

Research Article

Tales and misconceptions on the origin of the dogmatic controversy of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahdo* Church

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Abstract: The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (hereafter, EOTC) saw the emergence of a severe dogmatic controversy in the early seventeenth century. The feud enormously threatened the unity of the church and the Ethiopian state for two and a half centuries. The essence of clerical accounts, rapine and allegorical portrayals of sectarian documents are unnoticed by the scholarly literature dealing with the issue. This paper aimed at exploring the context to better understand the origins of the anecdotes and misconceptions about the dogmatic controversy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church. Important insights into the root causes, the subject matter, and the manner and time of the controversy are also provided. Primary sources such as polemic treatises, hagiographical traditions, and royal chronicles and secondary literature are consulted. A qualitative data collection tool and an integrated, thematic and chronological document analysis approach were also used. Exposition, in conjunction with narration and description, which is a mode of historical

writing, is also employed. An investigation of the available sources indicates that the sectarian literature written on the origin of the controversy is characterized by anecdotes, rapine, and allegorical portrayals. It also reveals that the scholarly misconceptions about its origins, root causes, and major themes of the controversy are enormously shaped by the accounts and the social and political context, rapine and allegories. It is believed that the results of the study will benefit the EOTC and the government to settle religious conflicts. It principally gives insights for further research aiming at deconstructing the Euro-centric view that credited the root cause of the dogmatic feud to the EOTC's supposed lack of dogmatic and hierarchical unity.

Keywords: Jesuit, Qib'at, Tewahdo, Tsegga, Rapine, Allegory

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1. Introduction

The EOTC is one of the ancient non-Chalcedonian *Miaphysite* (one nature) Oriental churches in the world.¹ The church traces its origin to the baptism of a eunuch of Queen Hindeke (Candace),

¹Getnet Tamene, "Features of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Clergy," *Asian and African studies*," Vol. 17 (1998),p.89; Kindneh Endeg, "Monks and Monarchs: Christological Controversy of the Ethiopian Church and its Impact on the State(1632-1878)," (Ph D Dissertation, Florida State University, 2011),p.1.

known traditionally as Bakos or Abelak, by Philip the deacon in about 42 A.D.²The academic view associates it with the conversion of King Ezana and his declaration of Christianity as a state religion in about 334.³

The Church had maintained a unified dogma and liturgy, established during the Axumite period, until the coming of Jesuits who inspired a protracted dogmatic controversy that lasted from the early 1610s to 1878.⁴The dispute was basically the product of the Catholic Church's hundreds of years attempt to submit the EOTC. Dominicans were frequently dispatched to Ethiopia to preach between the 13th and 15th centuries. Ethiopian monarchs were officially requested for "reunion". The EOTC clergy also took part at its economical councils.⁵The Catholic Church's desire to submit the EOTC was revived by the Counter Reformation (1540s-1640s).⁶The coming of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) to Ethiopia, who put it in effect in the 1620s, was the last phase of the scheme.

The Jesuit Interlude (1555-1632) covered three phases. The first began in 1555, when a Jesuits diplomatic mission under Goncalo Rodriguez came to Ethiopia. The first Jesuits missionaries, under Bishop Oviedo, also came two years later. They entered and stayed in Ethiopia as a reward

²Sergew Hable Selassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopia to1270* (Addis Ababa: United Printers, 1972), p.97; Gorgoriyos (Bishop), *Ye Ittiyopiya Betekristiyan Tarik*, 4th ed. (Addis Ababa, No Publisher,1993 E.C),pp. 18-19; Mahibere Qidusan, *Hamere Tawahdo: Ye-Hamer Metsihet Liyu Etim Metsihaf*, 5th ed. (Addis Ababa: Mega Matemiyu,Ltd,1998),p.2; Leonardo Cohen, "The Catholic Kingdom of Ethiopia: Father Manue de Almeid\ a Account of the Imperial Conversion Ceremony," *Lusitania Sacra*, Vol.29(2014),P.149.

³Paul.B Henz, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia* (New York: Palgrave, 2004),p.22.

⁴Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p.30; Donald Crummey, "Church and Nation: The Ethiopian Orthodox *Tawahdo* Church (from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth century)," in Michael Angold (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008),p.461.

⁵Hailu Kifle-Egzi "Western Relations with Ethiopia during the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period"(M.A Thesis, McGill University,1962), pp. 36-37, 51-54, 65&78; Matteo Salvatore, "Faith over Color: Ehio-European Encounters and Discourses in the Early Modern Era(Ph D Dissertation, Temple University, 2010)," pp.67-68 & 75-77; *Idem*, "The Ethiopian Age of Exploration: Prester John's Discovery of Europe, 1306-1458," *Journal of World History*, Vol.22, 4 (2011), PP.606-610; *Idem*, "The Jesuit Mission to Ethiopia (1555-1632) and the Death of the Prester John," in Allison B. Kavey(ed.), *World-Building and the Early World Imagination* (New York: Plgrave Macmillan,2010),pp14-17.

⁶Hailu Kifle-Egzi "Western Relations with Ethiopia during the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period"(M.A Thesis, McGill University,1962), pp. 36-37, 51-54, 65&78; Matteo Salvatore, "Faith over Color: Ehio-European Encounters and Discourses in the Early Modern Era(Ph D Dissertation, Temple University, 2010)," pp.67-68 & 75-77; *Idem*, "The Ethiopian Age of Exploration: Prester John's Discovery of Europe, 1306-1458," *Journal of World History*, Vol.22, 4 (2011), PP.606-610; *Idem*, "The Jesuit Mission to Ethiopia (1555-1632) and the Death of the Prester John," in Allison B. Kavey(ed.), *World-Building and the Early World Imagination* (New York: Plgrave Macmillan,2010),pp14-17.

for Portuguese military assistance in ending the war of Ahmad Gragn in 1543.⁷ The phase ended with the death of Francisco Lopes, the last member of the mission, in 1597. The second phase lasted from the coming of the Spanish Jesuit Pedro Paez, the second Patriarch of Ethiopia preceded by Joao Barreto, in 1603 to his death 1622. The third phase went from the coming of Alfonso Mendez, the third Patriarch, in 1625 to the expulsion of Jesuits from Ethiopia in 1632.⁸

Jesuits carried out intensive missionary activities in Ethiopia that divided the Orthodox clergy into *Qib'at* (Uctionist), *Tewahdo* (Unionist), and later *Ye Tsegga Lij* (Son of Grace).⁹The former two believed that Christ became natural Son of God through Union and Uction respectively. *Ye Tsegga Lij*, which emerged decades later, believed that Son of Grace was the grace of the Holy Spirit. Their rivalry brought the Church and the State in Ethiopia to ultimate collapse until Emperor Tewodros II (1855-1869) initiated their restitution in the 1850s.¹⁰

In spite of its decisive role in the unmaking and re-making of Ethiopia, the origin of the controversy is a theme of Ethiopian history that has attracted little attention. Merid Wolde Aragay, Donald Crummey, Getachew Haile, Anais Wion, and many others have contributed general insights into the dispute. However, they treated it as a side issue. It is only quite recently that full-fledged MA theses, PhD dissertations, and two journal articles have been produced by Kindneh Endeg on its Christological and political aspects. Sergew Gelaw and

⁷Salvadore, "Faith over Color," 184-185.

⁸Hailue, p.172; Salvadore, "The Jesuit Mission," pp.1-3,24 & 29; *Idem*, "The Ethiopian,"p.627; G.H. Schode, "The Confession of Calaudius," *Presbyterian Review*, Vol.8 (1887),33-35. Michael Russell, *Nubia and Abyssinia: Comprehending their Civil History, Antiquities, Arts Religion, Literature a, and National history* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1833), pp. 134-138. Bă'aman Netsere, *Tsin'a Tewahdo: Teqeb'a Tekor Metsihafawi Haregat, Guab'eyat, Tarikina, Dogma Kemiknyate Tsihfetina Kezirizir Ye Negere Kristos Hateta Gar* (Adda Abab; Birana Metsihafit Medeber, 2012E.C), pp.112-113.

⁹Merid Wolde Aregay, "Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom 1508-1708, with Special Reference to the Galla Migration and their Consequences" (Ph D Dissertation, University of London,1971) ,” pp. 550-552.

¹⁰Donald Crummey, "Society and Ethnicity in the Politics of Christian Ethiopia during the *Zāmānā Māsafānt*,"*The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 8, 2(1975),p. 269; *Idem*, "Church and Nations,"pp.460-463 &471; A.J. Davis, "The Sixteenth Century *Jihād* in Ethiopia and the Impact on Its Culture (Part one)," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 2, 4(1963),pp.578-579; Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004),p.74; Reidulf K. Molvaer, "The Tragedy of Emperor Libne-Dingil of Ethiopia (1508-1540)," *Northeast African Studies, New Series*, Vol. 5, 2(1998),pp.31-33; Belcher, Wendy Laura, "Sisters Debating the Jesuits: The Role of African Women in Defeating Portuguese Proto-Colonialism in Seventeenth-Century Abyssinia," *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 13,1(2013),pp.122-123.

Be'aman Netsere, both well versed in Geez and church education, freshly contributed high-flying books focusing on *qəb'at* (unction) as a theme of disagreement.

The literature shows that the origin of the controversy started during the nineteenth century when sectarian texts, the primary sources, were liable to revision. The changing of championship as a legal sect endorsed by the royal court led to either the total eradication or revision of the literary properties of the defeated sect. *Haddian Tseggoch's* alleged endorsing of their thoughts as the original doctrine of the church is decisive in misleading the academia.¹¹ Clerics also invented stories, marked by rapine and allegory, to sanction the primacy of a sect at the expense of its opponent.

The stories and the current social and political contexts of the rapine and allegorical portrayals misguided scholars to credit the root cause of the controversy to the Ethiopian clergy and identify Uction as the original theme of difference. The Catholic Church is accorded a mere impulsive role in this regard. The manner and relevance of Union, the center of the departure, is also either obscured as the nature of Christ or entirely neglected. Recent scholars ascribe the history of *Tewahdo*, the original party of the contest, to *Haddisan Tsegga*. The latter is allegedly given direct ancestral lineage to Debre Libanos of Shewa, while *Qib'at* is linked to *Abune Ewostatewos*. Consequently, the dogmatic controversy is supposed to be an extension of the medieval Sabbath controversy.¹²

Therefore, this paper tried to fill the gaps by primarily unearthing the stories, and inner contexts of clerical rapine and allegorical portrayals of sectarian texts dealing with the issue. Then, it counter argues scholarly views on its root cause, the topic, and the manner and time of origin.

A qualitative library search as a tool of data collection was employed. Archival materials, polemic treatises, and hagiographical traditions were collected from the churches and monasteries in Gojjam and Gondar, and the IES library of Addis Ababa University. A few manuscripts in private possession were also consulted. Besides, data was collected from secondary literature through an intensive library and website search.

¹¹Getachew Hsaile(ed.), "Material on the Theology of Qib'at or Uction," *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, edited by Gedoen Goldenburg, (April 14-17, 1980), pp.207-208.

¹²Kindneh, "Monks and Monarchs,"pp.1,31,35, 38-39&50.

An integrated content, thematic, and chronological document analysis approach was used to establish the reliability of the data. Exposition, supplemented by narration and description, mode of synthesis or historical writing was also employed in this paper.

2. The Essence of Traditional Assumptions

2.1 Denouncing the unpleasant past

Designed to recreate the past by avoiding its unpleasant events, clerics push forward the beginning of the controversy by decades. The advent of the schism appeared in the early 1610s. The clergy brought the case to Susnyos in 1619 while he was crossing the Gumara River for a campaign against the Oromo. A year later, he convened the synod of Fogera which ratified a pro-Catholic religious creed and declared both Orthodox thoughts heresies. Their representatives were also disgracefully banished.¹³

Instrumental in dividing the Orthodox clergy was Paez. He employed a top-bottom proselytizing strategy set by Ignatius of Loyola. Acquiring Geez and Amharic, he and Antonio Fernandez translated the basic Catholic tenets into Geez and Amharic and disseminated it to the public. Through diplomacy, rhetoric, and reasoning, Paez convinced Susnyos and his dignitaries to embrace Catholicism. His unrelenting proselytizing tempted some of the clergy to come up with new ideas on Union that initiated the split.¹⁴

To avoid the pains, therefore, clerics omitted the early phase of the controversy. Their texts evade the activities of Paez, the Gumara incidence of 1619, and the synod of Fogera in their accounts. The origin of the crisis has extended from the reign of the heretic Emperor Susnyos to his popular son Fassiladas (1632-1667) who restored the Church in 1632. Consequently, the evils

¹³Anai Wion, 2017 “*Abba Libse Kristos of Gonji Tsilalio: Sources for Discussing Religious Identities in Gojjam (Early Seventeenth Century, Ethiopia)*,” in A.C McCollum (ed.), *Studies in Ethiopian Languages, Literature, and History: Festschrift for Getatchew Haile Presented by his Friends and Colleagues*, Aethiopistische Forschungen, 83 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.), pp.495-497.

¹⁴Salvadore, “The Jesuit Mission,” Be’aman, p.10; Matteo Salvadore and James de Lorenzi, “The Ethiopian Scholar in Tredentine: Täsa Şəyon and the Birth of Orientalism,” *Itinerario*, Vol. 45, No.1 (2021), pp.17-36; Belcher, p.123.

of Paez were transferred to either Alfonso Mendez or the German Lutheran Peter Heylying, who came during the reign of Fassiladas.¹⁵

Gedle Bistawuros, a *Tewahdo* document, links the origin of *Qib'at* and *Tsegga* to the “heresies” of Arius, Paul Samosata, Nestories, Pope Leo and many others imported by Mendez.¹⁶ *Qib'atoch's* similar stand is apparent in referring to a contestant as *deqe* [*deqiqe*] Nistur (follower of Nestorius), *deqe* German (disciple of Peter Heyling), and *deqe* Liyo (son of Pope Leo) and *deqe qulaf* (disciple of Jesuits).¹⁷The tradition, cited from Amsalu Tefera, recounts the origin of the schism as:

ወኅበ ብሔረኒሂ አምጽአ ለዛቲ ዕለወት አዉፎንሶ[አልፎንሶ] ወልደ ልዮን በመዋዕለ ሱስንዮስ ንጉስ ኢትዮጵያ።ወሐሩ ንቤሁ ፪ሰብአ አብዳን..... ወሶቤሃ ፈቀደ አዉፎንሶ ወልደ ልዮን ይሌልዮሙ ወይፈልጦሙ በበዚአሆሙ ለእሉ ሰብአ አብዳን። ወይቤሎ ለ፩ እምእሉ ሰብእ እምይእዜስ ስማዕ ወልድዮ አእምር ወለቡ ወጠይቅ ከመ ተወለደ ወለድዮ ፫፯ዜ.....ቀዳሚ እምአብ፤ ወካልእ በግብረ መንፈስ ቅዱስ እማህጻን¹⁸ ድንግል፤ ወሳልስ ዉስተ ቤተልሃም.....ወሰመዮ ስሞ ተክለ ሃይማኖት በዕልወት.....ወካለዑኒ ብእሲ ጸዉአ ወይቤሎ ስማእ ኦ ወልድዮ አእምር ወለቡ ወጠይቅ ወእመን ከመ ከብረ ወልድ በቅብዐ መንፈስ ቅዱስ። ወአዉስአ ውእቱ ብእሲ ምንት ትረጓሜሁ ለቅብአት ወይቤሎ ኅድረት ወንሥአት.....መኑ ኅዳሪ ወመኑ ነሃኢ ወይቤሎ(ሜነዴዘ) ኅዳሪሁ

¹⁵Admasu Jembere, *Medlote Amin (Ye Haymanot Mizan)*, 2nd ed. (Addis Ababa Zigwara Metsahift Medebir,2014 E.C), p.4pp.321-322; Gorigoriyos, p.55.

¹⁶Amsalu Tefera, “Bestawiros: A Man and His Works,” in Alessandro Bausi, Alessandro Gorri and Gianfrancesco Lusini (eds.), *Linguistic, Oriental and Ethiopian Studies* (2014), pp.16-17. Bistawiros, who had served as *Aqabe Se'at* of Hayq Estifanos, lived roughly from the last years of Emperor Susnyos to the early eighteenth century. Be'aman, p.151.n. 349-352;

¹⁷*Mistire Haymanot*, Ms, Debre Worq, Fls. fols.34a,40b, 46a-53b, 53b &105b; Qoga Kidane Mihret, *Mistire Haymanot (Zikri) We Tinbite Zäkri We Pawuli* (Addis Ababa: Ahadu Matemiyä Bet, 2009 E.C.), pp.15-20.

Mistire Haymanot, Ms, fols. & 105b.

¹⁸Amsalu, pp. 16-17.

መንፈስ ቅዱስ ወንሣኢሁ ወልድ በስጋሁ፤ ወሰመዮ ስሞ በዕልወት ኤወስጣቴዎስ። ወበእላ
ዕልወት አማሰንዋ ሀገርን ቅድስት ኢትዮጵያ.....።¹⁹

This heresy was brought to our country by Awufonso [Alfonso Mendez], follower of [Pope] Leo, during the reign of Emperor Susanyos of Ethiopia. When two idle Ethiopians made a visit to him, Awufonso intended to divide and separate them. He said to the first person that listen, learn and think over my son that the Word was born three times ... First from the Father, second by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, third at Bethlehem ... He allegedly named the person Tekle Haymanot ... Then, he called the second person and pleaded with him that oh my son! Listen, learn, ask and confess that the Word was glorified by the Unction of the Holy Spirit. The person questioned what does *hadrät* (indwelling) and *nasat* (receiving) mean. He also asked the persons of the Trinity who indwelled and received the Unction. Mendez responded that it was the Holy Spirit who indwelled in Christ and the receiver was Christ in His humanity. He renamed the person Ewostatewos. The two troubled holy Ethiopia by these heresies....

The three births tenet: “ቀዳሚ እምአብ፤ ወካልእ በግብረ መንፈስ ቅዱስ እማህዳነ ድንግል፤ ወሳልስ ዉስተ ቤተልሄም,” believed to be taught to Tekle Haymanot is strange. *Qedamay* (First) *Tsegga* never credited Christ with three births. Nor *Haddisan* (New) *Tsegga* who believed in three births acknowledged the supposed second birth. It also associates the third birth with Christ’s baptism. Besides, the sect emerged more than a century after the expulsion of Mendez.²⁰ The fable was invented as a reaction to the dominance of *Haddisan Tsegga* in the nineteenth century. The document refutes *Qib’at* and *Tsegga* ancestral claim to Ewostatewos and Tekle Haymanot respectively by making the names of the individual’s fake.

Unlike the *gedl*, *Abune Gorgoriyos*, relying on the *Kibre Negest* (Glory of Kings), recognizes the names to be real. They came, he notes, from Shankua²¹ Giyorgis in Gojjam and Shewa

¹⁹Be’aman,p.152.

²⁰Getachew Haile(ed.), “Two Amharic Versions of One Essay in Defense of the *Tawahdo* Faith, *Ethiopian Studies in Honour of Amha Asfaw* (2017), 207; Be’aman, p.153.

²¹Sarka was situated near the town of Merawi in West Gojjam. It served as capital of Gojjam and temporary residence and place of exile for the Egyptian Metropolitans during the reign of Susnyos. Be’aman, p. 155.n. 357.

respectively.²²This suggests that the story was invented by the end of the controversy when *Qib'at* and *Tsegga* dominated the provinces.

Shewa was not the origin of *Tsegga*.²³ The same is true for the connection of *Qib'at's* origin with Gojjam. In fact, its early leaders like *Abba* Libse Kristos and *Abba* Tebdin Dingil came from Gonj Tsilalo. But, the thought was first introduced by *Abba* Fetile Sellasse of Infranz, *Abba* Askal of Atkene near Kimir Dingay and *Abba* Betro and *Abba* Estifanos, whose place of origin is not mentioned. At Fogera (1620), Gojjam was represented by Libse Kristos alone.²⁴ The reversal came when Gojjam dominated *Qib'at's* leadership which gave the rationale to attach its origin to the province.

A story recited by Admasu Jembere ascribes the root cause of the schism indirectly to Peter Heyling. His two local companions to Massawa, it says, told Fassiladas that Peter Heyling had insulted the clergy for debating on “ኅሥኦ (take) ተወክሏ (received)” without understanding the relevance of Unction.²⁵The Emperor ordered the clergy to explain it over which they were split into *Tawahdo*, *Qib'at* and *Tsegga* in their response.²⁶The emphasis on “ኅሥኦ ተወክሏ”, cornerstone of *Qib'at* theology, perhaps aimed at legitimatizing its primacy.

Mistire Haymanot likewise indirectly credits the birth of *Tsegga* with him. A *Tawahdo* monk from the monastery of *Abune* Betre Mariyam in Zege, nicknamed Zemariyan (lit. enemy of Mary or head of magicians), it notes, revived a new heresy in 1655. Zemariyan was a derogatory name ascribed to those who had contacts with Peter Heyling. It says, Zemarian accepted the Father as the anointer, the Son as the anointed, and the Holy Spirit as the ointment to trick *Qib'atoch*, but maintained that Christ was anointed for us – the teaching of *Tsegga*.²⁷

²²Gorogoriyos, p.55; Kidane Wold Kifle, *Haymanote Abew Qedemt* (Frankfurt: 1975), pp.24-26; Be'aman, pp. 155.n.155, 336-338 &360. For the details see also Alula Tilahun, “Ye Nufaqew Meshazur Ke Kelqedon [Chalcedon] Eske *Qib'at*,” *Hamer Metsihet Ze Meskerem/Tiqimt* (1997 E.C.), p.37.

²³Donald Crummey and Getachew Haile, “Abune Selama:Metropolitan of Ethiopia (,1841-1867): A New Geez Biography,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol,37,1 (2004), p.10.

²⁴Anais Wion, “*Abba* Libse Kristos,” p.496.

²⁵Qoga kidane Mihret, *Welde Abi*, 3rd ed. (No place of Publication and Publisher, 2001 E.C), megbiya (introduction), unpagued.

²⁶Admasu, pp.321-322.

²⁷Mistire Haymqnot, Ms, fol.49a-72a; Qoga Kidane Mihret, *Mistire Haymanot*, pp. 28 & 55-59.

Haddisan Tseggoch similarly associated the origin of their rivals with either Mendez or Peter Heyling. A document copied by *Aleqa Kifle Giyorgis*, edited by Ignazio Gudi, traces the origin of *Qib'at* to the reign of Fasiladas. Fearing that the Uction thought of *Tseggoch* was alike with that of the excommunicated foreigners, it upholds, the clergy of Gojjam articulated the idea that the Word became natural Son through Uction during the time of Fasiladas.²⁸ However, the position of *Qib'at* had appeared before a couple of decades. When the necessity to sanction the primacy of a sect came, clerics strengthened the stories with rapine and symbolic expressions.

2.2 The struggle for primacy and orthodoxy

Polemic texts praise the tenets of a sect as the ideas of known theologians in the past and externalize enemy thoughts as foreign imported heresies. As opposed to their claims discussed above, they push the origin of Uction as a theme of debate with Jesuits back to a royal synod convened by Emperor Gelawdewos (1640-1659) in 1546.²⁹ The synod was supposed to be held to settle Joao Bermudez's demand to convert Ethiopia into Catholicism. Mendez, member of the Portuguese embassy (1520), had stayed in Ethiopia until Libne Dingil (158-1540) dispatched him to Europe, requesting military assistance in 1535. He tried to trick the Catholic Pope and the crowns of Portugal that the emperor had given him the post of Patriarch. Returning with Portuguese soldiers in 1541, he similarly pretended that the Pope had appointed him Patriarch of Ethiopia. Bermudez also requested Gelawdewos to cede a third of Ethiopia to Portugal for its assistance in ending the war of Ahmad Gragn in 1543.³⁰

The literature disagrees on the response of Gelawdewos. Some note that he convened a synod in 1545 where *Abba Zikri* and *Abba Pawuli*, exegetes of the Bible in Gojjam, defeated Bermudez.³¹ *Mistire Haymanot* highlights the monks' patronage of the thought of *Qib'at*.³² Nonetheless, it mentions neither Bermudez nor the date of the exact debate which casts doubt on whether it

²⁸Be'aman.pp.334-335.

²⁹Mistire Haymanot, Ms, fols.15a-16a, 20a-22b.

³⁰ Hailu, p.101; Gorgoriyos, pp pp.44-49; Salvadore and Lorenzi, p.24.

³¹Sergew Hable Sellasse, "Amharic Church Dictionary (Draft),"1-13 Volumes (Addis Ababa: Unpublished,1977),p.12.

³²*Mistire Haymanot*, Ms, fols.14b-24a.

refers to the supposed synod or a later case. For *Abune* Gorigoriyos, it was the emperor’s meeting with metropolitan Yosef, Zikri, and Pawuli.³³

Probably, Gelawudewos’s informal encounter with Jesuits in 1559 was transplanted back, replacing the meeting of 1545, and was elevated to be a synod. His chronicle recites two encounters he made with Catholics. The first is undated³⁴while the second is traced back to 1559.³⁵The abridged Chronicle edited by Rene Basset makes it an ecclesiastic protest against the appointment of Endriyas [Andres de Oviedo], who was at odds with the court, as ‘Patriarch’ of Ethiopia.³⁶

Oviedo was replaced by Bermudez perhaps for the recognition the latter had won, as an agent of the Portuguese military assistance made him unforgettable. The synod was undoubtedly an anecdote premeditated to link the tenets of *Qib’at* and *Tawahdo* to Zikri and Pawuli. Each party highlights its idea as the historic Orthodoxy endorsed by the monks at the synod.³⁷ Be’aman describes the act of rapine:

.....:መጀመሪያ የራስን አስተምህሮ መቅረጽ። ከዚያ የታላላቅ ሰዎችን ስራ በጥንቃቄ እየቀረፉ በመጥቀስ/በመቆንጸል/ና እነርሱ የተናገሩትን አዉድ ወይንም ቁርጥ ሃሳብ ገድፎ /ትቶ/ በራስ ሃሳብ የተቀረጸዉን አስተምህሮ በቀደምት አባቶች የታወቀና የጸደቀ ማስመሰል.....:።³⁸

...after articulating a religious teaching, carefully misquoting and shaping the teachings of recognized fathers of the past in a way that could fit the new idea. Then, allegedly portraying it as a fact known and approved by the popular fathers...

On the other hand, the idea of *Haddisan Tseggoch* has been depicted as heresy:

³³ Gorigoriyos, pp pp.48-49.

³⁴Alemu, 64.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Rene Basset, *Etudes sur L’Histoire d’Ethiopie* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale,1882), p. 20; Hailu.p.173; Salvadore, “The Jesuit,” p.25.

³⁷Mistire Haymanot, Ms, fols. 14a-20b; Admasu, pp.42-43.

³⁸Be’aman, p.180, n.425.

ወአዉሥኡ ሮማውያን ወይቤልዎሙ ለደዕቆባውያን ሀገርነሰ ሮም፤ ወሃይማኖትነሂ ክልኢ ባሕርይ ወክልኢ ጠባይዕ ዘመለኮቱ ወዘትስብእቱ። ወዓዲ ሃይማኖትነ ወልድ ይንሰስ እምአብ፤ ወመንፈስ ቅዱስ ይሐፀፀ እምወልድ።³⁹ተንስኦ ፩ ቁላፍ እም ሰብኦ ሮም ዘስሙ ልዮን ወይቤ ወረደ ወልድ አብ ወለብሰ ሥጋ ማርያም ወኢተወሐድ ምስለ ሥጋ። ከመ ኢተወሐድ ቀቀብ ምስለ ሰይፍ ከማሁ ኮነ ክርስቶስ። ወእምድኅረ ህክረምት ሰብ ተጠምቀ በዮርዳኖስ ወረደ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ወነበረ ዲበ ርእሱ አሜሃ ተወሐድ ምስለ ሥጋ፤ ሥጋኒ ምስለ መለኮት እስመ በመንፈስ ቅዱስ ኮነ አምላክ በጸጋ።⁴⁰

[Catholics] replied to the [Orthodox] clergy that they came from Rome and believe in two natures and two attributes: divine and human. They also replied their confession in the subordination of the Son to the Father and the Holy Spirit to the Son ... A Roman named Leo stood and said that the Word descended and dwelt in the flesh assumed from Mary, despite He never united with it. Dwelt in the flesh, without union, He became Christ. He was united with flesh and became Son of Grace when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at His thirty during His baptism at the Jordan River.

The first sentence is a Catholic doctrine,⁴¹ while the rest is a collection of various heresies. The second and third sentences are Nestorian idea of *Prosopic* Union (conjunction) which was cursed as heresy by the Catholic Church at the Council of Chalcedon (451).⁴²The last seems a clerical misconception about the thought of *Haddisan Tsegga*. The exaltation of Christ to Son of Grace through His baptismal reception of the Holy Spirit belonged to them.⁴³Catholics recognized neither the ontological nor the functional glorification of Christ’s humanity.⁴⁴The thirty years delay of the act of union is, however, strange. It seems Qib’atoch’s interpretation of *Haddisan Tsegga*’s association of Unction with Christ’s baptism. For *Qib’atoch* believed that

³⁹Mistire Haymanote, Ms, fols. 14b-15a.

⁴⁰*Ibid*, fols. 20b,21b &29a-33b. See also its *Tawahdo* context from Admasu, pp.42-43.

⁴¹Admasu, p.44.

⁴²Richard Prince and Michael Gaddis (eds.), *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), pp.37-49.

⁴³Getachew, “Two Amharic,” p.206.

⁴⁴Olexander Kaschuk, “Logos-Sarx Christology and the Sixth Century Miaenergism,” *Vox Patrum*, Vol.37 (2017), pp. 201-206.

Union was executed by Unction, the delay of the latter implied the holdup of the former.⁴⁵ Thus, it was a *Qib'at* cleric who by implication pushed forward Union to Christ's baptism.

The parable is more apparent in the *Qib'at* and *Tewahdo* versions of *Mistire Haymanot*.⁴⁶ Admasu extracts the *Dimah Tewahdo* tradition as:

.....በንግድ ምክንያት መጡ እስክንድርያዊ መስሎ በኢትዮጵያ የሚኖር አንድ ሰው ተነስቶ እንዲህ ሲል ተናገረ 'አናንተ ኢትዮጵያውያን ቃል ሥጋ በለበሰ ጊዜ በማሕፀን ማርያም መንፈስ ቅዱስን ተቀብሎ የባሕርይ አምላክ ሆነ ትላላችሁ::..... ሮማውያን ግን እስከ ፴ዘመን በሰብአዊ ግብር ኖሮ ሲጠመቅ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ሰው ሁሉ እያየው ስለተቀመጠበት የጸጋ አምላክ ሆኖ የአምላክነት ስራ ሰራ ይላሉና ከእስክንድርያ ሃይማኖት የሮማ ሃይማኖት ትሻላላች' አለ::⁴⁷

A [Catholic] who had come for trade and lived in Ethiopia in the disguise of an Egyptian, said: 'you Ethiopians say that when the Word assumed flesh from Mary, He received the Holy Spirit and became natural Son.....'But, Romans believe that staying a mere man until his thirty, He became Son of Grace for the Holy Spirit publicly descended upon Him during His baptism. Therefore, the faith of Rome is better than the faith of Alexandria.

The excerpt is similar to the Debre Tsimona *Qib'at* text. A slight difference appears with the Debre Worq version.⁴⁸ The first sentence 'አናንተ ኢትዮጵያውያን ቃል ሥጋ በለበሰ ጊዜ በማሕፀን ማርያም መንፈስ ቅዱስን ተቀብሎ የባሕርይ አምላክ ሆነ ትላላችሁ' stands for the idea of *Qib'atoch*. Be'aman is mistaken when criticizing Admasu for recognizing it as the teaching of Ethiopians. The idea is labeled as unorthodox contemplation for making the Word the subject of anointment.⁴⁹

The idea is apparent from *Qib'atoch's* *zege* (debased) and *nidet* (imperfect human attributes) theology. Rejecting the separate anointment of Christ's humanity as a risk of confessing

⁴⁵Qoga Kidane Mihret, *Wolde Abi*, pp.196-198.

⁴⁶Qoga Kidane Mihret, *Mistire Haymanot*, pp.15-19; Admasu, p.45;

⁴⁷Admasu, p.45.

⁴⁸Mistire Haymanot, Ms, fol.19a-b

⁴⁹Be'aman, p.104.

dualism, *Qib'atoch* advanced the idea that the anointed was the Incarnate Word in the 1630s.⁵⁰ The Word demanded Unction for He was debased by the union of the flesh with Him. *Zege* was transformed into *nidet* during the reign of Yohannes I (1667-1682)⁵¹ perhaps as a moderate response to the accusation coming from its rivals. The Word demanded the anointing to abolish the *nidet* acquired from flesh through the act of Union.⁵² *Zege* and *nidet* were thus justifications for the Word's anointment and exaltation. The idea is well enshrined in *Wolde Abi*: "... ቃል ከሥጋ ጋር ሳይዋሐድ መንፈስ ቅዱስን [ቅብኣትን] መቼ ይፈልጋል::" /... the Word never demanded Unction before His union with flesh./⁵³

The second sentence of the above excerpt belonged to *Haddisan Tseggoch*.⁵⁴ A look into its content reveals allegorical representation of the Orthodoxy of *Qib'at* and the heterodoxy of *Tsegga* through Alexandria and Rome respectively. In the name of the missionary, the cleric praised the teaching of *Tseggoch* as orthodox and insults *Qib'atoch* as heterodox. The admiration was *Qib'at's* symbolic portrayal of the heterodoxy of the tenet of *Tsegga*.

Neither of the thoughts presented in the excerpt emerged prior to the seventeenth century.⁵⁵ Jesuits treated Unction, as a refutation to *Qib'at's miaphysite* stand over it in the 1610s and 1620s.⁵⁶ Therefore, it was the clergy who allegedly transplanted the nineteenth century context back into the first half of the sixteenth century. The intent was to endorse the primacy and orthodoxy of the teachings of *Qib'at* and later *Tewahdo* at the expense of *Haddisan Tsegga*. The above excerpts were polemic reactions to the dominance of *Haddisan Tseggoch* towards the end of the controversy. The anecdotes, the act of rapine, and allegories tempted the scholars to arrive at a wrong conclusion about the origin of the controversy.

⁵⁰Merid, pp.449-552.

⁵¹ Gorigoriyos, pp.89-90.

⁵²Wolde Abi, Ms, Mistire Haymanot, fols. 60a, 67b & 80b-81a. Gorigoriyos, p.90.

⁵³Qoga Kidanemhret, *Welde Abi*, pp.199 & 200.

⁵⁴Getachew, "Materials,"p. 206.

⁵⁵Merid, p.550; Welde Abi, Ms, fols.5b-8a.

⁵⁶ Be'aman, pp.132-134.

3. Scholarly Misconceptions about the Origin of the Controversy

The academic literature deals with the origin of the controversy characterized by misconceptions. Unable to notice the stories, rapines and allegorical portrayals in polemic texts, the academia identifies Unction as the original theme of the contest. Nor the root cause of the feud, the manner and the time it appeared were properly examined. Consequently, scholars failed to treat the mystery of Union over which the clergy basically disagreed.

Donald Crummey and Getachew Haile narrow down the topic of the dispute as the nature of Christ i.e. whether Christ is natural Son or Son of Grace.⁵⁷ The assumption is misleading for *Qib'at* and *Tewahdo*, the original rival parties, which unanimously accepted Him as natural Son of God. Their difference was on how Union was executed and Christ was exalted as their tenets, *betawahdo kebere* and *beqib'at kebere* respectively, reveal. The nature of Christ demarcated *Tsegga* from the former two.⁵⁸

Kindneh extends it to the meaning and relevance of Unction.⁵⁹ The presumption emanates from a wrong assumption that *Tewahdo*, which rivaled *Qib'at*, was *Tsegga*. But *Tiega* grew to encounter *Qib'at*, substituting *Tawahdo*, only in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ The view seems to have been misled by the traditions of *Haddisan Tsegoch* that the sect to be the original *Tewahdo*.

A view recently advanced by a semi-clerical scholar Sergew Gelaw further narrows the topic to the meaning of Unction foretold in Psalms 44:6-7. The controversy is viewed as a replica of what Christianity had witnessed in the fourth and fifth centuries.⁶¹ From a pro-*Qib'at* position, the view credits the source of the schism to *Tewahdo's* inheritance of Nestorian stand on the meaning of the psalm.⁶² Nestorius cited the verse as affirmation to his denial of the deity of

⁵⁷Crummey and Getachew, p.9.

⁵⁸ Getachew Haile, "Materials on the Theology of *Qib'at*," pp.205-207.

⁵⁹Kindneh, p.vi.

⁶⁰Crummey and Getachew, p.9.

⁶¹Sergew Gelaw, *Merahute Qib'at WeTewahdo: YeQib'at Enna YeTewahdo Negere Melekotawi Essabewoch* (Ekilipes Matemiya Bet, 2014 E.C.), pp.4-5.

⁶²*Ibid*, pp. 143.

Christ.⁶³ Nonetheless, the Ethiopian clergy unanimously referred to it from a *miaphysite* position premeditated to refute Nestorian position. Traditions of *Tewahdo* and *Qib'at* give due emphasis to Luke 1:38 as the main contesting biblical verse in the early stage of the rivalry.⁶⁴ One of them probably cited the Psalm as supplementary scriptural proof text to its stand on Luke 1:38.

The view is an innocent act of looking the local context through a very remote foreign lens. It overlooks metaphorical contexts of key Christological terms. The interpretation of Unction as allusion to Union by Gregory of Nanzinanzus and St Athanasius⁶⁵ is labeled as unorthodox on the linguistic ground that there is no a verb *awahade* (united) to drive the noun form *tewahdo*.⁶⁶ Intending to refute the thought, the view puts the position of *Qib'at* and *Tewahdo*, concerning the act of Union, upside down:

ቀብዐን አዋሐደ ለሚለው ትርጉም ሌላው ተግዳሮት በነገረ ተዋህዶ እሳቤ አዋሐደ የሚል ጽንሰ ሐሳብ አለመኖሩ ነው። ቃል ራሱ ነው ሰው የሆነው። ቃል ዘተሰብአ ነው የተባለው ሰው አደረገው ተብሎ አልተጻፈም። በተመሳሳይ የተዋሐደው ራሱ ቃል ነው። አዋሐደው ተብሎ አልተነገረም።⁶⁷

The other limitation of interpreting Unction as Union is the absence of the concept united in the doctrine of Union. It was the Word Himself who *hypostatically* became man. It is said that the Word became man, but never written that He had made Him man. Similarly, it was the Word Himself who was *hypostatically* united. It has never been told that He [the Word] united Him.

To the reverse, the assumption rebukes the position of *Qib'at*. The idea: “ቃል ራሱ ነው ሰው የሆነው....የተዋሐደው ራሱ ቃል ነው።” was the teaching of *Tewahdo* that essentially demarcated it from *Qib'at*. *Tewahdo* positioned that it was the Word who *hypostatically* assumed flesh and united it with Himself. He never demanded, *Tewahdo* contended, the assistance of the personal Holy Spirit as though alien to Him. ⁶⁸*Awahade* was instead central to the theology of *Qib'at*.

⁶³Gregory K.Hills, “The Natural Likeness of the Son: Cyril of Alexandria Pneumatology” (Ph D Dissertation, McMasters University,2006),p.128.

⁶⁴Qoga Kidane Mihret, *Mistire Haymant*, pp.15-19; Admasu, pp.44-45.

⁶⁵Be’aman, pp.23-25.

⁶⁶Sergew Gelaw, p.5.

⁶⁷*Ibid*, p.163.

⁶⁸Getachew, “Two Amharic,” p.180-181.

Wolde Abi lists nine activities performed by God the Father in the womb of Mary during the conception of Christ. The last of it reads: በጦላኩ ነፍስ ያለውን ሥጋ...[ከቃል ጋር] አዋሐዶ ምንታዩን አጠፋ።⁶⁹/With His divine power,.. [the Father] removed duality by uniting the flesh endowed with rational soul....[with the Word]/.

Scholars also either leave out the manner by which the disagreement appeared in obscurity or accuses the EOTC for bringing it. Some entirely frees the Catholic Church from dividing the EOTC. Sergew Gelaw is the most unrelenting in paying no heed to the role of Jesuits.⁷⁰ Providing no compelling justifications on the root cause of the crisis, he pushes the origin of the conflict into the clouds of pre-medieval Ethiopia. The preservation of foreign terms like *Messiah* in the Geez Bible translated from Arabic in the twelve century is his reference. He argues that the preservation of *Messiah* implies a *Tewahdo* translator's retreat from conceding *yeteqeba* (the anointed) thought of *Qibat*.⁷¹

Nevertheless, several Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, and Arabic terms like Orthodox (right), *Kristos* (Christ), *haymanot* (faith), and *Elohe* (Godhead) are adapted into *Tewhdo* and *Qib'at* local texts. The terms, except *Kristos*, were not issues of the disagreement. Had *Messiah* been preserved by *Tewahdo* as purported, its Geez equivalent must have been kept by the clergy of *Qib'at*. The rival clergies unanimously defined *Kristos* or *Messiah* as *yeteqeba* (the anointed) despite the fact that they disagree on its inner context. Translators perhaps kept the key foreign terms to preserve their original and true theological contexts.

The most widely held assumption, initiated by Ignazio Guidi, attaches the controversy indirectly to Jesuits' referencing of Unction during the debate. The view is shared by Donald Crummey, Kindneh Endeg, Be'aman Netsere and many others who dealt with the issue. It maintains that the

⁶⁹Welde Abi, fols.12b-18a.

⁷⁰Sergew Gelaw, pp.45-66 &18-44.

⁷¹*Ibid*, pp.163-164.

schism appeared when Ewostatean [*Qib'at*] monks formulated a *miaphysite* anti-thesis to Jesuits' characterization of Unction as affirmation to dualism.⁷²

The assumption was copied from *Haddisan Tseggoch's* tradition of the origin of *Qib'at*, described above. The teaching of *Qib'atoch* was supposed to be formulated as a retreat from the teaching of foreigners. According to Be'aman, the tradition is depicted in a document copied by *Aleqa Kifle Giyorgis* in the nineteenth century.⁷³ Guidi, who edited it, transformed the tale into a standard scholarly assumption and disseminated it among Western scholars. Consequently, the academia not only sanctioned Unction as the original theme of the contest, but also believed it to be introduced by Jesuits.⁷⁴ This Euro-centric view provides Jesuits an indirect impulsive responsibility. It ignores the impact of their proselytizing on the position of the clergy concerning the mystery of Union.

Kindneh recognizes Gudi's opinion with much appreciation.⁷⁵ On the presumption that "... the dogmatic and liturgical orthodoxy of the Ethiopian church...has always been loosely defined,"⁷⁶ he credits the root cause of the controversy to the church's lack of a unified dogma and hierarchy. He argues that the feud was an extension of the medieval controversy about the observance of the Sabbath. The Sabbath controversy is narrowed as Ewostateans', centered at Sera'e in Eritrea, rivalry with monastic community of Debra Libanos of Shewa.⁷⁷

The view allegedly sanctions the Gondarine experience back into the medieval context. It exchanges the Ewostatean and *Debre Libanos* monastic communities with *Bete Ewostatewos* [*Qib'at*] and *Bete Tekle Haymanot* [*Tawahdo, Tsegga*] sectarian identities respectively. Accordingly, *Qib'at* and *Tsegga* are given precursors to the medieval monastic communities

⁷²Ignazio Guidi, "Di Due frammenti: Relative alla storia di Abyssinia Roma," in *Rendiconti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei Classe di Scienze Marali*, Vol.5,2(1883), pp.23-24; Donald Crummey, "Priests and Politicians (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1972), p.21, n.2; Be'aman, pp.164-169.

⁷³Be'aman, p.164; n.2.

⁷⁴Getachew Haile, "Materials," pp.207-208.

⁷⁵Kindneh, "Monks and Monarchs," pp.150-151, nn.2 & 158- 158 .

⁷⁶*Ibid*,p.vii.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. vii, 152-153& 157-158.

respectively.⁷⁸ However, the Ewostatean movement was a nationalist reaction to the Coptic Church's denunciation of the EOTCs observance of Saturday as the First Sabbath. Striving to basically achieve the strict practice of Christianity, no dogmatic deviation was observed in its principles. Thus, it won the support of the revered court theologian *Abba* Giyorgis of Gasicha and the monastic community of *Abune* Zena Marqos of Merhabete in Shewa. The founder *Abune* Zena Marqos was a relative and disciple of *Abune* Tekle Haymanot of Debre Libanos.⁷⁹

A strong anti-Sabbath opposition rather came from the *Aqabe Se'at*, head of the mother monastery of Haiq Estifanos. The *Aqabe Se'at* was the most influential ecclesiastico-political office in medieval times while the *Echegge*, head of Debre Libanos, was less known. It surpassed the former only in post medieval times. Thus, Debre Libanos was undoubtedly only one of the anti-Sabbath monastic centers.⁸⁰

Bete Tekle Haymanot and *Bete Ewostatewos* were sectarian identities invented by *Tewahdo* and *Qib'at* parties just on the onset of the controversy. *Bete Tekle Haymanot* and its headquarters of Azezo Tekle Haymanot are confused with Debre Libanos of Shewa. Detached from the royal court throughout much of the rivalry, the latter was neither the center of *Bete Tekle Haymanot* nor the origin of *Tsegga*. The seat of the *Echege* was also transferred to Azezo by Susnyos. Through time, the office ceased to be the prerogative right of the head of Debre Libanos of Shewa. Other monastic leaders, even *Qib'atoch*, used to enjoy it. *Bete Tekle Haymanot* of the Gondar period, therefore, represented the non-*Bete Ewostatewos* [*Qib'at*] community of the church headed from Azezo. As seat of the *Echege*, it was Azezo Tekle Haymanot which was revered as *Dagmawi* (second) Debre Libanos as Kidane Wold calls its community *Debre Libanosoch* (men of Debre Libanos).⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pp. vii, 152-153& 157-158.

⁷⁹Getachew Haile, "The Forty-Eight Hour Sabbath of Ethiopian Church," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Voll.33, 2(1998),pp. 233-235;Taddesse, *Church and State*,p.209.

Taddesse, ⁸⁰*Church and State*, pp. 203 &2016.

⁸¹Kidane, *Haymanot Abew*, p.54.

Be'aman Netsere, a semi-clerical scholar who supports the above view, rejects the assumption that ascribes the dogmatic controversy a medieval precursor. Nor he believes that the Ethiopian church was a loosely tied institution prior to the advent of the schism.⁸² However, Be'aman lacks the credibility to give clear insights into the root cause of the discrepancy. Jesuits' indoctrination of the triviality of Union in bringing the oneness of Christ into the minds of the Ethiopian clergy is characterized as complete negligence.

It is only Merid who treats the mystery of Union as the center of the disagreement. He argues that the disagreement on Unction evolved through time as an upshot of the debate with Jesuits on the act of Union. His recognition of Union as the original topic of contest is an unusually critical insight. Jesuit missionaries challenged the Orthodox clergy basically on how the incompatible pre-existent natures of Christ were indissolubly unified without the debasement of divinity or the demolition of His human condition. As to him, the fundamental source of the crisis was the Ethiopian's incompetency to provide a unified *miaphysite* anti-thesis to the Jesuits' dualistic logic. When "hard pressed" by Jesuits' "scholastic learns learning," he argues, the Ethiopian clergy revived the various "heresies" of the early Christian Era.⁸³ Merid fails to look into the impact of Jesuits' missionary work on the held belief of the local clergy.

Qib'atoch cited Unction, probably at the council of Achefer held in 1613, to justify the manner by which the weak human nature of Christ became worthy of in Union with perfect divinity. It positioned that Unction had sanctified the humanity of Christ and made it capable of in Union with the Word. The clergy of *Tewahdo* responded that the union of the divine Word was enough to glorify Christ. Most of them were not intimidated by the idea of *Qib'atoch*.⁸⁴

The split came when *Qibatoch* began to argue that the act of Union and Christ's ennoblement was performed by Unction in the late 1610s. Within a couple of decades, they went on to advance the idea that the Word Himself was the subject of anointment and glorification. The sect

⁸²Be'aman, pp164-169.

⁸³Merid, p.550, n.2

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 550.

interpreted Unction as Christ's reception of the personal Holy Spirit from the Father during His conception. Through the anointing/indwelling/, it believed, the Holy Spirit created flesh, united it with the Word, and glorified it. *Tewahdo* reacted that Unction was allusion to the Word's *hypostatic* union with flesh and the ennoblement of Christ.⁸⁵The Holy Spirit here denoted the impersonal power of God. For *Tewahdo*, the role of the personal Holy Spirit during the Incarnation was functional, i.e. cleansing Mary or sanctifying flesh taken from her. Accordingly, the center of the disagreement was the manner and relevance of the mystery of Union.⁸⁶

4. Conclusion

The scholarly studies on the origin of the dogmatic controversy have been shaped by the anecdotes, rapine, and symbolic expressions kept in sectarian traditions. The central essence of tardyons was either avoiding the unpleasant past or endorsing the primacy of a sect by relegating its rival. Scholars' identification of Unction as the original theme and its linking of the root cause of the controversy with the EOTC came from a failure to notice their purpose. The root cause of the controversy was the Catholic Church's attempt to submit the EOTC. Its original theme of departure was the manner and relevance of Union. *Qib'toch* brought the concept of Unction as an alternative *maiphysite* thought to affirm the oneness of Christ. In other words, the disagreement on Unction was sub-topic of the debate on the manner and relevance of the mystery of Union.

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⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶Getachew, "Two Amharic," p. 179.

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