

ACCOUNTS REGARDING HISTORICAL EVENTS EXPOSED IN THE HAGIOGRAPHY OF ST. QAWESTOS

Hiruie Ermias

ABSTRACT

Apart from the life history and spiritual combats of saints, hagiographies deal with various historical occurrences that happened during the lifetime of the saints to whom they are dedicated. In some cases, incidents that took place before the rise of the saints are narrated in the hagiographies as standing points of the stories happened during their lifetime. The Hagiography of St. Qawəstos is one of the oldest hagiographical manuscripts which are rich in cultural and historical accounts. It is composed by Abuna Mabā'a Şəyon who was the disciple of the saint in the 14th century. As a direct witness, the composer wrote the saint's spiritual struggle and achievements sincerely and unambiguously. He has carefully mentioned the places where the incidents that had relation with the saint took place. The flow of the historical narratives covers the period between 970 BC to 15th CE, from Jerusalem to Kafā and 'Ēnsāro of Ethiopia. One of its peculiarities is that some of the historical accounts are not found written in other relevant sources. It also provides extent information with regard the known historical narrations such as the arrival of Ark of the Covenant in Ethiopia. The aim of this narrative article is to concisely demonstrate such historical narratives described in the hagiography. It consists of four sections and eight sub-sections which contain various selected issues. The first section is an introduction which gives an impression of the significance of hagiographies. The second and third sections deal with the tradition of

the hagiography and the historical events described in it. The fourth section is a conclusion that delivers a short and kind recommendation.

1. INTRODUCTION: The importance of local Hagiographies to the reconstruction of Ethiopian History

As many would agree, the time between the restoration of the so-called Solomonic Dynasty (1270 C.E) and the raise of Aḥmad Ibn Ibrahim Al-Ghazi (Aḥmad Gērāñ) 1528 C.E was the golden age of Ethiopian literature by which a large number of both ecclesiastical and secular texts were produced (OXDCC 1997: 565). On the secular side, the translation of the most popular historical document which is known as Kəbra Nagaśt was carried out by Nəburaed Yeshāq in the 13th century (Ibid, p. 75). Similarly, the translations of many other texts from Coptic-Arabic into Geez and the compositions of several chronicles and hymnodic treatises have been conducted by different scholars. It is undoubtful that most of the texts produced in that period were ecclesiastical texts. The remarkable indigenous text which does have an immense theological and historical value, Maṣḥafa Məštīr of *Abba* Giyorgis of Gasčča (1365-1425 C.E) and Maṣḥafa Bərhān of Emperor Zar‘ay‘əqob (1434-1468 C.E) were some of the magnificent literary achievements of the period.

One of the most important literary work to which a special attention was given by the scholars of the period was a composition of Hagiographies. Hagiography is a significant part of literature which deals with the virtuous biographies of saints. From the context of Ethiopian literature, hagiographies have mostly the following five decisive sections in common: foreword, biography, miracles, laudation, and colophon. The accounts provided in these sections give a complete view of the life and deeds of a saint to which the hagiography is dedicated and a glimpse of the composition or the reproduction history of the hagiography itself. But beyond that, each hagiography gives different accounts about historical, cultural, political, and religious experiences of various groups of people and

about natural or artificial incidents happened to them in a specific historical time.

The trend of writing hagiography exists almost in all Oriental Churches. It is believed that in Ethiopia the art had been practiced since ancient time following the spread of monasticism throughout the country in the 12th and 13th Century. As far as the main figures of hagiographies are local or foreign saints the hagiographers were most probably monks and clergymen (Ullendorff 1960: 143 & 148; “Hagiography”, *EAE*, II (2000), 969 (D. Nosnitsin). They are supposed to have dedicated themselves to confessing the exemplary life and apostolic mission of the saint who they were writing about through their compositions. It is also evidently revealed in various texts that the hagiographers had a belief that writing the acts of saints is ultimately a spiritual work and part of religious practices through which they might partake of the saints’ grace and may receive remission of sin from their Lord. Such an impression can genuinely be a motivational power for everyone in the faith to be devotee and productive. We can also say that hundreds of hagiographies produced in that golden era were the effects of such wonderful incentives.

Based on this reality, it is possible to say that the Ethiopic hagiography keeps not only a state of hagiography but also the features of historiography, hymnography, and exegetical commentary collectively and each hagiography has a great importance to recognize well the past history of the country as well as the cultures and mentalities of the people. Many people in Ethiopia recognize that hagiographies are the rudimentary indigenous sources of history and culture that have helped scholars to trace and reconstruct ancient and medieval Ethiopian history along with relevant written documents. (“Hagiographies and the history of Medieval Ethiopia”, *History in Africa* (1981), 107 (S. Kaplan)).

Lapiso Dilebo who critically denounces the works of royal chroniclers such as “የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ ታሪክ” (The History of Ethiopian people) written by *Alaqa* Tāyya Waldmāryām claims that

hagiographies serve as sources for Ethiopian history. He has also consulted with some hagiographies while producing his frequent publications on the origin and identity of Ethiopians (2008: xvii, 103 & 237).

As already mentioned, the main subject of hagiography is indeed the spiritual life of the saint it may concern. But this is not the only theme that a hagiography is concerned with. Beside the biography of the saint, it deals with different societies which had direct or indirect contacts with the saint; with their language, culture, religious practices, social and political administration, production, sayings, myths, clothing style, type of houses, means of transportation, marketing system and currency etc. Again, in many hagiographies one or more kings who were at the lifetime of the saint or earlier have been mentioned reasonably; sometimes, their personalities and their good or bad governmental activities, their genealogy and family status, ministers, advisers, capitals, and date of coronation are included in the narrations concerned with them.

Similarly, different names and locations of several cities, towns, villages, seas, rivers, fountains, mountains, caves, and trees are also mentioned attentively in the hagiographies. Even the etymological background of some terminologies and designations of places could be found essentially in different hagiographies. These accounts are not imaginations or fictions but facts which were transmitted by the eyewitnesses since in most cases the composers or the informants were the disciples of the saints who joined their life and mission with that of the saints. Hence, from the Ethiopian context, the accounts they provide are possibly preferred for reconstructing the history of the country as well.

Such basic reasons make really hagiographies so important due to their further accounts also compel us to study them properly in order to avoid the scarcity of information on some significant issues of history and to fill the blank spaces in historical narrations since in some cases hagiographies provide convenient details and further information even concerning secular history which are not discussed in other secular documents. In addition to this, they made

a considerable contribution for the preservation of Gə'əz language as well as for the development of Ethiopian literature ("Gadl", *EAE II* (2005), 642 (S. Kaplan)).

2. ON THE TRADITION OF HAGIOGRAPHY OF ST. QAWƏSTOS

One of several hagiographies dedicated to local saints that have been composed in the 14th century was the Hagiography of St. Qawəstos. It is known with the title 'Gadla Qawəstos'. The term 'Gadl' is an Ethiopic equivalent term to Hagiography or a vita. It also refers to the combat of the saint.

St. Qawəstos was one of the prominent Ethiopian saints of 14th century who reached several places in Ethiopia and many societies through his missionary activities. He built several monasteries and churches in central and southern Ethiopia. According to the narrative exposed in his hagiography, he was the elder half-brother of King Yəkunno'amlāk (1270 - 1285 AD) and a cousin of St. Taklahāymānot (1215-1313 AD). He was also the founder of the monastery of Nəbge Maryam in northern Šawā. It is reported in various hagiographic texts that he was one of the holy monks who have been violently murdered by the soldiers of Emperor 'Amdaṣəyon (1314- 1344) for refusing to admit the emperor's marital relationship with the concubine of his own father. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawāhədo Church venerates him as a martyr ("Qawəstos", *EAE*, IV, (2010), 266, (D. Nəsnitsin); Hiruie Ermias 2001: 157).

Based on the accounts stated in the colophon, the vita was composed by *Abuna* Mabā'aṣəyon who was one of the most popular disciples of St. Qawəstos during the reign of king Dāwit (1382-1413C.E). King Dawit was the grandson of king 'Amdaṣəyon. He has inspired *Abuna* Mabā'a Ṣəyon to compose the combat of the saint. (*G.Qaw.104vb*)

The composition consists of three parts, foreword, the biography of the saint and the miracles happened before and after his death. According to the testimony embodied in the colophon,

after the completion of its composition, the vita had been regularly read in the palace of king Dāwit. (105rb)

Very few handwritten copies of the vita are available in the monasteries of ʾĒttissā Dabra Ṣəlāləṣ Abuna Taklahāymānot (Ṣəlāləṣ, North Ṣawā), Dabra Libānos Abuna Taklahāymānot (Fəčče, North Ṣawā), and in the Vatican Apostolic Library (Vatican). There are also some digitized copies in the patriarchate Museum of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewāhədo Church (EOTC) (Addis Ababa), in Vatican Apostolic Library (Vatican), in the National Archives and Museum (Addis Ababa), in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies /IES/ (Addis Ababa) and in the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (Minnesota).

The vita was digitized twice (EMML 1513 & 4490). Some selective accounts quoted from it were mentioned by Taddese Tamrat in his book called 'Church and State' (1972:183-86). It was also briefly discussed in the Encyclopedia Aethiopica alongside with the life and combat of the saint ("Qawəṣtoṣ", *EAE*, IV, (2010), 266, (D. Nosenitsin)). The Gə'əz-Italian edition and translation of the vita was published by Osvaldo Raineri in 2004. A decade later, the Gə'əz-English and Gə'əz- Amharic editions and translations have been carried out by the writer of this article in 2014 C.E.

3. ACCOUNTS REGARDING HISTORICAL EVENTS

Beside the age, the vita of St. Qawəṣtoṣ is evidently a significant historical document due to the facts and deep narrations that it provides. Various incidents happened long time ago were illustratively narrated in the vita. Some of the narrations are of course mentioned in other relative sources and well known by scholars and even by non-scholarly individuals. But fortunately, few historical events which appear in written materials very rarely and those which are not mentioned at all are discussed descriptively in different parts of the vita. It also gives more information about some incidents described in other documents. This could be genuinely proofed through the following discussions which are provided

selectively based on the way and style of narration applied in the vita.

3.1. The arrival of Israelites and Ark of the Covenant

Regarding historical events, the arrival of Israelites and Ark of the Covenant during the reign of King Solomon (c. 967-928 B.C.E) the son of David (c. 1007-967 B.C.E) the psalmist is one of the most important issues which took special emphasis in the vita. Henceforth, the story is concisely discussed as narrated in the vita by the great scholar Həywat bəna ba Şəyon (1095-1222 C.E).

King Solomon gave birth to 'Əbna Həkim by the Queen of Ethiopia. Taddese Tamrat called this story 'Fable fabricated by church historiographers' (Tadese, *wəyəyt* v. I, No. 2, 1991). However, this is not a convincing conclusion, because history does need enough evidence to reject stories that are considered unreliable as it needs a reference to accept the reliable ones. Moreover, it is not easy to condemn such a widely known and acceptable story that has a biblical root. (1 Kings 10:1-10, Mathew 12:42).

The vita abstained from going deeply into their relationship. The story just began with the return of 'Əbna Həkim to Ethiopia with Israelites (25rb). As 'Əbna Həkim was still in Jerusalem, the Israelites asked the king to send his son back to the country of his mother. It seems that there were some controversies regarding the rite and tradition of kingdom, because the reason they presented to the king to convince him was, "...because Samuel the archpriests of our Lord did not order us to minister for two kings unless for one king, your father David" (25va).

According to Kəbra Nagaśt (KNS), 'Əbna Həkim went to Jerusalem when he was 22 years old at the 29th year of Solomon's reign. *Bəlätten Getā* Həruy Walda Śəllāse states that he lived with his father about three years in Jerusalem (Həruy: 1928:29). Both KNS and the vita skipped this point. (Sergew, 2008: 25, 32).

Let us come back to the narration; King Solomon accepted their appeal willingly and he ordered them back to send their children, one per family either a son or a girl with his own son to Ethiopia.

Nonetheless, Israelites were not willing to give away their children. By contradicting his order, they took opposition against the king to leave him alone and to appoint another king among the other sons of David otherwise to erect the god of the gentiles instead of Ark of the covenant due to their separation from their children if he used to force them.

Then, the elders of the people went to Zadoq the archpriest (1 King 4:1) and told him what the king ordered them and about their opposition. Zadoq informed the king. Then, Solomon decided immediately to make free discussion with the people to make clear his plan and to convince them. He gave the archpriest the responsibility to transmit his invitation for public meeting.

About three days, he was alone being committed to the steadfast supplication towards his Lord day and night. On the 3rd day, the people were gathered on the open public place. Then, he came to the multitude and discussed with them peacefully. In his discussion, he raised first a sensitive question as a quiz saying: "Where was the prophecy of my father David's psalm, was it from man or from God?"; they answered him "From God"; then, he continued his question, "Does it become real all what he said in his prophecy?"; they answered "yes".

Thus, he began to recite and interpret the 72nd psalm of his father David, "Give the king your judgments O God; and your righteousness to the king's son that he may judge your people with righteousness and the poor with justice Ethiopians will bow before him, and his enemies will lick the dust". He assured them that David has prophesied this about him, his son and about the Ethiopian people who were as poor of the word of God due to the absence of the prophets and priests. Finally, he kindly asked them to send their children to Ethiopia to get blessings from the Lord for the fulfillment of the prophecy with comparing himself as well as the people with Abraham who gave his son Isaac for God's sacrifice.

After such an exigent trial of convincing, the multitude agreed to send their children with 'Ēbna Ḥakim. The archpriest himself offered his older son whose name was Azariah. Those who were

from the line of Reuben gave 900 sons and 300 girls whereas those from the line of Judah 400 sons and 200 girls; 318 sons and 46 girls from the line of Levi; and others in hundred from the remaining tribes. The king permitted to the Levites to take cloths of God's service and inscriptions such as the five books of Moses, the book of Joshua, and the books of Samuel, Psalms of David the books of Judges and the books of Solomon with them. He also allowed them to take one of the sacred elements of the Ark by which they might worship their Lord using it as a sacred symbol.

Zadoq entered first to the Holy of Holies but he could not find the Ark. Thus, he invited his son Azariah to look for it. When he entered, the Ark moved and was carried on his back miraculously (25^{va}-29^{ra}). Kəbra Nagašt did not confirm this phenomenon as a sudden miraculous event like the *vita*. It rather described it as a planned action. According to its narration, few days before their departure, Azariah was informed by God's angel that God has allowed them to take Ark of the Covenant and he himself organized his fellowship of priests' sons. Finally, he took it secretly in the night and uploaded it on the chariot under some trivial elements and old cloths (KNS 2008: Ch. 45 v. 6; 48 v. 2; 50 v. 1-6).

Anyways, Azariah and his fellows left Jerusalem taking the Ark as accompanied by their neighbors who had been already given to 'Ēbna Ḥakim so that they might come to Ethiopia together with them. At the very moment on which they left Jerusalem, the whirlwind terrorized the whole city, and the people were in awe from the sudden perplexity. Then they recognized that the Ark was taken by their children and that the terror took place due to the loss of the Ark; they became more afraid while they were considering and trusting the Ark as their safeguard from any endangerment.

King Solomon pursued them with his ministers riding on chariots transported by rapid horses but unfortunately, he could not reach them because the journey was highly comforted of them by the help of the Lord. They reached to the sea of Eritrea in a single day, the sea became divided into parts and they could pass through just as it happened for their forefathers during the time of Moses the

prophet. This story was testified the same way in KNS (Sergew, 2008: Ch.53 v. 1)

Solomon returned to Jerusalem after watching them while they passed on the sea; his journey longed for about three months and twelve days (29va-30va).

The vita claims the following two reasons for the transition of the Ark from Jerusalem to Ethiopia with astonishing miracles happened:

- "Because the Israelites said, 'we will erect other god' by leaving the Law of Moses that he said, 'You shall have no other god unless the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'" (28vb).
- "Because the Lord agreed its departure from Jerusalem to come to our country the land of Ethiopia" (29ra).

Regarding the stories mentioned in this section, the written source which takes priority to be mentioned as a significant reference is KNS. However, some of the detailed information that are not found in KNS were presented in the vita. Particularly, the negotiation between King Solomon and his people; the reasons and processes of the transaction of Ark of the covenant narrated in the vita did not appear in KNS. Again, if someone likes to make an estimation of the number of Israelites who came to Ethiopia at that historical moment, he should consult with the vita instead of KNS and he takes a glimpse of their number. So, it is possible to say that several questions that arose on the narration of KNS were answered in the narratives of this vita.

3.2. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Ethiopian envoys

Long period of time later after the coming of Israelites to Ethiopia, Jerusalem had been destructed and the Israelites became captives by the infidels.

In the long-wide history of Israel, several destructions led by the unbelieving kings was recorded in several religious and non-religious texts. The vita did not specify which destruction is the

narration about. Nonetheless, from some fragments of the text and some popular individuals mentioned in the story such as Zerubbabel and Daniel; it is quite simple to understand that it is about the destruction led by the Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar in the time of the prophet Daniel which was recorded in the Prophecy book of Daniel (Dan 1:1).

The vita indicated that their transgression of God's Law was the reason why Jerusalem was destructed, and the chosen people became captives. The destruction caused the holy city to become a dwelling of beasts and the people to be scattered into different pagan cities and towns under pagans' jurisdictions.

According to Həywat bəna ba Şəyon's narration recorded in the vita, the Ethiopians sent their envoys to Babylon to comfort the exiled Israelites and to give them some brotherly advices. These were the first Ethiopian delegations that visited the exiled Israelites in Babylon. They suggested them not to exercise pagan practices no matter how they suffer, but rather to keep seriously their faith and tradition. The elders of Israel also begged them to visit Jerusalem and assess the lost inscriptions.

After several years of captivity, the Israelites got their freedom; they returned into their homeland and rebuilt Jerusalem as well as the destructed temples and synagogues with the overwhelming administration of king Zerubbabel (32vb-34ra).

3.3. The exchange of scriptures between the kings of Israel and Ethiopia

According to the vita Zerubbabel (6th century BC) the first king of Judah after the captivity of Israelites in Babylon realized the availability of uncorrupted versions of many Old Testament texts in Ethiopia. So, he sent a message to the Ethiopian king of the time appealing to send him these inscriptions just for copying. Hence, the king sent his delegations for the second time by selecting those who were competent to copy other inscriptions which were not yet in Ethiopia at a time. He gave them 2,200 coins (Golden Dinars), 200 to give for Zerubbabel as a gift and the rest for their provisions.

Therefore, they went to Jerusalem taking various inscriptions. On their return, they brought them back including the newly copied inscriptions such as the book of Isaiah and of Ezekiel. (25ra- 30va)

Regarding the identity of the Ethiopian king who conducted this historical communication with Zerubbabel, there is no obvious reference in the vita. To make a convincing assumption, we should count the date. It is assumed that the regime of Zerubbabel existed between 538 and 520 BC. Based on the information from the list of pre-Christian Ethiopian kings made by *Bälätten Getā Hərüy Walda Śällāse* Ethiopian kings who ruled Ethiopia in this era were Ramhay (246 to 532 BC) and Handiwabra (532-521 BC). It is therefore assumed that one of these two was the one who led this impressive mutual relationship. (1928:33).

3.4. King Ba'əmnat and Sabbath Controversy

Even though, it is difficult to find this stranger name Ba'əmnat in other historical documents even to accept it as a name of an Ethiopian king, it is really a new indication which initiate historians to thoroughly investigate the medieval Ethiopian history which probably remained still entirely uncovered because through consistent investigation may emerge evidently this kind of hidden facts and further information which help to develop to large extent the reconstructed past history from different angles.

Indeed, the vita did not preserve much about him but claimed something interesting. He was one of the kings of Zag'we dynasty who accepted the thoughts of Pop Leo (440-461 CE) of Rome who anathematized and was anathematized back by the Alexandrian patriarch Dioscorus (444-454 CE) at the council of Chalcedon in 451 CE due to his unorthodoxy 'Two Natures Doctrine'. (OXDCC 1997: 966-67).

During his reign there was a controversy between scholars and the monastic communities on the observation of Sabbath. The scholars were divided into two groups; those who were in the first group had been stating "We shall not keep the Sabbath (Saturday) like the Jews because it was substituted by Sunday which is the

Christian Sabbath” whereas those in the other group kept declaring its equal observance with Sunday.

One of the scholars who were defending the observance of Saturday was Həywat bəna ba Şəyon. At a sort of local council organized by the king, he argumentatively confessed about its observance saying, “The observation of the seventh day as a Sabbath was not removed by anyone; even Jesus Christ the Lord did not destroy the Laws, so we should observe it alongside Sunday which is the Christian Sabbath”.

The king was ultimately discontented of his arguments and his protest over those who had tended to keep out observance of the Sabbath from the long-standing Christian order and tradition through his strong statements describing as it is an unorthodox thought. Then, he scourged him through his servants in favor of those who were in the opposite side. The statements stated at the beginning of the same part of the text give hints about the main reason why the king took a side towards the protesters of Sabbath, again why he challenged Həywat bəna ba Şəyon’s confession. They claim that the king did whatever he did in favor of Pop Leo of Rome for he believed in his thoughts. It is also mentioned that the Roman Catholic church does not teach to observe Saturday but rather it proclaims that it is a fasting day. (24ra - 39ra)

When we come to the query of the king’s identity, we can understand that it was a given name of a certain Zāg^{we} king who had reigned during the lifetime of Həywat bəna ba Şəyon (1095-1222 C.E).

Zāg^{we} kings who ruled Ethiopia in this period were Yəmṛhana Kərstos (1067-1117 CE), Harbe (Gabra Māryām) (1117-1157), Lālibalā (1157-1197) and Na’akk^{to} la ’Ab (1197-1237). In the narrative, however, it is claimed that this happened to him when he was still young. If we assume that he was between 30 and 50 years old when this happened to him, then the time should be between 1125 and 1145 CE. According to the list of the kings mentioned earlier, the king at this period was Harbe (Gabra Māryām). So, the

assessment leads us to consider that the king had this additional given name, or some people were calling him Ba'əmnat.

Harbe (Gabra Māryām) is one of the four canonized saints of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church among the kings of Zāg^we dynasty (*Abba* Gorgoryos 1984:41). It is difficult to consider him as a follower of Pop Leo's thought as the *vita* introduced him. So, this leads us to question: How could this have happened? The Ethiopian church historian *Abba* Gorgoryos Archbishop of Šawā (1940-1989 CE) claims that his period is marked by a bitter dispute between the Ethiopian government and the Alexandrian patriarchate over the ordination of local bishops. The Alexandrian patriarch Gabriel II (1131-1145 CE) totally rejected his question to ordain Ethiopian bishops. He did not even send an Egyptian bishop to Ethiopia in his papacy. His successors Patriarch Michael (1145-1146) and Patriarch John IV (1147-1166 CE) were also not willing to send a bishop (1983:40-41).

So, the first possible assumption is that the king felt abandoned by the Coptic church and turned his face towards the Roman Church or played a tactical scene by announcing that he had a relationship with the Church to put pressure on the Alexandrian Church. Some Ethiopian scholars may have taken this seriously and thought so when he denied Orthodox Christianity. This could be the reason why he was introduced in the *Vita* as a follower of Leo's tradition.

The second assumption is that he once was in a confusion of traditions and supported those who recognized the Christian Sabbath only with his personal understanding. This cannot make him a Caledonian because those who he supported were also Orthodox clergy and laity. Again, the issue was not dogmatic, but rather canonical.

On the other hand, the king has a record of scourging his opponents. This also includes his young brother Lālibalā. According to few narratives, Harbe scourged him terribly, and because of this bitter punishment and hate Lālibalā had left the capital and lived in the wilderness (Hiruie 1994: 46-48). It is indeed undeniable that every king or regime has its own order and practice of punishing

opponents. The available materials do not give us information on how people were punished during the reign of Yəmrrhana Kərstos and Lālibal. Fortunately, Lālibalā's story denoted that scourging people who were considered guilty was one of the marks of Harbe's regime. His history of sainthood began after he left his power to Lālibalā to exercise a hermetic life. Thus, this may be the additional factor to suppose him to be the king who is mentioned with the name Ba'əmnat.

3.5. The victory of Nəwāya Krəstos over Saba and Nəgrān

The outstanding victory of king Kaleb (510-540 CE) over the Jewish king of Saba named Finhas (Dhu Nuwas) who had severely persecuted the Christians in Nəgrān the southern part of south Arabia in the middle of 6th century is extensively known in Ethiopian history (OXDCC 1997: 565). His descendants were also ruling over Saba longer after him until they had absolutely lost their power because of the Islamic movement of Muslim conquerors and because of the decline of strength and power of the Ethiopian kings and governors of the time to put persistently their influence on that land (Hable Selassie 1997: 18).

The manuscript introduces the other Ethiopian victory over the Sabaeans which took place long time later at which the Ethiopians had no more political or social influences over them.

The story was as follows: there was a chief governor of Təgrāy whose name was Nəwāyarəstos; he was well known by the people in the province and neighboring districts in terms of his charity beside his administrative position. As a faithful, he had been regularly attending annual celebrations held at Aksum Şəyon. On the same celebration when St. Qawəştos reached in Aksum while looking for his disappeared father, the governor announced in public his victory over the Sabean. He also gave alms for the poor and celebrated the occasion with great joy together with the elites, scholars and priests that came from various parts of Təgrāy (54ra-54vb).

What were the reasons and the consequences of the battle? Where did it take place? How long did they fight against each other?

How big was the loss from both sides? The *vita* gives no more information on such issues. It just introduces the war occurred between Nəwāyākṛəstos and the Sabeans, and that the triumph was for Nəwāyākṛəstos. In secular sources, there is no mention of this victory as well as the war. The governorship of Nəwāyākṛəstos is also not well known. So, doubt may arise on its certainty or an assumption as it is an outcome of some textual error. It might also be considered as a narration about the old victory by king Kaleb and the celebration might have been taken as its memorial celebration.

But as far as the *vita* did not claim that the battle occurred on the land of Saba, the account would not be ambiguous. Even no name of a king from both sides was mentioned. The text was also clearly written without any ambiguous character. Most probably, it might have been a small regional conflict on the border or at the Seashore against the warriors from Saba since he was responsible to safeguard and govern the northern part of the country as a governor of Təgrāy. In the history of Ethiopia and Saba which is the present-day Yemen, conflict is not a strange coincidence. If it were indeed a marginalized national war, it was not Nəwāya Krəstos but the king himself had to lead the war and to celebrate the victory.

3.6. Emperor Yəkunno'amlak

Emperor Yəkunno'amlak (1270-1285 C.E) was one of the most prominent Ethiopian kings and Emperors who had a lot of historical marks which can show him unique both in secular and spiritual history of Ethiopia. But only little is known about his background. The *vita* preserved some important points concerning his parents and close relatives.

He was born in Mañat of Wagəddā around 1220 C.E. His mother 'Əmmənaşəyon was first the wife of Galāwdewos the governor of Dawaro. Dawaro was the big region located along the south of Faṭagār in south-western Ethiopia ("Dawāro", *EAE*, II (2000), 109 (M. Franz-Christoph). There she gave birth to St. Qawəştos and other three children from her first husband Galāwdewos. On the 19th year of Qawəştos' age Galāwdewos left his office with personal

initiation and interest for extent spiritual demand and went to Aksum to be a hermit by pursuing the way which his firstborn son St. Qawəṣṭos preferred.

Thus, the close relatives of Galāwdewos opposed her supposing that she might come to power instead of her husband. They fought against her ministers and others who were on her side but unfortunately, they were defeated and were compelled to accept her second son 'Iyyāsu who she put on his father's chair. Then, she went to Mañat the territory of her father Matewos.

Since she was in Mañat of Wagəddā, begot this Yəkunno'amlāk and his sister the mother of *Abba* Zenā Marqos of Dabra Bəsrāt and Məhur as twins from Tasfā Şəyon who was from the Beta-Israel. After their births, she lived there for a long time.

Therefore, Yəkunno'amlāk was the younger half-brother of St. Qawəṣṭos. The most popular Ethiopian saint Taklahāymānot was also his uncle whereas the other saints *Abba* Anorewos and *Abba* Həşānmo'a the sons of his own aunts (sisters of 'Emmənaşəyon) were his superlative relatives.

He reigned being anointed by the hand of St. Taklahāymānot at his 50. At that time, St. Taklahāymānot was 70 years old, and St. Qawəṣṭos was about 7 months younger than St. Taklahāymānot. The actual time at which he died was not claimed in the vita but standing from the stories discussed in some parts of the manuscript, it can be estimated that he died after the death of St. Taklahāymānot (1313 C.E) and his mother because the vita tells that he attended the burial ceremony of his mother 'Emmənaşəyon in Dabra Libānos on the Memorial Day of the death of St. Taklahāymānot. (62vb; 92ra- 94rb)

3.7. The Invasion of Mota Lami king of Dāmot

Dāmot refers to the former region which located in the present-day Wallagā and western Şawā. The Dāmot kingdom was one of the most pagan and Muslim states that emerged after the decline of the Aksumite kingdom. It is supposed to have been the dominant power on the Şawān plateaus from the 10th -14th century until the time at which Emperor 'Amdaşəyon conquered it including Ifat, Dawaro, Bale, Hadyyā and the other former pagan territories.

Early 13th century, the pagan king Mota-Lami had invaded Šawā a little time before the birth of St. Qawəṣṭos and St. Taklahāymānot. He destructed mainly the churches in Wagddā, Sarmāt, Mahagəl, Dawaro, Zorare (Şəlāləš), Zəm and in some other Christian territories. (6rb - 9rb). Later after his conversion into Christianity through the apostolic mission of St. Taklahāymānot, Emperor Yəkunno'amlāk approved his power to be king of Dāmot and 'Ənnāryā (EAE II: 79; Taddesse 1972: 121).

3.8. Victory of Emperor 'Amdaṣəyon over king of Kafā
'Amdaṣəyon (1314– 1344, regnal name- Mabraq Saggad) was the grandson of Emperor Yəkunno'amlāk. Many historians described him as a strong and powerful Ethiopian Emperor who could control the commercial activities in the Muslim principalities. He united the empire by defeating several regional states.

The vita briefly declares his victory over the unknown king of Kafā. According to the Encyclopedia Aethiopica, the Kafā Dynasty emerged towards the end of the 14th century and longed until the 19th century being a strong dynasty ("Käfa Dynasty", *EAE*, III (2007) 324 (Shieferaw Bekele)). Nonetheless, based on the testimony of the vita, the dynasty is supposed to emerge a bit earlier, perhaps in the second quarter of 14th century. 'Amdaṣəyon's war against the Kafā king was part of his political agenda aiming to make the empire stronger throughout the country by striking several regional states. As usual, he defeated the king of Käfa and became victorious. The war was not reported in detail in the vita. The wise leadership of the emperor and his military strength was also not discussed. Instead, it fervently testified the strength, talent, and military preparation of the king of Käfa as follows:

The king of Kafā was more powerful than other peoples and his horse was covered up with metallic cloth so as not to be stricken by an arrow, and his body was also big.

He could have killed a lion by one striking, also an elephant by coming closer to it without apprehension. All wild beasts had been recognizing his voice when he came out to hunt them. So, when they

heard his voice they ran off, and he pursued behind and attacked them.

The vita witnessed that 'Amdaṣəyon was first anxious when he was fully informed of the military preparation and personal war experience of his opponent. His armies were also extremely afraid. Fortunately, soon after the war was started, the King of Kāfa ran away leaving his tent and died while escaping having fallen from his horse. Then the emperor controlled his capital and captured his armies.

In the vita, it is reported that after the victory, his uncle St. Qawəṣṭos propagated Christianity in the region and built about seventy churches there (94rb; 102ra- 102va).

4. CONCLUSION

The hagiography of St. Qawəṣṭos composed by his disciple *Abuna Mabā'a Ṣəyon* in the 14th century is one of the precious Ethiopian old manuscripts which mirror the culture and history of Ethiopia in the 14th and 15th centuries. Characteristically, a hagiography is a genre which deals with the life and apostolic missions of saints. Besides, in the Ethiopian context, hagiographies are important documents that help historians to study the history of the country as well as the culture and mentalities of the people in the past due to the facts and narrations they provide.

Thus, we can study the narratives exhibited in the hagiography by dividing them into two categories: spiritual and secular narratives. The first category includes what the saint did as an ascetic to fulfill his mission and the spiritual reward he received from his Lord in the end, while the narratives about the cultures, customs, and languages of different groups of people, as well as the events that happened during his life, are included in the second category. However, both parts are equally valuable to history. The hagiography of Saint Qawəṣṭos is rich in information about the culture, beliefs, traditions and history of Ethiopia and Ethiopians besides the biography of the saint.

The flow of the historical narrations provided in different sections reflects the historical relations of the Ethiopians with Israelites and Egyptians. Some of the historical accounts provided in the hagiography such as the Sabbath controversy happened during the reign of King Ba'əmnat (12th cent.), the victory of Nəwāyarəstos over the Sabeans (14th cent.), 'Amdaṣəyon's triumph over the king of Kafā and the Christianization of Kafā are not either fully or partially mentioned in other secular documents. This is one of the factors that make the hagiography unquestionably important. The other hagiographies are also firmly supposed to keep the same significance. Therefore, scholars and researchers are expected to pay attention to the study of manuscripts to collect untreated and complete information about various historical incidents and cultural aspects. Social anthropologists should also consult with this kind of written materials to find out the elements upon which the diversified cultural and social sentiments, mentalities and tendencies of different societies laid their foundation.

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Hiruie Ermias
University of Hamburg

