

Oxford, St John's College, MS 228 (item 1)

[Savage-Smith no. 39]

The following pdf is a scan of Emilie Savage-Smith and others, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts at St John's College Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 116-18. This catalogue entry was written by Edward Ullendorff.

Content beyond this particular catalogue entry has been digitally removed.

This pdf has been made searchable using Nuance Power PDF. To search the text, press **control + F**. Please be aware that there may be errors in automatic character recognition, and that not all text may have been captured in this process.

[Catalogue entry starts below]

Entry No. 39

MS 228 (item 1)

TITLE: [not given]

AUTHOR: [not given]

CONTENTS: The text, written in classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez), opens with a Hymn to God, beginning 'I bow to your divinity who have created darkness before making light'. This is followed by sixteen praises for creating the various parts of the world as indicated in the first chapter of Genesis.

For a comparable Hymn to God, see Getachew Haile, *Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts* (Collegeville, Minn.: St John's College, 1993), x, no. 4316.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

4 leaves (fos. 4r–7r)

Beginning (fo. 4r₁):

እሰግድ : ለመለኮትከ : ዘፈጠርከ : ጽልመተ : እምቅድመ : ትግበር : ብርሃነ ።

Each of the subsequent sixteen praises begins with the same phrase:

እሰግድ : ለመለኮትከ :

The copy is undated and unsigned. The nature of the script and general condition indicate conclusively that it was produced in the 19th century.

Classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez). Dimensions: c.22 × 20.5 (text area, 2 columns each 14.5 × 7.2) cm; usually 18–19 lines per page.

The text is written in black ink, in a rather unattractive hand. It was transcribed by the same person who transcribed fos. 63r–70v of the volume (see Entry No. 38). The text and column areas are ruled by hardpoint.

The texts are written on vellum, with leaves of varying sizes.

Volume contents: The volume consists of 72 leaves. Folios 1–3 and 71–2 are blank leaves of vellum (essentially endleaves), while fos. 7v and 62v are also blank. Folios 4r–7r (item 1) contain the item here catalogued, and fos. 8r–70v (item 2, Entry No. 40) contain the ‘Miracles of Jesus Christ’. The texts occupy eight unnumbered quires, consisting of 4, 8 10, 8, 8, 10, 11, and 8 leaves respectively.

Binding: The volume is bound in wooden boards. The front cover is formed of three pieces of wood stitched together with leather or cloth cords running through twelve bored holes. The back cover is formed in a similar manner of two pieces of wood. There is no spine. The eight quires and preliminary and back endleaves are stitched together with cords passing through eight bored holes in each cover.

Folios 15, 31, and 59 have a thread place-marker inserted at the top of the folio. Between fos. 14 and 15 there is a loose piece of printed cotton apparently serving as a bookmark.

The bound manuscript is kept in a dark-brown leather pouch, measuring *c.* 22.5 × 23.5 × 5 cm (see Plate 14). The back, front, and sides are formed of one piece of leather, except for a narrow gusset set into one side seam. A triangular flap (composed of two pieces of leather stitched together) is sewn to the top back edge of the pouch, and this flap comes over the top and can be passed under a stiff leather horizontal band attached by thongs to the two sides. Also attached to the side panels are two narrow strips of leather forming a shoulder or belt strap, which at one time could be attached to the small thongs on the lower back of the pouch. On the front side of the pouch, the area under the flap is a lighter shade of brown, not having darkened with age and exposure to light as the other exterior surfaces have done.

Provenance: No information is available on when or by what route the volume came to be at St John’s College.

The names of some owners with traditional Ethiopian personal nomenclature are indicated, several of which were subsequently erased to make room for new owners, but quite often these lacunae have not been filled in. None is dated.

On the first endleaf there is a pencilled annotation giving an earlier shelfmark, *MSS. 214*.

References

Unpublished. The manuscript is listed in the Coxe-supplement-1 (unpublished typescript), 5, though this item is not mentioned.

Pearson, *Oriental Manuscripts Europe*, 116 (a simple statement that St John’s College has a single Ethiopic manuscript; no shelfmark or description is given).

A brief, but accurate, handwritten description was first offered by the Revd. Dr. Charles Fox Burney of St John's College (Lecturer in Hebrew), then domiciled at 17 Bradmore Rd, Oxford. This undated typed material was found inside the pouch and is now kept separately in a plastic sleeve.