History of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church I

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Course Description

The course on the E.O.T.C. means, in one or another way, a course on the Ethiopian history in general. As a result of this it is very broad and distant. It encompasses religious, cultural, and political history of the country, as well as the Church. Many theologians, historians and, anthropologists have written on aspects of the Ethiopian history with their own perspectives. Easily, we can observe misunderstandings, misrepresentation and imposition of wrong ideas for their own sake. There is a desperate need to introduce and promote an Ethiopian perspective for the Ethiopian history to have an insider's view.

The course has three parts, I-III, Ancient, Medieval and Modern history of the EOTC. Each part will be explained in the structure of the course. Sources, developments and perspectives will be examined based on discussions in order to fulfill the course objectives.

Objectives of the course

- Imparting and sharing all available information to students is the main objective of the course.
- It also tries to familiarize the students with the historical perspectives and internal and external developments of Ethiopian history and the church, the various types of narrations, legends, fancy tales etc.
- Also efforts will be made to correct some historical fallacies by crosschecking available documents and at the end an Ethiopian historical perspective will be developed.

Course structure

The course, entitled as history of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, has three parts given in three semesters. This course is the first one, mainly deals with the ancient backgrounds of EOTC, its unique Features, first establishment, consolidation and expansion until the medieval period.

First semester

Part one

Ancient History of the E.O.T.C.

I. Introduction: Historiography
II. Etymology of Ethiopia, Orthodox, Tewahedo
III. Monophysitizm, Miaphysitizm, and Duophysitizm

Chapter One: **Pre Christian history of Ethiopia**

-Polytheism

-Judaism

Chapter II: Introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia

2.1. First Evangelization/ the Ethiopian eunuch

2.2. Second Evangelization, Frementius

2.3. Third Evangelization/the coming of the nine saints

Chapter III: Some Important Figures in Ethiopian Church History

3.1. Life, reign, and contributions of Atse Caleb

3.2. Life and works of St. Yared

Expectations

The course will enable students to know the main motives behind historical controversies, and tries to show some possible ways of solutios.

At the end of the course, students will have a better understanding on the history of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church with emic perspective.

Recommended Readings

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- ተክለ ጻድቅ መኩሪያ፥ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ኑብያ አክሱም ዛጉዌ
- ጎሩይ ወ/ሥላሴ፥ ዋዜማ
- ገብረ ሥላሴ (ጸሐፌ ትእዛዝ)፥ ታሪክ ዘመን ዘዳግማዊ ምኒልክ፥1959
- ግርማ ባቱ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ **2014** ዓ.ም.
- ደሴ ቀለብ (መ/ር) ፥ ታሪክ ነገሥት፥ ከምኒሊክ እስከ ምኒልክ፥

- ገድለ አባ ሰላማ
- ገድለ አባ አረጋዊ
- ገድለ ቅዱስ ያሬድ

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Ancient history of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Introduction

1. Historiography

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Historiography is the study of writing history which deals with the principles, theories, or methods of historical research or writing.
It is also a way of analysis and evaluation of source materials.

What is history?

History is a study of past events of a period in time or in the life and development of a people, an institution or a place. It is also a record of events and experiences of an individual's past.

Human records of the past can be viewed through both history and chronology. In history, we have an interpretative presentation of facts. Whereas chronology presents the actual occurrence of facts in a sequential manner. As stated below, Ethiopian history follows both the interpretative and chronological way also differs from author to author.

In the context of a discussion of Ethiopian or African historiography in general, two prominent African historians, Dike and Ajayi, remark that the Ethiopian historical tradition is "partly African and partly of Judeo-Christian inspiration.

> They write: - “the monasteries recorded the annals of each reign and preserved important texts and charters. Yet the primary interest of Ethiopian intellectual life was theological, not historical; there was little attempt until recent times to analyze and interpret the annals and the chronicles to produce history.” (Intl. Encycl. of the social sciences, vol. 6, p. 396)

Concerning the developments of Ethiopian history (EOTC), there are two ways internal and external. Other historians are saying about the Ethiopian history or historiography as it deals with traditions of origins, as well as traditions of king lists, genealogies, laws customs, etc. that are transmitted by priests, diviners, wise men. Foreign historians give much credit to the external development of Ethiopian history/historiography but, foreign scholars are often handicapped by lack of familiarity with the ethos of the culture or with the nuances of the languages of the peoples of the study. It also suffers from Afro-phobia and Euro-centrism.

Example: - Isaac Asimov’s deal with the term “Ethiopia” in his work Guide to the Bible.

Messaykebede’sEurocentrism and Ethiopian historiography …

- Who are the founders of Ethiopian study?
- Whose work was considered as authentic?

“According to Edward Ullendorff, the most illustrious name in Ethiopic scholarship is that of Job Ludolf, who was called “the founder of Ethiopian studies in Europe”, sometimes “the father of Ethiopian history” and the other important figure is James Bruce, the Scottish traveler. Thencomes August Dillmann, “the re-founder of Abyssinian studies … the Ludolf of the nineteenth century.”

According to Messay Kebede, this promotion to the rank of founders of European scholars who, with the exception of Bruce, never even set foot in Ethiopia, establishes that what is called Ethiopian history and culture is largely a representation of western scholarship. (Eurocentrism…, 1) No Ethiopian provider of information was counted as or among the founders of Ethiopian studies. What makes it very disgusting is that Ethiopian scholars themselves owe their knowledge of Ethiopia to western scholarship. For example, TaddesseTamerat, in his book Church and State in Ethiopia, Sergew Hable Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian history p.7, and others.

Internal developments of Ethiopia's history

Even though Ethiopia is among ancient civilized countries in the world, her history is not yet as well-known as that of other countries. Sergew Hable Sellassie writes

> *"Ethiopia was isolated from the outside world from the 9th C. A.D. and then the Dark Age followed. Furthermore, in those centuries she was often plagued by civil wars. War always brings catastrophe to any kind of national heritage… destroyed many historical monuments. At that time Ethiopians were pre-occupied with these wars and could not devote much attention to their history."*
> Sergew Hable Sellassie, 1972, 1

This doesn't mean there were no written historical documents but, in relation to the great historical and heritage treasures of the country, the documents are incomparable. Most of the time Ethiopian historians followed a biblical

method of writing genealogy, lists of kings. These lists are important to study the ancient history of Ethiopia: Aksumite and medieval.

Other helpful sources are the chronicles. In this case the chronicle of Amde-Tsion (1314-1344) was considered as the first of its type. Exaggerating good works of Emperors and to ignore completely the weaknesses or loses is among the characteristics of these chronicles.

Another type of Ethiopian historiography is hagiography. Hagiographers are different from chroniclers for they are not assigned and paid writers and their motive or objective is to promote, praise, and glorify the heroes of faith.

The 18th C. the era of the princes has shown us a new stage in the Ethiopian historiography with many and unqualified chroniclers. In addition to their number they had different objectives and interests. In this way the recording of history was no longer a monopoly of the Monarch but the common prerogative of those who played a certain role in the events. For example, we have three different chronicles of Emperor Tewodros II from three persons, Aleqa Zenab, Aleqa Wolde Mariam, and the anonymous one.

In the 20th C. Ethiopian historiography went a step forward. In this period historians started reflecting their own views to the old type of chronicle. AfeworkGebreYesus was the first writer of this new type. When he was in Italy, he wrote the history of Menelik II on his own initiative. አፈወርቅ ገብረየሱስ፣ዳግማዊ አጤምኒልክ፣1991፣ሮም

The second work of his kind was published in Amharic by Aleqa Taye -የኢትዮጵያ ሕዝብ ታሪክ፣1955፣አዲስ አበባ

Another contribution of the time is a short historical record of Ethiopia by Blattengeta Hiruy Woldesselassie. ብላቴን ጌታ ኅሩይ ወልደ ሥላሴ፣ዋዜማ፣ 1921፣አዲስአበባ

Other contributions

ብርሃኑድንቄ፣የኢትዮጵያ አጭር ታሪክ፣ 1952፣አዲስአበባ

ድጀዝማች ብረሃነ መስቀል ደስታ፣ዜና ላል ይበላል፣ 1958፣አዲስ አበባ

የተክለ ጻድቅ መኩሪያ መጸሕፍት፣ 1953-1960 ዓ/ም

ሌሎችም በርካታ የአማርኛ መጸሕፍት

According to Sergew, the sources used by these writers are usually oral or written legends and chronicles. They have not sought first-hand sources such as inscriptions, coins, letters, decrees, etc although they were available. The KibreNegest has often served as the basic source. He continues saying apart from that the Ethiopian writers used chronicles, hagiography and other legendary sources. Even he dared to conclude as no Ethiopian writer used authoritative sources as material to their Ethiopian history. For him, the man who has tried to use authoritative sources is TekleTsadikMekuria. See Ancient and Medieval…P7

External developments of the Ethiopian historiography

The first European to write Ethiopian history was Job Ludolf. In 1681, 17th century he wrote a book on the history of Ethiopia. As it is mentioned by Sergew Hable Sellassie, His main sources were literary acquisitions (oral sources) which he was able to collect from different people particularly from Abba Gorgorios, his Ethiopian teacher.

One hundred and fifty years later another Ethiopicist appeared again in Germany this was August Dillmann who lived from 1823-1894. He published two serious studies on ancient Ethiopia in German. Both these works are the result of long term and thorough studies of both primary and secondary sources in geez and other languages.

Many Europeans have written on the Ethiopian history from the perspective of the outsider. They wrote what Ethiopia is and who Ethiopians are. They dare to generalize the history, culture, and tradition of Ethiopia without having adequate knowledge on the overall features of Ethiopia.

> *"The Ethiopian scholars learn who Ethiopians are and what they want from foreign scholars. What we call a study on the Ethiopian history and culture is Ethiopia viewed from the west taken as a center. Such a perspective offers the view of a periphery with the result that Ethiopians are no longer subjects, but objects, representation of the west. In so being, Ethiopians are giving up the power of interpretation, that is, the power of construing themselves and the surrounding world in accordance with their priorities and aspirations." Messay Kebede, Eurocentrism and Ethiopian historiography…, 2*

To put the point in a clearer and precise form we need to reassess, reconsider, re-examine and then reconstruct our own history from the perspective of the insider.

The role of archeology

In the down of the 19th C. (1814) Henry Salt, on his visit to Ethiopia, copied many inscriptions. The first person who did research in archeology was Theodore Bent. He stayed for about four months in Ethiopia and visited ancient cities of Aksum, Adulis, Yeha, and Cohaito where Sabean, Ge'ez, and Greek inscriptions, as well as other historical relics can be found.

These sources were so useful to study specially the prehistory of Ethiopia.

Sources of Ethiopian history

Both primary and secondary sources were used in dealing with the Ethiopian history. Sergew Hablesellasie divided the sources of Ethiopian history in to two based on their quality, as first and second hand information, the former includes all authentic sources and the later dealing with information from secondary sources. By primary sources he means inscriptions, coins, letters and decrees, monuments. For him, secondary sources are Greek writers,

Latin writers, Arab writers, and Ethiopian manuscripts. (Ancient and Medieval, 11-19)

2. Etymology of "Ethiopia"

The origin of the word "Ethiopia"

The word has come from the Greek name Αἰθιοπία/ Ethiopia and from Αἰθίοψ, Aithiops, which equals to mean 'an Ethiopian". It is said that the name is a sum of two Greek words Aitho"I burn" + ops "face" to mean burnt-face. ("Aithiops, Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, "a Greek – English Lexicon", at perseus. Anton L Alahar. "when black first became worthless" international journal of comparative sociology 34 (1-2)) Therefore, the area they inhabit was named Ethiopia in relation to their color. (Asst. Prof. Lule Melaku, History of EOTC, 2008, 5)

The Greek historian Herodotus specifically uses it for all the lands south of Egypt, including Sudan and today's Ethiopia. In the 15th century Geez Book of Aksum, the name is ascribed to a legendary individual called Ityopp'is, an extra-biblical son of Cush, son of Ham, said to have founded the city of Axum. In addition to this Cushitic figure, two of the earliest Semitic kings are also said to have born the name Ityopp'is according to traditional Ethiopian king lists.

The name Ethiopia also occurs in many Greek translations of the Old Testament, but the Hebrew version has Kush (Ezekiel 29:10). And according to Genesis 10:6-8 Cush was one of the sons of Ham. Also in some texts the name used as tribe, as Cush, Cushitic and sometimes it was applied to the Black people as a whole.

In the Greek New Testament, the Greek term Aithiops “an Ethiopian” does occur, referring to a servant of Candace. On these bases we can understand that Ethiopia was the direct translation of the Hebrew, “Cush”, and indicates the region extending to the south of Egypt.

See -Gen. 2:13; ps. 68:31; 2kings 19:9; Jeremiah 13:23; Isa 43:3; Ester 1:1, 8:9

In assessing the significance of biblical references, Edward Ullendorff says, one has to bear in mind that the Hebrew “Cush”, which has been rendered by the Septuagint as Ethiopia, lacks any precise connotation. For him, Moreover, many of the scriptural references are of difficult interpretation. The same is true of classical writers as well: thus Homer speaks of “the distant Ethiopians, the farthest outposts of mankind, half of whom live where the sun goes down and half where he rises”. This division into western and eastern Ethiopians probably indicates that the name “Ethiopia” Αἰθιοπία referred to all peoples of dark skin, from the country south of Egypt, Nubia, to India. The word is usually explained as “burnt face” but it might also be derived from _ Αἰθίοψ which means “sparkling, brilliant. Αἰθίοψ is also “red, fiery”. (Edward Ullendorff, Ethiopia and the Bible, 1968, 5)

In addition to the name Ethiopia, the other names used in history to regions of the present day Ethiopia are “Habesh” (mixed race; mulatto) and “Abyssinia”. The name has come from the tribe called Habeshat of the Semitic race who migrated to Ethiopia from Arabia around 1000BC. The people of the east have referred to the present day Ethiopia as Habesh and the Europeans have called it “Abyssinia”. Asst. Pro. LuleMelaku, 1995, 2- text book)

Concerning this issue Ullendorff says the people who inhabit this beautiful land and who consider themselves the lawful successors of Israel have been established in the horn of Africa for several millennia and constitute an amalgam of Hamites, Semites, and Nilotic groups. Whether the Cushitic (that

is Hamitic Ethiopian) peoples originally came from southern Arabia whence the Hamito-Semites may have sprung, or whether the cradle of the once united Hamito-Semitic race was- as some scholars have conjunctured in that part of Africa-which is now called Ethiopia, need to concern us at present.

> *"Physically, the Hamito Semitic union has produced a handsome race, elegant, subtle and nervous. Most travelers and observers have gained the impression that Ethiopians are exceptionally intelligent, mentally agile (who able to think quickly), and quick to absorb knowledge. They are proud, yet courteous, and good manners are highly esteemed; they are also accomplished diplomats, perhaps somewhat suspicious, but generous and uncalculating. Ethiopians are given to litigiousness (inclination to go to law), but their sense of honor and justice is satisfied once the matter has been argued out at a length; they will present a case with great dexterity (sharpness or quickness of mind and skill in physical movement of using specially hands to express ideas), and a distinct flair for oratory. Their hospitality retains something of a Biblical and patriarchal flavor; …" (Ullendorff, Ethiopia and the Bible, 4)*

Still we have some sources which claim another origin for the name Ethiopia or Abyssinia. According to the ministry of information, punt was the first land of the Habesha people. During the first five centuries B.C., the earliest historically known people of north-east Africa were those of the state of Daamat. This state was located in the present Ethiopian administrative regions of southern Eritrea and northern Tigray. (Ethiopia: a cradle of history, 1989, 1) The Pharaonic Egyptians used to call the region south of Egypt as land of punt.

Orthodox

Orthodox is a Greek word meaning right belief, an opposite of heterodox. It is used as a title of the Ethiopian church to indicate that the church follows the right doctrine preached by Apostles and their successors. The word also indicates that the Church is among Orientals, non Chalcedonian churches as mentioned below.

The Ethiopia Orthodox Tewahedo Church/Addis Ababa

The Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria /Cairo

The Armenian Apostolic O.C. /Etchamiadzn

The Syrian O.C. of Antioch /Damascus

The Malankra O.C of India /kerala(The Syrian O.C. of India)

The Eritrean Orthodox Church

As an oriental orthodox church, the E.O.T.C. rejects the Christological definitions of the council of Chalcedon (451) – which asserted "Christ in two natures". For Orientals; this is purely a Nestorian way of understanding – which was condemned by the council of Ephesus (431). The Non-Chalcedonians, Orientals, Prefer the Christological formula of St. Cyril of Alexandria who spoke of "One Incarnate nature of God the Word".

Most historians and even theologians used to call the EOTC as Monophysite church but the dogmatic position of the church is completely different from it. Instead the Church is a "mia-physite' one with a statement of "One Incarnate nature of God the Word". (Yolande Mara, The Church of Ethiopia, 1972, 14)

3. Monophysites, Miaphysites and Duophysites

Monophysitism is the other name of Eutychianism. ("Eutychus taught that: - the divine nature of our Lord absorbed the human nature in Him")

* The Greek adjective of the term (mono), means “alone” (without a companion), ‘Only’ etc.

* The Greek term (physis) means “the nature”, “Natural qualities,” and “Powers”.

So, the meaning of “Monophysites” according to the Chalcedonians’ usage is to mean “those who claim the only one nature of Christ” – the human and the Divine fused together.

But, instead of this term, the Orientals (Non Chalcedonians) prefer to be called as “Miaphysites”. * The term “ ” mia, means “One”, but not “Single One”

There is a difference between “mono” and “mia” - the latter refers to “One composite and united nature”

Contemporary view of the situation

The Non-Chalcedonian side had wished to discard Nestorianism by confirming the doctrine of the one nature of God the Word incarnate, of two natures without intermixing or fusion or change. The expression ‘the one nature’ is the truest expression on “the natural union” which St. Cyril had taught in his Third Letter to Nerstorius, and which was approved by both the Council of Ephesus and the Council of Chalcedon.

The Chalcedonian side wished to discard Eutychianism by confirming the doctrine and expression of the two natures, non-separated, or non-partitioned, in order to affirm the continuance of the existence of the two natures and that they were not annihilated in the union, and to affirm the non-annihilation of the distinction in the attributes of the two natures due to the union.

Perhaps each of the two sides was complementary to the other in its expression of the one truth. Those who professed one incarnate nature of

two natures had added “without mixture or change” in order to refute Eutychianism. And those who professed two natures added “without separation or partition” in order to refute Nestorianism. Both sides spoke of one truth that the lord Jesus Christ is one divine-human being, i.e. they spoke of one being of two essences united in the one Christ. Those who used the expression ‘one incarnate nature’ had meant to express the state of existence; those who used the expression ‘two natures’ had meant to express the reality of the continuance of the existence of the two natures.

In other words, some have spoken about the state of existence, and some have spoken about the reality of the existence, and because they both used the same word ‘nature,’ they clashed.

Those who meant the **‘state of existence’** said **‘one nature,’** and those who meant the **‘reality of existence’** said **“two natures.”** The proof is that both sides have together accepted that there can be no distinction between the two natures except in thought alone ( ). This means that there can be no actual distinction between them in reality, but rather in imagination and contemplation. This does not mean abolishing the reality of their existence, but abolishing the state of their existence not in union. Unity is the truest expression of the ‘natural union’ ( ) enosis physis.

Tewahedo

This term expresses the unique feature of the church and used only for EOC. The real intention behind the term is the same with the statement above but, it is a development of the doctrine of incarnation by indigenous scholars.

See “The Faith of the Church”, in the Church of Ethiopia …by EOTC, 1970, 43.

* This is almost similar with the Cyrylian formula – One Incarnate nature of God the word (God the son), and is the same concept as we frequently use confessional terms like the following in our service books. “በእንተ

ሥጋ ወነፍስ፣አጽም ወደም፣ጸጉር ወአሥራው ዘነሣእከ እምኔሃ <u>ወረሠይኮን አሀደ ምስለ መለኮትከ</u> ዘእንበለ ፍልጠት ኢውላጤ፣ዘእንበለ ቱስሕት ወኢቡዓደ በከመ መህሩነ አበው" <u>አባ ጊዮርጊስ</u>

ዘሀሎ ወይሄሉ ዘመጽአ ወካዕበ ይመጽእ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ቃል ዘተሠገብአ ኢተበዓደ ወኢተፈልጠ በኩሉ ግብሩ ወልድ ዋሕድ አላ አሀዱ ራዕይ ወአሀዱ ሕላዌ ወአሀዱ መለኮት ዘእግዚአብሔር ቃል- <u>ቅ.ኤፍሬም</u>

Chapter One

The pre-Christian history of Ethiopia

1.1. Polytheism

As stated by Sergew HableSellassie, the Sabaean migrants who crossed the red see in the first millennium B.C. and settled in Ethiopia brought with them their own religions. They were polytheists who worship different gods of heaven, the earth and the sea. (The church of Ethiopia, 1970, 1) In south Arabia, religion entered into every aspect of life. Because of the concept that divine protection was necessary for the success of every being and act, not only tribes and families but also states and agricultural and commercial groups all had their tutelary deities.This concept was assimilated and practiced by ancient Ethiopians.

The pantheon of south Arabia consisted of many gods. One of the main gods was Astaror Astater, (Astaror Astarte- in "The Church of Ethiopia, 1970, 1) the male god of heaven. (Sergew, 1972, 31) These gods match with Aphrodite and Venus of Greek and roman world, Sin the moon god, and Shams the sun god and were widely worshipped in Ethiopia.in the well-known Greek inscription, left at Adulis by an anonymous Ethiopian emperor,

mention is made of Zeus, Poseidon and Ares. On the reverse of the monument appear engravings of another Greek god, Hermes and Heracles. Ares was in fact the personal god of the Ethiopian emperors of the pre-Christian era. (Ibid)

Another important god for the Arabia was Ilmouqah or Almouqah, the god of moon or heaven. It is believed that at an early stage of Ethiopian history, the worship of the serpent was widespread and the Ethiopians offered sacrifices to it. Archeological evidences witness that on one of the Stelae at Aksum an engraving of a serpent is still visible today. This cult was introduced directly to Ethiopia from Persia. The description in *Avesta*, the sacred book of Persia, concerning the worship of the serpent, is identical with the tradition found in Ethiopia. (The Church of Ethiopia, 1970)Later, Ethiopic names evolved as Mahrem for Ares, Baher to Poseidon, and Semay to the Sabaean god Almouqah. In Yeha, a temple dedicated to Almouqah was found and it is believed that it was erected before the fifth century. Also at Hawlti-Melazo, near Aksum, a similar temple was found but, it is now in ruins. A temple dedicated to Ares found at Aksum, and to the god Sin at Kaskasse, about eight kilometers north-east of Matara. Emperor Ezana erected statues in gold, silver and bronze to the god of Ares after his victory over the Bejjas.

In connection with the above, Lule Melaku (Asst. Pro.) said that there is

> a legend of a serpent (dragon) believed to be an Ethiopian king and god. As stated by him, *he was a python (dragon) and his mother a certain woman. When his parents died he became dangerous to the inhabitants. But fortunately through his sister, they made an agreement with him to offer many goats, sheep, milk, girls, etc. for food at regular interval. And this agreement continued for forty years. Then a warrior called "Gebegabo" (Angabo) arose and by means of poisoning his food (the mutton of a sheep) killed Arwe, and he himself became king after he had married the sister of Arwe. (History of Ethiopia, 2008, 15)*

The above story is unacceptable for some scholars of EOTC since they try to classify the religious history of Ethiopia in to three major phases: -

- Religion before the law (ሕገ ልቡና)
- Religion by the law (Judaism)
- Christianity

It is also mentioned by Asst. Pro. Lule Melaku as there were people worshiping nature such as the sun, moon, trees, rivers, dragons, and the like. For him, the practice is quite similar to those Israelites, who trespassed the law of mosses and worshipped other gods. (History of EOTC, 2008, 15) To conclude, as all historians agree the practices were results of contact with Middle Eastern countries through commercial channels.

1.2. Monotheism

The introduction of Judaism to Ethiopia

According to the "Kebra Nagast", Ethiopia had early relations with Israel. The relation began through commerce and then developed into the political sphere. This relationship was at a pick in the time of King Solomon and Queen of Sheba. The Holy Bible made the story beyond doubt saying: -

> "When Queen of Sheba heard about Solomon, she came to challenge him with difficult question. …she visited Solomon and discussed with him everything that was on her mind. …" (1kings 10; 2chronicles 9)

> "The Queen of the south will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the Wisdom of Solomon …" (Matt. 12:42)

The story is also available in the Jewish sources but it was interpreted in a quite different way. (Sergew Hable Sellassie, 1972, pp 34-44) the main Ethiopian source for the story of the Queen of Sheba is the kibre-Negest (Glory of the kings). It says,

> *"And there was a certain wise man, the leader of a merchant's caravan, whose name was Tamrin, and he used to load five hundred and twenty camels, and he possessed about three and seventy ships.*
>
> *Now, at that time king Solomon wished to build the House of God, and he sent out messages among all the merchants in the east and in the west, and in the north and south, bidding the merchants come and take gold and silver from him, so that he might take from them whatsoever was necessary for the work. And certain men reported to him concerning this rich Ethiopian merchant, and Solomon sent to him a message and told him to bring whatsoever he wished from the country of Arabia, red gold and black wood that could not be eaten by worms and sapphires (deep blue jewel). And that merchant whose name was Tamrin, the merchant of the queen of Ethiopia, went to Solomon the king; and Solomon took whatsoever he wished for in great abundance. Now, that merchant was a man of great understanding, and he saw and comprehended the Wisdom of Solomon." (Budge, the queen of Sheba, pp17-18)*

According to this story, it is Tamrin who told about the Wisdom of Solomon, to the Queen of Sheba and initiated her to go to King Solomon. To wrap up the whole story, Queen of Sheba returned to Ethiopia after six months' stay in Jerusalem and bore him a son, whom she named Menilek. When the son grew up he visited his father in Jerusalem, and came home accompanied by many Israelites, the sons

of the Levites, and brought with him the arc of the covenant. From then on, Judaism was practiced in Ethiopia. Some historians say that the Falashas of the northern Ethiopia, who practice a form of Judaism to this day, are descendants of the Israelites. (The church of Ethiopia, 1970, 3)

There are also some thoughts about the practice of Judaism in Ethiopia even before the visit of Queen of Sheba.

- The Queen's discussion with king Solomon is another point of departure.
- Migration of small groups of Jews from South Arabia to the Ethiopian highlands; the exposure to Jewish traditions, communication through trade routes, etc. were considerable.

But, conventionally the history of Judaism in Ethiopia starts with the visit of Queen of Sheba. (Donald Crummy, Neo-Solomonic Ideology, 1988)

> " Ethiopia's inherited ideology was a Zionist one, embodied in a book called the KebraNegast" "Glory of the Kings" (14)
>
> " ... The KebraNegest received its definitive form in the 14th century although it may have been written as early as the 6th the Solomonic ideology derived from it had five hundred years of practical expression. These laps of time produced another stock of precedents and examples upon which the founders of the modern Ethiopian state could draw." (15)

- **Signs for the early practices of Judaism in Ethiopia**

The Arc of the covenant

As we have seen above Menelik I brought with him the Arc of the covenant including first born of Israelites, the Sons of the Levites to assist him in every aspects of the Ethiopian Kingdom.

> "... Azarias was told by the Archangel Michael in a dream that he should take the Arc of the Covenant to Ethiopia. Thus, by the will of God they took the original with them..." (Asst. Lule, History of EOTC, 2008, 23)

Discuss the "Sign and the seal, by Graham Hancock"

- What about the replicas
- No country is claiming to have the Arc in our time
- Its influence in the history of the country

Structures of Church buildings

The most common structure /shape/ of Church building in Ethiopia is the circular one. Later, square (basilica) or cross-shaped churches like Egziabher-Ab at Amba Gishen, Bete Girogis of Lalibela etc. became widely known.

The internal department of the Church as QineMahlet, Kidist/Qidst and Mekdes seen to follow the pattern of the three fold of the temple in Jerusalem.

(Asst-prof. Lule, 2008, 28-34)

The Observance of the Sabbath

Observing the Seventh day/Sabbath/ is typically a Jewish Tradition. Not only in the pre-Christian era of Ethiopia but also in the Middle of 15th Century, even today the issue is among the Major concerns of some Christians. Some justifications like "Abiy and NeusSanbet" are also known to all. – See p P. 37 of History of EOTC

Circumcision

According to some Scholars of EOTC, also in the official teaching of the Church, Circumcision was a type- replaced by the NT baptism. But, still there are some people who consider it as a religious duty of the Church members.

The Dietary Laws

- See purity and Danger, Mary Douglas

The laws, which are recorded in the Leviticus concerning the issue of foods to be eaten or not, were exactly copied and practiced in pre-Christian Ethiopia, even today.

- **Ceremonial vestments and Musical Instruments**
  - Edward Ullendorff has many things to say concerning the above issues. (Ethiopia and the Bible)
  - Sergew preferred to say that the coming of the Nine Saints inaugurated a new era in the Liturgical life of the Ethiopian Church. Yared was a disciple of the Nine Saints, probably of Aragawi… (The Church of Ethiopia, PP 8-9)

Chapter II

History of Christianity in Ethiopia

2.1. Introduction of Christianity

Christianity was implanted in Ethiopia as early as the first century A.D. with the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch by Phillip the Apostle. (Acts 8)

He was a treasurer of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, who went to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel.

> "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, those who pray to me will bring me tribute." Zephania 3:10

According to the Acts of the Apostles (8:26-40), the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading the Old Testament, the prophecy of Isaiah, and it shows us the familiarity of Ethiopians to scriptures. But, people like Shauf, Scott (2009 "Locating the eunuch: characterization and narrative context in Acts 8:26) believe that the Eunuch is Gentile in the story, by both his ethnic and possibly physical description.

The man, locally known as "Bacos" on his way back to his country, Met with Philip and was baptized, then returned home in 34 AD for many EOTC believers this is the crucial and significant period for the birth and establishment of Christianity.

Ethiopian Traditional sources claim that Bacos evangelized his people and brought the good tiding of Christianity to Ethiopia. To support this view point, Eusebius, the Church historian (4^{th}c) singles out Candace's treasurer as the first gentile convert to Christianity.

But his consideration of the Eunuch as gentile contradicts with the Ethiopian background of Christianity.

There is also another story about the introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia. It is said that St. Matthew preached Gospel in Ethiopia and became a martyr. According to Ruffinus, when the Apostles drew lots to preach the Gospel to the pagans, Matthias drew Persia and Matthew Ethiopia. (Read History of EOTC, 44-47)

It is also possible to have an idea that the good news arrived prior to Bacos by one of the three wise men who traveled from Ethiopia to present a

gift for the child Christ. Some stories tell us that the person was an Ethiopian king Bazen (LuleMelaku, History of EOTC, 2008, 42)

In his homily on Pentecost, St. John Chrysostom mentioned that the Ethiopians were present in the holy city on the day of Pentecost. It seems that St. Luke did not mention them only because they were few in number. Those few people might have introduced Christianity is the very crucial point.

Moreover, from the early period, Ethiopian pilgrims went annually to Jerusalem where there is an Ethiopian Monastery built a long time ago on the land which was presented by king Solomon to the Queen of Sheba- "Deir Sultan", means a fief of a ruler. (An article by Fr. Jose Thomas)

2.2. Consolidation of Christianity: St. Frumentius (Abba Selama) (330 A.D.)

As we have seen above, Christianity had been known in Ethiopia since a much earlier time before the conversion of Ezana. The same is true with Frumentius. He is not the first Evangelist to introduce Christianity to the people of Ethiopia.

The story of the conversion of the Axumites has come down to us in the work of the contemporary Church historian, Rufinus (d. 410 A.D.)

Meropius, a philosopher from Tyre, set out to visit India accompanied by two young relatives, Frumentius and Aedesius.

In the course of their Journey they ran short of provisions and put in at a port on the African coast (Adulis). The local inhabitants were hostile to Roman citizens, as they had recently broken of their alliance with Rome. For this reason they Masacred Meropius and all aboard the ship, sparing only the two boys, who were taken to the king. They soon gained the king's interest and confidence. The younger Aedesius became the king's cup-bearer and the

elder Frumentius, who showed signs of wisdom and maturity became the king's treasurer and secretary.

Then the king was about to die and had given the two boys a chance to return to their country, but the Queen (the Mother of an infant boy) begged them to stay with her helping her administration. Both Frumentius and Aedesius agreed and stayed to carry out the task faithfully.

Frumentius started his mission with some Christians among the Roman merchants settled at Aksum and encouraged them to establish meeting places for prayer.

It was a way to spread Christianity, to convert the indigenous people and finally the young king himself became a convert.

When the young king was old enough to rule the country alone, Fumentius and Aedesius asked him a permission to leave Aksum.

Aedesius returned home to Tyre, but Frumentius went to Alexandria and laid the whole affair before the newly appointed patriarch, Athanasius, begging him to appoint a bishop for Ethiopia. But Athanasius consecrated Frumentius himself to be the first bishop of Aksum.

Although Rufinus does not specify the name of the country of which Frumentius went, other sources are more specific in this respect. For instance a letter from the Emperor Constantius, written in 365 A.D. to his "precious brother", Aezana and Saezana, rulers of Aksum, concerns the Bishop Frumentius.

Furthermore, the inscriptions and coins of the Emperor Ezana testify to his adoption of Christianity. In his early inscriptions, he styles himself "Son of unconquered Mahrem" But, Inscriptions after his victory over Nubia show new terminologies "the Lord of heaven and earth" and describes how he

destroyed the images in their temples, affirming his dissociation from paganism.

A recently discovered Greek inscription belonging to Ezana leaves no doubt on this matter. "... It begins: - In the faith of God and the power of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost". (The Church of Ethiopia, 1970, 5)

According to Hansberry, by 331 A.D. Frumentius returned to Ethiopia, and was welcomed with open arms of the rulers, who were not Christians at the time. Ten years later, through the support of the king, the majority of the Royal family /kingdom/ was converted and Christianity was declared the officials state religion. (Hansberry, William Leo, pillars in Ethiopian history, Howard university press, 1974)

The introduction of Christianity and its development to "State Religion" marked a turning point in Ethiopian history. Christianity does not constitute a purely Religious phenomenon in the country, but plays an Integral role in all aspects of national life. The Church is not only a religious Institution, but has for many centuries been the repository of the cultural, political and social life of the people.

The true feelings of the people who first received Christianity seem to have been expressed in the names they bestowed upon Frumentius, which are Abba Selama, Kassate Berhan, and Father of peace and Revealer of Light".

It is interesting to note that Ezana and Saezana baptized with names signifying illumination - Abreha (He illuminated) and Atsbeha (he brought the down). (Ibid)

According to the chronological lists of the Ethiopian bishops, Frumentius was succeeded by the bishop Minas. He was apparently of Egyptian origin. From this time onward began the peculiar Alexandrian jurisdiction over the Ethiopian church, which was to last for sixteen hundred years. Throughout

this period Ethiopians were not considered to be eligible for consecration as bishops.

Minas left some literary works concerning his missionary activities, but the major contribution in the missionary field was that of the Nine Saints. (The Church of Ethiopia, 1970: 7)

2.3. Expansion of Christianity: The Coming of the Nine Saints

The Nine Saints were monks who came to Ethiopia in the early history of the Ethiopian church. That means they came to Axum about 480, and were well received by the emperor and people of the surrounding area. The Ethiopian ruler at that time was Al'ameda, son of Sa'aldobba, who was succeeded by Tazena, father of Kaleb. When Kaleb, the Ethiopian king, set out to campaign in Arabia in 527 to rescue the Christians there from the persecution of their Jewish ruler, he solicited the prayer of Abba Pantalewon, one of the Nine Saints.

It is known that the arrival of the Nine Saints in Ethiopia was related to the schism and disturbance in the universal church over the nature of divinity and humanity in Christ at and after the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The assumption is that they are non-Chalcedonian monks who rushed to Ethiopia to protect the local church from the teaching of those who accepted the decision of Chalcedon. Even though some of the sources insist that these monks arrived at Ethiopia as a group via the monastery of Aba Pachomius in Egypt, it is reasonable that at least some of them came separately at different times.

The most outstanding figures among the Nine Saints were Ze-Michael (Aregawi), Pantelewon, Aftse, and Gerima or Isaac (Yeshaq) as their names indicate, they came from different parts of the Eastern Roman Empire, such

as Constantinople and Syria. They were adherents of the same doctrine- Mia-physis. In Axum, they studied the language and became familiar with the people and customs. After this preparation they set out in different directions to proselytize and to introduce and to introduce monastic institutions. Only two of them, Abba Liqanos and Abba Pentelewon, remained in Axum, the others went further east of the capital and founded hermitages in the old pagan centers.

Name	**Country of origin**	**Monastery founded by himself**	
Abba Aregawi	Constantinople	DebreDamo	
AbbaGerima	Constantinople	DebreMedera	
AbbaPenetelewon	Constantinople	DebrePenteleon - Axum	
AbbaLiqanos	Constantinople	Axum	
AbbaAftsie	Asia Minor	DebreYeha	
AbbaGoba	Cilicia	Ger'alta	
AbbaAlef	Caesarea	Debre Bihza	
AbbaYimata	Cosia	Ger'alata	
AbbaTshehma	Antioch	Debre Tsedenia	

The Nine saints contributed much in eradicating cults and pagan shrines and founded many churches and monasteries. They also contributed greatly to the **development of the Ge'ez liturgy** and literature. The introduced new

terms and vocabulary in to Ge'ez such as Haymanot, qasis, ta'ot, qurban, Tsom, Orit, Tselot, Mekdes etc.

Among their great contributions **Bible Translation** is so immense. Such commitment was started by Fremnatos like the book of psalms. Here, with the Nine Saints the very important thing is that they were familiar with both Greek and Syriac. It seems that each father translated one portion of the Bible that is why we see some considerable differences in style from one book to another in the Ethiopic version. The Ethiopic version is one of the earliest versions in the world. They also **translated a number of basic religious works in to Ge'ez – both doctrinal and literary content.** Among these, Qerlos- translation of dogmatic treatises of Cyril, Homilies of Church Fathers, the ascetic rules of St. Pachumis , the life of Saint Anthony by St. Athanasius, …

Their influence is extended also to art and architecture. The ruins of basilicas found in the ancient cities of Axum, adulis and Hawlti may show a resemblance to Syriac churches. Example, the church of Aregawi at Debre Damo has some unique features.

Another contribution of the Nine Saints can be seen in producing Ethiopian Church scholars. Among this the most notable one is St. Yared, the disciple of Abba Aregawi.

Aba Aragawi or Zamika'el

His names are Ge'ez, the first meaning "The Elder" and the second "of Michael," an indication that his native name has not been preserved. According to tradition, Aragawi was the leader of the group during the journey from Egypt to Ethiopia, a position that suits his name. The founding of the celebrated Dabra Damo is attributed to this saint. It was at this monastery that Iyasus Mo'a of Hayq Estifanos in Amhara and Abuna Takla Haymanot of Dabra Libanos in Shewa were clothed with monastic habits at the hands of Yohanni, a spiritual descendant of Aragawi.

The saint was said to have used a long serpent to ascend the impregnable summit of Mount Damo, where he built his monastery. Today people use rope to reach it. It is also reported that the saint's mother, Edna, followed the group to Ethiopia and established there a nunnery for virgins. Aragawi is commemorated on Teqemt14.

Aba Pantalewon (Pantaleon).

Pantalewon is most remembered for the role of his prayers in the success of Kaleb's campaign in Arabia. Before leaving his African realm for the campaign, Kaleb visited the saint at his cell and received his blessing and encouragement to fight ZuNuas (or Finnehas, according to local tradition), the Jewish ruler of Arabia who had inflicted serious persecution on his Christian subjects.

Aba Pantalewon is also famous for the ascetic life he led. It is reported that the cell with which he is identified—he is sometimes known as Pantalewon of the Cell—was so narrow that he never slept or sat in it, even though he never left it after he entered it forty-five years before his death. His cell, which was north of Axum and wasknown first by the name of DabraAsbo, later developed into a famous monastery carrying his name, Dabra Pantalewon. Pantalewon is commemorated on Teqemt6.

Yeshaq (Isaac) or Abba Garima

Both names are non-Ethiopian, even though his hagiographer attempted to derive Garima from an Ethiopic word meaning wonderful. Yeshaq joined the group onlyafter it had arrived in Ethiopia. It is reported that he left his parents' royal palace in response to an invitation by Pantalewon. When the group decided to leave their center at the king's palace in Axum, Yeshaq moved to Madara, not far from Adwa.

He was famed for performing many astounding miracles. A monastery bearing the name Abba Garima still exists today at another place in Tigre and is an important religious center. His feast is celebrated on 17 Sene.

Aba Aftse.

The *gadl* of this saint offers very little historical information about him, except that he made Yeha, an important archaeological site for pre-Christian Ethiopia, his center of activities. The name is clearly non-Ethiopian. The monk is believed to have ascended to heaven like Elijah. The feast of Afse is celebrated on 29 Genbot.

Abba Gubba

His *gadl* reportedly exists but has not been studied by scholars, nor is his name listed in an important fifteenth-century calendar. According to tradition, he founded his hermitage west of Madara, not far from the original hermitage of Abba Garima. The fact that neither of these two hermitages survived may indicate resentment and resistance to Christianity at the heart of Axumite paganism.

It is interesting to note that most of the places where these saints established their evangelical activities were centers of pagan worship. The feast of Gubba is celebrated with that of Aftse on Genbot29. .

Abba Alef

His *gadl* repeats what has been written about the rest of his colleagues—that they came together to Ethiopia, settled temporarily in the palace, and dispersed to establish centers of religious activities. Like that of Abba Gubba, Abba Alef's name is not found listed with those of his colleagues in the fifteenth-century palace calendar of saints. However, the famous monastery Dabra Halle Luya isbelieved to have been founded by him. His name may be

related to the name of the first letter in the alphabet. The feast of Alef is celebrated on 11th of Meggabit.

Abba Yem'ata

Some scholars, including Dillmann (1880, pp. 1-51), state that he is also called Mata. This could be confusion with another saint, Abba Matta', who flourished in Hawzen many years before the coming of the Nine Saints. The feast of Yem'ata is celebrated on 28th of Teqemt.

Abba Liqanos

This saint's *gadl*, though known to exist, has not reached the hands of scholars. At the time of the dispersion of the saints, Liqanos moved to north of Axum and founded a monastery,Dabra Qonasil, known by its founder's name to this day. His feast iscelebrated on 28 Hedarand 4 Terr.

Abba Tsehma

Abba Sehma is believed to have settled southeast of Adwa. Like many of his colleagues, no *gadl* for him has yet come to light. Nor is there any religious center carrying his name. There is, however, a region of Tigre named Enda Abba Sehma. The feast of Abba Tsehma is celebrated on 16 Terr.

Chapter III

3.1. Some Important Figures in Ethiopian Church History

3.1.1. Life and reign of King Caleb

Kaleb was the last major Aksumite king of Ethiopia, during whose reign the kingdom reached the apex of its glory. (Ruled circa 514-543) Ethiopian and Syrian sources refer to him as Kaleb, but Greek sources call him Hellesthaeeus, Ella Atsbeha, or Ellesbas. Legend makes King Tazena his father. (TaddeseTamerat, 1972: 123)

Very little is known of his earlier life. He was educated at an Ethiopian Church school, but realized the importance of Greek culture. He ordered the governor of Adulis, the famous Red Sea port of the Aksumite period through which Greek trade came to Ethiopia, to copy the Greek inscriptions of Ptolemy IV (Macedonian king of Egypt from 221-205 BC), and of an unknown Ethiopian emperor.

The 6th-century theologian and geographer Cosmas Indicopleustes preserved the only exact copy, which he later included in his book *Topographia Christiana* ("Christian Topography").
Aksum reached its last period of glory during Caleb's reign.

Legends were inscribed in the Ge'ez language on coins, and art and architecture flourished. Aksum controlled traffic on the Red Sea, as well as much of the Far Eastern trade. Only Aksumites were permitted to sail ships to the Far East. The Byzantine emperor Justin I (ruled 518-527) encouraged Aksum to engage in the silk trade with China, in competition with the Persians.

Caleb is especially remembered for his military expedition in to South Arabia, which had long been under Ethiopian control. About A.D. 523, DhuNuwas, a local prince of the Najran area, led a revolt, after first having secured the support of the large Jewish community in South Arabia by converting to

Judaism. Moving during the winter, when the weather would not permit Aksumite intervention he attacked the Ethiopian military base, conquered the whole of South Arabia, persecuted the Christians, and forced Judaism on them. The following summer, however, Kaleb heard of his exploits and prepared a punitive expedition against him. Kaleb himself set out with his naval force, defeated DhuNuwas restoring Ethiopian sovereignty over South Arabia in A.D. 525.

This victory won Caleb fame as the defender of the Christian faith and increased his prestige and power. Axumite Ethiopia became the third power in the Middle Eastern region as a whole after the rival Byzantine and Persian empires. The Byzantine Empire frequently sent ambassadors to Caleb to conclude commercial or military treaties.

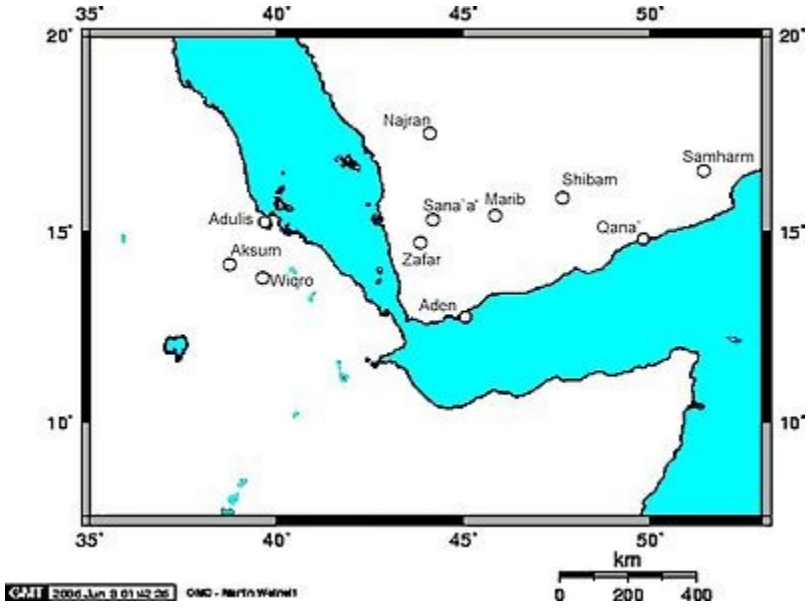
Ethiopian and Greek traditional stories state that Caleb abdicated after his return from South Arabia. Dedicating his crown to the Holy Sepulcher, he entered the monastery of Abba Pantaleon, where he spent the rest of his life. He was canonized by the Ethiopian church, and was the first Ethiopian to be recognized by the Greek and Roman Catholic churches as saint.

Information is available on the period from both external and internal sources. The former deals mainly with the external achievements of Kaleb, especially his expedition to Southern Arabiya. The later includes coins and epigraphic sources which have recently come to light. **(ibid, 130)**

3.1.2. Caleb and the persecution of Christians in southern Arabiya

Caleb is known in world history for his expedition to Arabiya. During his time the Axumite territory of south Arabiya, under his authority was greater than

ever. The inhabitants of southern Arabia were originally polytheists. Later, with the coming of a number of Jews to Arabiya especially after the roman invasion, they began to accept Judaism. However their conversion had political motives: they thought in this way to get help from the Jews whose number was increasing day by day.



A reference map of the Empire of kaleb of Axum

At the same time Christianity had been introduced in Arabia. According to some historical sources, the persecution, which happened, in southern Arabia was mainly directed against the Ethiopians who inhabited various places in south Arabia in the first quarter of the sixth century. This is why Caleb's expedition was undertaken.

The rivalry between these two religions, Christianity and Judaism became acute when the local prince, Dhu Nuwas was converted to Judaism and took the name of Josef. With the help of his co-religionists he began to be more and more aggressive towards the Axumites and the Christian religion. In the first stages of his persecution, he became successful and went further to

Nagran in the north of south Arabiya. Dhu Nuwas ordered the people of Nagran to change their Christian religion to Judaism and when they refused to change he ordered his army to execute them on the spot. Then he captured the city of Nagran and burnt all churches there.

We are told in the book of the Himyarites that a Christian lady, whose name was Hammayya, came to Ethiopia and informed the Bishop, Eutropius, and Emperor Caleb. According to Arabian sources, the king of Ethiopia was informed by a certain inhabitant of Nagran, who had escaped the massacre. He brought to Caleb the news about the destruction of the city, carrying with half-burnt copy of the Gospel as a witness. He begged Caleb and the Abyssinian bishop to wage war against Dhu Nuwas.

Caleb agreed and landed his army on the eastern front and began an offensive war against Dhu Nuwas. Caleb became victorious and restored the churches which had been destroyed by Dhu Nuwas and he gave encouragement to the Christian population.

This victory won Kaleb fame as the defender of the Christian faith and increased his prestige and power. Aksumite Ethiopia became the third power in the Middle Eastern region as a whole after the rival Byzantine and Persian empires. The Byzantine Empire frequently sent ambassadors to Kaleb to conclude commercial or military treaties.

Ethiopian and Greek traditional stories state that Caleb abdicated his power after his return from South Arabia. Dedicating his crown to the Holy Sepulcher, he entered the monastery of Abba Pantaleon, where he spent the rest of his life. He was canonized by the Ethiopian church, and was the first Ethiopian to be recognized by the Greek and Roman Catholic churches as saint

3.3. St. YARED

St. Yared is one of the very few early Ethiopian saints known to history. His second hagiographer lived most probably in the fifteenth century. However, the traditions firm that the Ethiopian church owes the composition of Degua, its music as well as the great part of its hymns, to this great saint.

Yared flourished during the reign of Gabra Masqal (c. 558-588). He was a son of an Axumite priestly family of Abiyud or Yeshaq and Krestina(Isaac and Christina). When his father died while the son was still a child, his mother took him to Gedewon (Gideon), a famous biblical scholar of the time who also happened to be a relative. It soon became clear to the child and the teacher that Yared did not have the talent for learning. Frustrated after several trials and unable to further endure his master's beatings, Yared considered abandoning school. He left his master and ran away into the woods.

While sitting there resting, he watched a caterpillar trying to climb a tree. When he saw that it succeeded after very many attempts, he went back to his teacher to try further. With persistence and prayers, Yared succeeded in becoming a great scholar.

Yared grew up serving as a deacon at the church of Axum, site of the "Ark of Zion," the *tabot* (ark) that was believed to house Moses' tablets of the Ten Commandments. When he reached the age of maturity, he married and became both a father and an accomplished priest. His marriage was, however, not without problems. When he discovered that his wife had a lover, he planned to ambush and to kill him. He abandoned the plan only when the messenger of God came to him in the form of three birds and reminded him that he should rather value his priesthood.

It seems that at this time Yared left Axum (or even Ethiopia) and probably went to the Holy Land and the neighboring countries where Christian worship had developed. According to his hagiographer, singing in church in a loud

voice was not known in the Ethiopian church at that time. But in Jerusalem he heard songs of praise to God in a loud voice. One of the birds appeared again and taught him the three types or modes of melodies that are still in use in the Ethiopian church.

As noted, tradition ascribes to Yared the composition of the voluminous composition for the year, the *Deggwa*. There is noreason to doubt that Yared was responsible for the composition of the nucleus of the *Deggwa*, the text as well as the melody. But the *Deggwa* was greatly enlarged by the inclusion of hymns for the saints who lived after the death of Yared. It includes, for example, hymns of the majority of saints who flourished from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries.

After serving at the church in Axum for several years, Yared decided to abandon his homeland and go west to Semen. The reason is not clear, but he spent the rest of his life teaching there. His concealed tomb is believed to be there. Yared is commemorated on 11 Genbot.

St. Yared’s contact with the Nine Saints acquired him many information about the Eastern and Western Churches’ traditions.