



# Contemporary scribes of eastern Təgray (northern Ethiopia)

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# Ethio-SPaRe

- **Ethio-SPaRe:** Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia: Salvation, Preservation and Research
- ERC Starting Grant (EU 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme)
- December 2009 - May 2015
- Team members:

Principal Investigator: Dr. Denis Nosnitsin

Four research associates

- 8 digitizing field trips to eastern Təgray (nothern Ethiopia), manuscript cataloguing database

# Aims and sources

- **The main questions to be answered:**
  - Who are the scribes and how did they become scribes?
  - Who are their clients?
  - What are the ways of selling manuscripts?
  - How does the work of the scribes look like?
  - What are the materials and tools they use?
  - What are their writing practices?
  - What is their economic situation?
- **Sources:** interviews with eight scribes, photos illustrating their work, tools and materials, and digitized mss.

# The Ethiopic manuscript culture

- Ethiopia as a place of still living Christian manuscript culture.
- Scribes manually copy religious texts of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church employing parchment as a writing surface.
- From the mid-20<sup>th</sup> cent. onwards manual book production has started decreasing as Christian literature has been printed on paper.



## ‘Ura Mäsqäl

Photo: Nicolas Sarris, Zakynthos



## *Psalter* (UM-026)

Photo: Nicolas Sarris, Zakynthos

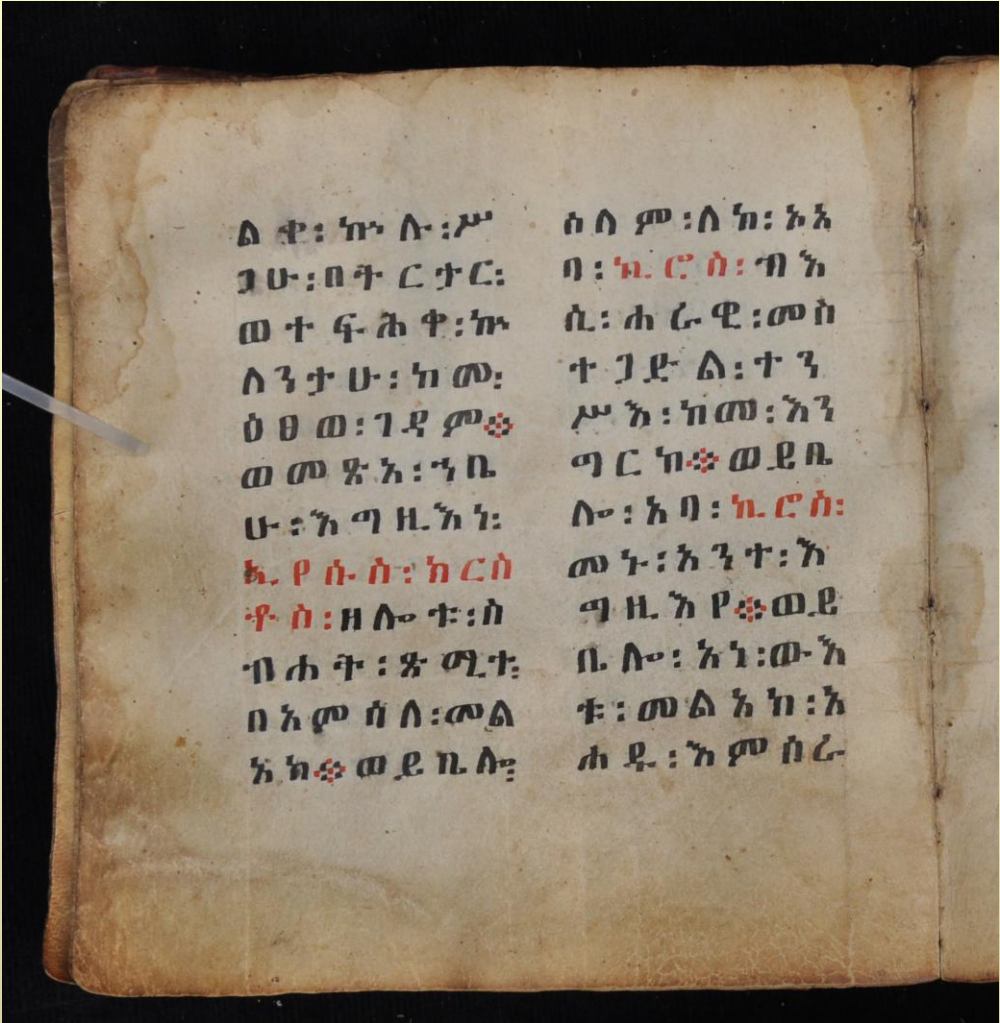


## *Sinodos* (UM-039)

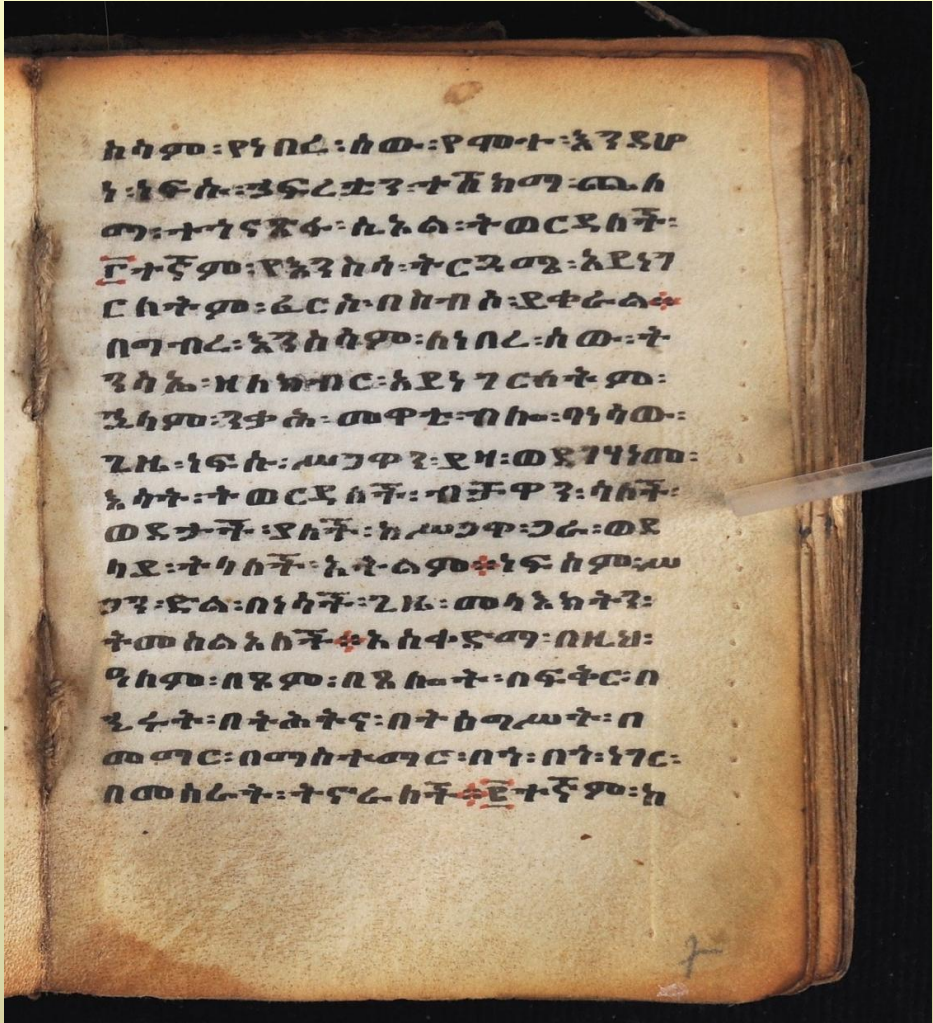
Photo: Nicolas Sarris, Zakynthos

# Texts in the Ethiopic script

- Gə'əz (*Vita of Kiros* MAKM-053)

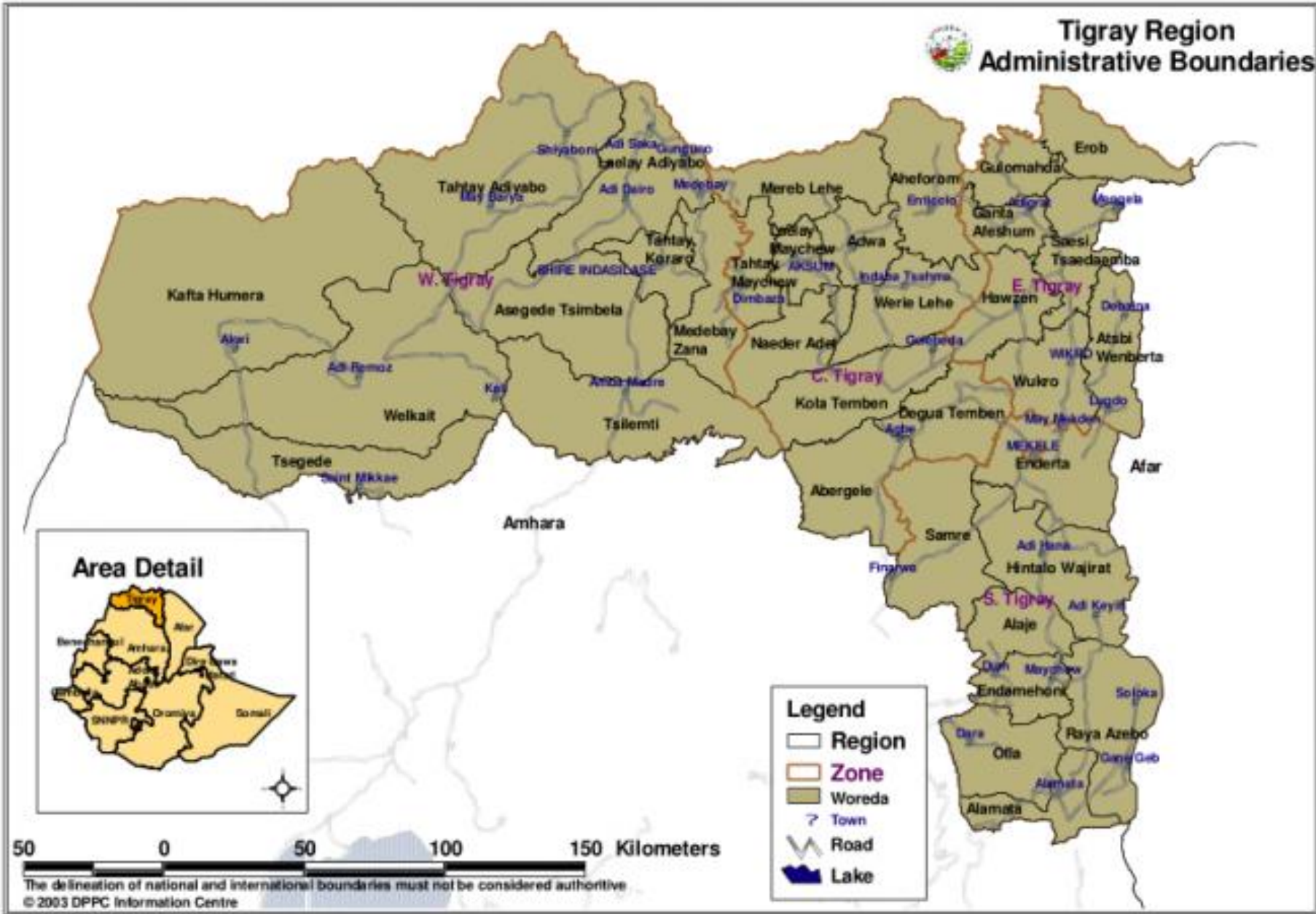


- Amharic (*The Five Pillars of Mystery* HMM-010)





# Tigray Region Administrative Boundaries



**Legend**

- Region
- Zone
- Woreda
- ? Town
- Road
- ~ Lake



The delineation of national and international boundaries must not be considered authoritative  
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# Scribes of eastern Təgray





# Monasteries in Däg'a Tämben

Qäqäma: St Mary's Monastery  
at least four active scribes



Qorrar: St Mary's Monastery  
three active scribes





Qes (Priest) Wäldä Hawaryat  
from Qäqäma  
Photo: Antonella Brita  
CSCM, Hamburg

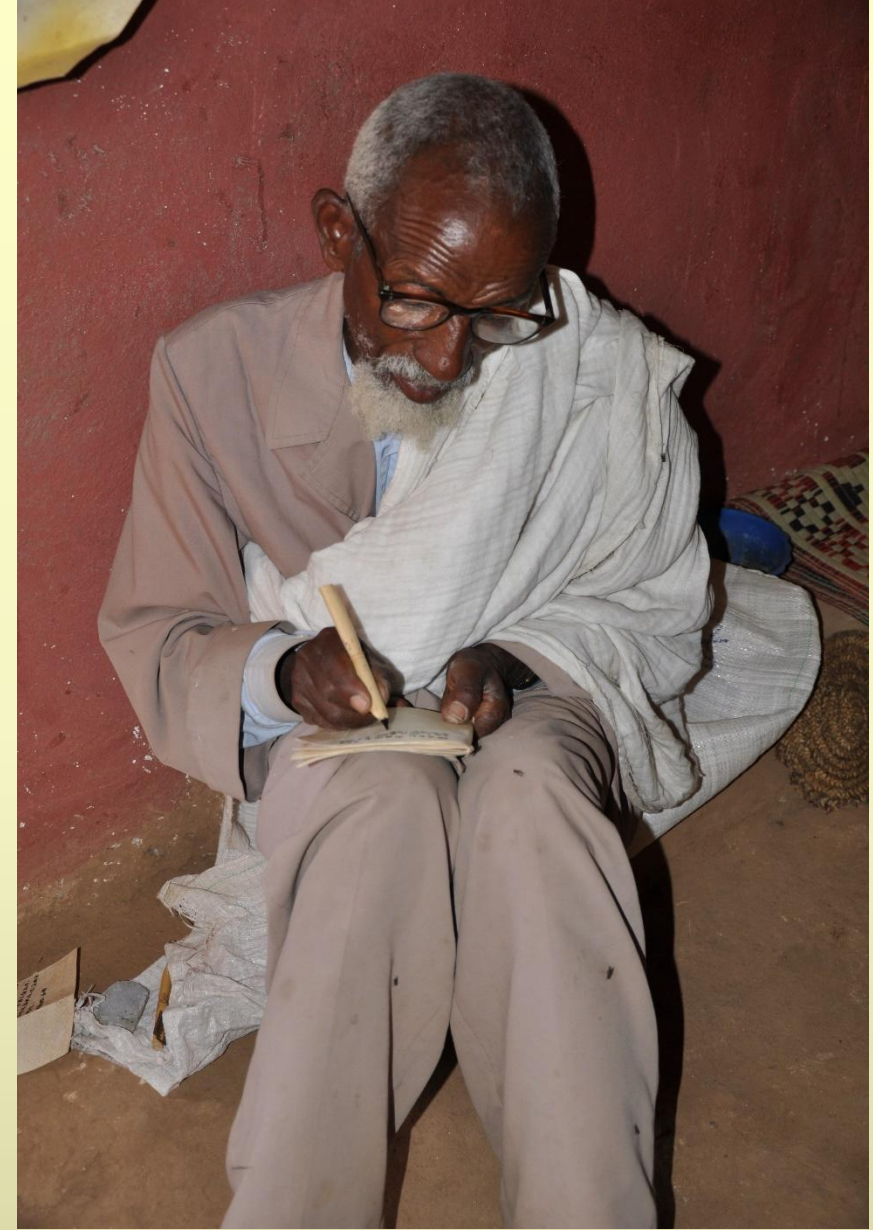


Qes (Priest) Ḥarägä Wäyṇi  
from May Ḕmori



Abba (Father) Taddäsä Məruṣ  
from Gwaḥtərat

Qes Täḵlu Märässa and his wife  
Ḥarägä Wäyḡi Bärhä from Məngas

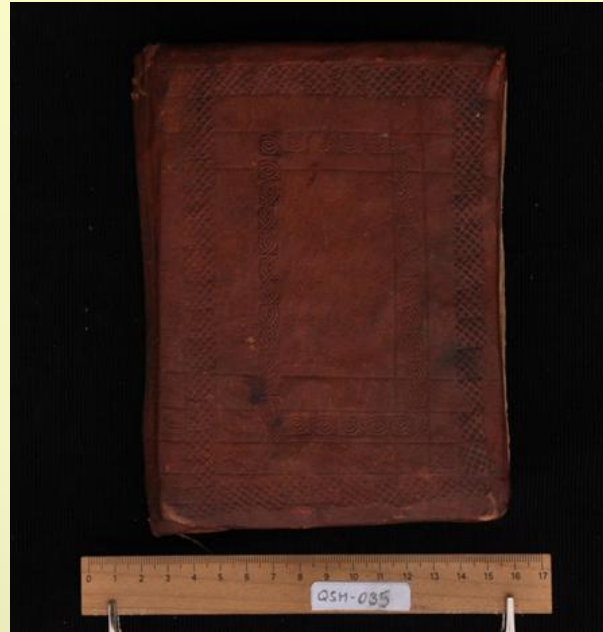


Qes Dästa Gäbrä Maryam from Ləgat

Deacon holding a ms. of *Bandlet of Righteousness*



### Examples of small mss that scribes write during the apprenticeship.



*Homily on the Sabbath of Christians*  
(QSM-035 13.0 x 18.0 x 4.5)

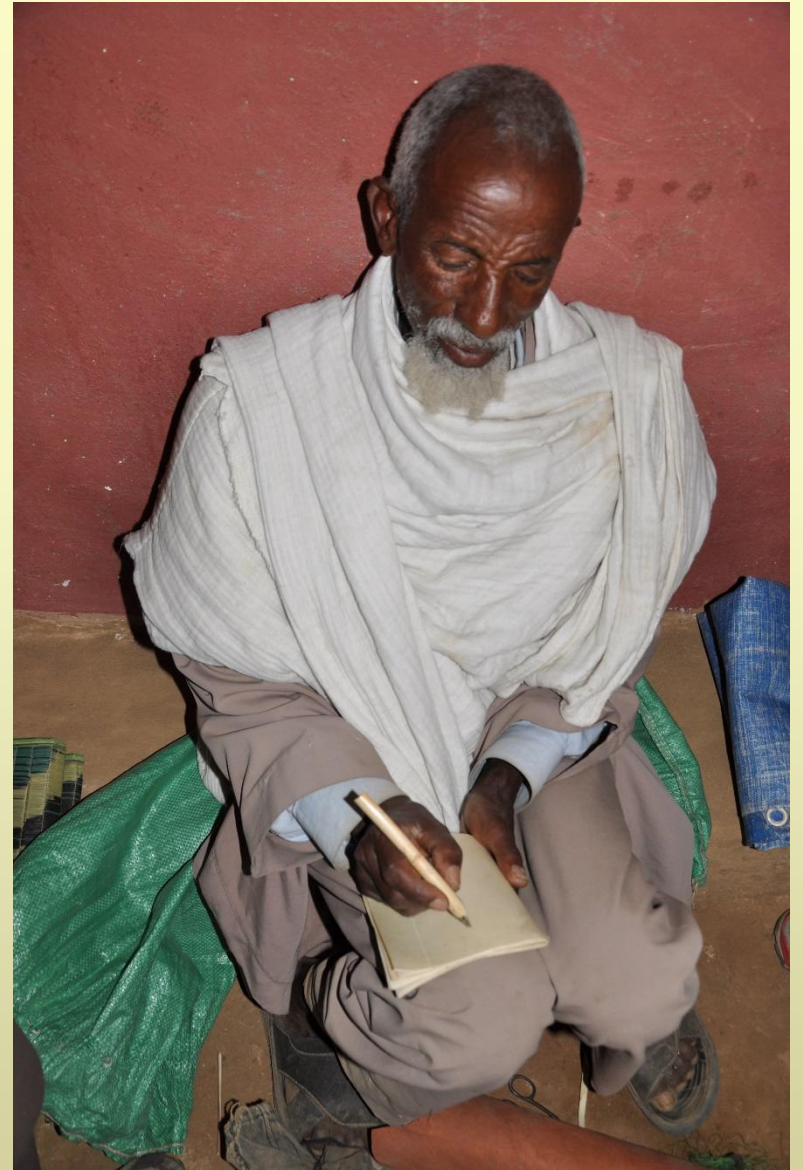


Ways of selling manuscripts:  
by being commissioned,  
selling at the market in Aksum



Abba Taddäsä writing *Prayer of incense* for a female commissioner

Qes Dästa Gäbrä Maryam (and his former students) commissioned by the church in Addigrat





A priest finishing off a ms  
at the market in Aksum

Photo: Antonella Brita, CSCM, Hamburg

A stall with satchels for carrying  
codices at the market in Aksum  
Photo: Antonella Brita, CSCM, Hamburg



# Some of the most frequently copied texts

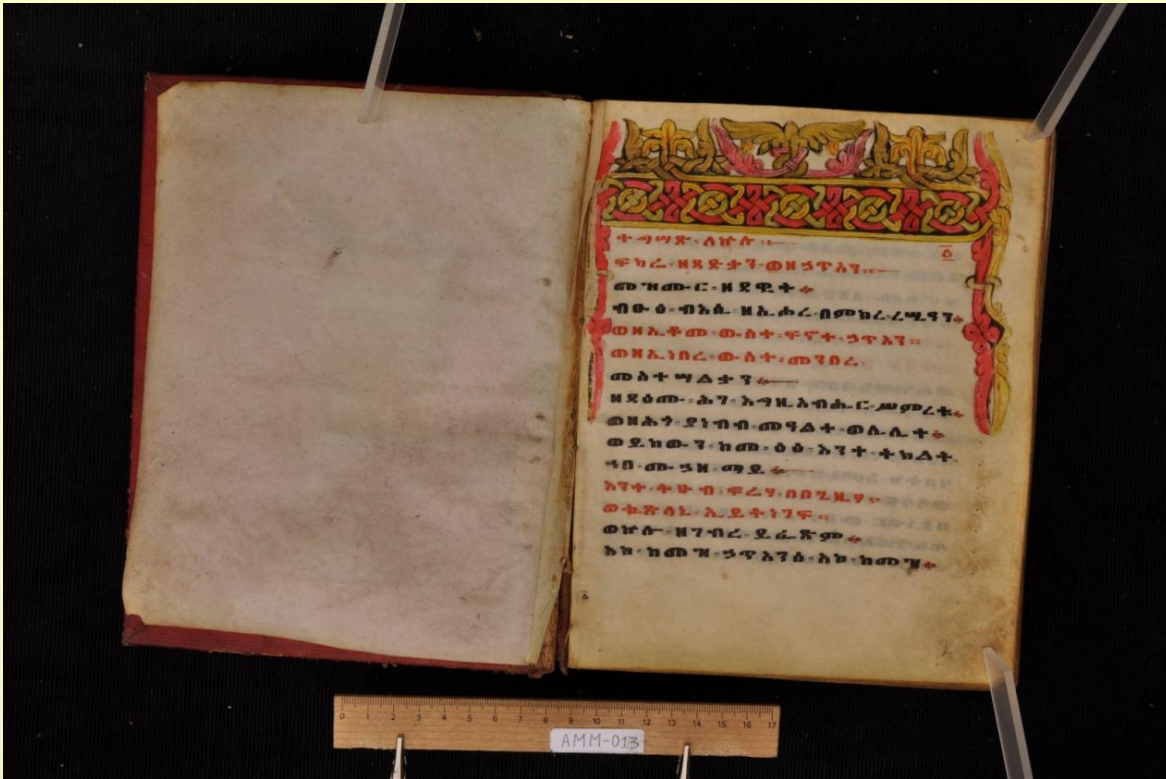
*Vita of John the Baptist,  
Miracles of John the Baptist  
(MY-023, 1969)*



*Miracles of Mary (AP-029, 1921/22)*







*Psalter* (AMM-013, 1901)

**Texts that are not produced  
any more**

*Daggwa*, Antiphonary for the entire year  
(DD-015a, 1675)



Abba Taddäsä unrolling an amulet



Qes Haylä Šöllase with a bunch of magic scrolls

# Process of manuscript production

A wooden frame with a stretched goatskin



Scribe from Addigrat scraping away the hair  
Photo: Nicolas Sarris, Zakynthos



A blank quire, a ruler, pieces of parchment, Løgat

Loose quires containing *The Faith of the Fathers*, Qorrar

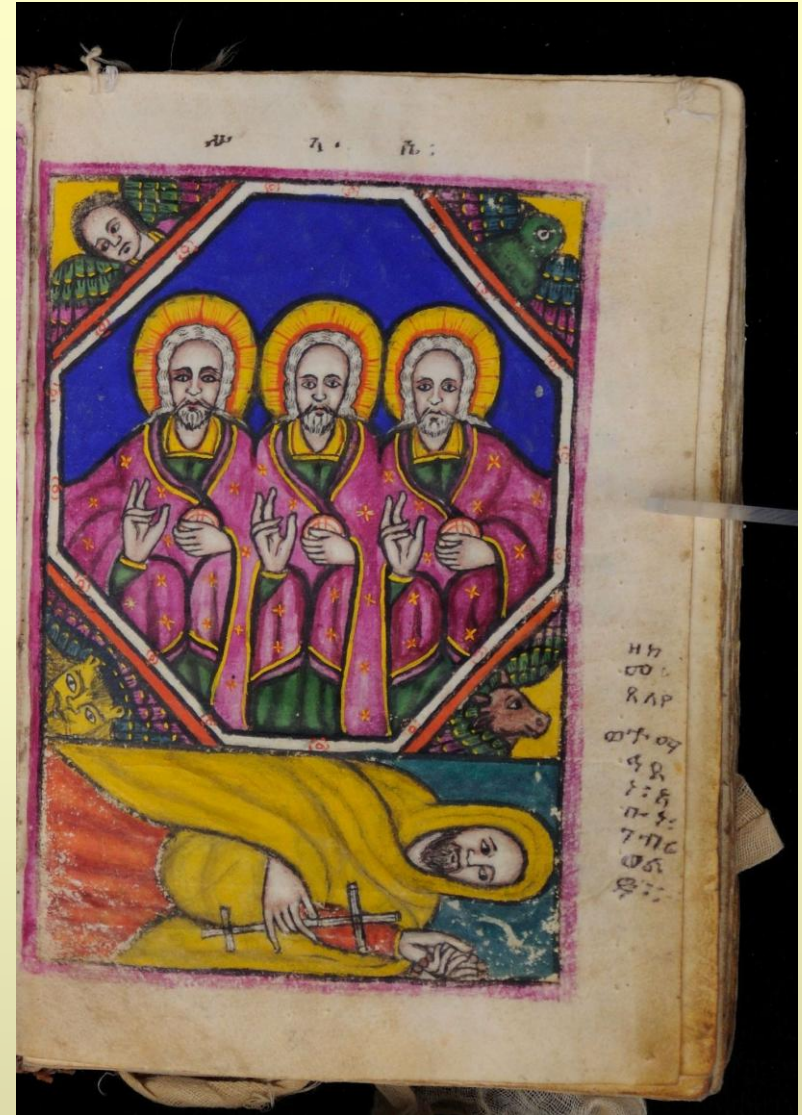




Ornamental band (GSQ-007, fol. 3r, ca. 1941)



Ornamental band (KY-068, fol. 5r, 20<sup>th</sup> cent.)



Holy Trinity, the donor  
(KAE-001, fol. 36r, late 19<sup>th</sup> cent.)



Qes Ḥaylä Šəllase carving a reed pen

Qes Ḥaylä Šəllase sharpening a pen  
for black ink



Inkhorns, Qäqäma



Containers for ink, May Emori



Rubrication executed in industrial rosy  
Qäqäma, 2012



Rubrication executed in red ink made of  
natural ingredients  
(QSM-010, end of the 17<sup>th</sup> cent.)



Thread of animal origin used for sewing and attaching the headband  
*Four Gospels* (MY-008, 1379-1413)

Synthetic thread used for sewing, May Emori

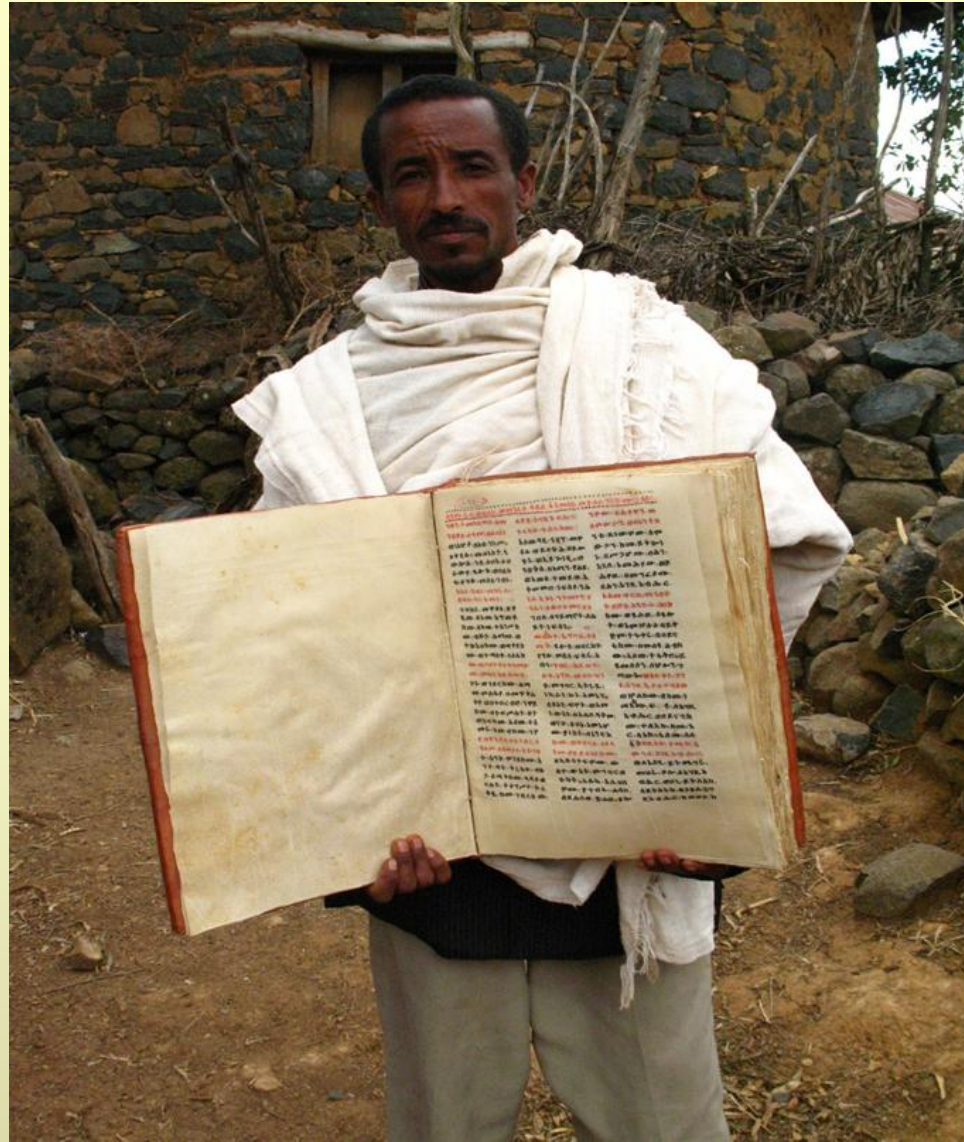




Photos: Nicolas Sarris, Zakynthos



*Vita of Kiros* (GSQ-007 ca. 1941)



Qes Gäbrä Mädhən from Qorror with  
*Lectionary for the entire year*

Modern and earlier (18th cent.)  
handwriting

ጊሎተ፡ፊጣግ

ጌግዢ እነ፡ ወመድ፡ ኃረገ፡ ጸረኩ፡ ከር  
ከቶሎ፡ ዘሶቶ፡ ለከ፡ በፈ፡ ለዓ፡ ዓሰ፡ ጸፊ  
በእመ፡ አብ፡ ወወልድ፡ ወመገፈክ፡ ትደ  
ሰ፡ ፩ ለምካክ፡ ዘለዓለም፡ ሰቡ ሕ፡ ወውደ  
ሰ፡ ዘሣረረ፡ ኑሎ፡ ዓለመ፡ በአሐቲ፡ ታላ፡  
ቅዱሰ፡ ቅዱሰ፡ ቅዱሰ፡ ጌግዢ ስብሐ  
ር፡ አምካክ፡ አማልክቶ፡ ዘሆኑ፡ ወደ  
ዊሎ፡ ወቅረ፡ እከክ፡ ለዓለም፡ ፍሃሊ፡ ሉ  
ዶ፡ ለአብ፡ ሃሊ፡ ሉዶ፡ ለወልድ፡ ሃሊ፡ ሉ  
ዶ፡ ለመገፈክ፡ ቅዱሰ፡ ሰብሐቶ፡ ስክብ፡

Book of the Funeral Ritual (UM-021, fol. 27vb, 1982)

ይቤሎ፡ አንድ፡ ወ፡ ምን ትኑ፡ ው  
አቶ፡ ዘተብህሎ፡ በእንተ፡ አ  
መ፡ ኃዩ ከ፡ ከመ፡ ው እቶ፡ በጊ  
ዜ፡ ተቃትሎ፡ ዝመተ፡ ያረከ  
ን፡ ሐዲን፡ በእስት፡ ወያንብር፡  
ዲበ፡ አባሎ፡  
ይቤ፡ መተርጉም፡ ከነ፡ ው  
እቶ፡ በጊዜ፡ ተፃብአተ፡ ሰይ  
ጣን፡ ሎቶ፡ ከነ፡ ይከቅዮ፡ ለሥ  
ጋሁ፡ በሕማማት፡ ስእባሎት፡  
እንተ፡ ባቲ፡ ትከውን፡ ኃጢአ  
ት፡ ከመ፡ ያብጥል፡ ተከውሶቶ  
ፍጥረት፡ ወተከውሶቶ፡ ሰይጣ

Book of Philoxenus of Mabogh (DD-048, fol. 24ra, 18th cent.?)

Thank you!