

## CASE STUDY 6 - Hanseatic - Trade Routes

The distribution of paper, as evidenced by watermark research, can highlight trade routes and the spread of ideas and beliefs. The following Case Study 6 shows how the Hanseatic trade routes enabled one such ground breaking dissemination – the spread of a knowledge of Gəʼəz (the religious language of Ethiopia) alongside other biblical languages. It also gives evidence of cultural and religious changes – in this case the 16<sup>th</sup> century displacement of Latin as the leading language.

The first book printed in Gəʼəz is Potken’s (ca 1470 - ca 1525)<sup>i</sup> Rome 1513 *Psalterium*<sup>ii</sup>.

In 1518 Potken used the same fonts in Cologne for *Psalterium in quatuor linguis : Hebraea, Graeca, Chaldaea* [i.e. Ethiopic], Latina : This is the first book printed in Gəʼəz with three other languages. The bibliographical significance was investigated using digital images from the 1513 project and from recent research into the three copies of the 1518 book held at the British Library.

Attention was given to watermarks in the three 1518 British Library copies. The distribution of the papers is shown to match with Hanseatic League ports as will be shown below. A full report can be seen at the Electronic British Library Journal at:-

<http://www.bl.uk/ebj/2016articles/article3.html>



The layout of Potken’s 1518 *Psalterium* (Greek, Gəʼəz, Hebrew and Latin in four equal columns) is to be contrasted with the layout of the contemporary *Complutensian Polyglot* by Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros, (1436–1517). As shown in the Endnote to this sentence,

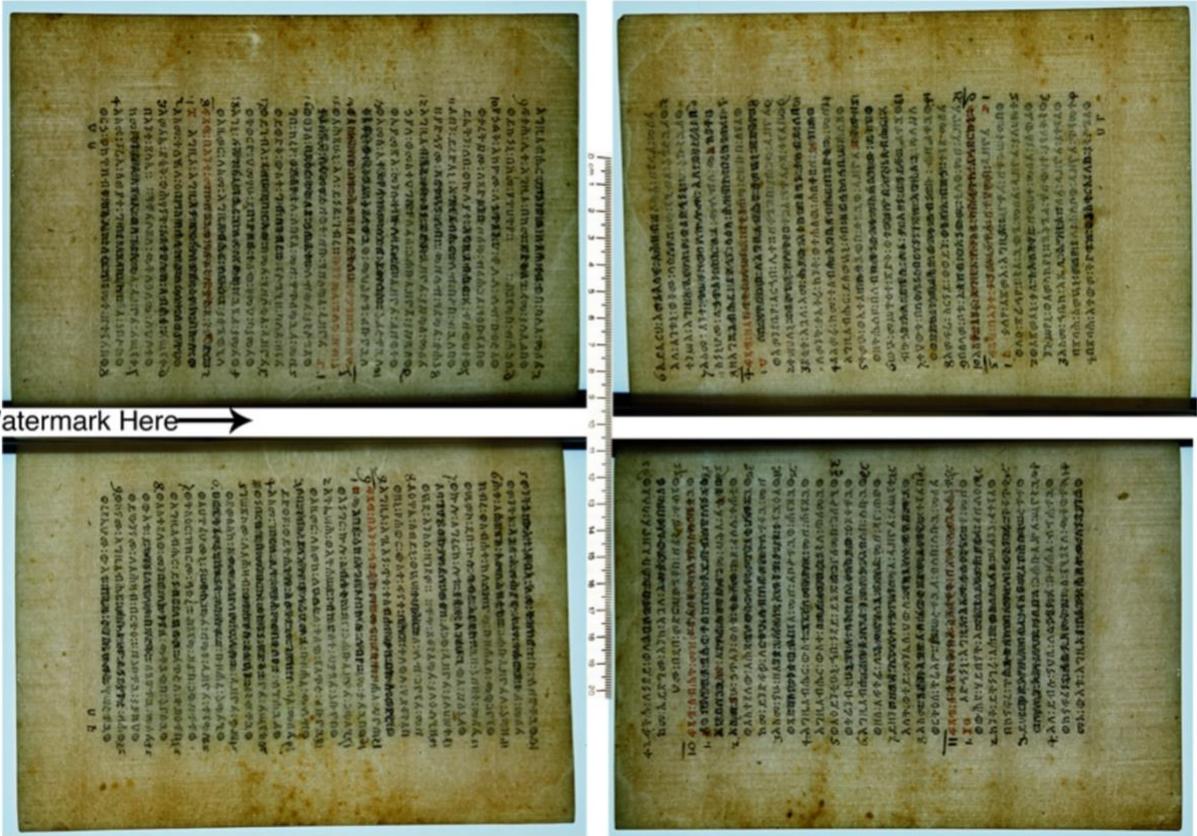
in the Complutensian Polyglot the Latin is placed prominently and purposefully central, flanked by Hebrew and Greek<sup>iii</sup>. Although Potken was Provost of the collegiate church of St Georg in Cologne and a papal proto-notary it is suggested that the layout of his 1518 *Psalterium* typifies the more progressive attitude of the age of the German led Reformation.

I used the earlybook imaging system on all the pages of the 1513 King's College London copy and on selected pages of the Lambeth Palace copy. The use of back lighting from the 1 mm. thick electroluminescent light sheet allowed the watermarks to be detected. Only one watermark was found. Use of the online Bernstein Memory of Paper database allowed it to be identified.

The watermark is a crowned eagle in a circle as shown below:-



This 1513 book is a quarto so the watermark is on two pages as shown below:-



This is four back lit reassembled images thereby recreating a whole sheet from KCL, Foyle Special Collections: [Marsden Coll.]

The Bernstein Memory of Paper datafiles showed that the same watermark (Briquet 203), as shown below, has been found in Lucca, 1504, Florence, 1505 and Pisa, 1506.



I was able to examine the three British Library copies of the 1518 *Psalterium in quatuor linguis*. Whereas the 1513 Rome *Psalterium* only has one watermark the 1518 Cologne books have paper with 17 different watermarks. The following watermarks are found in much the same order in the three books:- Shields (various); Jugs; Star with circle; Gothic P; Crown/shield/sun/letter 'h'; Gothic 'y'; Hand; Bull's head; Dog with trefoil; Dog without trefoil; Wheel; (none); Unicorns (various).

The on-line Memory of Paper datafile has been invaluable not only in allowing all the watermarks to be identified but in allowing the known distribution of those watermarks to be mapped. The following image shows how the distribution of those watermarks coincides with the Hanseatic League:-

---

<sup>i</sup> Potken (ca. 1470 – ca. 1525) was provost of the collegiate church of St Georg in Cologne, but his appointment as a papal proto-notary brought him to the Roman curia and there he became acquainted with Ethiopian churchmen. Curious about their worship, he attended services at their church in Rome, the church of Santo Stefano degli Abissini (the Ethiopian community was well established in Rome by the 16th century and had been granted a church of their own by Pope Sixtus IV in 1479), and started to learn Gəʿəz, the language of the Ethiopian church liturgy. His teacher was *Abba* Tomas Wäldä Samuʾel, an Ethiopian monk from Jerusalem, then residing in Rome as the guest of Pope Leo X.

I am indebted to Professor Wendy L. Belcher of Princeton University for the following information which corrects the previously accepted claim that Potken alone is to be credited with production and publishing the Psalms and the Song of Solomon in Gəʿəz. As no books

---

had been printed in this language before, the cutting of founts of type in Gəʿəz script had to be undertaken for the first time. Until recently it was accepted that Potken alone was responsible. However research by Samantha Kelly, as reported in "The Curious Case of Ethiopic Chaldean: Fraud, Philology, and Cultural (Mis) Understanding in European Conceptions of Ethiopia," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2015): 1228, Potken and Abba Tomas Wäldä Samuʾel are to be credited. As Samantha Kelly found, through her extensive archival work on how Gəʿəz came to be called "Chaldean" during this period, although Potken sought to claim sole editorship of the psalter, Tomas added a colophon of his own, in Ethiopic, in which he translated Potken's words and added 'and I, Tomas Wäldä Samuʾel, pilgrim of Jerusalem, made it with him'.

Professor Belcher commented in an email to me "As usual, the contributions of Africans were erased".

Working with a printer, Potken and Abba Tomas Wäldä Samuʾel designed and cast the metal characters needed for the unique font and in 1513 started printing books in the Gəʿəz language. (da Leonessa, *Santo Stefano Maggiore.*, 171; Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians.* 1990, 8, 33). The Ethiopian emperor had repeatedly asked in 1521 and 1524 for printers to come to the Ethiopian highlands to print books in Gəʿəz and there is some suggestion that a Florentine, Andrea Corsali, tried to do so. (Osbert Guy Stanhope Crawford, *Ethiopian itineraries, circa 1400-1524 / including those collected by Alessandro Zorzi at Venice in the years 1519-24.* Cambridge : Published for the Hakluyt Society at the University Press, 1958, 23, citing Conti Rossiini.)

One of Potken's sources for the text was a manuscript Gəʿəz Psalter which still survives in the Vatican Library (Vat. etiop. 20) and which he is known to have borrowed. By the early 16th century the Vatican Library held several manuscript Gəʿəz Psalters and Potken is thought to have drawn on a range of sources to create his text. It could be that the Vatican

---

manuscript went from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to the Council of Ferrara-Florence, 1438–1445, and thence to Rome. Alternatively it might have gone straight to Rome. The 1513 Psalter follows the Greek numbering. Oddly, despite his long study of the Gəʿəz language and evident erudition, Potken, as mentioned above, made the fundamental mistake of believing that Gəʿəz was a version of the Aramaic or Chaldean language, and he never swerved from this belief, referring consistently to the language of the Psalter as Chaldean. After the publication of the *Psalterium* Potken returned to Germany, where he continued to study the Gəʿəz language and published another edition of the Psalter in 1518, this time with parallel texts in Hebrew, Greek, Gəʿəz and Latin.

<sup>ii</sup> The first printed book to include Gəʿəz letters is Bernhard von Breydenbach's, *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam* (Mainz, 1486).

Thanks to funding by the Ordre Souverain Militaire et Hospitalier de Saint Jean de Jérusalem I was able to image every page of one copy and selected pages of the Lambeth Palace library copy of the 1513 Potken / Samuʿel, *Psalterium*. White light, infra red light for front lighting and for back lighting were used. Results are at:-

<http://www.kingscollections.org/exhibitions/specialcollections/psalter1513/>



<sup>iii</sup> The following image shows how the layout of the 1518 *Quatuor* places all four languages on an equal footing:-





---

The Latin is placed prominently in the centre of the page, as is explained in the Prologue: *Mediam autem inter has latinam beati Hieronymi translationem velut inter Synagogam & Orientalem Ecclesiam posuimus: tanquam duos hinc & inde latrones medium autem Iesum hoc est Romanam siue latinam Ecclesiam collocantes.* [We have placed the Latin translation of the blessed Jerome between that of the Synagogue and that of the Oriental Church, just as the thieves were hung, one on each side of Jesus, that is, the Roman, or Latin, Church.]