

## **Features of *andāmta* : the Ethiopian Hermeneutics in Amharic<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This research is geared towards putting forward a starting point for reasoning or explanation that the Amharic *andāmta* commentary material has its own valuable techniques as it identifies possible interpretative strategies that may help literary critics in their study of Amharic literature. The research begins by providing a general introduction to the definition, history and sources of the commentary material. The main body of the paper gives some insights in to the peculiar features of the commentary and show how these features fit into the overall interpretative strategy.

To do this, some strategic terms that are used in the *andāmta* commentary material are identified and show how the terms are drawn upon to justify the interpretation arrived at the *andāmta* commentary on the basis of the quoted texts from the Book of Genesis.

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<sup>1</sup> This work is produced based on the Author's MA thesis at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Addis Ababa University; and a paper presented at the 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, 21 July-25 July, 2003, University of Hamburg, Germany

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## Introduction

Ethiopia has distinguished herself by preserving her own unique ancient religious culture based on Holy Scripture, in an ongoing and dynamic religious tradition. This can compare favorably with the ancient cultures of other world religions with their own scriptures (Torah, Koran etc) in its sophistication and richness. Ethiopia whose culture has been influenced by the Bible since many centuries, has developed and established its own methods of commentary that helps to extol the truths and values of scriptures. This is in line with the pattern of other exegetical traditions of other Christian cultures in general (and, as it is supposed<sup>2</sup> the Antioch exegesis tradition in particular). This tradition, known as *andämta*, is one of the unique and most valuable legacies of the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church and the entire country of Ethiopia.

Having read an Amharic commentary material (*andämta*) on a given text, one can easily understand how the Ethiopic exegesis tradition has a wealth of different kinds of literary features and techniques as interpretative strategies. However, as yet not enough research has been done in this huge area of study.<sup>3</sup> Why? Pederson's probable reasons can be summarized as: the oral transmission of the commentary material, losing of interest from the scholars' side towards the area, and scarcity of scholars versed in Amharic and Ge'ez.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this research was intended to present a starting point for reasoning or explaining that the Amharic *andämta* commentary material has its own valuable techniques as it identifies varied interpretative strategies that could help literary critics in their study of Ge'ez and Amharic literature. To do this, some strategic terms<sup>5</sup> that are used in the *andämta* commentary material are identified and efforts are made to show how the terms are drawn upon to justify the interpretation arrived at in the *andämta* commentary based on the texts quoted from the book of Genesis.

### **The *andämta*: the Ethiopian Hermeneutics in Amharic Background Notes**

The *andämta* commentary can be defined as a mode of exegesis which permits the exegetes to interpret a verse or phrase of a sacred text with multiple choices of possible explanations or comments. It is a translation and clarification of the Ge'ez texts of Biblical, certain patristic and liturgical books. The commentary serves as a point of departure to point out the fundamental meaning of the translated Ge'ez text.

The mode of exegesis known as *andämta* consists of Amharic commentaries on Ge'ez texts<sup>6</sup> which are subsequently interpreted using different strategies. It is the type of commentary in which, after the text has been interpreted once, a chain of successive comments (as many as 10 or 15 alternative comments) is given, each one being introduced by '*andäm*' ('and' or 'one'). For the Ge'ez by Ge'ez commentary tradition (*tärgwame*), አወ, *aw* "or" or ቢ, *bo*, "there is" is used instead of *andäm*, which means "in addition to this meaning, there is another one."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cowley, *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics*. 1988, p. 38

<sup>3</sup> For the thorough discussion of the history of research on *andämta*, see Mersha Alehegne. 2011, pp. 13-18.

<sup>4</sup> Pederson Kirsten S. 1995, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> For the consumption of this paper, only few terms are picked and analyzed. For the comprehensive glossary of the *andämta* and their definitions, see Mersha Alehegne. 2011, pp. 670-676.

<sup>6</sup> Cowley, 1971, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> The *tärgwame* is the most virgin area in the academic circle of Ethiopian studies. We do not have a single study which explored the rich tradition. We look forward to read Zelalem's work, a PhD candidate at the Department of Linguistics and Philology Unit of Addis Ababa University who is working on the subject for his doctoral dissertation.

From the four hierarchies of the traditional school system of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church,<sup>8</sup> the *mäṣṣāf bet*, the level where the study of the traditional Amharic *andämta* commentary on a given Gə'əz text is practiced, is the highest stage of education.<sup>9</sup> It is here that the foundation for the practice of the Orthodox faith is set forth, the education of monks prescribed, the theology of the fathers of the church firmly standardized, the calendar fixed and dogma practiced.<sup>10</sup> Thus it requires a thorough knowledge of Gə'əz and the intellectual capacity to memorize the interpretation of a Gə'əz text.

The origin of the *andämta* commentary tradition is a controversial issue. Some traditional church scholars argue that it was started in Ethiopia when Zadox, who accompanied the legendary Mənilək I (son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba) to Jerusalem, brought the 19 Books of the Old Testament to Ethiopia. These scholars claim that their practice of exegetical interpretation is similar to that of the prophets. On the other hand, there is an argument that the *andämta* started to be widely practiced only during the period of the Gondärine kingdom (the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> cent.). According to this line of argument, there is a belief that there were two widely spoken foreign exegetes, known as Mualem Petros (possibly Peter Heyling, a German native) and Paulos Zəkrin who exercised a particular influence on the Ethiopian exegesis.

According to the tradition, the 18<sup>th</sup> C. *Mämhər* (“teacher”) Esdros led a well-known school of exegesis in Bä'ata Maryam, Gondär. He was the first person who stressed the need to revise and standardize the exegetical interpretations of the sacred books. He edited and improved the commentary tradition. However, there was a division among his disciples: some accepted his teaching and some opposed it. As a result, two types of *andämta* schools were created. Those who followed the revised tradition came to be called *Tač Bet* (“the Lower House”, also known as *Yä-gondäre Tərgum* “Gondärine Exegesis”), and those who adhered to the old teaching were called *Lay Bet* (“the Upper House”, also known as *Yä-Gojjame tərgum* “Gojjamie’s Exegesis”). The tradition also states that another renowned exegete *Aläqa Wäldä Ab* (native of Säwa, who probably knew Arabic and read Christian Arabic literature) declared his dissatisfaction with the revised tradition of Esdros and established another branch of commentary, which gained popularity among the exegesis scholars and students. Thereafter, *aläqa Wäldä Mika’el*, one of his disciples, made some improvements to Esdros’s commentary teaching and popularizing it throughout the Christian regions of the country (It became known as *Wäldä Mika’el Abənnät* “Wäldä Mika’el’s way [of thought]”).

Having passed through the aforementioned and other revisions, and being handed down through numerous generations from teacher to student, the *andämta* commentary tradition has been molded into its own specific form and feature and it is still in our days being taught in the traditional way.

### Features

*Andämta* has its own features and methods to explain a ‘religious’ text. The characteristic features of the commentary are discussed as follows with sample analysis from commentaries to demonstrate how the concepts and features fit into the overall interpretative strategy.

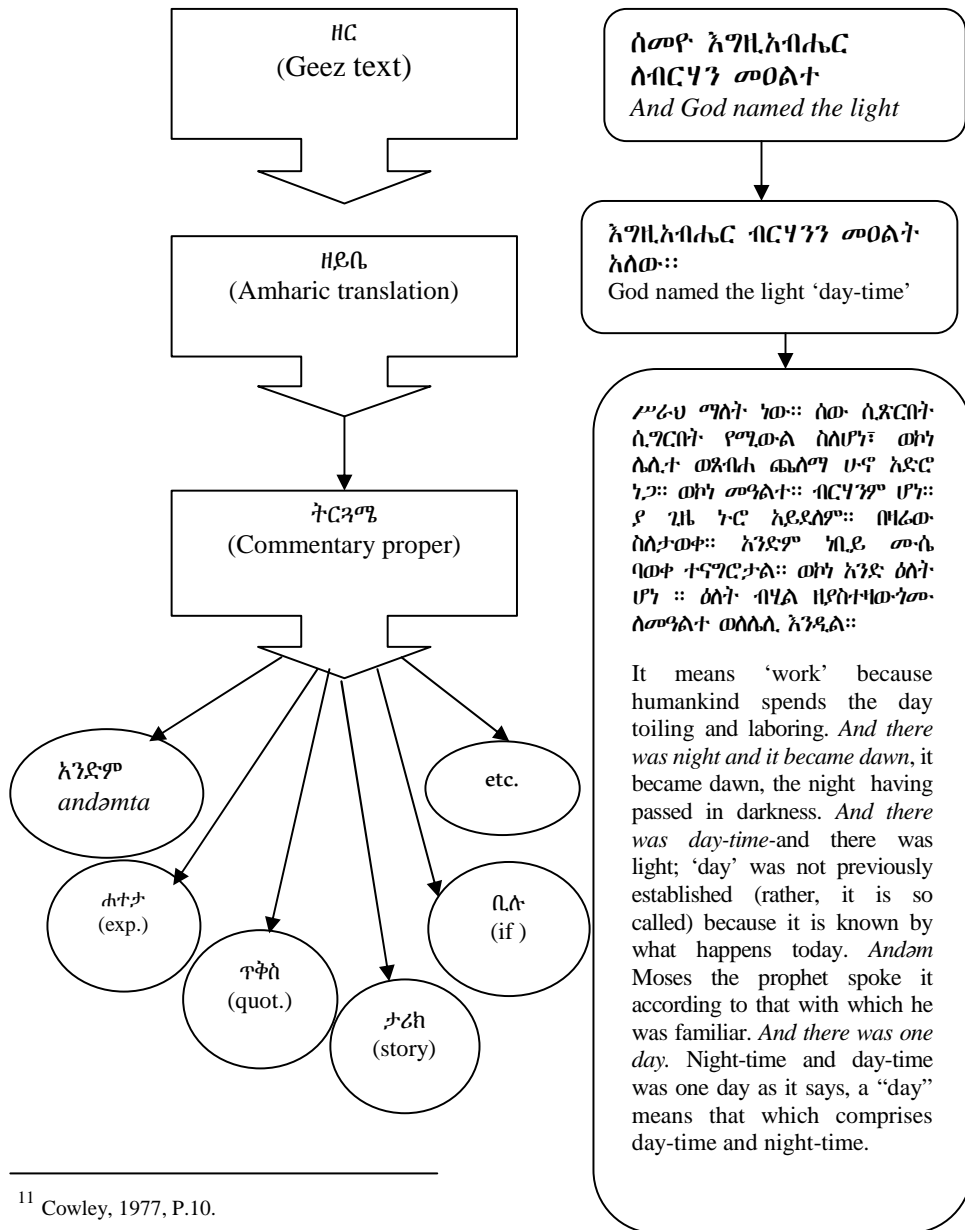
<sup>8</sup> From lower to higher: *nibabī bet* (school of reading), *zema bet* (school of spiritual music and dance), *qene bet* (school of spiritual poetry) and *məṭ’iḥfi bet* (school of commentary of books).

<sup>9</sup> The *mäṣṣāf bet* class is divided into four categories. These are *Haddis Kidan targwame* /New Testament exegesis/, *bäluyi Kidani targwame* /Old Testament exegesis/, *mäṣṣāf liqawanet targwame* /Exegesis of books of Scholars or Fathers/ and *mäṣṣāf mənəkosit targwame* /Exegesis of books of monks/.

<sup>10</sup> Frederich Heyer, 1966, p. 140

**A. Standardized Pattern**

The *andämta*, as a literary genre, follows a strict and uniform standard when it presents a commentary on the text.<sup>11</sup> The general purpose of this pattern is to enable the commentator to use a set of formulae so that he can reach his final goal of clarifying the meaning of the commented-upon text. It starts by giving the Gə‘əz text followed by its Amharic translation (*zäybe*) and finally the commentary proper (*tərg‘ame*). In the tradition, the Gə‘əz text (*zär*) is the text which is subjected to translation and comment. In the tradition, the Gə‘əz text (*zär*) is usually regarded as correct and texts found to differ from it are considered wrong. This standard pattern can be shown as follows:



<sup>11</sup> Cowley, 1977, P.10.

As we can see from the above example, the Amharic translation of the Gə‘əz text <sup>12</sup>attempts to bring out the essential meaning of the Gə‘əz into Amharic. In most cases, the commentator presents more than one alternative, which are either corresponding to different ways of understanding the Gə‘əz text or to different Amharic expressions of the same thought.

**B. The *Andām***<sup>13</sup>

In the *andāmta* commentary tradition the term *andām* (‘and’ or ‘one’) is a key technical term that is indispensable to the strategy. Once the commentator gives the *zāybe* of the *nəbab*, he usually gives different alternative interpretations <sup>14</sup> using the strategic term *andām* as a turning point. The purpose of this prolonged interpretation is to the better understanding of the mystery behind the commented upon text. We can see this by taking a text from the Book of Genesis.

ሥላሴን በምን እንመስላቸዋለን ቢሉ ሥላሴ ለባውያን ነባብያን ሕያዋን ናቸው። እኛም በነፍስ ለባውያን ነባብያን ሕያዋን ነንና አንድም ለሰው ልብ ቃል እስትንፋስ እንዳለው ሥላሴም በልብ በቃል በእስትንፋስ ይመሰላሉና አንድም ለሰው ፍጹም መልክ እንዳለው ለሥላሴም መልክ አላቸውና ነክምን ከመ ሰ ለእግዚአብሔር መልክነት ጽዱቃን ዓይን ወእዝን ለዕዳው ወአዕጋር ወሶ እለ ተርፋ እምኔሆን አባላት አንዲል። አንዱ በአርአያነ ወበአምሳሊነ ከመ ይኩንን ይላል። ሥላሴ በባሕርይ የሚገቡትን እኛ በጸጋ እንገዛለንና። አንድም በአርአያነ ከመ ይኩንን ይላል። ከመ ይኩንን ዓሣተ ባሕር ወአራዊተ ምድር ወአዕዋፊ ሰማይ። ዘፍ፡ (1:26)

If it is asked, ‘to what shall we liken [the members of] the Trinity?’ [the members] of the Trinity are understanding, speaking, and living. *Andām*. because just as a person, the Trinity has a heart, a voice, and breath. *Andām*. Because just as a person has a complete form, so also [the members of] the Trinity have a form, as it says, ‘we believe that God has real bodily parts eye and ear, hands and feet, and He has organs which are in addition to these.’ *Andām*. as it says’... in our appearance and in our likeness, in order that He governs or rules-because we govern by grace the ones that [the members of] the Trinity govern by nature. *Andām*. as it says ‘...as He governs in our appearance’<sup>15</sup> ... as he governs the fish of the sea, and the wild animals of the earth, and the birds of heaven.(Gen.1:26)

In the aforementioned text, the commentator explains how man resembles the Holy Trinity, introducing it with a quote, ‘Let us make man in our appearance and in our likeness’, which we find in the Gə‘əz text. As we can see, it is apparent that the commentator leads his readers into the heart of the text by presenting four alternative interpretations of the Gə‘əz text.

**C. Illustration**

The chief objective of the commentator in using *andāmta* as an interpretative strategy is to get in to the heart of the text he analyzes and to discover the mystery hidden in the depths of the text. Thus, he illustrates the commented text in different ways.

<sup>12</sup> In putting the Geez text (*zāḥ*), abbreviating terms and/or sentences is common. This might come from the general agreement that students of *andāmta* know the Geez reading by heart so that it is not probably necessary to put all the reading in the commentary corpus. In the tradition, there are three ways of abbreviating a Geez text. The first one is taking the first two or three words of the Geez text and presents the *zāybe*. Example: **ወአርዌ ምድርሰ**... for the text **ወአርዌ ምድርሰ ይጠብብ እምኩሉ አራዊተ ምድር ዘገዳም ዘገብረ እግዚአብሔር** (Gen. 3:1). The second method is taking the first word of the Geez text as it is and write the first one or two letters of the rest of the words of the text like **ወአርዌ ምድ ይጠ እም አ ም ዘገዳ ዘገብ እግዚ**, for the same text. The third way is taking the first and the last words of the text as they are with the intermediating technical term, abbreviation itself too, **ሂ** which is an acronym for the imperative **ሂድ** meaning go.

<sup>13</sup> Meaning: in addition to this meaning, there is another one.

<sup>14</sup> The *zāḥ* commented with the highest number of *Andāms* is Rev.6:2 where ‘the white horse’ has nineteen different explanations.

<sup>15</sup> Translation and comment on this variant appear to have been omitted by the scholars.

C.1. *Illustration by means of story/history (tarik)*

The predominant technique for the commentators to use *tarik* (illustrative story) taken from biblical and non-biblical sources. The sources actually do not appear in the *andāmta* commentary in the form of literal quotations from the canonical text, but rather in the form of paraphrased rendering. When the commentator wants to present a story to illustrate the text he is commenting , he introduces his commentary on a given text with the term *tarik*.

The following story, for example, is introduced by the term *tarik* to illustrate why God said “ለይኩን ብርሃን” meaning “Let there be light”, the story talks about the fall of Satan.<sup>16</sup>

ወርእዮ እግዚአብሔር ለብርሃን ከመ ሠናይ እግዚአብሔር ብርሃንን የበቃ ፍጥረት እንደሆነ ዐወቆ ፈጠረ። ከመ ሠናይ ባለው ከመ ጦብ ይላል። ከመ ሠናይ ማለት ነው። ጦቢት ማለት ሠናይ ማለት እንደሆነ ወፈለጠ እግዚአብሔር ማዕከል ለብርሃን ወጽልመት። እግዚአብሔር በጨለማና በብርሃን መካከል ድንበር ለየ። ታሪክ። ለይኩን ብርሃን ያለበት ምክንያት ምንድን ነው ቢሉ ጌታ መላእክትን ሕያዎን ለባውያን ነባብያን አድርጎ ፈጥሯቸው ነበርና ምንት ንሕነ እምአይቴ መጻእነ ወመኑ ፈጠረነ ወሚመ በበርእስነኑ ተፈጠርነ ተባባሉ። ዲያብሎስን ከሁሉ በላይ አድርጎ ፈጥሮ ነበርና ከወደላይ እኔ ፈጠርኩ የሚል ድምፅ አጣ። ከወደታች እንዲህ ሲሉ ሰማ። እኔ ፈጠርኩ ልበል ብሎ አሰበ። አስቦም አልቀረ እነ ፈጣሪሆሙ ሰፍጡራን አለ። ያን ጊዜ የሱ ወገኖች ከሦስት ተከፍለዋል። የተጠራጠሩ አሉ። አዎን ፈጠርከን ያሉ አሉ። ምን አንተ ትፈጥረን እኛ ፈጠርንህ እንጂ ያሉም አሉ። የተጠራጠሩት በአየር ቀርተዋል። አዎን ፈጠርከን ያሉት ወደዚህ ዓለም ወርደዋል። ምን አንተ ትፈጥረን እኛ ፈጠርንህ እንጂ ያሉት አብረው ወርደዋል። ያን ጊዜ በመላእክት ሽብር ጸናባቸው። ወአጽንዖሙ መልአከ ሰላም በቃሉ እንዲል ቅዱስ ገብርኤል ንቁም በበሀላዊነ እስከ ንረክቦ ለአምላክነ ብሎ አጽንቷቸዋል። ዛሬ ድል የተነሣን ጦር በጉ አርበኛ ባለህ ጽና ብሎ እንዲያጸናው ለብሥራት ያበቃው ይህ ነው። ወበእንተዝ ደለወ ይጽር ዜናሃ ለማርያም እንዲል። ከዚህ በኋላ ጨርሰው ሳይክዱ ላይክዱ ለይኩን ብሎ ብርሃኑን ፈጠረላቸው። ይህ ዕውቀት ሁኗቸው ቅዱስ ቅዱስ ቅዱስ ብለው አመስግነዋል።(ዘፍ 4.1)

And God saw that the light was beautiful, God created the light, knowing that it was a worthy creation. *Andām*. it reads ‘that it was tob’ for ‘that it was beautiful’; it means ‘that it was beautiful’, just as ‘Tobit’ means ‘beautiful’. *And God separated the light and the darkness*. God made a boundary between darkness and light. *Tarik*. If it is asked why he said, “*Let there be light*”, [it is because] the Angels said to each other –for the Lord had created them living, understanding, and speaking – “*What are we? From where did we come? And who created us? And were we created each by ourselves?*” Because God had created the devil in the highest place of all, he [the devil] lacked a voice from above saying “I created”, and he heard them [the angels] below talking like this. He thought he would say “I created”, and did not fail to act on his thought. He said, “I am the creator of the created being”. At that time his tribes were divided into three.

<sup>16</sup> The story is entitled by the Church scholars as “የመላእክት ጦርነት” ,“meaning ‘the war of the angels’.

Some doubted; some said, “Yes you created us”; some said, “What do you mean you created us - rather we created you.” The doubters remained in the air; the ones who said “Yes, you created us,” descended to this world; the ones who said “What do you mean, you created us - rather we created you,” descended together with him [the devil]. Then the angels were very troubled, and, as it says, “*an angel of peace quietened them with his word,*” The archangle Gabriel reassured them, saying, “*Let us stand firm in our respective states until we find our God,*” just as today a good warrior reassures a defeated army, saying “Stand firm where you are.” It was this that made him worthy to be the bearer of good news, as it says. “*And because of this it befitted him to bear news to Mary.*” After this, before they [the angels] completely apostatized, He [God] created light for them, saying “Let there be”. This became knowledge for them, and they praised Him saying “*Holy, Holy, Holy.*” (Gen.1:4)

*c.2 Illustration with təqs (quotation)*

In the *andāmta* commentary tradition, the commentators incorporated different quotations from Biblical and non-Biblical sources mainly from the passages of the books of the Fathers of the Church, whose conceptions corresponded with their own interpretations. This way of using quotations from different sources enables the commentators to enrich their commentary.

The illustration is introduced by the acronym on strategic term “*təq.*” (for *təqs*), meaning quotation. The following is a good example:

**ወሐይዎ ናኮር። ናኮርም በድንግልና መቶ ዘጠኝ ዘመን ኑሮ ታራን ወለደ። ታራ ማለት ያፍ ዕኑስ ማለት ነው። እስመ በመዋዕሊሁ ያስተዋዘነው ቋግት ወስዕዋፍ እንዲል። (ዘፍ 11:24)**

*And Nakor lived* Nakor lived one hundred and nine-years in chastity and begat Tara. Tara means “a conceived bird”. *Təq.* As it says, *in his lifetime, he let birds conceive.* (Gen.11:24)

**D. Explanation (Ḥatāta)**

In the *andāmta* commentary tradition, the commentator provides further explanation to a given text by inserting different kinds of strategic terms which are used to supplement, support or corroborate what has been interpreted in the *andām* mode. *Ḥatāta* is one of these terms. The commentator uses this term before he starts the commentary proper of the commented-upon text. It serves to pave the way for the commentary proper by illustrating unfamiliar concepts, terminologies, etc. For example, in the following text, it is noticeable that commentator explaining the text by using the term *ḥatāta*:

**ወባረከው እግዚአብሔር ወይቤ ብዝኅ ወተባዝኅ ወምልዕዋ ለምድር ውስተ ምድር። አዕዋፍንም በዚህ ዓለም ይበዙ ዘንድ አዘዛቸው። ሐተታ። በዚህ ቀን ሦስት ፍጥረት ፈጥሯል። በልባቸው የሚሳቡ በእግራቸው የሚሸከረከሩ በክንፋቸው የሚበሩትን እንደ ቆቅ እንደ ጅግራ ያሉትን። እነዚህን የመሰለ ሁሉ አንድ ወገን በክንፋቸው የሚበሩትን እንደ ያፍ አንደ ንስር ያሉትን እነዚህን የመሰሉትን ሁሉ አንድ ወገን መገኘታቸው ምንም በባሕር ቢሆን ተፈጥሯቸው ከአራቱ ባሕርያት ነው። ከነዚህም ከባሕር ተገኝተው በዚያው ጸንተው የቀሩ አሉ። አንድ ጊዜ ወደ የብስ አንድ ጊዜ ወደ ባሕር የሚሉ አሉ። በረው በረው የሄዱ አሉ። ይኸውም ምሳሌ ነው። ባሕር የጥምቀት በባሕሩ ጸንተው የቀሩት በክርስትናቸው ጸንተው የሚኖሩ ሰዎች**

ምሳሌ ነው። በረው በረው የሄዱት ወደ ክሕደት የሔዱ ሰዎች ምሳሌ ነው። ጅድ ጊዜ ወደባሕር ጅድ ጊዜ ወደ የብስ የሚመላለሱ ክርስቲያን ከመሆን እስላም ወደ መሆን እስላም ከመሆን ክርስቲያን ወደ መሆን የሚመላለሱ ሰዎች አምሳል ነው። (ዘፍ.1:22)

*And God blessed them, and said, 'Be many, and multiply in the earth',* And he ordered the birds, that they be many in this world. *ፆጥጥጥ*. On this day, He made three types of creation – the ones which crawl on their belly, the ones which run on their legs, and the ones which fly with their wings. The one like partridges and guinea fowl, and everything that resembles them, is one group. The ones that fly with their wings, like small birds and hawks, and everything that resembles them, is one group. Even though they come out of the sea, their created nature is from the four elements. From among these, there are some which, having been produced from the sea, have remained there. There are some which go at one time to dry land and at another to the sea. There are many which fly away. This is a simile. The sea is a likeness of baptism. The ones which remain living in the sea are a likeness of baptism. The ones which fly away are a likeness of the people who have gone off to apostasy. The ones which go to and from, at one time to the sea, and at another to the land, are an example of the people who go to and from being a Christian to being a Muslim be being a Christian. (Gen.1:22)

From the quoted text, it is clear that the commentator’s intention is to present the *ፆጥጥጥ* in advance (after the *ጥጥጥ*) in order to illustrate the following text with the exemplification, which is brought at the end.

**Cross-Reference**

The commentator sometimes refers to different kinds of sources. The text referred to might be the same book that is being commented or any other book. This is introduced with different kinds of strategic terms.

a. *ያለውን ወደፊት ያመጣል* (lit. it will bring what it said ...)

In the *andämta* commentary tradition, this term is used to indicate a text/texts which is/are taken from the text on which the commentary is done. This helps the reader of the commentary not to be confused by raising questions which are going to be answered later on. After presenting what is promised, the commentator concludes his narration by ... *yaläwän amätta* (lit. it brought what it said...). For example, in the following text, the commentator presents the narration he promised and concludes with ...*yaläwän amätta*.

ወኮነ በአሐዲቴ ዕለት ቦኔ የሴፍ ውስተ ቤት። ኮነ ያለውን ወደ ፊት ያመጣል። ከዕለታት በአንድ ዕለት የሴፍ ተክል ለመጎብኘት ወደ ተክል ቦታ ገብቶ ሳለ አንድም ብሉዩን ከሐዲሱ ሐዲሱን ከብሉዩ ለማናፈስ ወደ ቤተ መዛግብቱ። ያን ጊዜ አንድ ሰው ስንኳን አልነበረም። ሰው አለመኖሩን ዐይታ ሳታፍር ሳትፈራ አንት ባሪያ ዛሬ አለቀቅሁም ብላ ተራምዳ ልብሱን ያዘኛው። ኮነ ያለውን አመጣ። (ዘፍ.39:11)



Once upon a time it happened that Yosef entered a house.  
 What is said here will come (again) later. Once upon a time while Yosef entered the garden to visit the plants; *andām* to aerate the old with the new he entered the archive. By then there was no one. While she saw that there was nobody around, she, with no fear and shying, had caught his clothes by saying ‘you slave.’ Then the following happened

b. ... ሲል/ ሲል ነው (lit. ... it says)

By using this technical term, the commentator notes emendations of supposed grammatical errors in the Gə‘əz text and substitutions for words supposedly unsuited to their context. Usually, when he uses this phrase, the commentator asks his readers "if enquired as to why this is so, the answer is..."

There are times on which the exegete feels the *zār* or *nəbab* does not convey the idea that it should have. At this time, he corrects or restates the given *zār* or *nəbab* by filling in the gap from his own memory. This usually is introduced by the term *sil/ sil näw* meaning "... the text ought to read...". The following example illustrates more:

ስለምን አዳምን በነግሕ የቀሩትን በሠርክ ፈጠረ ቢሉ የሠርክ ተከታይ ጨለማ ነው። እነዚያን አላዋቆች ናቸው ሲል። የነግሕ ተከታይ ብርሃን ነው። እርሱንም አላዋቂ ነው ሲል ነው። ይኸስ ይሁን እነዚያን በፊት ፈጥሮ እርሱን በኋላ መፍጠሩ ስለምነው ቡሉ በሰው ልማድ ዛሬ ባለጸጋ በፊት ምግቡን አዘጋጅቶ ኋላ ሰውን እንዲጠራ ጌታም በፊት ምግቡን ፈጥሮ በኋላ እርሱም ፈጠረ ያውስ ቢሆን አቅንቶ እንዲሄድ እነሱን አጎንብሰው እንዲሄዱ አድርጎ ስለምን ፈጠራቸው ቢሉ። የጎሻርና የተጎሻር ምልክት ነው። አንድም እነዚያ ተስፋ ትንሣኤ የላቸውም። ለሱ ግን ተስፋ ትንሣኤ አለው ሲል። (ዘፍ:1:27)

If it is asked why he created Adam at dawn, but the others at dusk, dusk is followed by darkness, and by this, he said of those [other created things], ‘they are ignorant’; dawn is followed by daylight, and by this he said of him [Adam] , ‘He is not knowledgeable.’ If it is asked why, while this is so, that he created those first and him[and] afterwards, it is according to human custom; just as today a rich man, having first prepared the food, subsequently invites people [to eat], so the Lord having first created the food, subsequently created him [Adam]. If it is asked why even if that is so, he created him [Adam] so that he walked upright, but those so that they walked stooping; it is the mark of the governor and the governed. *Andām*. [by it] those have no hope of resurrection, but he [Adam] has the hope of resurrection. (Gen.1:27)

This term also introduces a correction in the structure of a given Gə‘əz text. When the commentator feels that the structure of a certain Gə‘əz text is wrong, he gives the correction of the very text, saying ‘*sil näw*’ after he translates the Gə‘əz text into Amharic. We can see this in the following example:

ወተፈጸመ ሰማይ ወምድር ወከሉ ዓለሞሙ  
 ፍጥረተ ሰማይ ወምድር ወፍጥረተ ከሉ ዓለሞሙ ሲል ነው። የሰማይና የምድር የሠራዊታቸውም ተፈጥሮ ሁሉ ተፈጸመ ። (ዘፍ.1.2)

The commentator not only makes a correction of the structure of a given Gə‘əz text, but also of grammatical errors. For example, in the following text, the commentator corrects a grammatical error:

የጨለማን ተፈጥሮ ወጽልመት መልዕልተ ቀላይ ብሎ የነፋስ ተፈጥሮ ወመንፈስ እግዚአብሔር ይጾልል መልዕልተ ማይ ብሎ የመላእክትን ተፈጥሮ ወአዘዙሙ ለኪሩቤል ወሰራፊል ብሎ የመላእክትን ተፈጥሮ ወአዘዙሙ ለኪሩቤል ወሰራፊል ብሎ ያመጣዋል። ምድርሲ ሀለወት ዕራቃ፣ ምድርሲ ሲል ነው። (ዘፍ.1.2)

He will now introduce the creation of darkness, saying ‘and darkness was over the deep,’ the creation of wind, saying ‘the Spirit of God hovered over the water,’ and the creation of angels, saying ‘and He commanded the Cherubim and the Seraphim.’ And the earth was bare, readings and the earth. (Gen.1:2)

In the quoted text, we see that the commentator corrects the error made by the previous writer by the letter ‘ሲ’ into ‘ሲ’ i.e the word «ምድርሲ» into «ምድርሲ»

c. ...እንዲል/ሉ or ... እንዳለ) lit. ...as it/they/he says/say)

This is a term which is employed by the commentator to conclude a quotation or proverb used to illustrate a preceding comment. Commentators quote a certain text from a certain book and try to convince their readers that what is being said is accepted by many scholars. This intention is introduced by the term ... *andi(u)* or ... *andalä*.

This can be seen in the following example:

ወይቤ እግዚአብሔር ንግበር ሰብእ በእርአያነ ወበእምሳሊነ። ጌታ ዓርብ በነግሕ በኛ አምሳል በኛ አርአያ ሰውን እንፍጠር አለ። ሐተታ። ን ግ በ ር ማለት የአንድነት በእርአያነ ማለት የሦስትነት። አንድም ን ግ በ ር ያለው ያንድነት የሦስትነት ይሆናል። ንግበር ብሎ ማጠዛት የሦስትነት እንደ አንድ ቃል ሁኖ ንግበር ማለት አንድነት እየኖራቸው ቃልልብ እስትንፋስ ቢኖራቸው እኔ ላድርግ አንተ አታድርግ እሱ ያድርግ እሱ ያድርግ ባሉ ነበርና። ኢይቤ እግበር አነ ወአንተ ግበር ወይግበር ዝኩ አላ ይቤ እግዚአብሔር ንግበር እንዲል። (ዘፍ.1:26)

And God said.’ let us make man in our likeness and in our image On Friday, at dawn, the Lord said, ‘Let us create man in our image and in our appearance.’ *Hatata*. His saying ‘let us make’ may show [both] Unity and Trinity - His saying ‘let us make’ in the plural shows the Trinity, [and] His saying ‘let us make’ while being as one voice shows the unity, because if each of them individually had a voice, a heart, and breath, they would have said, “Let me make [it], or “you make [it],” but God said, “let us make.” (Gen.1 :26)

d. እንዲል (lit. it said so)

The commentator does not only refer to what somebody said. He also sometimes tries to convince his readers concerning what the previous author said the very word, phrase or sentence. This is indicated by the phrase *andih alä*.

ወፈጸመ እግዚአብሔር ግብር ዘገብረ።  
 እግዚአብሔር የጀመረውን ፍጥረት ሁሉ ፈጥሮ ፈጸመ። ሰማይን  
 ከነግሱ ምድርን ከነልብሱ ፈጥሮ ፈጸመ። ሐተታ። እስከ አሁን ባዕድ

ፍጥረት ሲፈጥር ሰንብቶ ነበር። እንግዲህ ወዲህ ግን ግብር እም ግብር  
 ቢራባ እንጂ ሌላ ባዕድ ፍጥረት አይፈጠርምና እንዲህ አለ። (ዘፍ.2.2)

And God finished the works he made,  
 God completed [it], having created all the created things which He had  
 begun, meaning “He completed [it], having created heaven with its  
 belongings and earth with its garments”. Hatäta. He [Moses] spoke thus  
 because until now He [God] had spent the time creating alien created  
 things, but from now on, it will multiply further by natural increase,  
 and no other alien created things will be created, he said.(Gen.2:2)

Therefore, the objective of all these ways of justification and referring to the previous authors is to tell the readers that different authors are united concerning the comment given and to explain the text as exhaustively as possible.

#### **Concluding remarks**

As a conclusion remark: the *andāmta* commentary is a source that should not be neglected in the study of history, literature, geography, and the like. This research has attempted to introduce the subject, which was neglected by scholars, so that they may pick up and explore it part by part. As it has undergone little stylistic change over a long period and at least some parts of it have been transmitted with little change since the seventeenth century, one may proceed in the study of older Amharic. High caliber researchers could also conduct further meaning research by comparing the Ethiopian way of exegesis with other exegetical traditions.