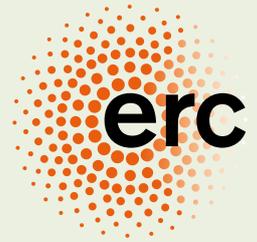


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**Ethio-SPaRe**

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

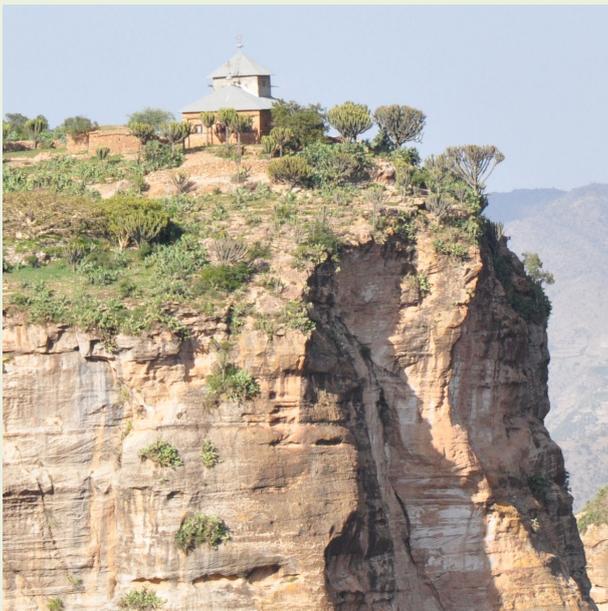


**First Mission**

**April-May 2010**

**Report**

(by Denis Nosnitsin, PI)



Hamburg University  
2010



# Ethio-Spare 1<sup>st</sup> Field Research Trip (April – May 2010).

## Public Report

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### Editorial note

A consequent transcription commonly applied to Ethio-Semitic languages is used for Ethiopian terms and names in the text below. Since the report is meant for broader public, the *apparatus* is limited to essential information. For the indigenous terms or names of persons left here without explanation, further data and references can be easily found in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (s. bibliography below).

During the period 23.04.-26.05.2010 the team of the Ethio-SPaRe project carried out its first field research season.

Basing in ሶAddigrat, the team was focusing on the historical sites of the Gulä Mäḳäda *wäräda* (East Təgray Zone). The team consisted of the members of the project from Hamburg University<sup>1</sup>, representatives of the Təgray Culture and Tourism Agency (TCTA)<sup>2</sup>, and representative officials of the respective church administration offices<sup>3</sup>. Within the four weeks of intensive work, the team was able to visit fourteen sites<sup>4</sup>, many of them completely unknown to scholars and/or difficult to access<sup>5</sup>.

The excellent cooperation of the TCTA and the local church administration enabled the team to achieve good results: it recorded a few hundred manuscripts and collected a lot of historical information about the sites. Below follow some brief observations about the sites visited and the most remarkable manuscripts and objects. Full-scale evaluation of the results is underway at the Hiob Ludolf Center for Ethiopian Studies in Hamburg. Digital copies of the collected materials can be consulted in the main office of the Təgray Culture and Tourism Agency and in the Eastern Təgray Diocese (ሶAddigrat). In the report below, all datings and conclusions should be considered preliminary.

### 1. ሶUra Qirqos/ሶUra Mäsḳäl

The site can be reached via the main ሶAddigrat – Zäla ሿAmbäsa road and a side road, after some 40-50 min drive. Situated quite close to the Eritrean border, the site of ሶUra Qirqos/ Ura Qirqos<sup>6</sup> has been known since several years, and was visited by scholars, but is still not well explored<sup>7</sup>. It accommodates two churches. The first, ሶUra Qirqos, more recent, is built in the traditional Təgrayan style, standing on the edge of the plateau (fig. 1). An impressive abyss opens just behind the eastern part of the church compound. The second, ሶUra Mäsḳäl, is difficult to access. It is located on the top of an outcrop of the rock and can be seen from the edge of the plateau (fig. 2). It appears to be of the same type as ሶUra Qirqos, built perhaps in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> cent. at the latest. To reach the church, one has to pass along the crest of a rocky outcrop, with breath-taking drops on both sides. Regular church service took place there until the beginning of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border conflict in 1999; then, because of its proximity to the border, ሶUra Mäsḳäl had to be abandoned, and the entire property of the church was transferred to ሶUra Qirqos. Today, the service takes place in ሶUra Mäsḳäl on the occasion of a few annual church feasts only.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Denis Nossitsin (principal investigator); Dr. Stéphane Ancel, Vitagrazia Pisani M.A. (research fellows).

<sup>2</sup> Berhanu Hešo and Tedros ሿAbohay spent the entire time of the field work with the team, rendering excellent service as field assistants. Besides, Mäsärät Haylä Səllase acted as field coordinator; head of the Agency, Käbbädä ሿAmarä Bälay, acted as project coordinator.

<sup>3</sup> Fəṣṣum Gäbru, the representative of the Eastern Təgray Diocese (substituted for a few days by ሿAbbäbä Gäbräሿəgzīሿabəḥer); *mälakä ḥəywät* Bərhänä ሿArägawi, from the church office of Gulo Mäḳäda. The field work was opened and concluded by the coordinating meetings in the TCTA and the in the East Təgray Diocese with His Grace ሿAbunä Maqaryos.

<sup>4</sup> Below, the description of work at all churches visited is presented, with the exception of only one (the archaeological site of ሶጂ Maሶre ሿEnda Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus, formerly called ሿEnda ሿPetros).

<sup>5</sup> Some of them were particularly endangered being located in the zone of the recent tension along the Ethiopian-Eritrean border.

<sup>6</sup> Pronounced today by the local Təgrəñña-speakers as ሶOra ሶጂerqos.

<sup>7</sup> S. Chojnacki 2006, index; recently, s. "Polytech Nantes Infos" no. 2, June 2009 ([http://web.polytech.univ-nantes.fr/09605448/0/fiche\\_\\_\\_pagelibre/&RH=1240409410714](http://web.polytech.univ-nantes.fr/09605448/0/fiche___pagelibre/&RH=1240409410714), accessed on 10 March 2011).

Local tradition does not preserve much information about the history of the site, commonly referring to foundation of ʿUra Mäsqäl in the time of “*ḥaṣäy Gäbrä Mäsqäl*”<sup>8</sup>, and assigning foundation of ʿUra Qirqos to the time of King Yoḥannēs IV (1872-89). The churches preserve quite a number of very ancient, unique manuscripts. Most of the old manuscripts belonged to ʿUra Mäsqäl. Both churches are historically linked, and seem to have had under their administration a few other churches in the surrounding area. There is no clear indication that a monastic community was ever established there<sup>9</sup>.

ʿUra Mäsqäl seems to have existed well prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> cent., possibly under the rulers of the dynasty referred to as “Zagwe”<sup>10</sup>, i.e. before the Solomonic dynasty was re-established in 1270. As follows from the marginalia in the manuscripts, the old name of the site is Qəfrəya which indeed appears in a few medieval sources<sup>11</sup>.

For ʿUra Qirqos, the foundation time is somewhat difficult to assess, but it existed definitely long before the reign of Yoḥannēs IV, who might have re-established or renewed the church or rather confirmed or extended its land possessions. The ancient collections of ʿUra Mäsqäl/ʿUra Qirqos survived centuries but were recently endangered because of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict. The collections are extensive and include dozens of books from different periods, some of them indeed very old. Among the most valuable books of the site, one should mention a pre-14<sup>th</sup>-cent. copy of the *Gädlä Sämaʿətat* (“Vitae of the Martyrs”) (fig. 3) and an ancient (14<sup>th</sup> cent.?) “Golden Gospel” book (fig. 4), as well as a substantial number of old fragments. Currently, Ethio-Spare is initiating measures aimed at preserving and restoring the manuscripts of ʿUra Mäsqäl/ʿUra Qirqos.

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<sup>8</sup> “Gäbrä Mäsqäl” was the name (or one of the names) of several Ethiopian monarchs starting from the half-legendary successor of 6<sup>th</sup>-cent. Kaleb; it was another name of Laläbäla, ʿAmdä Şeyon I, and some others (s. EAE II, 623b-24b).

<sup>9</sup> Today, three types of church institutions are formally distinguished in the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahədo Church. Most of the individual churches are registered as *däbr* (“church, cathedral”), some others as *gäṭär* (usually translated as “chapel”). Monastic communities which are formally recognized as such are referred to as *gädam* (“monastery”). However, today the status of *gädam* may be purely formal: if a monastic community gets dissolved, its church, “overtaken” by the local community and being served by the secular clergy, can still retain the status of *gädam*. (For the historical definitions and etymologies, s. EAE II, 6a-7a; 641b-42a; 714b). Further in the report, unless a remark on the status of an institution is provided, it is of *däbr*-type.

<sup>10</sup> The main argument for the hypothesis is an ancient processional cross preserved in ʿUra Qirqos, with an inscription mentioning King Ṭäntäwəddəm (s. Chojnacki 2006, pl. XVII, fig. 38), who indeed appears in the indigenous sources as one of the Zagwe rulers.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., in a document included into the *Liber Axumae* (Conti Rossini 1909-10:11 [text], 11 [tr.]), which lists obligations of different regions for the cathedral of ʿAksum Şeyon. Remarkably, local people do not seem to be familiar with the name “Qəfrəya”.



Fig. 1. ሆUra Qirqos



Fig. 2. ሆUra Mäsqäl



Fig. 3. 'Ura Qirqos, Gädlä Säma'etät



Fig. 4. 'Ura Qirqos, Golden Gospel

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## 2. ʿAddäqäḥarsi Mäkanä Ḥəywät Päräqlitōs

The church ʿAddäqäḥarsi<sup>12</sup> Mäkanä Ḥəywät Päräqlitōs can be reached by the ʿAddigrat – Bəzät road, after some 50min drive. Located below the road and well visible from above, the church stands on a picturesque rock, overlooking a deep gorge. The big, rectangular church is relatively recent and built in the traditional Təgrayan style; it stands on a podium, with stairs leading to the west entrance of the church. Outside the old compound, the construction of a new church building has been recently started.

At a first glance not featuring in historical sources and practically unknown before<sup>13</sup> the site proved to have a very ancient tradition of religious veneration. The presence of a Sabaeen inscription brings the history of the sanctuary of ʿAddäqäḥarsi Päräqlitōs back into the first millennium B.C. Besides, the site has a few remains that may originate from the Aksumite age: three big (ca. 2,5m) stone pillars can be seen standing in the church yard. One stone pillar is located on the left side of the podium; it bears an anthropomorphic relief on one side (fig. 5), and a relief of the cross on the opposite side (fig. 6). The second pillar bearing no decorations stands to the right of the podium, included in a barrier recently built around a water cistern (fig. 7). The third pillar stands in the doorway of the gate house (fol. 8). The vast compound of the church includes quite a number of structures of indefinite age, among them also individual dwellings for old retired priests.

Behind the church, on its southern side, there is a spot where a stone platform protrudes from the earth, with the surface showing typical traces of ancient volcanic activity (fig. 9). Females are prohibited to enter this place, which is sacred and referred to as the burial of “the Righteous ones of Päräqlitōs” (*ṣadəqan zä-Päräqlitōs*)<sup>14</sup>. The main *tabot* of the church is also dedicated to them, i.e. a group of anonymous saints who are said to be the first Christian missionaries of the area. They appear to be a new, previously unknown group of *ṣadəqan*<sup>15</sup>.

Local tradition recounts that in pre-Christian time (*ʿOrit*), the site was already a “sanctuary”<sup>16</sup>; “the Righteous ones” came in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. and made it a church. However, the “Righteous” were martyred when a conflict arose between them and those who opposed the new religion. The tradition vaguely mentions the Aksumite King ʿAlʿameda<sup>17</sup> and recounts that the church was re-established by a 16<sup>th</sup>-cent. King Ləbnä Dəngəl<sup>18</sup>. Also it reports that a big monastic community had existed at ʿAddäqäḥarsi, but died out long ago.

The library of the church is extensive, with a number of valuable manuscripts. The hagiography of “the Righteous ones of Päräqlitōs” includes a previously unknown Vita, Miracles and *mälkä*-poetry, attested in manuscripts of different age. The oldest collection is preserved in a unique manuscript dating into the reign of King Ləbnä Dəngəl (fig. 10). The veneration of the “Righteous

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<sup>12</sup> Or ʿAddiqäḥarsi, an original variant being probably ʿAddi Qäḥarsi (or ʿAddi Däqqi Ḥarsi?).

<sup>13</sup> The church is “das Kloster Parakleitos” located on the road to Däbrä Dammo, mentioned in Weninger 2007:52 as the site where a Sabaeen inscription was found by P. Henze, during the latter’s visit to the site on 3 June 2005. A report of P. Henze (“Unexplored Aksumite Sites in Tigray II”) is mentioned there as forthcoming in the “Akten der zweiten Internationalen Enno-Littmann Konferenz” (ed. by W. Smidt, St. Wenig). A very short notice on his 2005 visit can be found on-line: <http://www.irrob.org/page/page/2466345.htm> (accessed on 09.03.2011).

<sup>14</sup> Päräqlitōs is in fact a Gəʿəz word (borrowed from Greek) meaning “Holy Spirit” (Leslau 1987:415). It can refer to an ancient (original?) dedication of the church; today, however, local people perceive it rather as place-name.

<sup>15</sup> Cp. Brita 2010; EAE IV, 446a-47b.

<sup>16</sup> *Mäsgid*, usually meaning “mosque”.

<sup>17</sup> Probably identical with the Aksumite King ʿƏllä ʿAmida (EAE II, 259b-61a).

<sup>18</sup> The “holy war” of Aḥmad Graññ (*ʿimām* Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Ġāzī) took place during the reign of this monarch (cp. EAE III, 535b-37b). Local tradition of ʿAddäqäḥarsi may have its background in the historical presence of King Ləbnä Dəngəl in the region, during the last period of his reign, as he lost nearly all the ground to the Muslim troops. Ultimately, he found refuge in Däbrä Dammo and died there in September 1540.

ones of Āparaqlīṭos” was possibly revived in the 19<sup>th</sup> cent., as it is proved by a manuscript with their Vita from the time of Yoḥannēs IV (fig. 11)<sup>19</sup>. The “Golden Gospel” of the church originates from the time of Mənilək II and is remarkable thanks to an elaborate metal cover of the binding (fig. 12). Among other books, the church possesses a remarkable 15<sup>th</sup>-cent. copy of the *Täʾamrā Maryam* (“Miracles of Mary”; s. fig. 13).



Fig. 5-6. ʿAddäqäharsi Āparaqlīṭos, pillars with anthropomorphic relief and cross



Fig. 7. ʿAddäqäharsi Āparaqlīṭos, pillar at the cistern



Fig. 9. ʿAddäqäharsi Āparaqlīṭos. Volcanic activity.



Fig. 8. ʿAddäqäharsi Āparaqlīṭos, pillar in the gate house



Fig. 10. ʿAddäqäharsi Āparaqlīṭos, Vita of the Righteous ones of Āparaqlīṭos

<sup>19</sup> Completed on 30 *Gənbət* 1885 E.C. [6 June, 1893 A.D], and donated by a certain *däḡḡazmač* Dəḥayä Ləda, as it is stated in an *Additio*. For the moment, it is difficult to say how substantial are differences between the texts of the Vita as preserved in different manuscripts.



Fig. 11. ሳAddäqäharsi Päräqlitōs, Vita of the Righteous ones of Päräqlitōs

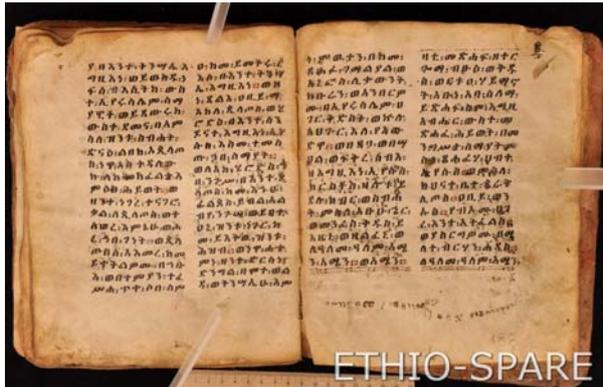


Fig. 13. ሳAddäqäharsi Päräqlitōs, Miracles of Mary

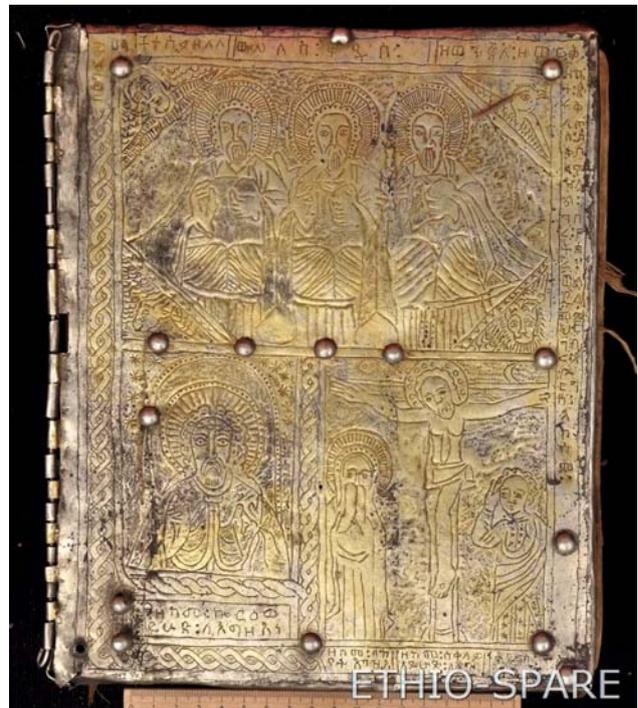


Fig. 12. ሳAddäqäharsi Päräqlitōs, metal cover of the Golden Gospel

### 3. Däbrä Zäyt Qəddəst Maryam

The site of Däbrä Zäyt is located not far from the ሳAddigrat – Bəzät road, approximately half-way to ሳAddäqäharsi. The church is partly visible from the road (fig. 14). The site seems to have been unknown to scholars before and does not feature, at a first glance, in the historical sources. The walk to Däbrä Zäyt is difficult: one has to descend into the deep gorge, cross the dry river bed, and then have a difficult walk upwards. The picturesque site is situated on several terraces under the cliff. The more recent part of the site, visible from the road, accommodates a few household structures, a recent rectangular church, a sacristy (*ḥəqa bet*), and a bell tower (under construction). A path downwards leads to the gate house (fig. 14, on the right)<sup>20</sup>. The part of the site with recent structures is separated from another one by a wall with the door. Here, apparently older structures are located one after another on a narrow ground along the cliff. The terrace becomes a narrow path which leads to a small cave with *ṣəbäl*-holy source (fig. 15). A protective barrier is built on the left side of this terrace; behind the barrier, an abyss opens. This part of the site is considered sacred, and one can enter it only having left the shoes outside. It is invisible from the outside, hidden by the overhanging cliff and the bushes.

The most remarkable feature of the site is the old church. An estimation of its age is still to be done, but it appears to be a medieval church predating the Gondärine period. The church seems to have escaped any profound rebuilding or renovation. It is a small basilica-like structure with one nave and two sequences of timber columns (four in each one) inside, and a narthex. The narthex can be entered through the double doorway (fig. 16). Made of sophisticated woodwork, its ceiling is supported by two wooden piers. There are murals on the walls, partly white-washed, partly still visible (fig. 17). A doorway in the western wall leads inside the nave. The eastern part of the church cannot be visited because it is used as the sanctuary, and the *tabot* is preserved

<sup>20</sup> Outside the gate, a few more community structures are built under the rock.

there<sup>21</sup>. However, one can see that the “throne” of the *tabot* is placed in a (square?) apse formed by a stone barrier and a rough arch above. The sanctuary is additionally screened by a curtain (fig. 18). The church leans against the rock which thus substitutes the southern wall (fig. 19). The roof of the church is flat, with a dome over the sanctuary indicating the presence of a cupola inside. Beside the main entrance, there is one small door and one window in the northern wall of the narthex, one window in the northern wall of the nave, and a door and a window in the eastern wall of the church building (fig. 20).

Behind the church, stairs cut in rock lead upwards, to a small elevated ground; to the left, a small house stands, described by the local people as the former *ʿəqa bet* of the old church (fig. 21). The surface of the rock at the beginning of the stairs is covered with crudely done and weathered graffiti-like designs; among those still visible, crosses and partly vocalized Ethiopic letters can be distinguished. The local people refer also to a “design of an ibex” allegedly visible on the surface of the cliff on the opposite side, but it could not be verified with certainty.

The priests reported the existence of one more, rock-hewn church somewhere above, between the rocks, and also to the presence of a *tabot* consecrated in the name of King Lalibāla (one of the Zagwe rulers, 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> cent.)<sup>22</sup>, but this information could not be verified. Local tradition recounts that, before the spread of Christianity, the site was an “Old Testament synagogue” (*yä-ʾOrit məkwərab*). A rock-hewn church is said to have been the initial structure of the site built in the time of King Bazen<sup>23</sup>. Some 400 years ago, another church (i.e., the old basilica-like church) was established and the sanctuary was transferred down. The new church was constructed in the late 1980s. A monastic community existed in Däbrä Zäyt, but disappeared long ago.

It seems that the library of the church was profoundly renovated, perhaps in the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20 cent, and a few ancient books were lost in the course of the time. However, a few interesting manuscripts were discovered in Däbrä Zäyt, among them: fragments of a 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> -cent. Gospel book (fig. 22); a 16<sup>th</sup>-cent. (?) poorly preserved copy of *Gəbrä Həməmat* (“The Rite of Passion Week”; fig. 23); an old (16<sup>th</sup>-cent.?) “leporello” manuscript of the finest production, with eleven miniatures depicting the scenes from the Holy Family and of the saints on one side and a text (a miracle of Mary) on the other side (figs. 24ab)<sup>24</sup>. Among the recent manuscripts, there is a 19<sup>th</sup>-cent. (?) copy of *Gəbrä Həməmat* written in a peculiar, small handwriting and including, unusually, a miniature of St. George of Lydda (fig. 25)<sup>25</sup>.

Needless to say, these are the first rough observation on the very rich and interesting site, which were done within several hours only. The site definitely needs a further detailed study and some preservation measures<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> The liturgy is still regularly celebrated in the church.

<sup>22</sup> One of the kings of the so-called Zagwe-dynasty which was overthrown by Yəkunno ʾAmlak in 1270 (EAE III, 477b-82a).

<sup>23</sup> Cp. EAE I, 511a.

<sup>24</sup> For a leporello book with a lesser number of miniatures (seven), but with some similarities in style, dated back to 15<sup>th</sup> cent., s. Barbieri – Di Salvo – Fiaccadori 2009:58-59, no. 10.

<sup>25</sup> This manuscript was apparently meant to substitute the old *Gəbrä Həməmat* (fig. 23). On the recto side, a prayer is written, produced by the same hand as the main text. The handwriting is that of a trained scribe, but is very specific and indeed difficult to read (small, bulky letters; substantial spaces between the letters). There are some indications that originally the church was consecrated to St. George of Lydda.

<sup>26</sup> An extended article on Däbrä Zäyt is going to appear in the next issue of *Aethiopica. International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies*.



Fig. 14. Däbrä Zäyt



Fig. 15. Däbrä Zäyt, şäbäl-source

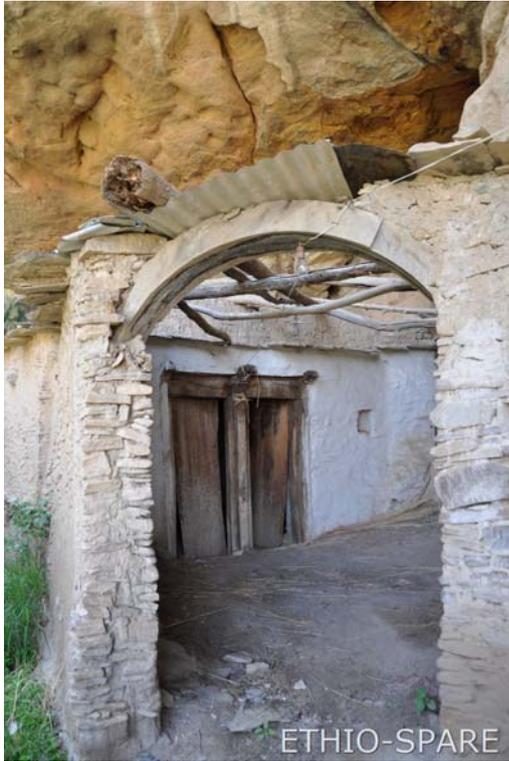


Fig. 16. Däbrä Zäyt, old church entrance



Fig. 17. Däbrä Zäyt, old church, murals



Fig. 18. Däbrä Zäyt, old church, nave



Fig. 20. Däbrä Zäyt, old church



Fig. 19. Däbrä Zäyt, old church, southern wall



Fig. 21. Däbrä Zäyt, old church



Fig. 22. Däbrä Zäyt, Gospel book



Fig. 23. Däbrä Zäyt, old Gebra Hemamat

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Fig. 24a. Däbrä Zäyt, leporello book



Fig. 24b. Däbrä Zäyt, leporello book

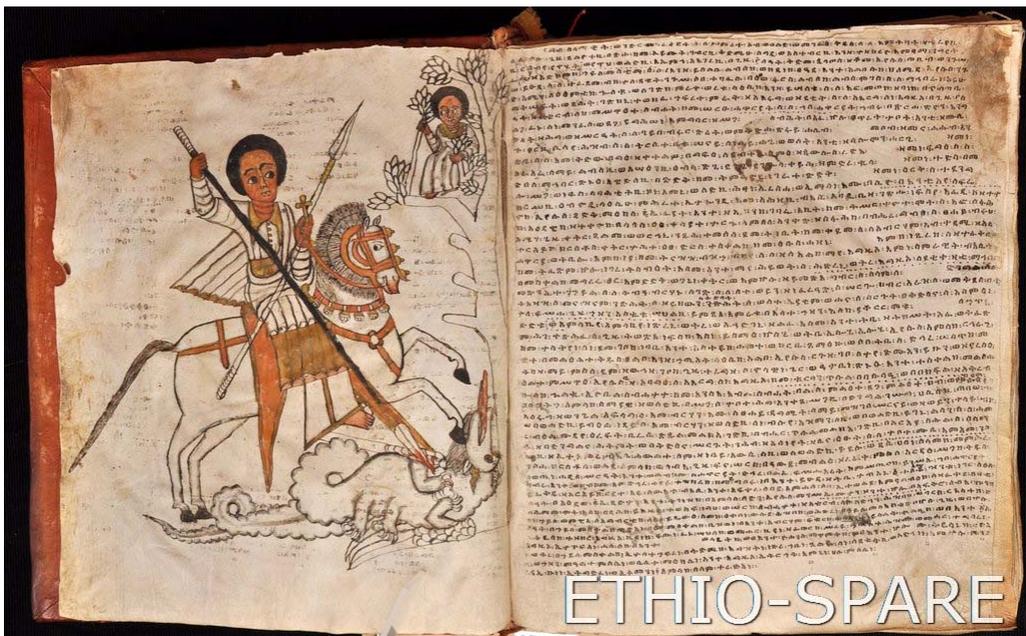


Fig. 25. Däbrä Zäyt, miniature, prayer in the recent *Gebrä Hemamat*

#### 4. Däbrä Maʿšo Qəddus Yoḥannəs

The church of Däbrä Maʿšo Yoḥannəs was noticed during the preparation of the field mission; it appears in a few old historical sources, but has not been identified until now<sup>27</sup>. The site is located in a remote and hardly accessible corner of Gulo Mākāda, and it had apparently never been visited by any European tourist or scholar.

In Gəʿəz and modern Təgrəñña, *maʿšo* means “gate, door”<sup>28</sup>. The settlement of the community is located on the top of an ʿ*amba*, or ʿ*əmba*, i.e., flat-top mountain. The foot of the mountain can be reached by car through the road from Zāla ʿAmbäsa, but in order to get to the village of the community, one has to make a difficult steep climb (fig. 26). As the team reached the top of the ʿ*amba*, it turned out that the actual church of Maʿšo Yoḥannəs could not be visited: standing on a separate rock, it is not directly accessible from the village. In order to reach it, one would have to start walking from the foot of the mountain, following another path. As one can judge from afar, the contemporary church of Däbrä Maʿšo is probably a recent, rectangular building in the traditional Təgrayan style (fig. 27).

The main *tabot* of the church of Däbrä Maʿšo is dedicated to John the Baptist (Yoḥannəs Mätməq), which seems to be the ancient, possibly original dedication, not so common today. The church possesses a few manuscripts with hagiographic works (Homilies, Miracles) devoted to John the Baptist. The oldest one, dating probably to the 16<sup>th</sup> cent., contains some thirty miracles of St. Mary and three homilies on John the Baptist (fig. 28).

A few ancient and valuable manuscripts hinting to the former significance of the place were discovered, including two old (late 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup>-cent.) manuscripts of the *Gädlä Hawaryat* (the apocryphal “Contendings of the Apostles”) representing, however, different versions of the collection, and written by different hand: one clearly superior and well-trained hand (fig. 29), and the other poor and, perhaps, of somewhat later period (fig. 30). The “Golden Gospel” of the church, though not illuminated, is an example of skillful scribal work from the same period (fig. 31). A manuscript containing a collection of homilies was given to the church in the time of King Däwit II (ca. 1379-1413), according to a donation note<sup>29</sup>. A flyleaf, attached to the manuscript, originates from a much older Gospel manuscript<sup>30</sup>.

Despite the extremely rough conditions of the site and poverty of the people, the ancient books have survived centuries in relatively good condition, though none seems to have preserved original binding. Preservation measures are currently underway to secure the ancient part of the collection<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> In the *Liber Axumae*, Däbrä Maʿšo is mentioned as a tributary of St. Mary Cathedral of Aksum (Conti Rossini 1909-10: 11, l. 8; 23, l. 11). An official bearing the title *šəyyum* (governor) of Däbrä Maʿšo is mentioned in *Additiones* of the “Golden Gospel” of Däbrä Libanos of Ham: nos. 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 20, 22 (s. Conti Rossini 1901). From notes 9 and 10 one may assume that the *šəyyum* of Däbrä Maʿšo was among those local rulers who competed with the famous 13<sup>th</sup>-cent. Yəkunno ʿAmlak or opposed him in the struggle for power. In later period, under the Solomonic kings, Däbrä Maʿšo lost its importance and is mentioned in very few sources only.

<sup>28</sup> Leslau 1987:75b; Kane 2000, vol. 2, 1945.

<sup>29</sup> The donation note mentions persons from the period of King Dawit II, who, to a first glance have not been so far known from other sources: ʿ*aqabe säʿat* Täsäbkä Mädhən (of Däbrä Libanos of Ham or of Däbrä Ḥayq ʿƏstifanos?), *šəyyum* (*šəyyumä Maʿšo?*) Hallo ʿƏgziʿabəḥer, *maʿkälä baḥr* Zä-ʿAmmanuʿel, *mäkwännən* (*Təgray mäkwännən?*) ʿAron.

<sup>30</sup> The text is a fragment of the Gospel of Luke. The writing shows typical features of the so-called “monumental script” (prior to the mid-14<sup>th</sup> cent.).

<sup>31</sup> For an extended version of this note, s. Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter no. 1, January 2011, pp. 24-27 (s. [http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/COMST/COMSt\\_Newsletter\\_1\\_2011.pdf](http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/COMST/COMSt_Newsletter_1_2011.pdf)).



Fig. 26. Däbrä Maṣṣo, mountain



Fig. 27. Däbrä Maṣṣo, church



Fig. 28. Dābrā Ma'ṣo, Miracles of Mary, Homilies on John the Baptist



Fig. 29. Dābrā Ma'ṣo, Gädlä Ḥawaryat , superior hand

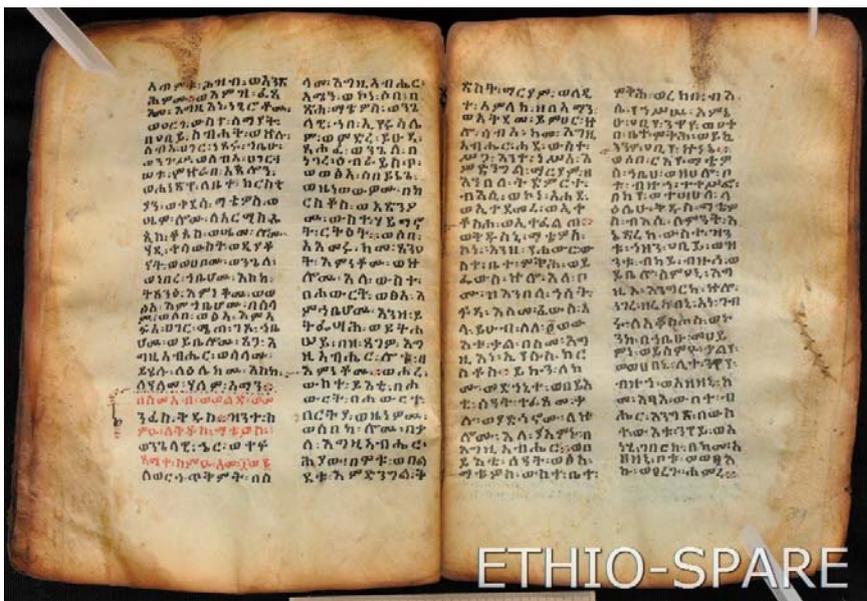


Fig. 30. Dābrā Ma'ṣo, Gädlä Ḥawaryat , inferior hand



Fig. 31. Däbrä Ma'ṣo, Golden Gospel



Fig. 32. Medrä Ruba



Fig. 33. Medrä Ruba, ṚArganonä Wəddase

### 5. Däbrä Gännät Qəddəst Šəllase Mədrä Ruba

The site of a large church Qəddəst Šəllase Mədrä Ruba<sup>32</sup> can be easily reached from the road Zäla ʔAmbäsa – Säbäya. Situated in the picturesque valley between the mountains, the church is quite recent (fig. 32), rectangular, built in the traditional Təgrayan style; the other buildings of the compound look older. According to local tradition, the church was founded by King Gäbrä Mäsqaḷ. Local people tell that there was another church dedicated to ʔabunä Libanos<sup>33</sup> in the vicinity, founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> cent. Some decades ago the local community decided to “fuse” both institutions, and the *tabots* and the books of the church of Libanos were moved to Mədrä Ruba Šəllase. A monastic community is said to have existed at the church<sup>34</sup>. One of the *tabots* is consecrated to ʔabba ʔAnanya of Däbrä Šärabi, one of the members of the so-called ʔEwošətean movement<sup>35</sup>. An extensive collection merged thus in Mədrä Ruba. Among interesting manuscripts, the following ones were discovered: a 16<sup>th</sup>-cent. (?) copy of the ʔArganonä Wəddase (‘The Organ of Praise’, a hymn praising St. Mary; fig. 33); a late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> (?) manuscript of the Synaxarion (fol. 34); an illuminated manuscript of the Vita of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus, donated by a local lord *däğğazmač* Ḥagwäs Täfäri<sup>36</sup> and members of his family (fig. 35). A few other manuscripts highlight the work of a 19<sup>th</sup>-cent. local scribe Wäldä Muse (contemporary of King Yoḥannəs IV) and his peculiar handwriting, who was probably influenced by the old local writing styles and/or imitated them (fig. 36).

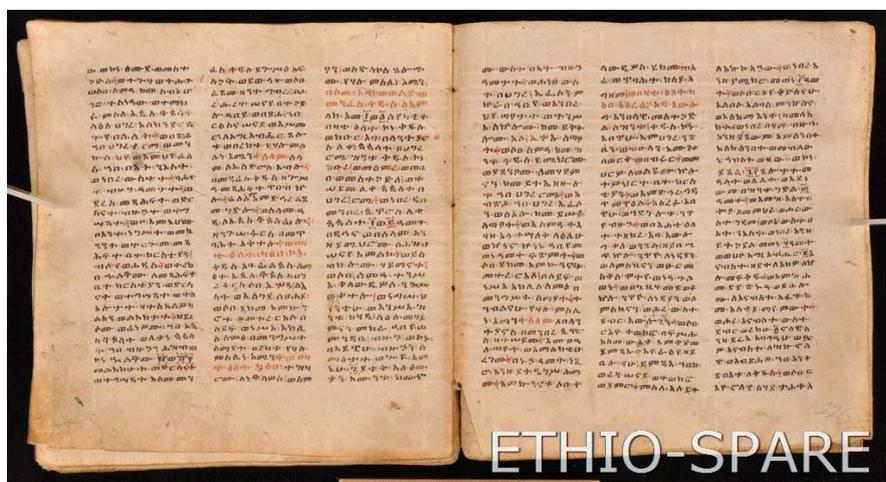


Fig. 34. Mədrä Ruba, Synaxarion

<sup>32</sup> An older variant: Mədərrəba.

<sup>33</sup> Referred to as ʔAbunä Libanos Mäsəḥ in *Additiones*.

<sup>34</sup> Local traditions frequently mention the former presence of monastic communities. However, in many cases the background of this information is merely the contemporary presence of disparate, individual monks or nuns living at the church without a proper monastic organization (such monks and nuns – called in Amh. *ḥəgatāñhočč* – can be found at many churches). In most cases, reports about the former presence of a monastic community are difficult to prove during a short stay; however, sometimes obvious hints can be found, such as clear references in *Additiones*, manuscripts containing works of monastic literature, specific buildings which could have been used by the monastic community etc.

<sup>35</sup> S. EAE I, 250b-51a; 464a-69a.

<sup>36</sup> From the line of the famous *däğğazmač* Säbagadis Wäldu (s. EAE II, 972). *Däğğazmač* Ḥagwäs also donated a processional silver cross to the church.

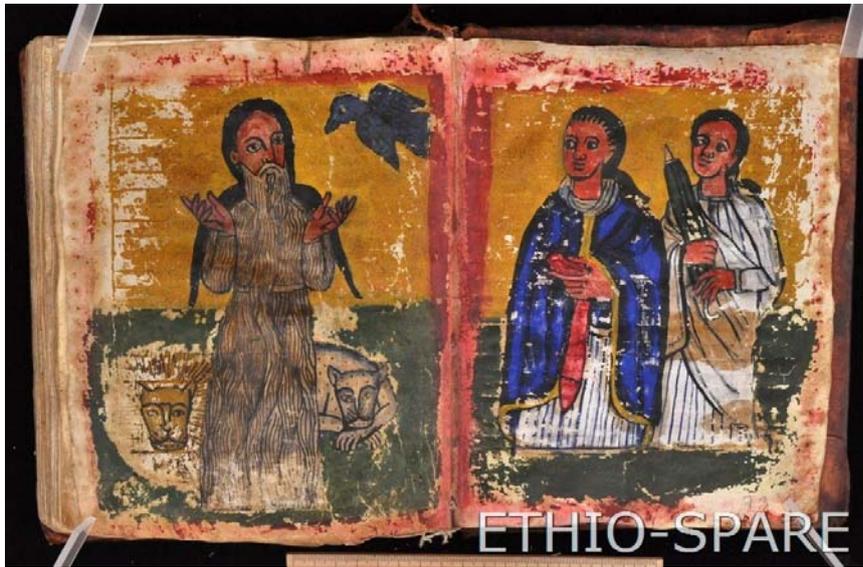


Fig. 35. Mədrä Ruba, Vita of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus



Fig. 36. Mədrä Ruba, a prayer book written by Wäldä Muse

## 6. Däbrä Şəyon Qəddəst Maryam Mänäbäyti

The church of Maryam Män(n)äbäyti is a well-known archaeological site<sup>37</sup> in the area around Amba Foqäda (s. below). As it frequently happens in cases of old church institutions, the manuscripts are less spectacular and informative than the archaeological features of the site. However, an *Additio* in a copy of *Täʾamrä ʾIyäsus* (“Miracles of Jesus”) recounts that the church was rebuilt under *qäyəsä gäbäz* Haylä Krəstos (the commissioner of the manuscript), King Täklä Giyorgis and Metropolitan ʾabunä ʾIyosab (fig. 37)<sup>38</sup>. Other manuscripts do not antedate the time of the Gondärine kingdom (cp. probably 18<sup>th</sup>-cent. Missal, fig. 38)<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Godet 1977:53.

<sup>38</sup> The document uses a different form of the name: Bet Nobäyt, pl. from *näbiyy* “prophet” (Leslau 1987:385), of which Mänäbäyti is a colloquial, “Tigrinized” derivation. However, Bet Nobäyt is also not a pure Geʿəz term (which would be: Betä Nobäyt). The name probably reveals the original dedication of the church. For the name of the Metropolitan, the standard Geʿəz form is Yosab, not ʾIyosab. ʾAbunä Yosab II (d. 1803) was a contemporary of King Täklä Giyorgis I, who reigned six distinct periods in 1779-1800 (s. EAE IV, 826b-27b). The translation of the document is as follows: “This sanctuary of Bet Nobäyt, of which the former building became old, was renovated in the time of its

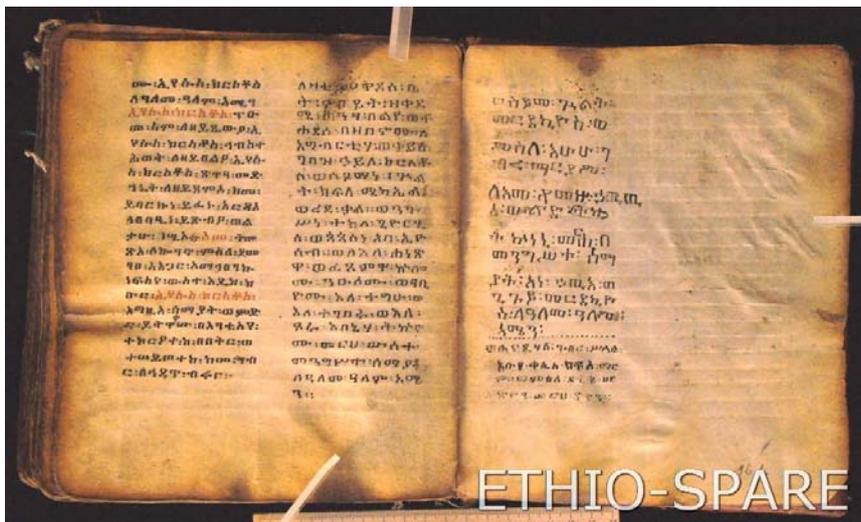


Fig. 37. Mänäbäyti, *Additio* in Miracles of Jesus

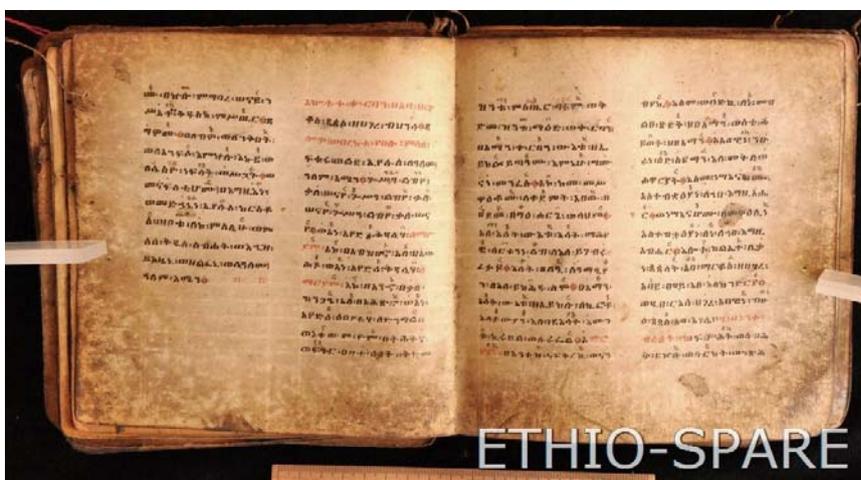


Fig. 38. Mänäbäyti, Missal

### 7. Däbrä Berhan Qəddəst Maryam Fogäda

The big church of Maryam Fogäda<sup>40</sup> can be easily reached through the main road ṢAddigrat – Zäla ʔAmbäsa; one has to turn to the right just before the town of Faṣiy. The church, well-known as archaeological site (fig. 39), stands in the rear of a plain, fertile valley<sup>41</sup>, with a picturesque

servants *qäyəsä gäbäz* Ḥaylä Krəstos, and the governors of the *gʷəlt* [?] Kəflä Mikaʔel (and) [?] Wäradä Qal, and our King Täklä Giyorgis, and our Metropolitan ʔabba ʔlyosab. For those who built it and completed it, all the young and elderly ones who exerted themselves and worked, and who carried its stones, it will be a guide to the Kingdom of Heaven. For ever and ever, amen”.

<sup>39</sup> The Ethiopian Metropolitan remains unnamed, while the Coptic patriarch is mentioned as ʔabba Marqos (s. foto, col. rb). The head of the Coptic Church Mark VII held tenure in 1745-69. A 17<sup>th</sup>-cent. dating cannot be completely excluded, with Patriarch Mark VI (1645-60), or even Mark V (1610-21).

<sup>40</sup> Called also Fogäda Maryam, with variants: Fägäda, Fogäda, Foqada etc.; the archaeological site is also referred to as simply ʔAmba Fogäda, after the mountain massive standing nearby.

<sup>41</sup> Despite the seeming accessibility of the site, the visitors have to take some precaution. Even after a moderate rain, the fertile soil of the valley becomes mud, thick and sticky, posing serious danger of getting stuck for many vehicles (cp. the impression of one the participants of Sir R. Napier’s expedition, as the British army camped in the valley of Fogäda on 6 February 1868; Shepherd 1868:72).

mounting on one side, and a gorge on another side<sup>42</sup>. Even though a general survey of the area was not a purpose of the visit, it soon became clear that it is very difficult to reconcile the information provided by old publications, with the contemporary situation marked by changes in landscape and place names that took place during the last 50-70 years. It looks that the church of Maryam Fogäda was not found remarkable by the previous researchers – C. Conti Rossini, A. Mordini, J. Leclant and A. Miquel – since there were neither rock paintings no antique ruins around<sup>43</sup>. Indeed, the church stands on a large basement suggestive of old foundation. Antique stone objects (including pillars etc.) can be seen in the church compound and remains of old structures were unearthed behind the church building during the recent archaeological reconnaissance works. Local tradition vaguely remembers that the site had been a place of a sanctuary in the pre-Christian time (“Qäläw-Bäläw”), and after the arrival of Christianity a church was established there by the wife of Gäbrä Mäsqäl<sup>44</sup>.

As in many other cases, the collection of the church did not have very old books; the priests, however, told that the most valuable manuscripts and objects had been taken by “the Turks”<sup>45</sup>. Among the interesting manuscripts, a copy of the *Tä’amrä Maryam* (“Miracles of Mary”) of late 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> cent. can be mentioned, with a beautiful frontispiece miniature originating from a much older book (14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> cent. ?; fig. 40), skillfully attached to the page by stitches.

A few nuns live at the church, but there has been no organized monastic community at Maryam Fogäda. An interesting feature of the local tradition is the veneration of *ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šällase*, a second half of the 17<sup>th</sup>-cent. saintly abbot of the monastery of Gundä Gunde<sup>46</sup>. The church possesses two manuscripts with hagiographic texts devoted to Mäzgäbä Šällase (*Vita*, *Miracles* and *mälkə*-poetry). Another interesting feature of the local cultural landscape, which seems to have been overlooked by former visitors, is a small rectangular church dedicated to Mäzgäbä Šällase, located just a few hundred meters from Maryam Fogäda. The existence of the sanctuary explains the presence of the manuscripts with Mäzgäbä Šällase’s hagiography<sup>47</sup>. Difficult to see from the outside, the church of Mäzgäbä Šällase is half-hidden in a picturesque canyon (fig. 41)<sup>48</sup>, with a *šäbäl*-stream falling down from the rock. The contemporary church appears recent, but local tradition tells that the first church building was established during the reign of King Fasilädäs (1632-67), with the personal involvement of Mäzgäbä Šällase, on the place of the latter’s “prayer house”<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Cp. summary in Godet 1977:37, and recently EAE I, 219a-20a.

<sup>43</sup> Unless the contemporary church should be considered standing on the same place as the one described by J. Baeteman and C. Conti Rossini as the “modern church of Dahané” (Conti Rossini 1925:484-89; Conti Rossini 1928, table XL, figs. 119-21). A drawing of the old church of Fogäda (front view) was done, however, by W. Simpson who accompanied the Napier expedition in 1868 (s. below), and included in the “Illustrated London News” for 16 May 1868, p. 489, together with a “Miriam decoration of the church of Miriam” (a fragment of the murals). He did also several other drawings in Fogäda (not all of them having been published, s. Chojnacki 1968:20, 23).

<sup>44</sup> The Acts of *ʾabunä Libanos/Mäṭa*, who is said to have been active in the area, recount of Däḥane (Däḥane) and Fäqada as two separate places; cp. Bausi 2003, §146 – Libanos let a stream of holy water spring from the earth; and § 154 – the wife of King Gäbrä Mäsqäl founded a church there, this being in fact similar to what the local tradition relates; curiously enough, the latter adds that the name of the Queen was Zäwditu (!). Currently, the church of Maryam Fogäda has no *tabot* of Libanos.

<sup>45</sup> Referring probably not to the Ottomans, but to the native troops of the Napier expedition, who passed by there (s. above).

<sup>46</sup> S. EAE III, 893b-94b.

<sup>47</sup> Reported in a short and not quite clear notice in Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke 1975:85, no. 114 (“Feqada, Agame, Tigray”).

<sup>48</sup> Of the river Qärni.

<sup>49</sup> Remarkably, in no contradiction with the years of tenure of *ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šällase*, known from his *Vita*.



Fig. 39. Maryam Fogäda



Fig. 40. Maryam Fogäda, Miracles of Mary, frontispiece



Fig. 41. Maryam Fogäda, Mäzgebä Šellase church

## 8. Sämaz Däbrä Məṭmaq Qəddəst Maryam gädam

The church of Sämaz Maryam can be reached from the road Zäla ʔAmbäsa – ʔIrob, after a short drive and a walk upwards. As a few other churches, it is located in a small, humid and hot valley, well-watered and covered by thick grass, reeds, trees and bushes (fig. 42). The rectangular church is brand-new, but the new building was in all probability constructed around the older *mäqdäs*-sanctuary that remained after the former church had been dismantled (a usual practice in the area). Sämaz seems to have been overlooked in the existing registers of archaeological sites<sup>50</sup>, perhaps due to the fact that its location is somewhat hidden, and there is no rock-hewn church or any spectacular ruins there. However, an ancient (Aksumite?) pillar was discovered in the doorway of the gate house (fig. 43), and another one was noticed in the masonry of the wall (figs. 44, 45). Several window grills, carved of stone, have been inserted in the windows of the gate house and of a half-ruined building to the left (fig. 46). In the background of the compound, there is a *šäbäl*-water spring which attracts sick people hoping for healing.

Local tradition claims that the first church on this site was built by King ʕAmdä Şəyon I (1314-34). Among the local *tabots*, one is dedicated to Mäṭaʕ/Libanos who is widely venerated in the region, and one to ʔabba ʔAnanya, one of the ʔEwoştatean monks (s. above)<sup>51</sup>. Formally, Sämaz Maryam is a monastery (*gädam*), but the monastic community has declined; now, there are no monks.

The local climate of Sämaz, humid and hot, strongly contrasts to the moderate climate of other places around, and must severely affect the conditions of parchment. Probably, the climate is the main reason for the young age of the collection of Sämaz, covering only the recent period of the history of the site, as well as for the poor shape of some of the books. A manuscript of the liturgical book *Mäşḥafä asleṭi* appears to be written by Zä-Wäldä Maryam, a local mid-18<sup>th</sup>-cent. scribe (fig. 47)<sup>52</sup>. An *Additio* in this manuscript (col. rb)<sup>53</sup> recounts that the sanctuary of Sämaz was built by ʔabunä ʕAşfä Dəngəl “on three stone pillars”<sup>54</sup>. At least one book of the collection was written by the scribe Wäldä Muse (fig. 48), contemporary of Yoḥannəs IV (1872-89; s. above, Däbrä Gännät Qəddəst Şəllase Mədrä Ruba). Sämaz was favored by *ras* ʔAraya Şəllase (ca. 1869-88), a son of Yoḥannəs IV, who donated at least one book to the church. Also a nice diptych showing some European influence probably originates from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. (fig. 49)<sup>55</sup>.

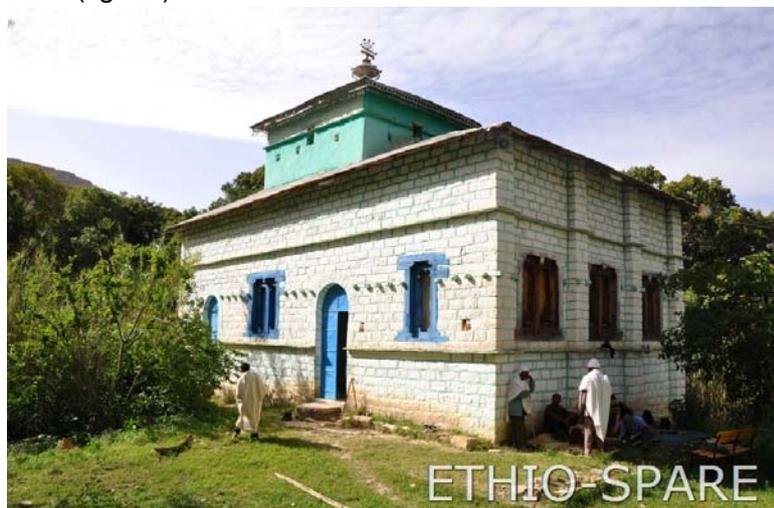


Fig. 42. Sämaz Maryam

<sup>50</sup> Godet 1977.

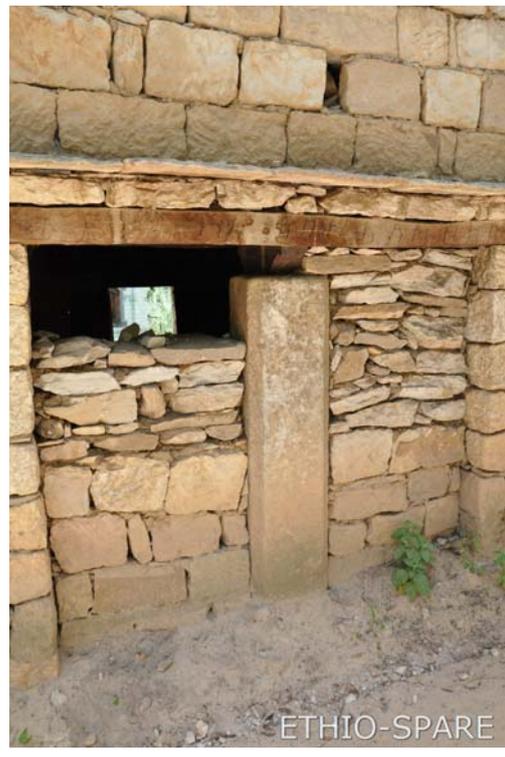
<sup>51</sup> An *Additio* in one of the manuscripts of Sämaz indicates that formerly (in the 18<sup>th</sup> cent. at least?) the main dedication was to Şəyon (“Zion”).

<sup>52</sup> At least two books written by the hand of Zä-Wäldä Maryam were found to the collection of ʕUra Qirqos/ʕUra Mäsqäl.

<sup>53</sup> Probably, added somewhat later; the hand is similar to the one that executed the main text.

<sup>54</sup> This being a reference to the Aksumite ruins “included” into the new church building?

<sup>55</sup> Donated by a certain ʔaläqqa Räm(ḥay), depicted on the right side, below.



Figs. 43-45. Sāmaz Maryam, pillars in the gate house and in the wall



Fig. 46. Sāmaz Maryam, stone window grill

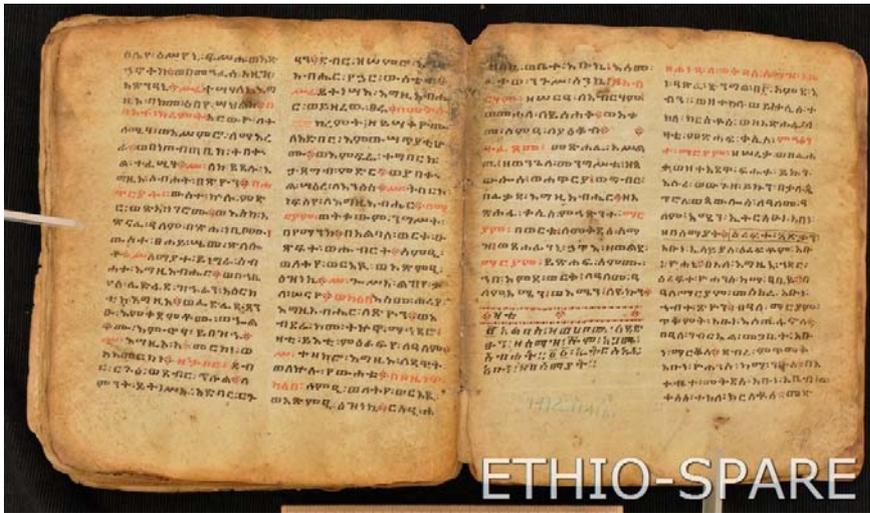


Fig. 47. Sämar Maryam, *Mäṣḥafä asleṭi*



Fig. 48. Sämaz Maryam, prayer book written by Wäldä Muse



Fig. 49. Sämaz Maryam, diptych

### 9. Däbrä Gännät Qəddəst Maryam Säbäya

The site of Säbäya Maryam can be conveniently reached through the road Zäla ʔAmbäsa – ʔIrob. It has been known ever since as an archaeological site<sup>56</sup>, but the landscape has changed drastically since late 1950s<sup>57</sup>. A new church was erected in the 1970s in the old church compound, and some other buildings have been constructed in the recent years. The valley between the mountains was cultivated and widely used for the construction of houses (fig. 50)<sup>58</sup>.

Local tradition only tells that a sanctuary had existed there in pre-Christian time (ʔOritočč), though the archaeological excavations made in 1950s are well remembered. One of the *tabots* of the church is dedicated to ʔabunä Yonas, one of the ʔEwoṣṣatean saintly monks. The oldest manuscript of Säbäya Maryam seems to be a late 15<sup>th</sup>-/16<sup>th</sup>-cent. copy of the *Täʔamrä Maryam* (“Miracles of Mary”) (fig. 51). One more manuscript written by scribe Zä-Wälda Maryam (s. above, Sämaz Däbrä Məṣmaq Qəddəst Maryam) was found, being a copy of Synaxarion for the first half of the year<sup>59</sup>. Though commonly said to be the most popular book in Ethiopia, in comparison to other sites visited during the mission, only in Säbäya the Psalter manuscripts make a conspicuous group of particular interest. Cp. a first half 19<sup>th</sup>-cent. Psalter, for which it was possible to partly trace its history (fig. 52)<sup>60</sup>; and a late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup>-cent. Psalter containing two miniatures (figs. 53a, 53b)<sup>61</sup>. Some years ago, a big processional cross was restituted to Säbäya Maryam, which had been stolen during the fighting around Säbäya, once a center of anti-*Därg* struggle.

At the entrance to the valley of Säbäya, on the left side of the road, the small but picturesque *gäṭär*-church of Mätiṣ Qəddus Gäbrəʔel stands on a mountain (fig. 54), overlooking the valley<sup>62</sup>. Local tradition does not remember anything specific about the history of the church, but claims that it is as ancient as Säbäya Maryam.

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<sup>56</sup> S. Leclant – Miquel 1959; after the first reconnaissance study of the area, it seems that nothing has been done (cp. Godet 1977:55).

<sup>57</sup> The exact spelling of the place name is Säbäya (contrary to not quite clear “Sabéa”, or “Sabēa/Sobēa” in the publications quoted above).

<sup>58</sup> Cp. a general view of the church and landscape in Leclant – Miquel 1959, pl. LI, fig. a.

<sup>59</sup> One would look for a copy for the second half of the year, but it seems that it did not survive. The binding which could have belonged to it was re-utilized for quite a recent copy – also a usual practice in the area.

<sup>60</sup> Note a short Gəṣəz commentary to Ps. 39:6, fol. v. The script shows a type of careful handwriting with influences of Gondäriṣ style (so-called *gwəlh*), suggestive of dating into the early 19<sup>th</sup> cent. Here, it is a case when the palaeographic characteristics can be coordinated with and supported by internal evidence, which also helps to trace the history of the manuscript (these cases are rare especially with the Psalter manuscripts). The owner of the book, ʔəmmahoy Bəru Zäwde, was a contemporary or even relative of *däḡḡazmač* Wäldä Mikael (Wäldänkiʔel), the second son of *däḡḡazmač* Säbagadis Wäldu (the ancestor of Ḥagwäs Täfäri). After the defeat of the latter in 1831 Wäldä Mikaʔel submitted to the powerful *däḡḡazmač* Wəbe Ḥaylä Maryam and apparently was appointed over ṠAgame, for a short period though (shortly thereafter he was assassinated in Ḥamasen). In one of the *Additiones* of the manuscript he is mentioned as the governor of ṠAgame. The title ʔəmmahoy points out to the social position of the owner, Bəru Zäwde, who might have been a head of female monastic community. Her Psalter contains not only texts common for Ethiopic Psalter, but also the so-called *Mäzmurä dəngəl* (“Psalter of the Virgin”, a long hymn praising St. Mary) with stanzas skillfully distributed between the Psalms of David, the parts of the Canticles and Song of Songs.

<sup>61</sup> The miniatures are done by two different painters; on the first, the typical figure below must be a donor; on the second, a lady standing in front of King David (?) may be a later owner of the manuscript.

<sup>62</sup> There was at least one more church in Säbäya, which we did not visit. As everywhere in Təgray, new churches are being built (and the older ones re-built and renovated), making the ecclesiastic landscape more and more complicated.



Fig. 50. Maryam Säbäya



Fig. 51. Maryam Säbäya, Miracles of Mary

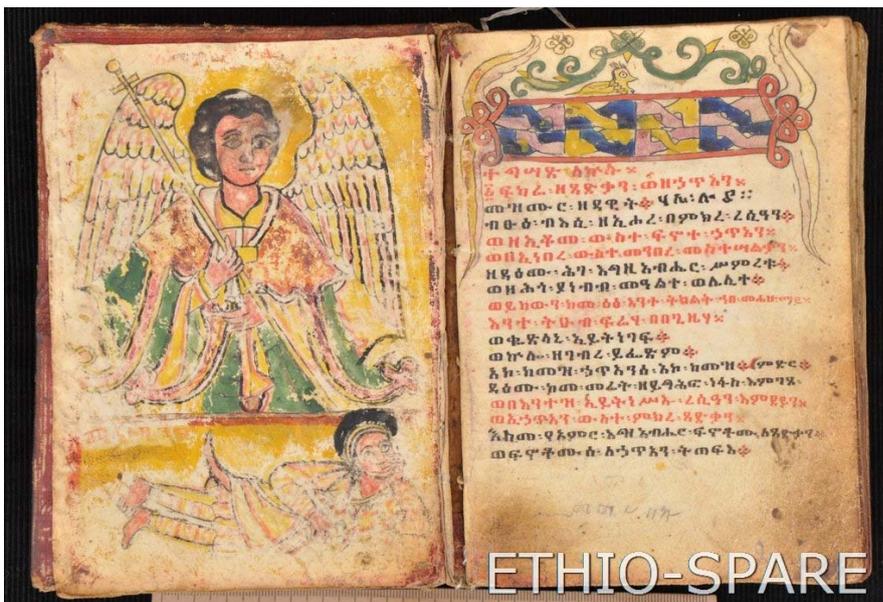


Fig. 53a. Maryam Säbäya, Psalter, miniature



Fig. 53b. Maryam Sābāya, Psalter, miniature

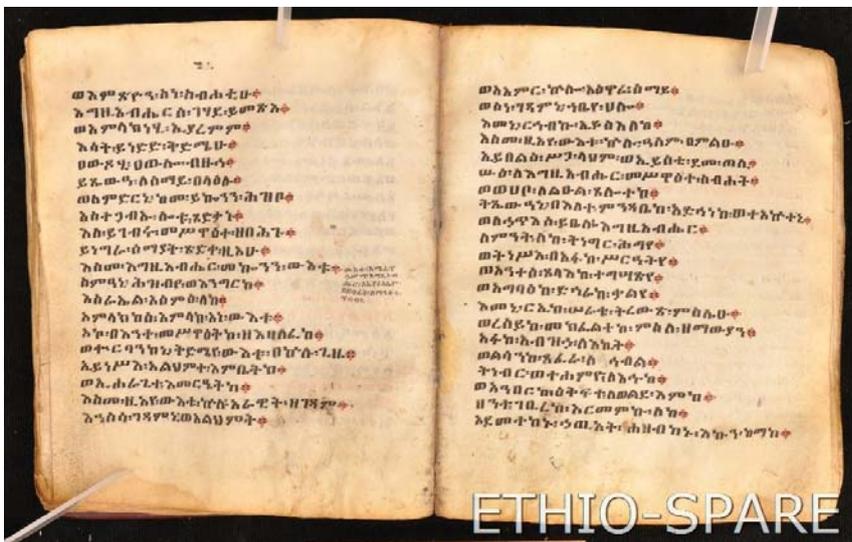


Fig. 52. Maryam Sābāya, Psalter



Fig. 54. Mātīḡ Gäbrēʾəl

## 10. Däbrä Sälam Qəddus Mikaʿel Qärsäbär

The big church of Mikaʿel Qärsäbär stands on the main road ʿAddigrat – Zäla ʿAmbäsa, at the place where the side-road to Bəzät starts (fig. 55). The church of Qärsäbär definitely predates ʿAddigrat; in the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. the settlement around Qärsäbär was at times larger than that of ʿAddigrat<sup>63</sup>. Local tradition recounts that the church was founded in the time of King Säʿaldoba; the present building was constructed under Emperor Ḥaylä Šəllase. A monastic community is said to have existed at Qärsäbär, but disappeared in the period of *Därg*, the military authoritarian government.

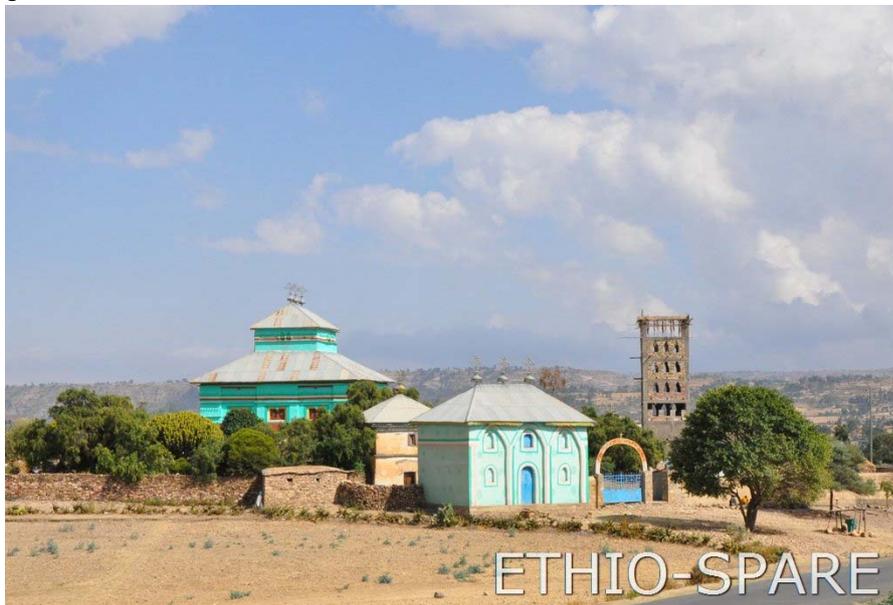


Fig. 55. Mikaʿel Qärsäbär

The collection of Qärsäbär<sup>64</sup> proves the substantial age of the church, and contains quite a number of interesting manuscripts which hint to a significant role played by the church in the past. The “Golden Gospel” of the church is a pre-16<sup>th</sup> cent. manuscript. Among other books, cp. a mid-18<sup>th</sup>-cent. copy of the Vita and Miracles of St. Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus which includes a “guest text”: the so-called *Šərʿatä beta krəstiyan* (“the Structure of the church”; fig. 56)<sup>65</sup>; a fine 18<sup>th</sup>-cent. copy of the *Täʿamrä Maryam* (“Miracles of Mary”; fig. 57)<sup>66</sup>, and an illuminated 18<sup>th</sup>-cent. (?) manuscript of the *Dərsanä Mikaʿel* (“Homily of St. Michael”), with miniatures executed in a peculiar “style of red faces” (fig. 58). Standing on the road to Bəzät, i.e. on the route to the monastery of Däbrä Dammo, the church of Qärsäbär must have entertained historical

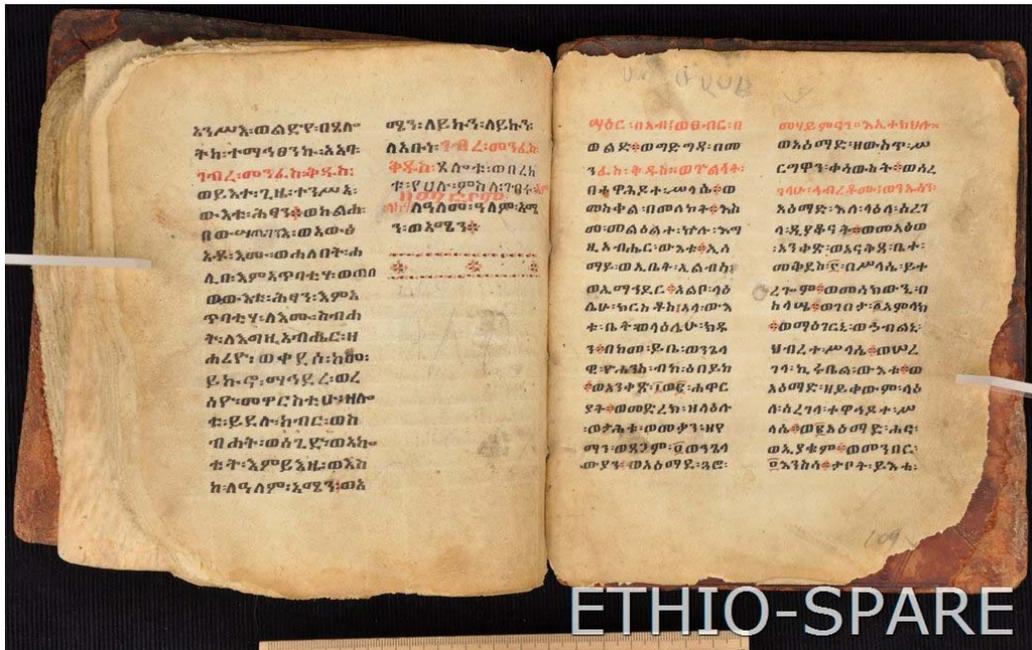
<sup>63</sup> Despite the obvious importance of the church, the only historical evidence for Qärsäbär found so far appears in a foreign source. L. Krapf passed the area in April 1842, and observed that the village of Qärsäbär is larger than ʿAddigrat (founded 1818, but by 1842 in decline). However, he did not make any observation on the church of Qärsäbär (Krapf 1842:513). D. Lindahl in his index “Local history of Ethiopia” ([http://www.nai.uu.se/library/resources/dossiers/local\\_history\\_of\\_ethiopia/A/ORTADI05.pdf](http://www.nai.uu.se/library/resources/dossiers/local_history_of_ethiopia/A/ORTADI05.pdf), under “Adigrat”; accessed on 21.03.2011) reports of a rock-hewn church “Mikael Kirsaba”. The local people did not mention it during the team’s visit to the site. However, the information correlates with “Aksumite tombs” on which the church of Qärsäbär is built according to Henze 2005:73, fig. 4; or even elsewhere in a travel guide book, Briggs – Blatt 2009:271-72, mentioning that the modern church is built upon an “old four-chambered rock-hewn church”. The location of the old structure under the main church building (probably under the *mäqdäs*) makes any investigation difficult.

<sup>64</sup> The original form of the name occurring in the manuscripts is: Qärnä Säbär.

<sup>65</sup> The *Šərʿatä beta krəstiyan*, known in both Geʿez and Amharic and represented in many versions (cp. EAE IV, 631a-32b), is a text describing parts of the church building and metaphorically interpreting them. Such texts usually included in manuscripts as additional notes, refer to the presence of traditional scholars interested in the exegesis.

<sup>66</sup> Dated into 1731; triple decorated quire marks, written in the upper margin of the first and the last folios of the quires, also belong to the properties of this finely produced Ethiopian manuscript.

connections to the latter, and, as a result, possesses at least one manuscript written there – a very fine copy of the Acts of Täklä Haymanot (fig. 59)<sup>67</sup>. The scribe Zä-Wäldä Maryam, mentioned above, might have been based in the church of Qärsäbär, as the church has quite a number of manuscripts written by his hand.



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Fig. 56. Mika'el Qärsäbär, Vita of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qeddus with “guest text”



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Fig. 57. Mika'el Qärsäbär, Miracles of Mary

<sup>67</sup> According to the colophon, the manuscript was commissioned by a certain Wäldä Dängel, who is depicted also as a donor on the miniature, and written by Wäldä Šellase (more than one hand is discernible in the manuscript, though), on Däbrä Dammo, “in the time of our Metropolitan ʿabba Sälama, during the time of his coming up to Däbrä Dammo”. The last information reveals that the book was with all probability written in 1847, the year when Metropolitan Sälama III indeed withdrew to the inaccessible monastery of Däbrä Dammo, having quarreled with *däḡḡazmač* Wəbe Ḥaylä Maryam, the then lord of Təgray. In 1848 both came to terms, and shortly thereafter Sälama left Däbrä Dammo.



Fig. 58. Mikaʼel Qärsäbär, *Därsanä Mikaʼel*

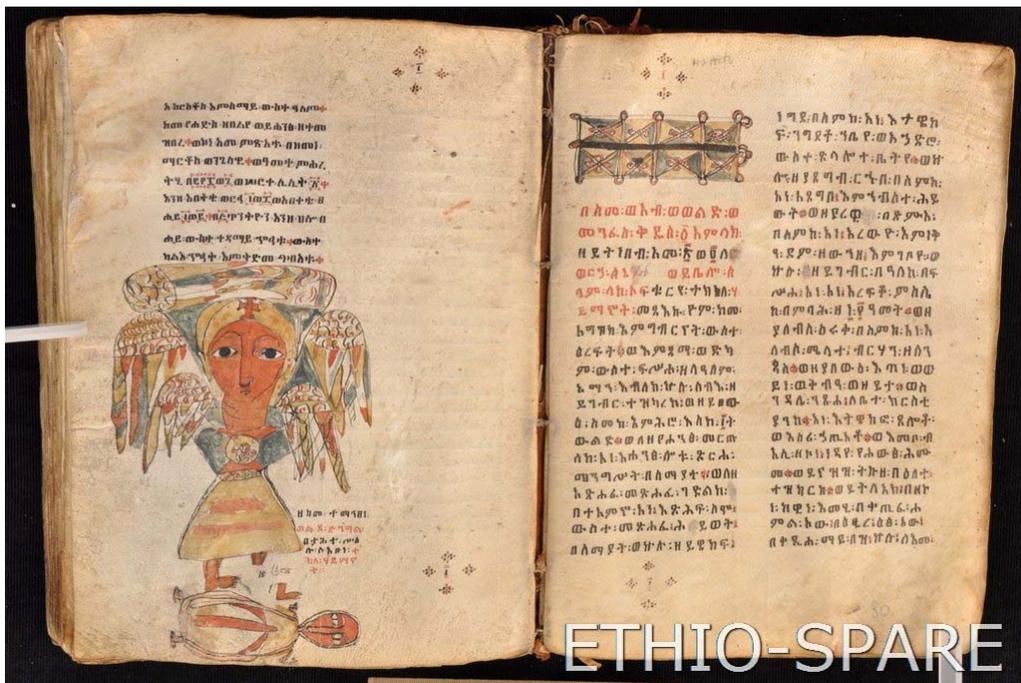


Fig. 59. Mikaʼel Qärsäbär, *Vita of Täklä Haymanot*

### 11. Däbrä Mänkərat Qəddus Qirqos ʿAddigrat

The church of St. Cyprianus (Qirqos)<sup>68</sup> is the main historical church of ʿAddigrat, established by *däğğazmač* Säbagadis Wäldu in the same time as he founded the town soon after his rise to power in 1818. Surrounded by increasingly modernized area and by bigger buildings, historical core of ʿAddigrat is still clearly identifiable, with the round, elegant church standing on a hill (fig. 60). The church was built by *däğğazmač* Säbagadis after his rise to power in 1818, and marked

<sup>68</sup> Called sometimes also ʿƏnda Qirqos.

the establishment of a new political center<sup>69</sup>. Being on the spot, one understands the reason why the town was called ሳAddigrat (which is a contracted form of ሳAddi Gäraht – in Təgrəñña, literally, “the town of fields”). In fact the historical core of the town is built upon a several hundred square meters large protruding rocky platform, the area exactly near ሳAddigrat Qirqos<sup>70</sup>. Here, one can see that, what today is completely occupied by urban area was once a valley of flat fields; indeed, ሳAddigrat was once a settlement surrounded by fields. However, much of the original structure of the settlement disappeared with the extension of the town by the Italians during the occupation of 1935-41, and the rest has completely gone due to the quick development of ሳAddigrat starting from the 1990s.



Fig. 60. ሳAddigrat Qirqos

The library of the church includes a number of interesting and valuable manuscripts, including also those which predate the foundation of the church: cp. a composite manuscript of the *Täʾamrä Maryam* (“Miracles of Mary”) which incorporated quires originating from a manuscript of the time of Ləbnä Dəngel<sup>71</sup> and personally donated by this king (fig. 61). Among others, there is a copy of *Haymanotä ʾAbäw* (“Faith of the Fathers”) written in the time of King Bäkaffa<sup>72</sup>; and at least one manuscript (the Book of the Funeral Ritual) is written by the mid-18<sup>th</sup>-cent. local scribe Zä-Wäldä Maryam. The best part of the library is composed by nice examples of early post-Gondärine manuscript culture: finely written Four Gospel manuscript (fig. 62) and richly illustrated Vita and Miracles of St. Cyriacus (fig. 63), both donated by *däğğazmač* Säbagadis.

<sup>69</sup> The church is reported to have been built by C. Eichinger, a German associate of *däğğazmač* Säbagadis. Since then, a considerable number of European witnesses left notices on ሳAddigrat Qirqos (s. bibliographic references listed in Pankhurst 1982:211). The church building seems to have survived two centuries more or less intact; however, a very quick look into the interior of the church revealed that, most probably, the original paintings (by “the Däbrä Tabor artist”, s. Shepherd 1868:74; for other references, s. Pankhurst 1982:211) have long disappeared.

<sup>70</sup> Cp. an illustration in EAE I, 78b.

<sup>71</sup> Reigned 1508-40, s. above, page 3.

<sup>72</sup> Reigned 1721-30 (s. EAE I, 449b-50a).



Fig. 61. Addigrat Qirqos, Miracles of Mary

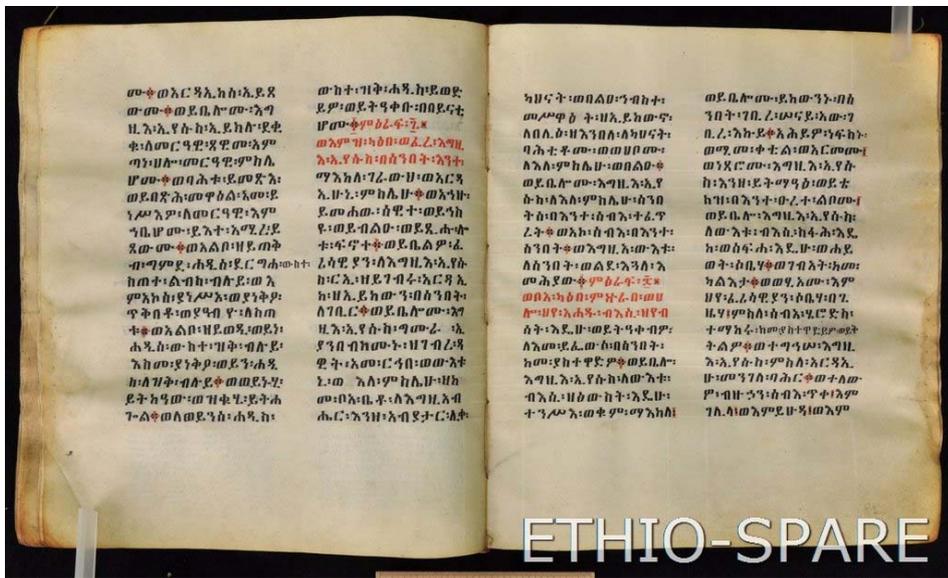


Fig. 62. Addigrat Qirqos, Golden Gospel

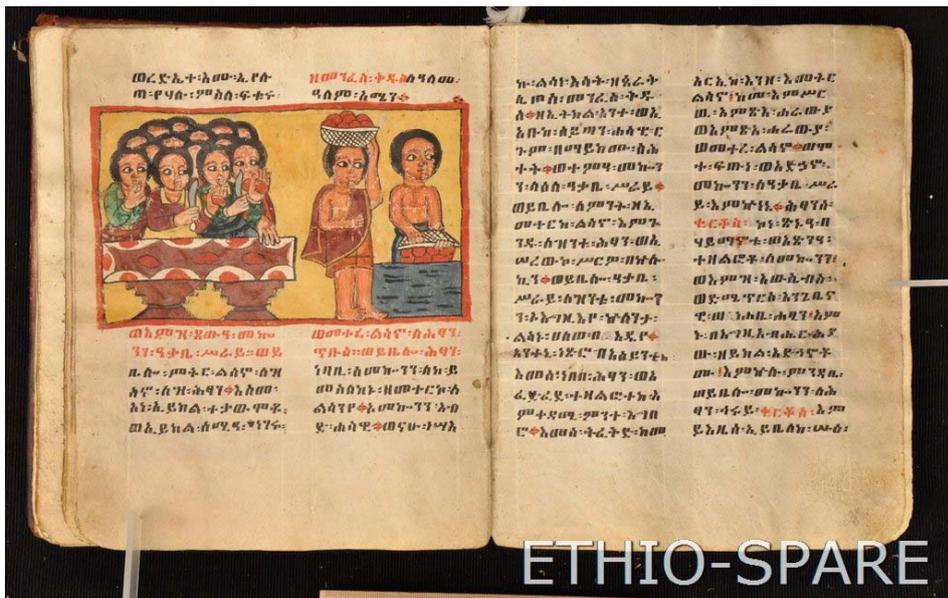


Fig. 63. Addigrat Qirqos, Vita of St. Cyriacus

## 12. Däbrä Mädhani Mädhane ʿAläm ʿAddigrat

The church of Mädhane ʿAläm ʿAddigrat is located not more than 200m from the church of St. Cyriacus. The church has never been mentioned in the sources, being, however, historically interesting and remarkable. The building of the church is rectangular, built in the traditional Təgrayan style, probably of recent age (fig. 64). Local tradition ascribes the foundation of the church to *däḡḡazmač* Kəflä Waḥəd, a late 16<sup>th</sup>-cent. governor of ʿAgamä (and later of Təgray), and well-known historical personality<sup>73</sup>. The manuscripts of the church do not support such an early foundation date, though it does not appear improbable in view of many other older churches existing around. The “Golden Gospel” (as well as some other books) of the church was donated by *däḡḡazmač* Säbagadis, but probably, at a later time, some additional folios were infixed bearing the so-called “Introduction to the Synoptic Gospel”, Canon Tables and miniatures skillfully copied from another, ancient Gospel book (fig. 65). As in a few other cases, Psalters are among the finest and most interesting books of the church: cp. a late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup>-cent. Psalter, which comprises also the so-called Psalter of Mary (*Mäzmurä dengel*), with stanzas distributed among the Psalms of Davit, the Canticles and Song of Songs (fig. 66; cp. above).



Fig. 64. ʿAddigrat Mädhane ʿAläm



Fig. 65. ʿAddigrat Mädhane ʿAläm, Golden Gospel

<sup>73</sup> Ca. 1560s-1607/8; s. EAE III, 373a-74a.

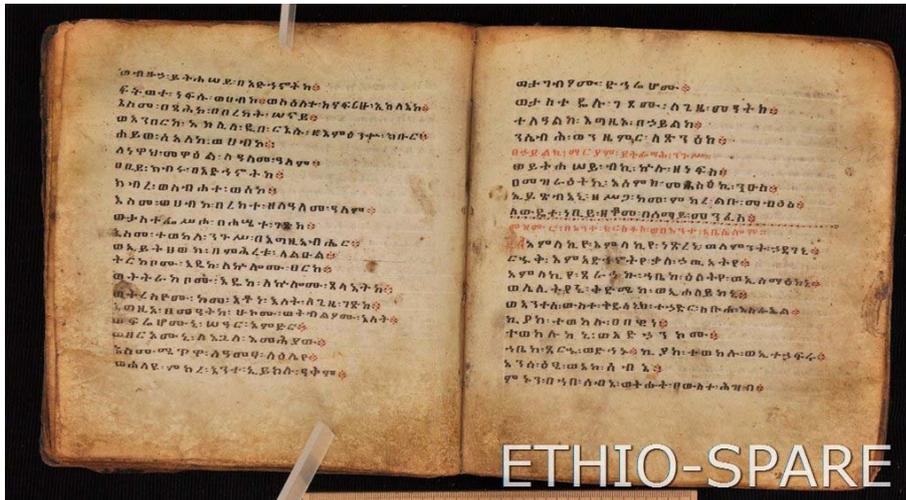


Fig. 66. ሳAddigrat Mādhane ሳAlām, Psalter

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