

Christian and Islamic manuscripts of Ethiopia: A comparative approach (12th-20th centuries)

Paris, 12–13 December 2014

On 12 and 13 December 2014 the Bibliothèque nationale de France hosted the workshop ‘Manuscripts chrétiens et islamiques d’Éthiopie: une approche comparative (XII^e-XX^e siècle)’ organized by Claire Bosc-Tiessé (CNRS, Institut des mondes africains, Paris, hereafter IMAF) and Anne Regourd (CNRS, ‘Proche Orient - Caucase’ and ERC project ‘Islam in the Horn of Africa’, University of Copenhagen). The workshop was devoted to various aspects of the Christian and Islamic manuscript book culture and gathered specialists in both fields, giving them opportunity to widely discuss the common research issues.

After the welcoming words offered by Dominique Charpin (Collège de France, deputy director of the unit ‘Proche Orient - Caucase’) and Marie-Laure Derat (CNRS, deputy director of the IMAF Malher unit) the first session, chaired by Judith Olszowy-Schlanger (EPHE, Paris) discussed the problems concerning scribal practice, codicology and the use of manuscripts. Steve Delamarter (George Fox University) reported the results of statistical analysis showing how the Ethiopian scribes working with the Psalter solved three technical problems arising in connection to copying of this text: the long sentences not fitting to a single line prescribed by the tradition, rubrication of the names of Mary and God, and marking the midpoint of the text in Psalm 77. Stéphane Ancel (IMAF) described outcome of the comparative studies focusing on the dimensions, proportions and page layouts applied to a large corpus of manuscripts (fourteenth to twentieth century) recorded in the Təgray province in northern Ethiopia in the framework of the ERC project ‘Ethio-SPaRe’ (Hamburg). Éloi Ficquet (Centre d’études interdisciplinaires des faits religieux, École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris) shared the observations about the use of manuscripts and other writings in the mystical ceremonials of the Ethiopian Muslims. The presentation of the *Handlist of the Manuscripts in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, II: The Arabic Materials of the Ethiopian Islamic Tradition* (by Alessandro Gori, with contributions by Anne Regourd, Jeremy R. Brown, and Steve Delamarter; *Ethiopic Manuscripts, Texts, and Studies*, 20 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014)) closed the session.

Two panels were devoted to literature; they were chaired by Tal Tamari (CNRS, IMAF) and Bertrand Hirsch (Université Paris-I, IMAF). Ahmed Hassan Omer (Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa) gave a general overview of the currents characteristic for the literary traditions flourishing in the

Horn of Africa focusing on the works by four writers: *alāqa* Tayyā, *mārig-eta* Ləsanā Wärq Gäbrä Giyorgis, *šayḥ* Bakri Sapaaloo and *ustaz* Abdāl Kadir Hagos. Andreas Wetter (Humboldt Universität, Berlin) presented the methods used for recording of Amharic *aḡamī* manuscripts and signalled the difficulties faced by the scholars. Alessandro Gori (University of Copenhagen) dealt with the opposite phenomenon, that is Arabic texts written in Ethiopian script, on the example of MS Collegeville, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, EMMML 6239: a work by *šayḥ* Zäkkarəyas, a learned Muslim who converted to Christianity and wrote a commentary on the Qurʾān from the point of view of his new faith. Another Muslim convert to Christianity, *abba* ʿEnbaqom, his ecclesiastical career, and his main work, the *Anqāšā amin* ('The Gate of Faith'), a polemic treatise against Islam, were the subject of presentation delivered by Margaux Herman and Deresse Ayenachew (Däbrä Bərhan University). Amélie Chekroun (IMAF) spoke about the connection between the Arabic *Futūḥ al-Ḥabaša* ('The Conquest of Ethiopia'), a Muslim account of the military conflict with Ethiopia during 1527–1534, and the Ethiopic *Māšḥafä səddät* ('The Book of Persecution'), representing the Ethiopian view of the war.

The archival and diplomatic subjects were discussed in a session chaired by Marie-Laure Derat (CNRS, IMAF). Anaïs Wion (CNRS and Centre français des études éthiopiennes, Addis Ababa) provided an overview of the documents written in Coptic and in Arabic, giving insights into the complex relations between the Ethiopian Church and Alexandrian patriarchate.

A session offering space to the papers addressing art history was chaired by Claire Bosc-Tiessé. The influences of Islamic art transferred to Ethiopia via Coptic Egypt and reflected in the decoration of some Ethiopian manuscripts were highlighted by Ewa Balicka-Witakowska (Uppsala University, Institute of Linguistics and Philology), while Sana Mirza (New York University, Institute of Fine Arts) brought to attention the splendidly illuminated Harari Qurʾān in *biharī* script dating to 1746 (presently London, Nasser D. Khalili Collection of Islamic Art, QUR 706) and the history of its wide circulation reconstructed from the owners' notes.

The final discussion moderated by the organizers of the workshop summarised the results of the debates and stressed the importance of further cooperation.

As the closing event, several Ethiopian and Islamic manuscripts in the collection of the Bibliothèque nationale de France relevant to the subjects discussed were presented to the participants of the workshop and interested audience.

For the full programme of the workshop see <http://calenda.org/311193>.

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