

New Branches of the Stephanite Monastic Network? Cases of Some Under-Explored Sites in East Təgray

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In the last few decades, considerable attention has been paid to the study of the so-called Stephanites (᾿Ἐστίφανοσιτες), the monastic movement of the adherents of the fifteenth-century ᾿*abunä* ᾿Ἐστίφανος. A remarkable phenomenon in Ethiopian history, the movement left a large historical and literary heritage. Significant progress has been made in reconstructing the main events in the history of the movement. The most important figures have been identified, and the theological doctrine has been discussed in detail. A number of works belonging to the Stephanite literary heritage have been studied or published, especially the *Vitae* of the abbots and prominent monks of the famous monastery Gundä Gunde, the center of the movement.¹ As it often happens, however, in the discussion on the Stephanites some issues have attracted much attention, while others, not unimportant for the understanding of the history and character of the movement, have been hardly attended to, sometimes remaining nearly completely neglected. Of these, I would like to point out two issues of the “Stephanite studies” that, in my opinion, require deeper research.

The first issue is the lack of studies on the “post-conflict” history of the Stephanites and Gundä Gunde. Thus, the developments from ca. mid-sixteenth century onward remain practically unknown. It is understandable that the active, open phase of the confrontation between the Stephanites on the one side and the rest of the Church and Ethiopian kings on the other side has been receiving the largest share of scholarly attention. However, a quick look

1 Providing here a complete list of all relevant publications is pointless. The Stephanite movement was considered as important phenomenon of the Ethiopia’s religious history already in the early period of Ethiopian studies. Foundations were laid by such Italian scholars as Carlo Conti Rossini, Enrico Cerulli, with the most important study of Gundä Gunde by Antonio Mordini. Later, significant contributions (editions, essays) were provided by such scholars as André Caquot, Robert Beylot, Stanislaw Kur, Aleksander Ferenc, Marilyn Heldman, Steven Kaplan and others. Also prominent Ethiopian scholars contributed to the topic, including Taddäsä Tamrat and Getaččäw Həyale; furthermore, Gigar Täsfay and esp. posthumously published GERMA ᾿ELYAS 2000 A.M. (see the recent overview in the relevant articles of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, esp. EAE II:390a–91b [“Ἐστίφανος”], 917a–21b [“Gundä Gunde”]; III:746b–49a [“Stephanites”], etc.). Finally, the manuscript collection of Gundä Gunde has been recently digitized on behalf of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) and its catalogue, hopefully, will appear in the next years.

through the history is enough to see that the conflict only covers a relatively short period – even though perhaps the brightest and the most productive – in the history of Gundä Gunde and the Stephanites. After the reconciliation with the Church and State during the reign of King Naʿod (r. 1494-1508), the memory of the unjust persecutions especially against ʾabunä ʾḤṣṭifanos was not cancelled but became part of Gundä Gunde’s “modern” identity and monastic culture. At a certain point after the reconciliation, the Stephanite monastic movement obviously changed its former “militant” character and strict organization, and got transformed into a loose network of communities affiliated to the main monastery, in the way not much different from other big monasteries of Ethiopia. The change, however, was not the end of the cultural tradition of the Stephanite movement. Rather the opposite: the monastery remained an important religious and cultural centre on the regional level at least (ʿAgamä).² Having absorbed the old heritage, the “cultural tradition of Gundä Gunde” lived forth and exerted significant spiritual and cultural influence on North Ethiopia.

The second issue is that, despite a relatively large amount of published sources concerning the Stephanites, we still have a very approximate idea of the geographic extent of the movement at its different stages, and, consequently, no clear understanding of its cultural and political embedding. One of the first attempts at providing data on the issue is the 1979 short article by Gigar Täsfa.³ He was the first to identify several “Stephanite places” previously unknown as such,⁴ and indicated a few others that have been reported in the Stephanite hagiographies.⁵ Also he was the first, to my knowledge, to

2 There is no information to what extent, and if at all, the monastery participated in the political events. References to Gundä Gunde in published historical sources are very rare, even though, e.g., a short story of Gäbrä Mäsiḥ – a contemporary of *däggazmač* Säbagadis (d. 1831) and King ʾIyoʿas II (r. 1801–21), sent to Gondär and eventually appointed head of a monastery outside Tägray (CONTI ROSSINI 1917:59 text, 120 tr., ch. 41) – hints to a certain importance of Gundä Gunde and its heads.

3 GIGAR TESFAY 1979.

4 Unfortunately, the sources he used cannot be readily retrieved and counterchecked today. The sites, such as Kuhule Golo, Endelit Af, Amidale Daga, Maʿadar Daga (GIGAR TESFAY 1979:96–97), obviously of great historical interest, are distant and hardly accessible areas deep inside the ʾIrobländ. I raised the question of those churches in the interviews I conducted during my research stay in Gundä Gunde in 2006, but the response was that they all are now deserted, and the *tabots* were brought to Gundä Gunde. No further investigation has been so far possible; to my knowledge, these sites are not mentioned in any Stephanite source, and their role in the movement will possibly never be clarified.

5 E.g., “Yibara, Tafat, Bareka”, which were ʾḤṣṭifanosite communities (before the foundation of Gundä Gunde) mentioned in the Vita of ʾAbäkäräzun (GIGAR TESFAY

highlight the roles of ʾAsir Mätira Maryam⁶ and Dibo Maryam, big monastic communities closely associated with the ʾƏstifanosites. Both are located in the area known today as *wäräda* Kələttä ʾAwlaʿlo, far away from Gundä Gunde. The history of ʾAsir Mätira, if once disentangled, will shed light on important episodes of the history of North Ethiopia.⁷ So far, no material has

1979:95, referring further to TADDESSE TAMRAT 1966:107, n.1). Indeed, according to the Vita of ʾAbäkäräzun, under King Yəshaq ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos and his disciples, including ʾAbäkäräzun himself, went to Yəbara and later proceeded to ʾafat (CONTI ROSSINI 1910:13, 15 text, 12, 13 tr.; the last place being the same as May ʾafat, Getatchew Haile 2011:18 text, 14 tr.). Still later they went to a margin of Sire (Šire), an area called Bäräka (Conti Rossini 1910:15 text, 13 tr.), and thereafter migrated elsewhere. In accordance with the Vita of ʾAbäkäräzun, the Vita of ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos tells that, having left Däbrä Qoyäša (Qʾäyäša), he established a community at an unknown location near Takkäze, i.e. in Šire, from where he and his followers were chased away after a while (GETATCHEW HAILE 2006:25 text, 21 tr., here, the name of the major disciple of ʾƏstifanos is Gäbrä Krəstos). The sources recount the establishment of Stephanite communities or monastic settlements (called *maḥdär*). These settlements were possibly only temporarily abodes; in any case, no traces of them were later noticed, and nothing is known about Stephanite presence in Šire in the later period (e.g., not even a slight hint in the important study by ELLERO 1941).

- 6 First mentioned in PLANT 1973:38–39, but without any reference to the Stephanites.
- 7 Cp. the important information in HELDMAN 1989:11–12; s. also the article “Asir Mätira” in EAE V. I visited the community in 2005, again in 2006 and on several occasions later. Today, ʾAsir (Däbrä ʿAlama) Mätira is a nunnery that has been headed in the recent years by the energetic ʾabba Gäbrä Mädhən. The extensive library of the community includes a late fifteenth/early sixteenth-century manuscript with the Vita of ʾabunä ʾAbäkäräzun (AM-017) in a version different from the one published by CONTI ROSSINI 1910, and an illuminated and finely written sixteenth-century (?) manuscript containing the Vita of ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos and other works (not used by Getatchew Haile in his 2006 edition; it is most probably not the “manuscript S” whose whereabouts remained unknown to the editor, s. GETATCHEW HAILE 2006:v, no. 17 [text]). Here is a summary of the content of the manuscript (AM-010/C3-IV-364):
 - fols. 4r–107v, the Vita of ʾƏstifanos;
 - fols. 108r–116r, treatise *Məṣḥafä qalä bäqʿet lä-zä-yäʾamən batti...*;
 - fol. 116v, treatise *Bäʾəntä Maryam kämäzə wəʾətu əmnätənä...*;
 - fols. 129r–136r, treatise *Bäʾəntä mä[s]qälä wəḥəd...*
 - fols. 136r–137v, marginal note by a recent hand: Genealogy of the monks of Gundä Gunde from St. Anthony until recent time (the last three lines are effaced; the last readable name is Gäbrä Mäsiḥ) and list of feasts;
 - fols. 138r–143v, portion of a text written by the main hand, probably a misplaced quire of the aforementioned treatise (*Bäʾəntä Maryam...*)
 - Miniatures, in the typical “Gundä Gunde style”: fol. 1v, ʾabunä ʾAbäkäräzun; fol. 2r, an Evangelist; fol. 2v, St. George; fol. 3r, The Virgin and Child; fol. 3v, ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos.

All texts from the manuscript were published in 1986 A.M. (1993/94 A.D.) under the

been published on Dibo Maryam, a big monastery located not far from ʾAsir Mātira. Apart from them, the areas Desʿa (Däsʿa) and Mānbārta⁸ are also mentioned in ʾEṣṭifanosite sources.⁹ The recent, posthumously published book of Gərma ʾElyas lists 33 Stephanite sites,¹⁰ of which 23, mostly in the Desʿa and Mānbārta regions, are said to have been destroyed during the fifteenth century, under the Kings Zārʾa Yaʿqob (Dəbb Šār) and Bāʾədä Maryam (ʾAdmas Bā-Šār). All the data underline the complexity of the Stephanite network and suggest, at least for the fifteenth-sixteenth century, a function of Gundä Gunde and the neighbouring areas (the habitat of ʾIrob people) as the protected, remote “retreat place” of the movement, whereas more active social and political (“external”) roles were assigned to the communities located in other parts of Təgray, like Desʿa and Mānbārta. However, only a few of those sites are explicitly mentioned in the Stephanite hagiographic works, and their true historical role remains to be clarified. The Stephanite hagiography speaks a lot about monks exiled to distant areas of Ethiopia but does not provide much tangible information helping us to understand how the Stephanites were organized and settled in the real landscape of North Ethiopia, and what were, apart from Gundä Gunde, the core and periphery areas the movement. It is even more difficult, then, to reconcile the information obtained from the written sources with the observations made on the ground, and create a dynamic historical picture of the monastic movement

title *Gädlä ʾabunä ʾEṣṭifanos zä-ʾAsira Mātira gädam*, ed. by the community of Däbrä ʿAlama ʾAsira Mātira. The community of ʾAsir Mātira reiterates its historical link to ʾabunä ʾEṣṭifanos and Gundä Gunde, but today stresses its independence from the latter, and its Orthodoxy. ʾabunä ʾEṣṭifanos is remembered mainly as the holy monk unjustly accused and tortured; his teaching is understood in the first line as the commitment to full self-subsistence.

8 GIGAR TESFAYE 1979:97–98.

9 Desʿa (or, rather, an unnamed church or monastery in that area), according to the Vita of ʾIsayyāyyas, was the place where ʾabunä ʾAbäkärāzun was buried, and where a monastic community (or communities) existed in the sixteenth century (FERENC 1976:250, 252 text, 276, 278 tr.). The mother of ʾabunä ʿEzra, an abbot of Gundä Gunde who preceded ʾIsayyāyyas, was for a while married to a noble man from Desʿa (here Dusʿa, CAQUOT 1961:72 text, 94 tr., s. also 118). According to the information received from the Tigray Culture and Tourism Agency, today Desʿa is the name of the forested area around ʾAsir Mātira and Dibo Maryam, and the local tradition confirms the historical presence the ʾEṣṭifanosite monks there. Mānbārta is a region adjacent to Desʿa, both in the twentieth century are parts of the Kələttä ʾAwlaʿlo ʾawraḡḡa. The present *wäräda* Mānbārta (or, today, Wāmbārta) hosts both ʾAsir Mātira and Dibo Maryam, possibly reflecting the historical geography of the area.

10 GERMA ʾELYAS 2000 A.M.:128.

with an ever changing character and network area.¹¹

During the field missions of the Ethio-SPaRe team in 2010-12,¹² a considerable amount of information was collected exactly to the question of scope and nature of the Stephanite presence and influence in East Təgray, in particular in the *wärādas* Gulo Mākāda and Ganta ʾAfäšum. The work of the project was not specifically aimed at looking for the historical traces of the Stephanites. However, inspecting ecclesiastic libraries, the team came across numerous hints as to the historical connections that various churches and monasteries of northeast Təgray entertained with Gundä Gunde. Below, I offer the first presentation and evaluation of the evidence.

Maryam Ḥarenāt Gäbäzäyti

The church Maryam Ḥarenāt Gäbäzäyti is located to the south-east from ʿAddigrat, closest to Gundä Gunde of all sites discussed in this paper.¹³ The present church building is not more than 70 years old, but the foundation appears to be of considerable age, as witnessed by the extensive and heterogeneous church library. To my knowledge, the name of the church does not feature in any old sources.

The main evidence proving the connection of Maryam Ḥarenāt Gäbäzäyti to Gundä Gunde comes from the old “Golden Gospel” book of the church (registered by the project as MHG-004), an impressive illuminated Four Gospel manuscript from the first half of the sixteenth century. At the time of the

¹¹ Below, I have deliberately reduced to a minimum the discussion about the so-called Gundä Gunde (“Stephanite”) style in Ethiopian manuscript painting, launched by the important contribution by HELDMAN (1989). One reason for that is that, during the last two decades, a lot of new material has become available which will probably compel us to reconsider the conclusions concerning the Gundä Gunde style. Another reason is that the analysis of the pictorial material lies outside my competence (I thank Verena Krebs, a PhD student from the University of Konstanz, for consulting me in issues related to art). Finally, the material collected by the team corroborated Heldman’s remark concerning the lack of strict homogeneity in Gundä Gunde style, also in the miniatures in the manuscripts at Gundä Gunde (HELDMAN 1989:9). It seems that what is defined as “Gundä Gunde style” had a core and very vague margins, with samples scattered far outside the area of the Stephanites and obviously not always linked to Gundä Gunde or Stephanite circles. That is why, below, the pictorial material is used only if the conclusions can be supported by additional evidence from written sources.

¹² To make the picture complete, in this article I have decided to complement the information used for the 2011 workshop paper by incorporating some relevant data collected during the field missions in 2012.

¹³ For a brief summary on the general situation of the sites and preliminary evaluation of their libraries, s. the project’s field mission reports (available from <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/ethiostudies/ETHIOSPARE/missions.html>).

examination, the manuscript was in poor condition but complete.¹⁴

We do not know exactly what type of Four Gospel books were circulating in Gundä Gunde and the Stephanites circles in the fifteenth–sixteenth centuries. According to different sources, there are at least three Four Gospel manuscripts in Gundä Gunde, described by Jules Leroy as nos. VIII (A), IX (B), and X (C).¹⁵ Recently, a fourth (illuminated) Four Gospel book from Gundä Gunde book emerged, being a 1998 acquisition of the Walters Museum (USA).¹⁶ As compared to those manuscripts, MHG-004 shows remarkable similarity to no. VIII (A) in arrangement and execution of the Canon tables (fig. 15 of Leroy’s article, second and third tables [cp. fig. 1]), and also in the style of (at least some of) the miniatures (cp. the Apostles of no. VIII published in HELDMAN 1989, fig. 11, right, with the respective miniature of MHG-004, fol. 22v [fig. 2]), though also demonstrates somewhat inferior quality of execution.¹⁷ A detailed comparison of the other miniatures, the texts and handwritings attested in the manuscripts is not possible for the moment;¹⁸ if written by the same hand as one of those attested in Gundä Gunde Gospel books this would be the strongest argument in favour of a Gundä Gunde provenance for MHG-004.

A strong argument in favour of a sixteenth-century relation between Maryam Harenät Gäbäzyti and Gundä Gunde comes from two additional notes included in the Gospel book, placed in fol. 14v [fig. 3], after the part of the Ethiopic Four Gospel introduction known as the “Synopsis of Classes”

14 Many leaves bear traces of extensive rodent damage (though the text has been fortunately spared). The original binding was missing, possibly as a result of an unlucky restoration attempt in the course of which nearly all quires were reinforced by parchment guards. Thanks to this measure, however, none of its 279 folia, including those with illuminations, has been lost. The precarious state of the manuscript makes me believe that we may have made it just on time to fully record it.

15 If the manuscripts (Leroy 1962, nos. VIII, IX, X) were among those still in Gundä Gunde in 2006, they were fully digitized by Michael Gervers and Ewa Balicka-Witakowska for HMML; there are hopes that the descriptions of those manuscripts will follow soon (<http://www.hmml.org/preservation10/GG.htm>).

16 A full set of images and a description of the manuscript are now available on-line: <http://www.thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W850/> (visited on 15 July 2012). The dating of the manuscript to the early/mid-sixteenth century as well as the attribution of the Gospel book to the “scriptorium of Gundä Gunde” are supported by the colophon, as well as by the style of handwriting and miniatures (s. the description on-line; also MANN 2001, 2004, esp. 104–07, cat. 14).

17 It is thus possible that MHG-004 was an “inferior copy” made from the main exemplar preserved in Gundä Gunde for an affiliated institution.

18 As a first observation, the hands attested in W.850 and MHG-004 can be characterized as similar though not identical. The style of the miniatures is not very close.

(*Bäʾantä həbrätä qalat zäʿarbaʿtu wängelat...*).

One note is a traditional inventory of holy utensils and books:

[Fol. 14va] ንዋሃ : ቅድሳት : መጻሕፍት : ዘጊደሬ : ወዘ : ፈልፈል : ሻወጀአልባስ : ፫መንጠዋልዕ
ት : ወ፫ጻሕል : ፫<...>ጽዋዕ : ወጀማዕጠንት : ወዕርፈ : መስቀልሂ : ጅወጀ : ቃጽል : ጀመስቀል : ጂመ
ሐፍድ : ጀወንጌል : ጀጽላት : ጀግብረ : ሕማት [sic] : ጀሲፍ [fol. 14vb] ዶስ : ወጀገድለ : ሐርያት :
ወዘተርፈሂ : መጻሕፍት : ፫ወክሉ : ድመር : ፹(፯)፯ : ወጀማሕተም : ወተጽሕፈት : ዛቲ : መጽሐ
ፍ : በመዋዕለ : ዮሐንስ : ወንጌላዊ : ፫፻፳ ዓመተ : ምኅረት : አመ : ዓሰሩ : ወጀለወርኅ : ጥር : በ
ዘመኑ : ለተክለ : ነቢያት : አቡነ :

[Fol. 14va]: (Here is the list of) the sacred utensils and books of Gudäre and Fälfäl. 41 vestments, 3 curtains, 3 patens, 70 chalices, 2 incense burner, and processional crosses 5, and 2 bells, 4 crosses, 7 veils,¹⁹ 2 Gospel books, 2 altar tablets, 4 Rites of the Passion Week, 1 Sino[fol. 14vb]dos, 4 Acts of the Apostles, and the rest of the books are 10. And all are in number 8{9}7. And 4 seals (for Eucharistic bread). And this book/writing was written in the time of John the Evangelist, 7020 year of mercy, on 17 *Tərr*, in the days of our father Täklä Näbiyat.

The handwriting of the inventory is not recent, and is comparable in age with the hand of the main text. The inventory is well understandable, even though the overall number 87 (or 97?) does not meet the preceding calculation (resulting in number 21). However, this is a usual problem of such inventories. Two different names, Gudäre and Fälfäl, can be hardly explained in the local context at present. These might be names of related churches which had possessed the book for an undefined period of time before it was brought to Maryam Harenät Gäbäzäyti. Also, they might be historical names of Harenät Gäbäzäyti or its related institutions.

The collection of Harenät Gäbäzäyti in its present shape significantly differs from the one described in the inventory.²⁰ The words “And this book was written...” can be understood in two different ways, depending on the translation of the word *mäṣḥaf*, “book” or, more general, “writing”. Both interpretations are possible. If the author intended the first meaning, the note should be considered as colophon referring to the date when the manuscript was completed. If he intended the second meaning, the date refers only to the year when the inventory was written. In any case, the date it contains is the “year of mercy” 7020 which is equivalent to 1528 A.D.²¹ As to Täklä Näbiyat

¹⁹ Seen in the opposition to number “2”, appearing in the document below, I think this sign should be interpreted as “70”, even though the total number seems incorrect (3 patens but 70 chalices!).

²⁰ Today, the collection has no more than 30–35 books, and neither *Senodos* nor Acts of the Apostles (a few older manuscripts have certainly gone lost over the last decades).

²¹ CHAÎNE 1925:164. The expression in “the days of John” should be probably understood as “in the year of John”, and 1520 A.D. is indeed the year of John.

mentioned in the document, he might be identical with the sixteenth-century head of Gundä Gunde of that name. According to the chronology of the abbots of Gundä Gunde reconstructed by Mordini, ʾabunä Täklä Näbiyat was in tenure for approximately 23 years;²² he succeeded Habtä Šəllase in around 1531 and was succeeded by ʾIsayyāyyas in approximately 1554.²³ If we accept the chronology, a small gap of three years remains, but it seems to be an acceptable imperfection, if we consider that the list of the heads of Gundä Gunde used by Mordini, a nineteenth-century product of the local monastic historiography, can hardly be considered a perfectly accurate source.²⁴

The second note, following the inventory, is a *qəne*-poem.²⁵ It is written by a hand that is later than and much different from that of the inventory. The handwriting of this type could be attested in some eighteenth to nineteenth-century manuscripts from East Təgray, characterized by small, slender, broadly spaced letters, with relatively weak shading (in the additional notes notably less careful than in main texts).

The poem indeed comes close to the form of *qəne* known as ʿəṭanä mogär (for ʿəzəl chanting mode), though it does not exactly fit the pattern of the known samples.²⁶ Praising the monastery of Däbrä Kaswa, i.e., Gundä Gunde, the author, a certain Zä-Maryam, does not use the particularly complicated language or “wax and gold” techniques, yet, as it is usual in the case of *qəne*, it is difficult to tell if it has been possible to fully understand all the connotations of the poem. Speaking of the arrival of a “killer”, i.e. a strong and brave warrior or warlord, the author might have had in mind a historical episode that took place at Gundä Gunde and thus was known only to a nar-

22 MORDINI 1953:59.

23 Cp. EAE III:196b. For the moment, the only published source mentioning Täklä Näbiyat is the Vita of ʾIsayyāyyas (FERENC 1976:250, 256 text, 276–78, 283 tr.); which gives his death date as 17 *Mäskäräm* (14 September), “the feast of the Cross”. However, in the collection of Gundä Gunde, an (unpublished) Vita of Täklä Näbiyat is contained in the same manuscript as the Vita of ʾAbäkäräzun (GG-001). The Vita narrates about stays of Täklä Näbiyat outside Gundä Gunde; e.g., Lakma (fols. 12v–13r, 16v–17r), Däbrä Sahl (fol. 38rb), Mänbärta (fol. 45vb, 46vb; cp. ʾadbarä Desʾa wä-Mänbärta, fol. 21va), Dibo (fol. 50ra, cp. fol. 31va), and also at some unspecified place(s) in ʿAgame (fols. 34vb, 46ra, 52rb). According to the Vita, he died on 23 *Näḥase* in an unnamed place (fol. 54rb; the date is different from the one mentioned in the Vita of ʾIsayyāyyas).

24 EAE II:917b.

25 Contrary to what is commonly said about the *qəne*-poetry, a short look through the manuscript catalogues suffices to see that such poems were indeed recorded, from time to time, and that this practice is not very recent. In the case of the note, a less common feature is that both its authorship and its poetic shape are explicitly indicated.

26 E.g., SCHALL 1961:108–10, 115–18, 121.

row circle of the people.²⁷ However, an intrinsic connection the poet had to Gundä Gunde cannot be doubted, and we can be sure assuming that it was not by chance that the *qəne*-poem telling about Gundä Gunde was included in the manuscript.²⁸ Herewith the text and the tentative translation of the poem are provided:

<p>[Fol. 14va] {ፊጣነ፡ ሞገር} ዝቅኔ፡ ዘዘማርያም፡</p> <p>1. ፩ዝሀር፡ ዕቡዮ፡ ልብ፡ ቀታሊ፡</p> <p>2. እንዘ፡ ገይሰ፡ ያሌሊ፡</p> <p>3. ደብረ፡ ወሉተ፡ ጽዮን፡ አመ፡ ዓርገ፡</p> <p>4. እምኖኖተ፡ ሞአብ፡ ወኢሎ፡ ፍሊ፡</p> <p>5. እንዘ፡ ግዑረ፡ ሰብ፡ ይጸሊ፡</p> <p>6. ንበ፡ ፈጣሪሁ፡ ሕዝቅያስ፡ እንዘ፡ ኢምንተኒ፡ ይሄሊ፡</p> <p>7. ተዝካረ፡ ረሰዮ፡ ለኩሉ፡ መሐሊ፡</p> <p>8. ዘትሊዓሊ፡ በጽድቅ፡ ደብረ፡ ካስዋ፡ እምደብተራ፡ አሮን፡ ወደብረ፡ ኤሊ፡ #</p> <p>9. ባሕቱ፡ ይበልኪ፡ ቃለ፡ ፈጣሪ፡ ከሃሊ፡ #</p> <p>10. በዘባነ፡ እጥሮስ፡ ወጳውሎስ፡ ቆሚ፡ ወታንቀልቅሊ፡</p> <p>11. እስከ፡ ግብር፡ ይማስን፡ ወይበሊ፡ #</p> <p>{ፊጣነ፡ ሞገር}</p>	<p>[Fol. 14va] {፫፻፲፭ ሞገር} this is a <i>qəne</i> of Zä-Maryam.</p> <p>One man, a killer with arrogant heart, Being underway, separated (from his way), When he ascended the mount of the Daughter of Zion, From the road of Moab and Philistines, Crying, while he was praying To his Creator (like) Hezekiah, without intending anything, He made a reminder for everyone who swears, That Däbrä Kaswa exceeds in the righteousness the tent of Aaron and the mount Eli, But the word of the mighty Creator might say to you (Däbrä Kaswa), “On the back of Peter and Paul stand, (not) shaking, Until the creation has grown old and vanished!”</p>
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Kidanä Məhrät Däbrä Gännät Mäḵod‘ä

Kidanä Məhrät Mäḵod‘ä (also Mäḵod‘e, Mäkod‘e) *gädam* is one of the few monastic communities active in East Təgray. Difficult to access, it is located under the same rocky escarpment as the well-known rock-hewn church of Qi‘at,²⁹ a few kilometres away. Kidanä Məhrät Mäḵod‘ä does not feature, to my knowledge, in any sources. By the time of the visit of the team, a small monastic community with less than 10 members was struggling for survival.

²⁷ The expression **ዘባነ፡ እጥሮስ፡ ወጳውሎስ**, “the back of Peter and Paul” may refer to the mountain slope on which the monastic settlement stands (see pictures in MORDINI 1953, fig. 2; for a contemporary view, s. EAE II:919); “Daughter of Zion” is St. Mary, to whom the main monastic church is dedicated. Also the author “hides” the meaning reversing the order of the initial lines in the stanza, which must be rather 1-2-4-3-5.

²⁸ The precise circumstances will be forever hidden from the scholars; as pure speculation, we could assume that the occasion might have been a solemn event on which the liturgy was celebrated and followed by reciting *qəne*-poetry (cp. FRITSCH 2001:236).

²⁹ LEPAGE – MERCIER 2005:126–29.

Local tradition does not specify the time when the monastic community was first established. The two oldest books of the monastic library are the *Miracles of Mary* (project number GKM-004) and a collection of the Marian texts (GKM-018), the first dating to 1520–26,³⁰ the second, broadly, to the sixteenth century. The monastery seems to have flourished particularly in the late seventeenth and/or first decades of the eighteenth century, since a substantial number of books of the collection date to this period.³¹

The most important witness of the historical relation between the Gundä Gunde and Kidanä Məhrät Mäḳod^cä is a manuscript containing hagiographic works devoted to ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase. According to the aforementioned chronology of the abbots of Gundä Gunde, *məmhər* Mäzgäbä Šəllase took over the office after the death of Samuʾel around 1650 and died around 1703 (i.e., during the reign of ʾIyasu I [1682–1706]) after being in office for an exceptionally long period of time.³² It seems that it was precisely Mäzgäbä Šəllase's tenure that was a productive and even formative period for the community of Gundä Gunde.³³

30 King Ləbnä Dəngəl (r. 1508–40) and the Metropolitan ʾabunä Marqos (in tenure 1520–26) feature in the colophon (fol. 186).

31 Names of many individuals mentioned in the subscriptions produce, however, an impression that most of the books entered the monastic library in a dispersed way and not as a single donation made by one person. Among the manuscripts to mention are: GKM-005, the “Golden Gospel” of the monastery, apparently from the late seventeenth century; GKM-008, *Commentary on Hebrews by John Chrysostom*, second half of the seventeenth century–first half of the eighteenth century; GKM-001, *Spiritual Elder*, dated to 1684 A.D.; GKM-022, *Missal* (unfortunately, only a fragment of the finely written manuscript has survived), the time of King Fasilädäs (r. 1632–67), donated by *fitawrari* ʾAbbay; GKM-003, *Zəmmare*, *Məwəṣṣət*, *Məʾraf*, by a similar of same hand as GKM-001, late seventeenth century; GKM-009 and GKM-011, two parts of the Synaxarion, written in Gondär by different hands, in the time of Kings ʾIyasu I (r. 1682–1702) and Yoṣṭos (r. 1711–16), commissioned and brought to Mäḳod^cä by a certain Mäzmurä Dəngəl, who also left an unusually extensive and emotional donation note (fol. 191vc). A note in the Golden Gospel (GKM-005) indicates the number of the manuscripts in the monastic library as 37 (fol. 2r). Ms. GKM-008 (*Commentary on Hebrews*) also contains a short note telling that “the number of the books of Däbrä Gännät Mäkanä Qəddəst Kidanä Məhrät is 47” (fol. 156vc).

32 MORDINI 1953:57–58, 59.

33 According to the local Gundä Gunde tradition, some important structures were built in the monastic compound during his office, including the system of storage rooms and a house for meetings and common meals of the community, *mərfäqiya* (here, the monks until now show the place Mäzgäbä Šəllase is said to have set upon presiding over the gatherings, and where he died). Under Mäzgäbä Šəllase, Gundä Gunde is said to have received *gʷəlt*-land. A significant number of manuscripts in the monastic library was written during his tenure, as it was noticed by the author when he was assisting

Mäzgäbä Šəllase is listed in Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke's well-known register of saints and hagiographic works.³⁴ However, no further information has been available on Mäzgäbä Šəllase's actual historical role and the scale of his veneration until recently.³⁵ The Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, an informative and complex text, must have been written in Gundä Gunde soon after his death, and was followed by a few other hagiographic compositions. The Vita is different from the early Gundä Gunde hagiography inasmuch as it is not centred on persecutions and martyrdom (the Synaxarion version is shorter, dropping many details and presenting some others in a different way).

Until recently, the main reference source for his hagiography had been the manuscript from the collection of Gundä Gunde containing Mäzgäbä Šəllase's hagiographic dossier, no. 116 of Mordini's list³⁶ (digitized in 2006 as GG-011). Since the manuscript is central for the following discussion and is most probably the source of the entire textual tradition of Mäzgäbä Šəllase's hagiography, here follows its short description:

in digitization of the monastic collection when he had an opportunity to check most of the books (the observation to be confirmed or modified by means of the thorough description of the Gundä Gunde manuscripts).

34 KINEFE-RIGB ZELLEKE 1975, no. 114, styling Mäzgäbä Šəllase as a "member of the Stephanite community", and mentioning two sites, "Feqada, 'Agamä" (cp. n. 48 below); and "Addi Qohayn, Eritrea" (the information on the second site has not been confirmed so far).

35 I have been collecting and systemizing the available information on Mäzgäbä Šəllase since the stay in Gundä Gunde in 2006. I authored a brief entry in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (EAE III:893a–94a) and presented the hagiographic tradition of this saint in more detail on two occasions, in 2007 (*Abunä Mäzgäbä Sellase: a 17th century builder of the monastery of Gundä Gunde, Tegray*, paper read at the conference "Materialities of Medieval Ethiopia", School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) and in 2008 (*Vita of Mäzgäbä Sellase of Gundä Gunde as historical source and literary work*, public lecture during the competition for professorship in Ethiopian Studies, Asia-Africa Institute, Hamburg University). I am currently preparing the Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase for publication.

36 MORDINI 1953:50. Today, it is one of the most illustrious items in the collection of Gundä Gunde.

GG-011

Physical features:

Parchment codex, 19.3 x 18 x 6 cm; 90 fols. in 13 quires (composite).

Content:

1st production unit:

Fols. 15ra-59rb: Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (the standard long version).

Fols. 60ra-72rb: Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (the short version which is included in one of the Synaxarions of Gundä Gunde, GG-167, fols. 45v-46r).³⁷

Fols. 72rb: Short *səlam*-hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase.

2nd production unit:

Fols. 77ra-81rba: *Mälkə*-hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase.

Fols. 81rb-81vb: *Səlam*-hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase.

Fols. 82ra-89ra: *Mälkə*-hymn for ʾƏstifanos.

Miniatures:

1) fol. 1v, ʾ**abunä** Təklä Haymanot and ʾ**abunä** ʾƏstifanos; 2) fol. 2v, ʾ**abunä** ʾAbäkərazun and ʾ**abunä** Gäbrä Məsiḥ; 3) fol. 3v, ʾ**abunä** ʾEwostəwos and ʾ**abunä** Barsoma; 4) fol. 4v, ʾ**abunä** Bärtəlomewos and ʾ**abunä** Habtä Šəllase; 5) fol. 5r, ʾ**abunä** Təklä Näbiyat and ʾ**abunä** ʾIsayyəyyas; 6) fol. 6r, ʾ**abunä** Gäbrä Krəstos and ʾ**abunä** Yəshaq; 7) fol. 7v, ʾ**abunä** Yosab and ʾ**abunä** Gäbrä Məsiḥ (II); 8) fol. 8v, ʾ**abunä** Samuʾel and ʾ**abunä** Mäzgäbä Šəllase; [narrative scenes for the Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase] 9) fol. 11r, ʾ**abunä** Mäzgäbä Šəllase and “the angel of death”; 10) fol. 12r, ʾ**abunä** Mäzgäbä Šəllase, his nephew Tənsaʾe Krəstos and the tree which “fell and bowed”; 11) fol. 12v, ʾ**abunä** Mäzgäbä Šəllase, his disciple ʾabba Habtä Maryam and three further disciples; ʾ**abunä** Mäzgäbä Šəllase partitioning the water of a river to let them cross it; 12) fol. 13r, ʾ**abunä** Mäzgäbä Šəllase and Wälättä Şəyon, commissioner of the miniatures, entrusting herself to the Saint; 14) fol. 13v, ʾ**abunä** Mäzgäbä Šəllase receiving the covenant (*kidan*) from Christ; 15) fol. 14v [two similar scenes] ʾ**abunä** Mäzgäbä Šəllase saving a child from a burning house.

Additiones:

Fol. 9r: a short note on a commissioner of the miniatures, Wäldä Iyäsus.

Fols. 72rb-74rb: two additional notes from a later period.

Dating:

The manuscript is composite and rather heterogeneous. The miniatures are executed by at least two artists (both early eighteenth century?), and the texts are written by different hands. The quires with both versions of the Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase can be dated to the early eighteenth century. The part of the manuscript starting from *Mälkə*-hymn is of later age (early nineteenth century? possibly also heterogeneous), the texts were written on leaves of slightly smaller size.³⁸

37 This Synaxarion manuscript is datable to the late seventeenth century; the name of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, who obviously was the commissioner of the book, is included in the supplication formulas throughout the text. The folia of the short version of the Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, written by a different (probably somewhat later) hand, constitute a separate quire inserted into the manuscript.

38 The manuscript was very briefly discussed by Marilyn Heldman in GRIERSON 1993:197 (fig. 26), but the conclusion (“the manuscript must have been produced at Gondar for

The library of Kidanä Məhrät Mäḵod^cä possesses a manuscript with the hagiographic collection of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (GKM-013),³⁹ commissioned by ʾAmdä Šəllase and written by the scribe Märḥa Šəyon [fig. 4]. The first half eighteenth-century manuscript is modest and clearly belongs to the mediocre manuscript production level. It contains the following texts, here in collation with the texts known from GG-011:

GKM-013	Corresponding texts in GG-011
Fols. 2r-51ra: Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, the long version.	Fols. 15ra-59rb: Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, the long version.
Fols. 52rb-53rb: <i>Mälkə</i> ^c -hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase (beginning, the text is interrupted at <i>sälam lä^cəmətəkä...</i> , cp. GG-011, fol. 79ra).	Fols. 77ra-81rb: <i>Mälkə</i> ^c -hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase.
Fols. 54ra-69ra: The short version of the Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase.	Fols. 60ra-72ra: The short version of the Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (Synaxarion of Gundä Gunde, GG-167, fols. 45v-46r).
Fols. 69ra-71ra: <i>Mälkə</i> ^c -hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase (continuation, cp. GG-011, fols. 79rb-81vb) and the <i>Sälam</i> -hymn.	Fols. 79ra-81vb, continuation of <i>Mälkə</i> ^c -hymn, and the <i>Sälam</i> ^c -hymn.

The monastery has a *tabot* of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, and his annual feast is celebrated on the 9th of *Təqəmt*. The veneration of Mäzgäbä Šəllase may have been established soon after the abbot's death, at the time the main hagiographic works about him in Gundä Gunde were compiled.

The collection of Kidanä Məhrät Mäḵod^cä provides further interesting evidence. Ms. GKM-002 is a composite codex, with the main text block containing 33 stories from the *Miracles of Mary* (fols. 12ra-67rb), 15 stories from the *Miracles of Jesus* (fols. 67rb-87ra), and excerpts from the Bible. The manuscript was commissioned by ʾabunä Gäbrä Mäsqäl (fol. 86vb) and written by the scribe Gäbrä Wəḥəd. Its main peculiarity is the series of fine miniatures infixed in the beginning. They are apparently older than the nineteenth-century main codex, and painted on parchment leaves of slightly smaller size. The miniatures are not homogeneous in style. However, the representations of "holy monks" (fols. 2v-3r, 5v-6r, 9r, 10v-11r [s. figs. 5, 7-9]) form a coherent group, obviously executed by one and the same painter; to them a miniature in fol. 4v [fig. 6] should be added, depicting a king on the throne in the presence of two servants.⁴⁰ The illuminations appear similar to the iconogra-

the presentation at Gunda Gunde") should be probably modified, as more information on the composition of the manuscript is now available.

39 At the time of the examination, the manuscript, severely damaged by water, was in poor condition.

40 The other miniatures in fol. 7v and 8r are *Ecce Homo* (Jesus wearing the Crown of

phy in manuscript GG-011, the Vita of Mäzɡäbä Šəllase, in particular those representing the heads of Gundä Gunde, cp. the description above, miniature 2, fol. 2v, [fig. 10], 3, fol. 3v [fig. 11], 4-5, fols. 4v-5r [fig. 12], 6, fol. 6r [fig. 13], 7, 8. In GKM-002, fol. 2v [fig. 5], a legend written in regular handwriting reads: *səʿälä mänäkosat* ('image of monks').⁴¹ On fol. 4v [fig. 6], the same hand wrote: *səʿälä nəɡuś* ('image of king'), and in fol. 5v [fig. 7]: *ʿəlluni (?) mänäkosat* ('those [are] monks'), on fol. 10r [fig. 9]: *zəni kämahu mänäkosat* ('and this is, likewise, monks').⁴² The legends do not appear very informative. However, there is an indication that the miniatures were intended to represent the Stephanite fathers, similarly to GG-011, and not the monks of Däbrä Gännät (Mäḵodʿe). There is a secondary legend above the picture of the sitting king on fol. 4v, with very bleak letters⁴³ continuing the main legend: (*səʿälä nəɡuś*) *Dəbb Dār nəɡuś wäʿali* 'picture of King Dəbb Dār; the King and (his) servant'. It is commonly known that Dəbb Dār is the name of Zārʾa Yaʿqob, particularly (if not exclusively) in the Stephanite hagiography. The scene depicted on fol. 9r is accompanied by a secondary legend made by the same hand as on fol. 4v, also very bleak but still readable: *zä-kämä qəsäfo nəɡuś lä-ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos*, 'How the King flagellated ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos'. It is difficult to say if the legends were effaced or originally written in such a way as to be inconspicuous. In any case, the miniatures and their legends seem to prove the local knowledge of the Gundä Gunde tradition, of which the story of the sufferings of ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos in the hands of King Zārʾa Yaʿqob was the most important part.

At least one more item of the collection may indicate that the link between Mäḵodʿä and Gundä Gunde existed over a long period of time until the late nineteenth–early twentieth century, or was resumed around that time. The bulky, not very carefully written, manuscript GKM-006, containing the *Rite of the Holy Week*, dated to 1893 A.M. (= 1900/01 A.D., fol. 219vc), was donated to Däbrä Gännät Mäḵodʿä by the community of Gundä Gunde, according to a note in fol. 144rc [fig. 16]:⁴⁴

[Fol. 144rc] *ዝግብረ ፡ ሕማማት ፡ ዘደብረ ፡ ንነት ፡ ዘወሀብዋ ፡ ማኅበረ ፡ ጉንጉህ (ን)ዴ ፡ በዘመኑ ፡ ለ*

Thorns) and the Virgin and Child, respectively.

41 A secondary, recent hand added: *zä-Däbrä Gännät* ('of Däbrä Gännät', i.e., Mäḵodʿä).

42 Another miniature of the same artist turned up in Däbrä Qʾäyāša. The collection of this ancient monastery preserves a manuscript of the hagiography of ʾabunä Samuʾel of Däbrä Qʾäyāša, with infixed miniatures, one completed and one unfinished. The figures are identified by the legends.

43 They become readable only if the contrast is digitally enhanced.

44 There is an identical note in fol. 219vc, in which the name of the donating community has been washed out.

መምሕር ፡ ፍሥሐ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ በገበዙ ፡ ለአባ ፡ ገብረ ፡ ሕይወት ፡ ከመ ፡ ይኩኖሙ ፡ መርሐ ፡ መንግ
ሥተ ፡ ሰማያት ፡ ለዓለመ ፡ ዓለም ፡ አሜን ፡ ወአሜን ፡ ፤፤

[Fol. 144rc] This is the Book of the Rite of the Passion Week of Däbrä Gännät, which the community of G^wə[n]g^wənde donated in the time of *mambər* Fəśśəḥa Šəyon and *gäbāz* Gäbrä Həywät so that it might be for them a guide to the Kingdom of Heaven. For eternity. Amen and Amen.

All pieces of evidence point out to a strong link between Kidanä Məhrät Mäḵod^ä and Gundä Gunde. It cannot be excluded that the former was established as a “daughter community” of the latter, perhaps some time in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. One cannot also exclude the personal involvement of ^ʾ*abunä* Mäzgäbä Šəllase, or his agency for acquiring at least some of the manuscripts listed above, as part of endeavours to strengthen the new community and supply it with necessary books.

Däbrä Bərhan Qəddəst Maryam Foqäda

The ancient church of Maryam Foqäda (also Foḡäda, Fäḡada) can be easily reached through the main road ʿAddigrat – Zäla ^ʾAmbäsa. The church is one of the historical and archaeological sites of the Foqäda area;⁴⁵ it stands in the back of a fertile plain, between the picturesque mountain ^ʾAmba Fäqäda (or ^ʾAmba Zəban) and the gorge of the Qärni river.⁴⁶

Local tradition vaguely relates that the site was a sanctuary in the pre-Christian time. According to one of the Miracles of Libanos, he made holy water spring out from the earth at “Fäqäda”, and the wife of King Gäbrä Mäsqäl founded a church there.⁴⁷

Currently, the church of Maryam Foqäda possesses neither hagiographic works nor a *tabot* of Libanos. The collection of the church does not have very old books; its most remarkable item is represented by a manuscript of the *Miracles of Mary*, datable to the seventeenth century, with a frontispiece miniature possibly originating from a different, much older (late fourteenth- or fifteenth-century?) manuscript.

There is a significant feature of the local landscape that has never been reported before. A small rectangular church, of *gätär*-chapel type, dedicated to ^ʾ*abunä* Mäzgäbä Šəllase and hosting a *tabot* consecrated in his name

45 See ANFRAY 1973:22, map 1; GODET 1977:37; recently, EAE I:219b–220a.

46 On its way to Mäqdäla, the British army camped in the valley of Foqäda on 6 February 1868; drawings of the old church of Foqäda and some paraphernalia were made by W. SIMPSON and published in the *Illustrated London News*, 16 May 1868, p. 489.

47 Cp. BAUSI 2003, §146, § 154. Curiously, during an interview in 2010 the local people said that the name of the queen was Zäwditu.

is located just a few hundred meters away from the main church Foqāda Maryam, in the gorge of the river Qārni. The building is recent but local tradition tells that the first church was established here during the reign of King Fasilādās (r. 1632-67), with the personal involvement of Māzgābā Šəllase, on the place of the latter's "prayer house". The information does not contradict the chronology of Māzgābā Šəllase's life (s. above). A *šəbəl*-spring (said to be "of Māzgābā Šəllase") falls down from the vertical rock slope of the gorge. Māzgābā Šəllase's annual commemoration is regularly celebrated, and the *šəbəl*-source appears to be very popular with the faithful.

In addition to Māzgābā Šəllase's *tabot*, the upper church Foqāda Maryam possesses two recent manuscripts with the collections of his hagiography.⁴⁸ The older of them, FBM-008, was commissioned by a few individuals and can be dated perhaps to the period of the Italian war and occupation (1935–41). The manuscript is a composite one, a quire with the *Miracles* was added later. The content of FBM-008 is briefly presented below, in collation with GG-011:

FBM-008	Corresponding texts in GG-011
Fols. 3r-57rb: Vita of Māzgābā Šəllase, the long version (divided into chapters).	Fols. 15ra-59rb: Vita of Māzgābā Šəllase, the long version.
Fols. 57va-60vb: <i>Mālkə</i> -hymn for Māzgābā Šəllase, incomplete, the text is interrupted (until <i>Səlam lə-gənzātə šəgakä</i> ..., cp. GG-011, fol. 81ra), colophon.	Fols. 77ra-81rb: <i>Mālkə</i> -hymn for Māzgābā Šəllase.
Fols. 61ra-66vb: Miracles of Māzgābā Šəllase which are a rearrangement of the short version of the Vita of Māzgābā Šəllase.	Fols. 60ra-72ra: Vita of Māzgābā Šəllase, the short version

The second copy of the Vita was commissioned by a group of the faithful, in the recent time. On the whole, the veneration of Māzgābā Šəllase at Foqāda Maryam appears to be well-established, and might significantly antedate the manuscripts with his hagiography in the possession of the church, even though there are no other proofs for that.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ The presence of the work at the site was, in fact, already reported in a short notice in KINEFE-RIGB ZELLEKE 1975:85, no. 114 ("Feqada, Agame, Tigray") and can be better explained in view of the presence of the chapel of Māzgābā Šəllase, as well as his *tabot*.

⁴⁹ It cannot be excluded that the *šəbəl* "of Māzgābā Šəllase" is in fact the same holy spring mentioned in the Vita of Libanos, whose origin was "reinterpreted" as soon as the church acquired a new patron and a new affiliation.

Maryam Mākan

The church of Maryam Mākan (Mākan) is located on the outskirts of ʿAddigrat. The site encompasses several structures, among them a recent church completed only a few years ago, an older one located some 200-300 metres away under the cliff, also not more than 70 years old, and another, still older structure in the rock hinting at the considerable age of the church.⁵⁰ At least one item in the church library, a fragment of the *Acts of the Apostles*, can be dated into the fifteenth century. The main piece of evidence hinting to the links between Maryam Mākan to Gundä Gunde is the main Gospel book (“Golden Gospel”) of the church (MM-001). The relatively modest, not illuminated manuscript (in its present state without Canon tables or other parts of the “Traditional introduction”) can be dated to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Two persons are mentioned as scribes, Zä-Wängel and Zä-Mānfäs Qəddus, and the text indeed appears to have been written by two hands. The name of ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase, obviously the commissioner, is inserted in the heading of each Gospel (s., e.g., incipit of Matthew [fig. 14]; incipit of Mark [fig. 15]).⁵¹ Moreover, the colophon in fol. 193 explicitly says that it was Mäzgäbä Šəllase who brought the book to the church, and indicates where the book came from. The colophon, written in red ink (most probably by the hand of Zä-Mānfäs Qəddus) reads as follows [fig. 17]:

[Fol. 193ra]: ዝመጽሐፍ ፡ {ዘደብረማርያም ፡ መካ[sic]} ዝመጽአ ፡ እምሆገረ ፡ {መካን ፡} ምስለ ፡ እቡነ ፡ መዝገበ ፡ ሥላሴ ፡ ዘሠረቐ ፡ ወዘፈሐቆ ፡ ወዘአውፅኦ ፡ እምዝንቲ ፡ ደብር ፡ ዘሆገረ ፡ {ማርያም ፡} ውጉዝ ፡ ለይኩን ፡ በሥልጣን ፡ እጥሮስ ፡ ወእውሎስ ፡

[Fol. 193ra]: This (is the) book of Däbrä Maryam Māka(n) which came from the country of Mākan with ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase. Whoever stole it or erased (its text) or took it out of this church of the country of Mary shall be excommunicated by the authority of Peter and Paul.

50 GERMA ʿELIAS (2000 A.M.:134–35) tells that ʾabba ʿErməyas, a member of “the community of ʾabba Yəṣḥaq”, settled under Məgullat at Däbrä Bəkot, near the church dedicated to ʾabunä Zä-Mikaʿel ʾArägawi. The description fits to the area extending under the village of Məgullat (on the top of Kəsad ʾAläqwa) between ʾAndel Maryam (s. below) and Maryam Mākan. Maryam Mākan is located in the district (*quṣāt*) still called Bəkot. There is no *tabot* of Zä-Mikaʿel ʾArägawi in the church of Maryam Mākan, but at a distance of several hundred metres (historically, possibly, in Bəkot, but now administratively in ʿAddigrat) there is indeed a church of Zä-Mikaʿel ʾArägawi. Said to be an ancient foundation, it has, however, no old books or objects.

51 It seems that originally another name of the commissioner (ʾaṣḥafi) was inserted in a few places (including the colophon, see below), later washed out and substituted by that of Mäzgäbä Šəllase.

The note shows traces of attempts to delete some of the text elements. The place name right after the words *zə-mäṣḥaf*, which initially indicated the provenance of the book, has been washed out; recently, the name “Maryam Mäkan” has been crudely inscribed instead.⁵² But the original name is still partly visible and the full reading can be surmised. With all probability, the original name was Kaswa, i.e. Gundä Gunde. A few other persons appear to have been mentioned in the Gospel book;⁵³ but there is little doubt that Mäzgäbä Šəllase was involved in the acquisition of the manuscript for the church of Maryam Mäkan.⁵⁴ For the moment it is impossible to say if the manuscript shows any features characteristic of the Gundä Gunde Gospel manuscript production of that period. At a first glance, the manuscript is a late seventeenth or first half eighteenth-century Four Gospel book, of the type typical for the region, of a very modest production level.

Taḥtay Ruba Qəddus Mikaʿel

The site of Taḥtay Ruba Mikaʿel, in the inner area of Gulo Mäkäda, accommodates three churches: a chapel of St. Mary on a hardly accessible rock and two churches below. The site is ancient, but the oldest items in the church manuscript collection appear to be dating to the seventeenth century at the earliest. The collection does yield a few hints concerning the links of the site to Gundä Gunde. A fine and skilfully executed seventeenth-century liturgical manuscript (TRM-017), containing the Divine Office books of *Məʿəraf*, *Dəggəwā*, *Zəmmare* and *Mäwašəʿt*, could have been written during 1682–1706 or 1730–45,⁵⁵ by the scribe Zä-Wäldä Maryam who in a rhymed *subscriptio*

52 In such a version, the record is illogical as it reports that the book belongs to the same place from where it came.

53 In fol. 155r, the name of commissioner (*ʿaṣḥafihu*) that follows that of Mäzgäbä Šəllase has been washed out; a certain Mälkä Šedeq is mentioned at the end of a Gospel text (s. fol. 153va).

54 In the past, the collection of Maryam Mäkan was not much more extensive than it is now, but its content was different. A manuscript with the Vita and Miracles of ʿ*abunä* Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus, datable to the second half of the eighteenth century, includes an inventory of the books. Many of the titles it counts are not in the church library today, among them such hagiographic works as the Vitae of Yared, Gärima, Gäbrä Krəstos, ʿAmdä Mikaʿel (otherwise unknown?), and ʿ*abunä* ʿEwoṣtəwos. It is one of the cases when the ecclesiastic library proves to accommodate written products coming from both Stephanite/Gundä Gunde and ʿEwoṣtəan/Däbrä Bizän networks (see also GERVERS in this volume).

55 The text (on fol. 7v) mentions Patriarch of Alexandria John and King ʿIyasu. This offers two possibilities of dating: John XVI (1676–1718) and ʿIyasu I (1682–1706), suggesting 1682–1706, or John XVII (1725–45) and ʿIyasu II (1730–55), i.e. 1730–45.

styles himself as “a son of the teaching of Apostle ᾤστίφανος who became martyr in Ethiopia” [fig. 18]:

[Fol. 164r]: ሰብሐት : ለእግዚአብሔር : ፈጣሪ : ‘...’ (ሜስ)⁵⁶ : ወአሰንያ ፩
 ለዛቲ : መዋሥዕት : ዘአፈጸመኒያ ፩
 ይቤ : ዘወልደ : ማርያም : ወልደ : ትምህርቱ : ለእስጢፋኖስ : ሐዋርያ ፳፭
 ዘኮነ : ሰማዕት : በኢትዮጵያ ፳፭
 በእንተ : ስሙ : ወልደ : አብ : ኪንያ ፳፭

[Fol. 164r]: Glory to God, the creator of ‘...’, and He made it beautiful,
 Who let me finish this (book of)⁵⁷ *Mäwasäʾt*,
 Zä-Wäldä Maryam said, a son of the teaching of ᾤστίφανος the Apostle,
 Who became martyr in Ethiopia,
 For the sake of the name of the Son of the Farther, the Artisan.

A donation note mentions the donors of the manuscript:

[Fol. 164v]: ዛቲ : መጽሃፍ : ዘወሐባ : መዝገበ : ስላሴ : ወለተ : ሃይማኖት : ወለተ : ጊዮርጊስ : ዘተ
 ሳዩጥዋ : በወርቆሙ : ዘወሐብዋ : ለታቦተጽዮን : ዘሰረቃ : ወዘፈሐቃ : ወጉዘይኩን : በአፈ : ጴጥሮ
 ስ : ወጳውሎስ : ን ፳

[Fol. 164v]: This (is the) book which Mäzgäbä Šəllase, Wälättä Haymanot and Wälättä Giyorgis donated, they bought it with their own money, which they donated to the *tabot* of Šəyon. Anyone who stole it or erased it shall be excommunicated by the mouth of Peter and Paul. [Ame]n.⁵⁸

Is Mäzgäbä Šəllase mentioned here identical to the aforementioned head of Gundä Gunde, or is it a different person incidentally called by the same name? In this case, the dating of the manuscript strongly depends on the identification of the scribe, Zä-Wäldä Maryam. The project team recorded a number of manuscripts produced by a scribe bearing this name, scattered in Gulo Mäḱäda and even beyond its limits. At least some of them are definitely written by the same hand. For the moment, scribal activities of Zä-Wäldä Maryam have been attested for 1716–45, the period which is difficult to reconcile with the existing chronology of Mäzgäbä Šəllase’s life.⁵⁹ Also, there may have been more than one scribe by the same name, active in the region in the late seventeenth – eighteenth century. Only in one single manuscript

56 The word written over the erasure is unclear.

57 ᾤAfäššämänniya, a rare example of two pronominal suffixes (1st pers. sg., 3rd pers. sg. fem.) attached to one verbal form.

58 The note is partly ungrammatical; possibly the scribe forgot or did not know from the beginning that he is supposed to mention more names than that of Mäzgäbä Šəllase. Otherwise the note would read as follows, e.g., ዛቲ : መጽሃፍ : ዘወሐብዋ : ለታቦተጽዮን : መዝገበ : ስላሴ : ወለተ : ሃይማኖት : ወለተ : ጊዮርጊስ : ዘተሳዩጥዋ : በወርቆሙ : ዘሰረቃ : etc.

59 The dating is preliminary and will probably be corrected in the future, as more manuscripts signed by Zä-Wäldä Maryam will be studied by the project team.

(TRM-017) does Zä-Wäldä Maryam refer to his connection to the Stephanite circles. Was it indeed a part of his background, or only a sign of politeness towards the commissioners of the manuscript? For the moment, there is no certain answer to the questions. As additional, though indirect hint in favour of Gundä Gunde connection reflected in TRM-017 is a curious ʾasmat-prayer written on a fly-leaf of the manuscript and mentioning, among others, the “ʾasmat of Gʷädgʷədo”, which seems to be one of the numerous colloquial variants of the monastery’s name.

A direct proof of the link to Gundä Gunde is the veneration of Mäzgäbä Šəllase in Taḥtay Ruba. There is no *tabot* dedicated to Mäzgäbä Šəllase, but his feast (9 Ṭəqəmt) is regularly celebrated. An illuminated manuscript containing Mäzgäbä Šəllase’s hagiographic dossier (TRM-023) is preserved in the church library. It embraces Mäzgäbä Šəllase’s Vita (the text is divided into portions by the rubricated word *məʿraf*, ‘chapter’, or rubricated passages), Miracles, *mälkəʿ*- and *səlam*-hymns. The manuscript can be dated to the first half of the eighteenth century; it was executed by a scribe also called Zä-Wäldä Maryam (fol. 74rb), but the hand is very different from that of TRM-017. Those involved in the commissioning the manuscript were probably simple faithful: ʾAmdä Mikaʿel, Gäbrä Krəstos, Wäldä Šəllase (ibid. and elsewhere). The cycle of the miniatures in TRM-023 bears no similarity to that of GG-011⁶⁰ [s. figs. 19, 20]. The collation of the TRM-023 and GG-011 looks as follows:

TRM-023	Corresponding texts in GG-011
Fols. 5ra-75vb: Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, the long version	Fols. 15ra-59rb: Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, the long version
Fols. 75ra-80va: <i>Mälkəʿ</i> -hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase, incomplete	Fols. 77ra-81rb: <i>Mälkəʿ</i> -hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase
Fols. 80va-81rb: <i>Səlam</i> -hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase	Fols. 81rb-81va: <i>Səlam</i> -hymn for Mäzgäbä Šəllase
Fol. 81ra: Supplication for the scribe and donors	
Fol. 81va: <i>Məltan</i> for Mäzgäbä Šəllase	

The *məltan*, being a short hymn, is a constituent part of the festive liturgy and one of the elements associated with the performance of the *Məwasəʾt*-

⁶⁰ The miniatures depict the following scenes: fols. 2r: How ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase was made abbot (legend: “How ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase was appointed *māmbər*, with his disciple”); fol. 3r: ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase and angels (legend: “ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase spoke with angels. They are the angels of the face”, cp. DILLMANN 1955:1210b); fol. 4v: ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase, ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos; 82r: Angels Michael and Gabriel; fol. 82v: an angel and a cross (unfinished?).

[Fol. 81va]: ምልግን ፡ ዘአቡነ ፡ መዝገበ ፡ ሥላሴ ፡ ሃሌ ፡ ለ-ያ ፡ ይንእዱ ፡ ምግባሪከ ፡ ውለ-ድከ ፡ ለ
 ዓለም ፡ ፤፤ መዝገበ ፡ ሥላሴ ፡ | ኩለ ፡ ገዳም ፡ ፤፤ መስ | ቀለ ፡ ጸዋረከ ፡ በጸም ፡ | ወበጸሎት ፡ እማን ፡ መዝ
 ገበ ፡ ሥላሴ ፡ ጽጌ ፡ | ገዳም ፡ ፤፤ ፤፤ ፡ ፈጸምኩ ፡ ጽሑፈ ፡ | መልክዕከ ፡ | ፳ወ፯ ፡ ዘ|እጽሐፋ ፡
 ቀሲሲ ፡ እምደ ፡ ማካኤል ፡ ለዓለመ ፡ ዓለም ፡ እም-[፡]፡[፡]ዝመጽሐፍኝ

So far, no *məltan*-hymn in honour of Mäzgäbä Šəllase has been recorded from Gundä Gunde. The one in TRM-023 appears to be a local addition to the Saint's "hagiographic dossier", created outside Gundä Gunde, suggestive of the significance ascribed to the veneration of Mäzgäbä Šəllase in the area of Tahtay Ruba in the eighteenth century.

The church of ʾĒnda Ḥawaryat Peṭros wā-Ṕawlos, located in a remote part of Gulo Mākāda, was possibly established as early as the fifteenth century. The oldest manuscript of the church library is a late fifteenth- or sixteenth-century manuscript of the Acts of the Apostles. The library also possesses a manuscript with the hagiographic collection of Māzgābā Šəllase (EHPP-004) of the same content as that of Taḥtay Ruba, to be dated to the second half of the eighteenth century [fig. 21]. A certain Nāššārā ʾAb is mentioned as the scribe in the supplication at the end of the text, and Wāldā ʿAbiyā ʾƏgziʾ appears to be the donor (fol. 59vb). The collation of EHPP-004 and GG-011 can be presented as follows:

EHPP-004	Corresponding texts in GG-011
Fols. 5ra-56ra: Vita of Mäzğabä Šəllase, the long version	Fols. 15ra-59rb: Vita of Mäzğabä Šəllase, the long version
Fols. 56rb-59rb: <i>Mälkə</i> -hymn for Mäzğabä Šəllase	Fols. 77ra-81rb: <i>Mälkə</i> -hymn for Mäzğabä Šəllase
Fols. 59rb-59vb: <i>Sälam</i> -hymn	Fols. 81rb-81va: <i>Sälam</i> -hymn

61 See EAE III:877a–78a; HABTEMICHAEL-KIDANE 1998:106, s. index.

023, though the sequence of the miniatures is different.⁶² The *māṭan* for Mäzgäbä Šəllase, the same as in TRM-023, is written under one of the miniatures (fol. 64r; reinterpreted as a “legend”?), and one more time, crudely, as a marginal note in a fly-leaf (fol. 62r). The church possesses a *tabot* of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, and his commemoration is said to be annually celebrated. The cult of Mäzgäbä Šəllase might have been established as early as in the (first half?) of the eighteenth century. So far, the collection of ʾĒnda Ḥawaryat yielded no other relevant information; yet the fifteenth-century *Acts of the Apostles* can be scrutinized in the future on account of possible links to the Gundä Gunde scribal tradition.

Səddäyto Mikaʾel

The church of Səddäyto Mikaʾel is located not far from Foqäda Maryam, somewhat deeper in the inner core of Gulo Mäḳäda. As an exceptionally rare case, the foundation of the church (which took place in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century) is well documented in the marginal notes contained in its “Golden Gospel”. The extensive and manifold library of Səddäyto contains a mid-twentieth-century copy of the hagiographic collection of ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase (SGM-018), donated by the faithful. The manuscript dated to 1938 A.M. may have been copied from the manuscript of the Vita belonging to Foqäda Maryam, but it also contains the *māṭan* for Mäzgäbä Šəllase. The church does not possess any *tabot* of Mäzgäbä Šəllase, and his annual feast is not celebrated.⁶³ The collection has provided no further hints on the relationship between the site and Gundä Gunde.

Sites with copies of the Vita of ʾabunä ʾĒstīfanos

Remarkably, few sites were found to possess manuscripts containing hagiography of ʾabunä ʾĒstīfanos. The collection of ʾAgamyo Mikaʾel, an old church of *gätär* type in the core of Gulo Mäḳäda, has a modest manuscript with the Vita of ʾabunä ʾĒstīfanos⁶⁴ and his *mälkä*^c (AQM-005) produced in the time of King Yoḥannəs IV (r. 1872-89). The church hosts a *tabot* of ʾĒstīfanos; the inside of the church building is decorated with recent paintings featuring

62 Fol. 3r: ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase, ʾabunä ʾĒstīfanos; fol. 64r: Angels Michael and Gabriel (with the *māṭan* for Mäzgäbä Šəllase written below); fol. 64v: How ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase was made abbot (legend: “How ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase [was appointed] *māmbər*, with his disciple”); fol. 65r: ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase and angels (the legend: “ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase met the angels of the face; he spoke with the angels of the face”).

63 On the contrary, the church possesses a *tabot* of Mäṭaʿ / Libanos, but not his Vita.

64 The text is very close to the published one, s. GETATCHEW HAILE 2006.

both *ʾabunä ʾEṣṭifanos* and *ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase*. Local tradition preserves no recollections that could clarify the history of the local veneration.

Another church possessing a copy of the Vita of *ʾabunä ʾEṣṭifanos* is ʾAnḏel Maryam (Ganta ʾAfäšum *wäräda*), located on the (asphalt) road leading to ʾAksum, half-way to the mountain crest of Kəsad ʾAläqʷa – Məgullat (cp. above). The modest manuscript containing both the Vita and *mälkä* of *ʾabunä ʾEṣṭifanos* (MA-002) is of recent date (late nineteenth or twentieth century). According to local tradition, the church founded under King Zärʾa Yaʿqob (r. 1534-68) possesses also a *tabot* of ʾEṣṭifanos. There is a reference in one of the documents collected in the *Liber Axumae*, indeed proving the historical connection of ʾAnḏel to Gundä Gunde. Issued probably by the famous ruler of ʿAgamä *dağğazmač* Säbagadis Wäldu (d. 1831),⁶⁵ it lists ʾAnḏel among the *gʷalt*-lands of Gundä Gunde.⁶⁶ It is not known, though, how long the dependency lasted.

Other sites

Some other sites visited by the project team can additionally contribute to disentangling the history of the Stephanite movement. Nəḥbi Mikaʿel, an ancient church near ʿAddigrat (today in the Ganta ʾAfäšum *wäräda*) is considered to be a place linked to *ʾabunä Yəṣḥaq*, the founder of Gundä Gunde. During the visit to the church Nəḥbi Mikaʿel in 2011, oral tradition was collected by the team from *mälʾakä bərhanat* Gäbrä ʾEgziabəḥer Gäbrä Mädhən, the head of the church. According to him, the church was founded in the time of King Zärʾa Yaʿqob. Yəṣḥaq established a monastic community (*gədam*) at the church of Nəḥbi in 1434 (i.e., the first year of Zärʾa Yaʿqob’s reign), thereafter he was told by *ʾabunä ʾEṣṭifanos*, in a vision which he saw at a place called Qorguna, to go to the area where he later founded Gundä Gunde. So far it has not been possible to define the age, origin and sources of the tradition.⁶⁷ The library of Nəḥbi Mikaʿel has no other documents related

65 See EAE IV:430a–431a

66 See CONTI ROSSINI 1910:62 (text), 75 (tr.), no. 88.

67 It is also indicated in GERMA ʾELIAS 2000 A.M.:93 (cp. EAE II:918a, Nəḥba, ʿAgamä). It may originate from (one of the versions of?) the Vita of Yəṣḥaq, still inedited, or other Stephanite hagiographies. Manuscript GG-005 refers to a different location as his birthplace, see fol. 2ra, with the not quite clear expression: *gədgädä Ləḥlen, ʾəntä səma Fəlmənmon*. In the Stephanite tradition, *ʾabunä Yəṣḥaq* is repeatedly referred to as “the founder of the monastery” (*sərare dəbr*): s. the Vita of ʾIsayyəyyas, FERENC 1976:244 (text, fol. 3r), 269 (tr., and no. 5). In the further published Stephanite hagiographies, he appears in the Vita of ʿEzra (CAQUOT 1961:72 text, 94 tr.) (ʿEzra is enquired by Yəṣḥaq) and the Vita of ʾAbäkərazun (CONTI ROSSINI 1910:29 text, 27 tr.) (brief mention of Yəṣḥaq as a companion of ʾEṣṭifanos). The commemoration day of Yəṣḥaq is 24

to Gundä Gunde or the Stephanites; the commemoration of Yəṣḥaq is not celebrated at Nəḥbi Mikaʿel.

It could be clarified that today's Gulo Mākāda comprises at least two places where Stephanites were imprisoned. Däbrä Maʿšo, in the eastern part of Gulo Mākāda (*tabiya* Taḥtay Qälʿat), is known as the banning place of ʿabunä ʾEṣṭifanos and his companion, Bärtälomewos.⁶⁸ Qəfrəya ʿUrä Mäsqäl, the ancient church on a hardly accessible rocky peak located close to Zäla ʾAmbäsa and, in fact, only a few kilometres away from Foqāda Maryam, was also used as a confinement place of the Stephanites.⁶⁹ The church of Säwnä (Däbrä Sina) Maryam, quite far to the northeast from ʿAddigrat (today Saʿsi Şaʿda ʾEmba *wäräda*, formerly ʿAgamä), possesses a Four Gospel book which was referred to as illustrated in the “style of Gundä Gunde”, but the rest of the church collection, at least after the quick check, has yielded no tangible proofs of possible links to the Stephanites or Gundä Gunde.⁷⁰

Conclusions

The evidence is represented mostly by the marginal notes, hagiographic texts, and to a lesser extent by manuscripts themselves and paintings. Some pieces of evidence are clear and provide tangible data, others are vague and elusive. As always, one must keep in mind that an unknown share of cultural heritage containing written evidence (as well as, probably, artefacts) has perished and a substantial amount of information, especially concerning pre-seventeenth century, will never be retrieved.⁷¹ However, the collected data allow us to

Təqəmt (GG-005, fol. 52ra), but manuscript GG-167, which I was able to check, has no commemorative notice for Yəṣḥaq under that day.

68 For the study of the ancient library of the church, s. NOSNITSIN 2011, 2012, and in preparation. Marginal notes in the manuscripts of the library contain references to different events, but nothing on the confinement.

69 Mentioned, e.g., in the Vita of ʾAbäkäräzun (CONTI ROSSINI 1910:30–31 text).

70 HELDMAN 1989:10–11. The Four Gospel book (SDSM-004) of the church contains a donation note (fol. 1vb) written by a crude, but not recent hand, which indicates that the donor of the book was an individual. The ancient church of Säwnä Maryam is located in the area called Subuha (Subuha was formerly also the name of *wäräda*, today called Säwnä), apparently after a local ʾIrob lineage. According to the Vita of ʾabunä ʿEzra, his parents were rulers of Səbḥa, and “the *rəst*-(land) of his father was Säwne” (CAQUOT 1961:72 text, tr. 93 and no. 2). The church might well be within the influence area of the Stephanites and Gundä Gunde. The local “foundation story” starts from the time of the seventeenth-century King Fasilädäs (r. 1632–67) and does not contain any hints to earlier history (cp. GIGAR TESFAYE 1974:59–60).

71 However, new evidence may also come in the future, when we will know more about the manuscript tradition of Gundä Gunde; it cannot be excluded that some of the fif-

make some preliminary conclusions and propose a hypothetical historical narrative, as they are indeed reminiscent of the existence of links within the network of related communities around Gundä Gunde, and provide some glimpses on its growth and transformation.

The first tentative conclusion that can be achieved is that during the sixteenth century (and before), the main area of the study, i.e. contemporary Gulo Mākāda and Ganta ʾAfäšum *wärädas*, did not play an important role in the Stephanite network. Especially the area of Gulo Mākāda was considered inconvenient for the needs of the movement, being too close to the seats of the regional rulers, very open and “transparent”, with only a few small areas suitable for monastic communities. Another reason could be that, of course, the local population and rulers did not favour the movement, as it was the case in some other regions; hence also the presence of the Stephanites’ imprisonment places in Gulo Mākāda (Qəfrəya ʿUrä Mäsqäl, Däbrä Maʿšo). The farthest point the Stephanite network reached in the sixteenth century (by the end of the “conflict period” of the movement) under abbot Täklä Näbiyat (?) might have been Maryam Harenät Gäbäzyti, the closest to Gundä Gunde of the discussed sites. Only in this case we can assume that the main piece of evidence, the Four Gospel book of the church, might have been produced after a model physically located in Gundä Gunde, and possibly by scribes and painters close to (or being members of) the Stephanite/Gundä Gunde circles.

After a substantial gap (no data for the period between mid/late sixteenth century and mid-seventeenth century), manuscript evidence in ecclesiastic libraries multiplies, presenting a different, more dynamic picture. It is centred on the person of ʾabunä Mäzgäbä Šəllase, an energetic and strong head of Gundä Gunde. For several decades, until his death in the early eighteenth century, he was active in asserting the influence of his monastery among the local communities scattered over a wide area of the contemporary Gulo Mākāda and Ganta ʾAfäšum *wärädas*, as well as around ʿAddigrat, probably on the basis of an ideology different from that of the “classical period” of the Stephanite movement and in cooperation with the political elites of the Kingdom (in the first line, the governors of ʿAgamä).⁷² Under Mäzgäbä

teenth- or sixteenth-century manuscripts collected by the project will be identified as originating from the Stephanite/ Gundä Gunde professional scribal milieu; the same is valid, in fact, also for the manuscripts from later centuries.

⁷² It is obviously difficult to speculate about a possible direct or indirect role of Gundä Gunde scribes in the production of the manuscript evidence mentioned above until more information is available on the collection of Gundä Gunde (especially its seventeenth - nineteenth-century part). At least for the moment, it looks as if the role of Gundä Gunde in supplying the affiliated site with books was very insignificant (despite

Šəllase, the relations with other churches of northeast Təgray established in the past (Maryam Hərenāt Gəbāzāyiti) were revived and new affiliations were created (Maryam Məkan, Tahtay Ruba Mikaʿel, possibly Maryam Fəqāda). Furthermore, the foundation of the monastery Kidanä Məhrāt Dəbrä Gənnāt Məkodʿa shows the extension of the influence area of Gundä Gunde to a region close to Dəbrä Dammo,⁷³ quite far from Gundä Gunde.⁷⁴ The veneration of ʾabunä Məzgəbä Šəllase at such sites as ʾƏnda Həwaryat Pətros wə-Pawlos as well as Səddäyto Mikaʿel might represent a recent, secondary spread of the cult,⁷⁵ but we cannot exclude that it had a deeper historical background and was originally linked to the activities of the Saint or his associates.⁷⁶ A message telling about Məzgəbä Šəllase's deeds seems to be discernible also in his Vita which, "encoding" it according to rules of the formal language of the hagiography, says that the Saint "renovated 12 churches".⁷⁷ The number of the churches which have come in question above is less than twelve; yet in this case we can say that the hagiographic "common place" may well be lined to the historical reality, and does fit into the historical context reconstructed by means of the research of the local archives.

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the statement made in the Gospel book of Maryam Məkan, MM-001, s. above).

73 Despite a very high status enjoyed by this monastery, there is still no indication that a network of communities affiliated to Dəbrä Dammo has ever existed.

74 Possibly links of Səwnä Maryam to Gundä Gunde and the Stephanite circles could be dated rather to the sixteenth century; the church is located far from the area of Gulo Məqāda, in fact in the area between Gundä Gunde and the Stephanite network in Mənbarta and Dəsʿa (s. above).

75 To get a better understanding of this, the relationships between the manuscripts must be investigated in the course of the preparation of a critical edition of the Vita.

76 Remarkably, the veneration of ʾabunä ʾƏstifanos (ʾAgamyo Mikaʿel, ʾAnel Maryam) played a secondary role; he might have been considered a symbolic figure and one of the "monastic fathers" of the past, though his name and deeds, of course, were known (also from the Vita of Məzgəbä Šəllase).

77 Ms. GG-011, fol. 52ra; no place names are mentioned.

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Fig. 1. Maryam Ḥarenāt Gābāzāyṭi, Gospel book (MHG-004), fols. 16v-17r.

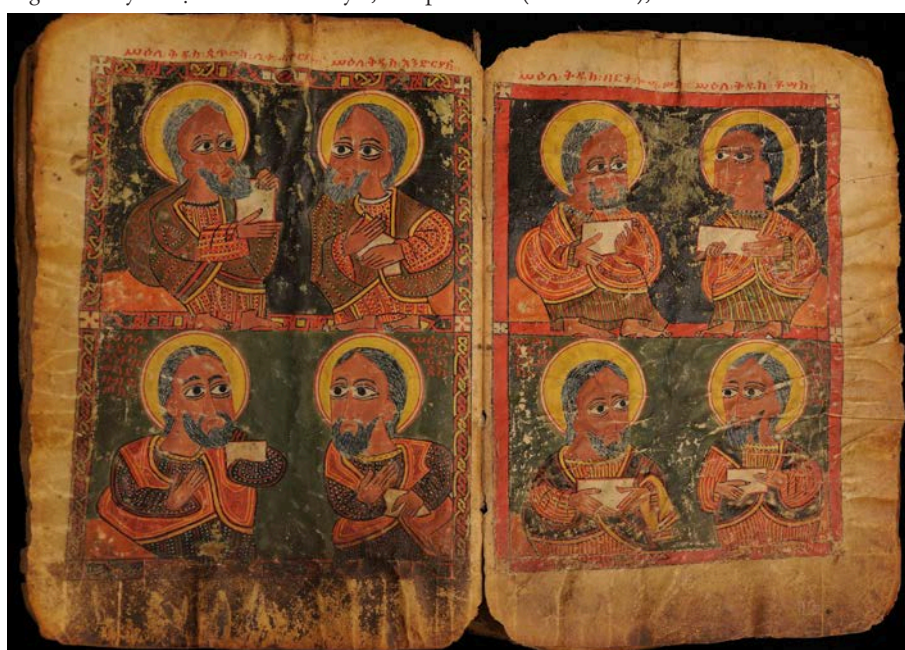


Fig. 2. Maryam Ḥarenāt Gābāzāyṭi, Gospel book (MHG-004), fols. 22v-23r.



Fig. 4. Kidanä Məḥrät Däbrä Gännät Mäḳod'ä, Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (GKM-013), fols. 56v-57r.



Fig. 5. Kidanä Məḥrät Däbrä Gännät Mäḳod'ä, Miracles of Mary (GKM-002), fols. 2v-3r.



Fig. 6. Kidanä Məḥrät Däbrä Gännät Mäḳod'ä, Miracles of Mary (GKM-002), fol. 4v.



Fig. 7. Kidanä Məḥrät Däbrä Gännät Mäḳod'ä, Miracles of Mary (GKM-002), fols. 5v-6r.

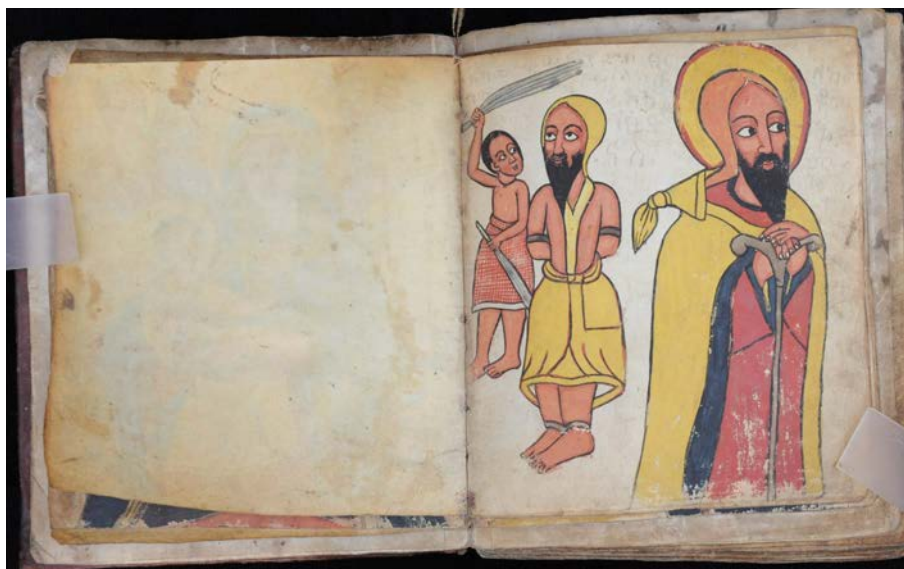


Fig. 8. Kidanä Məhrät Däbrä Gännät Mäḳod'ä, Miracles of Mary (GKM-002), fol. 9r.



Fig. 9. Kidanä Məhrät Däbrä Gännät Mäḳod'ä, Miracles of Mary (GKM-002), fols. 10v-11r.



Fig. 10. Gundä Gunde, Vita of Mäzɡäbä Šəllase (GG-011), fol. 2v-3r (the abbots Abäkärəzun and Gäbrä Məsiḥ).



Fig. 11. Gundä Gunde, Vita of Mäzɡäbä Šəllase (GG-011), fol. 3v-4r (Ewoṣtəwəwos, Barsoma).



Fig. 12. Gundä Gunde, Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (GG-011), fol. 4v-5r (Bärtälomewos, Habtä Šəllase, Täklä Näbiyat, Isayyāyyas).



Fig. 13. Gundä Gunde, Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (GG-011), fol. 5v-6r (Gäbrä Krəstos, Yəshaq).



Fig. 14. Maryam Mākan, Gospel book (MM-001), fols. 15v-16r.



Fig. 15. Maryam Mākan, Gospel book (MM-001), fols. 73v-74r.



Fig. 16. Kidanä Məhrät Däbrä Gännät Mäkod'ä, Book of the Rite of the Holy Week (GKM-006), fol. 144rc.

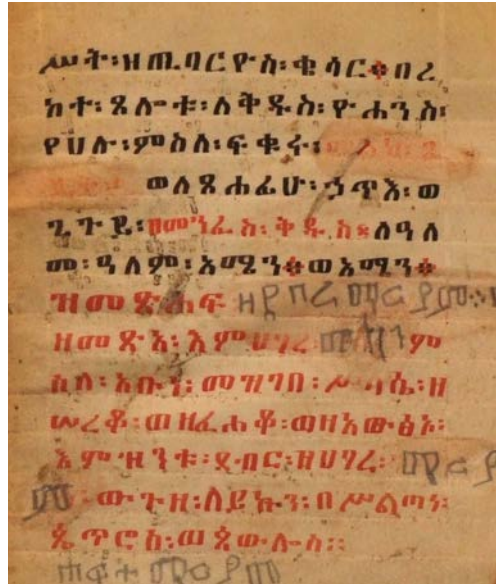


Fig. 17. Maryam Mäkan, Gospel book (MM-001), fol. 193ra.

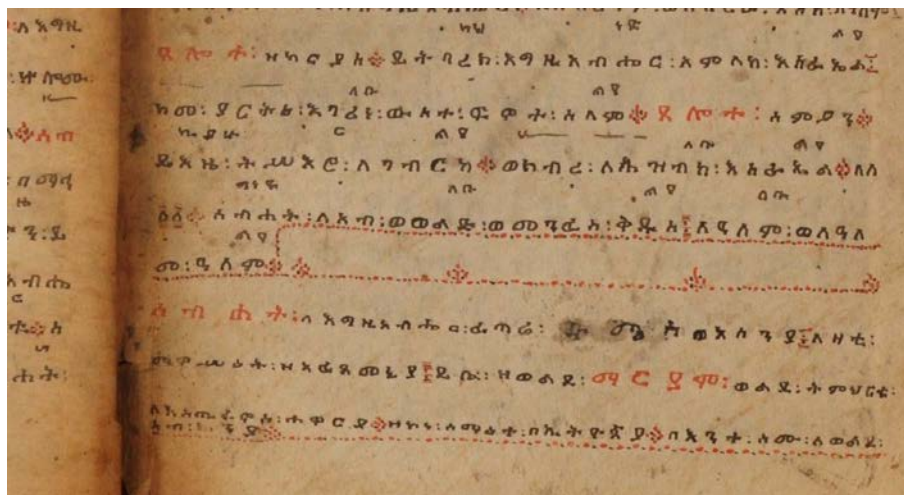


Fig. 18. Taḥtay Ruba Qəddus Mika'el, Hymnody manuscript (TRM-017), fol. 164v.



Fig. 19. Taḥtay Ruba Qəddus Mika'el, Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (TRM-023), fols. 1v-2r.



Fig. 20. Taḥtay Ruba Qəddus Mika'el, Vita of Mäzgäbä Šəllase (TRM-023), fols. 4v-5r.



Fig. 21. ʿĒnda Ḥawaryat Peṭros wā-Ṕawlos, Vita of Māzgābā Šōllase (EHPP-004), fols. 3v-4r.



Fig. 22. ʿĒnda Ḥawaryat Peṭros wā-Ṕawlos, Vita of Māzgābā Šōllase (EHPP-004), fols. 2v-3r.



Fig. 23. ܐܢܕܐ ܚܐܘܪܝܬ ܦܬܪܝܘܫ ܐܠܦܠܘܫ, Vita of Mäzğäbä Šöllase (EHPP-004), fols. 60v-61r.