Essays in Ethiopian Manuscript Studies

Proceedings of the International Conference
Manuscripts and Texts, Languages and Contexts:
the Transmission of Knowledge
in the Horn of Africa
Hamburg, 17–19 July 2014

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Table of Contents

Preface

From the Conference to the Proceedings

The papers collected in this volume, with two exceptions (see below), were originally presented and discussed during the international conference 'Manuscripts and texts, languages and contexts. The transmission of knowledge in the Horn of Africa', convened at the Universität Hamburg from 17 to 19 July 2014. Therefore, the composition of the volume largely reflects that of the conference, which was organized into four thematic panels, chaired by the convenors themselves (who also edited the respective contributions for this collection). These were Palaeography and Codicology (chaired by Denis Nosnitsin; the papers are grouped in Chapter 2), History and Historical Geography (chaired by Denis Nosnitsin; see Chapter 3), Gəʿəz Philology and Language (chaired by Alessandro Bausi; see Chapter 4), and Islamic Tradition: Arabic and ʿAğamī Manuscripts (chaired by Alessandro Gori, see Chapter 5).

At the beginning of each panel, the Chairs took the chance to reflect on their respective projects (these materials form the basis of Chapter 1 in this volume). Denis Nosnitsin summarized the preliminary results of the project *Ethio-SPaRe*: *Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia*: *Salvation, Preservation, Research* (ERC Starting Grant, Hamburg, 2009–2015, see pp. 3–6 for more details). After a short general overview, he dwelt on the new findings in Ethiopian manuscript making tradition, revealed thanks to the efforts of the project team and commented on an updated map of manuscript collections in Təgray. The PI focused in particular on several achievements owing to the interdisciplinary work within the project: new findings on historical ink composition were achieved thanks to close cooperation with scientists; advances in manuscript conservation were possible due to close cooperation between philologists and book conservators; research into local context was supported by archaeologists. The latter cooperation was illustrated by a case study on the church of Araʿro Täklä Haymanot in the *wäräda* Gulo Mäk̲äda. Here, Denis Nosnitsin's study of the history and the collection of the church (see this volume pp. 23–58 for an extended version) was further supplied by a virtual reconstruction and three-dimensional modelling by the archaeologist Marco Barbarino (Naples), now visible on the project web site. The methodology applied is illustrated in an Annex to the presentation of the Ethio-SPaRe project (see pp. 7–10) on the example of the church of Məʾəsar Gʷəḥila.

Alessandro Bausi spoke about the aims and goals of the project *TraCES*: *From Translation to Creation*: *Changes in Ethiopic Style and Lexicon from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (ERC Advanced Grant, Hamburg, 2014–

2019, see pp. 11–13 for details). The main scope is the creation of a digital an-notated corpus of the Gǝʿǝz language, linked to a unique online dictionary of Gǝʿǝz that would include not only words and their translations but also the information on roots and patterns, variants, and numerous language exam-ples. The computational tools being developed for Gǝʿǝz lexicography and corpus linguistics were illustrated by Cristina Vertan and Andreas Ellwardt (Hamburg, TraCES project team, see pp. 14–15).

Alessandro Gori described the structure and methodology of the project *IslHornAfr*: *Islam in the Horn of Africa, A Comparative Literary Approach* (ERC Advanced Grant, Florence – Copenhagen, 2013–2018). The project aims at the study of the Islamic literary traditions of the Horn of Africa (see pp. 17–20 for more details). With the help of a specifically developed data-base, it identifies, lists, describes, and classifies texts circulating among the Muslims (whether in Arabic or in local languages) according to their genres, contents, titles, authors, places of creation, number of witnesses, distribution of witnesses, and linguistic and graphic peculiarities.

The panel on codicology was primarily dedicated to the issues of manu-script production in Christian Ethiopia (codicology, scribal schools, collec-tions, manuscript preservation were among the central topics covered). The paper by Denis Nosnitsin, was dedicated to the 'Emergence and decline of manuscript collections in North Ethiopia: problems of study'. It is common practice in philological studies that scholars approach manuscripts and texts as isolated witnesses. Yet, in Christian Ethiopia, each witness is part of an ecclesiastic collection, or even of a network of collections. Such collections could go through various stages in their history, closely linked to the history of the relevant owning institution. They could be founded; re-established and/or renovated; have periods of extension and growth, and periods of de-cline. They could disappear by way of complete or partial physical destruc-tion or dissolving, and remaining manuscripts could be incorporated into other collections. Understanding the history of collections could resolve a number of issues related to individual manuscripts. The study of the Ethio-pian handwritten book can thus unfold on two interrelated levels: that of the individual manuscript and the of the collection; in many cases the features of a book can be better explained if looked at in the context of another level, that of the collection, and vice versa. This approach of the Ethio-SPaRe project was illustrated by a series of findings (see this volume pp. 23–58 for its appli-cation to the study of the collection of Araʿro Täklä Haymanot).

Vitagrazia Pisani (Hamburg, *Ethio-SPaRe* project team) looked at a par-ticular text type as it is found in the various manuscripts she surveyed, 'The Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: unknown witnesses from East Tǝgray' (see this volume pp. 75–94). This work (Eth. *Gädlä ḥawaryat*) is a collection

of texts translated into Gəˁəz from Arabic, which has circulated, with varying intensity, since the end of the thirteenth century. A significant number of witnesses was recorded in East Təgray. They date to the late fourteenth through the seventeenth century and contain between twenty-seven and thirty-six texts. The composition and distribution of these manuscripts are the main focus of the article.

Yohannes Gebre-Selassie (Mekelle) also surveyed manuscripts in Təgray ('The composition of historical documents in Təgray: the *Kəbrä nägäśt, Mäṣḥafä Aksum*, *Wängel zäwärq* and *Tarikä nägäśt*', not published in this volume). For that, he examined the collections of the churches of Aksum Ṣəyon and Mäqälä Mädḫane ˁAläm, and the monastery of Yoḥannəs Käma. Interestingly, he showed that the traditional title *Wängel zäwärq* ('Golden Gospel') may apply to manuscripts not only without any decoration, but also without any Gospel or religious content at all. Thus, the so-called Golden Gospel of Mäqälä Mädḫane ˁAläm only contains over 3,500 land ownership documents from the town of Mäqälä for the years 1923–1975, and was obviously originally intended for the particular purpose of document archive. Not only the priests refer to the manuscript as the Golden Gospel, they also treat it as one, as they kiss it before opening.

The talk by Ted Erho (Munich), 'Towards an understanding of early Ethiopian scribal tendencies' (not in this volume) was dedicated to the paratextual elements introduced by early scribes in biblical manuscripts. Among the most theoretical aspects of research on early Gəˁəz manuscripts and the early (and pre-)textual history of the Ethiopic Bible is that of the scribal activities that passed on the various traditions into later, better attested, eras. Much of the problem stems from the lack of serviceable evidence, as it is difficult to find exemplars from before the fifteenth century that are closely enough related to permit such an analysis. One of the rare exceptions occurs with manuscripts EMML no. 6977 and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, éthiopien 7, both of which contain the Old Testament book of Job followed by that of Daniel and possess a genetic relationship unlikely to be more than a couple of generations removed from a common ancestor. While textual variants often form the sole basis for an investigative comparison, paratextual evidence can be used to provide a far more comprehensive picture of scribal habits and tendencies. Erho's study, focusing primarily on the Book of Daniel in each manuscript, drew upon three paratextual aspects of scribal activity on display: 1) utilization of sense divisions; 2) inclusion of *sigla*, including *paragraphoi*; and 3) the formation of headings and use of rubrication. He demonstrated that early Ethiopian scribes had little autonomy to make cognizant changes of any kind to the copied text, suggesting the fairly high probability of relatively stable, but increasingly corrupt, texts (especially biblical

ones) apart from those few times when corrections were actively pursued at
scholarly centres.

Sophia Dege-Müller (Hamburg, *Ethio-SPaRe* project team) presented on
the 'Text arrangement and scribal practices in Ethiopian Psalter manuscripts'
(published as 'The Ethiopic Psalter manuscripts: scribal practices and text ar-
rangement', pp. 59–74). Analysing the Psalters recorded by the Ethio-SPaRe
project, she demonstrated that a number of frequently overlooked codico-
logical features typical for this type of manuscript (stichometry, midpoint
marking, rubrication, etc.) are shared by the Ethiopian tradition with such
manuscript traditions as Hebrew, Coptic, and Christian Arabic.

In his paper 'Portraits of donors in Ethiopian manuscripts of late 19th and
early 20th centuries' (not in this volume), Michael Knüppel (Vellmar) illus-
trated how the ancient illumination tradition of depicting donors in manu-
scripts has modified since the introduction of book print and photography.

A large number of conference papers were dedicated to Ethiopian history
with the focus on the use of manuscripts for reconstructing Ethiopian cul-
tural landscape of the past. Stéphane Ancel (Hamburg, *Ethio-SPaRe* project
team) presented an overview on 'Historical texts in manuscripts from East
Təgray' (not in this volume). After introducing the different kinds of histori-
cal texts found in that region (genealogies, chronicles, commemoration notes,
or short marginalia recording events which occurred in the past), a special
attention was paid to the manuscripts preserved in the famous monastery of
Däbrä Dammo. Stéphane Ancel showed that, on the whole, historical texts
are given considerable importance in manuscripts and in ecclesiastical collec-
tions, even if purely historical manuscripts remain a rarity.

Several presenters focused on the historical geography of Ethiopia. The
paper 'Reconstructing and mapping Aksum's historical toponymy: a prelimi-
nary attempt' was the result of an interdisciplinary research of an archaeolo-
gist, Luisa Sernicola (Naples), and philologist, Antonella Brita (Hamburg)
(not in this volume). Centuries of research in and about the area of Aksum
have produced a rich corpus of place names, emerging from various types of
written sources (traditionally domain of philological research) that may con-
tribute to refine our knowledge of Aksum's ancient urban topography and
the reconstruction of the changes in the spatial organization of the territory
(traditionally domain of archaeology). The paper illustrated a preliminary at-
tempt to classify, analyse, and visualize Aksum's ancient and contemporary
toponymy by combining philology, archaeology and geography.

The talk of Solomon Gebreyes (Hamburg) was dedicated to 'The Chroni-
cle of Emperor Gälawdewos (1540–1559): a source for the research of his-
torical geography of medieval Ethiopia' (see this volume pp. 109–118). In his
paper, Solomon focused on the place names featured on the pages of this im-

portant sixteenth-century text, trying to localize them using the text-internal but also text-external evidence and show the changes in the historical geography of the Ethiopian empire under Gälawdewos.

Shiferaw Bekele (Addis Ababa) introduced the preliminary results of his research towards 'Mapping medieval Ethiopia: the province of Wäǧ, 13th to 16th centuries' (not in this volume). He showed how the sources that have become available in the past decades, in particular the Stephanite hagiographies, help to identify the location of this historical region with a far greater precision than was possible to the earlier historians. Shiferaw argued that the high areas of Gurageland of today constituted the central parts of the province, the Gurage people being its core population. Five historical monasteries of Wäǧ could be placed on the map. More sources are needed to draw the precise boundaries of the province.

In his presentation 'Where was the original place of the Atronsä Maryam church?' (not in this volume), Derese Ayenachew (Debre Berhan) introduced a manuscript containing the Universal History by Ibn al-ᶜAmid (Giyorgis Wäldä ᶜAmid) from the church of Atronsä Maryam in Amḥara Sayənt. A historical additional note on ff. 143 and 144 of this 229-leaf manuscript, which summarizes sixteenth-seventeenth century events in the history of Ethiopia, seems to suggest that Atronsä Maryam was initially founded elsewhere and was transferred to Amḥara Sayənt at a later point in time.

A number of presentations introduced previously unknown sources. The paper by Getatchew Haile (Collegeville), 'Emperor Zärʾa Yaᶜqob of Ethiopia to Augusta Helen, "Your deed followed you"' (read in absentia; see this volume pp. 97–108) presented an Amharic text that may have the answer to the cryptic phrase *gəbrəki täläwäkki* from a *Nägś* hymn by Emperor Zärʾa Yaᶜqob of Ethiopia.

A very different Amharic text was the subject of the paper 'A short Amharic manuscript of the 1840s found in the Vatican papers of Arnauld d'Abbadie' by Eloi Ficquet (Paris) (not in this volume). Nineteen boxes of unpublished papers of the French-Basque-Irish explorer Arnauld d'Abbadie (1815–1893) are preserved in the Vatican Library: seventeen with the various parts and stages of his memoirs (edited by Jeanne-Marie Allier from 1980 to 1999) and two with different notebooks and some miscellaneous unbound papers. The only Ethiopian manuscript is a single bifolium containing an Amharic text probably written by an informant of the scholar. It seems to be a collection of popular stories and *tärät*-like sayings and comments on local history of areas in Goǧǧam and Bägemdər. Another leaf seem to preserve a translation by d'Abbadie. The manuscript is quite an unexpected witness of popular Amharic traditions in the 1840s, before the emergence of an official Amharic literature in the following decades.

Wolbert Smidt (Mekelle) introduced some previously unknown historical documents in his paper on 'North Ethiopian epistolography—newly discovered letters of Təgrayan nobles from missionary archives (second half of the 19ᵗʰ century)' (not in this volume). The letters, in Amharic, with Gəʿəz and Tigrinya elements, were written by northern Ethiopian nobles to Catholic missionaries of the Apostolic Vicariate of Abyssinia and were now discovered among the private papers of Jean-Baptist Coulbeaux. A particular attention was given to the seals we find on the letters, which were compared to the ones known from Sven Rubenson's publications.

Some papers revisited known manuscripts, trying to find new ways of dealing with them. Two papers approached the manuscript heritage of *aläqa* Täklä Iyäsus Nagaro Waqǧəra. In his paper 'The historical writings of *aläqa* Täklä Iyäsus in documenting the literary, cultural and regional landscape of Goǧǧam' (not in this volume), Getie Gelaye (Hamburg) examined the cultural, literary and regional landscape of Goǧǧam as documented in Täklä Iyäsus's *Genealogy of Goǧǧam* (published by Girma Getahun, 2010) and *History of Ethiopia* (published by Sergew Gelaw, 2009). Getie traced the founders and ancestors mentioned in the genealogy to local communities and offered a thematic analysis of several poems by Täklä Iyäsus, commenting on the linguistic features typical of Goǧǧame Amharic dialect.

Margaux Herman (Debre Berhan and Addis Ababa) presented a paper entitled 'Writing the ancient history of Goǧǧam: the screen of the 19ᵗʰ-century regional historiography' (see this volume, pp. 119–142). She showed how recent written sources on the history of Goǧǧam, particularly the works of the aforementioned *aläqa* Täklä Iyäsus Nagaro Waqǧəra, are closer to the oral tradition than to the mediaeval histories. On the example of the manuscripts examined she demonstrated the close relationship between the written and the oral history and the importance of the earlier documents for proper historical reconstruction.

The paper by Fesseha Berhe (Mekelle), 'Implications of a 19ᵗʰ-century Təgrəñña manuscript for the study of local history and culture' (not in this volume), focused on the nineteenth-century *Tarik Ityoṗya* ('History of Ethiopia') by *däbtära* Fəssəḥa Giyorgis ʿAbiyəzgi (1895, published by Yaqob Beyene in 1987 and by the *Maḥbär Bahli Təgray* in 2000/2001). It analysed the importance of the text for the understanding of population movements and interactions in northern Ethiopia, in particular the Saho and the Doba, with a special focus on rarely discussed toponyms and ethnonyms. Fesseha illustrated the close relationship between the written and the oral tradition.

In his talk 'Ras Alula's Gəʿəz biography—revisiting' (not in this volume), Haggai Erlich (Tel Aviv) readdressed the issues related to the Gəʿəz document about the nineteenth-century north Ethiopian lord, *ras* Alula, discov-

ered in 1972 in *ras*'s birthplace (Mänäwe, Tämben) and published (with a translation by Roger Cowley) in 1976.

Bahru Zewde (Addis Ababa) in his presentation 'Revisiting the 1911 unpublished diary of Ḥəruy Wäldä Śəllase' (not in this volume) returned to the Amharic manuscript he had already consulted for his presentation at the 15th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Hamburg in 2003.

Within the panel on philology, the challenges of Gəʿəz language studies was a central aspect. Besides addressing this issue in his project introduction (see above), Alessandro Bausi in his paper 'The earlier textual Ethiopic heritage' (not in this volume[1]) contemplated on the history of emergence of Ethiopic literature and its relationship with the history of the Ethiopic language. Gəʿəz played a major role of medium for the transmission of written knowledge to the Horn of Africa since the first millennium CE. It is commonly agreed that the earliest Ethiopic texts known so far are translations from Greek, while later works are much indebted to the Christian Arabic literary tradition, particularly to the Copto-Arabic one. There is evidence for the emergence of a rich local written production only later in the course of time. One would expect that the complexity of this literary history is fully reflected in the changes in grammar, lexicon, and stylistic means of the language. The first step in approaching this delicate question—which is one among the tasks of the TraCES project—is a systematic mapping of texts and works attributed on some grounds to a precise period.

Along these lines, Dawit Tessega (Nuremberg), in his paper 'Gəʿəz grammar and vocabulary in the ancient manuscripts and in contemporary usage' (not in this volume), attempted a comparison of rhythmic structure and grammatical arrangement of Gəʿəz poems written in ancient and in modern times.

Stefan Weninger (Marburg) spoke of 'A new grammar of Gəʿəz: challenges and surprises' (not in this volume). In his talk he addressed several challenges a scholar meets when preparing a descriptive grammar: How can one cope with the diachronic perspective of the documented language history of Gəʿəz and with the different linguistic background of the various text genres (Greek, Arabic, Amharic)? Is it possible, or sensible, to establish a standard? Is it possible to incorporate all that we have come to know in the past decades in a new grammar? And how to deal with the lacunae in our knowledge that would necessitate more ad-hoc research?

A particular take on the history of Gəʿəz language studies was offered by the paper by Leonardo Cohen (Haifa) and Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner

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1   The article shall appear in M. Wissa and H. Kennedy, eds, *Arabs, mawlâs and dhimmis. Scribal practices and the social construction of knowledge in Late Antiquity and Medieval Islam, Colloquium 11 and 12 December 2013, The Warburg Institute*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (Leuven: Peeters, 2016).

(Hamburg/Gondar), 'A 1609 Gəʿəz letter by *ras* Śəʿəlä Krəstos: Insights into the language's status in early seventeenth century Ethiopia' (published in this volume as 'On the roots of Ethiopic philology and a 'trilingual' letter from the Jesuit mission period', pp. 181–196). Taking as a starting point a Gəʿəz letter, transcribed in Latin script and translated into Portuguese by the Jesuit Luis de Azevedo, the presenters did not only discuss its historical context but also showed the way early scholars dealt with the Gəʿəz language.

The theme of the seventeenth-century Ethiopian studies in Europe is further developed in this volume by the article by Alessandro Bausi, 'Johann Michael Wansleben's manuscripts and texts. An update' (see pp. 197–244). Not originally part of the conference, this contribution considerably enhances our knowledge of the history of Gəʿəz scholarship, and highlights the importance of considering early studies, that may provide insights far deeper than the results of modern research. Gəʿəz manuscripts copied by Wansleben are briefly discussed.

A series of talks in the Gəʿəz philology panel were dedicated to the earliest stratum of Gəʿəz literature, in particular the biblical text. Daniel Assefa (Addis Ababa) spoke of 'An old witness for the Gəʿəz version of Ben Sira' (see this volume pp. 153–160). He presented some preliminary results of collation of one of the earliest witnesses of the Wisdom of Sirach in Ethiopic, MS Gunda Gunde 202, to the other known manuscript versions of the text and the critical text of Dillmann's edition.

In his paper 'The conundrum of the Ethiopic personal names in the Ethiopic Bible' (not in this volume), Martin Heide (Marburg) took a close look at the translation vector as illustrated by proper names. While most are directly transcribed from the Greek, some are evidently transcribed according to a Semitic pattern. These must have been borrowed into Ethiopic prior to the translation of the Bible.

Garry Jost (Marylhurst) presented his research on 'The textual criticism of Ethiopic Obadiah: a characterization of the shared variants constituting the five families of manuscripts' (see this volume pp. 161–180). The study was part of the Textual History of the Ethiopic Old Testament Project (THEOT) and illustrated the results of computer-assisted collation and grouping of 33 manuscripts of Obadiah.

The *Kəbrä nägäśt*, already referred to in the talk by Yohannes Gebre-Sellassie, was also in the focus of Amsalu Teferra's (Addis Ababa) paper 'Cycles of Zion in Ethiopic texts' (published in this volume, pp. 145–152). It was dedicated to the traditional Gəʿəz narrative of the Ark of the Covenant and its wanderings as witnessed by the *Kəbrä nägäśt*, the *Liber Axumae*, the *Dərsanä ṣəyon*, and the *Täʾammərä Maryam*.

The content of a previously unknown eighteenth-century manuscript was the subject of the presentation 'An ancient description of the inhabited world, with some anecdotes concerning different cities and sages: The case of a new manuscript' by Rafał Zarzeczny (Rome, not in this volume). The text transmitted by this witness seems to be a rare compilation of probably translated traditional (legendary or simply mythological) descriptions of the ancient world. Zarzeczny searched for the possible roots and ancient inspirations of this text.

A short study by Gidena Mesfin (Hamburg), 'Beyond tribal names and denominations in the texts of *Mäftəhe səray* manuscripts' (not published in this volume) offered a survey of proper names that are used for their alleged apotropaic powers in the various 'magical prayers'. Besides offering an identification of the names, Gidena tried to assign them to particular manuscript types and 'magic' practitioners.

Finally, the panel on Islamic tradition (a session running parallel to that on Gəʿəz studies), welcomed scholars dealing in their research with the manuscripts written or used by the Muslims of Ethiopia.

Several papers introduced previously unknown texts and documents in the Arabic language. In his paper 'Introducing an Arabic manuscript of *šayḫ* Muḥammad Šāfī (d. 1806)' (published in this volume as '*Maʿūnat al-faqīr* by *šayḫ* Muḥammad Šāfī (d. 1806): a first introduction', pp. 247–258), Endris Mohammed (Addis Ababa) offered a preliminary study of an unpublished Arabic religious treatise authored by the famous Wällo Muslim scholar, *šayḫ* Muḥammad Šāfī b. Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Asqārī.

Michele Petrone (Florence/Copenhagen, member of the *IslHornAfr* team) presented a paper entitled 'Some notes about the lists of saints in Harar Arabic manuscripts' (published in this volume as 'Devotional texts in Ethiopian Islam: a *munāǧāh* invoking the intercession of prophets, male and female saints and *ʿulamā*', pp. 259–272). He edited and translated a lengthy invocation in Arabic transmitted as an additional text in an undated manuscript from the collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and containing an extensive list of saints. He compared the text to the other known lists of saints from Ethiopia (in particular, those published by Ewald Wagner) and hypothesized that the text may have been written in the city of Harar.

Additional texts were also in the focus of attention of Sara Fani (Florence/ Copenhagen, member of the *IslHornAfr* team), who spoke about 'Magic, traditional medicine and theurgy in Arabo-Islamic manuscripts of the Horn of Africa' (published in this volume, pp. 273–280). Researching documentary notes and paratexts in Arabo-Islamic manuscripts in the collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University, she revealed that, in addition to historical and documentary notes, sometimes attesting *waqf*

or local Islamic *qaḍī* court records, many additional notes and paratexts are related to magical and theurgical practices or to traditional medicine.

A particular type of documentary texts, the *waqf* certificate, was dealt with by Alessandro Gori in his survey '*Waqf* certificates from Harar: a first assessment' (see this volume, pp. 281–296). He showed that research on *waqf* (charitable trust) has been overwhelmingly conducted by social historians and sociologists, their interest being in the investigation of the birth, development and spread of the charitable endowments of economically relevant assets or social institutions in the Muslim world and in their role in the preservation of the social cohesion of the Muslim territories. Little attention has been paid to the *waqf* of books, and even less to the actual form and style of the *waqf* certificates. Alessandro Gori presented an analysis of a selection of six unpublished *waqf* certificates of Qurʾānic codices from Harar kept in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa.

Another certificate type, the *iǧāza*, was studied by Hassen Mohammed Kawo (Addis Ababa/Cape Town), who spoke of '*Šayḫ* ʿAbdalla Walenso (d.1369/1949) and his legacy in transmission of *ḥadīṯ* in southeastern Ethiopia' (not in this volume). He offered some preliminary remarks on two *iǧāza* certificates of *ḥadīṯ* from eastern Arsi, issued to *šayḫ* Muḥammad Aliyyii Taaʾoo and *šayḫ* Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ b. *kabīr* ʿAlī better known as Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Hwaatee in Arsi. The certificates maintain the educational chain through *šayḫ* ʿAbd Allāh b. Ādam (better known as *šayḫ* ʿAbdalla Walenso, after the place of Walenso in eastern Harärge) to his teacher, *šayḫ* Aḥmad b. Sulaymān of Baallakasaa. The documents are witnesses to the diffusion of the *ḥadīṯ* teaching in Ethiopia.

Other contributions were dedicated to manuscripts containing texts in local languages written in Arabic script. The languages included the Cushitic Saho and Somali, and the Semitic Argobba, Amharic, Harari, and Tigrinya.

Giorgio Banti (Naples) read the paper he co-authored with Moreno Vergari (Bolzano) and Axmadsacad Maxammad Cumar on 'Saho Islamic poetry and other literary genres in *ʿaǧamī* script' (not in this volume). He focused on the *nazme* hymns, sung by the Saho during the *mawlid* and other religious ceremonies. These hymns are generally associated with popular Sufi Islam, in particular the Ḫatmiyya brotherhood. Most *nazme* are transmitted orally, and there is no printed collection, but occasionally *šayḫ*s would record them in Arabic script. The paper focused on the *nazme* by *Sheekh* Soliiman Ismaacil Maxammad (recited and written down in Irhaafalo, Eritrea, in 2010) and provided some other examples of Saho *ʿaǧamī* texts read by the Saho diaspora in the UK.

'*ʿAǧamī* manuscripts from southern Somalia: sheekh Awees from Brava (d. 1907)' was the title of another talk by Giorgio Banti (not in this vol-

ume). *Sheekh* Awees from Brava, killed by supporters of the 'mad Mullah' Maxamed Cabdille Xasan, composed several religious hymns both in Arabic and in southern Somali, with features of the local dialects of the communities for whom he had composed his poems. Some of these *qasīda*s have been published (by Enrico Cerulli and Martino Mario Moreno). Banti discussed some of the hymns which he could obtain in copy (by *sheekh* Abuukar Maxamed Yare) during his visit to Buulomareerto in the 1980s.

'Two Argobba *aǧäm* manuscripts from Wällo' (see this volume, pp. 297–308) were the topic of the talk by Andreas Wetter (Berlin). The two documents are rare examples of Argobba *ʿaǧamī* and unique witnesses of a particular dialect of this highly endangered language. They play a crucial role in the reconstruction of language history of Argobba since the variety used in the manuscripts differs considerably from the Argobba variety spoken today.

Kemal Abdulwahab (Addis Ababa) dedicated his talk to the '*Kašf al-ġumma* by *šayḫ* Ṭalḥa b. Ǧaʿfar (d.1935): a messianic and polemical Amharic-*aǧäm* text' (see this volume, pp. 309–324). The renowned Muslim scholar *šayḫ* Ṭalḥa b. Ǧaʿfar, from Argobba in Wällo, used Amharic as the language of religious teaching; the existing manuscripts all use the Arabic script. One of his treatises, *Tawḥīd inna fiqh* has been published (in *fidäl*); his poetic works remain largely unstudied. One of them, the *Kašf al-ġumma*, transmitted in at least three manuscripts, is particularly interesting for illustrating the relationship to the outside Islamic world, and in particular to the Dervish movement led by Muḥammad Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh (al-Mahdī) in Sudan.

In his paper 'Bun Fatah, a Harari supplication related to coffee ceremony' (not in this volume), Ahmed Zekaria (Addis Ababa) discussed a manuscript copied by *ustaḏ* Ibrāhīm Wazīr in Harar in 1409/1989 from a notebook of the late *ḥaǧǧī* Aḥmad ʿAlī Malāk. The main text of the manuscript is a description of the coffee ceremony in Arabic; it is interspersed with a supplication in Harari. A first analysis of the syntax and word formation suggests that it is an old supplication.

Amira Ibrahim (Addis Ababa) presented a paper entitled 'Describing a Tigrinya *ʿaǧamī* manuscript' (not in this volume). She offered a first analysis of a Tigrinya *manẓūma* by *šayḫ* ʿUmar Abrār from Təgray. The text, transmitted in a manuscript written in Arabic script, concerns the impression of the Prophet Muḥammad on his first wife, Ḫadīǧa—a unique topic since women were rarely addressed in early times.

Kemal Ibrahim (Addis Ababa) introduced the 'Unique manuscript collection of Säddäqa, Ǧimma zone' (not in this volume). This was one of the first glimpses into the manuscript tradition of the former Gibe kingdoms of south-western Ethiopia. Kemal surveyed and catalogued 52 manuscripts from the collection of the Säddäqa mosque. In addition to the 'usual' manu-

scripts such as the copies of the Qurʾān, *fiqh* and *tawḥīd,* texts, personal letters etc., there are manuscripts written in unknown 'secret scripts', invented by *šayḫ* Musᶜid al-Dīn Saddaqī. Some have strange symbols which superficially resemble Chinese characters. It is possible that the writing is fully invented and cannot be deciphered.

Finally, Orin Gensler (Addis Ababa) contemplated on the possible influences of Christian writing tradition upon the Arabo-Islamic one in his talk 'Word-breaking in Ethiopian Arabic: Evidence for intimate Christian-Muslim contact (with an appendix on semantic change in Harari)' (not in this volume). In particular, word division at line ends, as a rule next to impossible in 'canonical' Arabic scribal practice, seems to be a frequent feature of Ethiopian Arabic manuscripts. This may have been mediated by the Muslim communities that were intimately woven into the fabric of Christian Ethiopia— *Ǧäbärti*, and/or Christian converts to Islam. Gensler also showed that many words in Harari have undergone semantic change compared to their older meaning presumably recorded in Gəᶜəz. As the same shift of meaning is mostly present in Amharic, the change in Harari (spoken by Muslims) could be due to an influence of Amharic (spoken by Christians).

While none of the papers specifically dealt with manuscript conservation, many of the surveys commented on the preservation state of manuscripts and entire collections. Denis Nosnitsin, in his report on the *Ethio-SPaRe* project, described in detail the interdisciplinary efforts towards the reconstruction and conservation of several precious ancient manuscripts.

This cursory overview illustrates well the thematic extent of the conference. Most of the various issues connected with the study of the manuscripts, their material form and context, their content, and finally their place in scholarship have found their way into the four chapters of this volume.

The editors would like to thank on this occasion the Universität Hamburg for offering rooms and logistic support and the invited discussants whose comments during the conference have considerably influenced the shape of the edited contributions. These were David Appleyard (London), Baye Yimam (Addis Ababa), Ulrich Braukämper (Göttingen), James McCann (Boston), Gianfranco Fiaccadori (†), Ran HaCohen (Tel Aviv), Steven Kaplan (Jerusalem), Ewald Wagner (Giessen), and Rainer Voigt (Berlin). Last but not least, the editors thank the main funding organization, the European Research Council of the European Union (Seventh Framework Programme), for making the conference, and the publication of this volume, possible.

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Editors
Hamburg, 5 June 2015

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Introduction

Team work in Ethiopian manuscript studies

The papers collected in this volume were originally presented and discussed during the international conference 'Manuscripts and texts, languages and contexts. The transmission of knowledge in the Horn of Africa', convened at the Universität Hamburg from 17 to 19 July 2014.

The conference was convened by the Principal Investigators of three projects in Ethiopian studies, all funded by the European Union's 7th Framework Programme. These were *Ethio-SPaRe*: *Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia*: *Salvation, Preservation, Research* (ERC Starting Grant, Hamburg, 2009–2015, PI Denis Nosnitsin), dealing with recording and cataloguing manuscripts preserved in ecclesiastic libraries in the northern Ethiopian highlands;*TraCES*: *From Translation to Creation*: *Changes in Ethiopic Style and Lexicon from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (ERC Advanced Grant, Hamburg, 2014–2019, PI Alessandro Bausi), dealing mainly with Gǝˁǝz written heritage; and *IslHornAfr*: *Islam in the Horn of Africa, A Comparative Literary Approach* (ERC Advanced Grant, Florence and Copenhagen, 2013–2018, PI Alessandro Gori), dealing with the Islamic manuscript tradition of Ethiopia and the Horn. For *Ethio-SPaRe*, the main sponsor of the event, this was the major closing conference.

In the recent decades, project work has become an important engine in all fields of research. Team work—whether inter-, multidisciplinary, or not—has become a nearly absolute necessity in order to get financial support and be able to carry out research full-time. Individual long-term research initiatives, mostly undertaken by scholars with tenured academic positions, are to a varying degree integrated into relevant major scale research schemes. Ethiopian (and in general African and oriental) studies have been no exception to this phenomenon. The three projects behind the present volume are an illustration to this tendency. The majority of the speakers at the conference have been involved in one or more of such projects at some moment in time.

While project frameworks do impose some limitations upon research, the advantages for the scientific community cannot be denied. The precise planning and budgeting that are usually a prerequisite for a major project to be launched ensure that, even if failing some of the goals, such project achieves the majority of its aims. This is in particular significant in potentially extendable projects based on (often multidisciplinary) team work. In Ethiopian studies, in Hamburg alone, the past years have seen the successful completion of the fifteen-year editorial endeavour *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (sponsored primarily by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and several other foundations) and of the five-year research networking programme *COMSt*: *Com-*