

CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE UNDERSTANDING WRITTEN ARTEFACTS

HIOB LUDOLF CENTRE FOR ETHIOPIAN AND ERITREAN STUDIES



AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN IN HAMBURG

HIOB LUDOLF CENTRE SUMMER SCHOOL IN ETHIOPIAN AND ERITREAN MANUSCRIPT STUDIES 2020

AMHARIC MANUSCRIPT TRADITION

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Amharic, *lingua franca* of Ethiopia

- Ethio-Semitic language family, southern subgroup
- Language of a large ethnic group
- Language of cross-cultural communication, an African *lingua* franca
- Language of the royal court (*lassāna naguś*)
- "Learned language" of instruction in the traditional church education system

Amharic written tradition

- Application of Ethiopic written system to Amharic
- Amharic as the second written language in the pre-modern time
- Language development stages:
 - Old Amharic: ca. before 18th cent.
 - Early modern Amharic: ca. 18th to late 19th cent.
 - Contemporary Amharic
- Texts attested starting from ca. 16th cent.
- Amharic modern literature starts only in 1908, Afawarq Gabra Iyasus, Ləbb wallad tārik.

Early evidence: texts in Old Amharic

- The language of ca. 14 texts written before the 18th cent.
- Fluid orthography
- Palaeographic features: archaic shapes of some Amharic letters (for f, for f, etc.)
- Some words that are missing from the modern Amharic
- Consistent use of some Gə^çəz words, *ənbala* for *yāla* ("without"), *tafaśḥa* for *dass ala, tadassata* ("rejoice")

Early evidence: texts in Old Amharic

- Some phonetic and morphological peculiarities
 - characters for <u>h</u>, h, <u>h</u>, ^c and ² still kept in many words, ሐንድ vs.
 አንድ; ሐየ vs. አየ, ሄት vs. የት, በባዕ vs. በባ
 - plural marker -ačč(i) vs. later standard -očč
 - post-pronominal -t: የተሐየኝ፡ ይኽት
 - suffix 3 pers. plur. -(*w*) āččo vs. later -āččaw
 - lack of the particle -m- in negated verbs: አይኖራቸው, አልነሳ

The earliest known Amharic texts

- Portions of Gə^çəz-Amharic grammar (sawāsəw), 16thcent. additions in Ms. BnF Ethiopien 160
- Praising poems for Abāla Krestos in Ms. EMML no. 1943, late 16th-/early 17th-cent. additions, Dabra Hayq ⁹∃sţifānos
- "Royal songs" in Ms. Oxford, late 16th/early 17th cent., BodL Or. 29 = Bruce 88
- "Tract about Mary who anointed Jesus' feet", Jerusalem, Ethiopian Patriarchate, Ms. JE 9, an added text in the Four Gospel book, reportedly 16th cent. (?)

Sawāsəw in Old Amharic, 16th cent. (?)

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Ms. Bibliothèque nationale de France Éthiopien 160, first half of the 16th cent. (?), fol. 10r

The manuscript of *mamhər* Pāwlos, see C. Conti Rossini, "L'autobiografia di Pawlos, monaco abissino del secolo XVI", *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Rendiconti, Classe di scienze morale, storiche e filologiche* Serie quinta, 27 (1918), 279–96.

@ Bibliothèque nationale de France

Beginning of the "Royal Songs", early 17th cent.

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Ms. Bodleian Library, Or. 29 = Bruce 88, 1610 -1632, f. 35r, three column layout

© Bodleian Library

Amharic pre-modern literature

- Translations of Ga<sup>
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- Catechisms, "explanations of faith" of various types
- Theological treatises
- *Sawāsəw*: lexica and grammar treatises
- Andemta-commentaries
- Narratives developed from biblical stories

Early Amharic poetry

- "Royal songs" and praising poems (mawaddəs)
- "Condemnation of Glory" poems (margama kəbr)
- Minor poems on various matters
 - Religious matters
 - Historical events
 - Everyday life etc.
- *Məśtira səgeyāt* "Mystery of the Rosary", praises to St. Mary

Amharic pre-modern literature

- Computus and calendar texts
- Magic-medical texts (recipes, prayers)
- Historiography
- Documentary writing
- Epistolography

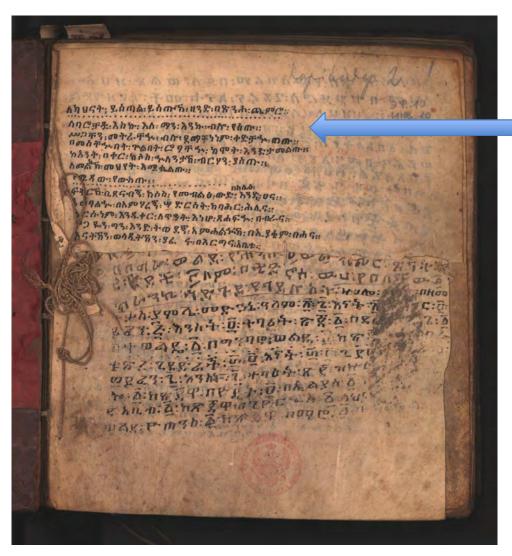
Amharic pre-modern literature

- Not equivalent to the Amharic oral literature
- Related to Gə^çəz literature, but not ist vernacular variant
- Strong residue of oral culture
- Fluid textual traditions
- Small number of witnesses in many cases
- Auxiliary character
- Not always appears as continuous texts
- Some works clearly adressed to "commoners"
- Didactic overtones

Amharic manuscripts

- Non-pretentious appearence, small size
- Inferior materials
- Frequently inferior handwriting
- Nearly no ornamentation
- Many Amharic manuscripts in private possession
- Wide geographical dispersion of Amharic texts
- Circulation: marginalia, paratexts, added texts, texts in Gə^cəz collections, Amharic collections

Amharic poems as marginal notes



Ms. St. Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Ms. Ef. 10/Koriander 2, *Wəddāse Amlāk* "Praises of God", 32 x 1 cm, mid-17th/mid-18th cent., fol. 1r

See Bulakh – Nosnitsin (forthcoming)

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An Amharic text on guard leaves



(https://gundagunde.digitalscholarship.utsc.utoronto.ca/)

Ms. Gunda Gunde 114/C3-IV-214, *Arganona wəddāse* "Harp of Praise", 17.5 x 18 cm, 18th cent., and Amharic treatise *Anqasa hāymānot* "Gate of the Faith" on fols 1v-1r, ed.

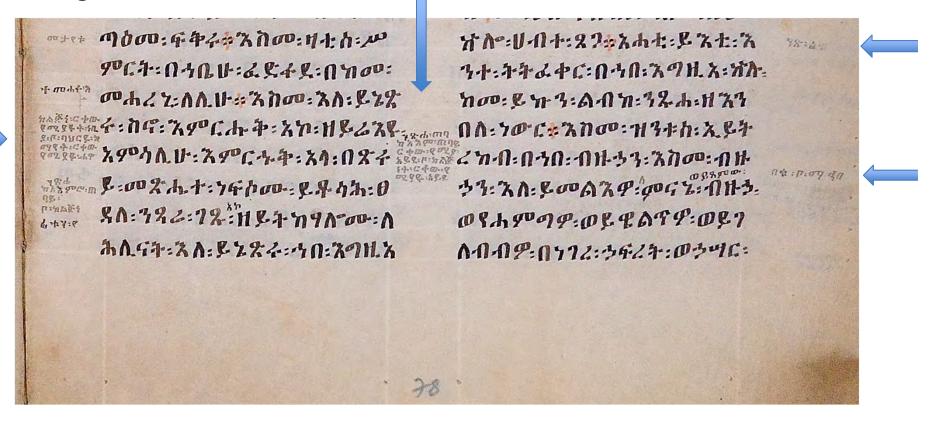
See Getatchew Haile 1983

Amharic texts added in the guard quires



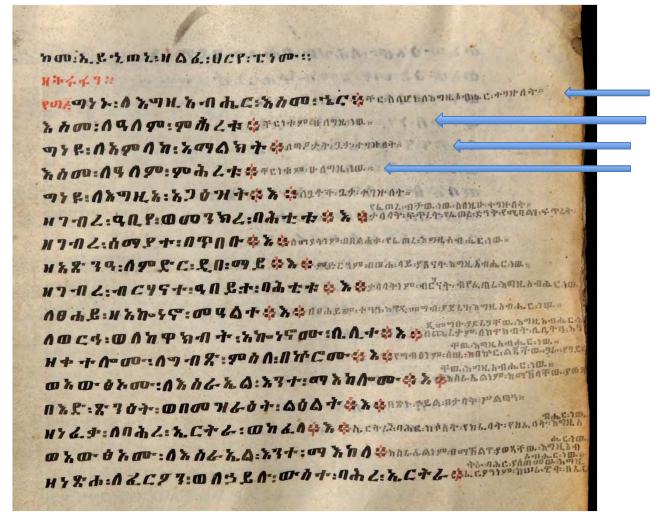
Ms. Māy Ba[?]ātti Arbā[°]əttu ∃nsəsā, MBAE-001, *Wəddāse Amlāk* "Praises of God", 19.4 x 16.5 cm, 18th cent., *Margama kəbr* "Condemnation of glory" poem added on fols 1r-3v.

Amharic glosses and commentaries as paratext in the margins



Ms. Dabra Dāmmo, DD-036, Collection of monastic texts, 25 x 21 cm, ca. 1650-1750, fol. 78r

Amharic translation of the Psalter



Ms. Rubākusā Qəddus Giyorgis, RQG-015, *Psalter* with Amharic translation (?), 33.2 x 29 cm, 18th cent., fol. 163r

An Amharic work in a collection of $Ga^{c}az$ poems and prayers





Ms. Sotā Dabra Salām SDM-019, *Məśtira səgeyāt* and other texts (*malkə*[?]āt, prayers, hymns), 7 x 7.7 cm, 18th cent., fols 2v-3r

An Amharic work in a Gə^çəz miscellany



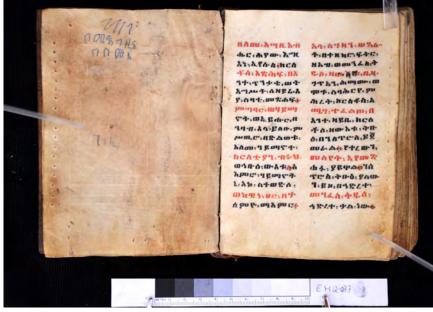
Dating: "no later than the 17th century (Cowley)

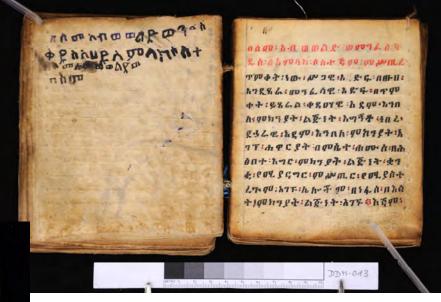
Second half of the 17th/18th cent. (?); not very professional but careful scribe, possibly imitating the Gondarine script

Ms. Māy Anbasā Kidana Məḥrat, MAKM-004, Miscellany in Gə^çəz and Amharic, 15.5 x 15.5 cm, here fols 24v-25r, treatise *Təmhərta hāymānot* "The teaching of the faith"

Amharic single text manuscripts

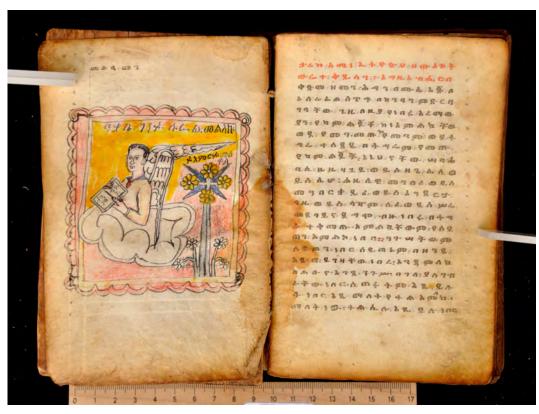
Ms. Dānderā Mikā⁹el, DDM-013, *Amməstu a^çmāda məstir* "Five pillars of mystery", 14 x 12 cm, 19th cent.





Ms. ∃ndā Māryām Qorrār, EMQ-077, *Amməstu a^cmāda məsțir* "Five pillars of mystery", 15.3 x 11 cm, late 19th/ early 20th cent.

Collections of Amharic text





Ms. Rubākusā Giyorgis, RQG-034, *Sawāsəw* and historiographic texts, 14x8 cm, fols 76v-77r, "A History of Aḥmad Grāňň"

Ms. Mədra Rubā Śəllāse, MR-035, Collection of historiographic texts, 17 x 11 cm, 1855-1904, fol. 3r, "History of faith of Ethiopia which is the tradition of the saints"

Thank you for your attention!