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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERISTY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

**A History Of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery in
Hahaile, Ahiferom *Wäräda*, Tigray, Ethiopia, from Its
Foundation up to 1991.**

By:

Leake Teklebrhan

November, 2019

Addis Ababa

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Ahiferom *Wäräda* Tigray, Ethiopia from Its Foundation up to 1991.**

By

Leake Teklebrhan

Advisor:

Teclehaimanot G/Selassie (Ph.D.)

**A Thesis submitted to Graduate Programs of Addis Ababa
University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts in History.**

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APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Advisor-----Signature-----Date-----

Examiner-----Signature-----Date -----

Examiner-----Signature-----Date -----



PHOTO: The current standing building of the monastery. The photo taken in December 2020.



Photo: The Painting of the Saint *Abunä Sét* found on the southern side of wall of the holy of holiness the monastery.

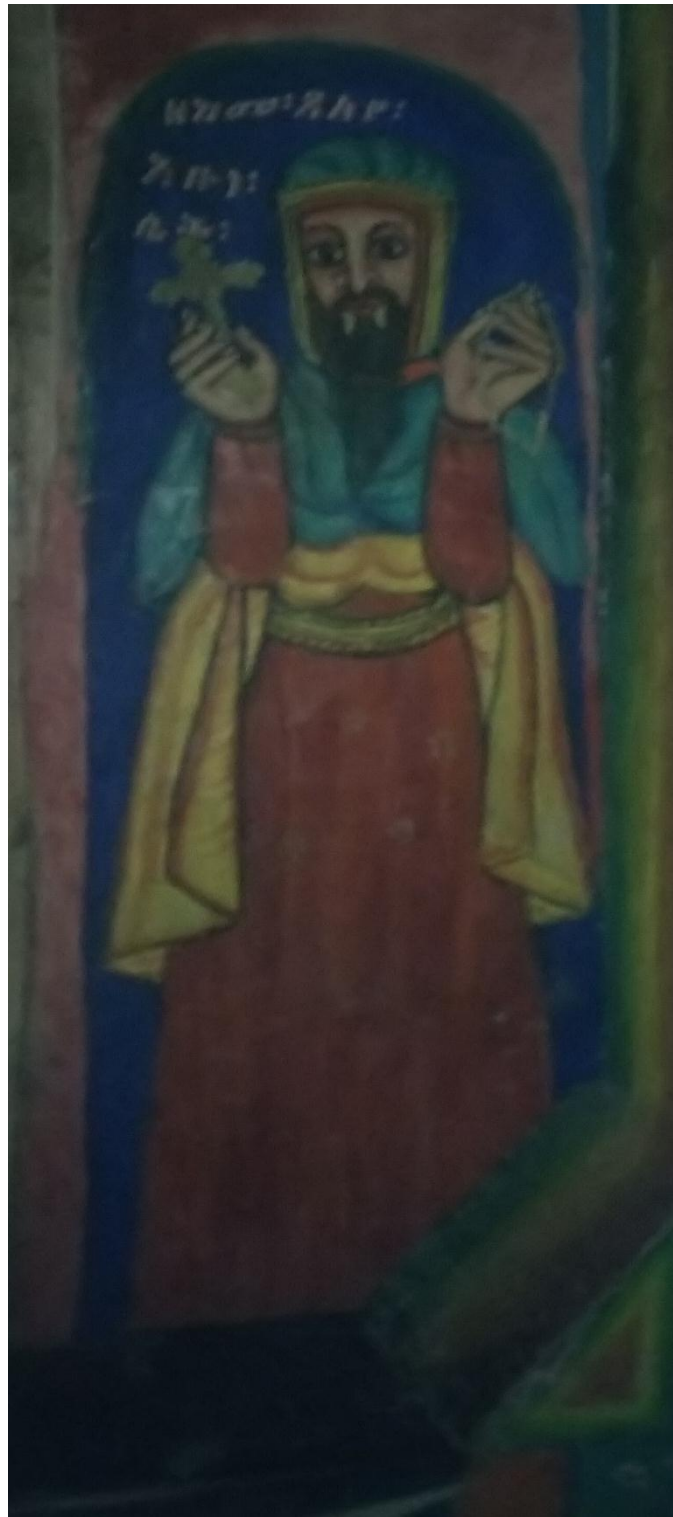
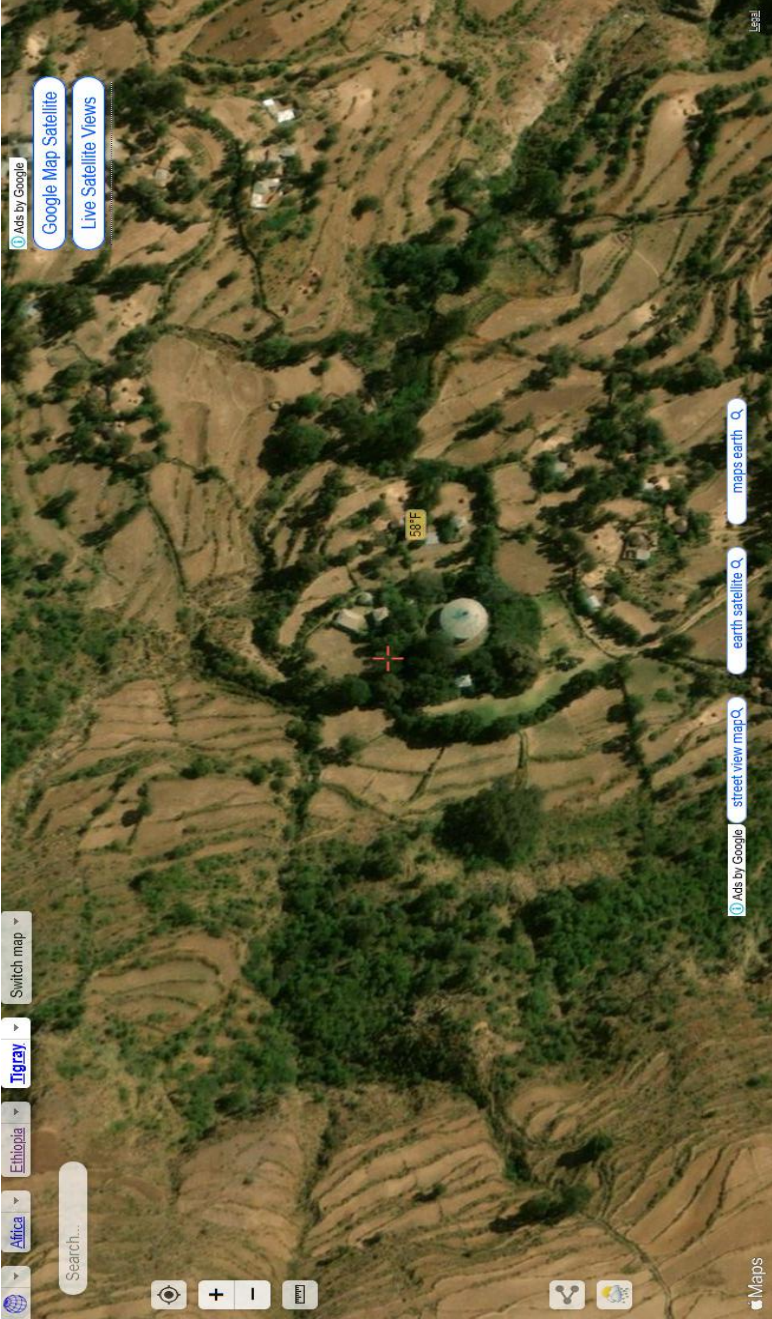


Photo: The other painting of the saint *Abunä Sét* found on the northern side door of the holy of holiness the monastery.

Picture: the photo of the monastery from google map.



Source: Google map.

Photo: the stamp of the monastery that made from Brass.



Source: photo by Leake tekabrhan taken in December 2019.

Photo: plastic Stamp of the monastery that eaten by the rat.



Source: photo by Leake tekabrhan taken in December 2019.

Key to the Transliteration System

I. The seven sounds of the Ethiopian alphabets are represented as follows:

1st ሰ = Bā

2nd ሰ፡ = Bū

3rd ሰ፡ = Bī

4th ሰ = Bā

5th ሰ፡ = Bē

6th ሰ፡ = Bē

7th ሰ = Bō

II. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows:

ሰ፡ = Šh

ሰ፡ = Čh

ሰ፡ = nä

ሰ፡ = J

II Glottalized Sounds are represented as follows:

፡ = tā

፡ = qä

፡ = Čhä

III. Germination sounds should always be indicated by doubling:

ደ፡፡ = Däbrä

መ፡፡ህር = Mämher

ቀኛ፡፡ሰ፡፡ = Qännazmačh

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I would also like to forward my heartfelt thanks to all my informants and *Sebeka Gubie* of the Däbrä Bäkuer *Abunä Sét* Monastery: *Haleqa* Gäbrägzabeher Tesfay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, Qés Sadur Woldegerges, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, Qés Tekleab Fesseha, *Haleqa* Teklebrhan Abay, and Rése Dabri Abrha Tesefay and Tigray region Central Zone Aksum Diocese Deputy manager *Leqe Kahinat* Gäbrämedhin G/sellasié for their cooperation and willingness to provide me what they knew about the monastery during the time of my fieldwork.

ABSTRACT

Ethiopia is one of the most ancient countries in the world with rich history and civilization. Most scholars stated that, one of the factors that contributed for the Ethiopian civilization is the introduction of Christianity in the fourth century. From the contribution of the introduction of Christianity is the expansion of Christianity and spread of monasteries in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the medieval period of Ethiopia witnessed the spread of Christianity and the foundation of several monasteries. Hence, several religious men and saints were emerged in Tigray and they established different monasteries in the name of themselves. Among the monasteries that established in Tigray was Däbrä Bäkuer Abunä Sét Monastery. The monastery found in the northern part of Ethiopia in central Zone at Ahiferom Wäräda; and it may be establish in the end of thirteen Century. Nevertheless, it is little known about the monastery in oral sources and written documents. However, the glorious period of the monastery began when Abunä Sét met with king Dawit I and the church received a monastery status. Since this period the monastery has a close contact with royal court. The main aspire of this thesis is to reconstruct a History of Däbrä Bäkuer Abunä Sét Monastery of Hahile Sub-Wäräda, Ahiferom Wäräda from its foundation to 1991. The study covers the time from its establishment until 1991. The study begins with geographical setting and historical background of the Wäräda. Along with, the Däbrä Bäkuer Abunä Sét Monastery was one of the monasteries of Ethiopia, which have a rich in ancient and various equipment; therefore, this study tries to assess the treasures found in the monastery and their deposition conditions. This monastery was one of the centers of traditional education. Based on this, the thesis endeavors to assess the traditional school of the monastery. In addition, this thesis also tries to look the construction of the building and the wall and parchment paintings that includes religious and secular depictions. Furthermore, the study also examines to set out the source of income of the Monastery. The main of income of the monastery was gult land that granted by the Ethiopian emperors besides the offering until the land nationalization policy of Dareg regime in 1975. Thus, the main revenue of the monastery lost. This indicates the monastery was highly depending on the land. Nevertheless, after 1975 the land was distributed to the surrounding community. Thus, from this time own wards the monastery had become dependent on the parish. As a result, the life in the monastery became challenging and many monks was displaced to other monasteries and the traditional education which was given in the monastery enter in to endanger. Gradually the religious education that given in the monastery was became a nebab bet (reading house) only. The Wäräda generally and the area specifically has a rich archaeological sites, monasteries, court place, and other historical places and events then to investigate them it needed more study. Then, I recommend for scholars or voluntaries to make a historical and archaeological study to know more about the Hahile Sub-Wäräda specifically and Ahiferom Wäräda in generally.

PREFACE

Däbrä Bäkuer *Abunä Sét* Monastery has been considered as one of the most important historical places in the area; and this thesis attempted to reconstruct a history of *Däbrä Bäkuer Abunä Sét* Monastery from the foundation up to the downfall of *Dareg* regime in 1991. It is realizing this fact coupled with the fact that the area has not been much studied that I motivated to deal with the history of this Monastery.

Däbrä Bäkuer Abunä Set Monastery has been considered as one of the most important historical places in the area; and this thesis attempted to reconstruct a history of *Däbrä Bäkuer Abunä Set* Monastery from the foundation up to the downfall of the '*Dareg*' regime in 1991.

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter deals with geographical Setting and historical background of the *Wäräda*. This chapter tried to look at the plants, animals, and cereals as well as the population, economic and infrastructures of the *Wäräda* and also tries to assess the known personalities, archeological sites and monasteries found in and around the *Wäräda*.

The second chapter emphasizes on the Christianity and the establishment of the *Däbrä Bäkuer Abunä Sét* Monastery in the *Wäräda*. In briefly, it describes the influence of Christianity in the *Wäräda*. In addition to this, it also describes when and by whom was established the *Däbrä Bäkuer Abunä Sét* Monastery. The chapter three also attempts to describe the construction of the building and painting of the monastery.

The fourth chapter also tries to describe the administration and the commemoration of the monastery. It also attempts to deal the source of incomes of the monastery. Chapter five also try to list and describe the treasures and manuscripts of the monastery and their deposition system in the monastery and the last chapter of this thesis concentrates on the description of the church

education system and situation of the monastery, the monastic life in the monastery and biography of the holy *Abunä Sét*. In this chapter, also tries describe the challenges faced now the monastery.

In carrying out the study, oral sources, written materials and archival sources were used to reconstruct the history of the monastery. Majority of the archive materials found in the monastery that could support the study had been destroyed and not well protected because of lack of awareness among the communities. Moreover, a shortage of information especially on knowing the exact date happen the event. Based on this, the researcher to fill the gap in the study used oral sources used written document collected from the monasteries in the field study from December 2019 and January 2020. The attempts have been made to support the oral testimonies with written sources in an effort to write this thesis.

Aiming at overcoming the weakness entailed in using oral sources, necessary efforts have been made in selecting appropriate informants and the researcher also made to evaluating cross-checking the collected data with available secondary sources written by amateur and professional historians. This work is far from being complete, it is hoped that it can initiate and give a clue to other historians who have the interest to study the history of the monastery as well as the *Wäräda* further.

Chapter I

General Background of Ahiferom *Wäräda*

Introduction

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahedo Church is one of the Orthodox Churches of the world. Nevertheless, Christianity was officially preached in Ethiopia during the Aksumite kingdom in the first half of the fourth century.¹ The introduction of Christianity as state a religion in to Ethiopia was attached with the coming of the two brothers Frumentius and Aedisus to Aksum.² This indicates that the establishment of Christianity was not the result of well-organized evangelical activity or by force but it was the desire of the king.³ Since this time, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church became one part of Ethiopian History. Not only this, the church also made a great contribution in the political, social, cultural, and other aspects of the country.

Ethiopian Orthodox church had strong tie with the state since its introduction until the downfall of Imperial in 1974. Because from the ancient time the Emperors had strong relation with the religion.⁴ This kind of features was observed in Ethiopia history. Because the leaders constructed churches, donated different treasures and granted *gult* lands. Not only had the Emperors considered but they saw Christianity as a unifying institution. Donald Crummy also argues that

¹Jon Abbink, *A Bibliography on Christianity in Ethiopia*, ASC Working Paper, 52/2003,leide. African Studies Centre, 2003.p.2; Sylvia Pankhurst,*Ethiopia A cultural History*, London: Leighton-Strake Book Binding Co.LTD,1955.p231; Kassa Lijmelkam,“A History of Deresgie Maryam Church, (1852-1991),” M.A Theses Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2018. p.1.

²Sergew Hable Sellasie, “The Establishment of the Ethiopian Church” *in the Church of Ethiopia, A Panorama of History and spiritual life*, Addis Ababa, United Press,1970.p.3.

³*Ibid*.p.3; Tadesse Tamerat, “A Short note on the Tradition of Pagan Resistance to the Ethiopian Church (14th and 15th centuries),” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.10, No.1, 1972.p.137; Kassa Lijmelkam....p.1.

⁴Getnet Tamen,“Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy,” *Asian and African Studies*, Vol.7, 1998.p.87.

the rulers of Ethiopia used their relations with church as a means to win the support of the people.⁵

Besides, internally, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was also used as means for Ethiopian foreign relations particularly with the Christian countries like Rome, Egypt and Israel.⁶ In addition to this, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has produced incredible written materials that deal with different contents. Based on this, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church served as one of the main source of Ethiopian history. That means it is difficult to look Ethiopian history without the Church history.⁷

Ethiopian Orthodox Church was also the main instrument to expand education and literature in Ethiopia throughout the time. Not only this, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had assumed sole responsibility in the teaching for the Ethiopians for centuries. It had contributed to start modern education and bureaucracy by providing elites.⁸

As a part of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Däbrä Bäkur *Abunä Sét* Monastery also had its own historical contribution in Ethiopian history. Then the researcher wanted to reconstruct the history of the Monastery.

⁵Donald Crummy, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 2000.p.153; Kassa Lijmelkam, ...,p.2.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Sargew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and medieval History of ...*pp.107-108; De Lacy O'Leary, *The Ethiopian Church: Historical Notes on the Church of Abyssinia*, London Northumberland Avenue, 1936, .p.7.

⁸Tashoma G. Wagaw, *Education in Ethiopia, Prospect and Retrospect*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan press, 1979.p.22.

Geographical Location (Setting) of Ahiferom Wārāda

The study dealt with a history of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery, which is located in Tigray, at Ahiferom *Wārāda*, in Northern Ethiopia. Ahiferom *Wārāda* is one of twelve *Wārādas* found in the Central Zone of Tigray Regional State. It is located in the Northeast Central Zone and found at a distance of around 974 kilo meters from Addis Ababa, 191 kilo meters from Mekelle and 55 kilo meters away from Aksum, the Zonal capital. A road that passes from Mekelle through Adigrat to Aksum crosses the capital town of the *Wārāda*, Enticho. Nowadays, Ahiferom *Wārāda* has four sub-*Wārādas*: Hahaile-Feresmay, Adi-Ahiferom-Edga-Arbi, Enticho and Egela-Gererhu serenay.⁹

Ahiferom *Wārāda* is bordered with Eritrea in the North, Wori'e Leke *Wārāda* in the south, rural areas of Adwa and Merb Leke *Wārādas* in the west, and Ganta-Afeshum and Gulomekeda *Wārādas* in the East.¹⁰

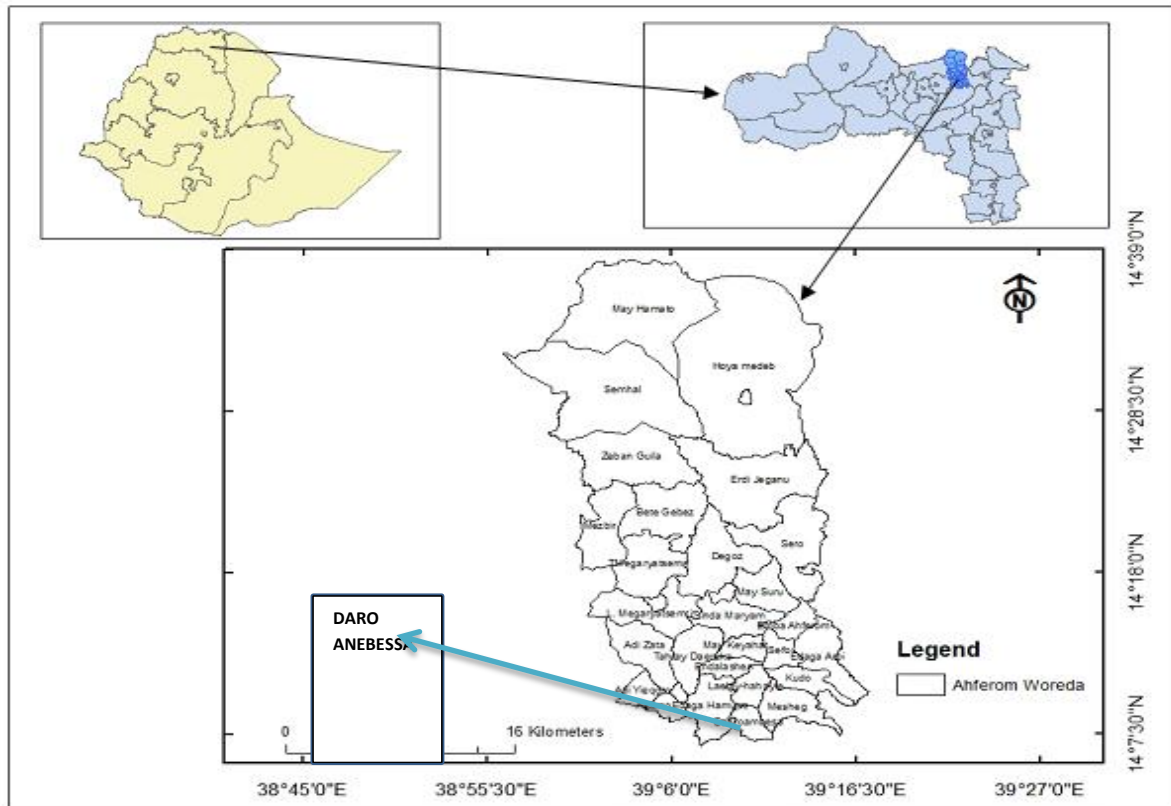
In terms of Grid reference, Ahiferom *Wārāda* is situated between 38⁰ 56' 30" and 39⁰ 18' 00" longitude and between 14⁰ 06' 30" and 14⁰ 38' 30" latitude. The elevation of the *Wārāda* ranges from 500 to 3200 above sea level. It gets an average rainfall of 540-650 mile liter annually. The total area of this *Wārāda* covers 133,979 hectares of land. The topographic feature of the

⁹Meaza Tafre, *Ahiferom Bet Tsehifet Rikib Hizbi ena Mengesten Wārāda Tedalo Metsihet*, No.11, 2009. p.9; Kahisay Abrha, *Year Book (Ametawi Māshāfa) Ahiferom Wārāda*, 2014.p.3; Gäbrä Wahed Berhane, "GIS Based Assessment of Rural Portable Water Access: In Ahiferom *Wārāda*, Tigray, Ethiopia." MA Theses. Department of Geography and Environmental studies, Mekelle University, 2014.p.20; Abrham Gäbrä Hiwot Yihedego, Addis Adera Gebru and Mesfin Tilahun Gelaye, "The impact of Small-Scale Irrigation on Income of Rural Farm Households: Evidence from Ahiferom *Wārāda* in Tigray, Ethiopia," *International Journal of Business and Economics Research*, Vol.4, No.4, 2015.p.218.(<http://www.Sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/ijber>); and Mulugeta Araya, "Personal Names and Tittle of Tigrigna Speakers in Ahiferom *Wārāda*," MA Theses, Collage of Humanities and Languages studies, Department of Linguistics, Addis Ababa University, 2012.pp.2-3.

¹⁰Meaza Tafre, *Ahiferom Bet...*p.9; Kahisay Abrha, *Year Book...*p.3; Abrham Gebrhiwot Yihedego... "The impact of Small-Scale Irrigation on Income .p.218; Kifle Zerue, "Archeological Investigation in Ahiferom *Wārāda*, Tigray: Ethiopia," MA Theses, Department of Archeology and Heritages management, Addis Ababa University, 2014.,p.21; Gäbrä wahid Berhe, "GIS Based.....p.20; and Mulugeta Areaya, "Personal Names...," pp.2-3,

Wäräda consists of chains of mountains, plateaus, and valleys.¹¹ One of the sub-*Wäräda* named Hahaile that established the monastery is located between the areas of Fersemay, Enticho and Ambä Sänäyti.¹²

Map.1. Location of Ahiferom *Wäräda* and Daro-Anbessa



Source: GäbräWahed Berhane, “GIS Based Assessment of Rural Portable Water Access: In Ahiferom *Wäräda*, Tigrai, Ethiopia.” MA Theses. Department of Geography and Environmental studies, Mekelle University, 2014. p.20.

¹¹Meaza Tafre, *Ahiferom Bet...* p.9; Kahisay Abrha, *Year Book...* p.3; Abraham Gebrhiwot Yihedego..., “The impact of Small-Scale Irrigation on Income...,” p.218; Kifle Zerue, “Archeological...,” p.21; Gäbräwahid Berhe, “GIS Based...,” p.20 and Mulugeta Areaya, “Personal Names...,” pp.2-3;

¹²Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester Jhon of Indies*, A true relation of The Lands of The Prester Jhon being the narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia in 1520, Cambridge Published for the Halkuyt Society, 1961.p.169; and Appendix.1,

Climatic Conditions of Ahiferom Wäräda

The climatic condition of Ahiferom Wäräda consists of *Degua*, *Woyna Degua*, and *Qola*. The climatic condition of this area is characterized by two distinct seasonal weather patterns; the wet season extending from June to September, contributing 80 percent annual rainfall and the dry season which covers the time from October to May. The long term mean annual rainfall ranges from 540-650 millimeters annually. The spatial distribution of rainfall is predominantly affected by latitude means due to topographic effects; the mean annual rainfall of this Wäräda varies very little from place to place. For instance, the northeastern part of the Wäräda is characterized by the *Qola* (hot land) topography, particularly around the Merb River receives low rainfall. On the other hand, the major area of the Wäräda is located in the highlands usually to have a high amount of rainfall.¹³

The annual temperature of the Ahiferom Wärädais ranging between 18-27 degree centigrade. There is a variation in the mean maximum and minimum temperature across the year. The area has experienced a higher humidity level during the month of July, August and September. Moreover, about 10.4 percent of the area of Ahiferom Wäräda is covered by natural vegetation and is among the few areas to have such large tree cover area in its south and sparsely covered in the rest.¹⁴

Generally, Ahiferom Wäräda's rainy season is registered to have been from June up to September, particularly July and August are months with high rainfall. Because of this the

¹³Kahsay Abreha, *Year book* ...,p.30; Abrham Gebrhiwot Yihedego...,“The Impact of Small-Scale Irrigation on Income..”,p.219; Kifle Zerue, “Archeological Investigation...”,P.26; Maza Tafere,*Ahiferom*..., .p.5; and Clements R. Markham, *A History of the Abyssinia Expedition*, F.S.A. London Macmillan and co. London R.Clay, sons, and Tayor, princess Bread Street Hill, 1869. P.178.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

majority of the people of Ahiferom *Wäräda* are highly dependent on the *Kiremeti* (summer) rain to farm and to plant seeds.¹⁵

Topography of Ahiferom *Wäräda*

The topographic feature of Ahiferom *Wäräda* has chains of hills, mountains, plains, plateaus and valleys. The topography, which is to the south and southwest direction, is full of plateaus, mountains and hills and the Northern direction is plain. The elevation of Ahiferom *Wäräda* ranges from 550-3200 meter above sea level.¹⁶ The topography of this *Wäräda* is divided as follows:-

1. 45.5 percent (six *tabias* cover 60,875 hectares) is *Qolla* covering Grehu-Sernay, May-Hamato, Semhal, Zeban-Guila and Erdi-Jeganu.¹⁷
2. 44.5 percent (21 *tabias* cover around 59,719 hectares) is *Woyna Degua* which covers the following Zata, Fers-may, Edaga-Hamus, Tahitay-Dareka, Adi-Yiqoro, Enedä-Maryam, May-Qeyahat, Enedä-Lashen, Tahitay Megariya Tseberi, Debedebo, Bet-Gebze, May-Seru, Sero, Daguz, Edaga-Arbi and Mezeber.¹⁸
3. 10 percent (6 *tabias* cover 13,385 hectares) is *Degua* which include Sefeo, Adi-Ahiferom, Kudo, Meshig, Daro-Anebessa (Adi-Satera) and Lalay-Hahaile.¹⁹

The total area of Ahiferom *Wäräda* is 133,979 hectares. From the total area around 23,434 hectares which are farmland and the rest 110,545 hectares are not farmlands. The *Wäräda*'s areas not farmed because of the areas its topography which is dominated by terrain of mountains. In

¹⁵Kahsay Abreha, *Year book* ...p.30; Abrham Gebrhiwot Yihedego..., "The Impact of Small-Scale Irrigation on Income....", p.219; Kifle Zerue, "Archeological Investigation....", P.26; and Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom.*, p.5.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Kahsay Abreh, *Year Book*, pp.10 and 30.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

addition to this, the existence of conflict between the Ethiopian's and Eritrea's since 1998 in the border areas also caused the people not farm the productive farmlands of the *Wäräda*.²⁰

Ahiferom *Wäräda*'s topography has different ecological environment and physical features like plain, plateau, cliff and mountains. For instance as indicated in the land charter book and other books they mentioned different areas name found in and around Ahiferom *Wäräda*. They are Egila, Daraka, Awger, Ambä Sänayti, Gual Hatzei, Hahaile, Lawsa, Agazena, Däbrä Bäkür/Däbrä Bakori/, Seguhe, Selesit, Edega-Arbi, Nabelt, Menadäeq, Enticho and Frsemay. The major part of the topography of Ahiferom *Wäräda* is Ambä (flat-topped Mountains) that link Ambä Sänayti and Adwa mountains with Torat-Hawezen region. Among these mountains and terrains found in Ahiferom *Wäräda* are Ambä Aweger/Ahiferom, Ambä Demberebera and Ambä Gual Hatsei.²¹

The topography of this *Wäräda* is vulnerable to soil erosion. This causes low productivity of the land and became among the poorest *Wäräda* in Tigray.²² Because of this, the majorities of the people of Ahiferom *Wäräda* are so poor who require ongoing food relief and are forced to migrate to other places to work.²³

In Ahiferom *Wäräda* there are permanent rivers such as Inuguya, Belesa, Mai-suru, Sebeha and Medemar which are tributaries of the Mereb River in the North while Berakit and Gedallo

²⁰Kahisay Abreha, *Year book*...pp.29-30; Meaza Tafere. *Ahiferom*...pp.8-9; GäbräWahed Brhane, GIS Based...p.20; and Aberham Gebrhiwot Yihedego....., "The impact of Small-Scale Irrigation on Income..," p.219.

²¹Huntingford G.W.B., *The Land Charters of North Ethiopia*, Oxford University press, Addis Ababa- Univeristy, 1965. pp.86-92; Arab Faqh, Futuh AL-HABASHA, *The Conquest of Abyssinia 16th Century*, Translated Tsehail, 2003. p.353; Castahoso, *The Portuguese expedition to Abyssinia in 1541-1543*, pp.33, Iii and Iiii; Antonio Mordini, "L'architecture religieuse chre'tienne dans l'Ethiopie du Moyen Age: Un programme de recherches," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, Vol. 2, 1961, p.170; and GäbräMikael Teklehiwot, *Ye Itopia Acher Tarik ena Ye Manenet Mastewasha*, Zemenawi Printing Press, 2017. pp.20-24.

²²John Young, *The Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front: 1975-1991*, Cambridge University Press, 1997. pp.187-188.

²³John Young, "The Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray: 1975-1989," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Simon Fraser University, 1994. p.318.

flow down in to the Tekezze River along the Worri river basin to the south. These rivers are the backbone of the *Wäräda*'s irrigation to supply water for the irrigated land.²⁴These rivers have served as one of source of income for their daily consumption for the people who use irrigation.

Economy of Ahiferom *Wäräda*

In Ahiferom *Wäräda* there are four sub-*Wärädas*, thirty three *Tabias* from these six *tabias* are urban, and twenty-four *tabias* (one hundred fourteen *qushetat*) are rural. From the total population and *tabias* of Ahiferom *Wäräda* around 93 percent of the population has been living in the rural areas, and the rest are living in small towns like Enticho, Dabedebo, Gäbrä he-Serunay, Edag-Arbi and Feresmay.²⁵

The people of Ahiferom *Wäräda* depend on mixed farming like crop production and animal husbandry. The major cereal crops in the *Wäräda* are teff, sorghum, millet, bean, lentil, Niger seed, flax, wheat, Finger-Millet, *Hanfets* (a mixture of wheat and barley), barley, maize, and *gesho/hops*/. There are also domestic animals, which support the economic life of the people of Ahiferom *Wäräda*, with a large population of cows, oxen, goats, sheep, donkeys, horses and mules. The *Wäräda* has a total area of 133,979 hectares that account 25.4 percent arable land, 12.05 percent grazing land, 32.4 percent forest and woodland, 30.15 percent residential and other non-productive land. Stony loams, sandy loams and low fertility characterize the land of this *Wäräda*. Due to this, there is low productivity of their farmlands. Now Ahiferom *Wäräda* is one of the most populated *Wärädas* in Tigray and stands first in its population. Nevertheless, due to the poor fertility of the land, land degradation, erratic rainfall and border conflicts, lack of

²⁴Kahisay Abreha, *Ahiferom Wäräda Year book*, P.5; and Kifele Zerue, "Archeological Investigation in Ahiferom *Wäräda*....," p.27.

²⁵Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*...p.9; and Kifele zerue, "Archeological Investigation....," p.16.

attention of different government, in secured exploitation of the land by the population, the people are considered to be the poorest. In addition to this, the people of the *Wäräda* were also involved continuously in fighting against the military regime.²⁶

Currently, in Ahiferom *Wäräda* due to the water conservation program, there is wide irrigation activity dependent on the rivers found in the *Wäräda*. Based on this many farmland hectares of this *Wäräda* are irrigated throughout the year. This indicates that the irrigation-based agriculture has an equal contribution to the rain fed agriculture in crop production particularly in the low land area than in the highland part of the *Wäräda*.²⁷ Generally, this *Wäräda*'s economy mainly depends on agriculture. i.e., crop harvesting, animal husbandry. Labor force, trade and handicrafts supplement their economy.

Population of Ahiferom *Wäräda*

Ahiferom *Wäräda* is one of the densely populated areas in Tigray as well as in Ethiopia. The total population of the *Wäräda* was estimated to be 131, 168 in 1994, 152,439 in 1999, 168,546 in 2003, 173,700 in 2007 and 2,006,993 in 2014.²⁸ This indicates that there was 2.5 percent population growth per year.²⁹ According the Ahiferom *Wäräda* public relation report, the population density of the *Wäräda*'s was 0.6 hectare.³⁰ However, when compared based on the topography of the *Wäräda* there is high population density in the highland Zone of Sefeo, Adi-Ahiferom, Kudo, Meshig, Dareo- Anbessa/Adi-Satera and Laelay-Hahaile and low density in the

²⁶Abreham Gäbrähiwot, "The Impact of small...", p.219; John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975-1991*, p.188; and Kahisay Abreha, *Ahiferom Year Book*, pp.3-32.

²⁷Kifele Zerue. "Archeological Investigation..." p.27.

²⁸Kahisay Abreha. *Ahiferom Year Book*...p.4; Abreham Gäbrähiwot Yihidego, "The Impact of Small-scale...", p.219; Kifle Zerue, "Archeological Investigation ..." p.29; Gebrwahed Brhane, "GIS Based..." p.2; Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray Region*, Vol. I, Addis Ababa, 1995.p.10; and Central statistical Authority (CSA), *The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray region*, 2007.p.7.

²⁹Kahisay Abreha, *Ahiferom Year Book*, p.4.

³⁰Kahisay Abreha, *Ahiferom Year Book*, p.4.

Qola (lowland Zone) of Merb basin of Gerhu-Sernay, May-Hamato, Zeban-Guila and Erdi-Jeganu. The *Wäräda* is not different from other parts of Ethiopia in having a high proportion of the young aged population. According to CSA census of 1994, the economically active age (15-64) accounts 51.1 percent of the total population, while the rest make 48.9 percent. Those under 15 years of age constitute 44.5 percent while the 4.45 percent represent greater than 64 years of age. Hence, the dependency ratio in Ahiferom *Wärädais* 48.9 percent.³¹

According to the 1994 report of the Central Statistical Agency, the total population of the *Wäräda* being 131,168 people, the great majority of the population, about 94.4 percent, lived in the rural areas and the remaining 5.6 percent lived in the urban centers.³² According to the 2007 report of the Central Statistical Agency also, the population of the *Wäräda* was 173,700 people. From this population 86.5 percent lived in rural areas and the rest 13.5 percent lived in urban centers.³³ This indicates that the majorities of the population of the *Wäräda* were directly engaged in agricultural activities and depended on rural based economy of mixed farming of crops and livestock. This meant that the majority of the areas of the *Wäräda*'s were rural.

Language and Religion in Ahiferom *Wäräda*

In this *Wäräda* people with different languages and religious were living. According to the 1994 report of the Central Statistical Agency, the total population of the *Wäräda* was 131,168 people. Among these, 99.6 percent were Tigrigna speakers and the remaining 0.4 percent was other

³¹Kahisay Abreha, *Ahiferom Year Book*, p.4; Abreham Gäbrähiwot Yihidego, "The Impact of Small-scale..." p.219; Kifle Zerue, "Archeological Investigation ..." p.29; Gebrwahed Brhane, "GIS Based..." p.2; Tesfay Halefom Enun, "Local Poultry Value Chain Analysis: the case of Ahiferom *Wäräda*, Central Zone of Tigray, Ethiopia." MA Theses, Department of Animal, Range land and Wild life science, Meklee University, 2016.pp.17-19; Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray region*, Vol. I, Addis Ababa, 1995.p.10; and Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray region*, 2007.p.7.

³²Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray region*, Vol. I, Addis Ababa, 1995.p.83; and Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray Region*, 2007.p.7.

³³Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 2007 Population and Housing.....*, p.7.

language speakers like Amharic, Saho, Affan Oromo and others.³⁴ According to the 2007, Central Statistical Agency Report the total population the *Wäräda* was 173,700. In this report also the majority of the people were Tegar. Ahiferom was predominantly inhabited by Tigrigna speakers.³⁵

In the day-to-day activities of human being, religion plays a crucial role. The people of Ahiferom were not free from religious influence. When we see the people's religion based on the Central Statistical Authority of 1994 report, 97.5 percent are followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, 0.92 percent is Muslims, and 1.5 percent are Catholics and Protestants.³⁶ According to the Central Statistical Agency of 2007 report, indicates that among the total population of the *Wäräda* 97.75 percent were followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, 2.217 percent of Islam and 0.0172 percent of Protestants and Catholics. This indicates Ahiferom *Wäräda*'s population due to long period of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity influence and experiences since the Aksumite period the majority of the residents of were the followers the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Here we also observe that when we compare the two Statistical reports the number of Muslims show radical growth whereas the size of Catholics and Protestants has significantly decreased.

Animals, Plants and Cereals in Ahiferom *Wäräda*

Ahiferom *Wäräda* like the other parts of Tigray has different topographical zones that range from 500 meters above sea level up to 3200 meters above sea level. Based on this, different cereals, plants (forest) and animals existed and produced. There are different species trees

³⁴Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray Region*, p.71.

³⁵Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray Region*, p.67.

³⁶Central Statistical Authority (CSA), *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Results for Tigray Region*, p.99.

(plants) found in the *Wäräda*. Some of the plants that are grown in the area are *Da'ero* (Ficus Vasta), *Sagela* (Ficus Sycomorus), *Aweliee* (olive tree or *Olea cuspidata*), Juniper, and other varieties species.³⁷

The Cereals produced by the peasants in the Ahiferom *Wäräda* are *Hanefetsee*, *Taff* (*Ergotis*), *Meshila/Leyiqua* (Sorghum), *Meshela Baheri* (Maize or Corn), *Ater-bahiri* (Beans), *Beresun* (Lentil), *Sernay* (Wheat), *Dagusha* (Eliusine), *Segem* (Barley), *Tselimo* (Black Barley), *Ayni-Ater* (Peas), *Ater* (Chickpea), *Aasebere* (Vicia), *Abaake* (*Trigonella Foenum-graecum*), *Adagura*, *Nihug* (Niger seed), *Berebre* (pepper), *Tsaeda-Shigurti* (White Onion), *Qeyih-Shegurti* (Red-Onion), *Tsaeqda* (*Coriandrum Sativum*), *Awasedaa*, *Seseg* (*Ocimum Basilicum*), *Shelan* (*Foeniculum Vulgare*), *Shnfae* (*Lepidium Sativum*), *Entatie* (*Linum Usitatissimum*) and *Suf* (*helianthus*).³⁸ Francisco Alvarez reported that when he arrives at Hahaile and Ambä Sänayti there were Wheat, Barley, Millet and all kinds of Vegetables produced by the people.³⁹

There are also different wild and domestic animals in the Ahiferom *Wäräda*. Among the domestic animals found in the *Wäräda* are Goats, Sheep, Cattles, Horses, Donkeys, Mules, Chickens, Dogs, and Cats. The wild animals include like Apes, Monkeys, Foxes, Hyenas, Cheetahs (wild cat), *Meda'aqwas*, *Gihe*s, *Sesehas*, Civet-cats, porcupines, *Zageras* (guinea hen), *Quqaaehs* (partridge), *Checheras* (Skunk), Rabbits, and also different species of Snake, insects, and birds.⁴⁰

³⁷Kahisay Abreha, *Ahiferom Year book...*, pp.32 and 37; Clements r. Markham, F.S.A. *History of the Abyssinia* ...pp.179-181; UNDP, ECA (FAO-ECA), TDA and the Regional Government of Tigray, *Sustainable Agriculture...* p.37 and Kifle Zerue, "Archeological investigation..." p.29.; and Apendex:2;

³⁸*Ibid.*; Asmelash Woldemariam, "The Effect of Village-Level Land Reform on Peasants Social Organization: A study of Village-Level Dynamics in Central Tigray, 1974-1994." MA thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Abba University, 2006.p.9;

³⁹Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester Jhon of Indies, A True Relation of The Lands of The Prester Jhon Being the Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia in 1520*, Cambridge published for the Halkuyt society, 1961.p.169.

⁴⁰Informants: *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Qés* Argawi Abay, and *Abba* Argawi Araya.

Infrastructure of Ahiferom *Wäräda*

Ahiferom *Wäräda* as one of the *Wärädas* found in Tigray has relatively large population. The majority population lived far from the main road that across the *Wäräda* town. Because of this, the *Wäräda* needed more infrastructures to facilitate the daily life of the people. The infrastructure necessary to the people's daily life are schools, hospitals, health centers, roads etc. Nevertheless, there are primary schools at Enticho and Feresmay. Because of this the students forced to travel a long distance to learn. As a result the illiteracy rate in the *Wäräda* was not good as expected. In addition, there is no hospital in the *Wäräda* still now, but there are clinics opened in the towns of the Sub-*Wärädas*. However, a road passes through the town of Enticho that extend from Addis Ababa to Shire used by the people of the *Wäräda*. This road was constructed by the Italians during the occupation period. The majority of the rural population of the *Wäräda* does not have enough transportation system and facilitate their activities by using pack animals and by travelling on foot. There is also rural road that extends from Gendebeta to Fresemay.⁴¹ John Young argues that this *Wäräda* did not possess a connecting track to the main east-west high way and made this to isolated that people from all daily activities.⁴² Generally, this *Wäräda* has no enough infrastructures like school, clinic, transport etc. That means the majorities of the peasants of the *Wäräda* did not have access to various services and became to live on the poor economy.⁴³

⁴¹UNDP, ECA (FAO-ECA), TDA and the Regional Government of Tigray, *Sustainable Agriculture and Environmental Rehabilitation in Tigray (SAERT)*, Statistical Master Book of Tigray, Vol. XIII, 1984.p.146

⁴²John Young, "The Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray: 1975-1989," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Political Science, Simon Fraser University, 1994. p.318.

⁴³*Ibid.* pp. 318-319.

Historical Background of Ahiferom *Wäräda*

Ahiferom *Wäräda* and its *neighboring Wärädas* are assumed to have been part of the ancient civilizations of Yäha and the kingdom of Aksum. Because the *Wärädas* were found at a short distance from Yäha and Aksum, about 5kms and 55kms distance respectively. There were also different archaeological remains and historical sites found in this *Wäräda*. For instance, there are Sabaean inscriptions and ruins of buildings related to Yäha and Aksumite civilizations. The archaeological sites are found in different places in Fresmay, Daro Anbessa, Mezeber, Gerhu Sernay, Adi-yeqoro, Zata-Filhat, Adi Ba'ekel, Enedä Ra'essi, Ziban-Geba, Hahaile, Enticho, Gerhu Sernay etc.⁴⁴

Along with these, there were also different events which took place in Ahiferom and its neighboring of Enedä *Abba Sahema Wäräda*, Ambä Sänayti sub-*Wäräda*. For instance, Yodit Gudit in the tenth century and Ahmed Gagn in the Sixteenth century had caused destruction in the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches and monasteries being stationed in the *Wäräda*. Yodit Gudit in order to attack and destroy different buildings, and churches in Aksum, she first landed in Hahaile and Ambä Sänayti and called on the people of Hahaile to stand on her side. By using the *Wäräda's* as strategic place, she attacked Aksum town and its surroundings.⁴⁵

Besides, one of the Ethiopian strong Muslim Leaders Ahmed Gagn landed and conquered Ambä Sänayti while he was in power for 15 years. He made Ambä Sänayti his political center to control Tigray. On the other hand different medieval period kings like Amda Seyon, Sarsa Dengil, etc. also landed in the land of Ahiferom and Ambä Sänayti until they won over their

⁴⁴Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*...p.14; Kifle Zerue, "Archeological Investigation....," p.29,

⁴⁵Segew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopia History up to 1270*, Addis Ababa, 1972. PP.225-227; and Gäbrämkael Teklehiwot, *Ye Itiyopia Achir Tarik ena Ye Manenet Mastewasha*, p.21.

enemies. For instance, Turkish army defeated at Fresemay by the army of Sarsa Dengel in 1583 A.D. In addition to this, Enticho served as a fortification of Baher Negash to fight against Sarsa Dengel in which the force of Sarsa Dengel emerged Victorious at the battle of Enticho over the Baher Negash-Turks. In the modern times the Italian army had also fortified at Enticho during the Battle of Adwa. For the same battle the Army of Emperor Menlik II passed through Hawezen, Nebelet, Seguh, Ambä Gual Hatsie, May Meret, Fresemay-Hahaile, Zata, Gendebeta and Yäha to stay in Adwa. In addition to this the area of Ahiferom *Wäräda* was one of the fighting places during the Italian occupation (1935-1941). The patriotic resistance held by *Däjjazmačh* Gäberähiwot Meshesha and other patriot bases themselves in Hahaile and Adwa while the Italian forces fortified at Däbrä Bokri.⁴⁶

Different territories in this *Wäräda* were mentioned in many books by different writers and travelers who travelled there and who wrote books. For instance, some of the names mentioned are Ambä Sänayti, Hahaile, Enticho, Feresmay, Egela, Zata, Adi Ahiferom, Däbrä Bokri, Däbrä Bäkür, Tserona, Bellesa, Darka, Awger, Ambä Gual Hatsei, Agazena etc. Most of the writers described the topography of Ahiferom *Wäräd aand* Ambä Sänayti as well as its neighboring areas that dominated by George, hills, Ambäs and flat-topped mountains.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Gäbrämekael Teklehiwot, *Ye Itiyopia Achir Tarik*, pp.21-23, Arab Faqh, *Futuh Al-Habasha: The Conquest of Abyssinia 16th Century*, p.353, Antonio Mordini, "L'architecture religieuse chre'tienne dans l'Ethiopie du Moyen Age: Un programme de recherches," *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, Vol.2, 1961.p.170, Muluwork Kidane Mariyam. "Neti Mebegesi Tarik' Tarik? Gele Hetotaten meaaremetataten," part.2. p.13 (<http://aigaforum.com/Article1>) (Muluwerk review-Gebru book-part 2); and Tewelde Tuke, *Ye Itiyopia Andenet ena Italiya*,.p.83;

⁴⁷Huntingford G.W.B. *The Land Charters*...pp.86-92, Gäbrämikael Teklehiwot,*Ye Itiyopia Achir*...p.20-24; Castanihoso,*The Portuguese Expedition to Abyssinia in 1541-1543*, pp. lii, liii; and 33; Arab Faqih, *Futhu Al Habasha:The Conquest of Abyssinia 16th Century*, .p.353; and Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester Jhon of Indies, A True Relation of The Lands of The Prester Jhon* being the Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia in 1520, Cambridge published for the Halkuyt Society, 1961.pp.168-169.

The current territory of Ahiferom *Wäräda* during the former government's organizational structure was administered under different *Wärädas*. Its size varied from one regime to another until new arrangement was made in 1994.⁴⁸

During, the period of Emperor Haileslasie I the current territories of Ahiferom *Wäräda* were divided into different *Wäräda*. The *Wärädas* were Egela, Enticho, Hahaile and Ambä Sänayti, and Ahisaa independently all assigned under Adwa *Aweraja*.⁴⁹

During the Military regime there was a new arrangement made in 1989. Based on this, Hahaile was organized under Adwa. The rest, Egela, Ahisaa and Enticho were organized as one *Wäräda* and named Enticho *Wäräda*. The *Aweraja* was not changed and the former Adwa *Awerja* continued.⁵⁰

After the coming of the Ethiopian People's Democratic Republic Front into power in 1991, from 1991-1994/5 in Tigray there was 81 *Wärädas*. However, in 1994 new arrangement was made by grouping and organizing different areas which were formerly organized under different *Wärädas* later re-organized into new *Wärädas*. Before the new arrangements was made the former independent *Wärädas* and territories like Enticho, Adi-Ahiferom, Hahayile and Egela were organized as independent *Wärädas* and got independent administration.⁵¹

However, 1994, in the new arrangement of *Wäräda* and zones in Tigray the number of *Wärädas* decrease from 81 to 35. Based on this Egela-Gerhu sernay, Enticho and its surrounding *Qäbälés-*

⁴⁸Kahisay Abrha, *Year Book*, p.19; and Informants: *Haleqa* Hafetu Gäbrämseqel, *Ato Araya Alemayehu*, and *Ato Hadush Asemelash*.

⁴⁹ገሊ.ኡ-ብገር ሁ-ገሊ.ኡ-ብገር ል-ካ-ብሀዳስኢ.ት-ዮጵያ, መቅለ, 2008. PP.12-22 (comment.on. *Wäräda*.admin-requestes).

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹ገሊ.ኡ-ብገር ሁ-ገሊ.ኡ-ብገር ል- ካ-ብሀዳስኢ.ት-ዮጵያ, መቅለ, 2008. pp.12-22; Asmelash WoldeMariam, "The Effect of Village-Level Land Reform on Peasants Social Organization: A study of Village-Level Dynamics in Central Tigray, 1974-1994," MA theses. Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Abba University, 2006.p.14.

Enticho, Adi-Ahiferom- Edaga-Arbi and Hahaile-Feresmay were merged and became one *Wäräda* to be named Ahiferom *Wäräda* and its administrative center was made Enticho.⁵² This name was given to the new *Wäräda* for the remembrance of the people of Adi Ahiferom and neighboring areas for their prolonged struggle against the Military regime. It served as a mobilization center for the people of Adi-Ahiferom and its neighboring areas.⁵³

At different times, when new governments came to power, they made a new *Wäräda* arrangement and organization. It was a common practice that different areas were taken from one *Wäräda* and given to another. Because of this tradition, throughout the period, the people of the *Wärädas* were intermixing and sharing common political, religious, economic and cultural features. It was difficult to separate the people of Ahiferom, Adwa, Hahaile, Ambä Sänayti, Endabä-Sahema, Gulo-Mekeda and Ganta Afeshum in their political administration. Not only in politics but they also had a close relationship in their cultural, economic, social, religious lives. Due to this, it is difficult to separate these people's history. For instance, most of the time the places and peoples of Hahaile, Fresmay, Enticho, Ambä Senyiti-Nebelet, Eglä, Ahisaa, Adwa etc. were mentioned and explained together.⁵⁴

Historical Monasteries, Known Personalities and Archeological Sites in the *Wäräda*

Ahiferom *Wäräda* people like other Ethiopians have made great contribution in Ethiopia history. They have preserved monasteries and archeological remains in addition to their active patriotic resistance against the Italians. Ahiferom *Wäräda* and its neighboring Ambä Sänayti *Wäräda* one

⁵²ገለ.ኡ-በገር.ሁ-ገለ.ኡ-በገር.ሐ- ካብሀዳስኢ.ትዮጵያ,መኞል, 2008,pp.12-22; and UNDP, ECA (FAO-ECA).TDA...p.13.

⁵³Informants: *Haleqa* Hafetu Gäbrämseql, *Ato* Araya Alemayehu, and *Ato* Hadush Asemelash.

⁵⁴Huntingford W.B,*The Historical Geography of Ethiopia from first to 1704*,London, Oxford University press, 1989.pp.120, and Huntingford W.B, *The Land of Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, pp.86-91.

can find ancient monasteries and archaeological sites. The same area had produced great personalities who contributed a lot to their country.⁵⁵ These are discussing as follow.

A. Monasteries

Ahiferom *Wäräda*, Gulo-Mekeda, Ganta-Afeshum, Enedä *Abba* Sahama and Ambä Sänayti are places found not far from Aksum. This means that, these *Wärädas* (places) were formerly under the Aksumite Empire and currently under the Central and eastern Zone of Tigray. Because of this, they were not free from the influence of the Aksumite civilization. They were probably highly influenced by Christian Aksum. When I say this, it is from the historical fact that Ahiferom *Wäräda* and its neighboring areas were encircled by the settlement and monasteries of the “Nine Saints” that had great contribution for the expansion of Christianity in Ethiopia.⁵⁶

Due to this long time influence of Christianity and the coming of different religious men into this area different monasteries were constructed. Some of the monasteries were the following.

1. Mekanakist *Abunä* Gäbrä Menfes *Qudis* Monastery

This monastery was initially found in the formerly Ambä Sänayti territory, but currently it is located in Ahiferom *Wäräda* specifically in a place named Tsehan. This monastery was founded by *Abunä* Estifanos in 16th Century and it got the *Gult* grants from Emperor Lebene Dengel,⁵⁷ and later in the 19th Century *Däjjazmačh* Sebagadis renewed the *Gult* right of the monastery.⁵⁸

The same monastery was rebuilt by *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè Bariya Gabir 1905. The place

⁵⁵Kifle Zerue, “Archeological Investigation...,” pp.34-71; Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*, pp.10-14; Informants:*Haleqa* Hafetu Gäbrämseqel, *Ato* Araya Alemayehu, and *Ato* Hadush Asemelash

⁵⁶Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval...*, pp.115-119; Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, pp.23-25; Belay Gidey, *Ye Itiyopia Seletanie*, Addis Ababa, pp.125-127; and Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of the Early Solomonian Ethiopia*, pp.16-17.

⁵⁷Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, CSCO, SAe.II, 8, 1909.pp.39-40.

⁵⁸Sergew Hableselesie, “*Amaharigna Ye Betekiristeyan Mezegebe Qalat*,” Vo.7, Addis Ababa, 1989.p.109; Sergew Hableselesie, “*Amaharigna Ye Betekiristeyan Mezegebe Qalat*,” Vo.2, Addis Ababa, 1989.p. 110; Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.57; and *Be Itiyopia Ye Migegnu Abete Keristeyanat ena Kahinat Quter Megelecha*, ND.pp.1132-1189.

where this monastery stands was the land and birthplace of the *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè. Because of this the corpse of *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè was buried in this monastery after the bones were taken from Addis Ababa from where it was buried.⁵⁹

2. Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery

Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery, which is the title of the thesis, is one of the oldest historical monasteries found in Ahiferom *Wäräda*, and in Hahaile sub-*Wäräda* specifically at Daro Anbessa *tabiya* and Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé*. According to the informants and different books, this monastery was established by one of the renowned monks *Abunä Sét*. In this monastery, *Abunä* Magebelgzie lived and served as an *Abmenet* (Abbot). This monastery was also one of the places where different religious men were ordained as monks.⁶⁰ Because of this, Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery has different religious treasures given by important personalities. This will be discussed further in the next chapters.

3. *Abunä* Mamas of Däbrä Gungudé Rock hewn Monastery

This monastery was one of the ancient rock hewn monasteries found in Wrie leke (Tsadiya *Wäräda*) in Ambä Säneyti specifically *attabia* Seguh (ሰጉሳ), specifically at the village Enedä Mamas little far to the south ward from Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery. *Abunä* Mamas was its founder during the reign of Emperor Dawit I in 1394.⁶¹ Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* and *Abunä* Mamas Ze Däbrä Gungudé due to their closeness, at different times, they were under common

⁵⁹ Tsehay Hile, "A Short Biography of *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè Baria Gabir (Abba Kibad) (1873-1930)," p.6.

⁶⁰ Sargew Hable Selasie, "Ye Amaregna Ye Bete Keristeyan Mezegebe Qalat," vol.10, p.169; Daniel Kebret, *Ye Bete Keristeyan Mereja*, p.468; and *Be Ethiopiya Ye Migegnu Abete Keristeyanat*.....p.184, and Informants: Qés Tekeleab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Aregawi Araya, and Qés Mezemur Gäbrämaryam.

⁶¹ Gashaw Gerimay, Yonas, *Nebayat*...., *Tigray a Source of Civilization*, Tigray Tourism Bureau, Reiena (Hagos) Printing and Promotion, ND, p.25; Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke, "Bibliography.....," p.82; Amsalu Tefera, *Neqea'a Matsahfet*, Addis Ababa, Jajaw Press and Developers P.L.C, 2019. p.116; Kahisay Abreha (Deacon), *Hadegitatenä*, No.1, 2003, p.62; and Tewledemedhen Joseph (*Abba*), *The monolithic Church of Tigray*, Addis Ababa, Central Printing Press, 1970, pp.54-56.

administration. From the common *Abmenet* (Abbot) and the administrator were *Mämeher* Gaberu and *Mämeher* Tekleyesus.⁶² This monastery still has different historical, religious and secular treasures like manuscripts and crosses, drum, which are stored under the rock.⁶³

Figure.2. The Front Image of the Rock Hewn Monastery established at the middle of the cliff.



Source: Photo by *Wäräda* Weri leke Tourism Bureau (culture and tourism weri leke @ gmail.com)

⁶²Informants: Qés Tekleaab Fesseha, and *Abba* Argawi Araya.

⁶³*Ibid.*

4. Saint Na'akueta'ab Rock Hewn Church

This rock-hewn church is found in *tabia* Meshig, specifically at the village of Sur Balti. This rock-hewn church was established in the middle of a cliff of Sur-Balti, a little Far East ward from Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery. It's assumed to have been founded in the 13th Century. This rock hewn church was named after the name of a medieval Ethiopian king of the Zagwe kings named Na'akueta'ab.⁶⁴ This rock-hewn church does not have any historical treasure but kept empty. In addition to this, the rock-hewn church did not offer daily religious services and liturgy. Nevertheless, starting from the recent time the community has begun to perform religious celebration and mass liturgy service on monthly bases on the 24th of *Tikimt* (November 4). In this monastery, on the top of the Sur-Balti cliff, there is a holy water that is used by the people for healing. This holy water has its own mystery. This holy water is situated on the cliff it has a small hole in the rock which is always has a full of water whose volume is constant or does not increase or decrease.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Kahisay Abreha (*Deacon*), *Hadegitatena*, p.62; Amesalu Tefera, *Nqa'a Masahefet...*p.149; and Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke, "Bibliography....", p.85.

⁶⁵Personal Observation on December 2020; and Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa*Gäbräzeher Tesafay, and Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam.

Figure.3. Saint Na'akueta'ab Rock hewn church.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in January 2020.

5. The Closed Enedä Giorgis church

Enedä Giorgis monolithic rock church is one of the historical places found in Ahiferom *Wäräda*, Hahaile Sub-*Wäräda*, Daro-Anbessa *Qäbälé* specifically at the Enedä Gerges village. According to local tradition the church is believed to have been one of the Aksumite rock hewn churches. Now this rock-hewn church does not give service.⁶⁶

According to oral tradition (oral information) of the community this church was closed by the angry of the God. Sometime in the remote past the religious men or the priests and deacons after they finished their program they were provided with food. After this a certain queen came to this

⁶⁶ Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, Zerue Teklemariyam, and *Ato* Teklemariyam Gäbräfael,

church she forced the priests and deacons to give her religious program service after they ate food. This is assumed to have angered God and all the clergy men including the queen were closed inside the church. Starting from this time, this rock-hewn church remained closed. However, one could evidences like tomb made from rock. The tomb is found near the closed rock hewn church which is visited as archaeological remains in the area. However, through time the hole of the tomb is filled with stones due to lack of protection.⁶⁷

According to the community, who lived Enedä Gerges *Qäbälé*, they constructed a small church on the closed rock hewn church and near the tomb as a remembrance of the rock hewn church in the name of Saint Giorgis. The community makes liturgy and religious ceremony once a year. Then to know all historical contributions and events it needed further study supported by Archaeological study.⁶⁸

Figure.4. the Closed Enedä Giorgis Rock Hewn Church on the Left and the Tomb on the Right.



Source. Photoby Zerue TekleMariyam and GäbräMedhin Tsige taken on May 2020.

⁶⁷Informants: Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay,Zerue Teklemariyam, and Ato Teklemariyam Gäbräfuuel.

⁶⁸Eye Witness on December 2019; and Informants: Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay, Haleqa Gäbräzeher Tesafay, Abba Argawi Araya, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, and Zerue Teklemariyam.

B. Archaeological Sites in Ahiferom *Wäräda*

The areas in and around Yäha and Aksum are rich in Archaeological evidences of ancient Ethiopian civilization beginning from the middle of the first millennium B.C.⁶⁹ According to this Ahiferom *Wäräda* is one of the *Wärädas* found around Aksum and Yäha. The *Wäräda* had different archaeological sites that trace their originto Yäha and the Aksumite periods.⁷⁰

In Ahiferom *Wäräda* there are many Archaeological sites. Among the Archaeological sites found in Ahiferom are discussed as follow.

The first, archeological site is Sefera Bet-Same’eti. This site is found in Ahiferom *Wäräda*, *Tabia Mezeber, qushet* Edaga Robe’e about 20 Kilo meters to north of Debedbo town. The people who were living in this place first discovered this archaeological site in 2004. According to the study made by archeologists, the archeological site was a ruin of a church constructed in the 6th Century. At this site different artifacts and utensils like a ring made of Gold, stone and silver, stamps made from stone and iron, and other material remains of different colors of *Enuqutat* (pearls), an inscription, the ruins of buildings of Aksumite style, and different pottery and animal and human remains were found.⁷¹

The second archaeological site found in the *Wäräda* is Tse’rhan. This archaeological site is also found in Ahiferom *Wäräda* at *Tabia* Erdi-Jeganu of Gerehu-sernay. According to oral tradition, this site was one of the religious centers of the community. At this site, stele made stone, ruins of buildings, red color pottery and tombs are found in large quantity.⁷²

⁶⁹Mulugeta Fesseha, Teclehaimanot G/sellasiae., *Participatory Tourism: The Future of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, Eclipse P.L.C, 2010.p.45;

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*,p.9;

⁷²Kifele Zerue, “Archeological sites....,” p.63; and Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*, p.10.

The third archeological site that existed in the *Wäräda* is Telee'ele Archaeological Site. This site is located in Ahiferom *Wäräda* at *Tabia* Tahitay Megariya-Tsemeri. At this site Archaeologist excavated ruins of ancient Aksumite building structure, broken pottery, ancient stone tools obsidians, and *Enuqutat* (pearls).⁷³

The fourth archaeological site found in the *Wäräda* is Zala (Sefera Abun). This site is found in Ahiferom *Wäräda* in *Tabia* Tahitay Megariya-Tsemeri and Lalay Megariya-Tsemeri *qushet* Liham specifically known as Zala (Sefera Abun). This site is categorized as Aksumite because of the artifacts found here. After the introduction of Christianity, this site is assumed to have served as a religious center of people coming from different places. It probably existed between 4th and 7ththe centuries. At this site, one finds different historical heritages of broken beautiful stones, a basement of the ruins of buildings, ancient instrument made from stone, broken pottery, and stone mill. Based on oral tradition, when the temple Yäha was constructed the masons came from this place.⁷⁴

The fifth archaeological site in the *Wäräda* is Georgis Filhat. This archaeological site is found in Ahiferom *Wäräda* near Fersemay town at a distance of four kilo meters in the Northwestern direction at *Tabia* Adi-yiqoro, *qushet* Lemeaat at a village of Enedä Giorges Filhat. At this site archaeologists found different heritage materials standing stele, ruins of building and stele, red color clay of broken pottery, stone mills and others.⁷⁵

The sixth archeological site is Ba'akiel. This site is also found in Ahiferom *Wäräda*, *Tabia* Adi Yiqoro at Da'aro *qushet* with its specific name Me'eray Enuqi close to the Adwa-Fersemay

⁷³Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*,...p.10;

⁷⁴*Ibid*, p.11;

⁷⁵Kifele Zerue, "Archaeological...",p.33; Maza Tafere,*Ahiferom*,P.12; and Fabienne Dugast, Iwona Gajda."Archaeological Survey in the Area of Meqele and the Easteren Edge of the Highlands in Tigray Region,"*Annales d'Ethiopie*, Volu.29, anne'e, 2014 .pp.181(French Version).

road. The archaeologists found different heritages. Among these a polished stone with Sabaeen Inscription on it, big well decorated and designed stone, pieces of red and black color of pottery, ruins of houses, *Enuqutat* (pearls), and ancient instrument made from stones.⁷⁶

The seventh archeological site is May-Lahelaha. May-Lahelaha is found in Ahiferom *Wäräda* at Meshig *Tabia* to the Southeastern Enticho town. At this archeological site valuable artifact, ruins of building, and old instruments are excavated.⁷⁷

The other historical place considered as a center of tourism in the *Wäräda* is the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front constructed Adi-Ahiferom hall. It is found in Adi-Ahiferom at Edaga-Arbi. This hall played a great role as a center of mobilization for peasants to fight against the Military regime. The people of Ahifrom fighting firmly against the *Derg* regime because they were tortured and their homes burned so many times.⁷⁸ The hall was constructed by the peasants to be used for meeting and as a mobilization center for the peoples. The hall did not only serve as a meeting and mobilization center, but also served as an education center. Because, there were houses that were used as classrooms near the hall. The teaching learning was conducted by the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front members to educate the youngsters and other community members.⁷⁹

⁷⁶Kifele Zerue, “Archaeological....,” p.54; Fabienne Dugast, Iwona Gajda, “Archaeological Survey in the Area of Meqele and the Eastern Edge of the Highlands in Tigray Region,” *Annales d’Ethiopie*, Vol.29, anne’e 2014.p.276 (English Version); Fabienne Dugast, Iwona Gajda, “Archaeological Survey in the Area of Meqele and the Eastern Edge of the Highlands in Tigray Redgion,” *Annales d’Ethiopie*, Vol.29, anne’e 2014 .pp.184-188 (French Version); and Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*, p.12-13.

⁷⁷Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*, p.13-14;

⁷⁸Tsige Hailemariyam and Mezegebe Woldegebriel, *Mestenker: Tarik Etuqe Hafash Melesha Tigray*, Addis Ababa, Mega Printing P.L.C, 2008.pp.184-190;

⁷⁹Maza Tafere, *Ahiferom*, p.15; Informants: *Wayzro* Brhane Meseqel Menker, *Haleqa* Gäbräzeher Tesefay, Qés Sadur Welegerges, *Ato* Hadush Asemelash, and *Wayzro* Haregewni Teklegerima.

C. Known Personalities

In Ahiferom *Wäräda* have different highly recognized personalities who made great contribution to Ethiopian history. Those known personalities of the area had contributed to the development and history of Ethiopia. Among these known personalities were:-

1. *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè Barya Gaber (*Abba* Kibad)

Däjjazmačh Gäbrä-Sellassè was born from his father Baria Gabir in 1873 in a small village of Tsahan in Ambä Sänayti, formerly under Adwa *Awraja* and currently in Aiferom *Wäräda*. During the reign of Emperor Menelik II, *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè had territory extending from Feresmay which constituted the present *Wärädas* of Hahaile and Ambä Sänayti to Haramat (now Hawezen) in Agame region.⁸⁰ During the reign of Emperor Menilik II in 1903, *Däjjazmačh*Gäbrä-Sellassè was appointed as a governor of Aksum, Adwa and Shire.⁸¹

Däjjazmačh Gäbrä-Sellassè constructed two monasteries in Ambä Sänayti, his birthplace. The monasteries are *Abunä* Gäbrä Menefes Qidus of Makanakist and Däbrä Ganat Sellassie.⁸² Not only this, *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè constructed his palace and others in Aksum. Among these were:

1. He cleaned the May Shum reservoir and he imported different water pumps from abroad. By doing so, he solved the water problem of Aksum town.⁸³
2. He renewed the main Aksum Tsion Church roof and added a new room, and also conserved the church from water entering through the roof.⁸⁴

⁸⁰Tsehaye Hile, "A Short Biography of *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè Barya Gaber (*Abba* Kibad) (1873-1930)," p.1;

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p.76;

⁸²*Ibid.*, p.69,

⁸³Belay Gidey, *Aksum*, pp.76-77; and Tsehaye Haile, "A Biography..." pp.75-81.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

3. He initiated different archaeological excavations and encouraged different research activities in Aksum conducted by the German team led by Eno Litheman.⁸⁵
4. He built a palace in Aksum. This served as the residence of the Neburä-ed of Aksum for many years, but now became a library.⁸⁶

Däjjazmačh Gäbrä-Sellassè established his political center at *Zeban* (upper) Hahaile and Tsehan. His ruined palace is found now in Zeban Hahaile and the area is still known by the name of *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè palace. On October 13, 1930, *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè died at the place of the Holy water of Mitaq Amanuel at the age of 57.⁸⁷ His body was buried at the Trinity Cathedral Church in Addis Ababa and after seven years, the remains of *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè was transported to his birthplace, Tsehan, by *Grazemačh* Tasefay Habitu. Then his remains was placed in the monastery of Gäbrä Manfasqudus of Makana Akist.⁸⁸

To sum up *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Sellassè not only had a political role in Ethiopian history but also made a great contribution in supporting and construction of different monasteries and churches at his birthplace and Aksum. There was also a historical relationship with Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery.⁸⁹

2. *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Hiwot Meshesha Bayiru (*Wedi Hazo Bayiru*)

Däjjazmačh Gäbrä-Hiwot Meshesha nicknamed *Wedi Hazo Bayiru* was the son *Däjjazmačh* Meshesha Bayiru and his mother was Tsehayitu Gezahegn, and was born at Gäralta in 1910. He was from a noble family related to Emperor Yohanis IV and to Shum Agame (governor of

⁸⁵Belay Gidey, *Aksum*.pp.76-77; and Tsehaye Haile, “A Biography...,” pp.75-81.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷Tsehaye Haile. “A Short Biography...,” p.67,

⁸⁸*Ibid*.pp.68-69;

⁸⁹Informants: Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam.

Agame).⁹⁰ His political base was Hahaile. His horse's name was *Fenkel*. Mainly being in his home place he participated in the Battle of May-chew and he played a great role in the Ethiopian Patriotic resistance (1936-1941). He attacked the Italian army in different places in central Tigray and made great casualties destroying the enemy force. Then Wedi Hazo Bayiru contributed a lot as a patriot and he served as an *Awraja* governor first of Kambäta and Hadiya and later of Adwa until he died in 1963. He was engaged in fighting the Italian army in Adwa, Hahaile, Enticho, Gäralta, Werie, Aksum and finally at Lemalemo after liberation.⁹¹ Then he is recognized as a number one hero in Tigray, especially at Adwa and its surrounding areas. A lot has been said about him in the poems composed by the community in Tigrigna.⁹² This can be seen/read in the following Tigrigna songs or poems sung at the time were:-

ገብረሄተይ ወዲ ሓዘ ባይርኡ 'የ
ንሱ ዓርዓር ሓሻኩሩ ነብሪ'የ
መፀ መፀ ለማሊጥ ገይሩ'የ
ውልዶ ሽባካ ፅላል ንሃገሩ'የ⁹³

Rough English Translation:

Gäbrähetey the son of Hazo Bayirue,

He is a Wildcat his followers was a Tiger

He is coming through Lemalemo

He is child of Shebaka and an umbrella/protector of his Country.

Another poem is-

ስሙ ገብረሄት ፈረሱ ፈንቅል
ብመድፍዕ በመተረየስ ፀላኢ ዝፍንቅል⁹⁴

⁹⁰Hadush Reda, *Yeqosele Tarik*, Far Esat Trading P.L.C, Addis Ababa,2018,p.134;
⁹¹Informants: Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay, Haleqa Gäbräzeher Tesafay, *Abba Argawi Araya*, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam; and Hadush Reda, *Yeqosele Tarik*, Far East Trading P.L.C, Addis Ababa,2018.p.141
⁹² *Ibid.*
⁹³ *Ibid.*;

Rough English Translation:

His name is Gäbrähiwot and his horse is *Fenkel*

Using canon and machine gun, who could evict his enemy.

During the period of the Italian occupation which lasted for five years, there were more than nineteen patriots who were led by *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrähiwot Meshesha. These were: *Fitäwrari* Abetew, *Fitäwrari* Berhane Tegebaru, *Haneta* Geberu Tegebaru, *Grazmačh* Gäbrämekael Deséta, *Grazmačh* Gäbrämekael Gidey, *Grazmahčh* Hayelu Gäbräyesus, *BelebeRäs* Gäbräyesus Wedabameret, *Fetewerari* Feleqe, *Fetewerari* Tessema, *Shum-Temben* *Däjjazmačh* Hadegu, *Qännazmačh* Gäbrämedhin Gäbräizegi, *Qännazmačh* Gäbräkeristos Gäbräizegi, *Grazmačh* Zeweldi, *Däjjazmačh* Sahele Gäbrämekael, *Däjjazmačh* Haileselasie Gäbrämedhin, *Qännazmačh* Enebeza Negash, *Fitäwrari* Gäbräselassè Enun, and *Fitäwrari* Abebe Tessema.⁹⁵ By leading these patriots, *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrähiwot Meshesha performed heroic activity in Tigray and in part of north Gondar.

In general, he made a great sacrifice for Ethiopian independence, but did not get an equivalent reward for his patriotic achievement in his political position and acknowledgment from the central government of Emperor HaileSelasie's regime. History has not given him full recognition despite his incomparable political achievements it in the war of resistance (1935-36) and in the later patriotic resistance.⁹⁶

⁹⁴Informants: Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam; and Hadush Reda, *Yeqosele Tarik*, Far Esat Trading P.L.C, Addis Ababa, 2018, p.141;

⁹⁵Gäbrämikael Teklehiwot, *Ye tiyopia Achir Tarik*, pp.23-24; and Informants: Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam.

⁹⁶Informants: Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha, Qés Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam.

3. *Bäshäy* Awe'alom Haregot

BäShäy Awe'alom was born in the central zone in Ahiferom *Wäräda*, *Tabia* Tekuz near the town of Enticho in Tigray in 1832. He was born from his father *Ato* Haregot Sereqebirhan and his mother *Wayzero* Sahelu Baheru. Awe'alom grew up as the ordinary community children. As a result he studied church education. Then Awe'alom at his young age attended court as attorney for different poor women's right and moved from place to place like Aksum, Adwa, Ambä Sänayti etc. and is said to have won different cases. This is indicated that he strongly defended human right of the community especially for women.⁹⁷

BäShäy Awe'alom was a sharp shooter at targets. He has taken training by using his uncle's gun. He was also working as a merchant going as far as Asmara in Hamasen and Massawa. He imported modern guns, ammunition, and glasses from Massawa to be sold at Enticho. Then in return, he exported different materials like gold, Chicken, honey, butter, civet to Massawa. This indicates that he was an active person. On the other hand, though not well known, *BäShäy* Awe'alom had begun intelligence services and had close relationships with *Räs* Bayireu, *Räs* Are'aya Demetsu, *Räs*Alula Abba Nega and *Räs* Menegessa Yohannis.⁹⁸

Then *BäShäy* Awe'alom served as a key intelligence person for the Ethiopian army victory over the Italian invaders in the 1896 at the Battle of Adwa. The skillful intelligence of *BäShäy* Awe'alom played a great role by misinforming the Italians and providing the false information about the Ethiopia army on the eve of Battle of Adwa. By giving false information, Awe'alom encouraged and forced them to evacuate the Italian army's fortification at Ambä Soyra in

⁹⁷Yemane Gäbrämesqel, *Bashay Awealom ena Ye Itiyopia Selela Tarik*, Addis Ababa, Rehobot Printing Press, 2003. pp. 107-116.

⁹⁸*Ibid*, pp.173-208; and Tekletsadiq Mokuria, *Menilik ena Itiyopia Andenet*, Addis Ababa, Kuraz Asatami, 1991.p.359.

Enticho.⁹⁹ Generally, *BäShäy Awe'alom* had contributed a great role in Ethiopian history and as a hero an individual citizen named engineer Tilahun in the name of Adwa Development Association in commemoration of his unforgettable and decisive work to save his motherland has erected a statue in 2008 at Adwa.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Tekletsadiq Mokuriya, *Atse Menelik Ena Itiyopia Andenet*, pp.360-63.

¹⁰⁰Appendix.3.

Chapter II

2.1 Christianity and the Establishment of Monasteries in Ahiferom Wārāda

Ethiopia is one of the early African countries that adopted Christianity. There are various traditions about the introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia in the first Century A.D or 34 A.D, (Act of Apostles 8:26-40). Nevertheless, historians are virtually unanimous for the introduction of Christianity to Aksum in viewing the arrival of the Syrian brothers Frumentius and Aedesius in the fourth century as a turning point in the religious history of the Aksumite kingdom.¹

In Ethiopia history, Aksum was a pioneer in the introduction and expansion of Christianity in its neighborhood. It is obvious that Christianity was officially introduced into Aksum in the first half of the fourth Century. However, the introduction of Christianity as the state religion of the Aksumites was not a result of an organized evangelical activity from outside but it was due to the freewill of the King. King Ezana was the first Ethiopian king to make Tewahdo Orthodox Christianity as his state religion. The pioneer in the process of the introduction of Christianity was a Syrian Monophysite Christian called Frumentius, who later was consecrated as “ኤጲስ ቆጶስ ዘኢኩሱም” a Bishop of the Aksumite Kingdom by the Egyptian Patriarch Athanasius.² Thus, the process of the introduction of Christianity was a turning point in Ethiopian history that brought a

¹Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270*, Addis Ababa, 1972, pp.98-99; Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of the Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1984. P.15; Gorgoryos (Abunä), *Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church History*, 1986. pp. 20-21 (Amharic Version); Belay Gidey, *Ye Itiyopia Seletanie*, Addis Ababa, Berhan Selam Printing press. 1991. pp.111-112 (Amharic Version); and Mersha Alehegn, *Zena Papat Itiyopian*, Addis Ababa, 2004, p.14; H.M. Hayatt, *The Church Abyssinia*, London, Luzac and Co, 1928, p.30.

²Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and medieval...* p.102; Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, London, Oxford University press, 1972. pp.22-23; H.M. Hayatt, *The Church Abyssinia*, London, Luzac and Co, 1928, p.31; Belay Gidey, *Ye Itiyopia Seletanie*, Addis Ababa, pp.113-115 (Amharic Version); Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of the Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1984, p.15; Gaseparini G.M, *Ye Aksum Bete Mengest Hawelet*, Asmera Comeaani collage, 1933, pp.122-130 (Amharic Version); Trinigham J. Spencer, *Islam in Ethiopia*, Frank Class and Co. Ltd, 1956, pp.38-39; and Paulos Yohannes (Bishop), “Filsata: The Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and the Mariological tradition of the Ethiopia Orthodox Tewahedo Church,” Ph. D. Thesis. Princeton, New Jersey, 1988. pp.15-16.

big change in the life of the Ethiopian people. From this time on, Christianity began to expand to different areas which the Aksumite state controlled. The introduction of Christianity began to play an integral role in all aspects of the national life of the Ethiopia and the Ethiopians.³

However, at the early time, Christianity was probably confined to the ruling class. It spread to the masses mainly with the coming of the Nine Saints from the Eastern Mediterranean world and were welcomed by Emperor Ellä Amida II (r.478-486) and by the inhabitants of the city towards the end of the 5th century. In Ethiopia, those monks were known as ስቲቆስቶሳን (Nine Saints). On their arrival, they translated the Bible Greek into the local Ge'ez language and built many churches and monasteries in the neighboring areas of Aksum town. By doing so, the church men played crucial role in the diffusion of the faith throughout the kingdom.⁴ Due to this, the current Ahiferom *Wäräda* and its neighboring areas like Ambä Sänayti as other parts of Aksumite Empire were not free from the influence of the Christianity.

In fact, the arrival of the “Nine Saints” to Ethiopia laid the foundation for the establishment of monasteries and the flourishing of the Ethiopian Tewahado Christian Churches in the country. This indeed promoted the establishment of monastic life and monasteries mainly in the northern part of Ethiopia. Then, the study area and its neighboring *Wärädas* and sub *Wärädas* like Ambä Sänayti, Enedä *Abba* Sahema, Gulo Mekeda and Ganta Afeshum as parts of the Aksumite Empire and northern Ethiopia have a long period of attachments with Christianity. For the same

³Segew HableSellasie, “The Establishment of the Ethiopian Church” *the Church of Ethiopia, A panorama of History and spiritual life*, Addis Ababa, United Press, 1970.p.5; Sargew HableSellasie, *Ancient and Medieval...*p.115.

⁴Sargew HableSellasie, *Ancient and Medieval...*pp.115-119; Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*.pp.23-25; Sargew Hable Selassie, “The Establishment of the Ethiopian Church,”p.2; Belay Gidey, *Ye Itiyopia Seletanie*, (Amharic Version) Addis Ababa, pp.125-127; Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of the Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, pp.16-17; Beda Mariyam Ejigu Reta. *Ye Itiyopia Orthodox*, p.1. Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, pp.16-17; H.M. Hayatt, *The Church Abyssinia*, London, Luzac and Co, 1928.p.32; and Gaseparini G.M, *Ye Aksum Bete Mengest Hawelet...*pp.130-131.

reason these different areas are mentioned in different books, namely Ambä-Sänayti, Enticho, Haramaet, Awger, Ambä Gual-Hatsei, Lawsa, Agazena, Daeraka, Hahaile-Fresemay and Eglä-Tsorena in associated with the monasteries and religious men.⁵The fact is that, these areas are surrounded by different monasteries established by the Nine Saints and later by other rock hewn churches and churches were established by some other holy men. In addition to this, there were different religious holy men who lived and preached Christianity and established different monasteries and churches in Ahiferom *Wäräda* and Ambä Sänayti. Among these holy men were *Abunä Ewostatéwos*, *Abunä Zäkaryas*, *Abunä Abasadi*, *Abunä Gäbräkeristos*, *Abunä Mamas*, *Abunä Estifanos*, *Abunä Sét*, and *Abunä Matiyos*. In this area *Abunä Ewostatéwos* met *Abunä Abasadi*. Then at the Däbrä Bäkür Mountains *Abunä Abasadi* was ordained as a monk by the hands of *Abunä Ewostatéwos*.⁶

Actually, the coming of the Nine Saints and the emergence of many religious men encouraged the establishment of much more monasteries and churches. Based on this, now a days in Tigray, there are about 2009 churches and monasteries both rock hewn and constructed ones.⁷ Among the churches that are found in Adwa *Aweraja* are around 843 churches and monasteries. From these, there are more than 296 monasteries and churches, which were built in the name of different Saints, Angel, and using the different names of God by assigning *Tabots* (Ark or replica of the True Ark of the Covenant) currently found in Ahiferom *Wäräda* and Ambä Sänayti sub

⁵Hunting ford G.W.B, *The Land of Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, pp.80-100; Carlo Conti Rossini. *Liber Axumae*, pp.39-40.

⁶Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*, Addis Ababa, Ageyos press,(Amharic Version),2013.pp.22-26; Sergew Hable Selassie, *Amarigna Ye betekeristeyn Mezegebe Qalat*, Vol. 1, 1969.p.7, Vol.9.1981.p.176 and Vol.10, 1982. p.169; Carlo Conti Rossini, *Il Gädlä Filipos edil Gädlä Yohanes di Däbrä Bizan*, MRAL(1901),Viii, p.112; Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axumae*, p.39; and Mareqerowos Arega (*Leqe Berhanat*), *Ye Qedusan Tarik*,. No.5, (Amharic Version), 2006.p.8; and Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, Qés Tekelaab Fesseha, *Haleqa Gäbrägzeher Tesefay* and Qés Mezemuer Gäbrämariyam.

⁷*Be Itiyopia Yemigegnu Abeyate Keristiyanat ena Yekahinat Quter Megelecha*, ND, pp.142-213; and Stitz V, “Distribution and Foundation of Churches in Ethiopia,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XIII, No.1, Addis Ababa, 1975.P.20.

Wäräda.⁸ This indicates that Ahiferom and its neighboring areas were predominately inhabited by Christian population. This trend has led to the establishment of many monasteries and churches starting from the fifth century A.D until now. One of these monasteries is the monastery of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét*. This monastery was administered by *Abement Abba Mäeqäbä Igzi'e*.⁹ This monastery in addition to having a long period history has been endowed with historical artifacts and treasures. However, this historically important religious site has not been well known. No concerned body has tried to take care of it and to introduce it to public. The purpose of this research is to explore the history of the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery that is one of the oldest monasteries of Ethiopia.

2.2 Establishment of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery

As it is already described above, the coming of the Nine Saints into the Aksumite Empire towards the end of fifth Century contributed a lot to the establishment of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery and different monasteries in Tigray. These monasteries belong to the ancient monasteries that have much importance to preserve the history of Orthodox Tewahido Church education and religious activities. Among the leading monasteries that are considered by the Christian people as first generation monasteries in Ethiopia are Däbrä Damo *Abunä Aregawi*, *Abunä Gerima Medera*, *Abunä Afšé Yäha*, and *Abunä Sahema Enedä Abaa Sahema*.¹⁰ These

⁸*Be Itiyopia Yemigegnu Abeyate Keristiyana tena Yekahinat Quter Megelecha*, ND, pp.142-213;

⁹Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ye Amarigna Ye Betekeristeyan Mezegebe Qalat*, part.10, p.169; Carlo Conti Rossini, *Liber Axumae*, p.39; Daniel Keberet, *Ye Betekristeyan Merjawoch*, p.468; and Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*; Qés Tekelaab Fesseha; *Haleqa Gäbrägzehar Tesefay* and Qés Mezemuer Gäbrämariyam.

¹⁰Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval...*, pp.115-119; Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, pp.23-25; Belay Gidey, *Ye Itiyopia Seletanie*, Addis Ababa, .pp.125-127 (Amharic Version); and Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of the Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, pp.16-17.

monasteries were established by the Nine Saints and all of them are recurrently located in the Central Zone of Tigray, a place little far from Aksum to its Eastern direction.¹¹

The monasteries established by the “Nine Saints” encircled the areas of Ahiferom *Wäräda* and Ambä Sänyti in Adwa area. Thus during the Aksumite period the Central Zone was highly influenced by the teaching and preaching of the Nine Saints. Being influenced by the Nine Saints there continued an expansion of the Christianity and monastic life in this area.¹² Due to this, different monasteries and churches including rock-hewn churches were established throughout Tigray and later on gradually in Ethiopia. Among these monasteries, one of the oldest monasteries is Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery.

However, the exact location of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery was not clearly known by different authors. Those who heard about it simply suggested that it was located in Tigray, in northern Ethiopia. When we refer to Sergew Hable Selassie, Daniel Keberet and Conti Rossini they simply stated that Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery was located in Tigray, in North Ethiopia.¹³ Another document written by Hunting Ford also stated that Däbrä Bäkür monastery is located in the way to Torat-Hawezen region.¹⁴ Nevertheless, a document, which is available in the National Archive and Library Agency (NALA) entitled “በኢትዮጵያ የሚገኙ አብያተ ክርስቲያናት እና የካህናት ቁጥር መግለጫ (Be Itiyopia Yemegegnu Abeyate Keristiyanat ena Ye Kahinat Quter megelecha). ND”, is gives the exact location where the monastery under study

¹¹Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval...*, pp.115-119; Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, pp.23-25; Belay Gidey, *Ye Itiyopia Seletanie*, Addis Ababa, pp.125-127(Amharic Version); and Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of the Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, pp.16-17.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ye Amarigna Ye Betekeristan Mezegebe Qalat*, Vol.10, p. 169; and Daniel Keberet, *Ye Betekeristeyan Merjawoch*, p, 468.

¹⁴Hunting Ford, *Land of Charters Northern Ethiopia*, p.97.

was established.¹⁵ Based on this document, Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery is one of the monasteries in Ethiopia situated in Adwa *Aweraja*, Hahaile Sub-*Wäräda* at the border area of Werie Leke and Ambä Sänayti specifically at Daro Anbessa formerly known as Adi Satera *Qäbälé* at the village of Däbri Bokri.¹⁶

With regard to the establishment date of when the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery, there is no documented evidence which indicates the exact date of establishment. However, there are different sources that give different information about when the monastery was established. These sources are oral tradition/information and written documents.

As the oral tradition reviles/stated that Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery was established during the reign of Amda Seyon (r.1314-1344) and the founder of this monastery was a monk called *Abunä Sét*. It believed that the area was selected by *Abunä Sét* with the help and guidance of an Angel of the God. *Abunä Sét* prayed for 40 days and 40 nights by standing at bottom of the Mountain of Ambä Gual-Hatsei, Hahaile. Following this, the Satan (devil) abandoned the mountain. Because of this, the people of Hahaile were freed from the Satan (devil) and started to live in peace. *Abunä Sét* not only prayed for the people and also preached the Gospels and new and old Testament for the community.¹⁷

¹⁵*Be Itiyopia Yemegegnu Abeyate Keristiyant ena Ye Kahinat Quter Megelecha*, ND.p.184.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, Qés Tekleaab Fesseha, *Haleqa* Gäbräzgeher Tesfay, Qés Sadur Woldegerges; and *Deacon* Kenife Abrha.

Figure: 5. *Ambä* (mount) Gual Hatsei (አምባ ንልሃፀይ)¹⁸



Source. Photo by Leake Tekleberhan taken in December 2019.

After this, Saint Michel again told *Abunä Sét*, this place was not favorable for him and then saying “ሐር ቅድሜክ መጠነ አሃዱ ምዕራፍ በምስራቅ ለአምባ ንል ሐፀይ” Rough translation reads: “go one more step forward to the eastern direction from the area of *Ambä* (mount) Gual Hatsei.” After this, *Abunä Sét* continued his prayer for seven days. Saint Michael told him again saying “በል ኪዳ እሞ ምርኩስካ ወርወር እሞ ምስወርወርካ እታ በትርኻ እንተይ ዘይ ወዲቃ እታ ቦታ ክፍልካ እያ አብኡ ድማ ተኣምር ክትርኢ ኢካ በሎ” Rough translation reads: “now

¹⁸Appendix.1; Hunting Ford. *Land of Charters Northern Ethiopia*....p.88; and Hunting Ford. *The historical Geography of Ethiopia from first to 1704*;pp. 114-115;and Francisco Alvares, *Prester John of Indies*,P.169. Mentioned as a mountain area and found near *Ambä Sänayti* at Hahaile.

move, then throw your stick, after throwing your stick if the stick does not fall down the place is your favorite place where you will see a miracle.” Then, *Abunä Sét* did what Saint Michael told him to do and threw his stick to the area found at the bottom of the mountain. Nevertheless, the stick fell down. After this, *Abunä Sét* believed that the area was not his destination. Then after, *Abunä Sét* named this area Keberi-Hasema (disrespect place). Then *Abunä Sét* moved again further direction to a place named Adi-Chende. *Abunä Sét* began to select a proper stones to build a church and planted different plants, especially Juniper and olive tree by taking seeds from Dessa-Enderta. Nevertheless, after *Abunä Sét* made a great effort he left this place due to lack of water.¹⁹

After this, *Abunä Sét* prayed to God and then moved to **ምቅማጥ ወልደ አምላክ** “the seat of the son of God” and threw his stick to a place called Laelay-Geza (upper house). *Abunä Sét* did not select this place because the stick fell down. Next to this, *Abunä Sét* from this place again threw his stick to a plain land. Then the stick nailed on the ground and remained erected. Then, *Abunä Sét* pick up the stick and water came out and erupt in the surface for about four meters above the surface. Then *Abunä Sét* prayed and God listened, then the water lay down on the ground and became a spring at May Meserab. Then Saint Michel came and said that “**ኣ ብፁዕ ማር አቡነ ሴት ዛቲ ዕለት ወበህዩ ይትሃነፅ ማህደረክ**” (Oh! holy *Abunä Sét* this place is your destination area and you will construct your church).²⁰ After this, *Abunä Sét* constructed a church at this place and the place where water come out was made as center of the church and became a *Bet meqedes* (holy holiness) and the water has been flowing to the eastern direction and has been

¹⁹Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, Qés Tekleaab Fesseha, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzehar Tesfay, Qés Sadur Woldegerges; and *Deacon* Kenife Abrha.

²⁰*Ibid.*

used as holy water to heal peoples from different diseases until this day.²¹ According to informants, this church was regularly inaugurated on Sene 21 (June 28) by conducting ceremony and liturgy by *Abunä* Samuel of Waldeba²², *Abunä* Abiyie Igzie of Merta²³ and *Abunä* Sét and also mentioned other two monks, but there is no clear date.²⁴ Since this time the church became a center of Christianity religion.

After the church was established, *Abunä* Sét was worrying about the concerned body that could elevate the church to a monastery level. This was because at that time if one church was established and promoted to the status of a monastery it had to be recognized by the contemporary King (Emperor). Then it was assumed that God was believed to have expressed his will to *Abunä* Sét that the church would evolve to a monastery by a King named Dawit who was not born yet. "Abunä Sét continued to stay praying to God until the king was born". Then *Abunä* Sét did what God had told him.²⁵

After this, different Ethiopia kings appeal to this place and asked *Abunä* Sét to develop the church to a monastery and to get blessing. One of these kings was Amda Seyon (r.1314-1344). However, *Abunä* Sét by blessing Amda Seyon stated that he had to wait for the coming of a king called Dawit to give the church a status of a monastery. Then Amda Seyon, after accepting the idea stated by *Abunä* Sét, He declared that any *Moqanentor Räs* (regional lords) should not allow entering in to this church except monks. The king granted *agult* land to this church. These *gult* lands included all *Qäbälés* of Hahaile. After Amda Seyon, another king called Newaya

²¹Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämaryam, Qés Tekleab Fesseha, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzehar Tesfay, Qés Sadur Woldegerges; and *Deacon* Kenife Abrha.

²²*Abunä* Samuél was a disciple of Madhaninä Igzi'e Däbrä Bänkol. He lived during the region of Dawit I.

²³*Abunä* Abiyie Igzie one of the Ethiopian holy men lived in the 12th and 13th century.

²⁴Informants: Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämaryam, Qés Tekleab Fesseha, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzehar Tesfay, Qés Sadur Woldegerges, and *Deacon* Kenife Abrha.

²⁵*Ibid*; and *Gädlä Abunä* Sét.p.2;

Krestos (Sayfeard) (r.1344-1372) also visited the church and to *Abunä Sét* asked the same question. However, *Abunä Sét* gave the same response. Then king returned by confirming the given *gult* land to the church.²⁶

According to the *Gädlä Abunä Sét* and informants, King Dawit (r.1382-1413) came to power in 1382. This information was listened by *Abunä Sét*. Then, *Abunä Sét* and *Abunä Enderiyas*²⁷ met with King Dawit. Dawit gave them a warm welcome and asked the reason why they came to him. *Abunä Sét* told him that there is a church named *Däbrä Mariyam* at Hahaile, which he wanted to raise it to a monastery. Then, the response of the king was positive one and agreed to elevate the church to the status of a monastery and to give it his own *gult*, but this would materialize after the defeat of Adal. After the king's response became positive, *Abunä Sét* decided to go to war front with Dawit. After two weeks traveling, Dawit requested *Abunä Sét* to pray in a separate place named Zanguie. In the meantime, the war broke out between Dawit and Adal. Dawit and Adal started open war. Nevertheless, the army of Dawit was unable to defeat the army of Adal that was well armed and covered all his body with hamlet except his eyes. Later, after the force of Adal was nearer to victory over the Dawit army. Then after, Dawit prayed three times by saying “ሴት ሴት ሴት ተዘከረኒ (ተረደኝ)” (*Sét Sét Sét help me*). *Abunä Sét* sent white Bees into the battlefield, then the Bees attacked the Adal army and then king Dawit emerged victorious. Dawit returned with the Bishop *Abunä Bärtalomewos* (1398/9-1436) and *Abunä Sét* to Hahaile *Däbrä Sebhät /Däbrä Mariam Church*. After this, King Dawit gave the title

²⁶Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, Qés Tekleaab Fesseha, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzehar Tesfay, Qés Sadur Woldegerges and *Haleqa* Tesefay Gäbräsetatiyos.

²⁷*Abunä Enderiyas* was one of the Ethiopian holy man lived during the reign of Emperor Dawit I, and in contemporary of *AbunäSét*.

of a monastery to this church and re-named it by the Däbrä Bäkür. Starting from this time *Abunä Sét* and the monastery had established a strong relationship with the royal court.²⁸

The other groups of sources are written documents. The written document could be further divided into four. According to the first group of documents written by Sargew HableSellasie, Daniel Keberet and Conti Rossini, Däbrä Bäkür Monastery is one of the monasteries found in Tigray that was established before the invasion of Ahemed Gragn in the first half of the 16th Century. The *Abamenet* (Abbot) of this monastery was called *Abunä Ma'egebeIgzie*. During this time, the *gult* of the monastery was also renewed and registered by Emperor Lebene Denegel (r. 1508-1540) as it is mentioned in the መዕከሪ ኣክሱም (Book of Aksum).²⁹ Besides this, Daniel kebret, in his Book entitled “*Aratu Hayalen*” writes that *Abunä Ewostatéwos* (*Abunä Ma'egebeIgzie*) (1272-1351) was one of the known religious men who had a great contribution in the establishment of different monasteries and had produced many disciples who served in different parts of Ethiopia. He and with other disciples lived for 10 years in Ambä Sanayti and Däbrä Bäkür. He was lived 10 years at Däbrä Bäkür and Däbrä Bärbäré from the year 1320-1330.³⁰ When we calculate the time *Abunä Ewostatéwos* lived in Däbrä Bäkür and Däbrä Bärbäré it was during the region of King Amda Seyon (r.1314-1344) one of the strongest Ethiopian kings. In the sources, there is a variation in time between the living time of *Abunä Ewostatéwos* (*Abunä Ma'egebeIgzie*) in the first half of 14th century and the *Abement* position (administration time) of *Abba Me'aqebeIgzie* in the first half of 16th century. This might

²⁸Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, Qés Tekleaab Fesseha, *Haleqa Gäbrägzeher Tesfay*, Qés Sadur Woldegerges and *Haleqa Tesefay Gäbräsetatiyos*.

²⁹Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.39, Sargew HableSellasie, *Ye Betekristeyan Mezegebe Qalat*..vol.10, p.139; and Daniel Keberet, *Ye Betekristiyan Merjawoch*, p.468.

³⁰Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*, p.22 and 26; and Carol Conti Rossini, *II Gädlä Filipos eil Gädlä Yohanes di Däbrä Bizan*, p.155.

bereferring to the different religious man with the same name who lived and served the monastery at different time.

The other written document that mentioned Däbrä Bäkuer as the oldest monastery is the Chronicle of Emperor Zara Yaqob (r.1434-1468) and Baeda Mariyam (r.1468-1478). This chronicle mentioned that one of the *Neburieds* (Administrators) of Däbrä Damo Monastery was named Kebero Seytan who was ordained as monk at Däbrä Bäkur monastery and the monastery located southward of the Däbrä Damo Monastery in the line of Torat Hawezen.³¹

The second document that states about the establishment of the Däbrä Bäkur *Abunä Sét* Monastery is *Gädlä Abunä Sét*. This *Gädlä Abunä Sét* said that *Abunä Sét* had close relationship with the medieval period Ethiopian emperors: Dawit I (r.1382-1413 A.D), Tewoderos I (r.1413-1414), and Yeshaq I (r.1419-1429). Then, the monastery named Däbrä Bäkur the first of my convenient (ደብረ በኩር /በኩሪ ኪዳን) based on the promise made by King Dawit I.³² According to *Gädlä Abunä Sét*, *Abunä Sét* was ordained as monks by the hand of *Abunä Zäkaryas* of Däbrä Bärbäéré.³³ *Abunä Zäkaryas* of Däbrä Bärbäéré was one of the *Abamenet* in Däbrä Bärbäéré in Ambä Sänayti towards the end of 14th Century and beginning of the 15th Century contemporary *Abunä Fileppos* of Däbrä Bizen (1313-1406). Kinefe-Rigb and Taddesse asserts *Abunä Zäkaryas* of Däbrä Bärbäéré was a disciple of *Abunä Ewostatéwos* (1272-1351). He lived in the reigns of Dawit I (r.1382-1413) and in the time or contemporary of the Egyptian Metropolitan *Abunä*

³¹Perruhon, Chronicle of Zara Yaqob and BeadaMariyam, p.12;

³²*Gädlä Abunä Sét* .pp.30-31

³³*Ibid*...p.1.

Bärtäloméwos (1398/9-1436).³⁴ Based on this *Abunä Sét* was one of the Ethiopian monks who lived in the contemporary of king Dawit I and *Abunä Zäkaryas* of Däbrä Bärbäré.

Gädlä Abunä Sét also says that, when *Abunä Sét* traveled to king Dawit I *Abunä Enderiyas* blessed *Abunä Sét* by saying “ናይ ኣቦታትና ዳንኤል፣ ኤዎስጣቴዎስ እና ማቴዎስን³⁵ ኣምላክ መንገድካ የቐንጠልካ” rough English translation that let “the God of our fathers Daniel, Ewostatéwos and Matewos strengthen your way.”³⁶ Then the *Gädlä Abunä Sét* led to reach a conclusion that the Däbrä Bäkur *Abunä Sét* monastery was already established before the reign of King Dawit I, when king Dawit came in to power in 1382, the monastery already established. In addition to this *Abunä Sét* and *Abunä Zäkaryas* were mentioned as their religious fathers for *Abunä Daniel*, *Abunä Matewos* and *Abunä Ewostatéwos*.

The third document that describes/states about Däbrä Bäkur *Abunä Sét* monastery is found in the NALA (Ethiopia National Archive and Library Agency). According to this document Däbrä Bäkur *Abunä Sét* monastery is one of the monasteries found in Tigray, Adwa *Aweraja* in Hahaile *Wäräda*. The communities of the area established the Däbrä Bäkur *Abunä Sét* monastery in 1890.³⁷ This source gives the exact location and correct name of the monastery with the correct name of *Abunä Sét*, but it does not indicate the correct date when the monastery was established. This document does not indicate its source of information. In this the establishment time of the monastery is not correct. Because different written documents indicated that the monastery as oldest monastery and established before the fifteen Century not in the 19th Century.

³⁴Sargew Hable Sellasie, *Yebete kristeyan Mezegebe Qalat*, p.176; Caro IConti Rossini, “*Il Gädlä Filpos e il Gadla Yohannes di Däbrä Bizan*,” p.118; Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, pp. 215; and Mareqorwos Arega (*Leqe berhanat*), *Yeqedusan Tarik*, No. 5.1998 E.C.p.127; Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke, *Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions*, p.71; and Amsalu Tefera, *Neqaa Mäshäfaet*, P.181.

³⁵According Maregors Arega, *Yeqedusan Tarik*, p.149-150:- *Abunä Matiyos* was born at Enderta. He was ordained as a monk by the hand of *Abunä Zakariyas*.

³⁶*Gädlä Abunä Sét* .p.1.

³⁷*Be Itiyopia yemigegnu Ye Betekristeyan ena Ye Kahinat Megelecha*, p.184;

The fourth source that taken as evidence are the treasures like *MenebereTsadeqan* (*Menbere Bärtāloméwos*) and *Māshāfa Ede* (መዕረፍ ዕድ). *Abunä Bärtāloméwos* (1398/9-1436) offered the *Menbere Tsadeqanas* a gift when they visited the monastery with Emperor Dawit I. The *Māshāfa Ede* (መዕረፍ ዕድ) hand written document found in the monastery also states that *Abunä Sét* also lived in the contemporary of *Abunä Bärtāloméwos*.³⁸

In many cases in Ethiopia monastery and churches history, there is incomplete information about the foundation date, the name of the founder, and the number of clergy.³⁹ This also happens with many monasteries in Ethiopia. From these monasteries one is *Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét* monastery not have full information about when was established. Based on the above written evidences and oral traditions there is no clear cut date about the foundation of *Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét* monastery. Based on the relevant sources *Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét* monastery might have been established in the end of thirteen Century and the beginning of fourteen Century.

³⁸Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, *Qés Mezemur Gäbrāmariyam*, *Qés Tekleab Fesseha*, *Haleqa Gäbräzgeher Tesfay*, *Qés Sadur Woldegerges*, and *Māshāfa Ede*(መዕረፍ ዕድ).

³⁹Stitz V, “Distribution and foundation of Churches in Ethiopia,” *Journal of Ethiopia Studies*. Vol.13, No.1, 1975.p.11;

Chapter III

The Construction and Painting of the Monastery

3.1 The Construction and Building of the Monastery

It is a common practice in Ethiopian history that the establishment and construction of churches has been on elevated areas, mountains and caves. This is observed in Ethiopian history since the Aksumite period. Most of the monasteries were established on mountains and hills. Because the cliffs and raised sites were considered held as sacred areas to serve as places of worship. It is common to see churches on cliffs in Tigray and Eritrea.¹ Some monasteries were established in the plain terrain and gorges in Tigray. Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery was established and constructed in the terrain that was partially encircled by cliffs.²

According to some informants, *Abunä Sét* came to Däbrä Bakori and established Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery by leading of Saint Michael. According to informants, this monastery was built at different times by different personalities since its establishment. *Abunä Sét* with the help of God built the first building. *Abunä Sét* called the first site Däbrä Sebhät because *Abunä Sét* prayed by saying “*Sebhät La'ab*” in this area. After the church building was finished, *Abunä Sét* brought *Tabote* Mariyam (replica of covenant of St. Virgin Marry). It is believed that the *Tabot* of Mariam was brought from Aksum. By bringing this *Tabot* of Mariam

¹Buxton, David Roden, *The Rock-Hewn and Other Churches of Tigre Province, Ethiopia* Oxford, Printed by Vivian Ridler for the Society of Antiquaries of London, 1971.p.77;

²Informants: *Abba* Aragawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariam, and *Qés* Gäbräkeristos Gäbrägziher.

it was put in the new building. The new building was inaugurated on *Sene* 21(June 28) but not well known in which year started the first mass service ceremony.³

On the opening day of the church, many religious men and women participated. These religious men came from different areas led by God. Some religious men who came to this church led by God were *Abunä* Samuel from Wäldebba, *Abunä* AbiyäIgzi'e from Tamben Adi Mereta, *Abunä* GäbräMeseqel from Legaso Adi Areba'ete, *Abunä* Gäbrä Nazerawi from Qia'at Haramat, *Abunä* Aron from Shire.⁴ Nevertheless, other informants mentioned only the name of two religious men. These were *Abunä* Samuel from Wäldebba with two unknown monks and *Abunä* AbiyäIgzi'e from Tamben Adi Mereta.⁵ Both sources have similar information about the coming of *Abunä* Samuel and *Abunä* AbiyäIgzi'e. However, they differ in the ideas of coming and participating in the mass ceremony with the monks in the monastery. From this time onwards, the name of Däbrä Sebhät was used to identify the church was replaced by the name of Däbrä Mariyam.⁶ This tradition continued in the celebration of the holiday of this monastery until the recent time was made on June 28. According to informants the first church building was built in the end of the 13th Century and beginning of 14th Century.⁷

Then after Emperor Dawit (r.1382-1413) renewed the first Church building. Emperor Dawit I renewed the church was as reward for the miracle of *Abunä* Sét attained/sanctified at battle between the Emperor and Adal. The Emperor was happy because of his victory over his enemy and the assistance of *Abunä* Sét in his prayer. Then the Emperor as a thanks giving built the church and planted different species of plants in the compound of the monastery. These plants

³*Ibid.*

⁴Informants: *Qés* Zemekaiel Gäbrämedhin; *Abba* Aragawi Araya; *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges; *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha; *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariyam; *Qés* Kinfé Fesseha; and *Qés* Gäbräkeristos Gäbräegizher.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

are twelve in number named *tekle Dawit* (David plant) and now found in the compound of the monastery.⁸ Not only this, Emperor Dawit also re-named the monastery of Däbrä Mariyam as Däbrä Bäkur and gave it the status of a monastery and awarded the *gult* land to the monastery.⁹

After King Dawit I, King Yeshaq I (r.1414-29) also constructed a new big building in the monastery by renewing the King Dawit building. King Yeshaq made this as a reward to *Abunä Sét* or his praying when the King fought against his enemies the Dobe'a people. In the battle, King Yeshaq captured many Dobe'a people. As a reward, King Yeshaq gave twelve people from among the captives to serve the monastery as servant.¹⁰ Based on this, the King sent skilled men and five well-designed and decorated stones. This building was larger than the formerly constructed and current building and its shape was a circular. This church was built by using marble stones. The church building was completed within a short time on September on the eve 27/28 of the Ethiopian Mesekel holiday (True Cross), and the mass service was made in this holiday.¹¹ The remains of evidence of those marble/white stones are now found on the wall of the *Bet Mäqedes* (holy of holies) because this wall was constructed by using these ruins of white stones.¹²

Currently there is big building in the monastery. This building was the last one that was constructed by the community. But not clearly known when the monastery building was built. There are two oral traditions. The first informants stated that, the current monastery building was built during the early reign of Emperor Menilik II and its age estimated around 150's

⁸*Gädlä Abunä Sét*.p.13; and Appendix: 4.

⁹Informants: *Abba* Aragawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Tekleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam, and *Qés* Gäbräkeristos Gäbrägizher..

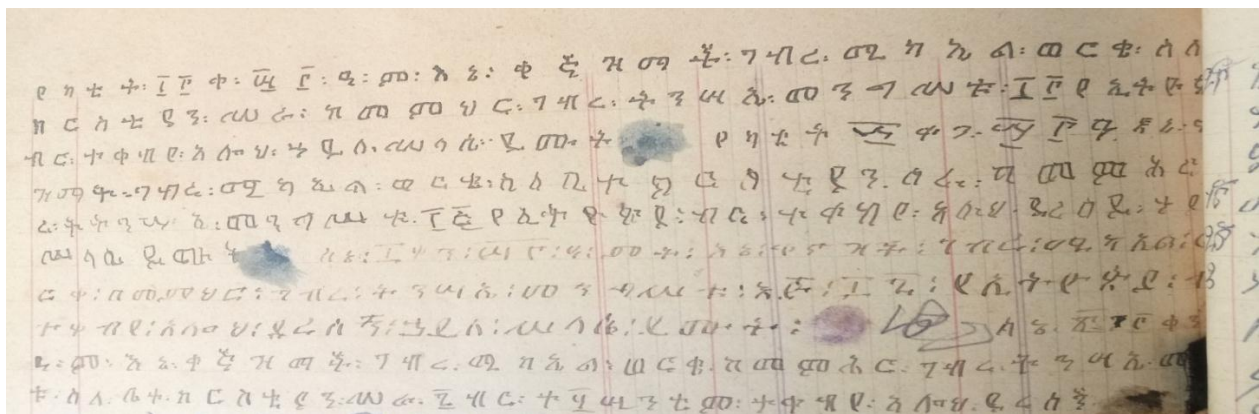
¹⁰*Gädlä*AbunäSét .p.33;

¹¹*Ibid*.p.34;

¹²Informants: *Abba* Aragawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam, and *Qés* Gäbräkeristos Gäbrägizher.

years.¹³ Other informants give other information, the currently standing monastery was built began during Emperor Menilik II and finished during the region of Emperor Haileselassie I.¹⁴ But, the second oral information supported by the document of *Mäshäfa Ede* found in the monastery. The *Mäshäfa Ede* (መፅሐፈ ዕድ) a document found in the hands of the *Sebeka Gubaie* give clue to the current building was built during the reign of Emperor Haileselassie I. This could be observed in the statements and the signature of different people is included in the document. According to the *Mäshäfa Ede*, the skilled and the architect people participated in the construction of the monastery building, when they receive of money to their service and to be paid as wages of their workers and also to buy nail, Coffee and other materials from the hand of Abbot like *Mämeher GäbräTensie* and *Mämeher Gaberu* they put their signature of the receivers name. They also put as bill by swearing in the name of Emperor “ኃይለሥላሴ ይመጥ” (let HaileSellasie die).¹⁵

Figure.6. The document found in the *Mäshäfa Ede* (መፅሐፈ ዕድ) written in 1943 E.C.¹⁶



¹³Informants: *Abba GäbräSellasie Gidey* and *Qés Zemekaiel GäbräMedhin*.

¹⁴Informants: *Abba Aragawi Araya*, *Qés Sadur Woldegerges*, *Qés Tekleab Fesseha*, *Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam*, and *Qés Gäbräkeristos Gäbrägizher*.

¹⁵*Ibid*;

¹⁶This describes *Qännazmach Gäbrämichel Wärqie* receiving Ethiopian Birr for the purpose of the monastery construction four times from the hand of the Abbot *Mämeher Gäbrätensie Mengestu*.

Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

According to the informants the current building took place a long time and finished during the reign of Emperor Haileseelassie I. Because, the current building was too huge.¹⁷ The current monastery building has a circular design. They constructed a circular monastery building based on the traditional church building style. Because Ethiopia is an ancient African country that has a rich tradition and affinities of religious habits and culture. One of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditions is round churches. The Ethiopians have developed their own peculiar round churches.¹⁸

During the construction of the monastery's building, many people took part in the building of the monastery and most of the labor needed was provided by the peasants' free labor. The local people participated throughout the construction process. This building was built by mobilizing the peoples of the 33 *Qäbälés* who were living in Hahaile area.¹⁹

The traditional architect's designers of the building were *Blata* Tesfay from Zeban Hahaile, *Blata* Senqe from Adi-Ahiferom, and *Belamberas* Woldemariyam from Adi-Ahiferom. The carpenters of the monastery were *Ato* Abera Meshesha, *Qännazmaçh* Gäbrämikael, and *Ato* Gäbräkeristos WoldeTekle. In addition, to the above-mentioned men there were also *Abba* Keifa and *Berjerod* WoldeHiwot participated in the construction of the monastery building. Nevertheless, *Berjerod* WoldeHiwot not clearly identified about the profession but he was

¹⁷Informants: *Abba* Aragawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, and *Qés* Gäbräkeristos Gäbräegizher.

¹⁸Getnet Tamen, "Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy," *Asian and African Studies*, Vol.7, 1998, p.92, Richard Pankhurst, *A Social History of Ethiopia: The Northern and Central Highlands from early Medieval times to the rise of Emperor Tewodros II*, Trenton, The Red Sea Press, 1992, pp.37-38;

¹⁹Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesfay, *Qés* Gäbräkeristos Gäbräegziher, and *Abaa* Argawi Araya.

mentioned by the community as one of the men who participated in the construction of the monastery.²⁰

The carpenter and designer who made the windows and the main doors of the building of the monastery was *Haleqa* Kidanu Woldenegus from Adi-Ahiferom. Throughout the time of construction, *Mämeher* GäbräTensaie Mengestu and *Mämeher* Gäbäru Medhanie from the Abbot and treasury men of the monastery, as well as *Däjjazmačh* Meshesha and *Blata* Bahita managed and supervised every step of the construction of the monastery. All the people who lived on the land that was granted to the monastery had participated in facilitating the work and mobilizing the people to contribute different materials like stone, wood, tall grass, etc. The wall of this monastery was built from the pieces and beautiful small stones and woods, the door and the window from wood; the coiling grass was thatched the roof. There is no specific information from informants as to when the current building begun and finished. They simply say this monastery was constructed during the reign of Emperor Haileselesie. The materials of Juniper, *Awehi* (*Cordia Abyssinica*), olive tree, and black tall stones used for the construction of the monastery was brought from the thirty-three *Qäbälé* of Hahaile for instance from Adi-Yiqoro, Daraka, Serace, and Adi Ekli.²¹

The Ethiopian Church architecture plans fall more than two main groups. From these, the rectangular and round plans are common. The Ethiopian churches plan in their internal part divided in to three sections. This culture was derived from the threefold division of the Hebrew

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesfay, Qés Gäbräkeristos Gäbräegziher, and *Abaa* Argawi Araya.

temple.²² These traditionally have three sections means the first section or the outer part is *qenemahlet* (outer ambulatory), second section or the middle part is *qeddest* (surrounding ambulatory) and the third section or center of the church is *Betmäqedes* or *qedusaqedusan* (sanctuary, sancta sanctorum).²³

Like most traditional Churches, Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery was built on the areas surrounded by a hilly terrain. As other traditional building of churches the wall of the monastery is circular and the *kefefkedan* (roof) is conical and thatched with grass; the ceiling was made from wood and *Gassa* (grass) and tied with leather. The concentric division of the church follows the established architectural tradition means it has three sections. The first two sections or the outer parts are *qene Mahilet* and *qeddest* are circular in shape. The *Bet mäqedes* is a rectangular. At the center of the *Bet mäqedes* of the monastery there is a hole of the holy water.²⁴ According to my informants, this *Bet mäqedes* was built two times, the first with the main building and the second time in the 1950s.²⁵

In Ethiopian Orthodox Church tradition, the sections of churches and monasteries building have different purposes. Based on this the *qene mahlet* as its name, it is a place *Dabtra* (Choir men), priests, *Mämeher* (Abbot) and privileged community members stand. The *qeddest* is a section that surrounds the *Bet mäqedes*. In the *qeddest* the priest, deacons and the community who receive communion. Whereas the *Bet mäqedes*, is the section of the center of building, only priests and deacons are allowed to enter and are made to hide from the view of the community.

²²Ullendorf, Edward, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, London, Oxford University Press, 1968.pp.87-88; and Mariya-Jose Friedlander and Bob Friedlander, *Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia: A Guide to Remote Churches of an Ancient Land*, I.B. Tauris and Co, Ltd. London, 2015.p.1.

²³H.M. Hayatt, *The Church Abyssinia*, London, Luzac and Co, 1928.pp.117-121; and Trimmingham J.spencer, *Islam in Ethiopia*, London, Oxford university press, 1952.p.26.

²⁴Appendix, 5.

²⁵Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, *Qés Sadur Woldegerges*, *Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam*, *Qés Tekelab Fesseha*, *Haleqa Gäbrägiher Tesfay*, *Qés Gäbräkeristos Gäbrägiher*, and *Haleqa Tekelberhan Abay*.

The *mäqedes* also called *menbere tabot* (the place of the Ark of covenant).²⁶ Trimmingham and Friedlander also asserts the Ethiopian churches are has three division and used for different purposes.²⁷As the tradition of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery also has three sections that gave different services like the other Ethiopian churches and monasteries.²⁸

This main building of the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery *qene mahlet* or the outer building has totally twenty-one windows and three doors. The *qeddest* has four single and four double doors and also four windows. The *mäqedes* has three doors on the west, south and north directions and three-joined door in the east. All windows and doors are made from well-decorated woods. The roofs of all the buildings found in the monastery are covered by grass. The internal side of the roof of the monastery is also highly decorated with different styles of woods (timber) of juniper trees. In addition, at the top of the roof of the main building of the monastery there are seven ostrich eggs.²⁹

However, the main building has faced challenges for many years because the grass that covered the roof got old and when the rainfall came water destroyed the roof and other parts of the building and the people when the rainy season came they make a great effort to repair by collect grass from all *Qäbälés*. Later on, the grass of all the buildings of the monasteries were replaced

²⁶Trimingham J.spencer, *Islam in Ethiopia*,pp.26 and 31, Gerima (*Abunä*), Samuel(*Abunä*), Rada Aseres ..., *Ye Itiyopia Orthodox Tewahedo Bete Keristeyan Tarik Ke Ledete Keristos Eske 2000 E.C*, p.9; and Informants: Abba Argawi Araya and *Qés* TekelabFesseha.

²⁷Mariya-Jose Friedlander and Bob Friedlander, *Hidden Treasures of Ethiopia: A Guide to Remote Churches of an Ancient Land*, I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd, London, 2015.p.10; and Trimmingham J.spencer. *Islam in Ethiopia*. 26.

²⁸ Informants: Abba Argawi Araya, *Qés* Tekelaab Fesseha, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, and *Haleqa* GäbrägiherTese fay.

²⁹*Ibid.*

by corrugated iron due to the assistance and collaboration of *Wayzero* Mulushewa Admassie³⁰ and her husband *Däjjazmačh* HaileMariam Sebhät the governor of Agame *Aweraja*. This sheet of iron was denoted by Emperor HaileSellasie I after he heard about the challenge faced the monastery.³¹

The person who took the responsibility to bring the corrugated iron to the monastery was *Mämeher* Gaberu Medhanie. This material was transported from Addis Ababa to Enticho by using rented vehicle because the vehicle was not able to travel up to the monastery because of the infrastructure problem. Based on this, the corrugated iron was brought to Däbrä Bokri by using human labor of Hahaile.³² When the people carried the corrugated iron to Däbrä Bokri were very happy and while traveling they were singing in Tigrigna:

The first song sang was:-

ዓለም (ደስታ) ኦዲስ አበባ ደሴ በዘበነ ኃይለስላሴ³³

Rough English Translation:

The Happiness of Addis Ababa and Dssie happened during the region of Haileselassie.

The couplet of the second Song was:-

ዓለም (ደስታ) ደበረ በኩሪዬ፡

ሳላ መምህር ገብርኖ³⁴

Rough English Translation:

The happiness at Däbrä Bäkuriye

Takes place because of *Mämeher* Gäberuye.

³⁰*Wayzero* Mulushewa Admassie was a wife of *Däjjazmačh* HaileMariam Sebehat of Agame. According to the community of Däbrä Bokri, She was a daughter of Emperor Haileselassie I sister's.

³¹Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, *Qés* Tekelab Fesseha, *Qés* Gäbräziher Tesfay, *Qés* Gäbräkeristos Gäbräziher, and *Haleqa* Tekelberhan Abay.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*

In addition to the big building of the monastery, there were other buildings used for different Purpose. These buildings are *Bethlehem* on the eastern side of the monastery which was served to prepare Holy Communion and others that needed for the mass ceremony. On the west direction, there is ground plus one building named *Gäblä* /ገበላ/ or *Däjä Sälem* (main gate to the compound) which also serves as baptismal as well sleeping for the Christians who came from far areas. In the northern direction, there are two buildings. One building is treasury (store house) and the bell tower and contains an underground house called *Hudemo* (traditional underground house) which served for storing grains. The other building is small hall also used as congregation. There is also a small building of *Enda Aqabit* (women that prepared a communion in the monastery).³⁵ The doors replaced by new ones. The person who worked the new doors was *Haleqa* Kidanu WoldeNegus from Adi-Ahiferom.³⁶

Figure.7. *Däjä Sälem* (ደጅሰላም) or *Gäblä* (ገበላ) that served as Entrance, baptizing and sleeping building.

³⁵Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Tekelaab Fesseha, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, and *Haleqa* Gäbrägiher Tesefay.

³⁶*Ibid.*



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure.8.The Front View of the current main Building of the Monastery



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure 9. *Enedämerfaqe* (እንዳምርፋቕ) which Served as a Meeting and Eating Place).



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Generally, the materials used to build the monastery were brought from the ruins of the former church building and also brought from all the thirty three *Qäbälés* (a villages) like wood (timber), grass and tall black stone were also brought from Adi-Ekeli a place near Nebelet (a small town in Ambä Säneyti sub-*Wäräda*) and the corrugated iron from Addis Ababa. These materials were carried on the shoulders of the community who were organized in the form of *Wefera* (work association).³⁷

³⁷Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Gäbräkeristos Gäbrägiher, and *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges.

3.2 The Painting of the Monastery

The religious painting has been one of the oldest practices that had remained a cultural heritage in Ethiopia. The country is known for its prehistoric cave painting. That means the art of painting has existed for a long period since people were living in caves. In the past and recent times painting played different social functions.³⁸ Since Ethiopians Christianization in the fourth century, Ethiopia had adopted the tradition of Christian religious painting.³⁹ Choinacki asserts the advent of Christianity to Ethiopia in the fourth Century marked the beginning of traditional religious paintings that has continued until today.⁴⁰ Historically, the centers of art production tended to be monasteries or workshops that were sponsored by the royal court from the fourth century until its demise in 1974. The religious paintings, created in the past would have been painted by people who tended to be rigorous in their piety and were a part of the intellectual elite, steeped in the traditions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.⁴¹

Starting from the Aksumite period painting used for different purposes and in different ways. First, the Christians used painting for religious purposes. They used to decorate the interior part of the church building with narrative hagiographies. The books and scroll parchments were also illuminated with miniature pictures. Based on this, the painters painted Holy Trinity, St. Virgin Maryam, Jesus Christ, Angels, Saints, religious men and sometimes their kings in their

³⁸DerejeNegussie, "Fiche Gannata Giyorgis Church (c.1871-1974)," BA Theses, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1996.p.28,

³⁹Elisabeth Biasio, "Contemporary Ethiopian *Painting in Traditional Style Beginning and Change*," In proceeding of the 16th international conference of Ethiopia studies, Trondheim, 2009.1259; and Marily E. Heldman, "The Sacred Art of Ethiopia," *The Historian*, Vol.57, No.1, 1997.p.37.

⁴⁰Stanislaw Chojnacki, "Ethiopian Religious Art: its Significance and Forms of Expression," *University of Sudbury, Ontario, Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne*, V. XII, No.2, 1999.p.47.; and Stanislaw Chojnacki, "Short Introduction to Ethiopia Traditional Painting," *Journal Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. II, 2, 19674.p.2.

⁴¹Johnson, Edwin Hamilton, "Patronage and the Theological Integrity of Ethiopian Orthodox Sacred Paintings in Present Day Addis Ababa, Ethiopia," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Art History School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, 2011.p.13.

paintings.⁴² Secondly, besides their paintings were used to express and provide information of the local personalities, political data on rulers, and events.⁴³ Johnson argues the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were used paintings to communicate theological concepts, such as the liturgy, scripture and preaching. These painted religious images are subject to the scrutiny of the priesthood. It is through them the Church is able to regulate peoples' perception of the divine.⁴⁴

Generally, in the Ethiopian tradition of Painting the main iconographical themes have been Christ and the Virgin. In addition to this, there are also local and Oriental saints. Among the saints were *Abunä Samuel Ze Wäledebba*, *Abunä Gäbrä Manfas Qeddus*, *Abunä Täklä-Häymanot* and other national saints. Ethiopian paintings also characterized by Biblical themes and figures like angles, evangelists, saints, martyrs and other Biblical personalities.⁴⁵ Artisans painted murals on the walls of churches, painted miniatures and decorated the parchment pages of hand-copied manuscripts, and painted devotional images of Our Lady Mary and other saints on wooden panels.⁴⁶

Now a day's religious painting is found at different monasteries and churches. The existence of the painting in the Ethiopia Orthodox monasteries and churches started from the ancient time indicates that the monks, priests, deacons, hermits, and other ordinary people have a rich and mysterious skill in the art of painting. The art of painting was practiced in the Ethiopian

⁴²DerejeNegussie, "Fiche Gannata....," p.28;

⁴³DerejeNegussie, "Fiche Gannata....," p.28; Henze B. Paul, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*, London, Hurst and company, 2000.p.80; and Kahisay Abrha (*Deacon*), *Hadegetatena, Quter.1*, Tigray, Mega printing P.L.C, 2003.p.43.

⁴⁴Johnson, Edwin Hamilton, *Patronage and the Theological Integrity of Ethiopian Orthodox Sacred Paintings in Present day Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*, .p.11;

⁴⁵Christine Chaillot, *Veneration of Icons in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, .P.255;

⁴⁶Marilyn E. Heldman, "Creating Religious Art: The Status of Artisans in Highland Christian Ethiopia," *Aethiopica*.1, 1998.p.132;

monasteries and churches were painted by educated and uneducated peoples. Moreover, the paintings are simply able to transfer religious messages to the people.⁴⁷

Hence, Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery, one of the oldest monasteries in Ethiopia, has its own peculiar painting. The religious painting of the monastery has similarities with the paintings found in the old Aksum St. Mary church and *Abunä Pentilion* monastery.⁴⁸ Most of the paintings in this monastery were painted on the wall of the *mäqedes* (holy of holiness). The wall of the *mäqedes* is painted only on three sides, but the fourth side to the eastern direction is still now simply covered by mud. Most of the paintings in this monastery are related with religious sacred nature and there are also paintings of important personalities who had great contribution by sponsoring the painting. The pictures of the administrators of the monastery at the time of painting were included.⁴⁹

According to the evidence found in the paintings and informants, the monastery was painted two times in the first half of 20th Century. The relatives of the important people sponsored the financial and other materials for the painting of the monastery. The painting of the monastery was made on imported cotton cloth, *Abu gedid* (a cloth made from cotton). Based on this, the first painting of the monastery was sponsored by *Käntibä Wolde Ananiya* and *Käntibä Reda* from *May-Tsaedaa* (a small village). *Käntibä Woldel Ananiya* and *Käntibä Reda* were the

⁴⁷Marilyn E. Heldman, "Creating Religious Art: The Status of Artisans in Highland Christian Ethiopia," *Aethiopica*.1, 1998.p.132; and Kahisay Abrha (*Deacon*), *Hadegetatena, Quter*.1, Tigray, Mega Printing, 2003.p.43;

⁴⁸Yemane Gedlu, Nebeyat and Yonas, *Discover Tigray cradle of Civilization...*p.13; Tigray: *The Open Air Museum*, ND.p.38;

⁴⁹Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, *Qés Tekelaab Fesseha*, *Qés Sadur Woldegerges*, *Qés Mezemu rGäbräMariyam*, and *Haleqa Gäbräziher* esefay.

administrators of May-Tsae'eda and its surrounding areas where the monastery was found. The artist who painted the painting was not well known by the community of the monastery.⁵⁰

Figure.10. The Painting of *Käntibä* Wolde Ananiya with his wife, Son, Servants, a girl slave and *Mämeher* GäbräTensaie, the administrator of the monastery.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure.11. The painting of *käntibä* Reda with his wife, Son, Servants, girl slave and *Mämeher* GäbräTensie, the Administrator of the monastery.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

⁵⁰An image found in the wall of *Bet meqedes*; and Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Tekelaab Fesseha, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, and *Haleqa* Gäbrägziher Tesefay.

The first and original paintings of the monastery were replaced by new painting in the 1940s. Because, the *Bet-mäqedese* (holy of holiness) was re-built and the former painting spoiled. Then for the second time, the painting of the monastery was painted sponsored by *Ato GäbräMedhin Gäberom* of *Adi-Chinde* (a small village). *Ato GäbräMedhin Gäberom* got the permission to renew the monastery painting by the community of the monastery because he was married to the daughter of the family *Käntibä Reda* and *Käntibä WoldeAnenia*. The artists who painted the present painting found in the monastery were *Haleqa Gesesaw Zeluel* who came from *Aksum* and *Ato Berhanu Hagos* from *Nabelet inAmbä Säneyti*.⁵¹

Figure.12. *Ato GäbräMedhin Gäberom* with his wife and *Ato Hagos GäbräMedhin Gäberom* with his wife.

⁵¹Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, *Qés Tekelaab Fesseha*, *Qés Sadur Woldegerges*, *Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam*, and *Haleqa Gäbräziher Tesefay*.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan and taken in December 2019.

The collection of the paintings in this monastery includes the picture of *Abunä Sét*, the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ, St. George killing the dragon, the Holy Trinity, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, *Abunä Samuel*, *Abunä Ewostatéwos*, *Abunä Täklä-Haymanot*, *Abunä GäbräMenfes Qudus*, the first religious men providing ceremony of the monastery and other

Martyrs considered as Saints.⁵² Sample of the paintings found in the wall of monasteries are the following.

Figure.13. The Painting of the Martyrs of Saints found in the Monastery.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure.14. The painting of *Abunä Samuel Ze Waledeba* on the left and *Abunä Täklä-Haymanot* on the right.

⁵² Personal observation in the monastery on December 2019.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure.15. The painting of the holy *Abunä Sét* with his white Bees on his head and the wolves at his foot.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure.16. The Painting of the *Abunä Ewostatewos* traveling by boat on the Sea with his disciples to Jerusalem and Armenia and One of his disciples named *Yemane berhan* who was sunk in the sea.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

In addition to the religious painting painted on the wall of *Bet mägedes* there are also pictures painted on the parchments. The paintings drawn in different parchments are mostly pictures related to the manuscripts contents and pictures of saints. This a common painted the paintings on parchments and wooden panels in Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Marilyn also argues the traditional painting of the Ethiopian was also painted on wooden panels or on the parchments pages of hand copied books.⁵³ Among the pictures painted on different parchments are the following:

⁵³Marilyn E. Heldman, "The Sacred Art of Ethiopia," *The Historian*, Vol.57, No.1, 1997.p.35.

Figure.16. The picture found in the parchment of *Gädlä Sematat*



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure. 17. The picture of St. Giorgis on the left and St. Virgin Marry on the right.



Source. Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Chapter IV

Administration, Commemoration and Source of Income of the Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét Monastery

4.1. Administration of the monastery

Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét Monastery had existed since the reign of Emperor Amda Seyon and achieved the status of a monastery during the reign of Emperor Dawit I.¹ Elders confirmed that Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét Monastery had never been administered by the regional lords or *Mequanenets* of the area. There was no interference of the local officials in the monastery issues and administration. Because all civil administration and other issues of the monastery was also lead by the administrator of the Monastery.²

The Ethiopian Kings like Amda Seyon and others sanctioned the areas and granted to this monastery said that “ማእከሉ ገነት ወሰና ሓዊ ይኩን፡ ብዘይካ ፈላሲ ከይክቱ ራእሲ” which means to prohibit the involvement of the nobility it was designated saying that “let the it’s center of monastery be paradise and its surrounding is fire and no *räs* would be allowed to enter except the monks.”³ The sanctions made by the Ethiopian kings prohibited the various regional governors and other officials from interference in the administrative and judicial affairs of the monastery. They could not interfere in the appointment or removal of the monastery administrators or other affairs. However, the regional nobles or *mequanenet* were coming to celebrate the annual and other festivals of the monastery and they also always collaborated in the

¹*Gädlä Abunä Sét* .p.2; and Informants: Qés Sadur Woldegerges, *Haleqa Gäbrägziiher Tesfay*, and Qés Tekelaab Fesseha.

²*Ibid.* and Appendix.6.

³Carlo Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*.p.39-40; and Informants: Qés Sadur Woldegerges, *Haleqa Gäbrägziiher Tesfay*, and Qés Tekelaab Fesseha.

construction of the monastery buildings.⁴ Based on this Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery has a full control over the administrative and judicial services.⁵ The monastery administrator (*Abamenet*) was responsible for the maintenance of civil order among the communities living within the *Gult* lands of the monastery, which were immune from all secular powers.

Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery like other monasteries found in Tigray had its organized administration system. According to this, the Däbrä Baker *Abunä Sét* Monastery had different types of administrators. Among these the main administrators of this monastery were the *Mämeher* (Abbot) and the *Qésä Gäbäz*.⁶ Accordingly, the administrator of the monastery had a title of *Mämeher* (Abbot) and he was leader of the religious activities. The keeper of the treasure of the monastery had a title of *Qésä Gäbäz*. These evidences available in different documents and in the last page of the parchment books which mentioned the name of the contemporary king, Patriarch, *Mämeher*, and *Qésä Gäbäz*.⁷ Also there were other committees had an authorities in the monastery. These were *Sebeka Gubai'e*.⁸ According to my informants, the head of the monastery and *Qésä Gäbäz* were elected by the *Mäheber* (the association of deacons, *Qéss*, *Dabtaras*, monks etc. of the monastery). The *Mäheber* used criteria to appoint the monastery officials based on their education, the religious strengthen and their ability to convince the administration. Whereas, the *Sebeka Gubaie* members were appointed by the community.⁹

⁴Informants: *Qés Sadur Woldegerges*; *Haleqa Gäbrägzihier Tesfay*; and *Qés Tekelaab fesseha*;

⁵*Ibid*; and *Gädlä Abunä Sét* .p.2;

⁶Qal Awadi, No.3, 1991.p.10; and Informants: *Abba Argawi Areaya*, *Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam*, *Qés Argawi Abay*, *Qés Zemechal Gäbrämedhin*.

⁷Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.39; The end part of different religious books of the monastery they mentioned the *Mämeher* and *Qésä Gäbäz* of the monastery with the name of donator person when the books donated; and Appendix.7;

⁸Informants: *Abba Argaawi Araya*, *Qés Sadur Woldegerges*, *Qés Zemekiel Gäbrämedhin*, *Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam*, *Qés Tekelaab Fesseha*, *Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam*, and *Haleqa Gäbrägzihier Tesefay*.

⁹*Ibid*.

After the *Mäheber* (association) of the monastery elected the *Mämeher* (Abbot) to administer the monastery, then they prepared a religious ceremony in which the newly elected *Mämeher* (Abbot) were made to stand on the *menbere tsadiqan* or *menbere Bärtälomewos* (chair of Bärtälomewos) in order to be blessed. Then religious community of the monastery made a blessing program by reading the *Mäshäfa Begiee* and they ordered then to take an oath led by the *Mämeher* (Abbot).¹⁰ After passing the step, the newly appointed became *Mämehers* or the administrators of the monastery. This kind of ceremony until the recent time practiced in the monastery.¹¹

Informants explain that, since the establishment of the Däbrä Bäkur *Abunä Sét* monastery, it was administered by different religious men and Abbots. Among them *Abunä Sét* himself was an administrator of the monastery. *Abunä Enderiyas* also administered the monastery when *Abunä Sét* went to Shewa.¹² Generally, many *Mämeheran* (Abbots) and *Qésä Gäbüz* (Treasurers) were elected as administrators and treasurers to serve the monastery since its establishment. However, there is no detailed written document and information about the *Abamenets* (Abbots) and *Qésä Gäbüz*. This made the research difficult to get the names of the *Abamenets* and the time of their appointment and their years of service. Based on the oral informants and some written documents found in different religious books donated by different people haphazardly mention some of the administrators (*Mämehers*) of the monastery. In addition to this information, there is also a document written by hand found in the first page of *Mäshäfa Meraf* also listed the Abbots of the Monastery.¹³

¹⁰Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, *Haleqa Gerezeher Tesfay*, *Qés Tekleab Fesseha*, and *Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam*.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Appendix.8.

Based on the oral information and written documents to mention few the head of the *Mämeheran* (Abbots) of the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery were-*Mämeher* Mäeqäbä Egzi'e,¹⁴ *Mämeher* Enderiyas, *Mämeher* Fiqitor, *Mämeher* Aron, *Mämeher* Melkie Tsediq,¹⁵ *Mämeher* Romuha, *Mämeher* Demtsuqal,¹⁶ *Mämeher* GäbräMedihen, *Mämeher* ZemenefesQidus,¹⁷ *Mämeher* Abba Zemekail,¹⁸ *Mämeher* Woldemariyam, *Mämeher* TekleGiorgis, *Mämeher* GäbräHiwot, *Mämeher* Sebehat la'ab, *Mämeher* GäbräMedihen, *Mämeher* GäbräHiwot, *Mämeher* WoldeMesqel, *Mämeher* WoldeKidān Dengeze,¹⁹ *Mämeher* GäbräTensaie,²⁰ *Mämeher* GäbräIgiziabeher WoldeMariyam, *Mämeher* WoldeLibanos, *Mämeher* NewayeMariyam, *Mämeher* Aregawi Araya and *Mämeher* Tekeleyesus.²¹ All of them were the *Abamenets* (Abbot) of the monastery²² at different times. In this monastery, only a monk was allowed to become an *Abamenet*. In addition, when the *Abamenet* was appointed by the community of the monastery they considered his religious educational capacity and social acceptance.²³ There was no time limit for the officials of the *Mämeher* (Abbot) he would administer the monastery and remained as figurehead until his death if the rules and regulation of the monastery were respected.²⁴

¹⁴Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*.p.39; Daniel Keberet, *Ye Betekristeyanat Merejawoch*, p.468; Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ye Betkeristiyān Mezegebe Qalat*, p.220; and the Informant: *Qés* Tekleaab Fesseha and *Abba* Argawi:- Then *Abunä* Ewostatéwos was an *Abamenet* of both Däbrä Bäkür and Däbrä Bärbaré. Däbrä Bärbaré is one of the monasteries found in Ambä Sänayti founded during this period. Then there is a place called *Emeni Kidana* a center place used as stand place and praying area of *Abunä* Ewostatéwos.

¹⁵*Mämeher* Melkie Tsediq was served, as Abbot of the monastery during the administrator of the area was *Wayzero* Akelesia.

¹⁶*Mämeher* Demtsuqal was served as Abbot of the Monastery during the time of *Däjjazmačh* Kassa.

¹⁷*Mämeher* ZemenefesQidus was come from Almeda-Adewa. Almeda was one of the *Gult* lands of the monastery.

¹⁸ He was the Abbot of the monastery during the reign of *Däjjazmačh* Mikael.

¹⁹ He was served as Abbot of the monastery during Italy Invasion.

²⁰ He was served as Abbot during Emperor Haile Selassie I.

²¹*Mämeher* Tekeleyesus was one of the Abbots of the monastery from the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie up to 2010.

²²*Mäshäfa Meraf*. P.1; and Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Tekleaa Fesseha, and *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesfay.

²³ Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Tekleaab Fesseha, and *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesfay.

²⁴*Ibid*.

The Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery had several *Qésä Gäbäz*. However, I found it difficult to get the full names and detailed information about the *Qésä Gäbäzs* who were elected to administer the monastery. However, some of the available names of the *Qésä Gäbäzs* of the monastery as mentioned by the informants and indicated in the written documents, especially on the end of the religious books they tried to include the name of the *Qésä Gäbäzs* when the books were donated. Based on this, among of the *Qésä Gäbäsz* (treasury) served in the monastery were: *Qésä Gäbäz Abba Eilaweteros*,²⁵ *Qésä Gäbäz GäbräMedhin*,²⁶ *Qésä Gäbäz Qés Werqe*,²⁷ *Qésä Gäbäz Abba WoldeLibanos*, *Qésä Gäbäz KidaneMariyam*, *Qésä Gäbäz Tekle*, *Qésä Gäbäz Mämeher Gaberu Medehanie*,²⁸ *Qésä Gäbäz Abba Kidanu*, *Qésä GäbäzGäbräTsadiq Gäberu* (1947-51 A.D), *Qésä Gäbäz Tesfaye GäbräTsadiq* (1952-54), *Qésä Gäbäz KidaneMariyam Mengestu* (1952 and 1971-77), *Qésä Gäbäz GäbräIgziabiher GäbräKeristos* (1961-65), *Qésä Gäbäz Qés Tesfay WoldeGiorgis* (1965-67 and 1978-80), *Qésä Gäbäz Germay GäbräHiwot*, *Qésä Gäbäzs TekeleHaymanot Tarfe* (1967-71), *Qésä Gäbäz GäbräMeseqel Negusie* (1977), *Qésä Gäbäz Meruts Welu* (1977-78) and *Qésä Gäbäz GäbräIgziabehier GäbräMaryam* (1980-1989).²⁹ These were among the *Qésä Gäbäzs* (treasurers) mentioned except that some were lacking the names of their fathers.

²⁵He was served as a treasury the monastery during the reign of *Däjjazmačh* Mikael and also when *Mämeher Abba Zemikiel* was the administrator of the monastery. The administrator of the area was *Abeto Isayas*.

²⁶*Qésä Gäbäz Gäbrämedhin* was served as a treasury of the monastery during *Mämeher Melkie Tsiediqe* Abbot of the monastery and during the administrator of the area was *Wayezero Akelesia*.

²⁷He was served as treasury man during the reign of Emperor Yohannes and *Afe-Mämeher WoldedeSellasie*.

²⁸Appendix.9:-*Mämeher Gaberu Medehanie* was one of the Abbots of the monastery. *Mämeher Geberu* was the confessor of *Däjjazmačh Hailemariyam Sebehat*. *Memher Geberu* traveled as far as Addis Ababa during Emperor Hailesellasie I and could brought iron curtain, different religious books and made a great contribution to construct the new monastery building.

²⁹*Mäshäfa Ede* (the written documents found in the hand of the *Sebeka Gubaie* of the monastery).

4.2. Commemoration of the Monastery

The Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery as one of the monasteries found in Tigray, Ethiopia and has its own commemoration of festival day or ceremony. Until the recent time the main and yearly religious ceremony of the monastery was held on *Sene*21st (June 28). When the name of the monastery was also changed from Däbrä Mariyam into Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery the ceremony on the day of St. Virgin Marry also continued until the recent time. The name of Däbrä Mariyam was given because the first Ark of covenant of the monastery was St. Virgin Marry which was bring in to the monastery when the newbuilding was inaugurated on June 28. On June 28, the religious men came from different areas to attend the mass ceremony with *Abunä Sét*. Among the religious men that came to the occasion were *Abunä Abiyä Igzi'e* of Mereta and *Abunä Samuel* of Wäldebba. Based on this the community of the monastery made the commemoration day on *Sene* 21(June28) in the day of St. Virgin Marry. This day is celebrated annually and monthly still now but unlike in the former days the community does not prepare food to feed the people.³⁰

However, gradually this great religious festival day of the community gradually changed from the day on *Sene*21st (June 28) into *Tahisas* 8 (December 17). Because, on *Tahisas* 8 (December 17) *Abunä Sét*'s remain was buried on the eastern direction of the monastery by transported from Northern Shawa and it was on this month that the community enough grain.³¹ On this day, the people of different areas came to the monastery to receive the blessing of his holiness of *Abunä Sét*. On this day like the other Christian peoples made, the community of this area made or still

³⁰ Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Gäbräkeristos GäbräIgzi'ber, and *Qés* Argawi Abay.

³¹ *Ibid.*

made high preparation to feed the visitors preparing traditional Ethiopian food like *Injera* (pancake) and *Tsebehi* (Stew), *Hembasha* (Bread) and *Sewa* (Habesha Beer) etc.³²

They were two reasons to change the commemoration ceremony day from June 28 to December 17. The first reason was the community of the area made this to remember the holy *Abunä Sét*. The second reason was in June it is difficult to prepare food and other facilities to feed the people who came to the monastery. Because, the month of June in Ethiopia is in the *Kiremet* (summer) season. This month is a working month for the farmers have to farm their lands. Additionally, this month is the farmers finished their grain and faced a shortage of food. This made difficult for the community to hold a ceremony.³³

4.3. Source of Income of Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét Monastery

4.3.1 Land and Taxation

In Ethiopian history Church and State had experienced strong relationship.³⁴ The establishment of monasteries and churches appears to have been accompanied by the extensive grants of land.³⁵ The Christian emperors of Ethiopia often regarded all lands in their realm as their own personal property. Because of this, they made generous land grants to several churches and monasteries. This kind of institution granting and controlling right to the land created the *gult* system.³⁶

Starting from the introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia it is assumed that there was interdependence between the state and the church. In this situation, both the church and state

³²Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, *Qés Gäbräkeristos*, and *Qés Argawi Abay*.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa University Press, 1966.p.38.

³⁵*Ibid.*; p.22.

³⁶Taddese Tamerat, *Church and state...* p.98; Abebaww Ayalew, "A Short History of Däbrä Eliyas Church (1874-1974)," BA Theses, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1998, pp.26-27; and Donald Crummy, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia From the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Addis Ababa, Addis Ababa university press, 2000.p.162.

were mutually benefiting. That means the church supported to state enable in turn the kings granted *gult* lands that enable the religious men and clergymen lead comfortable life securing the church.³⁷ According to Ambäye, in the ancient time the main source of acquisition of church land were grants made by charters from kings and rulers as *rest-gult*. There were also different types of *rest gult*.³⁸ Asmelash and Mahteme Selassie assert there were different types of *gult*. These were *gult seb* (charter land for ordinary persons), *gult chewa* (charter land for noble men) and also a land that granted for the church indifferent names like *gult tsadeqan* (charter land for saints, monasteries and covenants), *Reem Land*, *Risti Meseqel*, *Semon meret*.³⁹ These charters were also given to monasteries and covenants and until the coming of Military regime in to power the charter preserve and they deposited in *tabot* (ark).⁴⁰

Then, the kings had identified themselves as Christian monarchs. Based on this, the king shared both power and wealth with the church. The monastery also accepted the offer of the land by the King because they believed it was important to strengthen the ties between the monastery and the rulers as agents of the state.⁴¹ The Church's ownership of land seems to have had its origin as the Emperor's right to allocate land had developed. Because the rulers had long period practice to make grants of land to churches and monasteries as well as to individuals, bishops,

³⁷ Temsegen Gebeyehu, "Power, Church and the *Gult* system in Gojjam, Ethiopia," *Asian and African studies*, Vol.25, No.1, 2016.p.51;

³⁸ Ambäye Zekariyas, *Land Tenure in Eritrea (Ethiopia)*, Addis Ababa, Addis Printing Press, 1966.p.19.

³⁹ Asmelash WoldeMariam, "The Effect of Village-Level Land Reform on Peasants Social Organization: A study of Village-Level Dynamics in Central Tigray, 1974-1994," MA thesis, Department of Social Anthropology, Addis Abba University, 2006; and Ambäye Zekariyas, *Land Tenure in Eritrea (Ethiopia)*, Addis Ababa, Addis Printing Press, 1966.p.8; Gäbräwald Engedawarq, "Ethiopia traditional system of Land Tenure and Taxation," *Ethiopia Observer*, V.V, 1962.pp.308-309; and Mahteme Sellasie WoldeMesqel, "The Land System of Ethiopia," *Ethiopia Observer*, V.I, 1957.pp.208.

⁴⁰ Huntingford G.W.B, *Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 1965.pp.11-14; and Ambäye Zekariyas, *Land Tenure in Eritrea (Ethiopia)*, Addis Ababa, Addis Printing Press, 1966.p.19.

⁴¹ Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of the Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1984.p. 54; Dametew Kiflelew, "A History of Däbrä-Berhan Sellasie Church (1808-1974)," BA Theses, Department of History, Addis Ababa Univeristy.1996.p.50;

Qés and other ecclesiastical personalities.⁴² Hyatt argues the church lands were granted to the church and monasteries by the local leaders and kings. As a result, the main source of income of the monasteries and churches were land and taxation.⁴³

Based on this, the Christian monarchs when they distributed the state claimed that land to *Balebat* and soldiers, local administrators, judges and state servant and they distributed to the clergy men of the church and churches.⁴⁴ Ambäye also argue the granting of charter lands were motivated and given on different grounds to officials and loyal followers, lord men, institution of learning like monasteries, covenants and churches.⁴⁵

The church or the *bête kehnet* (house of the clergy) were one of the beneficiaries of state land. Because the church received assistance in the form of *gult* the church in return they made a great support to the monarchs. Pausewang contend the monasteries and churches were more privileged to have their own independent taxation rights and exempt from paying tithe to the emperor. In addition, it encouraged to have monasteries and churches more *Qés* and religious men.⁴⁶

Based on this, land was the main source of income or revenue for the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery and its functionaries (religious men). Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery had *gult* granted by different Ethiopian kings. The earliest record of land grant that was able to give some evidence about the *gult* of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery is መዕረፈ ኢክሱም (Book of Aksum) translated by Conti Rossini with the title of *Liber Axume*, and Hunting ford's book entitled "The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia" also describes about the *gult* land of Däbrä

⁴²Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, Haile Sellasie I University, 1966.p.26;

⁴³H.M. Hayatt, *The Church Abyssinia*, p.64.

⁴⁴Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopia*, p.53.

⁴⁵Ambäye Zekariyas, *Land Tenure in Eritrea (Ethiopia)*, Addis Ababa, Addis Printing Press, 1966.p.8.

⁴⁶Pausewang, Siegfried, *Peasants, Land and Society: A Social History of Land Reform in Ethiopia*, Munich, Woldeteforum Verlag, 1983.pp.25-26.

Bäkur. According to the *Liber Axume* as stated on pages 39 and 40 and also “The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia” stated on page 51 describes that Emperor Lebene Dengel renewed and had ordered the writing of this document concerning the lands which his predecessors gave to the monastery. This was made after all the Abbots came from more than seven monasteries to appeal to Emperor Lebene Dengel about the challenges faced, and the violating of rules due to the intrusion of the *meqanenets* or *Seyums* (Chiefs) in to the *gult* of the monasteries.⁴⁷

These Abbots who was came to appeal to the Emperor were *Abba* GäbräMarawi of Haliye Luya, *Abba* TenseaMadhen of Däbrä Banukual, *Abba* Mäeqäbä Egzi’e of Däbrä Bäkur and Däbrä Berbare, *Abba* Takla Giyorgis of Däbrä Seyon, *Abba* Neftalem of Däbrä Maara, *Abba* Bäkura Seyon the Negadi of Däbrä Aysama, *Abba* Filmona and *Abba* Sarsa Dengel of Damo, *Abba* Estifanos of Makana Yakes, *Abba* Asrata Seyon of Lagaso and *Abba* Tewodros of Danba Tanbuk and May Kuekue, Tawalda Hesana.⁴⁸ By listing their appeal, *Atse* Lebene Dengel ordered and sanctioned the *maqananet* or *Seyum* (regional leader) not to enter to the rights of the monasteries and renewed the *gult* of the monasteries.⁴⁹ Based on this document the *gult* of Däbrä Bäkur was granted before the coming of Emperor Lebene Dengel to power, because Emperor Lebene Dengel Said, “I renewed our predecessors granted *gult*.”⁵⁰

According to my informants, the first *gult* land of the monastery was granted by Amda Seyon then renewed by different Ethiopian Kings Seyfeared, Dawit I, Yeshaq, Zara Yaqob and Lebene

⁴⁷Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, pp.39-41; and Hunting ford G.W.B, *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, P.51.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹Carol Conti Rossini,*Liber Axume*, pp.39-41; Sargew Hable Sellasie, *Amarigna Mezegebe Qalat*, Vol.10, p.169; Hunting ford G.W.B, *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, P.51; and Daniel Keberet, *Ye betekeristen Merjawoch*, p.468.

⁵⁰Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.40; and Hunting ford G.W.B, *The Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*, P.51.

Dengel.⁵¹ The *gult* land granted to this monastery was including all the 33 *Qäbälés* (villages) of Hahaile. To express this *gult* land of the monastery the community expressed in their Tigrigna poem:

ካብ እምባ አፍተራ ንእምባ ደምበረበራ
ካብ ዓዲ መቅደላ ንዓዲ ገምቤላ
ወሰና ሓዊ
ማእከላ ገነት
እንበለ ፈለሰ.
እይባእ ራእሲ::⁵²

Rough English translation:

The area from Ambä Afetera up to Ambä Demberibera,
From Adi Meqedela to Adi Gemebe'la
Its borders are fire,
Its center heaven
No *Negasi* or official is allowed to enter
Except the monks and religious men.

Based on the system land ownership and paying of dues, the *gult* of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery was divided into two types. The first one, the *gult* land of the monastery found in the Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé*. This *gult* land owned only by the *Deacon*, *Qés*, *Dabtra*, *Gebeze*, *Mämeher* (the administrator of the monastery) and other clergy based on their education level and status.⁵³ This kind of garneted land known as *Samon* land. This kind of granted charter was donating their due of property as a whole to churches and *Qés* of the village as a reward for their service.

⁵¹Informants: *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Abba* Argawi Abay, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzehar Tesefay, *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam and Rése Däbri Abrha Tesfay

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

Means the churches and *Qés* does not pay a tax to the government they total used for themselves.⁵⁴ MahtemeSellasie and GäbräWald EngedaWoreq also assert there was this kind of land system that was granted for the monasteries and churches. This type of a charter of land granted was the religious men like to *Qés*, *dabetera* (choir man), deacons and others totally to use the product as salary for their service in the monastery.⁵⁵ The Dabri Bokri *Qäbälé gult* land totally occupied by the monastery and religious men. The *gult* lands were owned based on their educational status. In the *Qäbälé* that monastery's now emerged the names used to identify or to call the areas by the owner or title of the former owner of the lands. For instance:

- ❖ *Site Meseqel* (the land given in the name of the cross)
- ❖ *Grat-Medewel* (the land Given to the person who rings the bell)
- ❖ *Grat-Felesti (gembeya)* (the land given to the monks)
- ❖ *Grat-Mequnun* (the land added for all the monastery community)
- ❖ *Grat-Mebae* (the land given for the monasteries to serve for communion)
- ❖ *Grat-Aqabit (Haratsit)* (the land given to women who prepare the holy communion of the monastery)
- ❖ *Grat-Dagna* (the land given to the Judge)
- ❖ *Grat-Degua* (the land given to the *Qés* or monks who specialized in Degua)
- ❖ *Grat-Mämeher* (the land given to *Abemenet* (Abbot) or the Administrator of the monastery)
- ❖ *Grat-Zeyineges* (the land given to Dabtra or mezemeran)
- ❖ *Grat-Gabaz* (the land given to treasurer)

⁵⁴Ambäye Zekariyas, *Land Tenure in Eritrea (Ethiopia)*, Addis Ababa, Addis Printing Press, 1966.p.8

⁵⁵GäbräWald EngedaWarq, "Ethiopia Traditional System of Land Tenure and Taxation," *Ethiopia Observer*, V.5, 1962.pp.308-309; and MahtemeSellasie WoldeMesqel, "The Land System of Ethiopia," *Ethiopia Observer*, V.1, 1957.pp.208.

- ❖ *Grat-Zedengel* (the land given to celebrate)
- ❖ *Grat-Enedä Abba Aweli* (the land of Abba Aweli)
- ❖ *Grat-Semuri* (the land of Qés Semuri)
- ❖ *Grat-Mahiber* (the land Given for the religious association of the people)
- ❖ *Grat-Eteqe* (the land given and owned by *Eteqe* Kebera, the mother of Emperor Zara Yaqob)
- ❖ *Emni Kidana* (the place where *Abunä* Ewostatéwos sat when he administered Däbrä Bäkür and Däbrä Bärbäre, near the big cliff).⁵⁶

In this Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé* except religious men, other sections of the community are not permitted to have land. That means only men's that have a religious education owned all the land of the *Qäbälé* and on the other hand, women and the men do not have a religious education were not allowed owning land. Based on this, there was land donation and land alienation rule. This rule was implemented when one clergy or owner of the land dies immediately the land was taken away and given to another clergyman.⁵⁷

The other type of *gult* land of the monastery was the land of the monastery that was owned by the community who settled (lived) in all *Qäbälé* except the Däbri Bokri *Qäbälé*. In this *gult* land the peasants has a cultivation rights and could be owned to tenants who paid part of their produce towards the maintenance of *Qés* and religious men and some part to the government in the in the

⁵⁶Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesefay; Qés Mezemur Gäbrämariyam, Rése Däbri Abrha Tesfay; *Qés* Tekleaab Fesseha, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges.

⁵⁷Informants: *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges.

form of *Siso* to king, *siso* to clergy and *siso* to the tenants (farmers) .⁵⁸ The *gult* lands of the monastery granted and renewed at different times by different Ethiopian emperors.⁵⁹

According to the written documents and my informants, out of the *gult* land of Däbri Bokri *Qäbälé*, the *gult* lands of the monastery were also including different areas. These areas were: Adi-Chende, Adi-Tekelo, Mara-Geziet, Adi-Agam, Mekan, Adi-Genbella, Eseglie, Belehawa, May-Eila, Entebuwake, Gumie, Menekurekwar-walta, Tekawea, May-Tsaada, Qoratsit, May-Saale, Enedä-Gerges, Afetera, May-Lebo, Adi-Zaamerie,⁶⁰ Adi-Hutsaa, Enegu-Seye, Adi-Satera, Adi-Gudefa, Qonetsi, Adi-Tseraee, Enedä- Chireqos, Adi-Meqedela, Emeni-Kidana, Adi-Maheleka, Zban-Hahaile, Adi-Atekaro, Dur-Hassema and Adi-Qehinetay.⁶¹

Out of these areas, there were also *gult* lands at Adwa, Ahisaa and Aksum granted to the monastery. The names of the areas of the *gult* land in Adwa were May-Guagua, Guanefa-Felie, Adi-Maheleka, Alemeda-Bet Yohanes, and Adi-Gofafo. At Ahissa, the areas named Adi- Ede Aamoko, and May-Buwak. At Aksum there was also *gult* land near to May-Shum, for the reason of the rest place for monks of the monastery when they visited to Aksum Tsion.⁶² These *gult* lands were granted to the monastery.

The peasants and the community who lived in these *gults* were ordered to pay a fixed amount of tribute annually to the monastery. However, the amounts paid differ from one *gult* land to

⁵⁸Pausewang, Siegfried, *Peasants, Land and Society: A Social History of Land Reform in Ethiopia*, Munich, Woldete forum Verlag, 1983.p.25;

⁵⁹Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.40; and Informants: *Qés* Tekleaab Fesseha, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges.

⁶⁰This area was one of the *gult* lands of the monastery and for long time in the area were lived the community who follow Islamic religion.

⁶¹*Gädlä AbunäSét*.p.61 and Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, *Qés* Tekelaab Fesseha, *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam, and *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesefay,

⁶²*Ibid*.

another *gult* land. Because it is common in Ethiopian land tenure history paid a tribute in kind and in different amount.⁶³

The community used their own traditional unit of measurements to measure the grain like *teff* and wheat, honey and others. For instance the community used bushel and sack to measure the grain. They also used *Quna* and *Madega* to measure honey. Based on this the people who lived in this *gult* land paid different quantity dependent on the size of the *gult* land.⁶⁴ This kind of measurement was used in other monasteries to collect their tribute. For instance, the *Qésä Gäbüz* (treasurer) of Aksum Tsion like *Ĉhän* and *madega* as measurements to collect wheat for the Holy Communion.⁶⁵ Based on this in the monastery *gult* land the quantity to be paid was made by agreement between the community and the monastery. This kind of agreement is recorded in the *Gädlä Abunä Sét*.⁶⁶

Gädlä Abunä Sét describes that, the *gult* lands of the monastery are mentioned with the amount expected to be paid as the tribute. Nevertheless, this document does not tell about the kind of grain the community paid. This written document is as follow:

፪ ጫን ጅ ማድጋ [ዓዲ] ተክሎ፡ ቪ ጫን ተ ፬ ማድጋ ማራገቤት፡ ፬ ጫንተ ፬ ማድጋ አድአጋም፡ ፬ ጫንተ ፬ ማድጋ መካን፡ ፪ ጫን አድገንቤላ፡ ፬ ጫን አዲስ አድ፡ ፬ ጫን ተ ፬ ማድጋ ስገሌ፡ ቪ ጫን ፬ ማድጋ ተሁለት ላዳ በሊሐዋ፡፭ ጫን ተቺ ማድጋ ማይኤላ፡ እንትብዋክ ፡ ቪ ጫን ተቺ ማድጋ ግሙእ፡ ፭ ጫን ተማድጋ ምንኩር፡፲ርወልታ፡ ፭ ጫን ተማድጋ እድጭአንደ፡ ዕጣን ፬ ማድጋ ተካዕዋ፡ ፭ ጫን ተቺ ማድጋ ማይፀዓዳ እና ቆራጺት፡ ፮ ጫን ተቺ ማድጋ ማይሰዓል፡ ፭ ጫን ጅ ማድጋ እድሳጥራ፡ ፬ ጫን ተ፬ ማድጋ እንዳገርገስ፡ ቪ ጫን ተማድጋ አፍተራ፡ ፬ ጫን ማይልቦ፡ ፭ ጫን ተቺ ማድጋ አድጥዓ፡ ቪ ጫን ተ፬ ማድጋ፡ ፪ ጫን ተ፪ ማድጋ እንጉስዩ፡ ጫን መሀረፅ ጫን እድ ዘአመራ ገረሰ ዘነሠተ የክፈል ፪ቱ ጫን

⁶³GäbräWald EngedaWarq, “Ethiopia Traditional System of Land Tenure and Taxation,” *Ethiopia Observer*, V.V, 1962.pp.308-309; and MahtemeSellasie WoldeMesqel, “The Land System of Ethiopia.”*Ethiopia Observer*, V.I, 1957.pp.208.

⁶⁴*Gädlä Abunä Sét*, pp.61-65; Gäbräwald Engedawarq, “Ethiopia Traditional System of Land Tenure and Taxation,” *Ethiopia Observer*.V.5, 1962.pp.307; and Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya; *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges; *Qés* Tekelaab Fesseha; *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam; and *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesefay.

⁶⁵Carlo Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.17.

⁶⁶*Gädlä Abunä Sét*, pp.61-65.

መባዕ ለአቡነ ሴት ፲ ሕልቅ ወርቅ፣ ፲ መንጻፍ፣ ፲ ላም፣፲ ነፍጥ ማድጋ መዓር ዝኩሉ ክፍሎ ያፍርስ ዝኒ ዘተገብረ በደጅኻማች ካሰ በ ፯ ሽማግሌ ፯ኛ መምህር ድምፁ።⁶⁷

Rough English Translation

Two *Ĉhän* and five *madega* Adi-Tekulo, three *Ĉhän* and four *madega* Mara-Geziet, four *Ĉhän* and four *madega* Adi-Agam, four *Ĉhän* and four *madega* Mekan, two *Ĉhän* Adi-Ganbela, four *Ĉhän* Hadush-Aadi, four *Ĉhän* and four *madega* Esgelie, three *Ĉhän* and four *madega* with two *lada* Belihawa, five *Ĉhän* and three *madega* May-Eiela and Entebuwake, three *Ĉhän* and three *madega* Gemuee, five *Ĉhän* and *madega* Menekurequar-waleta, five *Ĉhän* and *madega* Adi-Chende, Ensience and four *madega* Tekaewa, five *Ĉhän* and three *madega* May-Tsaeda and Qoratsit, 6 *Ĉhän* and three *madega* May-Seaael, five *Ĉhän* and five *madega* Adi-Sateraa, four *Ĉhän* and four *madega* Enedä-Gierges, three *Ĉhän* and *madega* Afetera, four *Ĉhän* May-Lebo, five *Ĉhän* and three *madega* Adi-Hutsaa, three *Ĉhän* and four *madega* and also two *Ĉhän* and two *madega* Engui-Seye, *Ĉhän* Mehertsee Adi-Zaamerie, paid two *Ĉhän* communion to *Abunä Sét* ten *helqe* Gold, ten mat, ten cow, ten *näfete madega* honey, this all payment of agreement done by *Däjjazmačh*Kassa⁶⁸ and seven arbiters and the Seventh arbiter was *Mämeher* Demetsu.⁶⁹

In this document the information tells about how much could the community paid to the monastery and the agreements made. However, the type of kind of due is not clearly described. The other document written in the last pages of *Gädlä Abunä Sét* unlike the above statement describes and tells about the quantity and the kind expected to be paid to the monastery. This written state is as follow:

እወጥን ጽሕፈ ደብዳቤ ጉልት ዘአቡነ ሴት ዘደብረ በኩር ቀዳማይ ሲሶ ነገር ለነጋሽ ሲሶ[ለቀዳሽ]፣ ሲሶ ግብር ለጸማጅ፣ ሲሶ ለመነኩሴ ይሰጥ። በሲሶ ምድሩ ተቀምጦ የልሰራ እንዲሆን። ለመነኩሴ ምድሩ ይሥጥ።አከመ ባሹም በመመህር አባ ዘሚካኤል ወሉደ ስመዖን ዘውቅሮ አፈ መምህር ሀብተሚካኤል ቄስ ገበዝ አባ ኤለውትሮስ። በዘመነ ደጃዝማች ሚካኤል በ፫ወ፯ ሽማ ተመለሰ ደኛም አቤቶ ኢሳያስ ወአቤቶ ገብረድንግል ወድ አቤቶ መርደኬዋስ ፈራጅም አቤቶ ወልደ ዳዊት አቤቶ ጳውሎስ እሱ ፫ ሽማግሌ አካፋይም ወምክር ናኡድ ዋሰ ገብረሚካኤል ወድ ቄስ ዘወለደማሪያም። ዘአድገድፋ ፪ ሽማ ንፍቅ መዓር፣ ቆንዒ ፬ ሽማ ለዳን መዓር፡

⁶⁷*Gädlä AbunäSét*, pp.61-65;
⁶⁸*Däjjazmačh* Kassa was one of the lords in contemporary the period one of the monastery administer called *Mämeher* Demetsu Qal.
⁶⁹*Mämeher* Demetsu Qal Was the Abbot of the monastery during the time of *Däjjazmačh* Kassa.

ኃኃይሌ ፀ ሻማ ለዳን መዓር፡ አዲ አትካሮ ፪ ጫን ለዳን መዓር፡አዲዕራዕ ፪ ጫን ለዳን መዓር፡ አዲበረቶ ፪ ጫን ለዳን መዓር፡ ዱር ሐሰማ ፀ ጫን ላደን መዓር፡ ኩድሎ ፀ ጫን ላደን መዓር፡ አዲ ቅጎንጣይ ቺ ጫን እክል ላዳን መዓር፡አድ ተክሎ ፪ ጫን ለዳን መዓር፡ ማሪያገዜት ፪ ሻማ ለዳን መዓር፡ አድ ዓጋም ፀ ሻማ ላደን መዓር፡ ሐዲስ አዲ ፪ ሻማ ፭ ማድጋ እክል ለዳን መዓር፡ አድገምቤላ ፀ ሻማ ላደን መዓር፡ መካን ፪ ሻማ ለዳን መዓር ዳግመኛ መካን ፪ ሻማ ለዳን መዓር፡አድዛ አመሬ ፪ ሻማ ለዳን መዓር፡ በልሐዋ ፪ ሻማ ለዳን መዓር፡ ማይኤላ ፀ ሻማ፡ ቺ ማድጋ እክል ለዳን መዓር፡ ግሙእ ፀ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ እንትቡዋክ ፀ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ መሐርጽ ፪ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡እንጉሥያ ፪ ሻማ ኩሙሌ ካዕቦ መዓር፡እንዳ ጊዮርግስ ቺ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ ምንኩርኻር ወልታ ፀ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡አድሣጥራ ፪ ሻማ ፭ ማድጋ እክል ካዕቦ መዓር፡ እንዳ ቂርቆስ ካዕቦ ማዓር፡ ቆራጺት ቺ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ ማይ ዓዕዳ ፀ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ አድ መቅደላ ቺ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ አድ ጭእንዴ ፀ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ ተካዕዋ ፪ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ ዕብን ኪዳና ፀ ሻማ ካዕቦ መዓር፡ አፍተራ ፀ ሻማ ማድጋ ጤፍ ንእንፍቅ ፪ ቁና መዓር፡፡ አዲጭእንዴ፡እብን ክዳና፡ እድጉድፋ፡ አፍተራ፡ ቆንጺ፡ ዕጣን፡፡ አድ መቅደላ፡ ማይ ጻእዳ፡ ቁራጺት፡ ማይ ሳዓይል፡ አድሣጥራ፡ እንዳ ጊዮርግስ መሐር፡፡ ዕጣን ዞሬ ለባሕቲቱ ለፈላሲ፡፡ ፈላሲ ወርቀ ኃኃይ ለእመ ረከበ ንጉሥፈረቃሁ ምስለ አቡነ ሴት ይትካፈል ጉልት ማይጓጓ፡ ጓጓፋ፡ ፈሌ፡ አድማሕለካ፡ አድጼዋ፡ ቤት ዩሐንስ፡ አድጉፋፎ፡ አድኢዮ፡ አሞኾ፡ ማይብዋክ፡ እንዘ የወግዙ በጂ ቆስሞስት ቀሳውስት ወበ ቃለ ጳጳስ አቡነ በርተሎሜዎስ፡፡ ዝኩሎ ዘአቡነ ሴት ጉልት ዘወሐብዎ ሀጺ ዘርአያአቆበ ፡፡⁷⁰

አ፲ ወ ጅ ግብር የግሙእ፡ ሐዲስ አዲ፡ መርያ ገዜት፡ አድ ተክሎ፡ አፍተራ፡ ኃኃይሌ፡፡ ግብር ፯ አድ ተክሎ፡፤ ማሪያ ገዜት፡ ፲ ወ ፀ አድ አጋም፡ አ ፲ ወ ጅ ሐዲስ አዲ፡ ፯ ተቅራና አድ ገንቤላ፡ ፯ ተቅራና አዲ ዘአመሬ፡ ፲ ወ ጅ መካን፡ ፲ ወ ፀ እስገሌ፡ ፲ ወ ፀ በልሐዋ፡ ፲ ወ ጅ ማይኤላ፡ ፱ እንትብዋክ፡ ፲ እንዳጊዮርግስ፡ ፲ እንጉስዮ፡ ፯ መሐርጽ፡ ፲ ወ ጅ ምንኩርኻር ወልታ፡ አስር አድሣጥራ፡ ፲ ወ ጅ ማይ ሳአል፡ ፲ ወ ፪ ቁራጺት፡ ፱ አዲ መቅደላ፡፤ ፲ ወ ጅ ማይጻእዳ፡፤ ተክእዋ ዝተገበረ በወይዘሮ ኣቅሌስያ ዘመን በጅ ሻማግሌ ቤተክርስቲያን ሐንጹ በዘመኖሙ በወይዘሮ አቅሌሲያ በዘመነ አባዘሚካኤል፡፡⁷¹

Rough English Translation:

I start to write this letter of the *Gult* land of *Abunä Sét Däbrä Bäkür*. The first thing one third to king, one third to the clergy and one third tribute to *Temaje*(tenants). *Ĉhän -Ĉhän* given to monks and one third of the land keeping to given for aged society. All land given to the monks. This made by *Shum* (leaders) *MämeherAbba Zemekaiel* his relative was *Semon* of *Weqero*, *Afe-Mämeher Habtemekaiel*, and *Qésä Gäbäs Abba Eielweteros*. During the region of *Däjjazmačh Mikaiel* 190 *Shama* was returned and the judge were *Abeto Isayas*, *Abeto Gebredengel*, *Abeto Merdiekiewos* and judicator *Abeto Woldedawit*, *Abeto Dawit* and *Abeto Paulos*. There are also three arbiters was *Akafay* (the person who divide) *Mämeher Naaude*.

⁷⁰*Gädlä AbunäSét*,p.62;
⁷¹*Ibid*,p.63

The surety (warranty) was Gäbrämikael the child of Qés Zwoldemariyam. Based on the agreement the granted the *gult* land of the monastery was Adi-Gudefa two *Shama Nefeqe* honey, Qonitsi four *Shama ladan* honey, Hahaile four *shema ladan* honey, Adi-Atekaro two *Ĉhän ladan* honey, Adi-Bereto two *Ĉhän ladan* honey, Durhasemaa four *Ĉhän ladan* honey, Kudelo four *Ĉhän ladan* honey, Adi-qehintay three *Ĉhän* grain and *ladan* honey, Adi-Tekulo two *Ĉhän ladan* honey, Meriya-Geziet two *shema ladan* honey, Mekan two *shema ladan* honey and again Mekan two *shema ladan* honey, Adi-Zamerie two *shema ladan* honey, Belehawa two *shema ladan* honey, May-Eiela four *shema* and three *madega* grain and *ladan* honey, Gumiee four *shema kaebo* honey, Mehertsee two *shema kaebo* honey, Enegu-Seye two *shema kumulie kaebo* honey, Enedä-Giyorges three *kaebo* honey, Menquirequar-waleta four *shema kaebo* honey, Adi-Saatera two *shema* and five *madega* grain and *kaebo* honey, Enedä-Qirqos *kaebo* honey, Qoratsit three *shema kaebo* honey, May-Tsada four *shema kaebo* honey, Adi-Meqedela three *shema kaebo* honey, Adi-Chendie four *shemakaebo* honey, Tekaeewa two *shema kaebo* honey, [Emni]-kidana four *shema kaebo*, and Aftera four *shema madega* Teff and two *Quna* honey. In addition to the above ordered to pay the due there was also agreed to pay a tribute was Adi-Chinde, Eben-Kidana, Adi-Gudefa, Aftera, and Qonitsi are to give Essence. Adi-Maqedela, May-Tsaeda, Qoratsit, May-Saael, Adi-Satera and Enedä-Gerges to provide a communion. Then the area of Etan Zore was completely given to monks. A Monks named Woreqeof Hahailie met with Emperor ZaraYaqob and ordered and granted the areas of May-Guagua, Guanefa, felie, Adi-Maheleka, Adi-tsewie, Bet-yohanes, Adi-Gofafo, Adi-Iyo, Amoko, and May-Buwake as *gult* to divide equally with monastery. They sanctioned in the name of Sevenqosemosat *qesaweset* and by the word of Bishop *Abunä Bärtälmemows*. All *gult* was given to *Abunä Sét* by Emperor ZaraYaqob.

In addition, there is also some amount of tribute to be paid by the community. Based on this each *Qäbälé* was expected to pay its tribute as the follow:

Fifteen tax Gemuie, Hadis-Adi, Maria-Geziet, Adi-Tekulo, Afetera and Hahaile. Seven tax Adi-teklo, ten Mara-Geziat, fourteen Adi-Agamo, fifteen Hadis-Adi, Seven Adi-Gebiela, Seven Adi-Zamerie, fifteen Mekan, Fourteen Esegele, fourteen Belehawa, Fifteen Mai-Eila, Nine Entebuwake, ten Enedä-Gerges, ten Enegu-Seye, Seven Mehretse, fifteen Menequerquar-Waleta, ten Adi-Satera, fifteen May-Saal, twelve Qoratsit, nine Adi-Meqedela, fifteen Mai-Tsaeda and three Tekaeewaa. This make during the period of *Wayzero Aqelesiya* with five arbiters of the monastery built during the period of *Abba Zemikael*.

Generally, the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery highly depended on the *gult* land that was granted the charter by different Ethiopian kings and regional rulers at different times. Based on the above written document there is an agreement made by the local ruler and administrator of the monastery. According to these agreement that is clearly described how much the community

cloud pay in the traditional units of measurement like *Ĉhän, ladan, Kaebo, madega* to measure the Honey, *Teff*, and different grains.⁷² This is common in Ethiopian history the taxation or due paid in kind. Because in Ethiopia Taxes on land were traditionally paid in kind, i.e. in grain, honey, butter, cotton, and livestock as well as in labor in the form of service.⁷³

The *gult* system of the monastery was similar to the *gult* system in the other parts of Ethiopia. Based on the *gult* system except Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé* the rest *gult* land was also clearly states by saying *Siso*(1/3) to king, *Siso*(1/3) to clergy and *Siso* (1/3) to tenants. As a result of this the monastery had wide land charter. This indicates the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery being one of the oldest monasteries was respected by the community of the area. Some members of the community lived in the former *gult* of the monastery, to express their reverence to the saint they say, “*Abunä Sét*” which means in the name of the saint to get mercy or to confirm their opinion.⁷⁴

According to the *Gädlä Abunä Sét* and the informants except Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé*, the peasants who lived in *gult* land of the Monastery ordered to pay from their products one third to king, one third to themselves and one third to *Qedash* (clergy of the monastery).⁷⁵ The peasants paid their due in kind. The quantity expected to pay was made based on the agreements made between the local leaders, the monastery and the community members. That means that the communities were expected to fulfill their obligations based on their prior agreement. This shows that there was good relationship between the monasteries and the peasants who lived in the *gult* land of the

⁷²*Gädlä AbunäSét* ., pp.61-65;

⁷³Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, Haile Sellasie I University, 1966.p.50;

⁷⁴Informants: *Qés* Tekeleab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

monastery. The former communities living in the *gult* land had high respected towards the holy *Abunä Sét* and had a close relationship with monastery.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, unlike in other *gult* lands the women's and the uneducated men found in the *Däbrä Bäkür Qäbälé* were not treated equally. Because, at *Däbrä Bokri Qäbälé* land was allowed to be owned by the monastery clergymen based on their status. According the informants, any person if does not have any religious education could not allowed to possess land in the *Qäbälé*. In addition women's was not allowed to be came owners of the land until the recent period.⁷⁷

In order to avoid, the Women and uneducated men ownership in the *Däbrä Bokri Qäbälé* they formulated and implemented a rule and regulation of sudden evacuation of women from the *gult* hand with in one day after the death of their husbands. Because of this, the women became land less and faced economic challenge to feed their children, and were forced live in poverty.⁷⁸ According to my informants the monastery drafted this kind of rule was to encourage the men to study church education and to became a servant of the monastery.⁷⁹

The Monastery for long period became wealthy and the religious men like monk, nun, *Qés*, *Dabtara* (choir), deacons and other religious teachers lived in good manner. The monastery was one of the religious education centers and dominated religious men. However, all condition in the Monastery became worse after 1975. Because in 1975 the coming of *Derg* government to power introduced land nationalization the *gult* land of the monastery was taken and distributed among the peasants. The elders who distributed the land were *Mämeher Argawi*, *Qés Araya Gäbrä Tenese*, *Ato Berhe Wolde Mikiel*, *Ato Taddese Tasew*, *Ato Tekelay Demewoz*, *Ato Legesse*

⁷⁶Informants: *Qés Tekeleaab Fesseha*, *Qés Aregawi Abay*, *Haleqa Gäbrägzeher Tesafay*, *Abba Argawi Araya*, and *Qés Mezemur Gäbrä Mariyam*.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

GäbräSelassie and others. Because the *gult* land of the monastery was taken monastic system was endangered and it caused for the displacement of the monks who migrated to different places.⁸⁰

In addition to the *gult* lands nationalized by the government, the community who lived in the *gult* land of the monastery thirty-three *Qäbälé* had served the monastery as its source of income for a long period gradually began to be distributed among parishes and later they began to establish churches in the name of different saints and *tabots*.⁸¹ The communities were forced to establish their own churches because the monastery too far from their home of the communities who lived in the different *Qäbälé* from the former monastery. This led to lose of the income of the monastery.⁸²

4.3.2. Diversified Sources of Income of the Monastery

Besides the incomes obtained from the tribute of the *gult* land the monastery had other sources of income. It had been customary for the state and individuals to offer gifts to the monastery in various forms. One form of income was *metsebea* (vow) during religious celebrations. This is a material and financial support given by the faithful to the monastery usually on major anniversaries of the monastery's holidays. Majority of the offering has given by kings, regional lords and important to Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery were made in kind. These include different religious books, different crosses, crowns, colorful umbrellas, jewelry carpets, cloak, and *gemija*, incense, candles etc.⁸³ In addition to this other sources of income of

⁸⁰Appendix.10:- A letter sent by *Mämeher* Tekleyesus Woldegerges in 1996.

⁸¹Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam, and Apendix.11.

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³*Mäshäfa Eed* (a documents written by hand and now found on hand of the *Sebaka gubaie*.)

this monastery was the local people brought cereals to be used for the holy communion.⁸⁴ Hayatt argues the source of income of the churches and monasteries were also the free will offerings made by the people for special days such as on festival of Epiphany, marriage feasts, and *tescars* (a religious ceremony prepared for death person), and fee up on certain occasions.⁸⁵ This tradition continued as tradition from generation to generation and became a backbone of the monastery for long period.

⁸⁴Appendix.12:-The agreement written in the last books found in the monastery.

⁸⁵H.M. Hayatt, *The Church Abyssinia*, London, Luzac and Co, 1928.p.64;

Chapter V

The Treasures in the Monastery and Their Conditions

5.1. The Treasures (equipment) of the Monastery

It is well known that the manuscripts, letters, equipment and other related materials are the most precious items of the country's cultural heritage.¹ The Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery has a number of priceless historical objects that are important for the writing of history. Because, Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery have a different collection of treasures. That means there are different ancient church equipment's and parchments books found in Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery. Most of the treasures found in this monastery were organized and conserved by the monks of the monastery. Most of these treasures found in this monastery they could be served as evidences of the monastery has long period.² Hayatt argues in Ethiopian churches and monasteries found different treasures, ornaments, manuscripts, and accessories used for different purposes that has old age.³

The various valuable and different *Nawaya Qedsun* (church equipment's) were obtained from donations of important people like individuals, regional lords, Bishop, and kings. These were made from different materials. When we see the religious books were made from parchment (tanned leather). The other monasteries materials were made from wood, Iron, copper, silver,

¹Seleshi Mengiste, "A History of Dima Giyorgis Monastery from foundation to 1974," BA Theses, Department of history, Addis Ababa university .1998.p.40,

²Informants: *Haleqa Gäbrägzehar Tesefay, Qés Tekeleab Fesseha, Abba Argawi Araya, and Qés Sadur Woldegerges.*

³H.M. Hayatt, *The Church Abyssinia*, London, Luzac and Co, 1928. pp.131-146,

gold and colorful clothes.⁴ Paul Henze asserts that monasteries benefited from donations made by significant political figures often have sizable holdings of vestments, crowns and other objects-even their beds and chairs- that belonged to prominent men, including princes, Emperors, and regional nobility.⁵

Generally, now in the monastery found different treasures or equipment. However, the treasures not well registered and does not given a code number but they simply registered on the *Mäshäfa Ede*.⁶ Based on the *Mäshäfa Ede* and the *Qésä Gäbäz* (Treasury) and other religious men the treasures found in this monastery. These historical treasures found in the monastery were including manuscripts and other treasures. Some of them will be discussed as follow:

1. *Menebere Tsadeqan* (*Menbere Bärtäломewos*)

Figure: 19. *MenbereTsadeqan* donated by *Abunä Bärtäломewos* towards the end of the 14th Century A.D.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

⁴Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbrägzehar Tese fay, *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam, and *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges.

⁵Henze. B. Paul, *Church and monastery treasures of Tigray* (private)...p.152.

⁶*Mäshäfa Ede* (መሐላፊ ዕድ) is simply like a textbook and served as documents used as a record the treasures received by *Qésä Gäbäz* and have some record events of the monastery. This is on the hand of *Sebeka Gubaie* and Appendix.13.

This *Member Tsadeqan* is one of the oldest treasures found in the monastery. It was believed that *Abunä Bärtälomewos* donated the *Menbere Tsadeqan*. The *Menbere Tsadeqan* made from leather, metal and bronze. It is well-decorated treasures. According informants, this treasure served as stand to bless the newly elected *Abamenet* (Abbot) of the monastery.⁷ This treasure was recorded and taken photograph as one of the 16 valuable objects found in the monastery on December 29, 1999 G.C and the expertise recommended this objects was one of the highly damaged its leather part. The three experts involved in this activity were Mister Zek Mercy, *Ato GirmaEliyas* and *Leqe Teguhan Gäbräkirestos Hailemariyam*.⁸

2. *Akelils* (crowns)

Picture.20. the three crowns found in the monastery



Source: Photo by Ahiferom *Wäräda* Public Relation taken in July 2018.

⁷Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

⁸Appendix.14.

These crowns are also other old treasures found in this monastery. These crowns are well decorated. According to the informants of the monastery, these crowns were donated by King Dawit I, King Yeshaq and King Zara Yaqob.⁹ The crowns have similarity with the crowns found at *Enedä Abba Yohani Monastery*.¹⁰ These treasures were considered as one of the icons of the monastery, which are found at risk due to lack of good protection.

3. *Moqomiya* (stick) of *Abunä Sét*

Picture.21. Stick of holy *Abunä Sét*



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

⁹Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

This stick is also one of the treasures found in the monastery. According to my informants, this stick was the stick of *Abunä Sét* that used when praying. Because of this, the community of the monastery named it *Abunä Sét* stick. The *Abunä Sét* stick is well decorated by the art of wisteria. Now this stick accomplishes the *menegsha* cross which used to lead every ceremony in the monastery.¹¹

4. The *Awedi* (Plate)

Figure.22. *Awedi* (Plate)



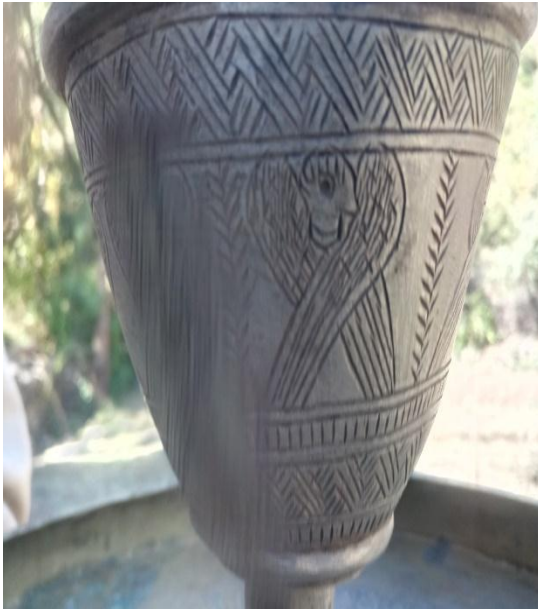
Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

¹¹Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

The *Awedi* is one of the valuable treasures found in the monastery. This is made of bronze and silver. It is well decorated with other materials. This *Awedi* has an Arabic inscription. According to informants the *Awedi* and *Tsewa* were brought to the monastery when the first day of church mass ceremony in the monastery was made by *Abunä* Samuel of Waldeba, *Abunä* AbiyeIgzie, *Abunä* Sét and other two religious men.¹²

5. *Tsewa* (Cup)

Figure.23. *Tsewa* (cup)



Source: Photo by LeakeTeklebrhan taken in December 2019.

The *Tsewa* (cup) is also one of the precious treasures of the monastery. This *Tsewa* is well decorated with bird's picture and wisteria. This is made of silver. According to my informants, this treasure came to the monastery when the monastery was established.¹³

¹²Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariyam.

¹³*Ibid.*

6. Boxes

Figure.24. the Box made from Leather and Bamboo.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

There are two boxes found in this monastery. It is believed that King Dawit I donated the two boxes to the monastery. These Boxes are made of leather and bamboo. The boxes served as store for the manuscripts and other treasures.¹⁴ Now the boxes found in the monastery are highly damaged by rainfall and termite.

¹⁴Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbrägzeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

7. Well decorated Stone

Figure.25. A Well Decorated Stone.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

This stone is well decorated. It is in the compound of the monastery along the entrance. According to the informants; it is a well-decorated stone which is one of the five stones donated by Emperor Yeshaq (r.1419-1429). Some of the well-decorated stones were used as decoration on the wall of the building of the monastery and others stand on the ground. This well-shaped stone currently is serving as a space where the *mudayemetsewat* (offering) is put to collect vows and others from the community.¹⁵

¹⁵Informants: *Qés* Tekeleab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur Gäbrämariyam.

8. *Werki kabba* (Gold Cloak) and photograph of *Wayzero* Mulushewa Admassie

Figure.26. The *Werki Kabba* (Gold Cloak) and Photograph of *Wayzero* Mulushew Ademassie.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Gold Cloak and the photograph of *W/ro* Mulushewa Admassie now found at *Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét* Monastery. This Gold Cloak and photograph are considered as one of precious treasures by the community of the monastery. *W/ro* Mulushewa Ademassie was the wife *Däjjazmačh* Hailemariam Sebehat of Agame and the relatives of Emperor Haileselasie I. She donated this because she was healed from her disease by the holy water of the monastery.¹⁶

¹⁶Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

9. *Werki Megonatsefiya*

Figure.27. *Werki Megonatsefiya* of *Däjjazmačh* Hailemariyam Sebehat



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

The *Werki megonatsefiya* was donated by *Däjjazmačh* HaileMariyam Sebhät. *Däjjazmačh* HaileMariyam was the governor of Agame. *Däjjazmačh* HaileMariam had a close relationship with the monastery. In addition, the confessor of *Däjjazmačh* HaileMariam and *Wayzero* Mulushewa Admassie was *Mämeher* GaberuMedehanie, an influential *Abbot* of the monastery.¹⁷ In the *Werki megonatsefiya*, the name of *Däjjazmačh* HaileMariyam is written.

¹⁷Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

10. *Negarit* (Drum)

Figure.28. *Negarits* found in the monastery.



Source: Photo by Ahiferom *Wäräda* Communication Bureau taken in July 2018.

This *Negarit* is one of the treasures found in the monastery. *Abeto WoldeHawriyat* donated the *Negarit*.¹⁸ *Abeto WoldeHawriyat* was has a title *bael aserete kelete Negarit* (the possessor of twelve Drum). In this monastery, there are twelve *Negarit's* which ranges from big to small. Some of them are damaged and the leather part is torn, due to lack the necessary protection. These *Negarit* exposed to damage because they stored on the window of the main building and do not have their own storage place.¹⁹

11. Different manuscripts

In the monastery, there are different manuscripts that have a long age. King Dawit, Emperor ZaraYaqob, Emperess Zewditu, *Wayzero* Mulushewa Admassie, *Abeto* Isayas, other local leaders and the ordinary people, donated some of the manuscripts.²⁰ Among these manuscripts with their donator were *Mäshäfa* Askimaros by King Dawit I,²¹ Tamere Mariyam by Emperor ZaraYaqob,²² *Gädlä* Haweriyat by *Gerazemaçh* Desta Woreqie, FetehaNegest by *Abito* Esayas, Senkesar by *Abito* WoldeHaweriyat,²³ Haymenote Abew by *Abeto* Kahisu, *Mäshäfa* Weddasie Amelak by *Abeto* Lebassie Kirestos, *Mäshäfa* Dawit by *Ato* Helawi Keristos, *Mäshäfa* Dawit by *Grazmaçh* Denegeze, *Mäshäfa* Dersane Mahaywi by *Fetwerari* Alabash,²⁴ *Mäshäfa* Darsane

¹⁸According to my Informants *Abeto* WoldeHaweriyat was one of the leaders in the area. Their home is in Gumie village.

¹⁹Personal observation in the monastery in the monastery in January 2020.

²⁰Appendix: 15.

²¹This manuscript is one of the oldest monasteries given for the monastery. This manuscript was written during the Reign of King Dawit I, and it was believed this manuscript given for this monastery by Dawit I. In this manuscript there is around seven paintings: the picture of Iyesus WuldeIgziabeher, cross and wisteria, Yohanes Lesane Worq, Yohanes Metemeq, Qedus Paulos, *Abba* Mussie Tselim and *Abba* Beresoma.

²²There are more than five Manuscripts of TamereMariyam. One of them is the oldest manuscripts. This was given to the monastery by Emperor Zara Yaqob. But now this book highly damaged by fire. The rest of Tamer eMariyam given for the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä* Sét Monastery was *Ato* GäbräMariyam, *Ato* AmdeMeseqel, *Wayzero* WoleteHiwot and *Ato* GäbräIsayas.

²³This manuscript donated by *Abito* WoldeHaweriyat during the region of Iyasu (r.1682-1706) and the *Abunä* Sinoda (1672-1687).

²⁴This manuscript donated to Däbrä Bäkür in 1927 E.C during the region of Emperor Haile Selassie I and the *Räs* of Tigry was, Leual Räs Seyum. The *Abamenet* of the Däbrä Bäkür monastery was *Mämeher* GäbräTensaie.

Mikael by Woldegerima,²⁵ GäbräHemamat by Helawi Keristos,²⁶ and *Mäshäfa* Degwua by *Shaleqa* WoldeHiwot.²⁷

From the manuscripts found in the monastery the manuscripts of Tamera Mariyam, *Gädlä Hana We Yaqem* and *Mefetehe Seray* is written in Geez and English inscriptions. According to the oral traditions, this book was one of the oldest manuscripts.²⁸ This manuscript is highly damaged, especially the English parts and its image of saints and St. Virgin Mary.

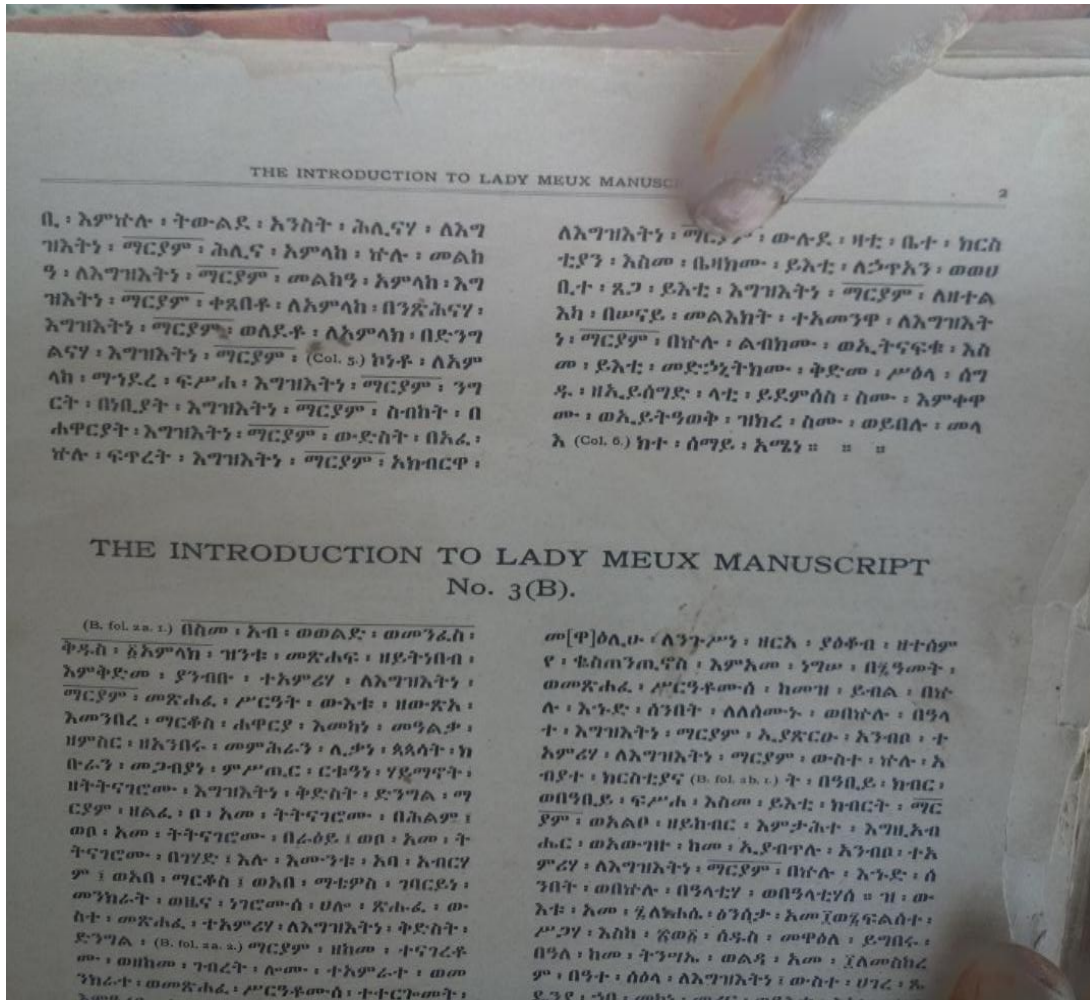
²⁵This Dersane Mikael is one of the most decorated manuscripts. In this, there is more than seven painting. This donated by WoldeGerima but its time not Known. This Dersane Mikael is one of the treasures photographed and recorded by the expertise lead by Mister JikMrese, Ato Gerima Eliyas and *Leqe Teguhan* GäbräKeristos HaileMariyam sent by Ethiopian Arts and treasures research Bureau in December 29, 1999 G.C.

²⁶This manuscript given by HelawiKeristos, one of the rich men in the Adi Chende and he has not child. This given to the monastery during the region of Emperor TekleGiorgis (r.1868-1871). The *RäsTegere* of *Räs WoldeSelassie* specifically during the time of *Räs WoldeSelassie* stay at Hentalo-Wajerat . The Hahaile *Räs* was *Wayzero Aqelesiya*. During this period the *Mämeher* and *Qésä Gäbüz* were *Mämeher MelkaieTsadiq* and *Qésä Gäbüz* GäbräMedhin.

²⁷This manuscript given to the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery by *Shaleqa* WoldeHiwot with his wife *Wayzero WolteSelassie*. But there is not time.

²⁸Informants: *Qés* Sadur WoldeGiorges, *Qés*Tekeleaab Fesseha, and *Rése* Debri AbrhaTese fay.

Figure.29. The Manuscript written English and Geez inscriptions.²⁹



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

²⁹This manuscript according the Amharic document on the top of p. XX was written during the region of *Bejerod Yohanes, Bejerod Nolay, Abeto GäbräHiwot TekelHaymanot and Yeguradinu Kiros Akalu and Liqe Meimeran Neway*. This manuscript probably written in XVIIIth (17th Century).

Figure.30. Different Manuscripts found in the monasteries.³⁰



Source: Photo by Ahiferom *Wäräda* Public Relation Bureau taken May 2019.

12. Different Crosses

Ethiopian monasteries and churches had beautiful crosses. These Ethiopian crosses have different designs, shapes and made from different materials like Wood, Iron, Cooper, Silver and Gold.³¹ Based on this, at Däbrä Bäkür monastery there are different cross is made from wood, iron, bronze and silver.³² The crosses found in the monastery includes *Qewami Meseqel* (big

³⁰Appendix.16.

³¹Eine Moore, "Ethiopian crosses from the 12th C to the 16th C," *proceeding of the first International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art*, London, Pinder Press, 1989. pp.110-114,

³²Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

crosses) and Hand crosses. These crosses were donated by different people: *Embetey Aqelesiya*, *Ato GäbräMariyam Kahisay May-Eila*, *Geta WoldeSamuel*, *Wayzero Asegash Tewelu*, *Abba GäbräKidān Kidānu*, *Abba Argawi* and others.

Figure.31. Different types cross-made from wood, bronze and silver found in the monastery



Source: Photo by Ahiferom *Wäräda* Public Relation Bureau taken in July 2018.

Picture.32. *Menegesha* cross with the back and front images.



Front image of the cross

Back image of the cross

Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

This *menegesha* cross is one of the precious treasures found in the monastery. The *menegesha* cross is made from silver and plated with gold. This cross has a picture of *Abunä* Daniel and *Abunä* Peteros the bishops of Ethiopia during the 10th Century. This cross is one of the most respected crosses and considered by the community of the monasteries as figure of the monastery. This carried by the community of the monastery when there is a funeral of an

important person and other celebrations. King Dawit was the one who donated this cross to the monastery as a gift.³³

13. Werki Dino (Lion main)

Figure.33. The *Werki Dino* found in the monastery.



Source: Photo by Ahiferom *Wäräda* Public Relation Bureau taken in July 2018.

The *Werki Dino* is one of the precious treasures found in the monastery. *Rése Debri* Gaberay donated these *Wrki Dino*. *Rese Dabri* Gäbräy was born in Däbrä Bokri. Then later

³³Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbrälgziher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

Rese Dabri Geberay was a rich patriot and he had a close relation with monastery. He fought against the assault Italians under *Däjjazmačh* Gäbrä-Hiwot Meshesha.³⁴

14. Bell

Figure.34. The Big Bell Found in the Monastery and still gives service.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

In the monastery there is a large bell made from bronze. *Wayzero* LeteMeseqel WoldeMariyam brought it from Italy and donated to the monastery. *Wayzero* LeteMeseqel was born in Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé*. She later lived in Asmara.³⁵ This bell is a well decorated with

³⁴Informants: *Qés*TekeleaabFesseha, *Qés*AregawiAbay, *Haleqa*GäbräegziherTsafay, *Abba*Argawi Araya and *Qés*MezemurGäbräMariyam.

³⁵Informants: *Qés*TekeleaabFesseha, *Qés*AregawiAbay, *Haleqa*GäbräegziherTsafay, *Abba*Argawi Araya and *Qés*MezemurGäbräMariyam.

different holy pictures and encircled by flowers. On the bell we find image of Jesus Christ, St. Virgin Mary, St. Megedelawit and others.³⁶

According the informants, this bell used for two purposes. The first purpose used for church purpose, which summons those worshippers to the service and other religious ceremony. The second purpose is to announce the accidental problems in the *Qäbälé*: fire accidental, death emergency and others.³⁷

15. *AratZufan* (Beds)

Figure.35. one of the Beds found in the Monastery donated by Emperor ZaraYaqob.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan, taken in December 2019..

³⁶The photo of the bell.

³⁷Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam

In the monastery, there are three beds. These beds made from leather and wood. According to my informants, these beds were donated by King Dawit I, Emperor Zara Yaqob and *Belata* Hadeğu.³⁸ From the three beds one was attempted to take over by the individuals who claim their ownership but the individual could not successes their idea and later became as a property of the monastery.³⁹ The bed found in the monastery also served as stand and store place of the gifted umbrella and others materials not well protected.

16. *Tseneha*

Figure.36. Different *Tseneha*



Source: Photo by LeakeTeklebrhan taken in December 2019.

³⁸Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

³⁹Appendix.17.

These *Tsenha* were made from materials like silver and bronze. These were has different design and time. Some of them were donated by *Mämeher Gäbräsét*.⁴⁰

17. Stone Bell

Figure.37. Stone Bell found in the compound of the Monastery.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

The stone bell is one of the instruments used in the monastery. This bell is used during holidays, *tabot* (Ark) ceremonies and the funerals.⁴¹ Paul Henze argues that stone bell from ancient time till today is used as musical instruments of the ceremony in many Tigray monasteries.⁴²

⁴⁰Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* AregawiAbay, *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

6.2. The Condition of the Treasures in Monastery

Starting from its establishment different treasures and equipment's were donated to the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery in the name of *Abunä Sét* and other saints.⁴³ As we discussed above these different treasures were made from different materials.⁴⁴ Then responsibility to protect these treasures is mainly on the hands of the *QésäGäbäz*. The *QésäGäbäz* usually transfers by counting all equipment's and treasures of the monastery to the next *Qésä Gäbäz* in front of the *Mahiber* (the monastery association). However, the *Qésä Gäbäzs* of the monastery did not have equal concern for the treasures. This caused damaged on different treasures. These treasures are stored in the small building without care. There are no enough shelves to store these equipment's in proper manner.⁴⁵

The Däbrä Bäkür *Abnä Sét* monastery treasures faced considerable damages and losses during its life span. The loss was faced due to lack of good protection.⁴⁶

The first major loss of the monastery was the looting of different treasures by the Italian soldiers during the Italian occupation. From the looted treasures were include three well-decorated stone. Among the decorated stones looted two were left in Adwa town. Now the two decorated stones are built on the building of the entrance of Adwa court Bureau commonly known by the name of Fisho. The third one could not be traced.⁴⁷ Italian troops came to the Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé* to capture one of the patriots *Gräzmačh GäbräMedhin Kahisay* during the

⁴¹Informants: *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesefay, *Abba* Argawi Araya and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

⁴²Henze. B. Paul, "Church and Monastery Treasures of Tigray (private)," *Orbis AETHIOPICUS*-in Leipzig, Vom.24, 2007.p.151,

⁴³Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesefay, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, and *Qés* Tekleaab Fesseha.

⁴⁴*Ibid*; and personal observation made in the monastery on January 2020.

⁴⁵Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesefay, *Qés* SadurWoldegerges, and *Qés* Tekleaab Fesseha.

⁴⁶*Ibid*.

⁴⁷*Ibid*.

Italian occupation (1935-1941).⁴⁸ During the Italian occupation, Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé*, a district of Hahaile (Enticho) served as a fort for the Italian army.⁴⁹ According to Antonio Mordini article and my informants, The Italy army visited Hahile district and Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé* several times to attack the patriots. Meanwhile, the Italians army looted different treasures from the monasteries found in the area.⁵⁰

Tremendous losses occurred due to the air attack of the *Derg* regime.⁵¹ The major treasures loss by the attack was the manuscript *Tamere Mariyam* (miracle of St. Mary) that was donated to the monastery by Emperor ZaraYaqob and the bed donated by of the unknown leaders. The loss also observed by the research expertise when they visited the monastery recoded and photographed different parchment books like *Mäshäfa Retu'a Haymanot*, *Gädlä Semaetat*, *Mäshäfa Orit*, and others they put as remark the majority book are damaged.⁵² For instance, some paintings of the parchments and manuscripts were found damaged are:

⁴⁸Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesefay, *Qés Sadur Woldegerges*, and *Qés Tekleab Fesseha*.

⁴⁹Antonio Mordini, "L'architecture religieuse chrétienne l'Ethiopie du Moyen Age: Un programme de recherches," *EHSS. Chaiers d'Etudes Africaines*, V.II, Cahier.V, 1961.p.170.

⁵⁰Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesefay, *Qés Sadur Woldegerges* and *Qés Tekleab Fesseha*

⁵¹*Ibid*,

⁵²Appendix.14: this document has a signature of the Expertise and the member of the monasteries *Sebeka Gubaie*.

Figure.38. *Mäshäfa* Orit that damaged by rainfall.



Source: Photo by LeakeTeklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure: 39. The Painting of WeludeIgzabiher in *Mäshäfa* Orit damaged by rainfall.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure.40. the Manuscript of *Tamere Mariyam* (miracle of Virgin Mary) burned by air attack.



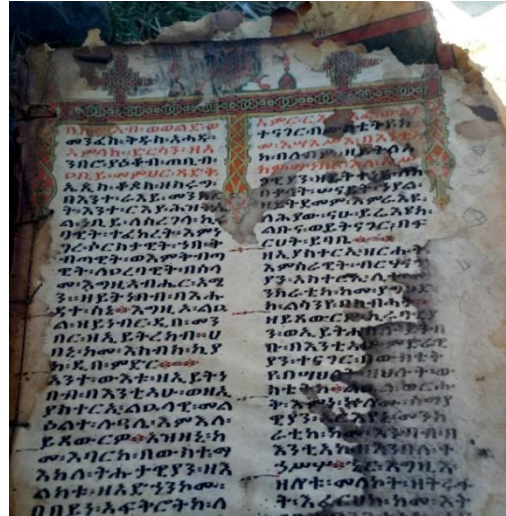
Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure.41. among the Oldest Parchment books damaged by rainfall and burned.



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

Figure.42. Parchment of *Gädlä* Samuel and *Gädlä* Lalibela on the left and DeresaneYaqob on the right damaged by rainfall



Source: Photo by Leake Teklebrhan taken in December 2019.

The second loss of the monastery is occurred due to lack of proper handling and awareness. There is no enough space and well prepared shelf to store. They are simply stored in one room. This building is still used as both a stores of the treasures and sleeping room of the *QésäGäbäz*. This caused a great loss and damaged on the treasures of the monastery.⁵³The treasures are stored on the floor, one laying over the other.⁵⁴

The other type of loss of the monastery treasures was occurring by the community of the monastery. Means the community of the monasteries like the priest, deacons, and other religious men they took different treasures like a book, Stick and cross. For instance, when one priest is a teacher of religious education and other purposes, they taken different books and materials of the

⁵³Informants: *Haleqa* Gäbräegziher Tesefay, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, and *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha.

⁵⁴Personal observation in the monastery on January 2020.

monastery but does not return.⁵⁵ Still now different treasures found at home does not return. Some of the treasures found at the home were like *Moqomiya* (stick), books and hand cross.⁵⁶

The other types caused for long period for the loss and the equipment of the monastery related with establishment of the new churches in the former *gult* land of the monastery. For instance the new established churches at different *Qäbälé's* of the monastery were taken the *tabots* (Arks) and equipment for mass ceremony from the monastery. According to informants, for instance the first *tabot* (Ark) of the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery was St. Virgin Mary. The Ark of St. Mary was taken to the Adi-Tseraee *Qäbälé*. In addition to this, the ark of the Holy Trinity was taken to Zeban-Hahile. When the Ark taken from the monastery in to newly established churches other equipment's like bell, *tsenha*, cloak, and others was also taken and the equipment's does not return back to the monastery they left in the church.⁵⁷ Based on this condition, the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery played a great role in the establishment of the different churches in Hahaile *Qäbälé*, due to this more than twenty churches established the monastery equipment also lost.⁵⁸ This and other factors made for the treasures and equipment to damage and loss at different times. Based on this the monastery must be made a well protection the remain treasures to transfer for the next generation.

⁵⁵Informant: *Qés* Tekelaab Fesseha, *Qés* Mezmur GäbräMariyam, and *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Informants: *Mämeher* Kaleab Zerue, *Abba* GäbräSelassie Gidey, *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha, *Qés* Aregawi Abay, *Haleqa* Gäbräzgeher Tesafay, *Abba* Argawi Araya, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

Chapter VI

The Monastic Life, a Brief History of the Holy Man *Abunä Sét* and the Church Education and at the *Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét* Monastery.

6.1. Monastic Life at *Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét* Monastery.

In Christianity, monastic life is one of its features. It is believed that *Abunä Entons* began monastic life. *Abunä Entons* is assumed to have been ordained as a monk by God power. *Abunä Entons* in turn ordained for *Abunä Meqars*. *Abunä Meqars* in his turn ordained *Abunä Pagumis*, *Abunä Pagumis* ordained *Abunä Tewodros* and *Abunä Tewodros* in turn ordained as a monk for *Abunä Aregawi*. This rule is assumed to have continued until this period.¹ Hayatt also argues monasticism was introduced to Ethiopia from Egypt. In 480 A.D *Abunä Argawi* has received his monastic life from *Abunä Pagumis* and founded the celebrated monastery at *Däbrä Damo*, in Tigray in 6th Century.²

The expansion of monastic life in Ethiopia has marked Ethiopia as the land of many holy men. The rise of the holy men in Ethiopia is attached to the beginning of the monastic life. The Ethiopian monastic life traces its origin to the late fifth Century in the Aksumite Kingdom.³ The crucial role played for the beginning and expansion of the monastic life in Ethiopia was highly related to the arrival of the “Nine Saints” in the end of fifth Century. The “Nine Saints” played a great contribution in the translation of religious books written by foreign language into Geez including the Bible, the construction of churches and the establishment of monasteries. Then the

¹Gerima (*Abunä*), Samuel (*Abunä*), Rada Aseres ..., *Ye Itiyopia Orthodox Tewahedo Bete Keristeyan Tarik Ke Ledete keristis Eske 2000 E.C.*, 2008.p.232;

²H.M. Hayatt, *The Church Abyssinia*, London, Luzac and Co, 1928.p.65;

³Tadesse Tamerat, “The Revival of The Church (1200-1526):” Addis Ababa, United Press, 1970.p.20; Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld, *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*, African Historical Dictionaries, No.3, The Scarecrow Press, INCchen, N.J., and London, 1981.p.136; Gerima (*Abunä*), Samuel (*Abunä*), Rada Aseres ..., *Ye Itiyopia Orthodox Tewahedo*....., p.232; Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, Stuttgart, 1984.pp.32;

monastic ideas and institutions became dominant features in Ethiopian Christianity.⁴ Monasticism constitutes the backbone of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity in expressing its identity, internal strength, and organizational strength.⁵ The Nine Saints founded a series of monastic communities in Tigray particularly in and around Adwa.⁶ Following the footsteps of the Nine Saints, the northern part of Ethiopia the present Tigray and Eritrea became centers of monasticism.

It is assumed that, the first monasteries in Ethiopia were *Abunä* Argawi the Däbrä Damo and *Abunä* Gerima near Adwa. Based on this these monasteries were considered as the base for monastic life in Ethiopia. Since Däbrä Damo had accumulated the richest church library materials, widely known monks learned, and were ordained as monks in these monasteries. Among the monks who learned religious education at the Däbrä Damo monastery were *Abunä* Iyasos Maoo, *Abunä* Yohani, *Abunä* Ewostatéwos, *Abunä* Estifanos, and *Abunä* Täklä-Haymanot.⁷

Following the footsteps of the “Nine Saints” and other saints monastic life expanded in different parts of Tigray specifically in Hahaile Sub-*Wäräda* in Ahiferom *Wäräda* and Ambä Sänayt Sub-*Wäräda* in Enedä *Abba* Sahama. This area was encircled by the monasteries established by the Nine Saints.⁸ Furthermore, Tigray Province for long period served as a land of

⁴*Ibid.*p.32; Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, Haile Sellasie I University, 1966.p.22; Don Colin Battel, “The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Its monastic Tradition,” *Ethiopian Journal.*, 2008.p.11.(<http://tseday.wordpress.com/2008/09/28/the-ethiopian-orthodox-church.org>);

⁵Jossi Jacob, “Monasticism in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: A Brief Introduction,” .p.2. (<http://addisababa.eotc.org.et/en/monasticism-in-the-ethiopian-orthodox.com>).

⁶Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization ...*,p.17; Krzysztof Piotr Blazewicz,“Ethiopian Monasticism,” *Institute of Oriental Studies Warsaw University*, *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne*, V.XII, No.2, 1999.p.36 and p.41;

⁷Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State 1270-1527*, 1972.p.211; Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopia...*,p.22; Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*, Ageyose Printing and General work plc, Addis Ababa, 2006. pp.17-18; Krzysztof Piotr Blazewicz, *Ethiopian Monasticism...*,p.36;

⁸Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*,,p.17;

monks. Not only this, this Province had a long been a center of church education and monastic movement. For instance in the fourteen Century and last fourteenth Century, a monastic movement developed in Tigray “The house of Ewostatéwosians” and “The Stephanties.”⁹

Due to the expansion of monasteries and monastic life, many monks have been lived and preached the gospels to the communities of the area. Among these religious men who lived and preached in the area were *Abunä Sét*, *Abunä Mamas* of GudaGude, *Abunä Ewostatéwos*, *Abunä Abasadi*, *Abunä Matiyos*, *Abunä Zäkaryas*, *Abunä Estifanos*, *Abunä Gäbräkirstos*, *Abunä Endiriyas* etc.¹⁰ This indicates that this area has been one of the religious centers of monastic life.

Mountains and valleys have dominated the area, which made it convenient for the establishment of monasteries and churches. Because, most of the monasteries were established on mountain areas. For Instance the most ancient Ethiopian churches belong to Däbrä Damo established at the top of the mountain in Tigray.¹¹ As Däbrä Bäkür and Däbrä Bärbäré are located within the Mountains areas of Hahaile and Ambä Sänayti where the most known Ethiopian monks lived and administered these monasteries.¹² One of the known Ethiopian monks who had lived in the area was *Abunä Ewostatéwos*. *Abunä Ewostatéwos* is believed to have lived there and administered the two monasteries-Däbrä Bäkür and Däbrä Bärbäré. When he moved

⁹Krzystof Piotr Blazewicz, *Ethiopian Monasticism*.38; and Chris Prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld, *Historical Dictionary of Ethiopia*, African Historical Dictionaries, No.3. the Scarecrow Press, Incchen, N.J., and London.1981.136

¹⁰*Gädlä Abunä Sét* , .p.1; and Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*,.pp.21-26.

¹¹Buxton, David Roden, *The Christian Antiquates of Northern Ethiopia*, Communicated to the Society of Antiquaries, Oxford, Printed by Charles Batey for the Society of Antiquaries of London, 1947.p.6.

¹²Sargew HableSellasie, *Amarigna Ye betekeristeyan Mezegebe Qalat*, Vol.10, p.169; and Daniel Kebret,*Aratu Hayaleyan*,.p.22.

into the mountain, he got *Abunä Abasadi*. Whom he ordained *Abunä Absadi* as a monk.¹³ He also ordained *Abunä Matiyos* of *Däbrä Bärbäré* as a monk.¹⁴

Abunä Estifanos was the *Abamenet* (Abbot) of the *Mekane Yakes Abunä GäbräMenfesQudes* monastery at the village of *Tsahan*.¹⁵ In addition to this, there is *Däbrä Bärbäré* Monastery at *Ambä Sänyati* identified by different names in different books and communities. The various names used to call or mention the monastery are *Däbrä Bärbäré Abunä Ewostatéwos*, *Abunä Matiyos*, and *Abunä Zäkaryas*. The community members and others commonly used these names because this monastery was administered and served by different *Abamenets* (Abbot) like *Abunä Ewostatéwos*,¹⁶ *Abunä Zäkaryas*¹⁷ and *Abunä Matiyos*¹⁸ at different times. *Abunä Zakaryas* of *Däbrä Bärbäré* was a disciple of *Abunä Ewostatéwos*. He lived during the reign of Emperor *Dawit I* and during the time of Egyptian Metropolitan *Bärtalomewos*.¹⁹ The *Däbrä Bärbäré* Monastery most of the time was mentioned in relation to or with *Abunä Sét* and *Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét* Monastery.

The other old monastery in this area is *Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét* Monastery. This monastery was also the center of monastic life, because many monks lived and had taken religious education and administered it. For instance, *Däbrä Bäkür* Monastery was administered by more than twenty-three Abbots. Among them were *Abunä Ewostatéwos* (*MagebeIgzie*) and *Abunä*

¹³Sargew HableSellasie, *Amarigna Ye bete keristeyan Mezegebe Qalat*, Vol.10, p.169; and Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*, p.22.

¹⁴Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*, p.23.

¹⁵Carol Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.39; *Be Itiyopia Yemigegna Abeyate Keristiyanat*, p.182; Sargew Hableselassie, *Amarigna Ye Bete keristeyan Mezegebe Qalat*, Addis Ababa, Vol.VII, 1989, p.109 and Vol.2, p.110.

¹⁶Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.39.

¹⁷Segew Hableselassie, *Amarigna Ye Bete kristeyan*...., Vol. IX, p.176; and Carol Conti Rossini, *GädläFiliposGädläYohanes*, P.112.

¹⁸Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*..., p.23; Mereqeryos Arega (*leqe Berhanat*), *Ye Qedusan Tarik*, No.5, 1988, p.81.

¹⁹Kinefe-Rigb Zeleke, "Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.13, No.2, 1975, p.100;

Endiriyas.²⁰ One of the Naburied of Däbrä Damo named Kebro Seyitan (Drum Devil) was ordained as a monk in the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery. This was written in Geez Script in the Chronicle of Emperor ZaraYaqob and Beada Mariyam as “ወለኖብሂ ንቡረኢድ ዘደብረዳሞ ወምንኩስናሁ ደብረ በኩር ዘተሰተፈ ምስሌ ሆሙ ስመይዎ ስም ከበር ሳይጣን ወደበይዎ ኃቡረ” Its English version states as: “The administrator of Däbrä Damo convent at Däbrä Bäkür, who had been their accomplice and who, subsequently, got the name of Kabaro Saytan (the drum of Satan).”²¹

Abunä Sét in the area had a close relationship with *Abunä Tewadros*, *Abunä Negedeberhan*, *Abunä Gäbräamlak*, and *Abunä Gäbräkeristos*. According the community these were known as *Amesetu Meqares* (Five friends).²² Furthermore, *Abunä Sét* ordained around 44 monks in the area and they played a great role in the expansion of monasteries and church education. According to the community elders and *GädläSét* among the monks who were the disciples and ordained by the hand of *Abunä Sét* were *Abba MelkaieTsadiq* of Däbrä Degna, *Abba* WenegedeBerhan of Däbrä Maqarsat, *Abba* WoldetnesaKeristos of Medera Nobie, *Abba* YemrehaKirestos of Medera Tseraa-Aabekuaee, *Abba* Teweldebrhan of Medera Shire, *Abba* Zamkiel of Medera Menz, *Abba* Gäbräkirestos of Medera Lawsa, *Abba* Gäbrämlak of Medera Temben and others.²³

Based on the oral and written information the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery in the past time was one of the centers of religious education and center of monastic life and also many monks were produced in this monastery.

²⁰Conti Rossini, *Liber Axume*, p.39; Daniel Kebret, *Ye bete keristeyan Merejawoch*, p.468; Sergew Hableselassie, *Amarigna Ye Bete keristeyan....*, Vol. 10, p. 169; and Vol.2, p.220.

²¹Perruhon, *Les Chrroniques De Zara Yaeqob et de Baeda Maryam Rois D'etHiopie De 1434 A 1478 (text Ethiopia et Traduction)*, Precedeeds D'une Introduction, Paris Emil E Boulllon, 1893.p.12;

²²A copy manuscript of *Amestu Meqarsat* (five *Meqaresat*) found in the monastery.p.1; and Appendix.18.

²³*Ibid*.p.200.

6.2. A Brief History of the Holy Man *Abunä Sét*

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, there were different holy men. According to Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke's work entitled "Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions" which refers to Tigray, Gojjam, Bagemedet, Eritrea, Wollo, and Shawa identified and mentioned about 201 holy men and women including *Abunä Sét*.²⁴ *Leqe Berhanat* Mereqeryos Arega in his work entitled "*Ye Qedusan Tarik*. No.5" also has identified 267 Ethiopian male saints including *Abunä Sét* and around 25 female saints.²⁵ These holy men and women emerged in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church played a great role in the expansion of Christianity and the establishment of monasteries. Ethiopia as a nation has many ancient saints and treasures. These ancient treasures, saints and historical accounts are found in the monasteries. The monasteries were established in the names of different God, Angels, holy men and saints and also the holy men and saints have their own *gadd*. Among these holy men one was *Abunä Sét*.²⁶

In the Orthodox Church, there was a holy man named *Abunä Sét* as mentioned in some documents. However, there is no *Abunä Sét* in the list of the names in the Ethiopian *Senyaxarium*, W. Budge work entitled *Book of Saints*, and in the other majority of holy books. The name of *Abunä Sét* was not also familiar among the Christians in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, besides of the Ethiopian *Senyaxarium* and majority of holy books, other some of documents and holy books mention the name of the Holy *Abunä Sét* in Eritrea and Ethiopia. Based on this in the Eritrea Orthodox Church, there is a monastery called a *Däbrä Haweriyat Adi-Qita* monastery. This monastery's saint is *Abunä Sét*. *Abunä Sét* was born from his father *Tamanie Igzie* and his

²⁴Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke, "Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions," *Journal of Ethiopia Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, IES, 1975. pp. 57-102.

²⁵Mereqeryos Arega (*leqe Berhanat*), *Ye Qedusan Tarik*, No.5, 1988, pp.74-175.

²⁶Mereqeryos Arega (*leqe Berhanat*), *Ye Qedusan Tarik*, pp.74-175; Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke, "Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions," pp.57-102; and Amesalu Tefera, *Neqa 'a Mäsähfet*, pp.87-2011.

mother SerweDengel in Tigray at Bur *Wäräda*. *Abunä Sét* was ordained as a monk by *Abunä Tewodoros Sehabe Bayita* in Adi-yabo in Shire.²⁷ *Abunä* Tewodoros of Adi-yabo was one of the saints in Ethiopia. His monastery located in Adi-qwola at shire.²⁸

Other documents that mention the name of the saint Sét also tell about his ancestral genealogy. According to the source, Sét's grandfather was *Abba Yidela* who came from Tigray and went to Shawa during the period of King Dilnaod (r.902-912). Based on the *Gädlä Ziena Marqos*, Sét stands on the seventh generation from *Abba Yidela* genealogy.²⁹ Furthermore, *Abunä Sét* is described as the grandfather of *Abunä Zäkaryas*, *Abunä Zena Marqos*, *Abunä Endireyas*, *Abunä Tewodros* and *Abunä Täklä-Häymanot*. In this document, Sét was a man whose origin was Bulega, in Northern Shawa.³⁰ Additionally, the Hagiography of *Abunä Täklä-Häymanot* in chapter seven numbers four mentions the name of Sét as third grandfather of *Abunä Täklä-Häymanot*.³¹ Based on these documents, the name of Sét emerged in the Ethiopian orthodox history before the birth date of *Abunä Täklä-Häymanot* (1215-1313) because *Abunä Täklä-Häymanot* was born in the early thirteen Century.

The other book, written by *Leqe Berhanat Mereqeryos Arega*, states that *Abunä Sét* of Medere Zema was one of the early Ethiopian saints. *Abunä Sét* was ordained as a monk by *Abunä GäbräKeristos* of Dagenä.³² *Abunä Sét* was born in Shawa and was also one of the 47 Ethiopian

²⁷*Bete Saida/Bete Medhanit*, “*Tarik Abunä Sét ena Gedamom*” (A history of *Abunä Sét* and its monastery). (<http://bietesaida.blogspot.com/2016/09/blog-post.html>)

²⁸Amesalu Tefera, *Neqa'a Mäsähfet*, p.147; and Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke, “Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions,” p.94.

²⁹Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*, Ageyos Hetemetena Tekelala P.L.C, Addis Ababa, 2014.p.44.

³⁰Veronica Six, *Die Vita Abunä Tadewos von Däbrä Maryam in Tanasee*, Steiner, 1975.p.98; and Daniel Kebret, *Aratu Hayaleyan*, Ageyos Hetemetena Tekelala P.L.C, Addis Ababa, 2014.p.49.

³¹*Gädlä Täklä-Haymanot*, 1989 E.C.p.25;

³²Based on the Mareqoriewos Arega (*leqe Berhanat*), *Ye Qedusan Tarik, Quter*, 5. Page.115, item number 143; Gäbräkeristos of Dagenä was one of Ethiopian saints. His father was King YekunoAmlak and his mother Leeletemenefesqedus. His birthplace was Shewa, Ankober. He was among the first monks in Ethiopia. He ordained many monks. some of them were:- *Abunä Melkatsadiq* of Dagenä RomawiYan, *Abunä Teweldemedhen* of Sherie,

saints. *Abunä Sét* with his friends led by the divine sprit traveled to Tigray and became one of the great religious fathers after he became a monk in Dagenä.³³ This document like the above mentioned documents also does not mention his parents and the year of his birth.

Besides to the above written information, there is also a holy man or a saint named *Sét* at around Adwa. Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke and Amsalu Tefera contend the saint *Abunä Sét* was a monk who preached the Bible and gospels in and around Adwa. *Abunä Sét* is little known even in Tigray. They also mentioned *Zana Sét* or the *Gädlä Sét* that used as reference found in the *Däbrä Maqarat*, near Adwa.³⁴

There is also strong oral tradition about the Saint *Abunä Sét* among the Hahaile community members. Nevertheless, the oral tradition of the community gives different information about the birthplace *Abunä Sét*. According to the first oral tradition, *Abunä Sét* was born from his father *Zara Keristos* and his mother *KeristosTsewena* in Alexandria, Egypt in the 5th Century. *Abunä Sét* was the first son of his mother and father and was born during their old age. They were born *Abunä Sét* when *ZeraKeristos* was 60 years old and his mother *KeristosTsewna* at forty-five. *Abunä Sét*'s father and mother were the relatives of a royal family. *Abunä Sét* from his childhood until his seven years are had stayed with his family and later sent to *Abba Jhon* is to receive church education. In this school, *Abunä Sét* stayed for seven years with his teacher *Abba Jhon* and studied the reading up to *Tergume Mesahefet* (interpretation of religious books) and the Old and New Testament. Then *Abunä Sét* went to the area, *Abunä Pagumis* lived. Then *Abunä Sét*

Abunä Yemaharene Keristos of Medera Alalen, *Abunä Tensaie Keristos* of Medera Nobien, *Abunä Tewderos* of Medera Maqarat, *Abunä Sét* of Medera Zama and seven stars. *Abunä Gäbräkeristos* was living in Ethiopia around 1335 E.C. *Abunä Gäbräkeristos* by leaving his father's title and wealth and traveling to Tigray by leading of the God and established a monastery at Nadir Adet near Aksum.

³³Mareqoriewos Arega (*leqe Berhanat*), *Ye Qedusan Tarik*, *Quter*, 5, Asege Lucy Matemiya Derjit, Addis Ababa, 1998 E.C. Item Number, 197.p.132.

³⁴Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke, "Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions," *Journal of Ethiopia Studies*, Vol.13, No.2, IES, 1975.p.90.Item no.142; and Amsalu Tefera, *Neqea Mäshäfat*, Jajawe Hetemetena Developers, Addis Ababa, 2011 E.C.p.130, item no.118.

became a monk after *Abunä* Pagumis ordained him, and gave a religious service in the area. During this period, *Abunä Sét* received information about a nation Azeb (now Ethiopia), a land of the Agaziayan and about the miracle, how they brought the Ark of Covenant to Aksum.³⁵ Based on the information, *Abunä Sét* became eager to go to the nation named Azeb. Then after *Abunä Sét* by crossing different areas by the leading of God arrived Eritrea at AdiQiheta. In Eritrea at Adi Qiheta *Abunä Sét* established a monastery. After staying for some time there, *Abunä Sét* moved to Aksum. In Aksum, *Abunä Sét* lived for long period by giving religious service at Aksum at *Abunä Penteliyon* Monastery. Later on, *Abunä Sét* being led by the God and Saint Michael traveled to Ambä Gual Hatsei and later to Däbrä Bkori. At Däbrä Bokri *Qäbälé* he established a monastery named Däbrä Mariyam. *Abunä Sét* after established this monastery met with the medieval kings like Amda Seyon, Dawit, and Yeshaq. These kings donated different gifts to the monastery.³⁶

The second oral tradition, the name of *Abunä Sét*'s father and mother are the same with the other oral information but the birthplace and time is quite different. In this oral information, *Abunä Sét* was born at Bur, at Ahisaa, the area near Yäha in the early period of the medieval period.³⁷

According the *Gädlä Abunä Sét* Said that, *Abunä Sét* was born from his father Zara Keristos and his mother Keristos Tsewena. *Abunä Sét*'s family had four Children these were *Abba* Giorgis, *Abba* Beise-Egzibiher, *Abba* Adam and *Abunä Sét*. *Abunä Sét* ordained as a monk by *Abunä Zakariyas*, the *Abamenet* (Abbot) of Däbrä Bärbäré. *Abunä Sét* in his early child hood grew with his parents and was highly attached with the church. During this period, *Abunä Sét*

³⁵Informants: *Qés* Argawi Abay, *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Informants: *Qés* Zemekiel GabraMedhin, and *Qés* Gidey KidaneMariyam.

received different church education and had strong religious life.³⁸ *Abunä Sét* was a highly religious man, because of this; *Abunä Sét* used to always go to church and provide service to the church during his childhood. Then *Abunä Sét* studied a religious education like Mezemura Dawit, Nebyat, and Haweriyat Mäshäfat etc.³⁹

During this time, *Abunä Sét* met with the monks who had completely abandoned their worldly life and were highly tortured by the unbeliever community. These monks were also punished being denied food and water. After observing the life condition of the monks, *Abunä Sét* decided to become a monk. Because of this, *Abunä Sét* was ordained as a monk. One day *Abunä Sét* at his work place, Saw an event like the image of a rose flower given to one old aged man, when blessing three times. This event was spread at the monastery. *Abunä Sét* told to his religious father his interest that he wanted to go to Waldeba Monastery. At that moment, *Abunä Sét* with the religious men traveled to the area of Serwe known as the area of monasteries. During his lifetime, he had strong relation with some religious holy men like *Abunä Zäkaryas* and *Abunä Endiriyas*.⁴⁰ Not only had this, *Abunä Sét* also had strong relationship with the royal court leaders. Because *Abunä Sét* in his life had met with Ethiopian kings and joined them in different wars. The Ethiopian kings who had close relationship with *Abunä Sét* were Amda Seyon I, King Dawit I, King Yeshaq and King Tewdros. *Abunä Sét* during war times was praying for the kings. Due to this King Dawit I and King Yeshaq became victorious over their enemies and in response the Ethiopian kings donated different gifts to the monastery. Not only this the kings visited the monastery at different times and give a different gift and *gult* for the monastery⁴¹

³⁸ *Gädlä Abunä Sét*.pp.1-2.

³⁹ *Ibid*.p.2

⁴⁰ *Gädlä Abunä Sét*.p.5-8.

⁴¹ *Ibid*.p.13 and p.32.

After a long period of great religious contribution, *Abunä Sét* was suffering from disease at the area named Gergiesa, Northern Shawa. *Abunä Sét* called for his disciples and told them that now our fathers and all Saints without stop are calling me means, which that he was going to die. *Abunä Bärtälomewos* (1388/9-1436) after listening the condition of *Abunä Sét* became sad. Then God came to the area where *Abunä Sét* had slept and told to *Abunä Sét* “that he had come to take him to heaven.” At that time, God promised a *kidan* (Covenant) rest for *Abunä Sét* for his sacrifice. According to the *Gädlä Abunä Sét*, God promised by Saying that “I will heal any one until your seven generations of men and women who remember you, or who built your church, who wrote your *Gädlä* and those who offered in the name of you and the people who would come from everywhere to the monastery and who are buried in the monastery God be heal until fifth generations.”⁴² *Abunä Sét* died on July 15 and was taken to heaven being guarded by twenty-four Angeles. After his death *Abunä Sét*’s corpse produced wonderful smell like incense and the religious men and others existed who were there were amazed. After *Abunä Sét* passed away, *Abunä Bärtälomewos* (1398/9-1436) came into the area. Then *Abunä Sét* was buried at a place called Gergiesa.⁴³ However, *Abunä Sét* corpse was transferred from Gergiesa to Däbrä Bäkür Monastery and buried at the Eastern direction of the monastery building on December eleven.⁴⁴ In the *Gädlä Abunä Sét* there is no information where and when he was born, but *Abunä Sét* was one of the saints’ contemporary to *Abunä Bärtälomewos* (1398/9-1436).

Generally, based on the above-described oral information and documents, there are different information about Saint *Abunä Sét*. Based on these documents and oral tradition that lead to conclude there is holy man in Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the name of *Abunä Sét*.

⁴²*Gädlä Abunä Sét*. pp. 50 and 51.

⁴³According the community, this area is located in Northern Shawa.

⁴⁴*Gädlä Abunä Sét*.p.27; and Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegeges, *Qés* Teklaab Fesseha, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

Nevertheless, there is no common information when and where was born and when was emerged as a monk in Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The researcher want to conclude that *Abunä Sét* an Ethiopian Saint not Egyptian because there is no name of holy man of Sét in the Coptic Synaxarium. He might be one of the holy man existed in Ethiopian orthodox church that served at different areas because it is common in Ethiopia Orthodox Church serving and establishing different churches and monasteries in different areas. This based on the documents and informants the holy man was existed in Ethiopian between the end of thirteen century and the beginning of fourteen century.

According the oral information and hagiography of *Abunä Sét*, *Abunä Sét* during his life career had made different miracles. According to these sources, the miracles of *Abunä Sét* still now are happening.⁴⁵ Among the miracles some of them were the following. The first miracle *Abunä Sét* was started at Ambä Gual Hatsei. According to this, *Abunä Sét* prayed forty days and forty nights at Ambä Gual Hatsei and had beaten off the Devil named Wedi Eneyqoala. As a result, the people of Hahile became free and lived peaceful.⁴⁶

The second miracle occurred during the time *Däjjazmačh Gäbrä-Sellassè Bariya Gabir*. *Däjjazmačh Gäbrä-Sellassè* wanted to cut the juniper trees planted by *Abunä Sét* at AdiChende *Qäbälé* and sent men to cut the timber without permission of the community of the monastery. At that time, *Abunä Sét*'s spirit became angry and sent more than 1000 wolves, and attacked the men sent to cut the Juniper. Due to this event, *Abunä Sét* received a second title "the owner of

⁴⁵Informants: *Abba Argawi Araya*, *Qés Sadur Woldegrege*, *Qés Teklaab Fesseha*, and *Qés Mezemur GäbräMariyam*.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

1000 wolves.” Since this time, the communities used the two titles by joining together, and then called “*Abunä Sét* the owner of White bee and thousands Wolves.”⁴⁷

The third miracle, When *Abunä Sét* died at Gergiesa and his corpse was buried in the same area. Before this, there was worst condition that destroyed all grains and farmland. As a result, the farmland became fruitless for a long period. However, after *Abunä Sét* was buried there the problem that faced the people of Gergiesa was solved and the product of the grains and others improved from year to year and the community started to lead better life.⁴⁸

On the other hand, there are three holy waters which healing the communities consider as healing water since long period. These holy waters are named as May-Meserab its source is from the center of the holy of holiness the monastery, *Metselay* (praying) *Abunä AbiyäIgzi'e* and *Mariyam Guna Zeyet*.⁴⁹

Abunä Sét had strong affection for plants. Because of this, *Abunä Sét* had planted many plants. In order to grow plants *Abunä Sét* brought seeds of juniper from Desseaa-Enderta in eastern Tigray. Then *Abunä Sét* saw the juniper seedlings at Adi-chiende and the compound of the monastery as well as at Adi-Atekaro. These plants that planted by *Abunä Sét* and the *tekle Dawit* still now existed in the compound of the monastery and Adi-chinde.⁵⁰

6.3. Church Education at Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery

The church education is one of the unique Christian heritages of the Ethiopia. Ethiopian churches and monasteries have been important for the development and expansion of church

⁴⁷Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegreges, *Qés* Teklaab Fesseha, *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam, and *Ato* Taddese Asegedom.

⁴⁸*Gädlä Abunä Sét*. p.72.

⁴⁹Appendix:19.

⁵⁰Informants: *Qés* Teklaab Fesseha, *Qés* Sadur Woldegreges, *Abba* Argawi Araya and *Ato* Araya Alemayehu; and Appendix:20.

educational and have significant importance in the production of elite communities in the country.⁵¹ Until the beginning of modern education in the early Twenty Century, the only source of knowledge was the Ethiopian Traditional church school. Sylvia Pankhurst and Ephraim Isaac asserted the origin of the Ethiopian church education coincided with the establishment of the church itself.⁵² Thus tradition church schools have been the main source of Ethiopian Education throughout the centuries. In these long periods, this traditional church teaching has been deeply part of the religious education, life and ethos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.⁵³

The Nine Saints initiated the building of different churches and monasteries, thus opened church schools and developed literature in the kingdom. Since this period, church education played crucial role in Ethiopia in building successive generations by providing knowledge and skill for many years until modern education was introduced in the early 20th Century.⁵⁴ Monasteries established by the Nine Saints were the earliest organized centers of Education in Christian Ethiopia.⁵⁵ “Education in Ethiopia was traditionally in the hands of the churches and monasteries directed by the individual clergy men who served the religious institution. They have been giving training to students by designing different content matters based on the philosophy of the church.”⁵⁶

⁵¹Haile Gabriel Dagne, “The Ethiopian Orthodox Church School System,” *The Church Of Ethiopia, A Panorama of Ethiopia of History and Spiritual Life*, Addis Ababa, United Printer, 1970. P.81; and Tashoma G.Wagaw, *Education in Ethiopia, prospect and retrospect*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan press,1979.p.10.

⁵²Ephraim Isaac, “Social Structure of the Ethiopian Church,” *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol. XIV, No.1, 1971. p.243; Sylvia Pankhurst, *Ethiopia, A Cultural History*, London: Leighton-Strake Book Binding Co. Ltd, 1955. p.232;

⁵³Kassa Lijmelkam, “A History of Dersegie Mariyam Church (1852-1991),” MA Theses, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2018.p.101; Chaillot, Christine, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahedo Church: A Brief Introduction to Its Life and Spirituality*, Paris: Orthdruk, 2002. P.23;

⁵⁴Taddesse Tamerat, “Education in fifteenth century Ethiopia,” Vol. II, Addis Ababa, Haile Sellassie I University, 1970.pp.1-12; Dereje Negussie,“Fiche Gannata....,”p.45; and Genet Abera Nigatu,“History of Itisa....,”p.1347.

⁵⁵Taddesse Tamerat, “Education in Fifteenth century Ethiopia,” p.32.

⁵⁶Damtew Kiflew, “A history of Däbrä –Berhan..,”p.32.

With the expansion of the kingdom, Christianity spread in different directions, many churches and monasteries were founded in different areas, which served for centuries as important centers of teaching and learning.⁵⁷ Besides, in Ethiopia, every village has a monastery and church has a church school. Most of the traditional Ethiopian church school is given in the church compound and in the home of the traditional church education teacher. There is no permanent place. Ephraim argue the church education traditionally given at every village either in the compound of the church but there was no fixed place of learning; the teaching learning sometimes take place at the home of the priest.⁵⁸ This education system was common in all Ethiopian Orthodox traditional Church. According to my informants, for the traditional church education does not built their own class purposely; but most of the time the teaching learning process held at the shade of big trees like Juniper, Olive, and others found in the monastery or the compound of the house of the teacher.⁵⁹

The Ethiopian traditional church education school system roughly has four levels. These are institute of reading (for Deacon), institute of singing and dancing (for priests), institute of creative writing (for scribe), and institute of literature (for scholars).⁶⁰ Girma Amare also argues the entire teachings of the traditional Ethiopian Orthodox Church Schools system can broadly be classified in to four themes: Reading (*Nebab*), Music (*Zema*), Poetry (*Qine*), and Book

⁵⁷Haile Gebriel Dagne, “*The Ethiopian Orthodox Church School System*,” *The Church of Ethiopia, A Panorama of History and Spiritual Life*, Addis Ababa, United Printer, 1970.p.82.

⁵⁸Ephraim Isaac, “Social Structure of the Ethiopian Church,” *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol. XIV, No.1, 1971.P.243.

⁵⁹Informants: *Qés* Argawi Abay, *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges, and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

⁶⁰Ephraim Isaac, “Social Structure of the Ethiopian Church,” *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol. XIV, No.1, 1971. P.243; Selamsew Debashu, “The Teaching-Learning Processes in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Accreditation Schools of Music (*Zema Bets*): The Cases of Bethlehem, Zur Aba and Gondar Baeta Mariam Churches.” MA Theses, Department of Arts in African Studies, Addis Ababa University, 2017.p.20.

interpretation (*Mäshäfat*).⁶¹ In these four levels or institute, different subjects (taught) were given to the learners. Among the subjects were *Nebab Bet* (Reading school), *Qedasse Bet* (Liturgy School), *Zema Bet* (Music School), *Qene Bet* (Poetry School) and *Mäshäfa Bet* (Literature School).⁶² Christine Chaillot also argues that traditional teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church also includes: Church singing and movement (*aqwaqwam*), Poetry (*Qene*), commentaries on the Bible, on the writings of the Church fathers and of the monks. For many centuries, this teaching has been deeply part of the religious education, life and ethos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The teaching is based on oral methods and memorization, with repetition and learning by heart by the students.⁶³

According to “Haile Gebriel Dagne” in Ethiopia 1960s there are around “1463s” traditional schools under direct supervision of the church.⁶⁴ These Ethiopia traditional church schools play a great role in Ethiopia teaching the societies until the modern education emerged in the 20th Century.⁶⁵

As one of Ethiopia part, Tigray has served as the center of church education in the medieval period. Because of this, different leaders and religious men received religious education in Tigray and became notables in Ethiopian history. For instance, among others Emperor Zara

⁶¹Girma Amare, “Aims and Purposes of Church Education,” *Ethiopian Journal of Education*, Vol.X, No.1, 1967.pp.1-5.

⁶²*Ibid*.p.87; TashomaG.Wagaw,*Education in Ethiopia, Prospect and Retrospect*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan press, 1979.pp.11-21.

⁶³Christine Chaillot,“Traditional Teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” *In Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by SveinEge, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele, Trondheim, 2009.p.527.

⁶⁴Haile Gebriel Dagne, “The Ethiopian Orthodox Church School System,” 1970.p.87.

⁶⁵*Ibid*, P.96.

Yaqob,⁶⁶ Iyasus-Mo'a,⁶⁷ Abunä Täklä-Haymanot⁶⁸ and others had received church education at the Tigryan monasteries.⁶⁹

Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét Monastery, as one of the monasteries found in Tigray, provided traditional religious education since its establishment. Based on this, the monastery was giving primary church education like *Fidel* (alphabets), *nebab* (reading), and higher level of church education like *qeddase*, *aqaqawam*, *Zema* (music), *qene* (geez poetry), *wengel* (gospel), *mäshäfa qudus beluy ena hadis* (old and new testament), *Dequwa*, and *mäshäf tergume* (books interpretation).⁷⁰ This indicates that the Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét Monastery was one of the traditional religious educational centers. Based on this, students or learners came from different areas to get church education in this monastery. Comparing to the neighboring communities, in this *Qäbälé* still a large number of clergymen are found in this monastery and it is considered by other Christian communities as a center of clergymen and churches. The deacons and priests of Däbrä Bäkür Abunä Sét Monastery served the newly established neighboring churches until they get and educate their own deacons and priests.⁷¹

In order to produce many clergymen and church school the monastery teachers played a great role. However, the monastery unlike the past the church education and the given fields from time to time decreased. According to the informants, in this monastery many teachers teach different subjects of specialization of church education. Nevertheless, there is shortage of evidence among the community members to list the names of teachers who were teaching higher

⁶⁶Taddesse Tamrat, *Church and State 1270-1527*, Oxford University Press, 1972,p.211.

⁶⁷*Ibid*, pp.110 and 158.

⁶⁸*Ibid*, pp.112 and 163.

⁶⁹Taddesse Tamerat, "Education in Fifteenth century Ethiopia," Addis Ababa, Haile Sellasie I University, 1970.pp.32-33.

⁷⁰Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam and *Qés* Tekeleaab Fesseha; and also the name of the places found in the monastery named by the religious teachers title.

⁷¹Informants: *Qés* Argawi Abay, *Qés* Tekleab Fesseha, *Abba* Argawi Araya, *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges and *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam.

traditional church education in different fields with exact served time. Based on the informants, among the teachers who taught students the different fields of study at this monastery were:

- ❖ *Mämeher Deguwa* were *Getaye Waka*, and *Getaye Mehireke*. According the communities *Getaye Mehireke* introduced a *tekalneqal* (land alienation) rule in the *Däbrä Bokri Qäbälé*.
- ❖ *Mämeher Aquaquam* were *Yeneta Gäbrä Yohanes*, *Liqe Mezemeran GäbräMedhin*, *Yeneta GäbräTsadiq*,
- ❖ *Mämeher Meraf qene Mewasiet* (geez poetry) were *Yeneta Haylu*, and *Gerazemach GäbräMedihen*.
- ❖ *Mämeher qedäsie* were *Yeneta TekleIyesus*, and *Yeneta Kenfe*.⁷²

⁷²*Ibid.*

Challenges of the Monastery

The Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery as one of the oldest monasteries in Ethiopia. However, it has its own challenges:

- ❖ Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery is one of the oldest monasteries in Tigray and has served by monks, priests and deacons. However, the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery monks, priests, and deacons faced serious challenges. Specifically, from time to time the number of monks, priests and deacons decreased and many monks left the monastery. Because, since 1975 A.D the *gult* land monastery that was farmed by the monks, priests, deacons and community of the monasteries was nationalized by the government and distributed among the peasants. The fact that, the area being in the war place between the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front and government forces for about 17 years. Therefore the life in the monastery become terrible.⁷³
- ❖ The second challenge is the main building of the monastery is in danger. Because, the community used a timber to build the monastery, the termite attacked the main building and the timber of the building could collapse because the problem is becoming worse and worse from time to time.⁷⁴
- ❖ The third challenge of the monastery is lack of enough and appropriate stores for the treasures. The manuscripts and treasures of the monastery are at risk. In addition, the

⁷³Appendix:-10:-The Document found in Aksum *Bete Kehehet Tsebet* file No:-Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery.No.80: The letter sent by the *Mämeher* Tekeleyesus Woldegeges to *Butsee we Qedus Abunä* Mqoreyos the Tigray region head of popes, Meklee. The letter wrote in 19/3/1998 E.C send by Ahiferom *Wäräda Bete Kehehet Tsehefet Bet*.

⁷⁴Appendix:21:-The copy of letter found in the monastery wrote by the Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* monastery *Sebeka Gubaie* in 21.6.2009 E.C that applying for the *Qäbälé* administrators about the conditions and they need a response with in short period of time to preserve the monastery building and to open the closed road of the monastery.

Wäräda and Regional Tourism Bureau of do not know much about the monastery. There is no any professional who would support the monastery.⁷⁵

- ❖ The fourth challenge is the decline of church education in the monastery from time to time. Because the religious teachers do not get material, support as there is no income to lead their daily life. The monks leave the area and go to another monastery where they get better has opportunity.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Informants: *Qés* Mezemur GäbräMariyam, *Haleqa* GäbräIgzeher Tesefay, and *Qés* Sadur Woldegerges.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

Conclusion

Ethiopia is one of the homes of the ancient countries in the world with a rich history. From one of the center of history and played a great role in Ethiopia since fourth Century is Ethiopian Orthodox Church. From these contribution is the establishment of monasteries in name of different saints. From these monasteries that established in Ethiopian Orthodox Church is Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery. The presence of study gave due attention to examine the history of A History Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery in Hahaile, Ahiferom *Wäräda*, Tigray, Ethiopia from Its Foundation up to 1991. It attempted to reconstruct the history of the monastery giving more emphasis to local developments depending on the oral sources and a few archival materials as well as written documents. The study investigated the prevalence of the history of monastery establishment, the administration, treasures, church education, and source of income and general background of the *Wäräda*. The study tries to look the construction and the painting of the monastery.

The Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* is one of the oldest monasteries like other Ethiopian monasteries and churches was called by the name saint *Abunä Sét*. *Abunä Sét* was one of the saints emerged in Ethiopian Orthodox Church but does not mentioned in the Ethiopian Synxarum.

The source of income the monastery until 1975 was *gult* land. The other source of income was also offering the people in the name of holy *Abunä Sét*. The monastery was one of the Ethiopian monasteries that served as center of monastic life and church education. Due to this many Ethiopian holy men lived, administered and received education in the monastery. One of the great Ethiopian religious men named *Abunä Ewostatewos* lived and administered for the monastery. In addition one of the Abbot of Däbrä Damo named Kabro Saytan ordained and received a monastic life in the monastery. However, gradually the church education enter

endanger because of this from time to time the church education and monastic life in the monastery decrease and now nearest to reached at null.

The study tries to look the valuable treasures and equipment that donated from different peoples. The treasures and its geographical setting could be one of the centers of Tourism in the *Wärüda*. Nevertheless, the monastery treasures and other historical account found in the monastery does not well protected, because of this the treasures vulnerable to damaged and loss. In my observation in the monastery the treasures and the main building himself now are endanger. In order to preserve the historical monastery it needed a special protection by the belonged Bureau and person.

Glossary

<i>Abba</i>	The religious title use to call for the monks.
<i>Abunä</i>	Bishop
<i>Ahiferom</i>	Administrative unit under Central zone in Tigray.
<i>Aqabit</i>	A women who prepared a holy communion.
<i>Ato</i>	A civil title given to ordinary people
<i>Awraja</i>	Administrative sub-province
<i>Baläbat</i>	Individual with the hereditary owner of rest land
<i>Betemäqedes</i>	Holy of holiness
<i>Blata</i>	A title which was given to learned individual
<i>Ĉän</i>	Tradition measurements of grain that ranges from 60-70killo.
<i>Dägua</i>	Zone with cold climatic condition.
<i>DajjaSelam</i>	The entrance of the monastery.
<i>Däjjazmačh</i>	A military title step below <i>Ras</i>
<i>Endä</i>	House or family
<i>Fitäwrari</i>	A military title below <i>Däjjazmačh</i>
<i>Grazmač</i>	A commander of left military title
<i>Grat</i>	land
<i>Gult</i>	Non hereditary right to collect tribute from the rest land owners
<i>Hahaile</i>	Administrative unit under the <i>Wäräda</i>
<i>Haleqa</i>	A title used for man who formerly <i>Deacon</i> but now not.
<i>Hudemo</i>	Traditional underground house
<i>Kaebo</i>	The tradition measurement of grain that ranges from 20-25 killo.
<i>Kushetat</i>	The administration system similar to <i>Qäbälé</i> .
<i>Ladan</i>	The traditional measurement used to measure grain that is 50 killo.
<i>Madega</i>	The traditional measurement used to measure honey.
<i>Mäqedes</i>	Holy of holiness

<i>Mämher</i>	Head of the monastery.
<i>Mäshafä</i>	Book
<i>Nefeqe</i>	Traditional measurements of grain that ranges from 40-50 killo
<i>Qäbälé</i>	Lowest (small) administrative unit
<i>Qännazmačh</i>	Commander of the right, a politico-military title above <i>Grazmačh</i>
<i>Qés</i>	Priest
<i>Qés Gäbäz</i>	Treasury in the monastery.
<i>Qolla</i>	Hot climatic zone
<i>Quna</i>	The traditional measurements of grain that ranges from 4 kilo -10 kilo.
<i>Rest</i>	Usufruct right over land
<i>Sebeka Gubaie</i>	The committee organized in the monastery or churches.
<i>Siso</i>	Literally “one third” the arrangement of land products sharing.
<i>Tabia</i>	The lowest administration above the <i>Qäbälé</i>
<i>Wäyenadägua</i>	Temperate zone (moderate climatic zone)
<i>Wäräda</i>	Administrative unit below <i>Awrajja</i>

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Lists of Oral informants

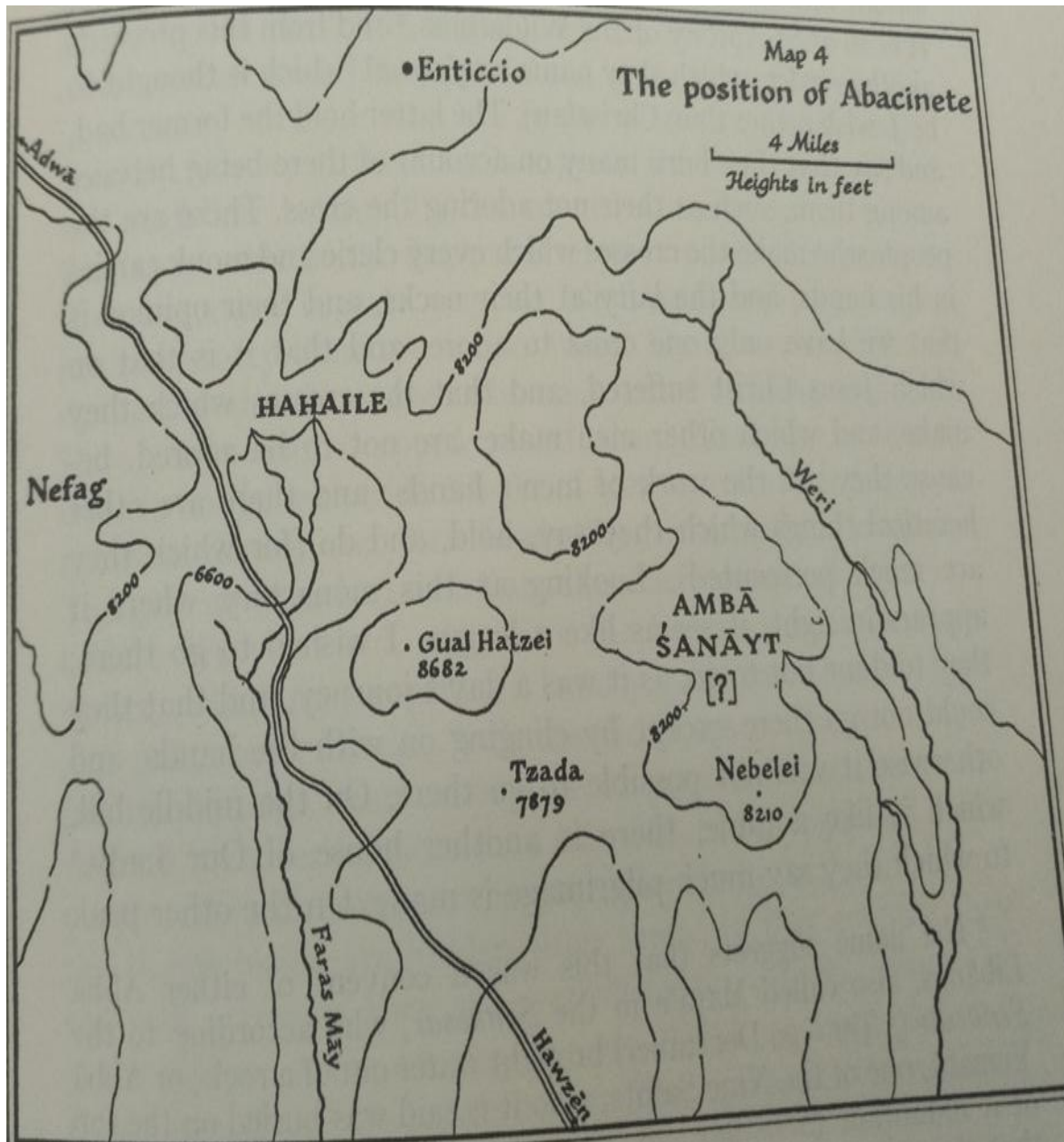
N o.	Name of informant	S ex	Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Remarks
1	AbrhaTese fay (<i>Rése Dabri</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	10,01,2010	He is native to the region. He is 49 years old. He is one of the priests of the monastery and served as Treasury.
2	Araya Alemayehu (<i>Ato</i>)	M	Ferse may	30,12,2018	He is native to the region. He is 71 years old. He served as a commando of Tigray Peoples Liberation Front.
3	Argawi Abay (<i>Qés</i>)	M	Adi Chinde	19,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 79 years old. He is one of the priests served for the monastery.
4	Argawi Araya (<i>Abbä</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	07, 01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 78 years old. He served as <i>Abamenet</i> of the monastery.
5	Berhane-Meseqel Menker (<i>Wayzero</i>)	F	Däbrä Bokri	20,01,2019	She is native to the region. She is 59 years old. She was one of <i>Shigweyanit</i> of the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front at the <i>Qäbälé</i> .
6	GäbräSellasie Gidey (<i>Abbä</i>)	M	Addis Ababa	11, 05,2019	He is from Zban Hahaile <i>Qäbälé</i> . He is 64 years old. He served at the Endä Sellasie church of Zeban Hahaile.
7	Gäbräkeristos GäbräIgzeher (<i>Qés</i>)	M	Addis Ababa	10, 05,2019	He is native to the region. He is 63years old. He was one of the priests of the monastery.
8	GäbräIgzeher Tesfay (<i>Haleqa</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	05,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 90 years old. He served as deacons for the monastery.
9	Gidey KidaneMariyam (<i>Qés</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	20,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 80 years old. He served as priest in the monastery.
10	Hadush Asemelash (<i>Ato</i>)	M	Enticho	01,01,2019	He is native to the Ahiferom <i>Wäräda</i> . He is 56 years old. He served as Ahiferom <i>Wäräda</i> peace and security manager.
11	Hafetu GäbräMeseqel (<i>Ato</i>)	M	Ferse may	30,12,2019	He is native to the Ahiferom <i>Wäräda</i> . He is 76 years old. He was one of fighter of TPLF.

12	Hargewni Teklegerima (<i>Wayzero</i>)	F	Däbrä Bokri	20,01,2019	She is native to the region. She is 57 years old. She was one of <i>Shigweyanit</i> of the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front at the <i>Qäbälé</i>
13	Kaleab Zerue (<i>Mämeher</i>)	M	Enticho	01,01,2019	He is from Adi Tseraee <i>Qäbälé</i> . He is 50 years old. He is served as Ahiferom <i>Wäräda Hagere Sebeket</i> .
14	Kenife Abrha (<i>Deacon</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	03,05,2019	He is native to the region. He is 40 years old. He served as deacon for the monastery and now an Instructor of Tourism and management at Arsi University.
15	Kenife Fesseha (<i>Qés</i>)	M	Adi Chinde	19,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 63 years old. He is one of the priests who serve a teacher of <i>Aquaquam</i> in the monastery.
16	Mezemur GäbräMariyam (<i>Qés</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	05, 01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 60 years old. He served now as <i>Sebeka Gubaie</i> and teacher of the Bible in the monastery.
17	Taddesse Asegedom (<i>Ato</i>)	M	Sefeao	08,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 90 years old.
18	Tekleab Fesseha (<i>Qés</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	06,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 65 years old. He served as Treasury of the monastery for four years.
20	Teklebrhan Abay (<i>Haleqa</i>)	M	DäbräBokri	08, 01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 61 years old. He is served currently as <i>Sebeka Gubaie</i> .
21	TekleMariyam Gäbräfueil (<i>Ato</i>)	M	Menqurquar Walta	24,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 71 years old.
21	Tesefay Gäbrästateyos (<i>Haleqa</i>)	M	Enticho	01,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 53 years old. He served as deacon for the monastery for monastery.
22	SadurWelegreges (<i>Qés</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	06,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 59 years old. He served currently as <i>Sebeka Gubaie</i> of the monastery.

23	ZemechalGäbrämedhin (<i>Qés</i>)	M	Däbrä Bokri	10,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 95 years old. He is one of the priests that served for long time to the monastery.
24	ZerueTekleMariyam (<i>Ato</i>)	M	Menqurquar Walta	24,01,2019	He is native to the region. He is 40 years old. He is a history teacher at EdagaArbi.

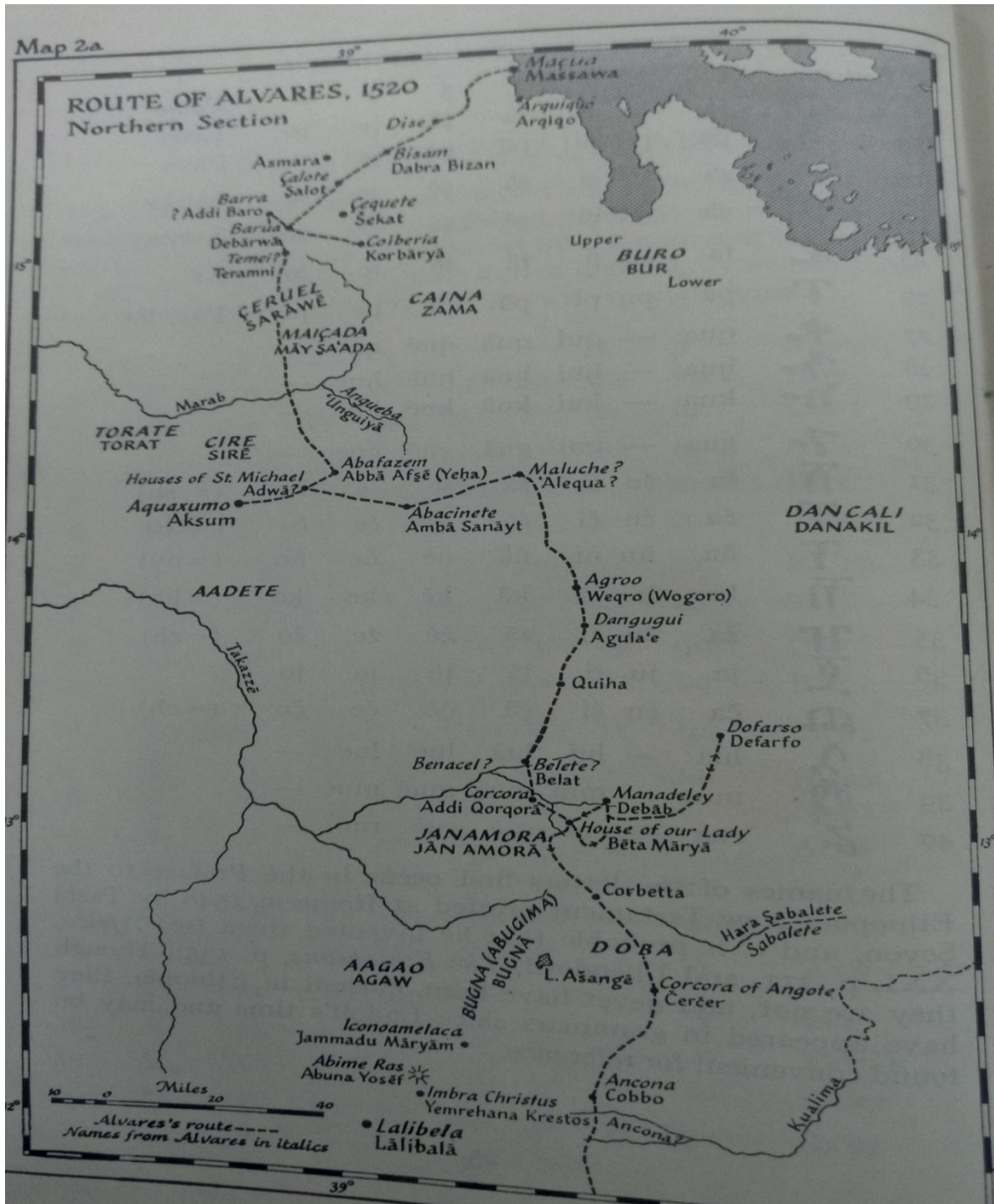
Appendixes

Appendix I: A map of Position of Hahayle, Enticho, Ambä Sänäyti, and Amba Gual Hatzei



Source: Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester Jhon of Indies*, A true relation of The Lands of The Prester Jhon being the narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia in 1520, Cambridge Published for the Halkuyt Society, 1961.p.169

Appendix I



Source: Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester Jhon of Indies*, A true relation of The Lands of The Prester Jhon being the narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia in 1520, Cambridge Published for the Halkuyt Society, 1961.p.169

Appendix II: The plant names found in Ahiferom Wārāda

አብ አሕፈሮም ወረዳ ዝርከብ ናይ ኣስማት ኣግራብ

ዳዕሮ ፡ ሳግላ ፡ ኣውሊዕ ፡ ሞሞና ፡ ዝዋውዕ ፡ ኩመል ፡ ክሊዓው ፡ ኣውሒ ፡ ቆልቋል ፡ ዓጋም ፡ ምልዖ ፡ ወይባ ፡ ገይሶ ፡ ታህሶስ ፡ ሽብጢ ፡ ታህብብ ፡ ጽሕዲ ፡ ሰራው ፡ ጨዓ ፡ ቆንጠፍጠፈ ፡ ዓንዴል ፡ ስየ ፡ ቀላሚጦስ ፡ ሽባኻ ፡ ዓሻ-ኦም ፡ ቀንጠብ ፡ ጭጎኖ ፡ መቂዕ ፡ ሰሰወ ፡ ሓጺባ ፡ ዝበ ፡ ኅኖቕ ፡ ኣርጉዲ ፡ ኪሊዓው ፡ ጠጠዓሎ ፡ ጽንቁያ ፡ ሕጻውጽ ፡ ለሓይ ፡ ጨቐምጠ ፡ እሾኽ-ዝብኢ ፡ ታምቡኽ ፡ ጸሊሞ ፡ ሓቢ-ጸሊም ፡ ቅንጭብ ፡ ሱር-በትሪ ፡ ጭዕንዶግ ፡ መጠረ ፡ መብጥዕ ፡ ጽንቁያ ፡ ላሓም ፡ ኣጎል ፡ ቆረነት ፡ ሻምብቆ ፡ ሽምዕዛ ፡ ቀዋ ፡ ሕኛ ፡ ዒቃ ፡ ሐሐት ፡ በለስ ፡ ጸዕዳ-ቀንጠብ ፡ ጸሊም-ቀንጠብ ፡ ጸዕዳ-ጨዓ ፡ ጸዕዳ-ቀላሚጦስ ፡ ሓምቦ-ሓምቦ ወ.ዘ.ተ.፡፡

Source: Informants: *Abba* Argawi Araya; Qés Tekelaab Fesseha; *Haleqa* Gäbrägzehar Tesefay and Qés Mezemuer Gäbrämariyam and My personal observation in the Ahiferom Wārāda in December 2019.

Appendix II: the Statute of Bashay Awalom found in Adwa Town



Source: Photo taken by Leake Teklebrhan in December 2019.

Appendix IV: The plants called by the name of *Tekle Dawit* (Dawit’s plant) found in the compound of the monastery that planted by king Dawit.



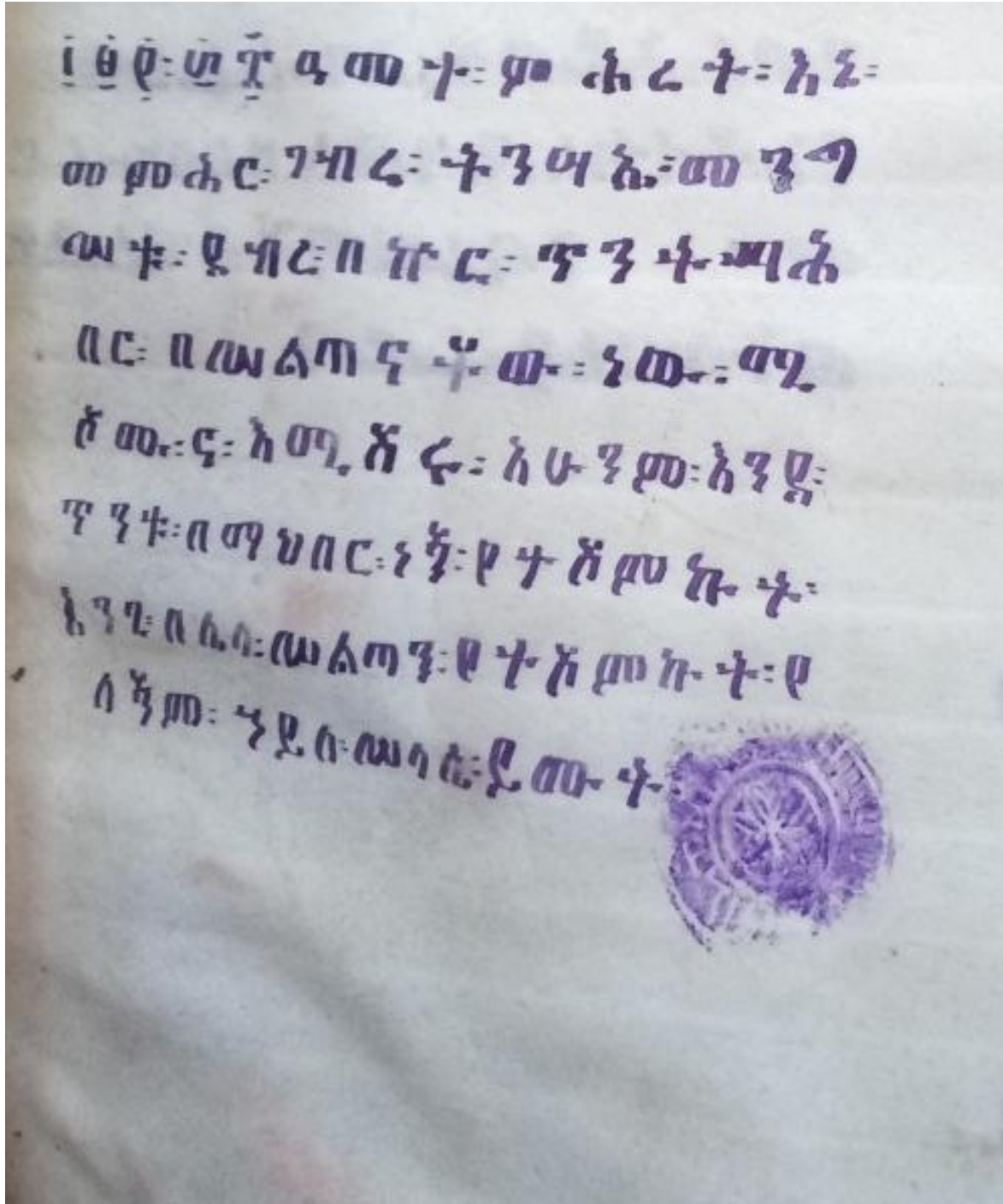
Source: Photo taken by Leake Teklebrhan in December 2019.

Appendix V: the hole holy water found in the center of the holy of the holiness of the monastery.



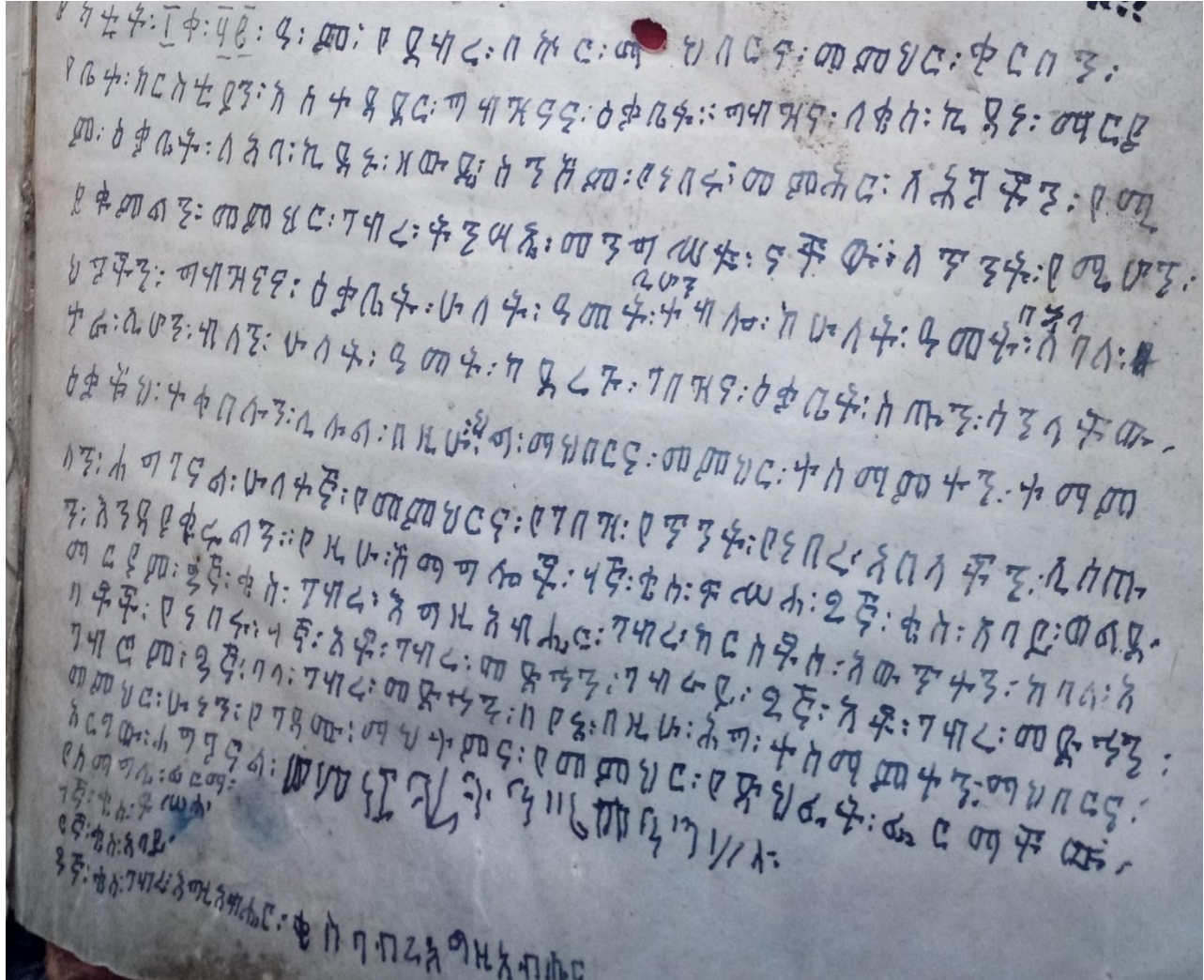
Source: Photo taken by Leake Teklebrhan in December 2019.

Appendix- VI: the idea that tells the leader (*Mämeher*) of the monastery has a right to administer the civil administration of the society and the monastery.



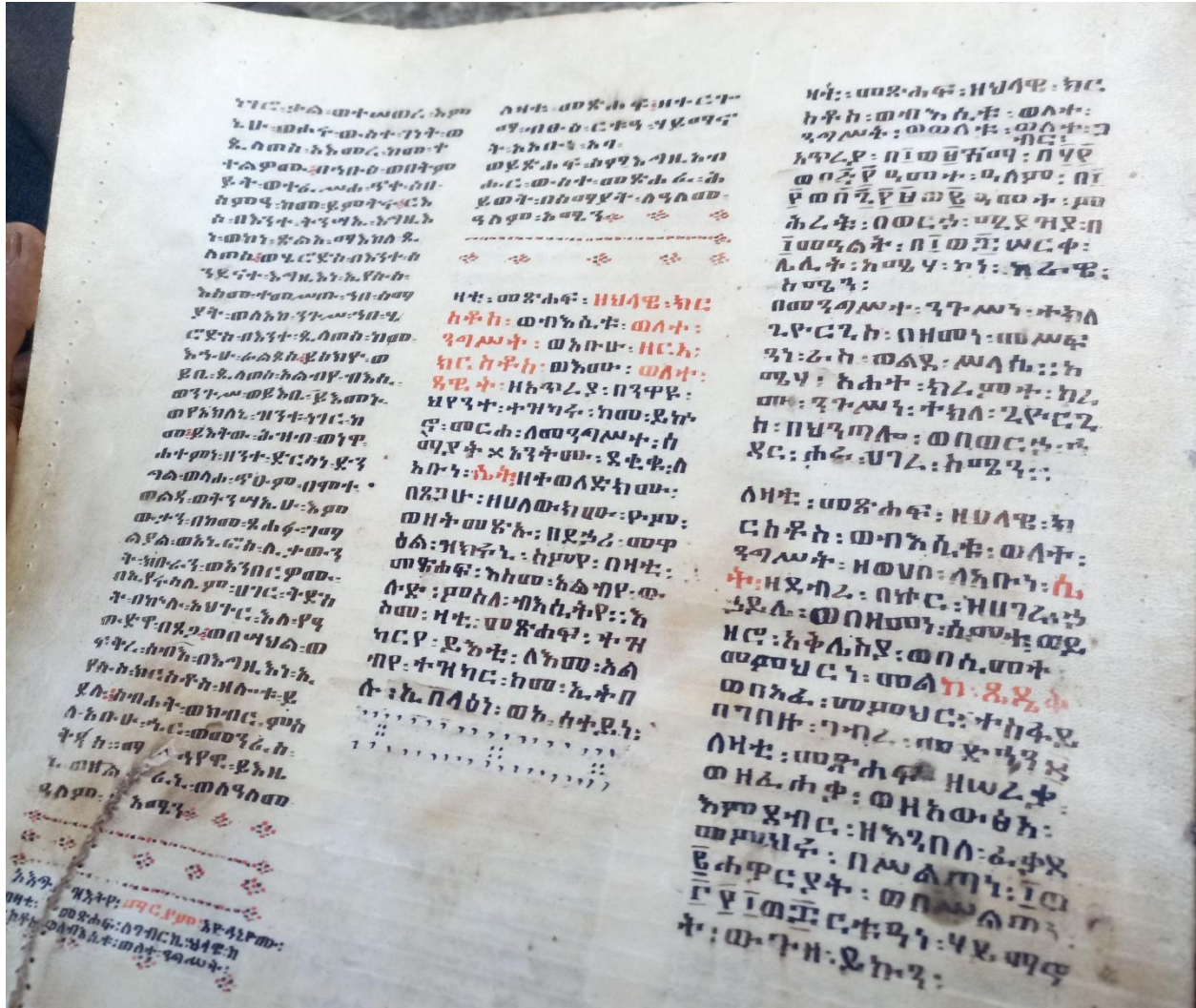
Source: Photo of the written document found in the end part of the parchment taken by Leake Teklebrhan in December 2019.

Appendix VII: the written document that mention one of the *Qésä Gäbäz* of the monastery and tells the *Qésä Gäbäz* of the monastery only served for 2 years.



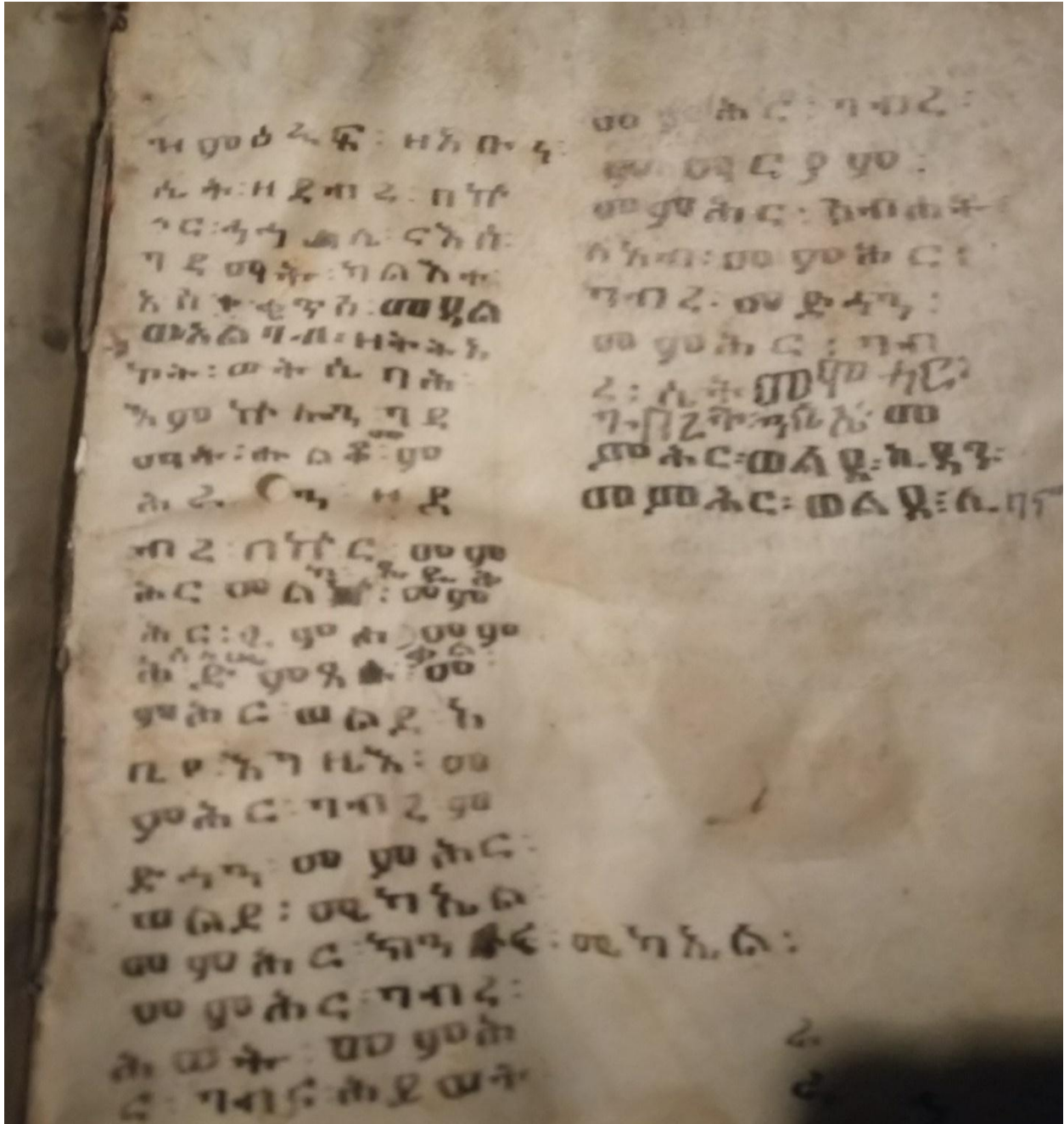
Source: Photo of the written document found in the end part of the parchment taken by Leake Teklebrhan in December 2019.

Appendix VII: the written document that mention one of the leader and *Qésä Gäbäz* of the monastery.



Source: Photo of the written document found in the end part of the parchment and the photo taken by Leake Teklebrhan in December 2019.

Appendix VIII: The written document that listed around 26 leaders (*Mämeher*) of the monastery.

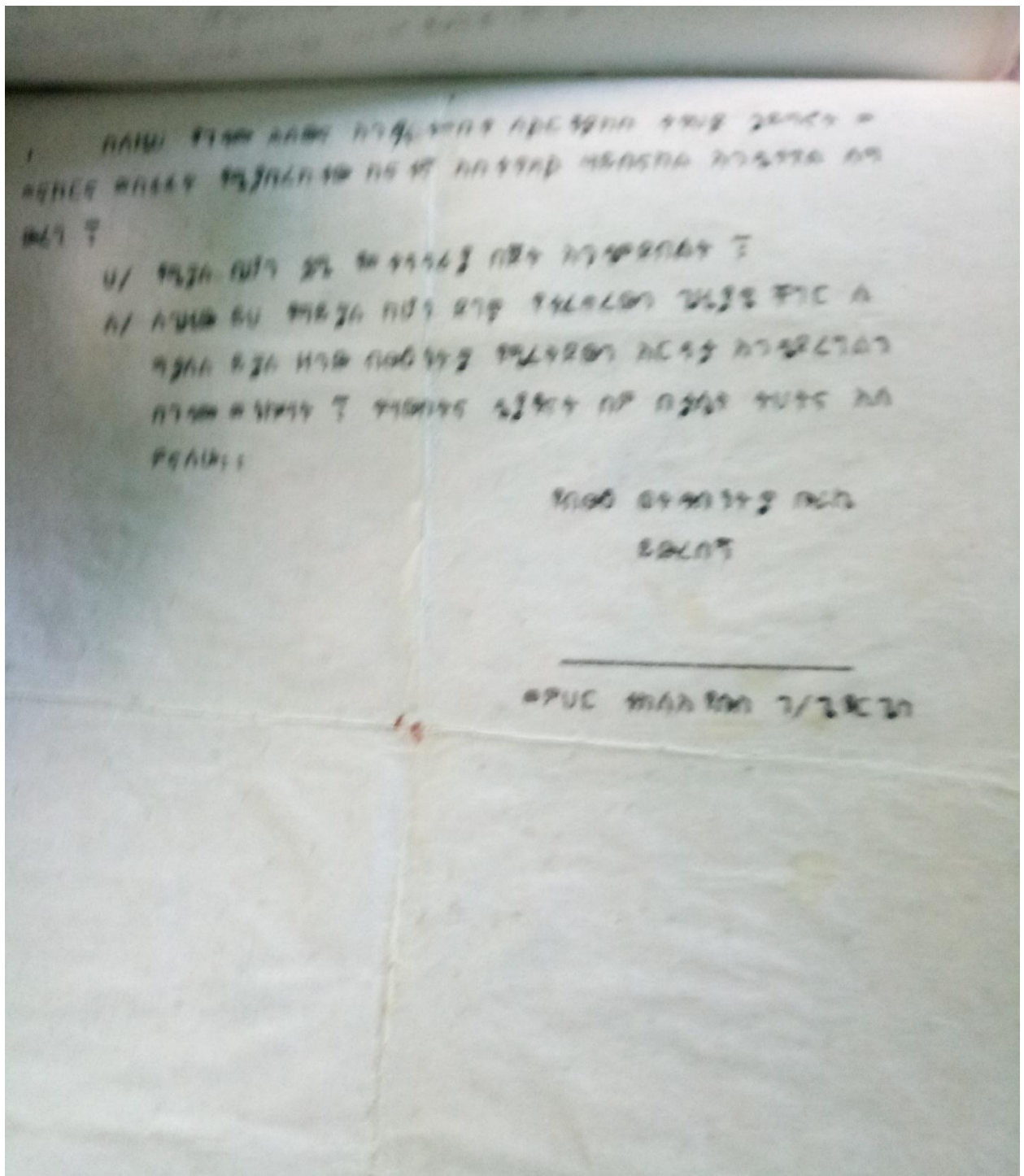


Source: Photo of the written document found in the end part of the parchment *Mäshäfa Meraf*. P.1.

Appendix IX: the stamp of *Qésä Gäbüz* Gaberu one of the treasury men of the monastery.



Source: Photo of the written document found in the different religious books found in the monastery.



Source: Photo of the written document found in the hand of *Sebeka Gubaie*.

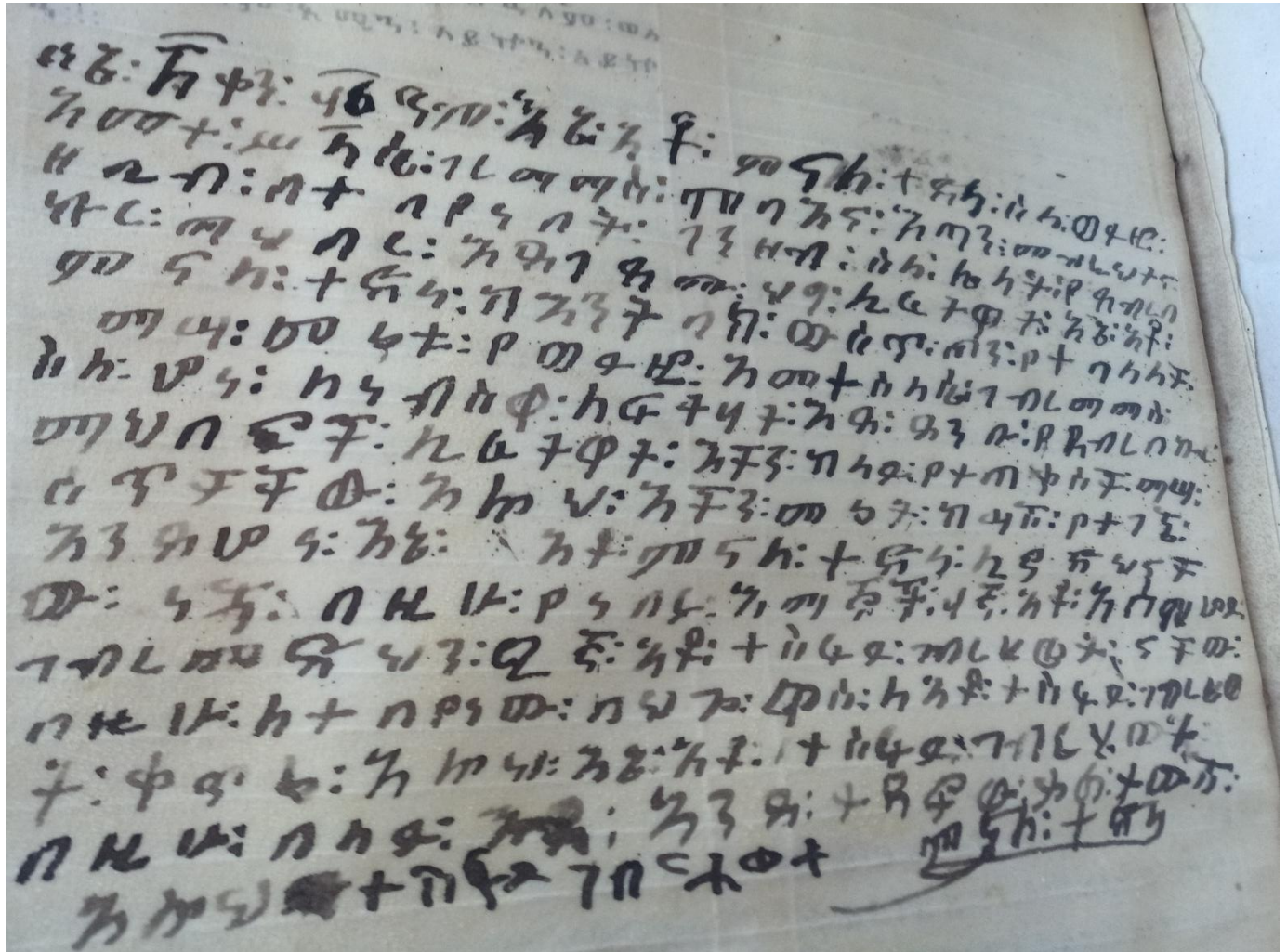
Appendix XI: List of Churches the newly established churches in the *gulland* of the monastery by leaving the monastery.

ደብረበኩርአብነሴትገዳምብኢትዮጵያነገሰታትዘተዋሃቡጉልትታትጋራይለእናደሕሪግዜገዳሙእናለቁቁዝተተከለሐደሽቲታቦታትእዞምዝስዕቡእዮም

ተ. ቁ	ቁሽት/ጉልት	ሐዚዘሎታቦት
1.	ደብረበኩር	አቡነሴት
2.	ዓዲክሳድ	
3.	ዓዲጉድፋ	
4.	ዓዲጭዕንደ	
5.	ዓዲሳጥራ	
6.	ተካዕዋ	
7.	ዕብንክዳና	
8.	ጉሙዕ	ኪዳነምሕረት/አብነመንቆሪዮስ
9.	ቆንዒ	ማርያም
10.	ዓዲጽራዕ	
11.	ዓዲበረቶ	
12.	ዱርሐሰማ	
13.	ዓዲቅሳንጣይ	
14.	ዓዲአትካሮ	ሥላሴ
15.	ዝባንሓሓይለ	እንዳሰንበት
16.	ዓዲተኸሎ	
17.	ማይጸዓዳ	ቅዱስጭርቆስ
18.	ዓዲገንቤላ (መርያዝቤት)	አቡነመድኃኒነእግዚእ
19.	ዓዲአጋም	አርባዕቱእንስሳ
20.	መኻን	ቅዱስሚካኤል
21.	ዓዲዘአመሬ	
22.	መኻን	
23.	በልሐዋ	አቡነእግዚእ
24.	እሰግሌ	ማርያምካብመካን
25.	ማይ-ዔላ	እንዳባሊባኖስ
26.	ዓዲኖጻ	ቅዱስሚካኤል
27.	እንትብዋኸ	ኪዳነምሕረት
28.	ዕንጉሥዮ	ማርያምጉናዘይቲ
29.	መሐርጽ	
30.	እንዳጊዮረጊስ	
31.	ምንኩርኳርዋልታ	
32.	እንዳጭርቆስነዓሊ	ቅዱስጭርቆስነዓሊ
33.	ማይሰዓል	መድኅኔዓለምጉናክ
34.	ቆራጺት	ዮሐንስወልደነጎድንድ
35.	ሐዱሽዓዲ	
36.	አፍተራ	
37.	ዓዲመቐደላ	

ምነጭ: ድያቆንክንፊኦብርሃእናአባአረጋዊአርአያ and Informants: Abba Argawi Araya, Qés Tekleab Fesseha, and Haleqa Gäbräzheher Tesfay.

Appendix XII: the agreement made between the monastery to gave their own land for the monastery after her death as her *tescar*(religious ceremony prepared for death person).



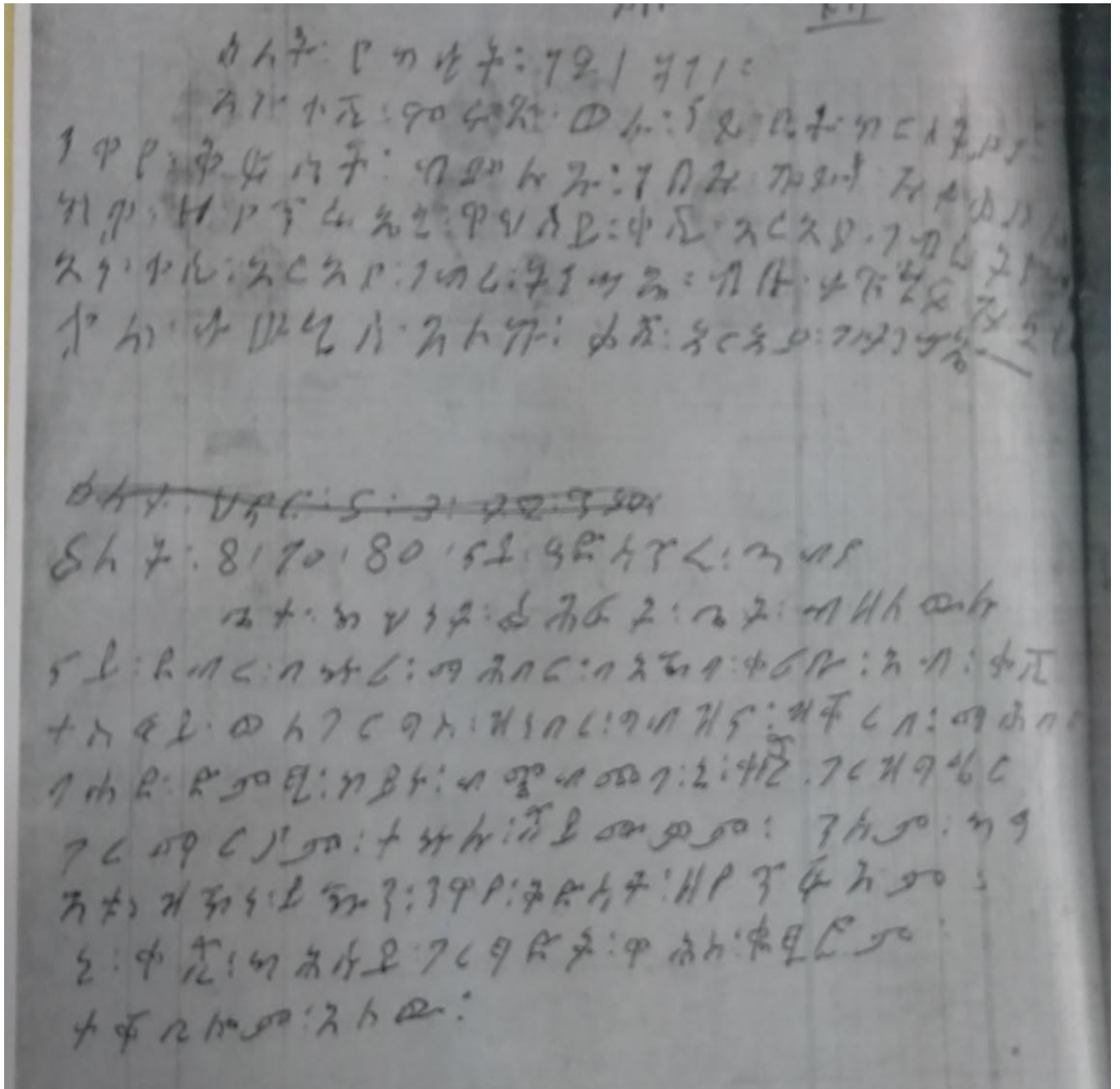
Source: Photo of the written document found in the end part of parchment of monastery.

Appendix XIII: The written document when the transfer the treasures from one *Qésä Gäbäz* to the newly elected *Qésä Gäbäz*.

Handwritten text in Ge'ez script, likely a religious or historical document. The text is densely packed and written in a cursive style. It appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly related to a monastery or a specific community. The script is highly stylized and characteristic of the Ge'ez language.

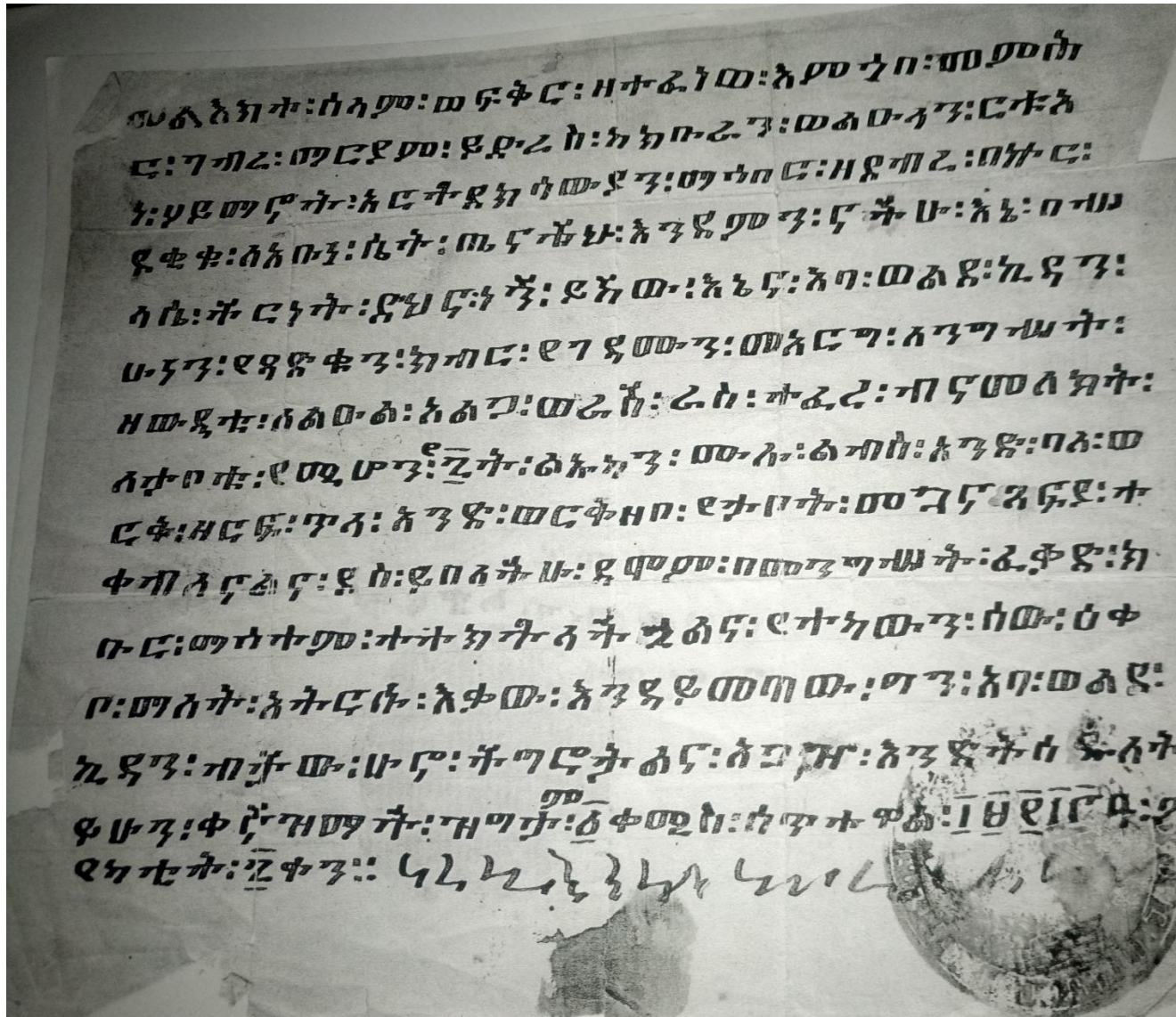
Source: Photo of the written document found in the end part of parchment of monastery and the photo taken by Leake Teklebrhan in December 2019.

Source: the written document found in the *Māshāfa Eed* of monastery.

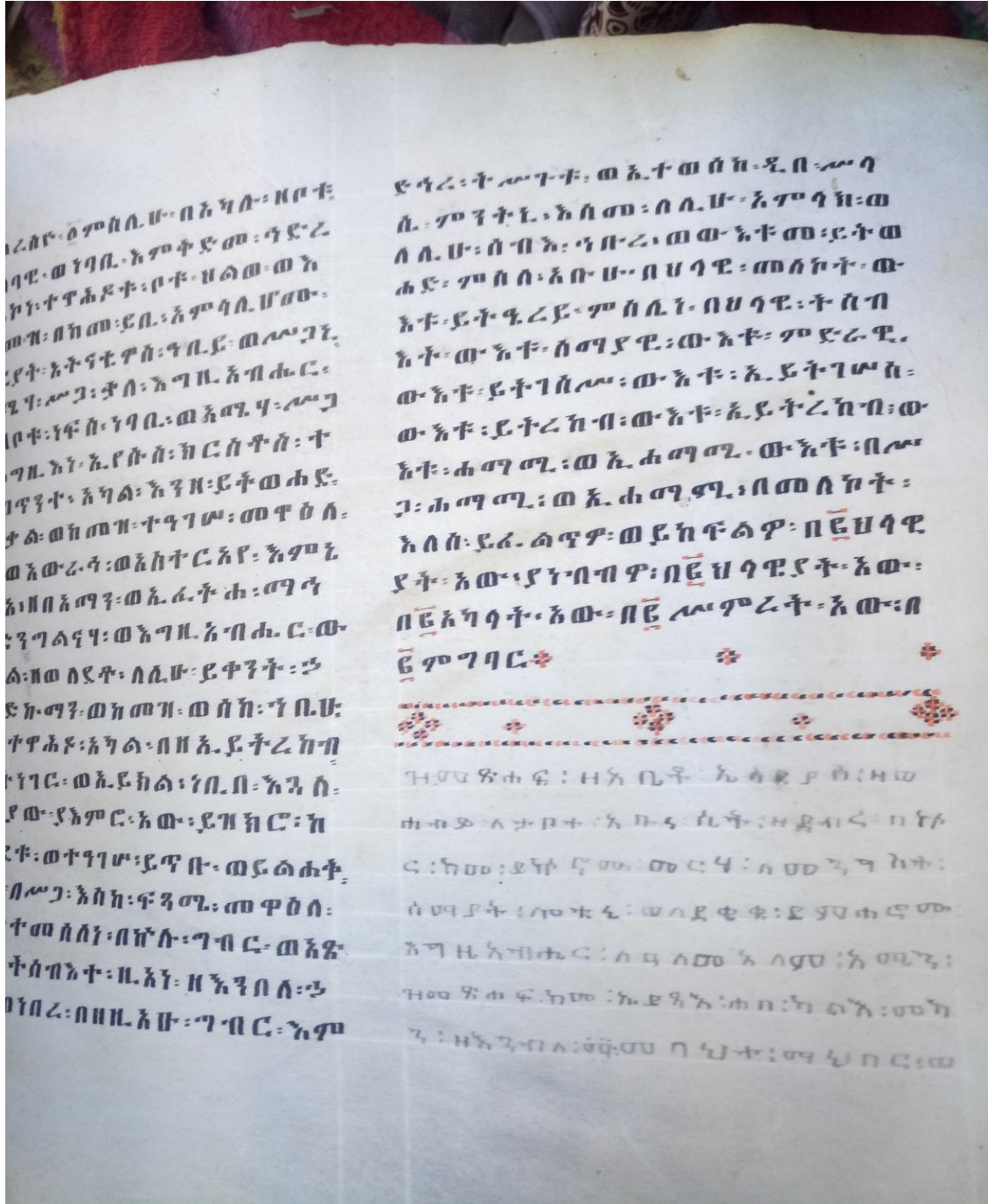


Source: the written document found in the *Māshāfa Eed* of monastery.

Appendix XV: the letter sent to the monastery and the end part of the monastery that explain about the trasures donated to monastery.



Source: the written document found on the hand of *Sebeka Gubaie* of the monastery



Source: the written document found on the end of the parchment.

Appendix XVI: The list of Manuscripts and trasures found in the monastery.

ተገቢ	ገጽ	ጥያቄ	ቁጥር
ገጽ 1	ገጽ 2	ገጽ 3	ገጽ 4
ገጽ 5	ገጽ 6	ገጽ 7	ገጽ 8
ገጽ 9	ገጽ 10	ገጽ 11	ገጽ 12
ገጽ 13	ገጽ 14	ገጽ 15	ገጽ 16
ገጽ 17	ገጽ 18	ገጽ 19	ገጽ 20
ገጽ 21	ገጽ 22	ገጽ 23	ገጽ 24
ገጽ 25	ገጽ 26	ገጽ 27	ገጽ 28
ገጽ 29	ገጽ 30	ገጽ 31	ገጽ 32
ገጽ 33	ገጽ 34	ገጽ 35	ገጽ 36
ገጽ 37	ገጽ 38	ገጽ 39	ገጽ 40
ገጽ 41	ገጽ 42	ገጽ 43	ገጽ 44
ገጽ 45	ገጽ 46	ገጽ 47	ገጽ 48
ገጽ 49	ገጽ 50	ገጽ 51	ገጽ 52
ገጽ 53	ገጽ 54	ገጽ 55	ገጽ 56
ገጽ 57	ገጽ 58	ገጽ 59	ገጽ 60
ገጽ 61	ገጽ 62	ገጽ 63	ገጽ 64
ገጽ 65	ገጽ 66	ገጽ 67	ገጽ 68
ገጽ 69	ገጽ 70	ገጽ 71	ገጽ 72
ገጽ 73	ገጽ 74	ገጽ 75	ገጽ 76
ገጽ 77	ገጽ 78	ገጽ 79	ገጽ 80
ገጽ 81	ገጽ 82	ገጽ 83	ገጽ 84
ገጽ 85	ገጽ 86	ገጽ 87	ገጽ 88
ገጽ 89	ገጽ 90	ገጽ 91	ገጽ 92
ገጽ 93	ገጽ 94	ገጽ 95	ገጽ 96
ገጽ 97	ገጽ 98	ገጽ 99	ገጽ 100

	ብራክ:	ወርቅት:	ዓ.ም:
ህዝብ			
መጽሐፍ: ስገት:		1	1
ተርጉም: መጻፍት:		1	1
ደብዳቤ: መጻፍት: ገብረጌሪ		1	1
ክሊት:		1	1
መክፈት:		1	1
የጻፉ: መሰቀል: ብራ:	3		
ብራት: መ: የጻፉ:	2		
ሰንጠረዥ: ተጻፎ	3		
ፅንሰት:	5		
ተርጉም: የጻፉ: መሰቀል	2		
ክስተት:	3		
ወርቅ: ዓ.ም:	1		
ሰፊ: አውጭ:	1		
ዓህል: ሐዋርያት:	3		
ታላ: አዋጅ:	6		
ድለት: ዓህል:	3		
ፅንጠረዥ:	2		
ደወል: ብራት:	1		
ምንጭ:	6		
መጽሐፍ: ክፍል:		1	+
መገቢያ: መቅደስ:	1		
ወርቅ: ደ.ም:	3		
ሲኖድ:		1	
አመራር: X		1	+
ወርቅ: መገንጠያ:	1	1	
ክስተት: ግብር:	X	1	
ግብር: ሐዋርያት:		1	
ሐይል: ኪዳን		1	
አህጉር:	10		
ብ ተ አምራ: መጻፍት =	5		

ትፈልጡ ደ ?

አብ ወረዳ አሕፈሮም ጣብያ ዳዕሮ እንበላ ደብረ በክር አቡነ ሴት ገዳም ንተወለድትን በፃሕቲ ዓደን ዘስደምሙ ቅርስታት ምርካቦም ። ገዳም ደብረ በክር ካብ ከተማ እንትሮም ንአስታት ደቡብ እንፊት ካብ ከተማ እንትሮም 24 ኪ.ሜ ራሕቁ ዝርከብ እኳ እንተኮነ ካብ ዝቀርቆር 1464 ዓመት ከም ዘቀፀ ትፈልጡ ደ ?



ገዳምነት

ገዳም ደብረ በክር ብ 1322 ዓ/ም ታእምራዊ ብገዝነ ገድሲ አቡነ ሴት ዝተከፈተ ገዳም እዩ። እዚ ገዳም ብአቦና አቡነ ሴት ባርከት መስቀል አብ ቤተ መቐደስ ማይጨለት ብምንታዕ /ብምክፋት/ ተአምርነቱ እናሐየለ ብምምፅኡ ብ 1322 ዓ.ም ድሕረ አቡነ ሴት ገደሊ ብሃፀይ ዓምደ ዕዮን ብምቅፃል ደማ ብሃፀይ ዳዊት ገዳምነቱ እናዓበዩ ከምዝከደን ዝተፈላለዩ ቅርስታት እናተበርከተሉ ከም ዝፀንሐን ትፈልጡ ደ ?



አብዚ ገዳም ዝርከቡ ቅርስታት ካብ ብዙሕ ንእሽተይ ክንገልፀልኩም

ፃሕፊ ፅዋ ካብ ሰማይ ሰማያት ከም ዝወረደሉ ዓበይቲ ናይ ብራና መፅሓፍቲ ብልሳነ ግዕዝ ልሳነ እንግሊዝ ልሳነ ዓረብ ዝተፀሓፉ ናይ ብራና መፅሓፍቲ ከም ዘለዉ ብምሕባር ካብአቶም ቁሩብ ንምጥቃስ፡



- ከም በዓል ድርሳን ሃና ወሊያዊም
- ጥሩላስ
- ሰንደዶስ ናይ ሕጊ መፅሓፍ
- ሃይማኖት እበው
- ሰንክሳር
- ኦሪት ዘፍጥረት
- ገድለ ሰማዕታት
- ዝተፋላለዩ ድርሳናት
- ዝተመልከተ ድጓን ዘይተመልከተ ድጓን
- ግብረ ህማማት ብ1792 ዓ/ም ዝተፅሓፈ
- ገድለ ሃወርያት በበ ክፍሎም
- ምድር ድጓ ወደል ድጓ
- ፍታሃ ነገስ ወዘተ ዝመሳሰሉ ናይ ብራና

መስቀልን ካልእት አቁሕትን

አብቲ ገዳም ዝርከቡ መስቀላት ካብ ወርቂ ናይ ሕሳስን ብሪን ዝተሰርሑ እንትኮኑ ግልጋሎቶም ድማ ንባርኩት፡፡ጥሳት በቲ መስቀል እንትሕፀባ ንክወልዱ መንፈሳዊን ሃይማኖታውን ድሕነት ከምኡውን ናይቲ ዓዲ ሕጊ ካብ ዝጥሕሱ ሰባት ወይ ድማ ዝክሕዱ እቲ መስቀል ንመሓላ ብምጥቃም ናብ እምነቶም ንክምለሱ ይሕግዝ ።

ብቤት ዕሕፊት

ርክብ ህዝብን መንግስትን ወረዳ ኣሕፊሮም
 ኣብ ወርሒ ሓዲ ግዜ ትዳሎ ብሮሽር
 ኣሰናዳኢ፡- ገ/ሂወት ኣስመላሽ
 ዲዛይን ፎቶ ግራፍ ፡-ሓዲሽ ገ/ኩርስቶስ
 አድራሻ፡ ስ.ቁ.-03-44-49-01-51
 እንትጮ
 ታሕሳስ 2011ዓ/ም

ቀይ- 2728

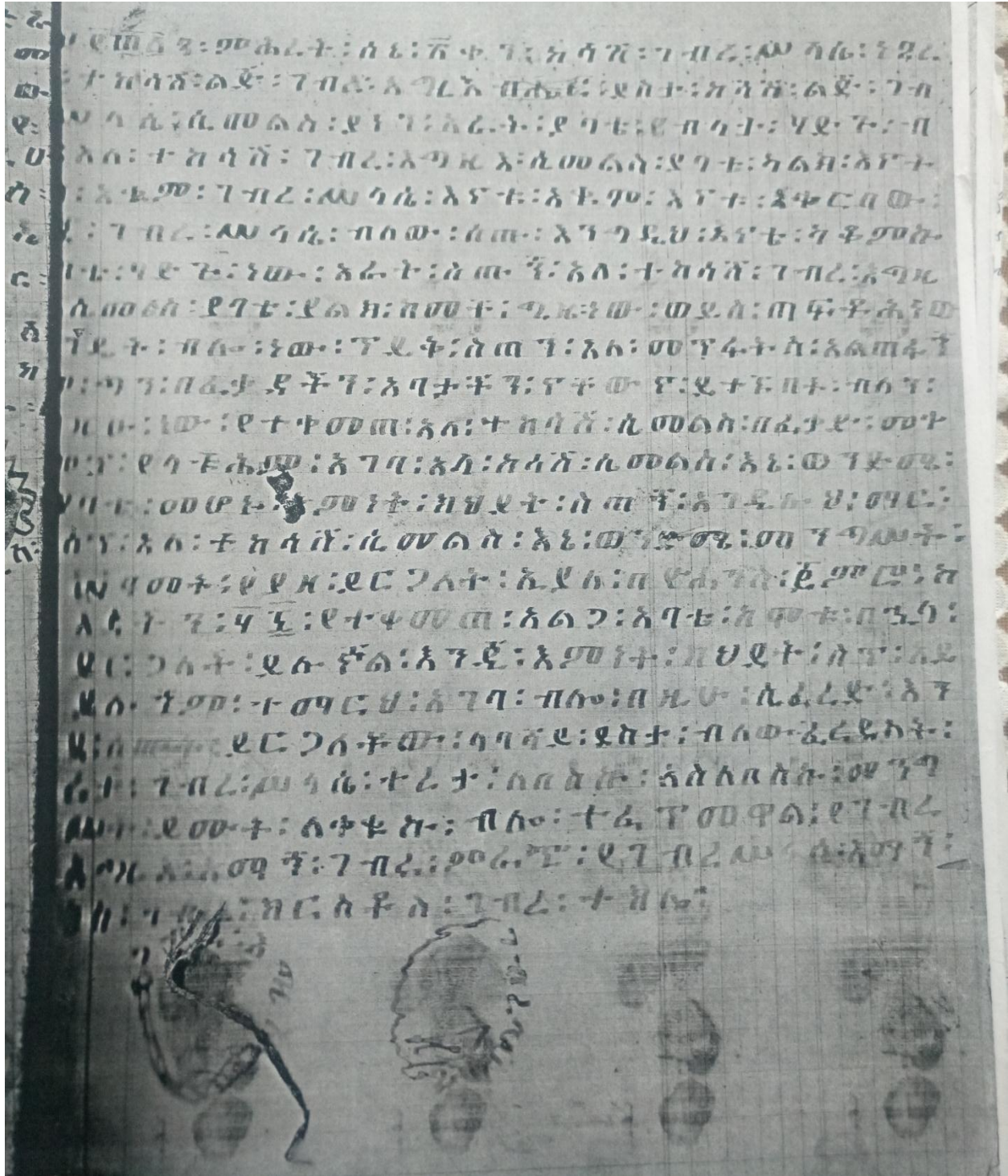
ናይ መዳብ ሃሕሊ ታሕ 16/04/2011 ዓ
 ናይ ወርቂን ብሪን ብራድ
 ናይ ወርቅን ካሳን ወንበር
 ናይ ወርቂ ሻሓነታት
 ናይ ወርቂ ካባታት
 ታርካዊ ደወል ፡-ዓራታት፡ሕበሮታት/ ነጋሪት/ወዘተ ይርከብዎም

ካብዚ ብተወሳኪ ካብ ናይ ኣቦና ኣቡነ ሴት መቃብር ከምኡ እውን ዝተፈላለዩ ሃፀይትን ሊቃናትን መቃብር ኣብቲ ገዳም ይርከቡ ።
 ነቲ ገዳም ገዳምነቱ ዝገልፁ ብዙሓት ቅርስታት እኛ እንተሃለው ኣብ ንብረት ኣተሓሕዞም ግን ዘመናውነት ዝተላበሱ ስለዘይኮኑ እቲ ቅርሲ ብዝተወሰነ መልክፅ ጉድኣት ይበፀሑ ከም ዘሎ ትርጉላ ።



Source: Brusher NO.2728 prepared by Ahiferom Wārāda Public Relation Bureau in 25/12/2018

Appendix XVII: the written document that explain the agreement made between the individual and the monastery about the ownership of the bead.



Source: the written document found in the *Māshāfa Eed* of monastery.

Appendix XVIII: the painting found in the manuscripts of Amestu Meqaresat from left to right: *Abunä Tewoderos, Abunä GäbräKeristos, Abunä Sét, Abunä NegedeBrhan, and Abunä GäbräAmlak.*



Source: The parchment of *Mäshäfa* Amestu Meqares. P.1.

Appendix XIV: the holy waters found in the monastery.

Photo 1. The holy water of *Abunä Sét* that sourced from the holy of holiness of the monastery.



Photo 2: The holy water of *Abunä Abiyälgzi'e*.



The source of the *Abunä Abiyälgzi'e* holy water.

Source: the photo taken by Lake Teklebrhan in December 2019

Appendix XX: the plants planted by *Abunä Sét*.

Photo 1: The trees planted by *Abunä Sét* found at Adi chinde village.



Photo 2: The trees that planted by *Abunä Sét* found at the compound of the monastery.



Source: the photo taken by Lake Teklebrhan in December 2019.

ዕለት 2116. 2009 ዓ.ም

5759 ጠባብ ደረሰ ገንብሳ ሳይባ ስጋ

ገበያ ገብሮት 3ጠና 5ተ ደገብ ስገብ ደገብ መገንባት

789ግ ገብሮት ስገብ ገብሮት መገንባት ገብሮት

1 ስገብ መገንባት ስገብ መገንባት ገብሮት

2 ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት 3 ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት

4 ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት 5 ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት

ገብሮት ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት

5759 7853 ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት

ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት

ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት ስገብ ስገብ መገንባት

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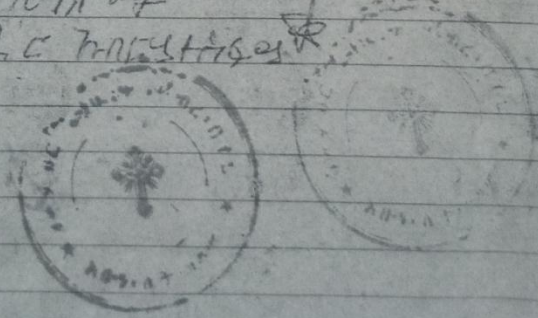
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Declaration

I, Leake Teklebrhan, hereby declare that the Thesis entitled “A History Of Däbrä Bäkür *Abunä Sét* Monastery in Hahaile, Ahiferom *Wäräda*, Tigray, Ethiopia, from Its Foundation up to 1991” submitted by me for the award in Master of Arts in History at Addis Ababa University. This Thesis is my original work and it has not presented for the award of any degree in other University or institution. All sources of materials used for this Thesis have dully acknowledged.

Student Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____