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# AN AMHARIC MANUSCRIPT ON THE MYTHICAL HISTORY OF THE ADI KYAZ (DIZI, SOUTH-WEST ETHIOPIA)

By EIKE HABERLAND

## 1. *Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

The Dizi (as they call themselves) have hitherto been generally known as the Maji, a term derived from the name of their largest chiefdom, in which there also lies the most important Amhara town of this region. They are one of the least studied groups of south-western Ethiopia.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the highlands of the Dizi, surrounded on all sides by the savannah of the Sudan, represent the south-westernmost outpost of the Ethiopian highlands, so too the culture of this people represents in some (but not all) respects an outpost of the 'common Ethiopian' culture.<sup>3</sup> Linguistically the Dizi, together with the related Chako in the north and the Na'ò in the north-east, form a branch of the West Cushitic or Omotic language group.<sup>4</sup> Racially, so far as one can judge by appearances, the Dizi represent a 'more negroid' type than the majority of Ethiopian peoples. They have many somatic similarities with certain culturally (but not always linguistically) related peoples of south-western Ethiopia—the Chako and Na'ò, the 'Gimirra' (She, Bencho, Mer), the Tšara, the Dime, the Ari and members of the Basketto group. A. E. Jensen has called these groups 'ancient peoples of southern Ethiopia'<sup>5</sup> and drawn a rough comparison with the 'Preniloti'.<sup>6</sup>

Although marginally part of the 'common Ethiopian' cultural sphere, whose environment they share, these peoples evince many cultural traits which are absent among other Ethiopian peoples and lack many traits which are otherwise common to all Ethiopians. They have undoubtedly been in contact for many centuries with the Nilotic pastoral peoples living at the foot of their hills (the Me'en and Surma); and this contact too has found expression in their culture.

Before the arrival of the Amhara in the 1890s and the subsequent forced incorporation of the Dizi into the Ethiopian empire, the Dizi probably numbered between 50,000 and 100,000.<sup>7</sup> The conquest had profound consequences in the decades which followed—subjection to the *gäbbar* system and (linked with this) economic exploitation and oppression; the abduction (e.g. when new governors were appointed) of innumerable people as slaves, servants or carriers, only a few of whom were ever able to return; famine, disease and a growing sense of hope-

<sup>1</sup> My sincerest thanks to Adam Jones for his help with the translation.

<sup>2</sup> This article is based on the results of research undertaken with the assistance of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in May 1970 and in March and September 1974. No literature of importance has appeared on the Dizi, apart from a short ethnographic report (1960) of Lt.-Col. Käbbädä Täsämma, who was governor of the Maji *awraja*. Unfortunately, the article of P. Giovanni Chionio, IMC (1941), who worked as a missionary in Dizi before and during the Italian period, contains such a juxtaposition of errors and inaccuracies that I must refrain from discussing it at all.

<sup>3</sup> For the 'common Ethiopian' culture, cf. Haberland, 1965, 9 f., and 1979, 72 f. Donald Levine (1974) calls the same culture (with certain divergences) 'panethiopian'.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Bender, 1976, 2 f.

<sup>5</sup> Jensen, 1959, 15 f.

<sup>6</sup> Grottanelli, 1948.

<sup>7</sup> These are very rough estimates, which I base on the statements of the Dizi themselves and on the deserted cultural landscape (endless abandoned terraces).

lessness and resignation, engendered by a total absence of justice.<sup>8</sup> These things not only caused the number of Dizi to shrink (in 1974 there were probably scarcely more than 20,000)<sup>9</sup> but shook their whole culture to its roots.

The territory of the Dizi consists of a series of mountain ridges, running mainly from north to south, and of their slopes. The optimum areas for settlement lie between 1,200 and 2,200 metres above sea level. (Below 1,200 metres it is generally too dry; above 2,200 metres it is here too cold for many economically useful plants.) Only in the central area south of the town of Maji and in the extreme north-west (from Beru to Jabba) are there larger plateaux. The climate, rainy seasons and vegetation correspond to those of the remainder of the Ethiopian highlands.

The economy of the Dizi was based above all on a highly intensive form of cultivation conducted with digging sticks (the hoe was unknown). Millet (*Sorghum bicolor*), which was both economically and in ritual the most important plant, was cultivated up to a height of about 1,800 metres above sea level. On the mountain slopes this was done on extensively laid out terraces: today these have mostly been abandoned, and they indicate that the population density was originally much higher. Above 1,800 metres ensete (*Ensete ventricosum*) is planted in gardens. In former times it did not have the same ritual or economic importance as in the rest of southern Ethiopia. Other plants of nutritional importance include: *tef* (*Eragrostis tef*), barley (*Hordeum vulgare*), yams (*Dioscorea abyssinica*), taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) and various kinds of cabbage. Coffee has always been a ritual drink. On the slopes of the mountains and in the lowlands, cattle must have been of some importance before the coming of the Amhara, although today their role is virtually insignificant. The Dizi shared many of the traits connected with the 'cattle complex' with their Nilotic neighbours, but only a few such traits with other Ethiopian peoples.

Until they lost their independence, the Dizi were divided into over twenty chiefdoms,<sup>10</sup> with shifting boundaries and allegiances. Their social structure was characterized by a caste system which, even by Ethiopian standards, could be termed hypertrophic, and by a strong emphasis on the principle of primogeniture. Society was organized hierarchically into five castes: nobles, freemen, bondsmen, *geymi*<sup>11</sup> and hunters. Each caste was distinguished by a large number of prerogatives, obligations, taboos and special 'languages'. The nobility was in turn divided into seven hereditary ranks,<sup>12</sup> although these did not form a hierarchy in the political sense: they had more to do with the ritual status of the holder than with his political power. Nobles of a low rank who managed to defeat chiefs of superior rank in the course of the uninterrupted sequence of petty wars (which often had the character of tournaments) were thus able to become political overlords whilst continuing to hold an inferior title. This was the case, for instance, with the famous Maji kuri, who rose to the position of overlord over several minor chiefdoms shortly before the coming of the Amhara, thanks to his military prowess and charismatic qualities.

<sup>8</sup> Eloquent testimony on the horrifying extent of this exploitation is provided by a trustworthy witness—F. de Halpert (Perham, 1969, 331 f.). Earlier reports too are full of information on the devastating effect of the *gäbbar* system (e.g. Hodson, 1929a and 1929b).

<sup>9</sup> This too is a rough estimate. Unfortunately, I was not able to look at the government tax registers.

<sup>10</sup> From south-east to north-west: Kolu, Adi, Muy, Tsiski, Maji (with the sub-chiefdoms Kärts, Gälkam, Kyält), Wor, Say, Mash, Gobi, Aro, Duku, Dami, Kanta, ʼZzkolu, Kasi, Beru, Gay, Garo, Jabba, Bay.

<sup>11</sup> A special caste, closely associated with the nobility, with manifold functions as craftsmen and in the sacral sphere.

<sup>12</sup> *kyaz*, *kyapn*, *burji*, *šōʼmi*, *kʷoyz*, *bar*, *keys*.

One famous, very ancient line of chiefs is that of the Adi kyaz, chiefs of the Adi region in southern Dizi, who are the subject of the chronicle reproduced here. As is often the case in Ethiopia (e.g. Jimma Abba Jifar, Illu Abba Boru), the title of the chief, which becomes the personal name of each successive holder, has become identical with the name of the region. The name Adi kyaz therefore refers both to the chief and to the country.

According to their oral traditions, the most important and respected chiefs' families in Dizi, including the Adi kyaz, originated from northern Ethiopia ('Tigre', 'Amhara'); and the fact that to this day they have in their possession relics of northern Ethiopian origin lends probability to this assertion.<sup>13</sup> The sharp contrast between the simple, not greatly differentiated 'substructure' of Dizi culture (technology and the economy) and the complex social structure is probably the result of this culture having been superimposed over an older cultural stratum by the immigrants from northern Ethiopia. In contrast to many other peoples of south-western Ethiopia, however, among the Dizi this superimposition has not left any linguistic mark.

Whilst the Dizi lived exclusively in the highlands and on the mountain slopes, the surrounding dry lowlands were inhabited by Nilotic ethnic groups belonging to the Didinga-Surma: in the north, the Me'en, to whom the Bodi on the far side of the Omo also belonged; in the south, members of the Surma or Suri group, known under various names (Tirma, Ṭid, Chachi-Chaych, etc.).<sup>14</sup> Although the Dizi look down on these 'nomads' and 'savages', there was and still is a close cultural connexion between cultivators in the highlands and herdsmen in the lowlands. This connexion is reflected in the myth reproduced here.

## 2. Notes on the manuscript

On 16 May 1970, through the kind intercession of Jim Keefer (American Presbyterian Mission, Maji) I was able to visit the late Adi kyaz, a remarkable and cultivated man, who was said to be over a hundred years old. My purpose was to talk to him about the traditions of his family, insofar as his strength still allowed. He was regarded as one of the great figures of the Dizi people. Much of the information gathered during the conversation has been incorporated into this article. He died the following year.

In March 1974, at the end of my second stay in Dizi, I visited the Adi kyaz's eldest son and successor, who had originally been called Kuməru. (On assuming a rank, a man loses the personal name by which he has hitherto been known.) We talked about the history of his family, and just before my departure he casually mentioned the existence of a written chronicle. Virtually at the last minute, this chronicle was at my request fetched from another compound and I was able to photograph it shortly before sunset. My caravan of mules then had to proceed, in order to reach the lowlands (Wāsha Wəha) and catch the plane to Addis Ababa the next day.

The text was translated in Germany, and during my third and last stay in Dizi in September 1974 various persons discussed it with me and commented on

<sup>13</sup> These include: the phallic brass forehead ornaments (*kalačča* in Amharic) of three chiefs; a brass handbell of Ethiopian Orthodox priests (Tigre, fourteenth century?), which is hung around the neck of the favourite bull of the Adi kyaz; the remains of a headband of blue material, belonging to the same chief (cotton and weaving were unknown among the Dizi); a saddle and horsewhip (animals for riding were likewise unknown); and a consecrated wooden board from a Christian church (*tabot*), belonging to the Dami burji, a chief related to the Adi kyaz.

<sup>14</sup> Haberland, 1966; Straube, 1979, 144 f.

it. Unfortunately, the new Adi kyaz and his kind brother Akəz, who held the rank of Disu burji, did not possess the immense knowledge of their father, and so many things had to remain obscure and unexplained. In dealing with linguistic problems and matters of content, I received considerable help from māmre Arägga Gobäna and Komtu Däshina (both in Maji town) and lej Asfa Wäsän Asserate zä-Kasa (in Frankfurt am Main).

The chronicle of the Adi kyaz is written in the Amharic script and language on pages 11–16 of a ruled account-book (format 31 × 21 cm.), which belongs to the family of the Adi kyaz. (It is followed by a list of persons liable to tax.) Apparently this chronicle represents the original version of a report which (as the first sentence of the text shows) was sent as a letter to the administrative headquarters of the sub-province (*awraja*) Maji-Goldya in the town of Maji. It is no longer known why it was sent. Perhaps this was done at the request of Lt.-Col. Käbbädä Täsämma, who was governor of Maji sub-province in about 1955 and wrote a booklet on the ‘beauty’ (*wəbät*) of this region (Käbbädä Täsämma, 1960). Possibly something prompted the Adi kyaz family to establish in writing its North Ethiopian origins (which were until 1974 a bonus with regard to the Amhara administration) and its mythical claims to rule the areas south of Adi (even the Toposa are mentioned in this context!). Unfortunately, I did not learn until later, that the present Adi kyaz (Kuməru), before succeeding his father, had been sub-district chief (*məkəttəl wärädä gaž*) in Tirma, south of Adi.

The text is said to have been dictated in about 1956 by the old Adi kyaz to an ordained Amhara monk named abba Kidanä Maryam zä-Wäldä. The scribe must have been what one would call (if I may use such a term) a ‘*yaltämaru ges*’—an ‘uneducated priest’. The chronicle is full of mistakes of every kind. The handwriting is clumsy, messy and unattractive. Deletions, insertions, repetitions which have not been deleted, poor orthography and, above all, poor syntax make the document anything but easy to read. Letters are frequently omitted. Words and names in the Dizi language are written quite differently from one line to the next. Fitawrari Adi kyaz spoke relatively good Amharic. The scribe, however, impaired the free flow of his dictation, although it should be noted to the latter’s credit that he did not entirely destroy the lively epic mode of expression typical for southern Ethiopia.

All punctuation shown in the translation (commas, full stops, question marks, quotation marks, etc.) have been inserted by me. Words added by me in order to assist in understanding the text are placed in square brackets. In the facsimile reproduction of the text, superscript letters referring to the footnotes to the text (pp. 249) have been inserted by me.

ለ ክፍር፡ ለ መጽሐፍ ስውራ ህግ፡ ግዛት፡  
 ድህረ ፊት፡ ቤት፡ ጉዳይ፡ መጀመሪያ፡  
 ያዲካ ስ፡ ትውልድ ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት ለውጥ  
 ለታሰቡ፡ በገጽ፡ ገጽ፡ ትውልድ ሁሉ ጻፉ፡  
 መጠ፡ ይገባል፡ ነገር፡ ግን፡ ግሎሪያ፡ ለገር፡  
 መጠ፡ ይገባል፡ ያዲካ ስ፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ስ፡  
 ጋዛ፡ ሁሉ ህግ፡ ወገን፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ስ፡ ስ፡  
 ለገር፡ መጽሐፍ፡ ይገባል፡ መጽሐፍ፡ ጸሎት  
 ገደ፡ ድርጅት፡ ከመጣ ስ፡ ሁሉ፡ ከገር፡  
 ጋዛ፡ ሁሉ ህግ፡ ይገባል፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት  
 የመጣ ገደ፡ ገላገል፡ ይገባል፡ ገላገል፡ ጸሎት  
 ጸሎት፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ነገር፡ ጸሎት፡ ጋዛ፡  
 ሁሉ ህግ፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት፡ ጸሎት  
 ነገር፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት፡ ጸሎት  
 ነገር፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት፡ ጸሎት  
 ነገር፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት፡ ጸሎት  
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 ነገር፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት፡ ጸሎት  
 ነገር፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት፡ ጸሎት  
 ነገር፡ ስ፡ ስ፡ ትግል ሁሉ፡ ጸሎት፡ ጸሎት

For notes to the MS, see folio 16.

አፎ፣ ለገታ፣ ለሹክ ርታ፣ ስድ ርልህ፣ መጠሁ፣  
 ለሰው፣ ለገታ፣ የገገሠ፣ ዘር፣ ትመሰላህ፣  
 አፎ፣ ለገታ፣ ለሹክ ርታ፣ ሰሃሳ ደር፣ ለልቻልም፣  
 ለሰው፣ ያላላ ሹሹ፣ ሲመልሱ ለታ፣ ጊሁ፣  
 አጠብቆ ለሁ፣ ላሎ፣ መልሱ፣ ለጠው፣  
 ግራህን፣ አጠብቆ ለሁ፣ ላሎ ስ፣ አገታ፣ ገል፣  
 አፎ፣ መሰታ፣ አሆኖ ለሁ፣ ለሰው፣ ከደ፣ ወዲህ፣  
 አላቆመጠው፣ ያላላ ሹሹ፣ ከገሳገራ፣ ግብር፣ ሲ  
 ያዘዘ፣ ግብር፣ ያላላ ስ፣ ስ፣ ስ፣ ከደ፣ ወዲህ፣  
 ሁሉ ታ፣ ያመታ፣ በኅገራ፣ ስድ፣ ድርቅ፣ ሆነ፣  
 ወኅም፣ ጠቅ፣ ኅገራ፣ ቸን፣ ድርቅ፣ ሆነ፣ ምን  
 ደብሳተ ለሁ፣ ላላ ሹሹ ለው፣ ያመ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ የወ  
 ኅ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ግር፣ ለሰሆነ፣ ለምን፣ ህድ፣ ትለ፣ ለህ፣  
 የወኅ፣ ቸግር፣ ለሰሆነ፣ አፎ፣ ወኅ፣ ለሰሆነ ለሁ  
 ብሎ፣ ከመሰታ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ መሪ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣  
 ወኅው፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ አገዳግ ህር፣ ሆነ ለታ፣ ከደ፣  
 ወዲህ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ወኅ ምጣ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣  
 ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣  
 ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣  
 መጠ፣ ከመጠ፣ ወዲህ፣ ለሰው፣ አገዳግ ሆነ፣  
 ብሎ፣ ከገራው፣ ያላላ ሹሹ፣ ለሰው፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣  
 ወሮቻ፣ ወኅው፣ ለመጠጠታ፣ አርሲ ለርሲ  
 ቸው፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ያላላ ሹሹ፣ ሲሮጠ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣  
 ለኅገራ፣ ላላ ሹሹ፣ ለሰሃኖ ከደዘ፣ ከገራ፣ ከገራ ም  
 ወዲህ፣ ሆኖ ር፣ ለገራ፣ ለሰግ ስር፣ ዲዘው ለታ፣  
 መጠ፣ ለሰላኝ ከሰታ፣ ሆኖ ም፣ አመራ ታ፣ ደታ ሆኖ፣  
 ያላላ ሹሹ፣ በራው፣ ለርሲ፣ በቀር፣ በቀር፣ ሆኖ፣  
 ግብር፣ ዲዘው ለታ፣ የመጠ፣ ሆኖ፣ ሲወኅ፣ ሆኖ፣





ከዚህ፡ ከመጡ ተ፡ ሰው ች፡ ከህዝብ ች፡ ይህ፡ እንደ፡  
 ለው፡ ጠር፡ ሲቀጠጥ፡ እስቅ፡ አሉ፡ ይኸውም፡  
 የተረፈ ተ፡ ሰው ች፡ ሃይሎም፡ ለሃገረ፡ ገዢው፡  
 ነገሩ ተ፡ ገዢውም፡ ሰማኛ፡ ይነገጠ፡ መቶ፡  
 ይነጋገር፡ አለ፡ ሰው የውም፡ ይቸገጥ፡ ጠር፡  
 ይዞ፡ ወደገዢው፡ ለመጠ፡ እዲቶ፡ ለሌሎች፡ እገረ  
 ገዢውም፡ እጅ፡ የውቀረ፡ ሆኖም፡ አህያዮሰሁ፡  
 አንቀ፡ ግን፡ አግዶ፡ አላሰራ፡ ይወደደህ፡ ነፃ፡  
 ገንዘብ፡ ሁኔታ፡ ሰው፡ አላላ ዲድር፡ አለው፡  
 ሃገሩንም፡ ሰውንም፡ አንቀ፡ ግዢ፡ ተቀመጥ፡  
 ወንጌላ፡ ለቀቀኛ፡ ለሌሎች፡ ሃይሎም፡ ለአዲህነት፡  
 አገሩ፡ ሆኖ፡ ለግዢ ሰው፡ አገሩም፡ ማሰኔ ገዢም  
 ደር፡ የምቅጥ ግዢውን፡ እገር፡ ሆኖ፡ ልቆቅ ሰቶ፡  
 አለው፡ መኖሪያውም፡ ሰው ይቶ፡ የገንዘብ ል፡ ማሰኔ  
 ያዝ፡ ለሰላም፡ አሰራር፡ ለሰላም ይቶ፡ ለዘቶ፡ አሰቃ  
 ሰሁ፡ ለሰላም፡ ወደሰላም፡ ለሰላም፡ ሃይሎም፡ አንድ፡ ኃረ፡ ዙ  
 ረውም፡ ሆኖ ሰው ገዢም፡ ያደካ ሰው፡ ተሰሰረ፡  
 የሚሰኘው፡ ግን፡ አገሩ፡ ገዢ ገዢም፡ ሆኖ፡ ሰው፡  
 የኃረውም፡ ሰው፡ ግን፡ ለሰላም፡ ይገሰገሰ፡ ይሆን  
 ውንም፡ አገሩ ች፡ ሰው ሰው፡ የሆነውም፡ ለሁሉም፡  
 ህዝብ ህዝብ፡ እንቀጥ፡ እንር፡ ሆኖ ሰው ሰው፡ ሰው ሰው፡  
 አለው፡ አዲህ ሰው፡ ለማሰኔ ገዢም፡ ገዢ፡ ተሰማኝ፡  
 ተቀሰገ፡ ለሰላም፡ ለሰላም፡ ይረሰ፡ ይኸገገ፡ አቅር፡ ለሰላም  
 ሰው ሰው፡ ማሰኔ ገዢም፡ አዲህ ሰው፡ ይኸገገ፡ ሆኖ፡  
 ሰው ሰው፡ ይገገገ፡ ሆኖ፡ ይኖር፡ ሰላም፡ ያልሰሰ፡  
 እቶ፡ ግዢም፡ ለሰላም፡ ለሰላም ሰው፡ ለሰላም ሰው፡  
 አንግደህ፡ አንግደህ፡ ለሰላም ሰው፡ ለሰላም ሰው፡ ለሰላም ሰው፡  
 ሰው፡ ለሰላም ሰው፡ ይኸገገ፡ ለሰላም ሰው፡ ገዢ፡ ህዝብ ሰው፡

፡፡፳፻፮፡

ህይወት፡፡ ጊዜ፡ ከሚገለገልው፡ እገር፡ የጉር ህይወት፡  
 ልጅ፡ እጭሮ ሰቶ፡ ቷ ራዎ፡ ጠዎ፡ ነው፡ ፍ፡ ልጅ ሞ፤  
 እንሰጥ ሞ፤ ጠሎ፡ የጉር ህይወት ገለገለ፡ ጠሎ፡  
 ልደክሳ፡ እንጠጠ፡ ለቆቆ ጠቆ፡ ህጽሐን፡ ል ሰጥራ  
 ለጠቆ፡ ጠሎ፡ የጉር ህይወት፡ የጊዜ፡ ንጉሠ፡ እንደጠገና፡  
 ይሰ፡ ክሬር፡ ነጠላ፡ ጊዜ ህይወት፡ እገረግጥ ሰው፡ ደረሰቶ፡  
 ጠሎ፡ ነገሠ፡ ጊዜ ህይወት፡ ለጊዜ ግጥሠ፡ እዲ፡ የሞት ገለ፡  
 ወፍ፡ ሞታ፡ ስራ ስራ ለደ፡ ስራ ስራ ጠቆ፡ እዲ ክሳ፡ ጠሰው፡  
 ሰው ሞታ፡ ይክንን፡ ሁሉ፡ ይደርገ፡ እገረግ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡  
 ስፍራ ሞር፡ ነው፡ ሁሉ ስፍ፡ ስፍራ ሞር፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡  
 ወሰደ፡ ስራ ስፍ፡ ሞር፡ ወሰደ፡ ስራ ስፍ፡ ሞር፡  
 እዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ስፍ፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ገሰሰ  
 ስ፡ እዲ ክሳ፡ ገንደ ገሰሰ፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡  
 ተገደ፡ ወሰደ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ተገደ፡ ሞር፡ ጊዜ፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡  
 ወደ ሞር፡ ሞር፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ስፍ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡  
 ወርቆ፡ ጊዜ፡ ጊዜ፡ ~~ሰው ሞት ስራ ስፍ~~ ሞር፡ ስዲ ክሳ  
 ኦርጋን፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ገሰ  
 ገደን፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ገሰ ገደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ወሰደ፡  
 ስዲ ክሳ፡ ጊዜ፡ ሞር፡ ጊዜ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ሞር፡  
 ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ጊዜ፡ የሚገል፡  
 ጠቆ፡ የጊዜ ስዲ፡ የሚገል፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ጊዜ፡ ጊዜ፡  
 ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ጊዜ፡ ወደ ሞር፡ ስዲ  
 ደደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ጊዜ፡ ተወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡  
 ጊዜ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡  
 እዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡  
 እዲ ክሳ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡  
 እዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስራ ጊዜ፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ጊዜ  
 እዲ ክሳ፡ ክጋ፡ ወሰደ፡ ጊዜ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ክጋ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡ ስዲ ክሳ፡  
 ወሰደ፡

<sup>kk</sup> ሸ እ ዲ ካላ፡ አዲ ካ፡ አዲ ካላ፡ ፀ ር ኃን፡ ወ ለደ፡ አዲ ካላ፡  
 ፀ ር ኃን፡ አዲ ካላ፡ ፀ ር ማን፡ ወ ለደ፡ ዲ ር ማ፡ ለፃፃህ፡  
 ጌ አ፡ ፃፃህ፡ ወ ለደ፡ ጌ ር ር ለ፡ ማ ለ፡ ሸ ር ፍ፡ አዲ ካላ፡  
 ዲ ር ማ፡ አዲ ካላ፡ አዲ ካን፡ ወ ለደ፡ ሃ ል ፍ፡ ል ፍ፡ ተ ማ ል ላ፡  
 አዲ ካላ፡ ዲ ር ማ፡ ጉ ለ ሌ ሌ ማ ም፡ ሃ ግ ለ፡ ለ ደ ቀ ር ጽ ም፡  
 ማ ግ ግ ህ ቀ፡ ግ ሀ ቀ፡ የ ማ ጽ ረ ግ ፡ ለ ም ፡ ሌ ሃ ሙ ሌ ል ፡  
 አዲ ካላ፡ ሃ ግ ሌ ፡ ለ ም ፡ ማ ም ቀ ቀ ፡ ግ ለ ለ ፡ ማ ግ ጽ ል ፡ ደ ፡  
 የ ጥ ግ ቀ ፡ አዲ ካላ፡ ደ ህ ፡ ሌ ሌ ፡ ሃ ለ ካ ፡ ቶ ሎ ለ ፡ ጽ ገ ለ ር ር  
 እ ለ ካ ፡ ለ ሌ ሀ ፡ ጽ ገ ለ ር ር ፡ ሃ ጥ ም ፡ አ ገ ለ ቀ ፡ ሃ ለ ካ ፡ ለ ም ም  
 ጽ ገ ለ ር ር ፡ ካ ለ ካ ላ፡ አ ገ ለ ቀ ፡ ሃ ለ ካ ፡ ም ፡ ደ ፡ ለ ደ ፡ ወ ግ ህ ፡  
 ግ ር ኃ ፡ ወ ግ ህ ፡ ጽ ረ ሌ ለ ፡ ደ ግ ሀ ፡ የ ለ ለ ለ ፡ ም ፡ ደ ፡ ጉ ሌ ፡ ግ ለ ፡  
 ቀ ለ ም ፡ ግ ም ፡ ደ ግ ም ፡ አዲ ካላ፡ ደ ግ ም ፡ ሌ ሌ ፡ ደ ግ ሀ ፡  
 ስ ለ ለ ፡ ደ ግ ፡ ካ ሌ ህ ፡ ለ ለ ለ ፡ የ ሃ ግ ም ፡ ጽ ህ ሙ ሙ ፡  
 ጽ ራ ለ ኃ ግ ለ ለ ፡ ። ።  
 የ ማ ል ለ ግ ለ ለ ሙ ፡ ል ፡ ካ ሌ ም ፡ ል ፡ ካ ሌ ም ፡ ል ፡ ።  
 ሙ ር ፡ ል ፡ ካ ሌ ም ፡ ል ፡ ካ ሌ ም ፡ ል ፡ ል ፡ ።  
 ል ፡ ል ፡ ል ፡ ል ፡ ል ፡ ል ፡ ል ፡ ል ፡ ል ፡ ።

- |   |  |    |   |
|---|--|----|---|
| a | <i>mājämmäriya</i>                                       | x  | <i>täsäbsəbo</i>  |
| b | <i>kä-Gämu</i>   | y  | <i>bet</i>  |
| c | <i>mättoal</i>   | z  | <i>bäçäläma</i>   |
| d | <i>mättom</i>  | aa | <i>lämən</i>  |
| e | <i>kä-Təd</i>  | bb | <i>əyyätänäffa</i>  |
| f | better: <i>kämmibbal</i>                                 | cc | <i>mätto</i>  |
| g | complete: <i>yämməttəwälläd</i>                          | dd | <i>Malikyaz</i>   |
| h | better: <i>yämməttəbbalāwan</i>                          | ee | erroneously written twice   |
| i | <i>näbbäräč</i>  | ff | <i>alnägsəm</i>   |
| j | better: <i>bäləy</i>                                     | gg | <i>əhəlun</i>   |
| k | very old-fashioned Amharic: the same Majij (?)           | hh | <i>mätäff</i>   |
| l | <i>yasgäbballät</i>                                      | ii | the scribe was not sure if he should write <i>Šəfçär</i> or <i>Šəbcär</i> |
| m | <i>hed</i>   | jj | Adikas Dərma is erroneously written twice.                                |
| n | either the construction is wrong or something is missing | kk | 20, not 22  |
| o | <i>wəha amfa</i>   | ll | 22, not 23  |
| p | <i>sinçəççu</i>  | mm | <i>yəhənnən</i>   |
| q | <i>säwoč</i>   | nn | better: <i>çəkuç</i>  |
| r | <i>bəye</i>  | oo | <i>kyaz</i>   |
| s | <i>yähomäbbat</i>  | pp | <i>kyapn</i>  |
| t | <i>Malikyaz</i>  | qq | <i>koyz</i> (or better, <i>kwoyç</i> ) erroneously written twice          |
| u | <i>amław</i>   | rr | <i>šo'əni</i>   |
| v | <i>betəm</i>   | ss | <i>ñank</i>   |
| w | <i>adərgäh (?)</i>                                       |    |   |

4. *Translation*

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[This is] a matter for the honoured office of the Maji sub-province. To begin with I will reveal to you the genealogy of the Adikas.<sup>15</sup> It is said that our family came from Gämu Gofa.<sup>16</sup> But it is said [too] that it came from the Amara country. It is said that the father of Adikas [whose name was] Gaz burji<sup>17</sup> came after he crossed the Wämo<sup>18</sup> River and that he colonized<sup>19</sup> the country. After coming, he made his camp in the place which is called Ələlbay Dərğa.<sup>20</sup> Gaz burji married a woman called Səmi, from the family of Təd<sup>21</sup> of the chief who was called Dälöti,<sup>22</sup> [and] who was king.<sup>23</sup> But she was the equal of the Adikas.<sup>24</sup> After Gaz had married this female chief, he begat Adikas Šəfčär.<sup>25</sup> Saying: 'The whole mountain is yours,' they called him and her 'Gaybi'<sup>26</sup> Afterwards, when they lived in Ələlbay, every day<sup>27</sup> he went out<sup>28</sup> they said 'ələl'.<sup>29</sup> 'The one land-owner<sup>30</sup> has united with the [other] landowner' saying, they [the people] lived in joy. Malikiyaz<sup>31</sup> came up<sup>32</sup> after he had been made chief of Adikas<sup>33</sup> and Kulo.<sup>34</sup> At this time the country was Surma; <sup>35</sup> it was only black.<sup>36</sup> As Malikas ruled the country, the son Šəfčär left his father<sup>37</sup> [and] came to Adikas.<sup>38</sup> While he was settled in a place which was called Maränta,<sup>39</sup> he entered the house of a countryman, Majij.<sup>40</sup> Majij said: 'Where do you come from?' ||

<sup>15</sup> The scribe always writes 'Adikas'. The correct spelling is *Adi kyaz*.

<sup>16</sup> i.e. they came via what is now Gämu Gofa.

<sup>17</sup> Gaz burji is a rank which still exists in the chiefdom of Kolu, south of Adi.

<sup>18</sup> Omo.

<sup>19</sup> The Amharic verb *aqänna* means 'to cultivate', 'to colonize' and 'to be the first settler'.

<sup>20</sup> Dərğa is a place in the lowland south of the Dizi mountains, not far from the former airfield of Wäsa Wəha. It was explained that Ələlbay was the Amharic and Dərğa the Dizi name (?).

<sup>21</sup> Təd is a hilly region in the lowland south of Dizi. It remains uncertain whether Təd is the name of a Surma group living there and whether there is a connexion with *təd*, the Amharic word for *Juniperus procera* which is said to grow there.

<sup>22</sup> Dälöti is a widespread geographical name in southern Ethiopia.

<sup>23</sup> Queen.

<sup>24</sup> Unclear. One could also read this sentence: 'But she was in agreement with A.'

<sup>25</sup> Šəfčär (or Šəfčär) was, according to another tradition, 'like a European with white skin and long white hair'.

<sup>26</sup> Gaybi is today the name of the holy place (and the whole compound) and of the principal wife of the *Adi kyaz*. The Surma call the *Adi kyaz* himself *Gaybi*.

<sup>27</sup> i.e. every time.

<sup>28</sup> From his compound. Before the amharic conquest the sacred chiefs of the Dizi used to leave their houses very seldom. They were therefore greeted very ceremoniously on such occasions.

<sup>29</sup> 'ələl' is the trill of joy which women in Ethiopia (and other regions) utter on festive occasions. On the birth of a daughter the women trill three times, and on that of a son four times.

<sup>30</sup> Chief.

<sup>31</sup> According to one tradition he was chief of the country before the coming of the *Adi kyaz* dynasty. It seems more probable that he too was a son of Gaz burji and that the latter appointed him as a successor, thus provoking Šəfčär to rebel. *Kyaz* is the highest rank in the Dizi nobility. The title *Mali kyaz* no longer exists.

<sup>32</sup> He came from the lowland, where the compound of Gaz burji was, to the highland of Dizi.

<sup>33</sup> Here 'Adikas' designates the region which received this name only later, being named after the title of the chief.

<sup>34</sup> Kolu (not Kulo) is a chiefdom south of Adi, today almost uninhabited.

<sup>35</sup> Surma is the name given to the different groups of Suri, such as the *Tirma*, *Təd*, *Chaych* etc., by their neighbours.

<sup>36</sup> The Dizi regard the skin of the nilotic Surma as blacker than their own. They are regarded as culturally inferior too.

<sup>37</sup> The dwelling-place of his father.

<sup>38</sup> Again, the name of a region which did not exist at that time.

<sup>39</sup> In the Dizi highlands, in what is now the *Adi kyaz* region.

<sup>40</sup> Majij was a follower of the local subchief *Mäna kwoyz* and belonged to the 'special' caste of the *geyma*.

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' I have come to serve you ' he [Š.] said. ' You look like [somebody from] a king's family ; I cannot let you live [with me] as a servant,' he [M.] said to him. When Majij replied [this] to him, ' I will guard your compound for you ' he [Š.] said, giving an answer. ' If you say : " I will guard your compound for you ", then you will be the husband and I the wife,' <sup>41</sup> he [M.] said. After that he let him live [there]. The Majij ordered the peasants to pay tax <sup>42</sup> and he [Š.] brought it for him. Afterwards it was dry throughout the country for two years.<sup>43</sup> There was no water.<sup>44</sup> He [M.] said to him [Š.] : ' Our country is dry, what shall I give you to eat ? Go to your country.' He [Š.], saying to Majij : ' Because there are difficulties with water, why do you say to me : " Go ! " ? Because there is trouble with water, I will show you water,' went out in the evening. When he scratched the ground, water gushed out, it was like a lake for him.<sup>45</sup> Afterwards he sent word to the Majij, saying : ' Go and fetch water ! ' And Majij went. On the dry ground he found water which had gushed out like a lake ; and having drawn some of it, he came back with it. When he came, he [Š.] said to him [M.] : ' Do not tell anybody.' Majij did not tell anybody, [but] as birds, [which came] to drink water, were chirping together [about this event], he hastened to the chief of the country Manakoys,<sup>46</sup> and told [him the story]. After he had told [it], they [the people] came, bringing a black ox <sup>47</sup> as a tribute for the Adikas.<sup>48</sup> He [Š.], who had previously slept on the ground, slaughtered the ox and slept on its hide.<sup>49</sup> He asked the people who brought the tribute : ' Who ||

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has told [you this] ? ' And they said to him : ' Majij told us.' Majij said to Šāfčār : ' I told your story [only in order that] the birds should not tell it [before me.' . . . <sup>50</sup> ' I have many more stories.<sup>51</sup> Wait, I shall show you [them, but] do not tell anybody.' After he said this, it rained for him <sup>52</sup> [in the country], which was dry for two years, three days and three nights. When the chief of the country, Malikayaz,<sup>53</sup> heard this, he said : ' This is son of my father, bring him to me.' They said to him [Š.] : ' As he said " bring [him] ", flee ! ' When he went, the water [of the river] was full against him.<sup>54</sup> When they said to him : ' How will you manage to go ? ' he said : ' I will show you a story.' <sup>55</sup> After that he struck the water with a stick. It parted for him ; and he crossed and went. He went [and] entered the house [of a man] called Burji Dumāz <sup>56</sup> in a country which was called

<sup>41</sup> i.e. ' we will live together and you will be the superior '.

<sup>42</sup> It was the duty of the members of the geyma caste to collect tribute from the serfs (*zaku*) for the nobility. It consisted mainly of sorghum.

<sup>43</sup> i.e. it did not rain.

<sup>44</sup> In the rivers and wells.

<sup>45</sup> The water came out in his favour, or : by reason of his magical powers.

<sup>46</sup> Mana kwoyz is a title connected with the chieftainship over a district in Adi, which still exists. *Kwoyz* (*koyz*) is the fifth grade of the nobility.

<sup>47</sup> Black oxen (or bulls) are the favourite offerings for the rain and the ' black ' (=blue) sky in Ethiopia.

<sup>48</sup> For Šāfčār.

<sup>49</sup> Only rich and important people sleep or sit on an ox hide.

<sup>50</sup> Unintelligible. It is not clear who is addressing whom.

<sup>51</sup> Wonders.

<sup>52</sup> In his favour and by the force of his magical power.

<sup>53</sup> Mali kyaz.

<sup>54</sup> It was to his disadvantage, being so full, that he could not cross it.

<sup>55</sup> Wonder.

<sup>56</sup> A rank which existed until recently.

Čärtita.<sup>57</sup> After he had entered his house and he [B.D.] had heard his story, he received him with joy. Afterwards he built him a house, let him live [there] and said to the overlord Tākəm :<sup>58</sup> ' A man has entered my house who has many stories.'<sup>59</sup> ' Because I have heard his story, you shall see<sup>60</sup> him benevolently [and] let him live [with you]. What he [Š.] wants is the kingdom of Malikiyaz, ourself<sup>61</sup> he does not want. Afterwards the country<sup>62</sup> came together and said to him : ' He shall stay.' They came to his dwelling-house, like a guard holding their spears [and] sat down near him.<sup>63</sup> Afterwards he said : ' Why do you come towards me in the darkness ? ' As he brandished [his] spear against them, their bodies swelled up and they perished.<sup>64</sup>

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The men who were left went to the chief of the country and told him : ' When this one man of the many people who came here brandished his spear against us, we [alone] were not destroyed.' The chief heard this and was terrified : ' Let him come and speak ! ' he said. When this man<sup>65</sup> saw him [Š.] coming to the chief of the country, holding that spear, he fled. The chief of the country said : ' I shall be the wəqabi-chief,<sup>66</sup> but as God is loved by you, come and become king and govern the people. You shall stay ruling the country [and] the people.' He left his seat,<sup>67</sup> fled and went [away]. The whole country submitted and did homage to Adikas. And the country said to Malikiyaz : ' You should let [give] him the whole of the country you used formerly to rule.' Məkyazəm [. . . .]<sup>68</sup> ' Because the army is mine.' Malikiyaz had [his army] drawn up in battle-order. ' I will give away [the kingship] by majority<sup>69</sup> of the army '<sup>70</sup> saying, they went to the place of battle-order. [The army of] Adikas was drawn up [in such a way] that it surrounded a mountain twice, but the men of Malikas surrounded the mountain [only] once. But the name of the mountain was called Bərbəra.<sup>71</sup> ' Since formerly it was our father who appointed me [chief], but as your people are more numerous, the country has appointed you. Let me go,' he [M.] said. Adikas said to Malikiyaz : ' Təd, Tərma,<sup>72</sup> Tofsa,<sup>73</sup> Bume<sup>74</sup>

<sup>57</sup> 3 km. west of the compound of the present Adi kyaz. His brother Dishu burji lives there.

<sup>58</sup> Tākəm is a corruption of the title Tapn kyapn. *Kyapn* is the second highest rank in the Dizi hierarchy. The Tapn kyapn was already living there before the coming of Gaz burji. He is still the second-in-rank after the Adi kyaz and determines who is to succeed him.

<sup>59</sup> Who can perform many wonders.

<sup>60</sup> Look after.

<sup>61</sup> Our wealth.

<sup>62</sup> The people.

<sup>63</sup> Apparently they did this to confine him to his compound.

<sup>64</sup> Among many peoples in southern Ethiopia, kings, high priests etc., are believed to have such strong magical power that they can kill people just by pointing at them with their (sacred) stick or spear. (Cf. Jensen 1959, 370, who relates the same from the Tšamako.)

<sup>65</sup> Messenger.

<sup>66</sup> This expression can have several meanings : ' Fate has made me chief ' or ' I will be like a spirit-priest (without political powers) ' or ' I am only a weak chief (like a spirit) but you will be a strong priest (like God) '.

<sup>67</sup> The seat is the symbol of chieftaincy.

<sup>68</sup> Unintelligible.

<sup>69</sup> Number.

<sup>70</sup> He whose army is greater shall reign.

<sup>71</sup> This is a steep, round hill to the west of the sacred compound of the Adi kyaz. It is also called Bangur.

<sup>72</sup> Təd and Tərma (Tirma) are two regions inhabited by Surma (Suri) south of Dizi.

<sup>73</sup> The Toposa are a fraction of the Karamojong around Kapoeta in the south-eastern Sudan.

<sup>74</sup> A Turkana group in Ethiopia west of the lower Omo.

until Baliz : <sup>75</sup> colonize all this.' <sup>76</sup> He sent Malikiyaz away. And after doing all this, Adikas lived as [a] virgin. <sup>77</sup> Saying : ' Without a wife you cannot be king,' the people forbade him [celibacy]. ' Well, if that is what you say, I will not become king ' he told them. When he said this, the people ||

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went to the country which is called Geša <sup>78</sup> and asked the daughter of the Gorkiyaz. <sup>79</sup> Saying : ' This is a long story and I don't give the daughter,' Gorkiyaz rejected [the proposal]. Afterwards Adikas sent locusts against him [and] destroyed his grain. <sup>80</sup> As Gorkiyaz, the king of Geša, had a lyre which was like a *bägāna*, <sup>81</sup> they brought her [his daughter] singing. <sup>82</sup> They married her to him [Šäfčär]. Afterwards he became king <sup>83</sup> [and as] they were singing, <sup>84</sup> a bird called *adu* <sup>85</sup> came to him and rested on his head. Saying ' Adikas ', they called him [by this name. He] who achieved all this was the first Adikas Šäfčär. Second <sup>86</sup> Šäfčär begat Adikas. Third he begat Mesa. <sup>87</sup> Fourth Mesa begat Adikas Guläsuru. 5. Adikas Goläsaru <sup>88</sup> begat Adikas Gändäbasa. 6. He [Gändäbasa] begat Adikas Tugi. Adikas Tugi begat the Maji gäž. <sup>89</sup> 7. He [Maji gäž] came to Maji. 8. Adikas Lulma remained, inheriting the Adikas. 9. Lulma Adikas begat Urga. 10. Adikas Urga begat Adikas Gondu. 11. Adikas Gondu begat Čara. Adikas Čara made his camp on the way to the Təd wilderness [and] to the Tofsa wilderness. [Even] now one can find [there] a place called Adikas Čara. <sup>90</sup> 12. Adikas Čara begat [a son] who was called Adu. He appointed his younger brother [as] chief and sent him to Muy. <sup>91</sup> 13. Adikas Čara was begotten. <sup>92</sup> 14. Adikas Čara begat [Adikas] Dirma. <sup>93</sup> 15. Adikas Dərma begat Adikas Ayka. 16. Adikas Ayka begat Adikas Dərma. 17. Adikas Dərma begat Adikas Šala. 18. Šala begat Adikas Kaga. 19. Adikas Kaga begat Adikas Ayka. ||

<sup>75</sup> I was not able to identify this river, which must lie in the country of the Toposa (?).

<sup>76</sup> cf. n. 19.

<sup>77</sup> Celibate.

<sup>78</sup> The Dizi claim that this hilly country which is at present inhabited by Me'en (' Tishana ') formerly belonged to them.

<sup>79</sup> Gor kyaz was the title of the mythical chief of Gesha.

<sup>80</sup> A sacred chief has magical powers over the locusts and can send or keep them away at will (cf. Jensen 1959, 37, 43 f., 48).

<sup>81</sup> The Dizi have five different kinds of lyre. Use of the biggest one was the prerogative of the chiefs. It was considered equal to the Amharic *bägāna*, which was likewise played only on ceremonial occasions.

<sup>82</sup> And/or dancing and playing the lyre.

<sup>83</sup> At the moment of his enthronement.

<sup>84</sup> And/or dancing.

<sup>85</sup> This is a small red bird, which is said always to appear at the enthronement of a chief.

<sup>86</sup> The following enumeration is not at all systematic : e.g. there is a gap between numbers 19 and 22. The real number of Adi kyaz is according to my calculation only 22.

<sup>87</sup> Šäfčär begat Adi kyaz, Adi kyaz begat Mesa ?

<sup>88</sup> The correct spelling is Guläsuru.

<sup>89</sup> Maji gäž (with the rank of *kyapn*) is the chief of Maji, the present town, which was founded by the Amhara around 1900. Another tradition states that the Maji gäž was the eldest son of Adi kyaz Tugi and was sent away by his father, because he did not bring him tribute.

<sup>90</sup> This is an allusion to the still existing connexion between the Adi kyaz and the Surma, who until recently brought him every year in May before the beginning of the great rain a black ox and a black goat, ' because they live on his land and because he has power over the rain '.

<sup>91</sup> Muy, east of Adi is another dépendance of the Adi kyaz family. It is not clear if Muy gäž was a younger son or a younger brother of Adi kyaz Čera. He refused to pay tribute and dis-affiliated himself from the main branch of the family. The two chiefs—Adi kyaz and Muy gäž—regard each other as ritual brothers and are forbidden to see each other's face.

<sup>92</sup> One of the many slips of the scribe.

<sup>93</sup> Dərma.

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22.<sup>94</sup> Adikas Ayka begat Adikas Urga. Adikas Urga begat Adikas Dərma. During the time when Dirma ruled, King Wäldä Giyorgis came.<sup>95</sup> 23. Adikas Dirma begat Adikas Ayka. His grandson was called [named after him] repeating [the names of the great-grandfathers] Adikas Dirma Guläsurumada.<sup>96</sup> He was given the rank 'fitawrari Adikas' by the government of the Ethiopian Empire. His Christian name is Gäbrä Mika'el. Formerly the Adikas ruled all this: as far as the Tofsa-boundary, as far as the Baliz-boundary, from Təd to the Muy [and] Säy River,<sup>97</sup> as far as the Karga River.<sup>98</sup> Muy, Kolu-Kəbi,<sup>99</sup> Taygu,<sup>100</sup> Baču: <sup>101</sup> the former Adikas ruled all this.<sup>102</sup> We confirm the statement written above.<sup>103</sup> Ranks <sup>104</sup> [in Adikas] are: 1. *kiyaz*,<sup>105</sup> 2. *kiyam*,<sup>106</sup> 3. *burji*, 4. *koyz*, 5. *koyz*,<sup>107</sup> 6. *şəne*,<sup>108</sup> 7. *ñiyang*,<sup>109</sup> 8. *zaku*.<sup>110</sup>

### 5. Concluding remarks

This is a rare and precious document. The extraordinarily free and direct mode of expression which is manifested, particularly in the pieces of conversation, offers a very instructive insight into the thought and speech of the people of southern Ethiopia. Despite the word order (determined by the complicated syntax of Amharic) and the involved language, it possesses almost the vividness of an epic. It is a pity that fitawrari Adi kyaz could not read or write and had to rely on a clumsy scribe.

This report mingles mythical truth with historical reality. It is an indication of the affinity of the people of southern Ethiopia to the myth, an affinity to which most publications make no reference. This is partly because those who have written about southern Ethiopia have had no interest in such matters, but also because among many peoples of southern Ethiopia this aspect of spiritual culture is only weakly developed. Yet this was not formerly the case. A decisive factor in the process of impoverishment has without doubt been the penetration of cultural elements from northern Ethiopia into the south and the consequent transformation of the autochthonous southern Ethiopian culture.

Since (if not before) the 'restoration' of the Solomonic dynasty and of the Christian Ethiopian empire in the thirteenth century, there has been close cultural contact between northern Ethiopia on the one hand and western and

<sup>94</sup> The number is incorrect.

<sup>95</sup> Two Amhara overlords, both members of the Solomonic dynasty—ras Täsämma and nəgus Wäldä Giyorgis—tried to enter Dizi first. Ras T. came with his army from Gurrafarda, W. G. from Kafa-Gimirra. Both met at Dagussa Meda, south of Beru in north-western Dizi. After long negotiations and shortly before a clash, ras Täsämma withdrew and returned to the north.

<sup>96</sup> This is the author of this chronicle. There was a tendency among many dynasties in southern Ethiopia to name children after famous forefathers.

<sup>97</sup> In the lowland east of the Muy mountains.

<sup>98</sup> Not identified.

<sup>99</sup> See footnote 34.

<sup>100</sup> Not identified.

<sup>101</sup> Not identified.

<sup>102</sup> This is again a claim to overlordship over the countries south and south-west of Adi kyaz.

<sup>103</sup> Presumably at this point in the letter came the seal of fitawrari Adi kyaz.

<sup>104</sup> The first six (in reality five) are rank-names of the nobility (*karyab*); the last two are names of castes.

<sup>105</sup> *kyaz* is the highest rank of chief.

<sup>106</sup> *kyapn*, the second highest rank.

<sup>107</sup> Erroneously repeated.

<sup>108</sup> *şo'ni*. The scribe has confused the sequence, which should be: *kyaz*, *burji*, *şo'ni*, *kwoyzi*.

<sup>109</sup> *ñank*. These were the free commoners who held a status between that of the nobility and that of the serfs.

<sup>110</sup> *zaku* were the serfs, who formed more than half of the population of Dizi.



southern Ethiopia on the other. From this time onwards, the state of the Tigray and Amhara, believing in its God-given mission (laid down in the Bible and the *Kəbrä nägäst*) to spread Christianity and civilization (*saləttane*), exercised various forms of influence over the southern part of the subcontinent. These included military expeditions conducted by the emperor, christianizing undertakings by the church and a multitude of activities not singly documented, such as the journeys of individual families, or the violent penetration of small warlike groups which sought to impose their rule, relying on the aura created by their cavalry (unknown in the south) and the superiority of their weapons. Nor can one exclude 'stimulus diffusion', for instance with regard to the spread of economically valuable plants or of handicraft techniques.<sup>111</sup> Indirect influence took place also in the socio-political sphere, in which processes directly inaugurated from the north developed their own momentum. This was illustrated by the foundation of the state of Hinario ('Enaria'), directly initiated from the north, which led to the establishment of a series of subsidiary states—Bosha, Kafa and Sheka;<sup>112</sup> or by the creation by the goshanaa dynasty of Gofa of dominions in Doko, Basketto, Malo, Konta, etc.<sup>113</sup> All these developments took place at the expense of the original population of southern Ethiopia, which, although it was not physically wiped out and was racially very often able to hold its own, nevertheless lost its political independence and often its cultural identity as well.<sup>114</sup>

The Dizi, living on the outer perimeter of the Ethiopian world, were only marginally affected by this trend. This is shown, for instance, by the total absence of loanwords from the Semitic languages of northern Ethiopia, as well as of many elements of both spiritual and material culture which are otherwise common to most Ethiopian peoples.<sup>115</sup>

Almost everywhere these migrations and contacts have found expression in the legends of origin of the ruling dynasties of southern Ethiopia, which refer to origins in 'Tigre', 'Aksum', 'Gondär', 'Amhara', 'Mänz', etc.<sup>116</sup> They have also found expression in the spread of loanwords from north to south, be it in designations for the dignitaries of the newly introduced socio-political structures (*dana*, *rasha*, *goda*, *halaka*, etc.), in concepts of the Christian faith (Maramo, Gärgisa, Kitosa), in the paraphernalia of cults or in festivals.<sup>117</sup>

The Dizi, Ethiopia's 'Ultima Thule', were only peripherally affected by such influences. One may reasonably doubt whether the immigrants who feature in this chronicle really came directly from the 'Amhara country' to Dizi. It is more plausible to suppose that, as in the cases mentioned above of the busasa among the Gongga or the goshanaa in the Gofa region, the ancestors of the founders of these dynasties came from somewhere in southern Ethiopia and retained only a vague notion of ancestors who originated from northern Ethiopia. Their culture had largely adapted itself to the southern Ethiopian pattern, which displayed weaker and weaker traces of northern Ethiopian influence the further it was from the North. From these northern influences the Dizi received their hypertrophic caste system, which was originally something foreign to the peasant peoples of southern Ethiopia.<sup>118</sup> In this myth it is repre-

<sup>111</sup> Haberland, 1976 *passim*.

<sup>112</sup> Lange, 1982, Appendix 1.

<sup>113</sup> Haberland, 1975, 27 f.

<sup>114</sup> Haberland, 1981 (b).

<sup>115</sup> Haberland, 1982 (a).

<sup>116</sup> Straube, 1963, 80 f., 103 f.

<sup>117</sup> Haberland, 1965, 241 f.

<sup>118</sup> Haberland, 1964.

sented by the Majij, who belonged to the geymi, a special caste associated with the chiefs as vassals and as assistants in ritual.

Further tangible manifestations of these northern Ethiopian influences are the objects originating from northern or central Ethiopia which are retained in the families of chiefs as precious relics (cf. n. 13, section 1).

This is one aspect of the chronicle. The narrative then departs from the historical context and superimposes on Dizi reality mythical motifs which are widely known almost throughout north-east Africa, not to mention other parts of the world. The 'king's son' who is entitled to rule but has been passed over flees and lives incognito. He demonstrates his supernatural powers through the epiphany of his charisma; and finally, after overcoming all difficulties and opponents, he is recognized as the legitimate ruler. Among the miracles which show him to be a thaumaturge, the chronicle particularly emphasizes the power over water and rain, which is important for the whole of Africa (even for the Dizi, who have a relatively high rainfall): he brings forth water from the dry ground, causes rain to fall and divides the waters. It is amazing how similar—indeed virtually identical—mythical motifs occur among neighbouring peoples. Here I shall mention only two examples—the Gofa<sup>119</sup> and the Masai.<sup>120</sup> Among the Gofa the first king smote the rock and it brought forth water; among the Masai it is the oloibon who is suddenly at hand (fallen from heaven?) and scratches the ground.

Further charismatic occurrences or actions include the annihilation of people by touching them or simply pointing at them with a (sacred) spear or staff, the appearance of sacred animals on important occasions<sup>121</sup>—here it is the adu bird at the enthronement—and the power over locusts. I should add that all these things are not merely mythical motifs, as readers unacquainted with the historical background might suppose from this text: they are very much a part of the complex of sacral kingship. Present and prospective rulers demonstrate through their miracles that they can influence the powers of nature and thus guarantee their people an assured existence. (It is not my intention to discuss this subject in greater detail, as I have dealt with it elsewhere.<sup>122</sup>) According to many southern Ethiopians, comparable occurrences took place as late as the mid-1950s (for instance in Gidole, where the quantity of grain was increased in a miraculous manner at an enthronement<sup>123</sup>).

Finally, this account brings us into contact with the real life of the people of southern Ethiopia—their human and all-too-human characteristics, the difficulties which a lone wolf faces in a closed society, the poverty of everyday life (the hero at first sleeps on the bare ground), the dependence on rain and the disasters caused by lack of it (movingly described in other accounts), the political intrigues, the secession of new dynasties and the dependence of the ruler on public opinion, which does not allow him to remain unmarried, etc.

One thing, however, the manuscript does not represent: a source which can provide us with an exact chronology. For one thing, the faulty taking down of what fitawrari Adi kyaz dictated makes it impossible to state exactly how many Adi kyaz there were—22 or 25. Not only does it seem impossible to find a satisfactory average length of reign for the rulers of southern Ethiopia: it is also doubtful whether each chief was really the son of his predecessor, as is the

<sup>119</sup> Haberland, 1975.

<sup>120</sup> Ole Sankan, 1975, 73 f.

<sup>121</sup> Haberland, 1965, 122 f., 297 f.

<sup>122</sup> Haberland, 1965, 151.

<sup>123</sup> Haberland, 1952.

stereotype claim made in the chronicle. We know that among neighbouring ethnic groups (Bako, Shangama, Gofa) this was certainly not the case and rulers were often succeeded by their brothers or other relatives. The statement by fitawrari Adi kyaz to me that there had been forty chiefs also contradicts this claim. As evidence he cited the fact that for each deceased chief a stone had been deposited on an artificial hill close to the main compound of the Adi kyaz, and up to his reign forty stones had been laid there! Nevertheless, the twenty-two names are for south-western Ethiopia a remarkable feat of human memory. Among neighbouring peoples the number is generally far lower. The relatively good oral traditions of the Baka, who live east of the Dizi, mention ten chiefs and extend only as far back as the middle or beginning of the last century. Then one comes to the mythical primeval era, with the story of Serser, who was found in a tree.<sup>124</sup> At any rate the large number of chiefs' names (there is nothing to suggest that these were invented) indicates that the founders of the Adi kyaz dynasty arrived in the sixteenth century or even earlier—an impressive piece of evidence for the early influence of northern Ethiopia even on these remote regions.

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<sup>124</sup> Jensen, 1959, 35 f.