ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
PHILOLOGY PROGRAM UNIT

TIGRINYA 'AJAMI ON NAJASI
PHILOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SHAYH 'UMAR ABRAR'S
MANUSCRIPTS

BY
AMIRA ABDULKADIR

June, 2011
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Abstract

This thesis examines a manuscript in Tigrinya that is written in the Arabic script. A text in a non-Arabic language that is written in the Arabic script is known in Arabic as 'ajamī. The 'ajamī manuscript the thesis deals with focuses on the 7th-century king of Abyssinia, popularly called Najāši by Muslims. He was contemporary with the Prophet Muhammad. The manuscript was written by a Muslim clerical scholar of the Tigray region, Šayḥ 'Umar Abrar, who lived in the last quarter of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. In addition to a detailed philological analysis of the manuscript on Najāši, the thesis provides brief descriptions of fourteen other manuscripts of the Šayḥ. It is believed that this thesis constitutes the first scholarly treatment of Tigrinya 'ajamī.

Most of the manuscripts of Šayḥ 'Umar are in Tigrinya 'ajamī; some are in Arabic and a few in Amharic 'ajamī. Apart from the one on Najāši, the other manuscripts deal with such topics as inheritance, genealogy, jurisprudence and Mawlid.

Based on the manuscripts of Šayḥ 'Umar, especially on the aspects concerning the emigrant companions of the Prophet who were welcomed by Najāši, the thesis hopes to contribute to the history of Islam and Muslims in northern Ethiopia.
Acknowledgements

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I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Šayḫ Ahmed Šayḥ 'Umar, Šayḥ Juhar Šayḥ Nuru, Šayḫ Seid Hajji Mohammedsali, Šayḥ Kedir Mahmud, Šayḥ Ali Dawud, Šayḥ Nurhusen Borhan, Šayḥ Adem Kamil, Abdulkerim Šayḫ Ahmed and Kedir Tahir for their invaluable time and more importantly for providing me with the information, and materials on which the work is based.

My thanks go to my sisters Shemsia Abdulkadir, Firdos Abdulkadir and Fethia Abdulkadir from whom I drew inspiration; and to my friends Muhammadtayyīb 'Umar, Mustafa Hamid and Nejat Mohammed who supported me in various ways.

Special thanks to my husband, Anwar, who stood by me and offered me a priceless backing in terms of finance, moral as well as technical assistance.

Our lovely kids are source of optimism and encouragement to me. I am so grateful to our sons Huzeifa and Uways for sharing the responsibility of taking care of Ukasha and Meryem who were born during my postgraduate studies.
Dedicated

to

my mom,

W/o Zemzem Zeinu

and

my dad,

Hajj Abdulkadir Ibrahim
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

The second semester of my first year, 2008, in the MA program of the Philology program was the time I started thinking about the topic I should focus on for my thesis. Along with my friends we decided to start with surveying the theses written by our seniors. While scanning through the theses I encountered beautiful contributions regarding Muslim clerics which indeed inspired me. Then I discussed with my friends as to how we should go about our studies. Consequently, there surfaced an idea; we decided to approach our undertakings from regional perspectives, that is, to focus on manuscripts and their producers who belong to the cultures, languages and ethnic groups we belong to. I found the idea quite sensible as my assumption was that almost nothing had been done so far on the contributions of Muslim clerics of the Tigray region. I considered myself fortunate and thought that I would bring a new entry into Ethiopian philology.

I consulted Ato Mohammed Seid, head of the Arabic Unit of AAU, who had successfully defended his thesis on a topic in Arabic philology in 2007. I asked him if he could help me in identifying a manuscript from the Tigray region. To my surprise, he showed me a copy of a manuscript in Tigrinya written in the Arabic script, that is, an "ajami" manuscript. He told me that the manuscript had not been studied and that I would be the first to work on it. I expressed my gratitude to him with a sense of relief. After browsing through the document I figured out that the author of the manuscript is one of those Muslim clerics who are popular in the Muslim community of Tigray. Instantly, I decided to go ahead with working on that manuscript. In fact, it so happened that that manuscript became the focus of my thesis.

What is often said or written about the history of Islam in northern Ethiopia is how it was resisted except at the initial stage when Muslim Arabs were welcomed by an Ethiopian king. Of course, although Arab Muslim followers of the Prophet were welcomed in Abyssinia in 615 A.D, spreading Islam in northern Ethiopia was not easy unlike in the southern part of the country. In northern Ethiopia, it was fiercely resisted by the Christian kingdom (Abraham Demoz 1972:1). Thus, many people get surprised when they come across a Muslim, let alone a clerical scholar of
merit, from Tigray, a traditional Christian region. Nevertheless, twenty-one inscriptions found in Tigray show that there existed a Muslim community since the eleventh century (Gori 2007:166). Hence, Islam is a religion that has been in the northern Ethiopian highlands for ages and has a long history of its own (Hussein 1982:2-3, 2001:58).

As mentioned above, although promoting Islam in northern Ethiopia had been difficult, there were individuals who shouldered the responsibility of spreading the faith and cultivating the Islamic culture in their community. One such heroic personality was Šayḫ 'Umar Abrar or, as he is popularly known by the Muslims of Tigray, Shāhnā Šayḫ 'Umar ‘Our teacher Šayḫ 'Umar’. Apart from upholding the Islamic faith during difficult days, the fact that he left us manuscripts that are of paramount importance for studying the history of Islam in Tigray and generally in Ethiopia, makes him one of those erudite traditional Muslim scholars of Ethiopia.

Most of the manuscripts of Šayḫ 'Umar Abrar are in his native language Tigrinya written in the Arabic script, that is, in 'ajamī – a local language written in the Arabic script. The etymology of the word indicates that it is an Arabic term used by the Arabs to refer to the Persians or Iranians. The Arabs used to call the Persians either 'ajamī or Furs. The word 'ajamī means ‘foreigner’ or ‘non Arab’ (Elias A. Elias n.d:293). Later on the meaning of the word was extended to include the sense of a foreign language written in the Arabic script. Although most of Šayḫ 'Umar’s manuscripts are in the genre of 'ajamī he has also written in Arabic.

Ethiopian Muslim clerics teach about Islam mostly through the indigenous languages written in the 'ajamī fashion. Apart from its religious use the 'ajamī literature is important as it embodies aspects of Ethiopian history in general and particularly that of Islam in Ethiopia. However, as many indispensable Arabic sources on Ethiopia were not given due consideration, the contributions of the Ethiopian Muslim scholars, especially their 'ajamī works, have also remained for long unnoticed (Endris 2007:4). In addition to manuscripts, information on the tombs of local saints which could be a subject of inscriptive philology is also in the category of important but neglected written heritage. In the same way as manuscripts are studied, examination of the tombs of saints and inquiry into the literature and oral traditions about shrines would give clues for the lacunae in the history of Islam in Ethiopia (Hussein 1984:52-53).
Sayl 'Umar's manuscripts, which are among the contributions of Muslim clerical scholars, are an aspect of the Ethiopian literary tradition. Of the manuscripts of Sayl 'Umar, the focus of the present study is on the one which is concerned with the ancient Ethiopian king, popularly called Najāši, who was a contemporary of the Prophet Muḥammad. The next section briefly describes what the name Najāši signifies and the historical events related to the reign of the King.

1.2 Najāši

The history of Islam in Ethiopia is directly related to the history of Islam in Tigray and its immediate environs. As it is widely known, Islam reached Ethiopia almost immediately after its emergence during the reign of King Aṣḥama ibn Abjar (Ella Šaḥam (Sergew 1972:185)) in 615 A.D. That Ethiopian king is popularly known as Najāši. The name is an Arabized version of the Ethiopian word nāgās meaning one who is anointed as a king. The word has gradually become an appellation by which King Aṣḥama is known.

Najāši's hospitality to the emigrant followers of the Prophet Muḥammad is a milestone in the relationship between the Ethiopian state and Islam. According to Muslim scholars such as Samia (2001) the king embraced Islam. But, for instance, Trimingham (1965:46) represents the historical narration as a legend. However, the introduction of Islam into Ethiopia by the followers of the Prophet Muḥammad has not been questioned.

The tomb of Najāši is found in Tigray, in the town of Nāgaš which is 10 kilometers from the town of Wukro along the Mekelle-Adigrat Road which itself is 55 km east of Mekelle, the capital of the Tigray region. According to Gori (2007), the number of inhabitants of the town of Nāgaš is about 1500 where half of them are Christians and the other half Muslims. In addition to bearing the name of the king, the town is the burial place of some of the followers of the Prophet who came and lived in Ethiopia (at the time Abyssinia) for about sixteen years. It is also the established tradition of the Muslims of Tigray to bury their notables in Nāgaš.

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1 The name of King Najāši's father is presented in the literature as 'Abjar' (MS 1) or 'Abjār' (Munro-Hay 1991:261) and even as 'Abhur Abjar' (Ahmedin 2011:57). The confusion between the first two is probably the Arabic letter jīm with its dot resulting in 'Abjar' or lacking the dot and becoming the letter / b/ and causing 'Abhur'. The third confusion 'Abhur Abjar' arises possibly from considering the former as the name of Najāši's father and the latter that of his grandfather.
Near the tomb of Najāṣī is found a church known as Mariam Kadīḥ. Its name is related to the wife of Najāṣī. It is believed that Najāṣī once set off with his wife and entourage and they reached the place where the church is now located. His wife asked those who were with her where they were going and they told her that they were going to the land of Islam. She then quitted the journey and went back. When Najāṣī asked where his wife had gone, his servants told him that she went back. “Did she betray?” he asked. They said “Yes”. After that event, the place came to be known as Kadīḥ ‘one who betrays’ (Ahmeddin 2011:55-56). According to Gori (2007:1109), the tomb of Najāṣī’s wife is in this church which is built facing opposite the tomb of Najāṣī. The Christians of the locality swear by saying Maryam Nāgaṣon yaghārānna which means let us be opposite as Mariam (the church) and Nāgaṣ (his tomb). The phrase is said when one tries to affirm that they are telling the truth.2

The place where Najāṣī’s tomb is found served as a place where ordinary Muslims gathered with Muslim clerics for fatwa, that is, for religious explanations by the clerics to questions posed by ordinary Muslims. Muslims, mainly from Tigray, used to gather there every year to get answers to their questions. According to Futuḥ al-Ḥabasha ‘the conquest of Abyssinia’ (2003: 351) when Imam Aḥmed Ibn Ibrahim (graññi) raided Tigray in the 16th century he passed by the tomb of Najāṣī. This indicates that there was a realization of the existence of the tomb since the sixteenth century.

Ṣayḥ’Umar Abrar, the subject of this research, contributed a lot towards the reconstruction and recognition of the site of Najāṣī’s tomb (source: Ṣayḥ Aḥmed and Ṣayḥ Ali). Effort was made to reconstruct the site but governmental recognition was not achieved easily. Yet Muslims value the place with reverence. Annual celebration takes place on the day of Ashura3, the day on which Prophet Moses defeated the Pharaoh. It is celebrated on the tenth day of the first month of the Islamic calendar, Muharram. Nowadays, people from all over the country and even from the Sudan gather and celebrate in memory of Najāṣī (Ṣayḥ Nurhusein and Ṣayḥ Aḥmed). Poems of Ṣayḥ’Umar Abrar about Najāṣī and about other Muslim saints are recited in the house of the

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2 The episode about the refusal of Najāṣī’s wife to head towards the prophet Muhammad with her husband implies that Najāṣī professed Islam.
3 The celebration in memory of Najāṣī was done on this day because it is a day on which many blessings occurred other than the defeat of the Pharaoh.
Šayḫ which he gave away for the purpose. These poems are in the form of *manzūma* style. A *manzūma* is a religious song sung in a group. It is a kind of panegyric or praise.

A national symposium on Najāšī was held in Mekelle, the regional capital of Tigray Region in 1999. The symposium assigned a committee for the establishment of a centre named Ašhama al-Najāšī Cultural and Educational Centre. In 2006 a symposium for launching the centre was held at ECA (Economic Commission for Africa). At the symposium the centre was formally established and was promised donations and various kinds of support. The first donation was made to the centre by the Tigray regional government by granting 110,000 square meters of land at Nāgaš town. The centre started operation by setting up an office in Addis Ababa. It has the objective of making the project feasible with the support of both national and international figures interested in preserving heritage and culture (Ismail 2006).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

a. General objectives

The general objective of the thesis is to identify a traditional Muslim clerical scholar in the Tigray region and to reveal his manuscripts. Based on one of the manuscripts of the cleric, the thesis aims to bring to light the history of an Ethiopian king related to the emigrant companions of the Prophet Muhammad.

b. Specific objectives

i. to give a brief biography of Šayḫ ʿUmar Abrar, a traditional Muslim clerical scholar in Tigray;

ii. to provide brief philological descriptions of fifteen *ʿajamī* and Arabic manuscripts of Šayḫ ʿUmar Abrar;

iii. to give philological analysis of a selected Tigrinya *ʿajamī* manuscript of Šayḫ ʿUmar Abrar on Najāšī;

iv. to identify and discuss the linguistic features of the manuscript on Najāšī.
1.4 Methodology

The study involves examining the physical conditions, content and language of the manuscripts. Data are also collected from informants especially for the reconstruction of the biography of Sayh 'Umar and for issues concerning the ‘ajami manuscript on Najasi.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The study surveys fifteen manuscripts of Sayh 'Umar Abrar which focus on different subjects. Of the fifteen manuscripts, the study provides in-depth analysis to the one which focuses on Najasi and which is written in Tigrinya ‘ajami. For all fifteen of the manuscripts brief philological descriptions are provided. Among the manuscripts, the one which focuses on Najasi is analyzed essentially from the view point of its contents. The analysis is descriptive in approach. Interpretations related to circumstances are not dealt with. However, linguistic features characterizing the manuscript are identified and described.

1.6 Literature Review

Research on ‘ajami literature in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon. This does not mean that ‘ajami is new to Ethiopia. Arabic was in use in several medieval Islamic states of Ethiopia where ‘ajami was also used. Similarly, as stated in the MA thesis of Kemal (2007:9), ‘ajami had been in the literary culture of some African countries but was later terminated during the period of colonial era.

According to Alula Pankhurst (1994:258), Enrico Cerulli was the first to discuss Ethiopian Muslim poetry in Amharic. Aseffa Mambo (1988) in his MA thesis analyzes the ‘ajami manziama, poems that are usually sung in the Wollo region. He mentions that the poems are in Amharic but written in the Arabic script.

Pankhurst describes and analyzes Amharic ‘ajami poems from the viewpoint of content, style, occasion and popularity. He indicates that Islamic poetry in the Ethiopian languages written in the Arabic script is very popular. He also points out that ‘ajami poems are found mostly in Adere (Harari), Oromo, Amharic as well as in Gurage and are often recited during Ramadan, the holy month of fasting (1994: 259).
As regards the contents of the poems, Pankhurst identified ten kinds based on the researches done by Cerulli, Aseffa Mamo and audio recordings available on the Merkato. Pankhurst also points out that there is no *manzūma* regarding the emigrants who sought refuge in Ethiopia. The reason he gave is that the local Muslim literature is reluctant to acknowledge the Christian king (1994:265). Both assumptions, that the scenario of the emigrants is missing and that the reason is the reluctance in the local literature, are not acceptable. Firstly, there are many poems in which the emigrants and their host are mentioned and glorified. A case in point is the very topic which this research is concerned with and which I will treat later. Secondly, based on written historical and Prophetic tradition, Samia (2001:94-97) attests that the Ethiopian king who hosted the emigrants embraced Islam. To that effect, she provides many reasons. Thirdly, the Prophet admired the king and said that he was a fair and honest king even before he became a Muslim (Abdusselam 1989:65).

The preceding scholars are among those who brought to light the importance of *ajami* literature in Ethiopia. But none of them analyzed *ajami* manuscripts from the perspective of textual criticism. The following three M.A theses by indigenous scholars are perhaps pioneering works fully devoted to textual criticism.

Kemal Abdul Wehab’s MA thesis (2007) focuses on *ajami* manuscripts in Amharic. In his paper he analyzes nine manuscripts of Shayh Ta’lha, a Muslim cleric from Wollo who spread the basic principles of Islam to the ordinary Amharic speaking Muslims through the medium of Amharic poetry. Shayh Ta’lha’s poems revolve around the glorification and description of the deeds and characters of Allah and the Prophet. They also focus on prayer through mediation and jihad. The Prophet Muhammad’s biography is the main subject of the Shayh’s manuscripts. The thesis also addresses the struggle that Shayh Ta’lha conducted against Yohannes and Menilik, two Christian emperors. He was bitterly against Yohannes for his fierce policy of conversion.

Mohammed Hakim, in his MA thesis (2007), deals with an Oromo *ajami* manuscript of Shayh Ahmed Shayh Siraj entitled *Brille Safa*. The thesis underscores that the Shayh was a man born to praise Allah, love the Prophet and sing in honor of him. The Shayh is portrayed as a virtuous cleric who influenced people by his piety, poetic ability and dedication. He is also presented as an intelligent Shayh who was endowed with a unique ability of the craft of speech and poetry who
emerged in his later life as a prominent author and mādiḥ (panegyrist). He was thus compared with leading poets in the global history of Islam like Hassan Ibn Ṭābit, al-Busayri and al-Waraq. The thesis points out that the manuscript deals with the sīrah (biography) of the Prophet and his companions.

Abdella (2009) is another MA thesis on Oromo ājami manuscript. According to Abdella, Šayḥ Uṭman Busesa of Hararge is the author of a manuscript which is entitled Qatro al-Ajurumiyyah. The thesis is a philological study of an Arabic grammar manuscript in Oromo ājami. Abdella (2009) states that the tradition of learning and teaching classical Arabic, mainly grammar and morphology, has been a common practice among the Muslim communities in Ethiopia over the last two centuries. However the basic educational system has involved oral interpretation of Arabic grammar. That drew the attention of Šayḥ Uṭman Busesa. He observed the problems and difficulties that students faced in learning Arabic grammar and he simplified the Ajurumiyyah (a well-known Arabic grammar textbook) by paraphrasing and translating it into the Oromo language. This helped students to achieve the basic knowledge of the Arabic grammar in a short time.

ājami has also been used to write some east gurage languages. For example, Redwan (2011) presents a poem in Wolene ājami.

As mentioned earlier the Arabic script had been used widely in many African countries before the colonial era. Nigeria, Senegal, Mali and Gambia are some of the countries that have recently revived their ājami literature. These countries are searching their ājami heritage which they believe embodies their history. The countries seem to be engaged in a movement of awakening in order to study their history prior to colonization (Mohammed Seid 2006).

As observed above, ājami literature has been used in Ethiopia and in many African countries for some centuries. This literature, which can contribute a great deal to the knowledge about the various African countries, has long been neglected. However, the need for researching the literature is now growing. The present study is one such attempt to reveal the existence and contents of Tigrinya ājami manuscripts of a renowned Muslim cleric of the Tigray region. The following chapter presents the biography of that renowned clerical scholar of the Tigray region, Šayḥ 'Umar Abrar.
CHAPTER TWO
Biography of Sayḥ ʿUmar Abrar

2.1 Family background

Sayḥ ʿUmar was born to his father Abrar Ḥayr ʿĀḥmed and his mother Desta Muḥammad Ḥiyar in Addargud, a district in Adua, Tigray region. The exact date of his birth could not be identified but it is believed to be in 1878. His family, through his father, claims that they are descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad through the Prophet’s grandson Hassen. Such a claim is common in the biography of many famous Sayḥs in Ethiopia (Endris 2007). Sayḥ ʿUmar’s father and uncles were personalities who are considered as saints venerated in the society. Some of their descendants are also respected and visited.

It is believed that the birth of the future Sayḥ ʿUmar had been foretold by a saint Sayḥ called Ḥalifa. The story goes that Sayḥ ʿUmar’s mother dreamed of eating honey. She was told by this saint that she would give birth to a son who would become knowledgeable but would not stay long in life. The mother died some years after she gave birth to the promised child. The father died earlier. The young ʿUmar became an orphan who was brought up under his uncles’ care (source: Sayḥ ʿĀḥmed, Sayḥ ʿUmar’s son, and Sayḥ Juhar).

It was during the intolerable reign of Emperor Yohannes that the young ʿUmar lost his father who refused to be converted to Christianity. One day officers of Alula Aba Nägga, the highest official of the Emperor, came and took the father, Sayḥ Abrar, from his house. Two other Muslims were also taken with him. Later, the bodies of the two other individuals were found while that of Sayḥ Abrar was lost. It is believed that since he was a saint God took him away (source: Sayḥ ʿĀḥmed, Sayḥ Kedir and Sayḥ Juhar). This kind of explanation was common in those times in the Muslim society of Tigray. This was the way they explain their steadfastness in their belief. Another case is the death of a saint named Sayḥ Ukaša, Sayḥ Abrar’s brother. The story is told that while the priests were trying to bury the dead body in the Christian graveyard it spontaneously disappeared.

The act of forcing Muslims to become Christians was not practiced by all the common Christians of Tigray. Surprisingly, some of my informants reported that the Christians of Tigray used to
help their Muslim compatriots by testifying that they had become Christians though they knew
that they were practicing Muslims. It is also interesting to learn that a Christian friend of Šayḫ
Abrar known as Kinfe’s father avenged the Šayḫ’s death by killing those who revealed the
religion of the Šayḫ.

During his childhood ‘Umar lived with his uncles serving as a shepherd. He had no chance of
getting religious training at that time because of the oppressive nature of the situation. However,
as he was approaching adolescence, he found it difficult to accept being ignorant about his
religion. Hence, he left for Wollo at the age of fifteen changing his name to Kāhsay to avoid
being tracked. That was in fact, a common practice by religious lads of the time. After fifteen
years studying in Wollo he went back home to Tigray (source: Šayḫ Aḥmed and Šayḫ Juhar).

2.2. Religious training

Little is known about Šayḥ ‘Umar’s religious schooling. In the colophon of one of his Arabic
manuscripts the Šayḫ indicates that he copied it and that it belonged to his teacher Muḥammad
Hasan al-Madanī. Informants also identify one of his teachers as Šayḫ Muḥammad Nur Bigiddo
of Wollo who came to Tigray with the intention of taking Šayḫ ‘Umar back to Wollo to assign
him as a teacher. But the Šayḫ refused. His teacher Muḥammad Nur Bigiddo argued that he
would not find as many students in Tigray as in Wollo. But Šayḫ ‘Umar said he would knock at
each door in Tigray to get students. The path of knowledge Šayḫ ‘Umar took can be identified
from the manuscripts he produced. His manuscripts deal with such topics as the biography of
King Najāšī, Islamic inheritance system, Unity of God (Tawḥīd), praise of saints, glorification
of the Prophet s, rights of parents and Islamic jurisprudence.

Šayḥ ‘Umar was not limited to writing; he was also active in teaching. According to my
informants when he returned from Wollo he preferred to remain solitary in a room. The Šayḫ did
not, however, want to remain in solitude when the society was in need of overhauling. The
concerned members of the society felt that Muslim identity was lost, moral laxity was rampant,
Islamic jurisprudence was neglected; the faith was corrupted by superstition and local attitudes.
So he campaigned hard and succeeded in reforming the society. He was instrumental for the
rebirth of the society he lived in. Šayḥ ‘Umar thus commanded respect and he is remembered as a
practical and pious teacher, or murabbī as it is written on the colophon of MS 2.
It appears prophetic that the young 'Umar chose for himself the prophetic name Kaḥsay long ago. In Tigrinya the name implies restoration or retrieval. Indeed the young Kaḥsay set out to do what his martyred father intended, that is, to fill the gap left as the result of the flight of Muslim teachers due to fear of persecution.

2.3. Livelihood and Family

According to Ṣayḥ Ṭayyib, Ṣayḥ 'Umar’s son, their livelihood was essentially dependant on the agricultural land they had. Nevertheless, the merchant cousin of the Ṣayḥ, Azmaḥ Mohammed Abdu, also used to help the family. Ṣayḥ 'Umar married a Tigrinya woman named Meryem, and had twelve children: Ruqiyya, Ḥajji Muḥammad, Muṣṭafā, Ḥabiba, Ḥadija, Abrār, Ḥamed, Ṭuḥa, Ḥasin, Žeynep, Mardiyya, Sofiya. Among his children the following are alive: Muṣṭafā, Ḥamed, Ḥasin and Mardiyya.

2.4. Contribution to Society

The contributions of Ṣayḥ 'Umar are not limited to teaching and writing. He was also engaged in social activities. A shrine to the seventh-century king of Axum, Aṣḥama Ibn Abjar (Ella ṣaḥām) and popularly known as Najāšī, was erected at his initiative. A clever trick was involved. According to Ṣayḥ Ahmed the local people sent some notables to Emperor Hailesellasie to request permission to build the shrine at the tomb of Najāšī. However, the Emperor refused. Then the Ṣayḥ proposed to Azmaḥ Muḥammad Abdu, his cousin, to ask the governor of Tigray, Ras Ṣayyum, for permission to build the tomb of his (the cousin’s) father. Ras Ṣayyum agreed. But, instead it was the tomb of Najāšī which was built. Regarding the tomb, Bušra Ṣayḥ Yahyā (2011:65-66) states that it was constructed “with the permission” of Ras Ṣayyum.

The local Muslim community then announced that the shrine of Najāšī was built. Buses belonging to the well-known merchant Azmaḥ Muḥammad Abdu brought people from different parts of the country to visit the newly built shrine. But there were Muslims who were against the construction of the shrine. They argued that the money could have been better spent on matters related to the teaching of the laity. However, Ṣayḥ 'Umar responded that his intention in building the shrine was to let the history of the just and friendly king of Abyssinia become known.
Sayh 'Umar also served as Qādī 'judge' during the Italian occupation and after the return of Emperor Haile Sellassie. Later he resigned, partly for fear that he might be tempted to do something that would displease God. Justice administration requires much time and that did not suit the Sayh, who was committed to teaching and writing.

It is also worth mentioning that Sayh 'Umar was politically sensitive and knowledgable. The divide-and-rule policy of Italy lured some sections of the Muslim population and innocent Sayhs with false promises. Sayh 'Umar stood against that policy and advised his people not to do anything that might displease and hurt their Christian brothers and sisters, as that would have bad consequences in the future. He challenged the seemingly benevolent gesture of the Italians by inviting them to come to the fold of Islam, if they were sympathetic to it (source: Sayh Ahmed, Sayh Ali).

2.5. Linguistic skill

It has been mentioned that Sayh 'Umar produced manzūmas in Tigrinya. In recognition of his valuable contributions to the development of elevating Tigrinya literature, a certificate was posthumously awarded to Sayh 'Umar by the Association of Tigray Artists and the Regional State of Tigray on November 8, 2008. The Arabic and Amharic knowledge of the Sayh was also profound, as can be observed from his Arabic and Amharic texts. Moreover, members of his family and students testify that the Sayh used to communicate with the Italians in Italian, both in speech and in writing.

2.6. Old age and death

Among the things Sayh 'Umar achieved in his old age was the performance of Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. According to Sayh Ali, he was sponsored by the Italians; but according to Sayh Ahmed he was sponsored by his cousin Azmač Muḥammad Abdu. After performing the Hajj the Sayh wanted to visit the Prophet’s mosque in Medina where his tomb is located. However, given his deep love and respect for the Prophet his cousin feared that the Sayh might remain in Mecca. Hence, the cousin promised Sayh 'Umar that he could return for another visit during the next Hajj, and they went back to Ethiopia. However, the Sayh fell ill. After three years in bed, he breathed his last in 1967 at the age of eighty-eight (Sayh Ahmed). His grave is in the town of Nāgaš, surrounded with metal fencing.
CHAPTER THREE

Survey of the manuscripts of Šayh ʿUmar Abrar

3.1 General information about the manuscripts

Šayh ʿUmar Abrar authored a number of manuscripts. As mentioned in section 1.5 of chapter one, I came across fifteen manuscripts of the Šayh. They are neither titled nor dated except for one which I identify as manuscript 2 (MS 2). The MSS I have come across are identified in this chapter. The manuscripts are of two types: a) those written in local languages but in Arabic script (ʿajamī), b) Those written directly in Arabic. The Šayh’s writings in ʿajamī can again be grouped into two: while most of the manuscripts are completely in Tigrinya, some contain some Amharic.

All of the ʿajamī manuscripts are written in poetic language, that is, as manṣūma. However, in MS 1 the duʿāʾ (invocations) and in MS 2 the text on the first three folios is in prose. The Šayh improvised special characters to represent Tigrinya sounds that are absent in Arabic. Usually dots are added to the Arabic letters; in one case, two Arabic letters are employed for a single Tigrinya sound (gn (jīm, nūn) = ｎ). The innovations that Šayh ʿUmar has made and the characteristic linguistic features of his manuscripts are treated in chapter five. Most of the Šayh’s manuscripts are in the custody of one of his sons, Šayh Aḥmed, who lives in Mekelle, the capital of the Tigray regional state particularly the Ṭabya ʿAydār part of the city. MS 8, 9 and 10 are with Šayh Nurḥusen Bārhan who lives in Mekelle in Ṭabya Sāmen. I provide brief descriptions of the manuscripts in the following two sections. Section 3.2 deals with the ʿajamī manuscripts while 3.3 treats the Arabic ones. The original manuscripts are written mostly in madd, locally made ink; however, modern pen is also used occasionally. Copies of the manuscripts are written with maddī or modern pen; there is one manuscript that apparently exists only in photocopy form.

3.2. ʿAjamī manuscripts

The ʿajamī manuscripts of Šayh ʿUmar that I have come across are eleven in number. They are written as indicated above, either completely in Tigrinya or in Tigrinya including some Amharic parts. A brief description of each of the manuscripts is provided below. (The ʿajamī transcription system is discussed in chapter 5)
This is the principal manuscript which the thesis is concerned with. It is essentially on Najāšī, and chapter four is devoted to it. It can be briefly described as follows.

i. **Language**: Tigrinya (‘ajami), with some parts in Amharic and some parts in Arabic

ii. **Title**: none

iii. **Topic**: biography of Najāšī, *du‘ā‘*, popular saints, *manzūmas* about the Prophet

iv. **Status**: original

v. **Physical material**: the text is written on ruled sheets of paper, with 17 lines. Black ink was used for consonants and red for vowel diacritics. The front and back covers are sewed together and are covered with cloth decorated with red and blue flowers. The word *manzūma* is written on the cover in elaborate style. There are additional words in blue ink but they are partly illegible.

vi. **Pagination**: the manuscript has 51 folios, that is, 102 pages including blank ones. Those on which texts appear are 85 pages while the other 17 pages are blank. The page sequence is based on catchwords at the bottom of the verso of the folios. There are also page numbers in Arabic numerals at the top of both the recto and verso of the folios. The numbers go from right to left. Each *manzūma* has its own pagination. Each *manzūma* starts from page two: the first *manzūma*, about Najāšī: pp. 2-25, including the closing *du‘ā‘*; the second on saints, pp. 2-17; the third on the Prophet (as an intercessor), pp. 2-21; and the fourth on the Prophet (panegyric), pp. 2-25. No page number is given for the doxology on the first folio, and for the short supplication on the verso of page 25. At the end of the manuscript there is a brief additional, unpaginated *manzūma* in Arabic which is not in Šayḫ ‘Umar’s handwriting and which as a result I do not treat in chapter four. Finally there are unpaginated blank sheets. One could be curious why the Šayḫ indicates the first page of each *manzūma* as page 2. According to one of my informants (Šayḫ Ali), the first page of each *manzūma* is reserved for a doxology. For two of the *manzūmas* the space for the doxology is left blank. For the *manzūma* about Najāšī and the one on saints, specific doxology is written in the MS.

vii. **Size**: 10.5 cm x 17.25 cm

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4 This MSS and the other manuscripts I have categorized as “original” are all written in the same handwriting and they are with Šayḫ Ahmed, Šayḫ ‘Umar’s son, as an inheritance.
viii. **Condition:** the manuscript is old, the sheets are fragile and a bit damaged; some pages (pp. 1, 2 and 3) are ripped and part of the lines are not clear; some of the lines are completed in blue ink in a different handwriting. The cloth covering is old so that the edge of the hard cover of the manuscript is ragged. The cloth on the inner side of the cover is well preserved.

ix. **Writing style:** The four 'ajamī *manzūmas* are composed of short and long lines; that is, there are three to nine short lines of verse concluded with a long line which is written curving upward at the end of the line. The pattern repeats to the end of each of the four *manzūmas*. Each set of the short lines between the long ones is a rhyming set. The long lines at the end of each rhyming set of short lines all have the same rhyme. There is editing in the margin and above the verses, sometimes upside down. The concluding *du 'ā* of the first *manzūma* and the isolated *du 'ā* on the verso of folio thirteen are written in prose.

x. **Detailed content:** The manuscript has four *manzūmas*. The first *manzūma* deals with the history of Najāsī including his enthronement, the fairness of his rule, the relationship he had with the Prophet and the importance of visiting his tomb. It concludes with a *du 'ā* in Arabic for Najāsī and for those who come to visit his tomb. The second *manzūma* is on the status of the saints. The text shows the great value of saints who can do miracles and are believed to have the power to intercede. The third *manzūma* is on the Prophet. It starts with the importance of praising the Prophet in a group (ḥadra). It then tells about the position of the Prophet among the other prophets. The fourth *manzūma* is on the importance of *salawāt*. The poem underscores that through *salawāt* one can avoid the miseries of this world and be successful in the hereafter. The Prophet’s mercy is described as extending not only to humans but also to animals. The Prophet’s death is mentioned as an agony where some became deaf and others dumb due to the intense love they had for him. Finally there is a short Arabic poem which praises the Prophet and an isolated *du 'ā* for those who got relief after a disaster.

**MS 2**

i. **Language:** Tigrinya ('ajami) and Arabic

ii. **Title:** none

iii. **Topic:** inheritance, the unity of God, homily, an Arabic poem on praise and another one on saints, and the five pillars of Islam.
iv. **Status:** scribal copy

v. **Physical material:** The text is written on sheets from the days of the Italian occupation. The sheets are used with the bottom side turned up. Black ink was used for consonants and red for vowels, titles and words that the author wanted to emphasize. The manuscript is bound with a thin cardboard cover and again covered with decorated white and red cloth. Just inside the hard cover there is a sheet which is thicker than the rest of the sheets; on the sheet in the front there are few Italian words (commodity names).

vi. **Pagination:** there are 112 pages (56 folios). The manuscript is a modern one and it is paginated with the European numbers at the edge of each recto and verso of the folios. The recto (left) of one folio and the verso (right) of the preceding folio are identified with the same page number. In some pages, where the numbers are not visible the copyist used catchwords to indicate page sequence.

vii. **Size:** 22 cm x 33.5 cm

viii. **Condition:** the sewing is loose, the last manzúma is not complete but the manuscript is clean and easy to read.

ix. **Writing style:** different styles are observed. Some of the manžúmas are composed in two columns; that is, a line of the first column rhymes with a corresponding line of the second column. Other manžúmas are composed of alternating indented and non-indent ed lines. Still others are composed of short and long lines as in the writing style of MS 1. Each manžúma has its own doxology. However, in the inheritance part, each issue is provided with its own heading.

x. **Detailed content:** the first part of the manuscript, written in Arabic, is about the five pillars of Islam: belief in the uniqueness (Tawhīd) of Allah and that Muḥammad is his messenger, performing ṣalāt (prayer), fasting, giving alms (zakāt) and Ḥajj. The second part is a manžúma which discusses the importance of inheritance as dictated in the Qurʾan and Ḥadīṯ. It discusses the people who are entitled to inheritance and the amount of the inheritance in detail. The third part focuses on the Tawḥīd: that is, believing in one Creator and that He has twenty attributes like the power to ‘see’, ‘hear’, ‘speak’, and so on. Then, the prophets of Allah and their qualities of truthfulness and trustworthiness are presented. The features of Angels especially of the ten prominent ones, their names and responsibilities are described. The fourth part gives an extensive account of the Last Day, or the Day of Judgment, where
every human being is supposed to stand in front of Allah to get his/her actions weighed. The
part ends with salawāt on the Prophet and those who follow his footsteps. It states that the
Prophet is the origin of life. The Prophet’s soul was the first to be created. Using the nūr
(light) of the Prophet, God created the other prophets and other creations like the sun, the
moon, and the stars. It points out that the prophets of God were given high position because
they were created from this nūr. The events that took place when the Prophet came to this
world are described. In the month of Rajab, the seventh month of the Islamic calendar, there
was celebration in Heaven when it was heard that the Prophet Muḥammad was in his
mother’s womb. The miracles that occurred after his birth are listed. The fifth part of the
manuscript is a homily. It starts with thanking Allah for His guidance and then presents
salawāt on the Prophet. It then provides advice in relation to the mission of the Prophet. The
qabr, the grave, is also discussed as a terrible and painful home for those who committed bad
deeds. The right of parents over their offspring is another issue that is treated. The focus is
that those who do not discharge their responsibilities to their parents will not enter paradise
but rather are sent to hell. The importance of sala (prayer) and the divine punishment for not
doing it is also given due attention. The final maḥalima is a short version; a fuller version
appears in MS 10.

xi. Colophon: it has a triangular shape and states the date, the person who compose the MS and
the person who copied it. Lastly there is a prayer to Ṣayḥ′ Umar by the copyist (his student).

MS 3

i. Language: Tigrinya (ajami)

ii. Title: none

iii. Topic: Mawlid and intercession of saints

iv. Status: original

v. Physical material: the text is written on ruled sheets of paper. Black ink was used for
consonants and red for vowels. The text is on recto and verso of the folios. The manuscript is
bound with cardboard which is covered with red cloth. The cloth covering has a strap which
is designed in such a way as to hang down from the shoulder.
vi. **Pagination:** the number of pages is 16 (8 folios). Pagination is indicated by catchwords at the bottom and European numerals at the top.

vii. **Size:** 10.5 cm x 15.25 cm

viii. **Condition:** not bound

ix. **Writing style:** The two manẓūmas appear in two columns; that is, the hemistich in the first column rhymes with the hemistich in the second column.

x. **Content:** It starts by indicating that life originated with the creation of the Prophet. Nūr (light) passed to Adam and to other prophets so that they attained a high position. This light was then passed on to righteous people until it reached Hāšim, the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad, where temporarily the transmission stopped. Hāšim was worried, so he

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**MS 4**

i. **Language:** Tigrinya (ʼajamī)

ii. **Title:** none

iii. **Topic:** about Hashim, the great-grandfather of the Prophet

iv. **Status:** original

v. **Physical material:** the text is written on ruled sheets of paper of notebook size. Black ink was used for consonants and red for vowels.

vi. **Pagination:** the number of pages is 16 (8 folios). Pagination is indicated by catchwords at the bottom and European numerals at the top.

vii. **Size:** 14.8 cm x 20 cm

viii. **Condition:** some of the sheets are loose so that some of the pages are not ordered correctly.

ix. **Writing style:** The two manẓūmas have two kinds of handwriting. The second manẓūma, on the importance of celebrating the birthday of the Prophet (Mawlid), is written with light madd in ʾSayḥ ʿUmar’s handwriting. The first manẓūma, on interceding to Allah through the saints, is written with bold madd and is not in the Šayh’s handwriting. The manẓūmas are composed of short and long lines like the style of MS 1.

x. **Content:** The second manẓūma discusses the importance of celebrating the birthday of the Prophet. Celebrating Mawlid is presented as a means by which one can get close to Allah. The first manẓūma asks Allah for blessings through the intercession of saints.
went to the Ka'ba and prayed. There he was told that he should marry a woman named Salmā who would bear a son who would become the grandfather of the Prophet, Abdulmutṭalib, who was known for coordinating the religious rites at the Ka'ba and for providing food to the pilgrims.

**MS 5**

i. **Language:** Tigrinya ('ajami)
ii. **Title:** none
iii. **Topic:** Jum' a ṣalāt (Friday prayer)
iv. **Status:** original
v. **Physical material:** sheets of paper, folded in half, with text on verso and recto of each half as if the folded sheet was two folios in a book. Black ink is mainly used for writing but on some pages red ink was used.
vi. **Pagination:** number of folios 6 (12 pages) with some catchwords.
vii. **Size:** 10.5 cm x 18 cm
viii. **Condition:** loose sheets, not sewn together, but they cohere thematically as a single document.
ix. **Writing Style:** composed of alternating indented and non-indent lines.
x. **Content:** how to conduct the Jum' a ṣalāt (Friday prayer) according to the different madhāhib (schools of legal thought).

**MS 6**

i. **Language:** Tigrinya ('ajami)
ii. **Title:** none
iii. **Topic:** miscellaneous
iv. **Status:** original
v. **Physical material:** the text is written on paper verso and recto with black ink for the consonants and red ink for the vowels.
vi. **Pagination:** 32 pages (16 folios) paginated using catchwords but not consistently.
vii. **Size:** 11 cm x 17 cm
viii. **Condition:** separate sheets of paper.
IX. **Writing style:** two styles are used: alternating indented and non-indented lines on the one hand; text in columns, on the other hand.

x. **Content:** These unbound pages are all written in the same handwriting, but because of their diverse content it is hard to know whether they are "a single manuscript". Many issues are discussed; among them is the steadfastness of the Prophet's companions when they were persecuted by the Quraysh. The case of Bilal, the first Ethiopian convert to Islam, is cited. Further themes are the terrifying nature of the grave, the importance of Salah, and the miracles on the day the Prophet was born and the response of Abdulmuttalib to Abrâha's plan to destroy Mecca.

**MS 7**

i. **Language:** Amhari and Tigrinya (ʼajami)

ii. **Title:** none

iii. **Topic:** praise of the Prophet and about persecution by the Quraysh

iv. **Status:** scribal copy

v. **Physical material:** the text is written in black ink

vi. **Pagination:** ten pages (five folios) with Arabic numbers at the bottom

vii. **Size:** 22 cm x 33 cm

viii. **Condition:** no cover and the pages are not sewn together. From the pagination and also based on content it was clear that the pages form a single manuscript.

ix. **Writing style:** composed of short and long lines just as in MS 1.

x. **Content:** Praise of the Prophet and persecution of his companions, giving Bilal as an example of steadfastness in the face of persecution.

**MS 8**

i. **Language:** Tigrinya (ʼajami),

ii. **Title:** none

iii. **Topic:** the marriage of Ḥadīja to the Prophet, and Mawlid

iv. **Status:** photocopy of a scribal copy

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5 The Quraysh were the noble tribe to which the prophet Muhammad belonged. The Quraysh, before embracing Islam, persecuted the first Muslims, some of whom the Prophet advised to emigrate to Ethiopia.
v. **Physical material:** bound photocopied sheets. The letters are in the black color of a photocopy.

vi. **Pagination:** there are 102 pages (51 folios) paginated with European numbers at the bottom going from right to left.

vii. **Size:** 18 cm x 24.25 cm

viii. **Condition:** the Mawlid part is not complete.

ix. **Writing style:** composed of short and long lines like the style of MS 1.

x. **Content:** It discusses how Ḥadīja (the first wife of the Prophet) was impressed by the Prophet. Their marriage ceremony is then discussed in detail. There is also a Mawlid part.

**MS 9**

i. **Language:** Tigrinya (ʼajamī), Amharic (ʼajamī) and Arabic

ii. **Title:** none

iii. **Topic:** Najāšī, saints and praise

iv. **Status:** scribal copy

v. **Physical material:** the text is written on bound sheets of paper. The consonants are written in blue ink whereas the vowels, subtopics and punctuation marks are written in red ink.

vi. **Pagination:** there are 200 pages (100 folios), marked with catchwords and also page numbers at the bottom. Out of the 100 folios 64 contain writing while 36 are blank.

vii. **Size:** 14 cm x 20.5 cm

viii. **Condition:** well preserved

ix. **Writing style:** some are composed in short and long lines as in MS 1. Others are composed in two columns like MS 4, while others are composed of alternating indented and non-indented lines.

x. **Content:** part of the manuscript is a copy of MS 1 (the biography of Najāšī and the superiority, miracles and contributions of the saints). There is an Arabic poem, similar to what is found in MS 2, and again a copy of the ḏuʿāʾ part from MS 2. Description of Muslim scholars in Hawzen (eastern Tigray) and how the death of those scholars affected the Šayḥ and the discomfort of living with ignorant people are included. There is one Amharic poem on the Prophet. And there is a short manzūma in Tigrinya on Najāšī.
MS 10

i. **Language:** Tigrinya (ʼajamī)
ii. **Title:** none
iii. **Topic:** the homily part from MS 2. It also contains the last manzūma of MS 2 in a fuller version. See MS 2 for details.
iv. **Status:** scribal copy
v. **Physical material:** bound ruled sheets of paper whose texts are written with madd.
vi. **Pagination:** there are 196 pages (98 folios) paginated with numbers at the bottom. 40 folios are blank.
vii. **Size:** 20.5 cm x 27.75 cm
viii. **Condition:** well preserved
ix. **Writing style:** composed of short and long lines like the style in MS I. The last letter of each indented line is black, red or green. He also uses green for headings and red for emphasis.

MS 11

i. **Language:** Tigrinya (ʼajamī)
ii. **Title:** none
iii. **Topic:** praise to the Prophet
iv. **Status:** scribal copy
v. **Physical material:** unbound sheets of paper written with madd
vi. **Pagination:** not paginated and it has only four pages (two folios)
vii. **Size:** 11 cm x15.5 cm
viii. **Condition:** the paper is fragile
ix. **Writing style:** composed of short and long lines like the style of MS I.
x. **Content:** praise of the Prophet

3.3. **Arabic manuscripts**

Among the manuscripts of Šayḥ ʻUmar Abrar, apart from the eleven treated in the preceding section 3.2, there are four manuscripts written in Arabic. I refer to these as MS A, MS B, MS C and MS D. Of these Arabic MSS one (MS D) is a copy as mentioned earlier in section 2.2. Nevertheless, at the end of the manuscript, there is a half-page Arabic text by the Šayḥ. As I have
done for the foregoing eleven manuscripts, brief descriptions of the four Arabic manuscripts are given below.

**MS A**

i. **Title:** none  
ii. **Topic:** supplications  
iii. **Status:** original  
iv. **Physical material:** partly a bound book; partly loose sheets of paper. The text is written in black ink.  
v. **Pagination:** there are 126 pages (63 folios). Catchwords are used but not consistently  
vi. **Size:** 10 cm x 16 cm  

vii. **Condition:** fragile paper  
viii. **Writing style:** prose  
ix. **Content:** supplication extracted from the tradition of the Prophet and other scholars

**MS B**

i. **Title:** none  
ii. **Topic:** genealogy  
iii. **Status:** original  
iv. **Physical material:** a bound manuscript. The text is written in blue ink but some of the contents are also written in *madd*.  
v. **Pagination:** not paginated  
vi. **Size:** 10.5 cm x 19.5 cm  
vii. **Condition:** well preserved  
viii. **Writing style:** the first part is in prose but there are also parts written in poetry.  
ix. **Content:** the genealogy of Šayḫ Abadır of Harar, with which Šayḫ 'Umar identifies himself, is written in about three to four pages. The manuscript also contains other Arabic contents and *manẓūmas.*
MSC

i. Title: none
ii. Topic: miscellaneous
iii. Status: original
iv. Physical material: sheets of paper detached from binding. The text is written with black ink and blue ink, and occasionally in red ink for bulling.
v. Pagination: 69 pages
vi. Size: 11 cm x 15.75 cm
vii. Condition: loose sheets of paper
viii. Writing style: prose with a few poems
ix. Content: it deals with a wide variety of topics including jurisprudence, tawhīd (unity of God), tajwīd (Quranic articulation), genealogy, history and praise of Allah.

MS D

i. Title: none
ii. Topic: supplication
iii. Status: original
iv. Physical material: unbound sheets of paper but they cohere thematically as a single document. The text is written with black ink.
v. Pagination: 12 pages (6 folios); catchwords are used for pagination
vi. Size: 11 cm x 19 cm
vii. Condition: not bound
viii. Writing style: alternating indented and non-indented lines of verse.
ix. Content: supplication, beseeching Allah through his names. There is also a discussion of the benefit and harmfulness of medicines.
x. Colophon: the Šayḫ writes that it was copied from his teacher. The title of the manuscript is stated: Asmāʾ Allah aḥsna ʿthe beautiful names of Allahʾ. But no date is provided.
CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of the Manuscript on Najāšī

Brief descriptions of the manuscript on the pious Abyssinian king, Najāšī, along with the descriptions of fourteen other manuscripts of Sayh 'Umar Abrar, have been given in the preceding chapter. Here, I single out the manuscript on Najāšī, MS1, and provide the analysis of its contents.

The great majority of the manzūma texts of the manuscript are in Tigrinya 'ajamī while some texts are in Arabic and a few in Amharic. Reading the texts is sometimes difficult, because some of the edges of the folios are torn, vowels have not been consistently provided and missing line-ends written vertically in the left margin have sometimes been added in ball-point pen. To overcome the problems, I resorted to listening to a recorded version of the manzūmas which I bought. The recording was done by Sayh Nurhusein in whose custody is a copy of the manuscript. Furthermore, I consulted with two of Sayh 'Umar's students: Sayh Ali and Sayh Seid Ahmed.

The original version of the manuscript (in the custody of Sayh Ahmed 'Umar, Sayh 'Umar Abrar's son) and the copy (in the custody of Sayh Nurhusein) are very similar except for the doxology part. In the doxology of the original manuscript the intercessor is Najāšī whereas in that of the copy the appeal is to Najāšī himself.

I analyse the four major parts, that is, the four manzūmas of the manuscript, by quoting, transliterating, translating and by discussing the targeted parts. I first give the original 'ajamī text (in Arabic script) in the form of a photocopy of the original. This is followed by transcription in Latin letters, then by an English translation.

To verify completeness and authenticity I have referred to supplementary sources. I have drawn from sources in Arabic, English and Amharic.

The structure of this chapter follows the structure of the manuscript, MS1, itself. It has a prologue and an epilogue of praise; in other words, it is prefaced with a doxology, praise to Najāšī, and concludes with a panegyric, extolling the Prophet Muḥammad. Among the topics
which appear between the two praises are: the enthronement of Najāšī, the welcoming of the Prophet’s companions, Najāšī acting on behalf of the Prophet for his marriage, the importance of visiting Najāšī’s tomb and narratives about saints. After the doxology, the main parts of the manuscript are the four manzūmas: i) on Najāšī; ii) on popular saints; iii) on the intercessor Prophet and iv) panegyric to the Prophet. The last manzūma (iv) is what I refer to as epilogue.

In the transcriptions below, I use several conventions:

[ ] indicates that the oral text which I am familiar with disagrees with the written text; I put the oral text in brackets. Also, there are cases where the written text seems not to make sense; here I add a correction in [ ].

( ) indicates a dittography (unnecessary repetition) in the written text.

I have tried to transcribe clearly Arabic words using normal Arabic transcription, and clearly Tigrinya words using normal Tigrinya transcription. Arabic loanwords which have become part of Tigrinya are transcribed according to Arabic convention.

In transcribing Tigrinya, the vowel-letters ى, ؤ, and ِ do not indicate length as in Arabic but only vowel quality. (Tigrinya has no vowel length.)

As indicated above, the chapter is concerned with a descriptive analysis of the contents of MS1. As to the linguistic and transcriptional features of the manuscript, some discussion is provided in chapter five.

4.1. Doxology

On the recto of the first folio of the manuscript on Najāšī appears the mašrab (doxology) which is given below. It is a poem praising Najāšī which consists of three lines. The mašrab is recited by the congregation after each stanza, consisting of short verses of the manzūma culminating with a long one, is sung by the leading singer. The first and the second lines are in Arabic while the third is in Tigrinya.

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6 Since the paper here is partly torn off, the doxology physically has the form of a collage created by sticking two pieces of paper together, the original paper and a “patch” added to supply the missing text. Consequently, in the first line the phrase al-madad is invisible except for the last letter. In the second line, the word bikun is unduly repeated.
al-madad al-madad yā-sayyid l-‘akbar

Narjū bikum (bikum) ‘aṭā‘l-‘a[w]fārī

Lā‘āhum zayyārī

Oh great lord we ask aid
We hope for abundant gift through you (from Allah)
On account of visiting you (your tomb)

The doxology is about the intercession of Najāṣī. Šayh ‘Umar, on behalf of the visitors to Najāṣī’s tomb, asks for the intercession of the pious king.

In reciting the doxology people say ‘natṭubu minkum‘ ‘we ask from you’, instead of narjū bikum ‘we hope through you’ (the second line in the doxology above). The difference between the two phrases is a point of theological debate. It can be assumed that the lyrical piece was originally written with the second option, bikum. Plausibly the Šayh inserted the marginal comment ‘ay min Allāh ‘that is, from Allāh’ as a response to the controversy.

Top right, the expression ‘ay min Allāh ‘that is from Allāh’ is a later addition to point out the abundant gift is sought from Allāh.
4.2. Aşhama al- Najašî

In Sayl̄ 'Umar's manuscript on Najašî, MS 1, two Ethiopian kings are mentioned. The first is King Abhûr who was in power before the advent of Islam, while the second is King Aşhama ibn Abhûr later better known as Najašî. The latter was contemporary with Muḥammad's prophethood.

King Aşhama is referred to by various names by different authors. Sayl̄ 'Umar's manuscript mentions Aşhama apart from Najašî (3)⁸.

Aşhama malât nasayyid Najašî, ʻayyu sāmu
Wahbât malât ʻayyu ba' Arab turgumu⁹
Hāmzi ʻilu kitāb ʻaṣābīqū torgimu
ʻĀḥmed Najašî, malât la'addi ʻayyu sāmu Jawāhir al-Ḥisān bargaş fassārī

Aşhama is the name of Lord Najašî
Whose meaning in Arabic is 'gift'¹⁰
A book has translated this well

ʻĀḥmed Najašî is a name of a locality; Jawāhir al-Ḥisān explains this well

⁷ The Arabic definite article al' 'the' and the noun (name ) Najašî 'king' are orthographically represented separately. However, in pronunciation, the alveolar lateral sound /l/ of the definite article is assimilated by the next alveolar nasal sound /n/ at the beginning of Najašî and the pronunciation of al-Najašî becomes anNajašî 'the king'. Locally, the name is used without the definite article and in the Ethiopian pronunciation Najašî.

⁸ The number of the page from which a direct quote is taken appears in parenthesis.

⁹ Line 2 of the verse is retrieved from what is written vertically to the left of lines one, three and four.

¹⁰ 'Gift' is not a usual meaning of the word aşhama in Arabic.
Aṣhama is the name more commonly used by Islamic sources. On the other hand, Ethiopian (Christian) sources recognize him as Adriaz (Sergew 1972:185). Many Muslims in Ethiopia consider Aḥmed Najāši as the king’s name, but the Šayḥ notes that this is actually the name of a place, citing the book known as Jawāhir al-Hisan.12

In this thesis the name Najāši, by which the king is generally known, is adopted. His fairness, and the hospitality he extended to the Muslim emigrants who were persecuted by the Quraysh, which is a major theme of the manuscript under discussion, won him broad recognition in the Muslim world. Consequently he has become a source of pride to Ethiopia.

4.2.1 Enthronement

In the long history of Ethiopia, leaders used to assume power in two ways. Conventionally, a royal family, used to assign the eligible individual to the throne purely on the basis of its rules of succession. However, a capable individual who subdued all his competitors could also assume leadership by himself based on his own merit. The manuscript under examination considers that the enthronement of Najāši took place both in the former manner, that is, through the rules of succession, and also due to his merit and competence.

4.2.1.1 Power through succession

According to Šayḥ ‘Umar the succession of the monarchical power passed from Abḥur, the father, to the son, Najāši. The Šayḥ describes the lineage in verse in the following manner (2).

11 Ahmeddin (2003:46), referring to Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, mentions that the original name was Ella Šaham.
12 The name Aḥmad has been attached to Nagaš probably to give it an Islamic flavor. According to Šayḥ Ḥedir, many places in Tigray are known after influential Muslim personalities such as ‘Addi Kûbirā for ‘Addirgud.
Lord Najāṣī has origin from time immemorial
His ancestors royal
His father Abhūr, ruler of the land

The Sayḥ also describes how the nobility plotted to overthrow king Abhūr to replace him with his brother for the simple reason that king Abhūr had only one son, Najāṣī, while Abhūr’s brother had twelve sons. The nobility were worried that the succession of Najāṣī would not last long if they let it happen since he had no sibling to take over after his death. So, they decided to kill and depose Abhūr, to deny Aṣhama, Najāṣī, his right to the throne. The nobility went ahead with their plot, that is, they killed Abhūr and brought his brother to power. They did this assuming the country would be guaranteed peace for a long time when the twelve sons of Abhūr’s brother succeeded each other.¹³ Sayḥ ‘Umar describes the scenario as follows (3).

¹³ In fact, this very naïve hope did not come true; the text tells us that the country was not at peace, which was why Najāṣī was recalled.
The brother of Abhūr had twelve children

While Abhūr had no other son than Najāšī

The ministers discussed the future of the nation

To kill the one with only one son

And replace him with the one who had twelve sons

So that succession can pass to the sons

Abyssinia will then be peaceful until the twelve sons get their turn to rule

All the ministers agreed on this idea

They thus killed Abhūr and left Najāšī an orphan

Nevertheless, the situation was not favorable to the ministers as Najāšī continued to impress. He even outdid the king, his uncle, not only in matters of knowledge but also in the art of speech and conversation. The Šayḥ depicts this in the following lines (3).
Lord Najāṣī entered training together with his cousins.
He was found to be the wisest among them.
He excelled in all aspects.
None was even close to his knowledge. The ministers started getting worried.

As expressed below, Najāṣī’s knowledge exceeded not only his cousins’ but also that of his uncle (4).

The courtiers were determined to do whatever it took to ensure that Najāṣī wasn’t a source of danger. So they came up with a plan to get rid of him as they were afraid he would make his own move. They brought the idea to the king, Najāṣī’s uncle. The king agreed to their proposal and
banished Najāstī, selling him into slavery. The following citation from the manuscript briefly relates how the banishment was carried out (4).

The ministers went to his uncle to propose either to kill him or banish him  
Fearing to differ  
(The king) chose to have him exiled  
They sold him to a traveler  
For six hundred dirham of silver  
He was taken to the land of the Arabs to the satisfaction of the ministers\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14}This story is reminiscent of the story of Joseph in the Quran and the Bible.
But the plot of the courtiers and the decision of the king did not hold for long. After a short time, as seen in section 4.2.1.2 below, the status quo changed and Najāṣī was brought back from slavery and enthroned.

4.2.1.2. Power through merit and competence

According to the manuscript, the king (Najāṣī's uncle) died of a thunderbolt. To make matters worse, none of his sons proved to be competent enough to replace the king. The country was thrown into political turmoil. The Šayḥ describes the episode as follows (4).

Nāgoda māṣī'a lāhawābbō'om kʿātālāt
'Imāk dāk'kʿu tāsʿānā latahž šumāt
Māryāt tāc'ēānnāk'[q]āt māryāt šālmātāt
Bāzbā mānkāra bāzhā ḥawkāt laʾayuwwo sāʾanu wāyyom ministry

A thunderbolt killed the uncle
None of the sons proved capable of assuming power
There was huge turmoil and chaos
The ministers did not know what to do
To turn to Najāšī became inevitable. The search for him is portrayed in the citation below (5).

Nāmsā’āyyo bālū lāţfā’nayyo wāddī
Gābā’om[gālī’om] tāl’ilom ‘atāwu māgāddī
Bāhāndāy mafataş tāgānāyā ‘ab ‘ārāb ‘addī
‘Ilkab bārāľa sārīk’[q]om ‘ams’uwom k’orişom māgāddī
‘İnkayyow tāşomu ‘atḥāzuwwom ‘addī máryāt ráğī’a k’[q]ārāyā şaggārī

Let’s bring the one whom we banished
Some of them (ministers) set off on the road
He (Najāšī) was found after a long search
They stole him from the desert and brought him back, cutting the road short
He was immediately enthroned to rule the land; things went back to normal and there was no more suffering

Despite the fact that his father was unfairly killed and Najāšī was originally denied power, although he had every right, ultimately Najāšī was enthroned. The Şayḥ considers the latter event as an outcome of his fairness and wisdom. He deserved to be a king for his qualities more than his mere descent from a royal family.
Najāšī’s fairness and wisdom were demonstrated even as a new leader coming back from slavery, that is, long before the historic incident with the Muslim emigrants from Arabia. One dramatic illustration of this happened when the master of the ex-slave Najāšī came all the way from Arabia to Abyssinia looking for his ‘lost slave’. Without knowing that the king of Abyssinia was Najāšī himself, the slave owner sued the nobility around Najāšī because they took the slave they had once sold to him without bothering to pay the money back. The case was brought to King Najāšī’s court. To the surprise of all, King Najāšī offered either to return the stolen slave or to pay the money that was due. This made a lasting impression on the people, who understood well what the consequence of the options would be. That is, if the ministers decided to give the slave back, it was Najāšī himself who would be taken away. The Šayḥ gives this account in his manuscript as follows (5).

Wāyyo goyo’tom māši’u ddaddabri’om sa’ibu
Ya-sayyidī ya-sayyidī ilu tāri’u tāzaribu
Baryā’ ayuy ilom šaytomulay wāsidom gänzābu
Ṣārik’[q]om ams’uwwo wāyyo lašātuwwo gänzābu
’Inkayyow layyow akkaballu sāb
Bāryā’u [baryu’u] yawsād bālu wāy yəsād gänzābu gänzāb nahab ‘ina bālu wāyyom ministri
Hābāša tā’ajjibom bažu ‘adli fārdi
Sayyid Najāšī lara’om latārudduwwo fārdi
Lazu sâb'ay gûnzâb yâstîd malât wây barya'û [baryu'û] yâwsâdi
Barya'û [baryu'û] yâwsâd kämbâlu 'azom nayom jundi sayyid Najâsî nâyrom mas'û hâyadi

His (Najâsî's) master followed after him (King Najâsî)

He exclaimed, "My master, my master,
The ministers took money for a slave they sold to me
Then stole the slave back."

He (Najâsî) immediately called the ministers

He declared, "Let him take either his slave or his money back".
The ministers agreed to pay back the money

The Abyssinians were struck by the fairness of the ruling,
The judgment Lord Najâsî gave on himself
That the master should get his money back or his slave
Had the ministers chosen to give the slave back
It would have been King Najâsî that would have gone

As can be seen above Najâsî was a king known for his fair administration. In reference to Najâsî the prophet underscored, "...where no one is unfairly treated in his land" (Abdusselam 1989: 65).

4.2.3. Welcoming the Prophet's companions

Not long after that event the Prophet Muhammad sent a group of emigrants to seek asylum in Abyssinia. The emigration to Abyssinia did not happen by chance. It was an order from the prophet Muhammad who advised his adherents to flee persecution by the Quraysh. The following is a citation from Shayh 'Umar's narration about the initiation of the emigration (6).
'Adil maḥ"anom māṣkiromullom nabi Muḥammadi
'Ab makka ṣaggar 'agnayom näyrom nayom jundi
'Aṣyom 'ilom lab 'aslamanne māgāddi
Ḥāmkādkum bāluwwom lab ḥāli 'addi
'Amru kaša' lažahar rabbunā ẓamādi
Labiy' ina lānaḥād bālu la-nabi Muḥammadi
Ṣallallāhu 'alayhi 'abād al-'abādi
Lab Ḥābīsā 'iša'ara gābīrū zārīğiām 'idī
Fa'-inna bihā malīkan lā-yazlimu wa-lā-yuẓlamu 'indahu 'a ḥadun ḥāṭītari yāllāy 'amma šī yāllāy
Malāt 'āyyu 'ab Ḥūbīsā 'addi bāṣabbuq nāgus maḥmud al-ḥabarī

The Prophet Muḥammad witnessed Najāšī’s fairness
When his followers were persecuted in Mecca
For accepting Islam
Some of them were killed and others burnt
He advised them to leave for another land
Until the Lord makes it safe

15 Line 6 of the verse is retrieved from what is written vertically in the margin.
16 The same holds for Line 11.
Where to? they asked the Prophet Muḥammad,  
May Allah’s mercy be upon him forever  
He pointed to the land of Abyssinia  
There is a king under whose rule no one either oppresses or is oppressed  
There is neither robber nor rebellion

Regarding the persecution the followers of the Prophet underwent and their emigration to Abyssinia, Endris (2010) describes as follows:

According to Ibn Jarir al-Ṭabari (839-923), there came a trial which severely shook the people of Islam; some were seduced. The messenger of God commanded them to immigrate to Abyssinia. He told them that there was a righteous king in Abyssinia in whose land no one was oppressed and who was praised for his righteousness. The messenger of God commanded them to do this. A batch of refugees went to Abyssinia because of the coercion they were being subjected to. His fear was that they would be seduced from their religion.

The emigration of Muslims to Ethiopia happened in two rounds, the first and the second. The first one was ordered by the Prophet when the oppression of the Quraysh was intolerable to the Muslims. Safiy al-Rahman (1979:118) describes the emigration as, “In Rajab of the fifth year of prophethood a group of twelve men and four women left for Ethiopia. Among the emigrants were 'Uṯman bin 'Affan and his wife Ruqaiyah the daughter of the Prophet”.

However, they went back when they heard that the Quraysh had embraced Islam. But they found that the persecution had rather increased. Therefore, the Prophet instructed them to emigrate to Abyssinia for a second time. This second group of emigrants comprised eighty-three men and eighteen or nineteen women (Safiy al-Rahman 1979:120-121). Ṣayḥ 'Umar mentions some of the names of the emigrants with admiration as follows (6):
The honorable emigrants began their journey from Mecca
Ruqiyya, the Prophet Muhammad’s daughter,
Her husband Uthman, the generous
Uthman Maz’un, “nurse-brother” of the Prophet Muhammad,
More dignitaries were also in the group that came to the good and famous king

The Ṣayḥ mentions the names of the most notable ones of the emigrants: Ruqiyya, daughter of the Prophet, her husband Uthman, the Prophet’s best friend, who was considered generous, and Uthman, the “nurse brother” of the Prophet. He generalizes that all were respected individuals.

The Quraysh, on learning of the hospitality of King Najashi towards the emigrants, dispatched their own emissaries asking Najashi for the handing over of the Muslim emigrants. The emissaries came with gifts to Najashi’s ministers and servants so as to win their hearts. But the scheme would not be effective under the straight, logical and fair king as discussed below (7).

17 According to Ṣayḥ ’Umar, Uthman was brought up breast-fed together with the Prophet Muhammad. Hence, in Arabic: ‘ah al-ridā’ literally translated as ‘nurse-brother’
بُداْحٌ هَمّةْ أَقاَمَتْ ثَقَمَّمْتُهَا فِي عَتْبٍ

"إِلَيْكُمْ سَمِّئُوا دَاءْ ِهِذَانِي نَمْ مَكَّةَ صَبْ

ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ يَأْبَأَبْهَا وَقَذَبْتُهَا وَأَسْتَرْهَبْنَا

يَأْتُوا مِنْ أَكْبَارِكُمْ مَكْحُولًا فَكَيْلٌ

ذَٰلِكَ لِيَكُونَ لَكُمْ عَلَىٰ فُجُورِكُمْ

يَعْقُبُ عَلَىٰ هَمَّةْ وَقَتَلَهَا عَلَىٰ عَلَجِّ

"إِنَّمَا هُمْ يَأْتُوا عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِمْ وَأَهْلِهِ

يَا أَهْلِكُمْ فَأَلْمَنَىٰ لَكُمْ أَحْزَانٌ وَأَمْسِكُواْ

يَأْتُوا مِنْ أَكْبَارِكُمْ مَكْحُولًا فَكَيْلٌ

ذَٰلِكَ لِيَكُونَ لَكُمْ عَلَىٰ فُجُورِكُمْ
Upon hearing this (the well-being of the emigrants), the Meccans were dismayed
They started plotting to bring them back to the previous harsh punishment
Money was amassed
To be given to the ministers as well as to Najāšī. They sent two diplomats
Amr bin al-'Aṣ and Amir
The two individuals came with many gifts
They distributed them among the servants as well as the nobles
To all the ministers and the great ones
They urged them to help them in their case:
That they (the emigrants) have a strange religion
That they had fled after getting punished
A man arose in the town (Mecca) claiming to be a prophet
He does not even get close to our gods
And these people joined his party
Family and relatives tried to reconvert them
But they came to your land.

The poem has very similar contents with the narration of Mohammad Tayib (2007:14) but in his version the names of the two Quraysh messengers are 'Amr ibn al-'As and Abdullah Ibn Rabī'ah.
According to Shayh 'Umar, the emissaries appearing before Najasi presented their case as follows (8).

The two men entered Najasi's court
They said, we came to you, sent by noble people
A few dissidents have come to your land
They are disobedient, corrupting people
We have been sent to prevent this
We request you to hand them over to us
The ministers who took gifts supported the request
The servants too who took gifts supported

Lab Najasi 'atawi wayyom kalti sabati
Labalha masi'ana balu sadidomuna 'abbayti
Nayna sabat masi'om 'allawu 'abzu nayka maryati
Hawwakti 'ayyom hazbi miiballaawi
Kyiitamamu 'ayyu latil'ahunyo malhti
Kathabannya nadilli buluwwom' azom sabat
Habbatom balu labalu makk'awani sa'ahaggizom labalu hasahori
The incident was critical. 'Amr bin al-'As was no ordinary man. He was carefully chosen to persuade Najāši with his eloquence. Along with the distributed gifts the pressure on Najāši was immense. 'Amr tried to convince the king that the emigrants professed a strange and corrupt religion. The ministers also supported the claim and pressured the king to turn the emigrants over to the Meccan Quraysh.

King Najāši, however, did not succumb to the pressure. As a wise leader and, above all, a just king, he had to listen to what the emigrants had to say. He gave them a chance to present and defend their case (8).

Hhabbatom dā’a bālu ’azom hadiyyā labāl’u
Sayyid Najāshī raḍiyallahu ’anhu lāyżang’u
Yāṣāddaday bālu māriḵom labay latāṣagga’u
Zārābā’om ḥasomma’ bāluwwom yāṣāwwu’u šāwwa’i sāḏādu labzom ’akābiri

Turn them over said those who took gifts
Yet king Najāši, may Allah be pleased with him, refused
I am not to turn over those who seek protection trusting me
Call them, and let’s hear what they say

'Amr made sure he exploited every opportunity to accomplish his mission. He seized upon the emigrants’ manner of greeting, which could be considered very rude. In those times, people had to bow or even prostrate in front of kings, especially when they anticipated some kind of favor. The incident is presented in the Šayḫ’s manuscript as follows (9).
'Amir 'agnāyā bə'ləbat məlbə'asi məgəddi
Mas sayyidi Najāśi goytay sayyidi
'Eman lābbol lasama' ləhəbdə
'Elzom səbat ḥuru'at 'əyyom 'ənkəb kullu 'addi
'Entə 'atwullāwu ayyəwārduy sujūdi
Ṣanhumma bālātum ḥatrī'u 'ihum gud i 'enta'atwu lab zu 'aflāggā bəri

'Amr got a means to cause discord between the emigrants
And Lord Najāši
Which is convincing
These people are arrogant
When they enter they do not bow down
You will see when they enter at the gate

The emigrants were exercising the new code of conduct as taught by the Prophet Muhammad: no one prostrates in front of another human being, regardless of status difference. Prostration is reserved for the Creator only. The following lines from the manuscript present the response of the emigrants (10).
'Assalāmu 'alayka 'ilom 'atawu 'azom 'asyādi
Tāyyaquwom sayyid Najāṣī goytay sayyidi
'Entay ḥ'enkum bālūwwom laygābārkumullāy sujūdi
Ḥālkilunna' ayyu bālū nabi Muḥammadī
Sujūd 'a yyāwārrādāy bilū[‘ilu] 'illā la-rabbūnū ṣamādī
Ḥālkilunna' allo bālū bāzuḥ ḥafū' māgaddi
Sālam bilnakā [bilnakka] bālū bi-tahiyyati jannat al-ḥukdi raḍiyallāhu 'anhum 'azom 'akābiri

The dignified (emigrants) said peace be upon you, on entering the court
Lord Najāṣī asked them
How come you did not bow?
The Prophet Muḥammad has prohibited it, they said
No more prostration except to the Eternal Lord
He prevented us from committing evil acts, they said
We have greeted you with the salute of the people of paradise
May Allah be pleased with those noble people.
King Najāṣī then asked Lord Jāfar, the cousin of the Prophet, to speak on behalf of the emigrants (II).

Are we slaves that we should return and fulfill their orders?

‘Amr, the accuser, answered, they are free people.

Did we kill people so that we should be killed in Mecca?

They did not kill, said their accuser ‘Amr.

Did we take money by force? they asked.

No, they did not take, said ‘Amr, the accuser

Then what wrong did they do?
'Amr responded as follows (11).

We and these people used to follow one path
But they went over to Muhammad’s path
All we want is to bring them back
To the way of our forefathers

Amr’s argument could not go beyond accusing the emigrants of abandoning the religion of their forefathers. What is interesting, as portrayed by the Šayb, is the response of Najâšî, which is consistent with his character. He always gives a chance to the accused, too. One can imagine the situation in the court with emotional tension rising while King Najâšî maintains his composure trying to arrive at the truth underlying the rift between the Quraysh delegates and the Muslim emigrants (11).
Sayyid Najāṣī ṭāyyik'[q]u latom 'asyādi

Ləmntay lāk’ik’kum[laqiqkum] bāluwwom nawālāļjum màğāddi

King Najāṣī asked the noble ones (emigrants)

Why did you abandon the path of your forefathers?

Ja’far declared why they chose to follow the Prophet Muḥammad. He explained that the religion they decided to embrace has values that would not accept the ‘established’ customs of Meccan society, no matter how popular such customs might be.

The manuscript briefly provides the argument of Ja’far at the court, which has been reported by many historians (12).
Our forefathers’ path was an evil one  
It was normal to usurp peoples’ money  
It was full of devilish acts  
But when the Lord chose for us a better path  
He sent us a messenger; the Prophet Muhammad Who guides to the good and  
forbids the bad  
He has a fine genealogy  
He is truthful and knows no lies  
He is trustworthy with no deception  
From his childhood to adulthood. In such a manner did master Ja’far present his reply.

The Şayḫ emphasizes in the manuscript that King Najāši called his officials and clergy to listen  
to what Ja’far had to say (12).
Immediately a bell rang
The clergy came in upon hearing the bell
Master Ja'far presented the attributes of the Lord
Which touched their hearts and minds
It was a new enlightenment

Such was the power of description of Ja'far who moved the clergy. The king was keen to compare the words of Ja'far with the teachings of his religion. Therefore, he asked Ja'far to recite some verses from the revelation sent to the Prophet (13).

Qur'an 'asm'uni bālu goytay mukarrami
Sayyid Ja'far k'āri'i surat al-'Ankabūt wa al-Rūmi
Ṣa'ā bāḥyu latā' akkābā qawmi
Faydi fāsisu faydan mukārrāmi kaṣa' lawassaf baqur'an saṭri
Nab'atom koynu faydi wāradi
The king asked to hear the Qur'anic verses
Ja'far recited the suras of the Spider (sura 29) and the Romans (sura 30)
Every one of them wept
Tears poured, tears of the king to the extent that it was expressed in Qur'anic lines
His tears gushing out, he said
I wish I had no leadership responsibility
I would have gone to the Prophet Muhammad
I would have carried his shoes and served under him, the Prophet Muhammad, the chosen one

The king was touched by the teachings of Islam as presented by Ja'far. The same story is told in a similar way in most of the history books, but the Quranic suras vary. The sura which is recited is Mary (sura 19) in many sources (e.g. Abdusselam 1989:70).

Najashi's dedication to protecting the emigrants is expressed in the manuscript as follows (13).
Be glad and live in peace in my country
Whoever looks at these people maliciously
At the group of Uṭman ibn Afan (one of the emigrants)
He has disobeyed me; (may Allah be pleased with him, as he is a mine of goodness)

This was the final blow to the Meccan envoys as King Najāṣī affirmed his continuous protection of the emigrants.

As can be seen above King Najāṣī was not only a source of peace for his country but also for the emigrants who sought his protection. In fact this was a milestone in setting a crucial example to the rest of the world. This legacy has also been a model for imitation even in modern times (Endris 2010).

4.2.4. An attack on Najāṣī

According to Šayḥ 'Umar’s manuscript, Najāṣī’s kingdom was attacked from the direction of the Nile River. The attack was to overthrow the king. Najāṣī went to the battlefield, which was on the other side of the Nile River. Šayḥ 'Umar discusses the emotional attachment the emigrants had to the King. Having enjoyed a long, peaceful and stable situation, they were concerned that things would not be the same without Najāṣī. Thus they volunteered to participate in the battle on his side, which Najāṣī declined (15).
While the emigrants were living in peace
An opponent of Najaši came with a large army
The dignified ones prepared together with Najaši for the battle
Najaši refused to take them and he crossed the Nile with his soldiers
They (emigrants) said, we are grieved
We are terrified that King Najaši might lose the battle
Thus we might lose the honor he afforded us

When the news of the battle was delayed, Zubair, one of the prominent companions of the Prophet, went to the battlefield and inquired (15).
When the dignified ones could not get news of the battle
Zubair went to inquire
He crossed the Nile with (an inflated) animal skin
He found the two armies fighting
So he joined the battle
Immediately the army won the battle
The enemy king was caught and brought back; the success was from Allah

The siding of the emigrants with Najāšī highlights how closely attached they were to him. The level of concern they had is discussed in the following lines (16).

Once the battle settled down
Lord Zubair returned
Crossed back over the Nile swimming with (an inflated) animal skin
Najāšī was victorious, which made us happy
Our (the emigrants’) joy was immeasurable; only God knows how much we were happy

The scenario of the battle is yet another manifestation of the relationship between the emigrants and Najāšī. Their worry when the king went to the battle and their joy at his victory testify to the strength of the bond between them.

4.2.5. Representing the Prophet for his marriage

The special relationship between the Prophet Muhammad and King Najāšī was enhanced when the Prophet married one of his wives, Ramla, who was then in Abyssinia. Ramla, widely known as Umm Habibah, was the daughter of Abu Sufian who was one of the leaders of Quraysh. In Islamic marriage, both the bride and the bridegroom are required to give their approval to their marriage. If they are not around, the fathers or other close family members serve as legal representatives. The Prophet requested the hand of Ramla whose husband, ‘Ubaydah bin Jahsh, had been converted to Christianity and later died while in Abyssinia. King Najāšī was honored to serve as the Prophet’s representative to conclude the marriage (16).

Ba’d al-Hijra ‘ab šāw’ attā ‘amāti
Nayna nabi sādidu wāråqāti
Lab sayyid Najāšī gāza’i māryāti
Huṭābāllāy malāt lanbāytāy Ramlati
Sāb‘a yā moýtū sāmi‘om bariddātī
Māččām nayna nabi rāhmāt ‘ayyū laummātī
Ḫaytaṣaggār ‘ilom baddīnāt laḥādāt saddāt sayyīd Najāšī māl‘u nanabīyyīna ‘amrī

Seven years after the Hijra
Our Prophet sent a letter
To King Najāšī the lord of Abyssinia
Asking him to get for him Lady Ramla in marriage
Whose husband died as an apostate (became Christian)
Our Prophet of course is merciful towards humanity
Concerned for her (Ramla) who emigrated professing Islam. King Najāšī fulfilled
the Prophet’s request

The response of Lady Ramla is shown in the following lines (17).

Sayyīd Najāšī la‘īlu ḥadīmatu Abrāhītī
Kīdi ‘ilom la‘ājuwwa lab ‘anbāyītāy Ramlatī
Wāraqāt māṣi‘unna bāliyya ‘ankab ḥayr al-bariyya
Ḫuṭābāllāy malāt laṃbāyītāy Ramlatī
Abrāhīt kāyda abṣāḥāt māl‘ ḥtī
Enkīyyow haba‘a na‘idān ẓallāmat nataḥg’as nūḡār ‘aylakka‘ay qādri
Lord Najasi sent his servant Abrähit

He sent her to Lady Ramla

Tell her that a letter has been sent to us from the best of human being (the Prophet)

To Betroth Ramla to him.

Abrähit delivered the message

Out of delight she (Ramla) gave her her bracelet

Endris (2010) relates this story as follows:

His wife Ummu Habiba immediately separated from him [her former husband]. She was shocked at the incident [i.e his conversion to Christianity]. He died as a convert in Abyssinia. In the seventh year of the Hijra, 627 AD, the Prophet then sent to Ja’far to propose to her in his name. When she consented al-Aṣḥama betrothed Ummu Habiba to the Prophet and sent her across the Red Sea with a wedding present of 400 dinars. On the other hand, Ummu Habiba’s father, the Meccan Quraysh leader, was not able to hide his delight over the marriage and later he also accepted Islam.

4.2.6. Najasi as companion of the Prophet

Some scholars consider Najasi to be a Ṣaḥābi, that is, a companion of the Prophet Muḥammad. Other scholars consider him as Tābi’i ‘follower’, a title given to one who follows the Prophet’s teachings as transmitted by the companions (the Ṣaḥāabis). Ṣayḥ ‘Umar considers Najasi as one of the companions of the Prophet (23).

18 Abrähit, literally ‘she gave off light’, is a typical Tigrinya woman’s name.
Whoever visits should do so with utmost discipline
With internal and external concentration
When you enter the shrine of Najäšī, the companion,
It is crucial to have full concentration; you will then be rewarded with great value

4.2.7. Importance of visiting Najäšī’s tomb

Visiting the Prophet’s grave is one of the recommended actions in Islam. Šayḫ Umar draws a parallel between visiting the grave of King Najäšī and visiting the grave of the Prophet (22).
Visiting Najāṣī is like visiting the Prophet
We have heard similar stories
We could not trust them as there was no written source
But when we look into it
We tend to believe what we have heard
He (Najāṣī) has something (knowledge) he got from the chosen Prophet
Visiting him is visiting the Prophet; respecting something is respecting what is in it

The poetic narration, the manzūma, concludes with the following Arabic du’ā’ (invocation) to Najāṣī and to the congregation of visitors (25).

\[ \egin{align*}
\text{'A'ānaka Allāhu 'alā al-dunyā bissa'ā} \\
\text{Wa'alā al-'āhirah bi-l-mağfīra} \\
\text{'Ahyāka Allāhu ħayātan hānī'a} \\
\text{Wa'amātaka mawtan ra'diyya}
\end{align*} \]

May Allah take care of you in this vast world
And in the hereafter with forgiveness
May Allah make your life pleasant
And your death agreeable

Allahumma 'i j al ijtimā’ anā bil - rāḥma wa-ftirāqānā
bil-mağfirati wa-l- 'ismā’ wa-ḥātimatunā bis-sa’ādā
wa- alhimnā al-raṣād. Allahumma 'irzuqnā 'at - taqwā
fa- 'innahā ḥayru l-zad. Allahumma 'innā nabātu ni' amik
fa- lā tāj alnā hāṣā 'ida n iqmā’ik. Allahumma 'innā na-'udū
bika min ḍullin 'illā ilayk wa- min al- faqir 'illā ilayk. Wa-nas'aluka
al- 'afwa wa-l- āfiyata fi-d-dini wa-d-dunyā
wa-l 'aḥirā nas'aluka 'āfiyata kāfiyatan wa-n'as'aluka tamām l- 'afiya
wa- 'as'aluka dawām al- 'afiya. min Kanz al-Madfūn

Oh Allah make our gathering full of mercy and our departure
Full of forgiveness and protection, our end joyful
And inspire us with guidance. Oh Allah bestow on us piety
Since it is best of all provisions. Oh Allah we are the plants of your favor
And do not make us harvesters of your indignation. Oh Allah we ask refuge
from being humiliat ed except by you, and from being impoverished except by
you. We also ask you forgiveness and well-being in our religion and in this world
and in the Hereafter. We ask you for sufficient and completeness well-being.
And I ask you for eternal well-being

At the end of the du'ā Šaykh Umar indicates that it was drawn from al-Kanz al-Madfūn ‘the
buried treasures’.

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19 The Šaykh doesn’t follow defined formats for word breaking.
4.3. Du ’ā’

On the verso of the preceding Arabic du ’ā’ (not paginated) there is a short du ’ā’ recited after a relief from anxiety.

Haḍā du ’ā’ al-faraj ba’d al-šidda
Allahumma yā-muḥallīṣ al-mawlūd min ḏiq ẓāḥī ṣummīhi
Wa-yā muʾaʃi-l-malsūʾ min ẓiddati hammīhi wa-γammihi wa-yā qādirun
’ala kulli šay’ in bi-’ilmihi ’as’aluka bi-ḥaqiqi Muḥammad wa-ismihi
’An- takfiyani kullā ẓālimin bi-zulmīhi. (Kanz al-Madfūn)

This is an invocation recited after the time of hardship
Oh Allah you frees the baby from the grief of the labor pains of his mother
You are the healer of the one who is stung from his grief and anxiety; you are the mighty who is capable of everything. I ask you by the rights of Muḥammad and his name that you protect me from any oppression of an oppressor

At the end of the du ’ā’ the Ṣayḥ indicates that it (like the previous one) is drawn from Kanz al-Madfūn ‘the buried treasure’.

After this isolated du ’ā’ there are six blank pages; then comes the following manẓūma on saints.
4.4. Popular saints

This section of the manuscript which contains seventeen pages discusses the status and contributions of popular saints. The manuscript identifies four saints. Among them, 'Abba'ay Šaliḥ 20 (also known among clergies as Kābirā Šaliḥ) is the most popular. The manuscript dwells on this saint at length. I focus also on him. According to the manuscript the saint was born in Tīhīllu Emba (now in Eritrea) and he is a descendant of the Prophet through Hasan the grandson of the Prophet (2).

20 'Abba'ay Šaliḥ (the popularly used form of the name) is probably the contracted form of 'Abbāy Abiy Šaliḥ, as it appears elsewhere in the manuscript.

21 The number 2 signifies that the phrase preceding it should be recited twice. I observed this from a recording of another manuscript, MS 9, where marked phrases are recited twice.
We ask for Allah’s help through you Oh the father of Muhammad (Abba’ay Salih’s son)

Now let me speak in Tigrinya

So that we comprehend the meaning

Let me say a few words to the congregation

Of our lord (‘Abba’ay Salih) who was born in Ta’ Jillu’Imba; listen with concentration, honorables

Our saint has descent from time immemorial

The genealogy goes back to the Prophet

I could have traced it back in detail on paper

But I am afraid it would take too long; otherwise I could have traced it back to Hasan (grandson of the Prophet)

‘Abba’ay Salih is considered to be a descendant (fifth generation) of Abadir of Harar. Abadir begot Muhammad (who went from Harar to Tigray to the place called Arba (Enderta)) and begot Ismail and Ismail begot Musa (who went to Ta’ Jillu’Imba (now Eritrean). Musa (commonly known as Feqih Musa) married and begot ‘Abba’ay Salih (source: Sayh Kedir).

Then the manuscript discusses the status of Kabirah Salih among other saints. According to the manuscript, the saints raised their hands up. When they did the hand of Kabirah Salih was found to be the longest. He was, thus, proven the best of the saints (3).
Lägnänayyo 'änkabtom 'akäbiri
‘Idom zärghu 'awlîyä bâ’al k’àdri
ḥafîl’tu maqâm labâš[âwo] sirri 'änkab kullom 'id nâwiña nagoytay 'idi

I have an amazing story
Which we got from the elders
The saints raised their hands
To know the level of knowledge they get from Allah. Of all the hands
that of Aba’ay Şaliḥ emerged the longest.

Saints are believed to have karâma (Spiritual power). 'Abba’ay Şaliḥ is known for his
saintliness. The manuscript portrays in the following lines a case where the saint used his
karâma (3).

‘Énkab ‘Ali ‘Abbâs nâgyu näyru gâza’i märyâti
Bâqli ūffat to bôwârk’i šollamti
Jinni k’ātifwwa lab Šâm märâyâti
‘Ab tâ’ab ’atâwu ’ab maftaš märâyâti
Lab gâza [kädä] bô‘šara mülkkäti
Bâqläy ‘amṣâ‘ullây bâlom wârk’i šollamti

A king came from the family of Ali ‘Abbâs
He lost a mule decorated with gold
A demon took it to the land of the Šam (Syria)
He started looking for it
He went to the saint guided by people
Bring back my mule which is decorated with gold, said he

The manuscript discusses the *karāma* of the saint as follows (4).

Habānnī bāluwwo habānnī māaltī šāw’attā mā’altī gāyrrūllum mi’adi
‘Enkoyyāw bālwāsā ‘aŋkab gāza
Wāyya bāqli māsāt lāḥazzittu ḥīza
Bāgoytay kar[ā]ma bā-ta’yād rab al- ‘izzā
Ḥafū’ mālsī mālisullom jazā ḥafū’ tāzarābom māhzānī lāḥābbdi

Give me time, he said to him; he gave him a week.22
As soon as the king went out
The mule came back with what it was carrying
Through the miracle of the saint with the support of Allah
But he responded to the favor with bad words

The saint was displeased at the king’s harsh words and they quarreled. When the saint realized that the quarrel could lead to an armed clash he sent men to the king of his country. The king responded that it would be too risky to engage in war against a strong king. The saint brought the guns of the Turkish king put them under his rug. He showed the guns to his countrymen who then concentrated on preparing for a battle (4).

22 The saint is addressing the Turkish king, according to oral tradition.
"Aq’a’u ['Aqha’u] ’ab taḥti maṭallā tā’akkiμu

Lab ḍa’ifat māngasti sādidullom sābi

Bāluwwo bālu gābārallu ḫarbi

Ḥāmelna bālławwom ḫān’al ḫarbi

Maṭallā gāliloμ ‘ar‘āyuuwwom wāyyo ‘akkubi kāydom gāṭāmullu wāyyo bāzuḥ jundi

His “things”\(^{23}\) were gathered under the rug

Messengers were sent to the weak ruler

Tell him to fight

How can we fight against the strong king? was his response

He raised the rug and showed them the “things”; then they went and fought

And the enemy king was defeated (6 and 7).

\(^{23}\) The “things” may be Turkish weapons.
Lab bazuļ jundi kāydom gātāmu
Wāyyo ḥayyal nágus tās‘iru hadimu
Kāmāy dā‘alayossa‘aru láyhadimu
Nawaliyyi firāta [firāsa] loḥaliﬁ lotārāgāmu
Nayom ḥozbi sā‘u tağānimu ba-barakat mawlānā babarakat sayyidi

They went and fought against a large army
The strong king was defeated
He lost the battle
Those who act badly against saints are cursed
His people emerged victorious by the blessings of the saint

According to Šayḥ Ahmed, the Turkish army attacked Embasineityi (near Adwa in Tigray) and started extracting gold from around Wāra‘i. The saint took the initiative to fight against the Turks and to restore sovereignty. As indicated above, the people were frightened. But he encouraged them and promised to help both in fighting and prayer. He took a gun and told one of them to shoot an erected pole but failed. He took the same gun and gave it to another person who was able to hit the target. He told the people to consider the first gun as that of the Turks and the second as their own. The people were filled with confidence and went to the battlefield and won the battle. The place where the battle took place is still known as Məmwaṭ Turki ‘death of the Turks’ while the district is known as Addi Kābirā after the saint.
The manuscript then describes how people visit the tomb of the saint and ask for his intercession (16).

Šīliṣṭilāh 2 Abā'ay Sāliḥ wāddi Mūsa
'Īgrna māṣya labahum gāsgisa
Abḥaharaḥum ['Abhraḥrahum] ṭāʾakibna rijāl wanisā
Dālina 'ina naykum 'īgāsā 'abširu bāluna goytay sayyidi

Oh Aba’ay Sāliḥ son of Musa
Our feet have hastened towards you
We, men and women are gathered by your heels
We need your intercession; welcome us

The tomb of 'Aba’ay Sāliḥ is located in 'Addargud in Tigray (source: Sheikh Ahmad ‘Umar).

4.5 Panegyric

This section of the manuscript is panegyric, that is, a manẓūma in praise of the Prophet Muḥammad. It is written in Tigrinya and Amharic ‘ajamī, switching irregularly from a stanza in one language to a stanza in the other. The focus is on the importance of praising the Prophet in a group (2).
K'urub ḥannagār na goytayyā madḥī
Sāb 'antāigniyā na'uṣṭāy laṣānnāh
'Intāḥonāsabba kōsa lawäggah
Ba-ta'ābkā lakko 'āyyu ṭawāb lābẓaḥ lāḥaznayyā läyti ḥawāy nōlla'am

Let me praise my Lord (Prophet) a little
If there are people who can stay a bit
If possible till morning
Because one is rewarded commensurate with effort

The praise follows (4).

'Antum24 zaynu zaynu 'aḍdāl l-'umami
'Antum zaynu zaynu ṣifātu l-'umami
'Antum zaynu zaynu mābrahtī‘alāmi

24 An Arabic 2pl being used as would be used I Tigrinya (for respect).
Oh handsome, handsome best of all creatures
Oh handsome, handsome medicine for all creatures
Oh handsome, handsome light of the world
Cheer us up in reality or in dreams

The following is another citation about the status of the Prophet among other prophets (6).

The prophets of God knew his (Prophet Muhammad's) status
When he came to this world
They call upon my Lord when they face a problem
Immediately they receive a solution
The first was our father Adam, the father of all humans

He asked the intercession of the respected Prophet and his problem was solved

The status of the Prophet is also expressed in a blend of Tigrinya and Arabic as follows (7).

Sarayta min ḥaramin laylan‘il ʿa ḥarami
Kamā marra l-badru fi dajjin mina ʿa-ẓ̱aʿlāmi
‘Ab bayt al-maṣqdis ‘agniyom tāʾakibbom ʿakārīmi
’Ellā ḥaliluallāḥ nabi ʿIbrahīmi
al-Mūsā al-kalīmu ‘Isa ibn Maryami
al-Nūḥ al-jalīlu masmūʿ al-kalāmi ʿalāt ʿasgāduwom koynom ‘imāmi

You went from one holy place (Mecca) to another (Jerusalem) at night
As the light crept out from the dark
Then the Prophet found all the prophets before him
Ibrahim, the beloved of Allah,
Moses, the one who spoke (with Allah), and Jesus son of Mary
Eloquent Noah, they performed ʿaṣṣalāt with the Prophet as imaṁ
As indicated above, Šayḫ Umar Abrar was versed not only in writing in Tigrinya 'ajamî and in Arabic but also in Amharic 'ajamî. The following excerpt is another illustration of his ability. Though the piece is in Amharic some Arabic elements are apparent (9).

‘Ajab ‘ajab ‘anbîl bâzza sûwyî
Fi-maydan al-qudra ‘ajjîg zâbîn yâk’oyyû
Allâh qadîr nâw yîlal bîqîlî bâyyû
Mu’jizâ b-s-r [lisârî] läggâsîw nabiyyû

Let us be amazed by that man
Who stayed long in the world of decision
A person who sees him knows the power of Allah
Allah granted him to perform miracles

4.6. The Prophet as intercessor

This section of the manuscript presents a text which has the nature of sâlawât (prayer/praise). Although it is basically in Tigrinya, Arabic expressions are also incorporated (2).
Nabi al-mukarrami ṣafi’ al-‘umami
Bālāllāy dā‘a ḥawāy māsayyāy gaṭāmi
Laḥḍznayya láyti kāsa‘ tālla‘ami
‘Inṣā’ Allah rājā[‘] allānna ḥayrāt kānɡātām ṣānkab rāḥmat-l-‘alami ṣāfī u-l-‘umami

Respected Prophet, the intercessor of nations
Brother, say this with me
During this night till morning
By the will of God we will be given many good things through the intercessor of Nations

The next piece underscores the importance of ṣalawāt (4).

‘Ayyuhā l-rijāl baṣalawāt dāwwāmu
Baṣalawāt ‘umrāhum ‘alla’mu
Ba ṣalawāt ‘ayyu lillā‘ al šāgāmu
‘Aboddunyā ‘alam ‘ab ‘aḥirā ‘alam bāmāḥra ta’atti jannat l-na‘imi

Oh you men take time to make ṣalawāt
In performing ṣalawāt you will be blessed with longevity
Through ṣalawāt problems will be solved
In this world and in the hereafter, through his mercy you will enter paradise.
The intercession of the Prophet is most highly valued as expressed in the following citation (11).

K‘addamot ‘antahalfu ‘allawu naguyo‘om ‘amri
Yawlawatu nayrom lab qirdi lab hinziri
‘Ayni ‘awwan yaṭaffa‘ näyru ‘anta ri‘u laygābbā‘ nāgār
‘Ezuy ḥullu qāryulna ba-naby l-muḥtāri

When the people of the past transgressed
They were changed to monkeys and pigs
They became blind if their eyes sinned
All this has been avoided through the chosen Prophet

The Prophet is also presented as being merciful towards animals (13).
By my Lord the Prophet, peace be upon him,
Problems were solved for the animals
They came to the Prophet and complained
That they were overburdened and exhausted
Immediately he solved their problems

The following brief quote is from the description of the death of the Prophet (14).

By my Lord the Prophet, peace be upon him,
Problems were solved for the animals
They came to the Prophet and complained
That they were overburdened and exhausted
Immediately he solved their problems

The following brief quote is from the description of the death of the Prophet (14).
They (the companions) were so much grieved
When they heard of the death of the Prophet
They were unable to stand up
Some became dumb
They were right [to do so], we can say, the honorable ones; the sun
[the Prophet] drifted away from them, the ruler of the world

At the end of the manuscript on Najāšī there is an Arabic text ṣalawāt. From the style of writing, the poetic text does not seem to have been written by Šayḥ 'Umar. Hence I have not treated it in the analysis of the manuscript.
CHAPTER FIVE

'Ajamī Transcription and Linguistic Features

Sayh 'Umar wrote his manuscripts in three languages, Tigrinya, Amharic and Arabic. For all three languages he employed the Arabic script. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, the Tigrinya and Amharic texts written in the Arabic letters are referred to as 'ajamī—languages other than Arabic that are written in the Arabic script. The majority of Sayh 'Umar's manuscripts are in Tigrinya 'ajamī while some are in Arabic and some of the texts in Amharic. In some cases, the Sayh blends Tigrinya with Arabic expressions and also Tigrinya with Amharic.

Since the main focus of the thesis is on the manuscript I have labeled as MS1, the concern of this chapter is analyzing the transcription and linguistic features of this same manuscript, especially the 'ajamī texts.

The transcription and linguistic features of the 'ajamī texts of MS 1 that are to be analyzed include the following:

1. Consonant representation
2. Vowels and gemination
3. Loanwords in Tigrinya 'ajamī
4. Dialect

5.1. Sound Representation

5.1.1 Using standard Arabic symbols

Below are given Arabic symbols which match (or almost match) those of Ethiopic in their representation of the corresponding consonantal sounds. Each pair of the corresponding Arabic and Ethiopic symbols is given the equivalent phonetic symbol. The 'ajamī texts below will be transcribed in phonetic script to facilitate the comprehension of the reader. In cases where an Arabic character does not have an equivalent Ethiopic character, the slot is left open.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic characters</th>
<th>Fidāl characters</th>
<th>Phonetic representations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ء</td>
<td>َُّ</td>
<td>َُّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ب</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ت</td>
<td>َُّ</td>
<td>َُّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ث</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ج</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ح</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. خ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. د</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. ذ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. ر</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. ز</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. س</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. اَلش</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. ص</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. ض</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. ط</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. ظ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. ع</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. غ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. ف</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. ق</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. ك</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. ل</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. م</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. ن</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. ه</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. و</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. ي</td>
<td>َّ</td>
<td>َّ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes:

1 َشَ is used interchangeably for two Tigrinya sounds: ِس (ِه) and ِق (ِق).

2 Although Arabic ُصَ (velarized) corresponds linguistically to Tigrinya ُسُ (ejective), the Sayḥ clearly did not feel these two sounds to be similar. He writes ُسُ in a different way (see below).

3 Arabic َظَ (velarized) corresponds linguistically to Tigrinya َمُ (ejective). Here the Sayḥ apparently did feel the sounds to be similar, because he uses َظَ to transcribe َمُ.

4 The letter ُغَ = ُق is used by the Sayḥ to transcribe Tigrinya ُضُ, the fricative allophone of ُضُ in Tigrinya. This is a uvular fricative or approximant. I will transcribe it as <q>, which however will not have its usual value of a uvular stop, but a uvular fricative.

5 The Sayḥ uses Arabic ُغَ to transcribe Tigrinya ُقُ. The Arabic letter here does not have its Arabic value of a uvular stop [q], but has the Tigrinya value [k'], and I will transcribe it as <k'>.

In the above list, 22 Ethiopic characters correspond directly with those of Arabic. Sayḥ 'Umar employs these for the 'ajamī texts more or less without any alteration. Of the five remaining Arabic letters, the four characters ُضُ ُثُ ُلُ have no phonetic equivalent in Tigrinya, and indeed the Sayḥ never uses ُضُ in Tigrinya transcription. Since Arabic ُتُ (t) is pronounced as [s] by Tigrinya speakers, the Sayḥ sometimes transcribes ُتُ as ُسُ, sometimes as ُقُ, apparently at random. Similarly, the voiced equivalent ُزُ (z) is sometimes transcribed as ُسُ, sometimes as ُقُ as exemplified below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethiopic character</th>
<th>Arabic character</th>
<th>Tigrinya word</th>
<th>Literal transliteration</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ِنَ (s)</td>
<td>ِسَ (s)</td>
<td>سبات</td>
<td>silbat</td>
<td>persons</td>
<td>8/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُثَ (t)</td>
<td>ُمَ</td>
<td>ماج</td>
<td></td>
<td>with</td>
<td>14/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُحَ (z)</td>
<td>ُحَ (z)</td>
<td>حزَنَو</td>
<td>hazānu</td>
<td>they were grieved</td>
<td>7/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ُدَ (d)</td>
<td>ُدَ (d)</td>
<td>باذَح</td>
<td>baḍuḥ</td>
<td>many</td>
<td>7/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are three Arabic characters which the Šayḫ uses only for Arabic loanwords. These characters are: ص (s), ض (d) and ظ (z) which appear in such loanwords as the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic character</th>
<th>Arabic loanword</th>
<th>Tigrinya pronunciation</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ص (s)</td>
<td>نصر</td>
<td>nāsiru</td>
<td>he won</td>
<td>16/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ض (d)</td>
<td>فيض</td>
<td>fāydi</td>
<td>flood</td>
<td>13/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ظ (z)</td>
<td>لظهر</td>
<td>lazohar</td>
<td>will manifest</td>
<td>6/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these words the endings -u, -i and the prefix la- represent "Tigrinyanization" of the Arabic words.

5.1.2 Using innovated symbols

For Tigrinya sounds that are absent in Arabic, Šayḥ 'Umar devised special symbols by adding diacritic dots. In one particular case he uses a sequence of two characters for the representation of a single sound.

a) Adding dots

The following are devised symbols formed by adding dots.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation</th>
<th>Tigrinya word</th>
<th>Tigrinya pronunciation</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ܠ (g)</td>
<td>بتكراي</td>
<td>bōtāray</td>
<td>in Tigrinya</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܕ (ts’)</td>
<td>ببوق</td>
<td>šābbiqu</td>
<td>became beautiful</td>
<td>4/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܐ (e’)</td>
<td>نببنت</td>
<td>tāč’ānnāqāt</td>
<td>worried (fem.sg)</td>
<td>4/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ܐ (e’)</td>
<td>تنثنق</td>
<td>tāč’ānnāqu</td>
<td>worried (they)</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that [e‘] can be represented in two ways, س and س, with just one example apiece, both on the same page (page 4).
However, the added dots are used inconsistently. In the following examples, in (a) the Arabic characters /ة/ and /س/ employed for the Tigrinya /g/ and /ş/ respectively are dotted while in (b) they are not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Dotted Arabic character</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>هیگر</td>
<td>hagār</td>
<td>country</td>
<td>4/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>پلاه</td>
<td>šālaʼi</td>
<td>enemy</td>
<td>15/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b) Undotted Arabic Transliteration</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>بكذ</td>
<td>bagaddi</td>
<td>by force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>سیتا</td>
<td>māşıʼunna</td>
<td>it reached us</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Sequence of two characters

To represent the Tigrinya palatal nasal (ّ) the Šayḫ joins two Arabic characters, /ن ّ (ğn) - ّ on the left (!), /ن on the right, thus: نّ. Here he was influenced by the Italian script with which he had acquaintance. In Italian, the palatal nasal sound is <gn> as in Bologna (name of a city). However, there is a discrepancy between <Cù> and <gn>. Since Arabic is read from right to left the first to be encountered is /ن (n) whereas in the Italian case it is /g/; the Arabic reproduces the visual ordering of the Italian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Innovation</th>
<th>Tigrinya word</th>
<th>Tigrinya pronunciation</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>نّ</td>
<td>حقتجا</td>
<td>ḥaqiqānna</td>
<td>truthful</td>
<td>10/11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of the Tigrinya labiovelars, /kʷ/and /hʷ/, are represented in Šayḫ ʻUmar’s manuscript with simple Arabic symbols /ة/، چ/، the same symbols that are used for /k/ and /h/. The labiovelar ḡʷ is represented with the innovated Arabic character for /g/، /ğ/. That is, both ḡʷ and ḡ are represented with ڿ while چ and ḡʷ are represented with ة.
5.2. Vowels and Gemination

In this section we will see some inconsistencies in voweling and gemination which are encountered in the manuscript. Moreover, unnecessary graphic vowel lengthening and incomplete representation of the seventh order characters are also observed. Let us look at the inconsistencies by citing examples.

5.2.1 Vowels: use of alif, wāw, and yā' as matres lectionis

Usually, Ca (4th-order fida) is represented with an Arabic long ā (consonant-alif):

\[ ba = \text{安全事故} = \text{安全} \]

The vowel Cā (1st-order fida) is usually represented with no alif:

\[ bā = \text{安全} = \text{安全} \]

However, this is not done consistently, so that sometimes \( \text{安全} = \text{安全} \) and \( \text{安全} = \text{安全} \). Moreover, the Šayḥ sometimes adds the vowel-lengthening wāw and yā', either redundantly together with damma or kisra (bu=\( \text{安全} \), bi=\( \text{安全} \)) or as a pure mater lectionis (bu=\( \text{安全} \), bi=\( \text{安全} \)). (Tigrinya has no vowel length, so this added alif, wāw, or yā' does not indicate length in Tigrinya 'afamī'.)
5.2.2 Voweling: other remarks

In the manuscript the first ten pages are written using vowels while the following fifteen pages are unwoweled. (I looked only at the first 25 pages of the MS.)

The examples below illustrate that Šayb’Umar applies vowels in some cases and omits them in other cases.

\[
\begin{array}{|l|l|l|l|}
\hline
(a) Added or missing alif & Transliteration & Gloss & Page/Line \\
\hline
\text{کید} [missing alif] & <
\text{kāyda}> = [\text{kāyda}] & \text{she went} & 17/5 \\
\text{مساء} [added alif] & <
\text{mas‘u}> = [\text{mas‘u}] & \text{with him} & 9/7 \\
\hline
(b) Unnecessary added waw/yâ’ & Transliteration & Gloss & Page/Line \\
\hline
\text{لاخوم} [added wāw] & <
\text{lā‘ābum}> = [\text{lā‘ābum}] & \text{for you} & 1/3 \\
\text{اینا} [added yâ’] & <
\text{‘ină}> = [\text{‘ină}] & \text{we are} & 14/2 \\
\hline
\end{array}
\]

The šayb uses the short vowel signs properly in the cases where he provides vowels. However, with the seventh order Ethiopic consonants (Co) he uses mostly fatha, e.g. kāy’t̂t̂l̂om, but sometimes damma. Moreover, for word-initial schwa (Gs) he employs kisra e.g. bā‘aman. Sukun is used for the first element of a consonant cluster medially (e.g.накفعل.)
5.2.3 Consonant Gemination

In the examples below, the gemination sign (šadda) is used in (a) while it is missing in (b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gemination sign used</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>حَقَّ</td>
<td>ḥaḵ'k̡'i</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>9/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>عَشَرَتْ</td>
<td>'asšiirtä</td>
<td>ten</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gemination sign missing</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>أبَعْدَي</td>
<td>‘ab’adäy</td>
<td>in my country</td>
<td>13/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تَلَكَم</td>
<td>tā’akibom</td>
<td>they were gathered</td>
<td>17/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. Loanwords in Tigrinya ʿajamî

The ʿajamî texts of Šayḥ ʿUmar are characterized by the use of Arabic loanwords, alternating synonyms and, in some cases, phrases in word form which show assimilation.

5.3.1 Loanwords

Šayḥ ʿUmar commonly makes use of Arabic loanwords in his ʿajamî texts. He does so by making whatever adjustments may be necessary so that each loanword fits in Tigrinya morphology. Examples are provided below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Loanword</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ṣamr</td>
<td>command</td>
<td>ṣamräy</td>
<td>my command</td>
<td>13/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fahima</td>
<td>he understood</td>
<td>kafifaham</td>
<td>to be understood</td>
<td>2/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabbara</td>
<td>to plot</td>
<td>ladabbäru</td>
<td>who plotted</td>
<td>2/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥälafa</td>
<td>to disobey</td>
<td>ḥalifü</td>
<td>to disobey</td>
<td>13/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥada’a</td>
<td>to cheat</td>
<td>ḥad‘at</td>
<td>cheating</td>
<td>12/8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to Arabic loanwords, Šayḫ 'Umar employs Amharic loanwords as the following examples illustrate. Tigrinya morphemes are added when necessary.

(b) Amharic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amharic</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Loanword</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ṭantā mäsārīt</td>
<td>origin</td>
<td>ṭantā mäsārīti</td>
<td>origin</td>
<td>2/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'alāk'at</td>
<td>in excess</td>
<td>'alāk'at</td>
<td>in excess</td>
<td>3/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'əwk'at</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>'əwk'at</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>4/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šabbər</td>
<td>terror</td>
<td>šabbari</td>
<td>terror</td>
<td>3/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.2 Synonyms

The practice of representing one concept with various words and using the words alternately is another common feature in Šayḫ 'Umar's manuscript. This is illustrated by the examples that follow.

a) the Prophet
   
   rasūl 'messenger'
   nabiyy 'prophet'
   al-ḥašir 'announcer'

b) officials of King Najāši
   
   ministiri 'minister(s)'
   māk'anant 'nobles'

c) companions of the Prophet Muḥammad
   
   'aḥyār 'chosen'
   'asyād 'lords'
   'aṣḥāb 'companions'
5.3.3. Sound Changes

Assimilation is a process of one sound influencing another neighboring sound so that they become more alike. This is common in speech. Šayḫ 'Umar, at times, uses assimilation in his 'ajamī texts with the preposition 'ab.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assimilation</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'ammadina</td>
<td>'ab madina</td>
<td>at/in Madina</td>
<td>14/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ammāyda</td>
<td>'ab māyda</td>
<td>at/in the field</td>
<td>21/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also sometimes word-initial schwa or 'a can be deleted in word combinations; for example,

nāgārzuy       nāgār 'ozuy     this matter     3/8

5.3.4. Dialect

A mixed dialectal profile is observed in the manuscripts of Šayḫ Umar. This was due to his exposure to different dialects as he moved from town to town for teaching and even to Asmara while he was Qadi during the Italian period. This can be seen from the word use of his manuscripts.

Dialects from the Manuscript:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Northern dialect</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
<th>Other dialects</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kullu</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>ḥullu</td>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hagār</td>
<td>4/11</td>
<td>'addi</td>
<td>6/5</td>
<td>country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baqqi</td>
<td>22/3</td>
<td>'amman</td>
<td>10/10</td>
<td>truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kazzarāb</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>ḥɔnnagār</td>
<td>10/13</td>
<td>I will speak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 The northern dialect is used in media.
CHAPTER SIX
Conclusion and Recommendation

Despite the widespread misconception that the northern Ethiopian highlands are strictly a Christian domain, this study unfolds the existence of a diverse wealth of Islamic traditions dating back to the emigration of the Prophet Muḥammad’s companions to Abyssinia in 615 A.D. The study is concerned with manuscripts produced by Šayḫ ‘Umar of the Tigray region who was born in the 1870s and whose biography appears in chapter two of this paper. The Šayḫ wrote his manuscripts in three languages: his native language Tigrinya, Amharic and Arabic. However, he wrote mostly in Tigrinya. For all three languages he used the Arabic script. In addition to producing a number of manuscripts, Šayḫ ‘Umar was socially very active. His initiative for the construction of the shrine of Najāšī, the king of Abyssinia who was contemporary with the Prophet Muḥammad, is a case in point.

In the course of my research, I examined fifteen manuscripts of Šayḫ ‘Umar. Eleven are written in ‘ajamī (mostly in Tigrinya and some in Amharic) and four in Arabic. Brief philological descriptions of the fifteen manuscripts are given in chapter three. Of the fifteen manuscripts I selected the one which I labeled as MS1 and which focuses on the seventh-century king of Abyssinia, Najāšī, who hosted the emigrant companions of the Prophet Muḥammad. This manuscript is the core of the thesis, and chapter four is devoted to it. Chapter five presents analyses of the ‘ajamī transcription and of some linguistic features reflected in the Šayḫ’s ‘ajamī writing. The background of the study, review of related literature and other preliminaries are covered in chapter one.

The contributions of this thesis can be summarized as follows:

1. The first known presentation (apparently) of Tigrinya ‘ajamī, which in turn pushes back the frontiers of research into the genre of ‘ajamī in Ethiopia.
2. Identification of Šayḫ ‘Umar Abrar, a Muslim clerical scholar of the Tigray region who produced a number of manuscripts especially in Tigrinya ‘ajamī and some texts in Amharic ‘ajamī as well as manuscripts in Arabic.
5.2.3 Consonant Gemination

In the examples below, the gemination sign (ṣadda) is used in (a) while it is missing in (b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) Gemination sign used</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>حَكَّاٰٰٰ</td>
<td>ḥak'k'i</td>
<td>truth</td>
<td>9/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>عَشَرِتَ</td>
<td>'assārtā</td>
<td>ten</td>
<td>3/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b) Gemination sign missing</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>اَبْعَدِيَ</td>
<td>'ab'adāy</td>
<td>in my country</td>
<td>13/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تَأَكِيمُ</td>
<td>tā'akibom</td>
<td>they were gathered</td>
<td>17/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. Loanwords in Tigrinya ʿajamī

The ʿajami texts of ʿSayḥ ʿUmar are characterized by the use of Arabic loanwords, alternating synonyms and, in some cases, phrases in word form which show assimilation.

5.3.1 Loanwords

ʿSayḥ ʿUmar commonly makes use of Arabic loanwords in his ʿajamī texts. He does so by making whatever adjustments may be necessary so that each loanword fits in Tigrinya morphology. Examples are provided below.

a) Arabic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Loanword</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>Page/Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'amr</td>
<td>command</td>
<td>'amrāy</td>
<td>my command</td>
<td>13/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fahima</td>
<td>he understood</td>
<td>kaffāham</td>
<td>to be understood</td>
<td>2/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dabbara</td>
<td>to plot</td>
<td>ḥāddābbāru</td>
<td>who plotted</td>
<td>2/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥālafa</td>
<td>to disobey</td>
<td>ḥillīfu</td>
<td>to disobey</td>
<td>13/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ḥada'a</td>
<td>to cheat</td>
<td>ḥad'at</td>
<td>cheating</td>
<td>12/8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Presentation of fifteen manuscripts by Šayḥ ʿUmar, of which I have dealt in some detail with one of them (MS 1) and the rest are briefly described.

4. Presenting the history of the advent of Islam in Ethiopia from an Ethiopian perspective (i.e. the Šayḥ’s perspective). This concerns the introduction of Islam into Ethiopia through the emigrant companions of the Prophet Muḥammad in the seventh century during the reign of King Najāṣī (Ella Ṣaḥam).

5. Enrichment of the history of the Ethiopian Muslims by further research into northern Ethiopia, which has been usually considered as a distinctively Christian domain.

I believe that further investigation into the various manuscripts of Šayḥ ʿUmar, including the one the present thesis has focused on, could result in more findings that would fill gaps in Ethiopian history especially from the viewpoint of the Ethiopian Muslims. I also recommend that the search for and in-depth study of ʿajamī manuscripts should be strengthened so as to learn more about our history and in some cases other fields of knowledge as well.
References


A certificate awarded to Šayḥ Umar by the Association of Tigray Artists and the Regional State of Tigray on November 8, 2008.
The tomb of Najāšt: external and internal view
Burial place of one of the companions of the Prophet at Nägaš.