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Introduction to A Catalogue of Previously Uncatalogued Ethiopic Manuscripts in England

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Introduction

This catalogue presents information on twenty-three previously uncatalogued Ethiopian manuscripts held in three University Libraries and one private collection in England.

Two prior catalogues of the Ethiopian manuscripts in the Bodleian Library (Oxford) have been produced. In 1848, A. Dillmann described thirty-five manuscripts in his *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae Oxoniensis, Pars. VII. Codices Aethiopici* (Oxford). In 1951, Edward Ullendorff described another sixty-six manuscripts in his *Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Volume II* (Oxford). This catalogue describes another fourteen Ethiopian manuscripts at the Bodleian, bringing the total to one hundred fifteen.

Sixty-seven Ethiopian manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library have been set forth in 1961 by Edward Ullendorff, along with Stephen G. Wright and D.A. Hubbard, in their *Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library* (Cambridge). This catalogue describes another two manuscripts bringing that total to sixty-nine.

In 1974, Stefan Strelcyn described forty-two manuscripts in the *Catalogue of Ethiopic Manuscripts in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* (Manchester). This catalogue describes another three manuscripts bringing the total number of manuscripts in the Rylands collection to forty-five.

Along with the additions to the collections of the university libraries, we offer here the information on four other manuscripts held in the private collection of Dr Ian Mac Lennan of London, arriving at the grand total in this volume of twenty-three.

The largest collection of Ethiopian manuscripts in Britain, of course, is to be found at the British Library whose holdings have been set forth in three catalogues. The earliest eighty-two in this collection were catalogued by A. Dillmann in his *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Orientalium Qui in Museo Britannico Asservantur* (London, 1838). The largest number of this collection was catalogued by W. Wright in his *Catalogue of the Ethiopic Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1847* (London, 1877). He provides information on four hundred and eight manuscripts, including some thirty-five which were acquired after 1838 and before the Magdala expedition of 1868. Thus, three hundred fifty were

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acquired through the Magdala expedition. The final catalogue is that of Stefan Strelcyn who, in 1978, published his *Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired Since the Year 1877* (London) which detailed another one hundred eight manuscripts (some twenty four of which he reckons to be from the Magdala expedition). This brings the total of the British Library collection to just under six hundred (598) manuscripts.

The other collections of note in the British Isles are to be found in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle and at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland at which Delamarter studied for a week in July of 2005. A description of the six sumptuous manuscripts at Windsor Castle is to be found in Edward Ullendorff's 'The Ethiopic Manuscripts in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle', *Rassegna di studi etiopici*, 12 (1954), 71–9. Beatty's fifty-three Ethiopian manuscripts have been catalogued by Enrico Cerulli in his *I manoscritti etiopici della Chester Beatty Library in Dublino*. (Rome, 1965). Mr Charles Horton, curator of Western manuscripts at the Chester Beatty, informs us that the library has acquired 'a few' more Ethiopian manuscripts since the time of Cerulli's catalogue, but that they are mainly Psalters and other well-known works.

The Ethiopian provenance of the twenty-three manuscripts described herein is known in only a few cases. For most, we know only the date they were acquired by the respective library and, perhaps, the person who donated it. However, in the case of the four manuscripts in the Mac Lennan collection, we know three of them to be from Magdala.

Steve Delamarter is Professor of Old Testament and Early Judaism at George Fox Evangelical Seminary in Portland, Oregon, USA. In the summer of 2004, assisted by a Theological Scholars Grant from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), he traveled to Israel and Ethiopia to study the sociology of scribal communities. Delamarter arranged for an affiliation with the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) of Addis Ababa University, the premiere research institution in Ethiopia. The IES was founded by Richard Pankhurst in the 1963 and occupies the Gännätä Lə'ul ('paradise of princes') palace given by Haile Sellasie to the University of Addis Ababa after the aborted coup in 1960. Delamarter and his translator, Mr Daniel Alemu of Jerusalem, studied manuscripts at the IES and took field trips into various regions of Ethiopia to interview some twenty-two scribes regarding their scribal practice and their social role, social location and the economic engines that affect the markets for their work.

The head of manuscripts and archives at the IES is Ato Demeke Berhane who gave a great deal of assistance to Delamarter and Alemu in their work in Ethiopia. Near the end of their time there, Demeke raised the issue of the need for a

published catalogue of the holdings of the IES. Delamarter took Demeke's information and, at a conference on the Dead Sea scrolls at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, Canada, enquired about the idea with Professor George J. Brooke of the University of Manchester and one of the editors of the *Journal of Semitic Studies*. Brooke invited a proposal for the Journal's supplement series. Demeke produced the proposal in time for the meeting of the editorial committee in December of 2004. Reviews of the catalogue proposal were favorable and, in June of 2005, Demeke and Delamarter came to Manchester to work out the details for the publication of the catalogue. Professor George Brooke, whose gracious hospitality we wish to acknowledge, not only oriented us to the issues of the publication of that catalogue, but also gave us letters of reference to study Ethiopian manuscripts at other libraries in England.

Our plan was to visit the John Rylands Library, the Cambridge University Library, the British Library and the Bodleian Library in order to study an array of early, dated Ethiopian manuscripts for the purposes of paleographical analysis. With the exception of the British Library, we found uncatalogued manuscripts at each of the libraries we visited and made it one of the goals of our time in each place to provide descriptions of the manuscripts.

During our stay in London we were cared for by several members of the Anglo-Ethiopian Society at which Ato Demeke gave a presentation on the role of the IES in preserving Ethiopia's cultural heritage. Notable among these were John Mellors and Anne Parsons whose work on the scribes and scribal practices in Ethiopia had been a direct help to Delamarter in his work with scribes in Ethiopia. Mellors and Parsons have traveled to Ethiopia on several occasions and lived with scribes of South Gondar, commissioning works from them and studying their practices. They wrote the books *Ethiopian Bookmaking* (London: New Cross Books, 2002) and *Scribes of South Gondar* (London, 2002) and their work was featured in an exhibition at the museum at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. In London, Dr Ian Mac Lennan graciously provided housing and hospitality for us. Dr Mac Lennan is a friend of Ethiopia and member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He came to the attention of the popular media recently when he purchased an Ethiopian *tabot* (a sacred object which, in the thinking of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, is connected with the Ark of the Covenant and sanctifies a place for worship) from a London antiquities dealer and returned it to the authorities of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Addis Ababa. Demeke and Mac Lennan met in Addis Ababa and Ian extended an invitation to stay at his home, should Demeke ever be in London. The offer was accepted and thus ensued many late-night discussions with tales of Ethiopia's history and culture. It was

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in this context that Dr Mac Lennan's manuscripts came up for discussion and he readily agreed to allow us both to study them and to produce high-resolution photographic images for deposit at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and at the Hill Museum and Manuscripts Library in Collegeville, Minnesota, USA.

In each of the libraries we were blessed to receive the generous help of various persons.

Mr John R. Hodgson, Keeper of Manuscripts and Archives at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, was of great help arranging for our arrival and in working with us to foliate the codices. Anne Young, Senior Special Collections Assistant, gave us every aid in our study of the manuscripts and in our work to publish the information about the three manuscripts from the John Rylands Library that appear in this catalogue. Likewise, Dorothy Clayton, editor of the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* worked closely with us to prepare an article for the *Bulletin* about their manuscripts. In addition, she worked with us in the process of getting the images for publication. We express our gratitude to the John Rylands Library of Manchester University for permission to publish photos of their manuscripts.

At the Cambridge University Library, Mr Richard Andrewes, Head of Cambridge University Library Music Department and Mr Godfrey Waller, Superintendent of the Manuscripts Reading Room, were of immense help to our general goal of inspecting nearly 20 manuscripts there, but also to our unanticipated work of cataloguing two undocumented manuscripts. We thank the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library for permission to publish images of their manuscripts.

At the Bodleian, Colin Wakefield, Deputy Keeper of the Department of Oriental Collections, and Doris Nicholson, Oriental picture researcher assisted us time and again during our initial visit in the month of June and in Delamarter's extended stay in July and August. As the notes below will show, Mr Wakefield provided many services for us, including research on manuscript provenance. He also proved invaluable in the decipherment of a hundred-year-old, hand-written note from a donor of one of the manuscripts. We extend our heartfelt thanks to these colleagues and to the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford for permission to publish images of the fourteen manuscripts in their collection.

In Oxford we also enjoyed the hospitality of John Roche, D.Phil., who tutors in the History of Science at Linacre College, Oxford University. Dr Roche assisted us with arrangements for transportation, housing and meals in Oxford and provided warm companionship as well.

These twenty-three codices can contribute to our knowledge of Ethiopic manuscripts in several ways. First, the social location represented by these

manuscripts seems to be common, representing use by normal priests in everyday life. This is in contrast, for instance, to the sumptuous manuscripts one can see at the Windsor palace, the British Library, and the libraries at Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester, which represent social locations around royalty and in the upper echelons of the church. While, in previous generations and in popular circles, these latter drew much of the attention because of their exceptional size and quality and the richness of their illuminations, there is rising interest in our day about the common niche as the domain in which life was played out by the vast majority of people in Ethiopia's long and varied history.

There is much in these manuscripts that is of interest regarding matters scribal and codicological. Six of the items in this catalogue (4, 7, 13, 14, 15, and 17) contain at least one work with musical notation. Items 5, 12, 17, 20, and 22 have leather cases (a *mahdär*); item 13 has a cloth pouch and item 23 is in an amulet case. Items 2, 7, 12 and 16 are covered in tooled leather. Items 8, 13 and 15 employ a piece of parchment as a spine cover; item 22 has a strip that covers spine and fore edge in a different format than the other three. Items 2 and 14 have been rebound in the West. Several of these codices employ quire numbers on the first folio of some or all of the quires of the codex (the various forms and locations of the quire numbers providing another fascinating study).

Among all twenty-three codices, there are around 277 quires from which we can gain an idea of the various approaches to the construction of what we might call 'normal quires' in the body of a codex. We list here a few observations about the quires in this collection:

1. There is a grand total of 277 quires.
2. Of these, the front protection sheets constitute exceptions. They are generally one or two sheets because of their function. About 18 of the quires fall into this category.
3. Last and next-to-last quires constitute exceptions. Most of the one-, two-, and three-sheet, balanced quires (i.e. quires made up exclusively of full-sheets and, thus, the same number of folios in the front half as in the back half of the quire) fit this category. About 15 of the quires fall into this category.
4. Even among balanced, adjusted quires (i.e. quires that include the use of half sheets, with the same number of half sheets in the front half as in the back half of the quire), three were end quires and, as such, subject to 'special rules', i.e. finish the codex with as few sheets/folios as necessary. Three quires fit into this category.

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5. This leaves a total 241 quires subject to what we might call ‘normal rules’, i.e. no particular constraints to make the quire short.
6. Of these 241, 104 or 43% are four-sheet, balanced quires.
7. Of these 241, 55 or 23% are five-sheet, balanced quires.
8. Of these 241, 10 or 4% are six-sheet, balanced quires.
9. Of these 241, 12 or 5% are three-sheet, balanced quires.
10. Of these 241, 16 are 5/4 adjusted balanced (a quire made up of three sheets and two half-sheets, one in the front and one in the back of the quire); five are 6/5 adjusted balanced; four are 6/4 adjusted balanced (two full sheets and four half-sheets) or 4/3 adjusted balanced or 5/3 adjusted balanced.
11. Thus, of the 241 quires, 25 (just over 10%) are adjusted balanced.
12. Of the 241 quires, 22 (just under 10%) are unbalanced quires (i.e. using usually only one half-sheet as part of a quire, rendering the total number of folios in the quire to be uneven).

It may be valuable at some point to try to correlate these quire construction statistics to the economic forces and practices at work among scribes. For instance, when it comes to common manuscripts (i.e. non-deluxe manuscripts made for persons of ordinary means), does the 4-sheet quire constitute the most ideal, preferable or manageable unit of micro-economic exchange? For what reasons: more frequent pay days (though smaller income per payday), i.e. operating on little overhead with little margins? Are the use of half-sheets with folio stubs—as seems to be not infrequent in common manuscripts—an attempt to press all available materials into service in a materials-scarce environment? These are just a few of the sorts of studies that the codicological information in these manuscripts can provide.

As the ‘List of Manuscripts by Date’ shows, these codices were produced across several centuries ranging from the 15th through the 20th centuries.

In June and July of 2006, we were privileged to spend four weeks together with Professor Getatchew Haile at the Hill Museum and Manuscripts Library at Saint John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota, USA. The focus of our work was on two other Ethiopian manuscript cataloguing projects. The first was a Catalogue of the Ethiopian Manuscripts in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies which will be published by the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, supplement series, and will contain entries for more than a thousand Gə‘əz manuscripts. The second project on which we worked was a Catalogue of Previously Uncatalogued Ethiopian Manuscripts in North America. This catalogue covers the contents of a digital collection known as the SGD Library of Ethiopian Manuscripts and will be published by Getatchew Haile and Steve Delamarter. The library is made up of 112 codices and 129 magic scrolls owned by

three universities and 12 private owners in North America. High resolution images of all of the codices were produced as part of the project. The entire digital collection of these manuscripts (some 18 gigabytes of pdf files) is currently available at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Hill Museum and Manuscripts Library in Collegeville, Minnesota, USA, and the Septuagint Institute of Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, Canada. In working on those catalogues we learned a great deal from Getatchew which we were able to bring to the final editing of this catalogue. We express our appreciation to Professor Getatchew and dedicate this work to him.

We should also say a word of thanks to Dr Jules Glanzer, dean of George Fox Evangelical Seminary and Delamarter's supervisor, for help in finding funds toward the cost of printing the colour images in this volume and to George Fox University for a load reduction in the fall of 2006 to be able to work on this and other catalogues of Ethiopian manuscripts.

Finally, we offer a word of appreciation to Bronwen Campbell, assistant editor at the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, for her help with various aspects of the publication process.