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(LVI)



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Ai lettori

In apertura, questo nono volume della “3a Serie” della *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* (cinquantaseiesimo dalla fondazione della rivista) offre al lettore una serie di contributi raccolti sotto il titolo generale ‘Cataloguing practices’, che rimanda a un evento scientifico celebrato a Napoli, presso il Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo, il 21 e 22 novembre 2024. In tale occasione, quindici comunicazioni furono presentate da specialisti di grande rilievo internazionale, prevalentemente formati o operanti all’interno dell’Asien-Afrika Institut dell’Università di Amburgo. Alla proposta di pubblicare i testi di quelle presentazioni hanno risposto solo quattro studiosi, che han fornito a questa uscita della nostra rivista contributi di sicuro valore scientifico. Nel suo articolo, Alessandro Bausi, coordinatore del progetto ‘Beta maṣāḥəft’ (2016-2040), illustrando i principi che han portato all’ideazione e alla creazione della maggiore piattaforma digitale operante a livello internazionale nel campo della descrizione e catalogazione dei manoscritti etiopici, fornisce una mole di considerazioni e strumenti di grande impatto e utilità, e opportunamente rivendica il contributo di ‘Beta maṣāḥəft’ in tutti i settori della ricerca sui manoscritti e il patrimonio testuale dell’Etiopia e dell’Eritrea. Gioia Bottari concentrando la propria attenzione sulla natura stratificata di molti codici etiopici e sulla necessità che questa loro condizione trovi adeguato riscontro in una catalogazione modernamente intesa, illustra come l’analisi codicologica, in particolare l’identificazione di unità di produzione distinte, aiuti a ricostruire le storie complesse di molti manoscritti. Daria Elagina, applicandosi al ricco e intricato *corpus* di scritture tradizionali volte a calcolare cicli temporali e posizioni astrali, fornisce un innovativo contributo su una tipologia testuale poco indagata, il *Ḥassāba ṣənə ‘t wa-ṣənṣənt*, di cui giunge a cogliere il nesso profondo con pratiche antiche, non estranee alla necessità di stabilire un rapporto fra ritmi lunari e qualità della legna. Pietro Liuzzo, partendo dallo studio di disegni fiamminghi della seconda metà del Cinquecento, che raffigurano animali e li identificano anche con parole etiopiche, trae argomenti per provare che queste scritture sono state utilizzate da Hiob Ludolf nella sua *Historia Aethiopica*, e per ricostruire un affascinante contesto di circolazione, in cui per oltre un secolo furono attivi intellettuali, artisti ed editori vissuti a Francoforte.

Nella seconda parte di questo volume, Jama Musse Jama offre un nuovo e significativo contributo di linguistica cuscitica, partendo dai notevoli risultati da lui stesso acquisiti nell'ambito del progetto di costruzione di un *corpus* della lingua Saho e di sviluppo delle risorse informatiche necessarie per la sua analisi, con particolare riferimento alla morfologia nominale. Allo studio di alcuni resti epigrafici della presenza militare italiana, negli anni in cui le ambizioni coloniali del gruppo dirigente fascista portarono all'occupazione, tanto breve quanto violenta, del Paese africano, si dedicano Jean-François Breton e Hiluf Berhe, ricostruendo alcuni momenti significativi della campagna di aggressione del biennio 1935-36. Infine, Ermias Andualem, offre un utile contributo lessicografico, incentrato sulla terminologia che viene utilizzata nell'ambiente della Chiesa Etiopica Ortodossa *Tāwahādo* per l'apprendimento e l'esecuzione della danza liturgica tradizionale (*aqq^waq^wam*).

Nella nuova rubrica 'Fieldwork and ongoing research' sono ospitati due *reports* di altrettante attività: Gioia Bottari rende conto della 'riscoperta' di manoscritti etiopici posseduti dalla Biblioteca Nazionale Univeritaria di Torino e dalla Biblioteca dei Cappuccini di Genova, felicemente individuati nell'ambito del progetto CaNaMEI (Catalogo Nazionale dei Manoscritti Etiopici in Italia); Luisa Senicola descrive le prime fasi di sviluppo del progetto *The Konso Agricultural Landscape: Documenting Traditional Terracing Systems in South-West Ethiopia*, mirante alla descrizione, allo studio storico-archeologico-antropologico e alla conservazione dei sistemi tradizionali di terrazzamento praticati nel Sud-Ovest etiopico.

Con profonda tristezza, la comunità scientifica internazionale ha appreso della scomparsa di Yaqob Beyene (1936-2025), personalità accademica di grande profilo, repentinamente sottratta alla stima e all'affetto di tutti. Poche settimane prima, egli aveva varcato per l'ultima volta la soglia del nostro Dipartimento, in visita ai nuovi scaffali che custodiscono i preziosi volumi della biblioteca personale di Lanfranco Ricci. Il ricordo scritto da Andrea Manzo riaccende in tutti noi la memoria della sua presenza, ad un tempo discreta ed elegante, sorridente e benevola, sempre pronta a condividere con i giovani ogni più piccola piega del suo vasto sapere.

Il Direttore

To the readers

This ninth volume of the “3rd Series” of the *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* (the fifty-sixth since the journal was founded) opens with a series of contributions collected under the general title of “Cataloguing practices,” which refers to a scientific event held in Naples, at the Department of Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean, on November 21 and 22, 2024. On that occasion, fifteen papers were presented by specialists of great international renown, mainly trained or working at the Asien-Afrika Institut of the University of Hamburg. Only four scholars responded to the proposal to publish the texts of those presentations, providing this issue of our journal with contributions of undoubted scientific value. In his article, Alessandro Bausi, coordinator of the ‘Beta maṣāḥəft’ project (2016-2040), illustrates the principles that led to the conception and creation of the largest international digital platform in the field of the description and cataloguing of Ethiopian manuscripts. He provides a wealth of considerations and tools of great impact and usefulness, and rightly underscores the significance of ‘Beta maṣāḥəft’ for all areas of research on the manuscripts and textual heritage of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Gioia Bottari draws attention to the layered nature of many Ethiopian codices and the need for this feature to be included in modern cataloguing practice. She illustrates how codicological analysis, in particular the identification of distinct production units, helps to reconstruct the complex histories of many manuscripts. Daria Elagina, applying herself to the rich and intricate corpus of traditional writings aimed at calculating time cycles and astral positions, provides an innovative contribution to a little-studied textual typology, the *Ḥassāba ṣənə́t wa-ṣənṣənt*, managing to grasp its profound connection with ancient practices, not unrelated to the need to establish a relationship between lunar rhythms and the quality of wood. Pietro Liuzzo, starting from the study of Flemish drawings from the second half of the sixteenth century, which depict animals and also identify them with Ethiopian words, lays out arguments to prove that these writings were used by Hiob Ludolf in his *Historia Aethiopica*, and to reconstruct a fascinating context of circulation, in which intellectuals, artists, and publishers living in Frankfurt were active for over a century.

In the second part of this volume, Jama Musse Jama offers a new and significant contribution to Cushitic linguistics, building on the remarkable results he himself achieved in the project to construct a corpus of the Saho language and develop the IT resources necessary for its analysis, with particular reference to nominal morphology. Jean-François Breton and Hiluf Berhe focus on the study of some epigraphic remains of the Italian military presence during the years when the colonial ambitions of the fascist leadership led to the brief but violent occupation of the African country, reconstructing some significant moments of the campaign of aggression in 1935-36. Finally, Ermias Andualem offers a useful lexicographical contribution, focusing on the terminology used in the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tāwahədo* Church for learning and performing traditional liturgical dance (*aqq^waq^wam*).

The new section ‘Fieldwork and Ongoing Research’ features two accounts on different activities: Gioia Bottari reports on the ‘rediscovery’ of Ethiopian manuscripts owned by the National University Library of Turin and the Capuchin Library of Genoa, successfully identified as part of the CaNaMEI (Catalogo Nazionale dei Manoscritti Etiopici in Italia) project; Luisa Senicola describes the early stages of development of the project *The Konso Agricultural Landscape: Documenting Traditional Terracing Systems in South-West Ethiopia*, which aims to describe, study (from a historical, archaeological, and anthropological perspective), and preserve the traditional terracing systems practiced in southwestern Ethiopia.

It is with deep sadness that the international scientific community has learned of the passing of Yaqob Beyene (1936–2025), a highly respected academic figure who was suddenly taken from the esteem and affection of all. A few weeks earlier, he had crossed the threshold of our Department for the last time, visiting the new shelves that house the precious volumes of Lanfranco Ricci’s personal library. Andrea Manzo’s tribute rekindles in all of us the memory of his presence, at once discreet and elegant, smiling and benevolent, always ready to share every little detail of his vast knowledge with younger colleagues.

The Director

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CATALOGUING STRATIFICATION IN ETHIOPIAN MANUSCRIPTS: NATURE AND ROLE OF CODICOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract

This article explores the stratification and cataloguing of Ethiopian manuscripts, focusing on the concept and function of codicological units, highlighting the codex as both a textual and material artifact, emphasizing its layered historical development. The study analyses 98 manuscripts and 118 codicological units from Italian collections, distinguishing between unitary, miscellaneous, and composite codices. Through case studies, we illustrate how codicological analysis—especially the identification of distinct production units—helps reconstruct the manuscripts' complex histories. The article underscores codicology's role as an analytical and historical discipline essential for understanding manuscript heritage.

Keywords

Codicology – Ethiopian Manuscripts – Composite Codex – Cataloguing – Material Culture.

Introduction

This article aims to examine the nature and function of codicological units in Ethiopian manuscripts, highlighting the methods by which they are catalogued and presenting representative examples of the stratifications ob-

servable within these texts.¹ Before delving into these core issues, it is essential to clarify the concept of ‘codicology’ as it applies to this field of study.

The manuscript book is a complex reality, consisting of two fundamental aspects: the first is the book as a container of texts, while the second is the book as a material object, representative of a definite culture and precise techniques.² In this respect, it is comparable to an archaeological site, with the advantage that in the codex older stratifications are co-present with the more recent ones. The manuscript bears the physical signs not only of the time and place in which it was made, but also of the events that marked its history and its movements over the centuries. The book as a container of texts is the object of various disciplines, such as philology and textual criticism, while codicology, sometimes also called ‘book archaeology’, is dealing with the material aspects.

Codicology *stricto sensu* analyses the artefacts in all their aspects and investigates how they were produced by collecting data directly on the objects. It would be impossible to carry out certain procedures without having the original under the eyes: just think of the impossibility of capturing the transparency of a watermark through photography or the difficulty of measuring a writing mirror without having the codex at hand.

Originally, codicology was a discipline aimed exclusively at the dating and localisation of historical artefacts studied by philologists, palaeographers and art historians. A change occurred when in 1950 François Masai (1909–1979), editor of the journal *Scriptorium*, argued that palaeography was deserving its own disciplinary field, distinct from other related disciplines.³ Since then, many theoretical studies by Gilbert Ouy (1924–2011),⁴ Albert

¹ The content of this article was previously presented at the international conference *Cataloguing Practices in Ethiopian and Eritrean Manuscript Studies* (Naples, University of Naples L’Orientale, Department of Asian, African, and Mediterranean Studies, 21–22 November 2024). The conference served as the concluding event of the three-year research project *I manoscritti etiopici in Italia: documentare, catalogare, conservare*, funded by the DAAM.

² Bausi (2004).

³ Masai (1950: 293).

⁴ Gilbert Ouy, among the pioneers of modern codicology, addresses in his study the crucial problem of accessibility to medieval manuscripts, proposing innovative methodologies for their cataloguing and study. His work forms a bridge between Masai’s early reflections and the subsequent developments of the discipline, with particular attention to the practical needs of research. See Ouy (1978).

Derolez,⁵ Johan Peter Gumbert (1936–2016)⁶ and Albert Gruys (1942–2020)⁷ have been carried out, but the first scholar who applied these theoretical studies in an archaeological sense was Léon Gilissen (1924–2009).⁸ As Gilissen was a conservator and restorer in the Royal Library in Brussels, he certainly had more opportunities to have direct contact with the manuscripts, which he could investigate by analysing their main components, to trace the actions carried out by the craftsman during their manufacture.

Scholars in codicology have also been interested in elaborating a uniform terminology for the different components of codices, but this terminology has undergone adaptations and has been improved over the years. Thanks to Marilena Maniaci's *Terminologia del libro manoscritto*,⁹ Italian terms concerning the manuscript book have been collected and ordered, and a solid reference was made available, although, almost thirty years after its publication, the work could be supplemented and updated.

⁵ Albert Derolez revolutionized codicology through systematic studies of manuscript material construction, as exemplified by his analysis of humanistic parchment codices. While focused on Europe, his methodological approach – based on examining quire structure, ruling patterns, and gathering assembly – has inspired similar research on non-European manuscript traditions, including the Ethiopian. See Derolez (1984).

⁶ Johan Peter Gumbert's foundational study on codicological units marked a turning point in manuscript studies by systematically analysing quire construction. His theoretical framework, initially developed for Western codices, proved particularly valuable for studying composite manuscripts across cultures – including Ethiopian cases where multiple production units are often combined. This work laid the groundwork for his later, more comprehensive terminology. See Gumbert (1989).

⁷ The pioneering study by Gruys and Gumbert on manuscript materials established essential technical terminology for codicological analysis, proving particularly valuable for classifying writing supports and bindings in Ethiopian manuscripts. Their systematic categorization of parchment, paper, and binding structures provides a reference framework for identifying both homogeneity and stratifications in composite codices. See Gruys, Gumbert (1980).

⁸ Léon Gilissen's archaeological approach to codicology, developed through his hands-on work as a conservator, revolutionized manuscript analysis by treating codices as stratified artifacts. His methodology for examining quire construction and page layout – though initially applied to Western manuscripts – provides essential tools for detecting production layers in Ethiopian composite codices, where palimpsests and reused materials are frequent. See Gilissen (1977).

⁹ Maniaci (1996) established the definitive Italian terminology for manuscript studies, providing an essential tool for describing codices, and actually anticipating the innovative methodological approach of Andrist, Canart, and Maniaci 2013. While focused on Western book production, her systematic categorization of quire structures, ruling techniques, and binding types offers a crucial conceptual framework for analysing the distinctive features of Gə'əz manuscripts.

Three terms still in use today, but not univocal in defining the different types of manuscript codices, are: unitary, miscellaneous and composite. By unitary codex it is meant a manuscript perfectly homogeneous in terms of its manufacture and in the progress of the text, but also a codex that contains only one text. Miscellaneous codex means that it contains more than one text but may be composite in structure. Finally, composite codex means that it is formed by the association of several independent units, but it could be unitary from the text point of view. So, these three definitions create areas of overlapping.

A composite codex can be ‘organised’ if the codicological units are joined according to recognizable intentions. Otherwise, can be ‘factitious’ if the codicological units are joined for purely accidental or external reasons, generally to avoid dispersion.¹⁰

In 1980, Pamela Robinson provided the most detailed definition of *booklet* or *libellus*, meaning a physically and content-independent unit.¹¹ The characteristics of the *booklet* are the following:

1. is limited in scope and structurally independent;
2. contains a single work or a series of short works;
3. may have circulated independently;
4. has an autonomous set of signatures;
5. often shows traces of wear on the initial and final pages;
6. may show anomalies in the composition of the final quire;
7. may show irregularities in the *mise en page* of the final pages;
8. may have evolved over time (with changes in structure and content).

¹⁰ Agati’s distinction between ‘organized’ and ‘factitious’ composite codices represents a fundamental heuristic tool for analysing Ethiopian manuscripts. Developed within comparative codicology, this categorization proves particularly relevant for contexts like the Ethiopian tradition, where the practice of combining distinct codicological units responds both to liturgical needs (‘organized’ codices) and historical contingencies (‘factitious’ codices). This typology enables researchers to differentiate between intentional assemblies – often traceable to specific monastic commissions – and later conjunctions dictated by preservation needs. See Agati (2009: 402).

¹¹ Pamela Robinson’s booklet theory provides a crucial methodological framework for analysing Ethiopian composite manuscripts. Her criteria for identifying self-contained units (independent quire structure, wear patterns, circulation evidence) are particularly valuable when examining Gə’əz codices, where multiple production phases often coexist. The booklet model helps distinguish between originally independent texts later bound together and intentionally planned composite volumes. See Robinson (1980).

Again, Gumbert, in 2004, gave a new definition of a codicological unit as follows: a volume, a part of a volume or a set of volumes, which can be considered to have been produced as a single operation, executed under the same conditions of technique, place and time.¹² Gumbert also theorised the notion of a ‘block’, describing it as parts of coherent units inside each codicological unit (for example, each gospel in a Four–Gospel book).

Since 1995, Gumbert gave indications for practically identifying the internal units in a manuscript.¹³ The key is to recognise discontinuities, the points where something changes, for example:

- the sequence of the files;
- the type of files;
- the support;
- the rifling;
- the mise en page;
- the hands and writings;
- the signatures;
- the content;
- the decoration.

Moving into the specific area of interest of this article, it should be noted that composite codices are also common in Ethiopic manuscripts. During the writing of my doctoral thesis (Bottari 2024), I analysed 98 manuscript codices, which number up to 118, if individual codicological units are considered.¹⁴

¹² Gumbert’s 2004 terminological framework for codicological stratification provides essential tools for analysing Ethiopian composite manuscripts. His distinction between production units (created in one operation) and textual blocks (coherent sections within units) is particularly valuable when examining Gəʾəz codices, where complex layering often reflects multiple historical phases. This approach helps reconstruct the ‘biography’ of manuscripts through their material features. See Gumbert (2004).

¹³ Gumbert’s practical guide for identifying codicological discontinuities provides the methodological backbone for our analysis of Ethiopian manuscripts. His nine diagnostic criteria (changes in quire structure, ruling patterns, handwriting, etc.) are particularly effective when examining Gəʾəz codices, where production layers often manifest through subtle material variations. This approach complements his later theoretical work (Gumbert 2004) by offering concrete tools for unit identification. See Gumbert (1995: 62).

¹⁴ This study develops the methodological framework established in my doctoral research. The analytical protocol I designed – adapting Gumbert’s models to Ethiopic book traditions – focuses specifically on quire construction, sewing techniques, and the identification of production phases through material and textual discontinuities; cp. Winslow (2015).

The database consists of manuscript codices from 10 public institutions and 1 private collection, situated in 5 Italian regions (Liguria, Emilia–Romagna, Tuscany, Lazio, Campania), catalogued and studied as part of the CaNaMEI project (Catalogo Nazionale dei Manoscritti Etiopici in Italia).¹⁵ Specifically, the collections referred to are shown in the following table.

Place of storage	Number of codices
Museo Archeologico e d'Arte della Maremma (Grosseto)	1
Archivio storico diocesano (Savona–Noli)	1
Biblioteca Palatina (Parma)	39
Biblioteca Forteguerriana (Pistoia)	5
Biblioteca del Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo (Università di Napoli L'Orientale)	10
Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale (Roma)	8
Biblioteca Angelica (Roma)	1
Biblioteca Vallicelliana (Roma)	1
Biblioteca Statale del Monumento Nazionale (Grottaferrata)	13
Società Geografica Italiana (Roma)	14
Fondo privato Zanasi–Li Volsi (Roma)	5
Total	98

¹⁵ The CaNaMEI project, promoted by the University of Naples L'Orientale, with the collaboration of the Istituto per l'Oriente "Carlo Alfonso Nallino" (IPOCAN) and ISMEO. Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo, is coordinated by Professor Gianfrancesco Lusini. See <https://www.ipocan.it/index.php/it/canamei-2>.

In order to organise the work of cataloguing, so as not to commit mistakes, a codicological data acquisition protocol was developed, which is followed each time a new collection is approached. Codicological data acquisition takes place by considering and recording each material aspect of the manuscripts under investigation, so that the data can later be analysed and similarities between manuscripts can be highlighted. First, it is necessary to determine and record if the manuscript is unitary or composite. As a basic concept, one should always take Gumbert's concept of 'codicological unit'. It is important to identify every single component of a manuscript within its 'confines', to give a perfectly realistic description of it, and sometimes even to recognise its stages of production.

Then we begin by listing the following data: book size, number of quires, number of folia, how many columns the text is written on, number of lines of text, thickness of the folia, foliation, layout, text area, material on which it is written, thickness of the boards, size of characters, flesh/grain sequence (if there is Gregory's rule¹⁶), type of pricking and ruling,¹⁷ type of ink, type of sewing,¹⁸ pH and description of the case.

In the case of a unitary codex, the description will begin with the identification data that allow the manuscript to be recognised within the holding institution (shelfmark, title, reference keywords, dating, provenance, and history of the artefact). This will be followed by details concerning the binding (type, stitching, state of preservation, and any additional features) and the block of papers (writing material, number of fascicles, layout, ruling, prick-

¹⁶ Gregory's study of parchment folding patterns established what became known as "Gregory's rule" – the consistent alternation of flesh and hair sides in quire construction. While developed for Greek codices, this principle proves invaluable when analysing Ethiopian parchment manuscripts, where deviations from the rule often reveal later interventions or composite production. See Gregory (1885).

¹⁷ Nosnitsin's 2015 study provides the most comprehensive analysis of pricking and ruling techniques in Ethiopic manuscripts, establishing diagnostic criteria for dating and localizing production. His typology of ruling patterns (particularly the 'secondary' and 'tertiary' systems) proves essential for distinguishing between different scribal workshops and chronological layers in composite codices. See Nosnitsin (2015).

¹⁸ Bozzacchi's study remains the most authoritative reference on Ethiopic binding techniques, documenting distinctive features like the chain-stitch sewing and wooden board attachment methods. His classification of sewing stations and thread patterns provides essential criteria for identifying the manuscripts' production. See Bozzacchi (2007).

ing, state of preservation, etc.). The entry will conclude with the linguistic and textual description (languages used, summary of contents, etc.).

In the case of a composite codex, the description will begin by indicating the number of codicological units it comprises. An initial section, structured like that for unitary codices, will record the identifying data and describe the binding. Subsequently, for each codicological unit, the block of papers will be analysed (including the same set of features as above), followed by the linguistic and textual description.

The following section presents two examples of composite manuscripts, one factitious and the other organised. The first one is Orient. 134 of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Rome. The codex consists of a total of 7 codicological units, containing the notes of Father Giusto da Urbino (1814–1855),¹⁹ a Capuchin missionary sent to Ethiopia by Propaganda Fide in the following of the Cardinal Guglielmo Massaia (1809–1899). This composite codex is not uniform from a textual or material point of view. Of its 7 units, the fourth was written on handmade paper (with watermark), while for the seventh, parchment made from goatskin was used. In contrast, the first 3 units, the fifth and the sixth were written on industrial paper (without watermark), but the same paper was not used, as can be seen from the grammage, colouring and size of the individual sheets. In these five units different texts are written.

Orient. 134 is a factitious composite codex, most likely assembled incidentally in order to preserve unrelated textual fragments and prevent their dispersion. The seven codicological units vary in content, layout, and material. The first unit contains a grammatical treatise titled *Propositio grammaticae Linguae Aethiopiae scripta in Aethiopia 1850–54*, written in full-page layout. The second features an Ethiopian–Latin vocabulary arranged in three columns. The third includes a list of religious texts, presented in two columns. The fourth unit, written on handmade paper (bearing a watermark in the upper margin), has been trimmed and contains the text *Squarcio dalla vita di Teclè Haimanot nel manoscritto di Bizan* (Excerpt from the Life of Täklä Haymanot in the manuscript of Bizän). The fifth comprises a list of Gə'əz entries with their Amharic translations, arranged in two columns. The sixth, written in Gə'əz in full-page layout on industrial paper, includes a list

¹⁹ Pizzorusso (2001).

of the patriarchs of Alexandria with reference to the kings of Abyssinia. Finally, the seventh unit, written on goatskin parchment in two columns, contains an incomplete version of the *Visions* of Isaiah.

Another interesting composite manuscript is no. 247 of the Società Geografica Italiana in Rome.²⁰ This too contains some writings by Father Giusto da Urbino. The codex consists of four codicological units (247, 1–4) that are not uniform from a textual or material point of view. They are written on paper, but the first, second and fourth are written on industrial paper (without watermark), while the third is written on handmade paper (with watermark). Different texts can be found in these four units. In the first one we read a Gə'əz–Latin dictionary by Giusto; in the second, there is a Gə'əz–Amharic treatise (*Säwasəw*) by *Abba* Filkəsyus; in the third and the fourth one can find a Gə'əz–Amharic vocabulary and a Gə'əz grammar in Latin, both by Giusto. The third unit is particularly interesting because it allows us to trace the history of the book through its watermark.

Studying the main watermark it emerged that the Cini Paper Mill was founded by brothers Giovanni and Cosimo Cini in 1807 near San Marcello Pistoiese (Tuscany).²¹ By 1839, the small paper mill had already become a real paper company,²² rewarded by the Grand Dukes of Tuscany with medals in recognition of their merits, for the quality of their paper, which was highly successful and highly commercialised even in America and the Middle East. However, when the founders died in 1844, the paper mill went into crisis, leading the heirs of Giovanni and Cosimo Cini to reconvert the mill and the machines used in it to the manufacture of felt cloths to produce carpets, blankets and travel bags.²³

The 'AL MASSO' countermark, on the other hand, indicates provenance from very old paper mills, founded in 1481 by the Magnani family and still active today,²⁴ and a guarantee of luxury and paper quality. Specifically, the 'AL MASSO' paper mill was founded in 1783 by Giorgio Magnani, halfway

²⁰ Bottari, Villa (2005: 42–52), nos. 3–6.

²¹ Nesti's reconstruction of the Cini paper mill's operations provides crucial dating evidence for Ethiopian manuscripts containing their watermarked papers. See Nesti (1997).

²² Nesti (2005).

²³ For the founder's biographical profile see: Danelon Vasoli (1981).

²⁴ The Magnani paper mill's website is available here: <https://www.magnanipescia.it/>.

between San Lorenzo and Pescia.²⁵ It became so famous as to be chosen in 1810 by Napoleon for his wedding invitations to Maria Luisa of Austria and later as the paper mill supplying paper money to many Central Banks in Europe and around the world, including first the issuing banks of the pre-unification Italian countries, then the Bank of Italy. During the 19th and 20th centuries, artists such as Picasso, De Chirico and Guttuso, and writers such as D'Annunzio and Giusti, as well as many others, employed this paper mill to produce papers with customised watermarks as a distinctive sign of recognition.²⁶

In the *Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali*²⁷ a form for a sheet of paper identical to that of manuscript no. 247 can be found. The right-hand portion bears the coat of arms with a six-pointed star decorated with olive branches and the inscription 'G. C. CINI', while the left-hand portion bears the inscription 'AL MASSO'. It is possible to think that, when the Cini paper mill stopped producing wastepaper in 1844, the Magnani paper mill took over the forms, adding its own watermark. The shape is from the early 20th century.

The two elements were also found on another manuscript of the National Library in Florence, whose watermark is the same.²⁸ Therefore, differently from the manuscript of the National Library previously examined, manuscript no. 247 of the Società Geografica Italiana is a 'composite design' codex, with a multi-part structure behind it.

By way of conclusion, it can be said not only that codicology, with its rigorous method and its complex terminology, is a discipline extremely analytical (at times apparently arid), but also that it truly belongs to the ranks of the historical sciences. The composite codex is an emblematic representation of this, because its study involves a chronological collocation both of the individual parts and of the historical moment in which they were joined. Within this framework, the Ethiopian codex offers a number of case studies.

²⁵ Magnani's monograph remains the authoritative source on the historic Pescia paper mill, see Magnani (1960).

²⁶ Bini's study on the Pescia Paper Museum documents how the Magnani mill's historical legacy (1783–present) has been preserved and exhibited. See Bini (2014).

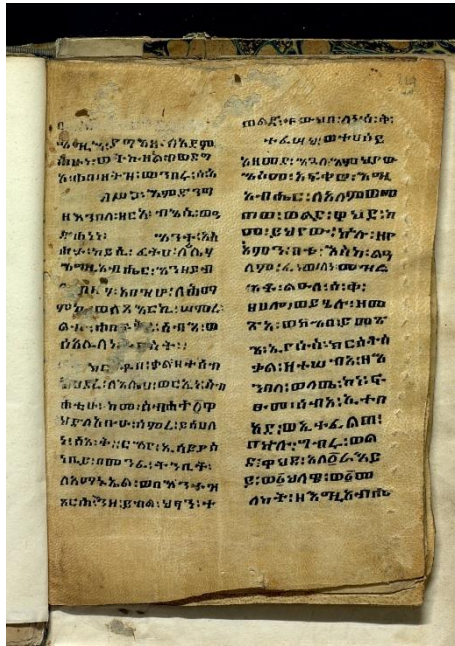
²⁷ See *Catalogo Generale dei Beni Culturali*, mould for producing laid handmade paper: <https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/ScientificOrTechnologicalHeritage/0900784072>.

²⁸ The same combination of watermark and countermark is also documented in a manuscript held at the National Library of Florence, as documented by De Oliveira's study on the use of Italian papers in colonial contexts. See De Oliveira (2014: 276).

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