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A short story of St. Tāklä Haymanot's ancestors  
and his "heritage" (*rist*) in the Däbra-Libanos version of his Vita

It happened so that a small monastery of Däbrä Asbo which had been founded by Tāklä Haymanot in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and later renamed into Däbrä Libanos, became in the course of time a mighty Däbrä Libanos congregation and gained dominating position within the Ethiopian Church. The growing influence of the congregation went hand in hand with the growth of Tāklä Haymanot's fame and popularity, and there appeared also new versions of his Vita, where his new significance found its expression, also new for the time. This literary development corresponded well to the popular understanding of history Allan Hoben had once written about: "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 historic representations, and changes in these relationships, particularly changes having to do with land rights, usually involve changes in the interpretation of 'history'."<sup>1</sup>

And new changes in the position of Däbrä Libanos congregation included also the "changes having to do with land rights." So, in later (so-called "Däbrä Libanos") versions of Tāklä Haymanot's Vita this led incidentally to the emergence and further development of such a new hagiographical element as genealogy of the saint, "the son of God by grace and the son of Adam by flesh" (ወልደ፡ አግዚአብሔር፡ በጸጋ፡ ወወልደ፡ አዳም፡ በሥጋ፡). Such a genealogy "by flesh" was an innovation indeed for Ethiopian hagiography: previously in Ethiopian vitae sanctorum there were found only "spiritual", or "monastic genealogies", which traced the saint's spiritual origin back to famous Egyptian fathers of monasticism – St. Antonius, St. Macarius and St. Pachomius, while his own pedigree "by flesh" seldom went further than his immediate parents. This innovation produced imitations in compilation of other vitae, and had its own further development as well within the Vita cycle of Tāklä Haymanot

1 Allan HOBEN, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia. The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent*. Chicago, 1972. 83.



himself, where besides his genealogy proper, a short story of his ancestors was included. Thus, in the Ms. Eth. 18 from the manuscript collection of St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences there are present both a short story of Tāklā Haymanot's ancestors and his genealogy. It is remarkable that these two stories were placed in different parts of the Vita: the former is written in the beginning on ff. 9-10, while the latter is placed at the end on ff. 84-85. In another Ms. from Bodleian Library No. Aeth. 3 at first is given a very short genealogy Tāklā Haymanot (ff. 4r-4v), then a short story of his ancestors (ff. 5r-6v), then the genealogy of Ethiopian kings (ff. 6v-7v), and finally goes an extensive genealogy of the saint.

The genealogy and the short story of Tāklā Haymanot's ancestors are obviously independent stories within his Vita. In the Ms. Eth. 18 the short story is presented as follows: (f. 9r. col. 2) ወኮነ፡ ጥንተ፡ ሙላዱ፡ ለዘንቱ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ሀገረ፡ ኢየሩሳሌም፡ አም[ደወ]ለ፡ ፍልጥ፡ ዘፈለጣ፡ ኢየሱ፡ መስፍን፡ ከመ፡ ትኩን፡ ክፍለ፡ ለሌዋውያን፡ ወይኦቲ፡ ክፍል፡ ለሳዶቅ፡ ካህን፡ ወልደ፡ አብያታር፡ በመዋዕለ፡ ሰሎሞን፡ ንጉሥ፡ ሳዶቅ፡ ወለደ፡ ለአዛርያስ፡ ወሰሎሞን፡ ወለደ፡ ለአብነ፡ ሐኪም፡። ዘበትርጓሜሁ፡ ወልደ፡ ጠቢብ፡ ወአንገሥ፡ ሰሎሞን፡ ለወልዱ፡ አብነ፡ ሐኪም፡ ወፈነዎ፡ ብሔረ፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡ ከመ፡ ይንግሥ፡ ላዕለ፡ ኩሉ፡ በሓውርቲሃ፡ ወለወልደ፡ ሳዶቅሂ፡ አዛር(col. 3)ያስ፡ ፈነወ፡ ምስሌሁ፡ ከመ፡ ይኩን፡ ካህነ፡ ከመ፡ አቡሁ፡ ወፅኡ፡ ኡ፡ (sic) አምኢየሩሳሌም፡ ምስለ፡ ብዙኅ፡ ሕግ፡ ወሥርዓት፡ ጽዮንሂ፡ ታቦተ፡ አምላክ፡ እስራኤል፡ ወፅኦት፡ ምስሌሆሙ፡ ብሔረ፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡ ወዲበ፡ ኩሉ፡ ንዋያ፡ ወመጋብርቲሃ፡ ሥሉጥ፡ ውኦቱ፡ አዛርያስ፡ በከመ፡ ሕገሙ፡ ለአበዊሁ፡ ሌዋውያን፡ ወበጽሑ፡ ምድረ፡ ትግራ፡ ወነቢሮሙ፡ ውስቲታ፡ ጎዳጦ፡ መዋዕለ፡ አውሰበ፡ አዛርያስ፡ ወለተ፡ ፩አምክቡራነ፡ ሀገር፡ አለ፡ ይብልዎሙ፡ ደቀ፡ መደባይ፡ ወወለደ፡ ወልደ፡ ወሰመየ፡ ስሞ፡ ሳዶቅ፡ በከመ፡ አቡሁ፡ ሳዶቅ፡ ወለደ፡ ለሌዊ፡ ወሌዊ፡ ወለደ፡ ለሕዝበ፡ ረዓይ፡ ወሕዝ(f. 9v col. 1)በ፡ ረዓይ፡ ወለደ፡ ለሕዝበ፡ ዋሒ፡ ወነበሩ፡ አሉ፡ ካህናት፡ አንዘ፡ ይሜህሩ፡ ሕገ፡ ኦሪቶሙ፡ ለኩሉ፡ ሰብአ፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡ ለአለ፡ ይትጋብኡ፡ ጎበ፡ ንጉሥ፡ በከመ፡ ግብሮሙ፡ ለካህናተ፡ ደብተራ፡ ወእስከ፡ አሜሃ፡ ኢተወልደ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ ወበ፲፻፵መት፡ አምጽአቶሙ፡ አምግብጽ፡ አንዘ፡ ጢባርዮስ፡ ንጉሠ፡ ሮሜ፡ ወአንዘ፡ ሂሮድስ፡ ንጉሠ፡ ግሊላ፡ ወአንዘ፡ ባዜን፡ ንጉሠ፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡ ወአኪን፡ ካህን፡ በውስቲታ፡ ተወልደ፡ ንጉሥነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ በቤተ፡ ልሔም፡ ዘይሁድ፡ ወአኪን፡ ወለደ፡ ለስምዖን፡ ወስምዖን፡ ወለደ፡ ለአንበሪም፡ ወአምድ(col. 2)ጎረ፡ ዓርገ፡ እግዚአነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ በ፪፻፵መት፡ መጽአ፡ ነጋዲ፡ አምኢየሩሳሌም፡ ወምስሌሁ፡ ጀደዊቅ፡ ስሙ፡ ለ፩ፍሬ፡ ምናጦስ፡ ወለካልኡ፡ ሲድራኮስ፡ ወጋደሩ፡ ውስተ፡ ቤቱ፡ ለአንበሪም፡ ካህን፡ ወበይኦቲ፡ ሌሊት፡ ሐመ፡ ነጋዲ፡



ወእምድጎረ: ጎዳጥ: መዋዕል: ሞተ: ወእሙንቱ: ደቂቅ: ልህቁ: በቤቱ: ለእንበሪም: ወአሐተ: ዕለተ: ይቤሎ: ፍሬ: ምናጦስ: ለእንበሪም: አንሰ: አንክር: ግዕዘክሙ: ለሰብአ: ኢትዮጵያ: ግዝረተ: ወእምነተ: ክርስቶስ: ሀሎ: ጎቤክሙ: ጥምቀትሰ: ወቀሪበ: ቀራርባን: ኢሀሎ: ወይቤሎ: እንበሪም: ግዝረተሰ: አም(col. 3)ጽኑ: ሌዋውያን: አበውየ: ወእምነተኒ: አምጽአ: ሕፅዋ: ለሕንደኬ: ንግሥት: ወለንሢአ: ጥምቀት: ወቀራርባን: ኢተፈነወ: ሐዋርያ: ጎቤን: ወባሕቱ: ነዓ: አንተ: ሑር: ጎበ: ሊቀ: ጳጳሳት: ወንሣኤ: መባሕተ: እምኔሁ: ከመ: ትኩንን: ሐዋርያ: ወይቤሎ: ፍሬ: ምናጦስ: ኮሆ: ለቃልክ: እግዚአብሔር: ወወሀቦ: እንበሪም: ለፍሬ: ምናጦስ: ወርቀ: ወብሩረ: ከመ: ይኩኖ: ስንቀ: ለፍኖት: ወሐረ: ፍሬ: ምናጦስ: አየሩባሌም: ወበጽሐ: ጎበ: ሊቀ: ጳጳሳት: አባ: አትናቴዎስ: ወነገሮ: ኩሎ: ግዕዘ: ብሔረ: ኢትዮጵያ: ወሰሚዖ: ሊቀ: ጳጳሳት: ተፈሥሐ: ጥቀ: ወሢሞ: ሎቱ: ከመ: ይኩን: (fol. 10r col. 1) ጳጳስ: ለኩሎ: ብሔረ: ኢትዮጵያ: ወሰመዮ: ጳጳስ: ለኩሎ: ብሔረ: ኢትዮጵያ: ወሰመዮ: ስሞ: ሰላማ: ዘበትርጓሜሁ: ሰላማዊ: ማእከለ: እግዚአብሔር: ወሰብአ: ግአባ: ሰላማ: ብሔረ: አግዓዚ: በ፪፻፵፱ወ፪ ዓመት: እምልደተ: እዚአን: ወበጽሐ: ጎበ: እንበሪም: ቅድመ: ወአጥመቆ: ወሢሞ: ሢመተ: ዲቁና: ወበሳኒታ: ረሰዮ: ቀሲሰ: ወወለጠ: ስሞ: ወሰመዮ: ሕዝበ: ቀድስ: ወይቤሎ: አጥምቅ: ኩሎ: ሰብአ: ወእምታሕቲየ: ይኩን: ሥልጣንክ: ወይበሉክ: ኤዲስ: ቆጵስ: ወንሢኦ: ሥልጣን: መባሕት: እምኔሁ: አጥመቀ: ኩሎ: ሰብአ: ወመሀርሙ: ሃይማኖተ: ክርስቶስ: ወአሜሃ: ተጠምቁ: ሰብአ: ኖባ: (col. 2) ወሳባ: ሰብአ: ናግራን: ወትግሬ: ሰብአ: አንጎት: ወእምሐራ: ወለቃ: ወቋታ: ወዘባጉደር: ወኮኑ: ኩሎሙ: ዓቢየ: ክርስቲያን: በእደዊሁ: ለሕዝበ: ቀድስ: በመዋዕሊሙ: ለነገሥት: ጌራን: አብርሃ: ወአጽብሐ: ወሕዝበ: ቀድስ: ወለዶ: ለሕዝበ: ባርክ: ወሕዝበ: ባርክ: መጽአ: እምትግሬ: ወነበረ: ብሔረ: ዳውንት: አንተ: ትሰመይ: ባሕረ: ቀጋ: ወነሥአ: ብአሲተ: እምህየ: ወወለዶ: ለተክለ: ቀዓት: ወተክለ: ቀዓት: ነሥአ: ብአሲተ: እምነ: እምሐራ: አንተ: ትሰመይ: መቅደላ: ወወለደ: ፲፪ደቂቀ: ወልህቁ: በውስቴታ: ወእስከ: ይአዜ: ይአቲ: ርስቶሙ: ወይትበሀሉ: ፲፪አብያተ: ዲያቆና(col. 3)ት: ካህናተ: ደብተራ: እሙንቱ: ዘሀገረ: ጽዮን: ወ፲፪እምኔሆሙ: ዘስሙ: ዓጽቀ: ሌዊ: አጥመቆሙ: ለሰብአ: ወለቃ: ወለቤተ: እምሐራ: ለሰብአ: መርሐ: ቤቱ: ወለመንዝጎ: ወውአቱ: ዓጽቀ: ሌዊ: ነሥአ: ብአሲተ: እምሐርበ: ግሼ: ወወለደ: ለአባ: ይድላ: ዘበትርጓሜሁ: ይሑር: ከመ: ይኩን: አበ: ለብሔረ: ሼዋ: ብሂል: እስመ: መንፈስ: ትንቢት: ይነብብ: ውስተ: አትሆሙ: ለሰብአ: እምሐራ: ዘተናገሩ: ነገር: ይከውን: በጊዜሁ: ወለአባ: ይድላ: ፈነዎ: ድግናይዛን: ንጉሠ: ብሔረ: ሼዋ: ምስለ: ፪ወ፻ካህናት: ክቡራን: ሌዋውያን: ከመ: ያጥምቁ: ኩሎ: ሰብአ: ለአለ: ይነብሩ: ውስቴታ: ወሊቆሙስ: አባ: ይድላ: ውእ (fol. 10v col. 1)ቱ: ወበጸሐሙ: ሸዋ:



ነበረ፡ አባ፡ ይድላ፡ ብሔረ፡ ጽላልሽ፡ ወአጥመቀ፡ ብዙኃን፡ ሰብአ፡  
 በውስቱታ፡ በ፲፱፻ ወበ፳፻፱ በአሐቲ፡ ዕለት፡ ወተሐንጸ፡ አብያተ፡  
 ክርስቲያዝናት፡ ብዙኃተ፡ በምድረ፡ ሸዋ፡ በመዋዕሊሆሙ፡ ለእሙንቱ፡ ካህንት፡  
 አስመ፡ ታቦታ[ት]ሂ፡ ወንዋዩ፡ ቅድሳት፡ ወኩሉ፡ መጻሕፍተ፡ ቤተ፡  
 ክርስቲያን፡ መጽሐ፡ እምአምሐራ፡ በትእዛዘ፡ ድግናይዛን፡ ንጉሥ፡ ምስለ፡  
 አሉ፡ ካህናት፡ ወውክቱስ፡ አባ፡ ይድላ፡ ኃረየ፡ ምድረ፡ እምነ፡ ጽላልሽ፡  
 ዘስማ፡ ዞራሬ፡ ወነበረ፡ ወስቱታ፡ ወነሥኦ፡ ብአሲተ፡ እምክቡራን፡ ሀገር፡  
 ወወለደ፡ ለሐርበ፡ ጎሽ፡ ዘውክቱ፡ ሕይወትን፡ በጽዮን፡ ወሕ(col. 2)ይወትን፡  
 በጽዮን፡ ወለደ፡ ለበኩረ፡ ጽዮን፡ ወበኩረ፡ ጽዮን፡ ወለደ፡ ለሕዝበ፡  
 ቀድስ፡ ወሕዝበ፡ ቀድስ፡ ወለደ፡ ለብርሃን፡ መስቀል፡ ወበውክቱ፡  
 መዋዕል፡ ፈለሰት፡ መንግሥት፡ እምእስራኤል፡ ጎበ፡ ነገደ፡ ሂጻጻ፡  
 ዘውክቶሙ፡ ዛጉይ፡ ወብርሃን፡ መስቀል፡ ወለደ፡ ለሕይወት፡ ብን፡  
 ወሕይወት፡ ብን፡ ወለደ፡ ለዘርኦ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ ዘውክቱ፡ ጸጋ፡ ዘአብ፡  
 ወክቱኬ፡ አበ፡ አቡነ፡ ናሁ፡ አብጻሕን፡ ልደቶሙ፡ ለሌዋውያን፡ አኮ፡  
 አንዘ፡ ነጋሥሥ፡ ክብረ፡ ልደቶሙ፡ አንዘ፡ ነጋሥሥ፡ አላ፡ ክብረ፡  
 አጥምቆቶሙ፡ ኪያነ፡ ሶበስ፡ ኃሠሥነ፡ ክብረ፡ ልደቶ(col. 3)ሙ፡ እምአይዳዕናክሙ፡  
 አንዘ፡ ናቀውም፡ ስምዓ፡ አመጻሕፍት፡ ቅድመ፡ እምኮሪት፡ ወዳግመ፡  
 አመጽሐፈ፡ ነገሥት፡ ወሣለስ፡ አመጽሐፈ፡ ታሪክ፡ ዘይነግር፡ ዜናሆሙ፡  
 ለአበው፡ ንጉሥዕ፡ አንክ፡ ከመ፡ ንነግር፡ ዜና፡ አቡነ፡ ጻድቅ፡ ...

"The place of origin of this saint was the city of Jerusalem, the share which had been allotted by Joshua the prince to be the part for the Levites, and this part was for Zadok, the son of Abiathar in the days of Solomon the king. Zadok begat Azariah, and Solomon begat Ebnä Hakim; and its meaning is "son of the wise". And Solomon made his son Ebnä Hakim king and sent him to the country of Ethiopia to reign over all her countries. And he sent with him Azariah, the son of Zadok, to be a priest like his father. They went out of Jerusalem with many laws and rules. Zion, the Arc of God of Israel went out with them to the country of Ethiopia, and Azariah according to the laws of his fathers, the Levites, preferred it to all the wealth and riches. They reached the land of Tigré and lived their some time. Azariah married a daughter of one of local nobles, who were called "Mädäbay children", and begat a son, and gave him the name Zadok, as that of his father's. Zadok begat Levi, and Levi begat Hezbä Rā'ay, and Hezbä Rā'ay begat Hezbä Wahi. And these priests had lived preaching the law of Moses to all the people of Ethiopia, who gathered to the King, according to the custom of the priests of tabernacle until Christ was born. In the 1000<sup>th</sup> year after their exodus from Egypt under Tiberius, the King of Rome, and Herodus, the King of Galilea, and Bazen, the King of Ethiopia, and Akin, a priest there, Our King Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea. And Akin begat Simeon, and Simeon begat Enbärim. And in the 100<sup>th</sup> year after the ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ a merchant



from Jerusalem came, and with him two boys, the name of one was Fre Mnatos, and of the second – Sidrakos. They passed the night in the house of Enbärim the priest. And in that night the merchant fell ill and after some time died. And these boys were brought up in the house of Enbärim. One day Fre Mnatos said to Enbärim: “I wonder at the ways of yours, the people of Ethiopia: you have circumcision and faith in Christ, but you don’t have baptism and communion.” Enbärim said to him: “The circumcision had been brought by the Levites, my fathers, and the faith was brought by the eunuch of Queen Candace, and no apostle was sent to us for reception of baptism and communion. But come on, you go to the Patriarch and receive from him permission to be apostle for us.” And Fre Mnatos said to him: “Yes, my lord, according to thy word!” And Enbärim gave to Fre Mnatos gold and silver for sustenance on the way, and Fre Mnatos left for Jerusalem and came to the Patriarch Abba Athanasius and related to him all the ways of the people of Ethiopia. And the Patriarch when heard rejoiced much and consecrated him Metropolitan for all the country of Ethiopia. And gave him the name of Sälama, and its meaning is “peacemaker between God and people”, Abba Sälama of the country Ag’azi, in the year 245 after the birth of Our Lord. He came to Enbärim first and baptized him and ordained deacon. Next morning he ordained him priest and changed his name and called him Hezbä Qädde, and said to him: “Baptize all the people, and your authority will be under mine, and let them call you bishop!” Having got the power of his permission from his hand, he baptized all the people and taught them the faith of Christ. At that time were baptized the people of Nubia and Saba, the people of Nagran and Tigré, the people of Angot and Amhara, Wäläqa and Quata, and Zäbagudär. And they all became great Christians by the hand of Hezbä Qädde in the days of the good kings Abreha and Atsbeha. And Hezbä Qädde begat Hezbä Barek, and Hezbä Barek came from Tigré and lived in the country of Dawnt, which is called Bahrä Qäga, and he took a wife from there and begat Täklä Qä’at. And Täklä Qä’at took a wife from [a land] of Amhara which is called Mäqdäla, and begat 7 children, and they grew up there, and it is hitherto their heritage and is called 7 houses of the deacons of tabernacle of the City of Zion. One of them, Atsqä Levi by name, baptized the people of Wäläqa and Betä Amhara, and the people Märhä Bete and Mänzeh. And this Atsqä Levi took a wife from [the clan of] Härbä Geše and begat Abba Yidla, and its meaning is “let him go to become father for the country of Šewa,” because the spirit of prophesy was speaking in the mouth of people from Amhara, who declared things that would come true in due time. And Abba Yidla was sent by the King Degnayizan to the country of Šewa with 150 priests, honorable Levites, to baptize all the people who lived there, and their chief was this Abba Yidla. And when he



arrived in Šewa Abba Yidla lived in the country of Tselaleš and baptized many people there: 10000 and 5000 in one day, and there were built many churches in the land of Šewa in the days of these priests, because tabots and the holy instruments, and all ecclesiastic books were sent from Amhara by the order of King Degnayizan with these priests. And this Abba Yidla chose a land in Tselaleš, Zoräre by name, and lived there. And he took a wife from the nobility of the country and begat Härbä Goš, that is Heywätinä Bätseyon. And Heywätinä Bätseyon begat Bäkuarä Tseyon, and Bäkuarä Tseyon begat Hezbä Qädde, and Hezbä Qädde begat Berhanä Mäsqäl. And at this time the reign passed from Israel to the tribe of Hepatsa, that is to Zagoy. And Berhanä Mäsqäl begat Heywät Benä, and Heywät Benä begat Zär'a Yohannes, that is Tsäga Zä'ab, and he is father of our father. Thus we have completed the genealogy of the Levites, looking for not the honor of their pedigree, but for the honor of their baptizing us. If we looked for the honor of their pedigree, we related to you beginning from the evidence from the Scripture, firstly, from the Books of Moses, secondly, from the Books of Kings, and thirdly, from the Books of History, which tell the story of the forefathers. Let us hasten now to tell the story of our righteous father ..."

This short story of Tāklä Haymanot's ancestors is a doubtless later hagiographic invention, which became widely used first and foremost in the so-called Däbrä Libanos version. The researchers noticed this new element in Ethiopian hagiography, and Boris Turaiev remarked : "On the whole the vitae dwell on his evangelization activities with particular enthusiasm; the Synaxarium bluntly put him in connection with the first preachers of Christianity in Ethiopia even genealogically, and the Däbrä Libanos version gives his full genealogy from the priests Zadok and Azariah; the latter with his descendants are presented as preachers of the law of Moses ... A number of his descendants convert entire provinces of Ethiopia: Tigré, Amhara, Angot, Wäläqa, Märahbet, Mänz, Guna. It was left for Tāklä Haymanot to baptize Šewa, Damot, Kätäta. This desire of the vitae's authors to stress the apostolic nature of the saint is most characteristic."<sup>2</sup>

Ethiopian hagiographic literature always had such a peculiar feature that most of its holy heroes were necessarily of foreign extraction for the simple reason that the Ethiopian Synaxarium was a copy of a Coptic one with some few Ethiopian additions. Probably this produced a tendency to ascribe some kind of foreign origin or descent to national saints in order to make them genuine. And the compilers of Däbrä Libanos version did this in their genealogy,

2 B. A. TURAIEV, *Issledovaniya v oblasti agiologičeskikh istočnikov istorii Efiopii*. 1902. 98-98.



where they traced their hero's descent up to Jerusalem, the center of Christian world and the birth-place of Ethiopian royal dynasty. Marie-Laure Derat, a modern researcher of Tāklä Haymanot's hagiographic cycle, appreciated the significance of this literary innovation: "La manière dont l'auteur de la version de Dabra Libanos II a retravaillé le gadl de Takla Haymanot pour parvenir à rehausser son prestige et à justifier les prétentions de ses successeurs est particulièrement habile. Il s'est d'abord servi de la généalogie de Takla Haymanot, pour montrer que le saint descendait de la même famille que celle de la dynastie royale éthiopienne en place, et que les ancêtres de Takla Haymanot avaient participé de manière active au développement du christianisme en Ethiopie."<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the compilers had literally inscribed Tāklä Haymanot's ancestors into Ethiopian history, making them both members and agents of the events of national importance, such as the origin of Ethiopian dynasty and Ethiopian Christianity. However, there are in fact two stories about Tāklä Haymanot's ancestors inserted into his Vita, i. e. a story of their participating in the events of national scale (when they were foreigners and newcomers yet) and a story of their gradual southward move from Aksum to Šewa (when they were native citizens already), in the course of which they married local women "from the nobility of the country." What was the reason for including this matrimonial details into the monk's Vita?

Probably, if not a proper answer, than some gentle hint can be found in the introduction to the Vita in the already mentioned Ms. Eth. 18 from the manuscript collection of St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. There (f. 2 r. col. 2) is mentioned a certain "heritage" of the saint:

ወያሰትሰ: ወኢይገብር: በዓለ: መንፈሳዊተ: ከመ: በዓለ: ፋሲካ:  
በዕለተ: ተዝካሩ: ለብክሌ: እግዚአብሔር: አቡን: ተክለ: ሃይማኖት]:  
በኩሉ: አድያማተ: ሴዋ: ወበሐውርቲሃ: ወለአመቦ: ብክሌ: ዘይገብር:  
ግብረ: (fol. 2r col. 3) ሥጋ: ለአመ: አስተተ: በሕሊናሁ: በገቢረ:  
ተዝካሮ: በፍሥሐ: ወበአክብር: ኢይደልዎ: ደቤሎ: በይካቲ: ዕለት:  
አቡዮ: ተክለ: ሃይማኖት: ውኣቱ: ኢይቤሎ: ነዮ: አቡክ: ደቤሎ:  
ኢየአምረከ: ወኢዓቀብከ: ቃልዮ: ወኢገበርከ: ተዝካሮዮ: ወይቤሎ: አቡዮ:  
ወለዘይገብር: ተዝካሮ: ስሞ: ዮሐዩ: ምስሌሁ: ሕይወተ: ዘለዓለም:  
ወይከውን: ብክሌ: ውጹአ: እምርስተ: ዚአሁ: አስመ: ኢዓቀበ: ቃልዮ:  
ወኢገብረ: ተዝካሮ: አስመ: ኩሎሙ: ዘአዕረፉ: ነፍሳት: ዘይሰመዩ:  
ሃይማኖታውያን: እመሂ: ጻድቅ: ወእመሂ: ኃጥኦ: ኢያበውዕምሙ: ውስተ:  
ርስተ: ካልዕ: ዘአንበለ: ያብጽሕምሙ: ኀበ: አቡዮ: ተክለ: ሃይማኖ(fol. 2v

3 Marie-Laure DERAT, *Les "enfants" de Takla Haymanot: naissance et développement d'un réseau monastique au Šawa (Ethiopie) du XIIIème siècle*. Mémoire de maîtrise. CRA, Université de Paris I. 1993. 58.



col. 1) ት፡ ወሶበ፡ ርእዮ፡ ይቤሎ፡ ውኣቱ፡ በከመ፡ ሕፃን፡ ዘይጸውዕ፡  
 ጎበ፡ አቡሁ፡ በጊዜ፡ ምንዳቤሁ፡ አባ፡ አቡን፡ ተክለ፡ ሃይማኖት፡  
 ወያወሥኑ፡ እንዘ፡ ይብል፡ ነዩ፡ አቡከ፡ ትስርር፡ ይኣቲ፡ ነፍስ፡  
 ወትረፍቅ፡ ውስተ፡ ሕፅኑ፡ ጎበ፡ አቡሁ፡።

"And the one who sins and does not celebrate a spiritual holiday, like the holiday of Easter, in the day of commemoration of the man of God, our father Tāklä Hayman[ot], in all the borders of Šewa and in all the districts of hers, or a man who commits a carnal act, or sins in thought in performing his commemoration in joy and devotion, is not worthy to say in this day: "My father, Tāklä Haymanot!". And he will not say to him: "Here I am, the father of yours!", but will say: "I know you not. You did not keep my word and did no commemoration of mine." And the one who celebrates the memory of his name will live with him eternal life. And the [former] man will be evicted from the heritage of his, because he did not keep my word and did no commemoration of his. Because all whose souls found repose, if they are called Haymanoters, be they righteous, or sinful, would not be put in the heritage of another, but led to my father Tāklä Haymanot. And when he sees him, he will say, like a child who appeals to his father in the time of disaster: "Abba, father of ours Tāklä Haymanot!". And he will answer to him: "I am here, the father of yours! Let his soul ascend and repose into the bosom of his Father."

What should constitute this "heritage" – *rist* (ርስት), whence to be evicted "a Haymanoter" "in all the borders of Šewa and in all the districts of hers", who sins in the day of the saint's commemoration? In the "pact" (ቢዳን), this indispensable attribute of any Ethiopian *vita*, where the Savior Himself appears before the saint before his death and promises to pardon and save not only the saint himself, but also those who honor his name and memory, there is no mentioning of any "heritage" (ርስት), except for the words:

(f. 77 v. c. 2) ዱበ፡ ፲ወ፩ አህጉረ፡ ገነት፡ ወ፩ መንግሥተ፡ ሰማያት፡  
 እስይመከ፡ በአንተ፡ ብዙኃ፡ ደቂቅከ፡ አለ፡ ይመጽኩ፡ አምድኅረከ፡ አለ፡  
 ኢትኃለቁ፡ ብዝሃሙ፡ ከመ፡ ከዋክብተ፡ ሰማይ፡።

"I shall appoint you upon 15 towns of Heaven and the one Kingdom of Heaven for the sake of many children of yours who will come after you, who are innumerable, like stars of the sky."

However, such kind of a grant in Ethiopia is called *gult* (ጉልት), not *rist*. Such experts of landowning relations in Ethiopia, as John Cohen and David Weintraub, define *rist* as follows: "Rist is a right to claim a share of land based on kinship to a historical ancestor".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> J. M. COHEN and D. WEINTRAUB, *Land and Peasants in Imperial Ethiopia. The Social Background to a Revolution*. Assen (The Netherlands). 1975. 31.



Allan Hoben remarked in this connection that rist “represents a share of a much larger tract of land held corporately by the descendents, *through any combination of male and female ancestors*, of a legendary figure who is believed to have first held the tract of land as his rist”,<sup>5</sup> and added later:

“There are no formal cultural rules to prevent any descendent of the founding ancestor from claiming active membership in the descent group and a share of its rist land. He is not required to live on the land or to farm it himself ... *Rist* rights do not die.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, if we take the “*rist* of Täklä Haymanot” mentioned in the introduction to his Vita not for a literary metaphor, but for a genuine Ethiopian reality, then, according to the short story of the saint’s Ethiopian ancestors, we can consider Täklä Haymanot himself as ristegna (ርስተኛ), i.e. an owner of rist rights (both on male and female lines) in the provinces of Tigré, Dawnt, Amhara, Wäläqä and Šewa, i.e. practically all over Christian Ethiopia of his time. Certainly, the author/s of the short story did this not at all for the sake of any landowning claims of their monastery, because in this case it was not of rist of their founder that they needed, but gult land grants from Ethiopian kings (just like Täklä Haymanot himself who was promised such by the King of Heaven). No doubt, Täklä Haymanot’s later successors being heads of a mighty and widely spreading congregation, had serious gult interests and did their best to establish good relations with Ethiopian kings. Hagiographically, however, they used to this end other methods and compiled other genealogies within his Vita (i.e. the extensive one of the saint himself and that of Ethiopian kings), but the short story of Täklä Haymanot’s ancestors has, probably, nothing to do with these landowning interests.

The Story does not make him a landowner, but it makes Täklä Haymanot a figure of national scale, a genuine Ethiopian of honorable descent (*ristegna*), which was, it seems, its ultimate aim. The author/s rather gracefully transferred the “*rist* of Täklä Haymanot” from a material into spiritual dimension. In the story of Täklä Haymanot’s ancestors, where the author/s particularly stress, that they enumerate them “looking for not the honor of their pedigree, but for the honor of their baptizing us”, there are mentioned 15 countries, where they lived and which they baptized. This is Nubia, Saba, Nagran, Tigré, Angot, Wäläqä, Quata, Zäbagudär, Dawnt, Amhara, Mäqdäla, Betä Amhara, Märhä Bete, Mänzeh and Šewa. One cannot help remembering here that according to the “pact” granted by Jesus Christ to Täklä Haymanot he was appointed precisely upon “15 towns of Heaven and the one Kingdom of Heaven”. Thus, here we have a double picture of earthy and heavenly parallelism, so typical

5 A. HOBEN, *Land tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia* ... 12.

6 Ibid., 22-23.



for medieval religious thought: on earth Täklä Haymanot's "heritage" consisted of his inborn *rist* rights in fifteen earthly "countries", and on Heaven it was "towns of Heaven" of the same number. The latter possession, like *rist*, was not destined only for him, but also "for many children of yours who will come after you, who are innumerable, like stars of the sky". These chosen ones are called in the Introduction "Haymanoters, be they righteous, sinful", who "would not be put in the heritage of another, but led to my father Täklä Haymanot". Strictly speaking, this was *gult*, i.e. "fief normally assigned to a high official during his tenure in office or during his lifetime",<sup>7</sup> but not *rist*, i.e. an inherited right.<sup>8</sup> Here, however, the eternal nature of this grant makes it equal to *rist*. So where is actually found Täklä Haymanot's "heritage", his *rist*, in which his spiritual children can put their trust? Is it on earth or on Heaven? Probably, on both, because Täklä Haymanot himself was "the son of God by grace and the son of Adam by flesh" and inherited along both these lines.

No doubt that the congregation named after Täklä Haymanot and the monastery he had founded, pretended to all-national (if not all-Christian) significance of their founder. The Synaxarium version of Täklä Haymanot's *vita* bluntly calls him "a teacher of the world" (መምህረ ግለም፡), and the authors of later Däbrä Libanos' versions of his *vitae* also used for this end diverse literary and philological devices. Thus, in the introduction they address their readers and listeners and call them "Haymanoters" (ሃይማኖተውያን), a words which can be understood as a derivative of either the second half of Täklä Haymanot's name, which means "Plant of Faith," or a derivative of the word "faith" (ሃይማኖት) itself, which means "faithful." There is no such word in Ge'ez language, where another word መከምር is used for the meaning "faithful", or "believers." So such a substitution may create among listeners an impression that only the adherents of St. Täklä Haymanot are true believers. However, a new word "Haymanoters" was not generally accepted, but otherwise the literary efforts of the authors were quite successful, and the short story of Täklä Haymanot's ancestors, which they had created, became an integral part of his *Vita*.

7 T. L. KANE, *Ambāric-English dictionary*. Wiesbaden, 1990. 2, 1893.

8 D. CRUMMEY, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the thirteenth to the twentieth century*. Urbana and Chicago. 1999. 19.