

A HISTORY OF PAINTING IN EAST GOJJAM IN  
THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES:  
A STUDY OF THE 'SECOND GONDÄRINE' STYLE  
OF PAINTING

BY

*ABEBAW AYALEW GELA*

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
OF ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

JUNE 2002

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
OF ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUAIRMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN  
HISTORY

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## Declaration

I, the undersigned declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used have been duly acknowledged.

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## Key to Transliteration System

Vowels	Symbols	Examples	
1 <sup>st</sup> order (ge'ez)	ä	wärärä	ወረረ
2 <sup>nd</sup> order (ka'eb)	u	mulu	ሙሊ
3 <sup>rd</sup> order (sales)	I	hid	ሂድ
4 <sup>th</sup> order (rab'e)	a	rara	ራራ
5 <sup>th</sup> order (hames)	é	bét	ቤት
6 <sup>th</sup> order (sades)	e	ber	ቤር
7 <sup>th</sup> order (sab'e)	o	hod	ሆድ

Consonants	Symbols	Examples	
ሽ	š	šäšägä	ሽሽገ
ቸ	č	čäräčärä	ቸረቸረ
ጸ/ፀ	š	täšäšätä	ተፀተ/ተጸተ
ጅ	j	jägna	ጅግና
ጨ	ç	çäqäçäqä	ጨቀጨቀ
ጠ	ṭ	ṭäräṭärä	ጠረጠረ
የ	y	yettay	ይታይ
ቀ	q	qäzäqäzä	ቀዘቀዘ
ኘ	ñ	daña	ዳኛ
ገሯ	ž	gäž	ገሯ
ሚ	mua	lamua	ላሚ

## **Abstract**

As early as the introduction of Christianity in the fourth century A.D. painting apparently was an important component of the Christian art of Ethiopia. Paintings that have come to light so far date back to the eleventh century A.D. This thesis attempts to study the last part of the history of painting in Ethiopia by concentrating on a small geographical unit, East Gojjam. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the art of painting underwent significant changes. Several different ways of expressing the same theme emerged. Most important of the developments was the growing regional variation and the emergence of schools.

Almost all of the paintings described and analyzed in this thesis are paintings that are yet known to scholars of art history. They are found in the different churches and monasteries of East Gojjam. In reconstructing the history of painting in East Gojjam in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contemporary as well as later written documents are used in addition to the paintings. Oral information is also an important source for this thesis.

The main focus of this thesis is showing the variations in expression, selection of themes, rendering of costume and composition at different times through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the first half of the eighteenth century the Second Gondärine style of painting was introduced in East Gojjam. In the middle and second half of the century the style was widely in use for decorating church walls and manuscript illumination. The period from the 1770s to the turn of the century witnessed the flourishing of the style. Several

churches were decorated and manuscripts were illuminated in these churches. The painting of the eighteenth century did not show significant variation. In the nineteenth century variations in expression became very wide. In the last part of the nineteenth century the art of painting flourished and a large number of painters existed. The painting of this period shows difference from the painting of the earlier period in composition. An attempt has also been made to trace the relationship between artistic and social and political developments.



## Preface

Following its incorporation to the medieval Christian Kingdom in the early thirteenth century East Gojjam was transformed from a predominantly Agäw inhabited region to a Christian Amhara region. Its incorporation to the Christian kingdom was followed by the founding of several churches and monasteries. The churches and monasteries soon developed into prominent educational centers. One of the Christian educations offered was the art of painting. From the fifteenth century onwards paintings of different forms were produced in the monasteries and churches of the region. Compared to other regions of Christian Ethiopia the monasteries and churches of East Gojjam host a huge corpus of artwork.

A very insignificant portion of the paintings of the region has been studied by some of the scholars of Ethiopian art and art history in recent years. What makes the research that is already undertaken incomplete is that quite a large number of paintings remain hidden in several of the churches and monasteries of the region. In this regard this thesis, I believe, is an important addition to the historiography of Ethiopian art. In the course of the research I discovered a large number of paintings that are not yet known by scholars of art history.

Scholars of art and art history had given little attention to the study of the paintings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The paintings of these two centuries are regarded as stereotyped. In this thesis I have given emphasis

to show the diversity in the selection of themes, expression and composition of different themes. The methodology I used is iconographic description and analysis. The absence of secondary written sources on the cultural and social history of the region is the main reason that restricted me from making iconological analysis and interpretation of the paintings.

Most of the paintings included in this thesis are original in that they have not been studied by other art historians. As much as possible I have tried to date all the paintings as accurately as possible. I have used local and written information as well as stylistic analysis and the classification of Stanislaw Chojnacki in dating all the paintings.

*Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus Waqjira's* chronicle provided me with ample information. I found this chronicle very important for the following two reasons. First, *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* was himself a painter and unlike other chronicles his chronicle contains a great deal of information on painting and painters in Gojjam in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Secondly, for the history of painting in the late nineteenth century *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* was an active participant and his chronicle gives first hand information on cultural and artistic developments of the period.

I have also utilized oral information. I found three of my informants very knowledgeable on the history of painting in East Gojjam. These are *Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru*, *Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu* and *Mämher Täklä Haymanot Basazenäw*. I have used the oral information I got from these people extensively.

When I began this research I was enthusiastic and hopeful to find out the unique characteristics of the paintings of the region in the two centuries under study and to find out if there is any separate school of painting in the region. It was this enthusiasm and hope that influenced me to limit the geographical unit of the thesis to East Gojjam only. However, my hope of finding out the existence of a separate school of painting vanished when most of the churches and monasteries of the region that contain a large number of paintings denied me access to the paintings. Particularly my unsuccessful attempt to get access to the paintings of the Monastery of Dima Giyorgis, a monastery from where most of the eighteenth and nineteenth century paintings of Gojjam learned the art of painting, completely made me hapless regarding my plan of finding a school of painting in the region.

Another very serious and disappointing problem that I faced was that in some of the cases where the clergy allowed me to see the paintings in their church/monastery they were not willing to allow me to photograph the paintings. Particularly the clergy of Däbrä Marqos church did not allow me photograph the manuscripts and the paintings on the church wall after getting permission from the Head of the Church *Mälakä Şähäy Mäqoya Kassa* and the Archbishop of East Gojjam Diocese.

Lack of enough funding for the research has handicapped me in many ways. The funds that the School of Graduate Studies provided me were not large enough to allow me make an extended fieldwork and a large-scale data collection. It only covered the cost and other routines of research work. The fact that the Department of History is poor in resources such as color printers, photo studio etc... determined the final appearance

of this thesis. Had it not been for Ato Shiferaw Bekele's tireless efforts the color illustrations in one of the copies of this thesis would not have been produced.

In the course of the research and production of this thesis I have enjoyed support from many individuals and institutions. My heart-felt thanks go to Ato Shiferaw Bekele who provided me with all the necessary supervision and constructive criticism as an advisor, allocating a significant portion of his sabbatical leave time. It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge his assistance in getting me permission from the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa to print my material in color.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. Paul B. Henze, Professor Stanislaw Chojnacki and Mrs. Martha Henze who gave me several photographs and slides of paintings from Gojjam from their personal collection. They allowed me also to travel with them to the different monasteries and churches of Gojjam for a duration of two weeks in late October and early November 2001.

I would also like to thank all colleagues in the Department of history who have been encouraging me. The Department has allowed me to use computers, scanners and printers. May special appreciation goes to Dr. Hussein Ahmed who allowed me to use his computer to type this thesis.

The Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa has cooperated in printing for me some of the colored illustrations of the thesis. My deep appreciation goes in particular to Professor Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed who agreed to help in providing color prints of illustrations and

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I am also greatly indebted to all my informants. I would like in particular to thank *Mälakä Berhan* Libanos Yätämäñu and *Aläqa* Ayaléw Tameru for their encouragement and for the valuable information they provided me.

Last but not least I am greatly indebted to my wife, *Wäyzäro* Yeromnesh Fantahun, who encouraged me throughout my study in the School of Graduate Studies. My thanks to her is beyond words.

## CHAPTER I

### **General Historical Background to the Region.**

#### **Geographical Survey of the Region.**

East Gojjam, the geographical unit of this study, is the eastern part of the former province of Gojjam. In the current administrative structure of Ethiopia, the East Gojjam Administrative Zone of the Amhara Regional State fits the study area with one exception—the Monastery of Dämbäça Mikael, which is located in the very southwestern part of the study area, belongs to the Western Gojjam Administrative Zone. What has been historically known as Gojjam also fits the study area with the exception of Mačakäl, the western district of the study area, which had historically belonged to Damot. Even if Mačakäl was part of Damot culturally and geographically, it was at the same time an integral part of Gojjam proper. (See Map attached as an appendix to this thesis)

The Tämça River and the Abäya River form the western boundary of the study area. The Abbay (Blue Nile) River from its confluence with the Abäya River to the point of its junction with the Tämça River forms the northern, eastern and southern boundary of the study area. The Çoqé Mountains that have an altitude of about 4000 meters above sea level mark the center of East Gojjam. From the peak of the Çoqé Mountains the altitude declines in every direction reaching the lowest point of 1500 meters above sea level in the Abbay gorge.<sup>1</sup> The Çoqé Mountains form the watershed of the region. All of the rivers that traverse the region rise from these mountains draining in every direction to the Abbay River. These rivers have a major significance in the history of Gojjam. They have served as natural boundaries of districts in Gojjam from early times.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the Çoqé Mountains, the mountains of Enäsé, the

highest peak being Mt Omnéous, are physical structures of the area, which have had a marked influence on the history of the region.<sup>3</sup>

Having an altitude, which ranges from 4000 to 1500 meters above sea level, the region has different climatic zones. The area around the Çoqué Mountains, which constitutes approximately 40% of the region, experiences a *däga* (cool) type of climate. This is generally a highland area dissected by several small gorges created by the upper course of the rivers that spring from the mountains. Broken and uneven landform is the major physical character of the region.<sup>4</sup> It is the most densely populated part of the region. It experiences the maximum rainfall of the region in the months of June, July, August and September. Barley, potatoes, wheat, peas, beans and onions are the main agricultural products of the area.

In the area, which forms a ring around the Çoqué Mountains next to the *däga* climatic zone prevails a *wäyna däga* (temperate) type of climate. The edge of the Abbay gorge forms the outer periphery of this climatic zone. Undulating, even plains characterize the topography of this area. In many parts of this area the rivers that traverse it make marshy plains. It constitutes approximately 40% of the region. Compared to the *däga* zone it is sparsely populated. Agriculturally, however, it is the most productive part of the region. The fact that it has many plains and marshes with rich and inexhaustible pasture has made it suitable for animal husbandry. This area was and still is known for its livestock wealth. The fertile black soils of the area produce *ţéff*, *nug*, *dagusa* and maize for which the area is known.

The periphery of the region which forms a crescent from the north-west corner of the region where the Abbay and Abäya rivers meet to the south-west corner of the region where the Tämça and Abbay rivers meet experience a *qolla* (arid) type of climate. Steep slopes, which are intercepted by sharp cliffs at short intervals, form the topography of the region. It is less humid; and a very high temperature prevails for most part of the year. It is sparsely populated. Its topography is not suitable for farming as well as animal rearing. Poisonous snakes and insects that cause animal and human disease especially malaria have made the area their habitat. These explain why the region is sparsely populated.

Though this area has a minor significance in the economic and social history of the region it has played a major role in the political history of the region. It is the presence of this escarpment and the Abbay River, which made Gojjam, especially East Gojjam, a peninsula.

This geographical unit, East Gojjam, whose general character has been described above, hosts about 1560 churches. Among these, 78 have a *däbr* status and 163 are *gädamats* (?). The rest (1319) are *gäṭär* churches. Some of these churches were founded as early as the fourteenth century. For centuries they benefited from grants and donations of different kinds from kings, members of the royal family and the nobility. Donations of illuminated manuscripts and commissioning of artists to decorate and paint the walls of the churches formed a significant part of their endowments through the centuries.



## Historical Background

### *Peopling and Christianization of the region*

The history of Ethiopia from the Axumite period to the first quarter of the sixteenth century may be said to have been marked by the southward expansion of the state. From the fourth century A.D the Ethiopian Orthodox Church also expanded in the same direction along with the state. Following the transfer of power from the Zagwé to the Solomonic dynasty, this process of expansion was further speeded up.<sup>5</sup> The incorporation of Gojjam into the Christian Kingdom and its subsequent Christianization and semitization was part of this general process.

Written historical records that date back to the sixth century A.D. indicate that the Agäw inhabited the area south of the Täkäzé River, which apparently includes East Gojjam.<sup>6</sup> Historical and linguistic researches also show that in the Pre-Axumite period the whole of northern Ethiopia was settled by non-Christian Cushitic Agäw. In the thirteenth and early fourteenth century the predominant population group of East Gojjam were the Agäw.<sup>7</sup> Oral traditions in different parts of the region indicate that the Agäw preceded the Amhara in settling the area. Place names such as አገው ባደማ (Agäw Ruin), አገው መሬት (Agäw Land), አገው በረት (Agäw Barn), አገው ካብ (Agäw Wall), አገው ምንጭ (Agäw Spring), አገው አምባ (Agäw Hill) found in different parts of the region as far east as Enäbsé and Enäsé and as far west as Mačakäl apparently show that there was a strong Agäw presence in East Gojjam.<sup>8</sup> At the time, Gojjam seems to have been a rich province with a relatively dense

population. As such, it was a target of the expansionist ambition of the kings of the early Solomonic dynasty.

On the other hand, there are local traditions, which tend to show strongly the Gafat ancestry of the people of Gojjam. In the genealogy from which most of the people of East Gojjam trace their descent the name Gafat appears at frequent intervals.<sup>9</sup> However, the researches of Professor Taddesse Tamrat have shown that the Gafat settled the southern periphery of Gojjam along the Abbay River later in the sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

The transfer of power from the Zagwé dynasty to the Solomonic one in general and the accession of Emperor Amdä Şeyon (r.1314-1344) to the Solomonic throne in particular were important events in the history of Christianity in East Gojjam. The dynastic transfer of power was followed by the shift of the political center from the Lasta area to Amhara and then to Šäwa.<sup>11</sup> As a result East Gojjam, which had been in the periphery of the Ethiopian state in Aksumite times, became more exposed to the overall influence of the new power group. It was in the reign of Emperor Amdä Şeyon that the political authority of the Solomonic state was established in Gojjam.<sup>12</sup> This opened the way for the subsequent evangelical activity by the Church at first against a strong pagan resistance and later followed by a large scale Christian Amhara settlement from the neighboring provinces of Šäwa and Amhara.<sup>13</sup> These Christian Amhara settlers brought with them their Semitic culture and their form of Christianity to East Gojjam. The evangelical activity of the monastic and secular clergy<sup>14</sup> together with the settlement of a considerably large number of

Christian Amharas in the region brought about the gradual transformation of Gojjam from a non-Christian Agäw province to a Christian Amhara province.

Christian influence was apparently felt in Gojjam for the first time in the direction of Lake Ṭana where isolated Christian monks seemed to have settled as early as the later period of the Zagwé dynasty.<sup>15</sup> However, the attempt of these monks to evangelize the mainland to the south of the lake faced strong resistance until the period of Emperor Amdä Şeyon (1314-1344). Even after the consolidation of Christian authority over the area, Christianity and Christian evangelization did not penetrate deep into the central highlands of Gojjam; rather it was confined to the lowland areas immediately to the south of the lake.<sup>16</sup> It was from the direction of Šäwa and Amhara that Christian evangelization and expansion to Gojjam became very successful. The Church penetrated deeper and deeper from this direction into the heart of Gojjam gradually affecting the whole of the region. The first initiative to spread Christianity in this direction seems to have come from the monks of the monastery of Däbrä Asbo, the later Däbrä Libanos.<sup>17</sup>

Though some churches in East Gojjam trace back the date of their foundation to the early fourth century A.D, namely to the period of Emperors Abräha and Aşbäha,<sup>18</sup> the first evangelical activity in the region seems to have been that of Abba Bäkimos who later came to be known as Täkästä Berhan.<sup>19</sup> His evangelical activities in East Gojjam seem to have preceded the expedition of Emperor Amdä Şeyon to the area in 1316/17. Täkästä Berhan succeeded in baptizing the people of the Enämay area and established a church there, the Church of Dima Giyorgis, after an initial firm pagan resistance. His

activities in East Gojjam and those of Zä-Yohannes in the area to the south of Lake Ṭana which also faced a strong resistance from the non-Christian local communities were some of the factors that led to the expedition to the area by Emperor Amdä Şeyon.<sup>20</sup> The incorporation of East Gojjam to the Christian Kingdom was followed by the establishment of a large number of churches in the area. Some of these churches such as Däbrä Wärq, Dima Giyorgis and Märtulä Maryam developed into important monasteries and educational centers. They played an important role in the expansion of Christianity further into the western parts of the region. There are several churches in Gozamen, Mačakäl, Erbab and Senan areas, which have traditions that their *tabots* were brought from Dima, Märtulä Maryam and Däbrä Wärq.<sup>21</sup>

The trend of Amhara expansion and settlement in Gojjam was from the east to the west. Within this general framework, there seem to have taken place two different settlement processes, which can be identified when one analyzes the oral traditions of the present inhabitants of the region and the traditions about the establishment of churches in the region. The first and most important process of settlement was the one, which probably involved violent conflicts between the Agäw inhabitants of the area and the Amhara new comers. In view of the east-west trend of Amhara expansion and settlement the very eastern most parts of the region: Enäbsé, Enäsé, Sar Meder, Gonča, Enarj Enawga, Šäbäl, Bäränta and Enämay, were the first districts affected by this process.<sup>22</sup> The Amhara who first settled in these areas from the provinces of Amhara and Šäwa seem to have increased their number, gradually expanding to the western districts of the region: Awabäl, Däbay Ṭelatgen, Anädäd, Gozamen, Mačakäl, Senan, and Moča.<sup>23</sup> The often-cited sayings of the region seem to echo this distant

development, “አገው ሲነቀል ጩታ ሲተከል”. This means, “When the Agäw were expropriated from their land and the Amhara were given land permanently.” Similarly “አገው ሲሰደድ አግራ ሲለምድ” which literally means ‘[when the] Agäw migrated and the Amhara settled down’ indicates the same development. Informants say that çäwa referred to the Amhara and the term ‘ሲሰደድ’ literally ‘migration’ implies forced migration.<sup>24</sup>

The second process of settlement may have consisted of slow and peaceful movement of isolated Christian families into the areas inhabited by non-Christian Agäw populations among whom they settled. Traditions about the foundations of many churches in the region attest to this process. Many clerical families from Šäwa and Amhara brought with them *tabots* and settled amongst the local people of East Gojjam.<sup>25</sup> In some cases this kind of settlement seems to have been supported by the Christian state. The families and individuals who brought *tabots* with them and settled in East Gojjam were given land to support themselves and the church they built for the *tabot* they brought. The land that they thus occupied was inherited by their descendants and gradually evolved to a family *rest*. The widely repeated popular saying in East Gojjam: “ታቦት በራሱ ቃጭል በጥርሱ ይዞ የመጣ”, which literally means “the one who came with a *tabot* on his head and a bell on his teeth” is always cited by informants when they discuss the origin of many early Christian settlements and the founding of churches.<sup>26</sup> Non-clerical Christian families and individuals are also said to have come and settled in many parts of the area. An instance of this kind is well documented in the hagiography of St. Täklä Alfa:

The country of the relatives of Täklä Alfa's father, Aron's, was in the land of Šäwa...Then in the reign of Yeshaq [r.1414-1430] the family migrated and arrived in the land of Wäsän Amba which is called Gofçema and lived there.<sup>27</sup>

Both Gofçema and Wäsän Amba were names of localities in the southern part of Mačakäl. In the tradition about the establishment of Däbrä Gänät Éleyas church there is the story of a man called Del Asäma who migrated from Šäwa together with his family and settled in Éleyas during the reign of King Zär'a Yaqob (r.1434-1468).<sup>28</sup>

During the reign of this monarch there was a considerable settlement of çäwa soldiers in Gojjam.<sup>29</sup> These settlements in the long run brought about the Christianization of Gojjam. This transformation seems to have been in full swing in the mid-fifteenth century.

### **Political Background**

Gojjam was a prominent political unit in the Ethiopian state from its incorporation into the Christian kingdom in the early fourteenth century. An indication of its political significance was that the province had its own ruler who held the title of Gojjam Nägaš right up to the period of Emperor Iyasu I (r.1682-1706).<sup>30</sup> In addition prominent members of the

royal family during the medieval period such as Queen Eléni and Etégé Säblä Wängél had their *gults* in Gojjam.<sup>31</sup> In spite of its political significance, Gojjam was not strictly speaking a core province of the Christian Kingdom until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. This was mainly due to the fact that having their political center in Šäwa the Christian kings did not control most parts of Gojjam. It was only east Gojjam that seems to have been under the strict control of the medieval monarchs. Moreover, the western parts of Gojjam namely, Damot and Agäw Meder were non-Christian and beyond the political reach of the medieval kings.<sup>32</sup>

However, with the change of the political center of the Ethiopian state from Šäwa to the Lake Ṭana region Gojjam found itself very close to the center. It became very much easier to control Gojjam from the direction of Lake Ṭana than from the direction of Šäwa and Amhara where the Abbay gorge forms a strong geographical barrier. It seems largely due to this that Gondärine kings exercised more effective control over Gojjam than the kings of the medieval period. An indication of this was that Gondärine Kings made more frequent campaigns to Gojjam than their medieval counterparts.<sup>33</sup> One of the palaces of the Gondärine Kings, Yebaba, was actually located in Gojjam to the south of Lake Ṭana in the district of Dénsa. The rulers of Gojjam from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century were directly appointed by the ruling monarchs of the Christian kingdom, which is another indication of the strong control they exercised over Gojjam.<sup>34</sup> Its proximity to the center made it influenced by political, social and cultural developments that took place in Gondär.

Beginning from the first decade of the eighteenth century, new political developments began to take place in Gondär as well as in Gojjam. In Gondär the royal court was troubled by intrigues and plots, which at times claimed the lives of the Solomonic monarchs. The political history of Ethiopia in the first half of the eighteenth century was characterized by the progressive weakening of the power of the monarchy and the increasing involvement of the nobility in court and state affairs. This eventually culminated in the *Zämänä Mässafent*. A succession of weak kings ruled the kingdom.<sup>35</sup> This political development seems to have given the opportunity for the minor nobility of different provinces to strengthen their power and bring a relatively large portion of territory under their control.

Wäldä Abib of Gojjam who held the title of *Yäšaläqa* in the reign of Emperor Iyasu I seem to have exploited this opportunity. He was promoted to *Däjazmač* some time between the second and third decades of the eighteenth century and became the governor of Gojjam.<sup>36</sup> His son and successor Yosédéq was also given the title of *Däjazmač* and made the governor of Gojjam in 1753 by Empress Mentewab and her son Iyasu II.<sup>37</sup> *Däjazmač* Yosédéq from the very beginning of his political career seems to have been on bad terms with the court at Gondär. His promotion to the level of *Däjazmač* from the minor title of *Abéto* was probably a measure taken to pacify him and to buy his allegiance. In addition to this he was given in marriage Wälätä Isra'el II, Mentwab's daughter.<sup>38</sup> These arrangements seem to have pacified *Däjazmač* Yosédéq for some time.



The marriage between *Däjazmač* Yosédéq and Wälätä Isra'el II had an adverse impact on the royal court. From then on the rulers of Gojjam became politically more ambitious, tracing their relationship to with the royal family. This marriage signaled the birth of the local dynasty of Gojjam. Ras Hailu I, who was the product of this marriage, brought under his rule the whole area from Dängäl Bär and Dura River in the west to the bend of the Abbay River in the east. He ruled Gojjam from 1777 to 1795.<sup>39</sup> His reign coincides with the early period of the *Zämänä Mässafent*. He enjoyed an absolute economic and political autonomy. Compared to his predecessors and successors he ruled Gojjam for a relatively long period of time. He founded Bičäna and Zewa as his capital. For most of his reign he made Bičäna his capital where he built a palace. His reign in Gojjam was characterized by peace, stability and cultural revival. He died in June 1795 at his second capital, Zewa.<sup>40</sup>

The period from 1795 to 1874 was characterized by frequent conflicts among the nobility of Gojjam on the one hand and between the nobility of Gojjam and the Yäju lords on the other. There were frequent political and social conflicts. Ras Hailu was succeeded by his son Ras Märed. Soon after the death of Ras Hailu, Ras Märed and *Däjazmač* Zäwdé of Damot, Ras Hailu's vassal who married *Wäyzäro* Denqenäš Hailu, Ras Märed's sister, began to compete for supremacy and to take over each other's territory. Ras Märed wanted *Däjač* Zäwdé to be his vassal as he had been to his father. *Däjač* Zäwdé wanted to maintain his political and economic autonomy over Damot if not over Gojjam.<sup>41</sup> *Wäyzäro* Denqenäš seems to have been the moving spirit behind *Däjač* Zäwdé since Zäwdé had no prominent family background to justify his claims and ambitions. Thus the

political struggle among the descendants of Ras Hailu I that lasted until 1874 started here. The rulers of Gojjam who descended from Ras Märed focused on extending their control to Damot. The rulers of Damot who descended from *Wäyzäro* Denqenäš similarly made a claim to rule Gojjam. Descendants of both at times ruled Gojjam and Damot as a single political unit and at other times their respective provinces.<sup>42</sup>

Ras Märed ruled Gojjam for a brief period, 1795–1799. He was highly involved in the political struggle of his period. In 1799 he died fighting with Ras Wäldä Gäbrél of Tegré.<sup>43</sup> A severe social crisis followed his death. During his reign Ras Märed prohibited the unlawful exploitation of the peasantry by the soldiers. He was also on bad terms with his nobility for a similar reason. Thus a strong tension between the peasantry on the one hand and the soldiery and the nobility on the other developed. This tension and friction evolved to social crisis soon after his death. The peasantry, who had enjoyed a great deal of freedom and protection in the period of Ras Märed, became victims of maximum exploitation following his death.<sup>44</sup>

Ras Märed's successor *Däjač* Gualu continued the struggle with *Däjač* Zäwdé of Damot for supremacy and territorial gain. Allying himself with Ras Gugsä and *Däjač* Éleyas of Agäw Meder he tried to take over *Däjač* Zäwdé's territory. However, *Däjač* Zäwdé's diplomacy and tricks superseded the coalition of *Däjač* Gualu and *Däjač* Éleyas. Both *Däjač* Gualu and *Däjač* Zäwdé retired from the political arena of the Zämänä Mässafent in the early nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup> *Däjač* Gošu succeeded his father Zäwdé in Damot and *Däjač* Tädla succeeded *Däjač* Gualu in Gojjam. The two continued the old rivalry, which they had inherited from their predecessors. However, *Däjač* Gošu was

powerful and possessed a higher military skill and leadership ability than the young and immature *Däjač Tädla*. Therefore, *Däjač Gošu* succeeded in extending his rule to Gojjam. Later, as he grew old, his son *Däjač Berru* began to challenge him. From 1838/39 *Däjač Berru* took over Gojjam from his father, *Däjač Gošu*, by force.<sup>46</sup> *Däjač Gošu* died at the battle of Guramba in November 1852 and *Däjač Kassa*, the later Emperor Téwodros II, captured *Däjač Berru* in 1854.<sup>47</sup>

In 1854 following the capture of *Däjač Berru*, *Däjač Tädla*, who had been a fugitive, appeared on the political scene. He went to *Däjač Kassa* and pleaded for vassalage. For some reason he defected from *Däjač Kassa* and went to Enäsé. Soon after he went to the Yäwuš and Mänqorär area, which is close to the mountain fortresses of Jebbäla and Mutära. At Mänqorär he appointed himself as the *Däjazmač* of Gojjam.<sup>48</sup> His reign was characterized by continuous struggle with the appointees of Emperor Téwodros in Gojjam and the emperor himself. The conflict among the members of the dynasty of Gojjam came to an end temporarily. This was mainly due to the fact that the descendants of *Däjač Gošu* who could have been formidable rivals were captured and taken prisoner by Emperor Téwodros. All of them died in prison except *Däjač Yälémtu Gošu*. An important development in the period of *Däjač Tädla* was that the political center of Gojjam moved to the Yäwuš and Mänqorär area.<sup>49</sup> The proximity of these two areas to Jebbäla and Mutära seems to have been the prime factor for this development. This process later resulted in the establishment of a capital at Mänqorär that came to be called Däbrä Marqos.

The death of *Däjač Tädla* in January 1867 opened another period of struggle between his two sons Negusé and Dästa.

First Negusé succeeded his father and became *däjazmač*. However, his soldiers and the nobility conspired against him and put Dästa on the throne with the title of *däjazmač* in December of the same year. The following three or so years witnessed fierce rivalry between the two. Eventually *Däjač* Dästa succeeded in strengthening his control over Gojjam.<sup>50</sup>

No sooner had he attained final victory over his brother than he was challenged by another claimant to the regional throne. This was Adal Tässäma who descended from the line of *Wäyzäro* Denqnäš. Adal's military power was insignificant so that he chose leading a fugitive life rather than direct military confrontation until the right opportunity.<sup>51</sup> The campaign of Emperor Täklä Giyorgis to Gojjam in 1869/70 offered him the opportunity he had been waiting for. *Däjač* Dästa was reluctant to acknowledge the authority of Emperor Täklä Giyorgis II.<sup>52</sup> After being defeated at the battle of Amwuaṭa/Säntära *Däjač* Dästa retreated to Jebbäla. Before the departure of the emperor from Gojjam, Adal succeeded in capturing *Däjač* Dästa whom he presented to the emperor. Subsequently Adal was made the governor of Gojjam, Damot and Agäw Meder with the title of *ras*.<sup>53</sup>

With the accession of Emperor Yohannes IV to power *Ras* Adal's position was challenged by his former rival *Däjač* Dästa who had been kept prisoner by Emperor Täklä Giyorgis and had been freed by Emperor Yohannes IV after the battle of Assäm. In 1874 when Emperor Yohannes IV made a campaign to Gojjam *Däjač* Dästa came with him.<sup>54</sup> *Ras* Adal refused to acknowledge the emperorship of Yohannes and as usual retreated to the mountain fortress of Jebbäla. After an unsuccessful attempt to storm Jebbäla and capture *Ras* Adal the emperor left,

appointing *Däjač* Dästa as the governor of the three provinces which Ras Adal had ruled, promoting him to the level of *ras*.<sup>55</sup> Not long after the departure of the emperor from Gojjam the two rivals fought at Angaṭa in June 1874. Ras Dästa died in the battle and Ras Adal re-established his authority over Gojjam.<sup>56</sup> In November of the same year Ras Adal went to Amba Çara where the emperor resided and declared his submission. The emperor on his part formally appointed him as the ruler of the whole of Gojjam with the title of *ras*.<sup>57</sup>

This development marked the end of the power struggle among the members of the ruling house of Gojjam and the beginning of a stable life and cultural revival which lasted for about a quarter of a century. In 1881 Ras Adal was formally crowned as Täklä Häymanot, *Negus* of Gojjam and Käffa.<sup>58</sup> With the exception of very few military campaigns outside Gojjam his reign was characterized by peace and a settled life. He built a new capital at Mänqorär, which came to be known as Däbrä Marqos.<sup>59</sup> The peaceful political atmosphere created a conducive situation for the arts to flourish as discussed in the next sub topic. His death in January 1901 marked the end of this cultural revival as the old rivalry for power among members of the ruling house resumed.<sup>60</sup>

### **Social and Cultural Background**

Though the history of the region for much of the period under study was characterized by political struggle and conflict among the nobility, it did not deter them from patronizing the arts and artists and from making *gult* grants and other endowments to churches and monasteries. The first

half of the eighteenth century witnessed a major change with regard to the patronage of the arts and *gult* grants and endowments. Formerly the Solomonic monarchs or prominent members of the royal family were the ones who were active in such benevolent actions. As of the mid eighteenth century the local nobility of high political significance began to involve themselves in a large-scale promotion of churches into *däbr* status and extensive *gult* grants to churches.<sup>61</sup> In normal circumstances such endowments were usually accompanied by the commissioning of artists to decorate the interior of the church or the monastery.<sup>62</sup> Thus throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century we find the nobility of Gojjam promoting churches, granting *gults* to churches, building churches and commissioning the decoration of church walls. Several individuals of significance commissioned the writing and illumination of manuscripts. *Däjazmač Wäldä Abib*, the governor of Gojjam in the early part of the eighteenth century, commissioned the writing and illumination of several manuscripts for the churches of Gonča Mädahné'aläm and Bičhäna Giyorgis. A single instance of this is an illuminated Gädlä Giyorgis, which he donated to Bičhäna Giyorgis church.<sup>63</sup>

In the period of *Däjazmač Yosédéq*, his son and successor, *Wäyzäro Wälätä Isra'el II* was active in the northern part of the region. She promoted the church of Moṭa Giyorgis to the level of a *däbr* and granted it an extensive *gult* in 1754/55. Following this the church was rebuilt and apparently decorated. Similarly she made the church of Muga Iyäsus near the peak of the Çoqé mountains *däbr* and granted it a *gult*.<sup>64</sup> In the second half of the eighteenth century *Ras Hailu I* made endowments to several churches. He established a capital at Bičäna, nowadays called Arogéw Bičäna, and Zewa, near the Çoqé

Mountain. At Bičäna he built a palace the ruins of which still exist. His palace was decorated with paintings. He also promoted several churches to the status of *däbr*. Some of these were Jebbé Amba Giyorgis located in Bäränta district, Şed Maryam of Qembuat district, Yädäräna Maryam in Gozamen and Mankusa Mikael in Şehnan. A major establishment of Ras Hailu I was the church of Bičäna Giyorgis that he promoted to the level of a *däbr*. It was rebuilt and its walls decorated.<sup>65</sup>

In the same period *Däjazmač Wälta*, a notable official and advisor of Ras Hailu I, promoted the church of Yägäwära Qusquam to *däbr* and rebuilt it. The building of this church was reputed for its fine architecture and paintings until its destruction in the early twentieth century.<sup>66</sup> Another prominent official of Ras Hailu, *Däjač Zäwdé*, founded the church of Dämbäça Mikael and the town of Dämbäça that were consolidated by his son *Däjač Gošu*.<sup>67</sup> Generally the period of Ras Hailu I was marked by cultural revival and social stability. Ras Hailu's successor in Gojjam, Ras Märed, had two major establishments. The first church, which he promoted to a *däbr* and which had allegedly been a medieval establishment, is the church of Qäranyo Mädahné'alam. He ordered the reconstruction of the church building and granted it a new *gult*.<sup>68</sup> The second church that Ras Märed promoted to a *däbr* status is the church of Ṭaba Nolawé in the Qembuat area. The reconstruction of the building of this church is believed to have been started by Ras Hailu I. In this particular case, the contribution of Ras Märed was in finishing the construction of the church building and reaffirming the *gult* granted by his father.<sup>69</sup>

*Däjač Gošu*, the successor of *Däjač Zäwdé* in Damot, raised the church of Dämbäça Mikael to *däbr* status and rebuilt it.<sup>70</sup>

The town of Dämbäça was also consolidated as the seat of the rulers of Damot during his period. *Däjač* Gošu raised the status of several churches to *däbr* in Damot. Of these the church of Dälma Amanuel, that later came to be renamed Däbrä Şebah Amanuel,<sup>71</sup> was the only one in addition to Dämbäça Mikael which is located within the geographical frame of this study. In the second half of the 1850s and early 1860s *Däjač* Tädla Gualu was active in the Basso and Libän areas in terms of promoting churches. He made Yäwuš his seat and made several endowments to the church of Mikael there. The church was decorated and its *gult* increased.<sup>72</sup>

The formal accession of Ras Adal to power in 1874 signaled the beginning of a cultural revival, which lasted for about a quarter of a century. His reign in Gojjam was characterized by internal peace and social stability. Most of the developments of his period came after his promotion to the status of *negus* in 1881. In 1883 he founded Däbrä Marqos as his permanent administrative center.<sup>73</sup> This was immediately followed by the establishment of the church of Däbrä Marqos. This church was made the first among the churches of Gojjam in terms of rank as the name *Mäle'eltä Adbarat* indicates.<sup>74</sup> In addition to Däbrä Marqos church, which was the major establishment of the *negus*; other churches were also promoted to *däbr* status. Some of these were Däbrä Gänät Abo, which was the birthplace of the *negus*, Gemja Bét Maryam, Abma Maryam, Ṭamawit Maryam, and Däbrä Qälämo Balä'egzi'abhér. Moreover, *Negus* Täklä Häymanot was active in terms of reconstructing and decorating churches, which had formerly been promoted to *däbr*. To this category belonged Agamna Giyorgis, Bičäna Giyorgis, Dima Giyorgis, Şed Maryam and Däbrä Şebah Amanuel.<sup>75</sup> Däbrä Éleyas church that was made a *däbr* in 1874 by Emperor Yohannes



IV was also built and decorated on the orders, and under the sponsorship, of *Negus Täklä Häymanot*.<sup>76</sup> His death in 1901<sup>77</sup> brought about the end of this cultural revival.

The promotion, construction or reconstruction of churches and granting of *gult* to churches throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century was accompanied by the decoration of the four sides of the *mäqdäs* with paintings. Decorating the four faces of the *mäqdäs* was an integral and important part of the construction of church buildings. There was a parallel correlation between promotion of churches to a *däbr* status and the granting of extensive *gult* land on the one hand and the construction and decoration of churches on the other. Both construction of a new building for a church and decoration of its interior with paintings required large funds, which any ordinary church could not afford. Such works were largely done by the sponsorship of the nobility. Thus mostly those churches which the nobility favored and which were promoted to *däbr* and granted extensive *gult* had their walls decorated and painted.<sup>78</sup>

The society in the period under consideration was deeply religious. Particularly the nobility, as shown above, devoted much of their time, finance and energy to the construction and decoration of churches to attain salvation. The commissioning of scribes to write and illuminate manuscripts on different subjects was also a means to achieve the same end. The frequently quoted inscription in paintings of any form, **“ህክም ተግጥሶኝ”** which literally means “as [somebody] beseeched” shows their wishes of attaining salvation through such works. Apocryphal texts such as the miracles of St. Mary, homilies and hagiographies of saints and angels set the rules for these

actions. In most of such writings it is clearly stated that those who write and paint or sponsor the writing and painting of a book of homilies, of miracles, a hagiography and image of a saint or an angel will be saved from eternal damnation by the intercession of the saint or the angel to whose honor they commissioned the above things, or even by Christ.<sup>79</sup>

The period from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, the *Zämänä Mässafent*, was considered as a period of punishment by God. The society that prevailed throughout this period tended to believe that God who had been observing the sin committed from the period of Emperor Gälawdéwos to the period of Iyo'as brought the era of the princes to punish the people. The social conflict, political instability and the moral crisis of the *Zämänä Mässafent* was understood by the society in these terms.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, donations of paintings were made to guarantee earthly protection from different dangers in addition to heavenly salvation.

### **General Significance of the Period**

In the history of Christianity and Christian art in Ethiopia from its beginning to the eighteenth century the principal patrons were the monarchs or prominent members of the royal family. Painters worked by moving from place to place according to the demands and wishes of these individuals. This led to a similarity in the paintings of a particular period found in different places. It was mainly due to this fact that Ethiopian painting has been considered as a stereotypic reproduction of one prototype.<sup>81</sup>

Beginning from the eighteenth century, there was a growing tendency towards regional variation. This was caused by the diminishing role of the Solomonic monarchs and the royal family in patronizing painters and by the growing role of the regional nobility in sponsoring works of Christian arts and crafts.<sup>82</sup> Most of the regional lords of the eighteenth and nineteenth century seem to have had their own painters and scribes. These painters and scribes worked under the supervision and patronage of their respective lords. They decorated the churches that their patrons favored and wrote illuminated religious texts, which their lords ordered them. In the case of East Gojjam most of the lords who ruled the province from the second half of the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century had their own painters. Ras Hailu I alone had four painters who worked for him.<sup>83</sup> These painters were prohibited from going to other areas that belonged to the nobility of other regions. They were confined to the province, which their lord ruled and worked only in this geographical limit.<sup>84</sup> With regard to painting this seems to have led to the emergence of a difference in executing some details, which gradually evolved into a separate school in the early twentieth century.

From the late seventeenth century there was a growing tendency towards wall painting rather than panel painting and manuscript illumination.<sup>85</sup> Most of the wall paintings in the churches and monasteries of East Gojjam were done in the eighteenth and nineteenth century while most of the panel paintings belonged to the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century. The production of panel paintings seems to have drastically declined in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Panel paintings were the subject of scholarly research more than

wall paintings. Most of the wall paintings of the region have not been studied mainly because they belong to a much recent time compared to panel paintings. Thus while the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries showed a gradual transition in terms of change of the emphasis of the painters and the patrons from panel painting to wall painting, wall paintings of the period have not been studied.

Secular art also developed during the period under consideration. Generally speaking what differentiates the art of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century from the art of the previous period was the appearance of secular figures and themes in the art of the eighteenth and nineteenth century.<sup>86</sup> In the paintings of East Gojjam secular figures appeared as early as the early eighteenth century. In the late nineteenth century completely secular themes appeared on the walls of several churches. The study of the secular aspect of the art of the period gives deep insights to the social and cultural history of the region.

## **Painting in East Gojjam from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century**

### **From the fifteenth to the early sixteenth century**

By the middle of the fifteenth century Christianity was well established in East Gojjam. A considerable number of churches and monasteries were founded. Some of these churches and monasteries soon became prominent centers of Christian education.<sup>87</sup> An important component of Christian education was the art of painting though it was not given high emphasis like

that of liturgy, chanting etc.. which are necessary in the day to day routine of the Church.<sup>88</sup>

Extant paintings of any form belonging to the pre sixteenth century period are generally rare. From the extant paintings of the period, the churches and monasteries of Gojjam possess a large number. They can be classified in two major categories based on their origin: those, which were imported from outside the country and those that were produced within the country by expatriate painters. There are seven panel paintings belonging to the first category. They are found in four churches and monasteries, Gétésämani Maryam, Wafa Iyäsus, Märṭulä Maryam and Däbrä Wärq. Five of the paintings are paintings of the Virgin with Child. The other two demonstrate the theme of the Lamentation and the Man of Sorrows. Iconographic analysis of these icons tends to show that most of them belong to the Italo-Cretan School of Painting that flourished in the sixteenth century in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>89</sup>

Neither existing written records nor traditions give a satisfying explanation as to how these icons were brought to the area and their exact origin. Written sources of the eighteenth century and a later period indicate that Emperor Dawit (r.1380-1412) had brought the icon of the Virgin Mary, which is believed to have been painted by St. Luke and the icon of the *Kur'atä Re'esu* (Christ crowned with thorns) which is attributed to St. John the evangelist along with the right arm of the True Cross from Jerusalem some time during his reign.<sup>90</sup> Oral traditions similarly indicate that Emperor Dawit imported eight icons of the Virgin Mary attributed to St. Luke and the *Kur'atä Re'esu*. Of these eight icons of the

Virgin, five are said to have been placed in different churches and monasteries of Gojjam as follows:

1. *Sergut* (the Adorned) in Gétésémani Maryam church
2. *Wäynut* (the Grape) in Däbrä Wärq Maryam Church
3. *Emä Meherät* (the Mother of Mercy) in Qollälla Kidanä Meherät Church
4. *Mänker Hayla* (the One whose power is surprising) in Wašära Maryam church and
5. *O'ho Bahlit* (the One who responds) in the mountain fortress of Jebälla.<sup>91</sup>

Though these traditions cannot be taken for granted it is apparent that there are icons in the region that were brought from outside the country as early as the fifteenth century. In the chronicle of Iyasu II there is a reference to the presence of icons of the Virgin at Däbrä Şemuna, Däbrä Wärq, Gétésämani, Märṭulä Maryam and Tädbabä Maryam that according to the Chronicler are, "surrounded with majesty and looking as if they were speaking to an observer".<sup>92</sup> Some of these icons were discovered in the last four decades and have been subjects of scholarly study since their discovery. Diana Spencer discovered Wäynut of Däbrä Wärq and Sergut of Gétésämani in the early 1970s.<sup>93</sup> We still do not know whether the other three icons mentioned above exist or not. Diana also discovered two other icons in the churches of Gétésämani and Wafa Iyäsus. The one at Gétésämani is named Şegéräda. At Wafa Iyäsus an icon of the Virgin with Child and a painting of the Man of Sorrows that is called by the people of the area as the Kur'atä Re'esu were discovered at the same time.

Two icons found in the Monastery of Märṭulä Maryam, however, seem as yet unknown by scholars of art and art

history. One of these paintings is an icon of the Virgin with Child. It is in a bad state of preservation. Most parts of its margins are flaked. Only the central part of the icon has survived the damages of time. The icon is not attributed to St. Luke. It shows great similarity to those of Wäynut, Sergut and the Şegéräda in terms of the way the folds of the mantle of the Virgin and the robe of the Child are draped and the modeling of the faces and the manner the hands are executed skillfully by marking the shadows. The embroidery of the fringes of the mantle of the Virgin and the rendering of the folds of the veil are also identical with the others.

However, in this particular case the Child appears to the left of the Virgin. He does not hold an orb. Neither does he give a blessing by a raised hand and pointed fingers as in the case of the other three. Rather his hands rest gently on the left shoulder of the Virgin. His shoulders are naked. The way the Virgin has put on the mantle is also another element of difference between this icon and the other three. In the case of Sergut, Wäynut, and the Şegéräda the opposite margins of the mantle are tied together below the neck of the Virgin like a cloak whereas in the case of the Märṭulä Maryam icon only one part of the mantle goes across the chest of the Virgin loosely. The nimbi of both figures are created by incised dots forming circular and floral patterns. This icon does not bear any Greek or Ge'ez inscription though there is a wide possibility that whatever inscription it might have had was flaked away. The background of the icon is painted uniformly with gold. In most of its appearance and details it shows a striking similarity with the other three icons. Local traditions about the icon indicate that it was brought to the church from Jerusalem in the period of Emperor Dawit.<sup>94</sup>

Another icon of a high quality of the Virgin and Child is said to have existed in the same church. At present only the wooden box in which the icon used to be kept is found, the icon having been taken away by robbers, as the church authorities report.<sup>95</sup>

The second painting is in a much better condition than the one described above. Two themes are depicted on it: the Lamentation and the martyrdom of St. Sebastian. The body of Christ, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene constitute the figural composition of the Lamentation. A number of compositional details suggest its external origin in addition to the tradition that it was imported from Jerusalem in the period of Emperor Dawit. To begin with, the painting is rendered in perspective. The Virgin wears a headdress covering the whole of her neck right to the chin, which was a common high and middle class outfit of the middle ages. This kind of outfit is common in Italian paintings of the *Pieta* during the Renaissance.<sup>96</sup> A deep knowledge of the anatomy of the human body as shown in the depiction of the body of Christ and St. Sebastian is another feature that suggests its external origin. The presence of St. Sebastian in the composition apparently assures its Italian or Greek origin. St. Sebastian is seldom found in the series of paintings of martyrs depicted on church walls and manuscript pages. In the Synaxarium of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church his feast is observed on 25 *Ṭer* (January). A short paragraph stating his saintly deeds contains a narrative of his martyrdom.<sup>97</sup> In the Catholic Church Sebastian is a prominent saint whose feast is celebrated on 20 January. In the eastern Mediterranean including Italy a vast iconography of him has developed.<sup>98</sup> Painters of the pre-Renaissance period used to depict him as an old Roman soldier. Later in the Renaissance he was depicted as a young man with a



clean-shaven face and well built body.<sup>99</sup> On this icon he is shown as a young man. This at least gives the first indication that the painting was done some time during or after the Renaissance. It is the scene of his martyrdom that is depicted here. His hands are bound behind his back and his body pierced with several arrows. Though the icon bears a Ge'ez inscription "ግርግሮ ምስላ ፍቅር ወልዳ" it is apparent that it is a later addition.

In spite of their numerical insignificance, these icons apparently played an important social and spiritual role. These icons were and still are regarded as the works of St. Luke and hence venerated highly as sacred objects. Their presence is believed to be an assurance of protection against natural catastrophes such as drought and epidemics.<sup>100</sup> With regard to the development of painting, some of these icons served as sources of inspiration for painters of the medieval as well as later periods. They seem to have influenced no less a painter than Brancalone who used Wäynut as a model.<sup>101</sup>

To the second category of paintings, namely to those produced within the country, probably within the region itself, belong quite a considerable number of paintings. Most of these paintings are the works of Nicolo Brancalone, a Venetian painter who was active in Ethiopia in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Others are attributed to him based on specific iconographical and stylistic details.<sup>102</sup> In the churches where his works are found there are no traditions indicating that he worked and lived there. Also there are no written records. However, it is safe to hypothesize that since the medieval kings and members of the royal family had a special attachment to some churches and monasteries of the region such as Gétésémani and Märṭulä Maryam<sup>103</sup> Nicolo Brancalone might have lived and worked in the

region for some time. The presence of a large number of his works in the region also supports this assumption. Among the signed works of Brancaleone is the Book of Miniatures in Wafa Iyäsus church. This manuscript, which was allegedly produced for Wälätä Dengel, sister of Emperor Lebenä Dengel,<sup>104</sup> is used as a reference together with other signed icons to determine the authorship of other panel paintings and miniatures of the period under discussion found in the region.

Since scholars of art history have studied most of these paintings and the period is out of the time frame of this study, a brief statement of the contribution of Brancaleone to the development of painting in Ethiopia in general and East Gojjam in particular will suffice. The major contribution of Brancaleone is that he introduced several details to the existing themes of painting. Among these the collecting of the blood of Christ in the Crucifixion, inclusion of the dragon and Birutawit in the painting of St. George are the most lasting and significant ones. Moreover he introduced several new themes in the martyrdom of St. George especially scenes of the torture.<sup>105</sup>

Another painting that is worth mentioning here is a diptych panel belonging to the Monastery of Märṭulä Maryam. On the upper register of this panel are depicted Jesus, St. John the Evangelist and one unidentified figure. In the lower register Abunä Gäbrel, Täkästä Berhan and a certain Gäbrä Maryam are shown. Abunä Gäbrel was one of the Egyptian Bishops who came to Ethiopia in the period of Emperor Zär'a-Yaqob.<sup>106</sup> Täkästä Berhan was the first missionary who preached Christianity in East Gojjam and the founder of the monastery of Dima.<sup>107</sup> The third figure in this row, Gäbrä Maryam, is anonymous. His dress is also rendered differently from the

others. A robe loosely put on his head covers his head. Tākästä Berhan holds his hand as if giving him a blessing. It may be assumed that this Gäbrä Maryam is his disciple. Though there is no inscription helping us to identify the person to the left of Jesus in the upper register, it is safe to assume that he is *Abunä Mikael*, the Egyptian Bishop who came with *Abunä Gäbrel*<sup>108</sup> from the similarity of his pose and outfit. Both figures hold a white object in their hands, which is likely to be a book.

The right panel of this diptych is flaked in several places. The upper register contains the painting of the Virgin with Child. It is rendered in the typical Ethiopian manner; the archangels Mikael and Gäbrel escort the Virgin. In the lower register three monastic leaders are depicted. Unfortunately the inscriptions identifying two of the figures are not readable. The inscription on the nimbus of the third figure reads "ሳሙኤል", "Samuel". He is apparently Abba Samuel of Waldeba. There is a great probability that the other two are Täklä Haymanot and Ewoṣṣaṭéwos. All of them are rendered as old men as their long and white beards show. Their outfit is likely to be an imitation of the outfit of a high-ranking monk of the fifteenth century. Their head is covered by a piece of cloth falling to their back. Some sort of rope or cord forming a huge cross on the center crisscrosses their chest. This seems to be the *askéma* worn by the most saintly monks after completing the last stage of monastic life.<sup>109</sup> They hold a *mäquama* (a monks stick) and a cross in their hands.

According to Chojnacki's classification this painting belongs to the moon-like faces style of the fifteenth century.<sup>110</sup> The style of the painting and the monastic leaders it depicts who lived in the thirteenth and fourteenth century

gives a reasonable ground to date the painting to the fifteenth century. An inscription written on the top frame of the left panel reads “ተክለ መርዳዊ ተግንፀንኩ እነ ኅጥእ አብሳጂ”. This gives us a reason to assume Täklä Mär’awi to be the painter. In most of the paintings of the fifteenth century the name of the donor does not appear in the form of an inscription. Inscriptions of the fifteenth and the sixteenth century identify the painter not the donor. It is unfortunate that I could not discover other paintings of this style done by Ethiopians in the course of my research.<sup>111</sup>

The fifteenth and the early sixteenth century witnessed large-scale production of panel paintings in East Gojjam. Taking into account what had been already lost over the centuries, particularly during the war of Ahmed Grañ, the churches and monasteries of the region undoubtedly once owned a big collection of paintings.

Most the panels of the period are made from wood of juniper (*Juniperus procera*) or *kaya* trees. The common technique of carving out the surface to be painted leaving only a margin, which serves as a frame is applied invariably to all known cases. *Boränq* (chalk) is applied on the surface of the panel to be painted to create a smooth ground for painting.

## **From the Mid-sixteenth to the end of the Seventeenth Century**

As is the case in fifteenth and early sixteenth century paintings, most of the paintings dating to the second half of the sixteenth and to the seventeenth centuries are found in the churches and monasteries of the eastern part of the region. There are a number of panel paintings of the sixteenth century style, which are conventionally known as the parallel line style.<sup>112</sup> The Monastery of Mărțulă Maryam alone has about thirty panel and pendant paintings of this style. There is a marked continuity from the paintings of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century in that the local monastic leaders and the Apostles form an important part of the composition of sixteenth century paintings. However, the painters of the sixteenth century did not identify the Apostles by individual names, they rather used the generic term “አዋርያት”, “Apostles”.<sup>113</sup> But like the painters of the medieval period, the painters of the sixteenth century tried to differentiate the Apostles by rendering their beards and hair in a different manner. Two figures that were absent in the fifteenth century composition appeared in the sixteenth century, Joachim and Anna. In most of the panel paintings of the region known to us they appear on the left panel of triptych icons side by side. Themes like the Trinity and the Ancient of Days do not appear in the paintings of this period. Although the Crucifixion appears in every triptych and diptych, it was not given equal emphasis with the Virgin. The panel painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth century seem to have focused very much on the theme of the Virgin. From the many equestrian saints of the fifteenth century only three, St George, St. Basilides and St. Theodore, are shown on the lower register of the lateral panels of triptychs. St. Mercurius appears on rare occasions.

In the second half of the sixteenth century there was a complete change of style of expression. The sturdy and short figures of Brancalone and the moon-like faces style give way to tall and slender figures. Spherical faces with bearded and elongated chins replace the round and mostly clean-shaven ones. The flowing and complicated drapery especially in the paintings of the Virgin with Child executed by marking the shades with a varying tone of hue was abandoned in favor of a simple and uniform parallel drapery using linear expression.

There is a great similarity in the program of most of the diptych and triptych panel paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The central panel is reserved for the depiction of the Virgin with the Child and the twelve Apostles. The Virgin in all instances occupies the upper register. The twelve Apostles were mostly depicted in the lower register. There are instances where some of the Apostles are depicted on the side panels suggesting that there was no convention in the programming. It was rather the painter who depicted figures as the space allowed him. On the side panels appear mostly the Crucifixion, equestrian saints, local monastic leaders and Christ's descent into Limbo. Generally, the painting of the sixteenth century in the region was expressive<sup>114</sup> and centered on panel painting, which is a continuation of the fifteenth century. On the other hand the painting of the seventeenth century, which came to be called the First Gondarine style, tend to be narrative<sup>115</sup> and centered on miniature paintings. Though panel paintings continued to be an important form of pictorial representation, miniature paintings seem to be more preferred since it was the best form of painting to narrate a story. As opposed to the sixteenth

century, there are a large number of miniature paintings in the region dating to this period.

As many of the miniature paintings of the period explicitly show there is a marked western influence. The impact of the Jesuits on Ethiopian painting in general and the paintings of the region first appears in the seventeenth century. Western models that apparently were brought to the country by the Jesuits influenced Ethiopian painters greatly.<sup>116</sup> A typical example of this was the miniatures of the Gospels of the Monasteries of Märṭulä Maryam and Dima Giyorgis. The painter (painters) of these miniatures was (were) apparently copying the illustrations of the *Evangelium Arabicum* only omitting the details of the background scenery.<sup>117</sup> During the early part of the seventeenth century the whole region of Gojjam was a locus of intense Catholic missionary activity.<sup>118</sup> Thus it is possible that a considerable number of Western paintings might have been introduced into the region.

The miniatures of the Gospels of Märṭulä Maryam and Dima Giyorgis dated, according to Chojnacki, to the second half of the seventeenth century, contain several details, which are not found in the paintings of the earlier period. Some of these, for example, the nimbi of the Apostles and Christ, several times rendered in angles, the fabulous turbans of the Scribes/Pharisees, the modeling of the body of the donkey in the Entry of Christ to Jerusalem and the Flight to Egypt<sup>119</sup>, the shoes etc...obviously indicate a influence of Western art. New themes such as the Kiss of Judah, the Withering away of the Fig Tree, the Feeding of the Five Thousand, the Last Supper, the Casting out of the Money Changers from the Temple

of God, the Transfiguration, the mocking of Christ etc... were also introduced.<sup>120</sup> However, in many cases new themes were adapted to the traditional style by adding Ethiopian elements and omitting details that were not necessary to the narration the story.<sup>121</sup>

The miniatures of the *Tamrä Maryam* at Däbrä Wärq explicitly show the adaptation of the new elements into the local style of expression. This manuscript contains many miniatures illustrating the miracles of St. Mary. As some of the illustrations show the painter of the miniatures included some details from the illustrations of the *Evangelium Arabicum* or from other sources influenced by the *Evangelium Arabicum*. For instance in the scene of the prayer of St. Mary at Golgotha some of the details were taken from the scene of the Resurrection.<sup>122</sup> Both St. Mary and Christ stand on a coffin, which represents the grave of Christ. What is interesting is that three soldiers are included in the composition. The inscription identifying these soldiers reads “ዓቀብተ መቃብር”, “grave guards”. The rendering of the shields of the soldiers and the seating soldier suggest that the painter was possibly using a painting with a perspective as a model. Many of the objects depicted in the miniatures of this manuscript however were taken from contemporary society and life.<sup>123</sup> The devil and hell appear in the paintings of the region for the first time during this period. The devil is represented as a black human being with horns, with extraordinarily long teeth, tail and an animal’s ear. Hell is represented as a dark place with long dark and red flames of fire where a number of human heads, presumably souls of sinners, are found.<sup>124</sup>



A unique aspect of the miniatures of this period is that in most of them architectural patterns and scenes of buildings are predominant. In some cases the architectural patterns form part of the decoration of the miniature. In other cases an outline of a certain building structure executed with varying degrees of skill and detail represent a town particularly Jerusalem.<sup>125</sup> This probably is due partly to the influence of external models and partly the result of the response of painters of the period to the developments of the time since the seventeenth century was a golden age of architectural development.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Painting in East Gojjam, c.1700- 1758**

#### **Formal Characteristics of the Second Gondärine style of Painting**

Scholars of art history trace the beginning of the Second Gondärine style of painting to the last decade of the seventeenth century. The first church decorated with paintings of the style known so far was the church of Däbrä Berhan Selasé in Gondär, which is founded by Iyasu I (r.1682-1706).<sup>1</sup> The style was fully developed in the 1740s and 50s under the patronage of Emperor Iyasu II and Empress Mentewab.<sup>2</sup> In many of its aspects the Second Gondärine style of painting is different from the styles of the previous periods.

The fundamental element that distinguishes this style from others is the appearance of secular figures.<sup>3</sup> The first secular figures to appear were presumably the portraits of Iyasu II and Empress Mentewab. Soon painters began to depict prominent historical figures of the past like Iyasu I, Bä'edä Maryam and Yekuno Amlak. Throughout the eighteenth century secular figures continued to appear in works of religious themes. The way they were expressed and depicted also was in a religious context not in a fully secular fashion. They were depicted prostrating themselves under or standing on the side of saintly figures. As of the second half of the nineteenth century full-fledged secular themes began to emerge.<sup>4</sup>

The modeling of parts of the body that are not usually covered by clothing like hands and faces was greatly improved. Most of the time shades of color with different intensity are used to outline different structures of the body rather than a line. In contrast to the slender shapes of human figures of the First Gondärine style, Second Gondärine painters preferred short and stout figures. Faces were rendered in a much more circular shape in a one third pose.<sup>5</sup> The second Gondärine style of painting was close to perfection in terms of maintaining proportion. Patterns of clothes and hair and dress style were rendered with extraordinary care and emphasis. Most of the clothes and garments that different saintly and secular figures wear had floral decorative patterns. Costume and hairstyle were executed from observation of contemporary society. Folds of clothes were marked by varying the shades of the color not by lines.<sup>6</sup> Instead of a parallel and uniform drapery Second Gondärine painters preferred complicated drapery. The colors they used were vigorous and several in number compared to the paintings of the sixteenth and

seventeenth century.<sup>7</sup> The vigor of the color together with the floral decorative pattern of the fabrics gives Second Gondärine paintings a majestic appearance.

Decorative patterns were dominant and highly emphasized in this style.<sup>8</sup> In all its appearance the Second Gondärine style was decorative and narrative. Compared to the styles of the previous periods the Second Gondärine style of painting achieved very little in terms of panel painting. Most of the paintings of this style are done on the walls of churches and on folios of manuscripts. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries indeed witnessed a great development in wall painting and manuscript illumination.<sup>9</sup>

Another most important aspect of the Second Gondärine style is that it included some degree of perspective and an illusion of depth. The technique that the painters employed in expressing perspective was the rendering of crowds of people by superimposed heads that decrease in size as they get farther from the observer and the shading of the background with different colors.<sup>10</sup> Mostly several variations of green, red and yellow were used alternately to shade the background.<sup>11</sup> These clearly differentiate the Second Gondärine style from all the other styles of the previous centuries. The figures and objects depicted in Second Gondärine painting are not just parallel to the frame; rather they seem to appear behind the frame with some sense of depth. The frame served as a border of a window to look in to the painted surface. The improved method in the modeling of the face and the drapery increased the three-dimensional appearance of the paintings. Moreover,

the Second Gondärine style was more realistic in expression.<sup>12</sup>  
As the painters strove for more narrative, they imitated  
reality far greater than their predecessors.

### **Introduction of the Second Gondärine Style in East Gojjam**

The probable origin of the Second Gondärine style of painting is believed to be, according to some scholars, the town of Gondär itself.<sup>13</sup> The island monasteries of Lake Ṭana which were frequently visited and supported by the Gondärine monarchs are also likely to have been in the forefront of the development of painting and, therefore, probable places of origin of new artistic inspiration and expression.

Soon after its development into a full-fledged style in the 1740s and 50s the Second Gondärine style spread to many parts of Christian Ethiopia. In the second half of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century it was widely used in decorating church walls and manuscript illuminations in different parts of Gondär, Tegré, Gojjam, Lasta and Šäwa.<sup>14</sup> The style seems to have been introduced in Gojjam as early as the first half of the eighteenth century. We know for sure the existence of a painter of this style in this period who worked both at the royal court in Gondär as well as in the churches and monasteries of East Gojjam.<sup>15</sup> Also, compared to other regions, East Gojjam was close to the places of origin of the style. Thus artistic developments from Gondär or the Lake Ṭana region might have found their way early into the region. The clergy of the monasteries and churches of East Gojjam were very close to the court at Gondär as they were highly involved in the doctrinal controversies of the

seventeenth and eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Such close political and religious relation with the center of the development seems to have created a good condition for the spread of the style into the region in its early stage. In addition to this, the nobility of early eighteenth century Gojjam seem to have commissioned painters of the Second Gondärine style to illuminate manuscripts as some manuscripts found in the region show.<sup>17</sup> Though not developed very well, the Second Gondärine style of painting was in use for illuminating manuscript pages and for decorating church walls as early as the second decade of the eighteenth century. In the following pages, a description and analysis of some of the miniature, panel and mural paintings of the early phase of the style will be given followed by a summary of major formal and compositional characters.

### **Panel Painting**

Though the emphasis was more on wall painting and miniature painting, panels were also painted during the first half of the eighteenth century. Because of the fact that most of the icons were considered sacred and are not accessible easily, only one diptych icon was found in the course of the fieldwork of this study dating to the first half of the eighteenth century. This panel painting is the property of the Monastery of Märṭulä Maryam. It is extraordinarily large and bound by strong leather. The upper register of the left panel contains a painting of the Trinity and the lower register the Virgin with Child.

The Trinity is depicted with in an octagon as three old men. On their left hand they hold a very tiny orb. The right hand gives a blessing with raised fingers. As usual in the four corners the four beasts of the Apocalypse are depicted with winged heads. An inscription on the top of the Trinity reads “ሥሉስ ቅዱስ”, “Holy Trinity”. Chojnacki identifies this form of painting as Type II, Phase I, Group B.<sup>18</sup> The rendering of the Virgin Mary and her Child in the lower register shows a marked difference from earlier paintings and other paintings of the same period. In the composition the Virgin and the Child are not the only figures. Salome and Joseph are included in the right upper part. The archangels Michel and Gabriel are missing. One might even mistake the theme of this painting for the Nativity or the Flight into Egypt, had the painter not included the inscription “ምስሉ ፍቁር ወልዳ”, “The Virgin with Child” and depicted the Flight in to Egypt on the lower register of the right panel.

What makes a more striking difference is that the head of the Virgin is rendered uncovered, her hair falling on her back and shoulders. She is depicted nursing the Child. In depicting this action, the painter has clearly demonstrated his skill. The chest of the Virgin is naked as the collar of her dress is pulled down to allow her breast to come out. She is seated on a certain cushion like structure. Christ wears only a transparent shirt extending to his tie with short sleeves. Joseph is depicted as an old man with baldhead, gray hair and beard. Salome as always is depicted as a young woman.

On the upper register of the right panel are shown two themes, The *Kur’atä Re’esu* and the Crucifixion. The *Kur’atä Re’esu* is depicted in the style that Chojnacki categorizes in

his classification, as Type II, Phase III, Form I, Group B.<sup>19</sup> The head of Christ is crowned with thorns. Rows of droplets of blood are shown on his forehead. His hair falls on his right and left shoulders. Blood flows on both sides of his neck in parallel lines to his chest forming a large drop at the end.

Christ wears a green cloak. The painter's extraordinary skill is explicitly shown again in the way he depicts the interlaced knots of the straps of the cloak. Christ's nimbus is a radiating one with dotted ends. There are also fleurs-de-lis at three places marking the outline of a cross within the nimbus. At the bottom of this painting is a prostrated figure. There is no inscription identifying this figure. Perhaps he is Iyasu II, for reasons that will be explained later.

The picture of the Crucifixion found to the right of the *Kur'atä Re'esu* is composed of four figures: the crucified Christ, Länginos (the Legionary) who is depicted piercing the body of Christ with a spear, the Virgin Mary and St. John. Länginos in this case is not mounted on a horse. He stands on a neutral ground and wears high boots. He is rendered in profile. To the right of Christ the Virgin and St. John are rendered standing. The Virgin Mary holds her mouth in both her hands under her mantle. The color of her clothing is identical to that depicted in the Virgin with Child, red dress and a deep green mantle. Here, however, her head is covered. Next to her St. John is depicted as a young man with a beardless face.

The rendering of the body of Christ and of his pose is superb. His head is crowned with thorns and his legs are crossed. Blood drips from other parts of His body in addition to the pierced parts. The background of the upper part of this

scene is painted in dark blue. Several falling stars dot the dark blue surface. On top, a dark sun and a red crescent are depicted to the left and right of the vertical column of the cross respectively. On top of the vertical column of the cross a script that is not readable is written.

In the lower register of the same panel the Flight into Egypt is depicted. Four figures constitute the composition of this theme, Christ, the Virgin, Joseph and Salome. The group as a whole walks from the left to the right. Joseph is depicted at the front as an old man carrying a "traveler's staff" tied to his traveling stick on his shoulder. He wears high boots. Christ is depicted as a young boy walking barefoot. Here he wears a long dress and red robe. The Virgin walking behind him holds his right hand. She is again depicted with her head uncovered. Her red dress falls to the ground covering her feet. In her left hand she holds a very beautifully depicted rose. At the end of the row is Salome carrying a *mosäb* on her head. In her right hand she holds a *masäro*. Her dress is a typical maiden outfit of the period. A garment tied to her waist forms a sarong. She also wears shoes. Inscriptions identify both Salome and Joseph. Another inscription reading "ሰከሙ ተወደት እግብእትነ", "as Our Lady fled" identifies the whole theme.

The depiction of some themes in this panel generally shows a deviation from the established tradition of painting in the previous centuries and in the eighteenth century in many details. For instance, in the depiction of the Trinity the three figures have a long thin mustache drooping downwards, extending beyond their cheeks and curling up slightly at the ends. In the composition of the Virgin with Child the inclusion of Salome and Joseph instead of the



archangels Michael and Gabriel is the other odd thing. In addition, eighteenth century paintings of the Virgin with Child render her with the head covered. In this particular case her head is uncovered and her hair visible. This particular aspect of the depiction of the Virgin with Child indicates the possible existence of an external model that influenced the painter. In the late seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century there were a relatively large number external models imported to the country through various means.<sup>20</sup>

Several formal and stylistic elements of the Second Gondarine Painting are reflected. Floral decorative patterns of garments are carefully rendered. The collars, buttons and margins of shirts, tunics and other kinds of garments are rendered with great care and emphasis. Folds of garments are marked with shades forming a good drapery outlining the body inside. The background in all cases is shaded with red, green and yellow colors used alternately. The colors the painter used are actually very few. The transition from one color to the other is smooth, not abrupt. The modeling of the body and the hands is very fine. Faces are rendered in one-third profile with the exception of the Trinity, which are rendered frontally. Ears are not shown as they are covered by the hair in the case of the face to the side of the observer and hidden from sight in the case of the side of the face distant from the observer. Such elements indicate the presence of a sense of perspective in the mind of the painter. The painter has maintained proportion very well. Nonetheless, figures that are supplementary to the main theme are reduced in size deliberately even if they are depicted on the same distance and perspective from the onlooker. This is a technique widely used to identify the social and religious status and position

of the figure depicted *vis-à-vis* other figures depicted in the painting. The nimbi of all the holy figures are depicted in a radii ending with dots. The dots form the outline of the circle of the nimbus. The painter unusually becomes selective in rendering nimbus to the persons depicted. Only Christ, the Virgin and the Trinity are rendered with nimbus. Joseph and Salome are rendered without nimbus.

The way the panel is made is different from the sixteenth and seventeenth century tradition. The frames of the panel are made from a separate piece of wood. The craftsmanship is excellent. A luxurious piece of cloth covers the back of the panel. On top of it is leather binding that protects both panels. Apparently a person of high political status commissioned the panel. This matches with the local tradition that Iyasu II donated it to the church. The figure that is prostrated below the painting of the *Kur'atä Re'esu* perhaps is Iyasu II. The painting is attributed to *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo*. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* in his chronicle of Gojjam mentions *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam* as follows:

**እርሱም [አለቃ ዘወልደ ማርያም] በአድያም ሰገድ ኢየሱና በአጽራር ሰገድ  
ቴዎፍሎስ በዳግማዊ ኢየሱ መንግስት ንጉሱን ከካራዊቱ እግዚአብሔርን  
ከነመላሳክቱ አሳምር ሥሎ ለንጉሡ አበርክቶ አገሩን ሸዋ መምህርን አስገደመ<sup>21</sup>**

In the reign of Adiyam Sägäd Iyasu [Iyasu I], Aşerar Sägäd Téwoflos, Iyasu II, he [*Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam*] made [the church of] his country Šäwa Mämher [Kidänä Meherät]<sup>22</sup> to be promoted to a *gädam* [monastery] by painting beautifully the king with his army and God with his angels and presenting it to the king

This reference does not clearly indicate to which one of the three kings he made the painting. Since Iyasu II is one of the three mentioned it might be for him that *Zä-Wäldä Maryam* made the painting. Even though the reference indicates that

Zä-Wäldä Maryam was active as early as the period of Iyasu I oral traditions at Märṭulä Maryam and Däbrä Ya'eqob strongly associate him with Iyasu II.<sup>23</sup> The reign of Iyasu II was a period in which there was a large-scale mobilization and patronage of painters. It was also the peak of the development of the Second Gondärine style of painting.<sup>24</sup> Zä-Wäldä Maryam might have been at the peak of his career as a painter during the same period.

### **Wall Painting**

The eighteenth century was a period in which wall painting flourished. Several churches in East Gojjam had their walls decorated and painted during this period. Moṭa Giyorgis Church is one of them. Princess Wälätä Isra'el II raised this church to the status of *däbr* in 1754/55.<sup>25</sup> The church building was reconstructed and decorated following its raising to *däbr* status.<sup>26</sup> The decoration of this church is quite different from the way other churches are decorated in that the upper part of the wall facing the western and northern sides of the *mäqdäs* is painted. It seems the whole of the upper part of the wall facing the *mäqdäs* was decorated at one time and destroyed at some other time. The paintings of the four faces of the *mäqdäs* are almost intact though there are scratches and flakes in some places. Two paintings on the western side were renovated recently. These are the paintings of the Virgin with Child and St. George killing the dragon. The renovator of these paintings is *Aläqa* Dästa of Säqoṭa Gabriel church. In renovating them he followed the original outline of the paintings. He did not change even the floral patterns of the paintings framing the painting on the right and left side. Apart from these two paintings the rest are intact with no renovation done to them.

Two important questions to be raised here are: how were the paintings of the wall opposite the walls of the *mäqdäs* destroyed? And why is it that only the two paintings are renovated? Local informants say that the paintings on the wall opposite the *mäqdäs* were destroyed as a result of the bombardment of the church by the Italians during the period of Italian Occupation.<sup>27</sup> But if this had really happened, the paintings on the walls of the *mäqdäs* could also have been lost. Rather we have to go back further into the past to find answers to this puzzle. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* gives us an indication as to what happened to the church long before the coming of the Italians. He writes:

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□  
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When Ras Ali pillaged Gojjam a Muslim from among his retainers entered the church of Moṭa [Giyorgis] and pierced the painting of St. George by a spear.

Ras Ali pillaged Gojjam several times between 1839 and 1853.<sup>29</sup> On one of these occasions most of the paintings of the wall facing the *mäqdäs* seem to have been lost. The painting of St. George was clearly damaged. The painting of the Virgin with Child that is depicted closer to it must also have been damaged. It could possibly be this damage that happened separately to the two paintings, which led to the renovation of the two paintings only. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* mentions another similar case of destruction of a painting in another church. In this case it was a total ripping down of a painting from the wall. He states it as follows:

2ኛም አንዱ እስላም ኮሶ ዝራ ከሚባል አገር ቤተ ክርስቲያን  
ገብቶ ሥዕል መርቆሬዎስን ልጦ ጠቅልሎ በፈረሰ ቀድሞት ኸደ<sup>30</sup>

Secondly one Muslim entered a church in a country called Koso Zera and ripped [off the wall] a painting of St. Mecurius, rolled it up and got away [with it] on horse back.

Therefore during this particular time and on other similar occasions paintings were destroyed. In the case of Moṭa the paintings of the wall facing the *mäqdäs* seem to have been destroyed in a similar fashion, ripped off from the wall.

The paintings of the church contain several new elements added to the traditional style. On the other hand, there are several details as well as themes that were introduced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and depicted here. One of the striking aspects of the paintings of the church of Moṭa Giyorgis is that secular figures are very rare. In the entire painted surface secular figures appear only at three places. In two of these cases two unidentified figures, male and female, are depicted prostrated below the painting of the Virgin with Child and the painting of the saving of the soul of Bäla'e Säb. In the third case a certain *Mälakä Sälam* Le'ulä Qal is depicted on the upper top part of the wall facing the northern face of the *mäqdäs* holding the tail of the horse of one of the equestrian saints. The two unidentified figures below the painting of the Virgin with Child and the saving of the soul of Bäla'e Säb are said to be princess Wälätä Isra'el and her husband *Däjazmač* Yosédéq. Some of the informants identify the figures as Mentewab and Iyasu II. In both of the cases there are no captions helping us to identify the personalities. It is apparent that a caption identifying them was there in earlier

times. We can infer this from the existence of a caption identifying the third secular person who apparently was lower in political and social status than the other two. Since Wälätä Isra'el was the one who was responsible for the promotion of the church to a *däbr* and the subsequent reconstruction and decoration of the church the female figure apparently represent her. Therefore, the male figure to the right is her husband *Däjazmač* Yosédéq.

An inscription reading “ዘከሙ ተግግሮን መላክ ሠላም ልዑሉ ቃል”, “as Mälakä Sälam Le'ulä Qal beseeched” identifies the third secular figure depicted. According to informants *Mälakä Sälam* Le'ulä Qal was a reputed religious scholar in the eighteenth century. He was a native of Gondär.<sup>31</sup> When Wälätä Isra'el promoted the church of Moṭa to a *däbr* he was one of the recipients of a big *gult*. He began to live in Moṭa.<sup>32</sup> In one of the religious councils held during the time of Emperor Iyasu II he was one of the prominent *tāwahdo* (Unionist) scholars arguing against the adherents of the *qebat* (Unction) doctrine.<sup>33</sup> Local traditions indicate that he was the teacher of the famous nineteenth century religious scholar *Arat Ayna* Gošu and some of the clergy in Gojjam even indicate that he was a well-known painter.<sup>34</sup> From his outfit on the painting it is obvious that he was a highly dignified religious scholar. A very big white turban covers his head. He also wears a transparent garment, *šäma*, on top of a very luxurious tunic with floral patterns. His title, *Mälakä Sälam*, indicates that he was a head of a prominent monastery or a scholar of very high rank. From all this it is safe to infer that he was one of the painters who decorated the church or supervised the work of decoration and painting of the church.

Analysis of the modeling of faces and body proportion of the figures in the paintings give an indication that at least two different hands were involved in the painting. One of the painters modeled the different structures of the face and the neck by marking them with shades. The faces of the figures tend to be more of a spherical shape. The neck is longer compared to the paintings of the other painter. The figures generally tend to be slender. Scholars of Ethiopian art history, particularly Chojnacki, consider this kind of body shape analogous with the figures in Baroque painting.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand the other painter depicted the faces in a circular (moon-like) manner. Instead of shades he uses lines to mark different parts of the face especially in separating the neck from the chin and the jaw. The neck is very short. The figures are stout and short. The spears are also very short. The garments and the robes are presented in a single color devoid of decorative patterns. Most of the figures depicted in such manner are those that are supplementary to the main theme. This gives us room to infer that the main painter did those figures that are slender and the main subjects of the story or the theme depicted. The other painter who seems to have been an apprentice depicted the sturdy figures.

Horse trapping is painted in very extraordinary care and detail. Several new elements are introduced. The *leguam* (bridle) is vividly depicted to the extent that the knot that ties the leather with the iron is shown. In addition to the leather straps that tie the head of the horse, a circular decorative structure is tied to the neck of the horse. In the lower part of the neck of the horse another circular decoration is added that rounds the neck and is tied to the saddle. The crupper strap appears in all the horse trappings. The stirrup mostly is the toe stirrup. St. Basil is painted

in a different way from the other equestrian saints. A richly decorated caparison extending to the hooves covers the horse on which the saint is mounted. Only the head and the legs below the hooves are visible. In some of the manuscripts of this period the horses of the kings and other royal persons are dressed in such a way.<sup>36</sup> The stirrup in this case is the foot stirrup.

The various weapons and objects shown in the painting are also taken from contemporary life.<sup>37</sup> Most of the spears the soldiers hold have a *jenfo* (a ring like structure made from metal) at the end opposite to the spearhead. The spears which equestrian saints hold are depicted in the same manner. In previous centuries the opposite end of the spears of equestrian saints had a cross. Obviously paintings of spearheads, shields, scabbards, matchlocks, sistrums, drums, ploughs, crowns and swords are imitations of real life. The way Båla'e Säb holds and cuts the raw meat is a clear evidence of the extent to which the painters imitated contemporary life. In some cases they expressed Old Testament scenes in an eighteenth century way. For instance, in depicting the death of Uriah they depict the infantry and cavalry soldiers in an eighteenth century manner. They even go to the extent of including matchlocks in the composition. In the eighteenth century matchlocks were rare.<sup>38</sup> The painters expressed this fact by limiting the number of matchlocks in the scene. Only two soldiers are depicted aiming and firing a matchlock at Uriah. In the theme of the Exodus also the soldiers of the Pharaoh are depicted holding matchlocks. Matchlocks were obviously non-existent in the period of the Pharaoh and King David. Thus, the painters projected contemporary aspects of life to the early times.



Many of the elements of Ethiopian painting, which in the seventeenth century were attributed to the influence of foreign especially of Western European models are included in the wall paintings of Moṭa Giyorgis. But they are expressed in the Second Gondärine fashion. One of these elements is the narration of the story of the Gospels. In wall paintings of other churches the life and deeds of Christ are usually depicted. However, only selected themes such as the Nativity, the Adoration of the Magi, Baptism, Crucifixion, Entry to Jerusalem, Resurrection and a few other themes are depicted. In this case we find several of the miracles of Jesus Christ depicted. The story of the Passion Week is highly emphasized. The left upper part of the western face of the *mäqdäs* is completely devoted to the depiction of themes and scenes of the Passion. The upper part of the wall facing the western side of the *mäqdäs* is largely devoted to depiction of the miracles of Jesus Christ. Many of these paintings are identical in composition with the seventeenth century miniatures of the Gospels of Dima and Märṭulä Maryam. Especially, the Nailing of Christ to the Cross manifests a striking similarity with the miniatures of the same theme in the Dima and Märṭulä Maryam Gospels. The scene of the Crucifixion is also highly influenced by seventeenth century miniature paintings. Two different paintings of the Crucifixion of Christ are depicted. One is depicted on the western face of the *mäqdäs* and the other on the opposite wall. The composition of both is different. In both, several figures are involved in the composition. On one of them, depicted on the western wall of the *mäqdäs*, the two robbers who were crucified to the right and left of Christ known as *Yämanay* and *Şägamay*, respectively by Ethiopian painters, are included in the composition. However, the painters added new details. The way they are nailed to the cross is different from the

seventeenth century form, their hands bound behind the cross. Rather their hands are depicted stretched and nailed to the arms of the cross just like Christ.

Yet another indication of the persistence of details influenced by external models in the eighteenth century is the presence of a sense of perspective though not intentionally done. The two robbers are depicted to the right and left of Christ in the distant background. As such their size is greatly reduced giving a clear impression of area perspective. What seems to be an addition is that the top of the central column of the Cross bears an inscription written in Ge'ez reading "ኢየሱስ ናሰራዊ ንጉሥ ከ", "Jesus of Nazareth king [Christ?]" . The letter 'ከ' seems to represent the word 'ክርስቶስ', Christ. It is evident that the painter took this from the seventeenth century depictions of the Crucifixion influenced by West European models bearing the Latin letters INRI (Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum). But he creatively adapted it to the traditional style by translating it into Ge'ez.

Scenes from the Old Testament are also depicted in large numbers. In most cases scenes of the Old Testament are depicted on the eastern wall of the *mäqdäs*. In this case they are depicted on the door of the *mäqdäs* and the upper part of the wall facing the northern and western sides of the *mäqdäs*. Some of the scenes depicted are the Exodus, the Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, the Murder of Abel by Cain, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the death of Uriah. The depiction of the scene of the death of Uriah is quite unusual. It is depicted on a large space and a large number of figures are included in the composition. Two groups of armies are depicted. One group of the army is retreating and the other

group chasing. The retreating army is apparently the army of Joab and the attacking army is that of the Syrians. On both sides cavalry and infantrymen are depicted. In the space between the two armies Uriah is depicted falling from his horse and pushing the shield against the spears thrown at him by the Syrian cavalrymen. In the upper left corner of the painting King David is depicted crowned and seated on a cushion-like seat. In front of him a messenger is standing apparently telling him the news of the death of Uriah. An inscription written in the space between David and the messenger reads “ዘከሙ ነገሮ ለዳዊት ሞተ ኦርያ” , “As [he, the messenger] told David the death of Uriah”. It is this inscription that helps to identify the theme. In the scene two soldiers are depicted firing a matchlock against Uriah. The matchlock and the pose of the two soldiers undoubtedly is imitation from real life. The painter seems to have got the inspiration from eighteenth century battles. Though there are indications of the depiction of scenes from the life of David and Gideon, which probably were battle scenes, in the later part of the eighteenth century this painting is unique. Another painting, which is unusual, is the depiction of a fight between a group of angels and devils. This is a representation of the rebellion of Lucifer. A description and analysis of this theme is given in the last part of this chapter

The post and lintel of the doors are decorated by winged angels and flowers incised in a rectangle. The margins of painted surfaces in most cases are decorated with a relatively wider space forming a large frame. Different floral patterns are depicted within it. In some cases the painters added bunches of threads with knots hanging from the edge of the

painted surface. This has given the painted surface the appearance of a carpet.

### **Miniature Painting**

The eighteenth century was a period in which manuscript illumination reached its highest stage. The manuscripts illuminated during this period were large in number and diverse in content. A peculiar character of the art of manuscript illumination and miniature painting of that century was that painters went to the extent of depicting scenes of the Revelations of St. John<sup>39</sup> and the Virgin Mary. In addition miniature paintings of the period particularly that of the mid and second half of the eighteenth century were extremely beautiful and lively. For this subtopic the miniatures of three manuscripts from three different churches are described and analyzed.

#### **1. Miniatures of the *Tamrä Maryam* and *Ra'eyä Maryam* Manuscript of Dämbäça Mikael Church**

This manuscript was made some time in the period between 1720 and 1735. In addition to the calligraphy and style of painting, the note written at the beginning of the manuscript gives us valuable information to date it. The manuscript seems to have changed hands several times as the erased and rewritten names of persons indicate. However, the name of one of the personalities is not changed. Bishop Krestodolu is mentioned in the note in connection with the anathema. It is this name which has a crucial importance to date the manuscript. *Abunä Kerstodolu* came to Ethiopia in 1720.<sup>40</sup> He died in August 1735.<sup>41</sup> The manuscript must have been written and illuminated during the period in which he was in office.

The miniatures of the manuscript can be grouped into three major categories based on the stories they illustrate. The first category is that of miniatures illustrating the text of the *Tamrä Maryam*. The second category is that of miniatures illustrating the *Ra'eyä Maryam*, an apocryphal text of the revelations of the Virgin. Miniatures of the third category narrate major themes of the life of Christ. They are additions in the last part of the manuscript. They do not illustrate a text since the texts included in the manuscript are only the *Ra'eyä Maryam* and the *Tamrä Maryam*.

All the miniatures are painted in a fashion closely similar to the First Gondärine style. They show considerable formal similarity with the miniatures of the *Däbrä Wärq Tamrä Maryam*. In the modeling of the face, the miniatures of this manuscript are more realistic. The rendering of garments, costume, architectural structures etc...is identical to that of the First Gondärine style. The background of some of the paintings is shaded with alternating colors of green, yellow and red. But there is no smooth transition from one color to another. The change is abrupt. In some of the cases, however, the background is shaded with a single color or left unpainted and unframed. Drapery of clothes and garments is invariably parallel. Tunics and robes are painted in a single color. They do not bear floral decorations rendered in patterns. In addition to such general formal and stylistic similarities with paintings of the First Gondärine style there are some details that are typical of the First Gondärine style in the miniatures of this manuscript.

In two cases a costume prevalent in the Second Gondärine style painting appears. In one of the cases the blessing of the man who celebrated the day of the Annunciation is depicted wearing a garment tied to his waist. In the second case in the Apparition of the Virgin Mary at Däbrä Meṭmaq several figures are depicted in the same manner. Some of the miniatures illustrating the miracles of St. Mary include new details. One of these new details exists in the painting of the Apparition of the Virgin Mary at Däbrä Meṭmaq. In programming the painting the painter has used a new method. He depicted the Virgin and the angels on one side on a separate page. The martyrs, the Just, the ordinary Christians and the unbelievers (presumably the Muslims of Egypt) are depicted to the left of the Virgin and the angels on a separate page. As usual the Virgin is depicted, enveloped in a certain structure with a rectangular base and a dome shaped top. This structure apparently represents the light boat of the miracle. The angels surround the outer part of the dome. The Virgin is depicted seated and her hands crossed. But she does not hold the handkerchief that usually appears in her hand in other paintings of the same theme. In the depiction of the Martyrs, the Just, the ordinary people and the unbelievers the painter used a large number of figures. What is exceptional to this painting is the inclusion of the unbelievers or Muslims in the composition. They are rendered in profile and appear in the far bottom left part of the painting.

The Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin Mary are rendered in a different manner. The Dormition in this case is rendered in the Western European form rather than in the old Byzantine form. The dead Virgin is depicted seated on a cushion-like structure. This form is prevalent in most of the paintings

done after the sixteenth century and it is not exceptional to this painting. What seems to be a completely new detail in this painting is the addition of the entombment of the body of the Virgin Mary. Two persons who represent the Apostles hold the body wrapped in a white garment at opposite ends to place it into a grave in front of them. According to the painter's depiction, this seems to have happened after the miraculous taking of the body of the Virgin to Heaven. One of the unique aspects of Ethiopian painting is that in cases where two or more scenes are depicted in one painting the first event in the story takes the left or the upper left part of the painted surface. In this case the entombment of the body of the Virgin Mary is depicted in the right lower part of the painting indicating that it was the last of the events in the narrative depicted in that particular painting.

The rendering of the Assumption is also different from the paintings of the period. The Virgin is depicted seated, her hands and legs crossed. She is enveloped in a sphere of yellow, green and red colors. Winged angels surround the sphere, supporting it with their wings. Most paintings of the Assumption known so far, particularly those painted in the seventeenth eighteenth and nineteenth century, depict the Virgin standing on a crescent and surrounded by a white cloud. The white cloud and the crescent are missing here. It is apparent that the painter used the form used to depict the Apparition at Däbrä Meṭmaq in the theme of the Assumption. Two figures are depicted below the Virgin. It is likely that they represent the Apostles since no secular figure is depicted in the entire manuscript.

The miniatures illustrating the *Ra'eyä Maryam* text are unique in that they are the only known miniatures illustrating this text. As such the painter was painting them by his own imagination without being influenced by any previous work or external model. These miniatures have a great importance in the study of Ethiopian painting of the eighteenth century. The miniatures of the Revelations of St. John that are now in the British Library are the only group of paintings similar to these miniatures in terms of being unique and the only known types. Stylistic and calligraphic comparison of the two manuscripts clearly indicates that the Dämbäça manuscript and its miniatures are earlier than the British Library Manuscript.

The first of the miniatures of the paintings of this category portray St. John and The Virgin Mary. It illustrates the first part of the text. Mary is depicted sitting and telling John what she saw above the "third sky." The other miniatures illustrating this text can be grouped into two based on the story they illustrate. One group of miniatures illustrates the kingdom of heaven and the *şadqan* (the Just) who live there. The other group illustrates hell and the sinners who suffer there. The *Ra'eyä Maryam* is a narration of how the Just are rewarded in Heaven according to their deeds and on the other hand how the sinners suffer in hell according to their sin. The painter attempted to depict all of the stories. He gave more emphasis to the depiction of hell and the suffering of the sinners. As usual he simplified most of the stories. Only what he considered a crucial element of the story is depicted. The Kingdom of Heaven according to the painter's expression is a luxurious looking palace with a garden of different fruit-bearing trees. Hell as usual is



portrayed as a dark place with red and black flames. In the depiction of hell the devil is always included. As in the seventeenth century case the devil is depicted as a human being with dark skin, horns, tail and long teeth. He is rendered in profile. Two miniatures explicitly show the painters understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven and his simplification of the story in translating it into painting. A simple building composed of an arch door and a dome shaped top represents Jerusalem of the Kingdom of Heaven. This architectural structure appears frequently in other miniatures portraying the Kingdom of Heaven. The curtain of fire covering the door of Jerusalem is rendered as a simple rectangular structure with floral decorations to the right of the building representing Jerusalem. The painter used a similar method of expression in rendering what the text describes as the country of monks and hermits in the Kingdom of Heaven. What is stated in the story as "a country shining like the sun whose end is unknown and that has gold clothes"<sup>42</sup> is depicted as a group of simple architectural structures rendered in perspective, their domes superimposed one upon another to give the impression of infinity of number and the illusion of depth. The gold cloth is rendered as a rectangular structure to the left of the houses. In the houses a large number of crowns are depicted. This seems to be an addition by the painter. It is the representation of heavenly reward for those monks and hermits who have left their money and property in favor of an ascetic life.

In all the miniatures depicting the suffering of the sinners in hell devils are depicted torturing the sinners. They are rendered with wings and in profile. However, they do not have horns, tails and teeth. The faces of sinners are rendered in

two-third pose just like the Just. In all cases they are rendered naked. This method of expression leads to an important question; do they represent the sinners themselves as they appear in human flesh or the souls of the sinners? Undoubtedly the painter was depicting the latter. In Ethiopian painting the soul is depicted as a naked baby.<sup>43</sup> Though in this case the painter rendered some of the souls with beards as grown up people, it is clear that he maintained the traditional method of rendering souls. The souls of the Just are depicted wearing clothes. In the miniatures depicting hell only in one case is a figure depicted wearing clothes. It is the sinner bishop who is depicted wearing a robe and a veil. The painter obviously did this to distinguish among sinners of different ecclesiastical status. The sinner priest, episcopal and deacon are rendered naked.

The objects the devils use for torture seem to be depicted based on similar objects used in the period. Spears, arrows and bows, chains and ropes are frequently rendered. In the text these objects are made from fire. The method the painter used to make these objects fit the story is to paint them red.

The last group of miniatures in this manuscript does not illustrate a text. All of them are **ሥዕላተ አድኅኖ** (Paintings of Salvation) as the inscription written in all of them indicates. In the inscriptions the phrase **“ስምዓን አምላክነ ወመድኃኒኑ”** which in some cases is abbreviated as **“ስም: አም: ወመ:”** appears in all cases. Two of the paintings in this category are that of the Trinity and the Virgin with Child. The rendering of the Trinity is different in one aspect from the paintings of the same period. It is set in an oval shape. There is very much space between the rectangle framing the whole painting and the

oval shape enveloping the Trinity compared to other paintings. In the eighteenth century the octagon is the widely used shape enveloping the Trinity.<sup>44</sup> The Virgin with Child is rendered in the typical Santa Maggiore form and two angels support a curtain behind the Virgin. The rest of the paintings of this category depict major themes of the life of Christ from the Annunciation to the Last Judgment. The rendering of the Annunciation differs from other paintings of the Annunciation in the same period. As already indicated, the archangel Gabriel is depicted as an old man with gray beard and hair. In his left hand he holds a stick and his right hand points to the Virgin who stands behind a lectern with an opened book on it. He is standing on a cloud poorly executed. The Virgin is depicted standing inside an arch. Except his head and right wing, Gabriel is also inside the arch. The columns of the arch form the lower right and left frame of the painting. Above the head of the Virgin a dove is depicted diving downward inside a diamond shape. Behind the Virgin there is an object, which probably is a chair. In the left upper corner of the painting God the Father is depicted seated on a cloud his hands outstretched.

The Nativity also is rendered in a different way from the usual form. Joseph and Salome are rendered at the front parallel to the frame of the painting. Joseph holds a whisk in his left hand. In the space between these two figures and the Virgin Christ is depicted lying on the floor wrapped in a white garment. His body is naked above the waist. A donkey and an ox are shown to the left and to the right of Christ respectively. The Virgin Mary is depicted behind the donkey and Christ. She seems to lie on the ground and lean on another young woman who is sitting behind her. To the right of the

Virgin two figures, a young boy and a girl are depicted seated. The boy holds in his arms a small lamb. It is apparent that they represent the shepherds. In the background, a building is depicted. Above the building an angel holding a flower is rendered. The rendering of figures one after the other and the open space in the middle where Christ is lying clearly gives the impression of depth. The modeling of the donkey and the ox is close to perfection.

The Passion Week is represented by nine paintings. In the painting of the Crucifixion the crown of thorns is rendered as a narrow strip of leather or garment tied to the head of Christ. In addition the red crescent appearing in the right upper corner is rendered as a red disc. Instead of the falling stars, the painter used circular structures that dot the blue painted surface. The composition of the Entombment contains the soldiers who guard the grave of Christ. Usually they are depicted together with the Resurrection. In the painting of the Resurrection they are missing. The *Kur'atä Re'esu* is rendered in a completely new fashion. Christ is depicted wearing a real crown on his head and seated on a cushion. The lower rim of the crown has an edge painted in green. The green color seems to symbolize thorns. Two soldiers flank Christ. Both hold pincers in their hands by which they hold the crown on the head of Christ. In their left hand they hold an axe. The soldier to the right hits the top of the crown with the blade of the axe. All the three objects, the crown, the axes and the pincers are new additions. In the rendering of the *Kur'atä Re'esu* the soldiers, when they are depicted, mostly hold a nail and a hammer.<sup>45</sup> The rendering of Christ seated on a cushion by itself is new. In the nailing of Christ to the Cross the soldiers hold the nails with pincers and hammer them

with an axe not a hammer. Since nails are depicted in the same miniature it is hard to say that the painter substituted the nails for pincers. It rather seems that the painter's knowledge of the story of the crowning of Christ with thorns is a different one as there are several legendary versions of the story told by Ethiopian clergy.

There are several details in these miniatures that are new and unique. The most crucial question here is to what could these new elements be attributed? In some cases it seems that the seventeenth century miniatures of the Gospels, which in turn were influenced by external models, influenced the painter. The absence of the painting of the Flight into Egypt in the scenes depicting the life of Christ strongly supports this. In addition the inclusion of themes like the mocking of Christ, descent from the cross, the arrest of Christ, the carrying of the cross and the nailing of Christ to the cross indicate the possible influence by external models directly or by works influenced by external models indirectly. In other cases the painter maintained many aspects of the traditional method at the same time introducing new details. In this case it might be possible that he was painting based on his own mere imagination. Especially the miniatures illustrating the *Ra'eyä Maryam* text suggest this.

## 2. Miniatures of the Four Gospels of Bičäna Giyorgis Church<sup>46</sup>

This manuscript was produced in the first half of the eighteenth century. The name and portrait of Wäldä Abib appears frequently in the manuscript. This helps us to date the manuscript. In all his portraits Wäldä Abib is addressed as *Däjazmač*. He was made *Däjazmač* in c.1708.<sup>47</sup> Therefore more precisely the manuscript must have been written and illuminated in the years between c.1708 and 1752. The latter year is the date in which Wäldä Abib died. The manuscript contains eight miniatures. Four of the miniatures are those of the four Evangelists; St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John. The other four miniatures depict the Virgin with Child, the Crucifixion, St. George killing the dragon and the Last Supper. The paintings portraying the four Evangelists appear at the beginning of the Gospel of each Evangelist. They are seated on a throne-like chair. The paper or parchment on which they write bear the first three or four words of the Gospel of the Evangelist that is depicted. The materials they use for writing are: an ink container, knife and a piece of parchment on which usually Ethiopian scribes try out the nib of the stylus before starting to write. In all the four cases a curtain forms a canopy over the throne on which they sit. The Evangelists are not the only figures constituting the composition of the paintings. In all the four paintings two additional figures are represented. In the case of the painting of St. Matthew a young man and the Archangel Michael are depicted. According to the inscription written at the top of the page, Michael is the angel who guards St. Matthew. The inscription reads as follows: **“ሥዕል ቅዱስ ሚካኤል መልአክ ዑቃቤሁ ለማቴዎስ ወንጌላዊ”**, which literally means “Painting of Saint Michel, the angel guarding Matthew the Evangelist”. The Archangel Michael is depicted holding his

scabbard. The holding of a sword as in the case of the painting of the Virgin with Child symbolizes protection.<sup>48</sup> The young man represents the beast with a human face from the four beasts of the Apocalypse. The four Evangelists are closely identified with the four beasts of the Apocalypse. St. Matthew is considered synonymous with the beast that has a human face. Ethiopian scribes and painters often refer to him as “ዘብኢ ማቴዎስ”, “Matthew the human”. St. Mark is identified with the lion-faced beast (ዘአንበሳ ማርቆስ), St. Luke with the bull-faced beast (ዘላህም ሉቃስ) and St. John with the eagle-faced beast (ዘንስር ዮሐንስ).

St. Mark is depicted in a pose similar to that of Matthew. The difference is that in the composition of this painting the Archangel Gabriel is depicted in place of Michael. Again the inscription identifies Gabriel as the angel who guards St. Luke. Gabriel is depicted surrounded by a white cloud. On the opposite page two figures are depicted, *Däjazmač* Wäldä Abib and a lion. *Däjazmač* Wäldä Abib is prostrate. He wears a shirt with long sleeves and a garment tied to his waist forming a skirt. He has a sword tied to his waist. In the miniature depicting St. Luke the angel is Rufa’el (Raphael) and the beast is the bull. *Däjazmač* Wäldä Abib is again prostrate on the opposite page. The angel Ragu’el and the eagle form an integral part of the composition of the miniature depicting St. John. Here again *Däjazmač* Wäldä Abib is depicted prostrated below the throne of St. John.

The depiction of the four evangelists as a front piece to each of the Gospels is a method Ethiopian painters used as early as the fourteenth century.<sup>49</sup> From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century the four Evangelists are rendered either sitting and writing with a bamboo stylus or standing and

holding a book and a cross.<sup>50</sup> But they were depicted alone. In the Gospels of Dima and Märtulä Maryam they are depicted alone sitting inside a building with a complicated architectural pattern. In this manuscript two things are added to the usual composition. The first is the addition of the angels guarding the Evangelists who are writing. The story told usually by the Ethiopian clergy about the writing of the Gospels is that four different angels were revealed to the four disciples of Christ, Matthew, Luke, Mark and John, and ordered or assisted them in writing the gospel and guarded them until they finished writing.<sup>51</sup> The painter of these miniatures was clearly depicting this story. The other new element is the addition of the four beasts. As already indicated, the Four Evangelists symbolize the Four Beasts of the Apocalypse. It was due to this reason that the painter made the Four Beasts as an integral part of the composition. The depiction of St. Mark on the southern door of the *mäqdäs* of Moṭa Giyorgis church is to some extent similar to this set of paintings. The only difference is that the throne is missing and the lion has a wing. The angel Rufael is not included in the case of the Moṭa church wall painting.

The paintings of the Virgin with Child and St. George killing the dragon are not different in composition, style and form from the other Second Gondärine style paintings of the same theme. The Virgin with Child is executed in the Santa Maria Maggiore form. Below the Virgin two figures are prostrate. A separate inscription identifies both. The one depicted to the left is *Wäyzäro Sahelu* and the one to the right *Wäyzäro Eléni*. *Wäyzäro Eléni* was the wife of *Däjazmač Wäldä Abib*.<sup>52</sup> The programming of the Crucifixion in this manuscript is different. It is the three figures form. The painter has separated the upper and lower part of the painting



to the right and left of the column of the cross by lines forming an arch. Both lines start from the bottom of the column of the Cross and ascend upwards to the point where they become completely above the head of Länginos, Mary and John. They canopy Länginos who is on horseback and the soldier holding the vinegar sponge on a long stick in the left, and St. Mary and St. John in the right.

The paintings of this manuscript obviously belong to the Second Gondärine style. However there is one typical element of the First Gondärine style that appears in the paintings of the evangelists, i.e. the robe the evangelists wear bears ornamentations outlined by parallel lines. Of course floral decorations appear. However, they are rendered strictly in parallel and within the space contained by parallel lines. In all the paintings the other elements except the newly introduced ones are depicted according to the Second Gondärine style. The way the frames of the paintings are executed show a close similarity with some of the borders and frames of the wall paintings of Moṭa Giyorgis church. The frames tend to be spacious, formed by two parallel lines. In the space between the lines several kinds of floral patterns are depicted. The other element making very striking similarity with the wall paintings of Moṭa are bunches of threads with knots forming the fringe of the throne on which the Evangelists sit. Though we do not know the painter of the miniatures of this manuscript we cannot attribute them to the painter/s of the wall paintings of Moṭa Giyorgis based on these trivial similarities that could be accidental. The miniatures seem to be produced earlier than the wall paintings of Moṭa.

Eight of the paintings contain secular figures in their figural composition. *Däjazmač* Wäldä Abib is depicted several

times; he appears in six of the paintings. His wife *Wäyzäro Eléni* is depicted two times. The other secular figure that the inscription identifies, as *Wäyzäro Sahelu* is anonymous. She is depicted only once together with *Wäyzäro Eléni*. The rendering of the hair of this woman is unique. She wears a jewel that looks like a headgear. From this one can guess that she was superior in social and possibly political status from *Wäyzäro Eléni* and perhaps the mother of either *Wäyzäro Eléni* or *Däjazmač Wäldä Abib*. These individuals are the earliest secular figures in painting from East Gojjam.

### **Formal and Compositional Characteristics of the Paintings of the Period**

The paintings produced in the period between c.1700 and 1758 show diversity in treatment of themes. Nevertheless, there are different elements by which they are similar to each other. The most clearly identifiable change in the painting of this period is that painters did not give much attention to the rendering of nimbi. The only figure that was rendered consistently with nimbus is Christ. Many saintly figures including the Virgin Mary were often depicted without nimbus. Partly this seems to be the influence of the miniatures of the seventeenth century Gospels. The first paintings where we find saintly figures depicted without nimbi are the miniatures of the Gospels of Dima and *Märṭulä Maryam*. Some painters went to the extent of depicting the Virgin with her head uncovered as in the case of the *Märṭulä Maryam* diptych.

Until the middle of the eighteenth century some elements of the First Gondärine style continue to appear. Thus in East Gojjam the transition from the First to the Second Gondärine

style was complete in the 1750s. Painters who came from Gondär seem to be the ones who were active in spreading the Second Gondärine style in the region. Gondär was a source of painters and architects for the various regions until the period of the *Zämänä Mässafent*. For instance the painters and architects who built and decorated the church of Moṭa Giyorgis are said to have been brought from Gondär.<sup>53</sup> Some painters who were native to the region and who worked in the royal court at Gondär, as in the case of *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo*, were also instrumental in the expansion and development of the Second Gondärine style in the churches and monasteries of Gojjam.

Paintings of this period set the rules and the models for the painters of the later part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century in terms of the execution of details and figures and objects. As indicated in the previous sub-topic the painters of this period add new objects and figures into the composition of themes. In many cases the new elements in the composition were retained into the mid-nineteenth century.

Modeling of figures improved greatly. Though it was not done intentionally to create the illusion of three-dimensionality, there is an impression of depth in some of the paintings. Similarly the rendering of some themes like the Crucifixion gives the impression of perspective. This is done by shading the background and by reducing the size of the figures as one went further from the center. The illusion of depth as well as perspective resulted unconsciously in the process of adapting themes composed according to western European form in to the traditional style. Both of them disappeared in the second half of the eighteenth century as

the painters were not aware of them in depicting and composing figures and as the influence of seventeenth century models declined.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **Painting in East Gojjam, 1758 -1874**

In 1758 Hailu Yosédéq became the *Däjazmač* of Gojjam.<sup>1</sup> His appointment as the *Däjazmač* of Gojjam signaled the political and economic autonomy of the region. In 1777 he was made *Ras*

by King Salmon of the early Zämäna Mässafent. At the same time he became the ruler of the whole territory of Gojjam from Dängäl Bär and the Dura River in the west to the eastern bend of the Abbay.<sup>2</sup> From then on he was virtually independent. As pointed out in chapter one, his reign in Gojjam was characterized by peace and political stability. Painting flourished in Gojjam especially in East Gojjam during his reign. Most of the churches that he promoted to the status of *däbr* are located in East Gojjam.

His political centers, Bičäna and Zewa, were also located in East Gojjam. This seems to have benefited the churches and monasteries of East Gojjam. Being closer to the political center, they received much attention from the Ras. They received extensive *gult* grants. Their buildings were reconstructed and decorated by architects and painters commissioned by the Ras.<sup>3</sup> The new development of the period was that painting for the first time in the region was made outside the church's domain. The palace of Ras Hailu at Bičäna reportedly was decorated with paintings. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus Waqqjira* in his chronicle states the following:

**ራስ ኃይሉ [ቀዳማዊ] ቢቸና ላይ መልካም ቤት አሰርቶ ከቀድሞ  
ታሪክ ከመሣፍንቱ የነገዴዎንንና የነሳምሶንን ከነገስታቱ  
የነዳዊትንንና የሰሎሞንን አሳለባት<sup>4</sup>**

Ras Hailu [I] made a good house to be built at Bičäna and made the ancient history of Gideon and Samson from the nobility, and David's and Salomon's from the kings painted on it.

Unfortunately the palace to which the chronicler is referring collapsed a long time ago. Nevertheless, the reference gives a hint of the Biblical themes that were painted on the inside walls of the palace. Themes from the Old

Testament related to David appeared before this on the wall paintings of Moṭa Giyorgis church. But the question as to why these themes were used to decorate the palace is unavoidable. It seems that such themes were regarded as partly secular. Moreover, since Ras Hailu had a connection with the Solomonic royal family through his mother Wälätä Isra'el II he seems to have been interested in commissioning paintings reflecting his royal descent for legitimacy or for his political ambition.

A relatively large number of churches were painted during his period. Some of these were Bičäna Giyorgis, Dima Giyorgis, Ser Iyäsus, Şed Maryam, Yägäwära Qusquam, Ankärker Giyorgis, Yädaräna Maryam and probably Wäynam Kidanä Meherät. Unfortunately the paintings of all of these churches were lost when they were repainted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> I have been to Bičäna Giyorgis, Şed Maryam, Yädaräna Maryam, Ser Iyäsus and Yägäwära Qusquam. In all cases I found out that they were repainted in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In the case of Ankärker Giyorgis I was not able to identify its exact location. In the case of Dima Giyorgis my attempt to see and photograph the paintings failed three times.<sup>6</sup>

Ras Hailu had four painters who worked for him. These were, *Aläqa Aşädu*, *Aläqa Qäşäla*, *Aläqa Täklä Haymanot* and *Aläqa Gäbrä Mäsqäl*. These were the painters who painted most of the churches and the palace of the Ras in the second half of the eighteenth century. *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo* is said to have trained all of them.<sup>7</sup> Since most of the paintings of this period were lost for one or another reason the wall paintings of Wäynam Kidanä Meheret, and the miniatures of the *Tamrä Maryam* of Märṭulä Maryam Monastery, another *Tamrä Maryam*

of Zäbč Iyäsus church and *Tamrä Iyäsus* of Yädaräna Maryam are the only ones to be described and analyzed in this chapter.

## **Miniature Painting**

### **1. Miniatures of the *Tamrä Maryam* of the Monastery of Märṭulä Maryam**

The *Tamrä Maryam* manuscript in which these miniatures are found was written and illuminated in the second half of the eighteenth century. The donor of the manuscript was *Mämher* Libariwos who was the head of the monastery for most of the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> *Mämher* Libariwos is mentioned at two places in the manuscript. In one of them the statement containing his name reads

“ዛቲ መጽሐፍ ዘመርጡሉ ማርያም ደብረ ኣብርሃ ወእጽብሃ ዘእጽሐፎ መምህር ሊባርዮስ”.<sup>9</sup> The name of the scribe and the painter is not mentioned and the clergy of the church do not remember.

The miniatures are depicted on the first eight folios of the manuscript. The miniatures are extremely colorful and beautiful. Both secular and religious themes are depicted. Two of the miniatures, the *Kur’atä Re’esu* and the Flight into Egypt, show a striking similarity with the paintings of the diptych panel of the same church. The Flight into Egypt is almost an identical replica of the painting in the diptych. As in the case of the painting in the diptych the Virgin’s head is uncovered. She holds a rose in her left hand. The tree behind Joseph is also depicted almost in the same manner as it is in the diptych panel. The only difference between the two paintings is the rendering of the color of the cloth and the shading of the background. The dress and mantel of Mary are shaded in a single color just as in the panel painting. The

clothes and garments of the other individuals are decorated in floral patterns.

The *Kur'atä Re'esu* also shows a great degree of similarity. But in this case three figures, Christ, and two soldiers flanking Him, constitute the composition of the painting. The way Christ is depicted is exactly similar to the miniature of the *Tamrä Maryam* described above and to the panel painting. In this case, however, the modeling of the thumbs of Christ is bad. In all the three cases the nimbus of Christ is not done in a perfectly circular manner; rather it goes down to his shoulders in an amorphous shape. The soldiers flanking Christ wear high boots. Unlike other eighteenth century paintings of the *Kur'atä Re'esu* they do not hold nails and hammers. The crucifixion is executed in a very brilliant and colorful manner. Mary the Magdalene is included in addition to the Virgin Mary and St. John. She embraces the Virgin from behind. All the three figures are tearful. What makes this painting unique is the shading of the background. The lower part of the painting is charcoal black. The upper part is blue and the falling stars dot the upper part of the sky. The upper margin of the background is black.

The Trinity is depicted in a different form in this manuscript. In addition to the three old men representing the Holy Trinity and the four beasts of the Apocalypse the twenty-four priests of heaven, the seven archangels, *Abunä Éwostaṣṣéwos* and *Abunä Täklä Haymanot* are represented. The Trinity is enveloped in an octagon. This time the orbs they hold have a cross at the top. The twenty-four priests of heaven wear crowns and cloaks. They hold a censer in their hand. *Abunä Täklä Haymanot* is depicted in the same pose and



outfit as the twenty-four priests of heaven. In his left hand he holds a cross. Because the twenty-four priests are superimposed on one another, their left hand is not visible. But it is likely that the painter has in mind that they also hold a cross in their left hand like *Abunä Täklä Haymanot*. The depiction of *Abunä Täklä Haymanot*, *Abunä Éwostaṭéwos* and the seven archangels together with the Holy Trinity and the twenty-four priests is unfamiliar. The seven archangels, Gabriel, Michael, Rufa'el, Ragu'el, Fanu'el, Saqu'el and Afnin, are depicted in the same manner as attendants and maids are depicted. The only difference is that they have wings. All of them gaze towards *Abunä Éwostaṭéwos* who is placed in their midst. The caption identifies them in the generic term **ገ ለቃናት**. The rendering of *Abunä Täklä Haymanot* and *Abunä Éwostaṭéwos* do not match at all. *Abunä Éwostaṭéwos* is rendered with a nimbus while the archangels are without one. He also holds a handkerchief. The story by which the painter was inspired is not clear at all.

Nine equestrian saints are depicted together with the idols and unbelievers they killed. Eight of them are rendered in the usual manner, riding a horse and in action. The depiction of St. Basil as in the case of the wall painting of Moṭa Giyorgis church is different from the depiction of other equestrian saints. He is mounted on a horse covered by a caparison. He wears a cloak that has thin strips hanging from the shoulder down to the length of the cloak. This kind of cloak is a typical ceremonial clothing of the Ethiopian nobility. Both in the painting of the wall of Moṭa Giyorgis Church and here he holds his spear slanted upwards resting on his right shoulder. It is very difficult to know at this stage the origin of this form in the iconography of this saint. But as

indicated above the caparison and the costume of St. Basil are apparently imitated from real life. St. George is not included in this group. He is depicted separately on another page. Both St. Basil and St. George seem to have gotten much attention from the painters of the period. The dragon in the painting of St. George looks different from the dragon in other paintings. The tail of the dragon is extremely long and it also has four legs. As in the case of the painting in the Bičäna Giyorgis Gospel, it has beards. Moreover, in this case it has hair all over its body.

The Virgin with Child is depicted as usual in the Santa Maria Maggiore form. Two angels hold a curtain behind her. St. George and the Virgin with Child are depicted on the two consecutive pages. In the lower part of both miniatures the Apostles and the seventy-two preacher evangelists stand in a row forming an integral part of the composition. The Four Evangelists hold a book in their hands. Near the feet of the three evangelists, St. John, St. Mark and St. Luke, are the respective beasts with which they are associated. In the case of St. Matthew there is no beast. The painter seems to have consciously done this. As already indicated St. Matthew is identified with the human-faced beast. It is probably due to this that the painter did not depict the human-faced beast. In the row Däqsyos, and another bishop are included. To the right side of the Virgin is found King David seating on a throne and crowned.

Monastic leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are also depicted. In the panel paintings of the fifteenth to the seventeenth century monastic leaders form a significant part of the figural composition. In the early eighteenth century

paintings of the region known so far, they do not appear. The monastic leaders depicted here are *Abunä Éwostaṭéwos*, *Abunä Täklä Haymanot*, *Abunä Gäbrä Mämfäs Qedus*, *Abunä Kiros*, *Abba Gäräma* and *Abba Samu'el*. The earliest representation of *Abunä Gäbrä Mämfäs Qedus* from the paintings I saw in the process of this research in East Gojjam is this one. He is depicted wearing a white furry garment and an *askéma* that harnesses his body above his waist and hanging down to his lower body. He has a blue veil on his head. Unlike the nineteenth century depiction of him his beard is short. It does not extend to his waist let alone go farther down.

*Abunä Täklä Haymanot* is depicted with six wings behind his back pointed in different directions. He wears a yellow dress and cloak. His dress covers his feet making it impossible to know whether he has one or two legs. Both *Abunä Täklä Haymanot* and *Abunä Gäbrä Mämfäs Qedus* are in a prayer pose. *Éwostaṭéwos* is depicted in the upper part of the painting sitting on the right side of Christ. Behind *Éwostaṭéwos* there are a number of heads lined up in a somewhat schematic way. They seem to be his followers. The annual feast of the church until very recently was celebrated on the annual feast of *Abunä Éwostaṭéwos*.<sup>10</sup> In the expansion of Christianity in the region in the early fifteenth century the followers and successors of *Abunä Éwostaṭéwos* played a very prominent role.<sup>11</sup> According to local traditions Christ Himself is said to have served the church. It is apparently based on this mythology and historical fact that the painter depicted *Abunä Éwostaṭéwos* sitting on the right side of Christ.

The last of the miniature of the manuscript is completely secular. In the upper register of this painting are depicted

Queen Eléni and King Bä'edä Maryam sitting side by side. Both have a multitude of attendants on their side. Two of the attendants standing in front on both sides hold a royal umbrella and a whisk. The ones on the side of King Bä'edä Maryam hold their scabbards. Both Eléni and Bä'edä Maryam have crowns on their head. The crowns they wear are identical. In their right hand, they hold a handkerchief. Their left hand is pointed towards each other. This painting is directly a replica of the composition of the Covenant of Mercy. King Bä'edä Maryam and Queen Eléni substituted Christ and Mary respectively. The attendants of both individuals are substitutes of the angels. An unusual aspect of the rendering of the attendants is that the painter has distinguished the attendants of King Bä'edä Maryam from those of Queen Eléni. The attendants of Eléni are fully dressed. They have tied a garment on their waist forming a sarong. On the other hand, the attendants of King Bä'edä Maryam are depicted partially naked. However, both groups wear some kind of jewel on their neck. Moreover, the painter has distinguished among the attendants of both individuals. The skin complexion of some of the attendants is black and the others brown. This kind of rendering is predominant in nineteenth century secular paintings.

In the lower register are represented the clergy performing the traditional religious dance of the Ethiopian church. The figures depicted in this part form two identical groups. The clergy wear beautifully done robes. Some of them have put on transparent *shämas* on top of the robes. All of them have white turbans and hold dancing sticks. They also wear *mädäbr quad*. Two of them hold a drum and some hold sistrums. In the central space between the two groups a priest wearing a

headgear is depicted. This figure, according to local informants, is the first head of the church, *Re'esä Re'usan Täklä Maryam*.<sup>12</sup> This painting was made with the intention of commemorating the medieval foundation of the church and the visit of King *Bä'edä Maryam* to the church upon the inauguration of the building that *Eléni* got built. She endowed the church with much property including a huge *gult*.<sup>13</sup> Apparently she did so by the support and good will of King *Bä'edä Maryam*.

## **2. Miniatures of the *Tamrä Maryam* Manuscript of *Zäbč Iyäsus Church***

*Ras Hailu* donated this manuscript to the church.<sup>14</sup> The dating of the manuscript, therefore, is based on this. Though the exact date is not mentioned it is clear that it was made in the late eighteenth century. The miniatures are painted at the beginning and the end of the manuscript. On the first four folios of the manuscript, the following themes are depicted: the Trinity, the Virgin with Child, St. George, *Däqseyos* and the Virgin Mary, the saving of the Soul of *Bäla'e Säb's*, the Annunciation, the Nativity and the death of the bishop who sat on the throne of *Däqseyos*. In the last part of the manuscript the Crucifixion, Resurrection, *Kur'atä Re'esu*, and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary are depicted. In some of these miniatures secular figures are depicted prostrated.

The depiction of the Trinity is in the typical eighteenth century manner. The Trinity is enveloped in an octagon. The rendering of the face of the three old men is closely similar with the Trinity depicted in the Mărțulă Maryam diptych. The mustache, the collar and the orb are identical replicas of the Trinity depicted in the diptych. Nonetheless the painter of this manuscript has added other details. The twenty-four priests of heaven are depicted on the next page in two rows. All of them have crowns on their heads and hold a cross and a censer in their left and right hands respectively. All of them wear a richly decorated cloak with the colors varying from one to the other. The other addition is that below the Trinity a prostrated figure is shown. There is no caption identifying the figure. Since his name is mentioned at several places in the manuscript, the figure is apparently a representation of Ras Hailu I.

The Virgin with Child and St. George are painted in the usual Second Gondärine manner. In the case of St. George the spear he holds has a cross at the opposite end. From the paintings used for this research this is the only painting of St. George in which the spear is depicted with a cross at the end opposite to the spear. Apart from this the depiction of the saint does not have any other difference from the others. Below both paintings, St. George and the Virgin with Child, secular figures are depicted prostrated. In the case of St. George the figure depicted is male and in the case of the Virgin with Child female. The painter seems to have made this intentionally. The male figure wears a white turban on his head and has a sword tied to his waist. A turban mostly symbolizes priesthood and a sword is a symbol of nobility. The depiction of the two together is unusual and creates a problem

to identify the figure. Since the figure depicted below the painting of the Virgin with Child is a female, one can guess that the two figures represent a married couple. This automatically dismisses the possibility of the figure being a priest or an ecclesiastic of some rank. This is because priests and ecclesiastics usually are depicted alone, not with their spouse. Thus the figure seems to be a portrait of Ras Hailu in a different outfit from the former painting. Therefore the female figure depicted in the next page is one of his wives; either *Wäyzäro* Meskab or *Wäyzäro* Mälidama.

The *Kur'atä Re'esu* is rendered in an identical manner with the one in the diptych panel of *Märṭulä Maryam*. The only difference is the shading of the background. In the case of the *Märṭulä Maryam* diptych the background is shaded red whereas here it is shaded green. In other aspects the two paintings are similar to the extent that the interlaced knots of the straps of the cloak Christ is wearing are identical.

The Assumption of the Virgin is rendered in the common eighteenth to nineteenth century style. The Virgin is depicted standing on a white cloud that forms a column to her right and left side. Winged angels, their wings pointed downward and crossed, flank her on both sides. They are depicted on the column of clouds. The Virgin holds a white handkerchief in her right hand and the hand of an individual depicted on her left side. Below this individual another person is depicted with his hands crossed. The two individuals apparently represent the Apostles. In the miracles of Mary, the seventh miracle gives a detailed account of the Assumption. According to this miracle, St. John the Evangelist is said to have ascended to Heaven with the body of the Virgin. Then he

descended back to earth and told the Apostles what he had seen. Christ soon appeared to them and took them all to Heaven and showed them the Virgin who sat to his right. The depiction of the Assumption is based on this story. The individual whose hands the Virgin holds is St. John. The other person depicted below him represents the Apostles who ascended to Heaven later. The most striking aspect of the Assumption of the Virgin in this particular case as well as in other similar cases is that the painters depicted the story which says the body of the Virgin ascended to Heaven in a way that appears as though the Virgin ascended to heaven live or resurrected from death. The inscription of this painting reads **“ሀኩሙ ተንሥኣት እግዛእትነ”** which literally means, “As the Virgin resurrected”. The program of Resurrection is exactly similar with the Assumption. Christ holding a victory flag is depicted standing on white clouds forming a column on both sides. Winged angels depicted on the column of clouds flank him. At the bottom of the column of clouds two figures male and female, representing Adam and Eve, are depicted. This strongly suggests that paintings of the Assumption of the Virgin were highly influenced by paintings of the Resurrection.

The painting of the Crucifixion in this manuscript is composed of three figures, Christ, the Virgin and St. John. What differentiates this painting from the Crucifixion of the Mărtulă Maryam diptych is the absence of Länginos and the depiction of the Virgin and St. John on opposite sides of the cross. Like the case in the Crucifixion of the diptych the falling stars are placed in the space between the horizontal axis of the cross, and the boundary between the lower and upper shades of the background. The similarity between the two in some cases goes to minute details. The similarity in the



rendering of themes between the Märṭulä Maryam diptych and some themes of the miniatures of this manuscript indicate that the painter was highly influenced by *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo*. He could possibly have been Zä-Wäldä Maryam's student.

### **3. Miniatures of the *Tamrä Iyäsus* Manuscript of Yädaräna Maryam Church**

A certain Täsfa Mikael donated this manuscript to the church. Local informants say that the manuscript was produced in the period of *Däjač Gošu*. Thus it is safe to say that it was written and illuminated in the period between the early 1820s and 1852. It is richly illuminated. It contains 62 miniatures.

The depiction of the Trinity is similar in form and style to those described above. The three old men representing the Trinity, the four beasts and the twenty-four priests of heaven constitute the composition. The Trinity and the twenty-four priests of heaven are rendered on the same painting: the Trinity on the upper register and the twenty-four priests of heaven in the lower register. In this case, the twenty-four priests have wings. Below the paintings of St. George and the Virgin with Child two individuals, female and male respectively, are found. The female figure wears a necklace. The male figure wears a transparent white garment tied to his body forming a sarong covering his body below his waist and carrying a sword. Although there is no doubt that they represent a husband and a wife, their identity is not known.

Most of the miracles of Jesus are depicted. The Passion Week is depicted in detail. In the set of paintings depicting the Passion there is one additional theme, which does not exist in the paintings described so far, i.e. the Carrying of the Cross. The depiction of the *Kur'atä Re'esu* in this manuscript has taken completely another form. Christ is seated on a throne. He wears only a purple robe and part of his body is naked. He holds a long scepter. His head is crowned with thorns. He has some sort of jewel on His right arm. He is flanked by three figures rendered in profile. The resurrection of Christ also has additional forms. Two stories are depicted side by side. In the first that depicts the resurrection and Christ's descent into Limbo, Christ wears a rich dress and robe. Winged angels and a column of cloud surround him. In the next scene he wears a red robe rounding part of his body loosely. Below him heads of several people arranged in a half circle are depicted. There is a devil, his hands and neck chained, inside the flame enveloped by the half circle around which the heads of people are visible. This apparently is a representation of the pit of Hell.

The Assumption of the Virgin is depicted together with this set of paintings. The Virgin is depicted standing. A column of cloud and winged angels surrounds her. In this case she stands on a white crescent.

The Four Evangelists are painted towards the end of the manuscript. They are depicted sitting on a throne. As usual they are writing. The four beasts with which they are identified are near their feet holding an ink container and gazing upwards to the respective evangelist. The three beasts: the human-faced, the bull-faced, and the lion-faced have

wings. The eagle-faced beast is rendered only with its natural wings. With the exception of St. Mark all are depicted as young men with clean shaven face. St. Mark is rendered as an old man with white beard and hair. The painter did not show consistency in depicting figures. In other miniatures St. Matthew is depicted as an old man with a white beard. He is also baldheaded.

Among the miniatures of this manuscript there are themes that are not commonly rendered in other manuscripts of the same content. One of these is the apocryphal story of the fall of Lucifer and his followers from heaven as a result of his rebellion. This is depicted in three successive paintings. The first scene depicts the division of the Angels into two groups. The group on the left is composed of Lucifer and his followers. His followers are naked. They have a dark skin. Lucifer is rendered seated. A blue-black garment covers his body below the waist. He and his followers have wings and horns. The group on the right is composed of angels who did not join Lucifer and remained firm. The leader of this group according to the caption is the archangel Gabriel. He is depicted at the front of the group holding a sword in a scabbard and pointing towards Lucifer and his followers in a mode of warning. The next painting in the series depicts a fight between the two groups. The figures on both sides hold spears and shields. In this painting Gabriel is depicted pulling out his sword from the scabbard. At the bottom of all Lucifer is shown with his hands and neck tied and thrown into the flames of the pit of Hell. A painting similar to this one is found in the wall paintings of Moța Giyorgis Church. In this case only the fighting between the two groups is depicted. In the Moța church wall painting the group of

angels is depicted on the left and the group of devils on the right. Shields are rendered in pererspective, in the case of the painting in the *Tamrä Iyäsus*, where as in the other they are rendered frontally in a full circle.

The creation of the world and of man is the subject of a series of paintings. On the first painting, God is shown seated and holding a white object. At his side are found animals, birds and one individual. The individual apparently represents an angel. Below God fire, water and earth are seen. The creation of Adam and Eve is represented in one painting. Adam lies on the ground. He wears a red garment below his waist and the upper part of his body is naked. At his side, there is a person with a small head. This head represents Eve emerging out from side of Adam. The painter rendered this carefully so that it reflects the story of the book of Genesis. Eve is depicted emerging from the left side of Adam. Though careful in some aspects, the painter was unaware of other details. An example of this is that Adam is rendered awake (not sleeping) as his open eyes indicate. To the right of this painting God the Father (the Ancient of Days) is depicted. There is a difference in the rendering of the God that is creating the world and Adam and Eve and, this one, God the Father. God the Father is depicted as one of the three old men representing the Trinity. The God depicted creating the world is depicted in a similar manner as Jesus Christ.

In the next painting Adam and Eve are depicted sitting side by side. This time they wear rich clothing. Eve wears a necklace. Behind them three trees with fruits are rendered. The trees symbolize the Garden of Eden. Two angels flank them. In the next series of paintings the fall of Adam and Eve

is depicted. The first painting shows the two sitting side by side. In the middle of them the serpent with the face typical of a devil is rendered rounding the trunk of a tree and talking to Eve. She offers Adam a fruit to eat. Adam holds his left arm up in a mode of disapproval and reluctance. To their side a seated angel holds a sword. His wings are spread. This angel represents Cherubim who guard the tree of life in the east of the Garden of Eden. In the next two paintings Adam and Eve are naked. They are hiding behind a tree and descending down a hill driven by a devil.

### **Wall Painting**

The period from 1758 to 1874 is a period in which wall painting became the dominant form of painting and flourished. As indicated above several churches were painted under the patronage of Ras Hailu I. For this sub topic description and analysis of the wall paintings of Wäynam Kidanä Meheret will be made.<sup>15</sup> Stanislaw Chojnacki dates the wall paintings of Wäynam Kidanä Meheret to the turn of the eighteenth century. The painter of the church was *Aläqa Täklä Haymanot*. He was one of the painters working under the patronage of Ras Hailu I.

On the western face of the *mäqdäs*, scenes from the life of Christ, St. George and the Virgin with Child are depicted. Though the slides do not show the whole of the wall The Trinity is not depicted on the actual wall of the *mäqdäs*. It seems to be depicted on the circular wall on the top of the walls of the *mäqdäs*. Usually it is placed at the center of the actual wall. Scenes of the life of Christ range from the Annunciation to the Resurrection. The Passion Week is less represented. The only painting representing the Passion Week

is the *Kur'atä Re'esu*. The *Kur'atä Re'esu* contains one new element. The palms of Christ contain the holes created by the nails when He was nailed to the cross. The soldiers flanking him hold axes.

The Virgin with Child is rendered in the usual form and type, Santa Maria Maggiore. But it is done in a bad proportion and decoration. *Aläqa Täklä Haymanot* has introduced new elements in the composition of the painting of St. George killing the dragon. First the modeling of the dragon is done in a different way from the other paintings of the previous period. Usually the dragon is modeled on a snake. Its skin as well as tail is similar to that of a snake. The tail is usually long. In the case of this painting, however, the tail is rather short. The modeling of the body and skin of the dragon is similar to that of a crocodile. The second and most fundamental addition to the composition is the depiction of a devil emerging from the dragon. He is given in a human face, which is seen in profile. As usual his skin is dark. This element is dominant in the paintings of the early twentieth century. It is not found in the eighteenth and nineteenth century paintings of St. George killing the dragon. It seems that *Aläqa Täklä Haymanot* added this element based on the story that inside the dragon there was a devil that leapt out when St. George called the name of Jesus Christ and after the devil was cast out the dragon became powerless. The addition of the devil in the painting later in the early twentieth century was based on this story.

The northern wall is completely devoted to the depiction of equestrian saints. What is special about the painting of saints on this church is that on the circular wall on the top

of the wall St. Stephen is depicted lying dead. Above him Christ is seated in glory. This theme is seldom depicted on the walls of other churches. St. Stephen is considered the first of the martyr saints. It is obviously based on this story that he is depicted on the top above all equestrian saints. Below on the actual wall of the *mäqdäs* a multitude of equestrian saints are depicted. St. Basil is mounted on a caparisoned horse. A large group of equestrian saints riding horses follow him behind. The painter identifies them by the inscription “ወራዲተ ሰማዕታት” which means “the army of saints”. Among the Ethiopian clergy St. Basil is regarded as the leader or chief of the martyrs. It is this story that was the basis for the painters to depict him mounted on a caparisoned horse. The rendering of St. Basil is similar to the paintings described above, the Moṭa wall painting and the miniature painting in the *Tamrä Maryam* of Märṭulä Maryam Monastery. However, in this case he wears a crown. All the other equestrian saints are depicted galloping horses and some of them killing different ditties. All of them ride from left to right.

By the time the slides were taken the eastern wall of the *mäqdäs* was damaged and only the paintings depicted on the left half of the church were visible. All the paintings on this side illustrate the miracles of Christ. All of the stories are directly taken from the Gospels, not from the *Tamrä Iyäsus*. The painter's strong adherence to the Gospels is clearly manifested with his depiction of the miracle of the changing of the water to wine at the wedding in Cana. According to the Gospel of St. John this is the first miracle of Jesus. In the *Tamrä Iyäsus* Jesus started to do miracles starting from His early childhood during the Flight into Egypt. The depiction

of the miracle at Cana is similar to that of the Last Supper. In both cases people are depicted seated behind a table containing food and drink. The table is always a simple rectangular structure.

Two of the Four Evangelists are also depicted on this side of the *mäqdäs*. These are St John and St Luke. It seems that the other two evangelists were depicted on the other side (right) of the wall, which is unfortunately completely damaged. The representation of the evangelists is different from the miniatures of the Gospels of Bičäna Giyorgis church in two aspects. First the big architectural structure or curtain that forms a canopy over the evangelists is not painted. Secondly the paper or parchments on which the evangelists are writing contain the name of the depicted evangelist and the beast with which he is identified. In the case of the miniatures of the Bičäna Gospels and many other cases it contains the first words of the beginning of the Gospel of the depicted evangelist. The beasts and the ink containers always appear.

The miracles of the Virgin Mary are represented on the southern wall. Droppings of birds have damaged most of the paintings on this side. The Assumption and the Apparition of the Virgin at Däbrä Meṭmaq are the two most visible paintings on this side. The rendering of both is different from others in composition. The Assumption is composed of different groups of figures representing different personages. The body of the Virgin is wrapped in a white cloth and it occupies a central place in the composition. At the bottom priests are depicted holding censers. The rendering of these priests is exactly similar to that of the priests of heaven in the paintings of



the Trinity. Next to the priests Apostles are depicted round the body of the Virgin. At the top angels holding swords are depicted. The vertical arrangement of these figures representing different groups seems intentionally done. If that is so, the priests depicted at the bottom represent ordinary priests not the Twenty-Four priests of Heaven.

The Apparition of the Virgin at Däbrä Meṭmaq is composed in a different manner. As in most cases the Virgin is rendered seated on a cushion-like structure and enveloped by white clouds. Winged angels replace the sword bearing angels flanking her. Secular figures are depicted on the bottom prostrated and standing on the side. The composition of this painting is much simplified. The usual method is to depict at least angels, equestrian saints, and the clergy. In most paintings of the Apparition at Däbrä Meṭmaq these groups are always depicted distinctively. The rendering of secular figures prostrated below the Virgin is also uncommon.

Several secular figures are depicted in different parts of the painting. In the painting of St. George killing the dragon one figure is depicted behind the horse. He is half naked (from the waist up). He has a sword. A representation of the same person also appears on the southern door of the *mäqdäs*. Secular figures that are shown are half their body naked and in some cases fully dressed. It is difficult to know the meaning of the two. All of the secular figures depicted are not identified by an inscription except in one case. In this exceptional case a certain *Yäšaläqa* Yabololé is depicted beseeching in the name of St. George. The inscription reads “**ዘከሙ ተግገወነ የሻለቃ ያዕለ-ሌ በቅዱስ ጊዮርጊስ**”. We do not know whether the other secular figures represent *Yäšaläqa* Yabololé or not. Ras

Hailu I did not sponsor the painting of the church. It is likely that *Yäšäläqa* Yabololé was the one who financed the decoration of the church. Similarly it is quite possible that the other figures represent the same person, *Yäšäläqa* Yabololé.

The modeling and proportion of most of the depicted figures is not good. Most of the paintings had the appearance of the seventeenth century style. Faces are spherical and large in shape. The cheeks are rosy. The way *Aläqa* Täklä Haymanot depicted nostrils is unique and the mustache is unique. The mustache in most cases is rendered as separate lines representing single hairs. He modeled the nostrils in sharp curves. Parallel lines mark the folds and floral decorations of garments. Linear patterns dominate his method of expression. The Second Gondärine style of painting was already fully developed in the region. The question here is why did *Aläqa* Täklä Haymanot widely use seventeenth century motifs in the decoration? It is quite possible that this was his first experience of painting a church. Had he been a very skilled painter with a well developed experience Ras Hailu I could have been the one to commission him not *Yäšäläqa* Yabololé who obviously was a noble of little political, economic and social significance. We know that *Aläqa* Täklä Haymanot was one of the active painters in the period of Ras Hailu I. Ras Hailu died in 1895. This gives a reasonable ground to date the paintings of the church to the 1880s or even much earlier.

### **Formal and Compositional Characteristics of the paintings of the Period**

Painters of the period under consideration were more realistic in depicting figures, costumes and objects. In

addition to their finely modeled faces and almost perfectly executed body proportion written records of the late nineteenth century indicate the presence of an effort to depict objects and figures according to their real appearance. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* states the following concerning this:

**ራስ ኃይሉ ቢቸናን ሲአስል በፈረስ ወጥቶ የፈረሱን እግር  
አነሳስ ለአለቃ አጸዱ እያሳየ ነው<sup>16</sup>**

[When] Ras Hailu got Bičäna [Giyorgis church] painted he was showing the way the horse gets up its legs [the way it walks] mounted on horse

The painting to which *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* is referring is lost. Therefore we cannot identify now what kind of change *Aläqa Asada* made in the rendering of horses from this practical observation. However, the existing paintings of the period including the ones described above do not show variation from the earlier ones in the manner of painting horses. Horses in all cases are depicted two of their front legs raised. The left leg is raised a little higher than the right. Rather what became more and more emphasized is the decoration of the horse trappings. Right up to the early twentieth century more and more decorations are added.

The handkerchief is repeatedly depicted in the paintings of this period. In addition to the Virgin Mary *Éwostaṭéwos*, Christ, God the Father and God the Son (in the painting of the Crowning of the Virgin), Queen *Eléni*, King *Bä'edä Maryam* and King David hold a handkerchief. A handkerchief symbolizes supreme status and royalty. The nobility and the kings of the eighteenth century apparently used handkerchiefs as a symbol of dignity and very high social status in addition to its

practical purposes. The rendering of crowns worn by kings in different paintings is almost the same.

The depiction of the nimbus became more elaborate. In the case of Christ, the Holy Trinity and the Virgin Mary the nimbus is rendered in a radial form with dotted ends. The dots defined a perfect circular shape. In some cases two layers of dots, one small and one large, forming the outer circle of the nimbus are painted. In the case of other saintly and holy figures a simple circular nimbus is used. As the analysis of the paintings show only the figure that is central to the theme is rendered with a nimbus. This is clearly evident in the case of the painting of St. Julita and St. Syracuse and the seven archangels and *Abunä Éwoṣṭaṭéwos*. St. Julita is depicted without a nimbus while St. Syracuse is rendered with a nimbus. Most of the saintly and holy figures are rendered without a nimbus.

All paintings of the Crucifixion are executed in such a way that blood drips from different parts of His body, not only from the parts of His body pierced by the nails. The painters did this to emphasise the flagellation. Particularly in cases where the Passion Week is not depicted the flagellation is explicitly shown by this method of rendering. In all the paintings of the Crucifixion the skull of Adam at the bottom of the vertical axis of the cross is depicted though there are variations in depicting it.

In the depiction of the Nativity the motherhood of the Virgin Mary is usually emphasized by showing her breast under her dress. It is rendered large and the collar of her dress in

this particular theme descends down to her chest forming a V shape. In other themes her dress has a circular collar. The depiction of the collar also is the main means of distinguishing between male and female figures. Except the figures who are rendered in profile and thus in an unusual kind of outfit the collar of the shirt of all the male figures is a soft collar. On the other hand the collar of all the dress of all female figures is rendered as a circular or round-neck collar.

In many cases the secular figures depicted in some of the themes are rendered prostrated. Mostly secular figures are depicted prostrated below the paintings of St. George and the Virgin with Child. As briefly indicated above the process of secularization of painting seems to have advanced. Moreover as the miniature of the Mărțulă Maryam Tamră Maryam indicate completely secular themes began to appear.

The rendering of themes varies according to each painter. A typical example of this is the depiction of the *Kur'atā Re'esu* in different miniatures. Painters seem to share the same literary source as a basis for depicting themes. But they seem to have been free to use different ways of expression according to their skill, exposure to other paintings and training. The depiction of the paintings of St. George killing the dragon and the Virgin with Child do not show significant formal and compositional variations. In the case of the paintings of the Virgin with Child the variation results from the difference in the depiction of the two angels and the curtain. Different painters adopted their own way of depicting the curtain as well as the angels supporting it. In some cases the decoration of the mantle of the Virgin also is rendered in

different ways. Apart from these differences the theme of the Virgin with Child is rendered in the same form and composition.

The depiction of St. George killing the dragon similarly maintained a uniform form and composition. The source of variation in this case is the depiction of the dragon. The depiction of the dragon varies in each of the paintings. The horse trappings in this case are extremely elaborate and some painters went to the extent of clearly depicting the buckle of the harness belt.

The rendering of costume shows an extraordinary variety. This variety was a result of the presence of quite a large number of figures with different social status: kings, soldiers, clergy, peasants and servants. The main technique the painters used in differentiating among persons of distinct social status was varying their costume. In doing so they apparently took many details directly from observation of contemporary society. Persons of high social status mostly wear some sort of undergarment. On top of it they wear a tunic with various decorative patterns. Floral patterns are the prevalent ones. On top of the tunic they wear a robe or a cloak. In some cases the robe or the cloak covers the whole of the body especially in cases where the person is seated. The *Mädäbr Quad* (a brace like strip of cloth or leather) was used to distinguish between the social statuses of the depicted figures. Only the nobility and royal personages are depicted wearing this. Female figures are rendered wearing a dress which extends to the foot and a robe. Soldiers are depicted wearing a *lämd* (a skin garment) and a short, extending to their knee. Most of the civil servants, maids and

functionaries are depicted wearing a garment tied on their waist forming a skirt. The upper part of their body above the waist is naked. In all cases they are depicted wearing a necklace on their neck that looks like a cowrie shell. Christ when rendered as a child and St. Syracuse wear the same kind of jewelry on their neck. A peasant tilling land with an ox-drawn plough is depicted only in one case in connection with the miracle of the Virgin Mary. He wears a *lämd* that covers only half of his body and a short reaching to his knee. The depiction of the peasant is similar with that of the Däbrä Wärq Miniature of the seventeenth century. In addition to costume enlarging and reducing the size of figures is the method used to differentiate among persons of different social status.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Painting in East Gojjam, 1874–1901**

The period from 1874 to 1901 in the whole of Gojjam was characterized by peace and stability. The rivalry between the two ruling houses came to an end when Emperor Yohannes IV formally accepted Ras Adal as the ruler of the whole of Gojjam in 1874.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently Ras Adal was promoted to the rank of *Negus* under the Emperor in 1881. The period from 1881 onwards was characterized by cultural revival. The *Negus* had also no

severe political or social problems that preoccupied his attention. The few wars he fought with his rivals and external enemies outside the region did not deter him from promoting cultural developments and patronizing painters and craftsmen. Even in the middle of the Great Famine that hit the region severely he undertook the work of decorating his palace at Däbrä Marqos.<sup>2</sup> The precursor of all the developments was the establishment of Däbrä Marqos as an administrative center.<sup>3</sup> Together with this, *Negus Täklä Haymanot's* major establishment, the church of Däbrä Marqos, was also founded and soon developed into a major religious educational center.<sup>4</sup> Painters and different craftsmen gathered at Däbrä Marqos. They were directly remunerated by the *Negus* and worked on his commissions. The political stability of the period seems to have paved the way for cultural and spiritual revival. One of the active participants of the artistic developments of the period *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* states the following in his chronicle:

በንጉሥ ተክለ ሃይማኖት ዘመን በንጉሠ ደግነት ከቸርነቱ ብዛት የተነሳ በነጃም ውስጥ በዓይነቱ ብዙ ሠራተኞችና ጥበበኞች አድገው ነበር ምን ልሥራ እነጂ ምንልብላን አያስቡ ምን ነበር ንጉሡም በፋኖስና በማብረጃ በነሽ ኮልባ እንደመለሱ ጠጅ ያጠግባቸው ነበር፡፡ ያን ጊዜ ሠራተኛው ሁሉ ጥበብ እንደ ጥንስስ እየፈላበት በየሙያው ስልጥኖ እኔ እበልጥ እኔ እበልጥ እያለ ይፈካከር ነበር፡፡<sup>5</sup>

In the reign of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* many craftsmen and artists grew in Gojjam due to the kindness and the benevolence of the *negus*. They think what to work not what to eat. The king used to satisfy them offering them *ṭäj* with *fanos*, *mabräja* and *goš kolba* as much as they could [drink]. During that time craftsmen were competing to supersede each other as art boiled/fermented [inside them].

As in the period of *Ras Hailu I* several churches were promoted to the status of *däbr* and their buildings



reconstructed and walls redecorated. Some churches, which were formerly promoted to *däbr*, were given more *gults* and their buildings reconstructed.<sup>6</sup> The *Negus* himself seems to have been very much inclined towards the church and gave close attention to religious and spiritual developments.<sup>7</sup>

*Negus* Täklä Haymanot had five painters who decorated the various churches that he promoted to the status of *däbr*. These were, *Aläqa* Hailu, *Aläqa* Täklä Iyäsus, *Aläqa* Tägäñ, *Aläqa* Fänta and Liqä Ṭäbäbt Zä-Éliyas.<sup>8</sup> They were the ones who painted most of the paintings described and analyzed below.

### **Panel Painting**

Panel painting seems to have revived in this period. There are several panel paintings produced in this period in the different churches and monasteries of the region. These panels were diverse in their technique of production, quality and treatment of themes. For the purpose of elaborating the general development of panel painting during this century three panel paintings from three different churches are described and analyzed below.

#### **1. Triptych Panel- Dämbäça Mikael Church.**

*Aläqa* Tägäñ Kassa made this very peculiar triptych panel. He was well known for his skill in carving as well as painting.<sup>9</sup> His name is inscribed on the wooden bottom frame of the central panel. The inscription reads as follows: “ዘደምበጫ ቅዱስ ማካሄል ዘወሀቦ አለቃ ተገኝ:” The main theme of this triptych panel is the Trinity. The technique of production used in the production of the panel and the expression of the Trinity is unique. The panel is made from wood and soft white limestone. The left and right panels are completely made from wood. It is the central panel that is made from wood and limestone. The

limestone carved in a spherical shape is put into an incised spherical shape of the panel. It is on this that the Trinity is engraved and also painted. This makes the panel both an engraving and a painting.

On the upper part of the limestone the Trinity is engraved. The depiction of the Trinity is completely different from the usual method in many ways. To begin with the three old men are depicted seated in a house with an even dome and a cross at the top. They do not hold three separate orbs; rather they hold together with their hands one large orb depicted on the chest of the old man in the center. It implies the oneness or the unity of the three in one.<sup>10</sup> As usual all the three hold their arms up and two of their fingers are pointed. As in the case of other depictions of the Trinity the two old men, the one in the center and the one in the left, hold up their right arms. The one to the right raises his left arm. As the three hold together a single orb the old man to the right has to use his left arm that is closer to the orb. The painter did this to create harmony of form. From the four beasts of the Apocalypse only three are depicted. These are the human-faced beast, the lion-faced beast and the eagle-faced beast. The bull-faced beast is missing. Ethiopian painters mostly give a high emphasis for completeness. It is difficult to know why the painter avoided this. It is clear that the painter did not omit this for theological reasons. The three beasts are not situated in their usual place. Usually the human-faced and the eagle-faced beasts are placed in the upper left and right corner of the rectangle framing the painting respectively. The lion-faced and the bull-faced beasts are depicted in the lower left and right corner respectively. The arrangement of these figures in the case of the triptych under discussion is different. The lion faced beast is depicted at the bottom of

the Trinity. The human faced and the eagle-faced beasts are depicted in the left and right bottom corner respectively. The upper space is completely occupied by the dome of the house. It is probably for lack of space that he has left it out.

Below the Trinity an angel with stretched wings holding a scepter and a censer is engraved. It is apparently in some sort of movement. This is also another addition to the traditionally accepted version of the Trinity. It is difficult to know what it represents. The twenty-four priests of heaven are depicted in the right and left panels. On both panels four figures are depicted in three layers. The priests depicted in the two upper layers are rendered in half. Only the part of their body above the chest is depicted. They seem to float on a layer of white cloud. The ones depicted on the third layer are rendered in full. In all cases they wear a veil and a robe with elegant folds. Some of them hold in their hands a cup and others a cup and a cross. All the Twenty-four priests have crowns. The ones depicted in the third layer of the right panel hold their crowns in their hands and their wings are stretched upwards. Their heads are inclined towards the direction of the Trinity as if they are vowing. The painter has differentiated among the crowns of several of the figures.

In the lower register of both, the lateral panels show kneeling and standing secular figures. In the left panel, three figures are depicted. All of them gaze upwards in the direction of the Trinity. Two of the figures are male and depicted in a relatively larger size. Their outfit is the same. They wear a blue cloak, a white turban and a white undergarment. Both are depicted kneeling. They are identified by their baptismal name. The third figure is depicted

standing. He is small in size. The inscription identifying him is not readable. She is apparently the daughter one of the two figures. If the third figure had been an attendant she couldn't have been identified by a caption and her outfit could not have been rendered in this way. In addition the attendants of males are always males not females.

In the lower register of the left panel, five figures are depicted. All of them are females. The one at the front of the group is kneeling. She wears a blue cloak and a white veil. She seems to wear a locally made type of dress and robe under the cloak. The other figures behind her are depicted standing and their hands crossed. The three of them seem to be the children of the woman at the front. The height of the three figures declines progressively from left to right. They seem to be rendered according to their age. They wear locally made traditional robes and dresses. The woman depicted at the far left seems to be a nun. At any rate, she holds a nun's stick on which she seems to lean. She is probably the mother of all the figures in front of her. All of the figures are identified by their baptismal name. Obviously they represent a family.

Though in many aspects, the depiction of these figures is expressed in the Second Gondärine style there are new elements. The secular figures are rendered kneeling and standing. In all the Second Gondärine paintings of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century secular figures are prostrate. In this case we find them depicted standing and kneeling. The other and most significant change is the rendering and coloring of the garments the holy as well as secular figures wear. In this particular case garments/ clothes are shaded in a single color. The multicolored robes and garments of the eighteenth and early

nineteenth century which were apparently imported are replaced by locally made garments, *šāmas*.

## **2. Diptych Panel - Mārṭulä Maryam Church**

The painter of this diptych panel is not known. It is, however, well known that *Däjazmač* Seyum, the later Ras Hailu II, donated it to the church. It was painted some time in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Each of the panels of the diptych is carved from a single piece of wood. Two themes are depicted on it; on the left panel St. George killing the dragon and on the right panel the Virgin with Child. Both themes have several new elements. In the case of the painting of St. George three new additions were made. The first is that St. George is holding two spears. With one of the spears he pierces the neck of the dragon. He holds the other spear slanted upwards in his left hand together with the bridle of the horse. The spear is made with such an extraordinary care and emphasis that the cross and the circular nuts on the neck show.

The other additional element is the outfit of St. George. The tunic and the undergarment (mostly shown by the sleeves) do not change. The change is first in the depiction of the robe he wears. The folds are executed in a very beautiful and harmonious manner. St. George has also tied three different strips of cloth on his head. This is not related to his martyrdom or to any of his other religious deeds. Rather it seems to be an imitation of the outfit of the nobility of the period. In other paintings of the period the nobility are depicted wearing a similar piece of garment on their head. The other addition is the depiction of the angel holding a sword instead of the three soldiers who followed him and observed

his martyrdom to the last moment. The angel is depicted floating on a cloud and offering a sword put in a scabbard to St. George.

The depiction of the Virgin with Child is also very much different from the usual Santa Maria Maggiore version that dominated the iconography of the Virgin in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Though the child appears on the left hand of the Virgin his pose is different. He is depicted frontally rather than the usual two-thirds pose. In his left hand he holds an orb rather than a book. The Virgin is depicted in the usual two-thirds pose. Her left hand supports the Child her palms resting on His left shoulder. In her right hand she holds a heart depicted on her chest. The heart in western tradition of Christian art symbolizes the "inner person", the dwelling place of God inside a man, and purity.<sup>12</sup> The heart has never been depicted in the iconography of the Virgin in Ethiopia. The depiction of the heart here absolutely is not a development that emanated from the genius of the painter. Rather it indicates that a model probably of western origin influenced the painter. The mantle of the Virgin also is different from the paintings of the previous period. The upper part of the mantle is red. The lower part, below her shoulders, is shaded blue. The two colors do not seem to represent different garments worn by superimposing one over the other as the blue garment is not seen from the inside view created by the space between the face of the Virgin and the hanging margins of the mantle as it descends from the head to the shoulder. The painter depicts the same mantle in two colors. The margins of the mantle are decorated in a similar fashion with the way local cotton garments are decorated. The margin of a *ṭebäb šäma* is exactly similar to the decoration of the mantle the Virgin is wearing.

The two angels representing Michael and Gabriel who support a curtain behind the Virgin in most of the eighteenth and nineteenth century paintings of the Virgin with Child are depicted carrying a crown above the head of the Virgin. The crown has a cross at the top. Both of the angels are floating on a white cloud. In the space between the crown and the edge of the nimbus of the Virgin a white bird with stretched wings and legs is depicted. It symbolizes the Holy Ghost.<sup>13</sup> In the composition God the Father is not represented. The depiction and the representation of the Trinity are given a very high regard in traditional Ethiopian painting. The crown does not symbolize God the Father. Then the question here is why did the painter depict only the Holy Ghost and God the Son only. This gives another hint of a model that influenced the painter.

The nimbi of the Virgin and the Child are not depicted in radii; rather, they are shaded with a single color, the outer margin marked by two concentric circles. Above the nimbus of Christ also there is a small crown. The depiction of this crown is different from the other. The carpet-like cushion on which the Virgin is sitting is depicted in the usual manner.

The general programming of the panel shows similarity with the eighteenth and early nineteenth century miniature paintings of the Virgin with Child and St. George. In the miniature paintings of the period indicated above the two themes are always depicted side by side on two consecutive pages. Also in wall paintings of the period the two themes are depicted in the middle of the western face of the *māqdās* on opposite sides of the door. The painter of this panel has maintained this tradition. However, as indicated above, he has

added several elements that do not completely match with the Second Gondärine tradition. Particularly in the case of the painting of the Virgin with Child he has introduced several new elements. Such changes that have a great iconological meaning seem not to have developed internally within the region. It seems that some other model, which probably was imported and found its way into the region, especially to Däbrä Marqos, influenced the painter.

The second half of the nineteenth century is a period in which several icons were imported into Addis Ababa and then distributed to the various regions.<sup>14</sup> Some time in the reign of *Negus Täklä Haymanot*, Emperor Menelik sent to the *negus* several icons of the Virgin with Child. On other occasions the emperor donated icons to the monasteries of the region.<sup>15</sup> The icons undoubtedly influenced the painters of the period to the extent that the changes that are described above were introduced.<sup>16</sup>

### **3. Triptych Panel – Yägäwära Qusquam Church**

The church of Yägäwära Qusquam was an unfortunate church, which experienced several disasters. Lightning is said to have burned the church in the early twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> Then a fire that started from a candle inside the church burned it in January 1989. The *eqa bét* (store or treasury) of the church was burnt in May 1999. The church is said to have been rich in paintings, manuscripts and other treasures. But these disasters, which occurred consecutively, reduced them to ashes.<sup>18</sup> The triptych panel described below was saved because it was kept in the hands of one of the priests of the church and it still is in the custody of the same priest.<sup>19</sup>



According to the priest the panel was painted in the period of *Negus Täklä Haymanot*. The *Negus* himself donated it to the church. The priest does not know the painter of the panel. The method of the preparation of the panel is similar to the way fifteenth and sixteenth century panels were made. The central panel is made from one single piece of wood. The middle part of the panel is carved out leaving the margins on the four sides to serve as frames. The two lateral panels are attached to it.

The central panel is completely devoted to the depiction of *Abunä Täklä Haymanot*. He is depicted with six wings. The two wings depicted at the front are very large. The other four decrease in size based on the order of their depiction. He wears a white veil with floral decorative patterns. His cloak and dress are painted yellow. On his dress human faces rendered in squares formed by horizontal and vertical grids are depicted. His white beard is executed in a very fine manner; each single hair is visible. He stands only on his left leg, his right leg being severed. His severed leg is seen on the left lower corner of the panel. His arms are stretched to the sides in a prayer pose. Chojnacki identifies this kind of iconography of the saint in his classification as Phase 2, Type IV, form I.<sup>20</sup> According to him it began to appear in the eighteenth century and dominated the iconography of the saint right up to the twentieth century.<sup>21</sup> Among the paintings observed in the process of this study in East Gojjam this is the only one in which the saint is depicted with one leg. In the early twentieth century many of the paintings of *Abunä Täklä Haymanot* are depicted in such a way. It appears that this form became popular among painters beginning from the second half of the nineteenth century.

To the right of *Abunä Täklä Haymanot*, *Negus Täklä Haymanot* is depicted kneeling and holding the dress and cloak of the saint. There is no caption identifying him. Two things help us to identify him. The first is that he was rendered wearing a crown on his head. In other paintings of the period *Negus Täklä Haymanot* is rendered in the same manner. In some cases another person, mostly *Zäwd Aqafi*, *Mämher Kassa*, carries his crown.<sup>22</sup> The second is the information derived from the present owner of the panel. Although they do not know where it is kept other clerics of the church remember the presence of a panel painting donated by *Negus Täklä Haymanot* on which his figure is also depicted. *Negus Täklä Haymanot* wears a blue cloak. Under the cloak he wears a white *šäma*.

On the left panel St. George and St. Julita and her son St. Syracuse are depicted. St. George is depicted on the upper register of the panel. St. George and the dragon constitute the composition of this painting. Birutawit, the most important component of this theme for centuries is omitted here. The painter seems to have omitted here for lack of space. The two mother and son saints constitute the composition of the painting in the lower register of the same panel. They are rendered standing in a fire with long flames. The depiction of St. Syracuse did not change from the eighteenth to the late nineteenth century. He is rendered as a child. Necklaces hang on his neck.

On the right panel the *Kur'atä Re'esu* and two anonymous monastic leaders are depicted. The *Kur'atä Re'esu* is composed of three figures, Christ and two soldiers flanking Him. Christ wears a shield-like crown on his head. Like the other

paintings of the *Kur'atä Re'esu* described previously, blood flows across his chest and forehead. He wears a green cloak. The two soldiers hold an axe in their hands. An interesting addition in this case is that the palms of Christ show the holes that were created when he was nailed to the cross. Blood flows from these holes. The painter does seem not to have mastered the story of the crowning of Christ with thorns. This particular event happened before the nailing of Christ to the cross. None of the paintings of the *Kur'atä Re'esu* of the previous century as well as those contemporaneous to this one contain the holes. The painter of this particular panel seems to have rather added them without knowing the story properly. The two monastic leaders depicted below the *Kur'atä Re'esu* wear a veil and a cloak. They hold in their hands whisks in their hands.

With the exception of the figures of *Abunä Täklä Haymanot* and *Negus Täklä Haymanot* the modeling and depiction of the other figures included in the panel is extremely poor. None of the figures have nimbi. Even in the case of Christ the painter did not consider the nimbus important. He is depicted wearing only the crown.

### **Wall Painting**

The second half of the nineteenth century was another glorious period for wall painting. As mentioned above several churches were painted. Most of the churches were painted in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For the purpose of this topic the paintings of two churches, *Däbrä Marqos* and *Däbrä Şebah Amanuel Iyäsus* are described and analyzed.

### **Wall Paintings of Däbrä Şebah Amanuel Church**

The church of Däbrä Şebah Amanuel was decorated and painted in 1897.<sup>23</sup> The church's building was reconstructed in the previous two years. *Negus* Täklä Haymanot was the one who sponsored the construction and the decoration. Four painters were commissioned to paint the church. These were, *Aläqa* Hailu, *Aläqa* Täklä Iyäsus, *Aläqa* Fänta and *Liqä Ṭäbäbt Zä-Éleyas*.<sup>24</sup> Four of them painted the four different faces of the *mäqdäs*. *Aläqa* Hailu painted the western face. *Aläqa* Täklä Iyäsus, *Aläqa* Fänta and *Liqä Ṭäbäbt Zä-Éleyas* painted the eastern, the northern and the southern faces of the *mäqdäs* respectively. Though none of them were trained and specialized in the decoration and painting of particular themes to be painted on different faces of the *mäqdäs* they seem to have developed special skills in painting a particular theme through time and experience. Their division of the different sides of the walls of the *mäqdäs* seems to be based on this. *Aläqa* Hailu as a senior painter and the most skilled one of them took the western face as his domain of work. *Liqä Ṭäbäbt Zä-Éleyas* was the junior of all the four and he was assigned to decorate the southern face of the *mäqdäs*.

The Trinity is depicted in the usual manner. *Aläqa* Hailu shows his superb skill very well in this painting. It is larger than all the mural paintings of the Trinity. It is painted on the top middle part of the *mäqdäs*. The vigorous colors and the size create awe in an ordinary observer. Similarly the Crucifixion is also done on a very large space to the left of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the number of personages included in the composition of this theme is limited to three, Christ, St. Mary and St. John. The other works on this side of the *mäqdäs* are done in a very limited

space. The Passion Week is presented in a series of seven paintings. Themes like the nailing of Christ to the cross and the various miracles of Christ are not painted. The painter depicts only those major themes that are significant in the theology of the church such as the Baptism, Nativity, Resurrection, and the Last Judgment. An interesting theme depicted here is the Circumcision of Christ. This theme is not usually presented in a mural form, or in miniatures and panel paintings. So why did the painter include this theme in the wall paintings of this church? The annual feast of the Church was always celebrated on 6 Ter (January). This was the day of the commemoration of the miraculous Circumcision of Jesus. It is apparently for this reason that the painter depicted this theme.

The Virgin with Child and St. George killing the dragon are depicted to the left and right of the door. These two themes do not show difference in depiction from others except that the horse trappings of St. George are depicted in detail and the floral patterns of the mantle and dress of the Virgin is highly emphasized. The Virgin and her Child are depicted with nimbus while St. George is depicted without one.

In all his paintings, *Aläqa Hailu* marked the eyes with shades. The size of the eye compared to other parts of the face is large. He emphasizes highly the folds of skin on the neck of individuals. Second Gondärine painters from the very beginning had been expressing the folds of skin on the neck. Here the expression was badly modeled and has a clumsy appearance. *Aläqa Hailu's* special ability was in depicting the chin and lip. The lips of the figures he depicted are very small. The legs are confined to the width of the nose. The chin is also very small. In depicting fingers and thumbs he

gives them extraordinary beauty and elegance. In depicting horses he makes the nostrils very wide. All these elements help us to identify his paintings in cases where there are no written materials to identify them.

On the eastern wall the miracles of Jesus are depicted. Most of the stories depicted here are taken from the *Tamrä Iyäsus* rather than the Gospels. In most of the scenes Jesus is depicted as a young boy. The miracles he did in the Flight to Egypt are dominant. Some themes from the Gospels such as the Entry to Jerusalem and the washing of the feet of the disciples are depicted. The bottom part of the wall on this side is devoted to depicting secular themes. Two groups of armies are depicted marching in procession. The group depicted at the front on the right side is the army of Emperor Yohannes. The emperor is depicted mounted on a richly decorated mule wearing a very big crown on his head. Two attendants behind the mule hold a royal umbrella. The high-ranking officials of the emperor follow on horseback. All of the emperor's soldiers are armed with firearms. In addition three cannons are depicted in the space between the two cavalry groups of the emperor's army.

On the left half of the space is depicted *Negus Täklä Haymanot* and his army. *Negus Täklä Haymanot* is depicted in a way similar to that of the emperor. But there is a difference. Here the umbrella held is one and the crown he wears is small in size. His army is composed of infantry and cavalry forces. In the case of the emperor's army it is composed of cavalry forces only. Like the emperor's army, the *Negus's* army is also armed with firearms. *Abunä Luqas*, the bishop of Gojjam, is next to the *Negus* walking on foot. The painter, *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus*, makes efforts to distinguish between the two groups.

He is aware of the political status of the two, the emperor and the negus. Thus his reduction of the size of the crown in the case of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* and the omission of cannons in the composition of his army is apparently done intentionally to show the inferior status of the *negus* compared to the emperor.

Täklä Iyäsus's modeling of faces, hands and legs is better than *Aläqa Hailu's*. The figures he depicts are mostly short and small in size. In depicting necks he does not emphasize the skin folds. Though tiny in appearance, his figures are better in terms of proportion. However he is not able to render the eye in a powerful and awesome way as *Aläqa Hailu* does. The eyes of the persons *Aläqa Hailu* paints are very large and very widely opened compared to *Täklä Iyäsus*. They have a much greater hypnotic effect. Although *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* is better than *Aläqa Hailu* in many aspects it is because of this quality of his paintings that *Aläqa Hailu* was much favored and liked among the ruling and clerical circles.

The other two painters, *Aläqa Fänta* and *Liqä Ṭäbäbt Zä-Éleyas* depicted religious themes only. As the painter of the northern face of the *mäqdäs* *Aläqa Fänta* depicted mostly equestrian saints. An interesting thing here is the depiction of St. Basil. Here he is depicted galloping a horse and spearing a man prostrated under the horse holding a shield and a sword. In other churches also he is depicted in such a manner. The eighteenth century iconography in which he is depicted comfortably mounted on a horse covered by a caparison seems to have been abandoned.

### **Wall Paintings of Däbrä Marqos Church**

The design of this church is different from other churches of East Gojjam. The outer wall of the church is circular like other churches. The inner part of the wall is in a rectangular shape. This rectangular structure has two parts. The eastern half is fully closed by walls and is used as *Qedestä Qedusan* (holy of holies). The western half has wide arched openings in the south, north and west with an open space in the middle. Thus, most of the paintings of the church are done on the wall surrounding the eastern part of the chapel and on the ceiling of the open space of the western half of the inner rectangular structure.

*Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* and *Aläqa Hailu* painted the church in 1900.<sup>25</sup> *Aläqa Hailu* painted the western face of the wall and the ceiling of the open space. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* painted the eastern side of the wall. Both of them worked together in the painting and decoration of the northern and southern sides of the wall. The northern wall is completed. The painting of the southern side is not completed only the outlines of the figures are done. It was left incomplete as a result of the death of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* in January 1901. The work of the reconstruction and the painting of the church were funded by the *Negus*.<sup>26</sup>

Though the design of the church is different from other churches, the arrangement and depiction of themes on the wall is not much different from other churches. Scenes of the Genesis are depicted on the ceiling of the open space of the church. Some of the themes are difficult to identify. In the middle of the ceiling is depicted a large sun on which the



face of a human being is depicted. The symbolism of this painting is not clear. Informants from the church identify it as the symbol of the unreachable mystery of the knowledge of God contained in light and surrounded by darkness.<sup>27</sup>

In the period of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* several scholars from different parts of Gojjam and Gondär were gathered at Däbrä Marqos. These scholars particularly *Mälakä Şähäy Tägäñ* wrote several apocryphal stories of the creation of the universe, the creation of man and the creatures of the earth. He even wrote that the source of the Muga River near the Çoqé Mountains was the exact place where God created Adam.<sup>28</sup> One of my knowledgeable informants, *Mälakä Berhan Libanos*, strongly insisted in his interview that *Mälakä Şähäy Tägäñ* instructed *Aläqa Hailu* to do the above paintings.

The Trinity, Crucifixion, the Virgin with Child, and St George are depicted on the eastern side of the *mäqdäs*. Compared to other churches, the height of the wall is small. Moreover the painter has depicted these themes on a large space. Thus these paintings took almost all of the space of the wall. On the bottom right corner of the wall, *Negus Täklä Haymanot* is depicted standing. He wears his crown. On the left bottom corner the children of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* are depicted. As in the previous cases these figures are depicted wearing garments and clothes, which look like the locally made ones. Only the *Negus* is depicted wearing a blue cloak on top of the *şäma*.

The eastern wall as in the case of the Däbrä Şebah Amanuel church is devoted largely to the depiction of the miracles of Jesus. The themes depicted are all similar to the ones he depicted at Däbrä Şebah Amanuel. The difference is in

the secular theme depicted in the bottom part of the wall. It is the battle of Adwa that is depicted here. The depiction of the battle is a variation of the rendering of the procession of the armies at the church of Däbrä Şebah Amanuel. On the right side are depicted the Italian soldiers. Most of them are retreating. They are depicted in profile. In front of *Negus* Täklä Haymanot two Italian soldiers are depicted speared by the *Negus*. St George is depicted galloping his white horse in the middle top part of the painting. The dragon is not represented. Several groups of the Ethiopian army are depicted. Empress Taytu and Emperor Menelik are depicted in the middle of the army.

The prime objective of the painter seems to show the bravery the *Negus* showed at the battle of Adwa. The composition and expression of this scene is not much different from the battle scene depicted at the wall of Moṭa Giyorgis church. It looks more like an army in the process of marching rather than fighting. The painter has included in the composition all the weapons and materials used in the period. Both on the Ethiopian side as well as the Italian side several cannons are depicted. The majority of the combatants are armed with firearms. But at the same time they hold shields and swords.

A similar painting is depicted on the bottom of the eastern wall of the *mäqdäs* of the church of Däbrä Éleyas church. In this case the battle scene depicted is the battle between *Negus* Täklä Haymanot and the Mahdists that took place in 1887. The programming of the two paintings is the same. The depiction of *Negus* Täklä Haymanot is also similar. In this case, however, the painter is *Aläqa* Hailu.

### ***Formal and compositional characteristics of the paintings of the period***

The period from 1874 to 1901 witnessed a transformation in some aspects of painting. Though there was a tendency towards preferring mural painting to panel painting, the art of panel painting revived. A marked change in terms of panel painting was that the old method of producing panels from a single piece of wood revived again to some extent. In this case, however, cotton material was used instead of white chalk as a priming to paint on the panel. Unlike the panel paintings of the early eighteenth and even the previous period where the programming of the themes depicted is similar in many cases, the late nineteenth century panel paintings show diversity in terms of planning of themes on the panel and the way of expression. Painters selected any theme, which they liked or their patrons preferred and painted it in any plan they wanted maintaining some of the conventions of expression and composition.

As part of panel painting, engraving on wood panels and on limestone also developed. *Aläqa Tägäñ* seems to have been the one who was active in this. One of his works is already described. C.F Rey who visited Gojjam in 1911 mentions in his book that he acquired a triptych panel engraved and painted in exchange for money.<sup>29</sup> It is quite possible that *Aläqa Tägäñ* made this triptych.

The depiction of religious themes on the other hand on walls of churches did not show much change. Nevertheless, an important change with regard to wall painting is that the

depiction of completely secular themes began. These themes were depicted on the bottom part of the walls. Soon this was made a convention in the early twentieth century. Most of the churches decorated in the period of Ras Hailu II contain different secular themes on the bottom of the eastern face of the *mäqdäs*. In the second half of the nineteenth century, secular themes were emperors and the nobility with their army and battle scenes. The painting of the battle of Adwa at Däbrä Marqos Church and the battle between the Mahdists and *Negus Täklä Haymanot* depicted at Däbrä Éleyas Church are the earliest representations of secular battle scenes in the region. The depiction of completely secular themes seems to have been started in the first half of the nineteenth century. Though the painting does not exist *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* in his chronicle mentions the existence of the painting of *Däjazmač Gošu* and his army on the eastern wall of the church of *Dämbäça Mikael*.<sup>30</sup>

The depiction of secular figures changed from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century form. During this period most of the secular figures are depicted prostrated under the holy figures. In very rare cases they are depicted standing on the side. In the second half of the nineteenth century secular figures are depicted standing or kneeling. Moreover the number of figures depicted increased. In the previous periods only one or two figures are depicted at once. In most of the cases married couples are depicted together. In the second half of the nineteenth century painters attempted to depict members of the whole family at once. Children of the person who sponsored a particular work are included in the composition giving a dramatic increase in the number of secular figures depicted.

Yet another change in the depiction of secular figures is the rendering of costume. Locally made clothes replaced the richly decorated garments of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. *Negus* Täklä Haymanot himself in most of his portraits is depicted wearing them under his blue cloak. The cloak more and more became a symbol of seniority and nobility. The *mädäbr quad* that was depicted in all the portrayals of eighteenth century secular figures was completely ignored. It is apparent that the rendering of the costumes of secular figures changed according to real changes in the costume of the society. The decoration and the coloring of the dresses and garments of the holy figures also changed. Painters of the second half of the nineteenth century shaded clothes and garments in a single color. It is very rarely that they decorated clothes and garments in floral patterns. The availability of color in abundance seems to have been one of the factors that caused this transformation. Informants unanimously indicate that the paint used in the decoration of Däbrä Şebah Amanuel as well as Däbrä Marqos church was brought from Addis Ababa.<sup>31</sup> Several colors were used. Sky blue, purple, different variations of red, green and yellow were used. Eighteenth century painters used various decorative patterns to distinguish among the dress and cloth color of different figures included in the composition. Since the colors they used were very limited the only way of differentiating among the clothes and garments worn by different figures is to render them in different floral decorative patterns. When there was color with abundance and in variety, the late nineteenth century painters seem to have abandoned this technique.

Decorative patterns that were dominant in wall paintings of the eighteenth century were omitted in the second half of

the nineteenth century. Both the winged angels and the rectangular patterns that filled open spaces created in the corners of the painted wall as well as the posts and lintels of doors seem to have been abandoned in late nineteenth century paintings.

Compared to the paintings of the earlier period the paintings of the second half of the nineteenth century express movement and motion. Rigidity of the figures progressively decreased. Modeling of the body and horses was also improved.

As in the period of *Ras Hailu I* paintings were used to decorate the palace of the *Negus Täklä Haymanot* at *Däbrä Marqos*.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately the palace of the *Negus* was destroyed long ago. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* did not indicate what themes were depicted on the palace. *Aläqa Hailu* and himself were assigned the task of decorating the palace.<sup>33</sup> Some of the nobility seem to have owned personal *se'el bét* (a prayer house decorated with religious paintings). A single instance of this is mentioned in the land register of the church of *Märṭulä Maryam*.<sup>34</sup> *Wäyzäro Yäwubdar*, the daughter of *Däjač Berru Gošu*, owned it.<sup>35</sup>

In spite of the fact that it was very brief, the period from 1874 to 1901 witnessed a revival and development of the art of painting. Painters were patronized and mobilized more than ever before. The number of churches decorated and painted was also very large. Of all the developments the significant one is the change in the rendering of secular figures and the beginning of the depiction of fully secular themes. Most of the formal and compositional elements of the Second Gondärine style continued. But the changes that took place were so significant that it is difficult to generalize about the

paintings of the second half of the nineteenth century as Second Gondärine.

The death of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* in January 1901 brought the end of this development. Most of the craftsmen and the painters who were patronized by him were not readily accepted by his successors. Moreover his sons and successors seem to have given more attention to their survival in power, which was not secure, than to cultural matters. The interruption of the artistic and cultural developments of the period was sad to the extent that the decoration work of Däbrä Marqos Church was left incomplete. Täklä Iyäsus in his chronicle expressed the situation of the period as follows:

**“ንጉሡ ከሞቱ በኋላ ሠራተኛው ሁሉ ደነቆረ ጥበቡን ችጋር**

**አባዘዘው”**,<sup>36</sup> which means, “After the death of the negus all the craftsmen became ignorant poverty undermined the art”.

**CHAPTER V**



## **The Training of Painters and Technical Aspects of Painting in East Gojjam in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries**

### ***Painters and Their Training***

One of the problems in the study of the history of Ethiopian art is that painters are not known except in very few exceptional cases. This resulted from the fact that Ethiopian painters did not sign their works. They did not want to be admired by people who observed the paintings since such an action was thought to reduce the heavenly reward they hoped to get from God.<sup>1</sup> If they had to sign their names on their paintings, they signed their baptismal name, not their worldly one.<sup>2</sup> But this does not help at all in identifying them.

The earliest known painter of the eighteenth century in East Gojjam was *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo*. He was native to Šäwa Mämher Kidanä Meherät located in the district of Erbab, the northern part of Mačakäl.<sup>3</sup> As already indicated he actively worked both in the royal court at Gondär as well as in some of the monasteries and churches of Gojjam in the first half of the eighteenth century. Apparently he was from a noble family. He was the grandson of the famous early seventeenth century noble of Gojjam, *Fitawrari Dämä Kerestos*.<sup>4</sup> *Fitawrari Dämä Kerestos* seems to have been descended from the nobility of Lasta. He contributed a lot to the development of painting in the region. One of his contributions was that he trained some painters who later became active in the region. He trained the famous painters of the second half of the eighteenth century, *Aläqa Ašädu*, *Aläqa Qäšäla*, *Aläqa Täklä Haymanot* and *Aläqa Gäbrä Mäsqäl*.<sup>5</sup> Among these, *Aläqa Ašädu* seems to have been the

most reputed and skilled. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* refers to him in his chronicle as follows:

**ከሠዓሊዎች ጥሩ ሥዕል የሚሥል አለቃ አጸዱ ነበር፡፡ በብቸናም በዲማም  
በየገወራም የምዕራቡን ገጽ የሚሥል አለቃ አጸዱ ብቻ ነበር፡፡<sup>6</sup>**

From the painters *Aläqa Hailu* painted a fine painting. In *Bičäna*, *Dima* and *Yägäwära* he was the one who painted the western side [of the wall of the *mäqdäs*] alone.

This reference leads to the very important question of why *Aläqa Aṣädu* was always made to paint the western face of the *mäqdäs*. The western face of the *mäqdäs* is the place where important themes like the Trinity, the Crucifixion, the Virgin with Child and St. George killing the dragon are depicted. Particularly in the case of the depiction of the Trinity special care and absolute mastery of proportion are needed. This is because the three old men representing the Trinity must be rendered in the same frontal pose, with the same proportion of every detail of their body and outfit and the same facial expression. Thus it seems that as the most skilled of the painters of the period *Aläqa Aṣädu* was assigned to paint these themes. In cases where the four painters worked together to decorate a church they painted their own separate wall. This is indicated in the case of *Dima Giyorgis* church where the four painters painted separately the four faces of the *mäqdäs*, each painter taking his own wall. *Aläqa Aṣädu* painted the western face, *Aläqa Qäṣäla* the eastern face, *Aläqa Gäbrä Mäsqäl* the southern face and *Aläqa Täklä Haymanot* the northern face.<sup>7</sup>

As we come to the first half of the nineteenth century we see that three painters were active in East Gojjam. These were *Aläqa Kenfu*, *Aläqa Me'eraf* and *Aläqa Yergu*. *Aläqa Aṣädu*

trained two of these, *Aläqa Yergu* and *Aläqa Me'eraf*. *Aläqa Yergu* was active in the eastern part of the region. *Aläqa Me'eraf* actively worked in the western part of the region and also in Damot.<sup>8</sup> During the period of *Däjač Gošu* he decorated the walls of *Dämbäça Mikael*. As far as the sources show, he was the one who painted the first completely secular painting on the wall of a church. When Emperor *Téwodros* was in *Gojjam* in his first campaign he visited the church and saw *Aläqa Me'eraf's* paintings at *Dämbäça Mikael*. The king is said to have criticized him for depicting *Däjač Gošu* and his army on the church wall. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* puts it as follows:

**ከዚያ ወዲያ ከቤተክርስቲያን ገባ በምስራቅ የተሣለውን የዳጅቶ ጎሹን ሥዕል ከብካቡን አይቶ አስጸየፈው በቤተክርስቲያን ተማጎፅኖ ይሣልበታል እንጂ እንደ ስጋዊ ሰው ከብካብ ይሣልበታል ብሎ ሰአሊውን አለቃ ምዕራፍን ነቀፈው<sup>9</sup>**

After that he [Emperor *Téwodros*] entered the church [of *Dämbäça Mikael*]. He was disgusted seeing the painting of *Däjač Gošu* [and] his army and court painted on the eastern [side of the wall of the *mäqdäs*]. He criticized the painter, *Aläqa Me'eraf*, saying it is beseeching that has to painted on a church [wall. How come he] paint a procession of armies like a man of earthly interest.

*Aläqa Kenfu* painted *Yäwuš Mikael* church some time in the period of *Däjač Tädla's* rule in *Gojjam*. He is remembered by the present clergy of *Gojjam* as a writer and illuminator of manuscripts.<sup>10</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century several painters worked under the patronage of *Negus Täklä Haymanot*. Five of these, and the most reputed, were *Aläqa Hailu*, *Aläqa Tägäñ*, *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus Waqqira*, *Aläqa Fänta Kenfä Mikael* and *Liqä Ṭäbäbt Zä-Éleyas*.<sup>11</sup> *Aläqa Hailu* was senior to them all. Sources do not say anything on his early life. He was the

most known and respected painter of his period. In 1905 he was brought to Addis Ababa accused of forging a seal. Soon after he was found innocent and ordered to paint the Yäka Mikael church in Addis Ababa.<sup>12</sup> *Aläqa Tägäñ* was also a wellknown painter. But he seems to have had a special skill in making mosaic engravings on wood and stone.<sup>13</sup> He was the descendant of *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo*.<sup>14</sup>

*Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus Waqjira* was born in 1875/76 in Kuttai (Gendä Bärät).<sup>15</sup> He was brought to Gojjam in June 1878 and baptized. His original name was *Nägäro Waqjira*. *Däjazmač Yälémtu Gošu*, the uncle of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* and the one who brought him from Kuttai, had him baptized and since then he began to be called by his baptismal name, *Täklä Iyäsus*. At his early age, he was made an attendant in the men's residential quarter of *Däjazmač Yälémtu*. When he grew up he was sent to Dima Giyorgis to attend church education under the supervision of a certain *Abba Sahelu*. He was trained as a scribe and painter there.<sup>16</sup> But he seems to have gotten much of his skill as a painter from *Aläqa Hailu* as he himself states in one of his writings.<sup>17</sup> He was actively involved in the painting of churches and other artistic works from the late 1880s to the 1920s. He died in *Däbrä Marqos* some time before the Italian occupation.<sup>18</sup> Sources do not say any thing about the other two painters, *Aläqa Fänta* and *Liqä Ṭäbäbt Zä-Éleyas*.

Most of the painters seem to have had a high social and ecclesiastical status. In some cases they were descendants of prominent noble families and this alone made them to have a high social status. A typical example of this is *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo*. In other cases their skill and church education was the main factor that determined their social status. All painters had to undergo a through traditional

church education and master liturgy, *Qené*, and other theological subjects of the church. The mastery of these subjects was basic for their training as a painter. Thus all painters were priests or *däbtāras* and in some cases monks. After they mastered the skill of painting and proved their ability as painters they were usually assigned to a prominent church or monastery as an *Aläqa* or as a *Liqä Ṭäbäbt*. The most skilled ones were apparently appointed, as *Aläqa*.<sup>19</sup> These two ecclesiastical positions were lucrative depending on the *gult* of the monastery or the church.

As painters they were patronized directly by the emperor or the ruler of the province. They regularly participated in the *geber* (banquet) the ruler or the emperor offered. In the period of Ras Hailu I painters seem to have enjoyed a very high social status. *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus* states this as follows:

አለቃ አጸዱ አለቃ ቀጸላ አለቃ ምዕራፍ አለቃ ገብረ መስቀል አለቃ ተክለሃይማኖት የሚባሉ ሠዓሊዎች ነበሩ በጥንግ ድርብና በደማስ ወርቀ ዘዞ በቀሽመሬና በመደብር ቋድ የሚሳናጡ ባለ ብር ጋማ ሰይፍ የሚይዙ በባለ ጽሙር ስሉስ በቅሎ የሚፈሱ አረቂ ጠጥተው ስጋ በል ተው ጥርሳቸውን በጠጅ የሚገምገሙ በሣሉት ሥዕል ተደንቀው ለመታየት የሚያስጎመጁ ሰውናቸውን መልዕክ ተብለው የሚጠረጠሩ ከጎጃም ገበያ ገፈፋውን የሚአስቀርጡ ኩሩ ብለ ጡ ጡ አትዋረዱ ከዙፋኑ አጠገብ ተቀመጡ ተብለው የሚቆላሙ የራስ ኃይሉ ባለሙዋሉ ች ነበሩ <sup>20</sup>

There were painters called *Aläqa Aṣädu*, *Aläqa Qäṣäla*, *Aläqa Me'eraf*, *Aläqa Gäbrä Mäsqäl* [and] *Aläqa Täklä Haymanot* [who] were the courtiers of Ras Hailu [I]. [They] wear *Teng Dereb* and *Dämas Wärqä Zäbo*, *Qäšmäre*

and *Mädäbr Quad*, hold a sword with a silver hilt, mount on a mule [that was] richly decorated? clean up their mouth with *ṭaj* after eating meat and drinking *aräqi*, [whom the people were] eager to see admired for their paintings, [whom the people] doubt are they humans or angels?, collect taxes indiscriminately from the markets of Gojjam, favored [by Ras Hailu I] to seat close to the throne and drink, eat, to feel proud and not to be humiliated.

Despite Täklä Iyäsus's exaggeration of the fact mainly due to his not being invited to Ras Hailu II's *gebers* by the time he was writing this chronicle, the reference indicates the prominent social position the painters of the second half of the eighteenth century enjoyed and the respect they got from the political figures and the ordinary people. Similarly in the period of *Negus* Täklä Haymanot painters including Täklä Iyäsus were respected and held prominent social positions. According to Täklä Iyäsus's report they drank in a *goš kolba* (a cup made from buffalo horn) in the banquet offered by the *Negus*.<sup>21</sup> Drinking in a *goš kolba* was a mark of high social status. On some occasions they also drank with *fanos* (a large container made from ceramic or brass).<sup>22</sup> The *fanos* was mostly reserved for the top nobility including the *Negus*.<sup>23</sup> All the five painters of *Negus* Täklä Haymanot mentioned above drank from a *goš kolba* or a *fanos*.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the income they got from the churches and monasteries where they were appointed as *Aläqa* or *Liqä Ṭäbäbt*,

they got *dergos* (daily food and drink rations) when they painted.<sup>25</sup> The *dergo* varied according to the skill and the status of the painter. Moreover they collected grain and *amole* from the inhabitants of the land under the control of the church or monastery in which they painted. The grain they collected in some cases reached ten *madegas* per month. Similarly the amount of *amole* they collected reached ten.<sup>26</sup> Another significant source of income for painters was taxation. They collected taxes in kind from the nearby market once in a month. Their right to collect taxes came to an end as the work of painting and decorating they undertook was completed.<sup>27</sup> The right of taxation was given only to the most senior and skilled painters.<sup>28</sup>

In the training of painters there were two phases. In the first phase the trainee studied calligraphy as well as miniature painting. A master, who mostly took only one or two trainees as apprentices, provided this training. At this stage, the trainee learnt basic forms of expression, composition of themes, mixing colors, and some of the conventional methods of rendering particular themes. The master strictly followed up the progress of the student and when he became convinced that his student had mastered the basics he would allow him to practice painting. The first practice was shading colors. Then he would be allowed to draw the outline of the figures and objects of a particular painting by which his mastery of modeling and composition as well as proportion was tested. The final aspect of the practice is the depiction of outlines of different floral and linear patterns, *häräg*.<sup>29</sup>

The second phase of training concentrated on wall painting. In this case the apprentice had to move from one

church to another following his master. Having mastered all the basics in the first phase of the training his major concentration here was mastery of proportion in a large-scale depiction of figures, management of the space and mastering the right place where a certain theme was to be depicted on the wall of the *mäqdäs*. As in the case of other theological training of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church after completing this phase of training the painter would be given a certain title according to his mastery of the art of painting and in his comparative rank to other painters. His master would give him a letter certifying that he had mastered the art under his supervision. Then the painter would go to the ruler of the local area or the king to get approval of his title as well as to assure him that he was ready to give professional service to the ruler or the king. When he did this he had to go with a present. The present was either an illuminated manuscript or an icon. In most cases the illuminated manuscript or the icon must bear the image of the person to whom it was to be given and his family depicted prostrated or standing and beseeching. The present he provided the king had a very special significance to the career of the painter. His skill was evaluated based on this painting. In cases where the painter proved to master extraordinary skill he would be rewarded with a cloak and other kinds of rich garments. The cloak was a mark of dignity. He would also be ordered to paint a church or illuminate a manuscript that the king or the ruler favored. If he continued to show exceptional ability he would be appointed over a prominent monastery as an *Aläqa* or be given another prominent post.<sup>30</sup>

The tradition of presenting panel paintings or illuminated manuscripts containing the images of the ruler or the king to whom the present was to be given indicated how



secular figures began to appear in religious themes. Of course depicting kings and prominent persons prostrated before holy and saintly figures was an old Byzantine tradition.<sup>31</sup> Secular figures were non-existent from the paintings of the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. They appear beginning from the early eighteenth century. By this time the external influence on Ethiopian painting came from Western European models not from Byzantine models. For this reason only the appearance of secular figures cannot be attributed to the influence of Byzantine models. Rather it was the innovation of the Ethiopian painters themselves. As they wanted to impress the king or the ruler to whom they gave a present and to get rewarded they seem to have begun to depict the portrait of the king by their own idea in a religious context. The reference to the present that *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo* made to one of the Gondärine kings seems to be an instance of this kind.

In East Gojjam the monastery of Dima Giyorgis seems to have been a training center for painters. To begin with from the land under the control of the church as a *gult* one parish in the vicinity of the monastery, *Yägänaž Maryam*, was reserved for a master who taught painting.<sup>32</sup> Also in the hierarchy of the functionaries of the church there was a title called *Se'el Ṭäbaqi*. The task of the person appointed to this post was to protect the wall paintings of the church and maintain them in good condition.<sup>33</sup> Most of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century painters of Gojjam had their early training there. Among these were *Aläqa Tägäñ Kassa*, *Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus*, *Aläqa Hailu* and *Aläqa Heruy Wäldä Giyorgis*. The training was obviously limited to the art of manuscript illumination, the first phase of training.<sup>34</sup>

During the *Zämänä Mässafent* painters worked within a limited geographical unit, governed by one prominent lord. In the second half of the nineteenth century lucrative posts and relatively better rewards in the court of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* made painters work within a limited geographical area. This fact together with the presence of a training center could naturally lead to the development of a separate school of painting. Since this research is very selective, it is not possible to identify the main elements of the paintings of the region that differentiate it from the paintings of other schools and regions. More work needs to be discovered and to be analyzed to do this. On top of this my effort to get access to the paintings in the church of Dima Giyorgis proved unsuccessful. As far as the sources of this study allow what is clearly visible is that the influence of one prominent master continued for about a century and a half.

#### **Materials of Painting and Methods of Execution.**

Painters used different materials for painting at different times. In panel painting in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century painters used wood panels on which chalk is applied. The white chalk creates a good surface to paint on. In the second half of the nineteenth century cotton material laminated to the wooden panel replaced the chalk. On the cotton cloth the white of an egg was applied to make it smooth easy for painting. On top of this, chalk was applied. All of the late nineteenth century panel paintings were produced in such a way.<sup>35</sup>

In the case of manuscript illumination it seems that at least two different people did the illumination and the writing. The writer of the text leaves space for miniature paintings as he writes. Usually the first and the last three

or four folios are left for the depiction of important themes like the Virgin with Child, Crucifixion, Trinity, *Kur'atä Re'esu* and St. George. Depending on the resource and wealth of person who commissioned the work the stories of the main text of the manuscript is depicted with several miniatures. There was no rule as to the themes to be rendered in every particular text.<sup>36</sup> This seems to be done according to the painter's interest and payment. The manuscripts studied for this research show variation in depiction of themes though the most important themes mentioned above tend to appear in all of them. The work of illuminating seems to have taken a period ranging from six months to a year based on the number of miniatures included in the manuscript.<sup>37</sup>

In decorating the walls of churches the technique that was employed by the painters was similar in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. First the surface of the wall to be painted had to be smooth. On this a cotton material was laminated using a glue made from the boiled powder of grain, mostly *teff*. On the cotton material white chalk was applied. At this stage the surface was ready for painting. The next step was to divide the space to be painted into different squares and rectangles. The painter carefully divided the space into different parts based on the number of separate paintings he would paint on the wall. The size of the squares and rectangles varied according to the importance of the theme to be painted on them. Having done this the painter began to outline the figures and objects of each separate painting.<sup>38</sup>

## **Colors and Color Preparation**

Compared to other styles, paintings done in the Second Gondärine style show diversity of color. The colors are vigorous and there is a variety in the hue of one color itself. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries colors were imported as well as locally manufactured. Several varieties of green, yellow, red, black, and white were locally made. Most of these colors were made from plants and soils. White color was made mostly from chalk. It is locally known as *boränq*. It is abundant in several parts of the region. The chalk had to be first ground. Then the chalk powder had to be liquefied using a fluid produced from boiled animal skin mostly that of an ox or a cow. This was used as a white paint as well as for priming, a smooth surface to paint up on. Another important use of the *boränq*/chalk is that the powder was used to soften red, green and yellow colors to create several variations of these colors.<sup>39</sup>

Black paint was mostly made from grain and charcoal. The charcoal was made from the leaf or stem of *ketketa*. The charcoal then had to be ground finely and liquidified. The fluid used to liquidify in this case was produced from a hard-roasted and boiled barley or wheat. The wheat or the barley has to be roasted first until it got completely black. Then it would be boiled in water. The fluid that came out of this was used to liquidify the charcoal powder. Mixing the charcoal powder and the fluid had to be done repeatedly for a long time. Then the mixed muddy product had to be dried and cut in the size of a Maria Theresa thaler. The painter used this for writing and painting by mixing it with water when he wrote or painted.<sup>40</sup>

Yellow paint was made from several plants. Some of these plants are *Maqmaqo*, petals of sunflowers and the bark of the *wänbära* tree. Some of the informants I interviewed also included *erd* to this category. But most of them do not remember the process of preparation. The *ṭäyba* tree was used for producing orange color. Green paint was produced from the leaves of *gurjajit* and *astänagr*. Particularly *gurjajit* is said to have been the one from which deep green color was made. Red is made from the leaf of the *qäräṭ* tree, *ensosela*, and *ençurur*.<sup>41</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In the course of the two centuries under consideration painting did not change much. The only significant change came later, in the second half of the nineteenth century. The secularization of painting that began early in the eighteenth century with the appearance of secular figures culminated in the depiction of completely secular themes on the walls of churches in the late nineteenth century. Even then the painters were careful in that the place where secular themes were depicted was conventionally the bottom part of the eastern wall of the *mäqdäs*. This seems to have been done mainly due to the religious belief that as earthly people secular figures should occupy the lower hierarchy in the vertical arrangement of themes.

The arrangement of themes on the church walls is done hierarchically. Themes like the Trinity are always depicted at the top of the wall. Then scenes from the life of Christ follow. The Virgin is depicted next to Christ. The painting of St. George killing the dragon has equal importance to the Virgin with Child and other themes of the Virgin. Local saints and monastic leaders are rendered in the at lowest part of the wall. *Be'el Zebul* (Lucifer) is always depicted on the lower left part of the southern wall of the *mäqdäs*.

The rendering of individual themes varies from one painter to the other. Though there are theological rules that are taken as a convention among painters in depicting certain themes each painter was free to introduce new elements according to his skill and thought. The main method of depicting themes seems to have depended on the particular version of the apocryphal and biblical stories, which the painter knew about a certain theme. Especially in the case of themes like *Kur'atä*

*Re'esu*, the Apparition at Däbrä Meṭmaq, the Nativity, Assumption and the Passion there are several versions of the story. The diversity in rendering these themes apparently resulted from the diversity of the stories about each particular theme.

On the other hand the rendering of the two themes, St. George killing the Dragon and the Virgin with Child showed almost no change throughout the two centuries. The only variation of these themes was limited to details in the rendering of the floral decorations of the garments. Later in the late nineteenth century probably as a result of the introduction of new models from Addis Ababa the rendering of these themes on panel paintings changed. However, the rendering of the two themes on the walls of churches did not change at all.

One remarkable aspect of some of the paintings of the eighteenth century was the continuation of the influence of a particular painter. As already indicated the painter of the Märṭulä Maryam Diptych, *Aläqa Zä-Wäldä Maryam Mamo*, seems to have been a model for most of the painters of the second half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. In the rendering of the *Kur'atä Re'esu*, the Trinity, and the Flight into Egypt his influence is clearly shown in the paintings of the same theme produced in the period mentioned above in the eastern part of the region. Similarities in treatment of themes, composition and expression seem to be more results of influence of a master on a student rather than conventions.



One very important feature of painting in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was that it responded to the social and material changes within society. The life of the nobility progressively became luxurious with the introduction and acquisition of luxurious items. These items were well represented in painting. Important items like firearms as well as little utensils like the *berelé* (a glass vessel used for drinking *ṭäj*) are reflected. Moreover the change of costume is clearly evident from the eighteenth to the late nineteenth century.

One of the scholars of Ethiopian art, Stanislaw Chojnacki, argues "Painting in Ethiopia was never a gratuitous act - art for art's sake - but a functional one..."<sup>1</sup> The prime function of paintings was to create a psychology of apprehension and awe among the lay Christians. Because of the fact that paintings are believed to possess the power of intercession in that the saint or the holy person represented can communicate with the individuals through the painting they were materials of worship by themselves. As believers of Orthodox Christianity do today, Christians of the earlier centuries were bowing down in front of paintings. Therefore, the society that prevailed in the two centuries had a high regard for paintings. For the illiterate paintings were the major ways of conveying stories of saints and also some aspects of the theology of the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanislaw Chojnacki, *Major Themes in Ethiopian Painting: Indigenous Developments, the Influence of Foreign Models and their Adaptation (from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century)*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), p. 19

**Notes**  
**Chapter I**

<sup>1</sup> *The National Atlas of Ethiopia*, (Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Mapping Agency, 1981), pp.10, 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> A genealogical manuscript written by Aläqa Täklä Iyäsus Waqjira. ff, 7-8, 10-11. The main content of the manuscript is narration of the genealogical descent of the people of different districts of Gojjam in general and the genealogy of Negus Täklä Häymanot and Aläqa Tägäñ Kassa in particular. The original of this manuscript is kept in the hands of Ato Wudu Fänta who lives in Däbrä Marqos town. What seems to be a copy of this manuscript is found in the National Library compiled with other materials. Here after this manuscript is cited as "The Genealogy manuscript."

<sup>3</sup> R.E Cheesman, *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile: An Abyssinian Quest*, (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968), pp, 254-256. Also see the appended map on the same book.

<sup>4</sup> *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, Results for Amhara Region, Vol. I, Part I, statistical Report on Population Size and Characteristics*, (Addis Ababa.1995), p.14.

<sup>5</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, "The Horn of Africa: The Solomonids in Ethiopia and the States of the Horn of Africa", *General History of Africa: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, Vol. IV (Heinemann: UNESCO, 1984), pp.349-340.

<sup>6</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, " The Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History, the Case of the Agaw", *Journal of African History*, (Vol. 29 No.1, 1988), p.9; Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, (London: Clarendon Press, 1972), p.65. Also see map 2 of the book.

<sup>7</sup>Tadesse, *Church and State*, p.27

<sup>8</sup> Abebaw Ayalew, "A Short History of Dabra Eleyas Church 1874-1974". (B.A. Thesis. Addis Ababa University.1998), pp.1-2; Habtamu Mengistie, " A History of the Monastery of Martula Maryam (c.1500-1974)" (B.A. Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1998), pp. 1-2

<sup>9</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, *The Genealogy Manuscript*, pp.7-8; Tadesse Tamrat, " Ethiopia in Miniature: The Peopling of Gojjam", *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies, Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (Michigan State University. Vol. I, 1994), pp.959-960.

<sup>10</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, " The Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History, the Case of the Gafat", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, (Vol. 21, 1988), pp.140-141

- <sup>11</sup> Tadesse Tamrat, "Ethiopia, the Red Sea and the Horn", *The Cambridge History of Africa*. Vol. 3, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp.100-101
- <sup>12</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp.189-190
- <sup>13</sup> Abebaw, pp.2-3, Habtamu, p.2
- <sup>14</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp.201-203; Sileshi Mengistie, "The History of Dima Giyorgis Monastery from Foundation to 1974" (B.A. Thesis Addis Ababa University, 1998), pp. 3-5
- <sup>15</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp, 196, 203
- <sup>16</sup> Tadesse, " The Process of... the Case of the Agaw", p.198
- <sup>17</sup> Sileshi, p.4
- <sup>18</sup> Habtamu, p.1
- <sup>19</sup> Sileshi, pp.4 -5
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.; Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp. 201-203
- <sup>21</sup> Abebaw, p.4
- <sup>22</sup> Habtamu, p.2
- <sup>23</sup> Abebaw, p.2
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. pp.2-3
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.p.3
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.; Habtamu,p.2
- <sup>27</sup> Enrico Cerulli(ed), *Gli Atti di Takla Alfa*, (Roma: Tipogrfia del Senato, 1942), p.10
- <sup>28</sup> Abebaw, pp 5-6
- <sup>29</sup> " The Chronicle of Emperor Zara Yaqob" (1434-1468) *Ethiopia Observer*. (Vol.2 1961), p.152
- <sup>30</sup> I. Guidi(ed), *Annales Iyohannes I, Iyoas et Bakafa*, (Louvain: CSCO, 1961) (text), pp.100, 155; Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp.190-191

- <sup>31</sup> Francisco Alvarez, *The Prester John of The Indies*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1961), Vol.1, p.41; Täklä Iyäsus Waqqjira, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", IES MS.254, p.28.
- <sup>32</sup> Taddesse, "Process of... the Case of the Agaw", pp.14-16.
- <sup>33</sup> Guidi, *Annales Iyohannes*, pp.68-73, 96-97,100-107,113-118; Täklä Iyäsus, 'The Chronicle of Gojjam", pp. 39,43-44.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Donald Crummey, *Land and Society in The Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia: From the Thirteenth to the Nineteenth Century* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2000), pp.90-91
- <sup>36</sup> Fantahun Birhane, "Gojjam 1800-1855", (B.A. Thesis. Addis Ababa University, 1973), p.2
- <sup>37</sup> I. Guidi(ed), *Annales Regum Iyasu II et Iyo'as*. (Louvain: CSCO, 1962), p.154, (text)
- <sup>38</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", pp.45-46
- <sup>39</sup> Fantahun, pp.2-3; Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.48
- <sup>40</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle Of Gojjam", pp.48-49
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.51
- <sup>42</sup> Fantahun, p.8
- <sup>43</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.52
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid.; Informant: *Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu*. Until very recently *Mälakä Berhan Libanos* was working in the East Gojjam Diocese Ecclesiastical Office. He is a reputed religious scholar as well as traditional historian. He has visited several of the monasteries and churches of the region and knows most of the manuscripts that contain historical substance. Currently he is writing a history of Gojjam.
- <sup>45</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", pp.54-55
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid. pp. 55-56
- <sup>47</sup> Enno Litman(ed), *The Chronicle of Emperor Tewodore of Abyssinia*. (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1902), pp.13-14

- <sup>48</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.63
- <sup>49</sup> Abel Kassahun, "Dabra Marqos, Foundation Growth and Development up to 1941" (B.A. Thesis Addis Ababa University.1984), pp. 2-3
- <sup>50</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.75
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 79
- <sup>52</sup> Lamalam (Aläqa), "The Chronicle of Emperor Takla Giyorgis II and Emperor Yohannes IV" 1895, IES MS.1763 ff. 6-7, I
- <sup>53</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", pp.80-81
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid. pp.82-83
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>56</sup> Zewde Gebre Selassie, *Emperor Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p.45.
- <sup>57</sup> Bahru Zawde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974*. (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1991), pp.44-45
- <sup>58</sup> Bayru Tafla(ed), *Chronicle of Yohannes IV (1872-1889)*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag gmbh, 1977), p.153
- <sup>59</sup> Abel, p.4
- <sup>60</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", pp.113, 118-119
- <sup>61</sup> Crummey, p. 105
- <sup>62</sup> Informants: Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru, Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu. Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru was a well-known religious scholar of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. For a long period of time he was the chairman of the Scholars Council of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He is from Gojjam particularly Dima Giyorgis Monastery. He knows the history of Gojjam very well. He has a very good knowledge of painting and painters of Gojjam in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- <sup>63</sup> Informant: Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru; Institute of Ethiopian Studies, UNESCO Microfilm Series No.10, 6-4
- <sup>64</sup> Crummey, p. 105; Informants: Mälakä Gänät Nebrätu Ewnätu, Mämher Abäbä Tameru. Mälakä Gänät Nebrätu Ewnätu is the head of Moṭa Giyorgis Church.

- <sup>65</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.49
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid. pp. 48, 85
- <sup>67</sup> Ibid.p53; Informant: *Mälakä Sälam* Akläwäg Meheräté. *Mälakä Sälam* Akläwäg Meheräté is the head of the Dämbäça Mikael Church.
- <sup>68</sup> Crummey, p.154
- <sup>69</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.52
- <sup>70</sup> Dersana Mikael manuscript found in Dambacha Mikael Church, f.?. The land Grant made by *Däjač* Gošu and the charter of the church is appended at the end of the manuscript.; Informant: *Mälakä Sälam* Akläwäg Meheräté
- <sup>71</sup> A land grant and register manuscript called *Baher Mäzgäb* found in Däbrä Şebah Amanuel Church, ff.4-5
- <sup>72</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.63
- <sup>73</sup> Abel, p.4
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.; Kendeneh Endeg, "The History of St. Marqos Church in Dabra Marqos(1882-1974)" (B.A Thesis, Addis Ababa University, 1997), p.14
- <sup>75</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", pp.107-108
- <sup>76</sup> Abebaw, pp.13-15
- <sup>77</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p. 109
- <sup>78</sup> In most cases informants indicate that the walls of the church of their locality were painted soon after the completion of the construction of the building. Written records, whenever they are available, confirm this fact. An instance of this is recorded in *Aläqa* Täklä Iyäsus's "Chronicle of Gojjam", p.49.
- <sup>79</sup> A typical example of this is found in the text of *Säné Gologot*, the prayer of the Virgin Mary at Golgotha.
- <sup>80</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", P.47

- <sup>81</sup> Jules Leroy, *Ethiopian Painting in the Middle Ages and During the Gondar Dynasty*. (New York: Frederick and Praeger, 1967), p.34
- <sup>82</sup> Crummey, p.105
- <sup>83</sup> Täkalä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.49
- <sup>84</sup> Informants: Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru, Demaha Gänät Abey Alämu, Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu
- <sup>85</sup> Leroy, pp.34-35
- <sup>86</sup> Stanislaw Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons: A Catalogue of the Icons of the Museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University*. (Milan: Skira Editore, 2000), p.40
- <sup>87</sup> Habtamu, p.42; Abebaw, pp.32; Sileshi, Pp.53
- <sup>88</sup> Informants: Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu, Aläqa Ayaléw Tamru
- <sup>89</sup> Stanislaw Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*, pp.21-22; Diana Spencer, "Travels in Gojjam: St. Luke Icons and Brancalone Re-discovered", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.12, No.2, 1974, p.204.
- <sup>90</sup> "Yä-Ityopya Wana Tarik" IES MS 21 85, ff.110, 113-114.
- <sup>91</sup> Informants: Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu, Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru, Re'esä Re'usan Haylä Iyäsus
- <sup>92</sup> Guidi, *Annales Iyohannes II*, pp.97-95
- <sup>93</sup> Diana Spencer, "In search of St. Luke Icons in Ethiopia", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.10, No.2 1972, pp. 83-85; Diana Spencer, "Travels in Gojjam..." pp 204-207.
- <sup>94</sup> Informants: Abba Te'umä Qal Molla, Re'esä Re'usan Haylä Iyäsus Gäbrä Maryam
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>96</sup> Michel Baxandal, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, pp. 46-47; *La Pittura Italiana: I Maestri Di Ogni Tempo E I Loro Capolavori*, (Milano: Elmond Editori Associati, 1997), pp. 87,94,123



- <sup>97</sup> Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church*. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1928), p.542.
- <sup>98</sup> Herbert Thurston & Donald Atwater (eds), *Butler's Lives of Saints*, (London: Burns Oates & Washburne Ltd., 1956), pp.129-130
- <sup>99</sup> *La Pittura Italiana*, pp. 81,90, 95,104
- <sup>100</sup> Spencer, "Travels in Gojjam..." p.205; Informants: Re'esä Re'usan Haylä Iyäsus Gäbrä Maryam, *Demaha Gänät Abey Alämu*
- <sup>101</sup> Stanislaw Chojnacki, *Major Themes in Ethiopian Painting: Indigenous Developments, the Influence of Foreign Models and their Adaptation (from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century)*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), p.386
- <sup>102</sup> Ibid. pp. 378-398
- <sup>103</sup> Ibid. p. 388; Habatamu, pp.4-5
- <sup>104</sup> Spencer, "Travels in Gojjam..." p.219
- <sup>105</sup> Chojnacki, *Major Themes*, p.398; Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*, p.28
- <sup>106</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp. 228-229
- <sup>107</sup> Sileshi, pp. 4-5
- <sup>108</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp. 228-229
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid. pp. 164-165
- <sup>110</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*, p.25
- <sup>111</sup> Afnin, to whom the panel painting at Märṭulä Maryam is attributed, is not, in my opinion, the painter of the panel. To begin with, the panel shows a striking similarity with the other paintings of Brancalone. Especially the tiled buildings shown in the backgrounds of many of the scenes in the panel and the book of miniatures of Wafa Iyäsus church are identical. In addition the inscription on the back of the panel seem to be a later addition and cannot be fully read. An iron bar used to fasten the crack of the panel covers the most important part of the inscription, which could have helped to identify whether Afnin is the painter or the donor of the painting. There is a marked difference between the color of the inscription and the color of the mosaic painted on the

back of the panel. The fresh and vigorous colors of the inscription as opposed to the faded and recessive colors of the mosaic obviously show that the inscription is of a recent date. Therefore, Afnin must have been the donor of the painting rather than the painter; hence he was not the student of Brancaloneone. For this reason I did not include the panel in the group of paintings locally produced.

<sup>112</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*, p.29

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. pp.29-30

<sup>114</sup> Otto Jager & Lisselotte Deininger-Englhart, "Some Notes on Illuminations of Manuscripts in Ethiopia", *Rassegna di Studi Ethiopici*, Vol. 17, pp.47.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Marylin Heldman, "The Late Solomonic Period, 1527-1769", *African Zion: The Sacred Art of Ethiopia*. (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1993), p.194.

<sup>117</sup> Chojnacki, *Major Themes*, pp.67-70.

<sup>118</sup> Girma Beshah and Merid Wolde Aregay, *The Question of the Union of the Two Churches in Luso-Ethiopian Relations (1500-1632)*, (Lisbon: NP, 1964), pp.91-93

<sup>119</sup> Chojnacki, *Major Themes*, pp. 67-69,

<sup>120</sup> Slides of the Four Gospels of Dima Giyorgis Monastery photographed by Stanislaw Chojnacki found in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, No. 552,553, 556,558,559

<sup>121</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*, p.69

<sup>122</sup> Slides of the *Tamrä Maryam* manuscript of Däbrä Wärq Maryam photographed by Stanislaw Chojnacki found in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, No. 615

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. No.598, 614, 621

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. No. 599,619

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. No. 617, 620; Slides of the Four Gospels Dima Giyorgis Monastery, No. 456,469,552

**Notes**  
**Chapter II**

- <sup>1</sup> Marilyn Heldman, "The Late Solomonic...", pp. 195-196.
- <sup>2</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*, p.40
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.43
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Jules Leroy, P.35; Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons...*p.40.
- <sup>6</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons...*p.40
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Leroy, p.29
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid. pp.34-35.
- <sup>11</sup> Heldman, p.195.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.196; Leroy, p.34
- <sup>13</sup> Heldman, p.197
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>15</sup> Täklä Iyäsus Waqjera, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.49.
- <sup>16</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu, Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru*
- <sup>17</sup> *Däjazmač* Wäldä Abib, who was the ruler of Gojjam proper in the early eighteenth century, is depicted in a Second Gondärine manner in a manuscript produced at that time. This indicates that the style was introduced as early as the first or second decade of the eighteenth century.
- <sup>18</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*...p.303
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.297.
- <sup>20</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*...p.41
- <sup>21</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.49.
- <sup>22</sup> Šäwa Mämher Kidanä Meherät Monastery is located in Erbab, the northern part of Mačakäl Wäradä, near the Çoqé Mountains.
- <sup>23</sup> Informants: *Re'esä Re'usan Haylä Iyäsus Gäbrä Maryam, Qesä Gäbäz, Gezačew Wäldä Sänbät*
- <sup>24</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*...p.40
- <sup>25</sup> Crummey, pp. 105, 157
- <sup>26</sup> Informants *Mälakä Gänät Nebrätu Ewnätu, Mämaher Abäbä Tameru*
- <sup>27</sup> Informants: *Re'esä Däbr Getu Tamrat, Mämher Abäbä Tameru*
- <sup>28</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Genealogy Manuscript", f.70r
- <sup>29</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", pp.57, 59-60
- <sup>30</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, The Genealogy Manuscript. f.70r
- <sup>31</sup> Informants: *Aläqa Ayaléw Tamru, Mälkä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu*
- <sup>32</sup> IES Microfilms, Film No.1989 VIII 25-27.
- <sup>33</sup> Informants: *Aläqa Ayaléw Tamru, Mälakä Berhan Libanos*
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., *Mägabi Zärihun Adnaw*
- <sup>35</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons*...p. 40.

- <sup>36</sup> James Bruce's description of the army and the horse harnessing of the nobility and the kings is almost similar. See James Bruce, *Travels to Discover the Source of the Blue Nile*. Vol. 6. pp.59-61
- <sup>37</sup> James Bruce's descriptions of Ethiopian life in different parts of his travel account indicate this.
- <sup>38</sup> Marid W. Aregay, "A Reprisal of the Impact of Firearms in the History of Warfare in Ethiopia (c.1500-1800)"; *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.XIV. 1976-79. pp.119-120
- <sup>39</sup> Leroy, pp. 31-34
- <sup>40</sup> Crummey, *Land and Society...* p.92
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.169
- <sup>42</sup> Ra'eyä Maryam Tensa'e Zä-Gubae Printing press. p.9
- <sup>43</sup> Chojnacki, *Major Themes...*p.304.
- <sup>44</sup> Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons...*pp.303-304
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid. pp. 296-297
- <sup>46</sup> The Miniatures of this manuscript exist in a microfilm form in the IES. UNESCO Microfilm Series 8 Ms.6
- <sup>47</sup> Informant: *Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu*
- <sup>48</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Sälam Akläwag Meheräté, Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru*
- <sup>49</sup> Chojnacki, *Major Themes...*p. 387
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>51</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu, Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru*
- <sup>52</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Genealogy manuscript", p.79
- <sup>53</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Gänät Nebrätu Ewnätu, Mämher Ababa Tameru*

**Notes**  
**Chapter III**

<sup>1</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam" p .47

<sup>2</sup> Fantahun, pp.3-4

<sup>3</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", pp.47-48

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.49

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp.47-49

<sup>6</sup> The worst of all the three was that when myself, Professor Stanislaw Chojnacki, Ato Shiferaw Bekele, Mr. Paul B. Henze and Mrs. Martha Henze and went there on 4 November 2001 we were not even allowed to enter in to the compound of the church.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.49

<sup>8</sup> Habtamu, p.38

<sup>9</sup> *Tamrä Maryam* manuscript, Märṭulä Maryam Church, f.284. r

<sup>10</sup> Informants: *Re'esä Re'usan* Haylä Iyäsus Gäbrä Maryam, Abba Ṭe'umä Qal Molla

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Habtamu, p.36

<sup>13</sup> Habtamu, pp.4-5

<sup>14</sup> *Tamrä Maryam* Manuscript, Zäbč Iyäsus Church. f.169. r

<sup>15</sup> The description and analysis of the paintings of Wäynam Kidanä Meherät is based on slides taken by Mr. Paul Henze in 1971 and 1972, and by Professor Stanislaw Chojnacki. By then the paintings were already damaged. At the present all the

paintings of the church are lost and the church is in the process of reconstruction.

<sup>16</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", P.49

### Notes

### Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> Zewde Gebre Selassie, *Emperor Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A political biography*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p.45.

<sup>2</sup> Täklä Iyäsus Waqjira, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.92.

<sup>3</sup> Abel Kassahun, pp. 2-4.

<sup>4</sup> Kendenah Endag, p.14.

<sup>5</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, p.3

<sup>6</sup> From Different sources the following churches are said to have been promoted to the status of *däbr* and given *gult* grants during his reign: Däbrä Marqos, Däbrä Şebah Amanuel church, Ağamna Giyorgis, Däbrä Gänät Éleyas, Däbrä Gänät Abbo, Serwä Iyäsus Täklä Haymanot. Gulit Mikael, Amari Iyäsus and Ṭamé Giyorgis.

<sup>7</sup> In many of his official letters he addresses himself as *Retu'a Haymanot* which means the demonstrator of a religion.

<sup>8</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, p.112.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp.2-3

<sup>10</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Sälam Akläwäg Meheraté*, *Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu*

<sup>11</sup> Stanislaw Chojnacki, *Major Themes...* p.31.

<sup>12</sup> Hans Bidermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism* (Oxford: Facts On File, 1992), pp.166-167.

<sup>13</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Berhan Libanos*, *Re'esä Re'usan Haylä Iyäsus*.

<sup>14</sup> Stanislaw Chojnacki, "Notes on Ethiopian Traditional Art: the Last Phase", *Etnologische Zeitschrift*, Vol.3, 1978, p.60.

<sup>15</sup> Informants: Mämher Täklä Haymanot Basazenäw, Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru, *Mälakä Şähäy Mäqoya*

<sup>16</sup> Chojnacki, "Notes on Traditional Ethiopian Art...", p.63.

<sup>17</sup> Informants: *Qésä Gäbäz Menwuyälät Gobäzé, Demaha Gänät Abey Alämu*

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> This panel is now in the possession of *Qésä Gäbäz Menwuyälät Gobäzé*. He was formerly the *Qésä Gäbäz* of the church. He still serves the same church.

<sup>20</sup> Stanislaw Chojnacki, *Ethiopian Icons...*, p, 300.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> A very vivid depiction of the court of *Negus Täklä Haymanot* is found on the eastern wall of the *mäqdäs* of the church of *Serwä Iyäsus Täklä Haymanot*. The depiction of the *negus* on this panel and in the wall painting of *Serwä Iyäsus Täklä Haymanot* is identical.

<sup>23</sup> *Täklä Iyäsus*, p.106.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. pp.106-107.

<sup>25</sup> *Täklä Iyäsus*, p.108

<sup>26</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Şähäy Mäqoya Kassa, Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu*

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> C.F Rey, *In the Country of the Blue Nile*. (London: The Camelot Press Ltd., 1927), p.109.

<sup>30</sup> *Täklä Iyäsus*, p.66

<sup>31</sup> Informants, *Mälakä Şebah Dibäkulu Wasé, Ato Wudu Fänta*

<sup>32</sup> *Täklä Iyäsus*, p.92.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



<sup>34</sup> Land Register Manuscript of the Monastery of Märṭulä Maryam. f.200 r. For this reference I am grateful to Ato Habtamu Mengistie.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, p.3.

## Notes

## Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> Informants: *Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru, Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu; Marilyn Heldman, "Creating Religious Art: The Status of Artisans in Highland Christian Ethiopia", Sonderdruck Aus Aethiopica I, 1998, p. 132.*

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.49.

<sup>4</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Genealogy Manuscript."

<sup>5</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.49

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Informant: *Mämher Täklä Haymanot Basazenäw*

<sup>8</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.66

<sup>9</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Şähäy Mäqoya Kassa, Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu, Demaha Gänät Abey Alämu*

<sup>10</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.12

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp.119-120,

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.1-3

<sup>13</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Genealogy Manuscript", f.23v, f.24.r

<sup>14</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.86.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Genealogy Manuscript", f.1v, f.2r

<sup>17</sup> Informant: *Ato Wudu Fänta*

<sup>18</sup> Informants: *Mämher Täklä Haymanot Basazenäw, Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru.*

<sup>19</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p.49

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.p.3

- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Informants: *Mälakä Berhan Libanos Yätämäñu, Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru*
- <sup>23</sup> Täklä Iyäsus, "The Chronicle of Gojjam", p. 112.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.106.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 106-107.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp.49, 106-107.
- <sup>27</sup> Informants: *Mämher Täklä Haymanot, Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru*
- <sup>28</sup> *Informant: Mämher Täklä Haymanot*
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Thomas F. Mathews, *Byzantium: From Antiquity to Renaissance*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams. Inc. 1998), p.53.
- <sup>31</sup> Informants: *Aläqa Ayaléw Tameru, Mämher Täklä Haymanot Basazenäw.*
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>34</sup> Informant: *Mämher Täklä Haymanot Basazenäw.*
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid

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Slides from the Collection of Mr. Paul B. Henze. I have used the slides of Wäynam Kidanä Meherät Church, and the Photographs of The *Ra'eyä Maryam* and *Tamrä Maryam* Manuscript of Dämbäça Mikael Church from Mr. Paul B. Henze's Personal Photo collection.



### List of Informants

No.	Name of Informant	Age	Date of Interview	Place of Interview	Remark
1	Abäbä Tameru (Mämher)	65	04/11/2001	Moça	A priest in Moça Giyorgis Church.
2	Abey Alämu (Demha Gänät)	67	14/09/2001 15/01/2002	Däbrä Marqos	Formerly he was head of Däbrä Gänät Éleyas Church. Now he works in the East Gojjam Diocese Ecclesiastical Office.
3	Akläwäg Meheräté (Mälakä Sälam)	?	31/10/2001 02/11/2001	Dämbäça	Head of Dämbäça Mikael Church.
4	Ayaléw Tameru (Aläqa)	76	25/08/2001 21/09/2001 14/12/2001 04/03/2002	Addis Ababa	Formerly he was the chairman of the Council of Scholars of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He is a native of Dima. He has a good knowledge of the history of the region and the painters and painting in region in the past.
5	Bäqabil Wärqnäh (Demaha Gänät)	63	18/01/2002	Éleyas	Head of Däbrä Gänät Éleyas Church.
6	Dibä Kulu Wasé (Mälakä Şebah)	67	16/09/2001 19/01/2002	Amanuel	Head of Däbrä Şebah Amanuel Church.
7	Haylä Iyäsus	58	28/03/2002	Märçulä	Head of the

	Gäbrä Maryam ( <i>Re'esä Re'usan</i> )		31/03/2002	Maryam	monastery of Märṭulä Maryam.
8	Libanos Yätämäñu ( <i>Mälakä Berhän</i> )	69	14/09/2001 14/01/2002 15/01/2002 19/01/2002	Däbrä Marqos	Until very recently he was working in the East Gojjam Diocese Ecclesiastical Office. He is a well-known religious scholar. He knows and has read many of the manuscripts that have historical reference in the various churches and monasteries of Gojjam. Currently he is writing a history of the province of Gojjam.
9	Mäqoya Kassa ( <i>Mälakä Şähäy</i> )	85	18/01/2002	Däbrä Marqos	Head of Däbrä Marqos Church.
10	Nebrätu Ewnätu ( <i>Mälakä Gänät</i> )		04/11/2001	Moṭa	Head of Moṭa Giyorgis Church.
11	Menuyälät Gobäzé ( <i>Qesä Gäbäz</i> )	74	11/03/2002 12/03/2002	Yägäwära	A priest in Yägäwära Qusquam Church.
12	Täklä Haymanot Basazenäw ( <i>Mämher</i> )	87	17/12/2001 19/12/2001	Dima	A priest in Dima Giyorgis Monastery. He was a painter.
13	Ṭe'umä Qal Molla ( <i>Abba</i> )	37	28/03/2002 29/03/2002	Märṭulä Maryam	The treasurer of Märṭulä Maryam Monastery.
14	Wudu Fänta ( <i>Ato</i> )	78	12/01/2002	Däbrä Marqos	A native of Däbrä Marqos. He has a good knowledge of the history of the Church of Däbrä Marqos and the area. He has a few

					valuable historical materials.
15	Zärihun Adnaw (Mägabi)	66	31/03/2002	Däbrä Marqos	A native of Däbrä Marqos. Knows the history of the region very well.
16	Gezachäw Wäldä Sänbät (Qesä Gäbäz)	74		Märçulä Maryam	A priest in Däbrä Yaqob Church.

