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

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Shelf mark	W.768
Manuscript	Ethiopic Psalter with Canticles, Song of Songs, and two hymns in praise of Mary
Text title	Psalms and associated texts
Author	<i>Supplied name:</i> St. Yared the Aksumite priest
Author	<i>Supplied name:</i> St. Ephraem Syrus
Abstract	This beautifully copied and bound Ethiopian Psalter likely belonged to one of the princes of the Gonderite royal family, whose reign ended in 1769. The main text of this undecorated manuscript is written in the ecclesiastical language of Gə'əz while the minor texts are in Amharic, added at a later time. While the colophon and the hand suggest that the original manuscript only contained the 151 Psalms of David, which is in an early eighteenth-century hand, the other texts such as the fifteen Canticles, Song of Songs, Weddase Maryam (Encomium of Mary) and the Anqasa Berhan (Porch of Light) were added in the nineteenth century to create a more complete Psalter. More unusual texts, unrelated to the Psalter, have also been added, for it begins with a homily admonishing the clergy to conduct themselves well spiritually, and ends with directions for undoing charms. The life of the manuscript can be traced not only in these cumulative texts, but also in added prayers for later owners, of which there are at least twelve appended to the ends of the Biblical texts.
Date	Early 18th century and 19th century CE
Origin	Ethiopia
Form	Book
Genre	Devotional
Language:	The primary language in this manuscript is Geez. The secondary language of this manuscript is Amharic.

Colophon *fol. 31v:*

In vernacular: Original colophon: ተፈጸመ ፡ መጽሐፈ ፡ ዳዊት ፡ ነቢይ ፡ ጸሎት ፡ ወበረከት ፡ የሃሉ ፡ ምስለ ፡ ፍቁሩ ፡ //// ለዓለመ ፡ ዓለም ፡ አሜን ።
 ወአሜን ። Secondary colophon for added texts: ስብሐት ፡ ወውዳሴ ፡ ለአምላክ ፡ ዳዊት ፡ ነጋሢ ፡ እግዚአብሔር ፡ አእርፍ ፡ ነፍሳተ ፡ አግብርቲክ ፡ ወእዕማቲክ ፡ ነፍሱ ፡ ገብርክ ፡ በእደ ፡ ማርያም ፡ ነፍሳተ ፡ አዕማቲክ ፡ ወለተ ፡ ሕይወት ፡ ወለተ ፡ ኪዳን ፡

Translation: Original colophon: The Book of the Prophet David is completed. May his prayer and blessing be with his beloved [name erased] forever and ever, Amen and Amen. Secondary colophon for added texts: Glory and praise to the God of King David. O Lord, give rest to the souls of your male and female servants: the soul of your servant Bā'ädä Maryam [and] the souls of your female servants, Wälättä Həywät [and] Wälättä Kidan.

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

Support material	Parchment Heavy, yellow parchment
Extent	Foliation: 43 No flyleaves; modern pencil foliation upper right corner
Collation	Formula: 1(10,-3,4,5,9,10), 2-4(8), 5(4,-2,4), 6(8), 7(4) Signatures: Quires sometimes numbered, top left of first recto of quire Comments: Quires begin on fols. 1(1), 6(2), 14(3), 22(4), 30(5), 32(6), and 40(7)
Dimensions	29.1 cm wide by 31.2 cm high
Written surface	25.5 cm wide by 25.0 cm high
Layout	Columns: 3 Ruled lines: 31 Hard point ruling; layout is unusual in using three columns for Psalter, Canticles, and Song of Songs, as they are usually written in a single column
Contents:	<i>fols. 1r - 43r:</i> <i>Title:</i> Psalms and associated texts <i>Contents:</i> Manuscript includes the Standard Gə'əz Psalter (with the Psalms copied in the eighteenth century and the rest in the nineteenth century) as well as short texts in Amharic on Christian morality and instruction to the clergy on how to execute their duties; prayers for later owners added after their deaths throughout the manuscript as follows: fol. 10r, (end Psalm 40): "O Lord, give rest to the soul of your servant."; fols. 12r, 20v, and 25r (ends of Psalms 50, 90, and 110): "O Lord, give rest to the soul of your maid, Wälättä Həywät."; fols. 13v and 18r (ends of Psalms 60 and 80): "O Lord, give rest to the soul of your maid, Wälättä

Kidan."; fols. 15v and 21v (ends of Psalms 70 and 100) and fol. 35r (end of Canticles): "O Lord, give rest to the soul of your servant, Bā'ädä Maryam."; fol. 28v (end of Psalm 130): the name of "Bā'ädä Maryam."; fol. 31v (at end of original colophon): "This is the glory and praise of the God of King David. O Lord, give rest to the souls of your servant Bā'ädä Maryam and the souls of your maids Wälättä Heyat [and] Wälättä Kidan."; fol. 37r (end of Song of Songs): "O Lord, give rest to the souls of your maids Walatta Kidan [and] Wälättä Həyiwät."

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

fols. 1r - 1r:

Title: On Christian morality

Incipit: በስሙ ፡ አብ ፡ . . . ሰው ፡ ሁሉ ፡ ትንሣኤ ፡ ሙታንን ፡ ያስብ ፡
ባንድ ፡ ምድር ፡ ስንዴና ፤ ኑግ ፡ ቢዘሩ ፡ ኑጉ ፡ ስንዴ ፡ ሳይሆን ፡
ስንዴውም ፡ ኑግ ፡ አይሆን ፡ . . .

Text note: Text added in nineteenth century

fols. 1r - 1v:

Title: Instructions to priests, part I

Incipit: በስሙ ፡ አብ ፡ . . . ካህናት ፡ ብቻ ፡ የሚሰሙት ፡ ነገር ፡ እንዳፍ ፡
(sic) በረቂቅ ፡ ሌላ ፡ ሰው ፡ አይሰማ ፡ እብዚአብሔር ፡ የማያስተምር ፡ . .

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

fols. 2r - 31v:

Title: 151 Psalms of David

Incipit: ፍካሬ ፡ ዘደድቃን ፡ ወዘኃጥአን ፤ መዝሙር ፡ ዘዳዊት ፤ ፩ ብፁዕ ፡
ብእሲ ፡ ዘኢሐረ ፡ . . .

Text note: Text is original part of manuscript, written in early eighteenth century Gə'əz; Psalm 151 is apocryphal, in which King David speaks about himself; see St. Strelcyn article (bibliography)

fols. 32r - 35r:

Title: Fifteen Biblical Canticles (Māḥaləyā Nābiyat)

Contents: Canticles are as follows: fol. 32r: First Song of Moses, **ጸሎቱ ፡ ለሙሴ ፡** (Exodus 15:1-19); fol. 32r-v: Second Song of Moses, **ጸሎተ ፡ ሙሴ ፡ ዘዳግም ፡ ሕግ ፡** (Deuteronomy 32:1-21); fol. 32v: Third Song of Moses, **ጸሎተ ፡ ሙሴ ፡ ዘሃልሰ ፡ ሕግ ፡** (Deuteronomy 32:22-43); fol. 33r: Song of Hanna, **ጸሎተ ፡ ሐና ፡ እመ ፡ ሳሙኤል ፡ ነቢይ ፡** (1 Samuel 2:1-10); fol. 33r: Prayer of Hezekiah, **ጸሎተ ፡ ሕዝቅያስ ፡ ንጉሠ ፡ ይሁዳ ፡** (Isaiah 38 ፡ 10-20); fol. 33r-v: Prayer of Manasseh, **ጸሎተ ፡ ምናሴ ፡ ነቢይ ፡** (Apocryphal, see The Holy Bible, NRSV. Oxford: University Press, 1977, 233-4); fol. 33v: Prayer of Jonah, **ጸሎተ ፡ ዮናስ ፡ ነቢይ ፡** (Jonah 2:2-9); fols. 33v-34r: First Song of the Three Holy Children, **ጸሎተ ፡ ዳንኤል ፡ ነቢይ ፡ ሰብሐት ፡ ዘእምላዊርያ ፡** (Daniel 3:26-45); fol. 34r: Second Song of the Three Holy Children, **ጸሎተ ፡ ቪዶቂቅ ፡** (Daniel 3:52-56); fol. 34r: Third Song of the Three Holy Children, **ጎበ ፡ ባረኩ ፡ አናንያ ፡ ወላዊርያ ፡ ወሚሳኤል ፡**

ለእግዚአብሔር : (Daniel 3:57-88); fol. 34v: Song of Habakkuk, **ጸሎት :**
ዕንባቂም : ነቢይ : (Habakkuk 3:2-18); fols. 34v-35r: Song of Isaiah,
ጸሎት : ኢሳይያስ : ነቢይ : (Isaiah 26:9-20); fol. 35r: Magnificat,
ጸሎት : እግዝእትነ : ማርያም : ድንግል : (Luke 1:46-55); fol. 35r:
 Benedictus, **ጸሎት : ዘካርያስ : ነቢይ :** (Luke 1:68-79); fol. 35r: Nunc
 dimittis, **ጸሎት : ስምዖን : ነቢይ :** (Luke 2:29-32)

Text note: Text added in nineteenth century

fols. 35r - 37r:

Title: Song of Songs of Solomon (Māḥaləyā Māḥaləy zə-wə'ətu zä-Sälonon)

Incipit: **ይስመኒ : በስመተ : አፋው :**

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

Text note: Text added in nineteenth century

fols. 37r - 40v:

Title: The Praises of Mary: Wəddase Maryam

Author: St. Ephraem Syrus

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

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

fols. 40v - 42r:

Title: The Praises of Mary: Anqäṣä Bərhan (Gate of light)

Author: St. Yared the Aksumite priest

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

fols. 42r - 43r:

Title: Instructions to priests, part II

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

fols. 42v - 43r:

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

Incipit: **ወትብል : በትሐት" ቃል : እሎንተ : አስማተ : ዓቢያተ : አክሶ ፤ አሜ : ኢሌኪ : . .**

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

fols. 43r - 43r:

Title: Directions for undoing charms and Trinitarian invocation

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

Binding	<p>The binding is original.</p> <p>Blind-tooled, stamped goatskin with cross design over wooden boards</p>
Provenance	<p>Probably created for one of the princes of the Gonderite royal family, whose reign ended in 1769</p> <p>Names of Wälättä Həywät and Wälättä Kidan, who added texts in the nineteenth century, mentioned repeatedly in later added prayers (fols. 12r, 13v, 31v, and 37r)</p>
Acquisition	<p>Purchased by the Walters Art Museum through the S. & A. P. Fund, January 1960</p>
Bibliography	<p>St. Strelcyn. "Le Psaume 151 dans la tradition éthiopienne," <i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>, Vol. 23 (1978), pp. 316-329. See this for apocryphal Psalm 151.</p> <p>The Ethiopic Version of the Song of Songs. Edited and translated by H. C. Cleave. London, 1951. See this for Song of Songs of Solomon.</p> <p>Weddäsê Mârjâm. Ein äthiopischer Lobgesang an Maria, nach mehreren Handschriften herausgegeben und übersetzt. Edited and translated by Karl Fries. Leipzig, 1892. See this for Praises of Mary (Wəddasē Maryam).</p> <p>Äthiopische Marienhymnen. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und erläutert. Edited and translated by Adolf Grohman. Leipzig, 1919. See this for Praises of Mary (Anqäšä Bərhan).</p> <p>Getatchew Haile et al. Catalogue of the Ethiopic Manuscript Imaging Project. Eugene, Oregon, vol 1, 2009, pp. xxxiii-l. See this for religio-magical prayers.</p> <p>"Bulletin Codicologique," <i>Scriptorium</i>, Vol. 26, 1972, p. 208, no. 402.</p>
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