Introduction to the Collection and Its Codicology

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The Collection and Its Presentation

This is a catalogue of the digital collection of images produced from the first two hundred and thirty nine Ethiopic manuscripts digitized by the Ethiopic Manuscript Imaging Project (EMIP). These include 105 codices and 134 scrolls of Ethiopian spiritual healing photographed in 2005 and 2006. While many of the manuscripts remain in the hands of the parties who owned them in 2005 and 2006, many others have changed hands since that time. Since the collections themselves cannot be stabilized, the plan of EMIP has been to create a new, digital entity from the manuscripts. This collection of digital images has been stabilized and is now available as an object of study. In fact, all of the images of all of the manuscripts are available online at http://www.hmml.org/vivarium/sgd.htm.

The history of EMIP and the process of digitization used in the first two years of the project have been described elsewhere. We made an initial report about the project in the online venue, *Society of Biblical Literature Forums*, in February of 2007. In that notice we referred to it as "The SGD Digital Collection: Previously Unknown and Uncatalogued Ethiopian Manuscripts in North America." but later changed the name of the collection to the EMIP collection. In November of the same year, and in the same venue, we gave notice of "More Ethiopian Manuscripts in North America." As of this time, the most complete written description of the project is to be found in our contribution to the Proceedings of the Sixteenth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, for the meeting held in Trondheim,

Norway, in July of 2007. We have given illustrated lectures about the project in various venues.[1]

In November of 2008, we convened a panel of scholars to report on the ten largest collections in North America at the annual Society of Literature Meeting in Boston, November 2008 as part of the Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible section of the meeting.[2] Before our report, the most widely-known published report accounted for "slightly over 400 manuscripts" in the United States.[3] Our panel reported on the collections at Princeton University (Dr. Wendy Belcher), Howard University School of Divinity (Dr. Alice Ogden Bellis), the Library of Congress (*Ato* Fentahun Tiruneh), Duke University (Dr. Lucas van Rompay), UCLA (*Kesis* Melaku Terefe), the collection of images at the Hill Museum and Manuscripts Library (Dr. Fr. Columba Stewart), and the four largest private collections in

[1] "The Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project: History, Goals, Methods, and Issues" (Pacific Northwest Regional SBL meeting in May of 2006); "The Characterization of God in Ethiopian Manuscript Illuminations in the SGD Collection (at the conference called "Descriptions of God in Ancient and Modern Monotheistic Traditions" held at the Septuagint Institute of Trinity Western University in September of 2006); "Ethiopian Codices and Scrolls for the Septuagint Institute: History, Significance, Method, and Contents" (at the same conference at Trinity Western in September of 2006); "Scribal Practice in Ethiopian Psalters" (at the annual SBL meeting in Washington D. C. in November 2006); "A Digital Collection of previously unknown Ethiopian Manuscripts in North America" (at the same annual SBL meeting in November 2006); "In a Foreign Land: Amazing Stories of Ethiopina Manuscripts in Exile" (at the George Fox Evangelical Seminary faculty research forum in January, 2007); "More Ethiopian Manuscripts in North America" (at the annual SBL meeting in San Diego in November of 2007); "Who Guides the Hand of the Scribe? Scribal Practices in Ethiopic Manuscripts" (at the graduate students' seminar, Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia, Canada, February 20, 2008); "What Do You Do with 110 Ethiopian Psalters? The Statistical Analysis of Scribal Practices" (at the Library of Congress, African and Middle East Division, May 21, 2008); "On the Digital Edge of the Ethiopic Manuscript Imaging Project," (at the Pacific Northwest Regional SBL Meeting in May of 2008); "The Statistical Analysis of Scribal Practices" (to the staff of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, in August 2008); and "The EMIP Manuscript Digitizing Expedition to Addis Ababa in December 2008—January 2009" (at the Library of Congress,African and Middle East Division. on 19 February 2009).

[2] I co-chair the SBL's Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible Section with Brent Strawn of Emory University.

[3] Richard Pankhurst, "A Serious Question of Ethiopian Studies: Five Thousand Ethiopian Manuscripts Abroad, and the International Community," *Addis Tribune*, 17 December 1999; available online at http://www.afromet.org/Archives/AddisTribune/17-12-99/Five.htm, accessed 30 November 2008.

North America (myself). By the time we were done, we had accounted for 2,017 manuscripts.

Layout of the Catalogue

For codices, each catalogue entry is laid out in seven sections: 1) number, name and title; 2) physical description and dating; 3) list of contents; 4) list of miniatures; 5) varia; 6) notes; and 7) quire maps.

In the first section is the EMIP number followed by the name of the manuscript (usually involving a form of the owner's name), and the title of the contents of the manuscript (often in English and Gə'əz). These designations are centered and placed in bold at the head of the entry.

In the first full paragraph under the title comes the physical description followed at the end by the date, and, if applicable, a description of the carrying case for the manuscript. Within the physical description, the following items are detailed: 1) material (usually parchment); 2) the external dimensions of the codex; 3) a description of the binding; 4) a description of the covers; 5) the number of quires (and their balance); 6) the number of folios; 7) the dimensions of the folios and margins; 8) the number of columns of text; 9) the language (usually Gə'əz, but sometimes Amharic); 10) the number of lines on a typical folio; 11) the date (on which, see below). If the codex has a case, it will be described just following the date of the manuscript.

The date is determined in one of three ways. Occasionally a scribe will provide a colophon where a date is given or reference is made to a known historical figure who appears to be contemporaneous with the production of the codex. Where a colophon is lacking, scribes may nevertheless mention a known historical figure somewhere in the content of the work. This is usual, for instance, in the case of missals, where the leaders of the church are listed within the liturgies to ensure that prayers are made on their behalf. In either of these two cases, the manuscript is said to be "dated or datable." Thirteen of the 105 codices fall into this category. See the "List of Dated or Datable Manuscripts." Dates have been assigned to all manuscript. Where there is neither colophon or other mention of known historical figures, a judgment has been rendered by Professor Getatchew based on the paleography of the script in the codex. See the "List of Undated and Composite Manuscripts."

Occasionally a second paragraph of the physical description will detail the navigation systems in evidence within the codex or give a detailed account of the balance of the quires. The former usually come in the form of

strings sewn into the fore edge of the folios to mark either the location of miniatures or to mark the location of contents within the codex.

The third element of each catalogue entry is a detailing, in sequential order, of the content of the major works in the codex. In most every case, Professor Getatchew has provided information about the published edition of the work and/or other important manuscripts containing the same work.

In the fourth element of the entry, the miniatures of the codex are listed by location and theme and any captions are translated. Since many of the illuminations in these codices are secondary and painted over text, we have rendered a judgment about whether the illuminations are apparently original or were added by a later hand.

In the fifth element of the entry, the *varia* are listed. In the first place, these varia are located in the codex in places (e.g., on the end leaves or on folios with some vacant space) and in ways that make it clear that these were not part of the original plan of the codex, but were added later, either by the same scribe or by another. This characteristic differentiates varia from the major works, on the other hand. On the other hand, varia are distinguished from notes in that the content of these additions are known and standard works or excerpts of known and standard works..

The sixth element of the entry is a detailing of notes. These are of two kinds: 1) a description of actual notes (i.e., not works or varia) made by any hand in the codex; or 2) observations by the cataloguers about any feature of the codex (e.g., scribal practices, condition of the parchment, blank folios, etc.).

Finally, the seventh element of each entry is a quire map which details, in graphical form, the architecture of the codex. The system of depiction is fairly self evident, but enables us to specify the location and character of every folio, sheet, and quire, and assigning a folio number to each folio.

The user will notice that more than usual attention has been given to the scribal practices in evidence in the codices. Notes on these appear in both the physical descriptions and in the notes field in each entry. Many of the scribal practices throughout the catalogue have been tagged and a separate index generated: “Index of Scribal Practices in the Codices.”

For the scrolls, each catalogue entry contains five elements: 1) number and name; 2) physical description and date; 3) contents; 4) miniatures; and 5) name of the owner.

These fields are essentially the same as the corresponding field in the entries for the codices. To enable the comparison of similar prayers in the scrolls, Professor Getatchew has provided implicits for most of the prayers.

Illuminations

There are 526 illuminations in these first 105 codices. Some of the illuminations, perhaps 15 per cent, are original. A few are, perhaps, important for their old and elaborate illuminations. But most of the illuminations were not part of the original production of the codex. They were painted fairly recently into the codices. This is evident by the fact that they are painted over the top of text (often visible under the paint) and often marked with a string sewn into the fore edge of the folio to draw the attention of a prospective buyer. As such, these manuscripts provide a clear window into the current entrepreneurial practices of dealers in Ethiopia who have keyed into the fact that old books sell, but old book with illuminations sell very well.

From the manuscripts in this first volume we have identified at least two distinctive artistic hands that are well-trained. One we call "the speckled garment artist" who is responsible for fully 177 illuminations across twenty-three manuscripts. We refer to the other as "the beautiful artist" and this artist is responsible for 26 illuminations in four manuscripts in the first volume. Many more manuscripts in the second and third volumes have come through the same shops in Ethiopia. Despite the secondary nature of the illuminations, they are authentic in the sense that they provide us with accurate representations of the traditional themes in Ethiopian artwork and they are executed by authentic Ethiopian craftspeople.

Codicology

The manuscripts described below are distinguished from one another both by the content they contain and also by the physical features they possess. While manuscripts are naturally known for their content, there is actually a great deal to be learned from the study of their physical features. At this time, we will limit ourselves to a few comments about quire construction in the codices and to a few of the general characteristics among the scrolls.

We can note some basic facts regarding quire construction in the codices. Our comments relate to 100 of the codices since four of these are accordion-fold books (EMIP 75, 85, 91, and 92) and two others (EMIP 24 and 27) are so thoroughly rebound that reconstruction of the original architecture of the codex is virtually impossible.

First a word about nomenclature. Quires come in three basic formats: balanced, unbalanced and what we call adjusted balanced. Balanced quires are the natural state of the architecture of a quire: when sheets are folded you end up with a balanced number of folios on either side of the fold. Unbalanced quires and adjusted balanced quires make use of one or more half-sheets. Where one half-sheet is employed the quire ends up unbalanced; where two half sheets are employed, the quire ends up balanced, but we refer to this as adjusted balanced. Theoretically, the half sheets could be placed on the same side of the quire fold and the quire would be doubly out of balance, but this is almost never the case. This is our first indication that the use of half sheets is a normal part of quire construction and that there are certain normal practices in such cases. In the first place, these half sheets are prepared to be about a centimeter wider than a normal folio, thus leaving a folio stub on the other side of the gutter fold and providing a stable space for the half sheet to be sewn into the quire with the rest of the sheets. One can almost always distinguish easily between a prepared half-sheet folio with a folio stub and the remains of a folio t has been cut out of the manuscript. Folio stubs are clearly manufactured edges. Often, there are no scored lines on the stub. And it is not uncommon to find several adjusted balanced quires in the same codex that have the half sheets located in precisely same places in the quires. As we will show, the use of half sheets in the construction of quires is very common. We assume that, in a resource scarce environment, the practice allows for the use of all available material, i.e., pieces of parchment too small to comprise a full sheet.

In all, we analyzed 1,320 quires in these one hundred codices. For the purposes of describing the characteristics of a "normal quire" we subtract from this composite number two categories of abnormal quires: protection quires at the front of a codex and the final quires in codices that are often manufactured to provide just enough space to complete the content of the codex.

Sixty-eight codices have protection quires. Two of these have two protection quires. Thus, we can describe seventy protection quires. Eleven of these are a single folio, i.e., a half-sheet, sewn in some extraordinary way to the codex. Thirty-seven of these are single sheets. Fifteen of these protection quires are comprised of two sheets and five are comprised of a full sheet and a half sheet. In both cases where the codices have two protection quires (EMIP 3 and 9), the second quire is a balanced, single-sheet quire. Besides their abnormal size (i.e., only one or two sheets) two things make it clear that protection quires are not to be considered in the same category as the rest of

the quires. First, the content of the first major work of the codex never begins in these quires. Second, and more telling, is that when scribes employed quire numbers, their numbering systems never include the protection quire(s). In such cases, the normal practice is to begin the first major work on the first full quire and begin numbering the quires at the second quire and following.

Forty-nine of the codices have final quires that are abnormal. This is most evident when the number of sheets in the quire is significantly fewer than the rest in the codex. Of these, 16 are single-sheet, balanced quires, 2 are a single folio, 12 are a two-sheet quire, 3 are two-sheet unbalanced quires, 1 is a two-sheet adjusted balanced quire, 11 are three-sheet balanced quires, 3 are three-sheet unbalanced quires and 1 is a four-sheet unbalanced quire. Once again, the primary force behind the design of these quires seems to be a desire to make the quire only big enough to hold the remaining contents of the codex and not to produce a quire that is the same as the ones typically in use in the codex.

When we remove the seventy protection quires and the forty-nine abnormal final quires from the total, we end up with 1,201 quires that we would refer to as "normal." By this we simply mean that the guiding principle behind their construction seems to be to provide one more quire for holding content and that the design and architecture of the quire is determined not by those that guide the design of a protection quire or an abnormal final quire. Instead, we assume that this design would be guided by the scribe's notion of an ideal quire as modified by the dictates of available resources and other economic factors. As we shall see, there is no standard formula for the ideal quire in all Ethiopian manuscripts. Nevertheless, by laying out the details we can see some definite tendencies emerging.

One-Sheet Quires (total: 15 quires or 1.2% of all normal quires)

Balanced	14
Unbalanced	1
Adjusted Balanced	0

Two-Sheet Quires (total: 16 quires or 1.3% of all normal quires)

Balanced	10
Unbalanced	3
Adjusted Balanced	3

Three Sheet Quires (total: 62 quires or 5.1% of all normal quires)

Balanced	51
Unbalanced	7
Adjusted Balanced	4

Four-Sheet Quires (total: 397 quires or 33% of all normal quires)	
Balanced	336
Unbalanced	28
Adjusted Balanced	33
Five-Sheet Quires (total: 598 quires or 49.7% of all normal quires)	
Balanced	531
Unbalanced	34
Adjusted Balanced	33
Six-Sheet Quires (total: 85 quires or 7% of all normal quires)	
Balanced	67
Unbalanced	11
Adjusted Balanced	7
Seven-Sheet Quires (total: 24 quires or 1.9% of all normal quires)	
Balanced	17
Unbalanced	7
Adjusted Balanced	0
Eight-Sheet Quires (total: 4 quires or .3% of all normal quires)	
Balanced	3
Unbalanced	0
Adjusted Balanced	1

We can make several observations based on this data. Five-sheet quires are the most frequent, but account for only 49.7% of all quires. Four-sheet quires are also very frequent comprising 33% of all the quires. Fully 172, or 14.3%, of the quires employ half-sheets as part of their construction.

When we study the quire maps of the codices other trends emerge. Only twenty seven of the codices employ quires that are entirely or very nearly all of the same size. Codices that use consistent four-sheet quires include: EMIP 18, 25, 26, 78, 83, 102, 105. Codices that use consistent five-sheet quires include: EMIP 14, 29, 30, 35, 38, 44, 48, 49, 60, 61, 62, 64, 70, 71, 79, 88, 94, 96, and, 99. EMIP 97 employs a consistent-six sheet quire. The remaining seventy-two codices in our sample employ quires of varying numbers of sheets.

A fuller study of the codicology of the codices will have to wait until a later time. But already we can see the promise in carrying out such studies. To give just one example related to the data we have presented above, it is already becoming clear that the use of four-sheet or five-sheet quires is not perfectly consistent across time. There appears to be a move from four-sheet quires in the earlier manuscripts to five-sheet quires in later manuscripts.

Professor Getatchew has provided below a thorough introduction to the contents of the scrolls; I will make only a few comments on the collection and the physical attributes of the scrolls.

Dating of the scrolls. The scrolls date from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries: 65 are from the 20th century; 53 are from the 19th century, 15 are from the 18th century and one is from the 17th century.

Number of strips of parchment in a scroll. In all but two cases (scrolls 1 and 2, which are made up of only one strip), the scrolls are made up of multiple strips of parchment, sewn end to end. The usual number of strips is three; 92 of the scrolls are made up of three strips. But 23 of the scrolls are made up of 2 strips and 17 are made up of four strips. Some of the two-strip scrolls are the result of a strip having become detached and lost. This suggests even more strongly that three is the usual number of strips in the scrolls.

Dimensions of the scrolls. The scrolls vary in length from 78.5 to 265 cm. The average length is 168.9 cm; the average width is 9.44 cm. Since several of the two-strip scrolls have lost one of their strips, the original average length would be slightly larger.

Number of columns of the scrolls. Far and away the majority of the scrolls, 122 of the 134, are laid out in one column, but twelve are laid out in two columns.

Borders of the scrolls. Only fourteen of the scrolls have no border. The rest have some sort of border, but these vary in the following ways. 72 of the scrolls have a single border, i.e., a black line marks a boundary near to the edge of the scroll. But 31 of the scrolls have a double border, i.e., two lines mark a boundary near to the edge of the scroll. In at least 87 cases, the borders have been filled with color, either yellow or a light brown. Sometimes the color is so faded and/or the scroll itself is so aged and worn that it is impossible to tell if the border originally had color. However, the numbers would suggest that the usual practice has been to color the borders. I have designated 30 of the borders as "elaborate." By this we mean that the border itself is something more complex than a simple line or two parallel lines. Elaborate borders can be made in several ways: a series of small horizontal strokes (EMIP scroll 1), wavy lines (scrolls 12, 31, and 34), sawtooth lines (scrolls 23, 65, 90, 92, and 121), "candy cane" patterns of parallel colored slanting lines of red and black (scrolls 18, 19, and 129), interlacing or woven rope patterns (scrolls 44, 58, 59, 61, 63, 113, and 123), and interlinking crescent-shaped lines (scrolls 120 and 126), etc.

Number of prayers per scroll. In all, Professor Getatchew identified 627 separate sections in the scrolls. This works out to an average of 4.67 prayers per scroll, but the numbers vary from one to twelve prayers in one scroll.

Illuminations in the scrolls. We can indicate the most frequently-used illuminations in the scrolls. The most common illumination is the image of an angel standing with sword drawn in one hand and holding the scabbard in the other. Seventy eight of the scrolls employ at least one example of this illumination. Seventy-four scrolls employ the image of the talismanic symbol with a face in the center. Thirty-eight scrolls contain an image of an ornate cross and thirteen contain an image of the four-petal pattern with eyes.