Three Portraits: Ato Aṣmä Giyorgis, Ras Gobäna Dači and Ṣähafé Tezaz Gäbrä Selassé

Author(s): BAIRU TAFLA

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SOURCE MATERIAL

The following are three portraits of inevitably important personages during the reign of Emperor Menilek II. Though in certain parts incomplete the portraits have the merit of being based on partly unpublished material and oral tradition as preserved by the families and old people. *Editors note.*

Šähafe Tezaz[1] Gäbrä Sellasé, 1844-1912

by BAIRU TAFLA

Aläqa[2] Gäbrä Selasé was the private secretary and a chronicler of Emperor Menilek for more than thirty years. He was one of the most trusted officials at the Imperial court and it was to him that the Emperor entrusted his seal, which was synonymous with his signature, according to Dr. Mérab[3]. He was very devoted to the royal couple who, from all reports gathered, never found course for reproach against him.

Born about 1844 at Däbrä Berhan, son of Ato Wäldä Arägay of Wägeda, a district in Eastern Säwa, and Wäyzäro Wälättä Giyorgis, Guragé, Gäbrä Sellasé had from an early date attachment to the royal court. His father was said to be keeper of the warehouse at the palace of Negus Sahlä Sellasé[4], while his mother, a Guragé of Selté, had been brought to the court as a hostage among other ladies in one of the expeditions of the Negus against that region. It is doubtful if this union was the first for either couple, because the chronicler had two half-sisters: Wäyzäro Yetäjabu from his father and Wäyzäro Wälättä Sellasé from his mother. Ato Wäldä Giyorgis, Ato Dargé and Ato Haddis were, however, his full brothers.[5]

Gäbrä Sellasé was separated from his parents when in 1855 Emperor Téwodros marched on Šäwa. Nothing more was heard of his mother, but Ato Wäldä Arägay followed the young prince Menilek as captive to Bägémder where, having lost hope of the restoration to power of the royal family he had served for so long, he retreated to a monastery and died. He had entrusted his youthful son to the care of Abba Gäbru, an Aläqa of the Church of Näč Gädäl, Šäwa, where Gäbrä Sellasé received his primary church education. He subsequently joined the Qené[6] and Zéma[7] school

1. Secretary of the king's order. In the past the person who bore the title was the personal secretary and chronicler of the ruler. Today, the title is given exclusively to the Minister of Pen, although he retains the same title after he relinquishes that office.
2. Patron of a church. Gäbrä Sellasé was an aläqa of St. Raguél's Church at Entoto.
3. P. Mérab, *Impressions d'Ethiopie* (Paris, 1922), II, 85.
4. The dates of his reign were 1813–47.
5. None of these achieved as high a position as Gäbrä Sellasé himself.
6. A philosophical, often poetic, branch of learning in the Ethiopian traditional schools.
7. Hymns.

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of Aläqa Haylä Sellasé of St. Gabriel Church in the vicinity of Mitaq Amanuél.[8] Having acquired sufficient knowledge in those fields of study, he returned to serve his former church.

Whether because he became discontented with the life he could lead in his old church or for some other unknown reason, Gäbrä Sellasé left for Ličé, one of the residential towns of Negus Menilek, to take up a position in the service of the Sovereign. According to his son, Qäñazmač Ṣämru, he started his profession as a clerk at the court of Wäyzäro Bäfana,[9] whereas according to another interviewee, Belambaras Garedé Gašé, who was a member of the palace guards from his youth, he was a clerk under his predecessor, Ṣähafé Tezaz Mar'awi. He was in any case around the court of Negus Menilek in the early 1870's.

Gäbrä Sellasé's holding of a lasting post, however, came in 1876 when the Sovereign's personal secretary and chronicler fell fatally ill at the time Negus Menilek was to set off for a campaign against Wällo. The Negus picked Gäbrä Sellasé on the basis of good character and excellent handwriting to replace the ill secretary at the recommendation of Wäyzäro Bäfana or of some other court officials. Form then onwards the Chronicler accompanied his sovereign in all his journeys and campaigns, and noted down most of the major events and accidents.

It was on one of these journeys that Gäbrä Sellasé met his wife, Ešété Maryam, at Ankobär, another residential town of Negus Menilek. She was from Gämza, a sub-district in Eastern Šawa. They lived happily together for the rest of their lives, and their union[10] was blessed by a number of children: namely, Wäyzäro Tänañä-Wärq, Wäyzäro Täsämas, Lej Abbäbä, Wäyzäro Mäkédda, Ato Berhané, Grazmač Käbkäb, Wäyzäro Šäwa-Gét and Qäñazmač Ṣämru.

Throughout his life Gäbrä Sellasé was busy. He attended the Emperor from early morning until late evening and apparently he had very little time to devote to playing with his family or to involving himself in trifling matters. He had his own court situated at the north end of the town, along the present Asfaw Wäsän Street, but he was made to reside in the palace grounds for the convenience of the Emperor. His son recalls that the Ṣähafé Tezaz rarely had a break except when the Emperor left the Palace on a promenade or for some other purpose without summoning the Aläqa to accompany him. He took that opportunity either to rest in his bed or play sänṭäräj[11] with his family and servants. Beside recording the activities of his sovereign, dispatching and receiving the royal letters, preserving the Imperial decrees and correspondence, and controlling all the court secretaries, the Ṣähafé Tezaz had the task of presenting people who wanted appointments to certain posts or who sought grants, for audience with the Emperor. He did not have experience of any foreign language and very likely this was why he had very little to do with visitors from

8. A monastery east of Addis Ababa, popular for its curative waters.
9. One of the earlier wives of Emperor Menilek.
10. Their marriage took place sometime between 1876 and 1881.
11. Ethiopian chess.

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abroad, who had practically nothing to say about him, although some of them received their pass from him.[12]

Ṣähafé Tezaz Gäbrä Sellasé was appointed Minister of Pen in 1907, when Emperor Menilek formally set up his first Cabinet in the modern sense of the word. But all the time the Ṣähafé Tezaz played an active role in the activities of the church. He was patron of St. Raguél's Church at Enṭoṭo.[13] In the absence of the Emperor in 1892–3 on a campaign to Arusi, Aläqa Gäbrä Sellasé in collaboration with Empress Ṣähaytu delimited the precincts of the churches of St. Raguél and St. Mary for the protection of criminals who looked for asylum until they received justice.[14] When in 1903 the Emperor built St. Mary's church of Addis Aläm, Aläqa Gäbrä Sellasé became the Nebrä'ed[15] and received a pair of fine silk trousers, a pair of gold shoes on which was inscribed "Nebrä'ed Zädäbrä Ṣeyon," and a šämma decorated with tinkling pieces of ornaments. He kept this post until 1910 in addition to his old office and exclusively until his death in 1912. He was also charged with the task of reconstruction of the church of St. Mary of Dembaro at the time when Menilek concentrated on the setting-up of new churches and reconstruction of ruined ones, after setting the acute political problems of his Empire. Ṣähafé Täzaz Gäbrä Sellasé was extremely influenced by his church education. His generosity and religious enthusiasm were the two major qualities that left an unforgettable impression on the minds of those who knew him. He lavishly spent much of his income, which was not remarkable compared to that of his contemporaries, on feasts in commemoration of saints and angels and on alms to the poor. He had developed cordial friendships with the clergy, particularly with those of Däbrä Libanos, but as far as doctrine was concerned, he confessed the Hulät Ledät.[16] It was not even possible for him to do otherwise.

He preferred to tolerate Islam rather than other Christian sects, so much so that he tended to associate Western education with the latter, and his son attributes his failure to go to school to this view of his father. The general attitude of the people of that period was that anyone who joined a modern school would incline to be an instrument of the foreigners. Being one of those who entertained such an attitude, Ṣähafé Tezaz Gäbrä Sellasé was in harmony with Abunä Matéwos in favouring the importation of Egyptian staff rather than Europeans for the Menilek II School which was set up in 1908. His religious convictions also clearly came

12. An example of a letter issued by the Sähafé Tezaz as a pass is reproduced by K. Herzbruch, *Eine Reise zum Hofe Kaiser Meneliks II* (Leipzig, 1925), p. 265
13. The church was at a later period moved to the centre of the Addis Ababa market-place, where it still stands.
14. See M. de Coppet (ed.), *Chronique du règne de Ménélik II, roi de rois d'Ethiopie* (Paris, 1930).
15. A title borne by the chief ecclesiastic in charge of Aksum. The same title is bestowed upon the person in charge of Addis Aläm, which has the same patroness.
16. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church had since the fifteenth century been much troubled by internal doctrinal conflicts, one of which, centred in Däbrä Libanos, was on the Birth of Christ. The traditionalists believed in two births of Christ: one from eternity without a mother, and secondly from the Virgin without a father. Another group added a third birth, by grace at baptism, as the result of which they were named Ṣägga or Yäṣägga Lej. See H. W. Blundell, *The Royal Chronicle of Abyssinia, 1769–1840* (Cambridge, 1922), Appendix H.

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out in his writings. Throughout his Chronicle, he attributes any astounding success in war, justice or feast to one or the other Tabot.[17]

The composition of Qené was the branch of church learning that greatly fascinated the Ṣähafé Tezaz. He had composed dozens of masterpieces, most of which were supplicatory and/or in praise of his master. One piece is the following, taken at random:

ደብረ ፡ ማርያም ፡ ትኩን ፡ መልዕልተ ፡ አድባር ፤
ምኒልክ ፡ ስፋሕ ፡ እዴከ ፡ ዘየማን ፡
አምጣነ ፡ ስፋሕ ፡ እዴከ ፡ ምሉአ ፡ ጥበብ ፡ ወኪን ፤
ጎቤሃ ፡ ለደብር ፡ እስመ ፡ ኢሀሎ ፡
ዘእንበለ ፡ ማይ ፡ ወይቡስ ፡ እብን ።
ወከመ ፡ በረድ ፡ ዝሰልሞን ።
ላዕሌሃ ፡ ይዘንም ፡ ንዴት ፡ ወኃዘን ።
ሐውጻሂ ፡ በሂሩትከ ፡ ለረኪበ ፡ ጸጋ ፡ ካህን ፡
ምስለ ፡ ካህናት ፡ እሊዓሃ ፡ ርእሳ ፡ ከመታፍትን ፡
አምጣነ ፡ ይቤ ፡ አቡከ ፡ በቃለ ፡ መዝሙር ፡ ቀርን ።
ብጹዕ ፡ ዘይሌቡ ፡ ላዕለ ፡ ነዳይ ፡ ወምስኪን ፡

For a long time Aläqa Gäbrä Sellasé thought of collecting all the contemporary and past Qené and compliing them in a systematic way. He complained of the work done by a few individuals, partly because it was not systematically compiled, and one had to read the whole or a large portion of the collection in order to find a Qené piece in question, and partly because they did not cover all. In 1907–8 he summoned Blatta[19] Heruy Wäldä Sell sé and Aläqa Haylä Sellasé of Gäbrä Mänfäs Qeddus Church in Addis Ababa to Raguél Church and expressed his idea to them. They appreciated his view and agreed to work in close collaboration in the collection of Qené and their alphabetical arrangement. Blatta Heruy undertook the task and collected about three hundred Qené pieces before the death of the Ṣähafé Tezaz.

17. An Ark bearing the name of a patron or patroness.
18. It roughly translates as follows:
In order that Däbrä Maryam be above monasteries
O, Menilek, stretch forth your right hand,
For the extending hand filled with wisdom and discretion
Is not with the Monastery—
Only water and granite;
For like the hail of the heights
Trouble and sorrow shower over her.
Visit her with charity so that she may get blessed priests
So that she, with her partisan clergy, may present herself for approbation,
For your father [David] said in the Psalms
Blessed is he who thinks of the poor and the needy.
19. Later Blattéñ Géta.

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But he did not publish his collection until 1925–6, by which he had amassed about one thousand one hundred pieces.[20]

Despite his bias against foreign learning and ideas, Ṣähafé Tezaz Gäbrä Sellasé was not wholly opposed to innovations into which Emperor Menilek put a great deal of effort to get started. Those who knew the Chronicler personally state that he enjoyed the telephone, which to many was an instrument of the devil. He was not, however, convinced of the advisability of Menilek's decree of 1906,[21] prohibiting the buying or selling of slaves, although he is reported to have been very sympathetic towards his own slaves and servants and often cared much for them.He never put on European fashion except a pair of boots, which he was induced by the physicians to wear as he began to suffer from rheumatic pains as the result of the crude air of the mornings. From time to time he offered himself to the diagnosis of European physicians, who discovered that he had an infected pancreas. He wavered between the old and new system of treatment and finally went to bathe in the holy waters of Däbrä Libanos, promising to return to the doctors if that proved a failure. His health seemed to improve for a brief period, but it again deteriorated fast. His huge body faded, and at the time he was critically ill, Dr. Martin Wärqénäh examined him and found out that his bowels were severely damaged. His son, Qäñazmač Ṣämru, attributes this to his regular rigid fast throughout his life, accompanied by his habit of sleeping on hard ground during certain fast seasons. He died in November 1912 and was buried at the Church of St. Raguél, where he had been an Aläqa for so long and already had his grave built. A few months later his wife, too, followed him to the grave at the age of 64.

Ṣähafé Tezaz Gäbrä Sellasé is reported to have preserved all his correspondence and notes, but they were said to have been lost during the Italian invasion. Thus we know little about his works apart from the chronicle which was written in Amharic which was recently published,[22] and a few remnants of his Qené. His chronicle is fairly detailed as far as descriptions of campaigns, feasts and parades are concerned. He gives, or this was possibly done by his predecessor, a resumé of the past chronicles and legends. But he gives an eyewitness account for the greater portion of his book.

A few shortcomings are, however, conspicuous in his writing. He exaggerates some of the achievements and events, and in fact elevates them at times to miracles accomplished by some of his favourite saints or angels. A rich feast given by the Empress during the rainy season to inaugurate the Church of St. Mary at Enṭoṭo was, according to him, achieved only by the miraculous help of the Virgin. Any insurgent is also described as having been inspired by the devil. Such a view is characteristic of all chroniclers with an educational background like that of Gäbrä Sellasé, but compared to the three chronicles of Emperor Téwodros, which inciden-

20. Blatta Heruy Wäldä Sellasé, *Mäṣähafä Qené* (Addis Ababa, 1918 E.C.).
21. For full text of the Decree turn to Balambaras Mahtäma Sellasé Wäldä Mäsqäl, *Zekrä Nägär* (Addis Ababa, 1942 E.C.), pl 72.
22. It was edited by Monsieur Maurice de Coppet in 1929, and published in the following year.

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tally were also written in Amharic, his work tends to be inferior and more resembles those of earlier centuries.

Another weakness is that he put very little effort into describing the family background of the important dignitaries, compared to the account he devoted to the Empress. He does not even speak highly of the achievements of any individual, especially if the Emperor was involved in the activity. From the general statements he makes with reference to one or the other personality, one expects to read more information, though in vain. The whole approach is based on the idea of exalting his lord to a certain degree of uniqueness. He accuses Emperor Téwodros and Emperor Yohanes IV of being pretenders unworthy of the throne, in order to accredit Emperor Menilek with direct historical success. This, too, was characteristic of most chroniclers, and Gäbrä Sellasé was no exception. His failings on this point were noticed by a critic of the Menilek period. Nägadras Gäbrä Heywät Baykädañ, in a letter from Massawa to a friend inland wrote as follows: "We understand that writers of our history are of two types: the first type is called the learned men of the royal court, that is, the soothers who, for the sake of bread associate themselves with the court, and who, at the order of the king, record his glory for posterity, claiming it to be history. The other group is the monks, and the history they write is dominated by partiality, for they never take into account the benefit or otherwise of the people, but only their own.[23]"

A third failing is Gäbrä Sellasé's disregard of the economic and social situation of Menilek's reign. Apart from the famine that raged in the country in the years 1889–91, the chronicler has very little to say either about the general economic condition of the Empire or about the amount and method of collecting or spending the government revenue. Hardly any effort was made on his part to describe the export and import of the country, and taxation or land reform (if any). Still less reflection is made on the social life of the whole or part of the Empire. The people are generally out of the picture and one can see in his work an ideal sovereign whose subjects are behind the scenes.

Finally, the chronicler has little to say of Emperor Menilek's foreign policy or relations. After 1868 Menilek cultivated friendly relations with several foreign powers. Various travellers, diplomatic and economic missions were received and entertained by the Emperor at his court. For some unknown reason, Gäbrä Sellasé ignored mention of all the British, German, French and American missions and travellers. He makes mention, though not in satisfactory detail, of the Italian delegation of Antonelli, in 1889, and the Russian Red Cross Mission of 1896.

To sum up this brief account of his life: Ṣähafé Tezaz Gäbrä Selasé was a man who achieved high position by merit alone. His peaceful character, his loyalty to his sovereign and country, his diligence, and his religious convictions are still lively in the minds of those who knew him. His work is a good contribution both to history as a source and to Amharic literature.

23. Swedish Mission, Asmara. *Berhan Yehun* (Asmara, 1912), p. 335.

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Ato Aṣmä Giyorgis, 1821-1914

Ato[1] Aṣmä Giyorgis, whose name is often abbreviated to Aṣmé or Aṣmé, was one of the few authors of the Menilek period. The French traveller Hugues le Roux, who met him at Harar in the closing decade of the nineteenth century, describes him as a man of distinction who was educated in Latin, an historian and a writer of high esteem in Ethiopia.[2] The Ethiopian author of the early twentieth century, Blattéñ Géta Heruy Wäldä Sellasé, also confirms that Ato Aṣmé was an honourable writer who set himself to the task of explaining to the Europeans the history and traditions of Ethiopia since antiquity.[3]

Born about 1821 at Hare Amba, a village in the district of Ankobär in Eastern Šäwa, the son of Däbtära Gäbrä Masih and Wäyzäro Wälättä Gäbr'él, Aṣmé received high education in various monastic schools. His father, who was said to have come to Hare Amba from Doba, Mänz, with King Sählä Sellasé (1813–47) was an Agafari[4] of twelve churches. His uncle, on his mother's side, Aläqa Täklä Ṣeyon, was also an extremely learned ecclesiastic, and it was through him that Menilek came to know Ato Aṣmé.

Ato Aṣmé acquired a knowledge of Arabic through his contact with the Arab traders at Farré, a town in the lowlands of Adal. Then, he came in contact with Monseigneurs Massaja and De Jacobis, from whom he adopted the Catholic faith and the learning of Latin.[5] He married Wäyzäro Tässamé Habté of Tara[6] with Catholic sacraments. Their union was blessed with ten children, two of whom died at birth and three in the infancy. The remaining five—Wäyzäro Laqäč, Wäyzäro Bälatsačäw, Ato Aläm Säggäd, Wäyzäro Bälaynäš, and Ato Berhané—grew up and were educated in varying degrees depending on their sexes.

Ato Aṣmé's wide education and fruitful activities overshadowed the intolerance of the time shown by many influential people and made him popular in and around the Imperial Court. He began his political profession by conveying important and highly secret messages between Menilek and his governors, particularly Ras Dargé and Ras Gobäna. Negus Menilek charged him with the task of surveying the political and military situation of the town of Harar, with the apparent intention of faking it. Not much is heard of his experiences on the way or even in Harar, except tor the fragmentary report his daughter, Wäyzäro Bälatsačäw, recollects from his

1. Aṣmé did not assume any title other than "Ato", which he preferred to any other title of honour. But some people addressed him as *Aläqa* because of his high ecclesiastical learning.
2. H., Le Roux, *Menelik et nous* (Paris, 1901), p. 132.
3. Blattéñ Heruy Wäldä Sellasé, *Yä-heywät Tarik* (Addis Ababa, 1918 E.C.).
4. Chief.
5. Monseigneur De Jacobis came to Ethiopia in 1839 and carried out his missionary work until his death in 1860. For his life and work see Lady Herbert, *Abyssinia and its Apostle*, (London, 1867). Monseigneur Massaja arrived in Ethiopia in 1846 and stayed in the country for many decades with intermittent absences. He baptised Ato Aṣmé some time between 1866–70. But it seems that Aṣmé had contact with the two bishops long before that.
6. The region around Däbrä Berhan.

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own narration. According to her, Ato Aṣmé took with him only one slave, named Negus Bäynoru, who saved his master's life by pulling him out of the Awash River. when he was nearly carried away by the current. Disguised as a Moslem merchant, Ato Aṣmé stayed in the house of an Adaré practising the Islamic daily bowing, but instead of the usual Koranic recitation he uttered, "Es'ub qedus Mika'él."[7] Having gathered enough information during a three months' period on the character, habit, economic and military situation of Harar, including statistical information on the number of houses and inhabitants, Ato Aṣmé slipped away from the town by night and returned to Šäwa. Just before he left, he inscribed the name of his own province on one of the gates of the walled town, and after Harar was taken Menilek permitted the retention of "Šäwa Bärr" as the official name of that gate. Ato Aṣmé presented the Sovereign with a full document, which pleased him greatly.

Towards the end of 1886, Menilek marched down to Čärčär, the region adjoining the territories of Ras Dargé and Däjazmač Wäldä Gabr'él. Why Menilek went down to that region is a controversial point. Some of the old people interviewed state that the two dignitaries mentioned above argued over a boundary question, and it was necessary for the Negus to go and settle the dispute. But his march was thought by Abdullahi of Harar to be against himself and he prepared himself for a fight. According to some sources, however, Menilek's march was an intentional one, and this seems nearer to the truth when viewed with his collecting of information, although it is difficult to ascertain that the campaign of Čälänqo on Ethiopian Christmas of 1887 was planned in advance.[8] Menilek himself says in a letter written to the French traveller, Jules Borelli, immediately after the campaign: ". . . While I was marching in the direction of Harargé, I met the chief of Harargé, who had fortified a place called Wärabilé in Méṭṭa, having mobilized his people, all followers of Muhammad, with the claim that it was a Jihad, and having prepared his cannons and rifles for a fight. I sent to him believing he would make an agreement, but he imprisoned the delegates and advancing to my camp on Christmas day, he fought. Hurrah! I have won, by the grace of God, and although he alone escaped on horseback I have exterminated his men and captured his cannons and rifles and entered his town, Harer."[9]

Ato Aṣmé had gone home to Hare Amba and did not attend the campaign which, according to his reported prediction, was supposed to be short and easy. Negus Menilek summoned him to Harar later on and ordered him to be always with Däjazmač (later Ras) Mäkonnen, the governor, who appointed him

7. "O Saint Michael, how wonderful you are!"
8. Compare this view with M. de Coppet in *Chronique de Ménélik II, Roi de Rois d'Ethiopie* (Paris, 1930), and H. Audon, "Voyage au Choa", *Le Tour du Monde*, LVIII (1889), 144 (as quoted in a paper submitted to the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies by Prof H. Marcus).
9. J. Borelli, *Ethiopie méridionale* (Paris, 1898), p. 99.

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president of the court of justice, especially of the section dealing with foreign cases.[10] The sovereign had also endowed Ato Aṣmé with a large district with about six hundred tenants, from whom he could draw his income in addition to the large sum of money granted to him regularly as salary. He built a spacious house in Harar for himself, which became a refuge to many traders and messengers plying between Addis Ababa and Djibuti. His kindness and generosity left an unforgettable impression in the minds of those who knew him. He visited prisoners regularly in their cells and entertained the poor, guests and friends in his house. He spent much of his wealth in philanthropic activities, so much so that in the words of his daughter, "he did not believe in saving wealth for his own children." He was extremely interested in imparting his knowledge to others, and it was his practice to gather in his house all those who were interested in the hymns of the church, singing and dancing himself until midnight in their midst, with great enthusiasm. He believed in limiting the education of women to reading and writing, and after such a training he gave away all his daughters in marriage. But he educated his two sons in the French Mission school in Harar and Aläm Säggäd was sent to France for further study.

Ato Aṣmé was convinced of the indispensability of innovations to Ethiopia in all fields. He helped missionaries of his religion to expand their teaching activities in Harar by permission and aid of his friend, Ras Mäkonnen. He also helped the government in establishing Customs houses in eastern Ethiopia. He was, nevertheless, mistrustful, like most of his contemporaries, of the intentions of the colonial powers that were competing to befriend Menilek. He described the Italian aid offered to Menilek in the late 1880's in the form of weapons as unhealthy and deceitful. In 1889 Emperor Menilek and Italy signed the Treaty of Wäččalé, Aṣmé was then at Ankobär, and as soon as he heard that the Emperor was ready to sign the Treaty, he wrote to him as follows: "The Treaty which is to be sent to Italy is good. But re-examine Article 17. Today it may not weigh a *temun*.[11] Yet, it shall, after a year, weigh heavier than a one thousand *farasulla*[12] of lead." The Emperor received this letter at Čafé Dänsa and after consulting the Italian delegate Count Antonnelli and Grazmač Yoséf, the interpreter, Menilek declared the writer a deceiver. Under this pretext the officials took Aṣmé for a criminal and at the order of the Emperor confiscated his house and property. Wähni Azaž Wäldä Ṣadiq supported him and helped him to retrieve his property and be fined only one hundred dollars. When Menilek later realized in the intricacy of Article 17 he felt exceedingly sorry about the maltreatment he had caused Aṣmé. He offered him the title of a Nägadras and a higher office in Harar, but Aṣmé rejected the offer.[13]

10. Regarding his intelligent judgment and his popularity among foreigners as the result of his judicial work, a story goes that he freed a twelve-year-old boy who was accused of having broken a contract he signed, an abuse on the part of the accusers who took advantage of his minority—the principle of which Aṣmé was quite aware.
11. A coin worth one-sixteenth of a dollar.
12. A measurement amounting to 17 kilogrammes.
13. Aṣmé himself gave this account without mentioning his own name. Abba Täsfa Sellasé who knew him well and who preserved two of his manuscripts states in a footnote that it was Aṣmé himself. See his *Yä-galla Ṭarik*, fl. 102–3.

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It is also said that in a contemplative discussion by a gathering of friends on the foreseeable fate of Ethiopia, Ato Aṣmé was quoted as having uttered the following piece, after which recitation he broke into tears:[14]

እንግሊዝ ፡ በሽታ ፡ ኢትዮጵያን ፡ አሚት ፤
ፈረንሣይ ፡ ኃኪሙ ፡ ሲያስታምማት ፤
ጣሊያን ፡ መምህሩ ፡ ሲያስተምራት ፤
ጀርመን ፡ አርበኛዋ ፡ ሲከላከላት ፤
መስኰብ ፡ እዳር ፡ ቆሞ ፡ ሲመለከታት ፤
መዳኑንማ ፡ ትድን ፡ ብዬ ፤
እስከዚያው ፡ ወየው ፡ ወዬ ።

Ato Aṣmé was interested in writing. He had three full-time secretaries to whom, after breakfast following the mass which he regularly attended, he dictated his compositions. According to his daughter, he assigned a separate room to such a purpose, where Ato Tomas, Ato Gäbrä Sellasé and Ato Sebbuh — his three amanuensis—were working. The author never liked to sit during his busy hours. He walked to and fro in the room and dicated his subject to one of them at a time, while he copied what he had received at a considerable speed, Ato Aṣmé turned to the next and dictated as much to the next, and so forth. He is also reported to have kept copies of all letters he wrote, and preserved all his correspondence in two locked caskets. Unfortunately, however, his family left Harar for Hare Amba after Ato Aṣmé's death in February 1914, taking all his possessions including the caskets in which his work and letters were treasured. Nobody tried to do anything about them for decades. Sometime between 1935–41, the village of Hare Amba was bombarded by the Italians, and the house of Ato Aṣmé's family went up in flames which consumed the treasure of the scholar. Thus we know only two of his works, although there are some references to others.

The first one is a laudatory composition in praise of the Virgin. This manuscript consists of two independent sections, each of which is paged separately. The major part contains the biography of the Virgin Mary and is written in fluent Amharic prose. It was composed in 1880, according to the note supplied at the end. But there is no allusion to the fact that this was Ato Aṣmé's first work. The other parta is a brief epilogue in praise of the Virgin, composed in rhythmic Amharic verse and divided into sections. It was written in two month's time, September 1 to October 31, 1901. A couple of months later, a certain Albargro[15] took possession of the whole manuscript, although is difficult to ascertain whether he took the original manuscript or a copy of it. The epilogue is bound at the beginning of the manuscript, but this seems accidental rather than designed. This same manuscript which was possessed by Albargro came, though it is unknown how, into the hands of Abba Täsfa Sellasé of the Lazarist Mission of Addis Ababa.[16]

14. This piece is difficult to translate line by line without destroying its beauty. But the tenor of it is as follows: Ethiopia is infected by the English. The French treat her, the Italians teach her, the Russians look on her and the Germans defend her. Indeed, she will recover, but woe unto her until then.
15. It has not been so far possible to identify this person.
16. The Institute of Ethiopian Studies, H.S.I.U., possesses a copy of this manuscript.

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A more important work, for whose preservation we owe gratitude to Abba Täsfa Sellasé, is Ato Aṣmé's *Yä-galla Tarik*.[17]

This book is composed of two parts, the first part consisting of seventeen chapters, while the second has eighteen. The manuscript is supplied with a fairly long foreword discussing the characteristics of traditional local historiography, the mistakes of the history of the Galla written by the clergy of the past, the general customs of the Galla and their judicial and administrative practices. The first part of the manuscript deals with the origin and migration of the Galla, and the various campaigns between them and the emperors of Ethiopia from the early sixteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth. Various traditions, the origin of other tribes, and the customs and historical background of certain people and places are also included in this section. The seventeenth chapter is a resumé of the whole content of the first part, and one would reasonably assume that it was designed to be a conclusion. But this is not an indication that the author intended to complete his work here. He states again and again in the first part that he will discuss this or that point in the second part of his book, which is mainly the history of Emperor Menilek's conquests.

The second part consists of eighteen chapters, mainly dealing with the relationship between the Galla and the Šäwan kings. It is the history of the victory of the Šäwan kings over the Galla. It also reflects the general political situation of the Empire in the nineteenth century, with brief mention of the various wars between the Emperors and princes. Towards the end Ato Aṣmé lightly touches on Ethio-Italian relations and concludes with a brief account of the campaign of Adwa.

The manuscript is not dated. The year 1901 is mentioned in connection with the veneration of some martyrs in Rome. In the last chapter of the second part, a statement implies that Menilek was still alive when the author completed his work. The book was therefore, written at some time between 1901 and 1913, the year of Menilek's actual death, or even possibly before 1910, after which year the Emperor was mentally and physically incapacitated. The original manuscript is suspected to be somewhere in Paris, but Abba Täsfa Sellasé copied it in 1920, adding some remarks of his own in footnotes, in one of which he admits the omission of a passage about the religious diversities of the fourth century, because of its incorrectness.

Yä-galla Tarik is the most detailed and well-compiled Amaric work on the subject. It is written in fluent and beautiful Amharic. The author must have been careful in selecting accurate words to express exactly what he wanted to say. But as far as punctuation and paragraphing are concerned, the manuscript badly needs revision.

The author does not seem to be acquainted with the use of footnotes, a method that would avoid interruptions of the flow of his narration. He likes to digress in order to provide the reader with the origin of a certain tribe or a place of worship or a custom that he touches on in his account, but this is sometimes given at con-

17. The Main Library of the Haile Selasse I University possesses a copy of this manuscript.

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siderable length and makes it difficult for the reader to follow the general trend of the theme. It is also because of a lack of technique that he repeats certain points in order to remind his readers that he discussed them previously, instead of simply giving page-references.

Another criticism that one may make of this work is that the author lets his emotion run loose in criticising the clergy. He severely attacks them again and again throughout his work and this creates some monotony for his reader. It is, of course, understandable that he should do so, considering some experiences of one member of his family, Aläqa Täklä Ṣeyon,[18] the author's uncle, who suffered persecution; perhaps Asmé himself too had to endure the taunts of the ecclesiastics and the people for being a Catholic.

A third conspicuous shortcoming in this manuscript is the lack of uniform dating. The author uses the Julian, the Gregorian and even the Coptic calendars interchangeably, thus making it difficult for the reader to follow. This was perhaps the result of his using a variety of historical sources for his writing without making any effort to standardize the material extracted.

Finally, it should be remarked that, because this work is very detailed, the names of numerous places are unavoidably mentioned. But the author took most of them for granted, that is, he did not try to give the general area or region or even at times the direction in which a mentioned place lay. Thus it is not altogether an easy task to identify all the names of the monasteries, districts, villages, mountains or rivers. Worst of all is the problem that in trying to identify some of the names one is faced with a number of similar ones. An example is "Däbrä Abraham", the name of a monastery mentioned repeatedly in *Yä-galla Tarik*: there are at least three monasteries by the same name—one in Gojjam, another in Bägémder and a third in Wällo —and it is difficult to know which of them Aṣmé was alluding to.

To sum up this brief biographical account, Ato Aṣmé was an erudite Ethiopian of the nineteenth century, familiar with both local and foreign literature. He was a diligent personality, a keen observer, a daring critic and a zealous patriot.

18. Aläqa Täsfa Ṣeyon was an erudite clergyman who belonged to the Ṣägga sect of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, for which he was persecuted and he retired to Jerusalem where he died. His relatives could not lament his death for fear of the persecutors, but could weep only in connection with somebody else's death. See Blatta Heruy, *Yä-heywät Tarik*.

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Ras Gobäna Dači, Abba Tegu, 1821-1889

Ras Gobäna was perhaps the most famous general of the first part of Emperor Menilek's reign. He was a brave warrior and expanded the Empire greatly to the south and west.

Gobäna was born about 1821[1] of an aristocratic Galla family[2] in Aman, Wägda, in the Province of Šäwa; he was a close relative of the Abba Mudda,[3] according to Jules Borelli.[4] How he started his career is enigmatic. It seems that he did not play a significant political role until 1865. His home-region had recognised the supremacy of the Šäwan kingdom for a long period, but it scarcely felt its influence, since Emperor Téwodros's march on Šäwa resulted in the instability of local government.

Gobäna saw no reason why he should submit to or ally himself with any pretender to the throne of Šäwa and refused to acknowledge the proclamation of Ato Bäzabeh[5] in 1865. He mobilised his men and retreated to a stronghold which was called the Azzu Čäwé, and fought the pretender from there for five months. Gobäna's strategic position, his bravery and the war-tactics he demonstrated soon made it clear to Bäzabeh that his antagonist was invincible. He withdrew to Afqara to possess a strategic position before the advent of Menilek, who had escaped from the prison of Mäqdala a few months earlier and was successfully winning over the allegiance of the Säwan chiefs.

Ato Aṣmé, who was then somewhere in eastern Šäwa, recounts that in September of the same year Menilek and Bäzabeh were reconciled under an oath that Bäzabeh would no longer lead an insurrection and that Menilek would cause him no harm, and Gobäna was on that occasion master of ceremonies.[6] Why and how Gobäna supported Menilek but resisted any other claimant to the throne is obscure. According to Antonio Cecchi, an Italian traveller of the late 1870's, Menilek received an enthusiastic welcome everywhere in Šäwa. Gobäna, seeing the growing power of the Negus, came to Menilek with all his treasure and threw himself at his feet, as a result of which the sovereign received the treasure, praised him for his conduct and gave him a high rank in his army.[7]

At any rate, Gobäna joined the service of Negus Menilek at a very early period of his reign and received the title of Däjazmač.[8] He was an excellent horseman and

1. The date of his birth is not exactly known. The date 1821 is based on Ato Aṣmé's statement that Gobäna was sixty years old when he fought at Embabo in 1881.
2. The following is his genealogical trace as given of Ato Aṣmé's *Yä-galla Tarik*: Boräna, Dači, Aieču, Abdäla, Wäyu, Gammé, Ali, Kata, Yaro, Wadé, Dači, Ras Gobäna.
3. A spiritual head of the Galla.
4. J. Borelli, *Ethiopie Meridionale* (Paris, 1890), p. 150.
5. Son of King Sahlä Sellasé, proclaimed himself Negus, 1863–65, submitted to Menilek and was shot down in October of the same year on the ground that he was found intriguing against Menilek
6. Aṣmé, op. cit, fl. 71.
7. A. Cecchi, *Da Zeila alle frontiere del Caffa* (Roma, 1886), I, 161.
8. A commander-in-chief of the army ranking next to a Ras. But it should be noted that Menilek did not appoint any Ras until 1878.

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many of the Galla warriors rallied around him. At the beginning of the next decade his town, Čembesi, turned into a remarkable military camp.

Gobäna's actual aggrandisement in power, however, came in 1876 when Emperor Yohanes IV marched through Šäwa. The Emperor had camped in the region of Däjazmač Gobäna, and part of his army spread over the country to ravage the villages. Däjazmač Gobäna took advantage of this dispersal and killed a number of isolated army-groups, thereby getting possession of more than one thousand Snider and Remington rifles.

The sudden acquisition of up-to-date weapons was an immense increase to his power. Soon he set himself to the task of subjugating the Galla in Šäwa. Before the end of the year he led a military expedition, in collaboration with Däjazmač Mäšäša Säyfu,[9] to Guduru in the north-west. In 1878 Cecchi saw the general with his colleague fortifying Mount Enṭoṭo with a large army consiting of four or five thousand cavalry, six or seven thousand infantry armed with guns and the rest with lances.[10] From here Gobäna led a series of incursions to the neighbouring regions, namely Gulélé and Yäka,[11] Wäčača, Gambiču, Méṭṭa, Mäčča, Ada, Bako, Čäbo and so forth, most of which had been conquered by Ato Dargé[12] in 1849 but resumed autonomy under their respective chiefs after 1855.

In the same year Negus Menilek gave a rich feast to all his army at Ličé and honoured Däjazmač Gobäna with the title of Ras, thus enhancing his popularity among the Galla. Gobäna continued his campaign against the remainder of Guduru, Mäčča, Jebat and the Guragé regions. Ato Aṣmé and Cecchi relate a story about a prophesy by a certain priest called Wärab that the Amhara would one day dominate the Galla and that this belief, which was planted in the minds of the Galla elders, made the people accept Gobäna's conquest as an inevitable fulfilment of the prophesy.[13] But Ras Gobäna's activity was certainly not inspired by the prophecy; in fact, he heard it only about 1880 when he had already pressed as far as the Gibé River in the South.

Taking over the Guragé regions of Wäliso and Amayya, Ras Gobäna crossed the Gibé River to subjugate the territories in the remote South. So far, he had not been confronted by any rival. But Negus Täklä Haymanot of Gojjam had sent his famous general, Ras Däräsu across the Abbay to the Galla territories on the south-west of his dominion. Ras Däräsu had conquered part of Guduru, Léqa, a large part of Wälläga and marching on the remote South took over Limmu, the old kingdom of Enarya. He advanced to Jimma and encountered Ras Gobäna approaching from the north. The rivals regarded each other from their camps, one expecting the other to evacuate his position. Then Ras Gobäna sent word to his opponent that he was encroaching on Menilek's rightful claim and it was advisable for Däräsu to retreat.

9. Grandson of Negus Sahlä Sellasé, a good warrior, but he intrigued against the life of Menilek and ended up in prison.
10. Cecchi, op. cit, I, 495.
11. These two regions have now shrunk to city-zones of Addis Ababa.
12. Paternal uncle of Emperor Menilek, raised to the position of Ras in 1878 and died in 1900.
13. Aṣmé, op. cit, fl. and Cecchi, op. cit, I, 510 and ff.

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He also added that he was determined to fight if Däräsu persisted and that the Negus was coming to his aid. Ras Däräsu hesitated to fight and, realising that Negus Täklä Haymanot was too far away to turn up to his aid, he hastily abandoned the district, leaving the rich ivory he had collected. The following verse was composed by a singer in connection with his depature:

አንግዲህ ፡ ጎጃሞች ፡ በምን ፡ ይስቃሉ ፡
ጥርሳቸውን ፡ ጅማ ፡ ላይ ፡ ጥለው ፡ ሔዱ ፡ አሉ ።[14]

Ras Gobäna took over Jimma and received rich tribute from Abba Jefar, the Sultan. He also entered Limmu, from whose king, Abba Gamol, he received submission and tribute. Camping at Limmu, Ras Gobäna sent messengers demanding the submission of Abba Dulla, the king of Guma, Abba Rago, the king of Goma, and Gumiti Géné, queen-regent for the young Abba Räsa, king of Géra, all of whom acknowledged him as their lord and paid tribute. He then returned to Šäwa and met Negus Menilek, who had also just returned from an expedition to Arusi.

Negus Täklä Haymanot was disappointed by the behaviour of his general and ordered him to go back to save at least the remaining territories from falling into the hands of his rival. He also sent his own son, Ras Bäzabeh, together with Ras Däräsu to Guduru. This was immediately understood by Menilek and his general Gobäna to mean an encroachment into Šäwan territories. Ras Gobäna marched to Guduru and drove away the Gojjami army as far as Wälläga.

Acceptance of such an act was a humiliation to Negus Täklä Haymanot, who would not condone it and he decided to march himself. The arrival of Negus Täklä Haymanot across the Abbay was announced to Negus Menilek by the messengers of Ras Gobäna, as well as by those of the Negus of Gojjam himself.[15] In the rainy season of 1881 a decisive battle took place at Embabo on the North-West Šäwa bordering the Abbay. Both sides were well-armed and supported by large cavalry groups. But a sweeping plague had broken out in the camps and each leader desired to attack before many of his men died. The battle raged for a few hours and the men of Negus Täklä Haymanot fought with astounding bravery. But they were shortly outwitted by the tactics of Ras Gobäna. He had manoeuvred part of his army behind the position of Täklä Haymanot and fired from the rear. The army of Gojjam was routed. Negus Täklä Haymanot was wounded and taken prisoner with his general Ras Däräsw.

A story goes that Ras Gobäna wanted strongly to avenge himself by spearing to death the captive Negus, who had contemptuously sent to him a message that he (Gobäna) was not worth fighting and that he had to invite his lord to the battlefield. Menilek nevertheless showed mercy to Negus Täklä Haymanot and protected him. He also ordered Ras Gobäna to help the defeated army go back home across the

14. How will the people of Gojjam laugh henceforth?
They say that they went away leaving their teeth in Jimma.
15. Negus Täklä Haymanot did not write to Menilek. According to Aṣmé, this was because he suspected Menilek of keeping his move secret and somehow shunning the conflict. But it could as well be to avoid any evidence against him in case Menilek accused him before Emperor Yohanes IV.

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Abbay before the river flooded. Negus Täklä Haymanot surrendered all the Galla territories to Menilek in exchange for his freedom.[16]

The conquering Ras turned to the West and subjugated Čäläya, Laga Horo, Nunu,[17] Léqa, Näqämt and Sayyo, most of which had submitted to Ras Däräsu. Only the old and strong kingdom of Kafa in the South resisted the attack of Ras Gobäna. In the same year that Negus Täklä Haymanot was defeated at Embabo, Ras Gobäna, accompanied by Däjazmač Mäšäša Wärqé[18] and other minor officers, marched to Kafa through Jimma Kaka. He found must of the country inaccessible and the people stubborn fighters. King Galli Seročo[19] promised through a messenger to pay tribute annually just as neighbouring kings did, and Ras Gobäna withdrew fast. According to the German traveller F. J. Biber, Ras Gobäna received rich gifts from the king of Kafa and then withdrew, excusing himself on the grounds that "Kafa was a bad country", as the result of which he cut the expedition short.[20] It is, however, unlikely that Gobäna could be seduced by limited treasure while an attractive and opulent country lay ahead of him, and, in fact, there was a great deal of truth in Gobäna's opinion about Kafa's being a difficult country: it took Menilek eighteen years to conquer it.

In 1882 Negus Menilek marched to the remote South and entrusted to Ras Gobäna, who commanded about twenty thousand men, the administration of Jimma Kaka, Géra, Goma, Limmu and Guma, advising him to do his best to take over Kafa. Ras Gobäna waited in vain to receive the promised tribute from Galli Seročo, who insisted on ignoring his threats. In 1886 Ras Gobäna again marched on Kafa and ravaged the country, but returned without affecting the political status of the kingdom. In the same year Menilek named Gobäna "Negus Mika'él of Kaffa",[21] perhaps with the intention of inciting the Ras to press the conquest of Kafa.

But this appointment resulted in a different and menacing problem. The popularity of Gobäna and the high title he received aroused the envy and perhaps the jealousy of the officials surrounding Menilek. The possibility that Ras Gobäna, backed by the various Galla chiefs, would defy Menilek's authority and set up a federated empire of the Galla territories seemed to many imminent. Indeed, their suspicions could be substantiated by some material evidence.

In 1885–6 the whole Mäčča Galla refused to recognise any other governor except Ras Gobäna, and Negus Menilek was able to instate his official, Däjazmač

16. Emperor Yohannes summoned Negus Menilek to appear immediately with his prisoner-of-war at Wäräylu. Täklä Haymanot was liberated and received his captured weapons but lost all his Galla territories to Menilek. According to Blatta Däréssa, Menilek proposed in the meeting of reconciliation at Wäräylu that he should retain all the territories beyond Tulu Amara, a mountain on the north-western Šäwa bordering the Abbay, to which Täklä Haymanot agreed under an oath, being ignorant of the geographical set-up of his dominions.
17. This is also written Nonno.
18. A famous general and diplomat during Menilek's reign. He died in 1916.
19. The dates of his reign are 1870–90.
20. F. J. Bieber, *Kaffa, Ein altkuschitisches Volkstum in Inner-Afrika*, (*Munster*, 1920,) I, 92.
21. Bieber, ibid, I, 93.

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Täklä Maryam[22] Gulelaté, only by force of arms. During the same period the Negus appointed Däjazmač Bäšah Aboyé[23] governor of Limmu, with special authority to exact tribute from Kafa, but when the Däjazmač reached the river Godéfo on the border of Kafa, Galli Seročo informed him that he would not even negotiate with him unless he had a permit from Ras Gobäna.[24] Again, before the end of 1886 Menilek ordered Gobäna to mobilise his army and move into Wällo. The Ras had camped in Laga Gora in the vicinity of Wäräylu, when some of his men clashed with the soldiers of Ras Mika'él of Wällo, whereby two of Gobäna's men died. Ras Gobäna flew into violent anger and devastated the whole area. Dissatisfied with his conduct, Menilek immediately sent him back to Enṭoṭo and subsequently restricted him to the governorship of Wälläga.[25]

Ras Gobäna was not, however, discouraged at this imposition. With the help of Däjazmač Kumsa of Läqämt and Däjazmač Joté of Sayyo, he expanded his territory as far west as the Egypto-Sudan border, where in 1887 he checked the advancing Dervishes.

The movement of the Mahdi had caused echoes in Ethiopia and the Muslims of Qäbéna in Southern Šäwa rebelled and encircled the governor, Däjazmač Wäldé. Gobäna hurried to his assistance and managed to rescue the governor, although he himself lost a son, Mär'ed, in the fight. Between 1887–9 he plied between Wälläga and Enṭoṭo, pacifying rebellious regions and helping Empress Ṭäytu in the running of the affairs at the capital during the intermittent absences of the Negus to the East and North. It was Gobäna, for instance, that helped Ṭäytu to deal with Däjazmač Wäldä Gabr'él's army, which deserted their commander at the beginning of 1887 when he was preparing himself to take over Harar.[26] But in July 1889 Gobäna died after three days' illness at Enṭoṭo and was buried at Däbrä Libanos. Thus, he was not able to attend the glorious coronation in the same year of Menilek II, Emperor of Ethiopia, whom he served for so long.

Apart from his military activities, very little is remembered about Gobäna's personal character or family. He was survived by a few sons and daughters, the most famous of whom was Wädajé, who became first a Liqa-Meqwas and later a Däjazmač during the latter part of Emperor Menilek's reign. As far as religion was concerned, Ras Gobäna was a practising Christian, though according to the French traveller, Jules Borelli, he was sympathetic to paganism.[27] Whatever his values to life and religion were, one thing is true of him, namely, he was loyal and devoted to Menilek, so much so that he even declined to see Emperor Yohanes IV, regarding such an act as a possible means of giving recognition to another lord.[28] His contribution was

22. Grandnephew of Menilek. He was later on found intriguing against the life of the sovereign and ended up in prison.
23. A brave general of Menilek. He died in the Battle of Adwa, 1896.
24. See Borelli, op. cit.
25. Aṣmé, op. cit, fl. 94.
26. See M. de Coppet (ed.), *Chronique de Menelik, rois des rois d'Ethiopie* (Paris, 1930).
27. Borelli, op. cit.,
28. Blatta Heruy Wäldä Sellasé, *Yä-heywät Tarik* (Addis Ababa, 1918, E.C.), p. 96.

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recognised and even appreciated during the reign of Emperor Menilek, as can be gathered from the following Qené piece presented to the Sovereign.

ባረከ ፡ አብ ፡ ሣህለ ፡ ማርያም ፡
በራስ ፡ ጐበና ፡ መስቀል ፡ ምሥራቅ ፡ ወምዕራብ ።
ወበራስ ፡ ዳርጌ ፡ ስሜነ ፡ ወደቡብ ።
ስደት ፡ ማዕደ ፡ አራሚ ፡ እስመ ፡ ዮም ፡ ቀርበ ።
ወከመ ፡ ይእመኑ ፡ አሕዛብ ፤
ውስቴታ ፡ ለምድር ፡ ሕጻናቲሁ ፡ ከበበ ።
ኃይልሂ ፡ ወተአምኖ ፡ ለራስ ፡ ጐበና ፡ ተውህበ ።
እምነ ፡ ሰረቅት ፡ ራስ ፡ ጐበና ፡ መርኤቶ ፡ እስመ ፡ ዐቀበ ።
ወራስ ፡ ጐበና ፡ ምእመን ፡ ድኅኒ ፡ ከመ ፡ ልቡ ፡ ረከበ ።
ሣህለ ፡ ማርያም ፡ በገቦሁ ፡ ኖመ ፡ ወሰከበ ።

29. This Qené piece is in the fourth issue of the *Qené Collection* issued by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and the tenor of it goes as follows: Sähla Maryam [Menilek's baptismal name], the father, blessed east and west by the Cross of Ras Gobäna, and north and south by that of Ras Dargé. The flight of the pagans was at hand and he appointed his sons over them so that they [the pagans] might believe. Power and trust were given to Ras Gobäna because he guarded the people against thieves. After he found Ras Gobäna as loyal as his own heart, Sähla Maryam lay on his side and slumbered.

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