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## The aerial Flight of Alexander the Great in Ethiopian painting and literature

Recently I had an occasion to publish an Ethiopian picture from Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstammer) collection No. 2594-21, painted by an anonymous Ethiopian artist in July 1912. It depicts the aerial flight of Alexander the Great to Paradise and then back to Jerusalem on a predatory "eagle-horse", whom he entices to fly up and down by holding before his beak a pole with a piece of raw meat tied to it.<sup>1</sup> The subject provoked Russian scholarly interest immediately after Dr. Alexander Kokhanowski had brought the picture from Ethiopia in 1913. Kokhanowski himself was sent to Ethiopia in 1905 as a physician of the Russian Legation. It was a period when the interest of the Russian Imperial government towards Ethiopia was reducing, and by 1910 Alexander Kokhanowski remained the only Russian official representative in Addis Ababa. European diplomats were ironic about the "breath-taking career" of the Russian doctor and nick-named him "watchman" of the Russian Legation. But it was the interest of the Russian government towards Ethiopia which was waning, not that of Kokhanowski himself who was fascinated with Ethiopia and her culture. He gathered there a rich collection of Ethiopian artifacts, this picture including. In the same year of 1913 the prominent Russian art historian Dmitri Ainalov made a hypothesis of a certain connection between "the Miraj of Muhammad" of Arabic manuscripts and the flight of Alexander in Abyssinian painting ... The Paradise Alexander was striving to, occupies a special place in the "Miraj of Muhammad" and is described there in details. On the Abyssinian picture Paradise is depicted as a roofed building with three locked entrances. Behind it there are two trees, and to the left a large fig-tree grows ... Near Paradise there stands Seraphim in the appearance of an angel with a sword who raises his hand against Alexander, forbidding him to enter and driving him down. It is interesting that Alexander is descending down to Jerusalem with a branch of the fig-tree which he is likely to have stolen from Paradise. Beneath, near Jerusalem, the same fig-tree

1 Chernetsov, Sevir B.: Ethiopian Traditional Painting: On the materials of collection of Peter the Great Kunstammer. In: St. Petersburg Journal of African Studies. 6. 1997. (128-155) p. 150.



is depicted as growing to the right”<sup>2</sup> This Ainalov’s connection between the Ethiopian picture and the “Miraj of Muhammad” may be not as far-fetched as it seems, because the Muhammads’s journey as described in “The Life of Muhammad” is a trip not only to Jerusalem but to heavens as well. It is called “The night journey and the ascent to heavens” and means precisely the celestial Jerusalem, where the “apostle” Muhammad “found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among a company of the prophets. The apostle acted as their imam in prayer.”<sup>3</sup> However, the Ethiopian picture depicts not Muhammad, but Alexander, and the “Miraj of Muhammad” cannot be the immediate source for the painting.

It is quite typical of Ethiopian traditional painting, ecclesiastical and medieval as it is, that its art works are always closely related to a certain text, sometimes literary, sometimes oral one. Here a picture is not a mere illustration for the text, it happens to be a pictorial narration of the same subject, the text relates on; a narration if analogous, then quite independent. The most vivid illustration of the fact are Ethiopian church murals that depict in a strict chronological sequence the whole history of the world from its creation to the future events of Doomsday. Such kind of painting is justly called “The Bible for illiterates”, i.e. the believers who were illiterate all right but not ignorant at all and who knew well (from the Bible itself, or from the mouth of learned literati) the text’s content. Otherwise they would be unable to understand its pictorial narration. This circumstance provoked me in my Russian publication of the picture of Alexander’s flight to make quite a daring assumption: “The picture in question was made in 1912 by an Ethiopian artist who knew well this legend. It was painted for Ethiopian public who also should know and understand it well. All this permits to hope that this legend, in its written or oral form, will be eventually found and made available for further examination.”<sup>4</sup>

These hopes came true surprisingly quickly. When I was representing on the theme at the session of the St. Petersburg branch of the Russian Palestinian Society, an old friend and colleague of mine, Vyacheslav Platonov, called my attention to the text of one Amharic chronograph, the photocopy of which he had brought from Ethiopia in 1963 and the description of which he published

2 Turaiev B. A. und Ainalov D. V.: *Proizvedeniya abissinskoi zhivopisi, sobrannyye d-rom A. I. Kokhanovskim*. St. Peterburg, 1912. p. 212-213.

3 Guillaume A.: *The Life of Muhammad*. A translation of Ishaq’s *Sirat Rasul Allah* with introduction and notes by A. Guillaume. Lahore – Karachi – Dacca: Pakistan branch of Oxford University Press, 1967. p. 182.

4 Chernetsov S. B.: *Puteshestviye Aleksandra Velikogo iz Iyerusalima v rai i obratno* (Nartodnaya kartina iz sobraniya Kunstkamery) [A Voyage of Alexander the Great from Jerusalem to Paradise and back (Popular painting from Kunstkammer collection)]. In: *Zhivaya Starina*, 3 (15). 1997. (27-28) p. 28.



in 1976.<sup>5</sup> He also prepared a critical edition of the text and its Russian translation, both of which, however, remained unpublished. The main role in this chronograph, like in most works of similar kind, belongs to the compiler, who, using the words of Alexei Shakhmatov, “felt himself a full and irresponsible master of the collected material.”<sup>6</sup> Of all this heterogeneous material we are



- 5 Platonov, Vyacheslav: “Mazhafa Tarik” po rukopisi Nazionalnoy Biblioteki v Addis Abebe – “B-36, The Book of History”. In: Tõid Orientalistika Alalt. Oriental Studies. III. Tartu Riikliku Ülikooli Toimetised. Acta et Commentationes Universitatis Tartuens. 292. 1976. p. 25-41.
- 6 Shakhmatov A. A.: Razbor sochineniy I. A. Tikhomirova “Obozreniye svodov Rusi Severo-Vostochnoy”. In: Otchet o sorokovom prisuzhdenii nagrad grafa Uvarova. St. Petersburg, 1899. p. 106.



interested now only in the literary subject dealing with Alexander the Great and his aerial journey to Paradise which correlates with our artistic subject with surprising precision. Therefore, there is every reason to compare them in every detail.

The picture is clearly divided into an upper and a lower part, between which there are depicted two figures of Alexander the Great on his eagle-horse. At the left one the hero is flying up, and at the right one – down. At the top of the picture and at the bottom of it two mirror images of a temple are placed. The one at the top is a typical Ethiopian church with a cross at the roof and inscription ገነት, i. e. “Paradise.” In the middle stands Seraphim with a naked sword and with Amharic inscription: አስከንድርን፡ ቅዱስ፡ ሰራፊል፡ በሰደፍ፡ ተቆጥቶ፡ እ (ን) ደመለሰው, i. e. “Seraphim grew angry and by sword drove Alexander back”. In the upper right corner stands a caption of the artist: ተፈጸመ፡ በዘመነ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ በ፲፱፻፱ት፡ አመተ፡ ምስረት፡ በሀምሌ፡ ፡ i. e. “finished in the year of John in 1904 [year] of Grace in Hamle”, the date which corresponds to July 1912. Near the image of ascending Alexander there is an inscription: አስከንድር፡ ወደ፡ ገነት፡ ባሞራ፡ ፈረሰ፡ እ (ን) ደወጣ, i. e. “Alexander left for Paradise on eagle-horse.” Before the beak of his mount Alexander holds a pole with a red shred inscribed ሥጋ, i. e. “meat”. The image of the descending hero differs from that of the ascending one not only by the fact that here he holds the pole downwards and induces his eagle-horse to descend. The hero descending from Paradise has now a nimbus around his head and a branch of the heavenly fig tree tied to a rope with an inscription እጽ፡ በለስ፡, i. e. “fig tree”. One can understand that this branch was stolen in Paradise which caused the wrath of Seraphim. The same fig tree is depicted beneath as a big tree already which towers above a temple without a cross with an inscription ኢየሩሳሌም፡, i. e. “Jerusalem”. Now we should look at the passage from the Amharic chronograph No. B-36 at the National Library in Addis Ababa.

#### Amharic text

ቀዳሚ፡ የአዜብ፡ ንግሥት፡ የሰ (f. 14) ሎሞንን፡ ጥበብ፡ ሰምታ፡ ኢየሩሳሌም፡  
ወረድኪ፡ ብሎ፡ መጽሐፍ፡ አንደተናገረው፡ የወረደችበትም፡ ምክንያት፡ እንዲህ፡  
ነው፡ አባቷ፡ ዘንዶ፡ ሲያለገድል፡ ደሙ፡ ተፈንጥቆ፡ አግረን፡ ቢነካት፡ ቀንድ፡  
አበቀለ፡ በዚህ፡ ስታዝን፡ ፩ነጋዴ፡ ከኢየሩሳሌም፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡ መጣ፡ በወርቅ፡  
በብር፡ ብዙ፡ ሸኒ፡ የተዋ (sic! Should be የተወ)፡ እቱጨት፡ እንቀዳ፡ ፈርጥ፡  
ለሰሎሞን፡ ገዛላት (sic! Should be ገዛለት)፡ የአዜብ፡ ንግሥት፡ ያን፡ ነጋዴ፡  
አስጠርታ፡ የሰሎሞንን፡ ነገር፡ ጠየቀችው፡ እሱም፡ ጥበቡን፡ ሁሉ፡ የቤቱን፡  
ሥራት፡ ሁሉ፡ ክብሩን፡ አጫውታት፡ እሷም፡ ይኸን፡ በሰማች፡ ጊዜ፡ በፍቅሩ፡



ፍላግ፡ ልቧ፡ ተነደፈ። ልታየውም፡ ወደደች፡ ነጋዴውንም፡ አገርህ፡ በሄድክ፡ ጊዜ፡  
 አትዋል፡ አትደር፡ ወደ፡ ሀገርህ፡ ወደ፡ ጌታህ፡ አሄዳለህ ሁኖ፡ መንገድ፡  
 አንድትመራኝ። ፈጥነህ፡ ተመለገ፡ አለችው፡ እሽ፡ ይሁን፡ በስ፡ አላት፡ ብዙ፡  
 ገንዘብ፡ ሰጠችው፡ ለሰሎሞንም፡ በኢየሩሳሌም፡ የሌለውን፡ እንቅ፡ የሚሻውን፡  
 ሰደደችለት፡ ያም፡ ነጋዴ፡ ሀገሩ፡ በደ (f. 14 v) ረሰ፡ ጊዜ፡ ለሰሎሞን፡  
 የንግሥትን፡ ነገር፡ ነገረው፡ የሰደደችለትንም፡ እጅ፡ መንሻውን፡ ሰጠው፡  
 ከጥቂት፡ ቀን፡ በኋላ፡ ያንን፡ ነጋዴ፡ ለንግሥተ፡ አዜብ፡ የሚበጣትን፡  
 ብዙ፡ ገንዘብ፡ አሲዞ፡ ሰደደው። ዳግመኛም፡ ተመልሶ፡ በመጣ፡ ጊዜ፡  
 የሰሎሞንን፡ ነገር፡ ነገራት፡ ዳግመኛም፡ ከጥንቱ፡ ቀን፡ አብልጦ፡  
 የግዛቱን፡ ስፋት፡ የጌትነቱን፡ ክብር። የመንግሥቱን፡ ታሪክ፡ ነገራት፡  
 ከዚህ፡ በኋላ፡ የአዜብ፡ ንግሥት፡ ብዙ፡ ሠራዊት፡ አስከተለ፡ ከሀገሩ፡  
 ተነሣች፡ በበቅሎ፡ በግመል፡ የሚቀመጡ፡ ፪፻፩ናግል፡ ተከተለት፡ ያነጋዴም፡  
 አየመራት፡ ኢየሩሳሌም፡ ገባች፡ አደባባይ፡ ሰፈረች፡ በሰሎሞን፡ ደጃፍ፡ ዕፅ፡  
 በለስ፡ ተጋድሞ፡ ነበረ፡ የዕፅ፡ በለጥም፡ ነገር፡ እንዲህ፡ ነው። እስክንድር፡  
 ገነትን፡ ሊያይ፡ በወደደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ባዝራ፡ ፈረስ፡ ከንስር፡ አላመደ፡ ፈረሲቱም፡  
 አንደ፡ አናቱ፡ አራት፡ አግር፡ ያለው፡ ፈረስ፡ አንደ፡ አባቱ፡ ሁለት፡ ክንፍ፡  
 ያለው፡ ወለደች። ያንንም፡ ፈረስ፡ በሥጋ፡ አሳደገው፡ በኋላ፡ ፈረሱን፡ ከግንብ፡  
 አግብቶ፡ ምግብ፡ ከለከለው፡ እስክንድርም፡ ፬ ቀን (f. 15) ሰባዬ፡ ገባ፡ በኋላ፡  
 አፈረሱ፡ ላይ፡ ወጥቶ፡ ሥጋውን፡ በዘንግ፡ አሥሮ፡ አሻቅቦ፡ ቢያሳየው፡ ይዞት፡  
 ገነት፡ ገባ፡ ፈረሱን፡ በዕፅ፡ በለስ፡ እንጨት፡ ላይ፡ አሥሮ፡ ወደ፡ መሀል፡  
 ገባ። ሱራፌ፡ መልአክ፡ ቢገሥጸው፡ አፈረስ፡ ወጣ፡ ሥጋውን፡ አቆልቶሎ፡  
 ቢያሳየው። እስክንድርንም፡ ዕፅ፡ በለሱንም፡ ይዞ፡ ኢየሩሳሌም፡ አደባባይ፡ ወረደ።  
 ሰሎሞንም፡ መቃን፡ እንዳያደርገው፡ አጠረ፡ መድረክ፡ እንዳያደርገው፡ ረዘመ፡  
 እንዴሁ፡ ይኖር፡ ነበር፡ ከዚህ፡ ወዲህ፡ የሰሎሞን፡ አጋፋሪ፡ ገብቶ፡ ንጉሥ፡  
 ሆይ፡ መልኳ፡ ያማረ፡ እግሩ፡ እንደ፡ ፍየል፡ ቀንድ፡ የዞረ፡ ወይዘሮ፡ መጣች፡  
 ቢለው፡ ጥራት፡ አለው፡ ስትገባ፡ ዕፅ፡ በለሱ፡ ዕግረን፡ ቢነካው፡ (ቀንድዋ?)፡  
 ወደቀላት፡ ሰሎሞንም፡ እጅግ፡ ደስ፡ ብሎት፡ አሲንም፡ ደስ፡ አሰኝቶ፡ ተቀበላት።

### Translation

In former times the Queen of the south [f. 14] who had heard about the wisdom of Solomon, came to Jerusalem, as the Scripture says. The reason for this voyage is as follows: when her father was killing the Serpent, the blood of that splashed upon her leg and shot out as a horn. When she grieved for this, to Ethiopia came a merchant from Jerusalem. He was buying for gold and silver a lot of incense, precious stones and pearls for Solomon. The Queen of the south ordered to summon this merchant and asked him about Solomon. He told her about all his wisdom, and glory, and all the rules of his court. And when she heard this, her heart was pierced with the arrow of love, and



she wanted to see him. She said to the merchant: "Do not linger returning to your country and do not sleep; I intend [to go] to your town to your master, so come back soon to show me the way." The merchant replied to her: "Yes, let it be so!" So she gave the merchant much money and sent Solomon precious stones that were unavailable in Jerusalem. Upon his arrival in his town this merchant [f. 14 v] told Solomon about the Queen and gave him the gifts which had been sent. After a short while he sent this merchant to the Queen of the south and gave him much money. When he arrived [to the Queen] for the second time, he recounted to her about Solomon more than before about the vastness of his domain, the glory of his dominion and the history of his kingdom. After that the Queen of the south departed from her country accompanied by a numerous army. Five hundred maidens mounted on mules and camels to follow her. Guided by the merchant, she entered Jerusalem and camped in the palace-square.

At the gates of Solomon's palace a fig tree [trunk] was laid. The story of the fig tree is this: When Alexander plotted to see Paradise, he coupled a mare to an eagle. And the mare gave birth to a horse which had four legs, like his mother, and two wings, like his father. Then he raised the horse on a tower and stopped feeding it. Alexander himself [f. 15] fasted and prayed for 40 days. Then he mounted his horse, tied some meat to a pole and began to show it to his horse holding it upwards. Thus the horse brought him to Paradise. He tied his horse to a branch of a fig tree and entered. When the angel Seraphim reprimanded him, he mounted his horse and showed the meat holding it downwards. Thus the horse descended with Alexander and the fig tree to the palace square of Jerusalem. Solomon could make [of the fig tree] neither door-post, for it was too short for it, nor threshold, for it was too long, so it remained there. After that a majordomo went to Solomon and said to him: «O King! A beautiful lady has come, but her leg is twisted as a goat's horn"! "Summon her", – he said. And while entering, she touched the fig tree with her foot, [and the horn?] fell down. And Solomon accepted her rejoicing himself and making her joyful.

As we can see, this written text about the aerial travel of Alexander the Great correlates precisely with the painted story. It is also quite clear that in the chronograph this subject does not constitute an independent story, but plays an auxiliary role in the narration about King Solomon and Queen of Sheba. As a matter of fact, the central place in the picture also belongs not so much to the royal hero, or his exotic means of conveyance, as precisely to the fig tree. Let us not forget that on the picture Alexander receives his nimbus only after obtaining this fig tree which plays such an important role in the rendezvous



of the Queen of the south with King Solomon. The tedious fact that historically Solomon preceded Alexander the Great should not disturb us at the least, because we deal not with history, but with a myth, which proved to be more important in social life than history proper. Allan Hoben, a thorough expert in Amhara peasant culture, wrote: "Most Amhara are little concerned with the past as such. What is important to them about these major events of traditional history is their representation on the present-day landscape and their projection into current administrative and social relationships. Contemporary relationships are justified with reference to these historical representations, and changes in these relationships, particularly changes having to do with land rights, usually involve changes in the representation of 'history'."<sup>7</sup> That is exactly what happened in our case. Thus, the written text which served the starting point for the Ethiopian artist who was making his picture in July 1912 is found. This is two pages of the Amharic chronograph which was compiled not long before, sometimes at the turn of the 20th century.

There the episode of Alexander's voyage was included into the story of the Queen of the south (i.e. Queen of Sheba), which invariably constituted the major part of Ethiopian national mythology. This myth in its written form ("The Honour of Kings")<sup>8</sup> took shape no later than the 14th century. There the historical importance of the rendezvous of King Solomon with the Queen of the south (of Sheba) is seen in its result, i.e. the birth of Menilek I, their first-born son and the founder of Ethiopian royal dynasty. He was born after the return of the Queen to Ethiopia, but later he visited his father in Jerusalem whence he stole the Tabernacle of Zion. Thus Ethiopian kings were not only the descendants of Abraham and David, but the owners of the most sacred relic of the Old Testament world. Concerning this Solomon sees an oracular dream how the sun had risen in Judea and after a while left for Ethiopia where it would shine forever. Further goes a narration about the origin from Sem of all the worldly kings of whom only Ethiopian kings have the right of primogeniture and the privilege of "the Orthodox faith", because Christian kings of "Rome" (i.e. Byzantium) "perverted the faith". In the epilogue of "The Honour of Kings" the God-chosen nature of Israel is completely rejected for the crucifixion of Christ by the Jews and the future triumph of the New Israel is proclaimed, i.e. Ethiopia who had the royal dynasty of primal Solomonides, the greatest relic of the Tabernacle of Zion, and "the Orthodox faith which would prevail until the Second Advent."

The significance of "The Honour of Kings", a literary work of national scale, where, in the words of Donald Levine, "it glorifies no tribe, no region,

7 Hoben, Allan: *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia*. Chicago, 1972. p. 83.

8 Riches and honor are with me (Prov. 8, 18).



no linguistic group, but the Ethiopian nation under her monarch,"<sup>9</sup> is impossible to overestimate. For the Ethiopians it was the absolute evidence for the uniqueness of Ethiopia, this New Israel, the legitimate heir and successor of the Old Israel. So in the hardest times they cherished hopes for better future and saw the pledge for it in Ethiopia's God chosen nature and never forgot their own primogeniture and the destiny promised in the story of Queen of Sheba. This old story gained a new popularity both in its literary and pictorial forms towards the end of the 19th century due to new political changes that demanded a new historical representation. In 1889 the supreme authority in Ethiopia passed to Sahle Maryam, a descendant of a ruling family from Shewa province. This family considered itself a Shewan branch of the Solomonide dynasty. In the proud though decaying capital city of Gonder these claims for kinship were flatly rejected, and there these Shewan offspring were never regarded as Solomonides, but as mere descendants of Gonderine deputies of this province who in fact they were. Thus as for legitimacy of his authority, the new Emperor had to begin his story with a blank page which he did already in the choice of his "royal name". As a matter of fact, while ascending the throne, every Ethiopian monarch was given a new, so-called royal, name. Here every branch of the vast Ethiopian royal dynasty had traditionally its own pattern of such "royal names". One such a pattern existed in Gonder, another – in Shewa. The new Emperor without meddling into the genealogical hair-splitting of Gonderine and Shewan dynastic relations chose neither of these patterns but ordered to name himself Menilek the Second, i.e. the second after the son of King Solomon and Queen of Sheba, who had been called by this name, thus appealing directly to the origin of his genealogy and his rights to the throne.

This new function admixed to the old story of the Queen of Sheba demanded to make some changes that would better adjust it to the new task. And we see those changes in the passage from the Amharic chronograph published here. First, here appears the motive of a certain deformity of the leg of the famous Queen, the deformity she was spared by King Solomon: This motive is well known in the Arabian legend about Queen of Sheba Bilkis and Suleiman the Wise. However, if in the Arabian version it was the unattractive hirsuteness of legs of otherwise beautiful Queen, the hirsuteness which wise (Hakim) Suleiman eliminated with quite ordinary pointments and liniments, in our version it is a magic horn, which splashed out of blood of the mythical Serpent who had ruled over Ethiopia and was killed by the father of the Queen of Sheba. She was spared from this horn not at all by Solomon, but by

9 Levine, Donald N.: *Greater Ethiopia. The evolution of a multiethnic society*. Chicago – London, 1974. p. 107.



the trunk of the Paradise fig tree which had been brought to Jerusalem by Alexander the Great. It is noteworthy that in the Geez story of "The Honour of Kings" about the Queen of Sheba's visit to Jerusalem there is neither Arabian hirsuteness, nor Amharic horn. Here we can only propose some assumptions as to why this horn is needed at all in the Amharic version. It is likely that the horn should fall down at the Queen's entrance into Solomon's palace in fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy: "In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth" (Ez. 29, 21), i.e. to demonstrate that the meeting of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba with all its consequences was in every detail foreordained by Providence. Alexander contributed his mite for this great event by his fig tree, which had been predestinated precisely for the role it played, and in our text was good for nothing else.

This story of the fig tree is known to us only from the manuscript No. B-36 of the Amharic chronograph which belongs to the historiographic genre named "cronaca interpolata" by Ignazio Guidi.<sup>10</sup> This genre emerged in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was widely popular precisely in the province of Shewa. The reason for this development in Shewa at the time when both Ethiopic literature and royal power in Gonder were in complete decline, probably due to the fact that provincial Shewan rulers were meanwhile pretending at first to independence, and then to the supreme power over all Christian Ethiopia. Certainly, these claims needed their historical justification. What was needed here was not only to prove the rights to the throne of the Shewan pretender, but also to demonstrate the preference of the rights of his particular branch of the dynasty before all other branches, the Gonderine one including. It was an uneasy task, especially for the literati of Shewa, which Gonder had every reason to slight as the depth of the country. To do this one had to revise and rewrite the whole history of both the world and Ethiopia to demonstrate all along it not only the God-chosen nature of the Ethiopian royal dynasty, but, first and foremost, the preference of the Shewan branch in this particular respect.

And here Shewan annalists revealed themselves as "full and irresponsible masters" of their historiographic legacy and accomplished their task mainly by tendentious wording of the whole Ethiopian literary heritage. As a matter of fact their task was not a historiographic, but a propagandistic one, and it is only natural that they began to use for the purpose not the literary Ge'ez, but the vernacular Amharic language intelligible for a wider circle of readers and listeners. The content of our Ms. No. B-36 is quite typical for such works. It

10 Guidi, Ignazio: Due nuovi manoscritti della "Cronaca Abbreviata di Abissinia." In: RRAL, ser. 6. vol. 2. 1926. (357-421) p. 358.



contains 42 independent stories none of which is an original work of the compiler who built the entire construction without making a single brick of his own, merely by gathering and adjusting one borrowed element to another. However, should a researcher blame here the compiler if the latter gives him a unique opportunity to make some acquaintance with those works of Ethiopian literature that are still unknown in its original form, though survived being included into such compilations yet deformed by the compiler as they are!

Thus we were lucky enough to find a definite literary text which served as the immediate basis for the pictorial narration about the aerial flight of Alexander the Great. It is also evident that it is not original and derives from some initial literary text that provided material for the compiler of the Amharic chronograph B-36. Let us hope that the original text will be found one day.