
HOLY TRINITY UNIVERSITY

HISTORY OF E.O.T.C. II



2015 E.C

Introduction

This second course of Ethiopian church history covers medieval period of the church journey in history. The part starts with entered of Islamic followers to Ethiopia and goes through different events then it ends on emperor Dawit I family especially focused on Atse Zara Yacob. The starting era of this course claimed that it was “Dark Age’ in Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church history. The term deals due to Islamic religion entered in Ethiopia many things were changed including the church missionary way. Due to this some historians reflect their thoughts on this event. The rose and expansion of Islam’s that contributed to the decline and fall of Axum. Its end is always a point of disagreement. Some say, the Dark Age ends with the restoration of Solomonic Dynasty. This position includes the Zagwe Dynasty as part of the Dark Age. There are also some who disagree with this and prefer to see the Zagwe period as a Golden one for revival of spirituality, monasticism, art and architecture... etc. Discussions will be made on contributions of the Zagwe period, so called restoration of Solomonic Dynasty, revival of monasticism in 13th century and some prominent monastic figures.

The Dark Age

Islam in Ethiopia

The seventh century, which saw the birth and unique expansion of Islam marked a decisive turn in the history of Axum.

“Any study of Islam in the continent will take into account the history of Islam in Ethiopia. ... An understanding of Islam in the Ethiopian region can provide new themes for, and insight into, the study of Islam in Africa. ...”¹

“... Consequently, had Abyssinia become Muslim, either violently as a result of the conquest of the Imam Ahmad Gragn in the sixteenth century, or pacifically through centuries of gradual infiltration, and had a strong Hamitic-Islamic civilization established itself in the highlands, nothing could have stopped the spread of Islam throughout the whole of the continent ...”²

The Seventh century, which saw the birth and unique expansion of Islam, marked a decisive turn in the history of Axum/Ethiopia says Trimingham.

“Christian Africa was abandoned to its fate. Egypt remained a Christian country for a long time with the Muslims as the dominant ruling minority, but through the machinery of the state the church was slowly strangled, and more and more of her peoples were absorbed into the

¹ Hussein Ahmed, Trends and Issues In The History Of Islam In Ethiopia, 1993

² Trimingham S., Islam in Ethiopia, 1952: xiv

new religion until in the course of time Egypt became a Muslim state with the Christians the subject minority, they remain to this day. ...”³

This is how Islam changed the surrounding area and Ethiopia’s neighboring countries. In many case, religious-cultural changes made by Islamic movements are gradual. Either directly or indirectly this can be applied to Ethiopia and specifically to EOTC.

Hussein Ahmed says Christian-Muslim encounter in Ethiopia is associated with the emigration of a group of the prophet Mohamed’s first followers from Mecca to Axum in 615 AD,⁴ which set the context for the subsequent period during which the adherents of the two faiths are believed to have coexisted in peace and mutual tolerance until the fall of Axum in the middle of the 10th century.⁵ It is not easy to accept the aforementioned idea as it is because; the then immigrants went back to their country. It is baseless to talk about coexistence and mutual tolerance. For this to be true, we have to wait until those gradual infiltrations. Again they were very few in number and unimaginable to clearly see their role in the societal formation of the time.

Whatever the case, the rise of Islam is a turning point in world history. It deeply influenced and radically transformed the political, religious and social structures of countries in the Middle East. And it was said that the nurse of Mohammad had an Ethiopian nurse, named Umm Ayman.⁶ It is evident that Mohammad had a detailed knowledge about Ethiopia, and for this reason he advised and sent his first followers to Ethiopia, where there was “...a king under whom none are persecuted. It is a land of righteousness where God will give you relief from what you are suffering.”⁷ So, the first group of Mohammad’s followers arrived in Ethiopia, a group consisted of the prophet’s daughter and her husband, one of the earliest converts.

When the immigrants arrived safely in Axum, they were hospitably welcomed by the Axumite king and the people. And there they lived a quiet life. The Quraysh sent emissaries to bring them back to Arabia, but the King of Axum refused their demands. The Prophet himself instructed his followers who came to the Axumite Empire, to respect and protect Axum as well as live in peace with the native Christians.

After three months, the immigrants heard that the Qurayish had stopped persecuting the Muslims in Arabia following an agreement between the former and Mohammad. Being encouraged by this

³ Trimingham, 42.

⁴ ብፁዕ ኣቡነ ጎርጎርዮስ (ፊቀ ጳጳስ)፣ የኢትዮጵያ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ 1986፣ ገ፡ 31።

⁵ . Hussein Ahmed, coexistence and/or confrontation...

⁶ Sergew Hable Selassie, Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History, 1972, 181

⁷ J.S. Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia, 1952, p.44

news they decided to return home. At different intervals some Muslims crossed the red sea and arrived at Axum. According to Sergew Hable Sellasie, their total number was 107: 89 men 18 women, and all returned back home.⁸

Arab sources say the emperor of Ethiopia at that time was Ella-Seham. However, Ethiopian sources refer to the king as Adiaz or Armah, who ruled the country for twenty years (603-623 AD). Some other sources use “Najashi” an Arabic loan word for ነጋሥቱ ንጉሥ ዘነግሠ, etc., a common adjective to all kings and Emperors. But mistakenly said, this Emperor converted to Islam, which is illogical. The reason is, the state formation, which based its ideology on Christianity, and Solomonic decent since Christianity was declared a national religion of Ethiopia. An example for this is the chaos happened during Atse Susenios. Trimingham further mentioned that some of those Muslim migrants had become Christians and therefore, the first converts from Islam to Christianity.⁹

“At this time arose the infidel Mohammad in the East, occupied all the countries, killed the magicians of Egypt, burned their books and came as far as Habab, the land of the Sudan. But he couldn’t subdue the empire of Ethiopia, for God kept it in His hands”¹⁰

Historical texts claim that the second group of immigrants also went back to Medina by the request of Mohammad to the Ethiopian king.¹¹ The rise and expansion of Islam has contributed much to the decline of Axumite kingdom and also to the Dark Age. According to some historians Ethiopia’s Dark Age is the time between the advent of Islam and the restoration of the Solomonic dynasty in 1270.

C. Harris in his book *The Highlands of Ethiopia* says that “Ethiopia...nearly isolated from the remainder of the world, rested for the next ten centuries as sealed book to European history preserving her independence from all foreign yoke and guarding in safety the flame of the faith, which she had inherited from her fathers.”¹²

The Decline of Axum

Readings

- Paul B. Henze, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*, 2000, pp. 39-43.

⁸ Sergew, *Ancient and Medieval...* p.182

⁹ Islam in Ethiopia, 45.

¹⁰ Ethiopian Chronicle, unpublished MS, p.63, *Ancient and Medieval*, 185

¹¹ Ibid, 186-192

¹² 1844, vol. III, 87

- **Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History*, 1972, pp. 205-225.**

Since it was a long and slow process, the exact reason behind the decline of the Aksumite kingdom is not precisely clear. One among many suggestions, Atse Caleb's march to South Arabian territories played a role in weakening its troops.¹³ According to Paul B. Henze, the reign of Emperor Caleb in the fifth century marked the final period of Aksumite expansion.¹⁴ The problem started after the reign of Emperor Caleb and came to decline during the rise and expansion of Islam.¹⁵ During this period, Ethiopia lost its trade routes. Among other underlying causes of its decline:

- **Shift of power Southward**

In the words of Henze, there is evidence that the once fertile agricultural lands around the city were becoming exhausted. Forests had been cut for consumption and as a result, the climate seems to have worsened. This situation necessitated a power shift from Axum to the South-around Hayq in Wollo. The power shift into southern regions had become necessary once deforestation and degradation had taken its toll on the land. While forests were being cut down for construction and irregular rainfall eroded the soil, Aksumite agriculture began to collapse. The power shift southward was also influenced by revolts occurring in surrounding areas, most notably by the Beja tribes from the north.¹⁶

- **The Economic Situation**

Two principal lines of communication linking Axum with the outside world the land route to Egypt and the sea route to Arabia passed into the hands of the enemies of Axumites. Jihad against Ethiopia started, and captured Massawa, Dahlak Islands, etc. In spite of so called Muhammad's declaration that there should be no holy war (Jihad) against Ethiopia, the friendly relation of Ethiopia with Muslims did not last long. By the 8th c the Axumite kingdom lost its territories in south Arabia. This was due to the rise of Muslims who occupied the Ethiopian coast and surrounding territory. They captured Massawa and Dahlak Islands subsequently sacking and setting fire to Adulis, a disaster from which the latter never recorded. The Aksumites were finally driven from coastal areas and lost many territories. Thus Ethiopian Empire completely cut off not only from the south Arabian territory but also from its commercial outlets.¹⁷

¹³ Paul B. Henze, *Layers of Time*: 44-6

¹⁴ *ibid*, 39.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.44.

¹⁶ Sergew, Hable Sellasie. *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History*. 1972, 207.

¹⁷ Henze, Paul. *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*. 2000, pp 44-45.

When the main conquests by Calipha Omars (AD 634-644) occurred, the Byzantine Empire was pushed out of Syria. Armenia was over run and Mesopotamia and Persia were conquered. Egypt passed almost completely from Christianity to Islam. Even the link with Alexandria was discontinued for a while. It was said that continues Christological dispute between the Christian Churches had contributed to weakening Christianity and encouraging the Islamic religion.¹⁸ In the following centuries the Muslim merchants gradually converted a number of people to Islam, mainly in the major market villages and along the caravan routs.

The Persians ended Ethiopian involvement in southern Arabia and Muslims replaced the Axumites in the Red Sea.

Until Adulis suffered a destructive attack in the middle of the 7th century, the Axumites exported ivory, incense, tortoise-shell, and obsidian (a type of black glass produced by volcano) and they imported clothing, glass, iron, and weapons from Egypt, India, and Arabia. But as Islamic expansions grew in the Red Sea and overpopulation and over-cropping were down the once fertile land, Aksum's presence in the seashores began to diminish. Trade with other countries, however, did continue, but trading ports that were located much more southern had become more prominent.

- **Internal troubles-the Bejjas**

The Bejja tribes in the North-East established separate kingdoms under their own rulers.¹⁹ Some scholars believe Axum ceased to be the capital city as early as the Mid-century. Archeology provides evidence of collapse of the large buildings of the capital and decline in its population, but whatever the condition, the city retained symbolic and religious importance-as it has ever since-in Ethiopian life.

- **Lack of spiritual guidance**

Eventually the internal situation in Ethiopia was undermined by the absence of bishops. Relationship between Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Coptic Orthodox Church were so great and multifaceted. The centers of this relationship were the bishops who are coming consequently. The bishop's presence had great significance for the general welfare of the country. The bishop was considered a living and visible symbol of the blessing of God and his absence brought wrath and misery to the empire. This was an interpretation by the Egyptian side that the country by that time had entered a very critical period in its history which was considered as wrath of God due to the absence of the Coptic bishop.

¹⁸ ብፁዕ አቡነ ጎርጎርዮስ (ሊቀ ጳጳስ)፡ የኢትዮጵያ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ፡ 1986፡ ገ ፡ 31።

¹⁹ Paul B. Henze, Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia, 2000, 45.

Week 3

- **The Destructive Invasion of Gudit**
- **Fall of Axum**

Readings

- ተክለ ጳውሎስ ሙሉ ሥራ ፡ የ ኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ፡ ኩብያ አክሱም ዛሬ ጊዜ ፡ ገ . 323 -385
- **Sergew Hable Sellasie, Ancient, 1972, 225-232.**

Who is Judith/የዲት?

Why she became so cruel and destructive?

There are many and different opinions and historical narrations concerning Judith. A manuscript used by Sergew Hable Selasie, starts a story about Judith:

“ ወእምዝ ንጽሕፍ ታሪክ ዘጉዲት በልሳነ ትግራይ ትሰመይ ጉዲት፤ ወበአምሐራ ትሰመይ እሳቶ ወበልሳነ ጥልጣል ትሰመይ ጋዕዋ። የዲት ብሂል ብፅዕት፤ ብጽዕት ወመንከርት። ወአልቦ ዘይትማሰላ በስን ወበላሕይ ዘእንበለ ንግሥተ አዜብ። ወይእቲ ወለተ ወለቱ ለወድመ አስፈሬ ንጉሥ። ወስመሀገረ እማኃኃይሌ። ወበእከየ ምግባራሰ ተሰምየ ትጉዲት በእንተ ዘአወሳየት መቅደስ ጽዮን ገበዘ አክሱም ዘተሐንፀ በወርቕ ወበብሩር ወበከድዋ። . . . ”²⁰

Gudit, Yodit or Judith, Queen, also known in Amharic as 'Esato and in Teltal as Ga'Ewa, was a rebel leader to whom the downfall of the ancient Aksumite Empire is traditionally ascribed. In this manuscript, the reason for nicknames is given. But, when we go through it, other reasons for her to behave like that don't seem acceptable.

* **Read and observe how clergies made responsible for her destruction**

* **Examine how scholars of the time and elders were demonized by the author.**

In addition to oral tradition there is considerable documentary evidence that a non-Christian queen, who destroyed churches and monuments and sought to exterminate all members of the royal family, the House of David, harassed the ruling Aksumite dynasty.²¹ Many traditional sources affirm that this queen was of the Jewish faith, or had adopted it from her husband. This perhaps led some traditional Ethiopian scholars and others such as Bruce²² to assume that she was a daughter of the Fālašha rulers of Semén.²³

²⁰ Sergew, Ancient..., 1972, 226.

²¹ Wallis Budge, A History of Ethiopia: Volume I, 2014, 213.

²² J. Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, Edinburgh, 1813, Vol. II

²³ Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270*, pp. 225-232.

Gudit has also been confused with the Princess Masoba-Wärq or Terde'a-Gäbäz said to have been instrumental in the transfer of power from the legitimate royal house to the Zagwé. Thus Gudit herself has sometimes been pictured as the founder of the Zagwé dynasty and is said to have reigned for forty years and to have been succeeded by her descendants. These all are just suggestions by different authors and are not easy to accept directly.

In the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, it is recorded that, during the Patriarchate of Philotheos (979-1003 A.D.), George, the King of Nubia, received an appeal for transmission to the Patriarch from an unnamed ruler of Ethiopia seeking the appointment of a new Metropolitan. The letter described how a woman, apparently queen of the *Bani al-Hamuya* (the script of the Arabic text lends itself to various interpretations), was laying waste to the country and harrying the Emperor and his followers from place to place in an effort to wipe out Christianity completely.

The Emperor attributed this calamity to divine wrath incurred because in an earlier reign, during the Patriarchate of Cosmas, the bishop, *Abunä Pétrós*, had been dispossessed and the imposter Minas installed in his place; since this episode no bishop had been sent to Ethiopia. In response to this appeal Philotheos appointed Dan'él, a monk from Abbu Maqar as *abun*. Subsequent to his arrival in Ethiopia, peace seems to have been restored and it is recorded that "God was no longer angry with them and put an end to the activities of the woman who had risen against them."

The basic theme of the story of a rebel queen as a destructive, bringing ruin and devastation upon Aksumite civilization is common to Ethiopian tradition, both oral and written, and to the supportive external sources.²⁴

Ethiopian tradition affirms, however, that this queen was of the Jewish faith. Some manuscripts studied at Aksum by Sergew Hable-Selassie, mentioned earlier, provide a surprisingly detailed framework to the story. They indicate a belief that Gudit was related in some way to the royal family - she is, for example, said to have been a granddaughter in the female line of Emperor Wedem-Asfäré. She is also said to have married a Jewish prince, a certain Zenobis, son of the King of Šam, which is an Arabic form for Syria, but here appears to designate a country on the Red Sea coastal plain, perhaps to the north of Ethiopia. She set out with her husband at the head of an army he had provided to attack Aksum in vengeance for harsh treatment that she had received in the past, coming across the Samhar plain from the coast, at Arkiko, i.e. a complete change of direction from that usually postulated by modern scholars.

A detailed description of the destruction of Aksum is also included, first the cathedral and then the ancient stelae, "... Constructed by Greek artisans, at great cost." Traditional scholars generally affirm that the invasion of the queen dealt a death blow to the city of Aksum and it is interesting to

²⁴ Wallis budge, *A History of Ethiopia: Volume I*, 2014, 213.

note, that, in the *Gädlä Iyasus-Mo'a*, it is recorded that, in the seventh year of the reign of Del-Nä'ad, sometimes said to have been the son or grandson of Degna-Zan, "... [the seat of] the kingdom was transferred from Aksum to the country of the East. "It is also suggested that, to plan her campaign, Gudit took advantage of the death of Emperor Degna-Zan, who had perished with an entire Aksumite army in the desert, while on an expedition to the "land of the Arabs," apparently western Ethiopia.²⁵

Yodit/Judith destructed many monasteries and churches in Ethiopia, books and other treasures were burnt, clergies were murdered, and these all calamities took 40 years. Many Christians migrated to the southern parts of Ethiopia. Tabote Tsion/Ark of the Covenant was taken to an island near Zeway. The place in which the Ark resided, holds the name "Debre Tsion" till this time.

It was a great disaster in general, and uncountable loss for EOTC. Some of the manuscripts and oral wisdoms couldn't be restored even after the destruction.

" She is credited with a lust to destroy by fire and sword churches, monasteries, buildings and everything that symbolized christian and imperial power, and is often called Esato in Amharic ... She is said to have killed the Emperor, ascended the throne herself, and reigned for forty years." ²⁶

Week 4

The Rise of the Zagwe Dynasty

Readings

ብፁዕ አቡነ ጎርጎርዮስ (ሊቀ ጳጳስ)፣ የኢትዮጵያ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ 1991፣ ገ . 32-41

ተክለ ጻድቅ መኰሪያ ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ፡ ኑብያ አክሱም ዓገዌ ፣ 1951፣ ገ .391-411.

There are about five alternative suggestions for the rise of Zagwe dynasty.²⁷

"About the middle of the 10th century, whilst Delnaád was reigning, a religious revolution brock out in Abyssinia, with far-reaching consequences. The authors of the revolution were the Falashas, who were of Jewish origin and practiced Judaism, and the zagwe, a tribe or section of the Agaws, who were Christians. The Abyssinianchronicles make no mention of any revolution, but the king lists say that

²⁵ Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History, p. 233.

²⁶ Paul B. Henze, Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia, 2000. Pp. 48-49.

²⁷ ተክለ ጻድቅ መኰሪያ ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ፡ ኑብያ አክሱም ዓገዌ ፣ 1951፣ ገ .391

after Dilna'ad the kingdom passed to another people who were not of the tribe of Israel' ለካልእ ሕዝብ እለ ኢኮኑ እምነ ገደ እሥራኤል”²⁸

Delnead's (Dil Nead's) rule was shaky and full of trouble some of the people of Agew, Lasta and Semien, who disliked the return of the Axumite kings, became unruly. Mara Teklehaimanot, Governor of Lasta, and the General of the Army killed Delnead; seized power and proclaimed himself king. This marked the end of the Aksumite Empire.

There are different opinions on the derivation of the word Zagwe.

- The baptismal/Christian name of Mera Tekle Haymanot was Zewge Michael, the founder of this Dynasty
- Others believe that it derives from Agaw, Ze Agew, The Agaw
- It was probably taken from Geez word “ዘአጉየየ” meaning persecutor, who persecuted, chaser, ...²⁹

It seems that the Aksumites themselves probably contributed to this change. As we have seen in the above chronicle of Ethiopia, we find two references to the move of the capital city, in both cases, two the south.

1. There is the flight of the dynasty to the south following/because of absence of natural resources, internal troubles and the rise of Gudit.
2. Gedle Abba Eyesus Moa mentions the arrival of Anbesa Wudim in the region of Haiq and the founding of a city there. So, we can assume that pressure from enemies both within and outside the empire forced the move.

The exact time for the rise of the Zagwe Dynasty is unknown. Internal sources say that Mera Tekle Haymanot's time was started in 912 AD.³⁰ Some sources, especially external historians say it was established in 1137 and stayed to 1270. David Buxton has stated that the area under the direct rule of the Zagwe kings probably embraced the highlands of modern Eritrea and the whole of Tigray, extending southwards to Waag, Lasta and Damot (Wallo province) and thence westwards to Lake Tana (Begemdir)

The Zagwe kings had their capital at Adaffa, about 200 km southeast of Aksum. It was frequently said that The Zagwe kings were further distinguished from the Axumite kings in that they did not belong to the same ethnic and linguistic group as the Axumites. These kings were, therefore,

²⁸ Wallis budge, A History of Ethiopia: Volume I, 2014, 213.

²⁹ Wallis budge, A History of Ethiopia: Volume I, 2014, 217-8.

³⁰ ጎሩይ ወልደ ሥላሴ፣ ዋዜማ፣ 201፥ 50።

described in Ethiopian traditional historical documents as usurpers and their dynasty (the Zagwe Dynasty) as illegitimate. “ተሐይደት መንግሥት ወተውሕበት ለካልዓን እለ ኢኮኑ እምሥራኤል።”³¹ ወእምዝ ፈለሠት መንግሥት ሀበ ካልዕ ሕዝብ እለ ኢኮኑ እምነገደ እምሥራኤል።”

But now, some critical questions are emerging on the credibility of this divisive form of the story. His grace, the late Abuna Gorgorios of Shoa, sees the shift of the seat/palace from Axum to Lasta positively. “የኢትዮጵያ ቤተ መንግሥት ከአክሱም ወደ ላስታ በተዛወረ ጊዜ በዮዲት ወረራ ተደናግጦ የነበረው ክርስቲያን ሕዝብ የሃይማኖት ስሜቱ እንደገና ተቀሰቀሰ። የተቃጠሉትን መጻሕፍት እንደገና በማጻፍ የፈረሱትን አብያተ ክርስቲያናት መልሶ በማሠራት ብዙ ጥረት ተደርጓል። ...”³²

A recently published book by Deacon Daniel kibret also questions the rivalry between Aksumite and Zagwe, and the Zagwe as usurpers, ...

“ገድላቱና ድርሳናቱ ብሎም ታሪክ ነገሥቶቹ የመንግሥቱን ዝውውር ፈጣሪ በአክሱማውያን ነገሥታት ላይ በመቆጣቱ እንደመጣ ቢገልጠልንም ክርስቲያናዊ ባሕላቸውን፣ ከኢየሩሳሌም ጋር የነበራቸውን ግንኙነት፣ ሴማዊ ለሆነው የአማርኛ ቋንቋ የሰጡትን ቦታና የሕንፃ አሠራራቸውን ስንመለከት ግን እሴት ጨምሮ የመጣ የአክሱም ባህል እምነትና ሥልጣኔ ተከታይ ሆኖ እናገኘዋለን።”³³

One of the earliest writers to comment on the reign of the Zagwe was the chaplain of the Portuguese Diplomatic Mission, Francisco Alvarez, in the early 1520's. After being shown a short list of five Zagwe kings, Alvarez commented that those who know said that the Zagwe kings were more than those on the list he was shown (Alvarez 1960).

Basing his argument on two types of sources, Conti Rossini wrote that the first Zagwe king came to power between 1135 and 1137. The first, and by far the most decisive, was an account in the *History of Patriarchs of Alexandria*. During the reign of Patriarch John (1147–67), an Ethiopian king wrote a letter to the Alexandrian see asking for a replacement of a metropolitan, since the incumbent had become too old to carry out his duties. What makes his argument poor is that every king in Ethiopia was asking for a bishop from Egypt. So, what is the reason to say the first? The reason for the Ethiopian king's request for a replacement, Conti Rossini argued, was not the old age of the metropolitan but that the metropolitan had refused to recognize the seizure of power by a strong man who did not belong to the royal dynasty.³⁴

Sergew Hable-Sellassie, partly relying on Ethiopian sources and partly on the fragmented Coptic and Arabic sources, has argued that the Zagwe probably came to power between 1030 and 1050 AD. This would reduce the Zagwe period from the maximum 375 years to slightly over 200 years.³⁵

As we have pointed out earlier, however, the Coptic and Arabic sources on the rise of Queen

³¹ Sergew, Ancient ... 231.

³² የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋሕዶ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ 1986፣ 35።

³³ ኢትዮጵያዊ ሱራፊ፣ 2011፣ 275።

³⁴ Conti Rossini 1928, p. 303

³⁵ ዳንኤል ክብረት፣ ኢትዮጵያዊው ሱራፊ፣ 2011፣ 275።

Judith (first mentioned in the second half of the tenth century) do not seem reliable enough as indicators for setting the chronology of the Zagwe. *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* by Sawirus which has been the key sources for Conti Rossini's reconstruction of the Zagwe chronology was composed towards the end of the seventeenth century and most probably on the basis of oral tradition.

According to another Ethiopian historian, the Zagwe came to power in the first half of tenth century. Adhering strictly to Ethiopian chronicles, Tekle Tsadik refuted the interpretation of Conti Rossini arguing that it was not the first time that the Patriarchate at Cairo had refused to recognize the Zagwe assumption of power. As early as mid-eleventh century, the Patriarchate had, according to Ethiopian hagiographies, refused to send a bishop to Ethiopia ruled by non-Solomonites.³⁶

The argument that the Zagwe might indeed have ruled since the first half of the tenth century has most recently been raised in an exhaustive study of chronology in Ethiopian sources. Due to the discovery of the duplication of Ethiopian chronology, involving an amount of 456 years, it has been argued that those sources which assign the Zagwe Dynasty 133 years might have been based on an account which eliminated 456 years from actual history.³⁷ This cutting down of intervals, writes Neugebauer, must affect the time before 1270, therefore, lending credibility to the argument that the Zagwe period could have been longer than suggested by authors such as Conti Rossini.

- Did the Zagwe rule for over three centuries, as some Ethiopian sources claim, or did they only rule slightly over a century?

Was Adaffa/Roha the Zagwe's fixed capital throughout their dynastic rule, or was it one of the predecessors of the moving capitals given the mark of permanence because it happened to be the capital when the Arab and Coptic interests were momentarily focused on the country?

Week 5

Contribution of Some Zagwe Kings to the EOTC

- ተክለ ጳጵቅ መስቀል ሥጋ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ኑብያ አክሱም ዛጉዌ፣ 1951፣ ገ. 399 - 411.
- Lule Melaku, *History of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church*, 2010, pp. 36-42.
- Serge Hable Sellasie, *Ancient ...*, 1972, pp. 239-264.

³⁶ Tekel Tsadik 1965, pp. 350-351

³⁷ Neugebauer 1989, 55–6

The Zagwe dynasty faced a strong opposition from the EOTC³⁸ and also the Coptic Church at its initial stage. It is recorded that the Zagwe kings sent a letter to Alexandria to ask the patriarchs to appoint a bishop.³⁹

To win the EOTC as the legitimate Ethiopian dynasty the Zagwe rulers involved in the activities of the church affairs. They tried to spread Christianity far to the South, built many churches around their capital, Wollo:-Lasta, Amhara, Tigray, Begemidir and Oromia –Adadi Mariam etc, and most of them were destroyed by the invasion of Ahmed Gragn. Due to these activities the EOTC acknowledged them as legitimate rulers till the so called restoration of the Solomonic Dynasty. (* this is not a single and unquestionable view. Remember that there are different deliberate insertions on the Ethiopian history to bring distrust among people. So, there will be a detail discussion on the matter taking perspectives into consideration.)

The most outstanding contribution of the Zagwe kings was their activities in the Church affairs. **Christianity spread far to the South and West during the Zagwe period;** and it was preached almost everywhere in the Empire. **The kings also built churches** in Lasta, Tigray, Wollo, Begemidir, etc.

In order to legitimize their royalty, the Zagwe rulers claimed a pre-Solomonic descent with a counter claim base on their connection with Mosses through his wife.⁴⁰

It suggests that they had found it necessary to rise in counter claim against the dynasty, which they rejected, and that dynasty, which fell in about 1268 already, claimed Solomonic descent.

They were great propagators of the Christian faith and were converting pagan Agaws to Christianity in northern Ethiopia. This was the period of great religious activities.

While the Zagwe kings were reigning, bishop Daniel and his successor Fiquitor died and the country was left without a bishop again and the end plan of Muslims against Ethiopian Christians had become dangerous, especially during the year. The number of Christians converted to Islam had extensively increased. Such conversion was associated with trade and commercial expansion throughout the country. This was because the Zagwe kings conducted no serious wars of important against the Muslims.

The usual request for a bishop was made during the office of patriarch Christodoulou (1047 – 1077). However, the patriarch of Alexandria, which was transferred at that time to Cairo, was under

³⁸ There is no clear and precise information about this opposition except some speculations about legitimacy, question of protection etc.

³⁹ Trimingham, 1952, p.55

⁴⁰ Numbers 12: 1

the control of Muslims, who not only demanded the expansion of trade and protection of Islamic religion in Nubian and the Ethiopian kingdom, but also interfered, in the actual selection of the Egyptian candidate to be ordained as metropolitan of Ethiopia.

It was difficult to obtain a bishop canonically ordained at this condition. During the reign of King Germa Seyum, Bishop Sawiros was sent by patriarch Cyril (1077 – 92) to serve the Ethiopian Christians. But instead of serving the Church, to fulfill his promise to the Amir Al-Juyush he started to support and protect Muslims in Ethiopia and to do everything in their interest, such as building mosques, etc. He also hoped by doing this, the Amir will lighten the suffering of the Christians in Egypt. The Ethiopians and the king turned against Sawiors and sent him to prison.

The contributions of St. Ymrahane kristos

“ከላሊበላ በፊት ያሉት የዛጉዌ ነገሥታት የሠሩት ሥራ መኖሩ ሳይቀር በዘመኑ ተጽፎ ወደዘመናችን ያልተላለፈ በመሆኑ ታሪካቸው ተደፍሏል።”⁴¹

Germa Seyum died and was succeeded by his son Ymrahana Kristos. During Ymrahana's reign the Christians in Egypt were suffered persecution under Muslim rulers. Upon hearing this, Yemrahana wrote a letter to the Muslim leader in Egypt threatening that if the persecution of the Christian in Egypt continued, he would punish them by diverting the water of the Nile. This had brought a great fear among the people of Egypt assuming that the king could bring famine to their land by diverting the water if he so wished.

As a result, Abune Michael, Patriarch of Alexandria, was sent to Ethiopia and negotiated regarding this serious matter. Abune Michael told the king that if the Blue Nile waters were diverted, it would not only hurt the Muslims, but also affect the lives of the Christians.

The king who had respect for the patriarch, agreed and after a successful mission, Abune Michael returned to Egypt with joy. As both his predecessors and successors had done, the king tried to protect the Christians in Egypt from the Islamic domination by threatening them using the water of the Nile. He wrote a letter to the Muslim leader saying if the persecution continued he would punish them by diverting the flow of the Nile's water.

Concerning the internal affairs, he prohibited magicians, polygamy by a decree. Ymrahane Kristos was a priest as most Ethiopian kings do, and he regularly fulfilled his duty by serving the Holy Communion and confession. He was canonized as a saint of EOTC.

The Contribution of Emperor Harbe (St.)

⁴¹ ተክለ ጳጳሩ መከራ ያፈርሳል፡ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ኑብያ አክሱም ዛግዌ፡ 1951፡ ፡ 400።

When Yimrahana died Harbe the son of Jan Seyoum, his nephew, brother of Lalibela succeeded him. “Harbe was a man who had a vision regarding the future of the church. He foresaw that one Coptic bishop, who cannot speak the language of the country, cannot satisfy the spiritual needs of the millions of believers in Ethiopia. Therefore, he asked the Alexandrian patriarch not only for several bishops to be consecrated, but also for the bishops to be Ethiopians.”⁴²

The response from Egypt was not positive and as a result of this the relationship between the king and Abuna Gabriel was impacted. Later, he sent another letter to patriarch John and it was in vain. The Alexandrian church was claiming that Ethiopians are forbidden to appoint from among their scholars. But the real reason behind was the fear that if Ethiopians have got native bishop, the next step/demand would be independence and it will affect the benefits of the Egyptians sultanates as well as the Coptic Church.

Week 6

St. King Lalibela and His Magnificent Rock Hewn Churches

Readings

- ገድለ ቅዱስ ላሊበላ
- **Lule Melaku, History of EOTC, 2010, pp. 42-48.**
- **Taddese Tamerat, Church and State in Ethiopia, 1972, pp. 53-64.**
- **Sergew Hable Sellassie, Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270, 265-281.**

ወሀለ ወት አሐቲ ሀገር እምአህጉራተ ኢትዮጵያ እንተ ትሰመይ ሮሐ ሀገረ መላዱ ለብፁዕ ላሊበላ ወሀለ ወበይአቲ ሐገር አሐዱ ብእሲ እንተ እምዘመደ ዓበይት ወክቡራን ወብዑላን ፈድፋደ በወርቅ ወበብሩር ወበአልባሰ ቀጠንት ወበአግብርት ወበአእማት። ወስመሰ ለወእቱ ብእሲ ዝን ሥዩም። ወነሥኦ ሎቱ ብእሲተ ወወለዶ እምኔሃ ለዝንቱ ቡሩክ ወቅዱስ ዘተሰምየ ላሊበላ . . . ወአመ ወለደቶ እመመጽኡ አንህብት ብዙኃን ወዓገትዎ ከመዘየዓግቱ መዓረ። ወርእያ እመኦሎንተ አንህብተ ከመዓገትዎ ወሐጸርዎ ለሕፃና ከመዘየዓወድዎ ሐራሁ ለንጉሥ። ወሶበርእየት ዘንተ ወረደ ኅቤሃ መንፈስ ተነብዮ። ወትቤንህብኒ አእመረ ከመዓቢይ ወእቱ ዝንቱ ሕፃን። ወበእንተ ዝንቱ ሰመየቶ ላሊበላንህብአእመረ ጸጋሁ ብሂል። (ገድለ ቅዱስ ላሊበላ)

*“Ethiopian Christianity is rich not only in oral traditions but in visual expressions. One of the most famous came from **King Lalibela** in the twelfth century. Revered as a saint,*

⁴² Lule Melaku, 2010, 40, The Ethiopian Synaxarium, Miyazia 10.

he was the visionary behind the construction of 11 rock-hewn churches, which he called a “New Jerusalem.” Each of these churches was carved from a single piece of rock as a symbol of inward spirituality and humility. Although hundreds of other rock-hewn churches exist in Ethiopia and around the world, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela are particularly famous for their beauty. ⁴³

As it is written in his hagiography, King Lalibela was born at either Adefa or Roha (it was later named Lalibela after him) in Bugna. He was given the name "Lalibela" due to a swarm of bees said to have surrounded him at his birth, which his mother took as a sign of his future reign as Emperor of Ethiopia. ⁴⁴

Lalibela is said to have seen Jerusalem in a vision and then attempted to build a New Jerusalem as his capital in response to the capture of old Jerusalem by Muslims in 1187. As such, many features of the town of Lalibela have Biblical names including the town's river, known as the River Jordan. The city remained the capital of Ethiopia till 13th century.

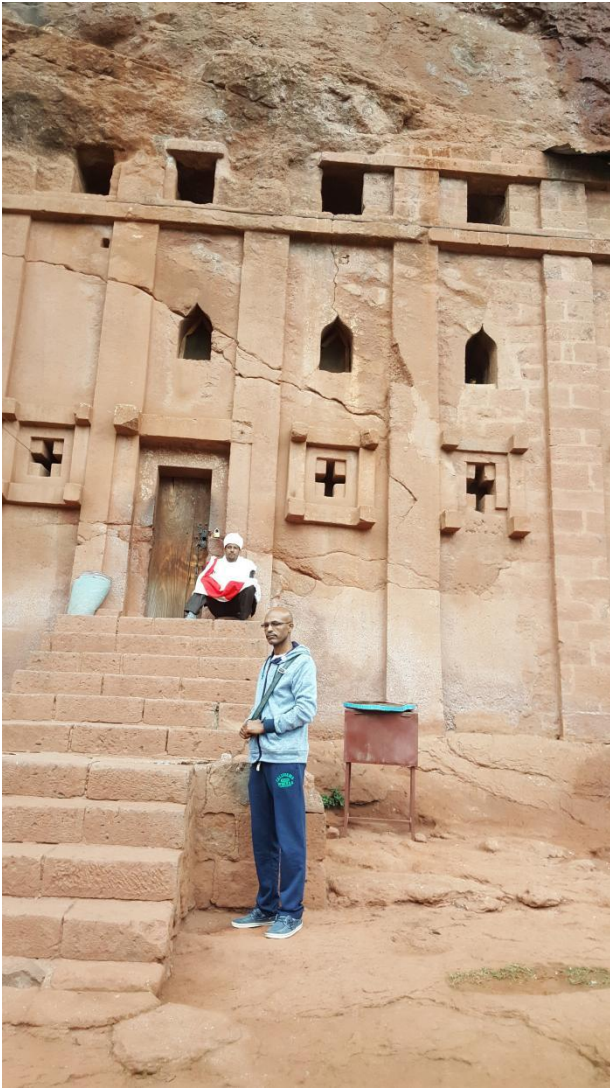
Details about the construction of his 11 monolithic churches at Lalibela have been lost. The later *Gadla Lalibela*, a hagiography of the king, states that he carved these churches out of stone with only the help of angels.

ስምዕኤል ኦፍቄራንየ እንግርክ ሙዝከመኮነ ግብረ ፀአቶን ለእላንቱ አብያተ ክርስቲያናት እምልበ ምድር በእደ ላሊበላ ልዑላ ዝክር ወዘከመ እፎ ግብረ ሕንጻሆን ኮነ እንበለ ዕጽ ወመሬት ወዘእንበለ አኅባለ ጠፈር ወመዋጽሕት። ሰማእከመኑ ዘከመዝ ግብረ ዜና ወሚመር ኢከመኑ በአእይንቲከሙ ዘከመዝ መንከረ ወዘከመዝ መድምመ፣ መድፍን ኅቡእ ዘተከሥተ በእደ ላሊበላ፣ እምልብኒ ተመሥጠረ ወእምሕሊናኒ ተሠወረ ዝኩ ገባሬ ኩሉ ወፈጣሬ ኩሉ ዘአምጽአ ኩሎ ዓለመ በጽዋዔ ቃሉ አመበጽሐጊ ዜሁ ለሕንጻ እሎን አብያተ ክርስቲያናት። . . .

ዘይፈቅድ ይርአይ ግብረ ሕንጻሆን ለአብያተ ክርስቲያናት ዘተገብራ በእደ ላሊበላ ይምጻእ ወይርአይ በአእይንቲሁ እስመአኮ ዘይበልያ . . .

⁴³ Christian History, Issue 105,2013, P.20.

⁴⁴ Taddese Tamerat, Church and State, p.61.



ወኩሎን ሰ ግብራቲሆን ኢንክል ንንግር በበገዱ
እስመብዙኅ ጾታግብረቶን። ናሁተስእነኒ ሊተሰ
ላዕላዓልሳን ከመእጽሐፍ ለክሙኩሎ ጊሩታቲሁ
ለዝንቱ ብእሲ ክቡር ላሊበላ ዘክብረ እምኩሎሙ
መሬታውያን . . .



Unlike the other Zagwe kings, a sizeable amount of written material has survived about his reign,



besides the *Gadla Lalibela*.

Sergew Hable Sellasie says, “ Lalibela was a devout christian emperor. His contributions to the church extended from the donation of land to many monasteries and churches in the Northern Ethiopia to the construction off the eleven monolithic churches of Roha hewn from solid rock.” He continues, these latter churches are located in three groups:

Group 1

Bete Medhane Alem, Bete Mariam, Bete Michael, Bete Meskel

Group 2

Bete Amanuel

Bete Merqorewos

Bete Libanos

History of EOTC II [Type the document title]

Bete Gabriel

Group 3

Bete Giorgis

Week 7

Revival of monasticism

Readings

- **Taddesse Tamerat, Church and State in Ethiopia, 1972, 107-114.**

EOTC, The Church of Ethiopia: A Panorama of History and Spiritual Life, 20-25.

The term monasticism is derived from the Greek word *monos* – single. It is a form of leaving the world, in order to discard in solitude all desires and their temptations and then devote oneself to pursuing inner perfection. This type of withdrawal from society is not exceptionally particular of Christianity; one can also find it in other religions for instance Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism. However the peculiarity of Christian monasticism differs it in a distinctive way from this form in other religions.

Some Ethiopian scholars see monasticism as part of an unbroken continuation stretching back to the Old Testament times when it was instituted by such figures as Melke Tsedeck and Enoch. Merigeta Berhanu in his book, *Tarike Gedamat* (History of Monasteries) traces this movement from Judean desert to Egypt and eventually Eritrea and northern Ethiopia.

An article, written by Kirch and Schule says, “In an extra ordinary way the monastic tradition is linked to the story of the visit of Holy Family in Ethiopia. The tradition was quoted in the introduction of Wedasie Mariam, makes a clear mention of the Blessed Virgin and her Son Jesus continuing their journey down the Nile to Ethiopia. It would be a mistake to dismiss it as a fairy tale and miss its deeper spiritual significance. The journey is symbolic of the renewal of the covenant which was initiated by the transportation of the arc from Jerusalem to Ethiopia by Menelik I. Just as the Ark contained the word of God, inscribed on tablets of stone, so the virgin bore the living Word.”⁴⁵

Eventually, monastic communities were established in each of the places they stayed, where apparently the Virgin Mary prophesied and even performed miracles. Ethiopia, as our Tradition

⁴⁵ Kirch and Shule, 2003: 5

relates, was given to Her by the Child Jesus as her personal patrimony. Therefore, the contemplative men and women are seen as the earthly angels, setting the example as the holy vanguard of the Holy Family.⁴⁶

Despite its early introduction, Taddese Tamerat says, in the 6th century with the advent of the Nine Saints, monasticism could assume a dominant position in the Ethiopian Church only Seven centuries later. But, his grace Abuna Gorgorios argues that the Zagwe period already brought monasticism and spirituality at its pick.

“የ ኢትዮጵያ ቤተ መንግሥት ከአክሱም ወደ ላስታ በተዛወረ ጊዜ በዮዲት ወረራ ተደናግጦ የነበረው ክርስቲያን ሕዝብ የሃይማኖት ስሜቱ እንደገና ተቀሰቀሰ። የተቃጠሉትን መጻሕፍት እንደገና በማጻፍ የፈረሱትን አብያተ ክርስቲያናት መልሶ በማሠራት ብዙ ጥረት ተደርጓል። ክርስቲያኖቹም ፍቅርና መተባበር ሥራውን ሁሉ እንዲቃና ረድቷል። የነገሥታቱና የመኳንንቱ ልጆች በወጣትነት ዘመናቸው እየመነኩ ገዳም በመግባታቸው ምንኩስናዊ ሕይወት በጣም ተስፋፍቶ ነበር።”⁴⁷

The 13th century saw a boost in the history of monasticism in Ethiopia. But it was a continued process from its pre christian origin, its expansion by the Nine Saints. This event is not an isolated one but, revival with all senses of the term.

The fifth century saw an important development with the arrival of the Nine Saints from Syria. They were perhaps among the refugees from the Byzantine Empire who refused to accept the Chalcedonian Christology. All of them were monks and all established monasteries which became very important centers of learning and evangelization. It would indeed be true to say that all evangelization and all education in Christian Ethiopia was in the hands of monks until modern times. Monks trained all the secular clergy and secular officials as well. (As in other Orthodox Churches, clergy may get married before ordination, but bishops are chosen only from the monks).⁴⁸

Many of these monasteries are still flourishing, for example, that of Debre Damo near the Eritrean border, still only accessible by rope. All Ethiopian monks trace their genealogy to Abba Aregawi, one of the Nine Saints. There are two houses in the monastic tradition of the Ethiopian Church namely, Bete Tekle Haymanot and Bete Ewostatewos of Sarae (d. 1352), both claim their origin from the Nine saints. This means, through the Nine Saints they associate themselves to those prominent monastic fathers like St. Anthony, and Pachumius ... , etc. “ወከመዝ ወእቱ ፀዓቱ ለአቡነ ዘማከኤል (አረጋዊ) ራብእ ትወልድ እምእንጦንዮስ ወመቃርስ ወጳኩማሲ”⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Abba Abraham Buruk, etal. Abyssinian Christianity, 2012, 51.

⁴⁷ የኢትዮጵያ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ፣ 1991፣ ገ. 32።

⁴⁸ Taddese Tamerat, 1972: 107

⁴⁹ ገድለ አቡነ አረጋዊ፣ 1978፣ (ተስፋ ገብረ ሥላሴ) ገ. 9።

Monasteries played a very significant role in the development of christian thought in Ethiopia. The Traditional Schools in the monasteries, produced almost all scholars of the church. Monasteries were the only educational center until recent time.

Another important contribution of monasteries is Geez literature. Concerning this, a well known scholar, Joachim Person said “In Ethiopia monasticism at an early date struck firm root in the native soil and flourished, becoming an important element in the formation of classical Geez Literature.”⁵⁰

Week 8

Abba Iyesus Moa

Readings

* ገድለ አባ ኢየሱስ ሞግ

* Taddese Tamerat, **Church and State in Ethiopia, 1972, pp. 156-160.**

ወተጾወወኒ ሕሊናየ ጎበ ካልዕ ነገር ከመኢይዜኑ ሀገረ መላዱ ለኢየሱስ ሞግ ወእምድኅረ ተወልደሂ ዘገብረ ለአምላክ ብርሃን ፈቃድ በጾም ወበጸሎት ከመተጾምድ ንጽሐ ወኒሩተ በአፈድፍዶ እስመዜና ጻድቅ አዳም ከመስቱ ወይን በአቅም።

ወሀገረ መላዱስ ከመዝ ወእቱ እምኩናነ ሰማን ጎንደር ወአድያ ማሠሰ ጎርጎራ እንተ ሰማዳህና ገብርኤል ወሀለው ወሰተ ይእቲ ሀገር ከልኤቱ መሐይምን ወመሐይምንት ወቅዱሳን እመንቱ በጎበ እግዚአብሔር ወክቡራነ ዘመድ እመንቱ።

ወመሐይምን ሰዘንቤ ዝ ወእቱ ዘክርስቶስ ወመሐይምንትኒ ዛቲ ይእቲ እግዚእ ከብራ ብእሲቱ ለዘክርስቶስ ወጻድቃን እመንቱ በቅድመ እግዚአብሔር ወይጸመዱ ታሕተ አርዑተ ትእዛዙ ለልዑል ሌሊተ ወመዓልተ ጽባሐ ወምቤተ ቀትረ ወሰዓተ ወበሙ ሞገስ በጎበ ሰማያውያን ወምድራውያን ወፍጹማን እመንቱ በሃይማኖተ ክርስቲያን። ...

ወእምዝ ወሀቦ ሙእግዚአብሔር ሠለስተ ወሉደ ስሙለ አሐዱ ኢየሱስ ሞግ ወለካልዑ ገብረ ጽዮን ወለሣልሱ ስቡሐ አምላክ። ወልሕቁ እመንቱ በሠናይ ልሕቀት እንዘ መንፈስ ቅዱስ የዐቅቦሙ በኩሉ ፍናዊሆመ። ወለኢየሱስ ሞግ ሰኮነ ዕለተ ቀጽረቱ አመእሥራ ወሰዱሱ ለነሐሴ ወዕለቱሂ ዕለተ ሰኮይ። ወኮነ ዕለተ ልደቱ አመእሥራ ወሰዱሱ ለወርሃ ግንቦት ወዕለቱሂ ዕለተ ረቡዕ .

..

According to his hagiography, Abune Eyesus Moa was born in 1206 EC. Other sources say, Abba Eyesus Moa was born around 1211 at Dahana district in Gondar bordering on the River Tekezze and died in 1292. His father was Zekristos and his mother Egzi Kibra. He received some primary religious education in his home district by his Uncle. In 1241 he traveled to Tigray and joined the famous monastery of Debre Damo.⁵¹

He had his early monastic training under Abba Yohanni, Abbot of Debre Damo with whom he stayed for seven years. Apart from fulfilling the orders of Abba Yohanni, devoted much of his time

⁵⁰ "Ethiopian Monasticism and the visit of the Holy Family to Ethiopia," in birch and Schule in Aithiopien, Heft 56 (www.tabor.society.de) November 2003, P. 21.

⁵¹ Taddesse Tamerat, 158.

to learning and solitary contemplation. The most important art he acquired here was that of writhing (i.e. he was an outstanding calligraphist).

He copied many books including the four Gospels while he was at Debre Damo, and he is renowned for having left a large collection of manuscripts when he died at hayq in 1292. His own Ms of the Gospels is kept at the monastery of Hayq and it is one of the oldest Ethiopian (Geez) MMS known. His sojourn in Debre Damo lasted about seven years after which he traveled south and settled on the Island of Hayq in 1248, and founded the monastery of St. Estifanos there.

Before his arrival there, it is apparent that the island only had a small church with no established educational and monastic institutions. According to Jean Doresse, it was about the year 627 that the monastery of Debre Egzaiabher was founded on the shores of Lake Hayq. In 850 the Axumite king Del-Nead, was responsible for the building of the monastery of St. Stephen on one of the islands on this lake, endowing it on a lavish scale and throwing it open to three hundred clergy from Axum.

Abba Iyesus Moa opened a church and a monastic school. Many young men from different parts of the country joined the monastic school. When they graduated from there, they have left Hayq and established their own monastic centers in different areas.

One of the pupils of Abba Iyesus Moa, Abba Hiruta-Amlak is believed to have been the founder of the monastery of St. Stephen on the Island of Daga in Lake Tana. Abba Tekle Haimanot who was the student of Abba Iyesus Moa founded the monastery of Debre Libanos, and helped Yikuno Amlak to hold power and many others who later founded a number of independent monasteries in the whole reign of medieval Ethiopia were graduates of this school. Even Yikuno Amlak the founder of the “Solomonic” dynasty that was born and brought up in the nearby district of Sagarat is mentioned as one of the pupils of Abba Iyesus Moa.

The traditions of close association with Yikuno Amlak are a basic factor in the history of Debre Hayq, and the historical significance of the island monastery in the whole period under consideration is entirely built on these traditions. Yikuno Amlak, a former pupil of Iyesus Moa is said to have had the blessing of his master (teacher) in his revolt against the last Zagwe king, Yitbarek.

Abba Iyesus Moa’s readiness to Co-operate with his former pupil is attributed to his acceptance of Yikuno Amlak’s claim that he descended from the ancient rulers of Axum, from the Queen of Sheba and king Solomon of Israel. On his return from a successful campaign against Yitbarek where the latter was killed Yikuno Amlak is said to have entered into a fact with Iyesus Moa, one of the terms of the agreement being that the title of Aqabe Seat would thenceforth be conferred on

Iyesus Moa on all of his successors as abbots of Debre hayq. From that time on wards until the wars of Ahmed Gagn, the abbots of Debre Hayq held the title of Aqabe Seat and the island monastery was one of the greatest cultural centers of the newly established Solomonic dynasty.

Thus, the island monastery of Lake Hayq continued to be one of the most important cultural centers of the “Solomonic” kings until the advent of Ahmed Gagn in the first half of the sixteen century and until its abolition in 1974 (1966 E.C.) by the Dergue.

The most important ecclesiastical official in court was the Aqabe Seat, the titular head of the island monastery of Debre hayq. Aqabe Seat was in actual fact responsible for affairs of state whether internal or external. Hagiographic tradition claims that the title was given to Abba Iyesus Moa and his successors by Yikuno Amlak himself, in return for the monk’s spiritual help in the dynastic struggle with the Zagwe king.

As clearly mentioned by Taddesse Tamrat,

- Abba Iyesus Moa was at Debre Damo
- left the place in 1248 to have his own
- Became an effective vehicle for the expansion of the Church.⁵²
- He also played a chief part in the so called "restoration of the Solomnic Dynasty" in 1270 A.D
- Helped Yikuno Amlak to obtain the throne⁵³
- Established educational and Monastic Institutions at DebreHayq
- St. Abuna TekleHaymanot and Abba Giorgis of Gasicha were among the disciples of Abba Iyesus Moa.

Week 9

Abba Tekle Haimanot

Readings

- ገድለ ተክለ ሃይማኖት

⁵² Church and State, 1972, 110

⁵³ . LuleMelaku, 2010, 52

- ተክለ ዳድቅ መከራከያ፡ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ሰነድ፡ ይኩኖ አምላክ እስከ ዐፄ ልብነ ድንግል፡ 1951፡ 16-28

- Lule Melaku, History of EOTC, 2010, pp. 55-63.
- ዳንኤል ክብረት፡ ኢትዮጵያ ዊውሉራፊ፡ 2011።

According to his hagiography, Abune Tekle Haymanot was a descendant of Zadok, the high priest of Jerusalem, who with Nathan the prophet, made Solomon King.⁵⁴ His Father was Tsega Zeab/ጾጋ ዘአብ and his mother Edzi Hareya/አግዚአታረያ. They were living around Bulga district in Shewa. At that time there was an atheist ruler called Motelemi. He invaded show and took Egzi Hareya with him. After a while she returned back to her husband by a miracle of God. Then in Tahsas 24, Abba Tekle Haymanot was born with a name Fisehatsion. Later the name Tekle Haymanot is given to him by God.

The same with Abba E/Iyesus Moa, he also visited the Monastery of Abuna Aregawi at Debre Damo and stayed for some time there. Abba Yohani, abba iyesus Moa's spiritual father was still alive and welcomed him to his fold. He was one of the disciples of Abuna Iyesus Moa at the Monastery of Debre Hayq.⁵⁵

Later. St. Tekele Haymanot was summoned by God to become a missionary.

At the time of the saint, there were small and isolated Christian communities scattered in the pagan dominated districts of Silalish (Ittisa)-birth place of the Saint, and Mugar, Wagda, Tagulat & Morat. Also Traditions of Debre Libanos tell us that it was a Christian area by the Middle of the thirteenth Century.⁵⁶

The area, covered by the saint's evangelical activities, Damot referred to the region immediately south of Nile, and west of the sources of the Awash River. Its limits are indefinable, but it may have extended as far west as the Didessa, and as far south as the region of Innarya. To the east it probably bordered on Hadya, and Conti Rossini thinks that the region of Walayta may have also been included in it.

As it is said above, Motelemi, a monarch of Damot invaded the whole Shewa to the Jema River, and annihilated the small Christian communities in the area. This happened at the same time with the revival of the Christian kingdom in the North and with the expansion of the Church to the South. Motelemi had strong political relationship with different Muslim sultanates in the parts of

⁵⁴ ገድለ ተክለ ሃይማኖት፡ ምዕራፍ 1 ቁ. 1 “ንቀድም በረድኤተ እግዚአብሔር መጽሐፈ ልደቱ . . .“ ተመልከት።

⁵⁵ Lule Melaku, 2010, 55.

⁵⁶ Taddesse Tamrat, Church and State in Ethiopia, 1972, 119.

the country. After a long stay in Tigray and Hayq, Teklehaymanot came to Shewa as Evangelist to face with these challenges. But his Mission was resulted in baptizing converts including Motolemi.⁵⁷

የመጨረሻው ግብጽዊ ጳጳስ ለአቡነ ተክለ ሃይማኖት የዲቂና ማዕርግ የሰጡት አባ ጌርሎስ (ኪዳር ሎስ) በ1250 ዓ.ም. ከሞቱ ወዲህ በግብጽ አገር እስላሞች በክርስቲያኖች ላይ ጥላቻ ስላበዙ ከዚህ ቀደም በጠቀሰነው በመስቀል ጦርነት ምክንያት ክርስቲያኖች በእስላሞች ላይ ስለተጫኑ እንደዚሁም በኢትዮጵያ የሸዋ ክርስቲያኖች ከአዳሎች እስላሞች ጋር እየተዋጉ ስላጠቁ ይኸንንም የግብጹ ሥልጣን ስለሚያወቅ ከግብጽ ወደ ኢትዮጵያ ጳጳስ እንዳይመጣ ከለከለ። ስለዚህ የጳጳስናው ሥፍራ ለብዙ ዓመት ባዶ በመሆኑ በኢትዮጵያ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ላይ ችግር ተፈጠረ። በዚህም ዓይነት የቆየ እንደሆነ የክርስቲያን ሃይማኖት ጨርሶ የመጥፋት አደጋ እንዳያገኘው የኢትዮጵያ ሊቃውንት ከየገዳማቱ ከየአድባራቱ ተሰብስበው ከግብጽ ጳጳስ የምናስመጣበት ጊዜ እስኪገኝ ድረስ ከኢትዮጵያ ተወላጅ አንድ ምግባሩ የቀና ሃይማኖቱ የጸና ሰው እንምረጥ ብለው ጉባኤ አደረጉ። በዚህም ጊዜ የአቡነ ተክለ ሃይማኖት ምግባርና ሃይማኖት እየዞሩ ማስተማራቸው ሁሉ በሁሉም ዘንድ በጣም ታወቆ ነበርና በጉባኤ የተመረጡት ሁሉ ርሳቸውን መረጧቸው። . . .”⁵⁸

ከዚህ በኋላ አቡነ ተክለ ሃይማኖት በቀድሞ ክብራቸው ላይ የጳጳስና ሥልጣን ሲጨምሩ አባትነታቸውና መንፈሳዊ ሥልጣናቸው በመሉ በመላ ኢትዮጵያ ተዘረጋ።

St. Tekle Haymanot contributed much to the spread of Christianity to the many parts of Ethiopia especially in southern part of Ethiopia. His influence had spread widely/significantly before he finally decided to settle at Debre Asbo, later called the Monastery of Debre Libanos.

* There are people who think that Abuna Teklehaymanot was involved and influenced the Last Zagwe dynasty to transfer power to the Solomonic Dynasty. But, as it is mentioned above questions are coming with a concrete evidence that he was too young to involve in it.

Week 10

*** Transition of power from the Zagwe Dynasty to the Solomonic Dynasty (Yikuno Amlak in 1270)**

Readings

• ተክለ ጳጳስ መከራያ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ከዐፄ አምደ ጽዮን እስከ ዐፄ ልብነ ድንግል፣ 1951፣ ገ. 21-39

• **Paul B. Henze, Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia, 2000, pp. 56-63.**

⁵⁷ Lule Melaku, History of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, 2010, 58.

⁵⁸ ተክለ ጳጳስ መከራያ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ከዐፄ አምደ ጽዮን እስከ ዐፄ ልብነ ድንግል፣ 1951፣ ገ. 17።

In the context of the time, it is said that the Zagwe Dynasty was not complete. Its hegemony and homogenization or the power to rule over the whole Ethiopia was questioned by many people. Opposition continued among the Semitic-speaking elite of Tigray, in the North and the newly emergent Amhara people, to the South. The opposition increasingly focused on questions of "Solomonic" legitimacy.

In 1270 a leading noble man of the province of Shewa, Yekuno Amlak, rebelled against the Zagwe dynasty. He was supported by influential faction of monastic Church-Men including Abba Tekle Haymanot.

The genealogy of the new Solomonic Dynasty was published in the early 14th C. in the *Kebra Negast*, that related the birth of Menilek I, associated Ethiopia with the Judeo-Christian tradition, and provided a basis for Ethiopian national unity through Solomonic ideology, Semitic culture, and the Amharic Language.

The ascent of Yekuno Amlak to the throne can be considered as the restoration of the Solomonic Dynasty. He made a genealogical connection with the last Axumite king, DilNegad. According to some hagiographical information Yekuno Amlak was born and grown up at Segelata which is near to the last Axumite settlement. He was educated at Lake Hayq's Estifanos Monastery near Ambasel. Earlier Hagiographies state that it was Abba Iyesus Moa, the Abbot of the Monastery, who helped him to achieve power.

According to Huntingford, Lake Hayq Estifanos had once been the premier monastery of Ethiopia, but Tekle Haymanot's Debre Libanos eventually eclipsed Estifanos and from the reign of Amda Tseion it became to appoint the abbot of Debre Libanos Ichege, or secular head of the Ethiopian Church.⁵⁹ Anyways, He had been educated, Asst. Prof, Lule Sages, and protected by the monks; among the most prominent monks, the founder of Debre Hayq Monastery, Abune Iyesus Moa who tutored him first from his childhood and later Abune Tekle Haymanot of Debre Libanos, who gave him spiritual support are the most frequently mentioned. These monks wanted the peaceful transition of power and at last persuaded Neakutoleab to leave the throne in favor of Yekuno Amlak (Tsefa Iyesus) after his death.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ G.W.B Huntingford, "The wealth of kings and the end of the Zagwe Dynasty Bulletin of the school of oriental and African studies, V. 28, 1965"

⁶⁰ History of EOTC, 2010, 78

There was also the story related in both the "Life of Iyesus Moa" and the Be'elenagastat, that a rooster was heard to prophesize outside the house of the Zagwe king for three months that whoever ate his head would be king. The king then had the bird killed and cooked, but the cook discarded the rooster's head which Yikuno Amlak ate and thus became Emperor of Ethiopia. Scholars have pointed out the similarity between this legend and one about the first king of Kaffa, who likewise learned from mysterious voice that eating the head of a certain rooster would make him king, as well as the Ethiopian "Masthafa Dorho", which related the story about a cooked rooster presented to Christ at the last supper which is brought back to life.⁶¹

Traditional history further reports that Yikuno Amlak was imprisoned by the Zagwe king Za-Ilmaknun ("the unknown, the hidden one") on Mount Malot, but managed to escape. He gathered support in the Amhara provinces and in Shewa and with an Army of followers, defeated the Zagwe king. Taddese Tamrat argued that this king was Yitbarek, but due to a local form of "damnation memorize" his name was removed from the official records.⁶²

A most recent chronicler of Wollo history, Getachew Mekonen, flatly states that the last Zagwe king deposed by Yekuno Amlak was none other than Na'akutola'ab himself.⁶³

YekunoAmlak is said to have campaign against the kingdom of Damot, which lay south of the Abbay River. Recorded history affords more certainly as to his relations with other countries. Wallis Budge states that Yekuno Amlak not only exchanged letter with the Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII, but sent to him several giraffes as a gift.⁶⁴ At first his interactions with his Muslim neighbors were friendly; however his attempts to be granted an Abuna for the EOTC strained these relations. A letter survives that he wrote to the Mamluk Sultan Baibars who was suzerain over the patriarch of Alexandria (the ultimate head of the Ethiopian Church), for his help for a new Abuna in 1273.

The letter suggests this was not his first request. When one did not arrive, he blamed the intervention of the sultan of Yemen, who had hindered the progress of his Messenger to Cairo. Despite this second appeal, however, Yikuno Amlak did not succeed in obtaining a new bishop

⁶¹ . Ibid

⁶² Church and state n Ethiopia, 1972, 68.

⁶³ Wollo, Yager Dibab, 1992, Pp-28-29

⁶⁴ Budge, A History of Ethiopia: Nubia and Abyssinia, 1928. 285

from Egypt since Abba Qemnos died. This may have induced him to look for a prelate from elsewhere.⁶⁵

In the same period a quarrel had arisen between Alexandria and Antioch. This angered the patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius II who retaliated by appointing an Ethiopian Pilgrim, Abba Tomas a Metropolitan of Ethiopia. On the contrary that patriarch Ignatius soon revoked his unusual appointment owing to strong pressure on him by the Dominicans in Palestine, who were eager to please the Egyptian sultan.

“ብዕለ ነገሥት የሚባል ያገራችን ጽሑፍ አቡነ ተክለ ሃይማኖት አፄ ይኩኖ አምላክን ሲያነግሡ የተዋዋሉትን የሲሶ መንግሥት ወልደገልጻል። ብዕለ ነገሥትን ሲመለከቱት እሳቸው የጻፉት ወይም ያጻፉት ይመስላል። ነገር ግን ዘተረክበ በእደ አቡነ ተክለ ሃይማኖት ስለሚል ራሳቸው ሳይጻፉት በርሳቸው አዛዥነት ተጽፎ ይሆናል።”⁶⁶

It is said that in this period, Abuna Tekle Haymanot made a threefold agreement by which the Late Zagwe Emperor was persuaded to leave the throne in favor of Yikuno Amlak after his death.

The statements of the agreement were: -

1. NakutoLeab was to continue in his throne until his death and was to be succeeded by YikunoAmlak.
2. Members of the Zagwe Dynasty were allowed to be governors of Lasta and Wag as "Wagshum", with silver throne and battle drum. "Negarit" This privilege also includes a special treatment by the Solomonian, like a direct salute instead of bowing down.
3. One third of the land is to be given to the EOTC.⁶⁷

In addition to the above, the position of "Etchege", the senior monastic rank of Ethiopia was given to Debre Libanos, and 'aqabe' sa'at (which is the first ecclesiastical position in the royal court) to the Monastery of HayqEstifanos.

YikunoAmlak was very strong in defending his kingdom and the church from Islamic invasion, especially the expansion of Muslim sultanate of Ifat over Shewa.

He also made Amharic the language of the court and of the people.

⁶⁵ Church and state, 1270, 70

⁶⁶ ተክለ ጻድቅ መኮሪያ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ከዐፄ አምደ ጽዮን እስከ ዐፄ ልብነ ጵንግል፣ 1951፣ ገ.21።

⁶⁷ . See, Lule Melaku's Book, 2010, pp 78-79

Week 11

Abba Ewostatewos (1273-1352) and the One or Two Sabbath Controversy

Readings

- **Taddesse Tamrat, Church and State in Ethiopia, 1972, 206-230.**
- **Lule Melaku, History of EOTC, 2010, 63-70.**

Born in Garalta, in central Tigray, and he studied under his uncle, Abba Daniel, who was the abbot of Debre Mariam there. He was the founder of "Ewostatewos Monastery" in Seraye, was a great preacher and successful in destroying different pagan shrines, idols etc. In Searye (now part of Eritrea) he had a large number of students and at that time, Serea became the center of his monastic activities. There he was joined by many students and taught (preached) vigorously. (Some of his students were Absadi, Bakimos, and Marqorewos). He is credited with the destruction of several pagan shrines.

Abuna Yaqob, who arrived in 1337, opposed his views before the church leader. He then visited Jerusalem, and eventually traveled to Armenia, where he died.⁶⁸

His view of the Sabbath was that it should be observed on both Saturday and Sunday: Saturday for the OT and Sunday for the NT, finding support for his views in the Ten Commandments and the canons of the Apostles.⁶⁹ The controversy over the Sabbath in the Ethiopian Church was much older than the 14th C. In a report on Ethiopia, Bishop Sawiros once requested patriarch Cyril II (1077-92) to write to the Ethiopians forbidding them to observe the customs of the OT.⁷⁰

The Egyptian bishop, the Monks of Debre Hayq and of Debre Libanos was devoted ally of Alexandria and always followed the leadership of the Egyptian bishops.

⁶⁸ Taddesse Tamrat, 1972, 206.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 209

⁷⁰ Sawirus, History of the patriarchs of Alexandria, II, Part 3, P 330

Taddesse Tamrat cites evidence that suggests the Ewostatewos' interpretation of the Sabbath was not his own innovation, but had been preached in the Coptic Church before his time, and was only declared heretical in Egypt a few centuries before⁷¹

At the time of Yikuno Amlak there were two religious factions in the country. One group supported the observation of two Sabbaths /Saturday and Sunday/ whereas the second group adhered only to one Sabbath, Sunday. The champion of the former group was a certain Hiywet Bine Betsion, a Shewan scholar who had been in close contact with the monks of the north. In fact, he had received his education in the famous centers of learning of that region, Axum and Madera, the monastery of Abba Gerima, near Adwa.

The controversy between the two groups had become more and more bitter and the intervention of the emperor became necessary. He summoned a council to settle the problem under his chairmanship. Each group began to reiterate its arguments. Those who believed in one Sabbath based their argument on the New Testament, particularly Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, "For in Christ Jesus Neither circumcision, availed anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature" (Gal. 6:15).

Taking St. Paul's position literally, as he was against Jewish practices, they refused to observe the Jewish Sabbath. The arguments of Hiywet Bine Betsion and his associates on the other hand were based on the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament.⁷²

The Emperor after he had listened carefully to both sides decided in favor of the observation of one Sabbath. This is why the defeated group accused him of being Catholic. Similar monastic leaders (i.e. like Abba Iyesus Moa) were emerging during the same period in northern Ethiopia, and they established other cultural centers.

Abba Ewestatewos deserves a particular mention. Gedle Ewestatewos states that there were several trees of idols worshipped by the inhabitants. He cut them down and burned them. The Ethiopian Synaxarium of Meskerem 18 states that toward the end of his life in 1337, Ewestatewos went to Egypt where he met patriarch Benjamin (1327 - 39), then to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem to Cyprus and then to Armenia, where he was received by the bishop of that land(Armenia) with joy. There he preached the Gospel, stayed and died about 1352. Abba Ewestatewos left the country as a result of religious controversies in Ethiopia.

Immediately before his departure, there was an attempt on his life, organized by a rival group of the clergy in Serea. At the court of the patriarch in Cairo, his fellow Ethiopian pilgrims accused him of

⁷¹ P. 209

⁷² Gen. 17:10, 21:4; EX. 16:23, 20:10

refusing to communicate with them and of observing the Sabbath as well as Sunday. The question of Sabbath was the central conflict, and Ewostatewos admitted the charge.

He defended his position by resulting to the Ten Commandments. He bitterly complained to the patriarch, who apparently asked him to be reconciled with his countrymen. Thus, his reception in Egypt was clearly unfavorable, and he passed on to Jerusalem. When he left Ethiopia, Ewostatewos was accompanied by some of his followers, but he entrusted the leadership of the rest of the community to his senior disciple, Abba Absadi. However, his absence greatly weakened the community, and on the eve of his departure, some of his followers are said to have defected from him. Abba Absadi had a difficult task in keeping the small group intact, and only on the return of some of Ewostatewos companions from abroad did his efforts begin to bear fruit. Bakimos, Marqoreos and Gebre-Iyesus went with their master to Armenia and returned home only after his death.

All the followers of Ewostatewos soon gathered around Absadi and established the community of Debre Mariam in Quahin. The leading members also founded other communities, and a chain of monastic groups, collectively known as the "Seven Disciples of Ewestatewos" was soon established. Apart from Gebre Iyesus who was preceded to Infranz in Begemidr, two of the communities were in north Tigray and the remaining four in Serea and Hamassen. Thus, the geographical distribution of the "house of Ewostatewos" was more heavily represented in the northern provinces of the Kingdom.

It is probable that the controversy over the Sabbath in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido church was much elder than the fourteenth Century. In a report on Ethiopia, for examined bishop Sawiros once requested patriarch Cyril II (1077-92) to write to the Ethiopians "forbidding them to observe the customs of the Old Testament" (i.e. polygamy, the observance of the Sabbath, etc).

In 1679 a bone of his hand was brought to Ethiopia by the Armenian bishop Abba Yohannes.

As it is mentioned above, in addition to the observance of the Lord's Day (Sunday) Ewestatewos taught his followers to observe the Sabbath as a holy day (i.e. because it is part of the Ten Commandments and it is found in the apostolic canon(Synods). On the contrary, the Egyptian bishop, the monks of Debre Hayq and of Debre Libanos (i.e. Debre Libanos was a devoted ally of Alexandria and always followed the leadership of the Egyptian bishops) considered the Sabbath celebration as Jewish practice and objected (rejected) its celebration. Because of this, the anti-Ewestatewos (anti-Sabbath) party persecuted him and his followers. His departure with his pupils

for Egypt, Jerusalem and Armenia was self-exile. Some of his students, who accompanied him managed to return to Ethiopia after his death.

Together, with their colleagues who had remained in northern Ethiopia, these followers of Ewostatewos effectively organized themselves and they become one of the two monastic houses of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. (The other is the house of Tekle Haimanot; Bete TekleHaimanot of Shewa).

The followers of Abba Ewostatewos later founded important cultural and educational centers like Debre-Mariam of Quahin, and Debre Bizen (on the eastern edge of the Hamasen plateau). The memory of the exile and death of Ewostatewos gave his followers a strong sense of unity.

In the beginning, **King Dawit** (1365-1395) opposed and forbade the observance of the Sabbath. Later he changed his mind and permitted the observance of the Sabbath for the followers of Ewostatewos. But he maintained at the same time that at the royal court and in all the non-Ewestatian churches the official Alexandrian position on the Sabbath (Sunday) should be strictly followed.

In doing this king Dawit was clearly anxious to please both parties but this timid approach to the problem did not bring about a permanent solution. Neither the diehards among the Ewestatians, nor the anti-Sabbath party, were fully satisfied by his half measure. The most drastic effect of his intervention was only to undermine the status of bishop Bartolomewos (1399-1436), and so weakened the position of his (Dawit's) ardent supporters who were completely loyal to Alexandria. Bartolomewos had been too deeply involved in the conflict, and there was very little chance of peaceful settlement to the controversy until the end of the bishop's reign. **In 1438, two Egyptian prelates - Bishop Michael and Gabriel whose names have become in separately connected with that of Zara Yaqob in the ecclesiastical traditions of Ethiopia, succeeded him. The king sought their full cooperation in his plans to restore the unity of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church.**

Soon after 1404 the whole Eritrean region became once and for all, an exclusive domain of the "house of Ewostatewos" that emerged from the struggle with tremendous success.

Because the hottest issue that had divided the clergy for a long time was that of the Sabbath, **to create peace the Son of King Dawit, Zara Yaqob accepted the observance of the two Sabbaths as feast days (i.e. observing the Sabbath together with the Lord's Day).** Thus, his attention was first drawn to the problem of settling the internal conflicts among the Ethiopian clergy and to the

creation of the perfect union within the church. This is because the hottest issue that had divided the clergy for him, as long as he could remember was that of the Sabbath.

For some (limited) time the Ewestatians abstained for taking Holy orders (ordination, for being ordained) since they refused to accept the ordination by the Egyptian bishops. As a result, they appointed a lay abbot, who did not have the ordination of a priest, to teach them and to administer them according to their own rules. Thus, the Ewestatians declined to receive the Holy orders. Only for the celebration of the mass and for hearing confessions did they require ordained priests, and these they apparently recruited from other communities on their own terms. (I.e. they admitted the Priests into their group only after giving them penance for having been members of other communities (Anti-Ewestatian).

Week 12

Atse Amda Tseyon (1314-1344)

Readings

- ተክለ ጳውሎስ መከራያ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ከዐፄ ይኩኖ አምላክ እስከ ዐፄ ልብነ ድንግል፣ 1959፣ 39-109።
- Taddesse Tamrat, **Church and State in Ethiopia, 1972, 132-145.**
- Paul B. Henze, **Layers of Time A History of Ethiopia, 2000, 63-72.**

In the words of Paul B. Henze, Amde Tseyon was one of the most outstanding Ethiopian kings of any age and a singular figure dominating the horn of Africa in the fourteenth century.⁷³

Amda Tseyon inherited the Military and political problems of his predecessors. These included the final consolidation of powers of the newly revived dynasty in all the Christian provinces.

He led the continuation of programs of expansion into the Agaw districts in the North-West, the kingdom of Gojjam in the west, and Damot in the south-West; and the more important struggle with the Muslims in the East and South-East.⁷⁴

⁷³ Layers of Time, 2000, 63.

⁷⁴ Taddese Tamrat, Church and State in Ethiopia, 1972: pp132-145.

Amde Tseyon's throne name was Gebre Meskel. In the beginning, his relationship with the church was not good. He was accused by several prominent religious leaders of fornication with his father's concubine and later marrying three wives. Successors of Abune Tekle Haymanot tried to enforce higher standards of morality among the elite, and they were beaten. For example Amda Tseyon exiled Echegie Filipos of Debre Libanos to an island in Lake Zeway.

Later, his victories make no mention of his troubles with the clergy. His military exploits and his dedication to Christian expansion completely overshadowed issues of immorality.

Amda Tseyon's most important victories were against the Muslim states to the East of the Christian highlands which shifted the balance of power in favor of the Christians for the next two centuries.⁷⁵ Amda Tseyon's eldest son, Sayfa Ar'ed, his throne name Newaye Kristos, succeeded him and reigned twenty-eight years, following his father's policies towards the Muslims on the East.

Also Sayfa Ar'ed's son, Wudem Asfare-his throne name Newaye Maryam, 1372-82 and his second son, Emperor Dawit I (1382-1415) followed the same procedures to defend the EOTC from all threats.

Dawit was an enthusiastic Christian. On his side, he shifted the attention to falashas. He was more successful in encouraging Christian expansion in Gojjam and supporting establishment of more Monastic establishments on the shores and Islands of Lake Tana.

During the reign of Emp. Dawit segment of the true cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified and the Icon known today as "Kur'ate-Re'esu" that depicts the portray of Christ crowned with thorns and other important Christian relics brought as a gift from Jerusalem to Ethiopia, and reached on the 10th of Meskerem/ September 21. Thus, the feast day of "Teketsel Tsigie" Started.⁷⁶

Week 13

Emperor Zara Yaqob (1434-1468)

Readings

- ተክለ ጳውሎስ ሙሉ ሪፖርት፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ከዐፄ ይኩኖ አምላክ እስከ ዐፄ ልብነ ድንግል፣ 1959፣ 135-216።

⁷⁵ Paul B. Henze, Layers of time: 66.

⁷⁶ Lule Melaku, 2010: 85.

• **Taddesse Tamrat, Church and State in Ethiopia, 1972, 221.**

“ከዚ ዘርዓ ያዕቆብ በፊት ከነበሩት ከአብርሃ፣ ከካሌብ ከላሊበላ፣ ከዓምደ ጽዮን ወዲህ እስከ ፲፰ኛው መቶ ዓመተ ምሕረት ድረስ እንደ ዘርዓ ያዕቆብ ያለ ስመ ጥር ንጉሥ በኢትዮጵያ አልተነሳም። ...”⁷⁷

Dawit I's Youngest Son, Zara Yaqob, declared emperor in 1434. Zara Yaqob was the greatest ruler and patron of the church among the kings of the Solomonic Dynasty. He is known to be crowned in Axum and in doing this; he sought to invest the Monarchy with all the religious and political symbols of Ancient Axum.

Zara Yaqob is known with the construction of Debre Mitmaq.⁷⁸ After bringing stability and unity to his empire, Zara Yaqob devoted much of his time in strengthening the Christian faith and in internal regulation. The controversy on Sabbath observation was resolved during his reign, by his most effort, at the council of Debre Mitmaq.

He asked the Alexandrian patriarch for more than one Egyptian Bishop, and he found/received two bishops Abba Michael and Gabriel. This helped him- to spread Christianity and to bring orders in the church. It is said that, this was the first occasion on which a patriarch of the Coptic Church had sent two Egyptian Bishops

Zara Yaqob's Religious and Moral Codes

- Fixed numerous feast days and fasting periods
- ordered priests to teach the creeds and Ten commandments to the people
- Denounced sorcerers and any act of sorcery
- Declared everyone should worship God alone and honor Holy virgin Mary Mother of the creator and the cross
- Ordered to install a cross in the direction of a faraway church
- Decreed that Saturday must be observed with that of Sunday
- Ordered – every Christian should go to the nearest church

⁷⁷ ተክለ ጳድቅ መኩሪያ፣ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ፡ ከዐፄ ይኩኖ አምላክ እስከ ዐፄ ልብነ ድንግል፣ 1959፣ 135

⁷⁸ Lule Melaku, 2010:88.

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- Every Christian had to have his own Father confessor, without whose recommendation participation of the Holy communion was forbidden
 - Encouraged the establishments of a Mini-Library in every church.

During his reign a doctrinal debate took place between the Ethiopian Church Fathers and d/t heretics. A book written by Abba Giorgis of Gasicha used very much and Zara Yaqob managed all the problems and brought stability within the Church and the country. He was successful in his aspiration of religious nationalism which contributed much in unification of Ethiopia. All the efforts made by His successors, and predecessors were reversed because of the invasion of Ahmed Gagn, the one who destroyed many churches, Monasteries, the highly esteemed documents and heritages in them as well as the orders among the society of Ethiopia.

***Rest of activities and efforts made by emperor Zara Yaqob and the destructive effect of the invasion of Ahmed Gagn will be covered in reading assignments and class discussions.⁷⁹**

⁷⁹ ተክለ ዳድቅ መኩሪያ ፡ የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ፡ ከአጼ ይኩኖ እምላክ እስከ አጼ ልብነ ድንግል ፡ 1959፡ 135።
፡ ከአጼ ልብነ ድንግል እስከ አጼ ቴዎድሮስ ፡ 1961፡ 40 እስከ 61። Trimingham,
Islam in Ethiopia, 1952, 76-97. ብፁዕ አቡነ ጎርጎርዮስ ፡ የኢትዮጵያ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ታሪክ ፡ 1986፡ 51።