

# The Refutation of Magic in the *Darsanat* of Zār'a Ya'eqob

by

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## Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

The 15th century Ethiopian Emperor Zär'a Ya'eqob (r. 1434-1468) is perhaps the most influential figure in the almost 1700 year history of the Ethiopian Church. One would be hard-pressed to name an individual who can match the amount of reforms, innovations, and persecutions brought about by him, the corpus of writings attributed to him, and the many acts and miracles associated with his life. Indeed, almost every aspect of modern practice in the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church has in some way been touched by the Emperor's influence, from the ecclesiastical calendar to canon law to ritual practice. Zär'a Ya'eqob is often known for his involvement in the theological controversies that were prominent during his reign, the instigators of which often elicited his ire, but no group of individuals were more feared or hated by the Emperor than magicians.

Many of the works attributed to Zär'a Ya'eqob, including the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət* (*Epistle of Humanity*), the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* (*Book of Light*), and the *Mäṣḥafä Miläd* (*Book of the Nativity*), contain rebukes of magicians of different sorts, from diviners to sorcerers or charmers to demoniac soothsayers. In order to argue convincingly against these practices, Zär'a Ya'eqob based his authority on texts from the Old and New Testaments and pseudo-Apostolic texts, adapting the motifs and arguments to suit his purposes, ultimately depicting practitioners of magic as wicked individuals, condemned by the Apostles, idolatrous, and destined for destruction. This use of sources and of portrayal formed a key part of the Emperor's efforts to root out magic in his Empire and an analysis of these efforts offers useful insights into medieval Ethiopian spirituality and religion, homiletics, theology, ecclesiastical politics, and even state politics.

## Acknowledgements

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I am also thankful to *Mämähər* Daniel Seifemichael Feleke of the Office of the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church, who graciously endured my incessant questions, and the always welcoming and helpful clergy and people of Däbrä Gännät Qəddəst Maryam Eritrean Orthodox Täwähädo Church (Kitchener, ON) and Mənbarä Bərhan Qəddəst Maryam Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church (Toronto, ON).

Lastly, I am thankful to those people, many of whom I do not know their names, who, although they did not know me, were overwhelmingly hospitable and informative while I was conducting research in 'Aksum, Lalibäla, 'Addis 'Abäba, and Gəšan Maryam. The Habesha people are a shining example of true ζενία and I will always have fond memories of the times I have spent with them, both within Ethiopia and in the diaspora.

## Table of Contents

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
<i>System of Transliteration</i>	vi
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	vii
<b>1. Introduction</b>	1
1.1. The Reign of Emperor Zär'a Ya'eqob (1434-1468)	3
1.2. Works Attributed to Zär'a Ya'eqob	9
1.3. Magic in the Time of Zär'a Ya'eqob	16
<b>2. The Rhetorical Strategy of Zär'a Ya'eqob in His <i>Dərsanat</i></b>	21
2.1. Rhetorical Use of Portrayal	21
2.2. Rhetorical Use of Scriptural Authority	29
<b>3. Use of Old Testament Sources</b>	33
<b>4. Use of New Testament Sources</b>	41
<b>5. Use of Pseudo-Apostolic Sources</b>	44
5.1 Introduction to Ethiopian Pseudo-Apostolic Texts	44
5.2 Importance of Pseudo-Apostolic Texts for Zär'a Ya'eqob's Polemic	47
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	51
<i>Bibliography</i>	53
<i>Glossary</i>	60

## System of Transliteration

This thesis adheres to the following system of transliteration, as recommended by the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. Quotations containing transliterations that follow alternate systems have been normalized to this system for consistency, but the titles of cited secondary books and articles have been retained. Ethiopic text in footnotes has not been transliterated.

### Consonants

<b>ሀ</b>	<b>ለ</b>	<b>ሐ</b>	<b>መ</b>	<b>ሠ</b>	<b>ረ</b>	<b>ሰ</b>	<b>ቀ</b>	<b>በ</b>
H h	L l	Ḥ ḥ	M m	Ś ś	R r	S s	Q q	B b
<b>ተ</b>	<b>ኀ</b>	<b>ነ</b>	<b>ከ</b>	<b>ኸ</b>	<b>ወ</b>	<b>ዐ</b>	<b>ዘ</b>	<b>የ</b>
T t	Ḥ ḥ	N n	ḥ	K k	W w	‘	Z z	Y y
<b>ደ</b>	<b>ገ</b>	<b>ጠ</b>	<b>ጸ</b>	<b>ጸ</b>	<b>ፀ</b>	<b>ፈ</b>	<b>ፐ</b>	
D d	G g	ፐ ፐ	ፆ ፆ	ፆ ፆ	ፆ ፆ	F f	P p	

### Labiovelars

<b>ቂ</b>	<b>ኀ</b>	<b>ኸ</b>	<b>ገ</b>
Q <sup>w</sup> q <sup>w</sup>	Ḥ <sup>w</sup> ḥ <sup>w</sup>	K <sup>w</sup> k <sup>w</sup>	G <sup>w</sup> g <sup>w</sup>

### Vowels

<b>አ</b>	<b>ሁ</b>	<b>ኢ</b>	<b>ኣ</b>	<b>ኤ</b>	<b>እ</b>	<b>ኦ</b>
Ä ä	U u	I i	A a	E e	Ἐ Ἐ	O o

The only non-Gə‘əz consonant to occur in this thesis is ḥ, which has been transliterated with Š/š, as recommended by the editors of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*.

Note that it is very common in Ethiopic manuscripts to see confusion between certain consonants that became homophonous over time due to the influence of vernacular languages. This confusion is generally observed with the letters ሀ/ሐ/ኀ, ሠ/ሰ, ከ/ዐ, and, less commonly, ጸ/ፀ and ጸ/ፐ. For example, one can find ሠራዲ : (*səray*) misspelled as ሰራዲ : (*səray*), with both spellings sometimes occurring in the same manuscript. Note also that, for the phonemes ሀ, ሐ, ኀ, ከ, and ዐ, the phonetic value of /ä/ is rather /a/, thus መጽሐፍ : is rendered as mäṣḥaf, not mäṣḥaf.

## List of Abbreviations

- CSCO** *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.*
- Didasqalya** *Harden, J. M. The Ethiopic Didascalia. New York: Macmillan, 1920.*
- EAe** Siegbert Uhlig, et al. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, Vol. 1: A-C.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003.  
 Siegbert Uhlig, et al. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, Vol. 2: D-Ha.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005.  
 Siegbert Uhlig, et al. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, Vol. 3: He-N.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007.  
 Siegbert Uhlig and Alessandro Bausi, et al. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, Vol. 4: O-X.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010.  
 Siegbert Uhlig and Alessandro Bausi, et al. (eds.). *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica, Vol. 5: Y-Z Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index.* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014.
- Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction**
- Textus* (Tx.) Getatchew Haile. *The Homily of Zär'a Yā'əqob's Mäṣḥafä Bərhan on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction.* Louvain: Peeters, 2013 (CSCO 653).
- Versio* (Vs.) Getatchew Haile. *The Homily of Zär'a Yā'əqob's Mäṣḥafä Bərhan on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction.* Louvain: Peeters, 2013 (CSCO 654).
- Mäṣḥafä Bərhan I**
- Textus* (Tx.) Conti Rossini, Carlo and Ricci, Lanfranco. *Il Libro della Luce del negus Zär'a Yā'əqob (Maṣḥafa Berhān).* Louvain: Peeters, 1964 (CSCO 250).
- Versio* (Vs.) Conti Rossini, Carlo and Ricci, Lanfranco. *Il Libro della Luce del negus Zär'a Yā'əqob (Maṣḥafa Berhān).* Louvain: Peeters, 1965 (CSCO 251).
- Ephraim Ephraim Isaac. *A New Text-Critical Introduction to Maṣḥafa Berhān.* Leiden: Brill, 1973.
- Mäṣḥafä Bərhan II**
- Textus* (Tx.) Conti Rossini, Carlo and Ricci, Lanfranco. *Il Libro della Luce del negus Zär'a Yā'əqob (Maṣḥafa Berhān) II.* Louvain: Peeters, 1965 (CSCO 261).
- Versio* (Vs.) Conti Rossini, Carlo and Ricci, Lanfranco. *Il Libro della Luce del negus Zär'a Yā'əqob (Maṣḥafa Berhān) II.* Louvain: Peeters, 1965 (CSCO 262).
- Mäṣḥafä Kidan** Beylot, Robert. *Testamentum Domini éthiopiens.* Louvain: Peeters, 1984.
- Mäṣḥafä Milad I**
- Textus* (Tx.) Wendt, Kurt. *Das Maṣḥafa Milād (Liber Nativitatis) und Maṣḥafa Sellāsē (Liber Trinitatis) des Kaisers Zär'a Yā'əqob.* Louvain: Peeters, 1962 (CSCO 221).

## ABBREVIATIONS

*Versio* (Vs.) Wendt, Kurt. *Das Maṣḥafa Milād (Liber Nativitatis) und Maṣḥafa Sellāsē (Liber Trinitatis) des Kaisers Zār'a Yā'qob*. Louvain: Peeters, 1962 (CSCO 222).

### ***Maṣḥafä Milad II***

*Textus* (Tx.) Wendt, Kurt. *Das Maṣḥafa Milād (Liber Nativitatis) und Maṣḥafa Sellāsē (Liber Trinitatis) des Kaisers Zār'a Yā'qob II*. Louvain: Peeters, 1963 (CSCO 235).

*Versio* (Vs.) Wendt, Kurt. *Das Maṣḥafa Milād (Liber Nativitatis) und Maṣḥafa Sellāsē (Liber Trinitatis) des Kaisers Zār'a Yā'qob II*. Louvain: Peeters, 1963 (CSCO 236).

### ***Royal Chronicle***

*Textus* (Tx.) Perruchon, Jules. *Les Chroniques de Zār'a Yā'eqôb et de Ba'eda Māryām, rois d'Éthiopie de 1434 à 1478*. Paris: Librairie Émile Bouillon, 1893.  
(with French *versio*)

Haber Haber, Louis. "The Chronicle of the Emperor Zara Yaqob (1434-1468)." In *Ethiopia Observer* 5 (2), 1961: 152-169.

### ***Sinodos***

*Textus* (Tx.) Bausi, Alessandro. *Il Sēnodos Etiopico*. Louvain: Peeters, 1995 (CSCO 552).

*Versio* (Vs.) Bausi, Alessandro. *Il Sēnodos Etiopico*. Louvain: Peeters, 1995 (CSCO 553).

### ***Ṭomarä Täsḅ'ät***

*Textus* (Tx.) Getatchew Haile. *The Epistle of Humanity of Emperor Zār'a Yā'qob (Ṭomarä Täsḅ'ät)*. Louvain: Peeters, 1991 (CSCO 522).

*Versio* (Vs.) Getatchew Haile. *The Epistle of Humanity of Emperor Zār'a Yā'qob (Ṭomarä Täsḅ'ät)*. Louvain: Peeters, 1991 (CSCO 523).

## Introduction

The rich religious tradition of Ethiopia, with its long history, unique development, and abundance of texts, presents a range of practices ranging from Christian rites to Semitic pagan rituals, with a sizeable class of “magico-religious” prayers and rituals bridging the gap between the opposing traditions. Few figures loom larger in Ethiopian religious history than the zealous Christian Emperor Zär’a Ya‘əqob (1399-1468). Remembered for the large corpus of lectionaries, treatises, and prayers attributed to him, his many significant, lasting religious reforms, and his severely repressive policies and persecutions, his role in working to suppress magical practices within Ethiopia is often highlighted in accounts of his reign, both contemporary and modern. Praised in the *Māṣḥafā Sənkəsar* (*Book of the Synaxarion*) as “orthodox and apostolic,”<sup>1</sup> the royal chronicle relates how “great terror and great fear” were spread throughout the entire country because of “the severity of his justice and his authoritarian rule,” directed largely against those who “confessed that they had worshipped *Däsk* and the Devil” (i.e., those who were accused of practicing magic).<sup>2</sup> The corpus of writings attributed to Zär’a Ya‘əqob affords an excellent opportunity to analyze several aspects of Ethiopian religion and society, including theology, homiletics, ecclesiastical structures, political and religious authority, popular devotion, and religious development. Given the Emperor’s great hatred and fear of practitioners of magic, his efforts to refute the practice of magic through his *dərsanat* using various rhetorical techniques, especially his use of the

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<sup>1</sup> Ignazio Guidi et al., *Le synaxaire éthiopien: les mois de Sanê, Hamlê, Nahasê, et Pâguemên III: mois de Nahasê et de Pâguemên* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1913), p. 454.

<sup>2</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. p. 4 = Haber p. 152.

This is described in the first recension of the royal chronicle. The more favourable second recension (copied together with the first) relates how “a great peace and great tranquility” were spread throughout the entire country “because the king taught justice and faith,” on account of which “he may be counted among the prophets and apostles.” (*Royal Chronicle*, Tx. p. 80 = Haber p. 163). On the reediting of the royal chronicles, see Manfred Kropp, “La réédition des chroniques éthiopiennes: perspectives et premiers résultats,” *Abbay* 12 (1983-84): pp. 49-73.

authority of the Christian Scriptures and pseudo-Apostolic texts, are particularly deserving of research.

Manuscript cataloguer Getatchew Haile has published extensively on Zär'a Ya'eqob, publishing editions and translations of some of the Emperor's works (*The Epistle of Humanity of Emperor Zär'a Ya'eqob (Ṭomarä Täsḅ ʾät)*, *The Homily of Zär'a Ya'eqob's Mäṣḥafä Bərhan on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, a collection of Marian texts (*The Mariology of Emperor Zär'a Ya'eqob of Ethiopia*)) and contemporary sources (including many Stephanite sources) with helpful introductions. He has also published some articles on the theological controversies during the Emperor's reign ("The Cause of the 'Eṣṭifanosites: A Fundamentalist Sect in the Church of Ethiopia," "The Forty-Nine Hour Sabbath of the Ethiopian Church"), but has not published any material directly related to the practice of magic in Ethiopia, with the exception of his edition (and *Preliminary Investigation*) of the *Ṭomarä Täsḅ ʾät*. Pierluigi Piovanelli has also written about the theological controversies ("Les controverses théologiques sous le roi Zar'a Yāqob (1434-1468) et la mise en place du monophysisme éthiopien," "Connaissance de dieu et sagesse humaine en éthiopie: Le traité *Explication de la Divinité* attribué aux hérétiques «mikaélites»"). Marie-Laure Derat, in addition to some articles on the Emperor's reign ("Do Not Search for Another King, One Whom God Has Not Given You': Questions on the Elevation of Zär'a Ya'eqob"), has published a valuable article on Zär'a Ya'eqob's royal homilies ("Les homélies du roi Zar'a Ya'eqob: La communication d'un souverain éthiopien du XVe Siècle"), although this is primarily focused on the composition and copying of his homilies rather than the rhetoric he uses in the homilies. The contributions of Steven Kaplan on Ethiopian religion (*The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century*, "Magic and Religion in Christian Ethiopia: Some Preliminary Remarks") are also deserving of mention. Taddesse Tamrat's foundational *Church and State In Ethiopia, 1270-1527*

is, of course, an important relevant historiographical work, as is his study of the Stephanite heresy (“Some Notes on the Fifteenth Century Stephanite «Heresy» in the Ethiopian Church”), however his works were published before the publication of several important historical sources. Lastly, but of no less significance, the critical editions of Carlo Conti Rossini and Lanfranco Ricci (*Il Libro della Luce del negus Zār’a Yā’eqob (Maṣḥafa Berhān)*), Kurt Wendt (*Das Maṣḥafa Milād (Liber Nativitatis) und Maṣḥafa Sellāsē (Liber Trinitatis) des Kaisers Zār’a Yā’eqob*), and Jules Perruchon (*Les chroniques de Zār’a Yā’eqôb et de Ba’eda Mâryâm, rois d’Éthiopie de 1434 à 1478*) are crucial works for any research pertaining to Zār’a Ya’eqob. However, neither the rhetoric of Zār’a Ya’eqob’s compositions nor the practice of magic during his reign have received significant attention in scholarship.

## 1. The Reign of Emperor Zār’a Ya’eqob (1434-1468)

Zār’a Ya’eqob was elevated to *Negusä Nägästä* (“King of Kings” — Amh. “*ʾAṣe*,” “Emperor”) in 1434, taking the regnal name Q<sup>w</sup>ästäntinos (Constantine).<sup>3</sup> The youngest son of Emperor Dawit I,<sup>4</sup> his reign was not only longer than that of his father, but also longer than the combined reigns of his brothers and nephews, whose reigns fell between his father’s and his own.<sup>5</sup> There is much confusion in the sources regarding those successions that followed the reign of Dawit I, which ended in 1412.<sup>6</sup> Even Zār’a Ya’eqob’s own succession faced challenges, as de-

<sup>3</sup> Steven Kaplan and Marie-Laure Derat, “Zār’a Ya’eqob,” in *EAE*, s.v.

His birth name, Zār’a Ya’eqob translates to “Seed of Jacob.” Although the only Zār’a Ya’eqob to have acceded to the throne, his grandson ʾEskändär (r. 1478-1494) also took the regnal name Q<sup>w</sup>ästäntinos and could thus be called Q<sup>w</sup>ästäntinos II, making Zār’a Ya’eqob Q<sup>w</sup>ästäntinos I, but the scholarly convention is to refer to both emperors by their birth names.

<sup>4</sup> Dawit I (r. 1379/80-1412) is sometimes called Dawit II by historians, but should not be confused with Ləbnä Dəngəl (r. 1508-1540), who took the regnal name Dawit and should thus be counted as Dawit II.

<sup>5</sup> Marie-Laure Derat, “‘Do Not Search For Another King, One Whom God Has Not Given You’: Questions on the Elevation of Zār’a Ya’eqob (1434-1468),” *Journal of Early Modern History* 8.3-4 (2014): p. 219.

<sup>6</sup> See Taddesse Tamrat, “Problems of Royal Succession in Fifteenth Century Ethiopia: a Presentation of the Documents,” *Atti del convegno internazionale di studi etiopici* 4 (1974), pp. 508-513.

scribed in the second *därsan* of his *Ṭomarä Täsḅät* and alluded to in other texts. The Emperor describes an attempted rebellion initiated by the *Bəḥət Wädäd* (a prominent court position), 'Isayäyyas,<sup>7</sup> and supported by 'Isayäyyas's wife, Ših Mängäśa, who may be identified as a daughter of Zär'a Ya'əqob,<sup>8</sup> and Gälawdewos "the Jew," who was probably another one of Zär'a Ya'əqob's children, perhaps even his eldest son and successor, Bä'ädä Maryam.<sup>9</sup> Zär'a Ya'əqob successfully quelled the rebellion and, in the third year of his reign, left for Aksum, being formally crowned there in 1439, presumably by the newly appointed metropolitans of Ethiopia, Mika'el and Gäbrə'el.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to his ascension to the throne at the age of 35, Zär'a Ya'əqob lived in the royal prison at 'Amba Gəśän, a location later associated with the famous church of Gəśän Maryam and a piece of the True Cross, which had been established to prevent intrigue among members of the royal family.<sup>11</sup> He is also supposed to have spent part of his youth living as a monastic in a monastery in Təgray, often identified as the monastery of Däbrä 'Abbay.<sup>12</sup> It is claimed that Zär'a Ya'əqob received an extensive theological education during his stays at Däbrä 'Abbay and 'Amba Gəśän, in some accounts from none other than the preeminent Ethiopian theologian Giy-

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<sup>7</sup> *Ṭomarä Täsḅät*, Tx. pp. 66-67 = Vs. pp. 53-54.

<sup>8</sup> Getatchew Haile, *The Epistle of Humanity of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob (Ṭomarä Täsḅät)* (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), p. xii; Derat, "Questions," pp. 220-221.

<sup>9</sup> Derat, "Questions," pp. 221-222.

<sup>10</sup> Kaplan and Derat, "Zär'a Ya'əqob," in *EAE*, s.v.; Derat, "Questions," p. 211; Haile Gabriel Dagne, "Amba Gəśän," in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>11</sup> Kaplan and Derat, "Zär'a Ya'əqob," in *EAE*, s.v.; Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270-1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 220-221, 278.

Tadesse suggests that Zär'a Ya'əqob was likely sent to the royal prison on the accession of his brother Tewodros in 1412.

<sup>12</sup> Kaplan and Derat, "Zär'a Ya'əqob," in *EAE*, s.v.; Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270-1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 221.

orgis of Gaśəṣṣā.<sup>13</sup> This education is often presumed to be part of what led him to enact his numerous religious reforms and compose the many theological treatises which have been attributed to him.

The most significant religious controversy during the reign of Zär’a Ya’əqob was that of the ’Ewoṣṣateans. ’Ewoṣṣatewos, who lived during the reign of ‘Amdä Şəyon (r. 1314-1344), was a monk who strongly supported the observance of the *Qädamit Sänbät*, the First (i.e., Hebrew) Sabbath. Although the practice was likely found in Ethiopia centuries before the monk rose to prominence, as evidenced by an 11th-century letter from Metropolitan Sawiros to Patriarch Cyril II of Alexandria, the monk had managed to gain a large following of monastic communities in support of the practice.<sup>14</sup> Before leaving for Egypt to make his case before Patriarch Benjamin, ’Ewoṣṣatewos told his followers never to associate themselves with those who did not follow their teachings, leading to a schism within the Ethiopian church.<sup>15</sup> By the time of Zär’a Ya’əqob’s ascension to the throne, the century-old *Däqiqä* (“House of”) ’Ewoṣṣatewos counted 95 monasteries and 26 convents under its influence, each of which represented several dozen resident monastics.<sup>16</sup> Dawit I had largely sought to avoid involving himself directly in the matter, instead authorizing Metropolitan Bärtälomewos to take action against the group, although he did eventually concede and issue a decree of toleration.<sup>17</sup> Zär’a Ya’əqob, however, being determined to settle the matter once and for all, presided over a council at Däbrä Məṭmaq in 1450, himself having “defi-

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<sup>13</sup> Marie-Laure Derat, “Les homélies du roi Zar’a Ya’əqob: La communication d’un souverain éthiopien du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *L’écriture publique du pouvoir*, ed. by Alain Bresson, Anne-Marie Cocula, and Christophe Pebarthe (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2005), p. 47; Tadesse, *Church and State*, p. 224.

<sup>14</sup> Getatchew Haile, “The Forty-Nine Hour Sabbath of the Ethiopian Church,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (2) (1988): pp. 233-234; Tadesse, *Church and State*, p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp. 210-212.

<sup>16</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, p. 211.

<sup>17</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp. 213-214.

nite pro-Sabbath convictions,” even though he did not actually observe it.<sup>18</sup> In spite of opposition from the Alexandrian Patriarch, the council decided in favour of observing the *Qädamit Sänbät*, and the *Däqiqä* ’Ewoṣtawos was fully reconciled to the Ethiopian Church.<sup>19</sup> This was only one of a number of steps taken by the Zär’a Ya’əqob to distance the Ethiopian Church from the Egyptian hierarchy and assert himself as the leader of Ethiopia, both politically and religiously.

Another noteworthy religious controversy in history of Ethiopian Christianity is the Stephanite heresy, which arose during the reign of Zär’a Ya’əqob. The name is taken from the leader of the heresy, the monk ’Ĕṣṭifanos. Although he had several monastic communities under his supervision, ’Ĕṣṭifanos was greatly disliked by many of the other monastic leaders in the Təgray region.<sup>20</sup> In the wake of ’Ĕṣṭifanos making public comments against the authority of the emperor in religious matters, Zär’a Ya’əqob summoned him to court, where he was flogged for his positions.<sup>21</sup> Some time later, the Emperor arranged for a meeting to take place in ’Aksum at which the clergy of Təgray would be assembled for a discussion on doctrine, to which ’Ĕṣṭifanos was brought by force.<sup>22</sup> The discussion at the meeting centred around the cult of the Virgin Mary and veneration of the Cross, and ’Ĕṣṭifanos publicly declared his opposition to both practises, in addition to rejecting the doctrine of millenarianism.<sup>23</sup> Because of his adamant position, ’Ĕṣṭi-

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<sup>18</sup> Taddesse, *Church and State*, p. 226; Kaplan and Derat, “Zär’a Ya’əqob,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>19</sup> Taddesse, *Church and State*, p. 225; Pierluigi Piovanelli, “Les controverses théologiques sous le roi Zar’a Yä’qob (1434-1468) et la mise en place du monophysisme éthiopien,” in *La controverse religieuse et ses formes*, ed. by Alain Le Boulluec (Paris: Cerf, 1995), p. 217.

<sup>20</sup> Taddesse Tamrat, “Some Notes on the Fifteenth Century Stephanite «Heresy» in the Ethiopian Church,” *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 22 (1966), pp. 108-109.

<sup>21</sup> Taddesse, “Some Notes,” p. 110.

<sup>22</sup> Taddesse, “Some Notes,” p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> Steven Kaplan, “Stephanites,” in *EAE*, s.v.; Pierluigi Piovanelli, “Les controverses,” p. 209; Getatchew Haile, “The Cause of the ’Ĕṣṭifanosites: A Fundamentalist Sect in the Church of Ethiopia,” *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 29 (1983), pp. 108-109.

fanos and several of his followers who were present with him were exiled, with ᾿Ἐστίφανος himself dying during his exile.<sup>24</sup> The remaining Stephanites assembled in the ᾿Agamä province, the location of what became their primary monastery, Gundä Gunde, where they were supported by the local population and the governor of the province.<sup>25</sup> Although they had been excommunicated, the Stephanites did not seek to separate themselves from the Ethiopian Church, instead participating with their persecutors in disguise.<sup>26</sup> As Getatchew Haile notes, the Stephanites were a great problem for Zär’a Ya’əqob, about whom he says, “He dreaded the challenge to his authority and the eventual schism in the Church, which he had united with an iron fist.”<sup>27</sup> The Stephanites faced widespread and harsh persecution, having been publicly branded as heretics, an opinion which persisted even after one of the most prominent Stephanite leaders prostrated himself before an icon of Mary in the hopes that the excommunication would be lifted.<sup>28</sup> The heresy persisted after Zär’a Ya’əqob’s death, especially around Gundä Gunde, although the Stephanites were gradually reincorporated into the Ethiopian Church.<sup>29</sup> Tadesse Tamrat questioned the validity of the accusation of heresy that was brought against the Stephanites, stating, “if ᾿Ἐστίφανος was paraded as a leader of a ‘heresy,’ it was largely due to the historical accident that he lived in the reign of Zär’a Ya’əqob, an Ethiopian priest-king of the first order.”<sup>30</sup> As Getatchew demonstrates, the doctrinal disagreements between the Stephanites and the Emperor were muddled

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<sup>24</sup> Tadesse, “Some Notes,” p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> Tadesse, “Some Notes,” pp. 112-113.

<sup>26</sup> Tadesse, “Some Notes,” p. 113.

<sup>27</sup> Getatchew, “The Cause of the ᾿Ἐστίφανosites,” pp. 105-106.

<sup>28</sup> Tadesse, “Some Notes,” pp. 113-115; Getatchew, “The Cause of the ᾿Ἐστίφανosites,” p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> Tadesse, “Some Notes,” p. 115.

<sup>30</sup> Tadesse, “Some Notes,” p. 115.

and, until the widespread persecution of Stephanites, the status of the Stephanites varied at different times and in different locations.<sup>31</sup>

The heresy of the priest Zāmika’el also received attention from Zār’a Ya’əqob. Unlike ’E-wostatewos and ’Ēstifanos, Zāmika’el was not the leader of a united group of followers but instead served as a figurehead for Zār’a Ya’əqob’s refutation of the doctrines ascribed to him and others.<sup>32</sup> The doctrine most associated with Zāmika’el concerns the personhood of the Trinity. While Zār’a Ya’əqob believed the Trinity to be analogous to three aligned suns, Zāmika’el believed the Trinity to be analogous to one sun which is round, bright, and hot.<sup>33</sup> This doctrine, seen as being anti-Trinitarian, led to its proponents being labelled as Jews.<sup>34</sup> Zāmika’el is also supposed to have taught, also in opposition to the beliefs of Zār’a Ya’əqob, that the image of God is unlike that of men, that the doctrine of millenarianism is incorrect,<sup>35</sup> that the Virgin Mary was undeserving of veneration, and that several books in the Ethiopian canon ought to be rejected.<sup>36</sup> The doctrines of Zāmika’el were refuted in Zār’a Ya’əqob’s *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* and *Mäṣḥafä Miläd* (and *Mäṣḥafä Šəllase* — see below).<sup>37</sup> The other theologians prominently associated with the same

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<sup>31</sup> Getatchew, “The Cause of the Ēstifanosites,” pp. 95-104.

<sup>32</sup> Getatchew Haile, “Zāmika’elites,” in *EAE*, s. v.

<sup>33</sup> Getatchew, “Zāmika’elites,” in *EAE*, s. v.

Cf. Boethius, *De Trinitate*, which uses similar analogies.

<sup>34</sup> Getatchew, “Zāmika’elites,” in *EAE*, s. v.; Ephraim Isaac, *A New Text-Critical Introduction to Maṣḥafa Berhān* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 54-59.

<sup>35</sup> The anti-millenarian doctrine attributed to Zāmika’el is usually described as “There is no (banquet on) Mount Sion” (Getatchew Haile, *Epistle of Humanity*, p. 4, n. 10). The Stephanites were also accused of this belief.

<sup>36</sup> Getatchew, “Zāmika’elites,” in *EAE*, s. v.; Piovanelli, “Les controverses,” pp. 197-198.

<sup>37</sup> Getatchew, “Zāmika’elites,” in *EAE*, s. v.; Ephraim, *Text-Critical Introduction*, pp. 54-59.

or similar doctrines are named ‘Aṣqa and Gämalyal.<sup>38</sup> As Pierluigi Piovanelli argues, the doctrines defended by Zär’a Ya‘əqob represent long-held traditions likely observed since the spread of Christianity during the Aksumite period, while the Emperor’s opponents are often advocating for doctrines that were considered orthodox by the Coptic and other churches.<sup>39</sup>

In the year 1454, the Emperor, who, like most of his predecessors, had a nomadic capital, established a fixed capital at Däbrä Bərhan (The Mountain of Light) following a miraculous vision. Thirty-eight days after a group of Stephanites was stoned, the royal chronicle reports that a cross of light appeared in the sky,<sup>40</sup> echoing that which appeared to Constantine the Great at the Milvian Bridge. Zär’a Ya‘əqob spent twelve of the last fourteen years of his life in Däbrä Bərhan, dying in 1468.<sup>41</sup> He was succeeded by his eldest son, Bä’ädä Maryam.

## 2. Works Attributed to Zär’a Ya‘əqob

The royal chronicle notes that Zär’a Ya‘əqob “recorded his instructions [concerning religious practice] in his holy books, which are titled: *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾät*, and *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan*, and *Mäṣḥafä Miläd*, and *Kəhdäta Säyṭan*, and *Mäṣḥafä Bahṛəy*, and *Tä‘uqəbo Məstir*, and *’Əgzi’abəher Nägsä*.”<sup>42</sup> These seven texts, universally attributed to the Emperor, are the most important works for understanding his religious policies and have left a lasting impression upon the theology of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

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<sup>38</sup> Getatchew, “Zämika’elites,” in *EAE*, s. v.; Piovanelli, “Les controverses,” pp. 197-198.

Each *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾät* begins with a story recounting how a certain Gämalyal told a deacon that he ought to have a book of magic copied onto his blank parchment instead of the *Tä’ammärä Maryam* ([Collection of] Miracle[s] of Mary). This story follows shortly after a rebuke of Zämika’el.

<sup>39</sup> Pierluigi Piovanelli, “Connaissance de Dieu et sagesse humaine en Éthiopie: Le traité *Explication de la Divinité* attribué aux hérétiques «mikaélites»,” *Le Muséon* 117 (2004), pp. 223-225.

<sup>40</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. pp. 69-71 = Haber pp. 162-163.

<sup>41</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. pp. 78-79 = Haber pp. 162-163.

<sup>42</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. pp. 76-78 = Haber p. 163.

The *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət* (*Epistle on the Incarnation*)<sup>43</sup> is a homiliary of three *dərsanat*, each dedicated to several of the apostles and to be read on their respective feast days. The purpose of the homiliary was, according to the text itself, to instruct the people in “the worship of God with a heart pure from the filth of the idol of this world, who is the *ṭānq ʾali*.”<sup>44</sup> According to a colophon in the only extant copy of the text, MS EMMML 1480, the Emperor, “being zealous for the proper faith,” composed the homilies in order to “abolish from the land of his kingdom all kinds of perversions.”<sup>45</sup> The text, which is entirely focused on the refutation of magicians, claims that its composition began within two months of the Emperor’s ascension and, given that it is referenced in the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* and the *Mäṣḥafä Milād* but does not reference these texts, and that it refers to fewer types of magical practices than the other texts, and that it is listed first in the royal chronicle, it is likely, as Getatchew Haile claims, that it was indeed composed before the Emperor’s other works.<sup>46</sup> As Marie-Laure Derat notes, due to some of the events described in the text, it could not have been completed before 1445.<sup>47</sup> Throughout the three *dərsanat*, all of which have a similar style, a common refrain, “Glory be to God Who created us to worship Him,” is found.<sup>48</sup> The text, which was almost entirely lost, was identified by Getatchew Haile from the only known extant manuscript, photographed in an Eritrean monastery in 1980, a manuscript which he considers to be contemporary with the Emperor’s reign and possibly copied at his own court,<sup>49</sup> and

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<sup>43</sup> Commonly referred to as the *Epistle of Humanity*, following the title of Getatchew Haile’s critical edition.

<sup>44</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 113= Vs. pp. 89-90.

<sup>45</sup> Getatchew Haile, “A Preliminary Investigation of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət* of Emperor Zär’a Ya’əqob of Ethiopia,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43 (2) (1980), pp. 211-212.

<sup>46</sup> Getatchew, *The Epistle of Humanity*, p. ix.

<sup>47</sup> Derat, “Questions,” p. 214.

<sup>48</sup> Getatchew, *The Epistle of Humanity*, p. viii.

<sup>49</sup> Getatchew, “Preliminary Investigation,” pp. 210-211.

published a critical edition and translation of the text in 1991. Consequently, a large portion of the scholarship surrounding Zär'a Ya'əqob and Ethiopian magic, having been written before then, is unaware of its contents.

The *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* (*Book of Light*) is a homiliary in six books comprised of fifteen *dərsanat* that are designated to be read on Saturdays, Sundays, and the days of Passion Week.<sup>50</sup> The text contains *dərsanat* devoted to the observance of the *Qädamit Sänbät*, the refutation of heresy and magic, church attendance and teaching, and the conduct of clergy.<sup>51</sup> Ephraim Isaac argued in his *Text-Critical Introduction* that the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* predated Zär'a Ya'əqob, having been composed by a “Jewish Christian,” “Sabbath-venerating community,” and was edited to suit the Emperor’s purpose.<sup>52</sup> Other scholars do not seem to take up this argument and generally consider the work to have actually been composed by or at the behest of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob and either make no discussion of the origins of the text or seemingly contradict Ephraim’s assertions. Getatchew Haile published in 2013 a critical edition and translation of a *dərsan*, which he titled *The Homily of Zär'a Ya'əqob's Mäṣḥafä Bərhan on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, that, while left out of Conti Rossini’s critical edition of the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan*, is found in manuscripts together with the first two books of the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* (although, strangely, not the last four). He argues it is a part of the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan*, or at least a *dərsan* that can without doubt be attributed to Zär'a Ya'əqob.<sup>53</sup> Like the rest of the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan*, the *dərsan* focuses on the conduct of clergy, church attendance, and the practice of magic.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ephraim, *Text-Critical Introduction*, p. 5; Getatchew Haile, “Bərhan: Mäṣḥafä bərhan,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>51</sup> Ephraim, *Text-Critical Introduction*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>52</sup> Ephraim, *Text-Critical Introduction*, pp. 23-24, 27-28, 53.

<sup>53</sup> Getatchew Haile, *The Homily of Zär'a Ya'əqob's Mäṣḥafä Bərhan on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction* (Louvain: Peeters, 2013), pp. vii-viii, xii.

<sup>54</sup> Getatchew, *The Homily of Zär'a Ya'əqob's Mäṣḥafä Bərhan*, p. xii.

The *Mäṣḥafä Miläd* (*Book of the Nativity*) is a homiliary for the monthly feast commemorating the Nativity of Christ, celebrated on the 29th day of the month (although some months also have a *darsan* for the 28th, since in leap years the annual feast falls on 28 Taḥśaś instead of 29 Taḥśaś).<sup>55</sup> The text serves as a treatise on the theology of the incarnation of Christ and a polemic against “Jews” (perhaps the Zämika’elites) and Stephanites.<sup>56</sup> The *darsan* for each month, with the exception of Mäskäräm, ends with a treatise on Trinitarian theology, collectively referred to as the *Mäṣḥafä Šəllase* (*Book of the Trinity*) or *Hoḥətä Šähay* (*Gate of the Sun*), which also contains polemical elements.<sup>57</sup>

The *Kəhdäta Säyṭan* (*Abjuration of Satan*) is a short creedal prayer recited everyday by Ethiopian Orthodox Christians as part of the daily prayers and is always the first prayer of every service.<sup>58</sup> The full text of the prayer is:

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God.

Believing and taking refuge in the Holy Trinity, I abjure you, Satan, before this my Mother, the Holy Church, which is my witness, Mary Sion, unto ages of ages.<sup>59</sup>

According to the royal chronicle, Zär’a Ya’eqob ordered priests to “ceaselessly sprinkle with holy water, from dusk to dawn, the palace of the King, [reciting] the Gospels, the Psalms of David, the *Kəhdota Säyṭan* [sic], and the hymn ‘*Əgzi’abḥer Nägśä*” for protection from magicians who

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<sup>55</sup> Getatchew, “Milad: Mäṣḥafä milad,” in *E Ae*, s.v.

<sup>56</sup> Getatchew, “Milad: Mäṣḥafä milad,” in *E Ae*, s.v.

<sup>57</sup> Tedros Abraha, “Šəllase: Mäṣḥafä šəllase,” in *E Ae*, s.v.; Getatchew, “Milad: Mäṣḥafä milad,” in *E Ae*, s.v.

<sup>58</sup> Emmanuel Fritsch, “Turning Everyday to Aksum Šeyon Unaware: King Zar’a Yä’eqob’s *Kəhdota Säyṭan* identified in the first prayer of the day,” *Annales d’Éthiopie* 28 (2013), p. 363.

<sup>59</sup> Fritsch, “*Kəhdota Säyṭan* identified,” p. 363.

wished to harm him.<sup>60</sup> The text of the prayer is found at the beginning of each book of the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* and of each *dərsan* in the *Mäṣḥafä Miläd*.<sup>61</sup> While Getatchew Haile “suspect[ed] that ... the [prayer was] composed at [Zär’a Ya’əqob’s] court as a prayer against evil spirits,”<sup>62</sup> Emmanuel Fritsch confidently identified the prayer as the *Kəḥdäta Säyṭan* of Zär’a Ya’əqob, the identification of which scholars had previously been uncertain.<sup>63</sup>

Several lesser works are also attributed to Zär’a Ya’əqob. The *Mäṣḥafä Bahṙəy* (*Book of the Pearl*) is a rite of unction for the sick,<sup>64</sup> the *Tä’əqəbo Məṣṭir* (*Care of the Mystery*) is a treatise for priests concerning the careful handling of the Eucharistic elements,<sup>65</sup> and *’Əgzi’abḥer Nägsä* (*God Reigns*) is a hymnal containing hymns that, as one might expect, concern role of the Virgin Mary, the glory of the Sabbath, and Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>66</sup> Other texts besides those listed in the royal chronicle are commonly attributed to Zär’a Ya’əqob, including the *Ra’əyä Tə’ammər* (*Revelation of the Miracle[s] [of Mary]*), a collection of four readings to be read before reading the *Tə’ammərä*

<sup>60</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. p. 40 = Haber p. 159.

<sup>61</sup> Fritsch, “*Kehedata Sayṭān* identified,” p. 366.

<sup>62</sup> Getatchew Haile, “Introduction to the Scrolls of Ethiopian Spiritual Healing,” in *Catalogue of the Ethiopian Manuscript Imaging Project: Volume 2, Codices 106-200 and Magic Scrolls 135-284* ed. by Veronika Six, Steve Delamarter, Getatchew Haile, Terefe Melaku, and Jeremy R. Brown (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 2009), p. xlvii.

<sup>63</sup> Fritsch, “*Kehedata Sayṭān* identified,” p. 368.

<sup>64</sup> Getatchew Haile, “Bahṙəy: Mäṣḥafä bahṙəy,” *EAE*, s.v.

ባሕርይ : (“pearl”) can also be translated as “essence.”

<sup>65</sup> Anaïs Wion, “Tä’əqəbo Məṣṭir,” in *EAE*, s.v.

See Carlo Conti Rossini, “Il libro di re Zar’a Yā’qob sulla custodia del mistero,” in *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 3 (2) (1943), pp. 148-166.

<sup>66</sup> Habtemichael Kidane and Maija Priess, “’Əgzi’abḥer Nägsä,” in *EAE*, s.v.; Jules Perruchon, *Les chroniques de Zär’a Yā’əqəb et de Ba’eda Māryām, rois d’Éthiopie de 1434 à 1478* (Paris: Librairie Émile Bouillon, 1893), p. 78, n. 4.

There is another collection of hymns bearing the same name attributed to Abba Giyorgis of Gaṣəčča and a third collection based on a hymnal composed by a certain ‘Arke. The title is based on the opening lines of Ps. 92 (LXX).

Perruchon notes that the text “renferme des salams ou pièces de vers en l’honneur des saints.” Presumably he is referring to the class of hymns called “መልክክ ፡;” which are composed in honour of saints, praising their sanctity through descriptions of their likeness (the literal meaning of the term), and which consist of verses that begin with the words “ሰላም ፡ ለኪ ፡;” (hence “des salams”).

*Maryam* ([Collection of] *Miracle[s] of Mary*),<sup>67</sup> the *Səbḥatä Fəqur* (*Praise of the Beloved*), a collection of hymns that “is considered to form a unity with the office of the *Sä‘atat* (*Horologion*),”<sup>68</sup> the *Mäṣḥafä Tēfut* (Amh. *Book of Teff Grains*), a book recounting how the Emperor brought a piece of the True Cross to ‘Amba Gəšän,<sup>69</sup> the *Dərsanä Mäla ʾkt* (*Readings on the Angels*), and a handful of individual *dərsanat* and other works.<sup>70</sup>

It is known that Zär’a Ya‘əqob patronized a royal scriptorium for copying his *dərsanat* and other royal texts, but it is unclear to what extent the scriptorium and court clerics were involved in the composition of the texts attributed to him.<sup>71</sup> As Marie-Laure Derat notes, it is possible that the Emperor “recevait l’assistance de membres du haut clergé, susceptibles de lui fournir le matériel théologique nécessaire à la construction de ses textes.”<sup>72</sup> The last homily of the *Tomarä Təsb ʾt*, written from the perspective of the copyist, describes its composition thus:

He [Zär’a Ya‘əqob] threaded pearls on the string of the pure faith. He extracted perfume and poured (it) into the bottle of the mind of man. He took great pains, cared exceeding-

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<sup>67</sup> Getatchew Haile, *The Mariology of Mary of Emperor Zär’a Ya‘əqob of Ethiopia* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1992), p. 67.

Zär’a Ya‘əqob and his father, Dawit I, are especially associated with the *Tä’ammərä Maryam*, as the text was first translated from Arabic into Gə‘əz during the latter’s reign, while the importance of the cult to Mary was greatly expanded during the former’s. The text is noteworthy for having been originally composed in Latin and Old French. The *Ra’yyä Tä’ammər* was edited and published in Getatchew, *Mariology*, pp. 63-145. On the *Tä’ammərä Maryam*, see Ewa Balicka-Witakowska and Alessandro Bausi, “Tä’ammərä Maryam,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>68</sup> Habtemichael Kidane, “Səbḥatä Fəqur,” in *EAE*, s.v.

Habtemichael notes in the *EAE*, “Tradition ascribes the composition of the S.f., or at least of its Marian parts, to the 15th-cent. Emperor Zär’a Ya‘əqob.”

<sup>69</sup> Haile Gabriel Dagne, “Amba Gəšän,” in *EAE*, s.v.

See André Caquot, “Aperçu préliminaire sur le Maṣḥafa Tēfut de Gechen Amba,” *Annales d’Éthiopie* 1 (1955), pp. 89-108.

<sup>70</sup> Kaplan and Derat, “Zär’a Ya‘əqob,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>71</sup> Derat, “Les homélies,” p. 46; Kaplan and Derat, “Zär’a Ya‘əqob,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>72</sup> Derat, “Les homélies,” p. 48.

Getatchew Haile also suggests this (Getatchew, *Mariology*, p. 67).

ly and was solicitous that God alone be worshipped and all (other) worshippings and the idol of this world cease. I am a witness before the dread God that I heard him as he said, “How much I desire that Ethiopia stand firm in the worship of God...”<sup>73</sup>

This can be seen in other works attributed to the Emperor.<sup>74</sup> In the letter of metropolitans Mika’el and Gäbrä’el concerning the observance of the *Qädamit Sänbät*, he is called “the horn of our salvation, the learned Zär’a Ya’əqob, treasure house of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,” again reinforcing the claim that Zär’a Ya’əqob composed the works himself.<sup>75</sup> It is clear that Zär’a Ya’əqob’s works played a critical role in his imperial policy, which has been best described by Taddesse Tamrat in the conclusion to his monumental *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270-1527*:

King Zär’a Ya’əqob stands out as the only monarch who made a serious attempt to grapple with the overriding problem of creating a nation out of the manifold communities which constituted his extensive empire. In doing this, however, he sought to superimpose a religious nationalism on his subjects, and his efforts ended in a substantial failure.<sup>76</sup>

While his attempts at unity may not have been lasting, his extensive theological contributions can be seen in almost every aspect of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, even in the modern day, and this fact alone attests to the significance of his works.

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<sup>73</sup> *Tomarä Təsb ät*, Tx. p. 113 = Vs. p. 90.

<sup>74</sup> Getatchew, *The Epistle of Humanity*, p. ix.

<sup>75</sup> Getatchew Haile, “The Letter of Archbishops Mika’el and Gäbrä’el Concerning the Observance of Saturday.” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 26 (1) (1981), pp. 76-77.

<sup>76</sup> Taddesse, *Church and State*, p. 302.

### 3. Magic in the Time of Zär'a Ya'eqob

Part of the difficulty in analyzing the writings of Zär'a Ya'eqob and his contemporaries with regards to the practice of magic is the terminology. As noted by Tadesse Tamrat, “the precise meaning of [the] terms frequently used by Zär'a Ya'eqob in his writings and in the hagiographies of his period [to refer to magicians] is still uncertain.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the Emperor does use a variety of terms to refer to practitioners of magic, including *ṭānqʷali*, *mäsarray*, *marī*, and *räʷayi*, among others,<sup>78</sup> and also refers to various demon cults.

Before assessing Zär'a Ya'eqob's refutation of the practice of magic, it is important first to establish what practices he is referring to. The most frequent term employed by the Emperor to refer to magicians is *ṭānqʷaləyan*, a term whose roots are elusive.<sup>79</sup> Lexicographer August Dillmann defines *ṭānqʷali* in his *Lexicon* as, “*hariolus, fatiloquus, divinator*,”<sup>80</sup> while Wolf Leslau, in both of his dictionaries, simply defines the term as, “soothsayer, diviner.”<sup>81</sup> In the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʷt*, it does not seem that the term occurs in any quotations and very rarely occurs in a form other than the agentive noun *ṭānqʷali* (such as the verb *ṭānqʷälä*). The Emperor does not indicate that *ṭānqʷaləyan* performed spells or wicked deeds and only associates them with divination. References also occur, both in Zär'a Ya'eqob's own writing and in his quotations, to astrologers, using the substantive active participle *räʷayi* (lit. “observing”). References also occur to those who participate in the *ḥasabä lödät*, the computation of the horoscope (lit. “the computation of [the time of] birth”),<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Tadesse, *Church and State*, p. 235, n. 1.

<sup>78</sup> See the glossary for a list of key terms with explanations.

<sup>79</sup> Maxime Rodinson, *Magie, médecine et possession à Gondar* (Paris: Mouton, 1967), pp. 52-53.

<sup>80</sup> August Dillmann, *Lexicon linguae aethiopicæ* (Leipzig: T. O. Weigel, 1865), col. 1234.

<sup>81</sup> Wolf Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), pp. 218-219; Wolf Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1991), p. 594.

<sup>82</sup> E.g. *Ṭomarä Təsb ʷt*, Tx. p. 29 = Vs. p. 23.

and in the *ḥəryätä ḥlätat wäsä'atat*, “the choosing of days and hours.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, divinatory magic, practiced by *tänq'aləyan* and *rä'əyt*, is a very common theme in the anti-magic polemic of Zär'a Ya'əqob.

When referring either to the practice or the practitioners of spell or charm magic (sorcery), the term *šəray* is very often used. While the term can have a positive connotation, referring to medicine and healing, as noted by Dillmann, and is used in this way in various prayers, the term frequently has a negative connotation, much like the Greek φάρμακος, which it often translates,<sup>84</sup> instead referring to illicit magical deeds, as is the case in the writings of Zär'a Ya'əqob and his contemporaries. As the Emperor describes in the second *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, one may, by means of *šəray*, kill a person, abort a fetus, or make someone ill.<sup>85</sup> In the *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Zär'a Ya'əqob reports that magicians using *šəray* were rumoured to be able to move mountains and trees and make a rope stand upright.<sup>86</sup> Those who use *šəray*, that is, *mäsərrəyan* or *səb'a šəray*, are heavily criticized in the Emperor's works. Later works, such as the *Maftəhe Šəray* ([*Prayers to*] *Loosen Šəray*), are wholly devoted to the subject of *šəray* and discuss similar matters as those which the Emperor brings up in his own works. The terms *mari*, *marit*, and *mart* also occur for sorcerers, although they can also refer to divination, being a more general term for magician, as noted by Leslau.<sup>87</sup> A variety of specific magical acts ranging from augury to illusions are mentioned throughout the works of Zär'a Ya'əqob but they are too numerous to analyze here.

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<sup>83</sup> E.g. *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 6 = Vs. p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> Dillmann, *Lexicon*, col. 245.

<sup>85</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 48 = Vs. p. 39.

<sup>86</sup> *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Tx. 98 = Vs. 68.

<sup>87</sup> Leslau, *Concise Dictionary*, pp. 32-33.

In the writings of Zär'a Ya'əqob and his contemporaries, one can find references to prominent demons or their cults, but there are few extant works that discuss these in detail. By far the most common of these demons/demonic cults is (the) *Däsk*. As Bogdan Burtea notes, the Emperor often seems to refer to the *Däsk* as being a sort of cult, while in literature generally composed after the reign of Zär'a Ya'əqob, *Däsk* is understood as being the name of a demon.<sup>88</sup> As Jacques Mercier notes, “One recognizes here the Christian scheme, dating from the time of Tatian, by which pagan gods are seen as demons seeking adoration.”<sup>89</sup> Most scholars explain the term as referring to a spot or stain, and the demon *Däsk*, associated with the “noonday demon” (*ganenä gätər*) in at least one instance,<sup>90</sup> was reported to cause a certain disease.<sup>91</sup> According to the royal chronicle, Zär'a Ya'əqob required his subjects to bear a tattoo on their left hand that said, “I reject *Däsk* the accursed; I am a servant of Mary, mother of the creator of the entire universe.”<sup>92</sup> In the Emperor's own writings, individuals consult with a *Däsk* like a soothsayer. One of the most significant sources on the cult of *Däsk* is the *gädl* of Abba Samuel of Däbrä Wägäg, a prominent monastic leader who lived during the reign of Zär'a Ya'əqob's father, Dawit I, which claims that Samuel travelled around the countryside expelling *Däsk* (and *G'ädale*) and converting people to Orthodoxy. It seems likely that, as Stanislas Kur explains in the introduction to his edition of the *gädl*, the cult of *Däsk* involves the demon possessing an individual and speaking through him, and

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<sup>88</sup> Bogdan Burtea, “Däsk,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>89</sup> Jacques Mercier, *Art That Heals: The Image as Medicine in Ethiopia* (New York: The Museum for African Art, 1997), p. 38.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Ps. 90:5-6 LXX, which refers to God's deliverance “ከምድድቅ : ወከምጋኔነ : ቀትር :” (“ἀπὸ συμπτώματος καὶ δαιμονίου μεσημβρινῶδ”) — “from misfortune and the noonday demon.”

<sup>91</sup> Stefan Strelcyn, “Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts of the Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine in London,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 35 (1) (1972), p. 45; William Hoyt Worrell, “Studien zum abessinischen Zauberwesen III,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 29 (1915), p. 138.

<sup>92</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. p. 6 = Haber p. 152.

it is this possessed individual who is consulted as a soothsayer.<sup>93</sup> Jacques Mercier describes a ritual by which pagan deities named *Gudale* and *Mäqawəzäy* “ride” a priest who was “anointed with [a sacrificial] cow’s blood and adorned with its peritoneum” and had stepped into a fire.<sup>94</sup> The deity “riding” him would then “speak through his mouth, prophesying for the congregation, who would ask questions about the future or about the origin and outcome of an illness.”<sup>95</sup> Presumably all of these cults, *Däsk*, *Dino*, *Gʷdale* (*Gudale*), *Ṭäfänt* (*Fäšänt*), and *Mäqawəze* (-zäy/-za), functioned in a similar way.<sup>96</sup> So-called “possession cults,” led by “shaman-like ritual experts,” are a prominent feature of Northeast African spirituality, with the best known such cult in recent times being that of the *zar*.<sup>97</sup> Interestingly, Jon Abbink notes that sometimes the practice of possession cults extends to someone who is a *ṭänqʷay* (Amh. = *ṭänqʷalä*), implying that the classes of magic are not mutually exclusive.<sup>98</sup>

Although it seems that there are logical categories of magicians, namely, diviners, sorcerers, and demoniacs, and *Zär’a Ya‘əqob* does occasionally make arguments directed to a specific category, they are very often referred to together, even in one mention. For example, from the first book of the *Mäšəfä Bərhan*, “teach them not to attend to *maryan* and *marit*, nor to *Däsk* and *Ṭäfänt* and *Gʷdale*, nor to *Mäqawəza* and *Dino*, nor to *ṭänqʷaləyan*, nor to those who make the calculation of the stars, nor to *mäsärrəyan*, nor to any idolatry which God hates.”<sup>99</sup> Similarly, from the *Homily*

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<sup>93</sup> Stanislas Kur, *Actes de Samuel de Dabra Wägag* (Louvain: Peeters, 1968), p. xi.

<sup>94</sup> Mercier, *Art That Heals*, p. 38.

<sup>95</sup> Mercier, *Art That Heals*, p. 38.

<sup>96</sup> Getatchew, “Fundamentalist Sect,” p. 114, n. 14; Strelcyn, “Catalogue,” pp. 45-49; Worrell, “Studien,” p. 138. Note that Strelcyn calls *Mäqawəze* a kind of *Gʷdale*.

<sup>97</sup> Jon G. Abbink, “Possession Cults,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>98</sup> Abbink, “Possession Cults,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>99</sup> *Mäšəfä Bərhan I*, Tx. p. 23 = Vs. p. 13 = Ephraim p. 85.

on the *Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, “The idlers [whom the Prophet Sirach refers to (cf. Sir. 22:2)] are the *mäsärrəyan*, *ṭānq* “*aləyan*, *Däsk*, *maryan*, and all idolaters and those who propagate their wonders.”<sup>100</sup> Presumably, such lists of magicians are meant to serve as a sort of catch-all for magical practices, leaving no practice to be assumed licit. In the same homily, the Emperor, however, does make the distinction that, among “the *mä’ansəban*, the *mart*, *Däsk* and *Dino*, ... some are *mäsärrəyan* and some are *ṭānq* “*aləyan*.”<sup>101</sup> All of these practices were deemed harmful, both physically and emotionally, and evil (i.e., spiritually harmful) by the Emperor and thus needed to be rooted out altogether.

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<sup>100</sup> *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Tx. p. 94 = Vs. p. 65.

<sup>101</sup> *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Tx. p. 83 = Vs. p. 57.

## The Rhetorical Strategy of Zär'a Ya'əqob in His *Dərsanat*

One of the frequent goals of Zär'a Ya'əqob's numerous *dərsanat* is to refute the practice of magic and divination, including the consultation of magicians and diviners, within his nominally Christian empire. The Emperor, rather than simply giving orders on his own authority, cleverly employs rhetorical techniques in order to present strong, convincing arguments in an attempt to persuade simply those who engage in these practices to abandon them. As Ephraim Isaac describes, "the tone of the command[s] [are] not royal but homiletic; the king is really not giving [commands] expecting to be obeyed, but is speaking like a religious spokesman."<sup>1</sup> The two most prevalent techniques used by the Emperor are the use of negative portrayal and a reliance on the authority of the Christian Scriptures and their composers. These complimentary techniques reflect Zär'a Ya'əqob efforts to refute better those practices which he did not approve of and more effectively root out the practice of magic.

### 1. Rhetorical Use of Portrayal<sup>2</sup>

The use of negative portrayal is most evident in the three *dərsanat* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*. Throughout the lectionary, the Emperor employs a number of recurring themes in order to portray practitioners of magic as wicked and harmful individuals who are deviants from orthodox Christianity. The most striking example of this is his oft-levelled appellation of "Jew and idolater [*ʾAyhud wä-mäta'awi*]," which occurs more than seventy times in the lectionary. The Emperor de-

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<sup>1</sup> Ephraim, *Text-Critical Introduction*, p. 22.

Ephraim's point is to contrast the tone of the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* with other works of Zär'a Ya'əqob, using the tone of the *Tä'äqobo Məṣṭir* as a contrasting example, in order to show how it might not have been composed by the Emperor. However, it is clear that this tone is shared by the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, which was published after Ephraim's *Text-Critical Introduction*.

<sup>2</sup> This section is based largely on my paper titled "Portrayal of the Magician in the Polemics of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob of Ethiopia," presented during the session "Pros(e) and Cons: Anti-Magic Polemic II" at the 51st International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, MI: May 11-14, 2016).

rives this appellation from the *Sinodos*, Canon 15 of the canons Ἐπιτομή Ἀργῆ (“*After the Ascension [of the Lord]*”):

Let anyone who trusts in astrology and believes in the words of *maryan*, of *säb’ä sray*, and of *rä’aytä kokäb* and in the computation of the horoscope, and he (who) consults them about what is not proper for him and accepts their words, disregards the commandments of God, his dispensations and judgements, and equates the Christians with those who do not know God, be removed from his office; let him fall from the ordination of priesthood because he has acted like the Jews and the idolaters.<sup>3</sup>

This quotation is also used by the Emperor in the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan*, Book IV, but without any repeated usage of the phrase:

Woe to you then, O children of the Devil, ... who want to suppress the majesty of the God of Heaven, who claim to know the mysteries of God, ... and as the man who draws auspices from the stars of heaven does not have to supplicate his Creator, who practice the computation [of the horoscope], ... His Apostles have called you idolatrous Jews in their *Sinodos*. By the Holy Spirit, behold, you are ruined, who cut stones for his altars, who sacrificed animals and birds to Satan, ... who know the incantations of Satan, who kill the souls of the sheep of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Sinodos*, Tx. pp. 22-23 = Vs. pp. 11-12.

Zär’a Ya’əqob, noting that he derived this appellation from the *Sinodos*, quotes the canon in the first *dorsan* (*Ṭomarä Tasb’ät*, Tx. p. 15 = Vs. p. 12.). For an introduction to the *Sinodos*, see Chapter 5.1: *An Introduction to Pseudo-Apostolic Texts in Ethiopian Tradition*

The reading in the *Ṭomarä Tasb’ät* is “ክደሁጽ፡ ወመጠዓዊያን ፡፡” which is found in some MSS of the *Sinodos*, though other MSS of the *Sinodos* omit the clitic “ው-” (“and”), rendering the phrase as “idolatrous Jews.” Yet other MSS read “ወክረማውያን ፡፡” (“and heathens”) in place of “ወመጠዓዊያን ፡፡” (Bausi, p. 23). Note that the second reading (“ክደሁጽ፡ መጠዓዊያን ፡፡”) is found in the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan* (see n. 4 below), although it is not a direct quotation in that instance.

<sup>4</sup> *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan II*, Tx. p. 72 = Vs. p. 43.

See n. 3 above.

The accusation of being Jews in the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt* is expounded upon later in the first *dərsan*, where he says, again referencing the *Sinodos*, “The Apostles have written in their *Sinodos* many excommunications about other sins, ... but they have not said (in those cases) ‘because one has acted like the Jews and the idolaters,’ as they have said about the *ṭānq<sup>w</sup>ali*.”<sup>5</sup> The intended meaning of the appellation is also made clear in the first *dərsan*, where the Emperor says, “The sin of *ṭānq<sup>w</sup>aləyan* is greater than any sin, and their perversity is greater than any perversity, because the Apostles have counted them in their *Sinodos* with the Jews and the idolaters,”<sup>6</sup> taking that the appellation to mean that their sin is the most grievous. Interestingly, the “Jews” whom the Emperor seeks to refute in the *Mäṣḥafä Milad* are, in the reading for 29 Yäkkatit, accused of consulting with “the *Ṭäfänt*, and the *G<sup>w</sup>ədale*, and the *Dino*, and the *Däsk*, and the *Mäqawəze*, and all kinds of *mäsär-rəyan*.”<sup>7</sup> He later asks “Why, O Jew, do you associate with the *Ṭäfänt* and all kinds of *säbʔA fal, maryan* and *maryat*... ?”<sup>8</sup> This is different from the accusation in the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt* that these magicians themselves are Jews, although it is still pejorative in that it is an association with the Jews. The Emperor elsewhere in the first *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt* makes an interesting argument regarding the faith and practice of magicians, saying that they call themselves Christians “in order that one may not call them Jews or Muslims,” but become magicians “in order that they may not live according to the law of the Christians.”<sup>9</sup> He then stresses that, having become magicians, they are those “whom the Apostles have called Jews and idolaters, which means (those who prac-

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<sup>5</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 29 = Vs. p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 29 = Vs. p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> *Mäṣḥafä Milad I*, Tx. p. 42 = Vs. p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> *Mäṣḥafä Milad I*, Tx. p. 42 = Vs. p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 26 = Vs. p. 21.

tice) idol-worshipping.”<sup>10</sup> The Emperor insists that they are not Christians, but does not explicitly identify them as Jews, simply noting that they have been “called Jews.” As Steven Kaplan notes, “perhaps the most common usage of the term *Ayhud* [Jew] in medieval Ethiopia was as a description of Christian groups viewed by an author as heretical,” a usage that “was especially popular in the time of Zär’a Ya’əqob.”<sup>11</sup> He goes on to say, regarding the dual allegation of being Jews and idolaters, that “there seems to be little alternative but to view [this] alleged ‘Jewishness’ as political in character.”<sup>12</sup> While Amaleetch Teferi disagrees with Kaplan’s general view that “the *Ayhud* of earlier sources are not identical to the *Fälaša* of later texts,”<sup>13</sup> arguing instead that some communities referred to as *Ayhud* were actually Jewish,<sup>14</sup> it is very clear that Zär’a Ya’əqob is using the term solely as a pejorative and not referring to actual practitioners of Judaism.<sup>15</sup> Even the Ethiopian daily prayers, the first of which is Zär’a Ya’əqob’s *Kəhdäta Säyṭan*, say this of the Jews — “The Jews rejected it [the Cross], but we believe, and those who believe in the power of the Cross are saved”<sup>16</sup> — demonstrating a pre-existing and oft-repeated pejorative example of “Jews” (referring in this example to actual Jews), who are seen as deviating from orthodox Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Tomarä Təsb ät*, Tx. p. 26 = Vs. p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Steven Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> Kaplan, *The Beta Israel*, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup> Kaplan, *The Beta Israel*, pp. 62-63.

“*Fälaša*” is a term often used to refer to Ethiopian Jews, the *Betä ’Isra’el* (“House of Israel”). The use of the term, and the connotations surrounding it, are complex and controversial, both historically and presently.

<sup>14</sup> Amaleetch Teferi, “About the Jewish Identity of the *Beta Israel*,” in *Jews of Ethiopia: the birth of an elite*, ed. by Tudor Parfitt and Emanuela Trevisan Semi (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 178-179.

<sup>15</sup> Kaplan, *The Beta Israel*, p. 61.

<sup>16</sup> ገብረሥላሴ ብርሃኑ, መዝሙረ ዳዊት (በግዕዝና በክርስቲያን) (አዲስ አበባ: አክሱም ማተሚያ ቤት, ፳፻፩ ዓ/ም), p. 316.

<sup>17</sup> Recall that the Stephanites refused to prostrate themselves before the Cross and that the allegedly non-Trinitarian Zämika’elites were called “Jews.”

Zär'a Ya'əqob's second accusation, that magicians are idolaters is also a recurring theme in the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*.

Throughout the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Zär'a Ya'əqob argues that magic is a form of idolatry. This is, of course, most evident in his “Jews and idolaters” appellation, but it is also discussed at length in several places. For example, in the first *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, the Emperor argues:

Behold, *ṭänq'äləyan* are not different from those who worship the sun . . . . What the Apostles have called “worshipping of a celestial power” is observing the sun, the moon, and the stars for a sign of wickedness by the teaching of the *ṭänq'äləyan*, who are called Jews and idolaters.<sup>18</sup>

The Emperor here equates divination by celestial bodies to worship, and therefore idolatry, in order to present an argument based on quotations from the Old Testament and from Apostolic texts. In the second *dərsan*, the Zär'a Ya'əqob proclaims to the magician, “there is no one who is more abominable than you, because you are called the idol of this world, as Paul has said.”<sup>19</sup> The Emperor, in addition to suggesting that magicians are idolaters, goes so far as to suggest, based on his reading of Galatians 4:8-10, that magicians are themselves idols. There is a significant implication behind this accusation. Calling magicians idolaters deters people from becoming magicians themselves, but calling them idols deters people from even associating with them and thereby becoming idolaters. He repeats the reference to Galatians later in the *dərsan*, prefacing it with the statement, “A *ṭänq'ali* is surely an idol, and those who consult him are idol-worshippers.”<sup>20</sup> It perhaps might be possible to connect this idea to the practices of the *Däsk* and other cults, since

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<sup>18</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 22-23 = Vs. p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 60 = Vs. p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 65 = Vs. p. 52.

they involve consulting a diviner, the individual possessed by the demon, but also have an aspect of worship, the demon being the focus of the cult. The allegation of idolatry is also seen in the *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, where the Emperor says, “Then, come, turn to repentance, O idolaters, who consult *ṭānq* “*alāyan* and are guided by astrology.”<sup>21</sup> Since magicians are always presented as performing services for others who consult them, it would be theoretically possible for the Emperor to repress the practice of magic by driving away their clientele. Regarding magicians as idolaters, the Emperor also states in the first *darsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*:

You, too, a Christian and a priest, when you abandoned the commandments of Christ and preferred the choosing of days and hours, and astrology, you became an idolater. The meaning of idolater is idol-worshipper.<sup>22</sup>

Here, Zär’a Ya’əqob very clearly suggests that the magician had previously been not only a Christian but a priest. The loss of priesthood (and even baptism) is also a recurring theme used by Zär’a Ya’əqob.

Throughout his *dersanat*, Zär’a Ya’əqob asserts the claim that magicians have nullified their baptisms and priesthoods. In the third *darsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, he says,

How is it, therefore, that your priesthood should not be nullified, O *ṭānq* “*ali*, whom (the Apostles) have called a Jew and an idolater? Not only (is this true of) the ordination of your priesthood, but even your Christian baptism has also been nullified.<sup>23</sup>

As in the first *darsan*, the Emperor is suggesting that magicians are clerics. Richard Kieckhefer’s notion of a “clerical underworld,” a collective term for clerics who practiced necromancy (here

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<sup>21</sup> *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Tx. p. 67 = Vs. p. 46.

<sup>22</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 14 = Vs. p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 107 = Vs. p. 85.

defined as “*explicitly* demonic magic”),<sup>24</sup> can be clearly seen in Zär’a Ya‘əqob’s rebukes of *tän-qʷaləyan*, whom he supposes to have been priests. As Kieckhefer notes, literate clerics, “if they had access to the infamous books of necromancy, and if they were curious enough to try them out,” would have had everything they needed for “membership in this clerical underworld.”<sup>25</sup> In the first *dərsan*, the Emperor, describing one’s ascent from layperson to psalmist [*mäzämər*], then to lecturer [*ʾAnagʷənəstis*], then subdeacon [*nəfqä diyəqon*], then deacon [*diyəqon*], then priest [*qäsis*], then bishop [*Ḃppis qopḂpos*], then metropolitan [*Ḃppas*], then patriarch [*liqä Ḃppasat*], says of this man, “you, after you had reached this honourable rank, you ruined the entire rank of your priesthood, you became stripped of your Christian baptism, and you made yourself a Jew and an idolater.”<sup>26</sup> It is safe to say that the accusation of the patriarch practicing magic is purely for rhetorical effect, after all, Zär’a Ya‘əqob’s *dərsan* is directed at all practitioners of magic and his knowledge of the patriarch’s activities was presumably limited. The point remains the same, that clerics were practicing magic and, as Kieckhefer notes, even in the absence of “hard evidence” against clerics, “there is nothing unlikely about people in these positions dabbling in magic of various kinds, including necromancy.”<sup>27</sup> *Däbtäročč*, lay clerics who are trained as cantors, are very often associated in Ethiopian tradition with natural medicine and magic, being attributed great powers largely on

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 151-152

<sup>25</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic*, p. 155.

<sup>26</sup> *Tomarä Təsb ət*, Tx. pp. 14-15 = Vs. p. 12.

The distinctions between episcopal ranks in Ethiopia, both historically and presently, are very complex, in no small part due to a multiplicity of terms (ኤጲስ : ቆጵስ ; ሊቀ : ኤጲስ : ቆጵስ ; ጳጳስ ; ሊቀ : ጳጳሳት ; ሊቃነ : ጳጳሳት ;). As a result, it is often difficult to establish direct correspondences with the episcopal ranks found in most other traditions.

The joint metropolitans of Ethiopia appointed at the start of Zär’a Ya‘əqob’s reign, Mika’el and Gäbrə’el, each held the rank of ጳጳስ ;, thus ሊቀ : ጳጳሳት ; can only refer to the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria (then Pope John XI).

<sup>27</sup> Kieckhefer, *Magic*, p. 155.

account of their literacy and advanced learning.<sup>28</sup> As Mercier says, describing the common perception of *däbtäročč*, “These clerics have two faces, one of them is bright and diurnal, lit by the light of the knowledge of God, the other obscure, casting evil spells in the dark of night.”<sup>29</sup>

Magicians are also portrayed as wicked individuals who cast harmful spells, conjure demons, and lie to others, causing strife. In the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Zär’a Ya’əqob says, “As for the *mäsärrəy*, sometimes he kills with his spell [*səray*]; sometimes he makes a fetus abort from the womb of its mother; and sometimes he makes people sick by his spell [*səray*]. The kinds of deeds of a *mäsärrəy* are many.”<sup>30</sup> The Emperor also refers to “the exorcist who enchants with his voice by invoking the names of demons,” and “the preventer, ... who prevents in the name of demons so that they may do for him what he wants.”<sup>31</sup> The Emperor proclaims to the magician, “behold, you kill the body and the soul of those who follow your teaching because your teacher is Satan, killer of man’s soul.”<sup>32</sup> He goes on to say, “You teach lies to those who listen to you, as your father Satan has taught you his lies.”<sup>33</sup> This ties in with his argument that magicians “make a husband quarrel with his wife whom he loves and whom she loves,” thereby becoming “a teacher of animosity by causing a man to quarrel with another by saying, ‘[This] is bad for you,’ and ‘[This] is good for you.’”<sup>34</sup> This same argument is seen in Zär’a Ya’əqob’s account of the attempted rebellion of ʾIsayəyyas. The Emperor proclaims,

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<sup>28</sup> Steven Kaplan, “Däbtära,” in *EAE*, s.v.; Mercier, *Art That Heals*, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> Mercier, *Art That Heals*, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 48 = Vs. p. 39.

<sup>31</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. pp. 50-51 = Vs. pp. 40-41.

<sup>32</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 10 = Vs. p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 10 = Vs. p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. pp. 7, 89 = Vs. pp. 6, 71.

O Christian people! Behold, you have heard how consulting *ṭānq* *ʿalāyan*, *maryan*, *Dino*, and *Däsk* did not save ʾIsayəyyas and his associates; on the contrary, the punishment of the wrath of God came down on them until it destroyed them for departing from his worship.<sup>35</sup>

These claims made by Zärʾa Yaʿəqob, as well as the others mentioned above, that magicians are idolatrous, false Christians and they cause harm to those around them and consort with demons, portray anyone who practices magic or consults with someone who does in a very negative light, furthering the Emperor’s goal of rooting out the practice among his nominally Christian subjects.

## 2. Rhetorical Use of the Scriptural Authority

The second key strategy employed by the Emperor in his anti-magic polemic is his reliance on the authority of the Christian Scriptures and Apostolic writings. The *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət* describes its composition in this way:

[Zärʾa Yaʿəqob wrote it,] gathering (passages from) the canonical Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments (and) harmonizing their words, as has been said in the *Sinodos*, “One theme from one word and from one utterance.”<sup>36</sup>

The Emperor, both here and in his other works, rests a considerable portion of his argument on the authority of these texts. As Getatchew Haile describes, discussing the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*,

[Zärʾa Yaʿəqob] had to make sure that the practices which he disapproved were also condemned in the book[s] of the Christians [i.e., the *Sinodos*, the *Didəsqəlyā*, etc.]. Since the

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<sup>35</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 77 = Vs. pp. 61-62.

<sup>36</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 113 = Vs. p. 90.

This is taken from title 81 of the first recension of the *ʾAbṭəlisat*, which reads, “it is a testimony from one theme from one word from one utterance, God, the artificer and its creator, in its word and its spirit” (*Sinodos*, Tx. p. 229 = Vs. p. 89). Zärʾa Yaʿəqob also cites this passage in his defence of the canonicity of the *Sinodos* in the *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, saying that the book unites all eighty-one Scriptures (Tx. p. 109 = Vs. p. 76).

book[s] [were] not written for the Ethiopian context, he had to interpret his quotations in such a way that they also applied to Ethiopia.<sup>37</sup>

By using these quotations in this way, the Emperor is able to show that his repressive policies are not innovations, but instead are avenging the instructions of the prophets, the Apostles, and even Christ Himself. He often uses phrases like, “It is not I who have ... but the Apostles” to emphasize this point.<sup>38</sup> Zär’a Ya‘əqob uses his sources in a number of ways, sometimes quoting lengthy passages from the Old Testament and from the *Sinodos*, other times using the same short quotation repeatedly, such as Isaiah 40:13, “No one knows the counsel of God,”<sup>39</sup> and Galatians 4:9-10, “How is it that, turning to this weak and beggarly idol of this world [*ta‘otä zə‘aläm*], you want to serve them in vain and observe days, months, seasons, and years?”<sup>40</sup> The Emperor adapts passages as necessary for his argument, making passages that do not seem immediately relevant useful to his argument and interpreting passages such that they seem to very strongly agree with his arguments. This use of Scripture will be explored in subsequent chapters.

While Zär’a Ya‘əqob’s quotations and references refuting magicians always come from the canonical Scriptures (according to the Ethiopian canon), there is one reference that is an exception to this. In the first book of the *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan*, the Emperor makes use of a reference to the

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<sup>37</sup> Getatchew, “Preliminary Investigation,” p. 214.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. *Ṭomarä Təsb ሕt*, Tx. p. 15 = Vs. p. 12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ሕt*, Tx. pp. = Vs. pp. .

<sup>40</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ሕt*, Tx. pp. = Vs. pp. .

*gädl* of St. Qirqos the child-martyr.<sup>41</sup> The Emperor relates how the infant, having been forced to eat food and drink that had been sacrificed to an idol, responded to his persecutor:

“Indeed, if I would have done this voluntarily, I would have been condemned before God; but since I [did it] involuntarily, you have prepared Hell [*Gähannäm*] for yourself. As for me, you have indeed prepared a crown [of martyrdom].”<sup>42</sup>

Zär’a Ya’əqob, also drawing on the Psalms and the Gospel of John, uses his recounting of the martyrdom to argue not only that “for a Christian, if the *mäsärrəyan* would kill him, he becomes a martyr,” and that, for the *mäsärrəyan*, “their blood is upon their heads,” but he even claims that “those who kill a *mäsärrəyan* have no sin,” and the killing is “as though he were bringing a sacrifice to God.”<sup>43</sup> While the Emperor says this elsewhere, it is often, as in this case, his own interpretation of the quotation. This is the sole instance in refuting magic where Zär’a Ya’əqob uses a text from outside the canonical Scriptures, although elsewhere in his *dərsanat* he references the works of John Chrysostom, Gregory the Theologian, Cyril of Alexandria, the *Gädlä Hawaryat* (*Gädl of*

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<sup>41</sup> “Qirqos” is the standard form in Ethiopic. The name can be found in scholarship variously rendered as Quiricus, Cyricus, Cyriacus (erroneously), and Cyr. The child-martyr is usually depicted with his mother, St. Julitta, who is said to have been martyred with him during the Roman persecutions. The cult of St. Qirqos (and Julitta) is very prominent in Ethiopia. See Vitagrazia Pizani, “*Passio* of St Cyricus (*Gädlä Qirqos*) in North Ethiopia Elements of Devotion and of Manuscripts Tradition,” in *Veneration of Saints in Christian Ethiopia* ed. by Denis Nonsitsin (2015).

Vitagrazia Pizani is currently preparing the first critical edition of the Ethiopic *gädl* (see above). An unedited comparison of the Syriac, Arabic, and Latin texts was prepared by August Dillmann (August Dillmann, “Über die apokryphen Märtyrergeschichten des Cyriacus mit Julitta und des Georgius,” *SPAW* 23, 1887, pp. 339-56.). Coptic fragments of the text were edited by Elinor Husselman (“The Martyrdom of Cyriacus and Julitta in Coptic,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* vol. 4 (1965), pp. 79-86.). The text, extant in a number of recensions, is known to have been translated into several other languages as well, including Armenian and Sogdian (Nicholas Sims-Williams, “Acts of Cyriacus and Julitta,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 4.5 (1993), p. 512.).

<sup>42</sup> *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan I*, Tx. p. 26 = Vs. p. 15 = Ephraim, pp. 88-89.

<sup>43</sup> *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan I*, Tx. p. 26 = Vs. p. 15 = Ephraim p. 89.

*the Apostles*), and other sources,<sup>44</sup> showing that, even though he is clearly capable of doing so, it is not useful to his arguments.

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<sup>44</sup> E.g. *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Tx. p. 63 = Vs. p. 44; *Mäṣḥafä Bərhan I*, Tx. p. 10 = Vs. p. 5; *Mäṣḥafä Milad II*, Tx. pp. 85, 96 = Vs. pp. 75, 84-85; *Ṭomarä Täsḥət*, Tx. p. 34 = Vs. p. 27.

The *Gädlä Häwaryat* is better known in English as the *Contendings of the Apostles*. Jacopo Gnisci briefly touches upon Zär'a Ya'əqob's use of Cyril ("Continuity and Tradition: The Role of Cyrillian Christology in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Ethiopia," in *The School of Oriental and African Studies Journal of Postgraduate Research* 4 (2012), p. 34).

## Zär'a Ya'əqob's Use of Old Testament Sources

The most important sources for Zär'a Ya'əqob in refuting the practice of magic are without doubt the Old Testament and the *Sinodos*.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor cultivated a reputation for being well-versed in Christian literature, as demonstrated throughout his works, but few sources can match the authority and breadth of the Old Testament. That Zär'a Ya'əqob cites the Old Testament more than the New Testament when refuting magic is of little surprise, as the Old Testament provides a larger collection of stories, especially concerning the practices of foreign cultures, which are often associated with the practice of magic, and those who transgress the commandments of God, including those who perform magic or consult with magicians. The Old Testament also provides a firm basis for argumentation that would be recognized by the Emperor's opponents, such as non-Trinitarians and "Jews," who might not be convinced by arguments from the New Testament. Throughout his *dərsanat*, Zär'a Ya'əqob retells a number of Old Testament stories and cites several excerpts, selected and interpreted to be as compelling as possible, in order to present convincing arguments against the practice of magic, often bolstering these with passages from the New Testament and pseudo-Apostolic texts.

Quotations from the book of Deuteronomy form a large part of the second *dərsan* of the *Tomarä Təsb ʔt*. Five long, direct quotations from the book of Deuteronomy are given, each introduced with the phrase, "Furthermore, the holy Octateuch says," with the exception of the first quotation, which is introduced with, "The holy Octateuch in Deuteronomy says."<sup>2</sup> The wording of the short introductory phrase is telling. While the Emperor could simply say, "As it says in Deuteronomy," as he does with other books, he always uses the adjective *qəddəst*, "holy,

<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to the *Sinodos*, see Chapter 5.1: *An Introduction to Pseudo-Apostolic Texts in Ethiopian Tradition*.

<sup>2</sup> *Tomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. pp. 53-60 = Vs. pp. 43-48.

sanctified,” and prefers the the term *’Orit*, which refers to the Octateuch as a whole, although it also may be used to refer specifically to the Mosaic Law.<sup>3</sup> This is evidently meant to give his quotations more weight. By continually referring to it as the “*qaddast ’Orit*,” Zär’a Ya’əqob reinforces the context of his quotations and their association with the earliest Judaeo-Christian laws and prophetic revelations. One only needs to recall the reverence given to the Torah in Jewish communities to imagine the effect that the Emperor’s use of the term might have had on his subjects, the Ethiopian Christian tradition being generally seen as among the most Judaic (or Judaizing) of traditions, having a strong connection to Judaism and the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup>

Zär’a Ya’əqob also makes a comparison in the second *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət* between *ṭānq ’aləyan* and the Babylonian court magicians in the book of Daniel. The Emperor, paraphrasing the events surrounding the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, describes how, “The king commanded that the *səb ʾa šəray*, *səb ʾa sägäl*, the wise men, those who have understanding, and *ma ʾəmran* be called to tell the king his dream.”<sup>5</sup> Describing their demise, he says to the *ṭānq ’aləyan* of his empire, “You, too, O *ṭānq ’ali* who lives in this time, deserve death like them.”<sup>6</sup> Here there is a clear distinction made between the magicians whom the Emperor is seeking to refute, the *ṭānq ’aləyan*, and the magicians referred to in the Old Testament, who are *səb ʾa šəray*, *səb ʾa sägäl*, and *ma ʾəmran*. Later, the Emperor does refer to the Babylonian magicians as *ṭānq ’aləyan*, but it is still clear that they are not the same as the current *ṭānq ’aləyan*. In both instances, Zär’a Ya’əqob, first describing the magicians of Nebuchadnezzar, then describing the magicians of Belshazzar, uses

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<sup>3</sup> Getatchew prefers to translate *’Orit* as “the Torah.”

<sup>4</sup> Getatchew, “Forty-Nine Hour Sabbath,” p. 233.

<sup>5</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 61 = Vs. p. 49.

<sup>6</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 61 = Vs. p. 49.

the phrase, “who were like you,”<sup>7</sup> maintaining some level of distinction between the *tänq* “*aləyan* of his time and the Babylonian magicians. The Emperor deals with this matter throughout his *dərsanat*, as there are no references to *tänq* “*ale* or *Däsk* or other such practices in the Scriptures. It is also fitting that the Babylonian magicians are, from the perspective of the Old Testament, alien priests, since *Zär’a Ya’əqob* implies that *tänq* “*ale* is practiced by foreigners.<sup>8</sup> Similar to the story of Nebuchadnezzar, *Zär’a Ya’əqob* also recounts in the third *dərsan* the story of King Balak of Moab from the book of Numbers, “who wanted the destruction of the people of God by the *mästəqasəm* of Balaam the *mäsəgəl*,” but is instead put to shame, as God “nullifie[d] the *mästəqasəm*” and “turn[ed] to blessing the curse of those who curse.”<sup>9</sup>

In the third *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ət*, *Zär’a Ya’əqob*, as he did with the story of Nebuchadnezzar, gives a lengthy summary of the destruction of Holofernes, who was a commander of Nebuchadnezzar, as described in the apocryphal book of Judith. Unlike in Deuteronomy, the Emperor is unable to find rebukes against magicians in the account, instead using it simply as an example of the wrath of God. *Zär’a Ya’əqob* proclaims, “See, O community of the Church, how God shows His power when He destroys those who deny Him, and how He saves those who worship Him.”<sup>10</sup> The Emperor here barely constructs any significant argument, seemingly drawing on whatever stories he can to make his point.

*Zär’a Ya’əqob* does not only simply rely upon the authority of his sources in his arguments, but he also constructs more complex rhetorical arguments using his sources. For example,

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<sup>7</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ət*, Tx. pp. 62-64 = Vs. pp. 50-51.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. “See, O alien people, who are not of us — *mäsərrəyan*, idolaters, and *tänq* “*aləyan* — ...” (*Ṭomarä Təsb ət*, Tx. p. 32 = Vs. p. 26); “[Gəmaləyal’s] book of *tänq* “*ali* ... is not from our country [*bəhərnä*]” (*Ṭomarä Təsb ət*, Tx. pp. 3, 39, 83 = Vs. pp. 3, 31, 66).

<sup>9</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ət*, Tx. p. 103 = Vs. p. 82.

<sup>10</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ət*, Tx. p. 100 = Vs. p. 80

in the beginning the first *darsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾät*, the Emperor constructs an argument from the book of Ezekiel. He first provides a lengthy quotation regarding the prophet's rebuke of the people of Jerusalem for their "abandoning of the worship of God," comparing them to a Christian priest who has "made [himself] a Jew and an idolater by [his] choosing of one day from (other) days and one hour from (other) hours."<sup>11</sup> He further compares magicians to those whom the prophet describes as going into the temple and, "with their backs to the house of God, ... [worship] the sun" (cf. Ez. 8:15-16).<sup>12</sup> The Emperor then asserts that "*ṭänq ʾaləyan* are not different from those who worship the sun," harmonizing the admonishments from Ezekiel with those from the *Didəsqəlyä*:

And as Ezekiel has called the children of the Temple "worshippers of the sun," so have the Apostles, too, called *ṭänq ʾaləyan* "worshippers of a celestial power," as they have said in their *Didəsqəlyä*,<sup>13</sup> "And as for those who practice astrology, worship a celestial power, and observe day(s) and hours, would [God] accept the prayers of these? ... They are, indeed, desolate of the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in the hearts of the faithful." Behold, *ṭänq ʾaləyan* are no different from those who worship the sun, as the Apostles have said ... . What the Apostles call "worshipping of a celestial power" is observing the sun, the moon, and the stars for a sign of wickedness by the teaching of the *ṭänq ʾaləyan*, who are called Jews and idolaters.<sup>14</sup>

The Emperor cleverly uses the *Didəsqəlyä* to equate astrology with the worship of celestial entities, which then allows him to equate astrologers with the worshippers of the sun mentioned by

<sup>11</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾät*, Tx. pp. 13-14 = Vs. pp. 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾät*, Tx. p. 22 = Vs. p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> For an introduction to the *Didəsqəlyä*, see Chapter 5.1: *An Introduction to Pseudo-Apostolic Texts in Ethiopian Tradition*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾät*, Tx. pp. 22-23 = Vs. p. 18.

Ezekiel, thereby enabling him to strengthen an argument from a pseudo-Apostolic text with one from the Old Testament. Immediately after establishing this connection with the sun-worshippers of Ezekiel, Zär'a Ya'əqob quotes several passages from the prophet describing God's wrath towards His enemies (i.e., the sun-worshippers). For example, he quotes Ezekiel as saying, "And God said to me, 'I will take my revenge on them in my wrath. I will not be compassionate toward them, and my eye will not spare them'" (Ez. 7:1-9), and relates this back to the magicians, saying,

See, therefore, how the worshippers of a celestial power, who are *ṭānq* *ʿaləyan*, who are called Jews and idolaters, have no salvation. Who will be compassionate toward those whom God has not spared? Stay away, therefore, from *ṭānq* *ʿaləyan*, O flock of God, lest they destroy you with themselves.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, one can see how the Emperor constructs a complex argument by equating a practice seen in Ethiopia, *ṭānq* *ʿāla*, with one described in the *Didəsqəlyä*, thereby connecting it to condemnations given by the prophet Ezekiel. Zär'a Ya'əqob would not have been able to connect directly the practice of *ṭānq* *ʿāle* with the prophet's condemnations, as they are solely directed towards sun-worshippers, but he uses a sort of syllogism to apply Ezekiel's condemnations to *ṭānq* *ʿaləyan*.

Although they are each cited only once in the first *dərsan*, and indeed only once in the entire *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Zär'a Ya'əqob's use of the books of Enoch<sup>16</sup> and Jubilees, which are only considered canonical in Ethiopia, are worth mentioning. The Emperor quotes from the book of Enoch the list of the watchers, or fallen angels, who taught magical arts to mankind. He cites the book, saying, "as Enoch, the seventh from Adam, has said, 'Bäraqəyäl taught astrologers [*rä'ayəyanä kokäb*], Kokäb'el omens [*tə'mərtat*], Ṭamə'el taught astrology [*ra'əy*], and 'Asdərə'el

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<sup>15</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 23 = Vs. p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> I.e., 1 Enoch, the Enochic book that is only extant in its entirety in Gə'əz.

taught the course of the moon for the destruction of men” (Hen 8:3-4).<sup>17</sup> As noted by Leslie Baynes, the book of Enoch is frequently used by Zār’a Ya’əqob in his other works, with the *Mäṣḥafä Milad*, for example, both beginning and ending with the same reference to the book of Enoch and being “permeated with quotations from 1 Enoch.”<sup>18</sup> However, this is the sole instance that the book is used to refute the practice of magic. It is an obvious choice, as it ties into the Emperor’s portrayal of magicians as the “partners of demons”<sup>19</sup> and the “son[s] of the Devil.”<sup>20</sup> Zār’a Ya’əqob defends the canonicity of the book of Enoch in the *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, at first giving arguments based on New Testament references to the book of Enoch and the patriarch himself, but also, countering the “man who says, ‘I will not accept the book of Enoch even if you give me [the evidence which] the Apostles gave from the book of the epistle of Jude,” presents an argument based on the *Didasqalya* as well as, more interestingly, Moses’ astronomical knowledge.<sup>21</sup> The Emperor poses the question, “how could [Moses have] know[n] the rotation of the sun, moon, and stars, the fullness of the light of the moon and its waning, and the appearance of (new) years without [the book of] Enoch?”<sup>22</sup> While the astronomical book is a well known component of the larger book of Enoch, it is interesting that Zār’a Ya’əqob should draw attention to Moses’ knowledge of astronomy, which he claims came from the book of Enoch, when he points out in the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət* that, according to Enoch, it is the demons who taught astrology and “the course of the moon for the destruction of men.” Perhaps

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<sup>17</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 15 = Vs. p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Leslie Baynes, “Enoch and Jubilees,” in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam Volume Two*, ed. by Eric F. Mason, Kelley Coblentz Bautch, Angela Kim Harkins, and Daniel A. Machiela (Leiden: Brill, 2012), p. 815.

<sup>19</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 12 = Vs. p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 15 = Vs. p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Tx. pp. 108-109 = Vs. pp. 75-76.

<sup>22</sup> *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Tx. p. 109 = Vs. p. 76.

Zär'a Ya'əqob did not consider it a problem, as the book in its entirety was considered canonical, or perhaps one might argue that the astronomy taught by Enoch is sanctioned by virtue of his holiness and distinct from the astrology taught by demons. Nonetheless, given the Emperor's attitude towards those who "worship a celestial power" in their observing of the stars and the moon, it does still seem somewhat odd that he should draw attention to this.

Zär'a Ya'əqob's quotation from the book of Jubilees introduces a series of Old Testament references at the end of the first *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ət*. After quoting a passage describing Abraham's epiphany, the Emperor admonishes his subjects, "who follow the footsteps of the faith of Abraham," that "Abraham prayed lest he and his seed go astray forever by observing the stars, the sun, and the moon" (cf. Jub. 12:16-20), a reference, of course, to magicians.<sup>23</sup> He then references Josiah in 1 Kings, who, he claims, "destroyed the *ma'mran*, *fäqadəyan* [lit. "ones who want/desire"], and the idols [*tärəfan*] of all their gods," as well as the destruction of idols by Jacob, Moses, Asa, Elijah, and Hezekiah.<sup>24</sup> As shown by Jacques van Ruiten, Zär'a Ya'əqob is fond of recounting stories told of Abraham in the book of Jubilees,<sup>25</sup> and here the Emperor also demonstrates his command of the Old Testament by including numerous other examples, although lacking in the same level of detail.

The Old Testament is a key source for Zär'a Ya'əqob in his refutation of magic. Being filled with stories of God's wrath towards those who oppose His chosen people and instances where those who practice magic or idolatry are rebuked, the Old Testament offers a wealth of

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<sup>23</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ət*, Tx. pp. 30-32 = Vs. pp. 24-25.

<sup>24</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ət*, Tx. pp. 32-33 = Vs. p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Jacques T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, "The Use and Interpretation of the Book of *Jubilees* in the *Mäšəfä Milad*," *Revue de Qumran* 26 (2014), p. 620.

Note that van Ruiten's study was limited to the *Mäšəfä Milad*.

material to draw upon his *dersanat*. Rebukes from prophets such as Ezekiel and stories of the destruction of wicked men such as Nebuchadnezzar are easily used by the Emperor to demonstrate why one should avoid practicing magic. The status of the Old Testament as a collection of sources accepted by most Christians, even if they are not considered orthodox, and also Jews enables Zär'a Ya'əqob to present arguments that would likely seem more convincing to his opponents. Combined with strategic presentation and juxtaposition with corroborating New Testament and pseudo-Apostolic texts, Zär'a Ya'əqob's use of Old Testament sources is a perfect example of his rhetorical use of Scriptural sources in the refutation of magic.

## Zär'a Ya'əqob's Use of New Testament Sources

For Zär'a Ya'əqob, the New Testament is of less usefulness than the Old Testament and pseudo-Apostolic sources. While the fact that he can directly cite Christ in the Gospels would seemingly allow him to present more authoritative arguments than when he quotes the prophets or the Apostles, there is the issue of the relative paucity of passages both in the Gospels and in the rest of the New Testament that discuss magic or even idolatry (of the pagan sort, not metaphorical idolatry) in any way. Nonetheless, the Emperor still manages to interpret some passages in such a way that he can use them to refute the practice of magic.

Quite fittingly, Zär'a Ya'əqob quotes the Gospels of Matthew and Luke in the first *darsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, which is dedicated to them, and the Gospel of Mark in the second, which is dedicated to him. The third *darsan* is not dedicated to any of the Evangelists, although it is dedicated to Peter and Paul, but nevertheless has very few references to the New Testament, with the exception of the frequently quoted passage from Galatians 4, instead favouring pseudo-Apostolic texts. In the first *darsan*, the Emperor compares the statement of Christ, which “the Evangelist Luke has reported,” that, “The Son of Man is coming at an unexpected time” (Lk. 12:40) with his oft-cited words of the prophet Isaiah, who says, “No one knows the counsel of God” (Is. 40:13).<sup>1</sup> These statements lead Zär'a Ya'əqob to conclude that *ṭäñq'äləyan* “lead others astray [in] saying, ‘I know your life and your death and the length of your years,’” calling this the greatest of all their lies.<sup>2</sup> He even mocks them, saying, “You do not know even what you will eat and what you will drink.”<sup>3</sup> This fits in with Zär'a Ya'əqob's portrayal of

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<sup>1</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. pp. 10-11 = Vs. p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 11 = Vs. p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 11 = Vs. p. 9.

magicians as people who lie to their clients and display arrogance in their supposed knowledge of the future.

Zär'a Ya'əqob, in the first *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, also juxtaposes words of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew with the book of Ezekiel. The Emperor begins,

Our Lord has said in the Gospel of Matthew, “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. ... Does one gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? ... Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire and burned up.” [Mt. 7:16-19]<sup>4</sup>

This passage is then juxtaposed with the prophecy of Ezekiel that sun-worshippers will be cut down by angels wielding axes:

Just as He ordered Ezekiel to tell those axe-men, “Cut down those who worship the sun” [cf. Ez. 9:6], so Our Lord has said in the Gospel, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire and burned up.”<sup>5</sup>

This is again part of the main rhetorical strategy of Zär'a Ya'əqob, to harmonize various passages from the Scriptures in order to construct more effective arguments.

As mentioned previously, a key passage of Scripture for Zär'a Ya'əqob, the one which he cites the most from the New Testament, is Galatians 4:8/9-10:

Formerly, you served, in your ignorance, those who are not gods [*ʿamaləkt*]. But now, you have known God [*ʿAgzi'abəher*], or rather, He has known you. How is it that, turning to

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<sup>4</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. pp. 27-28 = Vs. p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 28 = Vs. p. 22.

this weak and beggarly idol of this world [*ta'otä zə'aläm*], you want to serve them in vain and observe days, months, seasons, and years?<sup>6</sup>

The Emperor quotes the passage verbatim thirteen times in the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, often including its attribution to the Apostle Paul and always interpreting the phrase “observe days, months, seasons, and years” as a reference to divination and understanding the phrase “idol of this world” to refer to one who practices divination. The passage thus plays an important role in his portrayal of magicians as idolaters, even going so far as to call them idols themselves.

Although Zär'a Ya'əqob shows a clear preference for pseudo-Apostolic texts, especially the *Sinodos*, which he considers to be a part of the same Scriptural canon as the New Testament, he still makes use of the Gospels and also, with great frequency, the Epistle to the Galatians. Quoting the words of Christ in the Gospels allows him to appeal directly to the highest authority in his refutation of magic, further bolstering his arguments based on Old Testament and pseudo-Apostolic sources.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. pp. 59-60, 65-66, 87 = Vs. pp. 48, 52, 69-70.

Only these three instances include verse 8 and the beginning of verse 9, the other ten instances begin with “How is it that...”

## Zär'a Ya'əqob's Use of Pseudo-Apostolic Sources

The Scriptural canon of the Ethiopian Church is widely known for being the largest canon of any Christian tradition, traditionally enumerated in eighty-one books (a number acknowledged even by Zär'a Ya'əqob). In addition to the seventy-six books common among most Eastern Christian traditions (with the exception of 4 Maccabees),<sup>1</sup> the canon also includes several pseudo-Apostolic texts. As Alessandro Bausi describes, three pseudo-Apostolic texts in particular “enjoyed the highest success” in the works of Zär'a Ya'əqob, namely, the *Sinodos*,<sup>2</sup> the *Didəsqəlyä*,<sup>3</sup> and the *Mäṣḥafä Kīdan (Book of the Covenant)*,<sup>4</sup> used by the Emperor as “the paradigm of the true Christian law.”<sup>5</sup> The role of these texts in the theology and policies of the Emperor and his reliance upon them cannot be overstated. It is worth first introducing these texts and Zär'a Ya'əqob's general perspective of them before discussing their use in his anti-magic polemic.

### An Introduction to Pseudo-Apostolic Texts in Ethiopian Tradition

The *Sinodos*, which is certainly the most cited of the three pseudo-Apostolic sources, if not the most cited of any of the eighty-one Scriptures, in the works of Zär'a Ya'əqob, was thoroughly

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<sup>1</sup> The Ethiopian canon notably replaces 1-4 Maccabees with 1-3 *Mäqabyan*, particularly Ethiopian recensions that differ greatly from the LXX.

<sup>2</sup> Also known as the *Senodos* or (in English) the *Synodicon*. Borrowed from the Greek σύνδοδος.

<sup>3</sup> From the Greek διδασκαλία.

<sup>4</sup> Or simply the *Kīdan*. Also known as the *Kīdan zä'Agzi'änä Iyäsus Kṛastos (Covenant of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, often translated as *Testament of the Lord* or *Testamentum Domini*).

<sup>5</sup> Alessandro Bausi, “Senodos,” in *EAE*, s.v.

Other pseudo-Apostolic texts are extant in Gə'əz, however, most are not considered canonical according to the Ethiopian Church (and as argued by Zär'a Ya'əqob).

promoted by the Emperor, who notably sent a copy to the Ethiopian community in Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> The book is a sizeable compilation of numerous pseudo-Apostolic canons, canons (both genuine and pseudepigraphal) from both ecumenical and local church councils, and patristic texts.<sup>7</sup> The main text of the *Sinodos* is comprised of four different recensions of the *Apostolic Canons*, two in 80 (*Gəṣṣaw* and *Bätalsat*), and two in 81 canons (both called *ʾAbṭəlisat*), the 71 canon *Təʾzazət*, the canons *ʾİmdəhrä ʾArgä* (“After the Ascension [of the Lord]”), two different recensions of the canons of Simon the Canaanite, and the letter of Peter to Clement (the *Sinodos zäQäleməntos*).<sup>8</sup> The work “largely consists of translations [into Gəʿəz] from Arabic, in turn relying on Coptic and/or Greek texts.”<sup>9</sup> As noted by Bausi, “[many] sections of the *Sinodos* certainly depend upon a Greek *Vorlage* and date to a much older (probably Aksumite) period.”<sup>10</sup> The text comprises recensions of canons of Melkite and of Coptic origin.<sup>11</sup> Ignazio Guidi supposed that the Melkite elements were added by the Copts before its transmission to Ethiopia, although Bausi hypothesized that the Melkite canons may have come to Ethiopia alone and the Coptic canons were later superimposed on them.<sup>12</sup> Much of the importance and usefulness of the *Sinodos* is due to the fact that the component canons deal with “every aspect of the life of the Church” and were seen as having

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<sup>6</sup> Samantha Kelly, “Ewostateans at the Council of Florence (1441): Diplomatic Implications between Ethiopia, Europe, Jerusalem, and Cairo,” *Afriques: débats, méthodes et terrains d’histoire [en ligne]* (2016).

Kelly points out that the community was Ewostatean and that this occurred before the Council of Däbrä Məṭmaq (the accompanying letter was sent in 1442, while the council was held in 1450).

<sup>7</sup> Bausi, “Senodos,” in *E Ae*, s.v.

<sup>8</sup> Alessandro Bausi, “Heritage and Originality in the Ethiopic *Sinodos*,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 25 (1992), p. 17.

Note that some of these may be further subdivided and are referred to by Zär’a Ya’əqob according to their incipits. The letter of Peter to Clement (the *Sinodos zäQäleməntos*) should not be confused with the seven book compilation of canons referred to as the *Qäleməntos*.

<sup>9</sup> Bausi, “Senodos,” in *E Ae*, s.v.

<sup>10</sup> Bausi, “Senodos,” in *E Ae*, s.v.

<sup>11</sup> Bausi, “Heritage and Originality,” pp. 18-19.

<sup>12</sup> Bausi, “Heritage and Originality,” pp. 18-19.

Apostolic authority.<sup>13</sup> The effect of this on Zär'a Ya'əqob's rhetoric will be explored in the coming arguments.

The Ethiopic *Didəsqəlyä* comprises the first six books of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a Syrian reworking, now lost in its Greek original, of the Greek *Didascalia* plus the seventh book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which is based on the *Didache* (with some additions).<sup>14</sup> The *Didəsqəlyä* does not, however, contain the final eighth book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.<sup>15</sup> Translated into Gə'əz from Arabic, it is attributed to Clement of Rome and forms part of the large corpus of pseudo-Clementine literature.<sup>16</sup> Although it is cited far less than the *Sinodos*, the *Didəsqəlyä* still plays a role in Zär'a Ya'əqob's anti-magic polemic.

The *Mäṣḥafä Kidan*, likely translated into Gə'əz from Greek during the Aksumite period, deals with the performance of several rites, including the Anaphora of the Lord, one of the principal anaphoras used in the liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and also discusses numerous ecclesiastical matters, claiming to contain teachings given to the Apostles by Christ before his ascension.<sup>17</sup> While it is frequently quoted by Zär'a Ya'əqob in his *dərsanat*, forming an important trio of pseudo-Apostolic books along with the *Didəsqəlyä* and the *Sinodos*, it is not at all used in his refutations of magic.

In the *Homily on the Rite of Baptism and Religious Instruction*, Zär'a Ya'əqob provides a lengthy defence of the three texts together. The Emperor, countering the one who denies that the books belong to the eighty-one canonical Scriptures, says, “the *Kidan*, the *Didəsqəlyä*, and the *Sinodos* are

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<sup>13</sup> Bausi, “Heritage and Originality” p. 16; Bausi, “Senodos,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>14</sup> Alessandro Bausi, “Didəsqəlyä,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>15</sup> Bausi, “Didəsqəlyä,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>16</sup> Bausi, “Didəsqəlyä,” in *EAE*, s.v.

<sup>17</sup> Alessandro Bausi, “Testamentum Domini,” in *EAE*, s.v.

one book” — “the Apostles wrote [the *Kīdan*], with the Saviour dictating (it) to them,” while the *Didasqalya* and the *Sinodos* are “the casts in the image of this *Kīdan*” which the book describes as being sent out from Jerusalem after its composition.<sup>18</sup> He goes on to declare that “everything that is not in the *Mäṣḥafä Kīdan* and the *Mäṣḥafä Didasqalya* is in the *Sinodos*; everything that is not in the *Sinodos* is in the *Mäṣḥafä Kīdan* and the *Didasqalya*.”<sup>19</sup> Zär’a Ya‘əqob provides detailed arguments surrounding the rite of baptism and the construction of churches, suggesting that these cannot be performed without the directions given in the three books and thus they must be accepted as canonical. The Emperor concludes his defence (and the homily), which also incorporates a defence of the book of Enoch, with the words, “as for us, we preach the Octateuch [*’Orit*], the Prophets, the Gospel, the *Kīdan*, the *Sinodos*, and the *Didasqalya*.”<sup>20</sup> This is a clear testament to the importance placed by Zär’a Ya‘əqob on the three books.

### The Importance of Pseudo-Apostolic Texts in Zär’a Ya‘əqob’s Polemic

Each of the three *darsanat* in the *Ṭomarä Təsb’ət* is appointed to be read on feast days pertaining to certain Apostles. The first is appointed for the feast days of Bartholomew, Matthew, Luke, Philip, and Andrew;<sup>21</sup> the second for those of John, James, son of Alphaeus, Matthias, James, son of Zebedee, and Mark;<sup>22</sup> the third for those of Peter and Paul, Thomas, Thaddeus, Nathaniel, and James, the brother of Christ.<sup>23</sup> Throughout the beginning portion of each *darsan*, the named Apostles are quoted from the *Sinodos*. The only exceptions to this are Luke in the first

<sup>18</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb’ət*, Tx. pp. 103, 110 = Vs. pp. 71, 76.

<sup>19</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb’ət*, Tx. p. 104 = Vs. p. 72.

<sup>20</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb’ət*, Tx. p. 110 = Vs. p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb’ət*, Tx. p. 1 = Vs. p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb’ət*, Tx. p. 36 = Vs. p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb’ət*, Tx. p. 80 = Vs. p. 64.

*darsan*, who instead receives a quotation from his Gospel, and Paul in the third *darsan*, because the related feast day jointly commemorates Paul and Peter, the apostle who is actually quoted from the *Sinodos* in the third *darsan*. All other quotations from the *Sinodos* in each *darsan* are not attributed to any specific apostle, only broadly to all of the Apostles (with the exception of those quotations which themselves provide attribution).

The Apostolic attribution of the *Sinodos* is of great importance for Zär'a Ya'əqob with regards to his argumentation, given that the names of the Apostles presumably hold great authority for any Christian. The introduction and explanation of every quotation from the *Sinodos* reiterates its perceived Apostolic origin. For example, in the second *darsan*, Zär'a Ya'əqob argues,

Behold, the Apostles have said in their *Sinodos*, “Do not create division, but reconcile in peace those who quarrel.” But you, *tänq'ali*, behold, you create division and teach them quarrelling in place of peace, violating the law which the Apostles have laid down.<sup>24</sup>

In the cases of attributions to named Apostles in the second and third *darsanat*, each introduction also has an embellishing line about the life of the saint following Christ's resurrection. For example, from the third *darsan*,

Peter, the chief of the Apostles, preached in the land of Rome and other cities, as has been said in the *Sinodos*, “Simon Cephas, who is Peter,” preached in the land of Rome, “Antioch, Spain, and the cities surrounding them and in all of Rome.” And in his epistle, it is stated (that) Peter preached in the lands of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. In the course of his teaching, Peter has said in the *Sinodos*, “Do not kill, and do

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<sup>24</sup> *Tomarä Təsb ʔt*, Tx. p. 43 = Vs. p. 35.

not commit adultery; do not corrupt a little child; do not steal. Do not be a *maʿmār*; do not be a *räʿayä kokäb*; do not be a *mäsärrəy*. ...”<sup>25</sup>

The added description of Peter’s preaching evidently does not have a direct use in the Emperor’s argument against the practice of magic, almost seeming to be a digression. However, it demonstrates that Peter acted as an Apostle and lived in a devout manner, thereby enhancing his perceived authority on matters pertaining to a virtuous Christian life.

Perhaps the most extensive example of Zär’a Ya’əqob harmonizing texts in his refutation of magic occurs in the second *dərsan* of the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət* and concludes with a quotation from the *Sinodos*. The Emperor begins with a long quotation from Deuteronomy which prescribes death by stoning for those who “have bowed down to the sun or the moon” (Dt. 17:2-7), interpreted by the Emperor, of course, as referring to the practice of magic.<sup>26</sup> This is first harmonized with the words of Christ in the Gospels, “It is better that they fasten and hang a millstone round the neck of the one who leads one of these little ones who believe in me astray and drown him in the depth of the sea” (Mt. 18:6/Mk. 9:42/Lk. 17:2) the connection with magicians being that magicians “lead God-worshippers astray with heavenly signs.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, the Emperor argues, “The words of the Octateuch [*ʾOrit*] and the Gospel ... are in agreement” (since both prescribe death).<sup>28</sup> The Emperor finally quotes the *Sinodos*, saying, “As the Apostles also have said in their *Sinodos*, ‘Fight against the apostates and heretics with a sword of iron.’”<sup>29</sup> Zär’a

<sup>25</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 85 = Vs. p. 68.

<sup>26</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. pp. 53-55 = Vs. p. 43-45.

<sup>27</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 55 = Vs. p. 44.

<sup>28</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. pp. 54-55 = Vs. p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 55 = Vs. p. 45.

The quotation from *Sinodos* is taken from the Letter of Peter to Clement (*Sinodos zäQäleməntos*), tenth canon (*Sinodos*, Tx. pp. 286-287 = Vs. p. 110) (cf. Ex. 32:27).

Ya‘əqob then ultimately concludes, “See, O *ṭānq<sup>w</sup>ali*, that there is no sparing of your extirpation, neither with the people of the Torah [*‘Orit*] nor with the people of the Gospel,”<sup>30</sup> thereby tying all three texts together to form one strengthened argument, namely, that magicians are universally condemned to be executed, a policy Zār’a Ya‘əqob himself implemented in his empire, as the royal chronicle recounts, which notes that “he did not even spare his sons, [seven of whom are here named], nor many other among his offspring.”<sup>31</sup>

Zār’a Ya‘əqob quotes the *Didəsqəlyä* eight times in the *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, of which six quotations are taken from the same passage. First used in the first *dərsan* to equate the sun-worshippers in Ezekiel to magicians, the passage indicates that the prayers of “those who practice astrology, worship a celestial power, and observe days and hours” are neither pleasing nor accepted by God and such persons are “desolate of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>32</sup> The exceptional passages are the well-known apocryphal story of Simon Magus, who had been flying on a demon, falling to the ground after it is commanded by Peter,<sup>33</sup> and an apocryphal story of Manasseh, inserted as part of an account of the patriarch’s deviance and eventual repentance.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the *Didəsqəlyä* plays only a minor role in Zār’a Ya‘əqob’s refutation of magic, although it proves most useful in enabling the Emperor to equate the worship of celestial bodies with astrology and magic, thereby serving an instrumental role in several of his arguments.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 55 = Vs. p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. p. 5 = Haber p. 152.

<sup>32</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. pp. 22, 35, 65, 66, 112 = Vs. pp. 18, 28, 52, 53, 89.

<sup>33</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 50 = Vs. p. 41.

<sup>34</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb ʾət*, Tx. p. 94-95 = Vs. pp. 75-76.

## Conclusion

Zär'a Ya'əqob is said to have spent much of his reign living in fear of magic and zealously persecuting those accused of practicing it, whether divination or sorcery. Marie-Laure Derat makes the important point that, “Le plus souvent, [des opposants au roi] sont dénoncés [dans ses homélies] soit comme des hérétiques, soit comme des adeptes de pratiques magiques et de sorcellerie.”<sup>1</sup> Getatchew Haile likewise points out that one of the things Zär'a Ya'əqob accomplished with the *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət* was “the destruction of his personal enemies.”<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the Emperor's condemnations of the rebellious 'Isayəyyas and Ših Mängäsa were surely of great benefit to him in solidifying his reign and making it clear that the populace of Ethiopia ought not to “search for another (king) that God has not given [them].”<sup>3</sup> But one should consider the royal chronicle's claim that Zär'a Ya'əqob ordered priests to “ceaselessly sprinkle with holy water, from dusk to dawn, the palace of the King, [reciting] the Gospels, the Psalms of David, the *Kəhdota Säyṭan* [sic], and the hymn *'Igzi'abher Nägśä*” for protection from magicians,<sup>4</sup> the Emperor's edict ordering the people to bear three tattoos on their body affirming their orthodoxy and abjuring *Däsk* and the Devil,<sup>5</sup> and the very fact that prayers such as the *Kəhdäta Säyṭan* and *Mäṣṣafä Baḥrəy*, regardless of whether the Emperor truly wrote them himself, were seen as necessary in the first place. Steven Kaplan notes, “Whatever Zär'a Ya'əqob's problems may have had [to do] with the practice of magic[,] it was not because he did not [believe] in the efficacy of [magical] rituals,”

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<sup>1</sup> Derat, “Les homélies,” p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Getatchew Haile, “Preliminary Investigation,” p. 228.

<sup>3</sup> *Ṭomarä Təsb'ət*, Tx. p. 79 = Vs. p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. p. 40 = Haber p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> *Royal Chronicle*, Tx. p. 6 = Haber p. 152.

indeed, “it would appear that throughout his reign he lived in fear that his enemies would use such ‘magical’ forces against him.”<sup>6</sup> He points out that the Emperor, who always wore an icon of the Virgin Mary and denounced the use of heathen amulets, “objected not to protective power of a charm, amulet or image, but to the source of its power.”<sup>7</sup> While Zär’a Ya‘əqob may have benefitted in various ways from his persecution of magicians, it is still quite clear that the Emperor was truly afraid of magic and his efforts to root it out from his empire were not simply a veil for some political maneuvers.

The reign of Zär’a Ya‘əqob ended a period of instability and downturn within Ethiopia. For the Emperor, a key component of bringing about stability and national unity (to use the term very loosely) was promoting a religious unity among his subjects. His ecclesiastical reforms, persecutions of heretics and magicians, and homiletic contributions all worked towards this end. His rhetorical techniques, including the use of portrayal and strategic use of Scriptural texts, were critical to the effectiveness of his *dərsanat*, and thus of some significance for understanding the events of his reign. By presenting magicians not just as wicked individuals destined for destruction and deserving of reproach, but as individuals deemed so by the prophets, Apostles, and even Christ himself, Zär’a Ya‘əqob sought to achieve the eradication of those magicians whom he feared and bring about the peace and prosperity he so desired for his empire.

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<sup>6</sup> Steven Kaplan, “Magic and Religion in Christian Ethiopia: Some Preliminary Remarks,” in *Studia Aethiopica: In Honor of Siegbert Uhlig on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. by Verena Böll et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), p. 417.

<sup>7</sup> Kaplan, “Magic and Religion,” p. 417.

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## Glossary

<i>ʾamlak</i> (pl. <i>ʾamaləkt</i> )	አምላክ ፣ አማልክት ፡	A god or deity; compare with <i>ʾĒgziäbäher</i> .
<i>ʾĒgzi ʾabäher</i> ( <i>ʾĒgzi ʾa Bäher</i> )	እግዚአብሔር ፡ (እግዚአ ፡ ብሔር ፡)	The Christian God, lit. “The Lord of Earth;” note that this creates a clear distinction with the more general <i>ʾamlak</i> that is not found, for example, in Greek (θεός) or Latin ( <i>deus</i> ). <sup>1</sup>
<i>däbtära</i> (pl. <i>-ročč</i> )	ደብተራ ፣ -ሮቸ ፡	(Amh.) a well-educated lay cleric trained as a cantor; often associated with the practice of magic and traditional medicine.
<i>därsan</i> (pl. <i>-nat</i> )	ድርሳን ፣ -ናት ፡	an exegetical homily or reading, generally on a theological topic and drawing on Scripture; can also refer to a compilation of these (i.e., a homiliary or lectionary).
<i>fal</i> (pl. <i>-lat</i> )	ፋል ፣ ፋላት ፡	an omen; <i>säb ʾa fal(at)</i> are diviners or augurs; according to the <i>ገጣሚ ገጣሚ</i> <i>ገጣሚ</i> , “a <i>fal</i> is the idle rumour (of one) who foretells, saying, ‘At such time war will break out, famine will take place, the fruit of the earth will be destroyed’” (Tx. p. 52 = Vs. p. 42).
<i>gädl</i> (pl. <i>-lat</i> )	ገድል ፣ -ላት ፡	the hagiographical acts of a saint; often contrasted in scholarship with a saint’s <i>mälk ʾä</i> , a hymn that praises the piety of a saint through their physical description (“ <i>mälk ʾä</i> ” means “likeness”).
<i>ganen</i> (pl. <i>ʾaganənt</i> )	ጋኔን ፣ አጋንንት ፡	a demon (i.e., the Christian δαίμων); in later literature, <i>Däsk</i> , <i>Dino</i> , <i>Gʾədale</i> , etc. are explicitly labelled as <i>ʾaganənt</i> ; cf. Arabic <i>ǧinn</i> . <sup>2</sup>
<i>mäʾansəb(an)</i>	መዐንስብ ፡ (መዐንስባን ፡)	a diviner, perhaps one who casts lots; the term, found in the <i>Sinodos</i> (Tx. p. 68 = Vs. p. 33), is likely derived from the Arabic <i>naṣīb</i> (“fate, luck”); cf. Tigre <i>näsib</i> (“luck”) and the obscure Gəʾəz verb <i>näsäbä</i> (“to measure/count (one’s portion)”).
<i>ma ʾəmər</i> (pl. <i>-ran</i> )	ማአምር ፣ -ራን ፡	an augur or medium.
<i>mari</i> (pl. <i>maryan/maryat</i> )	ማሪ ፣ ማርያን/ ማርያት ፡	a heathen priest or magician (m.).

<sup>1</sup> The origin of this title is the monumental inscriptions of King ʾEzana of ʾAksum, the first Ethiopian ruler to convert to Christianity, who, seeking to replace the many-named pagan deities of his previous inscriptions, referred to God as እግዚአ ፡ ብሔር ፡ (“Lord of Earth”), እግዚአ ፡ ሰማይ ፡ (“Lord of Heaven”), and እግዚአ ፡ ኩሉ ፡ (“Lord of All”) (See Merid Wolde Aregay, “ʾĒgziʾabäher,” in *EAE*, s.v.).

<sup>2</sup> Although ጋኔን ፡ and ǧinn share the same Semitic root, شياطين are demons, not ǧinn. This is sometimes seen in Gəʾəz, that is to say, ሰይጣን ፡, usually reserved for the Devil, is sometimes used in the plural (ሰይጣናት ፡) to mean አጋንንት ፡. The suggestion by Ephraim Isaac (*Text-Critical Introduction*, p. 85, n. 3) of a connection between ዲኖ ፡ and ǧinn (which he misspells رجن) is baseless; the name is rather derived from Syriac.

GLOSSARY

<i>marit</i> (pl. <i>maritat</i> )	ማሪት ፣ ማሪታት ፡	a heathen priest or magician (f.).
<i>mart</i>	ማርት ፡	see <i>mari</i> and <i>marit</i> above.
<i>mäsarray</i> (pl. <i>-yan</i> )	መሣርይ ፣ -ያን ፡	a magician or sorcerer who practices <i>šaray</i> ; synonymous with <i>säb’ä šaray</i> (“men of <i>šaray</i> ”); often used to translate φάρμακος and γόης.
<i>mäšhaf</i>	መጽሐፍ ፡	a book; often in <i>status constructus</i> as <i>Mäšhafä</i> ... (“Book of ...”); can also refer to other written things.
<i>mästäqasəm</i>	መስተቃስም ፡	a type of divination or augury; in the <i>ፕማሪ ፕጌስት</i> , Balaam, who is called a <i>mäsägal</i> (see <i>sägäl</i> below), is implied to have practiced <i>mästäqasəm</i> .
<i>mäṭa’awi</i> (pl. <i>-wəyan</i> )	መጣዓዊ ፣ -ውያን ፡	a person who worships a <i>ta’ot</i> , an idolater; synonymous with <i>mämläke ta’ot</i> (“one who worships idol[s],” “idol-worshipper”).
<i>Qädam(it) Sänbät</i>	ቀዳሚት ፡ ሰንበት ፡ (ቀዳም ፡ ሰንበት ፡)	“ <i>The First/Original/Ancient Sabbath</i> ,” refers to the custom of observing Saturday (in addition to Sunday) as the Sabbath.
<i>rä’ayi</i> (pl. <i>rä’ayt</i> )	ረኣዩ ፣ ረኣይት ፡	act. ppl. of “to observe,” refers to an astrologer; often “ <i>rä’ayä kokäb</i> ” (“one who observes the stars”).
<i>sägäl</i> (pl. <i>-lat</i> )	ሰገል ፣ -ላት ፡	a form of divination or augury; <i>säb’ä sägäl</i> are diviners; the Magi from the Gospel Nativity account are called <i>säb’ä sägäl</i> .
<i>šaray</i>	ሥራይ ፡	magic, specifically spell or charm magic (as opposed to divination); often used to translate φάρμακον; Simon Magus, the quintessential magician in Christian tradition, is said to have practiced <i>šaray</i> (Acts 8:9); can also have a positive connotation (often one of healing); see <i>mäsarray</i> above.
<i>ta’ot</i> (pl. <i>-tat</i> )	ጣዖት ፣ -ታት ፡	an idol; see <i>mäṭa’awi</i> above.
<i>tänq’ali</i> (pl. <i>-ləyan</i> )	ጠንቋሊ ፣ -ልያን ፡	a kind of soothsayer or diviner; never mentioned in Scriptural quotations, only in rhetorical arguments and addresses.
<i>ṭomar</i>	ጦማር ፡	a small tract or epistle; cf. Greek τομάριον; note that, as in Greek, which uses ἐπιστολή, “ <i>ṭomar</i> ” is not used to refer to the Scriptural epistles, but rather “ <i>mäl’äkt</i> .”

See Chapter 1.3: *Magic in the Time of Zär’ä Yäṣqob* for a discussion on the various terms used to refer to practitioners of magic and the names of prominent demon cults (*Däsk*, *Dino*, *G’ädale*, *ፕፊላንት*, *Mäqawəze*).

Note that the *status constructus* in Gə’əz (used for genitive constructions) is formed with the suffix *-ä* (sometimes lengthened to *-a*). Additionally, note that some genitive relationships can also be indicated using the clitic preposition *lä-* and the clitic relative pronoun *zä-*.