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A Brief Description of the Manuscripts of the Chronicle of Mənilək II

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to discover untapped versions of the chronicle of Mənilək II by carrying out a thorough research and provide a detailed description of the manuscripts in relation to scribal habits and characteristics. Researches on the chronicle of Mənilək II are very recent and limited. Even these limited researches have not provided us the physical description of these manuscripts. Although they mention the existence of the manuscript of the IES (MS I) and the manuscript of the NALA (MS N), most of them have no knowledge even about the existence of the manuscript of Däbrä Şäge (MS D). The main sources used for this research are the extant manuscripts of the chronicle of Mənilək II. But other primary and secondary sources are also used for the introductory part. Attempts were made to find out other versions of the chronicle. Thus, the untapped version of the chronicle of Mənilək II, MS D, has been discovered in the monastery of Däbrä Qəddus Däbrä Şäge Maryam, northwest of Addis Ababa, due to these attempts. After months of enduring effort, this version of the chronicle was fortunately found in the untidy storehouse of the church dumped as trash. The descriptive method has been employed to describe the extant manuscript copies of the chronicle of Mənilək II. The whole texts of the three extant manuscripts were collated using manual collation. The collation of the texts of the three extant manuscripts helped to present a description of the manuscripts and the scribal habits and characteristics. The quality of the script, the shape and size of letters, the style of writing, the number of scribes in each manuscript copy, the existence or absence of illustrations and decorations, pagination or foliation, and types of inks used have been studied in detail. The age and author of the manuscripts has also been presented. The investigation of MS D, MS I and MS N shows that the general condition of MS D is good. This manuscript is less exposed to damages and spots than other manuscript copies. MS D is also the only complete manuscript among the extant manuscripts of the chronicle of Mənilək II while MS I and MS N omit several folios. The study also indicates close resemblance between the paleographical features of this script and the handwriting of the twentieth century except some unique paleographical features. MS I is characterized by several short blank spaces resulted from the deletion of mistakenly written words and phrases. Moreover, several folios in the manuscript are in precarious condition as the binding becomes loose because of the readers' lack of consideration. The finding also shows that dirty marks resulted from touching with sweaty hands appear in MS N occasionally. Signs of tearing and detaching are also observed on some folios.

Keywords: Extant manuscripts-paleographical features-scribal habits- parchment-complete text

1. Introduction

Ethiopian royal chronicles began to be composed as early as the 14th century.¹ The first known royal chronicle was the chronicle of Emperor Amdä Şəyon (r. 1314-1344). This chronicle narrates Amdä Şəyon's campaign against the Muslim sultanates. The second royal chronicle in Ethiopian historiography was the chronicle of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob. Then other royal chronicles were written.² The chroniclers who composed royal chronicles praised the king's deeds and Ethiopian chronicles revolve around the emperor's historical genealogical continuity, coronation, campaigns and expeditions, appointments and dismissals of officials, the establishment of towns and churches, land proclamations, resolution of religious and socio-political disputes, and problem of succession.³

Although the royal chronicles of Ethiopia are based on facts, they also include legends as they begin by narrating the genealogy of the reigning king going back to a distant past. They focus on the major political events that happened in the court and its environs placing little emphasis on economic and social issues.⁴ The reigning king mostly approves the chronicle written contemporaneously with the events. Thus,

the chroniclers are liable to make biases in favor of the king rather than treating the issue rationally.⁵ They gave emphasis to the achievements of the king, which they ascribed to God's will.⁶

To a certain extent, however, there were conditions in which the chronicles were written after the time of the events what the chroniclers describe elapsed. The authors of these groups of chronicles had freedom to describe the event without the influence of the king.⁷ For example, the chronicle of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob, written after his death, mentions the sufferings of the people of Ethiopia from the Emperor's severe measures. However, the accuracy and specificity of these kinds of chronicles is questionable due to the gap of time between the happenings of events and their description.⁸ But it does not mean that the chronicles written contemporaneously with the events are always accurate and authentic.

Ethiopian royal chronicles have many common features. They begin with በስመ አብ ወወልድ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ ፩ አምላክ:: (In the name of the Father, the

¹ Hussein Ahmed, "The Chronicle of Menilek II of Ethiopia: A Brief Assessment of its Versions," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. XVI (July 1983), p. 75.

² Sevir Chernetsov, "Ethiopian Historiography," *Encyclopaedia Aethiopia* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), III, 41b-45b.

³ Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Royal Chronicle* (Addis Ababa: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. xii.

⁴ Hussein, p. 75.

⁵ Pankhurst, p. xii; Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270* (Addis Ababa: United Printers, 1972), p. 2.

⁶ Sevir Chernetsov, "Medieval Ethiopian Historiographers and their Methods," *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies* (Moscow, 1988), p. 193.

⁷ Pankhurst, p. xii.

⁸ James McCann, "The Ethiopian Chronicles as Documentary Tradition: Description and Methodology," *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Session B* (Chicago, 1979), p. 390.

Son and the Holy Spirit, one God).⁹ But *Aläqa Zännäb*'s chronicle of Tewodros II does not begin with this sentence.¹⁰ The chronicles describe in depth the main events of the court and adulate the deeds of the king blaming his enemies and contenders.¹¹

Regarding the language of the texts, Gə 'əz was consistently used until the middle of the nineteenth century. It was during the reign of Tewodros II that chronicles began to be written in Amharic.¹² All the three chronicles of Tewodros II, written by *Aläqa Zännäb*, *Aläqa Wäldä Maryam* and an anonymous writer, and the chronicle of Mənilək II were written in Amharic as opposed to their precursors.¹³

Although Ethiopian royal chronicles have weaknesses, they are still valuable source materials to reconstruct the history of Ethiopia. They provide us valuable information about the attitudes and actions of the kings and their enemies. The existence of such chronicles partially eased the lack of source materials internal to the nation. They are useful in checking European secondary sources.¹⁴ However, some of such royal chronicles were lost due

to local wars, theft by enemy forces and poor management.¹⁵

Beginning from the first half of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, several Ethiopian chronicles were edited and translated into different European languages such as Latin, French, English, German, Italian, Portuguese and Russian.¹⁶ The translation and edition of these chronicles, which contain the history of individual kings and the accounts of the story of their genealogical continuity, has a paramount importance for the study of the medieval and modern Ethiopian history.¹⁷

The chronicles of the medieval period of Ethiopia, and the chronicles of Tewodros II and Yoḥannəs IV among the chronicles of modern period have been comparatively well researched. However, less emphasis has been placed on the chronicle of Mənilək II. The history of research on the chronicle of Mənilək II is very recent and limited. European scholars have embarked on the editions and translations of Ethiopian chronicles, but with little emphasis on the chronicle of Mənilək II. *Abba Täsfa Šəllase*¹⁸ should get credit for his translation of the chronicle of Mənilək II into French. Having sought *Abba Täsfa Šəllase*'s help for the translation of this manuscript copy into French, De Coppet was able to publish it in

⁹ Ignazio Guidi, ed., *Annales Iohannes I, Iyäsü I et Bakäffä, Texte Traduction* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1903), p. 60; Paolo Marrassini, ed., *Loscetto e la croce: La campagna di 'Amda Seyon I contro l'Ifat (1332)* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1993), p. 50.

¹⁰ Enno Littmann, ed., *The Chronicle of King Theodore of Abyssinia: Edited from the Berlin Manuscript with Translation and Notes* (New York: The University Library, 1902), p. 1.

¹¹ Hussein, p. 75; Pankhurst, pp. xii-xiii.

¹² Hussein, p. 75; Sven Rubenson, *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976), p. 21.

¹³ Chernetsov, 2007, 41b-45b.

¹⁴ Rubenson, pp. 20-21.

¹⁵ Hussein, p. 75.

¹⁶ Pankhurst, p. xvi.

¹⁷ Hussein, pp. 75-76.

¹⁸ Abba Täsfa Šəllase Wäldä Gäräma became a Catholic priest after he had pursued the Catholic Church education at the Lazarist Missionary school of Alitena and his conversion to Catholicism (Tedros Abraha, "Täsfa Šəllase Wäldä Gäräma," *Encyclopaedia Aethiopia* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), IV, 870a-871a).

two volumes in 1930 and 1931. The scope of De Coppet's published work is limited to translating one copy of the chronicle of Mənilək II into French and annotating it without providing its physical description, the first part of a philological research.

Hussein Ahmed in his work entitled *The Chronicle of Menilek II of Ethiopia: A Brief Assessment of its Versions* is another scholar who has conducted research on the chronicle of Mənilək II, but he does not provide us the physical description of the extant manuscript copies though he describes the general position of the manuscripts found in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES MS. 696) and in the National Archives and Library Agency (MS No.198). He also mentions the manuscript found in the monastery of Däbrä Şəge (MS D), but he has not attempted to find it and make part of his brief overview of the manuscript.

The chronicle of Mənilək II is one of the Ethiopian royal chronicles, which is indispensable for the reconstruction of the modern history of Ethiopia. It requires an extensive research to make it useable and accessible to the researchers. It was written by Şəhəfe Tə'əzaz Gäbrä Şəllase Wäldä Arägay who won the Emperor's favor and confidence. Gäbrä Şəllase follows the style of narration of events. He ascribes the achievements of Mənilək II to God's will as he was influenced by his fanatical devotion to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Apart from these problems of the chronicle, several changes were made by scribes during copying. This needs to ask the question for what purpose these changes were made. Moreover, the development of Amharic language and considerable changes

in its vocabulary has made several sentences of this text very obscure. This is another motivating factor to carry out a philological research on this chronicle. The physical description of this valuable chronicle of Mənilək II has not yet been studied at all. Thus, its originality and relevance along with my interest have motivated me to conduct this research on the chronicle of Mənilək II.

The descriptive method is employed to describe the extant manuscript copies of the chronicle of Mənilək II. It is a qualitative descriptive approach which helps to provide a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the physical condition and nature of the extant manuscript copies of the chronicle. The method involves collecting the extant manuscript copies of the chronicle of Mənilək II through documentation and describing the collected manuscript copies to gain insights into the chronicle of Mənilək II.

The copies of the existing manuscripts have been obtained after showing a remarkable endurance during fieldworks in churches, monasteries and libraries. I have discovered three manuscript copies from two libraries and a monastery, Däbrä Qəddus Däbrä Şəge Maryam. These are: የብራና ታሪክ ነገሥት ከመንግሥተ አዜብ እስከ ኢያሱ (Yäbranna Tarikä Nägästä Kämängəstä Azeb Əskä Iyyasu, "Parchment Royal Chronicle from the Reign of Azeb to Iyyasu"), IES MS. 696, የዳግማዊ ምኒልክ ዜና-መዋዕል ዋናው አብነት [20^{ኛው} ክ/ዘ መግቢያ] (YäDagmawi Mənilək Zena Mäwa'äl Wannaw Abənnät [Hayaññaw Kəflä Zämän

Mägbiya, “The Original Chronicle of Mənilək II [Early 20th Century]”), and the National Archives and Library Agency (NALA). No.198, ታሪክ የዳግማዊ፡ አፄ፡ ምኒልክ፡ በገብረ፡ ሥላሴ) (Tarik: YäDagmawi Aṣe Mənilək: Bägäbrä Šəllase, “History: Emperor Mənilək II: By Gäbrä Šəllase”). These manuscripts are identified by the sigla D, I and N respectively. The sigla (singular siglum) are used to represent manuscripts rather than writing their full name. Thus, capital letters are commonly used as substitute for the names of the extant manuscripts. The sigla can be chosen by chance or by taking the first letter of its name.¹⁹ With respect to this study, the designation of a siglum to each manuscript is made by taking the first letter of its owner institution or a monastery.

Thus, the study of the physical description of the chronicle of Mənilək II is based on these three manuscript copies. The main objective of the research is to discover untapped versions of the chronicle of Mənilək II, identify the extant manuscripts and provide a detailed description of the manuscripts *vis-à-vis* the scribal habits and characteristics that will serve as a reference for further broad and detailed philological investigations and the study of Ethiopian historiography on the chronicle of Mənilək II. This article attempts to describe the nature of the material on which the text is composed and its dimension, age of the colophon, the material composition, number of pages, hands, disposition of the writing, special features, illustrations and

decorations, general conditions, name of the author, incipit and explicit, name of the copyists and the philological evaluation of the text.

2. MS D

The untapped version of the chronicle of Mənilək II, MS D, has been discovered in the monastery of Däbrä Qəddus Däbrä Şəge Maryam, northwest of Addis Ababa, after carrying out a thorough search in churches, monasteries, archival centers and private hands. Hussein has only mentioned the existence of the manuscript copy of Däbrä Şəge in the monastery of Däbrä Qəddus Däbrä Şəge Maryam without confirming the existence of this manuscript copy by visiting the monastery. Other scholars have not yet made mention of its existence. Only the editors of *Tarik Zämän ZäDagmawi Mənilək: Nəguṣä Nəgäšt Zä’Ityopəya* have provided us a vital clue about its existence. Even after the publication of *Tarik Zämän ZäDagmawi Mənilək: Nəguṣä Nəgäšt Zä’Ityopəya* in 1966/1967 until I found it in 2014, any researcher had no access to MS D. Reading related literatures and my repeated fieldwork to the monastery of Däbrä Şəge in 2014 helped me to prove that scholars have not attempted to consult it. Lack of interest to study the chronicle of Mənilək II and the location of the monastery in the rural area of Sälale district seem to have MS D been neglected. My greatest enthusiasm for the study of this manuscript along with the other two manuscripts and my enduring request to get it made my attempt fruitful.

Even the head of the monastery of Däbrä Qəddus Däbrä Şəge Maryam and the keeper of the storehouse of the monastery were not aware of the presence of this manuscript

¹⁹ Alessandro Bausi, ed., *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction* (Hamburg: COMSt, 2015), p. 331.

there when I asked them for permission to use it for research. They had no information about the existence of this manuscript there and they told me the futility of attempting to get it. It was after four-repeated visiting of the monastery and six months enduring effort that the untapped version of the chronicle of Mənilək II was fortunately found in the untidy storehouse of the church dumped as trash.

Amharic is the language of this uncatalogued manuscript though Gə'əz is also used occasionally to quote the words of the Scriptures.²⁰ Measuring 28 × 22 cm, the parchment is covered with wooden boards. This parchment seems presumably to have been prepared from a goat skin. There is variation in the thickness of the parchment as a few folios are thinner than the regularly scraped ones. The text is written on two columns and each column has 25 lines except rare cases. F (folio) 11, for instance, contains only 21 lines while f. 95v (verso) and f. 96r (recto) contain 33 and 34 lines, respectively. As far as these additional lines are concerned, the space between lines is unusually narrower than the columns with 25 lines. The size of the script too decreases incredibly in comparison with the script of the other folios. The space between the two columns measures 1.5 cm. The upper margin of each folio is 4 cm while the lower margin measures 6 cm. The manuscript consists of 177 folios though 7 of them are blank leaves. Four folios from the beginning and two leaves at the end are left blank. There is also one blank folio between the table of

²⁰*Ṣāhāfe Tə'əzaz* Gäbrä Śəllase has quoted several Gə'əz words and even sentences and passages mostly from the Psalms and the Gospel.

contents and the text. Two types of inks, black and red, are used in the manuscript. The red ink is used to write titles and, names of the royal family and saints.

The top margin of f. 11r where the text starts is decorated with a rectangular illustration. Pictures of cross are embroidered on this illustration. The colors used for decoration are black, blue, pale red and yellow whose combination makes the illustration an abstract. This drawing rests just above the two columns. The space between this illustration and the first line of the folio is equal to the space between the lines of the manuscript. The drawing is also extended downward from its right and left tips to bound the eight lines of both columns. Neither the author's name nor name of the scribe is mentioned. There is no also indication of year of copying. Only the time when Ms D was given to its owner institution, the monastery of Däbrä Qəddus Däbrä Ṣəge Maryam (January 1949), is mentioned. The general condition of the manuscript is good. This manuscript is less exposed to damages and spots than other manuscript copies. But blanks are seen in some folios. Obvious examples of these blanks are found on f. 57v and f. 58r.²¹

²¹ Corresponding to this blank space, the Amharic publication of the chronicle of Mənilək II incorporates some Amharic letters known as the strange letters. These letters are said to have been issued by Mənilək II. No space has been left in MS I, but MS N leaves a large blank space similar to MS D. All the three manuscripts, however, unanimously mention Mənilək's attempt to add these strange letters. But none of them writes these letters. It seems that the scribes of MS D and MS N left these spaces in an intention to write these letters as soon as they finish the writing of their respective text. But with

unknown reason both scribes fail to fill the reserved spaces.



Figure 1. f. 11r-Look at how the illustration rests just above the two columns.

Incipit: በሰመ: አብ: ወወልድ:
 ወመንፈስ: ቅዱስ: ሷአምላክ:
 አብን: ወላዲ: ወልድን: ተወላዲ:
 መንፈስ: ቅዱስን: ሠራጺ: ብለን:
 በአብ: በወልድ: በመንፈስ:
 ቅዱስ: ስም: ሠለሱቱ: አካላት:
 አሐዱ: አምላክ: ብለን: አምነን:
 በእግዚአብሔር: አጋዥነት:
 የኢትዮጵያን: ነገሥታት: ታሪክ:
 ከምሉ: በ[ከፊ]ሉ: ከብዙ:
 በጥቂቱ: እንጽፋለን:

Explicit: ዝንቱ: መጽሐፈ: ታሪክ:
 ዘወሀባ: ብጽዕ: አቡነ: ባስልዮስ:
 ጳጳስ:²² ዘሸዋ: እጩጌ: ዘደብረ:
 ሊባኖስ: ለደብር: ቅዱስ: ደብረ:
 ጽጌ: ማርያም: እንተ: ይእቲ:
 ቅርብታ: ለደብረ: ሊባኖስ: መካነ:
 ዐጽመ: ለአቡነ: ተክለ:
 ሃይማኖት: በመዋዕለ: መንግሥቱ:
 ለኃይለ: ሥላሴ: ንጉሠ: ነገሥት:
 ዘኢትዮጵያ: ከመ: ይኩኖ:
 ለስርዖተ: ንጢአት: ወመርሐ:
 ለመንግሥተ: ሰማያት: በጸሎታ:
 በእግዚእትነ: ማርያም: ሰኣሊተ:
 ምሕረ[ት]: ወበምሕረተ: ፍቁር:
 ወልዳ: ኢየሱስ: ክርስቶስ: ንጉሠ:
 ስብሐት: ለዓለመ: ዓለም: አሜን:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we believe in one God. Saying the Father is the bearer, the Son is the born and the Holy Spirit is the one who proceeds, and believing in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who are the three bodies and one God, we write the history of Ethiopian kings, in part rather than in whole, briefly rather than at length, with the help of God.

²² Abunä Basalyos was known as Gäbrä Giyorgis before he became Abunä Basalyos in 1948. He was born from his father *Däbtära* Wäldä Ṣadəq Sälonon and his mother *Wäyžäro* Wälättä Maryam Bayyu in March 1892 in Mida Wäräda, northern Šäwa. He became *ጸጵጵ* in 1935 and the first native Ethiopian Patriarch in 1966/1967 (Märsəḥ Ḥazän Wäldä Qirqos, *Qädamawi Ḥaylä Šällase* 1922-1927 (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2009 E.C.), pp. 242-243).

**:ወተውሀቡተሂ: በ፲ወ፱፻፵፱ወ፩ዓመ:
አመ: ጳወ፩ ለጥር: በሰላመ:
እግዚአብሔር: አሜን::**

This history book is what His Holiness our father Basalyos, Bishop of Šäwa [and] Ἐḩḩäge of Däbrä Libanos, gave to Däbrä Qəddus Däbrä Şəge Maryam which is near to Däbrä Libanos, which is the graveyard of our father, Abunä Täklä Haymanot, during the reign of ḩaylä Şällase, King of Kings of Ethiopia, for it to be the remission of his sin and the guide to heaven. By the prayer of Saint Mary who beseeches for mercy, and by the mercy of Her Beloved Son Jesus Christ, King of glory. Amen. And it was given on 21 of ፒፕ፻፲፱ Year of Grace by the will of God. Amen.

Just below this colophon (f. 175v), there is a round seal bearing **እጩጌ: ወጳጳስ: አባ:
ባስልዮስ: ዘደብረ: ሊባኖስ: መንበረ:
ተክለ: ሃይማኖት:**

Abba Basalyos, Ἐḩḩäge and Bishop of Däbrä Libanos, seat of Täklä Haymanot.

MS D contains two types of page numbers written by different hands other than the scribe of the text. Both groups are Arabic numerals presumably written later on the completion of the copying of the text. One of these groups of numbering appears at the top left-hand corner of f. 5r where the table of contents starts and correctly continues up to f. 175v where the text ends. The second group of numbering, on the other hand, begins at the top center of f. 5v and only even numbers from 2 up to 350 appear only

on the verso side of each folio. With regard to this group of numbering, each even number is written on 2 × 1.5 cm pieces of paper and glued onto the folios.

When we come to the title of the manuscript, the short sentence **ታሪክ: ነው** (Tarik Näw, ‘It is History’) is written on a piece of paper and stuck on the front of the hard wood cover of the manuscript. The title **የብራና ታሪክ ነገስት ከመንግስተ አዜብ እስከ ኢያሱ**²³ (Yäbranna Tarikä Nägäst Kämängöstä Azeb Ἐskä Iyyasu, Parchment Royal Chronicle from the Reign of Azeb to Iyyasu) is also written on another piece of paper and fastened on the hard wood cover just below this short sentence. These titles are written in blue ink apparently by another scribe some time later. The owner monastery seems to have been involved in the writing of these titles. Although it is difficult to prove whether the two titles are written about the same time or not by observation alone, the second one seems to have been made as a correction since it is more expository title.

The script of MS D is neat, attractive and highly readable. But change in the shape and size of letters in the text clearly observed. This is a presumptive evidence to ascribe the copying of this manuscript to two scribes.²⁴ There is close resemblance between the paleographical features of this script and the handwriting of the twentieth century except

²³ He was Emperor Mənilək’s grandson and successor who was born from his mother Šäwarägga Mənilək and his father *Ras* (later *Nəguś*) Mika’el, governor of Wällo (Gobäze ፒaffätä, *Abba Tena Iyyasu* (Addis Ababa: Impress Printing Press, 2008 E.C.), p. 55).

²⁴ In connection with this change in scribe, copying errors become frequent in comparison with the previous scribe.

some unique paleographical features. In this manuscript copy, **ዠ** is rarely used instead of **ጅ**. For instance, ነሹብ (hyena) is used instead of ጅብ. Furthermore, **ዠ** is built by repeating the two slanting lines on the right and left side of the top to the bottom of the two legs. The shape of **ል** is also peculiar and unattractive as its ring is poorly formed.

The scribes usually avoid the use of **ሷ**, **ሸ**, **ሹ**, **ሺ**, **ሻ**, **ሼ**, **ሽ**, **ሾ**, **ሿ** and so forth. They write, for

instance, ተከተሉዋት for ተከተሏት; መታመምዋን for መታመሟን; ከሀገሩዋ for ከሀገሯ; ምግቡዋን for ምግቧን; መምጣትዋን for መምጣቷን and so on. This MS also contains certain peculiar letters, which confuse readers to identify. For instance, **ገ** resembles **ጊ**. There is similarity between **ለ** and **ዕ**, **ሰ** and **ዕ**, **ፀ** and **ዕ**, **ባ** and **ፀ**, **ባ** and **ለ**, **ሌ** and **ፈ**, **ሲ** and **ሴ**, **ሰ** and **ሴ**, **አ** and **ኔ**, **ደ** and **ጸ**, **ጂ** and **ጃ**, and so on.

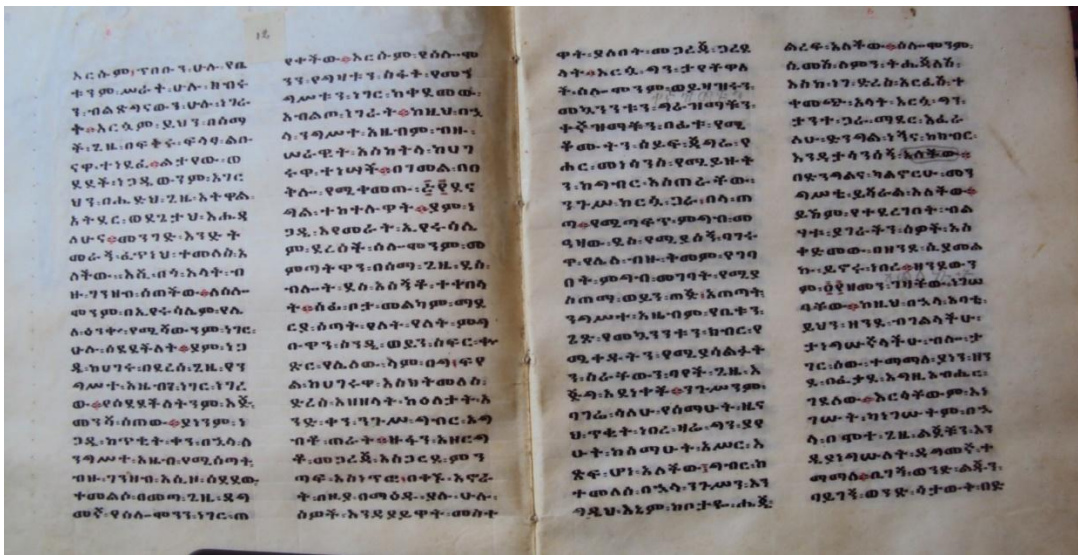


Figure 2. f. 11v and f. 12r- Look at on f. 11v in the right-hand column lines 6, 9, 12, 15, 16 and 18 to prove how the scribe avoid the use of **ሷ**, **ሸ**, **ሹ**, **ሺ**, **ሻ**, **ሼ**, **ሽ**, **ሾ**, **ሿ** and so on.

MS D is the only complete manuscript among the extant manuscripts of the chronicle of Mənilək II by comprising all seventy-eight chapters of the chronicle. From f. 11r to f. 27v, this manuscript contains the legends of the *Kəbrä Nəgāšt*, the fall of the Zag^we dynasty, the “restoration of the Solomonid” dynasty and the medieval history of Ethiopia up to 1559. The rise and expansion of the kingdom of Šäwa, the campaign of Tewodros II to Šäwa and the arrest of Mənilək, Mənilək’s escape

from Mäqdäla and his reign as the king of the kingdom of Šäwa, the genealogy of Empress Taytu Bəṭul and Mənilək’s relations with Yoḥannəs IV have been presented from f. 27v to f. 85v. From f. 86r to f. 175r exist the description of the coronation of Mənilək as king of kings, his campaign to Təgray, the Great Famine, the marriage between Šäwarägga Mənilək and Ras Mika’el, the construction of churches, Mənilək’s campaigns to Dawuro, Konta, Limmu and Wälayətta, the campaign of Adwa, the campaign to Käfa, the

incorporation of Borāna, Asosa and Beni Šangul, the illness of Mənilək and the designation of *Ləḡ* Iyyasu.

3. MS I (IES Ms. 696)

MS I is found in the manuscript section of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES). The language of this manuscript is Amharic, but occasionally Gə'əz is also used when mention is made to Biblical words. The manuscript is written on parchment likely prepared from a goat skin. This manuscript is covered with wooden boards and measures 25.5 × 20cm. The text is written on two columns and each column has 19 lines except some folios. Among these exceptional folios, f. 19r contains only 17 lines while folios from 91r to 93v contain 18 lines. F. 41, on the contrary, contains 23 lines. Additional lines are also made during correction by the same scribe. F. 46va, for instance, has 20 lines due to the addition of one line during correction. Similar additions of lines are also made on f. 63vb, f. 256vb, f. 265ra and f. 272rb. As opposed to this kind of addition of lines, some lines have been left blank due to corrections by erasure. These types of blanks appear on f. 23vb, f. 33vb, f. 34vb, f. 61ra, f. 86ra, f. 92rb, f. 121rb and va, f. 145vb, f. 147vb, f. 162vb and f. 258rb. MS I has 350 numbered folios and 10 unnumbered blank leaves. These unnumbered blank folios are found at the end. Four folios next to f. 1 do not contain any writing although they are given folio number. Similarly, other six numbered blank leaves exist between the table of contents and the text.

Black and red inks are used in the manuscript, but none of the folios in the

manuscript is decorated with illustration. Similar to the scribes of the other manuscripts of the chronicle, the copyist (s) of this manuscript used red ink to write titles, and names of saints and the royal family. Red and black inks are used alternately even within a single word. In the name **ጾኒልክ**, for instance, **ጾ** and **ል** are written in red while **ኒ** and **ክ** are written in black. In the table of contents, many of the names and titles of kings and names of saints are written in the same way. From f. 337v to the last folio, however, the use of red ink is totally abandoned. From this folio onwards, names of kings, queens and saints are omitted and their places remain lacuna. Similarly, chapters and titles starting from chapter seventy-four are missed out both in the table of contents and in the text. Moreover, their places are left blank. It can be presumed that when the scribe lacked red ink, he intended to write titles, and names of saints and the royal family when could get it later by leaving their places blank. However, when he finished his copying he forgot writing down these titles and names even in black ink.

There is no indication of year of copying and the name of the scribe. Moreover, no mention is made when and who donated this manuscript to the Library of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. The colophon at the end of the text contains only a short sentence saying **ይህንን፡ ላሳሰበልን፡ ለእግዚአብሔር፡ ክብር፡ ጾስጋና፡ ይሁን፡ ለዘለዓለም፡ አሜን፡፡** (Praise be to God forever who reminds this. Amen).

MS I is also characterized by several short blank spaces resulted from the deletion of

mistakenly written words and phrases.²⁵ Several folios in the manuscript are in precarious condition as the binding becomes loose because of the readers' lack of consideration. F. 218 and f. 221 previously detached though they are still kept there in the right sequence.

Incipit: በሰዎ፡ አብ፡ ወወልድ፡
ወመንፈስ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ሷአምላክ፡
አብን፡ ወላዲ፡ ወልድን፡ ተወላዲ፡
መንፈስ፡ ቅዱስን፡ ሠራጺ፡ ብለን፡
በአብ፡ በወልድ፡ በመንፈስ፡
ቅዱስ፡ ስም፡ ሠለስቱ፡ አካላት፡
አሐዱ፡ አምላክ፡ ብለን፡ አምነን፡
በእግዚአብሔር፡ አጋዥነት፡
የኢትዮጵያን፡ ነገሥታት፡ ታሪክ፡
ከምሉ፡ በ[ክፊ]ሉ፡ ከብዙ፡
በጥቂቱ፡ እንጽፋለን፡፡

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we believe in one God. Saying the Father is the bearer, the Son is the born and the Holy Spirit is the one who proceeds, and believing in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who are the three bodies and one God, we write the history of Ethiopian kings, in part rather than in whole, briefly rather than at length, with the help of God.

Explicit: ይህንን፡ ላላሰበልን፡
ለእግዚአብሔር፡ ክብር፡ ምስጋና፡ ይሁን፡
ለዘለዓለም፡ አሜን፡፡

²⁵ Some of these blanks are found on f. 19v, f. 20v, f. 22v, f. 27v, f. 29r, f. 30r, f. 36v, f. 44v, f. 50r, f. 54v, f. 56v, f. 65r, f. 70, f. 80v, f. 81v, f. 86r, f. 93v and f. 101v. As far as this manuscript is concerned, several corrections are made by different hands.

Praise be to God forever who reminds this. Amen.

Numbering starts at the bottom right-hand corner of the first blank folio and running to folio number 350. However, f. 350 is blank similar to 10 unnumbered leaves following it. The folio numbers are Arabic numerals, but all numbers used in the text as well as in the table of contents are Gə‘əz numerals. It gives clue that the foliation was done by another hand after the completion of the copying of the manuscript. The gold painted lion figure seal of Ḥaylā Šəllase I appears at the top of a number of folios. This imperial lion figure seal has the motto, ሞ[አ]፡ አንበሳ፡ ዘእም፡ ነገድ፡ ይሁዳ (‘[Conquering] Lion of the Tribe of Judah’²⁶).

The manuscript is foliated in blue ink. This foliation runs correctly up to f. 15, but number 15 is mistakenly repeated on f. 16.²⁷ More than that, f. 181 is mistakenly made 280. But this inaccurate foliation starting from f. 181 onwards has been corrected in pen by another hand, supposedly by the owner institution. The correction seems to have been done after the microfilming work was accomplished because the microfilm copy escapes this recent correction. Furthermore, the foliation has another error as number 327 comes next to 328.

²⁶ It is found at the top of f. 4r, f. 5r, f. 6r, f. 7r, f. 8r, f. 20r, f. 21r, f. 22r, f. 23r, f. 32r and continues up to f. 333r at these irregular intervals. A round seal of the Library of Ḥaylā Šəllase I is also stamped on f. 1r and f. 3r. A round stamp of Addis Ababa University lies only at the bottom of f. 6r.

²⁷ From f. 16 to f. 350, therefore, the foliation decreases by one from the actual folio of the manuscript.

The title of MS I has been printed on a piece of paper and put between the hard wood cover and the first folio. But since it is not attached, it is sometimes found in other places when readers displace it. This long title is presumably given later by the Library of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES).

MS I has typical features as far as its script is concerned. Curiously and inappropriately a sheep's horn like form of ግ is occasionally repeated at the bottom. The left-hand side legs of the second and the third orders of ጸ are shorter than their right-hand side legs similar to the fourth order in a highly distinctive style. This typical feature is also observed to the second and the third orders of ጸ. The vowel marker of the sixth order of ዐ is uniquely repeated to its lower part though it is shorter than the upper part. The three legs of ጠ are sometimes approaching to converge at their base and when this incident occurs, ጠ looks like ዐ. Irregularly, ጠ is also similar to its fourth and seventh orders. Every so often, it is difficult to discriminate ተ from ቀ, ቱ from ቁ, ለ from ዕ, ቦ from ዐ, ዳ from ቶ, ሰ from ሴ, ሰ from ስ, ለ from ለ, ዘ from ዘ, ጠ from ጠ and so forth.

Bearing in mind the omission of a few chapters in the table of contents, MS I contains all the seventy-eight chapters of the chronicle of Mənilək II as far as its text is concerned. The table of contents is presented from f. 6r to f. 12v. From f. 19r to f. 42r, the manuscript narrates the legends of the *Kəbrä Nəgäšt* and discusses briefly the fall of the Zag^we dynasty, the “restoration of the Solomonic” dynasty and the medieval history of Ethiopia. The rise and expansion

of the kingdom of Šäwa, the campaign of Tewodros II to Šäwa and the arrest of Mənilək, Mənilək's escape from Mäqdäla and his reign as the king of Šäwa, the genealogy of Empress Taytu Bəṭul and the fall of Yoḥannəs IV have been described from f. 42r to f. 158r. From f. 158r to f. 349v, exist the description of the coronation of Mənilək as king of kings, his campaign to Təgray, the Great Famine, the marriage between Šäwarägga Mənilək and *Ras* Mika'el, the construction of churches, Mənilək's campaigns to Dawuro, Konta, Limmu and Wälayətta, the campaign of Adwa, the campaign to Käfa, the incorporation of Boräna, Asosa and Beni Šangul, the illness of Mənilək and the designation of *Ləğ* Iyyasu. However, Ms I omits very large passages in chapters 27, 34, 35, 58 and 78.

4. MS N (NALA. No.198)

This manuscript copy has been kept in the National Archives and Library Agency (NALA) in Addis Ababa. Amharic is the language of this manuscript. Occasionally, Gə'əz is also used to quote the words of the Scriptures. MS N is written on paper of 31.5 × 20.5 cm and covered with a red color cardboard. Although the cover is cardboard, it is hard and well protects the manuscript. The text is written on two columns and each column contains 32 lines. The manuscript consists of 146 leaves. Illustrations and decorations are totally absent in the manuscript. However, names of saints and the royal family are written in red ink. The scribe also used red ink to write chapters and sometimes sentences. Red and black inks are alternately used to write even a single word. In the place name ቀወጉ

(Qäwät), for example, **Φ** and **†** are written in red ink while **ω** is written in black ink. The date of copying and the name of the scribe are not mentioned. Only the time when MS N was donated to the NALA, 21 May 1944, is mentioned.

One of the distinctive features of MS N is the deletion of words and sentences by means of diagonal lines having put the unwanted passage in a square. This sort of deletion occurs on f. 60v. Strikethrough deletions are also observed on f. 71r, f. 78r, f. 114r, f. 120v and f. 130v. Dirty marks most probably resulted from touching with sweaty hands appear occasionally. Signs of tearing and detaching are also observed on some folios despite the problem is not yet serious. This manuscript is also characterized by short spaces left within some lines. These spaces are created while attempting to maintain the regularity of the number of lines. Blank lines are also left between the end of the previous chapter and the next.

Incipit: በሰመ፡ አብ፡ ወወልድ፡
ወመንፈስ፡ ቅዱስ፡ ፩አምላክ፡
አብን፡ ወላዲ፡ ወልድን፡ ተወላዲ፡
መንፈስ፡ ቅዱስን፡ ሠራጺ፡ ብለን፡
በአብ፡ በወልድ፡ በመንፈስ፡
ቅዱስ፡ ስም፡ ሠለስቱ፡ አካላት፡
አሐዱ፡ አምላክ፡ ብለን፡ አምነን፡
በእግዚአብሔር፡ አጋዥነት፡
የኢትዮጵያን፡ ነገሥታት፡ ታሪክ፡
ከምሉ፡ በ[ከፊ]ሉ፡ ከብዙ፡
በጥቂቱ፡ እንጽፋለን፡፡

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we believe in one God. Saying the Father is the

bearer, the Son is the born and the Holy Spirit is the one who proceeds, and believing in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who are the three bodies and one God, we write the history of Ethiopian kings, in part rather than in whole, briefly rather than at length, with the help of God.

The manuscript is paginated in Gə‘əz numerals by the copyist of the text using the same ink. The first page number appears at the top of f. 7r where the text begins and runs to f. 146 where the text ends. The pagination is correct from the beginning to the last number, 280. Six leaves precede the first page number. Folios from 3r to 6v contain table of contents. The text is presented from f. 7r. to f. 146v.

Howeve^f, a penciled foliation was also made in Arabic numerals by another hand leaving this pagination intact. This folio number starts at the top right-hand margin of f. 1r and correctly runs to f. 7. But curiously and inconsistently, at the bottom right-hand margin of f. 2 appears number 3 apart from folio number 2 at the top right-hand margin. This sort of numbering, however, continues only up to f. 7. However, from f. 8 onwards, folio numbers are written at the bottom right-hand margin alone. Furthermore, number 8 is missed out in the foliation and number 9 is written in its place. Thus, this sort of foliation continues up to the last folio, f. 146. However, number 147 appears in the place of 146 owing to the omission of folio number 8.

As far as the title of the manuscript is concerned, the title ታሪክ (የዳግማዊ፡ አፄ፡

ምኒልክ፡ በገብረ፡ ሥላሴ) (Tarik: YäDagmawi Aše Mənilək: BāGäbrä Šəllase, History: Emperor Mənilək II: By Gäbrä Šəllase) was given later by the NALA. Evidently this title with No.198 below it has been written on a piece of paper in black ink and pasted onto the front of the cardboard.

There is a short statement written on f. 1r which reads as: ከግርማዊ፡ ቀዳማዊ፡ ኃይለ፡ ሥላሴ፡ ንጉሠ፡ ነገሥት፡ ዘኢትዮጵያ፡ ለሕዝብ፡ መጻሕፍት፡ ቤት፡ የተሰጠ፡፡ ግንቦት፡ ፲፫ቀን፡ ፲፱፻፴፮ ፃ፡ ም፡ (Donated by His Majesty Ḥaylā Šəllase I, King of Kings of Ethiopia, to the Public Library on 21 May 1944). A round seal of Ḥaylā Šəllase I lies above this short statement. The seal has a lion figure in the middle surrounded by the motto of ሞአ፡ አንበሳ፡ ዘእም፡ ነገደ፡ ይሁዳ፡ ቀዳማዊ፡ ኃይለ፡ ሥላሴ፡ ንጉሠ፡ ነገሥት፡ ዘኢትዮጵያ፡ (Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah Ḥaylā Šəllase I, King of Kings of Ethiopia).

For unknown reason, the German and Amharic alphabets are written on f. 1v under the title የጀርመንኛ፡ ያማርኛ፡ ፊደላት፡ እኒህ፡ ናቸው፡፡ (These are the alphabets of German and Amharic). F. 2 contains German words and phrases some of them with their Amharic translation. It is titled

የደውችና፡ ያማርኛ፡ ቋንቋ፡ ግሥ፡ (The German and Amharic verbs).

Although the script of this MS is legible, the shape of the letters is not attractive and their height is long. The space between each letter is wide and irregular. One of the striking features of this script is the building of ግ and ዜ in the word እግዚአብሔር as only the ring of ግ is attached to the head of the left-hand vertical line of ዜ. The left leaning head of the six vowel of the አ is also very long. The tip of the horizontal line of ግ is thicker than the rest part of it and slightly bends downward. Thus, there is a strong resemblance between ግ and ባ. Moreover, ግ has an awkward shape. ረ has a very long ascender slightly wedged to the right-hand and a little bit shorter horizontal foot, which is thicker at the end. However, the vowel marker of its second order is very short. ዠ is built by repeating the two slanting lines on the right and left side of the top to the bottom of the two legs. In many instances, the letter ጸ varies in form and style. One of the forms of ጸ has a very short right-hand side leg and a long left-hand side leg curved to the left. Thus, it resembles a corrupted form of ያ rather than the actual ጸ. Another form of ጸ has two short legs badly attached to the upper part. The regular form of ጸ also exists in many instances. Furthermore, there is a close similarity between ም and ሞ.

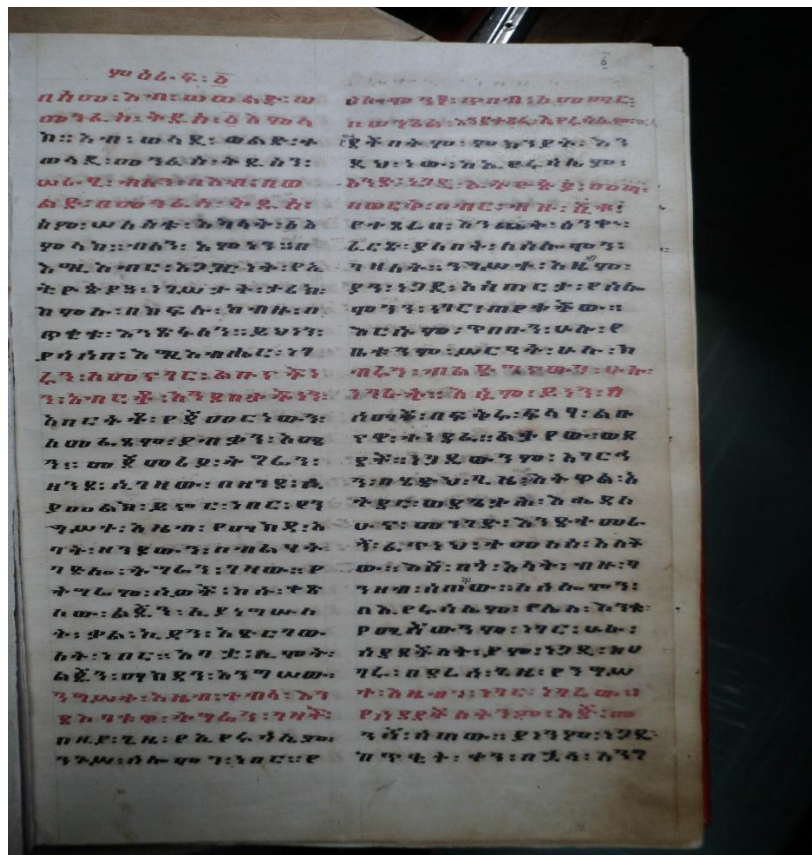


Figure 3. f. 7r-Look at the first column line 13 how the scribe builds ግ and ዘ, in the word እግዚአብሔር.

MS N is incomplete comprising only seventy chapters out of seventy-eight chapters of the chronicle of Mənilək II as far as its table of contents is concerned. Even the last section of chapter seventy which deals with the construction of the church of Saint Mary at Addis Alām is missed out. More than that, the second and the third sections of chapter seventy-one are erroneously made part of chapter seventy. The first section of chapter seventy-one, on the other hand, is omitted.

When we come to the body of MS N, chapter sixty-eight, chapter sixty-nine and chapter seventy are totally omitted and the last section of chapter sixty-seven is omitted too. The scribe suddenly stops his writing before the completion of this last part of

chapter sixty-seven which describes the construction of the grand palace in Addis Ababa. From f. 7r. to f. 19v, this manuscript contains the legends of the *Kəbrä Nəgāšt*, the fall of the Zag^we dynasty, the “restoration of the Solomonic” dynasty and the medieval history of Ethiopia up to 1559. The rise and expansion of the kingdom of Šäwa, the campaign of Tewodros II to Šäwa and the arrest of Mənilək, Mənilək’s escape from Mäqdäla and his reign as the king of the kingdom of Šäwa, the genealogy of Empress Ṭaytu Bəṭul and Mənilək’s relations with Yoḥannəs IV have been presented from f. 19v to f. 78v. From f. 79r to f. 146v, exist the description of the coronation of Mənilək as King of Kings, his campaign to Təgray, the Great Famine, the

marriage between Šāwarägga Mənilək and Ras Mika'el of Wällo, the construction of various churches, Mənilək's campaigns to Dawuro, Konta, Limmu and Wälayetta, the campaign of 'Adwa, the campaign to Käfa and the incorporation of Boräna.

5. Conclusions

The study of a brief description of the manuscripts of the chronicle of Mənilək shows insight into the physical features of each manuscript and the scribal habits and characteristics. It also helps to understand the relationships of the texts of MS D, MS I and MS N. Each scribe of all the three manuscript copies has not left us the year of his copying and his name. The time when MS D and MS N were given to their respective owner institution is mentioned. MS D was given to the monastery of *Däbrä Qəddus* Däbrä Şəge Maryam in January 1949 and MS N was given to the NALA in May 1944. But it does not mean that MS N and MS D were necessarily copied in 1944 and 1949 respectively. When we come to MS I, there is no even indication of year of donation to the IES. The last event noted down in the chronicle is the appointment of *Şəhəfe Tə'əzaz* Gäbrä Şəllase Wäldä Arägay, the author of the chronicle, as the *Nəburä 'ad*²⁸ of Däbrä Şəyon at Addis Aləm Maryam which happened in 1911. Thus, one assumes that the dates of copying of these extant manuscripts are from the 1910s until the 1940s.

Amharic is the language of all these manuscript copies. MS D and MS I are written on parchment while MS N is written on paper. The text of each manuscript is written on two columns. The script of MS D and MS I is neat, beautiful and highly readable while the quality of the script of MS N is very poor and archaic. Black and red inks are used in all the three manuscripts though appear certain variation in the alternative use of these inks.

One of the main findings of the research is the peculiarity of the script of each manuscript. MS D contains certain peculiar letters, which are not identified without difficulty. The study also indicates close resemblance between the paleographical features of this script and the handwriting of the twentieth century except some unique paleographical features. MS I and MS N have also their own typical features as far as the script of each manuscript is concerned. Unlike MS D and MS I, the shape of the letters of MS N is not attractive and their height is long. The study also shows which manuscript copy is complete and which one is incomplete as far as their content is concerned. MS D is complete in comparison with MS I and MS N by comprising all seventy-eight chapters of the chronicle of Mənilək II. However, it also omits some sentences and even paragraphs. Bearing in mind the omission of a few chapters in the table of contents, MS I has all the seventy-eight chapters of the chronicle concerning its text. But it omits very large passages. MS N, on the other hand, is incomplete consisting of only sixty-seven chapters out of seventy-eight chapters of the chronicle of Mənilək II with unknown reason.

²⁸ Title for the administrator of Aksum Şəyon or Addis 'Aləm Maryam (Thomas Kane, *Amharic-English Dictionary*. Vols, I-II (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990), p. 1034).

As the finding reveals, the general condition of all the three manuscripts is good except certain problems observed on MS I and MS N. The cover of all the three manuscripts is well protected and safe from damage. MS D is less exposed to damages and spots than other manuscript copies. However, as it is uncatalogued and not well kept in a library unlike MS I and MS N which are catalogued and well-kept in the manuscript sections of the IES and the NALA respectively, it may be exposed to damages by insects, humidity, temperature and light. When we come to MS I, several folios in the manuscript are in precarious condition as the binding becomes loose because of the readers' lack of consideration. The finding also shows that dirty marks resulted from touching with sweaty hands appear in MS N occasionally. Signs of tearing and detaching are also observed on some folios.

Conflict of Interest Statement

I have no conflict of interest to declare. The work has not received financial support from any institution or organization. I hereby certify that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publication.

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