS. Aeth. e.25—Psalter, 18<sup>th</sup> century.
9. Bodleian MS. Aeth. e.28—Harp of Praise, Arganonä Wəddase, with illuminations by the Hornbill Painter, 17<sup>th</sup> century.
10. Bodleian MS. Aeth. f.19—Praises of Mary (Wəddase Maryam), Gate of Light (Anqäl ä bərhan), Hymns (Sälam) to Rufa’el, 20<sup>th</sup> century.
11. Bodleian MS Aeth. f.20—Fragment from Gospel of John, 15<sup>th</sup> century.
12. Bodleian MS Aeth. f.21—Psalter with *mahdär*, 19<sup>th</sup> century.
13. Bodleian MS. Aeth. g.22—Book of Chants, Zema, with musical notation, 20<sup>th</sup> century.
14. Bodleian MS. Aeth. g.23—Praises of Mary and Gate of Light, with musical notation, 19<sup>th</sup> century.
15. Cambridge University Library Or. 2547—Liturgical Chants, with musical notation, 20<sup>th</sup> century.
16. Cambridge University Library Or. 2548—Prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Golgotha, The Mystagoga, and Hymn to Jesus, early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
17. Rylands Ethiopic MS 43—Praises of Mary, with musical notation and *mahdär*, 18<sup>th</sup> century.

18. Rylands Ethiopic MS 44—Daily Prayer book and Funeral Ritual, composite 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
19. Rylands Ethiopic MS 45—Prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Golgotha, 18<sup>th</sup> century.
20. Mac Lennan Codex 01—Psalter and *mahdär* (brought from Maqdala by Hormudz Rassam), 17<sup>th</sup> century.
21. Mac Lennan Codex 02—Psalter (brought from Maqdala by Major Leveson), 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century.
22. Mac Lennan Codex 03—Prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Golgotha and the Mystagogia, with *mahdär*, (brought from Maqdala by Major Leveson), 19<sup>th</sup> century.
23. Mac Lennan Codex 04—Prayer against the Tongue of People, with amulet case, 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Cataloguing and Digitizing Ethiopian Manuscripts in North America**

According to Beylot and Rodison (1995), the largest collection of Ethiopian manuscripts in North America is the Princeton collection which includes “approximately 150 codices and 235 magic scrolls.”<sup>2</sup> The next largest collection in North America listed by Beylot is the collection at Duke University with 32 codices and scrolls. In the last two years in North America I have located and digitized 292 codices and 294 magic scrolls that are previously unknown and uncatalogued.

In what follows we will describe the history of the finds, the process of digitization, the description and cataloguing of the manuscripts, a summary of the contents of the codices, the provision for access to the manuscript images and the opportunities for scholarly research in the collection.

### **History of the Finds**

In February of 2005, I was contacted by Mr. Paul Herron from a small town not far from Portland, Oregon, USA. He had been in the military service in 1966 and was stationed in Bahir Dar where he had acquired an old manuscript in a leather carrying case. He had kept the manuscript for nearly 40 years and wanted my help in identifying what it was. With the help of *Ato* Demeke, we identified the manuscript as a 17<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopian Psalter. Being familiar with the collection of images of Ethiopian manuscripts at the HMML, I asked Mr. Herron for permission to digitize the manuscript and deposit images at the HMML. He immediately agreed.

To learn more about the market value of such manuscripts, I contacted two dealerships—one owned by Ms. Eliza Bennett and the other by Claire and Blake Marwick. Between the two they were advertising about a dozen Ethiopian manuscripts for sale. I asked them if they would be interested in having their manuscripts digitized and deposited in the HMML and, to my surprise, both enthusiastically agreed. Over the last two years, these two dealerships have provided nearly 90 codices and around 40 magic scrolls for digitization.

<sup>2</sup> Beylot lists 135 codices and 172 magic scrolls covered in Ephraim Isaac’s two catalogues, but the Princeton University library website (<http://www.princeton.edu/~rbsc/department/manuscripts/nonwestern.html>), accessed 17 March 2007, provides the numbers given above.

Several months later, Ms. Bennett introduced me to two other dealers. The first was the owner of the Whisnant gallery in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA who provided two manuscripts. The second was Gerald Weiner, a financier and philanthropist in Chicago, Illinois. Weiner's collection of magic scrolls already surpasses the number in the Princeton collection and his impressive collection of codices—most with artwork—may soon eclipse the number in Princeton's collection as well. Weiner introduced me to another dealer, Mr. Mohammed Alwan of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA who has generously contributed another 46 codices to the project. I also contacted Ms. Lee Kirk, a dealer handling one codex for the owner of the Tsunami bookstore in Eugene, Oregon. They agreed to allow the codex to be digitized.

During this same time frame several private owners of individual manuscripts or small collections have contributed their manuscripts for digitization: Sheppard and Sharon Earl of Oregon, Hazel Kahan of New York, Luigi Focanti of Utah, Theodore Bernhardt Jr. of New Jersey, Mr. Holcomb of Portland, Oregon, Professor Getatchew Haile of Colledgeville, Minnesota, and Mr. Jim Subers of Missouri.

And beyond dealers and private owners there have been university libraries that have submitted their codices and magic scrolls for digitization. Sylvia Stopforth at Trinity Western University, in Langley, British Columbia, Canada, worked with us to digitize the three codices in their collection. Pam Endzweig, director of collections, and Jon Erlandson, director of the University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History in Eugene, Oregon, worked with us to digitize their collection of the three codices and two magic scrolls in the Bowerman-Hall collection. Carisse Berryhill, special services librarian at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas, worked with us to digitize their collection of two codices and three magic scrolls. Victoria Ertelt of the Mount Angel Abbey Library in St. Benedict, Oregon worked with us to digitize their sole Ethiopian codex.

### **The Process of Digitization**

In most cases, manuscript owners mailed the manuscripts to us and we processed them at my home studio. In some cases, though, we traveled to the location of the manuscripts and shot them there.

When we received a shipment of manuscripts, we sorted them into their own box and assigned each manuscript a number. The next step was always to produce a physical description and an architectural map of the codex we were about to photograph. This latter came in the form of quire maps that showed how each quire was constructed and accounted for each folio of the codex. This was crucial for the photography process since it provided a way to ensure that we had shot images for every page. Out of the entire project, we know of only two shots that were missed.

In the early months of the project, we photographed the manuscripts with a Nikon D-70 digital single lens reflex camera. More recently we are using a Nikon D-200. We have always photographed in fluorescent light to reduce the amount of heat to which the manuscripts were subjected. Most of the manuscripts were shot twice. The purpose of the first pass was to capture all of the content of the manuscripts. These were shot straight down from a copy stand. The purpose of a second pass was to capture details of codicology and scribal practice. For this purpose we used a macro lens and shot somewhere around 100 close-up shots per codex.

Five sets of images had to be produced for each manuscript. The digital masters are in Nikon's proprietary RAW image format called "NEF." Each image from the D-70 is

about 5.2 megabytes in size; each image from the D-200 is about 15 megabytes in size. Interestingly these 5.2 megabyte files carry all the information normally in a TIFF file of three to six times the size. If desired, 8-bit or 16-bit TIFF files can be generated from the NEF masters. And one very helpful aspect of working with NEF files is that, even after you have shot the original, you can reset the color balance of the image to get the colors to come out true to life.

From the NEF images we generated a first set of JPG images, each image running between two and five megabytes. We made a copy of these JPG images and went through each image to digitally paginate the manuscripts so they would have folio numbers. Next, we ran the foliated images through a PhotoShop routine to optimize brightness and contrast and to reduce each image to about one megabyte in size. Finally, we combined all of these optimized images into a single Adobe Acrobat pdf file for each manuscript. These contain the straight-down shots and the close-up shots and run anywhere between 60 and 450 megabytes for codices and 10-12 megabytes for magic scrolls. Even with the compression of file sizes, the images in the pdf files have very high resolution and allow the user to “drill down” into the smallest details of the images.

In all, I have well over individual 350,000 images on an array of several hard drives. With all the backups, we have well over two terabytes of information. This collection of digital pdf files, known as the SGD collection, runs to about 30 gigabytes.

We gratefully acknowledge the help we received from staff members at the HMML, Kelly Booth and Wayne Torborg, who shot six of the manuscripts for us.

### **Describing and Cataloguing the Manuscripts**

Our Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project (EMIP) entered into a new phase when Professor Getatchew Haile of the HMML agreed to work with us in preparing catalogue entries for the manuscripts. In the spring of 2005 I traveled to Collegeville and met with Getatchew and he agreed to do this work. This was at a time when we had only a list of thirty-nine manuscripts. But, even after the project began receiving more and more manuscripts, he has continued to work with us to produce catalogue entries for each of the manuscripts.

Getatchew has made the final determination of the content and dating. He has described the contents of each manuscript in detail (including varia and notes) and provided information on the *editio princeps*, critical editions and other scholarly work on the documents contained in the manuscripts. The cataloguing of the first 135 magic scrolls has been most remarkable. He has identified each and every prayer on the scrolls, providing extensive *incipits* and *explicits* in Ge‘ez, and cited extensively the relevant scholarly literature. And, he has written an introduction to the magic scrolls that provides a very clear overview of the place of these scrolls of spiritual healing in Ethiopian culture. This is sure to become one of the finest resources available for work on Ethiopian magic scrolls.

While Getatchew has tended to the matters of content and dating, I and my students have given our attention to matters of codicology and scribal practice. We have already indicated the attention given to the physical features of the codices and scribal practices in the close-up images we made from each manuscript. This same attention to detail was given to the physical descriptions, providing as thorough a listing of scribal and codicological features of the codices as possible. We have listed the basic information regarding material, measurements, binding, covers (leather and/or cloth coverings), number of quires and folios, illuminations, columns, language, lines per page and date.

In addition we have listed and collated the balance of the quires, the use of half-sheets with folio stubs in quire construction, navigation systems of string to indicate the location of content and illuminations, marginal notations for lectionary purposes, the presence of quire numbers, the use of reinforcement strips in the repair of manuscripts, the measurements of margins, section dividers in the form of *harägs* and other decorative designs with dotted lines of alternating black and red dots and multiple full-stop symbols, and the columetric layout of text (especially in Psalm 150 and the tenth biblical canticle).

Much of this work of physical descriptions has been performed as the manuscripts have arrived for digitization. But in June and July of 2006, we held a four-week seminar at the HMML to complete the processing of the digital images, the construction of the Adobe Acrobat pdf files and the physical descriptions.<sup>3</sup> Participants included myself, Mr. Roger Rundell, a former student, Daniel Alemu of Jerusalem and currently a student at SOAS in London (Ato Daniel served as my translator when I was in Ethiopia in the spring of 2004). Ato Demeke of the IES was also present, though he spent most of his time working on a catalogue for the IES collection of Ge'ez manuscripts. During this time Professor Getatchew convened workshops for us in which we constructed and refined the catalogue entry template and produced entries for each manuscript. Again in July (7 days), August (10 days) and December (5 days) of 2007 I traveled to Collegeville to work with Professor Getatchew to catalogue the most recent manuscripts.

Since the flow of manuscripts has continued,<sup>4</sup> we designated the first 245 manuscripts as volume one. Between August and December 2006, Getatchew completed his work on the catalogue of codices and magic scrolls. That volume has been submitted for publication. Volume two contains the information on codices 106-219 and magic scrolls 135-294. The latter are being catalogued by Dr. Veronika Six of the *Katalogisierung der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* in Hamburg. A third volume, which contains the information on codices 220-290 is begun.

### **Contents of the Codices**

Limitations of space do not allow a full handlist of the codices in the SGD collection. But we will characterize the manuscripts in volume one in a few paragraphs. Again, this includes the first 111 codices (105 from North America and 6 supplements from outside North America) and 134 magic scrolls.

The dating of the codices is as follows: 2 manuscripts come from the 16<sup>th</sup> century; 7 manuscripts come from the 17<sup>th</sup> century; 25 manuscripts come from the 18<sup>th</sup> century; 39 manuscripts come from the 19<sup>th</sup> century; and 38 manuscripts come from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of the biblical books there are fully forty-seven Ethiopian Psalters. This gives something of an idea of how significant the Psalter has been in the life of the Ethiopian Orthodox community.<sup>5</sup> Each Ethiopian Psalter contains five works: the 151 Psalms of David, the 15 Biblical Canticles, the Song of Songs, the Praises of Mary and the Gate of

<sup>3</sup> Some of the costs for this work were supported by a research expenses grant from the Association of Theological Schools' Theological Scholars Grant program.

<sup>4</sup> We are grateful for generous grants from the Gerald and Barbara Weiner Family Foundation and for matching funds from Morgan Stanley. These funds have enabled us to continue the work of digitization and manuscript description.

<sup>5</sup> I delivered a paper at the annual Society of Biblical Literature meeting in November of 2006 in Washington DC on "Scribal Practices in Ethiopian Psalters as Expressions of Identification and differentiation: An Illustrated Lecture."

Light. There are also seven copies of the Gospel of John and a copy of the General Epistles to Revelation.

Of service books there are a dozen manuscripts which are listed primarily as Antiphonaries (2), Anaphoras (5), or Missals (5). There are five works that contain funeral ritual and/or the *Bandlet of Righteousness*. There are also calendars and time tables. There are Hymns and Greetings and Prayers of all sorts. Many are the various works devoted to Mary. One of the most common is the *Prayer of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Golgotha* with is witnessed in six copies.

Of theological works, there are six copies of the *Mystagogia*, four of the *Sword of the Trinity*. Miracle stories are very popular. Three codices contain *Miracles of Mary* and another three contain *Miracles of Jesus*. But there are also miracles of Mercurius, T kl Haymanot, and Saint George. When it comes to a genre known as the Image, the codices contain an extensive array of images to Mary (10), Jesus (6), the Trinity (3), the Savior of the World (2), the angel Michael (5), the angel Gabriel (3), the angel Raguel (1), Saint George (3), John the Baptist (1), as well as to various Ethiopian figures: G br M nf s Qøddus (3), Fasilides (1), T kl Haymanot (2), Kiros (2), Mercurius (1), M zra't Kræstos (1), Ar gawi Z -Mika'el (1) and others.

### **Access to the Manuscript Images in Research Libraries**

Two goals have been fundamental to the Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project. First is a desire to assist in the preservation of this precious aspect of Ethiopia's cultural heritage, her manuscripts. Second is a desire to make the digital materials available to as wide a group of users as possible.

Something of both goals was accomplished when we sent a complete set of digital images of the first 111 codices and 129 magic scrolls back to Ethiopia, to the IES with Ato Demeke in the fall of 2006. In July at the International Conference of Ethiopian studies, we presented full image sets for codices 106-219 and magic scrolls 135-294 to Dr. Yonas Admassu, director of the IES. These manuscript images are now available for study at the IES.

In addition, we have deposited complete sets of images at two institutions in North America. The first is the HMML at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. The second is the Septuagint Institute of Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, Canada.

### **Access to the Manuscript Images Online**

Access to digital resources is, of course, what the Internet does best. From the outset our goal has been to make the manuscript images available through HMML's Vivarium website (<http://www.hmml.org/vivarium/sgd.htm>). All of the owners of the manuscripts have agreed to allow this. In November of 2007 the first 178 codices of the SGD collection were made available on that website. The 55 codices and 32 magic scrolls in the Marwick Collection will come online in January of 2008. These will shortly be followed by the remainder of the 294 sets of images for the magic scrolls and the remaining codices. Most of the technical work associated with the website has been performed by Wayne Torborg of the HMML. As of December 2007, the online collection comes to around 38,000 images with many more thousand to come.

### **Movements of Manuscripts**

Our project has documented something of the undulating nature of the market of Ethiopian manuscripts. Four manuscripts which we have previously digitized in the collections of dealers have come around to us in the hands of other dealers. This fact underscores the value of “capturing” the manuscript long enough to create a new entity from it: a digital record of its content and scribal and codicological features.

More significantly, we have digitized at least three manuscripts that were part of the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library. Weiner Codex 6 (SGD 89), Weiner Codex 45 (SGD 150), and Subers Codex 1 (SGD 226) all have folio numbers stamped in them in the distinctive way that reveals that they were part of the EMMML project of the 1970’s.

### **Interesting Manuscripts**

The collection is filled with fascinating manuscripts. Just a few examples will have to suffice. Weiner codex 56 (SGD 161) is a Psalter that was produced for the Emperor Menelik (1865-1913) and passed into the hands of relatives. A note and stamp signify as much on folio 124r. Weiner Codex 30 (SGD 135) is a large (313 x 246 x 72 mm) copy of the Four Gospels. Though the manuscript is dated to the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it contains fully 78 miniatures in an artistic style reminiscent of 17<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopian art. Subers Codex 4 (SGD 229) contains a “Theological Treatise about the Three-Birth Controversy” with information unknown from any other source. Similarly, Weiner Codex 41 (SGD 146) contains ordination rituals known from only one other (unpublished) manuscript in the library of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa. Ian Mac Lennan’s two Psalters (SGD S1 and S2) both came from the mountain fortress of Maqdala in 1868 where British forces faced off against the forces of King Tewodros. One of the Psalters, scorched in the fires of Maqdala, was brought back to England by a Major Levison. The other was brought back by one of the captives, none other than man who first gained fame as Henry Layard’s local assistant in the excavations at Nineveh, Hormudz Rassam. After his work with Layard, he became an emissary of the British government and was sent as a messenger to King Tewodros to demand the release of the missionary captives. Unfortunately, he himself became a captive until the British expeditionary force, under the direction of Field Marshal Robert Napier, arrived and effected the release of all the captives. Weiner Codex 79 (SGD 238), a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Synaxarium for the entire year, is quite large (395 x 320 mm) and contains some forty illuminations. Weiner Codex 111 (SGD 288), another Synaxarium (part one) is likewise large (359 x 279 mm) and has 18 miniatures. Weiner Codex 83 (SGD 260) contains several extensive explanations of Gə‘əz grammar (Sāwasəw). Weiner Codex 92 (SGD 269) and Weiner Codex 101 (SGD 278) contain several commentaries and treatises on theology (in Amharic). Weiner Codex 97 (SGD 274) contains a collection of major asmat prayers. These few examples do not begin to indicate the richness of the collection.

### **Opportunities for Scholarly Study**

Beyond the study of the religious texts of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, these manuscripts offer many opportunities for scholarly research. There are now over well over 1200 illuminations in the collections. Some of the illuminations, perhaps 30 per cent, are original. A few are, perhaps, important for their old and elaborate illuminations. But most of the illuminations were not part of the original production of the codex. They were painted fairly recently into the codices. This is evident by the fact

that they are painted over the top of text (often visible under the paint) and often marked with a string sewn into the fore edge of the folio to draw the attention of a prospective buyer. As such these manuscripts provide a clear window into the current entrepreneurial practices of dealers in Ethiopia who have keyed into the fact that old books sell, but old book with illuminations sell very well. We have identified several distinctive artistic hands and given them names like “the Speckled Garment Artist” (responsible for illuminations in more than 30 manuscripts), “the beautiful artist” (responsible for illuminations in more than 15 manuscripts), “the red box artist” and “the partial margin artist.” A couple of artists have even attempted very credible replications of the style of the “Ground Hornbill Artist” known to us from manuscripts like the Bodleian Library’s MS. Aeth. e.28, Harp of Praise manuscript. This manuscript, along with sumptuous photos of the Ground Hornbill Artist’s work, was advertised in the Sam Fogg catalogue 17 (called *Ethiopian Art*), in 2001, selling for the hefty sum of £40,000. It would seem that enterprising businesspeople in Ethiopian have been reading. Despite the secondary nature of the illuminations, they are authentic in the sense that they provide us with accurate representations of the traditional themes in Ethiopian artwork and they are executed by authentic Ethiopian craftspeople.<sup>6</sup>

As is well known, the front and back folios of Ethiopian codices often contain information useful for historical and sociological study. Limitations of space do not allow us to elaborate on all of the material contained in the codices. We merely provide here a representative list from codices in the fist catalogue:

- Calendars (of the church year, feast days, of apostles and evangelists, reading schedules, lists of the lucky and unlucky days of the year, the hours of the days and nights in the different months),
- tables of the Ge‘ez alphabet,
- prayers (for salvation, for dedication of baptismal waters, for the souls of people),
- economic texts (notes of ownership of land and other property, record of income of the church in grain paid by a number of people, records of transaction, notice of copying and donation to church, receipt of money, records of settlement of disputes),
- magical (so-called *asmat*) prayers for protection and healing,
- family records (birth records, death record, record of ordination as priest, division of land, record of marriage, last will and testament, name of intermediary),
- medical prescriptions,
- historical works and notes, e.g., genealogy of the Shoan dynasty, and a record of a military expedition to Eritrea on Gənbot 16, [19]68 EC (May 24, 1976) which returned on Säne 10, [19]68 (June 17, 1976).

This list makes it clear that Ethiopian manuscripts are a very important source of information about a great many matters beyond Christian doctrine.

Judging by their size, materials and layout, a fair number of the manuscripts are deluxe and/or ecclesial in their social location. But most of these manuscripts are common. As such, they provide us with extensive information about book production and use in the ordinary social setting of the common monk and priest. Because of the thorough photographic documentation, there is a wealth of codicological information

<sup>6</sup> I presented an illustrated lecture called “The Characterization of God in Ethiopian Manuscript Illuminations from the SGD Collection” at The Septuagint Institute of Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia in September of 2006 at their conference called *Descriptions of God in Ancient and Modern Monotheistic Traditions*.

about bindings, leather work, fabrics, and carrying cases (the *mahdär*). For instance, where fabric is used—either as a codex covering or underneath the leather covering of a book—we have taken extreme close-up images that show the pattern of the weave and the materials used.

Since the collection is fairly extensive and expertly dated by Professor Getatchew, there is an opportunity to study the chronological development of scribal and book-making practices over time. We offer one example about the general dimensions of the 47 Ethiopian Psalters in the first series.<sup>7</sup> The average dimensions of the 47 Psalters are 172.9 x 133.89 x 66.11 mm. This average produces a codex that looks very much the same as standard codex dimensions across several cultures, preferring a format taller than wide. However, when we look at the data more closely we see that taking just the average masks two important points. First, some of the codices are actually square or very nearly square. And, second, there is a clear progression across time from the older Psalters of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, which tend to be square with a height to width ratio of 1,<sup>8</sup> moving evenly toward the more recent Psalters whose dimensions are rectangles whose heights average 1.4 times the width.<sup>9</sup> I would characterize this as a change in aesthetic over time. I am tempted to explain the data in terms of Ethiopia's book-making practice coming more and more under the influence of the West from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Ethiopian Manuscripts in North America**

We return to Beylot's listing of Ethiopian manuscripts in North America. The information contained therein is not significantly different from Richard Pankhurst's brief summary of Ethiopian manuscripts in North America in his article, "A serious Question of Ethiopian Studies: Five Thousand Ethiopian Manuscripts Abroad," where he says that the United States has "...slightly over 400 mss. No less than 325 are in the Princeton University Libraries. Smaller collections are in four libraries in New York, with a total of 17 mss; and at the Free Library in Philadelphia, with 13. Yale has nine." While that article was written some time ago, the actual state of affairs is still not widely known. We can currently list the ten largest collections known in the United States.

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<sup>7</sup> This information was shared as part of the paper at the annual Society of Biblical Literature meeting in November of 2006 in Washington DC on "Scribal Practices in Ethiopian Psalters as Expressions of Identification and differentiation: An Illustrated Lecture."

<sup>8</sup> Five of the Psalters (SGD 9, 12, 15, 60 and S1) have height-width ratios in which the width is identical with or within 10 mm of the height. All are from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>9</sup> I consider the number of examples (N) to be too few to consider this point proven as a general pattern in Ethiopian Psalters. However, many more psalters have come to us in the second series and I am currently collating the dimensions of Psalters given in the various published catalogues to get an even greater sample.

Institution	Codices	Scrolls of Spiritual Healing
1. Princeton	150	235
2. Library of Congress	211	
3. Howard University	155	78
4. The Weiner Collection	108+	206
5. The Alwan Collection	59	20
6. The Marwick Collection	57	36
7. University of California, Los Angeles	50	“a few”
8. The Bennett Collection	45	
9. Seabury-Western Theological Seminary <sup>10</sup>	22	10
10. Duke University <sup>11</sup>	15	17
11. Others Private Collections	30	22
TOTALS	902	624+

Most of the Ethiopian manuscripts in North America are unknown or uncatalogued or both. A catalogue of Princeton’s collection (1 above) remains unavailable. The Thomas Kane collection at the Library of Congress (2 above) was acquired only in 2002 and has only a partial handlist. The Andre Tweed collection (3 above) at the Howard University School of Divinity, acquired around 1993 has not been catalogued. The existence of the Weiner collection (4 above), Alwan collection (5 above), Marwick collection (6 above) and Bennett collection (8 above) have been completely unknown, along with the 30 other codices in various private and university collections (11 above). So, of the ten largest collections in North America, only the Seabury-Western and Duke University collections have been catalogued. And, between the two of these collections there are only 45 codices and twelve of these are Psalters and four are Gospels of John, the most common of Ethiopian manuscripts.

We are pleased that the SGD digital collection provides access to a new and sizeable collection of Ethiopian Manuscripts and that catalogues of these manuscripts are moving toward completion. We will do what we can to assist these other collections in producing catalogues and in making digital images of the manuscripts.

<sup>10</sup> William Macomber, 1979a, catalogued the collection, five of which are Psalters and three are Gospels of John.

<sup>11</sup> *Beylot* (1995) reports 32 pieces. Macomber (1979b) catalogued twenty nine manuscripts, seven of which are Psalters, and one a Gospel of John.

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