

PRELIMINARY NOTES
ON
ANCIENT ETHIOPIAN HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

These notes were hurriedly gathered together to ensure their availability at the Second Annual Conference on the Horn of Africa: May 29-30, 1987, New York, N.Y. Hence their preliminary character.

In a critical article I wrote on the presumed ancient triple heritage of Ethiopia (Issue, vol. 13, 1984), I suggested towards the end that the methodical doubt of Descartes may be a productive approach to the study of the African patrimony. In that spirit, many assumptions on the Ethiopian past are here subjected to skeptical scrutiny. At this juncture, little more can be achieved. Further investigation may produce more conclusive results. Nevertheless, this exercise would be worthwhile if it contributes towards a clearer view of the region's history.

Present consciousness interprets the past and influences the future. Both the interpretation of the past and the vision of the future shape our daily lives. In Ethiopia, and in the wider Horn of Africa, the present is a grim reality of war and want and of destruction and deprivation. Apart from forces outside the region, the chief architects of that reality are the inhabitants of the region — especially its "elites". If the way these elites view their past now was less than satisfactory, might a more wholesome perspective remedy the excesses and tragic consequences of the myopic chauvinisms and nationalisms of the present? This preliminary study aspires to contribute towards the formulation of such an alternative perspective.

The inspiration for much of my independent research in the last few years has come from the works of classical Ge'ez scholars, especially from Asras Yane Saw's brief but pithy የገንዘብ መሠረታዊ የጽሑፍ ፊደል መሠረት: (A Monument to Ham: Notice on the Foundation of the Ethiopic Alphabet), and his opus እጩ ነገሮች: ማን ነገሩ?:: (Axum Asks: Who Are You?) The latter is a refutation of Gasparin Wolde Maryam's የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ: (The History of Ethiopia), a Catholic father's version of Ethiopian history presented to Haile Selassie on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of his coronation. Reading and rereading Asras' works, his "unorthodox" historiography compelled me to check and counter-check some of his views against those of foreign and highly esteemed scholars. The more I did so, the more persuasive many of his ideas appeared, and the less intimidating those intellectual giants became. These notes are thus submitted in the spirit of: (1) an affirmation in the value of Ge'ez sources as well as the various oral traditions of the entire region; and (2) a skepticism in what has passed for "authority" on the region's history, politics, and culture. The chief limitation of this preliminary study is its heavy emphasis on the Ge'ez heritage. Studies like Asmarom Legesse's Gada (1973) furnish an in-depth picture of Oromo culture and his "postscript" especially highlights the deficiencies of Euro-centric scholarship. Said Samatar's Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism (1980) is another excellent work on one of the Horn's most important regions and cultures. Similar studies for the other regions still await future scholars of the area. In the meantime, this preliminary study hopes to correct some commonly held and widely disseminated views and to urge a more rigorous scholarship in future writings on the area.

CHAPTER I

The Historiography of Ethiopia

In the context of a discussion of African historiography, two prominent African historians, Dike and Ajayi, remark that the Ethiopian historical tradition is "partly African and partly of Judaeo – Christian inspiration." They write:

The monasteries recorded the annals of each reign and preserved important texts and charters. Yet the primary interest of Ethiopian intellectual life was theological, not historical; there was little attempt until recent times to analyze and interpret the annals and the chronicles to produce history." (Intl. Encycl. of the Social Sciences, vol. 6, p.396)

They also state that African historiography deals with traditions of origins as well as factual traditions of king lists, genealogies, laws, customs, etc. that are transmitted by "priests, diviners, wise men," etc. In this regard, Ethiopian historiography, has been formulated and fashioned not by "priests, diviners, wise men," etc. but by foreign scholars and their indigenous associates. The foreign scholars are often handicapped by lack of familiarity with the ethos of the culture or with the nuances of the languages of the peoples they study. Consequently, there has yet to emerge a systematic, competent, and objective enterprise "to analyze and interpret the annals and the chronicles" as well as the manuscript sources and the oral traditions "to produce history."

The formulation of Ethiopian and other African historiography by European scholars at times suffers from Afro-phobia and Euro-centrism. Such attitude rears its head even in unexpected quarters. One of the West's most versatile and prolific authors is Issac Asimov. Although primarily a popularizer of science and a writer of science fiction, he has also written Asimov's Guide to the Bible. As the following shows, he appears to go through some agonizing doubts when he deals with terms like "Ethiopia", or with what the two African historians cited above would consider that portion of Ethiopian history which was of Judaeo – Christian inspiration.

"The Ethiopian Woman

The Israelites set out on their march toward Canaan and along the way, Moses had to contend with various types of disaffection. Even within his own family there was dissension, for his sister, Miriam, and his brother, Aaron, entered into an intrigue against him:

Numbers 12:1. And Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian Woman whom he had married....

From this verse one might picture, as many people do, a Negro woman as Moses' wife, since "Ethiopian" is used frequently nowadays as a euphemistic synonym for "Negro". However, there is no reason to think that a Negro woman was involved, or even an Ethiopian woman in the modern sense. The Hebrew word here translated as "Ethiopian" is "Cushi" and in the Revised Standard Version, Moses' wife is described as "the Cushite woman."

As I explained earlier (see page 19), a Cushite might indeed be an Ethiopian. According to legend, Moses served as an Egyptian general in his youth and led his troops in a victorious campaign in Ethiopia and might, conceivably, have picked up a wife or concubine there. However, there is no Biblical evidence of this and the legend of Moses' Ethiopian adventures is probably based on nothing stronger than this single verse.

Against this view is the fact that the Cushites are also Arabian peoples (see page 20).

Only one woman is specifically mentioned in the Bible as being married to Moses. Moses' marriage took place during his flight into Midian, in Arabia, and his stay at the home of a desert priest (see page 129):

Exodus 2:21. And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

Zipporah may very well have been the Cushite woman referred to in Numbers 12:1. She could be resented by Miriam out of generalized intrafamilial jealousy, or, specifically, because she was a "Cushite woman"; that is, a Midianite and a foreigner, and not an Israelite.

In any case, Moses faced down his brother and sister and won out over dissent as he did on numerous other occasions in the course of the Exodus." (p.167-68)

The long quotation above demonstrates difficulties foreign scholars may have in assessing even written records. Asimov's tortured equivocation regarding the meaning of "Cush" is rather amusing. More callous is his speculation, without any apparent justification, that what the Bible refers to as wife might really have been only a concubine with all the male chauvinism that that implies. Thus the reader needs to be discerning when reading African history or related literature produced by European scholarship.

Beginning with Job Ludolf in the mid-1600s, a number of European scholars have been engaged in the study of Ethiopian history and culture. The quality of their works varies. While Dillmann's Lexicon Linguae Aethiopicae (1865) would rank among the more impressive lexicographical works ever, Conti Rossini's much lauded Storia d'Etiopia (1928) may be deficient in fundamental respects. Overall, the contributions of linguists are perhaps more impressive than those of historians where Ethiopian Studies is concerned. In any event, the recognition of foreign "authority" on Ethiopian Studies was elevated to semi-official status in the sixties with an increasing number of Haile Selassie I Prize awards going to foreign historians of Ethiopia. Ethiopian recipients figured mainly in literature.

One of those foreign scholars honored as "authority" by such an award, Ullendorff, lists "masters" of Ethiopian Studies in the very first chapter of The Ethiopians where he evaluates their contributions. The judgement is valid when limited to an European audience and if it referred only to a "relative" mastery. Modern Ethiopian scholars also appear to have accepted whole such evaluation, and, as a result, cease to search for masters of the subject closer to home. Thus the works of the classical Ge'ez scholar mentioned in the introduction above do not appear in the bibliographies of Ethiopian historians.

One important aspect of Ethiopian history the "masters" and their modern Ethiopian counterparts all seem to agree upon * is the origin of Axumite civilization. ** A standard fare of the account is given in as late a work as a 1978 Cambridge History of Africa (Vol. 2, p. 262):

"The origins of the Aksumite kingdom go back well into the first millenium B.C., when settlers from South Arabia and the Yemen introduced Semitic languages, building in stone, and literacy. They may also have been the first to introduce agriculture into the area..."

* Getachew Haile and Tsegaye Gabre Medhin are among the outstanding exceptions.

** A conference on "Ethiopian Origins" was held at SOAS, London University on 28-29 June 1977. However, the proceedings were not published, and it is, therefore, difficult to evaluate the papers presented there.

To a large extent, the Semitic Sabean origin hypothesis has been internalized officially as well as by many groups. Recently, an Ethiopian addressed his compatriots thus: "To my Semitic – Cushitic brethren." The key term in the whole address was presumably "brethren". Still it repeats and implicitly sanctions the Semitic Sabean origin hypothesis. Yet there is no SEMITIC/HAMITIC* dichotomy in Ethiopian tradition.

The ኃገብ፡ ኃገሥት :: (The Glory of the Kings) classifies Ge'ez as a language of the house of Ham. So does መጽሐፈ ምዕጢ፡ ሐግደ፡ ጠግኤር :: (Book of the Mystery of Heaven and Earth). A relatively more recent 16th century work አፋቆጸ፡ ኃገሥት :: (The Gate of Faith) repeats the same point. Ge'ez sources are clear on that score. If Ge'ez is not a Semitic language, then much less so would be the other Ethiopian "Semitic" languages like Tigre, Tigrinya, Amharic, Harari, Gurage, etc. The classification of Ge'ez as a Semitic language is a rather arbitrary and recent European one. Until Greenberg came up with a single "Afro-Asiatic" family of languages, Semitic and Hamitic languages plus three other major groups were all considered separate families. Younger European, American, and other linguists are questioning further other earlier assumptions.

The title of Murtonen's work reveals the skepticism of a new generation of scholars studying the languages of the Horn: Early Semitic: A Diachronical Inquiry into the Relationship of Ethiopic to the Other So-Called South-East Semitic Languages. As it is a bold new approach, it is worth the quoting at length:

"Add the result of our vocabulary survey, according to which ancient South Arabic is more closely related to (Northern) Arabic and North-West Semitic rather than Ethiopic, and the fact that the syntax of sentences also is radically different in South Ethiopic from the state of things in the other languages studied, as well as from the rest of the Semitic family, although the present state of research and material available to the present writer did not allow investigation proper into the syntax. However, even what has been said above may be sufficient to prove that South Arabic, Soqotri, and Ethiopic have been developing independently of each other since the Proto-Semitic period, and that the connection between North and South Ethiopic also has been rather minimal from those days until less than a millenium ago and that at least some of the modern South Arabic languages do not derive from the epigraphically attested ancient South Arabic dialects. Moreover, the

* Hamitic and Cushitic are used interchangeably by linguists. According to the Biblical account, Cush is only one of the four sons of Ham. Thus the interchangeability is, strictly speaking, not warranted.

archaic features of Tigre and Gurage can hardly be accounted for otherwise than on the supposition that they have been living apart from the rest of Ethiopic for long periods, and since ancient times, which hardly could have been the case, had they come together with other ancestors of present-day Ethiopians from South Arabia; Cushitic and Egyptian affinities also point to a permanent stay of most Ethiopians on the African continent. We may therefore conclude our study establishing that the original home of the Semitic speaking nations was probably the Horn of Africa, and that they never formed quite closed unity even in what is commonly called the Proto-Semitic period, but were partially isolated and also in contact with dialects from which some of the present-day Hamitic languages developed. We hope that these results also will serve as a basic working hypothesis for further investigations in our field." (p. 73-74; emphasis added)

In any event, what is clear is that the boundary between Semitic and Cushitic languages or the location of the origin of especially "Semitic" is no longer as certain as might have been presumed by earlier generations of linguists.

Murtonen's conclusion quoted above seriously questions any significant linguistic connection between South Arabia and Ge'ez (ie. Ethiopic). Yet one of the pillars of the theory of the Semitic/Sabean origin of Axumite civilization is presumably the introduction of Semitic languages by South Arabian settlers in the first millenium B.C. (see Cambridge History of Africa quote above).

Over a century earlier, Henry Salt also questioned the suggestion of Sabceans immigrating into Ethiopia. He looked for a corroborative account in South Arabian lore. His finding is worth quoting in full.

"I still retain the opinion I have given in my former observations on this subject; that the Abyssinians, or Axomites (as they were called by the Romans) are descended from a race of the aboriginal inhabitants of Africa, composed of native Ethiopians who became in the course of time mixed with settlers from Egypt, and that they do not exhibit any claims to an Arabian descent, as was supposed by the late Mr. Murray; though I confess that I feel considerable regret in entertaining a different opinion from that gentleman on a subject, upon which, from his extra-

ordinary acquirements in Oriental literature, he was in some respects, so eminently qualified to decide. The chief, and indeed sole argument on which Mr. Murray founded his opinion, was drawn from the similarity between the Ge'ez and the Arabian languages, but surely this circumstance may be sufficiently accounted for, from the supposition, that both might have been derived from the same common stock, namely the Hebrew, which Mr. Murray himself appears to have satisfactorily explained to be the most ancient language in existence; whereas, on the other side of the question, the general tenor of the history of the Abyssinians, their buildings, written character, dress, and the description of them given in the earliest Arabian and Byzantine writers, all tend to prove them a distinct race from the Arabs.

As the last argument has not before, to my knowledge, been used, though it appears to bear very strongly on the question, I may be excused for entering into it a little more at large. In the history of Arabian Felix, collected from various Arabian authors, by Schultens we find several accounts of the conquest of this country by the Abyssinians, and the epithets continually applied to them are "blacks" (سود), which Schultens translates Aethiopes; and "people with crisped hair" (*crispa tortilique coma*);² one of their princes also, suing to the Emperor of Persia, entreats him to drive out "these crows," who are hateful to his countrymen;³ the application of which terms, makes it apparent that there existed, at that time, no traces of their being descended from the same progenitors. The Axomites are likewise correctly distinguished from the Homerites, in Philostorgius, one of the earliest of the Byzantine writers, by the appellation of "Aethiopes,"⁴ and in like manner Procopius,⁵ Cedrenus,⁶ Cosmas, and John Malala,⁷ though all apply to the word Indi to both people, confine the epithet Aethiopes to the Axomites. The term of Ethiopians too, or Itiopjawan,⁸ is, as I have before noticed the favorite appellation by which the Abyssinians designate themselves. It is true, that in the intercourse carried on with the opposite coast, vast numbers of Arabians have in process of time become mingled with them; but still it appears to me, that both in feature, colour, habit and manners, they form a perfectly distinct race." (p. 458-459)

The effort to establish an external origin for the people of Ethiopia has led some scholars to an examination of the names of people and places – ethnonymy and toponymy. Where the name of a people or a place has been found to be the same on either side of the Red Sea Coast, that has been usually interpreted as rather conclusive evidence of a South Arabian origin. Conti Rossini's work is especially liberal in its employment of this device. Thus the name of a "Habashat" tribe in South Arabia is supposed to have generated the name "Abyssinia," a term applied to Ethiopia, and the tribe is supposed to be one which migrated to Ethiopia and became one of the dominant "Semitic" groups.* An uncertain Arabic word "Habash" is also supposed to refer to a mixing of sorts' and is also often paraded as proof of the etymology of the name and also of the mixing of Semites and Hamites to become the ancient Ethiopians.

In contrast to the above, Desta Tekle Wold's ዐዲስ፡ዓገራ፡መዝገብ፡ቃላት (A New Amharic Dictionary) has under the entry አቢስ፡አቢሳ፡ (Abys) (ከላው)፤ የሰው፡ሥም፤ የሥፍራ፡

ሰባተኛ፡ልጅ፡የናምሩቱ፡ታናሽ፡፡የሃገሩ፡ሥም፡፡

አቢሲኒያ፡(አቢሳዊ)፤ የአቢሱ፡(ያጻራ)፡አገር፡ሐበሻ፡፡ዶሃውዎ፡ሥም፡፡

ከ፪፡ሊቃናት፡በልቶ፡ሃባራ፡አቢሲኒያ፡መሃለት፡ፊሊንጅኛ፡ሃው፡፡

Abs, Abysa (Kalaw): – name of a person, Cush's seventh son, Namrud's younger brother: an ethnos name. Abyssinia (Abyssawi): – the country of Abys (of Amara), Habesha. This name existed before the time of the Septuagint writers. Abyssinia is a foreign term.

The Amharic Dictionary derives Abyssinia not from the name of a South Arabian tribe but from that of Cush's seventh son. It makes Abys the grandson of Ham.

Ethnonymy, toponymy, and generally etymology are useful research devices, but their abuse or their facile interpretation is likely when not painstakingly counter-checked.

Perhaps another way of looking into the whole issue of origins is by changing the ground rules set by modern Ethiopicists and by taking classical and Old Testament references to Ethiopia more seriously than they have been hitherto.

*Getachew Haile in a footnote to his paper "Some Notes..." remarks:

"According to the penetrating observations of A.K. Irvine 'On the Identity of the Habashat in the South Arabian Inscriptions, JSS, 10/2 (1965, pp. 178-196, there was no nation or tribe called Habasha in South Arabia."

One such classical author, Diordorus of Sicily wrote:

"The Ethiopians say that the Egyptians are one of their colonies which was brought into Egypt by Osiris. They even allege that this country was originally under water, but that the Nile, dragging much as it flowed from Ethiopia, had finally filled it in and made it a part of the continent ... They add that from them, as from their authors and ancestors, the Egyptians get most of their laws. It is from them that the Egyptians have learned to honor kings as gods and bury them with such pomp; sculpture and writing were invented by the Ethiopians. The Ethiopians cite evidence that they are more ancient than the Egyptians, but it is useless to report that here."

Quoted in Diop, The African Origin of Civilization (p. 1-2).

Relations between Axum - Meroe - Egypt have not been the focus of much historical or other investigation. A move away from the South Arabian fixation would, of course, help to correct the imbalance.

In the first volume of his Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile, James Bruce reproduces a stone tablet from Axum inscribed with hieroglyphics*. (See Appendix I). This is a clear instance of cultural affinity between Axum - Meroe - Egypt. As early as Moses' time (c. 1250 B.C.) Ethiopia - Egypt relations existed (cf. legend mentioned above in the quote from Asimov). Ethiopian tradition (Asras 1958) holds that Moses led an Egyptian delegation to Ethiopia to request the Ethiopian king who was threatening to dam the Nile to refrain from doing so. Earlier Egypt - Punt contacts, those of Queen Hatshepsut (c. 2500 B.C.) and of Pharoh Pepi II (also 3rd millenium B.C.), have been attested for, the former in the Punt reliefs in the De-el-Bahri Temple at Thebes. Punt has, of course, been generally interpreted to mean the hinterland of the Ethiopian, Somali, and East African coasts.

Where the Old Testament is concerned, references to Queen Sheba (I Kings X: 1-10 and II Chronicles IX: 1-9) and her visit to Jerusalem "to prove him (Solomon) with hard questions" need not be dismissed lightly. If indeed she was the Queen of Ethiopia as Ethiopian tradition holds, the "civilizing mission" of the South Arabians would be a moot point. The earliest "civilized" kingdoms in South Arabia do not appear until a few centuries after Sheba's time.

*A person I showed the picture to recognized the object and said it was housed in the Brooklyn Museum and on display on the third floor.

To come back to the discussion of Ethiopia – Egypt affinities, the calendar they both used is a very important common feature. The year was divided into twelve equal months of 30 days each with additional five and six days respectively for the ordinary and leap years. To Mansfield Parkyns visiting Ethiopia in the last century it appeared as though ancient Egypt was still alive and throbbing in some of its features:

"Among the tombs of Upper Egypt may be seen faithfully represented the costumes worn by many of the tribes of Aethiopia of the present day, even to the dressing of the hair, though the hand which drew them has been in the grave for upwards of three thousand years." (Life in Abyssinia, vol. I, p. 262)

Yet more telling than such scenes is the survival in Ethiopia of the science of mummification at least until some two hundred fifty years ago. Cheesman (Lake Tana and the Blue Nile, 1968, p. 142–43) describes the mummy he saw in the island monastery of Deg Istifa:

"We had to wait in the gloom until the censer was taken round, our only light being a dim taper... We climbed up a well – polished tree branch that serves as a ladder and saw on one shelf a big wooden coffin, the lid of which opened on the mummified body of the Emperor Fasiladas (1632–1667). His head was covered by a cloth, which when removed disclosed the face of a fine-looking man with refined features, thin nose and lips. He must have been over six feet in height. The embalming process, which I have not seen or heard of elsewhere in Ethiopia, had been most successful as his face went, which was not at all gruesome to look upon. Beside Fasiladas in the same coffin lie the bones of his small son, Isur, whose short reign and tragic death do not seem to be mentioned in any of the Chronicles, nor is his name in the King lists..."

However, he was not allowed to see Zara Yakob's remains for "...so holy a man was he and such is the reverence in which his name is held that only the monks are allowed to look upon him." (ibid.)

Given the fact that Fasiledes restored the official status of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, after the attempts of Jesuit missionaries to bring it under the Roman Church had caused a century of bloodshed, it is quite understandable why the monks would take the trouble to mummify Fasiledes' corpse. As for Zara Ya'qob, not only was he a great and pious king but also the author of two religious Ge'ez works: ገጽ ፩ ለ፪ (The Book of Light) and ገጽ ፩ ለ፪ (The Book of Nativity). In the tradition of the Biblical Melchizedek, he was truly a priest – king. For the custodians of the faith, there could hardly have been a more deserving personage. What Cheeseman's testimony establishes is that there may be links between the sciences as practised by the ancient Egyptian priests and the Ethiopian clergy. In any event, a relatively novel approach to study Ethiopia – Egypt contacts may produce interesting results, not just in history but in other fields as well. As a preliminary exercise in such an orientation, I have added my own Ethiopic – Hieroglyphic cognate list to Budge's short list (Egyptian Dictionary) (See Appendix II)

In an opinion that runs counter to the prevailing South Arabian origin of Axumite architecture, Bent (The Sacred City of the Ethiopians p. 182–84) writes:

"The great point of interest about the obelisks of Aksum is that they form a consecutive series, from these very rude unhewn stones up to the highly-finished and decorated obelisks, and it is highly probable that here we have the origin and development of the obelisk, side by side; high up in the valley they are all rough and unhewn, like the monoliths at Ava, placed in the ground at all angles, and in no way to be distinguished from the many rude stone monoliths which we find scattered all over the world. Then we come to one sixteen feet in height which has the corners squared and a series of nine or ten notches running up one side of it, and various other holes cut on its surface. This appears to be the earliest attempt at bringing these monoliths under the influence of decorative art.

Next we have one about the same height, which is divided into stories by four bands, and the beam ends, supposed to support the stories, distinctly cut on the stone. Without the assistance of the more perfect monoliths, one would not have arrived at the meaning of this decoration; but by comparison I think it is quite obvious that the division into stories is here intended to be conveyed. The highly-finished monoliths are nearly all of the same character, namely, representations of a many-storied castle..."

As the above quote from a 19th century work amply shows as also do the earlier quotes from Henry Salt and Murtonen, all foreign writers on Ethiopian history do not necessarily seek an external origin for Axumite civilization. It is for future Ethiopian as well as other scholars to approach Ethiopia's history afresh free from preconceptions and to consult indigenous as well as foreign sources with a discerning and open mind in order to construct a truer Ethiopian historiography.

CHAPTER II

THE GE'EZ SCRIPT AND THE BOOK OF HENOK

A survey of the scholarly literature on the origins of the Ge'ez script is not any more helpful than that on the origins of Ethiopian civilization. Its main thrust is that like all the other important features of Axumite civilization, it developed from Sabea and was brought over from the other side of the Red Sea*. Dillmann's account (Ethiopic Grammar, p.3) is typical.

"The name, Ethiopic Language, which the old national speech of Abyssinia commonly bears among us now, is derived from the classical denomination given to the inhabitants of these regions, and has been taken over from the Greek by the Abyssinians themselves. Accordingly they called their kingdom አገላለጽ, and the national tongue ልሳነጽ. The original native appellation for the people, however, and further for their speech, is ግጥ, literally 'roaming', then as a national designation, in the sense of the 'the Roamers', 'the free'; and thus comes ልሳነጽ ግጥ: the tongue of the Free?"

In origin and essence Ethiopic is a pure Semitic Speech, transplanted by people who migrated from Yemen to Abyssinia."

A less known and unorthodox hypothesis is that of James Bruce. (Vol. I, p. 420-421):

"It seems also probable, that the first alphabet was Ethiopic, first founded on hieroglyphics, and afterwards modelled into more current, and less laborious figures, for the sake of applying them to the expedition of business. Mr. Fourmont is so much of this opinion, that the Beta resembles the door of a house or temple..."

*A. J. Drewes (Inscriptions..., p. 92) doubts the validity of this proposition.

Others are for giving to letters a divine original: they say they were taught to Abraham by God himself; but this is nowhere vouched; though it cannot be denied, that it appears from scripture there were two sorts of characters known to Moses, when God spoke to him on Mount Sinai. The first two tables, we are told, were wrote by the finger of God, in what character is not said, but Moses received them to read to the people, so he surely understood them. But, when he had broken these two tables, and had another meeting with God on the mount on the subject of the law, God directs him specially not to write in the Egyptian character or hieroglyphics, but in the current hand used by the Ethiopian merchants, like the letters upon a signet; that is, he should not write in hieroglyphics by a picture, representing the thing, for that the law forbids; and the bad consequences of this were evident; but he should write the law in the current hand, by characters representing sounds, (though nothing else in heaven or on earth,) or by the letters that the Ishmaelites, Cushites, and India trading nations had long used in business for signing their invoices, engagements, Sc. and this was the meaning of being like the letters of a signet.

Traditional Ethiopian accounts (Ayalew Tamiru, p. 20–21) claim Ge'ez to have been the single language in currently throughout the world before the confusion of tongues and quote Genesis XI:1 to support their contention: "ወፊደ: ሃገሩ ለአኩላ ሃገሮች።"



"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech."

Although advocated by some linguists (Swadesh The Origin and Diversification of Language) a few decades back, the monogenetic thesis of language is out of fashion. By contrast, the monogenetic thesis of humanity is not as lightly dismissed.

While the traditional Ethiopian claim of Ge'ez as the pre-Babel language in universal currency need not be accepted at face value, the hypothesis of its derivation from Sabeian is one to be rejected for the following reason. The unique internal logic of the script is most satisfactorily explained by Asras' account of its being also an astrograph. The main concern of this chapter is an examination of this most fascinating but least known account.

Discussions of the development of the alphabet, in its most generic sense of a writing system, have assumed that it represents primarily sounds, ideas, or pictures of objects. In short, it is a phonograph, an ideograph, or a pictograph. The use of the units of a writing system to represent number has long been recognized. Thus a writing system has also served as a numerograph. What is unique to Ge'ez and what has thus far passed generally unremarked is that it is not only a phonograph, and a numerograph, but also an astrograph. The Ge'ez alphabet* signifies syllables and numbers, but at a most fundamental level, it also represents astronomical cycles. Thus when Asras Yane Saw declares repeatedly in his two works that the letters of the Ge'ez alphabet are engraved on the tablets of heaven, one ought to keep an open mind and investigate his proposition further.

Unlike Hebrew and Arabic which have twenty-two and twenty-eight letters respectively and are written from right to left, Ge'ez has 182 letters vocalized in seven different ways giving twenty-six root letters. The twenty-six root letters are called **ግድዝ** (Ge'ez) while the other vocalic variations are respectively called **ከፊት ሃላፊ ሁለት ሃላፊ ሦስት ሦስት ሦስት** (second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh). Strictly speaking, a Ge'ez letter is really an open syllable of the form CV (consonant and vowel)**. None of the Semitic or European languages follows this system while Sanskrit does so in a somewhat similar fashion. The latter situation led A. Weber in his article "Wuber den semitischen Ursprung des indischen Alphabetes" DMGZ Vol. X, 1856, to hypothesize an Ethiopian influence on the development of Sanskrit.

The order of the letters in Ge'ez is ሀ ለ ሐ ወ ... ጥ (ሀ ለ ሐ ... ጥ). There is disagreement among Ethiopian scholars concerning the earlier order of the letters.*** Along with Asras and many others, I think the above is the right order. In this regard, it is an interesting coincidence that the first (h) and the last (p) sounds in the Ge'ez order are represented in hieroglyphics by the head  (h) and the tail  (p) of a lion. "H" and "p" in Ge'ez are respectively the topmost and bottommost letters of the alphabet, metaphorically speaking the head and tail of the alphabet.

For all of the reasons stated above, the standard account of the Semitic Sabea origin of Ge'ez is unsatisfactory. Its pervasive repetition has precluded the pursuit of possibly more fruitful and more interesting hypotheses like the one by the 19th century scholar Noldeke that the primitive seat of the Semites is to be sought in Africa (cited in Wright, Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages, 1890, p.9). Murtonen's work cited in the first chapter comes close to locating the origin of "Semitic" languages in Africa. More persuasive than such counter-hypotheses however is Asras' explication of the logic of the Ge'ez script.

-
- * The distinction between an alphabet and a syllabry is worth noting. However, they are here used interchangeably.
 - ** Modern linguists distinguish between two forms of the sixth order, CV, the V being a Schwa (ə), or just a "zero" vowel.
 - *** Ayalew Tamru whose work was cited above, and Desta Tekle World (A New Amharic Dictionary) maintain that the (aleph-bet) order of letters, much like the Hebrew's, is the earlier one.

The twenty-six Ge'ez letters represent the twenty-six weeks of the half-year and the Sundays, ie. the first days in each week. The second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh orders represent respectively Mondays through Saturdays. At the end of the twenty-six weeks comprising 182 days occurs the autumn equinox (ዕለቱ ግደላ፡ ዕለት p.182). The letters in the Ge'ez alphabet thus represent sounds as well as the days of the half-year. The second half-year follows a similar course at the end of which the spring equinox occurs. Here is Asras' summary of it:

[illegible]

"It is in Ge'ez alphabet that they are written as signs around the tablet of heaven. This is known by weighing on the scale of Henok. It is found in the revolution of the lights (of heaven). Those who say that Ge'ez came afterwards are chiefly found wrong by this alphabet which, on the tablet of heaven, is written commensurate to the days of the year: the Ge'ezs corresponding to Sundays, the second to Mondays, the third to Tuesdays, the fourth to Wednesdays, the fifth to Thursdays, the sixth to Fridays, and the seventh to Saturdays. It is in this manner that starting with one Miazia up till the end of Masakaram there are 182 days. Of those months, Miazia and Ginbot are 30 days each while Sane is 31. Hamle and Nehasse are 30 days each while Maskaram is 31. It is those that are referred to as 182 days. The letters of the Ethiopic alphabet are 26; when they are multiplied by the number seven which is the symbol of the seven days, they become 182. It is via the letters in the East that by looking at the numbers of the six gates in the West which are opposite the six gates in the East that Henok weighs (measures) the rising of the sun and the moon through the six gates in the East and the six gates in the West... Those who have not understood the science of this (matter) in the Book of Henok are seen attempting to portray Ge'ez as a bastard that was begotten later; it is a futile attempt." (p.259) (cf. Appendix III)

ግዕዝ፡ፊደል፡፡ Ge'ez (Ethiopic) Alphabet

| | ግዕዝ፡ 1ኛ ሂ | ግዕዝ፡ 2ኛ ሀ | ሣልሥ፡ 3ኛ ሊ | ፋብ፡ 4ኛ ለ | ኃምስ፡ 5ኛ ደ | ሳድስ፡ 6ኛ ሄ-ዘ | ሳብስ፡ 7ኛ ዐ |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| ከ | ሀ | ሁ | ሂ | ሃ | ሄ | ህ | ሐ |
| ፪ | ለ | ሉ | ሊ | ላ | ሌ | ል | ሎ |
| ከ | ሐ | ሐ | ሐ | ሐ | ሐ | ሐ | ሐ |
| ፡ | መ | መ | መ | መ | መ | መ | መ |
| ፡ | ሠ | ሠ | ሠ | ሠ | ሠ | ሠ | ሠ |
| ፡ | ረ | ረ | ረ | ረ | ረ | ረ | ረ |
| ፡ | ሰ | ሰ | ሰ | ሰ | ሰ | ሰ | ሰ |
| ፡ | ቀ | ቀ | ቀ | ቀ | ቀ | ቀ | ቀ |
| ፡ | ቦ | ቦ | ቦ | ቦ | ቦ | ቦ | ቦ |
| ፡ | ተ | ተ | ተ | ተ | ተ | ተ | ተ |
| ፡ | ት | ት | ት | ት | ት | ት | ት |
| ፡ | ኀ | ኀ | ኀ | ኀ | ኀ | ኀ | ኀ |
| ፡ | ኸ | ኸ | ኸ | ኸ | ኸ | ኸ | ኸ |
| ፡ | ከ | ከ | ከ | ከ | ከ | ከ | ከ |
| ፡ | ወ | ወ | ወ | ወ | ወ | ወ | ወ |
| ፡ | ዐ | ዐ | ዐ | ዐ | ዐ | ዐ | ዐ |
| ፡ | ዘ | ዘ | ዘ | ዘ | ዘ | ዘ | ዘ |
| ፡ | የ | የ | የ | የ | የ | የ | የ |
| ፡ | ደ | ደ | ደ | ደ | ደ | ደ | ደ |
| ፡ | ገ | ገ | ገ | ገ | ገ | ገ | ገ |
| ፡ | ጠ | ጠ | ጠ | ጠ | ጠ | ጠ | ጠ |
| ፡ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ |
| ፡ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ | ጸ |
| ፡ | ፀ | ፀ | ፀ | ፀ | ፀ | ፀ | ፀ |
| ፡ | ፈ | ፈ | ፈ | ፈ | ፈ | ፈ | ፈ |
| ፡ | ፒ | ፒ | ፒ | ፒ | ፒ | ፒ | ፒ |

It must now be clear why the Ge'ez alphabet should not be viewed simplistically. Asrat's discussion of this and other matters is at a profound level, and his two works have henceforth to be considered seriously in any attempt to formulate Ethiopian historiography. These preliminary notes can not deal with the many interesting questions his works raise. However, his linkage of the Ge'ez alphabet to the Book of Henok is worth examining in more detail.

The complete text of the Book of Henok has been preserved only in Ge'ez, if it ever existed in full in other languages. The book is taken seriously enough by theologians, although some have assessed it as merely one of those apocalyptic works written around the beginnings of or just before Christianity. An Ethiopian author Zamanfas Qidas Abraha, has come out with probably the severest, if also the flimsiest, appraisal:

[illegible]

"The true proof that the Book of Henok is false is that it is not at all found in the whole world (as) an ancient book written in Hebrew or Greek, save in the Ge'ez language written by a mendacious cleric. As to that which is found in the world at large, it is only the very one that has been translated from the Ethiopians' book from the Ge'ez language" (p. 71)

Abraham had a modernist orientation and that might have clouded his judgement towards matters highly regarded by an ancient church. The similarity of text between the prophecy of Enoch quoted in the Epistle of Jude: 1:14-15 and an early passage in the Ethiopic Book of Henok is interesting.

[illegible]

(Knibb, Vol. 1, p. 4-5)

"And behold! He comes with ten thousand holy ones to execute judgement upon them, and to destroy the impious, and to contend with all flesh concerning everything which the sinners and the impious have done and wrought against him." (Knibb, Vol.2, p. 59-60)

- "At this point, if there was anyone asking: 'Since you say the books were translated from Hebrew into Ge'ez, does not that make Hebrew the father of Ge'ez?' you'd reply: 'I say it is those spoken in the language of the Illah, the Forah and the Prophet, and not the book of Ilwak I am talking about.'"

A tradition concerning Henok as the one who taught men the art of writing is shared at least by Christianity and Islam. I have not had the opportunity to check whether it also exists in Judaism. In any case, the existence of such a tradition in Christianity and Islam only strengthens Asras' hypothesis concerning the origin of the Ge'ez alphabet. There is no other alphabet which has claimed such an origin or can demonstrate such a close correspondence between its internal structure and the discussion in "The book of the revolutions of the lights of heaven..." (ch. 72ff) in the Book of Enoch.

As regards the tradition about the Book of Enoch in the West, here is what W.J. Deane (Pseudepigrapha p. 84) says:

"The attribution of the work to Enoch is doubtless owed to the fact that popular tradition assigned to him the reception of revelations concerning the secrets of nature and other mysteries, the discovery of the alphabet, and the writing of the earliest books that the world ever saw." (emphasis added)

In Islamic tradition, the role of Enoch in imparting the art of writing to man and in the study of books is retained implicitly in the name given to him (Idris). The root of this is the triliteral verb **درس** which is a loan from the Ge'ez **ደረሰ** (to write) (See Appendix IV). Here follows J. Arthur's discussion of the name:

" **اِدریس** (Idris)

He is one of the Prophets casually mentioned in the Qur'an ... The Muslim authorities are agreed that he is **اخنوخ**, ie. **חֵנוֹךְ**, the Biblical Enoch³, a theory derived not only from the facts enumerated above, but from the idea that his name **اِدریس** is derived from **درس** to study - both Jewish and Christian legend attributing to Enoch, the mastery of occult wisdom" (The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an, p. 51)

Jewish, Christian, and Islamic tradition all give eminence to Enoch. However, although its most complete version is found only in Ge'ez, and other versions (see Knibb's Introduction to the The Ethiopic Book of Enoch) are only fragments, Donzel, E.J.V. in his Anqasa Amin (p.32) could still write as late as 1969:

"La place importante qu' occupent dans l'Anqasa Amin le livre de Henock, les Canons Apostoliques et le Qalementos, confirme a mon avis que ces textes one ete traduits par Enbaqom." (emphasis added)

This is a non sequitur. To argue from the importance that the Book of Henock, the Apostolic Canons, and Qalementos occupy in Anqasa Amin, the book authored by Enbaqom (a Yemeni Arab convert to the Ethiopian Church in the 16th century) to the translation, especially of the Book of Henok, by him is indeed a quantum leap. Unless Donzel knows of a version or versions of Enoch in Arabic or in other languages which are as complete as those of the Ge'ez text and were available in as late a period as the 16th century, it is untenable to suggest the translation of the Book of Enoch into Ge'ez by Enbaqom. Donzel's speculation is thus one more strange entry into the catalogue of compulsive searches for external cultural determinators in Ethiopian as generally in other African history. The link between Ge'ez and the Book of Henok is indeed a very hard one to break.

CHAPTER III

THE GE'EZ BIBLE

There are numerous references to Ethiopia in the Bible. This has been a source of fascination to many, and a source of inspiration and pride for still others like the Rastafarians. Those about Moses' wife and Queen Sheba have already been mentioned. Some others are:

II Kings 19:9. And when he heard say of Tirhakah King of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee; he sent messengers again to Hezekiah.

Isaiah 45:14. Thus saith the lord, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee.

Amos 9:7. Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the lord.

Nahum 3:9. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite.

Perhaps the favourite Biblical verse among Ethiopians is: Psalms 68:31. "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God."

That verse sealed the defiant circular Emperor Menelik II sent European powers in the 1890s when Italy claimed a protectorateship over Ethiopia, and Britain and others futilely rushed to recognize it.

Ethiopia and the Bible (London, 1967) by Ullendorff treats the theme at length. However, although it reviews in erudite fashion the literature on the subject, it does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question of when or how the Scriptures were introduced or transmitted to Ethiopia.

It is important to note that the canonical books of the Ge'ez Bible are eighty-one as against lesser figures for the Catholic, Protestant, and the other Christian churches. There is little difference where the New Testament is concerned, it being clear that all versions were translated from the Greek into various scriptural languages in the first few centuries of Christianity. The real problem arises with the Old Testament. For one, the Book of Henok is not only preserved solely in Ge'ez, but it is also considered "the father of all the Scriptures," as it were, by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church. The Book of Jubilees, which divides historical time in 49-year periods, is similarly preserved intact in Ge'ez as መጽሐፍ ሃገሩ: (The Book of Division). The situation with the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings is very much like Jewish and other Christian traditions.

Commenting in general on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, Ullendorff writes:

The canon of the Scriptures of the Abyssinian Church comprises a number of apocryphal or deuterocanonical books such as Enoch, Jubilees, the 'Shepherd' of Hermas, Judith, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, etc. Equal authority is attributed to the prescriptions of the Old Testament as to those of the New Testament. The Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431) are recognized, while that of Chalcedon is rejected..." (The Ethiopians, p. 98)

With the exception of the Book of Henok which Ethiopian tradition dates to as far back as 4800 B.C., the other books of the Old Testament begin with Moses and move forward up till a couple of centuries before Christ. However, even when the same books of the Old Testament in the Ge'ez and the other versions are compared, there are interesting differences here and there. The Ge'ez version is at times closer to the Greek Septuagint and at other times to the Hebrew Masoretic versions in an apparently unpredictable fashion. Might it have been independent from either and much closer than both to a now lost original version? Or is it possible that it has preserved the original version intact in the same intractable way that it has preserved the Book of Henok and the Book of Jubilees, and many other books besides?

The exegetic tradition in Ge'ez is profound, and there may be some clues and answers in that rich corpus. It is certain, in any case, that Ethiopian Biblical scholars distinguish between at least four versions of the Torah (Desta Tekle Wold, p. 140): ኦሌተ : ኦሪታዊ :: (Masoretic Torah), ኦሌተ : ሌቃዊ :: (Priestly Torah), ኦሌተ : ሌቃናት :: (Septuagint Torah), and ኦሌተ : ሳምራዊ :: (Samaritan Torah).

The status and date of the Ge'ez version of the Old Testament has not been satisfactorily determined by mainstream Biblical scholarship, nor has the Ethiopian account been properly investigated or appraised. Yet, were the Ethiopian account found valid, it would have significant implications for the way ancient history is viewed, especially the Judaeo-Christian heritage, and derivatively the Islamic heritage. The text of the Ge'ez Bible and some Ge'ez manuscript sources offer fascinating clues and leads that would help determine the status and date of the various early Biblical versions. The following translation of a Ge'ez passage is one such important lead. It is taken from a manuscript account of The Life and Contendings of Qawestos:

መጽሐፉም : ገድለ : ቀውስመስ : ይባላል : ወእምድኅረዝ : ነበሩ : አ
በዊን : በሕገ : መሥራ : እንዘ : ያከብሩ : ሰንበታቲሆ : ለእግዚአብሔር : በትእዛዝ :
አረተ : መሥራ : ወደቂቀ : እሥራኤል : ዘሀለው : በኢየሩሳሌም : ሰዓርዋ : ለሰለተ :
ሰንበት : ወተንገሥ : ደቂቀ : ነቢያት : ኢሳያያስ : ወኤርምያስ : ወገዳምያስ :
በትእዛዝ : አረት : ዘመሥራ : ወአበዩ : ወበእንተዝ : መጽሐ : ዓቢይ : መቅዋፍት :
እምነበ : እግዚአብሔር : ወተጸወወ : ወሉደ : ጄኤል : በዕደ : ነከራን : ዘኢ
ኮን : እምነበ : አምላክን : በገበረ : ጽድቅ : ወተመዝበረት : ሀገረ : ኢየሩ
ሳሌም : ወኮነት : ማኅደረ : ለአራዊት : ወበውዕቱ : መዋእል : ጊዜ :
ወኖአት : ኢየሩሳሌም : ረኒዉ : አበዊን : ኅበ : ዘተጸወወ : ባቲ :
ምድር : ደቂቀ : ጄኤል : እንዘ : ይብሉ : መልእክት : እርኑ : ሀለወ

ክሙ : መእረኝ : ኮን : መጸሕፍተ : ነቢያት : ዘአበዊን : ወዘአበዊክሙ : ውዕያ
 ኑ : አመ : ጸዋዊ : በእሳት : አው : ድኅናን : ሀለዋ : መእረ : ሀለውክሙ : አን
 ትሙ : ደቂቀ : ጸኢል : ወደቂቀ : ነቢያት : ሰገድክሙ : ለጣዖታተ : አረማው
 ያን : ወለመላእክተ : ባእዳን : መእረ : ኮንክሙ : ሠዓርክሙ : ሰንበታተ : ለእ
 ግዚአብሔር : መእምድጎረዝ : ሶበ : ሰምዑ : ዘንተ : መልእክተ : ዘአበዊን : አን
 ከሩ : ወደብሉ : ንህነሰ : ሀለውን : በዳኅና : በጸሎተ : ዳንኤል : ወአዛርያ : ወአ
 ናንያ : ወሚሳኤል : እንዘ : የዓቅበን : አምላክን : አምላክ : አብርሃም : ይስሐቅ :
 ወደዕቆብ : አንትሙኒ : አረክክሙ : ጎሥሥዎን : ለመጸሕፍተ : ሕገ : ሙሴ : ወ
 ዘ : ዘነቢያት : ንሕነሰ : ሐለውን : ሀገረ : ጸዋዊ : ወአንትሙሰ : ውስተ : ሀ
 ገረ : ግህል : ወዛህን : ባሕቱ : ንሥኡ : ዘንተ : መጽሐፈ : ዘኮን : እምነብ : አ
 ብ : ዳንኤል : ነቢያ : ወዘዮቤ : ዘንተ : ነገረ : መጽአ : ንብሆሙ : ለአበዊን :
 እመጽሐፈ : ትንቢቱ : ለዳንኤል : በዕደ : ጌዳ : ተንባላታዊ : ዘተፈነወ : እምንጉ
 ሠ : ኢትዮጵያ : አዮሱር : ንበ : ዳርዮስ : ንጉሠ : ፋርስ : ወሚያን : ዘዮቤ : ዳን
 ኤል : ነቢያ : እንዘ : እገብር : ጸሎተ : ወእትኑንያ : ኃጣውእያ : ቅድመ : እግዚ
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 ረ : ኢየሩሳሌም : በዘመን : መንግሥቱ : ለዘሩባቤል :

"And after this, our fathers lived according to the Law of Moses keeping the Sabbaths of the Lord as Moses' Torah commands. But the children of Israel who were in Jerusalem did not honor the day of the Sabbath and (so) arose Isiah and Jeremiah – the children of the prophets – and rebuked them according to the commandment of the Torah of Moses, but they did not heed (their admonition). On account of this, there came (upon them) a punishment from God. And the children of Israel were made captive and fell into the hands of unbelievers who were not of our God in the practice of righteousness. And Jerusalem was sacked and she became a den for beasts. In that era when Jerusalem was destroyed, our fathers sent a message to the children of Israel, even unto the land where they were taken captive, saying: "How have you been, and how have fared the books of the prophets – of our fathers and of yours? Were they burnt at the time of captivity, or are they safe? And how have you been — you the children of Israel and the children of the Prophets? Did you bow in worship to the idols of the heathen, and to alien gods? And how have you conducted yourselves? Did you violate the Sabbaths of the Lord?" And after this, when they heard the message of our fathers, they marvelled and said: "As for us, we have fared well on account of the prayer(s) of Daniel, Azaria, Anania, and Misa'el — our God, the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob protecting us. As for you, go forth and search the books of the Law of Moses and those of the Prophets; we live in a country of captivity and you in a land of peace and security. Only! — take this book from (our) father Daniel the Prophet." Here is the meaning of this matter: – To our fathers came from the Book of Prophecy of Daniel, in the hand of one non-believer who was sent by Aisur, the King of Ethiopia, to Darius, the King of Persia and Medon — that which says "while I was praying and lightening the burden of my sins in the sight of the Lord, Gabriel came to me..." This book they appended to the Book of the Torah, of Moses – which came from Jerusalem with our fathers of formerly, in the time of Solomon – which says: "Six days, do thy work and on the seventh day – rest." After thus had come to our fathers the word (text) of the Prophet Daniel, Jerusalem was built (rebuilt) in the time of Zerubabel and the captive Israelites returned to their country. And in that time our fathers went to Jerusalem, for Zerubabel had written to the Ethiopian king saying: "The peace of God be with you! Hear me, for the sake of God that which I ask and send it to me; by the holy name of the God of our fathers the Israelites I beseech you, for the book of the Torah of Moses reached your country before the destruction of Jerusalem in the hand of one of your kinsmen, the son of Solomon. As for me, I am sending you the books of the Prophets which are from God which the successors to the Prophets of

earlier times wrote in the country of Babylon and Cyrus. And you send to me the books of the Prophets which precede me and are from before the destruction of Jerusalem and which have existed in the domiciles of your fathers, so that they may be unto us hope in the Lord, the God of our fathers, of mine and of yours." On hearing this, the King of Ethiopia called our fathers and said to them, "Take the book of the Torah of Moses, and of Joshua, and of Samu'el and Judges, and the Psalms of David with the Book of Kings and the Book of Solomon -- Go to the city of Jerusalem to Zerubabel. And you, having written them down (copied them), bring to me the books of the Holy Prophets that did not come to us formerly in the time of our fathers. Take 2200 dinars of gold for your journey. And 200 dinars of gold, let it be for you as a present to Zerubabel that you may receive honour in his sight. The 2200 for your journey!

Having taken this, our fathers went to the city of Jerusalem and met King Zerubabel, and they met in peace with the children of the Prophets, and they displayed, in the presence of Zerubabel, the books of the Prophets which had come to our country earlier. In turn, they (ie. the Israelites) showed them books of the minor prophets that had not come for us before this time. They (ie. the Ethiopian 'our fathers') brought the Prophecy of Ezekiel and the Book of Isiah and of the Prophet Jeremiah. These books carrying, our fathers returned from the city of Jerusalem during the reign of Zerubabel."

The above account of how the Hebrews had lost copies of the Torah and asked the Ethiopian King Aisur to send them the earlier books of the Old Testament is plausible both on chronological and other grounds. The obscure circumstances surrounding the restoration of the text of the Pentateuch by Ezra, who comes to Jerusalem from Babylon after Zerubabel, make such accounts as the above Ge'ez passage worthy candidates for very careful investigation.

The Jewish Encyclopedia (Vol.5) assesses Ezra's role in the following terms:

"Ezra marks the springtime in the national history of Judaism ... Ezra was worthy of being the vehicle of the law, had it not already been given through Moses...It was forgotten, but Ezra restored it... Ezra reestablished the text of the Pentateuch, introducing therein the Assyrian or square characters, apparently as a polemical measure against the Samaritans... He showed his doubts concerning the correctness of some words of the text by placing points over them."

What text or texts and what version or versions was Ezra working from? If he should place points over words whose correctness he doubted, he obviously did not fully endorse the text he was working from, which he would have if it had been passed on to him as part of authoritative Hebrew traditon. The most likely candidates as base texts for Ezra would be the Samaritan and the Ethiopic versions. The traditon quoted above however, indicates that Ezra took the great trouble of even introducing Assyrian or square characters to distance his text as much as possible from the Samaritan. Is it possible that he might have had an Ethiopic version at hand, passed down to him from the time of Zerubabel?

In this connection James Bruce's remark is interesting:

"Though there is really little resemblance between the Ethiopic and the Hebrew letters, and not much more between that and the Samaritan, yet I have a very great suspicion the languages were once much nearer a-kin than this disagreement of their alphabet promises, and, for this reason, that a very great number of words are found throughout the Old Testament that have really no root, nor can be derived from any Hebrew origin, and yet all have, in the Ethiopic, a plain, clear, unequivocal origin, to and from which they can be traced without force or difficulty." (emphasis added; vol. I, p. 423-24)





The Ge'ez Bible has not been thoroughly evaluated yet on its own merit. Much like other aspects of ancient Ethiopian history, too many assumptions and preconceptions may have stood in the way of an objective and critical appraisal of its similarity to, and independence from other Biblical versions. It probably is much closer to the oldest possible Biblical versions and to the Septuagint version than say the King James version. Yet vernacular Ethiopian Bibles in Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya and many others appear to be translated from the latter completely bypassing the Ge'ez text. In accepting this state of affairs, Ethiopians who read the Scriptures disinherit themselves from a very rich literary and spiritual source.

CHAPTER IV

GE'EZ NUMERALS

This chapter reexamines the consensus reached by Ethiopists that Ge'ez numerals are signs borrowed from the Greek letters.

The 19th century German philologist and Biblical Scholar Dillman wrote: (Ethiopic Grammar, p. 33):

"The Abyssinians borrowed their numerical signs from the Greeks. Whether they ever possessed any of their own, ____ in particular whether they used their own letters as numerical signs – we do not know. The Greek signs appear already in the Inscriptions; but an attempt was made, wherever possible, so to fashion the foreign sign that it should come to resemble the character for some Ethiopic letter or syllable: thus  was formed so as to resemble the sign of sa,  the sign of ha,  the ancient sign of ru . In this way the ciphers given in Table I were finally evolved. In order that they might be more easily recognised as numerical signs, and might not be mistaken for letters of the alphabet, a small horizontal stroke was applied to them both above and below."

The above paragraph and a table reproduced at the end of the book constitute the proposition, the arguments, and the proof. This is the whole discourse on the Greek origin of Ge'ez numerals. It is brief but categorical. However, closer scrutiny reveals its shaky basis.

Is it the case, as Dillman states in the above quote that "the Abyssinians borrowed their numerical signs from the Greeks." To answer the question, one must examine the relevant numerical signs which are nineteen i.e. one to ten, and twenty, thirty....to one hundred. The rest, those in the middle, i.e. eleven to nineteen, twenty-one to twenty-nine, etc. or those above one hundred i.e. 200,300 etc. are permutations of those basic nineteen ciphers. The horizontal strokes applied both above and below Ge'ez numerals may be disregarded for the moment. Let us now list those Ge'ez numerals that resemble Greek letters.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Γ (Ge'ez numeral for 'three') resembles the Greek letter | Γ Gamma |
| Z („ „ „ 'seven') „ „ „ „ „ | Z Zeta |
| Θ („ „ „ nine) „ „ „ „ „ | Θ Theta |
| I („ „ „ 'ten) „ „ „ „ „ | I Iota |
| O („ „ „ 'four') „ „ „ „ „ | O Omicron |
| Π („ „ „ 'eighty') „ „ „ „ „ | Π Pi |

It is clear from the above that six Ge'ez numerals closely resemble six Greek letters. Whoever wishes to derive Ge'ez numerals from Greek letters may do so only for those six or for about a third of them. However, closer examination will show that this may be too liberal an inference when juxtaposed with a counter hypothesis that if Ge'ez numerals are derived from any alphabet at all, it is from the Ge'ez alphabet itself.

Let us first dispose of the two ciphers that resemble equally Greek and Ge'ez letters.

Ge'ez numeral for seven Z resembles the Greek letter Zeta(Z) but also equally the Ge'ez letter Z (3rd order of 7) Ge'ez numeral for four O resembles the Greek letter Omicron (O) but also equally the Ge'ez letter O (1st order of O and incidentally the first letter for ዐርባት (four).

If we choose to derive those two ciphers from the Ge'ez alphabet instead of from the Greek, the number of Ge'ez numerals resembling Greek letters drops from six to four out of nineteen or to about one-fifth.

Let us list the rest of the Ge'ez numerals which resemble only Ge'ez letters.

| | |
|--|--|
| The Ge'ez for six ፩ resembles the Ge'ez letter | ፩ (5th order of 1) |
| „ „ „ „ forty ፪ „ „ „ „ | ፪ (4th order of ፬) |
| „ „ „ „ fifty ፫ „ „ „ „ | ፫ (4th order of ፬ and incidentally the first letter for <u>ሃምሳ</u> (fifty)) |
| „ „ „ „ seventy ፭ „ „ „ „ | ፭ (7th order of ፭) |
| „ „ „ „ ninety ፮ „ „ „ „ | ፮ (6th order of ፫) |
| „ „ „ „ one hundred ፯ „ „ „ „ | ፯ (1st order ፯) |

Eight Ge'ez numerals out of nineteen resemble Ge'ez letters. However, on Dillmann's own authority, the Ge'ez numeral for five ፩ is an ancient form of the 2nd order of ፭ (nowadays written as ፪) bringing the score to nine out of nineteen or about one half.*

On the available evidence, the assertion that Ge'ez ciphers are derived from the letters of the Greek alphabet has a very weak basis – only four out of nineteen ciphers can be shown to have exclusive resemblance to the letters of the Greek alphabet.

*Asras' formulation of the shapes of the ancient Ge'ez letters also shows "ru" having the same shape (ሀ ለ ፡ ኀ ነ ገ ጊ ጋ ... unpaginated leaf between p.260 and 261)

The counter-hypothesis that, if Ge'ez numerals are derived from the letters of any alphabet at all, then the Ge'ez alphabet is the source for the Ge'ez ciphers (nine out of the nineteen) is more sound.

Having disposed of thirteen ciphers at a ratio of nine to four weighted in favor of Ge'ez as against Greek letters, let us consider the remaining seven. Proponents of the derivation of Ge'ez numerals from Greek letters consider (Ge'ez for one) a modification of α . This feat can be accomplished only by an imaginative re-arrangement of α . It is first turned 90° anticlockwise to become λ and then the top left stroke is clipped to yield δ . However, the counter-suggestion that it is the Ge'ez letter ሀ (also the Ge'ez cipher for 100) turned upside down to yield ሀ is as, if not more, plausible.

The Dillmann proposition that the Ge'ez numeral for two (ሀ) resembles β (Beta) does appear correct, although one could argue even in this case that it is only σ (Ge'ez letter m) turned 90° anti-clockwise. Following a similar procedure, the Ge'ez numeral for ሀ is viewed by the Dillmann as similar to the Greek letter H (zeta) turned 90° anti-clockwise. That inference would be no more justified than stating that it is the Ge'ez letter H (the 1st order of the consonant Z) manipulated similarly.

The Ge'ez numeral for thirty (ሀ) is a mirror image of the Greek letter N (Nu), but then ሀ (Ge'ez for 20) is as close to the Ge'ez letter ሀ (ሀ) as it is to the Greek letter ሀ (lamda), and ሀ (Ge'ez for 60) can be related to Ge'ez letter ሀ (6th order of T) connected to a horizontal stroke at the bottom even more than it can be related to the capital letter Ξ (Greek Xi)

We have discussed all nineteen ciphers and their respective resemblances to Greek and Ge'ez letters. The thirteen ciphers could be comfortably situated in their appearance either to Ge'ez or Greek letters (four resemble Greek letters; seven resemble Ge'ez letters, and two resemble both Greek and Ge'ez letters). The remaining six ciphers have been shown to be more problematic. One could twist, turn, and trim the shapes to suit one's position. That is a rather arbitrary operation and of dubious scholarly value. On the available evidence, therefore, the conclusion is inescapable that the derivation of Ge'ez numerals from Greek letters is far less justified than the derivation of those same numerals from the Ge'ez alphabet. If the ciphers are derived from any alphabet at all, Ge'ez as the source is the more weighty proposition with a probability of more than two to one for it as against for Greek.

The discussion so far has centered around the shapes of the Ge'ez ciphers. It has avoided the question of which of the two alphabets is prior in time. If it could be shown that Ge'ez was, then the chances of borrowing the ciphers from the Greek alphabet would be much less. The double ratio of Ge'ez ciphers to Greek ciphers in Ge'ez numeration would indicate a system prior to the Greek alphabetical system.

Let us now discuss some of Dillmann's other statements. The second statement of the above quote leaves open the questions of whether the Abyssinians "used their own letters as numerical signs." The fact is that they did and Gematria is used for scriptural exegesis in Ge'ez. This note suffices for the present purpose as the subject is too involved to pursue further here.

The rest of Dillmann's statements suffer from internal inconsistencies. Unwittingly, he even strengthens the counter-hypothesis of the derivation of Ge'ez numerals from Ge'ez letters. Consider the statement "... an attempt was made, wherever possible, to fashion the foreign sign that it should come to resemble the character for some Ethiopic letter or syllable: thus ሣ was formed so as to resemble the sign of ሠ, ሣ the sign of ሐ, ፩ the ancient sign of ሠ &c." What Dillmann has failed to do is to furnish us those foreign (v.g. Greek) signs from which ሣ, ሣ and ፩ were fashioned to resemble Ge'ez characters. To the above may be added Ϟ, ϟ, Ϡ. Search the Greek alphabet as we may, we can not identify the signs from which those Ge'ez numerals evolved.* The next sentence following the above quote gives away the weakness of Dillmann's hypothesis.

"In order that they might be more easily recognised as numerical signs, and might not be mistaken for letters of the alphabet, a small horizontal stroke was applied to them both above and below."

Dillman does not appear to have thought out the matter consistently. How could foreign Greek ciphers, only two of which Z and O resemble Ge'ez characters compel the use of the small horizontal strokes above and below, in order to void their confusion with letters of the Ge'ez alphabet? The fact that they were foreign signs would have precluded their being confused with Ge'ez letters. Further, why would the borrowers of the foreign ciphers first go through a tortuous feat and an intricate and elaborate process to have them resemble Ge'ez characters and then provide against their possible confusion with Ge'ez letters by supplying the ruse of a small horizontal stroke above and below each cipher?

For the purpose of these preliminary notes, the remarks above should suffice. Critical reactions to the suggestion here may help clarify the situation better. This chapter was an exercise in micro-historiography. A reformulation of Ethiopian historiography is certainly going to require analysis at various levels of depth and magnitudes of scope.

* Ϟ (ie. ro) appears to have also been an earlier shape for ϐ in Greek writing.

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N°2

A TABLE OF *HIEROGLYPHICS*, FOUND AT AXUM 1771.

APPENDIX 2

1314 BUDGE, WALLIS A. NON-EGYPTIAN WORDS, ETC., IN DICTIONARY

VI ETHIOPIC AND AMHARIC

ሀይል: 129a.

ሀዘዋ: ብሔር: 522b.

ሠቅ: 647a.

ረዓላ: 62b.

ሰብላ: 725b.

ሰዉ: 583a, 729b.

ሴት: 583a.

ሰይፍ: 597b, 660a.

በፍታ: 726a.

ቀሥሕ: 771b, 789a.

ቀይላ: 702b.

በቀልተ: 276a.

በነተ: ዐይነ: 471b.

ሩወ: 374b.

ሩገሀ: ብሔር: 522b.

ሩፋ: 369b.

ለጽሐቅ: 905b.

ለፍታ: 43b.

ዘለብ: 868a.

ዘይተ: 903b.

ይንከ: 867b.

ገወል: 788b.

ገወዕ: 770a.

ሒት: 824b, 870b.

ጸሐፊ: 898a.

ፀብላ: 897b.

j

cf. ጆዌ (o)
jäwe
(snake)

jd

(said)

cf. ጆዌ (o)
jd
(said)

k

cf. ካራን (Tna)
kärän
(hill)

nb
(lord)

ናይብ (Tg)
na'ib
(title of Governor
of Massawa area)

ah
(cattle)

ኣሐ (Tna, G)
aha
(cattle)

ara

ሩረዌ (G)
arwe
(snake)

h

h tm
(seal)

h

h

cf. ሐተመ (G, Tna)
h tm
(to seal, stamp, print)
h tm (A)
h tm

met
(death)

met

ጠፋ (A, G, Tna)
mot
(death)

A (Amharic) G (Ge'ez) O (Oromo) Tg (Tigre) Tna (Tigrinya)

30 ሆሎ፡፡ጠላላም፡ይከሙ፡፡እድታ፡፡መብረሃ፡
 ፡፡ቱ፡፡እድታ፡፡በከመ፡፡እግዚአብሔር፡፡ፍከት፡፡ላዓለ
 ሙ፡፡ዓለምት፡፡ነ፡፡ሉ፡፡ሮ፡፡ዕመጽሐ፡፡ሚጠቀሱ፡፡በ፡፡ሃ
 ሩቱ፡፡ከማያ፡፡፪፡፡ዛከመ፡፡ሠልጣ፡፡በበሕዝቢያሁ፡፡
 ፡፡ዕከበሥልጣኖሙ፡፡መበዘመኖሙ፡፡፪፡፡፬፡፡በ
 ከሃሁ፡፡ጠሁላዳቱ፡፡ሆሙ፡፡ቁጠበሕው፡፡ሉ፡፡ሆሙ፡፡
 35 ለሉ፡፡አርአያ፡፡ኢርኤል፡፡መልእክቶቶቱ፡፡ሠሁም፡፡
 በሌያ፡፡ሠውእቱ፡፡መራ፡፡ሆሙ፡፡ሠሁ፡፡መጽሐፍ
 ሆ፡፡በከመ፡፡ውእቱ፡፡አርአያ፡፡መበከመ፡፡ዘሁ፡፡ዓ
 ሙቱ፡፡ዓለምቲያልእከሉ፡፡ላዓለም፡፡እከከ፡፡ይት፡፡ገበር፡፡
 ግብር፡፡ሐዲከ፡፡ዘይጎብር፡፡እከከ፡፡ላዓለም፡፡ውዝ፡፡ከ
 ሙእቱ፡፡ትእዘዝ፡፡ቀዳማዊ፡፡ዘብርሃኖት፡፡ሀሐ፡፡፤

72-2-5

Pol.

[illegible]

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[illegible]

storehouses of all the stars and the lights, from where they come out before the holy ones. 71. 5 And the spirit carried in through off (gr, b30) to the highest heaven, and I saw there in the middle of that light something built of crystal stones, and in the middle of those stones tongues of living fire. 71. 6 And my spirit saw a circle of fire which surrounded that house; (gr, b35) from its four sides (came) rivers full of living fire, and they surrounded that house. 71. 7 And round about (were) the Seraphim, and the Cherubim, and the Ophanim; these are they who do not sleep, but keep watch over the throne of his glory. 71. 8 And I saw angels who could not be counted, a thousand thousands and ten thousand times (gr, c1) ten thousand, surrounding that house; and Michael and Raphael and Gabriel and Phanuel, and the holy angels who (are) in the heavens above, went in and out of that house. (gr, c5) 71. 9 And Michael and Raphael and Gabriel and Phanuel, and many holy angels without number, came out from that house; 71. 10 and with them the Head of Days, his head white and pure like wool, and his garments indescribable. 71. 11 And I fell upon my face, and my whole body melted, and my spirit (gr, c10) was transformed; and I cried out in a loud voice in the spirit of power, and I blessed and praised and exalted. 71. 12 And these blessings which came out from my mouth were pleasing before that Head of Days. 71. 13 And that Head of Days came with Michael and Gabriel, Raphael (gr, c15) and Phanuel, and thousands and tens of thousands of angels without number. 71. 14 And said to me: 'You are the Son of Man who was born to righteousness, and righteousness remains over you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days (gr, c20) will not leave you.' 71. 15 And he said to me: 'He proclaims peace to you in the name of the world which is to come, for from there

71. 16 And all . . . will walk. I ought
72. 1 regulations: literally 'book'
72. 3 to the south and north: lit

peace has come out from the creation of the world; and so you will have it for ever and for ever and ever. 71. 16 And all . . . will walk according to your way, inasmuch as righteousness will never leave you; (gr, c25) with you will be their dwelling, and with you their lot, and they will not be separated from you, for ever and for ever and ever. 71. 17 And so there will be length of days with that Son of Man, and the righteous will have peace, and the righteous *will have an upright way*, (gr, c30) in the name of the Lord of Spirits for ever and ever.'

72. 1 The book of the revolutions of the lights of heaven, each as it is, according to their classes, according to their (period of) rule and their times, according to their names and their places of origin, and according to their months, (gr, c35) which Uriel, the holy angel who was with me and is their leader, showed to me; and he showed me all their regulations exactly as they are, for each year of the world and for ever, until the new creation shall be made which will last for ever. 72. 2 And this is the first law of the lights. The light the sun, (gr, a1) its rising (is) in the gates of heaven which (are) towards the east, and its setting (is) in the western gates of heaven. 72. 3 And I saw six gates from which the sun rises, and six gates in which the sun sets, and (gr, a5) the moon (also) rises and sets in those gates, and the leaders of the stars together with those whom they lead; (there are) six in the east and six in the west, all exactly in place, one next to the other; and (there are) many windows to the south and north of those gates. 72. 4 And (gr, a10) first there rises the greater light, named the sun, and its disc (is) like the disc of heaven, and the whole of it (is) full of a fire which gives light and warmth. 72. 5 The wind blows the chariots on which it

71. 16 And all . . . will walk. I ought
72. 1 regulations: literally 'book'
72. 3 to the south and north: lit

ascends, and the sun goes down from heaven and returns through the north in order to reach the east, (9v, a15) and is led so that it comes to the appropriate gate, and shines (again) in heaven. 72. 6 In this way it rises in the first month in the large gate, namely it rises through the fourth of those six gates which (are) towards the east. 72. 7 And in that fourth (9v, a20) gate, from which the sun rises in the first month, there are twelve window-openings from which, whenever they are opened, flames come out. 72. 8 When the sun rises in heaven, it goes out through that fourth (9v, a25) gate for thirty days, and exactly in the fourth gate in the west of heaven it goes down. 72. 9 And in those days the day grows daily longer, and the night grows nightly shorter, until the longer than the night by a double (part), (9v, a30) and the day amounts to exactly ten parts, and the night amounts to eight parts. 72. 11 And the sun rises from that fourth gate, and sets in the fourth gate, and returns to the fifth gate in the east for thirty mornings; and it rises from it, and sets (9v, a35) in the fifth gate. 72. 12 And then the day becomes longer by two parts, and the day amounts to eleven parts, and the night becomes shorter and amounts to seven parts. 72. 13 And the sun returns to the east, and comes to the sixth gate, and rises and sets in the sixth gate for thirty-one mornings because of its sign. 72. 14 And on that day (9v, b1) the day becomes longer than the night, and the day becomes double the night; and the day amounts to twelve parts, and the night becomes shorter and amounts to six parts. 72. 15 And the sun rises up that the day may grow shorter, and the night longer; (9v, b5) and the sun returns to the east, and comes to the sixth gate, and rises from it and sets for thirty mornings. 72. 16

72. 7 **window-openings**: literally 'open windows', i.e. windows that can be opened—as the following words make clear (cf. 75. 4, 7).
72. 8 in heaven: literally 'from heaven'.

72. 10 by a double (part): i.e. by two parts.

72. 27 the divisions of its journey
of a Greek κερδασιον—'division' (cf. *Immortals, The* 105).

72. 27 seems here to be a translation of a Greek κερδασιον—'division' (cf. *Immortals, The* 105).

And when thirty mornings have been completed, the day becomes shorter by exactly one part; and the day amounts to eleven parts, and the night to seven parts. 72. 17 And the sun goes out (9v, b10) from the west through that sixth gate, and goes to the east, and rises in the fifth gate for thirty mornings; and it sets in the west again, in the fifth gate in the west. 72. 18 On that day the day becomes shorter by two parts, (9v, b15) and the day amounts to ten parts, and the night to eight parts. 72. 19 And the sun rises from that fifth gate, and sets in the fifth gate in the west, and rises in the fourth gate for thirty-one mornings because of its sign, and sets in the west. (9v, b20) 72. 20 On that day the day becomes equal with the night, and is (of) equal (length); and the night amounts to nine parts, and the day to nine parts. 72. 21 And the sun rises from that gate, and sets in the west, and returns to the east, and rises in the third gate (9v, b25) for thirty mornings, and sets in the west in the third gate. 72. 22 And on that day the night becomes longer than the day, and the night grows nightly longer, and the day grows daily shorter until the thirtieth morning; and the night amounts to exactly ten parts, and the day to eight parts. 72. 23 And the sun rises (9v, b30) from that third gate, and sets in the third gate in the west, and returns to the east; and the sun rises in the second gate in the east for thirty mornings, and likewise it sets in the second gate in the west of heaven. 72. 24 And on that day (9v, b35) the night amounts to eleven parts, and the day to seven parts. 72. 25 And the sun rises on that day from that second gate, and sets in the west in the second gate, and returns to the east, to the first gate, for thirty-one mornings, and sets in the west in the first gate. 72. 26 And on that day the night becomes longer, (9v, c1) and becomes double the day; and the night amounts to exactly twelve parts, and the day to six parts. 72. 27 And (with this) the sun has completed the divisions of its journey, and it turns

back again along these divisions of its journey; and it comes through (9v, c5) that (first) gate for thirty mornings, and sets in the west opposite it. 72. 28 And on that day the night becomes shorter in length by one part . . . and amounts to eleven parts, and the day to seven parts. 72. 29 And the sun returns, and comes to the second gate in the east, (9v, c10) and it returns along those divisions of its journey for thirty mornings, rising and setting. 72. 30 And on that day the night becomes shorter in length, and the night amounts to ten parts, and the day to eight parts. 72. 31 And on that day the sun rises from that second gate, and sets (9v, c15) in the west, and returns to the east, and rises in the third gate for thirty-one mornings, and sets in the west of heaven. 72. 32 And on that day the night becomes shorter, and amounts to nine parts, and the day amounts to nine parts, and the night becomes equal with the day. (9v, c20) And the year amounts to exactly three hundred and sixty-four days. 72. 33 And the length of the day and the night, and the shortness of the day and the night—they are different because of the journey of that sun. 72. 34 Because of it, its journey becomes daily longer, and nightly shorter. (9v, c25) 72. 35 And this is the

72. 28 by one part . . . I have not translated *ḥw-ḥf: ḥq-ā: ḥ: ḥc-ā*: it is fairly clearly a gloss which is meant to explain that in this passage *ḥc-ā*: is the equivalent of *ḥq-ā*: (cf. Dillmann, *Translation*, 226).

72. 29 returns, and comes: literally 'returned, and came'. There is no apparent reason for the change of tense.

and it returns along those divisions of its journey: the reference to the divisions of the journey is unexpected. The only other place in this chapter where we have the same expression is v. 27, and that verse deals with the special case of the winter solstice and the start of the period when the days begin to get longer. Possibly 'along those divisions of its journey' has been copied here by mistake from v. 27.

72. 33 are different: literally 'are separate'.

72. 34 Because of it: because of the difference in the length of day and night, i.e. in order to bring about the difference in the length of day and night (cf. Dillmann, *Translation*, 226).

law and the journey of the sun, and its return, as often as it returns; sixty times it returns and rises, that is the great eternal light which for ever and ever is named the sun. 72. 36 And this which rises is the great light, which is (so) named after its appearance, (9v, c30) as the Lord commanded. 72. 37 And thus it rises and sets; it neither decreases, nor rests, but runs day and night in (its) chariot. And its light is seven times brighter than that of the moon, but in size the two are equal. (9v, c35) 73. 1 And after this law I saw another law, for the smaller light named the moon. 73. 2 And its disc (is) like the disc of the sun, and the wind blows its chariot on which it rides, and in fixed measure light is given to it. 73. 3 And every month its rising and its setting change, and its days (are) as the days of (10r, a1) the sun, and when its light is uniformly (full), it is a seventh part of the light of the sun. 73. 4 And

73. 4-8 There is Aramaic evidence that is relevant to this somewhat obscure passage. All the fragments of Aram¹¹ and fragments 1-22 of Aram¹² belong to a table which deals with the phases of the moon (cf. on this Millik, *HTR* 64 (1971), 338 f.). In the Aramaic version it is clear that the light of the moon increases or decreases by a half of a seventh part each day. What we have in the Ethiopic version of 73. 4-8 appears to be a garbled summary of the table in Aram¹¹ and ¹². The idea of seventh parts of light is retained in the Ethiopic version, but in a different way from that in the Aramaic. In the Ethiopic version the moon is conceived of as divided into two halves, each half being further divided into seven parts. Thus in the Ethiopic 'a seventh part', 'seven parts', 'six parts' refer to divisions of half the moon, and 'fourteen parts' to divisions of the whole moon.

The phases of the moon are discussed not only in 73. 4-8, but also in cc. 74 and 78, but it is not entirely possible to make sense of the various different pieces of information given in these three passages, or to reconcile them with one another. It appears from cc. 74 and 78 that the lunar year is held to consist of three hundred and fifty-four days, i.e. six months of twenty-nine days each, and six months of thirty days each; further that in the twenty-nine-day month there are fourteen days from new moon to full moon, and in the thirty-day month fifteen. In 73. 4-8 it seems that vv. 4 f. deal with the case of the twenty-nine-day month; in this month on the first day a fourteenth part of the total light of the moon appears (i.e. a seventh part of half the light, cf. v. 5), on the second day

borrowed words can be found that as a rule, whose classification is the most complete that has come down, divides them in the *Muda-weakhi* into the following classes:—

(i) Words borrowed from Ethiopic (سالك الحبشة)

(ii) Words borrowed from Persian (سالك الفارسية)

(iii) Words borrowed from Greek (سالك اليونانية)

(iv) Words borrowed from Indian (سالك الهندية)

(v) Words borrowed from Syriac (سالك السريانية)

(vi) Words borrowed from Hebrew (سالك العبرانية)

(vii) Words borrowed from Nabataean (سالك النبطية)

(viii) Words borrowed from Coptic (سالك القبطية)

(ix) Words borrowed from Turkish (سالك التركية)

(x) Words borrowed from Negro (سالك النجدي)

(xi) Words borrowed from Berber (سالك البربرية)

It is obvious at the first glance that much of this is mere guess-work, and equally obvious that the philologists whom as-Suyuti quotes had frequently very little conception of the meaning of the linguistic terms they use. It is necessary, therefore, to inquire a little more closely into what may have been meant by these terms and what may have been the possibilities of Arabic having drawn on any of these languages for religious and cultural vocabulary.

(ii) *Abyssinian*.—Philologically, Ethiopic, the ancient language of Abyssinia, is the most closely related to Arabic of all the Semitic tongues. Egyptian and Arabic, with the languages of the S. Arabian

Speyer's list of Foreign Words occurring in the *Qanun* in *JAM.*, vol. I, 1872, pp. 100-114, is taken from his list of suggestions in *Al-Makhalat*.

inscriptions, being grouped together as South Semitic as opposed to the North Semitic group. The modern Abyssinian languages, and particularly Amharic, have in some respects diverged very considerably from the ancient Ge'ez, but it was presumably this ancient language with which the Arabs were in contact in pre-Islamic days and during Muhammad's lifetime. These contacts, as a matter of fact, were fairly close. For some time previous to the birth of Muhammad the southern portion of Arabia had been under Abyssinian rule,¹ and tradition relates that Muhammad was born in the Year of the Elephant, when Mecca was saved from the Abyssinian army which marched up under Abrahā to destroy the city. It is practically certain that there were trade relations between Abyssinia and Arabia at a much earlier period than the Axumite occupation of Yemen,² and that friendly relations continued in spite of the Year of the Elephant is clear from the fact that Muhammad is said to have sent his persecuted followers to seek refuge in Abyssinia,³ and that the Meccan merchants employed a body of mercenary Abyssinian troops.⁴

That Muhammad himself had personal contact with people who spoke الحبشة سالك seems to be indicated from the fact that tradition

tells us that his first nurse was an Abyssinian woman, Umm Aiman,⁵ and that the man he chose as first Muezzin in Islam was Bilal al-Habashi,⁶ and the tradition already noted that the Prophet was particularly skilled in the Ethiopic language.⁷ [emphasis added]

Abyssinian slaves appear to have been not uncommon in Mecca after the rout of the famous army of the Elephant,⁸ and it would not have been difficult for Muhammad in his boyhood to have learned many words of religious significance from such sources.⁹ It must

¹ At Tabari, *Annals*, I, 926 ff.; Ibn Hishām, 25 ff.; at Mas'ūdī, *History*, III, 157, and see particularly Noldeke's *Sasaniden*, 126 ff.

² *Et.* I, 119, and Lammens, *La Mecque*, 281 ff.

³ This was in A.D. 616, and is known as the First Hijra of al-Tabari, *Annals*, I, 1181. Ivošvič, *Frontier*, 25, would derive some of the Ethiopic elements in the Qur'ān from the two Abyssinian migrations, but this is hardly likely.

⁴ Lammens, *Les Arabes*, in *Et.*, XVI, ser. 2, vol. VIII, 1916, p. 425 ff.

⁵ *Arab. Epist.*, *De Mohammed*, p. 2, and Xawwat, 706.

⁶ *History*, p. 30, at Khirāḡ, III, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

Excerpt from ἡ ΕΞΕΓΕΣΙΣ: Ἀποκάλυψις (Exegesis of Matthew)

[illegible]

Excerpt from 7C2B1A:1P520 032A (Exegesis of Matthew)

"As how exists God in His entirety in one place while he is not known in any one of them. Behold, I reveal to you as Jesus Christ my creator graced me on account of your prayer. Listen as I tell you an example small, about secrets hidden and power great, containing all, to the extent that it is possible for my weak mind, although it is not proper to speak of such matters. Comprehend, O! my brother and see with the eye of the mind as how full is the nature of this world of fire which is hidden in them. And without action, it appears and in all places it exists and in all things it is seen in all its entirety. And it is not measured while it is hidden inside a small grain of sand and it is not seen while powers exist in it which are co-mingled in its nature. And when man chooses to extract from her, she appears in her minuteness and she comes out and exists standing without defect. And when to her is given an avenue, she burns many rocks, mountains, and forests and all that is fit for combustion. And she manifests all the power of her nature while she is hidden inside a minute particle with the flame and light of her heat, and she is not measured but exists there in her entirety with her power. As to her measure, you do not find a termination and nothing whatever exists that is smaller than her size. Her entirety manifests the strength of her power when in action, but she hides in a minute particle and from there she appears to us in her entirety inside all places, while her measure is not known in any one of them. By this and such as this example, seek O! my brother with the eye of your mind, with a high perception and reason that which arises from all and enters into all, and which removes all from in front of Him, that inside light He exists on account of His nature and on account of His glory and perfection. She is the creator of everything and then she exists while she is not measured. Existent she is in all places in her entirety, and all creatures lack her measure. Listen, O! my brother! what are we saying and discussingAh! Ah! What am I saying now, behold my mind is closed from wonder and can not go further. My right hand is tired from writing and the feet of the pen have been prevented from walking, for I have sank into a deep sea. Silence is better for me than this.Glory to You, for Your entirety is in all places. You measure all, but there is none who can measure You." (emphasis added)

Reflections On The Famine In Ethiopia

Recently, households in the West have been treated daily to an unsavory spectacle of famine and death in Ethiopia. Shocked by the sight, individuals, organizations, and governments have responded admirably to mount effective relief. Those more fortunate all over the world and not so immediately caught up in the existential agony of it all may pause to reflect on some of the deeper issues and longer-term remedies.

Drought is the factor that most readily springs to mind to explain the famine in Ethiopia and in other parts of Africa. However, even a school child knows that its effects can be significantly mitigated by an appropriate strategy to conserve water, dig wells, conduct afforestation programs, etc. What sustained effort will the rest of the world make, the mass media in particular, to call for such a strategy long after the appeal for famine relief ceases to hit the headlines? How will the Chinese adage, "Teach a hungry man how to use a fishing pole instead of giving him fish every day," be implemented in reality in the coming few years?

Other than drought, war causes such a disruption in the agricultural cycle and in economic activity in general that decreased food intake, if not outright famine, often accompanies it. Such was the situation in post-World War II Europe, which the U.S. Marshall Plan speedily and effectively corrected. War is infinitely more devastating in countries which have neither the technological nor the manpower bases of a pre-World War II Europe, or the massive

capital infusion to them afterwards. Such are Ethiopia, Somalia, and Chad, where their relatively insignificant internecline wars continue unabated with borrowed weapons. Yet the superpowers and medium powers, deeply engrossed in their global or regional strategic pursuits, ignore this crucial factor and conveniently gloss over their exacerbating roles in it.

Human rights violations in Ethiopia prompted the Carter Administration to put a moratorium on arms exports to that country. Nevertheless, such concern, noble in itself, did not stop the same administration from condoing in the same breath a Somali invasion of Ethiopia. Despite official disclaimers to the contrary, Somalia's head-of-state, General Siad Barre, has repeatedly insisted (and who can claim to know better?) that he was shown the green light by Washington. Abandoned by its erstwhile arms supplier, the U.S., Ethiopia approached the Soviet Union, which as readily discarded its hitherto ally and prized African model of scientific socialism, Somalia. It is worth noting that up to that point, the Soviet Union had massively armed Somalia beyond its defensive requirements and thus implicitly fueled the latter's irredentist ambitions. In 1977, however, lured by a bigger prize and an even newer and more persuasive African model of scientific socialism, the USSR blitzlifted over a billion dollars worth of arms to Ethiopia. On the other side, petrodollar rich Saudi Arabia happily welcomed errant Somalia's return to the Islamic fold,

and generously financed its arms purchases from the U.S. and other Western countries. Cuba proved as willing to come to Ethiopia's rescue and to commit its troops in the frontline. Thus Ethiopia's new profession of socialist ideology, Somalia's reconfirmation into the Islamic faith, and the Superpowers' cavalier exchange of partners provided the bizarre, if macabre, background for the tragic drama of aggression and counter-aggression, mutual carnage and destruction that was consummately played out in the now highly militarized Horn of Africa.

In the circumstances, Ethiopia successfully repulsed the Somali invasion. Emboldened by that victory and the concurrent backing of the Soviet Union, the Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia adopted essentially military solutions to its outstanding problems. It quintupled the size of its army to over 300,000, allotted roughly a third of its annual budget to defense, and conducted six successive military campaigns in Eritrea and Tigray in the north. Nonetheless, the Liberation Fronts there continued to challenge and frustrate the government's bid for legitimacy and consolidation. Undaunted, it proclaimed universal military conscription in May 1983.

Through it all, the civil war raged on and the countryside resounded with the noise of bullets, mortars, and bombs. Caught in the crossfire, the peasants and the nomads did not know what to make of it except to note with resignation that their liberators were legion indeed while their feeders were far too few. Abused and trampled on, the earth turned barren. Peasants, nomads, and their families, all now reduced to just sinews and bones, started slow, sad marches to relief camps. Death stalked them on the roadside and in the camps. One fine autumn evening, the world woke up to scenes of live, rather dead, horror on the screen.

Ethiopia, Somalia, and Chad are among the world's 25 poorest countries. A new term has been coined to describe this sorry and motley group — the Fourth World. If the universal human compassion triggered by the tragic spectacle of famine in Ethiopia is not to be made a lasting mockery of, then it is time people all over the world signed substantive petitions and made peaceful demonstrations to the end that the meaning of Detente is expanded and given wider scope to include *A Ban on Arms Sales to the Fourth World*.

The call for such a ban need not unduly alarm armaments manufacturers in the East or West. They will still have left the three other Worlds for markets. In any case, whatever spirited lobby armaments manufacturers should put up against such a ban, it is high time for the rest of the world to enter the issue as a perennial item in the agenda of the U.N. General Assembly until the day that it is passed and a monitoring organ for its implementation is set up. Ironically, if not half as justifiably, there is an international precedent for it. In 1936, the League of Nations in Geneva passed a hollow and hypocritical ban on arms sales applicable to both the weapons-manufacturing aggressor, Italy, and the non-manufacturing victim, Ethiopia. Still it did not stop Ethiopia's patriots from maintaining effective guerrilla resistance for all five years of the Fascist Occupation, and, together with British and Commonwealth troops, from finally pushing out the unwelcome intruder.

Precedent and history aside, there is a compelling developmental and humanitarian case now for *A Ban on Arms Sales to the Fourth World*. Will the international community have the requisite moral fibre to prove equal to the challenge? Truly non-aligned nations like Sweden, with no record of arms exports to the Fourth World and with clean hands in the matter could spearhead this concern. Only then may the universal goodwill, so abundantly manifest recently, make famine truly a relic of the past.

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