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Article

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A Royal Correspondence in the XVth and XVIth Centuries: the Documents of the Gospel of Dâbrâ Kârbe (Zana)

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In the beginning of the XXth century, Carlo Conti Rossini visited monastic communities in Ethiopia, especially in Tigre, where he was able to consult some manuscripts in monastic libraries and made copies of some of them. These copies are now stored in the Accademia dei Lincei at Rome, and Stefan Strelcyn described them for the catalogue of the library1. One manuscript from the Carlo Conti Rossini collection (manuscript no 91 entitled “chronique royale, documents divers” by S. Strelcyn)2 is a copy of some documents registered in a Gospel which came from Dâbrâ Kârbe of Zana in Tigre3.

This type of text raises many problems. As we know only the copy, not the original, we cannot estimate the date of the manuscript4. Moreover, even if Carlo Conti Rossini had given any information concerning the position in the Gospel manuscript of the different documents copied for him5, we could not tell exactly where they were located and we cannot examine

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1 S. STRELCYN, 1976.
3 The location of Zana in Tigre can be deduced from two different sources. First, in the Liber Axumae, Zana appears in two acts. In these documents, the other place names are located in Tigre (C. CONTI ROSSINI, 1910, 34–35, 58). Secondly, in the History of Labnā Dongal, there is a short reference to Dâbrâ Kârbe of Zana which was destroyed by the armies of Grañ on January 1540, after Grañ had burnt Aksum (M. KROPP, 1988, 18; F.A. DOMBROWSKI, 1983, 166). F. A. Dombrowski proposes a geographical location (East of Ferfera, south of the Takkaze river and west of Gumalo, ibid. 344). Finally, we must point out that G.W.B. HUNTINGFORD (1965, 98) located Dâbrâ Kârbe 20 miles southwest from Aksum, which seems to be quite reliable according to the maps.
4 Carlo Conti Rossini only says that the copy was made from an old Gospel (Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 2).
5 See for instance Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 76.

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*A This paper was submitted at the 13th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa (2000), but unfortunately was not published in the proceedings. I would like to thank Daniel Assefa for his corrections of the translation from ge’ez and for his help and kindness at all times, and Michael Gervers who kindly corrected the English version. Of course, any mistakes and mistranslations are my own.
the handwriting. These reasons make the different texts more difficult to understand and so we can only submit some hypotheses here.

Four types of document were registered in the Gospel of Däbrâ Kärbe:

- two letters written in the name of the king and the 'aqqabe sâ'at of Ḥayq: the first one dates from the reign of Zâr’â Ya’aqob, the second letter from the reign of Løbnà Dongël;
- the rules concerning the dïbtïra (Śv’atâ Dïbtïra) i.e. a re-partition of the dïbtïra in three groups for the service of qone;
- the donations of land to the monastery, with the assignment of their incomes for the celebration of the tâzkar of the kings or the feast of Mary;
- and finally, a text presented by Carlo Conti Rossini as a short history of Zâr’â Ya’aqob, without either beginning or end. This text seemed to be meaningless because, in Carlo Conti Rossini’s copy, words were cut and the paragraphs were not linked together. However, the document is actually an extract from the Mäṣḥafâ Milad, more precisely the lecture for taḥṣâs 29, which is a celebration of king Zâr’â Ya’aqob’s victory over Badlay at the battle of Gomit. But this was not recognised at first, because the page sequence is arranged backward. It is not known if this was already the case in the original Däbrâ Kärbe Gospel or if the mistake was made by the copyist of Carlo Conti Rossini. The presence of this extract from the Mäṣḥafâ Milad in the Däbrâ Kärbe Gospel is very important because, according to Kurt Wendt, there is only one other copy of this text. It can be found in a manuscript preserved in the National Library in Paris, belonging to the d’Abbadie collection, coming from Daga Ǝṣṭifanos, and dating from the XVIth century. No other copy of this text has been discovered since then.

6 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 76–78, 96–99.
7 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 100–107.
9 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 79–93.
10 About this battle, see M.-L. DERAT, 2002, 87–102.
11 The text copied in the Däbrâ Kärbe’s Gospel corresponds to pages 13 to 20 of Kurt Wendt’s edition (K. WENDT, 1962, 13–20). But in manuscript 91 of Conti Rossini’s collection, the beginning of the text is on page 93, and the end on page 81. For this reason, we can guess that the text was copied upside down. It is interesting to note that part of this text is very similar to a miracle of Mary published by E. CERULLI, 1933, 57–112. See also K. WENDT, 1962, IV note 15.
12 K. WENDT, 1962, II–III. There is another extract from the Mäṣḥafâ Milad in a manuscript of Däbrâ Ḥayq (EMML 1835, cf. GETATCHEW HAILE & W. F. MACOMBER,
Of course, these different categories of documents are not clearly distinguishable in the manuscript. For example, assignments of land incomes are included with the Šarʾatā Dābtāra.

Moreover, as has already been noted, since palaeographical observations are impossible, these texts can only be dated through internal criteria. The first letter written in the Gospel of Dābrā Kārbe is attributed to ‘aqqabe śāʾat Amḥa Lāṣayon. According to Taddesse Tamrat, Amḥa Lāṣayon was in charge of the monastery in 1444/1445 and in 1480/1481. Later on, another text seems to have been added in the Gospel. It refers not only to Amḥa Lāṣayon but also to the king Zār’a Yaʾqūb (1434–1468) and to Gābrā Krūstos. Gābrā Krūstos was the second ‘aqqabe śāʾat in charge in Hayq monastery during the reign of king Zār’a Yaʾqūb. He held this office when Amḥa Lāṣayon was living at the royal court in Dābrā Barḥan. These historical references are very compelling. The allusion to the sharing of the office of ‘aqqabe śāʾat between Amḥa Lāṣayon and Gābrā Krūstos is so rare that we can assume that those texts are authentic and date from the mid-XVth century.

The relationship between Dābrā Kārbe and the royal court continues throughout the XVth century and the beginning of the XVIth century. Some documents actually refer to ‘aqqabe śāʾat Nāgādā Iyāsus, who was in charge during the reign of Lābnā Dongol (1508–1540), killed in 1534, and one of these texts contains the date of the 180th year of mercy, equivalent to our 1525/26.

The Dābrā Kārbe Gospel was no doubt included in the archives of the monastery from the reign of Zār’a Yaʾqūb until the reign of Lābnā Dongol. But we do not know whether the texts copied for Carlo Conti Rossini were the originals, or a secondary copy, as in the case of the production of a new manuscript of the Gospel. The only clue is given by Carlo Conti Rossini himself who occasionally mentions that some documents are written by the same hand, which probably means that the others are from different hands.

The documents of the Dābrā Kārbe Gospel are very interesting since they show a correspondence between the royal court and this Tigre monastery. But the danger with this kind of document is to exaggerate their

1981, 322–323), which is a homily on the importance of the feasts in honour of the angels and Mary (K. WENDT, 1962, 20–21).
14 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 97.
16 Mss. Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 97.
17 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 100.
historical importance. We can classify these texts in two different categories. On one hand, they could be seen as very ordinary acts and letters, issued from the royal court to the monasteries and that it was only through a fortunate preservation that this particular manuscript acquired its position, which might reflect something from the reality of the XVth century. On the other hand, we can assume that Däbrä Kärbe had close relations with the royal court, and that these documents have an exceptional status. In fact, I will try to show that the different texts of the Däbrä Kärbe Gospel are relevant to these two categories.

The correspondence between Däbrä Kärbe and the ‘aqqabe sæ’at

Some of the documents preserved in the Däbrä Kärbe Gospel can be described as letters sent from the royal court to the monastery, and copied as a testimony in the most sacred book of the community, the Gospel18. This description is based on the text of the first document where ‘aqqabe sæ’at Amḥa Lāṣyön, upon hearing that some monks of the community of Däbrä Kärbe had broken their monastic vows of obedience, reminds them about the rules, and finishes his text with these words:

May this message be written in the Gospel, so that it will be a testimony before God, between me and you.

Moreover, it seems that this letter came from the royal court. As was mentioned before, Amḥa Lāṣyön spent many years at the court of king Zār’a Ya’ǝqob at Däbrä Barhan20. In one of the documents of the Gospel, he is clearly linked with Zār’a Ya’ǝqob21. Above all, the copy of an extract of the Māšǝfā Milad in the Däbrä Kärbe Gospel offers a clue as to the origin of the letter. The Māšǝfā Milad was produced in the scriptorium of Zār’a Ya’ǝqob’s court22, especially the text copied in the Däbrä Kärbe Gospel, which celebrates the glorious victory of the king against Badlay in 1445. Thus there is a probability that the first letter and the extract of the

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19 Mss Conti Rossi 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 77.
21 Mss Conti Rossi 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 97.
Mâṣḥafà Milad were sent together to Dâbrà Kârbe from the royal court, and more precisely from the royal scriptorium²³.

The reason why Amḥa Lâṣṣyôn sent a message to the community of Dâbrà Kârbe is clearly exposed in the letter:

I have heard that some of you do not follow the rule of the monks. Instead you are calling yourselves my children, you are living in the (secular) world, building houses near the residence of the women. Then you come back in the monastery.

Later on the basis of the first letter of Amḥa Lâṣṣyôn, ‘aqqabè sè’at Nâgâdà Iyĕsûs repeated the warning to the monks²⁵. This implies both that a copy of this letter probably existed in the archives of the ‘aqqabè sè’at, and that, despite the threat of Amḥa Lâṣṣyôn, the monks of Dâbrà Kârbe continued breaking the rules of their monastery, which are manifested through these letters and in the Šør’âtâ Dâbtâra. As we have seen before, the monks must retire from the secular world, and live apart from women. The Šør’âtâ Dâbtâra shows also that Dâbrà Kârbe followed the ritual of the Horologium, as we can read that 47 priests are enumerated “for the prayer of the day and night hours”²⁶. But according to the text, the Šør’âtâ Dâbtâra of Dâbrà Kârbe was established by king Žàr’â Ya’qûb and ‘aqqabè sè’at Amḥa Lâṣṣyôn²⁷. Is this rule a sign of the court’s attempt to impose the Horologium of Giyorgis of Sàgla on the community of Dâbrà Kârbe²⁸?

Finally, these documents reveal how the ‘aqqabè sè’at of Ḥayq exercised control and authority over the monasteries of the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. It seems that, with the support of the king, he sent messages

²³ This hypothesis is reinforced by a reference in the chronicle of Žàr’â Ya’qûb, where we find: “Lorsqu’une affaire se présentait à lui, il appelait quelqu’un digne de confiance parmi ses moines, et l’envoyait là où il voulait, près ou loin” (cf. J. Perruchon, 1893, 7 and the revised translation of the chronicle by the late R. Schneider, 1990, 126).

²⁴ Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 77.

²⁵ Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 97.

²⁶ Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 101.

²⁷ Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 101.

promptly to errant communities\textsuperscript{29}. But also, he was able to lay down rules to the monks, as in the case of the \textit{Horologium}, according to the religious policy of the king. This was probably the main task of the '\textit{aqqa\textae s\textae at}'. So, we can assume that the letters sent to D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe and the \textit{S\textae rt\={a}t\={a} D\={a}bt\={a}ra} were not unique (though conservation has made them exceptional), but were representative of the way the '\textit{aqqa\textae s\textae at}' was leading the monastic world.

**Privileged relations between D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe and the royal court**

However, these documents referred to a monastic community of T\={e}g\={r}e, with whom the religious and secular powers had a special relationship. Two elements in the texts of the D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe Gospel raise problems of interpretation. One of the letters alludes to the rules of D\textae br\={a} N\={a}g\={w}\={a}dg\={w}\={a}d which inspired king Z\={a}r\={a} Ya\textae q\={o}b and '\textit{aqqa\textae s\textae at} Am\textae h\={a} L\={\textacute{a}}s\={a}yon to draw up the D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe's rules, and, according to the land donations, it seems that the kings had a specific policy towards D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe. In this section, we will try to solve these problems by answering two different questions. Was the monastery of D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe a royal foundation? Was the royal power trying to control the Ewos\textad\={a}thian movement through D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe?

**A royal foundation?**

According to G. Villari\textsuperscript{30}, D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe was founded by king Z\={a}r\={a} Ya\textae q\={o}b himself. This reference, probably based on oral tradition, is not enough to explain the particular interest the kings showed towards the community. But a second point has to be underlined. One of the letters asserts that the rules of D\textae br\={a} K\={a}rbe were copied from the rules of D\textae br\={a} N\={a}g\={w}\={a}dg\={w}\={a}d:

\begin{quote}
\textit{\textsuperscript{31}Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 97.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{29} Unfortunately we do not know how the 'aqqa\textae s\textae at' became aware of the situation in the monasteries. The information could have come from those high clergy who exercised regional authority, as Giyorgis of Sagla did in the XIVth century as \textit{n\={s}b\={u}ra\textad\={d}} of Dammo (G. COLIN, 1987, 17 and k\={a}h\textad\={n}t\={a} D\={a}bt\={a}ra (priest of the court, \textit{ibid.} 13, 23). But there are many different possibilities, including the stay of Z\={a}r\={a} Ya\textae q\={o}b in Aksum in the beginning of his reign (J. PERRUCHON, 1893, 49–50, 83; M.-L. DERAT, 2004, 211–212).

\textsuperscript{30} G. VILLARI, 1938, 1442–1443.

\textsuperscript{31} Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 97.
I have written and I have threatened of excommunication, I, Nāgādā Iyāsus, ‘aqqabe sē at, learning how our king Zār’a Ya’qob and ‘aqqabe sē at ‘Amḥa Lāṣyon, made the rules for the priests of Dābrā Kārbe like (those) of Dābrā Nāg”ādg”ad.

The identification of this Dābrā Nāg”ādg”ad is not obvious. There are two possibilities. It could be Dābrā Nāg”ādg”ad in Amḥāra founded by Zār’a Ya’qob as his future necropolis. It could also be Ḥayq Īṣṭīfanos, which is also called Dābrā Nāg”ādg”ad. The two choices are interesting, but the first is probably better. In one of the documents of the Dābrā Kārbe Gospel, the destination of the land incomes is actually mentioned. They are specifically assigned to the celebrations of the tāzkar memory of the kings (Dawit, Yāṣḥaq, Zār’a Ya’qob, Bā’adā Maryam, Ḫskondar, Na’a’od).

And also, he ordered that 37 (feasts) would be celebrated for the tāzkar (memory) of Our Lady Mary, from year to year, and for the tāzkar of the kings and for the tāzkar of ‘aqqabe sē at and for the feasts of the Son.

‘Ad Zār’a Dawit for haṣe Zār’a Ya’qob. They will celebrate the tāzkar. Wāhabit for haṣe Bā’adā Maryam; ‘Ad Kādānī for haṣe Eṣkondar; Pār for haṣe Na’a’od; Ṣārya for haṣe Dawit; ‘Ad Nāguṣ ʾĀzd”a for haṣe Yāṣḥaq.

We can assume that Dābrā Kārbe had a particular status in Tigre concerning the royal power. Its function was to celebrate the dynastic memory through the tāzkar of the kings. For this reason, the link between Dābrā Nāg”ādg”ad, the royal necropolis of Amḥāra, and Dābrā Kārbe, the place of commemoration of the kings, is logical. The copy of the Māḥṣafā Milād, dedicated to the victory of Zār’a Ya’qob over Badlay in 1445, in the Gospel of Dābrā Kārbe is another indication that one of the tasks of this com-

33 S. Kur, 1965, 16.
34 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei, 101.
35 Here, we follow the way Na’a’od is written in the Conti Rossini’s manuscript, however it is not the usual transcription.
munity was to celebrate the memory of the kings. Even if Dābrā Kārbe was not a royal foundation, the monastery had a close relationship with the royal power since the reign of Zār’a Ya’aqob. Indeed the particular position of Dābrā Kārbe in the policy of Zār’a Ya’aqob could have been the beginning of the tradition that the monastery was a royal foundation.

The control of the Ewostaṭhian movement through Dābrā Kārbe

The second question I would like to focus on is the link between Dābrā Kārbe and the Ewostaṭhian movement. According to the Liber Axumae, the Zana region was given by king Lḥbnā Dngl to Pawlos, the successor of abba Yonas36. In the gādl of abba Yonas, we learn that this saint took part in the Dābrā Mḥmq council in 145037, where the observance of the Sabbath was recognized as an orthodox practice, imposed on all the communities38. So, the community of Yonas (ında Abba Yonas) was a member of the Ewostaṭhian movement, and in the beginning of the XVIth century, the region of Zana, where Dābrā Kārbe was located, was under control of this community.

Moreover, recent documents published by Gianfrancesco Lusini show that this dependence of Zana upon ında Abba Yonas (Dābrā Şage) had already begun during the reign of Zār’a Ya’aqob (1434–1468). According to a text preserved in the Gādlā abba Yonas in Dābrā Şage, the king gave lands to the new monastery founded in 1455 and among these lands we find Debā Zana, which could partially identify with Zana39. So, it is clear that immediately after the council of Dābrā Mḥmq, Zār’a Ya’aqob tried to control the communities of Tigre, through donations of lands. Zana was linked with the Ewostaṭhian communities, which probably means that Dābrā Kārbe played a role in the controversy about the Sabbath. Dābrā Kārbe also received lands from the king Zār’a Ya’aqob. We can underline the similarity between Dābrā Şage of abba Yonas and Dābrā Kārbe. Both of them were granted lands by the kings, and one of the communities (Dābrā Şage) was clearly linked with the Ewostaṭhian movement.

This idea of an attempt to control the monastic communities of Tigre, and especially Dābrā Kārbe, is reinforced by the documents of the Dābrā Kārbe Gospel. The ‘aggabe sā’at asks the monks to observe the rule set by the king and these texts show how the monks pledged their allegiance to the king through the celebration of the tāzkar.

36 C. Conti Rossini, 1910, 34.
Even if the documents of the Däbrä Kärbe Gospel seem to be purely practical documents, often sent to the monastic communities by the ʼaqqabe sâʾat, they attest also to a specific interest taken by the royal power in this monastery. The king tried to exercise control over the Ewostathian movement, after the appeasement of the controversy on the Sabbath. The letters sent to Däbrä Kärbe show this control. Both ʼaqqabe sâʾat and kings remind the monks of the monastic rules, they grant them lands, and they want them to pray for the memory of the royal dynasty.

This paper is a first study of the documents of the Däbrä Kärbe Gospel. Of course, because the story of the community of Däbrä Kärbe is still unknown, there are a lot of questions with no answers. The study of such texts is probably the most interesting way to find information about how the ʼaqqabe sâʾat of Ḥayq exercised their authority over the monastic communities and the way in which the kings of Ethiopia, especially since the reign of Zâr’a Yaʾqūb, used the ʼaqqabe sâʾat as intermediaries for their religious policy.

The monastery of Däbrä Kärbe was destroyed by the armies of Grañ in 154040, but, according to the Liber Axumae, it was rebuilt later. In the Däbrä Kärbe Gospel, there is a land donation at the beginning of the XIXth century in which Däbrä Kärbe and the region of Zana are mentioned41, so this community was still in existence then. The main task now is to check the Gospel of the monastery.

Goʾaz text and translation

I will now summarize the content of the documents in the Gospel of Däbrä Kärbe from the notes of Carlo Conti Rossini, give the goʾaz text and its translation. The text, as an historical document, is copied from the Conti Rossini manuscript with its faults42. This translation is a working document. Some passages are still obscure, particularly the one referring to the lands for the tâzkar of the kings.

Placed after the Gospel of Matthew and at the beginning of Mark, this letter is written on one damaged folio, but the writing is well preserved. No date or seal43.

40 M. Kropp, 1988, 18.
41 C. Conti Rossini, 1910, 70–71.
42 As it is a secondary copy, a correction of the text would add a new version to it without solving the problem of the original. Secondly, it is an historical study and as such, the language of the author, his faults, could be of more interest than a correction.
43 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei 76.
I, 'aqqabe sā' at Amḥa Lāʃayon, greet you. Peace be with you all the community of holy monks who are living in Dābrā Kārbe. May the peace of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you, each day and at all times.

The Lord has appointed you to travel on the way of the Gospel, the road of life. He turns you away from the path of sin, that leads to the fires of hell, and Jesus, the great High Priest, will lead you into His kingdom of Heaven, for ever and ever, Amen.

I have heard that some of you do not follow the monastic rule. Instead you are calling yourselves my children, you are living in the (secular) world, building houses near the residence of the women. Then you return to the monastery of monks, and again you go back into the (secular) world.

He who behaves like this, may he renounce this bad habit, may he repent of his previous sin with great penitence and may he do as the priest ordered. If he does not renounce this habit, may he never return to the monastery.

May this message be written in the Gospel, so that it will be a testimony before God, between me and you. And all of you, monks who love the Lord and who go on His way, He will bless you and will let you enter into His kingdom, for ever, Amen.

44 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei 77.
After the Gospel of Matthew and before Mark, there is the following document, which is a notification of 'aqqabe sâ at Nâgâdâ Iyâsus. Five lines follow the erasure of the main part, which gives a list of lands attributed to the convent.  

I, Nâgâdâ Iyâsus, 'aqqabe sâ at, have written and I have threatened excommunication, learning how our king Zârâ Yaâqob and 'aqqabe sâ at Amâ Lâsâyon set the rules for the priests of Dâbrâ Kârbe like (those) of Dâbrâ Nâgâdâgâd, that no other charge except the service of the church, incense, sacrifice and prayer should fall to the m. May the spirit renounce the sin, as has been prescribed before. Let no one enter, be he šayum or awâfari or qalâ nâgasi, and whoso violates this, may he be cursed by the mouth of the prophets and the apostles, by the mouth of the righteous and the martyrs, by the mouth of the vigilant angels, by the mouth of Our Lady Mary, by the mouth of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. May they be cursed in the sky and in the land, for ever and ever, amen.

This is the land of the church of Dâbrâ Kârbe: Mâstârsi, Sâgl, Sâlbâya, Hafâq, Šâgofo, Šora, Lâgamâd, Ašom, Sârab ... (illegible text) With our king Zârâ Yaâqob, for the 'aqqabe sâ at Amâ Lâsâyon and with the 'aqqabe sâ at Gâbrâ Krastos, this book was written in the 180th year of the grace (1528), saying: be he awâfari or hâdug, (may he be cursed) by the mouth of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

45 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei 96.
46 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei 97.
The Šarʾatā Dābtāra is written on the verso of a folio which is a piece of the index of the Gospel of Matthew. The folio is damaged. In the last six lines of this folio and the second folio, less wide than the others, there is an assignment of lands for different feasts. The last ten lines of the document are by another hand. On the verso of this folio, Nāgādā Iyāsus and Amba Lāsyyon assign lands for Dābrā Kārbeī.47

47 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei 100.

48 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei 101–103.
Rule for the dābtāra [Šor’atā Dābtāra] established by our king Žãr’ã Ya’qob, the orthodox, and by our father Amhã Lãşyôn, ‘aqqabe sã’at. Rule for the dābtāra of Dãbrã Kãrbe.

Enumeration of the 47 priests for the service of the qonè, around three guides, for the prayer and the hours of the night and of the day, for the salvation of their soul. Around Gãbrã Kãrøstos: Šãrãqã Barhan, Gãbrã Mãnfa Qðddus, Gãbrã Nazrawi, Tãns’ã Kãrøstos, Kiros, Natna’el, on the left. Abraham Nolawi, Filpos, Pawlos, Žãr’ã Kãrøstos, Tãklã Maryam, Žã’amãnu’el, on the right. Around Gãbrã Mªdñàn: Matewos, Tãns’ã Kãrøstos, Sobãhãt Lã’ãb, Sâwiros, Êštîfanos, Iyu’el, on the right. Gãbrã Mªsãqãl, Ênqonis, Tâwâldâ Mªdñàn, Bsk”ãra Šøyon, Isayyas, Êtrros, Êndryas, on the left. Around abba Yohânnos, Tâsâbåkâ Mªdñàn, Tâsfa Mika’el, Žãr’ã Tomas, Mªlãkâshedeq, Yohânnos, Milkiyas, Natna’el, on the right. Šewa Šollus, Mârqoryos, Êštîfanos, Gãbrã Maryam, Êštîfanos, Tãns’ã Kãrøstos, Šãrãqã Barhan, on the left.

And also, he [the king] ordered that 37 (feasts) shall be celebrated for the tãzkar of Our Lady Mary, from year to year, and for the tãzkar of the kings and for the tãzkar of the ‘aqqabe sã’at and for the feasts of the Son.

‘Ad Žãr’ã Dawit for base Žãr’ã Ya’qob. They will celebrate the tãzkar. Wåhabit for base Bã’odã Maryam; ‘Ad Kãdåni for base Êskonåder; Pår for base Na’od; Šãrya for base Dawit; ‘Ad Naqûs Êzgwå for base Yás’håq.

Whose violates or infringes this all, may he be cursed by the mouth of the prophets and the apostles, by the mouth of the righteous and the martyrs and by the mouth of our Lady Mary, the pure Virgin. Be you īeyum or dâbtâra or saint fathers, great (men) or little, you will be imprisoned.

Those who established this rule, abba Tewoglos of Häyq, gave 59 breads, 41 (measures) of mead and 60 (measures) of beer, in order to celebrate the tãzkar of the apparition of Our Lady Mary. If they neglect this tãzkar, may they be cursed by the mouth of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and by the mouth of Our Lady Mary.

I Nãgådã Iyåsûs, and Amhã Lãşyôn, ‘aqqabe sã’at, have written, knowing what our king Žãr’ã Ya’qob, the orthodox, had ordered, in order that they do not alter anything and do not quarrel concerning the building of the church of Dãbrã Kãrbe. (The lands): ‘Imba with G”onayá, ‘Imba Šår, Çela Çqãq, Helo with Gãmãd, Kabarto, Šimãl, Walka Sa’ær, Wândaq from Ša’ãda Robe to Pår, Nãr which is ‘Adã Amhara, ‘Ad Žãr’ã Dawit with ‘Imba Yodaqa Bahora and ‘Ad Ţãfanot.
On the third folio following the index of the Gospel of Matthew, there is a representation of Mark on the verso, and on the recto, twelve lines referring to the Ābrà Kàrbà's community by different lands, but the writing is illegible.

Rule for the ḏābtārā established by our king Zār'a Yaḑqob and our father Amhà Lāshyon. The priests for the service of the ġnne around Gābrà Króstos are on the left, Ġźrà Bûrhan, Gābrà Māfṣàs Qǎddus, Gābrà Nazrāwī, Tānsā'a Króstos, Kiros, Natnà'el, on the left. Ġbrà Nolawi, Filpūs, Krúwos, Zār'a Króstos, Tāklà Maryam, Zā'amanu'el, on the right. Around Gābrà Mādhān: Matewos, Tānsā'a Króstos, Sabḥàt Lā'ab, Sāwiros, Ġstifanos, Iyu'el, on the right. Gābrà Māsqāl, Ḡttonis, Tāwāldā Mādhān, Bākarārā Śoyon, Isayyas, Ḡtros, Tādewos, on the left. Around ābbà Yohannās, Tāšābkā Mādhān, Tāśa Mika'el, Zānā'ay, Mālkāsdēq, Yohannās, Milkūyās, Natnà'el, on the right. Śewa Śollus, Marqoryos, Ġstifanos, Gābrà Maryam, Ġstifanos, Tānsā'a Króstos, on the left.

Summary

One of the numerous manuscripts seen by C. Conti Rossini and copied for him deals with the monastery of Dābrà Kārbe, a religious community of Tigre. Some documents included in the Gospel of Dābrà Kārbe preserved traces of a correspondence between this community and the 'aqqabe sā'at of Ḥayq.

This correspondence is very interesting from a historical point of view. It is accepted that the community of Ḥayq headed the monastic clergy in Ethiopia approximately

49 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei 100.
50 Most probably as written in the third document.
51 Mss Conti Rossini 91, Accademia dei Lincei 103.
until the XVIth century. But, it was not known how the ‘aqqabe sā’at exercised control and authority over the monasteries, and what was his area of competence. These documents of Dibrā Kārbe give us a first answer to these questions.

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Abbreviations

CSCO Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium