



# Ethiopian Manuscript Studies Yesterday and Today

*Ethio-SPaRe: Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia,  
Salvation, Preservation, Research*

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Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG



European Research Council

Established by the European Commission

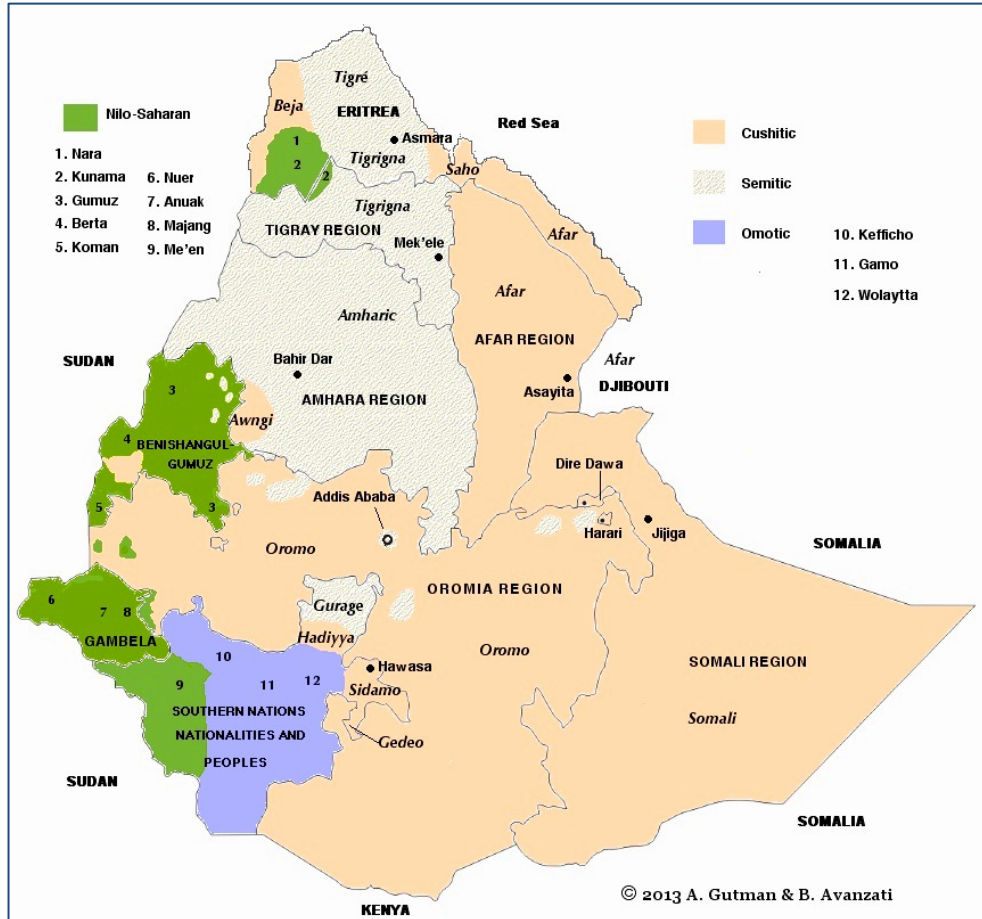


# Ethiopia: geography





# Ethiopia: languages and peoples



Statistics for 2007:

Population 73,700,000

Number of languages 89

Ethio-Semitic languages:

Tigrigna - 4,320,000 speakers

Amharic - 21,600,000 speakers

Ge'ez (Ethiopic) – extinct language of liturgy and church literature

(<http://www.ethnologue.com>)

# Ethiopia: a brief history



The Kingdom of Aksum. Ge'ez. Christianization.



# Ethiopia: a brief history



The oldest Ethiopian manuscript:  
The Gospels of Enda Abba Garima  
(<http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Saving-the-Garima-Gospels/21266>)



## The Bible and the Birth of the Manuscript Culture

# Ethiopia: a brief history



Four Gospels Book of Iyasus Mo'a  
(before 1293?)

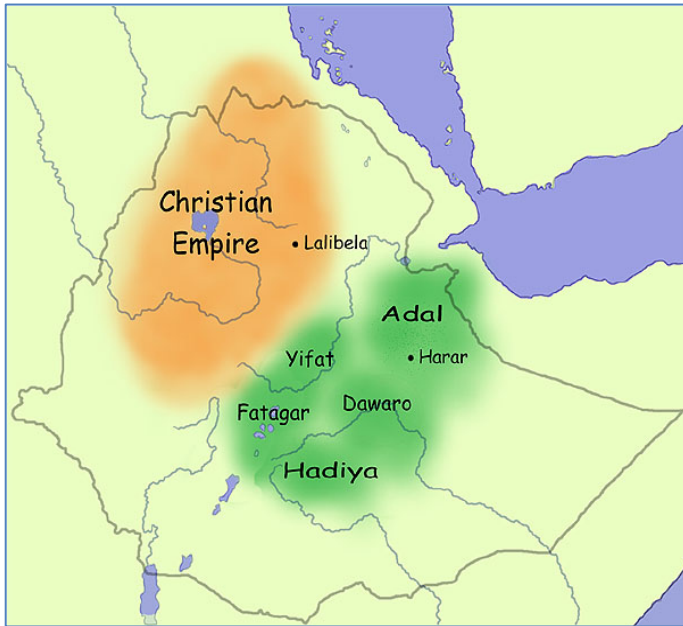
(Mazgaba seelat, MG-2000.003:028)

Rock-hewn church of St. George,  
Lalibala

The Zagwe dynasty and the Early “Middle Ages”

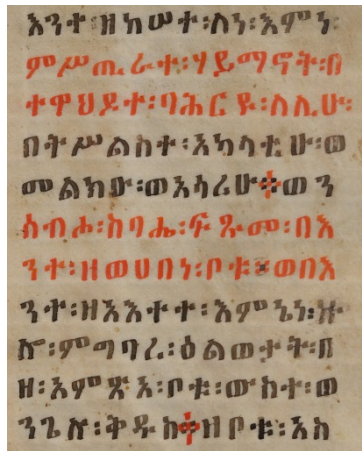
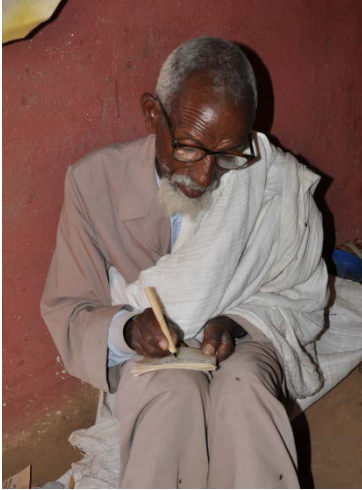


# Ethiopia: a brief history

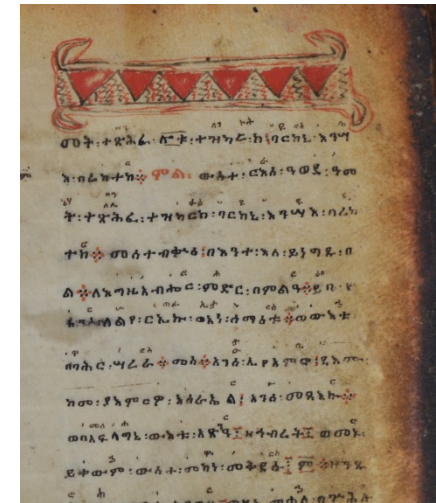


The “Solomonic” dynasty and the High “Middle Ages”. Christianity and Islam. Monastic movement. Gondarine kingdom. Religious disputes. Modernization.

# Ethiopia: ancient written culture



Presumably up to 200,000 manuscripts exist



The persistence of the medieval manuscript culture. 8



# Ethiopia: ancient written culture



Codex



Scroll

Enda Abba Garima Gospels (<http://www.hewit.com/download/sd26.pdf>)

Church literature: Bible (esp. Gospels); Liturgical texts; Hagiographies,  
Devotional texts (prayers, hymns); Theological treatises,  
Monastic literature

“Secular” literature: Protective texts; Historical texts; Legal documents

## Text genres and types of manuscripts.

# Research in Ethiopian manuscripts

## Philology and text studies

Texts studied since the 16<sup>th</sup> century

Text editions and critical editions

Overviews of the history of literature

all on the basis of the texts available in the  
manuscripts preserved in European collections

## Cataloguing

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century

mostly: attention on texts

## Codicology, palaeography



# Ethio-SPaRe: concept

Research in the Ethiopian manuscript culture in its original context; application of methods of the modern manuscript studies



Interviewing of  
priests from  
Däbrä Mä'so  
Yohannes, 2010

# Ethio-SPaRe: main aims

Systematic research of manuscript collections in Ethiopia

Digitization; physical preservation

Study of the newly discovered texts and objects

Development of new standards in Ethiopian manuscript studies

Research into the local history and traditions

Interdisciplinary work, academic exchange and education



# Ethio-SPaRe: field work

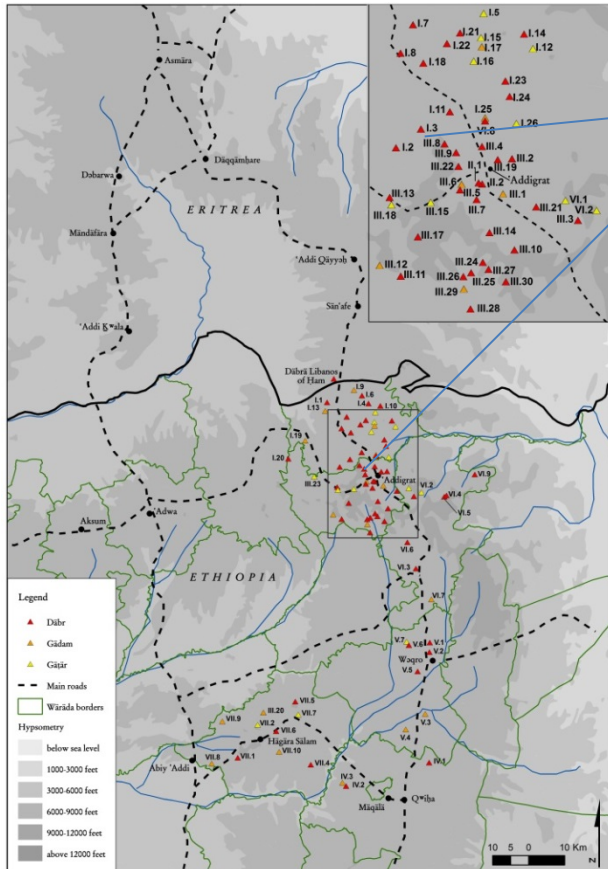
6 research and digitalization missions in 2010-2012







# Findings: new or undocumented sites



'Addäqäharsi  
Paraqlitos





# Findings: new texts

The Acts of the Martyrs of Paraqlitos

Left: ms. AP-046, 16<sup>th</sup> century,

Below: ms. AP-022, 19<sup>th</sup> century



ETHIO-SPARE



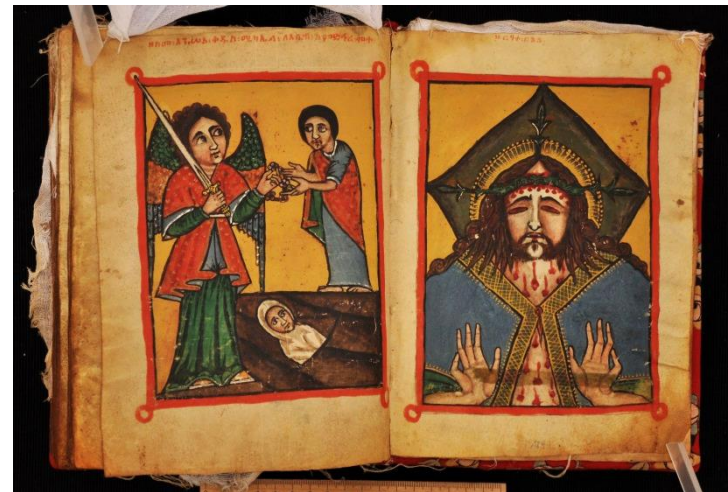
ETHIO-SPARE

# Findings: valuable manuscripts



Left: Fragment of pre 13th-century  
Four Gospels in a 15th-century  
homiliary (MY-002)

Below: lavishly illuminated Homiliary  
for the Feasts of St. Michael, late  
18th/early 19-century (NSM-004)





# Ethio-SPaRe: analysis Cataloguing as basis of research

New standards in  
manuscript  
description.

Systematic study  
of the  
codicological  
features.

Catalogued  
collections – the  
main product of  
the project.

Sinodos "Sinodos"	
AM-002 C3-IV-359 (fol. 66v)	
[+] <<< IMAGES >>> :	
[+] General description :	
[-] Physical description :	
<b>Binding :</b>	<p>Wooden boards (recently) covered with reddish-brown tooled leather; Four pairs of sewing stations; Back board is broken and repaired with a piece of another board and wire rings. Parchment strips (possibly originating from the same Ms. as fol. 183) were used to sew together fols. 1-2. wood</p> <p>-&gt; Material : -&gt; Decoration : -&gt; Original binding : -&gt; Spine binding : -&gt; State : -&gt; State details : -&gt; Endbands : ----- Headband : ----- Tailband : -&gt; Other information :</p> <p>partly no intact yes</p> <p>Fols. 1-2 are crudely stitched to the Ms.; Fol. 183 is crudely stitched to the Ms. as endleaf. The leather cover is of recent age. Leaves carefully amended: fols. 48, 61, 105, 106, 176.</p>
<b>Writing material :</b>	<p>-&gt; Material : -&gt; Watermark : -&gt; Ink :</p> <p>Parchment yes Black, red.</p>
<b>Number of folios :</b>	183.0
-> notes :	
<b>Blank folios :</b>	0.0
-> notes :	
<b>Number of quires :</b>	25.0
-> notes :	
<b>Structure of quires :</b>	<p>{2/2v} — IIg(8/fols. 3r-10v) — gIII(8/fols. 11r-18v) — gIV(8/fols. 12r-26v) — gV(8/fols. 25r-34v) — gVI(8; s.l.: 3, stub after 6; 6 stub after 3/fols. 35r-43v) — gVII(8; s.l.: 2, stub after 6; 7, stub after 4/fols. 44r-50v) — gVIII(8/fols. 51r-58v) — gIX(8/fols. 59r-66v) — gX(8/fols. 67r-74v) — gXI(8; s.l.: 3, stub after 5; 6, stub after 2/fols. 75r-82v) — gXII(8/fols. 83r-90v) — gXIII(8/fols. 91r-98v) — gXIV(8/fols. 99r-106v) — [g]XV(8; s.l.: 2, stub after 5; 6, stub after 2/fols. 107r-114v) — gXVI(8/115r-122v) — gXVII(10/123r-129v) — gXVIII(8/133r-140v) — [g]XIX(8; s.l.: 3, stub after 5; 6, stub after 2/fols. 141r-148v) — gXX(8/fols. 149r-156v) — gXXI(6; s.l.: 3, stub after 4; 4, stub after 3/fols. 157r-162v) — gXXII(4/fols. 163r-166v) — [g]XXIII(8; s.l.: 3, stub after 5; 6, stub after 2/fols. 167r-174v) — gXXIV(8; s.l.: 3, stub after 5; 6 stub after 2/fols. 175r-182v) — &lt;B(1; s.l.: 1, stub after 1/fol. 183r-v)&gt; Fol. 183 originates from a different Ms.</p>
<b>Measurements :</b>	(width x height x thickness, cm) 27.0 x 27.0 x 11.5
<b>Text area :</b>	(width x height, cm) 21.0 x 24.5
<b>Margins :</b>	top: 3.5; bottom: 6.5; left: 1.5; right: 4.0; other values: , 1.5 All data are for fol. 2r.
<b>Number of columns :</b>	2.0
-> notes :	
<b>Number of lines :</b>	35.0
-> notes :	Between 31 et 38 lines
<b>Ruling :</b>	<p>Prickling and ruling are visible. Ruling pattern: 1A-1A-1A1A/0-0/0-0/C. Primary pricks are partly visible. Ruling pricks are visible. Structural pricks are not visible. The upper line is written above the ruling. The bottom line is written above the ruling.</p>
<b>Paleography :</b>	<p>-&gt; Type of script : -&gt; Hand writing : -&gt; Change of hand :</p> <p>middle 15th-cent. very regular, by a well-trained hand Hand a: fols. 1ra-182vb + Additions nos. 8, 15. Hand b: fol. 183ra-183vb Hand c: Additions nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 13. Hand d: Additions nos. 2, 7, 10. Hand e: Additions nos. 6, 14. Hand f: Addition no. 12. Executed: regularly Usage: logical I. colon. II. nine dot asterisk; paragraph signs on the left of the text column, accompanying nine dot asterisks (esp. fol. 3r-15r); doubled nine dot asterisks with thin black and red line(s) in between (used to fill the line, frequently at the end of a section); four dot asterisk encircled with red line (fols. 20v, 37v); III. black line with one (or more) chain of red and black dots in the middle (e.g., fol. 85r), separating canons; black line (e.g., fols. 80v, 82v, 83v); red line (fol. 21v); chain of coronis signs, under the chain of nine dot asterisks with thin red and black lines in between (fols. 49r, 182vb); fols. 28v, 33r, 49r, 50v, 55v, 82r, 82v, 83r, 83v, 84v, 85r, 87v, 88r, 94v, 95v, 104v, 124v, 125v, 126v, 126v, 127r, 131v,</p>
-> Crux ansata :	
<b>Rubrication :</b>	Numbers and incipit of canons; incipit of prayers; incipit of texts; elements of the punctuation signs; Addition fol. 140v.
<b>Abbreviations :</b>	

# Ethio-SPaRe: analysis Codicological studies

Borders of “codicological units” in a  
manuscript Miracles of Mary, 18th  
and 16th centuries (DD-006)

Stratigraphy of  
the manuscript;  
composite  
manuscripts



14th-century miniatures infixed in a 19th-  
century “Miracles of Mary” (DZ-014):  
A(fols. 1r-2v) – I(12/s.l.: {5, 6} /fols. 3r-  
14v)...

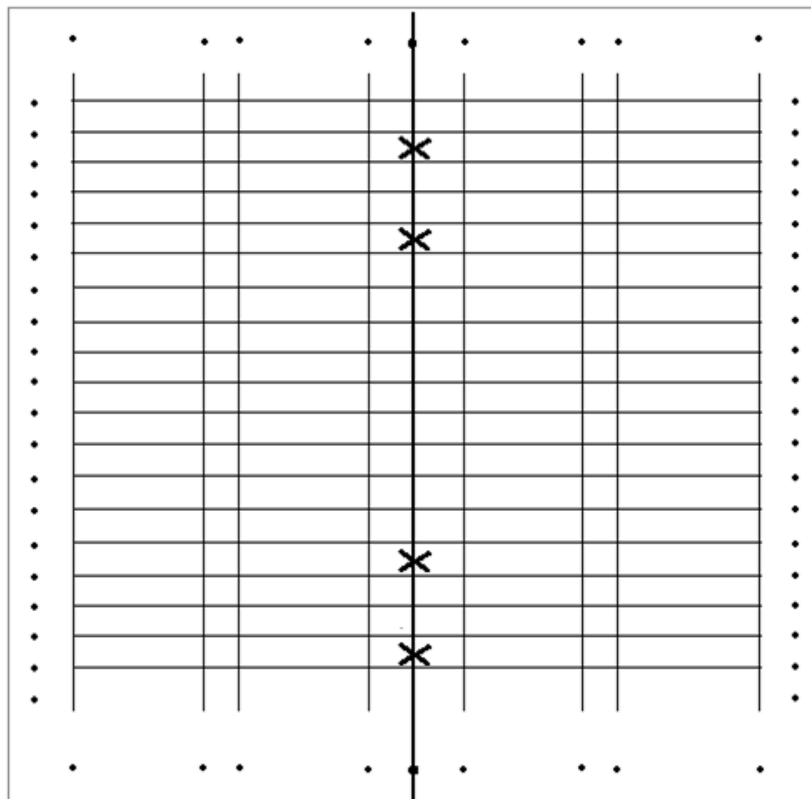
...III(6/fols. 8r-13v) – <IV(12/fols. 14r-  
25v)> – V(8/fols. 26r-33v)....



# Ethio-SPaRe: analysis Codicological studies



1A-1A-1A1A/0-0/0-0/C



Ruling and  
Pricking

MY-008,  
Four Gospels,  
early 15th  
century

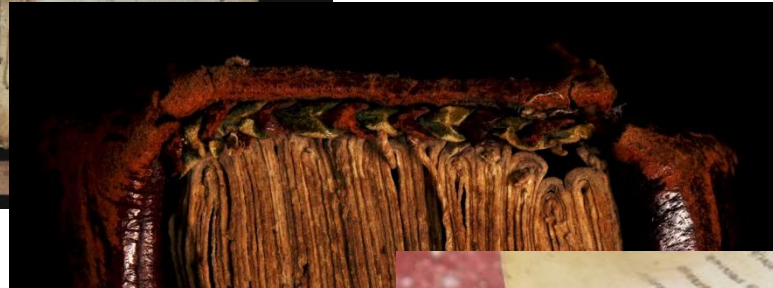
# Ethio-SPaRe: analysis

## Codicological studies



First and last  
leaves pasted  
down on the  
boards

Systematic  
analysis of  
physical  
features



Coloured  
endbands









































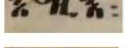

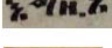
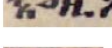
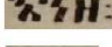


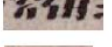
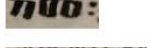
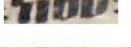
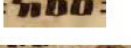
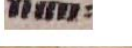


“Tackets” on  
quires prepared  
for binding



# Ethio-SPaRe: analysis

## Palaeographical studies

Feature	MY-008	MR-023	UM-023	MR-007
1. wā				
2. mā				
3. bē				
4. 'ə				
5. ḥa				
6. lā				
7. dā				
8. ya				
9. yə				
10. ligature				
11. 'enzā				
12. kāmā				
13. divider				

Support for dating  
Distinguishing scribal  
hands

Identification of individual  
scribes

650 manuscripts: ca. 100  
scribes known by name

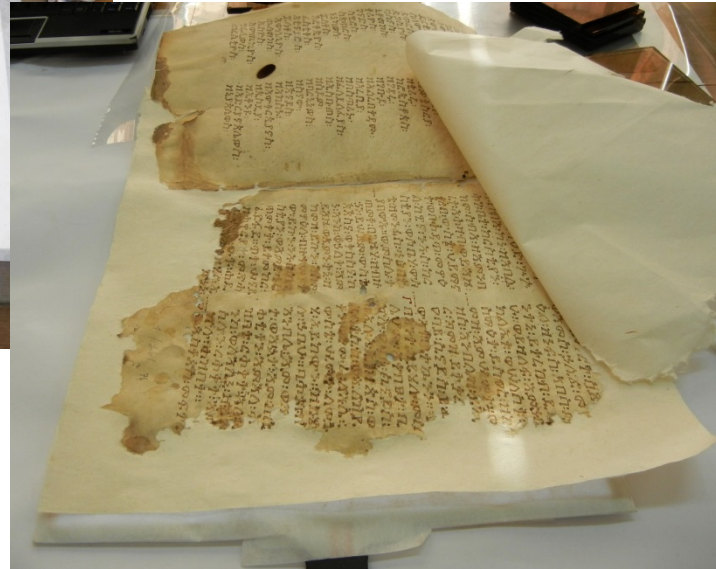
Scribe Wäldä Muse: active in 1865-90s around Addigrat,  
East Tigray (at least 15 manuscripts identified)

# Ethio-SPaRe: analysis Restoration



New standards in manuscript restoration: cooperation of book conservators (N. Sarris, M. Di Bella) with philologists (A. Brita, A. Bausi). Study of texts before intervention, in order to restore the original page sequence

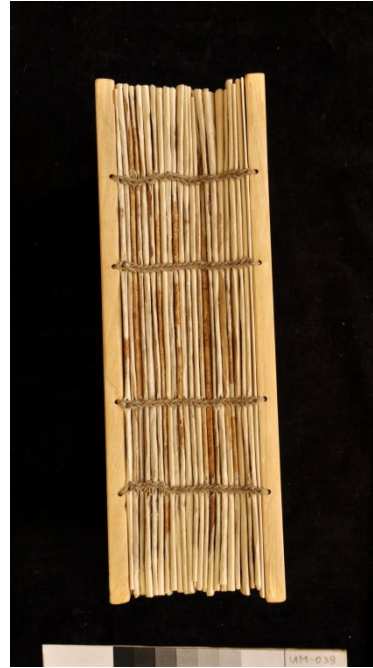
# Ethio-SPaRe: analysis Restoration



a: Ms. MY-004, humidifying and stretching leaves  
b-c: Mss. UM-039, UM-018: reconstruction of quires,  
leaves repair with Japanese paper



# Ethio-SPaRe: analysis Restoration



- a-b: Ms. UM-039, spine before and after consolidation  
c: Ms. UM-039 returning to the owner  
d: Ms. MY-004, minor repairs of sewing and textblock



# Interdisciplinary work

Philologists and Conservators

Philologists and Archaeologists



Here: archaeological findings from Mengas Qeddest Maryam, discovered by the team from the University of Naples

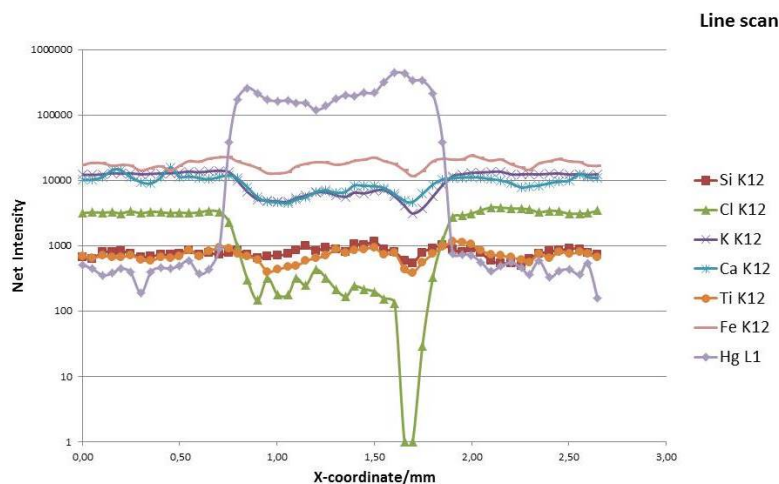
# Interdisciplinary work

Philologists and Conservators

Philologists and Archaeologists

Natural Scientists

Ms. QDGM-010 (late 17<sup>th</sup> cent., collection of NT texts)



Spectral analysis on ARTAX-spectrometer (Federal Institute for Material Research and Testing, Dr. I. Rabin): Significant quantity of potassium (**K**) in parchment – a feature of the local water? Absent in the local contemporary parchment production



# Teamwork

## Research fellows

Dr. Stéphane Ancel (FR, Dec. 2009 - )

Sophia Dege, M.A. (DE, Jan. 2013 - )

Susanne Hummel, M.A. (DE, Sept. 2011 - )

Iosif Fridman, M.A. (RU, Sept. 2010 - Dec. 2011)

Dr. Vitagrazia Pisani (IT, Dec. 2009 - ) (PhD acquired in the  
course of the project)

## PhD fellows

Abreham Adugna (ET, since 2012)

Magdalena Krzyzanowska (PL, Sept. 2011 - )

Irene Roticiani (IT, since 2012)

## External collaborators

Dr. Maria Bulakh, Moscow (Semitic linguistics)

Marco di Bella, Palermo (book conservation, codicology)

Dr. Nicolas Sarris, Zakynthos (book conservation, codicology)

Dr. Luisa Sernicola, Naples (archaeology)

Marco Barbarino, Naples (archaeology)

Dr. Ira Rabin (material analysis)

Verena Krebs, Konstanz (history of medieval art)

# Cooperation

## **Ethiopia:**

Tigray Culture and Tourism Agency  
Käbbädä Amarä Bälay (head)  
Mäsärät Hayle Sellase (heritage expert)

Church authorities  
Abunä Mäqaryos, Bishop of East Təgray  
Diocese of East Təgray, 'Addigrat

District church administration  
mälakä ḥeywät Bərhanä Arägawi  
mälakä mehrät Täḳlay Gäbrä Ab  
märigeta Hadära Tädla  
mämher Ezra Gäbrä Mädhən

Local communities

## **Europe:**

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies network  
Center for the Study of the Manuscript Cultures (Hamburg)



# Conferences and Events



3 Ethio-SPaRe International Workshops (2011, 2012, 2013)

2 Bookbinding Analysis Workshops


25 papers at international conferences and workshops



# Publications and Outreach

**ETHIO-SPARE: Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia:  
Salvation, Preservation, Research**

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Ethiopia is one of the countries with the most ancient Christian history, and the only country in Africa where Christianity became official religion as early as in the 4th century A.D. It is also one of the very few African regions where the history has been documented in written sources: manuscripts in possession of ca. 600 monasteries and 20,000 churches, some of which date back to early Middle Ages, have been estimated to number dozens of thousands.

Only a minor part of these archives have so far received scholarly evaluation, only less than one tenth of manuscripts have been microfilmed or digitalized, and only those that have come in possession of European libraries have been duly catalogued and are well protected. A great part of this unique heritage is on the verge of extinction, and urgent action needs to be taken to save it from complete disappearance.

New online: [sixth mission report!](#)


Presentations:

- [October 2011: D. Nosnitsin: the Making of Ethiopic Book](#)
- [June 2012: D. Nosnitsin: DomLib/EthioSPARE online catalogue](#)
- [October 2012: D. Nosnitsin: Different Books from East Tigray-Layouts, Organization of Text](#)
- [October 2012: D. Nosnitsin: Titles, Rubrics, Tables of Contents](#)
- [October 2012: D. Nosnitsin: Morphology of Ethiopian Binding](#)
- [October 2012: S. Ancel: Some Biblical and Liturgical Books](#)
- [October 2012: M. Krzyzanowska: Scribes of East Tigray](#)
- [November 2012: D. Nosnitsin: Lesser Known Features of the Ethiopian Codex](#)
- [July 2013: D. Nosnitsin: An Ethiopian Manuscript after its Completion: Typologies of Reuse](#)
- [July 2013: S. Ancel: Travelling Books: Change of Owner and Library in Ethiopian Manuscript Culture](#)

Project  
Website



# Publications and Outreach


**ETHIO-SPARE: Cultural  
Salvation, P**

**EthioSPARE**

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- [July 2013: D. Nosnitsin: An Ethiopian Manuscript af](#)
- [July 2013: S. Ancel: Travelling Books: Change of Ov](#)


6 Mission Reports: Online and as Booklets

European Union Seventh Framework Programme  
IDEAS  
ERC Starting Grant

**Ethio-SPaRe**

**Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia:  
Salvation, Preservation and Research**





**Sixth Mission**

**November-December 2012**

**Report**

(by Denis Nosnitsin, PI)

Hamburg University  
2012

# Publications and Outreach



## ETHIO-SPARE: Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia: Salvation, Preservation, Research



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### Publications

Monographs:

Denis Nosnitsin, [Churches and Monasteries of Tegray. A Survey of Manuscript Collections](#), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2013 (Aethiopica Supplement 1)

Denis Nosnitsin (ed.), [Ecclesiastic Landscape of North Ethiopia. Proceedings of the International Workshop Ecclesiastic Landscape of North Ethiopia: History, Change and Cultural Heritage, Hamburg, July 15-16, 2011](#), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2013 (Aethiopica Supplement 2), in print

Vitagrazia Pisani, [Il culto di San Qirqos nell'Etiopia storica: analisi storico-filologica, con edizione critica della "Passio" \(Gädlä Qirqos\)](#), Dissertation in African Studies (Curriculum Literatures, Philology and Studies on African Antiquity and Middle Ages), Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale". Supervisor: A. Bausi. Defended: 26 March 2013.

Articles:

Stéphane Ancel, Historical Overview of the church of Addiqäharsi Paraqlitos (Gulo Mākada): Site, Traditions and Library, in Denis Nosnitsin (ed.), [Ecclesiastic Landscape of North Ethiopia ...](#), Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2013, in print

Stéphane Ancel, [Discourse against Catholic Doctrine in Tegray \(Ethiopia\): A Nineteenth-Century Text](#), Aethiopica, International Journal for Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies 15, 2012, pp. 92-104

Stéphane Ancel, [Les sièges épiscopaux en Éthiopie: Une étude préliminaire](#), Pount, 2012

Stéphane Ancel, [Le cout de la mort dans les communautés chrétiennes en Éthiopie](#), [Online], 03 | 2011, Online since 17 January 2012

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# Conclusion. Outlook

## Statistics:

Over 100 ecclesiastic institutions surveyed

Over 600 manuscripts catalogued

## Planning:

Final restoration, digitalization and instruction missions

Publication of catalogue volumes

Publication of workshop proceedings

Finalization of study of the most important manuscripts, texts and paraphernalia

Final conference: July 2013



# Ethio-SPaRe: A Milestone in Ethiopian Studies

