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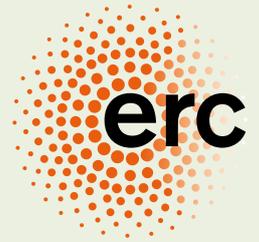
Ethio-SPaRe

Cultural Heritage of Christian Ethiopia:

Salvation, Preservation and Research

Third Mission

April-May 2011

Report

(by Denis Nosnitsin, with an Annex by Emmanuel Fritsch)
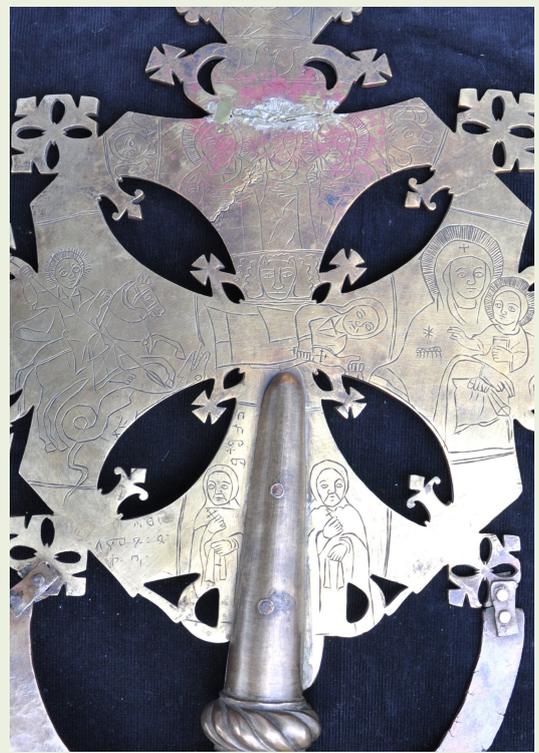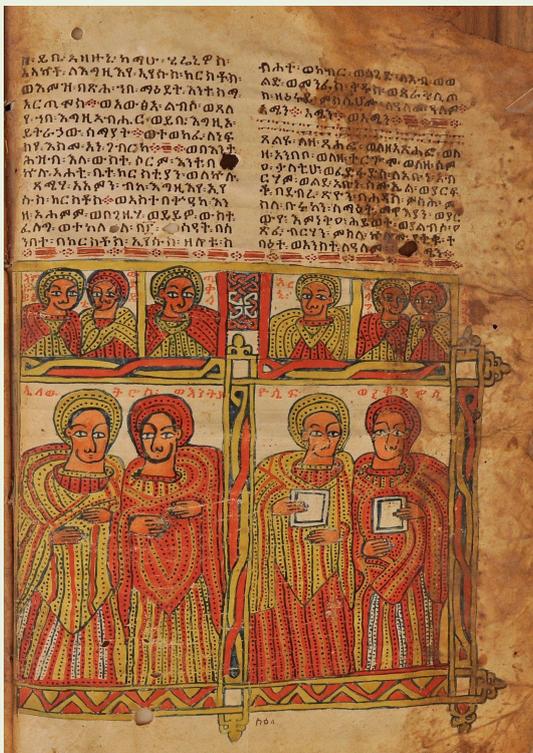
Hamburg University
2011

Ethio-Spare 3rd Field Research Trip (April-May 2011).

Public Report

Public Mission Report (Denis Nosnitsin)

In the period 28.04.-01.06.2011 the team of the Ethio-Spare carried out its third field research season. Basing in ʿAddigrat, the team was focusing on the historical sites of the Gulä Mäk̲äda, Ganta Afäšum and ʾƎndärta *wäräda*s, and the area around the city of ʿAddigrat (East Təgray Zone). The team included of the members of the project from Hamburg University[1], representatives of the Təgray Culture and Tourism Agency (TCTA)[2], and members of the administration of the respective church administration offices[3]. Within five weeks of intensive work, the team was able to visit 17 sites[4], some of them completely unknown before or difficult to access. The excellent cooperation of the TCTA and the local church administration enabled the team to score good results: it recorded a few hundreds of manuscripts and collected a lot of historical information about the sites. Below follow some brief observations on the churches and monasteries visited, and photos of the sites and the most remarkable manuscripts and objects. The full-scale evaluation of the results is being underway at the Hiob Ludolf Center for Ethiopian Studies in Hamburg. The digital copies of the collected materials can be consulted in the main office of the Təgray Culture and Tourism Agency (Mäk̲äla) and in the Eastern Təgray Diocese (ʿAddigrat). In the report below, all datings and conclusions should be considered as preliminary.

1. Däbrä Gälila/Däbrä Betel Koholo Qəddus Yoḥannəs Mäṭməq

The site is located in the surrounding of Mäk̲äla and can be accessed through a road to the district May ʾAnbäsa. After some 25 min drive, one has to leave the main road, go down and cross a stream. Located on a kind of rock platform and well-watered, the hamlet of Koholo[5] is well visible from the road thanks to the groves of green trees and terraces covered by green bushes and grass, which make the place remarkable on the rocky and rugged landscape[6]. From the main road, at some distance from Koholo, the entire site can be seen: the round church, the rock-hewn deserted old church below, under the cliff; in front of the latter, a rocky hill with ruins on the top (fig. 1). At some distance, there is a small rectangular white church dedicated to Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus.

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[1] Dr. Denis Nosnitsin, the principal investigator and head of the project, Dr. Stephane Ancel, Vitagrazia Pisani M.A. (research fellows).

[2] Mäsärät Haylä Səllase acted as field coordinator, and Haylay Täklay as field assistant; the head of the Agency Käbbädä ʾAmarä Bälay acted as project coordinator.

[3] Fəṣṣum Gäbru, the representative of the Eastern Təgray Diocese; *liqä mäzämməran* Kasa, *mälakä ḥəywät* Täklay Gäbrä ʾAb, from the church offices of Wuqro and Ganta ʾAfäšum, resp. The field work was opened and concluded by the coordinating meetings in the TCTA and the in the East Təgray Diocese with His Grace ʾ*abunä* Maqaryos.

[4] It was possible also to collect, indirectly, information on two more sites. All in all, team worked with the collections of 14 sites. Below, the description of the main work follows which could be achieved during the field mission.

[5] Variants of the name found in the manuscripts are: Kokolo, K̲ok̲olo, K̲okʷəlo etc.

[6] As we were told by the people, local scribes produce their reed pens from the type of reed plants growing in Koholo.

Fig. 1. Koholo Yoḥannəs, general view

Fig. 2. Koholo Yoḥannəs, old church

The upper church dedicated to Yoḥannəs Mäṭməq (John the Baptist) is easily accessible. It is a recent round structure, with richly painted *mäqdäs*. The old church building was demolished some time ago, but the painted *mäqdas* structure was left intact, and new walls were constructed around it. The paintings, executed in the peculiar "monumental" style, have been attributed to the famous artist ʔƎsṭäzya (b. 1872, d. 1942) [7]. The compound of the church seems to have been somewhat wider in the past, with some old, half-destroyed graves still visible outside. The old rock-hewn church can be accessed from the foot of the platform through several narrow passes in the rock massif. Apparently, a natural cavity under the overhanging rock formation was deepened and widened, pillars were hewn from the stone, and the outer wall was constructed, with the wood-framed entrance door and windows. Now, the church is ruined. On the walls,

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[7] S. E. Balicka-Witakowska, in: EAE II, 387b-88a.

remains of the murals (17th cent.?) are still visible (figs. 2, 3). Below the church, there are holes and caves in the rock, said to have been former dwellings of the monks and their burials.

A ruined structure on the rocky hill in front of the rock-hewn church seems to have been rectangular in plan. Local people refer to it as the former "house(s) of the monks". Now, there is no monastic community in Koholo, only a few old nuns live at the church. A traditional school affiliated with the church is located in the hamlet, in the house compound of the only teacher, and is well attended by numerous disciples [8].
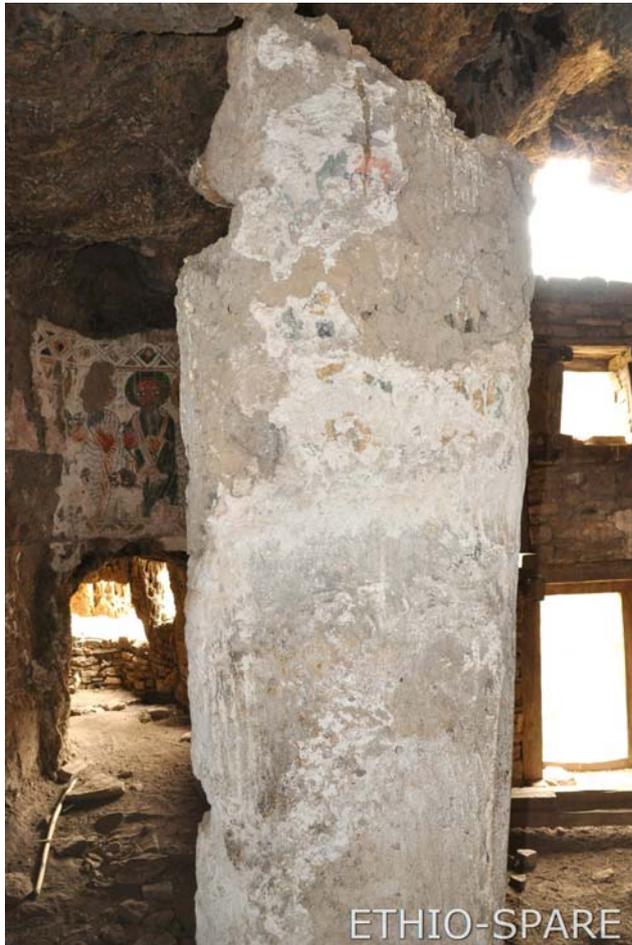
Fig. 3. Koholo Yoḥannəs, old church

Fig. 4. Koholo Yoḥannəs, *Gädlä sämaꜥtat*

The site is said to have been a sanctuary already in "Orit" ("Old Testament") time, while the rock-church below is reported to have been founded by ꜣabunä ꜣAbrəham, or ꜣAbrəham of May ꜣAnbäsa[9]. His Vita (a 19th-cent. manuscript), otherwise hardly known, was found among the books of the church collection, and a *tabot* consecrated with his name is preserved in the church. An old (15th cent.?), magnificent manuscript of the *Gädlä Sämaꜥtat* ("Vitae of the Martyrs")

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[8] The teacher *yäneta* Kəfle is ca. 70 years old; a native of the area, he spent more than 20 years learning at different schools in Gondär and Gayənt; then he returned to his native place and now teaches the subjects from *nəbab* (reading) to *qəddase* (liturgy). During our visit, we observed how carefully the teacher was following what his pupils were singing and reading. The diligence and concentration of the students was remarkable. The teacher told us that the learning process greatly changed in the recent years since printed books are extensively used today as support for learning process. Before, when he was a student, much more was memorized from mouth to mouth, because written texts were less accessible.

[9] Apparently, he is identical to "ꜣAbrəham of Qata" in Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke 1975:61; Qata is the area around Koholo, which includes also May ꜣAnbäsa.

mentions a certain *ʔabunä* ʔAbrəham "son of *ʔabunä* Samuʔel" in the supplication formulas and the colophon (fig. 4). It is not clear yet, if the record indeed refers to the founder of the church[10]. Later, during the conversations with the priests, the figure of *balgäda däggač* Hadgä ʔAnbäsa came out; the ruins on the hill were said to have been his residence (cp. above). However, the local people were not conclusive as to in what way Hadgä ʔAnbäsa was linked to the church of Koholo[11].

Fig. 5. Koholo Yoḥannəs, document in the Four Gospel book

The church collection of Koholo is extensive and contains a number of interesting and old manuscripts, among them a 15th cent. Pentateuch, three Four Gospel books dating back to different periods, and a fairly large number of Psalters (14), the feature probably referring to the presence of a substantial monastic community at Koholo, at least in the 18th or early 19th cent. One of the Four Gospel books of the church, a 15th-cent. manuscript, includes a document which seems to be a register of land parcels allocated as *gʷəlt*-land to different individuals (local lords?), a bizarre, hardly understandable text, with no indication as to by whom it was issued (fig. 5).

As in some other places around Mäg̱äla, at Koholo the (indirect) influence of the ʔEwosṭatean movement is proven by the veneration of *ʔabunä* ʔAnanya, the presence of his *tabot* and a 19th-

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[10] Initially, the local priests told that the church was founded by ʔAbrəham of Däbrä Ṣəyon (cp. Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke 1975:60-61, no. 5); however, later it became clear that the information was wrong, basing, most probably, on the misunderstanding of the colophon (s. fig. 4, col. rb).

[11] As in other places, the paintings of the *mäqdäs* were used by the local people for enquiring about the history of the church, interpreting it and explaining to the visitors. Hadgä ʔAnbäsa was supposed to be an equestrian figure depicted on the wall of the *maqdäs*; however, the ink of the caption was degraded, and the name was hardly readable (only the first part could be assumed, written evidently as ʕAdgä). The historical identity of the character remains unclear. He is unlikely identical to Hadgä ʔAnbäsa of Ḥamasen (b. ca. 1854, d. ca. 1891, though the chronology is not contradictive; s. W. Smidt, in: EAE II, 960b). Further on, one of the figures depicted on the *mäqdäs* was said to be *ʔəččäge* Gäbrä Giyorgis (?); and another one *p̣ap̣p̣as* (Metropolitan) P̣eṭros (s. Shiferaw Bekele in: EAE IV, 141a-142a); the group of ecclesiastics receiving *ras* ʔAlula (ʔꓱngəda) was said to be the priests of Koholo.

cent. manuscript of his Vita (fig. 6)[12]. According to his Vita, ʔabunä ʔAnanya was buried in Qata[13]. The study of the rich collection of Koholo will definitely require a lot of time. With all probability, Koholo was one of the most significant religious and cultural centres of the region in the pre-modern time; but no references or hints to the site have been retrieved so far, either in the sources or in the secondary literature.
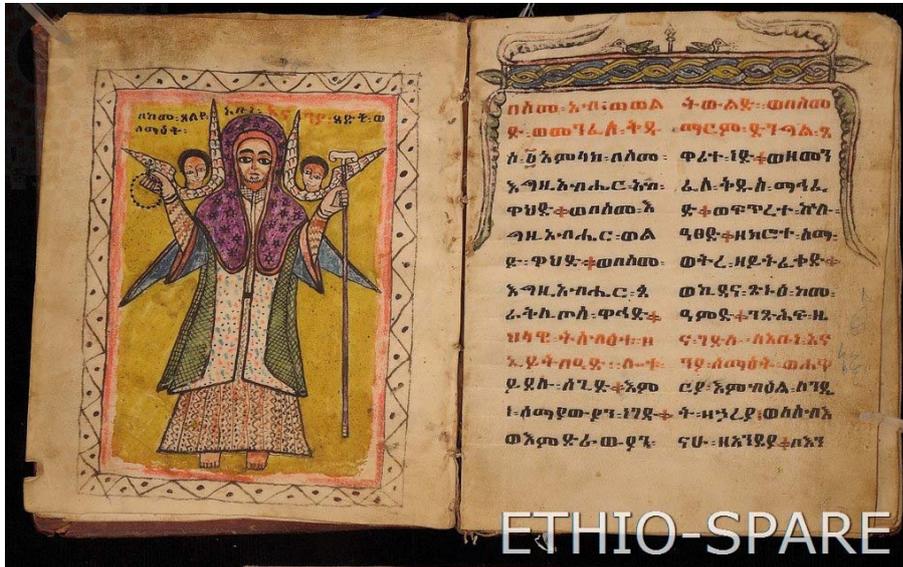

Fig. 6. Koholo Yoḥannəs, *Gädlä ʔAnanya*

2. Maryam Mäḵan

The site Maryam Mäḵan is located on the western outskirt of ʿAddigrat[14]. The site has two rectangular churches: the first is massive and recent; the second one, some 300m far, is somewhat older. The recent church stands on the open spot, close to the houses of the people. The old church is located under the cliff. Above the church, a cave or cavern is visible in the rock, at some 15m height, closed off by a stone wall with wood-framed windows; a doorway is visible only from the right side (figs. 7, 8). According to the local priest, it is the former church, now inaccessible and deserted. No information concerning the founder of Maryam Mäḵan and its foundation time was available. A brass cross was shown as the proof that the church was founded by King ʿAmdä Ṣəyon I (1314-1348), but the cross, though of fine quality and indeed bearing this name (fig. 9; standing figure to the left form the shaft of the cross), was of definitely later time.

The manuscript collection of the church, though not extensive, is of considerable interest. The "Golden Gospel" book of the church (late 17th - early 18th cent.) mentions Mäzgäbä Śəllase in the headings and the colophon (fig. 10), proving, as in other places, the influence of the Gundä Gunde monastery[15]. Among other books, the church collection has a fine manuscript of the

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[12] Both ʔabunä ʔAbrəham and ʔabunä ʔEwosṭatewos are depicted on one of the *mäqdäs* walls of the church.

[13] A place called Zaʔta. Cp. Pearce 1831, vol. 1, 133-37, where the traveller describes rituals and liturgy at the place where ʔabunä ʔAnanya was reportedly killed, somewhere not far from Mäg̱älä, in Gämbäla (unfortunately, it is difficult to figure out the exact location, but it must be not far from Koholo).

[14] Some 400m far from a church dedicated to Zä-Mikaʔel ʔArägawi.

[15] The postscript to the Gospel of John contains the name of the scribe (col. ra): Zä-Mänfäs Qəddus. The colophon, despite the place names partly washed out and secondary additions made by recent hand, still hints to the origin of the codex, reading: "This is the book of {Däbrä Maryam Mäkan} that came from the land of [Kaswa], with our father Mäzgäbä Śəllase".

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Gəbrä ḥəmamat (the Book of the Rite for Passion Week), possibly originating from the same period as the Gospel book. Besides, there are remains of an old, 15th-cent. *Gəbrä ḥawaryat* (the apocryphal Vitae of the Apostles), with the name of a certain Särṣä Dəngəl added in *subscriptio*s by a secondary hand (fig. 11a). The main handwriting appears be one of the finest pre-Gondärine writing styles observed in East Təgray, with harmonious, well balanced and finely rounded letters (cp. fig. 11b). Among other books, the collection possesses a 18th-cent. (?) illuminated manuscript of the *Dərsanä Mädḫane ʕAläm* ("Homily of the Saviour of the World"; s. fig. 12)[16]; one more manuscript of the collection with the Vita of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus can be attributed to the same scribe.
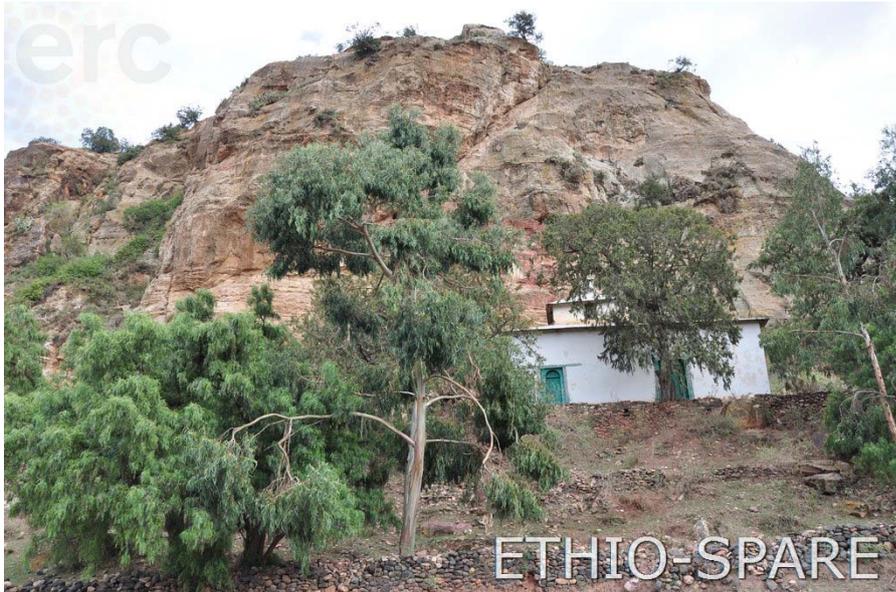
Fig. 7. Maryam Mäk̲an, general view
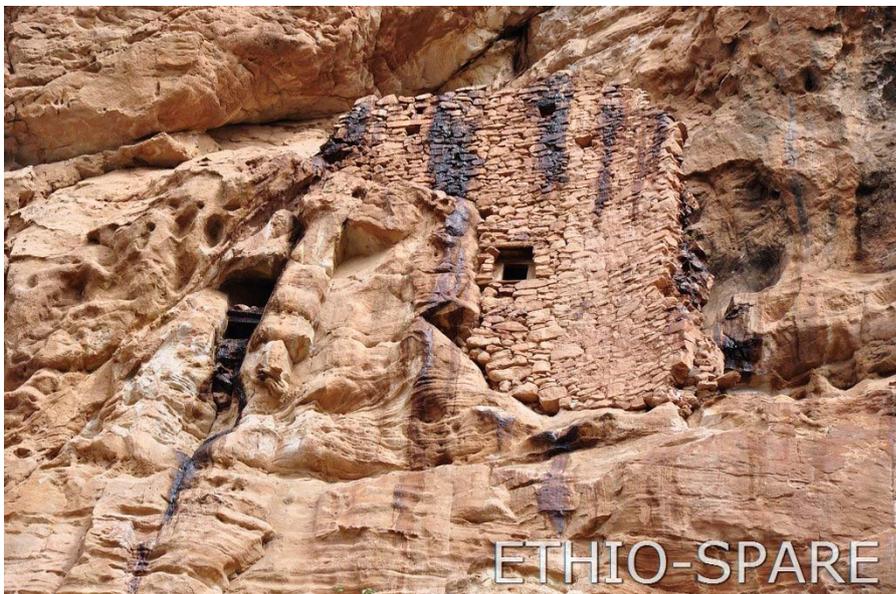
Fig. 8. Maryam Mäk̲an, old church

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[16] Usually, the *Dərsanä Mädḫane ʕAläm* is not illuminated.

Fig. 9. Maryam Mä<u>k</u>an, processional cross
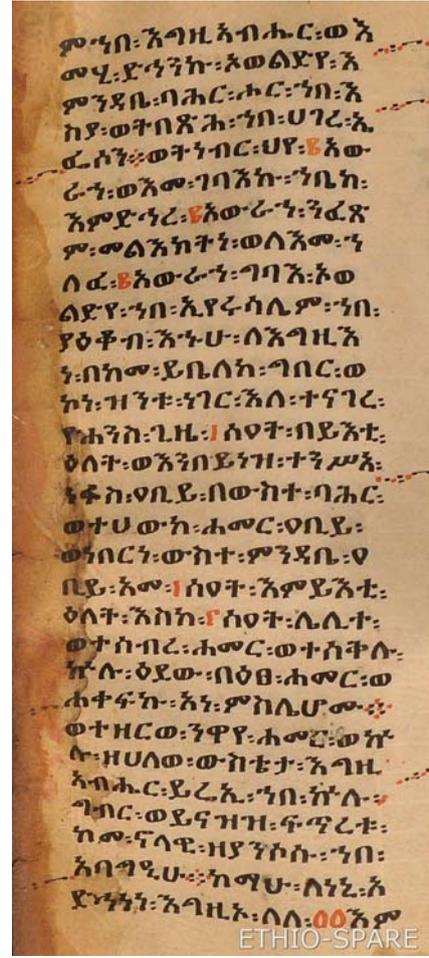
Fig. 11b. Maryam Mä<u>k</u>an,
Gädlä ḥawaryat, handwriting

Fig. 10. Maryam Mä<u>k</u>an, Four Gospel book

Fig. 11. Maryam Mä<u>k</u>an, *Gädlä ḥawaryat*

Fig. 12. Maryam Mä<u>k</u>an, *Dərsanä Mädḫane ꜥaläm*

3. ʔAndel Maryam

The church of ʔAndel Maryam is located near the asphalt road to Aksum, on the picturesque spot situated half way to Kəsad ʕAläqwa (on the crest of the mountain), from which the entire ʕAddigrat can be overlooked. ʔAndel Maryam is considered *gäṭär* (small church, or "chapel"). In fact, there are two churches at the site. A large, recently built rectangular church standing just below the road hides the older, small round church (fig. 13). Local people say that ʔAndel Maryam was established in the time of King Zärʔa Yaʕqob (1434-1468), but no immediate proof for this dating could be found. Unexpectedly, the collection yielded a few interesting books: a fine late 17th-cent. "Golden Gospel" with an extensive theological treatise occupying spare folia throughout the manuscript (fig. 14)[17]; a 17th-cent. (?) fine hymnody manuscript (an opening with crude notes on verso-side, s. fig. 15); a recent copy of the Vita of *ʔabunä* ∃sṭifanos of Gundä Gunde[18].
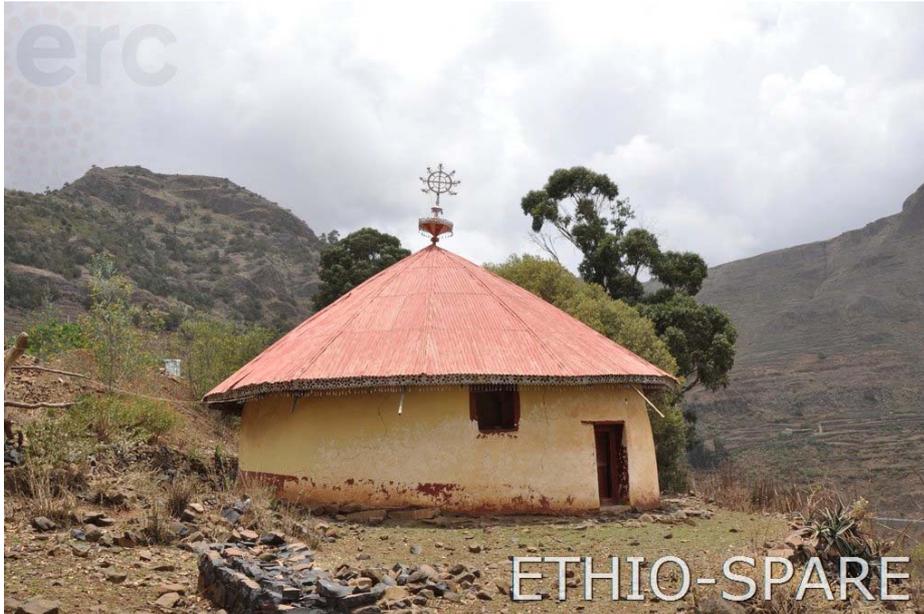
Fig. 13. ʔAndel Maryam, old church
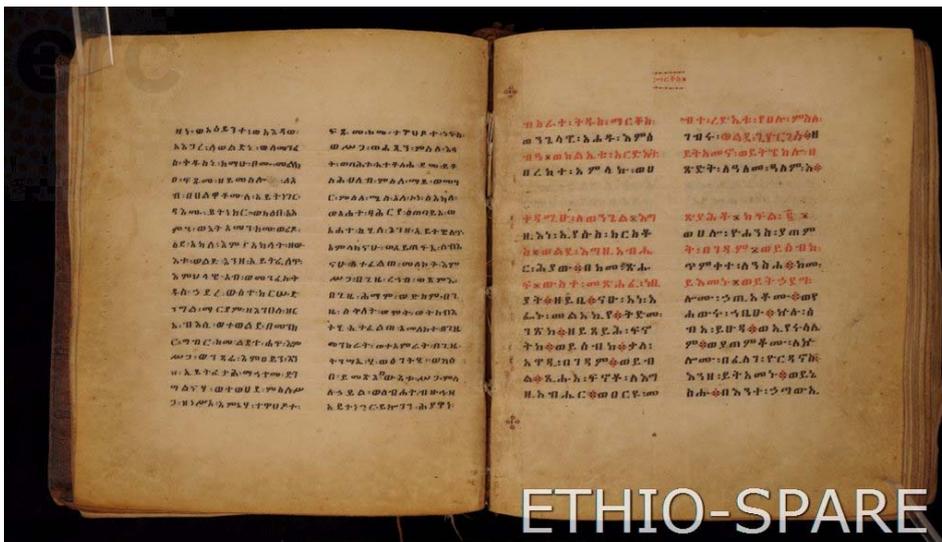
Fig. 14. ʔAndel Maryam, Four Gospel book

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[17] Unusually, there were running titles throughout the manuscript.
[18] According to a document from the *Liber Axumae*, ʔAndel was give as *gʷəlt* to the monastery of Gundä Gunde, apparently by *däǧǧazmač* Säbagadis (s. Conti Rossini 1909:62, no. 88).
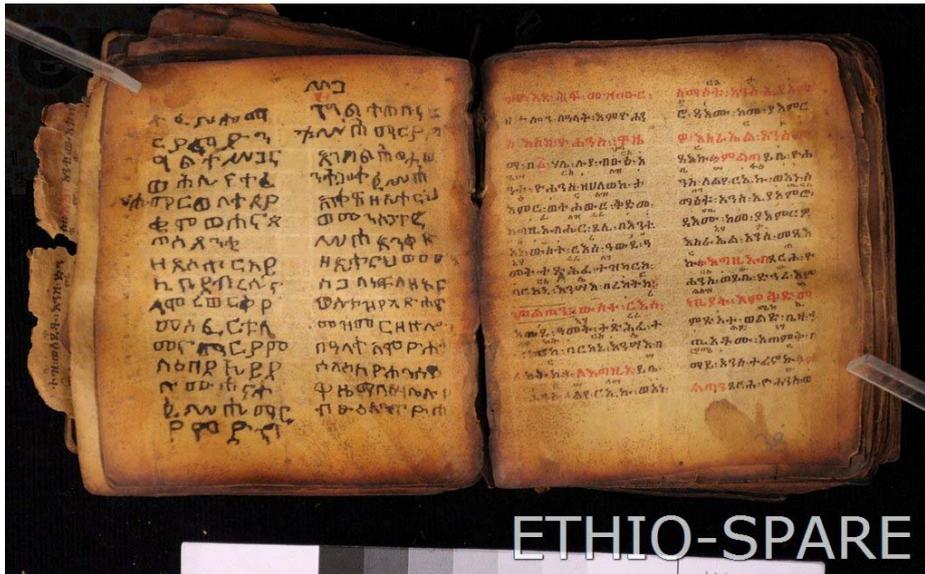
Fig. 15. ?Andel Maryam, hymnody manuscript

4. Soṭa Maryam

Soṭa Maryam is one of the remote churches of Ganta Afäšum, located north from the main road ʿAddigrat – ?Aksum. The entire area around Soṭa can be entered through a few slanted and very rugged side roads, leading down from the pass of Qǝsad Aläqʷa.

According to local tradition, the church was founded in the time of King Zär?a Yaʿqob (1434-68). There was no immediate proof for this claim; the oldest books of the library, including the Four Gospel manuscript, originated from the Gondärine time (18th cent.). The church collection has two fine Missals: one dating back to the time of King Täklä Haymanot (II) and Metropolitan Yosab (II), i.e. 1769-70 (fig. 16), and another one probably originating from the first half of the 18th cent. Remarkably, local people have in private possession quite a number of manuscripts and protective scrolls; the manuscripts were chiefly small-size codices meant for private use, such as a (18th-cent.?) collection of *mälkǝ?*-hymns (fig. 17), or the Amharic theological treatise *?Ammǝstu ?aʿmadä mǝṣṭir* ("Five Pillars of Mystery"; fig. 18)[19].
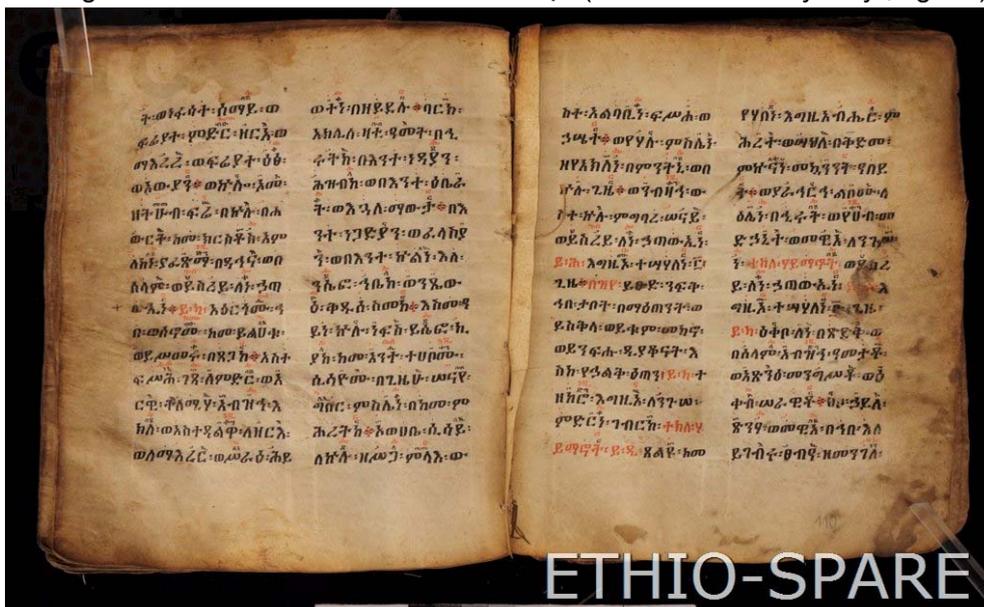

Fig. 16. Soṭa Maryam, Missal

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[19] The end of the "Mystery of the Baptism", the beginning of the "Mystery of the Eucharist". On the treatise *?Ammǝstu ?aʿmadä mǝṣṭir*, s. V. Böll, in: EAE I, 248.

Fig. 17. Soṭa Maryam, collection of *mälkəˀ*-hymns

Fig. 18. Soṭa Maryam, *ˀAmməstu ˀaˤmadä məṣṭir*

5. Dändära Mikaˀel

Dändära Mikaˀel is a big new rectangular church, located not far from Soṭa in another hardly accessible corner of Ganta Afäšum. A small, half-ruined round building of the old church still stands in the church yard nearby.
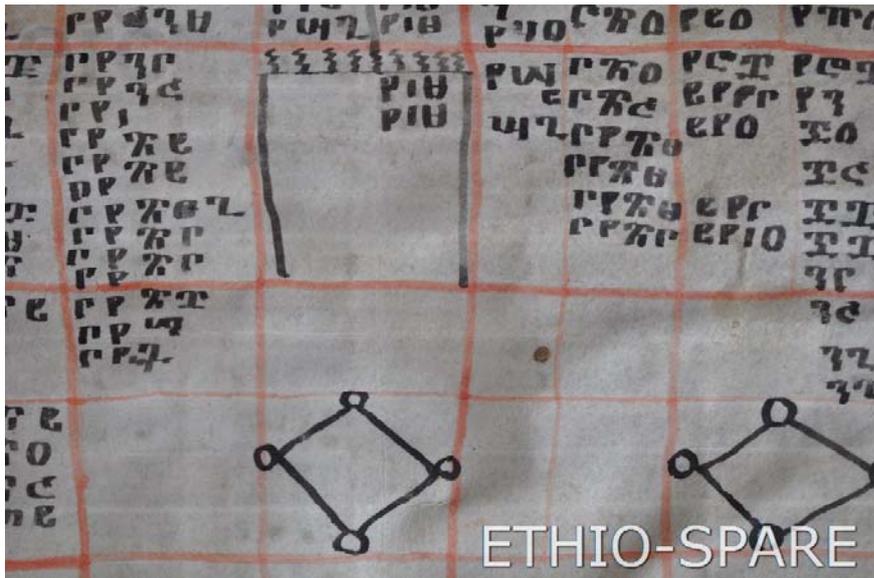
Fig. 19. Dändära Mikaʔel, Four Gospel book, Canon tables
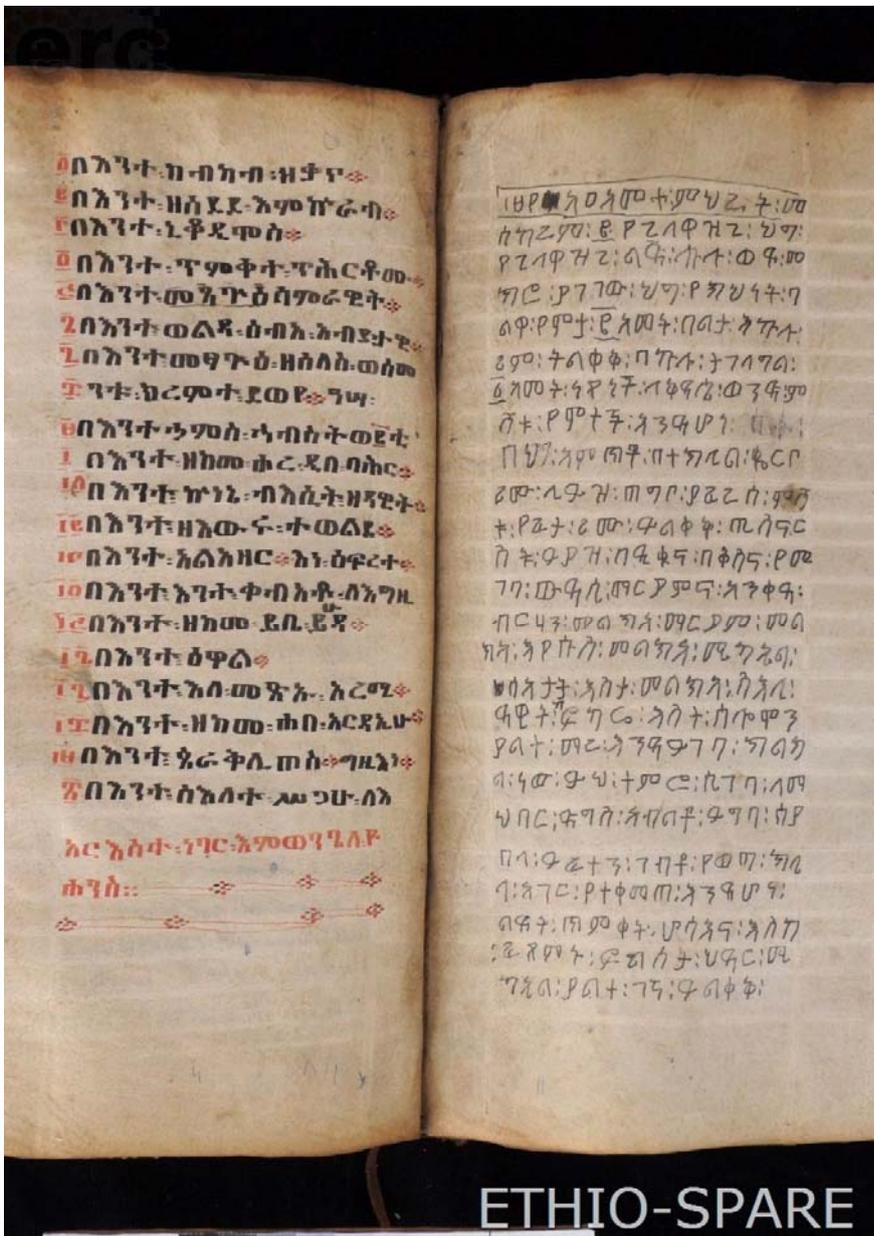
Fig. 20 Dändära Mikaʔel, "The Law of the Children of Gilawazgi"

The people of Dändära call themselves "the children of Gilawazgi". As it was explained to us, Gilawazgi means *nayʔəgziʔ fätawi*[20], i.e. "the servant, associate of God". Gilawazgi is considered the founder of the church. A 57-year-old peasant told us that he was a descendant of Gilawazgi in the 18th-generation; Gilawazgi's father was ʔƎsṭifanos Gʷälʕa, his mother was Täkkaza. Täkkaza's father was *šum ʕagame* Däbrä Ṣəyon, who in turn was a descendant of Degäna[21].

The manuscript collection of Dändära is quite modest. The "Golden Gospel" manuscript is a fine sample of the second half of the 19th cent. scribal art (s. a fragment of the Canon tables, fig. 19). It contains an Amharic *additio* with the title "The Law of the Children of Gilawazgi" (fig. 20) which is a short summary of customary law mostly concerning the remuneration for the service in the church of Dändära, written down in 1924 A.M. It turned out that, like in Soṭa Maryam, a remarkable number of manuscripts and protective scrolls are in private possession of local people[22]. Among them, there was an elegant (19th-cent.?) manuscript of the *ʔAmməstu ʔaʕmadä məśṭir* ("Five Pillars of Mystery", figs. 21a, 21b) [23], which appears to be widely spread in the region; a late 19th-/early 20th-cent. collection of protective prayers *Mäftəḥe śəray* ("Loosening of charms"; fig. 22); a 19th-cent. (?) manuscript containing a collection of Marian prayers (fig. 23). All those books are of small size (an additional indication that they were primarily intended for the private use), carefully written and bound, usually in good condition. The reason for a remarkable number of books in private hands at Dändära is not quite clear; an explanation proposed by the local people – "learned people used to come from Gondär hitherto" – did not sound very convincing, though it could not be immediately confirmed or dismissed.
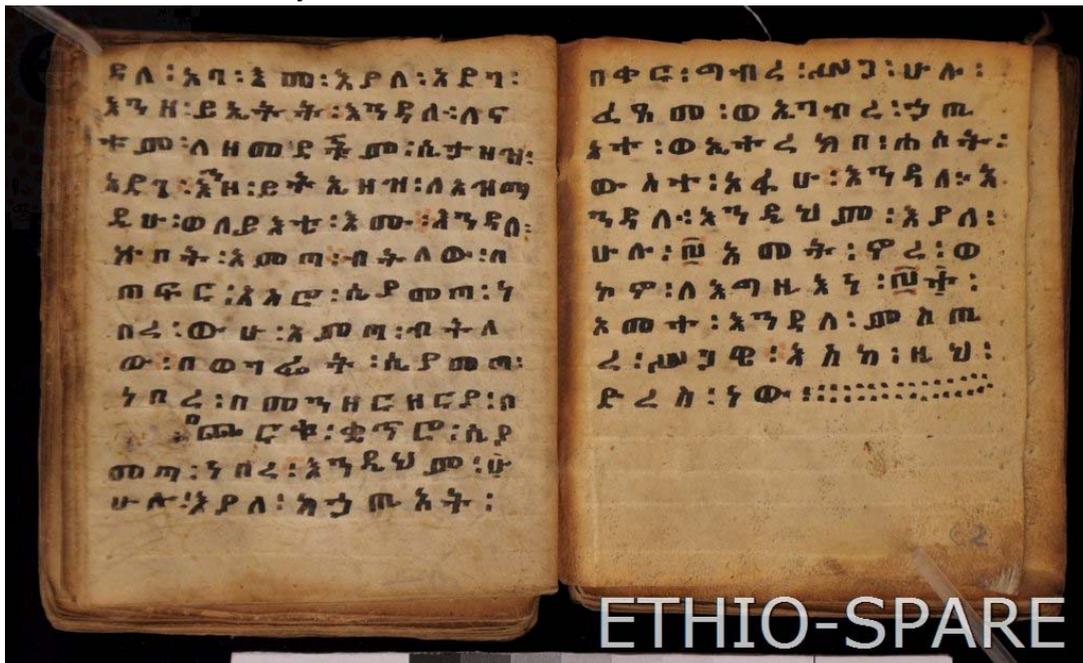

Fig. 21a. Dändära Mikaʔel, *ʔAmməstu ʔaʕmadä məśṭir*

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[20] The full, un-contracted form of the name is Gilawa ʔƎgziʔabəḥer (for Tgn. *gilawa* "servant", s. Kane 2000:2218b).

[21] *Ras* Degäna might have lived in the 14th cent.; he is considered to have been the founder of the ruling lineage of Šire (s. D.Nosnitsin, in: EAE IV, 671b; Raineri 1986:46f.).

[22] It was not the case in many other places, despite the substantial numbers of books in the church libraries.

[23] Figs. 21a and fig. 21b show the explicit of the second part, "Mystery of the Incarnation" and the incipit of the third part, "Mystery of the Baptism", resp. In this codex, all five parts of the work are executed by different scribes.
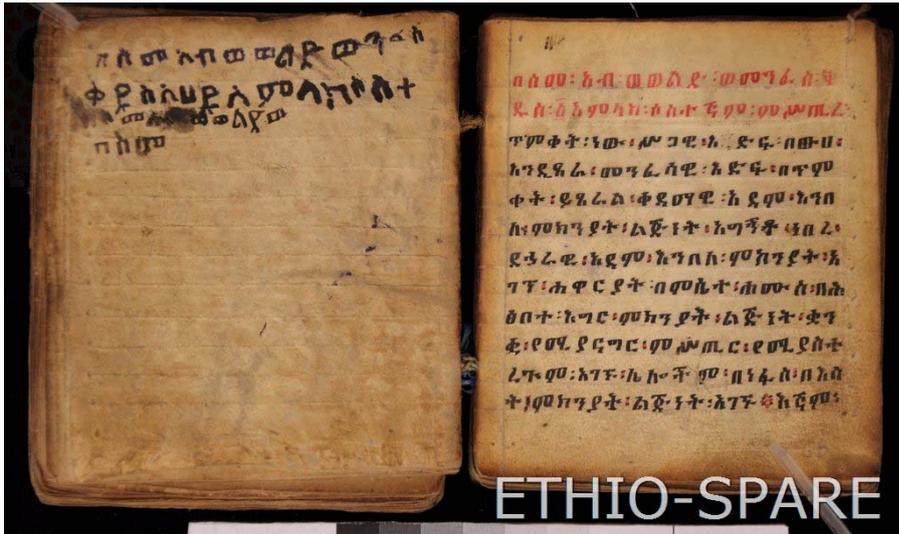
Fig. 21b. Dändära Mikaʾel, *ʾAmməstu ʾaʕmadä məṣṭir*
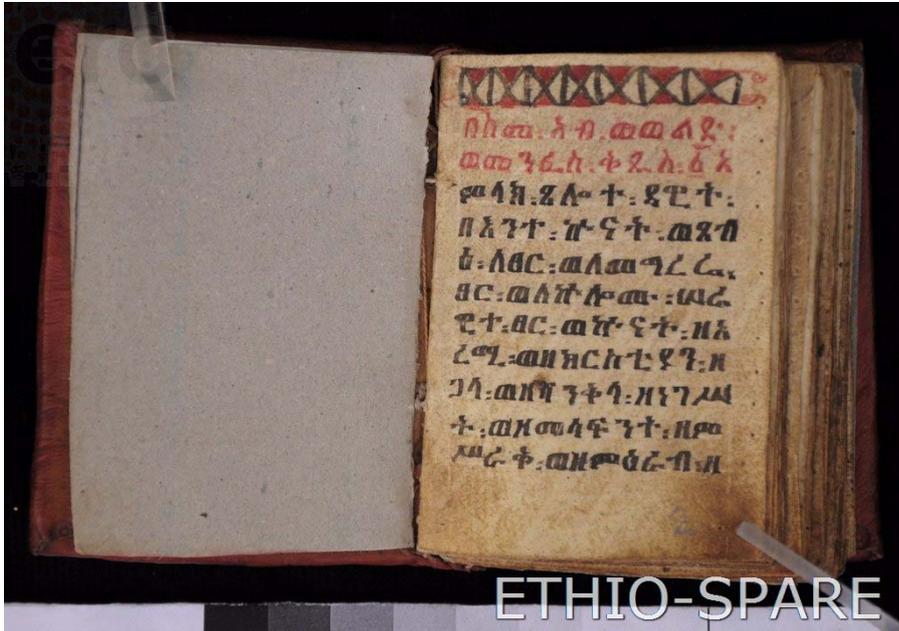
Fig. 22 Dändära Mikaʾel, *Mäftəḥe śəray*

Fig. 23 Dändära Mikaʾel, collection of Marian prayers

6. Bet Mäḵaˁ Däbrä Sahəl Qəddus Mikaˀel *gädam*, Bet Mäḵaˁ Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus

The locality Bet Mäḵaˁ is the site of the church Däbrä Sahəl Qəddus Mikaˀel and the chapel dedicated to Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus, associated with the church. Qəddus Mikaˀel Bet Mäḵaˁ is formally still considered *gädam*. Both are located at the outskirts of ˁAddigrat, but soon will be encircled by the ever extending urban area; the church of Mikaˀel stands somewhat close to the asphalt road to ˀAksum, the chapel is located behind the church, and is not visible from the road[24].

Fig. 24 Bet Mäḵaˁ, Four Gospel book

Fig. 25 Bet Mäḵaˁ, *Dərsanä Mikaˀel*

The manuscript collection of the churches turned out to be extensive. Among the remarkable manuscripts, the church possesses a very fine, late 16th-cent. (?) "Golden Gospel" book, written by a well-trained hand, with typically thin, broadly spaced letters (fig. 24)[25]; *Synaxarion* and *Haymanotä ˀabäw* manuscripts of the Gondärine time; richly illuminated early 19th-cent.

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[24] Bet Mäḵaˁ occurs in the so-called *Mäṣḥafä ˀAksum* (Conti Rossini 1909:12, 54f., no. 73 [text]; the context in the first document is unclear; and there are probably more than one place called by the name in Təgray); it should not be confused with the church referred to in Sauter 1976, no. 1108.

[25] As in quite a number of similar cases, unfortunately, the name of the original commissioner was carefully erased and could not be retrieved. The last donor's name, *ˀabunä* Särḍä ˀArägawi (cp. the donation note on the verso-side), was written over erasures by a recent (19th- or even 20th-cent.?) hand.

Dərsanä Mika^ʾel ("Homily of St. Michael", with some unfinished miniatures though, figs. 25, 26)[26], being so far the only codex found by the project team with inner sides of the wooden covers painted (figs. 27, 28)[27]; a 19th-cent. Missal, with a peculiar representation of Eucharistic bread as traditional map (fig. 29)[28].
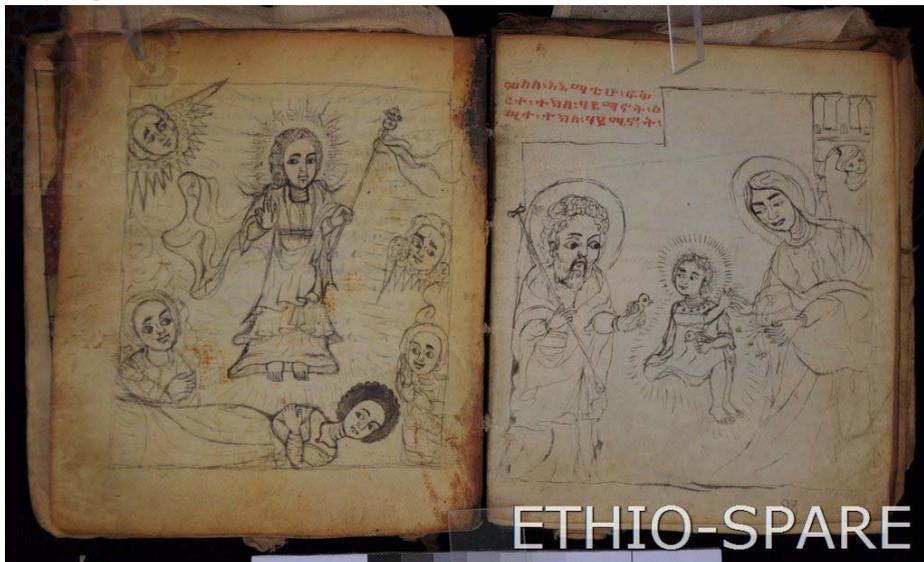

Fig. 26 Bet Mäka^ʿ, *Dərsanä Mika^ʾel*
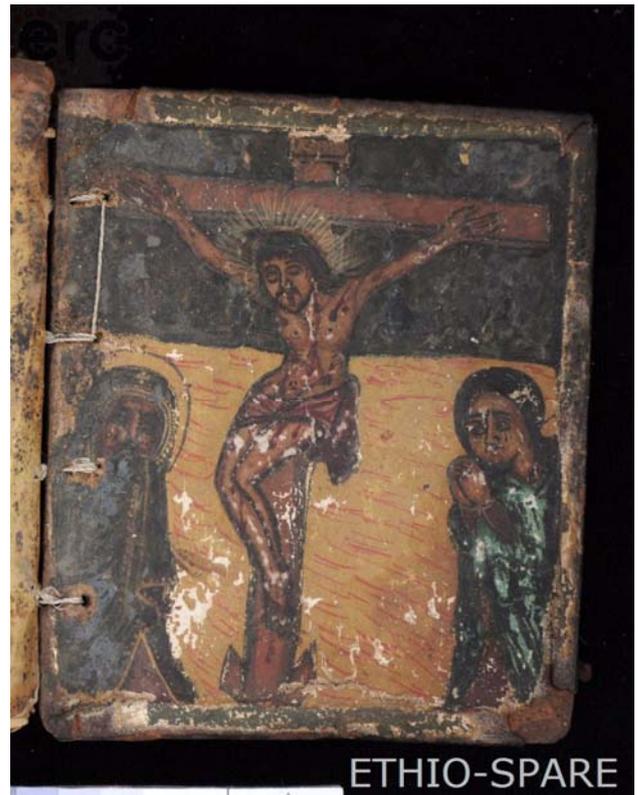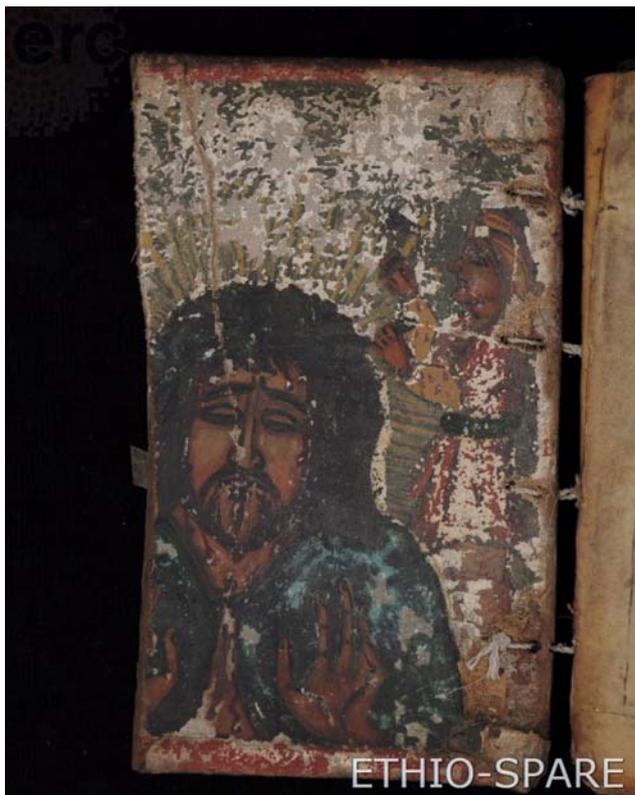
Fig. 27, Fig. 28 Bet Mäka^ʿ, *Dərsanä Mika^ʾel*, wooden covers

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[26] Two female donors are mentioned in the supplication formulas: Fəqərtä Täklä Haymanot and ^ʿƎsetä Täklä Haymanot (s. also fig. 26).

[27] The pictures are painted on linen which is glued to the wooden surfaces (front cover, unfortunately broken, with very worn representation of the *Percussio capitis*; back cover with the Crucifixion).

[28] With King Sahlä Dəngəl (one of the "puppet kings" of the "Time of the Princes", who ruled in 1830-50s, s. D. Crummey, in: EAE IV, 464) mentioned in the "supplication for the king" and elsewhere.
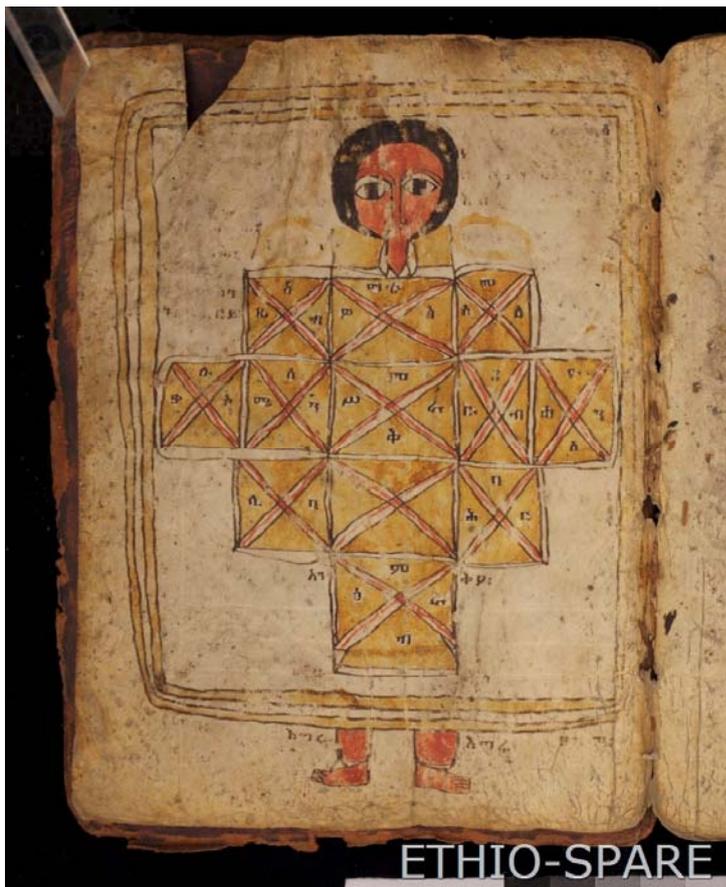
Fig. 29 Bet Mäkaʿ, Missal

Local tradition says that the church was founded under King Naʿod (r. 1494-1508). A monastery (*gädam*) was established under King Yoḥannǝs IV, and "renewed" under *ras* Śǝyyum Mängäša (the governor of Tǝgray in 1941-60) who also re-built the church. The monastic community, however, declined some time after the 1974 revolution. Recently, the construction of a new church building has been sponsored by a rich donor.

7. May ʾAbʾa Maryam

The site of May Abʾa (or May Baʾa)[29] is located on the outskirts of ʿAddigrat, behind the city's zonal hospital. It is in fact the site of (at least) two churches, situated on the slopes of the mountains around the green plain of May ʾAbʾa: that of St. Mary, rectangular, recent; the old cave church dedicated to Prophet Simon (Sǝmʿon), located some 2-3km far[30]. The old church is deserted. Not much information on the history of the site was available, except the claim that the cave church was founded in the time of King Säʿaldoba; the oldest book of the church (Vita and Miracles of St. George of Lydda) can be dated back to the late 17th - early 18th cent.

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[29] The place name appears among the charters of the *Liber Axumae* (though the identification is not quite certain): cp. Mayä ʾAbʿa, Conti Rossini 1909:40, l.18 (no. 44) as a *gʷǝlt* of Däbrä Bänkʷäl in a charter issued by King Lǝbnä Dǝngǝl; in another document, issued by King Gälawdewos, confirms Mayä ʾAbʿa as *gʷǝlt* of Däbrä Bizän, ibid. 43, l.2 (no. 50).

[30] Perhaps identical to the church of "Semoon" (Plant 1974:34), only mentioned and with no entry in the book, since the site was not visited by R. Plant. The place name "Adi Kabriel" mentioned by R. Plant as locality of the "Semoon" church, however, was not recalled by the local people. One cannot exclude confusion with another cave-church described by R. Plant, "Samuel Mayaba" (which was not mentioned during our visit to May ʾAbʿa), with a place description fitting in fact for Sǝmʿon May ʾAbʾa (Plant 1974:169, no. 101).
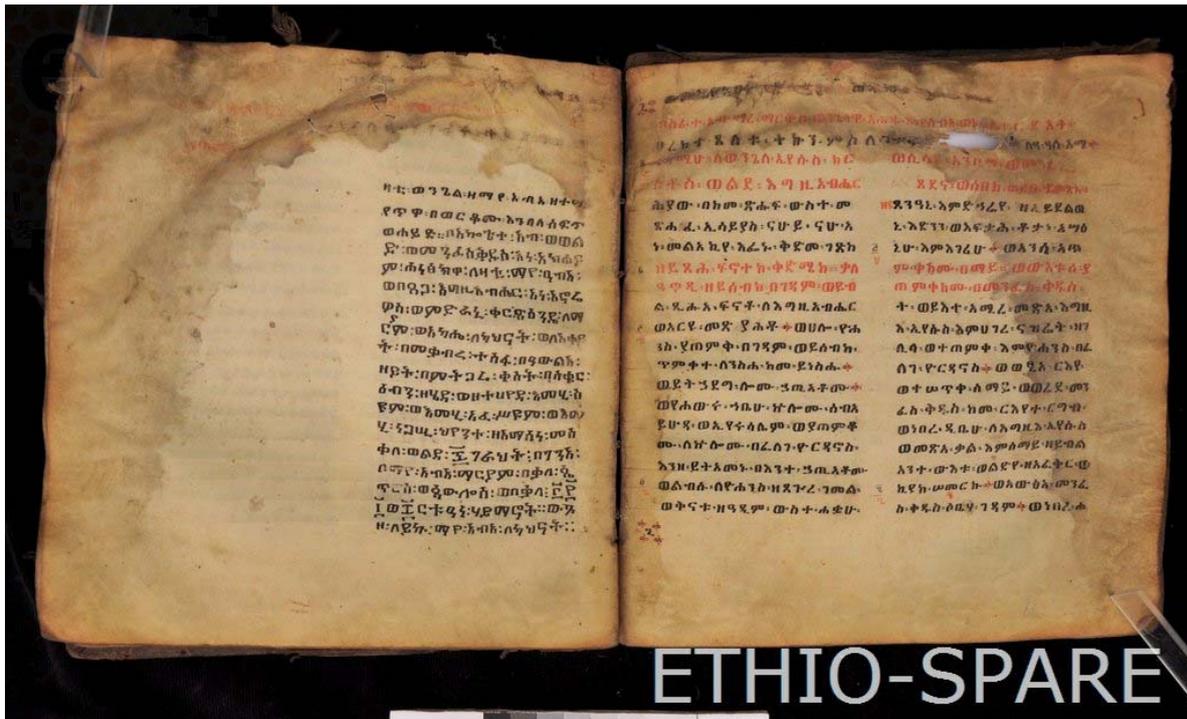
Fig. 30 May ʔAbʔa, land charter in the Four Gospel book

The Gospel Book of May ʔAbʔa Maryam probably dates back to the late 18th or first half of the 19th cent.; among the *additiones*, it contains a document which appears to be a (reworked?) copy of an old land charter of May ʔAbʔa (fig. 30). The document recounts that the church was built by a certain ʔAkḥadom, and enumerates its *gʷəlt*-lands. Indeed, it might mean early 15th-cent. ruler of ʕAgamä[31], but the document is inscribed into the Gospel by a much later (late 19th - early 20th-cent.) hand, and, in its form and style, does not really resemble the authentic old charters. At least two more manuscripts of the collection (a *Dərsanä Mikaʔel* and a Missal) appeared to have been copied by the same scribe, whose handwriting was otherwise observed as a different place (s. Golʕa Yoḥannəs, below). Among the other books of the collection, there is a very recent manuscript with a Vita and Miracles of St. Simon, who is vividly venerated in the area[32].

8. Qəddus Gäbrəʔel Ḥawaṣi, ʔAbrəqo Qəddəst Maryam

The collections of two more churches from the area of Märgahaya, Ḥawaṣi Gäbrəʔel and Abrəqo Maryam, were investigated, though the sites, remote and difficult to access, could not be visited. The collections are small. The oldest book of the church Gäbrəʔel Ḥawaṣi is a manuscript of the *Mäṣḥafä gənzät* ('The Book of the Funeral Ritual'), with the names of King Iyoʔas (r. 1755-69) and Metropolitan Marqos mentioned; a few protective scrolls have been also recorded (figs. 31a, 31b). The church of ʔAbrəqo Maryam yielded a few interesting manuscripts, among them an 18th cent. Missal; a relatively old (19th-cent.?) protective scroll (fig. 32) in private possession; a 19th-cent. small, elegant codex of unusual format[33], containing a collection of protective texts (*Təmhərtä*

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[31] S. Tsegay Berhe, in: EAE I, 166b.

[32] The *tabot* of St. Simon is one of the seven *tabot*s kept in the church. The saint is the "Holy Simon" from Lk. 2, in May ʔAbʔa referred to as "Prophet Simon", in the same way as he is styled in the Vita (*näbiy* Səmʕon). The Ms. contains a lengthy text, separated into monthly readings, containing such parts as: "Prophecy of Simon", "Vision of Simon", "Miracles of Simon", "Covenant of Simon". It seems that the narrative concerns not only the Biblical story, but also the church of May ʔAbʔa. No references to any similar work has been found so far in the literature devoted to the apocryphal literature in Ethiopic (cp., e.g., Piovanelli 1993, etc.).

[33] 12 (L) x 5,5 (W) x 3,5 (T).

ḥəbuʾat, *Säyfä śəllase*, etc.) and *ʾasmat*-prayers as marginal notes, neatly decorated with a devotional picture of foreign origin (figs.33a, 33b).

Fig. 31ab Gäbrəʾel Ḥawaṣi, magic scroll   Fig. 32 ʾAbrəqo Maryam, magic scroll
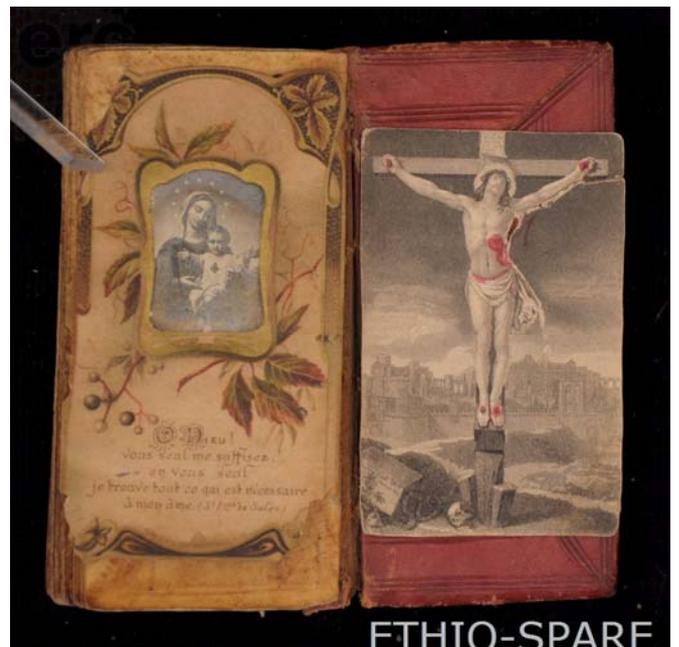
Fig. 33ab ʾAbrəqo Maryam, collection of protective texts

9. Golʿa Yoḥannəs Mäṭməq

The church of Golʿa Yoḥannəs Mäṭməq (dedicated to John the Baptist) stands on a steep slope above the Italian military cemetery, near the large Catholic installation of the Silesians of Don Bosco[34]. There is a *ṣäbäl*-source in a grove in the vicinity of the church, regularly attended by many people. The church building is recent, rectangular. The priest did not know anything about the foundation of the church, except that it is old; he reported that there had been another church on the site which was destroyed in the time of *däǧǧazmač* Säbagadis, and its *tabot* was taken to Gundä Gunde.

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[34] The church is not mentioned in the article about the locality, s. K. O'Mahoney, in: EAE II, 938.

Fig. 34 Golᶜa Yoḥannəs, Four Gospel book

Fig. 35 Golᶜa Yoḥannəs, Four Gospel book, Canon tables

The collection of the church, exceptionally well kept, includes a number of interesting books. The "Golden Gospel" of the church, though not illuminated, is a sample of the fine scribal art from the second half of the 18th cent. (s. the incipit page of Matthew, fig. 34; cp. a fragment of the Canon Tables, executed by a different, less skilled scribe, fig. 35), with up to ten additional notes. One of the copies of the *Dərsanä Mikaʾel* ("Homily of St. Michael") possessed by the church is a composite manuscript, of which the first quire, containing "Introduction" (fig. 36), was

produced around the middle of the 19th cent. by the same scribe who copied the *Dərsanä Mikaʾel* for May ʾAbʾa Maryam (s. above)[35]. The second hand observed in the *Dərsanä Mikaʾel* of Golʿa Yoḥannəs, which produced the major part of the text, is of somewhat earlier time (fig. 37). Among other books, the church possesses a complex, 18th - 19th-cent. manuscript containing hagiographic texts devoted to John the Baptist (fig. 38) and a 19th-cent. collection of protective prayers *Mäftəḥe śəray* ("Loosening of the Spell"), with a design of rare type (fig. 39; symbolizing Trinity?).
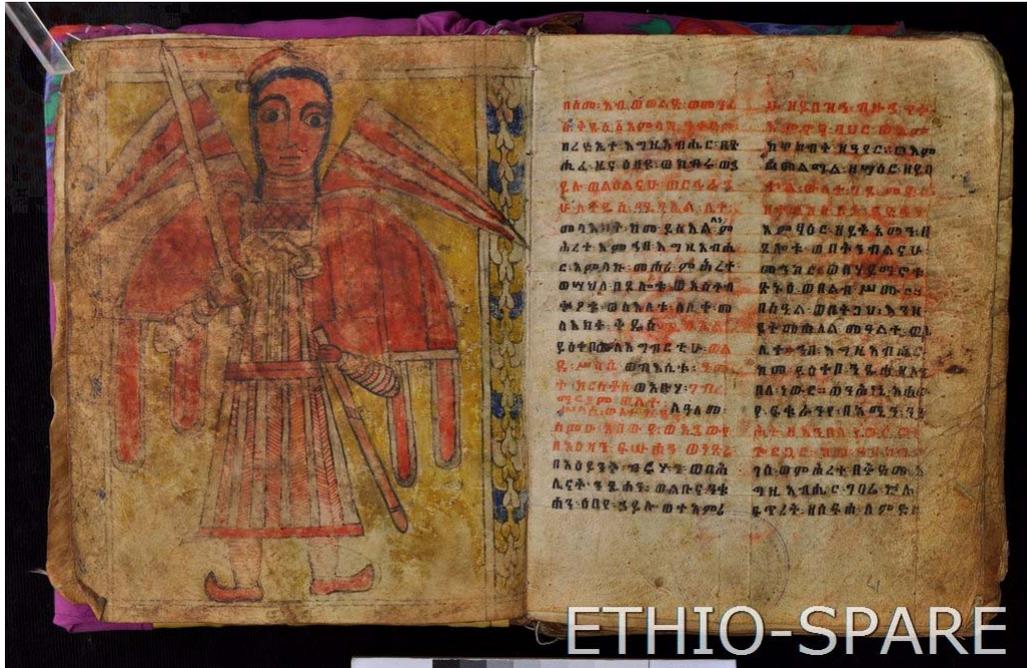

Fig. 36, Fig. 37. Golʿa Yoḥannəs, *Dərsanä Mikaʾel*

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[35] In the context of the local scribal art, the handwriting of this scribe appears remarkable. It is characterized by a conspicuous tendency to small, broadly spaced letters; the strokes are thick, the contrast between the thick and thin elements of the letters is not articulated.
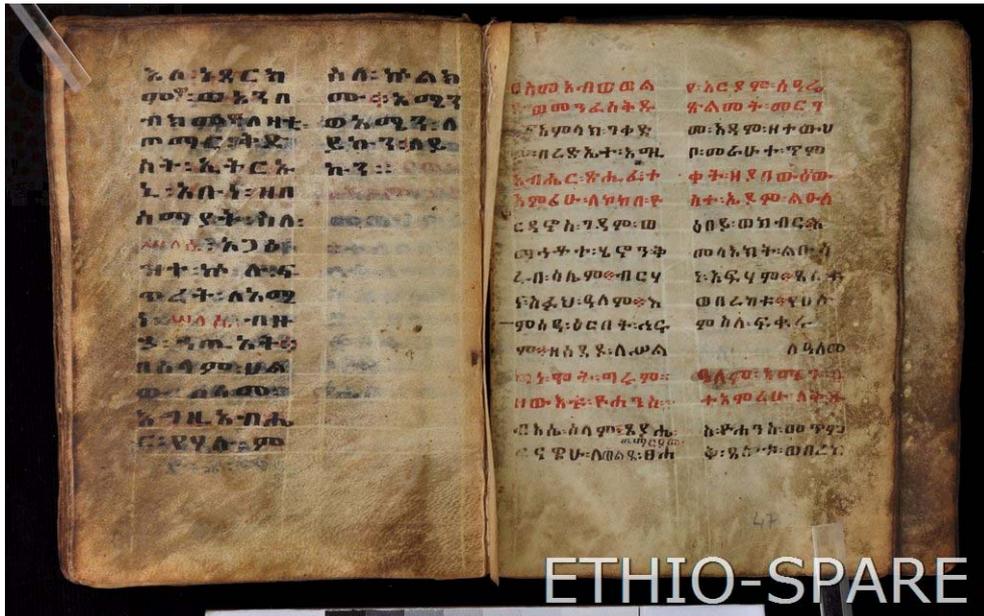
Fig. 38 Golᶜa Yoḥannəs, collection of texts devoted to John the Baptist

Fig. 39 Golᶜa Yoḥannəs, *Mäftəḥe śəray*

10. Qəta Maryam

To reach the site, one has to drive on the asphalt road ᶜAddigrat – ʾAksum, turn left ca. 1 km before the town of Bəzät and continue some 15-20 min on the rugged side road leading into a valley between the hills (until the local "educational centre"). Then one walks on the path upwards and descends into the gorge of river Qəta. The site of the church can be reached after ca. one hour of difficult walk[36].

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[36] All in all, the way between the main road and the church is ca. 15 km long. There are no dwellings in the vicinity of the church; during the day, the people (including the church servants) usually go to their works and cannot be quickly found and called back. Therefore, it is advisable to arrange a visit in advance.

The manuscript collection of Qəta Maryam was very modest, but the church itself turned out to be impressive. It is a rock-hewn church, somewhat difficult to identify as such from the outside because of the new porch looking like a common rectangular church building (fig. 40).
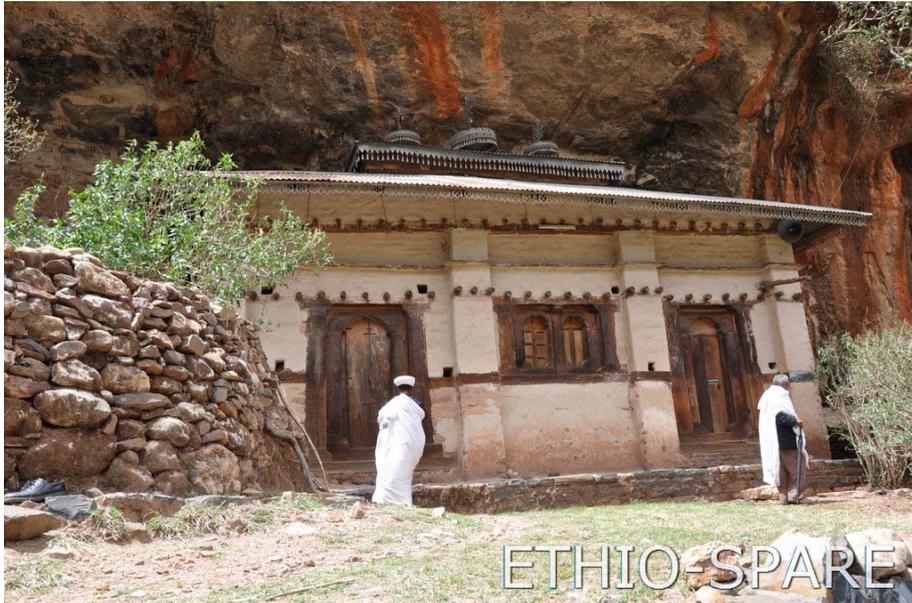
Fig. 40 Qəta Maryam

Apparently, Qəta Maryam does not feature in any published register of the rock-hewn churches and seems to have been completely unknown. The interior of the church consists of two chambers. The one, commonly accessible nave, has four massive, rough columns, and can be entered through an entrance. Under one of the columns, there is a pit some 2m deep, obviously a former burial, now empty and covered with a wooden board (once used as door). The priest stressed that the pit was the former "pass of ʾabba Sälama which leads to ʾAksum". Another similar pit, a shallow one (a former burial of a child?), is to the right from the entrance.

The second chamber is used as the sanctuary; it can be entered from the nave through a semi-circular pass in the rock and a door in the rock wall. A *mänbärä tabot* is installed in the middle; some old liturgical devices are also kept there; a look inside was only possible from the doorway (however, cp. some conclusion and observations in Annex I by E. Fritsch). The sanctuary is separated from the porch by a wall with a door which is not used and remains blocked from inside. Local tradition claims that the church was founded by Kings ʾAbrəha and ʾAṣbəha; but no other hints to the time of the foundation were found, except an iron cross of the ancient (14ᵗʰ cent.?) design. Besides, two old, broken *nägarit* drums lying in the pass leading towards the *mäqdäs* were said to have been "drums of King Dawit (II)".

The church is remarkable thanks to its wall paintings. All of them are executed *a secco*, apparently by different painters. An inscription under the picture of St. Theodore (probably Theodore the Stratelates; here the name spelled as Tiyodros; fig. 41) reveals the name of the person who commissioned the painting, a certain Fanuʾel[37]. Among the others paintings, there are: the Four Evangelists (?; one on the wall to the left), the Devil and an equestrian figure with the cross in the hand, in front of the main (fig. 42); the Virgin with Child and Angels, King David playing the harp, on the wall next to the pass leading to the sanctuary (fig. 43); next to the entrance into the sanctuary, John the Baptist (fig. 44)[38].

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[37] The depiction of the donor to whom the inscription refers, which was below the equestrian figure, is to the most part destroyed. The inscription reads: "And (as for) the painting, it is me, Fanuʾel, who caused it be painted. Do not forget (to recite) for me *Pater Noster*, and (you), head of the priests … [?]".

[38] The inscription above is practically invisible (and could be read only after the picture was drastically processed), but the name can still be assumed with a degree of certainty: {səʿəlä qəddus} *Yoḥannəs*

Figs 41-44. Qəta Maryam, wall paintings: St. Theodore (up left); John the Baptist (up right); Evangelists (bottom left); Virgin with Child, Archangels, King David (bottom right)

Mäṭməq. The inscription is probably not contemporary with the painting. It was written, unusually, with blue paint, now absolutely bleached; it ends with a section divider frequently used in the manuscripts: two nine-dot asterisks connected with two lines. Also the color distribution partly resembles the one employed in the texts written on parchment: four dots and connecting lines are executed in blue, the other five dots in red (in a written text, usually four dots of a nine dot asterisk and connecting lines are black, and the over five dots are red).

The church definitely requires further careful study. Its discovery again highlights the issue of the region between ʿAddigrat and Däbrä Dammo which appears important as the route along which cultural influences spread into the interior part of the country, and the area where important historical events took place.

11. Ḥarennät Maryam Gäbäzäyti

The church of Ḥarennät (Ḥarännät, Ḥarännet) Maryam Gäbäzäyti is located a few km eastward from the church of Bet Ḥawaryat (s. Report II), but is difficult to access. The church stands on a hill, overlooking a riverbed; ʿAddigrat can be seen far away. Until late 1970s, Ḥarennät Maryam had one more church located in the vicinity under its administration, Täklä Haymanot ʿAddigodina. Both churches are rectangular, built in the traditional Təgrayan style; the former being somewhat older, the latter being quite recent structure. Täklä Haymanot ʿAddigodina does not possess any significant manuscript collection, but is located in a picturesque gorge, covered with thick forest. A *ṣäbäl*-source is located nearby, falling down from the cliff. The source is always attended by many people, especially women seeking for cure from infertility or other diseases. As in other places, while approaching the holy water source, the visitors are obliged to take off shoes[39]. Close to the waterfall, there are ruins of a small rectangular building, which was said to have been the "first church of Täklä Haymanot"[40], built in the Gondärine time. The church was later moved downwards, to a more accessible place.
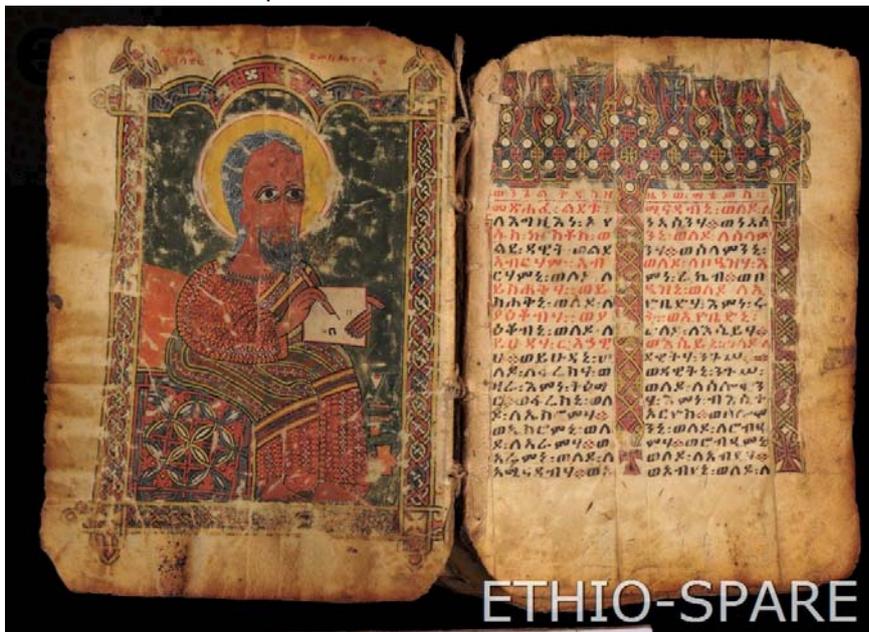

Fig. 45 Ḥarennät Maryam, Four Gospel book, the beginning of St. Matthew

Local tradition claims that the church of Ḥarennät Maryam Gäbäzäyti was founded in the time of King Sälʿadoba; later, *däǧǧazmač* Säbagadis re-established the church and donated *gʷəlt*-lands. The collection of church turned out to be extensive and heterogeneous, with a number of interesting manuscripts. Particularly interesting is an early 16th-cent. Four Gospels manuscript, still complete, though with disintegrated binding and heavily damaged by rodents[41].

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[39] Electric cables with attached bulbs were hanging between the trees; we were told that the faithful spend nights sleeping near the stream, and the electric light was used for the night veneration. There were improvised "curtains" – pieces of white cloth stretched between the trees – hiding the people who take *ṣäbäl*-bath from being seen from the outside.

[40] A kind of stone stand in the middle was said to have been the former *mänbärä tabot.*

[41] The present condition of the book is probably the result of intervention of a traditional (not very skilled) binder, a type of repair that we elsewhere observed on old books. At some point, after the threads of the binding were broken and the front board got lost, each quire was reinforced by crudely

The book appears to be a *deluxe* codex, with 279 fols., finely painted arches of the Canon tables and miniatures of the Apostles and Evangelists (fig. 45). It is an early example of the Four Gospel manuscript which includes the so-called *Mäqdəmä wangel* (traditional introduction to the Four Gospels, fols. 1r-12v, with characteristic sub-sections)[42]. One of the *additiones*, a register of the church property of Ḥarennät Maryam, written by an old hand, is dated to 7020 "year of Mercy" (1528 A.D.) and mentions ʾabunä Täklä Näbiyat, possibly that of Gundä Gunde[43].
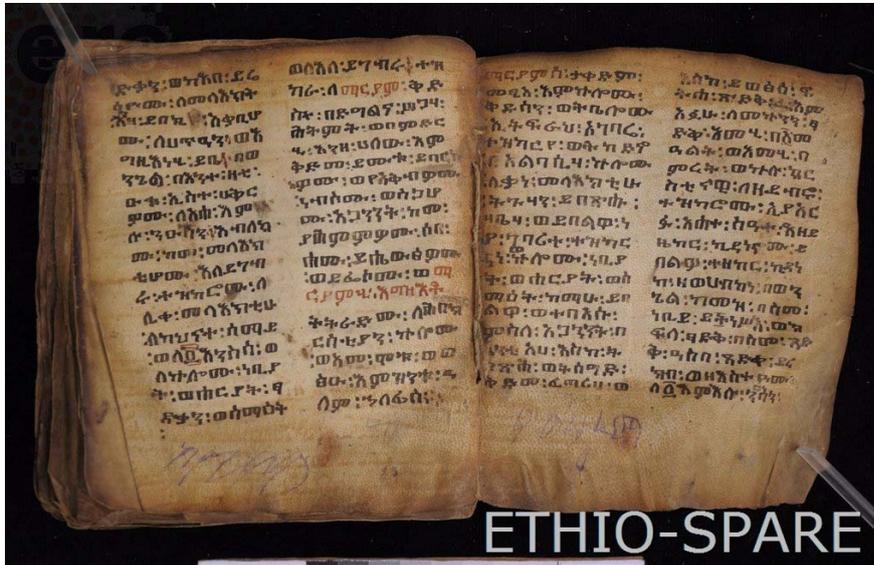

Fig. 46 Ḥarennät Maryam, *Dərsanä Mikaʾel*

Fig. 47 Ḥarennät Maryam, *Mäṣḥafä ṭomär*

made parchment guards which were attached to the folds from the outside by means of leather strips led through slits in the folia. The leaves of the quires were thus kept together; however, as the quires were not properly bound anymore they got in disorder. Some got detached from the text block, and were found lying elsewhere in the sacristy.

[42] Cp. Zurmond 1989, part I, 14, n. 14. The Ms. includes the statement on the stichometry of the Gospels (fol. 13rb) and the statement on the symbols of the Evangelists (fol. 13rb); followed by the "Synopsis of Classes" (fols. 13va-14ra); Letter of Eusebius to Carpianus (the *incipit* is decorated with an elaborated ornamental band; fols. 14ra-16rb), eight folia of the Canon tables (fols. 17r-21r, richly elaborated, but the last two unfinished); pictures of all 12 Apostles on the next three folia (fols. 22v-23v). Each of the Gospels is preceded, as usual, by the miniature of an Evangelist (with the exception of Luke).

[43] One Täklä Näbiyat is known as a 16th-cent. head of Gundä Gunde (d. 1554?).

Fig. 48 Ḥarennät Maryam, collection of Marian texts

The church of Ḥarennät possesses a few manuscripts which may represent the "average level" of the local manuscript production: the codices somewhat crudely manufactured, written with roughly looking, angular script, frequently without paying much attention to the ruling lines (fig. 46, *Dərsanä Mikaʾel*; fig. 47, *Mäṣḥafä ṭomär*, "The Book of Letter [that Fell from the Heaven]"). These books are not easy to date (18th-19th cent.?), but they can be easily distinguished (esp. paleographically) from a few manuscripts apparently reflecting much finer, late or post-Gondärine manuscript production tradition of approximately the same period (cp. fig. 48; illuminated collection of Marian texts).

12. Qəddəst Maryam Kudo Hawwəs ʿAddi Qiyaḥto

Located in the south-western (internal) part of Gulo Mäḵäda, Qəddəst Maryam Kudo Hawwəs ʿAddi Qiyaḥto stands on a hill, overlooking the valley. The magnificent mount of Däbrä Maʿṣo rises on its other side. The church of May Čäw (s. Report II) stands at the entrance of the valley. Local people were not able to say much about the history of the church: only that it had been a sanctuary before the coming of Christianity, and that the church was founded in the time of King Gäbrä Mäsqäl. The church is considered *däbr*, but has only two *tabot*s (Trinity, St. Mary).

Among the books, the church possesses a recent copy of the Miracles of Mary with infixed miniatures (fig. 49) originating from a much older (15th cent.?) book; a 16th cent. (?) manuscript of the *Gädlä ḥawaryat* (the apocryphal "Vitae of the Apostles", fig. 50); a finely written mid-18th-cent. collection of prayers (*Ṣälotat ʾəntä säbʿatu ʿəlätat*, fig. 51); a few books whose age was difficult to define immediately, written in rough, angular script (like an 18th-cent. [?] copy of the *Mäṣḥafä gənzät*, fig. 52; cp. above, Ḥarennät Maryam Gäbäzäyti), which perhaps continues one of the northern local scribal traditions (that of Gulo Mäḵäda?) as opposed to the outer influences, first of those coming from the area of the Gondärine culture.

Fig. 49 Maryam ʿAddi Qiyaḥto, old miniatures in a recent Miracles of Mary

Fig. 50 Maryam ʿAddi Qiyaḥto, *Gädlä ḥawaryat*

Fig. 51 Maryam ʿAddi Qiyaḥto, *Ṣälotat ʾəntä säbʿatu ʿəlätat*

Fig. 52 Maryam ʿAddi Qiyaḫto, *Mäṣḥafä gənzät*

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Annex I. A Note on the Altars Found in the Rock-Church of Qəta Maryam

(Emmanuel Fritsch)

Rather open in style, the sanctuary of the rock-church of Qəta Maryam features in the rock ceiling a small and shallow cupola under which the altar of modest size stands (fig. 53). These details point to the 14th century as timeframe for the church. The altar, as we see it today, is made of three different elements:

a) the original rock-altar (hardly visible on the picture);

b) because the original altar got cracks, it was eventually encased in a cement frame; c) an iron structure has been set up above the ancient altar: it is the modern altar, at which the liturgical services are celebrated once its doors are open and the altar-tablet is laid there.

Besides, another device attracts the eye, which looks like a wooden table (figs. 54, 55). It is also an altar, characterized as such by its dimensions and the rounded, flat shapes of the top of its four feet, adorning its angles. Its *mensa*, or table, is missing, and a net crafted of leather throngs makes an adequate lower level upon which a wooden paten is resting (now out of use because of its condition). It cannot be excluded that the *mensa* itself might also have been made of a leather throngs plated horizontally.

Across the altar, two pieces of short and wide boards are lying. Their heads look like the decoration of altar angles. Their ends are worn, possibly because they were ensconced in the ground, carrying the altar. Obviously, these pieces need to be examined more closely, to determine their actual purpose. Now, they serve for carrying the wooden tray of the ʕawäd (meant to carry the Eucharist at the time of the distribution of the Holy Communion to the faithful), placed above them as a secondary table which is proper to be used for the purification of the sacred vessels.

In view of the presence of the ancient rock-altar, the second and (third) altars are in a secondary position. It may be possible to determine whether another rock-altar could have been a real possibility or not (according to the physical configuration of the rock and possibly attempts at chiseling one out). In fact, the two wooden altar(s) belong to an earlier type, which suggests that they have been brought in from some other place rather than were manufactured for this church, at the same time as the rock-altar was made or soon after.

To be complete and be used for the liturgy, especially the Eucharistic liturgy (the Mass), any of these altars needs to be completed with a consecrated altar-tablet (the *tabot*).

Fig. 53

Fig. 54

Fig. 55

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