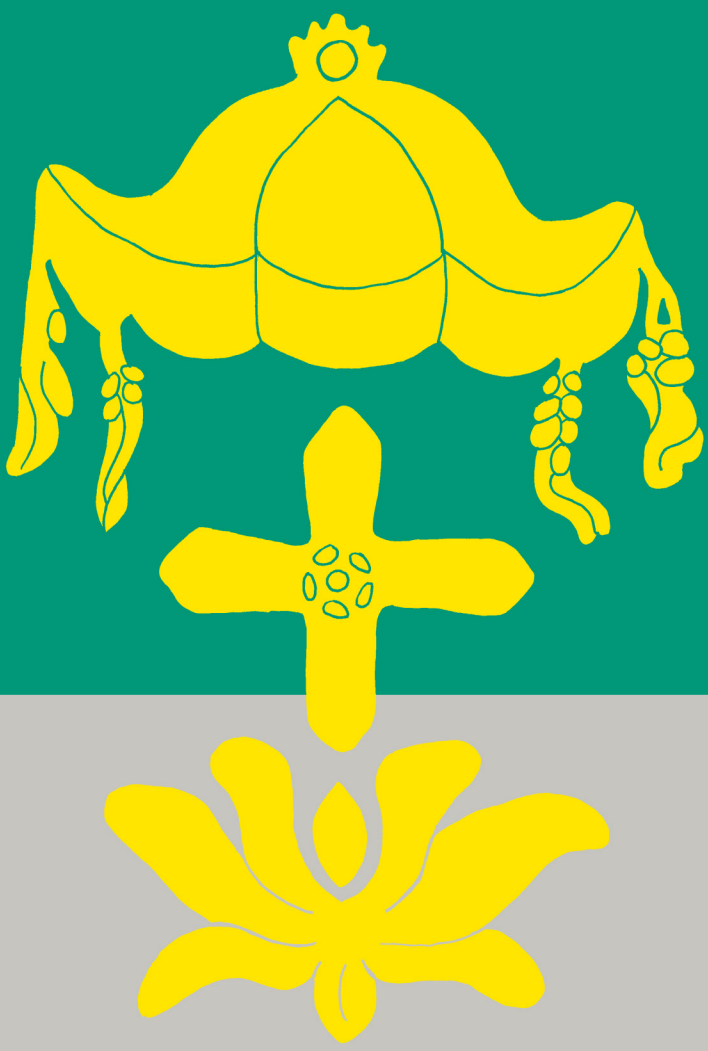
Edited by Stanislau Paulau and Martin Tamcke

Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity in a Global Context

Entanglements and Disconnections



TSEC VOL XXIV

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The Open Access publication was financially supported by the Leibniz Association's Open Access Monograph Publishing Fund.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004505254

The logo for the TSEC series is based on a 14th century tombstone of the Church of the East from Quanzhou, South China, courtesy of the Quanzhou Museum of Overseas Communications History.

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at https://catalog.loc.gov

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2213-0039
ISBN 978-90-04-50434-9 (hardback)
ISBN 978-90-04-50525-4 (e-book)

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

Contents

Abbreviations

EAe	Encyclopaedia Aethiopica. Vols. 1–3, ed. Siegbert Uhlig; vol. 4, ed. Siegbert Uhlig and Alessandro Bausi; vol. 5, ed. Alessandro Bausi and Siegbert Uhlig. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003–2014.
EMML	Ethiopian Microfilm Manuscript Library (Addis Abäba and Collegeville, MN).
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Placing Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity into a Global Context

Stanislau Paulau & Martin Tamcke

Christianity is without any doubt a global phenomenon. Its historiography, however, is not. The way the history of Christianity is being narrated still customarily follows the pattern that focuses on the Roman and Byzantine Empires in the course of late antiquity and spotlights Western Europe in the subsequent periods of time. The turn of Christianity into a global religion has been thus traditionally interpreted as a result of a worldwide expansion of Latin European forms of Christianity, first Roman Catholicism and then Protestantism, commenced in early modern times and culminated in the age of European imperialism and colonialism. Over the last decades scholars of Christianity have become increasingly conscious of limitations of this frame of reference and have embraced a new sensibility to those themes and contexts that so far have been underprivileged in scholarship. This has led to the rapid growth of a new field of inquiry termed "World Christianity." Nevertheless, this discipline so far mainly focuses upon the variations of Christianity that emerged in the Global South in consequence of Western missionary endeavors and fails to integrate the multiplicity of Eastern and Oriental Christianities into its scope of interest. At the same time, academic scholarship dealing with *Oriens Christianus* developed itself into a series of highly specialized sub-disciplines (Coptic Studies, Syriac Studies, Ethiopian Studies, Armenian Studies etc.) with a strong philological emphasis. Whereas this differentiation enables them to engage in highly nuanced analysis of the sources, it also reduces their visibility and overall impact upon the larger academic community. Hence, there is a twofold problem. On the one hand, historians of Christianity tend to neglect Eastern and Oriental churches and to disregard their decisive role in the making of Christianity into a global religion centuries before the European expansion. On the other hand, researchers of the Christian East incline to concentrate on debates within the context of their sub-disciplines and hardly engage in discussion around the historiography of global Christianity.

This volume aims at narrowing the indicated gap. By doing so, it invites readers to a conversation about the ways we can arrive at a non-Eurocentric reading of the global Christian past. Instead of perpetuating the narrative that

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004505254_002

privileges Latin European forms of Christianity, the book spotlights an African Christian formation, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and summons to look at global entanglements through the prism of its history.

Even though the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is by far the largest among the churches of Oriental Christianity, it has so far received relatively little attention in Western scholarship. The marginal position ascribed to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity has not least to do with its alterity. This African Christian tradition differs from the rest of Christendom not only by a much broader biblical canon, but also by a multitude of religious practices which are often described as being "Jewish" (as for example circumcision or the observance of the Sabbath commandment). The alterity of the Ethiopian Church is usually explained by reference to the geographically isolated location of the Ethiopian highlands and the resulting lack of contacts with the rest of the Christian world. Generally, the idea of isolation became a dominant commonplace in descriptions of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. The further aim of this volume against this background is to explore the various trajectories of translocal and transconfessional entanglements in the history of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and by doing so to place it into a global context.

Notwithstanding the fact that the idea of the isolation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity still remains highly influential, the last decade has witnessed a steady growth of interest in themes dealing with processes of cultural transmission and interaction between Ethiopian Christianity and other Christian churches or religions. Two fields of inquiry have proven themselves to be particularly productive. Firstly, a considerable corpus of scholarship has been produced on the establishment of relations between Ethiopia and Latin Europe, as well as the Ethiopian presence in the Italian peninsula in late medieval and early modern times.[1] And secondly, the history of the Jesuit mis-

1 Matteo Salvadore, *The African Prester John and the Birth of Ethiopian-European Relations 1402–1555* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Verena Krebs, *Medieval Ethiopian Kingship, Craft, and Diplomacy with Latin Europe* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021); James De Lorenzi, "Red Sea Travelers in Mediterranean Lands: Ethiopian Scholars and Early Modern Orientalism, ca. 1500–1668," in *World-Building and the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Allison B. Kavey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 173–200; Benjamin Weber, "An Incomplete Integration into the *Orbis Christianus*. Relations and Misunderstandings between the Papacy and Ethiopia (1237–1456)," *Medieval Encounters* 21, no. 2–3 (2015): 232–249; Verena Krebs, "Re-Examining Foresti's Supplementum Chronicarum and the 'Ethiopian' Embassy to Europe of 1306," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 82, no. 3 (2019): 493–515, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X19000697; Andrew Kurt, "The Search for Prester John, a Projected Crusade and the Eroding Prestige of Ethiopian Kings," *Journal of Medieval History* 39, no. 3 (2013): 297–320; Delio Vania Proverbio, "Santo Stefano degli Abissini. Una breve rivisitazione," *La parola del passato: Rivista di studi antichi* 66 (2011): 50–68; Benjamin Weber, "La bulle Cantate Domino (4 février 1442) et les enjeux éthiopiens du concile de Florence,"

sion in Ethiopia that took place in the 16th and 17th centuries has experienced a major upswing.[2] Other dimensions of Ethiopian Christian engagement with

Mélanges de l'École française de Rome—Moyen Âge 122, no. 2 (2010): 441–449, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/mefrm.686; Benjamin Weber and Robin Seignobos, "L'Occident, la croisade et l'Éthiopie," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 27 (2012): 15–20; Benjamin Weber, "Vrais et faux Éthiopiens au XVe siècle en Occident? Du bon usage des connexions," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 27 (2012): 107–126; Camille Rouxpetel, "Indiens, Éthiopiens et Nubiens dans les récits de pèlerinage occidentaux: entre altérité constatée et altérité construite (XIIe–XIVe siècle)," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 27 (2012): 71–90; Benjamin Weber, "Gli Etiopi a Roma nel Quattrocento: ambasciatori politici, negoziatori religiosi o pellegrini?," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome—Moyen Âge* 125, no. 1 (2013), DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/mefrm.1036; Olivia Adankpo-Labadie, "Accueillir et contrôler les pèlerins éthiopiens à Rome aux XVe et XVIe siècles," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome—Moyen Âge* 131, no. 2 (2019), DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/mefrm.5864; Samantha Kelly, "Biondo Flavio on Ethiopia: Processes of Knowledge Production in the Renaissance," in *The Routledge History of the Renaissance*, ed. William Caferro (New York: Routledge, 2017), 167–182; Samantha Kelly, "Ewosṭateans at the Council of Florence (1441): Diplomatic Implications between Ethiopia, Europe, Jerusalem and Cairo," *Afriques. Débats, Méthodes et Terrains d'histoire*, June 29, 2016, URL: http://journals.openedition.org/afriques/1858; Alessandro Bausi and Paolo Chiesa, "The Ystoria Ethyopie in the Chronica Universalis of Galvaneus de la Flamma (d. c. 1345)," *Aethiopica* 22 (2019): 7–57, DOI: https://doi.org/10.15460/aethiopica.22.0.1491; Marco Bonechi, "Four Sistine Ethiopians? The 1481 Ethiopian Embassy and the Frescoes of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican," *Aethiopica* 14 (2011): 121–135; Matteo Salvadore, "African Cosmopolitanism in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Diasporic Life of Yohannes, the Ethiopian Pilgrim Who Became a Counter-Reformation Bishop," *The Journal of African History* 58, no. 1 (2017): 61–83; Samantha Kelly and Denis Nosnitsin, "The Two Yoḥannəses of Santo Stefano Degli Abissini, Rome: Reconstructing Biography and Cross-Cultural Encounter through Manuscript Evidence," *Manuscript Studies* 2, no. 2 (2017): 392–426; Cates Baldridge, *Prisoners of Prester John: The Portuguese Mission to Ethiopia in Search of the Mythical King, 1520–1526* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2012); Samatha Kelly, "Medieval Ethiopian Diasporas," in *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea*, ed. Samatha Kelly (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 425–453.

2 Victor Manuel Fernández et al., *The Archeology of the Jesuit Missions in Ethiopia (1557–1632)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Wendy Laura Belcher, ed., *The Jesuits in Ethiopia (1609–1641). Latin Letters in Translation*, trans. Jessica Wright and Leon Grek (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017); Andreu Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, *Envoys of a Human God. The Jesuit Mission to Christian Ethiopia, 1557–1632* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Wendy Laura Belcher and Michael Kleiner, ed., *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros. A Seventeenth-Century African Biography of an Ethiopian Woman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Matteo Salvadore, "Gaining the Heart of Prester John: Loyola's Blueprint for Ethiopia in Three Key Documents," *World History Connected* 10, no. 3 (2013), URL: https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/10.3/forum_salvadore.html (15.12.2019); Matteo Salvadore, "The Jesuit Mission to Ethiopia (1555–1634) and the Death of Prester John," in *World-Building and the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Allison B. Kavey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 141–171; Leonardo Cohen, *The Missionary Strategies of the Jesuits in Ethiopia (1555–1632)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009); Wendy Laura Belcher, "Sisters Debating the Jesuits: The Role of African Women in Defeating Portuguese Proto-Colonialism in Seventeenth-Century Abyssinia," *Northeast African Studies* 13, no. 1 (2013): 121–166; Hervé Pennec, *Des Jésuites au Royaume du Prêtre Jean (Éthiopie). Straté-*

the wider world have received significantly less attention. Further contributions appeared within the last ten years that in one way or another touch upon global entanglements of Ethiopian Christianity can be broadly classified into several clusters based upon their topic.

The most prolific cluster of studies deals with interconnections between Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and different Christian traditions. It encompasses contributions on a wide range of chronological, geographical and confessional settings. Historical ties connecting Ethiopian Christianity with other Oriental churches are of particular importance in this context. Recently, several studies have shed new light upon Aksumite contacts with Christian Nubia,[3] the phenomenon of the so called "second evangelization" of Ethiopia as well as literary connections with Syriac Christianity.[4] Furthermore, historical, religious and cultural ties connecting Ethiopia with Christian Egypt remain a highly productive field of investigation.[5] An important subject in this context is also the history of Indian and Armenian diasporas in Ethiopia.[6]

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gies, rencontres et tentatives d'implantation 1495–1633 (Paris: Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, 2003); Elias Ng'etich, "Catholic Counter-Reformation: A History of the Jesuits' Mission to Ethiopia 1557–1635," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42, no. 2 (2016): 105–116; Leonardo Cohen, "Visions and Dreams: An Avenue for Ethiopians' Conversion to Catholicism at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 1 (2009): 4–29; Annie Molinié-Bertrand, "Pierre Du Jarric et l'Éthiopie," in *Contrabandista entre mundos fronterizos*, ed. Nicolas Balutet et al. (Paris: Publibook, 2010), 155–164.

3 George Hatke, *Aksum and Nubia: Warfare, Commerce, and Political Fictions in Ancient Northeast Africa* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Benjamin Hendrickx, "The Letter of an Ethiopian King to King George II of Nubia in the framework of the ecclesiastic correspondence between Axum, Nubia and the Coptic Patriarchate in Egypt and of the events of the 10th Century AD," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 99 (2018): 1–21.

4 Antonella Brita, *I racconti tradizionali sulla 'Seconda Cristianizzazione' dell'Etiopia. Il ciclo agiografico dei Nove Santi* (Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale," 2010); Ralph Lee, *Symbolic Interpretations in Ethiopic and Early Syriac Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2017).

5 Alessandro Bausi and Alberto Camplani, "New Ethiopic Documents for the History of Christian Egypt," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 17, no. 2 (2013): 215–247; Alessandro Bausi, "Ethiopia and the Christian Ecumene: Cultural Transmission, Translation, and Reception," in *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea*, ed. Samantha Kelly (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 217–251; Zeus Wellnhofer, "Die arabisch-altäthiopische Übersetzungsliteratur im historischen Kontext des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts," in *Multidisciplinary Views on the Horn of Africa. Festschrift in Honour of Rainer Voigt's 70th Birthday*, ed. Hatem Elliesie (Köln: Rüdiger Köppe, 2014), 467–496; Verena Krebs, "Crusading threats? Ethiopian-Egyptian relations in the 1440s," in *Croisades en Afrique: les expéditions occidentales à destination du continent africain, XIIIe–XVIe siècle*, ed. Benjamin Weber (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2019), 245–274; Wudu Tafete Kassu, "Religion and Cold War Politics in Ethiopia," in *Religion and the Cold War. A Global Perspective*, ed. Philip E. Muehlenbeck (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), 139–157.

6 Martin Tamcke, "Indians and Christians in Ethiopia: Abraham Verghese's Constructions and

Another set of studies has been produced on the multifaceted history of relationships between Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism.[7] They encompass both certain aspects of mission history[8] and issues of interconfessional tensions between Orthodox and Protestant Christians in modern Ethiopia.[9] Given that the history of the Roman Catholic engagement with

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their Background," *The Harp, A Review of Syriac, Oriental and Ecumenical Studies* XXX (2016): 333–342; Boris Adjemian, *La fanfare du Négus: les Arméniens en Éthiopie* (*XIXe–XXe siècles*) (Paris: Éditions EHESS, 2013); Boris Adjemian, "Rās Tafari dans la mémoire de l'immigration arménienne en Éthiopie," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 28 (2013): 133–155; Boris Adjemian, "L'invention d'un homeland arménien en Éthiopie. Exil et sédentarité dans l'écriture d'une mémoire d'hôtes en diaspora," *Tracés. Revue de Sciences humaines* 23 (2012), DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/traces.5546; Boris Adjemian, "Les Arméniens en Éthiopie, une entorse à la 'raison diasporique'? Réflexion sur les concepts de diaspora marchande et de minorité intermédiaire," *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 28 (3) (2012): 107–126, DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.6082.

7 Cf. especially a programmatic proposal of writing an engangled history of Ethiopian Orthodoxy and European Protestantism: Stanislau Paulau, *Das andere Christentum. Zur transkonfessionellen Verflechtungsgeschichte von äthiopischer Orthodoxie und europäischem Protestantismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021). An open access version is available at: https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666336041.

8 Wolbert G.C. Smidt, "A Remarkable Chapter of German Research History: The Protestant Mission and the Oromo in the Nineteenth Century," *ITYOPIS—Northeast African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* Extra Issue 1: Cultural Research in Northeastern Africa. German Histories and Stories (2015): 61–77; Wolbert G.C. Smidt, *Photos as Historical Witnesses: The First Ethiopians in Germany and the First Germans in Ethiopia, the History of a Complex Relationship* (Berlin: Lit, 2015); Stanislau Paulau, "Encountering the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the Pre-Ecumenical Age: Some Remarks on the First Protestant Missionaries in Ethiopia (1829–1843)," in *Movements in Ethiopia, Ethiopia in Movement*. Vol. 1, ed. Eloi Ficquet, Ahmed Hassen and Thomas Osmond (Los Angeles, CA: Tsehai Publishers, 2016), 175–184; E. Paul Balisky, *Thomas A. Lambie. Missionary Doctor and Entrepreneur* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020); Stanislau Paulau, "Legitimation Strategies in the Encounters between Missionary and Indigenous Christianity: Examining German Hermannsburg Mission's Narratives on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (1924–1927)," in *Ökumenische Begegnungen—Ecumenical Encounters*, ed. Claudia Hoffmann, Florian Tuder and Irena Zeltner Pavlović (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 170–179; Stanislau Paulau, "Auf der Suche nach dem *Tabot*. Zu einem vergessenen Kapitel in der Geschichte der Wechselbeziehungen zwischen deutscher Wissenschaft, Mission und äthiopischem Christentum," in *Begegnungen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Beiträge dialogischer Existenz. Eine freundschaftliche Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Martin Tamcke*, ed. Claudia Rammelt, Cornelia Schlarb and Egbert Schlarb (Berlin: Lit, 2015), 286–295; Jörg Haustein, *Writing Religious History. The Historiography of Ethiopian Pentecostalism* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014); Hagos Abraha, "Christianity and Global Networks in Ethiopia during and after the First World War," in *The First World War as a Turning Point. The Impact of the Years 1914–1918 on Church and Mission* (*with special focus on the Hermannsburg Mission*), ed. Frieder Ludwig (Berlin, Lit, 2020), 149–160.

9 Lydette S. Assefa, "Creating Identity in Opposition: Relations between the Meserete Kristos

Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is typically being seen through the prism of the Jesuit mission in the 16th and 17th centuries, one can only welcome the fact that the impact of the later Roman Catholic missions on the Horn of Africa has recently also attracted the attention of scholars.[10] The history of Ethiopia's relations with the world of Eastern Orthodoxy can be considered the least investigated area of its entanglements with other Christian traditions. However, a couple of studies lately dedicated to this subject matter indicate that this situation has begun to change.[11] Yet another emerging field of study is the history of the engagement of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches in the modern ecumenical movement.[12]

Further clusters of topics reflecting the overall phenomenon of global entanglements of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity are that of migration and interreligious contacts. Thus, migration of Aksumite Christians to South Arabia in late antiquity, as well as modern migration of Ethiopians to Europe and the United

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Church and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 1960–1980," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 83, no. 4 (2009): 539–570; Diego Maria Malara, "Exorcizing the Spirit of Protestantism: Ambiguity and Spirit Possession in an Ethiopian Orthodox Ritual," *Ethnos* 2019, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2019.1631871.

10 Mauro Forno, *Cardinal Massaja and the Catholic Mission in Ethiopia. Features of an Experience between Religion and Politics*, trans. Angela Amone (Nairobi: Paulines Publ. Africa, 2013); Valentina Fusari, "Comboni Missionary Sisters in Eritrea (1914–2014)," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 30 (2015): 45–69; Yonatan Tewelde, "The Impact of European Christian Imagery on Contemporary Orthodox Tewahedo Iconography in Eritrea," *Northeast African Studies* 19, no. 2 (2019): 91–110; Thomas Fornet-Ponse, "Zwei Kirchen, zwei Riten—eine Gemeinschaft?: Die Ritenfrage der katholischen Kirchen Äthiopiens und die Frage nach kultureller und kirchlicher Identität," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 68, no. 1/2 (2019): 287–306.

11 Tobias Rupprecht, "Orthodox Internationalism: State and Church in Modern Russia and Ethiopia," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 60, no. 1 (2018): 212–235, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417517000469; Stanislau Paulau, "Beyond Words: Practical Dialogue between the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church Family," in *The Dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches*, ed. Christine Chaillot (Volos: Volos Academy Publications, 2016), 415–422.

12 Stanislau Paulau, "Ecumenical Dialogue in the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church," in *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism: Resources for Theological Education*, ed. Pantelis Kalaitzidis et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014), 597–604; Stanislau Paulau, "Interconfessional Dialogue and Traditional Litigation in the Early 20th Century Eritrea: Introducing an Unpublished Manuscript," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Eritrean Studies 20–22 July 2016*. Vol. 1, ed. Zemenfes Tsighe et al. (Asmara: National Higher Education and Research Institute, 2018), 143–155; Stanislau Paulau, "Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and the Global Ecumenical Movement: Forms and Dynamics of Multidirectional Interactions," in *A History of the Desire for Christian Unity. Ecumenism in the Churches (19th–21st Century)*. Vol. 3, ed. Alberto Melloni (Leiden: Brill, 2022), forthcoming.

States, have become subjects of historical analysis.[13] At the same time, the history of interreligious interactions in Ethiopia has emerged as a dynamic field and lead to the production of a notable set of works on Christian-Muslim as well as Christian-Jewish relations.[14]

This short overview of studies which appeared within the last decade reveals a growing interest towards the questions regarding the engagement of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity with the wider world. Nevertheless, since these contributions remain scattered across different disciplinary settings (often bound not only to certain thematic, but also chronological and geographical limits), they do not reach critical mass in order to initiate a broad discussion regarding the positionality of Ethiopian Christianity in a global context. This volume wishes to assume this task and invites to consider global entanglements as well as disruptions thereof not as peripheral phenomena, but rather as factors that have shaped Ethiopian Christianity in the whole course of its history. Yet, entanglements and disconnections are to be understood here not as static dichotomous variables. Rather these analytical concepts aim to emphasize the reciprocal nature of integrative and disintegrative elements that constitute a complex and dynamic relationship. At the same time, one ought to also consider Ethiopian Christianity as a force that has influenced other actors it came in contact with. The pursuit to bring both these dimensions together are at the heart of the studies presented in this book.

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13 George Hatke, "The Aksumites in South Arabia: An African Diaspora of Late Antiquity," in *Migration Histories of the Medieval Afroeurasian Transition Zone. Aspects of Mobility between Africa, Asia and Europe, 300–1500 C.E.*, ed. Johannes Preiser-Kapeller, Lucian Reinfandt, and Yannis Stouraitis (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 291–326; Joachim G. Persoon, "The Planting of the Tabot on European Soil: The Trajectory of Ethiopian Orthodox Involvement with the European Continent," *Studies in World Christianity* 16, no. 3 (2010): 320–340; Walle Engedayehu, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in the Diaspora: Expansion in the Midst of Division," *African Social Science Review* 6, no. 1 (2013): 115–133.

14 Haggai Erlich, *Islam and Christianity in the Horn of Africa: Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010); Jon Abbink, "Religion in Public Spaces: Emerging Muslim-Christian Polemics in Ethiopia," *African Affairs* 110, no. 439 (2011): 253–274; Jürgen Klein, "Some Patterns and Trends in Christian-Muslim Relations in Ethiopia," in *Orientalische Christen und Europa. Kulturbegegnung zwischen Interferenz, Partizipation und Antizipation*, ed. Martin Tamcke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 293–308; F. Peter Ford, "Christian-Muslim Relations in Ethiopia: Lessons from the Past, Opportunities for the Future," in *World Christianity in Muslim Encounter*, ed. Stephen R. Goodwin (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009), 54–70; Amélie Chekroun, "Conquête(s) et conversions religieuses dans l'Éthiopie du xvie siècle," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 182 (2018): 149–166; Brigitte Proksch, "Mönchtum in Äthiopien: Einflüsse und Wechselwirkungen mit Judentum und Islam," in *Das Charisma des Ursprungs und die Religionen: Das Werden christlicher Orden im Kontext der Religionen*, ed. Petrus Bsteh and Brigitte Proksch (Berlin: Lit, 2011), 13–35.

All the contributions collected in this volume (apart of that of Blessen George Babu) were presented at the panel "Ethiopian Christianity: Global Interconnections and Local Identities" within the 20th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies "Regional and Global Ethiopia—Interconnections and Identities" that took place on 1–5 October 2018 in Mäqälä, Ethiopia. We wish to thank all the contributors for their vigorous and passionate engagement in this academic endeavor. Transliteration norms for Gəʿəz and Amharic are based on those established by the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. Ethiopian personal names are given in references as usual, listing always the personal name and name of the father, without reversal in bibliographic entries.

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PART 1

Late Antique and Mediaeval Perspectives

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CHAPTER 2

Christianizing Ethiopia: Legendary Motherhood in the Story of Frumentius

Bernadette McNary-Zak

1 Introduction

Over forty years ago, the Ethiopian philologist Getatchew Haile published a translation of, and introduction to, the *Homily in Honour of St. Frumentius Bishop of Axum* from a collection of homilies copied between 1336 and 1340 for the Monastery of Ḥayq Ǝsṭifanos in Wällo, Ethiopia.[1] The homily includes a version of the story of Frumentius that distinguishes the figure of the Queen in the christianisation of the Aksumite kingdom. If, as the American sociologist Gary Alan Fine writes, "[c]ollective memory is about the past—a past filtered and shaped through the needs of the present,"[2] then how might we evaluate the hermeneutic purchase of the version of the story contained in the homily? A brief exploration of how royal motherhood operates in the homily's version of the story situates its distinct pedagogical and cultural currency in an Ethiopian Christian etiology intending to inform and to shape collective memory, and collective identity, for its 14th century monastic audience.[3]

1 Getatchew Haile, "The Homily in Honour of St. Frumentius Bishop of Axum (EMML 1763 ff. 84^{v}–86^{r})," *Analecta Bollandiana* 97, no. 3 (1979): 309. EMML 1763 is one of two extant manuscripts (EMML 8508 is uncatalogued and unedited). See: Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Sälama (Käśate Bərhan)," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 484–488. See also: Massimo Villa, "Frumentius in the Ethiopic Sources: Mythopoeia and Text-Critical Considerations," *Rassenga di Studi Etiopici*, Serie terza, 48, no. 1 (2017): 87–111.

2 Gary Alan Fine, "Rumor, Trust and Civil Society: Collective Memory and Cultures of Judgment," *Diogenes* 54, no. 1 (2007): 7. On the adaptation of the story of Frumentius see: Villa, "Frumentius."

3 I am grateful to colleagues at the Gender and Medieval Studies Conference (Oxford 2018) and the 20th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (Mäqälä 2018) for discussion of earlier drafts of this short essay. I am also grateful to the editors and reviewers of this volume. The story of Frumentius has received considerable scholarly attention. The present preliminary study approaches its reception through a narrow focus on the characterization of the figure of the unnamed Queen in the homily's version of the story making use of Villa's foundational work. The characterization of the Queen has not, to my knowledge, received this type of comparative scholarly assessment. The present study does not include the other 14C manuscript

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004505254_003

2 From Homily to History

A cursory review of some of the earliest variants of the story of Frumentius dated to the period of Roman late antiquity reveals inconsistent treatment of the Aksumite Queen.[4] The fourth century ecclesiastical historian, Rufinus of Aquileia, claims to have received the story of Frumentius from his subject's childhood companion, Edesius.[5] However, Rufinus includes the story in his continuation of Eusebius' ecclesiastical history, a section of the work that may have drawn on the earlier ecclesiastical history of Gelasius of Caesarea.[6] Gelasius and Rufinus both employ a basic two-part structure for the story of Frumentius. The first part of the story describes formative events in Frumentius' early life: Frumentius and Edesius travel abroad with their uncle, they are taken captive when their uncle is killed, and they are placed into service in the Aksumite royal court by the king.[7] The second part of the story presents subsequent events in Frumentius' adulthood: Frumentius and Edesius remain in their posts when the king dies, they gather a Christian community and, upon

in the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (EMML 8508), nor does it include discussion of the historical identity of the figure of the Aksumite Queen. Due to linguistic limitations, the present study is based almost entirely on sources available in English and in translation. Future work hopes to incorporate a number of critical studies including, among others: Alessandro Bausi, "La tradizione scrittoria etiopica," *Segno e Testo* 6 (2008): 507–557; Carlo Conti Rossini, *Storia d'Etiopia. Parte Prima. Dalle Origini all'avvento della Dinastia Salomonide* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1928); Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Sembrouthes 'gran re' (DAE IV 3 = RIÉth 275). Per la storia del primo ellenismo aksumita," *La Parola del Passato* 59 (2004): 103–157; Paolo Marrassini, *Storia e leggenda dell'Etiopia tardoantica. Le iscrizioni reali aksumite* (Brescia: Paideia, 2014).

4 For a comparative chart of the versions of the story in the ecclesiastical histories of this period see: Bruno W. Dombrowski and Franz A. Dombrowski, "Frumentius/Abbā Salāmā: Zu den Nachrichten über die Anfänge des Christentums in Äthiopien," *Oriens Christianus* 68 (1984): 114–169, especially 151. See also the presentation of the story in: Villa, "Frumentius," 88–89; Fiaccadori, "Sälama (Käśate Bərhan)," 485–486.

5 Rufinus of Aquileia, *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia: Books 10 and 11*, trans. Philp R. Amidon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19. The story of Frumentius is in Book X.9–10, pages 19–20. See also: David Rohrbacher, *The Historians of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2002).

6 Gelasius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History: The Extant Fragments with an Appendix containing the Fragments from Dogmatic Writings*, eds. Martin Wallraff, Jonathan Stutz and Nicholas Marinides, trans. Nicholas Marinides (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), xxxiii–xxxvii. The story of Frumentius is on pages 130–139. Gelasius also credits his version of the story of Frumentius to Edesius. See also the discussion in: Mark Humphries, "Rufinus's Eusebius: Translation, Continuation, and Edition in the Latin *Ecclesiastical History*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16, no. 2 (2008): 143–164, especially 150–159.

7 Gelasius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 130–135; Rufinus of Aquileia, *Church History*, 19.

release, they part as Frumentius travels to Alexandria where he accepts episcopal consecration and returns to serve the church in Aksum.[8]

Gelasius and Rufinus both highlight the role of the Aksumite Queen in two key moments of transition in the kingdom. The first moment of transition marks the death of the king. Both ecclesiastical historians indicate that when the king dies leaving an infant son as heir, the Queen appeals to Frumentius and Edesius to remain in the kingdom in order to assist with its administration because of her trust in them and their administrative capabilities.[9] Only Rufinus includes an additional detail: he explains that the dying king had offered the pair release from service upon his death.[10] The second moment of transition signals the maturity of the young king. When the young king reaches appropriate age, Frumentius and Edesius leave the kingdom. Here, Rufinus again offers a distinct observation, maintaining that Frumentius and Edesius "executed their trust completely and handed it back faithfully"[11] to the royal pair before departing the kingdom.

Writing in the mid fifth century, the ecclesiastical historian Socrates refers explicitly to Rufinus as his source for the story of Frumentius.[12] Although Socrates relies on Rufinus, he also draws on a number of other sources, perhaps including Gelasius, for his version of the story.[13] Socrates reinforces an independent feature of the Queen's role from each of these ecclesiastical historians. Like Rufinus (and unlike Gelasius), Socrates contends that when the king dies, he gives Frumentius and Edesius freedom from their service.[14] For Rufinus and Socrates, the king's promise and Frumentius' renunciation of freedom establish a significant foundation for the work that Frumentius undertakes during his continued service. Frumentius' decision to remain in the kingdom appears to be determined for the greater good of the Aksumite people, the Queen's people, thereby concretizing a specific relationship with the Queen and her son.[15]

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8 Gelasius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 135–139; Rufinus of Aquileia, *Church History*, 20.

9 Gelasius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 134–135; Rufinus of Aquileia, *Church History*, 19.

10 Rufinus of Aquileia, *Church History*, 19.

11 Ibid., 20.

12 Socrates Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus*, ed. Andrew Zenos (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1957). The story of Frumentius is in Book I.19, pages 51–52.

13 Gelasius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, xxxvii–xxxix.

14 Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 52. See above: note 10.

15 On the relationship of queens to sons, see Iris Berger and E. Frances White, *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 18–19.

By elevating Frumentius' choice alongside his intellectual and administrative capability and prowess, both Rufinus and Socrates suggest that Frumentius' efforts to build up spaces for Christian prayer and infrastructure for Christian worship in the kingdom, during the remaining years of continued service to the royal family, receive imperial support.[16] It is telling that Frumentius is openly Christian and that he is entrusted to stabilize the practice of others who are openly Christian across the kingdom; missionary growth takes place under the oversight of the Queen as her son matures.

Like Gelasius (and unlike Rufinus), Socrates emphasizes that Frumentius and Edesius' release from service is based on their explicit request to leave, their desire to return to their homeland and their permission from the king.[17] For Gelasius and Socrates, such emphasis reinforces Frumentius and Edesius' submission to the secular, governing authority and status of the now mature king. It also draws attention to the fact that Frumentius' stated desire remains unfulfilled. Upon release, Frumentius travels to Alexandria. When Gelasius indicates earlier in his account that Frumentius and Edesius "were not able to establish altars because they did not possess sacerdotal authority"[18] as they work to support Christians in the kingdom, he provides a reasonable explanation for Frumentius' decision. Socrates retains a similar tone of preparation and need that provides implicit reason for Frumentius' acquisition of external ecclesiastical support in Alexandria.[19] For Gelasius and Socrates, the inclusion of Frumentius' unrealized intent suggests that, while Frumentius' decision to travel to Alexandria may not have been publicized, it was certainly supported given that he returns to preside as bishop over the Christians in their kingdom. The implicit welcome of this initiative is a gesture of ongoing imperial oversight in the development of the Christianization of the kingdom.

It is noteworthy that Rufinus, Gelasius, and Socrates share a single detail: the Queen and her son attempt to dissuade Frumentius and Edesius from departing the kingdom. Imperial pressure recognizes that Frumentius and Edesius have earned a place of importance with the royal family as *Christian* administrators.[20]

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16 Rufinus of Aquileia, *Church History*, 20; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 52.

17 Gelasius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 136–137; Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 52.

18 Gelasius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 137.

19 Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 52. On Athanasius in these accounts see also: Villa, "Frumentius," 93.

20 In contrast, Theodoret of Cyrus erases the Aksumite Queen from his version of the story of Frumentius. See: Philip Schaff, ed., *Theodoret, Jerome, Gennadius, and Rufinus: Historical Writings* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989). The story is found in Book 1.22, page 58.

3 From History to Homily

The *Homily in Honour of St. Frumentius Bishop of Axum* opens with a clear statement of purpose: to explain the Christianization of Aksum.[21] The homily uses native terms for the Aksumite Kingdom (i.e. Agʿazi) and its royal family in order to set the story of Frumentius into a particularly Ethiopian Christian context.[22] Although the version of the story in the homily shares a number of features found in the earlier ecclesiastical histories reviewed above, including a similar structure and sequence of events,[23] there is a subtle yet salient difference: the identity and influence of the Aksumite Queen in the homily's version centers on the inclusion of a speech act.

Unlike the ecclesiastical histories, in the homily's version of the story of Frumentius the Queen is introduced in relation to several other members of the royal family.[24] The Queen is further distinguished by her public pronouncement about the status of Frumentius and Edesius, issued immediately following the death of the king; unlike the ecclesiastical histories reviewed above, in the homily the Queen speaks directly to the pair and her words—issued in a single statement of public pronouncement—are included.[25] That the Queen is the first main character in the homily's version of the story to speak—and that she speaks as a figure of authority—sharpens her agency and autonomy in the homily. It is *she* who states in her pronouncement—*when* Frumentius and Edesius should leave the kingdom.[26] Because she has requested that the pair remain in service, her pronouncement appears to strain the dead

21 Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 316.

22 Ibid., 310–313. As in the ecclesiastical histories reviewed above, the Aksumite Queen is unnamed in the homily.

23 For discussion of the relationship between the homily and the ecclesiastical histories as well as other sources, see: Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 309–313; Fiaccadori, "Sälama". Villa, "Frumentius," has undertaken the careful work needed to confirm Getatchew Haile's proposal for the homily's use of Socrates' account (see 92–95).

24 Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 317; on the complicated relationship between family members, which appears to include more than one son, see: Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 313. See also: Getatchew Haile, "An Anonymous Homily in Honor of King Ǝllä Aṣbäḥa of Axum. EMML 1763, ff. 34^{v}–35^{v}," *Northeast African Studies* 3, no. 2 (1981), 27; Wolfgang Hahn, "Ezanas and Caleb, the Pair of Saintly Kings," in *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (*Hamburg 2003*), ed. Siegbert Unlig (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 260–265; Pierluigi Piovanelli, "The Apocryphal Legitimation of a 'Solomonic' Dynasty in the *Kəbrä nägäśt*—A Reappraisal," *Aetheopica* 16 (2013): 7–44, especially 17–19.

25 Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 317.

26 Ibid.

king's decision to free Frumentius and Edesius from service upon his death.[27] Here, Frumentius and Edesius appear to remain in service in obedience to the Queen's pronouncement, thereby acknowledging an authority of person and of office.[28]

The consequence is an alliance with Frumentius; he and the Queen will share responsibility for key areas of the young king's development. The more explicit nature of this partnership is rendered in the observation that Frumentius struggled with his administrative duties.[29] Here, Frumentius' administrative weaknesses will serve to showcase the strength of his religious sensibilities and accomplishments. Over time, Frumentius undertakes public religious activities, with others and without any obstacles; Christianity takes shape openly and with imperial support.[30] Accordingly, when Frumentius and Edesius intend to depart the kingdom, the implication is that they are dissuaded not because of Frumentius' secular influence but, rather, because of his religious impact.[31] The process of constructing Frumentius as a holy person in the homily's version thereby extends more deliberately beyond Frumentius to the figure of the Aksumite Queen; in the homily, her pronouncement is connected to the growth of the Christian religion in the kingdom.[32]

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27 Ibid. This also magnifies the element of choice for Edesius and Frumentius.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid. See also: Villa, "Frumentius," 104–105.

30 Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 317. This parallels the activities described in Rufinus and Socrates, see above: note 16.

31 Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 317.

32 There is a considerable body of scholarship on the Christianization of Aksum. Studies include, among others: Erich Dinkler, "New Questions concerning King Ezana of Axum," *Études et travaux* 9 (1976): 6–15; Steven Kaplan, "Ezana's Conversion Reconsidered," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 13, no. 2 (1982): 101–109; Stuart C. Munro-Hay, *Aksum, An African Civilization of Late Antiquity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991); Christopher Haas, "Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no. 1 (2008): 101–126; Stephanie L. Black, "'In the Power of the Christian God Christ': Greek inscriptional evidence for the anti-Arian theology of Ethiopia's first Christian king," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 71, no. 1 (2009): 93–110; David W. Phillipson, *Foundations of an African Civilization: Aksum & the Northern Horn 1000 BC–AD 1300*. Woodbridge: Suffolk Curry, 2012; Pierluigi Piovanelli, "Reconstructing the Social and Cultural History of the Aksumite Kingdom: Some Methodological Reflections," in *Inside and Out: Interactions Between Rome and the Peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, eds. Jitse H.F. Dijkstra and Greg Fischer (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 329–350; Rugare Rukini, "Negus Ezana: Revisiting the Christianisation of Aksum," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (2021). DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42i1.2083.

4 From Homily to Memory

Why might the copyist have attended to a homily containing this version of the story of Frumentius? How might this version align with the monastic community's annual commemoration of Saint Frumentius? An appeal to context may provide an initial direction for future consideration. The homily's version recounts the spread of an imperially, politically, and theologically supported form of Ethiopian Christianity.[33] By casting Frumentius as a founding father of Ethiopian Christianity, whose efforts were made possible by the religious sympathies of the Aksumite Queen, the homily's version casts an etiology that reinforces an ecclesiastical line of succession and royal legitimacy in the past, an etiology that may inscribe positions embedded in monastic tensions of the present.[34]

The Monastery of Ḥayq Ǝsṭifanos, located in the Amhara region, operated during a period of religious revival.[35] Under the Solomonic dynasty of this period, hagiography (*gädl* writing) lauded the struggles and triumphs of prior Christians.[36] Monasteries like Ḥayq Ǝsṭifanos were responsible for copying manuscripts "which preserved for later generations the cultural legacy of Aksum."[37] Donald N. Levine writes that "the differentiation of an autonomous stratum of literati made it possible for monks to diffuse the national religious system far and wide."[38] As a result, Levine continues, "They could also develop a literary tradition that underlay a more inclusive collective identity."[39] Culturally relevant, this "more inclusive collective identity" might thereby impact not only the monks but their fellow non-monastic Christians in the region.

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33 See the discussion of belief legends in: Linda Dégh, "What Is A Belief Legend?" *Folklore* 107 (1996): 33–46.

34 See above: note 2. See also: Villa, "Frumentius," 99–100 for discussion of the homiletic use of ancient sources.

35 Donald Crummey, "Church and Nation: The Ethiopian Orthodox Täwahedo Church (from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century)," in *Eastern Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 457–487, https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521811132.020.

36 Steven Kaplan, "Hagiographies and the History of Medieval Ethiopia," *History in Africa* 8 (1981): 107–123.

37 Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia: From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 20.

38 Donald N. Levine, "Evolutionary Grades within Complex Societies: The Case of Ethiopia," in *Social Theory and Regional Studies in the Global Age*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014), 245.

39 Ibid.

The transmission of foundational narratives and legends contributed to this religious revival by hearkening to the past in a purposeful way. In particular, the *Kəbrä Nägäśt* introduced an account of the rise of the contemporary Solomonic dynasty "claiming both the legitimate mantle of the Aksumite rulers and descent from the biblical King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba."[40] Here, "Solomonic renewal in the state was preceded by renewal in the church, which expressed itself in a vigorous monastic movement."[41] In this context, by recalling the success of missionary growth, the homily's version of the story of Frumentius may have provided ideological support for Christian evangelization and expansion efforts under King ʿAmdä Ṣəyon.[42] Taddesse Tamrat explains that several monasteries in this period, including several in the Amhara region, "seem to have made a strong bid for influence as champions of better moral standards in the administration of the Church, and in the daily lives of the Christians, including the monarchs themselves."[43] The Egyptian ecclesiastical authority at this time, *Abunä* Yaʿəqob, created strategic alliances with monastic leaders in the region in an effort to influence religious reform.[44] More specifically, the power of the royal court thwarted the *Abunä*'s unsuccessful attempts to overturn the practice of polygamy among the king and his successors.[45]

The homily's version of the story of Frumentius admits to a polygamous king who dies with an heir too young to rule independently; as a result, this version repositions the direct authority of the king during a key period in the spread of Christianity in the kingdom. By stabilizing and enhancing the authority of the Aksumite Queen, this version hearkens to a long tradition of rule and regency by Ethiopian queens in the past.[46] There is, perhaps, a certain irony between a king who ignores reprimands about his un-Christian marital practices and a

40 Crummey, "Church and Nation," 461. See also Steven Kaplan, "Dominance and Diversity: Kingship, Ethnicity, and Christianity in Orthodox Ethiopia," *Church History and Religious Culture* 89, no. 1 (2009): 291–305; Piovanelli, "The Apocryphal Legimitation"; Iosif Fridman, "The Aksumite Kingdom in the Lives of Aksumite Saints," in *Veneration of Saints in Christian Ethiopia: Proceedings of the International Workshop Saints in Christian Ethiopia: Literary Sources and Veneration, Hamburg, April 28–29, 2012*, ed. Denis Nosnitsin (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015), 51–66.

41 Crummey, "Church and Nation," 461.

42 Ibid., 468.

43 Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia: 1270–1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 107.

44 Ibid., 115–118, 178–180. Taddesse Tamrat provides a dating of c. 1337 for this *Abunä* (117). See also: Crummey, "Church and Nation," 468–469.

45 Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State*, 116–118. See also: Crummey, "Church and Nation," 469.

46 Knud Tage Andersen, "The Queen of the Habasha in Ethiopian History, Tradition and Chronology," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 63, no. 1 (2000): 31–63.

Queen who tolerates the spread of the religion throughout her kingdom over an extended period of time. A Coptic *Abunä* attempting, unsuccessfully, to purge his king from such pagan practice might see a cautionary tale in the homily's version of the story of Frumentius.

The homily's version also asserts a strong relationship between the Coptic *Abunä* and the local Christian community. Getatchew Haile draws attention to the significance of this relationship with regard to religious identity when he suggests that "The anonymous author of this homily was a foreigner who had access to local and foreign sources."[47] This suggestion highlights again the etiological role of the story of Frumentius in this particular context. Steven Kaplan explains that

> Athanasius' selection of Frumentius to head the Church in Ethiopia established a precedent whereby the leader of the Ethiopian Church was chosen by the head of the Egyptian (later Coptic) Church until the middle of the twentieth century. The candidates chosen, Egyptian monks and not Ethiopians, arrived in Ethiopia unfamiliar with the local languages and customs and with no indigenous political base. Thus, they were usually dependent on the goodwill of the monarch.[48]

In the homily's version of the story of Frumentius, the Queen's "goodwill" is extended.[49] She comes to recognize Frumentius as an orthodox Christian figure of authority. Given the evidence that Frumentius' episcopal consecration was contested,[50] the consequences of the Queen's pronouncement are later reinforced by the homily's use of epithets that exalt Frumentius' status and praise for his activities; these serve to validate the legitimacy of his episcopal appoint-

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47 Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 313. See also: Villa, "Frumentius," 97–98.

48 Kaplan, "Dominance and Diversity," 294. For an extended historical treatment, see: Stuart C. Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria: The Metropolitan Episcopacy of Ethiopia* (Warszawa: ZAŚ PAN, 1997). See also: Alessandro Bausi and Alberto Camplani, "New Ethiopic Documents for the History of Christian Egypt," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 17, no. 2 (2013): 215–247, especially 226–230; Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 312, for discussion of the homily's purpose in relation to this practice.

49 For comparison consider: Getatchew Haile, "An Anonymous Homily in Honor of King ƎIlla Aṣbäḥa of Axum"; Susanne Hummel, "The Disputed *Life* of the Saintly Ethiopian Kings ʾAbrəhā and ʾAṣbəḥa," *Scrinium* 12, no. 1 (2016): 35–72, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1163/18177565-00121p06.

50 See Athanasius, *Apologia ad Constantium*, 31, in Archibald Robertson, ed., *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1953), 248–249.

ment.[51] Together, the characterization of Frumentius' religious orthodoxy and episcopal legitimacy in the homily could thus define a commissioning whose lineage extends to the Coptic *Abunä*, possibly lending integrity to a royal reprimand.

5 Conclusion

The *Homily in Honour of St. Frumentius Bishop of Axum* recalls a version of the story of Frumentius that not only affirms the influential role of a foreigner on the religious orientation of an Aksumite Queen and her royal family; it also intensifies deliberately her characterization through the inclusion of her speech act. In the homily, it is under her authority, oversight, and goodwill that Christianity, a religion practiced by Roman merchants at the borders of her kingdom, is institutionalized. It is under her watch that a particularly Ethiopian form of Christianity emerges. Through this particular construction of collective memory, the homily hearkens to the past "filtered and shaped through the needs of the present,"[52] and the story of Frumentius maintains the capacity to function as a tale of local and global proportions in the Ethiopian Christian imagination.

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51 Getatchew Haile, "Homily," 318. Frumentius' impact is emphasized at the close of the homily (ibid., 318), where Villa observes another parallel with Socrates (Villa, "Frumentius," 93–94).

52 Fine, "Rumor," 7.

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CHAPTER 3

How Did Ethiopian Christians Come to Know the Parisian Cephalophoric Martyr Bishop Dionysius?

Michael Muthreich

1 Introductory Remarks

Everyone dealing with Dionysius the Areopagite has to answer the question about whom exactly he is speaking. There are at least three possible answers. He may speak about the "original" Dionysius, the one who followed Paul after his sermon at the Areopagus and became Christian, even though we do not know much about him because we do not have much pertinent information. Alternatively, he may speak about the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* about whom one can say quite a lot with regard to theology and philosophy. He may speak as well about the Parisian cephalophoric bishop to fill the audience or the reader with wonder and amazement and maybe there are still others he can speak about, when treating Dionysius the Areopagite. I will focus on the three mentioned individuals who became one single "Dionysius" by certain traditions.

The centuries in which the three Dionysii lived are quite easily to indicate: It is the first century for the "original" Dionysius, the third century for the cephalophoric Parisian Bishop Dionysius, who—as an aside—is the very first Christian cephalophore,[1] and the late fifth or early sixth century for the "Corpus Dionysius." The identification of the "Corpus Dionysius" with the "original" Dionysius took place soon after or maybe already with the appearance of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* collected and commented by John of Scythopolis in the sixth century. The Parisian bishop "joined the party" in the ninth century "with a little help" of Hilduin, abbot of the abbey of Saint Denis located close to the city of Paris. It was there that the merging of these three different persons took place.[2]

1 "[*N*]*ovo et prius inaudito miraculo*." Michael Lapidge, *Hilduin of Saint-Denis: The Passio S. Dionysii in Prose and Verse* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 696.

2 Lapidge however states that Hilduin on his part drew on a certain anonymus "Passio S. Dionysii" in which the Parisian Dionysius was first identified with the Areopagite. In addition, the account of the miraculous cephalophory is told there for the first time. See ibid. 660.

Anyway, in oriental Christianity as a whole—and thus also in Ethiopia—the identification of Dionysius, the disciple of Paul, with the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* was accepted undisputedly, while Oriental churches generally speaking were ignorant of the existence of the Parisian bishop or Dionysius' decapitation in the Far West! Were they really ignorant of him? No, not all of them: The Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church for example did in fact know him or, to be more precise, did know about his decapitation in the West, including the miracle of him carrying his head after having had it cut off, no later than the 15th century! The Ethiopian tradition knows as well that he had two disciples who were beheaded with him. In the West, their names are Eleutherius and Rusticus, while they became Äryanos and Wusefos in the Ethiopian tradition. So, in which text can we find this story about Dionysius the cephalophore in the Ethiopic tradition? It is the so-called autobiography of Dionysius the Areopagite, the *Narratio de vita sua* (Clavis Patrum Graecorum 6633),[3] also extant in Syriac,[4] Armenian,[5] Arabic,[6] Coptic[7] and Georgian[8] but not in Greek or Latin. This text, usually read on Good Friday in the Coptic and the Ethiopic tradition of the Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church, claims to be a narration of Dionysius in which he reports a vision he had in Heliopolis during an earthquake and a solar eclipse. It turns out that these, as they were non-natural phenomena, occurred because of the crucifixion of Christ. Dionysius' vision anticipates the correlation that he eventually understood after Saint Paul had come to Athens and held his sermon at the Areopagus. This correspondence of his vision with the report of Saint Paul was decisive for him to become a Christian.

3 Mauritius Geerard, ed., *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*. Vol. 3, *A Cyrillo Alexandrino ad Iohannem Damascenum*, 2nd ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 276. For further information about the text tradition, see: André Binggeli, "Les traditions hagiographiques orientales liées à Denys l'Aréopagite." *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes* 172 (2018): 141–153.

4 Marc-Antoine Kugener, "Une autobiographie syriaque des Denys l'Aréopagite," *Oriens Christianus* 7, no. 1 (1907): 292–348.

5 Nerses Akinian, "Geschichte des heiligen Dionysius Areopagita," in *Materialien zum Studium des armenischen Martyrologiums*, ed. Nerses Akinian (Vienna: Mechitaristen Buchdruckerei, 1914), 35–42.

6 Paul Peeters, "قصة القديس ديونيسيوس الاريوپاغي (The Story of St. Dionysius the Areopagite)," *al-Mašriq* 12 (1909): 118–127.

7 Oskar von Lemm, "Eine dem Dionysius Areopagita zugeschriebene Schrift in koptischer Sprache," *Bulletin d'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Pétersbourg* 12, no. 3 (1900): 267–306.

8 Paul Peeters, "La version ibéro-arménienne de l'autobiographie de Denys l'Aréopagite," *Analecta Bollandiana* 39 (1921): 277–313.

2 Postscript of the Ethiopian *Narratio de vita sua*

The identification of Dionysius the Areopagite with the Parisian martyr bishop indicates a postscript, the narration being essentially complete and some additional information on Dionysius given. The Ethiopic text reads:

> ወዝንቱሰ፡ ደዮናስዮስ፡ ውእቱ፡ ዘተርጕመ፡ ሥርዓተ፡ ቤተ፡ ክርስቲያን፡ ወብዙኃ፡ ድርሳናተ፡ ፭እምኔሆሙ፡ ድርሳነ፡ መስቀል፡ ዘይትናበብ፡ በዕለተ፡ ዓርብ፡ ወ፭እምኔሆሙ፡ ድርሳን፡ ዘሀሎ፡ ጽሑፈ፡ ውስተ፡ ዝንቱ፡ መጽሐፍ፡ ወእምዝ፡ ሶበ፡ ሰምዓ፡ ዱማትያኖስ፡ ንጉሥ፡ ከሀዲ፡ ከመ፡ ዲዮናስዮስ፡ ይሰብክ፡ ወይሜሕር፡ በስሙ፡ ለእግዚእነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ አሐዞ፡ ወሞቅሖ፡ ወኮነኖ፡ ኮነኔ፡ ዓቢየ፡ ወመተረ፡ ርእሶ፡ ቅድስተ፡ በሰይፍ። ወነሥአ፡ አክሊለ፡ በመንግሥተ፡ ሰማያት፡ ወእምድኅረ፡ ተመተረት፡ ርእሱ፡ አንሶሰወት፡ በድኑ፡ መጠነ፡ ፪ምዕራፍ፡ እንዘ፡ በየማን፡ ትፀውር፡ ርእሳ፡ ምትርተ፡ ወእምዝ፡ መተሩ፡ አርእስተ፡ አርዳኢሁ፡ ውሲፎስ፡ ወአርያኖስ፡ ጸሎቶሙ፡ ወበረከቶሙ፡ የሃሉ፡ ምስለ፡ አቡነ፡ ወልደ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ለዓለመ፡ ዓለም፡ አሜን፡ ወአሜን። ለይኩን፡ ለይኩን፡[9]
>
> And this is indeed Dionysius who expounded the ecclesiastical hierarchy and many homilies. One of those is the homily about the (Holy) Cross, to be read on Good Friday. Another one of them is the homily that is written down in this book. Afterwards, when the infidel king Domitianus heard that Dionysius preached and taught in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, he arrested and imprisoned him, and punished him severely. And he cut off his holy head with the sword. And he received the crown (of martyrdom) in the Kingdom of Heaven. And after his head had been cut off his (dead) body still ran two miles carrying the cut-off head on the right. And afterwards they cut off the heads of his disciples Wusefos and Äryanos. May their intercession and their blessing be with our father Wäldä Iyäsus in all eternity! Amen and Amen. So be it. So be it.

This short postscript tells the martyrdom of Dionysius but says nothing about where it happened. However, the fact that he went to the Far West is told in another manuscript, namely in EMML 3802.[10] There we read:

> ወቅዱስሰ፡ ዲዮናስዮስ፡ ተርጕመ፡ ሥርዓተ፡ ቤተ፡ ክርስቲያን። ወእምድኅረዝ፡ ሖረ፡ ኀበ፡ ጽንፈ፡ ምዕራብ፡ በመዋዕሊሆሙ፡ ለሐዋርያት። ወገብረ፡ ተአምራተ፡ ወመንክራተ፡ ብዙኃተ።

9 The text is from Michael Muthreich, "Die äthiopische 'narratio de vita sua' (CPG 6633) des Dionysius Areopagita," *Oriens Christianus* 102 (2019): 60.

10 For a short description of the manuscript, see the list below: b) The Biography, no. 7.

And the holy Dionysius expounded the ecclesiastical hierarchy. And afterwards he went to the Far West, in the days of the apostles, and performed a lot of miracles and wonders.

3 Biography and Autobiography

Incidentally looking at manuscript EMML 3802 we come across another peculiarity of the text at hand in the Ethiopic tradition, namely that the same text essentially exists in two different versions, once in the form of an autobiography (Dionysius speaks about himself, the proper *Narratio de vita sua*), but also in the form of a biography (Dionysius is spoken about). Although the narrative form is different, the contents are similar.[11] They are, of course, easy to distinguish by their *incipit* and the corpora of texts, which they are part of usually.

To speak about the different text traditions the *incipit* of both texts are first of interest:

a) The *incipit* of the autobiography[12]

ይቤ፡ ደዮናስዮስ፡ ገናዊ፡ ዘጸሐፈ፡ በእንተ፡ ስቅለቱ፡ ለመድኃኒነ፡ በእለት፡ ንጽሕት፡ ተጋብዑ፡ አረማውያን፡ ከመ፡ ይሡዑ፡ ውሉደሙ፡[13]

Dionysius the heathen priest [who wrote] about the crucifixion of our Saviour said: At the time of purification [literally: on the pure day] the heathens gathered to sacrifice their sons.

b) The *incipit* of the biography

አንቀጽ፡ ዘዲዮናስዮስ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ዲዮናስዮስ፡ ሰማዕት፡ ኤጲስ፡ ቆጶስ፡ ዘሀገረ፡ አትናስ። ለዝንቱ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ኮነ፡ ጥንተ፡ ነገሩ። ወውእቱ፡ ሊቅ፡ ወርእሰ፡ ኵሎሙ፡ ጠቢባን፡

Section on Saint Dionysius the martyr bishop of Athens: This is the beginning of the report about this saint. He was master and head of all the wise men.

11 The biography omits the first part of the *Narratio de vita sua* though, which tells about the education of Dionysius and starts with him being the head of the philosophers.

12 The Christian *basmala* precedes the given *incipit*.

13 Cf. Muthreich, *"Die äthiopische 'narratio de vita sua'"*, 52.

There are, in fact, different beginnings for the biography. The one given above is from manuscript Orient 767 (CCLXIII)[14] of the British Library. Another quite common *incipit* is:

> ድርሳን፡ ዘቅዱስ፡ ዲዮናስዮስ፡ ብፁዕ፡ በረከቱ፡ የሃሉ፡ ምስለ፡ ፍቁሩ፡ ለዓለመ፡ ዓለም፡ አሜን፡ ወሀሎ፡ ፩ኤጲስ፡ ቆጶስ፡ ዘስሙ፡ ዲዮናስዮስ፡ ዘሀገረ፡ አቲና፡ ወዝንቱ፡ ተላዓለ፡ በላዕለ፡ ብዙኃን፡ ብትምህርቱ፡ ወበጥበቡ፡
>
> Homily on the holy and blessed Dionysius, may his blessings be with his beloved forever. Amen. There was a bishop called Dionysius in the city of Athens. He was superior to most as far as erudition and wisdom are concerned.

In the Ethiopian *Synaxarium* as given by Colin[15] there is a lengthy *incipit* of the biography, which differs again because it is imbedded in a larger context (the lecture of the sixth of Ṭəqəmt). It is not a stand-alone text here.

The different versions of the *Narratio de vita sua* are part of the following corpora of texts:

a) The autobiography:
   - Corpora containing saints' lives including the *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*.
   - Lectionary for Passion Week.

b) The biography:
   - *The Book of the Commemoration of the Saviour of the World* (መጽሐፈ፡ ተዝካሩ፡ ለመድኃኔ፡ ዓለም) otherwise called *Treatise on the Saviour of the World* (ድርሳነ፡ መድኃኔ፡ ዓለም), starting with *Gädlä Mäba'a Ṣəyon*.
   - Lectionary for Passion Week.
   - *Synaxaria*.

Both texts are also quite often part of the Lectionary for Passion Week or Good Friday (ግብረ፡ ሕማማት). This collection however does not necessarily comprise either the autobiography or the biography.

Another difference between the two versions—already obvious from the corpora of texts, which they are part of—is the date in the liturgical calendar when they are to be read out. The autobiography we only find in the liturgy for Good Friday after the prayer of the sixth hour, which is the usual date for reading it in the Coptic-Arabic tradition, as has been mentioned above. The biography on the other hand is to be read out on this same day (Lectionary for

14 For a short description of the manuscript, see the list below: b) The Biography, no. 5.

15 Gérard Colin, "Le synaxaire éthiopien. Mois de Tequemt," in *Patrologia orientalis* 44, fasc. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 26–27.

Passion Week), as well as on October 16 (፮ተቅምት / sixth Ṭəqəmt) the day of the martyrdom of Dionysius the Areopagite as given in the *Synaxarium*.

4 Manuscripts

Regarding the age of the manuscripts containing the autobiography, they are quite young, which is not uncommon for Ethiopic manuscripts in general. They usually range from between the 18th and the 20th century. As far as the biography is concerned there are *Synaxaria* including the biography dating back to the 16th and even 15th centuries.

As an aside: There exists a manuscript of the *Narratio de vita sua* possibly dating back to the thirteenth century. The *Narratio de vita sua* there is part of a homily of Benjamin of Alexandria for Passion Week.[16] This version is without the mentioned postscript though.

In the following, I present a selective list of relevant manuscripts:

a) The autobiography:
   1. Addis Abäba, Church of St. Peter and Paul, Kolfe, Cod. EMML 242 (ff. 152ª–154ª);
      Parchment; anno 1924; Lectionary for Passion Week.[17]
   2. Addis Abäba, Lədäta Maryam Church, Cod. EMML 411 (ff. 156ª–157ª);
      Parchment; early 20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[18]
   3. Goǧǧam, Märṭulä Maryam Monastery, Cod. EMDA 00008 (IMG 181 jpg; 182 jpg);
      Parchment; 20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[19]
   4. Goǧǧam, Qäraneyo Mädḫane ʿAläm Monastery, Cod. EMDA 00183 (IMG 240 jpg, 241 jpg);

16 I owe this knowledge to the kind notification of Ted Erho. He informed me that there are no less than five manuscripts of this homily, all except one in a fragmentary state. Unfortunately, he did not provide any further details.

17 William F. Macomber, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library* (*Addis Abäba*) *and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library* (*Collegeville*). Vol. 1 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and St. John's Abbey and University, 1975), 253.

18 William F. Macomber, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library* (*Addis Abäba*) *and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library* (*Collegeville*). Vol. 2 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and St. John's Abbey and University, 1976), 128.

19 For a detailed description of the manuscript, see the website of the "Virtual Hill Museum & Manuscript Library": https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/138171.

Parchment; 19th cent. (?); Lectionary for Passion Week.[20]

5. Šäwa, Church of Mitaq Ämanu'el, Ankobarr, Cod. EMML 2338 (ff. 194[b]–196[a]);
   Parchment; 1813–1847; Lectionary for Passion Week.[21]
6. Šäwa, Church of Hulara Madḫane ʿAläm, Assagərt, Cod. EMML 3629 (ff. 2[a]–4[b]);
   Parchment; 18th cent.; *Gädlä Täklä Haymanot*.[22]
7. Wällo, Church of Wäldəya Mika'el, Cod. EMML 3803 (ff. 137[a]–138[b]);
   Parchment; 19th/20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[23]
8. Wällo, Church of Boru Śəllase, Cod. EMML 4775 (ff. 42[b]–45[b]);[24]
   Parchment; 19th/20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[25]
9. Wällo, Church of Gännätä Giyorgis, Cod. EMML 4856 (ff. 142[b]–144[a]);
   Parchment; 20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[26]
10. Wällo, Church of Mänbärä Ḍäḥäy Täklä Haymanot, Cod. EMML 4967 (ff. 142[b]–144[a]);
    Parchment; anno 1924; Lectionary for Passion Week.[27]

b) The biography:

1. Addis Abäba, Church of the Saviour of the World, Gulale, EMML 519 (ff. 79[b]–83[a]);
   Parchment; 20th cent.; *Treatise on the Saviour of the World*.[28]
2. Addis Abäba, Lədäta Maryam Church, EMML 537 (ff. 119[a]–121[a]);
   Parchment; anno 1932; *Treatise on the Saviour of the World*.[29]

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20 For a detailed description of the manuscript, see the website of the "Virtual Hill Museum & Manuscript Library": https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/500221.

21 Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library* (*Addis Abäba*) *and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library* (*Collegeville*). Vol. 6 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and St. John's University, 1982), 405.

22 Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library* (*Addis Abäba*) *and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library* (*Collegeville*). Vol. 9 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and St. John's University, 1987), 77–78.

23 Ibid. 159–160.

24 This manuscript is in a very fragmentary condition.

25 Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library* (*Addis Abäba*) *and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library* (*Collegeville*). Vol. 10 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and St. John's University, 1993), 307.

26 Ibid. 337–338.

27 Ibid. 373.

28 Macober, *Catalogue*. Vol. 2, 257.

29 Ibid. 272.

3. Addis Abäba, Church of the Saviour of the World, EMML 766 (ff. 59^{b}–62^{a});
   Parchment; end of 19th cent.; *Treatise on the Saviour of the World*.[30]
4. Addis Abäba, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, EMML 1553 (ff. 72^{b}–75^{b});
   Photocopy of an unidentified 20th century manuscript; *The Book of the Commemoration of the Saviour of the World*.[31]
5. London, British Library, Orient 767 [CCLXIII] (ff. 178^{b}–179^{b});
   Parchment; 18th cent; Collection of saints' lives from the Lectionary for Passion Week (?).[32]
6. Šäwa, Church of Säll Dəngay Marqos, EMML 4440 (ff. 141^{a}–141^{b});
   Parchment; anno 1884/5; Lectionary for Passion Week.[33]
7. Wällo, Church of Wäldəya Mika'el, Cod. EMML 3802 (ff. 196^{b}–197^{a});
   Parchment; 19th/20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[34]
8. Wällo, Church of Gännätä Giyorgis, EMML 4856 (ff. 142^{b}–144^{a});
   Parchment (?); 20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[35]
9. Wällo, Church of Däbrä Betel Śəllase, EMML 4898 (ff. 180^{a}–180^{b});
   Parchment (?); 20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[36]
10. Wällo, Church of Mänbärä Ḍäḥay Täklä Haymanot, EMML 4967 (ff. 122^{a}–123^{b});
    Parchment (?); 20th cent.; Lectionary for Passion Week.[37]

Additionally, Colin in his edition of the Ethiopian *Synaxarium* lists the following manuscripts:[38]

1. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien 126 (1699).[39]

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30 William F. Macomber, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library* (*Addis Abäba*) *and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library* (*Collegeville*). Vol. 3 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and St. John's Abbey and University, 1978), 77–78.

31 William F. Macomber and Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library* (*Addis Abäba*) *and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library* (*Collegeville*). Vol. 5 (Collegeville, Minnesota: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library and St. John's Abbey and University, 1981), 51.

32 William Wright, *Catalogue of the Ethiopic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: Longmans & Co, 1877), 173.

33 Getatchew Haile, *Catalogue*. Vol. 10, 155–156.

34 Getatchew Haile, *Catalogue*. Vol. 9, 158.

35 Ibid. 337–338.

36 Ibid. 351–352.

37 Ibid. 273.

38 Colin, *Le synaxaire éthiopien*, 5. I only give the manuscripts mentioned by Colin. To provide a complete listing of *synaxaria* would go far beyond the scope of this article.

39 For a detailed description of the manuscript see the website of the "Bibliothèque nationale

2. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien 677 (15th century).[40]
3. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Éthiopien d'Abbadie 66 (15th–16th century).[41]
4. Wällo, Ḥayq Ǝsṭifanos Monastery, EMML 2054 (1581).[42]
5. Ethiopia (?), EMML 6952 (15th century, mutilated).[43]
5. Ethiopia (?), EMML 6458 (15th century).[44]

5 Origin of the Information about the Parisian Martyr Bishop in Ethiopia

It is easy to detect where the information about Dionysius travelling to the Far West, as well as about the decapitation of him and his two disciples comes from. It stems from the biography of Dionysius written by the already mentioned Hilduin abbot of Saint Denis around the years 835–840.[45] Comparing the biography of Hilduin with the *Narratio de vita sua*, we do not find many correspondences except for some main features that are explicable by premises given in the Scriptures and the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. The biography composed by Hilduin differs from the *Narratio de vita sua* for example in giving the reason of Dionysius' conversion to Christianity, at least as far as the impetus for his accepting baptism is concerned. The *Narratio de vita sua* narrates that the correspondence of what Dionysius saw in his vision in Heliopolis with what Saint Paul told at the Areopagus about the crucifixion of Christ was his motive for

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de France": https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc105600b (systematically used in Colin's edition).

40 For a detailed description of the manuscript see the website of the "Bibliothèque nationale de France": https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc1030542.

41 For a detailed description of the manuscript see the website of the "Bibliothèque nationale de France": https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc1090411 (systematically used in Colin's edition).

42 For a detailed description of the manuscript, see the website of the "Virtual Hill Museum & Manuscript Library": https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/203883 (systematically used in Colin's edition).

43 For a detailed description of the manuscript see the website of the "Virtual Hill Museum & Manuscript Library": https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/200577.

44 I was not able to get further information about this manuscript. It was systematically used in Colin's edition. At the "Virtual Hill Museum & Manuscript Library," there are no images and no cataloging metadata available yet as David Calabro informed me on 19 March 2021, to whom I would like to express my thanks.

45 Cf. Lapidge, *Hilduin of St. Denis*, 124.

receiving baptism. In Hilduin's narration, the rationale for this fact is the story of a certain blind man whom Saint Paul cured. Dionysius eventually desired baptism after becoming aware of this miraculous cure.

The Arabic tradition of the *Narratio de vita sua* knows the story of Dionysius going to the west, to Paris, his decapitation together with two of his disciples and him carrying his head after decapitation as well. This fact testifies at least one manuscript from Beirut (Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque orientale no. 616).[46] Here we find—in a second part as Peeters says—a lengthy narration of what tells Hilduin's biography of Dionysius' martyrdom at the end of the *Narratio de vita sua*. It is very likely that Ethiopians learned the story of Dionysius' decapitation in the west by way of this Arabic narration or a similar one. The narration of Dionysius' and his disciples' martyrdom anyway is much shorter in the Gəʿəz version than in the one given by the mentioned Arabic manuscript. Whether there are Arabic manuscripts containing the abridged martyrdom of Dionysius and his disciples Rusticus and Eleutherius as told in the Gəʿəz *Narratio de vita sua*, and upon what *Vorlage* such Arabic translations depend, remains yet a task of further research.[47] Anyway, it suggests itself very much to explain the names Wusefos and Äryanos as wrong spellings derived from misunderstanding the Arabic writing for Rusticus and Eleutherius.[48]

6 Transmission of the Ethiopian *Narratio de vita sua*

To understand the tradition of the *Narratio de vita sua* in Ethiopic we have to take a quick look at Gəʿəz literature. In doing so, I generally follow Getatchew Haile's *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* article on this subject.[49] Peeters assumes the *Narratio de vita sua* to have been written in Greek originally, but like the *Epis-*

46 Cf. Peeters, *Story of St. Dionysius*, 127. The manuscript is online at the "Virtual Hill Museum & Manuscript Library" website (https://w3id.org/vhmml/readingRoom/view/505006). For the *Narratio de vita sua* see page 208 (…6c105.jpg)—239 (…6c120.jpg). Peeters presents the text until a few lines before the end of page 235 (…6c113.jpg). He made a sign (cross) in the relevant place. It was surely him as well who wrote down the numbers of the folia for the text he edited with a pencil. For Dionysius' martyrdom see page 236–237 (…6c119.jpg).

47 A detailed examination about this topic will provide Corpus Dionysiacum III, 2, which is currently in preparation at the Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Patristische Kommission in Göttingen.

48 Colin, by the way, interprets Wusefos (he writes ʿUsefos) as Joseph and Äryanos (he writes ʾUryanos) as Urien. Cf. Colin, *Le synaxaire éthiopien*, 29 and 31. He does not consider Hilduins account in conjunction with a (misleading) translation from Arabic to explain the names.

49 Cf. Getatchew Haile, "Gəʿəz literature," in *EAe* 2 (2005): 736–741.

tula ad Timotheum de passione apostolorum Petri et Pauli ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite (Clavis Patrum Graecorum 6631)[50] it is not preserved in a Greek manuscript. Kugener on the other hand thinks of a Syriac original whereas Binggeli says "la question de la langue originale de l'*Autobiographie*, syriaque ou grec perdu, reste entire."[51] Anyway, the Ethiopic *Narratio de vita sua* is certainly a translation from Arabic.[52]

The Arabic period of Gəʿəz literature starts already in the time of the Zagʷe dynasty (10th–13th century). There is only the above-mentioned uncertain witness of a translation at that early date (13th century) though. In the 14th century *Abba* Sälama, patriarch of the Ethiopian Church (1348–1388), initiated the translation of the Lectionary for Passion Week of the Coptic Church from Arabic into Gəʿəz. In this lectionary, the *Narratio de vita sua* is read after the prayer of the sixth hour on Good Friday as has been pointed out above. Early manuscripts of it however do not display the text of either the autobiography or the biography.[53] It looks like the *Narratio de vita sua* did not belong to the original text collection but was added later.

The Ethiopian manuscripts containing the *Narratio de vita sua* proper are usually quite young as has been shown. The biography on the other hand is older. We find it in manuscripts of *synaxaria* going back to the 15th century. This leads to a closer look at the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*,[54] which is a translation depending on the *Synaxarium* of the Coptic Church and dating from the end of the 14th century. The reading for the sixth of the month of Bābah though, which corresponds to the sixth of Təqəmt, actually does not display the *Narratio de vita sua*.[55]

The *Narratio de vita sua* finally is also part of the mentioned homily of Benjamin of Alexandria for Passion Week. The Ethiopian manuscript containing the homily possibly goes back to the thirteenth century as Ted Erho thank-

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50 Geerard, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, 275.

51 Cf. Binggeli, *Les traditions hagiographiques*, 146–147.

52 This is proven by the use of an Arabic word (*al-maknūn*—meaning "the Hidden"—for "the unknown God," cf. Act. 17, 23) for example.

53 See for example: Wright, *Catalogue* 1877, 136–140 or Pisani, Vitagrazia. "*ʾAbbā* Salāmā and his Role of Commissioner of the *Gəbra Ḥəmāmāt*: an Additional Evidence from Two Witnesses from Təgray, Northern Ethiopia," *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin* 5, no. 2 (2019): 129–150.

54 Here I refer to Gérard Colin and Alessandro Bausi, "Sənkəssar," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 621–623.

55 Cf. René Basset, "Le synaxaire arabe Jacobite (rédaction copte)," in *Patrologia orientalis* 1, fasc. 3 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907), 319–320. Basset says, he uses two manuscripts for his edition: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de Paris, Arabe 256 (16th century) and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de Paris, Arabe 4869–4870 (14th century). Since the publication is quite old, further research is necessary.

fully let me know. Surely, this date is just an educated guess. Still it may well be that the *Narratio de vita sua* was actually copied even before the 15th century manuscripts of *synaxaria* containing the biography. The earliest translation of the *Narratio de vita sua* into Gəʿəz could indeed go back to the 14th or perhaps even to the late 13th century. Anyway, there are no hints for an acquaintance with the martyrdom of Dionysius in the west at such an early date.

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CHAPTER 4

Cultural Contacts between Ethiopia and Syria: The Nine Saints of the Ethiopian Tradition and Their Possible Syrian Background

Blessen George Babu

1 Introduction

While studying the early and mediaeval histories of Ethiopia, one cannot easily neglect its cultural contacts involving the rest of Christendom, which indisputably eventuated Ethiopia to emerge as one of the ancient Christian domains of Africa. Correspondingly, the spread of Christianity throughout Ethiopia during the Aksumite era, as recounted in a florilegium of Ethiopian hagiographies, is traditionally ascribed to the contributions of the 'Nine Saints':[1] a group of foreigners, presumably monks, "several of royal or near royal Roman birth,"[2] who, by a certain number of scholars in the West[3] were assumed and classified

1 The following are the names of the Nine Saints arranged in alphabetical order along with their date of commemoration (although the corresponding hagiographies might carry slight variations), based on the English translation of the Ethiopian Synaxarium. Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church*. Vol. 1/2 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1976), 116–118, 155, 198, 299–300, 505; Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church*. Vol. 3/4 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1976), 688, 944, 1009–1110. Afṣe (29 Gənbot = ca. 6 June), Alef (11 Mäggabit = ca. 20 March), Gärima or Yəsḥaq (17 Säne = ca. 24 June), Guba (29 Gənbot = ca. 6 June), Liqanos (28 Ḫədar = ca. 8 December), Pänṭälewon (6 Ṭəqəmt = ca. 17 October), Ṣəḥma (16 Ṭərr = ca. 25 January), Yəm'ata (28 Ṭəqəmt = ca. 7 November), Zämika'el Arägawi or Arägawi (14 Ṭəqəmt = ca. 25 October).

Moreover, the number 'nine' need not be necessarily taken for granted as accurate, since the variations in the names might also indicate the possibility that they might be more than nine. For instance, we sometimes also find a tenth name, ʿOṣ (4 Taḫśaś = ca. 13 December) affixed to this list, but interchangeably used also for Guba and Afṣe. Stuart C. Munro-Hay, "Saintly Shadows," in *Afrikas Horn: Akten der Ersten Internationalen Littmann-Konferenz, 2. bis 5. Mai 2002 in München*, ed. Walter Raunig and Steffen Wenig (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 138; Antonella Brita, "Nine Saints," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 1188.

2 Munro-Hay, "Saintly Shadows," 137.

3 Although the label 'Western' in general is grandiloquent and terms like 'West' (or 'Occident') may sound vague just as how its antipodal counterpart 'East' (or 'Orient') does, the terminological distinction 'West' or 'Western' as applied in this paper refers explicitly to the contributions of scholars from Europe who were involved in the field of Ethiopian studies.

in general to be 'Syrian' monks and were believed to have sown Christianity and monastic life in the kingdom of Aksum during a time period collectively addressed as the 'second evangelization'[4] in the history of Ethiopian Christianity, i.e. the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century.[5]

What little available knowledge we receive about these foreign monks is on a large extent based on their Ethiopic hagiographies known as *gädlat*,[6] a literary form that originated most probably by the end of the 14th century or the beginning of the 15th century,[7] where the Gəʿəz hagiographers, according to Munro Hay, "fill in quite lavishly one section of the Aksumite 'dark age', in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, with the rich tapestry of the lives of the so-called Nine Saints"[8] such as the *Gädlä Pänṭälewon* (14th century),[9] the *Gädlä Gärima* (15th century),[10] the *Gädlä Zämikaʾel Arägawi* (16th century),[11] and the *Gädlä Afṣe*;[12] most of these works are pseudepigraphs

4 The first feat of evangelization was accomplished by Fremnaṭos (Frumentius), who was later appointed as the first bishop of Aksum and is popularly known by his Ethiopian appellation, *Abba* Sälama ('Father of Peace') and Käśate Bərhan ('Revealer of Light'). For further reading on Frumentius, see: Budge, *The Book of the Saints*. Vol. 3/4, 1164–1165.

5 Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270* (Addis Ababa: United Printers, 1972), 115–121; Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East*. Vol. 3 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1958), 274–278; Carlo Conti Rossini, *Storia d'Etiopia* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arte Grafiche, 1928), 162–163; Brita, "Nine Saints"; Munro-Hay, "Saintly Shadows"; Albert Kammerer, *Essai sur l'histoire antique d'Abyssinie. Le royaume d'Aksum et ses voisins d'Arabie et de Meroe* (Paris: Geuthner, 1926), 103–104.

6 *Gädlat* (singular: *gädl*), literally meaning 'contending,' 'spiritual combat,' but comprises also a meaning of 'Life', 'Acts', 'Biography (of a holy person).' Cf. Wolf Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Geʿez* (*Classical Ethiopic*)*: Geʿez-English, English-Geʿez, with an Index of the Semitic Roots* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987), 182.

7 For a brief reading on the Ethiopian hagiographies, see: Antonella Brita, "Hagiography and Monasticism in the Ethiopian Church," in *Ethiopia: History, Culture and Challenges*, ed. Siegbert Uhlig et al. (Münster: Lit, 2017), 230–233.

8 Munro-Hay, "Saintly Shadows," 137.

9 Carlo Conti Rossini, *Vitae Sanctorum Antiquiorum*. Vol. 1: *Acta Yāred et Panṭalewon* (Leuven: Durbecq, 1955).

10 Carlo Conti Rossini, "L'Omilia di Yohannes, Vescovo d'Aksum, in Onore di Garimâ," in *Actes du XIe Congrès International des Orientalistes. Paris. 1897*. Vol. 4 (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1898), 139–177.

11 Ignazio Guidi, "Il 'Gadla Aragâwî'," in *Atti della R. Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche*. Vol. 2 (Roma: Tipografia della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1896), 54–96; Marcus Antonius van den Oudenrijn, *La vie de saint Za Mīkāʾēl ʾAragāwī* (Fribourg: Imprimere St.-Paul, 1939).

12 This is the version seen only by Conti Rossini in the year 1937 and is not available anymore. Carlo Conti Rossini, "La Leggenda di Abbā Afṣē in Etiopia," in *Mélanges Syriens Offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud*. Vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1939), 151–156.

where the names of the authors are either false or purportedly accredited to popular historical figures of the past.[13]

Furthermore, it is necessary also to understand here the diachronic incongruity involved in the historical settings of this tradition. One can imagine this as represented by a mathematical 'Venn diagram of three sets,' with the tradition itself at the intersection and the outer three circles representing respectively: the world of the events as portrayed in their textual sources (that would rather point to the Late Antiquities), the time of composition of the accounts in their available written formats (which would apparently be not earlier than the 14th century) and finally, the recent suppositions and the scholarly developments that occurred in the field of Ethiopian studies related to the tradition of Nine Saints.

Moreover, the subject upholds a protuberant place in Ethiopian studies due to the convoluted scholarly discussions, since the earlier propositions of some prominent scholars like Ignazio Guidi, Carlo Conti Rossini, and of few church historians like Arthur Vööbus, overtly generalizing the saints as 'Syrian' missionaries based on some rather weak philological arguments, were exposed in the recent fields of scholarship as unconvincing and untenable.[14] However, the presumed Syrian identity of these saints that were earlier postulated by these

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Meanwhile, the remaining hagiography texts that are attributed to the names of these saints such as the texts of *Gädlä Afṣe* (the version that is accessible at present), "*Gädlä Guba* (recently found and closely linked to the *Gädlä Afṣe*), *Gädlä Alef*, *Gädlä Liqanos*, *Gädlä Ṣəḥma*, and *Gädlä Yəm'ata* [...] belong all to a later period (probably between the 19th and 20th centuries)." Brita, "Nine Saints," 1189. Cf. also Hagos Abrha, "Philological Analysis of the Manuscripts of Gädlä Yəm'ata," *Ityopis* 1 (2011): 61–75.

13 For example, 'Yared' as the author of *Gädlä Arägawi*, *Gädlä Ṣəḥma* and *Gädlä Yəm'ata*; 'Athanasius' for *Gädlä Afṣe* and *Gädlä Guba*; Yoḥannəs, the Bishop of Aksum, for *Gädlä Gärima*; and Rətu'a Haymanot or in some occasions Yəsḥaq for *Gädlä Pänṭälewon*. Brita, "Nine Saints," 1189. We also get to know of them, especially of Zämika'el Arägawi, Gärima, and Pänṭälewon, from the brief accounts of their biography mentioned in the Ethiopian Synaxarium. For reference to the English translation of the Synaxarium see fn. 1. However, the scant notes about the Nine Saints in the Synaxarium according to Munro-Hay, were rather added to 'Ethiopianise' the work at some time after the original Gə'əz translation and was apparently prepared by a certain *Abba* Səm'on in the fourteenth century. Munro-Hay, "Saintly Shadows," 140. For a brief understanding on the life and acts of the Nine Saints as recounted in their hagiographic texts, see: Belaynesh Michael, S. Chojnacki, and Richard Pankhurst, *The Dictionary of Ethiopian Biography: From Early Times to the End of the Zagwé Dynasty c. 1270 A.D.* Vol. 1 (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1975).

14 Hans Jakob Polotsky, "Aramaic, Syriac, and Ge'ez," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9 (1964): 1–10; Paolo Marrassini, "Una Chiesa Africana. L'Etiopia fra Antiochia e Alessandria," in *XXVIII Corso di Cultura sull'Arte Ravennate e Bizantina* (Ravenna: Edizioni del Girasole, 1981), 193–

scholars in the West received also its acceptance among the Ethiopians who already cherish the tradition of Nine Saints as part of their "cultural memory,"[15] awarding the saints some feasible credit towards their liturgical, theological, cultural, and, linguistic developments.[16]

Nevertheless, within the more generic problem of 'Syrian influences on the Aksumite Ethiopia'[17] which is a matter of deliberation among scholars, the appellation of the Nine Saints as Syrian monks cannot be completely overlooked as wrong either, but rather demands a deeper investigation and even when the validation for substantial 'Syrian influence' on Ethiopian Christianity during the Aksumite period looks slim, it may not be totally non-existent. In view of the above, the following paper is an attempt based on the notion of 'cultural memory' to reassess the identification of 'Syrian' associated with this tradition along with their concomitant historical discrepancies by proceeding further from textual and philological pieces of evidence towards the consideration of a few socio-cultural aspects.

203; Paolo Marrassini, "Some Considerations on the Problem of the 'Syriac Influences' on Aksumite Ethiopia," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 23 (1990): 35–46; Paolo Marrassini, "Once Again on the Question of Syriac Influences in the Aksumite Period," in *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Ethiopian*, ed. Alessandro Bausi (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 209–219; Paolo Marrassini, "Frustula Nagranitica," *Aethiopica* 14, no. 1 (2011): 7–32; Antonella Brita, *I racconti tradizionali sulla Seconda Cristianizzazione dell'Etiopia: Il ciclo agiografico dei Novi Santi* (Napoli: Università degli studi di Napoli l'Orientale, 2010); Paolo Marrassini, *Storia e leggenda dell'Etiopia tardoantica. Le iscrizioni reali aksumite con un'appendice di Rodolfo Fattovich su La civiltà aksumita: aspetti archeologici e una nota editoriale di Alessandro Bausi* (Brescia: Paideia, 2014).

15 "[…] a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive frame-work of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation." Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 126.

16 Arthur Vööbus in his work *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* mentions the following as a brief note about the Nine Saints: "In a series of Ethiopian documents, these men are celebrated as the fathers of Christianity in Abyssinia. We hear that they reformed customs, introduced Christian discipline, and successfully fostered religious and ecclesiastical institutions. Further, they gave the Church its liturgy and established monasticism. As information stands, we must conclude that their influence and impact covered the entire field of spiritual life, and that owing to this impetus, the Christian cause took a new turn in the country." Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, 276.

17 Witold Witakowski, "Syrian Influences in Ethiopian Culture," in *Languages and Cultures of Eastern Christianity: Ethiopia*, ed. Alessandro Bausi (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 197–208.

2 The Entangled Problem of 'Syrian Provenance'

The tradition of the Nine Saints has evoked a few substantial debates among the scholars of Ethiopian studies as the subject also to a large degree encompasses the issues regarding the Gəʿəz translation of the Bible. The grounds for discussion were apparently paved during the end of the nineteenth century[18] when the saints were addressed by certain scholars generically as 'Syrian monks' based on their assumptions from a number of Syriac elements supposedly identified in the early manuscripts of their hagiographic accounts, which in addition also augmented the hypotheses on the topic of Syrian influences in Aksumite Ethiopia.[19]

Although scholars like Guidi and Conti Rossini perhaps attempted only to construct an image of the Nine Saints based on the historical settings of the time procuring the benefits of doubt that they could have been Monophysite Syrian monks who reached Ethiopia while fleeing from the Byzantine persecution,[20] the problem arises when they further assert the notion of a 'Syrian

18 This time period, i.e. the end of the nineteenth century, was also marked by some noteworthy studies within the branch of New Testament textual criticism, like that of Westcott and Hort's edition of the New Testament in Original Greek, that was aimed at presenting exactly the original words of the New Testament in the best possible manner deduced from the extant materials. Cf. Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Cambridge: Macmillan and Co., 1882). Consequently, such scholarly attentions to Bible translations and editions acted as the corresponding catalysts in the field of Ethiopian studies, as in most cases the several suggestions of scholars seem to have emerged out of the their attempts in finding solutions for the problem of the translation of the Gəʿəz Bible. Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 33.

19 "According to this theory, immediately after the council of Chalcedon in 451, Syriac monks fled to Ethiopia from their original country, but also from South Arabia and Egypt, and were instrumental, or even essential, in a deeper rooting of Christianity in Ethiopia, and also in the translation of at least some parts of the New Testament." Marrassini, "Some Considerations," 35.

20 Conti Rossini, in his extensive work on Ethiopian history, *Storia d'Etiopia*, suggests and relates the legends of the Nine Saints to similar circumstances when at the time of the Byzantine Emperor Justin I (518–527), numerous non-Chalcedonians of Syria, expelled by him, first sheltered in al-Ḥīrā, then in Naǧrān where they propagated their doctrine and thus giving rise to an obvious chance to assume that these missionaries or ecclesiastics of Syria must have also come to Ethiopia in the same fashion; cf. Conti Rossini, *Storia d'Etiopia*, 162. Thus, it is possible to convincingly assume that the Nine Saints might have belonged to the mass of Non-Chalcedonian exiles fleeing from the persecution of the Byzantine Empire against their own faith. Also, some of the immediate and later events that ensued from the results of Chalcedon such as the *Henotikon*, and the subsequent

identity' to them based on three remote possibilities, namely: the place of origin of the Saints, the personal names of the Saints, and the testimony that involves a Syriac contribution in the translation of the Bible to Ethiopic during the aforesaid time period.[21] Besides, the affirmative approach of Arthur Vööbus towards the use of Syriac translation techniques in the Ethiopic translation of the Bible,[22] also calls for our attention in this problem as he further shares the general assumption that the Nine Saints were Syrian monks who translated the four gospels into Gəʿəz.[23] However, almost all of their arguments do not really seem to be substantial or reliable enough to favour the theory,[24] even when this would leave some gaps to be filled within the question of the translation of the Ethiopic Bible. Paolo Marrassini (1942–2013), in one of his later articles, remarks that

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monastic reaction towards it appear to be plausibly validating the above suggestion that they could perhaps be fugitives who reached Ethiopia in search of asylum. Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Between Arabia and Ethiopia," in *Life and Works of Saint Gregentios, Archbishop of Taphar: Introduction, Critical Edition and Translation*, ed. Albrecht Berger (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 65. Yet, it would still be a hasty conclusion to exclusively refer the repercussions of Chalcedon as the sole reason behind their migration. This is because their relocation to Ethiopia could also be related to contrasting motives than the above as we see in the *Mäṣḥafä Məśṭir* (Book of the Mystery) written by Giyorgis of Sägla, a 15th century Ethiopian monk who introduces the Nine Saints as coming to Ethiopia "with their kings, with their princes and with their dignitaries, their priests, with their altars, with their sacred furniture, with their books and with their people," persuasively instigating the thought that they might have probably also had intentions of invading the country with an evangelistic zeal. Yaqob Beyene, ed. and trans., *Giyorgis di Saglā: Il Libro del Mistero* (*Maṣḥafa Mesṭir*). *Parte Prima* (Louvain: Peeters, 1990), 73–74; quoted in Marrassini, "Frustula Nagranitica," 10. Hence, "[…] until now we have no hint whatsoever as to whether it was due to the unhappy and disastrous religious policy of the Byzantine rulers who possessed a proven talent of agitating the inhabitants of the Eastern provinces against the state, or whether it was due to the natural zeal of expanding Monophysitism or to church political considerations, namely, to find new allies in the South at a time when they felt a gathering of the storm clouds." Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, 276.

21 Ignazio Guidi, *Le Traduzioni degli Evangeli in Arabo e in Etiopico* (Roma: Salviucci, 1888), 33–34; Ignazio Guidi, *Storia della Letterature Etiopica* (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1932), 13–15; Conti Rossini, *Storia d'Etiopia*, 155–556, 161–162; Conti Rossini, "La Leggenda Di Abbā Afṣē in Etiopia," 151–156; Conti Rossini, "L'omilia Di Yohannes, Vescovo d'Aksum, in Onore Di Garimâ," 140, 174–175.

22 Arthur Vööbus, *Early Versions of the New Testament: Manuscript Studies* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1954), 253.

23 Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, 275–277.

24 For further reading on the discussions against the 'Syrian' background of the Nine Saints based on the textual and linguistic evidences, see fn. 14.

> [...] the Syriac origin of the Nine Saints can still be considered to be nothing but a modern story, created accidentally in the West, after a series of mistakes and misunderstandings of some of the most authoritative scholars of that time, and accepted in Ethiopia for (unusual) psychological submissiveness.[25]

Meanwhile, apart from the linguistic or textual propositions, there seems to also exist another typology of evidence based on a comparison between the ascetic practices in Ethiopia and Syria, which, although they might only be a speculative analysis of some hypothetical demonstrations, still draws our attention towards understanding the problem, especially while dealing the topic in line with the notion of cultural memory.

3 Syrianness of the Nine Saints as a Phenomenon of Cultural Memory

Jan Assmann, the renowned cultural scientist and religious scholar of our contemporary era, elucidates the theories of collective memory put forward by Maurice Halbwachs and Aby Warburg[26] and subsequently coins the term 'cultural memory' by labelling the different carriers of communication such as oral traditions, texts, monuments and rituals collectively as "figures of memory."[27] The meaning of the term 'cultural memory', as it is applied in this paper with regard to the tradition of the Nine Saints, therefore embraces the multiple elements of cultural remembrances and is based on the explanation given by Jan Assmann, which is as follows:

> [...] cultural memory, [is] a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation. [...] The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each

25 Marrassini, "Frustula Nagranitica," 14.

26 Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and tr. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Roland Kany, *Mnemosyne als Programm: Geschichte, Erinnerung und die Andacht zum Unbedeutenden im Werk von Usener, Warburg und Benjamin* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987).

27 Assmann and Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 129.

> epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.[28]

Accordingly, the hagiographic texts, monastic practices, archaeological sites, iconography and religious paintings and any other related 'figures of memory' concerning the tradition of the Nine Saints can be applicably analysed to review the notion of 'Syrianness' involved within the subject matter. In this paper, we deal particularly with the hagiographic genre and the monastic units related to the saints as 'figures of memory' evolving within the different socio-political and religious contexts of Ethiopia that may perhaps lead us to some possible Syrian elements.[29]

3.1 *Ethiopian Hagiographies as Socio-politico-religious Figures of Memory*

The hagiographic genre of *gädlat* is a part of the very old and time-hallowed traditions of Ethiopia and was among the "first works to be translated from Greek into Gəʿəz during the Aksumite period, soon after the Christianization of the country."[30] However, a serious problem arises when one attempts to distinguish between Ethiopian hagiography and history since the work might be far from being a text that could provide precise historical data. As Steven Kaplan in his article *Hagiographies and the History of Medieval Ethiopia* points out:

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28 Ibid., 126, 132.

29 By the appellation 'Syrian,' I here intend to borrow the approach of Witold Witakowski who in his article *Syrian influences in Ethiopia* attempts to distinguish between the terms 'Syrian' and 'Syriac' influences. While the latter has largely to do with the realm of linguistics and oftentimes corroborates to direct contacts and influences, the former one on the contrary, although it might occasionally stand witness to direct contacts, would more often testify indirect influences that sketch a possible scope of cultural exchange in history; for example in literary works transmitted through intermediary means or perhaps in those minute details expressed in art, architecture, liturgy etc., which he collectively calls 'Syrian' influences in Ethiopia; cf. Witold Witakowski, "Syrian Influences in Ethiopia," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 781. I also intend to place forward a similar approach here while focusing on the idea of a 'Syrian' background of the Nine Saints as a collective consciousness based on their contributions in Ethiopia, either direct or indirect, while simultaneously also not ignoring the scientific aspects of the problem involved.

30 Jacopo Gnisci and Antonella Brita, "Hagiography in Geʿez," in *Treasures of Ethiopia and Eritrea in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, ed. Jacopo Gnisci (Oxford: Manar al-Athar, University of Oxford, 2019), 58.

> The life of a saint was usually written by a monk from the saint's own monastery, who sought by writing the work to glorify the saint as well as his monastery. His goal was not to write history in any modern critical sense of that word, and thus the political, social, and historical data which are of such interest to us are accidental by-products. He weighed his sources (if at all) not to produce the most accurate version, but rather to produce a work which suited his purposes.[31]

Accordingly, on account of the fact that the primary purpose of these works of literature was positioned at the exaltation of saints, they were able to adopt any literary form relevant to the context in order to appeal to the local community without paying keen attention to its historic details and consequently ended up to be, to a large extent, or perhaps even totally disconnected from actual facts.[32] "Because of the sensitivity of hagiographic literature to the surrounding society texts were shaped both in their initial writing and throughout the course of transmission by the needs and concerns of the religious community as perceived by hagiographers and scribes."[33] This is the reason that when a situation occurs where the hagiographers were left with an inadequate amount of sources, they equitably complemented their accounts by inserting narratives and figures taken from the Bible or other prevalent Christian literature as well as from some popular and conventional hagiographic writings, such as the Life of St. Anthony.[34] As a consequence:

> [...] while specialists in Ethiopian literature and history have long realized the potential value of these *gädlat* as sources for the study of Ethiopian history, the tendency towards idealization displayed in these works, as well as their abundant miracles and anachronisms, have left historians uncertain as to how to extract reliable information from them.[35]

As Taddesse Tamrat points out:

> [...] the authors of the *gädls* placed their saintly heroes within certain historical contexts, sometimes imaginary, but mostly within the context

31 Steven Kaplan, "Hagiographies and the History of Medieval Ethiopia," *History in Africa* 8 (1981): 110–111.

32 Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, trans. Virginia Mary Crawford (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1907), 3.

33 Kaplan, "Hagiographies," 114.

34 Ibid., 111.

35 Ibid., 107.

> of the period in which they actually lived. Here our problem is no longer the alteration of the period in which the hero lived.[36]

Hence, in the analysis with hagiographies, that which matters profoundly as a problem should be the attempts to understand the motives or the causes that had influenced the author (or the scribe) in the depiction of events rather than lingering on the actuality of the events portrayed.

Considering the hagiographies of the Nine Saints, the tales are preserved in the form of nine *gädlat* or perhaps ten, largely focusing on their miracle accounts and mostly composed in the style of a sermon intended to be read to the faithful on the day of commemoration of these saints. Antonella Brita clarifies that the relation between the homiletic and the narration is not always constant and depends as much on the function that the author intended to convey to his story on the availability of information about the protagonist.[37] Moreover, there exists already a historical time gap of approximately around a thousand years between these writings and the events described, a reason for which one can certainly not deny the possibilities of cultural influences intersecting the historical data giving rise to the following conceivable options, i.e. the events as described in the writings were factual and transmitted as oral traditions passing through different cultural backgrounds before finally being written down; or, "some of these texts attested in the manuscripts must have circulated much earlier than the 13th century"[38] and unfortunately did not survive or were eventually lost; or the events and the data as such are only later interpretations developed by the hagiographers inspired from other existing writings of their contemporary or previous times. Modern scholars like Paolo Marrassini are mostly of the third opinion that they were "all inspired by writings translated in the preceding decades"[39] and viewed the collection of the *gädlat* noteworthy only as "a general testimony."[40]

Nevertheless, it would certainly be too harsh if one attempted to reduce the significance of these pieces of literature to mere fiction since "fiction presupposes conscious creative action. In a certain sense, there was no conscious fictional manipulation of history in early hagiographic literature, but a deliberate

36 Taddesse Tamrat, "Hagiographies and the Reconstruction of Medieval Ethiopian History," *Rural Africana* 11 (1970): 15.

37 Brita, *I Racconti*, 55; Brita, "Nine Saints," 1190.

38 Brita, "Hagiography," 230.

39 Marrassini, "Una Chiesa Africana," 203; Munro-Hay, "Saintly Shadows," 142.

40 Marrassini, "Una Chiesa Africana," 197.

transformation of biographical reconstructions into hagiographic images."[41] Also, it would be serious neglect in the study if one did not pay ample attention to the factors that had influenced the works of the hagiographers or the scribes because, "while aesthetic and didactic concerns were of some significance, issues of monastic and political prestige seem to have exerted the strongest influence on their work."[42]

For instance, the sequence of missionary activities of the Nine Saints and the traditional attribution to their Syrian provenance is in close proximity to the narration of accounts relating to the 'Thirteen Syrian Ascetic fathers' identified in the Georgian tradition dating back to the sixth century,[43] implying also a possibility of the presence and influence of common cultural memories about Syrian monks that might have been shared and transferred between Christian communities having similar monastic traditions since "the pattern of Syrian missionary ascetics is similar over the vast religious and cultural realm of the Late Antique Mediterranean."[44]

Moreover, one shall also not neglect the fact that these hagiographical texts would convey their underlying political aspects too since these texts often reflected the layers of native resistance towards the primacy of the Alexandrian (Coptic) Patriarchate over Ethiopia[45] because of which it is conceivable to speculate that the Ethiopians might have wanted to emphasize on non-Egyptian monastic roots. Rochus Zuurmond, the Biblical scholar, while still acknowledging the Syrian provenance of the saints by stating that "there may always have been monks with a Syrian background, either from Syria or from Egypt, who occasionally corrected Gəʿəz text or suggested such corrections to the Ethiopian scribes, in- or outside Ethiopia,"[46] also puts forward his speculation whether the narratives might actually reflect the political context of antagonism between Egypt and Ethiopia during the thirteenth century instead of a fifth-century ecclesiastical history since the opposition to Alexandria in Ethiopia was also buoyed by the patriarch of Antioch at that time.[47]

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41 Giovavanni Paolo Maggioni, "Texts between History and Fiction in Medieval Hagiography," in *Fiction and Figuration in High and Late Medieval Literature*, ed. Marianne Pade et al. (Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2016), 75.

42 Kaplan, "Hagiographies," 114.

43 Shota Matitashvili, "The Monasteries Founded by the Thirteen Syrian Fathers in Iberia: The Rise of Monasticism in Sixth-Century Georgia," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 2, no. 1 (2018): 4–39. Brita, *I racconti*, 8–17.

44 Ibid., 11.

45 Stuart C. Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria: The Metropolitan Episcopacy of Ethiopia* (Warszawa: Zaś Pan, 1997).

46 Rochus Zuurmond, ed., *Novum Testamentum Aethiopice: The Synoptic Gospels. Part 1: General Introduction* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1989), 117.

47 Ibid., 117, n. 45.

Thus, even minor narratives concerning the tradition of the Nine Saints that might be considered as 'least significant' in terms of a historical document would certainly incorporate the potential of delivering some substantial insight into the religious, cultural and, socio-political situations of the time surrounding the composition and later developments of these accounts. Therefore, any inferences on the credibility of a hagiographic text as a historical source can be drawn out only through a process of methodical analyses as well as comparisons with other texts in order to carefully examine its process of developments through the various socio-political elements of cultural memory in history.

3.2 *Early Ethiopian Monastic Units as Figures of Memory: Syrian or Egyptian?*

Even when the linguistic analyses fail to substantiate the postulations of the Syrian connection, the accounts of the Nine Saints can still be further analysed to study whether or not they reflect any traces of Syrian elements in ascetic practices, a topic that rather demands a more vicarious approach than an absolute empirical investigation. Although we now lack proper documentation about the beginnings and development of monastic life in Ethiopia,[48] the introductory models of ascetic practices that include both the anchoritic style (for instance, as practised by *Abba* Pänṭälewon) as well as the well-organized cenobitic style (for example, the Däbrä Dammo monastery that directly relates to *Abba* Zämika'el Arägawi) are traditionally understood to have been carried to Ethiopia towards the end of the 5th century with the advent of the Nine Saints.[49]

Moreover, even when the conclusions of the linguistic and philological studies held by scholars such as Polotsky and Marrassini, in their respective

48 Gianfrancesco Lusini, "The Ancient and Medieval History of Eritrean and Ethiopian Monasticism: An Outline," in *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea*, ed. Samantha Kelly (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 196.

49 The places where the saints are believed to have established their monasteries as per the information from their respective hagiographies are: Yəḥa (*Abba* Afṣe), Däbrä Halleluya (*Abba* Alef), Däbrä Mädära (*Abba* Gärima or Yəsḥaq), an unidentified place in the Baraka desert (*Abba* Guba), Däbrä Qʷänaṣəl in ʿAdwa (*Abba* Liqanos), Däbrä Ṗänṭälewon in Aksum (*Abba* Ṗänṭälewon), Ṣädäya (*Abba* Ṣəḥma), Gərʿalta (*Abba* Yəmʾata), Däbrä Dammo (*Abba* Zämikael Arägawi). The saints are believed to have established their own monasteries in those places where they settled, particularly surrounding Aksum, where now churches exist (although not monastic communities) close to the ancient ruins at various sites connected to these saints. Steven Kaplan, "Monasticism," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 444; Steven Kaplan, "Monasteries," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 988.

works,[50] more likely point towards the Egyptian origins of the monks, it has, however, to be noted that the purported ascription of monastic origins to Egypt is apparently due to the massive influence of Egyptian monasticism to the extent that the "later Syrian monks were prepared to forget their genuinely native heritage"[51] and therefore simultaneously "it can be admitted that the same Egyptian monasticism played a mediating role in transmitting to Ethiopia elements of the asceticism practised in the deserts of Syria and Palestine since the end of the third century."[52]

A stark observation on the monastic features of their time period might present to us reflections of certain distinct Syrian elements. This is because the expressions of the monastic practices or discipline contrasted between Egypt and Syria at certain levels particularly among the anchorites, as the anchoritic roots and observances in Syria emerged as a relatively more rigorous and idiosyncratic lifestyle of its times[53] which is why when "[…] Egypt's *forte* was cenobitic monasticism, in Syria it was the solitary virtuoso who dominated the scene."[54]

The severity in the eremitic practices of Syrian ascetics could possibly be due to the differences in the landscapes and the climatic conditions of the two regions since Syria had better and more favourable geographic conditions with an extensive terrain of steppe regions, mountains and deserts in contrast to the grating desert atmosphere in Egypt forcing the Egyptian anchorites to be confined within their monastic cells;[55] as a result of which "the human contrast between the man in the desert and the man in the world was heightened"[56] among the Syrian eremites.[57]

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50 Polotsky, "Aramaic, Syriac, and Ge'ez"; Marrassini, "Once Again on the Question of Syriac Influences"; Marrassini, "Some Considerations."

51 Sebastian P. Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism," *Numen* 20, no. 1 (1973): 3.

52 Lusini, "The Ancient and Medieval History," 196, fn. 10.

53 Jeffrey Conrad, "Egyptian and Syrian Asceticism in Late Antiquity," *Syriac Studies*, 16 September 2015, URL: https://syriacstudies.com/2015/09/16/egyptian-and-syrian-asceticism-in-late-antiquity-jeffrey-conrad-2/.

54 Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism," 13.

55 Conrad, "Egyptian and Syrian Asceticism"; Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 83–84.

56 Ibid., 83.

57 Although the anchorites of Egypt went in pursuit of harsh deserts, the Egyptian cenobites nevertheless also instituted monasteries within the inhabited regions such as fertile gorges, riverbanks, villages, and towns. Cf. James E. Goehring, "Withdrawing from the Desert: Pachomius and the Development of Village Monasticism in Upper Egypt," *The Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 3 (1996): 268. However, the contrast we analyse here is primarily between the eremites of Egypt and Syria.

However, the heightened contrast did not isolate the hermits of Syria far away from the villagers[58] unlike the Egyptian eremites who rather preferred to detach themselves from the populated world and settle in modified cells rebuilt upon those sites which were considered as the fringes of their society such as the ancient temple ruins, pharaonic monuments, tombs and natural caves.[59] The eremitic style of asceticism in Syrian terrains rather undertook a visible form as the hermits in fact got engaged with their societies acting as counsellors, instructors and mediators.[60] Perhaps the most acclaimed and well documented among these ascetic practitioners were the 'pillar-saints' or the 'stylites' who practised their monastic disciplines by dwelling on top of pillars or high columns; Saint Simeon Stylites (ca. 389–459) being the prime among them.[61]

If we now try to study these distinguishing features of the Syrian anchoritic model in relation to the Ethiopian ascetic practices and the tradition of the Nine Saints, we can see, according to the hagiographic accounts, that some of the Nine Saints like *Abba* Liqanos, *Abba* Afṣe and *Abba* Pänṭälewon for certain practised the hermitic style of asceticism,[62] and a closer observation on their mode of eremitic practices would reflect us entangled layers of what we distinguished earlier as Syrian elements. Further, almost all of the terrestrial

58 Jakob Ashkenazi, "Holy Man versus Monk—Village and Monastery in the Late Antique Levant: Between Hagiography and Archaeology," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57, no. 5 (2014): 745–765.

59 Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, "The Geography of the Monastic Cell in Early Egyptian Monastic Literature," *Church History* 78, no. 4 (2009): 756–791.

60 "[…] the hermit deliberately placed himself on the mountain tops; […] from such tops, he could look down on prosperous villages and on the farmers working on the slopes. He belonged to a world that was not so much antithetical to village life as marginal. He was known to the hunter: he too was on the mountainside 'to stalk his god.'" Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man," 83–84.

61 The fame and practice of this innovative monastic trend of stylitism spread beyond the geographical borders of Syria to several other surrounding regions like Palestine, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Georgia, Paphlagonia, Cilicia, Phoenicia, Osrhoene etc. For further reading on the Stylites, see: Emma Loosley Leeming, *Architecture and Asceticism: Cultural Interaction between Syria and Georgia in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 85–102. Also see: David T.M. Frankfurter, "Stylites and Phallobates: Pillar Religions in Late Antique Syria," *Vigiliae Christianae* 44, no. 2 (1990): 168–198; Herbert Thurston, "Stylites or Pillar-Saints," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 12, no. 48 (1923): 584–596; Brock, "Early Syrian Asceticism."

62 Cf. Brita, *I Racconti*. Meanwhile, we can also see the other model among saints like *Abba* Arägawi who is directly linked in his vitae to the Egyptian monastic tradition as the disciple of Pachomius and is accredited with the founding of Däbrä Dammo, one of Ethiopia's greatly celebrated ancient monasteries of the cenobitic style.

landscapes chosen by the saints for their monastic settlements were of the same fashion, i.e. to settle at a relatively higher place than the cities or villages which were mostly either a hill or a mountain while at the same time not totally detached from the inhabited region below.[63]

The monasteries of *Abba* Pänṭälewon and *Abba* Liqanos resemble the archaeological phenomena of Syrian eremitic units especially of the pillar-saints, with the hill or the high terrain serving as "an analogue to the pillar"[64] and hence "were vertically distanced from the city, yet could be seen from all around the immediate landscape: they are at once isolated yet central."[65] Also, the propinquity of both these saints to the political affairs of the state is somewhat evident from their involvement in the ascension of Emperor Tazena[66] as well as from the cordial relationship between King Kaleb and Pänṭälewon as mentioned in the hagiographies where the monk plays the role of a spiritual counsellor to the King during warfare.[67] The choice of unique and high landscapes, as well as the involvement of the monks in social life, are some unusual characteristics belonging to the Syrian hermits[68] giving rise to the possible implication that "although possessing Greek names, Pänṭälewon and Liqanos could actually be hermits in the Syriac tradition."[69]

The other saints like *Abba* Yəm'ata, *Abba* Arägawi, *Abba* Alef and *Abba* Gärima also preferred to settle at relatively higher terrains or mountains[70] where either churches or monastic units still exist; whereas the sites of monasteries established by the remaining saints are rather indistinct and, according

63 Niall Finneran, "Ethiopian Christian Material Culture: The International Context. Aksum, the Mediterranean and the Syriac Worlds in the Fifth to Seventh Centuries," in *Incipient Globalization? Long-Distance Contacts in the Sixth Century*, ed. Anthea Harris (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007), 85. Two of those sites which I could visit during my travel to Ethiopia in September 2019 were the *Abba* Ṗänṭälewon monastery and the Abuna Yəm'ata Guh; the former situated atop a small hill, hardly few miles away from the town centre in Aksum and the later a rock-hewn church dedicated in honour of Saint Yəm'ata situated atop the Gər'alta mountains of the Tigray region at a stupendous height of approximately 8640 feet from sea level.

64 Ibid.

65 Niall Finneran, "Hermits, Saints, and Snakes: The Archaeology of the Early Ethiopian Monastery in Wider Context," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45, no. 2 (2012): 260.

66 Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History*, 116–117.

67 Budge, *The Book of the Saints*. Vol. 1/2, 117; Balthazar Telles, *The Travels of the Jesuits in Ethiopia*, trans. John Stevens (London: J. Knapton, 1710), 93–94.

68 Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man."

69 Finneran, "Ethiopian Christian Material Culture," 85.

70 However, the choice of location for their monastic settlements at high regions could also be merely a strategic attempt to protect themselves from their enemies.

to the archaeologist Niall Finneran, in almost all of the monastic units of the Nine Saints, "the Syrian cultural tradition does appear, from at least a landscape perspective, to run strongly in the story of early Ethiopian monasticism."[71] Thus, when analysing the archaeological landscapes of these monasteries, the existing gap between the shreds of textual evidence and the material cultural elements observed in the monastic units lead us to develop a rather imaginative and empathetic approach towards Syrian influences; whereas their connection to the available historical material remains very slim.

4 Conclusion

There is no denying that the theory of the 'Syrian origin' of the Nine Saints in all can be evaluated only as a contingent proposition that emerged from a series of misinterpretations put together by a collegium of western scholars. Yet, the currently available textual and linguistic evidence can neither completely prove nor disprove the problem of Syrian provenance but can only derive a solution as either more likely or less likely, which in this case seems only to be less likely if we do not consider the notion of 'ultimate origin' into our discussions. But does the concept of 'ultimate origin' matter to our current topic? To a large extent what matters profoundly concerning our research problem is rather the inquiry of 'direct origin' than the question of 'ultimate origin.' Even so, the question of 'ultimate origin,' (if at all it matters to the context) can be taken into consideration while dealing with the idea of 'Syrianness' of the Nine Saints as a phenomenon of 'cultural memory' which in turn demands appreciation and empathy towards the 'figures of memory' that sustain the tradition. Accordingly, the figures of memory that were discussed in this paper, the hagiographies and the monastic units reflect to an extent a few Syrian correlations within their material cultural aspects as well as in their underlying socio-political motives.

Therefore, while considering the problem of 'Syrian origin' of the Nine Saints a possible speculation could turn out that, despite the dissonance in the existing arrays of evidence, the chances of underscoring a conjunction with Syrian elements could still appear feasible, if not by direct at least by means of indirect contacts that could have happened through other mediatory carriers like Egypt or Arabia. However, such an approach encompasses hidden snares of presenting the problem in a reductive manner and hence does not serve as an outright

71 Finneran, "Hermits, Saints, and Snakes," 261.

solution but only as a conjecture, for which reason one must be simultaneously aware of the scientific discrepancies involved within the subject matter to demystify facts from mere typological allusions.

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CHAPTER 5

Paride de Grassi's Account of the 1481 Ethiopian Delegation to Rome

Konstantin Winters, Katharina Ritter, and Philipp Stenzig

1 Introduction

This paper seeks to examine the insights that a recently edited source, the *Tractatus de Oratoribus* written by the papal master of ceremony Paride de Grassi in 1508,[1] can hold for an examination of a thoroughly *Roman* image of Ethiopia towards the end of the European medieval period. In his *Tractatus*, de Grassi tried to compile the ceremonial knowledge about how to properly receive any delegation that could possibly arrive at the papal courts, and for this he described in detail a precedent delegation for any power that had once been represented in Rome. What makes it even more interesting, is the fact that he did not stop with accounts of the delegations of European Christian princes but chose to also include non-Christian rulers and sovereigns of those Christian communities outside of Europe.

It is a chapter regarding the latter case that has struck our attention.[2] In fact, the chapter in question is the only chapter that deals with the possibility of contact between the pope[3] and any non-European Christians, and it labels them all under the name of the mythical figure of Prester John. This somewhat indiscriminate treatment of all non-European Christians may seem to challenge some well-established suppositions on what Western Europe had grown to be in the early 16th century and how the other regions of the world were related to it. The early 16th century Western Europe is widely viewed as intellectually awakened, sophisticated and progressive towards the goal of a *modern* soci-

1 The *Tractatus* was edited and commentated by Dr. Philipp Stenzig in 2013, and it is this edition that will be used throughout this paper. Philipp Stenzig, *Botschafterzeremoniell am Papsthof der Renaissance. Der Tractatus de Oratoribus des Paris de Grassi—Edition und Kommentar* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang-Ed, 2013).

2 Paride de Grassi, "De oratoribus a prete Jano ad papam missis," in *Botschafterzeremoniell am Papsthof der Renaissance. Der Tractatus de Oratoribus des Paris de Grassi—Edition und Kommentar*. Vol. 2, ed. Philipp Stenzig (Frankfurt am Main: Lang-Ed, 2013), 236–239.

3 The term "pope" will refer to the then patriarch of the West and bishop of Rome throughout the article; the patriarch of Alexandria will be denoted as such.

ety, based on an empirical and realistic world view as opposed to the religious and often allegorical interpretation of one's surroundings in medieval times. It is associated with the formation of world empires, mainly the Castilian conquest of the Americas and the Portuguese control over the Indian spice trade whose traditional trade routes had collapsed after the Ottoman capture of Constantinople.[4]

With that in mind it may strike us as odd how the papal master of ceremony Paride de Grassi, a man holding one of the most esteemed positions within this highly educated community, apparently was not able to differentiate between the various Christian communities outside of Europe, as the St. Thomas Christians in India, the Orthodox church in Ethiopia or the multitude of Central Asian tribes converted to Christianity over time. Had not the late 15th century seen a rapid evolution of European cartography? It was fifty years prior to the publication of the *Tractatus* that the Camaldulese monk Frater Mauro designed a world map devoid of any religious representations: he drew Africa as a distinct continent that could be circumnavigated, added Japan in the far East and the geographical centre was not located in Jerusalem anymore, but in modern day Iraq.[5] As Tajoli describes him, Mauro was clearly "critical of the sources and would rather follow empirical findings in case of doubt."[6]

Nevertheless, the fact that de Grassi describes a delegation coming from the Ethiopian Empire as precedent for any delegation sent by Prester John, gives rise to two key questions: how did de Grassi as a representative for the papal court and Western Europe in general gather and combine the specific information he got about Ethiopia? And what can his account tell us about how Latin Europe related to them as non-European Christians in general? For this, we will examine (I) the use of Prester John in its historical context and (II) the ethnological and religious information de Grassi was able to gather about Ethiopia. We will combine this with (III) the Ethiopian delegates own intentions unknown to de Grassi and (IV) de Grassi's detailed account of the exact reception.

4 The trope of the dawn of modernity in the beginning of the 16th century can be traced back as early as the late 17th century and has influenced European historiography far into the 20th century. Cf. Jakob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*, ed. Horst Günther (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), 137; Jacques Le Goff, *Das Hochmittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1965), 294–295; Hans Blumenberg, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Schurkamp, 1997), 555–556.

5 Cf. world map of Fra Mauro (ca. 1457–1459).

6 Luciano Tajoli, "Die zwei Planisphären des Fra Mauro (um 1460)," *Geographica Helvetica* 9 (1994): 15.

2 The Title: The Ambassadors That Were Sent by Prester John

The title of the respective chapter is *De oratoribus a prete Jano ad papam missis*.[7] This title is already holding a clue about the European view on Ethiopia. The Ethiopian monarch is assumed to be Prester John, a legendary Priest King, who for the last 400 years was the symbol for every Christian ally that could potentially be anywhere beyond the lines of the seemingly inexhaustible Muslim threat. This figure embodied the hope of Latin Christianity that they did not stand alone against the Islamic Sultanates, even though no one really seemed to know where exactly his realm was located. It was an urban legend that Prester John ruled a Christian community on the other end of the world, but this could be—and therefore has been—applied to a variety of Christian communities across the known world.

The popularity of his myth arose in the 12th century when some nomadic tribes of the Kara Khitai utterly annihilated the great Seljuk army at Samarkand in modern-day Uzbekistan what must have been an incredible achievement in the eyes of the Europeans because the Christian monarchies themselves had lost nearly all their encounters with the Seljuks. They had taken Anatolia from the Byzantines earlier and at this moment they were just about to topple the Latin crusader states in the Middle East. Of course, the Kara Khitai were no Indians either, but at least both were located reasonably close to each other in the East from a European point of view. And India was the only place beyond the Islamic Persia Western Europe certainly knew of, anyway, because they knew that Saint Thomas had gone there as a missionary in the first century. And that was good enough to believe—or at least hope—that this far away community had grown large enough to challenge the Muslims.[8]

So, how did Prester John get from India in the far East to Ethiopia in the far South? When the Turkic and Persian Muslim realms were destroyed by the Mongols in the early 13th century, there were some Europeans who believed that Genghis Khan was in fact Prester John. This possibility was quickly ruled out when the Mongols started to slaughter not only the Russian Orthodox believers in Kyiv or Novgorod, but also many Catholic Christians in Hungary and Poland.[9] After the Mongols finally started to create a stable empire, many

7 De Grassi, *De oratoribus*, 236.

8 Cf. Bernard Hamilton, "Continental Drift. Prester John's Progress through the Indies," in *Medieval Ethnographies. European Perceptions of the World Beyond*, ed. Joan-Pau Rubiés (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2009), 121–125.

9 Cf. Gian Bezzola, *Die Mongolen in abendländischer Sicht (1220–1270). Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Völkerbegegnungen* (Bern: Francke, 1974), 28–63.

European monarchs sent ambassadors east to explore the unknown territory and maybe even find Prester John on their journey. But returning travelers all brought the same news: no such Prester John could be found and locals had not even heard of him.[10] So simultaneously, the illusion of a powerful Christian kingdom in India lost credibility and at least for the moment the Mongols did not turn out to be religious allies either. They also left quite a power vacuum in the Middle East which the Mamluk Sultanate based in Cairo took advantage of. When the Mamluks even halted the Mongol expansion at the battle of Ain Jalut in 1260, this finally cemented the move of the European main threat from the Middle East to Egypt, from Baghdad and Damascus to Cairo. But when this perception of the villain changed, Prester John changed with it. He was no longer needed in the East, so the collective mind of the Latins just moved him to another Christian community they certainly knew of: and that was Ethiopia. And this migration did not even have to be inconsistent at this time because Medieval European geography somewhat consistently holds onto the belief that Africa and India were connected through a small strip of land in the South.[11]

The pattern behind the location of Prester John is the following: he is supposed to be in a space where he is needed. Pragmatically, an ally in the far East would not be of much use against an opponent in North Africa. But it is also important in an ideological sense because it is no coincidence that Prester John always lies beyond the enemy. His function is to create the image that Islam is encompassed by a larger Christian world. If Islam is located in the middle of an otherwise purely Christian world, it can be treated as a foreign particle, as a virus of some sort. If both Christianity and Islam were independent entities that just existed alongside each other, how could anyone then tell with credibility which one was the normality and which one the disturbance? But at the same time, because so little was known of India or Ethiopia, this gave rise to some ridiculous exaggerations of the religious ally: the Ethiopian emperor

10 The first eyewitness to detailedly write down his insights won on his journey is John de Plano Carpini. For a description of the history and structure of the Empire, cf. John de Plano Carpini, "Libellus historicus Ioannis de Plano Carpini, qui missus est Legatus ad Tartaros anno domini 1246 ab Innocentio quarto Pontifice maximo," in *The texts and versions of John de Plano Carpini and William de Rubruquis as printed for the first time by Hakluyt in 1598 together with some shorter pieces*, ed. Charles Beazley (London: Hakluyt Society, 1903), 53–61. For a compilation of every people the Mongols had conquered: ibid., 66–69.

11 The transition between India and Ethiopia lays within the white spot at the one-o'clock-position. Cf. Ebstorf world map (early 14th century).

would have one million soldiers ready to fight. At least. And more gold than anyone could count.[12]

We can see that the title of the chapter alone expressed the high expectations that the Latins had passed on from generation to generation and which de Grassi cites here.

3 Looking for Information: What Latin Europe Knew about Ethiopia

The first thing de Grassi mentions is the fact that he does not really remember the delegation of 1481 himself because it is 1508 now and he is only 38 years of age.[13] In general, since the Council of Florence in 1441 there had been only three documented encounters between the Papacy and Ethiopian delegates, the last one as mentioned in 1481;[14] but only three visits within 65 years could not possibly be enough to leave any significant marks in the Roman collective memory. It is interesting to note that for virtually every Latin-Ethiopian encounter pre-

12 Adam Knobler proposes a distance-power-paradigm: the farther away one's distant ally is believed to be located, the stronger his powers are supposed to be. Knobler compares the myth of Prester John to other tropes of distant allies around the globe, notably the lost ten tribes and the Raja Rum. Cf. Adam Knobler, "Prester John, the Ten Tribes and the Raja Rum. Representing the Distant Ally in Three Pre-modern Societies," in *Locating religions. Contact, Diversity and Translocality*, ed. Reinhold Glei and Nikolas Jaspert (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 151–172. The idea of a Christian enclosure ideology is not new either, as it was the key theory of Eric Taylor, who conceived this idea within his master thesis. Eric Taylor, *Waiting for Prester John. The Legend, the Fifth Crusade, and Medieval Christian Holy War* (Master Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2011).

13 "De oratoribus indianis et caldeis ab ipsorum imperatore qui a nobis vulgo presbiter Janus dicetur ad Sixtum papam quartum missis aliqua recordor me eo tempore quo pene puer eram vidisse; et cum plura quasi per nubilum notabilia viderim, que non notavi tanquam ab ea professione, que tunc temporis mea non erat." De Grassi, *De oratoribus*, 236.

14 A delegation representing Africa nominated by the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria that was basically consisting of only Egyptians and Ethiopians, made their way to the Union Council of Florence in 1441 where they likely received their own Union Bull. "[…] imbasciatori dell'ill'mo prete Janni […] vennono a papa Eugenio per fare l'unione della fede loro con la nostra." Cf. Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Magliabechiano II, I, 313 fol. 65^{r}, cited as: Eugenio Cerulli, "Eugenio IV e gli Etiopi al Concilio di Firenze," *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 9 (1933): 349. However, the document seems to have had no impact at all on the Ethiopian church. Another delegation stopped in Rome in 1450 while actually being on a mission to king Alfonso V of Aragón motivated by Emperor Zär'a Yaʿəqob's desire to establish permanent contact with Latin Europe, both economically and militarily. Cf. Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia: 1270–1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 264–266.

served in our sources Ethiopian delegates travelled to Rome. There had indeed been journeys of European clergymen into Africa, but unlike the Ethiopian delegates most of them did not seem to survive their way back; or at least added to that rumor by either staying indefinitely within Africa, dying on their way, or simply vanishing inside a peaceful monastery along the way which obviously was not helpful at all in lifting the veil surrounding the mysterious Prester John.[15]

In his search to find more information, it would have been an obvious choice for de Grassi to turn to the diaries of his late predecessor, the former papal Master of Ceremony, Johannes Burckard; it seems that even Burckard had not seen any Ethiopians during his tenure because de Grassi does not mention him once. After some meticulous research de Grassi finds out that an interpreter and papal secretary, Giovanni Battista Brocchi da Imola, who escorted the delegation on their way, is still well and alive. In fact, this old man had once travelled to Ethiopia himself and returned. Unfortunately, he did not bother documenting the details of his journey; or at least did not preserve its records.[16] But regardless, this had to be an opportunity for the Roman community to shed some light on Prester John and especially for de Grassi to become a pioneer in their intercultural relations. And thus, the papal Master of Ceremony leads an interview with the retired secretary.

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15 A letter sent by Alfonso V in 1450 is preserved in which he complains that all 13 Catalan artisans he had sent earlier had died on their way East: "[…] those thirteen men, masters of the different arts, who were requested from us many years ago by you great brother. We sent them, and they died on the way being unable to pass." Cited as: Francesco Cerone, "La politica orientale di Alfonso di Aragona," *Archivio storico per le Province Napoletane* 27 (1902): 40. Italian merchants and artisans did not seem to fare any better, as guardian Soriano of the Franciscan abbey in Jerusalem noted in the second half of the 15th century. "In la qual corte troviamo dieci Taliani, homini de bona reputatione […]. Adimandai io questi homini, che vi erano andati a fare in quel stranio paese? Dissero che loro intento era de trovar zoye et pietre preciose. Ma poi che quel re no li lassava ritornar, stavano tutti malcontenti, per ben che da lo re fossero tuti, secundo el grado di ziascuno, ben premiati e provisionati." Cited as: Renato Lefèvre, "Riflessi etiopici sulla cultura europea del medioevo e del rinascimento," *Annali Lateranensi* 9 (1945): 398–399. See also: Samantha Kelly, "The Curious Case of Ethiopic Chaldean: Fraud, Philology, and Cultural (Mis)Understanding in European Conceptions of Ethiopia," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2015): 1227–1264; and Samantha Kelly, "Medieval Ethiopian Diasporas," in *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea*, ed. Samantha Kelly (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 425–453.

16 This may be the case because of an unfortunate mix-up as there may have been two Brocchis bearing the same name: one who actually travelled to Ethiopia, and one who de Grassi interviewed in the end. This possibility was pointed out to us by Professor Verena Krebs from the University of Bochum whose publication regarding this question was not available yet as of the time of this paper's conception.

The ethnological background de Grassi is trying to present is a direct quotation of what Brocchi recalls to him, and it is the following: Ethiopia consists of a few small kingdoms which are ruled by a *nəguś*, the Ethiopian term for 'king.' Those vassal kings all answer to an emperor, the *nəguśä nägäśt*, or *king of kings* who rules over a vast empire.[17] Obviously, the trope of Prester John has already been incorporated into Brocchi's account, but we also have to remember that Africa and India were not that far apart in Medieval European thought. The Ethiopian emperor could have ruled as a supranational monarch over the Indians, but that did not necessarily have to refer to the geographical region of India that we know today because the Medieval European region of India began just east of the Nile.[18]

When describing the liturgical conducts of the Ethiopian people, Brocchi notes that they're not that different from the Western European traditions, contrary to many rumors. They did not even baptize their newborns with fire, but used ordinary water for that sacrament, too. Since the reign of Zär'a Yaʿəqob who took the throne in 1434, Christian newborns received a branding on their forehead which symbolized their privilege of being able to inherit land. Ethiopians of other religions did not receive such a branding and therefore could not inherit any land themselves. Brocchi does not know the meaning of the branding and muses it could be some magical heat-protection; maybe because he was not that familiar with the subtropical climate and deemed it somewhat inhospitable when he himself travelled to Ethiopia twenty years ago.[19]

A practice that Brocchi finds highly suspicious is the Ethiopian use of leavened bread in their liturgy. De Grassi attributes this practice to the bad influence of the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria. But his accusations of heresy con-

17 "Hic dominus in lingua eorum id est Indorum vocatus nagus, quod est idem quod […] in lingua nostra dicitur imperator; populi sub hoc nago dicuntur a nobis et Iherosolimitanis Abbassim, quod est commune provintiarum nomen, ut nos Itali alii Galli item partim vocantur, Indi et partim Ethiopes, nam imperium sive dominium huius nagi sive preti Jani in utramque partem extenditur, in Asiam videlicet et Affricam, sicut eam Nilus disterminat, circa quem Nilum imperat libere ipse nagus." De Grassi, *De oratoribus*, 237.

18 Cf. Lefèvre, "Riflessi," 428.

19 "Hic nagus sive prete Janus fidem Christi et Christum ingenue confitetur, nam et ipse ac sui populi indigene baptizantur et etiam circumciduntur, quoniam ipsi dicunt Christum et discipulos Christi sic fuisse circumcisos et similiter baptizatos. […] Caracter autem, qui impressus in facie eorum apparet, ideo infantibus imprimitur propter nimios calores evitandos, aciemque integram oculorem et dentium ut ipsi dicunt observandam." De Grassi, *De oratoribus*, 237. For the branding and Zär'a Yaʿəqob's religious policy, cf. Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State*, 201–239.

tain a highly important twist because he calls the Ethiopian Church Nestorian, a christological position regarding the exact nature of Christ.[20]

What seems problematic of Brocchi's attribution is the fact that the Ethiopian Church did not follow the Nestorian creed, but rather its opposite. They were Miaphysites. Did not Brocchi know that? Perhaps he did not, but it was not uncommon to label all the Eastern churches that did not follow Rome or Constantinople as Nestorians.[21]

4 The Ethiopian Delegation of 1481: Their Initial Mission

Within the next passages, de Grassi will turn to the delegation itself, and this is the first time that the Ethiopians appear as acting persons. So far, we only have looked at the perspective of Latin Europe on the delegation; but what about its very own intentions? The delegation was initially sent by Emperor Bä'ədä Maryam in 1478 when the Ethiopian Church was facing a huge problem because its clergy as a whole had grown old over time. New priests needed to be consecrated in order to combat the shortage of educated churchmen. Usually, this was the responsibility of a bishop, called *Abunä*, who was responsible for the sacrament of ordination, but even he had died at least twenty years ago. So, for more than twenty years not a single priest had been consecrated in Ethiopia. This situation alone may already seem grave, but there was even more to it because according to the concept of apostolic succession the king could not simply appoint anyone as *Abunä*. Traditionally, it had to be an Egyptian and he had to be appointed and consecrated by the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria himself.[22]

The delegation set out to Egypt visited also Jerusalem where they came in contact with the local Franciscan monastery. After talking for a while, the Ethiopians told the Catholics of their conflict: how could it be possible to

20 "Ceterum Missas et sacrificia partim eorum proprio ritu, scilicet redolente ritum primitive Ecclesie peragunt, partim quasi nostro, nam quasi totam Missam absolvunt sub oratione dominica, consecrantque in pane fermentato, ita enim ruditer instructi fuerunt a patriarchis eorum Alexandrino, Antiocheno et Jerosolimitano qui etiam potius declinaverunt ad heresim, sunt ibi quoque populi christiani qui Nestorite dicuntur." De Grassi, *De oratoribus*, 237.

21 A world map drawn by Martin Waldseemüller in 1507, thus conceived contemporaneously to de Grassi's *Tractatus*, still associates the uttermost north-eastern part of the world with the notion that *hic sunt christiani nestorini*, while not mentioning any other christological heresy. Cf. World map of Martin Waldseemüller (1507).

22 Cf. Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State*, 245–246.

adhere to the rule of apostolic succession without being dependent on the unpopular patriarch of Alexandria? The Franciscans started to promote their own pope as the apostolic successor.[23] It appears that now the delegation came to believe that they were able to solve this dilemma on their own: it was certainly not possible to change one's patriarch, but he could be bypassed, by turning directly to the one that stood above the patriarch. They had superficial knowledge about the papacy at best, leading to the false hope that the pope would listen to them open-mindedly. Incredibly, the delegates decided to follow the Franciscan friars to Rome where they presented Pope Sixtus IV with the gifts that they should actually have presented to their patriarch in Alexandria. Some of them, however, went to Alexandria after all in order to distract the Mamluk Sultan.

5 De Grassi's Account of the Delegation: The Pseudo-agreement of 1481

The low number of delegates that eventually arrived in Rome is actually the first thing de Grassi notes about the delegation;[24] but neither de Grassi himself nor Pope Sixtus IV seemed to be surprised about that. But why was it even necessary for the Ethiopians to act in such discretion? To make sense of that, we must understand that the relations between Ethiopia and the Mamluks had always been difficult, but at least the Sultan granted them the right to visit the Holy Land whenever they wanted without an entry fee.[25] And the only thing that the Mamluk Sultan knew about the delegation's intent was to visit Jerusalem,

23 The surviving accounts of the conversation between Franciscans and Ethiopians may differ in their descriptions of the delegate's goals. The Franciscan friar Paul Walther for example states that their initial goal was Greece in order to find a prelate who was able to crown their king: Itinerarium fratris Pauli Waltheri, "Et magnam familiaritatem habuit cum fratribus conversando, comedendo et bibendo, et tandem reseravit eis negotium suum, scilicet quod vellet ire ad Graeciam et afferre christianum prelatum, qui coronaret dominum suum. Respondit guardianus Montis Sion dicens: 'Domine, quare vultis a Graecis regem vestrum coronari, cum non sint veri catholici, sed haeretici et scismatici et a vera Ecclesia excommunicati?' Respondit legatus: 'Nescio alios christianos'," cited from Teodosio Somigli, *Etiopia francescana nei documenti dei secoli XVII e XVIII preceduti da cenni storici sulle relazioni con l'Etiopia durante i secoli XIV e XV* (Florence: Collegio di S. Bonaventura, 1928), 66–67.

24 "Itaque missi sunt oratores sex quorum principalis fuit Antonius cappellanus et familiaris ipsius nagi, vir quidem partibus illis magne auctoritatis et ingenii sicut a nobis cardinalis in honore habetur […]." De Grassi, *De oratoribus*, 237.

25 "Hunc prete Janum soldanus Babilonie apud Charas etiam veretur et veneratur, nam per

go to Alexandria, and get back home. The Ethiopian monastery in Jerusalem was virtually their only connection to the rest of the world—as we have seen before—and if the Sultan would find out that a delegation had used it to make contact with Europe—let alone the pope himself—he would completely shut down any travel from Ethiopia. It is not uncommon that a monarch tries to prevent two enemies to join forces, especially when he is outflanked by them; but the Mamluk Sultanate of the 15th century was especially dangerous and unpredictable. From the outside the Mamluks were still a powerhouse and in the first half of the 15th century both Ethiopia and Europe saw them as a main Muslim threat in the Mediterranean region, but domestically they suffered from severe political instability and were faced with a series of internal power struggles. And that made them feel vulnerable on the outside, so the tiniest irritation could trigger some sort of overreaction in Cairo.

Both Latin Europe and Ethiopia had to experience that in a similar way. A good example are the trading relations between the Republic of Venice and the Mamluks. The slightest *misbehavior* of one Venetian merchant could lead to heavy consequences for all traders as well as the Venetian ambassador, reaching from physical abuse to the expulsion of every Venetian from the Sultanate.[26] Now, the Ethiopians did not have any merchants in Egypt, so the Sultan had to look for other subjects he could threaten if he felt that Ethiopia violated his rights. Usually, he was content that the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria was always in his range while the Ethiopians only had some of his ordinary ambassadors who were disposable in comparison. He knew that the Ethiopian Church needed the patriarch to invest and consecrate new clergy, but at times he exacted his revenge not only on him, but on the Coptic monasteries within his territory. Sometimes a Sultan even exacted revenge on all the Christians in his territory, regardless of who had violated his rights in the first place. There is an important example of this which we will come back to later, but it is out of this reason that only six delegates did not want to attract too much attention and that Pope Sixtus IV received them only in his secret consistory. The ambassadors went on to present the Romans with an astonishing offer.

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imperii sui loca et populos, homines qui sub hoc nago sunt liberi sunt neque solvunt vectigalia neque introitum Sepulchri dominici sicut alii ceteri Christiani." Ibid., 237.

26 Cf. Kate Fleet, "Turks, Mamluks, and Latin Merchants. Commerce, Conflict, and Cooperation," in *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150*, ed. Jonathan Harris, Catherine Holmes and Eugenia Russel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 335–336.

They pretended to act on behalf of their emperor who is willing to offer submission to papal authority.[27] What does this offer include altogether? First of all, it includes the yearly payment of a traditional tribute to the Latin church, the Peter's Pence. Secondly, the delegates promise on behalf of the Ethiopian Church to cut ties with Alexandria and to let their clergy be educated by Roman authorities. And thirdly, there finally seems to arise a foundation for a military alliance between Western Europe and the legendary Prester John. The delegates actually encourage Latin Europe to attack the Mamluks on their northern frontier; the Ethiopian emperor would support the European strike force by simply letting the Nile run dry.[28]

Rome was now the only one of the ancient Patriarchates left in Christian hands. And Latin Europe had not exactly been of much use in the protection of the East, so they comforted themselves by dreaming of a great crusade that they would launch against the Ottomans; and in a second step maybe against the Mamluks, but primarily against the Ottomans. At first, they seemingly succeeded when a Christian coalition army annihilated an Ottoman army at Belgrade in 1456. But in hindsight, that was it. Later popes and clergymen could preach all they wanted, but practically no one wanted to take part in any other crusade.[29] This Ethiopian delegation came as a welcome surprise because

27 "Propositio ipsa fuit hec, tria continens capitula, videlicet: Primum qualiter venissent ad Ecclesiam Romanam, ut si ibi invenirent unum esse Christi vicarium et successorem Petri, prout ab aliquibus apud ipsos dicitur, quod ipsum Christi vicarium nomine prefati nagi adorarent, duo ipsi pape vicario Christi pollicentes." De Grassi, *De oratoribus*, 238.

28 "Primum, quod omni anno per oratorem ipsius nagi apud Christi vicarium manentem tributum darent Ecclesie Romane et ipsi vicario ipsumque dominum superiorem et reverentem haberent, prestarentque eidem ac suis successoribus obedientiam per alios principes et imperatores christianos prestari solitam. Secundum petierunt per papam destinari aliquos sive episcopos sive sacerdotes seculares aut regulares bene instructos in fide Christi tanquam magistros qui ipsos populos et nationem tanquam rudes et ignaros discipulos instruerent in fide Christi. Tertio obtulerunt ipsum nagum paratum esse dum vicarius Christi mandaret cum armis in exercitum ac expeditionem ire contra soldanum Babilonie et Mauros ad recuperationem Sepulchri dominici, et turbare crescentiam illi de quo Mauri plurimum timent." Ibid., 238.

29 The outrage over the sacking of Constantinople is testified in various accounts, many of those written by Greek refugees. Kritoboulos even compares the atrocities to the sackings of Troy, Babylon, Carthage, Rome and Jerusalem. Cf. Kritoboulos of Imbros, *The history of Mehmed the Conqueror*, trans. and ed. Charles Riggs (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 76–78. Subsequently, the papacy desperately reached out to every potential ally that they had envoys to send for. Sometimes an envoy was sent to a list of places mindboggingly random. "In civitatibus Caffe et Pere et in terris Sarracenorum, Paganorum, Gregorum, Bulgarorum, Cumanorum, Ethiopium, Iberorum, Alanorum, Basarorum, Bottorum, Zizorum, Brutenorum, Sitorum, Iacobitarum, Nubianorum, Nestorianorum, Beor-

it could be used as evidence that a crusade could be a possible and rewarding undertaking. Prester John had finally shown himself and he had declared allegiance to their cause! And not only that, but the fact that he had come to Rome—and not the other way around—seemed to make it evident that Latin Europe had the high ground, both ideologically and morally; because the pope claims to be the vicar of Christ, after all, he has *qua definitionem* no other choice than to be right.

It is not clear, if the ambassadors actually presented such an elaborate three-point-offer to the pope. Maybe Brocchi and Pope Sixtus IV just wanted to hear it that way. But if the ambassadors had really made these offers, they did not even have to be that far-fetched to them. The plan of a crusade in cooperation with Europe had been pursued by Emperors Zär'a Yaʿəqob and Bä'ədä Maryam, anyway, but had never borne fruit.[30] And even the imperial submission under the pope was likely seen as equivalent to the former dependency on Alexandria. But ultimately, the plan was ill-conceived, and the delegates likely started to notice that the pope would have never accepted their Jewish influenced rites either.[31] We can trace these growing insecurities in the last few comments that

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gianorum, Armenorum, Indorum, Molescitorum, Tartharorum, Kardorum, Hungarorum maioris Hungarie et aliorum qui nondum sacramenta fidei perceperunt." cf. Rome, ASV, Reg. Vat. 519, fol. 117^{r}, cited as: Benjamin Weber, "Toward a Global Crusade? The Papacy and the Non-Latin World in the Fifteenth Century," in *Reconfiguring the Fifteenth-century Crusade*, ed. Norman Housley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 36. Even more striking than this vast line-up of potential allies is the fact that none of these seemed to have any interest in partaking or at least failed in coordination. As Pope Pius II put it in a state of frustration towards the end of his life: "We longed to declare war against the Turks and to put forth every effort in defense of religion, but when we measure our strength against that of the enemy, it is clear that the Church of Rome cannot defeat the Turks with its own resources. […] We are far inferior to the Turks unless Christian kings should unite their forces. We are seeking to effect this; we are searching out ways; none practicable presents itself, […] no one believes what we say. Like insolvent tradesmen we are without credit. Everything we do is interpreted in the worst way, and since all princes are very avaricious and all prelates of the Church are slaves to money, they measure our disposition by their own." Pius II., Commentarius, cited as: Kenneth Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*. Vol. 2, *The Fifteenth Century* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978), 235.

30 Cf. Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State*, 256–267.

31 Cf. Kenneth Stow, "Papal Mendicants or Mendicant Popes. Continuity and Change in Papal Policies toward the Jews at the End of the Fifteenth Century," in *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Michael and Susan Myers (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 255–271. The 1470s had seen Jewish communities across Latin Europe exceptionally threatened compared to the centuries before. Vigilante justice by locals against their Jewish neighbours was openly tolerated by the papal court, as the case of the blood libel of Trent in 1475 makes evident. Pope Sixtus IV seems to have yielded to his zeitgeist, too, as is shown

Brocchi reports to de Grassi. There he mentions an argument between some nameless Catholic clergymen and the delegates who were asked if it was true that they have a large and autonomous Jewish community back home and that they themselves even incorporate Jewish elements into their rites. Apparently, rumors of the schism had reached Rome, but could not really be put into context there. The delegates strongly rejected these claims and even stressed their immense animosity against any Jewish community they would encounter.[32] There was no reason for Brocchi to report this to de Grassi if he did not remember it to be a very emotional episode during their reception. It seems as if the delegates feared that the pope would condemn them for the same reasons as the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria had done earlier, so they stressed that their way of life was in fact perfectly compatible with the Christian doctrine. Their caution is further exposed as de Grassi notes their strict observation of the Roman Catholic customs and their refusal to celebrate the Mass in their own rites.[33]

In the aftermath of de Grassi's account, the pope accepted the terms of the Ethiopian offer, but the delegates did not dare to return home. Three years later, two of the delegates could be found in the monasteries of Jerusalem, one had even converted to Islam.[34] In the meantime, Emperor Bä'ədä Maryam had died

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by the language employed in his comments regarding Jewish life. Not only did he accuse Jews of "ora sua spurcissima aperire, ac prava et obscena quedam diabolica figmenta, suis falsissimis dogmatibus confingere." No. 972, in: Shlomo Simonsohn, ed., *The Apostolic See and the Jews*. Vol. 3, *Documents: 1464–1521* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990), 1213. But he even employed the trope of an imminent Judaizing threat himself: "[…] contagione Iudaica […] ut Christicolas a veritate seducere, et se voluptatum suarum compotes facere valeant." No. 1002, ibid., 1250–1251.

32 "[…] sed neque sabbatum ut Judei sanctificabant et omnia edulia comedebant non sicut Judei abstinentes ab aliquibus, et inimici erant Judeorum, quos ipse nagus prete Janus et predecessores eius destruxerunt penitus, instanter negantes quod Judei mentiuntur se videlicet habere dominium in partibus eorum id est Ethiopie, quod falsum est." De Grassi, *De oratoribus*, 239.

33 "Nunquam fecerunt aliqua sua sacrificia particularia sicut alii aliarum nationum infidelium facere solent, sed voluerunt habere modum nostrum dicendi Missam, quia sic ipsi in suis regionibus volebant facere et reducere omnia ad eorum modum et facere secundum quod nos facimus." Ibid., 239.

34 "De li quali l' uno, in grande confusione del nome cristiano e de la sua natione, ha renegato la fede. L'altro chiamato Antonio già doi anni da poi el suo giongere qui, ritiene le paterne et amicabile littere, li presenti in segno d'amore, la ymagine da esso summo pontefice, lo anelo del proprio dito, in segno de fidele disponatione ad tua excellentia da quello dirizzate. Et allegando la difficultà del venire, consuma la pecunia a lui donata per lo viaggio, defrauda la dicta Sede dal suo intento e tua serenità, che senza lachrime non proferisco." Francesco Suriano, *Il trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente*, trans. and ed. Girolamo Golubovich (Milan: Artigianelli, 1900), 82.

and his successor Qʷästänṭinos II was just six years of age. His regent council had sent another delegation to Alexandria who accomplished their task this time without any diversion. So, the Ethiopian Church had got its much needed *Abunä* and therefore it did not have to think about its relation with Alexandria for the moment. A Roman expedition sent by the pope that actually arrived in Ethiopia had to learn that when the imperial council bluntly rejected them. There was no reason for them to allow yet another foreign force to interfere in their domestic affairs.[35] For a time, Rome was confused. Some even felt betrayed and called the former delegates impostors.[36] But this impression did not hold for long. First of all, this was not the first time that communications with a territory far away had failed due to misunderstandings and the sheer distance, and secondly, only six years after de Grassi published his manual, the Ethiopian emperor acknowledged the pope as head of church—and this time for real, as the pope made the concession to accept the Miaphysite patriarch of Alexandria as legitimate.

6 Conclusion

The *Tractatus de Oratoribus* and its development can really be seen as exemplary for the waning days of Ethiopia's mythical status in Western Europe. What can be concluded regarding the image Western Europe had about this far-away country of Ethiopia at the end of the Middle Ages? Let's draw four conclusions. First of all, the Latin European image of Ethiopia was always a construction that struggled between their own collective desires, diffuse knowledge and the sheer distance that made reliable information very hard or sometimes impossible to get. The expectations that they had of the African empire highly overestimated their capacities because they elevated the emperor not as an ordi-

35 Cf. Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State*, 289–291.

36 "Hos ego non ab eorum rege destinatos audio, sed ab ipsius secretario [Ioanni Baptista Brochi Imolensi], viro primario regni illius, cui desiderium est fedus et amicitiam inire cum pontifice et ritibus latinorum christianorum vivere. Christiani tamen sunt, quibus rex ille imperitata, quem nos Presto Ioannem vulgo dicimus, sed eorum ritus a nostris admodum differunt. Id fuit precipuum petitionum suarum: Ut cum eis latine legis et lingue episcopus mitteretur, qui et sacra nostra illis ostenderet et christianam doctrinam in eorum terris seminaret. Non inventus est qui se illis voluerit credere, tamen religiose admoniti sunt pontificis liberalitate sunt aliti et donati muneribus quibusdam, actis quoque publicis honorati. Pluries etiam per interpretem ab eodem pie et amanter auditi." Cf. Giacomo Gherardi, *Il diario romano di Jacopo Gherardi da Volterra dal 7 settembre 1479 al 12 agosto 1484*, ed. Enrico Carusi (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1904), 79.

nary monarch, but as the mythical figure of Prester John. That the Ethiopian emperor himself declared to possess control over the Nile just fit perfectly to this web of legends and superficial knowledge. Secondly, the Mamluk Sultanate affected both Latin Europe and Ethiopia and was unanimously seen as a large threat. Its political instability made its behaviour impossible to predict. Both Europeans and Ethiopians had to experience that through brutal collective punishments sometimes exerted on all Christians in Mamluk territory. This led to total secrecy regarding the delegation and contributed to a quick agreement on the proposal of a joint crusade. This secrecy combined with the complete failure of the delegation contributed to make this reception fall into oblivion for a long time. Thirdly, even if it was the legendary Priest King, Latin Europe still knew that his people had wandered off into heresy. Even if Brocchi did not label them the right way as Miaphysites, but instead as Nestorians, Rome was aware that their Christological position was not compatible with the Roman Catholic position and had to be corrected in case of a successful pact. And finally, not only the ancient schisms were still a huge obstacle in the relation between different Christian denominations, but there were also recent ones that affected the course of events. After all, the Ethiopian delegation got to Rome by chance, and it did only because the Ethiopian way of Christianity forced them to constantly reconsider their religious connections. The delegates did not know that for sure when they traveled to Rome, but they soon came to realize that their plan was ill-conceived from the start. It was never going to work. So, we see that it were political reasons and expectations that brought both sides together, mainly the fear of the Mamluk Sultanate and Islam in general, but it were religious and cultural differences that ultimately kept them apart, when both realms, Latin Europe and Ethiopia, for once managed to overcome the huge distance between them and get in contact with each other.

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PART 2

Early Modern Perspectives

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CHAPTER 6

An Ethiopian Orthodox Monk in the Cradle of the Reformation: *Abba* Mika'el, Martin Luther, and the Unity of the Church

Stanislau Paulau

1 Introduction

The 16th-century Protestant Reformation became a turning point not only for Latin Christendom. Rather, it profoundly impacted the trajectory of Christianity as a worldwide religion. Arguably, the ways in which the Reformation legacy has taken root and been expressed contextually around the world—particularly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—constitute one of the most vibrant research fields within the academic discipline of World Christianity. Yet, the relations between the Reformation and the wider world can also be conceptualized in a radically different way. Instead of looking at the Reformation as an initially European phenomenon that became global as a result of worldwide transmission and cross-cultural diffusion of its impulses (predominantly in the 19th and 20th centuries), in the following I would like to invert this perspective and ask whether the Reformation itself can be seen as a product of the increasing global interconnectedness of the early modern world.[1]

The reformers were doubtlessly aware that the Christian world was comprised not only of Latin Christendom but also of various branches of Eastern Christianity, which extended geographically from Eastern Europe, through the Eastern Mediterranean (including Northeast Africa), to South and East Asia. The fact that these churches did not recognize the primacy of the pope became an important argument in the early anti-Roman polemics of the reformers. Thus, already at the Leipzig Debate in the summer of 1519 (but also in his later writings), Martin Luther expressed the opinion that the Eastern churches were

1 Cf. Stanislau Paulau, "Re-Envisioning Ecumenism and World Christianity in the Age of Reformation: The Theological Dialogue of *Abba* Mika'el and Martin Luther," *Ecumenical Trends* 50, no. 3 (2021): 2–5. In more detail this perspective is elaborated in Stanislau Paulau, *Das andere Christentum. Zur transkonfessionellen Verflechtungsgeschichte von äthiopischer Orthodoxie und europäischem Protestantismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021). An open access version is available at: https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666336041.

neither heretical nor schismatic, even though they did not recognize the primacy of the pope as divine right.[2]

Reformation historians have typically argued that Luther himself had no personal contact whatsoever with Eastern Christians;[3] the commencement of Orthodox-Protestant[4] interactions is usually associated either with the activities of Philipp Melanchthon in the 1540s[5] or else, more frequently, with the

2 At its most elaborated, this argument is expressed in Luther's work *Von dem Papstthum zu Rom gegen den hochberühmten Romanisten zu Leipzig* (*On the Papacy in Rome: An Answer to the Celebrated Romanist at Leipzig*), published in 1520. Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 6, *Schriften 1519/20* (*einschließlich Predigten, Disputationen*) (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1888), 285–324. Regarding the position of the Orthodox churches in Luther's ecclesiology, see: Fairy von Lilienfeld, "Zum Wesen der Kirche. Einheit, Kontinuität und Universalität der heiligen katholischen und apostolischen Kirche in der Theologie Martin Luthers und in der 'eucharistischen Ekklesiologie' des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Sophia—Die Weisheit Gottes. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1983–1995*, ed. Karl Christian Felmy, Heinz Ohme and Karin Wildt (Erlangen: Lehrstuhl für Geschichte und Theologie des christlichen Ostens, 1997), 3–12. Cf. also George Pósfay, "'The Whole Christian Church on Earth'—Luther's Conception of the Universality of the Church," *Lutheran Theological Seminary* (*Gettysburg*) *Bulletin* 72 (1992): 20–43.

3 Hans-Dieter Döpmann formulated this view with reference to the international network of the Wittenberg reformer in the following way: "Many foreigners visited him [Luther], but no Orthodox." ("Viele Ausländer besuchten ihn [Luther], aber keine Orthodoxen.") Hans-Dieter Döpmann, "Das Verhältnis Luthers und der Lutheraner zu den orthodoxen Kirchen," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 109, no. 5 (1984): 323.

4 In this paper, the generic term "Orthodox churches" comprises both Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox (i.e., dyophysite and miaphysite) churches. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church belongs to the latter group.

5 Thus, for example, Daniel Benga suggests locating the first personal meeting between a Reformer and an Orthodox Christian in Melanchthon's meeting with the Greek Franciscus Magera at the Regensburg Reichstag in 1541. Daniel Benga, *David Chytraeus* (*1530–1600*) *als Erforscher und Wiederentdecker der Ostkirchen. Seine Beziehungen zu orthodoxen Theologen, seine Erforschungen der Ostkirchen und seine ostkirchlichen Kenntnisse* (Giessen: VVB Laufersweiler Verlag, 2012), 54. Cf. also Daniel Benga, "Philipp Melanchthon und der christliche Osten. Bis heute unbekannte Begegnungen Melanchthons aus den Jahren 1541 und 1556 mit orthodoxen Christen," *Orthodoxes Forum* 16 (2002): 19–38. For Franciscus Magera, see: Martin Hein, "Das Schicksal des Franz Magera. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Reformation und Türkenkriegen," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 73 (1982): 308–313. Dietmar Plajer, on the other hand, assumed that the first contacts between Reformation and Orthodox Christians can be traced back to the activities of the reformer of the Transylvanian-Saxon church Johannes Honterus (ca. 1498–1549) in Braşov (Kronstadt) in the 1540s. Dietmar Plajer, "Auftrag und Grenzen. Zu den Anfängen lutherisch-orthodoxer Beziehungen im 16. Jahrhundert," *Review of Ecumenical Studies Sibiu* 10, no. 1 (2018): 90–91. While it has been speculated whether a scholar from the University of Krakow who prepared a German-Romanian-Polish edition of the New Testament and visited Luther in 1532 might have been Orthodox, the source material, as the authors themselves admit, provides no evidence for such an assumption. Gunnar

correspondence between the Tübingen theologians and Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession in the 1570s.[6]

And yet, this established narrative has to be reconsidered in the light of the new evidence showing that the first documented encounter of the Reformers with Eastern Christianity can be traced to the time of Luther. Remarkably, this encounter took place not due to European but to Orthodox initiative. In 1534, an Ethiopian Orthodox monk and deacon *Abba*[7] Mika'el (ሚካኤል) traveled to Wittenberg where he contacted the Wittenberg reformers, Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon.[8] Arguably, this meeting should be regarded as the very

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Hering, "Orthodoxie und Protestantismus," in *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 31, no. 2, ed. Herbert Hunger (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 827; Benga, *David Chytraeus*, 49–50.

6 Dorothea Wendebourg, *Reformation und Orthodoxie. Der ökumenische Briefwechsel zwischen der Leitung der Württembergischen Kirche und Patriarch Jeremias II. von Konstantinopel in den Jahren 1573–1581* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 18–24; Benga, *David Chytraeus*, 45–50; Johannes Karmiris, "Luther und Melanchthon über die Orthodoxe Kirche (I)," *Kyrios* 6, no. 2 (1966): 77–104; Johannes Karmiris, "Luther und Melanchthon über die Orthodoxe Kirche (II)," *Kyrios* 6, no. 3 (1966): 150–173; Oskar Wagner, "Luther—Osteuropa und die griechisch-orthodoxe Kirche," *Kyrios* 4 (1964): 69–90; Viorel Mehedintu, "Martin Luther und die Ostkirche," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 32 (1983): 291–309; Ernst Benz, "Die östliche Orthodoxie und das kirchliche Selbstbewußtsein der Reformation," in *Evangelisches und orthodoxes Christentum in Begegnung und Auseinandersetzung*, ed. Ernst Benz and Lev Zander (Hamburg: Agentur des Rauhen Hauses, 1952), 101–160; Theodor Nikolaou, "Die orthodox-lutherischen Beziehungen im 16. Jahrhundert," *Ökumenische Information* 14/15 (1980): 7–10; Vasilică Mugurel Păvălucă, "Einige schriftliche Verweise Martin Luthers auf die Ostkirche," *Review of Ecumenical Studies Sibiu* 9, no. 3 (2017): 360–370. For further genealogies of early relations between the Reformation and Eastern Christianity, all of which get along without Martin Luther, see for example: Ernst Benz, *Wittenberg und Byzanz. Zur Begegnung und Auseinandersetzung der Reformation und der östlich-orthodoxen Kirche* (München: Fink, 1971), 4–33; Paschalis Kitromilides, "Orthodoxy and the West. Reformation to Enlightenment," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*. Vol. 5, *Eastern Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 187–209; Gisa Bauer, "Evangelisch-orthodoxe Religionsgespräche im 16. Jahrhundert," in *Zwischen theologischem Dissens und politischer Duldung. Religionsgespräche der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Irene Dingel, Volker Leppin and Kathrin Paasch (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 43–60.

7 *Abba* (አባ, derived from *ab*, "father") is an honorific title applied in Ethiopian Orthodox tradition to monks and clergy and is frequently used as a prefix to their names.

8 For a detailed evaluation of this encounter, see: Paulau, *Das andere Christentum*, 21–31 and 42–72. Previously, Martin Brecht and Tom G.A. Hardt briefly mentioned the meeting of Martin Luther and *Abba* Mika'el, however they did not go into detail about it. Cf. Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther*. Vol. 3, *Die Erhaltung der Kirche: 1532–1546* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1987), 67; Tom G.A. Hardt, "The Confessional Principle. Church Fellowship in the Ancient and in the Lutheran Church," *Logia. A Journal of Lutheran Theology* VIII, no. 2 (1999): 27. Most recently David Daniels drew attention to this encounter and emphasized its extraordinary importance for church historical studies: "I believe the dialogue between Luther and Michael the Deacon is historically significant. For historical studies, it might be on par with the colloquy between

first significant Protestant-Orthodox encounter. However, it is not the mere fact of such an early encounter between an Ethiopian Orthodox monk and the German reformers that make it extraordinarily significant. Of high importance is rather its theological dimension. This intercultural dialogue about the core issues of the Christian doctrine resulted in a mutually shared conviction that Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and proponents of the Wittenberg Reformation belonged to the very same Church of Christ.

This contribution has a twofold objective. Firstly, it aims to reconstruct the circumstances and the main content of the theological dialogue between *Abba* Mika'el and the Wittenberg reformers. Secondly, the paper seeks to uncover the history of the subsequent oblivion of this early Protestant-Orthodox encounter.

2 An Exceptional Encounter: *Abba* Mika'el in Wittenberg

On 31 May 1534 Philipp Melanchthon wrote a letter to his friend, the Wittenberg lawyer Benedict Pauli, in order to inform him about an unexpected event that occurred earlier that day.[9] According to Melanchthon, an Ethiopian monk came to Wittenberg and had a discussion with Luther. Despite initial communication difficulties—Melanchthon had to invite one of the fellow scholars as an interpreter—*Abba* Mika'el and Luther were able to speak about the doctrine of the Trinity. The African guest proved himself to be *homo ingeniosus*.[10]

But who was this Ethiopian monk and how did he come to Wittenberg? By the turn of the 16th century, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians were by no means rare guests in the Latin West. As supposed subjects of the legendary

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Luther and Zwingli." David Daniels, "Luther and Ethiopian Christianity," in *Reformation in the Context of World Christianity. Theological, Political and Social Interactions Between Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe*, ed. Frieder Ludwig et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019), 28.

9 Letter of Philipp Melanchthon to Benedict Pauli, 31.05.1534. Heinz Scheible, ed., *Melanchthons Briefwechsel. Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. T6, *Texte 1395–1683 (1534–1535)* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 2005), 99–100. Cf. also Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider, ed., *Philippi Melanthonis Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*. Vol. 2 (Halis Saxonum: C.A. Schwetschke et filium, 1835), 730–731. See also the recent introduction and translation in: Timothy J. Wengert, "Melanchthon's First Letter about an Ethiopian Visitor to Luther's Wittenberg," *Lutheran Quarterly* 35 (2021): 182–188. For the view arguing that Melanchthon possibly refers in this letter to a different visitor, see: David Daniels III and Lawrence Anglin, "Luther and the Ethiopian Deacon," *Lutheran Quarterly* 32 (2018): 428–434.

10 Letter of Philipp Melanchthon to Benedict Pauli, 31.05.1534. Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*. Vol. T6, 100.

Prester John, a monarch who was believed to rule over a powerful Christian empire in the midst of Muslims and pagans, they were not only tolerated, but rather treated with great respect (at least in most of the cases).[11] Having established a network of diasporic communities in the Mediterranean region—the most prominent ones could be found in Jerusalem, Cairo, Nicosia and Rome—Ethiopian Christians facilitated increasing circulation of knowledge between Northeast Africa and Latin Europe and widely engaged in interaction with Latin Christianity.[12] Since, according to Melanchthon, *Abba* Mika'el was able to communicate in broken Italian (although he did not speak either Greek or Latin),[13] it can be assumed that he spent a long time in an Italian-speaking environment. Most likely he belonged to the Ethiopian monastic community in Rome. The church of *Santo Stefano dei Mori* (or *Santo Stefano degli Abissini*), adjacent to St. Peter's, which had served as the main meeting place and guest house for Ethiopian pilgrims from the 1480s onwards; it developed into an important center of Ethiopian Orthodox intellectual life and also received the formal status of an Ethiopian Orthodox monastic community in 1515.[14] A fur-

11 Cf. Samuel Asghedom, "Contributo dell'Ospizio di Santo Stefano degli Abissini agli Studi Etiopici in Europa," in *IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici* (*Roma, 10–15 April 1972*). Vol. 1 (Roma: Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, 1974), 393. On the myth of Prester John (Lat. Pres[by]ter Iohannes) and its association with Ethiopia, see: Wilhelm Baum, *Die Verwandlungen des Mythos vom Reich des Priesterkönigs Johannes. Rom, Byzanz und die Christen des Orients im Mittelalter* (Klagenfurt: Kitab, 1999); Lew Gumilev, *Searches for an Imaginary Kingdom. The Legend of the Kingdom of Prester John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Prester John," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 209–216.

12 For Ethiopian journeys to Europe in the 16th century and Ethiopian diasporic communities in the Mediterranean, see: James De Lorenzi, "Red Sea Travelers in Mediterranean Lands: Ethiopian Scholars and Early Modern Orientalism, ca. 1500–1668," in *World-Building and the Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Allison B. Kavey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 173–200; Samatha Kelly, "Medieval Ethiopian Diasporas," in *A Companion to Medieval Ethiopia and Eritrea*, ed. Samatha Kelly (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 427–441; Matteo Salvadore, *The African Prester John and the Birth of Ethiopian-European Relations, 1402–1555* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017); Matteo Salvadore, "The Ethiopian Age of Exploration: Prester John's Discovery of Europe, 1306–1458," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 4 (2011): 593–627; Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Venezia, l'Etiopia e l'Europa," in *"Nigra sum sed formosa." Sacro e bellezza dell'Etiopia cristiana* (*13 Marzo–10 Maggio 2009*), ed. Giuseppe Barbieri and Gianfranco Fiaccadori (Crocetta del Montello: Terra ferma, 2009), 27–48; Samantha Kelly and Denis Nosnitsin, "The Two Yoḥannəses of Santo Stefano degli Abissini, Rome: Reconstructing Biography and Cross-Cultural Encounter Through Manuscript Evidence," *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 2, no. 2 (2017): 392–426.

13 Letter of Philipp Melanchthon to Benedict Pauli, 31.05.1534. Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*. Vol. T6, 99–100.

14 Cf. Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Santo Stefano dei Mori," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 528–532; Sebastian

ther indication of this hypothesis is provided by the manuscript "Vat. et. 47" of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, which formerly belonged to the Ethiopian Orthodox monastery in Rome.[15] On fol. 215^{r}, at the very end of this 15th century manuscript, there is an addendum of a later date that identifies a certain Mika'el from the Ethiopian Orthodox monastery in Rome as the owner of this manuscript (**ዝመጽሐፍ፡ ዘሚካኤል**; *Zəmaṣḥäf zamika'el*).[16] In view of the fact that the entire monastic community was small even during its heyday between the 1520s and 1550s and consisted of around five to 40 monks (this number varied),[17] it is quite conceivable that this Mika'el is identical with the Ethiopian deacon who visited Wittenberg.

Abba Mika'el stayed in Wittenberg until 4 July 1534. The two reformers were on site during almost the entire stay of *Abba* Mika'el and met repeatedly with him for theological discussions.[18] Before the departure of the Ethiopian monk, the Wittenberg reformers issued him a formal letter of recommendation, that can be regarded as the key document of this encounter. The letter was drafted by Melanchthon and signed by Luther. Due to the importance of this document, it will be given in the following in both its original Latin version and an English translation:

> Testimonium datum cuidam Aethiopi a d[omino] Mart[ino] Luth[ero]. Φ[ίλιππος] M[elanthon] f[ecit].

Euringer, "San Stefano dei Mori (Vatikanstadt) in seiner Bedeutung für die abessinische Sprachwissenschaft und Missionsgeschichte," *Oriens Christianus* 32, no. 3 (1935): 38–59; Mauro da Leonessa, *Santo Stefano Maggiore degli Abissini e le relazioni romano-etiopiche* (Vatican: Tipografia Poliglota Vaticana, 1928); Marius Chaîne, "Un monastère éthiopien à Rome au XVe et XVIe siècle," *Mélanges de la Faculté Orientale, Bayreuth* 5 (1911): 1–36; Sylvain Grébaut, "Contribution à l'histoire du couvent éthiopien San-Stefano-dei-Mori," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 26, no. 3 (1927): 211–218; Sylvain Grébaut, "La règle de Santo Stefano dei Mori," *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* 27, no. 3 (1929): 214–219.

15 Cf. Sylvain Grébaut and Eugène Tisserant, *Bybliothecae apostolicae Vaticanae codices manu scripti recensiti iussu Pii XI Pontificis maximi* (Città del Vaticano: Byblioteca Vaticana, 1935), 199–201.

16 Besides three prayer books—*Səbḥätä fəqur* (**ስብሐተ፡ ፍቁር**), *Ṣälotä maḥtäm* (**ጸሎተ፡ ማኅተም**), and *Ṣälotä haymanot* (**ጸሎተ፡ ሃይማኖት**)—the manuscript contained the Gospel of John and the Revelation of John.

17 Cf. Mauro da Leonessa, *Santo Stefano*, 185–188.

18 The only exception were the few days the reformers spent in Dessau from 3 to 8 June 1534. Cf. Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 59, *Nachträge zu Band 1–57 und zu den Abteilungen "Deutsche Bibel" und "Tischreden"* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1983), 351 and Heinz Scheible, ed., *Melanchthons Briefwechsel. Kritische und kommentierte Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 10, *Orte A–Z und Itinerar* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1998), 426–427.

Fuit nobiscum in Germania dominus Michael, Aethiops diaconus, cum quo de doctrina christiana familiariter colloquentes audivimus eum cum symbolo, quod habet ecclesia occidentalis, recte convenire nec de trinitate aliud sentire, quam quod sentit ecclesia occidentalis. Ideo, quantum nos quidem possumus, commendamus eum bonis viris. Nam etsi orientalis ecclesia habet aliquas dissimiles ceremonias, ipse quoque iudicat, quod dissimilitudo earum non tollat unitatem ecclesiae nec pugnet cum fide, quia Christi regnum est spiritualis iustitia cordis, timor dei et per Christum fiducia. Hanc sententiam et nos probamus. Comperimus etiam ex eo, quod ritus, quem nos observamus in usu coenae domini et missa, convenit cum orientali ecclesia. Optamus autem, ut omnes gentes agnoscant et glorificent Christum et ei obediant vera fiducia misericordiae ipsius et dilectione proximi. Ideo rogamus bonos viros, ut christianam dilectionem et huic hospiti praestare velint. Witeb[ergae] 1534, 4. Non[as] Iulii.

MARTINUS LUTHERUS[19]

A letter of recommendation given to an Ethiopian by Mister Martin Luther. Φίλιππος Melanthon drafted it.

Mister Michael, an Ethiopian deacon, was with us in Germany. We spoke with him about the Christian doctrine on friendly terms and heard him rightly agree with the creed that the Western church holds. Nor does he think about the Trinity any differently than what the Western church thinks. Therefore, as much as we can, we recommend him to good people. For although the Eastern church observes some divergent ceremonies, he judges that this difference does not undermine the unity of the Church nor conflict with faith, because the Kingdom of Christ is spiritual righteousness of heart, fear of God, and trust through Christ. We, too, approve of this opinion. We also learned from him that the rite, which we observe at the Lord's Supper and the Mass, is in accord with the Eastern church. Moreover, we desire that all peoples acknowledge and glorify Christ and obey him through true trust in his mercy and through love of the neighbor. Therefore, we entreat good people that they, too, would show Christian love to this visitor. Wittenberg, July 4, 1534.

MARTIN LUTHER[20]

19 The text of the letter of recommendation is given according to the critical edition of Melanchthon's correspondence: Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*. Vol. T6, 123–124.

20 Translation—S.P. For another recent English translation, see: David Daniels III and Lawrence Anglin, "Luther and the Ethiopian Deacon," *Lutheran Quarterly* 32 (2018): 428–434.

The very fact that the Ethiopian monk had a letter of recommendation drawn up suggests that he sought further contacts with the representatives of the Reformation. And in fact, another letter from Melanchthon indicates that *Abba* Mika'el also intended to travel to France. It seems that on his way, the Ethiopian monk wanted to meet the Strasbourg reformer Martin Bucer (1491–1551).[21] It is, however, not known whether these plans could be carried out or not.

3 Key Themes of the Theological Dialogue between *Abba* Mika'el and Martin Luther

3.1 *Trinity*

Based on the available sources we can determine that the main themes of the dialogue between *Abba* Mika'el and Martin Luther were among others the doctrines of the Trinity and the Lord's Supper.[22] Since both sides had to deal with cultural and religious otherness, not only genuine theological convictions but also mutual misconceptions inevitably influenced the discussion and contributed to the perceived accord in faith. Therefore, the following analysis aims at disentangling these layers of the theological dialogue.

Already during the first encounter on Sunday, 31 May 1534, Martin Luther and *Abba* Mika'el have discussed the doctrine of the Trinity.[23] But why of all topics, have they chosen exactly this one for the first conversation? Decisive for this choice could have been the fact that according to the Western Christian liturgical calendar the Trinity Sunday was celebrated on this day. Thus, immediately before meeting the Ethiopian monk, Luther had given a sermon in the Castle church of Wittenberg on the Trinity. In his sermon he tried to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity of God using Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus from the Gospel of John (John 3:2–11).[24]

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21 Cf. letter of Philipp Melanchthon to Martin Bucer, 04.07.1534, in which he recommends *Abba* Mika'el travelling to France: "[S.D. Fuit hic nobiscum Aethiops homo cupidus cognoscend(i).] S.D. Hic hospes mirabili studio tenetur cognoscendi varias nationes. Fuit itaque nobiscum et, cum familiariter multa de relligione et doctrina christiana collocuti essemus, visus est non abhorrere a studio pietatis. Ideo dedi hoc epistolium roganti et commendo eum tibi, mi Bucere, commendandum etiam aliis fratribus. Videre cupit Galliam. Melanthon." Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*. Vol. T6, 122.

22 The two other broadly defined fields dealt with were ecclesiology and eschatology. For more details, see: Paulau, *Das andere Christentum*, 52–65.

23 Cf. Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*. Vol. T6, 99–100.

24 Both Luther's sermon on Trinity Sunday (31 May 1534) and his sermon on the Monday after Trinity Sunday (1 June 1534) have been handed down. Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers*

Moreover, at that time triadology also played an important role in Luther's thought due to another reason. Since the late 1520s, when Luther became aware of the emergence of anti-Trinitarian teachings within the Reformation movement, he was confronted with the question of the scriptural conformity of the doctrine of the Trinity.[25] In this context, the neo-Cappadocian triadology (which Luther, however, received in its form shaped by Latin authors) acquired an eminent importance for his theology.[26] Owing to the fundamental nature of this issue, Luther repeatedly returned to it again in the early 1530s, trying to defend the Trinitarian theology of the early church as it was formulated at the first two ecumenical councils, the Council of Nicea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381).[27] Against this background, it does not seem all too surprising that Luther directed his initial conversation with the Ethiopian monk to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Vol. 37, *Predigten der Jahre 1533 und 1534* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1910), 414–424.

25 Cf. Reiner Jansen, *Studien zu Luthers Trinitätslehre* (Bern: Lang, 1976), 91–97.

26 On the importance of the patristic doctrine of the Trinity for Luther's theology, see: Christoph Markschies, "Luther und die altkirchliche Trinitätstheologie," in *Luther—zwischen den Zeiten. Eine Jenar Ringvorlesung*, ed. Christoph Markschies and Michael Trowitzsch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999); Jouko Martikainen, "Christologische und trinitätstheologische Aporien der östlichen Kirche aus der Sicht Luthers," in *Luther und die trinitarische Tradition: Ökumenische und philosophische Perspektiven*, ed. Joachim Heubach (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1994). Luther oriented himself to early church models even in his dissociation from misguided developments in the Trinitarian theology. Thus he writes in the testamentary confession of faith, which concludes his work *Vom Abendmahl Christi, Bekenntnis*: "Erstlich gleube ich von hertzen den hohen artickel der goettlichen maiestet / das Vater / son / heiliger geist drey Unterschiedliche personen / ein rechter / einiger / natuerlicher / warhafftiger Gott ist / schepffer hymels vnd der erden / aller dinge widder die Arrianer / Macedonier / Sabelliner / vnd der gleichen ketzerey." Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 26, *Vorlesung über 1. Timotheus 1528; Schriften 1528* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1909), 500. In his sermon on the Feast of the Trinity on 23 May 1535—exactly one year after his encounter with *Abba* Mika'el—Luther even stated that in the Trinitarian dogma "God speaks about himself" ("Gott also von sich selbst redet"). Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 41, *Predigten der Jahre 1535 und 1536* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1910), 270. Philipp Melanchthon, too, saw himself as a representative of the neo-Cappadocian Trinitarian theology and in his polemic against the anti-Trinitarians he expressly referred to the teaching of the Cappadocian Church Fathers. Cf. Ashley H. Hall, *Philip Melanchthon and the Cappadocians. A Reception of Greek Patristic Sources in the Sixteenth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 122–128.

27 Ibid., 149–206. See also: Ulrich Asendorf, *Die Theologie Luthers nach seinen Predigten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 29–46.

It is unclear whether Luther was familiar with the *Legatio magni Indorum imperatoris Presbyteri Ioannis* and the *Legatio David Æthiopiae Regis*, widely circulated collections of letters sent by Ethiopian rulers to the Portuguese monarchs and Roman pontiffs, which were by that time available in several Latin and German editions.[28] Should this be the case, the remarkable triadological statements of Emperor Ləbnä Dəngəl, with which he began his letters to the Portuguese monarchs, may have prompted Luther to ask his guest about the Ethiopian Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity.[29]

According to Melanchthon, *Abba* Mika'el testified to Martin Luther that both Eastern and Western churches adhere to the same triadological teaching, "[…] concerning the Trinity he [*Abba* Mika'el] told Luther that the teaching of the Eastern church agreed with that of the Western church."[30] This sentence reveals that in the view of the reformers the Ethiopian monk did not represent the Ethiopian Church, a particular Christian tradition with its own cultural, liturgical and dogmatic characteristics, but rather the "Eastern church" ("orientalis ecclesia"). Precisely this undifferentiated attitude towards the Christian Orient (that was quite understandable due to the lack of information) made genuine understanding difficult.

The idea that Eastern and Western Christianity adhere to an identical doctrine of the Trinity was important for the Wittenberg reformers to such an extent, that they highlighted it in the recommendation for *Abba* Mika'el.[31] However, upon closer inspection this conviction seems to be questionable.

First of all, it seems that the whole *filioque* (Latin: "and from the Son") controversy around the procession of the Holy Spirit was completely unknown to

28 Thus only in 1533—apart from numerous additional Latin editions and two Italian translations—appeared two German editions of the *Legatio David Æthiopiae Regis*: *Bottschafft des groszmechtigsten Konigs David aus dem grossen und hohen Morenland den man gemeinlich nennet Priester Johann an Babst Clemens den siebenden zu Bononia vorhort in offnem consistorio am xxix. Tag Januarii Anno m.d.xxxiii* (Dresden: Wolfgang Stöckel, 1533) and *Bottschafft des groszmechtigsten Konigs David aus dem grossen und hohen Morenland den man gemeinlich nennet Priester Johann an Babst Clemens den siebenden zu Bononia vorhort in offnem consistorio am xxix. Tag Januarii Anno m.d.xxxiii* (Nürnberg: Friedrich Peypus, 1533).

29 See for example the beginning of the letter of Ləbnä Dəngəl to Manuel i from 1521. Damião de Góis, *Legatio magni Indorum Imperatoris Presbyteri Ioannis, ad Emanuelem Lusitaniae Regem, Anno Domini. m.d. xiii.* (Antwerpen: Grapheus, 1532), 15–16. Remarkable in this regard is also the beginning of the letter of Ləbnä Dəngəl to João iii. from 1524, where he artistically paraphrases the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople. Ibid., 32–33.

30 "[…] de Trinitate dixit [*Abba* Mika'el] Luthero sententiam orientalis ecclesiae convenientem cum occidentali ecclesia." Letter of Philipp Melanchthon to Benedict Pauli, 31.05.1534. Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*. Vol. T6, 99–100. Translation—s.p.

31 Translation—s.p.

the conversers. On one side, the Wittenberg reformers taught with great self-evidence that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.[32] They did not only use the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed with the addition of the *filioque*, but were also convinced of the authenticity of the Pseudo-Athanasian Creed that originally contained the *filioque*.[33] Since Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon had received the neo-Cappadocian triadology through the writings of the Latin authors, they were probably unacquainted with the fact that the original version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed still in use in Eastern and Oriental churches did not contain the *filioque*. On the other side, the Ethiopian monk seems to be unaware that the *filioque* was an integral part of the triadology in Latin Christianity.

Yet there is also another reason to doubt the declared agreement in the doctrine of the Trinity between the Wittenberg Reformation and Ethiopian Christianity. This reason has to do with the far-reaching church reforms, that had been carried out by Ethiopian Emperor Zär'a Yaʿəqob (1399–1468) in the 15th century. These reforms aimed at unifying church doctrine and liturgical practice also influenced the triadology of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.[34]

The decisive factor for this was the controversial discussion about the appropriate interpretation of biblical statements about the image of God,[35] and, accordingly, of the theological concept of *Mälkʿə* (**መልክዕ**, "image"), in relation to the Trinity.[36] Zär'a Yaʿəqob tended towards a literal, even physical, interpretation of the biblical passages referring to the image of God. Based upon numerous biblical anthropomorphisms, he advocated the idea that the human-like features can be ascribed to God.[37] The image of the human being, which

32 Cf. Jansen, *Studien*, 98–99.

33 Bernd Oberdorfer, *Filioque. Geschichte und Theologie eines ökumenischen Problems* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 266.

34 For Zär'a Yaʿəqob (throne name: Qʷäṣṭänṭinos, **ቈስጠንጢኖስ**) and for extensive further literature, see: Steven Kaplan and Marie-Laure Derat, "Zär'a Yaʿəqob," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 146–150.

35 Cf. Gen 1, 27.

36 For the prehistory and context of this debate, see: Getatchew Haile, "Religious Controversies and the Growth of Ethiopic Literature in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Oriens Christianus* 65 (1981): 127–129; Kurt Wendt, "Die theologischen Auseinandersetzungen in der äthiopischen Kirche zur Zeit der Reformen des XV. Jahrhunderts," in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici* (*Roma 2–4 Aprile 1959*) (Roma: Accad. nazionale dei Lincei, 1960), 137–146; Pierluigi Piovanelli, "Les controverses théologiques sous le roi Zar'a Yāʿəqob (1434–1468) et la mise en place du monophysisme éthiopien," in *La controverse religieuse et ses formes*, ed. Alain Le Boulluec (Paris: Cerf, 1995), 189–228.

37 Getatchew Haile, "The Homily of Zär'a Yaʿəqob in Honour of St. John the Evangelist, EMML 1480, ff. 48ʳ–52ᵛ," *Oriens Christianus* 67 (1983), 150. Cf. Heyer, *Die Kirche Äthiopiens*, 255–256.

took shape with Adam, was at the same time the image of God. A group of clergymen, who became known as the Zämika'elites, engaged in a theological discussion with the emperor.[38] Following the patristic tradition, they argued that the similarity of the image of God and the image of man refers exclusively to the spiritual realm and that consequently one should not speak of a physical body of the invisible and boundless God.[39]

However, the Zämika'elites were declared heretics and the ideas of Zär'a Yaʿəqob were integrated into the Ethiopian triadology.[40] The emperor attributed the physical characteristics that appeared at the creation of Adam and the incarnation of Christ to all three persons of the Trinity. According to him, the image of God was "in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, be it the head or the face, the eyes or the ears or the nose, the lips or the teeth, be it the tongue or the hands and fingers, be it the heart according to the image or the feet and toes."[41] Thus, in the middle of the 15th century the Zär'a Yaʿəqob's

38 They were named after one of the leading theologians within this movement called Zämika'el (ዘሚካኤል). The question of the image of God was not the only point of contention between them and Zär'a Yaʿəqob. They also opposed for instance his eschatological millenarianism, the introduction of new Mariological feasts and the expansion of the biblical canon (these were the books of *Enoch*, *Jubilees* and the *Testamentum Domini*). For a brief introduction, see: Getatchew Haile, "Zämika'elites," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 131–133.

39 Cf. for instance: "God has no form like the form of man. God did not create in his image and likeness the form of Adam's body which is palpable and visible. The image of God and his likeness are an invisible spirit which was breathed upon Adam's face." Quoted in: Getatchew Haile, "Zämika'elites," 132. Or: "God is invisible and has no image which man may know; He alone knows His image." Getatchew Haile, "The Homily," 159. The most important work attributed to Zämika'elites is *Fəkkare Mäläkot* (ፍካሬ፡ መለኮት; "Interpretations of Divinity"). Cf. Enrico Cerulli, *Scritti teologici etiopici dei secoli XVI–XVII*. Vol. 1, *Tre opuscoli dei Mikaeliti* (Città del Vaticano: Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana, 1958). The book both reflects on the image of God and argues against a literal interpretation of the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Bible. Cf. Pierluigi Piovanelli, "Connaissance de Dieu et sagesse humaine en Éthiopie. Le traité Explication de la Divinité attribué aux hérétiques 'mikaélites'," *Muséon* 117 (2004): 193–227; Carlo Conti Rossini and Lanfranco Ricci, ed., *Il Libro della Luce del Negus Zar'a Yāʿqob* (*Maṣḥafa Berhān*). Vol. 2 (Louvain: Peeters, 1965); Getatchew Haile, "The Homily," 149 (text) and 159 (translation).

40 Zär'a Yaʿəqob accused them of teaching that "God had no form, and man is not formed after God's image." Getatchew Haile, "The Homily," 164. Apart from the rejection of the physical aspect in the Trinity, the following statement was attributed to Zämika'elites (which, however, is not found in their writings): "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were three names, one person, one hypostasis and one aspect." Tedros Abraha, "Trinity," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 992. They were also accused of using a different version of the Trisagion in their services: "Holy, holy, holy God who is not likened to the image of creatures." Cf. Getatchew Haile, "Zämika'elites," 132; Conti Rossini and Ricci, *Il Libro della Luce*, 126 (text), 172 (translation).

41 Kurt Wendt, ed., *Das Maṣḥafa Milād* (*Liber Nativitatis*) *und Maṣḥafa Sellāsē* (*Liber Trini-*

triadology, which was summarized in the concise formula "The Father in the perfect image of man," became the official teaching of the Ethiopian Church.[42]

Consequently, the declared agreement in the doctrine of Trinity was deluding for two reasons. On the one hand, there was a dissimilarity between Eastern and Western Christianity concerning the issue of the *filioque*. On the other hand, the Ethiopian triadology after the reforms of Zär'a Ya'əqob differed not only from the Trinitarian doctrine of Western Christianity, but also from that of the rest of the Christian East. While Zär'a Ya'əqob's triadology remained unknown in the West until the 20th century and thus could not be identified as a theological problem, the explosive nature of the *filioque* question became clear to both German Protestants and Orthodox Ethiopians already a few decades after the encounter of *Abba* Mika'el and Martin Luther. The Ethiopian Orthodox Christians were confronted with it in the course of the dispute with the Portuguese Jesuits in the 1550s;[43] the Lutherans were referred to the *filioque* as a serious point of difference in the course of the correspondence with Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople in the 1570s.[44]

3.2 *Lord's Supper*

Another topic touched upon by *Abba* Mika'el and the Wittenberg reformers concerned sacramental theology, especially the understanding of the Lord's Supper. In the age of the Reformation, the question about the meaning and nature of the Eucharist was a matter of particularly intense theological dispute. It did not only mark a significant point of difference between Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians, but also caused a deep division within the Reformation movement itself.

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tatis) *des Kaisers Zar'a Yā'qob*, [Vol. Versio 1] (Louvain: Peeters, 1963), 79–80. Cf. Heyer, *Die Kirche Äthiopiens*, 255–256.

42 Conti Rossini and Ricci, *Il Libro della Luce*, 128–129. Cf. Getatchew Haile, "Ethiopian Orthodox (Täwaḥədo) Church. History from Ancient Times till the Second Half of the 19th Century," in *EAe* 2 (2005), 417. The influence of Zär'a Ya'əqob's doctrine of the Trinity on the later Ethiopian theology needs a thorough examination. On the one hand, it shaped the iconography of the Trinity, which was now predominantly represented as three older men (cf. Marilyn E. Heldman, "Trinity in Art," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 994–996), on the other hand, the hymnography of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church firmly rejects the idea of the humanity of God. The liturgical texts rather pass on a classical triadology, i.e. that which the emperor regarded as heretical. Cf. Mebratu Kiros Gebru, *Liturgical Cosmology. The Theological and Sacramental Dimensions of Creation in the Ethiopian Liturgy* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2012), 40–44.

43 Leonardo Cohen, *The Missionary Strategies of the Jesuits in Ethiopia (1555–1632)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 133–136.

44 Wendebourg, *Reformation und Orthodoxie*, 63–65.

In the letter of recommendation, there is the following remarkable reference to the Eucharist: "We also learned from him [*Abba* Mika'el] that the rite, which we observe at the Lord's Supper and the Mass, is in accord with the Eastern church."[45] Whereas the doctrine of the Trinity was discussed referring to the teaching of the Western and the Eastern churches in a rather general manner (without making any distinction between Roman Catholics and Protestants or between Ethiopian Christians and adherents of other Orthodox churches), the information about the mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper obtained from *Abba* Mika'el was unambiguously linked to the rite practiced by Luther and his followers. This emphasis was aimed at providing additional legitimization to the position held by Luther in the context of theological controversy over the Lord's Supper. The issue was of current interest. As late as on 10 March 1534, just before the meeting with the Ethiopian monk, he wrote a commentary on his own treaties *Von der Winkelmesse und der Pfaffenweihe* published the year before. There he polemicized sharply both against "the Papists," whose theology of the Mass sacrifice and private masses he vehemently rejected, and against "enemies of sacraments" within the Reformation camp, who denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.[46]

Most likely, the aforementioned conformity of liturgical practices of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and the followers of Luther have referred to the features that differentiated them from the Catholic Christians, on one side, and the Zwinglians and the Anabaptists, on the other side. Both Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and followers of Luther supported the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (in contrast to the Zwinglians and the Anabaptists) and distributed the Eucharist to the faithful under two forms and did not celebrate private masses (in contrast to the Roman Catholics).[47] Ulti-

45 "Comperimus etiam ex eo, quod ritus, quem nos observamus in usu coenae domini et missa, convenit cum orientali ecclesia." Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*. Vol. T6, 123–124. Translation—S.P.

46 It should be emphasized that Luther was still involved in the Lord's Supper controversy at the time. As late as 10 March 1534, just before the meeting with the Ethiopian monk, he wrote a commentary on his own writing *Von der Winkelmesse und der Pfaffenweihe* published the year before. There he polemicized sharply both against "the Papists," whose theology of the Mass sacrifice and private masses he vehemently rejected, and against "enemies or sacraments" in the Reformation camp, who denied the real presence. Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 38, *Schriften 1533/36* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1912), 171–255 and 257–271.

47 Since Ṣägga Zä'ab, another Ethiopian theologian who visited Europa in the early 16th century, in his work written for the Western readership mentions especially these characteristics of the Ethiopian liturgy, it is likely that *Abba* Mika'el also referred to them. Cf. Damião de Góis, *Fides, Religio, Moresque Aethiopum: sub imperio Preciosi Johannis degen-*

mately, the assertion of supposed conformity with Ethiopian Orthodox liturgical practices was intended to serve both as a means of self-reassurance and as an argument in polemics against the theological adversaries. Such strategy of argumentation was applicable in so far as Luther's opponents in the Lord's Supper controversy—both Protestant and Roman Catholic—also sought to support their position with the help of references to the practice of the early church or quotations from the Church Fathers.[48] The testimony of *Abba* Mika'el about the absence of private mass in Ethiopia seemed to verify the assessment of Luther, who saw this liturgical practice as a deviation from the tradition of the early church introduced in the Latin West by Pope Gregory I. The importance of this idea for the Wittenberg reformers can be exemplified by the fact that even three years after the encounter with *Abba* Mika'el, Philipp Melanchthon and Martin Luther referred to him in their conversation about the private mass, recorded in one of the "table talks":

> Priuata missa multos sanctos decepit a tempore Gregorij, ober 800 Jar. Et Ioannes Huss adhuc in illius superstition fuit captus. Miror, inquit Marti-

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tium una cum enarratione confoederationis ac amicitiae inter ipsos Aethiopum imperatores et reges Lusitaniae initae [...] (Lovanii: Ex officina Rutgeri Rescij, 1540), 76–78; Siegbert Uhlig and Gernot Bühring, ed., *Damian de Góis' Schrift über Glaube und Sitten der Äthiopier* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 254–256.

48 For the use of quotations from the Church Fathers in the Lord's Supper controversy, see: Gottfried Hoffmann, *Kirchenväterzitate in der Abendmahlskontroverse zwischen Oekolampad, Zwingli, Luther und Melanchton: Legitimationsstrategien in der inner-reformatorischen Auseinandersetzung um das Herrenmahl* (Göttingen: Edition Ruprecht, 2011); Hall, *Philip Melanchthon*, 169–178. Already in the *Apologie der Confessio Augustana* (first published in 1531; officially declared a confessional document in 1537), written under the leadership of Melanchthon—but under the influence of Martin Luther—Article 10, the Lord's Supper article in Apology, referred to the epiclesis of consecration of the Greek Orthodox liturgy as proof of the doctrine of real presence. Irene Dingel, ed., *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche. Vollständige Neuedition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 242. Furthermore, in contrast to the medieval Latin practice of distributing the sacrament in only one form of bread, Article 22 refers to the Orthodox practice of distributing the sacrament in both forms. Dingel, *Bekenntnisschriften*, 581. Article 24, referring to the Greek Church, rejects the practice of private masses: "Das wir aber nicht privatmessen, sondern alleine eine öffentliche Mess, wenn das volck mit Communicirt, halten, das ist nichts widder die gemein Christliche kirchen. Denn inn der Kriechischen kirchen werden [bis] auff diesen tag kein Privatmessen gehalten, sondern allein ein Messe, und dasselbige auff die Sontage und hohe feste; das ist alles ein anzeigung des alten brauchs der kirchen." Dingel, *Bekenntnisschriften*, 616. Cf. also: Reinhard Slenczka, "Melanchthon und die orthodoxe Kirche des Ostens," in *Philipp Melanchthon. Ein Wegbereiter für die Ökumene*, ed. Jörg Haustein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 115–116.

> nus Lutherus, quomodo Deus me ab hac una idolatria eripuerit. Respondit Philippus Melanthon, Aethiopem quendam ante triennium Witebergae fuisse, qui affirmasset in Asia nullum exemplum privatae missae esse, sed tantum unam publicam missam.
>
> 'The private mass deceived many saints from the time of Gregory, for over 800 years. Even John Hus was still captive to this superstition. I am amazed,' said Luther, 'how God wrested me from this singular idolatry.' Philip Melanthon responded: 'There was a certain Ethiopian who was here in Wittenberg three years ago. He affirmed that in Asia there were no instances of private masses but only the public mass.'[49]

The understanding of the Lord's Supper and the way of its performance by Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Luther's followers indeed had some substantial resemblances. Yet, a detailed conversation about the actual rite of the Ethiopian Orthodox liturgy (**ቅዳሴ**, *Qəddase*) and its theological implications would obviously also manifest significant points of dissent.[50] However, Luther's and Melanchthon's engagement into the inner-European eucharistic controversy inclined them to highlight the identified similarities and did not allow to use the conversation with *Abba* Mikaʾel in order to deepen the understanding of unique features of Ethiopian Christianity and its liturgical tradition.

3.3 *The One Church of Christ*

Undoubtedly the most important result of the proto-ecumenical dialogue between *Abba* Mikaʾel and Martin Luther was the conviction that the adherents of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and of the Wittenberg Reformation belonged to the same Church of Christ. The basis for this conviction was agreement on such central issues of the Christian teaching as the doctrine of the Trinity and the understanding of the Lord's Supper. The existing differences in some ceremonies were not regarded as essential and, consequently, were seen as adiaphora. This fundamental conviction was reflected in the already quoted letter of recommendation that the Wittenberg reformers issued to the Ethiopian monk before his departure from Wittenberg. Interestingly enough, the preserved formula that expresses this attitude is that of to *Abba* Mikaʾel: "Even though the Eastern church observes some divergent ceremonies, he [= *Abba* Mikaʾel] also judges that this difference does not abolish the unity of the

49 Luther, *Tischreden*. Vol. 5, 450–451. Translation—S.P.

50 For an introduction and further bibliography, see: Emmanuel Fritsch, "Qəddase," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 271–275; Habtemichael Kidane, "Eucharist," in *EAe* 2 (2005): 448–450.

Church nor conflict with faith."[51] The Wittenberg Reformers expressed their explicit support for this ecumenically oriented ecclesiology.[52]

The assertion that the fathers of the Reformation and Ethiopian Orthodox Christians confess essentially the same faith was quite extraordinary in the context of the advancing polarization and enduring theological polemics within Latin Christianity in the 16th century. Even though the shortage of accurate knowledge about each other's theological positions of the respective other and possible misinterpretations caused by the difficulties of communication may have contributed to this Orthodox-Protestant ecumenical understanding, this does not undermine the fact that both parties seem to have been genuinely convinced of their accord. Both Luther and Melanchthon have themselves repeatedly spoken about the encounter with the Ethiopian monk, highlighting the perceived accord in the main issues of faith. For instance, three years after the meeting with *Abba* Mika'el, on 17th November 1537,[53] Luther stated:

> Ante triennium nobiscum hic erat monachus Aethiops, cum quo disputabamus per interpretem, et iste omnibus nostris articulis conclusus dicebat: Ista eta bona creda, id est, fides.[54]
>
> Three years ago, there was an Ethiopian monk with us, with whom we had a discussion through an interpreter. He summed up all our articles [of faith] by saying, "This is a good *creda*, that is faith [in Italian]".[55]

This statement demonstrates a striking parallelism with a passage from Luther's Wittenberg sermon dating from the same year, in which he spoke of the unity of the true church of Christ, referring to a certain Ethiopian as his example of a fellow believer.[56] The fact that Luther had repeatedly, and in various

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51 "Nam etsi orientalis ecclesia habet aliquas dissimiles ceremonias, ipse quoque iudicat, quod dissimilitudo earum non tollat unitatem ecclesiae nec pugnet cum fide." Scheible, *Melanchthons Briefwechsel*. Vol. T6, 123–124. Translation—S.P.

52 "Hanc sententiam et nos probamus." Ibid.

53 In the edition of the speeches at table, "17 November 1538" is given as the date, but this may be an error. Insofar as Luther speaks of the monk visiting him *ante triennium* ("three years ago"), this statement would have to be from the year 1537.

54 Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Tischreden 1531–1546*. Vol. 4, *1538–1540* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1916), 152–153. See also: Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Tischreden 1531–1546*. Vol. 5, *1540–1544* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1919), 450–451.

55 Translation—S.P.

56 Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 47, *Reihenpredigten aus den Jahren 1537 bis 1540* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1912), 235–236.

contexts, expressed the conviction that he professed the same faith with the Orthodox Ethiopians and belonged together with them to the one true Church of Christ, demonstrates the importance of this idea for his ongoing theological reflection. This conviction touched upon one of the core issues of the ecclesiological self-understanding of the Reformation movement, the question regarding the Protestant understanding of the article of faith declaring the unity of the Church.[57]

4 Oblivion of the Ethiopian Monk and His Disappearance from the Historiography

However, why has the theological dialogue between *Abba* Mika'el and Martin Luther virtually been forgotten? The fate of the letter of recommendation issued by the Wittenberg reformers to the Ethiopian monk, its circulation and reception in the subsequent periods of time, can provide some insights in this regard.

At an early stage, among the first generation of Protestants, this encounter seems to have played a considerable role, since both Luther and Melanchthon had repeatedly referred to it. In the 16th century, this text of the letter of recommendation enjoyed wide dissemination. At least nine manuscripts containing the letter of recommendation for *Abba* Mika'el—a comparatively high number—have survived.[58] Especially interesting in this regard is a manuscript

57 Still in the year 1532 Luther had to defend this article of the creed in his epistle to Duke Albrecht of Prussia (1490–1568). Cf. Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 30 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1910), 552.

58 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Ms. Coll. Dupuy 796, pagina 702–703 (Heading: "Epistola commendatitia data cuidam Aetiopi. Phil. Melanthon pro Mart. Luthero scripsit"); Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Paris, Ms. 1458, fol. 224^{v} (Heading: "Epistola commendatitia data cuidam Aetiopi. Φ.M. pro M.L. scripsit"); Forschungsbibliothek Gotha der Universität Erfurt, Ms. Chart. B 1483, fol. 84$^{r–v}$ (Heading: "Epistola commendatitia Martini Lutheri data cuidam Aetiopi, authore Ph. Mel."); Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 64.4 Extrav., fol. 5^{v} (Heading: "Epistola commendatitia Martini Lutheri data cuidam Aetiopi, authore Philip. Melanch."); Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 107 Helmst., fol. 10^{v} (Heading: "Epistola commendadicia M. Lutheri data cuidam Aetiopi"); Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Cod. Guelf. 214 Gud. Lat. 4°, fol. 16$^{r–v}$ (Heading: "Epistola commendadicia D.M.L. data cuidam Aetiopi"); Stadtbibliothek Trier, Ms. 1880/1444, fol. 135$^{r–v}$ (Heading: "Testimonium datum cuidam Aethiopi a. d. martino Luther"); Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Ms. O III 4, fol. 124^{v}–125^{r} (Heading: "Epistola commendatitia M. Luth. data cuidam Episcopo"); Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Ms. 2630, fol. 60^{r}–61^{r} (Heading: "Commendatio data Aethiopi Anno 1535").

now kept in the Basel University Library. The title of the letter of recommendation "Epistola commendatitia M. Luth. data cuidam Æpiscopo" indicates that Luther had given it to an "Æpiscopo," a bishop.[59] In the context of the Ethiopian ecclesiastical structure, this anyway remarkable transformation of the status of *Abba* Mika'el, who was a deacon, had an important implication. Since, until the 20th century, the Ethiopian Church has merely had one single bishop at any given time, the claim that Luther met an Ethiopian bishop would imply that he met the head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The letter of recommendation was not only copied by hand, but was published in 1565, just five years after Melanchthon's death. Johannes Manlius, an alumnus of the Wittenberg University, included the letter of recommendation in the first printed edition of Melanchthon's letters, *Epistolarum D. Philippi Melanchthonis Farrago*, containing about 350 letters (about 200 of which have not survived anywhere else).[60] However, Melanchthon's son-in-law Caspar Peucer reacted furiously to Manlius' publication[61] and in the same year produced an alternative, much smaller, edition of letters from his father-in-law, *Epistolae selectiores aliquot Philippi Melanthonis*.[62] Peucer's edition did not include the letter of recommendation issued for the Ethiopian monk.

In following times, the willingness to commemorate Luther's meeting with an Ethiopian Orthodox theologian gradually declined. The dynamics of oblivion of the Ethiopian monk can be clearly seen in the production of further printed editions of this recommendation letter.

The next time the letter of recommendation was published was two centuries later, in 1784. Gottfried Schütze, the theologian and director of the Hamburg Public Library, had found the text in the holdings of his library and published it in both the Latin original and a German translation.[63] However, this publication was accompanied by a new attribution of meaning. Insofar as the letter of recommendation, among other things, referred to *orientalis ecclesia*,

59 Universitätsbibliothek Basel, Ms. O III 4, fol. 124^{v}–125^{r}.

60 Johannes Manlius, ed., *Epistolarum D. Philippi Melanchthonis Farrago* (Basel: Queck, 1565), 367–368. About Manlius, see: Matthias Simon, "Johann Manlius, der erste Herausgeber von Melanchthonsbriefen," *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Kirchengeschichte* 24 (1955): 141–149.

61 Christiane Mundhenk, "Briefe," in *Philipp Melanchthon. Der Reformator zwischen Glauben und Wissen. Ein Handbuch*, ed. Günter Frank (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 316.

62 Caspar Peucer, ed., *Epistolae selectiores aliquot Philippi Melanthonis* (Wittenberg: Crato, 1565).

63 Gottfried Schütze, ed., *D. Martin Luthers bisher ungedruckte Briefe*. Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Weygandsche Buchhandlung, 1781), 319–320 and Gottfried Schütze, ed., *D. Martin Luthers bisher grossentheils ungedruckte Briefe. Nach der Sammlung des Hrn. D. Gottf. Schütze, aus dem Latein übersetzt*. Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Christian Friedrich Wapßler, 1784), 54.

the Eastern church, and its doctrine, Schütze was led to the mistaken conclusion that this was to be equated with the Greek Church, which was probably the most familiar to him. He introduced the text as follows: "A recommendation letter for a foreigner, who in regard to his confession belonged to the Greek Church, thereby however thought in a fairly good and Protestant way."[64]

The assertion that *Abba* Mika'el, who as a clergyman of the Ethiopian Church obviously stood in the miaphysite theological tradition, would have followed the creed of the Greek (i.e. a Chalcedonian) Church, indicates an undifferentiated view of the Christian East. This view was not only left uncorrected in the following publications of the letter of recommendation, but even consolidated. Thus, Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, professor of Theology at the University of Basel, went even further and transformed the Ethiopian monk into a "Greek clergyman." In his edition of Luther's correspondence published in 1827, he titled the letter of recommendation for *Abba* Mika'el as: "Open Letter of Recommendation. L.[uther] recommends a Greek clergyman as being orthodox."[65] The Ethiopian monk disappeared.

The idea of Luther having amicable theological conversations with an African theologian and advocated the idea that they belonged to the same church did not fit into the emerging nationalistic Luther imaginations of the 18th and 19th centuries. Up until to the 20th century, the editors found it difficult to see *Abba* Mika'el as an Ethiopian and provide the letter of recommendation with an appropriate title. Only in a volume of Luther's correspondence, published by the Reformation historian Ludwig Enders in 1903, the text received a suitable heading: "Letter of Recommendation for an Ethiopian, named Michael."[66]

This phenomenon can be described as a retrospective confessional standardization of history on the part of the editors. The marginalization of the Ethiopian monk in the historiography took place typically by means of providing misleading titles to the respective texts but was not limited to it. Noteworthy example in this respect offers the handling of the letter of recommendation in the famous Weimar edition of Martin Luther's works. Even though in the accompanying text to the letter of recommendation, the editor had referred

64 "Empfehlungsschreiben für einen Fremdling, der sich in Absicht auf sein Glaubensbekenntniß zur griechischen Kirche bekannte, aber doch dabey recht gut und evangelisch dachte." Ibid.

65 Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, ed., *Dr. Martin Luthers Briefe, Sendschreiben und Bedenken, vollständig aus den verschiedenen Ausgaben seiner Werke und Briefe, aus andern Büchern und noch unbenutzten Handschriften gesammelt, kritisch und historisch bearbeitet* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1827), 550.

66 Ludwig Enders, ed., *Dr. Martin Luther's Briefwechsel. Briefe vom Februar 1534 bis Juli 1536*. Vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main: Schriften-Niederlage des Evangel. Vereins, 1903), 60.

to *Abba* Mika'el as an Ethiopian, in contrast to other texts in this volume, this letter was not assigned with a sequence number and was not even included in the table of contents.[67] The disregard of this historical document, which made its reception even more difficult, expressed itself not least in the lack of translations. Since the publication of the first translation into German in 1784 (that has never been reprinted since), no new translations into any modern language has appeared until recently.

The treatment of the letter of recommendation reveals the mechanisms of marginalization to which the memory of Martin Luther's encounter with *Abba* Mika'el and their ecumenical understanding had been exposed over the last two and a half centuries. Ultimately, these mechanisms unfolded in the *longue durée* and led to the erasure of the Ethiopian monk's visit to Wittenberg from the archives of collective memory. A critical examination of this process not only exposes mechanisms of confessional memory, but also shows how fragile these constructed self-images are. Ironically, the effort of Lutherans over the last two and a half centuries to not remember the meeting of the Wittenberg reformers with *Abba* Mika'el stands in contrast to the recollection of this event by Luther, who had himself repeatedly reffered to it. Nevertheless, the fact that Luther's theological dialogue with the Ethiopian monk still largely remains forgotten shows how powerful the mechanisms of retrospective confessional standardization of history actually are.

5 Conclusion

The travel of *Abba* Mika'el to the cradle of the Reformation and his dialogue with the Wittenberg reformers resulted in the mutual discovery of the unity of the Church challenges the perception of the early modern time as a period in the history of Christianity in which processes of globalization were driven exclusively by the Europeans discovering the wider world and expanding their missionary network. Furthermore, the encounter of the Ethiopian monk with Martin Luther exemplifies how global epistemic entanglements shaped the early formation of Protestantism. As long as Protestants found themselves at a formative stage, the reference point of the Ethiopian other played a stabiliz-

67 The letter of recommendation was simply printed between two other letters, Nr. 2126 "Luther an den Rat zu Regensburg. 30. Juni 1534" and Nr. 2127 "Luther an Friedrich Myconius in Gotha, 5. Juli 1534." Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Briefwechsel*. Vol. 7, *1534–1536* (Weimar: Hof-Buchdruckerei und Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1937), 86.

ing role. In the context of theological polarization within Roman Christianity, the idea of common belonging to the very same church as Orthodox Christians in distant parts of the world gave credibility to the article of the creed regarding the unity and universality of the church. For Luther, the ecumenical agreement with *Abba* Mika'el became not least a means of inscribing the Reformation into the global Christian context.

Whereas the study of religious contacts between Europe and the Horn of Africa has so far been predominantly focused on relations between the Ethiopian Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, Protestantism was virtually missing in the picture of the Ethiopian-European relations of the 16th century. Conventionally, scholars of Ethiopian studies suggest that the first encounter between Protestantism and Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity occurred in 1636, when Peter Heyling, a Lutheran from Lübeck, reached Ethiopia.[68] Likewise, it is often taken for granted that Luther neither met Africans nor had trustworthy knowledge about the African continent.[69] Both these ideas have to be revised in the light of the encounter between *Abba* Mika'el and the Wittenberg reformers.

Ultimately, the theological dialogue between *Abba* Mika'el and Martin Luther adds to our understanding of how new and connected forms of world-building between Europe and Africa, as well as between Protestantism and Orthodoxy, were negotiated. By doing so, it enables us to revise radically not

68 Cf. for example Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia. Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Stockholm: EFS Förlaget, 1978), 32; Ernst Hammerschmidt, "Die äthiopistischen Studien in Deutschland (von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart)," *Annales d'Éthiopie* 6, no. 1 (1965): 255; Donald Crummey, *Priests and Politicians: Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia, 1830–1868* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 10; David D. Grafton, *Piety, Politics, and Power. Lutherans Encountering Islam in the Middle East* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 153.

69 See for example: Kirsten Rüther, "Kannte Luther Afrika? Afrika kennt Luther! Eine Skizze zu Luther im südlichen Afrika," in *Luther zwischen den Kulturen. Zeitgenossenschaft—Weltwirkung*, ed. Hans Medick and Peer Schmidt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 337–372; Tom Joseph Omolo, "Luther in Africa," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 621–626; Martin Junge, "Global Perspectives on the Reformation," in *Global Perspectives on the Reformation: Interactions Between Theology, Politics and Economics*, ed. Anne Burghardt and Simone Sinn (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017), 9–17; Heinrich Bedford-Strohm et al., ed., *African Christian Theologies and the Impact of the Reformation. Symposion PIASS Rwanda February 18–23, 2016* (Wien: Lit, 2017); Friederike Nüssel and Hans-Peter Großhans, ed., *Lutherische Theologie in außereuropäischen Kontexten. Eine Zusammenschau aus Anlass des 500. Reformationsjubiläums* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2017).

only the picture of African-European interactions in the 16th century, but also that of proto-ecumenical relations in the age of the Reformation.

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CHAPTER 7

What Has Ethiopia Got to Do with India? Reflections of the First German Lutheran Missionaries in India

Martin Tamcke

When the Protestant churches of Germany started their worldwide missionary work, neither Ethiopia nor India were considered a dark horse. Historical records on both countries were of great importance to German Protestant theologians since the beginning of the Reformation.[1] Early historiography was the source of their knowledge about these countries and their respective local Orthodox churches. But their knowledge was by no means limited to the historiographical legacy. Even Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon had theological and religious discussions with monks from Ethiopia, a subject which Stanislau Paulau explored in his dissertation.[2] There were numerous ways to gain knowledge about these countries and their churches. Nonetheless, they had a desire to communicate with both churches directly. The reformers were interested to see whether reformed theological ideas would fall on sympathetic ears. Badly equipped as they were, the theologians put their lives at risk when they set out for a journey which had the sole purpose of theological exchange. A young theologian from Tübingen was supposed to travel to Ethiopia as a representative of the two leading reformers of the so called second Reformation without any previous knowledge of the language.[3] He was to travel through the

1 For the sources for the example of David Chytraeus, see: David Benga, *David Chytraeus (1530–1560) als Erforscher und Wiederentdecker der Ostkirchen. Seine Beziehungen zu orthodoxen Theologen, seine Erforschung der Ostkirchen und seine ostkirchlichen Kenntnisse* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Nürnberg-Erlangen, 2001), 104–111; also accessible online, see URL: https://www.yumpu.com/de/document/view/4508618/dissertation-david-chytraeus-d-benga/109 (07.05.2019).

2 See Stanislau Paulau, *Das andere Christentum. Zur transkonfessionellen Verflechtungsgeschichte von äthiopischer Orthodoxie und europäischem Protestantismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021). DOI: https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666336041.

3 See Martin Tamcke, "Filling gaps in the history of Ethio-European relations in the 18th century. The Moravians and Ethiopia," in *Proceedings of the 19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Warsawa 2015* (forthcoming); Martin Tamcke, "In the direction to Massawa in pre-Egyptian time," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Eritrean Studies 20–22 July 2016*. Vol. 1, ed. Zemenfes Tsighe et al. (Asmara: National Higher Education and Research Institute, 2018), 231–237.

Sahara Desert dressed as a merchant, picking up Arabic along the way. This plan was doomed to fail from the beginning. It is not of primary importance whether the information accessible to the early Protestants would have allowed them to draw sufficient conclusions about the characteristics of the two churches from abroad. If the early generation missionaries had known about the theological differences from the beginning, there might not have been any real interaction between the churches prior to the 19th century.[4] In that case, the first contact would probably have been similar to many other interactions in the missionary context of the 19th and 20th century. It would have been marked primarily by a western standard that entailed reforms and progress or, in case of resistance, the founding of their own church. Early Protestant missions, however, had other intentions. After all, the German Protestant churches were still cautious about their involvement in missionary work and occasionally decided against it.

The first German Lutheran missionaries who set foot on foreign soil had been instructed by Orientalists to gather information about the local Orthodox church. It soon transpired that this task was almost impossible to fulfil. Time and time again, missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg tried to follow the demanding instructions given to him.[5] He travelled far in search of the Orthodox Saint Thomas Christians.[6] He was posted in the Danish colony Tranquebar, a region in present-day Tamil Nadu. Unfortunately, he discovered that there

4 See Lina Elhage-Mensching, "Wie kommt man nach Äthiopien? Patriarch Markos VII (r. 1745–1769), Abuna Johannes III. (r. 1747–1761) und Ireneos Hocker (1713–1782)," in *Imaginiert und real, erschaut und erdacht. Literarische Werke von und über Christen in Ägypten*, ed. Martin Tamcke and Heike Behlmer (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 79–88.

5 For Ziegenbalg, see: Rekha Kamath Rajan, "Cultural Deliminations. The Letters and Reports of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg," in *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*. Vol. 3, *Communication between India and Europe*, ed. Andreas Gross, Vincent Kumaradoss and Heike Liebau (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2006), 1221–1239. The instructions for his search came from Johann David Michaelis, see: Brigitte Klosterberg, "'How Many People Can an Elephant Carry?' Questions from Johann David Michaelis to the Missionaries in East India," in *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*. Vol. 3, *Communication between India and Europe*, ed. Andreas Gross, Vincent Kumaradoss and Heike Liebau (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2006), 1091–1114.

6 For a more comprehensive overview, see: Martin Tamcke, "Lutheran Contacts with the Syrian Orthodox of the St. Thomas Christians and with the Syrian Apostolic Church of the East in India (Nestorians)," in *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*. Vol. 2, *Christian Mission in the Indian Context*, ed. Andreas Gross, Vincent Kumaradoss and Heike Liebau (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2006), 831–878. Cf. Martin Tamcke, "Die frühen lutherischen Missionare in ihrem Kontakt zur syrischen Thomaschristenheit," in *Ego sum qui sum. Festschrift für Jouko Martikainen*, ed. Tuomas Martikainen (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 2006), 115–156.

were no Orthodox Saint Thomas Christians living in the area. He had to rely on the information he got from local Catholic Christians. They, in turn, only knew what they were told by the Malabar 'pagans' of Mylapore upon their arrival.[7] The fact that Syriac was not among the practiced languages of his mission in India was another obstacle.[8]

The next generation had a more systematic approach; they acquired a basic knowledge of Syriac.[9] As there was still no face-to-face contact, they put their new language skills to use and wrote a letter to the Orthodox representatives in India. They received an answer by the leader of the Orthodox Saint Thomas Christians; the correspondence caused some irritation.[10] The leader of Indian Orthodoxy was puzzled by the fact that they had sent him a Tamil translation of the Bible—a language he did not understand himself. He wrote his response in Syriac. Thus began both real interaction and an intercultural learning process.

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7 Archiv Franckescher Stiftungen / Archive of Francke Foundations (= AFSt), M 1 C 4: 10a, Letter from Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler to Anton Wilhelm Boehme from Tranquebar on 16.9.1712, edited in excerpts in: Gotthilf August Francken, ed., *Achte Continuation des Berichts der Königlichen Dänischen Mißionarien in Ost-Indien*, 3rd ed. (Halle: Waysenhaus, 1745), 605–614. See also: Arno Lehmann, ed., *Alte Briefe aus Indien. Unveröffentlichte Briefe von Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg 1706–1719* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlags-Anstalt, 1957), 241.

8 For Syriac in Halle in general, see: Tamcke, "Lutheran Contacts," 842–846.

9 The first missionary really trained in Syriac was Benjamin Schultze, see: Heike Liebau, *Die Sprachforschungen des Missionars Benjamin Schultze unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der "Grammatica Hindostanica." Historisch-linguistische Untersuchungen* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Halle-Wittenberg, 1989). For the later period, see: Tamcke, "Lutheran Contacts," 860–864.

10 For this correspondence, see: Martin Tamcke, "Lutheran Contacts with the Syrian Orthodox Church of the St. Thomas Christians and with the Syrian Apostolic Church of the East in India (Nestorians)," *Христианство на Ближнем Востоке* (*Hristianstvo na Blizhnem Vostoke*) 1 (2017): 13–49; Martin Tamcke, "The Letters of Bishop Mar Thoma in the Archive of the Francke Foundations in Halle," *Hekamtho. Syrian Orthodox Theological Journal* 1 (2015): 49–58; Martin Tamcke, "Mar Thoma: eine indische Stimme der syrischen Thomaschristenheit in der Interaktion mit deutschen und niederländischen Protestanten," in *Veränderte Landkarten. Auf dem Weg zu einer polyzentrischen Geschichte des Weltchristentums* (*Festschrift für Klaus Koschorke zum 65. Geburtstag*), ed. Ciprian Burlacioiu and Adrian Hermann (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 95–110; Martin Tamcke, "Who is Bishop Gabriel? Essay on the East Syrian opponent of Mar Thoma v," *The Harp. A Review of Syriac and Oriental Ecumenical Studies* 27 (2011): 211–224; Martin Tamcke, "Der Brief des Mar Thomas V. von 1728 (AFSt, M 1 B 1: 11 ab) als Quelle zur Geschichte der syrischen Thomaschristenheit," in *Akten des 5. Symposiums zur Sprache, Geschichte, Theologie und Gegenwartslage der syrischen Kirchen, Berlin 14.–15. Juli 2006*, ed. Rainer Voigt (Aachen: Shaker, 2010), 251–266; Martin Tamcke, "A letter of Mar Thoma's from 1728 as source for the history of the Syrian St. Thomas Christians," *The Harp. A Review of Syriac and Oriental Ecumenical Studies* 22 (2007): 201–214.

At the time, however, Ziegenbalg was only able to report based on third-hand information. His background in systematic theology shows up when he concluded that Indian Christians might have gotten their name as Saint Thomas Christians from the Portuguese in order to avoid communion with Rome. So how should we perceive the Saint Thomas Christians? Did they actually all convert to Catholicism? There were no Saint Thomas Christians left surrounding Santhome, Mylapore. He learned from the Portuguese, however, that they could be found in Cochin at the Malabar Coast and they were now members of the Roman Catholic Church.[11]

In Madras Ziegenbalg visited an Armenian church service and talked to the priest of the parish.[12] He had several further encounters with Armenians in India and was received with both understanding and actual help in his search for the Saint Thomas Christians. In a second letter dated 15 November 1713 to Berlin he continued his report from the previous year.[13] It says: "We have already reported on the Saint Thomas Christians over the past years."[14] The Portuguese were adamant that these old-established Christians were descendants of Saint Thomas the Apostle. They said that they even referred to an old disciple of the Saint Thomas Christians who had told them about the Gospel of Thomas and shown them the relevant monuments. The *actual* Saint Thomas Christians were said to have moved to the Malabar Coast back in the day.[15] In the first half of the 18th century, during the time of the missions, St. Thomas Mount was still a place of pilgrimage for the Saint Thomas Christians.[16] Ziegenbalg learned more from an Armenian account. Supposedly, the book was "written before the Portuguese arrived in East India and written in Armenian."[17] Thomas is said to have travelled to India and stayed in Mylapore. There were numerous books about it in Indian Christian tradition. But they were "all written after," meaning

11 See AFSt, M 1 C 4: 10a; Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, 242.

12 See AFSt, M 1 C 3: 1, Letter of Heinrich Plütschau, Johann Ernst Gründler, Johann Georg Bövingh to August Hermann Francke vom 6.2.1710 from Tranquebar, in: Gotthilf August Francken, ed., *Zweyte Continuation des Berichts der Königlichen Dänischen Mißionarien in Ost-Indien*, 3rd ed. (Halle: Waysenhaus, 1718), 102–109.

13 See AFSt, M 1 C 5: 75/1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21: 50, transcript of the preceding letter), Letter of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler to the dear fathers and men in God in Berlin vom 15.11.1713 from Tranquebar, in: Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, 345–356.

14 AFSt, M 1 C 5: 75/1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21: 50); Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, 349.

15 Cf. the explanation by Folker Reichert on his edition of the report by Oderich of Pordenone: Folker Reichert, trans. and ed., *Die Reisen des seligen Odorich von Pordenone nach Indien und China (1314/18–1330)* (Heidelberg: Manutius, 1987).

16 See Wilhelm Germann, *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Orientalischen Kirchen* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1877), 559.

17 Ibid.

after the arrival of the Portuguese.[18] Also they "included many fables."[19] Still, Ziegenbalg received the same answer wherever he went, "Saint Thomas the Apostel himself had been in India."[20] In order to verify these claims he would have to travel to the Malabar Coast. The picture becomes more complex, when reports declare that these Christians were not actually Saint Thomas's progeny, but those of a Syrian whose name—Mar Thoma—was responsible for their designation.[21] This Syrian was said to have arrived in India as late as the 5th century. From this time onwards until the arrival of the Portuguese there had only been bishops from Syria who had used Syriac in their church services.[22]

A journey to Kerala was impossible for Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau.[23] So they sought contact through writing instead. Ziegenbalg's main interest was concerned with doctrinal theology. He was suspicious of their attempts at entering communion with the Catholic Church. The Roman Church was very eager to "lead these Thomas Christians to the Holy See," but the old-established Christians never voluntarily followed.[24] Contrary to the reports he received about a union of these Thomas Christians with Rome, Ziegenbalg remained convinced that he would find in them fellow sufferers, who struggled under the Roman dominance like the Protestants.

At first, the "papists" had tried to convince the Saint Thomas Christians with kindness and promises.[25] But they defied these efforts and declared that they were "not interested in any Pope or alien doctrines."[26] As soon as the Portuguese had established their position in India, the attempts at joining these Christians with the Roman Catholic Church intensified and became violent. The bishop

18 AFSt, M 1 C 5: 75/1–13.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 See Tamcke, "Lutheran Contacts," 835–836; Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, 349–350.

22 See AFSt, M 1 C 5: 75/1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21: 50); Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, 349–350. It is very likely that the Syrian in Ziegenbalg's report refers to the merchant Thomas of Cana, although this is difficult to verify. Tradition places him in the year 345 when he and 72 other families came to Cranganore and settled there. The only discrepancy lies in Ziegenbalg's time frame which places his arrival in the fifth century. On the union of the Syrians with Rome see: Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*. Vol. 2, *From the Middle of the Sixteenth to the End of the Seventeenth Century* (*1542–1700*) (Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1988).

23 For Plütschau, see: Martin Tamcke, "Heinrich Plütschau. The Man in Ziegenbalg's Shadow," in *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*. Vol. 1, *The Danish-Halle and English-Halle-Mission*, ed. Andreas Gross, Vincent Kumaradoss and Heike Liebau (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2006), 547–566.

24 Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, 350.

25 Ibid.

26 AFSt, M 1 C 5: 75/1–13 (ALMW/DHM 10/21: 50); Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, 350.

was captured and the Catholic doctrine was forced upon the people. Ziegenbalg knew about later efforts to re-establish contact between the Syrian Church and India. Syrian bishops had tried to come to India, but they were hindered by the Portuguese. He felt the suffering such disputes caused among the Christians. Among his documents were reports from a Syrian bishop of the Saint Thomas Christians who was imprisoned in Pondicherry at the time. Many Saint Thomas Christians sought protection with the Dutch in order to escape the yoke under the Portuguese. The Dutch were not affiliated with Rome. Other members of the Saint Thomas Christians who did not join the Roman Catholic Church were located in the middle of the country.[27] After the end of Portuguese hegemony, they took advantage of the "pagan rulers" and returned to following their traditional doctrines.[28]

Initially Ziegenbalg assumed that all Saint Thomas Christians in Kerala had entered communion with Rome, only to later learn of the schism among the Thomas Christians.[29] He thought the schism was a consequence of political alterations following the change in colonial leadership from the Portuguese to the Dutch. It was the protection by the Dutch that made communications with Rome possible again. There is no indication of him knowing the differentiation the Dutch made between the different groups of Thomas Christians in Kerala. He does not mention that the Dutch fancied themselves protectors of those Saint Thomas Christians who were in communion with Rome.

It is recorded in Indian church history after the Synod of Diamper (20–28 June 1599) that the Portuguese kept Syrian bishops from entering India.[30] Bishop Ahathalla's actions since 1652 pushed the Syrians, who were eager to be independent, in the direction of the miaphysites.[31] The *Koonan Kurishu* (Coonan Cross) oath on 3 January 1653 was the final chapter of reparations to the Saint Thomas Christians and a clarion call for the independence of the Syrians in India from Rome.[32]

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27 Ibid., 349–350; Tamcke, "Lutheran Contacts," 836.

28 Lehmann, *Alte Briefe*, 350; Tamcke "Lutheran Contacts," 837.

29 Ibid., 837–841.

30 On the discussion about this Synod, see: Karen Hermes, "Countdown to 1999. Die Synode von Diamper (1599) im Spiegel der verschiedenen Kirchen der südindischen Thomaschristenheit," in *Syrisches Christentum weltweit. Studien zur syrischen Kirchengeschichte* (*Festschrift Prof. Wolfgang Hage*), ed. Martin Tamcke (Münster: Lit, 1995), 325–340.

31 See Stephen Neill, *A History of Christianity in India*. Vol. 1, *The Beginnings to AD 1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 316–319; Thekkedath, "History of Christianity," 91–94; Edouard Hambye and Johannes Madey, *1900 Jahre Thomas-Christen in Indien* (Fribourg: Kanisius-Verlag, 1972), 35.

32 How the respective denominational position of each church historian nowadays affects their interpretations of events can be exemplified by the following analysis of the synod

It is obvious that the Portuguese influence on the church-internal affairs of the Saint Thomas Christians was not Ziegenbalg's only concern. Otherwise, why would he be referring to this particular bishop in the context of Portuguese interference? Pondicherry is not Portuguese but French territory after all. It seems he was more concerned with the access from any Catholic leadership in favour of the Catholic Church and at the expense of the independent Saint Thomas Christians. The political argument is included in the denominational polemics. He could also connect it to crucial developments in the church history. Ziegenbalg brought his preconceived notions to all his efforts and they merely needed proof: The Syrian Saint Thomas Christians sought to assert themselves just as the Protestants did in Europe and both had Roman Catholicism as their opponent. They each fought for independence which also explains why the German Lutherans were eager to establish contact with these potential fellow-sufferers to take defensive action against Roman influence.

Christoph Theodosius Walther, a missionary who followed Ziegenbalg in his efforts to establish a connection to the Saint Thomas Christians, highlighted in his reports how the Syrian Christians resisted Rome. His commitment to the Saint Thomas Christians was based upon this resistance, which gave him a strong strategic argument for his mission. This is where Ethiopia comes in. Walther compared the consequences of Portuguese rule and their connection to the Jesuits in India to the Portuguese and Jesuits in Ethiopia. Syrian Christians of the Malabar Coast did not bow to the pope's will and neither did Christians in Ethiopia. In both regions the Catholics' endeavours were fruitless. The parallel Walther draws between the historical background of the Orthodox Ethiopians and Indians is based on one crucial point: Both Orthodox communities withstood the pull of Rome. The conflict with Rome actually brought their denominational differences to light. It is the steadfastness of the Ethiopians and the Indians that raised hope in the Lutheran missionaries from Germany.

Comparing the two countries and their struggles with Rome, Walther would see a staging of the same ostensible comedy—be it by different people.[33] The Jesuit and Archbishop Alexis (Aleixo) de Menezes[34] as well as the Jesuit Patriarch Alphons Mendez[35] in Ethiopia had pointed out the fallacies of the Indian

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of Diamper: Hermes, "Countdown." Thus far there has not been an interpretation which considers only the facts and disregards the author's position.

33 The following is a shortened version of Tamcke, "Lutheran Contacts," 860–869.

34 See Pius Malekandathil, ed., *Jornada of Dom Alexis des Menezes. A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar* (Kochi: LRC Publ., 2003).

35 Here the way to Ethiopia already crosses the way to India, when Hieronymus Lobos on his way to Ethiopia met Alphons Mendez, the patriarch of Ethiopia, see: Theophil Friedrich

Christians and demanded they submit to the Roman rule. The former railed against Nestorius and the latter against Dioscorus. In both cases the Catholic Church operated from the standpoint of Catholic orthodoxy and identified their Ethiopian and Indian counterparts as heretics. Both representatives of the Jesuits under Portuguese rule were accused of rebaptism by Walther. They had introduced Iconodulism, which was supposedly unacceptable in both Ethiopia and India. This claim seems rather contrary to the culture of images in both communities. What could have led Walther to this conclusion is a matter of further examination. The domineering nature of the Portuguese would have led to rebellion in any case. Under no circumstances would the Portuguese have lost sight of their objective to seize power in both countries. They bewitched the allegedly unsuspecting people with splendid churches. The Syriac Bible was altered according to the Vulgate just like the new Amharic Bible was created. But later they also had prevented the arrival of an Alexandrian metropolitan to Ethiopia and prevented a Babylonian metropolitan from coming to India.

The similarities between the situations in Ethiopia and India gave Walther the idea that the community in India could benefit from the Ethiopian example and the acting Protestant missionary Peter Heyling.[36] If he could prove that a Lutheran was helpful in gaining ecclesiastical independence, this would support his argument for a tripartite alliance between the Lutherans, Ethiopians, and Indians. He used his contacts to well-travelled Armenians to get a written account of Heyling's life. Walther arranged for the Armenian merchant Peter Nuri from Persia to write down a report by the Armenian Morad about the end of Heyling's life.[37] At the same time, he asked the merchant to look out

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Ehrmann, trans. and ed., *P. Hieronymus Lobo's, eines portugiesischen Jesuiten, Reise nach Habessinien, und zu den Quellen des Nils*. Vol. 1 (Zürich: Orell, 1793), 90–96.

36 See Johann Heinrich Michaelis, *Sonderbarer Lebenslauf Herrn Peter Heylings, und dessen Reise nach Ethiopien, nebst zugänglichen Berichten von der im selbigen Reiche zu Anfang des XVII Saeculi entstandenen Religions-Unruhe* (Halle: Waysenhaus, 1724). Johann Heinrich Michaelis is the uncle of Christian Benedikt Michaelis, who took him in his home in Halle and gave him the instruction for the oriental languages. He is the father of Johann David Michaelis, who was teaching in Göttingen since 1745. In their correspondence with the missionaries in India they asked for information about the Thomas Christians and their history. For Heyling, see also: Manfred Kropp, "Ein äthiopischer Text zu Peter Heyling. Ein bisher unbeachtetes Fragment einer Chronik des Fasiladas," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund, 26–29 April 1982*, ed. Sven Rubenson (Addis Abeba: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1984), 243–252.

37 In general on the contact of the Lutherans with the Armenians in India, see: Martin Tamcke, "Early Protestant Missionaries and their Contacts with the Armenians," in *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*. Vol. 2, *Christian Mission in the Indian*

for any other reports on Heyling all around the world and send it to Madras. Walther was not very optimistic though, given that there was not even information to be found at the Ethiopian court. Walther commissioned an extract on Heyling's life and a report on the riots in Ethiopia that led to the expulsion of the Jesuits and the Portuguese. Through the Ethiopian and Indian example, the rural Indian catechists could observe how the Catholics' attempts to subdue other countries came to nothing. And they could see that both countries used the same pretence to achieve their goal.

The fact that Ethiopia had already thrown off the Portuguese-Catholic yoke, while only a part of the Syrian Christians in India had gained back their independence is utilised as an implicit advice in a pedagogy of liberation. The Ethiopians and their history are turned into an encouraging example that is to be followed in a fight for freedom. The Lutherans hence presented themselves as allies in the defence against Rome.[38]

Walther instructed the rural catechists to make the Indians aware of this historical example. He meant to ensure that no external influences could alter the Indian or Ethiopian context. It was supposed to strengthen their selfhood. Ethiopia had become a paragon for the Indian Saint Thomas Christians and their fight for independence, but also for those Indians who had only recently found their way to Christianity and joined the Lutheran mission in Tranquebar.

Context, ed. Andreas Gross, Vincent Kumaradoss and Heike Liebau (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2006), 813–830; with small revisions: Martin Tamcke, "Die Präsenz und Rolle der Armenier unter den indischen Christen," in *Bibel, Byzanz und Christlicher Orient* (*Festschrift für Stephen Gerö zum 65. Geburtstag*), ed. Dmitrij Bumazhnov (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 465–485; Martin Tamcke, "Lutheran-Armenian Contacts in India 1708–1765," *Chronos, Revue d'Histoire de l'Université de Balamand* 16 (2007): 129–148. Cf. also: Martin Tamcke, "Konstruktionen lutherisch-syrischer Gemeinsamkeiten in der Frühphase lutherischer Mission in Indien," in *Construction of the Other, Identification of the Self. German Mission in India*, ed. Martin Tamcke and Gladson Jathanna (Wien: Lit, 2012), 1–12. For a synthetic text of the letters of Mar Thoma, see: Martin Tamcke, "Mar Thoma to Mr. Carolus," in *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*. Vol. 3, *Communication between India and Europe*, ed. Andreas Gross, Vincent Kumaradoss and Heike Liebau (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle, 2006), 1379–1382.

38 Later they clearly refused any idea of unification of the Thomas Christians with the Protestants (they meant here only the Lutherans and were clearly rivals of the Dutch Reformed), see: Germann, *Die Kirche der Thomaschristen*, 561 ("Die Missionare halten dafür, daß an eine Vereinigung mit den Protestanten gar nicht zu denken wäre").

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CHAPTER 8

The Herrnhuter Brethren in Search of Ethiopian Christianity: A Letter to *Abunä* Yoḥannəs III (1756)

Lina Elhage-Mensching

1 Introduction

This article positions itself within the perspective of a small community in the Europe of the 18th century with a specific view on Ethiopia, which led it to build a whole discourse on an Ethiopian identity. More precisely, the article focuses on one of the sporadic interactions between German Protestants, namely the Herrnhuter Brethren, and the Ethiopian Church as early as the 18th century, testified in letters that are kept in the archives of the Herrnhuter Brethren in Germany. The core of this article is the commented edition and translation of one of these letters, a letter of recommendation from the Coptic Orthodox Pope Markos VII (r. 1745–1769), patriarch of Alexandria, to the metropolitan of Ethiopia, *Abunä* Yoḥannəs III (r. 1744–1761),[1] written in Arabic and dating from 1756.

It was in 1722 that protestant refugees, descendants of the Unity of Brethren from Moravia, a region in what is today the Czech Republic, fleeing on-going persecution after the Counter-reformation, sought refuge on the estate of a noble Pietist, Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, in Lutheran Saxony. With his help, they developed the settlement that they called Herrnhut. They were soon joined by other refugees from Moravia and Bohemia as well as by Lutheran Germans. Count von Zinzendorf very soon became involved in their communal work and five years later, in 1727, with more than 200 people living in Herrnhut, the *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine*, a protestant evangelical church was founded.[2]

1 Cf. Osvaldo Raineri, "Yoḥannəs [III]," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 71–72.

2 For these and other general details on the Herrnhuter Brethren mentioned throughout this article, see, among others: Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church, the Renewed Unitas Fratrum* (Bethlehem, PA: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education Moravian Church in America, 1967); Joseph Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Missions* (London: Moravian Publ. Office, 1922); Joseph Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Moravian Publ. Office, 1909). These works can also be used as reference works on the history of this community.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004505254_009

The movement soon extended beyond the boundaries of Herrnhut and, in 1732, the first two missionaries set out from Herrnhut to the Danish West Indies. This was just a start. Within two decades, more than 70 missionaries had been sent across the world from a congregation of merely 600 members.[3]

Herrnhut still exists today and still possesses a huge collection of documents from the past three centuries. An edition project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and headed by Martin Tamcke,[4] mainly based on a corpus of documents preserved in the archives at Herrnhut, resulted in a series of publications which unveiled the vast extent of the first interactions between members of that community and the communities of various confessions in the Middle East. The publications comprised the edition of diaries and letters covering the period from 1769 to 1783 that testified to the activities of those German protestant missionaries in Egypt during the 18th century.[5] The archives at Herrnhut also preserved Arabic manuscripts of the period preceding 1769,[6] which were not included in the mentioned project and which I edited for the first time.[7]

This article is organized as follows: After a brief presentation of the Herrnhuter Brethren, I will first, in section 2, briefly refer to the vision of their leader with respect to the country he called "Abyssinia," and then to the means undertaken by the Herrnhuter in view of achieving their goal, namely to establish a contact with the Ethiopian Christians by actually travelling there. In section 3, I will present and discuss my first edition of the above-mentioned letter of

3 Cf. John Choules and Thomas Smith, *The Origin and History of Missions. Compiled and Arranged from Authentic documents*. Vol. 1 (Boston: S. Walker, 1832), 41.

4 Research Project "Edition der Quellen zu Ägypten der Herrnhuter Brüderunität" (2006–2012), URL: http://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/30265927 (08.01.2019).

5 The publications include Arthur Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo. Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine im Kontakt zum Ökumenischen Patriarchat und zur Koptischen Kirche. Interkonfessionelle und interkulturelle Begegnungen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2010); Martin Tamcke and Arthur Manukyan, ed., *Herrnhuter in Kairo. Die Tagebücher 1769–1783* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2012); Martin Tamcke, Arthur Manukyan and Christian Mauder, ed., *Die arabischen Briefe aus der Zeit der Herrnhuter Präsenz in Ägypten 1770–1783* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2012).

6 Under R.17.B—"Beziehungen zur Orthodoxen und Koptischen Kirche," 07.b and 07.c.

7 The critical edition and translation of the three Arabic letters predating 1769, can be found in Lina Elhage-Mensching, *Pope Mark VII. Arabic Letters to Count von Zinzendorf and Yohannes III, Metropolitan of Abyssinia, with the 'Sermon on the True Faith' in an Appendix* (Baden-Baden: Ergon, 2020). Also see: Lina Elhage-Mensching, "Wie kommt man nach Äthiopien? Patriarch Markos VII. (r. 1745–1769), Abuna Johannes III. (r. 1747–1761) und Ireneos Hocker (1713–1782)," in *Imaginiert und real, erschaut und erdacht. Literarische Werke von und über Christen in Ägypten*, ed. Martin Tamcke and Heike Behlmer (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017), 79–88. Section 2 is partly based on that article.

recommendation, which the Herrnhuter Brethren member who was in charge of the mission received from the Coptic Orthodox Pope Markos VII and carried with him aiming to give it to the metropolitan of Ethiopia. I will conclude with a few remarks on the importance of this correspondence in providing a small piece of testimony to the immense interest in establishing contact with the Ethiopian Christianity on behalf of a small community of Pietists as early as the 18th century.

2 The Failed Herrnhuter Mission to Ethiopia

2.1 *An Ethiopian Identity as Seen from Abroad in the 18th Century*

To understand the context of the Arabic letters at issue and, in particular, the one that I will present and discuss in section 3, a few words about the vision of Count Zinzendorf are due. He hoped that Herrnhut would be the center of a movement that would unite the various Christian denominations and he soon became the leader of the community and the renewer of the Unity of Brethren.[8] According to the *Periodical Accounts relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren*, the missionaries were sent out to spread a message of unity involving all Christians in one universal mission. Zinzendorf wished to establish a "spiritual connection between the Unity of the Brethren and other divisions of the Church of Christ on earth."[9] His knowledge of the existence of a Christian church in Egypt and especially in Ethiopia, with whom a contact might be established, led him to entertain the idea to send "Brethren to visit the distant and hitherto nearly inaccessible Christians in Egypt and Abyssinia."[10] This must be seen in connection with early Christianity and the context already mentioned in the Acts 8:27: the Ethiopian eunuch, treasurer of Queen Candace, who converted to Christianity. To Zinzendorf, Ethiopia was a truly Christian country where Christianity had spread as early as the fourth century when the king of Axum had established it as the court religion. It seems that Zinzendorf saw the Ethiopian faith as an expression of the *Urchristentum*, the original Christianity which had preserved a kind of religious purity over the centuries.[11]

8 Cf. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church*, 171.

9 Cf. Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, ed., *Periodical Accounts relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren established among the Heathen*. Vol. 12 (London: John Marshall, 1831), 97.

10 Ibid.

11 Cf. Theodor Bechler, *Die Herrnhuter in Ägypten. Evangelisation und Mission der Herrnhuter Brüder in Ägypten im 18. Jahrhundert und ihr Vorstoß nach Abessinien* (Herrnhut: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1936), 11.

2.2 *Overview of the Ethiopian Mission*

Knowing that the Coptic Church was present in Egypt and Ethiopia and that the patriarch of the Coptic Church was also the patriarch of Ethiopia,[12] Count von Zinzendorf thought that to reach Ethiopia, the Brethren should first ask the Coptic patriarch in Cairo for a letter of recommendation to the metropolitan of Ethiopia.[13] Zinzendorf therefore sent the physician and member of the Brethren Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker to Egypt in 1752 with a letter of introduction addressed to the Coptic patriarch[14] and instructions to keep his eyes on Ethiopia.[15]

Hocker first reached Cairo at the end of August 1752. There he started practicing as a physician, further learning Arabic and gathering information relative to Ethiopia. In a conversation with a native of Ethiopia, he was informed that the "Emperor wished to introduce Europeans into his territories, especially such as were skillful artisans."[16] He was also informed that the country could be best reached by travelling down the Red Sea from Suez to Ǧidda and Muṣawwaʿ. There, from a place not far from Muṣawwaʿ, there was a caravan travelling periodically to Gondär, the capital of the kingdom of Ethiopia.[17]

Hocker himself reports that by the end of November 1753, he had made himself "sufficient master of the Arabic language to translate the letter addressed by Count Zinzendorf to the Coptic Patriarch," to pay him a first visit and to inform him of his wish to reach Ethiopia and his hope to be recommended by him.[18] But during Hocker's first stay in Egypt from 1752 to 1755, the patriarch only gave him a reply to the letter of Count Zinzendorf.[19] This letter is a testimony of the first ever contact between the patriarch of the Copts and the Herrnhuter and

12 Further asserted in the *Fəṭḥa nägäśt*: "42. As for the Ethiopians, a patriarch shall not be appointed from among their learned men, nor can they appoint one by their own will. Their metropolitan is subject to the holder of the See of Alexandria, who is entitled to appoint over them a chief who hails from his region and is under his jurisdiction." Peter Strauss, ed., *The Fetha Nagast. The Law of Kings*, trans. Abba Paulos Tzadua (Addis Abeba: Haile Sellassie University, 1968), 18.

13 For a detailed account of the relations between the Church of Ethiopia and the Coptic Church of Alexandria, see among others: Stuart Munro-Hay, *Ethiopia and Alexandria: The Metropolitan Episcopacy of Ethiopia* (Warsaw: ZAS PAN, 1997).

14 Cf. Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, ed., *Periodical Accounts*, 98.

15 Cf. Hocker's diary preserved at the Herrnhut Archives under signature R.21.A.70.

16 Cf. Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, ed., *Periodical Accounts*, 102.

17 Cf. Bechler, *Die Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 19; Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, ed., *Periodical Accounts*, 98–102.

18 Cf. Hutton, *A History*, 160–161; Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, ed., *Periodical Accounts*, 103.

19 Cf. ibid., 104.

the first of three manuscripts edited, translated and commented upon in my edition project.[20]

On his next trip to Cairo, in 1756, Hocker was accompanied by another member of the Brethren, named Georg Pilder.[21] After a few visits to the patriarch, the latter gave Hocker the coveted letter of recommendation to the metropolitan of Ethiopia in September 1756 (the second letter manuscript of my edition project[22] and the focus of my article, see section 3).

2.3 *The Failure of the Mission to Ethiopia*

While waiting for the opportunity to travel to Ethiopia, the Brethren visited the patriarch on more than one occasion. On their last visit before setting off to Suez, in September 1758, the patriarch gave Hocker a letter addressed to Count von Zinzendorf. This is the third manuscript of my edition project, only preserved in copies at Herrnhut.[23]

Eventually heading to Ethiopia, the two brethren left Cairo on the 22nd of September 1758,[24] arrived at Suez on the 27th of September and waited a few days to be able to embark on a Turkish vessel on the 9th of October 1758, so as to reach Ǧidda and Muṣawwaʿ and from there to travel by land to Ethiopia. On the way from Suez to Ǧidda, they stopped twice and after a voyage of eleven days, the ship anchored near the coast of the island of Ḥassān. There, it got bogged down during a night storm and broke. Finally taken ashore two days later, Hocker and Pilder had lost most of their luggage, clothes and money, they had to remain another 19 days before being able to take a ship and reach the port of Ǧidda (through Yanbuʿ, 12–19 November) on the 30th of November 1758.[25]

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20 Cf. Elhage-Mensching, *Pope Mark VII*, 38–41. The letter is preserved at the Herrnhut Archives under signature R.17.B.7.b.2.

21 Cf. Bechler, *Die Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 20–23; David Cranz, *Alte und neue Brüder-Historie oder kurz gefaßte Geschichte der evangelischen Brüder-Unität in den älteren Zeiten und insonderheit in dem gegenwärtigen Jahrhundert* (Barby: Laux, 1772), 600, 675; Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 293.

22 Cf. Elhage-Mensching, *Pope Mark VII*, 44–49. The letter is preserved at the Herrnhut Archives under signature R.17.B.7.b.3.

23 Cf. Elhage-Mensching, *Pope Mark VII*, 54–57. The copies are preserved at the Herrnhut Archives under signature R.17.B.7.b.4. For some further information, see section 4 of this article.

24 Cf. Bechler, *Die Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 25; Cranz, *Alte und neue Brüder-Historie*, 677; Brethren's Society for the Furtherance of the Gospel, ed., *Periodical Accounts*, 189.

25 The details of the shipwreck and the hard conditions of the stay on the island of Ḥassān

While in Ǧidda, they met two Turkish merchants who told them that they had been commissioned by the regent of Ethiopia to bring a physician to Gondär as the Prime minister was very sick. This would have been a great opportunity to reach Ethiopia. "[F]or three reasons, however, Hocker declined the invitation. He had lost his medicine-chest; his friend was ill; and the Lot, when consulted, answered 'No'."[26] (Casting lots was a common practice within Pietism and the Moravians used it to make or ratify decisions on all levels of Moravian life. They believed that the lot represented the true will of Christ).[27] Hocker gave the merchants a letter to the *Abunä* of Ethiopia and told them that they would travel to Ethiopia the following year with a full medicine chest. They therefore waited for a vessel to return to Cairo, which they finally reached late in July 1759, almost one year after having left.

On their arrival, they learned that the pest had made numerous victims while they were away. Pilder, who was ill, returned to Europe. Hocker waited in Cairo for a reply from Count Zinzendorf to the last letter of the Coptic patriarch. While in Cairo, Hocker was informed of the death of Count Zinzendorf in July 1760. He finally left Cairo and returned to Europe in 1761 without having been able to reach Ethiopia.

Still, not discouraged by his previous attempts, Friedrich Hocker returned once more to Cairo in 1769, accompanied by another brother, namely Johann Danke. Whereas all the information they could gather from Ethiopia convinced them that any attempt would be unsuccessful, they decided to remain in Egypt and turn their attention to the Christians in Egypt. Hocker visited again the patriarch of the Copts. During one of his visits, he had the opportunity to meet the newly ordained metropolitan of Ethiopia, the successor of Yoḥannəs III, who invited him to accompany him. Yet, Hocker replied that it would be better to send younger brethren as he felt too old to undertake the trip. He remained in Cairo and attended Patriarch Markos in his sickness before he died in May 1769. Hocker, who had tried so heartily to reach Ethiopia, died in Cairo in 1782. The Brethren remained in Egypt until 1783.[28]

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are described in Bechler, *Die Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 25, 81–86 and in Cranz, *Alte und neue Brüder-Historie*, 677–678.

26 Cf. Hutton, *A History*, 162.

27 On the use of the lot by the Moravian Brethren, see: Elisabeth Sommer, "Gambling with God. The Use of the Lot by the Moravian Brethren in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59, no. 2 (1998): 267–286.

28 The publications of the project "Quellen zu Ägypten der Herrnhuter Brüderunität" mentioned in note 5 are a precious testimony to the activities in Egypt until they left in 1783.

3 The Letter of Recommendation by Pope Markos

The manuscript preserved as R.17.B.7.b.3 and reproduced in the Appendix is the letter of recommendation written by the patriarch to the metropolitan of Ethiopia and given to Hocker on the 10th of September 1756 (see section 2.2).[29] In that year, the Ethiopian emperor was Iyo'as I (r. 1755–1769) and the metropolitan of Ethiopia was *Abunä* Yoḥannəs III. Yoḥannəs III had been designated by the Coptic Synod and consecrated by the Coptic Orthodox Pope Yoannis XVII in 1744 but was only able to reach Ethiopia and assume his functions in 1745.[30]

The manuscript consists of two longitudinal sheets glued together and shows traces of wax and glue. The two sheets were glued together between lines 24 and 25 where one can see the catchwords اخوتهم المسيحيين "their fellow Christians" ending the first sheet and repeated at the beginning of the second. On the left and on the right upper parts, the manuscript bears the seal of the Coptic patriarch where one can read in Coptic ⲓⲥ ⲭⲥ, the abbreviation for Jesus Christ, followed by the name of Patriarch ⲙⲁⲣⲕⲟⲥ and the abbreviations ⲭ̅ⲥ̅ and ⲑ̅ⲥ̅, respectively, corresponding to "Lord" and "God." Two crosses appear in the middle over and under the name of the patriarch.

On the left upper part and right above the seal featuring the word ⲙⲁⲣⲕⲟⲥ, two words are written, one in Coptic reading ⲥⲓⲙⲱⲛ "Sim'on," the birth name of the patriarch,[31] followed underneath by the mention (in Arabic) المدعو which means "called." This gives us the following reading: "Simeon, called Markos." The Basmala[32] wording reading *b-ismi-llāhi al-ra'ūfi al-raḥīmi* as used by the Christians[33] and followed by *b-llāhi al-ḫalāṣ* "in God is salvation" cover two lines written in calligraphy between the two seals.

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29 According to R.17.B.6.a.14.g. preserved at the Herrnhut Archives and cited by Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 300.

30 Cf. Salvatore Tedeschi, "Ethiopian Prelates (d. 1699–d. 1761)," in *The Coptic Encyclopedia* 4 (1991): 1005a–1044a; Marius Chaîne, *La chronologie des temps chrétiens de l'Égypte et de l'Éthiopie* (Paris: Geuthner, 1925), 247, 270.

31 Cf. Antoine Khater and Oswald Khs-Burmester, ed., *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church known as the History of the Holy Church of Sawirus ibn al- Muqaffa', Bishop of el-Ashmunein*. Vol. 3,3, *Cyril II—Cyril V* (*AD 1235–1894*) (Cairo: Société d'Archéologie Copte, 1970), 292–295.

32 For a definition of the *Basmala*, see: William Graham, "Basmala," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_23497 (26.01.2019).

33 For a discussion of the *Basmala* as written by the Christians, see: Karin Almbladh, "The 'Basmala' in Medieval Letters in Arabic Written by Jews and Christians," *Orientalia Suecana* 59 (2010): 56–59.

The content follows and covers another 48 lines. In what follows, I reproduce the Arabic wording of the whole letter and provide an English translation:[34]

34 The edition and the translation are slightly revised versions of what appears in Elhage-Mensching, *Pope Mark VII*, 44–49. For the purpose of the present article, I substituted the original punctuation marks with modern ones in the English translation and made some minor changes for a better understanding of the text.

باسم الله الرؤوف الرحيم
بالله الخلاص
من مرقص. عَبد عبيد الرب يَسُوعَ المَسّيحَ.المدعَوا
بنعمَة الله واحكامه الغير مدروكه.بطريكًا علي
مدينة العَظما الاسْكندريه.والمدينه المحَبه
الله الايروشاليميه.والديار المصريه.وساير
ما تَحويه. الكرازه المرقصَيه. سَلام سّيدنا والاهنا
يسُوعَ المسَيحَ. الدي حَل عَلي زمرت التلاميد الابرار.
ابانا الرسُل الأطهار.في الغرفه الصَهيونيه.سَلامه
الدي قال هاندا معكم.الي كمال الدهور. والازمان.
يفيض دلك.ويتضاعَف ويتزايد ويترادف.
عَلي اخينا الحَبيب.الفاضل اللبيب:. الموید من الله.
اخينا المُطران المكرم.انبا بوانِسَ ٧٣١ :.
مُطران الحَبشه.بارك الله عليه.وَعلى شعَبه
وكهنته.بكل البركات الروحَانيه.امين. بَعد
تجديد البركات عَليه.واهدي السَّلام الروحَانيه
لديه.الموجب لاصدارها اليه.هوان المماتل
بحملها.الابن المبارك.الشماسْ المكرم.ايرينيوسْ
اوكار.رجل مبارك افرنجى الجنسَ.مُحب لسَاير
المَسيحَيين:. وجميعَ خليقت الله. فقصَد منا
انه يتفرج عَلي بلاد الحَبشه.فكتبنا لكم هدا
النَص.لاجل ما تشملوه بنظركم.لان المدكور
لم يتكلم مثل المنافقين.الذين يسجَسُّون
اخوتهم المسَيحَيين :.:.:.:.....
اخوتهم المسَيحَيين. بكلام الاهويه

In the name of the clement and merciful God.
In God is salvation.
From Marqoṣ, the servant of the servants of Jesus Christ, called
with God's grace and his unknown wills, Patriarch of the great city of
Alexandria and the God loving city of
Jerusalem and the Egyptian territories and all what
is included in the Episcopate of Saint Mark. May the peace of our Lord
and God
Jesus Christ that came upon the assembly of innocent disciples,
our fathers the pure apostles in the house of Sion, the peace
that He told them would be upon them for ever and ever
embrace, grow, increase and extend
upon our beloved virtuous wise brother, supported by God
our brother, the venerable *Muṭrān*, *Anba* Yū'anis (ιων),
Muṭrān of *Ḥabaša*. God bless him, his people
and his priests with every spiritual blessing, Amen. After
reiterating the blessings upon him and wishing him the spiritual peace
expressed herein, this [letter] I entrusted
to be carried by the blessed son and venerable deacon Irenaeus
Hocker, a blessed man of European race, loving (to) the rest of
Christians and all God's creatures, who informed us of his intention
to see the land of *Ḥabaša*. So we wrote to you this
text so that you welcome him because his speech
is not that of the hypocrites who upset
their fellow Christians ∴ ∴ ∴ ····
their fellow Christians with words false

الفاسَد.ولكن يا اخينا هدا رجل
مبارك تتوصَابه.غايت الوَصيه التامه.
من شان الدى قال.غريبًا كنت فاويتوني.
ومن شان خاطَرنا.ولما يريد يتوجه من عَندكم.
تكتب لنا معَه مكتوب.لان سَابق تاريخه.
توجهوا الي عَندكم جماعَه روم.تابَعين
الافرنج.صُحَبة ميخايل الحَبشي.ولم كان عَلمنا
بهم.وانك تتوصَا بهده الاخ.كتير قوى وتوصَى
عَليه.الابن المبارك القسّ انطَونى تلميدكم.
وسَابق تاريخه.حَضر لنا مكتوب منكم.بخط
المعَلم شنوده الخشاب.صَحَبة واحَد قسَّيسْ
حَبشى.وارسَلنا لكم رد جوابه صَحَبة القسّ
بنيامين الحَبشى .ومكتوب الي السُّلطَان اياسُوا.
نيحَ الله نفسَه .واوراق بركه الي القسّ انَطوني
ورقه.والي الراهب باخوم ورقه.والي المعَلم
شنوده الخشاب ورقه.وانتم ورقه بخَطنا.
خلافًا عَن الدرج المكتوب.واعَلمناكم فيها.
بعَلم المَصلحَه التى ارسَلتها.صحبت ميخايل
الحَبشي.وانك يا اخينا تتوصَا بالمعَلم شنوده
الخشاب.وحَضروا اولادنا.التلاميذ القسّ جرجسْ
النجار.والقسّ انطوني الزيد.والقسّ قرياقص
والقمصْ تادرسَ البهجوري.والراهب عَمّ الله
والمعلم مقار.واخينه بشاي.والمعَلم عَبد المَسيح.
وحَن الله اخيه.وانطوني تادرسْ.يسَلموا عَليك
كتير السَّلام والشكر اول توت [illegible] تلاته وسبعون

and corrupt. But, my brother, this is a man
who is blessed and you take the utmost care of him
for the sake of the one who said "I was a stranger and you welcomed me"
and for our sake. And when he will want to depart from you
write to us a letter [to take] with him because in the past·
Greeks came to you, followers of the Europeans,
along with Mīḫāyil al-Ḥabašī and we were not aware
of it. And take the utmost care of this brother and recommend
him to the blessed son, the priest Anṭūnī, your student.
And in the past, we received a letter from your side written
by *muʿallim*[35] Šenūda al-Ḫašāb brought by an Ethiopian
deacon, and we sent you a reply with the priest
Benyāmīn al-Ḥabašī and a letter to the Emperor Iyāsū
—may God rest his soul—himself and blessing notes, to the priest Anṭūnī
a note, and to the monk Bāḫūm a note, and to *muʿallim*
Šenūda al-Ḫašāb a note, and to you a note of our writing,
unlike what is usually written. And we informed you therein,
being aware of the issue you entrusted to Mīḫāyil
al-Ḥabašī, and that you, our brother, take care of *muʿallim* Šenūda
al-Ḫašāb. And [there] are present our children, the students, the priest Ǧerǧes
al-Naǧǧār, and the priest Anṭūnī al-Zīd, and the priest Qeryāqoṣ, and the
hegumen Tādros al-Baḥǧūrī, and the monk ʿAmmallāh
and *muʿallim* Maqār, and his brother Bešāy, and *muʿallim* ʿAbdalmasīḥ,
and Ḥannallāh his brother, and Anṭūnī Tādros who send you their
best regards and thanks. The first of Tout 1473 Anno Martyrum seventy-
three [= September 9, 1756 Anno Domini].

35 The word *muʿallim* generally means 'teacher', but is also used as a title of address, cf. Edward W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1863), 2141c.

Lines 3 to 7 are dedicated to the name and title of the patriarch, followed in lines 7 to 11 by an invocation of blessings upon the addressee of the letter, who is described in line 12 as "beloved and virtuous brother" and named *Muṭrān* in lines 13 and 14, meaning "metropolitan" in Arabic, followed by the denomination *Anba* Yū'anis (= *Abunä* Yoḥannəs) and again *Muṭrān* of *Ḥabaša*, meaning Ethiopia. In expressing his blessings to the metropolitan of Ethiopia in lines 15 and 16, the patriarch paraphrases the Epistle to the Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

The formulae of greeting end in line 15 with the word *Amen*. The recommendation proper of Friedrich Hocker, who is referred to as Irenaeus, starts in line 17. Hocker is described as a blessed and venerable deacon of European race and as a person who loves his fellow Christians. Further on, in lines 23 and 24, the patriarch underlines the fact that Hocker is nothing like the hypocrites who upset their fellow Christians, using in his writing the verb يسجسّون, "to upset," "to turn upside down" in the same structure and almost the same words as a passage from the Apocryphal Acts of Bartholomew and Andrews, which reads "لا تسمعوا من كلام هولاى الخالفين الذين يسجسون المسكونة," "Hearken not on unto the speech of these seditious men, who have turned the world upside down."[36]

The letter goes on in lines 25 and 26 with the repetition of the catchwords "fellow Christians" and the end of the sentence "with words false and corrupt." Here, the letter shows already the first signs of the benevolent attitude of the patriarch of the Copts towards Hocker and the community that he represented. The patriarch seems convinced that the community of the Brethren is sincere, not like the "hypocrites who upset their fellow Christians with words false and corrupt" hinting to the Catholics and Greeks and to the previous attempts to convert the Ethiopians to Catholicism. From the words of the patriarch, it seems that Hocker was successful in convincing him of the benevolent character of his mission. Here one should note that the mission of the Brethren was based on unintrusiveness as they believed that God positively wills the existence of a variety of churches to cater for different spiritual needs and that there was no need to win converts from other Christian churches. Their presence was also based on fellowship and giving an example of virtuous and useful life.

36 Agnes Lewis, *Acta Mythologica Apostolorum. Transcribed from an Arabic MS in the Convent of Deyr-Es-Suriani, Egypt, and from MSS in the Convent of St Catherine on Mount Sinai with two Legends from a Vatican MS by Prof. Ignazio Guidi, and an Appendix of Syriac Palimpsest Fragments of the Acts of Judas Thomas from Cod. Sin. Syr. 30* (London: Clay, 1904), 17 [= f. 34r].

In lines 27 and 28, the patriarch recommends that Hocker be welcomed, quoting Mt 25:35, "I was a stranger and you invited me in," and seems moreover to trust him as he ends this part of the letter by asking the metropolitan to send him a letter that Hocker would bring him when he would leave Ethiopia to return to Cairo (line 30). Lines 35 to 45 of the letter are dedicated to the contact of the two prelates in the past, which seems not to have been always fortunate, with the mention of various persons I had not had the opportunity to further investigate. This passage is rather obscure and would need more research in the future.

In lines 45 to 49, the patriarch mentions all the persons who join him in sending their regards to the metropolitan and he ends his letter, using the Coptic month and year dating, writing in Arabic the first of Tout, corresponding to the 10th of September, and using the *zimām*[37] numerals to indicate the year 1473 Anno Martyrum corresponding to 1756 Anno Domini. Anno Martyrum is represented in the Arabic text by the symbol of the Coptic Era of Martyrs.

The objective of this letter was never achieved, Friedrich Hocker was never able to meet the addressee of the letter of recommendation in person and the addressee never received the letter.

4 Conclusion

The three Arabic letters preserved in the Herrnhuter archives represent landmarks with regard to the relinquished mission to Ethiopia. The first letter (see section 2.2) was the first letter ever written by the Coptic patriarch to Count von Zinzendorf. It was a letter of introduction of the Brethren aiming at establishing the first contact with the Coptic patriarch. The letter of recommendation addressed to the metropolitan of Ethiopia, which we have just looked at in some detail, was meant to facilitate the contact with the Ethiopian Church, which was the primary goal of the Herrnhuter.

The third letter which I briefly mentioned at the beginning of section 2.3 and which was not further discussed in this paper was addressed by the Cop-

37 The *zimām* numeral system or *ḥurūf al-zimām* developed in Egypt from the register's numerals. Unlike the classical Coptic system, the signs are cursive minuscule letters rather than uncial ones. After the twelfth century, Coptic Christians continued to use *zimām* numerals in documents otherwise written in Arabic. Cf. Stephen Chrisomalis, *Numerical notation. A Comparative History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 149–151; George Colin, "De l'origine grecque des chiffres de Fès et de nos chiffres arabes," *Journal Asiatique* 222 (1933): 193–215.

tic patriarch to Zinzendorf, stating that the patriarch sees that the Brethren's faith is close to the faith of the Copts but requests more information about the kind and origin of the Christian confession of the Brethren. The fact that only copies of this third letter are preserved in the archives at Herrnhut, is a direct consequence of the failed attempt to reach Ethiopia, since Hocker must have lost the original during the shipwreck.[38]

Although the Herrnhuter mission to Ethiopia finally never took place, the episode described in this article can be seen as a small piece of the puzzle of deconstructing the view on Ethiopian Christianity as forgotten by the rest of the world. Count Zinzendorf's vision of an Ethiopian mission and the extreme effort of the Herrnhut brethren during several years to reach Ethiopia testify to an immense interest in establishing contact and interaction with what they considered fellow Christians in the far-away country. The letter of recommendation shows the Coptic patriarch in Cairo as an intermediator of this endeavour, so that the triangle Herrnhut-Cairo-Ethiopia is an interesting example of a kind of global interconnection, which unfortunately was not put into practice.

38 Cf. Elhage-Mensching, *Pope Mark VII*, 58.

Appendix

FIGURE 8.1 Ms. R.17.B.7.b.3
UNITÄTSARCHIV HERRNHUT

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PART 3

Late Modern and Contemporary Perspectives

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CHAPTER 9

Beyond *Yäkkatit 12* (19 February 1937)

Ethiopian Christians and German Missionaries Resisting Together

> If there is any room after the assassination attempt to interact closely with the natives—and Mr Rathje as a missionary was always doing that day-in, day-out, throughout the past year—and to remain innocent, then we are certainly innocent. However, if in our situation there is no room anymore to be innocent in the eyes of the Italians, only then are we also guilty. There will be nothing that can be done about that.[1]

⁂

1 Introduction

Resistance, both passive and active, can be described as a counter-movement to stop any state, system, power or ideology that acts against the freedom of a nation and its people. For Christians, resistance is justified or required when evil powers violate fundamental human rights or human dignity, which is against the law of God.[2] In Ethiopia, resistance is connected to the Italo-Ethiopian war (1934–1936) and the subsequent occupation that ended in 1941.[3] It is connected to patriotism, liberation and intellectual movements.[4] It com-

1 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (Political Archive of the Foreign Ministry, PA-AA), RAV Addis Abeba, Berlin, GG40, Bahlburg-Olivieri, 06.04.1937. All translations are by the author [JK].

2 Acts 5:29 "We must obey God rather than men" or passages of the Sermon of the Mount (Matthew 5–7) are often used, among other, as parameters for a theology of resistance.

3 Seltene Seyoum, "Resistance," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 379–380, with the concept of *yäwəsṭənna yäwəčči arbäñoč* (inner and outer patriots); Bahru Zewde, *Society, State and History. Selected Essays* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2008), 383–385. Transcription rules follow *EAe* 1 (2003): xx–xxi.

4 Bahru Zewde, *Society*, 215–237.

prises political, economic, sociological and religious factors. Based on the nexus between religion and nation, the religious factor played a pivotal role in Ethiopian history. However, religious or theological motives in Ethiopian resistance movements have not been widely studied.[5] This article focuses on the German Hermannsburg Mission (GHM) and three of its members: Səbḥat Ṭərunäh (1901/11–1937), an Ethiopian teacher at the GHM, and the missionaries Rev. Hermann Bahlburg (1892–1962) and Rev. Hinrich Rathje (1904–1959).

The article explores their roles in resisting together during the incidents around *Yäkkatit 12* (19 February 1937),[6] commemorated since 1942 as *yäsämaʿə-tat qän* (Martyrs Day).[7] The research is based on documents found in the archives of the German Foreign Ministry, the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Hermannsburg, in the private archives of the families Bahlburg and Rathje, on interviews and secondary literature. The objectives include highlighting the complexities of GHM's involvement in the resistance and questioning the methodology for the reconstruction of history in the account of I. Campbell's book *The Plot to Kill Graziani* (2010), which deals extensively with the GHM.[8] The first part describes the political and religious context of *Yäkkatit 12*. The second part analyses different accounts of the events during those days. The

5 A discussion of a theology of resistance referring to Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) and Guddinaa Tumsaa (1929–1979), as an example of Ethiopian-German interconnectedness, is beyond the scope of this article. Both represent models of active and passive resistors against different sets of unbearable totalitarian state ideologies. See Paul Wee, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Gudina Tumsa. Shaping the Church's Response to the Challenges of Our Day," in *Church and Society. Lectures and Responses. Second Missiological Seminar 2003 on the Life and Ministry of Gudina Tumsa*, ed. Gudina Tumsa Foundation (Hamburg: WDL-Publ., 2010), 15–51, referring to both, on the question of critical solidarity with the state turning against it.

6 Ṗawlos Ñoño, *The Ethiopian-Italian War* [in Amharic], 2nd ed. (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2009 A.M.–2017), 158–170; Angelo Del Boca, "Faschismus und Kolonialismus. Der Mythos von den 'anständigen Italienern'," in *Völkermord und Kriegsverbrechen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Fritz Bauer Institut (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004), 197; Ian Campbell, *The Plot to Kill Graziani. The Attempted Assassination of Mussolini's Viceroy* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2010), 452–455 (Chronology); Ian Campbell, *The Massacre of Debre Libanos. Ethiopia 1937. The Story of One of Fascism's Most Shocking Atrocities* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2014), 46–53; Ian Campbell, *The Addis Ababa Massacre. Italy's National Shame* (London: Hurst & Company, 2017), 47–48.

7 Campbell, *The Plot*, xxxv–xxxix. For the massacres, see: Del Boca, "Faschismus und Kolonialismus"; Campbell, *The Addis Ababa Massacre*; Seltene Seyoum, *Resistance*, 379. A monument in Addis Abäba (*Arat Kilo*) displays the atrocities of the Italians.

8 For a comprehensive review, see: Jürgen Klein, *The Reconstruction of Ethiopian History. The Involvement of the German Hermannsburg Mission in the Incidents around Yäkkatit 12* (forthcoming).

third part deals with how the Germans and Ethiopians resisted the Italians together, and the conclusion synthesizes the main findings. The article aims to reveal aspects of religiously motivated resistance that interconnects Christians transnationally, and beyond *Yäkkatit 12*.

2 The Political and Religious Context of *Yäkkatit 12*

Understanding the context of the Italian rule in *Africa Orientale Italiana* (AOI) helps to explain how the actors involved had to deal with the complex setting. An overview of the religious situation of the evangelical missions helps to localize the GHM and the activities of its members within the socio-political landscape of Addis Abäba.

2.1 *The Political Context*

The occupation, with Viceroy Rodolfo Graziani preferring a direct colonial rule, was accompanied by an ongoing resistance of Ethiopian patriots.[9] The liquidation of the *intelligentsia*, especially during the massacres, was a systematically planned method to curb resistance.[10]

9 Angelo Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War 1935–1941*, trans. P.D. Cummins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Aregawi Berhe, "Revisiting resistance in Italian-occupied Ethiopia. The Patriots' Movement (1936–1941) and the redefinition of post-war Ethiopia," in *Rethinking Resistance. Revolt and Violence in African History*, ed. Jon Abbink, Mirjam de Bruijn and Klaas van Walraven (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 87–113; Aregawi Berhe, "Spirit vs. War-machine. A Patriotic Resistance to Italian Occupation of Ethiopia (1936–1941)," *Aigaforum*, 02.27.2015, URL: http://aigaforum.com/articles/Ethiopian-Resistance.pdf, at 16: "The Italians [...] could in no way gain control over the vast Ethiopian countryside where the resistance was gathering momentum"; Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 148: "Never in their quinquennium of rule did the fascists feel secure in Ethiopia, and their anxiety came to border on neurosis"; Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War*, 236: "[...] only 300,000 Italians were absorbed into Ethiopia, more than a third of whom were soldiers" 1939, about 39,000 of them lived in Addis Abäba. See further: Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855–1991*, 2nd ed. (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, ^{2}2005), 150–177 and 375–390. For the rule, see: Michael Thöndl, "Mussolinis Ostafrikanisches Imperium in den Aufzeichnungen und Berichten des Deutschen Generalkonsulats in Addis Abeba (1936–1941)," in *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken 88*, ed. Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rom (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2008), 475; Aregawi Berhe, "Spirit," 14. The order *Nessun potere ai Ras* ("No power to the lords"), was given in August 1936.

10 Bahru Zewde, *Society*, 215–237; Szélinger Balázs, ed., *Fascist Italian Brutality in Ethiopia, 1935–1937. An Eyewitness Account by Sáska László* (*aka Ladislas Sava*), trans. from Hungarian by Meneczer Béla (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 2015), 109: "The Italians destroyed

A system of racial discrimination developed within the *Impero* (empire). It revealed the hatred which many of the Italians and their allied forces cultivated against the Ethiopians. Racial segregation became part of the city construction plans, but it also was evident in daily relations between the occupants and the natives.[11] The racist attitude reached its climax during the abominable atrocities of the *Vendetta* (vengeance) on 19 February 1937 and the following days.[12] In July 1936 it had been foreseen that the violent character of the Italian rule under Graziani, previously witnessed in Libya, would also erupt in Ethiopia.[13] In 1937, animosity against the Italians grew steadily because of their atrocities. The public execution of *Abunä* Ṗeṭros (1882–1936), because of his active resistance, was one example.[14]

Of particular interest is the relationship between the Italians and the Germans, both of whom had fascist regimes at home.[15] Initially, the German gov-

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systematically all priests and all chiefs and anybody of superior education; in a word all who could have any influence over the people." PA-AA, Pol 3:209, Richter, J. Nr. 292/37, 24.03.1937: "[…] more than 2000 'better' natives have been deported to Somaliland […] the night before yesterday, 40 Abyssinians, who had been imprisoned since the assassination attempt on the Viceroy, were shot." Archiv des Ev.-Luth. Missionswerks in Niedersachsen e.V. (Archive of the Evangelical-Lutheran Mission in Lower Saxony, A-ELM), Hermannsburg, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 31.05.1937, 4.

11 Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War*, 226, 229; Campbell, *The Plot*, 59; Richard Pankhurst, "Development in Addis Ababa during the Italian Fascist Occupation (1936–1941)," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, November 24–25, 1986*, ed. Ahmed Zekaria, Bahru Zewde and Taddese Beyene (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1987), 131–132; Otto Welsch, "Befriedung und Aufbau in Äthiopien," *Zeitschrift für Politik* 27, no. 9 (1937): 540, URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43527536?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents: Racial segregation served for "[…] keeping the Italian race pure […] since mixed races are an element of social and political disorder and therefore dangerous for the future of the empire."

12 Thöndl, "Mussolinis Ostafrikanisches Imperium," 487. For the massacres in Addis Abäba, see: Campbell, *The Addis Ababa Massacre*; for Däbrä Libanos, see: Campbell, *The Massacre*; for Näqämṭ, see: Aregawi Berhe, "Spirit," 10; for the Ethiopian revolt in Goǧǧam, see: Thöndl, "Mussolinis Ostafrikanisches Imperium," 487.

13 Matilda Axton et al., ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1936*. Vol. 3, *The Near East and Africa* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1953), 308. Telegram 29.07.1936: "The Ambassador went on to say that he fully expected a 'first-class massacre' in Addis Abäba in the not too distant future. […] It was the Latin way of doing things, he said, to resort to massacre in order to impress native populations with the authority of Rome."

14 Aregawi Berhe, "Spirit," 9: "The killing of a bishop was unimaginable […]. It indeed shocked the nation, arousing the indignation of the people and especially the clergy." About the martyrdom of Archbishop *Abunä* Ṗeṭros, see: Ṗawlos Ñoño, *The Ethiopian-Italian War*, 156–157; Bahru Zewde, *Society*, 383; Mersha Alehegne, "Ṗeṭros," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 140–141.

15 Balázs, *Fascist Italian Brutality*, 103–104. The Italo-German axis refers to the political-military alliance established 1936.

ernment secretly provided material and financial support to the empire of Ḫaylä Śəllase I.[16] Controlling the balance of power framed the Italian-German 'friendship', with both observing each other had also been noticed in the relationship between the German Consulate and the AOI in Addis Abäba.[17] Consulate reports show a critical observation of the Italian methods and their bureaucratic system, which was confirmed by the GHM missionaries.[18]

2.2 *The Religious Context*[19]

The role of native and foreign religious institutions, leaders and adherents as members of the resistance has not previously been dealt with in a comprehensive way, other than in a few Christian (orthodox and protestant) and Muslim participations.[20] Evangelical engagement was, however, an essential part of the resistance.[21]

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16 Edward Westermann, "In the Shadow of War. German Loans and Arms Shipments to Ethiopia, 1935–1936," in *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies, Proceedings of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University 5–10 September 1994*, ed. Marcus Harold (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1994), 1036–1050.

17 Thöndl, "Mussolinis Ostafrikanisches Imperium," 451–452. Since October 1936 the Embassy (*Gesandtschaft*) had been closed and a General Consulate (*Generalkonsulat*) opened. It was subordinated to the German Embassy in Rome. In 1937, the Consulate was responsible for 184 Europeans, including Germans, Austrians, Swiss and Hungarians. See also: Westermann, "In the Shadow of War," 1038; according to Halldin Norberg, *Swedes in Haile Selassie's Ethiopia, 1924–1952: A Study in Early Development Cooperation* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), 66 and 69, the number of Germans was 230 (1.6 % of the foreign population), with 10 from the GHM.

18 Thöndl, "Mussolinis Ostafrikanisches Imperium," 481–482; A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 31.05.1937, 3: "The way through the Italian offices is very troublesome, consuming much time and money. Anyone who does not make use of the unclean means of corruption to reach the results wished for feels bullied […]. But this costs much strength of nerves, strength of soul!" Ibid., 4: "Between the German and Italian authorities exists the well-known 'friendship'. And everyone is cautious not to let any incident occur that could peeve the 'friend'."

19 Ingeborg Lass-Westphal, "Protestant Missions During and After the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935–1937," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 10, no. 1 (1972): 89–101; Mikre Sellassie Gebre Ammanuel, *Church and Missions in Ethiopia in Relation to the Italian War and Occupation and the Second World War* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Enterprise, 2014).

20 For the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church, see: Aregawi Berhe, "Spirit," 8–9: "The church took it as an everyday obligation, inside and outside the church, to renounce the incursion of Italian invaders." For the nexus of religion and nationalism, see: Mikre Sellassie Gebre Ammanuel, *Church and Missions*, 172–176. Expressed in the 13th century collection of the *Kəbrä nägäśt* (Nobility of the Kings), the symbiosis of church and state was established with the salomonic dynasty claiming Israelite descent. See Paolo Marrassini, "Kəbrä nägäśt," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 364. Even though the new constitution (1995) separated state and religion (Art. 11), the Ethiopian Orthodox Church retains its nationalistic identity.

21 Bahru Zewde, *Society*, 232–233: "[…] one can suggest tentatively that resistance to Italian

In 1935, there were ten mission societies in Ethiopia.[22] The archives provide details about the conditions of the missions in 1936 and 1937, and about the policy of the AOI concerning the religious institutions, churches and missions.[23] After the shift of power from the Ethiopian imperial to the Italian fascist government, in 1936–1937 only a few mission stations and missionaries remained, working under aggravating circumstances.[24] Before, during and partly after this new political situation, many mission societies took a pro-Ethiopian stance but remained mostly passive. Some were lobbying in their mother churches and home countries through reports. However, there were others who tried to actively strengthen Ethiopian resistance.[25] As a result, many missionaries were expelled and mission societies were shut down because of open or alleged anti-Italian activities.[26] The GHM was also affected.[27]

By 1937 very few protestant missionaries remained. In 1941, only 6 Adventist, 2 Presbyterian and 5 GHM missionaries were active, before the Emperor and British troops arrived.[28]

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rule appears to have been most intense among those with an Anglo-Saxon and Protestant educational background [...] Related to this is the prominent role played by the Eritrean-educated elite in the course of the war. Most of these men tended to have a Swedish evangelical background [...]."

22 Lass-Westphal, "Protestant Missions," 91, slightly corrected by Norberg, *Swedes*, 70. There were four British, two American, one British-American, two Swedish and one German mission societies with a total of 170 missionaries. For the condition of the GHM in 1935, see: Winfried Wickert, *Männer und Zeiten. 50 Jahre Hermannsburger Missionsgeschichte. Ein Rückblick* (Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung Hermannsburg, 1987), 272–273. For conditions in 1936 and 1937, documents of the Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry provide further details about the religious situation and policy of the AOI, and how it planned to deal with the religious institutions, churches and missions.

23 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Strohm, 30.09.1936 and 28.12.1936; A-ELM, AE 1.05, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 1937.

24 Lass-Westphal, "Protestant Missions," 97–101, lists the measures taken against the Missions to reduce foreign influence.

25 Lass-Westphal, "Protestant Missions," 94. PA-AA, Richter, J. Nr. GG 40, 06.04.1937. The British Churchmen's Missionary Society's (BCMS) expulsion with German missionary Friedrich Schmidt was politically motivated.

26 In particular, the Swedish Missions and the BCMS were shut down, while other mission stations, hospitals of the Sudan Interior Mission, the Adventist and Presbyterian missions and schools in Addis Abäba and elsewhere in Ethiopia were confiscated and had to stop work.

27 The mission station in Bäddällä was evacuated and partly destroyed first. The same happened later in Ayra. GHM missionaries were able to continue their work in Addis Abäba, and in 1938 they resumed work in Ayra.

28 Lass-Westphal, "Protestant Missions," 99.

The Italians intended to reduce foreign or anti-Italian influence of any sort from their colonial empire-building. Promoting Catholicism over Protestantism was only occasionally reported and 'Italianisation' brought a general strengthening of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia.[29] Strengthening Ethiopian Islam by supporting the construction of mosques and by facilitating the *Haǧǧ* to Mecca was intended to win allies and collaborators,[30] whereas the Ethiopian Orthodox Church generally has been regarded as an anti-Italian element, loyal to the royal imperial government of Ḫaylä Śəllase I.[31]

Far less known than the active resistance efforts that led to martyrdom or direct patriotic attribution is the fact that there had been a strong 'passive' resistance in the underground. Many Ethiopians and foreigners were involved passively in the fight for freedom from injustices, negative racist attitudes and cruel deeds. Identifying those yet unknown participants and 'unsung heroes' is an ongoing process,[32] in which the Association of Ethiopian Patriots plays an active role.[33] Members of the evangelical protestant churches

29 On the role of the Catholic Church during the Italo-Ethiopian war and the situation of the protestant missions, see: PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Strohm, and Bahlburg, 20.10.1936, who deals with the acceptance of the GHM by the AOI, and the relations between church and state. PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Klee and von Bergen, 13.08.1936, about the Vatican's plan for expansion in Ethiopia. However, see: Mikre-Sellassie Gebre Ammanuel, *Church and Missions*, 375, who wrote that the Italian government prevented catholic missionary activities.

30 For the treatment of Muslims by the Italians in Libya, see: Aram Mattioli, "Die vergessenen Kriegsverbrechen des faschistischen Italien in Lybien 1923–1933," in *Völkermord und Kriegsverbrechen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Fritz Bauer Institut (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004), 203–226. For the relations between the Italians and Ethiopian Muslims, see: Hussein Ahmed, "Islam and Islamic Discourse in Ethiopia (1973–1993)," in *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies, Proceedings of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University 5–10 September 1994*, ed. Marcus Harold (Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1994), 775–776; Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacy of Bitterness. Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935–1941* (Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1997), 162–163; Ahmed Hassen Omer, "Mussolini and Islam in Ethiopia (1922–1941)," in *Symposium "Cross and Crescent: Christian-Islamic Relations in Ethiopia," 23.–26.09.2002* (Addis Ababa: Addis Abäba Goethe Institute, 2002), 7–15 (not published). Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War*, 215, mentioned also the killing of Muslims during the massacres. Narratives of Muslims engaged in resistance can be found at the Ethiopian Association of Patriots in Addis Abäba and in further literature.

31 Aregawi Berhe, "Spirit," 14; Thöndl, "Mussolinis Ostafrikanisches Imperium," 480.

32 Gəzaw Zäwdu, *Commemorating Patriotism and a Short History of the Historical Heroes of the Ethiopian Patriots Association* [in Amharic] (Addis Abäba, 2016). In this regard, the efforts undertaken by Ian Campbell must be highly appreciated.

33 For the Association of Ethiopian Patriots, see: Richard Pankhurst, "Yäṭəntawit Ityopya Ğägnočč Arbäñño čč Maḫbär," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 35–36 and Bahru Zewde, "Hagär Fəqər Tiyatər," in *EAe* 2 (2005): 966–967.

like *Qes* Badəmma Yaläw (1885–1973),[34] Amanu'el Gäbrä Śəllase (1910–1997)[35] and others participated in passive resistance.[36] One of the many, yet little known participants in passive resistance was Səbḥat Ṭərunäh, the teacher and evangelist of the GHM, who will be introduced later. The leading missionaries of the GHM in Addis Abäba should be mentioned in this regard. Even though the GHM remained as a functioning mission, its work under the given circumstances, framed by a difficult economic situation, was anything but easy.[37]

It was a tense time. The turmoil of May 1936, when the GHM members had to defend their compound against *Holäta* Military Academy soldiers and others who were marauding after the emperor fled abroad, was still a recent memory.[38] With the coming events of *Yäkkatit 12*, they now had to face another shocking wave that again would target the very existence of their mission endeavours in Ethiopia, for which so many sacrifices had already been made.[39]

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34 Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia. Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Stockholm: EFS Förlaget, 1978), 423–424, 435; Gustav Arén, *Envoys of the Gospel in Ethiopia. In the Steps of the Evangelical Pioneers 1898–1936* (Stockholm, EFS Förlaget, 1999), 95, 464, 477, 532; Sven Rubenson, "Badəmma Yaläw," in *EAe* 1 (2003): 429; Campbell, *The Plot*, 79.

35 Johannes Launhardt, "Amanu'el Gäbrä Śəllase," in *EAe* 1 (2003): 217. In 1941, he became the first President of the Mekane Yesus Congregation of Addis Abäba, and in 1959 the first President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY).

36 For *Käntiba* Gäbrä Ǝgzi'abəḥer Dästa, known as Gäbru Dästa, see: Bairu Tafla, "Gäbrä Ǝgzi'abəḥer Dästa," in *EAe* 2 (2005): 606–607; Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia. The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42–47. Members of a special intellectual and social circle that according to Campbell, *The Plot*, 78–79, included Səbḥat Ṭərunäh, Mogäs Asgädom, Abrəha Dəboč, Mähari Kassa, Colonel Bälay Haylä-Ab, Amanu'el Gäbrä Śəllase and *Qes* Badəmma Yaläw all had some connections through the Täfäri Mäkʷännən School or the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), and were at large part of the 'Intellectual Movement' and network that engaged in some sort of resistance activities.

37 Lass-Westphal, "Protestant Missions," 100: "The fate of the Hermannsburg mission proves clearly that political considerations concerning the mother countries were decisive, since it was allowed to continue, despite the fact that it had taken the Ethiopian side during the conflict, and was not in line (single missionaries excluded) with National Socialist politics." For the economic situation and the situation of foreign currency, see: PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Bahlburg-Richter, 06.04.1937.

38 The killing of missionary Adolf Müller (1905–1936) on 11 May 1936, was part of the first shocking wave of the Italian war that affected the GHM. See Ernst Bauerochse, *Ihr Ziel war das Oromoland. Die Anfänge der Hermannsburger Mission in Äthiopien* (Münster: Lit, 2006), 231–240; PA-AA, A. Müller (file), 1936.

39 For the history of the GHM, see: Bauerochse, *Ihr Ziel*.

3 The Events around *Yäkkatit 12* from the GHM's Point of View

Having been caught by surprise about what happened around *Yäkkatit 12*, the missionaries later recognized some connections to it. Rathje reported on 13 April 1937 that Mogäs Asgädom (1911–1937), one of the two assailants,[40] was involved in the events: "His [Səbḥatu's] friend Mogas, who lived with him, was suspected because he left Addis 14 days before the assassination attempt, in order to drive with an Italian to Jimma".[41] Other documents confirm that Mogäs was living with Səbḥat on the GHM compound for about 8 months, beginning around May 1936 until January 1937 at the latest. Both men helped defend the compound against attacks from 2–5 May 1936.[42] Both Səbḥat (from 1926–1927), and Mogäs (from 1928 on) went to Täfäri Mäkʷännən School, a central place for the formation of the *intelligentsia* (Young Ethiopians).[43] Together with other friends, they secretly developed plans to fight against Italian oppression. The missionaries were barely aware of these connections.[44]

3.1 *The Chronology of Events*[45]

On Friday, 19 February 1937, the day began as usual on the GHM compound, called *Harmshusen*,[46] located in *Qäčča̤nä*, a city district in the northern part of Addis Abäba, next to the orthodox Mädḫane Aläm Church.[47] Everyone began

40 For Mogäs, see: Matteo Salvadore, "Mogäs Asgädom," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 984–985; Campbell, *The Plot*, 15–18, 28–30, 46–47, 68, 75, 90–91, 96–97, 122–124 (Mogäs took a cottage near Harmshusen in December 1936 or January 1937), 150–151, 196–197, 206–219, 247–249, 325–354, 361–366 (Mogäs may have been shot at Mätämma, Sudan). Mogäs was the same age as Səbḥat, according to Bahlburg's report. For more details, see next sections. The other assailant was Abrəha Däboč, see: Bahru Zewde, "Abrəha Däboč," in *EAe* 1 (2003): 47. A third major accomplice was Səm'on Adäfrəs, who took care of the logistics.

41 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937; Richard Pankhurst, "Events during the Fascist Occupation: Who was the third man?" *Addis Tribune*, 27.02.2004. The information about driving to Ǧimma still remains unclear. See further: Campbell, *The Plot*, 74, 150–154.

42 A-ELM, Bartzsch-Schomerus, 10.05.1936: "Also Sepatu [Səbḥatu], the teacher, was protecting us, and Mogas, an Abyssinian [actually an Eritrean, JK], who lived with us." The time differs from Campbell, *The Plot*, 77 and 90.

43 Bahru Zewde, *Society*, 221–226.

44 A-ELM, AE 1.05, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 789, 30.03.1937.

45 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937 (*My Imprisonment*); PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Bahlburg-Richter (Bahlburg-Olivieri), 06.04.1937; PA-AA, Pol 3:209, GG 40 Rathje; A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 06.04.1937 and 29.04.1937.

46 *Harmshusen*, a name given to the compound in the northern German language *Plattdeutsch*, literally means Village of Harms, referring to the Mission founder Ludwig Harms (1808–1865).

47 For an official Italian map that served propaganda purposes, with some important loca-

their customary daily activities.[48] Rathje, who left in the morning to the city for business, was on his way back to *Harmshusen* before noon when he heard shots, saw fleeing people shouting, and met soldiers with guns at the corner of the Gännäta Lə'ul Palace, the seat of the AOI government. This was where the celebration of the birth of crown prince Vittorio Emanuele (born 12 February 1937) with an alms-giving ceremony had taken place, which was interrupted by the assassination attempt where hand-grenades were thrown at Viceroy Rodolfo Graziani. At about the same time, Bahlburg, who was teaching the first-grade class of the German school on *Harmshusen*, heard detonations and machine-gun fire. At about 2 pm the first refugees were taken in. Bahlburg calmed down the workers in the compound later in the afternoon.[49] In the evening, a security meeting of the GHM staff took place. On the following days of the weekend, fleeing people again took refuge on *Harmshusen*. On Saturday, an Italian patrol checked the situation on the GHM compound.

Based on the information provided by spies and interrogated subjects that already had been imprisoned, Səbḥat had been caught and taken to prison on March 6 (about two weeks later), and Rathje on April 5 (about six weeks later).[50] These dates are contrary to Campbell's account, who writes that the

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tions in Addis Abäba in 1937, see: Ufficio Superiore Topocartografico, ed., *Guida Turistica di Addis Abeba, Riproduzione Vietata 1937 XV* (Asmara: A Cura dell'Ufficio Stampa e Propaganda dell'A.O., 1937). For the GHM compound, see: Wickert, *Männer und Zeiten*, 152, 167–168; Johannes Launhardt, *Evangelicals in Addis Ababa (1919–1991): With special reference to Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Addis Ababa Synod* (Münster: Lit, 2004), 57, 60–61; Campbell, *The Plot*, 13–14. *Harmshusen* was 36,000 m² big in size when first bought (later an additional 4,000 m² have been added).

48 The GHM members, missionaries, families, co-workers and other workers around *Yäkkatit 12* included Rev. Hermann Bahlburg (GHM Head in Ethiopia), his wife Minna Bahlburg with their five children; Rev. Hinrich Rathje (Deputy Head); Sister Eva Bartzsch (Nurse); Mrs. Ida Fischer (a guest and teacher); about 10 students at the German School; about 6 Ethiopian children at the orphanage; Max Müller and Fritz Brand (both working on the garden's fence); carpenter Arno Geikler; Ethiopian staff included Səbḥat Ṭərunäh (teacher and evangelist), with his younger brother Taddäsä; a second teacher until December 1936 or January 1937 possibly was Mogäs Asgädom; Gäbrä Ṣadəq Wäldä Mika'el (chauffeur) and his wife (housekeeper); Asrəss (Gate Keeper); Asmara (Horse Servant and possibly servant of Rathje); a pigs' keeper; Amlak Tärädda (Servant); Täfärra (Servant); Ašine (Servant); a cooking team; workers on the compound (with contract workers coming from outside). Altogether there had been about 40–50 persons on the compound. Campbell, *The Plot*, 122–123; the number (ca. 125) given here is an exaggeration.

49 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Bahlburg-Richter, 06.04.1937. For the life-saving activities of Bahlburg and the others, see later. 2–6 pm could be approximately the time when he saved a group of priests who fled into *Harmshusen*.

50 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937 (My Imprisonment).

imprisonments and interrogations all happened on the same day, namely February 19. Campbell's dramatic narrative with unsubstantiated accusations against Bahlburg, therefore, falls apart due to the wrong chronology.[51] His method of basing his information only on oral informants, who recalled a 'constructed' memory after more than half a century, without cross-checking their testimony with other available sources, needs to be seen critically.

During the 2–3 days he was in prison where he was interrogated twice under life-threatening conditions, Rathje steadied himself through faith and prayer. Finally, with the support of Bahlburg and the German Vice-Consul Richter, he was freed on 7 April 1937.[52] Səbḥat had been methodically killed in prison by the Italians between 30 April–6 May 1937.[53] Hans Fricke, the newly appointed Consul, wrote to Bahlburg on 14 June 1937, attaching a letter from Colonel Alberto Mazzi to him, that all matters concerning Rathje could be considered settled.[54]

3.2 *Səbḥat Ṭərunäh—His Ministry and Involvement in Resistance*

The missionaries were able to save the lives of many Ethiopians during the massacres, which will be described later. However, it was not possible for them to save their faithful co-worker, Səbḥatu, as they called him familiarly.[55] Səbḥatu had been working for the GHM for about seven years (Easter 1930 until end of April 1937) as a teacher and evangelist, a translator and interpreter, as well as helping in administration, acquiring land and in defending *Harmshusen* from 2–5 May 1936.[56]

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51 The two dates mentioned here support the fundamental critique against Campbell, *The Plot*, 237–240 and 253–260, who narrates that all incidents took place on 19 February 1937. With this information, the reconstruction of this part of the history, including all assumptions and allegations, needs to be revised.

52 PA-AA, Pol 3:209, GG 40 Rathje, Richter (Aktenvermerk), 07.04.1937; A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 793, 06.04.1937.

53 A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 31.05.1937, written with more details from a safer distance in Aden.

54 PA-AA, Pol 3:209, GG 40 Rathje, Fricke-Bahlburg, 14.06.1937.

55 For a critical discussion of the point of view taken by Campbell, *The Plot*, see: Klein, *The Reconstruction*, 26–30. The main arguments against Campbell refer to the role of Səbḥatu in the plotting, which has been overemphasized, and the expression "Hermannsburg Mission Group," which is misleading. Both will be clarified later.

56 According to Campbell, *The Plot*, 12–13, Səbḥat Tərunäh was born in 1901, being the first son of *Aläqa* [*Qes*] Ṭərunäh Dästa and his first wife, who lived in the province of Gondär (Dära). Bahlburg wrote in A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 16.05.1930, that Səbḥat was a 19-year-old man when he was introduced to him, therefore born in 1911. Bahlburg further: "His father is working as a teacher for the evangelical teaching in Gondär but has not left the

He was a highly esteemed member of the 'spiritual family' on *Harmshusen*.[57] The documents of Bahlburg and Rathje give no indication that Səbḥatu contributed to the preparation of the assault on Graziani. It seemed impossible for either of them to imagine that Səbḥatu had been actively engaged in the plot. "Our Səbḥatu has been sitting in prison for weeks, and we do not know if, and when he will be set free. Without any doubt, he has been politically suspected by the government without any reason. A dubious friendship has brought him under suspicion".[58] "Səbḥatu has been with us for six years, and to

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Abyssinian church." *Qes* Ṭərunäh was a member of a group of protestants that remained within Orthodoxy. He is identical with *Qes* Ṭərunäh Dästa in Arén, *Envoys*, 33: "A friend of theirs [*Aläqa* Tayyä Gäbrä Maryam (1860–1924) and *Aläqa* Täsäma Haylu—JK] named *Qes* Tiruneh (c. 1870–1933) took over the school at Dera […]." See also: ibid., 41–45, 95–96. Səbḥatu, according to Campbell, arrived in Addis Abäba in 1926. He first went to the Täfäri Mäkʷännən School (1926–1927) and then joined the Swedish Mission School for further studies (1927–1930). According to A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 16.05.1930, Səbḥat started to work with the GHM around Easter 1930, because for the Swedish missionaries it was not possible to employ him as a teacher. The first confirmation celebration, a result of a small seminary work on *Harmshusen*, took place on 30 March 1932. On the back of a photo (A-ELM) taken on that day, Bahlburg wrote: "The other young man in the Abyssinian dress is our native teacher Sebhatu. Together with him I founded the seminary work. In teaching, he is a great help for Brother Schnack. He is a good evangelist and aware of his evangelical Christian faith. For some years the Swedes have educated him." According to A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 27.01.1933, both Bahlburg and Səbḥat's father were together in the hospital, where *Qes* Ṭərunäh died early in January. He was buried in Addis Abäba, and Bahlburg released Səbḥatu for three months to look for his relatives near Gondär. After the mourning period, he took his youngest brother Taddäsä Ṭərunäh to Addis Abäba and cared for him on *Harmshusen* (1933–1937). They first lived in a small hut, and later, according to Bahlburg in Privatarchiv der Familie Bahlburg (Private Archive of the Bahlburg Family, PA-B), Berlin, 06.05.1936, in a "[…] building with a kitchen and a native female cook, two native teachers and six orphans […]" next to the building with the church and school. One teacher was Səbḥat, the other Mogäs Asgädom. In A-ELM, Rathje-Schomerus, "Aus meiner Arbeit," May 1935: "Our Evangelist Sebhatu understood it respectably to bring the Gospel of Christ close to them, because he himself was an upright Christian and knew his folk among whom he grew up. His father formerly had also been trained as an Evangelist and had been a teacher in the Abyssinian church." A-ELM, Rathje-Schomerus, 01.05.1935: "A great support is our native teacher Segatu [Səbḥatu], who speaks German well." He gave sermons in Amharic during the Sunday afternoon worship, in which especially Orthodox Christians took part. Bahlburg reported in PA-B, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 16.12.1936, about plans to start a Bible School, where orthodox priests could participate to take part in local outreach programs, and Səbḥat would certainly have played an important role in its development.

57 For the term 'spiritual family,' see next section 3.2.

58 A-ELM, AE 1.05, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 789, 30.03.1937. Campbell, *The Plot*, 153, supports this partially.

our knowledge he has not been engaged in politics with either the Abyssinian or the Italian government."[59]

Only in retrospect did they recognize that the friendship with Mogäs had become fatal for him. However, many Ethiopians in Addis Abäba and elsewhere had been engaged in the underground or indirect and passive resistance in one way or another. It is therefore very difficult to describe the extent of Səbḥatu's involvement in those passive resistance activities, even though he was among the *intelligentsia* connected to the Täfäri Mäkʷännən School and the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM). He had close relations with *Qes* Badəmma Yaläw (1885–1973), a friend of his father, who became Səbḥatu's mentor and who had held responsible positions at the SEM, where Səbḥatu had studied for about three years (1927–1930). Following the emperor's request that prayers be offered at all mission headquarters, *Qes* Badəmma gave a famous speech on Sunday, 4 August 1935, at the market place below the Qəddus Giyorgis Cathedral, where also the pupils of the SEM schools were present.[60]

In his family, patriotism played a pivotal role.[61] His father, *Qes* Ṭərunäh Dästa, was part of a 'protestant' movement within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The reminiscences of his younger brother Taddäsä Ṭərunäh (1924–2015) have certainly been influenced by this spirit in his reconstruction of history as given to Campbell. After everything Səbḥatu had been through, his family felt he deserved to be honoured as a patriot. This may be the context of his brother's recollections that, nevertheless, need to be critically cross-checked.[62] *Yäkkatit 12* certainly was a fateful day for his brother Səbḥatu and his own life. Everything had to be explained from this perspective. Taddäsä Ṭərunäh and Campell filled in the missing information in their reconstruction of history. Səbḥatu's fateful end had been described. Bahlburg, who tried to free him with a petition addressed to the Viceroy reported that he had been methodically killed by the Italians.[63]

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59 A-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937.

60 Arén, *Envoys*, 464.

61 Campbell, *The Plot*, 74: "Sebhat Tiruneh's brother Tilahun [Təlahun Ṭərunäh, JK] and cousin Teferi became Patriots. Tilahun joined *Ras* Desta Demtaw, and Teferi fought with the *Balambaras* (later, *Ras*) Abbebe Aregay in Shewa. Thus, *Aleka* Tiruneh's family became, in effect, a family of Patriots, and this tradition was to be a dominant influence in the lives of both Sebhat and Taddesse. However, Sebhat remained in Addis Ababa, and became, as we shall see a *yewust arbeñña*—an underground urban member of the resistance."

62 This has not been done satisfactorily by Campbell regarding the passages that deal with the GHM.

63 A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 29.04.1937 and 07.05.1937. First Bahlburg did not mention

In addition to what Campbell wrote about Səbḥatu's involvement in the passive resistance,[64] taking seriously into account his faith, nurtured by his father and the SEM, and framed by the teachings and theological convictions of the GHM on *Harmshusen*, it is questionable that Səbḥatu was the 'initiator' of the underground resistance group that Campbell called the "Hermannsburg Mission Group."[65] Despite his ill-fated end, both Bahlburg and Rathje held him in high esteem for years after the incidents.[66] They remembered Səbḥatu as a humble and deeply convicted Christian minister.[67] His heart, like his father's one, was deeply connected with his brothers and sisters of the orthodox faith, with whom he always had had good relations.

Səbḥatu on April 29, but on May 7 he wrote: "Səbḥatu unfortunately died in prison because of typhus, and we are deprived of this faithful co-worker forever. He has done loyal services, which cannot be forgotten." The time of Səbḥatu's death can therefore be dated between April 13, after Rathje's report about Səbḥatu's condition (already affected in a prison by typhoid) and Bahlburg's report written on May 7, most probably toward the end of April 1937. A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, Aden, 31.05.1937, 7: "Almost 14 days after Səbḥatu's cruel death in a prison contaminated with typhus—we believe that he was brought to death methodically by subsidiary bodies of the investigation office—a secret policeman came with my plea for Səbḥatu's liberation in his hand, which I wrote to the Viceroy. He was sent to make more inquiries about Səbḥatu, who already for longer had been in a mass-grave, we believe, probably eaten up by hyenas. It had not been considered necessary to inform us about his death. And he always was a valuable employee for us."

64 Campbell, *The Plot*, 489 (Index, Sebhat Tiruneh). For comments, see: Klein, *The Reconstruction*, 26–30.

65 Campbell, *The Plot*, 78–79, 90–91, 105–107, 112–118, 122–131, 153, 158, 175, 181, 237–240, 247–251, 453–454. For comments on Campbell's terminology, see: Klein, *The Reconstruction*, 42–46 (footnote 180).

66 PA-B, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 14.08.1939: "Our Sebhatu—he unfortunately is dead—has personally made an enormous contribution to this success […]," here referring to an acquisition of land for the enlargement of *Harmshusen*. Privatarchiv der Familie Rathje (Private Archive of the Rathje Family, PA-R), Sittensen, Rathje-Schomerus, 15.11.1939: "It still makes me very sad that our faithful Səbḥatu has been taken away from us forcefully through a sudden death, since he was of good support here in our work among the Amhara."

67 The memory of Səbḥatu has only recently been revitalized in the efforts of Cord Bahlburg, the youngest son of Hermann Bahlburg, and the author of this article. Cord Bahlburg handed over a collection of notes about Səbḥatu to his youngest brother Taddäsä Ṭərunäh in 2014. See PA-B, In memoriam of Sebhat Tiruneh, 2014.

3.3 *The Imprisonment of Missionary Rev. Hinrich Rathje*[68]

Rathje's 11-page report, entitled *Meine Verhaftung* (*My Imprisonment*), was written on 13 April 1937.[69] It is a detailed account of the events around *Yäkkatit 12* in connection with the GHM, and on life-threatening aspects of his imprisonment.[70] It provides rare insights into the techniques used during interrogation by the Italian secret police. Moreover, the report allows a reconstruction of the events around *Yäkkatit 12* and its aftermath. Colonel Alberto Mazzi, *Capo di Gabinetto* (Head of the Cabinet), wrote that Rathje was taken to the *Stazione dei Carabinieri Reali*, to be interrogated by a *Comandante*, because there had been grave accusations against him that warranted a two-day investigation. The reason was the allegation, promulgated by spies,[71] that he knew about or was involved in the preparations for the assassination attempt on Graziani.[72] Con-

68 Hinrich Rathje arrived in Addis Abäba on 31 October 1933, together with the nurse Eva Bartzsch. Soon he took over responsibility for the small Orphanage that started in 1931. Working closely together with Səbḥatu Ṭərunäh, who had been working formerly with teacher Heinrich Asmus, deacon Ernst Greb and missionary Rev. Willy Schnack, both Rathje and Səbḥatu organized Amharic worship programs on Sunday afternoons. In addition, both Rathje and Sr. Bartzsch had social visit programs in the vicinity, often together with Səbḥatu for translation. Later, Rathje went to Bäddälle and Ayra for short periods of work, but returned to Addis Abäba together with Rev. Dietrich Wassmann, after spending a short time in Ǧimma, to be interned by the British military, like Bahlburg, from 1941–1948. After the internment, he stayed in Germany from 1948–1954. He returned to Ethiopia in 1954 but fell sick again and went back to Germany after about a year, where he died in 1959. For other reports of Rathje's imprisonment, see: PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje, 1937; Bahlburg's reports PA-AA, Bahlburg-Richter, 06.04.1937 and A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 31.05.1937; Dietrich Wassmann, *Der Durchbruch des Evangeliums im Gallaland. Ereignisse und Erlebnisse nach dem italienisch-abessinischen Kriege 1936–1941* (Hermannsburg: Missionshandlung, 1948), 5–6—influencing Launhardt, *Evangelicals*, 78–79 and Bauerochse, *Ihr Ziel*, 269–271; Balázs, *Fascist Italian Brutality*, 138–139—influencing Campbell, *The Plot*, 257–260. For the critical discussion of the point of view regarding Rathje's imprisonment taken by Campbell, *The Plot*, see: Klein, *The Reconstruction*, 37–40.

69 This report was discovered by the author of this article a few years ago at the Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry, before other copies appeared. See PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937 (2nd version); for later versions, see: A-ELM, Rathje-Schomerus, 07.04.1937 (1st version), and PA-R, Bericht von Missionar Rathje in Ethiopien über die schweren Tage seiner Verhaftung im April 1937 ("Report of Missionary Rathje in Ethiopia about the troublesome days of his imprisonment in April 1937") (3rd version).

70 Wassmann, *Der Durchbruch*, 5, describes how the police threatened Rathje.

71 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937, 1. Since they caught some plotters and persons related to them, among them Səm'on Adäfrəs and Səbḥatu, interrogations may have laid the trail to Rathje. Rathje himself noticed that right after the assassination attempt, *Harmshusen* was surrounded by spies.

72 PA-AA, Pol 3:209, Mazzi-Fricke, 03.06.1937. Among the witnesses against Rathje were some spies, Amlak Tärädda, a servant that had been manipulated according to Rathje, and others who had been identified through the interrogations of Səbḥatu and Səm'on Adäfrəs.

fessing to involvement in this kind of anti-Italian political activity could result in a prison or even a death sentence for him and the expulsion of the GHM with many dangers for the GHM members. Other plotters might also be imprisoned.[73]

It is not possible to give a full account of the report here.[74] Rathje defended himself repeatedly referring to the mission's strict policy of non-political engagement and obedience to the God-given government based on Romans 13. This is a central part of the report.[75]

Bahlburg also referred to these principles in his briefings about Rathje's imprisonment in his letter to Bernardo Olivieri, and later in more detail in his letter to Christoph Schomerus.[76] Due to the vehement advocacy of Bahlburg, speaking about the gentle personality of his colleague Rathje, and because of the official 'friendship' between the two countries, reinforced by Vice-Consul Herbert Richter, all allegations were finally dropped and Rathje was set free.[77]

3.4 *Hermann Bahlburg: Saving the Lives of Ethiopians as Part of the Resistance*

This section deals not only with the activities which saved Ethiopian lives during the days around *Yäkkatit 12*, but also with the circumstances under which these occurred.[78] For the Italians, saving of Ethiopian lives would have meant that the GHM supported the resistance. Further, the Italians were looking for any possibility to get as many of the non-Italian missions as possible out of the country. From 19 February 1937 on, spies in service of the Italian intelligence tried anything to support their alleged suspicions. In return, the spies hoped to make a profit themselves.[79]

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73 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937, 5–6, for the threats Rathje had been intimidated with.

74 Klein, *The Reconstruction*, 30–40.

75 A-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937, 4.

76 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Bahlburg-Richter, 06.04.1937; A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 31.05.1937.

77 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Bahlburg-Richter, 06.04.1937; PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937.

78 For a critical discussion of the point of view taken by Campbell, *The Plot*, see: Klein, *The Reconstruction*, 47–53. The main argument against Campbell focuses on his negative portrayal of Bahlburg, making him Səbḥatu's betrayer.

79 A-ELM, Rathje, 07.04.1937, 1: "Since a longer time we have been observed strongly by spies (Abessinians), who surrounded our place day and night, in fact already since the assassination attempt on Viceroy Graziani took place. […] The espionage around our compound increased, and one has always seen people, who observed our people and questioned them about our work."

The missionaries had to take a pro-Ethiopian stand *and* had to maintain good relations with the Italians to safeguard their mission work. The quotation of Rev. Hermann Bahlburg at the beginning of this article, written on 6 April 1937, points to this dilemma.[80]

Bahlburg was busy safeguarding the work of the GHM in Ethiopia, for which so many sacrifices had been made.[81] For the leader it was a *Drahtseilakt* (a tight rope act), balancing between different interest groups without falling to either side.

The previous year *Harmshusen* had been attacked and had become a shelter for refugees.[82] It was an ethical principle that the gates would be kept open for the wounded. The GHM had a sign of the Red Cross indicating its availability for support.[83] The compound team was trained in taking in refugees with Sister Eva Bartzsch nursing many heavily wounded.[84] This contributed significantly to saving lives around *Yäkkatit 12*.

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80 Biographical notes about the life and work of Bahlburg are provided on the website hosted by the Bahlburg family at http://www.hermann.bahlburg.name. See Ernst Bauerochse, "Die Hermannsburger Mission in Äthiopien im Zeitalter des Totalitarimus," in *Die Hermannsburger Mission und das "Dritte Reich" zwischen faschistischer Verführung und lutherischer Beharrlichkeit*, ed. Georg Gremels (Münster: Lit, 2005), 129–139; Bauerochse, *Ihr Ziel* and Cord Heinrich Bahlburg, "Memorandum (2006) der Familie Bahlburg zum Konflikt der Hermannsburger Mission mit dem Missionar Hermann Bahlburg," in *Der Weg einer heilsamen Erinnerung. Hermann Bahlburg 1892–1962. Zwischen Missionsdienst und Predigtverbot*, ed. Georg Gremels (Hermannsburg: Ludwig-Harms-Haus, 2008), 28–29. Being at the age of 45 in 1937, Bahlburg, who grew up at Thelsdorf in the Lower Saxony's rural area of Germany, started his career as a blacksmith. In the middle of his theological studies at the Mission Seminary in Hermannsburg, he had been serving as a sergeant in World War I. Bauerochse, *Die Hermannsburger Mission*, 129, describes how the four years of military service shaped his mind. As described in Hermann Bahlburg, *Aufbruch in der Heimat zum Gallaland. Anfänge der Hermannsburger Gallamission. Galla Sennung vun binn'n naoh buuddn* (Hermannsburg: Selbstverlag, 1949), he completed his theological studies and later developed the Home Mission in Germany. After preparations, together with another theologian (D. Wassmann) and two handcraft missionaries (Adolf Müller and Hermann Grabe), the pioneer group arrived in Addis Abäba on 30 December 1927.

81 There are many letters and reports in which Bahlburg wrote about the dangers and threats of a possible end of the mission work in Ethiopia. Wassmann, *Der Durchbruch*, 118–124, describes this reality in more detail.

82 PA-B, Bahlburg, Tatsachenbericht über vier Kampftage auf der deutschen Hermannsburger Mission von Sonnabend, 2. Mai bis Dienstag, 5. Mai 1936 in Adis Abeba (Report of facts of the four days of fighting at the Hermannsburg Mission from Saturday, May 2, until Tuesday, May 5, 1936, in Addis Abäba), May 1936.

83 PA-B, Bahlburg, Tatsachenbericht, 2.

84 A-ELM, Bartzsch-Schomerus, 10.05.1936.

It is also important to note that the Italian intelligence enforced strict censorship.[85] The missionaries were not free to write about the events. There is, however, one report written by missionary Rev. Dietrich Wassmann (1897–1954) in his book published more than a decade later (1948). Wassmann based his memories on the time he returned to Addis Abäba from Germany at the end of January 1938,[86] and on various discussions he had with those who talked with him about the incidents. He wrote:

> Missionary Bahlburg was able to save the lives of about 200 persons, including many priests of the Medani-Alem-Church, who took refuge on our compound Harmshusen, by quickly employing them for soil transport, when the policemen placed their machine-guns to shoot them down. […] Although the natives' mistrust against all white people had increased because of the war experiences and even more after the horrible bloodshed, we as Hermannsburg people did not have to suffer. It was of greatest advantage that brother Bahlburg was successful in saving the lives of hundreds during the turmoil. Numerous Abyssinian priests with trembling knees experienced themselves how this was only possible at one's own risk with the utmost determination and intrepidity.[87]

85 A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 31.05.1937, 3; Lass-Westphal, "Protestant Missions," 95: "Censorship of their letters [of the Swedish missionaries] had proved anti-Italian activity." On the strict censorship, see also: Campbell, *The Addis Ababa Massacre*, 104, who is quoting Sáska László (aka L. Sava) in Balázs, *Fascist Italian Brutality*.

86 Wassmann, *Der Durchbruch*, 11.

87 Wassmann, *Der Durchbruch*, 4–5, 9. This is confirmed by Winfried Wickert, *Männer und Zeiten*, 275: "Even many Abessinians were looking for and found protection on Harmshusen, and they did not forget what Bahlburg did for them." Wickert must have been informed about Ethiopian witnesses about their rescue, including the report of Bishop Hanns Lilje, who met an Ethiopian orthodox priest during one of his ecumenical meetings in England, who told him that he was one of the priests that Bahlburg saved in 1937. This narrative has also been kept and transmitted by Bahlburg's family, in PA-B, Freytag nee Bahlburg-Behrends, Email, 27.10.2008. Among the refugees who had been taken in was a group of priests. This is a significant detail in Wassmann's account. The Bahlburg family narrates that Bahlburg saw a group of about a dozen orthodox priests fleeing on *Harmshusen*. A new sport- and playground was under construction, so he gave the refugees tools. He stepped forcefully in front of the persecutors of carabinieri and 'blackshirts' and declared that the priests were workers he hired. No bullet was shot, and the priests were saved. Bahlburg may also have argued with the friendship between the Italians and the Germans. The family further heard that during an ecumenical meeting in England, Bishop Hanns Lilje from the *Landeskirche Hannovers* had been approached by an Ethiopian orthodox priest who told him, "I am one of the priests whose lives have been saved by Missionary Hermann Bahlburg back then in Addis Abäba." See PA-B, E. Freytag

Wassmann in 1948 may have seized the opportunity to show that even though the GHM was allied with the Italians, it was nevertheless more concerned and allied with the Ethiopians. It was not pro-Italian against the Ethiopians, but pro-Ethiopian while keeping diplomatic relations of an official 'friendship' with the Italian regime for the sake of the continuation of the mission work. In order not to arouse the suspicions of the censors, the reports of Bahlburg and Rathje do not say much regarding the lifesaving activities. However, an indirect reading method or inferential process draws conclusions about their saving activities. Decoding these hidden intimations must be done cautiously. Bahlburg wrote that on Friday afternoon he went to 'the workers' to calm them down saying that he "[…] told them that they had nothing to fear against the Italians."[88] Bahlburg indirectly said here that he would protect them. Rathje in *My Imprisonment*, written on 13 April 1937 to Vice-Consul Richter, wrote about his second interrogation (6 April 1937), especially his reply to the question as to why he ordered the gate to be closed. "They should have kept the gates closed because we were not able to take all people in [*sic*!] and protect them."[89] Indirectly understood, this meant that they had taken in and protected a significant number of people already. These were so many that they were not able to take in more. This was the reason why the gates should have been closed.[90] This is a form of resistance because it counteracts the fascist plan of the *Vendetta*, intended to kill those Ethiopians that had been protected by the GHM.

4 Some Important Aspects of Being Together in Resistance

The policy of non-political engagement and having a social responsibility for the 'extended spiritual family' are two dimensions of the involvement of the GHM in resistance activities.

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nee Bahlburg-Behrends, Email, 27.10.2018; ibid., L. Duschat nee Bahlburg, Notes telephone discussion, 25.12.2012.

88 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Bahlburg-Richter, 06.04.1937 (Bahlburg-Olivieri).

89 PA-AA, GG 40, Nr. 068, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937 (*My Imprisonment*).

90 In an interview: Jürgen Klein, *Interview, Addis Abäba 2018* (not published), Mahlet Gäbrä-Ṣadəq, daughter of GHM driver Gäbrä Ṣadəq Wäldä Mika'el (ca. 1888–1963), reported that her mother Askale Dadi told her that refugees were streaming into *Harmshusen*, that the women and children were taken into the *Unterstand*, called *waša* (cave). When the situation calmed down, they silently went out through the gates on the western side toward the orthodox church.

4.1 *The Policy of Non-political Engagement*

The principle of the GHM not to engage in politics but to focus only on wholistic evangelical work, based on the separation between church and state, and the obedience to God-given rule had all been put to the test around *Yäkkatit 12*.[91]

Both Bahlburg and Rathje highlighted the importance of not being allowed to get involved in political affairs. This was one of the basic principles of the Hermannsburg Mission, as taught by the founding father, Ludwig Harms.[92]

Bahlburg and Rathje both refer to Romans 13 of the New Testament in mentioning this.[93] However, they were struggling to keep things in balance while having almost daily contacts with various interest groups, some of whom were politically-inclined such as the offices of the AOI, the German Consulate and the local NSDAP (*Nationale Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) group in Addis Abäba. In the emergency case, when the question was whether to help the Ethiopians in need or support the Italians who were persecuting them, the missionaries felt obliged to apply the 'higher principle', namely loving God and 'the next.'

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91 This was an ideal of high standards that must be seen critically in the light of the dilemma of a contextual reality, in which engagement with local people and relations with governmental offices often made it difficult to remain neutral. See the quotation at the beginning for this dilemma.

92 Hartwig Harms, *Concerned for the Unreached. Life and work of Louis Harms, founder of the Hermannsburg Mission* (Addis Ababa: Mekane Yesus Seminary, 1999); Jobst Reller, *Heidepastor Ludwig Harms. Gründer der Hermannsburger Mission* (Holzgerlingen: Hänssler, 2008).

93 PA-AA, Bahlburg-Richter, 06.04.1937: "My coworker, Herr Hinrich Rathje, and myself are presenting us to the Ufficio di giustizia militare as upright Germans and Christians, who so far and lifelong have been unsuspected and unblemished in domestic and foreign politics. As such, for about 80 years, our Hermannsburg Mission Society proved to be unsuspected and unblemished in domestic and foreign politics, and together with our homeland church seconded us on this compound in Ethiopia. In these institutions, in the spiritual ministry and office every kind of engagement in domestic and foreign politics is forbidden for us." PA-AA, Rathje-Richter, 13.04.1937: "Do you really believe that I did something against Italy? It is a principle of our German Hermannsburg Mission that we never engage politically. No, the contrary is the case. In our prayers on Sundays we also pray for you, and to our people we say that God said according to Romans 13: 'Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established'." See further: PA-AA, Bahlburg-Strohm, 20.10.1936; and A-ELM, Bahlburg-Schomerus, 31.05.1937: "It is therefore principally not difficult for us, being His servants in His work, to obey to the authority, which has power over us, but not all the power—that always remains reserved for Christ." Bahlburg refers to the supremacy of God and Christ in relation to other powers.

The Lutheran doctrine, separating church and state, stood in contrast to Səbḥatu's conviction based on the symbiosis of faith and nation. He came from a tradition of 'Protestantism within the Ethiopian orthodox identity', a Bible movement that his father, *Qes* Ṭərunäh Dästa, had taught him based upon a centuries-old tradition, which had its roots in the efforts of the Lutheran Peter Heyling in the 17th century,[94] and was taken up by *Aläqa* Tayyä Gäbrä Maryam, *Käntiba* Gäbru Dästa and *Qes* Badəmma. Despite this, he kept his orthodox patriotic or nationalist identity.[95] This mixture of being Ethiopian-orthodox in his protestantism (and *vice versa*), combined with patriotism, formed the backbone of Səbḥatu's conviction and engagement.

4.2 *The Principle of Being a 'Spiritual Family'* (*Social Responsibility*)

A system of priorities or preference groups may help to briefly describe the invisible structure that steadied the missionaries from within.

The love of God is the nucleus around which the 'spiritual family' of *Harmshusen* forms the first-priority group of people.[96] The second-priority group means those to whom the love to others in the mission is directed, namely the neighbors, the priests, and all those in need. This group can also be called 'extended spiritual family.' The third priority-group is the outer group with representatives of the government and others, who are not as important as the first and second group. The preference for the third (outer) group may be abandoned when the first or second (inner) group must be given priority. In con-

94 Otto Meinardus, "Heyling, Peter," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 27–28; Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 34–38, 409–410; Manfred Kropp, "Ein äthiopischer Text zu Peter Heyling. Ein bisher unbeachtetes Fragment einer Chronik des Fāsiladas," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund, 26–29 April 1982*, ed. Sven Rubenson (Addis Abeba: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1984), 243–256.

95 Ezra Gebremedhin, "Tayyä Gäbrä Maryam," in *EAe* 4 (2010), 880–881; Arén, *Envoys*, 19–58.

96 While navigating between groups with various interests, Bahlburg received orientation and orders from the home mission leadership in Hermannsburg. But he was also entrusted with some degree of local decision-making powers. Harms chose John 17:3 as the guiding motto of the Hermannsburg Mission. He believed that Christians cannot condone seeing others not taking part in the experience of God's love and love to one another through Christ. The love and compassion the mission staff expressed toward the Ethiopians stood next to the centre of serving God. This was the Christian principle of loving God (*Gottesliebe*) and loving the others or neighbours (*Nächstenliebe*) as images of Him. While the spiritual father was God, on *Harmshusen* the physical was Rev. Bahlburg, representing the mission founder Harms. For this understanding of roles, see: Harms, *Concerned*, 56–58. In this understanding, Səbḥatu and others were members of the 'spiritual family.' The argument against the portrait of Bahlburg in Campbell, *The Plot*, focuses on these family aspects, and on the suppression of central spiritual aspects, when accusing him of having betrayed Səbḥatu.

junction with this, the law of obedience to the government, based on Romans 13, and the principle of non-political engagement are superseded by the law of loving God and loving others, because they are the highest commandments. That was the case when Bahlburg, standing between the two priority groups, was protecting Ethiopian lives on the days of the massacre against the Italian system. However, later he had to write to the Italian General Olivieri, a representative of the third-priority group, about what happened on those days. To balance the diplomatic relations with this interest group, a different language was required to avoid any suspicion of supporting the Ethiopian people against the Italian system. This rather invisible structure and principle guided the GHM staff when they protected the Ethiopians.

5 Conclusion

Methods for the reconstruction of history must take seriously into account that oral transmission of (constructed) information needs to be double and triple cross-checked with all available written sources. Gaps resulting from a lack of information about historical events should not be filled in with private assumptions or allegations that could harm someone like Hermann Bahlburg (and his family) in retrospect as has been identified in Campbell's book *The Plot*.

Resisting together in view of the GHM first meant living together on the same compound. Having employed Səbḥatu, and having allowed Mogäs to be with him, led to unintended passive co-participation in resistance.

However, it is misleading to use the expression "Hermannsburg Mission Group" as a core resistance element, as claimed by Campbell. The missionaries were not part of those secret meetings, and if they would have known about them, they would have prevented them, based on their principles that they still adhered to at that time, namely the obedience to the government and not engaging in political activities.

Secondly, being together in resistance meant being together in confronting convictions. Both Səbḥatu and the missionaries had different understandings regarding the relationship between religion and politics or church and state. Ecumenical dialogue in global interconnectedness encourages clarification of different theological concepts, both in Ethiopia and in Germany, and between orthodox and protestant convictions. Səbḥatu was not able to cross the line from passive to active resistance. Based on this he eventually saved the GHM and the spiritual family, whereas it was not possible for the missionaries to save his life. He was struggling with his concept of faith and nationalism, keeping

parts of the Ethiopian orthodox identity as a protestant Christian. For his convictions he became a martyr, worthy to be remembered for his faith.

Being together in resistance finally meant to help the needy in cases of emergency. It means to be a spiritual family that cares for the extended family, based on the commandment to love others, and ruling out secondary or tertiary priorities, if necessary. The spirit of this kind of family was recalled by Taddäsä Ṭərunäh, the younger brother of Səbḥatu, when he and Cord Bahlburg, the youngest son of Hermann Bahlburg, met in 2014. Looking back with sadness and good memories, almost 90 years old, he said: "We are still a family."[97] Global interconnectedness in this sense creates a bond that lasts across space and time, and beyond *Yäkkatit 12*. Recently Cord Bahlburg was awarded the honorary membership of the Association of Ethiopian Patriots in commemoration of the life-saving activities of his father. This is yet another example of transnational interconnectedness.

Generally, there may be situations that lead to resistance following the demand to abandon a principle that is believed to be an essential one, like obedience to the government, by a more human and divine principle, born out of the commandment of love. The outcome of such resistance may be a sacrifice. However, it has the potential to overcome oppression, leading to more freedom.

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97 Jürgen Klein, *Interview, Addis Abäba 2014* (not published). During the interview he said: "We are a family. Even though Hermann Bahlburg and Hinrich Rathje are dead, it is as if they were alive. We were and we are a family. After all, we are still a family."

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CHAPTER 10

Addis Abäba as Place of Ecumenical Dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches

Andrei Macar

1 Introduction

Addis Abäba has been an important place for ecumenical dialogue. It has been the forum for many discussions and ecumenical encounters not just in the last century, but to this day. Among these encounters were the meeting of the Central Committee of World Council of Churches (WCC) from 1971,[1] the assembly of the Christian Students Associations from 1973,[2] and the ninth meeting of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox churches from 2012,[3] to name just a few. Beside these meetings, four others took place in Addis Abäba from 1965 to 1976, which dealt with the dialogue between Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches. It is not difficult to observe that most of these dialogue meetings took place around the 1970s, and therefore it is justified to ask what qualified the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church to be the host for such events at the time.

First of all, one has to bear in mind that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church became autocephalous in 1959, just before this prolific time for ecumenical dialogue. The autocephaly was achieved mainly through the contribution of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase I (1930–1974), who was the leader of the Ethiopian efforts near the Coptic Church in Egypt for achieving this desideratum. His intention was to gain control over the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which led some

1 See Emmanuel Lanne, "Le Comité central du Conseil oecuménique, Addis-Abéba, 10–21 janvier 1971," *Irénikon* 44, no. 1 (1971): 39–54; M.M. Thomas, "Report of the Executive Committee by the Chairman," *The Ecumenical Review* 23, no. 2 (1971): 89–104.

2 See "Les étudiants orthodoxes à l'Assemblée Générale de la F.U.A.C.E. à Addis-Abeba," *Episkepsis* 71, no. 4 (1973): 8–11.

3 For a short report on this dialogue meeting, see: "International Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches Report, Ninth Meeting, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 17 to 21, 2012," *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, accessed 12.05.2021. URL: http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-orientale/chiese-ortodosse-orientali/commissione-mista-internazionale-per-il-dialogo-teologico-tra-la/rapporti/testo-in-inglese5.html.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004505254_011

scholars to affirm that "freed from its dependence on the Coptic Church, it immediately came under the tutelage of the monarchy."[4] However, the fact that the emperor supported the emancipation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its openness to ecumenism should not be understood as exclusively determined by his political and diplomatic interests. It might be true that these efforts could have strengthened his internal control and made the country more visible at an international level, but one cannot say that all this was done unrelated to the emperor's attachment to Christian values in general, and to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in particular. This attachment is clear from the Ethiopian constitution of 1955, which defined the emperor as "defender of Orthodox faith."[5] Moreover, Ḫaylä Śəllase's openness and interest in ecumenical dialogue, especially with the Eastern Orthodox church family, is shown by the fact that he supported cultivated and foresighted clerics, such as Basəlyos (1883–1970)[6] and Tewoflos (1909–1979)[7] to become leaders of the ETOC. In addition, he had for a while Paul Verghese as personal counsellor,[8] one of

4 Stéphane Ancel and Éloi Ficquet, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and the Challenges of Modernity," in *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia. Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi*, ed. Gérard Prunier and Éloi Ficquet (London: Hurst, 2015), 74.

5 Karl Pinggéra, "Die Äthiopisch-Orthodoxe Kirche und die Eritreisch-Orthodoxe Kirche," in *Die altorientalischen Kirchen. Glaube und Geschichte*, ed. Christian Lange and Karl Pinggéra (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010), 49.

6 *Abunä* Basəlyos was the first Ethiopian metropolitan of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in history (since 1951), and he also became its first patriarch in June 1956. Before this, he was superior of the Ethiopian monastery in Jerusalem. He joined Ḫaylä Śəllase in Sudan during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia, and after the defeat of the Italians was de facto the leader of the church and the most important advisor of the emperor in religious matters. See Bairu Tafla, "Basəlyos," in *EAe* 1 (2003): 495–496.

7 *Abunä* Tewoflos was the second patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He was elected on 9 May 1971 (after the death of Patriarch Basəlyos in October 1970, he was a *locum tenens* of the patriarchal throne up to the official election). He is considered a reformer of the church, because he modernized the administration, the theological education system and he introduced the first modern church constitution. As a delegate of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, *Abunä* Tewoflos attended several ecumenical meetings of the WCC: in 1948 (Amsterdam), 1955 (England), 1971 (Ethiopia), and 1975 (Kenya). Furthermore, he encouraged the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox churches. After the communist revolution in 1974, *Abunä* Tewoflos was arrested, because of his opposition to the Derg Regime. He was executed in 1979. See Dirshaye Menberu, "Tewoflos," in *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, ed. Jonathan Bonk et al., accessed 29.01.2019. URL: https://dacb.org/stories/ethiopia/tewoflos2/; Mersha Alehegne, "Tewoflos," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 938–939.

8 Lukas Pieper, "Paulos Mar Gregorios (1922–1996). Indische Orthodoxie im 'Zeitalter der Ökumene'," in *Profile gelebter Theologie im Orient. Sidney Harrison Griffith zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Martin Tamcke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), 222.

the leading personalities of the official and unofficial dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches.

It can therefore be assumed that the openness of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to ecumenical dialogue in the 1960s and 1970s was determined not only by the political and diplomatic interests of Ḫaylä Śəllase, but also by his obvious concerns for the inter-Christian dialogue. Another essential element was the fact that clerics who were open for dialogue were elected patriarchs of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and sought to affirm it as an autocephalous church both in the family of Oriental churches and in the rest of the Christian world. They have made the church turn from one for whom "the relations with other Churches have never been a particular characteristic,"[9] as Paul Verghese described it, to one who seeks and supports ecumenical dialogue.[10] The first steps in this direction were made in Amsterdam in 1948, when the Ethiopian Orthodox Church became a founding member of WCC, and ten years later in Ibadan (Nigeria), when it founded the All Africa Council of Churches together with other churches.[11] In the years that followed, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church increased its contacts, especially with the Eastern Orthodox churches and with the Roman Catholic Church, through delegation exchanges with the Churches of Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Russia and Yugoslavia, and also through the meeting between Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase and Pope Paul VI in 1970.[12]

The most substantial relations of this period, however, were maintained with the Eastern churches and impelled by the theological dialogue between

9 Paul Verghese, "Beziehung zu anderen Kirchen und ausländischen Missionen in Äthiopien," in *Koptisches Christentum. Die orthodoxen Kirchen Ägyptens und Äthiopiens*, ed. Paul Verghese, trans. Ingrid Jonas (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1973), 200.

10 Concerning the ecumenical relations of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, see: Verghese, "Beziehung," 200–207; Owen Lambert, "Ecumenism in Ethiopia," *African Ecclesiastical Review* 21 (1979): 172–179; Stéphane Ancel, Giulia Bonacci and Joachim Persoon, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church," in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lucian Leustean (New York: Routledge, 2014), 508–511; Ayalkibet Berhanu, "Ecumenical Dialogue in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church," in *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism. Resources for Theological Education*, ed. Pantelis Kalaitzidis et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2014), 564–575; Stanislau Paulau, "Beyond Words. Practical Dialogue between the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church Family," in *The Dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches*, ed. Christine Chaillot (Volos: Volos Academy Publications, 2016), 415–422.

11 Kai Merten, *Das äthiopisch-orthodoxe Christentum. Ein Versuch zu verstehen* (Berlin: Lit, 2012), 302–303.

12 Verghese, "Beziehung," 207.

the two church families[13] which occasioned several meetings in Addis Abäba. The first part of the present study will deal with these, whereupon I will try to show how the Eastern Orthodox side responded to the theological agreements from Addis Abäba in the second part.

2 Theological Consultations in Addis Abäba Relevant for the Dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches

The first of these theological consultations took place in Addis Abäba from 15 to 21 January 1965, being convened at a time that was convenient for dialogue in both church families. It should be mentioned that the Chalcedonians were very open towards the Oriental Orthodox churches at the First Pan-Orthodox Conference in Rhodes in 1961,[14] where the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and other Non-Chalcedonian churches had sent their representatives. Moreover, important debates had just taken place between Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians at the first meeting of the unofficial dialogue, which was held in Aarhus in 1964.[15] The idea of organizing a theological conference in Addis

13 The dialogue began with four unofficial dialogue sessions organized in Aarhus (1964), Bristol (1967), Geneva (1970) and Addis Abäba (1971). The representatives of the two church families debated about Christology, the lifting of anathemas, and the recognition of saints. The official dialogue started in 1985 with a meeting in Chambésy, where the delegations evaluated the unofficial consultation and discussed the methodology of future meetings. Three other dialogue sessions followed: one in the Egyptian monastery Anba Bishoy (1989), and two in Chambésy (1990, 1993). The delegations adopted two agreed statements which expressed the identity of faith between the two church families. Furthermore, the statements requested the mutual lifting of anathemas and the restoration of the full communion. The two delegations have left the churches to decide when this step will be taken, but so far this has not happened. See Ovidiu Ioan and George Martzelos, "Eastern Orthodox—Oriental Orthodox Dialogue. A Historical and Theological Survey," in *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism. Resources for Theological Education*, ed. Pantelis Kalaitzidis et al. (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2014), 508–535.

14 Regarding the Oriental Orthodox churches, the conference recommended the study of the means for unity, the exchange of students and professors, the organization of theological consultations, as well as the study of history, doctrine, and worship. 13 representatives of the Non-Chalcedonian churches were invited to the conference and participated as observers. See Ioannis Karmiris, "Relations between the Orthodox and the Non-Chalcedonian churches and the beginning of the preparatory Dialogue between them," *Abba Salama* 1 (1970): 139.

15 The meeting took place from 11–15 August 1964 and had as a topic the Christological difference between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox churches. For the papers and minutes of the consultation, see: *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 10, no. 2 (1964): 7–160.

Abäba came from the emperor of Ethiopia, Ḫaylä Śəllase,[16] who declared himself an advocate of the dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodoxy by saying in a press conference that

> one of the major desire of my life is to gather at the same table the heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, divided from the vigorous branch of Orthodoxy due to the rejection of the Synod of Chalcedon, and also the heads of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, who remained faithful to the next four Ecumenical Synods.[17]

The emperor therefore invited both the heads of the Oriental Orthodox and those of the Eastern Orthodox churches to the conference in Addis Abäba. However, the latter declined the invitation[18] and planned to send just their representatives, but shortly before they left for the consultation the organizers announced its restriction to the Oriental Orthodox churches only.[19] One reason for this could be the fact that the non-Chalcedonians wished to be at liberty to discuss their agenda as a communion of churches, as Kenneth F. Yossa noticed.[20] Another reason could be that the Orientals thought that without the Eastern leaders the conference would no longer have the scope they had originally desired, which is why they restricted it to their own church family. But despite this, the assembly from Addis Abäba went down in history as the first meeting of the heads of the Oriental Orthodox churches at a common theological conference, after 15 centuries.[21]

The consultation started with discussions about internal matters of the Oriental churches such as the attitude towards the challenges of the modern

16 Friedrich Heyer, *Die Kirche Äthiopiens. Eine Bestandaufnahme* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 283–284.

17 Marius Florescu, *Etapele unui dialog uitat. Spre comuniunea sacramentală deplină dintre Biserica Ortodoxă și Bisericile Ortodoxe Orientale* (Timișoara: Astra Museum, 2007), 27, fn. 25.

18 Ioannis Karmiris mentioned as a possible reason for this refusal the lack of time for the preparation. See Karmiris, "Relations," 144.

19 Ibid.

20 Kenneth Yossa, *Common Heritage, Divided Communion. The Declines and Advances of Inter-Orthodox Relations from Chalcedon to Chambésy* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2009), 101.

21 Heyer, *Die Kirche Äthiopiens*, 283. The participants were Patriarch Cyril VI of the Coptic Church, Patriarch Ignatius Jacob III of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Catholicos Vasken I of Armenia, Catholicos Koren I of Cilicia, Archbishop Tewoflos of Harar (representing Patriarch Basəlyos of Ethiopia, who was ill), and Catholicos Baselios Augen I of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Each church also invited 4–5 clerics and theologians. See Karmiris, "Relations," 144–145.

world, the pastoral care of young people and family, the theological education and church administration. Afterwards, the participants discussed their relations with other churches and at the end issued a statement regarding the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and the other member churches of the WCC.[22] In this statement, they declared that the dialogue with the Eastern Orthodoxy was the first step to be taken by their churches towards Christian unity, given the doctrinal similarities and the spiritual kinship between both families.[23] Consequently, the conference decided to initiate

> a fresh study of the Christological doctrine in its historical setting [...] taking into account the earlier studies on this subject as well as the informal consultations held in connection with the meetings of the World Council of Churches. Meanwhile, we express our agreement that our church could seek closer relationship and cooperate with the Eastern Orthodox Churches in practical affairs.[24]

These decisions stimulated the interest in the dialogue and were very much welcomed by the Eastern Orthodoxy. A positive reaction to this came only a few months later through the Encyclical Letter issued by the Ecumenical Patriarchate on 9 June 1965, which mentions that the official dialogue between the two church families should start immediately.[25] Unfortunately, the initiation of an official dialogue was not possible in the years that followed, but the availability for dialogue shown in the middle of the 1960s led to three other unofficial consultations held in Bristol (1967), Geneva (1970) and Addis Abäba (1971).

The meeting held in Addis Abäba in 1971 was the fourth and the last unofficial theological consultation between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.[26] It was convened for 22 to 23 January, taking advantage of a meeting of

22 For the papers and decisions of the conference, see: *The Oriental Orthodox Churches. Addis Ababa Conference, January 1965* (Addis Ababa, 1965); "Decisions of the Conference of the Heads of United Orthodox Churches. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 15–21, 1965," *The Ecumenical Review* 17, no. 2 (1965): 178–189.

23 Ibid., 187.

24 Ibid.

25 Georgios Martzelos, "Der Theologische Dialog der Orthodoxen Katholischen Kirche mit den Nicht-Chalkedonensischen Kirchen des Ostens. Chronik, Auswertung, Perspektiven," in *Die Orthodoxe Kirche. Eine Standortbestimmung an der Jahrtausendwende. Festgabe für Prof. Dr. Dr. Anastasios Kallis*, ed. Evmenios von Lefka, Athanasios Basdekis and Nikolaus Thon (Frankfurt am Main: Lembeck, 1999), 179.

26 For the papers and minutes of the consultation, see: "Addis Ababa Consultation, January 22 and 23, 1971," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 16, no. 1–2 (1971): 211–259.

the Central Committee of the WCC organized at that time in the Ethiopian capital.[27] This meeting gathered many of the theologians who were already involved in the dialogue between the two Orthodox churches, which made it easier to establish a study group in order to continue the unofficial theological discussions started in Aarhus, Bristol and Geneva. Furthermore, the idea of such a meeting was very much supported by Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase and by the acting Ethiopian Patriarch Tewoflos, who have provided suitable conditions for it.[28] There are a few details worth mentioning: the fourth unofficial consultation was the shortest unofficial dialog meeting, the first on the territory of an Oriental Orthodox Church, the only one in a country whose population was mostly Oriental Orthodox, and the only big meeting outside Europe.[29]

The consultation was presided over by the Greek Professor Nikos Nissiotis and by the Indian Fr. Paul Verghese, who announced from the beginning that it was not going to be like the previous three meetings, because of its late convocation. Accordingly, just two papers were presented at this meeting, which addressed the question of lifting the anathemas and the recognition of saints, as requested by the organizers.[30] The first paper was that of Fr. Vilakuvelil C. Samuel, entitled *Condemnation of Teachers and Acclamation of Saints in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches*, while the second was read by Fr. Vitaly Borovoy with the title *Recognition of Saints and the Problems of Anathemas. A Summary of the Views of N. Berdyaev, S. Bulgakov and A.V. Kartashev*. The two papers were then discussed by 30 theologians who attended the consultation, whereupon they wrote the summary of their conclusions. As was likely to be expected, the Ethiopian Orthodox delegation to this event was the most numerous, comprising nine members.[31] They made important contributions especially during the first and third dialogue sessions (of five in total), showing willingness and enthusiasm and raising essential questions about the issue of lifting anathemas.[32]

After presenting and discussing the papers, the members of both traditions agreed that in order to reach a union, the lifting of anathemas was an essential step, which required the unity in faith. But the lifting of anathemas against certain persons who were regarded as saints by the other tradition, should

27 For some literature about it, see fn. 1.

28 "Addis Ababa Consultation," 215, 234.

29 Ibid., 215; Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 106.

30 "Addis Ababa Consultation," 215–216.

31 For the list of participants, see: ibid., 214.

32 I have in mind especially the questions raised by Mikrä Śəllase Gäbrä Amanu'el and Abäbaw Yəggəzaw. For the minutes of the consultation, see fn. 26.

not imply their recognition as saints in the church where they were previously anathematized. As an argument, the participants referred to the fact that autocephalous churches did not have identical liturgical calendars and lists of saints. For them, it was very clear that the church had the authority to lift anathemas when needed, this being an act which is not to be done exclusively by an Ecumenical Synod, and which does not compromise the infallibility of the church. The study group also agreed that the lifting of anathemas is a process that should be prepared by the churches through study of the teachings of the anathematized ones, of the circumstances under which they were anathematized, as well as of the ways in which the churches lifted anathemas in the past. Many of the participants considered that the churches should not lift anathemas formally, in a ceremony, but rather drop them quietly and announce at the time of union that the anathemas had been lifted. The consultation also recommended the elimination of the condemnations from the liturgical texts and hymns and the actualization of the theological manuals and catechetical materials. Finally, it was agreed that a deeper study of the question *What is a saint* was needed, and both sides expressed the hope that the work done at the four informal consultations would be continued by the churches through an official dialogue.[33]

A few months after the unofficial theological consultation between Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches in Addis Abäba, the Ethiopian capital was again the main location of discussions concerning the dialogue of the two church families. From 18 to 28 August 1971, the Inter-Orthodox Theological Commission for the Dialogue with the Non-Chalcedonian churches gathered there for the first time since its formation.[34] This commission was appointed by the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Conference (Chambésy, 1968) in order to prepare the dialogue with the Oriental churches by drawing up lists of the questions which needed to be answered on the way to unity.[35] The meeting was convened with the consent of the Eastern Orthodox autocephalous churches by the Ecumeni-

33 "Addis Ababa Consultation," 211–213.

34 At the beginning, the meeting was set by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the first ten days of January 1971 in Alexandria, but after some months the location was moved to Addis Abäba. Finally, another change occurred and the date of the meeting was moved from January to August 1971. See "Contacts des orthodoxes avec les Églises non-chalcédoniennes," *Episkepsis* 12, no. 1 (1970): 5; "La première rencontre de la Commission interorthodoxe de dialogue avec les non-chalcédonniens à Addis-Abeba," *Episkepsis* 19, no. 1 (1970): 4; "La question ecclésiologique au coeur du probleme de l'union des Églises non-chalcédoniennes avec l'Église Orthodoxe," *Episkepsis* 36, no. 2 (1971): 3.

35 Damaskinos, Metropolitan of Switzerland, "The Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox Churches," in *Towards Unity. The Theological Dialogue*

cal Patriarch Athenagoras, who chose Addis Abäba as a location based on the availability shown once again by Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase and Patriarch Tewoflos of Ethiopia.[36]

The consultation was attended by 17 members[37] and led by the Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myra as president and by the Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum as secretary. In the opening session, the participants listened to the message of the emperor read by the Minister of the Imperial Court, and to the message of the Ethiopian patriarch, who attended the meeting during the opening day. Afterwards, short messages sent by all other heads of the Oriental Orthodox churches,[38] except the patriarch of the Coptic Church,[39] were read as well as words of welcome of the Orthodox churches represented at the conference.[40] The opening session ended with the paper of Metropolitan Methodios about the aspects on which the union of the two church families depends.[41] During the next dialogue sessions three other papers were analyzed and discussed, one written by Professor Ioannis Karmiris about the Christology of the two churches, another by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae concerning Christological issues and the lifting of anathemas, and the last one by the Romanian Bishop

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between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, ed. Christine Chaillot and Alexander Belopopsky (Geneva: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 1998), 31.

36 Dumitru Stăniloae, "Perspectivele dialogului cu Bisericile Vechi Orientale. Lucrările comisiei interortodoxe de la Addis Abeba," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 89, no. 9–10 (1971): 978.

37 For the list of participants, see: Panayitis Fouyas, "The First Meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Theological Commission for the Dialogue with the Ancient Oriental Churches," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 53 (1971): 685; Methodios, Metropolitan of Aksum, "The Dialogue between the Orthodox and Oriental Churches. The Conference of the Inter-Orthodox Theological Commission held in Addis Ababa from 18 to 28 August 1971," *Abba Salama* 4 (1973): 12. The metropolitan reports that not all the autocephalous churches were represented there. The delegates of the Churches of Antioch, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia were absent, while the Church of Poland was represented by a bishop of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

38 For the messages of the emperor and of the heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, see: Fouyas, "The First Meeting," 686; Methodios, "The Dialogue," 13–15; Stăniloae, "Perspectivele dialogului," 979–980.

39 The Metropolitan Methodios tried to find the reason for which the Coptic Church did not send a welcome message to this consultation. He supposed that "the reasons for their silence should not be attributed to any reactionary policy of this Church to the problem of Eastern Church unity, although we must not forget, that the Coptic Church is reluctant to enter into full unity with the Orthodox Churches. She gives too much nationalistic spirit to her independence from the Greek Church." See Methodios, "The Dialogue," 13–14.

40 Stăniloae, "Perspectivele dialogului," 980.

41 For this paper, see: Methodios, Metropolitan of Aksum, "Inter-Orthodox Theological Commission for the Dialogue with the Non-Chalcedonian Churches. Addis Ababa, 18–29 August 1971. A Statement by Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum, representative of the Patriarchate of Alexandria," *Abba Salama* 3 (1972): 132–139.

Antim of Târgoviște about the recognition of the four later Ecumenical Councils by the non-Chalcedonians.[42]

After ten sessions of deliberation, the Inter-Orthodox Commission summarized the conclusions in 14 points.[43] They announced that the preparation that had been done until that moment was sufficient and the two church families could advance to an official dialogue.[44] This dialogue should re-examine and evaluate the Christology of both traditions, as well as the question of lifting anathemas and recognition of the Ecumenical Councils. As an addition, the commission proposed that the union of the churches should not imply any absorption of one church by the other in cases where they shared territories. Finally, it was suggested to the Oriental Orthodox churches to arrange the appointment of a commission similar to the Inter-Orthodox one, in order to evaluate the achievements of the dialogue. Besides this, the nomination of a sub-committee with three members was also recommended, which should meet with the sub-committee of the Inter-Orthodox Commission to define the agenda for the first joint meeting of the theological commissions of the two church families.

The non-Chalcedonians accepted the suggestions of the Inter-Orthodox Commission, and convened the Permanent Committee of their churches[45] which appointed the members of the sub-committee. Hence, in 1973, the two sub-committees gathered in Athens for the first time, starting to set up a pro-

42 A summary of these papers in English can be found in the article of the Metropolitan Methodios. See Methodios, "The Dialogue," 23–30. For the complete papers of the Romanian delegation, see: Stăniloae, "Perspectivele dialogului," 982–988.

43 For the decisions of the inter-orthodox commission, see: Methodios, "The Dialogue," 31–33; Stăniloae, "Perspectivele dialogului," 989–991. A summary of the conclusions in French was published in one number of *Episkepsis*. See "Communique de la Commission théologique interorthodoxe pour le dialogue avec les Églises Orientales Anciennes, Addis-Abéba, 18–28 août 1971," Episkepsis 38, no. 2 (1971): 9–10.

44 After Fr. Stăniloae's paper, the participants discussed the validity of the results of the unofficial dialogue meetings. While Ioannis Karmiris considered it appropriate that the Inter-Orthodox Commission confirm these resolutions, others requested that the Commission at least take them into account. The Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum and Ioannis Romanidis disagreed. The former thought the organizers of the four unofficial consultations "overestimated the results of these meetings and they hastened to issue their resolutions, without corresponding them with what the participants represented in their deliberations and with the reality that existed in the Churches in both sides." For I. Romanidis, the resolutions of the unofficial dialogue are not to be regarded as a basis for the official dialogue "because actually they have not reached any Christological agreement." For their opinions, see: Methodios, "The Dialogue," 26–27.

45 In 1972, in Aatchane (Lebanon).

gram for the joint commission;[46] this work continued two years later at a meeting in Addis Abäba from 9 to 13 January 1975.[47] It was the last theological consultation of the two church families in the Ethiopian capital.

It is very surprising that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was able to organize this event, given the fact that Ethiopia was going through the Marxist Revolution of the Derg, which started in 1974. It resulted in an unprecedented situation for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, because it lost state support through the draft constitution of the new regime, which came into effect in August 1974 and proclaimed the separation between church and state.[48] Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase, who always encouraged the organization of ecumenical meetings in Addis Abäba, was removed from office in September 1974, and one day before this incident Patriarch Tewoflos acknowledged the revolution.[49] The new regime was aware of the significant influence the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had in society and tried to control and use the church for its own political interests, despite the proclaimed secularity. For instance, the Derg continuously supported the External Relations Department of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, ensuring that it would defend its actions and policies at an international level during inter-religious conferences and exchanges of ecclesiastical delegations.[50] It was probably for these reasons that the church was allowed to hold the second dialogue meeting of the sub-committees of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches in Addis Abäba in early 1975.

The sub-committees decided that "the time is ripe and the preparatory work has been completed for the Conference of the two Theological Commissions."[51] Consequently, the agenda of the forthcoming conference was finished, and it was agreed that it should be convened in July 1976, even though a host church had not yet been established. As a precondition for choosing the venue it was specified that the place should have a comprehensive library, for consultation should it be needed.[52] Regarding the topics to be discussed, the members chose the Christology of John of Damascus, the Christology of Severus of Antioch,

46 Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 107–108.

47 "Dialogue entre l'Église orthodoxe et les anciennes Églises orientales: réunion des sous-commissions," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 25, no. 1 (1975): 100.

48 Haile Mariam Larebo, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Politics in the Twentieth Century: Part II," *Northeast African Studies* 10, no. 1 (1988): 14.

49 Ancel and Ficquet, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church," 77.

50 Haile Mariam Larebo, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church," 17.

51 Methodios, Metropolitan of Aksum, "The Second Meeting of the Sub-Committees for the Theological Dialogue between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches," *Abba Salama* 7 (1976): 239.

52 "Dialogue entre l'Église orthodoxe," 100.

and issues related to the Ecumenical Councils. For each of these topics the sub-committee asked certain theologians of both church families to prepare and present papers at the Conference. They were commissioned to send the final form of these papers to Metropolitan Methodios of Aksum by the end of December 1975.[53] Finally, the participants decided to communicate the results of the joint sub-committee meetings to the heads of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches for analysis.[54]

But although the sub-committees were very enthusiastic during the assembly in Addis Abäba, and despite the thorough preparation of the first official dialogue meeting, it was not realized in 1976. The two church families had to wait no less than a decade until they gathered for the first time for an official dialogue (1985, Chambésy/Geneva).

3 The Reaction of the Eastern Orthodox Theology to the Agreements from Addis Abäba

Among all the meetings between the two church families organized in Addis Abäba, the one that generated the most interest for the theologians who took part in the dialogue was the 4th unofficial meeting, in January 1971. This is because the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox representatives discussed the issue of lifting anathemas which is of fundamental importance to the unification of the two churches. In the following, I will talk about the way in which the Eastern Orthodox theologians reacted to the theological agreement form January 1971, taking into account, first of all, the period before the official dialogue, afterwards the time of the official dialogue, and, in the end, the years that followed it.

3.1 *Before the Official Dialogue*

The first reaction comes from Fr. D. Stăniloae.[55] He expressed his view in the talk in front of the Inter-Orthodox Theological Commission in August 1971, which I spoke about already, in which he favoured many aspects from the

53 Methodios, "The Second Meeting," 239–240.

54 Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 110.

55 For Stăniloae's contribution to the dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox churches, see: Ciprian Toroczkai, "Toward an Expanded Formula of the Chalcedon Dogmatic Definition? Fr. Dumitru Staniloae's Contribution to the Dialogue with Non-Chalcedonian Churches," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 59, no. 1–4 (2014): 145–160.

agreement.[56] Fr. Stăniloae considered the lifting of anathemas to be an important step for the unity, but conditioned by an identity of faith between the two churches. Apart from the Addis Abäba agreement, he added the necessity for a common Christological definition in order to lift the anathemas.[57] Further, the Romanian theologian asserts that the official statement of cancelation should be preceded by thorough studies on the reasons that led to anathema. They would have the role of preparing the general atmosphere in the churches so that "each side would get the feeling that it did not act contrary to its Fathers who wrote against the other side."[58] Fr. Stăniloae supports the agreement of Addis Abäba in suggesting that the churches could gradually abandon the anathemas until they fade into oblivion, given the interim consensus on the identity of faith reached by the two sides during the unofficial dialogue. This could be done by removing the references by which non-Chalcedonians are condemned from the liturgical books and theological handbooks. At the end of his speech, Fr. Stăniloae says that the elimination of the anathemas should not imply that those who were previously anathematized would now be recognized as saints, as this was "a problem that could be left for the spiritual evolution of the future."[59] The Romanian theologian referred again to the cancelation of anathemas in the debates after the speech. He disagreed with the representative of the Church of Cyprus, who proposed confusingly that only a new Ecumenical Synod could cancel the anathemas of another Synod, and not even that one. Also, he confessed that he was a bit surprised that the anathema on cardinal Humbert and his adepts was cancelled so easily, whereas the anathema on Dioscorus was a more difficult case for some, even after the same faith between the two churches had been established.[60]

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56 Stăniloae's paper was entitled "Considerations on the Results of the 4th Unofficial Consultation between Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Theologians held in Addis Ababa (22–23 January 1971)." This topic was recommended by the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, Geneva. See Stăniloae, "Perspectivele dialogului," 982. For a summary of this paper in English, see fn. 42. Despite its title, the paper does not exclusively address the issues discussed at the meeting in January 1971. The author begins with the exposition of the opinion of the Romanian hierarchs and theologians regarding the dialogue between the two church families, after which it addresses the Christological issue. The proposals on lifting the anathemas are analyzed only in the last third of the paper.

57 Stăniloae, "Perspectivele dialogului," 985.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., 986. Cf. Toroczkai, "Toward an Expanded Formula," 155.

60 Stăniloae, "Perspectivele dialogului," 988–989. Cf. Toroczkai, "Toward an Expanded Formula," 155.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myra had a more critical approach than Stăniloae. In a paper he presented at a conference organized by the Foundation Pro Oriente, in 1979,[61] he says that both church families show great enthusiasm for the lifting of anathemas.[62] He appreciates the fact that the two parties tried to reach a joint decision at the 4th unofficial meeting, but suggests that it lacked a more detailed preparation, by saying "it is not exaggerated to affirm that the discussion in Addis Abäba was an *ad hoc* meeting in fact."[63] Furthermore, Metropolitan Chrysostomos analyses paragraph 4 of the agreement, which states the necessity of an identity of faith for the cancelation of the anathemas. Therefore, he asks the following question: is its lifting the very final purpose of the unity, or is it only a step in our way for the dialogue and unity? He argues that if it were the final purpose, it would not be brought into discussion as long as the dialogue had not been finished. On the other hand, if it were only a step, then it would be a commendable gesture, because it would reflect the wish of the two families for mutual understanding and collaboration, in the same way it happened in the case on anathemas cancelation between Rome and Constantinople.[64] Between these two choices, the metropolitan seems to favour the latter.

Regarding the paragraphs 5 and 6, which analyse the possibility of lifting anathemas of certain Ecumenical Synods, Metropolitan Chrysostomos is rather reserved. He says that the anathemas were not given only "for pastoral and other reasons,"[65] as the participants of the 4th unofficial discussion concluded. He argues that the excommunications of the 4th and 5th centuries were based on dogmatic reasons. Therefore, it seems the anathema was indeed the way the church protected the community against spiritual dangers, so it had a pastoral intention, but these anathemas also suggest that a doctrinal error existed at the anathematized ones. For these reasons, the metropolitan finds that the lifting of anathemas for the Oriental Orthodox churches could not be simply solved by *oikonomia*, as the Addis Abäba agreement stated, and that

61 Metropolitan Chrysostomos was a member of the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and represented it at the conference organized by Pro Oriente in Vienna on 29th of October 1979. In my research I used the French translation of his paper, which was published in the journal *Proche-Orient Chrétien*. See Chrysostome, métropolite de Myre, "Le dialogue entre l'Église orthodoxe et les Églises de l'ancien Orient. Appréciacions et perspectives," *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 30, no. 1–4 (1980): 14–57.

62 Chrysostome, "Le dialogue," 46.

63 Ibid., 48.

64 Ibid., 48–49.

65 Ibid., 49.

is why it should be treated by the Eastern Orthodox more carefully.[66] Lastly, Metropolitan Chrysostomos accepts the suggestions of paragraph 7 on the need for studies concerning the doctrine of the anathematized ones, the circumstances under which they were excommunicated, and the real purpose of their writings, whereupon he agrees with the idea that those from whom the anathema will be raised should not necessarily have to be canonized.[67]

3.2 *During the Official Dialogue*

In the time of the official dialogue, which took place between 1985 and 1993, an Eastern Orthodox reaction regarding the lifting of anathemas and the veneration of saints belonged to Fr. John Meyendorff. In his study *Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians: Last Steps to Unity*, he says that the clarification of this matter seems to be more difficult than the establishment of the identity of faith, because both church families insist on faithfulness to their own tradition.[68] Unlike the 11th paragraph of the agreement of Addis Abäba, which stated that the anathemas can be cancelled before establishing a solution to the question of saints' veneration, Fr. Meyendorff insists that the churches, first of all, have to come to an agreement on this matter. He suggests that this agreement should take into account the fact that "the Church never believed in the infallibility of any human being, not even the saints."[69] He gives the example of St. John Chrysostom, considered to be a heretic and impostor by the Saints Epiphanius of Salamis and Cyril of Alexandria, and also the example of Bishop Peter the Iberian, an adversary of the Chalcedon venerated by the Church of Georgia.[70]

The official dialogue took into account the matter of lifting anathemas for the first time at the 3rd official meeting of the Joint Commission for Dialogue, organized in Chambésy from 23rd to 28th September 1990. There, the representatives of the two churches debated over more documents, among which was also the agreement of the 4th unofficial meeting from Addis Abäba.[71] They adopted afterwards the Second Agreed Statement. The 10th paragraph of this text refers to the lifting of anathemas and strongly reflects the proposals from

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 50–51.

68 John Meyendorff, "Chalcedonians and Non-Chalcedonians: The Last Steps to Unity," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1989): 325.

69 Ibid., 326.

70 Ibid., 325–326.

71 Christine Chaillot and Alexander Belopopsky, ed., *Towards Unity. The Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches* (Geneva: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 1998), 62.

Addis Abäba.[72] Thus, the cancelation of anathemas is considered the ultimate step on the way to unity, and the essential reason for which it can be realized is the conviction that the Fathers and the Synods under the anathema are not heretical. Lastly, the Second Agreed Statement recommends the two church families to lift the anathemas, saying that the way this should be done can be decided by each church on its own.[73]

The Joint Commission for Dialogue developed the methodology for the lifting of anathemas three years later, at the 4th official meeting. It took place in Chambésy, from 1 to 6 November 1993. During the debates, each commission presented a report with proposals for the completion of the agreement of Addis Abäba from 1971 and of the stipulations regarding the cancelation of anathemas from the Second Agreed Statement. One of the suggestions from the Eastern Orthodox theologians was about the solemn concomitant lifting of the anathemas by both Orientals and Easterners reading a document signed by the two sides, to which they could attach some *peace letters* between the leaders of the churches. In these letters, the Oriental Orthodox side should mention, among other things, that the Eastern Orthodox church is fully orthodox, and they should recognize the Synod of Chalcedon and the Ecumenical Synods that followed.[74] The Oriental Orthodox were quite critical of this report, and considered some of its proposals unacceptable. For instance, they argued against the solemn lifting of anathemas by reading a document, and in favour of a general lifting without mentioning the names of the persons reintegrated into the church. In addition, they rejected any stipulations in the document that they would recognize the Synods after Ephesus.[75] But eventually, the representatives of the two churches reached a compromise. They decided that, apart from the agreement of Addis Abäba and the Second Agreed Statement, the procedure of lifting the anathemas would also have to mention that they must be cancelled simultaneously by the leaders of all churches, by signing a document which should include a confession of orthodoxy from both families.[76]

3.3 *After the Official Dialogue*

After the official dialogue, a positive reaction to the results regarding the anathemas came from the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. In a declaration from December 1994, the members of the Holy Synod approved the conclu-

72 Cf. Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 154.
73 Chaillot and Belopopsky, *Towards Unity*, 64.
74 Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 156.
75 Ibid., 157–158, fn. 179.
76 Chaillot and Belopopsky, *Towards Unity*, 68.

sions of the official meetings and mentioned that the anathemas were given in a period characterized "by division, by the absence of a consensus in the formulation of the confession of the faith, and by the absence of fraternal charity."[77] Furthermore, they considered necessary that the Synods of the Eastern churches should reach a consensus regarding the cancelation of anathemas, which should be expressed in a joint statement signed by the church leaders. This text could be read afterwards during a Eucharistic celebration officiated by the Primates of both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.[78]

Soon after, the position of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the results of the discussion referring to the lifting of the anathemas were heavily criticized in a memorandum with eleven accusations, promulgated by the monks of Mount Athos in May 1995.[79] This text suggests that the anathemas pronounced by the Ecumenical Synods are of divine inspiration and therefore, the remark by the Synod of the Romanian Church about "the absence of fraternal charity [could be considered] profound blasphemy against the Holy Spirit."[80] The Athonite position received a thorough reply form the orthodox Bishop Alexander (Golitzin), who saw in it a closed ecclesiology of neo-cyprianic inspiration and recommended to the Church of Greece and to the Athonite monks to think more about the nature of the anathemas and about their relationship to the doctrine.[81]

The monastic community of Mount Athos was not the only one who criticized the results of the dialogue. In a letter sent to the Greek-orthodox Patriarch Ignatius of Antioch (1979–2012)[82] in 1997, Patriarch Diodorus of Jerusalem

77 Ibid., 42.

78 Ibid.

79 "Memorandum of the Sacred Community of Mount Athos Concerning the Dialogue between the Orthodox and Non-Chalcedonian Churches," accessed 24.03.2019. URL: http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/mono_athos.aspx. The content of this text does not reveal how many of the Athonite monasteries supported it. Cf. Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 190, fn. 51.

80 Alexander (Golitzin) of Toledo, "Anathema! Some Historical Perspectives on the Athonite Statement of May, 1995," *St. Nersess Theological Review* 3, no. 1–2 (1998): 107.

81 Ibid., 116–117.

82 The Chalcedonian Patriarch Ignatius IV Hazim of Antioch signed a pastoral protocol with the Syrian Orthodox Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I (1980–2014) in November 1991, as a consequence of the positive results of the official dialogue. In this protocol it is said, among other things, that the believers of one church can attend the liturgy of the other church and receive the Holy Sacraments from its clergy, if no priest of their own church exists in their place. A protocol was also signed by the Greek and the Coptic patriarchs of Alexandria in April 2001, dealing with the sacrament of marriage. Cf. Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 159–166.

(1980–2000) declared himself unsatisfied with the proposals regarding the lifting of anathemas made by the official dialogue. He expressed discontent with the fact that the Oriental Orthodox churches were not obliged to recognize all decisions and canons from Chalcedon and from the Ecumenical Synods that followed.[83]

The agreements on the lifting of anathemas were criticized again, in a conference about ecumenism organized in September 2004 at the *School of Pastoral Theology at The Aristotelian University in Thessaloniki*.[84] The conference decided that the dialogue between Orientals and Easterners at both the official and the unofficial level, did not represent anything except a compromise regarding the faith, and that it was incompatible with the orthodox doctrine.[85] Among the criticized aspects, the conference also mentioned the revision of the liturgical texts recommended in the 10th paragraph of the unofficial meeting in Addis Abäba. This position is, to some degree, in accordance with the position of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, which rejected the documents of the Joint Commission for Dialogue in February 1994.[86]

The Russian Orthodox Church had a more moderate position in the reports from 1994 and 1997. Even though it did not recognized the results of the Official Dialogue, it welcomed the initiative to hold a dialogue with the Non-Chalcedonians and considered that further studies were needed in order to lift the anathemas and reach full communion.[87] At the opposite side, the Orthodox Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria not only declined the results but rejected the very idea of having a dialogue with the Oriental Orthodox churches.[88]

A last important reaction regarding the lifting of anathemas belongs to Fr. John H. Erickson, professor emeritus of the *Saint Vladimir Theological Seminary*. In response to the question *who has the authority of cancelling the anathemas?* he said that from a juridical point of view they could be cancelled only by the same authority that gave them, or by an entity with equal authority. Therefore, only an Ecumenical Synod, or a Great and Holy Synod would ful-

83 John Erickson, "Anathema: An Obstacle to Reunion?," *St. Nersess Theological Review* 3, no. 1–2 (1998): 67–75.

84 The 53 participants of the conference belonged to the Churches of Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Georgia, Canada, Serbia, USA, and Russia. Cf. Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 193, fn. 61.

85 Ibid., 192–194.

86 Marius Florescu, "Recunoașterea acordurilor teologice dintre Biserica Ortodoxă și Bisericile Vechi-Orientale (II)," *Altarul Banatului* 23, no. 1–3 (2012): 111–112.

87 Cf. ibid., 106–109. For the two statements of the Russian Orthodox Church, see: Chaillot and Belopopsky, *Towards Unity*, 43–44.

88 Yossa, *Common Heritage*, 192, fn. 58; Florescu, "Recunoașterea," 112–113.

fil these requirements,[89] which is why the proposal from the 4th paragraph of the agreement of Addis Abäba, where it is stated that the anathemas could be lifted slowly, in a silent way, would not comply with the juridical aspect. As to the infallibility of the ecumenical synods, Fr. Erickson agrees with paragraph 6 from Addis Abäba that the lifting of anathemas does not affect it at all, reasoning that "the infallibility does not imply full and direct divine inspiration for each and every statement made in the course of these councils."[90]

4 Conclusion

One can say that the meetings held in Addis Abäba had a significant role in the dialogue between the Eastern Orthodox and the Oriental Orthodox churches on multiple levels. On the one hand, they stimulated the dialogue by showing availability and interest, as was the case with the meeting of the heads of the Oriental churches in 1965. On the other hand, they brought into question essential theological issues, as happened at the fourth unofficial meeting in January 1971. Finally, they contributed to the creation of necessary structures for the development of the dialogue and to the establishment of its agenda, as was done at the meetings from August 1971 and January 1975. All these achievements would not have been possible without the availability for dialogue shown by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in that time, which was supported by Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase for both political reasons and sincere concern for the dialogue with the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Regarding the theological contribution of the meetings in Addis Abäba, I have shown that the most relevant discussions took place at the fourth unofficial dialogue meeting in January 1971. There the two churches approached the questions of lifting anathemas and of the recognition of saints, which has proven to be the most difficult obstacle on the way to unity. The conclusions of this meeting show that, despite the short duration and the scanty preparation, it succeeded in answering the most important questions concerning that topic. The main argument for this is the fact that the conclusions from the unofficial consultation in Addis Abäba provided the basis on which the official dialogue established the methodology for the Inter-Orthodox rapprochement.

As to the attitude of the Eastern Orthodox theologians towards the agreements on the lifting of anathemas, we saw that the majority agreed with them,

89 Erickson, "Anathema," 70.
90 Ibid., 71.

in spite of some constructive criticism, and some tried to expand them. On the other hand, there were also rejections of the agreements and even of the whole dialogue. Such attitudes have at the basis a closed ecclesiology and blame the Oriental Orthodox churches for the separation. Unfortunately, in the years that followed the last official dialogue meetings, the scepticism towards the dialogue covered a significant part of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches. In the Non-Chalcedonian side, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church surprisingly changed its attitude and proved to be an obstacle to advancing the dialogue. This is evident from a book published by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in 1996, which was prepared by its bishops and theologians and was endorsed by Patriarch *Abunä* Ṗawlos. There it is stated that the Christological Formula of the Chalcedonian Fathers

> was not felt to be the same as that of the Oriental Orthodox Churches [...] and since the anathemas have been observed for about 1500 years by our Holy Fathers as inscribed in our liturgical texts and hymnody, they shall not be lifted [...] To lift the anathemas imposed in the past upon those Chalcedonian Fathers and to accept them as saints would dishonour those Oriental Orthodox Church Fathers who condemned the Chalcedonians.[91]

Such statements totally ignore the results of both the official and unofficial theological dialogue, and contradicts all the efforts for unity made by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for decades. It is reminiscent of the intransigent and unwilling positions of the monastic community of Mount Athos and of the Orthodox Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria, and shares with them a part of the responsibility for the current stagnation of the discussions regarding the lifting of anathemas.

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CHAPTER 11

Dilemma in Relations? A Socio-historical Study of Ethiopian Orthodox Attitudes towards Protestant Christianity

Eunhye Chang

1 Introduction

Where is the root of Christianity in Africa? While other African countries struggled under the colonial yoke, Ethiopia preserved a unique Christianity and its culture. Christianity in Ethiopia dates to the 4th century when the King ʻEzana first adopted Christian faith. Being influenced by various theological orientations, the early Ethiopian Christianity established its own distinctive heritage and tradition. Later, Catholic and Protestant Christianity were introduced. Among these churches of different traditions, the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church, as a state religion, has had a dominant influence over every sphere of Ethiopian society.

The past history of Ethiopia provides that the influence of Catholicism and Protestantism within Ethiopian territory resulted in the conflict with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and consequently in developing a xenophobic attitude in Ethiopian society towards Western forms of Christianity and their missionaries.[1] Catholicism and Protestantism are perceived as "foreign,

1 According to most recent Ethiopian national census of 2007, Ethiopian Christianity includes Orthodox, Protestants, and Catholics.

Year	Total population	Orthodox	Protestant	Catholic	Islam	Traditional religion	Others
2007	73,750,932	32,092,182 (43.5%)	13,661,588 (18.6%)	532,187 (0.7%)	25,037,646 (33.9%)	1,956,647 (2.65%)	470,682 (0.6%)
1984	38,203,682	20,637,362 (54%)	2,094,371 (5.5%)	374,880 (0.9%)	12,569,995 (32.9%)	2,213,665 (5.7%)	249,043 (0.65%)

Protestants radically increased from 5.5% to 18.6% of the total population from 1984 to 2007. Most of this increase seems to have come at the expense of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church,

unfamiliar, and heretical"[2] religions. More recently, it is observed that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has tended to be associated with protection and hesitation in developing the relation with Western forms of Christianity within Ethiopia as well as in International context.

This paper explores the reasons why the Ethiopian Orthodox is reluctant to engage with Western forms of Christianity within Ethiopia as well as in global context. In order to investigate this question, three subsidiary questions are asked as follows. First, what are the major issues that resulted in the conflict between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Western missions? Secondly, what is the Ethiopian Orthodox perception of the Western forms of Christianity, especially Protestant Christianity?[3] Finally, what kind of engagement the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has developed with other churches of different Christian tradition within Ethiopia as well as in global context?

For answering these questions, the Ethiopian Orthodox interaction with Western missions in the past and in current context are reviewed based on the literatures related to history, theology, missiology, and anthropology. Qualitative research method based on thirty-two personal interviews is employed to analyze Orthodox Ethiopians' attitudes towards Western forms of Christianity at the grass roots level.

2 The Ethiopian Orthodox Encounters with Western Christianity: A Historical Outline

2.1 *Encounters with Catholic Missions*

There have been many studies discussing the main causes that contributed to developing the tension between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Western Christianity.[4] When the Portuguese Catholic missions ventured into the coun-

whose share declined from 54.0% to 43.5% in the same time span. It is expected that the growth of Protestants will continue, leading to a deep shift in Ethiopia's religious landscape: Jörg Haustein, *Writing Religious History. The Historiography of Ethiopian Pentecostalism* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 18.

2 Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia. Resistance and Resilience* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 309.

3 In the last decades, it was observed that there has been more conflict between the Orthodox and Protestant churches due to the radical growth of Protestant churches. In order to ask the question about the Orthodox perception for Western Christianity, only Protestants are included for this research.

4 For further discussion, see: Arnold Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 100–101; Donald Crummey, *Priests and Politicians. Protestant and*

try in the 16th century, they came into significant conflict with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Leonardo Cohen writes that "[i]n 1520, the first Portuguese delegation reached Ethiopia, which became a center to a most interesting encounter between religions and cultures."[5] Catholic mission's methods to establish Catholicism as the state religion during 1555–1636 provoked fierce opposition from Ethiopian monks, ultimately leading to a widespread civil war. This resulted in the Jesuits' expulsion from Ethiopia.

To explain the main problems of the clash between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Catholics during 16th and 17th centuries, some scholars indicate the following three points: Catholic missionaries' methods to subordinate the Ethiopian Ecclesiastical hierarchy, Ethiopian Christological doctrine, and Ethiopian religious practices under the authority of the Catholic Church.[6] Many of them focus on mainly discussing the difference between their Christological positions, especially regarding the nature of Christ as the central issue of the conflict between the two parties.[7]

More recently others claim that the conflict between missionaries and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was due to the missionaries' ignorance of the fact that they were actively involved in challenging the Ethiopian Church's "existing political and ecclesiastical powers or religious identity" and "humiliating the ruler of the country" in order to achieve their aims.[8] It was believed by the Ethiopians that missionaries "threatened the Ethiopian nation."[9] Therefore, the

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Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia 1830–1868 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 6; Leonardo Cohen, *The Missionary Strategies of the Jesuits in Ethiopia (1555–1632)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 27; Ayele Teklehaymanot, "The Struggle for the 'Ethiopianization' of the Roman Catholic Tradition," in *The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia. Papers from a Symposium on the Impact of European Missions on Ethiopian Society. Lund University, August 1996*, ed. Getatchew Haile, Aasulv Lande and Samuel Rubenson (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 135–154; Calvin Shenk, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Church: A Study in Indigenization," *Practical Anthropology* 16, no. 3 (1988): 259–278.

5 Cohen, *The Missionary Strategies*, xv.

6 See Jones and Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*; Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*.

7 Stephen J. Strauss, *Perspectives on the Nature of Christ in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: A case study in contextualized theology*. Ph D. diss. (Deerfield, Illinois: Trinity International University. 1997), 1. See also Ethiopian scholars' arguements on the Ethiopian Orthodox Christological position: Aymoro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motovu, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, 1970) Ayele Teklehaymanot, *The Ethiopian Church and its Christological Doctrine* (Addis Ababa: Graphic Printers, 1981).

8 Sven Rubenson, The missionary factor in Ethiopia: consequences of a colonial contest. In *The missionary factor in Ethiopia: Papers from symposium on the impact of European missions on Ethiopian society*, Lund University, August 1996, ed. Getachew Haile, Aasulv Lande, and Samuel Rubenson, 57–70. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 69.

9 Ibid., 70.

incident of Catholic interlude left something in the heart of Ethiopian people, which became one of the factors in the development of very strong antipathies towards Western missions. The sore feelings engraved in the Orthodox Ethiopians is found by calling the Catholics as *Śärä Maryam*, 'enemies of Mary.'[10] This labeling became "a generic tag to categorize all non-Orthodox Christians."[11] The one who turned to Catholicism was also called *kätolikawyan* which became a generic term for "heterodoxy, or even worse, apostasy."[12] Thus, for Ethiopians, the one who joins Catholics in Ethiopian society is assumed to be abandoning the Orthodox faith and his national identity.[13]

2.2 *Encounters with Protestant Missions*

In relationship with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the early Protestant missionaries in Ethiopia avoided confronting the ancient Ethiopian Church, but pursued renewal and reform from and within the Church. However, the mission decree published by the Ethiopian government in 1944 directed all Protestant missionary activities to non-Orthodox areas, which led to winning converts among the Orthodox. These converts became members of Protestant groups with foreign mission affiliations.[14] Western mission agencies and their related churches started growing into many non-Orthodox areas in the southern and western region of Ethiopia.

The growth of Protestant churches was strongly opposed by the Orthodox church leadership, in cooperation with local administrative authorities in the south, who made a protracted effort to curtail the planting of evangelical churches. The Orthodox persecution of Protestant Christians spread out within the country to the extent that Protestant evangelists and local church leaders were imprisoned and beaten. As recently as 2002, the evangelical churches have experienced a martyrdom arising from the Orthodox church leadership.[15]

In order to look down for Protestant Christians, the word *Ṗenṭe* was coined during the Communist regime in the years 1978 and 1979.

> The government, the local leaders and society at large determined then, once and for all to expel anyone found to be Protestant. [...] The gov-

10 Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement*, 25.
11 Ibid. 25.
12 Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change*, 71.
13 Ibid., 71.
14 Tsega Endalew, "Protestant Mission Activities and Persecutions in Bahər Dar, 1968–1994. A Chronicle," in *Ethiopia and the Missions. Historical and Anthropological Insights*, ed. Verena Böll et al. (Münster: Lit, 2005), 210.
15 Balisky, *Wolaitta Evangelists*.

> ernment could not tolerate the Protestant meetings as it suspected they fostered affiliations with the West. Under cover from the government, people rose in mob actions with the notorious slogan 'Down with *Pente*!', where *'Pente'*, a corrupt form of Pentecost, was a derogatory name given to the Protestants. Anti-Protestant propaganda was more pronounced at the local level. Protestantism was considered a foreign religion, opposed to the ancient Orthodox faith.[16]

From the Ethiopian Orthodox perspectives, the missionary activity is often considered as shrinking the power of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The growth of Western Protestant mission agencies and their related churches within the country is seen as a threat to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Getatchew Haile contends that "Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is an embedded nationalism based on culture, religiosity, and identity: religion has become the foundation of patriotism, nationalism and personal identity." To challenge Ethiopian religion is to challenge the makers of Ethiopian patriotism, nationalism, and identity.[17] Thus, Western Protestant missionaries' evangelistic activities within the Ethiopian territories are considered by the idea of sheep-stealing. This created sore feelings within the Orthodox Ethiopians, who believed that missionaries had only come to take away its flock.[18]

In summary, it is reviewed how the Catholic missionaries' activities to abolish the long-established Ethiopian Christian traditions during 1555–1632 and the sudden expansion of Protestant local churches in Ethiopian territory were considered to be a threat to Ethiopia, its church, its culture, and ultimately its identity. As a result, both Catholicism and Protestantism are engraved as negative stereotype of "foreign, unfamiliar, and heretical"[19] religion in the heart of Orthodox Ethiopians. This incurs a xenophobic attitude in Ethiopian society towards Western Christianity, including Protestant and Catholic Christians, and missionaries as well as anything foreign.

16 Tsega Endale, "Protestant Mission Activities," 210.

17 Getatchew Haile, "The Missionary Dream," 3.

18 Taddesse Tamrat, "Evangelizing the Evangelized. The Root Problem between Missions and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church," in Ethiopia and the Missions. Historical and Anthropological Insights, ed. Verena Böll et al. (Münster: Lit, 2005), 30.

19 Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement*, 309.

3 The Ethiopian Orthodox Attitudes towards Protestant Christianity: A Sociological Study

Historical study provides scholars' discussion on the main causes that contributed to developing the Orthodox strong antipathy against foreigners and foreign Christianity. In order to find out the actual Ethiopian Orthodox attitudes towards Western Christianity, especially Protestant Christianity and Protestant Christians at the grassroots level, thirty-two Orthodox young people in Addis Abäba whose ages ranged from 18 to 32 were selected[20] and interviewed.[21]

Table 11.1 illustrates the most frequently used words by which thirty-two Orthodox young adults refer to Protestant Christianity. The list of the words implies the negative images attached to Protestant Christianity.

The most prominent image attributed to Protestant Christianity is identified as the foreign and heretical religion. The report of an eighteen-year-old boy well represents the negative association related to Protestant Christianity as foreigners' religion.

> At home, I do not dare to talk about Protestant Christianity. Since it is regarded as *Färänǧi* [foreigner] religion, I am not allowed to talk about it. In the history of Ethiopia, Orthodox Christianity existed for thousands years, which was the foundation of our society. Protestant Christianity was brought by the whites later by using programs like a project in order to convert Ethiopian people to the Protestant faith. Thus, Protestant Christianity is new religion that *Färänǧi* tries to win over the Orthodox.

The second most prominent perception is related to the Protestant missionary methods using material aid, such as money, funds, wheat, corn, food, *sälbaǧ* (second-hand clothes), various materials, financial support, feeding, and sponsoring, which were all mentioned in the interview narratives. According to a twenty-two-year-old woman's report,

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20 In pursuit of the qualitative research, the population for this research consists of young adults in Addis Abäba who self-identified their Orthodox faith and were affiliated to Orthodox churches in Addis Abäba. Their names are confidentially kept in order to encourage the interviewees to freely express their understandings, thoughts, and experiences without imposing the researcher's own perceptions on the interviewees.

21 By employing the Nvivo 10 software program, the interview narratives were encoded and categorized according to the words that respondents used in describing their impression of Protestant Christianity. The most prominent words were analyzed to provide the images attached to Protestant Christianity and Protestant Christians.

TABLE 11.1 Negative attributions attached to Protestant Christianity

Protestant Christianity as	Number of respondents	Number of references
the religion of *Färänǧi* (Foreigner), the Whites, missionaries	29	69
the religion of deceiving / lying people in missionary intention	20	23
the religion using material aid in missionary methods	15	23
enemy of the Orthodox church	15	22
mete (new religion imported from abroad)	15	22
Satanic religion	9	23
the religion of cultural invasion	5	7
the religion of Sheep stealing	1	2
wrong / bad / false / disgusting / fake religion	17	40

> [w]e thought that Orthodox people converted to Protestant Christianity because the *Färänǧi* (foreigners) convinced them to accept their religion by giving wheat or money as the reward for conversion. So, missionaries are regarded as the agents who deceive Ethiopian people for changing our religion into Protestant Christianity [...] I used to criticize the *Ṗenṭewoccˇ* (Protestant Christians) for stealing sheep from the Orthodox Church.

From the Orthodox perspective on how they use material aid, missionaries are often associated with the negative images of deception and sheep-stealing.

The third stems from the theological difference by which Protestant Christianity is called as the enemy of Orthodox because of expressing their faith in Jesus Christ, not worshiping Mary as well as angels. Thus, "Protestants are labeled as *Mänafəq* [apostate] or 'the enemy of Mary, the enemy of saints and angels.' Protestants are not considered good persons but deniers of the Orthodox faith."[22]

The fourth most common negative association for the Protestant Christianity is that it is perceived as *Mete*, which means that

22 Interview: The narratives of a twenty-six-year-old man.

TABLE 11.2 Negative attributions attached to Protestant Christians

Negative attributions attached to Protestant Christians	Number of respondents	Number of references
Ṗenṭe	27	160
Hold bad things / make mistakes / lost / defiled / wrong / disgusting	19	42
Hatred	17	31
Denier of the Orthodox Faith / *Mänafəq* (Apostate) / enemies of Mary / enemies of God	10	14
Slave of material aid or money	7	11
Liar	6	7
Fanatical attitudes regarding speaking up about Jesus and reading Bible	6	6
Serve Satan	4	6
Betrayal of Ethiopian identity	5	5
Witchdoctor	1	1

> it was invented and imported from abroad. It is the religion of *Färänǧi* that recently came into the country. Thus, it is not counted as the right religion in Ethiopia as the same as Orthodox and Islam because it did not come from the past generation.[23]

Furthermore, Protestant Christianity is considered a religion brought by *Färänǧočč*, foreigners, who intended to defile Ethiopia and Ethiopian culture.[24] Protestant Christianity is seen as a cultural invasion of *Färänǧi*.[25]

Table 11.2 provides different types of stigmas attached to Protestant Christians. The most prominent image mentioned in the interviews was the labeling of Protestant Christians as *Ṗenṭe* in the Ethiopian language in order to stigmatize them within the Orthodox community.[26] The narratives of a twenty-six-year-old man describe the second most popular misconception:

23 Interview: The narratives of a thirty-year-old woman.
24 Interview: The narratives of a twenty-three-year-old man.
25 Interview: The narratives of a twenty-two-year-old woman.
26 Interview: The narratives of a twenty-two-year-old woman.

> Protestant Christians are counted as the opponent of the Orthodox faith since they abandoned what the Orthodox worship—Mary, saints, angels, and martyrs. They are labeled as *Mänafəq* [apostate] or 'the enemy of Mary, the enemy of saints, and angels.' *Ṗenṭewoччč* are not considered good persons but deniers.

As the third most common misperception, Protestant Christians were criticized for using material aid in missionary methods. Protestant converts are called slaves, while missionaries are liars. Protestant Christians were also misunderstood as serving Satan. Orthodox people condemn Pentecostal style of prayers as Satanic ritual. Another negative perception comes from Protestant believers' fanatical attitudes of speaking up about Jesus and Bible reading, which are considered as the marks of counteraction against Orthodox practices. Ordinary Orthodox believers often avoid talking about Jesus in order to differentiate themselves from Protestant believers emphasizing on Jesus, but prefer showing their veneration to Mary, saints, and angels in daily life. Some also believe that the authority of Bible reading belongs to the priests, not the ordinary people. Thus, if someone shows overconfidence in talking about Jesus and reading the Bible in public, he/she might be criticized as the enemy of the Orthodox faith, the enemy of Mary, or the apostate.

Four respondents mentioned that becoming a *Ṗenṭe* (Protestant Christian) is equated to abandoning the Ethiopian nationality. An eighteen-year-old boy commented that the "Orthodox may consider that becoming a *Ṗenṭe* means betraying the Ethiopian nation and accepting the religion of *Färänǧi* for the sake of the material benefit." One respondent's answer provided the extreme case: "My family even claimed that the Protestants are *ṭänkʷay* [witchdoctor]."

In reviewing the interview narratives, it is noteworthy to find that the words, hate and hatred were used by seventeen respondents (in thirty-one occurrences) in uncovering their rancor towards Protestant Christians. These respondents expressed that the feeling of hatred against Protestant Christianity and Protestant Christians had been passed down from the teaching of the old generation. The narrative of a twenty-six-year-old man offered this:

> My parents had intense hatred towards Protestant Christianity. So did I. However, I could not provide a clear answer as to the reason why I hated Protestant Christianity. Without knowing it, there was hatred deeply residing inside of me [...] In Ethiopia, a religion is inherited from the family in most cases. Prejudice toward Protestant Christianity is inherited from parents. I think that this impacted my perspectives toward Protestant Christianity.

Respondents are frequently instructed by their parents and their Orthodox community how to behave towards Protestant Christians. The most prominent reactions towards Protestant Christians are mentioned by an eighteen-year-old boy saying that

> My parents asked me to be distant from *Ṗenṭe* or to look down on *Ṗenṭe*. Even in the Orthodox church, they preach to us not to do anything with *Ṗenṭe* and not to talk to *Ṗenṭe*. They teach that *Ṗenṭewočč* are holding bad things [...] This is the current situation against Protestant Christians.

Although many of the respondents reported on negative images associated with Protestant Christianity and Protestant Christians, six of thirty-two respondents provided that they did not have negative attitudes towards Protestant Christians. They attributed the following factors as contributing to their good impressions: Protestant ethical lifestyles, their courage in keeping the faith firm in Christ despite of persecution, and the gospel message they are witnessing.

In summarizing the findings of the Orthodox perception of Protestant Christianity, they do not remember the Catholic missions' interlude happened in Ethiopian history. They even do not talk about any theological controversy that most scholars discuss. It is significant to find that Orthodox Ethiopians see Western Christianity as foreign and heretical religion, which becomes the major cause to prevent Ethiopian Orthodoxy from interacting with other foreign churches within Ethiopia.

4 Recent Developments of Ethiopian Orthodox Relations with Other Christian Churches

4.1 *Current Interactions of Ethiopian Orthodoxy with Catholic and Protestant Churches*

Although there was no established tradition of making peaceful relations among Ethiopian Christianity, the cumulative sequence of events within Ethiopia for the last decades led to a new orientation and development of the Ethiopian Christian life.

Especially during the Communist regime, three Ethiopian Churches were coerced into cooperation towards the communist propaganda discrediting Christian Churches' activities.[27] The Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane

27 Petros Berga, *Ecumenical Dialogue*, 298.

Yesus (EECMY) initiated to facilitate a series of seminars and workshops to study what it meant to be a Christian in this particular socialist context. Although small numbers of people from one department of Ethiopian Orthodox Church came, however, for the first time, in Ethiopian church history, the representatives of evangelical churches, the Catholic Church came together to discuss the common issues of the time. On this occasion, it was suggested the formation of the Council for Cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia. It was the common concern, how to survive in a Socialist State, which brought them together. Unfortunately, the Council did not have a long life because the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches withdrew.[28]

The severe drought in 1984 also united three churches again to work together for helping the people in the extremely damaged area. They established Joint Relief Program on the national level and appealed Ethiopian draught situation to the outside world. EECMY sent the message to the World Lutheran Federation; the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to World Council of Churches (WCC); Catholics to the Catholic Relief Services. The representatives of these three churches put all the effort in travelling overseas to get international aid to distribute the food to the people in the damaged area. Through the support of the Inter-Church Aid Commission and the programs of the WCC, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church implemented her development schemes in the areas such as its relief, rehabilitation and development programs.[29] This relationship enhances the Orthodox church to have the opportunity in establishing friendly relations with many different churches and Christian associations in international context.

Continuous effort to establish an informal relationship with the leaders of the Orthodox churches can pave the way for building good relationship with three churches. EECMY endeavored to establish contact with some of the leaders in the Orthodox church on a personal basis. Especially, Rev. Gudina Tumsa believes that "this type of informal relationship will possibly lead to official dialogue between the two Churches."[30]

The current situation of the globalization process in Ethiopia presents new opportunities for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to associate with foreign churches in international context. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of

28 The Gudina Tumsa Foundation, ed., *The Life and Ministry of Gudina Tumsa. Lectures and Discussions* (Hamburg: WDL-Publishers, 2007), 136–137.

29 The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, ed., *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Faith, Order of Worship and Ecumenical Relations*, 2nd ed. (Addis Ababa: Tansae Publishing House, 1996), 140.

30 The Gudina Tumsa Foundation, *The Life and Ministry*, 136.

the founding members of the World Council of Churches[31] instituted in 1948 in Amsterdam. From the beginning, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church claims that it has played a significant role in the work of the WCC by having twelve delegates sit in the general Assembly and an additional two representatives in the Central Committee.[32] Later, in 1974, EECMY among the Evangelical churches in Ethiopia joined the member of the WCC. The fellowship of the All Africa Conference of Churches holds the theological conferences, where the Ethiopian Orthodox Church participates to build a closer relation and mutual sharing of experiences among the churches in Africa.[33]

Since 1961, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church actively took part in the Pan-Orthodox meeting which promotes the unity of the Oriental Orthodox churches (Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, Ethiopian and Indian) and the Eastern Orthodox churches in the realm of ecumenical movement.[34] They tried to find the ways of resolving the Christological difference and an eventual reunion of the Chalcedonian Orthodox churches and the Non-Chalcedonian churches.[35]

More recently, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical churches have participated in Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative,[36] which was born of informal conversations between leaders of the Lausanne Movement and Orthodox observers at the 2010, the third Lausanne Congress in Cape Town. These conversations led to making a steering committee to explore how to increase mutual understanding and a healing of wounds, in order to collaborate more effectively in the area of God's mission. Subsequent regional consultations were held in Albania (2014), Finland (2015), Ethiopia (2016),

31 This Ecumenical Council has various functions and purposes, the first and the foremost of which is to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship in expressed worship and in common life in Christ, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe. In addition to this, the Inter-Church Aid is the other main function of the WCC's general purposes.

32 The Gudina Tumsa Foundation, *The Life and Ministry*, 140.

33 Ibid., 141–142.

34 Ibid., 143–144.

35 Ibid., 143.

36 The Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative seeks to mediate reconciliation and healing between the Orthodox communities and Evangelical communities. Over many centuries, and particularly during the twentieth century, there has been both the persecution of Evangelical Christians by Orthodox communities and the demonization of the Orthodox faith by Evangelical missionaries. The Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative tries to find a way to build constructive relationships of trust and respect between the two communities: Danut Manastireanu, "Lausanne Initiative to Bring together Orthodox and Evangelical Leaders in Ethiopia," *Lausanne Orthodox Initiatives*, accessed 15.06.2019. URL: https://danutm.wordpress.com/2016/03/21/lausanne-initiative-to-bring-together-orthodox-and-evangelical-leaders-in-ethiopia.

Cambridge (2017), and Boston (2018) to bring together Orthodox and Evangelical leaders in Ethiopia. In October 2016, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church hosted the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative in Ethiopia. Sixty Orthodox and Evangelical church leaders, theologians and mission workers from other parts of Ethiopia and the world gathered in Addis Abäba seeks to mediate reconciliation and build constructive relationships of trust and respect between the Orthodox churches and the evangelical churches.

4.2 *Developing Ways to Achieve a Constructive Relations with Western Churches*

Inter-Church activities such as WCC and other international meetings as well as cooperative meetings within the country offer the opportunities for the representative leaders from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Catholics, and Evangelicals to sit together at the executive committee, without tension and without conflict, and share fellowship and prayer, and discuss their faith, missions and evangelism, and development. Although there has been tension between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Western missions and their related churches at the grassroots level, this indicates that it is possible to find a way to deconstruct negative stereotypes of the past and reconstruct the Inter-Church relation within the country first and then in the global context.

How to develop the ways for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to make a constructive relation with Western forms of Christianity? From the evidence of current Orthodox Church's interaction with other churches within Ethiopia and in international context, it shows that there is "a negotiable possible middle way"[37] to bring Christian churches of three traditions together so that it can mediate the three Christian churches by providing the moral guidance and emotional motivation to bring the peaceful relation.

International conferences as well as the national level of cooperation work provided a suitable neutral place for the leaders from the three churches of Ethiopia to build constructive relation. As for the future plan of three churches' cooperation work, Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa, the director of Peace Office of EECMY[38] suggests establishing the Council of Churches in Ethiopia. He says that

37 Petros Berga, *Ecumenical Dialogue*, 63.

38 The EECMY Peace Office was established 1993. Its objective is to build a peaceful society where all people have equal access to national resources and promote unity based on equality. It collaborates with various government offices, local and other partner churches, faith-based institutions and civil society organizations in carrying out its work, Tsion Alemayehu, "Ethiopian Church Fosters Peace and Reconciliation in Gambella," *The*

> in 2016 there was an informal discussion among the two representatives from the EOTC and EECMY, and Catholics who met together and tried to establish the Council of Churches in Ethiopia. Eventually it did not turn out to be an agreement among the three Churches due to the EOTC's indecision and hesitation.[39]

Nevertheless, several points were suggested for constructing positive Inter-Church relation. First of all, it is primary task that Christian identity needs to be reconstructed through this Council of Churches. Over the centuries, being closely tied to the state, the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church has had a dominant influence over every sphere of Ethiopian society by setting "the cultural delimiters, legislating norms, and defining national identity."[40] Ethiopia's Marxist regime (1974–1991) and the federal form of government established in 1991 disestablished the political power of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and sanctioned this separation between the church and the state, whose sudden implementation had a major impact on the religious map in Ethiopian society.

Secondly, there should be revision or correction on the way of Protestant churches' sharing the gospel message with others. The findings from the literature and the interviews indicate the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's bitter responses to Western missions and their related churches were caused by their evangelistic methods. The negative stereotypes engraved in Orthodox Ethiopians' heart also brought about the unnecessary conflict and tension between the Orthodox and the other churches. Dr. Wakseyoum says, "those EOTC, Catholics, evangelicals, and all of us have one country. We have the right to promote our religious faith without conflict. We have to find a way to live together peacefully, to tolerate each other, to collaborate together to reach out people in Christian faith."[41]

Thirdly, once the Council of Churches in Ethiopia is established, it will be able to provide a platform for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to cooperate with other churches. The current Ethiopian Orthodox Church is challenged to revitalize its tradition and identity relevant in the current context as well as to recuperate her competitive spiritual implications and practical participation in a public sphere. In order to do this, the Orthodoxy needs to be flexible to open to new ideas and pluralism, and to engage with foreign churches for the task

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Lutheran World Federation, published 07.07.2016, URL: https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/ethiopian-church-fosters-peace-and-reconciliation-gambella.

39 Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa, Director of EECMY Peace Office, Interview on 28.09.2018.

40 Tibebe Eshete, *The Evangelical Movement*, 310.

41 Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa, Director of EECMY Peace Office, Interview on 28.09.2018.

of performing valuable public services. It is good for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to work together with the Council of Churches in order to address the issues like peace, drought, development projects, and national crisis are good themes in public space.

Finally, it is necessary to train the mission-minded leaders within each Christian church to promote to effect attitudinal and behavioral transformation of their members. From reflecting the interview findings and the recent Inter-Church meetings and conferences, there is the huge gap between the Orthodox church leaders present in international conferences and the ordinary Orthodox people in their attitudes towards Western Christianity. In order to provide a way to deconstruct each other's negative stereotypes, it is helpful to find "the possible narratives" that can provide the good examples in which the Orthodox and Two other churches or the members of these churches cooperated together in history.[42]

Needless to say, there are conflicts and different opinions within the Orthodox church as well as within Evangelicals regarding interaction with other churches of different faith. As cumulative sequence of Inter-Church activities within the country were successfully initiated by building informal relations between the Orthodox and the evangelical churches, it requires lots of effort in fostering continuing interaction and building a friendly relation between the churches within Ethiopia as well as in international context.

5 Conclusion

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been resistant to engage with Western forms of Christianity within Ethiopia. The past history reveals that the Orthodoxy has tended to be associated with protection from the foreign invasion and xenophobia. In ordinary Ethiopian Orthodox perception, Western forms of Christianity is identified as illegitimate and hatred religions, which prevented them from interacting with Protestant Christians and their churches. Although there are many challenges to rebuild Christian identity embracing three Christian traditions within Ethiopia, it is still possible when the churches put an effort on working together to develop a constructive relations and reconciliation for the common purpose for the Gospel within Ethiopia as well as in global context.

42 Petros Berga, *Ecumenical Dialogue*, 63.

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CHAPTER 12

Teaching *Wadla Qəne* Today: Observations from a Field Research in the Wadla Region

Christine Chaillot

1 Introduction

The topic of this article, *qəne*, has very much to do with the identity of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church and with its traditional oral education. *Qəne* (and *wadla qəne*) is intrinsically part of this very ancient African church, officially established and proclaimed as state religion around 340.[1] *Qəne* is a poem composed in the Gəʿəz language, the ancient language of Christian Ethiopia, and having a double meaning: the direct one also called wax (*säm*), and the hidden one called gold (*wärq*), referring to the goldsmith's technique of casting gold shapes within a wax mould. Whereas the writing in Gəʿəz has virtually ceased, the oral composition and use of *qəne* in Gəʿəz continues to this day.[2] In every major church, the person who has the ability to compose the *qəne* and was trained and graduate from the *qəne* school, creates a *qəne* which is sung during the liturgy and other festive church services.[3]

Qəne is a kind of 'philosophical' or rather spiritual message composed in the Christian context of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which is given and shared by all those who listen to it while it is sung in church. *Wadla qəne* was created in the region of Wadla (in Wällo province today).[4] It is the most important type of *qəne* as it is the basis for all its other types.

1 Stuart Munro-Hay, "Christianity," in *EAe* 1 (2003): 717.

2 Getatchew Haile, "Gəʿəz literature," in *EAe* 2 (2005): 738–739.

3 Ibid., 736–738.

4 Wadla is a historical district in the Amhara region to the south of Lasta and to the west of Angot and has been recognized as a province since the end of the 15th century. In the imperial administrative division, it was paired with Dälanta in the administrative division (*awrağğa*) of Wadla Dälanta. Today it is one of the districts (*wäräda*) in the Amhara Region of northern eastern Ethiopia and is named after the former district which lays roughly in the same area. Part of the Sämen (nothern) Wällo zone, Wadla is bordered on the southeast by Dälanta, on the southwest by Dawənt, on the north by Mäqet, and on the northeast by Guba Lafto. Today the major and administrative town in Wadla is Kon. The majority of the inhabitants practice

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004505254_013

According to the tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the *wadla qəne* is the original *qəne* created by Yoḥannəs Gäblawi. It is known to be particularly difficult on account of its grammar as well as its composition and interpretation, using many equivocal words, allusions and allegoric figures. The *wadla qəne* was created in the region of Wadla. It is in that area[5] that my research and interviews took place. Wadla is also the name of a type of church poetry (*qəne*) proper to the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church. In fact, in the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, Wadla region is said to be the place of origin of *qəne*. This was the reason of my interest to visit the place, in order to make interviews with *qəne* teachers and to see what they could tell me about *wadla qəne*, about the present situation of the teaching of *qəne* in Wadla, including of *wadla qəne*, and also to continue my quest for *qəne* and its teaching today.[6] I also asked some questions about the *qəne* teachers' life conditions and that of their students.

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the students who study *qəne* must also study other topics necessary to be trained as deacons and later as priests, first of all the Eucharistic liturgy (*qəddase*). They may also study liturgical music (*zema*), with *dəggʷa* and *ṣomä dəggʷa* and, according to their choice, for a better education, they can also study "the Books," that is of the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, the Church Fathers, the monastic literature, as well as ecclesiastical law. Thus, apart from poetry (*qəne*), other subjects studied in the traditional schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church will be named in this article such as the study of the liturgy (*qəddase*), chanting (*zema*), and exegesis or the Scripture (*mäṣḥaf*).[7]

Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. The largest ethnic group reported in Wadla is the Amhara. Evgenia Sokolinskaia, "Wadla," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 1067.

5 See all the names quoted in this article (in a different transliteration) in the detailed map: Svein Ege, *North Wälo 1:100,000. Topographic and administrative map of North Wälo Zone, Amhara Region, Ethiopia* (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2002). Such detailed maps with the names of Ethiopian Orthodox churches should be made for all Ethiopia.

6 See Christine Chaillot, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Tradition. A Brief Introduction to Its Life and Spirituality* (Paris: Inter-Orthodox Dialogue, 2002).

7 Sevir Chernetsov, "Traditional Christian education," in *EAe* 2 (2005): 228–230. See also: Chaillot, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Tradition*, 83–100. For the Psalter (*Dawit*), see: Marilyn Heldman, "Psalter," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 231–233. For the liturgical music (*zema*), see: Anne Damon-Guillot, "Zema," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 174. For the liturgical books (*dəggʷa*), see: Habtemichael Kidane, "Dəggʷa," in *EAe* 2 (2005): 123–124. For *ṣomä dəggʷa*, book used from the beginning of Lent to Easter, see: Habtemichael Kidane, "Ṣomä Dəggʷa," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 691–692. For Eucharistic liturgy (*qəddase*), see: Emmanuel Fritsch, "Qəddase," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 271–275. For theology and particularly exegesis of the Scripture (*mäṣḥaf*) studied in the house of the books (*mäṣḥaf bet*) including the interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, of

For the composition of the *qəne*, specific grammatical, symbolic and other rules have to be maintained.[8] Students may study all types of *qəne*. The place where *qəne* is taught is called "the house of the *qəne*" (*qəne bet*), one possible stage of the traditional church education in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Here the students focus on the theory and practice of the composition of *qəne*. This study is difficult and can take many years. The student must first perfectly master the ancient church language, Gəʿəz, by building up his vocabulary as well as composing and interpreting *qəne*. He must also profoundly study traditional Ethiopian Christian cultural, social, intellectual and educational and spiritual values.[9] The students move from place to place, in order to study with some very good *qəne* teachers of their choice.

The main historic centers for learning *qəne* are in Wadla (Wällo), Gonǧ (Goǧǧam), Wašära (Damot/Goǧǧam), and also Gondär, each having distinct features.[10] As the learning of *qəne* requires studying with different teachers and in different schools and places, students attend lessons with more than one master and in more than one school, in order to reach a high level of mastering *qəne*.[11]

According to Ethiopian Orthodox church scholars, the *qəne* goes back to St. Yared, since short *qəne*-like compositions are found in the *dəggʷa* (liturgical book with hymns and troparies) said to be composed by him.[12] But, according to Habtemichael Kidane, St. Yared does not appear to have set the forms and meters for the genre thus his hymns cannot be defined as *qəne*.[13]

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the Church Fathers (*liqawənt*) and of the Monastic literature (*mäṣaḥəftä mänäkosat*), see: Habtemichael Kidane, "Mäṣḥaf bet," in *EAe* 3 (2007), 834. For liturgical dance and its instrumental accompaniment (*aqqʷaqʷam*), see: Kay Kaufman-Shelemay, "Aqʷaqʷam," in *EAe* 1 (2003): 293. For the hymn called *mästägaber*, name also used as a hymn for the study of hymnody, see: Ezra Gebremedhin, "Mästägabə'," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 857–858. For *arbaʿət*, element found in the *dəggʷa* and *ṣomä dəggʷa*, see: Habtemichael Kidane, "Arbaʿət," in *EAe* 1 (2003): 317.

8 Habtemichael Kidane, "Qəne," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 283–285.

9 Ibid., 285.

10 Ibid., 286 refering to Admasu Ǧämbäre, *Mäṣḥafä Qəne* (*Zəkrä Liqawənt*) [*The Book of the Qəne* (*The Memory of the Scholars*)] (Addis Abäba, 1970/71), 10. At the 17th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Abäba in November 2009, I presented another paper: Christine Chaillot, "How to Preserve the History of the Oral Traditional Education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Ethiopia: *Qəne* teachers in Wašära, Gonǧ, Sälalo and elsewhere in Goǧǧam," in *African Studies. Forging New Perspectives and Directions*, ed. Nina Pawlak, Hanna Rubinowska-Anioł and Izabela Will (Warszawa: Elipsa, 2016), 199–215.

11 Habtemichael Kidane, "Qəne bet," 286.

12 Yared is credited with the invention of Ethiopian church music and hymnody. Cf. Antonella Brita, "Yared," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 26–28.

13 Habtemichael Kidane, "Qəne," 284.

In fact, the beginning of the composition of *qəne* is attributed to an early 15th-century scholar from Wadla named Yoḥannəs Gäblawi.[14] This is the Wadla claim. Then there is the Gonǧ claim (in Goǧǧam)—attributing the deed to a certain Täwanäy who flourished after the 15th century. The line of Yoḥannəs Gäblawi is said to have precedence on other *qəne* teachers. Yoḥannəs Gäblawi is said to have acquired his *qəne* inspiration during a spiritual meditation. Some say that he was born at Gäblon in Wadla (Lasta), and that his *qəne* flourished at the time of Emperor Zär'a Yaʿəqob (1434–1468). Later Dədq Wäldä Maryam and Täwanäy formed two separate *qəne* styles—the *wadla* and the *gonǧ* schools. The Wadla school was led by a succession of seven teachers—all with the title *dədq*.[15]

In his book, a collection of *qəne*, a great contemporary Ethiopian Orthodox scholar and a *qəne* specialist, Admasu Ǧämbäre,[16] gives a genealogy of the *wadla qəne* teachers. He writes: "When one is asked who started [*qəne*] there are some who say Yoḥannəs Zägäblon born in Wadla; there are some who say Täwanäy or Däqqä Ǝsṭifa born in Goǧǧam."[17] Then Admasu Ǧämbäre says that all are right and that there is no reason to quarrel about this. In a short history of Wadla and Goǧǧam *qəne*, he states:

> First the Wadla party group made as their basis the history that the one who started *qəne* was Yared. In 1460 year of mercy, Yoḥannəs Gäblawi after realizing that it was Yared who started the *qəne* way asked him: 'Reveal it for me.' He went for a retreat (he hid himself to pray and fast) to a place called Däbrä Tabor which is located between Boräna and Amara Sayənt. It is said that this place was the town of King Yəkunno Amlak. After that the mystery [of *qəne*] together with versification was revealed to him [...]. After that he taught *Abba* Wäldä Gäbrə'el, (and) *Abba* Wäldä Gäbrə'el taught Śämrä Ab; Śämrä Ab taught around 1470 year of mercy in the time of Emperor Bä'ədä Maryam. [...] After that Śämrä Ab taught Ləḥib; Ləḥib taught Elyab; Elyab taught Dədq Wäldä Maryam and Täwanäy. At that time Graň invaded [Ethiopia] and the government was disturbed. Täwanäy stayed on an island called Däqqä Ǝsṭifa on the island of the Lake

14 This was told to me by several *qəne* teachers.

15 See a list of teachers in: Mariye, "The Origin of Qəne and the sources for the Qəne Subject Matter." Such lists are traditionnaly learned by heart by the students in *qəne* schools and (thus) may somehow differ.

16 Tedros Abraha, "Admasu Ǧämbäre," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 221.

17 Admasu Ǧämbäre, *Mäṣḥafä Qəne*, 10.

> Tana. When he was leaving that place, he removed the most important part of Gəʿəz grammar (*aggäbab*); he kept only *qəne*. Because his master Elyab had already died and because he was not willing to ask his brother Dədq Wäldä Maryam, he abandoned the grammar and started to teach only *qəne*. That is why there is not much grammar and verb conjugation in the *gonǧ qəne*. But Dədq Wäldä Maryam went to a place called Yäçäräqa in Dawənt and stayed there together with other scholars. He kept the verb conjugation and the grammar and taught. After him six scholars followed him and each of them had the name *dədq*. *Dədq* means 'hero.' When one says, 'a hero of mystery' [that is of *qəne*], one means *dədq*. At the time of the sixth *dədq* the community of students became large and so seven [types of] *awaǧ*,[18] seven [types of] verb conjugations and seven [types of] grammar were taught there.[19]

In another book, Habtä Maryam Wärqənäh, at one time head of the Holy Trinity cathedral in Addis Abäba (*liqä śəlṭanat*), has got one chapter about *qəne*.[20] This is what Habtä Maryam says about Yoḥannəs Gäblawi:

> The place where he lived was Wällo, in Amara Sayənt, in the town of Däbrä Tabor. He taught many people. But the one who became a role model or who was his successor was a monk called *Abba* Wäldä Gäbrəʾel. *Abba* Wäldä Gäbrəʾel taught Śämrä Krəstos; he is also called Śämrä Ab. Śämrä Ab taught having expanded his school, he took more students. He even taught Emperor Bäʾədä Maryam. [...] This Śämrä Ab taught Ləhib and Elyas. Elyas taught Täwanäy and Dədq Wäldä Maryam. Täwanäy became the father of the *gonǧ* way; Dədq Wäldä Maryam became the role model for the *wadla* way. The *qəne* bet or the difference in the [*qəne*] way began at that time. It was the time of war, the [16th century Muslim] Graň invasion, so there was not much communication among them. Therefore, Täwanäy's disciples made the *qəne* difficult and the grammar (*aggäbab*) short. But because Dədq Wäldä Maryam continued to teach and kept his position, (he) managed to keep the way of *qəne* and the principles of grammar (*aggäbab*). Because he was known by his name, those who continued his teachings were called 'dədq' and continued teaching. This is

18 It is a general study of the Gəʿəz grammar.

19 Ibid., 10–11.

20 Habtä Maryam Wärqənäh, *Ṭəntawi Yä-Ityopya Sərʾatä Təmhərt* [*The Ancient Educational System of Ethiopia*] (Addis Abäba: Bərhanənna Sälam Qädamawi Haylä Śəllase Mattämiya Bet, 1970/71), 172–211.

> why, being called the *wadla qəne* or grammar (*aggäbab*), it is praised and is called after them. In this way, the history tells about seven Dədq who taught the *wadla* way. However, the last *dədq* taught Dədq Wäldä Maryam. Dədq Wäldä Maryam taught Maʿəbäl Wäldä Ḥəywät Meḫa. Maʿəbäl Wäldä Ḥəywät taught *Aläqa* Getahun Gete Gämora Mikaʾel Däbr. After that, however, one teacher started mixing the *wadla* grammar with the *gonǧ* and the *wašära*, due to his desire of not being an ignorant in one of them [...]. When we look at the issue from the distance and study it deeply, there is no doubt that the [first] *qəne* composer was Yared.[21]

These two accounts somehow differ. According to Habtä Maryam Wärqənäh, "one teacher started mixing the *wadla* grammar with the *gonǧ* and the *wašära*." As for Admasu Ǧämbäre "at the time of the sixth *dədq* the community of students became large and so seven [types of] *awaǧ*, seven [types of] verb conjugations and seven [types of] grammar were taught." How to interpret this? Further studies are needed to answer these questions.

For the time being I shall describe the present situation of teaching *qəne* in some parts of Wadla where the first *qəne* teacher, Yoḥannəs Zägäblon Gäblawi, is said to be born, at least by Admasu Ǧämbäre. I shall now present *qəne* teachers whom I met during a visit in some churches around Kon, in November 2009.[22] Before leaving Addis Abäba, I had asked in a hurry some advice about some names of *qəne* teachers and places in Wadla to the regretted Ethiopian Orthodox scholar *Abba* Säyfä Śəllase (d. 2010)[23] who had only time to tell me about two places: Abdiqon Giyorgis[24] and Yänäǧǧa Mikaʾel and its *qəne* teacher Täkkalləňň Mängäša. Some people working for the diocese in Waldiya and in Kon[25] also gave us the names of some *qəne* teachers teaching there. We slept in Gašäna.[26] Then we visited people working for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

21 Ibid., 174–175.

22 I was accompanied by Magda Krzyzanowska who also made some interviews with the *qəne* teachers; I want to thank her very cordially for her translations of the interviews from Amharic and also for helping me in finalizing this article, especially for the translation of some texts (cf. notes 17 and 20) and for the transcription of Amharic proper names and terms according to the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*.

23 Amsalu Tefera, "Säyfä Śəllase Yoḥannəs," in *EAe* 5 (2014): 506–507.

24 The village of Abdiqon Giyorgis lies on the way from Wäldiya to Gašäna, in Douftsi Hamousit. Ege, *North Wälo*, map 58. You must turn to the left, for about 5 km, then walk half an hour (or all the way by 4×4). The place is known as a famous traditional school, also for *qəne*. In 2009, I was told that no teacher of the traditional schools was left there but I could not check.

25 URL: http://www.maplandia.com/ethiopia/amhara/north-wello/kon/ (13.05.2019).

26 Gašäna is a crossing place: coming from Wäldiya you can turn to the right to reach Lalibäla;

in Wägäl Ṭena town, the administrative centre of the present Dälanta *wäräda*.[27] Then a list of teachers and places was established to be visited around Kon.

2 Field Research in the Wadla Region

2.1 *Qəne Teachers near Kon*

Near Kon, the first *qəne* teacher we met[28] was *Märigeta*[29] Ǝzra Bərhanu, a blind man, at Yädəhun Mädḫane ʿAläm church.[30] He was born in 1944 EC[31] in Asgağä village (a three-day walk from there), where he began his traditional education in Tädbabä Maryam church in which he graduated. He first studied *dəgg^{w}a*[32] and then *qəne*, for five years, with *Märigeta* Gäbrä Mäsqäl[33] (d. 1986 EC). Then he taught *qəne* in Wämbär Zaragaw for four years. From 1971 EC he began to teach *qəne* in his present place. Before him, there was here a *zema* teacher, *Märigeta* Kiros, but no *qəne* teacher. Ǝzra Bərhanu was graduate in *wašära* and *wadla qəne*; and his teacher Gäbrä Mäsqäl knew three *qəne* styles: *wašära*, *wadla* and *gonǧ*. At that time, Ǝzra Bərhanu was teaching *wašära sämənna wärq* (that is "wax and gold" with literal and figurative or "hidden" meanings[34]). He said that there is not much difference between the *wadla* and *wašära qəne* and that they are almost the same, which surprised me.[35]

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straight you go to Däbrä Tabor; and left to Kon. URL: http://www.maplandia.com/ethiopia/amhara/north-wello/kon/#map (13.05.2019).

27 Wägältena, also known as Wägäl Ṭena, is located in the Däbub Wällo Zone of the Amhara Region, with an estimated total population of 7,205 in 2005. It was the main city of the former Wadla Dälanta *awraǧǧa*. Situated on the recently constructed main road between Dässe and Lalibäla via Kone and Gašäna, Wägältena is expected to become a communication link between these historical places.

28 We began to visit *qəne* schools on 11 November 2009.

29 Evgenia Sokolinskaia, "Märigeta," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 786.

30 From Kon, we drove by pickup for 14 km in the direction of Däbrä Tabor, stopped, turned right, and then walked for about 6 km. Ege, *North Wälo*, map 68.

31 EC refers to the Ethiopian Calendar, with a seven-to-eight-year gap between the Ethiopian and Gregorian calendars. Emmanuel Fritsch and Ugo Zanetti, "Christian calendar," in *EAe* 1 (2003): 668–672. The liturgical year begins on the 11th (12th on a leap year) of September.

32 With *Märigeta* Gera Wärq, for five years.

33 Gäbrä Mäsqäl's teacher was *Märigeta* Ṭəbäbu, a famous teacher (died during the reign of Ḫayla Śəllase) from Yäǧǧu who himself was teaching in Gayənt Mägäč Qirqos and who had graduated with teacher Buruk. Ǝzra showed us a notebook with notes by *Märigeta* Gäbrä Mäsqäl.

34 Denis Nosnitsin, "Sämənna wärq," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 507.

35 According to Habtemichael Kidane, the *wašära qəne* is relatively simple and its meaning can be caught even by someone who is not specialized in *qəne*; the *gonǧ qəne* is difficult to

In November 2009, he had 40 students (and 66 students the year before).[36] They came not only from the surroundings but also as far as Šäwa, Goǧǧam and Təgray. At the practical level, in 2009 Ǝzra Bərhanu said that he received a salary of 30 Birr a month.[37] He had some fields for growing crops. His family lived from hand to mouth, but this was not enough to keep the whole family, sometimes, if harvest was bad, daily food became a problem.

As for his students, they got some money from their parents who were farmers to get their food (cereals and grains) bought from the market. They did not go for begging their food, as this is the ancient custom for traditional students of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, because the neighbours had only little for themselves. Here they received no financial help from the church or diocese.

In the afternoon, we met *Mämhər*[38] Nahu Sännay of the church of Giyorgis in Dorära.[39] He was born in 1935 EC in Giǧǧu, around 150 km from here, where he began his traditional education which he finished in Goǧǧam.[40] He studied *qəne* for six years with Wäldä Mika'el whose teacher was *Mämhər* Sahlu from Mäqälä who was teaching *wašära* and *gonǧ qəne*. Then he went for *qəne* graduation to Goǧǧam, in Gonǧ, where he spent three years. His teacher was Məḥrät Ṣəgge from Walta Maryam in Goǧǧam who had graduated in Moṭa Giyorgis. Məḥrät Ṣəgge was teaching *gonǧ* and *wašära qəne*. Then our teacher went to Gondär to study "the Books."[41] After graduation there, he began to teach *qəne* and "the Books" for eight years in Gayənt Zuramba (the place of graduation for *zəmmare*, 65 km from Däbrä Tabor) where he also studied *zəmmare*, one of

understand due to its profound meaning, using complicated concepts and images, often only understandable to the author; the Gondär *qəne* is characterized by its melancholic mood and is didactic alluding to the teaching of the *qəne* teachers. Habtemichael Kidane, "Qəne," 284. The grammar of the *wadla qəne* is difficult.

36 During my visit the students were absent as they had gone home to help their parents for harvest and were coming back after Epiphany.

37 In January 2009, 10.46 Birr equaled one US-dollar, URL: http://nazret.com/blog/index.php/2009/01/13/ethiopian_central_bank_depreciates_birr_ (13.05.2019).

38 Marie-Laure Derat and Denis Nosnitsin, "Mämhər," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 713.

39 From Kon, go for 4 km in the direction of Dälanta, then turn right for 6 km (rocky road which can be used by pick ups), then walk 45 minutes to Dorära Giyorgis church which is situated down, half way between the plateau and the valley; the interview was made near Balä Ǝgzi'abəḥer church, without going down to Dorära, because we met the teacher on the way. Ege, *North Wälo*, map 68.

40 He also studied *zema*, *aqqʷaqʷam*, New Testament and Old Testament. He studied *dəggʷa* with Wäldä Giyorgis.

41 In Gondär city, with *Mämhər* Bərhanu, in Bä'ata Maryam church, Old Testament and New Testament, for nine years.

the five books of liturgical song, or *zema*. Then he came to teach in the present place. In 2009, he was 67 years old. He was then teaching *wašära* and *gonǧ qəne*, not *wadla qəne*.

In November 2009, 25 of his students of *qəne* were present, not the usual 45 as some had left to go home and help their family for harvest. During Lent the number of students grows up to fifty. He had no student to study "the Books" with him. In November 2009 (European year), his salary was of 55 Birr a month.

The next day, we took the road in the direction of Arbit and Däbrä Tabor. From Gašäna, after 23 km, the car dropped us on the side of the road and we walked to the right in direction of Wäqeta Maryam church (now in Mäqet *wäräda*,[42] not in Wadla *wäräda*), looking for *Mämhər* Dibäkwəllu Geṭu. We met him on the way, near Gabrəʾel church (that is about half way), as he was going there for a funeral.[43] He told us about his life. He was born in Läyamba Mikaʾel (Lasta), in 1936 (the year when the Italians arrived in Ethiopia, he said).[44] He studied *wadla qəne* in Waro Mikaʾel (*wäräda* of Mäqet). His teacher for *wadla qəne* at Šädaho, Sändära Maryam church was Wase for about one year. Wase's teacher was from Abdiqon Giyorgis, but unfortunately Dibäkwəllu Geṭu could not remember his name.[45] *Mämhər* Dibäkwəllu's next teacher was in Sämada in Däbrä ʿƎnqʷä Maryam, *Mämhər* Geṭu Täsämma,[46] with whom Dibäkwəllu studied some *qəne* of Goǧǧam for four years.[47] His first and last teacher with whom he learned all kinds of *qəne* (*wadla*, *wašära*, *gonǧ*) for four years was *Mämhər* Bäträ Wärq[48] in St. George church in Säne Gäbäya in Sämada, on the way to southern Gondär. Dibäkwəllu, graduated with him in all types of *qəne*.

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42 Mäqet is one of the *wäräda* in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia, in the North Wällo Zone.

43 From Gašäna, take the direction to Däbrä Tabor for 23 km, then walk to the right to Gabrəʾel church where we met the *mämhər* and made the interview; the walk took less than one hour. In 2019, I was showed a non-asphalt road (for 4×4 drive) on the right leading down into the valley and reaching very close to the school and church of Wäqeta Maryam.

44 As it is the custom, he studied the Psalter (*Dawit*) and *zema* in his village.

45 Dibäkwəllu said that he never heard of the famous Ṭəbäbu of Abdiqon. He only knew that the place was famous with many *qəne* teachers. He remembered the name of one teacher, Däbrä Mäsqäl, who was the teacher of the blind teacher met the day before in Kon and who taught at Betä Yoḥannes (near Kon).

46 Geṭu Täsämma was a student of *Mämhər* Wəbəšät (he could not remember his second name) from Goǧǧam (he could not remember the exact name of the place).

47 From Geṭu Täsämma (who did not know *qəne* well, but knew history well), for about three years, Dibäkwəllu studied the Psalter, Hymns (*nägs*) and *tərgum* (that is the interpretation) of *wəddase maryam* and *qəddase maryam*.

48 Bäträ Wärq learned from Buruk, a teacher in Dässe (also mentionned the day before by the blind teacher).

He also said that he went to Ṣälalo where he studied *qəne* with the famous Mother Gälanäš. He stayed there only one year and found the *gonǧ qəne* there very difficult. *Mämhər* Dibäkwəllu also studied *aqqʷaʷqam* for three years with *Mämhər* Ayyälö Märawi at Mäqet, Kurifta Kidanä Məḥrät. When we met him in 2009, Dibäkwəllu said that then he was not teaching the *wadla qəne*, but *wašära qəne*. When I met him in February 2019 he said that he was teaching different types of *qəne*, including *wadla*. According to Dibäkwəllu, when we met him in 2009, no one was then teaching the *wadla qəne* in Wadla.

On 13 November 2009, we went to Yänäǧǧa Mikaʾel.[49] The place is historically important for *qəne* as some say that Yoḥannəs Zägäblon Gäblawi (that is of Gäblaw), the first composer of *qəne*, was born there.[50] When we went in 2009, there was no *qəne* teacher. It is also here that taught the famous teacher Täkkalləňň Mängäša (d. 1969), apparently the last *qəne* teacher in this place (of what we then understood).

We asked the few traditional teachers whom we met about him,[51] as well as a farmer, Taddäsä Mäkʷännən, who had been Täkkalləňň's student. He told us about Täkkalləňň's grand son, *Märigeta* ʿAlämu Yoḥannəs, living in a nearby village. We decided to visit him. We found him living near the hamlet of Zugära.[52] He was a *däbtära* doing the *aqqʷaqʷam* in church, but he did not teach. He owned some manuscripts, which is quite unusual in a faraway hamlet. He was thirteen years old when his grandfather died and, unfortunately, he told us that he was too young to remember him well.

ʿAlämu Yoḥannəs studied with Nahu Sännay and with his father Yoḥannəs in Agiḍäw, but he did not study any *qəne* with his grandfather. ʿAlämu Yoḥannəs said that Täkkalləňň's wife was Käbäbuš Bäwqätu, the mother of Yoḥannəs. Täkkalləňň Mängäša studied *qəne* in Goǧǧam, in Gonǧ. Later he "disappeared, became invisible" in the place called Däqqä Ǝsṭifa, which means that he went there to have a spiritual retreat. Then he came back to Wadla, to Abdiqon (the place of his father Mängäša) and later moved to Yänäǧ Mikaʾel. He was buried

49 First by bus (in direction of Kon), and then we walked to the right for about an hour. In 2009 there was no asphalt road, but I was told that there was also a possible access by 4×4 from the main road from Gašäna to Däbrä Tabor.

50 *Märigeta* Ləʿul Mälläs, the teacher of *aqqʷaqʷam* we met in Yänäǧǧa Mikaʾel, told us that Yoḥannəs Gäblawi established there the first *qəne bet*. Today it is a market place (twice a week).

51 With *Märigeta* Abraham, teacher of *zema*, with the *aqqʷaqʷam* teacher Läggäsä Ǝngədaw who spoke on the tradition of the place; and with a nun *Ǝmmahoy* Alämitu Gəzaw.

52 Probably Zigora between Yänäǧǧa Mikaʾel and Arbit, near Qʷama village. Ege, *North Wälo*, map 68.

in the St. Giyorgis church in Abdiqon where he was born. Apparently, he taught all kinds of *qəne*, including *wadla qəne*. This must be investigated in the future with other interviews about him.

2.2 *Qəne Teachers in Wägäl Ṭena* (*Dälanta*)

We also wanted to visit some *qəne* teachers in Wägäl Ṭena town (Dälanta),[53] a town south of Kon. There we went to the church of Mäsqälä Krəstos built in 1987 EC, on top of a hill. In 1995 EC, the place was organized as a traditional school. In 2009 *Abunä* Qerəllos, Archbishop of North Wällo, residing in Wäldiya was responsible of the Wadla region described here.

In 2009, there were two *qəne* teachers and 17 students. The old *qəne* teacher, Gäbrä Ḥanna, was blind. He was born in 1920 EC in Ṣay Moča (Dälanta),[54] on the way to Iğğu, three hours walk from his present place. Then he went to Lasta and later to Wadla. He studied *qəne* for one year with *Mämhər* Märawi Wärqənäh[55] (d. 1968 EC), a *qəne* graduate from Dima Giyorgis (Goğğam) who lived in Waro Mika'el (Lasta) and later in Dälanta Ṭana Iyäsus. He graduated with him. Gäbrä Ḥanna taught *sämənna wärq qəne* and he did not know the *wadla qəne*.

Then, in the same school, we had a long talk with another *qəne* teacher who was young, Yəbabe Fäqadä (apparently, since that time, he left the place). He was born in 1969 EC in Yäğğu, near Kom. He began to study *qəne* with *Mämhər* A'əmro (himself graduated from *Mämhər* Yared Šifärraw from Č̣ägode) in Yänäğğa Mika'el in 1985 EC, for one year. Then he studied in Gännätä Lə'ul near Wäldiya with *Mämhər* A'əmärä Mäššäša (who also graduated by Yared Šifärraw in Č̣ägode), for two years. He became assistant teacher (*zärafi*)[56] of A'əmärä Mäššäša. Then, he went to Ḥayq Ǝsṭifanos monastery, for one year and half, and studied *qəne* by *Mämhər* Məśraq. He also studied in Däbrä Sina (Gayənt) with *Mämhər* Fərew. He graduated in *qəne* in 1995 EC by Bishop Qerəllos of Wäldiya

53 We found no direct public transportation from Kon thus we had to go to Däsie and take a bus from there (leaving at about 5–6 am) to Dälanta.

54 There he first studied the Psalter.

55 Märawi Wärqənäh was teaching the *sämənna wärq qəne*. He graduated in *goğğam qəne* in Dima Giyorgis which is a place famous for *sämənna wärq qəne* and commentaries of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Märawi Wärqənäh's teacher was *Mämhər* Yared (died 1944 EC) also from Dima Giyorgis. Then Märawi Wärqənäh went to Dälanta Ṭana Iyäsus (where he spent eighteen years and died); there Gäbrä Ḥanna studied with him for ten years. After that, Gäbrä Ḥanna went back to his native village and taught from 1951 and went to the present place (in Dälanta) in 1995 EC.

56 The advanced student of the school of *qəne* (*qəne bet*) is permitted to teach the beginners and lecture *qəne* until his graduation day as *qəne* master. Habtemichael Kidane, "Qəne bet," 285.

who knows different types of *qəne*, including *wadla qəne*. Then Bishop Qerəllos employed him to teach *qəne* in the church school of Mäsqälä Krəstos.

In 2009 both teachers had a good salary in comparison with some others in that time. In 2009 Yəbabe Fäqadä received 125 Birr a month and the old teacher Gäbrä Ḥanna 300 Birr. On the other side, ten on seventeen students were receiving 95 Birr a month. This place was considered as a boarding school and a kind of 'high school' of *qəne* which explains the rather high salaries in a rather isolated place.

These were the teachers I met and interviewed in 2009. We heard of other *qəne* schools in the area of Wadla but we were not able to visit them, because we had not enough time and no private transportation. For example, near Wägäl Ṭena, the names of two other *qəne* teachers were given, *Mämhər* Fəssəḥa Č̣anne and *Mämhər* Bäyyänä in the large church (*däbr*) of Babba Nä'akkʷəto Lä'ab. And we heard about the Č̣äw Quṭər *qəne* school near the *däbr* of Mika'el, near Wägäl Ṭena town (Dälanta), on the way from Kon to Wägäl Ṭena in Dälanta.

3 Conclusion

In 1971/72 EC Admasu Ǧämbäre was still putting Wadla in first position on his list of the main centres for learning *qəne* in Ethiopia.[57] In November 2009, after my trip in Wadla, *Mämhər* Gäbrä Wäld (d. 2016), a well-known *qəne* teacher in Bä'ata church in Addis Abäba (including of *wadla qəne*), told me, after I told him that the teaching of *wadla qəne* in Wadla had somehow disappeared: "I don't know what you have found in Wadla now, but in my time there were teachers of *wadla qəne* in Wadla."

During my visit in Wadla in 2009, only two of the *märigeta* we met, Ǝzra Bərhanu and Dibäkwəllu Geṭu, had studied *wadla qəne* but they did not actually teach it at the time we met them, thus their knowledge of *wadla qəne* was somehow lost. Then it seemed to me that, in that time, *wadla qəne* (the root of *qəne*) had much decreased and was not taught in a systematic way in the part of Wadla which I have visited. This was confirmed to me by *Mämhər* Fəssəḥa Č̣anne (his school name was Nä'akkʷəto Lä'ab).[58] When we asked him which teachers were still teaching *wadla qəne* in Wadla, he answered none, except sometimes Ǝzra Bərhanu, just mentioned.

57 Admasu Ǧämbäre, *Mäṣḥafä qəne*, 10. Cf. Habtemichael Kidane, "Qəne," 284–285 and Habtemichael Kidane, "Qəne bet," 286.

58 We called him from Addis Abäba on 3 February 2017 with Dr. Mersha Alehegne of Addis Abäba University whom I want to thank here for his help.

Mämhər Fəssəḥa Č̣anne studied *wadla qəne* from *Mämhər* Däbrä Maryam, from *Mämhər* Kaśśaye Ḥawaz (who lived in Č̣äw Quṭər Mika'el) and from *Mämhər* Wäldä Tənsa'e (who lived in Č̣ana Mika'el), all from Wadla. He graduated in *wadla qəne* with *Mämhər* Ḥawaz in Nä'akkʷəto Lä'ab. He also went to Goğğam to study *gonǧ qəne* with *Mämhər* Harägäwäyn Kənde in Wägära Guntər in the church of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qəddus (not far from Gonǧ), where he graduated in *gonǧ qəne*. In February 2017, he was teaching *gonǧ qəne* in Dässe (in Mänbärä Ṣäḥay Täklä Haymanot church) not *wadla qəne*, which means that his knowledge of *wadla qəne* was not transmitted, as it is also unfortunately the case for other teachers knowing *wadla qəne*.

Mämhər Fəssəḥa Č̣anne also gave me the following information. In Nä'akkʷəto Lä'ab, the genealogy of *qəne* teachers is as follows: the first teacher was *Mämhər* Wäldä Giyorgis who gave his chair to Śənnä Giyorgis, then to Wəbe Gäbrä Śəllase, Bərəlle Wube, Bälay Gobäze, Märʿawi, Gäbrä Maryam gave it to Ḥawaz, and then to himself, Fəssəḥa Č̣anne.

When Fəsseha Č̣anne was a student, the following *qəne* teachers were famous in Wadla: Wäldä Tənsa'e (in Č̣ana Mika'el), Gəč̣äw (in Yäč̣äräqa Giyorgis) and Gäbrä Mäsqäl (from Sayənt Tängobaläl Mädəḥ) who used to teach *wadla qəne* in Tängobaläl Mädḫane ʿAläm church (in Sayənt). Fəssəḥa Č̣anne named another famous teacher of *wadla qəne*, Yəḥeyyəs (in Boräna Mäkanä Sälam in Kidanä Məḥrät church, in Wällo), still alive in 2017, but very old and not teaching any longer.

According to Fəssəḥa Č̣anne, the famous centres to teach *wadla qəne* in Wadla were (still during the imperial period): Betä Yoḥannəs (with the famous teacher Gäbrä Mäsqäl), Yänäğğa Mika'el (with the famous teacher Täkkallənň Mängäša who also had a great knowledge of *dəggʷa*) and Betä Hor Giyorgis where the famous Gäbre was teaching. In February 2017 there was no more *qəne* teaching in these places.

Mämhər Fəssəḥa Č̣anne also said that, in 2017, in his original place of Babba Nä'akkʷəto Lä'ab, *Mämhər* Bäyyänä Nəguś, mentioned before, was old and sick and not teaching *wadla qəne* any longer and that there was no more teacher of *qəne* also in Č̣äw Quṭər *qəne* school in St. Michael church (also mentioned before) where the last teacher was Ḥawaz. Ḥawaz taught *wadla qəne*. This interview with Fəssəḥa Č̣anne shows the decrease of the teaching of *wadla qəne* in Wadla recently. About Täkkallənň Mängäša and the other famous teachers named in this article, further investigations should be made.

At the same time, also in February 2017, I heard from Dr. Mersha Alehegne in Addis Abäba that a group of people in the town of Wäldiya wanted to revive *wadla qəne*, with a committee under Archbishop Qerəllos and with the collaboration of the university of Wäldiya and of the local governement. During my

visit in Wäldiya in January 2019, I heard the same information, also with the support of the newly appointed Bishop Erməyas. Further and more systematic studies are needed to complete my present comments on the situation of *wadla qəne*, its teaching and the situation of the few professors still teaching it in Wadla and elsewhere in Ethiopia.

Nowadays, in Ethiopia, *wadla qəne* is still taught, but by very few teachers.[59] *Wadla qəne* is said to be more complex and complicated to compose than other types of *qəne*. As mentioned before, the *wadla qəne* is particularly difficult on account of its composition and interpretation, because it employs many equivocal words, allusions and allegoric figures. This explains partly why there are very few specialists of *wadla qəne* still composing it today in Ethiopia. Also the deep meaning of the *wadla qəne*, more than other types of *qəne*, is very difficult to be understood by the audience when it is sung in church because people are less learned than in the past in this specific type of *qəne*, and also in *qəne* and in Gəʿəz language in general. And today people request *qəne* which can be understood easily such as *waššära qəne*.

Traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been taught for centuries and is still taught, but for how many years more? Now what about global interconnections of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditional education and *qəne*? Apparently external influences are none. In reality, modern life with a lot of western habits in Ethiopia has a strong and negative impact on these Christian traditional fields in Ethiopia today. It is also a fact that, nowadays, less young people dragged by modern life are interested to study Gəʿəz and traditional education, including *qəne*. The question of the decreasing number of teachers and students and the reasons for that should also be discussed. For all the questions about this topic, the causes must be analysed and answers must be found, as *qəne* and *wadla qəne*, being deeply part of the traditional oral teaching of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, can be seen as intangible patrimony not only in Ethiopia but also in the history of church at large.

Other factors must be analysed. Nowadays in Ethiopia, and for many decades already, foreign influences came from the western countries, including from other churches through their missionaries's activity. For example, the missionaries, especially from the Protestant traditions, do put forward modernity and technological progress, often without respecting the traditional life and teaching of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and sometimes also mocking not to say showing despise for the traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. One might perceive these factors as somewhat negative.

59 I hope to speak about it in another article.

One cannot stop modernity as well as western influence in Ethiopia including in the life of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Then, what to do to keep this traditional education (including *qəne*) alive for today and for the next generations? How to keep something of this traditional *qəne* teaching, which is an oral teaching thus fragile and difficult to keep? In this case, modern technichal means could be very useful in order to safeguard what can be safeguarded, for example through recording and making videos.

It is now the last moment to think and to organise recording of the best teachers as well as to publish materials that they have preserved for example in their notebooks of grammar while they were students, or what they learned and remember from their teachers, some being famous and their names must be remembered as well. It is time to write their history, or at least what is being remembered today about them. Ideally all such material should then be put on a website, in order to be shared by the largest number of people (Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, scholars, etc.).

At the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Trondheim Norway in July 2007, I presented a paper to challenge people to make specific studies on traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Ethiopia, including on *qəne*.[60] In this paper I wish to challenge people on *wadla qəne* in Wadla. Here I present this paper as a little act of resistance in time and space, in fact a shout in the middle of the modern wilderness as *qəne*, *wadla qəne* and the teaching of Gəʿəz are somehow, slowly, step by step, disappearing in Ethiopia.

All together we have to think seriously what to do, how to do it, how to answer the question of the future of traditional education, including *qəne* and *wadla qəne*, and how to save all this. The first step would be to write down in detail all the rules of *qəne*, including *wadla qəne* (especially its grammar, *aggäbab*), and also verbs, in a systematic and scholarly way.[61]

In the case of traditional education and *qəne* teaching in a globalized context, western scholars who really appreciate traditional education as well as *qəne*, together with Ethiopian scholars, could find ways to keep it alive and to teach it (also on Internet). In the case of our topic, *qəne*, all the rules of the different types and schools of *qəne* should be written down in a very precise and

60 Christine Chaillot, "Traditional Teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," in *Research in Ethiopian Studies. Selected Papers of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim July 2007*, ed. Harald Aspen et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 240–247.

61 See Muluken Andualem Siferew, *Comparative Classification of Ge'ez Verbs in the Three Traditional Schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2013). See e.g. also: Hiruie Ermias, *The Issues of* ʾAggabāb (*Classic Gəʿəz Grammar*) *According to the Tradition of* Qəne *Schools*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Universität Hamburg 2018.

detailed way. All this material should be published and shared through printed and digital media. This type of collaboration would be a way to save what can be saved of the Ethiopian Orthodox treasure of *qəne* for the coming generations. This would also configure the global interconnections and local identities in a positive way.

Some of our present considerations show that it is very urgent to make interviews and to record at least the very best teachers before they pass away and before their knowledge and traditional way of teaching is lost. For the last decade I have repeated this, unfortunately without any tangible results. If the teaching of *qəne* (and also of traditional teaching of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church at large) is not preserved properly, soon it can be lost, and forever. This is my worry. It should be our common worry.

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CHAPTER 13

Rastafarian Perceptions of the Christian Burial of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase I (2000)

Verena Böll

1 Introduction[1]

The Ethiopian Orthodox ceremony of the Christian burial of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase I (1930–1974) took place in Addis Abäba, Ethiopia on 5 November 2000. The event has had a great local and global impact. Rastafarians worship Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase as God and Messiah. They were skeptical about the event and only a few attended. In my paper I will describe the sequence of the burial and present some comments from the Rastafarians on this ceremony.

2 The Death of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase

Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase, the last emperor of Ethiopia, ruled as emperor from 1930 until 1974. Born on 23 July 1892 as Prince Täfäri Mäkʷännən he was appointed regent and throne successor in 1916.[2] On 2 November 1930 he was enthroned and crowned in the Gännätä Ṣəge Giyorgis (Qəddus Giyorgis) in Addis Abäba as emperor. His reign ended in 1974 after 44 years.[3] On Septem-

1 My scheduled paper *Funerals of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians in Germany* was postponed because the first part of our documentary on the burial of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase (see fn. 7) was shown in the film panel "Ethiopian Studies through Image, Sound and Beyond: Perspectives from Ethnographic films" by Itsushi Kawase during the 20th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies and I could present some details in the panel "Ethiopian Christianity: Global Interconnections and Local Identities" organized by Martin Tamcke and Stanislau Paulau.

2 He was proclaimed with the rank and title *Ras* in 1916 and started immediately his efforts of Ethiopian Modernity, see: Stanislau Paulau, "Isaac of Niniveh, *Ras* Täfäri and the Making of Ethiopian Modernity," in Acts of the *Symposium Syriacum* 2016, ed. Emidio Vergani et al. (forthcoming).

3 On his person and reign, see: Christopher Clapham, "Ḫaylä Śəllase," in *EAe* 2 (2005): 1060–1066.

ber 11, 1974, Ḫaylä Śəllase was deposed and locked up in a wing of the palace. There he died as a prisoner on 26 August 1975.[4] His body was secretly buried in the palace grounds.

The collapse of the socialist military government of Mängəśtu Ḫaylä Maryam in 1991 allowed family members to search for his remains. They were discovered in 1992 and for the time being kept in the church of the palace, the Bä'atä Maryam church.[5] After the end of the Transitional government and the start of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia in 1995 different efforts started to organize a Christian burial and a state funeral. The time had come on November 2000 and lasted three days.

The November 2000 was chosen mainly due to the coronation day of the emperor, but also because of the 14th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, during which an international audience was already present in Addis Abäba.[6] All foreign participants of the Conference have been invited to attend the solemnity on Sunday, 5 November 2000, and numerous visitors witnessed the ceremony, this applies also for me and two other researchers, Günther Schlee and Georg Haneke (d. 2017). They filmed the ceremony at different places and the footage was stored in the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale), Germany. A three-year research project (Ḫaylä Śəllase Film Project, October 2016–July 2019) enabled me, assisted by Ambaye Ogato and Robert Dobslaw to produce a two-part documentary on the ceremony and the perspectives of the Rastafarians about the death and burial of the emperor.[7]

3 The Christian Burial of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase

Ḫaylä Śəllase was officially buried only 25 years after his death. For Ethiopian Orthodox Christians this violates the existing rites of mourning and burial

4 The discussion about the date of his death and the circumstances, if he was murdered are currently being revived by the opening of the archives and the emergence of new documents.

5 The Bä'atä Maryam church is the mausoleum of Emperor Mənilək II, who died in 1913 but was buried only in 1916, see: Estelle Sohier, "Le corps des rois des rois dans la ville: Ménélik II et Haylé Sellasé à Addis Abeba," *Afriques. Débats, méthodes et terrains d'histoire* 3 (2011), https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.1015.

6 The 14th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies took place at the University of Addis Abäba from 6 to 11 November 2000.

7 Verena Böll, Georg Haneke, Günther Schlee, Ambaye Ogato and Robert Dobslaw, *Emperor Haile Selassie I. His Burial and the Rastafarians in Shashamane, Ethiopia. A two-part Documentary*, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale), Germany, Part 1 2018, 45 min., Part 2 2019, 49 min., https://www.eth.mpg.de/cms/en/media/haile-selassie-film-project.

which are supposed to take place in a precisely prescribed sequence immediately after the death.[8] The funeral traditionally takes place the same day.[9] The funeral rite and liturgy include the caring for the dying, the wake, the prayer of absolution and the ablution of the death. Due to the circumstances of the death of Ḫaylä Śəllase and that all his closest relatives were imprisoned these rites could not be performed. And when his corpse was discovered in 1992 it was just bone. But regarding the other parts of the mourning rites there was the possibility of carrying them out despite the time lag of a quarter century.

In the Ethiopian Orthodox culture, a funeral is a very important social moment. Relatives, friends, neighbors and other people participate. The number of participants provide information about the social position and rank of the deceased. The organizers of the burial of Ḫaylä Śəllase got the permission from the government to perform the ceremony at different places and churches to guarantee a place for all mourners and to be able to fulfill the mandatory procession.[10] The organizers, coordinated by the Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase I Memorial Foundation, the War Veterans Association, the Crown Council in exile and family members were sure that many people would attend.

The organizing committee defined three churches for the liturgical commemorations. The liturgy of the dead (requiem mass) was celebrated on 2 November 2000 in the Gännätä Ṣəge Giyorgis where he was crowned 70 years

8 In the *Mäṣḥafä gənzät* (*መጽሐፈ፡ ግንዘት* "Book of wrapping [corpse]"), translated from Gəʿəz into Amharic titled *Yäfəṭḥat mäṣḥaf* ("Book of absolution"), the prescribed prayers for burial liturgy are to be found. The best overview and translation of the Ethiopian liturgical books on mourning and burial offers Friedrich Erich Dobberahn, "Der äthiopische Begräbnisritus," in *Liturgie im Angesicht des Todes. Judentum und Ostkirchen*. Vol. 1, ed. Hansjakob Becker and Hermann Ühlein (St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 1997), 137–316, 657–683 (text); Friedrich Erich Dobberahn, "Der äthiopische Begräbnisritus," in ibid., vol. 2, 859–1036 (translation); Friedrich Erich Dobberahn, "Weitere Formulare zum äthiopischen Begräbnisritus," in ibid., vol. 3, 1397–1432; Friedrich Erich Dobberahn, "Das Gedenken an die Verstorbenen im äthiopischen Begräbnisritus," in ibid., 1469–1486, 1506–1508.

9 The globalization and the fact that at least one member of a household is living in another city or land changes the tradition. Funerals are still carried out immediately (there are only a few cold stores in Ethiopia) but the liturgical ceremonies are increasingly postponed to enable all relatives to travel home and to participate.

10 On the procession, see: Verena Böll, "Die Anwesenheit von Klageweibern bei der Bestattung von Kaiser Ḫaylä Śəllase im Jahr 2000," in *Ägypten und der Christliche Orient. Peter Nagel zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Heike Behlmer, Ute Pietruschka and Frank Feder (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018), 39–46; Anaïs Wion, "Onction des malades, funérailles et commémorations: pour une histoire des textes et des pratiques liturgiques en Éthiopie chrétienne," *Afriques. Débats, méthodes et terrains d'histoire* 3 (2011), https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.921.

ago.[11] On Sunday, 5 November, the solemn funeral started with a liturgy at the Bä'atä Maryam church at the Palace compound, where his bones have been kept since 1992, followed by prayers in the Gännätä Ṣəge Giyorgis and the main liturgy at the Holy Trinity Cathedral (Qəddəst Śəllase Cathedral). Ḫaylä Śəllase had the Cathedral built in 1933 (the construction was interrupted by the Italian invasion and was completed in 1943) to be his court church and his final resting place. His consort Empress Mänän (d. 1962) has her grave there in the chapel and the other family members are laid out there in granite coffins in the crypt.

The burial ceremony of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase was planned by the organizers as a state funeral, but only a few days before the date it was cancelled by the government and the ceremonies were only allowed to be held on a smaller scale.[12] This was also noticeable on the Meskel (*Mäsqäl*) Square where many chairs remain empty. After the prayers in the Bä'atä Maryam church early in the morning the red granite coffin, draped in the Ethiopian flag, with the mortal remains of Ḫaylä Śəllase was brought in a car procession to this place. There, the coffin was set out in the middle of the square, guarded by members of the Imperial guards in their specific uniforms with baboon headdresses and lion's mane cape worn over a striped silk tunic. After liturgical chants, addresses and the funeral oration by the grandson Bä'ədä Maryam Mäkʷännən,[13] the funeral procession continued to the church of Gännätä Ṣəge Giyorgis. The granite coffin was put on a decorated pickup, the veterans took up their position on the truck by standing the whole procession besides the coffin. After a short stop in the Gännätä Ṣəge Giyorgis the funeral procession, consisting of cars and walkers, continue to the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. It is here that most of the participants of the 14th Interntional Conference of Ethiopian Studies attended as guests. They could witness the ceremonial arrival of Patriarch Ṗawlos, who presided over the ceremony at the church forecourt. After a while the pickup with the coffin arrived and the choirs started to sing. The coffin was laid out and the liturgical ceremony started. The dance and the rhythmical singing by the *däbtära* using the sistrum and the ceremonial stock (*mäqqʷamiya*) around

11 Many guests from abroad attended the coronation in 1930 and the international press reported abundantly. It was the wish of the organizers that this should also be possible at the funeral ceremony.

12 Interview with *Liqä kahənat* Abbaye, Abbäbä Bäqqälä and Nəguśä Ambo of the Haile Selassie I Memorial Foundation on October 2018 in Addis Abäba. Together with my colleague Ambaye Ogato I conducted two interviews with the board of directors. The results of these and other interviews, which could not be included in the film, will be published in articles.

13 He was imprisoned until 1989 and lives now in Addis Abäba. We interviewed him in October 2018.

the coffin was part of the ecclesiastical rite but also symbolized the dignified farewell of the last emperor of Ethiopia. Speeches by *Abunä* Gärima and Patriarch Ṗawlos recalled Ḫaylä Śəllase's support for the church and his contributions to Ethiopia, Africa and the entire world. Finally, the coffin was taken by the emperor's grandchildren and great-grandchildren on their shoulder and they walk slowly towards the church. Inside the church, Patriarch Ṗawlos gives his blessings. The flag, in which the coffin was draped, was folded and handed over to the last daughter still alive, to Princess Tänañña Wärq (d. 2003). The coffin and that of Empress Mänän are now standing side by side in the cathedral's chapel.

4 Rastafarian Perceptions

Is His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase, King of Kings of Ethiopia, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, really dead? The Rastafarians doubt or deny this. Rastafarians, attributing their name on the first title (*Ras*) and birth name (Täfäri) of Ḫaylä Śəllase, live in different places in Ethiopia, but their main living area is Šašämäne.[14] In Šašämäne we conducted long-durée interviews with 15 Rastafarians about their belief and their comments on his announced death (1975) and his burial (2000).[15] The Rastafarians belong in Šašämäne mainly to the houses (mansions) of Nyabinghi, the Twelve Tribes or the Ethiopian World Federation.[16]

14 Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase granted land in Šašämäne to the "black people of the world" as a thank-you present for their support during the Italian invasion and occupation (1935–1941), see: Kevin A. Yelvington, "Jamaica and the Caribbean," in *EAe* 3 (2007): 266–267. Since 1948 black people repatriate to Ethiopia to live in the only sovereign nation. The first Rastafarian from the Caribbean, especially Jamaica, came in 1968 to Ethiopia and settled in Šašämäne, see: Giulia Bonacci, "An Interview in Zion. The Life-History of a Jamaican Rastafarian in Shashemene, Ethiopia," *Callaloo* 34, no. 3 (2011): 744. Since then the Rastafarian community in Šašämäne became international, including Rastafarians with European origin.

15 The second part of our documentary points out the perspectives of the Rastafarians about the death and burial through interviews with Rastafarians in Šašämäne, Ethiopia. On the website of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle (Saale), Germany, 2019 a film booklet and a postcard booklet provide further information about the research and the interviewees: https://www.eth.mpg.de/cms/en/media/haile-selassie-film-project.

16 See Giulia Bonacci, "Rastafari/Rastafarianism," in *EAe* 4 (2010): 339–340 and for a detailed overview Giulia Bonacci, *Exodus! Heirs and Pioneers, Rastafari Return to Ethiopia*, trans. Antoinette Tidjani Alou (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2015). The

4.1 *Rastafarian Belief System and the Death of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase*

The Rastafarian movement is characterized by individualism and freedom, there is no central structure or head and some Rastafarians do not belong to a certain house. Part of them are members of Ethiopian churches, in Ethiopia especially of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church. Two points are common among all Rastafarians, the veneration of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase and the appraisal of Ethiopia as the promised land.

The Bible is the most read book by the Rastafarians. During the conversations they quote Bible passages, mostly from the Leviticus and other books of the Old Testament. Other scriptures of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church are well known. Besides the Christian scriptures the speeches of Ḫaylä Śəllase are intensively studied and cited as well.

The relation between the Rastafarians and representants of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is inconsistent. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church accepts the movement on certain points and the Rastafarians are welcomed by the church. It is possible to be both, baptized member of the church and Rastafarian. Rastafarians in Europe have their children baptized in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, one reason being the search for spiritual and physical closeness to Ethiopia.[17] During his lifetime Ḫaylä Śəllase was the (secular) head of the church and becoming member of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church means to be part of his religious and spiritual realm. For the Rastafarians the millennium started with the coronation of Ḫaylä Śəllase in 1930 and in the end, there will be a D-day, a final judgement.

Ras Kawintseb explained that there has been always a biblical relation between Israel, Ethiopia, Jesus Christ and Ḫaylä Śəllase. The inscription INRI above the cross of Jesus means "I Nəguś rule Israel." This is a popular Interpretation among the Rastafarians in Šašhämäne.[18]

Sister Ijahnya states that she gives thanks and praises in the name of His Imperial Majesty Ḫaylä Śəllase and praises to Empress Mänän. The name Ḫaylä Śəllase means power of the Trinity. And the Trinity for them is not three male persons, but the father, the mother and the child which is the basis of the African family. The Trinity is eternal and can never die.

For the Rastafarian Sandrine, Alex and Jaden, Ḫaylä Śəllase of Ethiopia is God and Messiah. But they refer to biblical figures as well and through Ḫaylä Śəllase Jesus Christ is transformed to a *Black Christ*. Alex argues that Ḫaylä

Ethiopian perspective is included in Erin C. MacLeod, *Visions of Zion: Ethiopians and Rastafari in the Search for the Promised Land* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

17 Merawi Tebege, "Rastafari und die Äthiopisch-Orthodoxe Kirche," *Salama* 35 (2005): 35.

18 Interview 7 May 2019. *Nəguś* is the Amharic word for King.

Śəllase conquered death as Christ did. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and Christians believe in his second coming and for him Ḫaylä Śəllase is the resurrected Christ. They explain that Ḫaylä Śəllase did Christian deeds and followed the Bible. They do not believe the story of his death and the presented evidences. Ḫaylä Śəllase is alive, he is a messiah, a king, a living black Christ. Alex says, "I don't believe in white Christ." They argue that history and religion are always two different things. Religion has to do with belief and not with evidence. People believe that Christ has arisen and Rastafarian believe that Ḫaylä Śəllase is alive, there is no difference. History deals with facts, but even history needs proofs and research. And until today no prove about the death and the dead body of Ḫaylä Śəllase was submitted.[19]

Ras Fwè Jah Jah says that he does not want to talk about the death of Ḫaylä Śəllase as he does not believe in it; instead, he wants to talk about love. He believes that love is what Ḫaylä Śəllase represents and Ḫaylä Śəllase is God, a creator and created everything. He argued that a funeral is a "men-thing," Mängəśtu Ḫaylä Maryam is man, all organizers are men, but Qädämawi (the first) Ḫaylä Śəllase is spiritual, he is God. We must talk only about these positive vibrations.[20]

For Che Peter Lee, Ḫaylä Śəllase is a king of kings, but he never worships Ḫaylä Śəllase as God. He refers to the Bible, "the Bible told us that Israel was never short of a prophet and that is why we love Ḫaylä Śəllase." He is sceptical about the death of the emperor and argued that he believes Ḫaylä Śəllase as a spiritual person, he is from God and so it is hard to say that he is dead, or someone killed him. He cannot say Ḫaylä Śəllase is dead because he does not believe in that.[21]

Ras Iron Gad and Elder Zion Gad compare the crises after the death of Christ 2000 years ago with the one after the alleged death of Ḫaylä Śəllase. And as the Ethiopian Church is one of the oldest churches in the world, the Rastafarians had to establish their community on this land given in Ethiopia by the emperor. Ethiopia is Zion for the Rastafarian "The black man's Zion ruled by their God and king, Ḫaylä Śəllase."[22]

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19 Interview with Alex and Jaden in August 2018 and with both and Sandrine in October 2018. *Ras* Ghion indirectly criticized this statement by saying: "He believes in colour," interview 10 May 2019.

20 Interview August 2018. Ras Fwè Jah Jah came to Ethiopia eleven years ago for the Ethiopian millennium (E.C.).

21 Interview in his Bolt house in May 2019.

22 Interview in a soup bar, 10 May 2019. In the soup bar they sell food, consisting of ingredients from own cultivation.

Sister Linda and *Mama* Joan discuss the deification of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase, and *Sister* Linda explains that Ḫaylä Śəllase is alive, he is a Messiah, but he is not divine.[23] *Ras* Kawintseb and his friend Paul McIntosh handed over material that witnesses that Ḫaylä Śəllase is alive. Among others a video with an interview with an Indian who saw Ḫaylä Śəllase in London in the 1980s. *Ras* Kawintseb stresses that even if Ḫaylä Śəllase is not present in person, his ideas are always present among the Rastafarians. He is immortal, immortal for the whole world.[24]

Sister Ijahnya, *Ras* Iron Gad and Elder Zion Gad told that Ḫaylä Śəllase lives in Lalibäla as a *baḥtawi*. He was seen there several times. The *baḥtawi*, Ethiopian Orthodox hermits, have a high value among the Rastafarians.[25] *Ras* Ghion emphasised that Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase is living, he is 126 years. The holy old people, the *baḥtawi* in the holy mountains told him that the emperor is not dead. For him the *baḥtawis* are holy men, strongly disciplined, living a pure life, dedicated to God. They are the real *arbäñño*č̌ (patriots).[26]

What become clear through the interviews is that the denial of the death and the burial are closely linked together. When Ḫaylä Śəllase died, an attempt was made to keep that secret and his corpse was not shown, no relatives saw him dead. The prescribed rituals of the church could not be performed. Some of the Rastafarians are members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church and they accept the funeral rites of the church. But because these rites could not be fulfilled, he could not be dead. Both arguments were given by the interviewees to emphasize that he is not dead. He only disappeared in August 1975 and is still alive.

4.2 *The Bones*

Another argument was mentioned again and again by the Rastafarians: The question regarding the bones. When in 1992 the remains of Ḫaylä Śəllase were found at the palace compound, the international newspaper and TV channels documented the digging for the bones. In the film *The Emperor's Birthday* by John Dollar (1992) one interviewee, Noel Dyer explains, that the Rastafarians from all over the world gather in 1992 to celebrate the centennial birthday (23 July) of Ḫaylä Śəllase in Addis Abäba and that the appearance of the bones

23 Interview May 2019 in the Restaurant Bolt house of Che Peter Lee, the son of *Mama* Joan.

24 Meeting with *Ras* Kawintseb and Paul McIntosh in the garden of *Ras* Kawintseb, 8 May 2019.

25 Interview in a soup bar, 10 May 2019.

26 Interview in his hut, August 2018.

at this very moment was very confusing.[27] He emphasizes that His Majesty is alive and that they will celebrate a living king and not a dead bone. The pilgrimage of the Rastafarians to Addis and their presence at the most important places for Ḫaylä Śəllase, like the Palace, the University, the headquarter of the African Union and their performances at the National Theatre was perceived positively by the residents. The memories of Ḫaylä Śəllase, who had been suppressed during the dictatorship, came back. In some reports it was said they came for a supposed burial instead for the centenary, but all interviewees denied this.[28]

Numerous arguments have been raised against the alleged bones of Ḫaylä Śəllase. *Ras* Kawintseb mentions the missing autopsy and medical examination of the bones. It exists no certificate of death. A DNA test and analysis were not performed. Nowadays old bones can be dated exactly, so why they did not make a DNA test? He also comments the size of the bones, especially the thighbone. Ḫaylä Śəllase was short in stature, but the bones discovered were very large. The same is true for the sarcophagus, it did not fit, and that cannot be as the Ethiopian craftsmen are masters.[29]

4.3 *The Burial*

The burial rites of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are a controversial issue. *Ras* Kabinda said that the Rastafarians have a different concept of death.[30] The mourning, the lamentations, the regulations and limitations for a year after the death of a relative they do not practice. Dying happens and life goes on. The death is accepted, and funerals should not be a big deal.[31]

Ras Kawintseb said that the burial in 2000 was a propaganda and a fake. It was not a state burial, but a public one. *Ras* Ghion does not believe that

27 John Watt Dollar, *The Emperor's Birthday* (Ethiopia / USA, 1992), 52 min., https://search.alexanderstreet.com/preview/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cvideo_work%7C1689423. Noel Dyer is well-known by the Rastafarians as the one who walked to Ethiopia. He is the father of Jonathan Dyer, whom we interviewed in May 2019. On the film, see the review of John Homiak. Homiak discusses the postmodern idea of "Travelling Cultures" by James Clifford and shows that the filmmaker uses the door of a hotel as symbol for the culture-as-travel. John Homiak, "Rastafari Voices Reach Ethiopia," *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 4 (1994): 962.

28 About the Rastafarians during the Derg time, see: Bonacci, "An Interview," 753.

29 Interview October 2018. *Ras* Kawintseb lived in Šašhämäne for more than twenty years. He is a musician and artist.

30 Interview 10 May 2019.

31 The question, where to bury dead Rastafarians in Šašhämäne, is not solved, see: Carsta Schnabel, *Heimkehr aus Babylon. Rastafari repatriieren nach Äthiopien* (Köln: Köppe, 2017).

Ḫaylä Śəllase is dead as no official of the Därg regime acknowledged the death of Ḫaylä Śəllase. For him the burial was a great crime, a drama played by the government to bury the Imperial system and institute a new federalism system. The government took eight years to prepare the drama. Rastafarians fights against Babylon, they cannot accept the burial.[32]

Sister Berenice phrased it like that: "It is just a big joke. If you don't have a body, you don't have a dead person to bury." Jonathan Dyer remembers when he was a little kid he heard that Ḫaylä Śəllase is dead and his father was so vexed and said: "Ḫaylä Śəllase did not die, how can they said that." Jonathan emphasises the significance of the new generation in Šašämäne. They do not care about the burial almost twenty years ago. Ḫaylä Śəllase is the reason their parents or grandparents came to Ethiopia. Ḫaylä Śəllase is always present.[33]

5 Conclusion

The global interconnections between Ethiopia and the world can be shown by the person of Emperor Ḫaylä Śəllase. The performance of this Orthodox burial in the year 2000, 25 years after his death got international attention. The ceremony caused a lot of controversy. The Rastafarians believe that Ḫaylä Śəllase is still alive and therefore it was not his burial.

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32 Interview October 2018. Babylon stands for the (western) world which follows the material goods and the evil thoughts.

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