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“Against Thirty and Twenty Five Devils”: Two Ethiopian Painted Amulets in the British Museum Collection

Abstract

The paper discusses two paintings on parchment preserved in the British Museum collection, one representing the cycle of Moses, the second St. Mary, St. George and a pair of suppliants. Both are found to be amulets, although they lack protective prayers, which is an unusual feature. Their effectiveness is based upon a carefully chosen set of apotropaic images.

The British Museum owns a small, but interesting, collection of Ethiopian items which were donated in 1912 by the family of the British traveller and adventurer Charles Speedy. He spent many years in Ethiopia, first at the court of King Theodore II and later as a political adviser to General Napier. Eventually, after the British government decided to take charge of Theodore’s son Alamayyahu, he was also made responsible for the care of the prince.

Among this collection, a pair of large pieces of painted parchment, attributable to the same artist deserves particular attention. At first glance it seems as though the scenes and figures depicted on them have very little in common with each other. However, due

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3 The pieces, which measure approximately 120x120 cm each, are presently separately framed under glass. They are catalogued as: Af 1912, 1120.2 and Af 1912, 1120.3.
to a relatively transparent iconography and the presence of inscribed captions, we are able to interpret their meaning and establish the purpose of the pictures.

The piece designated as A (Fig. 1), can be divided into two registers. The upper is dominated by the figure of St. Mary with the Child flanked by two angels and accompanied by the unfortunately somewhat obscure legend: \( \text{አተባጫ [?] ከርርም: ያ్ከለ: ቅዐስ:} \) – “Atabaga [?] Mary with her Son”.\(^4\) Rendered in a half figure, even somewhat simplified, she follows the most common Ethiopian iconographical type, which reproduces a Byzantine icon, still preserved in the Roman church of Santa Maria Maggiore and called “\( \text{ሔለስ የ попуሊ የሆማን} \)”.\(^5\) Mary holds in her left hand a diminished, but still visible handkerchief, the characteristic detail of the famous Vorlage. The disposition of her right hand has been changed into a gesture of blessing by elongating the fingers. She is the only person crowned by a halo and the only one who gazes straight at the viewer, establishing eye contact. Jesus’ blessing hand also has long, extended fingers. He wears a necklace, which is typical of Ethiopian silver jewellery and has an unusual headdress with tufts of hair around his head like a nimbus. One may suppose that the latter detail was inspired by a depiction of \( \text{ኩሮሮ at ሰስሮ} \) in which the nails stick out of Jesus’ head creating a sort of halo,\(^6\) and that, by the addition of this element, the painter was recalling the predestination of the Child.\(^7\) The angels, identified as Gabriel and Michael,\(^8\) are armed with swords and each raise a wing above St. Mary’s head, according to an iconographical formula well established in Ethiopian art since the middle of the 15th century.\(^9\) The importance of Michael and his superiority over his companion is expressed by the dimensions of his figure: in fact, he is the largest figure in the painting.

The centre of the lower register is occupied by the mounted St. George killing the dragon and is labelled with the caption: \( \text{ወርጆስ ይ: ሳንሽ:} \) (sic) – “mounted George”. The saint is throwing spears towards the beast and one of them has already pierced its profusely bleeding jaws. The dragon (\( \text{ድንኩ} \)) is represented as a decoratively cruled snake, with ears on its head. A little devil called \( \text{ግን:} \) – ganen emerges from the middle of

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\(^4\) The figure of Jesus is labelled with the inscription: \( \text{ሄወና:] \) – “the Child”.


\(^7\) The same idea is expressed in the Byzantine pictures of St. Mary called \( \text{Panaghia tou Pathous,} \) or the “Passion’s Madonna”, which depict the Jesus-Child seeking protection in Mary’s arms when the angels approach Him carrying the instruments of the Passion, H. Hallensleben, ‘Maria, Marienbild’, in: Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie, Bd. 3, Rom-Freiburg, 1971, cols 173–174; N. Schmuck, ‘Passionmadonna’, in: Marienlexikon, hrg. R. von Bäumer, L. Schefczyk, Bd. 5, Ottolien 1993, pp. 117f.

\(^8\) \( \text{ሄስህወና:] ከስህወና:] \) and: \( \text{ሄስሮወና:] ከሮወና:] \)

his body. This element, as well as the princess Borutawit (םרועית) sitting on a tree is typical of the 18th century iconography of the scene.

In the left corner of the picture is represented a little, naked figure, sitting with spread legs and raised hands. The inscription אפק: פּוּנַת: [for פנַח] – “26Dāra became barren” makes it clear that she is a childless woman praying to conceive. Behind her, also with raised hands, stands a man, certainly her husband, described as סֵלֶדֶל: תָּוָּיָד: – “Dөratəs praying”.

On the second piece, called B (Fig. 2), biblical scenes connected to Moses are represented. Chronologically the story begins in the lower register. Moses, armed with a lance and a shield is galloping on a white horse. He is identified by the caption: אָמַּה: אַלָּי: אַלַּע – “Moses on his horse”. A similarly-armied man riding a blue horse accompanies him. Behind the prophet flies an angel or rather a cherub and the inscription explains the event: אָמַּה: אַלָּי: אַלַּע – “the angel spoke to Moses”. We may surmise that the scene alludes to the moment when God decided to confide in the prophet regarding the rescue of the Israelites and warned him of his plan through an angelic messenger. The episode took place when Moses was still a young man, attached to the Pharaoh’s household and was appointed by him to be chief of the army.

The next episode is depicted in the upper register and represents the Crossing of the Red Sea. To the right, Moses has just used his staff to close the parted waters, as explained by the inscription: אָמַּה: אַלָּי: אַלַּע – “Moses smote the sea”. Two people who accompany the prophet, each armed with a stick and a sword, are designated as אָמַּה: אַלָּי: אַלַּע – “the soldiers of Moses”. From the sea emerge the Pharaoh on a white

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10 Most probably a misinterpretation of a European, somewhat crudely painted picture in which a rather ugly princess in a half-figure was pictured directly behind the dragon’s body; changed to a devil by the Ethiopian painters, the figure became one of the enduring elements of St. George’s iconography in Ethiopia, cf. for instance the central panel of the St. George triptych IES 4191, produced by Nicolò Brancalone, S. Chojnacki, Major Themes (n. 5), cat. 151, p. 169.


12 A similar figure appears in the magic scroll IES 293 on the picture representing Samuel of Wäldäbba riding the lion. Lacking an inscription it was wrongly interpreted both by C. Lepage as an apotropaic figure in: J. Mercier, ‘Les peintures des rouleaux protecteurs éthiopiens’, JES, 12:2 (1975), p. 141, and by J. Mercier who saw it as a prostitute sent to tempt the saint, J. Mercier, Ethiopian Magic Scrolls, New York 1979, p. 73.

13 It is difficult to understand the inscriptions which accompany this figure, one placed above him: אָמַּה: אַלָּי: אַלַּע: and another below: אָמַּה: אַלָּי: אַלַּע: – “his green horse”? It should be recalled here that usually in Ethiopian painting no special meaning or symbolism is attached to the colour of horses which can be chosen at will and need not be realistic, as in our case. However some of the Equestrian Saints are traditionally represented on horses of a particular colour, for instance St. George on white, St. Mercury and St. Claudius on brown or black etc., cf. E. Balikka-Witakowska, ‘Equestrian Saints’, in: Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, vol. II, ed. by S. Uhlig, Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 347b-351a. An anonymous young man is depicted on a green horse in the Abba Yäm’ata church, Guh, Gär’alta, cf. Mägzäbü sərəlat: http://ethiopia.deeds.utoronto.ca (username & password: student), 2002.017:017 and 018.

14 The legends concerning Moses’ youth circulated in the Christian world and found their way into many literary works, see infra, notes 26, 42–45.
horse and his two soldiers, both trying to keep their swords and shields above the surface of the water. The inscription reads: ‘Nfr =, Fr Os, TS4M, BwsT, ber, – “King Färös drowned in the sea”.

The last episode is portrayed on the right-hand-side, in the middle of the picture. Inside a white circle a little figure is sitting on a low chair under which the following text is placed: [L?]BT, mS, KdN, agZ AbE r, H – “The house of Moses made a covenant with God”. The figure’s right hand is surmounted by a cross and, holding a stick, marks a light-coloured line on the water while its left hand touches one of two hands which protrude from a patch of blue. The other hand is holding a square decorated with a cross. That part of the painting is explained by two inscriptions, one above the spot: Clt, [for: clt,] ZWH BM, LmS,, BDM n, Smy, WRD: – “Tablets of Law which He gave Moses”; “He descended on a heavenly cloud”, and the second, unclear, below it: Hüatt: awn= – “Our Lord on account of Moses […?]”. It seems that two events, both in very abbreviated form, are conflated here: Moses with his hand strengthened by the cross making a passage through the water for his fellow-countrymen and Moses as the representative of all Israelites, (the inscriptions mentions betä Muse) receiving the Ten Commandments from God who is hidden behind a cloud.

Judging from many details in this picture it is obvious that the painter did not follow the main literary source for the story of Moses, that is the Old Testament, particularly the Book of Exodus. Most probably he was inspired by some Ethiopian versions of the apocryphal and magic texts which also had Moses as their central figure, such as the Gädlä Muse, the Falasha version of the ḌArde’et, the Asmatä Muse,19

15 One of them is called Ṣängr$ – Sängrışis. I was not able to establish from which literary source origins this person.

16 The painter making this pictorial fusion obviously had to disregard the chronological sequence of the events.

17 The representation of God by means of a hand, the manus dei, emerging from a cloud or “from above” is well established in Ethiopian art. The motif appears first in depictions of the Equestrian Saints combating the forces of evil or receiving the crown of martyrdom. The oldest representations of that type, dated to the 12th century are to be found in the church of Ymrahannä Krästos, Lasta, cf. E. Balicka-Witakowska, ‘The Paintings of Ymrahannä Krästos: a preliminary report’, AfrBull, 59 (2002), pp. 39–44, Figs 13–16. The other scenes in which the manus dei frequently appears are Moses receiving the tablets of law and the Sacrifice of Abraham. The story of Moses is to be found in Exodus 2–40, Numbers, Deuteronomy 1–34.


19 The Disciples – an apocalyptic text, both magic and liturgical (it is read during the baptism ceremonies), which contains one of the largest collections of the mysterious names of God used as magic formulae against any mental and physical disease, E. Littmann, ‘Arde’et: the Magic Book of the Disciples’, Journal of the American Oriental Society, 25 (1904), pp. 1–48; R. Basset, Les apocryphes éthiopiens, VII: Enseignement de Jésus-Christ à ses disciples et prières magiques, Paris 1896. In the Falasha version the names were revealed to Moses who used them to perform the miracles fighting with the Pharaoh and his magicians, Recueil..., (n. 19), pp. 29–34, 80–101.

the Qal zä-Muse and Šälot zä-Muse, which is known from many different versions.

For instance, according to the Old Testament Moses always talked to God directly, while in the apocryphal texts and magical prayers an angel, usually called Gabriel, is the go-between. In the biblical books God reveals himself to Moses in the form of lighting, thunder and smoke, the other texts mention the cloud, and that Moses was the chief of an army. Finally the staff with which he parted the sea is described in detail and its magical features are pointed out.

The question arises as why these pictures were produced. We find a clue in two additional inscriptions. On parchment A, the text below the figure of St. Mary reads: ΦΩΝΑ: θο: θω: “there are thirty wagawon”, while on B, below Moses’ horse it is as follows: ΦΩΝΑ: ἣ[for θ]ε: θω: “there are twenty five wagawon”. The name wagawon, corrupted legewon or legəwun derives from Greek (legion) and is one of the names of Satan. In the Ethiopian magic texts it designates the frequently-occurring devils which cause many medical conditions, among them barrenness. We may surmise that both captions were included as an identification of malevolent spirits, the careful enumerating being a way of controlling them. Therefore there can be little doubt that these pictures are a double amulet made for the childless couple ፒልል and ወራተኝ ወን ትዕም እና ወን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት ክርክር እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገዝ ቤት በመብረ ለትርክም እና ከማን ትማን የሚገzerbaios depicted on piece A. We may surmise that a learned healer first found the cause of his client’s trouble, that is the presence of thirty and twenty-five demons and then prescribed a remedy in form of...
the amulet which he possibly executed himself. Judging from the size of the parchments they were not meant to be carried by the owners but rather permanently displayed in their home, in the same way as the magic scrolls called “wall-amulets”.

However, it must be pointed out that our paintings have little in common with regular Ethiopian magic scrolls. The most important difference is the use of pictures rather than text as the main therapeutic medium. Moreover, these are purely figural representations which were not chosen from the typical pictorial repertory of scrolls dominated by the abstract drawings with secret meanings. They are purely religious, and were it not for the addition of the spell and the very particular depiction of the female owner, they could easily be accepted as devotional or church paintings.

Although unusual, the omission of text in an amulet seems to be not unacceptable, particularly since the owners of the scrolls can seldom read. Wearing or simply possessing the scrolls is considered enough to activate their protective function. In the case of the childless couple the carefully chosen, very personalized pictures would offer powerful talisman.

St. Mary, the compassionate and most approachable intercessor between God and mankind who was particularly venerated in Ethiopia, is represented here as

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31 Most of these scrolls are of imposing size and are often written in two or three columns. They are called wall-amulets because they are displayed unrolled on the wall of a house for apotropaic and curative purposes, O. Löfgren, ‘Äthiopische Wandamulette’, Orientalia Suecana, 10 (1962), p. 104; S. Chernetsov, ‘Ethiopian ‘Magic scrolls’ from the MAE Collection’, Manuscripta Orientalia, 10:4 (2004), pp. 40–42. For the examples see infra, note 47.


33 Ethiopian talisman makers call the first category sa²∅l, the second tālsām.

34 This kind of representation would never appear in the religious paintings although they are not free from the obscene scenes which usually represent the punishment of evil people and evil spirits, cf. for instance a painting from Gündä Gunde monastery showing the devils tormenting the soul of a sinner, Gigar Tesfaye, ‘Note sur Gunda Gundé et d’autres couvents stéphanites dans le Tigray’, Abbay, 10 (1979), Figs 5–8, or the reproof of Arius introduced to the wall-painting programme dated to the end of the 18th century, cf. ‘Arius’, in: Mäzgäbä sa²∅lat (n. 13).

35 For more information on this subject, see Mercier, Ethiopian Magic Scrolls, (n. 12), pp. 21–23; Chernetsov, ‘Ethiopian “Magic scrolls”…’; (n. 31), p. 40.


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a mother, and so it is to her that the sterile woman and her husband direct their prayers. The promise of divine assistance is expressed by the clearly depicted gestures of blessing, made by Jesus and Mary while her intensive gaze may have been intended to have curative powers. Since the picture of St. Mary with the Child does not belong in the pictorial repertory of the scrolls, we may surmise that the painter allowed himself to take such an unprecedented step in order to make the amulet particularly effective.

The enlargement of the figure of St. Michael also seems to have been done deliberately. Michael, the most militant of all the archangels, was appointed by God to fight with the powers of evil so he would have been emphasized by the painter as the best possible protector of the unfortunate couple. Since the archangel in contrast to St. Mary is one of the most popular figures in the repertory of the amulets, his picture was certainly selected because of its proven effectiveness.

In turn, the depiction of St George can be understood as a pictorial prayer. The scene shows him about to vanquish the multiple evil forces and most probably depicts the popular spell “let the evil spirits be pierced by the lance of St. George”. The saint appears quite often in the magical scrolls but usually as a single figure. The representation on the amulet of his most famous and impressive rescue action may also seek to improve the efficacy of the token.

The story of Moses should also be seen in this context. The Crossing of the Red Sea belongs to those events which showed God’s intervention on behalf of the chosen people and in the early visual language of Christianity was used as a symbol of the particular protection of God. Moreover, Moses himself was believed to be a magician. This tradition, which is based on the biblical account of Exodus, was elaborated in the legends and apocryphal literature, which circulated widely in the Christian world, Ethiopia included. According to some accounts the prophet was taught by the famous Egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres whom he eventually defeated in a competitive display of magical powers performed in the presence of the Pharaoh.

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39 On the particular meanings of eyes, gaze and eye contact between the painted figure and the viewer in the magico-medical context cf. Mercier, Art that Heals... (n. 32), pp. 87–95; Vikan, ‘Art, Medicine...’ (n. 36), p. 72.


42 Cf. for instance the material presented in Moïse: L’Homme de l’Alliance, Paris 1955.


There are also versions which state that he learnt augury, divination and the art of enchantment.45

Despite the popularity of this tradition, the introduction of Moses to our amulet is surprising. As far as we know neither he nor his story were ever depicted in an Ethiopian magical scroll, although, as was mentioned above, texts connected to him appear frequently. Looking for a source of inspiration we cannot exclude the possibility that the painter was to some extent influenced by the programme of wall-paintings which from the second half of the 18th century permanently place the Crossing of the Red Sea on the main door of the sanctuary,46 obviously for the apotropaic purposes. It would be easy for a person versed in Ethiopian ecclesiastical traditions to transfer knowingly this popular motive from one medium to another.

The dating of our two paintings is problematic because they contain no written indication of when they were produced. However closer examination of the stylistic features can yield some indications. The painter used very distinctive means of expression. The heads of all the figures are drawn as regular circles or ovals and the skin is tinted red. The large eyes, with big round pupils, perceived as the central point of the face, skilfully use the contrast between black and white in order to attract the attention of the spectator. The mouths are marked by a zigzag line or simply missing. The range of colours is limited to black, white, red, dark green, and sapphire blue while the yellowish parchment is used as background. Also characteristic is the decorative pattern composed of red and blue repetitive and overlapping curves, applied mostly on the garments of the depicted figures and on the wings of the angels.

It is significant that the same style also distinguishes a group of magic scrolls, all belonging to the category called “wall-amulets”47 and dated to the middle or end of the 19th century.48 Among them there are some which show such close similarities to our paintings that they should be attributed to the same artist, for instance the scroll in the


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Uppsala Universitetsbibliotek. It is illustrated by four large pictures (Figs 3 A–D). The first depicts an apotropaic figure with raised hands and a big head encircled by two snakes which also encircles the enourmous eyes dominated by black pupils. However, it is not clear what the figure represents since the amulet-makers interviewed about this gave very different explanations. The second picture shows two angels armed with swords, very similar to Michael and Gabriel in the British Museum painting. Even closer to it is the figure of St. George and particularly his horse. The last representation shows a devil grasping a child and its mother. They are helped by Gäbrä Mänfäs Qoddus who rises his cross and an angel who covers the devil’s eyes with his sword. Another scroll which almost certainly was executed by the same artist belongs to a private collection in Paris. Its apotropaic figure with the head encircled by two snakes is very similar to the figure in the Uppsala scroll while St. George to the Pharao in the British Museum painting.

It seems that the style of our painter was admired because an important group of scrolls obviously display artistic dependence of him and either came from his workshop or are close imitations of his work.

Searching for more comparative material, we may also recall a piece of painted parchment in the collection of the Yoḥannes IV Museum in Mäqäle, Tigray, dated on stylistic grounds to the second half of the 17th century. (Fig. 4) It measures 75 x 65 cm and presents an iconographical programme, which could also be designated “religious”. The pictures are arranged in three registers. The uppermost is dominated by a centrally-placed St. Mary with the Child between Michael and Gabriel. Two scenes flank the group: the Crucifixion and the Anastasis. The first, which visualises the act of redemption, is a standard image in the scrolls. The second, symbolising the triumph of Christ over Death and Satan, belongs to the category of scenes which depict the victory of Good

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50 Mercier, Ethiopian Magic Scrolls, (n. 12), p. 66.

51 In the Uppsala scroll the angel on the right-hand side lacks wings. The shadows above his shoulders show that the painter intended to add them but was prevented because of lack of space.

52 A very similar picture illustrates a scroll kept in the IES, no. 234, where Gäbrä Mänfäs Qoddus and the devil are identified by the inscriptions, cf. Mercier, ‘Les Peintures des Règles..’, (n. 12), no. 23.

53 Cf. Mercier, Ethiopian Magic Scrolls, (n. 12), pls 14, 16. Unfortunately it is not known what represent its other pictures.

54 To the examples quoted in n. 47 we can add: Paris, Musée national des arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie, nos 6, 12, 18, 19, 52, 62, 64, all published in Mercier, Le roi Salomon, (n. 32), pp. 179, 169, 168, 109, 120, 119, 167, 118 and also there exp. 101, p. 162.


57 It appears predominantly in a simplified form as a cross flanked by two figures or as three crosses, see the examples in: D. Appleyard, Ethiopian Manuscripts, London 1993, nrs 88, 94, 100, 110, 119, 123.
over Evil. In Ethiopia, where it is always represented as the liberation of Adam and Eve from Hell, it recalls the divine intervention on behalf of the faithful.\textsuperscript{58}

In the second register four Equestrian Saints defeat the maleficent figures. They are followed by Ss. Gäbrä Mänfäs Qeddus and Täklä Haymanot, both well-known persecutors of demons, and for that reason often represented in the scrolls.\textsuperscript{59} The program is completed by twenty-eight figures of the Stephanite abbots,\textsuperscript{60} each carefully identified by an inscription. It is not impossible that this gallery of named saints was considered to be a sort of textual and pictorial litany.

Taking all this into consideration one might be tempted to see in the Mäqäle painting an amulet similar to the British Museum parchments, but lack of any direct reference to the evil powers prevents us from drawing such a conclusion. Nevertheless all three pieces clearly prove that it is very difficult to distinguish between the religious and the magical sphere as reflected in the spiritual life of Ethiopians and that the term “magical-religious” once introduced to designate the Ethiopian magical texts\textsuperscript{61} can with good reason be applied in the case of same paintings.

\textit{Post scriptum}

When this paper was already in press I came across a text which seems to explain the figure on the green horse depicted in the section B (cf. note 13). It is a fragment of the commentary on the \textit{Apocalypse} from the Ms. British Library Or. 743, fol. 171r, which reads: “And when he loosed the first seal – time. And a white horse went out – Adam... And a green horse – Torah. And the one sitting on it – Pharaoh.”

A similar reference is to be found in the Amharic commentary on the \textit{Apocalypse} edited and translated by R. Cowley, in which the apocalyptic green horse is interpreted \textit{inter alia} as follows: “If it is referred to successive millennia: green horse – it is the time of Moses. He calls it green, because in his time Israel wavered between the law of the Torah and the law of idols; ... and the one mounted on it – because the law of Torah which was made in his time does not save from spiritual death or descent into grave.” (R. Cowley, \textit{The Traditional Interpretation of the Apocalypse of St. John in the

\textsuperscript{58} Amazingly, the scene never appear in the magical scrolls. Instead it is frequently used in the programme of the devotional paintings, cf. the examples in S. Chojnacki, \textit{Ethiopian Icons}, (n. 6).


Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Cambridge 1983, pp. 172, 236). Taking into consideration the texts quoted above we may assume that the amulet-maker, probably familiar with the traditional biblical commentaries, decided to represent the Pharaoh again, this time conceived as the fourth Apocalyptic Rider, the harbinger of death and destruction.

Fig. 1. British Museum, painting A (photo M. Gervers)
Fig. 2. British Museum, painting B (photo M. Gervers)
Fig. 3 A–D. Uppsala, Universitetsbibliotek, O. Etiop. 44, 45, 46 (photo courtesy of UU)
Fig. 4. Mäqäle, Yoḥannos IV Museum, painting no. P3 (photo M. Gervers)