Constructing Kingship in Early Solomonic Ethiopia: The David and Solomon Portraits in the Juel-Jensen Psalter

Jacopo Gnisci

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Abstract

This study focuses on the illustration of psalters in medieval Ethiopia and, especially, on the David and Solomon portraits in the Juel-Jensen Psalter. After determining what these miniatures have in common with other traditions, it singles out what makes them unique to show that they were structured around Ethiopian imperial ideology, which considered the country's emperors as descendants of David and Solomon. It demonstrates that these images are distinctly Ethiopian in character to show that the work of Ethiopian artists can be appreciated only if one considers their communicative intentions and sociocultural background.

The illustrations in Ethiopic manuscripts from the early Solomonic period (ca. 1270–1527 CE), more often than not, have been studied in isolation from the cultural context in which they were produced. Indeed, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Western scholars have adopted a narrow, and at times openly Eurocentric, approach to Ethiopian art, focusing on formal features rather than on symbolic associations, and on questions of "foreign influences" rather than on the social, political, material, and religious boundaries

that defined the production of imagery in Ethiopia during this period.[1] This tendency to dehistoricize and decontextualize Ethiopian art, placing greater emphasis on the foreign over the local, has its origins in broader intellectual currents that emerged during the colonial era, when Africa and its people were represented in negative and stereotypical terms, and its artists were considered capable of producing "primitive" works or, at best, of receiving and imitating foreign "influences" from more "advanced" non-African cultures.[2]

The material culture of Africa, as Peter Mark aptly puts it, entered into the art historical discourse "not as an autonomous entity, as an art form worthy of study on its own terms, but as an extension of European interest."[3] This kind of attitude is evident in the words of E. A. Wallis Budge, who, in the first description of illuminated Ethiopic manuscripts, asserts that the Ethiopian artist's "palaces are the palaces of Southern Europe; his churches are the churches of Constantinople, Italy, and Spain; the dress of the Virgin Mary is the garb of the European nun; Christ is made to wear crown and robes similar to those of the emperors of the East; the angels are the angels of the mosaics and frescoes of Italy and Spain; in short, *everything which the artist could copy from foreign sources he copied*" (emphasis added).[4] Here, as in subsequent work on the Ethiopian tradition, the cultural background and communicative intentions of the artists are simply overlooked as if they were irrelevant.

In fact, while scholarship on West Africa and other extra-European traditions has recognized the need to reexamine and extricate itself from the legacy of colonialism, a similar shift has not taken place in research on East Africa, and on Ethiopian art in particular.[5] The field of Ethiopic manuscript illustration has yet to see a revision of its founding paradigms, partly due to its underdevelopment and marginalization, and partly due to a general lack of reflexivity and historiographical awareness in the relevant publications.[6] Suffice to note, as evidence of the underrepresentation of the field, that the *Art Bulletin* had not featured an article on Ethiopian art since its foundation, and, as evidence of the dearth of scholarship, that

the only scholarly book on early Solomonic manuscript illustration was published over twenty years ago.[7]

Because perspectives about Ethiopia formulated at the beginning of the twentieth century continue to color the discourse on illuminated Ethiopic manuscripts, and because historians of this tradition have not reflected upon the paradigms that inform their processes of inquiry, the literature on the subject remains marred by implicit and simplistic assumptions about the modus operandi of Ethiopian illuminators and the significance of their work. One may take, as an example of this type of research, Claude Lepage's claim that the illustrations in early Solomonic manuscripts can be looked at to reconstruct "ex nihilo" cycles of "proto-Byzantine" images.[8] This argument betrays not only a lack of understanding of the ways in which visual culture can be reshaped and redeployed over time, but an evident prejudice against Ethiopian illuminators—since it implicitly discounts the possibility that they introduced their own variations to those subjects they decided to appropriate over the many centuries that divide the two periods.[9] Like most other scholars who have dealt with this topic, Lepage overlooks the relationship between the features of early Solomonic miniatures and the communicative intentions of their makers.

In this essay I seek to counter such Eurocentric scholarship on early Solomonic Ethiopian art by focusing on two ruler portraits showing David and Solomon that are found in a lavishly illustrated Ethiopic psalter previously in the collection of Bent Juel-Jensen and now in the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford (Figs. 1, 2 / L-L).[10] These two miniatures, as we shall see, are embedded with objects, such as the royal umbrella (*dəbab*), that were used to mark royal status in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Ethiopia. Adopting a comparative approach, I intend to single out not so much what these miniatures have in common with other traditions, but what makes them distinctive and unique in order to show that their local features would have resonated with the religious and political concerns of the

period. It will become clear that the presence of the symbols of power of the Solomonic emperors in illuminated Ethiopic psalters is crucial to our understanding of their meaning, which would have been political as much as religious. Such references, in fact, suggest that the images were constructed to emphasize and validate the claim that the emperors of the Solomonic dynasty descended from the prophet-kings David and Solomon. Through this association, the David and Solomon portraits in the Juel-Jensen Psalter and in other Ethiopic manuscripts fulfil a symbolic function, projecting a unique and timely image of Ethiopian imperial power and articulating a complex relationship between contemporary identity and the past.

The miniatures in the Juel-Jensen Psalter can be looked at to enhance our understanding of the strategies of visual communication employed by Ethiopian illuminators and the cross-cultural dynamics that came into play in the creation and appropriation of imagery in early Solomonic Ethiopia.[11] They also provide a means for challenging negative stereotypes about Ethiopian artists put forward by scholars such as Carlo Conti Rossini, who, in the first-ever study devoted to illuminated Ethiopic psalters, describes them as "ignorant and fanatic," and their work as a "barbaric derivation from Copto-Byzantine art."[12]

By identifying distinctively Ethiopian features in the miniatures of David and Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, and more generally in the Ethiopic tradition, it will become evident that attempts to examine Ethiopian art to uncover "lost foreign models," such as those by Lepage, have paid insufficient attention to the cultural roots, artistic practices, and sociopolitical dynamics that shaped the production of material culture in early Solomonic Ethiopia. In contrast to the current approach, which treats Ethiopian images from the early Solomonic period as records of a more distant and non-Ethiopian past, I wish to show that early Solomonic art is more valuable if it is first looked at to reconstruct and understand the aspirations, concerns, and beliefs of those who produced and beheld it.[13] My aim, then, is to

treat the illuminations in Ethiopic manuscripts as "records of choices but also as records of intentions."[14]

The line of inquiry followed here provides a new framework for understanding the diachronic dimension of visual culture in Ethiopia and assessing some of the largely overlooked transcultural factors that shaped its transformations between late antiquity and the Middle Ages or, more appropriately, since the latter terms have little relation to Ethiopian history, between the Christian Aksumite (ca. 350–700 CE) and the early Solomonic periods.[15] My overall goal is to present an interpretation of illuminated Ethiopic manuscripts that finally credits the achievements of the illuminators involved in their production, thus showing that the question of exchanges between artistic traditions cannot be tackled without considering the role played by local artists and their culture. In doing so I also hope to finally dislodge the tendency—implicit in much of the literature—to treat Ethiopia as a marginal or "isolated" province of Christian art: the sheer range of visual sources from which Ethiopian illuminators drew, as discussed below, attests not to individuals who lacked creativity and copied everything they could, as Budge would have it, but to the fact that they operated within a powerful empire with a long history and vibrant culture, creating images that reverberated with local aspirations and beliefs.[16]

The Main Features of the Juel-Jensen Psalter

Psalters, together with gospel books, were among the most frequently copied manuscripts in early Solomonic Ethiopia because of the central role they played in the life of the Christian community, especially for monks who recited the Psalms weekly. For instance, according to the Life of Saint Ǝsṭifanos, who became the leader of one of the most influential monastic movements in fifteenth-century Ethiopia, the first thing the saint had to do upon joining a

monastery as a novice was "learn the Psalms of David."[17] Several other works from this period demonstrate the importance of psalters. For example, in the *Book of Light* by Emperor Zärʾa Yaʿəqob (r. 1434–68), the faithful and clergy are instructed to pray using the Psalms during the day and the biblical canticles at night.[18]

The Juel-Jensen Psalter can be approximately dated to a period between the second half of the fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries based on the style of the miniatures and its paleography, and represents one of the finest examples of psalter illumination from the early Solomonic period.[19] The miniatures in this codex appear to have been painted by the same artist who illustrated a liturgical book with readings for Holy Week now in the British Library (Fig. 3 / M). This attribution is significant in three respects. First, among the over two hundred illustrated Ethiopic manuscripts from the early Solomonic period that are known to me, only two had been hitherto attributed to a same artist, and even this suggestion has been challenged.[20] Second, the British Library manuscript has an excommunication note (f. 260v) written by Märḥa Krəstos (c. 1408–97)—abbot of the monastery of Däbrä Libanos and commissioner of the manuscript—that supplies a terminus ad quem of ca. 1497 for its making which supports the dating suggested above for the Juel-Jensen Psalter. Lastly, the British Library codex features a second note (f. 259v), in which the scribe identifies himself as Gäbrä Krəstos.[21] Since it is known that Ethiopian scribes could also illustrate manuscripts, and since the Bodleian Library and British Library manuscripts are paleographically as well as stylistically similar, it is reasonable to conclude that Gäbrä Krəstos was either the scribe and illustrator of both manuscripts, or someone who worked closely with their anonymous illuminator.

This conclusion is supported by existence of a third manuscript that is paleographically almost identical to the British Library and Juel-Jensen manuscripts and that features illustrations that were clearly been painted by the same artist of the other two

codices. This manuscript is currently kept at the Ethiopian monastery of Däbrä Libanos and contains the Lives of Paul the Apostle and Sarabamon, Bishop of Nikiu. Thanks to a *subscriptio* (f. 118v) we can say that it was commissioned by the same patron of the British Library's lectionary, Märḥa Krəstos, and written by the same scribe, Gäbrä Krəstos.[22] It would be tempting to conclude that Gäbrä Krəstos illustrated all three manuscript, but since he never explicitly claims authorship of the illustrations, the door must be left open to the possibility that he worked closely with an anonymous illuminator.

As is the case for most Ethiopic psalters, the Juel-Jensen codex contains, in addition to the 151 Psalms, some prefatory textual material, fifteen biblical canticles, the Song of Songs, the Praise of Mary, and the Gate of Light.[23] Moreover, like other deluxe Ethiopic manuscripts from the early Solomonic period, it is decorated with miniatures of holy men and headpieces that are interwoven with the text to help the reader navigate through, and interact with, the book's content.[24] The figurative miniatures are placed before the beginning of a new textual section, while the ornamental borders are used to punctuate the passage between each Psalm and hymn as well as to mark the salient points in the manuscript (Fig. 4 / M).[25]

The David miniature in the Juel-Jensen Psalter is part of a prefatory cycle of three illuminations found at the beginning of the book (Fig. 1). The first miniature shows four Old Testament figures, namely Heman the Ezrahite, Asaph, one of the Korahites, and a fourth figure that can only be tentatively identified, because the inscription is damaged, as Ethan or another Son of Korah (Fig. 5 / S).[26] The second miniature features six pairs of Old Testament figures framed in panels, among whom we recognize Daniel, Jeremiah, Gad, Enoch, Elijah, and Isaiah. Finally, the third miniature shows an enthroned David with an instrument and a caption above his head that identifies him as "the King of Israel" (Fig. 1). The king is surrounded by three attendants. One stands behind his throne bearing a large parasol. The

other two, who are placed below the throne and identified by a caption as "soldiers," respectively hold a sword and a fly whisk.

The portrait of Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter is found after the biblical canticles and opposite the beginning of the Song of Songs (Fig. 2). He is shown standing in front of a stepped podium, with a spear in his left hand and his right hand raised to his chest. The figure that stands opposite him with a book is identified by a caption as the "prophet Sirach."[27] The figure behind him stands at the top of the podium bearing a parasol that is similar to the one visible in the David miniature (Fig. 1). In accordance with a convention of early Solomonic art, in which scale and disposition are used to emphasize social and religious hierarchy, Solomon (like David) is placed at the center of the scene and is much larger than the other figures. As noted elsewhere, this approach to figuration, with its disregard for naturalistic proportions, is in keeping with the rigid hierarchical organization of society promoted by the Ethiopian church in the fifteenth century.[28]

The placement of the David and Solomon miniatures in the Juel-Jensen Psalter emphasizes their connection to the text. In early Solomonic Ethiopia, as in other traditions, David was seen as the main psalmist and Solomon as the author of the Song of Songs, so the two ruler miniatures function as author portraits, together with the representations of the four psalmists on folio 5v (Fig. 5) and Moses on folio 126r (Fig. 6 / M).[29] The latter's portrait is set in a headpiece that is placed above the First Song of Moses (Exodus 15:1–19) to mark the beginning of the biblical canticles.[30] Interestingly, the only other early Solomonic manuscripts that present a similar type of composition are the Däbrä Libanos codex and the British Library's lectionary, where a portrait of John on folio 225r is framed within the headpiece that marks the beginning of the Book of Revelation (Fig. 3).[31] While the combination of a portrait and headpiece is unusual in the Ethiopian tradition, the practice of illustrating manuscripts with author portraits is well documented and can be dated back to

late antiquity in light of an Ethiopic gospel book kept at the monastery of Ǝnda Abba Gärima that has been dated by carbon 14 to ca. 330–650 CE and is decorated with portraits of the Evangelists before their gospel and a figure, probably representing Eusebius of Caesarea, before the Letter to Carpianus.[32]

Illuminated Psalters in Ethiopia

Before assessing the significance and peculiarities of the David and Solomon miniatures in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, it is necessary to consider two intertwined issues. First, in which ways are the Juel-Jensen miniatures connected to other representations of David and Solomon in Ethiopian art? Second, what do the Ethiopian miniatures have in common with other traditions and how do they differ? Evidently, this article can only present a synthetic overview of these questions, rather than an in-depth treatment. Nevertheless, by bringing these two questions together, it is possible to advance our understanding of the connections between the Ethiopian Empire and its neighbors and to explore how the Juel-Jensen illuminator engaged with local and foreign expressions of material culture.

With regard to the first question, thanks to the evidence afforded by the Gärima Gospels mentioned above, we can say with confidence that illuminated manuscripts existed in Ethiopia during late antiquity. Moreover, because several Aksumite inscriptions feature quotations from the Psalms, we can say with equal confidence that the Psalms were translated from the Greek Septuagint into classical Ethiopic (*Gəʿəz*) during this period.[33] It follows that psalters must have circulated in Ethiopia in late antiquity, and that such manuscripts could have presented illustrations.

Unfortunately, any further observation on the subject is bound to remain speculative because the earliest Ethiopic psalters that have come down to us—with and without

illustrations—belong to the early Solomonic period.[34] This lack of pre-Solomonic illustrated psalters makes it difficult to identify the distinguishing characteristics of the David and Solomon miniatures in the Juel-Jensen Psalter and to trace a history of these motifs in the Ethiopian tradition. Our understanding of the material from early Solomonic Ethiopia also suffers from neglect. There are no books on the subject, and the handful of existing articles (none of which are in English) focus on a single manuscript, making no attempt to present a comprehensive overview of the evidence.[35] To make matters worse, most of the relevant material is poorly documented or unpublished.

To date, only two out of thirteen psalters with figurative images known to this author have been the object of in-depth art historical research, albeit in studies that focus on their formal features rather than on the significance that the images might have had for those who produced, commissioned, or beheld them. The first is a psalter from a private collection analyzed by Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, who dates it with reason to the second half of the fifteenth or the early sixteenth century.[36] The second is the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd (Figs. 7, 13 / L-L), which takes its name from its donor and has been dated by its colophon to 1476/77.[37] With the exception of this latter codex, the dating of all illustrated psalters from the early Solomonic period remains problematic and open to challenge because it is based on stylistic and paleographic grounds.

The other known illuminated psalters from early Solomonic Ethiopia are unpublished or have been mentioned in passing in the literature. This group of manuscripts has been inadequately documented and studied. For instance, an illustrated psalter kept in the remote monastery of Däbrä Qʷəsqʷam, near the Ahəyya Fäǧǧ gorge, is known only through photographs taken by the British traveler and artist Diana Spencer in the 1970s.[38] Spencer did not photograph all the pages of the Däbrä Qʷəsqʷam Psalter, and researchers have not seen it since. Hence, we know that this psalter has a portrait of David playing the harp (Fig. 9 / S),

but we cannot say whether it also has a portrait of Solomon. Likewise, a psalter kept at the monastery of Däbrä Wärq, situated about 200 kilometers north of Addis Ababa, is known only through some photographs taken by researchers in the 1980s. This codex has a miniature of David playing the harp (Fig. 10 / S) at its beginning and a more unusual miniature of the Judgment of Solomon (Fig. 11 / S).

Judging from the evidence discussed above, it seems that the practice of placing an image of David before the Psalms and an image of Solomon before the Song of Songs was well established in Ethiopia by the fifteenth century.[39] Practically all of the earliest illustrated Ethiopic psalters from this period have, or appear to have had, such images. This includes the aforementioned example studied by Balicka-Witakowska and the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd (Figs. 7, 13). Portraits of David and Solomon are found also in a psalter documented in the 1970s by the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library project in the Ambassäl district of Ethiopia (Fig. 8 / S), which was dated by the cataloguers to the fourteenth century, though in my view the style of its miniatures is more compatible with the fifteenth century.[40]

In some illustrated psalters from the early Solomonic period, the frontispiece portrait of David is missing, but even in such cases this appears to be due to subsequent damage. We may take MS IES 74, a manuscript in the collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, as an example.[41] Like the Juel-Jensen Psalter, MS IES 74 is decorated with miniatures of Moses before the biblical canticles and of Solomon before the Song of Songs (Fig. 12 / M), so it stands to reason that it originally featured a frontispiece portrait of David that was subsequently lost. After all, it is not uncommon for the initial leaves of the first quire to be missing in Ethiopic manuscripts, since the beginning and end of manuscripts are more exposed to damage.[42]

In terms of iconography, the miniatures of Solomon from the psalters mentioned above have little in common with the one from the Juel-Jensen Psalter.[43] For instance, in the

Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd, Solomon holds a sword and is seated on a square-shaped throne (Fig. 13), whereas in the Juel-Jensen Psalter he stands and holds a spear (Fig. 2).[44] In both miniatures the king is accompanied by an attendant carrying a parasol, but in the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd this attendant does not stand upon a stepped platform, and the prophet Sirach, who is present in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, has not been represented. Similar observations could be made about the Solomon miniature from MS IES 74 (Fig. 12), which recalls the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd in its details, even though the king's attendant in this instance is missing.[45]

This manner of representing King Solomon, seated and with a sword, finds few parallels outside Ethiopia. Comparable miniatures can be seen in some fourteenth-century Armenian manuscripts.[46] Given the existence of Armenian illuminations in an early fifteenth-century Ethiopic manuscript kept in the Vatican Library, as well as the strong ties between the two churches, the possibility of further exchanges between the two traditions should not be ruled out a priori.[47] However, the miniatures in MS IES 74 and in the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd could represent simplified versions of a scene showing the judgment of Solomon, such as the one visible in the Däbrä Wärq Psalter (Fig. 11). Whatever the precise interrelations between these Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian images of Solomon, the connections with the miniature in the Juel-Jensen Psalter are clearly tenuous.

Conversely, the miniatures of David found in the various psalters described above form a cohesive group. In all cases, we see David seated with his body turned to the right on a square-shaped throne (Figs. 7–10) similar to those seen in Ethiopian portraits of the Evangelists (Fig. 14 / S).[48] He has a pick in his right hand and a ten-string instrument in his left that alludes to the ten-string harp mentioned in several Ethiopic Psalms but resembles an Ethiopian lyre (*bägäna*).[49] The Ethiopian tradition maintains that the *bägäna* was first used by King David and introduced to Ethiopia by his son Mənilək I (*Ǝbnä Ḥakim*), the mythical

founder of the Solomonic dynasty, a connection to which we will return below.[50] In all the miniatures, David is tailed by an attendant with a large parasol. This attendant typically holds a fly whisk, or more occasionally a sword, in his other hand (Figs. 7, 9), but in the Juel-Jensen Psalter these objects are held by the two additional attendants standing beneath the throne (Fig. 1).

From the above, it is evident that the illustrator of the Juel-Jensen Psalter must have drawn from a stock of existing miniatures of David, perhaps adding a few details of his own, such as the two additional courtiers and a four-legged throne. But what can be said about the use and appearance of these motifs in Ethiopian art? Interestingly, the parasol appears in Ethiopian wall paintings of David that are approximately coeval with or somewhat later than the miniatures, as in the church of Yädəbba Maryam (Fig. 15 / M), but not in ones from the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that predate the miniatures, if only slightly, and provide the earliest known examples of Davidic imagery in Ethiopia (Fig. 16 / S).[51] This observation, coupled with the evidence discussed below, suggests that the parasol motif was introduced in Ethiopian depictions of David toward the end of the fourteenth century, if one accepts the dating of the Ambassäl Psalter (Fig. 8) proposed by its cataloguers, or during the fifteenth century, if one accepts my later dating of this manuscript.

Images of David Outside the Ethiopian Context

The compositional similarities among the early Solomonic miniatures of David highlighted above are enough to suggest that we are dealing with a group of closely related images. At the same time, the lack of pre-Solomonic examples of manuscript illumination hinders our ability to assess the earlier development of this subject in Ethiopian art. These difficulties may be partly circumvented by situating the Ethiopic tradition within the wider context of

Christian manuscript illumination. Some features of the David miniatures in Ethiopic psalters are common to other traditions, and through a comparative analysis of these similarities, it becomes possible to recognize with greater clarity which elements are distinctive of the Ethiopian miniatures. It is worth observing that although my main aim is to demonstrate that early Solomonic miniatures articulated meanings that were relevant to those Christian artists by and patrons and audiences for whom they were made, I also recognize that these images can be viewed as links in a chain of transmission, circulation, and reconceptualization of "visual knowledge."[52] From this angle, the miniatures from the Juel-Jensen Psalter and other Ethiopic manuscripts can be studied as evidence of the Ethiopian Empire's integration into transnational networks of manuscript production and exchange.

The motif of the enthroned David playing the harp, shown frontally or in profile, appears in numerous Byzantine and Latin manuscripts, and some of the earliest extant psalters are adorned with frontispiece portraits of him.[53] In many Byzantine miniatures David plays the harp sitting next to Melodia in a bucolic setting that is unrelated to the Ethiopian tradition.[54] However, there are also a number of cases where the enthroned David is depicted against a neutral or gilded background that recalls the neutral setting of the Ethiopian miniatures.[55] One such example is provided by the Khludov Psalter, in which David, shown frontally, raises his right hand toward his instrument to pluck its strings.[56] Another example, featuring an almost identical representation of David, is found in the Vatican Christian Topography, though in this instance a young Solomon, rather than two attendants, stands by the king's side.[57] The stance of David in both miniatures is similar to the Ethiopian images of him discussed above.

The art of the Coptic Church of Alexandria should also be considered in this brief review of Davidic imagery, not so much for reasons of geographic proximity, but because of its ascendancy on the Church of Ethiopia. Up to 1959 CE , the Metropolitan of Ethiopia was

an Egyptian appointed by the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria, so exchanges between the two contexts were frequent.[58] The presence of scenes from the life of David in Chapels III and XXXIV at Bawit, as well as the existence of Coptic textiles showing the king playing the harp, attest to the diffusion of Davidic imagery in Egypt at an early date.[59] Moreover, the image of a standing David with a harp in the Canon Tables preserved in the Rabbula Gospels, to mention the best-known among such images, shows that manuscripts with portraits of the king were in circulation within the Oriental Orthodox Christian world.[60] However, the extant Coptic and Copto-Arabic manuscripts lack illuminations resembling the Ethiopian ones. Therefore, while manuscripts featuring Davidic imagery may well have reached Ethiopia through exchanges with Egypt and the Coptic Church, we must look elsewhere for comparanda.

In this respect, Latin manuscripts preserve many close parallels to Ethiopian art.[61] This comes as no surprise given that several authors have pointed out instances where the Western tradition is closer than others to the Ethiopian.[62] Rather than offering evidence of direct exchange, these similarities should be taken as an indication that the two traditions, the Latin and the Ethiopic, branched off from a common cultural background with strong connections to the Byzantine world and especially to Alexandria prior to its fall to the Rashidun Caliphate in 641.[63] Direct evidence of these connections has been recently provided by Alessandro Bausi and Alberto Camplani, who have shown that the Ethiopic tradition preserves texts originally composed in Greek in Alexandria during late antiquity that were previously known only through Latin translations.[64] This important discovery shows that the Christian manuscript cultures developing in the northern Horn of Africa and Europe were receptive to the intellectual activities of the Egyptian capital and furnishes a basis for further cross-cultural comparison between them.

Among the numerous early Latin psalters that are decorated with portraits of David, the best-known is the Vespasian Psalter.[65] This manuscript shows the king holding the harp closer to his body than he does in the Ethiopic and Byzantine miniatures mentioned above. Nevertheless, in later Hiberno-Saxon manuscripts such as the Cotton MS Vitellius f. XI, not to mention other media, the pose of the sovereign recalls that seen in Ethiopian and Byzantine images.[66] Another interesting comparison is provided by the Utrecht Psalter since it features a representation of David accompanied by an angel holding a parasol above his head.[67] As far as I am aware, the Utrecht Psalter, and later copies of it such as the Harley Psalter, are the only non-Ethiopian manuscripts in which David is paired with a figure bearing an umbrella.[68]

Also worth mentioning is the eighth-century copy of the *Expositio Psalmorum* by Cassiodorus preserved in the Durham Cathedral Library and displayed in 2018 in a wonderful exhibition at the British Library.[69] The Durham Cassiodorus preserves two miniatures placed before the commentaries to Psalms 51 and 101 that were probably inspired by the decorations of an earlier illustrated psalter with a tripartite division of the Psalms. The manuscript's first miniature shows an enthroned David playing the harp. The second, which is far more unorthodox, depicts him standing on top of a two-headed beast with a spear in one hand and a circular object in the other.[70] While there might not be a correlation with the miniatures of David and Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, the compositional similarities between the two manuscripts are noteworthy given that the combination of full-page images of a seated figure with a harp and of a standing figure with a spear in manuscripts containing the Psalms, or at least material related to the Psalms, is otherwise unknown outside the Ethiopic tradition.

The Ethiopian Features of the Juel-Jensen Miniatures

Having examined, in general terms, what the Ethiopian miniatures of David have in common with other traditions, it is now possible to single out what makes them distinctive. It is evident that the use of frontispiece images showing David seated on a throne with an instrument are not unique to Ethiopia but draw from a broader tradition of Christian psalter illumination that flourished in various parts of the Mediterranean world from late antiquity onward. The frequent exchanges between Ethiopia and centers such as Alexandria and Jerusalem, as well as the translation of Greek and Copto-Arabic texts into Ethiopic, would have no doubt furnished Ethiopian artists with opportunities to draw ideas from the illustrated psalters that circulated across these regions.

Conversely, several other details of the David miniature in the Juel-Jensen Psalter are typically absent in other manuscript cultures and can now confidently be identified as characteristic of the Ethiopian tradition of psalter illumination. The parasol, fly whisk, and sword carried by the king's three attendants (Fig. 1), for instance, are features that are not usually encountered in other manuscript cultures. Since these objects functioned as signs of royal status in fifteenth-century Ethiopia, the artists who used them would have been conscious that their presence served to evoke the life and ceremony of the Ethiopian court. King David's throne as well as his adornments also carry royal connotations that would have been readily understood by contemporary viewers. While some of these objects were used as symbols of kingship across broad swaths of Eurasia and Africa, we will see that a second group of items, which includes the earplugs and headband of David, may have been inspired by more localized customs and by traditions that are unique to Ethiopia.

The parasol (*dəbab*), which is one of the most noticeable elements in the Juel-Jensen Psalter and in the other Ethiopian miniatures of David (Figs. 1, 7–10), certainly belongs to the first category of objects.[71] The umbrella was an essential part of the emperors' trappings of power in early Solomonic Ethiopia, and for this reason it appears also in the miniature of

Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter (Fig. 2) and in other representations of sovereigns in Ethiopian art of the fifteenth century. For example, in the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd the umbrella appears in the miniatures that depict David (Fig. 7), Solomon (Fig. 13), and the emperor Constantine the Great but, significantly, not in the portrait of the donor of the manuscript, Bəlen Sägäd (Fig. 17 / S), since he was not of royal lineage.[72]

In the Juel-Jensen Psalter the parasol—topped by a rounded element, embellished with fringes, and decorated with cross-shaped dot patterns—is placed on a long pole that is held with two hands by a courtier, who is identified by the caption above his head as the "Bearer of the Parasol" (*ṣäware dəbab*). The singling out of this figure by means of such a caption is in itself an indication of importance. Nevertheless, a number of written sources from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries confirm that the Bearer of the Parasol was among the closest attendants to the emperor, who, it is worth recalling, would never show himself to his subjects unless on special occasions and would therefore travel across his empire surrounded by pages bearing curtains to conceal him from sight.

The most important source for the study of these customs is the Chronicle of Emperor Zärʾa Yaʿəqob, which relates that this sovereign moved across his country tailed by three Bearers of the Parasol and surrounded by pages carrying curtains, who effectively formed a moving screen around him that concealed him from the public eye.[73] Later European eyewitness accounts confirm this tradition. For instance, the sixteenth-century chaplain of the Portuguese embassy to Ethiopia, Francisco Álvares, describes the umbrellas in some detail as well as the sovereign's habit of lying under them when resting from movement across his lands.[74] The written sources also indicate that the sovereign would be accompanied by courtiers bearing his unsheathed weapons—another feature that we find represented in the David miniature in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, where one attendant holds the ruler's sword.[75]

A recently published early Solomonic gospel book from a private collection bears further witness to these practices and to the tendency of Ethiopian illuminators to infuse depictions of biblical rulers with elements drawn from the customs of the Ethiopian court. The gospel features a unique nine-page-long representation of the Three Magi, who are depicted in the act of traveling toward an encampment (which resembles those used by the peripatetic courts of the emperors of Ethiopia) and in the company of a large retinue of soldiers, ecclesiastics, and beasts of burden. Each of the Three Kings is encircled by pages bearing unfolded curtains and tailed by an attendant bearing a parasol above his head (Fig. 18 / M).[76] As pointed out in the study of this scene, these details and other elements, such as the unridden caparisoned horses behind the Three Magi, offer an almost literal illustration of the imperial customs of the time as described in the Chronicle of Emperor Zärʾa Yaʿəqob.[77]

Both the visual and written sources provide ample evidence that large umbrellas were closely associated to kingship in early Solomonic Ethiopia during the fifteenth century. What is considerably harder to determine is the antiquity of this practice, partly because the customs of the Ethiopian court began to be codified in written form only from the sixteenth century onward, and partly because earlier sources, with the exception of Zärʾa Yaʿəqob's chronicle, tend to be silent on such matters.[78] According to Stuart Munro-Hay and Balicka Witakowska, who discuss the use of the umbrella in Ethiopia, the Bearer of the Parasol is mentioned among the officers who accompany the king in Ethiopia's national epic: the *Kəbrä nägäśt* ("The Glory of Kings"), a fourteenth-century text that asserts that the emperors of the Solomonic dynasty were the descendants of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon's first son, Mənilək I.[79] However, this information is inaccurate, as the Bearer of the Parasol is only mentioned in later texts often associated with, but not part of, the *Kəbrä nägäśt*.[80] Both authors also argue that the umbrella could have been in use as an object of regalia in the Aksumite period, but offer no substantive evidence to support this claim.

True, umbrellas were used as items of ceremonial regalia across broad parts of Eurasia and Africa long before the advent of Christianity in Ethiopia in the mid-fourth century. For instance, parasols were used in ancient Egypt and in the Assyrian Empire.[81] In particular, those depicted in some reliefs of Xerxes from the Achaemenid period (in which the ruler is accompanied by an attendant carrying an umbrella and a fly whisk, as in Ethiopian miniatures) bear a startling resemblance to the one seen in Ethiopian art.[82] Umbrellas also carried regal and religious associations in India, that is to say, in territories with which Ethiopia had significant interactions between the Christian Aksumite and early Solomonic periods, as showcased by the discovery of Kushan coins and the presence of twelfth- or thirteenth-century Indian paintings in Ethiopian churches.[83] The royal umbrella was used by the Fatimid caliphs in Cairo and the Christian kings of Nubia, again areas with strong connections to Ethiopia.[84] It is clear, then, that umbrellas functioned as markers of royal status across a broad transhistorical and transnational network that included the Ethiopian Empire. That they were not used in the Byzantine Empire, in the Christian kingdoms of Armenia and Georgia, or in medieval Europe, where images of David in psalters are attested, speaks to the capacity of Ethiopian artists to appropriate elements from different periods and cultural contexts as part of their communicative strategies.

Since there was ample opportunity for exchange between Ethiopia, North Africa, West Asia, and South Asia long before the advent to power of the Solomonic dynasty in 1270, it is possible that the royal umbrella was used by Ethiopian rulers before the thirteenth century. However, this hypothesis is not supported by substantial evidence. On the contrary, several observations suggest that the royal umbrella began to be used in Ethiopia toward the fifteenth century. First, as observed above, the umbrella is absent in Ethiopian wall paintings of David prior to the fifteenth century (Fig. 16). Second, it does not appear in a thirteenth-century representation of Emperor Yəkunno Amlak (r. 1270–85), the founder of the

Solomonic dynasty, who is depicted with two of his officials in the church of Gännätä Maryam (Fig. 19 / M). This wall painting, which offers the earliest known representation of a Solomonic emperor, can be firmly dated thanks to the inscription above it, which records Yəkunno Amlak's involvement in the construction of the church.[85]

Similar difficulties would arise in tracing the genealogy of some of the other elements present in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, such as the throne and unsheathed sword in the David miniature (Fig. 1), or the spear in the miniature of King Solomon (Fig. 2). These items were part of a broader population of objects—which included drums, tents, caparisoned horses, and ceremonial arms (cf. also Fig. 18)—that were used in early Solomonic Ethiopia, as in nearby contexts, to signify authority.[86] It may be difficult to determine exactly when such items became part of Ethiopian court culture, but this is of little consequence for the present discussion. What really matters is the fact that the emperors of Ethiopia appropriated such transcultural symbols of authority and that the illustrator of the Juel-Jensen Psalter included some of these items in his representation of David and Solomon. The miniatures thus offer hitherto overlooked clues to the circulation of objects and the transmission of ideas about kingship in early Solomonic Ethiopia and provide insight into some of the mechanisms of visual communication adopted by Ethiopian artists.

The Aksumite Background of the Juel-Jensen Miniatures

As noted above, there is a second group of items in the David and Solomon miniatures that is more distinctly Ethiopian in character. This latter category includes the large green ornaments that pierce the lower lobes of the two biblical kings. As first observed by the former owner of the Bodleian's psalter, Bent Juel-Jensen, similar adornments can also be seen in some portraits of Ethiopian kings on coins from the Aksumite period.[87] Let us take, as an example,

a gold coin in the British Museum minted at the beginning of the fourth century, during the reign of the Aksumite king Ousanas I (Fig. 20 / M), with a half-length bust portrait of him on both sides.[88] On the obverse Ousanas I wears a tiara above a headcloth and holds a spear, that is to say, the same symbol of kingship employed in the Solomon miniature in the Juel-Jensen Psalter (Fig. 2). On the reverse he wears a simple headcloth and holds an object that Munro-Hay has identified as a fly whisk, again an object associated with rulers in the later period of early Solomonic illumination (Figs. 1, 7–10, 13).[89] On both sides of the coin, the king's lobe is clearly pierced by a large circular object that recalls the one visible in the early Solomonic miniatures of David and Solomon. Further evidence of the use of such objects during the Aksumite period is offered by a series of green, blue, and yellow glass plugs found in archaeological sites in Aksum dating to ca. 350–800 CE.[90]

A second distinctive feature of Ousanas's attire is the rounded ribbon that falls behind the tiara on the obverse and the headcloth on the reverse of the coin (Fig. 20).[91] While crowns with streamers are not unique to Ethiopia (pace Juel-Jensen), during the Middle Ages such a headcloth must have been seen as a distinctive symbol of Aksumite kingship since we find references to it far beyond the context of Ethiopia.[92] John Malalas, for instance, mentions it in his Χρονογραφία.[93] Furthermore, a headcloth appears as the distinctive attribute of the ruler of Ethiopia in the wall paintings at Qusayr 'Amra.[94] Juel-Jensen rightly noted that such a knotted ribbon can also be seen in the David and Solomon miniatures and that in later Aksumite coins, such as those of the seventh-century king Ioel, the king wears a crown topped by a cross that brings to mind the crosses that anachronistically embellish the crowns of the two kings in the Juel-Jensen Psalter (Figs. 1, 2).[95]

The headbands worn by David and Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter perhaps resemble a gold diadem (*ras wärq*) that was given to important officers of the Ethiopian state, such as the *däğğazmač*, during the early Solomonic period. There are no descriptions of this

object, but the sources state that it was "tied" to the head.[96] Nevertheless, there is nothing in the written sources to suggest that the objects worn by Ethiopian emperors during the early Solomonic period took the shape of the earlobe ornaments and the ribbon-bound crowns represented in the portraits of David and Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter.[97] In the aforementioned portrait of Emperor Yəkunno Amlak in the church of Gännätä Maryam, the ruler is presented without plugs in his ears and wears a crown rather than a headband (Fig. 19). All of this suggests that the Ethiopian artists who painted the headbands and earplugs in the David and Solomon miniatures (Figs. 1, 2, 7, 13) were intentionally copying symbols of kingship from the Aksumite period. In other words, it is clear that the illustrator of the Juel-Jensen Psalter, in creating the two ruler portraits, drew not only from a stock of transnational symbols of authority, which referred to the coeval customs of the Ethiopian court, but also from his own Aksumite heritage.

Art historians and archaeologists have already commented on the use of Aksumite motifs in Ethiopian art during the Zagʷe (ca. eleventh century to 1270 CE) and early Solomonic periods, but there has been a tendency in the literature to describe such phenomena as a sign of "conservatism" or backwardness, and as an indication that Ethiopian artists slavishly followed whatever exemplars they had at their disposal.[98] Until the 1970s, similar paradigms shaped the study of romanizing elements in medieval art, which were considered valuable for having preserved traces of the Roman past, rather than for their capacity to convey information about the context in which they were made. The approach was based on deterministic interpretations that stressed "the decline or passive emulation of antique and Mediterranean culture in the early medieval West."[99] Regrettably, while historians dealing with European traditions have since moved toward an approach that recognizes the creative processes of medieval artists, there has not been a similar shift in research on early Solomonic illumination.

In contrast to earlier scholarship on Ethiopian manuscript illumination, but in line with some recent work that has been done on Ethiopian literature, I would argue that these Aksumite elements were deliberately reintroduced by Ethiopian artists in the fifteenth century to support the efforts of the Solomonic emperors to legitimize their rule.[100] The years before and immediately after the ascent to the throne of Emperor Zärʾa Yaʿəqob were marked by religious and political instability, with members of the imperial entourage plotting against each other and monastic communities on the brink of secession from the Ethiopian Church. As part of his efforts to unify the empire, Zärʾa Yaʿəqob organized a coronation ceremony for himself, three years after his accession to the throne, in Aksum—the former capital of the Aksumite Empire and the site of the Church of Mary of Zion, where, according to local traditions, the Ark of the Covenant taken to Ethiopia by the mythical founder of the Solomonic dynasty, Mənilək I, was kept. The story of the coming of the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia and the claim of royal descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, through Mənilək I, is presented in the *Kəbrä nägäśt*, a text written in the fourteenth century to present the rise to power of the Solomonic dynasty as a restoration rather than a usurpation.[101]

The choice of Aksum as the site for Zärʾa Yaʿəqob's coronation must have been driven by a desire to present his reign as a return to the former glory of the Aksumite Empire and emphasize his blood ties with its mythical founder, Mənilək I. This conclusion is supported by the emperor's chronicle, which records that the coronation ceremony followed the "custom of his forefathers."[102] Truth be said, it is unclear whether such a ceremony had ever taken place before in Aksum, but the fact that Zärʾa Yaʿəqob's chronicler framed the event in these terms attests to the emperor's intention to present himself as heir to the kings of Aksum. Another interesting aspect of the ceremony is that the actual coronation, which was preceded by a procession inspired by Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, took place near a series of stone thrones set on a stepped base dating to the Aksumite period, since the

distinctive stepped podium in the Solomon miniature from the Juel-Jensen Psalter (Fig. 2) seems to allude to these monuments.[103]

There is a clear parallel here between the reuse of early monuments as foci for ritual and processional activities and the insertion of Aksumite elements in the David and Solomon miniatures. Both serve purposes of political legitimation and ideological propaganda, and both use the past to address issues relevant to the present, fashioning a sense of belonging and identity that plays upon the foundational myth of the *Kəbrä nägäśt*. Such communicative activities were effective because they were directed at a society that, as Pierluigi Piovanelli puts it, was "accustomed to interpreting collective realities as complex as interethnic and international relations through the filter of biblical stories and genealogies."[104] The coronation performance became part of a collective memory and was reenacted by several other Ethiopian rulers over the centuries. For instance, about a century after Zärʾa Yaʿəqob's coronation, according to the chronicler of Emperor Śärṣä Dəngəl (r. 1563–97), when the ruler was ritually questioned about his lineage during his coronation rite, he proudly asserted that he was "the son of David, son of Solomon, son of Ǝbnä Ḥakim [Mənilək I]."[105]

Returning to the fifteenth century, it is now clear that the Solomonic kings had an almost antiquarian interest in their Aksumite past, and that the presence of Aksumite regalia in the miniatures of David and Solomon should not be viewed as an expression of artistic "conservatism," but as evidence of a broader movement of revival that was taking place within the Ethiopian Empire. This is an important shift in emphasis that promotes a recognition of the creative agency of Ethiopian artists and their patrons. The inclusion of Aksumite regalia—and, more generally, of the trappings of power of the Solomonic emperors—would have sent a precise political message that stressed the ties between King Solomon and the kings of Aksum and thus, ultimately, to the current ruling dynasty of Ethiopia, who claimed to descend from them. In literature, the best-known expression of the

desire of the Solomonic emperors to present themselves as heirs to King Solomon is found in the *Kəbrä nägäśt*, but the miniatures of David and Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, so rich in their allusions to Ethiopian kingship, should be viewed as an equally powerful means to the same end.

If my reading is correct, the miniatures of David and Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter represent a deliberate attempt to give legitimacy and prestige to the rulers of the Solomonic dynasty by visually affiliating the two biblical kings with the founders of the Ethiopian kingdom and their modern successors.[106] In the manuscript the conceptual parallel is expressed visually, just as elsewhere the connection is made through the written word and ceremonial practices. In Ethiopia, as in other Christian traditions, this type of comparison between Old Testament figures and contemporary individuals was a recurring trope in both the literature and the arts. For Christian Ethiopians the present was informed by the biblical past, and the past could be interpreted through the present. Further evidence of this viewpoint is provided by the Ethiopian commentary to the Psalms, which interprets several passages in the light of the customs of the Ethiopian court.[107]

Although the emperors of Ethiopia seldom appeared in portraiture during the early Solomonic period, there is ample evidence to suggest that they used imagery to further their political ambitions. Zärʾa Yaʿəqob's use of icons and crosses to promote Marian devotion and, not so subtly, his own authority over the Ethiopian Church is an excellent example of royal intervention into the arts.[108] By asking his subjects to prostrate themselves before these images, the emperor was imposing his authority in religious matters. Evidently, the representations of David and Solomon are stylized and show us not so much a realistic depiction of the attire of an Ethiopian emperor during the early Solomonic period, but a series of elements that a contemporary educated viewer would have associated with his sovereign.

While there is no way to determine whether the Juel-Jensen Psalter was commissioned by or for an Ethiopian emperor, or if the illuminator was inspired by such a manuscript, the presence of numerous items associated with Ethiopian kingship in the David and Solomon miniatures, as well as their political undertone, strongly suggest that the Ethiopian court had some degree of influence on their creation. In this regard, the presence of Sirach in the miniature of Solomon (Fig. 2) should be associated not so much to the fact that he is an author of one of the Books of Wisdom, but to his assertion that the house David would endure forever, since this statement would have been taken as a prophecy about the imperial line of Ethiopia.[109] The fact that the other two manuscripts produced by the illustrator of the Juel-Jensen Psalter (Fig. 3) can be associated to the patronage of the abbot of Däbrä Libanos, Märḥa Krəstos—who was one of the closest political allies of Emperor Zärʾa Yaʿəqob and his son and successor Bäʾədä Maryam (r. 1468–78)—further strengthens the impression of imperial involvement in the production and circulation of images of David and Solomon in fifteenth-century Ethiopia.[110]

Conclusion

This article has tried to situate the David and Solomon portraits in the Juel-Jensen Psalter in the context of fifteenth-century Ethiopia (Figs. 1, 2), and to demonstrate that this backdrop is essential for understanding their form and meaning. It has shown that the two ruler portraits were not simply intended as renderings of the two biblical kings, but that they were structured around Ethiopian imperial ideology, which considered the country's emperors as descendants of David and Solomon. Such typological associations to Old Testament figures, and to David in particular, are not a distinctive feature of the Ethiopic tradition.[111] Nevertheless, because of the insertion of a number of details inspired by the customs of the Solomonic dynasty and by

local ideas of kingship, the rendition is distinctly Ethiopian in character. The commonly held idea that Ethiopian artists were able at best to slavishly copy subjects must therefore be reversed in favor of an approach that considers how their communicative strategies were connected to the sociocultural, political, and religious realities of the early Solomonic period and the transnational networks of the Ethiopian Empire.[112]

The Ethiopian rulers who contemplated similar miniatures would have been reminded of the importance of following the example set by David and Solomon. At the same time, the miniatures would have served as a visual prompt to remind their subjects that their rulers were of Solomonic descent. Moreover, the presentation of David and Solomon as Christian rulers, since both bear a crown topped by a cross, would have also sent a relevant political message at a point in time, between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Ethiopian emperors were facing revolts from Jewish groups along the northwestern border of their empire, by stating that the Solomonic emperors and their Christian subjects were the true descendants of Israel.

To conclude, it is apparent that the Ethiopian miniatures of David and Solomon in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, far from being simple renderings of foreign visual models, are the result of an articulated process of adaptation and appropriation from a variety of sources. Through a purposeful selection of details drawn from Aksumite sources and other cultures, and the inclusion of references to the costume of the emperors of early Solomonic Ethiopia, the two images were constructed to transform the ancient kings of the Old Testament into figures that were relevant to the present viewers. The refashioning and reinterpreting in Ethiopian terms of a non-Ethiopian motif, like that of David playing the harp, shows that it is impossible to provide an accurate picture of the development of early Solomonic illumination without understanding the elusive biography of each image. Only when the paraments that defined the production of imagery in the early Solomonic period are understood will it become possible

to tackle the complex issue of the development of manuscript illumination in Ethiopia and its relationship to other traditions.

Bio

Jacopo Gnisci is a Lecturer in Art and Visual Cultures of the Global South at UCL and a Visiting Scholar at the British Museum. He recently edited the volume *Treasures of Ethiopia and Eritrea in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, which accompanied the 2019 exhibition *Languages of God: Sacred Scripts of Ethiopia and Eritrea*.

[University College London, Department of History of Art, Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT, UK. Email: j.gnisci@live.com]

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[1] See Jules Leroy, e.g., "Une 'Madonne italienne' conservée dans un manuscrit éthiopien du British Museum," *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 18 (1962): 77–82; Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "The Iconography of the Deposition in Ethiopian Painting," in *Proceedings of the First International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art: Held at the Warburg Institute of the University of London, October 21 and 22, 1986* (London: Pindar, 1989), 15–22, 139–44; Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Πρόσοψις, non πρόοψις: Efeso, Gerusalemme, Aquileia (Nota a IEph 495, 1 s.)," *La Parola del Passato* 58 (2003): 182–249; and Claude Lepage and Jacques Mercier, "Un tétraévangile illustré éthiopien à cycle long du XVe siècle: Codicologie et iconographie," *Cahiers Archéologiques: Fin de l'Antiquité et Moyen Âge* 54 (2012): 99–174.

[2] On Western representations of Africa during the colonial era, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850*, 2 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); and Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture, and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New

Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); Paul S. Landau and Deborah D. Kaspin, eds., *Images and Empires: Visuality in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, *African Art and the Colonial Encounter: Inventing a Global Commodity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

[3] Peter Mark, "Is There Such a Thing as African Art?," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 58, nos. 1/2 (1999): 7.

[4] E. A. Wallis Budge, "On the Illustrations of Ethiopic Manuscripts," in *The Lives of Mabâ' Seyôn and Gabra Krestôs: The Ethiopic Texts Ed. with an English Translation and a Chapter on the Illustrations of Ethiopic Mss.*, ed. Budge (London: W. Griggs, 1898), xviii.

[5] Drawing upon postcolonial theory, scholars in the 1980s started to question the adequacy of earlier discourses about African art and to critique the objectifying and allochronic representation of the Global South in Western literature, as exemplified by landmark studies such as Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, "One Tribe, One Style? Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art," *History in Africa* 11 (1984): 163–93, and James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988). Such debates have not had an impact on the study of Christian Ethiopian art, as recently and briefly noted in Elizabeth W. Giorgis, *Modernist Art in Ethiopia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019), 18–19. Indeed, while it has been occasionally observed that recognizing the contribution of Ethiopian scribes to their own tradition is essential even when the focus is on the relationship between Christian Ethiopic literature and other traditions – e.g. Gianfrancesco Lusini, "Naufragio e conservazione di testi cristiani antichi: Il contributo della tradizione etiopica," *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 69 (2009): 69–83; and Lusini, "Elementi romani nella tradizione letteraria aksumita," *Aethiopica* 4 (2001): 42–54 – similar calls have not been made for the study of Christian Ethiopian art.

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[6] This is shown by the fact that there are currently no studies offering an overview or a critical review of the existing research on the history of Ethiopian manuscript illumination; a short contribution by Claire Bosc-Tiessé, "A Century of Research on Ethiopian Church Painting: A Brief Overview," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 42, no. 1–2 (2009): 1–23, omits the foundational studies and most of the landmark contributions to the topic. I intend to address this lacuna in my forthcoming book on early Solomonic manuscript illumination; here suffice it to note that the existing scholarship on Ethiopian manuscript illumination has systematically failed to engage with, or contribute to, the conceptual and theoretical discussions in the broader field of art history.

[7] Namely, Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, *La crucifixion sans crucifié dans l'art éthiopien: Recherches sur la survie de l'iconographie chrétienne de l'Antiquité tardive* (Warsaw: Zaś Pan, 1997); the book has many strengths, but it is telling of the kind of attitude that I am criticizing here that its author seeks to interpret the Ethiopian miniatures by looking at a vast corpus of written sources without asking herself whether such texts were read in Ethiopia. This type of attitude endures to this day. For instance, in Evangelatou, Maria, *A Contextual Reading of Ethiopian Crosses Through Form and Ritual: Kaleidoscopes of Meaning* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2018), the author attempts to offer an interpretation of the significance of crosses in contemporary Ethiopia without having ever gone to the country and by drawing on Byzantine sources that were never translated into the local languages and on a small corpus of old Ethiopic texts that are no longer read in most contemporary realities. On the more general issue of the underrepresentation of African art in Western scholarship, see Robert S. Nelson, "The Map of Art History," *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 1 (1997): 28–40; and, with regard to the *Art Bulletin*, the editorial by Kirk Ambrose, "Editor's Note: Perspectives on Art History," *Art Bulletin* 98, no. 4 (2016): 415.

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[8] Claude Lepage, "Contribution de l'ancien art chrétien d'Éthiopie à la connaissance des autres arts chrétiens," *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 134, no. 4 (1990): 799. Even in more recent studies, such as Marilyn E. Heldman, "Metropolitan Bishops as Agents of Artistic Interaction between Egypt and Ethiopia during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *Interactions: Artistic Interchange between the Eastern and Western World in the Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, NJ: Index of Christian Art in association witih Penn State University Press, 2007), 93, the author argues that Ethiopian artists borrowed details "from a visual model without necessarily recognizing what it represented," without interrogating the reasons that induced Ethiopian artists to appropriate foreign motifs.

[9] On the existence of similar but superseded trends in the study of medieval art, see Celia Chazelle, "'Romanness' in Early Medieval Culture," in *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Chazelle and Felice Lifshitz (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 81–98; Lawrence Nees, "Ethnic and Primitive Paradigms in the Study of Early Medieval Art," in *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Felice Lifshitz (Nw York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 41–60; and Herbert L. Kessler, "The Christianity of Carolingian Classicism," *Convivium* 3, no. 1 (2016): 22–39..

[10] On this manuscript and its acquisition, see Bent Juel-Jensen, "Three Illuminated Ethiopian Manuscripts," *Book Collector* 36, no. 2 (1987): 207–24; Stanislaw Chojnacki, "An Ancient Ethiopian Custom Illustrated by a Fifteenth Century Miniature in the Juel-Jensen Collection," *Bodleian Library Record* 13 (1990): 395–405; Steve Delamarter and Jacopo Gnisci, "The Psalter in Geʿez," in *Treasures of Ethiopia and Eritrea in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, ed. Jacopo Gnisci (Oxford: Manar al-Athar, University of Oxford, 2019), 36–51. I am working with Dorothea Reule, Massimo Villa and Susanne Hummel on a catalogue that will contain

detailed descriptions of this and the other manuscripts from the Juel-Jensen collection in the Bodleian Library.

[11] In choosing to use "appropriation" rather than "influence" as a concept for explaining exchanges between cultures, I am drawing upon Kathleen Ashley and Véronique Plesch, "The Cultural Processes of 'Appropriation,'" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, no. 1 (2002): 1–15; and Robert S. Nelson, "Appropriation," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 160–73. Some excellent discussions of mechanisms of exchange are found in Hourihane, *Interactions*; Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Heather E. Grossman and Alicia Walker, eds., *Mechanisms of Exchange: Transmission in Medieval Art and Architecture of the Mediterranean, ca. 1000–1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[12] Carlo Conti Rossini, "Un codice illustrato eritreo del secolo XV (Ms Abb. n. 105 della Bibl. Nat. di Parigi)," *Africa Italiana* 1 (1927): 90, 83.

[13] Most current scholarship still tends to superficially follow the "philological" approach to manuscript illustration developed in studies like Kurt Weitzmann, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), without considering that the method has its value as long as it does not adopt a teleological and determinist approach to the study of illustration; as discussed in the landmark volume by John Lowden, *The Octateuchs: A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), which still offers the most lucid treatment of the matter. For an overview of the philological approach to manuscript illustration, see the opposing positions presented in Mary-Lyon Dolezal, "The Elusive Quest for the 'Real Thing': The Chicago Lectionary Project Thirty Years On," *Gesta* 35, no. 2 (1996): 128–41; and Massimo Bernabò, "Nascita di una disciplina: Weitzmann,

Toesca, Salmi; La strada si biforca," *Rivista di Storia della Miniatura* 21 (2017): 162–76. For a recent application of the philological approach to Ethiopian miniatures, see Jacopo Gnisci, "An Ethiopian Miniature of the Tempietto in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: Notes on Its Relatives and Symbolism," in *Canones: The Art of Harmony; The Canon Tables of the Four Gospels*, ed. Alessandro Bausi, Bruno Reudenbach, and Hanna Wimmer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 67–98. On the value of images as historical sources, see Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion, 2001).

[14] Tina M. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 6.

[15] For the history of the early Solomonic period, see Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270–1527* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972). It is beyond the scope of this article to consider the application of European names or categories of time to non-European contexts such as that of Ethiopia; for some thought-provoking discussions on the matter, see Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, eds., *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of 'the Middle Ages' Outside Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and Holmes, Catherine, and Naomi Standen. "Introduction: Towards a Global Middle Ages." *Past & Present* 238, supplement 13 (2018): 1–44. On the problems that arise when using Western categories for the study of Ethiopian religion, see Steven Kaplan, "Indigenous Categories and the Study of World Religions in Ethiopia: The Case of the Beta Israel (Falasha)," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22, no. 3 (1992): 208–21. Scholarship on Christian Ethiopian art has not been receptive to these issues.

[16] The isolation trope, first put forward in the eighteenth century by Edward Gibbon, appears in many publications, as lamented by Teshale Tibebu, "Ethiopia: The 'Anomaly' and 'Paradox' of Africa," *Journal of Black Studies* 26, no. 4 (1996): 414–30; see, e.g., Werner Gillon, *A Short History of African Art* (New York: Viking, 1984), 311; and Ewa Balicka-

Witakowska, "Crucifixion," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed. Siegbert Uhlig (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), 1:825.

[17] Translation from Getatchew Haile, ed., *The Gəʿəz Acts of Abba Əsṭifanos of Gwəndagwənde* (Louvain: Peeters, 2006), 2.

[18] See, e.g., Carlo Conti Rossini and Lanfranco Ricci, eds. and trans., *Il Libro della Luce del negus Zarʾa Yāʿqob (Maṣḥafa Berhān), II* (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1965), 2–3, 13, 15, 18, 23.

[19] For the paleography, see Siegbert Uhlig, *Introduction to Ethiopian Palaeography* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990). The miniatures stylistically recall those in the gospel book discussed in Jacopo Gnisci and Rafał Zarzeczny, "They Came with Their Troops Following a Star from the East: A Codicological and Iconographic Study of an Illuminated Ethiopic Gospel Book," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 83, no. 1 (2017): 127–89.

[20] Gnisci and Zarzeczny, "They Came with Their Troops," 138.

[21] For a description of this manuscript and the note on f. 260v, see William Wright, *Catalogue of the Ethiopic Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1847* (London: British Museum, 1877), 136–38..

[22] A draft description of this uncatalogued manuscript, identified with the shelf marks EMIP 2099 and EMML 6533, has been recently published by Ashlee Benson, Jonah Sandford, and Ralph Lee in an online catalogue, "Ethiopia, Dabra Libānos, Tweed Codex 150," accessed June 6, 2020, https://betamasaheft.eu/manuscripts/EMIP02099/main. The attribution of this manuscript to the same scribe of the British Library and Bodleian Library codices is my own. I would like to thank Dr. Antonella Brita for confirming my opinion about the notes in the two manuscripts in a personal communication on June 1, 2020.

[23] Psalm 151 is supernumerary, so the Psalms are numbered from 1 to 150 and divided into three groups of fifty; on the tripartition of the Psalms in the Irish tradition, see Susan E.

Gillingham, “A Ninth-Century Irish Bog Psalter and Reading the Psalms as ‘Three Fifties,’” in *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of Robert Gordon*, ed. Geoffrey Khan and Diana Lipton (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 373–85. The prefatory material consists of a synopsis attributed to Eusebius of Cesarea, to be compared with Hermann Zotenberg, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens (gheez et amharique) de la Bibliothèque nationale* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1877), 15; the attribution of the Psalms to different authors loosely follows the Greek tradition, on which see Martin Wallraff, “The Canon Tables of the Psalms: An Unknown Work of Eusebius of Caesarea,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 67 (2013): 1–14. The literature on the titles of Ethiopic tradition is still limited, but see Roger Schneider, “Les titres des psaumes en éthiopien,” in *Mélanges Marcel Cohen: Études de linguistique, ethnographie et sciences connexes offertes par ses amis et ses élèves à l’occasion de son 80ème anniversaire, avec des articles et études inédits de Marcel Cohen*, ed. David Cohen (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 424–28. For an overview of textual features of psalter manuscripts in Ethiopic, see Sophia Dege-Müller, “The Ethiopic Psalter Manuscripts: Scribal Practices and Text Arrangement,” in *Essays in Ethiopian Manuscript Studies: Proceedings of the International Conference; Manuscripts and Texts, Languages and Contexts; The Transmission of Knowledge in the Horn of Africa; Hamburg, 17–19 July 2014*, ed. Alessandro Bausi et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 59–74.

[24] Marginal illustrations, like those found in other traditions, are not attested in early Solomonic Ethiopic psalters.

[25] For a discussion of headpieces in Ethiopian art, see Siegbert Uhlig, “Funktion und Bedeutung der Ornamente in Äthiopischen Kodizes,” in *Proceedings of the First International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art*, 56–59; and Carla Zanotti-Eman, “Gli areg nei manoscritti dell’Institute of Ethiopian Studies,” in *Orbis Aethiopicus: Studia in*

honorem Stanislaus Chojnacki natali septuagesimo quinto dicata, septuagesimo septimo oblata, ed. Piotr O. Scholz (Albstadt: Karl Schuler, 1992), 2:475–99.

[26] The four psalmists are not attested in other illustrated Ethiopic psalters, but similar compositions are found in other traditions. For some Byzantine examples, see Suzy Dufrenne, *L'Illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Âge, I: Pantocrator 61, Paris Grec 20, British Museum 40731* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1966), 53, pl. 47; and Anthony Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters in Byzantium* (Paris: Picard, 1984), figs. 69, 128, 176, 205, 281. For some medieval examples, see Hugo Steger, *David Rex et Propheta: König David als vorbildliche Verkörperung des Herrschers und Dichters im Mittelalter, nach Bilddarstellungen des achten bis zwölften Jahrhunderts* (Nuremberg: H. Carl, 1961), 74–75, pls. 4, 9–17; and William J. Diebold, "The Ruler Portrait of Charles the Bald in the S. Paolo Bible," *Art Bulletin* 76, no. 1 (1994): 7–18.

[27] Sirach is also associated with a portrait of Solomon in an Ethiopic gospel book published in Claude Lepage, "Un manuscrit éthiopien du 15e siècle," *Connaissance des Arts* (1974): 95.

[28] Jacopo Gnisci, "The Liturgical Character of Ethiopian Gospel Illumination of the Early Solomonic Period: A Brief Note on the Iconography of the Washing of the Feet," in *Aethiopia fortitudo ejus: Studi in onore di Monsignor Osvaldo Raineri in occasione del suo 80° compleanno*, ed. Rafał Zarzeczny (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2015), 253–75.

[29] For an introduction, see Kirsten S. Pedersen, *Traditional Ethiopian Exegesis of the Book of Psalms* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 9–13. On depictions of Moses in the Ethiopic tradition, see Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Prototipi miniati dell'Ottateuco etiopico," *Bollettino del Museo Bodoniano di Parma* 8 (1994): 69–102; on Moses and Aaron, see Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "Un psautier éthiopien illustré inconnu," *Orientalia Suecana* 33–35 (1986): 23; the two are paired also in a gospel book in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, MS 105 (f. 6r). For a more general discussion of the iconography of Moses and Aaron in psalters, see

also Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *L'Illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen Âge, II: Londres, Add. 19.352* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1970), 102, fig. 162.

[30] For a visually similar solution in a Copto-Arabic manuscript, see Jules Leroy, *Les manuscrits coptes et coptes-arabes illustrés* (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1974), pl. 97:2; for an Armenian example, where the headpiece features the Ancient of Days and Moses in the margin, see Sirarpie Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting in the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993), 1:149, fig. 621; for a headpiece in a Byzantine manuscript with Moses but without Aaron, see Lawrence Nees, "An Illuminated Byzantine Psalter at Harvard University," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975): 221–22, fig. 6.

[31] For further discussion, see Marilyn E. Heldman, "The Early Solomonic Period: 1270–1527," in *African Zion: The Sacred Art of Ethiopia*, ed. Roderick Grierson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 141, fig. 20; and Heldman, *The Marian Icons of the Painter Frē Ṣeyon: A Study in Fifteenth-Century Ethiopian Art, Patronage, and Spirituality* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 65–67, figs. 38–39. The miniatures should also be compared with the loose folios from a manuscript in the Church of St. George on Däq, reproduced in Claude Lepage, "Histoire de l'ancienne peinture éthiopienne (Xe–XVe siècle): Résultats des missions de 1971 à 1977," *Comptes Rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 121, no. 2 (1977): 325–76, fig. 20; and Ernst Hammerschmidt and Otto A. Jäger, *Illuminierte äthiopische Handschriften* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1968), fig. 16.

[32] Judith S. McKenzie and Francis Watson, *The Garima Gospels: Early Illuminated Gospel Books from Ethiopia* (Oxford: Manar Al-Athar, University of Oxford, 2016), 1, 67–82.

[33] Michael A. Knibb, *Translating the Bible: The Ethiopic Version of the Old Testament*, (Oxford: published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1999), 46–52; and Dege-Müller, "The Ethiopic Psalter Manuscripts," 59–60.

[34] The current state of research does not allow us to say whether this loss of pre-Solomonic examples was caused merely by constant use; empty spaces and blank leaves in Ethiopic manuscripts could be used to record historical information, royal decrees, and land grants, so it is possible that an intentional destruction of books occurred after the Zagwes—who had come to power in the eleventh century—were replaced as rulers by the Solomonics in 1270.

[35] Conti Rossini, "Un codice illustrato eritreo"; Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "Le psautier illustré de Belēn Sägäd," in *Imagines Medievales: Studier i medeltida ikonografi, arkitektur, skulptur, måleri och konstverk*, ed. Rudolf Zeitler and Jan O. Karlsson (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1983), 1–46; Delamarter and Gnisci, "The Psalter in Geʿez," 47–51.

[36] For a discussion and reproduction, see Balicka-Witakowska, "Un psautier éthiopien illustré inconnu," fig. 4.

[37] For a discussion see Conti Rossini, "Un codice illustrato eritreo"; Marion Debout, "Un psautier éthiopien du XVe siècle au Départment des Manuscrits," *Bulletin de la Bibliothèque nationale* 3, no. 3 (1978): 108–14; and Balicka-Witakowska, *Le psautier illustré de Belēn Sägäd*.

[38] Diana M. Spencer, "The Monastery of Aheya Fağğ Qusqwām in Wallo: Its Illuminated Manuscripts and Other Treasures," in *Aspects of Ethiopian Art from Ancient Axum to the 20th Century*, ed. Paul B. Henze (London: Jed, 1993), 73–82.

[39] Images of David and Solomon occasionally appear also in other types of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Ethiopic manuscript. See, e.g., the gospel book in the J. Paul Getty Museum, MS105 (f. 6v); the manuscript in Witold Witakowski and Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "Solomon in Ethiopian Tradition," in *The Figure of Solomon in Jewish,*

Christian and Islamic Tradition: King, Sage and Architect, ed. Jozef Verheyden (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 230, fig. 2; a loose page in the National Museum of African Art, Washington, DC, no. 2004-7-7; and a leporello and a manuscript at Däbrä Zäyt, described in Denis Nosnitsin, *Churches and Monasteries of Təgray: A Survey of Manuscript Collections* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 22.

[40] Getatchew Haile and William F. Macomber, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa, and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville*, vol. 6, *Project Numbers 2001–2500* (Collegeville, MN: Monastic Manuscript Microfilm Library, 1982), 126–28 (EMML 2064).

[41] The manuscript is mentioned and partly described in Heldman, "The Early Solomonic Period," 180.

[42] Similar observations could be made for other illustrated manuscripts, such as the unpublished MS IES 837, also in the collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies; and Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, MS Éthiopien 10, a manuscript containing the Psalms, the Biblical Canticles, and a collection of Antiphons, which has been dated to the fourteenth century on the basis of its paleography and features a portrait of Moses before the Biblical Canticles and a cross before the Antiphons, discussed in Jacques Mercier, ed. *L'arche éthiopienne: Art chrétien d'Éthiopie* (Paris: Paris musées, 2000), 46–47.

[43] For representations of Solomon in other traditions, see Dufrenne, *L'Illustration des psautiers grecs*, 28, pl. 12; Der Nersessian, *L'Illustration des psautiers grecs*, 87, fig. 149; Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting*, 82, figs. 305; and Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters*, 104–5, fig. 365.

[44] For a discussion of Solomon in the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd, see Balicka-Witakowska, "Le psautier illustré de Belēn Sägäd," 23, fig. 29.

[45] The same composition is found in the aforementioned psalter described in Balicka-Witakowska, "Un psautier éthiopien illustré inconnu," pl. V; whereas a hybrid solution is adopted in the Ambassäl Psalter, in which Solomon holds a spear and a sword, and one cannot determine whether he is seated or standing, in this latter manuscript the parasol bearer is absent.

[46] For an example and discussion, see Der Nersessian, *Miniature Painting*, 150, fig. 626. However, the motif of a seated ruler with a sword appears in other traditions, most notably in the Utrecht Psalter (which, as discussed below, has other points in common with the illustrations in Juel-Jensen Psalter), discussed by Bart Jaski, "The Ruler with the Sword in the Utrecht Psalter," in *Religious Franks: Religion and Power in the Frankish Kingdoms; Studies in Honour of Mayke de Jong*, ed. Rob Means et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 72–91. Some Jain manuscripts also have elements in common with the Ethiopian portraits of Solomon; see the example in Finbarr B. Flood, "Before the Mughals: Material Culture of Sultanate North India," *Muqarnas* 36, no. 1 (2019): 1–39, fig. 34.

[47] On the Armenian illustrations at the Vatican, see Carlo Conti Rossini, "Miniature armene nel Ms. Et. N. 50 della Biblioteca Vaticana," *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 2, no. 2 (1942): 191–97.

[48] For further examples and discussion of Evangelist portraits, see Marilyn E. Heldman, "Miniatures of the Gospels of Princess Zir Gānēl: An Ethiopic Manuscript Dated A.D. 1400/01" (PhD diss., Washington University, 1972), 109–18; Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "The 'Golden Gospel' of Agʷäza and Its Historical Documents," in *Studies in Ethiopian Languages, Literature, and History: Festschrift for Getatchew Haile*, ed. Adam C. McCollum (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 187–220; and Jacopo Gnisci, "Illuminated Leaves from an Ethiopic Gospel Book in the Newark Museum and in the Walters Art Museum," *Manuscript Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 370–74, with additional references.

[49] To this day, the *bägäna* is an instrument associated with the upper classes of society and is used only for prayer and meditation; see Stéphanie Weisser, "Le bagana, instrument de musique et de prière amhara (Éthiopie)," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 23, no. 1 (2007): 61–76; according to the author of this study, the ten strings of the instrument are taken to be symbolic of the Ten Commandments. However, the ten strings are clearly also a reference to the Psalms, which state that David's instrument had this number of chords (namely Pss. 32:2; 91:3; 143:10; 150:4). In an unpublished fragment documented in Däbrä Zäyt by the EthioSpare project, the instrument is wrongly identified by a caption as a *mäsənqo*, which is a single-string lute; on this point, see also Balicka-Witakowska, "Le psautier illustré de Belēn Sägäd," 18. It is not uncommon for artists to adapt the instrument to their own tradition, as noted, for instance, in Isabel Henderson, "The 'David' Cycle in Pictish Art," in *Early Medieval Sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, ed. John Higgitt (Oxford: BAR, 1986), 101.

[50] Weisser, "Le bagana," 64.

[51] On Yädəbba Maryam, see Witakowski and Balicka-Witakowska, "Solomon in Ethiopian Tradition," 230, though the authors misinterpret the umbrellas as "buildings"; and Walter Raunig, ed., *L'Art En Éthiopie* (Paris: Hazan, 2005), fig. 152; and Lepage, "Histoire de l'ancienne peinture éthiopienne," 357–58. The earliest examples are found in the churches of Gännäta Maryam and Ǝmäkina Mädḫane ʿAläm, and in the oratory of Qorqor Danəʾel. On Gännäta Maryam, see Marilyn E. Heldman and Getachew Haile, "Who Is Who in Ethiopia's Past, Part III: Founders of Ethiopia's Solomonic Dynasty," *Northeast African Studies* 9, no. 1 (1987): 1–11; and Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "Les peintures murales de l'église rupestre éthiopienne Gännätä Maryam près Lalibela," *Arte Medievale* 12–13 (1998–99): 193–209. On Ǝmäkina Mädḫane ʿAläm, see Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "The Wall-Paintings in the Church of Mädhane Aläm near Lalibäla," *Africana Bulletin* 52 (2004): 18, fig. 11. On Qorqor Danəʾel, see Lepage, "Histoire de l'ancienne peinture éthiopienne," 355 n. 79; and Claire

Bosc-Tiessé, "Le site rupestre de Qorqor (Gar'āltā, Éthiopie) entre littérature et peinture: Introduction à l'édition de la *Vie et des miracles de saint Daniel de Qorqor* et aux recherches en cours," *Afriques: Débats, Méthodes et Terrains d'Histoire* (2014), accessed July 29, 2019, http://journals.openedition.org/afriques/1486.

[52] As defined in John Lowden, "The Transmission of 'Visual Knowledge' in Byzantium through Illuminated Manuscripts: Approaches and Conjectures," in *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Catherine Holmes and Judith Waring (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 59–80.

[53] It is beyond the scope of this article to offer a complete review of the evolution of the motif of David playing the harp and its classical antecedents, but the David/Orpheus painting in Dura Europos should be mentioned; on which see André Grabar, "Le thème religieux des fresques de la synagogue de Doura (245–256 après J.-C.)," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 123, nos. 2–3 (1941): 143–92; Henri Stern, "The Orpheus in the Synagogue of Dura-Europos," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21, no. 1 (1958): 1–6; and Géza G. Xeravits, "The Reception of the Figure of David in Late Antique Synagogue Art," in *Figures Who Shape Scriptures, Scriptures That Shape Figures: Essays in Honour of Benjamin G. Wright III*, ed. Xeravits and Greg S. Goering (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 71–90.

[54] See, e.g., Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters*, figs. 60, 153, 172, 191, 245, 290, 294, 308; for a more general discussion of Davidic imagery in the Byzantine tradition, see Kurt Weitzmann, "The Psalter Vatopedi 761: Its Place in the Aristocratic Psalter Recension," *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 10 (1947): 20–51; and Anthony Cutler, "A Psalter from Mar Saba and the Evolution of the Byzantine David Cycle," *Journal of Jewish Art* 6 (1979): 39–63, with further bibliography.

[55] For some additional examples, see Cutler, *The Aristocratic Psalters*, figs. 13, 25, 88, 116.

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[56] State Historical Museum, Moscow, cod. gr. 129, f. 1v. On this manuscript, see Kathleen Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters: Iconophile Imagery in Three Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge: Cambridge Uversity Press, 1992), esp. 8–26; for the results of recent restoration of the manuscript, which has shed important light on its history, and a discussion and reproduction of the David miniature, see Elina Dobrynina, "New Findings on the Khludov Psalter Revealed During Restoration," *Νέα Ῥώμη* 7 (2011): 59–60, fig. 2.

[57] Vatican Apostolic Library, Vatican City, MS Gr. 699; for a description and analysis of this miniature, see Maja Kominko, *The World of Kosmas: Illustrated Byzantine Codices of the Christian Topography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 157–61, fig. CT 34. On the Topography, see also the essays in Jeffrey C. Anderson, ed., *The Christian Topography of Kosmas Indikopleustes: Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 9.28; The Map of the Universe Redrawn in the Sixth Century* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2013). Samuel is also associated with David in a sixteenth-century Ethiopic gospel reproduced in Lepage, "Un manuscrit éthiopien," 95. The picks held by David in Byzantine miniatures have little in common with the large stadium-shaped one visible in the Juel-Jensen Psalter, which is instead similar to that held by a muse playing the harp on an early Byzantine casket in the Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, reproduced in Joseph Natanson, *Early Christian Ivories* (London: A. Tiranti, 1953), 26, fig. 14.

[58] On this subject, see Stuart Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria: The Metropolitan Episcopacy of Ethiopia* (Warsaw: Zaś Pan, 1997). On the artistic exchanges between Ethiopia and Alexandria in the early Solomonic period, see Heldman, "Metropolitan Bishops"; and Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "Islamic Elements in Ethiopian Pictorial Tradition: A Preliminary Survey," *Civiltà del Mediterraneo* 16–17 (2009–10): 109–31.

[59] On Bawit, see Jean Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1904), 13–27, pl. 17; and Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1916), 1:20–21, pl. 13. For a discussion of this imagery in relation to other cycles illustrating the life of David, see Steven H. Wander, "The Cyprus Plates: The Story of David and Goliath," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 8 (1973): 89–104. On the textiles, see Thomas E. A. Dale, "The Power of the Anointed: The Life of David on Two Coptic Textiles in the Walters Art Gallery," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 51 (1993): 23–42.

[60] On the manuscript, see Carlo Cecchelli, Giuseppe Furlani, and Mario Salmi, *The Rabbula Gospels: Facsimile Edition of the Miniatures of the Syriac Manuscript Plut. I, 56 in the Medicaean-Laurentian Library / Evangeliarii syriaci, vulgo Rabbulae, in Bibliotheca Medicea-Laurentiana (Plut. I, 56) adservati ornamenta: Edenda notisque instruenda* (Olten: Urs Graf-Verlag, 1959); for an updated study of the manuscript, and a reproduction, see Massimo Bernabò, ed., *Il Tetravangelo di Rabbula: Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 1.56; L'illustrazione del Nuovo Testamento nella Siria del VI secolo* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2008), esp. 14, 28, 81, pl. VIII. On this folio, there is also a portrait of an enthroned Solomon, thus reversing the representation of the two sovereigns in the Juel-Jensen Psalter. For another early Syriac miniature of David, full page but typologically similar to the one in the Rabbula Gospels, see Annie Montgomery Labatt, "The Transmission of Images in the Mediterranean," in *Age of Transition: Byzantine Culture in the Islamic World*, ed. Helen C. Evans (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 70–81, fig. 9.

[61] For an overview of Davidic imagery in the West, see Steger, *David Rex et Propheta*.

[62] See, e.g., Ugo Monneret de Villard, "La Majestas Domini in Abissinia," *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 3, no. 1 (1943): 36–45; and Martin Werner, "The Madonna and Child Miniature in

the Book of Kells: Part I," *Art Bulletin* 54, no. 1 (1972): 1–23. More generally, on the possibility of detecting connections between the Western and Oriental traditions, see, e.g., Hugo Buchthal, "The Painting of the Syrian Jacobites in Its Relation to Byzantine and Islamic Art," *Syria* 20, no. 2 (1939): 136–50.

[63] On the possible appropriation of Coptic elements in the Latin West, see, e.g., Walter W. S. Cook, "The Earliest Painted Panels of Catalonia (II)," *Art Bulletin* 6, no. 2 (1923): 64, 71; Richard Krautheimer, "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture," *Art Bulletin* 24, no. 1 (1942): 1–38; Suzanne Sulzberger, "Un exemple d'influence copte sur un manuscrit précarolingien (Paris, BNF, lat. 12168)," *Scriptorium* 9, no. 2 (1955): 263–67; and Erwin Rosenthal, "Some Observations on Coptic Influence in Western Early Medieval Manuscripts," in *Homage to a Bookman: Essays on Manuscripts, Books and Printing Written for Hans P. Kraus on His 60th Birthday Oct. 12, 1967*, ed. Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1967), 51–74. For a differing view, see, e.g., Per J. Nordhagen, "The Codex Amiatinus and the Byzantine Element in the Northumbrian Renaissance," in *Studies in Byzantine and Early Medieval Painting*, ed. Nordhagen (London: Pindar, 1990), 404–29.

[64] Alessandro Bausi and Alberto Camplani, "The History of the Episcopate of Alexandria (HEpA): Editio Minor of the Fragments Preserved in the Aksumite Collection and in the Codex Veronensis LX (58)," *Adamantius* 22 (2016–17): 249–302; see also Bausi, "The Accidents of Transmission: On a Surprising Multilingual Manuscript Leaf, with the Edition of the Ethiopic Version of Two Constantinian Epistles (CPG No. 8517, *Epistula Constantini imperatoris ad ecclesiam Alexandrinam*, and CPG Nos 2041 = 8519, *Lex lata Constantini Augusti de Arii damnatione*)," *Adamantius* 22 (2016–17): 303–22.

[65] British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian A I, f. 30v. The miniature must have originally functioned as a frontispiece. On this manuscript, see Sherman M. Kuhn, "From Canterbury to Lichfield," *Speculum* 23, no. 4 (1948): 591–629; Kenneth Sisam, "Canterbury, Lichfield, and

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the Vespasian Psalter," *Review of English Studies* 7, no. 25 (1956): 1–10; David H. Wright, ed., *The Vespasian Psalter: British Museum, Cotton Vespasian A.I.* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1967); and Carl Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting: Book Illumination in the British Isles, 600–800* (New York: Braziller, 1977), 95.

[66] Helen M. Roe, "The 'David Cycle' in Early Irish Art," *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 79, no. 1 (1949): 39–59, esp. 54–59, fig. 12; and Henderson, "The 'David' Cycle."

[67] On the ruler portraits in this manuscript, see the study by Jaski, "The Ruler with the Sword." More generally, on this manuscript see Gertrude R. Benson, "New Light on the Origin of the Utrecht Psalter," *Art Bulletin* 13, no. 1 (1931): 12–79; Ernest T. DeWald, *The Illustrations of the Utrecht Psalter*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1932); and Celia Chazelle, "Violence and the Virtuous Ruler in the Utrecht Psalter," in *The Illuminated Psalter: Studies in the Content, Purpose and Placement of Its Images*, ed. Frank O. Büttner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004) 337–48, with further references.

[68] British Library, Harley MS 603, f. 15v. For the detail of the umbrella in this manuscript and, more generally, in the Western tradition, see T. S. Crawford, *A History of the Umbrella* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970), 80–93.

[69] Claire Breay and Joanna Story, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War* (London: British Library, 2018). On the David portraits in this manuscript, see Henderson, "The 'David' Cycle," 98–99, pls. 5.5b, 5.9b; and Laura E. Cochrane, "'The Wine in the Vines and the Foliage in the Roots': Representations of David in the Durham Cassiodorus," *Studies in Iconography* 28 (2007): 23–50.

[70] David is shown standing in several manuscripts, including the Rabbula Gospels, but he seldom holds a spear; among the few examples, see British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian A I, f. 31r; and Vatican Apostolic Library, cod. gr. 333, f. 31r; both are reproduced in Christoph

Eggenberger, *Psalterium aureum Sancti Galli: Mittelalterliche Psalterillustration im Kloster St. Gallen* (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1987), figs. 164, 166.,

[71] On this item, see Crawford, *A History of the Umbrella*, 65–66; Lepage, "Histoire de l'ancienne peinture éthiopienne," 359; Mercier, *L'arche éthiopienne*, 54; Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, "dəbab," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed. Siegbert Uhlig et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 2:121–22; and Gnisci and Zarzeczny, "They Came with Their Troops," 142.

[72] For reproductions and a discussion, see Balicka-Witakowska, "Le psautier illustré de Belēn Sägäd," 21–24, figs. 26, 30.

[73] Jules Perruchon, ed. and trans., *Les chroniques de Zarʾa Yâʿeqôb et de Baʾeda Mâryâm, rois d'Éthiopie de 1434 à 1478* (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1893), 44.

[74] Francisco Álvares, *The Prester John of the Indies: A True Relation of the Lands of the Prester John, Being the Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia in 1520*, ed. and trans. Charles F. Beckingham and George W. B. Huntingford (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1961), 2:324, 334–36.

[75] Álvares, *The Prester John of the Indies*, 304; and Isabel Boavida et al., eds. and trans., *Pedro Páez's* History of Ethiopia*, 1622* (London: Ashgate, 2011), 1:172.

[76] The detail of the riding ruler tailed by a parasol bearer can be compared with numerous near-coeval Islamic manuscripts; for examples, see Elaine Wright, *The Look of the Book: Manuscript Production in Shiraz, 1303–1452* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), figs. 74–75; and Oleg Grabar, *Mostly Miniatures: An Introduction to Persian Painting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), fig. 43.

[77] Gnisci and Zarzeczny, "They Came with Their Troops," 138–147; see also Mercier, *L'arche éthiopienne*, fig. 35.

[78] Ignazio Guidi, "Contributi alla storia letteraria di Abissinia," *Memorie della Reale Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 31, nos. 3–4 (1922): 65–218; Eike Haberland, *Untersuchungen zum äthiopischen Königtum* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965), 56–148; Manfred Kropp, "The *Sərʿatä Gəbr*: A Mirror View of Daily Life at the Ethiopian Royal Court in the Middle Ages," *Northeast African Studies* 10, no. 2 (1988): 51–87; and Kropp, "Notes on Preparing a Critical Edition of the *Śərʿatä Mängəśt*," *Northeast African Studies* 11, no. 2 (2011): 111–40.

[79] Stuart C. Munro-Hay, *Aksum: An African Civilisation of Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 155; and Balicka-Witakowska, "*dəbab*," 121.

[80] I am grateful to Dr Alessandro Bausi for clarifying this matter to me in a personal communication on November 5, 2019.

[81] Crawford, *A History of the Umbrella*, 19–33.

[82] See, e.g., the examples in Margaret C. Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 77, 97, 205, pls. 15a, 25b, 54b.

[83] For some examples in India, see Sarabhai M. Nawab, *Jain Paintings: Paintings on Palm-Leaves and Wooden Bookcovers Only* (Ahmedabad: Messrs Sarabhai Manilal Nawab, 1985), 1:pl. 17; John Guy and Jorrit Britschgi, *Wonder of the Age: Master Painters of India, 1100–1900* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 30, with a miniature in which King Afrasiyab's guards hold a parasol and fly whisk; and Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 75–76, 94, 122, fig. 32. For a later Mughal example, see Douglas E. Barrett and Basil Gray, *Painting of India* (Milan: Skira, 1963), 61. The best-known cases of Ethiopia's material connections with India are discussed in Stanislaw Chojnacki, "New Aspects of India's Influence on the Art and Culture of Ethiopia," *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 45 (2003): 5–21; and Michael Gervers, "The West Portal Ceiling Paintings in the Zagwe Church of Yəmrəḥannä Krəstos,"

in *Studies in Ethiopian Languages, Literature and History: Festschrift for Getatchew Haile*, ed. Adam C. McCollum (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 42, 44, figs. 27–28. I am grateful to Dr. Finbarr Barry Flood for drawing my attention to some unpublished examples of these paintings.

[84] For Cairo, see Marius Canard, "Le cérémonial fatimite et le cérémonial byzantin: Essai de comparaison," *Byzantion* 21, no. 2 (1951): 355–420; and Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 20, 25, 90; for Nubia, see the case presented in Giovanni Vantini, "Le roi Kirki de Nubie à Baghdad: Un ou deux voyages?," in *Kunst und Geschichte Nubiens in christlicher Zeit: Ergebnisse und Probleme auf Grund der jüngsten Ausgrabungen*, ed. Erich Dinkler (Recklinghausen: Aurel Bongers, 1970), 42–43.

[85] Heldman and Getachew Haile, "Who Is Who in Ethiopia's Past"; for a more general discussion about donor portraits in Ethiopia, see also Stanislaw Chojnacki, "Les portraits des donateurs comme sources de l'histoire politique, religieuse et culturelle de l'Éthiopie du XIIe au XIXe siècle," *Nubica et Aethiopica* 4–5 (1999): 621–47.

[86] As discussed in Gnisci and Zarzeczny, "They Came with Their Troops," 138–47. The literature is too extensive to be given in full. For swords, spears, drums, tents, and flywhisks, see, e.g., Canard, "Le cérémonial fatimite et le cérémonial byzantine," 368; and Carl F. Petry, ed. *The Cambridge History of Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1:172. On tents see, e.g., Scott Redford, "Portable Palaces: On the Circulation of Objects and Ideas about Architecture in Medieval Anatolia and Mesopotamia," in *Mechanisms of Exchange* (see note 14 above), 84–114. On umbrellas, see, e.g., Stewart Gordon, "In the Aura of the King: Trans-Asian, Trans-Regional, and Deccani Royal Symbolism," *South Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2016): 42–53.

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[87] Bent Juel-Jensen, “An Aksumite Survival in Late Mediaeval Ethiopian Miniatures,” in *Proceedings of the First International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art*, 41–43.

[88] On the coins of this sovereign, see Stuart Munro-Hay, *Catalogue of the Aksumite Coins in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1999), 29, types 20–24.

[89] Munro-Hay, *Aksum*, 187.

[90] Andrea Manzo, “Aksumite Trade and the Red Sea Exchange Network: A View from Bieta Giyorgis (Aksum),” in *People of the Red Sea: Proceedings of Red Sea Project II Held in the British Museum, October 2004*, ed. Janet C. M. Starkey (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), 60, fig. 17.

[91] For a more general discussion of the regalia on Aksumite coins, see Stuart Munro-Hay and Bent Juel-Jensen, *Aksumite Coinage* (London: Spink, 1995), 37–40.

[92] For an example of such head decoration, see the Kushite regalia discussed inAnthony Leahy, “Royal Iconography and Dynastic Change, 750–525 BC: The Blue and Cap Crowns,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 78 (1992): 223–40, esp. 232–33. The Ethiopian headband can also be compared with similar objects that appears in several Indian paintings of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; see Flood, *Objects of Translation*, figs. 33, 36–39, for some comparanda.

[93] For an English translation of the relevant passage in the Χρονογραφία, see Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, and Roger Scott, trans., *The Chronicle of John Malalas* (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986), 268.

[94] These are discussed in greater detail in Garth Fowden, *Qusayr ‘Amra: Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 198–226, which also provides further references on the matter.

[95] For a reproduction, see Munro-Hay, *Catalogue of the Aksumites Coins*, 43, types 131–32, 134.

[96] Guidi, "Contributi alla storia letteraria di Abissinia," 77, 82.

[97] Early sixteenth-century descriptions suggest that the emperors wore a tiara-like crown; see Álvares, *The Prester John of the Indies*, 305, fig. 28.

[98] On the use of Aksumite motifs, see David W. Phillipson, "The Aksumite Roots of Medieval Ethiopia," *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 39, no. 1 (2004): 77–89. For examples of a simplistic use of the terms such as "conservative" or "conservatism" to describe a complex range of phenomena in Ethiopian art see, e.g., Monneret de Villard, "La Majestas Domini in Abissinia," 45; Lanfranco Ricci, review of *La pittura etiopica, durante il medioevo e sotto la dinastia di Gondar*, by Jules Leroy, *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 39, no. 4 (1964): 325–43; Lepage, "Contribution de l'ancien art chrétien d'Éthiopie," 800; and Balicka-Witakowska, "Crucifixion," 825.

[99] Chazelle, "'Romanness' in Early Medieval Culture,"82.

[100] For examples of related approaches to Ethiopic literature, see Lusini, "Elementi romani," 42; Bertrand Hirsch and François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar, "Aksum après Aksum: Royauté, archéologie et herméneutique chrétienne de Ménélik II (r. 1865–1913) à Zär'a Yaʿqob (r. 1434–1468)," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 17, no. 1 (2001): 75–78; and Izabela Orlowska, "The Legitimising Project: The Coronation Rite and the Written Word," *Aethiopica* 16 (2013): 74–101. On the Solomonic emperors, see Marie-Laure Derat, "'Do Not Search for Another King, One Whom God Has Not Given You': Questions on the Elevation of Zär'ä Ya'eqob (1434–-1468)," *Journal of Early Modern History* 8, no. 3 (2004): 210–28.

[101] Pierluigi Piovanelli, "The Apocryphal Legitimation of a 'Solomonic' Dynasty in the *Kəbrä Nägäśt*—A Reappraisal," *Aethiopica* 16 (2013): 10.

[102] Hirsch and Fauvelle-Aymar, "Aksum après Aksum," 76–77; and Orlowska, "The Legitimising Project," with an extensive bibliography.

[103] For a reproduction and discussion of these stepped thrones see D. W. Phillipson, *Ancient Ethiopia: Aksum, Its Antecedents and Successors* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 52–53, fig. 20. According to an unpublished text on the *Interpretation of the Throne of Solomon* preserved in a sixteenth-century manuscript in the famous monastery of Ḥayq Ǝsṭifanos, the steps of the throne of Solomon symbolize the sixty generations from Adam to Mary. I am grateful to Dr. Girma Getahun for looking at this text with me; for a preliminary description of this manuscript, see Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa, and for the Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville*, vol. 5, *Project Numbers 1501–2000* (Collegeville, MN: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, 1981), 352.

[104] Piovanelli, "The Apocryphal Legitimation," 10.

[105] Quotation taken from, Richard Pankhurst, "Coronation," in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, 1:803.

[106] On sacred kingship in Ethiopia, see Carlo Conti Rossini, "La regalità sacra in Abissinia e nei regni dell'Africa centrale e occidentale," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni*, no. 21 (1947–48): 1–21; and André Caquot, "La royauté sacrale en Éthiopie," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 2, no. 1 (1957): 205–18.

[107] Pedersen, *Traditional Ethiopian Exegesis*, 66.

[108] The relevant history is discussed in Steven Kaplan, "Seeing Is Believing: The Power of Visual Culture in the Religious World of Aṣe Zärʾa Yaʿeqob of Ethiopia (1434–1468)," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 4 (2002): 403–21; Heldman, *The Marian Icons*; and Jacopo Gnisci, "A Fifteenth-Century Ethiopian Icon of the Virgin and Child by the Master of the Amber-Spotted Tunic," *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, no. 65 (2019): 183–93.

[109] Sirach 47:22.

[110] On the connection between this ruler and the abbot of Däbrä Libanos see Heldman, "The Early Solomonic Period," 141; and Stanislaw Kur "Märḥa Krəstos" in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed. Siegbert Uhlig et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 3:782–83.

[111] The literature is too extensive to be given in full; see, as examples, André Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin: Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'Empire d'Orient* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1936), 95; Henry Maguire, "The Art of Comparing in Byzantium," *Art Bulletin* 70, no. 1 (1988): 88–103; Diebold, *The Ruler Portrait of Charles the Bald*; Antony Eastmond, *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Jaski, "The Ruler with the Sword," 73; and Riccardo Pizzinato, "Vision and Christomimesis in the Ruler Portrait of the Codex Aureus of St. Emmeram," *Gesta* 57, no. 2 (2018): 145–70.

[112] Monneret de Villard, "La Majestas Domini in Abissinia," 42, for instance, says that Ethiopian artists lacked any sense of creativity.

Figure Captions

1 *King David with Three Attendants*, from the Juel-Jensen Psalter, second half of the 15th or early 16th century, 11 1/4 x 8 in. (28.5 x 20.5 cm) [GLOBAL: Are dimensions given of the illustration or the page? It's always the page unless otherwise specified]. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS Aeth. d. 19, f. 6v (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

2 *King Solomon and Sirach*, from the Juel-Jensen Psalter, second half of the 15th or early 16th century, 11 1/4 x 8 in. (28.5 x 20.5 cm). Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS

Aeth. d. 19, f.138v (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

3 *Portrait of John before the Beginning of the Book of Revelation*, illustrated by the same artist of the Juel-Jensen Psalter, second half of the 15th century, 16 x 12 in. (40.6 x 30.4 cm). British Library, London, MS Or. 597, f. 225r (artwork in the public domain; photograph © The British Library Board)

4 *Biblical Canticles and Division of the Psalms*, from the Juel-Jensen Psalter, second half of the 15th or early 16th century, 11 1/4 x 8 in. (28.5 x 20.5 cm). Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS Aeth. d. 19, f. 138r (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

5 *Four Psalmists*, from the Juel-Jensen Psalter, second half of the 15th or early 16th century, 11 1/4 x 8 in. (28.5 x 20.5 cm). Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS Aeth. d. 19, f. 5v (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

6 *Headpiece with Moses and Aaron above the Biblical Canticles*, from the Juel-Jensen Psalter, second half of the 15th or early 16th century, 11 1/4 x 8 in. (28.5 x 20.5 cm). Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, MS Aeth. d. 19 f. 126r (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford)

7 *David Playing the Harp*, from the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd, 1476/77, 11 3/4 x 8 3/8 in. (30 x 21 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, MS Éthiopien d'Abbadie 105, f. 13v (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the Bibliothèque nationale de France)

8 *David Playing the Harp*, from the Ambassäl Psalter, late 14th or 15th century, 10 3/8 x 8 in. (26.5 x 20.5 cm). Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, Saint John's University,

Collegeville, MN, EMML 2064, f. 1v (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Hill Museum and Manuscript Library)

9 *David Playing the Harp*, from the Däbrä Qʷəsqʷam Psalter, 15th century, dimensions unknown. Monastery of Däbrä Qʷəsqʷam (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Diana Spencer, provided by the DEEDS Project)

10 *David Playing the Harp*, from the Däbrä Wärq Psalter, second half of 15th century, f. 1v, ca. 7 7/8 x 6 3/8 in. (ca. 20 x 16 cm). Monastery of Däbrä Wärq, (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Stanislaw Chojnacki, provided by the DEEDS Project)

11 *The Judgment of Solomon*, from the Däbrä Wärq Psalter, second half of 15th century, ca. 7 7/8 x 6 1/4 in. (ca. 20 x 16 cm). Monastery of Däbrä Wärq, (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Stanislaw Chojnacki, provided by the DEEDS Project)

12 *King Solomon and the Beginning of the Song of Songs*, from the second half of 15th century, 9 1/4 x 6 3/4 in. (23.5 x 17 cm). Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa, MS IES 74, ff. 117v–18r (artwork in the public domain; photograph by Steve Delamarter, © Institute of Ethiopian Studies and Endangered Archives Programme, EAP 286/1)

13 *King Solomon*, from the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd, 1476/77, 11 15/16 x 8 1/4 in. (30 x 21 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, MS Éthiopien d'Abbadie 105, f. 121v (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bibliothèque nationale de France)

14 *Portrait of the Evangelist John*, late 15th or early 16th century, tempera on parchment, 13 5/8 x 10 3/8 in. (34.5 × 26.5 cm). J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, MS 102 (2008.15), f. 215v (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the Getty's Open Content Program)

15 *King David and King Solomon*, late 15th or 16th century, Rock Cut Church of Yädəbba Maryam, (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Michael Gervers provided by the DEEDS Project)

16 *King David*, late 13th or 14th century, Cave Church of Ǝmäkina Mädḫane ʿAläm, (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Michael Gervers provided by the DEEDS Project)

17 *Portrait of Bəlen Sägäd*, from the Psalter of Bəlen Sägäd, 1476/77, 11 15/16 x 8 1/4 in. (30 x 21 cm). Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, MS Éthiopien d'Abbadie 105, f. 89v (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by Bibliothèque nationale de France)

18 *Two of the Three Magi Surrounded by Their Retinue*, from the Gospel of the Three Magi, second half of the 15th or early 16th century, ff. 4v–5r, 12 5/8 x 10 in. (32 x 25.5 cm). Private collection (artwork in the public domain; photograph by the author)

19 *Portrait of Emperor Yəkunno Amlak between Two Officials*, late 13th century, Rock-Cut Church of Gännätä Maryam, (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Stanislaw Chojnacki, provided by the DEEDS Project)

20 *Gold Coin of King Ousanas I*, ca. 300–340 CE. British Museum, London, no. G1925,1112.1 (artwork in the public domain; photograph © Trustees of the British Museum)