



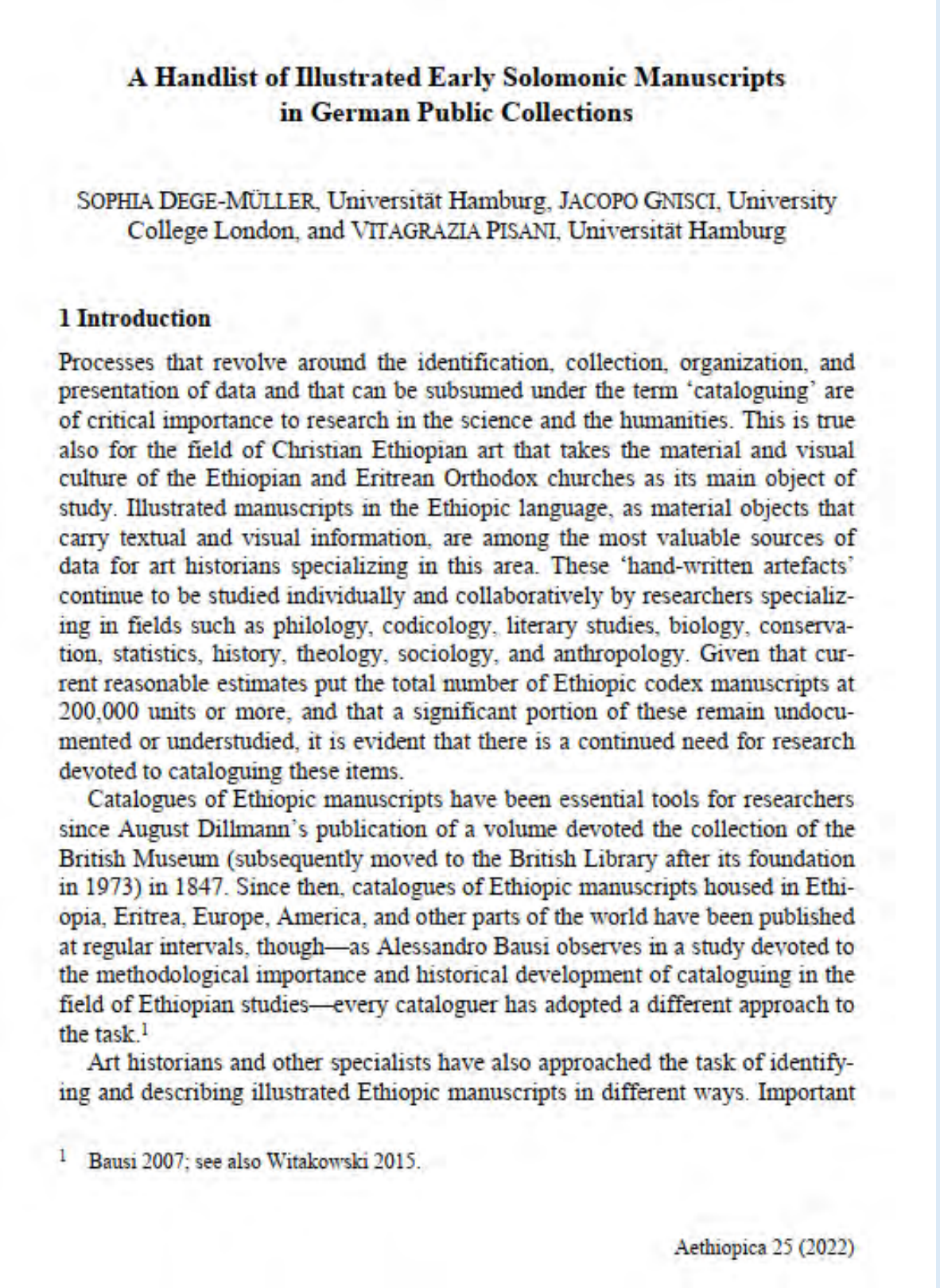
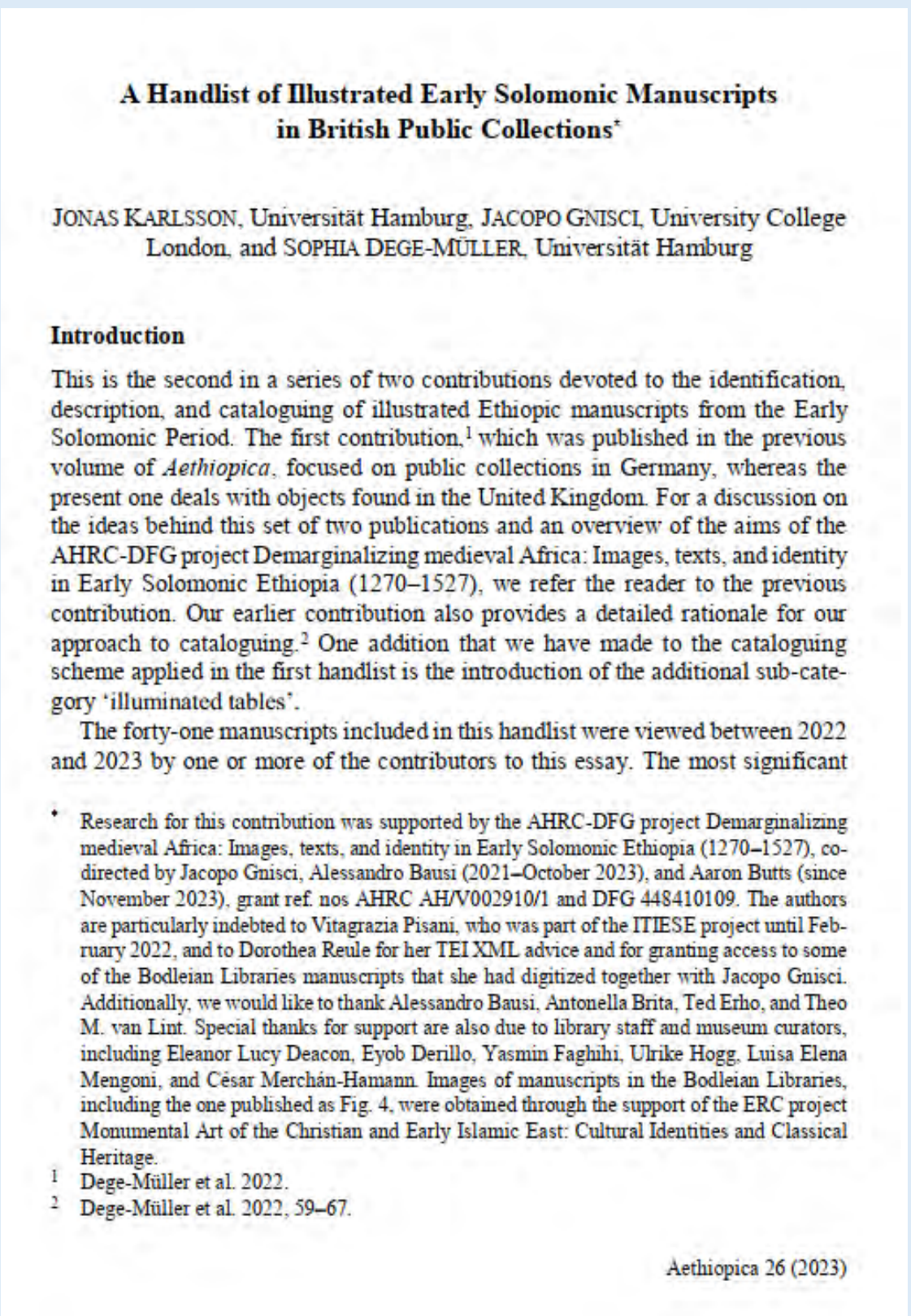
The colourful hieratic images that decorate Ethiopian manuscripts produced during the time span considered by this project – the early Solomonic period (1270–1527) – are unlike anything else produced in sub-Saharan Africa. These illustrations embody the spiritual aspirations and cultural identity of the artists who made them. The Ethiopian Empire was the longest-lived empire in Africa after that of Ancient Egypt. However, while there have been thousands of publications on the arts of Ancient Egypt, the visual culture of Ethiopia continues to be marginalized and misrepresented. By looking at the illustrations in medieval Ethiopic manuscripts, focusing especially on hitherto little-known examples in collections in Germany and the UK, the project aims to improve our understanding of this material through a range of publications and activities that will reconstruct the vibrant cultural and religious history of the Ethiopian Empire during the early Solomonic period.



Demarginalizing Medieval Africa

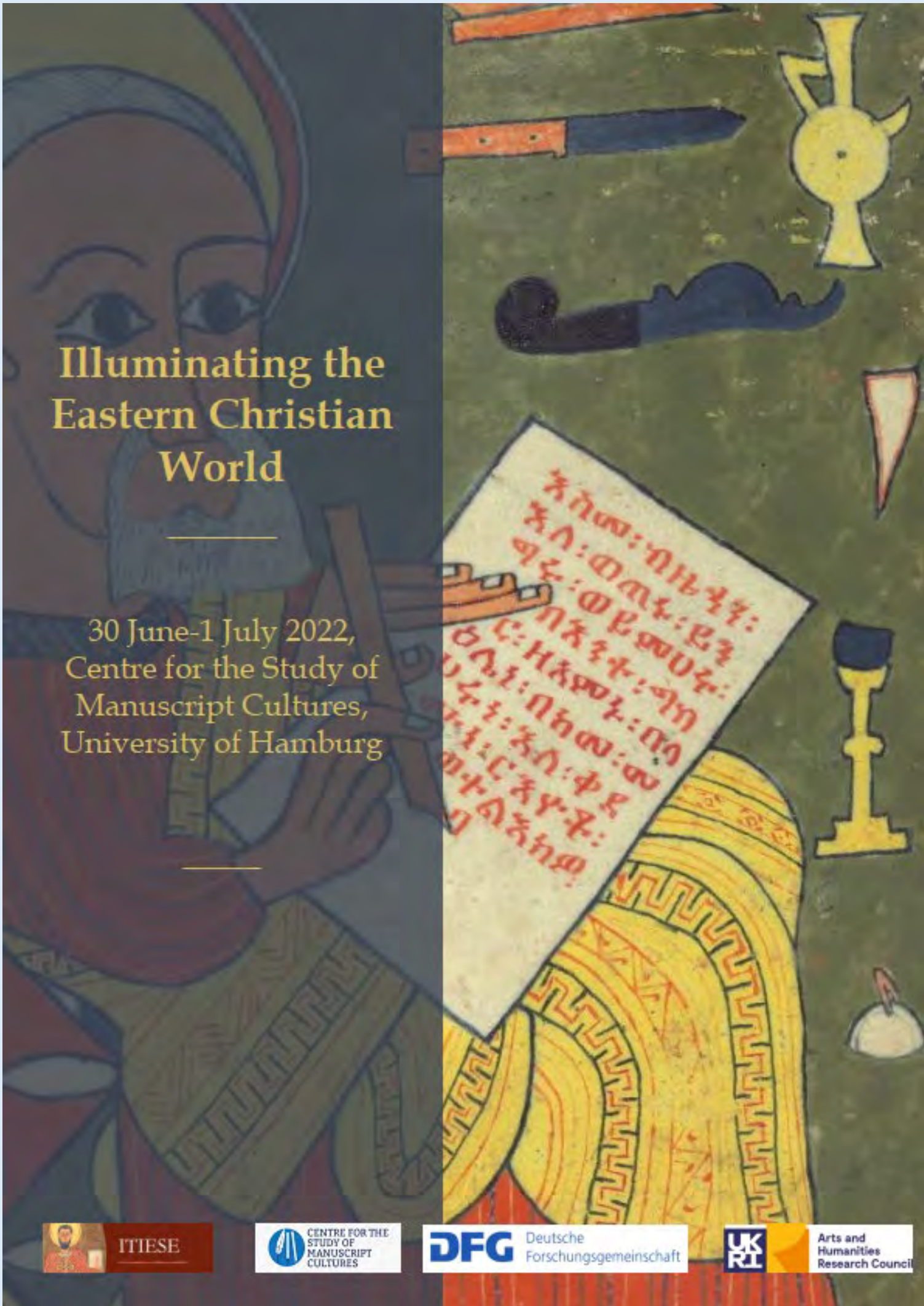
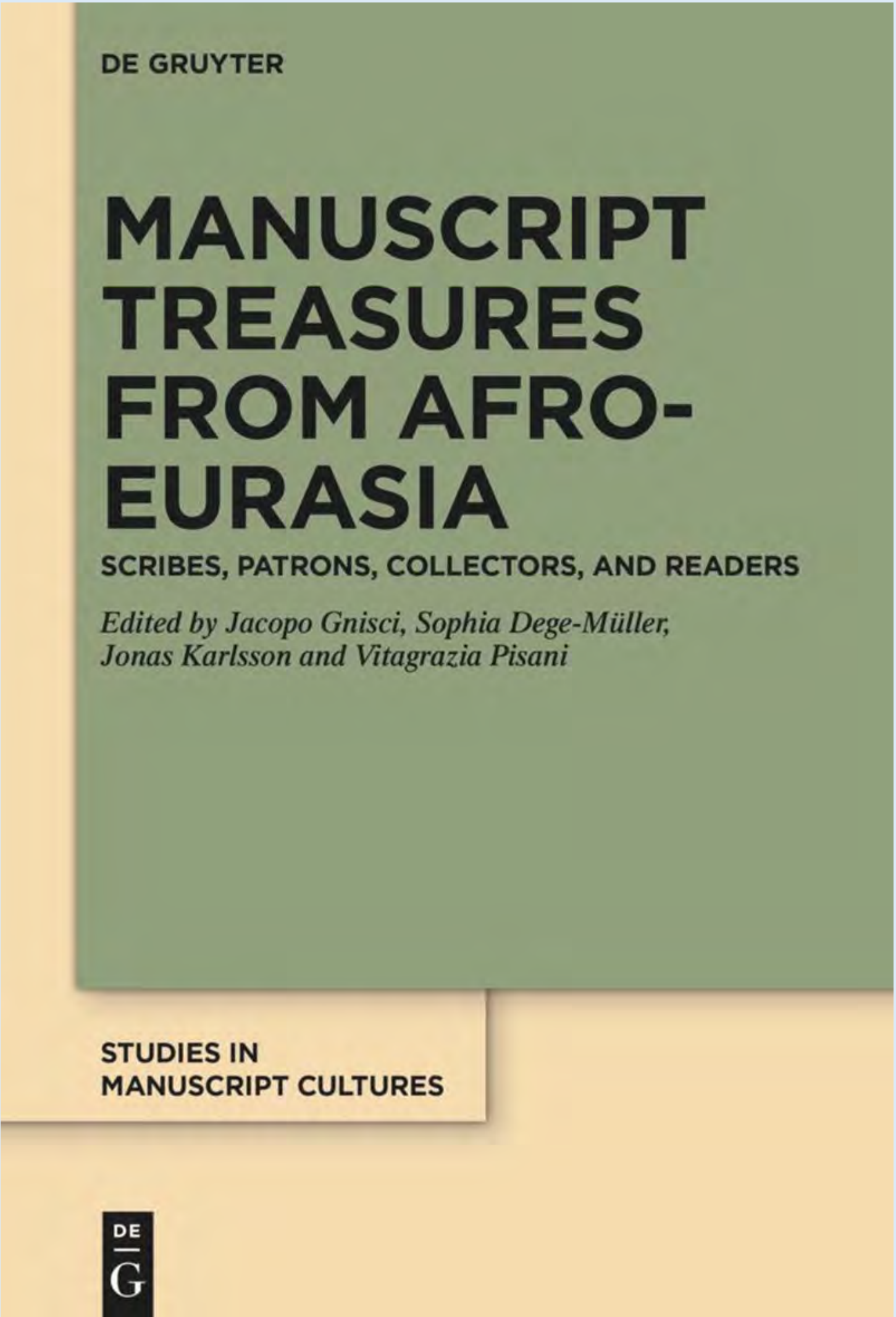
Images, texts, and identity in early Solomonic Ethiopia (1270-1527)

Illustrated manuscripts in the Ethiopic language, as material objects that carry textual and visual information, are among the most valuable sources of data for art historians specializing in this area. These ‘hand-written artefacts’ continue to be studied individually and collaboratively by researchers specializing in fields such as philology, codicology, literary studies, biology, conservation, statistics, history, theology, sociology, and anthropology. Given that current reasonable estimates put the total number of Ethiopic codex manuscripts at 200,000 units or more, and that a significant portion of these remain undocumented or understudied, it is evident that there is a continued need for research devoted to cataloguing these items.



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Throughout the Middle Ages manuscripts were routinely commissioned, copied, illustrated, displayed, read, and transferred across both sides of the Mediterranean. Their significance as vehicles for the transmission of visual and textual knowledge is well known. Less understood, particularly when it comes to non-Latin manuscripts, is the complex web of spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional interactions that influenced their production and reception. The twelve essays presented here seek to address this gap by exploring the very direct relationships that existed between manuscripts and those individuals or communities that were involved in their making. The volume is broad in scope, covering written artefacts produced between Late Antiquity and the fifteenth century and presenting case studies that range from the British Isles to East Africa and from Spain and the Maghreb to Armenia. The visual and textual evidence preserved in these manuscripts is interpreted by drawing from disciplines such as palaeography, art history, codicology, and textual criticism. The result is a book that details the impact of makers, patrons, collectors, and readers on the making and circulation of manuscripts across Afro-Eurasia.



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