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Article

The Ramsa of šayḥ Aḥmad Ādam, al-Danī al-Awwal (d. 1903)

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Editorial

The present issue of AETHIOPICA, like the preceding one, is partly monographic, with a section containing the proceedings of the Panel on Islamic Literature in Ethiopia: New Perspectives of Research, from the '19th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies', held in Warsaw, Poland, on 24–28 August 2015.

Starting from this issue, the annual bibliography on Ethiopian Semitic and Cushitic linguistics held from its inception in 1998 for eighteen years by Rainer Voigt is handed over, on Voigt's own will, to a pool of younger scholars, with the substantial support of the AETHIOPICA editorial team. I would like on this occasion to express the deep gratitude of the editorial board of AETHIOPICA and of all scholars in Ethiopian Semitic and Cushitic linguistics to Rainer Voigt for his fundamental and valuable contribution.

Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

- AE* *Annales d'Éthiopie*, Paris 1955ff.
ÄthFor Äthiopistische Forschungen, 1–35, ed. by E. HAMMERSCHMIDT, 36–40, ed. by S. UHLIG (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (1–34), 1977–1992; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (35–40), 1994–1995).
AethFor Aethiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLIG (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011); 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLIG (*ibid.*, 2011f.); 76ff. ed. by A. BAUSI (*ibid.*, 2012ff.).
AION *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'*, Napoli: Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale' (former Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), 1929ff.
CSCO Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.
EAE S. UHLIG, ed., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; in cooperation with A. BAUSI, eds, IV: O–X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); A. BAUSI in cooperation with S. UHLIG, eds, V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).
EI² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, I–XII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1960–2005).
EMML Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
JES *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Manchester 1956ff.
NEASt *Northeast African Studies*, East Lansing, MI 1979ff.
OrChr *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
PICES 9 A.A. GROMYKO, ed., 1988, *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Ethiopian Studies, Moscow, 26–29 August 1986*, I–VI (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, Central Department of Oriental Literature, 1988).
RSE *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma, 1941–1981, Roma–Napoli 1983ff.
ZDMG *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Leipzig–Wiesbaden–Stuttgart 1847ff.

The Ramsa of *šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam, *al-Danī al-Awwal* (d. 1903)

ENDRIS MOHAMMED YESUFE, Addis Ababa University

1. Biographical résumé¹

1.1 Early Life and Education

Šayḥ Aḥmad was from the son of Ādam Muḥammad, himself a pious scholar nicknamed *šayḥ* Ādam *Qul huwa Allāhu Aḥad*,² and of Rabī^ʿa. He was born in Bātāho near Ġāma Nəḡus³ in the second half of the nineteenth century. He then moved with his father and mother to Raya, northern Wällo, and started learning the different Islamic disciplines under *šayḥ* Muḥammad al-Annī (d. 1882) who trained him, gave him his blessing, and initiated him into the *Qādiriyya* brotherhood. *Šayḥ* Aḥmad endured the hardships of retreats, fasting and night-long vigils.⁴ He was also initiated into the order of *Šādiliya* under *al-ḥāḡḡ* ʿUmar Maḡribī; furthermore the *Sammāniya* was transmitted to him by *šayḥ* Nurye ʿUmar popularly known as *šayḥ* Limo who was also renowned for his traditional medical practices.⁵ *Šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam is also identified as *šayḥ* Aḥmad Gurračča, not to be confused with a contemporary, his friend, *šayḥ* Aḥmad Dimma⁶; he is also nicknamed by some as Abū Lubāba, after the name of his only daughter.⁷

¹ Muḥammad Taḡ al-Dīn n.d., 75–81 and Muḥammad Wälē 2005, 78–85 have biographical entries on *šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam. R.S. O’Fahey (2003, 47–48) also mentions him.

² He used to frequently recite the sura *al-Iḥlās* of the Qur’an (Chapter 112) which starts with the verse ‘*Qul huwa Allāhu Aḥad*’ (Say: ‘He is Allah, [who is] One’).

³ A corruption of Ġāmiʿat Nəḡus, ‘community of the king’.

⁴ The *Qādiriyya silsila* of Wällo starts with *šayḥ* Sayyid Musāfir, and goes back to Muḥammad Šāfi (d. 1806), Muḥammad b. *faqīh* Zubayr and Muḥammad al-Annī, Aḥmad b. Ādam, Muḥammad Yasin, Sayyid Ibrāhīm (Hussein Ahmed 2001, 69–70; Muḥammad Taḡ al-Dīn n.d., 76, 80).

⁵ Emperor Mənilək II was once cured of a problem of impotence by *šayḥ* Nurye. The latter was also the chief negotiator between the Emperor and *šayḥ* Ṭalḥa Ġaʿfar and was given a written certificate of appreciation from Emperor Mənilək for his conciliatory efforts. I have seen this sealed and signed certificate.

⁶ *Gurračča* and *dimma* are Oromo words denoting black and red respectively; the nicknames were given by the master of the two scholars, Ġamal Al-Dīn Muḥammad Annī (Muḥammed Taḡ al-Dīn n.d., 75–76).

⁷ Muḥammed Taḡ al-Dīn n.d., 75–76; his daughter was married to *šayḥ* Misbah, the *mādiḥ* of her father, and bore many children. The current custodian of Dana, *šayḥ* Aḥmadnūr Misbah, is one of her sons (interview, *šayḥ* Yasin Muḥammad, May 2, 2015, Dana).

Šayḥ Aḥmad spread the *ṭarīqa* to many scholars and students after him. His residence was already a centre of pilgrimage during his lifetime. People came to him from all over the country to be initiated and get his blessings as well as to learn under his guidance. People agree that he was one of the leading scholars of his time for the whole Islamic community.⁸ According to the manuscript written by šayḥ Muḥammad Tağ al-Dīn, he was able to change the way people think and many came to his centre with presents from far away. It is said that, if he had had a long life, he would become one of the wonders of the world.⁹ Šayḥ Aḥmad Ādam was both teacher and mentor; he is known not only for his intellectual sophistication but also for his spiritual powers which enabled him to mobilize many people around him.¹⁰ Šayḥ Ādam al-Qaṭāṭaye, šayḥ ʿIsā al-Qaṭbare, šayḥ Bušra of Abret, šayḥ Muḥammad of Alkaso from Gurage were among his best students.¹¹ Šayḥ Aḥmad also confronted the famous convert šayḥ Zakariyā², who had come to his residence in Dana. Zakariyā² was given a sharp scholarly response to some of his theological claims when šayḥ Aḥmad Ādam asked him a complicated question which he simply could not answer.¹²

1.2 Works

Šayḥ Aḥmad Ādam composed many poems to praise and pray to the prophet. His works are remembered for their stylistic beauty and refined morphological structure. Šayḥ Muḥammad Wālē, speaking about the originality of the Arabic used by šayḥ Aḥmad, writes: *Lam yaṭmis abkaraha insun qablahu wala ḡann* ('Neither men nor jinns violated the virginity [of Arabic] before him').¹³

Here is a list of the works of šayḥ Aḥmad Ādam known so far (as usual, poems without a commonly acknowledged title are identified by their incipit).

- 1 *Bi-smillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm Allāhumma ṣallī ʿalā zayn al-wuḡūd* (the first poem of the *Ramsa*).
- 2 *Qamaru ʿizzin qad bad, ḥāʿizan sabiḡa niʿm.*
- 3 *Ṣallā Allāh ʿalā Muḥammad ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallam Aḥmad al-Muṣṭafā, šarāb al-ṣafā* (the second poem of the *Ramsa*).
- 4 *Al-ḥamdu li-llāhi qad ṭalaʿ lana min samāʿ al-ḡaybi šams al-ḥaḡiqatī.*
- 5 *Ṭalaʿa šams al-ḥidāya (saḡʿiyyat al-dāliya, rhyming prose text ending in the Arabic letter dāl).*

⁸ Interview with šayḥ ʿAbdallāh Idrīs, April 11, 2015.

⁹ Muḥammad Tağ al-Dīn n.d., 77.

¹⁰ Muḥammad Wālē, 2005, 79; interview with šayḥ ʿAbdallāh Idrīs, April 11, 2015.

¹¹ Muḥammad Tağ al-Dīn n.d., 78.

¹² Muḥammad Wālē 2005, 83–84.

¹³ *Ibid.* 82.

- 6 *Al-ḥamdu li-llāhi dīl karāmi al-awfa* (sağciyyat al-fāciyya, rhyming prose text ending in the Arabic letter fā).
- 7 *Kitāb tuḥfat al-muštāq fi al-ṣalāt wa-al-salām alā urs ḥaḍrat al-malik al-Ḥallāq.*
- 8 *Allāhumma ṣallī alā Muḥammadin Allāhumma ṣallī ala Muḥammadin yā Imām al-ḥaram kanzun muṭalsam.*
- 9 *Ḥud bi-yadī yā rasūl Allāh.*¹⁴

1.3 Death of the ṣayḥ

Ṣayḥ Aḥmad b. Ādam was a hard-working teacher and spiritual mentor who used to say: *Al-mu'minu lā yastariḥ ḥattā yadhūla al-darīḥ* ('A believer never rests until he enters his tomb'). He died in the month of *dū al-qa'da*, on a Thursday (some say Thursday night, *laylat al-ḡum'a*), AH 1321 (1903 CE). The funeral procession was led by his longtime friend and classmate ṣayḥ Aḥmad Dimma. He was succeeded by ṣayḥ Muḥammad Yasin b. Hārūn, known as *al-Danī al-tānī*.¹⁵ A biographical note on ṣayḥ Aḥmad Ādam was written by ṣayḥ Aḥmad Dimma and by the grandson of ṣayḥ Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Annī (through his daughter), ṣayḥ Abd al-Ġalīl; both are quoted by ṣayḥ Muḥammad Taḡ al-Dīn in his biographical dictionary which the present researcher sees as the main source for this biographical section.¹⁶

2. The *Ramsa* Poems

Ramsa, according Murad Hassen¹⁷ is an Oromo word meaning 'samples' or 'specimen of objects'. A scholar who has a comprehensive knowledge of the

¹⁴ It is reported that this farewell poem was composed after his quarrel with the local chief, Gugsu Wālē, who was envious of Aḥmad b. Ādam's fame; the chief ordered him to come to his court and explain what he had reportedly said against him. The ṣayḥ came and said that he had no personal issue with Gugsu and went back to Dana reconciled. But some malicious people maintained that the answer given by the ṣayḥ was an allegorical insult to the chief. The chief sent his messengers to summon the ṣayḥ again. The ṣayḥ of Dana told the messengers that he would never again come to Gugsu; he then started praying so that God would cause his death rather than being humiliated by a worldly chief. This poem is a plea to the Prophet for his intercession on the Day of Judgment. Gugsu was angered by the answer of the ṣayḥ and himself led his soldiers to punish him; he reached Dana only to hear of the great ṣayḥ's natural death. He shed tears of regret as he had been pursuing a pious man (Interview with ṣayḥ Abdallāh Idrīs).

¹⁵ Muḥammad Taḡ al-Dīn n.d., 79.

¹⁶ Muḥammad Taḡ al-Dīn n.d., 78. The text is not published yet but the manuscript is currently in the custody of the author's son, Qāsim Muḥammad Taḡ al-Dīn, Addis Abāba.

¹⁷ Interviewed on April 11, 2015, Addis Abāba. He was born in Harār and speaks Afaan Oromo.

legacy of the ‘*ulamā*’ of Wällo, *šayḥ* ʿAbdallāh Idrīs (now aged over 80) confirms that the meaning given by Murad Hassen is congruent with the word *ramsa*, though he is not able to provide an exact etymology of the term. In the practice of the mystical brotherhoods in Wällo, the word *ramsa* indicates a collection of three different poems which are chanted as a kind of prelude to the main session of a long ceremony, like an inaugural speech. *Šayḥ* Muḥammad Ġama (*imām* of Šāwabār Mosque, Dässie) says that this *Ramsa* was glossed by the *šayḥ* of Dana himself as *ma yuqalu fī awwal al-maḡlīs* (‘what is chanted at the beginning of a gathering’).¹⁸

The following verses are the incipits of the three *Ramsa* poems.

- *Bi-smillāh al-raḥmān ar-raḥīm bi-smillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm Allahumma ṣallī ʿalā zayn al-wuḡūd;*
- *Šallā Allāh ʿalā Muḥammad ṣallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallam Aḥmad al-Muṣṭafā, šarāb al-šafā;*¹⁹
- *Yā rasūl Allāh al-madad.*²⁰

These three *Ramsa* texts are found independently and in different combinations in the manuscripts. Although further research on the tradition and circulation of the *Ramsa* must wait, I shall here analyse the first of the *Ramsa* texts contained in a manuscript copied by *šayḥ* Muḥammad Tāḡ al-Dīn Aḥmad of Wällo.

3. The manuscript: a short description

The manuscript on which I base my analysis can be described as follows:
Paper Manuscript: 240 mm x 180 mm. Support: yellowish Arabic paper, no visible watermarks. Text area: 190mm x 120mm. Number of folios: 48 leaves, of which 8 are blank. Numeration and Catchwords: catchwords are found at the bottom left of each verso; no numeration. Text layout: two columns, no frames, uniform indentation found after each single verse with paragraph marks. The text never extends beyond the text area except on ff. 4b, 5ab; Lines per page: 14, except the colophon, page 10. Binding: the volume is bound in a brown leathered cardboard which is held together by adhesive tape and a piece of cloth around the spine. Condition: good general condition but needs to be sewed as there are loose papers. Palaeography: beautifully written, very neat *Nashī* script; the letters are medium sized,

¹⁸ Interviewed on May 21, 2015, Däse.

¹⁹ The first one (*Bi-smillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*) is generally recognized as the main component of the *Ramsa*; the remaining two are considered optional in some gatherings.

²⁰ Author is *šayḥ* Sayyid Ibrāhīm of Čale.

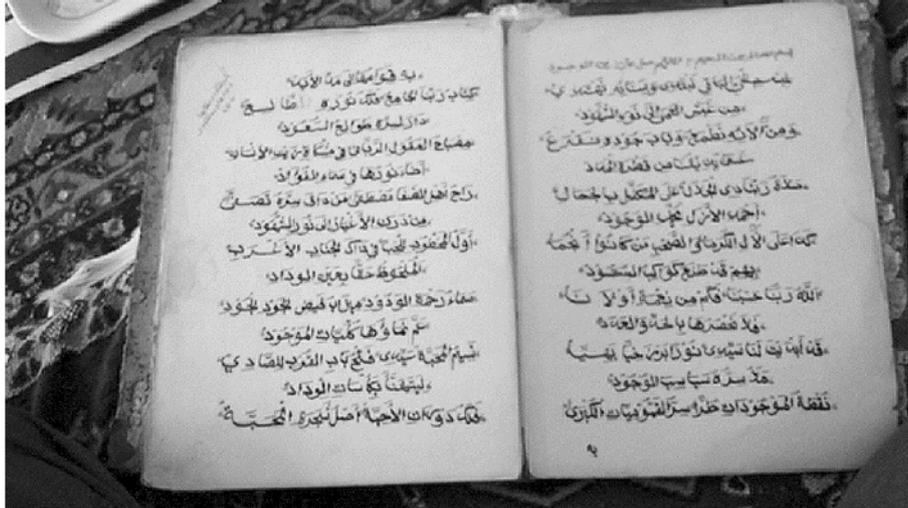


Fig. 1: Incipit page of the manuscript (right)

clear and readable (see fig. 1 and 2). Orthography: fully vocalized by the copyist with punctuation marks (verse separators). Rubrication: title of each text, verse separators and marks are uniformly (on each folio) rubricated in red colour; salutations to the Prophet: *Al-salāmu ʿalayka* (ff. 24, 25, 26), *Yā ǧamāl* (ff. 34, 35) are always in red ink. Decoration: none. Word Divisions: none. Marginal notes: the scribe gives grammatical and variant forms in some folios in the left, right and bottom margins near the words that need his intervention (see ff. 2a, b; 3a, 7a, 8b, 9a, 11ab; 12, 14, 15, 16a, 17, 18b, 24a, 26b, 29ab; 30ab; 37a). Colophon: no colophon, except the word *tammāt* ‘ended’ is found at the end of the text. Scribe: *šayḥ* Muḥammad Tāǧ al-Dīn Aḥmad. Date of copy: not known. Owner: Qāsim Muḥammad Tāǧ al-Dīn, the son of the scribe. Provenance: Addis Ababa.

The manuscript includes two of the *Ramsa* litanies and other texts of what scholars name ‘ordinary panegyrics’. Here is a list of the main works copied in the codex.

1. *Bi-smillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* (c. 4 pages).
2. *Šallā Allāh ʿala Muḥammad šallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa sallam* (2.5 pages).
3. *Šalātun wa-taslimun wa-azkā taḥiyatin ʿalā Muštafā hādī al-bariyya Muḥammadun yā rasūl Allāh* (3 pages).²¹
4. *Awaya salām ʿalayka awaya salām ʿalayka šalarwāt Allāh ʿalayka* (4.5 pages).

²¹ The first three were composed by *šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam.

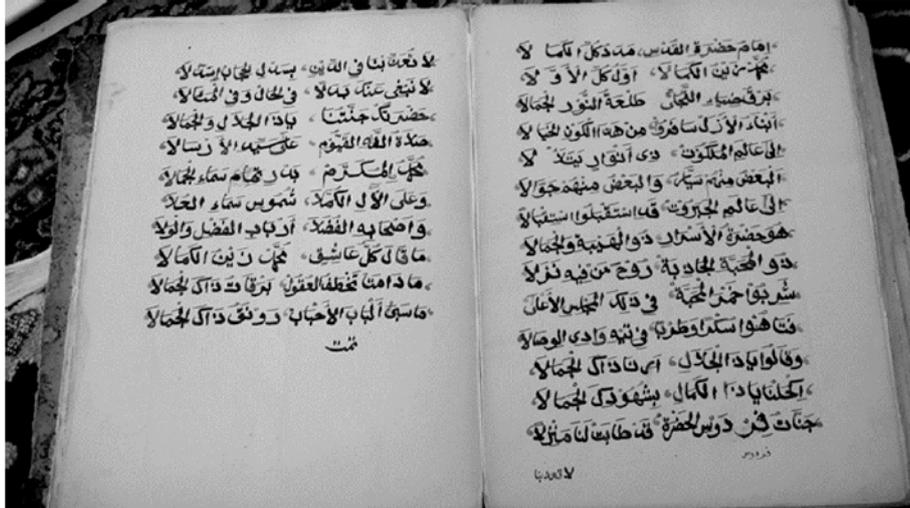


Fig. 2: The end of the poem

5. *Yā muṣtafā al-ānāmi yā muṣtafā al-ānāmi yā muṣtafā al-ānāmi °alayka salāmī* (2 pages).²²
6. *Allāhumma ṣallī °alā Muḥammadin Allāhumma ṣallī °alā Muḥammadin yā imām al-ḥaram kanzun muṭalsam* (7 pages).
7. *Muḥammad salām °alaykum sayyidi salām °alaykum ṣalāt Allāhi °alā ḥayri al-bariyya* (2 pages).²³
8. *Awaya nabī Awaya nabī Muḥammad nabī salām °alaykum* (5 pages).²⁴
9. *Ṣalāt Allāh salām Allāh °ala Muḥammadin Ḥāšimī °Arab* (6.5 pages).²⁵
10. *Zaynu nabī zaynu nabī zaynu nabī zaynu nabī yā ḥabibī salām °alaykum* (2 pages).²⁶
11. *Allāhumma ṣallī °alā Muḥammadin wa-sallam °alayh Allāhumma ṣallī °alā Muḥammadin wa-sallam °alayhi* (4 pages).
12. *Allāhumma ṣallī wa-sallim °ala sayyidinā Muḥammad* (4 pages).
13. *Allāhumma ṣallī °alā Muḥammadin Allāhumma ṣallī °alā Muḥammadin nizām al-wuḡūdi wa-sallam °alayh* (5 pages).

²² This panegyric was composed by šayḥ Amān Amba of Däwe, Maḥmud Kanz, a student and disciple of *al-Danī al-tānī*, šayḥ Muḥammad Yasin (Qāsim Muḥammad Taḡ al-Dīn, interviewed on March 19, 2015, Addis Abāba).

²³ The scribe notes that the poem was written by šayḥ Sirāḡ al-Dīn Gafra (left margin, f. 16a).

²⁴ The scribe notes that the poem was written by šayḥ Sirāḡ al-Dīn Gafra (left margin, f. 16a).

²⁵ The scribe notes that the poem was written by šayḥ Sirāḡ al-Dīn Gafra (left margin, f. 18a).

²⁶ The scribe notes that the poem was written by *al-quṭb al-rabbānī* Ġamāl al-Dīn of Anna (left margin, f. 23b).

14. *Al-salāmu °alaykum al-salāmu °alaykum al-hādī al-muṣṭafa al-salāmu °alaykum* (3 pages).
15. *Ḥayat al-°ālam ḥayat al-°ālam ṣallā Allāhu °alayhi wa-sallam* (3 pages).
16. *Ṣallā Allāh °alā ṣallā Allāh °alā Muḥammad šams al-risāla* (2 pages).²⁷
17. *Allāhumma ṣallī °alā Muḥammad šarāb al-safā° muṣṭafa muṣṭafa* (6 pages).²⁸
18. *Ṣallā Allāh °alā Muḥammad Ṣallā Allāh °alayh wa-sallam* (8 pages).
19. *Ṣallā Allāh °alā Muḥammad tāğ al-mursala ṣallā Allāhu °alā Muḥammad qubbat al-walā°* (8 pages).²⁹

In the following I focus on the first of the texts of the *Ramsa*, translated into English below. A linguistic and literary annotation of the text is not included as the researcher finds the subject very difficult even for specialists in the field of Arabic grammar and syntax.³⁰

4. The first poem of the *Ramsa*

Title: *Bi-smillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm Allāhumma ṣallī °alā zayn al-wuğūd*.
Author: *šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam Language: classical Arabic; poetic in style. The author employs a high level standard Arabic with very difficult words and mystic nuances. Incipit: *Bi-smillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm Allāhumma ṣallī °alā zayn al-wuğūd*. Desinit: *Bawwābu ḥadrat al-iḥsāni yanbū° mudām al-°irfāni li-dāwi al-°ināyati ṭāba la-hum al-madad*.

4.1 The Arabic Text

1. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
اللهم صل على زين الوجود
بسم الحي الباقي نبتي وبسنائه نهتي
من غيبش العمى إلى نور الشهود
ومن ألائه نطمع وباب جوده نقرع
عسى يذيقنا من قطرة المدد

²⁷ This was composed by *šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam.

²⁸ Also composed by *šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam.

²⁹ This panegyric was composed by *šayḥ* Muḥammad Amade, a student of *šayḥ* al-Annī and a panegyrist known for his melody both for his teacher and for *šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam of Dana. He composed *°Arus al-kamāli Aḥmad ḥayr al-warā al-nur al-awwal* (Qāsim Muḥammad Tağ al-Dīn, interviewed on March 19, 2015, Addis Abāba).

³⁰ Muḥammad Wālē writes that his father, *šayḥ* Aḥmad Darra, wrote a commentary on the *Ramsa* entitled *Misk al-ğulasā°*; however, I could not trace the work though it was promised me by family members.

2. صلاة ربنا ذى الجلال على المكلل بالجمال
أحمد الأزل محمد الوجود
كذا على الأل الكرما والصحب من كانوا أنجما
بهم قد طلع كواكب السعود
الله ربنا حسبنا فكم من نعمة أولانا
فلا نحصرها بالحد والعدد
3. قد أبديت لنا سيدى نورا برزخيا بهيا
ملأ سره سباسب الوجود
نقطة الموجودات طرا سر القيوميات الكبرى
به قوامها إلى مد الأبد
4. كتاب ربنا الجامع فلك نوره طالع
دار لسره طوالع السعود
مصباح العقول الربانى فى مشكاة زيت الأنسان
أضاء نورها فى سماء الفؤاد
راح أهل الصفا مصطفى من ذاق سره تصفى
من درن الأغيار إلى نور الشهود
5. أول المخطوب للحب فى ذاك الجنب الأغر
الملحوظ حقا بعين الوداد
سما رحمة الودود ميزاب فيض جود الجود
عم نماؤها كليات الموجود
نسيم المحبة سيدى فتح باب القرب للصاد
ليتهنا بكأسات الوجود
6. فلك دوران الأحية أصل شجرة المحبة
جنى ثمارها أهل ذاك الوادى
يا بدرا طالعا كريما فى نوايا قلب الكرما
بدا شعاعها فى جميع الأجساد
نعمة أرواح الأخيار مقدح أنهار السيار
أمواج التيار فيض ذاك الوادى
أرج فواح شميم قلوب العاشقين تهيم
تناديه غوثا مددى مددى
7. حياة أموات القلوب شراب المجذوب المحبوب
مربح تجار سوق ذاك النادى

مغتم جيوش الطريقة مخيم عروس الحقيقة
فى ناموسية خلوة الوداد
أول أعداد المعقود أخير صلاح الوجود
إنتظم به خرزات الأيجاد
الغوث الأعظم الممجد أعده الله للمدد
8. فيه نصرت جيش ذاك المقصود
النور الأكمل الممدد للأرباب السير تجدد
حتى غاب بهم فى ذلك المشهود
حجاب الأعظم المؤبد شمس الحضرات المسرمد
أضاء نورها فى ذلك المشهد
شمس سرادقات الجلال درا مكللا بالجمال
من سره رأت بصائر الشهود
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4.2 English Translation

1. In the name of God, the beneficent the merciful (2 times)
Oh God, shower your blessings upon the Jewel of the universe
We begin in the name of the Everlasting-Eternal
We pass under his light from deep darkness into the world of radiance
We aspire to his benediction and knock on the door of his bounty
Perhaps we might taste the drops of his support
2. May the blessings of the Almighty God shower upon the one who is
crowned by beauty
Aḥmad in the eternity, Muḥammad in the existence
The same upon his honored family and the companions who are like stars
It is through them that the stars of favour appeared
Allah is our Lord and He suffices us; how many bounties He bestowed us
That we cannot limit their boundary and number
3. Oh Lord, you manifested to us the radiant hidden light
the secret of which fills the expanse of the universe
[He is] the centre of the whole world; the secret of the great constellations
It is through him we reach the way of eternity
4. The Book of our God is comprehensive. The orbit of his light has emerged
The rising constellations orbit around his secret

He is the lamp of the divine minds and is inside the niche of the human marrow
The light of which glows in the vacuum of the hearts
The wine of the selected people is *al-Muṣṭafa*; those who taste his secret are purified
From the internal decadence to the light of testimonies

5. He is the first to be engaged for Love in that secret fringe of the world
He is indeed the focus in the eyes of lovers.
The sky of the mercy of love; the channel of the wave of the supreme generosity
Its fruit proliferates in every corner of the world
The breeze of the gentle wind of love – oh my lord – opens the door of sublimity to the thirsty
To be rejoiced with the cup of life
6. [You are] the orbit of the constellation of the lovers; the root of the tree of love
Whose fruit is picked by the people of that valley
Oh the rising moon, the generous; you are at the corner of the nobles' heart
Its rays reflect in all bodies
You are a blessing for the elected souls, the spark coming out of the flowing rivers
The waves of the tide, the inundation of that valley
[You are] scent, fragrant and aromatic the hearts of the candles aspiring to you
Calling for support and saying: My supporter and helper!
7. You are the life of the dead hearts; the drink of the beloved hare brained
The quarter of the merchants' profit; the shop of the assembly
The spoil of the army of the fraternity Orders; the tent of the real bride

Under the secret of the love inside the closet
The first of the numbers conceived; the end of the best people
Through him are organized the beads of life
The great helper, the sublime whom Allah prepared for support

8. Through him was helped the army to reach the target
The full everlasting light is renewed for the secret travellers
Until it takes them to that witnessed place
The great eternal screen; the sun of the everlasting witnesses
Its light radiates in that place
[You are] the sun of the guidance of the Almighty; the gemstone embroidered with beauty

From his secret is manifested the light of faith
He is the guard of the attendance of excellence; the flood of knowledge
springs from it
His support is vigorous for those who are eligible for it.

Conclusion

The text of the panegyric composed by *šayḥ* Aḥmad b. Ādam as presented in this paper clearly shows the proficiency of the scholar in Arabic and the level of Islamic scholarship of Ethiopian mystic masters. A further linguistic and prosodic analysis of the text by specialists in the field will reveal more aspects of the text and the scholar.

References

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Summary

The Muslim scholars of Wällo are known for composing panegyrics that are usually chanted on special occasions or gatherings like *ḥaḍra* and *Mawlid* (festival to solemnize the birthday of the Prophet). The *Ramsa* is a very famous collection of poems made up of three Arabic litanies: the first two of them were composed by *šayḥ* Aḥmad Ādam (d. 1903) the founder of Dana, centre of Islamic learning and mysticism located in Yāḡḡu province, northeastern Wällo. The third one is by *šayḥ* Ibrāhīm Čale (d. 1958). This paper is a preliminary attempt to introduce the first of the three invocational poems composing the *Ramsa* to the academic world, to give a first impression of the level of Arabic proficiency of local Ethiopian scholars and to discuss the message the text contains as part of a spiritual culture practiced and cherished for at least a century by both the Muslim intelligentsia and the laity. Some codicological information about one of the manuscripts which preserve these texts is also given.