

The Charters of the Four Gospels Book of Däbrä Ma'šo

DENIS NOSNITSIN, Hamburg University

The following study was not read during the conference; however, it does deal with the ecclesiastic landscape of North Ethiopia and is closely connected with several of the presented contributions. It is therefore a valuable addition to the discussion in this volume.

Among the churches and monasteries explored by the Ethio-SPaRe team, the church of Yoḥannəs (St. John the Baptist) Däbrä Ma'šo (Gulo Mākāda, East Təgray, Ethiopia)¹ occupies a special position. Known previously only from a few literary sources,² also as a place with Stephanite connections as mentioned elsewhere in this volume, the site was clearly identified during one of the first project field missions. Its manuscript collection contains a few old codices. Of particular interest is the “Golden Gospels” book of the church (MY-008) as it contains several additional notes of importance.³ On a previous occasion I published a fifteenth-century note concerning a certain Patriarch 'Astona.⁴ The same manuscript contains a lengthy collection of charters that has been ascribed to the scribe Wäldä Muse who was active in the area of Mədrä Ruba, close to Däbrä Ma'šo, between 1865 and the 1890s.⁵ This palaeographic link as well as the factual content of the note deserves its edition and a short analysis.

Edition⁶

[Fol. 74v, upper margin] ለእመ ፡ ሐልቀ ፡ ቀዳማዊ ፡ ብራህ ፡ ሀሎ ፡ ውስተ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ። ለአጽ ሐ
ፍዋ ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ አምደ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ወንጉሥ ፡ ገበረ ፡ መስቀል

(I)[fol. 74vb] በስመ ፡ አብ ፡ ወወልድ ፡ ወመንፈስ ፡ ቅዱስ ፡ ፩አምላክ ። ወአውሥኦ ፡ ህወወዊዋዊውዎ ፡
ኅሉልቄ ፡ ፫፻፹፫፻፳፭ ፡ ወበዳግምሂ ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ ገብረ ፡ መስቀል ። ወአምደ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ ከመ ፡ ይወ
ጽእ ፡ ዕክለ ፡ ግብሩ ፡ ለዮሐንስ ፡ ዕክለ ፡ ወላህም ፡ ከመ ፡ ይኩኖሙ ፡ መድኃኒተ ፡ ነፍሱሙ ።
ወቀዳሲሃ ፡ አባ ፡ ዮሐንስ ፡ ጳጳስ ፡ ወዓቃቤ ፡ ሰዓቲሂ ፡ ፍሬ ፡ ሚካኤል ፡ ሊቀ ፡ ዲያቆናት ፡ ዘቤተ ፡ ቂርቆ
ስ ፡ ዘዋሥል ፡ ወሥዩም ፡ ዘደብረ ፡ ማዕቆ ፡ ሕዝበ ፡ አንበሬ ፡ ወንጉሥ ፡ አምደ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ወለቅመ ፡ ሣራ ፡
ስለ ፡ ዓምዳይ ፡

- 1 See note 68 p. 83, also NOSNITSIN 2013b.
- 2 NOSNITSIN 2011:24.
- 3 For the list of *additiones*, see NOSNITSIN 2012:27.
- 4 NOSNITSIN 2012.
- 5 NOSNITSIN 2011:27, *additio* 10. On the attribution of the charters and for a reproduction of the text pages see NOSNITSIN 2013a. This is the same scribe V. PISANI introduces on pp. 115–117 of the present volume; further samples of his handwriting can be found on figs. 22–24 pp. 187–188.
- 6 The numbering of the documents is introduced by the editor; see p. 123 below.

(II) ዘከመ፡ ተሰርዓ፡ እንባ፡ ስነይት፡ ዘተሰርዓ፡ ግብሩ፡ ለዮሐንስ፡ ፀፊሕ፡ ቀላይ፡ በዘገዝዓት፡ ምድራ፡ ወግብራ፡ ኣነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ሞአ፡ በሰ(ይ)ጥየ፡ ዘነሣዕኩ፡ ዘወሀብኩ፡ ለዮሐንስ፡ ደብረ፡ ማዕዳ፡ ወዓቃ[fol. 75ra]ቤ፡ ሰዓት፡ ዘሚካኤል፡ ወበዓልተ፡ ምድራ፡ እምነ፡ እግሚእ፡ ወረድአ፡ ብነ፡ ወመኑ፡ ከመ፡ እግሚእ፡ ወበኃይለ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ ለሊሆሙ፡ ፈቲዖሙ፡ ዘወሀቡኒ፡ ወዘገብኩ፡ ወወሀብኩ፡ ኣነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ሞአ፡ ለቅዱስ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ ለሊያ፡ እንዘ፡ ስዩም፡ ሞአ፡ ወእሰግድ፡ እንተ፡ ለንጉሥ፡ ፤ ዘገብኩ፡ ለዮሐንስ፡ ዘተሐየደ፡ ወዘገሰሳ፡ ውጉዘ፡ ይኩን፡ ፤

(III) በአኩቴተ፡ እግሚአብሔር፡ ወሀብኩ፡ ኣነ፡ ጽንዕነ፡ እግሚእ፡ ለዮሐንስ፡ ላህም፡ ከመ፡ ይዝክሩነ፡ ለገብርከ፡ ጽንዕነ፡ እግሚእ፡ ወብእሲትየ፡ ኣክሀዱ፡ ወለውሉ(ድ)የ፡ ቀለታ፡ እግሚእ፡ ፤

(IV) ጳጳሳት፡ ወደብረ፡ ማዕዳ፡ ዘተሐንፀት፡ በሐፀይ፡ ገብረ፡ መስቀል፡ ግብሩ፡ ለዮሐንስ፡ ጀኤቱ፡ እንተላም፡ ወእንፈቅት፡ ፤ ጳወጃኩማሌ፡ ዘወሀብኩ፡ ግብሩ፡ ለቅዱስ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ ኣነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ [fol. 75rb] ሞአ፡ ዘምድረ፡ ጉልት፡ ዘፀፊሕ፡ ቀላይ፡ ዘወሀቡኒ፡ ፈቲዖሙ፡ ፤

(Va) ዝንቱ፡ ደብዳቤ፡ ዘቅዱስ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ ዘደብረ፡ ማዕዳ፡ ዘተጽሕፈ፡ በዘመነ፡ ንጉሥነ፡ እምደ፡ ጽዮን፡ ወንጉሥነ፡ ገብረ፡ መስቀል፡ ፤ ዘገብኩ፡ ክልኤሆሙ፡ ለተዝካሩ፡ ወለተዝካረ፡ ጻድቃን፡ ለዓለመ፡ ዓለም፡ ፤

(Vb) በአኩቴተ፡ አብ፡ ወወልድ፡ ወመንፈስ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ጸሐፍነ፡ ዘከመ፡ ይወፅዕ፡ ግብሩ፡ ለዮሐንስ፡ እክል፡ ወስርናይ፡ አድሕዖው፡ ጅት፡ ገበታ፡ ዝላዖፍ፡ እንተላም፡ ወእንፈቅት፡ ቅርንጫፍ፡ ያሒት፡ ምድፋዕ፡ ወልታ፡ ጅገበታ፡ ወአድ፡ ያዕቆብ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ወቃለ፡ ነጋሢ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ አይረ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ወሕዳድ፡ ወበማዕዳድ፡ ወበማሕረስ፡ ወማይ፡ ዌው፡ ካዕብ፡ ወያሒት፡ አድ፡ ይመዓት፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ወሕዳድ፡ በምድር፡ ሸመስለስ፡ ይዘርኡ፡ ውስተ፡ ገራህቶሙ፡ ወአድ፡ ጸለምቶ፡ [fol. 75va]ጅገበታ፡ ወአድ፡ ቀያሕቶ፡ ጅገበታ፡ አድ፡ አሕስአ፡ ጅ(ገበታ)፡ ወአድ፡ አተሌ፡ ጅገበታ፡ ልጉዳ፡ እንተላም፡ ወእንፈቅት፡ ወምርጋፅ፡ ያሒት፡ ፤ ሰግላት፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ዓሕዋ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ፤ ዱሐኔ፡ እንተላም፡ ወእንፈቅት፡ ፤ ወአድ፡ ቁልቋል፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ እንበይቶ፡ እንተላም፡ ወገበታ፡ ደላ፡ ጅገበታ፡ ወፍቃዳ፡ ካዕብ፡ ወያሒት፡ አንበስት፡ ጀእንተላም ወእንፈቅት፡ ቤተ፡ ቂርቆስ፡ እንተላም፡ ወእንፈቅት፡ ፤ አንፈ፡ ቀዳምቶ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ፤ ቆቂሕያ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ቀርነ፡ ሰበር፡ ካዕብ፡ ወያሒት፡ ፤ አሚኦት፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ፤ አድ፡ ሐዴ፡ እንተላም፡ አድ፡ በረት፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ አድ፡ ሰሪገ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ፤ አድ፡ ግራህቶ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ፤ አድ፡ ንጉሥ፡ አይአሎ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ፤ [fol. 75vb] ወሬጌና፡ እንተላም፡ ወእንፈቅት፡ ማየ፡ ፀዓዳ፡ እንተላም፡ ወያሒት፡ ወጸሐፍነ፡ ዘከመ፡ ይሠውዑ፡ ሎቱ፡ በዮሐንስ፡ አዌውዊት፡ ያመጽኡ፡ ላህመ፡ ሥጋ፡ በተዝካረ፡ ውደሙ[sic]፡ አመ፡ ፤ ፲ወጃለተሕሣሥ፡ ያመጽኡ፡ ላህመ፡ ሥጋ፡ በሰንዳድያ፡ በዮሐንስ፡ {በ}መስከረም፡ ወበኅዳር፡ በተዝካር፡ ቅዳሴ፡ አመ፤ ወጃለተሕሣሥ፡ ሲካ፡ የሃብ፡ ላህመ፡ ሥጋ፡ ዘተሰይመ፡ ወገብይዖ፡ ፀባ፡ ዘያምጽኡ፡ በበሃገሩ፡ ለድራር፡ ወበዕለተ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ ወበእዳጋ፡ ሰጠሂ፡ ዌው፡ ፤

(Vc) ዝንቱ፡ ደብዳቤ፡ ዘፀፊሕ፡ ቀላይ፡ ዘወሀቡ፡ ፈቲዖሙ፡ ከመ፡ ኢይቅረቡ፡ መሳፍንት፡ ወመኳንንት፡ እመሂ፡ ነጋሢ፡ ወእመሂ፡ ቃለ፡ ነጋሢ፡ ወእመሂ፡ ስዩም፡ ወእመሂ፡ በአልቱት፡ ወእመሂ፡ ገባር፡ ፤ ወዘካነ፡ ከዊኖ፡ ወዘደምሰሶ፡ ይደምሰሰ፡ በሥልነ[sic]፡ ጴጥሮስ፡ ወጳውሎስ፡ በአ፲ወጃነብያት፡ በአ፲ወጃሐዋርያት፡ ውጉዛነ፡ ይኩኑ፡ ፤

Translation

[Fol. 74v, upper margin] If the original parchment has perished, there is another one in the church, which our kings ጳAmdä Şəyon and Gäbrä Mäsqäl caused to be written.⁷

7 The translation is very uncertain. The sentence is incomplete or elliptic as it was addressed probably to the people who knew the local context and did not need the full information. It can be understood in different ways. Possibly, the scribe's intended message concerns the function of the note, and I propose a following interpretation: “(Consult/look at the writing below) if the original parchment has perished, which

I) [fol. 74vb] In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God. And he answered to him, 9 *wä-wu-wi-wa-we-wə-wo*, the number 300-80-72-*fa*,⁸ and again our King Gäbrä Mäsqäl and King ^oAmdä Şəyon (ordered) that the cereals of the tribute for Yoḥannəs, cereals and cow, come out, so that it might become for them the salvation of their soul. And its celebrant (is) ^o*abba* Yoḥannəs the Metropolitan; and its ^o*aqabe sä^cat*⁹ (is) Fəre Mika^oel, the archdeacon of the church of Quiricus of Waśäl;¹⁰ and the governor of Däbrä Ma^cḏo (is) Həzbä ^oAnbäre; and the king (is) ^oAmdä Şəyon, and *läqmä sara sälä^c amday*.¹¹

II) How ^oEnba Sənnäyt had been established, the tribute for Yoḥannəs Däfiḥ Qälāy was established in its land and tribute that (the church) had administered. I, ^oIyäsus Mo^oa (is the one) who took it through my purchase and gave it to Yoḥannəs Däbrä Ma^cḏo; and (in that time) [fol. 75ra] ^o*aqabe sä^cat* was Zä-Mika^oel, and the owner of her land ^oEmmənā ^oƏgzi^o. And (as to) Räd^oa Bənā, and Männu Kämā ^oƏgzi^o, and Bā-Haylä Krəstos, (it was) at their own will¹² that they gave (it to) me and gave (it) to me as *g^wəlt*; and I myself, ^oIyäsus Mo^oa, gave (it) to St. Yoḥannəs while the governor was Mo^oa and I prostrate myself in front of the King.¹³ The one who robs and touches what I gave to Yoḥannəs as *g^wəlt* shall be excommunicated.

III) In the praise of God, I, Şən^oənā ^oƏgzi^o, donated a cow for Yoḥannəs so that they might commemorate us, your servant Şən^oənā ^oƏgzi^o, my wife ^oAkhadu and my sons Qälāta ^oƏgzi^o.

our Kings ^oAmdä Şəyon and Gäbrä Mäsqäl had caused to be written, (which) is (now) in the church”. I.e., the scribe dropped the apodosis (“Consult...”), and in the protasis he intended to say: ... ለእመ ፡ ሐልቀ ፡ ቀዳማዊ ፡ ብራና ፡ ዘእጅሐፍዋ ፡ ንጉሥ ፡ አምደ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ ወንጉሥ ፡ ገበረ ፡ መስቀል ፡ [ዘሀሎ] ፡ ውስተ ፡ ቤተ ፡ ክርስቲያን ።

- 8 The passage right after the usual introductory formula until the word *wä-bä-dagəmbi* is mysterious. Does it mean anything at all? Was there a foreign element (a part of the Ethiopic syllabary or a writing exercise) mistakenly perceived by the scribe as an original part of the document? Or, on the opposite, did the scribe omit a portion of the text before *kämä yəwäşşə*?
- 9 On the ^o*aqabe sä^cat* of Däbrä Ma^cšo, see NOSNITSIN 2012:28, n. 28.
- 10 Betä Qirqos of Waśäl. Waśäl or Wäsäl is mostly known as one of the strategic “gates” (passes) leading into the historical ^oAmhara province at the beginning of the sixteenth century (cp. HUNTINGFORD 1989:81, 104, 129–131). From it, the name of the town ^oAmbasäl (Wällo) is probably derived.
- 11 The meaning of the words *läqmä sara sälä^c amday* is unclear, but it may a corruption of a title followed by a name; e.g., such title as *raq / ^oəraq masäre*; a certain *qämädani* (*liqä mädani*?) Mängädäy is mentioned in an authentic land grant of King ^oAmdä Şəyon I (TADDESE TAMRAT 1970:96–97). One can wonder, in fact, if the words ለቅመ ፡ ሣራ ፡ ስለ ፡ ግምዳይ may be a graphic corruption of the latter, [ሊ.]ቀመጣኒ ፡ መንገደይ.
- 12 I think that this is the meaning of the words *lälibomu fätiwomu*, here and below, which underline that the donors acted voluntarily, absolutely on their own will (for *fätäwä* “to like, wish, desire” see LESLAU 1987:171a).
- 13 The translation of ^o*ənzä səyyum mo^oa wä^oəsaggəd ^oəntä lä-nəgus* is uncertain.

IV) (For the church of) the 638 Righteous Ones of Däbrä Maḥdo which was built by His Majesty Gäbrä Mäsqäl, the tribute for Yoḥannəs (is) 2 ʾəntälams¹⁴ and ʾənfäqət.¹⁵ (It is) 24 *k^wəmale*¹⁶ that I gave the tribute for St. Yoḥannəs, I, ʾIyäsus [fol. 75rb] Moʾa, of the land of *g^wəlt* of Däfiḥ Qälāy which they, having themselves wished, donated to me.

Va) This is the register of St. Yoḥannəs Däbrä Maḥdo which was written in the time of our King ʾAmdä Şəyon and our King Gäbrä Mäsqäl, which they both gave as *g^wəlt* for his commemoration and for the commemoration of the Righteous Ones. For ever and ever.

Vb) In the praise of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We have written how the tribute of Yoḥannəs comes out, cereals and wheat. ʾAd Həyaw 6 *gäbätas*,¹⁷ Zəla^c of ʾəntälam and ʾənfäqət, Qärnəmela *yahit*,¹⁸ Mədfa^c Walta 6 *gäbätas*, and ʾAd Ya^cqob ʾəntälam and *yahit*, and the spokesmen of the *nägäsä* Yoḥannəs ʾAyrä (?) ʾəntälam and *yahit*, and *hədad*¹⁹ (is) in harvesting and ploughing. And May Dew *ka^b*²⁰ and *yahit*; ʾAd Yəma^cat ʾəntälam and *yahit*, and *hədad* in the land (is) 9 *mäsläs*²¹ (that) they sow in their fields. And ʾAd Şällämtö [fol. 75va] 6 *gäbätas*, and ʾAd Qəyaḥto 6 *gäbätas*, ʾAd Aḥsəʾa 7 *gäbätas*, and ʾAd ʾAtäle 6 *gäbätas* and ʾənfäqət, Ləg^wəda ʾəntälam and ʾənfäqət, and Mərgad *yahit*. Säglat ʾəntälam and *yahit*, Daḥwa ʾəntälam and *yahit*. Duḥane ʾəntälam and ʾənfäqət. And ʾAd Q^wälq^wal ʾəntälam and *yahit*, ʾƏnbäyto ʾəntälam and *gäbäta*, Däla 6 *gäbätas*, and Fəqada *ka^b* and *yahit*, ʾAnbäsät 2 ʾəntälams and ʾənfäqət, the church of Qirqos ʾəntälam and *yahit*. ʾAnfä Qäddamto ʾəntälam and *yahit*. Qoquḥya ʾəntälam and *yahit*. Qärnä Säbär *ka^b* and *yahit*. ʾAmi^cat ʾəntälam and *yahit*. ʾAd Hade ʾəntälam, ʾAd Bärät ʾəntälam and *yahit*, ʾAd Säriḡä ʾəntälam and *yahit*. ʾAd Gərahto ʾəntälam and *yahit*. ʾAd Nəḡus ʾAy^calo ʾəntälam and *yahit*. [fol. 75vb] Wäregena ʾəntälam and ʾənfäqət, May Dä^cada ʾəntälam and *yahit*.

We have written how they will offer sacrifice for (the church). On Yoḥannəs ʾAwewəwet,²²

14 A traditional measurement unit, see LESLAU 1987:33; EAE II, 318b; PANKHURST 1969:120–21, 124; also used in the old *additio* 2 (NOSNITSIN 2012:28–29).

15 Cp. Pankhurst 1969:120–21, 148; see the Təgrəñña variant ʾənfəqti in KANE 2000:1498b (“...equal to two *gäbäta*”). Also used in the old *additio* 2 (NOSNITSIN 2012:28–29).

16 Registered as an Amharic word, see KANE 1990:1376b, “a measurement of land approximately 40 ha (Gojjame usage)”.

17 A traditional measurement unit, see LESLAU 1987:179b; also in Amharic, KANE 1990:1980b and Təgrəñña, KANE 2000:2299b; the term is used in *additio* 3 (NOSNITSIN 2012:28).

18 KANE 2000:2032a, “grain measure of four *gäbäta*, of ca. 80 kg...”. See the relationship between the measurement units mentioned below, according to different sources, in PANKHURST 1969:118–120.

19 The land owned by the lord and the peasants’ unpaid work on it (HABTAMU MENGISTIE 2004:13; cp. KANE 1990:32ab, 1456a).

20 A traditional measurement unit, KANE 2000:1676a.

21 A traditional measurement unit, KANE 2000:338a.

22 ʾAwit, ʾawet in the expression Yoḥannəs ʾAwit refers to the feast of the nativity of John the Baptist, 30 *Säne* (LESLAU 1987:49a; GUIDI 1906:698–700).

they will bring cow meat. On the commemoration (day) of their sons²³ on the 19th of *Taḥśās*,²⁴ they will bring cow meat. On *Səndadəya*,²⁵ on Yoḥannəs in *Mäskäräm*²⁶ and in *Ḥədar*,²⁷ on commemorative Mass on the 19th, on the Easter Day, the one who is appointed will give cow meat. And a cup of milk they will bring each in his district, for the supper, on the day of Yoḥannəs. And the share²⁸ (of the church) at the market is salt.

Vc) This is the register of Däfiḥ Qälāy which they gave at their own will, so that judges and princes might not approach, and be it a ruler, or a spokesman of the ruler,²⁹ or a governor, or a noble lady, or a peasant, or whoever else. The one who destroys (the register) will be destroyed. They will be excommunicated through the authority of Peter and Paul, through 15 Prophets and 12 Apostles.

Structure, form and style

While the note is copied by the same hand it appears clear that it encompasses at least five small documentary texts (referred to as “documents I–V” in the proposed reconstruction):

- I Charter concerning tributes for the church of St. John the Baptist which were established by King(s) ʿAmdä Şəyon I/Gäbrä Mäsqäl.
- II Charter concerning tributes for the church which were established through the offices and personal charity of ʿIyäsus Moʿa and a few other people.
- III Record of donation for commemorative service (*täzkar*) of Şənʿənä ʿƏgziʿ and his family members.
- IV Charter concerning tributes for the church of St. John the Baptist established through the charity of ʿIyäsus Moʿa.
- V Charter (*gʷəlt?*) concerning tributes for Däbrä Ma'šo issued by King ʿAmdä Şəyon I.

The scribe drew crude text dividers to separate the documents, but he was not fully consistent (no line between documents I and II). Passage Va can

23 *ⲁⲛⲥⲟⲩ* should probably be corrected to *ⲁⲛⲥⲟⲩⲛ*.

24 It is unclear which occasion is referred to. According to the old charter of Däbrä Ma'šo (NOSNITSIN 2012), Patriarch ʿAstonā is commemorated on 21 *Tərr*, and the Martyrs of Däbrä Ma'šo on 1 *Taḥśās*, respectively.

25 Most probably, a wrong spelling for *Şedenya*, the Marian feast on 10 *Mäskäräm* (FRITSCH 2001:62); possibly somehow influenced by the original Arabic name Şaydnāyā, a place where one of the miracles of St. Mary took place.

26 Feast of the Decollation of John the Baptist (COLIN 1986:338–340).

27 Possibly, the occasion on 21 *Ḥədar*, not mentioned in the edited version of the Synaxarion (but for which a special homily is found, e.g., in mf. EMMML no. 1763, fols. 9r–10r; see also EAE III, 288b–291b).

28 *Säto*, probably a variant of *šäyətə* (cp. LESLAU 1987:540b).

29 Lit. “the word of the ruler”; for *nägasī*, cp. EAE IV, 1662b (also used in *additio 2*, s. NOSNITSIN 2012:29).

belong to either document IV or V, or be an independent statement.

The remark of the scribe in the upper margin of fol. 74v is puzzling, but it may refer to the original model documents when they still existed, and reflect how the scribe perceived the function of the text he was writing. Document V contains the peculiar term *däbda(b)be*. It is used twice, in the beginning and in the “immunity clause”.³⁰ It is impossible to know whether the term was used in the model documents or was first introduced by Wäldä Muse. When the team of Ethio-SPaRe visited the site in 2010 and 2011, it discovered no writings which could come in question as model(s) or sources for the note. Therefore, it is difficult to speculate about their possible form and authenticity. However, the evidence has come down to us at least in the form of the note, which apparently worked in the way the scribe had envisaged in his remark (in the upper margin).³¹

30 Today mostly known as an Amharic word for “letter”, this term – in Gəʿəz meaning “register, list” (LESLAU 1987:120b) – has still not been properly surveyed and studied (cp. WION 2011:x). The note of MY-008 brings another example of its use. It means here also “register”, but, possibly, with a connotation: it is a “register” of documents, or, precisely speaking, their copies (distinct from the original writings). A similar clarification of the term has been already proposed (concerning the documents copied into Ms. Orient. 641): cp. KROPP 2004:213 note 1, and 216, the expressions *yä-milad däbdabbe*, *yä-wängel däbdabbe* “indicating documents from the *Mäṣḥafa Milad* ... and documents from the Gospel” (*ibid.*); in other words, they refer to the copies of the documents inscribed in the books mentioned. I assume that a documentary writing may be marked as *däbdabbe* if it is an “archival copy” of one or more documents. This may explain, e.g., why the land charter of King Zär’a Ya’qob to Däbrä Maryam Qoḥayn, inscribed in the “Golden Gospels” not earlier than the seventeenth century (thus being a copy of an older document now missing), is called *nägärä däbdabbe* (BAUSI 1996:31–35 tr., 41–43 text; the notes in the Gospel of Däbrä Libanos of Ham are called *däbdabbe* possibly by this reason, according to CONTI ROSSINI, see *ibid.* 32, n. 70, esp. those which are written on added leaves; cp. also BAUSI 2001:150 and note 17). The so-called charter of Tāntäwəddəm from the church of ‘Urä Mäsqäl (Gulo Mākāda, not far from Däbrä Ma’šo) which has recently become known (DERAT 2010:162–163; FIACCADORI 2014, forthcoming) contains copies of a series of land documents. The title referring to the collection, *yä-Mäsqäl däbdabbe*, is written on the last folium of the quire. References to a copy, not an original charter, can be occasionally found elsewhere (cp. the *Liber Axumae*, CONTI ROSSINI 1909:57 text, no. 81). If preserved in the form of a separate manuscript filled completely or predominantly by copied documents, such a collection, even a small one, comes closer to the European “cartulary” (cp. LdM V, 1026–27; CLEMENS – GRAHAM 2007:238–239; see other comparisons and attempts at finding an apt description [“condaghe”, “archive”] in EAE IV, 1130b).

31 This also recalls one of the ways in which European cartularies were supposed to serve. At this point, if one wishes to make an attempt of presenting the functionality of the manuscript and its *additiones* in a wider context, along with the notion of the wide-spread custom of inserting different documents in the Four Gospels books,

The understanding of the note is a challenging task. Its language is concise and difficult, and while the essential message of each of the documents is clear, some passages are hardly understandable and details remain vague. Documents I and V basically conform to the structure of the Ethiopian documentary writing known otherwise.³² Multiple relative clauses (*zä* + Perfect) may be indicative of the influence of a spoken language; peculiar use of the verb *fätäwä* “to wish, want, love” may be suggestive of the same or be a mark of the compiler’s personal style.³³ Both the form and the content of the note hint to a strong (intentional and/or non-intentional) transformation of the original texts, but since the latter are missing, no further statements are possible as to how the redaction was carried out.

Historical elements

Donations to Däbrä Ma^çso by King ^çAmdä Şəyon I (r. 1314–44) should not be immediately discarded as a nineteenth-century fraudulence just because they are attested in a recent copy. However, the authenticity of the note (or, rather, of each of the five documents) is difficult to prove, and it is equally difficult to separate its historical core from later elaborations and embellishments. The scribe was not consistent in presenting ^çAmdä Şəyon I and Gäbrä Mäsqäl as one and the same ruler. In document I, but especially in document V (part Va) the words “they both” do not leave any doubt about that. However, in the midst of document I ^çAmdä Şəyon is mentioned as the only king; also Gäbrä Mäsqäl is referred to as the only king in document III. We may assume that the names ^çAmdä Şəyon and Gäbrä Mäsqäl both stood together in the model documents.³⁴ By whatever reason, the nineteenth-century scribe

the term “cartularies in Gospel books” can be recalled. In the European traditions, they represent an early type of cartulary (cp. DAVIS 1958:xiii). In Ethiopia, the ancient practice of collecting documents (or their copies) in Four Gospels manuscripts continued until the twentieth century, whereas collections of documents in form of separate manuscripts (sometimes referred to as *mäzgäb*) are less common. In a few cases the Four Gospels books accumulate many dozens of (both older and recent) documents (cp. the Four Gospels Book of ^çAşbi Şəllase, NOSNITSIN 2007).

32 It usually includes the following elements: invocation, indication of grantor/grantee, list of estates; type of the grant; legal regulation concerning the grant (*g^wəlt*); immunity close; sanction (see HUNTINGFORD 1965:4–8; KROPP 2005:121–137).

33 The verb *fätäwä* makes rare appearance in the documentary writing, cp. CONTI ROSSINI 1901:192–193, no. 8. Incidentally or not, this document refers to the time of King Lalibäla (13th cent.?) but may be written in later time (cp. CONTI ROSSINI’s remark: “Scrittura forse del secolo XVII”).

34 Cp., e.g., such well-known document as the one issued by ^çAmdä Şəyon I, restituting land estates to Däbrä Hayq ^çƏstifanos (see TADDESSE TAMRAT 1970:96–97).

was uncertain as to how he has to consider them, as name of one ruler or of two distinct rulers.

Remarkably, the note does not contain any reference to the authentic charter of Däbrä Ma^çso dating to the time of King Zär^oa Ya^çqob (r. 1434–68), preserved in the same Four Gospels Book (*additio* 2), or to another ancient short note concerning tributes for the church, included in an old Homiliary (MY-002) dating to the same period as the Four Gospels.

Historical narratives emerging from the note are confusing. Among the persons mentioned, Metropolitan ^oabba Yoḥannəs of document I may be identical to an early fourteenth-century Ethiopian metropolitan called by the same name³⁵ who was indeed a contemporary of King ^çAmdä Şəyon I. Most of the other names are unknown; only Männu Kämä-^oƏgzi^o is reminiscent of Männu Kämä-^oƏgzi^oabəḥer, who lived, however, in the second half of the fourteenth century.³⁶

The reason why ^oAmba Sännayt is mentioned in document II is not quite clear. Document III seems to be an endowment to Däbrä Ma^çso Yoḥannəs from an individual who is otherwise unknown. A certain ^oIyäsus Mo^oa appears in documents II and IV as a benefactor of Yoḥannəs Däbrä Ma^çso. Document IV, a very short note, mentions tributes (*gəbr*) for Däbrä Ma^çso which ^oIyäsus Mo^oa secured for the church from (his own?) *g^wəlt*-land.³⁷ It is difficult to ascertain the identity of ^oIyäsus Mo^oa since he is mentioned without any reference to his title and function. In any case, he must have been a person of high status.³⁸

Document V, the main charter attributed to ^çAmdä Şəyon and Gäbrä Mäsqäl as separate rulers, is more informative and contains some information which can certainly be considered historical. It embraces a list of localities from which Däbrä Ma^çso was supposed to get revenues. However, it is questionable if the geographical background of the charter is indeed that of the fourteenth century, or reflects rather the activity period of the scribe (nineteenth century). Among the toponyms mentioned in the charter many can be easily identified today:

- Däfiḥ Qälay – (used also in documents II and IV), as the place to which the church is affiliated, and probably a variant of the church name: Yoḥannəs Däbrä Ma^çdo is the same as Yoḥannəs Däfiḥ Qälay (or simply Däfiḥ Qälay). This is an old toponym appearing

35 CE IV, 1010: “Ethiopian prelates: Yohannes II”.

36 TADDESSE TAMRAT 1970:100, 102.

37 EAE II, 723b–725b.

38 However, he cannot be identical to the famous ^oabunä ^oIyäsus Mo^oa of Ḥayq ^oƏstifanos (see EAE III, 257b–259a) who, according to the reconstructed chronology, died in 1293, prior to the reign of ^çAmdä Şəyon I and rebellion of Ya^çbikä ^oƏgzi^o, the lord of ^oAmba Sännayti (mentioned in the note as ^oƏnba Sännayt, s. above).

in the notes of the Four Gospels of Däbrä Libanos of Ham³⁹, which was still in use around the middle of the twentieth century;⁴⁰

- ʾAd Ḥəyaw – possibly the same as ʾAd Ḥəyaw Mikaʾel; the exact location is not known, but it must have been not far from the church Mədrä Ruba Šəllase (where it is mentioned in manuscripts) and only a few kilometres away from Däbrä Ma^cšo;
- Mədfa^c Walta – mentioned in a note of the Four Gospels Book of Däbrä Libanos of Ham;⁴¹
- May Dew – today’s church May Čäw Mikaʾel, right at the foot of the flat top mountain (*ʾamba*) of Däbrä Ma^cšo;⁴²
- ʾAd Yəm^cat – probably the same as ʾAddäy Mä^cat Mikaʾel, attested in an *additio* in one of the nineteenth-century books of Däbrä Ma^cšo;
- ʾAd Qəyaḥto – today’s church ʾAddi Qiyah^cto Mikaʾel, at the foot of the mount Däbrä Ma^cšo;
- ʾAd ʾAḥsə^a – obviously the same as ʾAḥsə^a, a historical and archaeological site outside Gulo Mäḵäda, around ʾAdwa;⁴³
- Säglat – an archaeological site, today’s churches Säglat Maryam and Mikaʾel;
- Duḥane – probably the same as Dähane, an archaeological site around the church Fəqada (Foqäda) Maryam (see Fəqada below);⁴⁴
- ʾAd Q^wälq^wal – today’s church ʾAddi Q^wälq^wal Giyorgis;
- ʾƏnbäyto – today’s church ʾƏmbäyto Täklä Haymanot, located close to ʾAddi Q^wälq^wal Giyorgis;
- Fəqada – today’s church Fəqada Maryam, a well-known archaeological site;⁴⁵
- ʾAnbäsät – today’s church ʾAmbäsät Kidanä Məḥrät;
- (Betä) Qirqos – most probably, today’s church ʾUra (ʾOra) Qirqos (with the nearby church ʾUra Mäsqäl), located not far from the border town of Zäla ʾAmbäsa;
- Qärnä Säbär – today’s church Qärsäbär Mikaʾel;
- Wäregena – possibly mentioned in a note of the Four Gospels of Däbrä Libanos of Ham;⁴⁶

39 CONTI ROSSINI 1901:185, no. 2, l. 4.

40 LECLANT – MIQUEL 1959:110; unfortunately, the exact location of this area is difficult to figure out on the basis of the article. It can be the valley at the foot of the *ʾamba* of Däbrä Ma^cšo; today it is also the name of the entire administrative unite, the *wäräda*. In the past, the name Šäfiḥ Qäläy could be applied to both the habitable area on the *ʾamba* and the church (see NOSNITSIN 2012:29, esp. n. 25).

41 CONTI ROSSINI 1901:184, no. 1, ls. 5–6; 219, no. 35, l.10.

42 See also LECLANT – MIQUEL 1959:110.

43 It appears in the hagiography of Libanos (BAUSI 2003, §145, 410) and is mentioned many times in documents collected in the *Liber Axumae* (CONTI ROSSINI 1909; for all references, see BAUSI 2006). The site is known also as a sanctuary of ʾabunä ʾAlef, one of the “Nine Saints” (see BRITA 2010:235–236).

44 ANFRAY 1973:22, map; GODET 1977:50.

45 ANFRAY 1973:22, map; GODET 1977:50.

46 Cp. ʾA ʾamä Rāgenya, CONTI ROSSINI 1901:184, no. 1, l. 6; and very probably Märagän-ya *ibid.*, no. 22, 35 l. 4.

– May Ḍäʿada – probably, today’s May Ḍäʿada ʾArbaʾtu ʾEnsəsa, located in Gulo Mākāda at a considerable distance from Däbrä Maʿšo.

The Ethio-SPaRe project team visited at least ten of the places mentioned in document V and studied their collections, but no proof of the dependency to Däbrä Maʿšo has been found so far.⁴⁷ The claims raised in the note exceed those of the old *additio* 2. However, it is unlikely that Däbrä Maʿšo, a small, poor and hardly accessible local church, was able to control tributaries scattered across a large territory and enjoy all the listed benefits for a considerable period of time, if at all.

We will probably never learn exactly what the legal value of the note was in relation to its alleged original(s) and which historical developments led to the creation of the note. Was the writing initiated by the local political authority or by the local priests only? We may assume that the composition of the note coincided with a short revival of Däbrä Maʿšo which might have taken place in the second half of the nineteenth century. At least two large finely produced manuscripts (the Book of the Rite for the Passion Week, and the Four Gospels) were donated to the church by Səbḥat ʾArägawi, the lord of ʿAgamä.⁴⁸ It happened probably after 1892, since the donation notes style Səbḥat with the high title *ras*. The title was bestowed upon him in 1892 by Mängäša Yoḥannəs, who also confirmed Səbḥat in the office of the governor of ʿAgamä. The local scribe could have written down the note in that context, using perhaps both old records and oral tradition, as an attempt to “revive” the old fame and privileges of Däbrä Maʿšo Yoḥannəs.

It is true that the collection of charters copied by Wäldä Muse is not the most striking sample of the genre. However, it is representative of a significant corpus of Ethiopian documentary texts which are re-elaborations of older documents. Even if the evaluation is difficult and does not always bring conclusive results, such copied documents do contain potentially important data. The methodology when a palaeographical study is combined with a stylistic and historical analysis brings about new aspects. In this case, it was possible to identify palaeographically the scribal hand and thus date the writing with a relative precision.

47 The sites identified and visited are: May Čäw Mikaʿel, ʿAddi Qiyahṭo Mikaʿel, Säglat Maryam/ Mikaʿel, ʿAddi Qʾälqʾal Giyorgis, ʾƏmbäyto Täklä Haymanot, Fäqada Maryam, ʾAmbäsät Kidanä Məḥrät, ʿUra Qirqos/ʿUra Mäsqäl, Qärsäbär Mikaʿel and May Ḍäʿada ʾArbaʾtu ʾEnsəsa. See field reports of the project Ethio-SPaRe online; now also NOSNITSIN 2013b. More place names will possibly be identified in the future, when more manuscripts from Gulo Mākāda have been studied.

48 Ca. 1844–1914, see EAE IV, 587b–589a.

Bibliography

- ANFRAY, F. 1973. "Nouveaux sites antiques", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 11/2, pp. 13–27.
- BAUSI, A. 1994. "Su alcuni manoscritti presso comunità monastiche dell'Eritrea (II)", *Rassegna di studi etiopici* 38, pp. 13–69.
- BAUSI, A. 2001. "Documents Collected During Field Work in Eritrea (1992–94). Dabra Märyām, Dabra Bizan, Dabra Libānos, Dabra Abuna Beḏu'a Amlāk, Dabra Marqorēwos", in: A. BAUSI – G. DORE – I. TADDIA (eds.), *Materiale antropologico e storico sul "rim" in Etiopia ed Eritrea. Anthropological and Historical Documents on "Rim" in Ethiopia and Eritrea*, Torino: L'Harmattan Italia, pp. 141–165.
- BAUSI, A. 2003. *La «Vita» e i «Miracoli» di Libānos* = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 595, 596; Scriptorum Aethiopicum 105, 106, Lovanii: Peeters.
- BAUSI, A. 2006. "Un indice del Liber Aksumae", *Aethiopica: International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies* 9, pp. 102–146.
- BERTRAND, P. – A. WION 2011. "Production, Preservation and Use of Ethiopian Archives", *North East African Studies* 11/2, pp. vii–xvi.
- BRITA, A. 2010. *I racconti tradizionali sulla seconda cristianizzazione dell'Etiopia. Il ciclo agiografico dei Nove Santi* = Studi Africanistici. Serie Etiopica 7, Napoli: Dipartimento di Studi e Ricerche su Africa e Paesi Arabi.
- CE = AZIZ S. ATIYA (ed.) 1991. *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, I–VIII, New York: MacMillan.
- CLEMENS, R. – T. GRAHAM 2007. *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*, Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press.
- COLIN, G. 1986. *Le synaxaire éthiopien. Mois de Maskaram* = Patrologia Orientalis 43/3 [195], Turnhout: Brepols.
- CONTI ROSSINI, C. 1901. "L'Evangelo d'oro di Dabra Libānos", *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* ser. 5^a, 10, pp. 177–219.
- CONTI ROSSINI, C. 1909–10. *Documenta ad illustrandam historiam. Liber Axumae*, I–II = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptorum Aethiopicum Series Altera 24 = Aeth. II, 8, Parisiis: E Typographeo Republicae. Repr. 1962 = Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 58; Scriptorum Aethiopicum 27, Lovanii: Peeters.
- DAVIS, G.R.C. 1958. *Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain: A Short Catalogue*, London – New York – Toronto: Longmans, Green.

- DERAT, M.-L. 2010. "The Zāg^wē Dynasty (11th–13th centuries) and King Yemreḥanna Krestos", *Annales d'Éthiopie* 25, pp. 157–196.
- EAE I–V = UHLIG, S. et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. I: A–C, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003; Vol. II: D–Ha, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005; Vol. III: He–N, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007; Vol. IV: O–X, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010; Vol. V: Y–Z. *Addenda. Corrigenda. Index*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz in press.
- FIACCADORI, G. 2014. "Su un atto di donazione del *nāgus* Lalibāla", *Aethiopica. International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies* 17 (forthcoming).
- FRITSCH, E. 2001. *The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church: the Temporal: Seasons and Sundays = Ethiopian Review of Cultures*, Special issue IX–X, Addis Ababa: Master Printing Press.
- GODET, É. 1977. "Répertoire de sites pré-axoumites et axoumites du Tigré (Éthiopie)", *Abbay. Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la civilisation éthiopienne* 8, pp. 19–113.
- GUIDI, I. 1906. *Le synaxaire éthiopien. Les mois de Sanê, Hamlê et Nahasê*, I: *Mois de Sanê* = *Patrologia Orientalis* 1/5 [5], Paris: Firmin Didot.
- HABTAMU MENGISTIE 2004. *Lord, Zèga and Peasant: a Study of Property and Agrarian Relations in Eastern Gojjam* = Forum for Social Studies monograph series 1, Addis Ababa: OSSREA.
- HUNTINGFORD, G.W.B. 1965. *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia* = Monographs in Ethiopian Land Tenure 1, Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies.
- HUNTINGFORD, G.W.B. 1989. *The Historical Geography of Ethiopia. From the First Century AD to 1704*, ed. by R. PANKHURST = Union Académique Internationale. *Fontes historiae Africanæ ser. varia* 4, London: British Academy.
- KANE, T.L. 1990. *Amharic–English Dictionary*, I–II, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- KANE, T.L. 2000. *Tigrinya–English Dictionary*, I–II, Springfield, VA: Dunwoody Press.
- KROPP, M. 2004. "Four G^welt Documents of 'Amdä Şeyon from the Archive of the Church of Däbrä Egziabeher-Ab on Amba Geshe (with an additional note on the name Bätärgelä Maryam)", *Afrique & histoire* 2, pp. 213–232.
- KROPP, M. 2005. "«Antiquae restitutio legis». Zur Alimentation des Hofklerus und einer Zeugenliste als imago imperii und notitia dignitatum in einer Urkunde des Kaisers Zär'a Ya'eqob im Condaghe der Hs. BM Or. 481,

- fol. 154”, in: D. NOSNITSIN (ed.), *Varia Aethiopica. In Memory of Sevir B. Chernetsov (1943–2005) = Scrinium. Revue de patrologie, d’hagiographie critique et d’histoire ecclésiastique* 1, St. Petersburg: Byzantinorossica, pp. 115–147.
- LdM = *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, I–IX, München: LexMA-Verlag, 1988ff. (Online version: Turnhout: Brepols, 2009).
- LECLANT, J. – A. MIQUEL 1959. “Reconnaissances dans l’Agamé: Goulo-Makeda et Sabéa (Octobre 1955 et Avril 1956)”, *Annales d’Éthiopie* 3, pp. 108–131.
- LESLAU, W. 1987. *Comparative Dictionary of Ge^çez (Classical Ethiopic): Ge^çez – English / English – Ge^çez with an Index of the Semitic Roots*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- NOSNITSIN, D. 2007. “Historical Records from Ethiopia: A Trilingual Document from Aṣbi Däbrä Gännät Səllase, Təgray”, in: *Proceedings of the Workshop “European Schools of Ethiopian Studies; Poland & Germany” October 18–20, 2006 = Studies of the Department of African Languages and Cultures* 41, Warsaw: Warsaw University, pp. 17–47.
- NOSNITSIN, D. 2011. “The Manuscript Collection of Däbrä Ma^çso Qəddus Yoḥannəs (Tigray, Ethiopia): a First Assessment”, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* 1, pp. 24–27.
- NOSNITSIN, D. 2012. “The Four Gospel Book of Däbrä Ma^çso and its Marginal Notes. Part 1: Note on the Commemoration of Patriarch ʾAstona”, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* 4, pp. 13–20.
- NOSNITSIN, D. 2013a, “The Four Gospel Book of Däbrä Ma^çso and its Marginal Notes. Part 2: An Exercise in Ethiopian Palaeography”, *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* 6, pp. 29–33.
- NOSNITSIN, D. 2013b, *Churches and Monasteries of Təgray. A Survey of Manuscript Collections = Supplement to Aethiopica* 1, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- PANKHURST, R. 1969. “A Preliminary History of Ethiopian Measures Weights and Values (part 2)”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 7/2, pp. 99–164.
- TADDESSE TAMRAT 1970. “The Abbots of Däbrä Hayq 1248–1535”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 8/1, pp. 87–117.