

Missal with Anaphoras and Litanies  
In Ge'ez and Amharic, decorated manuscript on parchment with musical notation  
Ethiopia, c. 1850

*116 folios on parchment, complete, mostly in numbered gatherings of 8 leaves, ruling and prickings visible throughout, written in black ink in two columns of twenty-two to twenty-four lines in at least two sizes of script (usually 3-4 mm., but 2 mm on ff.109-112) in a number of 19<sup>th</sup>-century riiqiq hands, with the usual rubrics including opening lines of sections, instructions for the performance of the Mass, and some cantillations, many of the texts include interlinear cantillations or musical notation, with a small number of single-column head-ornaments or hariigs and one large, full-page hariig, f. 1, in red, green and yellow, edges of a number of leaves have been trimmed, and some are repaired, slight staining and traces of rodent damage to some leaves, one leaf is loose. Bound between its original plain wooden boards. Dimensions 185 x 245 mm.*

Ethiopian manuscripts are remarkable products of a living scribal culture that has survived from the fourth century until today. Their bindings often preserve structures similar to early Christian books from the fourth to the seventh centuries; their tradition of liturgical music is a living example of a system transmitted through oral teaching, with some use of notation. Noteworthy features of this Missal are the musical notation or cantillation marks (*melekket* or "signs"), two diagrams, and a colorful frontispiece.

#### PROVENANCE

1. There is no colophon giving a precise date of completion; a note on f.108v indicates that the principal text was finished on Tahsas 22nd (December 31st or January 1st), but the year is not mentioned. The scribe's name is given as Gabra Madhen as an insertion over an erasure, belonging to a church called Mahdara Maryam, after which the name of John Boanerges/Son of Thunder [Yohannes Walda Nagwadgwad] has been added. The name of the original owner, Gabra Sellase, appears in a few invocations for blessing (e.g. f. 63v). The hands and the drawing of the large *hariig*, however, indicate a nineteenth-century date, probably around the middle of the century.
2. Ink stamp-seal, now illegible, on f. 2.

#### TEXT

The opening text is without a title, but comprises a collection of Office Prayers. Most other texts within the manuscript are provided with titles in red.

ff. 1-7v, Office prayers;

ff. 7v-13, Litany of St. Basil for Monday;

ff. 13v-19, Gospel Prayer of Abba Giyorgis;

ff. 19-42v, Ordinary of the Mass [*Ser 'atii Qeddase*], together with various hymns and litanies;

- ff. 42v-52v, Anaphora of the Apostles;
- ff. 52v-53, Prayer of the Covenant;
- ff. 53-55v, Anaphora of Our Lord Jesus Christ;
- ff. 55v-58v, Anaphora of Our Lady Mary;
- ff. 58v-63v, Untitled and unidentified liturgical hymn;
- ff. 63v-70, Anaphora of St. John Boanerges;
- ff. 70-77v, Anaphora of the 318 Orthodox Fathers;
- ff. 77v-79v, Anaphora of Dioscurus;
- ff. 79v-85, Anaphora of St. Basil the brother of Gregory;
- ff. 85-89v, Anaphora of St. Gregory the brother of Basil;
- ff. 89v-97, Anaphora of Athanasius of Alexandria;
- ff. 97v-101v, Anaphora of St. Jacob of Serug;
- ff. 101v-106, Anaphora of St. Cyril;
- ff. 106r-108v, Anaphora of St. Gregory of Armenia;
- f. 108v, "Seal" [*mabtiim*] or diagram of the positions of the priests, deacons, and celebrants of the Mass;
- ff. 109-112v, [different hand] Anaphora of St. Epiphanius;
- f. 113, "Seal" [*mabtiim*] or diagram of the Thirteen Passions of the Cross;
- f. 113v, [different, untidy hand], Amharic text describing the correct belief and religious practices of a Christian; [ff. 114-116v, blank].

Christianity came to Ethiopia in the fourth century, and until the seventh century Ethiopia maintained close contact with the Coptic Church. Despite a brief period of Portuguese rule, the country remained isolated until the nineteenth century. The continuation of a living scribal culture well into the modern era make Ethiopian manuscripts a special resource for scholars interested in earlier manuscripts. The liturgical texts and music of Ethiopia are equally important witnesses to ancient traditions.

The Ethiopian rite is one of the oldest rites. Today it is used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as well as by the group which is in full communion with the Church of Rome, the Ethiopian Catholic Church. The language used in the services is classical Ethiopian called Ge'ez. In its essential elements, it stems from the Alexandrian rite. The similarity between the Ethiopian and the Egyptian Coptic Rites stems from their common origin. This manuscript includes texts for the Mass, divided into the usual two parts, the introductory part (the *Ordo communis* or the Ordinary of the Mass), corresponding to the ancient Alexandrian liturgy, and the Eucharistic prayers, the Anaphora, which are variable according to the feast days of the liturgical year. The Ethiopian rite has a particularly large number of Anaphoras (only the Syro-Antiochene Church has more).

The text here is notable for the use of cantillation marks or musical notation, called in Ge'ez *melekket* or "signs," inserted between the lines of text. The system is indigenous to Ethiopia. These signs do not depict the melodies in any visual way, but are more a mnemonic device for recalling the chants. To read the notation properly the singer must therefore already be acquainted with the corresponding melodies. The *melekket* comprise (a) characters from the Ethiopian script, occurring either singly or in groups, (b) a small number of conventional, non-alphabetic signs, (c) numbers indicating the repetitions of the "halleluyas," and (d) marginal signs indicating related groupings of melodies. Ethiopian tradition ascribes the origin of the system to the sixth-century Saint Yared. However, copies of liturgical texts before the sixteenth century are without musical notation, and some sources mention two *diibtiiras* who codified the system following the Muslim invasions between 1529 and 1541 (Shelemay, "Melekket" in Uhlig, ed., 2003-2014). Manuscripts containing *melekket* are uncommon in private hands.

Ethiopian manuscripts, even those of a relatively late date such as the present example, are marvelous because their binding structures survive as archetypes of early Christian, specifically Coptic, codices from the fourth to seventh centuries (Szirmai, 1999, pp. 45-50).

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#### ONLINE RESOURCES

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