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# THE LIBRARY OF EMPEROR TEWODROS II AT MÄQDÄLA (MAGDALA)

By RITA PANKHURST

The Emperor Tewodros II (1855–68), although remembered to-day mainly as an energetic modernizer, was also involved to a significant degree in the history of traditional Ethiopian libraries.

Tewodros had intended to build a great church dedicated to Mädhane Aläm ‘Saviour of the World’, on Christian ground near the natural fortress of Mäqdäla which had served him as state prison, granary, and family sanctuary no less than as a storehouse for his accumulated treasures.

Within the precincts of the fortress, which was not considered Christian ground, the only church was the modest one also dedicated to the Saviour and described by the geographer, C. R. Markham, as ‘a wretched place, without pictures or even whitewashed walls’,<sup>1</sup> and by Major H. A. Leveson, a British officer and journalist, as ‘the hovel called a Church’.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor wished to provide the new church with the traditional service-books and other manuscripts which turned important churches into centres of study as well as of worship. To this end he had for years been collecting manuscripts from churches throughout his domains, and especially from Gondar.

The missionary T. Waldmeier reports, of one of Tewodros’s expeditions against the city in December 1866: ‘The royal army fell with great rapacity upon the unhappy city . . . houses were plundered, hidden treasures sought out and stolen, churches robbed of their holy relics, their prayer-books, their other old documents . . . and afterwards set on fire’.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Gerhard Rohlfs, a German scholar who visited Gondar in 1881, relates that, in the course of Tewodros’s two sackings of the city, he carried away all books he could seize. ‘Of the many books mentioned, for example, by Combes and Tamisier, none could be procured other than those of a religious nature. Certainly this was not due to ill will: I was on very good terms with the Kantiba and the whole clergy, and they sold me church objects. But whenever I asked for books they always answered: “Theodore took them all away”. It was the same in Matraha.’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> C. R. Markham, *A history of the Abyssinian expedition*, London, 1869, 357–8. A photograph of the church is reproduced in F. Myatt, *The march to Magdala*, London, 1970, between pp. 144 and 145. The original photograph is in the Army Museums Ogilby Trust, War Office, London. One of Tewodros’s chroniclers, Aläqa Wäldä Maryam, mentions that the Emperor reopened two churches at Mäqdäla, the second being Egzeta Maryam. *Vide* C. Mondon-Vidailhet (ed.), *Chronique de Théodoros II, roi des rois d’Ethiopie*, Paris, [1905?], translation, 22. The latter church does not appear to have been in use in 1868.

<sup>2</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 30 May 1868; *vide* also H. Blanc, *A narrative of captivity in Abyssinia*, London, 1868, 210.

<sup>3</sup> T. Waldmeier, *Erlebnisse in den Jahren 1858–1868*, Basel, 1869, 59.

<sup>4</sup> G. Rohlfs, *Meine Mission nach Abessinien*, Leipzig, 1883, 256–7.

According to the chronicle of the Emperor written by Aläqa Wäldä Maryam, Tewodros had decided to make Däbrä Tabor 'a new Gondar'; he had removed 981 manuscripts from Gondar itself before setting fire to its churches. Later the chronicle records that these manuscripts and other treasures were taken from Däbrä Tabor to Mäqdäla which had been proclaimed the seat of the royal treasury.<sup>5</sup>

The precise manner in which the manuscripts were kept is not known but it is clear from an account of one of Tewodros's prisoners, the English surgeon Henry Blanc, that there was no disorder: 'Since about a year before his death Theodore had been gradually accumulating at Mäqdäla the few remnants of his former wealth. Some sheds contained muskets, pistols etc.; others books and paper . . . Once or twice a week the chiefs would meet in consultation in a small house erected for that purpose in the magazine inclosure to discuss public affairs, but, above all, to assure themselves by personal inspection that the "treasures" entrusted to their care were in perfect order and in safe keeping'.<sup>6</sup>

When, on Easter Monday, 13 April 1868, the British and Indian troops stormed Mäqdäla to liberate Tewodros's prisoners, bringing to a climax the Emperor's long-drawn-out dispute with the British Government, they found the manuscripts piled up in huts near the church. 'The treasury', wrote Markham 'consisted of a small number of huts surrounded by a wall, and was the receptacle of all the property and plunder collected by the King. Here were ecclesiastical crowns . . . besides tons of Geez and Amharic manuscript books.'<sup>7</sup>

H. M. Stanley, special correspondent of the *New York Herald* who was on the mountain shortly after the capture, refers to the treasury as being stored in 'treasure-tents'.<sup>8</sup>

The capture of the citadel was followed by an evening of looting, 'in the best traditions of the British Army at the time', as the military historian, F. Myatt, observes.<sup>9</sup> Markham notes that 'the troops dispersed over the *amba* in search of plunder. The treasury was soon rifled'.<sup>10</sup> Dr. J. Bechtinger, an Austrian who was Acting Surgeon in the British-Indian Army, states that Mäqdäla was 'volkommen geplündert' (completely plundered).<sup>11</sup>

A British officer, Captain H. B. Hayward, who kept a diary during the campaign, wrote on 13 April: 'The whole division then occupied Magdala and a general loot took place', but he added with some foresight: 'not that

<sup>5</sup> Mondon-Vidailhet, *op. cit.*, 22, 49–50.

<sup>6</sup> Blanc, *op. cit.*, 209–10.

<sup>7</sup> Markham, *op. cit.*, 357–8.

<sup>8</sup> H. M. Stanley, *Coomassie and Magdala*, London, 1874, 457; a photograph of the treasury appears as No. 44 in a contemporary album of photographs of the expedition. The album is No. 204 in the Manuscript Collection, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Haile Sellassie I University, Addis Ababa; No. 45 in this album is the photograph reproduced by Myatt and mentioned on p. 15, n. 1, above.

<sup>9</sup> F. Myatt, *The march to Magdala*, London, 1970, 165.

<sup>10</sup> Markham, *op. cit.*, 359.

<sup>11</sup> J. Bechtinger, *Ost Afrika: Erinnerungen und Miscellen aus dem abessinischen Feldzuge*, Wien, 1870, 234.

it will be of much use as everything will be collected and a prize committee formed to value all'.<sup>12</sup>

Several observers have described the scene, as soldiers and civilians, including Tewodros's captives, helped themselves to what they fancied from the Emperor's treasury.

Waldmeier, a prisoner at Mäqdāla whose own remaining possessions disappeared during the looting, wrote that 'the soldiers, especially the Hindus, began robbing and plundering as though they had been Theodore's pupils . . . . Many valuable articles were stolen from the royal treasury'.<sup>13</sup>

Stanley, an acute observer, drew up a more detailed list: 'There were also an infinite variety of gold, and silver, and brass crosses . . . heaps of parchment royally illuminated; stacks of Amharic bibles; missals, and numberless albums; ambrotypes and photographs of English, American, French and Italian scenery . . . . Over a space growing more and more extended, the thousand articles were scattered in infinite bewilderment and confusion until they dotted the whole surface of the rocky citadel, the slopes of the hill, and the entire road to camp two miles off!'.<sup>14</sup> Dr. Rohlfs, who accompanied the expedition as one of the German representatives, wrote that, during the withdrawal of the British troops the surroundings of Mäqdāla were strewn with torn Amharic books, loose leaves, and fragments, and that much must have been destroyed at that time.<sup>15</sup>

One can only speculate on the efficiency of the sentries who were stationed at the gates to prevent plunder from being taken down to the camp, as it had been determined that it should be all reclaimed, and eventually sold as prize for the troops.<sup>16</sup>

Although Captain Hayward may have been over-pessimistic about the chances of keeping the plunder—especially of smaller objects, perhaps including small books and scrolls—it is clear that much of it was in fact recuperated. There was only one practicable way out of the fortress, through the northern gate, and this was held by the provost, backed by a guard of the 33rd Regiment.<sup>17</sup>

D. G. Chandler, a military historian, confirms that 'every item of booty that had not actually been captured in combat "at point of sword or bayonet" was rigorously collected by the Prize-Master for future action—to the disgruntled annoyance of the soldiers'.<sup>18</sup> There were, nevertheless, some loopholes in the control system, as emerges from a letter to Lord Enfield written in

<sup>12</sup> H. B. Hayward, 'Extracts from the diary of Major-General, then Captain H. B. Hayward, during the Abyssinian expedition of 1868', *The Sherwood Foresters, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Regiment: 1927 Regimental Annual* (Derby), [1927?], 300.

<sup>13</sup> Waldmeier, op. cit., 118; *vide* also R. Acton, *The Abyssinian expedition and the life and reign of King Theodore*, London, 1868, 75; H. A. Stern, *The captive missionary*, London, 1869, 396.

<sup>14</sup> Stanley, op. cit., 457–9; *vide* also J. M. Flad, *Zwölf Jahre in Abessinien*, Leipzig, 1887, II, 72.

<sup>15</sup> Rohlfs, op. cit., 257.

<sup>16</sup> Markham, op. cit., 359.

<sup>17</sup> Myatt, op. cit., 165.

<sup>18</sup> B. Bond (ed.), *Victorian military campaigns*, London, 1967, 149; *vide* also Acton, op. cit., 75.

1872 by Lieutenant-Colonel T. W. Milward, an artillery officer who was appointed a member of the Prize Committee involved in the collection and sale of loot; he states that there were some civilians attached to the army who did not comply with the General Order of the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>19</sup> That these were not the only sinners is an inescapable conclusion, with which Myatt agrees, though in his view only a few easily concealed items were smuggled through.<sup>20</sup>

More detail about the collection of loot is provided by Milward's diary.

'14 April 1868. I am put on the Committee for prizes . . . it gives a great deal of trouble . . .

15 April 1868. We are collecting the loot, and I am much bothered with it. All is to be brought to Dalanta and we are to have sale there.

17 April. We are burning large quantities of corn . . . which we cannot carry away, but we are taking a good deal of other loot, for sale for the good of the men. Being on the Committee gives me very much bother.'<sup>21</sup>

By the early afternoon of Friday, 17 April, Mäqdāla had been cleared of its population, estimated at 30,000–50,000,<sup>22</sup> and the last of the booty had been removed. The sappers had proceeded to destroy the remaining guns and mortars and, when this work had been completed, they set fire to the palace, prison houses, and temporary huts.<sup>23</sup> It had been decided to spare the humble church, the outhouses of which had sheltered the great manuscript collection, 'lest the priests should say that the common tie of Christianity between conquerors and conquered had been forgotten';<sup>24</sup> but it did not survive the conflagration. The *Daily News* correspondent, in a graphic description quoted by the *Illustrated London News*, reported that 'a pyramid of fire laid hold upon it [the church] and licked it up, leaving the church bell alone standing'.<sup>25</sup>

The official history of the expedition, by T. J. Holland and H. M. Hozier, devotes only one sentence to these events: 'The plunder taken at Magdala was sold by auction, and the proceeds of the sale distributed among the troops as prize money'.<sup>26</sup>

It appears that Mäqdāla did not yield as many valuables as was hoped, for Napier was able to report on 13 May: 'No booty was found at Magdala'.<sup>27</sup> As the total amount to be realized was not expected to exceed £3,000 the

<sup>19</sup> Milward to Lord Enfield, 27 November 1872, FO 1/29.

<sup>20</sup> Myatt, op. cit., 165–6.

<sup>21</sup> S. Chojnacki and I. Marshall (ed.), 'Colonel Milward's Abyssinian journal 2 December 1867 to 13 June 1868', *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, VII, 1, 1969, 107–8. The original diary is in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Haile Sellassie I University.

<sup>22</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 13 June 1868; vide also F. Stumm, *Meine Erlebnisse bei der englischen Expedition in Abessinien*, Frankfurt am Main, 1868; Bechtinger, op. cit., 234.

<sup>23</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 13 June 1868; Myatt, op. cit., 168.

<sup>24</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 30 May 1868, report of Major Leveson.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 23 May 1868.

<sup>26</sup> T. J. Holland and M. H. Hozier, *Record of the expedition to Abyssinia*, London, 1870, II, 78.

<sup>27</sup> Telegram from Sir Robert Napier to Sir Stafford Northcote from Antalo, 13 May 1868. Quoted in *Illustrated London News*, 30 May 1868.

commissioned officers relinquished their share of the prize-money.<sup>28</sup> To appreciate Napier's understatement and the officers' action it should be noted that earlier wars, such as the China campaigns or the Spanish wars, yielded considerably more booty. Wellington, for example, received £120,000 after Waterloo.<sup>29</sup>

Napier's 'no booty' consisted of miscellaneous articles requiring 15 elephants and nearly 200 mules for the journey from the fortress to the Dälanta plain, on the northern side of the Bašilo river, where the auction took place.<sup>30</sup>

Before the sale began, everyone was urged once again to hand over all objects found or purchased from soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

As soon as the sale started the 'gentlemen who had either a superfluity of cash, or who leaned to antiquarian tastes'<sup>32</sup> took a lively part in the bidding. The entries in Milward's diary read as follows.

'20 April. Halted at Dalanta . . . In the afternoon the sale of loot began, and is realizing very large prices.

21 April. The sale going on all day, some things going fabulously high.'<sup>33</sup>

It appears from Milward's letter to Lord Enfield that the books were not disposed of in the same way as the other trophies and that Lieutenant-Colonel Dillon, Military Secretary on Napier's personal staff, was involved in dealing with them.<sup>34</sup>

According to Graf von Seckendorff, an officer of the Prussian army who accompanied the expedition, the manuscripts found fewer bidders than did some other articles because their real value was not known.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless Stanley confirms that, among the 39 field officers, 60 captains, and 146 subalterns of the British force, as well as the foreign officers and accompanying civilians, there were a number of bidders to struggle against Mr. Holmes of the British Museum.

'On the third day of our stay in our cantonement upon Dahonte Dalanta plateau', Stanley writes, 'the articles for sale were ready for the auctioneer . . . Bidders were not scarce. Every officer and civilian desired some souvenir . . . [there were] richly illuminated bibles and manuscripts . . . Mr. Holmes, as the worthy representative of the British Museum, was in his full glory. Armed with ample funds, he outdid all in most things but Colonel Frazer ran him hard because he was buying for a wealthy regimental mess . . . and when anything belonging personally to Theodore was offered for sale, there were private gentlemen who outbid both . . .'<sup>36</sup> The auction lasted two days. The total

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*; G. B. von Seckendorff, *Meine Erlebnisse mit dem englischen Expeditionscorps in Abessinien 1867-1868*, Potsdam, 1869, 178.

<sup>29</sup> Von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, 178.

<sup>30</sup> Stanley, *op. cit.*, 467.

<sup>31</sup> Stumm, *op. cit.*, 134; *Illustrated London News*, 30 May 1868.

<sup>32</sup> Stanley, *op. cit.*, 467.

<sup>33</sup> Chojnacki and Marshall, *art. cit.*, 108.

<sup>34</sup> Milward to Enfield, 27 November 1872, FO 1/29.

<sup>35</sup> Von Seckendorff, *op. cit.*, 177.

<sup>36</sup> Stanley, *op. cit.*, 470.



receipts amounted to £5,000'—much more than had been anticipated by Napier—'This sum was divided among the non-commissioned officers and men who were southward of the Bechilo, which gave each man a trifle over four dollars'.<sup>37</sup>

The official history relates that Richard R. Holmes, F.S.A., Assistant in the Department of Manuscripts at the British Museum, was deputed by the Trustees of the Museum to accompany the expedition on their behalf as archaeologist. He landed at Zula on 24 January 1868, and joined the headquarters at Sānāfe. The fruits of his labours on the journey towards Māqdāla were disappointing. 'In only one or two instances, however, was he able to make any discovery of antiquarian interest. The remains of the libraries, which to a greater or less extent were in the possession of each religious community were found to be without exception, modern, and of small interest. No trace of really ancient MSS could, after careful search, be discovered nor was there in any case any relic even of ecclesiastical furniture to which an early date could be assigned. The state of intestine warfare in which the country had for so long a time been plunged seemed to afford a solution for this dearth of material of historic interest.'<sup>38</sup> This was largely because it was not considered expedient for him to deviate from the line of march, which by-passed Aksum.

It is therefore likely that the £1,000 inserted in the estimates 'to cover the cost of excavations or collections'<sup>39</sup> was almost untouched and at Holmes's disposal during the auction. From Roger Acton's account of the expedition, it would appear that Holmes was well prepared, having earlier been given an opportunity of examining the manuscripts, possibly *in situ* at Māqdāla.<sup>40</sup> It may be deduced from von Seckendorff's remark that the books attracted fewer bidders, that not all the manuscripts from the Emperor's library were disposed of at the sale. Napier was thus saddled with the unsold portion of the 'tons' of manuscripts found at Māqdāla—manuscripts which had not been selected by the British Museum representative and had not interested the officers and gentlemen present at the auction.

The substance of Napier's decision was recorded by Holland and Hozier as follows.

'On the capture of Magdala a large number of Ethiopian manuscripts were found, having been carried there by Theodore from the libraries of Gondar and the central parts of Abyssinia. . . . On finding that Magdala would have to be abandoned to the Gallas it became necessary to provide for the safety of these volumes which would otherwise have been destroyed by the Mohammedans. About 900 volumes were taken as far as Chelikot and there about 600 were delivered to the priests of the church, one of the most important in Abyssinia.'<sup>41</sup> Čālāqot, in the province of Tigre, was some four miles from the

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 471.

<sup>38</sup> Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, II, 371.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, 370.

<sup>40</sup> Acton, *op. cit.*, 75; *vide also* Flad, *op. cit.*, II, 72.

<sup>41</sup> Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, II, 396.

line of march at Ayqulāt camp. It had taken the forces of the expedition about a month to reach this point.

William Simpson,<sup>42</sup> a well-known journalist and illustrator covering the campaign on behalf of the *Illustrated London News* provides further details in a posthumously published autobiography which was in fact a compilation of his previous writings.

‘ There was a place called Chelicut, with an important church, that I wished to see, and on the march back from Antalo to Eikullet, I went by another road to see Chelicut on the way. An escort of two or three dragoons was sent with me in case of accidents. A large number of books had been found in Magdala. Sir Robert arranged to bring home a certain number of these books to place in museums, and in the libraries of the Universities, and a few for presents. The books were all written on parchment, and in the old Geez character. Books of this kind are scarce in Abyssinia because they are expensive, so Sir Robert considered that it would be unfair to bring out of the country more of them than was necessary. As they were principally Bibles, gospels, psalters, and books of devotion, he was giving them as we marched back, to the various churches we passed. So a message was sent with me—it was given to an Abyssinian servant I had picked up—to tell the priests at Chelicut to come that day to the camp and they would receive some of the books.

That evening at Eikullet there was a terrible storm of thunder and rain. The rain poured, and in the midst of this outburst of nature news came that the Queen was dead.<sup>43</sup> Messengers were sent off to Chelicut for the priests to come and perform the funeral services, and our early march in the morning was ordered to be postponed.’<sup>44</sup>

In an article published in London in 1868 which gives substantially the same account of events, Simpson adds a further justification for this policy of distributing the manuscripts to Ethiopian churches: ‘ It was also known that these books found in Magdala had been plundered by Theodros from the churches of the different provinces which he had conquered, and so it was, to a certain extent, as if we were returning them again to their rightful owners. Chelicut being an important place, a good number of books were presented to the church ’.<sup>45</sup>

As has been pointed out by Professor Chojnacki<sup>46</sup> there is some difference

<sup>42</sup> For a fuller description of Simpson’s travels at this time *vide* S. Chojnacki, ‘ William Simpson and his journey to Ethiopia ’, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vi, 2, 1968, 7–38.

<sup>43</sup> Empress Teruwärq or Terunāš, second wife of Emperor Tewodros, who had declared her wish to accompany her son, Alāmawayhū, to Bombay, died at Ayqulāt on 15 May 1868, of a lung disease. The funeral ceremonies were performed the next morning and the Empress was buried at Čäläqot. They are vividly described by Simpson in continuation of the passages quoted above; *vide* also Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, II, 83; H. M. Hozier, *The British expedition to Abyssinia*, London, 1869, 258.

<sup>44</sup> W. Simpson, *The autobiography of William Simpson, R.I.*, ed. G. Eyre-Todd, London, 1903, 193–4.

<sup>45</sup> *idem*, ‘ An artist’s jottings in Abyssinia ’, *Good Words*, 1 October 1868, 612.

<sup>46</sup> Chojnacki, *art. cit.*, 35.



between the official account which states that 'about 600' volumes were all delivered to the priests of the church of Čäläqot and Simpson's version of what happened, namely that Napier was distributing manuscripts to various churches along the route.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless it is clear from Simpson's account that, although the priests of Čäläqot were originally called to collect 'some of the books' (*Autobiography*), 'a few of the books' (*Good Words*, 612), in the event they were presented with 'a good number' (*Good Words*, quoted above). Graf von Seckendorff confirms this interpretation. 'The greater part (of the books . . .)', he reports, 'remained in Abyssinia, as General Napier gave them to the Church of Chelikot.'<sup>48</sup>

The German missionary, J. M. Flad, who returned from Mäqdäla with the expedition, offers yet another version of the disposal of these manuscripts. According to him all books not taken by the British Museum were handed over to Däjazmač Kassa of Tigre for distribution to the churches.<sup>49</sup> This story is not corroborated from any other source; however, Čäläqot and the other churches on this part of the route were situated in territory ruled by Kassa. The deposit of the manuscripts must have had his approval and may well have been intended to please the possible future ruler of Ethiopia, who had performed friendly services for the expedition. A more significant reward from the British Government was to follow a few weeks later when Kassa was presented with half a dozen mortars and as many howitzers, with 200 rounds for each piece, together with 850 muskets, 350,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition, and 28 barrels of gun-powder.<sup>50</sup>

The present writer visited the Čäläqot Sellase church on 16 May 1970, with a list of 158 manuscripts which had been registered as the holdings of the church shortly after the Italo-Ethiopian War. The priests produced 47 volumes for inspection stating that all in their possession had been shown, with the exception of four volumes which had been sent to Mäqäle, for repair.

Of the volumes seen at Čäläqot, only one could be clearly identified as having been in the Mäqdäla collection: it was a *Šomä Degwa* 'Hymns for Lent', which had belonged to one of the Gondarine kings, Emperor Bäkaffa (1721–30). A second beautifully illustrated manuscript, a *Tä'amerä Sellase* 'Miracles of the Trinity', depicting scenes from the life of Iyasu I, 'the Great', of Gondar (1681–1706) may have reached Čäläqot by the same route; this also applies to one of the Čäläqot manuscripts seen at Mäqäle, a *Qälementos* (Clement, disciple of Peter). It, too, had belonged to Emperor Iyasu I. Most of the other volumes seen at Čäläqot were either given by other named donors, especially Ras Wäldä Sellase, or were clearly of recent origin.

<sup>47</sup> This account of the disposal of the manuscripts in Ethiopia is repeated by W. Wright in his *Catalogue of the Ethiopic manuscripts in the British Museum acquired since 1847*, London, 1877, p. iii.

<sup>48</sup> Von Seckendorff, op. cit., 177.

<sup>49</sup> Flad, op. cit., II, 72.

<sup>50</sup> Holland and Hozier, op. cit., II, 96.

Some of the more aged and learned priests had also heard it said that books from Mäqdäla had been deposited with the priests of their church at the time of the British expedition and they pointed out a grave believed to be that of Tewodros's second wife whose name they had forgotten. However, Mälakä Meherät Yared Gerday, Co-Aläqa of Čäläqot, told Mr. Roger Cowley in October 1971 that 'some books from Mäqdäla' had been given to the church by Tewodros's wife.

The priests offered the writer alternative and somewhat implausible explanations for the virtual disappearance of the Mäqdäla manuscripts.

The first was that, whilst carrying the books from Napier's camp to the church, the priests were waylaid by robbers who stole them all; and second, that the books were taken away by the Italians. The latter explanation was rejected by Märiqeta Lesanä Wärq Gäbrä Giyorgis, keeper of the Mäqäle palace museum, who stated that the Italians did not take any books from Čäläqot. He had been told that in Mäskäräm 1876 EC (September–October 1883) Emperor Yohannes IV had founded seven churches in and around Mäqäle. Knowing that there were some 500 manuscripts at Čäläqot the Emperor had ordered that about 100 should be transferred to the newly endowed churches. It has not, unfortunately, been possible so far to follow up this clue.<sup>51</sup>

The official record of the expedition continues, after the account of the gift to the priests of Čäläqot church: '359 books were retained for the purpose of scientific examination in the hope that some light might be thrown by them, through the labours of the learned men of Europe, on the ancient history of Ethiopia and on the records of Christianity'.<sup>52</sup> How these books came to be 'retained' has been shown earlier. The books had been selected by Holmes with advice from Werner Munzinger, a Swiss national who had been appointed British Consul at Massawa. Munzinger was an accomplished scholar; he knew Tigre very well. He examined each manuscript and, as Holland and Hozier state, wrote the title inside every volume.<sup>53</sup>

The subsequent fate of these manuscripts is recorded by William Wright, who was Assistant Keeper at the British Museum 1862–70, in the preface to his *Catalogue of the Ethiopic manuscripts in the British Museum* published in 1877, which was largely a catalogue of the Mäqdäla collection: 'On 28 August 1868 the bulk of the Magdala Collection was handed over to the Trustees of the British Museum by the Secretary of State for India. Some volumes [the 16 mentioned in his report] were sent to the Royal Library at Windsor of which Her Majesty [Queen Victoria] was graciously pleased to present ten . . . to the British Museum on 21 January 1869. The entire Magdala Collection consists,

<sup>51</sup> The churches mentioned were: Agula'e Kidanä Meherät, Arra Mika'el, Tägogwa Johannes, Mälfa Maryam, Qäqäma Maryam, Čeh Kidanä Meherät, Mäqäle Kidanä Meherät. According to our informant there is now only one manuscript left at Agula'e, but in all the other churches except the one in Mäqäle, which was burned down by the Italians, there are still 'good books'.

<sup>52</sup> Holland and Hozier, op. cit., II, 396–7.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 397.

therefore, of 350 volumes'. The difference between this figure and the 359 manuscripts originally deposited at the British Museum is made up of the six volumes retained by the Queen plus three acquired by Mr. Holmes on the way to Mäqdäla.<sup>54</sup> The figure of 350 volumes quoted by Wright includes one volume which had been returned to Ethiopia in 1872, a *Kebrä nägäst* whose adventures are recounted later in this paper. The British Museum owned only 349 volumes of the Mäqdäla collection at the time the preface was written.

Since the publication of Wright's *Catalogue* other Ethiopian manuscripts have been acquired by the British Museum. The catalogue of these, by Stefan Strelcyn, is in the press. Professor Strelcyn has kindly supplied the writer with the information that three manuscripts, probably all three from the eighteenth century, were inscribed as having belonged to the Mädhane Aläm church. These were: Or. 13264, Pauline Epistles, etc.; Or. 8824, 'Miracles of Jesus Christ', and Or. 13309, *Arke*, a collection of salutations for commemorations according to the months of the year.<sup>55</sup>

Of the volumes which were not acquired by the Museum six, as was noted above, were retained at Windsor Castle. They are exceptionally fine specimens of Ethiopian manuscript art and were all the property of the Mädhane Aläm church at Mäqdäla. The catalogue of these manuscripts, by Edward Ullendorff, was published in the *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*.<sup>56</sup>

The University Libraries at Oxford and Cambridge had acquired other Mäqdäla manuscripts. In his *Catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, Ullendorff writes: 'On the whole, it is safe to assume that the majority of the [66] MSS here described, were acquired in Ethiopia by individual members of Napier's expedition in 1867-8. After the death of their owners many found their way to auction sales and were then purchased by the Bodleian Library'.<sup>57</sup>

Four of the manuscripts described, Nos. 36, 54, 76, and 77, belonged to the church of Mädhane Aläm; a fifth, No. 44, appears to have belonged to that

<sup>54</sup> Wright, op. cit., p. iv. The Wright *Catalogue* describes 389 MSS in 408 numbers (which should have been 409 as the number CCCXCI is given in error to two different manuscripts, Or. 818 and Or. 820). Of these, the following do not belong to the Mäqdäla collection, as is clearly indicated by Wright, who marks the beginning and end of the collection in the index table respectively on pp. 329, Or. 480, and 334, Or. 829:

- (a) 35 volumes acquired by the Museum 1847-67, commencing with Add. 18993, and ending with Or. 80, i.e. volumes acquired since the publication of Dillmann's catalogue of 1847;
- (b) 3 volumes procured by Mr. Holmes on the way to Mäqdäla (Or. 451-3);
- (c) 1 volume added to the Department by purchase (Or. 1378).

*Vide* also S. Zanutto, *Bibliografia etiopica, secondo contributo: manoscritti etiopici*, Roma, 1932, 67; Wright, op. cit., pp. iii-iv. Ullendorff states that the Mäqdäla Collection at the British Museum consists of 373 MSS ('The Ethiopic manuscripts in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, xii, 1953, [pub.] 1954, 72; *The Ethiopians*, second ed., London, 1965, 19). This figure was arrived at by actual counting of the manuscripts at the British Museum in 1953 (letter from E. Ullendorff to the present writer, 9 May 1972).

<sup>55</sup> Letters from S. Strelcyn to the present writer, 12 and 24 November 1971.

<sup>56</sup> Ullendorff, art. cit., 71-2.

<sup>57</sup> *idem*, *Catalogue of the Ethiopian manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, II, Oxford, 1951, p. vi.

collection, according to Ullendorff. A further five manuscripts, Nos. 40, 41, 45, 57, and 63, reached the Library through some member of the Napier expedition and No. 83, a treatise on the Christian faith in Amharic and Ge'ez was 'sent from Abyssinia in 1868'.

Thirty-two other manuscripts in the Bodleian could conceivably also have come from Mäqdāla although there is no evidence to this effect.

Of the 67 manuscripts in the Ethiopian collection of the Cambridge University Library, Ullendorff writes that their provenance is 'in the main, from two sources; (a) MSS brought back by individual members of the British Expedition to Ethiopia in 1867-8; and (b) the gift of a number of MSS . . . from the Library of the late C. H. Armbruster'.<sup>58</sup> The latter number 20, mostly acquired by Armbruster in Ethiopia early in this century; this leaves some 47 of which, in Ullendorff's view, a good proportion may have been brought to Britain by members of Napier's expedition. Of these, two manuscripts definitely did: No. IX, a service-book, was purchased by the artist, William Simpson, 'from an Abyssinian' on the return march: it is not known who the Abyssinian was, nor how he obtained it; the other, No. XL, consisting of homilies, was brought to England from India where it had been taken by a member of the expedition. A third manuscript, No. XXXIII, a theological work, was acquired at a sale in 1878.

William Wright believed that the following manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library 'no doubt' came from Mäqdāla: 'A fine copy of the Gospels, of the latter part of the XVIIth cent.; a manuscript of the XVIIIth cent., containing the rest of the New Testament . . .; and a splendid copy of the Old Testament written for the Queen of Sarza Dēngēl, in the twenty-sixth year of the king's reign, A.D. 1588 . . . . Another volume, of the XVIth or XVIIth cent., contains Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom. Besides these there are a *Kērlōs* and an '*Argānōna Dēngēl*', both of the XVIIIth cent.; a couple of Psalters; the Gospel of St. John (brought from Southern India by Dr. C. Buchanan) of the XVIIth cent.; the '*Amēstū 'A'māda Mēstīr*' in Amharic; and one or two more of less note'.<sup>59</sup>

The catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts at the John Rylands Library in Manchester by E. Ullendorff and S. Strelcyn is not yet published, but Professor Strelcyn has kindly informed the writer that two eighteenth-century manuscripts in that collection—a *degwa*, No. 4, and a Gospel, No. 213—bear inscriptions in Ge'ez noting that they belonged to the church of Mādhane Alām. Another volume, No. 18, a lectionary for Holy Week, dating from the late seventeenth century, probably also belonged to the royal library, according to Professor Strelcyn. It is inscribed 'G. F. Robertson, Lieut. & Adjutant, 3rd Dragoon Guards Magdala. 13 April 1868'.

<sup>58</sup> *idem*, in E. Ullendorff and S. G. Wright, *Catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library*, Cambridge, 1961, p. viii.

<sup>59</sup> Wright, *op. cit.*, p. iv, note.

In his letter Strelcyn adds that a number of other manuscripts in both libraries as well as six magic scrolls at the Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, London, may have been taken either at Mäqdäla but from private individuals or during the expedition but not at Mäqdäla.<sup>60</sup>

In Edinburgh, the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland possesses two Ethiopian manuscripts formerly belonging to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. One of them, an ancient manuscript of the four Gospels, was 'brought from Abyssinia, and presented to the Society (with other MSS) by Captain Charles M'Inroy [*sic.*]'.<sup>61</sup> C. M. McInroy, from the Madras Staff Corps, was Captain of a Division in the transport corps of the Napier expedition.<sup>62</sup>

The most famous private collection of Ethiopian manuscripts in England which was associated with the Mäqdäla library consisted of five valuable illustrated manuscripts and belonged to the collection of Valerie Susie Bruce, Lady Meux, of Theobald's Park. They were sold, by an officer who had served in the British expedition, to the antiquarian Bernard Quaritch, who offered them to Lady Meux in the spring of 1897, shortly after acquiring them. She immediately telegraphed to Sir Wallis Budge who describes them and their fate as follows: 'The oldest of them was a small 4to volume containing a Life of Ḥannâ, the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary; it was illustrated with archaic Ethiopian pictures of Ḥannâ and her husband Joachim, the Birth of the Virgin, &c., and was written in the XVth century. It was and still is the only copy of the Life of Ḥannâ in Ethiopic known to me. Two of the manuscripts were large handsome volumes about 16 inches square, and each containing a good selection of the Miracles of the Virgin Mary, illustrated with many full-page pictures painted in bright colours which were intended to illustrate the texts of the Miracles. The older of these MSS was written in the XVIth century and the other a century later; each had been made for the use of a royal personage. Another manuscript contained the Life of Mabâ'a Şëyôn, a comparatively modern Ethiopian saint, and the Life of Gabra Krestôs, a prince who abandoned his royal state and home and parents, and became a mendicant monk. These Lives were illustrated by a large series of coloured pictures, which are of special interest as they portray events in the daily life of the modern Abyssinians. I sent to Lady Meux a description of these MSS, pointing out their interest and importance, and their great value from an artistic point of view. I also told the Keeper of Oriental Manuscripts in the British Museum of them, and urged him to attempt to acquire them for the National Collection. But his official financial position was such that it was impossible for him to make an offer for them which Mr. Quaritch would accept, and so the whole group of MSS, together with a few smaller works, became the property of Lady Meux, who added them to her

<sup>60</sup> Letters from S. Strelcyn to the present writer, 12 and 24 November 1971.

<sup>61</sup> Zanutto, *op. cit.*, 63; D. Laing, 'A brief notice of an ancient ms. of the four Gospels, brought from Abyssinia, and presented to the Society (with other mss.), by Cap. Charles M'Inroy', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, VIII, 1871, 52-5.

<sup>62</sup> Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, I, 184.

collection of Egyptian and Sûdânî antiquities preserved in the museum at Theobalds Park'.<sup>63</sup>

Lady Meux subsequently printed for private circulation one of the manuscripts, *The lives of Mabâ' Šeyôn and Gabra Krestôs*, with 92 coloured facsimiles illustrating the text. It appeared in the summer of 1898 and was followed, two years later, by the publication of *The miracles of the Virgin and the life of Hannâ*, with over 100 colour reproductions from four of the manuscripts, MSS 2-5.<sup>64</sup> J. L. Harrington, British Minister to Emperor Menelik II's<sup>65</sup> Court, presented the Emperor with a copy from Lady Meux to whom he wrote: 'From the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Menyelek, King of the Kings of Ethiopia. I am well. How are you? The book which you sent to me with Mr. Harrington has come to me. I am pleased. And because it is very well done I send you this letter and my seal'.<sup>66</sup>

The publication of these manuscripts appears to have been much appreciated in Ethiopia. When, in the summer of 1902, Ras Mäkonnen came to England for the coronation of King Edward VII he visited Theobald's Park, Cheshunt, one Sunday. Together with three Ethiopian bishops and an Arabic-speaking secretary he examined carefully both the original manuscripts and the reproductions. Budge related that 'His reverence for the manuscripts was great, and after bowing several times to the older manuscript of the Miracles of the Virgin Mary, he knelt on the floor of the Museum and lifting the book on the top of his head remained in this attitude and prayed for several minutes. A few days later Lady Meux sent to him by me a set of her publications, and when I delivered the books at his lodging in Westminster the joy of himself and the bishops who were with him was unbounded'.<sup>67</sup>

An article in the *Times* shortly after Lady Meux's death relates the same incident much more dramatically: 'The Prince was particularly attracted by *The Miracles of the Virgin Mary*, and, when told that it had belonged to one of his ancestors, knelt down and prayed for their souls. Then he burst into tears. Never, he said, had he seen any such beautiful manuscripts in the country he and they had come from, and he would ask the Emperor to buy them back.

<sup>63</sup> E. A. W. Budge, *Legends of Our Lady Mary the perpetual Virgin and her mother Hanna*, London, 1933, pp. vii-viii. Presumably Budge was convinced that the Meux manuscripts had belonged to the Imperial collection at Mäqdāla for on the title-page of the *Legends* it is stated that they were 'translated from the Ethiopic manuscripts collected by King Theodore at Makdala and now in the British Museum'. The title-page does not mention that the legends are translated only partly from manuscripts of the Museum. The preface makes this clear and also shows that Budge believed that the Meux manuscripts had originally been part of that collection. He writes: 'Many scholars . . . have wondered how these five MSS become detached from the great Makdala Collection'.

<sup>64</sup> MSS 2 and 3 were used as sources in A. Grohmann, *Aethiopische Marienhymnen*, Leipzig, 1919.

<sup>65</sup> Menelik II was Emperor of Ethiopia 1889-1913.

<sup>66</sup> Budge, op. cit., p. xiv.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, pp. xiv-xv.



Later in the day his secretary approached Dr. Budge and offered him a handsome bribe if he would induce the owner to sell'.<sup>68</sup>

Lady Meux, if the *Times* is to be believed, replied in terms which to this writer seem enigmatic: 'What a beautiful thing it is for your horrid people to go about the world stealing these books! What's the good of them?'.<sup>69</sup> One may wonder who, in her estimation, were the thieves and how she could question the worth of books for which she must have paid handsomely and which she had taken such pains to have published. Clearly, however, Lady Meux was impressed. Her immediate reaction was to ask Budge to present Ras Mäkonnen with a whole set of the magnificently printed, translated editions which the Prince received with much gratitude.<sup>70</sup>

Her final reaction was even more generous, for in her will, dated 23 January 1910, she bequeathed all her Ethiopian manuscripts to the Emperor Menelik or his successor. In a report on the will the *Times* notes that the manuscripts had been 'understood to have been obtained on the capture of Magdala . . . Envoys from the Emperor were sent over to arrange for their recovery, and it is believed that the present bequest is the fulfilment of a promise then given'.<sup>71</sup>

Lady Meux died on 20 December of the same year. Her will created a sensation partly because it did not bestow her inheritance in the customary manner upon her husband's relatives and partly because public opinion appeared to pine for the retention of the manuscripts in England. An article in the *Times* of 7 February 1911 expresses the belief that 'Many persons interested in Oriental Christianity will view with extreme regret the decision of Lady Meux to send her valuable MSS once and for all out of the country'.<sup>72</sup> In a footnote, in the preface to his translation of the *Legends of Our Lady Mary* published in 1933, Budge notes the bequest of the manuscripts to Menelik, adding 'but he was dead when she died'.<sup>73</sup> He did not in fact die until 1913, although early in 1911 it was rumoured that he might be dead.<sup>74</sup> Budge continues: 'What became of the manuscripts I do not know'.<sup>75</sup> According to W. R. Dawson 'the whole collection was sold in 1911; many of the objects being bought by William Randolph Hearst, whose collection was sold at Sotheby's, 11-12 July 1939'.<sup>76</sup>

The manuscript, known as 'Lady Meux 3' and referred to by Budge as MS. 'B', reappears in Dublin as No. 914 in the collection of Chester Beatty. He must have purchased it some time between July 1939 and February 1955 when Enrico Cerulli published his catalogue of the 53 Ethiopian manuscripts in

<sup>68</sup> *Times*, 12 January 1911.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Times*, 11 January 1911.

<sup>72</sup> *Times*, 7 February 1911.

<sup>73</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. xv, n. 1.

<sup>74</sup> H. Marcus 'The last years of the reign of the Emperor Menelik, 1906-13', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, ix, 1, 1964, 232-4.

<sup>75</sup> Budge, *op. cit.*, p. xv, n. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Dawson, W. R., *Who was who in Egyptology*, London, 1951, 106-7.

the Chester Beatty Library.<sup>77</sup> ‘Lady Meux 3’, which was edited and translated by Budge in 1900,<sup>78</sup> is an eighteenth-century collection of miracles of the Virgin Mary. It is not known what has happened to the other four manuscripts bequeathed to Emperor Menelik or his successor.

The publication of the Lady Meux manuscripts, which were printed for private circulation only, was warmly welcomed by European scholars and learned societies; the volumes were indeed fine achievements in book production and stimulated interest in the study of Ethiopian manuscript painting.<sup>79</sup>

Scholars and students of the history of Ethiopian religion had urged Lady Meux to publish a popular edition of the manuscripts; so had Ras Mäkonnen, who wanted copies for the monasteries and churches of Ethiopia. However, financial difficulties prevented her from undertaking this work and she died having made no provision for this plan, which nevertheless materialized, through Budge’s initiative.<sup>80</sup>

Supplements to the reproductions of the Meux manuscripts, with additional material from Ethiopic manuscripts at the British Museum, were published in 1923 in companion volumes edited and translated by Budge: *Legends of Our Lady Mary* and *One hundred and ten miracles of Our Lady Mary*. Both volumes were reproduced—the former, with additions, in cheaper editions ten years later.

Silvio Zanutto, the Italian librarian who published a world bibliography of Ethiopian manuscript collections in 1932, records that one additional manuscript found at Māqdāla, was then in undisclosed private hands in England.<sup>81</sup>

There are probably other collections of Ethiopian manuscripts in Great Britain as yet uncatalogued. Most of them, Professor Ullendorff believes, were brought back by members of the Napier expedition. Manuscripts are known to be in the British and Foreign Bible Society Library, London, in the Selly Oak Colleges Library, Birmingham, and in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Professor Ullendorff estimates that ‘no fewer than 150–200 were brought to Britain by individual members of the expeditionary forces. Most of these found their way into University libraries, notably the Bodleian and the Cambridge Libraries, but a few remained in private hands and reappear occasionally at auction sales’.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> E. Cerulli, ‘I manoscritti etiopici della Chester Beatty Library in Dublino’, *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Memorie*, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche, Ser. VIII, Vol. XI, 6, 1965, 290–1.

<sup>78</sup> E. A. W. Budge, *The miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the life of Ḥannā (Saint Anne), and the magical prayers of Ḥēta Mikāēl*, London, 1900.

<sup>79</sup> The coloured facsimiles were reproduced in England by W. Griggs and were inserted in the English text. The Ethiopic texts were printed by the eminent German firm of W. Drugulin of Leipzig because the necessary fount of type did not exist in England.

<sup>80</sup> *idem*, *One hundred and ten miracles of Our Lady Mary*, London, 1933, p.v.

<sup>81</sup> Zanutto, *op. cit.*, 74; H. Reade, ‘An ancient Ethiopic vellum manuscript’, *Bibliographer*, 1883, 24.

<sup>82</sup> E. Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians*, second ed., 19.

One other manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin may also have come from Mäqdäla. It is No. 949, a collection of hymns. On the verso of folio 46 is the inscription: 'Tho. Eadon, 10th Company, Royal Engineers'.<sup>83</sup> This was one of the units which took part in the Napier expedition.

A small number of manuscripts obtained during the expedition found their way into libraries outside Great Britain.

The Österreichische Nationalbibliothek possesses one illustrated eighteenth-century manuscript of the New Testament, Aeth. 25, presented to the Imperial Palace Library in Vienna by General Napier in 1868.<sup>84</sup>

In Berlin, in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, there are two important seventeenth-century manuscripts obtained from King Wilhelm, to whom they had been presented by Graf von Seckendorff. The latter purchased them after the storming of Mäqdäla, no doubt at the auction. One, No. 19, is a splendidly written and illustrated *Dawit* and the other, No. 42, is a *Fetħa nägäst*.<sup>85</sup>

In the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris there are two magnificent manuscripts which were donated in 1868 by Major Gally-Passebosc, an officer from the French Navy who followed the expedition: <sup>86</sup> No. 112 in the Zotenberg catalogue of the Ethiopian manuscripts of this library is a *Haymanotä abaw* 'Faith of the fathers', made in the twelfth year of the reign of Iyasu the Great, i.e. 1694, by order of the Queen Mother Wälätä Giyorgis; No. 138, a life and miracles of Saint Täklä Haymanot, had belonged to King Haylä Mäläkot of Shoa. There is a prima facie case for supposing that these manuscripts from Gondar and Shoa (Ankober?) had been taken to Mäqdäla by Tewodros.

In the Vatican Library, one manuscript which, Zanutto believes, came from Mäqdäla is a homily for Saint Michael bearing the following note: 'These two (?) books were found in an old convent or church in Abyssinia by my nephew, Captain Thomas Kelly, 2nd Queens Own (Fusiliers) and sent to me 20th Oct., 1868. Mathias Kenny, 3 Clifton Terrace, Monkstown, Dublin'.<sup>87</sup> However, there is no evidence that the unit mentioned took part in the campaign.

In India two manuscripts from members of the expedition were exhibited at a meeting of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in August 1868. One was a life of St. George with drawings of various Christian martyrs which belonged to Capt. James of the Bombay Staff Corps and was brought from Ethiopia, and the other was a copy of the Gospel of St. John presented to Dr. Wilson, Honorary President of the Society, by Ato Mikael Joseph, one of the

<sup>83</sup> Cerulli, art. cit., 310.

<sup>84</sup> N. Rhodokanakis, *Die äthiopischen Handschriften der k. k. Hofbibliothek zu Wien (Sitzungsberichte der k. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, CLII, Phil.-hist. Klasse, 4)*, Wien, 1906, 2, 17.

<sup>85</sup> A. Dillmann, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, III. Bd.: *Verzeichniss der abessinischen Handschriften*, Berlin, 1878, p. ii.

<sup>86</sup> H. Zotenberg, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, 1877, p. iv.

<sup>87</sup> S. Grébaud and E. Tisserant (ed.), *Bybliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae codices manu scripti recensiti. Codices Aethiopici Vaticani et Borgiani, Barberiniani, Barberiniani Orientalis 2, Rossianus 865. Pars prior: enarratio codicum*. Bybliotheca Vaticana, 1935, 853.

interpreters of the Abyssinian force.<sup>88</sup> Because the expedition was organized from India it may be that other manuscripts from Mäqdāla will come to light in the Indian subcontinent.

Two private collections in the United States contained manuscripts from Mäqdāla. One was in the collection of Wilberforce Eames, principally discourses for the feasts of the angels Michael and Raphael with three paintings, and belonged to Gally-Passebosc; the collection was sold and dispersed in 1907. The other collection is that of Samuel A. B. Mercer; one manuscript in this collection, the life of Täklä Haymanot, comes from Mäqdāla.<sup>89</sup>

In the course of the century which has elapsed since the death of Tewodros a few of the manuscripts from Mäqdāla were returned to Ethiopian rulers.

The most renowned of these was a manuscript containing a *Kebrä nägäst* 'Glory of the kings', written during the reign of Emperor Iyasu I. It was the older of two copies of the Ethiopian national saga acquired, presumably at the auction, by Mr. Holmes. Having been duly accessioned as Or. 819 it was briefly described by William Wright in a list of the Mäqdāla collection published in 1870 as preliminary information for scholars who were eagerly awaiting the publication of a full catalogue.<sup>90</sup> In the same year a German scholar, F. Praetorius, wrote his thesis using the volume as a source;<sup>91</sup> and, based on Wright's list and Praetorius's thesis, Carl Bezold used this source as text D in his publication on the *Kebrä nägäst*.<sup>92</sup>

It is known that the 'Glory of the kings' was much esteemed and venerated in Ethiopia. This particular copy, however, appeared to have been of special importance to more than one Ethiopian ruler. According to the learned Tigre scholar Haylä Maryam who mentioned it to the French envoy Hugues Le Roux in the early years of this century, the manuscript was the personal possession of Emperor Tewodros.<sup>93</sup> There is no evidence for this report but undoubtedly his successor, Emperor Yohannes IV (1868–89) not only knew of the existence of the copy but wished to possess it.<sup>94</sup> On 10 August 1872, in letters written from

<sup>88</sup> *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, IX, 1867–70, [pub.] 1872, Appendix, pp. lx–lxi.

<sup>89</sup> Zanutto, op. cit., 155–6.

<sup>90</sup> W. Wright, 'List of the Magdala collection', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, xxiv, 1870, 614–15.

<sup>91</sup> F. Praetorius, *Fabula de regina Sabaea apud Aethiopes*, Halle, 1870.

<sup>92</sup> C. Bezold, *Kebrä Nagast, die Herrlichkeit der Könige*, München, 1905.

<sup>93</sup> H. Le Roux, *Chez la Reine de Saba*, Paris, 1914, 96–7. Zanutto also believed that the manuscript belonged personally to Tewodros, *vide* op. cit., 147.

<sup>94</sup> Haylä Maryam alleges that his father, who was from Aksum, witnessed an audience given by Yohannes to an embassy from Britain led by an admiral who presented him with a golden crown, which gift did not please him. When the admiral asked him for some message for the Queen, Yohannes is said to have replied: 'Tell your Queen that the soldiers took from Tewodoros's room the book which is most prized by Ethiopian emperors. It is the history of the Queen of Sheba, of Solomon and their son: our book. I pray God it will come back'. *Vide* Le Roux, op. cit., 97–9. There is no evidence of the return of a golden crown from England to Yohannes. The crown of Abuna Sälama, as well as his chalice, both taken at Mäqdāla, are at the Victoria and Albert Museum; the gold crown of Tewodros was sent back to Ethiopia by King George V in 1925, the bearer being Ras Täfäri Mäkonnen. *Vide* Budge, *History of Abyssinia*, London, 1928,

Adwa to Queen Victoria and to the British Foreign Secretary, Earl Granville, dealing with political affairs, he requested the return of the volume.

The letters were taken to England by J. C. Kirkham, an adventurer who had served as a steward in one of the P & O Company steamers and who had risen to the rank of General in the Emperor's army in which he had at first acted as an instructor.<sup>95</sup> Kirkham arrived in London on 10 October and presented the letters some time after 31 October.<sup>96</sup>

Both letters were very inaccurately translated, as has been pointed out by Edward Ullendorff and Abraham Demoz in their publication of the letters,<sup>97</sup> but the English translation was the one seen and acted upon in England. 'I have another thing to say to you,' runs the official translation of the letter to Queen Victoria, 'there is a picture called Qurata Rezoo,<sup>98</sup> which is a picture of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and which was found with many books at Magdala and is now in England. If it is possible, please to send me this picture . . . also a book called Kivera Negust, containing the whole of the laws of Ethiopia and the names of the Shums (Chiefs) and Churches, and Provinces.'<sup>99</sup> The letter to Earl Granville, which in the Amharic original, is substantially the same, contains the following addition, in the English translation, to the final sentence about the book. It begins 'I pray you will find out who has got this book and send it to me', and continues with the mistranslation 'for in my country my people will not obey my orders without it'.<sup>100</sup> Attempts to find the picture proved abortive but the volume was soon located at the British Museum.

The British Government was at this time anxious to keep on good terms with Yohannes who had co-operated during the Napier expedition. As Granville wrote to the British Ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Henry George Elliot, 'Her Majesty's Government have much reason to feel interest in the King of Abyssinia'.<sup>101</sup> The Foreign Secretary therefore applied some gentle pressure on the Museum. A Foreign Office official was directed to write as follows to the Principal Librarian of the Museum, John Winter Jones, on 29 November 1872 in a letter marked 'pressing': 'Lord Granville thinks that it would be considered as a gracious and friendly act if the volume which most nearly answers the

II, 516–17; and the royal cap of Tewodros, together with his imperial seal, were returned by Queen Elizabeth II during her state visit to Ethiopia in 1965.

<sup>95</sup> Napier to India Office, 29 October 1869, FO 1/28.

<sup>96</sup> Kirkham to Granville, 10 and 31 October 1869, FO 1/27b.

<sup>97</sup> E. Ullendorff and A. Demoz, 'Two letters from the Emperor Yohannes of Ethiopia to Queen Victoria and Lord Granville', *BSOAS*, xxxii, 1, 1969, 135–42.

<sup>98</sup> Kuratā Re'esu. This picture was traditionally carried into battle and is mentioned in several chronicles; *vide* I. Guidi, *Vocabolario amarico-italiano*, Roma, 1901, 760–1. The chronicle of Iyasu II, 1730–55, mentions that the picture was donated to the church of Qwesqwam, on the outskirts of Gondar, by Iyasu's mother, Queen Mentewwab; *vide* I. Guidi (ed. and tr.), *Annales regum Iyāsu II et Iyo'as* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, LXVI. Scriptorum Aethiopicum, XLIX), reprinted, Louvain, 1954, 108.

<sup>99</sup> Yohannes to Victoria, 10 August 1872, FO 95/731. Crown copyright material is quoted by kind permission of the Controller of HMSO.

<sup>100</sup> Yohannes to Granville, 10 August 1872, FO 95/731.

<sup>101</sup> Granville to Elliot, 18 December 1872, FO 1/27b.

description given, were restored. His Lordship therefore directs me to request that you will lay this letter before the Trustees at the earliest opportunity and, if they concur with him in opinion, that you will move them to be pleased to send the volume in question to this office, for the purpose of being sent back to Abyssinia'.<sup>102</sup>

The next meeting of the Trustees of the Museum was not due until 14 December. Impressed, no doubt by the heart-felt appeal from the distant monarch and perhaps also by the request for compliance from no less a personage than the Foreign Secretary they decided to part with the Museum's property—a most unusual step. On 17 December Jones replied to Earl Granville. Having first noted that the picture requested by the Emperor was not in the Museum Jones continued: 'The volume required by King John is, however, in the Museum and the Trustees have directed me to acquaint Your Lordship that, under the very exceptional circumstances of the case, they have great pleasure in acceding to Your Lordship's suggestion that it should be restored to King John. I have, therefore, the honour to send the volume to your Lordship herewith'.<sup>103</sup>

The following day the replies from the Queen and Granville to the Emperor were ready, signed and sealed. The relevant passage in the Queen's letter from Windsor Castle begins: 'We have caused enquiry to be made about the Book and the Picture which you mention in your letter'. The Queen then explains that no trace could be found of the picture and that it may not have reached Great Britain; 'But we have discovered a book', the letter continues, 'which appears to be the one which you enquire after, and have directed that it may be delivered to you with this our letter'.<sup>104</sup>

Granville's letter emphasizes that 'the book is restored as a proof of the friendly feeling of the Queen and Her Majesty's Government for your Highness'.<sup>105</sup>

The letters and the packet containing the book were forwarded on 20 December to Kirkham, who was waiting in Vienna,<sup>106</sup> and he reached Massawa with them on 15 February 1873.<sup>107</sup> He must have accomplished his mission successfully, for Yohannes replied to the letters on 15 May. Curiously, the receipt of the book is not mentioned.<sup>108</sup> It would seem highly unlikely that Kirkham failed to deliver the manuscript without this coming to light in the subsequent correspondence between the monarchs. It might be conjectured that this book, which Yohannes had probably not seen before, but about which he had been given exaggerated expectations, did not turn out to be quite as

<sup>102</sup> Hammond to Jones, 29 November 1872, FO 1/29.

<sup>103</sup> Jones to Granville, 17 December 1872, FO 1/29.

<sup>104</sup> Victoria to Yohannes, 18 December 1872, FO 1/27b.

<sup>105</sup> Granville to Yohannes, 18 December 1872, FO 1/27b.

<sup>106</sup> Granville to Kirkham, 30 November 1872, FO 1/29; Granville to Buchanan, 20 December 1872, FO 1/27b.

<sup>107</sup> J. de Coursac, *Le règne de Yohannes*, Romans, Drôme, 1926, 118.

<sup>108</sup> Yohannes to Victoria, 15 May 1873, FO 1/27b.



informative as he had been led to expect. It is known that the volume did contain matter other than the *Kebrä nägäst*, and Jones pointed to the possible significance of this in his letter to Earl Granville accompanying the transmission of the manuscript: 'The Kibra Negust occupies folios 2–130 of this volume. The additional matter consists of historical notices and other documents relating mostly to the City of Axum and its church,<sup>109</sup> which circumstance may probably enhance the value of the gift in the eyes of the King of Ethiopia'.<sup>110</sup>

Edward Ullendorff and Abraham Demoz have noted, in their commentary on the translation of Yohannes's request for the book, that the Trustees of the British Museum might not so easily have complied with the Emperor's appeal 'had they known that the English translation went a good deal beyond the original phrasing of the Imperial missive'.<sup>111</sup> It may be pleaded that the mistranslation may have been perfectly in keeping with Yohannes's thinking before he had had the opportunity of seeing the manuscript.

Even if we are right in deducing the Emperor's reasons for not mentioning the book in his letters, it is clear from its subsequent history that the volume had almost mystical importance in many Ethiopian eyes.

According to Le Roux's informant, Haylä Maryam, Yohannes kept the restored *Kebrä nägäst* with him always; when he died of a Dervish bullet at Mätamma the book disappeared. Haylä Maryam, surmised that it had been hidden by his confessor or one of the monks in his entourage so that it should not fall into the hands of the Muslims.<sup>112</sup>

The next recorded event in the remarkable history of this volume occurred in 1904 when Haylä Maryam revealed to Le Roux in the greatest secrecy that he knew the whereabouts of the volume. Le Roux's curiosity having been aroused, he set about trying to gain access to it. Eventually, having performed a useful service for Emperor Menelik, Le Roux was in a position to ask for a reward. The Emperor had expected him to ask once again for permission to hunt elephant. Instead, to Menelik's surprise, the envoy asked to be allowed to see and translate into French the famous *Kebrä nägäst*. Le Roux relates the rest of the interview which took place at Addis Alem, as follows: 'Menelik thought for a while. Finally he said "I am of the opinion that a people defends itself not only with its weapons but also with its books. The one you speak of is the pride of this Kingdom. Beginning with me, the Emperor, right down to the poorest soldiers walking the roads, all Ethiopians will be happy that the book should be translated into the French language and brought to the knowledge of the friends we have in the world. Thus people will see clearly what links join us to the people of God, what treasures have been entrusted to our safe-keeping.

<sup>109</sup> Where Iyasu I was crowned. *Vide* I. Guidi (ed. and tr.), *Annales Iohannis I, Iyäsü I et Bakäffä*, II (Corp. Script. Christ. Orient., xxv. Script. Aeth., VIII), reprinted, Louvain, 1955, 170.

<sup>110</sup> Jones to Granville, 18 December 1872, FO 1/29.

<sup>111</sup> Ullendorff and Demoz, art. cit., p. 135, n. 4.

<sup>112</sup> Le Roux, op. cit., 101.

People will understand better why God's help has never failed us against the enemies who attacked us'''.<sup>113</sup> After this clear-sighted speech on the role of the written word in Ethiopia's struggle for independence Menelik, according to Le Roux's account, ascertained from Haylā Maryam that the book was in Addis Ababa.<sup>114</sup> This would suggest that the Emperor was unaware of its location—a somewhat curious supposition in view of the importance he attached to it. He then ordered that it be made available to Le Roux. The sovereign brushed aside a request for postponement on the part of the monks, who pleaded that the manuscript was being recopied and that they would gladly give Le Roux a fresh copy as soon as the copying had been completed. 'You will copy it later', Menelik said.<sup>115</sup> Within eight days Le Roux had the satisfaction of holding the precious manuscript in his own hands. There, on the title page was the note :

OR. 819

PRESENTED BY  
THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR INDIA  
AUG. 1868

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At the bottom of the second folio, the first inscribed one of the manuscript, in the empty space between two columns of writing was a seal in red ink of the lion and unicorn bearing an escutcheon with the words 'British Museum'. On the verso of the last folio was the following note in cursive script :

'This volume was returned to the King of Ethiopia  
by order of The Trustees of the British Museum

Dec. 14th 1872

J. Winter Jones

Principal Librarian'<sup>116</sup>

Le Roux's elation was set down in a passage which reflects favourably on his powers of imagination and warrants quotation : 'There was no longer any room for doubt : the book which I held in my hands was the very version of the story of the Queen of Sheba which the Emperors and priests of Ethiopia considered the most ancient of those which have been scattered in Abyssinian monasteries or have found their way by chance into the libraries of Europe. It was the book which Theodorus had placed under his pillow the night when he killed himself ; the book which the English soldiers had taken with them to London, which an especial ambassador had returned to the Emperor John, which this Emperor had by him in his tent on the very day when he fell under the

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, 115–16.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, 116–17.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, 118.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, 120. Also quoted, with slight variations, in Le Roux's introduction to Mrs. J. Van Vorst (tr.), *Magda, Queen of Sheba: from the ancient royal Abyssinian manuscript 'The glory of the kings'*, after the French translation of H. Le Roux, New York and London, 1907, 21–2.

scimitars of the Mahdists; which the monks had stolen and which Menelik had commanded the monks to bring back to light. There was something thrilling in the touch of the old document, wherein a people of dreams held, closely guarded, and as if in a precious receptacle, the delicious perfume of their most cherished tradition. Those for whom books are sacred things will understand the feelings I experienced'.<sup>117</sup>

From Le Roux we obtain the first detailed physical description of the volume. It was relatively small and almost square—26 cm. × 25 cm.—with a thickness of 7 cm. The binding was covered in a printed cotton cloth with a design of yellow flowers and was itself made of two boards in cedar wood<sup>118</sup> covered in red leather. Back and front were decorated in an identical manner. The leaves were made of goatskin and numbered 164. There were two columns to a page, each column measuring 7 cm. in height by 8 cm. in width. Each column had 19 lines written in a regular, rather bold hand. The letters were on average 4–5 mm. high. Changes in chapter were indicated without paragraphing by writing the first two lines of a chapter entirely in red ink.<sup>119</sup>

Le Roux, with much help from Haylä Maryam, translated the text of the *Kebrä nägäst* into French<sup>120</sup> in a few months, returned the volume to the Emperor, and left for France, his diplomatic and literary mission completed, in June of the same year.

The next reference to this manuscript occurs almost 20 years later. The South African traveller, C. F. Rey reported in *Unconquered Abyssinia*: 'It is now at the Monastery of Debre Libanos where it was seen by a European traveller who noticed the inscription attached to it stating the conditions under which the Trustees of the Museum had parted with it'.<sup>121</sup>

For many years scholars remained uncertain about the fate of the book and whether it had safely survived the Italo-Ethiopian War. It could not be traced at Däbrä Libanos and indeed it is not certain that it ever reached that monastery as Rey's information may have been incorrect.

Finally, however, Dr. Haylä Gäbre'el Daññe traced it to its new home: whilst compiling a catalogue of manuscripts in Addis Ababa churches in 1963 he found the *Kebrä nägäst*, Or. 819, in the church of Raguel. His catalogue notes that there are 164 leaves and that, on folio 163, there are orders concerning the administration of the church of Aksum and donations by different sovereigns. Dr. Haylä Gäbre'el adds: 'later acquired by Emperor Menelik and deposited in the Raguel church probably by Aläqa Gäbrä Sellassie'.<sup>122</sup> This was the great

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, 22–3.

<sup>118</sup> Probably *ted*, *Juniperus procera*, or pencil cedar, a tree native to Ethiopia.

<sup>119</sup> Le Roux, *Chez la Reine*, 119–20.

<sup>120</sup> A part of the text was published in his *Chez la Reine de Saba*, quoted above; a fuller translation was entitled *Makeda, Reine de Saba. Chronique éthiopienne*, Paris, 1914; for the English translation see above p. 35, n. 116.

<sup>121</sup> C. F. Rey, *Unconquered Abyssinia*, London, 1923, 164.

<sup>122</sup> Haylä Gäbre'el Daññe, *Catalogue of manuscripts in Addis Ababa churches*, Addis Ababa, 1963, I, No. 3, Raguel, No. 39. Unpublished manuscript, of which a copy is at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Haile Sellassie I University.

octagonal church, Däbrä Hayl Qeddus Raguel, founded by the Emperor at Entotto in 1885 of which Gäbrä Sellase, the Emperor's chronicler, was the Aläqa, or head, until his appointment as Minister of the Pen in 1908.<sup>123</sup>

In September 1955 (Mäskäräm 1948), the main *tabot*<sup>124</sup> and church paraphernalia, including the books, were moved down from Entotto into a new church bearing the same name, in the Market area of Addis Ababa.<sup>125</sup> This was the last journey to be recorded in the odyssey of this peripatetic little volume which the writer was given the privilege of seeing in the precincts of the church, through the good offices of Ato Alemayehu Mogas, on 28 November 1971.

The volume was covered in a cloth which corresponded exactly to that described by Le Roux; the manuscript was in excellent condition with the complete 164 leaves as previously noted.

In addition to the annotations relating to the British Museum the volume bears the inscription ' *Kebrä nägäst za qeddus Mädhane Aläm* ' [Book of the] glory of the kings belonging to [the church of] the Holy Saviour of the World ', at the top of the first folio. The small red seal of the British Museum occurs at intervals throughout.

Near the end of the volume, on the verso of folio 150 was a large gold and green seal of a lion but the ink had evidently not taken well and the seal was not distinct. On folio 153, however, was a very clear black ink seal 6 cm. in diameter easily identified as one of the well-known seals of Emperor Menelik showing a crowned lion holding a staff with a cross and bearing the legend ' Conquering lion of Judah, Menelik, King of Kings of Ethiopia '.

A cursory study of the text, all that was possible, revealed that folio 131 onwards, as Winter Jones had observed, were devoted mainly to matters relating to Aksum and its church. Folio 131 has a plan of Ethiopia with Aksum shown inside three concentric circles and indicating the provinces of Ethiopia and the points of the compass. There follow administrative rules for the church and the public, a king list, details of taxes paid to various Ethiopian kings, and titles of governors.

The colophon, folio 163, is in another hand and refers to the reign of Adyam Säggäd, i.e. Iyasu I.

A second manuscript believed to have belonged to Emperor Tewodros was returned to Ethiopia after the Liberation. According to a letter to the *Times* of 11 July 1942, from H. H. Dale, Chairman of the Wellcome Trustees, ' an Ethiopian manuscript since known as " King Theodore's Bible " authenticated by a scribe and a body slave of the dead king, was taken from his house in

<sup>123</sup> Gäbrä Sellase, *Chronique du règne de Ménélik II*, Paris, 1930-2, I, 210. See also *ibid.*, p. vii. On the same page the editor of this chronicle, M. de Coppet, notes that Gäbrä Sellase used a *Kebrä nägäst* as a source for events preceding this appointment as *Šāhafē Te'ezaz* in 1880, but it cannot, of course, be assumed that he was using the copy discussed above.

<sup>124</sup> The tablet, usually of wood or stone, placed in the church's ' holy of holies ' to symbolize the Ark of the Covenant.

<sup>125</sup> It was consecrated by His Beatitude Abuna Baselyos on the first day of the Ethiopian year, 1 Mäskäräm 1948 (11 September 1955).

Magdala and passed into the possession of Major Leveson, who brought it to England in 1868. The book was in private keeping till 1936, when it was offered at auction and bought for the late Sir Henry Wellcome—one of many items having little obvious relevance to the museum and library of the history of medicine which he had so generously planned. When King Theodore's Bible thus came recently to the notice of the Wellcome Trustees, it seemed to them inappropriate that its fate and ownership should again be left to the chance of the sale rooms, and the Foreign Office approved their proposal that it should be offered to the Emperor of Ethiopia, now restored to his throne by armies of the British Empire'.

The volume was bound in wooden boards covered with tooled leather and had a mirror on the inner side of the front cover. The contents included the Psalms, the Song of Songs, the Gospel according to St. John, and liturgical items. Bound with them were a number of earlier paintings on vellum.

The book was dispatched to Addis Ababa, and on 15 March 1942 was offered by the British Minister, Sir Robert Howe, for the acceptance of Emperor Haile Sellassie.<sup>126</sup>

Another manuscript, which returned to Ethiopia from Australia in 1968, was a morning prayer scroll alleged to have been found lying near the Emperor's body by Petty Officer Barr of the British Navy.<sup>127</sup> His grand-daughter Mrs. Esther Sidney-Smith, to whom he gave it 40 years ago, is presumably the source of the information, published in the press on the occasion of the scroll's restoration, that Barr was a 'God-fearing Scot who hid the scroll from desecrating hands'.

Mrs. Sydney-Smith asked that the scroll be handed back to its rightful owner and, on the last day of his visit in Perth, 17 May 1968, Emperor Haile Sellassie was presented with it by the State Premier of Western Australia, Mr. David Brand.<sup>128</sup>

What, then, was the size of the original library which Emperor Tewodros had assembled for the endowment of the church he had intended to build?

To attempt an estimate is almost an impossibility because of the number of imponderables.

On the one hand many manuscripts may have been destroyed altogether. It is known that some volumes and papers, including, possibly, most of the imperial correspondence, perished immediately after the storming.<sup>129</sup> It may be assumed that further volumes may have been damaged or lost in transit to Europe. Other volumes, looted or purchased, may have disappeared whilst in the hands of members of the expedition, or their families.

<sup>126</sup> *Times*, 11 July 1942.

<sup>127</sup> The Royal Naval Rocket Brigade was with the leading troops in the advance on Mäqdäla; *vide* Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, II, 473.

<sup>128</sup> *Ethiopian Herald*, 18 May 1968; Ethiopia. Ministry of Information and Tourism, *His Imperial Majesty visits Asia, the Far East and Australia*, Addis Ababa, 1968, 75.

<sup>129</sup> See above, p. 17, n. 14 and 15.

On the other hand not all the manuscripts which have come to light are necessarily from the Mädhane Alām church or from among Tewodros's personal possessions. Other literate inhabitants of the fortress including the prisoners possessed books: members of the expedition may have purchased or looted these.<sup>130</sup> Books could also have been purchased,<sup>131</sup> albeit not in large numbers, on the way to and from Mäqdāla. Another important consideration is that a number of manuscripts are probably still in private hands unknown to the world of scholarship; these are only gradually appearing on the market.

At the risk of incurring the disapproval of all bona fide scholars the present writer has ventured to tabulate her guesses about volumes which have come to light outside Ethiopia, adding the 600 officially left behind, plus the three officially returned.

The table on p. 40 shows that manuscripts from the Mädhane Alām church have travelled to all the five continents, though, outside Ethiopia, by far the greatest concentration remains, as is to be expected, in Great Britain.

William Wright estimated in 1877 that Tewodros had assembled a library of about 1000 volumes at Mäqdāla.<sup>132</sup> In the light of information which has become available in the century since Wright published his list of the collection, it would appear that his estimate was sound, though it is possibly somewhat on the conservative side, taking into account the manuscripts destroyed or untraced.

The question of the nature and age of the manuscripts collected at Mäqdāla is more easily resolved. It can be assumed that the books left behind in Ethiopia were those which did not interest Mr. Holmes or the officers and gentlemen who purchased at the auction. Holmes, with Munzinger's assistance, was attempting to purchase a representative collection of texts,<sup>133</sup> and, in addition, manuscripts of outstanding quality or antiquity, especially if illustrated. Other buyers were probably interested only in the latter category. It is therefore probably safe to assume that, although Holmes and the bidders at the auction picked the better items, the library at Mäqdāla did not differ very greatly in its content from the collection taken to London. This is described by William Wright in the official history of the expedition as follows.

<sup>130</sup> The soldiers looted the homes of the prisoners. Waldmeier, op. cit., 118, specifically mentions that they took books. Markham, op. cit., 365, mentions that gently nurtured ladies among the fugitives 'were eager to sell their personal ornaments, their sacred pictures and books . . . for the means of buying bread'.

<sup>131</sup> Flad, op. cit., II, 72, confirms that there was no looting on the way to and from Mäqdāla. Orders to pay for everything were strictly enforced, and, indeed, high prices were charged and paid. *Vide* Chojnacki, art. cit., 36. Not too much weight need be attached to the account of the French traveller, A. Girard, who, after visiting Adwa in September 1868, was told that the English officers had emptied all the church libraries (A. Girard, *Souvenirs d'un voyage en Abyssinie, 1868-1869*, Le Caire, 1873, 242-3). The opposite is attested by numerous other accounts of the expedition.

<sup>132</sup> Wright, op. cit., p. iii.

<sup>133</sup> Flad, op. cit., II, 72.



TABLE INDICATING THE DISPERSAL OF TEWODROS'S LIBRARY

<i>Collection</i>	<i>Possible (maximum)</i>	<i>Probable</i>	<i>Certain or highly likely (minimum)</i>
<i>Great Britain</i>			
British Museum, to 1877	350	350	349
„ „ „, to 1971	7	5	3
Royal Library, Windsor Castle	6	6	6
Bodleian Library, Oxford	34	10	5
Cambridge University Library	47	12	10
John Rylands Library, Manchester	4	3	2
Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, London	6	—	—
National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh	2	2	—
Lady Meux collection (now dispersed)	5	5	5
Unknown private owner	1	1	—
<i>Total in G.B.</i>	462	394	380
<i>Ireland</i>			
Chester Beatty Library (excluding Lady Meux MSS)	1	1	—
<i>Austria</i>			
Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna	1	1	1
<i>Germany (German Democratic Republic)</i>			
Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin	2	2	2
<i>France</i>			
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris	2	2	2
<i>Vatican City</i>			
Vatican Library	1	—	—
<i>India</i>			
Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society	2	2	—
<i>U.S.A.</i>			
Wilberforce Eames collection, New York	1	1	1
Mercer collection, Grafton, Mass.	1	1	1
<i>Total outside Ethiopia, excluding G.B.</i>	11	10	7
<i>Ethiopia</i>			
Left behind at Čäläqot, or distributed to other churches	600	600	600
Returned : <i>Kebrä nägäst</i> , from G.B.	1	1	1
'Theodore's Bible', from G.B.	1	1	1
Prayer scroll, from Australia	1	1	—
<i>Total in Ethiopia</i>	603	603	602
<i>Grand total</i>	1,075	1,007	989

'The collection of manuscripts deposited in the British Museum by the order of Sir S. Northcote consists of 359 volumes, one of which is a paper manuscript, in Coptic and Arabic. The remainder are Aethiopic, with the exception of about half-a-dozen, which are written in the modern Amharic dialect.

Of these manuscripts, four or five are paper, the rest vellum. They are mostly well bound, and in good preservation, and some of them contain pictures, representing the state of art in Abyssinia during the last two or three centuries. The oldest among them Dr. Wright finds to be of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but the great bulk of the collection belongs to the seventeenth and eighteenth, and some were written during the present century, even in the reign of the late King Theodore. The following are some of the more important classes :

1. Manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures, comprising the whole of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, as well as the Apocrypha; among the latter may be specified the Book of Enoch, the Rufate (" Liber Jubilaeorum " or " Parva Genesis "), and the Ascension of Isaiah.

2. A Lectionary, several missals and other office books, psalters, antiphonaries, Hymn-books, and Prayer-books.

3. Collections of homilies and discourses for festivals, saints' days, &c. Here may be mentioned the Gebra Hemamal or services for Passion week, the Nagara and Manjane Dersana Mikail, Dersana Gabriel, and Dersana Rufail, besides the " Miracles of the Virgin Mary " and the " Miracles of Jesus ".

4. The Patristic literature is represented by various translations from the Greek and Arabic, such as the Ancoratus of Epiphany, some works of Cyril of Alexandria, the Commentary of Chrysostom on the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the works of Mar Isaac. Other ecclesiastical works of importance are the Dedas Calia Apostolorium, the sinodos or collection of Canons of the Councils, the treatises ascribed to Clement, the Haimanota Abau, or " Faith of the Fathers "; the Lena Abau, " History of Paradise of the Fathers ", Tilekseysu or Philoxenus, Aragani Maufasawi, Faus Maufasawi, the huge compilations called Hawiand Talmid, and the Fetha Nagast, or " Laws of the Kings ".

5. The department of history is not so well supplied, but the collection comprises copies of the Jewish history of Joseph ben Gorwon, or Joseppon, the Kebra Nagast or " Glory of the Kings "; the Universal History of George Walda Amid, the Chronology of Abu Shaker, and two Aethiopian chronicles of considerable value. The History of Alexander the Great is rather to be regarded as a romance.

6. Finally may be mentioned the Seukesor, or Synascarium, of which there are several copies; the Gadla Hawareyat, or acts of the Apostles and Disciples, and numerous lives of Saints.<sup>134</sup>

It was Wright's opinion that the acquisition of the Mäqdāla collection made the British Museum the best library for Ethiopian manuscripts in Europe. In his report, quoted in Holland and Hozier, he writes:

' Looking to the number and intrinsic value of these manuscripts, this seems to be the largest and finest collection of Aethiopic literature in Europe. Certainly it far surpasses in extent that of the French traveller, M. Antoine D'Abbadie,

<sup>134</sup> Holland and Hozier, *op. cit.*, II, 397.

the printed catalogue of which comprises 234 numbers, and if it were added by the Trustees to their present collection of about 115 manuscripts, the British Museum would probably be placed in the first rank in another department of oriental literature besides the Syriac'.<sup>135</sup>

Wright feared, however, that some scholars would be somewhat disappointed with the contents of the collection. Firstly the bulk of the manuscripts were of comparatively modern date, i.e. from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Manuscripts of the sixteenth century were rare and none could be dated before 1400. Secondly the collection did not bring to light much new religious material of Greek or Coptic origin. Thirdly very few manuscripts were of a non-religious character: only a handful had any direct bearing on Ethiopian history, and a mere three were concerned with traditional medicine.<sup>136</sup>

Despite Wright's fears the haul of manuscripts from Mäqdāla led to a rebirth of European interest in Ethiopian culture, and a number of texts were edited and translated. The most prolific worker in this field was Budge, several of whose translations have already been mentioned. His edition of the Ethiopic version of the 'History of Alexander the Great' was based on a manuscript at the British Museum and was the first Ethiopic text to be published for private circulation by Lady Meux.<sup>137</sup>

She sent Emperor Menelik a copy through Sir Reginald Wingate. Graf Gleichen, who was present when Menelik received the gift, observed that 'the king was delighted, and discussed the possibility of having other books similarly printed'.<sup>138</sup> This suggestion was taken up by Lady Meux, as we have seen.

Even to-day over 100 years after Mäqdāla, it is not unusual to see an éthiopsant, or in recent years, an Ethiopian of the younger generation, at work in the British Museum's Oriental Reading Room turning the leaves of one of the manuscripts which the great Emperor had collected.

Determined in all things, Tewodros succeeded in assembling what Zanutto considered to be the 'most important' among the collections ever brought together in Ethiopia.<sup>139</sup> Never before, as far as history tells us, had a library of 1000 manuscripts been gathered in the country. Even to-day Ethiopia has not seen its like.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, II, 397-8.

<sup>136</sup> Wright, *op. cit.*, p. iv.

<sup>137</sup> E. A. W. Budge (ed. and tr.), *The life and exploits of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge, 1896.

<sup>138</sup> E. Gleichen, *With the mission to Menelik 1897*, London, 1898, 145.

<sup>139</sup> Zanutto, *op. cit.*, 144.

<sup>140</sup> This paper uses a modified form of the transliteration system devised by Stephen Wright and adopted by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies; it recommends that the very well established names of a few people and places be left in the commonly accepted spelling. This recommendation has in general been followed here.