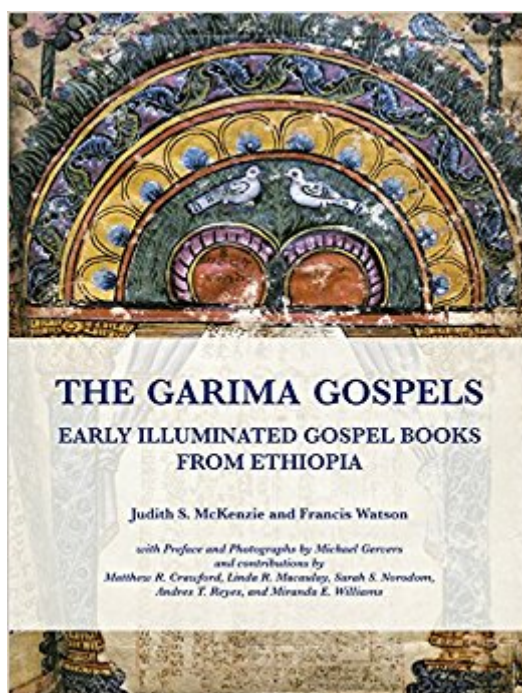


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# The Garima Gospels: Early Illuminated Gospel Books From Ethiopia



## Synopsis

The three Garima Gospels are the earliest surviving Ethiopian gospel books. They provide glimpses of lost late antique luxury gospel books and art of the fifth to seventh centuries, in the Aksumite kingdom of Ethiopia as well as in the Christian East. As this work shows, their artwork is closely related to Syriac, Armenian, Greek, and Georgian gospel books and to the art of late antique (Coptic) Egypt, Nubia, and Himyar (Yemen). Like most gospel manuscripts, the Garima Gospels contain ornately decorated canon tables which function as concordances of the different versions of the same material in the gospels. Analysis of these tables of numbered parallel passages, devised by Eusebius of Caesarea, contributes significantly to our understanding of the early development of the canonical four gospel collection. The origins and meanings of the decorated frames, portraits of the evangelists, Alexandrian circular pavilion, and unique image of the Jerusalem Temple are elucidated. The Garima texts and decoration demonstrate how a distinctive Christian culture developed in Aksumite Ethiopia, while also belonging to the mainstream late antique Mediterranean world. Lavishly illustrated in colour, this volume presents all of the Garima illuminated pages for the first time and extensive comparative material. It will be an essential resource for those studying late antique art and history, Ethiopia, eastern Christianity, New Testament textual criticism, and illuminated books.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"These gospels had been overlooked by scholars, who took them for medieval copies. Carbon-14 analysis seems to suggest that they belong to the late fifth or sixth century. ... We are looking at a

specimen of late classical art at its most hauntingly exuberant. Along with the portraits of holy figures, a set of written tables of the canon grip the eye ... in a doorway of sumptuous majesty. ... Judith McKenzie (with her colleagues) takes the reader through this scholarly feast with a sure touch and with justified enthusiasm. Here is the evidence for a spread of late classical art with deep roots in the great Hellenistic cities of the East-most notably Alexandria ... But the main excitement of this discovery is that the great gospel book may well have been produced in Ethiopia itself." --Peter Brown, *New York Review of Books* May 11, 2017

"The group of early Christian illuminated manuscripts known as the Garima Gospels -- written in an old Ethiopic translation of the Bible -- are among the very earliest and most important illustrated Christian books. They have never been published in a properly illustrated edition before, nor with a sound scholarly introduction and discussion such as presented here. Judith McKenzie and Francis Watson's remarkable publication of Michael Gervers' photographs is not only the first fundamental presentation of this immensely important set of visual and textual materials, but it is also a record of the state of the manuscript at the moment of its discovery by contemporary scholarship. The volume is a landmark in early Christian studies and in late antique art history." --Jas Elsner, University of Oxford

"How many movable objects have been in use ever since late Antiquity, in the same place they were produced? The battered and well-thumbed Garima Gospels may never have left the sequestered Ethiopian monastery where they still reside -- and which no woman may enter. The English artist Beatrice Playne first noticed them in 1948 (they were carried out for her to inspect). She perceptively compared them with the Syriac Rabbula Gospels of 586 in Florence. Now Judith McKenzie has taken the lead in publishing and discussing all the illustrated folios for the first time, while Francis Watson's analysis of the canon tables drives home the point that images should not be studied in isolation from the texts they adorn. This attractive and learned book will at last ignite informed debate about one of the most important manuscripts to have survived from Antiquity." --Garth Fowden, University of Cambridge

"We owe McKenzie, Watson, and their team a great debt for making these codices accessible to the general public. Their fine volume will hopefully serve as a stimulus for further research on ancient Ethiopia more broadly, a great crossroads of culture whose significance to world history we are only just beginning to appreciate." --Christian C. Sahner, *Marginalia Review of Books*

JUDITH MCKENZIE is University Research Lecturer, University of Oxford. She lived in a cave while working on *The Architecture of Petra* (1990), the rock-cut capital of the Nabataeans in Jordan. Her other books include *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, 300BC-AD700* (2007) and on the

sculpture and religious practice at The Nabataean Temple at Khirbet et-Tannur (2 vols, 2013). She is the director of the open-access photo-archive [manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk](http://manar-al-athar.ox.ac.uk) and Principal Investigator of the ERC Advanced Project 'Monumental Art of the Christian and Early Islamic East: Cultural Identities and Classical Heritage'. Her interest in the Garima Gospels comes from the use of architecture in their illuminations, and the role of influences from places, such as Egypt, alongside the development of a distinctive Ethiopian Christian art. FRANCIS WATSON holds a Research Chair in Biblical Interpretation in the Department of Theology and Religion, Durham University, having previously taught at the University of Aberdeen (1999-2007) and King's College London (1984-99). His primary research interests lie in the field of canonical and non-canonical gospels and their early reception; recent books include *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (2014) and *The Fourfold Gospel* (2016). He is editor of the journal *New Testament Studies* (Cambridge University Press), and Principal Investigator on the 'Fourfold Gospel and its Rivals' project (2012-17), funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. MICHAEL GERVERS is professor of medieval history at the University of Toronto. He teaches a course on the history of Ethiopia and has recently introduced the study of Old Ethiopic (Ge'ez) language to the curriculum. He has published widely on Ethiopian architecture and material culture and is currently co-authoring a major volume on the ancient church of Yemrehanna Krestos (near Lalibela, Lasta). A new objective, sponsored by the Arcadia Fund, is to document the contemporary but quickly disappearing highland craft of hewing churches from the rock. His thirty-five years of fieldwork has led to an extensive photographic repertory of Ethiopian art and culture.

Does not contain translations. Only discussions about

I'm not sure what I expected after reading the NYRoB. The data is interesting and it does, in some degree, to The Crucible of Islam

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