

Introduction

This book is the companion volume to the *Catalogue of the Ethiopic Manuscript Imaging Project, Volume 1: Codices 1–105, Magic Scrolls 1–134*. It contains at least one plate for each of the 105 codices described in that volume. But this is designed to be more than just a “plates volume.” We have selected images from the various manuscripts to tell a host of stories about Ethiopic manuscripts:

- cases (single and double-slip),
- covers and coverings (including leather and cloth),
- the tooling of leather covers,
- layout of text on the page (with prickings, columns and scored lines),
- codex binding (including primary binding chain stitches and secondary fixing points with headband and tail band),
- the marking of content divisions,
- iconography and illuminations,
- the dating of manuscripts (with colophons and other references to historical persons as well as through an analysis of the paleography),
- mirrors and mirror niches in the inside covers of books,
- navigation systems (including strings sewn in the fore edge of books),
- forged paintings,
- quire numbers,
- arranging of contents (for days of the week, church year, etc.),
- the standard formatting of standard works (Psalters, Homiliaries, Missals),
- dimensions of books and how they change across time,
- repairs (to folios, quires, bindings, boards),
- explanations of genres,
- methods for dating of manuscripts,
- musical notation,
- quire construction (including the use of half sheets),
- the use of red ink (names, full-stop symbols, full lines as section divisions, etc.),
- marks of ownership (including seals),
- the completion of long lines of text in Psalters,
- protection sheets,

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- the use of rejected sheets from other manuscripts,
- the social location of different grades of codices,
- composite codices (made of quires from differing dates),
- the characteristics of deluxe manuscripts,
- columetric layout of text (especially in Psalms 135, 150 and in the tenth biblical canticle),
- notes, records and other information in the end leaves of books,
- scribal training and apprenticeship,
- scribal systems for the insertion of overlooked material,
- magical prayers (*asmat*), incantations and palindromes,
- marking the midpoint of the Psalms,
- colored fabric lining the inside of wooden covers with leather covering,
- “accordion-fold” codices,
- amulet codices,
- spine straps,
- damage (from water and animals that eat the pages),
- the treatment of the spiritual meanings of the Hebrew Letters in Psalm 118 (= ET 119),
- Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library (EMML) manuscripts come to North America,
- bugs trapped in books, and
- marginal commentaries.

Thus, this book is a work on the practices of Ethiopian scribes. It represents a first installment on the way toward a comprehensive treatment of the subject which we shall attempt when we have completed the cataloguing of the manuscripts.

All of these images, along with the other tens of thousands of images of the Ethiopic Manuscript Imaging project, are available online at the website of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, found at <http://www.hmml.org/vivarium/sgd.htm>.