

Ethiopic I recension of 1 Enoch, assessing their significance; Anaïs Wion focuses on nine different sources regarding the first known abbot of the Gong Tewedros Däbra Təbab church, *Abba Ləbsä Krəstos* (d. 1647), including the oral tradition regarding his association with a giant sycamore tree in Gong; Witold Witakowski discusses several sources that recount the story of Cain, Abel and their sisters; Gideon Goldenberg discusses Old Amharic object suffixes; Grover Hudson contends with an established argument from Agaw language pointing to early Semitic groups settling in the north of the Ethiopian Highlands, challenging assumptions on the origin of Ethiopian Semitic in South Arabian migrations; Olga Kapeliuk discusses syntax in the early development of Ethiopian Semitic languages; and Rainer Voigt outlines the formation of the perfect tense in the Tigre language. Finally, there is a chronological selected bibliography of Getachew Haile's publications.

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GETACHEW HAILE:

*The Ethiopian Orthodox Church's Tradition on the Holy Cross.*

(Texts and Studies in Eastern Christianity.) x, 285 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2018. €162. ISBN 978 90 04 34868 4.

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This book is a compilation of previously unpublished Ethiopian Orthodox works on the Holy Cross, presented clearly with Gə'əz text facing an English translation. Mostly the works are Gə'əz translations from the Aksumite period (roughly 100–940 CE) of Greek originals. There is also a selection of Ethiopian hymns which date from the thirteenth century CE onwards, and some later Amharic material. Getachew Haile's deep knowledge of Ethiopian Christianity, Ethiopian studies more broadly, and especially of the Ethiopian manuscript tradition, provides a solid basis for a book which is illuminating because of the breadth of theological, teaching, and devotional material that it presents around the theme of the Holy Cross.

The first chapter opens with excerpts from a selection of poetic and historical works that establish the tradition that part of the true Cross was given to Emperor Dawit (1382–1411 CE), an account that lies behind some of the Ethiopian material in the book. The chapter then introduces the broad subject area with the text and translation of five works: the story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, commentary on Matthew 27: 1–28: 7, which draws primarily on material attributed to Athanasius; works possibly by Severus of Ashmunain (tenth century), a Coptic bishop, meditating on the wood of the Cross, with additional Amharic commentary on this; and a work by *Giyorgis Wäldä 'Amid* (1205–1273 CE), another Coptic Arabic writer. The introduction ends with two *mälkä'* hymns, a distinctive Ethiopian tradition of poetry, characterized by five lined stanzas each greeting a part of the body of the saint – usually starting with the upper parts, head, eyes, nose, mouth, and moving down the body. Other objects of reverence are personified, hence the first, *Mälkä' a Mäsqäl*, “Image of the Cross”, personifies the Cross, attributing these body parts to it, but the hymn develops wishing peace also to Christ's soul departing, his shrouding, his resurrection, and his second coming. The second, the *Mälkä' a Həmam*, “Image of Sufferings”, departs somewhat from this pattern, wishing peace to Christ's suffering, humility, foot washing, arrest, etc. and including

a stanza on the Cross. The second chapter comprises three short selections of texts on the Cross used in the life of the faithful, written by important monastic writers: *Arāgawi Mānfāsawi*, the Spiritual Elder John Saba taken from the key selection of texts used in the training of monastics; the Miraculous Works of *Abunā Libanos*, a monk who came early to Ethiopia from Byzantium; and the Life of the hermit *Abba Akalā Krastos* who was active in Ethiopia in the seventeenth century. The third chapter is a selection of homilies taken from a single manuscript, which itself is probably a copy of one from the Aksumite era, suggesting strongly that these texts came to Ethiopia shortly after the widespread introduction of Christianity in the fourth century, making them of broader historical interest. The eight works from this manuscript are: a homily by Minas, Metropolitan of Aksum, for the Feast Day of the Cross; a homily by James of Sarug, for the Feast of the Cross; three anonymous homilies relating to the finding of the True Cross; a homily by John Chrysostom; an anonymous homily on the Holy Wood of the Cross; an excerpt from John Chrysostom's homily of the Fig Tree. These are followed by an Amharic translation of a probably fifteenth-century Gə'əz work which is more expansive than other sources on St Helen's background, and includes an account of her finding the true Cross. Finally, two Gə'əz works: a beautiful hymn *Səbhatā Mäsqäl*, "Glorification of the Cross" most probably by the sixteenth-century monk *Abba Bahrəy*; and the anonymous *Məstirā Mäsqäl*, Mystery of the Cross. The fourth chapter has four short hymns to be sung on festivals celebrating the Cross: two *Nägś* hymns, for use at the start of the liturgy, one by *Zär'a Ya'əqob* and another by *Abba Giyorgis of Gasəčča*, also known as *Giyorgis of Sägla* (fourteenth–fifteenth century); an excerpt from the *Sä'atat*, or Horologium, of *Abba Giyorgis of Gasəčča*; and an *'Arke* hymn, a poetic form with five rhyming lines, by the little-known *Arkä Šallus*, who may have been a disciple of *Abba Giyorgis*.

Whilst the most revered object in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the Ark of the Covenant, or *tabot*, the Holy Cross is closely related and is an object of significant devotion and reflection. The shape and sign of the Cross, and its wooden composition are strongly connected theologically with the Ark, aspects drawn together notably in the thirteenth century national epic, *Käbrä Nəgəst*, "The Glory of Kings", which elaborates theological significance around the core legend of how the Ark of the Covenant came to Ethiopia, but of the salvific significance of the Ark and the Cross (a detailed discussion of which may be found in R. Lee, *Symbolic Interpretations in Ethiopic and Early Syriac Literature* (Leuven: Peeters, 2017)). Any visitor to Ethiopia will see the cross as omnipresent, from the hand crosses administering blessings, to crosses worn around the neck by the faithful, to larger processional crosses. Cross designs are innumerable, and the image of the cross has inspired much creative artistic endeavour, and literary imagination. The Ethiopian Church celebrates with large public gatherings the legend of St Helen finding the true Cross, and holds dear Emperor Dawit (1382–1413 CE) receiving a fragment of the true Cross. These traditions provide the framework for an elaborate collection of literature represented in its true diversity in this book, which explores all of these aspects.

Furthermore, the deep theological reflection and lay devotion cannot be separated. Hence in the *mälkä'* hymns we read "O Christ, the messenger of the Father, who fulfilled the acts of humanity, Guard me with your Cross that vanquished the angel of the world" (p. 59) alluding to the human and divine nature of Christ understood theologically as necessary for salvation.

For scholars of Ethiopian tradition, the book presents an edited collection of theologically and liturgically important texts critically analysed and clearly presented. The work allows a detailed appraisal of the tradition, with other previously

published texts also being clearly identified. For scholars with a broader interest the book is an excellent introduction to the diversity of Ethiopian Orthodox Christian writing, including approaches to biblical interpretation, historiography, poetic and hymn writing approaches, including an appreciation of original Ethiopian compositions, and the way in which Ethiopian tradition draws on other sources.

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JASON KANDYBOWICZ and HAROLD TORRENCE (eds):

*Africa's Endangered Languages: Documentary and Theoretical Approaches.*

x, 503 pp. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. £79. ISBN 978 0 19 025634 0.

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The book reviewed here is a collection of articles from the workshop “Africa’s Endangered Languages: Documentary and Theoretical Approaches”, which took place in conjunction with the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on African Linguistics (ACAL 45) at the University of Kansas on 17–19 April 2014. It should be mentioned and commended that work on this collection was completed within three years and published a year before the Proceedings of ACAL 45.

The book brings research on a number of endangered African languages to the forefront. As the editors point out the subject of language endangerment in Africa has not received equal attention to that in Australia, North Asia, and the Americas. In fact, only two books have been published in the last two decades on language endangerment in Africa. This volume is therefore a timely contribution that creates awareness of the endangerment situation of African languages and invites linguists and Africanists to work towards safeguarding them. As the subtitle indicates, the book seeks to encourage partnerships between documentary and theoretical perspectives to research on endangered languages in Africa and other parts of the world.

After the introduction (pp. 1–10), which offers a synopsis and highlights the symbiotic relationship between linguistic theory and language documentation, Bonny Sands discusses the challenges of documenting Africa’s least-known languages (pp. 11–38) and argues that the level of language endangerment in Africa has generally been underrated. She concludes that the number of languages in urgent need of documentation in the continent is close to 600, and recommends that when setting priorities for language documentation in Africa, the vitality level of a language as reported by *Ethnologue* or UNESCO should be considered alongside other factors such as trending patterns in language use, proportion of speakers undergoing language shift, population movement, language attitudes, and the absolute number of speakers.

Chapters 3 to 6 are dedicated to the documentation and theoretical analysis of Nata, spoken in Tanzania. The Nata language and research project are introduced in chapter 3 (pp. 39–55), an account of tongue root harmony is given in chapter 4 (pp. 57–85), followed by that of nominal and verbal tone in chapter 5 (pp. 87–123) and, finally, a discussion of deverbal nominalizations in chapter 6 (pp. 125–44). The interplay between language documentation and linguistic theory in Nata is first outlined in Chapter 3 and illustrated in chapters 4–6.