

The Cross in Ethiopia: Decoding the Symbolisms in the Christian Traditions

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አካላዊ ጥናት

የኢትዮጵያ ክርስቲያኖች መስቀል የቅዱስ ኃይል፣ የመከታ፣ የመሥዋዕትነት፣ የድኅነትና የዘላለማዊነት ዐርማ መሆኑን በጽኑ ያምናሉ። በኢትዮጵያ ሃይማኖታዊ ታሪክና ወግ መሠረት መስቀል ከፍተኛ ቦታ አለው። ምክንያቱም በመስቀል መንፈሳዊ ይግባኝ መጠየቅና የእግዚአብሔርን መንግሥት መውረስ ይቻላል። ለዚህ የኢትዮጵያ መስቀል የተለያዩ ምስጢራዊ ትምህርቶችን የያዘ ነው። በዚህ ጥናት ውስጥ የጥልቅ ትእምርታዊ ትንተና (Critical Semiotic Analysis) ምርምር ዘዴን በመጠቀም ከ፪፻ በላይ የሚኾኑ የኢትዮጵያ የመስቀል ዐይነቶችን ለመመርመር ተሞክሯል። በጥናቱ መሠረት የልመና ማቅረቢያ፣ የድኅነት ማግኛ፣ ወዘተ... ትእምርቶች ተጠምደው ይገኛሉ። ከሌሎች በላይ መልኩ የ“እንስሳት”፣ የዕዕዋት፣ የቋጠሮ ሥራዎችና የተለያዩ ሥነ ቅርጾች በብዛት ይገኛሉ። እንዲሁም እያንዳንዱ ትእምርት በተለያዩ መልክ፣ ቦታ፣ አቀማመጥና መጠን ይገኛል። ይኸም መንፈሳዊ መስተጋብርን ለማስማማት ስለሚረዳ ሰይጣንን (ዲያብሎስን) ድል ለመንሣት ከማንኛውም ዐይነት መጥፎ ወጥመድ ለማምለጥና ከሞት ለመዳን ይረዳል። በእጅ መሳይ ትእምርት ወደ ላይ በመዘርጋት መደገፍ (ማቀፍ) የታላላቅ መስቀሎች ልዩ ባሕርይ ሲኾን ይኸም በሰውና በእግዚአብሔር መካከል ያለውን ጥልቅ ፍቅርና የግንኙነት ኃይል ያመለክታል። በእጅ መስቀሎች ላይ ደግሞ በመንግሥተ ሰማይ በመሬትና በሰው መካከል ያለውን ምስጢራዊና ተዛማጅ የግንኙነት ኃይል ያሳያል። ለእነዚህና ተዛማጅ ትእምርቶች ዋነኛው ምንጭ መጽሐፍ ቅዱስ ሲኾን ተወራራሽ ትርጓሜዎችም ኹነኛ አስተዋጽኦ አድርገዋል። ኾኖም ግን የመስቀል ሠራተኞች ግላዊ ጥበብ፣ ክህሎትና ሃይማኖታዊ ዕውቀት፣ የቀሳውስት፣ ዲያቆናትና መስቀል አሠሪዎች አስተምህሮና ትእዛዝ የተለያዩ ምስጢራዊ ትእምርቶች በመስቀል ላይ እንዲቀመጡ አስተዋጽኦ አድርጓል። በኸክ ጥናት ውስጥ ሌሎች ተዛማጅ ግኝቶችም ተመርምረዋል።

ቁልፍ ቃላት፡- እግዚአብሔር፣ ኢትዮጵያ፣ ሃይማኖት፣ ክርስትና፣ መስቀል፣ ኃይል፣ ትእምርት

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1. Introduction

Christians sketch the cross. It is a hand on hover (movement) beginning from the head and moves down to the abdominal nipple and from the left hand to the right hand at a symmetric measurement of the “bets cross sign”. This is usually made on their body to bring closer the power of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God, the Almighty, Alpha and Omega. In the daily prayers, they say this, “the Cross is our Power, the Cross is our Ransom, the Cross is our Salvation; even though Jews denied it, we believe in it, for this we get Salvation in the Power of the Cross.”¹ (Yezewoter Tselot, They also make a system of the cross over meals, drinks, and many objects and subjects. As stated in the 1Corinthians 1:18, “the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” On Earth, the cross had been figured into universal human symbolisms before the Great Crucifixion; i.e. Jesus Christ’s ordeal on the wooden cross, unreserved Benevolences be before Him. The Cross can save us from everything (Saint Yared)². In frequent ecclesiastical scholarship, there has been a this cognitive set: the Great War in Heaven lead by Archangel Michael become victorious over the great defectors; i.e. Lucifer (the Great Devil), the big dragon and his fellow “angels” (Revelation 12:7), after Archangel St. Michael was given to fight with a spear of which its back-end has a *Cross Sign*. From keen observations of nature, a reflection from sunlight (and of course from other sources of light) creates distinctive spectra of light of a cross pattern from rays. Roads, directions, and nature all around us are shaped in the semiosis of a cross. This is the great symbolic power in creation. The flowers, fruits and seeds of life, the genesis patterns, the levels of consciousness and decision, and the cycles of life, to mention some, are cross images. Man is created as vibrant cross who is God’s image and to Their Likeness. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them” (Genesis 01: 26-27). Man who stands and stretches his hands sideways make a Living Cross. Hence, Christians always

¹The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church clearly states in its Daily Prayer (Yäzawotär şelot), “though the Jews denied it, we believe in it; those of us who believe get Salvation through the Cross”. (Yäzawotär şelot: Tesfa Gebre Sellassie, 1995, p.6)

²This is mentioned in Abba Giyorgis Zä Gaşəça (2016). ‘Wudassé Mäsqäl’. Trans. Mäzğäbu Səbəhat (Mäməhər). Addis Ababa, Mahbärä Qədusan, p. 6.

remember this Image. This image is the image that anyone (all people) can visibly look at when a “normal” person stands straight and stretches his/her two hands sideways. Anyone can see a cross from the head to the feet and from left to right hand. One of the transcending intellect observed in Africa’s Art is on the Ethiopian Cross. Do not you put Ethiopia for the production of On Roof-Apex/ Pinnacle, On Tomb, Procession, Pilgrimage, Hand, Neck (Pendant), Wall-Paint, Manuscript Binding Incision, Body Tattoo, Dress Embroidery, and many more Pictorial (e.g. the decorative elements or codes of caesura in manuscripts) crosses on the highest tower of Art? (Giyorgis Zä Gaśəča, [Abba, Saint], 2016).

I believe that cross has been embodied as one of the most beautiful and spiritually evocative symbols since the ancient world. In this article, a clear introduction followed by meticulous analysis done and conclusions are drawn to reveal Ethiopian crosses symbolism and semiotic secretes for power. Vital to note on Ethiopian crosses, most of the publications³ per se have focused merely on the simple physical description and documentation of each cross as a material being. There are also many descriptive presentations and documentations in French, German and Italian languages. In this article, figuring has been made in the symbolic codes of each cross design in Ethiopian tradition for seizure of spiritual power and living with God.

Historically, Ethiopians have begun stamping crosses during coin minting as earlier as the great Aksumite kingdom immediately after the Birth of Jesus Christ; hence, the symbolic place of the cross in Christian Ethiopia has been so time crucial⁴. Nevertheless, this does not mean that other kingdoms before Axum did not understand, believed in and embalmed the cross in the Old Testament. Opinionated in a rough conviction, the Christian Coptic cross was adopted

³ Moore (1989). *Ethiopian Crosses from 12th to 16th century*. Moore (1971). *Ethiopian Processional Crosses*. Petrides (1969). *The Wonderful World of Ethiopian Crosses*. Hecht, Benzing & Girma (1990). *The Hand Crosses of the IES Collection*. Di Salvo, M. (2006). *Crosses of Ethiopia: The Sign of Faith, Evolution and Form*. Skira Editore S.P.A., Italy, Milan; Pankhurst, R. (1997). *Ethiopian Crosses, and Their History: Processional, Hand and Neck Crosses*. *Addis Tribune*. ሐፀረ መስቀል (Haşurä Mäsqäl). IES. MS.2211. 8x7cm. 54 pages; ወዳሴ መስቀል (Wudassé Mäsqäl). IES. MS. 1827. 21x18cm. 143 Pages. Abba Giyorgis Zä Gaśəča. (2016). ወዳሴ መስቀል (Wudassé Mäsqäl). Tarns. Mäzgäbu Səbəhat (Mäməhər). Addis Ababa, Maḅbärä Qədusan.

⁴Sergew Hable Selassie. (1970). The expansion and consolidation of Christianity. In *The Church of Ethiopia: A Panorama of History and Spiritual Life*. Addis Ababa, A Publication of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. pp. 1-7.

from what is called the *Crux Dissimulata* that truly could be called the Lalibela cross. The original Coptic cross is probably derived from the (Cushites, later the Egyptian) *Ankh amulet* or *Faience* as earlier as 1700 BC and used by the early Christians. However, it has been identified through time that various forms of crosses have existed which are uniquely signaled as the Ethiopian Crosses. Crosses in Ethiopian tradition can verily be distinctive, gallantly intricate, and harmoniously interwoven for wisdom, power, meaning, protection and salvation in codes. In 2014 I travelled to many parts of Ethiopia for a research purpose. In the tour, I observed that these “crossed designs” have been believed as powerful primarily by all true Ethiopian Christians that could be named the Gojjam, the Aksum, the Lalibela, the Gondar, or the Shewa crosses after the Holy places of Ethiopia in the dynamism and socio-religious variety in singularity. Alternatively, a cross in Ethiopia can be labeled as a cross of Ezana, St. Caleb, St. Yared, St. Atse Gebre Meskel, St. Lalibela, Emperor Zera’a Yaqob, Emperor Tewodros II, etc. according to the prime devotees or contributors.

Ethiopian crosses are intricate and filled with history and symbolism. The geometric shapes symbolized sacred power common in Ethiopian art, the crosses, with much order and care placed in the intertwined patterns. The original designs were influenced by the ankh symbol, and many variations have been crafted since then. It is often worn in jewelry as a symbol of faith and has even been adopted in popular culture. It most commonly represents everlasting or indestructible love. Ethiopians love “objects” that have a long religious story and value, and that have sacred nature. As purpose, the Ethiopian cross has an intricate design, baroque style or filigree, mirroring the richness found in the hearts and heads of the Ethiopian faithful. In early Ethiopian Civilization, crosses were minted in coins and carved in rocks and stones (Sergew, 1970). At the zenith of the [Zä’agew] dynasty (800-1270 AD) art traditions, the crosses in this case, were casted using the famous lost wax method in their sobbing finest and complete pattern. In unique productions cross, as can be seen in many churches of Gojjam and the Pendant Crosses of from this area⁵, they replicated a part or the whole in modified adaptations in ceased complex of the codes, or removed art at all in producing the Gojjam Cross, also known as Gammadion Cross or *Gəmadä Mäskäl*.

⁵ I myself saw these cross in many churches of Gojjam: Mertule Maryam (Enebse Sar Meder), Motta Giyorgis (Hulet Ejju Enese), Abəma Maryam (Debre Markos), Degetamo/Degua Taəmo Maryam (Bibugn), Debre Medhanit (Bibugn), Bebecha Michael (Bibugn), Girarma Sellasse (Hulet Ejju Enese), etc.

In spiritual functions, Ethiopian crosses have innumerability for the Orthodoxy, as they are *on roof, on tomb, processional, hand, pendant (neck), and tattoo, picture, and embroidery* genera with variations in imaginative thrill and level of involvedness⁶. Processional crosses are made mostly from metals, alloys and sometimes from wood and leather with a hollow shaft-a socket surrounded by two loops used to affix and mount it to a wooden staff, permitting the cross to be carried and held high aloft during liturgical services and important religious processions. Typically, the loops had to carry colorful cloths which symbolizes the *veil of Jesus Christ* on His crucifixion day. They are always the property of churches. The oldest types of processional crosses yet identified date back older than the 11th and 12th century Ethiopia. Ethiopian hand crosses, either small, medium or large sized, have a “decorated” or smooth handle and a base. In prayers and blessings, priests hand these crosses to all people who flock around in need of bowing, kissing, being caressed and blessed of it. A hand cross could be made out of precious minerals, wood, metal, leather, or marble, and it is the property and virtuous power of the priest.

In the following parts, critical analyses were made to show how the Ethiopian Cross making culture and skill singled out in Spiritual Art vis-à-vis the Holy Bible⁷ and Ethiopian Christianity of the Orthodox Church for virtuous power grant and vice power denial⁸. The crosses kinds used form analysis were collected from countless sources and places from Ethiopia, Poland (during the 19ICES) and the Internet. Since the cross varieties used are numerous in number, I found it difficult to cite the sources of each cross. Right so will require me another article. This will be my next project; it will be a project to document cross types, descriptions and actual locations.

2. The Cross in the Holy Bible

Pillar to Christians as Jesus said is “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34).

⁶Abba Giyorgis Zä Gaśəča. (2016). ውዳሴ መሥቀል (Wudassé Mäsqäl). Trans. Mäzğäbu Səbəhat (Mäməhər). Addis Ababa, Maqbarä Qədusan.

⁷The Holly Bible. (2000). *King James Version (KJV)*. Texas: National Publishing Company. This version of KJV is the direct printing of the KJV 1611’s version.

⁸ *Ibid*

The Lord also said to the rich young man, "...go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor..., and come, and take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21). These are invitational implications from the Lord Jesus Christ as symbolisms to his followers to carry His cross and leave the earthly life. This way, Jesus made the bearing of the Cross a precondition for discipleship to Him, and He said, "...whoever does not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). In Incarnation on earth (as recurrently written in the New Testament), Jesus Christ has suffered a lot bearing the cross. He was wanted to be killed. He was insulted, bitten, allegedly accused, dishonored, and spitted on; He endured the cross (Matthew 2:16; 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19; Hebrew 12:2). These and many are symbolisms of the cross other than the cross of crucifixion. In affirmation, Saintship was guaranteed in, on and for the cross. Salvation from the death because of Adam and Eve was gained, as stated in Colossians 2:14, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" The eyes and hearts of Jesus Christ's disciples have also been on the cross. In their daring preaches, they said, "...we preach Christ crucified... [the cross]" (1Corinthians. 1:23), "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1Corinthians. 2:2). "... God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). Moreover, the Angel who announced the Resurrection also used the term referring the cross saying to the two Mariam, "I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified..." (Matthew. 28:5).

In Christianity, the Cross is always evident in the lives of the martyrs, the abbots, and the ascetics⁹. As declared in Colossians 1:20, Jesus Christ "made peace through the blood of his cross." In view of this unfolding faith, many martyrs and confessors suffered unbearable torments and agonies. Early Apostles and Bishops marched in the way of martyrdom for the cross (Luke 9: 21-26; Acts 9:16). When the Lord called Saul of Tarsus to become an apostle for the gentiles, He said about him, "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:16). Clear, many fathers have borne the cross of solitude and aloofness from every human consolation, and the cross of ascetics in which they were denuded from every corporal desire. They suffered the pains of hunger,

⁹Giyorgis Zä Gaśəça (Abba). (2016). ውዳሴ መስቀል (Wudassé Mäsqäl)—Praise of the Cross. Trans. Mäzገäbu Səbəhat (Mäməhər). Addis Ababa, Mahbärä Qəḍusan.

thirst, cold, heat, poverty, and destitution, in view of the greatness of their love for the King Christ. They also suffered the afflictions and the warfare of the devils in various ways and kinds and the lives of the wandering anchorites. Evidently, Christian life is a cross; it is a fearless journey to eternity from miseries. True Christians leave all their belongings and fear, bear, suffer and die in/for glory, peace, consolidation, resurrection and rejoicing (Luke 16:25; Philippians 3:10; Galatians 2:20; Acts 7:55-56; Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 3:14; Matthew 5: 11-12; 1Corinthians. 15:19; Acts 18: 9-10; Joshua 1:9). For God, “they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” (Galatians 6:12).

Christians love and die for their non-scrabble emblem, the Cross, in courage and martyrdom, as it is their deep spiritual doctrinal meaning. Christians put the cross everywhere¹⁰: on the churches and houses, on paintings, in offices and work places, in and on their cars and machines, in signs and sculptures, on breasts, necks, foreheads, cheeks, hand as tattoos, etc. All their beginnings are with a cross: prayers, runs, writings, foods and drinks, openings, speeches, researches, exams, and many other forms of feelings and careers. Ethiopian Christians make it a sign on themselves, on everything, and across horizons. Christians’ mind can make a sign of the cross in cases of reservations not to do so. They also kiss it in deep love and belief for healing and salvation and power and longevity. They can gain blessings and power from the cross. Ethiopian priests and deacons carry the cross in all ecclesiastical processions and people and nations could be blessed in it. Their clothes could also be beautifully adored with crosses for its benediction and power and safeguarding. The sign and the signing of the cross done with true faith and veneration has a power which Satan dreads it from afar (1Corinthians 1: 18). We got Salvation through Christ’s Cross¹¹. Hence, the analysis in this article is the search for and scrutiny of symbolic codes associated to spiritual power in Ethiopian cross of a multitude.

3. Sources (The “Cross data”) used for the Analysis

The crosses used for the analysis in this article were collected from many sites and collections of a period of time. In 2012, I took different photographs from Gojjam area including Dəgua Ṭa’əmo (Dəgəṭamo or Ləyitamo) Maryam in Bibugn Woreda, Abəma Maryam in Debre Markos, Moṭa Giyorgis in Hulät

¹⁰*Ibid*

¹¹*Ibid*

Eġu Enäsé, Märto LāMaryam, and many of the Ṭana/Ṣana Monastries. I also took pictures from Gondar Dābrā Bərəhan Səllassé Church. A friend of mine also brought me multiple types of crosses from Ṣāwa churches and the people wearing a cross. From Tigray, I myself took pictures from Aksum Ṣəyon Maryam Church, souvenir shops, and Yāha Abune Afśé Church. From Lalibela, a friend of mine sent me beautiful cross pictures. In Addis Ababa, I collected cross pictures from Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Éntoṭo Maryam and Éntoṭo Kidanā Məḥərät Churches, Mahəbārā Qədusan shop of crosses and “gifts”, and many other Soverier shops in Märkato, Piazza, and Bole. I also took photographs from street cross sellers. I also took pictures from Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw, Poland. Internet was the other source I used to collect different crosses of Ethiopia. I also took a lot of photographs from assorted sources.¹² I also photographed from people’s “neck”. It was a very tiresome job to collect all these crosses.

4. The Material Symbolisms of Making Crosses

For Silver, in the Holy Bible it is written for the Israelites who trespassed Old Testament Laws, a snake was biting them in mass and Moses asked Lord God for mercy. In mercy, God ordered him to symbolize and show them a snake (serpent) shaped silver (variably written as brass or bronze) *rods* in a cross figure, and they were saved from ferocious stings and woke up alive (Numbers 21:5-9). This was an earlier indication of the inevitable crucifixion of Jesus as a universal Savior from perish. Moses’s cross saved the people of Israel, and the True cross saves the people of the whole World who believe in it. In addition, the brass/bronze/silver signifies the salvation of idol believers made out of it, for they believe in the cross. Silver also represents pure words and understanding (Proverbs 2:4; 3:13-14; 10:20; 25:11; Psalms 12:6). Silver may also represent impurity for a teaching of repent (Ezekiel 22:20-21).

And Ethiopian crosses can be made of Gold to signify that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings of the universe and of purity (Isaiah 13:12); it also remembers the bearing of Pure, Precious and Rare Gold by the Wise Men (the Magi, *Seba’a Segel*) for the Kingship during His birth (Matthew 2:11). The Iron crosses are

¹² Moore (1989). *Ethiopian Crosses from 12th to 16th century*. Moore (1971). *Ethiopian Processional Crosses*. Petrides (1969). *The Wonderful World of Ethiopian Crosses*. Hecht, Benzing & Girma (1990). *The Hand Crosses of the IES Collection*. Di Salvo, M. (2006). *Crosses of Ethiopia: The Sign of Faith, Evolution*. Pankhurst, R. (1997). *Ethiopian Crosses, and Their History: Processional, Hand and Neck Crosses*. Addis Tribune.

made in Ethiopia, again, to signify the chains used at the time of crucifixion, for they were made from iron and the strength (endurances of Jesus Christ). Longinos, the single-eyed Roman, had also stabbed (thrust) the spear made of iron on Jesus Christ's side while He was on the Cross. It also signifies impurity (Ezekiel 22:20-21); strength (Leviticus 26:19; Revelation 19:15). Ethiopian crosses could also be carved out of wood for reasons that Jesus Christ was crucified on a wooden cross. It also signifies the legendary wood brought out of Paradise by Eskinder with an Eagle-like-Horse (*Kebre Negest*, Glory of the Kings). The Thicket, Etse Sabek which caught the Ram [sheep], is another semblance of cross making out of wood (Genesis 22:13). What is more, it could be symbolic for the arch of the gopher wood of Noah (Genesis 6:14), the wood to be burnt off by Abraham (Genesis 22:3-9), Moses and Aron's stick (Exodus 7:19), the shittim (acacia) wood of Moses to make the altar and Arch of the Covenant or Tabot (Exodus 25:5-28; 26:15-37; 27:1-6; 30:1-5; 35:7&24; 36:20-36; 37:1-28; Deuteronomy 10:1&3; Ezekiel 41:22), or the cedar wood of Moses (Leviticus 14:4-52; Numbers 19:6). It could be David's and Solomon's timber of cedar and fir (1Kings 5:8; 6:10-34; 7: 2&7; 9:11; 2Chronicles 2:3). It may be the Amlug-Sandal-trees of Ophir to make pillars for the house of the Lord (1Kings 10:11); the olive tree to make the Cherubims, doors of the oracle and the temple posts (1Kings 6:23, 31, 33), and the cedar beams of the temple (1Kings 6:36), or the juniper of David (Psalms, 120:4). A cross could be made out of leather for reasons of remembrances out of which Jesus Christ was beaten, whipped and flogged by the Jews before crucifixion. There are many more symbolisms of the cross in representational adaptations and adoptions to the Biblical and cultural associations of a time dynamism in belief and power.

5. The Bio-Crosses: “Animals” and Plants on the Cross

Cross smiths and the people who believe in the cross put “animal” and plant as motifs of a variety. The nature of the “animals” and plants (their behavior) and the positions in the socio-religious dichotomies could have triggered cross-smiths to include themes of a variety on the crosses. In this section, some “animal” and plant behaviors as depicted on the cross are analyzed in critical semiotics. *Mäṣəḥafä Fis'algos*¹³ also described many symbolisms of “animals” closely related to the symbolisms on the Cross.

¹³ Rodas Tadesse. *Mäṣəḥafä Fis'algos*. Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, Far East Trading Plc. 2017.

5.1. Serpents Motif



Fig.1: Serpent/Snake motif crosses

For some cross patterns at the edges of ‘terminal’ points there are intertwining or straight lines ending in serpentine curves (the snake-like forms) assumed a more distinct shape on either side of the looping brackets that secure the cross to its base or at the tip-ends of the top or the rear sides-left and right. Such details most possibly incorporate (in) direct references to the deceptive serpent of Adam and Eve at the Garden of Eden together with the Tree of Life, or the multi-headed big snake thrown down to the earth (Genesis 3:1-13; 2Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9; 20:2). It may also represent motifs of the brazen serpent of Moses-- as described in the Book of Numbers (21:4-9; John 3:14-15). Serpent is wise (Matthew 10:12). It is replenishing animal in fasting and seclusion (Rodas¹⁴, 2017, p.47; Matthew 7:13 & 14). A snake spits its poisons before it drinks water as humans must repent before Eucharist (ibid; Matthew 5:23-25; 6:14 & 15). It is written that in the wake of a devastating plague of poisonous snakes, God instructed the Israelites to erect a brass serpent upon a pole. Gazing upon this object was believed to cure those bitten, Christians interpreted the brazen serpent as a prefiguration of the redemptive cross of Christ. It could symbolize the snakes (serpents) described about 49 times in the New Testament as deceptive, poisonous, Satan, evil/devil, etc. Serpents could also signify fertility, creative life force, rebirth, transformation, healing, immortality, or the umbilical cord (Rodas, 2017, pp. 47 & 49). It may also represent sexual desire and the endurance from such and so indulgences. Serpents could also be taken as a motif displaying the powerful guardianships in associations to the natural behaviors of cobras or rattlesnakes, for they never retreat from a fierce fight.

¹⁴ Rodas Tadesse. 2017.

5.2. The fish Motif

The fish as a symbol—as a sign—has been seen in the past on things like art and architecture. These days, a signification of fish on the crosses endures with Christian faith. Considering a linguistic turn, the Greek word ICHTUS [also ICHTHUS] for fish works as an acrostic for I = Jesus, C = Christ, HT = God's, U = Son, S = Savior¹⁵. Jesus' ministry could be associated to the fish symbol because (as one interpretation) He chose several fishermen to be His loyal disciples and declared that He would make them “fishers of men” (Matthew 4:18-20).



Fig.2: Fish motif crosses

The fish is also a symbol of baptism, since a fish's home is in the water. The Holy Bible testifies, “As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.” (Mark 1:16-18). Hence, Fish is a powerful symbol for “Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior.” Ethiopian crosses have also adopted the fish in signification of the Lord God, Jesus Christ in variety of forms and sizes. Each symbol is also powerfully associational.

5.3. Birds Motif

Birds' symbolism on Ethiopian crosses transcends spiritual life at representations of the messengers of peace, hope, relief, savior-hood, mercy, good news, etc. (Rodas, 2017). A call to the mind is the great flood's dove that returned to Noah's Ark with “an olive leaf plucked off.” (Genesis 8:11). Fig.3 shows a collection of bird symbols as they appear in variety.

¹⁵See “ICHTHUS”. *Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd ed.). 2007; <http://www.plymouth-church.com/>; Rasimus, T. (2011). “Revisiting the Ichthys: A Suggestion Concerning the Origins of Christological Fish Symbolism”. Pp. 327-348 in *Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices*. Biblical Studies, Ancient Near East and Early Christianity E-Books Online, Collection 2012, 76; Augustine. *The City of God*. Wikisource. XVIII, 23.



Fig.3: Birds motif crosses

The dove also represents the Holy Spirit as a pillar belief system of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32) which revealed at the time of Jesus Christ’s Baptism. The dove can also implicate humbleness-innocence, of God and His Apostles (Matt 10:16). On the cross significations are subtle in behaviors of the turtledove, turtle, or sparrow mentioned five (5) times, birds forty-two (42) times, and doves or pigeons seventy seven (77) times in the Holy Bible. Besides, the sparrow may represent God’s concern for the most insignificant living things, and the mother eagle gives the greatest care and training to its young the most.

5.4. Dog Motif

Dog (Hebrew celeb, Ge’ez Keleb, and Arabic Kelb) is mentioned about forty (40) times in the Bible to symbolize barking and biting man, foolishness, uncleanness, and evilness. Dogs bark to guard flocks of sheep, and they can hunt animals. The Holy Bible connotes and denotes them for similar purposes (Isaiah 56:10-11; Job 30:1).

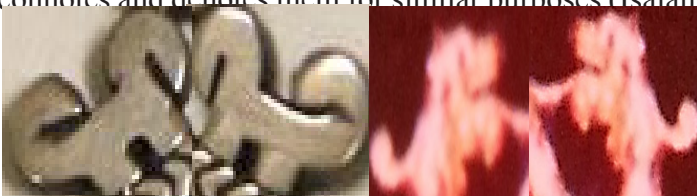


Fig.4: Dog motif crosses

Dogs in the Bible exhibited predatory behavior in their quest for survival (they ran wild) which included the eating of dead bodies (1Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:19, 23-24; 22:38; 2Kings 9:10, 36; 1Kings 21:23). Signification of man with dogs might imply low status, sinfulness, uncleanness, being a Gentile, non-believer and baseness (2Kings 8:13; Exodus 22:31; Deuteronomy 23:18; 2Samuel 3:8; Proverbs 26:11; Ecclesiastes 9:4; 2Samuel 9:8; 1Samuel 24:14; Matthew 15:26, 27; Mark 7:27, 28). Besides, the New Testament's calling of a human "a dog" meant false apostles, evilness, persecutors, (Philippians 3:2; Revelation 22:15;). As can be seen in Fig.4 above and in many Ethiopian cross varieties, the dog's symbolism could represent these meanings associated within the Bible and the Theoculture.

5.5. Sheep/Lamb Motif

The Sheep/Lamb or Ram which exists in at least five hundred (500) instances in the Holy Bible implicates the Lord God, Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd (Matthew 15:24; John 10:2; Hebrews 13:20; Acts 8:32), the man (John 10:27; 21:16-17; Roman 8:36; 1Peter 2:25; Hebrews 13:20), the sinners or the lost sheep (Matt 10:6; 15:24; 18:13; Luke 15:4, 6), religious commitment and wisdom (Matthew 10:16), foolishness (Matthew 12:12), followers of Christ and close relationship (John 10:3-26), purity (Matthew 25:32-33), etc. This variation exists on the



Fig.5: Lamb/Sheep motif crosses

Keen to analysis, sheep is mentioned first in the Bible in Genesis 4:2 connoting Abel, the first good shepherd, who was sacrificed for goodness as opposed to evil thoughts and acts of Cain. The Bible symbolizes that sheep have to pay attention to and understand the "words (commands and advises) of the shepherd, but some people are dumb like sheep and they are not better than a sheep (Matthew 12:12). Some sheep still have free will, and a "sheep" can get lost accidentally or on purpose. God will try to go and find the lost sheep, but not all sheep belong to God. Besides, not every sheep has to follow the shepherd, and no one can force a

sheep away from his shepherd as long as it hears and follows orders and advice. The sheep also signify the good, The Lamb of God (Genesis 4: 3-4; 22:1-18; Matthew 25:33; John 1:3; 10:27; Matthew 10:5-6; John 21:15-17), the sacrifice or freewill offerings (Exodus 20:24; 29:28; Leviticus 9:3; 12:6; 22:21; Numbers 18:17), food (1Samuel 25:18; Deuteronomy 14:4; 26), paid tributes (1King 3:4), cover of the tabernacle (Exodus 25:5), an emblem of humbleness (Isaias 53:7; Matt 10:16; Acts 8:32), etc. Interestingly Ethiopian crosses depict sheep doubtless in significations of deliverance from beasts and the evil; otherwise, it implicates beliefs of man to and the phenomena of God, Jesus Christ, and The Lamb¹⁶.

The horn of sheep also symbolizes hyper-semiosis representations with Abraham's sheep (Genesis 22:13), the altar and the tabernacle (Exodus 27:2; 29:12; 30:2-10; Leviticus 4:7-34; 16:18; 1Kings 1:50 & 51; 2:28; 118:27), priests' seven trumpets of ram's horn (Joshua 6:4-13), the horn of oil, salivation, power, anointment and bud (1Samuel 16:13; 2 Samuel 22:3; 1Kings 1:39; Psalms 81:2; 132:17; Jeremiah 17:1; Ezekiel 43:20), horns of iron (weapons) (1Kings 22:11; 2Chronicle 18:10; Ezekiel 34:21); horns of the wicked and the cut off vs. the righteous and the exalted (Psalms 75:4, 5, 10; 89:17, 24; 92:10; 112:9; 148:14; Jeremiah 48:25; Lamentations 2:2 & 17; Ezekiel 29:21; 43:15). The inclusion of sheep on cross-smith may symbolize these Theo-practices and spiritual connections. Sheep is deeply associated to Christianity all over the world and in Ethiopia. For many Christians, a genealogical pull-thread is from the Lamb Who is God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, and this motif is symbolized in Ethiopian cross.

5.6. The Lion Motif

With more than 167 direct mentions across the Bible, the lion is very typical of Ethiopian crosses in its ubiquity relational signification to the positivity and negativity in Divine-human relations. It signifies the mightiest beast (Proverbs 30:30), especially in its teeth (Job 4:10) and paws (1Samuel 17:37), characteristically fearless (Proverbs 28:1; 30:30), stealthy (Psalm 17:12; Rodas, 2017, p.29), frightening (Ezra 19:7; Hosea 11:10; Amos 3:8; Psalms 17:13; 22:13, 21), and destructive (1Samuel 17:34; Micah 5:8). The lion laid waste towns and villages (2Kings 17:25- 26; Proverbs 22:13; 26:13), devoured men (1Kings 13:24; 20:36), and territorially protective and untraversed (Isaiah

¹⁶Abba Giyorgis Zä Gašəčā. ወዳሴ መሥቀል (Wudassé Mäsqäl). Trans. Mäzğäbu Səbəhat (Mäməhər). Addis Ababa, Maḡbärä Qəḍusan, 2016, p. 37.

31:4). Numerous qualities of the lion are often applied figuratively in a variety of ways to individuals and nations. Ascribing are a frightening king (Proverbs 19:12; 20:2), a brave soldier (2Samuel 17:10), destructive of the nations (Isaiah 5:26-30; Jeremiah 2:15; 4:6-7; 5:6; 50:17; Ezekiel 32:2), but protective of their conquests (Isaiah 5:29).



Fig.6: Lion motif crosses

Symbolic to lion included on Ethiopian crosses are also the personal enemies, wisdoms (Rodas, 2017, p.29) and stealthy nature in their pursuit to harm (Psalm 10:9; 17:12). Likewise, God is described with a number of leonine features. He is strong (Isaiah 38:13), fearless (Isaiah 31:4), stealthy (Jeremiah 49:19; Hosea 13:7), frightening (Hosea 11:10; Amos 3:8), and destructive (Jeremiah 25:38; Lamentations 3:10; Hosea 5:14; 13:8). In Amos 3:8, “The Lion” represents a title of God. In Ethiopian crosses, the leonine features are constructive representations of the kingship with “roots of David”, the Conquering (sin and death) Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ (Genesis 49:8-12; 1Kings 2:45; Isaiah 11:1, 6-10; Matthew 1:3; Hebrews 7:14; Revelation 5:5-10; 6:12-17), the majesty and the “head of the Church” (Amos 3:8).

Interestingly, winged lion on Ethiopian crosses may represent the fierce eagle-winged lion that Daniel has watched (Daniel 7:4), or the Apostle Mark (Revelation 4:7). Its fierceness and cruelty rendered it to appropriate for negative metaphors for a ferocious and malevolent enemy, a danger or a vengeance (Psalm 7:2; 22:21; 57:4; 2Timothy 4:17), and hence for the archfiend (diabolically evil person), the beast, or Satan himself (1Peter 5:8; Revelation 14:9-11). The lion could also represent many pagan nations that threatened and devoured many Christians all over the world. On the extensions, the lion may signify Isaiah’s city (Jerusalem which is the chief city) a synonym for the altar of the burnt offerings (Isaiah 29:1-2; Ezekiel 43:15-16). Likewise, the symbol of a lion represents command,

authority and power over our conscious mind which is the sensible life-force. All this representational associations can be elicited through presenting the lion motifs in Ethiopian crosses.

5.7. All-Carrying God Motif

This sign/signage can also be found in many Ethiopian crosses to show God’s All-Carrying Characters (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 1:31; Isaiah 46:3; 53:4; 63:9; Psalms 91:11-12). Its powerful symbolism teaches us to be with the words of God (Galatians 6:2) in sharing the burdens of others. It is a powerful emblem for the absolution of man’s guilt (the trespasses) which Jesus Christ (the Second, Later) Adam, has carried all our sins while He “walk” to Calavary (Am. Kāranəyo), which the place of crucifixion (Luke 23:33), and which He later rose from the grave.



Fig.7: Motif of an All-Carrying God

Presenting the All-Carrying Sign on the cross gives spiritual hope and eternal pride to all Christians for God is an All-Carrying Father of the world’s sufferings and burdens on His head. This cross motif operationalizes the enactments into the inculcation of Christian identities anew and the power of healing and redemption. In Ethiopian crosses, God was an All-Carrier of the world where the cross is within directly from Adam’s tomb and His Commandments and Promises.



Fig.8: Crosses sections with motifs of God, the Holy Trinity, Arch-Angels and Saints

5. 8. Motifs God, the Holy Trinity, Archangels and Saints

Theologically speaking, the cross is a fundamental stake to all humanity for their trespasses¹⁷. Together with the cross and the crucified Jesus Christ, many subtleties are inculcated in the full operationalization of Ethiopian Orthodox Church belief system for inclusions of different motifs. The Trinity, Saintship, Martyrdoms, Safeguarding, Evangelical expansions, a few among the abundance. These are dealt with some level of details in the following section with spatial symbolism in operationalizations. It is the space factor on the structural arrangement of “things” on the cross.

5.9. Motif of the malefactors

The Holy Bible has also mentioned the crucifixion of two robbers, thieves, or evildoers of the time. Many other wrong doers who stabbed Him by the sides, and the soldiers who enforced Him to drink vinegar, parted His garments, gambled in it, watched Jesus for a while, and put up His “accusations” are also mentioned (Matthew 27: 7-8, 38, 44; Mark 15:9, 27; Luke 23:10, 32-33, 39-43; John 19: 11-13, 63).



Fig.9: Crosses motif of the malefactors

The presentation of these malefactors as one on the repentant and healed and the others in unremorseful statuesque on Ethiopian cross, is a vital motif for theological significances in the sustained dynamism in the necessities for hope, light, mercy, and salvation. Mercy and cure was also the major phenomena which Jesus Christ did while He was on the cross (Luke 23: 42-43), and those were the promises after Adam and Eve’s deaths. I ponder that any good Christian of the EOTC always learns and recalls while he kisses on it and bows for it¹⁸.

6. The Plants Motif

The plant motifs in spiritual symbolism on Ethiopian crosses are very prevalent

¹⁷ Abba Giyorgis Zä Gaśəça. ውዳሴ መስቀል (Wudassé Mäsqäl). Tarns. Mäzgäbu Səbəhat (Mäməhər). Addis Ababa, Maḅbärä Qəḍusan, 2016.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

with associational inculcations and operationalizations to the plants' natures and uses in variability. The major themes are more with cedar and the temple, fig and the covering, and gopher and the ark. In generics, trees represent reproduction and perpetuation (Genesis 1:11-12), food (Genesis 1:29), life and knowledge and death (Genesis 2:9; 2:16-17; 3:3; 3:11-12, 17), power (Exodus 15:25), hope and resurrection and mercy (Job 14:7; Psalms 52:8), prosperity (Psalms 1:3), righteousness (Psalms 92:12), trust and faith (Proverbs 27:18), and/or St. Mary (Proverbs 3:18).



Fig.10: The Plants motif on Crosses

In tree types Acacia symbolizes beauty and soul's immortality for it is durable. Algom implies Christ's humanity (2Chronicles 9:10-11). Almond represents Divine approval or St. Mary (Numbers 17:1-8) and watchfulness, which is the watchful eye of God (Jeremiah 1:11-12).

Paradoxically, some trees are associated with sin, for example, Apple as the forbidden fruit with Adam and Eve signifies sin (Genesis 3:3-24), but Abba Giyorgis Zä Gašəča (2016, p.7) stated that a plant (the Cross) with Jesus Christ signifies Salvation. Bramble represents purity of St. Mary (Judges 9:14-15). Clover/Shamrock's shape is symbolically transferable to the Trinity (1Peter 1:1-25). Grape depict the mission filed or the blood of Christ (Revelation 14:18-19). Holly or Ilex signifies the passion of Christ. Iris symbolizes Mary's sorrow at Christ's passion. Ivy embodies faithfulness and eternal life, and Laurel clearly denotes sweet triumph, success and achievement (2Timothy 2:1). Lemon connotes fidelity in love, and Oak implies the Jesus Christ. Olive entails peace, prosperity, wealth, and justice/fairness, and Vine presages God's providence and heavenly care. Jesse Tree represents Christ's Spiritual blessings, Divine judgments, and His relationship with man dawn through the genealogy. Wheat together with the grape epitomizes the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. What is still important to remind,

a cross may not be made out of all these tree types, but they are symbolically depicted on Ethiopian crosses. The quatrefoil or trefoil for symbolisms of the Trinity is the usual and mysterious motif on Ethiopian crosses.

7. Spatial Symbolism in Ethiopian Cross

With a closer decoding, Ethiopian crosses carry subtle meanings of loci (space and direction) of their existence in relative inclusions. The cross in a right-to-left round moves of the full circle with reference to the top-and-the center it carries big symbolic powers put structurally different. In this section, critical analysis was made to unpack the spiritual symbolisms of Ethiopian crosses for their spatial meaning and power. In each space, the type and meaning of power is fundamentally different.

7. 1. The Top most Motifs

In the positional semiotics of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the highest, the leading power shall be vested at the top most section of the cross in which God, The Lamb, the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ Crucified, St. Mary with her Child, Archangels, and similar motifs of super power are gloriously bestowed (Genesis 27:39; 49: 25; Joshua 3:3, 16; Psalms 78: 23; Isaiah 32:15; Luke 1:76; John 3:31; 8:23; 19:11; James 1:17). With the real cross shape, the triangular cross, the circular cross, the oval cross, the square cross, or through various beautiful patterns: stars, trefoils, hearts, etc., the “Thing(s)” of the Lord God as Three-In-One, The Lamb of God, the Kingdom of God in eternal praises by Cherubs (1Kings 6:24), the Last Supper, Resurrection, and many more spiritual powers are con



Fig. 11: Crosses with the top most motifs of pace

At the topmost part of the cross in multiple symbolisms: a cross, birds, “animals”, networks, and any more geometrical patterns, which are critically discussed below, bring into live for the worship of God. Besides, St. Mary with Christ the

Child, Archangels, St. George, or Great Fathers and Apostles could be positioned with full power granted from God in God for God. Generally, and most frequently, the topmost sections carry meanings of Might and the Creator, LORD God, The Lamb, The Dove, Archangels, Cherubs, St. Mary, The Kingdom of God, the Trinity, and many other Spiritual superpowers of the sacraments.

7.2. The Bottom most Motifs with the Base

At the bottommost, the cross fundamentally includes symbolisms and direct references to the Tomb of Adam and Jesus Christ, the Crucifixion’s story, the Ark of Covenant, the Earth, the Holy Trinity and the Trinity Miracles, St. Mary and her only Son’s migration to Egypt, the Altar, Archangels, and many other semiotic “p



Fig.12: Crosses with the bottom-most motifs of pace at the foundation.

With a closer look at some the pictures taken from the bottommost parts of Ethiopian crosses, one could get connotative belief systems for God as the base of eternal life and Salvation (Psalms 104:5; Proverbs 10: 25; 1Chorinthians 3:10; Ephesians 2:20). God’s stone put at Zion (Isaiah 28:16), the Eternal Church and City (1Timity3:15; Hebrews 11:10; Revelation 21:19), God’s unchanging seal (2Tomity 2: 19), and similar motifs are gloriously positioned.

7.3. The Central Motifs

From a very critical and closer look on and within Ethiopian crosses, revelations could be symbolisms of power and belief in many motifs. All Old and New Testament sacred power codes are found at the center of Ethiopian crosses as a resu



Fig.13: Crosses with the central motifs for pace

The most frequent depictions, inter alia, are the Crucifixion story, Holy Trinity, God, St. Mary with her Son, Archangels, The Bread, Holy Fathers and Apostles. The ‘center’ theme which exists about 821 times in the Holy Bible also has sacrament relationships in implicational remembrances to the earth (Genesis 1:6), the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:9), the threats, the beast, the barriers and many more vices (Genesis 3:15; Luke 10:3; Luke 16:26; Revelation 5:6), the relationships, promises, salvations, mercies and the emblems set agreed between man and God (Genesis 9: 12-17, Genesis 17: 7, 10, 11; 1Timoty 2:5), the Saints, Apostles, Great Fathers, and many more martyrdoms. We can also decipher from the center motifs that the worship of God is seen with in symbolisms of stars, trees of life in trefoil, the bridges, and God as the Sun (Mathew 13:6; Revelation 21:23). In addition to the spiritual power, traditional belief systems are included, for example, the Axum obelisk, stars, the sun, swastika, etc. The center persuades Christians bringing all keys to Christianity in the Spiritual relationships to God’s Family.

7.4. The Left Motifs

Thematic representations on-within the cross to the “left-hand” side of the cross and the crucifixion connotes the “cursed” malefactors, the moon, the horn of the sheep (Qerne bege’e); otherwise, Martyrs and Saints and many more motifs such as Archangels (Gabriel), and worth keeping Angels (2Chronicles 18:18), and Mary M



Fig.14: Cross collection with the left motifs of pace

In the Holy Bible, the left contains references to the People (Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malichiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, and Zechariah, [and] Meshulam) who stood by the left of the pulpit of wood while Ezra was reading the Book of the Law of Moses (Nehemiah 8:4). It may also refer to the riches and honor that are found on the left hand sides of wisdom (Proverbs 3:16); similarly, it

may signify the idea that a fool [man's] heart is at his left (Ecclesiastes 10:2). It also symbolizes the goats [the sinful] who will stand by the left, and He will say unto them depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:33 & 44). It also connotes meanings of the Mighty Angel's Foot that was put on earth referring earth as a place of devil worship and negativity (Revelation 10:2). Ethiopian crosses could contain motifs of negative or positive representations. During the Last Super, half of the Apostles sat at the left side of Jesus Christ; while Jesus Christ was on the cross, some of His Family was standing at the left side, and His Angels were surrounding Him.

7.5. The Right Motifs

The word "right" exists in about 362 instances in the Holy Bible with approximately similar connotative and denotative themes. The word "righteous" is also a derivational signification from the historical linguistics meaning to right as cc



Fig.14: Crosses with the right motifs for location

At the right side, Ethiopian crosses possess themes, which Christianity always associates to goodness, virtue, light, ascensions, eternal mercy, the east, and many more big symbols of hope and success. Within the Ethiopian crosses, symbolisms signify Archangels (St. Michael), the Sun, the eight "petaled-flower" (*the tow crosses*), the three-leafed "tree of life", some malefactors and soldiers, St. Mary and her companions, Jesus Christ in "platted crown of thorns" (Matthew 26:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5), etc.

7.6. Motifs of the Shaft, the Arm and the Handle

Deeply intriguing, a processional cross has multitudes of architectural varieties in the symbolisms for Trinity through Adam's Arms and his neck and head leeway with reference to the Old Testament, and/or it is Jesus Christ's Arms and

His Neck-Head Extension with reference to the New Testament. Likewise, a hand cross has a handle that separates the two quarters of the cross. It signifies sculptu



Fig.15: Cross collections with motifs according to the shaft, the arm and the handle for space

It also indicates the distance, sometimes in ladder shapes, between the earth and heaven. It also symbolizes Longinos's spear that thrust Jesus Christ's right rib-cage, which immediately Longinos's eye saw light from blindness. Naturalistic and prophesized (reveled), themes of the Holy Bible are very prevalent from the assemblies of art through changes in histories and treatise of the Theological culture. The serpent, the Lamb, the wine, the Cherubim, and the Ark, to mention a few, also appear.

8. Geometrical Symbolisms on the Cross

Assertively contended, Christians vitalize [sacred] symbols though they may be called "people of the book" (readers of the Bible), and "people of faith" (believers of the unseen), for God is the creator of human senses for signs and codes as aids to faith according to Biblical symbolisms. Consequently, geometry and measurements carry spiritual truth, goodness and power. The Holy Bible testifies that "the angel measured the city, the gates and the wall; the length and the breadth and height of it are equal; a hundred forty and four cubits, which is the measure of a man, that is, of an angel" (Revelation 21:15-17). Shape, size and measurements are the fundamental codes (laws of the Bible) in making the Man, Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, the Altar, The Court, the Temple, the Church, and the New Jerusalem. Various secrets have been also identified with different shapes and forms¹⁹. In Ethiopian crosses, multi-faceted geometries and

¹⁹Spencer-Brown, G. I. *Laws of Form*. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd; Baez, M.A. 1969. (2001). "The Phenomenological Garden". In *On Growth and Form: The Engineering of Nature* [ACSA east Central Regional Conference]. University of Waterloo; Barnsley, M. (1988). *Fractals Everywhere*. San Diego Academic Press; Chaitin, G.J. (2000). "A century of controversy over the foundations of Mathematics," *Complexity*, vol. 5, No. 5, Pp.12-21; Jenny, H. (1967). *Cymatics*. Basel: Basilius Press; Kappraff, J. (2003). *Beyond Measure: A Guided Tour through Nature, Myth, and Number*. Singapore: World Scientific; Kauffman, L.H. & Varela, F.J. (1980). "Form Dynamics," *J. Social and Biological Structure*. Vol 3, Pp. 161-206; Kauffman, S.A. (1995). *The Origins of Order: Self Organization and Selection and Complexity*. New York: Oxford Press; Peitgens, H-O., Jurgens, H., & Saupe, D. (1992). *Chaos and Fractals*. New York: Springer; Purce, J. (1974). *The Mystic Spiral*, New York: Thames and Hudson; Schwenk,

measurements exist in the codified signification of the secrets in the Holy Bible. In crosses pattern analysis of Ethiopian crosses in the geometry, we find the Cellular automata that Wolfram²⁰ mentions (in a large class of unique systems governed by rules) in which the next unique state of the system has to be determined by the previous state in ascending or descending concordance. That is, as codes of genealogy²¹, the intricate patterns and brilliant executions make the cross as one of the most important arts never to exist outside of Ethiopia. In this section, some prominent geometries and measurements are analyzed for symbolic determinism of Ethiopian Christians as they appeared on the cross.

8.1. Motifs of Circle(s), the “Sun Disc”

Circles on the cross sketch the earth as circle (Isaiah 40:22), the circuit of heaven (Job 22:14), the compass (Proverbs 8:27) which scientifically would help us prove that the earth was round before “great” scientists told us. It may also mean the circuit made through travels from Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh (1Samuel 7:16).



Fig.16: Cross collection according to the motifs of circle or the “sun disc”.

Circle designates Divine Power, and it is very fundamental and prevalent in Ethiopian crosses. The circle can be placed at the top-tip, center, sides, and/or at the bottom of Ethiopian crosses. Inclusive could be triangles, squares, lines, zigzags, crosses, stars, and so on and so forth for meaning change.

The circle also represents God’s omnipotent and omniscient nature (the infinite spiritual form and power) which is mentioned only once in the Holy Bible with its direct nomenclature at Isaiah 40:22. The round stood sheaves that were seen by Joseph (Genesis 37:7) could also be signified in the use of circles at the cross. It also means the “crown of gold round about” put on Moses’ ark, altar (Exodus

T. (1976). *Sensitive Chaos*. New York: Schocken Books.

²⁰Wolfram, S. *A New Kind of Science*. Champaign: Wolfram Media, Inc. 2002.

²¹Spencer-Brown, G. I. *Laws of Form*. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. 1969.

25:24-25; 30:3), the roundabout court (Exodus 27:17; 38:16, 20, 31; 40:8, 33), the “crown of gold round about” of Bezaleel’s ark of shitim wood (Exodus 37:2, 11-12), and the altar’s and the tabernacle’s round about (Leviticus). It also means Joshua’s move roundabout of the city (Joshua 6:3), God’s “darkness pavilions round about him” (2Samuel 22:12; Psalms 18:11), Solomon’s “Jerusalem round about” buildings (1Kings 3:1; 1Kings 6:5-6, 29), Solomon’s “great court round about” (1Kings 7:12), the “roundabout of Zion” (Psalms 48:12), “clouds and darkness...round about” the Lord (Psalms 97:2), etc. It suggests, “The Lord is round about his people...forever” (Psalms 125:2), and His “appearance of the brightness round about” (Ezekiel 1:27-28). The circle also represents Jerusalem and the countries round about her, as the scripture confirmed: “Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her... you” (Ezekiel 5:5-7). It also depicts the round characteristics that Ezekiel was commanded to build a house, temple, and court (Ezekiel 40-48). A circle brings to sight the shining “round about” of God’s “light from heaven” (Acts 9:3; 14:6; 22:6; 26:13), and Gospel preaching round about Jerusalem (Romans 15:19). It also denotes the “...rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald” (Revelation 4:3).

8.2. The Moon Motif

The famous Gondarine cross which is found to constitute the Ordeals of Jesus Christ before and on the Cross: His Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection as Revealed in holding the leaflets of the Rainbow Flag-the Flag and Color of Promise and Mercy, contains the moon (which is believed to be a relics or religious emblem of non-Christian religions). A single cross may contain about nine half-moons or a single full-moon. Theo-cultural interpretations could be ascribed to the power responses in the reflections of anger and sorrow which various creatures have shown while God, Jesus Christ was crucified by the Jews of the time. The moon also takes the multitude of symbolisms that are mentioned in the Holy Bible (Genesis 37:9; Deuteronomy 4:19; 33:14; Joshua 10:12; Psalms 148:3; Isaiah 13:10; 30:26; Joel 2:31; Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24; Acts 2:20).



Fig.17: Cross design with the moon motif

It can also remind us of the victories of Crucifixion over worships on “non-recommended” gods (Deuteronomy 17:3; 2Kings 23:5). It identifies codes related to the New Moon (1Samuel 20:5, 18, 24, 2Kings 4:23; 1Chronicles 23:31; 2Chronicles 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Nehemiah 10:33; Psalms 81:3; Isaiah 1:14; Isaiah 66:23; Ezekiel 45:17; 46:1,3,6; Hosea 2:11; Amos 8:5; Colossian 2:16), the Fair Moon (Song of Solomon 6:10), the moon with a different glory (1Corinthians 15:41); the blood colored moon (Revelation 6:12), the Moon which clothed the Woman under her feet (Revelation 12:1), the smitten third part of the moon (Revelation 8:12) which have strong Spiritual significances of secret symbolisms to Christianity.

8. 3. Motifs of Trefoil, Triangle or Trinity Spiral



Fig.18: Cross parts with motif of a Trefoil

The trefoil which is a single design composed of three joined circles represents the Eternity, Christians’ fundamental doctrine of the Holy Trinity, a connotation to one God in Three Presence. The signification bearings in the motifs of a trefoil is similar to that of a triangle and the Trinity Spiral. The expansion of the trefoil will bear meanings of signification to the Genesis Pattern (the form of creation in the dynamism from “without form and void”) nothingness, to the movement of the Spirit of God to the light (Genesis 1:1-5). Ethiopian cross predominantly includes this symbolism.



Fig.19: Cross parts with motif of a Triangle

A Triangle is also a pioneer symbolic representation of the Trinity. It is symbolic

to *One God in three Persons* in that this deep doctrine of the Trinity comes from the story of Jesus Christ's Conception, Birth, Baptism and Teachings (a very Great Commission (Matthew 01:18, 20; 3:11; 28:19; Mark 1:8; 3:29; Luke 1:15, 35; 3:16; 12:12; John 1:33; 14:26; Acts 5:32; 7:55; 2Chorontians 13:14). A triangle also represents universal trinities of past, present, and future; creation, destruction, and endurance; spirit, mind and body; mother, father and child; power, intellect and love; thought, feeling, and emotion; and love, truth, and wisdom. As a semiotic image, the pointing-up could connote the male energy (masculine power) solar power, active state, mountain (apex), spiritual ascension, paternity, stability, strong foundation, air and fire. Likewise, the pointing-down triangles are believed to represent earth, water, female energy (feminine power), lunar energy, passive state, cave loci, downsizing, and maternity. For the triangle shapes are reversed, depictions are descents to the physical world. In real elasticity to symbolism, such down-pointing states are deciphered to epitomize love and exploitation of earthly pl



Fig.20: Cross parts with motif of a Trinity Spiral

In Ethiopian crosses, there are the Trinity Spirals (which can also be named as the Spiral of Life or Spiral of Harmony) architecturally symbolizes the nature and Theo-historical narratives of the Holy Trinity and Their miraculous harmony in combination. This unique motif is very dominant on crosses made up of leather, wood, gold and other flexible materials. It is a symbolism of belief according to the pillars of the Eastern Churches of which Ethiopian Orthodox Church is known for.

8.4. Motifs of Square, Cubit and Quatrefoil

Very fundamental in Christian symbolism, a Square (otherwise a Foursquare), is a very prevalent geometrical figure that represents sacred concepts related to the number²² four, such as the four corners of the earth (Acts 10:11). It also signifies

²²Cf. McClain, E.G. "A priestly View of Bible arithmetic in philosophy of science, Van Gogh's Eyes, and God: Hermeneutic essays in honor of Patrick A. 2001. Heelan". Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishing. More on numbers in the Holy Bible, I am doing a critical analysis; God willing, it will appear in one of the coming journals.

the characteristic connotation powers of four or foursquare in making the Altar, the Tabernacle, the Ark (of Covenant)-the Tabot, Solomon’s Temple, the Holy Oblation and the New City of Jerusalem (Exodus 27:1; 28:16; 30:2; 37:24; 38:1; 1Kings7:31; Ezekiel 40:5; 41:5; 45:1; 48:16; 49:16; 50:16; 51:16; 52:16; 6).



Fig.20: Cross parts with motifs of square and cubit.

It may also mean the four heads of the River, which went out of Eden to water the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10), the four Evangelists who preached the words of God (the Gospel), in the four directions of the earth. It also denotes the “four living creatures who said, ‘Amen!’” (Revelation 5:14), the “four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree” (Revelation 7:1), “the four winds of heaven” (Zechariah 6:5; Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27), the “great sheet” knit, let down to the earth from heaven by four corners (Acts 10:11; 11: 5), etc. Likewise, a Cubit is a geometrical measure and shape prevalent in making the ark, the altar, the temple, the court, the throne of God and many other sacred loci for the Lord.

The Quatrefoil in Christianity is a symbol of harmony and symmetry and wellbeing and just. It is a harmonious architecture of four circle-like shapes joined together with ultimate quatrefoil shape to exist. With variety in artistic glamor and taste, the emergence of peacefulness, tranquility, evenhandedness and consummation are con



Fig.21: Cross parts with motifs of quatrefoil

The Ethiopian Orthodox crosses harmoniously included in the artistic determinations for a true worship of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost²³. It also shows the basis of the genesis pattern with forms of the tree of life with its flowers, fruits and seeds of life (Genesis Chapters 1-4). What is very important, the quatrefoil represents the Throne of God, the Lord, Jesus Christ where the Cherubim (Kirubes) and the Family of the Holies carry it in eternal prayer and unreserved gratitude.

8.5. Star Motifs

A four or five-pointed star in Christianity signify the known Star of Bethlehem²⁴, which ultimately represents Jesus Christ's birth and incarnation. This star type is also called the Epiphany Star (Matthew 2:1-10). The eight-pointed star is the Star of Redemption, Regeneration, Circumcision (Genesis 21:4) which is also associated to the motifs Baptism and the Eight people saved in Noah's Ark (Sheep).



Fig.22: Cross parts collection with motifs of different number-pointed stars

A 9-pointed star symbolizes the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit listed in the Epistle to the Galatians: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22). The eleven stars (his brothers) dreamt by Joseph as mentioned first in Genesis 37: 9 which were obedient to him. Besides, a 12-point star (or 12 stars; Revelation 5, 12:1-2) with meanings of completeness (St. Mary), it stands for God's people, who were the 12 sons of Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel, and/or the 12 Apostles. However few or many pointed²⁵, Star has been a vital spiritual symbol

²³Abba Giyorgis Zä Gaśəça. ውዳሴ መስቀል (Wudassé Mäsqäl). Tarns. Mäzgäbu Səbəhat (Mäməhər). Addis Ababa, Maḣbärä Qəḣusan, 2016. pp, 1-8; p. 36.

²⁴ኅዝቢ ማርያም—Nägärä Märəyäm, *The Subject/Story of Mary* constructs the Magi was led by not an Angel, but by a Star. However, in መጽሐፈ ልደታ ለማርያም እግዚአብሔር—Mäşəḣafä Ləḣätä Lämärəyäm 'Əgezətənä, *The Book of the Birth of St. Mary* [[Budge, E.A.W. (1922). *Legends of Our Lady Mary, the Perpetual Virgin & Her Mother Hanna* (Trans.). London, 122-142] and ተክምረ ማርያም—Tä 'ämrä Märəyäm, *The Miracles of Mary*, [IES.MS. 737. (n.d). 63f; IES.MS.3183. (1985). 429 Pages], the powerful star (which has a power to lead walking people-the Magi) was figured as St. Michael.

²⁵For example, the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*—8th C. ACE world chronicle preserved in a single manuscript—codex Vaticanus Syriacus f.162. This old chronicle depicts “A Fourteen-Pointed Star”, “A Star Child”—

in Ethiopian Christians' history²⁶. This symbolism of power due to star types exist in Ethiopian cross varieties.

The David's Star. A Six-pointed star is also symbolized as the Creator's Star or the Star of Creation in which its six points stand for the six days of creation (one after the other in sequence). It may represent the six attributes of God: power, wisdom, majesty, love, mercy and justice. This star is the same as the Star of David which is famously known as a symbol for Judaism since the ancient time (both Testaments).



Fig.23: Cross parts collection with a motif of David's Star.

This star is also theologically called the Morning Star with reference to the star mentioned in Job and Revelations. As it is written, “the morning stars sang together” (Job 38:7). It is also put in the Scriptures that the morning star refers to Jesus Christ; “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star” (Revelation 2:28). The other direct reference of the morning star is made to King David; “I Jesus has sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16). Therefore, this star cross with a single cross or double crosses represents God, the Lord, God's families and the Angels of God.

8.6. The Diamond, the Rhomboidal and Spear-Like Motifs

The semiotic inferences that diamond shapes on Ethiopian crosses result in are very much related to the Era of the Gondarine power grant in Ethiopian history.

God, Jesus Christ as revealed to the Magi-Wise men/kings.

²⁶ In *ገድለ ኣዳም ወሒዋን*—*Gädälä 'Adam Wa Hewan, the Life of Adam and Eve*, clue was that the Magi saw an extraordinary Star—the face of a young virgin carrying a “Little Child” [*The Book of Adam and Eve, also called The Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*. (1882). Transl. Malan, S.C. London]; *ተኣምረ ኢየሱስ*—*Tä'ämrä 'Iyäsus, the Miracle of Jesus*, መጻሕፍተ ትእዛዝ ዘአበወ—*Mäṣähätä Tə'əzäzä Zä'abäwu, the Books of the Commandments of the Fathers*, and *ትእዛዝ ኣዳም ንባ ሴት*—*Tə'əzäzä 'Adam ḥabä Set, the Commandments of Adam to Seth*, figured the light of the Star the Magi saw as a column planted between Heaven and Earth middle by the image of a *Virgin Girl carrying a Shining Child* [Witakowski, W. (1995). *The Miracles of Jesus: An Ethiopian Apocryphal Gospel. Apocrypha* 6, 25–244].

Closer associations in representations are to the Cross in Glory or Rayed Cross which verily contains Rays of Brilliance to the victory of Jesus Christ on death that God had passed to Christians. It also connotes the purity of Jesus Christ and the faith that Christ's followers have to rely on. The Rhombic shapes could be inclusive of countless semiotic meanings trough the codes on and within the cross as wholesome significations to the Theological narratives of God, the Lord, and Christianity.



Fig.24: Cross parts collection with diamond, rhomboidal and spear-like motifs

The Spear-Like motifs—the sharp pointing traditions, of making Ethiopian crosses in the theological culture is associated to the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians Commentary-the Andemta, of the Longinos cross—the one-sighted Cavalry who thrust his spear into Jesus Christ's chest as He was Crucified, and he had been bore of his sight. It is a commemoration of the pains that God Incarnates, Jesus Christ, endured for humanity is the eternal salvation plan. Some references from the Holy Bible could be associational meanings to Exodus 28:18; 39:11; Jeremiah 17:1; and Ezekiel 28:13.

8.7. Heart Motifs

With its first existence of the word heart, its significations are evilness: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5; 27:41). Next, it signifies God's lamented heart and the promise entered between God and man and earth, “...and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done” (Genesis 8:21).



Fig.25: Cross parts collection with heart motifs

It also connotes the hardened heart of the Egyptian Pharaoh at the time of the

Israelites bondage (Exodus 4:21; 7:3-22, 8:15-32, 9:7-35; 10:1-27; 11:10; 14:4-8). It also signifies the good Heart of a man that God needs (Exodus 25:2; Numbers 15:39; Deuteronomy 4:29; 6:5; 8:2; 10:12, 16; 11:13, 16; 13:3; 15:7), a non-fainting, a fearless and a non-trembling heart (Deuteronomy 20:3), an “inclined heart unto the Lord God of Israel” (Joshua 24:23), a heart that “rejoiceth in the Lord” (1samuel 2:1), and a heart that serves God with its full power (1Samuel 12:24), and truth (1John 3:19-21). With more opposite significations are to the “wicked heart” (Deuteronomy 15:9), “the uncircumcised hearts” (Leviticus 26:41), “thine heart lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 8:14), a turn away heart (Deuteronomy 17:17), a lifted up heart above his brother (Deuteronomy 17:20), etc. God doesn’t like a heart “...thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things” (Deuteronomy 28:47), and people “whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God” (Deuteronomy 29:18), “an evil heart of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:12), “hearts they have exercised with covetous practices” (2Peter 2:14). So, the cross reminds us to “harden not our hearts” (Hebrews 3:8) for of “pure hearts” (1Timoth 1:5; 2Timothy 2:22) which we have to “direct your hearts unto the love of God” (2Thessalonians 3:5). The heart also signifies the central loci of the earth as indicated in, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). Ethiopian cross-smithies have developed the art of putting heart symbolisms in major parts (the body) or on the shafts and handles of crosses.

8.8. Motifs in Thread and Knotworks

Threaded and Knotwork smith with cross, serpent, trefoil, quatrefoil, kernebegea, lamb, dove, clover, flower, tree, Solomon’s knot, etc. endings or non-endings on Ethiopian crosses is very pervasive in the glamour for faith and power in genealogical symbolisms. It also relates to the caduceus snakes motific symbolisms for a point to life, health and creative power.



Fig.26: Cross parts collection with thread and Knotwork motifs

The existence of threaded and knotworked art on Ethiopian crosses have enlightened Christianity in the signification of the celestial cycle: from microseconds through the millennia, and the seasonal divisions of spring, summer, fall, and winter, and the multitude of things that happen within each phase. It also signifies a new expansion of Life with renaissance such as the big genealogical changes of birth, growth and death, the natural cycles, fore example, e.g. breath, drink, heat, metabolism, etc. cycles in Humans, and the transitions from the year(s) of birth through to the inevitable phases death. Threaded existence, as can be seen Fig.26 above, could also be patterned by combinations of accentuations through circles, [spiral] lines, loops, vine branches, squares, triangles, other crosses, natural motifs, and many more natural and geometrical figures of a multitude in the selection for artistic glamour.

Threaded forms of plants could also signify the Tree of Life and the thread that caught the sheep of sacrifice for Abraham in lieu of Isaac. The intertwined sophistication of recursive tread in lattice geometric patterns of a variety depict the motifs of Everlasting Lives to Christians who strongly believe in God, the Lord, for each treaded unison brings our genetic origins to God, Adam and Eve down through each genetic lines' intricate relationship in paternity, maternity and fraternity. What is more, the threaded levels of arrangements could signify the levels of Christianity's consciousness connoting to who we were, who we are, and who we will be the universal dynamism.

8.9. Motifs of Solomon's knot, Solomon's Cross

This peculiar type of art work in wisdom is one of the threading knotworks. That is, one of the prevalent types of cross in Ethiopia is what is Theo-culturally termed as Solomon's knot. The cross is associated to Solomon's wisdom, and the strength he gained due to wisdom use for "the Lord loved him" (2 Samuel 12:24). For the cross has interlocking parts, it could also be called the cross of love, solidarity, fraternity, unity, harmony, indivisibility, power, victory, etc.



Fig.27: Cross parts collection with motifs of Solomon's knot/ Cross

It is also related to King Solomon's prayer for "an understanding heart... to discern between good and bad, an understanding to discern judgment", and the blessings he received: "a wise and understanding heart... wealth, health, wisdom,

happiness, and lengthened days” (1Kings 3:7-15). Therefore, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are exalted in cross patterns which are labeled with Solomon’s Knot/Cross to gain or be kept in the wisdom of what of God gave King Solomon.

8.10. Motifs of Solomon’s seal, Solomon’s key, Solomon’s net, or Solomon’s ring

King Solomon of Israel is Theo-traditionally accredited as the wisest king of Israel under the statues of God by many Ethiopian Christians (references are made to the Kibre Negest—Glory of the Kings). As a matter of association, any relics that have any direct or indirect references to this wise king are given special places in the Orthodoxy.

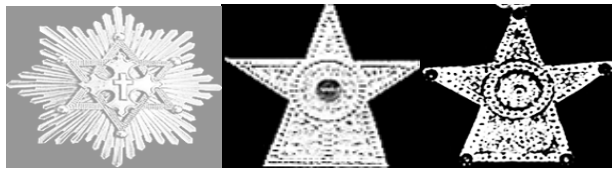


Fig.28: Cross parts collection with motifs of Solomon’s seal, key, net or ring

The Ethiopian cross contains such symbolism inclusion. It has taken and rescaled the Order of the Queen of Sheba. Some of these references of which most of them are found in many Apocryphal books are Solomon’s seal, Solomon’s key, Solomon’s net, or Solomon’s Ring with variety in nomenclature and symbolic architecture. These references are symbolisms to his witty power and guard against evil and deception given from God. Solomon’s seal is also a very artistic accentuation of David’s Star.

8.11. Motifs of the Swastika, Suavastika, or Gammadion

This is another very intriguing cross marque, which doesn’t prevail a lot in the territorials of Christianity in Ethiopia, but it is very common around Lalibela, Gojjam, Shoa and the church groups of a symmetrical era, signifying various Theo-cultural practices. Though swastika is associated to one of the hated-ideology of the world, the German Nazi, it is also true that this symbol is found in Ethiopia, Cush, Egypt, Samaria, China, Japan, India, Peru, Israel, Russia, Syria and many other Ancient countries of Origin for codes of Cosmological and Religious beliefs²⁷. Partisans to this symbol are Buddhism, Hinduism, Pagans

²⁷Clear details about this concept are found in the following websites (Retrieved on December 17, 2016): <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-29644591>; <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/the-holocaust-education-program-resource-guide/the-swastika/>; <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007453>; <http://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends/symbol-swastika-and-its-12000-year-old-history-001312>; <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/465090-where-the-swastika-was-found-10000-years-before-hitler-made-us-uncomfortable-about-it/>; <http://www.historygraphicdesign.com/the-modernist-era/pictorial-modernism/464-swastika>; <https://www.theosophical.org/publications/quest-magazine/3845>. But very little is written about its conceptual activations and circumstantialization

and many other symbols. However, it is a powerful symbol of Christianity; i.e. Christianity is a Universal religion.



Fig.29: Cross parts collection with motifs of Solomon's seal, key, net or ring

With its momentous variety in manner, it is a symbol of love, soul, luck, beauty, eternal communication, victory, health in belief, and spiritual ascent. In Ethiopia it may represent the four seasons each working in unison for life, the four Evangelists who worked in perfect harmony to disseminate the Gospel of God, the four winds and directions in the movement and change of the universe with the corresponding spirits, the unity and harmony of differences, the recycling of life and death (birth and living), rebirth, resurrection and eternity, and Jesus Christ with His disciples. The steering arrangement of the *swastika* may be twofold: either a clockwise [right-to-left] or an anticlockwise [left-to-right] direction which could have symbolical associations to Theological philosophy of salvation. Besides, its patterns have evolved into web-like forms for an all-sided orientation in Christianity.

8.12. The Lalibela Cross

The geometrical peculiarity of the Lalibela Cross should attract any researcher on Theo-cultural dynamisms of religion. It is made like a “Peal” or “Spindle-shape” with many architectural symbolisms. Prominent motifs on the Lalibela cross are: the Last Supper where Jesus Christ and the 12 Apostles made the communion of Man and God, the Lord, the Holy of Holies, the Holy Trinity, The Rainbow which is the Sign of Promise, the Cherubs, the Tree and Fruit of Life, the Defeated Serpent, the Temporal [Earth] and the Eternal [Heaven] aspects of Creation, the Crown of Thorns of Jesus, the Light through the *Bulb like* symbol, inter alia. The “wings, birds, tongues, or leaves” at the two sides of the Lalibela crosses are very enthralling in the architectural glamour depicting unconditional holiness.



Fig.30: The Lalibela Cross parts collection (The 'Afro-Aygäba)

The determinately Theocultural designs could not be found in other countries and cultures of Christianity in its inclusions of these magnanimous Biblical themes. After decoding, the exalted harmony, unmatched beauty, unconditional love, vibrant faith, and pure sacrament are the Theological manifesto of the Lalibela cross, also named as the 'Afro-Aygäba, indicates its real power of a day to day spiritual healing and safeguarding.

8.13. The Anuak or the Ankh Cross or Crux Ansata

In history, it is discovered that one of the ancient Pharaohnic occult symbol of power was the “Anuak, Ankh” cross signage (a secret code). Many Ethiopian, Libyan, Nubian, Cushitic and latter Egyptian Pharaohs could use it to seize power and occult spirit.



Fig.31: Cross parts collection of the Ankh/Anuak or Crux Ansata

This cross could also be called Key of the Nile, Key of Life or Coptic Cross. It also represented the combinations of male and female power, which in turn represents zest for life, fertility power (the combination of femininity and masculinity for creation power) or future life. The combinations of the circle, which is the oval or the sun, the head and the cross also represent the story of incarnation, immortality, rebirth and resurrection. Perhaps influenced by these ancient traditions, Ethiopian cross-smith professionals tend to include this spiritual figure²⁸. Other options of decoding, I think, are left uncloaked.

8.14. The Church Cross.

This cross is a very special cross type in Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Concomitantly, the whole cross has included the Four Churches which joined together in their heads in turn to form another cross in the center—the Cross of Jesus Christ.

²⁸See Details (Retrieved on November 11, 2016) in <http://www.egyptianmyths.net/ankh.htm>; <http://www.secretoftheankh.com/>; <https://www.ancient.eu/Ankh/>; <http://egyptian-gods.org/egyptian-symbols-ankh/>; <http://wiki.ultimacodex.com/wiki/Ankh>; <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/ankh.htm>; <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Ankh>; <http://www.ancientegyptonline.co.uk/ankh.html>; <http://goodlucksymbols.com/ankh/>; <http://www.holoweb.net/~liam/pictures/ankh/ankh.html>

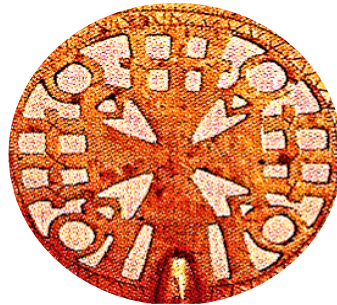


Fig. 32: A Church cross from big cross

One of the many symbolisms is the Church of God, the Lord which has been established through His flesh and blood in the four directions of the universe. As can be seen in Fig.32, the four churches signed in the four directions joined together towards the center and formed a single and well vested cross. This may also symbolize the New Church of Jerusalem, the New Heaven and the New Earth that is mentioned in the Revelation of St. John (Revelation 03:12; 21:1).

9. The Holy-Whole Cross and the Faith

Christians gesture of the cross everywhere, whatever, and however to convey an overpowering faith and bring spiritual guard. It expresses spiritual ascension in the powerful prayer in which their heart opens to receive the Holy Spirit in the blessings bonding them to God, the Lord's grace. Ethiopian Christians believe and affirm that the recurrent acts of cross gestures through our hand, face, whole body, eyes, breathes, mental schema, clothes, etc. on all encounters sanctifies our minutes, hours and days in the momentum to live with God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in His Names' invocations. These all acts of hovering and symbolisms on our physique take us, in the commitment, to God in whole-the heart, the soul, the spirit, body and the mind in profound and concentrated emotional ascent. Ethiopia's unique religious symbolic submissions helps the cohorts for the reminiscence of Jesus Christ's Incarnation (His personified manifestations) and His Passion on the Cross holding their three convenient fingers (to solidly witness and confirm the true belief in Trinity) or the five fingers (a heartfelt witness of the Five Wounds of Jesus Christ in His Benevolence). The public gesture Ethiopians make for the cross appealing God's powerful interventions on all their walks of life is a testimony to others of their strong and vibrant faith in Orthodox Christianity unanimously sealing themselves in

the Holy Spirit as was put in their heart by God Himself (2Chorinthians 1:22). Ethiopian Orthodox Christians also believe that making the sign of the cross can definitely and quickly fend a devil, an evil spirit, a Satan and many other forms of departed spirits accompanying people to deceive. They believe that departed spirits (the Satan and his companions) tremble in fear and quickly vanish, or burn in agony and weaken in power from around people who think or make the sign of the cross in belief. These beliefs exist in many of their prayers and Holy Literatures.

They believe that the cross is a powerful weapon which they “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11), and to cast out, rebuke or devour it before temptation. Their strong conviction with the cross is that they “resist the devil, and he will flee from” them (James 4:7). They understand that they have to “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walkth about, seeking whom he may devour” (1Peter 1:7). They always take “The Sword of the Lord” (Judges 7:18, 20), “the sword of the angel of the Lord” (1Chronicle 21:30), “and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). They understand and believe that the cross and its signage is “...the helmet of salvation” (Ephesians 6:17). In the sign and the seal of the cross, Christians always crucify themselves with Jesus Christ and show their vibrant faith to Him by reconstructing themselves in God, the Lord’s Image. They use hand and nodal signage, embroidered and crossed-clothing styles, tattoos and pictures, neck-hangs and many more jewelry buds, etc.

The cross remembers Christians of their Baptism and rebirth by calling the same Name: In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. It brings renewal and repentance as sinfulness automatically transforms into the natures and traits of God, Jesus Christ. It also reminds of the undressing of Jesus Christ at Crucifixion. Through the sign of the cross, Ethiopians fine-tune their prayers to the Lord, God for His unreserved Benevolence by invoking in all power of His Name and Image and the Holy Spirit which is with them. They directly connect themselves to God, the Lord and the Holy Trinity in confessions of their faith in the incarnation, teachings, ordeals, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity Which Lives with them²⁹.

²⁹Māzgābu Səbəhat (Māməhər). ውዳሴ መስቀል (Wudassé Mäsqäl). Abba Giyorgis Zä Gaśəča. . Addis Ababa, Maḅārā Qədusan. 2016.

They uphold the miraculous secrets of the processions of Unison in Trinity through the movements of their hands from hand-lifting, lowering and side moving in the Name of the Father (hand-lifted to touch the forehead) and the Son (hand lowered to touch the lower tip of the abdomen), and the Holy Spirit (hand moves from left to right), and said *Amen* (hand ends)! In holy places, people may kiss the ground as they kneel down; else, some may kiss a wall or pole of a sacred compound and space. The proceeding expressions of faith vary from people to people and from locality to locality. Their pivotal aim is to kindly inquire God's power and support in all walks of their life. In the sign of the cross and the invocation of God's Names, the words which were used they were baptized: "In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen", Christians summarily reiterate their baptism. Through the signage of the cross, Christians always mark themselves that they verily and only belong to God, the Lord, Jesus Christ, the true Savior) and Shepherd, the righteous Judge and King of Kings. Ensuing all these, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are the Antithesis of sin that comes due to the Great Deceiver, the Devil, which is the first Satan that falls from heaven to deceived humanity³⁰.

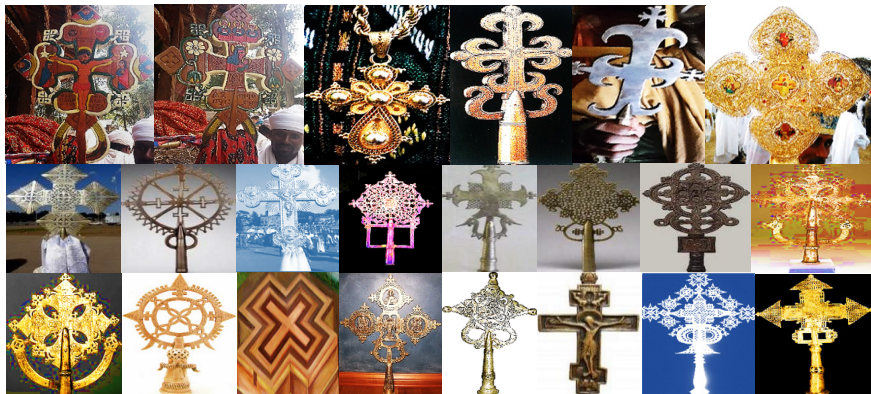


Fig.33: Some samples that show the Holy-Whole Cross

It should be noted that hand crosses have a long handle indicating that Jesus Christ came down from Heaven for Incarnation. He, then Resurrected in promises that He will come down again. Besides, the lower base indicates the Arch of Covenant as a glorious resting place to the Trinity, it is the Arch for the Father, for the Son and for the Holy Trinity, in the descending. Likewise, Jacob has also seen a prophetic dream of the descending and ascending angels from and to the Heaven in which the handle represents as the way, the ladder, the rope or the steps towards Heaven

³⁰*Ibid*

from the earth. The Ethiopian cross with its universally wonderful matching of the granular serial dots, straight and zigzagged lines, ladder-like smiths, thread, rope and lope-like incisions, patterned crosses and other forms of geometry in a variety also indicate the theological narratives of the Old and New Testaments for orders, commands and beliefs to live accordingly³¹.

10. Conclusion

Most Christians know what is said in the Holy Bible about God, the Lord, and Jesus Christ. He is Emmanuel, the Savior, the Lamb of God, the Way, Alpha and Omega, the Bread of Life, Jesus, the Messiah, Holy One, the Good Shepherd, the Son of God, Light of the World, the Might, the King of Kings, Truth, the Savior, the Morning Star, etc. There are different names of God, Jesus Christ. Ethiopian Christians know that His Names are written on St. Michaels' Wings for they are included in, at least, Dərsanä Mika'él and Mälkä'a Mika'él. On the cross of every signification, all these words are also meaningfully represented for faith, worship, and direct link with God, the Lord in prayers and blessings. The sophistication of wisdom in the cross-smiths in Ethiopia is an attempt to understand all invisibilities though they are done with great secrets as spoken in Job 35:5, "...great things doeth He, which we cannot comprehend", and in Revelations 4:11; "...for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created". Each symbolic class represents spiritual power that evokes human soul to connect with the Spirits of God and His Family in his Heavenly kingdom and the Holy Ghost Who is residing around/in us. It has to be clear to the universe that no cross of the world but the Ethiopians' teach and preach unity in diversity. It is inferential that the Theo-Culture has determined Ethiopia; otherwise, the people have established their Theo-Culture. The cross is one of the reverent expressions of vibrant patriarchy, paternity, matriarchy, maternity and fraternity for close ties with God, the Lord, and Jesus Christ. The transcending symbolisms of spiritual power analyzed in the above section are vital codes of Christianity and Christians for being blessed, guarded, and saved.

These days, crosses (mostly of smaller crosses) are "fabricated in China" with semiotic abuse and non-representativeness. Shoes are also fabricated with crosses under the feet. Building floors of the non-believers also put the cross at their

³¹ *Ibid.*

busy loci. These are attempts of discrediting “Others” religion and emblems of spiritual power and salvation. Though the cross can do all its secret powers against all these evil acts, Christians are highly offended of these mindless deeds. Therefore, all Christians must raise the cross. They must raise for the cross with the cross. They must raise their hands with the cross. Mahəbärä Qədusan can also set up a committee that can follow up and regulate the production of Cross. In cases of abuse, they shall appeal to justice. In the appeal, this office will be delegated to follow up the court process. I also recommend that all Christians are responsible for the true production and use of the cross. Finally, through the cross everything is possible; by the cross nothing is impossible. Amen!