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THE FOUR GOSPELS OF DÄBRÄ MÄ^cAR: COLOPHON AND NOTE OF DONATION*

The focus of this article is the dedicatory colophon and the note of donation of the Four Gospels of Däbrä Mä^car. With elaborate Canon tables, a preface of three full-page miniatures, and four evangelist portraits, the Däbrä Mä^car Gospels is a manuscript *de luxe*. The three miniatures showing the Crucifixion, the Holy Women at the Tomb, and the Ascended Christ are the earliest known example of what is recognized as an iconographically distinctive Gospel preface. Thus, because of the significant position of this manuscript in the history of Ethiopian manuscript illumination, the translation and discussion of the colophon and note of donation is preceded by a brief discussion of the relationship of the preface miniatures of the Four Gospels of Däbrä Mä^car to other Ethiopic illuminated manuscripts of the Four Gospels dating to the late 13th and 14th cent.

Although a prefatory cycle of Christological miniatures appears in several of the earliest extant illustrated Gospel books, namely the 6th-cent. Greek Rossano Gospels and the Syriac Rabbula Gospels dated A.D. 586,¹ the earliest extant Christological preface in an Ethiopic Gospel book is found in the so-called Gospels of *abba* Iyäsus Mo^oa of Däbrä Ḥayq Ḥṣṭifanos dated A.D. 1280/81.² This is probably not the first Christological preface ever to have been produced for an Ethiopic manuscript of the Four Gospels, but, because

* Dr. Monica S. Devens is responsible for the translation of the colophon and the note of donation. She also provided provisional translations of the additional notes, which require further study, and thus do not appear in their entirety in this publication.

¹ See J. LOWDEN, «The Beginnings of Biblical Illustration», in: *Imagining the Early Medieval Bible*, ed. by J. Williams (University Park PA: the Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 9–59.

² See W. F. MACOMBER — GETATCHEW HAILE, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville*, vols. I–X (Collegeville, 1975–1993) [in the following: EMMML], here V, 293–301, no. 1832. M. E. HELDMAN, «An Ethiopian Miniature of the Head of St. Mark: Egyptian Influence at the Monastery of St. Stephen, Hayq», in: *Ethiopian Studies, Dedicated to Wolf Leslau on the occasion of his seventy-fifth Birthday (November 14th, 1981) by friends and colleagues*, ed. by S. Segert and A. J. E. Bodrogligeti (Wiesbaden, 1983), 554–568.

this is the earliest extant prefatory cycle of Christological miniatures, writing the history of the Christological preface in Ethiopian manuscript illumination must begin with this manuscript. Most earlier Ethiopic manuscripts of the Four Gospels did not survive what Getatchew Haile has termed «a systematic destruction of the past on religious grounds», which occurred some time after the establishment of the so-called Solomonic dynasty in 1270.³ Furthermore, the late Sevir B. Chernetsov observed evidence of the destruction of historical writings during this same period.⁴ The fourteen-miniature Christological preface of the Gospels of *abba* Iyäsus Mo³a begins with the Annunciation to Mary, ends with the Ascension of Christ, and includes full-page miniatures of Christ's Infancy and Passion.⁵ This Christological preface cycle served as the essential model for the fourteen-miniature Christological preface in the manuscript of the Four Gospel created ca. 1320 at Däbrä Ḥayq Ḍṣṭifanos for the monastery's abbot, Krəstos Täsfanä, although the miniatures of the latter's Gospel book are by no means always direct copies of the former.⁶ This extended Christological preface inspired the creation of similar prefaces in other Ethiopic manuscripts of the Four Gospels of the late 14th and 15th cent.⁷

The Christological preface of the Däbrä Mä^car Gospels, preceded by a set of elaborately decorated Canon tables⁸ and followed by four Evangelist portraits, is limited to only three full-page miniatures — the Crucifixion, the Holy Women at the Tomb, and the Ascended Christ. In Marilyn Heldman's

³ GETATCHEW HAILE, «Who is Who in Ethiopia's Past, Part II: the Zagwe Royal Family after Zagwe», *Northeast African Studies* 7, no. 3 (1985), 41, 47 n. 2.

⁴ S. B. CHERNETSOV, «The Crisis of Ethiopian Official Royal Historiography and its Consequences in the 18th Century», in: *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by Bahru Zewde, R. Pankhurst, Taddese Beyene (Addis Ababa, 1994), I, 87. The earliest extant chronicle is considered to be that of the emperor ^cAmdä Ṣəyon I (1314–1344).

⁵ The miniatures of this remarkable manuscript have not been published in their entirety; for a complete list of the miniatures, EMMML V, 293–301.

⁶ For lists of the miniatures of the Christological prefaces of these two manuscripts of the Gospels produced at Däbrä Ḥayq Ḍṣṭifanos, see HELDMAN et al., *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia* (New Haven & London, 1993), 176–177.

⁷ These include the Kəbran Gospels (HELDMAN et al., *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, 178–179, with further bibliography); the Gospels of Princess Zir Ganella, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M828 (M. E. HELDMAN, *The Gospels of Princess Zir Ganella, an Ethiopic Manuscript dated 1400/01 A.D.*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Washington University in St. Louis, 1972); and the Four Gospels of the Metropolitan Museum of the City of New York, No. 1998.66 (H. C. EVANS [ed.], *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, catalogue of an exhibition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art [New York and London, 2004], catalogue no. 267).

⁸ Canon tables are a tabular form of Gospel concordance that demonstrate the harmony of the Four Gospels. See M. E. HELDMAN, «Canon tables», in: *EÆ* I, 680–681.

article of 1979⁹ and Claude Lepage's article of 1987,¹⁰ both authors concluded that this abbreviated three-miniature frontispiece follows an iconographic scheme inspired by Late Antique works of art that celebrate major sites of pilgrimage in the Holy Land. One of the most definitive aspects of the miniature of the Crucifixion is the absence of the body of Christ upon the Cross, an iconography similar to that of late 6th-cent. souvenir ampullae produced in Jerusalem.¹¹ Although the miniatures of the Crucifixion in the Gospels of Abbot Iyäsus Mo³a and the Gospels of Krəstos Täsfanä of Däbrä Ḥayq Ḥṣṭifanos also follow this same Late Antique iconographic tradition, the other two miniatures of the Däbrä Mä^car preface — the visit of the Holy Women to the Tomb of Christ¹² and the Ascended Christ with Mary and flanking Archangels Michael and Gabriel — bear no similarities to the Christological miniatures of the Gospel manuscripts of the two abbots of Däbrä Ḥayq Ḥṣṭifanos, although the Gospels of Abbot Krəstos Täsfanä predates the Gospels of Däbrä Mä^car by only a decade or two.

It is safe to assume that the presently unknown archetype or archetypes of the three miniatures of the Christological preface had come to Ethiopia before A.D. 600.¹³ Furthermore, it is quite unlikely that the illumination of Ethio-

⁹ M. E. HELDMAN, «An Early Gospel Frontispiece in Ethiopia», *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 48 (1979), 107–121.

¹⁰ C. LEPAGE, «Reconstitution d'un cycle protobyzantin à partir des miniatures de deux manuscrits éthiopiens du XIV^e siècle», *Cahiers archéologiques* 35 (1987), 159–196.

¹¹ The subject of this distinctive Ethiopian iconography of the Crucifixion was taken up again by E. BALICKA-WITAKOWSKA, *La Crucifixion sans Crucifié dans l'art éthiopien*, *Bibliotheca nubica et aethiopica* 4 (Warsaw, Wiesbaden 1997).

¹² The miniature of the Holy Women at the Tomb of Christ follows the Gospel accounts of Matthew 28:1–10 and Mark 16:1–13.

¹³ The archetypes need not have been souvenirs of the Holy Places produced in Palestine. John Lowden argues that representations similar to those of pilgrimage art decorated textiles, carved ivories, painted panels, and the walls of churches throughout the Mediterranean world (LOWDEN, «The Beginning of Biblical Illustration», 54–58). No decorated souvenir lead ampullae from Jerusalem or other such portable objects have been reported to date at Ethiopian archaeological sites or in Ethiopian church treasuries. Objects received during the Christian Aksumite period include Canon tables fragments and Evangelist portraits at the monastery of *abba* Gäräma (Ḥnda Abba Gäräma) datable to the late 6th cent. (HELDMAN et al., *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, 129–130) and a souvenir terra cotta ampulla with a portrait of St. Menas from the great pilgrimage church of St. Menas on the west-north coast of Egypt recovered by Paribeni at Adulis (R. PARIBENI, «Ricerche nel luogo dell'antica Adulis (Colonia Eritrea)», *Monumenti Antichi* 18 [1907], col. 538, Fig. 54). Ampullae of St. Menas were produced between 480 and 640, see Z. KISS, «Les ampoules de St. Ménas découvertes à Kôm el-Dikka (Alexandrie) en 1969», *Études et Travaux. Studia e praci. Travaux du Centre d'Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l'Académie Polonaise des Sciences* 7 (1973), 138–154.

pic manuscripts of the Four Gospels remained unchanged over a period of many centuries. The frontispiece scheme of the Däbrä Mä^car Gospels quite possibly represents a deliberate *revival* of Late Antique Gospel decoration.

The three-miniature preface of the Däbrä Mä^car Gospels is repeated in two preface fragments and in five extant illuminated Ethiopic Gospel books of the 14th and 15th cent., two of which are known to have been at one time royal property. An Ethiopic Gospel book in Paris (Bib. Nat., éth. 32) was given by Emperor Säyfä Ar^cad (r. 1344–1372) to the church of the Apostles at the monastery of Qusqām in Egypt.¹⁴ Although there is no proof that this manuscript was created for Säyfä Ar^cad, the manuscript was royal property at the time of its donation by the emperor to Ethiopian members of the monastic community at Qusqām in Upper Egypt.¹⁵ Another 14th-cent. Gospel book with the three-miniature frontispiece, presently in an anonymous private collection, appeared in an exhibition of Ethiopian art in Paris organized by Jacques Mercier.¹⁶ Because the frontispiece of this manuscript is very close in style and iconography to the frontispiece of the Gospel book sent to Qusqām by Säyfä Ar^cad, we may assume that the two manuscripts are of the same approximate age, i. e. the mid-14th cent. or later. According to the catalogue of this exhibition, a note in the Gospel book in the anonymous private collection states that Emperor Na^cod (r. 1494–1508) presented this manuscript to the monastery of Däbrä Libanos (Asbo) for the commemoration of the translation of the bones of Täklä Haymanot on the 12th day of *Gənbot* (May 20).¹⁷

¹⁴ The note of fol. 1r, added after the manuscripts was copied, gives no date; however another note added at Däbrä Q^wəsq^wam — Qusqām (fol. 207v) — includes a date of A.D. 1381. H. ZOTENBERG, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens (Gheez et Amharique) de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris, 1877), 24–29. See also LEPAGE, «Reconstitution d'un cycle protobyzantin à partir des miniatures de deux manuscrits éthiopiens du XIV^e siècle», 159–196. For the popular pilgrimage site of Däbrä Q^wəsq^wam or Qosqam/ Qusqām in Egypt, see L. MACCOULL, «Holy Family Pilgrimage in Late Antique Egypt: the Case of Qosqam», in: *Akten des XII. Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Bonn, 22.–28. September 1991*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband 20 (Münster, 1995), II, 987–992. On the associated monastery, see ABŪ ŠĀLIḤ, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, ed., tr. by B. T. A. Evetts, A. J. Butler (Oxford, 1895), 224–227; it is noteworthy that the primary compiler of this account was a 12th-cent. Coptic priest, Abū al-Makārim. See, J. DEN HEIJER, «Coptic Historiography in the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid and Early Mamlūk Periods», *Medieval Encounters* 2, no. 1 (1996), 77–81.

¹⁵ There is no reason to suspect that the emperor would have sent a manuscript of some antiquity as a gift to the monastery.

¹⁶ JACQUES MERCIER (ed.), *L'arche éthiopienne. Art chrétien d'Éthiopie, 27 septembre 2000 — 7 janvier 2001*, Paris 2000, catalogue of an exhibition at the Pavillon des Arts (Paris, 2000), 44–45.

¹⁷ MERCIER, *L'arche éthiopienne*, 45. The commemoration of 12 *Gənbot* celebrates the translation of the bones of Täklä Haymanot to the monastery of Däbrä Libanos

Thus, this second manuscript was royal property at the time of its donation to Däbrä Libanos (Asbo). These acts of royal donation suggest that monarchs of the early Solomonic dynasty held manuscripts of the Four Gospel decorated with the so-called Late Antique three-miniature preface in high regard.¹⁸ An undated Gospel book in the collection of the Walters Art Museum of Baltimore¹⁹ may be compared stylistically with the Gospel book in Paris (Bib. nat., éth. 32) and the Gospel book presently in a private collection.²⁰

Two fragmentary sets of a three-page preface, presently separated from their original manuscripts of the Four Gospels, are more closely related stylistically to the miniatures of the Gospels of Däbrä Mä'ar: a frontispiece fragment with a Crucifixion miniature which is presently in the collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa,²¹ and the three-miniature preface of a frag-

(Asbo) of Šäwa in 1410. Unfortunately, the entire note (of donation?) is not included in the catalogue entry which refers to the note as a «colophon». Evidently the manuscript was not presented to the monastery when Na'od visited Däbrä Libanos in January 1495 (TADDESSE TAMRAT, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270–1527* [Oxford, 1972], 292–294), because the note is said to mention the names of Märḥa Krəstos (†1497) and Peṭros (abbot 1497–1523), the ninth and tenth abbots of Däbrä Libanos (Asbo). It is also possible that the note was added when *abunä* Peṭros was abbot. A passage in the *Life* of Märḥa Krəstos refers to the emperor Na'od «transferring» the bones of Täklä Haymanot in a golden box at the time of his visit, but this does not necessarily refer to yet another translation. On this point, see S. KUR (ed., tr.), *Actes de Marḥa Krestos*, CSCO 330/331, SAe 62/63 (Louvain, 1972), 90 [text], viii, 82 [tr.].

¹⁸ It is possible that this three-miniature Gospel frontispiece was recognized as a Late Antique revival and thus was associated with the Christian Aksumite past. There is a passage in the *Life* of Märḥa Krəstos in which the emperor Ḍskəndər (r. 1478–1494) likens his relationship with *abunä* Märḥa Krəstos with that of Kaleb and *abba* Pāntälewon: see KUR, *Actes de Marḥa Krestos*, 97 [text], 88 [tr.]. This comparison may have been suggested by the *Life* of St. Pāntälewon; on the other hand, it may represent a broader 14th- and 15th-cent. pattern of identification with the Christian Aksumite past.

¹⁹ D. E. HOROWITZ (ed.), *Ethiopian Art, The Walters Art Museum* (Baltimore, 2001), catalogue no. 10, pp. 96–97. The museum purchased the manuscript from the Nancy and Robert Nooter Collection, prior to which the manuscript was in the possession of the proprietors of the Craft Caravan of New York, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Knopfelmacher.

²⁰ The group of Gospel manuscripts illuminated with the three-miniature preface have similar measurements: Däbrä Mä'ar Gospels, 28.2×18.5 cm; Paris, Bib. nat., éth. 32, 29×18 cm; private French collection, 29×18.5 cm; Baltimore, Walters MS W.836, 26.7×17 cm. Cp. also Stockholm fragment, 27.5×18.5 cm; Addis Ababa fragment, 29.5×19 cm (s. below).

²¹ Addis Ababa, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, inv. no. 3475a–b, two separate leaves. The Crucifixion miniature is painted on the verso side of a single parchment leaf; a tholos or tempietto with conical roof is painted on the recto side. The tholos composition routinely concludes the set of decorated Canon tables, thus indicating that the miniature of the Crucifixion was the initial miniature of a three-miniature

mented Ethiopic manuscript of the Four Gospels in the National Museum, Stockholm,²² divided between the National Museum and a private collection.²³

Luxury manuscripts of the Four Gospels decorated with the three-page preface continued to be produced in the early years of the 15th cent. Mercier reports that a Gospel book with this distinctive three-miniature frontispiece, presently the property of a church near Däbrä Mä'ar, was produced during the reign of Emperor Yəśhaq (r. 1414–1429).²⁴ All of these manuscripts appear stylistically to be later in date than the miniatures of the Gospels of Däbrä Mä'ar. Hence the importance of the translation of the colophon and the note of donation in the Gospels of Däbrä Mä'ar in this paper offered in memory of Sevir B. Chernetsov whose work enriched our understanding of Ethiopian history.

The reader will note that the spelling of the name of the monastery and that of its founder is notably inconsistent. The forms in the most recent note (fol. 76r, col. B), which was added in the 19th cent., follow the present-day spelling, i. e. Däbrä Mä'ar and Gäbrä Mäsqäl. The place name, Däbrä Mä'ar, appears in the colophon and additional notes in the following variations: Däbrä Ma'äya, Däbrä Ma'ara, Däbrä Mä'arä, Däbrä Mə'rya.²⁵ The name of the

preface. HELDMAN, «An Early Gospel Frontispiece in Ethiopia», 107–121; C. NORDENFALK, *Bokmålningar från medeltid och renässans i Nationalmusei samlingar* (Stockholm, 1979), figs. 200–202; HELDMAN et al., *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, 130–31. This leaf and the leaf with a portrait of the Evangelist Matthew were detached from the manuscript of the Four Gospels in the library of the church of Maryam Şəyon at Lake Zəway (S. CHOJNACKI, *Major Themes in Ethiopian Painting*, Aethiopistische Forschungen 10 [Wiesbaden, 1983], 490).

²² Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, B 2034. HELDMAN, «An Early Gospel Frontispiece in Ethiopia», 107–121; NORDENFALK, *Bokmålningar från medeltid och renässans i Nationalmusei samlingar*, 16–21; HELDMAN et al., *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, 131–132.

²³ Catalogue of Sotheby & Co., *Western Manuscripts and Miniatures* (5 December 1994), catalogue no. 53, with photograph of the tholos miniature. For a drawing of the Crucifixion miniature of the verso, see BALICKA-WITAKOWSKA, *La Crucifixion sans Crucifié dans l'art éthiopien*, 121, fig. 108.

²⁴ MERCIER, *L'arche éthiopienne*, 44. Nevertheless, the popularity of this three-miniature Gospel preface was displaced in the late 14th cent. by a Christological preface based in part on the preface miniatures of the Gospels of Abba Iyäsus Mo'a of Däbrä Ḥayq Ḥstifanos. Consisting of up to twenty full-page miniatures, some of which are framed by trilobe arch embellished with arabesque patterns, this distinctive Christological preface is found in such manuscripts as the Gospels of Princess Zir Ganela (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M828) (see n. 7 *supra*), and the Gospels of the Metropolitan Museum of Art of the City of New York, no. 1998.66 (see n. 7 *supra*).

²⁵ Another variation in the spelling, Däbrä Mä'ara, is found in a land grant of Ləbnä Dəngəl: C. CONTI ROSSINI (ed., tr.), *Documenta ad illustrandam Historiam, I.*

founder and first abbot has also undergone changes in spelling and perhaps meaning, from Kəbur Mäsqäl to Gäbrä Mäsqäl.

Translation of the Colophon: fol. 230v, col. B (see Pl. II)

In glorification of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, this book was copied at Däbrä Ma^cräya in [this] holy place, for *abunä* Maḥḍäntä Krəstos, and I, Isayəyyas, the sinner,²⁶ am the one who copied it. Furthermore, this Gospel was copied in the Year of Grace 525 [A.D. 1340/41] during the reign of ^cAmdä Şəyon. And the *‘aqqabe sä‘at* of the place Däbrä Ma^cara was *abunä* Kəbur Mäsqäl.

He who copied it and he who commissioned it and he who read it and he who heard its words and believed, may God have mercy on them in the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen and amen. And this Gospel was finished on 10 *Taḥśas* [6 December 1340].

Note of Donation: fol. 231r, cols. A & B, 23 lines (see Pl. III)

And Maḥḍäntä Krəstos gave it [this Gospel book] to the [Archangel] Gabriel of Däbrä Mä^carä so that God would have mercy on him in the Kingdom of Heaven with the saints and the martyrs forever and ever. Amen and amen.

And it was entrusted to God and to the throne of power so that people would not sell or barter or remove it from this place. If anyone sells it or barter it or removes it from this place, let him be anathematized in heaven and on earth, by the mouths of the Twelve Apostles, by the mouths of the Fifteen Prophets, by the mouths of the Three Hundred Eighteen Orthodox Fathers,²⁷ and by the mouths of the Seventy-Two Disciples. If anyone scratches it or effaces it, let him be anathematized forever. Amen and amen.

And furthermore, this Gospel was given to [Archangel] Gabriel in the Year of Grace 525 on 13 *Miyazyä*, on Easter Day, during the reign of ^cAmdä Şəyon [21 April 1340 A.D.]. It was Maḥḍäntä Krəstos and Isayəyyas, his brother, who gave it to Gabriel of Däbrä Mä^carä. May God bestow the salvation of their souls and their bodies. Amen, amen, and amen.²⁸

Liber Axumae, CSCO 54/58, SAe 24/27 (Parisiis — Lipsiae 1909–1910 [repr. Louvain, 1961–1962]), 39 [text]; G. W. B. HUNTINGFORD, *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, 1965), 51–53.

²⁶ For several examples, see TADDESSE TAMRAT, «The Abbots of Däbrä-Hayq 1248–1535», *JES* 8, no. 1 (1970), 90.

²⁷ The Three Hundred and Eighteen Orthodox Fathers are the bishops who sat at the Council of Nicaea. They are commemorated on 9 Ḥədar: G. COLIN (ed., tr.), *Le synaxaire éthiopien. Mois de Hedar*, PO 44 (Turnhout, 1988), 276–279.

²⁸ An added note takes up the final 8 lines of column B.

The colophon not only establishes the date of the production of this important manuscript, but it also provides a few essential insights into the early history of the monastery.²⁹ The illuminated manuscript of the Four Gospels was formally presented to the church dedicated to Gabriel of the monastery at Däbrä Mä^car on 8 April 1341 when *abunä* Gäbrä Mäsqäl, the monastery's founder,³⁰ was abbot, his title being *ʿaqqabe sä^cat*. It is more commonly known that the title *ʿaqqabe sä^cat*, literally «Keeper of the Hours», as for the hours of prayers (?), was assumed by the abbot or head of the monastery at Däbrä Ḥayq ʿEṣṭifanos, the abbot of the monastery of Ṣana (Ṭana) Qirqos at Lake Ṭana,³¹ and by the abbot of the ancient monastery of *abba* Mätṭa^c at Däbrä Libanos near Ham.³²

Däbrä Mä^car is situated in a mountain landscape about 600 meters above the high Ḥawzen plateau in the district of Gä^calta in Təgray.³³ Located far above the secular world of the plateau, *abunä* Gäbrä Mäsqäl chose an ideal site for his monastery.³⁴ The rock-hewn church of the monastery at Däbrä Mä^car, one of a number of rock-hewn monastic churches in Gä^calta,³⁵ was placed by David Buxton in his category of Təgrean basilica churches datable to the late 13th or early 14th cent.³⁶ Neither the date of birth of *abunä* Gäbrä Mäsqäl of Gä^calta nor the date of the establishment of his monastery at Däbrä Mä^car is known, but it is safe to assume that the monastery could not have been founded much earlier than A.D. 1300 and that the monastery's estab-

²⁹ Priests are attached to the church at Däbrä Mä^car, but there is no longer a monastic community at the site.

³⁰ KINEFE-RIGB ZELLEKE, «Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions», *JES* 13, no.1 (July 1975), 74–75. The church at Däbrä Mä^car possesses a manuscript with the *Life (Gädl)* of *abunä* Gäbrä Mäsqäl; the text has not been published.

³¹ TADDESSE TAMRAT, «The Abbots of Däbrä-Ḥayq», 90 and 98, n. 57, citing the *Life of Yafqərännä ʿEgzi*?. Although the discussion of this title in the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* treats it as an essentially imperial office, this was not strictly the case (S. KAPLAN, «ʿAqqabe sä^cat», in: *EA* I, 292–293).

³² C. CONTI ROSSINI, «L'evangelo d'oro di Dabra Libānos», *RRALm*, ser. v, 10 (1901), 197.

³³ R. PLANT, *Architecture of the Tigre, Ethiopia* (Worcester, England, 1985), 44.

³⁴ A mountain is so closely associated with a monastic setting that the Ge^cez word *däbr* means «mountain», «region where there is a monastery», and «monastery»: W. LESLAU, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge^cez (Classical Ethiopic)* (Wiesbaden, 1987), 121.

³⁵ See the list of rock-hewn churches in Gä^calta in PLANT, *Architecture of the Tigre*, 30.

³⁶ D. BUXTON, «The Rock-Hewn and Other Medieval Churches of Tigre Province, Ethiopia», *Archaeologia or Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Antiquity* 103 (1971), 52–57.

lishment preceded the excavation of the rock-hewn church. «Gäbräʾel», to whom the original altar tablet (*ṣəlla*) of the church at Däbrä Mäʿar was dedicated, is the Archangel Gabriel.³⁷ In stating that the Gospel book was given to Gabriel, rather than to the church of Archangel Gabriel, the author expressed how the altar tablet was regarded — it was quite literally the personification of the saint to whom the altar tablet was dedicated.³⁸ According to an additional note of fol. 231v, col. B, the church building (*betä krəstyān*) was consecrated on 28 *Säne*, but unfortunately the year is not indicated.

The rock-hewn church at Däbrä Mäʿar is not presently known as the church of the Archangel Gabriel. *Abba* Tewelde Medhin Joseph reported that there are two churches at Däbrä Mäʿar, one known as Ānda Giyorgis, the other as Ānda Maryam, i. e. dedicated to St. George and St. Mary.³⁹ The list of rock-hewn churches published by Roger Sauter, following the report of *Abba* Tewelde Medhin Joseph, states that the rock-hewn church at Däbrä Mäʿar (the primary church) is dedicated to St. George.⁴⁰ It is not uncommon to find that the name of a church, i.e. the dedication of the altar tablet, appears to have changed.⁴¹ The combination of dedications to the Virgin Mary and Saint George suggests that two additional altar tablets (*ṣəllat*) were dedicated in the mid-15th cent. or later, after the cult of the Virgin had been mandated by Emperor Zärʾa Yaʿəqob, when portraits of the two saints were frequently placed together in devotional images.⁴² The 19th-cent. note on fol. 76r, col. B, which refers to a gift for the «commemoration of Giyorgis» without citing the date of the commemoration, apparently refers to the annual commemoration of St. George.⁴³ Ruth Plant

³⁷ A later note on fol. 14r (col. B, line 12) refers to the archangel as «Gäbräʾəl Mäbässər» i. e. «bearer of good news» (Luke I: 26–28).

³⁸ On the dedication of the altar tablet and thus the altar and the church itself, see GETATCHEW HAILE, «A History of the *Tabot* of Atronəsä Maryam in Amhara (Ethiopia)», *Paideuma* 34 (1988), 18–22.

³⁹ *Abba* TEWELDE MEDHIN JOSEPH, «Introduction générale aux églises monolithes du Tigräi», in: *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa 1966* (Addis Ababa, 1969), I, 96.

⁴⁰ R. SAUTER, «Églises rupestres au Tigre», *AÉ* 10 (1976), 167.

⁴¹ For example, the primary altar of the dynastic church of Yəkunno Amlak was dedicated to *abba* Mätṭa^c; a later dedication of another altar tablet to the Virgin gives the church its present name of Gännätä Maryam («Garden or Paradise of Mary»).

⁴² M. E. HELDMAN, *The Marian Icons of the Painter Frē Šeyon. A Study in Fifteenth-Century Ethiopian Art, Patronage, and Spirituality* (Wiesbaden, 1994), 175–178; HELDMAN et al., *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, catalogue nos. 95 and 102. See also GETATCHEW HAILE, *The Mariology of Emperor Zärʾa Yaʿəqob of Ethiopia*, OCA, 242 (Rome, 1992).

⁴³ The date of the primary commemoration of St. George is 23 *Miyazya* (May 1). It is no surprise to learn that the church owns an 18th-cent. manuscript of the *Life* of St. George.

who first visited Däbrä Mä^car in the late 1960s reported that the rock-hewn church of Däbrä Mä^car was known as *abunä* Gäbrä Mäsqäl and a second church, in a «primitive cave» and at that time only used for shelter, was known as *abunä* Abraham.⁴⁴ Sauter noted that there were numerous tombs around the church.⁴⁵

The dedication of the church to *abunä* Gäbrä Mäsqäl as noted by Plant refers to the founder of the monastery of Däbrä Mä^car, Gäbrä Mäsqäl of Gär^calta, whose renown is apparently limited to the area of northern Ethiopia within the old governing unit of Gär^calta. The scribe described himself as «I, Isayäyyas, the sinner», a phrase which typically appears in monastic signatures⁴⁶ and which signifies that Isayäyyas was a monk. Isayäyyas states in the colophon that the book was copied for *abunä* Maḥḍäntä Krəstos, who was also a member of the monastic «family» at Däbrä Mä^car. In the final lines of the note of donation, it is written that «Maḥḍäntä Krəstos and Isayäyyas, his brother», gave the book to Gabriel of Däbrä Mä^car, which suggests that the men were siblings rather than just fellow monks. An added note on fol. 14v refers to «the priest Maḥḍäntä Krəstos», and a second added note gives the dates of the deaths of these two members of the monastic community.⁴⁷ The manuscript was commissioned by a priest-monk of the monastic community at Däbrä Mä^car and copied by a monk-scribe at Däbrä Mä^car for the monastery's church of St. Gabriel.

The four months that elapsed between the day of completion of the Gospel text (6 December) and the presentation of the Gospel book on the following Easter (8 April) were probably given over to the creation of the decorated Canon tables, the three full-page preface miniatures, and the four author portraits that introduce each of the Four Gospel texts. With the completion of the illuminations and final assembly of the quires, the quires were sewed together to wooden endboards.⁴⁸ Because the scribe Isayäyyas does not expli-

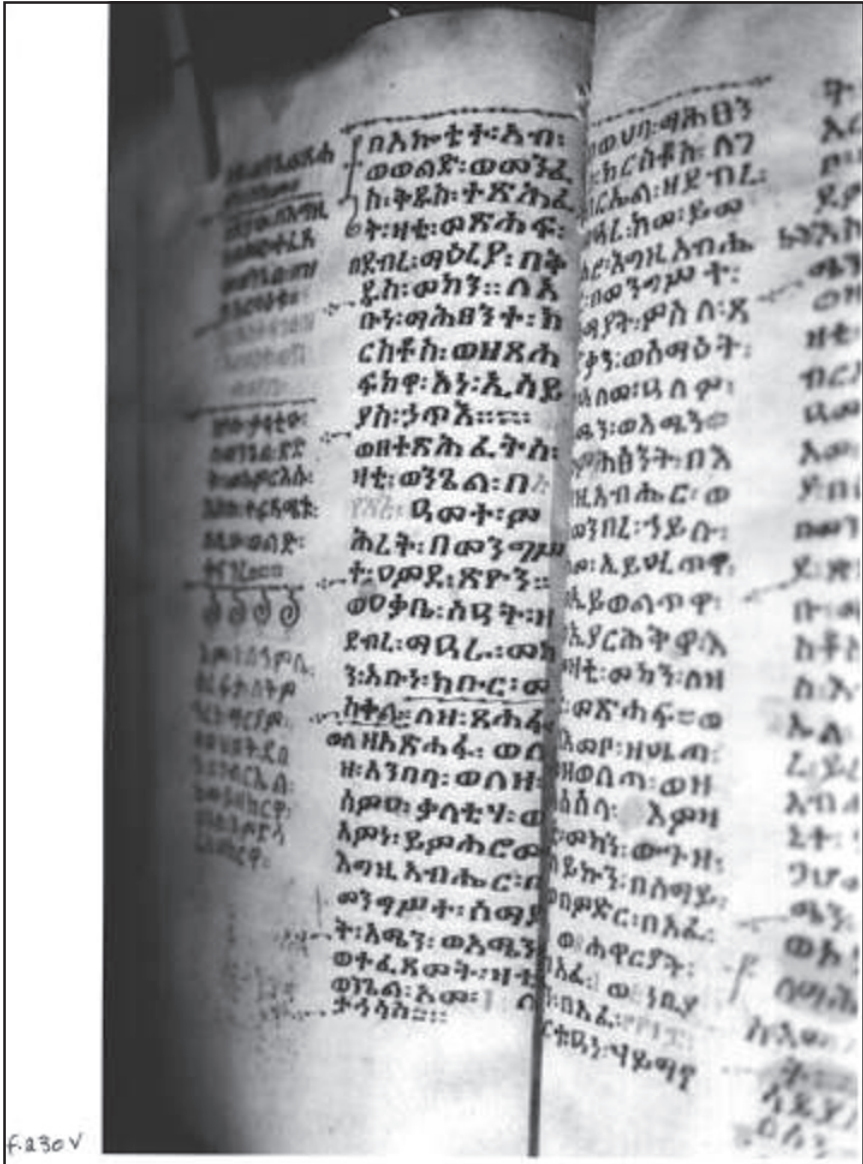
⁴⁴ PLANT, *Architecture of the Tigre*, 44–45.

⁴⁵ SAUTER, «Églises rupestres au Tigre», 167.

⁴⁶ For several other examples of the use of this phrase, see TADDESSE TAMRAT, «The Abbots of Däbrä-Hayq 1248–1535», 90. For signatures of monk-painters who describe themselves as sinners, see M. E. HELDMAN, *The Marian Icons of the Painter Frē Şəyon. A Study in Fifteenth-Century Ethiopian Art, Patronage, and Spirituality*, *Orientalia biblica et christiana* 6 (Wiesbaden, 1994), 24–25, 52–53.

⁴⁷ Fol. 231r, col. B (the final 8 lines).

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the distinctive method of sewing the endboards and the quires together, see J. A. SZIRMAI, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 1999), 45–50. Some of the quires with worn gutters were repaired in the early 1970s at the governor's palace in Mäqäle, a process which required re-sewing the quires; the wooden endboards were replaced at this time. On the project of repairing manuscripts at Mäqäle, see R. COWLEY with *fitawrari* ALEM TEFERU, «The Study of Geez Manuscripts in Tégre Province», *JES* 9, no. 1 (1971), 21–25.



f.230v

Pl. II. Four Gospels of Däbrä Ma'ar, fol. 230v, col. B
 (photo: M. E. Heldman)



Pl. III. Four Gospels of Däbrä Ma'ar, fol. 231r
(photo: M. E. Heldman)

citly state that he was the painter, we may assume that he played little or no part in producing the miniatures or decorating the Canon tables. These beautiful illuminations, which transformed the Gospel book given by *abunä Maḥḍāntä Krəstos* and *Isayyyas* into a luxury manuscript, were painted by another person, a monk who had received his artistic training within a monastic setting.⁴⁹

The painter of the miniatures (decorated Canon tables, three miniatures of the preface, and four Evangelist portraits) may have come from another monastery in northern Ethiopia. The iconography of the preface miniatures and the decoration of the Canon tables are the work of an accomplished painter who had access to visual models, some perhaps of considerable antiquity. The library of a recently-established monastery such as *Däbrä Mä'ar* would not have had a large store of illuminated manuscripts that could provide visual models, but it is safe to assume that, then as now, important manuscripts could be borrowed from other monastic establishments. The Gospel manuscript from which the text was copied may have been borrowed, too, and may have been decorated with Canon tables, author portraits, and even a Gospel frontispiece that would have provided visual models. Older monasteries in the general vicinity of *Däbrä Mä'ar* where a pre-13th cent. illuminated Gospel manuscript may have been located include the monastery of *abba Mätṭa'c* at *Däbrä Libanos* (Ham, Eritrea); the monastery at *Däbrä Dammo*, where *abba Iyäsus Mo'a*, according to his hagiography, trained as a scribe; the monastery of *St. Pāntālewōn* (*Abba Pāntālewōn*) near Aksum; and the monastery of *abba Gärīma* (*Ḥnda Abba Gärīma*) at *Mädära* near *Adwa*.

The addition of a colophon — an inscription giving the date of the completion of the manuscript, the name and perhaps the scriptorium of the scribe, and the name of the person for whom it was copied — and a note of donation was not standard practice among Ethiopian scribes. However, like the Four Gospels of *Däbrä Mä'ar*, the Four Gospels of *Iyäsus Mo'a* at *Däbrä Ḥayq Ḥṣṭifanos* presented by the founder of the monastery, *ʿaqqabe sä'at Iyäsus Mo'a*, contains a note of donation.⁵⁰ The priest *abunä Maḥḍāntä Krəstos*

⁴⁹ See M. E. HELDMAN, «Creating Religious Art: the Status of Artisans in Highland Christian Ethiopia», *Aethiopia. International Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 1 (1998), 131–146.

⁵⁰ EMM L V, pp. 293–301. The note of donation by *Iyäsus Mo'a* is on fol. 24v. Tadesse Tamrat, in his article on the history of the abbots of *Däbrä Ḥayq* («The Abbots of *Däbrä-Hayq*, 1248–1535», 87–117), utilized the material in the added notes of this manuscript. *ʿAqqabe sä'at Krəstos Täsfanä* of *Däbrä Ḥayq*, following the model of his successor, commissioned an illuminated manuscript of the Four Gospels (Addis Ababa, National Library, MS 28) in c.1320 for the monastery. The Gospels of *Krəstos Täsfanä* carries neither a colophon nor formal note of donation, but *Krəstos Täsfanä* is named in prayers that accompany miniatures in the Gospel Book; his Gospel book also holds a number of added notes of land grants that are published

apparently occupied a position of importance at Däbrä Mä^car. The date of his death on 29 Ṭəqəmt is recorded in a brief addition note on fol. 231r, col. B, so that his memorial service (*täzkar*) could be observed in perpetuity. The day of the death of the scribe Isayəyyas is also included in this note.

Both the colophon and the note of donation are carefully structured, following the pattern of clauses observed by G. W. B. Huntingford in Ethiopian land charters. These include an invocation, the reason for the grant or gift, name of the grantor, an immunity cause, followed by the sanction.⁵¹ Although the colophon begins with an invocation, «In glorification of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit», the note of donation commences directly with the name of the donor who gave the book «so that God would have mercy on him in the Kingdom of Heaven». The immunity clause warns against removing, damaging or destroying the manuscript; the sanction guarantees that the one who disregards the immunity clause will be anathematized, in this case by the mouths of the Twelve Apostles, the Fifteen Prophets, the Three Hundred Eighteen Orthodox Fathers and the Seventy-Two Apostles — fairly typical choices, but atypically expansive in the number of powers that will pronounce anathemas.⁵² The scribe Isayəyyas was familiar with the procedure of composing formal charters of donation.

The colophon begins at fol. 230v, col. B, following the explicit of the Gospel of John on col. A, and continues on the following recto (fol. 231r) where it is followed by the note of donation. Later notes, however, were added at various points within the manuscript where blank areas of parchment were available. Nevertheless, the availability of blank parchment was not the only reason for adding important notes within the monastery's primary manuscript of the Four Gospels. The Gospel book is the most important manuscript in

by PAULOS ŞADUÄ, «Un manoscritto etiopico degli Evangelii», *RSE* 11 (1952), 9–28; for the miniatures of the Gospels of Krəstos Täsfanä, see HELDMAN et al., *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, 176–177. Additional notes in the Gospel Book of *‘aqqäbe sä‘at* Iyäsus Mo‘a establish that Krəstos Täsfanä was an *‘aqqäbe sä‘at* of Däbrä Ḥäyq (TADDESSE TAMRAT, «The Abbots of Däbrä-Hayq», 95–98).

⁵¹ HUNTINGFORD, *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, 4–7, 16–21.

⁵² HUNTINGFORD, *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, 20. The sanction of the added note of fol. 4v, col. B (probably of the mid-15th cent.) is more unusual: «And God will oppress him who oppresses them from the Tree of Life in the heavens, and may his portion be with Judas [Yəhuda] and Fola». Judas [Yəhuda] is the «Seller of the Lord». In the Ethiopic Apocalypse of the Virgin, *The Vision of Our Lady Mary*, we learn that Fola was condemned because he «sold his daughters for an ox». See M. CHAÏNE (ed., tr.), *Apocrypha de Beata Maria Virgine*, CSCO 39/40, SAe 22/23 (Roma, 1909 [repr. Louvain, 1955]), 77 [text], 65 [tr.].) The names of Judas and Fola are also included in the added note of fol. 232r, col. A.

the church treasury or library, indeed it is an essential possession. The text, the life of Christ as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, is read during the church service, during which the presence of the book symbolizes the real presence of Christ among the congregation.⁵³ In highland Christian Ethiopia, it was the custom to use the Gospel manuscript as a repository for records of dates of deaths, in order to commemorate the deceased, and for records of gifts presented to the church.⁵⁴ The traditional manner of producing a manuscript of the Four Gospels guarantees a number of blank areas of parchment, which are free to receive additional notes. According to the standard practice for the production of manuscripts of the Four Gospels established during the Late Antique period in the Mediterranean world and followed assiduously by Ethiopian scribes, each Gospel text begins on the first recto of a quaternion (quire composed of eight folios).⁵⁵ In Ethiopian

⁵³ As stated in the first lines of the Gospel of John: In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

⁵⁴ Often important records were entered into the primary manuscript of the Four Gospels of a church, the Gospel Book that was carried into the church for the celebration of liturgy. Several such Gospel Books are presently known as *Wärq Wängel* or *Wängelä Wärq* («Golden Gospel»); they are the Four Gospels of Däbrä Libanos near Ham (A. BAUSI, «Su alcuni manoscritti presso comunità monastiche dell'Eritrea. Parte terza», *RSE*, 41 [1997], 13–23) and the Gospels of Iyäsus Mo^ʿa at Däbrä Ḥayq (EMML V, 293–301). Gilt metal plates cover the wooden endboards of the Four Gospels of Däbrä Libanos. The wooden endboards of the Gospels of Iyäsus Mo^ʿa of Däbrä Ḥayq were originally decorated with gold plates (TADDESSE TAMRAT, «The Abbots of Däbrä-Ḥayq», 92, the text of a note on fol. 339v; *bäwäwäq wäbäbrur*, «gold and silver» were omitted in the translation). The *Life of Marḥa Krastos* refers to the writing of a Golden Gospel [*wängelä za-wärq*]: KUR, *Actes de Marḥa Krastos*, 101 [text], 92 [tr.]. Many golden covers (and Gospel manuscripts, too) were lost during the uprising led by Aḥmad bin Ibrāhīm al-Ġāzī in the early 16th cent. Among the many accounts of looting in the history of his *jihād* is the note of «a book of gold, with a human image inside», (ŠIHĀB AD-DĪN AḤMAD, *Futūḥ al-Ḥabaša: the Conquest of Abyssinia*, tr. by P. L. Stenhouse [Hollywood CA, 2003], 249). It seems likely that this is a reference to an illuminated Gospel Book with golden covers, a *Wärq Wängel*. For the stripping of the monastery of Däbrä Ḥayq of its gold, but not its books, see ŠIHĀB AD-DĪN AḤMAD, *Futūḥ al-Ḥabaša*, 270–273. The church of the Trinity at Čäläqot in Ēndārta, Təgray is said to have a *Wärq Wängel*. In medieval Europe, a splendidly illuminated Gospel Book was known as a *Codex Aureus*, such as the *Codex Aureus* of Canterbury (Stockholm, Royal Library, MS A.135) and the *Codex Aureus* for Speyer Cathedral (Escorial, Codex Vit. 17), either because of a golden cover or the gold leaf that embellished the miniatures.

⁵⁵ P. MCGURK, *Latin Gospel Books from A.D. 400 to A.D. 800* (Paris/Brussels, 1961), 7–10. Reprinted as «Introduction to Latin Gospel Books from A.D. 400 to A.D. 800», in his *Gospel Books and Early Latin Manuscripts*, *Variorum Collected Studies* 606 (Aldershot, England, 1998), essay VI: 7–10. In Ethiopian manuscripts of the Four Gospels, the pattern of eight folios (four bi-folios) per quire may be altered in order to

practice, each Gospel is introduced by a full-page miniature of the evangelist-author painted upon the verso of the final leaf of the preceding quire. The recto of this leaf is often free of text.

The additional notes, while terse, present information about the community and its supporters. In the colophon, the monastery's founder and first abbot, Gäbrä Mäsqäl of Gärcalta,⁵⁶ is identified with the distinctive title of *‘aqqabe säcat*,⁵⁷ a title that continued to be used by his successors. The added notes yield neither the year and nor the date of Gäbrä Mäsqäl's death. The short undated note of fol. 14v, written at the order of *abunä Märqoryos*, states that *abunä Kəbur Mäsqäl* gave (*wähabä*) arable land (*gäraht*) for his *täzkar*. The longer and difficult note of fol. 231v (also undated), written at the order of *‘aqqabe säcat* Gäbrä Mäsqäl during his lifetime, includes lists of donors who gave fields to Gabriel, i. e. the church of St. Gabriel, as well as a list of persons with the dates of their annual commemoration. Three later additional notes include *abunä* Gäbrä Mäsqäl among the saints within the sanction clause.⁵⁸

The successor of *‘aqqabe säcat* Gäbrä Mäsqäl, perhaps his immediate successor, was *‘aqqabe säcat* Tänśə'a Krəstos. That he was abbot after 1388 is established by the additional note of fol. 178v–179r which *‘aqqabe säcat* Tänśə'a Krəstos caused to be written. The note orders the commemoration (*täzkar*) of one «*abunä abba Sälama pappas*» on the 20th of the month of *Nähase*.⁵⁹ The date of this commemoration confirms that this *abunä abba* Sälama *pappas* is the man who was the Metropolitan of Ethiopia from 1348 until his death in 1388.⁶⁰ In addition, the note concerning the *täzkar* of *abba*

facilitate the placement of the opening of each Gospel text upon the first recto folio of a quire, following the Late Antique scribal tradition of beginning each Gospel on a new quire. See P. MCGURK, «The Irish Pocket Gospel Book», *Sacris Erudiri* 8, no. 2 (1956), 249–269, reprinted in McGurk, *Gospel Books and Early Latin Manuscripts*.

⁵⁶ Gäbrä Mäsqäl of Gärcalta is not to be confused with the better known Gäbrä Mäsqäl, the disciple and successor of *abba* Samu'el of Däbrä Halle Luya; see S. KAPLAN, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, Studien zur Kulturkunde 73 (Wiesbaden, 1984), 8.

⁵⁷ The additional note (fol. 231v, col. A & col. B lines 1–12) was written when Gäbrä Mäsqäl was *‘aqqabe säcat*. In posthumous references to an abbot of Däbrä Mäcar, the title *abunä* replaces the title *‘aqqabe säcat*.

⁵⁸ The phrase «by the mouth of *abunä* Gäbrä Mäsqäl» appears in the sanction clause of the following notes: fol. 14r, col. B; fol. 114r, cols. A & B, following the list of pericopes of the Gospel of Luke; and fol. 178r, cols. A & B, following the list of pericopes of the Gospel of John.

⁵⁹ The note is written in the upper margins of the portrait of St. John and the Gospel incipit.

⁶⁰ The manuscript of the Synaxary published by Budge (London, British Library, Or. 661) begins the reading for 20 *Nähase* with «On this day died *abba* Sälama the interpreter...», see E. A. W. BUDGE, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church* (Cambridge, 1928), IV, 1232. The Synaxary recension published by Guidi lists the com-

Sälama commands «...and observe, all of you priests who are blessed through his hands, his *täzkar* on the 20th of the month of *Näḥase*. Do not forget him». The phrase «all of you priests who are blessed through his hands» refers to those priests of Däbrä Mä'ar who had been ordained by *abunä abba* Sälama, whose prerogative as Metropolitan Bishop of the Ethiopian Church was the ordination of all priests and all deacons as well as consecration of all new altar tablets (*ṣəllat*).

That Tānsə'a Krəstos was *‘aqqabe sä'at* during the reign of Emperor Dawit (1382–1413) is also indicated by the additional note of fol. 76r, col. A, a record of the grant of *gwəlt* land to Gabriel of Däbrä Mä'ar by Emperor Dawit. *Abunä Tānsə'a Krəstos* is named posthumously in four of the additional notes. The note of fol. 4v, col. A (final 9 lines) also contains the name of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob (r. 1434–1468). The note on fol. 231r, col. B (final 8 lines) gives the date of death of three members of the monastic community in the following order: «Maḥḍāntä Krəstos on 29 *Ṭəqəmt*, Isayəyyas on [date illegible] *Säne*, and *abunä Tānsə'a Krəstos* on 20 *Mäggabit*». The order of the three names in this list, written by three different hands, suggests that *abunä Tānsə'a Krəstos* outlived Maḥḍāntä Krəstos and Isayəyyas. *Abunä Tānsə'a Krəstos* died on 20 *Mäggabit*, yet a line at the bottom of fol. 13v (bottom of the page) states that his *täzkar* was to be commemorated on 9 *Säne*.⁶¹ According to another posthumous note, *abunä Tānsə'a Krəstos* gave (*wāhabä*) arable land (*gäraht*) to Gabriel (fol. 13v, col. B).

Both 14th-cent. abbots of Däbrä Mä'ar, *‘aqqabe sä'at* Gäbrä Mäsqäl and *‘aqqabe sä'at* Tānsə'a Krəstos, gave grants of land to the monastery. Gäbrä Mäsqäl must have brought family land with him when he founded the monastery.⁶² Because monastic leaders frequently came from land-owning families,⁶³ it is quite possible that *‘aqqabe sä'at* Tānsə'a Krəstos also brought family land to the monastery. The notes concerning the royal *g'əlt* grant of

memoration of *abba* Sälama on 21 *Näḥase*; see I. GUIDI (ed., tr.), *Le synaxaire éthiopien*. III. *Mois de Nahasé et de Pâguemên*, (traduction de S. Grébaud), PO 9 (Paris, 1912 [repr. 1981]), 359. The bishop of Ethiopia was one of three metropolitan bishops appointed by the Egyptian patriarch, the other two were the bishops of Damietta and Jerusalem (EVETTS, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, 33, n. 5). On the contribution made by *abba* Sälama to the Ethiopian Church, see A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, «Abbä Salama, métropolitaine d'Éthiopie (1348–1388) et son rôle de traducteur», in: *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Ethiopici (Roma 2–4 aprile 1959)*, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 357 (Roma, 1960), 397–401.

⁶¹ We are unable to explain this disparity. The *täzkar* is to be observed upon the anniversary of a person's death.

⁶² Whether the donation of land for his *täzkar* was a reallocation of land or an additional grant of land is unknown. For a discussion of land grants of abbots, see D. CRUMMEY, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Urbana and Chicago, 2000), 42–43.

⁶³ KAPLAN, *The Monastic Holy Man*, 54–59.

Emperor Dawit during the abbacy of Tānsəʾa Krəstos⁶⁴ suggests that the monastery and its abbot had attained a level of importance, because Emperor Dawit more than any other ruler of the 14th and 15th cent. undertook a program of strengthening ties between the court and monastic leaders by granting lands to their monasteries.⁶⁵ The undated note of fol. 76r, col. A not only describes the *gwəlt* land given by Emperor Dawit for his *täzkar* on 9 Ṭəqəmt,⁶⁶ but also lists *gwəlt* lands given by Emperor Yəšəhaq (r. 1413–1420) for the celebration of his *täzkar* on 30 Ṭəqəmt.

Less can be inferred about later abbots of Däbrä Mäʿar. ʿAqqabe säʿat Mäksimos was abbot of Däbrä Mäʿar during the reign of Zärʾa Yaʿəqob (1434–1468).⁶⁷ Dates of the abbacy of ʿaqqabe säʿat Mäqabis⁶⁸ and of ʿaqqabe säʿat Gäbrä Maryam have yet to be established. ʿAqqabe säʿat Gäbrä Maryam gave land to the monastery of Däbrä Məʿərya [Mäʿar] for the *täzkar* of *abunä* Gäbr Ḥer, presumably a deceased worthy of the monastery.⁶⁹

A short undated note written for one *abunä* Märqoryos, evidently a member of the monastic community, is of interest because it refers to «his children, both male and female»,⁷⁰ terminology which refers to a monastic community composed of both monks and nuns. The pattern of dual monasteries with both male and female monastics apparently had a long history in Ethiopian monasticism.⁷¹ A 15th cent. holy woman Krəstos Šämra established a

⁶⁴ Two brief notes on fol. 4v, col. A, follow the explicit of the *Gəssawe Šərʿat*, a synoptic preface to the Gospels. In addition, there is an incomplete note on fol. 14r, col. A, at least three lines of which appear to have been scraped away; below this note of col. A, is a block of text, 14 lines in length, that has been rendered illegible by smudging the ink; the note of col. B, a continuation of the erased block, is the partial record of what appears to have been a rancorous challenge to the leadership of the monastery. A note of fol. 76r, col. A restates the incomplete statement concerning the *gwəlt* land given by Dawit of note fol. 14r col. A. For a discussion of *gwəlt* land, see CRUMMEY, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia*, 8–12.

⁶⁵ KAPLAN, *The Monastic Holy Man*, 54–55.

⁶⁶ This is the date given in the Ethiopic synaxary for the commemoration of Emperor Dawit: BUDGE, *The Book of Saints of the Ethiopian Church*, I, 135; G. COLIN (ed., tr.), *Le synaxaire éthiopien. Mois de Ṭeqemt*, PO 44 (Turnhout, 1987), 52–53.

⁶⁷ Mäksimos is named as ʿaqqabe säʿat in the notes of fol. 4v., one of which includes the name of Emperor Zärʾa Yaʿəqob.

⁶⁸ He caused the note of fol. 114r, col. A to be written.

⁶⁹ Note of fol. 178r, cols. A & B. The sanction clause of this land grant includes a penalty of divine punishment «by the mouth of Our Lady Mary», which is unique among the additional notes of this manuscript. However, this particular sanction clause appears in a land charters of Säyfä Arʿad (r. 1344–1372) (HUNTINGFORD, *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, 32).

⁷⁰ Note of fol. 14v, written in the upper margin of the portrait of St. Matthew.

⁷¹ The *Life of abunä* Zä-Mikaʿel Arägawi, the traditional founder of monasticism in Ethiopia, suggests that the pattern of double monastery was introduced to Ethiopia

hermitage at Lake Ṭana after receiving her monastic habit at the monastery of *abunä* Täklä Haymanot at Däbrä Asbo. When her fame as a holy woman attracted young women, she established a monastery there becoming the abbess [*əmmä mənnet*], while Isaac, a monk, became the head of the lesser community of monks drawn to her monastery, the church of which was dedicated to the Archangel Michael.⁷² That the rite of monastic investiture was identical for men and women is demonstrated by the *Life* of Zena Maryam, an Ethiopian holy woman of the late 14th cent. The novice received from the abbot the tunic (*qämis*) and the belt or leather cord (*qənat*), while the monastic cap (*qob^c*) and the scapular (*askema*) were bestowed after a period of spiritual apprenticeship.⁷³ A nun owed her allegiance to the abbot from whom she had received her monastic tunic and belt; he was her spiritual father, and she his spiritual daughter.⁷⁴ This pattern of allegiance is corroborated by the Portuguese priest Francisco Alvarez who lived in Ethiopia between 1520 and 1526. He observed that «nuns are not cloistered, nor do they live together in convents, but in villages, and in the monasteries of the monks ... and the nuns give obedience where they receive their habits».⁷⁵

A brief note on fol. 230v, col. A (final 8 lines) states that the commemoration of Ṭəmḥarännä Maryam, a woman who gave brocade to the church of St.

during the Aksumite period with the institution of monasticism itself; see I. GUIDI, «Il *Gadla 'Aragâwî*», *MRALm*, ser. V, 2-1, 1894, 54–96. Whether or not this is actually so, the author(s) of the *Life* of *abunä* Zä-Mika'el demonstrate that they considered the double monastery to be typical of Ethiopian monasticism, a pattern which *abunä* Zä-Mika'el brought from Egypt. Double monasteries in Egypt go back to the time of St. Pachomius, whose sister established a monastery near his and became the «mother» of her community; see *The Life of Pachomius [Vita Prima Graeca]*, tr. A. N. Athanassakis, (Missoula, Montana, 1975), 45–47, 176–177. This pattern was followed by St. Basil and his sister Macrina (*Vita S. Macrinae Virginis*, in: *PG*, vol. XLVI (Paris, 1863), cols. 959–1000), and by Paula who established a monastery for women at Bethlehem beside the male monastery of Jerome (ANNE E. HICKEY, *Women of the Roman Aristocracy as Christian Monastics*, Studies in Religion no. 1, [Ann Arbor MI, 1987], 30–31).

⁷² E. CERULLI (ed., tr.), *Atti di Krestos Samrā*, CSCO 163/164, SAe 33/34 (Louvain, 1956), 50–52 [text], 34–36 [tr.].

⁷³ E. CERULLI, «Atti di Zēnā Māryām, monaca etiopica del secolo XIV», *RSO* 21 (1946), 140, 142–143.

⁷⁴ Allegiance of the nun to a spiritual father was the pattern in the Egyptian Church (IRIS HABIB EL-MASRI, «A Historical Survey of the Convents for Women in Egypt up to the Present Day», *Bulletin de la Societe d'Archeologie Copte* 14 [1950–1957], 83–84, 86–88). A similar institution existed in the Greek Church (CATIA GALATARIOU, «Byzantine Women's Monastic Communities: the Evidence of the *Typika*», *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 38 [1988], 287).

⁷⁵ FRANCISCO ALVARES, *The Prester John of the Indies: A True Relation of the Lands of the Prester John*, ed. G. F. Beckingham and G. W. B. Huntingford, Hakluyt Society Publications, 2nd ser., 114 (Cambridge, 1961), I, 200–202.

Gabriel, was to be observed on 10 *Ḥamle*, but gives no indication of her relationship with the monastery. She may have been an important member of the local ruling elite. This note mandating the commemoration of a woman may be contrasted with an additional note (fol. 114r, col. A) written by the order of *ʿaqqabe säʿat* Mäqabis, regarding the commemoration of Səmʿon who, with his wife, gave *gərat ʿamaqwäy* (?) for his *täzkar* on 11 *Ḥamle*.⁷⁶ Although Səmʿon's anonymous wife is identified as a donating partner in this record, her commemoration is not mandated in the additional notes.

The list of persons to be commemorated in the note of fol. 231v, col. A – col. B, written by the order of *ʿaqqabe säʿat* Gäbrä Mäsqäl, includes the name of Yaʿəbikä ʿƏgziʾ on 25 *Ṭərr*. The man to whom this commemoration refers may be the powerful ruler (*mäkʷännən*) of ʿƏntərta (ʿƏndārta), the district in which Däbrä Mäʿar is located. The note does not include any identification of this man, but a reference to the deceased ruler of ʿƏntərta would have needed no further identification.⁷⁷ Yaʿəbikä ʿƏgziʾ was destroyed by Emperor ʿAmdä Şəyon after 1319 because the governor refused to recognize the sovereignty of the emperor.⁷⁸ The colophon of the *Kəbrä Nəgüšt* (*The Glory of the Kings*) identifies Yaʿəbikä ʿƏgziʾ, the «upright and God-loving governor [*mäkʷännən*]», as the authority who approved the production of this document in Gəʿəz, the literary language of highland Christian Ethiopia.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Səmʿon could not, of course, stipulate the date of his *täzkar* while he was still living. This note was apparently written on or after 11 *Ḥamle*, the date of Səmʿon's death. *Abunä* Mäqabis evidently ordered the note to be written as a record of the donation that Səmʿon and his wife had made for his *täzkar* prior to his death.

⁷⁷ An unpublished manuscript of the *Life* of Gäbrä Mäsqäl preserved at Däbrä Mäʿar might throw some light on this question of his connections with the monastery.

⁷⁸ In a historical note in the Four Gospels of Däbrä Ḥayq (EMML 1832), ʿAmdä Şəyon states that «God gave me into my hands the ruler of ʿƏntərta with all his army, his people, his relatives and all his country as far as the cathedral of Aksum» (TADDESSE TAMRAT, «The Abbots of Däbrä-Ḥayq», 95–96). A land grant of Yaʿəbikä ʿƏgziʾ is dated 1319; see CONTI ROSSINI, «L'evangelo d'oro di Dabra Libānos», 200–201. His defeat is recorded in a grant of Ləbnä Dəngəl (CONTI ROSSINI, *Liber Axumae*, 30–31 [text], 36 [tr.]). For a discussion of the conflict between local rulers in northern Ethiopia and Emperor ʿAmdä Şəyon, see TADDESSE TAMRAT, *Church and State in Ethiopia*, 73–74, 251.

⁷⁹ The colophon alleges that the *Kəbrä Nəgüšt* was translated from a Coptic manuscript belonging to the Throne of Mark the Evangelist [i. e. the Egyptian Patriarch] into Arabic in the Year of Mercy 490 [A.D. 1226] in the country of Ethiopia during the reign of King Lalibäla, explaining that God neglected to have it translated into the speech of Ethiopia during the reigns of the Zagwe kings because they were not «Israelites», i. e. descendants of Mənilək, son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, in other words, descendants of the Aksumite kings (C. BEZOLD, *Kebra Nagast. Die Herrlichkeit der Könige*, Abhandlungen der königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil. Class., Bd. XIII, 1. Abteilung [Munich, 1905], 138 [tr.], 172–173 [text]; E. A. W. Budge (tr.), *The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menylek* [Lon-

A post-1530 land charter of Emperor Ləbnä Dəngəl, recorded in a manuscript presently in Paris (Bib. nat., MS d'Abbadie 152), renewed royal grants of land to monasteries of northern Ethiopia, lands given for the support of the annual commemorations of past emperors, lands given «for the salvation of their souls».⁸⁰ This charter names *Abba Nəftalem* as the abbot of Däbrä Mä'ara. However, the name of *ʿuqqabe sä'ut Nəftalem* does not appear among the notes of the Four Gospels of Däbrä Mä'ar, nor is there a record among the additional notes of this renewal of land charters. All of the additional notes, with the exception of the 19th-cent. note of fol. 76r, col. B, appear to have been written before 1530.

The majority of additional notes in the Four Gospels of Däbrä Mä'ar are records regarding *täzkar*, the annual commemoration of the dead, among which notes are records of grants of land for the provisioning of the commemorative meal, a significant element of the *täzkar*. These records are simple notations that do not follow the formal pattern of land grants or charters as outlined by Huntingford in his *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*. The notes that record the dates of commemoration of members of the monastic community and of those who gave gifts to the monastery for their commemoration are documents of obligation. The living members of the community received the responsibility for the memorial services and the associated commemorative meals in remembrance of the dead. The duty of commemorating the dead and preserving their memory among the living passed from generation to generation.

SUMMARY

The colophon and note of donation of Däbrä Mä'ar Gospels, a manuscript historically important for its illuminated Canon tables and Christological preface consisting of three full-page miniatures, not only provide a dated record of the production of the manuscript in A.D. 1340–1341, but also yield information concerning the history of the monastery and its founder. Additional notes, copied over the years into various blank spaces within the manuscript, consist primarily of records of grants of land made to the monastery of Däbrä Mä'ar and records concerning the annual commemoration of deceased members of the community and of laity who gave gifts to the community for their annual commemoration. Complete translations of the additional notes are not included in this essay.

don, 1922], 228–229). Sevir B. Chernetsov recognized the political message of the colophon of the *Kəbrä Nəgəšt* as a literary manifestation of the legitimate claim of Ya'əbikä ʿƏgzi' for the throne of Ethiopia (a passage from Chernetsov's unpublished *History of Ethiopia* quoted by M. KROPP, «Zur Deutung des Titels 'Kəbrä nəgəšt'», *OC* 80 [1996], 108–115).

⁸⁰ HUNTINGFORD, *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, 51–53, no. 43; CONTI ROSSINI, *Liber Axumae*, 39–41 [text]; 46–48 [tr.].

The four gospels of d'ÁbrÃ mÃcar: colophon and note of donation. Article. Mar 2005.Â The large painting, South Africa 1958â€“1959 (Deposition) (1959) and four small etchings, all 1955, on the Deposition of Christ, form the basis of a discussion of the place of Albert Adams in the canon of South African art and of this artistâ€™s re-interpretation of a key image in Christian iconography and Western painting.