A digital facsimile of Walters Ms. W.768, Ethiopic Psalter with Canticles, Song of Songs, and two hymns in praise of Mary

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Shelf mark: Walters Art Museum Ms. W.768

Descriptive Title: Ethiopic Psalter with Canticles, Song of Songs, and two hymns in praise of Mary

Text title: Psalms and associated texts

Author: Supplied name: St. Yared the Aksumite priest

Author: Supplied name: St. Ephraem Syrus

Abstract: This beautifully copied and bound Ethiopian Psalter likely belonged to one of the princes of the Gonderite royal family, whose reign ended in 1769. The main text of this undecorated manuscript is written in the ecclesiastical language of Gǝ’ǝz while the minor texts are in Amharic, added at a later time. While the colophon and the hand suggest that the original manuscript only contained the 151 Psalms of David, which is in an early eighteenth-century hand, the other texts such as the fifteen Canticles, Song of Songs, Weddase Maryam (Encomium of Mary) and the Anqasa Berhan (Porch of Light) were added in the nineteenth century to create a more complete Psalter. More unusual texts, unrelated to the Psalter, have also been added, for it begins with a homily admonishing the clergy to conduct themselves well spiritually, and ends with directions for undoing charms. The life of the manuscript can be traced not only in these cumulative texts, but also in added prayers for later owners, of which there are at least twelve appended to the ends of the Biblical texts.

Date: Early 18th century and 19th century CE

Origin: Ethiopia

Form: Book

Genre: Devotional

Language: The primary language in this manuscript is Geez. The secondary language of this manuscript is Amharic.

Colophon: fol. 31v:
In vernacular: Original colophon: ከሽእጋው፡ ወውን እὁ.፡ ውጫ፡ ይስ፡ ኲugu፡ ወውን፡ ውጫ፡ ወውን፡ ከሽእጋው፡ /// ከሆለው፡ ወው፡ ከሆለው፡ ከሆለው፡

Comment: In red and black ink, divided from rest of text by small crescent patterns and decorated with dotted crosses.

Support material
Parchment

Heavy, yellow parchment

Extent
Foliation: 43
No flyleaves; modern pencil foliation upper right corner

Collation
Formula: 1(10,-3,4,5,9,10), 2-4(8), 5(4,-2,4), 6(8), 7(4)

Signatures: Quires sometimes numbered, top left of first recto of quire

Comments: Quires begin on fols. 1(1), 6(2), 14(3), 22(4), 30(5), 32(6), and 40(7)

Dimensions
29.1 cm wide by 31.2 cm high

Written surface
25.5 cm wide by 25.0 cm high

Layout
Columns: 3
Ruled lines: 31
Hard point ruling; layout is unusual in using three columns for Psalter, Canticles, and Song of Songs, as they are usually written in a single column

Contents
fol. 1r - 43r:
Title: Psalms and associated texts
Contents: Manuscript includes the Standard Go’az Psalter (with the Psalms copied in the eighteenth century and the rest in the nineteenth century) as well as short texts in Amharic on Christian morality and instruction to the clergy on how to execute their duties; prayers for later owners added after their deaths throughout the manuscript as follows: fol. 10r, (end Psalm 40): "O Lord, give rest to the soul of your servant."); fols. 12r, 20v, and 25r (ends of Psalms 50, 90, and 110): "O Lord, give rest to the soul of your maid, Wälättä Häywät."); fols. 13v and 18r (ends of Psalms 60 and 80): "O Lord, give rest to the soul of your maid, Wälättä Kidan."); fols. 15v and 21v (ends of Psalms 70 and 100) and fol. 35r (end of Canticles): "O Lord, give rest to the soul of your servant, Bä’ǝdä Maryam."); fol. 28v (end of Psalm 130): the name of "Bä’ǝdä Maryam."); fol. 31v (at end of original colophon): "This is the glory and praise of the God of King David. O Lord, give rest to the souls of your servant Bä’ǝdä Maryam and the souls of your maids Wälättä Heyat [and] Wälättä Kidan."); fol. 37r (end of Song of Songs): "O Lord, give rest to the souls of your maids Walatta Kidan [and] Wälättä Ḥǝywät.

Decoration note: No illuminations; small cross designs created from alternating black and red dots decorating the text periodically; text written in black and red ink

fols. 1r - 1r:
Title: On Christian morality
Incipit: እኔ፡ ኪኔ፡ ለፉ፡ ኧፈ፡ ለፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ኪኔ፡ ለፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ኧፈ፡ ለፉ፡ ኪኔ፡ ለፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኪኔ፡ ለፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኪኔ፡ ለፉ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኪኔ፡ ለፉ፡ ኧፈ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ፡ ካፉ፡ ለፉ:

Text note: Text added in nineteenth century

fols. 1r - 1v:
Title: Instructions to priests, part I
Incipit: እኔ፡ ኪኔ፡ ለፉ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ፡ ኧፈ:

Generated: 2012-05-08 09:57 -04:00
Text note: Text added in nineteenth century; this is one of two sections of a unique text in Amharic that provides private instruction to priests on how to teach and give benediction

fols. 2r - 31v:
Title: 151 Psalms of David
Incipit: የጻድቃን፡ ቈወአን老百姓፡ ቸኡሉ። የላይፋ፡ ይላለል። ለአይፈፋ።...
Text note: Text is original part of manuscript, written in early eighteenth century Gǝ’ǝz; Psalm 151 is apocryphal, in which King David speaks about himself; see St. Strelcyn article (bibliography)

fols. 32r - 35r:
Title: Fifteen Biblical Canticles (Mäḥalǝyä Näbiyat)
Contents: Canticles are as follows: fol. 32r: First Song of Moses, ወለተ፡ እውወሉ፡ (Exodus 15:1-19); fol. 32r-v: Second Song of Moses, ወለተ፡ እውወሉ፡ ኩምምም፡ አት፡ (Deuteronomy 32:1-21); fol. 32v: Third Song of Moses, ወለተ፡ እውወሉ፡ ኩማለል። አት፡ (Deuteronomy 32:22-43); fol. 33r: Song of Hanna, ወለተ፡ እስፋ፡ እመፋ፡ ወአማፋ፡ እረገ፡ (1 Samuel 2:1-10); fol. 33r: Prayer of Hezekiah, ወለተ፡ እውወሉፋፋ፡ ዓዲምፋ፡ እናፋ፡ (Isaiah 38:10-20); fol. 33r-v: Prayer of Manasseh, ወለተ፡ እውወሉፋ፡ ወአማፋ፡ (Apocryphal, see The Holy Bible, NRSV. Oxford: University Press, 1977, 233-4); fol. 33v: Prayer of Jonah, ወለተ፡ እፋፋ፡ እመፋ፡ (Jonah 2:2-9); fol. 33v-34r: First Song of the Three Holy Children, ወለተ፡ ወለተ፡ እውወሉፋፋ፡ እሱፋፋ፡ ወለተፋ፡ ኩምምምፋፋ፡ (Daniel 3:26-45); fol. 34r: Second Song of the Three Holy Children, ወለተፋፋ፡ ወለተፋፋ፡ (Daniel 3:52-56); fol. 34r: Third Song of the Three Holy Children, ወለተፋፋ፡ ወለተፋፋ፡ እውወሉፋፋ፡ ወለተፋፋ፡ ወለተፋፋ፡ (Daniel 3:57-88); fol. 34v: Song of Habakkuk, ወለተፋፋ፡ ኩምምምፋፋ፡ እመፋፋ፡ (Habakkuk 3:2-18); fol. 34v-35r: Song of Isaiah, ወለተፋፋ፡ ወለተፋፋ፡ እመፋፋፋ፡ (Isaiah 26:9-20); fol. 35r: Magnificat, ወለተፋፋ፡ ወለተፋፋ፡ ኩርፋፋፋ፡ ወለተፋፋ፡ (Luke 1:46-55); fol. 35r: Benedictus, ወለተፋፋፋ፡ ወለተፋፋፋ፡

_text note:_ Text added in nineteenth century

fols. 35r - 37r:

_title:_ Song of Songs of Solomon (Māḥalayā Māḥaloy zā-wā’atu zā-Sālomon)

_incipit:_ ṭnaissance ṭnaissance ṭnaissance

_contents:_ Text broken into five parts: fols. 34r, 35v, 35v, 36r, and 36v

_text note:_ Text added in nineteenth century

fols. 37r - 40v:

_title:_ The Praises of Mary: Wǝddase Maryam

_author:_ St. Ephraem Syrus

_contents:_ Fol. 37r: Monday; fol. 37r: Tuesday; fol. 38r: Wednesday; fol. 48v: Thursday; fol. 39r: Friday; fol. 39v: Saturday; fol. 40r: Sunday; see edition by Karl Fries (bibliography)

_text note:_ Text added in nineteenth century; composed by Saint Ephraem Syrus for the seven days of the week

fols. 40v - 42r:

_title:_ The Praises of Mary: Anqāṣa Bǝrhan (Gate of light)

_author:_ St. Yared the Aksumite priest

_text note:_ Written by St. Yared the Aksumite priest; religious families, especially the clergy, are expected to pray reciting ten Psalms a day with the Praises of Mary designated for the day

fols. 42r - 43r:

_title:_ Instructions to priests, part II

_text note:_ Text added in nineteenth century; this is one of two sections of a unique text in Amharic that provides private instruction to priests on how to teach and give benediction

fols. 42v - 43r:

_title:_ Prayer with the powerful secret names of God (Asmat)


_Incipit:_ የትብል፡ በትሑት” የል፡ እሎንተ፡ የቢታ፡ እክሶ፤ ወ፡ ፌ፡ ቤ፡ . .

_Text note:_ There are many versions of this kind of religio-magical prayer. For more on the subject, see Haile (bibliography). This prayer begins with the secret names of God given to the Archangel Michael (see Walters Ms. W.835, fol. 9v).

_fols. 43r - 43r:_

**Title:** Directions for undoing charms and Trinitarian invocation

**Text note:** Added by a later hand, late nineteenth or twentieth century

**Binding**

The binding is original.

Blind-tooled, stamped goatskin with cross design over wooden boards

**Provenance**

Probably created for one of the princes of the Gonderite royal family, whose reign ended in 1769

Names of Wälättä ከሃይወት and Wälättä Kidan, who added texts in the nineteenth century, mentioned repeatedly in later added prayers (fols. 12r, 13v, 31v, and 37r)

**Acquisition**

Purchased by the Walters Art Museum through the S. & A. P. Fund, January 1960

**Bibliography**


Weddâsê Mârjâm. Ein äthiopischer Lobgesang an Maria, nach mehreren Handschriften herausgegeben und übersetzt. Edited and translated by Karl Fries. Leipzig, 1892. See this for Praises of Mary (Wǝddase Maryam).


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