

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**Traditional and Cultural Beliefs on Magical Prayers  
(Ethiopic Amulets) and Their Influences on  
Women's Life**

**BY**  
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Influences on Women's Life**

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**By  
Tadesse Esubalew**

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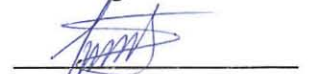
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## Symbols for consonants and vowels

In this research, I used the following Gə'əz and Amharic letters for the sound orders.

### Vowel orders

ä	=	for 1 <sup>st</sup>	order
a	=	for 4 <sup>th</sup>	order
e	=	for 5 <sup>th</sup>	order
ə	=	for 6 <sup>th</sup>	order

### Consonants

‘	=	for	ዐ	ከ	=	for	ሐ
’	=	for	አ	ኮ	=	for	ኀ
ḡ	=	for	ሠ	t	=	for	ተ
S	=	for	ሰ	t’	=	for	ጠ
Š	=	for	ሸ	C’	=	for	ጨ
S’	=	for	ጸ	Ĉ	=	for	ቸ
d	=	for	ዐ	P’	=	for	ጸ
q’	=	for	ቀ	Ž	=	for	ቸ
h	=	for	ሀ	J	=	for	ጀ

### Abbreviations

f = for folio

ff = for folios

Ms = for manuscript

Mss = for manuscripts

r = for recto

v = for verso

For the unfinished statements of the usual formula

**በስመ:** = በስመ አብ ወወልድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ

## **ABSTRACT**

*This thesis deals with the traditional and cultural beliefs on magical prayers in Ethiopia, and their influence and connection on women's life. Amulets and scrolls which are composed with different magical prayers or spells or charms have played a great role on the life of women. Most cultures and traditions in Ethiopia have connections to religious beliefs that supernatural powers can be compelled or influenced, to act in certain ways for good or evil purposes, by using ritual formulas. These formulas are, in a sense, magic. By performing certain magical acts in a particular way, misfortunes are broken, illness cured or avoided, women made fertile, evil spirits can be defended or possessed.*

*In this thesis I tried to list out and discuss many magical prayer texts. Especially my explanation depend on the traditional and cultural phenomena of magical prayers. I tried to examine the contents of the various works of magical prayer texts. I tried to show the characters of magical prayers and how they are connected to the life of women.*

*In other words I tried to indicate the linguistic, historical, and anthropological features of magical prayers related to women. The connection between magical prayers and evil spirits (demons, Zars,) are strongly elaborated. Some ideological words which are composed together with magical prayers are examined as to how they were used as ideological intensions among different ethnic groups.*

# CHAPTER I

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

Magical prayers are used as instruments by human beings to defeat enemies, to get salvation from God, to gain properties as much as possible, to be cured from ailments, etc.

An amulet is a charm, something worn, often around the neck, inside armpit, on different parts of the body (like tattoo), as a remedy or protection against evils or misfortune or mischiefs. Amulets were common in earlier days. They consisted of stones, pieces of metal, or plants, and some times were composed of spells, words, characters, or sentences arranged in a particular order (N. Webster's New 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1979:62).

Most of the time amulets are considered as magical prayers and as superstitions. However, they should be known as they are in the forms and contents respectively. Methods of predicting, avoiding and controlling certain occurrences by supernatural or irrational means, this is clearly a definition of magic as our most primitive ancestors saw it. And it becomes clear that superstitious beliefs are indistinguishable from magic (Paul Hamlyn: 1968: P. 85).

In other words, an amulet is an object which is believed to have a beneficial influence on its owner. It is usually small, and generally portable. Its shape, its material and many markings or inscriptions or magical drawings on its surface are generally believed to be significant. Amulets to be efficacious, should be magically charged or blessed by a *dābtāra* (cleric) in those cases where their action is believed to depend solely on the faith of the owner or wearer. They

were formerly used very frequently, in order to cure diseases (Crow W.B., 1968: P. 71).

In all cases involving the use of amulets, it is the object itself, in some way or another, that has acquired magical power. It may be that its form or shape or the circumstances of its discovery has fulfilled the requirement for possession of magical properties. In other cases, according to New Catholic Encyclopedia (V I, 1966: 457) the words, signs, or symbols are prescribed in some religious ritual as carrying with them a peculiar control over pertinent deities and spirits.

According to Budge W.A., in his work *Amulets and superstition*, (1930: 180) the commonest amulet in Abyssinia appears in the form of a strip parchment made of sheep skin, which varies in length from a few inches to five or six feet, and in width from two to six or seven inches. These strips are sometimes folded flat and sewn up inside leather coverings which are attached to cloaks and inner garments, and sometimes they are rolled up and enclosed in cylindrical leather sheath; often resembling cartridge cases.

The written letters and magical drawings or images in the form of talismans inside the scrolls are held in great reverence, and traditionally were themselves supposed to possess magical powers. Especially women are subjected to this matter.

J, Mercier, in his work *the art that heals. The image as medicine in Ethiopia*, 1994: 87, emphasized strongly that images, talismans and words inside the scrolls have equal value. Each has its own meanings. They have equal psychological powers for users. Images and magical drawings in the scrolls can be classified into abstract and openly presented painting forms. Most probably, the abstract ones can be indicated as Old Testament style such as Cherubim, while the openly presented painting form is as in the New Testament style such as cross. Further more, the same metaphorical plays are implied to the two types of images. The lamp of God, for example, has been shown on a scroll

accompanied by the usual formula, which however, is developed in such a way as to include the name of the patient. Here is the lamp of God, which washes away the sins of the world; by the same token let it wash away the illness of evil spirits and demons.

Both traditionally and culturally, it is believed that the most magical prayers and images in the texts have metaphorical explanations for the society.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Even if they are still in practice, the traditional and cultural values of magical prayers have low considerations among Ethiopians. Most of the time this kind of practice is considered as unusual, because some have prejudicial observations on it. Their contribution for the building up of the cultural history of Ethiopia, as well as its possession to form the secured societies, is forgotten. Besides this, the lexical values of words of magical prayers and the lists of texts which contain these magical prayers are clearly unknown. The anthropological and historical value of magical prayers and the consequences of their influences on women's life are not fully stated.

The purpose of this study is to discuss and give answers to the following questions.

- Are the traditional and cultural values of magical prayers clearly understood?
- What are their critical considerations to be explained linguistically?
- What kind of characters do the magical prayers have?
- What are the usual formulas of magical prayers?
- Is there repelling or attraction between the Christian faith and magical prayers?
- What kind of ideological intentions were created by means of magical prayers?

- What kind of external forces pushed women to use magical prayers in the form of amulets?
- What are the relations between spirits and magical prayers, and what are their historical and anthropological values about women?

In order to evaluate the above questions and to give some explanations the following important issues are listed.

- The initial point of magical prayers in Ethiopia
- The influence of pagan and Christian traditions on magical prayers.
- The ways of believing the change of the power of magical prayers.
- The type of words and magical drawings which have been inscribed in magical texts.
- Concerning women, the meaning of magical words and symbols inscribed in the magical prayer texts.
- The different forms of amulets which are composed for women.
- The sign of cross and writings of some hymnal texts as amulets.
- The influence of the interpretation of magical prayers on women's life.
- Traditional and cultural concepts about the mighty power of magical prayers and amulets as a medicine to protect the usual bleeding and to encourage fertility among women.
- The requirement of magical prayers and amulets to overcome enemies or evil spirits.
- The negative and positive impacts of magical prayers on women.
- Materials from which magical prayer texts and amulets were made, and which are beneficial to women.

### **1.3 Objective of the study**

The objective of this study concerns the following:

- The works of some magical prayer texts and the related Ethiopic amulet literatures.
- One is compelled to think of foreign contributions to the subject, say /Babylonian, Jewish, Islamic, and other elements in these literatures/.
- By whom they were formulated, and to whom they were addressed?
- The critical values of amulets and their philological, historical and anthropological evaluation.
- Show the linguistic feature of magical prayer texts
- Show the characters of magical prayers and their influences on women's life.
- Show the figures and different magical drawings in the scrolls, are full of meanings.
- Show how the sick are psychologically treated and encouraged to practice magical prayers for the sake of secured life.
- Indicate how and when women are frequently involved to be treated by magical prayers
- To explain how the interpretations of inscription on amulets influenced the attitude of women.
- Concerning their medicinal values, investigate both the positive and negative factors of magical prayers, and show their effects among societies.
- The beliefs on the relations between magical prayers and spirits and the consequences of their anthropological values.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

Probably it is said that the problem of traditional and cultural beliefs on magical prayers still needs solutions. Some scholars like S. Strelcyn, J. Mercier and others tried to explain Ethiopian magical prayers. But they put them in some what mixed ways. They did not put clearly which magical prayer belongs to women and which one to men or which one to both. And magical prayers concerning only women are not yet explained in clear terms.

Therefore, I hope that this research will make some contribution to know how the magical prayers are practiced in the society among women; and I will try to show how the magical prayers are considered as they have both negative and positive factors. Since this research has focused only on the connection between magical prayers and women, it will provide informations about the possible sources of variations of contents of magical prayers with the same title but in different texts, and serve as a base for further studies concerning gender issues. Also it is believed to have significance for a better understanding of magical practices among societies.

The work of on defferent scrolls which have been collected and stored in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES). There are a lot of scrolls composed of different magical prayers. All are put in more than ten boxes. Even if there more than 10 boxes in IES, I have chosen only few, because they are not properly catalogued, and do not yet have catalogue numbers.

#### **1.5 Delimitation of the study**

The scope of the study is limited only to the traditional and cultural considerations of magical prayers, and to their influence on the life of women. The study is also limited to legendary works of magical texts which were written in Ethio-Semitic language, especially in Gə'əz.

This study is constrained by lack of organized reference materials, finance and basically time. Since most of the documents are unpublished and some are in unorganized manner works of magical texts, are difficult to access.

## 1.6 Definition of basic terms

### 1.6.1 English terms

Amulet (ክታብ): The practice of wearing on the person, a small symbolic object as a charm or protection against evils.

- It could be simply in material form like a stone, bead etc. or in scroll form with magical writings
- It could be used as medical or prophylactic treatment
- It could be as a substance used in medicine.

Counter Charms (መፍተሐ ስራይ): This is a kind of magical prayer used as a means of antidotes, or it is used to make neutralize the evil doings.

Curses (ቀሳፊ ቃላት): Anathematizing words during magical practices

Defensive Magical Prayer (የመከላከያ ጸሎት): Magical Prayer which has a defensive character.

Demon (ርኩስ መንፈስ- የሌሊት መንፈስ): Unclean spirit, living on earth among the people

Evil doer (አስማተኛ- አስማት አድራጊ ክፋት ስሪ): This is a kind of witchdoctor who practices evil doings.

Evil eye (ቡዳ): Traditionally known as *buda*. The word is operating in connection with the sight. It will produce an effect on the person or thing which the eye is looking up on.

Fetter of Devils (ማአሠረ አጋንንት): A magical prayer used to attack evil spirits

Ganen (ጋኔን): Unclean spirits, especially living on the air.

Herbalist (ቅጠል በጣሽ-ሥር ማሽ): The one who has a knowledge of traditional medicine, and able to prepare it from plants.

Incantation (ድግምት-ድጋም): A kind of series of words used as a magical spells or charms.

Jinn,-Jinni (ጂ.ኒ): Unclean spirits with supernatural power which is able to appear in human and animal form.

Magic (አስማት፣ መተት፣ ምትሐት): Method of predicting, avoiding or controlling certain occurrences by supernatural or irrational means. This is also a power of apparently using supernatural forces to change the form of things or influence events. It could be positive or negative magic.

Magical Prayer (ምትሐታዊ ድጋም ወይም ድግምት): A prayer which is connected to magical practices. The prayer could be full of spells, magical word powers, magical names of God and angels, singly stringed letters etc.

Magical Texts: (አስማታዊ ጽሑፎች) Texts which hold different contents concerning to magical prayers in.

Magical Spells: (አስማታዊ ቃላት) Repeatedly pronounced or praid or written of words. Words of which when spoken, are thought to have magical power; reciting of magical words

Productive Magical Prayer (አጋዥ ድግምት): Magical prayer which has a productive character. e.g. for fertility, for rain etc.

Prophylatic (**መከላከያ**): A kind of magical prayer protecting against diseases .e.g. malaria,

Sador, Alodor, Danat, Adera, Rodas (**ሳደር፣ አላዶር፣ ዳናት፣ አዴራ፣ ሮዳስ**): The names of the five wounds of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Scroll (**ሽብልል የብራና ክታብ**): a kind of amulet in which different magical prayers were written and rolled.

Talisman (**ጠልሰም**): This is a kind of magical drawings or magical marks which are used for the specific purpose of healing.

Tattoo (**ንቅሳት**): A sign which is made on the neck, on forehead, on the hands of women in the form of cross sign.

Therapeutic (**መመለሻ**): The art of healing or curing diseases which bring an effect on human mind. It is more related to psycho-analytical functions.

### 1.6.2 Amharic terms

**አብነት** ('abənät) – Esoteric works of the *däbtära* likely to be understood only by those which have a special knowledge; mysterious and obscure.

**አስማት** ('asmat) – Magical practice (lit. it is the plural of the word *səmə*)

**ባለዛር** (baläzar)- Zar (evil Spirit) possessed persons (women)

**ደብተራ** (däbtära)- Ecclesiastical healer.

**ዲያብሎስ** (Diablos)- Supreme evil being, satan, wicked spirit.

**ድጋም** (dəgam)- prayer or spell used in *abənät*.

**ግርፍታ** (gərəfta)- Miasma which comes during bad atmosphere, but traditionally believed that can be caused by evil spirits.

ክፋት (kəfat)- offensive *abənät* a kind of action doing charms, sorcery.

ቁራኛ (Qurañña)- Prodrome of Zar possession

ዛር (zar) like *ganens*, - causes a great variety of ailments, often mortal.

ልክፍት (Ləkəft)- A kind of ailment caused by demon pollution.

ምትሐት (məthat)- Trickery action; in order to deceive some one, a thing done by the help of magical spells.

- Simulation of magic.

መመለሻ (Mämäläsha)- antidote, counter magical prayer or counter traditional medicine.

ሾተላይ (Šotälay)- a kind of ailment caused by evil spirits and traditionally known as a womb closer.

የባሪያ በሽታ (Ye-bariya bäsəta)- a chill disease to which the evil spirit is associated.

ደም ምታት (däm mətat) – continuous bleeding which is commonly seen on women. It is believed that the ailment is caused by evil spirits.

ደም ቀትር (däm qättər) - Hemoharrhaging, a magical prayer which is used to stop the continuous bleeding of women.

ዓይነ ጥላ ('aynät'əla)- (The shadow of eye) a kind of ailment caused by *ganens*, and which prevent the women from being married.

አቴቴ (Atete)- A kind of Zar, traditionally believed in southern Ethiopia.

እመ ውሉድ (Immä wulud)- A kind of Zar, traditionally believed to be the killer of women and children.

የሰው ዓይን (Ye-Säw ‘ayn)- (The person’s eye) shares important similarities with *buda* powers.

ቁርጥማት (Qurt’əmat)- Rheumatoid complaints

ውጋት (Wəgat)- Localized pain (pain of the breast).

መቅሰፍት (Mäqsäft)- Divine displeasure (calamities).

## **1.7 Methodology**

### **1.7.1 Sources of data**

The important sources for this study are traditional scholars who are known as *däbtäras* (clerics), and their writings or works in the form of scrolls. Different magical texts are also used as sources. The works of modern scholars concerning magical practices in Ethiopia are the other sources of this study.

### **1.7.2 Sampling techniques**

The discussion with a few traditional scholars and the women who depended on the traditional and cultural beliefs of magical prayers, are selected as they are still using magical practices, especially in country sides.

In this study only qualitative data gathering methods are employed. Analyses of some magical documents are used. However, the method that I have chosen to get the sources from the countryside was not satisfied. Because the people who live there are not willing to show the texts in some churches. So simply I have chosen the oral discussions with the owners of some magical texts.

## **1.8 Review of related literature**

It is well known that magic has a long pre-historical development in Ethiopia. The use of magic as a form of amulet, dates from the time when animism (that is to say magic) satisfied the spiritual needs of man. Many scholars such as

Budge, E.A.W 1928: 581; 1929: ix; 1930: 1), (Allan Young 1975: 245), (Worrell, W.H. 1910: 398-401), (Harold Aspen: 2001) and others have written about it.

There are many traditional Ethiopian scholars who have written about magical prayers. But the dates and the authors of some works of magical prayers texts are not mentioned properly, and most of them are still unpublished; some were edited by foreign scholars like the book of Barthos.

According to the age of the writings of magical texts, Budge, E.A.W. (1929: ix) in his work mentioned that, even if there are indigenous writings, the Ethiopian magical texts are not older than 16<sup>th</sup>c. AD. In his other work (1928: 572) he mentioned that the Abyssinians adopted magical cults during the queen of Shaba.

Many magical texts are composed in the form of amulets or scrolls. These amulets are composed with mystical magical names. Budge (1930: 180-181) divided them as follows. 1. The various names of God, 2 the Name of arch angels, 3, The magical names of Christ, 4 the names of the fiends (very cruel evil spirits) and devils, strings of letters arranged singly or in groups, 6 traditional words of power and so on.

Some scholars evaluated magical names together with magical drawings. (J. Mercier, 1997: 87) strongly elaborated that the figurative images in the scrolls together with the magical names and the name of the owner, are believed to be essential for one's salvation; and can thus find themselves promoted to medicinal or even talismanic status.

According to Ethiopian traditional and cultural point of view, these figurative drawings of magic, are also considered as having the power of defensive and productive characters. However, J. Mercier (Locit: 93) did not distinguish clearly which one had a productive and which one has a defensive character. He put them in mixed manner.

The Ethiopian women are more influenced by magical practices. Säblä Gärämäw (1998: 5) tried to show the influence of tradition on women. And she emphasized that the life of women is always connected with child birth. However, she couldn't raise the role of magic on the life of women how it aggravates the traditional influences.

To encourage pregnancy, scrolls can be prepared for women (Encyclopedia of Aethiopia, VI: 189) emphasized the use of amulets by pregnant women. The purpose is to guard against miscarriage or other dangers.

In other words, (Torrey, E. Fuller, 1966: 51-59) discussed about the traditional and cultural practice of possession of Zar cult. He put clearly the relations between Zar and women, but he did not mention the connection between Zar possession and magical prayers and practices related to women. Many scholars wrote about Ethiopian magical texts, but they did not put clearly how they influence the life of women.

## CHAPTER II

### **Lists and descriptions of contents of the Ethiopian magical texts**

The magical texts written in Ethiopic are vast in number and in type. And some are also written in Arabic language but in Ethiopic transcription. Some of these works were composed in Ms forms; some in scroll forms. Scholars from in and outside tried to list out and describe the contents of mainly those which are now found in some museums and libraries of the universities of European countries. The Institute of the Ethiopian Studies has collected many works of magical texts and scrolls.

For this study I have listed them and indicated their contents, and also I have marked whether they are published or unpublished. Most texts are written in Ethiopic (Gə'əz) language:

#### **1. መጽሐፈ ከብነት /Mäs'hafä abənnät/**

This text contains the general magical works; and the term '*abənnät*' refers to recondite (obscure) works which cryptically satisfy some personal interest.

*abənnät* subjects include (1) curing and prophylactic amulets; (2) works with academic (*təmhərt*) goals; (3) works protecting property and stimulating its increment; (4) works for gaining respect, love, and favorable treatment; (5) accurate divination through dreams; (6) parts of divinatory texts; (7) works for sending sickness and other misfortunes (black magic); (8) techniques which enhance for the appearance and co-operation of demons.

The works from 1 to 5 include-invocations made up of passages which are composed from the Bible such as the secret names of Jesus and the Almighty; and requests for specific assistance. Each invocation indicates the supernaturals which are appealed to (the usual formula at the beginning), the agent of misfortune against which help is asked.

From 6 to 8 include, astrological works related to client's autonym, works with black magic, demon-calling 'abənät respectively.

## **2. ስንክሳር /Sənkəssar/ of Miyazya 26**

### **Defending evil spirits**

This text narrates about the work of St. Susenyos, who defeated the wərzəlya evil spirit. His prayer to God and his martyrdom are clearly indicated in the text. It is published under the title /መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር በግዕዝና በአማርኛ ከመጋቢት እስከ ጳጉሜን /Mäs'əhafä Sənkəssar bägə'əz'ə'na bä 'amarəñña kāmäggabit 'əskä P'agumen/ Tənṣae Zä Gubae Printing Agency. Printed by Bərhan'əna Sälam Printing Press (1993 E.C), vol. 1. Addis Ababa. The prayer is found in most magical texts.

S. Grébaut also published it as La legende de Sousneyos et de Werzelya d'apres le Ms éthiop. Griaule n.297, Or Ns 6 (1937), PP. 177-183.

## **3. ስንክሳር /Sənkəssar/ of Mäskäräm 13**

### **Contract with the devil**

The text contains the magical literature of the middle age. It contains legends about men and women. The text shows the contract with devils. The contract is written on parchment with the blood of the man who applied to the devil for assistance. Usually the man who made the contract paid the penalty and the devil got his success. The texts shows believe in personal devil who might have appeared in the form of wild animals. Fiends (cruel evil spirits) with animal heads and tails and with filthy smell are mentioned in the text.

The young man fell in love with his master's daughter. His desire was not favoured by her parents. The young man consulted a magician and asked him to entreat sat'an to give him the maiden. He received the instructions from the magician and gave the paper to sat'an. Sat'an asked the young man whether he believed or not. The young man denied Christ. Sat'an diverted the heart of the

maiden to leave her parents. Christ heard their petition. Christ indicated that the young man was not Christian. The young maiden was filled with grief (deep or violent sorrow). The young man returned to his real faith of Christianity. Both became free from the threat of sat'an.

The text is published under the title መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር በግዕዝና በአማርኛ ከመስከረም እስከ የካቲት / Mäs'əhafä sənəkəssar: bägə'əz'əna bä Amarñña: Kämäskäräm 'əskä yäkatit/. Tənṣae Zä Gubae Printing Agency, Printed by Bərhan'ənna Sälam Printing Press (1994 E.C Vol. 2). Addis Ababa. E.A.W. Budge published it in his book "Amulets and superstitions", Oxford UP, 1930, pp. 177-199.

#### 4. ቆጵርያኖስ /Qop'rəyanos/ Cyprian

The text narrates the work of Cyprian of Carthage of North Africa as a patron, a social historical study of the role of bishops in the ancient Christian community of North Africa.

The text contains a magical prayer. It has its own hymnal *'arche* written in Gə'əz language. The prayer is divided into the seven days of the week. At the beginning it has a usual formula as most magical texts do. The prayer encourages the kings but without mentioning their proper names. It narrates the disappearance of the devils. It speaks about the greatness of the day of the Holy Sunday. Cyprian himself speaks as he was the servant of Jesus Chrst. However, the evil work of Cyprian does charms over natural events such as stopping rain or enchantments to prevent rain from falling. Before he becomes Christian his incantations prevented women from bringing forth their new babies. He also speaks about the four great rivers, about 'Aynä Säbə', about *legewon*, about lists of saints, about the name of diseases, single letters as magical names, cursing and commanding sat'an to leave the place, the magical names or the magical formulas of about 5 nails. This text is published by R. Basset in his book of "Les apocryphes Ethiopiens, VI...; Paris, 1894. cp also A. Grohmann, Studien zu den Cyprianusgebeten, WZKM 30(1916), 121-150. cp.

also Ch. A. Bobertz, Cyprian of Carthage as a patron: a social historical study of the role of bishop in the ancient Christian community of North Africa.

### **5. መጽሐፈ ኦርድዕት /Mäs'hafä 'ard'ət/**

The text contains the teaching of Christ to His disciples. In addition, at the end, the prayer of St. Mary, the prayer of St. Peter and the prayer of mercy which the angels prayed are included. There is a mass prayer which is used to sanctify Jesus Christ for the fact of keeping generations from being attacked by evil spirits, particularly to save the relatives and children. The content includes ሩaynät, curses, sorcerers, enchanters, devils, demons (night spirits) death, fire. The prayers in the text are divided into the seven days of the week. It is published and edited with an English version by E. Littmann on the title "Ardə'ət: The magic book of the disciples, JAOS, 25 (1904), PP. 1-48.

### **6. ለፋፋ ጽድቅ /Ləfafä S'ədq/**

Several Copies are found in IES. The contents in this text show different sections. In the first section it narrates how it came to be known on earth. This composed prayer was given to St. Mary on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of February /Yəkkatit/. St. Mary received the message from our Lord. She visited heaven in the city of God. The conversation between St. Mary and Jesus Christ; the idea of the river of fire in the hell; the mystical names of Jesus which were revealed to St. Mary are included in the text.

The second section starts with and opens by the usual expression "In the name of ...". Jesus wrote the names of the letters of Hebrew alphabets with his hands; an address to the Great and Ever Lasting God, the 69 magical names of God; the 5 magical square words which are repeatedly found in this text.

In the third and the fourth sections, the text shows the prayers which were given to St. Mary.

In the fifth section this text shows how the recitation of prayers is believed and how it enabled a man's soul to pass through the earth and enter heaven without hindrance.

In the sixth section, the text contains the prayer which explains better to the owner. Here also the disciples argued our Lord Jesus Christ to reveal His secret and hidden names.

In the Seventh section, the text shows the sending of St. Andrew to the city of the cannibals. A series of 34 single magical names, the names of Alpha and Omega, 141 magical names which are used for man to guard him from the attacks of devils are listed.

This text has been published by many scholars. Among them. E.A.W. Budge. "The bandlt of righteousness," London, 1929; S. Euringe, Die Binde der Rechtfertigung (Lefafa Sedq), Or Ns 9 (1940) 76-99, 244-259;

L. Fusella, II "Mangada Samay", in: Proc. of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa 1966, II, Addis Ababa 1969, 254-8.

D. Lifchitz, Textes étiopiens magico-réligieux, Paris, Insitut d'Ethnologie 1940, 13-14.

O. Löfgren, Aethiopische Wandamulette, OS 11(1962) 96 [art.. 95-120].

[A. Munding, tesi di laurea Università di Roma, cfr. Conti Rossini, Aevum 19, 1936, 543].

### **7. መጽሐፈ መግረፍ ፀር /mägräre där/**

This text is full of sentences from the Psalms. Especially the prayer of Psalm 35, which is connected with the defense against enemies is commonly listed. In other words, the text is considered as the prayer of Moses that he received from God. The name of the special staff of Moses by which he divided the Red Sea is included in the text. The magical prayer in this text belongs to a time in which enmities and sufferings were seemingly endless.

Within each section, the text narrates about races; and at the same time speaks about peace, and calls for divine intervention. Everywhere, after the word *gäbräkä*, the name of the owner is erased. The word *Ṣaləsay* /ሃለላይ/ is given to the Holy Spirit. This text is unpublished.

**8. መጽሐፈ መስጥመ ኢጋንንት /Mäs'hafä mäst'əmə' aganənt/**

This text is written in Gə'əz language. There are a collection of charms, which was probably written or compiled by a good scribe. The owner of the book might be a priest or some kind of church servant to whom men made application for bans or spells, and in prayers and formulas of blessing to help them spiritually and physically and to protect their flocks and herds and possessions in general. Because the prayer can be practiced by this kind scholar.

Inside the text, the source of the power which underlies all these amulatic texts or charms is infallible name of God. In the spell against fear and trembling comes the names of the archangels. The spell of St. Susenyos which expels the evil spirits, the spell of the crucifixion which have a power to destroy the power of swords, arrows, spells against sickness of every kind, headache, the evil eye; and prayer for the possession of this world and riches for peace in general and for peace in the household included in this text.

This text is still unpublished. However, J. de Fraine, wrote about evil spirits on the title *Le "demon du midi"* (Ps 91/90/6). *Bibl* 40 (1959) PP 372-383.

G. Penco, on the title of "Sopravvivenze della demonologica antica nel monachesimo medievale, *Studia Monastica* 13 (1971) PP 31-36 (demone del Mezzogiorno; demoni = Piccoli etiopi)"

### 9. መጽሐፈ አስማት /Mäs'hafä 'asmat/

The text speaks about the enemies which have a special herbal medicine 'ädä Mässəwar /ዕፀ ምስዋር/ by which they will be hidden and attack human beings. In this text the Ethiopic 'ahaz (number) ፻<sup>1</sup> (10,000) is repeatedly mentioned before the word gäs'ä (ገጸ), (for instance) ፻ ገጸ አንበሳ/ ፻ gäs'sä anbäsa/.

It narrates of the sickness of *barya* and *legewon*; and the owner of the text has saluted the God of Angel Fanuel to be saved from *barya* and *legewon*. The content includes the prayer against the weakening of *gannen*. The unique words of disease like ማቋ፣ ገብጥ<sup>2</sup> /maqwa, gäbt'ə/ the 5 magical square words are listed here. The prayer of countercharms, the prayer written in Arabic words but in Gə'əz transcription, some cursing words over those who practice charms, hymn of Trinity, are included here. The year 1968 is inscribed here. The 12 names of Zodiac are listed. The text is still unpublished.

### 10. መጽሐፈ ጸሎተ ሙሴ /Mäs'hafä S'älotä Mussie/

The text is composed with 28ff, the contents inside the text are divided into three parts. The prayer of St. Mary, a hymn of St. George, and the magical prayer of the prophet Mussie are included. At the end of the text shows the victory of Israelites over Egyptians. The text is not published.

### 11. መልክክ ዜና ማርቆስ /Mälkä'a Zena Marqos/

The text has 16ff. From one up to fifteen folios are composition of the magical prayer for loosening tongue, on the 16<sup>th</sup> folio included the magical prayer for acquiring a pleasant voice and good pronunciation, and for learning Zema and Psalm. This is traditionally known as ሆሃእና/hosa'əna/. Some magical names are listed at the end. This text is unpublished.

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<sup>1</sup>. ፻: አልፍ /'əlf/ = 10,000

<sup>2</sup> ማቋ፣ ገብጥ: የሆድ በሽታ ብስና የሚጎረብጥ የሚያስቀምጥ ደስታ ተክለ ወልድ::

## 12. ዓውደ ነገሥት /'Äwdä Nägäst/

The text contains a collection of magical writings, astrology and ḥassab, ḥassabä həməuman, the name of 12 stars and their characters.

- ሐሳብ ልደት ሐሳብ ብእሲ ወብእሲት/ ḥassabä lədat ḥassabä bə'si wäbə'sit/.
- ሐሳብ ፍኖት ሐሳብ ሐዊረ ቤተ ደውይ /ḥassabä fənot, ḥassabä hawiräbetä dəwəy/.
- አንቀጽ በእንተ ብእሲ ወብእሲት/ anqäs' bə'əntä bə'əsi wäbə'əsit/. It has thirty sub parts.
- ሐሳብ ብሩህ ደመና በወርኃ መስከረም /ḥassabä bəruh dämāna bāwārha mäskäräm/.
- ሐሳብ ጠቢባን /ḥassabä t'abiban/
- ሐሳብ ከዋክብት /ḥassabä käwakəbt/
- ሐሳብ አርእስተ አጣሊ /ḥassabä 'ar'əstä at'ali/
- ሐሳብ ጥብእ /ḥassabä t'əbc/
- ሐሳብ መዋዒ ወተመዋዒ /ḥassabä mawa'ci wätämawa'ci/
- ሐሳብ ዳዊት /ḥassaä Dawit/
- ሐሳብ ዳንኤል /ḥassabä Dan'el/
- ሐሳብ ሐመም /ḥassabä hamäm/
- ሐሳብ ጥፍአተ ንዋይ /ḥassabä t'əfatä nəway/
- ሐሳብ ደውይ /ḥassabä dəwəy/
- ሐሳብ ነገር ዘኮከብ /ḥassabä nägär zä Kokäb/
- ሐሳብ ዘትሁብ ስማ ወእማ /ḥassabä zätəhub səma wä'əmma/
- ሐሳብ እንግዳ ሐሳብ ፍቅር /ḥassabä 'əngəda ḥassabä fəqr/

- ሐሳብ ጸብእ/ḥassabä S'ab'ə/

Prayers which have different contents are included in the text and some magical drawings are commonly found.

This text is published and edited by C. conti Rossini, *Lo 'Awda Nagast, scritto divinatorio etiopico*, RSE 2(1942:228); and in Amharic by Zämänfäsə Qəddus Abrəha ሐተታ መናፍስት ወዓውደ ነገሥት 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (1949 E.C) አርቲግራፊክ ማተሚያ ቤት አስመራ.

C. Conti Rossini, *Il libro della rivelazione dei misteri attribution a Tolomeo*, RSO 19(1940).

M. Griaule, *Notes sur l'arythmomancie éthiopienne*, JSA 4(1944:119-122).

S. Strelcyn, *La magie éthiopienne*, in: *Convegno Internazionale di Studi Ethiopici* (1960), Rome, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 1960, 163-4 [art. 146-165].

### 13. መጽሐፈ መፍትሔ ሀብት /Mäs'hafä mäftəhe habt/

It has two parts: magical prayers with Mälkä'a Iyob and malkə'a Yohannəs Wäldä Nägodgwad. The prayer shows how to become rich or wealthy. Many magical drawings and the design of the traditionally known Ethiopian hand cross are printed on many pages of the text. Some magical names of God are included in the text. All magical drawings, titles and the beginnings are written in red ink. The owner's name after the word *Lägäbrəkä* is left in blank. Since the word *gäbrəkä* indicates the masculine, the manuscript belongs to a male person who is interested to become very rich and wealthy and who are traveling on business activities. This text is edited in Gə'əz language in 1998 E.C, by Axum printing agency in Addis Ababa.

#### 14. መርብብተ ሰሎሞን /Märbäbtä Sälomon

This text is found on amulet rolls, from which we learn that Solomon used to catch the devils in a net, as a fisherman catches fishes in a net in the sea. His power over demons of every kind was believed to be absolute. The text includes the traditional words such as Lofham (ሎፍሐም) and Mahafilon (ማሐፊሎን), and compelled his adversary to declare the various means by which he worked evil on men and women. Some magical names are also included here. The text shows directly speaking and anathematized and cursing words over ganens. Words which are related to sat'an such as Legewon, qurañña etc. are commonly found here and there in the text.

The text is published by some scholars.

- S. Aescoly, Les noms magiques dans les Apocryphes chretiens des Ethiopiens., JA 220 (1932:87-137).
- S. Euringer, Der Spiegel Salomons, ein abessinisches Amulett, ZDMG 91(1937) 162-174.
- O. Löfgren, Der Spiegel der Salomo, ein äthiopisches Zaubertext, in: Ex Orbe Religionum. Studia Geo Widengren oblata = Supplem. to Numen, XXI, 1, London 1972, 208-273.
- P. A. Torijano, El studio de la magia en la Antigüedad tardia: algunas consideraciones practicas, Gerion 18(2000) 535-547.

#### 15. መጽሐፈ መድኃኒት /Mäs'hafä mädhānit/

It is known as a traditional Ethiopian medicine text. In this text of lists of medicines are given. Leaves, flowers, juices, fruits, roots, rinds of fruits and vegetables, bushes, trees, and climbing plants, the gall, dung of leopards, the gall of crocodile, head of snakes, frogs, lizards, and all kinds of reptiles, the eyes, brains, livers and feathers of certain birds, salt, the milk of women etc. The substance possessing the magical powers may be laid upon for safety in

the figure of man, and it is believed that the medicine administered will be more efficacious if it also contains the personal strength of the medicine man himself. It is published and edited by ሐዲስ ገብረ መስቀል (1980 E.C), Oxford. On the other hand, M. Rodinson published it under the title of “Magie, Medicine et Possession en Ethiopic. The Hague- Paris, Mouton, 1967:310-317.

## 16. ዐቃቤ ርዕስ /<sup>c</sup>Aqabe rə<sup>c</sup>əs/

This text is composed or extracted from more than ten psalms. Each psalm contains a prayer of defensive character. The parts of the psalm are listed as follows.

- እግዚአ ሰማዕን በእዘኒን /'əgzɪ'o sāma'ənä bə'əzäninä/ Psalm 43
- እግዚአ በስምክ አድጎኒ /'əgzɪ'o bäsəməkä adhənänni/ Psalm 53/54.
- አጽምዐኒ እግዚአ ጸሎትየ/ 'as'mə'anni 'əgzɪ'o s'älotəyä/. 54-55
- ተሣሀለኒ እግዚአ እስመኬደኒ ሰብዕ/ täsahalänni 'əgzɪ'o 'əsmä kedänni Säbə'/ Psalm 55/56.
- ተሣሀለኒ እግዚአ ተሣሀለኒ/ täsahalänni 'əgzɪ'o täsahalänni/ Psalm 56/57.
- እመሰ አማን ጽድቀ ትነቡ/ 'əmmäsä 'aman s'ədqä tənäbbu/ Ps. 57/58.
- አድጎኒ እግዚአ እምፀርየ/ adhənänni 'əgzɪ'o 'əmdärəyä/ Psalm 58/59.
- እግዚአ ገደፍክን ወነሰትክን/ 'əgzɪ'o gädäfkänä Wänäsätkänä/ Ps. 59/60.
- አኮኑ ለእግዚአብሔር ትገኒ ነፍስየ/ 'akkonu lä'əgzɪ'abəher təgänni näfsəyä/ Ps. 60/61.
- አድጎኒ እግዚአ እስመ በጽሐኒ ማይ እስክ ነፍስየ/ 'adhənänni 'əgzɪ'o 'əsmä bäs'hanmi may 'əskä näfsəyä/ Ps. 68.

- ለምንት ገደፍከነ እግዚአ ለዝሉፉ/lämənt gädäfkännä 'əgzi'o lazəluፍu/ Psalm 73.
- እግዚአ ሰዑ አሕዛብ ውስተ ርስትከ/'əgzi'o bo'u 'ahzab wəstā rəstəkä/ Psalm 78.
- ኖላዊሆሙ ለእስራኤል አጽምዕ/ Nolawihomu lä'isra'el as'mə'/ Psalm 79.
- እግዚአ መኑ ከማከ/'əgzi'o männu kämakä/ Psalm 82.
- እግዚአ ኢትፀመመኒ ስዕለትየ /'əgzi'o itəፈāmāmänni sə'ələtəyä/ Psalm 108.

### 17. ትምህርተ ገቡአት /Təmhərtä ስəbu'at/

The text is one of the seven sections of Mäs'əhafä kidan. It speaks strongly about the divinity of Jesus Christ. It has two parts. Part one is about the power of Jesus Christ over this world about His journey to hell, and how He saved Adam. The second part narrates about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and about the defeating of Diablos. The text is published, by Täsfa G/Səlassie printing press (1960) A.A.

E. Hammerschmidt, has also (1960) published it in his "Aethiopische liturgische Texte der Bodleian Library in Oxford. Berlin 1960; and also D. Lifchitz, Textes éthiopiens magico-religieux, Paris, 1940:40-52.

### 18. ሐፀረ መስቀል /ፀadura mäsqäl/

The text which is said to have been composed by the prophet Jermiah, narrates about the function of the cross. The text contains many works and it is considered as a victor over the enemy, overthrower of the enemy, slayer of the enemy repeller of the enemy, the cross as victorious over all things.

- The text shows that the cross is used as a guard for Christians; as a helper of the poor, as a supporter for handicaps, the defender against sat'an and demons; cross as a symbol of war instrument for angels and human beings; cross as a savior of human soul.

The text is published partially by

- O. Grebaut. Published it as “Petit Hasoura Masqal”, *Aethiopica* 6(1938) 12-13.
- M. Cohen, *Ceremonies et Croyances Abyssinie*, *RHR* 66 (1912) 183-200.

### **19. ሐምስቱ ቅንዎተ መስቀል /amməstu qənwatä mäsqäl/**

Drawings of the cross are found on many texts. In the text of the magical names of the five wounds of the cross of Jesus Christ, such as *Sador*, *Alador*, *Danat*, *Adera*, *Rodas* are listed and described. The text shows that they have the power to protect human beings from being attacked by evil spirits, and the Cross wounds the angel of death, protects the sheep from the wolf. All disturbances can be vanished by the sign of the cross. Even if they have no real meanings, all the five are known as nails which wounded Jesus Christ. The text is published by some scholars under different titles. Some of them are:

J. Frei, *Le Carré Magique*, *Eirene* 31(1995) 109-111.

F. Grosser, *Ein neues Vorschlag Zu Deutung der sator-Fomel*, *ARW* 24(1926) 165-169.

Heyer, *Die Kirche Äthiopiens* (1971) 199-200.

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## **20. ጸሎት ዘቅዱስ ሱስንዮስ /S'älot Zä Qəduṣ Susənyos/**

This text is known as legend of susenyos. It contains the prayer of St. Susenyos. The prayer used for the removal of sickness. For full description it will be treated in chapter three.

## **21. መልክሐ ሳጥናኤል /Mälkä'a Sat'na'el/**

The text is written in Ethiopic and Arabic but the one written in Arabic is in Ethiopic characters. It contains 14 hymns. All hymns show the sanctification of Diablos. Each part shows the victory and glory of Sat'əna'el. The prayer exaggerates Sat'nael as if he can do a negative charm on the selected persons or objects.

The text written in Arabic language but in Ethiopic transcription has been published by S. Strelcyn with the title "La magie Ethiopienne, in: Convegno Internazionale di studi Ethiopic, Rome, 1959. Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (1960).

The text which is written in Ethiopic language is still unpublished. It is found in IES in a fragmentary condition.

## Chapter III

### **Lists and descriptions of magical prayers concerning only Women**

The majority of the magical prayers which are composed in many magical texts begins with the statements: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God; and sometimes between the end of one section and the beginning of the next, there is an elaborate image of angels, saints, and the figure of the cross. It is believed that they were added to the text with the purpose of increasing their potency. In each magical text there are different magical prayers. The next lists show what is said before.

#### **1. መጽሐፈ ባርቶስ /Mäs'hafä Barthos/**

This work was written in the 20<sup>th</sup>c; in Ethiopic language; 12½ x 10 cm, one columnar, vellum; 76 folios; binding by wood board on both sides and covered by leather. It has 14-15 lines on a page. The titles, names of Almighty, name of St. Mary the word *Yibe* (ይቤ), and the name of the owner were written in red ink. This magical prayer is divided into the seven days of the week. However, the prayer of Friday is not clearly identified. The text is found in the Institute of Ethiopian studies, AAU.

#### ***For Monday***

f.1r: The title and beginning: በስመ ... ጸሎት ዘእግዛእትነ ማርያም ድንግል ንጽህት ዘጸላየት ባቲ በውስተ ሀገረ ባርቶስ /Bäsämä: s'älot Zäs'aläyet bati bäwəstä hagärä Barthos/. (May be Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon) The prayer was presented by Mary to God.

#### ***For Tuesday***

The title and beginning are similar to that of Monday. Here, St. Mary asked the veneration of the 24 clergies of heaven. In f. 34<sup>v</sup> a prayer of Mary is presented to God.

### **For Wednesday**

The title and beginning are similar to that of Monday. In f. 40<sup>v</sup> ወይሰበር ኃይሎሙ ለከሎሙ ሰብእ እለ ይገብሩ እኩዮ በላእለ አመትከ ወለተ ሀይወት/Wäyässäbbär haylomu läkullomu säbə' 'älä yəgäbbəru 'əkuye bāla'älä amätəkä Wälätä Həyəwät. (Let be broken their power of all men who do evel work on Your servant Wälätä Həyəwät.)

### **For Thursday**

Title and beginning are similar to the composition of the day of Monday. The name of the writer is presented as ወልደሃና (wäldä Hanna). (Son of Hanna).

### **For Saturday**

In f.54. St. Mary speaks as follows: ዘእቀውም ወእነብር አነ እምላእለ አመትከ ወለተ ሀይወት .../Zä'əqäwəm Wä'ənäbbər 'anä 'əmla'älä 'amätəkä wälätä Həyəwät .../

(I who stand and site on your servant Wälätä Həyəwät.)

### **For Sunday**

f. 59<sup>r</sup>: The title is similar to that of Monday, but missed the word S'älot /ጸሎት/ at the beginning. In f. 60<sup>v</sup> some magical names of God are listed. In f. 76<sup>r</sup> it ends by the words አሜን ወአሜን/'amen Wä'amen/.

### **Remarks**

The friday prayer is missed. The name of the owner is in red and the name of the writer ወልደሃና/Wäldä Hanna/ is written next to Thursday's prayer.

R. Basset has published in French in his book "les apocryphes ethiopiens traduits en franÇais. V. Les prieres de la Vierege a Bartos et au Golgotha, Paris, Librairie de l'Art Independent /1895/.

## 2. መጽሐፈ አስማት /Mäs'hafä 'asmat/

It has 53ff: written in 20<sup>th</sup>c in Ethiopic; composed in one columnar; on the average 14 lines to a page; vellum; 19 x 9 Cm; binding by wood board on both sides. It has eight different magical prayers. Donated to IES in 1980 E.C. it is unpublished.

ff.1<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>v</sup>, 9<sup>r</sup>-12<sup>v</sup>: the title and beginning: በስመ፡ ጸሎት በእንተ መፍትሔ ሥራይ/Bäsämä: S'älot bä'entä maftöhe Səray/. This prayer is used to neutralize the evil doings or to be used as antidote.

f. 3<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>, Beginning and beginning: በስመ፡ ያህ፣ ያሸበላትያ ተላቱን፣ መቅደሱን .../Bäsämä: yahə; yaššəbalatəya tālatun; Mäqdäson, .../. These words are more related to Arabic words. Because the suffixes ... tun, ...son etc are Arabic ones.

ff.7<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>: Beginning: በስመ፡ አሁማይቸር እልመኪን ወያኑራ ተዋዊራ አሸማርድ/Bäsämä: 'ahumayc'är, 'əlmäkin, Wäyanura, täwawira, ašmärd/. This is also similar to Arabic words.

f.10<sup>r</sup>. Beginning: በስመ፡ አማኖስ ዩልዮብ አልቀዝዮብ /Bäsämä: Amanos, yuləyob, Alqäzəyob/.

ff. 11<sup>r</sup> - 12<sup>v</sup>: The title: በስመ፡ እስመ አልቦ ነገር ዘይሰአኖ.../Bäsämä: 'əsmä albo nägär ZäySä'ano.../.

ff. 13<sup>r</sup> - 18<sup>r</sup>: The title: በስመ፡ ጥልመን ፋልድ እውልሽ /Bäsämä: T'əlmän, fuld, 'əwləšə/

ff. 18<sup>r</sup> - 38<sup>r</sup>: The title: በስመ፡ ሰፍሐዘር (3) ኤልናዝራ (3) ፍታህ ወዘርዘር ሰዓር ወመንዘር ወመዝብር ከሎ ሥራያተ ኪን/Bäsämä: Säfha Zär(3) alnazəra (3), fətahə wäzärzər, Sä'ar Wämänzər Wämäzbər Kulo Sərayatä kin/. (By the name of:...Säfha Zär (3), alnazra (3) (both are names of God) make free and destroy, abrogate, split all doing charms.)

This prayer is used to make ineffective or to make neutralize the case of doing charms.

ff. 38<sup>r</sup> – 53<sup>r</sup>: Title: መልክክ ሥላሴ/mälkə'a s̄əlassie/

### **Remarks**

In f. 1 the year 1968 is written by second hand writing in black pen is because it is different from the first one. In f. 6<sup>v</sup>, the 12 names of Zodiac are listed, and says; በእሱ ስመ ከዋክብት ይተፈታህ ከሱ ሥራይ እምላእለ አመትክ ፍቅርተ ሥላሴ /Bä'əlu s̄əmə [asmatä] Kāwakəbt yitəfätah kulu s̄əray 'əmhaälä 'Amätəkä Fəqərtä s̄əlassie/.

At the end, the unfinished name of another woman is mentioned.

## **3. Magical Writings**

The title was composed like Ləfafä s'ədq. It is written in Ethiopic, the three strips of vellum of roughly equal size stitched together and rolled. Written on both sides; continued on verso in opposite direction. Bindings are wooden boards to which are stiched the beginning and end of the strip. It has one columnar. Probably written in the late 19<sup>th</sup>c. It measures 7 fit long.

The contents on Recto: prayers of magical names it begins. ጸሎተ መንገደ ሰማይ/s'älotä mängädä sämay/. Here Maryam is rubricated. The owner is ወለተ ዓድቅ/ Wälätä S'adəq/. It might be the original owner.

But on verso: Wälätäs'adəq partly erased and Amätä written over wälättä in blue

- Prayer of the Blessed virgin Mary to Our Lord is included here.
- Prayer of the Apostles to Our Lord. Beginning: አሰማት ዘነገሮ እግዚአብሔር ለእንድርያስ ቅዱስ.../ Asmat Zänägäro 'əgzi'abher lä Endəryas Qədus .../. The scroll was donated to IES in 1945.

#### 4. አንቀጽ ዘምፅ/Anqäs'ə Zäməd/

The three strips of vellum stitched together and folded in circular or cylindrical shape, probably written in 20<sup>th</sup>c, in Ethiopic.

Three parts and three kinds of prayers:

Part I \* ጸሎተ ትምህርተ ሕቡአት/ S'älotä tēmḥertä ḥəbu'at/.

\* ጸሎተ ኪዳን /S'älotä Kidan/, and

\* ወንጌል ዘዮሐንስ/ Wängel ZäYohannəs/

At the bottom of the prayers, some medical prescription are composed.

Part II The prayers in this text are used to support the pregnant women during the time of child birth; and to expel the placenta after birth. This prayer begins; በዝንቱ ስምክ ወበዝንቱ አስማቲክ እንግዳ ልጅ ውረድ [ረድ] ይቤለክ አብ ወወልድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ (7 ጊዜ)/ Bāzəntu Səməkä Wäbāzəntu asmatikä 'əngəde ləjə Wəräd [räd] yibeläkkä 'Ab, Wäwäld, Wämānfäs Qədus/. Father, Son and Holy Sprit (7 times) said to you “by the names you plasenta be remoed out).

Part III. It begins: ጸሎት ለዘይትቃረና ትክቶን (ደም መፍሰስ)/S'älot läzäyitqarräna təkton (däm mäfsäs). Prayer about a woman which will be affected by continous bleeding).

- በስመ እግዚአብሔር ቀዳማዊ /Basəma 'əgzi'abher Qdamawi (9)
- ኪዳን /Kidān (9 times)
- ዓሊፋት መዝሙራት (9 ጊዜ) /Aliphāt paslmas (9 times)
- የማርቆስ ወንጌልና አንቀጽ ብርሃን (1 ጊዜ) /Yāmarqos Wängel 'əna Anqäsä bərhan(1)

Some magical drawings which have important value for stopping the bleeding are inscribed at the beginning, at the middle and at the bottom. This text is unpublished.

## 5. ጸሎት በእንተ ዘርዓ ብእሲት /S'älot bä'äntä zär 'á bə'əsit/

It is composed in three strips of vellum, stitched together. The date is 19<sup>th</sup> c. AD, written in Ethiopic on one side in one columnar. It measures about 2 mt. The text has four parts of prayers.

The contents speak about the offspring of one women.

**Part I:** The title begins. በስመ፡ በእንተ ዘርዓ ብእሲት... ዘሀሎ ወይሌሎ ዘያክቅብ ዘርዓ ብእሲት... ከመትለድ ተባእተ ወአንሱተ/Bäsämä: Bä'äntä Zärə'a bə'əsit... Zāhalo Wäyihellu Zäyā'aqəb Zärə'a bə'əsit... Kämätə'äläd täba'ətä Wä'anəstä/. By the name of Father, Son and Holy Sprit. About ofspring of woman... who existed and lives, who is keeping of spring of woman... in order to give birth both male and female babies. This part mentions the mother of the prophet Samuel.

**Part II:** Some magical names of God and the unique symbols of magical arts; and the names of God together with the names of angels are written in red.

In the middle of the text says, ከመ ኢይቅረቡ መናፍስት ርኩሳን ወእደ ሰብእ መሠርያን ንብ ነፍሳ ወሥጋሃ ለዓመትክ ወለተ ሚካኤል/Kämä 'iyiqräbu Mānafəst rəkusan Wä'ädä Säb'ə mäṣarəyan habä näfsa Wäsəgaha. Not to be near evil sprits and the doing charms towards her soul and her flesh of your servant Wä'lättä Mika'el.

**Part III:** The Prayer of St. Susenyos with some magical drawings, images of eye, and at the center is the image of a human face.

**Part IV:** Beginning ሾተላይ አንተ ሾተላይ ዘትቀትል ሕፃናተ ወታውህዝ ደመ እምአንስት አውገዝኩክ ወሃተምኩክ ... እቀባ ለዓመት ወለተ ሚካኤል/ Šotālay 'ant ä Šotālay Zätəqätələ həs'anatä Wätawəhəzə dämä 'əmanəst awgäzkukä wəhatämükä ... 'əqäbba lä'amätəka wälatä Mikael/. You shotelay who will kill babies and who will affect women to have been bleeding continuously. I anathematized and tied you. Save your servant wälttä Mikael. It ends by the sign of cross and it is unpublished.

## 6. ጸሎተ በእንተ ሸተላይ ወሸተላዊት /sälot bä'əntä Šotälay wäŠotalawit

The scroll is made from three strips of vellum stitched together, written in Ethiopic in 20<sup>th</sup>c. A.D. It consists of one columnar, and measures 2m. The text has four prayers.

**Part I:** The title and the beginning: ወንጌል ዘማርቆስ ... አርግዕ ደማ ውስተ ማህፀና/Wängel Zämarqos ... 'argəçə däma Wəstä Mahəḏ'äna/. The name of the ownere is wälättä ሼlassie. Gosple of mark ...stop her blood inside her woumb.

**Part II:** The prayer of Legend of susenyos. This part narrates about all things that Susnäyos did over wərzəlyä, and contains a salutation for the owner to be protected from bleeding.

**Part III:** The title and the beginning. በስመ: ጸሎት በእንተ ሕማመ ቡዳ ወጠይብ<sup>1</sup> ወአንጠረኛ<sup>2</sup> ... ዛር ወጉስምት Bäsämä: S'älot bä'əntä həmamä buda Wät'äyib .... Zar Wägusəmt. By the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A prayer about the ailment of evil-eye and carpenter and smith man... zar and pain. The name of the owner is also mentioned.

**Part IV:** It begins with the words quoted from ትምህርት ጎቡአት təmhərtä ḥəbu'at. At the end, it says ...በዝ ቃልከ አድህና ለዓመትከ ወለተ ሥላሴ -Bäzə qaləkä adəhənnä läamätəkä Wälätä səlassie. (By this Your word save your servant Wälätä səlassie.)

At the center, it is composed of the sign of the cross and the image of a human face.

<sup>1</sup> ጠይብ: ብረት ቀጥታዊ፤ በልማዳዊ አጠራር እንደ ቡዳ የሚቆጠር።

<sup>2</sup> አንጠረኛ: ጌጣጌጥ ሠሪ፤ በልማዳዊ አጠራር ልዩ መንፈስ ያለበት እንደቡዳ የሚቆጠር።

**7. ጸሎት በእንተ መርገመ ደም ወሽተላይ ወዓይነጥላ/ S'älot bä'ëntä  
märgämä däm wäšotälay wä'aynä t'äla/. A Prayer about  
Bleeding and Shotelay, and Eye of Shadow**

It starts with the title: መፍትሔ ደም/ Mäftəhe däm/ made in the form of scroll; written in Ethiopic, it consists of three strips of vellum, stitched together. The date is 19<sup>th</sup>c AD. It measures 2 ½ met. The writing is composed of one columnar, only on one side, six prayers are composed in it.

**Part I:** It begins with በስመ: ጸሎት በእንተ መርገመ ደም/S'älot bä'ëntä märgämä däm/. Some magical names are included here and some command words for example... ወኢታውጽእ ደማ ወከፅንእ ውሳዘተ ደማ ለዓመትከ wä'itaws'ə dä'ma wä'as'n'ə wəḥəzätä däma lä'amätəkä/(Don't follow her blood, and stop her bleeding, your servant.) are found inside. The name of the owner left in blank.

**Part II:** It begins: በስመ: ጸሎት በእንተ መፍትሔ ሥራይ/ S'älot bä'ëntä mäftəhe šəray/. This is also composed with magical prayers connected with ideological intention such as Christian, Islam, Agäw, šanqəla etc. That means the prayer such as counter charms against each other.

**Part III:** It begins: ጸሎት በእንተ ማእሰረ አጋንንት ወጥላ ወጊ/Bäsəmə: S'älot bä'ëntä maəsärä 'aganent Wät'əla wägi/. The name of God such as Elšaday, S'äba'ot, Elohe etc, are included. Next to this some magical drawings with the figure of two eyes are composed. The prayer of King Alexander is also included.

**Part IV:** It begins: በስመ: ጸሎት በእንተ ገርጋሪ ወከሰራሪ/ Bäsəmə: S'älot bä'ëntä gärgari Wä'asfärrī/. In this part after the word amätəkä "your servant", a secular name *abäba* (f) is inserted. The prayer also will be presented to a woman who is interested for marriage.

**Part V:** It begins: ሰላም ለሮቆ መስተጋድል .../ Sälam Läroqo Mästägadəl/. A prayer of salutation is presented to this saint by the women, called Abäba, here, her baptismal name *wälätä Iyäsus* is also mentioned.

**Part VI:** It begins: በሰመ: ሰላም ለተፈጥሮክ ምስለ መላእክት ሕቡረ... ሰዳዴ ኢጋንንት ፋኑኤል/ Bäsämä: Sälam Lätäfät'rotäkä mēslä Mälu'əkt hēburä ... Sädade 'aganənt Fanuel .../. This is a salutation presented to the angel Fanuel. At the end the name Wälätä Iyäsus is written, and it says ከመኢይግበሩ ኪያየ ማኅደረ ሊተ ለአመትክ ወለተ ኢየሱስ/ Kämä iyəgbäry kiyaye mahədärä litä Lä'amätäkä Wälätta Iyäsus/. Not to make me as their huse ... your servant Wälätta Iyäsus. This text is personally owned, and it is unpublished.

### 8. መርበብተ ሰሎሞን / Märbäbtä Solomon/

This prayer is used only for women who need special support. Composed in poor handwriting. Written in Ethiopic on one side, one column, three strips of vellum; the date is 20<sup>th</sup>c. AD. It measures 1.9 mt. The prayer has seven parts.

**Part I:** Begins with ጸሎተ በእንተ መርበብተ ሰሎሞን/S'älot bä'əntä märbäbtä Solomon/. The name of the owner is ወለተ ሥላሴ/ Wälätä Səlassie/.

**Part II:** Begins with ጸሎት በእንተ መሰጥመ ኢጋንንት/S'a lot bä'əntä mast'əmə 'aganənt/. Here, the owner has asked God to tie Sat'an.

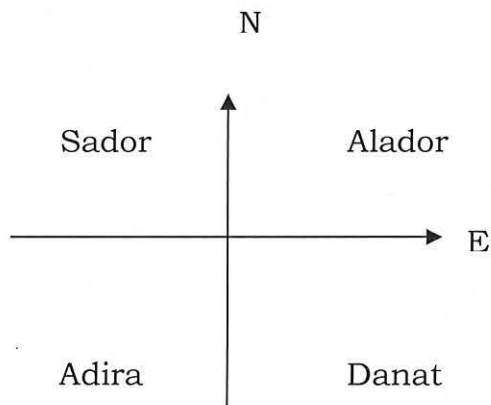
**Part III:** Begins with ጸሎት በእንተ ማአሠረ ኢጋንንት/ S'älot bä'əntä ma'əsärä 'aganənt/. Here, names such as, ቅማንት/ Qəmant/, ዘእስላም/ Zäislam/, ክርስቲያን / Christian/, አምሐራ/Amhara/, ትግሬ/Təgre/ are listed.

**Part IV:** Begins: ወንጌል ዘዮሐንስ: ቀዳሚሁ ቃል .../Wängel Zäyohannəs. Qädamihu qal/.

**Part V:** Begins; ጸሎት በእንተ ዓይነባርያ/S'älot bä'əntä çaynä barya/. Here, some mystical names of God, like, Elshaday ..., are listed.

**Part VI:** Begins: ጸሎት በእንተ ሕማመ ውግኦት አላህ ወላህ በላህ.../ S'älot bä'əntä həmamä Wəgə'at Alah, Wälah, Bälah .../. Here, the hymns of Angel Fanuel and Peter, are inserted. Another owner's name ወለተ ማካኤል/ Wälättä Mika'el is written.

**Part VII:** Begins: በስመ፡ ድርሳን ዘቅዱስ ሚካኤል ... በረከቱ የሀሉ ምስለ ክመቱ ወለተ ሚካኤል/ Bäsəmä; Dərsan Zä qəduṣ Mika'el ... Bäräkätu yähallu Məslä'amātu Wälätä Mika'el/. The sign of cross with magical drawings are found at the end. The four traditional words, *Sador*, *Alador*, *Danat*, *Adira* are composed on the sign of cross as follows. They are the names of the five wounds of the cross of Jesus Christ.



It has some differences comparing to the text which is mentioned in chapter two.

### 9. ጸሎት ዘቅዱስ ሱስንዮስ /S'älot zäqəduṣ Susənyos/

The prayer has four parts, written in Ethiopic on three strips of vellum, 19<sup>th</sup>c (?). It measures 2.2 mt.

**Part I:** Begins: በስመ፡ ጸሎት በእንተ አሰሰሎ ደዌ/Bäsəmä: S'älot bä'əntä 'asässəlo däwe/. The name of the owner is 'Amätä Maryam.

**Part II and III:** Begins: በስመ፡ ጸሎት በእንተ ማእሰረ አጋንንት/Bäsəmä; S'älot bä'əntä Ma'əsärä 'aganənt/.

**Part V:** Begins: በስመ፡ ጸሎት በእንተ ሕማመ ዓይነት/ Bäsəmä: S'älot bä'əntä ḥəmamä 'aynät/. (cf. Book of ሳርዳጭጥ).

It is published by E.A.W. Budge, History of Ethiopia, London, (1928) Vol. 2.

**10. ጸሎት በእንተ መፍትሔ ሥራይ/S'älotä Ba'əntä Mäftəhe Šəray/**

It is written in Ethiopic on vellum: It has 11 ff. The date is 18<sup>th</sup>c. It measures 7.3 x 7 cm. square rather careful script on one column. The prayers are divided in six sections.

**Part I:** f. 1<sup>r</sup>. Prayer for doing charms: Beginning. በስመ: ... አስማተ ሥራይ/'asmatä šəray/.

**Part II:** Another Prayer for undoing charms.

Beginning: በስመ: ... ጸሎት በእንተ መፍትሔ ስራይ/ Bäsəmə: S'älot bə'əntä Mäftəhe šəray/.

**Part III:** f. 3<sup>v</sup>. Paryer against Legewon

Beginning: በስመ: ... ጸሎት በእንተ ሌጌዎን ርኩስ/Bäsəmə: ... S'älot bə'əntä Legeon rəkus/. Here, the name of the owner is mentioned as ፍቅርተ ማርያም/Fəqərtä Maryam/. May be the babtismal name of the woman.

**Part IV:** F. 6<sup>v</sup>. Paryer for catching devils

Beginning. በስመ: ... አላሁማ ወያኑራ ሐሽም /Bäsəmə: ... Alahuma. Wäyanura, ስሐሻም/. (Oh God! Save by your name ...) Here both Gə'əz and Arabic languages are used together. The name of the same owner is mentioned.

**Part V:** f. 8<sup>v</sup>. Prayer against Barya, chest pain (wəgat) disease and charm.

The beginning: በስመ: ... አልመይከክን ረቢ፣ ታኣስ .../ (names of God) Bäsəmə: 'əlmäykäkəñ Rābi. Thaos .../. The language is the same as part IV.

**Part VI:** f. 9<sup>r</sup>. Prayer against colic

The title and beginning: በስመ:... ጸሎተ ቁርፀት/Bäsəmə:... S'älotä qurs'ät/. The scroll is personally owned and it is unpublished.



There are some remarks written on the text. At the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the text five colored magical pictures with the name Wälättä Maryam are composed.

**11. ጸሎት በእንተ መድኃኒተ ነፍስ ወስጋ /s'älot bä'entä mädhānitä näfs wäsəga/**

The date is 20<sup>th</sup>c; vellum; the measurement is 2.6 mt. It has large regular handwriting; scroll composed of three strips presented in cylindrical leather case consisting of three parts.

**Part I:** Beginning. በስመ: ... ጸሎት በእንተ መድኃኒተ ነፍስ ወስጋ/Bäsəmä: S'älot bä'entä Mädlānitä näfsə wäsəga/. This part has two sub sections.

**Part II:** the title and beginning. በስመ: ... ጸሎት በእንተ ጸእረ ሞት/ Bäsəmä: Sälot bä'entä S'a'ərə mot/.

**Part III:** The title and beginning: በስመ: ... ጸሎት ዘመንገደ ሰማይ/Bäsəmä: s'älot Zämängädä Sämay/. The prayer for the journey to heaven.

The owner's name Wälättä Mika'el (f) is indicated in each section. Not Published.

**12. ጸሎት በእንተ መፍትሔ ሥራይ /s'älot bä'entä mäftəhe Ṣəray/**

This is a prayer for undoing of charms; the date is 19<sup>th</sup>c, vellum, written in Ethiopic, in two columns, made from three strips in total, 3 mt long; poor handwriting. It has four parts.

**Part I:** Beginning: በስመ: ... ጸሎት በእንተ መፍትሔ ሥራይ/ Bäsəmä: S'älot ba'entä Maftəhe Ṣəraye/. This is a prayer for undoing of charms.

**Part II:** Beginning: በስመ: ጸሎት በእንተ ሾተላይ/Bäsəmä: ... S'älot bä'entä Ṣotālay/. It is a prayer against Ṣotālay.

**Part III:** The title and the beginning: በስመ፡ ... ጸሎት በእንተ ማእሰሮም ለኢጋንንት/  
Bäsämä: ... S'älot bä'əntä Ma'əsäromu lä'aganənət/. this is a prayer for  
arresting devils and legewon.

**Part IV:** The beginning: በስመ፡ ወሀሎ ፩ ብእሲ ዘስሙ ሱስንዮስ /Bäsämä: Wähalo  
'ahadu bə'əsi zäsəmu Susənyos/. This is the subpart of Legend of Susənyos.

Three coloured magical drawings with the inscription of ዐቃቤ መልአክ  
ዐቃቤ/'aqabi Mälə'akə 'aqäbänni/. The owner was Wälättä Bərhan (f) daughter  
of Färe Maryam (f). A leather lace is attached to the top of the scroll. It is  
unpublished.

### 13. ጠልሰም /T'äls'äm / (Amulet)

This is a kind of scroll, written in Ethiopic; three strips of vellum, stitched  
together, written in one column. It measures 2.5 m. The date is 19<sup>th</sup> c. Its  
handwriting is clear, but poor.

The contents are prayers against devils and sickness, for the owner Wälättä  
Səlassie (f). It has five parts.

**Part I.** Five prayer against possession (ባሪያ ወለጊዎን)

**Part II.** A prayer against terror and possession by demons

**Part III.** A prayer of Susənyos against sickners

**Part: IV.** A prayer against sharp pains

**Part: V.** A prayer against dysentery.

Some words are composed in Amharic. Some headings, owner's name and some  
other special words are written in red. At the top, there is a picture of two  
saints; lower down an angel, and lower still a saint, all very crudely drawn. It is  
unpublished.

## 14. ጠልሰም / Tälsäm (amulet)

An amulet; written in Ethiopic, on vellum, in 18<sup>th</sup>, the collation is from three strips of vellum, stitched together. Its handwriting is poor. the prayers are composed in one column. The length is 2.67 m.

The contents are prayers against sickness for the owner Amätä Gäbr'el. The text has eight prayers.

**Part I:** prayer of Susənyos against all disease.

**Part II:** A prayer against colic and pleurisy (serious illness).

**Part III:** A prayer against dysentery and colic.

**Part IV:** A prayer against ills of the stomach

**Part V:** A prayer against disease of the head and eyes

**Part VI:** A prayer against possession and fits.

**Part VII:** A prayer against various diseases.

**Part VIII:** A prayer against peritonitis (painful inflammation).

Various words and sentences are in Amharic, and there are many magical words. Some of the headings, names, and some other words are in red. A crude design of five faces occurs three times.

Concerning the magical prayers which are composed in the form of scroll, generally, it is possible to say that all belong to women. There is a strong relation between women and the use of magical prayers. For full descriptions of different magical prayers and for what purposes they are used, see the next chapters (especially chapter 4).

## CHAPTER IV

### 4. Description and Analysis of Magical Prayers

In Ethiopian culture, both Islamic and Christian, directly or indirectly, prayers are connected with the practices of magic, and they were usually done for the sake of self protection. Many biblical texts narrate about the necessity on magic.

Ritual performances or activities were believed to bring influences on human or natural events through accessible ways to an external mystical forces beyond the ordinary of human sphere. They constitute the core of many religious systems, and centrally play a great role and interact in human.

Beliefs and practices which were either magic or closely akin to magic had wide vogue among Ethiopians especially Christians. Even intellectual of high level held that the repetition of the name of God if made in faith, would expel evil spirits and demons.

Some magical practices have been transformed orally from generation to generation. Some others are found in inscriptional and in written forms. The Ethiopian culture was rich in this character. For instance some magical texts such as *Ard'ət* (The book of disciples), *Märbäbtä Solomon* (Net of Solomon) *Ləfäfä s'ədq* (The bandlet of righteousness), *Säne Golgotha* (Prayer of Mary at Golgotha), *Təmhərtä həbu'at* (Mystical teaching- the teaching of arcance), *Awdāce Nägäst* (The confront of the kings) etc are very strong in their characters. Among these texts, some have defensive character, and some others also have both a kind of defensive and productive characters.

#### 4.1 Magical prayers with defensive character

Defensive character means the texts which were composed with some special magical prayers or spells or psychical words. The prayers with this kind of character could be done for the purpose of protecting human beings or one's own animals and properties before or after being attacked by evil spirits and by

diseases. It is considered that the method was adopted as the result of the gradual cultural development of the society.

#### 4.1.1 Defensive character before being attacked

Naturally human beings are affected by evil doings. In order to protect themselves from being attacked, they need some additional mystical power which will save them from misfortunes.

Texts with prophylactic concepts, have their own cultural developments and local meanings, and people especially who live in the countryside have strong belief over their functionalities. Then it was believed that these magical prayer texts had power to prevent diseases, misfortunes, doing charms, and even to avert death. These kinds of texts are composed with the form of command words, and some others are found recited with request forms. They are full of spells or incantations which were inscribed as /እምኩሉ ሰብእ ሰዓቢ ወረጋሚ ወእምኩሉሙ ሰብእ በላእያነ ሥጋ ወሰታይያነ ደም እምኩሉ ሰብእ ዘቤት ወዘገዳም/ (Ardə'ət: in Littmann, 1904:11).

/From all people who would have spoken bad words and cursed, and from all people who would have eaten flesh and drank blood of all the people of the house and of the monastery/.

Since it has been believed that they have a power to drive away the Satans, the evil spirits, zars, demons; many people, especially women, were familiar with these practices. They always carry *Kətab* (amulets) on their nake. Traditionally believed that each text of magical prayers (scrolls) which shows the positive sense of character, begins and ends with the phrasal words of /በስመ አብ ወወልድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ አሁዱ አምላክ/ By the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit one God. These kind of phrasal words of power were accepted as they have strengthen the might of spells of which they follow.

In many areas of the countryside of Ethiopia, especially in the northern regions, every disease was believed to be caused by devils or evil spirits or demons, and by physically known enemies. By physically is meant that it could be to

represent Zars on human beings. One magical prayer recited spells, as /በስመ አብ: ... ጸሎት በእንተ ዓቃቤ ርእስ ቁጅ፣ መጅ፣ መጅናን፣ እረቀመጅ፣ መከመጅ፣ መማሽ፣ ሹጁ፣ አዑር አዕይንቲሆሙ ወአጽንዕ ልቡናሆሙ ከመባድን ርኩስ ወከመ ዕብን ፍዙዝ ይኩኑ ነጌ ከምቢያማ አውራሪስ ቀንዳማ ሰብእ ሰይፋማ ስልብ ልቦሙ ለሰብአኩሉ ፀርዮ ወጸላእትዮ/ (ዘመንፈስ ቅዱስ, 1949: 248).

“By the name of Father: ... A prayer about to protect oneself q’ej, māj, mājīnan, əraq’āmaj, mākāmāj. Māmash, shuju make their eyes blind, and make their heart as filthy corpse and as stone. Let them become as elephant and as rhinoceros and like a man with sword. Make their hearts of my enemies useless”. This is a magical prayer practiced to defend oneself from all types of enemies.

In this character the end sentence of each magical prayer text puts commonly known salutation statements as /አድንኒ (እቀበኒ) እመከራ ሥጋ ወነፍስ ለዓመትክ/ save me, your servant, from being attacked of soul and flesh/. In Ethiopian tradition, people believe that if the psalms of David are used as a prayer, they will save from dangers, and they use them as defensive means (Cf Psalm 53, Psalm 68).

The use of magical prayers who have a defensive character was usual. During the prayer time, repetition of some selected sentences or traditional word powers might have been developed at the time of king Zār’a Ya’əq’ob (15<sup>th</sup> C. A. D). Kaplan in his book of “Magic and Religion in Christian Ethiopia” P. 147 quotes the following passage “I adjured my sons and daughters that they neither carry nor read names not found in 81 canonical scriptures”. Since the bases of some magic prayers were the pagan traditions, Zar’a Ya’əq’ob had developed intentional feelings to change or to reduce magical words of pagans, and to replace them by commonly accepted biblical words and sentences. The church uses some texts extracted from psalm to defend evils.

#### 4.1.2 Defensive character after being attacked

For defensive character, one of the best examples is a magical prayer found in the text of legend of Susanyos. It begins, and says: በሰመ አብ ወወለድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ አሀዱ አምላክ፡ ጸሎት ዘቅዱስ ሰ-ሰንዮስ በእንተ አሰሰሎ ደዌ እምሕፃናት እለ ይጠብው ጥበ እሞሙ (Budge, 1930, P. 593) "By the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God. Prayer of St. Susenyos about removing illness from children who suck their mothers' breast/. Here, the word /ደዌ/ indicates or represents a kind of disease caused by evil spirit which attacked children. Many scrolls were composed with the legend of Susenyos. This text is not only supposed to save children, but it is also supposed to prevent mothers' sickness of the body, and to save women from miscarriage and abortions caused by evil spirits. The prayer and the blessing of St. Susenyos shall deliver them from every thing that would cause harm in their progress, and from Barya<sup>1</sup>, Legewon<sup>2</sup> Fils'at, Q'urs'ät, Wägät, Q'urt'mat, Aynät, zars, Cänäfär etc, and from the men who work enchantments and come by day and night."

The prayer ends with the special salutation form of benevolence, as /ዕቀባ ወአድገና ለዓመትክ/ "protect and deliver your maiden". The word /ለዓመትክ/ refers to a woman who needs protection by the power of magical prayers.

From the other part of the legend of Susenyos, there is a formula of prayers or spells which have the power to fetter devils and sicknesses. It begins with: በሰመ አብ ወወለድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ አሀዱ አምላክ፡ ጸሎት በእንተ ማዕሠረ አጋንንት ወባርያ ወሌጌዎን፡ አብ እሳት ወለድ እሳት መንፈስ ቅዱስ እሳት ፩ ወእቱ እሳተ ህይወት ዘአርያም በጋይለ ዝንቱ አስማቲክ ይሰደዱ አጋንንት ወይጸኡ ሰይጣናት እለ ይደውዩ ርዕሰ ወየሐውኩ ናላ (Budge, 1929: 594) "By the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit One God. A prayer to fetter the devils, Bāryā and Legewon. The Father is

<sup>1</sup> *Barya*: means slave "in Amharic, and this reflects the low consideration for the people.

<sup>2</sup> "Legewon (Greek Legion, from Latin *Legio*) used four times in NT [Mt. 26:23 of angel] and Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30 (of the demons possessing)] was the main division of the roman army, and comprised between 4000 and 6000 men." New Bible Dictionary P. 682.

fire, the Son is fire, and the Holy Spirit is fire. The Fire is one, the life of the great heaven. By the might of these Your names, the devils shall be driven away, and let satans who caused headache and disturb the brain shall be scattered".

Some phrases such as "the Father is fire, the Son is fire, the Holy Spirit is fire..." may have been quoted from the text of anaphora of St. Mary. Since the 14 anaphoras were translated from Arabic into Ge'ez in the 15<sup>th</sup> cAD, the copyists might have been commanded by king Zär'a Ya'əq'ob to insert these phrases into magical prayer texts, or it could be vice versa. The word "fire" here indicates the power to defend from every evil doing and to cure from every disease.

In contrast, there is a legendary magical prayer which is found in the text of the Awdä Nägäst under the title of ንራ መዊዕ (Gerā Mäwiç). When the 3 men (Ananya, Azarya and Misahel) were put in the fire, God gave His magical name to them through the agent archangel Mika'el. The archangel stood up in the middle of the fire and uttered these Magical names over the flame. Then, the flame of fire became as cold as water. The 3 men were saved from being burned. The text in Ethiopic versions says/ በስመ አብ ወወልደ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ ፩ አምላክ፡፡ ብርሃናኤል አጉዳ አግፍላላኤል ዘንተ አስማተ ዘወሀቦሙ እግዚአብሔር ለአናንያ ወአዛርያ ወሚሳኤል እንዘ ይትናገሮሙ ሚካኤል ቀደሞ ማእከለ እቶነ እሳት ንበ ፫ቲሆሙ ዘንተ አስማተ ቆረ ወኮነ ጠለ ወአውሎ (ዘመንፈስ ቅዱስ አብርሃ: 1949 E.C : 237).

"By the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy spirit one God. Birhanael, a guda, agfəlalael. These are the names whom God gave to Ananya, Azarya, and Misael, when Mika'el (some texts self Gäbrə'el) uttered them by standing up in the middle of the flame, and when he made a sign of cross in four directions up on each of the three men ..., then the flame became cold and wet wind".

Both in the texts of Gera Mäwiç and Legend of Susenyos, conceptually the meaning of "fire" was put in opposite ways.

Different from other magical prayers which have a defensive character, in the text of Gera Mäwiç (ጌራ መዊዕ) six different letters were composed in the form of magical square.

አ	ና	ን	ያ
ና	ሠ	ቀ	ን
ን	ቀ	ሠ	ና
ያ	ን	ና	አ

Here, the word */አናንያ/* “Ananya” which represents the name of one of the three men, can be read in four directions. On the above first boxes from left to right, on the left first boxes from up to bottom; on the right side last boxes from bottom to top, and finally on the bottom boxes from right to left in all, give the word */አናንያ/*. The representations of the letters ቀ (q’) and ሠ (፩) which were written in central boxes with double form are not clearly identified as to what kind of meanings they represent.

Traditionally, this magical square was believed to cure the people who had been affected by malaria fever; and it says as *ወጸሐፉ ጠቢባን ዘንተ አሰማተ አእሚሮሙ ከመ ይድኃት እምንዳድ<sup>3</sup> ወእምነ ቀጥቃጥ<sup>4</sup>/*.

“The wise people wrote these names because they knew that they will be healed from malaria disease”.

In Ethiopian tradition, especially in the countryside, *nəḍād* (mālāria) disease was believed to be connected with Zars. In other words, mālāria disease was caused by Zars.

Spells against the disease of the eye are parts of defensive characters. The text of the Legend of Susenyos begins *ጸሎት በእንተ ማእሠረ አጋንንት ወባሪያ ወሌጌዎን ዓይነጥላ ወዓይነ ወርቅ ጎብኦሙ ለሚካኤል ዐቢይ...* (Budge, 1929: 593).

<sup>3</sup> ንዳድ: የሚያተኩስ የወባ በሽታ በገጠሩ ሕዝብ ዘንድ በዛር አማካኝነት ይመጣል ተብሎ የሚታመን:: ኪዳን ወልደ ክፍሌ መጽሐፈ ሰዋስው ወግሥ ወመዝገብ ቃላት ሐዲስ 1949.

<sup>4</sup> ነቀጥቃጥ: የወባ በሽታ ምልክት:: (Ibid)

Prayer to fetter the devils and Baryā and Legewon, the eye of shadow and the eye of gold/ the yellow eye/ has been given to Michael the great).

Most of the time the word or phrase */ማአሠረ አጋንንት/* “fetter of devils” is commonly found in magical prayer texts which have a defensive character. Differently from others, this text starts with the word “Prayer”. The reason is unknown.

### **4.1.3 Defensive character as counter charms**

Some magical prayers were believed to do evil charm (Kəfat) on selected persons or things. So, the people who were affected by this for a long time created some types of magical prayers which have the characters of countercharms. And, spells which have a character of countercharms (*መፍትሔ ሥራይ*), are the basic means of preventive magic. It was believed that they had power over doing charms to be in effective, */አራሁማ አራሂም ቆቆልያ አቢድንን መስኑ.../* (Ibid: 247). These magical words used as counter charms. Typically these words were borrowed from Arabic.

Similarly some texts were composed with magical prayers which have a curative character against poisons which are considered as evil charms. Many people especially those who used to live in hot areas, have a strong belief on these types of spells. For example they have been accepted as they are the defender of snake stings, and other poisons.

#### **4.1.3.1 Command words as counter charms**

The simulation of personal discussion within magical prayers indicates strong divination command powers although they are submitted in request form. In turn they used to curse or to cast out the evils, and says as “Oh You Good God, crush the power of the devils and the spirit of the fiends the great power of demon...”

The one who recites or writes these kind of magical texts for prayers, says as “I drive you away from the neighborhood of X's (X is for whom this magical prayer

is prepared) house, and from the house of X and from all the regions around about them". With the help of this prayer the devils will be forced to write bill of divorce and cast away woman and never again approach her. The conversation on the magic prayers continues, and says "so, do you accept this bill of divorce and receive your dowry which is written here and get you gone, betake yourselves to flight, make haste to depart, and leave the house of a woman and in the name of Eternal God. Get your forth into the darkness, away from that woman amen, amen, amen". All these magical prayers show that some statements were composed with command words and some others were put in conversational forms.

#### **4.1.3.2 Cursing words as counter charms**

Besides, there are strong cursing words of power in some magical prayers which were directed against evil spirits, and demons, and devils of every description, both male and female which bring disease and sickness upon women and against magicians<sup>5</sup> of every kind, both male and female who by word or curse or ban or act do harm to *ዝርዎሙ እግዚአብሔር ለኩሉሙ አጋንንት ወመናፍስት ርኩሳን ወለኩሉሙ እለ ይጸልዑኒ ወይጸብዑኒ ሊተ ለ...* (Mercier, 1994:87).

As a counter charm form this practice one will make the curses and incantations of evil spirits and demons to have no effect, and it makes the magical ceremonies of the sorcerers to be causing no harm. These kinds of scrolls can be found in countryside preserved personally.

During my field study in Addet near Bahir Dar, I heard some information about one especially written scroll. With the help of two young local men, I met one priest whose name is Q'es Asmarä Hailu. I raised some questions what I had heard about. According to him the mentioned magical scroll had been tied with hard leather and has been transferred from family to family, and still is on the way to be transferred for the next generation. According to Q'es Asmarä, at the

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<sup>5</sup> Both male and female. This is to express the kind of Zars and Demons who can be multiplied as human beings on the earth.

moment, the scroll is owned by his older sister Imama Wälättä Birhan **ወለተ ብርሃን** "Wälättä Berhan" is her baptismal name. Probably she is 77 years old. Now she has become a nun. That old woman was not willing to show that scroll. Even she could not say any thing about it.

However, her younger brother the 65 years old, q'ës Asmarä, gave me some fragmented information. According to this information, the style of composition of the mentioned magical scroll is different from others. It was written in circular clock wise directions. It begins from the center and ends on the edge of the circular face on long parchment. In the scroll, the circularly written style has been inscribed in three places in that long parchment. As I understood from my informant the written form was regarded like swords used to cut Satan and traditionally accepted as strong amulets for the life security of the family.

Since my informant has discussed with me in Amharic, simply I changed into English. What he said "Let all the evil sorcerers, and violent attacks, and cursings, and distrust words, and undertakings, and nagging words whether near or far, by night or by day, by men or by women, which it is possible to be directed against **ወለተ ብርሃን** (Wälättä Bərhan) [the old nun], or who attacks her sons and daughters and her relatives, and her properties, let all these things, with out any exceptions, be cursed, and driven away, and expelled, and utterly destroyed away from the bodies of the children of Wälätä Birhan, and the bodies of their sheeps and cattles, and from the habitations of bad luck of each of them on the road. Amen Amen, Amen". The text of Ardə'ət says, as **/ኤል ሀበነ እግዚአብሔር በኃይል ዝንቱ አሰማቲክ ሃይማኖተ ርትዕተ ወጸሎተ ቅዱስ በዘኢይክህሉን አቃብያን ሥራይ እርኩስ ፈውሶሙ ወንስትኃይሎሙ ወዘርዘር ምክሮሙ/** (Ael (Bod) please give us by this your name an orthodox faith and a holy prayer. Please destroy their power and remove their advice who try to do evil charm on us. (Littmann, Op. Cit: 18). Both prayers contain the command words.

In general, the cursing word powers have great acceptance in all societies of the countryside. The living condition of the people, probably shaped within this cultural practices. Some people see and connect with negative practices; and in

contrast, some others interpret it with positive attitudes. However, directly or indirectly people are involved in it with their own cultural outlooks.

## 4.2 Magical prayers with productive character

The term productive in this context is often used to describe rites of spells which bear on the increase of food-animals and plants to gain rain. In other words this term is also used to acquire grace (Gərma Mogās), and helps the barren women for fertility through their normal ages.

### 4.2.1 Prayers used to be rich and gain properties

By using magical prayers people develop methods of asking more properties from the supernatural power.

Many scrolls were composed in connection with magical prayers copied from the Awdä Nägäst. The text written in Geez says: በስመ አብ ወወልድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ ፩ አምላክ ጸሎት በእንተ መፍትሔ ሀብት ወግርማ ወጸሎተ ድንጋጂ አላትብ ገጽዮ ወኩለንታዮ በትእምርተ መስቀል በስመ ሥላሴ በእንተ ማእሠረ አጋንንት ወሰይጣናት ወግርማ ሞገስ ከመ አቡነ ዳዊት ወሰሎሞን በርሃ (7 ጊዜ)፣ ጨ(7)፣ ሚ(7)፣ ዮ(7)፣ ገይሙት(4)፣ ያጥብሀል(7)፣ ፊ(7) ዮፍታሔ በዝንቱ ግብርክ ወበኃይለ ዝንቱ አስማቲክ ፍታህ ማእሠረ እደቂሆሙ ወአራህርህ ህሊና ልቦሙ ወአደንግፅ ልቡናሆሙ ለሰብአ ሀገር ወየሀቡኒ ሀብተ ሊተ ለዓመትክ ... (ዘመንፈስ ቅዱስ, 1949:241).

/By the name of the Falther, the Son, and the Holy Spirit One God, Prayer to free girls and honour properties, courageous and a prayer which brings frightening over others. I will make a sign on my face, and on all my body by the sign of the cross by the name of the Trinity to fetter evil spirits and satans, and to gain grace or respectability, as our father(s) David and Solomon. Bärha (7) Ā(7), mua (7), yo (7), Gāymut (4), Yät'b ḥal(7), fae(7), Yoftahe(7) by this Your work and by the power of these your magical names of yours make free the string of their hands and make their mind to think positively and make the hearts of the people of the country to be frightened and let order them to give a property to me servant(f)...

From the given passage we can observe two things. First with the list of spells of magical prayer the user tries to fetter the satan and utters to get courageous. In other words to own some properties of others in the form of gifts, the user of that scroll requests God's willingness. The one who used this kind of prayer traditionally called as *Wäsaj* (having taken others' property).

There is a similar text that contains a magical prayer which narrates about a gift of money. Usually merchant women used and tied it on their neck in the form of scrolls. It was believed that the prayer has power to attract customers and also to convince the suppliers by saying /...ስጡ አሰጡ እምነ ወይዛዜ ወደንገድር። ስጡ አሰጡ እም ወታደር ወባላገር። ስጡ አሰጡ እምነ ካህን ዘማሪ ወእምነ ጠቢብ ቆርቋራ... ድቅማኛዎን፣ ዱዱልሻዎን፣ አለታዎን፣ አባቲዎን አጋቲዎን .../ “...Give and have to make to be given from ladies and servant. Give and have to make to have been given from soldiers and peasants. Give and have to make to have been given from the priest who sings, and from the wise carpenter. *dəq'mañāon*, *dudulshaon*, *shushaon*, *alataon*, *abation*, *agation*...” (Ibid, P. 144).

In other words in the text of *Ard'ət*, it is said /መስድድዮስ ኅብነ እግዚአብሔር በኃይለ ዝንቱ አሰማቲክ ሃይማኖተ ርትዕተ ወጸሎተ ቅዱስ ክብረ ወብእለ ሞገሠ ፍጹመ እምነብ ከሉሙ አጽናፈ ምድር ወእምነብ ከሉሙ ነገሥት መኳንንት ወአሕዛብ እንተ ታዴምን ደመና ወትክዑ ዝናመ ወስተ ገጸ ምድር ከማሁ አዝንም ወከዓው ሞገሠ ላእሌሃ (Littmann, Op. Cit: 20).

/Mäsdidios [magical name], O God! by this word power of Your magical names, by orthodox faiths, by holy prayer, please give us, grace, property and absolute respectability from all horizon of earth, from all kings and lords and from all nations. As a cloud becomes wet and showers a rain on the ground, like that, please, shower up on us, and anoint us like a rain/.

Even if the texts in two works contained different readings, the concepts are similar. Indeed, in the first text (*Awdä Nägäst*), many statements were composed by mixed words. Both Amharic and Ge'ez words were used in mixed way. These kind of prayers are also practiced for the purpose of fertility for women.



### 4.2.2 Prayers used to facilitate birth

In many parts of the countryside of Ethiopia, some cultural activities show that the life of women was connected with the fact of giving birth. Traditionally, there was a strong belief that if the women do not have children from their husbands, they will not have settled life. A woman's importance and stability in husband's home was judged and evaluated by the degree of her fertility. So then, in order to make her life normal, she would have been forced to enhance her giving births frequently. That means, the culture in which she has lived, has shaped her to use magical prayers which have mystical power to facilitate birth.

In other way, sometimes the barren women have been advised to carry Gädlä Kiro / **ገደለ ኪሮስ** / in their backs, and will be ordered to go around the church canonized by the name of that saint. Traditionally it is believed that, if the women can do this, the coming of new child will be sure. According to the sayings of local people, still there is a belief that the ghost can cause fruitfulness, or perhaps may incarnate himself in the barren woman who carries that gädl. According to the tradition, when the barren woman does this practice, she has to make a promise by pronouncing clearly the name of God using her own language in front of the saint's church. In relation to this traditional narrations, there is no writing on Gädlä Kiro. However, it may be connected with the life of Kiro. Since he was born with his twin brother, the act of carrying of Gädlä Kiro / **ገደለ ኪሮስ** / by women may be in related to the fertility of their mother.

### 4.3 Linguistic characters of magical prayers

Culture and tradition are the most significant **factors for the formation of human societies**. Language as a part of culture, is a primary means of learning and transmitting one's culture, and it is used to help defining and distinguishing different practices among different ethnic groups and their culture.

Some texts were directly written by native scholars and by foreign missionaries. Some other texts, even larger than the directly written, were translated from other languages. W. Leslau, in his book of "Arabic Loanwords in Ethiopian Semitic" in the introductory part, put supportive ideas that many religious texts were translated from Arabic, and he said "Through its entire history, as a spoken and literary language, Ge'ez was exposed to the influence of Arabic. Indeed, most of the Ethiopian religious writings were translated from Greek, Syriac, and Arabic" (P IX). Since more magical texts strongly connected with biblical texts, it is clear that they have been influenced by Arabic language, and lexically composed with this language (cf. 4:1:3). (cf. 4:1:2).

### **4.3.1 Lexical features of magical words**

The character of many words in more magical texts were mostly dominated by semitical borrowings. The letters which formed these borrowings in magical prayers were held in great reverence, and it was believed that they themselves can bring secured life over the one who can possess them properly.

The writings inside the magical prayer texts include various magcal names of God, the names of archangels, the magical names of Christ, the names of the fiends and devils which produce sickness and diseases through the human body, strings of letters arranged singly or in group. Some of them cannot be translated easily. Some others were composed in compound word forms.

#### **4.3.1.1 Loan words**

Most of the time names of God, names of archangels names of evil spirits and demons which existed in magical texts were borrowed from Hebrew words. Probably it is considered that the most mysterious words may be from Jewish origin. Though their meanings are not clearly known and their appearance is

Greek, some traditional words such as “Asparasas”, “Askoraskis”<sup>6</sup> might have been borrowed from Jewish cultural words.

These words are frequently found in the text of Ard’ət. The traditional word such as ‘Lōfham’ is found in the text of the magical prayer called Net of Solomon. This is also a traditional loanword. However, the real meaning is still unknown, but it is commonly practiced in magical prayers. Some magical names of God and angels are listed here at the end in the Index I A and B respectively.

In most scrolls, some loanwords were composed in the form of strings of letters. Some others were composed in single letters and recited as spells. Each spell has to be read repeatedly either by the patient or by the dābtāras. (Cf on 4.2.1)

It seems that the traditional way of acceptability of some magical words without the exact meanings, the conditions might have lead them to be considered as mysterious words. Vice versa if the words in the scroll were considered as mysterious, those scroll were believed to be very strong and very powerful to defend the demands.

Some magical texts written in Ge’ez were mixed with many Amharic words. From the beginning of 15<sup>th</sup>c AD onwards, or earlier the official Ge’ez language has been dominated by Amharic and Arabic; and hence, many words started to be used for writing together with Geez words, especially in the form of compound words, for instance some words from magical prayer texts can be listed as:

<b>Amharic</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Arabic</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>
ቁራኛ	q’urañña	አላሁሙ	’alahumä
ናላ	nala	ከራሂማን	’irrahiman
አንጀት	’anjet	መሊኩን	mälikun
ዓይነጥላ	’aynät’əla	አሌኩም	’alekum
ፀጉር	s’ägur	ዎላተሂ	woltähi
መጋኛ	mägañña	አልመይ ከክን	’əlmäyəkäkən
ወዘተ			etc

(Cf 4:2:1)


<sup>6</sup> Asparasas, Askoraskis: In their appearance these words are Greek. But in my point of view they may have Jewish origin. Because these traditional words came down to us from Jewish culture.

Not only this, but orthographically also, some phonemes of palatal sounds such as  $\bar{n}$ (ን)  $\check{z}$  (ገ)  $\acute{c}$  (ቸ) (C') (ጨ) (ḡ) (ጆ) (š) (ሽ) were commonly inserted in many magical prayer texts. Even these palatal sounds were sometimes used as single or compound form of magical word powers or spells. In other words, if magical prayers were with palatal sounds, it was believed that they should strengthen their mystical values.

#### 4.3.1.2 Phonetic value of symbolic magical drawings

As usual, in Ethiopian tradition, the method of preparation of magical figures in scrolls followed its own styles. Most of the time figurative images were graphed or painted decoratively with varied colours, and with meaningful colour types. Indeed, the images with attractive colours have great reverence among the users. Symbolic drawings inside the scrolls have a character of readability. The use of symbol is very close to the use of a secret code.

Each symbolic figure has its own phonetic value. For instance, if there is a symbol “+”, it is pronounced as the word መስቀል cross. From one scroll by the title of ጸሎት በእንተ ለጌዎን the sign “ከ+” can be read as ከ መስቀል “O cross”. Here, the sign of the cross symbolized or represented the presence of Christ on it. Ethiopians believe in the power of the cross to vanquish evil spirits, and frequently the women wear and use it in connection with magical prayers.

In many magical scrolls, the symbol of the eye is commonly inscribed. If there is a symbol /  / it is clearly pronounced as ዓይን “eye”. Figurative images of an eye without the connection to human like face are frequently found in magical scrolls. Traditionally it was believed that images of eye in scrolls would have controlled the movement of evil spirits and their enmity. Especially, if one women is considered as the victim of ዓይን ጥላ "shadow of eye" she will be advised to use a *kətab* which is composed with the symbol of eye. This is common in Ethiopia.

Some figurative images of the Almighty, the Virgin Marry, the reverend saints and angels, even the images of imprisoned Satan but unusually are pronounced as a prayer.

The figurative images of human face with large prominent eyes, is attached in sunset in a rectangular size from each side of which two right angle triangles projected (Budge, 1930:190). If the figurative images are set with two eyes both with decorative colours, pronounced as watcher angels /አቃቢያን መላእክት/. Traditionally it is believed that as every body has his own guardian angel /አቃቢ መላእክት/. If the figurative images are seen only with one eye and half face with black colour, they are pronounced as sayt'an (diyabəlos). However there is no exact answer why it was represented by one eye.

In general a symbol in the form of figurative image in many magical scrolls has a certain mystical sense and meaning identical to that which it symbolizes. A true symbol should be a perfect vehicle for what it symbolizes, because its energy becomes infinite when belief in it is vital. Besides that the magician who can prepare magical scrolls, knows the secret image and knows when and how to use it in the correct time and meaning with the sake of best results.

#### **4.3.1.3 Semantic value of symbolic magical drawings**

“With the acquisition of symbolic communication the whole of human life was radically transformed, (completely treated) compared with other animals. Human beings now live not simply in a broader reality, but rather in a new dimension of reality. Symbolic representation was a central function of human consciousness and basic to our understanding of all human life, language, history, science, art, myth and religion” (Brain, 1987: 218).

From the above sentences, some important and critical points have to be observed. Clearly, symbolism is an open way to the understanding of human culture. Such as aesthetic, cultic, and magical practices were structured around symbols that could create a real connection with their object. The symbols are also multimodal and may stand for many things. Some arouse

desires of feelings, and some others refer to social norm and values inherent in the social structure.

Figurative images which are found in magical scrolls have their own semantic values. They are full of meanings. All the figurative images in many magical scrolls are interpreted in terms of their functions. For instance if the figurative image represent the Almighty, or the Virgin Mary, or the various saints or angels, traditionally, it is believed that supports for one's salvations of soul and curity of illness, and protection from being attacked by evil spirits.

Several magical scrolls were filled with drawings of various forms of the cross, group of eyes, human heads which probably represent Christ and the four evangelists, figures of animals such as lion and cheetah images and the heavenly things such as sun, moon, stars and other planets were included inside. Each figure gives its own meaning with respect to socio cultural identities.

Indeed, the eyes drawn on the scrolls were not simply scattered over the long parchment. They were paired formally, so that they give an impression and transmit information with their gazing eyes, which attract and captivate the users.

The image of lion or cheetah inside the magical scrolls introduces the meaning of power or respectability (**ܘܠܥܘܢܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ**) in front of people. The image of serpent's head is commonly painted. It is frequently found in women's *Kətab*. "The serpent's head amulet which was painted inside, was regarded as a projection against the bite of the cobra and other venomous snakes" (Budge, 1930: 174). According to this statement like defends the like. This might have been similar to scientific vaccination process. In order not to be bitten by snake, the women have to be encouraged to develop internal strength and to take care throughout their life. This, in general, is the partial meaning of the serpent's head image inside the magical scrolls.

The images of ladder and chariot (*mäsälāl* and *särägällā*) in the scrolls, especially in the book of *Ləḫfä s'əddq* were commonly drawn. It was believed that their symbolic means lead to the meaning of ascending from earth to heaven. Women were familiar with it.

Generally, the traditional concept on magical prayers has to be seen in cultural contexts and values, because each culture has its own value system, formula, and definitions of figurative images in the scrolls.

#### **4.4 Formulas in magical texts**

All kinds of magical texts have their own formulas. Whether in positive or negative character, in Ethiopian tradition, a standardization of inscribing of spells inside the scrolls has been formulated. Culture asserted that if the spells were arranged or recited accordingly, they are thought to be able to defeat the power of evil.

##### **4.4.1 The formula at the beginning**

Magical texts who have a positive sense, start by commonly known biblical words. Since the Ethiopian traditions more probably have been dominated by Christianity, the initial statement of magical prayer texts begins with the usual formula of *በሰመ አብ ወወልድ ወምነራስ ቅዱስ አሁዳ አምላክ* "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit One God" Then follows a sentence, like *ጸሎት በእንተ... a prayer about...*. After this sentence the name of the main subject which has either a positive or negative value, was frequently mentioned. For instance: *ጸሎት በእንተ መፍትሔ ሥራይ፣ መርገመ ደም፣ ሸተላይ ለጌዎን...* are parts of the given formula.

Different types of spells have to be listed next to the mentioned formula. The formulas should give their own contribution for the effectiveness of spells. For instance the spells formula of magical names of God which were listed in the text of Barthos (the Ethiopic version of the prayer of Mary in Barthos or Beirut)

were used to heal or prevent, or to counteract the effects of the evil eye and evil spirits. The spells written in are mysterious magical words.

The formulas of magical names or spells were put and read repeatedly. Some were written seven times each, and some others three times each. The customers or the patients should have to be ordered to utter or pronounce the spells which were recited inside the scrolls. In the text of Bārtōs (ባርቶስ) in IES 60 magical names of God are listed /ጁ አሰማቲሁ ለእግዚአብሔር ወውአቶሙ እሱ አልፋ (7 ጊዜ) ኤሰዮንሮድ (7) ሂድራ (7) ዮዶርፍዎአፍሎጳሎሚስ (7) ወዘተ/ “60 magical names of the God and they are Alfa (7), Aesyonrod ፱(7) Hidra(7) Yodorfowōaflop’alomis (7) etc” are the best example for the magical formulas which should be used in repeated form. Some times in the scrolls, the spells are composed in single letter forms. Their origino may be from different languages. Such as Greek, Syriac, Hebrew, Arabic etc.

#### **4.4.2 The formula of repetition of spells based on number**

##### **3 and 7**

Why were the spells repeated for 3 or 7 times? The answer should be based on the Ethiopian traditional allegorical interpretation. For instance the number "three" was said to symbolize three stages in the life of human beings such as birth, life, and death, beginning, middle, and end, childhood, man hood, and old age. In other words, as symbolic of the Trinity it was most sacred and found in the form of the names of the Three persons, as በሰሙ አብ ወወልድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ: ... አሜን.

The Old and the New Testaments contain many instances of the use of three as a symbolic or perfect number. Example, God called Samuel three times. David bowed before the Lord three times. So then, in magical scrolls if one spell was written three times, usually it symbolizes and gives the mystical meaning of Trinity, and traditionally it is believed that, repeating spells three times can bring the true dreams. All these are the central points for the allegorical interpretations, and in turn they might have brought influences on magical

prayers. Historically, it is known that, to gain daily food, the primitive people had used magical spells. Once they used spell for the same purpose. So, this kind of repetition might have created and cultured the formula of repetition of magical prayers.

Similarly the number seven is considered as sacred, symbolic, perfect and mystic, and it has always been so. Even if it was in different cultural point of views, all the Ethiopians have considered that it possesses a special significance. In that it is indivisible it has been compared to God so, allegorically, some biblical words compounded with the word "seven" viz. 7 weeks, 7 shepherd, 7 eyes, 7 lamps, 7 deacons, 7 churches in Asia and others might have created influences over the practice of magical prayers to repeat seven times.

In general, the traditional pronunciations of spells either three or seven times have come down up to this generation. The formula of repeating magical words or spells were developed throughout the formation of cultural history. Sometimes some magical prayer words or spells represent either the name of demons or the name of diseases caused by them.

#### **4.4.3 The formula of copying the spells**

The copied formula on Scrolls which were composed with the magical names or spells have been written exactly as they were written on parchments which is especially prepared. Their values can be judged in terms of their positions which. Sometimes, the copyists decorated with square size letters. So that no letter shall touch the next one. There will be a free margin round each letter.

The inks by which the magical prayers have been written within, have their own reverential values. Most of the time the most important magical names or spells either at the beginning, or at the middle or at the end, were written in red ink.

The lines for the writing have been drawn on the hairy side of the parchment, and the writing was done on the flesh side with the baptized name of the patient. The parchment in the form of scrolls must be cut, and the lines have to

be drawn on it. When the writer dips his pen into properly prepared ink, he has to start his copying by saying “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who created heaven and earth. I (the name of the copyist), son of (his father), wrote this scroll for Wölätä Kidan (the name of the owner (f)) daughter of Haile Michael, (the name her father) to heal her fever.” These sentences indicate that the copyists should have their own regulations to copy the scrolls. This can be considered as the part of cultural history of Ehtiopian writing system.

## CHAPTER V

### 5. Historical and cultural considerations of magical prayers

For writing the history of literature in Ethiopia, the large sources used were from outside Ethiopia. Even if they are more Mss which were written in Ethiopic language, still a few are found and used as sources both for local and foreign scholars.

For the composing of Ethiopian history, the use of oral traditional and inccribed literature goes back before the Christianity. It is obvious that before the invention of writing system, events had been transformed orally from generation to generation.

Since Ethiopia is found near to Middle East and the South Arabians, culturally both have been interconnected in the region. Some traditional beliefs which were practiced in both places, shared by the peoples who lived throughout both regions. For example, symbols such as stars, sun half crescent moon on different monuments which were used for worshipping some super powers can be found from both sides. This shows the cultural interconnection of the region.

#### 5.1 The beginning of amulets and magical prayers

In Webster's new 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary, "Amulet: a charm, something worn often around the neck, as remedy or protection against evils or mischief. Probably Amulets were common in older days. They consisted of stones, metals, or plants, and sometimes of words, characters, or sentences, arranged in a particular order" (1979, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed). According to this point, an amulet could be in the form of an object, or in written form, such as *Kitabs*.

Beads and stones, traditionally are used as amulets in the countryside of Ethiopia. This is a kind of material with a hole through it. Usually, this is worn by children and by women. The purpose of using this might have been observed from two directions, that is to prevent evil spirits or for decoration, or it could be for both at the same time.

In other words amulets have been presented in the form of *kitab*s or *tälsäm* (talisman). Usually women were familiar with *kitab*s. Most probably *kitab*s in which the spells or magical prayer have been inscribed can be prepared from leather like *biranna* “parchment”. One of the most unique feature of Ethiopic knowledge system is the process of producing the instruments of writing, such as parchment, inks, *bə’r* (local pen made from bamboo) or feather pen. What the Ethiopians call as *biranna* is obtained from wild as well as from other domestic animals. The most preferred animal skin is the goat skin, because most of the time *biranna* from goat skin were believed to be soft, durable, smooth and absorbent of inks. It was also believed that, amulets prepared from goat skin, might have added some strength on the power of magical spells which could be written on it.

### **5.1.1 Amulets before and after Christianity**

The magical literature of medieval Ethiopia contains many legends of women who wish to obtain wealth or health or power or being loved by men, made a contract with the evil spirits who gave them what they wanted very much to possess. Spells and magical prayers were the main role players for this purpose.

Magical prayers composed with some word powers and spells, were inscribed in long parchment and worn as *kitab*s around the neck. The principal classes of inscribed *kitab*s were sanctioned by *däbtāras* who composed by many biblical words, and sentences. For instance all words composed in the text of *Pslam 97* were used as *kitab*s and often had been written on leather in the form of rectangular size, and worn as an amulet. It is, however, quite clear that many of the magical practices which were made known for Ethiopians in the Bible, were of very great antiquity, and might have been shown at by the Jewish people who migrated and lived in Ethiopia.

Though there is no proof that the Ethiopians in general under Bible dispensation used amulets, it is tolerably certain that the pagan belief in their efficacy was understood without getting a real sense put into words, and

unofficially adopted by them, especially when after they had learned to write, they could inscribe the name of God, and the names of His angels, and passages from the sacred books.

Most of the time a kind of pagan amulet was made efficacious by the words, (i.e. the charm or incantation), which were pronounced over it by the magician, or dābtāra, but the words could be profane, and represented a belief in the power of the devils and evil spirits, which the Christian faith could not accept. But the object itself, whether it was a strip of leather or a stone like bead or metal plaque might be used by women and children. The provided words pronounced over it or written upon it, were derived from Holy Scripture. For example, in the text of the ጸሎት በእንተ መርቦብተ ሰሎሞን (Prayer about the net of Solomon) which was composed in the form of scroll the words እግዚአብሔር፣ ሚካኤል፣ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ወ.ዘ.ተ. (Jesus Christ) etc. are commonly found and become the example of Christian amulet. Some pagan style magical words also composed together with these biblical words.

There is no exact proof about the problem of some pagan magical words were mixed with biblical words, either inside Ethiopia or outside Ethiopia. However, Budge, in his book of “A history of Ethiopia V<sub>2</sub> P 582, made about the traditional sayings of this statement,

*“... Abyssinians abandoned their pagan cults and all their various magical practices at the command of Queen of Sheba, who under the influence of Solomon’s teaching had embraced Judaism, but this, even if true, only means that they exchanged native for Judaic systems of magic. Solomon’s power of working magic was, they thought, greater than that of any Abyssinian magicians, and with the acceptance of Solomon’s God, they adopted much that appertained to Hebrew magic and sorcery.”*

From the above narration, I understood that the magical practices in Ethiopia before the acceptance of biblical concepts were in the form of pagan styles. So, those mixed magical words might have been Ethiopian originalities.

### **5.1.2 Forms and preparations of materials for amulets (magical prayer texts)**

As it has been said before, the Ethiopia amulets appeared in several forms, such as a square sheet of parchment which practically represents a whole skin of goat or sheep, and it is composed in the form of a prayer book, as a scroll which varies in length and width, as a booklet which was probably carried in a case, as a metal disk like a coin or a cross, as inscribed stones, hung on the door of the house, etc.

Some amulets in the form of strips of leather (scrolls) contain short formula, accompanied sometimes by mystical diagrams, which are taken from biblical statements. The smallest formulas are found on silver-coin materials which are frequently worn by women and children at the present day to protect them from the evil spirits. All these manifold amulets have an ancient mystical tradition which in its essence and fundamental principle is indistinguishable from Jewish traditions.

### **5.2 Traditional and cultural beliefs on spirits**

Traditionally, here in Ethiopia, it is to be said and believed that there are distinctions in nature, function, and level among what people call and know as “spirits”, by which the magical inspiration of objects (human and non-human beings) is held. In other words there are in the world different considerations on “spirits”.

In Ethiopia, spirits were categorized into three parts, whose powers can be taped:

- The sprits of the church: (the Almighty, the Virgin Mary, various saints and angels.)
- The spirits of enemies of the church (*ganen*, demons)
- The spirits of the *zar* possession cult. (Zars use human beings as host)

Cultural practices among the societies in Ethiopia assert that if the existence of spirits is real, magical prayer will be functional. According to many magical prayer texts, both good and evil spirits have shared some facts throughout human life, and it was believed that they might have appeared in different forms.

### **5.2.1 Good spirits and magical prayer practices**

Most magical texts written in Geez have mentioned good spirits in the image of human beings. Here, the way of categorizing the spirits may include not only the interpretation of the Bible, but also the imagination of the traditionalists, based on either from the interpretation of the Bible or from their experiences.

As I mentioned in chapter four, magical prayers with defensive characters (e.g. *Təmhirtä həbu‘at*), with productive characters, and in turn texts with the character of countercharms, were mostly interconnected with good spirits. Naturally, human lives can be threatened by evil doings. Therefore, to protect oneself from them (evil spirits) and to be saved from dangerous acts of human beings, people tended towards supernatural powers.

The inscriptions on different amulets include the various names of God, the names of archangels, the magical names of Christ, as the cursed names of the fiends and devils which produce sickness and disease into human body. Not only the names, but also the pictures of angels, saints, cross at the beginning and at the end, and a kind of net drawings and others.

### **5.2.2 Evil spirits and magical prayer practices**

Scriptures tell us that some angels were capable of rebelling against God, for some sinned. In *Isaiah 14÷12-16*, though it has a somehow allegorical interpretation, the “fall” of Lucifer (*Sat’nael*) has been recorded and the text says that the “fall” of Lucifer is because of his pride before God.

Besides the scripture, the religious traditions which are the spark of the scripture, elaborates that those evil spirits emanate among the host of the

angels of God; and all these and many other stories tell that through such evil acts, the evil spirits emanated. The evil spirits were identified by different names. They also had hideous forms; part by animal, partly bird, part serpent, and part human. Also they appeared in the form of different objects.

Many magical texts mentioned them as *ganens* (*ganels*), demons (ርኩስ መንፈስ), Zars (ዛር), evil eye or aynāt, *Buda* (ቡዳ) q'urañña (ቁራኛ ልክፍት) etc. From the point of these texts, they were listed under the groups of human enemies.

### **5.2.2.1 Conceptions of ganen (s'äla'e Sännay) in magical texts**

As I mentioned before, ganens (sat'an) are grouped under evil spirits. It is believed that they can appear as a tall and thin black man except for certain details. As it was mentioned in chapter four, for the purpose of defending ganens or as a way of warding off such spirits, which are referred to as S'älae sännayat "hater of good things", many magical texts have the common traditional magical prayer writings and phrases, like ፀሎት በእንተ ባርያ ወሌጌዎን which can be wrapped up and will be worn around the neck, or arm. Here the word ባርያ (Bārya) represents *ganen* (Sat'an), because, it was believed that apparently they may be similar with *ganens* in physical appearance. Though they couldn't appear physically, some descriptions which were given by local people are generally based on oral traditional sayings.

#### **5.2.2.1.1 Names of diseases caused by ganen, and magical prayer defenses**

It is believed that the ganen's existence is entirely in the air and earth-bound, and that they are found in dirty and ash places. Disease names, thus, differ from designations of kinds of symptoms, although the names of certain symptoms are also used to denote specific ailments. For example, in traditional outlook *bird* refers to 'chill', but /yā-bird bäsita/ (lit. the chill disease) refers specifically to "Malaria". The same is generally true regarding the use of the

names of pathogenic agents. For example, the literal meaning of *yä-Barya bāšita* is the “ganen’s disease” i.e. *Barya* meaning “slave”, is often used as a euphemism for *ganen*. In practice, it is used to denote only “epilepsy”, one of the several ailments with which the *ganen* is associated.

If someone is affected by *ganen*, she/he will be victimized with madness (*ibdät*), and then repeatedly will be sick by epilepsy. Since madness strike the unprotected women who looks on a *ganen*, and if the glance is returned, the effects are mortal. So, dangerous is the *ganen*’s person that even a contact with his shadow leaves fear and called *‘aynä t’əla*. When the symptom is really seen, in order to defend this a magical prayer in the form of scroll can be composed in Ethiopic. The prayer starts: ጸሎት በእንተ ዓይነጥላ ወዓይነ ወርቅ. “A prayer about anxiety, and about eye of gold (yellow eye)”

This kind of prayer is always prepared for women who did not get a chance of marriage.

Traditionally it is believed that if one woman is victimized by *ayinä t’əla* which was caused by *ganen*, her assumed husband might not come and she will be left unmarried. Even if she would be married, the marriage will not be fruitful, and immediately the process of divorce will be real.

Similarly, *ganen*’s shadow is sufficient to attack the alone woman at night. Not only this, its shadow also becomes the cause of *ləkəft ልክፍት*: (lit: “demon pollution”). This refers to the transformation of substances causing no harm into some growing diseases through contact with certain agents. The *ganen* is the most virulent of these agents, and the most serious form of *ganen-ləkəft* results from the eaten food which has been tasted by *ganen*. Frequently, this is a kind of food which has been left uncovered over night. Or it could be caused by washing with “*ganen*-touched water” (*ganen-yeläkäfäw wəḥa*).

The sick woman becomes greatly fatigued by this cardiac activity and finds it particularly difficult to breath. Since the *ləkəft* substance works on contact,

washing with ganen-touched water results in a variety of skin ailments, such as scabies, and infrequently leprosy.

*Ləkəft* powers are also associated with crawling insects. The creepers are really contaminating, either through direct contact with their persons, or indirectly through which they have touched with, such as clothes. Sometimes if the illness which was created by *ləkəft* reached a higher stage and became incurable, the illness will be called 'əjesāb (Lit: hand of man) If charms (evil doings) are done on someone by other person, this is indicated as 'iəjesāb.

*Ləkəft* is also associated with a sun born agency known as *girifta* (ግርፍታ). Traditionally it is believed that if sunlight falls on soil recently moistened by shower rain or by human urine, the *girifta* symptoms can be created. Both the ailments which are mentioned through the above paragraphs, can be defended by magical prayers and by mystical word, like አልመክነን፣ አማኑኤል፣ ጌክ፣ በዒቃ፣ ቀርነ ሐሹል ዘነበረ ውስተ ቤተ ሰሎሞን። በዝንቱ አሰማቲክ ዕቀባ እምደዌ ሥጋ ወመጋኛ ለዓመትከ... (Awdä Nägäst. p. 252). “əlmäknun, Amanuel, gek, by s'eq'a, horn of ḡashul which has stayed in the house of Solomon by these Your magical names save your maiden from all flesh ailments”.

All ailments, traditionally connected with ganen causes. That was why they intended to use scrolls composed with magical prayers.

### **5.2.2.2 Other demons (Yä-lelit mänfäs or rəkus mänfäs) in magical texts**

Most of the time demon called by “she-devil”. That means this is female evil spirit and is considered as the spirit of the night. A traditional story tells that she always watches men during sleeping time. Budge wrote in his book, “... the night devil Lilith, who was a spirit wife of Adam before God gave him a wife of flesh [Eve]”, (Budge) 1930, 224).

Demons could be the cause of divorcing between husband and wife. This seems similar to the case of divorce to the action of ganen. However, it is different.

Divorcing by ganen is because of the ailment, while divorcing by demon is by sexual interconnection of the two. Means that if demons come towards their house through the night, the she-devil might have exercised towards the opposit sex. This has become the cause of divorce. Since the people, especially those who lived in the countryside of Ethiopia, were suffering by the attack of demon, they might have formulated and practiced magical prayers to be saved.

The she-devil also has a power to excercise some negative effects over women and children. For example, if one woman cannot give birth or remains barren, it is believed that the woman has been dominated by the power of she-devil. If the woman is with her newborn child, and if the she-devil watches it (child), it will be victimized by some kind of disease.

The main means of defending from the she devil is a known magical prayer found in the Ethiopic version of Ardēt, ዘአንበበ ዘንተ አስማተ ክርስቶስ ይደህን ... ወእምኩሉ ጋኔን ወመናፍስት ርኩሳን “one who reads this magical names of Christ, will be saved ... from all ganen and filthy spirits”. Here, Ethiopic ወመናፍስት ርኩሳን wāmānāfst rəkusan indicates the character of she-devil.

According to the traditional point of view in the country side, human beings can tap special powers through the help of magic and certain spirits. With these powers, it is possible to divine the future, to prevent misfortune by repelling and confounding agents of misfortune, end misfortune by neutralizing these agents, and in turn, send misfortune. There is an Amharic oral saying, እሾህን በእሾህ ፎፀካን ባፎፀካ, lit: “thorn with thorn”. It means that “like repels the like” or demon repels demons. This method was frequently practiced with magical spells.

### **5.2.2.3 Zars in magical texts**

Zars are mentioned in most magical prayer texts. One traditional story about the nature and origin of zars can be considered as the Ethiopian popular narrative. According to this traditional narrative, Adam and Eve had gotten 60 (some says 30) children. Then one day God asked Eve to tell Him how many

children she has (as if He did not know). But she hid thirty of them and displayed only the other thirty. And God knowing that she hid, said “May those who are displayed in front of Me be blessed, but those who you hid let be hidden”. Hence then, those whom God said to be hidden became Zars. That is why nowadays these spirits live among the people for both purposes, either to help or to hurt. Indeed, the traditional preaching of the church is commemorated with this oral tradition.

Zars which are under the group of spirits, are exercised in connection with human activities. They have different names in different places with different but very important traditional celebrations. The spirit of the possession cult in the old history of human societies, has very deep root. It is an embodied phenomenon on manifesting itself in physical pain, spiritual, emotion, anxiety, and hyper-convulsive behavior, temporary and partial amnesia. In other words possession is the state of a person whose body has fallen under the control of the devil or demon.

#### **5.2.2.3.1 Conviction of dābtārās on the existence of zars**

Dābtāras as role player on the tradition share the same idea with the society and with church members. For this reason, they also as the popular tradition divide the spirits into two major divisions. “incarnate” and “fine” spirits:

- a. The incarnate spirits experience all what human beings experience. It is to say that they may give birth, they are afraid of the lightening and thunderbolt; they are eaten by hyenas from which vomited the inside part of the bone of the zar, can be found hair like things. It indicates that the nature of this spirit is different from other physically known animals; and they will die. The difference is that they are hidden from human vision; they can accumulate countless wealths; they live for many thousands years. The secret of their life length is traditionally believed that they drink mercury which causes them live for a long time.

Though it is believed by many traditionalists and by dābtāras that the incarnate spirits will die, the following local story demonstrates. A dābtārā who went to his friend, a spirit caller, dābtārā (some times also Muslim) narrates the story and the incident in as follows:

*One day I went to what I knew who used to call spirits. On that same day when I went, he was about to call the spirits. As usual, all things needed for the rite were ready. Finishing, his preparation, he started divining (reciting the magical spell which is specified for that particular spirit). He continued unusually for a longtime. Unfortunately undid (አልሰረዘም) all the preparation and was lost into a contemplation searching whether he did a mistake to his promised spirit.*

*Another day, in my absence he did the same. On this day he was fortunate, the spirit appeared and they made discussion. Then when my friend asked why the spirit did not come in the pervious day, he got an anamazing answer from the spirit. The spirit told him “There was an old Zar who was our friend and was living in the time of Christ. On that day (the day of calling spirit (Zar)) she died and we were mourning there in her funeral. That is why you missed me.”*

Despite the spirits are the descendants of the “father of lie (sat’nael)”, this story from dābtārās and from traditionalists reflects about the existence of Zars and this death. Besides this paradoxical belief, there are many impressive incidences in the rural areas, especially in the lowlands and dwellings near the big rivers. Why then, we call them spirits though they are corporeal? Is that because we cannot sense (touching, seeing) them? Otherwise they are like human beings in marriage, multiplying and other human characters.

Another characteristics of the spirits, according to the narrative of some dābtārās, is that they have their own magical spell by which they are to be called by the dābtārās. They at times made this magical spell composed by someone whom they randomly chose. The purpose of calling Zars (ዛር መሳብ ወይም ዛር መጥራት) is to gain some hints how to solve the problem of the victims, (the sick people) and to change or divert the unfortunate conditions.

- b. Another group is that of incorporeal spirits which we referred to above, as “Fine spirits”. Dābtāras must offer some sorts of sacrifices and other

offerings, whereas the spirits must fulfil the need of dābtārās mostly attacking enemies and doing other secrets. These spirits, especially ganens, like those incarnate spirits, have their own magical spells by which they are called or pulled. Even the devil like the saints, also has “images” that the dābtārās use to pray it. For instance from the fragmented folios of the text of Mälk’a Sat’na’el, some special spells composed as:

/ሰላም ለአክናፈክ አምሳለ ፀሐይ ወወርኅ፣  
 እለ ይረውዓ ወትረ እምሰርክ እስከነግህ ፣  
 ንጉሠ ጋውል ሣጥናኤል ዘርዕየትክ ፍስሕ፣  
 ነፃ ነፃ ዘምስለ መንጅ መሲህ፣  
 ለተጻድቆ ፀርየ በብካይ ወላህ::/

“Sälam to your wings similar to sun and moon; who always run from afternoon till the dawn; king of Gawl Sat’na’el your looking is happy; come! Come! With the anointed mänji; to touch my enemy with cry and sad. (Fragmented folio in IES page No. 96); (cf. Strelcyn, 1960: P. 155).

The above statements, indicate that some dābtārās have used means of salutations from Sat’na’el the head of evil spirits). It indicates that there will be a special communication between the two parties (the caller and the being called). Among local people, the *ganen*-puller dābtārās are still being considered as if they are strong and powerful actors, and they are also believed as an *andärib*-maker (*andärib*-indicates an unusual calamity ordered by dābtārās).

Locally or traditionally it is believed that the dābtārā’s power can be derived from his intimacy with spiritual beings of the ganene. Therapeutic usefulness of the dābtārās familiarity is believed to be related to the ability of ganens to produce a wide variety of ailments. Some other ailments coincide symptomatically with ailments treatable by traditional farmacists (herbalists), but some others cannot be treated without the power of the spells.

### **5.2.2.3.2 Causes of ailments and intelligibility of zars**

From cultural and spiritual point of views, Zar spirits are regarded with the greatest interest and concern. On the one hand, Zars cause a great variety of ailments. On the other side, they are intelligible beings, each organized into socially structured communication systems and most important to humans; they are willing for communication of information of therapeutic significance as intermediary.

Zars select their victims carefully, most often choosing girls and women. Typically this choice is signaled by the onset of chronic stomach pain persisting headache, artheric complaints, although powerful zars are capable of sending any ailments.

Zars are visible only during the dream time of their human partners; in addition, they frequently speak through their hosts. From these sources of traditional stories, it is known that the zars have human-like forms and live in bisexual and culturally pluralistic society. That is why sometimes they are called as *wulaj* (lit: "hybrid").

Zars contrast with ganens in several significant respects. The zars live in that world which parallels that of the ordinary people but it is distinct from it is a world whose existence, together with that of Zars themselves, is denied by the church. The ganen's existence is entirely earth-bound, and he is identified as *s'äla'e-sänay* (lit, enemy of the good), whereas it is the zar which initiates living with his host; the ganen is forced into such relationships by his human partners' (*däbtäras*) knowledge about zan and ganen.

### **5.2.2.4 Concepts of evil eye (buda) in magical texts**

The fear of the Evil Eye always has been, and still is, common in Abyssinia (Budge, 1930: 185). Of all the things which have driven human being in all age to invent and to use magic, the most potent is the Evil Eye (*buda*). The reason is that the various ethnic groups, especially those who live in the northern region of Ethiopia, for many years were convinced that certain men and women,

certain flocks, and even apparently inanimate objects, possessed the power of causing, by a mere glance of the eye or look, or by a mere aspect or appearance, injury to their fellow creatures, and to their flocks and herds, and to their crops and in fact to any kind of property whatsoever.

This glance of the eye has always been thought to be especially injurious to children and women who were about to become mothers, for it threatened the very existence of the human race.

The look which the eye casts upon some person or thing in wondering, astonishing, or surprising can be made to produce an evil effect on that person or thing by means of words which the owner of the eye may utter at one. If the words disparage and operate in connection with the look, they will produce an evil effect on the person or thing which the eye is looking upon. And the same bad effect can be produced by the look or glance of the eye of the woman who will utter words of praise, makes a mental reservation whereby she produces the exactly opposite effect to that which her words wished to make.

Evil spirits and the Evil eye have from time immemorial been regarded as one and the same, and it is for this reason that among many people both in all directions, the evil eye (*Buda*) has been regarded as having an animal form.

The evil eye is often depicted in magical writings as an eye. e.g. psalm 17÷8, in Ethiopic version says, "*Kämä binta 'ayin*", (cf Mark 7 ÷ 22, Matt 20 ÷ 15).

The Ethiopians have always held the evil eye which they call "*ayenät*", in great fear, and their amulets are filled with eye pictures, because they expect to protect themselves from its influence. Christ has told to His disciples about the feature of the Evil Eye which is called a filthy one. The Ethiopians call their waste matter, as *'aynä-mədr*. This might have been connected with the word "eye of earth" because evil spirits are always believed as if they could have a relation with dirty things.

#### 5.2.2.4.1 Victims of Evil-Eye (*Buda*) and magical prayer

It is believed that human illness-causing powers may be inherited, as well as learned. Usually, inherited powers are limited to *budas*. Some people who have attractive physical features, or who have a “good blood (*t’əiru dām*)” excite the *buda*’s interest. The *buda*’s remaining victims are people he/she/*Buda*/ sees eating or drinking in public. In all cases the *buda* concentrates up on the part of his /her victim’s body that initially attracted him/her and through it inserted his/her invisible *buda* aspect into the victim’s abdomen.

For defending from *buda* spirit, many magical prayer texts prepared with many magical words as ... ወላዲኖ ለሰይጣን ወለጂን ቦቸር ወለኩሉ ሰብአሎፍሐም ዳግመ እሠሮሙ በዝንቱ አሰማት ወበዝንቱ ቃላት አሰተናግር ለቡዳ መሰርይ ወለእመ አሀዘ እደሰብ ይትናገር ህመም በእግዚብሔር ኩብ ወወልድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ እግዚእነ ኢየሱስ ክርስቶስ ህድግ ይቤለክሙ ለገብርክሙ እገሌ/ (Audä Nagast f 133). This is not found in the printed Audä Nägäst).

“Woladino to Sat’an and to jinn, bochär, and to all people of lofham, and again lat tied them by this magical name and by these words, and make the provocative *buda* to speak, if *Edäsäb* (hand of man) has caught the sick person says: “By God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Sprit our Lord Jesus Christ said to you Leave your servant some one masculine”

In other wards, *yä-säw’ayn*; (lit: the person’s eye) share important similar functions with *buda* spirit power. It is exercised voluntarily, and in the case of *Yä-säw’ayn*, this power is usually unknown to its possessor. The victim of *Ye-saw’ayn* may have “good physical feature” (ቁመናዋ ያመረ) or “good blood” (the term “good blood” is to say the one who was born from a well known family) or more frequently, she may have been observed while eating or drinking, or when an obstacle touches her foot on the road, etc.

Most of the time women and children are victimized in this matter. For healing purpose, many magical prayer formulas, which can be prepared in the form of

scrolls, like as ፀሎት በእንተ ዓይነ ሰብእ sometimes the strategy of healing could be done in dialogue form with the ailment agent, that convincing the buda (agent) to leave the sick man. To heal the victim both the *däbtärās* and the herbalists are the main actors. Like hearbalists, *däbtärās* are sorted into a graded series according to differences in healing power. In general, the two types of practitioners can be arranged into parallel and mutually distinct series, according to the sources of their respective healing power. While the herbalist's power driven from the traditionally transmitted herbal (pharmacological) information, the *däbtära's* power can be derived from his intimacy with spirit beings with the help of magical prayers.

### **5.3 Some names of demons and their anthropological values<sup>7</sup>**

From the preceding subtopics it is indicated that evil sprits are distinguished from other good spirits by distinctive classificatory systems. This distinctive factor can be functionally related to certain features of traditional magicians' perspectives, and their activities through the society.

Most of the time evil spirits are grouped and called under the common names – such as säytan, ganen, demon (yä-lelit mänfäs), Zar, Mälə'akä mōt, S'allim, Təq'ur, q'äyəḥ, S'äla'e Sännay, mästema, yä-ayär ganen, Yä-baḥr jinn, etc. A lot of magical prayer texts were composed in connection with the name of these evil spirits. The names of evil spirits inscribed inside *kitab*s were mentioned in relation to certain kinds of ailments caused by them, e.g. those who make the head sick who disturb the brain, who make the face black, who wound the eyelids, who make the eye decay, who make the ears deaf, who prevent the nose from smelling, who make voice feeble, who bend the neck, who distort the intestine, and others were considered as the general name of evil spirits. It was believed that these kinds of evil spirits should exist wherever human beings live.

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<sup>7</sup> Anthropological valves: This is more related to cultural anthropology. This term is in this thesis, is used to explain about man and his work. His belief, knowledge, art, morals, law, custom like magical prayer etc.

From a cultural point of view, every disease was believed to be caused by evil spirits who were more or less considered strong, and most probably in many magical texts, the evils were identified and named as legion.

### 5.3.1 Local names of demons and zars

Both to defend and pull demons, *däbtärās* have used specific names of demons or zars. Tradition says, each demon and Zar has his/her own name. For example, Attete, Imma Wulud (mulad), ainät, wärzəliya, Däbas, Dask, 'enate Mariyam, etc are considered as names of Zars or demons.

Some magical prayer texts were also composed with some ethnic and religious words, and used as the names of Zars and demons, like በስመ አብ: ጸሎት በእንተ ማእሰረ አጋንንት ዘቅማንት ወፅላወጊ ዘእስላም ወክርስቲያን ዘአምሐራ ወዘትግሬ... “by the name of the Father... A prayer about the fitter of granens of the *dəlawägi* of Muslim and Christian, and of Amhara and Təgre” (Scroll IES no 1829 (442), 2<sup>nd</sup> part).

Next to this, there are composed magical words or spells, which were written repeatedly seven or three times each, e.g. kananh (7), Kahənan (red) (7) etc. magical prayers which were connected within either ethnic identity or religious concepts give some hints about ideological intentions. In other texts, these kinds of magical prayers might have been used between the dominant and the minor groups of ethnics in the society. Or they might have been used as the means of defensive methods among the ethnic groups. That means, the methods might have been used as defensive method during the propagation and expansion of religious concepts between Islam and Christian or might have used to neutralize the real practices of evil (kifat) magics of Islam an Christian followers of each other.

In the same scroll (part 3), it said: ... በአምላክ ጻድቃን ወሰማዕት አምሀልኩክሙ ወአውገዘኩክሙ አንትሙ አጋንንት እኩያን ወሰብአ መሠርያን ... ውግዓት ወቁርጥማት ቆሌ ወቁራኛ (ዛር) ... አድህና ለዓመትክ ወለተ ሚካኤል” /By the God of saints and martyrs, I swear you and I anathematized you the bad ganens, and you people of

magicians ... wəg'at (sharp pin pain) and q'urt'əmat, q'olle and q'urañña (zar), ... please save your maiden servant Wälätä Mika'el.

In general, the given statements in all paragraphs assert that, sometimes the names of different ethnic groups have been represented as if a local names of demons or Zars were replaced by the names of ethnic groups. Some are listed as däsk (ደስክ), Gudäle (ጉደሌ), nob (ኖብ), 'afägam (አፈ.ጋም), qäc'är (ቀጨር), dino (ዲኖ)... etc (Strelcyn, 1955:327-390).

### **5.3.1.1 Some unique names of locally known femal zars and demons**

As it was said before, many locally known evil spirits can be identified by their own names. Some kinds of demons or Zars might have one name in one place, and another name in another places. Sometimes also they can be named in relation to the causes of their effects, or can be named with words which have ethnical and ideological meanings.

For the present study I have chosen two Zars, Attete and Immäwulud (bulad) (አቴቴ እመውሉድ (ቡላድ)) which are greatly honoured in the countryside. A little bit they are similar by their functional effects over the society. I listed them as **A** and **B**; both are reffered to as female spirts.

**A:** Attete – is a super natural power that shapes the destiny of people. Many kinds of misfortune are attributed to this zar, such as sickness in the family, and among domestic animals, economic crises, attacks from neighbors, etc. To overcome these negative factors, annually people celebrate them in great manner.

On the eve of Attete, the woman wears a dress decorated with black, red and white colours. Since once the woman has been possessed by Attete, she will celebrate her, and should become the main actor among the audiences. If she ignores the Zars celebration, the whole family believe that the distraction will

come soon by the assumed Zar, even, could be more than the former distraction.

The spirit Attete-Zar is supposed to speak through the mouth of the Attete woman. The center of the ritual act in most cases, is the Attete woman.

According to the traditional point of view, originally the women might have been expected to defend themselves from the Attete's negative effect; and for this purpose sometimes they wear kitabs composed with magical words of God. However, once they are possessed with Attete spirit, they will be known as the victim of Q'urāñña and Mägañña (ቁራኛ ወመጋኛ) ailments. These words are mentioned in magical prayer scrolls (cf 5:3.1).

**B.** one of the famous female Zars, is Immäwulud (lit: children's mother). She is well known by the local people in all Gojjam region. According to one traditional story which is narrated around Dima (great monastery in East Gojjam) and Addet (near to Bahr Dar), first she had lived near Dima, and the people believed that she became the cause of some ailments of mothers and children. She attacked women with continuous bleedings, and by making them not to give birth. If by chance they (women) have given birth, the child could be attacked or even could be killed by the power of this she -Zar.

Because of fearing of her evil doings, the people started to worship her. Still there is one big mountain called by her name "*Immäwulud Tärārā*". This is found near the monastery of Dima. One day Abba Täkästä Bərhan (his former name was Abba Bakimos), a medieval saint of Ethiopia, the founder of monastery of Dima, heard about *Imma wulud* as she was worshipped by the people. Then, he went towards her and ordered her to leave the place. Because of this condition, she left and went to *AgawMidir* (lit: Land of Agaw) and to Addet. The people of Dima had been taught and baptized, and became free from evil doings. This story is widely known among the people.

From gädlä Abba Täkästä Birhan which was translated and summarized from Geez to Amharic, by አባ ገ/አምላክ, 1998 E.C, *Imma wulud* was quoted in the

introduction part, and says, as /... በአካባቢው ሕዝብ አጠራር እመውሉድ የምትባል ዛር በብርቱ ህመም የምታሰቃያቸውን ሰዎች በፃድቁ በአቡነ ተክስተ ብርሃን ፀበል ሲጠመቁና ሲጠጡ ይድናሉ። «እመውሉድ» እየተባለች የምትጠራው ዛር በፃድቁ በአቡነ ተክስተ ብርሃን ጸሎት ከዲማ ተባርራ ወደ አገው ምድር ተሰደደች። በዚያም አካባቢ ሰዎች የእኛ እመቤት እያሉ ይጠሯታል። ያመልኳታል። በዚህ ምክንያት ከእግዚአብሔር መንፈስ እየራቁ በመሆናቸው በዛሯ ጠንቅ በተለያዩ ደዌ እየተሰቃዩ ይገኛሉ።

“... The local people who were affected by different ailments caused by Zar, which is locally known and called Immäwulud’ could be recovered from their ailments when they have been baptized and drank the wholly water cononized or sanctified by the name of this saint. This Zar, which is locally called ‘Immäwulud’ was pushed by the prayer of Abba Täkästä Birhan from Dima to Agaw midir. The people who live there, worship her and called her as ‘Ye-’ēña Immäbet (lit: our lady) or as ‘Innate Mariyam” (lit: My mother Mary). Since they have forgotten the spirit of God, still they are being affectged by different ailments and by her (zar) evil doings.”

Among the peoples of Agaw Midir and Addet, the belief in her, and her annual ceremonial practice, are common. They commemorate her in each house with her symbolic image. This practice can give some hints of how the she-devil (zar) became the dominat culture in the society.

### **5.3.1.1.1 Zars can be explained in the from of human image**

Various conclusions have been reached at by those local peoples traditional story tellings. However, there is no doubt that her influence exists and the belief in her is beyond all primeval doubt. Moreover, the languages which are spoken either in her initial place (Dima) or in the place where she is commemorated now both Semitic (Geez Amharic) and central Cushitic (Agaw) respectively contain a word or expression which is the equivalent of Immawulud. This demonstrates the sharing of culture in both sides.

Immāwulud is represented in the form of human skeleton with very long hair standing upright (የተንጨፈረረ) on her head. The picture of Immāwulud which is found in the monastery of Dima, and quoted by Abba G/Amlak, shows as of she has been touched by the known staff (መቁሚያ) of Abba Tākästa Birhan, and turned back her forth and chased her away from Dima to Agaw Midir.

There is a strong belief about this in the society, and people around Addet are well acquainted with the spirit of Immāwuldud. In all periods they are found under the influence of Immāwulud. That is why around Addet they call her as 'ənnate Mariyam (lit: my mother Mary). Curiously enough, they sometimes call her, being afraid of incurring her evil doings over theme. The case of Immāwulud is more similar to the case of Wərzəliya. Their picture is almost similar, both are believed as the closer of wombs of women and marders of children. The picture shows both sides the bare body of her. The only difference is that while St. Susenyos drove his spear into the right side of Wərzəliya and killed her, St. Tākästä Bərhan simply touched the body of Immāwulud and chased her away. So, the explanation about the zars in the form of human image demonstrates their anthropological values in the society.

## CHAPTER VI

### 6. Summary, conclusion and recommendation

#### 6.1 Summary and findings

The two basic words, amulet and scroll are used here interchangeably for the same purposes. Both are composed with different kinds of magical prayers and spells. When we say “magical texts”, we mean that the texts contain magical prayers which are written in Ethiopic. Each magical text through its contents, indicates the traditional and cultural influences on today’s activities of the people.

Traditionally it is believed that magical prayers have the power to create the normal living conditions for women, because they can protect themselves against evil spirits by using amulets. They can be encouraged to stop continuous bleedings of themselves, for their child care. So, the life of women in countryside is based on the practice of magical prayers.

Culturally, based on the lexical features of magical words the communication systems are more functional in the life of women than in men. During the explanation of the nature of women, magical words are easily understood by women.

In many magical texts certain magical formulas have common usage. The formulas at the initial points of magical prayers, the repetition of spells and magical words based on number 3 and 7, the name of the female owner on scrolls, etc, all have emphasized the relation between magic and women for the fact that to be saved from evil doings.

The philological, historical, cultural consideration; and the anthropological values of demons which are frequently explained in relation to magical prayers have taken the considerations. The names of demons and their anthropological values related to women are clearly identified. Most of the time Zars, evil eyes, evil spirits, Jinns, demons can be seen by the image of women. Because,

traditionally it is believed that Zar possession will be functional only on women. Some names of Zars, such as Immä would, Atete, Inate Mariyam and the like, mentioned in this study are feminine. All the mentioned Zars are known as female Zars. Many magical texts mention them repeatedly. (Harold Aspen: 2001)

Somewhere near the monastery of Dima, in Eastern Gojjam and near to Bahir Dar-Addet in Western Gojjam, those demons who are mentioned above, are still used as the head figure of each family in the society. They are celebrated annually in each house in that region.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

The traditional and cultural beliefs on magical prayers and their influences on women's life have been observed and discussed from two directions. One is from the great number of magical texts. The other one is from oral discussions with the owners of some magical prayer texts.

Most magical texts which are listed in this study were composed in connection with women and female demons. So, they are explained and interpreted according to on the cultural and traditional beliefs of the society.

There is still considerable number of people who do not believe in them, claiming that the beliefs on magical prayers are rather difficult. According to them, the magical practices are the results of false interpretations. Even if, it does not mean that a magical belief is true, many words in magical prayers narrate about the social interactions among different ethnic groups. So, their historical and philological and anthropological values in both sides deserve great consideration.

## **6.3 Recommendations**

In general, the Ethiopians do not have interest to know how and in what way the magical prayers became acceptable in the society. Since the functions of many magical prayers have been practiced through informal ways, concerning

them, information gaps were created. Because of this, many Ethiopians lost their interest on magical prayers. So, this study indicates the methods of how to know the relations among different ethnic groups gaps.

No doubt that the history of every country has been developed by the composition of many elements, such as culture, traditions, customs, language communications and the writing systems and others. If so, also magical prayers are parts of the elements which help to develop the history of the country. There are many works of magical prayer texts, but still only few are studied. Therefore, this study indicates the methods and tries to attract the researchers who are interested in.

- To know the starting point of magical prayers and to know how they are transformed through traditions.
- To supply informations for some organizations (governmental and non governmental) who intend to study the linguistic character of magical prayers and their influences on gender issues among different ethnic groups.
- To know the ideological intentional words which are found in many magical texts.
- To reconstruct of the social of the country and to fill the gap.
- To know the causes of the conflict among different ethnic groups, because there are unique magical prayers words composed for the purpose of defense against each other among different ethnic and religious groups.

## REFERENCES

### INDEX-I

#### A. Some magical names of God

አዶናይ	ኢያኤል
አልፋ	ኤል
ጸባዖት	ኬ
ኤሎሄ	መሰድዮስ
ኤስዮንሮድህ	አፍርዮን
ሂድራ	አፍራናት
አፍሎጳሎሜስ	ኂጣ
ኢያሂ	አፍር
ሱራሂ	ልሃን
ደመናኤል	አማኑኤል
አቅባዴር	ኢያኤል
አብያቴር	ማርዮን
ምናቴር	ያው
አድናኤል	ላሃን
ኬንያ	የውጣ
ግዮስ	አራኤል ወዘተ
ቤቃ	
ሴቃ	
ሰተናዊ	

**Source:** E. Littman Arde'et: *The Magic Book of Disciples*, JAOS (25),  
Princeton University Baltimore. 1904: 9-10.

## B. Some magical names of angels

ሚካኤል	ሰውርያል
ገብርኤል	መላድያል
ሩፋኤል	መዳርያል
ሱርያል	አፋኤል
ሰዳክያል	ፋሮድያል
ሰራትያል	አራድያል
አክያል	መራድያል
ዳርትያል	ብርሃናኤል
ለርትያል	ፍልክኤል ወዘተ
ኤልያል	
ታታኤል	
ዮልያል	
አርትያል	
ልብትያል	
ልብቅያል	
ሚታኣል	
ሚርያል	
አክሲፍያል	
አውክትያል	
ቢቅያል	

**Source:** መጽሐፈ ባርቶስ: 76 Folios, Parchment in the Institute of Ethiopian Studis (IES) Library, A.A.U.

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the under signed, declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other universities and that sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

**Tadesse Esubalew**

**Signature**



**January, 2008**

**Addis Ababa University School of Graduate Studies**

## **CONFIRMATION**

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University advisor

**Confirmed by the Advisor**

**Professor Paolo Marrassini**

**Signature**



**January, 2008**

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