Ethiopian Objects in the Blick-Harris Study Collection: Art, Context, and the Persistence of Form

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Edited by Brad Hostetler & Lynn Jones
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Note on Transliteration and Dates

In order to maintain consistency in the spelling of terminology and of historical names and places associated with Ethiopia, we have adopted the conventions and transliteration system that is used by the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003–14).

Ethiopia has a long artistic tradition in which forms, motifs, iconographies, and techniques have persisted for centuries. For this reason, and following the lead of other handbooks on Ethiopian art (cf. Hecht et al 1990, p. 18), we have decided to avoid any estimation of dates for the objects in the catalog.
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1 Introduction

Brad Hostetler and Lynn Jones

In July of 2020, the Department of Art History at Kenyon College received and accessioned over 450 objects into its study collection. These objects were part of a bequest from David P. Harris (1925–2019), a 1946 graduate of Kenyon, and emeritus faculty in the Department of Linguistics at Georgetown University. Of these 450 objects, thirty-six are Ethiopian; they are the subject of this volume.

Organization

The volume is organized in two parts. The first focuses on the Harris bequest, the ethics of accepting such a collection, and the use of such objects for teaching and student research. The second part focuses on Harris’s Ethiopian objects, beginning with a historical overview of Ethiopian Christianity, followed by essays and catalog entries.

We begin with an essay by Brad Hostetler, Assistant Professor of Art History at Kenyon College, with Kenyon undergraduate Ani Parnagian (’23), on Harris’s collection and his collecting habits viewed through the lens of the supporting documentation that accompanied the bequest. This is followed by an essay by Elizabeth Marlowe, the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Chair in Liberal Arts Studies, an Associate Professor of Art & Art History, and the Director of the Museum Studies Program at Colgate University. Brad first “met” Liz in July of 2020 when he announced the news of the Harris bequest on Twitter. She responded, questioning the provenance of the pieces and Kenyon’s reasoning for accepting them. Wanting to learn more about the legal and ethical dimensions of such poorly provenanced collections, Brad invited her to serve as a consultant, and then to contribute an essay examining these issues. The third essay, by Erika Loic, Assistant Professor of Global Medieval Art at Florida State University, demonstrates the importance of such collections for the work of students and scholars, and the limitations of photographs and other digital surrogates.

The second part of the volume begins with an essay by Neal Sobania, Emeritus Professor of History at Pacific Lutheran University, who provides an introduction to Ethiopian Christianity and its relationship to other Orthodox traditions. This is followed by a series of essays and catalog entries on the thirty-six Ethiopian objects by Lynn Jones, Associate Professor of Eastern Medieval Art at Florida State University, and four FSU doctoral students: Sarah Mathiesen, Sonia Dixon, Caitlin Mims and Madison Gilmore-Duffey. Lynn focuses on eleven hand and processional crosses. She asks two questions: what makes an Ethiopian cross recognizable as such when it is purchased outside of Ethiopia, and what can these objects tell us about Harris as a collector? Sarah examines the seventeen pectoral objects through the lens of their relationship with the body.1 Sonia investigates issues of authenticity, using the pendant icon and stone diptych as case studies. Caitlin contextualizes the sensul fragments within the larger tradition of cutting manuscripts into individual leaves for sale. Her catalog also includes the two amuletic scrolls. The final essay and catalog, by Madison, analyzes the parchment icon of Abba Šamu‘el of Waldabba and

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1 We begin the catalog with the hand, processional, and pectoral crosses because these objects were grouped together as a distinct sub-collection in Harris’s own catalog.
considers the ways in which particular aspects of his vitae are represented and emphasized in art.

The Harris Bequest

A gift such as this has its pros and cons. These artifacts provide material for teaching, and for students and scholars to conduct original research, but what are the ethics of keeping such objects? While Harris left purchase records for the majority of his collection, only a small percentage of these records say anything about the provenance of the objects prior to their acquisition by the sellers. Most of the pieces lack the documentation needed to show when they were exported from their countries of origin — a critical requirement for determining an object’s licit or illicit status as defined by the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Preventing and Prohibiting the Illicit Import and Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property held on November 17, 1970. This bequest therefore raises questions regarding the ways in which these objects changed ownership, from the makers to the private collectors and dealers who sold them to Harris.

Why did the College and the Department of Art History accept Harris’s collection when most of the objects lack the provenance necessary to meet the UNESCO Convention standards? Leaving no heirs, Harris bequeathed his estate to Kenyon; upon his death in 2019, the objects immediately became the property of the College. The decision then facing the Department of Art History was not whether to accept the items, but how to best care for them now that they were in Kenyon’s possession. If they declined them, the College would have liquidated all assets at auction. Members of the Department felt that this was not the best course of action, as this could subject the objects to conditions that would jeopardize their preservation and limit their accessibility. The Department of Art History instead chose to incorporate as many objects as possible into their existing study collection, where they could be properly cared for, and available for teaching and for research by students, faculty, and the wider scholarly community. If, through this research, it is determined that any objects in Harris’s collection were acquired illegally at any point in their history, Kenyon College is prepared to return these artifacts to their rightful owners.

Prior to the Harris bequest, the study collection in the Department of Art History primarily consisted of a long-term loan from the estate of Boris A. Blick (1922–2005), emeritus faculty in the Department of History at the University of Akron. The Harris bequest was a significant addition to the study collection, and so the faculty decided in the winter of 2020 to designate it as the Blick-Harris Study Collection (BHSC). Brad worked with Kenyon students to improve the BHSC’s cataloging, care, and organization, and to make it readily accessible to the public. Katherine Crawford (’22) assisted with storage and protection. Maia Cornish-Keefe (’23) photographed objects and posted these files to the collection website. Ani organized the vast amounts of documentation that came with the Harris bequest. The bequest has allowed the Department to consider, with student involvement, the best practices in caring for the objects following professional standards in storage, preservation, and research.

Collaboration

The partnership with Florida State University demonstrates the ways in which the BHSC can be used beyond Kenyon. In the summer of 2020, Brad discussed Harris’s Ethiopian artifacts with Lynn, who was preparing her Fall graduate seminar, East of Byzantium. In the past, students in this seminar examined the traditions of Armenian, Georgian, Syriac, and Coptic art. Lynn realized that a partnership with Kenyon offered opportunities for students to extend their research to include Ethiopia.

Sarah Blick, Editor of Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art & Architecture and Professor of Art History at Kenyon, suggested that we co-edit a special volume on this Ethiopian material for the journal. We were able to bring on board Birhanu T. Gessese (Kenyon ’21) as copy editor. We then began
reaching out to potential collaborators, including Ethiopia-based scholars, but quickly ran into difficulties created by the pandemic, which upended (and increased) everyone’s workloads. We considered delaying the project and publication until we could recruit more collaborators and access more resources — but this project relies most heavily on student research at Kenyon and FSU. We were mindful of students’ pandemic-delayed research opportunities and missed degree benchmarks. The study of these objects was an extraordinary opportunity for them at a time when everything was on hold. Research allowed them to expand their knowledge of Eastern Christian art, gave them experience in academic publishing, and added significant value to their CVs.

We identified thirty-six Ethiopian objects that could serve as the basis for FSU graduate student research. The MA and PhD students enrolled in Lynn’s course — Sonia, Madison, Caitlin and Colin Kraft — were joined by doctoral candidate Sarah Mathiesen. They began the semester studying the rich artistic traditions of Ethiopian Orthodox art, and then worked on the material in the BHSC. In September of 2020, Lynn and Brad drove the thirty-six Ethiopian objects from Ohio to Florida, allowing the students one week in which to study them in person. Erika joined in, assisting as the students tackled this new challenge. It was an extraordinary week for us all, and we began to plot out the shape of this volume.

It is important to underscore that FSU students and faculty were not part of the discussions regarding Kenyon’s acquisition of Harris’s bequest, nor were they investigating provenance. Research on these issues was undertaken by Brad and his students at Kenyon. At FSU, students focused on historical examination of the objects, researching Ethiopian cultural heritage and the persistence of artistic forms, media, and techniques. Funding provided by FSU’s Museum and Cultural Heritage Studies Program allowed them to consult with specialists (via Zoom), including Felege-Selam Yirga, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and Elizabeth Dospěl Williams, Associate Curator of the Byzantine Collection at the Dumbarton Oaks Museum. This has truly been a collaborative project; one in which scholars, students, librarians, and museum professionals worked together during a world-wide pandemic.

We have only scratched the surface, and hope that the works presented here will prompt future research and publication opportunities. We also hope that this volume will serve as impetus and a template for other such collaborations. We encourage readers to consult the online catalog to the BHSC, where they will find additional photographs of each object and scans of Harris’s personal catalog, notes, and purchase receipts.

Ethiopia has a long artistic tradition in which forms, motifs, iconographies, and techniques have persisted for centuries. For this reason, and following the lead of other handbooks on Ethiopian art, we, as Editors, decided to avoid any estimation of dates for the objects in the catalog.

In order to maintain consistency in the spelling of terminology and of historical names and places associated with Ethiopia, we have adopted the conventions and transliteration system that is used by the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003–14).

Brad, Lynn, and Birhanu wish to express their gratitude to all those who generously contributed their time and knowledge to this project — in conversations conducted via email, Zoom, and phone — during a world-wide pandemic. We, and the authors of the essays in this volume, offer particular thanks to Sarah Blick, without whom this project, and this issue, would not exist. Her ideas and enthusiasm were essential to the success of the volume. Raymond Silverman, Professor in the History of Art at the University of Michigan, was a key point of contact at the start of this project. He

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2 https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/

3 In avoiding any speculation on dates, we follow Hecht et al 1990, p. 18.
offered his own expertise, and connected us with a number of specialists. We thank Laura De Becker, the Helmut and Candis Stern Associate Curator for African Art at the University of Michigan Museum of Art, and Kristen Windmuller-Luna, Curator of African Art at the Cleveland Museum of Art, for providing advice on issues of collecting and exhibiting African art.

FSU students received valuable assistance from Stormy Harrell, Collections Manager at the Museum of Anthropology at Wake Forest University, and Michael Gervers, Professor in the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Toronto Scarborough. We are grateful to Leah Sherman, Visual and Performing Arts Librarian at FSU, whose ability to provide us with much-needed resources during the pandemic bordered on the miraculous. Particular thanks go to Felege-Selam Yirga who graciously fielded numerous and varied questions from us.

We would like to thank the friends, colleagues, and acquaintances of Harris who shared their memories: George Bozzini, Connie Human, Alexandra Martin-Zakheim, John and Camille Staczek, and Eugene Vricella. Kate Daleiden, Director of Planned Giving, and Kyle W. Henderson, retired Associate Vice President for Planned Giving, provided valuable information on Harris’s estate. We are also grateful to Kenyon’s President Sean Decatur, and Daisy Desrosiers, Director of the Gund Gallery, for their support of this project. Finally, we owe an immense amount of gratitude to the Kenyon faculty in the Department of Art History — current and emeriti — for their support and for sharing their knowledge on Harris’s collection: Sarah Blick, Katherine Calvin, Alexandra Courtois de Viçose, Melissa Dabakis, Eugene Dwyer, Austin Porter, Katherine Taronas, Patricia Yu, and Yan Zhou.

As Editors, Brad and Lynn offer particular gratitude to their Assistant Editor, Birhanu. He began as copy editor, and quickly became much more. His meticulous work — new photography of all objects, collaboration on formatting and design, assistance in reading Ga’az and Amaraña (Amharic) inscriptions — were crucial to the success of this project. We hired a student, and gained a valued contributor.
The thirty-six Ethiopian objects featured in this catalog are part of a bequest from the estate of David P. Harris (1925–2019), a 1946 graduate of Kenyon College (fig. 2.1). In July of 2020, over 450 of Harris’s objects were accessioned into the Department of Art History’s study collection, now named the Blick-Harris Study Collection (BHSC). In this essay, we situate the Ethiopian pieces in the broader context of Harris’s bequest, by examining his collecting habit, his organization of objects, and the ways in which his purchases of Ethiopian works of art fit into his overall collection.

Biography

David Payne Harris was born January 5, 1925 in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised in the suburb of Rocky River. Following a year at the College of Wooster, he transferred to Kenyon in 1944, where he majored in English, served as editor for the Collegian, and was a member of the Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity. His interest in languages blossomed during his undergraduate studies; he took courses in Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and German. He graduated cum laude in 1946, and then entered the graduate program at the University of Michigan, earning his PhD in Linguistics in 1954. While at Michigan, he designed tests for the Educational Testing Service and the English Language Institute. In 1954 he joined the English faculty at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Harris quickly became a prominent scholar in his discipline. In 1961 he was appointed Professor of Linguistics and became the first Director of the American Language Institute at Georgetown University. He was part of the development of the first Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam, and served as the first president of the Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL). His book, Testing English as a Second Language (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969) was an influential contribution to the field. Harris also held two Fulbright residencies in Greece; he was first a Lecturer at the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens in 1957–58, and then the Coordinator of the Fulbright English Language Program in Greece and Visiting Professor of Linguistics at the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki in 1967–68.

Harris remained at Georgetown University until his retirement in 1990. Friends have told us that he spent his retirement developing and researching his collection, traveling, and attending exhibitions and concerts. He resided in Washington, DC until his death on August 19, 2019 at the age of ninety-four. His ashes were spread at the Kenyon College genealogical research of Eugene Dwyer — government-issued documents indicate that he was born on January 5. We are grateful to the Office of the Registrar for providing Harris’s academic transcript.

1 The study collection was named after Harris and Boris A. Blick (1922–2005), the two donors whose estates form the foundation of the collection.
2 General biographical information is drawn upon interviews with Harris’s friends and colleagues, from the obituary published in the Kenyon Alumni Magazine 2020, p. 61; and from the author bio published in his first book, Harris 1969, p. ii. Obituaries and Harris’s academic records at Kenyon state that he was born on January 6, but — thanks to the
Cemetery, where he is commemorated with a stone marker.

In the final years of his life Harris began discussions with his *almae matres* as possible recipients of the objects he collected. He presented to Michigan his collection of letters and ship logs associated with the War of 1812. This material is now housed at the William L. Clements Library, and was featured in a 2012 exhibition. Harris wanted Kenyon to be the primary beneficiary of his estate. Discussions with the College began in May of 2009, and it was agreed that a monetary bequest would be used to establish a fund for the care, maintenance, and restoration of art on campus. Later that summer, Harris proposed to also leave his collection of Asian art to the College. Harris submitted documents of select pieces to the Accessions Committee, who recommended that these objects be accepted if he decided to leave them in the bequest. When Harris died in 2019, it was discovered that he had left his entire estate to the College. The Office of Planned Giving first consulted with the Gund Gallery, who took over the role of the Accessions Committee when it was established in 2011. As most of the objects fall outside of the Gallery’s collecting mission, the Department of Art History’s study collection was suggested as the most suitable home. Faced with the choice of housing these objects or allowing them to be sent to auction, the Department decided to accession them so that faculty and students could research, and teach with, the pieces and more properly investigate their provenance.

**Harris Catalog (HC)**

The Department also received Harris’s own records of his collection (fig. 2.2). For each object, Harris produced what we refer to as a “one-sheet,”

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Clements Library Chronicles 2012.
Table 2.1. Organization of the HC with sub-collection names provided by Harris. Inferred sub-collection names are given in brackets. The asterisk (*) identifies the sub-collection for which we attribute a title not given by Harris elsewhere in the HC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binder</th>
<th>Sub-collection</th>
<th>Number of Objects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. African &amp; Other Tribal Objects; Ethiopian Crosses</td>
<td>A. African and Other Tribal Objects</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Untitled [Other Tribal Objects]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Ethiopian Crosses</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Asian Art, Mostly Ceramics</td>
<td>D. Asian Ceramics Part One</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. Asian Ceramics Part Two</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F. Untitled [Asian Ceramics Part Three]</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Byzantine-Era Small Objects; Icons: Byzantine to Modern Era; Post-Byzantine Sacred Objects</td>
<td>G. Byzantine Era Small Objects</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H. Rings and Small Pendant Crosses</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. Icons: Byzantine to Modern Era</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J. Post-Byzantine Sacred Objects</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Small Russian Icons, Mostly Metal; Roman, Hellenic, Coptic, Egyptian Objects</td>
<td>K. Untitled [Small Russian Icons, Mostly Metal]</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L. Roman, Hellenic, Coptic, Egyptian Objects</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M. Untitled [Early Medieval Objects]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. American Small Objects; Greek, Slavic Miscellany; Paintings, Silver, Rugs, Misc. Small Items</td>
<td>N. American Small Objects; Greek, Slavic Miscellany</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O. Untitled [Greek Miscellany]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. Untitled [Slavic Miscellany]</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q. Paintings, Silver, Rugs, Misc. Small Items</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
which includes most of the following information: a photograph, title, description, dimensions, date, dealer, date of purchase, and purchase price (fig. 2.3). He filed purchase receipts and other relevant documents after the one-sheet. In some instances, two or more objects are grouped together on a single one-sheet. These documents are held in five three-ring binders, which are labeled and organized by sub-collections. Table 1 summarizes the contents of the Harris Catalog (HC), and reproduces the titles that he gave to each sub-collection. Some sub-collections are unnamed, but their titles can be inferred by those given on the covers of the respective binders.

We do not know when Harris began organizing the HC, or when he first devised these sub-collections. What we can say is that the HC was a long-term project that was continually developed and revised. Evidence suggests that he began this documentation by creating a one-sheet for each object using a typewriter, and at some point, perhaps in the mid-to-late 1990s, he produced and revised one-sheets on a computer. There are a few instances where Harris preserved both the typewriter- and computer-generated one-sheets for a single object, and in these cases we find minor revisions to his titles and descriptions from the first version to the second. He did not regularly save purchase receipts, and/or document specific purchase dates until the early 1960s, a few years after beginning his collection.

Our analysis of Harris’s collection is through the lens of the HC, the only primary source that allows us to view the collection as through the eyes of the collector. We unfortunately never had the opportunity to speak with Harris. He was by all accounts a very private man. He left no personal diaries or letters in his estate, and while

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9 Harris did not number or sequence his binders and sub-collections, but we have done so here for the purpose of efficiently referring to specific groupings.

10 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.44.
conversations with friends have been helpful, they have not shed light on any specific pieces, or on the collection as a whole.

**Building the Collection**

The BHSC acquired 284 of the 407 objects that are individually cataloged in the HC. The remaining 123 objects were either given away by Harris — as indicated in hand-written notes in the HC — or could not be responsibly accepted due to the limitations of the Department’s storage space. The BHSC also received 174 objects that were not cataloged in the HC (see the Appendix for a complete list of objects accepted by Kenyon, organized by accession number and direct links to the online catalog).\(^1\) The reason why Harris did not catalog all of his objects remains unclear; we have been able to find references to uncataloged objects on receipts filed with other objects purchased at the same time. For example, while the stone diptych (cat. 30) and the two amuletic scrolls (cats. 34, 35) were not cataloged in the HC, the purchase receipt for an Ethiopian processional cross (cat. 2) that was cataloged in the HC, lists other Ethiopian objects in that same purchase (fig. 2.4). We have identified the “slate book” on this receipt as the stone diptych, and the “antique scroll” as referring to one of the amuletic scrolls.\(^2\)

The HC shows that Harris’s collection focused on a relatively few, specific, areas of interest. The largest, represented by Sub-collections G–K, can be characterized as Byzantine and Post-Byzantine artifacts, including jewelry, icons, and other religious objects associated with the Orthodox churches of Greece and Russia. The other major area of the collection is Asian art, represented by Sub-collections D–F. It is not clear in his

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\(^1\) Harris’s stamp collection (BHSC, 2020.453) and his coin collection (BHSC, 2020.454) are counted in this number as two objects because the hundreds of coins and stamps in these collections have not yet been fully inventoried.

\(^2\) Other objects listed on the receipt include a “Doll bead,” which we have not been able to identify in the bequest, and a “seal,” which we identify as BHSC, 2020.230. We identified this seal late in the project and so were unable to include it in the catalog. For the stone diptych, see the essay by Sonia Dixon (ch. 8).
organization why he created three sub-collections within Binder 2 nor why he emphasized ceramics in the title. While Harris indeed focused on ceramics in his collecting of Asian art, his Asian sub-collections also include small figural sculptures in terracotta and wood.

Harris’s collecting history spanned nearly sixty years, with his greatest activity in the 1970s and 1990s, the latter period corresponding to the first decade following his retirement (table 2.2). Harris began collecting in 1957. His first purchase, acquired in Athens, is a Greek Orthodox triptych with the Mother of God and Child (fig. 2.5). In 1957 he was in Athens for his first Fulbright residency, and it is clear that this experience greatly influenced him. Athens is where he first developed an interest in collecting, and, more specifically, collecting Orthodox icons, and we know that at some point in his adult life he converted to Greek Orthodoxy. His interests in Byzantium and Orthodox Christianity remained at the center of his collection; his last documented purchase is a small Greek triptych acquired in 2015.

Harris also collected Asian art throughout this period. He purchased his first two Asian pieces on June 10, 1967 in San Francisco: a Ming celadon dish and a head of Buddha (fig. 2.6). He continued to add Asian objects to his collection; his last recorded purchase is a Song Dynasty stone head, purchased in San Francisco in 2005. His interests in other sub-collections were more limited. His collection of antique silver (filed under Sub-collection Q, Paintings, Silver, Rugs, Misc. Small Items) was purchased in the early 1960s. His purchases cataloged in Sub-collection L (Roman, Hellenic, Coptic, Egyptian Objects) began in 1968, but most objects in this group were bought between 1992 and 2005. Similarly, most objects in Sub-collection A (African and Other Tribal Objects) were purchased in the mid-to-late-1970s.

It is through this lens that we look more closely at the focus of this volume, Ethiopian art. The Ethiopian crosses filed under Sub-collection C were purchased between 1975 and 1979, with one addition in 1989. His interest in Ethiopian art and Ethiopian crosses, specifically, is brief, but we can examine how his interest in these objects was piqued by examining what else he was buying at the time. His first Ethiopian acquisitions were the *sansul* and the two *sansul* fragments (cats. 31, 32, 33), purchased together on October 21, 1975 in London. Harris did not catalog these works with the other Ethiopian objects in Sub-collection C (Ethiopian Crosses), but rather included them in Sub-collection J (Post-Byzantine Sacred Objects). In 1974, one year prior to this acquisition, Harris had begun collecting African objects, filed under Sub-collection A, and had already acquired over half of the objects filed under Sub-collection I (Icons: Byzantine to Modern Era); he had also been actively adding to his collection of works cataloged in Sub-collection K (Small Russian Icons, Mostly Metal). It is therefore likely that purchasing Ethiopian objects satisfied two of his interests at the time: African art and Orthodox icons. The *sansul*, with its extensive Ge’ez writing must have also appealed to him as a scholar of linguistics.

What culture did Harris believe he was collecting when he began acquiring Ethiopian objects? Constantine Panayotidis, the dealer who sold Harris the *sansul* and the two fragments, identified the entire lot on the receipt as “16 Coptic Parchment

13. The three-part division of Asian art may reflect an older organization of Harris’s binders. The Department received a photo of a second set of binders for the HC, but not the binders themselves, and these smaller binders, according to their labels on the spines, seemed to have contained the individual sub-collections listed in table 2.1.
16. BHSC, 2020.72. The Ming celadon dish was not received in the bequest.
17. BHSC, 2020.53.
18. The antique silver was not received in the bequest.
19. See the essay by Lynn Jones (ch. 6).
20. The *sansul* and *sansul* fragments were sold to Harris as one object; see the essay by Caitlin Mims (ch. 9) in this volume.
Drawings of Religious Scenes.”\textsuperscript{21} Regardless of whether Harris knew these objects were of Ethiopian origin, this purchase initiated an interest in “Coptic” art. Four days later, he visited a different London dealer and acquired two Ethiopian pectoral crosses, also identified as “Coptic” (cats. 13, 14).\textsuperscript{22} Harris’s purchases of pectoral crosses are not a surprise, as at this time most of the objects in Sub-collections G (Byzantine Era Small Objects), H (Rings and Small Pendant Crosses), and J (Post-Byzantine Sacred Objects) were pectorals from various Orthodoxies, including Bosnian, Ukrainian, Russian, and Byzantine (fig. 2.7).\textsuperscript{23}

When Harris returned to Washington, DC from his trip to London in October of 1975, he continued his “Coptic” hunt. On November 22, he made his first visit to Nuevo Mundo, a gallery in Alexandria, Virginia, to purchase what is identified on the receipt as a “Coptic textile,” a tapestry weave from early medieval Egypt.\textsuperscript{24} His interest in this object seems to have been the “Coptic” identifier because he returned to Nuevo Mundo a few weeks later, on December 13, to purchase his first Ethiopian hand cross (cat. 1), identified on the receipt as a “Coptic cross.”\textsuperscript{25} On February 28, 1976, Harris returned to Nuevo Mundo again. He purchased five objects, identified on the receipt not as “Coptic,” as was the case for his earlier purchases, but as “Ethiop.,” written in parentheses next to each item (fig. 2.4). From this point through 1979, Harris continued to buy Ethiopian crosses on a regular basis, and they are identified on the receipts as “Ethiopian,” “Coptic,” or both. He then paused his purchasing of Ethiopian crosses for ten years, with a final purchase in 1989 (cat. 10). Two years later, he bought the double-sided, painted pectoral icon (cat. 29), but he filed this object not with any other Ethiopian objects, but in Sub-collection I (Icons: Byzantine to Modern Era). This narrative suggests that what started as an initial interest in Coptic art and its relationship to other Eastern Orthodies, evolved into the collecting of Ethiopian crosses. This sub-collection in the HC is the most narrowly defined in terms of culture, object type, and the period of time in which he purchased them.

This suggestion of why Harris became interested in Ethiopian objects — that it developed from his broader interests in Orthodies — is supported by a photograph of one of the display cases that he kept in his living room. When Harris died in 2019, Kyle Henderson, the Associate Vice President for Planned Giving at the time, visited the home, and photographed the objects in order to take stock of the estate. One photograph depicts a display case that includes two Ethiopian objects featured in this catalog (cats. 21, 29) with five small Post-Byzantine icons (fig. 2.8).\textsuperscript{26} While this is only one case of objects, without a date of assembly, it suggests that Harris perceived his Ethiopian pieces as part of Orthodox Christian artistic traditions.

Harris kept purchase records for most of his objects, allowing us to analyze his investments in each sub-collection. We are not interested in seeing whether he over- or under-paid for a particular object; our interest lies in determining where he invested his resources. In order to create a comparative analysis across his nearly sixty-year collecting history, we have adjusted all purchase prices to 2021 values based on the rate of inflation.\textsuperscript{27} In doing this, we are able to see how his purchases in the 1950s are compatible with those later in his life, and can then examine the amount he invested in each sub-collection, and the average price he paid per object. This method admittedly does not account for his changing financial resources over time, or for other social conditions that would

\textsuperscript{21} See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.189.1.
\textsuperscript{22} See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.31. For Harris’s neck crosses, see the essay by Sarah Mathiesen (ch. 7).
\textsuperscript{24} See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.401.
\textsuperscript{25} See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.29.
\textsuperscript{27} We used the CPI Inflation Calculator provided by the United States Department of Labor, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm (accessed October 16, 2021).

Table 2.2. Number of Objects that Harris Purchased by Decade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Number of Objects Purchased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010s</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3. Harris’s Monetary Investment by Sub-collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-collection</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. African and Other Tribal Objects</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Untitled [Other Tribal Objects]</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Ethiopian Crosses</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Asian Ceramics Part One</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Asian Ceramics Part Two</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Untitled [Asian Ceramics Part Three]</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Byzantine Era Small Objects</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Rings and Small Pendant Crosses</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Icons: Byzantine to Modern Era</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Post-Byzantine Sacred Objects</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Untitled [Small Russian Icons, Mostly Metal]</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Roman, Hellenic, Coptic, Egyptian Objects</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Untitled [Early Medieval Objects]</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. American Small Objects; Greek, Slavic Miscellany</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. Untitled [Greek Miscellany]</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Untitled [Slavic Miscellany]</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. Paintings, Silver, Rugs, Misc. Small Items</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. African and Other Tribal Objects
B. Untitled [Other Tribal Objects]
C. Ethiopian Crosses
D. Asian Ceramics Part One
E. Asian Ceramics Part Two
F. Untitled [Asian Ceramics Part Three]
G. Byzantine Era Small Objects
H. Rings and Small Pendant Crosses
I. Icons: Byzantine to Modern Era
J. Post-Byzantine Sacred Objects
K. Untitled [Small Russian Icons, Mostly Metal]
L. Roman, Hellenic, Coptic, Egyptian Objects
M. Untitled [Early Medieval Objects]
N. American Small Objects; Greek, Slavic Miscellany
O. Untitled [Greek Miscellany]
P. Untitled [Slavic Miscellany]
Q. Paintings, Silver, Rugs, Misc. Small Items
influence his purchasing decisions, but it does offer us a snapshot of how and when he was willing to invest in particular areas. For example, many of Harris’s more costly purchases occurred in the last twenty years of his life, and most of these objects are part of his Asian and Byzantine sub-collections. This could reflect many factors: a changing market, a more sophisticated eye, and/or a willingness to take greater purchasing risks in specific sub-collections. When the purchasing date and price are not known for an object, we did not include it in our analysis. Table 2.3 illustrates the financial share of each sub-collection.

As we can see, Sub-collections I (Icons: Byzantine to Modern Era) and K (Small Russian Icons, Mostly Metal) represent approximately one-third of Harris’s overall investment. This higher spending within these specific areas also reflects his sustained interests over the course of his collecting career. By contrast, Sub-collection C (Ethiopian Crosses) represents a very small share of his total investments. It is also the area in which he spent the lowest amount per object. The reasons why dealers priced these Ethiopian crosses as they did is not one that can be adequately addressed within the scope of this essay, but might include low market demand and/or an abundant supply. When we look closer at individual purchases, we notice that the most expensive Ethiopian purchases — the consular and fragments (cats. 31, 32, 33) and the double-sided painted pectoral (cat. 29), which were also his first and last Ethiopian purchases — are not, as we have seen, cataloged with the crosses in Sub-collection C, but are rather placed with Byzantine and Post-Byzantine objects.

Harris’s Intellectual Engagement with the Collection

Harris’s friends and colleagues all noted that he enjoyed researching the objects in his collection. He found continual pleasure in his purchases, as he studied them and shared them with friends. He did not research all of his objects. His Asian pieces, for example, received little recorded intellectual engagement — even though they encompass a significant portion of his collection in terms of number and financial investment. His descriptions, dates, and identifications for these works largely correspond to those provided on the purchase receipts.

Harris was demonstrably more intellectually engaged with his Byzantine and Post-Byzantine objects in Sub-collections G–K; this engagement is evident in a number of ways. We find him correcting one dealer’s identification of a saint on an icon, and emending another dealer’s reading of an inscription.28 Harris was also interested in seeking out comparative material for pieces in his collection. In the HC, he included photocopies of pages from books and print-outs from museum websites. The museums he most often cited are those that were closest to his Washington, DC home, including the

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Freer Art Gallery and Dumbarton Oaks, and, when he was living in Greece, the Benaki Museum in Athens — suggesting a familiarity and thus regular visits to his local museums. One example is a Cretan icon of Christ, purchased in Athens in 1967, during his second Fulbright residency (fig. 2.9). In the HC, Harris compared this to an icon at the Benaki, signed by Emmanuel Lambardos, a name shared by two artists, an uncle and nephew working in the same workshop in Heraklion in the seventeenth century. Harris also consulted scholarly literature to glean additional information on objects in his collection, such as identifying the weight value of his Byzantine weights by consulting the seminal source on these objects. We also find examples of his ability to read Greek inscriptions even on the most epigraphically challenging objects. There are also a few objects in the HC for which Harris included short, type-written research papers, complete with footnotes and brief bibliographies. For every document that Harris filed in the HC, he followed academic procedure, citing sources that he consulted. These type-written papers are given no attribution, and so appear to be authored by him.

Harris’s intellectual engagement also included the restoration of particular works of art. We have evidence of this for three pieces, all post-Byzantine icons. His notes indicate that after purchasing an icon of Saint Nicholas in Athens in 1967, he had a large central crack repaired the following year in London by the Bowater Gallery. He had two other icons repaired by prominent Byzantinists in Athens. The triptych with the Mother of God and Child (fig. 2.5) was cleaned in 1958 by Fotis Kontoglou (1896–1965), the celebrated iconographer who is also known for his work as the conservator for the Byzantine and Christian Museum and in Athens, and for his restoration work on the fourteenth-century frescoes at the Peribleptos Monastery at Mystras. A wing of a triptych (fig. 2.10), purchased in Athens in 1968, was cleaned that same year by Maria Sotiriou (1888–1979), who was also a conservator at the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, and co-author of a number of important studies with her husband, George Sotiriou (1881–1965), the first Director of the museum.

Harris’s interest in having his works appraised can also be seen as an aspect of his intellectual engagement. Of the sixteen objects in Sub-collection A (African and Other Tribal Objects), ten were

Figure 2.10. Wing of a Triptych with Saints Nicholas and Demetrios. BHSC, 2020.350. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesese.
appraised by William L. Hommel (1935–2018), who was, in the 1970s, when these works were purchased, a curator at the Museum of African Art in Washington, DC.37 Seven of these appraisals are indicated on the purchase receipts from the Von Barghahn Gallery in Washington, DC.38 Harris also sought out Hommel’s expertise for the appraisal of three other African objects that he purchased from other dealers.39 While Harris may have been interested in an object’s value, his work with Hommel, Sotiriou, and Kontoglou may also reflect an interest in verifying the authenticity of specific pieces.

Based on what remains in the HC, it appears that Harris had less intellectual engagement with his Ethiopian objects. He did not include any images of comparanda, nor do we find the type of research activities discussed above. However, the terminology he used to describe these pieces on the one-sheets evolved as he made more purchases. What may have begun as a desire for Coptic works, Harris later understood to be from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

**Provenance**

Research on any collection must address questions of provenance. This is of importance not only for the purpose of evaluating an object’s authenticity, but for also determining its ownership history, both licit and illicit; for an in-depth examination of these issues, see the essay in this volume by Elizabeth Marlowe (ch. 3). Such information is critical in determining how the Department of Art History and Kenyon College should responsibly serve as stewards of Harris’s collection.

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) provides guidance on this matter. The 2008 report on the "Acquisition of Archaeological Materials and Ancient Art” identifies the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import and Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property held on November 17, 1970 as providing the critical benchmark for art acquisitions.40 This report, following the date and guidance of the UNESCO Convention, states that:

Member museums normally should not acquire a work unless provenance research substantiates that the work was outside its country of probable modern discovery before 1970 or was legally exported from its probable country of modern discovery after 1970.

We have very little information regarding the pre-dealer history of Harris’s objects. Of the 458 objects that were accessioned into the BHSC from the Harris bequest, thirty-eight meet the guidelines established by the UNESCO Convention and that supported by the AAMD (see the Appendix). The AAMD Report also offers guidance when an object’s full ownership history is not available. They cite that “the cumulative facts and circumstances resulting from provenance research” may lead to the conclusion that a work most likely meets the 1970 threshold, and in such cases a museum may choose to accept a work. If so, then the museum must also publicize all known information that led to the decision to acquire the work. But they warn:

The museum must carefully balance the possible financial and reputational harm of taking such a step against the benefit of collecting, presenting, and preserving the work in trust for the educational benefit of present and future generations.

Kenyon, as Harris’s primary beneficiary, immediately became the new owner of the collection upon his death in 2019, and the

Department of Art History was then given the extraordinary opportunity and privilege to have a voice in determining how to best care for the pieces. Faced with the choice of incorporating Harris’s bequest into the BHSC or allowing the estate to be liquidated at auction, the Department chose the former. Objects were immediately accessioned and added to the online collection catalog, where provenance materials will continue to be publicized. If research “establishes another party’s right to ownership of a work” — as stated by the AAMD 2008 Report — the Department of Art History and Kenyon College, as the current stewards of these pieces, are prepared to return the work to said owner. Harris’s records have already revealed the existence of one possible looted object in the collection: a glazed sgraffito Byzantine potsherd, which was reportedly “found in 1968 near the Church of Saint Demetrios, Salonica.” As we have seen, Harris was methodical in indicating when, where, and how he acquired his objects. Given that this note says nothing of a purchase, we can assume that he was the one who found and smuggled the potsherd back to the United States. We have already been in contact with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Thessaloniki City regarding this piece, and will post information to our website when the issue is resolved.

The HC also preserves documentation that shows at least one object purchased after 1970 was exported from its country of modern discovery. A small Byzantine stone icon, purchased from Christopher Martin-Zakheim of Iconastas in London on October 20, 1994, was acquired by Martin-Zakheim in March of that same year from the State Historical Museum in Moscow. A letter preserved in the HC, and signed by curator Galina Grigorievna Smorodinova, authorized the object’s deaccessioning and sale (fig. 2.11). Such a document is exceptional in the HC. For most objects, we know when and where they were purchased, but we have little or no information regarding their pre-dealer history. In the absence of this documentation, we must turn to other details preserved in the HC. We offer some approaches that may help in uncovering the provenance of Harris’s objects.

We begin by looking at what the dealers wrote on the receipts. Most dealers do not provide provenance, and when they do, the notes are minimal and/or ambiguous. For one Byzantine belt buckle, a receipt from Tetragon, a London-based gallery operated by Julia Schottlander, includes the handwritten note “8th–9th or 9th–11th [century] bronze belt buckle with a lion, Syria, £90.” It is not clear what Schottlander meant by this attribution. Is Syria a suggested place of origin; is it a known find location? Perhaps she verbally clarified these questions to Harris. On the one-sheet, he interprets her note thusly, “The piece comes from Syria.” On the receipt for another Byzantine belt buckle, Schottlander writes, “complete buckle with 2

41 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.146.
42 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.181.

43 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.122.
crosses, punched, & incised design, Lebanon/Syria, 6th–8th [century] AD.” On the one-sheet, Harris clarifies this attribution by noting: “The present buckle was believed by the dealer to have come from Lebanon or Syria.”

Some receipts indicate that objects were once part of older collections, but this information is also told in varying degrees of specificity. On one receipt, Schottlander states that a writing tablet came from a “c. 1880s Collection,” and a bone doll from a “mid-nineteenth century French collection” (fig. 2.12). No additional documents were included to prove these claims, but the mention of these purported collections was certainly meant to legitimize the acquisition and sale, as they claimed that these objects left their countries of modern discovery prior to 1970. In other instances, Schottlander was more specific about the source collections. A gold Byzantine earring is said to have come from the “Moustaki collection,” referring to Gustave Mustaki (d. 1965), a Greek-born resident of Alexandria, who collected ancient and medieval antiquities in the first half of the twentieth century. This provenance is also suggested by the modern handwritten “M” on the back of the gold earring, but there is no certainty as to who produced this label.

The HC also includes provenance information that is not reflected in documents provided by the dealers. A Byzantine ring purchased from the Temple Gallery in London on June 12, 1992, is filed with a photocopied image of the same ring, from an auction catalog for the Jerusalem antiquities dealer L. Alexander Wolfe. There is no mention of this catalog on the receipt, but presumably the Temple Gallery acquired the ring from this auction, which was held in Zurich on November 20, 1989. On the one-sheet for a Roman appliqué head, Harris added that the object is “said to have come from Mildenhall, England.” Again, this information is not found on the purchase receipt from Schottlander, and so it is unclear how Harris gained this information. We can also learn about the ownership history of these pieces by studying the objects themselves. One example is an amulet from the Church of Saint Spyridon in Corfu (fig. 2.13), which preserves inside not a relic, but a business card from the local silversmiths, “O. Marolla & Fils” and 207n75. For a list of Mustaki’s objects that were acquired by the British Museum, see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG59539 (accessed October 16, 2021).

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44 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.125.
45 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.188, 2020.177.
46 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.111. After World War II Mustaki legally exported most of his collection to London, and upon his death in 1965, his objects passed to his daughter Elsa MacLellan; Green 2019/2020, p. 207n75. For a list of Mustaki’s objects that were acquired by the British Museum, see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG59539 (accessed October 16, 2021).
47 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.100. For the auction catalog, see Wolfe 1989, pp. 92–93, no. 347.
48 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.179.
the handwritten date, May 14, 1929, presumably when the amulet was made.49

Another way we might approach the provenance of items in Harris’s collection is by looking more closely at the dealers. This may not tell us much about the provenance of specific objects, but can reveal the types of objects they sold, and where they may have acquired them. Julia Schottlander of Tetragon serves as a case study for this approach. Between 1989 and 2005, Harris acquired seventy-one objects from Schottlander — the most from any one dealer. He cataloged them in Sub-collections G (Byzantine Era Small Objects), H (Rings and Small Pendant Crosses), and L (Roman, Hellenic, Coptic, Egyptian Objects). We were unable to make contact with Schottlander, but the objects that she sold to Harris and donated to museum collections indicate that she specialized in artifacts from ancient and medieval Egypt and the Near East.50 Based on the documents preserved in the HC, she was active in acquiring existing collections, as we saw with the gold earring from the Mustaki collection.51 A fragment of a Roman lamp handle in the shape of a horse’s head came from the collection of Hans Abarbanell.52 An amphora-shaped pilgrim vessel came from the collection of Lord Alistair McAlpine.53 We do not have documented proof that these objects came from these older collections; Schottlander’s handwritten notes on the receipts are the only source of this information. Schottlander is on record as having donated and sold objects associated with these former collections to major museums. She also donated a set of two copper alloy sculptures of camels from the Arbanell collection to the British Museum in 2000, and in 1992 sold a Barbotine cup from the Mustaki collection to Peter

49 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.159. The amulet also contains a tag branded by the London printer, “W Straker Ltd” and “The Ludgate Tag” and the same handwritten date, “Corfu, May 14, 1929.” We also found a clipping — perhaps from a guidebook — that describes Corfu and the shrine of Saint Spyridon.


51 See also BHSC, 2020.310.

52 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.184. For a list of Abarbanell’s objects that were acquired by the British Museum, see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG83823 (accessed October 16, 2021).

53 BHSC, 2020.115. For a list of McAlpine’s objects that were acquired by the British Museum, see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG74756 (accessed October 16, 2021).
Table 2.4. Chronology of Harris’s Purchases of Ethiopian Art

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Purchase</th>
<th>Dealer</th>
<th>Cat. nos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 [date unknown], 1975</td>
<td>Christopher Martin, Portobello Galleries, London</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 October 21, 1975</td>
<td>Constantine Z. Panayotidis, Antiques by Constantine Ltd., London</td>
<td>31, 32, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 October 25, 1975</td>
<td>Christopher Martin, Portobello Galleries, London</td>
<td>13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 December 13, 1975</td>
<td>Maria Teresa O’Leary, Nuevo Mundo, Alexandria, Virginia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 February 28, 1976</td>
<td>Maria Teresa O’Leary, Nuevo Mundo, Alexandria, Virginia</td>
<td>2, 30, 34 or 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 March 5, 1976</td>
<td>Endicott-Guthaim Gallery Inc., New York</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 October 11, 1976</td>
<td>Maria Teresa O’Leary, Nuevo Mundo, Alexandria, Virginia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 January 19, 1977</td>
<td>Michael and Vivian Arpad, Arpad Antiques, Washington, DC</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 February 20, 1977</td>
<td>United Nations Gift Center, New York</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 June 1977</td>
<td>Christopher Martin, London</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 August 15, 1977</td>
<td>Guthaim Gallery Inc., New York</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 November 26, 1977</td>
<td>The African Gallery, San Francisco</td>
<td>9, 15, 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 October 23, 1978</td>
<td>Guthaim Gallery Inc., New York</td>
<td>18, 19, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 June 1979</td>
<td>Unnamed dealer, London</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 June 23, 1989</td>
<td>Bruce and Marcia McDougal, New Davenport Cash Store Pottery Gallery &amp; Restaurant, Davenport, California</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 April 26, 1991</td>
<td>Xanadu, San Francisco</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lacovara, who later donated it to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Schottlander provides us with a special case for a deeper investigation of Harris’s dealers because there is so much information available on her donations and sales to other clients.

Can we apply this approach to the dealers who sold Harris his Ethiopian objects? Table 2.4 lists the individual purchases made by Harris for the Ethiopian objects in this catalog. We have listed only those objects for which we have a receipt, or Harris’s recording of the date and dealer. Harris made nineteen purchases of thirty-two objects. Seventeen of these purchases occur between a narrow window of time, between 1975 and 1979; two additional purchases were made over a decade later. These purchases come from nine named dealers.

Harris did not have a long purchasing history with most of these dealers. He made only one purchase from Constantine Z. Panayotidis of Antiques by Constantine, Michael and Vivian Arpad of Arpad Antiques, The African Gallery, and Bruce and Marcia McDougal of the New Davenport Cash Store Pottery Gallery & Restaurant. He made more than one purchase from each of the other dealers, often buying a few non-Ethiopian objects as well. From Nuevo Mundo, he also bought a medieval Egyptian textile in 1975 and an Afghan necklace in 1980 — a five-year purchasing period. From the Endicott-Guthaim Gallery, which was later incorporated at the same address as the Guthaim Gallery, Harris purchased two other African objects and a Turkmen bracelet in 1976, and a Turkmen breast ornament in 1980 — a four-year purchasing period. From the United Nations Gift Center, Harris bought a Yoruba scepter in 1976, one year before buying an Ethiopian hand cross (cat. 7) with a silver Agadez pectoral. While he made only four purchases from Xanadu, he did so over a fifteen-year period starting with a Yoruba baton in 1983, then a Chinese soapstone figure of Luohan in 1986, followed by the Ethiopian painted pectoral (cat. 29) in 1991, and ending with an iron Marka mask in 1998. Christopher Martin is the exception to these short-lived relationships. Prior to opening the gallery Iconastas in 1975, and changing his name to Christopher Martin-Zakheim, this dealer operated a small shop on Portobello Road in London, where Harris purchased four of his Ethiopian neck crosses (cats. 12, 13, 14, 23). His next purchase from Martin-Zakheim was at Iconastas in 1985, and his last was in 2015, establishing forty-year history with this dealer of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine religious artifacts. In total, Martin-Zakheim was the second greatest source for Harris’s collection (four from Portobello Road and forty-three from Iconastas) after Schottlander (seventy-one objects).

When we look at the dealers associated with Harris’s Ethiopian objects, we are left with many unanswered questions. Harris purchased most of these objects nearly five decades ago; many dealers have died or are no longer in business, and attempts to make contact with people who may have known them has yielded little information. What then can we say more generally about the dealers, how they acquired their pieces, and who were their clients? Answers to these questions are limited, but we present what we have been able to find in the hope that this will prompt further research.

Not much is known about The African Gallery in San Francisco. Online records indicate that the business was incorporated in 1977, the same year that Harris made his single purchase of one hand...
cross (cat. 9), one neck cross (cat. 15), and an earpick (cat. 16). The receipt lists additional locations in Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, and Washington, DC, but we have not been able to determine whether any of these branches are still in operation.\textsuperscript{60}

We also have minimal information regarding Xanadu for the fifteen-year period in which Harris was a customer. The gallery was established in 1979. A new owner took over in 2000 and merged Xanadu with her own gallery; she was unable to provide us with any information about the acquisition practices of the previous owner.

Bruce and Marcia McDougal built the New Davenport Cash Store Pottery Gallery & Restaurant in 1977 as part of their pottery studio, making Davenport, California an artistic hub and tourist destination.\textsuperscript{61} When Harris visited Davenport in 1989 he had not purchased an Ethiopian object for ten years. It is not clear whether the McDougals regularly sold objects such as this in their store, and if so, where they would have acquired such pieces.

Maria Teresa Eneim O’Leary established Nuevo Mundo in Alexandria, Virginia with her business partner, Cornelia Noland, in 1966.\textsuperscript{62} Her store sold clothing and jewelry as well as antiques from around the world. O’Leary’s expertise in textiles led to her serving on the Advisory Council of the Textile Museum in Washington, DC.\textsuperscript{63} She traveled extensively to Latin America and Asia, and her obituaries state that this was how she sourced many of her products.\textsuperscript{64} We can assume that she acquired Ethiopian material in the same manner, but we have not been able to make contact with O’Leary’s family members to verify this information. While Nuevo Mundo remained in business until 2011, Harris’s purchases were limited to a five-year period (1975–80), during which he made at least five purchases.

We are unsure when Antiques by Constantine of London was in business, but they seem to have been most active in the mid-to-late 1970s and in the first part of the 1980s. They frequently exhibited items in London antique fairs and advertised in collector magazines, including as The Connoisseur. Based on these advertisements we were able to determine that Antiques by Constantine specialized in “Netsuke, Tsuba, Japanese Swords, Ikons, Jade, Oriental Porcelain.” Harris’s sole purchase from them was for the \textit{sosul} and the \textit{sosul} fragments (cats. 31, 32, 33).\textsuperscript{65}

Arpad Antiques of Washington, DC was in operation from 1966 to 1990. While Harris made a single purchase from them, for two Ethiopian crosses in 1977 (cats. 5, 6), their focus was in other areas, specifically American art. Arpad Antiques dealt in works that were associated with high profile artists such as James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), and with historical figures, including the merchant Elias Hasket Derby (1739–99).\textsuperscript{66} They also are on record as having sold a wooden sculpture of President Benjamin Harrison to the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery.\textsuperscript{67}

The Endicott-Guthaim Gallery is no longer in operation, and we were unable to find a contact. However, this dealer appears to have been most active in the mid-1970s, when Harris was a customer. The gallery hosted an exhibition of African art in 1975, and regularly advertised in issues of the peer-reviewed journal \textit{African Arts}.\textsuperscript{68}

The United Nations Gift Center opened in 1952 under its first Director, Mary Dean, and Executive

\textsuperscript{60}See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.23.
\textsuperscript{61}Smith 2018.
\textsuperscript{62}Theismann 2015, pp. 5, 9.
\textsuperscript{63}The Textile Museum 2014, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{64}The Washington Times 2015.
\textsuperscript{65}Advertisements can be found in the following publications: Financial Times (June 24, 1978), p. 13; Antique Collector (June 1976), pp. 12, 13; Antique Collector (September 1981), p. 16; The Connoisseur (September 1981), p. 16; The Connoisseur (June 1976), pp. 12, 13.
\textsuperscript{66}MacDonald and Petri 2020, cat. YMSM 269. For the tumbler owned by Elias Hasket Derby, see Metropolitan Museum of Art, 67.94 https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/385 (accessed October 16, 2021).
\textsuperscript{67}National Portrait Gallery, NPG.77.249 https://americaspresidents.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.77.249 (accessed October 16, 2021).
\textsuperscript{68}Scheinberg 1975. Examples of advertisements can be found in African Arts, vol. 8, no. 2 (Winter 1975), p. 73, and in vol. 9, no. 1 (October 1975), p. 68.
Native arts and crafts of many lands are represented by products on sale at the United Nations Gift Center, situated in the General Assembly Building of the United Nations. Here daily hundreds of visitors come, from different parts of the United States and from all continents. The Gift Center, established by the United Nations Cooperative, Inc., is a showplace for the handicrafts, where many beautiful products are displayed and sold.

The Gift Center is constantly seeking new sources for unusual and beautiful articles; it will accept sample shipments comprising one article of a kind, placing initial orders after inspection of samples, whenever saleable objects are offered. The most saleable articles are those which combine skilled craftsmanship with functional use and decorative value. These display beauty of design, pleasing colour combinations, good proportions and interesting materials. All articles must be in good taste and of good quality and workmanship.

The lists at the right give an idea of the types of articles carried. Except for items of transitory interest, such as articles of the “souvenir” type, which the Gift Center does not carry, any product of native arts and crafts may be acceptable. The Gift Center is constantly widening its assortment to include new and beautiful examples of craft products resulting from unusual processes, new use of materials, unusual decorative treatment and other innovations. It provides an ideal outlet for the best in handicrafts and art creations.

Types of articles. Those suitable for gifts or for home decoration (Metalware, jewelry, wood carvings, glassware, ivory, leather goods, tortoise shell, textiles. Very bulky articles cannot be handled, nor goods sold by the yard, nor those sold by size, such as gloves, shoes and hats.)

**GLASSWARE**
Individual pieces or pairs, not complete sets; modern designs or good traditional forms; silver deposit ware

**IVORY**
Small carved pieces; letter openers; pins; inlaid work on trays and other usuable articles

**LEATHER GOODS**
Polished leather and tooled leather boxes; cigarette cases; jewel boxes; boys’ belts

**TEXTILES**
Woven fabrics in suitable finished lengths for scarves, stoles, etc. In hand woven goods, the colour combinations should be in good taste

**METALWARE**
Copper, traditional or modern; copper or brass with coloured enamel finish; pewter; silver

**JEWELRY**
Brooches, earrings, bracelets of silver, gold on silver or gold; silver filigree work; silver and turquoise; semi-precious stones and the less expensive gems such as gemet, moonstone, amethyst, topaz, cornelian, etc., set in ornaments like rings, tie clasps, and brooches

**WOOD CARVINGS**
Hand carved statuettes; polished bowls; salad fork and spoon sets; unusual decorative carved animals; special woods

**INDIVIDUAL CERAMICS**
Decorative pieces to serve as ashtrays, bonbon dishes, vases, mantel ornaments (but not sets such as dinnerware sets)

**CHARACTER DOLLS**
Suitable for collectors or for children, in authentic national costumes; peasant types in provincial costumes or in modern dress; tradesmen (lumbermen, fishermen, etc.)

**CHILDREN’S TOYS AND GAMES**
Unbreakable toys characteristic of a particular region, made of sanitary materials

**SPECIAL MATERIALS**
Articles made of mother of pearl; cloisonne; onyx; lacquered articles

**DESK AND OFFICE ORNAMENTS**
Letter openers; ashtrays, ornamental objects

**OTHER TYPES OF ARTICLES**
Well designed men’s jewelry; boxes and cases for accessories; travel accessories; hand woven ties; gift toilet articles; small woven or braid baskets and trays; well made replicas of traditional items (masks, boots, ceremonial articles, bells, amulets, etc.) and interesting modern adaptations of these


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Director, Eleanor Roosevelt, seeking “to promote international understanding through the medium of arts and crafts.”69 The Gift Center sourced its stock by soliciting handmade goods from around the world. We were able to find one undated pamphlet that describes the kinds of objects they desired (fig. 2.14):

The most saleable articles are those which combine skilled craftsmanship with functional use and decorative value. These display beauty of design, pleasing color combinations, good proportions and interesting materials.70

The UN Gift Center also acquired established collections. The HC preserves a document from the Gift Center regarding the provenance of the Yoruba scepter that Harris purchased on March 7, 1976.71 The document is type-written, with “for David Harris” at the top, suggesting that it was prepared for him after the purchase. The document states that the scepter came from the collection of Sandford Griffith (1893–1974), a New York based collector of African art.72

Christopher Martin, first as a dealer at the Portobello Gallery then as Christopher Martin-Zakheim of Iconastas, offers us the possibility of more information if only because Harris had such a long purchase history with him. Martin-Zakheim operated Iconastas from 1974 until his death in 2018.73 While Iconastas lists Ethiopian objects on their website and in their published sales catalogs, Harris only purchased Ethiopian material from Martin-Zakheim prior to the establishment of Iconastas gallery.74 It is unclear how Martin-Zakheim acquired the specific objects purchased by Harris, but his obituary, published in The Times of London, describes one way in which he sourced his objects.75 The Patrice Lumumba University, established in Moscow in 1960 for students from developing nations, prohibited students from leaving the USSR with cash, but allowed them to take purchased objects with no restrictions. Martin-Zakheim would meet these students at Heathrow, and buy their Soviet purchases. This obituary also describes the ways in which Martin-Zakheim bypassed paying costly customs fees to the United States by gaining permission to pack items in shipping containers with the United States Air Force. These actions speak to Martin-Zakheim’s willingness to avoid legal and documented forms of object acquisition and customs control.

We are left with unanswered questions regarding the ways in which these dealers acquired Harris’s Ethiopian objects. This information is imperative because each of these purchases were made after Ethiopia’s own Antiquities Proclamation of 1966 and after the UNESCO Convention date of November 17, 1970.76 While we are uncertain of the age of these objects, Ethiopia’s current definition of cultural heritage, as established in 2000, does not stipulate age as a criterion for protection, but includes, among other things, “parchment manuscripts, stone paintings and implements, sculptures and statues made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, copper or of any other mineral or wood, stone,” and that “Cultural Heritage illegally held in other countries shall be repatriated.”77 The Ethiopian objects featured in this catalog certainly fit within this definition of Cultural Heritage. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the Department of Art History and Kenyon College to conduct additional provenance research on Harris’s collection, to determine whether any were illegally acquired, and — if so — to repatriate them.78

69 Cartwright 1954, p. 178.
71 See the supporting documentation for BHSC, 2020.4.
72 New York Times 1974, p. 44.
73 The gallery is now operated by his widow, Alexandra Martin-Zakheim, by appointment only.
75 The Times 2019.
78 Jacobs and Porter 2022 serves as an excellent model for college and university museums as they pursue repatriation efforts.
This survey helps us to better contextualize Harris’s broader collecting interests and habits, and the ways in which he may have become interested in smaller cultural groupings, such as the Ethiopian objects featured in this volume. While Ethiopia was not a long-term collecting passion of his or a large monetary investment, it emerged at the same time as his interest in collecting African art. As we have suggested, his interest in collecting Ethiopian objects was also likely first piqued by his interest in objects associated with Orthodox Christianities. This essay also raises questions, and opens up many avenues for future research on provenance. While we have a great deal of material with which to begin our analyses, this information can only take us so far. It is our hope that students and researchers will continue this work by helping us place these objects in context, maintain their preservation, expand our knowledge of their provenance, and, when possible, ensure their repatriation.
Orphan Antiquities at Kenyon College: The Lessons of the Harris Bequest

Elizabeth Marlowe

From the perspective of cultural property and museum ethics, Kenyon College’s 2010 decision to accept alumnus David Payne Harris’s collection of hundreds of artworks and antiquities is a complicated one. Harris had receipts for most of his purchases; but the objects’ provenance histories prior to their arrival in the dealers’ shops was unknown in almost all cases. This means there is a possibility that the objects were stolen — whether from the ground, from standing monuments, or from museums and their storerooms. Such thefts result in both the loss of historical knowledge and access to what many modern countries consider their cultural heritage. Seeking to prevent these harms by disincentivizing looting, most modern museums have stopped acquiring objects that might have reached the market in this way. Severed from their historical origins and tainted by their possible connections to heritage crime, these objects are often referred to as “orphans” in scholarly and popular literature.

If museums won’t take them, what should happen to orphans when their private owners pass away? Harris’s collection and Kenyon’s handling of the gift together offer a useful case study for thinking through the pitfalls and possibilities. In this article, I will present an overview of the policies that governed Kenyon’s decision-making process. I will then discuss some of the moral and ethical complexities of antiquities collecting, which arguably blur some of the sharp lines those policies seek to draw. Finally, I will consider the positive aspects of Kenyon’s decision, and some lessons that can be learned from it. My hope is that this case study may be useful to other institutions, particularly colleges and universities, together with their museums and development offices, when thinking through how to handle alumni gifts of problematic artworks.

I. Policies

David Payne Harris began collecting art and antiquities in 1957, shortly after completing his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan, when he travelled to Greece on a Fulbright fellowship. A professor of linguistics at Georgetown University, he continued collecting his entire life, focusing primarily on small-scale objects connected to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, a religion he adopted as an adult. He also collected memorabilia associated with the War of 1812. In the summer of 2009, when Harris was eighty-four years old, he approached Kenyon College, his alma mater, about the possibility of leaving his collection of Asian ceramic art to the school. At some point later that year, he offered the College his Mediterranean antiquities as well.

Kenyon had no campus art museum at the time but it did have a Fine Arts Accessions Committee, where the matter went for review.¹ The committee solicited input from two faculty members with appropriate expertise, both of whom advocated for the acceptance of the gifts. The letter on the Asian collection speaks enthusiastically about the quality of the pieces and their potential classroom use in “many Asian studies courses.” The faculty member who evaluated the Roman, Greek, and Byzantine

¹ This committee ceased to exist after 2011, when its duties were transferred to the newly established Gund Gallery; see the essay by Brad Hostetler (ch. 2).
works was so impressed with their quality that he expressed some concern that Kenyon might not be able to provide the “proper care and protection of these fine items.” The writer in fact thought the works would “be best accommodated in a specialized collection such as the Byzantine Collection at Dumbarton Oaks or the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology at the University of Michigan,” and that Kenyon should accept the gift “only if we are committed to housing and showing them as a collection” (emphasis in original). The Fine Arts Accessions Committee notes in its annual report for that year that based on the recommendations of the faculty experts, the committee was “unanimous in its enthusiasm” to accept both collections, which would form “part of an estate which will arrive at the College in the future,” i.e. upon Harris’s death.

That same year, a different campus body, the Collections Steering Committee, was revising the 2007 “Collecting Plan for Kenyon College.” The 2007 document was brief and more descriptive than prescriptive. It included a summary of Kenyon’s existing art collections; identified three categories of collection display (primary, education, and public); and offered a six-question “checklist for acquisition” and an eleven-point “criteria for accession.” The revised Collecting Plan, completed in January, 2010, greatly expanded upon the original. It encompassed policies and procedures for accessioning and deaccessioning, a loan policy, and an ethics policy. It is this last item that is relevant to the present discussion, and in particular the ethics policy’s treatment of the issue of provenance.

The 2007 document’s engagement with provenance consisted only of a single two-part question in the six-question “Checklist for Acquisition,” (“Are the provenance and ownership of the work known and acceptable to the museum? Are there legal or ethical concerns that can be anticipated by the museum?”) and one bullet in the eleven-bullet “Criteria for accession” (“Authenticity and provenance must be satisfactorily proven; the donor must certify true, rightful, legal ownership.”). The document offered no specific criteria for determining what counted as “acceptable” provenance, nor any guidelines as to how exactly authenticity and provenance could be “proven.” The lengthy and strongly-worded “Ethics Policy” of the 2010 document, by contrast, states that the College will not knowingly accept any artifact illegally imported or collected in the United States, or whose acquisition would encourage illegal traffic or damage to archaeological sites or cultural/natural monuments. The College will not collect art and artifacts with unsatisfactory or questionable provenance. The College endorses the 1988 Policy on Repatriation of Native American Ceremonial Objects and Human Remains and the 1970 UNESCO convention and other applicable antiquities statutes that prohibit “the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property.”

The 1970 UNESCO Convention referred to here is also known as the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. This international agreement demanded that states parties respect each other’s cultural property laws, and that archaeological or ethnographic artifacts trafficked in violation of those laws henceforth be considered “illicit.” Proof of compliance with the relevant laws would be satisfied by an export license issued by the country where the object in question originated.

It is important to understand that this requirement of the Convention effectively reverses the burden of proof, insofar as no information countries had laws in place safeguarding their cultural property and/or vesting its ownership with the state prior to 1970. I foreground it here because of its prominence in Kenyon’s own policy.

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2 UNESCO 1970. For a helpful overview, see Gerstenblith 2013. It should be noted that many heritage advocates, including Gerstenblith, reject the primacy of the UNESCO Convention as the framework for these debates, as many
regarding a theft or act of looting would henceforth be required for an archaeological or ethnographic commodity to be considered “illicit.” The absence of proof of government-sanctioned export from its country of origin would be enough. In other words, states parties were agreeing that the scale of the problem of the trafficking in cultural property was wide enough that objects should be assumed guilty unless an export license proved them innocent.

Kenyon’s 2010 policy not only declares its endorsement of the 1970 Convention. It doubles down on the avowal to uphold the Convention’s underlying principles: “The College will acquire or accept an object only when it can determine with reasonable certainty that the object has not been unethically obtained, or obtained in violation of state or federal laws, treaties, or international agreements.” It seems from this radically revised and expanded language that between 2007 and 2010, Kenyon College’s Collections Steering Committee had developed an entirely new understanding of its responsibilities with respect to the UNESCO Convention. The change of heart may have been occasioned by the new guidelines that had been issued in 2008 by the two leading professional organizations of museums in the U.S., the Alliance of American Museums and the Association of Art Museum Directors. The AAM guidelines stated that

museums must comply with all applicable U.S. law, including treaties and international conventions of which the U.S. is a party, governing ownership and title, import and other issues critical to acquisitions decisions. Beyond the requirements of U.S. law, museums should not acquire any object that, to the knowledge of the museum, has been illegally exported from its country of modern discovery or the country where it was last legally owned. In addition, the Alliance recommends that museums require documentation that the object was out of its probable country of modern discovery by November 17, 1970, the date on which the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was signed. For objects exported from their country of modern discovery after November 17, 1970, the Alliance recommends that museums require documentation that the object has been or will be legally exported from its country of modern discovery, and legally imported into the United States.³

Likewise, the AAMD guidelines stipulated that museums “should not normally acquire archaeological materials and ancient art without provenance demonstrating that the object was out of its country of modern discovery prior to or legally exported there from after November 17, 1970.”⁴ It is worth noting that because Kenyon College did not yet have a campus museum in 2010, it was a member of neither professional organization at that time. Regardless of what triggered the formulation of the ethics policy in 2010, what matters is that this addition to the “Collecting Plan for Kenyon College” brought the plan and the College into alignment with current, professional best practices in the museum world.

Unfortunately, however, the contradiction between the new ethics policy of the College’s revised Collecting Plan and the decision to accept David Payne Harris’s collection of Asian and ancient Mediterranean artifacts was not recognized. But the contradiction is undeniable. The UNESCO Convention explicitly called on museums “and similar institutions” not to acquire illicitly exported cultural property (article 7). It also specified, as noted above, that the only guarantee of licit export was an export certificate from the country of origin (article 6).

This is very clear-cut; but there is one large loophole that muddies the picture and at least partially explains Kenyon’s inconsistency. Because

³ AAM 2008.

⁴ AAMD 2008.
the 1970 Convention was not retroactive, another way in which objects of cultural property can achieve the status of “licit” is if it can be proven that they left their country of origin prior to 1970. Such proof might come in the form of a pre-1970 sales receipt or a pre-1970 publication listing the object’s location in a foreign collection, or through more indirect means, such as evidence of a conservation treatment that had to have occurred a) outside the country of origin and b) prior to 1970. Most of the objects in Harris’s collection are accompanied by receipts from established dealers documenting his purchases. A former member of Kenyon’s Fine Arts Accession Committee acknowledges that this was understood at the time as proof of the objects’ licit status. In fact, only about eight percent of these receipts demonstrate that the purchase occurred prior to 1970. Furthermore, as Hostetler makes clear in his contribution to this volume, none of the objects Harris purchased after 1970 were accompanied by an export permit or proof of pre-1970 export. Thus, approximately 92% of the items in the Harris bequest are “illicit” by the terms established in the UNESCO Convention.

It’s important to recognize that “illicit” is not the same as “illegal.” When and how the UNESCO stipulations go from being ethical guidelines to being law depends on the terms under which it is implemented in each state party. In the U.S., this took place in 1983, with the Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act. But in this case the matter is even more complicated because the CPIA imposes restrictions only on objects that originated in countries with which the U.S. has taken the additional step of signing a “memorandum of understanding” based on demonstrated “jeopardy from pillage of archaeological or ethnological materials.” But for our purposes, the legal nuances are less relevant. By stating that it will adhere both to (state and federal) laws and to international agreements, Kenyon’s 2010 Collecting Plan, like the 2008 AAM and AAMD Guidelines, makes it clear that it is motivated by broader principles of ethics as well as by narrower legal codes.

II. Grey Areas and Misunderstandings

Kenyon’s acquisition of Harris’s collection must thus be understood as a contravention of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, of the 2008 AAM and AAMD Guidelines, and of the College’s own 2010 Collecting Plan. That is the most black-and-white interpretation of the matter. But as we saw, that was not how it was understood by those making the decision in 2010. Nor was it understood in those terms by those involved with Harris’s collection more recently. I first learned of the acquisition from a tweet by Brad Hostetler celebrating the Harris gift of antiquities and Ethiopian materials on Twitter in the summer of 2020. There was no mention of provenance or export licenses, nor any discussion of acquisition policies or other ethical considerations. I followed up with a private message; and in our subsequent exchange, Hostetler assured me that while he was aware of the need for follow-up provenance research, the College was satisfied by the fact that Harris had receipts for his purchases. In later conversations, notions of the “reputable dealer” and “legal purchases” were invoked several times. The only object in the collection which was thought to be problematic was a pottery fragment, presumably a surface find, which Harris seems to have picked up near a church in Thessaloniki — in other words, one acquired without the intervention of middlemen or dealers.

Based on numerous conversations with colleagues in fields such as classics, history and art history across the U.S., I can say with certainty that Kenyon faculty are not alone in their imperfect

5 Brad Hostetler, pers. com., based on a conversation he had with the former committee member.
6 One possible exception mentioned by Hostetler (ch. 2) is the stone Byzantine icon Harris acquired in 1994 from Iconastas in London (BHSC, 2020.181). This piece is accompanied by a document in Russian apparently authorizing its deaccessioning and sale written by a curator of the State Historical Museum in Moscow. This episode, and the question of whether or not this document authorizes export abroad, deserves further research.
7 BHSC, 2020.146.
understanding of the issues surrounding antiquities collecting, provenance, and international conventions and agreements like the UNESCO Convention. This despite the steady drumbeat of sensational stories about international smugglers, false papers, terrorist involvement and so on, involving some of the most prestigious institutions such as the Getty, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in high-profile venues like The New York Times, the Boston Globe, the Los Angeles Times, the New Yorker and the Atlantic, as well as in innumerable scholarly books and articles. Why is this the case? How can we account for seemingly unshakeable assumptions that, for example, reputable dealers wouldn’t be selling illicitly-trafficked goods?

To answer this question, we must remember that what the UNESCO Convention offers is a bright line for collectors and institutions looking to do the right thing: they are urged to treat all works on the market as “guilty” unless an export license or proof of pre-1970 export proves them innocent. But the risk associated with not following the guidelines is low. No law enforcement official (or reporter) will show up at your door without specific information connecting works in your possession to known traffickers. Furthermore, while it is easy to see that an object lacks an export license, it is much harder to know for certain from which country the object was illicitly removed. Forfeiture is unlikely unless the dispossessed country can satisfy a court that the piece was stolen from within its borders, and not the borders of some other country. This is often hard to prove, as ancient cultures rarely map onto modern borders. The Byzantine pendant crosses in Harris’s collection could have come from any of the dozens of countries that the Byzantine empire once encompassed. As long as the looters and smugglers and middlemen have done a thorough job of erasing any trace of information about where the object originated, there is little chance that a foreign minister of culture will step forward to block its sale or make a claim to it. Prosecution is even more rare than forfeiture, since the laundering function of the transit process gives the vendors at the end of the chain plausible deniability, or what Mathew Bogdanos, the chief of the Manhattan District Attorney’s Antiquities Trafficking Unit, calls “the ostrich defense.”

It’s quite possible that despite decades of participation in the art market, Harris might have known very little about the specifics of the UNESCO Convention or the broader, shifting ethical norms in the field. Low rates of prosecution are one reason the issue may have never crossed his radar. In addition, amateur collectors like Harris often get their information about their collecting field from other collectors or from the dealers from whom they are buying. Despite the obvious conflicts of interest, dealers frequently play the lead role in shaping collectors’ tastes and desires, educating them about what to look for in a potential acquisition, what matters and what doesn’t.

Harris’s collecting pattern fits this mold; over the course of thirty years, he acquired a total of 114 objects, nearly a fourth of his collection, from just two London dealers in Byzantine art, Julia Schottlander at Tetragon and Christopher Martin-Zakheim at Iconastas. He must have developed deep trust in their opinions and guidance. These dealers would have had no incentive to explain the UNESCO Convention to him, to emphasize the importance of archaeological context to a work’s ancient meaning, or to encourage him to demand documents or information they would not or could export licenses, but the New York District Attorney’s office only took an interest in the collection when proof emerged about the role of notorious smuggler Edoardo Almagià in their trafficking. In 2021, the museum restituted almost one-hundred works to Italy. See Mashberg 2021, p. A10.

8 Some of the most important publications are Watson and Todeschini 2006; Eakin 2007, pp. 62–75. Felch and Frammolino 2011. For a compendium of recent cases, see Gill 2020.

9 The recent case of the Walsh collection at the Fordham Museum of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art is typical in this regard. None of the 260 works donated in 2007 came with

10 Sabar 2021. See also Mackenzie et al 2020.

not themselves supply. Dealers aren’t alone in normalizing and valorizing artworks with murky origins and gappy provenances. Many curators and scholars feature antiquities with unknown origins and incomplete collecting histories in their exhibitions, publications and lectures without drawing attention to the epistemological uncertainties, let alone to the legal and ethical issues. In this regard, they are complicit in the larger system that allows looted artifacts to gain legitimacy and respectability in the field. They may even play a direct (if inadvertent) role in their laundering. Given these discipline-wide norms, few are likely to see anything suspicious in the silence or ignorance of dealers about the origins of their wares; and well-meaning collectors like Harris and institutions like Kenyon will see nothing intrinsically problematic about acquiring them or treating them as secure evidence of ancient practices. The very fact that the AAM and AAMD had to remind members in 2008 to please follow the UNESCO guidelines is evidence of just how poorly the issues were understood.

Further muddying any black-and-white framework through which we might be tempted to judge Harris’s and Kenyon’s actions is the fact that an object’s status as licit or illicit, art or crime, is neither fixed nor absolute. Victoria Reed, the curator of provenance at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has recently recounted an ostensibly happy story of an Egyptian stone torso of a seated male figure (initially misidentified as “probably Rajasthan”) which was offered to her institution in 2009 by the dealer Jerome Eisenberg. The piece had an ownership history going back only as far as 1989, when it was documented in a Dutch collection. Following UNESCO guidelines, the museum declined to purchase this illicit object. Then Eisenberg did more research and discovered a photograph of the figure in a London sales catalog of 1962. Now the piece was licit, per UNESCO, and in 2012, the museum went ahead and bought it. This story demonstrates that the status of an object as either licit or illicit is not intrinsic to the object itself but is, rather, a function of information.

Things would seem to have turned out well for the dealer and the museum here, but this case study should also serve as a warning, a reminder that additional information can always surface, even after an acquisition has been made. What if a future researcher learns that this torso had been broken off of a statue on the façade of a standing ancient temple in Egypt in 1961? According to the UNESCO Convention, the piece would still be licit; but the MFA might no longer feel quite so secure about the ethics of owning it. Of course, every Egyptian statue in London and Boston was detached from its original setting in Egypt at some point. What makes some of these removals more ethically problematic than others? Is it a function of how much time has elapsed? Whether we know the specific temple or tomb to which it once belonged? How much of the original structure is still in situ? Whether an official said it was okay at the time, and signed a piece of paper to that effect? Whether it was paid for? What if the payment was a bribe? What if the official who received it was not an Egyptian but an Ottoman Turk?

My point is simply that the whole field of antiquities collecting is far more grey than black and white. Ultimately, for all the strong language of the UNESCO Convention and the various policies based upon it, the fact remains that when most people see a beautiful Byzantine carving in a dealer’s case, on a living room mantle, or in a college art collection, they don’t see an object of cultural property that has been wrongfully detached from its true context. They see a work of art, a connection to the past, a signifier of discernment, wealth, and class, a worthy object of study. Dealers in particular take care to propagate the positive connotations of art collecting and suppress the negative. Their tony addresses, elegant lighting and very proper-looking receipts keep the taint of the market’s

\[12\] Mackenzie et al 2020, p. 34.
\[13\] Marlowe 2013.
\[14\] Reed 2021.
\[15\] Mackenzie and Yates 2017.
underpinnings — the midnight digging, sledgehammers, car trunks, mislabeled crates, bribes, etc. — far from mind. Museum labels that tell only happy stories, and cover up missing information with guesswork, are equally complicit. As a result, for many if not most people, it requires a concerted effort of imagination to bridge the gap between the sordid realm evoked by words like “illicit,” “plunder,” “smuggling,” and so on, and the acquisition of historical treasures on Portobello Road or Madison Avenue — or between “looting” and donating artworks to a college for the benefit of its learning community.

III. Orphans

The most obvious implication of these observations is the need for more education about how the art market works, how artifacts change hands, how they are viewed by source countries, how those views can clash with the acquisitive desires of collectors and museums, and how various international treaties and national, federal and local laws have tried to manage these conflicts. These topics are rarely taught in university courses, even in the countries with the most active art markets. Programs in Museum Studies and Heritage Studies, where these subjects are central, are relatively new. They are more common in the U.K. than in the U.S., but they are still rare in both countries and even more unusual in other European nations compared to programs in art history or archaeology. It is in courses in these latter topics that most students encounter pre-modern artifacts, and most of these still ignore issues of the market and cultural property.

The fortunes of Harris’s collection also expose a paradox of the AAM and AAMD guidelines. The guidelines were one consequence of several years of relentlessly bad press for the museum sector in the mid-2000s, after a trove of documents and photographs exposed the staggering scale of international antiquities looting and trafficking. The fallout from these revelations was public and humiliating: hundreds of artworks from dozens of U.S. collections were returned to Italy and Greece, and a leading curator at the Getty Museum was prosecuted in an Italian court for dealing in stolen goods. The looting of the Iraq Museum in 2003 also heightened public attention to unscrupulous international art trafficking.

The AAM and AAMD’s 2008 Guidelines were in part an exercise in crisis management. But they were also a response to years of lobbying from organizations like the Archaeological Institute of America, which had been actively working since the 1970s to combat the destruction of archaeological sites by looters. The AIA’s approach was not only to shore up the U.S. commitment to the UNESCO Convention. It was also to disincentivize collectors, who are often referred to in the archaeological community as the “real looters,” since it is their activities that motivate looters in the first place.

Collectors might be dissuaded from buying illicit antiquities if they were denied the possibility of eventually donating those pieces to museums, thus losing the social capital and tax benefits that such donations could otherwise be expected to generate. Ultimately, a reduced market should result in reduced looting, an obviously laudable goal.

The collector-focused approach to the problem of looting, however, ignores the fact that there are thousands of David Payne Harrises in the U.S. — private collectors who, for whatever reason, ignored the UNESCO restrictions and built up collections

16 Marlowe 2016.
17 Watson and Todeschini 2006; Felch and Frammolino 2011; and Silver 2009.
18 Rothfield 2009.
19 A first attempt at this came in 2004, when the AAMD issued guidelines recommending that museums avoid acquiring antiques that had been out of their country origin for less than ten years. This measure failed to quell the critics.
20 The quote is from Elia 1993. On the harms of painting all collectors with this broad brush, see Thomas and Pitblado 2020, along with responses, especially from Kersel 2020.
21 Hopes that the market might “auto-regulate” have not panned out, however; see Brodie 2014; and Mackenzie et al 2020, pp. 94–114.
of mostly (or entirely) illicit objects over the past half century. Their artifacts are often referred to as “orphans.” This reflects both their severed relation to their origins and the difficulty they will face of finding permanent care-takers when their current owners (or their descendants) seek to dispose of them, now that the AAM and AAMD enjoin museums to refuse them. What will be their fate? Many of my colleagues in archaeology see this problem as a red herring. From their perspective, these objects are lost causes, useless for historical purposes, mute, dead. Any attempt to accommodate them in public collections or make excuses for their purchasers only blunts the hard-won tools, like the 2008 Guidelines, that archaeologists and cultural property advocates use to combat looting. As one of them, a prominent expert on cultural property law, said to me angrily at a recent conference where I was trying to raise these questions, “archaeologists don’t care about orphans!”

To a certain extent, I share this view. Indeed, I have gone further in my own work, advocating that we refer to any object lacking a known archaeological findspot as “ungrounded,” regardless of how famous it is, how long it has been in a museum, and whether or not it might have been illicitly trafficked. No ungrounded object, I argue, not even the canonical ones on which the whole discipline of Roman art history has been built up, should be used as the basis for historical interpretations about the ancient past, since we can never be certain that they are what we hypothesize (or have long unquestioningly assumed) them to be. But I don’t go as far as my colleagues in archaeology and see these objects as useless; they have much to tell us about the modern history of collecting and the reception of the classical past.

The problem with the archaeologists’ stance is that if the matter of the fate of orphans is simply ignored, then the status quo will continue. And the status quo is harmful to the historical record, as I will attempt to demonstrate. Let’s consider what would have happened to Harris’s collection had Kenyon not accepted the bequest. As Hostetler says, the College was “faced with the choice of housing these objects or allowing them to be sent to auction.” That was certainly true in 2019, when Harris died with no heirs and, unexpectedly, left the entirety of his estate to Kenyon. Given these circumstances, the College was hardly in a position to make more granular or piece-by-piece decisions about the disposition of the artworks. Auctioning off the collection is also quite possibly what Harris himself would have resorted to had the Fine Arts Accession Committee said no back in 2010. Harris would have had a hard time finding another cultural institution willing to accept his gift. By that date, most had absorbed the lessons of the scandals that had appeared in the news so regularly in the 2000s, lessons codified in the 2008 AAM and AAMD Guidelines. To institutions paying attention to these stories, the pieces’ lack of provenance going back to 1970 would have been a red flag.

For a glimpse of what this shifting landscape looked like at the time to someone like Harris, we can turn to a 2012 New York Times article called “The Curse of the Outcast Artifact.” The piece was deeply sympathetic to those who had built up antiquities collections between 1970 and 2008. Many “good faith collectors” did so with the intention of bequeathing them to public museums. But now, due to the new guidelines, they found themselves unable to dispose of their collections in this way. Many were turning reluctantly back to the market, often selling pieces at a loss. Harris would likely have followed this path, had Kenyon declined the bequest in 2010. These sales might have been handled by his trusted dealers; but just as likely could have occurred on an online platform such as

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22 On orphans, see Leventhal and Daniels 2013.
23 For example, Renfrew 2000; and Fincham 2009.
25 Some direct, provocative responses to these arguments are gathered in De Staebler and Kontokosta 2020 (in particular the essays by Lenaghan, Tuck, Cassibry, Van Voorhis and Abbe, and Anderson). See also Gill 2016; Lyons 2016; and Bell 2016.
26 This perspective also animates the chapters in Hopkins and Costello 2021.
27 Blumenthal and Mashberg 2012, p. AR1.
eBay, where thousands of sales of lower-value, poorly-provenanced antiquities occur daily. Either way, these sales would have added fuel to the art market, potentially attracting new buyers to the field. They would have again contravened the UNESCO guidelines. They almost certainly would have kept the objects in private hands, and they also almost certainly would have lost their connection to Harris and to each other. As a historical artifact in its own right, Harris’s collection would have been effectively lost (more on this last point below). Compare that outcome to the current situation, in which the collection has been kept together, and the objects as well as many of Harris’s receipts are accessible both in person to Kenyon students as well as online to everyone. From the perspective of historical knowledge, this is clearly preferable to the alternative.

Furthermore, the fact that the collection was donated to a college is what made the in-depth provenance research described in Hostetler’s chapter possible. Incentives and resources — in the form of time and labor — were generated by the courses that Hostetler and his Florida State colleague Lynn Jones taught on Harris’s collection, the outcome of which is this catalog and collection of essays. Unsurprisingly, Hostetler, Jones, and their students encountered many ambiguities and dead ends. Most of what we would like to know about the origins of these pieces remains unknown; they remain what I call ungrounded. But a quick scan of the catalog reveals numerous avenues for future research. One example is the claim made by the dealer Julia Schottlander that one of the Byzantine bronze pieces, identified as a belt ornament, was excavated in Stockholm. On the face of it, this strikes me as too surprising to be entirely fictitious; a dealer looking to say something plausible to satisfy a nosy customer could easily, like hundreds before her, have said something vague like “the eastern Mediterranean” and been done with it. Stockholm is an unexpected but not impossible findspot for a bit of Byzantine bronze adornment, especially in light of our increasing understanding of the Vikings as enterprising long-distance traders. And there are, presumably, a finite number of excavations that took place in Stockholm (or perhaps in Sweden more broadly) prior to 1991, the year of Harris’s purchase of the object, that turned up Byzantine material; this might be a good research project for some future Kenyon student. Perhaps some day this belt ornament might be the subject of what Colin Renfrew has called “post-disjunctive forensic recontextualization,” i.e. when archival research allows a looted object to be reassigned with its archaeological context, and thus (at least partially) “regrounded.”

As a result of Hostetler’s and Jones’s courses and the follow-up research published in this volume and in the online catalog, we now know more about these objects than the Fine Arts Committee did at the moment when they were ruling on the collection’s fate in 2010. Some of the details recovered and described in Hostetler’s chapter — such as the use of U.S. Air Force shipping containers to avoid customs duties in the transit of artifacts between a British dealer and international students studying in Russia; or the fact that United Nations Gift Center used to sell historical artifacts as well as those made for the tourist market — will not make us feel any better about how antiquities are trafficked across national borders. But it is knowledge that has been generated in a place where there was none before, and which may in turn form the basis of subsequent discoveries and additional knowledge in the future; and for that reason we can be grateful that Kenyon’s Fine Arts Committee said yes to Harris’s offer.

28 BHSC, 2020.129.
29 On the vague and possibly invented claims of provenance given by dealers, see Chippindale and Gill 2000.
31 Renfrew 2010. For more recent examples, see Hopkins 2021; and Papalexandrou 2021.
IV. Object Itineraries

In his chapter, “From Private to Public: The Collection of David P. Harris,” Hostetler combines an archival study of Harris’s collection — the taxonomies by which Harris organized the paper catalog, the sequence of the purchases, a photograph of one of the display cases in his home, etc. — with an ethnographic consideration of Harris as a collector. While one might assume that only his Greek Orthodox icons have a direct connection to his adopted faith, Hostetler finds evidence in the documents that suggest that Harris’s religious interests animated many parts of the collection. Focusing, like the rest of this special issue, on his Ethiopian materials, Hostetler discovered, for example, that his earliest Ethiopian acquisitions were sold to him as “Coptic,” a term that refers to the material culture of late antique and Byzantine Egypt. This raises further questions both about what Harris understood at the time of the purchases and how his understanding of these works developed over subsequent years; and also more broadly about the reception of Ethiopian art in the art world during this period. What is clear is that in ways both direct and indirect, Harris’s acquisitions, in the context of his collection as a whole, reflect his exploration of Eastern Orthodoxy’s deep, ancient history; its geographic expanse; and its doctrinal variations.

This is obviously not what the objects were created to signify, and it is not the same story as the one we would have been able to tell had the objects surfaced in a controlled and documented archaeological excavation, i.e. were “grounded.” But it is nevertheless part of their “object biography,” a theoretical model whose central tenet is the continual transformation of things and their meanings over time. In traditional art historical or archaeological approaches, primacy is given to the history and context surrounding the object’s creation — the artist, style, culture, patron, original meaning, purpose or use, and so on. The “biographical” approach, by contrast, gives equal attention to the subsequent events, repurposings, repairs, relocations and reinterpretations that comprise the life of an object over time and up to the present day, as it is caught up in ever-shifting networks of social interaction. Both the value and the hazards of this approach with respect to collections like Harris’s was recently articulated in an edited volume that focused on the Menil collection in Houston:

Object biography is a particularly useful approach for the study of antiquities in museum collections, especially those that lack a full provenance and provenience [ownership history and archaeological findspot, respectively]. Such objects are sometimes intentionally ignored by scholars, since their study can legitimize a looted object and thereby add to its market value, incentivizing looters to bring similar objects to market through illicit excavation.... However we argue here that taking a biographical approach to these works draws attention to the missing parts of their stories and to the losses in our knowledge that result from looting and trade in antiquities.

This is, indeed, an important purpose these objects can serve today. As we saw above, ignorance about the harm of looting is widespread. When students conduct provenance research on looted, illicit, or ungrounded antiquities, there is almost invariably a moment after they’ve traced the chain of ownership back two or maybe three links when the trail runs out, when they realize that the distance between the earliest demonstrable change of hands and the original moment of the object’s discovery is unknowable and unbridgeable. They are left to grapple with the fact that they will never know for certain where their artifact came from — or in some cases, if it is a genuine antiquity or a modern forgery.

32 Kopytoff 1986; and Gosden and Marshall 1999. For a recent survey of the literature and theoretical critique on the concept of object biography, see Bauer 2019.

33 Hopkins and Costello 2021, p. 18.
The editors’ wise decision not to assign dates to the Ethiopian objects in this catalog is in part an acknowledgment of this grim epistemological reality. It should be a reminder to us all of the hazards of basing historical interpretations on objects whose origins are hypothesized through connoisseurship rather than known through archaeology. The students who participated in this research will come away with a deep understanding of the ways in which the secrecy of the art market — traditionally part of its culture of discretion and gentility — ultimately serves to protect looters and middlemen and to erase historical knowledge.

Object biography is important in other ways as well. The stories of how objects circulate in the modern world, changing meaning as they change hands, is also a valuable form of historical knowledge. Many scholars have enriched our understanding of the agency of artifacts in the modern world by exploring their movements in and out of collections. The international “Follow the Pots” project, for example, explores “the multiple and contested values” of Early Bronze Age ceramics as “archaeological heritage,” as they travel from tombs in the southern Levant to museums worldwide, passing through the hands of “archaeologists, people living in southern Ghor, looters, intermediaries, museum administrators, government officials, antiquities dealers, and collectors.” Padma Kaimal has reconstructed the movements and shifting valences of a group of sculptures that were plundered in 1926 from a temple in South India and trafficked on the international art market. In a dozen museums “from Zurich to San Francisco,” they have been conscripted into a range of discourses, from the construction of the primitive, colonized Other, to the encyclopedic pretensions of cultural institutions in small, midwestern cities, to sources of pride and belonging for local, diasporic communities.

Recently, scholars have called for alternatives to the biographical metaphor, which forces us to single out some moment, usually that of deposition in the ground, as that of the object’s death, and to denigrate whatever comes after that as merely and secondarily an “afterlife,” different in some ontological way from the events of the object’s life. Scholars such as Rosemary Joyce and Susan Gillespie prefer the notion of an “itinerary” to that of a “biography,” which urges us not only to give up unhelpful life-cycle analogies but also to abandon notions of “repose,” even for objects that have entered museum collections. Indeed, once they enter public collections, the number of social interactions objects get pulled into only multiplies, as the recent history of the Harris objects — and this volume itself — amply demonstrate.

In sum, the trafficking that delivered artifacts into Harris’s hands harmed the historical record by erasing all information about their archaeological context. But Kenyon, by preserving the Harris collection intact, has preserved another historical artifact. A collection is more than the sum of its parts. It is an assemblage made up of interconnected elements whose meanings have been constructed in relation to one another and to the collector. The dispersal of the collection on the market would have entailed the dissipation of our understanding of those constructed meanings; and that would have been a loss.

V. Takeaways

My colleagues in archaeology who “don’t care about orphans” will disagree with that assessment. Many see museums’ willingness to accept donations of unprovenanced antiquities as excusing, normalizing and even ennobling the reprehensible behavior of collectors (as well as funding that behavior, in the form of the tax write-offs). In my view, this depends on what the institution chooses to do with the objects once it accessions them.

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34 See https://followthepotsproject.org/. The project is led by Morag Kersel, Meredith Chesson, and Austin (Chad) Hill. See also Kersel 2019.

35 Kaimal 2012.

36 Joyce 2015; and Bauer 2019.

37 Bauer 2015.
(although I concede the point about tax breaks). Had Kenyon simply accepted the Harris bequest, folded the objects into its historical collections, labelled them in the database and in the gallery as “Gift of David Payne Harris ’46,” and either left the provenance field blank or filled it in with the vague information supplied to Harris by the dealers without further comment, I would agree with those critics. And it is never a good idea to disregard one’s own written policies without so much as word of explanation. But since receiving the bequest in 2019, Kenyon has handled the situation well; there are also some lessons to be drawn from this story about how such bequests might be handled better in the future.

1. University Museums are an appropriate home for collections of orphan artifacts.

Collections of orphan antiquities have their own histories. As ensembles, the stories they can tell us illuminate a potentially wide range of topics: the history of collecting, the reception of antiquity in the modern era, tourism, cultural property, heritage, the art market, looting, forgery, the construction of value, the fluidity of meaning. For this reason, there is historical benefit to preserving them intact, as many of these stories would be lost if the collection were to be dispersed on the market. As the case of Harris’s collection demonstrates, universities (or ideally, university museums) are an appropriate home for them, perhaps the most appropriate, at least until their source country can be identified and restitution, if desired by cultural officials of that country, can be effected (see below).

Although their core activities — collecting, conserving, exhibiting, interpreting, educating — are largely the same as those of freestanding museums, university museums have some distinctive characteristics that make them well-suited to care for artifacts with spotty ownership histories. They are typically expected to serve as a resource for the whole university, not just for art-lovers, so research and exhibitions exploring wide-ranging, interdisciplinary topics such as those mentioned above are likely to generate interest across campus. Universities have on hand a wide range of experts with training in chemistry, geology, biology, classics, economics, history, religion and so on who may be eager to collaborate in such research and exhibitions, and to coordinate it with their teaching. Furthermore, the demand for provenance research is certain to grow in coming years, as awareness of these issues and the momentum behind decolonizing initiatives grow in the cultural sector. For this reason, the training that students receive in courses like the one Hostetler and Jones taught are likely to have not only rich intellectual benefits but also practical, real-world value.

2. Orphan artifacts can be used to generate critical conversations about looting, cultural property, museum ethics, and epistemology.

In order for illicit antiquities to serve the purposes described above, of educating the public about looting, cultural property and so on, it is essential that whatever institution houses them be willing to research and tell these particular stories, and not simply fold the artifacts into its historical collections and celebrate them as unproblematic examples of ancient art. Another reason why university museums are best-suited to this role is that they can tell the difficult stories with less fear of recriminations from board members, potential donors or the public than other cultural institutions might face. Faculty members can teach these topics in their classrooms, and students, faculty, and curators can collaborate to tell the messy stories behind campus collections on collections websites and in campus museum spaces. University museums have the protection of their larger institutional settings and the principle of academic freedom behind them. Expectations about the kinds of critical questions and challenging issues that will be addressed in a university setting are different from those typically encountered in necessarily more risk-

King and Marstine 2006; Pickering 2012; and Cotter 2009.
averse public museums. There are plenty of exceptions to this principle, but we can see its effects in the more hard-hitting exhibitions that university museums are often willing to mount, in comparison to the uncontroversial themes of beauty, splendor, treasure and so on typically encountered in free-standing institutions, especially when it comes to exhibitions centered on single private collections.\textsuperscript{39} Collectors who donate their collections of orphan artifacts to university museums can expect — and should be told — that provenance research will be a top priority, and that the institution will not hesitate to discuss publicly whatever sordid facts emerge, not to titillate but to educate.

Kenyon’s transparency with regard to Harris’s collection is exemplary. Although increasing numbers of institutions have been willing to give detailed provenance information on the object pages of their websites, I know of no other that has publicly shared the primary sources. Kenyon’s Blick-Harris Study Collection (BHSC) website includes photographs of unredacted receipts and other provenance documents. This should become the new gold standard in public accountability and transparency for museums, alongside the institution’s willingness to publish essays like Hostetler’s as well as this one, in which none of the issues have been sugar-coated. Indeed, it is worth underscoring that this article exists because Hostetler responded to my criticism of his tweet about the Harris bequest with an invitation to me to write it. Open dialogue of this kind is precisely what is needed for illicit artworks to become teachable objects, spurs to discussions about archaeological context, looting, the art market, collecting history, and cultural property.

3. Whenever possible, conduct oral history research with the collector.

Hostetler has uncovered many interesting nuggets of information and drawn compelling interpretations from the catalog that accompanied the Harris bequest from Washington, DC to Ohio. We are fortunate that this documentation reached them — that Harris kept such meticulous records, and that it existed in hard copy and so was easily recognizable to the executors of his estate. This does not always happen.

But the biographies or “itineraries” of these objects could have been much richer had researchers not waited until after Harris’s death to begin compiling the data. Had the study of Harris’s collecting practices commenced a decade earlier, upon Kenyon’s 2010 decision to accept his gift, it could have been based on a comprehensive oral history rather than simply receipts, handwritten notes and a single photograph of one cabinet at his home. Researchers could have asked Harris directly how he displayed his pieces, why he acquired them, what they meant to him, how his understanding of them evolved over time, how they connected (or not) to his religious beliefs, or whether the shifting legal landscape and public attitudes about cultural property had any impact on his collecting practices.\textsuperscript{40} The value of such questions seems to have been appreciated by at least one person involved with the acquisition at Kenyon, the faculty member who recommended the acceptance of the gift because of its value “as a collection” (emphasis in the original). But the deeper implications of this observation do not seem to have been recognized. Rather, the promised gift seems to have been understood entirely as a collection of historical artifacts, worthy because of what they would be attracted strong criticism at the Brooklyn Museum in 2016. The project was funded by the Teagle Foundation, and resulted in a publication: Berry, Hellman, and Seligman 2019.

\textsuperscript{39} An example of the former is Prelude to a Nightmare: Art, Politics and Hitler’s Early Years in Vienna, 1906–13, which opened at the Williams College Museum of Art in 2002, and included two of Hitler’s early watercolors; see Rothschild 2012. Campus museums at Skidmore College, SUNY Albany, Hamilton College, and Colgate University also collaborated, in 2018, on a four-part installation of the controversial This Place exhibition of photographs of Israel and the West Bank that had attracted strong criticism at the Brooklyn Museum in 2016. The project was funded by the Teagle Foundation, and resulted in a publication: Berry, Hellman, and Seligman 2019.

\textsuperscript{40} A wonderful example of this kind of work is Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2004. Thompson 2016 gleans important insights from an archival interview with the antiquities collector Leon Pomerance in the last chapter of her book.
capable of revealing to students about the cultures that created them. No one seems to have placed much value on their modern meanings or object biographies. No action to study the collection as a collection was undertaken at the time. Instead, the 2010 year-end report of the Fine Arts Committee announced only that Harris’s collection would “arrive at the College in the future,” implying that the next step was simply to await the owner’s death.

This missed opportunity can be attributed to the relative rarity of the perspective that collections have historical value beyond that of their constituent parts. And to the concomitantly quite common view, particularly in art history, that the primary focus of scholarly attention should be the object itself; and that everything worth knowing about it can be read directly from its forms and material properties. To a person with that set of assumptions, it will no doubt have seemed quite natural and obvious not to begin studying Harris’s collection until the objects arrive on campus, after Harris’s death. But if one starts with the belief that we can never be certain about the origins — or even the authenticity — of ungrounded antiquities, then one will see the Harris bequest in a different light, one in which its historical value as a modern assemblage is at least equal to its historical value as a collection of artifacts (ostensibly) from particular past cultures. In which case, one can see of the death of the collector as a moment of tremendous loss, equal or almost equal to the moment when the objects were separated without record from their findspot, for with the collector dies all the information about why he made his purchases, how he understood them, and so on. 41 In the context of a university or college, if the Development Office reaches out to faculty members or museum staff for guidance about a potential gift of art and artifacts, plans for conducting oral history interviews with the collector-donor should be part of the conversation from the outset.

41 Pitzlado 2014.
42 For example, Leopold 2019.

4. Possessors of collections of orphan artifacts should think of themselves as stewards, not permanent owners.

In museum discourse, the term “stewardship” is often accompanied by the adjective “shared.” The concept denotes an alternative to traditional models of museum ownership (predicated on legal principles and presumed to be permanent) and curatorial authority (derived from academically-credentialed expertise). It refers to “sharing authority, expertise, and responsibility for the respectful attribution, documentation, interpretation, display, care, storage, public access and disposition of a collection with the advice of the source community.” 43 The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and the National Museum of the American Indian have been leaders in these practices in the U.S. In the U.K., the Manchester Museum’s South Asia Gallery Collective offers another model, in which local community members with ties to South Asia are empowered as exhibition co-curators. 43

The stewardship paradigm is helpful for thinking about what Kenyon is doing right with Harris’s collection. Although this is not stated on the BHSC website, Hostetler says in his essay that Kenyon is prepared to restitute pieces “if research establishes another party’s right to ownership.” While promising to return stolen property may not seem like a radical stance, it is remarkably rare for institutions to present an openness to this possibility without loading it up with qualifiers about the public interest, fiduciary responsibilities, etc. Even more unusual is for institutions to proactively undertake provenance research on their own initiative, rather than waiting for some external spur, and to promptly share bad news, unbidden, when they discover it. This is what happened when Hostetler noticed that the documents associated with one of the Byzantine potsherds in Harris’s collection included no receipt and instead only a typewritten note that the piece had been “found in

43 See, for example, Noor 2021.
1968 near the Church of Saint Demetrios, Salonica.” Suspecting that the shard may have been a surface find that Harris simply pocketed, Hostetler immediately contacted the Ephorate of Antiquities of Thessaloniki City. So far no restitution request has been made, but it seems likely that should that ever happen, Kenyon will return the item promptly, without dragging all parties through onerous legal proceedings. In fairness, it should be said that the fact that Harris’s collection has been accessioned into a departmental Study Collection rather than into the campus museum no doubt makes it easier for its custodians to adopt this flexible, open-minded stance. The more defensive and often legalistic positions that museums often reflexively adopt whenever discussions of restitution arise can be understood in terms of those institutions’ deeply ingrained sense that their mission is to care for their holdings forever.

Going forward, Kenyon can build on these strengths. An analysis of the Ethiopian materials in terms of their heritage significance and legal status should be a high priority. Hostetler reports that steps in this direction through collaborations with Ethiopian colleagues had already been initiated before the pandemic brought them to a halt. One hopes that someday soon, those colleagues will be able to help the College identify stakeholders from the communities for whom Harris’s collection of antique Ethiopian crosses, painted prayer books and other religious paraphernalia may hold extraordinary sacred meaning. That is who should ultimately decide what the most appropriate home for these works is.

The website of the BHSC can grow in its role of disseminating primary and secondary sources about the objects in the Harris collection. All the documents in the Harris catalog should be made available there, if they aren’t there already, as well as all the articles in this special issue of *Peregrinations*. Other primary source documents, such as the 2009–2010 communications of the Fine Arts Accession committee and the 2007 and 2010 Collecting Plans, should also be made available, perhaps with names redacted. It would also be enormously beneficial to the field and to the general public to share the text of the recent communications with the Ephorate of Thessaloniki City, since very few people or institutions have any idea how actual restitution conversations or processes unfold.

In conclusion, Harris’s collection has already had a tremendous impact on the understanding of the ethics, pitfalls, and best practices regarding orphan antiquities at Kenyon College, as this special issue of *Peregrinations* and the exemplary website of the BHSC attest. It is hard to imagine a better role for such objects to play.
Retro digitis teneas: Keep Your Fingers Back

Scribal colophons of the Middle Ages regularly implore readers to handle manuscripts with care. After writing out a commentary on Matthew by Paschasius Radbertus, the ninth-century scribe Warembert of Corbie added the following:

Friend who reads this, keep your fingers back lest you suddenly wipe out the letters, for a man who does not know how to write thinks there is no work involved.... Three fingers hold the pen. The whole body labors.¹

In 945, Florentius from the Iberian monastery of Valeránica appended a similar message to his sumptuous copy of Gregory’s *Moralia in Iob*:

One who knows little of writing thinks it no labor at all. For if you want to know I will explain to you in detail how heavy is the burden of writing. It makes the eyes misty. It twists the back. It breaks the ribs and belly. It makes the kidneys ache and fills the whole body with every kind of annoyance. So, reader, turn the pages slowly, and keep your fingers far away from the letters, for just as hail damages crops, so a useless reader ruins both writing and book.²

These two manuscripts are now in the national libraries of France and Spain, respectively, where their custodians likely share some of the scribes’ concerns: handmade books are the result of grueling human labor, and both their form and their content are vulnerable to the damage wrought by the “useless reader” (*lector inutilis*).

For those concerned with preserving cultural heritage, one of the clear advantages of digital surrogates has been the simultaneous increase in access and distance.³ More readers than ever can marvel at the fruits of scribal labor, their fingers forever at a safe distance. Virtual archives and libraries are invaluable resources to researchers at all levels. They eliminate the costs and carbon footprint associated with travel, and they allow unlimited, repeated consultation, often with the ability to zoom in on details more closely than one could with the naked eye. Digital surrogates and interfaces also open up possibilities for use and manipulation that mimic how medieval users themselves collaborated on, annotated, and otherwise augmented, copied, and circulated their books.⁴

While the merits of online collections are indisputable, digital surrogates — and even physical facsimiles — are inadequate substitutes for precisely those readers Warembert and Florentius had in mind: novices. That being said, it is not my intent to advocate for one medium or form of investigation over another, or to overemphasize the loss of “authenticity” and “aura” in the creation of digital surrogates. Instead, I wish to foreground some of the

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¹ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 12296, fol. 162r (https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9072596g/f174.item).
² The colophon appears on fol. 500v of Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, MS 80 (http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000206931&page=512).
³ For a review of the literature on digital surrogates and their archival value, see Burns 2017.
⁴ See Nichols 2016; Bamford and Francomano 2018; and contributions to Albritton, Henley, and Treharne 2021.
benefits of teaching collections (also called study or education collections) and hands-on codicological training for students in particular. I draw on personal experience, student interviews, and my recent observations of students interacting with objects from the Blick-Harris Study Collection (BHSC) (fig. 4.1).

In his introduction to Book Conservation and Digitization, Alberto Campagnolo notes that when the transformative nature of the digitization process is more fully harnessed, [surrogates] can become digital cultural objects: digital objects that transcend the originals, work in synergy with them, and make them something more.5

Extending this idea of synergy, I propose that object-based learning encourages students to use digital surrogates with greater nuance. In addition, it can address certain access and equity issues that digitization alone cannot.

**Artifacts as Complements to Digital Surrogates and Facsimiles**

Copies of illuminated manuscripts were produced for research purposes long before the advent of digital technologies, beginning in the nineteenth century with chromolithograph facsimiles, and then followed by analogue photographs and microfilm.6 Dot Porter, Curator of Digital Research Services at the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript, University of Pennsylvania, offers the following helpful distinction:

*Facsimile* literally means make similar, so if I call a digitized manuscript a facsimile, I draw attention to its status as a copy. *Surrogate*, on the other hand, generally means something that stands in for something else. So if I call it a surrogate, I draw attention to its status as a stand-in for the physical object.7

Despite the long history of creating consultation copies, the idea of electing the surrogate as an adequate or even superior alternative is relatively new. While many scholars lament the dematerializing effect of digital interfaces, at least as many are exploring the potential of new tools to enhance our understanding of book materials, uses, and structures through novel imaging techniques.8 Paleographic and art historical analyses of books or fragments are often possible with the help of reproductions, digital or otherwise, as are certain

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5 Campagnolo 2020b, pp. 2–3.
6 On chromolithographs as part of a facsimile impulse, see Echard 2008.
7 Porter 2018.
8 See, for example, the contributions to Campagnolo 2020a; as well as the work coming out of the University of Toronto’s Old Books New Science Lab (OBNS), directed by Alexandra Gillespie, https://oldbooksnescience.com, and the associated Digital Tools for Manuscript Study project, https://digitaltoolsmss.library.utoronto.ca (both accessed 29 April 29, 2021).
Figure 4.2. *Simul* fragment (cat. 33), Apostles Yāqob, Pētros, and Yohannas. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 4.3. *Simul* fragment (cat. 33), detail of the Apostle side. Photo: Brad Hostetler.
aspects of codicology. High image resolutions and options for magnification can reveal the finer details of texts, images, and material supports. The presence of some feature in a photograph, however, is not the same as knowing to look for it or trusting that it has been captured fully and accurately.

Figure 4.2 is an illuminated leaf I examined with Caitlin Mims when the Ethiopian objects from the BHSC were at Florida State University in September 2020 (cat. 33). Close inspection uncovered the order in which pigments had been applied to the parchment. At first sight, the green background appears to have been added last (see, for example, the way the green overlaps the edges of the man’s black hair in figure 4.3). When I scrutinized the black borders through a magnifying glass, I found evidence of a more complex sequence: a lighter green background was applied to the parchment before the addition of blacks. At a later date, someone repainted the background with a slightly different green pigment — possibly to retouch a background that had begun to fade or flake. Only this new layer of darker green sits above the blacks.

While it is possible to capture these details in a photograph, I would have struggled to discern the two distinct greens without first seeing the object in person. The layering of pigment in successive states also creates a subtle three-dimensional effect. Such surface textures and other aspects of manuscript materiality are regularly diminished or lacking in digital surrogates.

Materiality, as a concept, includes the physical attributes of materials but also extends beyond them. It incorporates embodied users’ responses (past and present) to tangible objects — “the meeting of matter and imagination,” to borrow a phrase from Michael Ann Holly. Even though some digital media “cunningly illustrate materiality without being material,” they undeniably have distinct characters.

The differences between artifacts and their surrogates are not simply matters of rarefied debate; they have fundamental implications for the theories and methods students bring to bear on questions of use in a context. According to Sarah Mathiesen, who worked with neck crosses in the BHSC, “qualities like the material and weight of the pectoral crosses become more than just numbers.” Experiential learning pushed her to develop and start from a more phenomenological set of questions:

I thought about how the physical relationship of the cross with the body would change based on the length of the string around the neck, the size of the cross, and/or the shape of the chest of the wearer — does the person’s body factor first and affect their choice of cross at all or do they make the cross fit with their body?

She likewise considered the feel of metal against skin, and how it was subject to environmental temperature changes. Madison Gilmore-Duffey described similar sensory experiences, as well as some of what surprised her:

I expected to be most impressed by the fact that I could view details up close and more clearly, but given that a lot of museums have updated their digital technology, this aspect wasn’t much different than viewing the objects online. I was most surprised by how tangible the objects and their history seemed when I was able to interact with them. It was much easier to imagine how they were used and handled in their original contexts when I could actually feel their weight and see their size in relation to me. I didn’t have to think about which details would have or would not have been visible to an audience, how the objects would have been held, or even what the materials felt like — I

9 See the essay by Caitlin Mims (ch. 9) for a discussion of this topic.
10 Rosler et al 2013, p. 15.
11 Rosler et al 2013, p. 15.
12 Sarah Mathiesen, email message to author, May 31, 2021. See also the essay by Mathiesen (ch. 7).
could determine this through my own interactions.¹³

Magnification is rarely where digital surrogates fall short — at least when institutions offer access to high-resolution images. Where digital interfaces, and even high-quality facsimiles, are still lacking is in conveying the more holistic experiences of weight, tactile attributes, sounds, smells, and movement.¹⁴

Even scholars who specialize in editing and interpreting the textual content of manuscripts must engage with them materially: text on the page may be damaged, glossed, corrected, or designed to interact with nearby paratextual features.¹⁵ The study of books as physical, archaeological objects (i.e., codicology) might include the following kinds of evidence:

- The subtleties of the parchment surface, such as the color and reflectiveness that help identify the type of animal, or the textures and small details that distinguish the “hair” and “flesh” sides;
- damage to the pages at the time of production (e.g., tears made during the scraping processes);
- the preparation of the parchment for text or image, including any prickings or rulings;
- evidence of preliminary sketches, catchwords, quire numerals, or other preparatory marks for text, image, and book assembly;
- stitching, binding, and arrangement of folios and quires;
- damage inflicted by insects and other pests, including holes created before the animal was slaughtered and so-called wormholes that post-date the completion of the book;
- visible evidence of the book’s evolving microbiome (e.g., the effects of bacteria or fungi); and
- all evidence of use throughout the long lifespan of the book, including intentional and unintentional damage.

Despite the admonitions from Warembert, Florentius, and other exhausted scribes, the manuscripts of the Middle Ages were frequently manipulated in ways that were far from reverent. Scribes and artists regularly modified, annotated, or added to each other’s texts and images. Readers might dribble oil or wax on the page, or damage it through repeated touching, ritual kissing, or offended censorship.¹⁶ Years of burning incense might infuse the pages with scents, as the students working with the Ethiopian collection certainly observed (see cat. 31). Books might be disassembled, recombined, rebound, scraped blank and palimpsested, or cut down for reuse in items that were no longer even books. The history of use and reuse can be especially difficult to capture in digital surrogates.

Although I write from my own perspective as a medievalist who tends to focus on parchment-based examples, similar observations apply to other substrates and to artifacts from a range of regions and periods. For instance, the ability to inspect the lengths and directions of fibers or to view supports under different lighting conditions is as important for papyrology as for the study of paper. Similarly, damage from larval insects (sometimes generalized as “bookworms”) is not unique to parchment, and lining up wormholes across a series of consecutive pages, while feasible with digital images, is much easier with a book in hand.

Viewing multiple objects through a digital interface makes it difficult to compare them, discern their scale, or understand the relations of parts to

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¹³ Madison Gilmore-Duffey, email message to author, April 21, 2021.
¹⁴ On holistic, sensuous interactions with medieval manuscripts and the limits of digital representation, see Porter 2018; Treharne 2013; Wilcox 2019; and Camille 1998.
¹⁵ On some of these themes, see Nichols 2016; and Lied 2019.
¹⁶ For specific examples, see Camille 1998, pp. 41–42; and Rudy 2011.
Figure 4.4. Samad fragment (cat. 32), Annunciation/Presentation. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 4.5. Samad fragment (cat. 32), detail of the Annunciation/Presentation side. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
whole. Sonia Dixon, another doctoral student who worked with the Ethiopian art from the BHSC, focused on a double-sided icon with figures holding hand crosses (cat. 29).\textsuperscript{17} She noted the value of handling multiple items in close succession, as well as reenacting their intended uses. She could walk between them rather than scrolling through photographs online or switching between tabs. Working with the collection helped place the objects more in context.... I could hold the crosses as the monks do on the icon.\textsuperscript{18}

“Feeling out” evidence is one of the most difficult skills to teach from photographs alone. As I examined the loose leaves in figures 4.2 and 4.4 (cats. 32, 33), I discerned certain facts of their original context not with a magnifying glass but rather with my fingers (the useless reader’s dangerous digits!). Along the left and right edges, just past the seams where the leaves were cut from their original contexts, I could feel the original folds and the vestiges of adjacent pages. One edge curled towards me and the other curled away (fig. 4.5). This haptic evaluation confirmed the assumption that the cuttings were originally part of \textit{somsul manuscripts}, accordion-folded books of the type in figure 4.6 (cat. 31). In addition, the edges curling in opposite directions revealed that both cuttings were removed from interior sections of \textit{somsul manuscripts}. Again, I have attempted with difficulty to convey these facts in the accompanying photographs, but I would not have made these observations had I started from digital images.

\textsuperscript{17} See the essay by Dixon (ch. 8).

\textsuperscript{18} Sonia Dixon, email message to author, April 29, 2021.
I first witnessed the limits of photographic reproduction in 2011, during a visit to the British Library with Adam S. Cohen of the University of Toronto. With great excitement, we examined an oft-reproduced illumination of Saint Benedict in the eleventh-century Eadui Psalter (fig. 4.7). I watched as Cohen moved the page and shifted in his seat to examine the reflective gold from different angles. He observed a detail neither of us had ever seen reproduced, precisely because it was impossible to detect when viewing the page from the conventional perspective of a camera. Every evenly lit, overhead view of this page, reproduced countless times, had failed to capture three words inscribed on golden quatrefoils: Castus, Obediens, and Humilis:

What is most remarkable, however, is the way the labels correspond to Benedict’s body: “chaste” is on the lobe above his groin, while “obedient” and “humble” are on his knees, a graphic reminder of the kneeling performed daily by monks and modelled by the figure at the bottom of the page (probably the abbot).... With this discovery we can better appreciate how Anglo-Saxon images not only could communicate complex theological iconography, but also evoke the bodily aspects of monastic practice.²⁰

The process by which Cohen and I came to see the core monastic virtues written on Benedict’s robes itself mimicked bodily aspects of monastic practice, namely careful, collective reading of a book and its activation through touch and motion.

The pale pink inscriptions are now visible in photographs captured through multispectral imaging (fig. 4.8). This technology, however useful, received undue credit in a catalog entry for the British Library’s 2018 Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms exhibition: “Multispectral imaging has recently revealed further text on this page.”²¹ There are several points to make about this

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²⁰ Cohen 2012; and Cohen 2018.
mischaracterization. First, the decision to re-photograph the image in this way was the direct result of in-person examination of the book, yet this combination of old and new techniques — precisely the synergy I support — is regularly downplayed when individuals or institutions seek to give manuscript studies the high-tech veneer of the Digital Humanities. Guiding technology towards useful codicological ends depends on scholars asking the right questions, and some of these necessarily depend on direct observation.

Another point I would like to reiterate is that Adam Cohen observed something new in an image that had been reproduced countless times. Surrogates can close people off from thinking there are still discoveries to be made in person. In addition, one of the more common issues with digital surrogates is the understandable priority given to works deemed important or canonical in some way, as the Eadui Psalter certainly has been. The decision to digitize and offer online access to surrogates is a critical act of selection akin to curation. Surrogates, therefore, limit not only the nature of inquiry but also which objects are likely to receive sustained attention.

Students often learn best from the items least likely to be digitized. Senta German and Jim Harris, art historians with backgrounds as teaching curators, note that a museum’s canonical collections are rarely the most pedagogically useful. They compare a thirteenth-century copper-alloy pyx on display at the Ashmolean Museum (University of Oxford) to one in the same museum’s reserves:

It is a far better example of its type than its sibling but the very wholeness and clarity that make it suitable for inclusion in the Ashmolean’s “canonical” displays make it a less rewarding object for investigation. The damaged pyx is mysterious, but careful examination makes it accessible. The loss of gilding, for example, has revealed hidden details of construction and evidence of use.  

German and Harris discuss object-based teaching through the lens of “agility,” the quality that makes certain museum objects well suited to cross-disciplinary teaching and investigation. Agile objects are those that are complex enough to encourage sustained engagement and that invite questions about materials, production, and use whose answers are not immediately clear. They are decontextualized and often damaged or incomplete, inviting students to imagine objects’ earlier incarnations and to engage with their long physical histories.

The lack of context that characterizes so many agile teaching objects is also common to the countless fragments dispersed across libraries, museums, and archives. Fragments are commonly low priority on the list of items for institutional digitization, yet they form an integral part of many historians’ evidence base. For that reason, training with teaching collections can prepare students for future work with challenging, incomplete artifacts.

Fragments in teaching collections can also serve as entryways into larger discussions of collection practices, for instance the history of the leaf trade or the ethics of accepting bequests with complicated provenance histories. Even without prompting, certain students examining objects in the BHSC considered their privileges and moral responsibilities. One wished to be “a better ally to the people and histories that give these objects meaning”: “I was very aware during this entire experience of both my process and responsibilities as a scholar who exists outside of the historical and contemporary contexts of these objects.”  

Another rewarding aspect of agile objects is the possibility of making breakthrough discoveries side-by-side with a specialist. My opportunity to assist and observe while a mentor studied a manuscript at the British Library is certainly one example of what

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22 German and Harris 2017, pp. 250–51.
23 On the value of study collections despite incomplete provenance records, see the essay by Elizabeth Marlowe (ch. 3).
24 Sarah Mathiesen, email message to author, May 31, 2021. See also the essay by Mathiesen (ch. 7).
Beyond the Teaching Collection: Building towards Equity and Success

In my experience, *retro digitis teneas* is rarely the guiding principle among custodians of teaching collections. Objects in university libraries, archives, and museums are certainly treated with care, but preservation initiatives are aligned with the ultimate goal of long-term student success. This is even true of certain university collections of international renown. I will never forget visiting the Parker Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. I and the other graduate students on a class trip reacted nervously as Christopher de Hamel pushed some of the most famous manuscripts of the Middle Ages into our hands and told us not to be so cautious with them. In the decade that followed, I internalized those lessons and learned to trust my instincts and abilities — a fact I only realized recently when colleagues expressed their own surprise at my bold handling of the Ethiopian manuscript fragments.

Student confidence improves in environments where they feel more comfortable expressing uncertainty while also establishing new relationships with special collections librarians and archivists, university museum professionals, or faculty members. In addition, their newfound perspectives shape their subsequent work on material culture, even in photographs. As one student noted:

Professors and museum professionals often stress this, but it was not until I was able to gain that experience myself that it fully clicked with me.... Interacting with these objects directly has shifted the way I think about and approach the objects I study in my classes.\(^{25}\)

The advantages are even more pronounced for students who go on to conduct independent object-based research beyond university settings.

On the surface, teaching collections are valuable means of preparing self-assured and well-rounded scholars of material culture. Their less evident but more profound benefit is one of equitable access.

As part of the anti-racism, inclusion, and equity terminology distributed at Florida State University, equity is defined as follows:

> Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.... Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.\(^{26}\)

Although teaching collections and codicological training may seem far removed from equity issues, physical access to objects in archives and museums is highly controlled and tends to be limited to those already established as experts in their fields. Graduate students and junior scholars must frequently rely on their “connections,” for lack of a better term. During my own doctoral studies, my ability to consult manuscripts at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and the Bibliothèque nationale de France depended on luck and a great deal of privilege. I had to seek support from colleagues of colleagues, reach out to contacts I had made at conferences, and leverage the reputation of my advisor.

For many students, working on artifacts in their university’s collection can mean developing specialized skills. An advisor can then affirm those practical abilities in a strong letter of surety that

\(^{25}\) Madison Gilmore-Duffey, email message to author, April 21, 2021.

helps the student overcome institutional gatekeeping.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, opportunities to handle and ideally publish on objects in a university’s teaching collection allow students to build a research profile and convey expertise.

Graduate students who need to handle restricted materials in libraries, archives, or museums sometimes face significant barriers beyond gatekeeping. Among others, these include linguistic competencies (which can apply to the languages that facilitate travel and to those necessary for the research itself); aspects of their identities (e.g., gender, race, disability) that may make travel to certain parts of the world difficult or unsafe; personal and professional obligations that make it inconvenient to take time off; and financial barriers. While experience with a teaching collection will not, in and of itself, address these problems, developing a scholarly profile can open up new possibilities for external funding for travel, language study, and participation in specialized programs.

Emily C. Francomano and Heather Bamford caution against equating online availability with accessibility.\textsuperscript{28} They note that Digital Humanities projects regularly overlook functionality for users with disabilities, are nearly always designed for Anglophone audiences, and often assume preexisting expertise. As an extension of these points, I propose that teaching collections and object-based learning are far easier to adapt to the needs of diverse student groups and help address some of the knowledge gaps required to benefit more fully from online content.

One of the ironic outcomes of increasingly digitized collections is decreased access to the objects they have come to replace. Universities and external granting bodies may be less willing to offer financial support, and institutions more protective of their collections, both arguing that digital surrogates act as suitable alternatives to in-person consultation. Students who have gained unexpected insights from previous work with artifacts will be better positioned to justify the need to visit other collections.

Understandable enthusiasm for online content and digital tools, especially for their democratizing effects, risks overshadowing the advantages of object-based learning. The benefits of such experiences go beyond the delight students feel when given the chance to make physical contact with the past — although delight should not be undervalued. Put simply, students thrive when they can build their competence and confidence in environments with fewer access barriers. Even limited interactions with a teaching collection can material culture. With guidance, support, and artifacts at their fingertips, students learn to work more dynamically with physical and digital evidence alike.

\textsuperscript{27} For example, students seeking a reader’s pass at the Vatican Library require not only “a reference letter or a valid document proving appropriate academic qualifications” but also “a Letter of Surety, printed on institutional letterhead and signed by their dissertation supervisor.” “Admission Criteria,” Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, https://www.vaticanlibrary.va/en/information-for-readers/admission-criteria.html (accessed May 1, 2021).\textsuperscript{28} Francomano and Bamford forthcoming.
5  Adopted and Adapted: Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity

Neal W. Sobania

Introduction

The Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church (EOTC) is one of the world’s most ancient churches.1 Its followers number in the millions, and not just in Ethiopia, but also in major diaspora communities in Australia, Europe, and North America. Putting a figure on the number of Ethiopian Orthodox faithful is challenging. The percentage of followers within Ethiopia is generally cited as about 40% in a population that today numbers over 100 million.2

Orthodox churches are generally identified by titles that recognize their geographical location (e.g. Armenian Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox) with each one drawing upon the cultural traditions of its believers. Being self-governing (autonomous) and having their own heads (autocephalous), these cultural differences are supported by Orthodox churches. Nevertheless, there are theological differences, the major one being over Jesus Christ’s nature. Where the Western world labels the eleventh century separation of western (Roman) and eastern (Byzantine) Christianity the Great Schism (451) when it settled the theological issue of Christ’s nature, a matter that had proven intractable for decades. Briefly, the “settled” Chalcedonian position on this issue, held by the vast majority of participants, decreed that Jesus Christ was to be “acknowledged in two natures [human and divine], without being mixed, transmuted or separated.”3

Those who disagreed with this position, the so-called non-Chalcedonians, asserted Jesus Christ had only one nature, divine, even though for a time he had taken on an earthly human body. As no Ethiopian representative attended the Council, nor was the position taken there communicated to them, it has been suggested that a more accurate description of this position is pre-Chalcedonian.4

Today there are six non-Chalcedonian Orthodox churches that hold the position that Jesus Christ’s perfectly united human and divine nature is indistinguishable.5 The Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church (EOTC), the largest, makes their position clear by including “Täwaḥədo” in its official name, which means “unity” or “oneness” in Ga’az, the ecclesiastical language of the church. The for Orthodox Christianity the great schism took place 600 years earlier at the Council of Chalcedon (451) when it settled the theological issue of Christ’s nature, a matter that had proven intractable for decades. Briefly, the “settled” Chalcedonian position on this issue, held by the vast majority of participants, decreed that Jesus Christ was to be “acknowledged in two natures [human and divine], without being mixed, transmuted or separated.”3 Those who disagreed with this position, the so-called non-Chalcedonians, asserted Jesus Christ had only one nature, divine, even though for a time he had taken on an earthly human body. As no Ethiopian representative attended the Council, nor was the position taken there communicated to them, it has been suggested that a more accurate description of this position is pre-Chalcedonian.4

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5 Also identified as Monophysites or Oriental Orthodox Churches, those who follow the non-Chalcedonian tradition are said to prefer the term miaphysite from the Greek mia, “single” and physis, “nature” to make the distinction between themselves and the fifteen Eastern Orthodox churches, such as Georgia, Greek, and Russian, that hold the “two natures of Christ” belief, and are nominally headed by the Patriarch of Constantinople; Encyclopedia Britannica Online, s.v. “Monophysite,” https://www.britannica.com/topic/monophysite (accessed February 16, 2020). See also Binns 2017, pp. 143–53.

1 Only the Armenian Apostolic Church is said to be older, adopted by the Kingdom of Armenia as its official religion ca. 300 CE.
2 Ethiopian Orthodox 43.8%, Muslim 31.3%, Protestant 22.8%, Roman Catholic 0.7%, traditional 0.6% (2016). According to “People and Society: Religions,” The World Factbook: Ethiopia https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ethiopia/ (accessed January 18, 2021).
4 A case can be made for using pre-Chalcedonian (Binns 2017, p. 145); however, given the antiquity of Ethiopian Christians’ rejection of the Council of Chalcedon’s formulation of

https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol8/iss1/1
other five non-Chalcedonian churches are the Armenian Apostolic Church, Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt, the Syriac Orthodox Church, the Malankara Orthodox Church of India, and since 1992, the Eritrean Orthodox Täwaḥdo Church. Note that each one’s geographical location is reflected in its name. While in communion with each other (members of each Church may participate in the others’ Eucharist celebration), each church is hierarchically independent.

**Orthodox Christianity Adopted**

Christianity’s arrival in Ethiopia is closely linked to Aksum (Axum), a town in the north of the country’s highlands that is the spiritual home of the EOTC. Aksum is both the name of an ancient kingdom and its capital. This empire emerged in the last few centuries before the Gregorian year 1, and its capital ruled over what by the third century was considered, along with Persia, Rome, and China, one of the world’s four greatest powers. Situated at the hub of one of the world’s great crossroads, where the peoples and cultures of Africa, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean exchanged goods and ideas, meant that Ethiopia came in contact with Christianity within a century or two of its beginnings.

Aksum is inextricably linked to both the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the country’s monarchy. Two different but widely known traditions supported this relationship and kept Ethiopia religiously Christian, socially hierarchical, and linguistically Semitic. One tradition focuses on the adoption of Christianity; the other links Ethiopia to ancient Israel as the inheritor of the Solomonic lineage. Although historically the two events fall into different time periods, this is of little importance in terms of popular understanding.

According to one tradition, for which there is contemporary written support, two young Syrian Christian boys, Frumentius and Aedesius, were shipwrecked on the Red Sea coast. Presumably, this was at or near Adulis, the port from which Aksum played an active role in the trade of the Red Sea. Found sitting under a tree preparing their lessons, they were taken to Aksum where the brothers grew up and earned the high regard of King Ṣllà ‘Amida. When the king died, his son ‘Ezana was too young to be crowned king, so the queen asked Frumentius to be his tutor and Aedesius to be his cup-bearer. They agreed, and in serving ‘Ezana they introduced him to their Christian faith. The clearest evidence for this is from numismatics. In the early part of ‘Ezana’s reign, the coins of his realm bore his image on one side and a crescent and disc symbol on the other. Later in his reign, a Greek cross replaced the crescent and disc suggesting Christianity was adopted ca. 330 CE. Additional evidence for the adoption of Christianity at this time is found in royal inscriptions of military victories. This is not to suggest the population immediately became Christian; rather it is likely that Christianity was limited at first to the royal court, from where the practice then spread to the general population (see below). What actual role Frumentius took in this adoption process is not clear, but what is known is that his involvement in Ethiopia continued after ‘Ezana was crowned king. Frumentius left Ethiopia to return home but stopped in Alexandria to urge the patriarch, Athanasius (293–373 CE), to send a bishop to continue the evangelical work he had begun. The patriarch heeded this advice by consecrating Frumentius as a bishop and sent him back to Aksum to look after the newly converted faithful.

The second tradition, also linked to Aksum, is the visit by the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon in Jerusalem. Accounts of this visit are found in both the Bible (Kings 10:1–13 and II Chronicles 9:1–2) brothers as having survived a shipwreck in 346 CE and Frumentius being appointed by Athanasius as bishop of Ethiopia. See Phillipson, 2014, pp. 91–93.
and the Qurʾān (Sūra 27:2–45). The Ethiopian version also relates how the Queen of Sheba, having heard of Solomon’s great wealth and wisdom, traveled to Jerusalem. However, this version takes a markedly different twist when six months after she returns to her own kingdom, the Queen, called Makadda in Ethiopia, gives birth to a son, Manilik. Conceived with Solomon during her visit, Manilik is held to be the founder of the Solomonic dynasty that reigned in Ethiopia until the overthrow of Emperor Ḥaylā Šollase I in 1974; amongst his many titles was “the 225th ruler in the Solomonic line.” It is a terrific story but factually presents more than a few serious challenges. The principal one, setting aside the question of whether the Queen of Sheba actually existed and if she did where she came from, is simply a matter of chronology. Solomon lived in the tenth century BCE and the earliest evidence of an empire at Aksum begins only in the first century BCE.

The second issue is the thirteenth-century manuscript in which the legend is found, the Kəbrä Nəgäṣt (Glory of the Kings). It is a compilation of religious writings in Gəʿəz that were pertinent to that time when a new line of rulers replaced the Zagwe dynasty, who were said to be usurpers of the Solomonic line. That the Kəbrä Nəgäṣt was foundational to this claim of a continuous line of rulers going back to Solomon, who were the keepers and defenders of the true faith, seems more than coincidental. As Steve Kaplan points out, “There is no credible evidence that any Aksumite ruler ever claimed Solomonic descent or that there was a continuous bloodline from the kings of Aksum to

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8 In the Ethiopian tradition the Queen of Sheba is called Makadda. In Islamic tradition she is Bilqūs; Solomon is Sulaymān.
Yakunno Amlak [the king who restored the Solomonic dynasty] and his descendant.9 Thus, the real purpose of the Solomon and Sheba legend was to legitimize the claim of Ethiopian kings as part of the Solomonic lineage and thereby justify Ethiopian Christianity as the rightful heir to Israel — an unbroken chain of the Jewish-Christian relationship in Ethiopia.10 Hence the story of Solomon and Sheba is not only about the son that resulted from their union. It is also the explanation of how the Ark of the Covenant came to be in Ethiopia.11 As a teen, Manilak, desiring to meet his father, also traveled to Jerusalem. When it was time for him to return home, Solomon gave Manilak a copy of the Ark of the Covenant and instructed the first-born sons of Jerusalem’s aristocracy to accompany him. This included Azariah, the son of high priest Zadoq. Declaring he could not live without the Ark, Azariah switched the copy for the original, and with divine assistance brought the Ark of the Covenant to Aksum, demonstrating not only how God chose Ethiopia but how “the glory of Zion passed from Jerusalem and the children of Israel to the New Zion, Aksum, and the new Israel, the Ethiopian people” (fig. 5.1).12 Additionally, as John Binns relates, this reflects the Old Testament understanding of divine kingship. Azariah “is the priest who presides over and enables the worship of God. The ruler of the people is the king [Manilak].”13

Though the Ethiopian Church dates to the fourth century, it was not fully independent. For the seventeen hundred years following the Patriarch of Alexandria’s appointment of Frumentius as bishop, Alexandria oversaw the Ethiopian Church through a succession of Egyptian monks who served as metropolitanans. Because church law requires twelve bishops to appoint an archbishop, and the Ethiopian Church did not have twelve of its own bishops, it could not consecrate kings, ordain priests, or sanctify churches. However, the king, who was both a temporal and a spiritual leader, was not indifferent to the affairs of the church and held considerable power over ecclesiastical matters. In reality, the leadership of the church was diffuse, with many different power centers — the Egyptian patriarch, various bishops, and the heads of major monasteries — a dynamic that was not all that dissimilar to the political scene in which regional kings and princes competed for authority, influence, and spiritual dominance. This status slowly began to change at the end of the nineteenth century when the first Ethiopian was consecrated as a bishop to work with the Coptic archbishop and continued until in 1959 when an Ethiopian Patriarch (abunä) was consecrated.14 In the years from Aksum’s adoption of Christianity to securing its own patriarch, Orthodox Christianity became uniquely Ethiopian. The next section briefly introduces five distinctive aspects that demonstrate this: language and literature, church architecture, fasting and feasting, veneration of saints, and visual representation.

Orthodox Christianity Adapted

Language and Literature

Go’az (also called Ethiopic), the language of the Ethiopian Church’s liturgy and sacred texts, is an ancient Semitic language derived from an even older language, ancient Sabean (Epigraphic South Arabian).15 In the early days of the Aksumite Empire, Go’az was the language of Aksum, but Greek, the trading language of the region, and Sabean were also in use, as evidenced by royal inscriptions that were written in all three languages.

9 Kaplan 2017, p. 111.
11 Yes, the same ark of popular culture made famous with the 1981 film Raiders of the Lost Ark and the story Graham Hancock built upon in his 1992 book, The Sign and the Seal.
12 Kaplan 2017, p. 111.
13 Binns 2017, p. 53.
14 Today, there are positions for eighteen archbishops and bishops. For more on the history of leadership in the EOTC, see Archbishop Yesehaq 1997; Ancel and Ficquet 2015.
15 Semitic languages are a large family of languages that also includes Arabic and Hebrew. Ancient Sabean was used in the southern regions of the Arabian Peninsula from ca.1000 BCE – sixth century CE.
The widespread usage of Gaʿaz by the church is associated with the arrival of the “Nine Saints” in the late fifth and early sixth centuries. It is a tradition that recalls a group of holy men who came from “Rome” who were in reality from various locations in the eastern Mediterranean and likely to have been escaping persecution for their one-nature belief. The Nine Saints are credited with translating the Bible and other sacred writing into Gaʿaz, a critical factor in spreading the faith to ordinary Ethiopians (fig. 5.3). Also important were the monasteries they founded, major centers of Christian learning spread across the north of the country in what is today the Tigray National Region.

Gaʿaz probably ceased to be an everyday spoken language by the tenth century, replaced by two related Semitic languages, Ṭagrañña and Amarañña (Amharic), the vernacular languages spoken at the royal courts. Nevertheless, as royal power spread throughout the highlands and beyond, so did Christianity. As the language of the Church, Gaʿaz has preserved a rich tradition of ecclesiastical writing, including treatises, homilies, hagiographies, and collections of miracles, as well as secular works, often chronicles of kings. Whereas the earliest translations were from Greek, the fifteenth century witnessed a revival of translation activity. This time, however, it was of works from Coptic literature in Arabic. Among these important liturgical works were the Praises of Mary (Weddase Maryam) and the lectionary for Holy Week (Gobrā Ḥomamat). Two others that were not only translated but also greatly expanded demonstrate how Ethiopia built upon translated literature and made it their own. The Synaxarium (Sankossar), a compendium of short biographies of Coptic and other eastern saints, added commemorations of indigenous saints. Similarly, the translation of the Miracles of Mary (Ṭāʾammorā Maryam), which in the original included thirty-two miracles, grew so extensively that some collections comprise over 300. This

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16 As Appleyard 2002, p. 127 notes, “Ethiopian Christian literature is often said to be essentially a literature of translation.”
17 Whether nine is an accurate number or not, monasteries they established still bear their names and paintings of the nine appear in churches everywhere. See also the essay by Madison Gilmore-Duffey (ch. 10)
18 Written Gaʿaz, like Sabean, uses only consonants and no vowels. Rather than an alphabet, it has a syllabary — characters that represent both a consonant sound and a vowel sound. Indeed the syllabary for Gaʿaz is the same one for Amarañña and Ṭagrañña, and, though the readers of one language can read in another, they will not necessarily be able to understand it.
19 For more on the translations of the ecclesiastical works of this period see Appleyard 2002, pp. 128–29.
Figure 5.4. Choristers chanting on Hosanna (Palm Sunday), Aksum, Ethiopia. Photo: Neal Sobania and Raymond Silverman (2009).

Figure 5.5. Priest and deacons during Maspal service, Aksum, Ethiopia. Photo: Neal Sobania and Raymond Silverman (2012).
same period also saw the writing of a number of original works. Characteristic of these is the Book of Light (Māḥafā Bārhan), in which the king makes clear the reforms and regulations he has imposed, and attacks magical practices that have persisted from earlier times. Many of these works are used regularly in performing the liturgy.

To celebrate the Eucharist Mass (Qəddase) requires at a minimum, two priests and three deacons. Priests (qāsis in Ga’az, qes in Amaroñña and qāssi in Tagrañña) may marry, but bishops and monks should remain celibate. In addition there are quasi-clerics (dābtāra) who are religiously educated but not ordained. These serve the church in a wide variety of roles from scribes and scholars to administrators and choristers. They also have a dark side because they are believed to harbor mystical powers, including divination and the making of healing scrolls (cats. 34, 35). Dressed in their finest ecclesiastical garments the distinctions can be hard to discern. The choristers with their prayer sticks and clinking sistrums perform liturgical music and dance (fig. 5.4). A deacon holds a processional cross aloft, a priest swings a censer to engulf the proceedings in the sweet smell of frankincense, while another reads from a manuscript shielded under an umbrella; they all have hand crosses. Ethiopian Church services are stunningly rich and colorful and can be an imposing sight to behold (fig. 5.5). However, the most sacred act — the consecration of the bread and wine — takes place in the māqdās (Holy of Holies) of a church, where only priests and deacons (and kings when Ethiopia had them) may enter.

**Church Architecture**

Ethiopian churches, whether round, octagonal, square, or rectangular, have an architectural feature that not only serves as a reminder of the Ark coming to Ethiopia, but without which the building is not considered a church. Regardless of its exterior shape, the most distinctive feature of an Ethiopian church is its interior tripartite structure. Free standing in the middle of a church (or at the eastern end of a rectangular church) is the māqdās or Holy of Holies (fig. 5.6). This is where an altar tablet (tabot) is housed, the presence of which makes the church sacred. Of wood or stone, the tabot is inscribed with a name of God, a saint, or biblical event that gives the church its name. The tabot is kept in an altar cabinet (mānbārā tabot), literally, “Seat of the Tabot” that is understood to be a representation of the Ark of the Covenant. It is in the māqdās, a space that is generally square, even in a round church, where the Eucharist is consecrated. The walls of the māqdās are well suited for the display of paintings that present key elements of Ethiopian Christianity.

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20 Some churches have more than one tabot, especially the larger ones in towns and cities.
Figure 5.7. Interior of Saint Mika’el Church during mass, Aksum, Ethiopia. Photo: Neal Sobania and Raymond Silverman (2012).

Figure 5.8. Worshipping outside Abba Mäṭa’ Church, Aksum, Ethiopia. Photo: Neal Sobania and Raymond Silverman (2012).
Architecturally, two additional areas extend outward from the màqḍās. The next, the qǝddǝst, is where the congregants receive communion, with the outermost space, the qǝne maḫlet, where the choristers chant their hymns of praise.\(^{21}\) Generally oriented on an east-west axis, the primary entrance to the church is on the west. Churches have a further division — males stand or sit on the north side and females on the south. Generally, there are no pews or chairs so sitting means on the floor, though this is changing (fig. 5.7). And yet, all that said, the majority of worshippers actually stand outside the church or even the compound to hear the service (fig. 5.8).\(^{22}\) Entry to the church building itself, and the taking of communion, is strictly governed by rules of cleanliness.

_Fasting and Feasting_

The rules of cleanliness include cleansing and purifying the body through acts of piety such as confession and fasting. The Ethiopian calendar is replete with fasting days — the Fast of Salvation (every Wednesday and Friday), the fifty-five-day Easter Fast (Lent plus the Sundays of Holy Week), the Fast of the Apostles (between ten and forty days after Pentecost), the Fast of Maryam (sixteen days before Mary’s assumption), the forty-day Christmas Fast, and the three-day Fast of Nineveh. It is mostly monks and those who are particularly devout that maintain the 250 days that this totals. Still, most Ethiopian Orthodox Christians fast about 175 days of the year.\(^{23}\) For these Christians fasting means no eating or drinking until noon and the food consumed must not include meat or animal products.

Just as fasting days fill the liturgical calendar, so too do feast days. There are nine canonical Feast Days and another nine minor ones. Additionally there are holy days dedicated to particular saints, some of which occur each month. As to be expected in an Orthodox church, there are feast days associated with Mary, who as the mother of Jesus is the mother of God, the Theotokos (“Giver of birth to God”). As such, Mary has the primary place of honor in Orthodox churches but in Ethiopian Christianity this is particularly prominent. For example, the Armenian Church recognizes five main holy days in honor of Mary — annunciation, her conception, her birthday, presentation to the temple, and her assumption; the Ethiopian Church recognizes thirty-three.

_Veneration of Saints_

Reverence for saints is yet another characteristic of Ethiopian Christianity. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians venerate many saints, both foreign and indigenous, (see below under Visual Representations), but none more than Mary. The particular expansion of feast days related to Mary dates to the fifteenth century, but this and the other changes that characterize this century need to be put in context. The Zagwé dynasty, though responsible for both the remarkable and spectacular rock-hewn churches at their capital Lalibāla and the expansion of Christianity southward, did not speak a Semitic language and were regarded as culturally different.\(^{24}\) Thus when Yakunno Amlak toppled the last king of this short-lived dynasty in 1270, it marked the restoration of the monarchy to the lineage of Solomon and Sheba.

The importance of this lineage connection to Ethiopian national identity cannot be overstated. For example, Zär’a Ya’eqob (r. 1434–68) reinforced this connection and his authority to rule, by returning to Aksum for his coronation and the blessing of the church. During his reign, he continued the work begun under his predecessors; spreading Christianity into new regions, including that around Lake Ṭana. He provided patronage for writing and translating manuscripts and sought to

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\(^{21}\) On some churches this third space is not part of the interior but the roofed portico that surrounds the building.

\(^{22}\) The liturgy is conducted in Ga’az with the sermon given in the local vernacular.


\(^{24}\) Esler 2019, pp. 52–53; Phillipson 2009, p. 22.
settle controversies of theological doctrine. Notably, Zăr’a Ya’eqob was particularly uncompromising on matters related to the veneration of Mary. He insisted that Abyssinians wear amulets inscribed with declarations that proclaimed, “I belong to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost,” or “I am the servant of Mary, the mother of the Creator of the World,” introduced thirty-three Marian feasts, required the readings from Täʾammarä Maryam (The Miracles of Mary) not only on her feast days but as part of the liturgy, and promoted the display of visual images. His influence on religious practice in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been long lasting with many elements still easily recognizable in the EOTC today.

One that we might single out amongst the thirty-three mandatory commemorations of Mary introduced by Zăr’a Ya’eqob, is the celebration of Our Lady Mary as Intercessor — when Mary prevails upon Jesus, her Beloved Son, to forgive the sins of those who call her name. Because Jesus is perceived as being spiritually too distant, believers do not pray directly to him, and instead do so through an intercessor, a mediator such as Mary, a saint or priest. As a priest in Addis Abāba explained, “Jesus is the one who is begged by mediators, but he is not a mediator himself. How can God mediate with God?” All the requirements put in place by Zăr’a Ya’eqob “created an immediate and urgent need for images of Mary.” Today Our Lady Mary with Her Beloved Son is the most prominent of the many religious images found in Ethiopia (fig. 5.9).

Visual Representation

Painting of religious figures and biblical narratives is a distinctive element of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and represents another of the Church’s cultural adaptations. Often characterized as one of the most distinguishing features of Ethiopian Orthodoxy, this visual imagery includes illuminations in manuscripts, icons, and wall paintings. The oldest extant examples of church paintings are illuminations of the Gospel writers. Dated to the fifth to seventh centuries, they reside in the Abba Gārîma Monastery that has also given its name to these two Gospels (fig. 5.10). With these exceptions, most of the earliest imagery, which is in

25 A major controversy he personally engaged in settling was whether the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest and religious celebration was Saturday or Sunday. He held a council that decreed the Eucharist (communion) could be celebrated on either or both days. For a brief description of this issue, see Esler 2019, p. 60.
manuscripts and on the walls of a few of the rock-hewn churches in the north of the county, dates from the twelfth century. The earliest icons are from the fifteenth century. The production of these wood panel paintings dramatically increased in the fifteenth century when Zär’a Ya’eqob elevated Mary to a central position of ritual devotion, and decreed that every church display a painting of Mary, and that the population should prostrate themselves in front of paintings of her (fig. 5.11).31

Unlike manuscript illuminations and icons that are generally not widely accessible to believers, the walls of churches have proven particularly well suited for paintings and are visible to all who enter.32

This is especially the case with churches that have a freestanding mäqdäs, the Holy of Holies. The images of holy figures and biblical narratives on these outer walls present a means for communicating with the divine and a clear and concise visualization of religious doctrine.

Because there is little remaining evidence of painting before the twelfth century, understanding how the subject matter of the paintings may have changed or been influenced by regional differences is complicated, but the dominant program was and remains that of paintings illustrating the life of Christ, the Salvation Cycle (annunciation, nativity, crucifixion, and resurrection) (fig. 5.12). Above this wall. A discussion of stylistic and iconographic conventions is beyond the scope of this short essay. For more on these conventions and twentieth and twenty-first-century painting practices, see Silverman and Sobania 2022.

31 For more on Ethiopia’s devotion to Mary and the role played by Zär’a Ya’eqob in its expansion, see Heldman 1994, pp. 165–68; and Heldman 1984, pp. 131–42.
32 Some paintings were done directly on a wall but the vast majority were and are painted on canvas and then pasted to a
are depictions of the Trinity (three identical white-bearded elderly men each holding an orb in the left hand that represents the world, with a raised finger of the right hand that indicates their unity) flanked by the Heavenly Elders. The story of Adam and Eve is often depicted below this (fig. 5.13). In the eighteenth century the Passion Cycle was added. In the nineteenth a further expansion of Saint Mary with Her Beloved Son took place when she began to be painted on one side of the maqdās entrance opposite Saint George Slaying the Dragon on the other, a layout also found in manuscript illuminations (fig. 5.12 and fig. 5.14). Again, this is about her role as an intercessor. As protectors of the faith and the faithful, Mary should have her portrait painted with that of Saint George “so that it may be a port of salvation for those who pray in his name.”

The wall on which these paintings are found is the west wall of the maqdās, the Holy of Holies. Liturgically, this is the most significant. All churches will strive to fill this wall with paintings. If the church has a freestanding maqdās all four walls of the structure can hold paintings (see above) for which there is a generally prescribed program. On the south wall, facing the side of the church reserved for women, the painting program depicts the Miracles of Mary and an expanded narrative of her life. The north wall with depictions of martyred saints, many of whom are equestrian saints, is on the side of the church reserved for men. The east wall includes paintings that illustrate miracles of Jesus and events from the Old Testament. Frequently these paintings are embellished with features that demonstrate traditions that link events to Ethiopia. In Mary’s life, for example, the Flight into Egypt often includes a scene “Hiding from Herod’s soldier during the flight to Egypt,” which is said to have occurred in Ethiopia, and the Holy Family typically includes a fourth person, Salome, a cousin of Mary, who accompanied the family on their journey to help look after the baby Jesus. Again, this description is of an ideal program of paintings; variations of what paintings are included and where they are placed can vary.

Along with Mary, Ethiopian Christian traditions also include the veneration of a number of other saints (qǝddusan) — angels, apostles, martyrs, and righteous ones — revered for their spiritual values. The veneration of many of these saints may date to Ethiopia’s adoption of Christianity, their

35 Interview, Abba Ewostateos Gebrekristos, April 22, 2017.
36 Heldman in Grierson 1993, p. 185, citing Budge 1928, p. 4:1224. Saint George sits astride a beautifully caparisoned white horse after having thrust his spear, the top of which is depicted in the shape of a cross, into the dragon.

37 For a good introduction, see Berzock 2002.
38 This is not the infamous Salome, who danced before Herod, leading to the beheading of John the Baptist. Tradition records that this Salome was Mary Salome, the daughter of Saint Mary’s sister, who was like a second mother and present at Jesus’s birth and throughout his life. See Mark 15:40 and 16:1.
Figure 5.13. Painting of the Trinity, the Heavenly Elders, and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden by Yemeta Hailemaryam in Old Maryam Church, Aksum, Ethiopia. Photo: Neal Sobania and Raymond Silverman (2015).

Figure 5.14. Manuscript illumination of Saint George Slaying the Dragon tipped into a Miracles of Mary manuscript, Aksum, Ethiopia. Photo: Neal Sobania and Raymond Silverman (2001).
hagiographies having been translated from Greek to Ga’az; others to later translations from Arabic to Ga’az. The saints and martyrs of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are recorded in the Synaxarium (Synaxarion). In another demonstration of adaptation, some of these saints are of Ethiopian origin and others are not, yet images of both sorts appear on wall paintings, icons and in manuscript illuminations. In addition to Saint George who is said to be from Cappadocia, there are the Nine Saints who introduced monasticism, played a significant role in the translation of the Bible, and are credited with performing many miracles. One of the nine, Abunä Arägawi, is often singled out as being the most famous. As the founder of the mountaintop monastery of Däbrä Damo, he is said to have ascended the sheer cliff face hanging on to the tail of a large snake. Other well-known saints include Abba Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus. Born in Egypt, he is depicted in a long cloak of bird feathers standing among wild animals. Some indigenous saints have greater regional popularity, but the thirteenth-century Abunä Täklä Haymanot, who travelled widely evangelizing non-believers, many of whom became his devoted followers, has been called “the great national saint.” Near the end of his life (he lived to be ninety-nine) he is said to have become a recluse and after praying for so long while standing on one foot, his other foot withered and fell off. He is commonly pictured standing in prayer with his withered foot off to the side (see lower left, fig. 5.12). Another indigenous saint is Saint Yared, the father of Ethiopian church music who in the sixth century is said to have created the three distinctive types of musical chant still used in Ethiopian Orthodox worship services; three birds represent these in paintings of him (fig. 5.15).

Whether saints have their own hagiographies or only short biographies in the Synaxarium, these as well as other ecclesiastical writings are written in Ga’az. Whether their feast day is celebrated locally or nationally, monthly or annually, it is a day the church sets aside to celebrate a saint or a significant theological event. Whether a saint’s image is incised on a cross, or painted as an illumination in a manuscript, on an icon, or is painted on a wall in a church, it is done in a characteristically Ethiopian way — figures and objects are outlined, eyes are large and wide, fingers are often elongated, with no sense of three dimensionality. These and other distinctive cultural characteristics give the Christianity practiced by the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥado Church a uniquely Ethiopian identity.

38 The Synaxarium in Ga’az, a late fourteenth-century collection of Christian saints, is likely a translation from Arabic with Ethiopian additions.
Conclusion

Orthodox Christianity is at the heart of Ethiopia’s history.\textsuperscript{41} For more than 1600 years, from the adoption of Christianity in the fourth century, the Church flourished alongside monarchs who ruled the highland regions. As these rulers expanded their kingdoms to the south, west, and east, so Christianity spread until, by the end of the nineteenth century, the country took on the geographic shape it has today. This close relationship between church and state came to a dramatic end in 1974 with the overthrow of Emperor Ḫaylā Sollase I, the last ruler of the Solomonic line. The Military Coordinating Committee or Därg, with its Marxist-Leninist ideology that came to power in the aftermath, was truly revolutionary. The feudal-like nobility who had governed in the provinces and nationally, and the aristocrats who owned enormous estates, were jailed and stripped of their holdings. The impact on the church was equally profound. Whereas the monarchy had safeguarded the privileged status of the EOTC as a state religion, the Därg promoted freedom of religion, and gave voice to Protestants (the largest denomination being the Ethiopian Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church), Pentecostal churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Muslim communities. The new dynamics created by the separation of church and state was most profound when in 1975 the Därg initiated a national land reform. The Church, which reportedly owned 5% of all land, but most importantly 20% of the cultivable land, lost a significant portion of its economic base.\textsuperscript{42}

After sixteen years of the Därg’s disastrous rule, the EOTC again found itself having to adjust to a changing political environment. In 1991, a group of ethnically based liberation movements militarily defeated the Därg. Generally referred to as the EPRDF (The Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front), this new government came to power promoting policies based on ethnicity and regionalism. This included the reconfiguration of long-standing administrative provinces into ethno-linguistically-based regional states. The political upheavals this engendered were also reflected in the EOTC when this new government unceremoniously removed the Patriarch of the church and replaced him with a new one from a different ethnic group. This led to a split in the Church with the diaspora community in North America breaking away and forming its own synod.\textsuperscript{43} Though reconciliation after twenty-seven years led to their reunification in 2018, the hardening of regional and ethnic divisions continues within Ethiopia. Often fraught with tension and too often with violence, it is hard to imagine how Ethiopia will overcome the persistent effects of ethnicity. Yet, if the EOTC can surmount its internal differences and retain its remarkable uniqueness, there is hope that this can find application in the political situation.

\textsuperscript{41} This is in large part because the rulers of what was once called Abyssinia, the lands encompassing the central and northern highlands of the region, have written the country’s history. As the African proverb says, “until the lions learn to write, hunters will tell their history for them.”

\textsuperscript{42} For more on the Därg’s impact on religion in Ethiopia, see Haustein 2009.

\textsuperscript{43} The Diaspora community is large with estimates from 70 to as high as 100 million. Most are recent creations and scattered globally — stretching from the Caribbean and North America, to Africa and Europe, and to New Zealand and Australia.
Variations on a Theme: Hand and Processional Crosses

Lynn Jones

Of the thirty-six Ethiopian objects in the Blick-Harris Study Collection (BHSC) in the Department of Art History at Kenyon College, eleven are hand and processional crosses (cats. 1–11). It seems reasonable to suggest that David P. Harris saw Ethiopian religious art as an extension of his connection to, and collection of, Greek Orthodoxy and Greek and Russian religious art. Harris converted to Greek Orthodoxy as an adult, and I suggest that this is one of the motivating factors for his interest in, and acquisition of, Ethiopian religious art — that it too is Orthodox. As a convert he would be aware of the theological similarities and differences between the Greek and Ethiopian churches, and also of the pivotal historical role played by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.¹

The bequest contains sales receipts for all but one of these crosses (cat. 11), and so allows us to piece together when and where they were purchased. Harris purchased his first hand cross in 1975 (cat. 1); his last was purchased in 1989 (cat. 10). All were bought in the United States, first in the Northeast, likely reflecting his residence in Washington, DC, and then later purchases were made in California, specifically in and around San Francisco. We have no indication that he sold any of his Ethiopian purchases before his death; they seem to have been acquired, cataloged, and kept, for his pleasure. As is discussed in the essay by Brad Hostetler, we have little information as to how these objects were acquired by the sellers.²

In this essay I ask two questions of these hand and processional crosses. First, what is recognizably Ethiopian about them — what makes an Ethiopian cross recognizable as such when it is purchased outside of Ethiopia? My second question focuses more specifically on Harris — what can these objects tell us about him as a collector? In what follows, I take what Harris wrote in his catalog entries to be accurate reflections of the ways in which he saw the works he purchased. As with the other object-based essays in this volume, my conclusions are often limited due to the lack of information. There are many questions that I can raise but not answer, and it is my hope that the publication of these objects spurs more research.

I begin with a brief overview of the role of the Cross in Ethiopian culture. The key word here is “culture,” as the cross is ubiquitous in Ethiopia today.³ Ethiopian textiles are decorated with crosses of all shapes and sizes; liturgical vestments are embroidered with crosses.⁴ Crosses are featured in contemporary wall paintings, icons, and religious texts.⁵ Cross tattoos provide visual statements of faith and also function to protect the faithful (fig. 6.1). Cross pendants are worn by children and adults, strung around the neck or wrists; they too are found in a wide array of forms, sizes and materials.⁶

There is ample evidence of a sustained history of this ubiquity. The cross appears on the reverse of a mid-to-late fourth-century silver coin, and this representation on coinage continues into the later

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¹ For more on this topic, see Neal Sobania’s essay (ch. 5).
² See the essay by Brad Hostetler (ch. 2).
³ Mann 2001, p. 75.
⁵ See the collection catalog, Sobania et al 2018.
⁶ See the essay by Sarah Mathiesen (ch. 7).
medieval period. Perhaps the most famous medieval example is the rock-cut church of Betä Giyorgis, in Lalibäla, dated to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which was carved in the shape of an equal-armed cross. Perforated windows in this and other churches in the complex are carved in the shapes of a variety of crosses. Wall paintings and manuscripts also feature crosses, both as decorative patterns and as representations of objects, including hand crosses (fig. 6.2). There are liturgical crosses in Ethiopian museums dated to the twelfth century; these iconographical types have been replicated over centuries.10

Wooden hand crosses are created by clerics and skilled artisans for liturgical and personal use, and for the tourist market; an example is that purchased by Harris at the United Nations Gift Center (cat. 7; fig. 6.3).11 They are carved from a single piece of wood, and their iconography reflects both tradition and innovation. This is evident in Harris’s collection, in which no wooden hand cross is identical to another.12 In their religious context, these crosses function in motion, between two people. The one who is blessing raises the cross and then extends it to the one being blessed. This physical extension of a cross between two people sets up a relational interplay in which both parties take part in, and benefit from, the blessing and the cross’s protective functions.

Metal hand crosses serve the same purpose as their wooden counterparts — they too function in motion. They were traditionally made by the lost wax method and by cutting and punching decorations in a sheet of metal. The double-mold method has become more popular, as it allows for the copying of metal crosses made by any of the other methods.13 The final step is the addition of incised embellishments, both figural and aniconic. As with their wooden counterparts, the metal hand crosses display both continuity of form and variation in size, shape, and iconography. Two of the metal crosses collected by Harris are similar in shape, and they are also the simplest, in terms of design, with minimal punching, cutting, or incising.

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7 Munro-Hay 1993. See also Sobania’s essay (ch. 5).
8 Heldman 1995.
9 For the windows at Betä Maryam and at the complex of Betä Dabrä Sina, Betä Golgota, and Śällase, see Di Salvo 2006, p. 32, figs. 19, 20, 21.
10 See Hecht et al 1990, p. 6 for the dating of the oldest known cross, without further citation; p. 8 for a discussion of the dates assigned to the development of different cross forms; and p. 18 for the problems of dating created by continuity and repetition of form.
11 See Sonia Dixon’s essay (ch. 8) for a discussion of market economy and authenticity of these objects. For the pamphlet describing the types of objects solicited by the United Nations Gift Center (BHSC, 2021.26), see the essay by Hostetler (ch. 2).
13 Hecht et al 1990, pp. 8–9. This may be the manner in which cats. 3 and 9 were produced. They are similar in form, but different enough to suggest that the form was popular for iron hand crosses, and so that molds were created in different sizes, with slightly different components.

Figure 6.3. Hand cross (cat. 7). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 6.4. Hand cross (cat. 3). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Figure 6.5. Processional cross (cat. 4). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 6.6. Processional cross (cat. 2), detail of the front. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 6.7. Processional cross (cat. 2), detail of the back. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
of the metal (cats. 3, 9; fig. 6.4). Processional crosses are identified by their shafts, which are cone-shaped and open in order to accommodate a rod; there are two in Harris’s collection (cats. 2, 4; fig. 6.5). They vary in size, and in the type of metal(s) used. All have a support, or holes, just below the upper cross and on either side at the top of the shaft, in which cloth symbolizing the sudarium of Christ can be draped. These crosses are used in the liturgy, and so they too are viewed in motion.

I do not identify a front or back, obverse or reverse for ten of Harris’s eleven crosses in the catalog entries. I instead use “side 1” and “side 2,” chosen at random, for discussions of iconography and for reference to photographs. If, however, we define “front” and “back” according to the religious hierarchy seen on the one cross with figural decoration that differs on the two sides (cat. 2), we can then use “front” for the side that features the Virgin and Child, and “back” for the side that features an image of an angel (figs. 6.6, 6.7). There are other crosses that feature figural imagery that is similar on both sides. The brass hand cross (cat. 6) features small faces in the arms of the central cross, and figures on the base that represent an angel on one side and possibly a saint on the other (figs. 6.8, 6.9). A second metal hand cross (cat. 10) features depictions of angels directly below the cross on both sides, and on both sides of the base. The figures of birds, created by the form of the metal and inscribed “eyes” are traditional religious symbols, and are found on one processional cross (cat. 4; fig. 6.5).14

Hand crosses consist of three parts: the cross, the handle, and the base. As described by Dorothea Hecht, Brigitta Benzing, and Girma Kidane, there is a symbolic meaning to each part, no matter the medium, form, or iconography.15 We begin with the lowermost part, the base. It is most frequently square or rectangular, and can be representative of Adam’s tomb or of the tabot — the Tablets of the Law.16 The handles of all crosses collected by Harris are either undecorated, feature incised geometric patterns, or were carved or cast with differing

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14 See Hecht et al 1990, pp. 15–16 for bibliography on the interpretation of form.
15 See the illustration and discussion in Hecht et al 1990, pp. 15–17.
16 The bases of cats. 6 and 10 also feature protruding elements on the sides, which can be termed finials. Both are metal; no such embellishment is found on the wooden crosses in Harris’s collection. See also Sobania’s essay (ch. 5).
components, and are of differing sizes.\textsuperscript{17} The upper part, the cross, is the largest element, and is symbolic of redemption. Several crosses feature “ram’s horns,” a curling volute, which have many interpretations, including Christ as the Lamb of God.\textsuperscript{18}

All crosses, created for any Christian confession, are recognizable as crosses — their function depends upon their recognizability. Broadly speaking, crosses feature a single vertical bar with horizontal bars of varying length and number. Most crosses are similar, if not the same, in form during a particular time and place for a particular Christian confession. Ethiopian crosses also display consistency, but this consistency co-exists with variability of form. Some types of crosses, made in a particular way, in a particular form, with particular formal elements, have been produced since the medieval period.\textsuperscript{19} New types then developed from these older forms, and other new types were introduced, persisted, and then were further developed into new — or newer — types.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, while the majority of Ethiopian crosses have arms equal in length, this core standard is accompanied by a kaleidoscope of variants.

Mario Di Salvo maps out a system for classifying the morphology of Ethiopian crosses.\textsuperscript{21} For the uppermost part alone — the cross — he identifies three main divisions based on form: type, subtype, and group. These are then further subdivided: types A–D are based on arm length, subtypes 1–5 on arm form, and groups I–IV on the shape of the enclosing profile. Each type, sub-type and group are therefore representative of only the basic cross forms. Each type, for example, can be composed of different sub-

\textsuperscript{17} Handles can be anthropomorphic, carved or cast as a figure. An example is found on a wooden hand cross in the collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, no. 4518; see Hecht et al 1990, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{18} For the interpretation of “ram’s horns,” see Hecht et al 1990, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{19} Hecht et al 1990; and Di Salvo 2006.

\textsuperscript{20} See Hecht et al 1990, pp. 2–6 for a discussion of the origins of the differing cross forms in Ethiopia.

\textsuperscript{21} Di Salvo 2006. See also Evangelatou 2018.
types and of formal elements associated with different groups, resulting in a potential 150 different possible forms for each cross in one type. Di Salvo presents similar classifications for the handles and bases, further expanding possible forms. Add the finials, which are found on some crosses and and/or on the bases, and the number of variations further expands. According to Di Salvo’s classifications, it is possible to have any combination of approximately 600 formal elements in a single hand or processional cross.

Harris’s hand and processional crosses exhibit this variety. Only one takes the form of two intersecting bars and only this one is uncircumscribed (cat. 5). The other ten are contained, with profiles that are (roughly) that of a square, lozenge, or circle. Further distinctions can be made. Four have figural decorations (cats. 2, 4, 6, 10); one has similar decorations on both sides (cat. 4) while seven do not (cats. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11); seven are perforated or formed with openwork (cats. 1, 2, 4, 6, 10, 11), while four are solid (cats. 3, 5, 7, 8, 9). All have finials, but all finials differ in placement, form, and decoration.

The cross, or crosses, at the core of these Ethiopian hand and processional crosses are created and connected by trellises and interfaces (fig. 6.10) or are present as distinct cross forms, but are contained within the decoration (fig. 6.11). In contrast, non-Ethiopian crosses in Harris’s collection are characterized by iconography and embellishments that are placed on the cross. I offer as comparanda three Greek and one Slavic example from his collection. In the Ethiopian crosses, the cross is most frequently one formal element in the midst of, and/or created by, other formal elements. In the Greek and Slavic crosses, the decoration is placed on the cross, or, in the case of the Greek standing cross, forms a framing device in which the cross remains the dominant element. This cross is given further visual emphasis by the coral beads, which are placed in such a way as to outline, and emphasize, the form of the cross (fig. 6.12, second from left).  

This, then, provides an answer for my question on the recognizability of Ethiopian hand and processional crosses: they are identifiable as Ethiopian because the cross is most frequently created by, and/or surrounded by, the fundamental decorative elements, to the extent that it can be difficult to visually locate. They function in motion, and their form and embellishments are designed to be seen in this context. For this catalog, we have endeavored to photograph them in ways that allow for the best recreation of their original visual context.

A secondary characteristic of Ethiopian crosses is the repetition of crosses on a single object. The large processional cross, for example, features numerous crosses. The central cross is flanked by multiple crosses of differing sizes (fig. 6.5).

Of the eleven hand and processional crosses in Harris’s collection, two are identified on the sales receipts as being Ethiopian (cats. 2, 3); one “Coptic Cross Ethiopia” (cat. 10); three as “Coptic” (cats. 1, 4, 8); three as “Cross” (cats. 9, 5, 6); one is unidentified (cat. 7). Harris recognized all of these crosses as being Ethiopian—demonstrated by his type-written emendation on the receipt for two crosses (cats. 5, 6). These were each identified by the seller as “cross,” but were corrected by him to “Ethiopian.” The documentation of Harris’s cataloged Ethiopian crosses—hand, processional, and pendant—are grouped together in one subcollection, labeled “Ethiopian Crosses.”

It is instructive to re-create the timeline of his purchases. Harris purchased his first hand cross on December 13, 1975, from Nuevo Mundo in Alexandria, Virginia (cat. 1). At this time in his life, Harris was living in Washington, DC and teaching at Georgetown University. His second cross, a small processional cross (cat. 2), was also purchased from Nuevo Mundo, two months later. While his first purchase was limited to only one cross, his second was for five objects: a cross identified on the sales receipt as a “head of scepter” (cat. 2), a “slate book”

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22 For Harris’s identification of the Slavic cross, see the essay by Hostetler (ch. 2); in figure 6.12 it is the first cross, on the left.

23 Cat. 11 has no receipt.

24 See the essay by Hostetler (ch. 2).

Figure 6.13. Comparison of the Mother and Child on a processional cross (cat. 2) and the stone diptych (cat. 30). Photos: Birhanu T. Gessese.
(cat. 30), an “antique scroll” (either cat. 34 or 35), a “seal,” and a “doll bead.”

The figural decoration of two objects in this group, the cross and the “slate book,” feature the same style of exceptionally large eyes and wide, prominent noses; this style is not present in any other Ethiopian objects in Harris’s collection (fig. 6.13). This raises many questions: did Nuevo Mundo have a connection with an Ethiopian workshop? Did they buy pieces from immigrants, who came to Washington, DC from an area in Ethiopia where this style was common?

Harris collected Ethiopian art from 1975 until 1991, but the majority of the collection was acquired from 1975 to 1979. While he purchased pendant crosses in London, all hand and processional crosses were bought in the United States. Between 1975 and 1977 he patronized shops and galleries of all types in Virginia, Washington, DC, and New York City. In 1977, he made a single purchase in San Francisco. His last purchase of a hand or processional cross was from the New Davenport Cash Store, Pottery Gallery & Restaurant in California, and was made in 1989 (cat. 10), twelve years after his previous purchase of any type of Ethiopian hand or processional cross. This “last” cross is an exceptional work, and, at $115.00, is the most he paid for any of the ten crosses for which we have receipts. That said, it seems to be a purchase of opportunity — he bought it because it was there, and because he recognized it as being Ethiopian.

In conclusion, what can these crosses tell us about Harris as a collector? As other authors in this volume have noted, the paucity of information makes it difficult to reconstruct or assign specific meanings to his purchases of individual objects. Harris’s personal catalog confirms that Harris viewed all Ethiopian crosses — hand, processional, pendant — as linked. Why did he buy eleven Ethiopian hand and processional crosses, and why did he buy examples that differ from each other? Their variety reflects that which characterizes Ethiopian cross morphology, and his collection suggests that he valued the differences that characterize this artistic tradition.

I suggest too that these purchases reflect the way he viewed the art of the Orthodox traditions in many countries, from Russia to Ethiopia. Harris’s collection of Greek and Russian icons, so identified in his own catalog, suggests that he viewed Orthodox art through a specific cultural lens, and that he connected Greek and Russian Orthodoxies with icons. Presumably, he could have purchased many different types of Ethiopian religious objects. Why crosses? His Ethiopian collection contains two icons (cats. 29, 30) — but, as we have seen, the majority of objects are crosses of all forms and types. As discussed by several authors in this volume, the Cross is ubiquitous in Ethiopian culture. For Harris, I suggest, the Cross was emblematic of Ethiopian Orthodoxy, and he therefore targeted his purchases of Ethiopian art to reflect this — he bought crosses.

In the catalog entries that follow, I aim only for description, hoping that this publication, and the related documents and photographs that are available on the BHSC website, lead to further research.

For the identification of the objects listed on this receipt, see the essay by Hostetler (ch. 2). We identify the “slate book” as the stone icon (cat. 30) discussed in Dixon’s essay (ch. 8). The “doll bead” was not part of the bequest to Kenyon College. The seal’s accession number is BHSC, 2020.230.

He could have bought what was available — we cannot know.

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/

The purchase date of cat. 11 is unknown. I have placed it at the end of the catalog of hand and processional crosses.
1. Hand Cross

Wood, possibly olive, acacia, or ebony
11 1/4 × 4 11/16 × 7/16 in. (28.5 × 11.8 × 1.1 cm)
2.33 oz. (66.2 g)

CONDITION: Darkening of the wood, especially on the handle.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from Maria Teresa O'Leary (Nuevo Mundo) in Alexandria, Virginia on December 13, 1975. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.29).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/645/

This wooden hand cross consists of a circumscribed lozenge, above two lateral projections, and a shaft that ends with a rectangular lower base and diamond-shaped finial. The wood is tan in color and is lightweight, with discoloration on the shaft.

The two sides of the cross are similar in design. A twisted line motif begins on the cross and repeats on the shaft. The cross encloses a cruciform design made of curved and looping lines. The negative space around the cross allows light to pass through. A small cross is inscribed on the lower finial.

The two sides differ in small details. On side 1 (cats. 1A, 1C), the lateral projections below the cross are inscribed with a four-leaf motif, while on side 2 (cat. 1D) this motif is missing. The twisted-line motif of the shaft continues to the base of side 1, looping at the corners to create leaf-like shapes, framing a central cross. On side 2, the base features a grid-like pattern of squares, some of which contain a four-leafed cruciform motif.

The pierced, lozenge-shaped cross is comparable to that of other hand and processional crosses in this catalog (cats. 4, 6, 10, 11). In each case, the piercings allow for the central cross to become illuminated by the negative space that defines it (cat. 1B).

MGD
Cat. 1C. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 1D. Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
2. Processional Cross

Metal alloy
6 7/8 × 3 1/3 × 7/16 in. (17.5 × 8.9 × 1.4 cm)
3.62 oz. (102.7 g)

CONDITION: Minor scratch marks on cross head. The conical shaft is slightly dented along the long vertical seam.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/660/

The small processional cross is made of three sections that appear to have been cast in one piece: the cross, an oval panel with two circular holes, and a conical shaft. The cross takes the general form of a large square with rounded corners, and three cruciform protrusions along the left, right, and upper edges. The perimeter of the square is articulated with additional details. The four rounded corners feature smaller crosses that are similar in form as the finials. Each of these is made of four arms of equal length, rounded and notched at the ends and converging to a single point at the crossing. Each arm of these crosses is also decorated with an incised circle.

The oval panel is pierced with two holes and is notched around the perimeter. The conical shaft is marked with parallel rings at the upper, middle, and lower ends. It appears that this shaft was initially cast flat, and then later rolled to create the conical shape. The faint seam is still visible where the two ends were welded and hammered together, a detail that is most evident in the interior of the cone. This shaft would allow the cross to be mounted on a pole and processed in liturgy.

The cross is incised with figural and non-figural decorative elements on both sides. The front features, at the center, the Virgin and Child (cats. 2A, 2B). Mary, to the left, is nimbed, and is shown with short hair, indicated by striations, large circular eyes with pupils, and a broad nose. She holds her son to her left side, wrapping him in her cloak. Her right hand grasps the hem of her garment that covers him. Christ is shown with short cropped hair, indicated by a hairline, wide eyes, and a broad nose. To the left and right are images of angelic figures, represented with schematic heads, bodies, and a single wing each. The upper frame features three haloed faces, each of which consist of a brow ridge, two dots for eyes, a rectangular nose, and vertical striations to indicate a beard.

The back of the cross features an angel at the center of a dotted background pattern (cat. 2C). Its face is similar to that of Mary: wide open eyes with pupils, a broad nose, and a small semi-circular shape to indicate a mouth. The halo is marked by striations. Wings emerge on either side of the halo, and are marked by three layers of lines to indicate...
Cat. 2B. Processional cross, front. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 2C. Processional cross, back. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
feathers. The angel has a squat body that is also schematically represented. Emphasis is placed on its large-scale hands, and on the triangular-shaped sword that it carries in its left hand. The left and right margins also feature haloed figures of the same style.

The style of these figures, with their wide and accentuated eyes, broad noses, and large hands, is similar to that found on the stone diptych (cat. 30), and is in sharp contrast to the more Italianate style found on the painted icon (cat. 29). This similarity in style suggests a shared artistic tradition for these two objects, if not a shared workshop.

LJ

1. These holes would allow cloth to be threaded through, meant to represent the sudarium of Christ. See also cat. 4.

3. Hand Cross

Metal alloy
7 3/4 x 3 3/8 x 5/16 in. (19.6 x 8.5 x 0.7 cm)
0.40 oz. (6.5 g)

CONDITION: Vertical cut running along the length of the shaft on side 2.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from the Endicott-Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on March 5, 1976. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.28).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/639/

This small hand cross, cast in one piece, consists of a cross, a shaft, and rectangular base. The cross has four arms of approximately equal length, and four small triangular-shaped protrusions at the crossing. Each arm flares into a pair of volutes, each pair taking a form that closely resembles a prayer stick. The cross is incised with five circles at and around the crossing, and a circle on each of the volutes. A beaded line outlines the outer contours of each arm. The small cruciform finials are defined by rounded arms articulated by shallow notches and five circles inscribed onto the surface.

The rectangular base is incised with a beaded and solid-line border. At the center is a design that consists of a rectangle inscribed with an X and four circles at the corners. The upper and lower edges of the base feature crosses that resemble those used for the finials on the cross.

LJ
Cat. 3B. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 3C. Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
4. Processional Cross

Brass with copper rivets
13 7/8 x 8 7/8 x 1 5/16 in. (34.5 x 21.1 x 3.4 cm)
24.34 oz. (690.0 g)

CONDITION: The lower rivet connecting the cross to the shaft is slightly loose. The metal around the upper rivet on side 2 is partially lost. The shaft has been repaired multiple times; cracks and holes have been filled with a metal alloy of a different color.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from Maria Teresa O’Leary (Nuevo Mundo) in Alexandria, Virginia on October 11, 1976. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.27).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/640/

This processional cross is composed of four different brass pieces soldered or riveted together and fastened by copper pins: the large lozenge-shaped cross, two rectangular “handles” directly beneath it, and the shaft.

The lozenge-shaped cross features the same decoration on both sides. At the center is a cross with its arms and crossing articulated by a beaded outline. This cross is also marked by two intersecting hatched lines that suggest the depiction of rope that binds the vertical and horizontal arms together. The four ends of the cross are adorned with cross-shaped finials incised with lines and dots that form additional cross patterns. This central cross is encircled by a complex lattice-work of abstract bird forms that are organized in groups of three, and punctuated at the left, right, and upper points by a motif consisting of two birds flanking a cross.

The cone-shaped shaft is hollow, allowing for it to be placed on a pole and processed in the liturgy.

1. The left arm of the cross, on side 2, features a small engraved mark.
2. For a similar cross with this suggested depiction of a rope, see Dallas Museum of Art, 1991.352.161, https://collections.dma.org/artwork/3324642
3. These holes would allow cloth to be threaded through, meant to represent the sudarium of Christ. See also cat. 2.
Cat. 4C. Processional cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 4D. Processional cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 4E. Processional cross, detail of side 1 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 5A. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 5B. Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
5. Hand Cross

Metal alloy
9 3/4 x 4 1/16 x 3/8 in. (24.8 x 10.2 x 1.0 cm)
5.30 oz. (150.1 g)

CONDITION: Surface exhibits pitting throughout.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/643/

This hand cross, cast in one piece, consists of a flat cross, a rounded shaft, and a flat rectangular base. The cross has arms of approximately equal length and size. Each arm flares outward; the left, right, and upper arms are adorned with finial disks. A similar finial design is attached to the lower edge of the base.

6. Hand Cross

Brass
15 1/16 x 7 x 3/8 in. (38.2 x 17.8 x 1.0 cm)
25.54 oz. (723.9 g)

CONDITION: There are small spots of red paint on the cross, on side 1, and areas of green surface corrosion on side 2.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/642/

This heavy hand cross consists of a lozenge-shaped cross, a shaft with piercings at both ends, and a rectangular base with a cross-shaped finial at the lower end. The cross was cast in three distinct pieces — cross, shaft, and base — and affixed together; the unpolished surfaces from the casting process are visible along the interior edges.
Cat. 6B. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 6C. Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 6D. Hand cross, detail of side 2 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesese.
The cross features, at the center, a cross with arms of equal length. Each arm is triangular, inscribed with an abstract face, and adorned with a knotted finial. These finials are articulated with smaller lobes on the contours. While the outline of the cross is that of a lozenge, the numerous cut-outs allow for light to pass through the negative spaces, and bring greater definition of, and emphasis to, the central cross shape (cat. 6D).

The shaft is marked by a cross-hatching pattern, and the base is inscribed with figures on both sides. On side 1 (cats. 6A, 6B), the winged figure is decorated with crosses on its body; dots and straight lines comprise its wings. The concentric circles surrounding the head suggest a halo. The figure on side 2 (cat. 6C), features two palm branches, rather than the wings featured on the opposite side of the base. Below the base a cross-shaped finial consists of four triangular-shaped arms of equal length, with the left, right, and lower arms each additionally adorned with a three-lobed finial.

The multi-part construction of this cross is similar to others in this catalog (cats. 4, 10), and is comparable to a hand cross at the Dallas Museum of Art.1 These objects speak to the artistic processes involved in casting the individual pieces and affixing them together by welding, soldering, or the use of rivets.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/655/

This hand cross consists of a lozenge-shaped circumscribed cross. The lower end of the shaft terminates in a rectangular base with a cross-shaped finial. This hand cross is not straight; the plane of the lozenge tilts and twists toward the side with the broken corner, preventing the cross from lying flat.

The cross on side 1 (cats. 7A, 7B), features a narrow border consisting of a beaded line between two plain lines. The wider border on side 2 (cat. 7C) includes a beaded line enclosed by cross-hatches, resembling a basket-weave pattern. The differing border widths on each side result in different sizes of the central cross design. Multiple perpendicular and diagonal lines intersect to create several smaller crosses within the larger cruciform design.

7. Hand Cross

Wood, possibly olive, acacia, or ebony
16 × 4 1/2 × 3/4 in. (40.6 × 11.5 × 1.9 cm)
5.33 oz. (151.2 g)

CONDITION: One corner of the cross is missing; the edges are smooth.


MGD
Cat. 7B. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesese.
Cat. 7C. Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
8. Hand Cross

Metal alloy
6 1/16 × 2 3/16 × 1/8 in. (15.4 × 5.8 × 0.3 cm)
2.67 oz. (75.7 g)

CONDITION: Surface exhibits pitting throughout.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from the Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on August 15, 1977. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.43).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/659/

This hand cross was cast in one piece. The form of the cross consists of four triangular-shaped arms of equal length and size converging at a single, central point, which itself has four small pointed protrusions. Each arm features a cruciform finial with elongated and rounded lateral arms articulated by small notches. Variations on these finial-cross forms are found at both ends of the shaft. The base includes a two-bulbed finial attached to the lower edge.

Small decorative elements are visible on both sides, including horizontal bands and X-shaped incisions on the shaft, incised circles on the base, and small accent dots on the cross, shaft, and base.

LJ
Cat. 8B. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 8C. Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
9. Hand Cross

Metal alloy  
5 1/4 x 1 15/16 x 1/4 in. (13.3 x 4.9 x 0.6 cm)  
1.60 oz. (45.4 g)

CONDITION: Surface exhibits rust concentrated in the corners and crevices.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/644/

This small hand cross, cast in one piece, is similar in shape to that of another hand cross in this collection (cat. 3). The cross consists of four arms of equal length, each flaring at the ends into two volutes. Each arm is also adorned with a three-lobed finial. The transition between the lower arm of the cross and the shaft is marked by three bulbous “cushions.” These are also present at the lower end of the shaft, connected to the base. The three-lobed finial attached to the lower edge of the base is similar in form to those on the cross head.

LJ
Cat. 9B. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 9C. Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
10. Hand Cross

Metal alloy
12 1/4 x 4 3/8 x 5/8 in. (31.1 x 11.1 x 1.6 cm)
8.42 oz. (238.7 g)

CONDITION: On both sides, the head is darker around the perimeter, and appears to have been polished at the center.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from Bruce and Marcia McDougal (New Davenport Cash Store Pottery Gallery & Restaurant) in Davenport, California on June 23, 1989. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.26).

The metal cross was constructed in three pieces that were soldered or welded together: the cross, shaft, and base. The cross, which consists of a complex knot pattern surmounting a panel incised with angel-like figures, is affixed to the upper end of the handle by two prongs. The lower square base is likewise affixed to the handle by two prongs. This square panel is adorned with two open triangles on the lateral edges and a three-lobed, open-work knot attached to the lower end.

There are minor differences in decoration of the two sides. On side 1, a cross emerges from the central knot-work through the hatching of specific “threads” (cats. 10B, 10D). These hatched threads are concentrated at the center, and extend outward to form a general cross shape. This hatching is absent on side 2 (cats. 10A, 10C).

The figures on the panel below the lozenge are each composed of the same outline — a central figure flanked by two slightly detached wings — but differ in details. On side 1, the figure appears to wear a feathered or fur mantle. Its hands emerge at waist level, and grasp, a sword in its right and a spear in its left hands. The figure’s wings are spread outward, filling the square shape of the panel. On side 2, the figure wears a striated mantle with a cross at the chest. Unlike the figure on side 1, this is without hands, sword or spear.

The surface decoration of the base of the handle also differs on the two sides. Side 1 features a small head, flanked by and what appears to be two wings. Side 2 is inscribed with a cruciform design, consisting of two perpendicular lines with small circles at each end.

The complex knotwork found on this cross is a design found on other crosses in the collection (cats. 1, 6, 11, 15, 23). These examples demonstrate the many ways in which knots were used to not only adorn, but also create, the form of the cross.

LJ
Cat. 10B. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 10C: Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 10D. Hand cross, detail of side 1 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
11. Hand Cross

Wood, possibly olive, acacia, or ebony
13 3/8 × 6 1/4 × 11/16 in. (34.0 × 15.9 × 1.8 cm)
5.85 oz. (165.9 g)

CONDITION: A hole is drilled through the upper end of the shaft.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris. Date, receipt, and supplemental documents are unavailable. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.199).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/664/

This lightweight, dark wooden hand cross consists of a lozenge-shaped cross, a smooth shaft topped by three horizontal lines, and a rectangular base with a cross-shaped finial at the lower end. The lozenge features a circumscribed equal-armed cross. The interstitial areas between the arms are pierced, allowing light to pass through the negative space. The contours of the lozenge are articulated with three-lobed finials that alternate with triangular projections. There are slight differences in the carved decoration of each side. On side 1, the crossing is marked by a small cross made of four triangles, and the arms are decorated with beaded lines (cats. 11A, 11B). On side 2, the small cross at the crossing is made of four diamond shapes, and the arms are filled with interwoven lines (cat. 11C). On both sides, the small cross at the crossing is carved with an X, possibly meant to imitate the insertions found on many metal hand and processional crosses.

The base is, on side 1, carved with small squares along the perimeter, and at the center a tilted cross inside of an inscribed square with smaller squares lining the upper and lower edges. On side 2, the base is carved with a border of jagged lines. At the center is a large, tilted cross enclosed within a border made of small squares.

MGD
Cat. 11B. Hand cross, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 11C. Hand cross, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 11D. Hand cross, detail of side 2 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Effective Objects: Ethiopian Pectorals and the Body

Sarah Mathiesen

Of the thirty-six Ethiopian objects in this catalog, seventeen are small-scale, pendant objects: sixteen yangät mäsqäl (literally “cross of the neck”), or neck crosses, and one kuk mawča, or ear spoon.1 This essay takes these seventeen objects as a point of departure to demonstrate a more inclusive grouping of objects based on a shared relationship with the body, specifically the chest, or core, of a person. Recent art historical scholarship on Ethiopian Christian material culture focuses on formal typologies of objects and tends to present internal arguments about object groups. This is particularly true in the case of scholarship on Ethiopian crosses, in which crosses are primarily put in conversation with other crosses.2 As I argue in this essay, these fundamental studies enable us to look beyond classifications based on form to more fluid categories based on shared functions and meanings. In so doing, we can find meaningful connections between formally disparate objects. I suggest that the neck crosses and the ear spoon can be grouped together with a variety of devotional material culture, including pendant icons, magic scrolls, and the askema, or monastic scapular. Together they can be described as enkolpia, a term that more accurately reflects their status as Christian devotional objects.

I begin with a brief overview of the significance of the cross in Ethiopia and of the history and meaning of yangät mäsqäl. I then provide a short state of the literature on Ethiopian crosses, focusing on yangät mäsqäl, as well as my methodology for approaching these objects. In addition to methodology, this section provides a rationale for my use of terms such as “pectoral” and “enkolpia” to describe different objects. These introductory sections lay the groundwork for three successive sections on classification, significance, and intermateriality. I close with several suggestions for future avenues of inquiry and an introduction to the catalog entries that follow.

The Cross and the Yangät Mäsqäl in Ethiopian Christianity

The cross as a Christian symbol represents the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and victory over death. The ur-apotropaic Christian device, the cross serves as a sign of faith, protection, and membership in the Christian community.3 One of the most distinctive elements of Ethiopian Orthodox visual culture is the sheer variety of forms the cross may take, which produces a stunning array of designs and objects (fig. 7.1).4 The cross as an object in Ethiopian Christianity can be divided into four general categories: architectural, processional, hand, and

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1 In this essay and the following catalog entries, I begin with the transliterated Amarañña (Amharic) term yangät mäsqäl, or “neck cross,” to describe these smaller, personal devotional objects that can be suspended from the neck in order to restore some level of original, Ethiopian context and lived experience to these otherwise decontextualized objects. I also use the Amarañña term kuk mawča to describe the ear cleaner or earpick. Later, I provide a rationale for my use of the term “pectoral” to describe these same objects as part of a more inclusive art historical category. See Chojnacki 2006, pp. 17–20, 26–27 for an overview of cross nomenclature and classification in scholarship. See Chojnacki 2006, p. 35; and Pankhurst and Pankhurst 1979 for kuk mawča.


3 Horowitz 2001, p. 75. For more information on the symbolic meaning of the cross, see the chapter by C. Griffith Mann titled “The Role of the Cross in Ethiopian Culture.”

4 Langmuir et al. 1978, p. 27. See Lynn Jones’s essay (ch. 6) for a treatment of the processional and hand crosses.
neck. This study focuses on the neck crosses — the yangät mäsqäl.

By far the largest category are personal crosses, a number that attests to the important position of the cross in the daily lives of Ethiopian Christians. The practice of wearing neck crosses likely began in the early centuries of Ethiopian Christianity, though the tradition fell out of use until its revival in the fifteenth century during the rule of the nəguś (king) Zär’a Ya’eqob (r. 1434–68). Textual sources indicate that Zär’a Ya’eqob decreed that all Christians tattoo themselves on the forehead with the name of the Trinity, as described in the Book of Revelation. This mark would serve to identify the elect at the end of days. In reality, Zär’a Ya’eqob’s decree likely was understood as marking the body with the sign of the cross, not necessarily with a tattoo. The practice of suspending a cross from the

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5 Horowitz 2001, p. 92.
7 See Kaplan 2002 on the role of visual culture, from tattoos to monumental projects, in consolidating and maintaining Zär’a Ya’eqob’s rule.

9 A European account documenting neck crosses is provided by the early sixteenth century travel narrative of Francesco Alvarez, the chaplain of the Portuguese embassy to Ethiopia from 1520–26; see Alvarez 1961, p. 1:170.
matàb, a blue cord worn around the neck and often gifted at a child’s baptism, began at this time as a means to fulfill this decree.\(^\text{10}\)

The earliest surviving neck crosses are dated to the fifteenth century and are made of bronze and copper, though examples made of less durable materials, such as leather or grass are known from later centuries.\(^\text{11}\) The majority of extant neck crosses are made of metals, many out of silver; those produced today are primarily made out of metal.\(^\text{12}\) Most metal crosses are created in molds using the lost wax method; copies and applied and incised decoration help create the variety of forms and decorative motifs seen today.\(^\text{13}\) The Blick-Harris Study Collection (BHSC) neck crosses are all metal.\(^\text{14}\)

Though it is widely accepted that a special symbolic and spiritual meaning is attached to the constituent parts and design motifs of Ethiopian crosses, such as neck crosses, efforts to assign singular meanings to these same elements remain elusive.\(^\text{15}\) Ethiopian crosses of all types are multivalent objects; a range of accepted meanings accompany the most basic design motifs and limited figural motifs seen on neck crosses. The elaborate latticework and intertwined lines can represent everlasting life and the rejuvenating power of the cross.\(^\text{16}\) Horn-like flourishes, sometimes identified as the “Ram’s horn” can, among other meanings, simultaneously represent wings, flames, or foliage as visual referents to Ezekiel’s vision, the Four Beasts of Revelation, or the Tree of Paradise.\(^\text{17}\) Small birds, symbolizing spiritual wisdom or possibly heralds of the Resurrection, are found on some neck crosses, often placed at the interstices between crossbars (fig. 7.1, lower left; cat. 21).\(^\text{18}\) Depictions of human figures, however, and especially that of Christ on the Cross, are uncommon and mainly reserved for the larger, liturgical hand and processional crosses.\(^\text{19}\)

Due to the variety of possible forms and materials of neck crosses, each object is a unicum. Yet these unique objects also fit into a coherent class based on three primary characteristics: 1) they are non-liturgical, 2) they are small-scale items that can be

\(^{10}\) Horowitz 2001, p. 75; Chojnacki 2006, pp. 56–58. Neck crosses can be suspended from the matàb, though not all neck crosses are so suspended nor does the matàb require a neck cross to function as a devotional item. The matàb alone is recognized as a sign of Christian identity and faith.

\(^{11}\) Chojnacki 2006, pp. 67, 105, 120, 145; Di Salvo 2006, pp. 110n27, 120n20. More investigation is needed to date the earliest surviving examples and shed more light on the revival of the practice during the fifteenth century.

\(^{12}\) Silverman and Sobania 2004.

\(^{13}\) Horowitz 2001, p. 92; Di Salvo 2006, p. 97; and Silverman and Sobania 2004, p. 338. According to Silverman and Sobania, the use of technologies such as filigree (cats. 16, 26) and granulation (cats. 12, 24) are indicators of a modern date of manufacture as these metalworking technologies were introduced later in Ethiopia.

\(^{14}\) Silverman and Sobania 2004; Di Salvo 2006, p. 97; and Chojnacki 2006. Di Salvo and Chojnacki share a similar concern for the diachronic evolution of Ethiopian crosses. Both publications include considerations of the decoration and materials of crosses, though with different methodologies and focuses.

\(^{15}\) Chojnacki 2006, p. 79.

\(^{16}\) Fletcher 2005, p. 16.

\(^{17}\) Mercier 1997, pp. 71, 90; Fletcher 2005, p. 16; and Korabiewicz 1973. Korabiewicz supplies the term kornebege ("Horns of the Ram"), though it is unclear what language tradition this term reflects.


\(^{19}\) Heldman 1993, cat. 1, p. 91; Mercier 1997, p. 72; and Korabiewicz 1973. Mercier notes that depictions of the Crucifixion do not appear on neck crosses and are limited only to larger crosses commissioned for churches. However, a neck cross and ear spoon from Korabiewicz 1973 (figs. 200 and 207) both feature a crucified figure. Another example now held at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African Art (no. 2004-7-47) displays an incised human face at its center; https://africa.si.edu/collections/objects/16723/pendant-cross.

Examples of human figural imagery on the larger hand crosses can be found in the BHSC. A metal hand cross (cat. 6) displays four human faces in the arms of the cross at the center of its design, as well as a half-length figure in the rectangular panel at its base, while another metal hand cross includes two angels (cat. 10). Larger neck crosses can accommodate figural compositions, such as images of Mary, the Mother Church, and the Virgin and Child as seen on a cross pendant dated to the fifteenth century and now held in the Church of the Archangel Gabriel in Tigray and featured in the African Zion catalog; Heldman 1993, cat. 1, p. 91.
worn suspended from the neck, and 3) they have a consistent socio-religious function as personal devotional objects and talismans. Neck crosses are worn by the Ethiopian Orthodox faithful of all ages, genders, and classes, though they are more commonly seen on women. These same social categories can influence the number and material of crosses that one wears.²⁰

These objects are still produced and worn by the faithful. Inscriptions bearing valuable social data, such as name, date, etc. are rare.²¹ The agency of the owner, or wearer, also affects study of these objects since they can dictate how a viewer might interact with the object, if at all. The owner can hide or display the object on their body with their clothing; they can also decide which side is visible at any given time; and they can invite someone else to hold or handle the object — to feel its weight and the lines, edges, and bumps of the design work and contemplate its meaning.

State of the Literature: Ethiopian Crosses

Neck crosses serve as the organizational center of this essay, whose primary argument focuses on the categorization of Ethiopian material culture.²² Stanisław Chojnacki provides a cogent state of the literature in his book on the cultural history and chronology of Ethiopian crosses.²³ Here follows a brief summary of the state of the literature specific to studies on Ethiopian crosses, with a focus on the treatment of neck crosses, studies without which my own would not be possible.

First, the terms used to describe small-scale, personal crosses are inconsistent among scholars; the conventional terminology vacillates between “neck,” “pectoral,” or “pendant,” with “neck” being most frequently used.²⁴ In his album of Ethiopian crosses, Waclaw Korabiewicz also uses the Greek term “enkolpia” as a descriptor for neck crosses to refer to these objects as a late stage in an evolution from earlier pectoral reliquaries.²⁵ Each of these terms have their merits and are used to specific effect. Usually, only one term is used at a time or, in the case of Korabiewicz’s enkolpia, is used very narrowly. Such uses of the terminology privileges one aspect of neck crosses over others and does not convey the multivalency of these objects as they are at once “neck,” “pectoral,” and “pendant.” For this reason, this essay uses, and differentiates between, all of the above terms throughout. To acknowledge the original, Ethiopian context of these objects, I follow Chojnacki, who in turn follows Getatchew Haile, in using the Amarəña (Amharic) term, yangät mäsqäl, to refer to a cross with the distinct characteristic of being suspended from the neck via an attachment to a cord or necklace.²⁶

Several themes in scholarship on Ethiopian crosses can be summarized as follows. Within the formal category of crosses, the fundamental categorization is based on function, with the resulting three categories: processional, hand, and neck.²⁷ Other categorizations — such as by material, style, morphology, etc. — are also found. These studies focus primarily on formalist concerns, particularly morphology, and emphasize the role of neck crosses as symbols of identity, aids to prayer, and/or instruments of protection in Ethiopian Christianity.²⁸

²⁰ Chojnacki 2006, p. 163–64.
²¹ This neck cross (cat. 13) is one of the few examples of inscribed neck crosses that I have been able to locate in publications and museum collections.
²² Moore 1971. Eine Moore’s catalog of processional crosses is the first comprehensive attempt to examine and classify the nomenclature, typology, and chronology of Ethiopian crosses.
²³ Chojnacki 2006, pp. 17–35.
²⁴ Chojnacki 2006, p. 20; and Korabiewicz 1973. The definition associated with each term is also fluid; Korabiewicz, for example, further limits this category to crosses measuring 1–10 cm.
²⁶ Chojnacki 2006, pp. 23–27. Other Amarəña terms used in scholarship include yälbb (pectoral cross) and yädärät mäsqäl (lit. “chest cross”), though the latter largely refers to the crosses worn by women of the elite social class.
²⁷ Langmuir et al. 1978, p. 19. At times a fourth category, focused on architectural crosses, is added.
Emblematic of these trends is the work of Mario Di Salvo, who focuses on cross forms and traces the developments of cross iconography. Di Salvo’s study provides a detailed description and categorization of cross forms, which in turn provides important insights into dating concerns and the interpretation of meaning. Chojnacki offers a new approach to the evolution of Ethiopian cross design by integrating written records, dated crosses (or at least those whose date can be reasonably assumed), as well as visual depictions of crosses across various media (when both are available and dated). Chojnacki’s study, particularly his use of visual depictions of crosses in manuscripts, wall paintings, and icons, as well as physical crosses, provides a valuable cross-media consideration of these objects and allows us to see the cross as both motif and object in different visual contexts. Maria Evangelatou contributes a contextual reading of Ethiopian crosses in which she argues that their visual language and possible meanings both reflect and reinforce specific socio-cultural values for Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. Evangelatou’s study references a range of cross expressions, from neck crosses to processional and tattooed crosses, though her analysis primarily focuses on hand and processional types. She suggests that the constant handling and socio-ritual importance of these objects situates them as key actors in the development of Ethiopian Christian “socio-cultural interactions, experiences, and identities.”

The contributions of these studies, so fundamental to establishing a chronology and macro perspective of the cross, provide the infrastructure for this essay, which takes a micro perspective focused on neck crosses. A side effect of the macro view that should be addressed is the privileging of the larger, more ornate, liturgical processional and hand crosses. This privileging is due, in part, to the greater number of datable examples of these two types and their public, social, and ritualistic importance in the Church. Within this, at least partially, artificial academic hierarchy, the agency of neck crosses is minimized in comparison with other cross types. While these studies narrow their focus to crosses, they also open the door for further cross-media dialogue. Using this scholarship as a basis for further discussion, we may ask: what happens if we privilege the neck crosses as distinct objects in their own right and examine their relationships with other Ethiopian Christian material?

Methodology for a New Classification

Korabiewicz uses the Greek term *enkolpia* to describe the Ethiopian neck cross, but does not make an argument for its use. I suggest it can serve as the basis for a new classification of Ethiopian Christian material culture. This study employs scholarship on the visual and material culture of Byzantium to complement the Ethiopian material, while also recognizing the limitations of using one culture to describe another. The goal is to let the objects speak for themselves in order to reflect, as much as possible, the Ethiopian Orthodox understandings and uses of these objects. I apply a two-fold approach: first, a theoretical framework using Byzantine *enkolpia* to describe and group Ethiopian devotional objects of different types and, second, visual analysis. By doing so, I hope to offer a new perspective and invite further discussion about these meaningful objects.

Ivan Drpić focuses on Byzantine Christianity and material culture, and provides a useful framework for understanding Ethiopian devotional objects worn over the chest, such as neck crosses. *Enkolpia*, literally “in the bosom,” describes the manner in which the object is worn and encompasses a diverse

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30 Di Salvo 2006.
31 Chojnacki 2006.
Figure 7.2. Yangät mäsqäl (cat. 15), side 1 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 7.3. Yangät mäsqäl (cat. 19), side 1 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 7.4. Yangät mäsqäl (cat. 21), side 1 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 7.5. Yangät mäsqäl (cat. 23), side 1 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
array of Orthodox Christian material culture. The Byzantines understood *enkopia* as pendants with an unambiguously Christian character.\(^3^6\) What defines an *enkpcion* is its “devotional, prophylactic, and/or apotropaic role” and its suspension from the neck, from which the object hangs down over the chest.\(^3^7\) Drpić convincingly demonstrates that the power of *enkopia* — typically small enough to fit in the hand and constantly present and accessible when hung around the neck — stems from their intimate association with the body, and that they are far more than instruments of protection and aids to prayer.\(^3^8\) Drpić also notes the historiographical devaluing of *enkopia* within Byzantine studies and the overemphasis on differences in typology and manufacture, arguing that we must study them as a group.\(^3^9\)

The Byzantine category of *enkopia* is a useful way to describe a range of Ethiopian material and visual culture, which includes *yangät mäsqäl*, *kuk mawča*, monastic *askema*, magic scrolls, and pendant icons. This essay is not concerned with the dating, materials, or development of *yangät mäsqäl* or other objects; instead, it argues for a group of objects united by their common positioning on the body, specifically the chest. Descriptors such as “neck,” “pectoral,” or “pendant” only refer to an object’s location with respect to the body or its relation to another object. Using *enkopia* as a descriptor for these objects, while inherently artificial, pointedly identifies them as Christian and speaks to their function and meaning within Ethiopian Christianity. This methodological approach to Ethiopian religious material culture is inherently transhistorical and multi-media, featuring objects and representations of objects from the fifteenth through twentieth centuries in both visual and textual sources.

**Ethiopian Enkolpia**

The category of Ethiopian *enkolpia* is not restricted to neck crosses, but also includes several different types of Christian devotional objects worn over the chest. What follows are case studies of the following object types: neck crosses, ear spoons, the *askema*, magic scrolls, and pendant icons. All of these Christian objects can be worn over the chest, and thus can be seen as “pectorals.” These pectorals, already unified by their common positioning on the body, are further unified by their intimate scale, personal function, and their devotional, prophylactic, and/or apotropaic role.

**Yangät Mäsqäl**

Glenn Peers’s work on pectorals and “framing” the meaning of devotional objects in Byzantium demonstrates the potentially powerful mediating effect of these pectoral objects on the self. Peers argues for a union between the divine and the viewer created by the boundaries, or frame, of a cruciform pectoral, which both enclose the image (of the Crucifixion) and complete it.\(^4^0\) Ethiopian neck crosses, including those in the BHSC, function in a similar way, particularly those that display open-work designs. Open-work designs make visible light or, when worn, the body through the object, making the body a fundamental part of the object itself (figs. 7.2–7.5; cats. 15, 19, 21, 23).

An inscription on a neck cross in the BHSC further amplifies this connection between wearer-object-divine, in a manner that reflects Ethiopian textual sources and iconographic trends concerning the Crucifixion (fig. 7.6; cat. 13).

The inscription on this cross reads, “Let it be pleasing for Barhan” across the horizontal cross bar and “Joy” down the lower vertical arm.\(^4^1\) An Ethiopian homily dated to the early fifteenth century reads, “Today the cross, which came in splendour, turns our mourning into joy, and renders

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\(^{3^6}\) Drpić 2018, p. 198.

\(^{3^7}\) Drpić 2018, pp. 197, 199.

\(^{3^8}\) Drpić 2018, pp. 201, 203, 212–24.

\(^{3^9}\) Drpić 2018, p. 200.

\(^{4^0}\) Peers 2004, p. 34.

\(^{4^1}\) I thank Felege-Selam Yirga for providing this translation.
our enemies mournful and languishing.” Absent of additional translated neck cross inscriptions, using Peers’s argument, it may be suggested that the word “joy” is meant to direct a specific emotive response in the wearer-reader.

No extant neck cross bears an image of the Crucifixion. As we have seen, this iconography is only found on the largest of crosses, such as the processionals, and even then is quite rare. The BHSC inscribed cross reflects this iconographic practice. The form of the inscription on the cruciform object is thus significant.

The inscription covers only the horizontal and lower vertical arms of the cross. The name of the wearer, Barhan, is centered on the object at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical axes. The name invokes Barhan’s physical body while the inscription as a whole mimics the form of the physical crucified body with arms outstretched wide and legs pointed downward. Barhan’s body thus becomes, and is united with, that of Christ’s. In this way Barhan symbolically shares with Christ the “joy,” or victory over death, and offers the promise of resurrection. The inscription collapses time and space and invests a performative and emotive force into the object, causing the wearer to identify with the object, which in turn makes present the events of the Crucifixion and subsequent Resurrection.

Kuk Mawča

Like the neck crosses in the BHSC, the ear spoon (cat. 16) is a pendant object, as indicated by the suspension loop (fig. 7.7). Used for the extraction of ear wax, this object, unlike the neck crosses, does not have a secondary devotional function. The BHSC example lacks any iconography or motif, such as a cross, that could link it with Christianity. Some ear spoons, however, can be devotional objects as they are decorated with, or take the form of, the cross; others, both with and without cross iconography, are worn on necklaces alongside neck crosses (fig. 7.8). As such, ear spoons are often included with neck crosses in studies of Ethiopian crosses.

Due to their repetition of forms and their medicinal function, Mercier considers ear spoons that are decorated with crosses as medico-religious objects that collapse the boundaries between the two areas and evidence the close relationship between art, religion, and healing.

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43 Gnisci 2014, p. 217 (emphasis mine).
45 Mercier 1997, p. 72. See also Gnisci 2004 for a study on the iconographic trend of the absent and dead Christ scenes of the Crucifixion in Ethiopian art.
46 Hostetler 2012.
47 Drpić 2018, p. 211.
48 Another example of an ear spoon with a cross motif incorporated into the form of the object can be found in Chojnacki 2006, p. VIII, fig. 14.
49 Korabiewicz 1973; and Chojnacki 2006.
50 Mercier 1997.
crosses, or worn on a necklace alongside crosses, ear spoons thus share a formal similarity and devotional function to neck crosses. In this way, ear spoons also double their relation to the body of the wearer (relating to both the chest as a pectoral object and the head as a medical device), which in turn doubles their efficacy as healing devices.

The Askema

The monastic askema, or scapular, is not usually included in discussions of pectoral, neck, or pendant objects, but they are also closely associated with the body. Composed of two bands, typically made of leather, draped over the shoulders and forming an “X” pattern on the chest, the askema is sometimes adorned with twelve small crosses. The askema visually declares two related elements of the wearer’s identity: first, their group identity as a monastic and, second, their individual identity as a high-level monastic, as only the most “perfect” of monks may wear the askema. Visual representations of the scapular in Ethiopian art are, to my knowledge, limited to representations of two of the most famous local monastic saints: Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus and Täklä Haymanot.

On the pendant icon in the BHSC (cat. 29), Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus is shown wearing a plain version of an askema (fig. 7.9), whereas on a processional cross from Gondär now in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Täklä Haymanot wears two straps that meet in the center of his chest forming a quatrefoil design (fig. 7.10). Describing a similar image, Marilyn Heldman and Stuart C. Munro-Hay identify the straps as heavy chains used in the ascetic mortification of the saint’s body.

50 Chojnacki 2006, pp. 56, 68.
52 Grierson 1993, cat. 116 and p. 251. Another possibility is that the straps convey the rope which the saint is said to have
While such straps could represent the chains worn by an ascetic, they also match the form of the askema and could be interpreted as such. The combination of the iconography of the straps placed across the chest with the specific saints who wear them aids the viewer in understanding the askema as object and its socio-religious importance.

Once the askema is identified, the meaning attached to the object is significant to our consideration of the relationship between the body and pectoral religious objects. As neck crosses can collapse the boundaries between object and body, particularly those with open-work designs, so too does the askema. On the Walters cross, the image of Täklä Haymanot makes visually explicit his angelic nature. The saint, recognizable by his lame leg, not only wears the askema but also has six angelic wings. These wings are a key part of Täklä Haymanot’s vita, in which he, desiring to come down from the mountain upon which he lives, falls and plunges to his death, only to be given wings and saved on behalf of his devotion to God.

The phrase askema zämäla škt means “appearance [likeness] of an angel.” Askema, “appearance” or “likeness,” can be understood as a quality or the physical appearance of a being. This fluidity can be further extended to the relationship between askema-as-object and askema-as-likeness.” Only the purest and highest-ranking monastics obtain the askema and this “angelic nature.”

The representation of Täklä Haymanot on the Walters processional cross plays on this fluidity; the wings are an iconographic feature connected to the saint’s life but are also the askema zämäla škt of Täklä Haymanot made manifest. This representation thus refers to the saint’s angelic nature — explicitly and symbolically — via both body and object.

What is additionally intriguing about this representation of Täklä Haymanot’s scapular is that used to secure his body hair and beard in place as a cover after he abandoned his clothing.

it terminates on his chest in a form that resembles a neck cross. However, in my opinion, the object worn by Täklä Haymanot is an askema as there is a consistency between the shape of the cross florets with those in other images of the saints, the placement on the chest, and the type of owner — an ascetic holy man and saint. Its identification as an askema, though, is not mutually exclusive with that of a neck cross. The potential visual ambiguity of this object — is it neck cross or askema? — is part of the point. The key difference then is based on who can wear a neck cross and who can wear the scapular; saints such as Täklä Haymanot and Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus can wear both, while the ordinary Ethiopian Orthodox person would only be allowed the neck cross.

Magic Scrolls

Magic or healing scrolls produced by däbtära — unordained clerics — also fit within the proposed definition of Ethiopian enkolpia (cats. 34, 35). These objects, which function to heal or prevent an ailment, usually take the form of long, narrow vertical strips of parchment measured to the height of the patron and are covered with text and images designed to combat the illness or evil plaguing the patron. Mixing orthodox imagery with heterodox elements, magic scrolls blur the boundaries between religion and magic, official and popular religion.

The production of magic scrolls requires the body. Preparation of the parchment begins with a ritual in which the animal’s body substitutes for that of the afflicted patron’s body. The finished scroll substitutes for the human skin as a container and site of potential power. This symbolic relationship engenders a close connection between scroll and its owner, a relationship in which the scroll symbolically is the owner. The Amarañña term for magic scrolls, yäbranna kotab, literally “written on skin,” cues this ontological relationship between these objects and the animal, then human, body.

Though focused on Western, European Christianity and western-produced manuscripts, Sarah Kay’s work on the materiality of manuscripts offers an interesting methodological comparison; her work explores the fraught connection between the medieval reader and parchment as skin and object, and the act of flaying as both torture and manner of book production.

As apotropaic objects, magic scrolls bear a functional similarity to neck crosses, ear spoons, and the askema. Like all three of the above objects, magic scrolls, too, can be pectoral objects. When worn on the chest, they then double their relationship with the body of the owner. The magic scroll is sewn into a leather case which is then suspended over the chest;
the case can also be worn on a longer cord over the shoulder and across the chest (fig. 7.11).58 Like the askema and inscribed neck cross, then, magic scrolls symbolically represent the “likeness,” or body, of the person on which they are worn, though in more physical terms.

Pendant Icons

Pendant icons are the final object type to consider (cat. 29, fig. 7.12).59 Worn suspended from the neck on the chest, these objects can also be defined as pectorals. The practice of wearing a devotional image of the Virgin Mary on one’s chest is documented in fifteenth-century sources. Among them, the legend of Saint Krastos Śämra recounts that Christ appeared to the saint and hung a painting around her neck.60 Other saints such as Täklä Ḥawaryat and Mäba’a Şuyn also wore images of the Virgin, or the Virgin and Child, on their chests. Steven Kaplan notes that Mărha Krastos wore a small prayerbook containing a religio-magic text known as the “Prayer of Mary at Bartos” around her neck. Other accounts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries corroborate the practice of wearing prayer booklets of the “Rampart of the Cross” (Ḫâṣurá māsqāl) suspended from the neck.61

58 Mercier 1997, p. 46; Windmüller-Luna 2015; and Winslow 2011.
59 See Sonia Dixon’s essay (ch. 8) for the issues of applying “icon” terminology to Ethiopian panel paintings.
60 Heldman 1994, p. 171.

Part of the genre of personal devotional objects, the double-sided pendant icon worn as a pendant became popular in the seventeenth century and remained common until the nineteenth century. Many of the surviving double-sided pendant icons have cruciform designs enhancing the exterior surfaces of the icon’s wooden protective covers — the side of the object that, when closed, would be visible — therefore combining the symbolic power of the cross and the efficacy of the image inside (cat. 29; figs. 7.12, 7.13, 7.14).  

The Meaning of Ethiopian *Enkolpia*  

The above examples demonstrate that, if we expand beyond the boundaries of formal categorization, a range of objects are thus aligned with neck crosses in fundamental and meaningful ways. These connections in turn can create the foundation for a new category of objects tentatively described here as Ethiopian *enkolpia*. Each *enkolpion* has, or is centered on, a cross motif; while all are not neck nor pendant objects, all are pectorals; all elide the boundary between object and body. These characteristics aid in fulfilling the devotional and prophylactic functions of *enkolpia*.

Across Christian confessions, the cross is a potent symbol of triumph and hope of resurrection. By dying on the cross, Christ’s blood sanctified it. This sanctification of object and sign thus confers upon all crosses the infinite power to heal, bless, and protect. In the Ethiopian Orthodox confession, the cross is not only that of the Crucifixion. It is also the seal of the Father and the “Cross of light” first given by God to the Archangel Michael as a means to defeat the devil; this cross then passed from the archangel to King Solomon. According to an Ethiopian tradition, both the cross and its sign act as protection from external and internal enemies. A sixteenth-century text of the prayer of the Rampart of the Cross, owned by a certain Gäbrä Mäsqāl (“Servant of the Cross”), says that Gäbrä Mäsqāl made the sign of the Cross on his face, forehead, and back so that it would be a shield and a force for him always.  

By drawing the above objects together in a new category, we see that the devotional, prophylactic, and apotropaic functions of Ethiopian *enkolpia* all converge on a person’s core — “in the bosom” — and consequently highlight the body as a significant nexus of meaning, power, and transformation in Ethiopian Christianity.

Paths Forward: Intermateriality  

The use of the cross motif shared by many of these objects is not only a case of reduplication or, simply put, the more crosses the better. Instead, the crosses on these objects also enact charged moments of intermateriality — a closed pendant icon is both a pendant icon and a neck cross. As we have seen, many of the protective covers of these icons are embellished with cruciform designs; many of these designs are recognizable as hand crosses (figs. 7.13, 7.14). This intermaterial relationship between pendant icons and hand crosses establishes a link between a personal object and a liturgical object. Hand crosses are not simply liturgical artifacts, but also powerful symbols of office, social position, and, ultimately, authority of the priesthood. As liturgical artifacts used to bless the faithful they are also actors in a complex ritual of social interaction.

While this final point regarding intermateriality compares crosses with crosses — an approach this essay has so far sought to avoid — it demonstrates the need to redefine the classifications of Ethiopian Christian objects by centering the wearer/body rather than the object. A unifying characteristic of

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62 Sobania et al 2018, p. 39; Sobania and Silverman 2009, p. 37n5. A diptych dated to the second half of the sixteenth century, now held at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, is one of the earliest examples carved with a suspension loop; Grierson 1993, cat. 95, p. 239.
64 Chojnacki 2006, p. 62.
65 Mercier 1997, pp. 50, 54; and Evangelatou, p. 3n5.
68 Evangelatou 2018, p. 296.
all the objects discussed — neck crosses, the askema, ear spoons, pendant icons, and magic scrolls — is how fluid they are when we try to impose academic categories upon them.

Future investigations may involve closer examination of the textual sources and the language used to describe such objects.\(^{69}\) Tattoos, as well, should be included in the conversation, thus moving beyond a consideration only of physical artifacts worn on the body to incorporate signs inscribed directly onto the body.\(^{70}\) This study has argued that neck crosses possess their own form of monumentality and agency distinct from that of the larger hand and processional crosses, and that they demonstrate the multi-faceted nature and efficacy of Ethiopian “enkofpia.”

**The BHSC: Catalog Entries**

I offer several observations that apply to the group of seventeen small-scale, pendant objects in the BHSC. The catalog entries are organized by accession number rather than any iconographic, morphological, or other organizational scheme. Each entry offers a description of both sides of the individual object; when applicable, images and citations of closely comparable objects are also provided.\(^{71}\) In order to avoid assigning a hierarchy to the sides of each pendant object, my entries do not identify a front or back, obverse or reverse.\(^{72}\) Instead, “side 1” and “side 2” is used for discussions of decoration and for reference to photographs; “upper” is designated as the end with the suspension loop. Formal descriptions move along the vertical axis, starting at the upper end, then across the horizontal unless the decoration is the same across the entire object.

Each of the seventeen objects that follow are composed of at least two elements: the suspension loop and the body of the object.\(^{73}\) On the ear spoon and thirteen of the neck crosses, the suspension loop is directly connected to the upper end of the body of the object (fig. 7.15; cats. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, “primary” one, though without contextual information it is unclear which side would be displayed outward (what we might consider the “front”) and which would be against the body (the “back”). However, in the case of the cross with projecting elements (cat. 12), the protrusions may determine which side was worn against the body and which was worn facing outward, as the protrusions would be uncomfortable pressed against the skin. We may thus suggest that side 1 on cross cat. 12 is the “front,” and side 2 the “back.”\(^{73}\) See Dixon’s essay (ch. 8). The painted pendant icon (cat. 29) also has a suspension loop and so could be worn.

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\(^{69}\) Drpić 2018; and Nosnitsin 2009. The second half of Drpić’s study provides a model for this type of investigation. An examination of the “Wawišabo qoba wa askema...” in relation to the askema, for example, is potentially revealing.

\(^{70}\) Chojnacki 2006, p. 59. A longstanding tradition of tattooing that began under Zar’a Ya’eqob continues to this day. The custom of women tattooing crosses on their foreheads, hands, or both, is still widely practiced in the north of the region.

\(^{71}\) Included in each entry is the material(s) of each object with the caveat that no scientific tests have, as yet, been undertaken.

\(^{72}\) In the case of the inscribed cross (cat. 13), the lack of additional decoration may indicate that the inscribed side is the
20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28). In the case of the neck crosses, the suspension loop is attached to the upper arm of the cross, and, when finial decoration is included as part of the cross’s decorative scheme, the loop often takes the place of the finial decoration found on the other three cross arms. Three of the BHSC neck crosses (cats. 12, 21, 26) are tri-part objects, with a hinge element added between the suspension loop and cross (fig. 7.16).

The following logic informs the separation of the objects into the three constituent parts: suspension loop, hinge, and body. The loop is what allows the object to be suspended from the owner’s neck or waist; the hinge allows the cross to move independently from the suspension loop. These components act in different, though related, ways. It is the suspension loop that defines these objects as pendants, and consequently neck and/or pectorals when a person’s body is involved, and that thus unites them by function as objects worn on the body. The hinge imbues an active quality to a neck cross, as the cross can now be set in motion and move from the body when worn. In the case of larger neck crosses, such as the bronze BHSC (cat. 12), this movement makes it possible for the wearer to view, and possibly kiss, the cross as it is worn.

As a final observation, readers will notice that the open-work design of six of the neck crosses produces a certain effect: the interplay of visible positive and negative spaces (figs. 7.2–7.5; cats. 15, 19, 21, 22, 23, 27). This effect, part of the overall decoration of these particular crosses, is created via the removal of portions of the metal body of the object — cutouts. As seen in the photographs, these cutouts allow light to stream through and to be visible through the openings. Elaborate latticework and cutouts are also found, often to a much greater degree, on processional and hand crosses, including examples from the BHSC (cats. 1, 4, 6, 10, 11). In this manner, the neck crosses can be related to crosses of different sizes and functions. However, as explored above, there is an additional effect specific to the neck crosses: when the cross is worn, it would be the body of the wearer that is now made partially visible through the cutouts. The body is then not only the backdrop for the cross but is also actively a part of the object, completing the decorative scheme, and thus expanding and amplifying the semiotic range of meaning associated with the object.

The following seventeen catalog entries offer a sampling of the possible forms of Ethiopian pendant objects. No matter their form, size, or decoration, each object is both a testament to the importance of the cross for Ethiopian Christians and an intimate reminder of the wearer’s part in a living, centuries-old practice.

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74 See Jones’s essay (ch. 6).
75 Peers 2004. For a discussion of possible meanings and visual referents of the open-work designs of Ethiopian crosses, see Evangelatou 2018, p. 132.
12. Yangät Mäsqāl (Neck Cross)

Bronze
Cross: 4 15/16 x 3 3/8 x 1/16 in. (12.5 x 8.5 x 0.2 cm)
Loop: 1 9/16 x 1 x 9/16 in. (3.9 x 2.5 x 1.4 cm)
Projecting Elements: 1/16 in. (0.5 cm)
1.70 oz. (48.3 g)

CONDITION: Several of the applied projecting elements have been damaged. There is some patina on side 2.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from Christopher Martin (Portobello Galleries) in London in 1975. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.30).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/646/

One of three hinged, multi-part neck crosses in the catalog (cats. 20, 26), this example is the only one with dark coloring, suggesting that it is made of bronze. The circular hinged segment at the upper end and connected to the suspension loop is decorated on side 1 with a protruding round boss encircled by four layers of dotted wire ornamentation (cats. 12A, 12B). Below the hinge is a large cross with a long vertical axis. The lower arm of the cross features two large bosses, the other three arms feature a single, central, boss. Each boss is encircled by decorative wire ornamentation. A ball is attached to each interior corner of the cross; three triangular groupings of three circular globules project from the finials of the left, right, and lower arms. At the center of this side is a rectangle of unidentified transparent material, flanked by two small bosses.

This neck cross is one of the few in the catalog that features different decoration on each side. That on side 2 closely resembles that of side 1 on another neck cross (cat. 24) — solid bars alternate with lines of circular dots along the length of each crossbar (cat. 12C). The decoration on the vertical crossbar is continuous, thus bisecting that on the horizontal.

A distinctive aspect of this object is its decidedly three-dimensional, sculpted nature (cat. 12A). When viewed in profile or at an angle, the six large circular bosses that decorate the arms and the suspension loop project outward from the body of the object, creating six distinct peaks.
Cat. 12B. Yangät māsqāl, side 1. Photo: Birhana T. Gesese.
Cat. 12C. Yangät mäŋäľ, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 13A. Yangät mäsqäł, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
13. *Yangät Mäsqäl (Neck Cross)*

Metal alloy  
$2\frac{1}{8} \times 1\frac{11}{16} \times 1\frac{7}{8}$ in. (6.7 $\times$ 4.3 $\times$ 0.3 cm)  
1.62 oz. (45.8 g)

**INSCRIPTIONS**: “Let it be pleasing for Borhan” (horizontal crossbar); “Joy” (lower arm).

**CONDITION**: No damage to side 1; minor abrasions to side 2.

**PROVENANCE**: Purchased by David P. Harris from Christopher Martin (Portobello Galleries) in London on October 25, 1975. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.31).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/647/

The only decoration on this cross, attached to a beaded necklace, is an *Amarännä* (Amharic) inscription that spans the horizontal arms and lower half of the vertical arm on side 1 (cat. 13A).Speaking on behalf of one “Borhan,” likely the owner of the object, the inscription evokes such feelings as (religious) pleasure and joy in connection with the Crucifixion and Christ’s Resurrection. Side 2 is undecorated.

Two comparable inscribed neck crosses demonstrate alternative possibilities for inscription type and composition. The first displays only a name, “Zewde Kassaye,” — again, likely that of the owner — across its horizontal crossbar, while diagonal lines of incised dots decorate the upper and lower arms of the vertical axis (fig. 7.17). Though the inscription on the cross in the BHSC is more complex, adding another textual-visual element with the word “Joy” perpendicular to the rest of the inscription, both of these examples place the name of the invoked person on the crossbar.

The other neck cross, now at the Dallas Museum of Art, is inscribed with a Coptic version of the Latin “Sator Square,” a four-way palindrome (fig. 7.18). The inscription covers all four arms of the cross and is the only source of decoration on the object. Reading clockwise, beginning on the upper arm of the cross, this inscription reads: Alador, Rodas/Sador (sharing the right arm; Rodas being read from left to right, and Sador from right to left), Danat/Adera (sharing the lower arm), and Alador, repeated on the left arm. Inscriptions on neck crosses are rare and do not follow a single standard form or type, but these examples, along with the neck cross in the BHSC, show different ways in which words could not only adorn the object but also convey meaning by their arrangement.

1. One of Harris’s photographs of this neck cross does not include the necklace. It is not clear whether the necklace was purchased with the cross or was added later by Harris.

2. Korabiewicz 1973. I thank Felege-Selam Yirga for his translations of the three inscriptions in this entry and their meanings.

3. Chojnacki 2006, p. 89. This palindrome is a common motif on pendant crosses that feature the nails with which Christ was crucified; each word names one of the five wounds Christ suffered.
14. Yangät Mäsqāl (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy
1 3/4 × 1 7/16 × 1/8 in. (4.4 × 2.7 × 0.3 cm)
0.62 oz. (17.6 g)

CONDITION: Incised decoration on both sides of cross is obscured by aging of the metal.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from Christopher Martin (Portobello Galleries) in London on October 25, 1975. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.32).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/648/

This cross retains a gold sheen over the incised decorative patterns on each side, as well as on the lower edges of the suspension loop. The gold-colored material indicates that this cross may have originally been gilded or was otherwise decorated to imitate gold. Whether real or imitation, the final visual effect was meant to be seen as gilding. This object then is the only gilded metal cross — neck, hand, or processional — in the catalog.

The vertical length of this cross is greater than the horizontal. The decoration on side 1 takes the form of an incised X-shaped interlace pattern with rounded edges that fills each arm of the cross (two on the lower arm) and, at its center, a circle around a design of radiate curved lines (cat. 14A). Side 2 features a similar decorative schema (cat. 14B). The incised patterns on the arms of this side, however, are cross-shaped quadrilobes with lancet-shaped projections at the corners.
15. *Yangät Mäsqäl* (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy

$2\frac{3}{4} \times 1\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{32}$ in. (6.6 $\times$ 4.1 $\times$ 0.1 cm)

0.49 oz. (13.8 g)

CONDITION: There is no visible damage.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/649/

Intricate interlacing knotwork fills this cross. The deep, delicate nature of the incision work calls attention to the X-shaped negative space at the center, which is further articulated when suspended and light is allowed to stream through (cat. 15C). At the upper end of the cross is a box-like element enclosing a four-lobed knot. The upper and lower ends of this box extend beyond the width of the vertical arm; a short projection extends from the middle of the left and right ends of the box. Short projections also extend from the left and right edges of the lower arm. Semicircular finials attached to the left, right, and lower arms of the cross are incised with a square and an interior “X.” Side 1 (cat. 15B) is differentiated from side 2 (cat. 15A) by the increased incised detail of the interwoven latticework on the interior of the body of the cross and in the boxed-in section near the suspension loop. Two additional incised lines on the threads of side 1 give a sense of movement and of a woven texture to the decoration.

SEM
Cat. 15B. Yangät mäsqäl, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 15C. Yangät mäsqäl, side 1 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 16A. Kuk mawča, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 16B. Kuk mawča, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
16. **Kuk Mawča (Ear Spoon)**

Metal alloy
2 7/16 × 11/16 × 3/16 in. (6.5 × 1.7 × 0.5 cm)
0.39 oz. (11.0 g)

**CONDITION:** There is some patina and aging of the metal, and several sections of the rope-like filigree decoration are missing or damaged on both sides.

**PROVENANCE:** Purchased by David P. Harris from the African Gallery in San Francisco on November 26, 1977. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.34).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/650

Known in Amaroñña as *kuk mawča*, this distinctive type of object was used for the extraction of earwax and can be identified by the tiny spoon at the end of the arm that extends out from the body of the object (cat. 16C).¹ Though utilitarian in nature, the ear spoon can also double as an object of personal adornment, and is today commonly worn suspended from the neck or, sometimes, the waist. The tradition of using ear spoons is corroborated by textual and archaeological evidence stretching back centuries, though these same historical sources do not always indicate how they were worn.²

Ethiopian ear spoons are produced in several different forms and exhibit a variety of decorative motifs. Some are cylindrical in shape, others square; many, such as this one, have a triangular body onto which decoration can be added, such as rope-like filigree spirals. On side 1 of this ear spoon, two connected spiral bundles fill the wider upper end, while only one is needed to fill the space toward the pointed end (cat. 16A). Four spirals fill the triangular space on side 1, while only three are found on side 2 (cat. 16B). A fourth may have once decorated the point of the triangle on side 2, but, if so, is no longer extant. Subtle additional differences distinguish one side from the other. Two layers of the rope-like filigree surround the triangular body on side 1, while side 2 has three layers. On side 1, two sets of double-spiral wire bundles open upward, and on side 2 one double-spiral wire bundle opens downward.

Many Ethiopian ear spoons incorporate crosses into their designs, and can be worn on the same necklace as a cross.³ The Christian function of the cross can thus combined with the health benefits of the ear spoon into one object, reminding us of the close connection between religion and health.⁴ The decoration of the ear spoon in the BHSC is not explicitly religious in nature, making it the one secular object in the catalog.

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1. Pankhurst and Pankhurst 1979. This study remains one of the few dedicated to Ethiopian ear spoons.
3. See, for example, the ear spoon at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2012.383; figure 7.7 in my essay.
17. *Yangät Mäsqäl* (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy

\[1\frac{1}{8} \times 1\frac{7}{16} \times \frac{3}{16} \text{ in.} (4.7 \times 4.0 \times 0.5 \text{ cm})\]

0.73 oz. (20.6 g)

**CONDITION**: Good condition aside from some aging of the metal on both sides.

**PROVENANCE**: Purchased by David P. Harris in London in June of 1979. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.35).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/651/

This cross of approximately equal arms exhibits rounder edges and a plasticity that sets it apart from the hard-edged crosses in this catalog. Side 1 features an “X” incised onto a raised rectangular panel at the crossing (cats. 17A, 17B). Side 2 does not have any markings (cat. 17C).

SEM

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18. *Yangät Mäsqäl* (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy

\[1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{5}{16} \times \frac{1}{16} \text{ in.} (3.8 \times 2.4 \times 0.2 \text{ cm})\]

0.33 oz. (9.3 g)

**CONDITION**: Some patina on the incised decoration on the upper arm of the cross on side 1. Several small cracks in the same incised decoration on both sides of the upper arm.

**PROVENANCE**: Purchased by David P. Harris from the Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on October 23, 1978. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.36).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/652/

This cross is composed of a single piece of metal, with a vertical arm that is longer than the horizontal crossbar. Both sides display this same decoration of incised triangles on the short upper arm, and an incomplete, or worn, incised circle at the crossing.

SEM
19. *Yangät Mäsqäl* (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy

$1 \frac{3}{8} \times 1 \frac{7}{16} \times 1 \frac{1}{32}$ in. ($4.1 \times 3.0 \times 0.1$ cm)

0.39 oz. (11.0 g)

CONDITION: Similar condition on both sides of the cross: patina on the metal around the cutout sections, some corrosion of the metal on the upper arm, and multiple, significant scratches, which may be part of original, now-damaged decoration.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from the Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on October 23, 1978. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.37).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/653/

Damage or wear on this cross has obscured the incised line decoration that once covered the majority of both sides. The extant lines once extended across all arms, and on both sides forming a weave-like pattern. Similar incised decoration is found on other neck crosses in the catalog (cats. 15, 23). An additional decorative effect is created by five cutouts in the metal: a square at the center of the cross, and four triangles in the middle of each arm.

20. *Yangät Mäsqäl* (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy

$1 \frac{7}{16} \times 1 \frac{7}{16} \times \frac{1}{16}$ in. ($3.3 \times 2.8 \times 0.2$ cm)

0.13 oz. (36 g)

CONDITION: The rope-like decoration on the upper arm of side I is worn down.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from the Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on October 23, 1978. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.38).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/654/

This cross has arms of equal length that are narrowest in the center and flare outward, ending in rounded edges that are articulated by applied globules — two on the upper arm and three on the other arms. Circular bosses are applied on each arm and at the crossing of side 1 (cats. 20A, 20B). A single strand of rope-like wire extends from the center, circular boss and wraps twice around those on the arms. Side 2 (cat. 20C) is undecorated and displays a slightly different profile than that of side 1. The applied globules makes the edges of each arm appear straighter on side 2, giving them a pointed, rather than a rounded, profile. A raised diamond-shaped panel is affixed at the crossing of this side.
21. *Yangät Mäsqäil* (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy  
Cross: $5 \times 3 \frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{32}$ in. ($12.7 \times 9.5 \times 0.08$ cm)  
Loop: $1 \frac{9}{16} \times \frac{15}{16} \times \frac{1}{2}$ in. ($4.0 \times 2.4 \times 1.3$ cm)  
1.38 oz. (39.2 g)

CONDITION: No visible damage.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/656/

One of three hinged, multi-part neck crosses in the catalog (cats. 12, 26), this example is also the largest of the neck crosses and is the only one with figural decoration. The hinge attached to the upper arm takes the form of a “cross pattée,” decorated on both sides with incised outlines and a circle on each arm.¹ The complex main body of the object is composed of three compounding cross designs (cats. 21A, 21B).² Beginning at the center on side 1, is a small, straight-bar cross with an incised “X” at the crossing and circles on each arm. This central cross is embedded within a larger, intricately woven pattern of lines that create the overall cruciform shape of the object — the second of the three compounding cross designs. Each arm of the cross terminates in a straight edge; the left, right, and lower ends are appended with the third cross design: cross-like quatrefoils. Each quatrefoil is decorated with an incised “X” across the middle and circles in each lobe. In the interstitial space between each arm of the main cross is an abstract profile representation of a bird, identifiable by the pointed beak. Each bird faces inward, toward a vertical arm of the cross.

The latticework body of the cross is emphasized on side 1 by straight incised lines down each “thread” of the design. The three compounding cross designs described above for side 1 are also visible on side 2, though side 2 lacks the incised decoration that further articulates each design. On side 2, the only incised decoration is a simplified design of two perpendicular lines running through two diamond shapes (cat. 21C). These lines intersect with several of the cutout holes and continue into the curved ends of the cross arms. Additional visual information, such as the beaks and wings of the birds, are conveyed with incised lines on side 1. Side 2 lacks these details — the birds, for example, can be described on side 2 as crescents appended to the corners of the cross and linked to the upper and lower cross arms by a short bar.

A nearly identical neck cross at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African Art displays the same composition of four birds at the corners of a large central cross.³ This object, too, is hinged and would be prominent against the chest of the wearer.

Birds may be interpreted specifically as doves symbolizing the soul liberated from death and as a sign of the Resurrection, or more generally as symbols of spiritual wisdom.⁴ This iconography can also be found in a variety of religious images, from processional crosses (cat. 4) to manuscripts and monumental painting.

SEM

1. A “cross pattée” is a form in which the arms are narrow at the center and flare outward, often with flat end edges.
2. For a discussion of the compound nature of Ethiopian cross designs, see the essay by Lynn Jones (ch. 6).
3. Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, no. 72-10-10. For another similar example, see Di Salvo 2006, p. 88, fig. 11.
Cat. 21B. Yangät mä zgäl, side 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 21C. *Yangät mängāl*, side 2. Photo: Bithanu T. Gessese.
22. Yangät Mäsqāl (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy
2 3/8 × 1 13/16 × 1/32 in. (6.6 × 4.6 × 0.1 cm)
0.50 oz. (14.2 g)

CONDITION: Object shows considerable wear. Some patina of the metal is visible on both sides around the circular cutouts on the interior of the body of the cross.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from the Endicott-Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on February 18, 1977. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.41).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/657/

The form of this neck cross resembles that of a basilica-plan church with transept and chapels radiating from the apse. The semicircular upper end meets the suspension loop at the middle and has five radiating semicircular finials. Triangular points emanate from the inner corners of the cross, and each arm terminates in quatrefoils flanked by two circular finial disks. Only the lower arm has an additional pair of disks at the midpoint of each outer edge.

Incised decoration and perforations define the surface of this cross. The upper arm encloses a cross formed by the negative space created by the perforations in the metal. Side 1 (cat. 22A) features a grid of dots connected by incised straight lines with incised circles in the interstitial areas. The quatrefoils at the ends of the left, right, and lower arms are each decorated with an incised “X” across the middle and circles in each lobe. Side 2 (cat. 22B) is undecorated, or no longer retains its incised decoration. The only evidence of previous decoration is an incised “X” across the body of the lower quatrefoil. When this particular cross is suspended, and light is visible through the cutouts in the metal, it is apparent that the grid of dots were likely meant to be perforated; only some are fully punched out.

SEM
23. *Yangät Mäsqāl* (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy

\[ 2 \frac{3}{4} \times 1 \frac{3}{4} \times \frac{1}{16} \text{ in. (6.0} \times \text{4.5} \times \text{0.2 cm)} \]

0.54 oz. (15.4 g)

CONDITION: Minor scratching on the surface of side 1.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/658/

This cross is formed from a single piece of metal. The woven pattern is created by the combination of diamond-shaped cutouts and incised lines in the metal. Side 1 (cats. 23A, 23B) features an additional incised line down the middle of each “thread” in the weave-like pattern, while side 2 (cat. 23C) does not.

Cat. 23B. *Yangät mäsqāl*, side 1 backlit. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 23C. *Yangät mäsqāl*, side 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
24. *Yangät Mäsqål* (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy

$2\frac{7}{16} \times 1\frac{3}{16} \times 1\frac{1}{16}$ in. (6.2 \times 4.0 \times 0.2$ cm)

0.36 oz. (10.1 g)

**CONDITION:** Several of the round dots on side 1 have worn away, and the upper end of the cross exhibits some damage. Side 2 possesses some shallow nicks, as well as a white elliptical sticker with “24. –” written on it.

**PROVENANCE:** Purchased by David P. Harris from the Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on August 15, 1977. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.45).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/661/

The suspension loop and the vertical bar are longer than the horizontal. On side 1 (cat. 24A) the applied decoration on the vertical bar features a continuous design, which bisects that of the horizontal bar, a design similar to that on side 2 of cat. 12. This applied decoration consists of pairs of solid lines that alternate with a line of circular dots. Small circular attachments decorate the central corners and ends of the cross. Side 2 is without decoration, though the crossing is obscured by a price sticker (cat. 24B).
25. Yangät Mäsqäl (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy
1 7/16 x 1 7/16 x 1/16 in. (3.0 x 2.1 x 0.5 cm)
0.30 oz. (8.4 g)

CONDITION: Minor abrasions to the cross.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from the Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on August 15, 1977. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.46).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/662/

One of the smallest crosses in the catalog, this cross is molded and composed of arms of equal length. They narrow at the center and flare outward, ending in a slight curve. Neither side is decorated.

26. Yangät Mäsqäl (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy
Cross: 3 7/16 x 1 13/16 x 1/16 in. (8.7 x 4.6 x 0.2 cm)
Loop: 1 5/16 x 1 13/16 x 3/16 in. (3.3 x 2.1 x 0.8 cm)
0.70 oz. (19.7 g)

CONDITION: The cross and suspension loop are in good condition aside from some discoloration of the metal alloy. The surface metal on side 2 is beginning to pull away from the edges of the left and right arms, and displays some rippling on the lower arm. The upper arm on side 2 preserves a white elliptical sticker with “24,—” written on it.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from the Guthaim Gallery Inc. in New York on August 15, 1977. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.47).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/663/

One of three hinged, multi-part neck crosses in the catalog (cats. 12, 21), this example is composed of a
triangular hinge with a suspension loop attached to a four-lobed cross. The lower arm is wider and longer than the other three. Rope-like, twisted wire decorates the face of the hinge and cross on side 1 (cat. 26A). Three concentric circles of wire fill the triangular hinge; concentric wire teardrops fill each lobe of the cross. Six circular bosses decorate side 1; they are placed at the center of the triangular hinge, on the four lobes, and at the crossing. Fourteen small circular disks are attached to the contours of the object: the hinge has four, the upper and left arms each have two, and the right and lower arms each have three. Side 2 lacks any decoration; the upper lobe of the cross is partially obscured by a price sticker (cat. 26B).

SEM

1. The left lobe of the cross has only two small circular disks, while the left and lower lobes have three each. I could not find any clear physical indication that a third disk was lost from the left lobe, but there is also no evidence or comparanda, that I have found, for a neck cross with a purposefully asymmetrical design like this. I suggest, then, that it is likely that a third disk originally decorated the left lobe.

27. Yangät Mäsqāl (Neck Cross)

Metal alloy
$1\frac{3}{16} \times 1\frac{11}{16} \times 1\frac{1}{16}$ in. (3.0 × 1.7 × 0.2 cm)
0.16 oz. (4.4 g)

CONDITION: Slight corrosion on the lozenge-shaped element on side 1. Some minor patina is visible on side 2 around the perforated triangles on the circular element.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris. Date, receipt, and supplemental documents are unavailable. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.212).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/665/

The upper end of this pendant cross — the section directly below the suspension loop — is decorated with a cross of equal arms, created by four triangular cutouts in the metal, and inscribed within a circle. The lower part of the object is lozenge-shaped. Triangular points articulate the edge where the circle and lozenge merge. Neither side is further decorated.

SEM
28. **Yangät Mäsqäl (Neck Cross)**

Metal alloy  
$2^{3/4} \times 1^{11/16} \times 1/8$ in. (6.9 $\times$ 4.3 $\times$ 0.3 cm)  
1.04 oz. (29.5 g)  

CONDITION: There is slight corrosion of the metal around the inscribed decoration on side 1 of the cross. Damage has partially obscured the decoration on upper end of vertical cross bar. Side 2 exhibits some minor abrasions.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris. Date, receipt, and supplemental documents are unavailable. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.213).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/666/

This cross consists of a straight vertical bar intersected by a shorter horizontal bar. Incised onto side 1 is a single, repeating oval motif. Each oval-shaped swirl is composed of three elements: a central circle enclosed by two curved lines. There is no decoration on side 2.

**SEM**
The Question of Authenticity: Two Ethiopian Icons

Sonia Dixon

Walter Benjamin’s work remains central in discussions of authenticity nearly a century after publication. In his seminal essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” he concludes that the concept of an object’s authenticity requires an “original,” stating, “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” However, for ritual-based objects, Benjamin proposes that they remain intact with their mystical or religious functions, so that religious objects — even if reproduced — are original, or authentic. Christopher B. Steiner takes this further, exploring the definitions of reproduction. He convincingly argues that in certain instances authenticity requires redundancy and repetition.

With this approach, the new creation is accepted as authentic.

In their 1999 publication, Ruth B. Phillips and Steiner note that “both art historians and anthropologists have resoundingly rejected most commoditized objects.” They conclude that scholars and collectors reject objects if they do not appear to have been created in a perceived, traditional style. The authors, focusing on Africa, see this as an attempt of “civilizing” indigenous craftsmen and artists. In many non-Western nations, the economic value of objects often depends on how “traditional” they appear to Western consumers. In this model, fewer commoditized objects are purchased for collections and museums.

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1 Benjamin 1968, p. 220 deals with modern material and writes in a particular context without closely analyzing liturgical objects. For a more recent application of Benjamin’s work and modernism, see Nagel 2012.
2 Benjamin 1968, pp. 223–24 argues that authenticity persists in these objects since the uniqueness of the original remains due to its connection with tradition. For a more detailed discussion of Benjamin’s work and devotional objects, see Bredekamp 2009, pp. 285–301; see Nichols 1989, pp. 7–11.
3 Steiner 1999, pp. 92–93 examines the printing press to explain redundancy and repetition in tourist art. He notes that woodcuts with the same imagery representing different cities are an example of redundancy. Repetition results from the process that repeats the use of what is considered redundant. Maps, for example, are repetitions. According to Steiner, redundancy and repetition are accepted as being true.
4 Steiner 1999, p. 93 suggests the viewer is not concerned if a map is the original or the copy. Steiner applies this method to the large-scale production of objects sold in African tourist markets.
5 Phillips and Steiner 1999b, p. 9. I define commoditized objects as items created with the intent of earning a financial profit. Phillips and Steiner examine the nuances of art, commodity, and artifacts and propose that it is not always obvious if the object falls into the category of commodity.
6 Phillips and Steiner 1999b, p. 10 argue that objects created with elements of “Western style” are not purchased by tourists. Steiner 1999, pp. 101–02 also explores this issue and proposes that objects not appearing in this “traditional” style are labeled as inauthentic.
7 Phillips and Steiner 1999a, p. 10 argue that this practice removes the craftsmen and artists from modernity.
8 Steiner 1999, p. 95. For interviews with contemporary artists creating icons in Ethiopia, see Silverman 1999c, pp. 135–36. Silverman interviewed artists in 1993. Artist Adamu Tesfaw explains that he moved from Gojjam, a northwestern province of Ethiopia, to the capital Addis Ababa to improve his sales due to buyers who seek “traditional” Ethiopian paintings.
9 Steiner 1999, pp. 96–97 and 102 identifies “‘elite’ consumers” and “‘serious’ collectors” as the individuals responsible for selective collecting. Steiner proposes that these collectors do not purchase commoditized objects and/or objects outside a certain style.
The term “traditional” is of course problematic when discussing modern art. Workshops, artists, and practices change over time, according to the needs and desires of consumers, and while some artists continue to emulate traditional style, others deviate from perceived traditions. I use the work of Benjamin, Phillips, and Steiner to investigate issues of authenticity by focusing on two icons purchased by David P. Harris as case studies: a double-sided painted icon (cat. 29; fig. 8.1), and a stone diptych icon (cat. 30, fig. 8.2).

The painted icon consists of three components: a central panel and two wings. The central panel is painted on both sides. The side wings are painted on one side and feature carved wood decoration on the other; they serve as covers when closed. The bail at the upper end allows for the icon to be suspended, possibly as a pendant on the body, in a liturgical setting, or in a home. The small size and portability is key to its function as a devotional object. The paintings feature an Italianate style, which is thought to have been introduced in Ethiopia in the seventeenth century when Jesuit missionaries brought prints of the Santa Maria Maggiore icon from Italy. Double-sided painted icons from Ethiopia featuring this Italianate style are displayed in museums, and published in scholarly catalogs and articles. Many such objects held in these museums,

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10 Silverman 1999a, p. 22 argues that the term “traditional” is ambiguous and concludes that “traditions are fluid.”
12 Mann 2005, p. 8; Mercier 1997, p. 77; Silverman 1999c, p. 138. Icons can be suspended from the neck or shoulders.
14 Including the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa University, no. 3531 (early eighteenth century); Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.81.1 (early eighteenth century); the Walters Art Museum, 36.17 and 36.5 (eighteenth century); Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2011.218 (late seventeenth century); Saint Louis Art Museum 12:2016 (late seventeenth century); and the Thomson Collection at the Art Gallery of
dated to the seventeenth century or later, also demonstrate an evolution from the Italianate tradition, and the adoption of a “local” style. Some local stylistic features that can be seen on our painted icon, including the addition of red and green backgrounds, a lack of shading, large eyes, elongated fingers, and organic forms. They are also found in the carving on the exterior panels, with crosses and X motifs, or diagonal ovals, representing doves’ eyes. This local, or indigenous style, increasingly displaced the Italianate style. The iconography has, however, changed very little over time; most double-sided painted icons feature the Mother of God and saints associated with Ethiopian Orthodoxy. According to Orthodox iconography, the saints and holy figures depicted must be recognizable for the icon to function. Standard iconographic compositions and the presence of naming inscriptions are tools that aid the viewer in this recognition.

The acquisition of double-sided painted icons in museums and their publication by scholars suggest that these objects are perceived as being authentic. While many of these types of objects feature an Italianate style combined with some more local Ethiopian elements, this stylistic synthesis and evolution occurred over the course of several centuries in the early modern period, and is seen as an expression of authenticity by scholars, collectors, and curators outside of Africa.

Ontario, AGOID.107383 and AGOID.70080 (seventeenth century). The double-sided painted icons are published in scholarly catalogs; Langmuir et al. 1978; Grierson 1993; Mercier 1997; Chojnacki and Gossage 2000; Fletcher 2005. Silverman 1999c, p. 139 describes this as the “basic style.”


17 The saints most frequently depicted include Gäbrä Mänfás Qeddu, Täklä Haymanot, and Ewosṭatewos. For an encyclopedia of Ethiopian saints, see Haile 1991. See also the essay by Madison Gilmore-Duffey (ch. 10) for a discussion of specific Ethiopian saints.
The stone diptych icon (cat. 30; fig. 8.2) features four carved surfaces with Christian-themed iconography commonly found on Ethiopian painted icons, executed in a more indigenous, non-European style. Like the double-sided painted icon, the stone diptych is also small and fits into one’s hand. It does not feature a bail for suspension, but does stand upright when open — the weight of the stone adds to its stability. Taken together, the small size, material, and ability to stand open without support, suggest an object of portable, personal devotion.

The origin of stone icons has not yet been determined; these objects are thought to be a relatively new phenomenon, perhaps beginning in the twentieth century. A comparable object, now at the Timothy S. Y. Lam Museum of Anthropology at Wake Forest University in North Carolina (fig. 8.3), also features an indigenous style and iconography, exhibiting none of the European influences seen on double-sided painted icons. On stone icons, such as the one purchased by Harris and that at the Lam Museum, figures are without naming inscriptions and bodies are abstracted, with an emphasis on the enlarged hands and faces. The continued production of stone icons using non-European style and iconography ensures that they retain their recognizability to the Ethiopian faithful. Single saints are most frequently depicted; popular narrative scenes include those of the Crucifixion and of the Virgin and Child. The saints depicted are both those traditionally represented on Eastern Orthodox devotional objects, and those specifically associated with Ethiopia. The exteriors of the panels show great diversity in subject matter, including images of saints, animals, and non-figural geometric designs.

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18 The stone diptych measures slightly larger than the double-sided painted icon; see cats. 29, 30.
19 This timeframe is based on interviews with the artists conducted by Sobania and Silverman 2009. The Timothy S. Y. Lam Museum of Anthropology at Wake Forest University in North Carolina and the Horniman Museum and Gardens in London date the stone icons in their collections to the twentieth century.
Figure 8.5. Stone icon. $\frac{5}{16} \times 3$ in. (13.01 × 7.62 cm). Horniman Museum and Gardens, London, 1971.441. Photo: Courtesy of Michael Gervers (via DEEDS).

Figure 8.6. Stone icon. $\frac{3}{16} \times 2\frac{1}{8} \times \frac{7}{16}$ in. (8.4 × 6 × 1.4 cm). Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, 8364. Photo: Courtesy of Michael Gervers (via DEEDS).

Figure 8.7. Stone icon, twentieth century. $\frac{5}{16} \times 3\frac{3}{16}$ in. (13.5 × 9 cm). Private collection. Photo: Africa Gallery, Hengelo, Netherlands.

Figure 8.8. Stone icon, twentieth century. Greenstone with red cinnabar. $4 \frac{1}{2} \times 3 \frac{3}{8}$ in. (11.4 × 8.6 cm). Private collection. Photo: Artemis Gallery, Erie, Colorado.
Are stone icons authentic? The answer might seem to be “yes,” as they are found in museums and collections; however, this collecting is limited. To my knowledge, three museums include stone icons in their online catalogs, and all are dated to the twentieth century (figs. 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6).²⁰ While stone icons are sold by a small number of western galleries, they are also available in Ethiopian markets (figs. 8.7, 8.8).²¹ This availability in Ethiopia suggests that their production is, in part, for the local faithful, and thus argues for their authenticity according to Benjamin’s definition.

Why then are stone icons seemingly not objects of desire for museums and collectors, and why have they been largely overlooked in scholarship? In interviews with Neal Sobania and Ray Silverman, artists, such as Adamu Tesfaw, make clear that they create these items without regard for the identity of the potential buyer — tourist, clergy, and/or the faithful.²² When stone icons are purchased as religious objects by the faithful, the depicted holy figures are recognizable, and the objects are authentic. When they are purchased by tourists, function — and thus authenticity — is less easy to define. Some tourists can see these objects as devotional; others may see them as souvenirs.

Harris bought his stone diptych in 1976 from a dealer in Alexandria, Virginia, early in his Ethiopian collecting phase, with other Ethiopian objects.²³ Among them is a metal processional cross (cat. 2), which features the same indigenous style as that found on the stone diptych: large eyes, elongated fingers, and abstract representations of bodies (fig. 8.9).²⁴ For Harris, it can be suggested that the authenticity of the stone diptych was recognizable because of its similarities to other Ethiopian religious objects, such as the processional cross. For the double-sided painted icon, because Harris

²¹ The galleries include Artemis Gallery of Erie, Colorado, and the Africa Gallery, based in Hengelo, Netherlands. Both sell modern stone icons.
²² Silverman 1999c, p. 145; Sobania and Silverman 2009, p. 28.
²³ According to the sales receipt, Harris purchased the stone diptych — listed as a “slate book” — with other Ethiopian objects. For more on this receipt and on Harris’s collecting overall, see the essay by Brad Hostetler (ch. 2).
²⁴ For discussion of Harris’s purchase of this cross, see the essay by Lynn Jones (ch. 6).
cataloged this object with his sub-collection of “Icons: Byzantine to Modern Era” and displayed it in his home alongside Post-Byzantine painted icons (fig. 8.10), it can be suggested that Harris perceived this object as authentic not for its Ethiopian features, but because it was recognizably an icon to him, according to his expectations of Greek Orthodox icons.\textsuperscript{25} As detailed in the essay by Brad Hostetler, Harris had converted to Greek Orthodoxy. Therefore it can be argued that what both objects share in terms of their authenticity to Harris is their sacred recognizability and function.

A comparative example for this discussion of authenticity is the \textit{Kykkotissa} icon, associated with the Holy Monastery of the Virgin of Kykkos in Cyprus. This icon remains an object of pilgrimage despite not having been seen since the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{26} Benjamin’s definition of ritual-based objects is applicable here, as copies have continued to be made since the icon’s removal from public view. These copies are perceived as the original — and thus authentic — and are displayed for public devotion and purchase. Like the stone diptych, the copies of the \textit{Kykkotissa} icon are authentic because they are recognizable to the faithful.

What is the status of an object’s authenticity when it is made for the tourist industry? Phillips and Steiner argue that commoditized objects, such as those found in the souvenir and tourist trade, are often labeled as “the inauthentic, the fake, or the crassly commercial.”\textsuperscript{27} How might we recognize tourist objects among the Ethiopian objects in this catalog? The Lam Museum describes one of its stone icons as made for the tourist trade, noting that icons are typically wooden and painted.\textsuperscript{28} This viewpoint suggests that objects made for the tourist market are defined by medium, and does not allow for change and evolution of artists’ practices, and for the realities of the economy. We cannot determine the use of tourists’ icons, whether they are of stone or painted. If we follow Benjamin’s definition, the purchase of any object by tourists would render them inauthentic, unless they are purchased by the faithful. If function defines authenticity, the stone icons are authentic to those who recognize them as religious objects.

I suggest, however, that authenticity, once affirmed, cannot be lost. The stone diptych is, at base, a religious object, an icon; whether it was, or was not, made for the tourist market would not negate its authenticity. The object can remain authentic even though a purchaser does not recognize its intended function. When sold in the tourist trade, such an icon could remain authentic because it is purchased by a member of the Orthodox faithful. If purchased as a souvenir, the icon remains authentic. In the eyes of the tourist, it may be recognizable and may lose its intended function, but it would not lose its authenticity.

\textsuperscript{25} For a discussion of Harris’s organization of his collection, see the essay by Hostetler (ch. 2).
\textsuperscript{26} Carr 1999, pp. 368–71; Kouneni 2008, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{27} Phillips and Steiner 1999b, p. 4.

https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol8/iss1/1

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29. Double-sided Painted Icon

Tempera on gesso-covered wood (possibly olivewood), pigment, and string
Central panel: 4 × 3 1/4 × 5/8 in.
(10.1 × 8.0 × 1.6 cm)
Side 1 wing: 2 13/16 × 2 7/8 × 5/16 in.
(7.1 × 6.6 × 0.5 cm)
Side 2 wing: 2 13/16 × 2 5/8 × 1/8 in.
(7.1 × 6.7 × 0.4 cm)
3.23 oz. (91.5 g)

INSCRIPTIONS: On the wing of side 2: Abba Gâbrâ Mânîs Qâddus; on the main panel of side 2, inscribed on their lower robe, left: Abba Tâklâ Haymanot; and right: Abba Ewostâtewos.

CONDITION: There is extensive wear on the painted panels. The wood frame below the Virgin and Child has a chip.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/637/

This object consists of a central panel and two wings. String attaches each wing to the central panel. The central panel is painted on both sides; the two side panels are only painted on the interior. Their exterior faces feature carved wood decoration and serve as covers to the paintings on the central panel when closed. A string attached to the outer edge of each cover allows the wings to be fastened. When opened, the wings provide stability and allow the object to stand on its own. The loop at the upper end indicates that this object could also be worn or suspended.¹ The small size suggests that it served a personal, devotional purpose.²

The exterior of the wing on side 1 is carved with a central, equal-armed cross with trefoil finials on the left, right, and upper arms, and a lozenge-shaped finial on the lower arm.³ The cross is enclosed within a beaded lozenge, and each corner of this panel features a framed-X motif.

The interior of this wing features a haloed figure on a white horse, set against a background created by three horizontal registers; from top to bottom they are red, green, and red (cat. 29B). The equestrian wears a blue long-sleeved tunic beneath a red short-sleeved tunic. He wears a yellow and red patterned
mantle and matching trousers. He raises his right arm and holds a lance or spear, now badly abraded. The horse tramples a limbless reptile. This iconography depicts Ethiopia’s patron saint, Saint George, on horseback killing a snake. Some depictions portray a dragon with wings and legs rather than a snake. Equestrian saints are popular talismanic images in Ethiopian religious art.

The painting on the central main panel, on side 1, shows four haloed figures (cat. 29C). The Virgin is in a frontal pose with both of her arms wrapped around the Christ Child; they are flanked by two angels holding spears. The Virgin wears a red gown under a blue maphorion. Her halo is highlighted by red rays, a feature that is distinct from the other haloes. She also grasps a ropelike object in her left hand — possibly a handkerchief, or mappa — and gives the blessing gesture with her right hand, extending her first two fingers. Christ gazes at his mother as he holds up his right arm and hand with the gesture of blessing while holding a red closed book in his left hand.

The pairing of the Virgin with Saint George is first associated with king Zärʾa Yaʿeqob (r. 1434–68). According to legend, they are said to have helped the king triumph in a battle against Sultan Ahmad Badlāy (r. 1432–45), a Somali kingdom in the Horn of Africa, in 1445. Zärʾa Yaʿeqob subsequently mandated an increase in the veneration of Mary through the making of icons, the establishment of festivals in her honor, and the implementation of readings from the Miracles of Mary in every church service. The king encouraged the faithful to wear images of the Virgin on their chest. Icons of Mary became more prevalent after the rise of this Marian cult.

On side 2, the cover features a carved checkered pattern with nine square frames alternating between two designs: an X motif and cross-hatching. The X motif is common in Ethiopian art, and is interpreted as “doves’ eyes,” which are apotropaic in function.

When open, the wing features a figure standing against a background with three painted registers: (from top to bottom) red, green and red (cat. 29D). The figure lifts both of his arms with his palms facing upward — the same direction as his gaze — and is flanked by two lions. His body is covered in hair and he wears an orange harness strapped across his chest and torso. He has long black hair, a white beard, and a halo. This is an image of the hermit saint Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus (fl. fifteenth century) — founder of the monasteries Däbrä Zaqʿala and Däbrä Zewdot. 

Cat. 29C. Double-sided painted icon, side 1, Virgin and Child with two angels. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 29D. Double-sided painted icon, side 2, Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Madrä Käbd, both southeast of Addis Abäba — identified by the Ga’az inscription in the upper left corner.

Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus lived as a hermit who refused to wear clothes due to his ascetism. According to legend, God covered his body with hair to protect him from cold weather — portrayed in the painting as black hatching. The orange harness that he wears may represent heavy chains for mortification, emphasizing his ascetic lifestyle. In the wild, Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus befriended and tamed animals and is often depicted with them.

The central panel on side 2 features two similarly dressed haloed saints in frontal pose standing against a green background with Ga’az inscriptions on the lower half of their bodies. On the left stands Abba Täklä Haymanot (ca. 1215–1313), founder of the monastery, Däbrä ʿAsbo, later renamed Däbrä Libanos in Šäwa in central Ethiopia. Abba Ewoståweos (ca. 1273–1352), who stands on the right, founded his own monastic community in modern Eritrea (Ertra).

These two monastic leaders are usually depicted together. They are both recognized as being religious and political leaders. A legend credits Täklä Haymanot with helping king Yakunno Amlak (r. 1270–85) overthrow the Zag’e dynasty and restore the Solomonic dynasty in 1270. Ewoståweos criticized emperor ʿAmdı Şayon I (r. 1314–44) for his involvement with his father’s wife and encouraged a ruler from Ḥamasen, modern Eritrea, to rebel against the emperor.

SFD

1. Mercier 1997, p. 77; Silverman 1999c, p. 138. Larger icons were carried in liturgies; Mann 2005, p. 13.
3. To avoid iconographical hierarchy, I identify sides 1 and 2, rather than front and back. The paintings on side 1 have more deterioration than those on side 2; this may indicate more use.
5. Grierson 1993, p. 244.
6. Scholars often state that the composition of the Mother and Child derives from a painting located in Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, prints of which were brought to Ethiopia by Jesuits in the 1570s. Chojnacki 1964, p. 9; Heldman 1993, p. 96; Langmuir et al 1978, p. 3.
7. Chojnacki 1990, p. 18. He refers to the red decoration as red “tongues of flame” that begins during the First Gondär style in the seventeenth century.
14. See Sarah Mathiesen’s essay (ch. 7).
21. See the essay by Lynn Jones (ch. 6).
22. Depictions of the two saints with turbans and nimbi begin in the seventeenth century; Chojnacki 1990, p. 29.
Cat. 29E. Double-sided painted icon, view of side 1 with both wings open. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 29F. Double-sided painted icon, view of side 2 with both wings open. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
**30. Stone Diptych**

Stone, leather string, and possibly cinnabar
Left panel: $3\frac{3}{16} \times 2\frac{11}{16} \times \frac{7}{16}$ in.
(8.4 × 6.7 × 1.1 cm)
Right panel: $3\frac{3}{16} \times 2\frac{9}{16} \times \frac{5}{16}$ in.
(8.4 × 6.6 × 0.7 cm)
8.52 oz. (241.5 g)

CONDITION: The leather strings that tie the two panels together are broken.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/638/

This stone diptych features four carved surfaces with Christian-themed iconography commonly found on Ethiopian painted icons (see cat. 29). Leather strings threaded through pierced holes fasten the two panels to form the diptych. A recess in the interior of the left panel accommodates a raised surface on the right panel, allowing a snug fit when closed. The reddish tint on the object may be traces of cinnabar, also found on similar objects.¹

The diptych can fit into one’s palm suggesting a personal devotional object.

The front cover (cat. 30B) features a thin, unadorned border that encloses a carved frontal depiction of an angel with spread wings, their arms crossed over the chest, and their hands framing the face. The angel wears a long-sleeved garment with
vertical stripes, and a belt around the waist. The angel’s round eyes stare directly at the viewer.

The upper portion of the cover’s interior surface, the left panel of the diptych (cat. 30C), features an equal-armed cross with quatrefoil finials. To the left and right of the cross are wavy stripes. Below this decoration is carved recess, measuring three-eighths of an inch deep (1 cm).

The recess contains an image of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child flanked by two bodiless angels, a standard Ethiopian Orthodox iconography. The angel on the right has a halo while the other does not. Wings, indicated by faint carved lines, emerge from behind their heads. Radiate haloes encircle the Virgin and Child. The half-length Virgin carries Christ with her left arm while gripping a cloth in her left hand. She makes a sign of blessing with her right hand, extending her index and middle fingers, as she gazes at the viewer with her large round eyes. Christ holds an object in his left hand, possibly a closed scroll, and makes the gesture of blessing with his right hand, as he looks at his mother.

According to an account from the Miracles of Mary, a servant had a vision where the Virgin took her mappa, or handkerchief. Scholarhip often associates the iconography portraying the Virgin with the handkerchief to a the painting of the Virgin and Child from Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, copies of which were brought by Jesuit missionaries to Ethiopia in the 1570s. King Zar’a Ya’eqob (r. 1434–68) amplified veneration of the Virgin and required readings of her miracles during each service; more than 600 of these miracle accounts survive.

The interior of the diptych’s right panel is carved with two frames (cat. 30D). The exterior frame features a harag, or tendril-like decoration, often found in Ethiopian manuscripts and on hand and processional crosses. The interior frame is undecorated with an equal-armed cross at the top center, matching the cross on the left panel.

Below the cross and within the frames is the raised surface that nests inside the left panel’s recess. The protrusion features an image of a man in frontal view with no identifying inscription. The figure has a short beard, wears a long-sleeved garment with vertical stripes on the lower half, and is adorned with
a belt around his waist. He points upward with his two index fingers, as he gazes toward the sky.

The diptych’s back cover (cat. 30E) also features a double frame, the style of which matches that of the interior carving of the right panel. Inside the frame is a frontal figure raising his arms while pointing upward with his two index fingers. He wears a body length, textured garment with sleeves that hang low, almost touching the ground. His long straight beard extends to the ground while the scalloping around his head indicates he has curly hair. While this figure is not named by an inscription, these iconographic elements identify him as Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus. This hermit saint lived in the wild and adhered to a strict ascetic life, including forgoing clothes. The textured details on the diptych represent the hair God provided Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus to protect him from cold weather. Painted depictions of the saint often include wild beasts (see cat. 29).
Cat. 30F. Stone diptych, exterior. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 30G. Stone diptych, interior. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
There are three main types of manuscripts produced in Ethiopia and Eritrea (Erətra). The most frequently occurring is the codex, called máṣḥaf, which is made up of folded parchment leaves collected into gatherings or quires, sewn together, and given covers made of wood or hide. Another type of manuscript created in the region is the scroll, called kståb or tālśäm, which is made of one or more strips of parchment sewn together and inscribed with texts and images. These scrolls are mostly used for protective or healing magic and are produced by a dābtära — an unordained, itinerant singer and healer. Two Ethiopian healing scrolls can today be found in the Blick-Harris Study Collection (BHSC) (cats. 34, 35).

The subject of this essay is the third type of manuscript produced in Ethiopia: the accordion book, or as it is known in the region, as well as throughout this essay, the šənsul. This book form is the least common type of manuscript produced in Ethiopia; it is comprised of one or more pieces of parchment stitched together with parchment or leather thongs to create a long strip and that is then folded accordion-style. The folded book can be bound between covers made of wood or hide and is sometimes carried or suspended by a strap around the chest. Most šənsul manuscripts consist of images, typically of saints, prophets, apostles, or archangels, and, beginning in the seventeenth century, scenes from the life of Christ and the Virgin. It is less common, although not unprecedented, to find šənsul manuscripts that include texts. Standard texts that appear in šənsul manuscripts include hagiographies of saints, hymns, and protective prayers.

In 1975, David P. Harris purchased the šənsul now in the BHSC (cat. 31). This šənsul is made up of fourteen rectangular sections that are painted on both sides. One side, identified here as the front, includes seven pages with the text of the Anaphora of Mary (Qǝddase Maryam) that alternate with seven pages of single, framed miniatures (fig. 9.1). Beginning on page 2 and continuing on even-numbered pages to page 14, the Anaphora is inscribed in a single column of Go'az script. Each of these pages contains ten lines of text, written

1 Nosnitsin 2012 provides an introduction to these manuscript types and their production.
2 Bausi et al 2015, pp. 154–74 provides an introduction to Ethiopic codicology and descriptions of the materials used for, and methods of, production of Ethiopian codices, most of which are made of parchment. Goatskin is the most commonly used material, but the skin of sheep, cows, horses, and antelopes are also said to be used. Paper was used very rarely in the region before the twentieth century.
3 Nosnitsin 2012, p. 4; Bausi et al 2015, pp. 158–59. Scrolls are made with parchment, the quality of which varies. Some are very high quality, but most are coarse; the parchment used is often a by-product of the production of parchment for codices.
4 Nosnitsin 2020, p. 295. Šənsul literally means “chain.” This manuscript type is also referred to as “leoporelo,” “concertina,” or “accordion book,” as well as the more general “folding book.” The earliest known examples of this manuscript form date from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Early šənsul manuscripts can today be found in the Peabody Essex Museum (Langmuir 368), the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (no. 5965-5966), and the Pontificia Università Gregoriana (Fondo Vedovato inv. N. 136).
5 Bausi et al 2015, p. 158.
6 Bausi et al 2015, p. 158.
7 Sciacca 2018, p. 93.
8 Nosnitsin 2012, pp. 4–5.
9 Bausi et al 2015, p. 158.
10 On October 21, 1975, Harris paid $295 for the “sixteen Ethiopian Parchment Pages,” with “two separated pages,” which the seller described as “all over 100 years old.” See figure 9.3.
primarily in black ink, with important scriptural names and phrases in red ink. The reading of an Anaphora is a standard part of the liturgical service, or qeddase. It is the part of the service in which the bread and wine are consecrated for communion; in the western tradition the comparable rite is the Eucharistic Prayer.

Alternating with the text of the Anaphora are full-page, framed miniatures, which illustrate a portion of the text in which the Virgin is compared to figures from the Old Testament. In the twenty-ninth verse of the Anaphora, the priest speaks directly to Mary, asking “with whom or with what likeness shall we liken thee?” Verses thirty-five and thirty-six list the comparisons:

The golden omer of Elijah, the cruse of Elisha, the virgin conception of which Isaiah prophesied, the first giving birth without intercourse of which Daniel (also spoke), the mountain of Pharan of Habakkuk, the closed house in the east of Ezekiel, the place in

Bethlehem from which the law goes forth, the land of Ephratah of Micah, the tree of life of Silondis, the healer of Nahum’s wounds, the rejoicing of Zechariah, the clean hall of Malachi.

In our samsul, each of these comparisons is illustrated and each figure is identified by Go’az naming inscriptions placed outside the lower edge of the frame. The final illuminated page on the front, page 13, departs from this pattern; it depicts the Annunciation of the Virgin.

On the other side of the samsul, referred to here as the back, all fourteen pages contain full-page framed miniatures that depict scenes from the Passion of Christ (fig. 9.2). The cycle follows the scriptural order of the Passion, beginning with the Flagellation of Christ on page 15 and ending with the Resurrection on page 28.

Two parchment fragments were bundled together with the samsul by the dealer, suggesting that the dealer assumed that the fragments were once part of

feast days of the Virgin, as well as on January 6 (the day preceding the Nativity), April 7 (the day of the Annunciation), and October 12 (the feast day of Saint Cyriacus (Haryaqos), Bishop of Behnesa, who is believed to have written the text of the Anaphora.

11 Daoud and Hazen 1959, pp. 104–21. There are two parts to the qeddase: the preparatory service and the reading of an anaphora. The preparatory service consists of prayers over the liturgical vessels, the reading of Psalms, verses, and prayers, and the preparation of the Eucharist. Following the preparatory service, the priest leads the congregation through an anaphora. The Church has 14 different anaphora, each celebrated on specific days. The Anaphora of Mary is celebrated on most

12 Daoud and Hazen 1959, p. 107.
13 Daoud and Hazen 1959, pp. 107–08.
with white hair and long, white beards; they hold small crosses in their right hands (fig. 9.5). Naming inscriptions to the left of the figures’ heads identify each as an abunä — Arądawi, Alef, and Afše, three of the Nine Saints who came to Ethiopia to Christianize the Aksumite Empire.16 For this essay, this fragment is identified as the “Apostle/Abun leaf,” the Apostle side is referred to as the front and the Abun side as the back.17 The front and back of the fragment was established by matching the colors of the figures’ skin to that used for figures depicted in the sanül, the color pattern of which is described below. The use of front and back for the leaf is not intended to privilege one side over the other, only to provide clarity for the reader.

The second parchment fragment also features full-paged framed miniatures on both sides (cat. 32). The front depicts the Dormition of the Virgin — the moment of her death and the assumption of her spirit into heaven (fig. 9.6). An inscription at the lower edge, outside the frame, describes the scene: “how our lady died from the toil of this world.” The Virgin lies horizontally at the bottom of the frame. On the left, a group of male mourners gather around her, while on the right Christ holds her infant-like soul. The back of this fragment seemingly presents two episodes from the life of the Virgin (fig. 9.7). To the left, Mary spins thread, an iconography associated with the Annunciation. Interrupted in the act of spinning thread, she holds a spindle in her right hand and a ball of unspun fibers in her left. On the right, the archangel Phanuel (Fanuel), identified by an inscription in Ga’az above his head, stands holding a paten and chalice, attributes which may refer to the Entrance of the Virgin into the

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14 See the essay by Madison Gilmore-Duffey (ch. 10). Prayer staffs such as those seen on this page are used in Ethiopia to support the clergy during lengthy church services, as well as to mark rhythm during dances. An example of this form of staff can be found at the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, no. 97-19-4, https://africa.si.edu/collections/objects/12402/prayer-staff-

15 All of the Ga’az-to-English translations for this essay were generously provided by Fedege-Selam Yirga and Birhanu T. Gessese, both of whom I thank.

16 For a discussion of the Nine Saints and their role in the Christianization of Ethiopia, see the essays by Gilmore-Duffey (ch. 10) and Neal Sobania (ch. 5).

17 Abun is the form used when there is no name following the title, while abunä is used when a name does follow.
Figure 9.4. Small fragment (cat. 33), Apostles Yaʿqob, Pēetros, and Yoḥannas. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 9.5. Small fragment (cat. 33), Abunäs Arägawi, Alef, and Afä. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Figure 9.6. Smūd fragment (cat. 32), Dormition. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 9.7. Smūd fragment (cat. 32), Annunciation/Presentation. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
For this essay, this fragment is identified as the “Dormition/Annunciation leaf”; the front (Dormition side) and back (Annunciation side) were designated via the same method previously described for the other fragment.

Close physical examination of these fragments conducted by Erika Loic revealed details about their production and original context, namely that both leaves were cut from sənsul manuscripts. Loic identified a small strip of parchment with a parchment thong still stitched to, and folded over, the Apostle/Abun leaf, on the front (Apostle side), along the right edge. The parchment thong would have originally attached this fragment to another piece of parchment. On the left edge of the Apostle side, the parchment curls in the opposite direction from the folded and stitched piece. These details reveal that originally this Apostle/Abun leaf would have been located between at least two other accordion-folded sections, making it part of a sənsul. The Dormition/Annunciation leaf is similarly revealing: the left edge of the front (Dormition side) has a triangular overhang (fig. 9.8). This triangular piece of parchment was left behind when the fragment was cut — likely with scissors — from its connecting section. This left edge of the leaf curls to the right, toward the Dormition. The page that was removed must have been folded accordion style. This fragment was thus also originally part of a sənsul.

Figure 9.8. Sənsul fragment (cat. 32), detail of the Dormition side. Photo: Brad Hostetler.

18 Gnisci 2020. The archangel Phanuel is venerated in the Ethiopian church and is known from the book of Enoch. Phanuel can often be seen on healing scrolls and alternates with Gabriel in representations of the Annunciation. The Entrance of the Virgin into the Temple is celebrated on December 12. According to tradition, for the twelve years she resided in the temple, the Virgin was fed by angels. The possible conflation of the Presentation and Annunciation on this page and, therefore, use of continuous narrative offers an interesting avenue for future inquiry into the iconography of this fragment.

19 See the essay by Erika Loic (ch. 4).
The fact that both fragments were originally part of a *sensus* would seem to suggest that the dealer from whom Harris purchased these works was correct, and that the leaves were once part of the *sensus* in the BHSC. There are, however, certain incongruities between the two leaves that call into question their association with each other and with the *sensus*. As we shall see, neither of the fragments were originally part of the *sensus* in the BHSC; instead, they belong to separate manuscript(s), which may have been produced by the same artist or workshop. Both fragments were likely removed from their original contexts when the *sensus* manuscripts entered the art market, as dividing the manuscripts into individual leaves would increase the seller’s profit.

**Color Patterns**

The *sensus* has a specific layout of colors consistent across its miniatures. On the front side, the backgrounds of the miniatures consist of a field of two colors: red on the left and a deep green on the right. The skin color of all figures on this side is provided by the parchment, with red highlights applied to the cheeks and foreheads. On the back side of the *sensus*, the background of the miniatures is similarly made up of a field of two colors: red on the left and green on the right; however the green used on this side is lighter and brighter than that on the front. On this side the color of the figures’ skin tone is also different; it is rendered in a rich brown pigment.

The background colors of the fragments do not perfectly match those of the *sensus*. The background of the Dormition side of the Dormition/Annunciation leaf is comprised of green on the left and red on the right, a reversal of the color placement used on the *sensus*. Incorporating this leaf into the *sensus* would therefore disrupt the color pattern used throughout the manuscript. One
possible explanation for this shift in the color pattern is that it cued a narrative shift or called attention to certain images; however, as discussed in the next section, this is unlikely.

The background color pattern of the Apostle side of the Apostle/Abun leaf also calls into question its possible affiliation with the s\textit{onsul}. Presently, the color pattern matches the \textit{sonsul}, but there is evidence this was not always true. In-person examination of the leaf conducted by Loic revealed evidence of restoration to the background of the Apostle side.\footnote{See the essay by Loic (ch. 4).} Originally the right half of the miniature was painted the same light, bright green used in the Passion miniatures of the \textit{sonsul}. This pigment was covered at a later date with the current darker green color. Looking closely at the frame in the upper and lower right corners, Loic observed that remnants of the light green can be seen beneath the black border of the frame, suggesting the light green was applied first (fig. 9.9). The darker green pigment covers the light green and overlaps portions of the black frame and the outlines of the figures, providing evidence that it was added last. The solid, even tone of the darker green also suggests that it was not applied contemporaneously with the rest of the pigments, which have begun to flake. When the Apostle page was first painted, it did not match the background color pattern of the \textit{sonsul}. It would have therefore disrupted the pattern of the manuscript in the same way as the Dormition page.

On the basis of color pattern, both fragments challenge the dealer’s assumption that they were part of the \textit{sonsul}. Further issues with this assumption emerge when the narrative qualities of the leaves are compared to the \textit{sonsul}.

**Narrative**

In terms of narrative content, the front of the Dormition/Annunciation leaf does not raise any immediate issues when compared only to the front of the \textit{sonsul}. Although the background colors are reversed, the Dormition could be appended to either end of the \textit{sonsul} as the subject matter of the fragment seems, at first glance, to fit. On the front side of the \textit{sonsul}, a portion of the Anaphora of Mary is inscribed and illustrated. A scene from the life of the Virgin does not seem out of place with this text. There is, however, no explicit reference to the death of the Virgin in the Anaphora, which is primarily focused on appealing to the Virgin for her intercession. In terms of narrative, it is inconclusive whether the Dormition side of the fragment would fit with the \textit{sonsul}.

The back of this fragment — the side featuring the Annunciation — is more revealing. As we have seen, the back of the \textit{sonsul} is filled with an extensive illuminated cycle of the Passion of Christ, which is rendered in sequential narrative from the Flagellation to the Resurrection. Placing the Annunciation into this cycle would make it the first page in the cycle, and would leave a large gap in the chronology between the depiction of the Annunciation and that of the Flagellation. While there could certainly be more pages missing from the \textit{sonsul} that would fill this gap, the necessary scenes to match the degree of detail given to the Passion cycle would result in a very long \textit{sonsul}.\footnote{See the essay by Loic (ch. 4).}

If we ignore the previously described problems with the color patterns and attempt to match the front side of the Dormition/Annunciation leaf to the back side of the \textit{sonsul} and vice versa, narrative issues still remain. This flipping would result in two Annunciation scenes on the front side of the \textit{sonsul}, a repetition that disrupts the chronological narrative. Placing the Dormition into the Passion cycle on the back side of the \textit{sonsul} signals multiple missing scenes. On the basis of narrative the Dormition/Annunciation leaf can thus be discounted from belonging with the \textit{sonsul}.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{20}See the essay by Loic (ch. 4).}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{21}Sciacca 2018, p. 93 states that “the number of panels created by folding can range widely from four to at least forty-eight.” It is not clear from this assertion what the dimensions of a \textit{sonsul} traditionally are when unfolded; the width of each panel can vary a great deal. To my knowledge of published or digitized \textit{sonsul} manuscripts, they range from 50 to 130 centimeters when unfolded. The \textit{sonsul} in the BHSC is approximately 180 centimeters when unfolded.}
Moving to the Apostle/Abun leaf, we encounter a different problem: the static frontality of the figures on this fragment does not match the sequential narrative and expressive gestures found throughout the sənsul. On the front side of the sənsul, Old Testament prophets are depicted on six illuminated pages and the Annunciation is depicted on the seventh. In each miniature, at least one figure is depicted in movement: on page 3 the prophet Isaiah points at a star in the background (fig. 9.10), on page 5 Daniel holds his face in a gesture of sorrow (fig. 9.11), and so on. This depiction of movement can also be seen on the back of the sənsul. The miniatures on this side depict for the viewer moments in the progression of Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection. In the scene of the Flagellation, on page 15, whips are shown in mid-air, leaving the viewer to imagine their trajectory as they descend and strike Christ (fig. 9.12). On pages 19 and 20, blood streams from Christ’s wounds as he hangs on the cross (fig. 9.13). This depiction of movement and action in the sənsul stands in sharp contrast to the motionless frontality of the figures on both sides of the Apostle/Abun leaf.

Inscriptions

One final factor must be briefly considered as we compare the sənsul to the fragments: the mise-en-page of the inscriptions. Throughout the sənsul, inscriptions are written outside of the frame and are placed at the bottom of each page. On both of the fragments, however, inscriptions appear inside the frame: in the Annunciation an inscription can be seen to the left of the Virgin’s head and another above Phanuel. On the other fragment, a naming inscription is written to the left of each abun’s head. The other sides of both fragments have naming inscriptions outside the frame.

Conclusion: Contextualizing the Cutting and Selling of Pages

On the basis of color pattern, narrative, and inscriptions, the formal qualities of the parchment fragments suggest that they were not originally part of the sənsul now in the BHSC. If the fragments do not belong with this sənsul, what then can we determine about their original contexts? Their folded and curled edges confirm that they were at one point integrated in sənsul manuscripts and that they were cut from these manuscripts at some point after their initial production. The narrow sample size of two fragments, however, makes it impossible to determine conclusively whether both leaves were disassembled from the same sənsul, or if they originated in different manuscripts. It is unfortunately also impossible to determine when the manuscript(s) was disassembled. In the remainder of this essay, I provide some
Figure 9.12. *Sãoul* manuscript (cat. 31), the Flagellation (page 15), the Crowning with Thorns (page 16). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Figure 9.13. *Sãoul* manuscript (cat. 31), Christ Nailed to the Cross (page 19), the Crucifixion with Mary and John (page 20). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
contextualizing information about the most likely — but not the only possible — scenario in which the fragments were removed.

Manuscripts have been cut up and used for new purposes since the origin of the codex.\(^2\) Christopher de Hamel — speaking on the subject of western medieval manuscripts — demonstrates that since the fourteenth century manuscripts have been divided for the re-use of their illuminations. These could then be pasted into new codices or, as was common practice in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, collected and displayed in albums.\(^3\) De Hamel establishes that around 1900 collection practices shifted; illuminations were no longer cut from folios, instead whole leaves were disassembled and sold.\(^4\) In England in the 1960’s — only one decade before Harris purchased the sensuīl and fragments in London — the cutting and selling of folios by art dealers flourished.\(^5\) It is in this commercial context that we must consider the fragments.

The leaves were most likely cut from the sensuīl(s) to which they belong once they entered the art market. Dealers frequently acquired manuscripts, disarticulated the leaves, and sold them as parts. Catalogs issued in the 1960s advertised loose pages as “matted, ready for framing.”\(^6\) De Hamel demonstrates the ways in which this practice resulted in increased profits for the seller. A complete manuscript could be sold for $1,000; split it in two and each half could sell for $900, in fourths and each quarter might sell for $800, and so on.\(^7\)

While scholarly perception of the disarticulation and sale of European manuscripts has evolved and art historians now challenge the practice, Ethiopian manuscripts are still disassembled and sold.\(^8\)

The division and sale of these manuscripts into individual leaves fits into a larger tradition of western desire for Ethiopian manuscripts, which were displaced to Europe as early as the fifteenth century. Individual collectors, pilgrims, and missionaries collected small numbers of manuscripts, which they then bequeathed to various European institutions upon their death.\(^9\) In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European colonial powers, including Germany, France, and Britain, conducted expeditions with the explicit intention to acquire ethnological and cultural objects from Africa, including manuscripts from Ethiopia.\(^10\)

Manuscripts were also taken from the country following armed conflict, the most (in)famous of which is the 1868 British Expedition to Mäqdālā. Ostensibly a rescue mission for British citizens being held in the royal fortress of Emperor Tewodros II (r. 1855–68), the conflict was also used by Britain to loot works of art.\(^11\) The then acting director of the British Museum joined the expedition in order to select objects from the royal treasury which would be taken and sent back to Britain.\(^12\) Two hundred mules and fifteen elephants are said to have been required to transport the loot, which included three Wansleben (1636–79), and Theodorus Petraeus (ca. 1630–72), as well as donations from Protestant missionaries.

\(^{10}\) Wion 2012. Germany sent Felix Rosen in 1905 and Enno Littmann in 1906 to Ethiopia; both collected on behalf of the Royal Library in Berlin. France sent Antoine Thomason d’Abbadie in 1837; the manuscripts he acquired were sent to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. One of the earliest explorers/collectors sent by Britain was James Bruce, who traveled to Ethiopia in the late eighteenth century. Bruce’s Ethiopian manuscript collection is now in the Bodleian Library.

\(^{11}\) Pankhurst 1985, pp. 233–35.

\(^{12}\) Woldeyes 2020. Comparable examples of targeted robbery of cultural patrimony by colonial powers are discussed in Hicks 2020.

\(^{2}\) De Hamel 1996, p. 5.

\(^{3}\) De Hamel 1996, pp. 10–11.

\(^{4}\) De Hamel 1996, p. 15.

\(^{5}\) De Hamel 2000.

\(^{6}\) De Hamel 2000, p. 55.

\(^{7}\) De Hamel 1996, p. 19.

\(^{8}\) Mauk 2014. Elaine Treharne, Sandra Hindman, and Eric Johnson are just a few of the art historians who have, in the past 20 years, worked to bring public awareness to the practice and to curtail it. See also the essay by Loic (ch. 4); and the work by the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, https://hmml.org/about/global-operations/ethiopia/.

\(^{9}\) Wion 2012. For instance, until 1900, Germany’s collection of Ethiopian manuscripts comprised of bequeathments from European travelers, including Hiob Ludolf (1624–1704), J.M.
hundred and fifty-six manuscripts for the museum.\textsuperscript{33}

The last of these state-sponsored collecting missions took place in the 1930’s, but individuals continued to collect both loose pages and entire manuscripts. Today the movement of Ethiopian-produced manuscripts out of the country continues as a result of the tourist trade.\textsuperscript{34} It is in this commercial context that we must view both the \textit{sinsul} and the fragments today in the BHSC. These works represent at least two — and possibly three — Ethiopian \textit{sinsul} manuscripts. These manuscripts were at some point in their history taken from their country of origin, at which point they were disassembled and sold.

As a result of the long-term western desire for, and collection of, Ethiopian manuscripts, there are now large collections of these objects in institutions in Europe and North America. Amsalu Tefera counts 6,928 Ethiopian manuscripts currently held outside Ethiopia; this figure does not include privately held or unofficial collections.\textsuperscript{35} Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes demonstrates the ways in which the foreign collection of these objects impacts Ethiopia, namely “the denial of access to knowledge, Eurocentric interpretation of Ethiopian manuscripts, and the handling of Ga’az manuscripts as artefacts from the past.”\textsuperscript{36} Woldeyes argues that these manuscripts are living sources of knowledge. In the words of one Gondärine scholar: “they are creations of Ḫegziabher (God), like all of us. Keeping them in institutions is like keeping living bodies in graveyards.”\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{33} Pankhurst 1985, p. 236.
\textsuperscript{34} Delamarter 2007.
\textsuperscript{35} Tefera, 2019, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{36} Woldeyes 2020 details each of these three impacts. First, he argues that the traditional school system in Ethiopia suffers from a lack of available Ga’az manuscripts, which are used to teach students the language. He also suggests that the collection of Ethiopian manuscripts in western institutions has resulted in a greater amount of scholarship on the objects produced by western scholars than by Ethiopian scholars.

Woldeyes describes this as “epistemic violence whereby local knowledges are used as raw materials to produce Eurocentric knowledge, which in turn is used to teach Africans as though they had no prior knowledge.” Finally, he argues that, when in western collections, Ethiopian manuscripts are viewed as artifacts of the past, while in Ethiopia they are understood as living persons. He concludes “African’s intellectual and cultural heritage, these living bodies locked away in graveyards, must be put back into the hands of Africans.”

\textsuperscript{37} Woldeyes 2020. Ḫegziabher = Ḫegziʾabəḥer.
31. *Sonsul* Manuscript

Ink and paint on parchment  
Page 1: $3\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$ in. (9.8 × 13.0 cm)  
Unfolded length: $69\frac{1}{4}$ in. (175.9 cm)

CONDITION: There is some flaking on the illuminations throughout; a tear on page 1 has been stitched and painted over, as has a tear that bridges the external fold between pages 3 and 4.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from Constantine Z. Panayotidis (Antiques by Constantine Ltd.) in London on October 21, 1975. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.189.1).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/668/

This manuscript is a *sonsul*, also referred to as a “leporello,” “concertina,” or “accordion book,” all terms which reference its folded format. It consists of three pieces of parchment stitched together and folded in rectangular sections. Each section features a painted miniature or text on each side, which we designate as a page. When unfolded, the *sonsul* includes 14 rectangular pages on one side of the stitched parchment, and 14 on the other. For clarity, and to reflect the way in which the *sonsul* is viewed, we have numbered the pages on one side 1–14, and those on the other side 15–28.

Pages 1–14 alternate between full-page miniatures (odd-numbered pages) and text (even-numbered pages). The text, written in Gaʿaz, is the Anaphora of Mary (*Qaddase Maryam*). Each of these text pages contains ten lines of script, written primarily in black ink, with important scriptural names and phrases in red ink. In the twenty-ninth verse of the Anaphora, a priest speaks directly to Mary, asking “with whom or with what likeness shall we liken thee?” The next eight verses compare the Virgin to figures from the Old Testament. In the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth verses the Virgin is compared to: the golden omer of Elijah, the cruse of Elisha, the virgin conception of which Isaiah prophesied, the first giving birth without intercourse of which Daniel (also spoke), the mountain of Pharan of Habakkuk, the closehouse in the east of Ezekiel, the place in Bethlehem from which the law goes forth, the land of Ephratah of Micah, the tree of life of Silondis, the healer of Nahum’s wounds, the rejoicing of Zechariah, the clean hall of Malachi.

The full-page miniatures that alternate with the text pages illustrate this portion of the Anaphora. Each figure is identified by a Gaʿaz inscription located outside the lower edge of the frame. On page 1, an angel is shown touching Elijah’s forehead and gesturing toward two jars. On each of the next five illuminated pages, two of the prophets mentioned in the Anaphora are illustrated, each with an identifying attribute. On page 3, Elisha gestures toward three vases, while Isaiah points toward a star. Two lions can be seen at Daniel’s feet, and a mountain rises behind Habakkuk on page 5. On page 7, Ezekiel and Micah are separated by a built structure resembling a *tukul*, a type of traditional
Ethiopian construction. Silondis and Nahum are similarly separated on page 9, this time by a tree toward which they both gesture. On page 11, Zechariah and Malachi face a central tukul.

The final illuminated page on this side, page 13, departs from this pattern; it depicts the Annunciation of the Virgin. Mary stands outside of a stepped tukul, next to the left edge of the frame. God is shown in bust at the center, inside an abstracted cloud border, accompanied by a dove. On the far right, the archangel Gabriel points upwards with his right hand and gestures toward the Virgin with a branch, held with his left hand. This is one of two standard representations of the Annunciation in Ethiopian art; the branch is a reference to the tree of Jesse.

Pages 15–28, on the other side of the sensul, consist of fourteen full-page miniatures with scenes from the Passion of Christ, each identified by a Ge'ez inscription placed outside the lower edge of the frame. The cycle begins with the Flagellation of Christ on page 15 and continues on 16 and 17 with the Crowning with Thorns and Christ Carrying the Cross. On page 18, Christ is depicted being stripped of his garments. The next four pages (19–22) depict moments from the Crucifixion: the Nailing to the Cross, the Crucifixion with Mary and John, the scene with the Piercing of his Side and the Offering of the Sponge, and the Division of the Garments. The next three pages (23–25) show the events following Christ’s death: the Deposition, the Preparation of the Body, and Burial. Page 26 depicts the Descent into Hell, and page 27 the Resurrection. On the final page (28) is a representation of Mary Magdalene greeting the resurrected Christ.

The color palette of the sensul consists primarily of red, green, and brown. The backgrounds of all miniatures are divided vertically into color fields, with red on the left and green on the right. On pages 1–13, the figures are outlined in black; their skin tone is unpainted, and thus the color of the parchment. On pages 15–28, the green of the background is more thinly applied, resulting in a lighter tone. The figures on this side of the parchment are also outlined in black, and their skin is painted a rich brown. The clothes worn by the figures are similar on both sides. The prophets on pages 1–11 and Christ and Mary on pages 13, 20, 26–28 wear red tunics beneath striped mantles; the other figures are shown in various striped outfits.

Ethiopia and Eritrea have a long tradition of manuscript production, stretching back to the Aksumite Period (ca. 80 BCE – ca. 940 CE).7 Sensul manuscripts have been created in the region since the late fifteenth century.8 Of the three types of manuscript production — the others being codices and scrolls — sensul manuscripts are the least common. They typically functioned as private devotional books and could be carried by their owner in a case or displayed on an altar.9 In this way, they have characteristics of both manuscripts and icons.

This sensul emits a strong fragrance. It would require a significant amount of time and/or exposure to imbue the parchment to this degree with the smell of incense.

CEM

2. Pages are numbered sequentially according to reading direction, following the conventions that scholars use for other screenfold traditions, for example Mesoamerican painted books; see Boone 2007.
3. A translation of the Anaphora can be found in Daoud and Hazen 1959, pp. 104–21. For an explanation of the role of the Anaphora in Ethiopian liturgy, see my essay (ch. 9) in this volume.
5. Daoud and Hazen 1959, pp. 107–08. An omer is a unit of measurement, and a cruse is an earthenware jar.
Cat. 31B. Sinual manuscript, Elijah and the angel (page 1). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 31C. Sinual manuscript, excerpt from the Anaphora of Mary (page 2), Elisha and Isaiah (page 3). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 31D. *Snud* manuscript, excerpt from the Anaphora of Mary (page 4), Daniel and Habakkuk (page 5). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 31E. *Snud* manuscript, excerpt from the Anaphora of Mary (page 6), Ezekiel and Micah (page 7). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 31F. Sinmil manuscript, excerpt from the Anaphora of Mary (page 8), Silondis and Nahum (page 9). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 31G. Sinmil manuscript, excerpt from the Anaphora of Mary (page 10), Zechariah and Malachi (page 11). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 31H. Sənsul manuscript, excerpt from the Anaphora of Mary (page 12), the Annunciation of Mary (page 13). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 31I. Sənsul manuscript, excerpt from the Anaphora of Mary (page 14). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 31J. Sənsul manuscript, the Flagellation (page 15), the Crowning with Thorns (page 16). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 31K. Sənsul manuscript, Christ carrying the Cross (page 17), Christ is Stripped of his Garments (page 18). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 31L. *Sωτήρ* manuscript, Christ Nailed to the Cross (page 19), the Crucifixion with Mary and John (page 20). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 31M. *Sωτήρ* manuscript, Piercing of Christ’s Side and the Offering of the Sponge (page 21), the Division of Christ’s Garments (page 22). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 31N. *Snsel* manuscript, the Deposition (page 23), the Preparation of the Body (page 24). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 31O. *Snsel* manuscript, and Burial (page 25), the Descent into Hell (page 26). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 31P. Sinul manuscript, the Resurrection (page 27), Mary Magdalene greeting the resurrected Christ (page 28). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 31Q. Sinul manuscript, Christ Nailed to the Cross (page 19), the Crucifixion with Mary and John (page 20). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
32. Sənsul Fragment

Ink and paint on parchment
$4^{1/16} \times 5^{1/8}$ in. (10.3 × 13.0 cm)

CONDITION: There is some flaking on both sides; a tear near the upper center has been stitched and painted over.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from Constantine Z. Panayotidis (Antiques by Constantine Ltd.) in London on October 21, 1975. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.189.2).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/1514/

This parchment leaf features full-page framed miniatures on both sides.¹ On one side is a depiction of the Dormition of the Virgin, known in the western tradition as the Assumption. Her body lies horizontally in the lower half of the miniature. On the left, a group of male mourners gather around her, while on the right Christ holds her infant-like soul.

The scene on the other side of the leaf seemingly presents two episodes from the life of the Virgin. To the left, on the red background, Mary spins thread, an iconography associated with the Annunciation. To the right, on the green background, is the archangel Phanuel (Fanû’el), identified by a naming inscription, holding a paten and chalice.² This iconography is associated with the Presentation of the Virgin to the Temple. The Annunciation and the Presentation are depicted on facing folios in an Ethiopian manuscript now at the British Library (Or 481, ff. 99v and 100r).³ Our miniature seemingly conflates these two events, compressing important moments in the life of the Virgin to fit the format of the Sənsul of which this leaf was once a part, and evoking both for the viewer.

The color palette of red, green, and brown is similar to that of the Sənsul (cat. 31) and the other parchment leaf (cat. 33). The backgrounds of both miniatures on this leaf consist of a field of two colors; on the side with the Dormition, the left background is green and the right is a bright red. On the other side these colors are reversed, and the green is lighter. In the scene of the Dormition, the figures are outlined in black and their skin tone is provided by the color of the parchment. In the scene of the Annunciation/Presentation, the skin tone of the figures is a rich brown.

This leaf originally belonged to a larger manuscript and was, at some point, disarticulated.⁴ The edges of the parchment curl in opposite directions, providing evidence that it was cut out of an accordion-folded Sənsul.

CEM

1. Further discussion of this parchment can be found in my essay (ch. 9) in this volume.
2. Many thanks to Birhanu T. Gessese for his identification of the archangel Phanuel.
4. Further discussion can be found in the essays by Erika Loïc (ch. 4) and myself (ch. 9).
Cat. 32B. *Snsul* fragment, Dormition. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

Cat. 32C. *Snsul* fragment, Annunciation/Presentation. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
33. Sənusul Fragment

Ink and paint on parchment

4 1/16 × 5 1/8 in. (10.3 × 13.0 cm)

CONDITION: A tear near the center of the upper edge has been stitched; there is evidence of restoration to the green paint on the apostle side and flaking of paint on the abun side.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris from Constantine Z. Panayotidis (Antiques by Constantine Ltd.) in London on October 21, 1975. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.189.3).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/1515/

This parchment leaf has full-page framed miniatures on both sides. A group of three men is depicted on each side; all six wear red tunics beneath striped mantles and hold prayer staffs in their left hands. On one side, the men depicted are young with black hair and beards, and hold bound books with crosses on the covers in their right hands. Naming inscriptions in Ga’az outside the lower frame identify them as Ya’qob, Peṭros, and Yohannas — the apostles James, Peter, and John.\(^1\) On the other side, the men depicted are older, and are shown with white hair and long, white beards; they hold small crosses in their right hands. Naming inscriptions to the left of the figures’ heads — Arägawi, Alef, and Afṣe — identify each as an abun, a title used for priests, bishops, and monastic holy men.\(^2\)

The color palette of the leaf consists primarily of red, green, and brown. The backgrounds of the miniatures are a field of two colors: red on the left and green on the right. On the apostle side of the leaf the figures are outlined in black and their skin tone is provided by the color of the parchment. On the abun side the skin tone of the figures is painted a rich brown.

This leaf was originally part of a larger manuscript and was, at some point, disarticulated.\(^3\) A small strip of parchment, with a parchment thong still stitched to it, is folded over one lateral edge of the leaf. The parchment thong would serve to attach this leaf to another. Along the opposite edge, the leaf curls in the opposite direction. These two edges reveal that the adjacent pieces of parchment originally attached to this leaf were folded in opposite directions, making the manuscript to which this leaf belonged a sənusul.

CEM

1. Many thanks to Birhanu T. Gessese for his translation of the inscriptions on this leaf.
2. Further discussion on the use of abun can be found in the essay by Madison Gilmore-Duffey (ch. 10) in this volume.
3. Further discussion can be found in the essays by Erika Loic (ch. 4) and myself (ch. 9).
Cat. 33B. *Sinsäl* fragment, Apostles Ya'qob, Peṭros, and Yoḥannas. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.

34. Fragment of a Parchment Scroll

Ink on parchment
6 7/8 x 3 7/8 in. (17.5 x 9.8 cm)

CONDITION: There is damage to both sides of the parchment, particularly on the upper half of the back side, which was exposed, and therefore more vulnerable when the scroll was rolled closed. The lower edge has a series of punctures.


https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/669/

This fragment of parchment is likely the upper portion of a healing scroll. The upper edge of the parchment is straight and has two horizontal slits, which could be threaded with a string to keep the scroll rolled closed. This scroll would have been created by a däbtära using the same ritual described for the other healing scroll (cat. 35).

This fragment retains an image of an angel, brandishing a sword in his right hand and holding a scabbard in his left. The figure is outlined in black, with pink used for the skin, and for details of the tunic and scabbard. The face is abstracted and dominated by large eyes, which gaze outward at the viewer. The figure’s long neck is marked by three horizontal lines. Both the scabbard and the lines of the angel’s tunic continue beyond the torn lower edge of the scroll. There are no inscriptions that identify the figure; it could be any of the seven archangels venerated in the Ethiopian Church, or an unnamed guardian angel.

The angel motif is standard on healing scrolls, the iconography of which alternates between geometric designs, magical letters, and figural images of archangels, angels, and saints. These figures threaten demons by brandishing weapons or being depicted fighting demons. The large eyes are a typical feature of healing scrolls. The angel’s gaze is meant to both deter demons and to focus the healing power of the scroll on the person who gazes at it. Scrolls are rarely unrolled and viewed; instead they are more often kept, tightly rolled, in cylindrical leather cases. The owner wears the case daily around their neck or chest as a protective measure. Both scrolls in the BHSC were likely used in this way, as the parchment remains tightly rolled today.

CEM

2. Chernetsov 2006a, pp. 95–96.
Cat. 34B. Fragment of a Parchment Scroll. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesese.
Cat. 34C. Fragment of a Parchment Scroll, back. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
35. Healing Scroll  
(*ṭälsäṃ or yäbranna këtab*)

Ink on parchment  
46 1/16 × 3 3/4 in. (117.0 × 9.5 cm)

CONDITION: A portion is missing from the upper edge of the scroll; remnants of the pink ink used on the missing illustration(s) are visible. The upper edge also has a series of pinpricks, with a row of spun thread still attached. There is extensive damage to the left side of the scroll — and less severe damage to the right — likely a result of wear and tear as the scroll was rolled closed for daily use.


This parchment scroll was created for a woman, either to enhance her fertility or offer protection for herself and her unborn child. The scroll’s prophylactic function is created by the specific combination of texts and images inscribed on it.¹

The text begins with an opening standard in Ethiopian protective scrolls, “In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God,” and then details the object’s purpose: to capture demons and protect the mother and fetus from their threats.² Several prayers for protection against the Evil Eye and a historiola — a type of spell which describes a mythical or religious narrative in order to provide a precedent for the spell’s request — are also included on this scroll.³ The historiola describes the story of Sissinios, an Orthodox saint who killed his sister when she was possessed by a demoness and attempted to murder her own children.⁴

The scroll is comprised of three sheets of parchment stitched together with parchment thongs.⁵ The uppermost edge of the scroll is torn and contains traces of a pink ink, suggesting an image was originally at the top opening of the scroll.⁶

The rest of the scroll is filled with single-columned lines of Ga‘az text and two talismanic images, one near the center of the scroll and the other at the lower edge. Both images are executed in pink and black pigments.

These images do not illustrate the text, but rather are talismans that supplement the scroll’s protective function. The central image depicts the heads of four angels, each projecting from a side of a central rectangle. The angels are outlined in black and painted pink. Each features a set of large eyes which gaze out at the viewer; the facial features are indicated by black lines. A set of two pink wings, also outlined in black, surrounds each angel’s head. The central rectangle is filled with a wash of pink ink and features a face, similar to that of the angels, with large eyes and eyebrows, as well as a nose and mouth.

The lower edge features a cruciform design. At the center is a pink rectangle with a similar face: large eyes and features that are delineated by black lines. The cross is made of two intersecting arms of equal length, each outlined in black (exterior) and pink (interior) lines. The terminals of each arm curl away from each other. Each arm has a decorated central strip, composed of pink and black wavy lines ending in a terminal conical shape, in which there is a single tear-drop design. Four double-armed crosses, each
made of a single black line, extend from the junction of the cross-arms.

Both of the extant images on this scroll are variants of an image commonly found on healing scrolls: magical geometric designs. These designs are intended to trap demons, sealing them inside the scroll. They are said to derive from the seal of King Solomon, which was revealed to him by God and used to command and trap demons. Together, the designs supplement the healing power of the text, in order to confront and trap demons. Similar motifs can be seen on healing scrolls in the collections of the Bodleian Library (MS Aeth. f. 4 and MS Aeth. f. 10) and the Menil Collection (CA 64051.02).

The oldest surviving Ethiopian healing scroll dates to the early sixteenth century, but they are believed to have been first produced in the Aksumite period (ca. 80 BCE – ca. 940 CE). The scrolls are produced by däbtära — itinerant, unordained clerics. A däbtära was traditionally a teacher and scribe until the education reforms of Ḥaylə Šollase I in the early twentieth century. Today, they serve as singers and musicians in the church and as healers outside the church.

Each scroll is tailored to the needs of a specific client, and is created according to a standard ritual. The process begins with the selection and sacrifice of an astrologically determined animal. The client is then purified by being washed with the animal’s blood. The animal’s skin is then used to produce the parchment for the scroll. Healing scrolls typically consist of three strips of parchment, stitched together to create a scroll equal in height to the client. This ensures the client is protected from head to toe. The scrolls are then inscribed with the owner’s name and a collection of texts and designs that together provide its protective role. While the majority of extant scrolls were created for women, to aid in conception and pregnancy, they can be produced to counteract any ailment. The däbtära selects appropriate prayers and protective spells and inscribes them in black ink on the scroll. The baptismal name of the client, incipit phrases of prayers, and important words from scripture are then inscribed in red ink. These scrolls can then be worn by the client in a cylindrical case or hung from the walls of their home until they have served their purpose. Once the client is healed, the scroll can be stored in case the ailment returns.

CEM

1. Major sources to consult on the creation and function of Ethiopian healing scrolls include Mercier 1979; Mercier 1997; Chernetsov 2006a; Levene 2019.
2. This incipit is termed the “usual invocation” in Levene 2019, p. 109.
3. I am extraordinarily grateful to Felege-Selam Yirga for his translations of the Ga’az text on this scroll and his assistance throughout the research process.
4. Chernetsov 2006a, p. 101. The Ethiopian legend of Saint Sissinios seems to have been borrowed from Coptic Synaxaria. Parallel stories exist in the Greek, Armenian, Romanian, Slavonic, Arabic, Syriac, and Hebrew traditions, although the spelling of the saint’s name and the name of the child-killing demon varies. In the Ethiopian tradition the demon is called Warzalya.
5. The uppermost section measures 12 3/4 in. (31.5 cm) in length, the central section 22 1/4 in. (56 cm), and the lower section 12 1/4 in. (31 cm).
7. Chernetsov 2006a, pp. 95–96. Other types of images are iconic figures, typically saints or angels, and magical letters or marks.
15. Mercier 1979, p. 16. Goat and sheepskin are the most frequently used.
Cat. 35B. Healing scroll, part 1. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 35C. Healing scroll, part 2. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesese.
Cat. 35D. Healing scroll, part 3. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 3SE. Healing scroll, part 4. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesese.
Cat. 35F. Healing scroll, part 5. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 35G. Healing scroll, part 6. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesese.
Cat. 35H. Healing scroll, part 7. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesesse.
Cat. 35I. Healing scroll, part 8. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 35K. Healing scroll, front. Photo: Brad Hostetler.

Cat. 35L. Healing scroll, back. Photo: Brad Hostetler.
The Iconography and Roles of an Ascetic Monk:
A Painting of Abba Samu’el of Waldabba

Madison Gilmore-Duffey

The recent developments in Ethiopian studies, including translation and digitization, have made accessible texts and objects that were previously unavailable to non-Ethiopian specialists. Many of these translations include gādlat, or saints’ vitae. The saints are central figures in the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥado Church (EOTC), and by studying their vitae and associated iconographies we can gain a better understanding of the ways in which saints functioned for the faithful.1 Abba (“Father”) Samuʾel of Waldabba (fl. fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries), the focus of this study, has been for centuries depicted in Ethiopian Orthodox public and private devotional art. These depictions include the painting now in the Blick-Harris Study Collection (BHSC) in the Department of Art History at Kenyon College (fig. 10.1; cat. 36). The iconography of his images, and the ways in which they reflect aspects of his vitae, have not been treated in depth, nor recognized for its relationship with Ethiopian identities. In what follows I analyze the iconography of Abba Samuʾel and consider the ways in which aspects of his vitae are represented and emphasized in art. Variations of these iconographies evoke and invoke different roles, or identities, of Abba Samuʾel: as a Good Shepherd, as a witness and legitimizer, and as a representation of Ethiopian identity. The interpretation of these iconographies relies in part on the work of art, but it is also dependent on the viewer, owner, patron, placement of its display and use, as well as the individual and broader cultural context. The painting of Abba Samuʾel of Waldabba in the BHSC serves as a case study through which we can consider this variability.

The painting of Abba Samuʾel of Waldabba is an irregular rectangle, thick, and stiff; this thickness indicates that it may be made of goat skin, which is often used to make parchment throughout Ethiopia.2 There is a tear along the upper left edge and two holes in the upper corners of the parchment. The larger hole, on the right, is a wormhole, while the smaller perforation, on the left, may be from a nail — a possibility to which I shall return.3 The parchment has darkened edges; the bottom right edge is significantly darker. The front — the flesh side — is painted and features a depiction of a bearded figure riding a lion, within an orange-red rectangular frame on top of a darker orange background. Partial frames, similar to that which surrounds the central image, are visible on the bottom right and upper left of the fragment. There is a horizontal crease in the parchment below the lion’s hind feet that extends across the fragment; it appears to have been used by the artist as a ground line when drawing the lion.4 The underdrawing — faint brown lines — is visible under the lion’s body, legs, and mane. The reverse of the fragment — the hair side — is unpainted.

The upper left of the frame contains a Gaʾaz inscription, labeling the figure as “Abunā Samuʾel

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1 For background on Ethiopian Christianity, see the essay by Neal Sobania (ch. 5).
2 Gnisci 2019, p. 24. Sheepskin is also used, although it is not as thick.
3 I thank Erika Loic for bringing this to my attention, as well as for her generous assistance on all matters concerning parchment.
4 It is unclear if the artist intentionally created the crease as a guide for a groundline, or if the parchment was creased before they painted it.
Figure 10.1. Parchment Fragment with Abba Samu’el of Waldabella (cat. 36). Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
of Waldabba]. The figure — as well as his clothing and accouterments — is outlined in dark paint. His skin is painted the same orange as the background within the frame, but his halo and the stone cap are unpainted and are therefore the same color as the parchment. He is clothed in a dark blue robe and red belt. In his right hand he holds a prayer stick: a tall stick with volutes at the top that can be used as a walking stick and portable chair to rest on during long periods of prayer or during a church service (fig. 10.2). Only his bare right foot is visible. He wears a hollowed-out stone cap, and his halo encompasses his head, shoulders, and cap. Abba Samu’el sits astride the lion’s back, gripping its mane with his left hand while the lion rears up on its hind legs. The lion’s body, teeth, and hair are outlined in a dark color; its body is unpainted except for the brown tuft of hair at the end of its tail, which curls up into the air. The lion has long, attenuated triangles representing the thick hair of its mane, large and slanted eyes, and a humanoid nose. Its teeth are bared and emphasized by the artist; they take up almost half of the lion’s face and are represented by wide triangles.

To my knowledge, there is no published comparanda for this object. For this reason, we must compare it with depictions of Abba Samu’el in other media. While the iconography is not standardized, there is an unofficial formula within which images of him are constrained. Through the study of depictions of Abba Samu’el and the iconographies that recur, it is possible to consider which of his roles are evoked and invoked in this particular work. This approach, I suggest, sheds light on the messages conveyed by the iconography of our piece, and the ways in which it may have been used.

The Life of Abba Samu’el of Waldabba

Differing iconographies and textual interpretations offer insight into the roles that Abba Samu’el occupies in Ethiopian society. In order to understand the ways in which iconography signals

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5 I thank Felege-Selam Yirga for his translation. “Abuna” is the Ga’az word for “father” and is often used to refer to priests or bishops. I have chosen to use the Amariñña (Amharic) word for “father” (“Abba”), also used to refer to priests and bishops, as this is the title primarily given to Samu’el of Waldabba in current English-language scholarship. Additionally, while Ga’az is the language of the Church, it was replaced as a spoken language in the tenth century by other Semitic languages like Amarañña. See Sobiana’s essay (ch. 5) for more on Ga’az and Amarañña. Today, Amarañña is the state and inter-ethnic language primarily spoken by Ethiopians. Given that we do not know when or where this parchment fragment was made, and in following the standards set by scholars of Ethiopia, I have decided to use the Amarañña word. See also Haile 2001, pp. 20–21.
these roles, it is important to contextualize him within the history of the church, and to examine the evolution of his vitae. We therefore take a slight detour, into the history of Ethiopian monasticism as it relates to Abba Samu’el, followed by an overview of his vitae.

There are two primary narratives that recount Ethiopia’s conversion to Christianity. The earliest of these survives in a fourth century Roman text written by the historian Rufinus. In this contemporary account, two traveling Christian merchants, Frumentius and Aedesius, are taken into the custody of King Ḥḷāʾ ‘Amida and are called upon to serve his son — King Ḥ’Ezana (d. 356 CE) — after his death. Eventually, they convert Ḥ’Ezana and spread Christianity throughout Ethiopia. The second narrative, dated to the late fifth to early sixth centuries, emphasizes the primacy of monks and the monastic system, and positions Ethiopia’s religious tradition and conversion as distinct from that of the Coptic Church of Alexandria. In this narrative, a group of missionaries from the Eastern Mediterranean (Rome or Byzantium), known as the Nine Saints, brought a collection of Greek homilies and monastic rule books to Ethiopia. These saints are credited with implementing monasticism within the early church. Robust legends regarding these saints did not develop until the fourteenth century, during the early Solomonic period (1270–1530), when local monastic establishments began to develop across Ethiopia, with major movements in the provinces of Šäwa and Ṭegray. The Nine Saints are considered students of Saint Pachomius (d. 348 CE), the founder of cenobitic monasticism, which emphasized monastic community. Pachomius was Coptic, and his status gave him a legitimacy and authority that was passed on to the Nine Saints and their students.

Monastic authority was dependent upon pious legitimacy that passed from teachers to students and others with whom they interacted, thus creating a spiritual lineage or descendancy. This concept is integral to the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition and is emphasized in both art and textual sources. The Kōbrā ṉāgbaṣ (Glory of Kings), a thirteenth-century compilation of religious texts, emphasizes the importance of this descendancy, characterizing it in both spiritual and political terms. According to the contemporary accounts that support the Nine Saints’ legend. See Lusini 2020, pp. 199–200. See also Sobiana’s essay (ch. 5).

6 See Sobiana’s essay (ch. 5). Most of the information that survives about King Ḥ’llaʾ ‘Amida comes from his coins.
7 Upon arrival, Frumentius and Aedesius’s entire crew was killed by Ethiopian coast guards except for these two men who were then taken as servants to the king where they gained his favor and that of his son. After converting the son (the new king), Frumentius traveled to Alexandria to request a bishop for the newly converted Ethiopians and was given the position himself. This narrative emphasizes the ties between the Ethiopian and Coptic churches — a relationship that was continued during the Solomonic period, where the Ethiopian patriarch was chosen from an Egyptian monastery. See Sobiana’s essay (ch. 5); Haile 2001, pp. 28–29; and Kaplan 2009, pp. 293–94.
8 Lusini 2020, p. 199 notes that this second narrative regarding the conversion of Ethiopia by the Nine Saints suggests that the earlier conversion of King Ḥ’Ezana was “superficial.”
9 Their names are Alef, Afį, Zāmikaʾel called Arågawi (“the Elder”), Yāšḥaq also called Gārima, Guba, Liqanos, Pāntālewon called Zāsomaʾat (“the one from the cell”), Šōhuma, and Yāmʾat’a, and sometimes ʿOṣ. In some accounts, the Nine Saints are from Syria; see Gniści 2019, p. 16; and Brita 2020, p. 262. Unlike the story of Frumentius and Aedesius, there are no
text, Ethiopian Christians are the descendants of the Jewish King Solomon and the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba, Makada, as well as possessors of the Ark of the Covenant. Through this text, the Ethiopian faithful are positioned as descendants and inheritors of Judaism and so as the chosen people of God, as are the kings of Ethiopia, who trace their lineage back to Solomon and Makadda. It is important to consider the significance of this spiritual descentancy and the legitimacy it conveys within Ethiopian Orthodoxy, as well as in the political landscape of Ethiopia.

According to Abba Samu’el’s vitae, his father, Ṣṣṭifanos, a “holy man,” and his mother, ‘Amätä Maryam, moved to Aksum to teach him the Holy Scriptures. After his parents’ death, Samu’el traveled to Däbrä Bänkänl to become a monk, studying under Abba Mäḏḥanänā Ḭgzi’ (fl. fourteenth century). Abba Samu’el fasted, prayed, and worked at the monastery. He eventually found the other monks visiting him to be a nuisance, and so went into the desert where he fasted and prayed alone for forty days and forty nights. In the desert, wild animals bowed down to him, and licked the dust off his feet. He was protected from natural disaster by God and tempted by Satan, until one day Christ visited him while in prayer and “sealed his whole body...with His spittle.” This inspired Abba Samu’el to become an anchorite (a monk who rejects a monastic community in favor of solitude), to wear fetters and a sackcloth, and to self-mortify. During this period he also began to administer to the lions’ needs, tending to their wounds and plucking thorns from their paws. He began to attract disciples, and met other, historically important monks, including Abba Gäbrä Mäšqäl of Däbrä Lägaso. While consecrating the Eucharist, a chalice and bread came down from Heaven, and while reading the Praises of Our Lady Mary, Abba Samu’el was lifted off the ground. The Virgin then gave him a stone that shot out light and the scent of incense. Before his death, the Archangel Michael carried him through the Heavenly Jerusalem, bringing him before the throne of God who said he would be praised on Earth. Abba Samu’el then returned to his bed, reported the events to his disciples, and died.

As a student of Mäḏḥänānā Ḥgzi’, who was a student of Täklä Haymanot (1215–1313) — a major church leader and, later, a saint, who is credited with monastic reform and the establishment of monastic communities across Ethiopia — Abba Samu’el is connected to the Nine Saints and to Pachomius. As we recall, this is the group of missionaries who brought Christianity to Ethiopia. Abba Samu’el’s association with Waldbaba, now in Tagray in Northern Ethiopia — the same province from which the Nine Saints spread their teachings — ties him to these figures in a second way. He is therefore — by location and monastic training — part of a long spiritual lineage that links him to the Nine Saints and to the foundations of Ethiopian monasticism.

Abba Samu’el lived during the fifteenth century, a period of intense monastic reform in Ethiopia. Prior to this period, the kings of Ethiopia supported the Coptic patriarch and metropolitan — whose offices were in Alexandria — over the Ethiopian monastics who did not participate in courtly power.

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14 Brita 2020, p. 273. Abba Mäḏḥānānā Ḥgzi’ was a disciple of Täklä Haymanot and a teacher to Abba Samu’el, and he founded Däbrä Bänkänl; see Zelleke 1975, p. 81.
15 Each of these actions is a type of self-mortification.
16 Abba Gäbrä Mäšqäl of Däbrä Lägaso is most known for having founded a hermitage; see Zelleke 1975, p. 74.
17 Moore 1936, p. 283; and Brita 2020, p. 273. Täklä Haymanot studied under Abba Yohanni of Däbrä Damo. He established monastic communities, including Däbrä ‘Asbo (later, Däbrä Libanos); see Budge 1928, p. 2:365; Zelleke 1975, pp. 81, 92; and Brita 2020, p. 273.
structures. As the Solomonic Dynasty (1270–1974) sought to expand its territory during this period, local aristocrats allied themselves with local monasteries in order to protect their autonomy and disrupt the power systems that benefited the king and elites of his court, including priests and church leaders. This changed under King Dawit II (r. 1379/80–1413) and the Emperor Zär’Ya’eqob (r. 1434–68); both recognized Ethiopian monastics as representatives of a specifically Ethiopian Orthodox identity.

Monastic reform during the Solomonic period emphasized the dichotomy between cenobitic monasticism and anchoritism. Abba Samu’el, like other monastic saints during this period, operated in both spheres. His depiction in art, to which I now turn, is similarly informed by this seeming dichotomy.

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20 The priests were part of Ethiopia’s political hierarchy and many were often in close communication with the king; Lusini 2020, pp. 211, 214. The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria is a Non-Chalcedonian Church. From the introduction of Christianity until 1959 — when the EOTC received its first Ethiopian Patriarch and gained autocephalic status — members of the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition followed the patriarch in Alexandria.

21 See footnote 11; and Lusini 2020, pp. 211–12.

22 Lusini 2020, p. 214. Sometimes King Dawit II is referred to as “Dawit I.” The other “King Dawit I” is the King Manilik, son of King Solomon and Queen Makadda of Sheba, anointed “Dawit (David)” by Solomon; see Aynachew 2020, p. 59.

23 Lusini 2020, p. 209.

24 Saints Bāṣalotā Mika’el and Filappos of Dābrā ‘Asbo are also known for participating in both cenobitic monasticism and anchoritism. Bāṣalotā Mika’el was a fourteenth-century monk who accused Abunà Yoḥannas (an Egyptian Bishop in Ethiopia) of practicing simony. He improved monastic conditions and played a large role in the early monastic reform; see Zelleke 1975, p. 66. Filappos of Dābrā ‘Asbo (ca. 1323–1406) was another leader in the monastic reform movement, pushing for the observance of two sabbath days. See Zelleke 1975, p. 71; and Lusini 2020, p. 209.
Iconography and Identity in Depictions of Abba Samu’el of Waldabba

The varying iconographies associated with Abba Samu’el convey and emphasize different aspects of his life. The placement of certain iconographical elements in relation to the saint’s body, and the selection and inclusion of other saints with him are variables that communicate his many identities. Abba Samu’el’s physical characteristics are also subject to variability and choice. He is depicted with different beard lengths and hair colors, and at different ages; there are variants in the colors of his clothing; sometimes he wears shoes, and sometimes he does not; he carries different symbols of piety; he is sometimes shown riding a lion, is sometimes accompanied by lions, and is sometimes depicted without them. What remains consistent and acts as confirmation of his identity is his naming inscription. Sometimes these inscriptions tell us more than just his name, as we find in the inscription on a fifteenth-century wall mural at the church of Däbrä Ṣyyon. This mural depicts Abba Samu’el beside two lions; the inscription reads: “...Abunä Samu’el, you cover him as with the clothing of his heart... and make him sit with the blessed doves [monks] in Däbrä Ṣyyon, the temple. Amen” (fig. 10.3).25 Both the longer inscriptions and the shorter ones, such as that on our parchment fragment of Abba Samu’el of Waldabba, clarify who, specifically, is depicted, and are typically written in Ga’asz.

There are aspects of Abba Samu’el’s vitae that are consistently depicted in all of his images, such as his status as a monk, which is visually communicated by his clothing. He is always in traditional monastic garb, consisting of a long cloak or robe, and a belt.26 This choice of clothing clearly identifies his position as a monk, rather than a saint with a lay or clerical background. The consistency with which he is depicted in this clothing indicates that it is an important aspect of his visual identity. In some images, he is shown barefoot. Not all saints or monks are depicted in this way, and it is possible

25 Translation from Tribe 2009, p. 20, with spelling emendations.

26 Tribe 2009, p. 18. Many saints in the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition are monks.
Maryam Quiat (fig. 10.4), and with symbols of his self-mortification.  

27 Abba Samu’el’s vitae and associated legends tell us that he fasted, prostrated so often that he became flat-footed, and practiced self-mortification, specifically through flagellation, but none of these practices are included in images of the saint. Instead, he is sometimes depicted with a stone cap that covers his ears and resembles a helmet, as we see in our parchment painting; stone caps are still worn today by monks as a form of self-mortification (fig. 10.5).  

28 These symbols of piety — his prayer stick, hand cross, and stone cap — are therefore attributes that are used to emphasize Abba Samu’el’s spiritual devotion.

Abba Samu’el’s association with lions is not unusual in hagiography and art; multiple Ethiopian saints are said to have tended to them.  

29 He is, however, the only saint shown riding a lion, often grasping its mane (fig. 10.6). The bared teeth and claws emphasize the fact that the lion is powerful.

There is no mention of the subsequent use of this stone — whether it was worn or held.

29 Kaplan 1984, pp. 87–90. All of these saints were modeled after Daniel and his relationship with lions, either hagiographically, iconographically, or both.
and deadly, thereby displaying *Abba* Samu’el’s ability to ride, and ultimately control, the animal as something unusual and incredible. In other depictions, *Abba* Samu’el does not ride a lion, but is accompanied by one. These images emphasize other aspects of his identity, such as his relationship with *Abba* Gäbrä Mänfäs Qđ dus (fl. fifteenth century) — a saint from Egypt credited with founding multiple monasteries in Ethiopia. On a fifteenth-century diptych owned by Daga Ǝśṭifanos on Lake Ṭana, these two saints are shown together in the lower-left corner of the right panel (fig. 10.7). *Abba* Gäbrä Mänfäs Qđ dus, on the left, stands in front of four lions, and is shown with his hands raised in prayer. *Abba* Samu’el, on the right, is accompanied by one lion, whose head is partially visible.

In all extant depictions of *Abba* Samu’el, we can see different roles, or identities, based on the iconography chosen, the context in which he is shown, and the saints with which he is depicted. In what follows, I identify three primary identities in depictions of *Abba* Samu’el: as a Good Shepherd, as a witness and a legitimizer of other Ethiopian saints, and as a representative of Ethiopian identity. These suggested roles are not mutually exclusive, and some images of *Abba* Samu’el are multivalent.

**Abba Samu’el as a Good Shepherd**

As we have seen, *Abba* Samu’el is depicted with his lion companions more often than not. A wall painting from the church of Däbrä  ámbon depicts
the saint returning a lost lion cub to its mother (fig. 10.3). Tania Costa Tribe situated this wall painting within the larger context of the church, arguing that this image demonstrated one aspect of the saint’s *vita*: using his special bond with animals to protect people from attack.\(^{31}\) I push this argument further by suggesting that the text and iconography associated with *Abba* Samu’el parallel Biblical verses detailing Christ’s return of a lost sheep to the flock and his protection of them.\(^{32}\) Depictions of Christ as the Good Shepherd are found in Ethiopian church decorative programs, including the east wall of the Church of Bačāna Giyorgis (date unknown) in Goğğam province (fig. 10.8).\(^{33}\) Two side-by-side scenes on the third register depict Christ protecting his flock of sheep from wolves. Iconographically, depictions of Christ and *Abba* Samu’el as Good Shepherds differ; thematically, however, there are parallels between Christ as protector of animals, and by extension, mankind, and *Abba* Samu’el as a similar protector. Just as Christ returns the lost sheep to its flock, so too does *Abba* Samu’el return the lion cub to its mother; each figure tends to the faithful.

**Abba Samu’el as Witness and Legitimizer**

*Abba* Samu’el’s role as a legitimizer is emphasized in images where he is shown alongside depictions of other monastic saints and church leaders. In a painting, dated to 1905–12, now at the Kunstkamera in Saint Petersburg, we see him depicted with Täklä Haymanot, Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus, and Gäbrä Krastos — all descended from the Nine Saints — in a grid pattern that visually associates *Abba* Samu’el with the lives of these three men (fig. 10.9).\(^{34}\) We see this too on the seventeenth-century diptych from Daga Ǝstifanos, where *Abba* Samu’el is shown beside Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus (fig. 10.7). In both of these works, *Abba* Samu’el’s

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33 There is little information recorded for this church; the dates of both the building and wall paintings are unknown.
34 For Gäbrä Krastos, see Zelleke 1975, p. 73.
Figure 10.9. Painting of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus (upper left), Tāklä Haymanot (upper right), Samu’el of Waldabba (bottom left), and Gäbrä Krastos (bottom right), 1905–12 (?). Oil (?) on linen. Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (The Kunstkamera), St. Petersburg, Russia (МАЭ № 2594-3). Photo: http://collection.kunstkamera.ru/en/entity/OBJECT/281507
association with these particular saints highlights their shared spiritual lineages. His image, then, functions to legitimize: he provides spiritual legitimacy to these other saints and they in turn legitimize him. The spiritual powers of all these figures are increased when they are shown together.

*Abba* Samu’el’s legitimizing power also comes from his role as witness. The *vita* of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus recounts a story in which *Abba* Samu’el, along with Saints Anbäs of Hazalo and Banyam, appeared from the heavens with their lions to learn from him.\(^{35}\) According to his *vita*, Satan killed the saints’ lions with his own, but Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus raised them from the dead.\(^{36}\) *Abba* Samu’el, witnessing this miracle, deferred to him, asking if he was God.\(^{37}\) In this narrative, *Abba* Samu’el acts as

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35 *EAE*, 2:621b. Modern translations of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus’s *vita* record *Abba* Samu’el, Anbäs, and Banyam as the three saints who arrive on lions to learn from him. Budge’s translation (1928, p. 3:767), however, identifies the figures as *Abba* Samu’el, Anseo, and Banyam. Like Anbäs, Budge’s Anseo is from Hazalo.

36 Budge 1928, pp. 3:768–69.

37 Budge 1928, p. 3:769.
witness to Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus’s act. His role as witness thus served to legitimize another saint’s miraculous deeds. The authority that he possesses through his esteemed spiritual lineage empowers him to acknowledge and verify the event.

Abba Samu’el and Ethiopian Identity

Abba Samu’el’s role as a representative of Ethiopian identity is also reflected in his vitae, which as we recall, was developed during a period of intense monastic reforms that connected monastic saints with Ethiopian power and identity. His spiritual lineage from the Nine Saints, through Täklä Haymanot and Abba Mädḫaninä Ṣgzi’, and his relationship with Gäbrä Mänfäs Qaddus, underscore his ties to the foundation of Ethiopian Christianity and to the development of Ethiopian monasticism. In art, this role is visually detailed through two main iconographies: the combination of cenobitic and anchoritic elements, and the depictions of legendary events that show Abba Samu’el interacting with Ethiopian political figures.

While Abba Samu’el participated in the cenobitic monastic tradition, he later left the monastic community to become an anchorite. In art, this dichotomy is represented through the monastic clothing of the cenobitic tradition, while the lion he rides, the stone helmet of mortification, his prayer stick, and his bare feet (a rejection of earthly possessions) identify him as an anchorite. Each of these elements are depicted in the painting of Abba Samu’el of Waldabbba in the BHSC. The references to cenobitic and anchoritic traditions reflect the variety of monastic practices within Ethiopia, many of which developed during the period of reform in Abba Samu’el’s own lifetime. His images, then, serve as visual markers in this history and as a representation of a distinctly Ethiopian monastic tradition.

In the Church of Yoḥannas Mä’aquddi, we find a seventeenth-century wall painting that shows Abba Samu’el aiding King Fasilädäs (r. 1632–67) against Muslim insurrections (fig. 10.10). On the second row, Abba Samu’el stands beside a disciple-attendant; both hold hand crosses. Neither the saint nor his attendant is depicted in the midst of action; however, they are surrounded by scenes that depict soldiers on horses, figures being hung, and other battle scenes. The viewer, looking at a work of art such as this, would have been familiar with the legends about Abba Samu’el and his role in the battle, and would remember how he defended Christianity and protected the Ethiopian faithful. The viewer’s familiarity with the legend means that depiction of his participation is not necessary; his inclusion in the scene is enough. Legends such as this are examples of the ways in which monastic saints such as Abba Samu’el can become representations of Ethiopian Orthodox identity; here, deceased saints return to earth to aid the state against Muslim insurrection or rebellion, indicating that both the saints and the kings have a shared goal in maintaining Ethiopia as an Ethiopian Orthodox state.

The Painting of Abba Samu’el of Waldabbba

The various roles of Abba Samu’el of Waldabbba can be invoked through different iconographies. The visual expression of each is dependent upon which iconographies the artist or patron chose, the location of the image, the media, and/or the audience. Sometimes these roles converge and sometimes they are distinct. For example, the image of Abba Samu’el that depicts him with King Fasilädäs emphasizes his roles as protector of Ethiopia, a legitimizer of the king’s piety and faith, and a preserver of Ethiopian Orthodoxy and identity. Depictions of him alone and riding his lion, on the other hand, rely on the viewer’s knowledge of his vitae, and aspects of his life that speak to the viewer in that moment, including his role as a Good Shepherd and as a model of monastic piety. These

38 Lusini 2020, p. 209.
39 Kaplan 1984, pp. 87–90.

40 King Fasilädäs is credited with “restoring” the Ethiopian church by removing the Jesuit, Roman Catholic, and Muslim presence; see Moore 1936, pp. 281–82.
Iconographies can evoke and remind the viewer of specific aspects of the saint and his vitae, but it is the people who interact with the image that invoke and call upon Abba Samu’el’s various and specific roles.

For the painting of Abba Samu’el of Waldabba in the BHSC, the loss of context prevents us from identifying the original uses and intents of the people who interacted with the object. We are left with only a few clues based on the current state of the parchment. It is possible the fragment may have been used as a personal devotional object. As we have seen, the small perforation in the upper left corner is similar to the shape of a nail. This perforation is not smooth but contains jagged edges on the reverse side, as if something had been pushed through it (fig. 10.11). While there is limited comparanda for objects similar to this fragment, there are examples of other pieces of parchment being hung and displayed on the walls of Ethiopian homes (fig. 10.12). This photo shows a magic scroll (kətab) nailed to the wall. Magic scrolls are sometimes displayed this way in order to function as traps for demons (see cats. 34, 35). The painting of Abba Samu’el of Waldabba may have once been nailed to a wall the same way. It would have had a similar importance as an object used for personal devotion, and its display on the wall is indicative of it having once served as a protective or meditative device that needed to be visually accessible to the viewer.

Other aspects of the fragment’s condition also indicate personal use, including the edges darkened by skin oils, the tear on the left side, and the uneven edges. As we have seen, the bottom right corner is significantly more worn, and darker, than the remainder of the parchment. This wearing is similar to the discoloration caused by skin oil found on the corners of manuscript pages, where the parchment has been turned and touched many times. The discoloration would occur from similar haptic use during personal devotion.

41 These scrolls are personal and made specifically for the purchaser, then buried or destroyed after they have served their purpose. They are usually kept in cases and are displayed only to perform specific functions; see Nosnitsin 2012, p. 4; and Windmuller-Luna 2015.
The tear and jagged edges indicate that this fragment was cut from a larger piece. Had our parchment originally been part of a manuscript, it would have been cut in straight lines, as seen in the *sinsul* and *sinsul* fragments featured in this catalog (cats. 31, 32, 33.) This fragment was originally part of a larger piece that included other framed images; the upper and lower right edges of the fragment preserve colored lines that match the frame surrounding *Abba Samu‘el*. As we have seen, images of multiple saints, each contained within a single frame, are found on a variety of objects, including wall paintings and manuscripts (figs. 10.4, 10.7, 10.9).

We do not know what the original message of the fragment may have been, as *Abba Samu‘el’s* roles change depending on who is depicted with him. The iconography of the parchment fragment is meant to recall his relationship with cenobitic monasticism and anchoritism. In this way, his own piety is emphasized. He also serves to legitimize the viewer’s piety. The viewer — who is already participating in the act of pious devotion by either displaying, viewing, or holding the object — is witnessed by *Abba Samu‘el* in the same way that the miraculous acts of Gäbrä Mänfä sä Qaddus were witnessed. The viewer could also recognize and invoke *Abba Samu‘el’s* role as protector. As we have seen, he rides his lion, emphasizing his control of animals, and the legends that place him as a Good Shepherd.

*Abba Samu‘el’s* vitae and associated legends, which are well known to the faithful, would have informed these different perceptions and uses. We cannot know if the owner, artist, or viewer was also a native of Waldabba or Tagray, but if so *Abba Samu‘el* could represent a specific local identity — in the same way that he invokes a larger Ethiopian Orthodox identity when depicted alongside kings and saints.

The iconography of *Abba Samu‘el* functions to convey a spectrum of Ethiopian identities. While there are no standardized iconographic formulae for the depictions of *Abba Samu‘el*, there is formal continuity among depictions of him. As the essays and catalog entries in this volume demonstrate, this continuity in Ethiopian Orthodox art and material culture is indicative of the persistence of form and function in the Ethiopian Orthodox artistic tradition.
36. Parchment Fragment with Abba Samu’el of Waldabba

Ink on parchment, possibly goat skin
6 15/16 x 4 3/4 x 1/32 in. (17.6 x 12.1 x 0.08 cm)

INSCRIPTION: Abunä Samuʾel [of Waldabba]

CONDITION: Worn with evidence of handling and bending at the foot of the lion. There is a worm hole in the upper right corner and a nail hole in the upper left. The edges are uneven, and a piece appears to have been cut from the upper left side.

PROVENANCE: Purchased by David P. Harris. Date, receipt, and supplemental documents are unavailable. Harris bequest, The Blick-Harris Study Collection, Department of Art History, Kenyon College (2020.408).

https://digital.kenyon.edu/arthistorystudycollection/667/

This parchment is thick and stiff. The edges are uneven, suggesting that this fragment was cut from a larger piece. It contains a depiction of Abba Samuʾel of Waldabba, a fifteenth-century Ethiopian monk. Abba Samuʾel is shown within an orange-red frame on a light-orange background. He sits on the back of a lion, who is growling and rearing up on his hind legs. Abba Samuʾel grasps the lion’s mane in his hand and is guiding it. He is shown with a beard and wears typical monastic garb: dark robes with white borders and a red belt. He is barefoot and carries only a prayer stick in his right hand. Abba Samuʾel has a halo and wears a stone cap.

The hole in the upper-right corner of the parchment is a wormhole. That in the upper-left corner is possibly a nail hole, and may be evidence that the parchment was once hung on the wall. There remains evidence of another two border frames, visible at the upper-right and lower-right edges of this fragment, further suggesting that Abba Samuʾel’s icon was removed from a larger parchment that contained multiple, similar icons of other Ethiopian saints. There is a crease below the rear feet of the lion that the artist used as a ground line, suggesting that it was there before this image was painted. The under drawing is visible for the lion’s body, legs, and mane.

1. “Abunä” is a Ga’az word for “father” and is often used to refer to priests or bishops. I have chosen to use the Amaroña (Amharic) word for “father” (“Abba”), also used to refer to priests and bishops, as this is the title primarily given to Samuʾel of Waldabba in current scholarship. For more information, see my essay (ch. 10).
2. Stone caps, or hollowed stones worn on the head like a hat or helmet, are used by some Ethiopian monks as a type of self-mortification device. References to Abba Samuʾel’s self-mortification are found in his vitae. For more information, see my essay (ch. 10).
3. Abba Samuʾel is sometimes depicted alongside Gàbrä Mänfás Qoddus, Tàklä Haymanot, and Gàbrä Krastos — other Ethiopian monastic saints and church leaders. In one example (see figure 10.9 of my essay), each figure is framed by borders similar to those on this parchment fragment. For more on Abba Samuʾel’s relationship with these saints and what may have originally been depicted, see my essay (ch. 10).
Cat. 36B. Parchment Fragment with Abba Samu’el of Waldabba, front. Photo: Birhanu T. Gessese.
Cat. 36B. Parchment Fragment with Abba Samu‘el of Waldobba, back. Photo: Birhanu T. Gesese.
Appendix
List of Objects from the Harris Bequest Accessioned into the BHSC

Objects not included in the Harris Catalog (HC) are indicated by a hyphen (-) under the sub-collection column. Accession numbers with one asterisk (*) indicate those objects that were purchased by Harris prior to the UNESCO Convention (November 17, 1970). The two asterisks attached to 2020.181** indicate that this object was purchased after 1970, but is accompanied with documentation authorizing its transfer from its country of modern discovery. The three asterisks attached to 2020.321*** indicate that this object was also purchased after 1970, but is accompanied with documentation that suggests it was outside its country of probable modern discovery prior to 1970. All other objects not so marked do not have documentation that meets UNESCO Convention standards.

<table>
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<th>Accession Number</th>
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