

The Place of St. Mary in the Orthodox Christianity of Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia is one of the countries where Christianity was introduced before the schism of the one Christian Church. Its ancient civilisation was closely associated with Christianity, which strongly shaped the socio-cultural views and habits of its people. Until the mid-20th century, the only legitimate sect of Christianity and state religion was Orthodox Christianity, represented by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The church shares the same doctrine, canon, and tradition as the Oriental Orthodox churches. It is also committed to the veneration of the Holy Mary. Its members are also characterised by their devotion, love, and reverence for her. This paper is concerned with the place given to St. Mary by the Church and the Orthodox Christian community. The public views, beliefs and customs that reflect the devotion of the people to Marian veneration, as well as the ecclesiastical rites and celebrations that illustrate the attention the Church pays to her in honour are elaborated in detail in the paper under various topics.

Keywords: Celebrations, Marian Doctrine, Marian Texts, Taking an Oath.

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I. INTRODUCTION

St. Mary is the most venerated saint in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. (Aymro-Motovu, 1970, p. 105). The basic belief that the Church teaches about her depends on biblical verses and patristic literatures including the *Nägärä Maryam*. All these recognizable scriptures testify commonly that she is the holiest, purest, greatest among all human beings and the most beloved creature of God (Ibid; *Tənsae*, 1995, p. 56).

Such an expression is particularly explicated in the homilies of St. Yared (505-571 AD) and of Abba Giyorgis of Gasäčča (1365-1425 AD) (Ibid, 53).

Getachew Haile and Nosnitsin declared that she is the goddess of the Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia. (2007, p. 814-816). Such a statement might lead some people to assume that Mary is considered a female god and is worshipped as a creator. However, this is not correct, since the Church and its followers do not consider her a female God unless they venerate her only as the mother of the Lord. Thus, this clarification would be correct only if it is meant to mean that she is greatly revered (Aymro-Motvu, 1970, p. 107).

Based on such written sources, the Church teaches about her bibliography as follows: St. Mary was the daughter of Joakim who was one of the descendants of David. Her mother Hanna was also from the line of Levi. They were barren for a long time and gave birth to her in their old age. They had promise with the Lord to give away to the temple if He gives them a child. So, in her three, they gave her away to the temple where she lived the following 12 years. When she turned 15, they gave her away to the righteous Joseph to protect her since he was a close relative to her. Such an expression is confidently denounced by Abba Giyorgis of Gasäčča. He also claimed that she served Joseph's family during her stay in his home (Hirui, 2008).

In the same year, she conceived a son through the glad tidings of Archangel Gabriel. Then, on her journey to Bethlehem to be registered, she gave birth to a son and named him Jesus. After two years, Herod wanted to murder her son, thus, she escaped to the deserts of Egypt where she faced several tribulations with the accompany of Joseph and Salome. After three and half a year, hearing Herod's death, she returned to Israel and lived in Nazareth. There, she nurtured her only son until he became a man of thirty years (Hirui 2008).

Even in his evangelization time, she was not ever far from him; she was together with him at the wedding in Kana. She was also visiting him eventually. Finally, when he was crucified, she was under the cross mourning at his suffering and death. After Christ's ascension, she lived about 15 years and died on her 64. She was buried in Gethsemane, and on the third day, she arose from the dead and ascended to the heavenly kingdom with the will and authority of the Lord. She is the only human that arose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Agreeably with the declaration of the council of Ephesus in 431 AD, the Church confesses that Christ who is born of her is the incarnated son of God and she is also the mother of the incarnated God (Theotokos). She is a twofold virgin, virgin in body and virgin in spirit. Before bearing a

son, she was a virgin, and after bearing a son, she is a virgin. As the Father begot the Son without a mother, she also begot Him without an earthly father. One of the well-known biblical pieces of evidence that the church presents for this Marian doctrine is the prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son" (Is 7:14). This is however stated to finalize that she became a mother in her perpetual virginity (Tənsäe, 1995, pp. 52-55).

The Church demonstrates again her immaculate conception and her role in the salvation of human beings as the one who bore the saviour. The liturgical rites and celebrations also reflect that she is the central figure of the Church for her name is continually mentioned almost in every liturgical prayer, hymns, and various types of homilies (Aymro-Motovu, 1970).

This paper aims to deal with the place she has in the Orthodox Christian community as a church in general and as individual member of the church.

A. Various Names of St. Mary

In the Orthodox Christian community of Ethiopia, the name Maryam is the most beloved and venerated human name like no other. This is certainly due to the unmatched love and respect the people have to St. Mary the mother of the Lord Christ. She has a special place in the heart of every orthodox Christian and is considered as the mother of every Christian that spiritually lives near all and with all.

To express their love and honour, many would call her name sympathetically with a proper adjective such *əmmäbete*, *ənnate/ addäy* as to say *əmmäbete Maryam* (my Lady Mary), *əmmebetacən Maryam* (our Lady Mary), *addäy Maryam* (Mother Mary). Calling her simply as 'Mary' is considered by the people as weird and disrespectful.

There is also a tendency to call her in other designations that represent her personal name. Because of the love and high respect to her, many would prefer to call her in such a way instead of calling her 'Mary'. Some of the designations are the following:

- i. *Dəngəl* (virgin): a designation which depicts her perpetual virginity. (Tənsäe, 1995, p. 52)
- ii. *‘İmmä-Amlak* (Theotokos): a nominal phrase that illustrates that she is the mother of the incarnated God.
- iii. *‘İmmä-Bərhan* (the mother of the light): depending on the biblical phrase "I am the light of the world" (Jh 8,12) the church calls the Lord as 'The Light'. Thus, she is also called 'The Mother of the Light' as to say the mother of the Lord.
- iv. *‘İmmäbete/ ‘İmmäbetaććən* (my Lady/ our Lady): this also relates to the designation *‘əgziə* (Lord) with which Christ was frequently mentioned in the New Testament. Instead of calling him Jesus or Christ, the apostles mentioned him as *‘əgziə* (Lord), especially the evangelist John in his gospel. According to the Ethiopian tradition, the mother of the king is treated as a queen. In this context, St. Mary is the one to be treated as the queen since she is the mother of the heavenly king Jesus Christ, and she is called as *‘İmmäbete/ ‘İmmäbetaććən* (Tənsäe, 1995, p. 52).
- v. *Wäladitä-Amlak* (Bearer of God): this is also a designation which has the same meaning and significance with *‘İmmä-Amlak* (The Mother of God) (Ibid, p. 55).

These designations are known by most of the orthodox Christians, and no one needs to have further indication or an explanation to understand who that is. There are of course a plenty of similar designations which are figuratively formed and mentioned in various hymnodic treatises such as: *anqäšä bərhan* (The gate of the Light), *bezawitä kʷəllu* (the one who rescues all), *hohtä məsraq* (The door of the East), *‘İmmä adonay* (The Mother of Adonai), *‘İmmä qal/ ‘İmmu lä-qal* (The Mother of the Word/ Jesus), *məsraq məsraqat* (The east of the easts), *nəgštä aryam* (Queen of Ariam), *nəgštä sämay* (Queen of the heavens), *säalitä Məhrät* (The one who asks (for humans) for mercy), *Şəyon* (Zion).

However, it is not quite simple to understand them quickly and recognise that they refer to St. Mary like the designations listed earlier, especially for the laymen since they are essentially written in the hymnodic compositions that they do not use frequently.

B. Seasons Dedicated to St. Mary

If someone makes research about the place that the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Community gives to St. Mary or their link to her, he finds several circumstances that enthusiastically express the significant place she has and the strong relation that the people have to Her spiritually. One of the circumstances is the dedication of seasons to her name to cordially remember her with different reasons. The dedications have obviously various historical backgrounds and purposes. However, they commonly remind to the people her commemoration. The people also keep them celebrated to practically show their love and devotion and to receive blessings from her. The main widely held times dedicated to her are three, and these are:

- i. **wärha şəge**: the 40-day period from 26 *Mäskäräm* to 5 *Hədar* (October 6 - November 13). It is the time of commemoration of the flight of St. Mary to save her son with Joseph and Salome to Egypt in fear of persecution by Herod. During this time, the *Mahlet* and the liturgy commemorate her tribulation in the deserts of Egypt, her sorrow, hunger, thirst, and all the sufferings she endured for about three and a half years. In wishing to partake of her worriedness, sadness, and suffering, some

would fast in this period of time. Every Sunday the clergy men spend the night in the church and celebrate the *Mahletä şage*. In the middle of the celebration, they go around either inside or outside the church while performing the *wäräb* called እንዘ፡ ተሐቅፈዮ፡ ለሐዋንዢ፡ ንዒ፡ ርግብዩ ... *anzä tähqqəfiyyo lä-həşan-ki nə 'i rəgb-yä ...* (the/my dove (i.e., St. Mary) come please (to me/ us) while hugging your child). A deacon takes the Maria icon with his hands and goes ahead of them. The faithful prepare food and local beverages in groups and after the completion of the Liturgy give banquets for the clergymen who were giving services in the *Mahlet* and Liturgy. The destitute living around churches and the beggars who reside around the church compound are welcomed as usual to enjoy the meal (Habtemichael, 2007, p. 817).

- ii. **şomä Fəlsüta**: a fasting time, during which most Orthodox Christians joyfully fast in commemoration of the death of St. Mary. It is one of the seven canonical fasts. According to the rite of the Church, children begin fasting at the age of seven, as prescribed in the Fəṯḥa-Nägäşt (Chap. 15 Verse 571), and most children begin fasting with this fast and partake the Holy Communion. The reason could be that it lasts only 15 days from the 1st to the 15th of *Nähase* (August 7 - 21). It is also believed that the parents encourage them to fast so that they can keep the love of St. Mary in their hearts and receive her blessings. For the children, this is the finest time to exercise religious duties and social endeavours for it is winter when they are free from school stuffs. The first believers to begin this fast were the apostles after the death of St. Mary. The time by which the *sä'atat* (horologium) is mainly celebrated almost in all parish churches is this fasting time.
- iii. **Fəlsüta/ 'ərgäta**: the period consisting of five days from August 22 to 26. During this time the Ascension of Mary to the heavenly kingdom is commemorated and celebrated. This is reaffirmed by Archbishops Abba Mikael and Abba Gabriel during the reign of Emperor Zär'a-Ya'əqob (1434-1468 AD) as stated in the introduction of *Tä'ammərə Maryam* (Miracles of Mary) “ወአመ፡ ፲፯፡ ለነሐሴ፡ ፍልሰተ፡ ሥጋሃ፡ እስከ፡ አመ፡ ጳወጁ፡ ሰዳሱ፡ መዋዕለ፡ ይግበሩ፡ በዓለ፡ ከመ፡ ትንሣኤ፡ ወልዳ” (22 August is the memorial day of) the ascension of her body; until 26, they shall celebrate it five days long like the resurrection of her Son) (Verse 11).

II. MARIAN ANNUAL FESTS

The verses of *Tä'ammərə Maryam* dealing with the memorial fests of St. Mary announce 33 annual fests to be held and celebrated by all members of the Church. This number comprises the regular monthly memorial days which are the 21st day of each month. The additional five days following the actual day of her ascension are also included individually (Verse 11-32; Aymro- Motovu, 1970, p. 107).

This number makes her the leading patron saint with greatest number of annual fests. However, the annual fests that are colourfully celebrated in the churches dedicated to her are the following:

- i. **Şedenya Maryam**: this fest is celebrated on 10 *Mäskäräm* (20 September). With this celebration, the arrival of the miraculous Marian icon which is believed to be depicted by the evangelist Luke in *Şedenya* and the miracles done in the house of Marta is remembered. The entire story is narrated in the *Tä'ammərə Maryam*. The Church of Mary in Şedenya, Burrayu is committed to hold this annual celebration.
- ii. **Bəzuhan Maryam**: Behind the celebration of this fest, there are two historical backgrounds. The first is that the 318 episcopates who defended the Church by excommunicating Arianism arrived on that day in Nicaea. The second one is the arrival of the holy portion of Christ's cross in Gəşän Däbrä-Kärbe Maryam during the reign of Emperor Zär'a-Ya'əqob (c. 1453 AD). According to the testimony of synaxarion, both stories occurred on 21 *Mäskäräm* (1 October). The word *bezuhan* reminds that many people had participated in both occurrences for its meaning is 'many'. To remember these two stories, the fest is celebrated in many parish churches dedicated to St. Mary. Particularly, in Gəşän Däbrä-Kärbe Maryam church, it is colourfully celebrated with the presence of hundred thousand of people who gather there from various parts of the country (*Tənsəe zä-gubae*, 2001, pp. 51, 103).
- iii. **Qəsq'am**: is originally a place name. It is an isolated hill in Egypt where St. Mary lived with her son for a couple of months. It is claimed that the Angel Gabriel appeared to Joseph in a dream and said to him “Get up, take the child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead”. (Mt 2,20) The fest is celebrated on 6 *Hədar* (15 November) in honoring her return from the flight to Egypt. The celebration is particularly held in the churches called *Qəsq'am Maryam* (Ibid, p. 100).
- iv. **Şəyon Maryam**: one of the most prominent annual Marian fests which is colourfully celebrated on 21 *Hədar* (28 November). Almost all churches dedicated to St. Mary are devoted to celebrating this fest. In relation to the fest, many members of the Church from different parts of the country pilgrim to Aksum *Şəyon Maryam* Church and attend the celebration held there. The verses of the Vita of St. Qəwştoş (1285-13 AD) indicate that the pilgrimage to Aksum during this fest is very customary since

- ancient time. The reason is so obvious, and it is that the Church is the existing place of Ark of the covenant (Hiruie, 2021, pp. 64-67). In the Ethiopian Church tradition, both Zion and Ark of the covenant are the symbols of St. Mary.
- v. **Bä'ata lä-Maryam:** According to the witness of *Tāammärä Maryam*, the parents of St. Mary had a promise to the Lord to give their child to the temple while they were asking Him so that He may give them a child. Thus, when Mary was three years old, they delivered her to the high priest and lived 12 years in the temple. In commemorating her entrance to the temple, the Church celebrates this fest on 3 *Tahāsas* (10 December). The fest is especially celebrated in the churches named *Bä'ata lä-Maryam* (lit., The entrance of Mary).
 - vi. **Astārəyo Maryam:** it is the death memorial fest of St. Mary. It is celebrated on 21 *Ṭərr* (28 January). It is called '*Astārəyo*' for it is celebrated in the Epiphany weeks, and *Astārəyo* means Epiphany (*Tənsae*, 1995, p. 55; *Tənsae zä-gubae*, 2001, p. 657; 2018, p. 197).
 - vii. **Kidanä-Məhrät** (covenant of mercy): Both the Synaxarion and the *Tā'ammärä Maryam* explain that after Christ's ascension, St. Mary went daily to Golgotha and prayed at the place where her son was buried. On the 16th of *Yäkkatit* (February 23), the Lord appeared to her while she was praying at his tomb and made a covenant of mercy to forgive the sins of those who perform virtues for others in her name. To commemorate this, the Church celebrates a *Tabot* procession on this day in all parish churches named after the *Kidanä-Məhrät*. (*Tənsae*, 1995, p. 54; *Tənsae zä-gubae*, 2001, p. 686; 2018, p. 181).
 - viii. **Ṣənsūt** (conception): the tradition of the church acknowledges 29 *Mägabbīt* (6 April) to be the day on which the Archangel Gabriel announced St. Mary that she will bear a son who will be called the Son of the Most High. When Mary said to the Angel "Let it be for me, Behold the bond servant of the Lord", at that very moment the unity of divinity and humanity has been done in her womb. Thus, it is celebrated in commemorating the conception of the Lord at her womb (*Tənsae zä-gubae*, 2000, pp. 127-128).
 - ix. **Lədūta** (her nativity): one of the most colourfully celebrated Marian fests in Ethiopia which is held on 1 *Gənbət* (8 May). As claimed in the Marian doctrine of the church, St. Mary was born at the wilderness of Lebanon for her parents Joachim and Hanna fled before her birth to the wild of Lebanon because of fear of Jews. It links this story with the prophetic song of Solomon "O my sister, come forth from Lebanon" (Song, 4:11) To remember this, at the evening of the festive day, every family celebrate it again by enjoying dinner accompanied by indigenous coffee ceremony outside their house.
 - x. **Däbrü Məṭmaq:** is a place name in Egypt where St. Mary appeared on the church wall in that place for the faithful and gentiles for five days continuously. In commemoration of this, this fest is celebrated every year on the 21 of *Gənbət* (28 May).
 - xi. **Qəddase beta:** The E.O.T.C affirms that the first church was constructed in the name of St. Mary in Philips in 52 AD. It was built by the hands of the Apostles as they were guided by the Lord. The construction was made on the 20 *Säne* (27 June). On the next day, Christ sanctified the church with liturgical celebration. In remembering this, 21 *Säne* (28 June) is celebrated as a Marian fest in all parish churches named after her name. It is claimed that St. Peter was appointed a Patriarch on that same day.
 - xii. **Ṣənsūta** (her conception): As stated in Synaxarion, St. Mary was conceived on 7 *Nähase* (14 August). It is commemorated and celebrated without a procession of *Tabot* for it is held within the fasting week.
 - xiii. **Fəlsūta / 'ərgūta** (her ascension): as stated before, the ascension of Mary is celebrated for six days from 16 – 21 *Nähase* (22-28 August). Though, the first celebrational day which is 16 *Nähase* (22 August) is very colourfully celebrated with the procession of *Tabot* in all churches named after the name *Kidä-Məhrät* for it is believed to be the day by which she was ascended (*Tənsae*, 1995, p. 55).

III. HOMILIES COMPOSED IN ST. MARY'S DEDICATION

The E.O.T.C has rich literary heritages. Apart from biblical inscriptions, since the emergence of Christianity as a state religion in the 4th century, several patristic literatures were translated from Greek and Arabic languages to Gə'əz in different times. Parallely, several indigenous liturgical and hagiographical treatises were composed by local authors, especially from the 12th-16th century. More than 30 individual Marian texts are recognized and used by the Church. The list of Marian texts presented by Amsalu Tefera consists of 27 texts, including the Hymns of St. Mary listed by Habtemichael Kidane in the Encyclopaedia Aethiopia (Amsalu, 2012; Habtemichael, 2007). Many of these literary works are concerned with Marian doctrine and her praises. They also contain several theological concepts which illustratively determine the dogmatic definitions of the church. Even those that are not Marian texts genuinely mention her repeatedly. Particularly, the introductory parts and doxology are mainly formulated to comprise her names. Thus, the availability of such compositions in abundance is the evidence of the love and honour of the faithful to St. Mary. Had the composers paid less attention to her, this would have not been realised.

Thus, the availability and utility of excessive Marian homilies magnificently reflect the most significant place that St. Mary has in the hearts of every church member as well as the church institutionally.

IV. OLD CHURCHES NAMED IN ST. MARY'S NAME

Churches in Ethiopia are built in the name of the Lord, angels, and sacred people: prophets, Apostles, righteous and martyrs that the church recognises as canonical saints. Yet, as a most significant figure of Christianity, every Church gives a special place for the memorial of St. Mary. There is an altar which is a centre for the Liturgical celebration in every Church; and on the alter, the canonised Marian icon should be placed. This is a genuine proof of the high honour the Church gives to her.

Besides, there are a plenty churches and monasteries that are named after her name. The Church claims that more than 35 thousand monasteries and parish churches are existing inside and outside the country. It is of course hard to find an ultimate statistical data on how many of these parish churches and monasteries are dedicated to St. Mary. Even though, if we make a reliable estimation basing the data of some sample cities and towns, we realise that many of these churches are dedicated to St. Mary in her various names like none other than. Let's look at some data from Table I.

TABLE I: THE NUMBER OF ST. MARY'S CHURCHES IN SELECTED CITIES IN PERCENT

	City/Town	Total number of Churches	Churches dedicated to St. Mary	%
1	Addis Ababa	170	41	24.11%
2	Bahar Dar	59	15	25.42%
3	Däbrä Tabor	19	7	36.82 %
4	Däbrä Bərhan	12	3	25%
5	Däse	20	5	25%
6	Gondär	44	12	27.3%
7	Ġemma	12	3	25%
8	Nazret / Adama	28	3	10.7%
9	Mäqäle	20	5	25%
10	Wäldəya	16	6	37.50%

Moreover, several most ancient monasteries and parish churches having high historical value are still named in her names. The following ones are very few of them:

- i. **Adadi Maryam:** locates in the district of Qärsa, Šäwa. It is a rock-hewn church built by King Lalibäla (1181-1221 AD) in the form of eleven rock-hewn churches in his capital Lasta. He built it shortly before his death on his return from Zəq^ᵐala.
- ii. **Addis-Alem Maryam:** (*Addis Aläm Däbrä Šəyon Maryam*): a church built in 1900 by Emperor Menelik II. It is in the town of Addis Aläm, in western Šäwa, about 40 km from Addis Ababa. On the walls of the church were painted various portraits of kings and their royal families, as well as biblical and local saints. The highly esteemed ecclesiastical title of "*Nəburä əd*" is given to the chief priest of the church as to the church administrator of Aksum Maryam. To preserve the historical values of the church, Emperor Haile Selassie I (1892-1975 AD) established a museum in the compound in 1957 AD (Garretson, 2003).
- iii. **Aksum šəyon Maryam:** before the emergence of Christianity as a state religion in 330 AD, on the place where the present church is located, there was a temple where an old Testament sacrifice was offered. As a consequence of the legitimacy of Christianity, the temple was reconstructed and became the first Christian church, named after St. Mary. It was also the first episcopal see, at least until the fall of the Aksumite kingdom in the 9th Century. It is the place where the Ark of the Covenant is kept (Munro-Hay, 2003).
- iv. **Atronsä Maryam:** a parish church built in Wäryälu during the reign of King Bäädä-Maryam (1460-1470 AD). It was looted and burned by the warriors of Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim. Later it was rebuilt by King Gälawdewos (1533-1551 AD) when he restored all the churches that had been destroyed during the last fifteen years of destruction. During the reign of Tewoflos (1700-1703 AD), it was burned down again by Oromo raiders and finally rebuilt during the reign of Emperor Menelik II (1881-1913 AD) with his help. It is a place where the relics of some kings, including Bäädä-Maryam are preserved.
- v. **Bäta lä-Maryam Church:** a church built in the city of Gonder. Its establishment is attributed to King Täklä Haymanot II (1788-89 AD). The ecclesiastical schools of Biblical Exegesis and Aqaqam (yaredic chanting) are among the prominent church schools which are recognised as excellence centres.
- vi. **Bäta lä-Maryam Monastery:** a monastery which locates in the centre of the capital Addis Ababa, neighbouring to the grand palace. The exciting Church building was built fully out of a stone. Its construction is attributed to Empress Zewditu (1916-1930 AD). In the monastery, there is a school

- consisting various institutions for ecclesiastical studies. Both the church and the school were built for the memorial of Emperor Menelik II. His remnant is preserved there.
- vii. **Betü Maryam:** one of eleven rock hewn churches of Lalibela built during the reign of King Lalibela in the 12th Century. In 1978 AD, it was documented as world Heritage along with the remaining ten churches by UNESCO.
 - viii. **Bərbər Maryam:** a church built first during the reign of King Ləbnä Dəngəl (1507-1540 AD). The first building was destroyed by Grañ's commander Nur b. Muğahid. Emperor Menelik II ordered a new church to be built on the side of the relics of the ancient church. It is in Čėncá, Gamo (Bustorf, 2003).
 - ix. **Däbrä Maryam:** a monastery established by *Abunä* Tadewos of Şəlaləş (1207-1335 AD) on the island of Lake Tana. (Six, 2010, p. 812) The monastery at which the saint was baptised on his 40th day of birth is also called *Däbrä Maryam* or *Maryam Gädam*. It is situated near Şəlaləş. The accounts of his vita affirm that it is one of the oldest churches in Bulga (Hiruie, 2017).
 - x. **Däbrä Gännät Kidanä-Məhrüt:** one of the Ethiopian Churches and monasteries in Jerusalem. Its construction was grounded by Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889 AD) and completed by Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913 AD) (Gäbrä Şəllase, 1966).
 - xi. **Əntofo Maryam:** the first church built in Əntofo after the capital of Menelik king of Säwa was moved from Ankober to Əntofo. It was firstly built in 1884 AD. The coronation of emperor Menelik II was celebrated there in 1889. The church was rebuilt in 1904 AD under the patronage of the emperor (Gäbrä Şəllase, 1966; Märsə' eħazän, 2001).
 - xii. **Əntofo Kidanä-Məhrüt:** A church built on the hill of *Əntofo* during the reign of Emperor Menelik II. Its construction is attributed to Empress Tayətu (1851-1918 AD).
 - xiii. **Gännätü Maryam:** the former name of the famous monastery *Däbrä Libanos* found by *Abunä* Täklä Haymanot in the 13th Century. Until it gained its current name by Emperor Zära-Yaeqob (1334-1368) in the 15th century, it had been named in this name. The following verse assured this: "Again, he went from there and reached the monastery of his brother *Abunä* Täklä Haymanot built by King Yək'nnno-Amlak" (*translated by the author*) (Gädlä Zenamarqos 14:20). The ark (*Tabot*) with which *Abunä* Täklä Haymanot had been celebrating Liturgy was *Tabotä Maryam* which disappeared during Ahmäd Grañ's invasion and later found in Bäläsa, Gonder and was returned to the monastery by the order of Emperor Menelik II (1881-1913 AD) (Gäbrä Şəllase, 1966).
 - xiv. **Gəşän Däbrä Kärbe Maryam:** a popular church built during the reign of Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob on the top of the mountain of *Amba Gəşän* which had been used as a custody for princes for a long time since the time of King Yək'nnno-Amlak. The portion of Christ's cross is preserved there (Haile Gabriel, 2003).
 - xv. **Mänbürä Patrəyark Maryam:** A church which is the seat of the Patriarch of the church. Its establishment is attributed to the Egyptian Archbishop *Abunä* Matewos (1843-1926 AD).
 - xvi. **Märkülä Maryam Monastery:** one of the few historical places where Old Testament sacrifices were offered. The first church was built there in the 4th century during the reign of the brother kings *Abrəha* and *Aşbəha* and consecrated by *Abba* Sälama Käsate Bərhan (330-350 AD). It was destroyed twice by *Ahmed b. Ibrahim* (Grañ) in the 15th century and by the Oromo horsemen in the 17th century. The present church was rebuilt during the reign of Emperor *Susnəyo* (1607-1632 AD) (Bosc-Tiesse, 2007).
 - xvii. **Mäsno Maryam:** a church built in the 13th century on the highland of Bulga in northern Sawa. According to the testimony of the Vita of Saint Qäwştos (1215-13), the inhabitants suffered from water shortage and infertility. Through the prayer of the saint and his blessings, they obtained a pure water well, and through irrigation their land became cultivated and fertile. For this reason, they named the place "Mäsno", which is the Ethiopic word for irrigation. The church was built for the first time during the evangelization period of the saint (Hiruie, 2019).
 - xviii. **Şadqane Maryam Monastery:** a monastery established by Emperor Zär'a Ya'əqob in North säwa. According to the witness of *Täammərə Maryam*, the factor that initiated the emperor to establish it was the destruction of the famous Mary's Church built in *Däbrä Mətmaq*, Egypt by Muslim troopers. The monastery is still called after its name as *Şadqane Däbrä Mətmaq Maryam Monastery* (*Tənsae zä-gubae*, 2018).
 - xix. **Tädbabü Maryam:** a church established by Emperor *Gälawdewos* (1540-1559 AD) in Amhara Saynt. The church title *Bätrəyark* (Patriarch) was given to the chief priest of the church (Wion, 2010).
 - xx. **Wəqro Maryam:** one of the oldest rock hewn churches which locates in *Amba Sänäyti*, Təgray. It was built in the 4th century and its establishment is ascribed to the Kings *Abrəha* and *Aşbəha* (Balicka-Witakowska, 2010).

As stated above, counting every Marian Church existing throughout the country is not quite simple. It is not also the aim of the paper to deal with each church or monastery that is dedicated to St. Mary. It is rather intended to give a glimpse of how Ethiopians give attention to honour her in terms of constructing memorial places in her names, and this is already seen from the number and state of the monasteries and churches that are named after her names as clearly shown in the list.

V. PLACES NAMED AFTER HER NAME

Several places in Ethiopia received their names from popular names of persons and places mentioned in biblical texts and ancient Christian texts, such as Ephrata, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Antioch. In relation to the name of St. Mary, there are two districts similarly called Hagärä Maryam (The Land of Mary).

The first Hagärä Maryam is located in the northern part of Šäwa and is bordered by the river Käsäm in the south and Angoläla in the north. It is part of the historical region called Bulga, which is mentioned in several hagiographic manuscripts as the place of origin of many Ethiopian saints such as St. Täklä Haymanot, St. Qäwstos, Abunä Tadewos, Abunä Mäbaa Šeyon and St. Krəstos sämra. According to the report of the Central Statistical Authority of Ethiopia, the population of the district in 2007 was 55,235. (Population and Housing Census, 2007). The second is the town in the western Guji zone, where mainly Guji Oromo people live. According to the National Census Agency report, the population was 27,820 in the same year (Ibid). The tendency to dedicate cities and districts to the name of St. Mary is one of the significant indications that illustrate the high concentration on the devotion and commemoration of St. Mary.

VI. PERSONAL AND BAPTISMAL NAMES CONSTRUCTED WITH THE NAME MARYAM

Some Marian texts testify that the Lord has promised to St. Mary to have mercy on those who name their sons or daughters in Her name (*Tənsäe zä-gubae*, 2018).

In relation to this, many parents would give for their children names which are constructed with her name. In doing so, they become happy for they consider it as a reflection of their love to her. For the children also it is like possessing a special gift that makes happy to have the name Maryam as part of personal or baptismal name. This might be the fundamental reason for the availability of several personal and baptismal names constructed with the name Maryam in Ethiopia. Table II shows some of the most used personal and baptismal names constructed with Marian names.

TABLE II: NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH THE NAME MARYAM

	Name	Personal/ Baptismal/ Both	Rough meaning	Gender (M/F/Both)
1	Amätä Maryam	Both	Bond servant of Mary	Female
2	Ašädä-Maryam	Both	Garden of Mary	Female
3	Asbä Dəngöl	Both	Wage of Mary	Both
4	Askalä Maryam	Both	Fruit of Mary	Female
5	Bä' ədä-Maryam	Personal	The one who is in Mary's hand	Male
6	Bäträ-Maryam	Both	Mary's branch	Male
7	Fəqrä-Maryam	Both	Mary's love	Male
8	Fəqrtä Maryam	Both	Lover of Mary	Female
9	Gäbrä Kidan	Both	Mary's servant	Male
10	Gäbrä-Maryam	Both	Mary's servant	Male
11	Haylä Maryam	Both	The power of Mary	Male
12	Kəflä Maryam	Both	Part of Mary	Male
13	Kidanä Maryam	Both	Covenant of Mary	Male
14	Ləbnä Dəngöl	Personal	Fragrance of the Virgin	Male
15	Nəwayä-Maryam	Both	Treasure of Mary	Male
16	Mänbärä Maryam	Personal	The See of Mary	Female
17	Maryam-kəbra	Personal	The one whose glory is Mary	Female
18	Maryam-Mogäsa	Personal	The one whose grace is Mary	Female
19	Maryamawit	Personal	Follower of Mary	Female
20	Maryam-Zämäda	Personal	The one whose relative is Mary	Female
21	Šädalä Maryam	Both	Mary's shine	Female
22	Sahlä-Maryam	Both	Mercy of Mary	Male
23	Šəge Dəngöl	Both	Flower of the Virgin	Both
24	Šəge Maryam	Both	Flower of Mary	Female
25	Sərgutä Maryam	Both	The one who is adorned of Mary	Female
26	Täklä-Maryam	Both	Plant of Mary	Male
27	Täklä-Dəngöl	Both	Plant of the Virgin	Male
28	Täsfä-Maryam	Both	The hope of Mary	Male
29	Wälättä-Maryam	Both	The daughter of Mary	Female
30	Wälättä Šeyon	Both	The daughter of Zion	Female
31	Wäldä Kidan	Both	The son of Mary	Male
32	Zädəngöl	Personal	Of the Virgin	Male
33	Zämāryam	Personal	Of Mary	Male

VII. OTHER TERMS CONSTRUCTED WITH THE NAME MARYAM

Beside personal and place names, there are various terms constructed with the name Maryam. There is not a tangible information about their origins and the time when they began to be used. But they are transmitted from generation to generation as oral traditions and used to describe persons, personal status, body parts and many other things. Some of the terms are the following:

Yä-Maryam Aras: refers to a mother with a newly born baby. According to the tradition of the Christian

Ethiopia, if a woman begets a baby, she sits at home for a couple of weeks and her responsibility will be just nursing the baby. The husband, family members and cloth relatives are responsible to handle the housework. This lasts up to the 40th day of birth for a male baby and to the 80th day for a female baby. In this period, she is called *Yä-Maryam Aras*. It is most probably to confess that Mary helped her to give birth in a good condition for there is a belief that every mother is helped by Mary's blessing to give birth while she is in pain. The family members call the name Maryam continually till they hear the voice of the baby. When they meet her firstly, express her their happiness by saying *ankan^{uu}n Maryam marechesh*. When they leave her, express again their best wish by saying *Maryam bāshlām tawtash*. Supporting a woman in such circumstance is one of the norms of Ethiopians that everybody knows and exercises in a countrywide level.

Yä-Maryam māngäd (Mary's pathway): the way which is generously given to the competitor in a play and to an opponent in any sort of struggle to try his last chance or to return into his standing point safely. The tradition encourages to give such a chance if somebody or a group of people is afraid to continue competing or fighting more and asks for *Yä-Maryam māngäd*. With regard battling, this is however one of the traditional methods of conflict resolution.

Yä-Maryam māqännät (Mary's belt): a metaphorical expression referring to the rainbow.

Yä-Maryam ṭat (Mary's finger): refers to the 5th and the shortest finger of the two hands. It is considered a means of making peace. Children also shake their little fingers and kiss them when they want to make peace with one another. It is believed that this is the reason why Mary's finger is called, because according to the ideas of Marian doctrine, St. Mary is the means for the occurrence of peace between God and man.

Yä-Maryam ṭälat (Mary's enemy): If a person is hated by almost everyone around him because of his guilt and if no one wants to support him, then he is called *Yä-Maryam ṭälat*. He should repent of his guilt and ask people for forgiveness. Otherwise, he will be expelled from the community.

VIII. PLEADING AND TAKING AN OATH IN THE NAME OF ST. MARY

Asking people for any kind of support and taking an oath in the name Maryam is very usual and significant part of the Socio-Christian culture in Ethiopia. Those who need urgent help use mainly her name and asks by saying *bä-Maryam* or *sälä-Maryam* for they know that people will be kind for them because of the love they have to St. Mary. Particularly, for the students in the traditional schools, this is the main means of getting their daily bread. They go house to house and people when they hear while they are asking for help saying *bäantä säma lä-Maryam* (for the sake of Mary's name), they would give them prepared food or cereals. If they have nothing to give them, they express for them their wish by saying "*Maryam təṣṭəlagñ*" (May Mary give you on my behalf).

Likewise, many confidently say *Maryam-ən* when they take an oath. It is as to mean honest to Mary! If someone is not sure to fulfil what he promises, he would not dare to say this for he knows what a respect is given to the name by the society. Notwithstanding, the name Maryam is used also as informal creed to confront demonic illusions. For instance, if someone feels that somebody who is not seen calls his name, he phrases repeatedly a statement: *yä-Maryam bəql 'əyyäfäccähu näw* (I am grinding a malted grains for Mary's feast) because there is a belief that such trickery moments come from demons and the demons shall disappear if the name Maryam is called repeatedly.

There is also a well-known public song which is sung by the nonclergy on celebrations. It says: ነዬ: ነዬ: እምዬ: ማርያም: የአማኑኤል: እናት: የመድኃኔዓለም:: *näyi näyi əmməyye maryam yä-amanuel ənnat yä medhane aläm* (Come, come, my mother Mary, the mother of Emanuel, the Saviour of the world). By singing this public song, people show their love to St. Mary. They do also have another public song by which they express their concern to Her.

እምዬ: ማርያም: ምን: ሆናለች? *əmməyye Maryam mən honnaläch* - What happened to Mother Mary?

አንገቷን: ደፍታ: ታለቅሳለች:: *angät^{uu}n däfta taläqsalläch* - She lays down her neck and mourns

ብታለቅስስ: ብታነባ፤ *bətaläqsəs bətanäba* - What if she howls and mourns?

ልጇን: ሰቀሉት: እንደ: ሌባ:: *läg^{uu}an säqqälu əndä leba* - They crucified her Son like a thief

እኔን: ይስቀሉኝ: ይግረፉኝ፤ *ənən yəsəqälun yəgräfun* - May they crucify me, may they scourge me

ያለአንተ: ጌታ: ማን: አለኝ? *yälä-antä geta mann allän* - Who do I have a Lord other than you?

IX. CONCLUSION

St. Mary is the most venerated saint in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhahädo Church like no other. The Marian doctrine of the Church declares that she is immaculate and Theotokos. In honouring her, the church gives a special place and attention for her commemoration and laudation. It preserves several Marian texts that confess bravely her grace, purity, perpetual virginity, and blessings. The extensive collection of Marian texts includes anaphora, horologium, and various eulogies originally composed by Ethiopian authors. There are also many homilies that refer directly to the Holy Mary, translated mainly from Copto-Arabic. In addition, the number of monasteries and parish churches dedicated to her, both inside and outside the country, is estimated in thousands. But more than this, the strong connection of the people with her, her fast and feasts as well as their habits and tendencies to mention her names in many personal and social affairs, in happy and sad moments, in giving and pleading acts magnificently show the place she has even in individual lives of people. The tradition of naming children and places with one of her familiar names is also an indication of such a connection. The socio-anthropological research studying the history and culture of the people is recommended to pay proper attention to focus on such topic which significantly associated with the spiritual and social life of the people.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I hereby declare on my oath that this journal article is an original work written by me and that I have used only the sources and aids I have indicated.

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