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## Joyful boys singing Hoya Hoya: biblical, social, cultural connotations and symbolism of the Buhe celebration in Ethiopia

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## **Joyful boys singing *Hoya Hoya*: biblical, social, cultural connotations and symbolism of the *Buhe* celebration in Ethiopia**

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**Abstract:** *Buhe* belongs to the major religious holidays of Christian Orthodox Tewahido community of Ethiopian. It commemorates the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ on Mount Tabor. This article will review all imaginable aspects of *buhe*. Only a handful of written accounts referring to *buhe* are at our disposal. Selected materials, private conversations and interviews with community members have been used in this study. Besides the description, the traditional boy's song *hoya hoye*, has been thoroughly discussed. The reason why boys perform this functional song is to epitomize shepherds, who played at the foot of Mount Tabor, marking the day of Jesus' Transfiguration. Audio materials derived from recordings made during fieldworks in Ethiopia in 2005, 2006, 2015 and 2016.

**Keywords:** Buhe. Hoya Hoya. Ethiopia.

### **Garotos alegres cantando Hoya Hoya: Conotações bíblicas, sociais e culturais e simbolismo da celebração de Buhe na Etiópia**

**Resumo:** *Buhe* pertence aos principais feriados religiosos da comunidade ortodoxa cristã de Tewahido da Etiópia. Comemora a Transfiguração do Senhor Jesus Cristo no Monte Tabor. Este artigo reverá todos os aspectos imagináveis do *buhe*. Apenas um punhado de relatos escritos referentes a *buhe* estão à nossa disposição. Materiais selecionados, conversas privadas e entrevistas com membros da comunidade foram usados neste estudo. Além da descrição, a música tradicional do menino, *hoya hoye*, foi amplamente discutida. A razão pela qual os meninos executam essa canção funcional é de sintetizar o papel dos pastores, que tocaram no sopé do Monte Tabor, marcando o dia da Transfiguração de Jesus. Materiais de áudio são oriundos de gravações feitas durante trabalhos de campo na Etiópia em 2005, 2006, 2015 e 2016.

**Palavras-chave:** Buhe. Hoya Hoya. Ethiopia.

### **Chicos alegres cantando Hoya Hoya: connotaciones, simbolismo, culturales y culturales de la celebración de Buhe en Etiopía**

**Resumen:** *Buhe* pertenece a las principales festividades religiosas de la comunidad ortodoxa tewahido de Etiopía. Conmemora la Transfiguración del Señor Jesucristo en el Monte Tabor. Este artículo revisará todos los aspectos imaginables de *buhe*. Solo un puñado de cuentas escritas referidas a *buhe* están a nuestra disposición. En este estudio se han utilizado materiales seleccionados, conversaciones privadas y entrevistas con miembros de la comunidad. Además de la descripción, la canción del niño tradicional *hoya hoye*, ha sido ampliamente discutida. La razón por la que los niños interpretan esta canción funcional es para personificar a los pastores, que tocaron al pie del Monte Tabor, para marcar el día de la Transfiguración de Jesús. Materiales de audio derivados de las grabaciones realizadas durante el trabajo de campo en Etiopía en 2005, 2006, 2015 y 2016.

**Palabras-clave:** Buhe. Hoya Hoya. Ethiopia.

## Introduction

The word *Buhe* is believed to originate from the term *buha* (Hebrew) or *boha* ቦሃ (Amharic) meaning bold head, barren land or something exposed a light and something bright. The latter refers to seasonal changes. *Buhe* takes place towards the end of the rainy season with mainly wet and gloomy weather, only a couple of weeks before the Ethiopian New Year<sup>1</sup>, *ənqutatash*<sup>2</sup>, 11th/12th September, a period that replaces the rainy season with relatively brighter, blue-sky days accompanied by the New Year. This seasonal change is spiritually represented with the glory of Jesus Christ's Divinity.

Another *Buhe*-related term is *bəhu'ə* or *buho* ቡኩዕ/ቡዮ (Ge'ez), meaning dough, referring to the dough prepared to bake the special *Buhe* loafs, *mulmul*. The syllable *bwa* ቧ also denotes the Lord Jesus Christ's appearance, lighting the area with brightness and shimmer with His snow-white robe (Abebe and Tadesse 2015). In this regard, *Buhe* refers to light or to the graceful brightness that was witnessed during the transfiguration.

1 The Ethiopian calendar is based on the Coptic calendar. Seven to eight years' gap exists between the Ethiopian and Gregorian Calendars. The Ethiopic calendar is made up of 12 months, each consisting of 30 days. Every month has its own local name taken from the ancient Ge'ez language. Besides the 12 equal months (*Mäskäräm*, *Təqəmt*, *Hədar*, *Tahsas*, *Tər*, *Yäkatit*, *Mägabit*, *Miyazia*, *Gənbət*, *Säne*, *Hamle* and *Nähase*), the remaining 5 or 6 days (in leap years) resulting from this calculation are considered as the thirteenth month, *Pagume* (see also Getahun 2014: 150; Wainwright and Westerfield Tucker 2006: 145). Therefore, Ethiopia is known as the land with the '13 Months of Sunshine' a motto used to advertise the tourism industry of the country (see also Teffera 2015).

2 According to the Ethiopian calendar, it is the month called *Mäskäräm*. See details about the Ethiopian New Year in Timkehet Teffera (2015).

Ethiopian clergymen relate *Buhe* with the Amharic designation *Däbrä Tabor*. *Däbrä* means 'mountain' and *Tabor* alludes to the Mount Tabor. Another biblical story associated with Mount Tabor is Peter's (the apostle) confession to Jesus Christ, which took place on this mountain. In Matthew 16:13-17, the following is narrated:

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."<sup>3</sup> And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven"<sup>4</sup>.*

40 days prior to His humiliating death for the sins of mankind, Jesus revealed the glory of His Divinity on Mount Tabor to only three of His twelve disciples, leaving the remaining nine at the foot of the mountain. In Matthew 17:1-5 the following is narrated:

*After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son,*

3 In the liturgical language Ge'ez this phrase is read as follows: እንተ ውለቱ ክርስቶስ ወልደ እግዚአብሔር ሕያው

4 See further information in Exodus 33:17-23.

*whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"*

This was the moment Jesus Christ was referring to when He said,

*"There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His Kingdom". (Matthew 16:281)<sup>5</sup>*

Jesus Christ took only three of His disciples to the mountain, leaving the other nine at the mountain's foot. The reason why he left the others was because of Judah, who was not meant to watch the miracle on the Mount Tabor. On the other hand though there are assumptions that The Lord did not want to leave Judah alone, assuming that he would reveal the secret and deceive Him (Abebe and Tadesse 2015; Mengistu 2015). Nonetheless, the eight apostles sensed Jesus' glory and secret taking place on Mount Tabor, even though they were not physically on the spot. The bible reports the following in the introduction of the Sermon on Mount Tabor:

*Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely*

*say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:1-12).*

The reason why Jesus Christ deliberately chose Mount Tabor for his Transfiguration was to fulfill David's prophecy. "The north and the south you have created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in your name". Tabor and Hermon - That is, the west and the east - the former of these mountains being on the western side of Palestine, the other on the eastern, and both of them being objects of beauty and grandeur. The idea is, that God had control of all parts of the universe; that the world in every direction, and in every part, declared his power, and made known his greatness. Shall rejoice in thy name or, do rejoice in thee. That is, They, as it were, exult in thee as their God. They are clothed with beauty, as if full of joy; and they acknowledge that all this comes from thee as the great Creator" (Psalm 89:12; 65:8; 65:12 and 96:11-12)<sup>5</sup>.

In addition, the biblical account of Deborah and Barak is related to Mount Tabor. As repeatedly mentioned in the Holy Bible, for instance, in Judges 4-5, Deborah, a prophet and wife of Lappidoth, sang a song on Mount Tabor glorifying Jesus Christ after Barak defeated the army of Sisera.

Pursuant to the astonishing miracle, they witnessed on Mount Tabor, the faith of Peter, James and John grew stronger than ever before. Therefore they were prepared for the trial of the Lord's approaching passion and death and they were able to witness not only human suffering, but the entire passion of the Son of God, as well. Moreover, they saw Moses and Elijah speaking with the Lord (figure 1), and thereby, understood that He,

<sup>5</sup> See additional information in Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36 and Peter 1:16-18; see also interview with Alemu Haile in Sheger (2017).

Himself, was not Elijah or any other prophet, but someone superior, namely He [The Lord], who calls upon the Law and the prophets to be His witnesses, because He was the fulfilment of both (Mengistu 2015).

Jesus Christ brought the two prophets from the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah and three disciples from the New Testament (Peter, James and John) to Mount Tabor and revealed His glory. The Lord deliberately selected Moses and Elijah in order to make sure that the two represent both the married and unmarried. Moses had namely a married status, while Elijah was still a virgin (unmarried). This is to denote that both married and unmarried are allowed to entering the paradise. Both are considered equal in the eyes of the Almighty God. Similarly, the church also opens its doors to both married and unmarried humans. In other words, *paradise* and *church* are home for everyone regardless of his/her marital status. Peter, John and Jacob were perplexed when Moses and Elijah suddenly appeared in front of them talking with God. At this moment,

*Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You wish, I will put up three shelters: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"<sup>6</sup> (Matthew 17:3-4; see also Mark 9:5 and Luke 9:33)*

In the Ge'ez language, the following sentence expresses the moment related with Christ's transfiguration ገነቱ ውዕቱ ውልደዮ ዘእፊቅ ወለተነጋዎእ. It narrates about God the Almighty's voice that came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him" (Luke 9: 35; see also Sheger

6 Ahade leke, wehade lemuse wehade le'elias ngber mahdere = እሃደ ለከ ወሃደ ለሙሴ ወሃደ ለሙሴ ለእ.ል.ያስ ንግበር ማህደረ (ancient Gə'əz language, Ethiopia)

2017). This narration is of vital importance for the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahədo Church, which accepts both Old and New Testaments (Abebe and Tadesse 2015; Woldu 2012; Sheger 2017).

Ethiopian scholars relate *Däbrä Tabor* with the account of Noah and his descendants. This account narrates the construction of a gigantic ship for years in which animals went in two by two survive the flood. Further narratives refer to the dove that came back to the ship with an olive branch in order to announce the end of the suffering (Genesis 8: 11-12). Then the receding of the waters follows and finally - as a sign of God's covenant with Noah - and his descendants a rainbow (indication for God's eternity) appeared in the sky, an arc of refracted light glimmering in the all colors. So in relation with the *Däbrä Tabor* feast in Ethiopia, the day when Noah and his descendants saw the tip of mountains for the first time after 40 days of suffering. This was the day when the water receded as narrated in the book of Genesis (8: 3-5):

*and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased. In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat. The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.*

This miracle gave Noah great hope so that he subsequently commanded his descendants to commemorate the discovery of the mountain's top and the gradual receding of the water. In other words, this narrative also indicates the end of the dark period of the year and the dawn of the bright season,

which is also symbolized with the *Buhe* or *Däbrä Tabor* holiday (Abebaw Ayalew 2017).

### Whip Cracking: Its Biblical Connotation and Symbolism

Another custom connected with the *Buhe* holiday is that of the whip-cracking that is heard in many areas (figure 2). Tree barks or vegetable fibers are used to make whips, locally called *ǧəraf* (Amharic). The fibers are braided in order to create a sonorous sound from the *ǧəraf*. A few days prior to *Buhe*, the sound of cracking whips echoes in many neighborhoods, signaling the approach of the holiday as well as marking the end of the dark season.

Abebaw Ayalew (2017) describes the use of the *ǧəraf* in conjunction with the cropping

season that starts around the mid of *Hamle* (July) and lasts until the beginning of *Nehassie* (August). Farmers all over Ethiopia are busy with cropping. The period after the cropping, namely *Nehassie* (August) to *Təqəmt* (October) farmers and their families are busy protecting the crop fields from wild animals and birds. In many parts of Ethiopia, it is the traditional duty of young boys who serve as shepherds gazing their flocks and at the same time also protecting the crop fields. It is customary that the boys, among other things, use *ǧərafs* to guide their flocks, but they also crack them as loud as possible in order to scare away animals from the fields. While during other seasons of the year shepherds would use simple sticks to gaze their flocks, during the rainy season, *ǧəraf* sounds are common to protect the field and to gaze their flocks.



Figure 1: Image displaying the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ on Mount Tabor in front of his disciples Peter, James and John; Moses and Elijah are seen in the light standing Jesus' right and left side speaking with Him. Photo source: <https://godshotspot.wordpress.com/tag/jesus-transfiguration-on-mountain>

In Gondär (northern Ethiopia) and nearby rural villages, for instance, shepherds form small groups and go to hill tops to enjoy cracking the *ǧəraf*s they made, usually comparing the sound of one whip with the other. Participants try their level best to produce the loudest sound from their respective whips and win a competition amongst them. Each boy takes *mulmul* breads (home-baked loafs only baked from wheat for this holiday; see detailed description below). At the end of the competition the winner is ascertained. Consequently, he will be given the opportunity to take all the *mulmul*, with a right to determine whether to share it with the other boys. Fearing to loose, every participating boy tries his level best to become the winner of the game<sup>7</sup> (Desta 2010). The symbolic meaning of the *ǧəraf* cracking is connected with the thunderous sound that was heard when Jesus revealed His glory and transfigured.

In relation with the explosive *ǧəraf*s sounds that penetrate the darkness and echo in the air, Roy (2005: 25) discusses “organized battles of men, young and old, who lashed out at each other in teams until one of them could no longer stand the pain”. According to Alemu Haile (2017) the lashing battle takes place to symbolize the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ who was whipped by Judas 6.666 times. This tradition has diminished today largely, because at times severe injuries occur through the lashing. Some few rural areas are however, assumed to practice it still today. In some regions of Arsi and Gojjam, such battles take place at central

spots of villages where people come together on various events. Reminick similarly argues about an old ritual of whipping contests in which masculinity and honor plays a vital role among the *Amhara*, a tradition that is ever since attributed to the male domain as the scholar puts it as follows in connection with Buhe:

*Of all the religious celebrations that derive from both the Christian and indigenous realms the celebration of Buhe is most expressive of the values of masculinity and the code of honor implicit in the body of values. ...it has been the custom for men to pit their skill and stamina against their fellows in a whipping battle that proves beyond doubt where the superiority lies. For about a week prior to the actual event men and boys find their whips, repair them, affix new snappers or set about making new whips from rope or hide. During this period the males of the community are also getting their arms in shape practicing with the whip; renewing old skills and learning new whip cracking techniques.(Reminick 2006: 185-186)*

Furthermore, Desta (2010) explains another version of cracking *ǧəraf* during the *Buhe* season in connection with traditional farming activities. In traditional agrarian communities ploughing is done by using paired oxen since ancient times. During the initial cultivation of soil in preparation for sowing seed, farmers use these animals until total exhaustion beating them with *ǧəraf* whips. This task should be accomplished until *Buhe*, because after that there is no farming as the rhymes below accordingly reflect it:

ቡሄ ካለፈ የለም ክረምት  
[No more rain, after the Buhe holiday]

ዶሮ ከጮኸ የለም ሌሊት  
[No more darkness after the rooster crows]

7 Information retrieved from Mesfin Messele Desta's interview at Deutsche Welle Amharic Program. Desta is staff of the Addis Ababa University (AAU), College of Humanities, Language Studies Journalism and Communication.

So, in some areas, people believe that farmers would feel guilty for having beaten their animals with *ǰəraf* whips. Therefore, on *Buhe* they gather and whip one other in order to remove their sins.

From a biblical aspect, the whip cracking embodies the Lord's thunderous voice and the sparkling light witnessed during His transfiguration.

### Mulmul Bread: Its Biblical Connotation and Symbolism

As stated earlier, *mulmuls* (Figure 3) are a type of bread, especially baked for the *Buhe* holiday. The relation of *mulmuls* with the biblical history goes as follows: When the Lord's glory was revealed on Mount Tabor, shepherds were excited and thought the night did not yet set in. They stayed there

leaving their parents worried for not showing up at home at their usual time. Parents, therefore, went out to search for their kids, carrying freshly baked bread to feed them wherever they found them. This act symbolizes love, attachment, concern and care between family members. It is also part of the tradition that Ethiopian mothers bake and distribute *mulmuls* to children of close family members or group of boys, who come to sing *Hoya Hoya* (Abebe and Tadesse 2015). It is also important to mention that *mulmuls* symbolize the Last Supper, during which Jesus Christ distributed loafs of bread to His followers. His disciples represent the children, while Jesus' act reflects that of their mothers (Matthew 10:12). Therefore, for some religious scholars, *mulmul* breads directly symbolize the Lord, whose flesh is true food and whose blood is real drink (*Ge'ez* = ቅብስት ዘወረደ ከሰማያት ወለቢሎት ለኩሉ ዓለም; see also John 6:55).



Figure 2: Shepherd boys cracking their whips high above Addis (seen in the background). Source, <http://thomasmeyerson.blogspot.de>, last retrieved December 08, 2018.





Figure 3: Mulmul bread baked only for the celebration of Buhe. Source, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilri/4919364846>, last retrieved December 08, 2018.

*Mulmuls* are habitually prepared of white wheat flour. The whiteness of the flour epitomizes the brightness of the Lord’s face during the moment of His Transfiguration.

It is part of the *Buhe* custom that *mulmuls* are prepared in every household of both rural and urban communities. I have vivid memories how important the tradition of exchanging of *mulmuls* between close relatives and family members was during my childhood and youth in Addis Ababa. The number of *mulmuls* sent to different families corresponded to the number of children in that particular household. Of course, *mulmuls* that come from different homes had their respective taste. I remember certain types of tasty *mulmuls* I enjoyed eating made at home of some of our relatives and/or neighbors. This tradition, however, gradually

diminished, mainly in urban areas since the early 1980s<sup>8</sup>.

Desta (2010) explains that in some regions of Gojjam Godfathers habitually let their wives; mothers or other female relatives prepare *mulmuls* for their Godchildren.

In the *hoya hoye* song, there are various narrations of the *mulmul*. The following rhymes may serve as example:

የቡሄ ዳቦ የሚሉት ሙልሙል  
 [The bread they call *mulmul* of Buhe]

ኅብዝ ተሰብሱብ ቡሄ እንበል  
 [Folks! Let’s get together and sing the Buhe song]

8 The major reason for this change was the worsening economic situation of the country during the military Derg regime. The political unrest had pushed Ethiopia to a disastrous economic collapse and to poverty.

ሆ ያ ሆ ዩ ጉደ

[*Hoya hoye! Oh, my God!*]

ሙልሙል ይላል ሆ ደ

[*I am craving for mulmul bread*]

## Torch Lighting Ceremony: Its Biblical Connotation and Symbolism

Another aspect of the Buhe celebration is the *čəbbo*<sup>9</sup> lighting ceremony. In areas such as Addis Ababa and neighboring areas, this ceremony takes place on the eve of Buhe around evening. The *čəbbo* are bundles of dried twigs tied together (figure 4a). Lighting *čəbbo* torches takes place outside of the dwelling or in front the premises of a private house. On this occasion, family members gather together around the flickering fire and sing functional songs (antiphonal songs), clap their hands, dance and enjoy the moment of togetherness until the fire expires (figure 4b).

The *čəbbo* ceremony marks the story of the children lost while playing near Mount Tabor on the day of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the bright light resulting from the transfiguration, the children were of aware that the night had set. Hence, they continued playing and enjoying themselves until their worried parents searched for them holding torch lights until they eventually found them (Abebe and Tadesse 2015).

Despite its traditional and religious connotations and background, all Christian communities of Ethiopia have a *čəbbo* ceremony for *Buhe*. Among others,

<sup>9</sup> The online Abyssinica dictionary defines *čəbbo* as “torch, wrapped pieces of dry sticks, torch, firebug, fire cracker, bundle of stick under fire”. Available at <https://dictionary.abysinica.com/%E1%89%BD%E1%89%A6>, accessed December 02, 2018.

communities in Gondär, Gojjam and Tigray (central and northern Ethiopia), do not practice this ritual.

It is worth mentioning that *čəbbo* lighting ceremonies take place on other religious holidays of the Orthodox church as well, e.g. *Mäsqäl* (The Finding the True Cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified) and *ənqutatash* (New Year) holidays.

## Yäqolo Tämari and the Däbre Tabor (Buhe) Feast

In the country's ancient traditional theological schools, churches and monasteries located in various towns, e.g. Däbre Libanos, Gojjam and Gondär, mendicant students (only male), called *yäqolo tämari*, celebrate *Däbre Tabor* or *Buhe* in a special way. In the areas where these traditional church schools exist, *Däbre Tabor* is considered as the holiday of the *yäqolo tämari*.

Since the means of survival for church students mainly relies on mendicancy, by wandering from one village to the other, begging residents for either food or ingredients to prepare meals and beverages for daily survival as well as during the holidays. According to Kassahun (2012: 59) this practice of begging

*is a traditionally and religiously accepted activity for students in the traditional church education. Begging has purposes beyond fulfilling food substances. It is a tradition practiced by students attending traditional church education for a long time. Students' begging act does not necessarily mean they are poor and their family is financially incapable.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See also Tsegaye (2011: 45-47).



Figure 4a: Ĉəbbo offered at a roadside around Sululta. Photo taken by the author, Sululta September 2016.



Figure 4b: Ĉəbbo (torch) Lighting Ceremony. Photo taken by the author, Addis Ababa September 2016.

Well aware of the custom, people willingly and kindheartedly share whatever they have with mendicant students. And using the ingredients donated by the community, the students bake *mulmuls* and brew the local

beer, *tälla* which they distribute to worshipers after the liturgy on the *Däbre Tabor* holiday<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> In fact, villagers willingly and gladly support the livelihood of *yäqollo tamaris* while they are in the traditional schools that last between 6 and 8 years

## Music Analysis: Hoya Hoya Song

Singing *hoya hoye* begins on the eve of *Buhe* and continues on the break of the next day. Either groups of boys perform the song at the front gate or sometimes, if permitted in the premises of the houses in the neighborhoods they choose to go to. From biblical perspective, the boys embody Jesus' 12 apostles, whom He sent to preach his words, live and dine with the poor. The apostles did follow His instructions as stated in Matthew 10:5-15:

*Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, and cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give. Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts – no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home deserves let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that town.*

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depending on what one is expected to become, i.e. a deacon, a priest or an administrative staff of a church. Yohi Mersha (2008) points out that these traditional church schools have contributed a lot to Ethiopia's literature, art and music apart from their spiritual involvement and influence to spread the Christian faith. He points out: "It has initiated the creation of the system of writing that has developed from Sabeian scripts into Ethiopic alphabets. Amharic literature takes its roots from the church literature that has ignited since the Axumite period."

Hence, providing singing boys with *mulmul*, goes beyond tradition and is linked with a religious purpose. Their singing represents the joyful news shared by Christ's disciples about salvation and new life. In the same manner the disciples taught, preached, baptized and blessed His people everywhere, while the singing boys visit a family, perform songs, get rewarded for which they express gratitude to the family and consequently, adding lyrics of blessing and praise in the name of the Lord (Mengistu 2015).

*Hoya hoye* comprises several song parts. Each part consists of distinct melodic-rhythmic course and lyrical messages. The song arranged in call-response singing style. Thus, one of the boys serves as a lead singer and the rest of the group as accompanying chorus. Commonly, each member of the group holds a wooden stick (ca. 1 meter long) in his hand, which he stamps on the floor to support the rhythmic course of the song (Figure 5a-b).

Five tones with relatively fixed intervals play a vital role in the melodic structure of this song. The tones and their intervals represent the traditional scale called *qənət* that make the foundation of central and northern Ethiopian music cultures, e.g. the *Amhara*. Consequently, four major *qənəto* (pl. to *qənət*) types may be distinguished named *təzəta*, *bati*, *an i hoye läne* and *ambassäl*. The *hoya hoye* tune employs the tones of the *bati qənət*.

The staff notations or music examples in Figures 7 to 12 are written down out of memory. In so doing, "middle C" serves as the "departure pitch". Starting from this pitch, the intervals of the five *bati qənət* tones would, therefore, be C E<sub>b</sub>, F G B<sub>b</sub> (in ascending order), with intervals of minor third; major second,

major second and minor third (Figure 6). This is just for the orientation of the reader. As we may encounter in the musical notations, two more pitches, namely G and Bb, appear in the lower octave (see e.g. figures 10 and 11). The numbers of additional pitches that may appear in lower or higher octaves generally depend on the respective melodic arrangement.

The song lyrics in the tables below display the melody lines (ml) indicated as a, b, c.... etc. and their variations, for instance, a1, b1. The call and response parts of the song leader and the accompanying chorus group, called *awraġ* and *täqäbayo*, are designated with the abbreviations A or T.



Figure 5a: Group of young boys performing the *hoya hoye* each holding a wooden stick and stamping on the floor for rhythmic accompaniment. Source, <https://aboutaddisababa.wordpress.com/2013/08/20/Buhe-ethiopian-religious-gala-inaddis-ababa>, accessed December 02, 2016. Photographed by Sara Genene, posted on August 20, 2013.



Figure 5b: Group of teenage boys performing *hoya hoya*. Photo taken by the author.

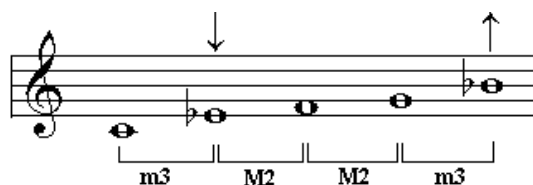


Figure 6: Tone sequence and intervals; *bati qənət* (relative pitches)

The lyric is presented in the original language, Amharic, whereas each line is translated into English<sup>12</sup>.

The song is arranged in fixed rhythm (2/4 beat). In the following, the song's parts are described in detail.

**Song Section I:** With the first song part (Table 1), the boys' group announces its arrival from a distance. The boys start by

singing this part of the song before they proceed to the next. The melody phrases A-B-C of both *awrağ* and *täqäbayoare* short and cyclic. The text mainly consists of redundant (untranslatable) words. The staff notation in figure 7 shows how the call and response parts are set melodically and rhythmically. The rhythmic course is accentuated by stamping of the sticks that falls on the stressed beat of the regular duple meter (see the last line = rhythmic stamping).

**Song Section II:** Here the *awrağ* sings a complete verse line, which is repeated by the *täqäbayoc* in the same style (Table 2).

<sup>12</sup> Translating song lyrics from one language to another is a painstaking task, because what is meant to express something in one language might not make sense in others' language. Hence, in this article, an attempt is made to reproduce the song content in a simplified and understandable manner.

Table 1/ Hoya Hoya, song part 1 (see also figure 7)

vl	ml	A/T	original script	translation
1	a	A	አሲዮ ቤሌማ	Assiyo Bellema
	b	T	አሆሆ	Ohoho
	c	A	አሃይ በል	Say <i>ahay</i>
2	a	A	የቤሌማ ጥጃ	Bellema's calf
	b	T	አሆሆ	Ohoho
	c	A	አሃይ በል	Say <i>ahay</i> - (---)
3	a	A	አብረን እንጎጫጫ	Let us romp (have fun) together!
	b	T	አሆሆ	Ohoho
	c	A	አሃይ በል	Say <i>ahay</i> - (---)

vl = verse line

♩ = 150

**awrag**

a ----si-yo be----le--ma      a----hay bel ye----be-le--ma      te-ḡa      a----

አ ----ሲ -ዮ ቤ- - ሌ- -ማ      አ- - -ሃይ በል የ- - - ቤ- ሌ- ማ      ጥ- ጃ      አ- -

**täqäbayoç**

oh----ho-ho      oh----ho-ho

አ - - - ሆ - ሆ      አ - - - ሆ - ሆ

**rhythmic stamping**

----hay bel a---b--rān ə--nə--n--ča-ča

--ሃይ በል አ-ብ- ረን አ- ጉ- - ጉ- ማ- ማ

oh----ho-ho

አ - - - ሆ - ሆ

Figure 7: Hoya Hoya, section 1

Table 2a: Hoya Hoya, song part 2 (see also figure 8a)

vl	original script	translation
1	መጣና መጣና / ደጅ ልንጠና	Here we are, coming to pay a visit
2	ክፈት በለው በሩኝ / የጌታዬኝ	Tell him to open my master’s gate (head of the household)
3	ክፈት በለው ተነሱ / ያንን እንበሳ	Wake up, open the gate and tell that ‘Lion’ (the master)
4	መጣና በዓመቱ / እንደምን ሰነበቱ?	Here we are, paying our annual visit! How have you all been?
5	መጣሁኝ በዝና / ተው ስጠኝ ምዘዝና	Here I came to visit you because of your fame; please give me my tip (financial reward)
6	ሆያ ሆዬ ነው / የምንለው	It is <i>hoya hoye</i> that we are singing
7	ሆያ ሆዬ ዝና / ተው ስጠኝ ድገምና	<i>Hoya hoye zəna</i> , just tip me more
8	አረ በቃ በቃ / ገርሯችን ነቃ	Release us from singing loud – our throat is aching
9	አረ በልጅዎ ይራራ ሆድዎ	Please respond to our song in the name of your child

♩ = 150

**awrag**

mā-----ta-na      mā-t--na      dā-jə-lən-tā--na  
 መ - - - ጣ -ና      መ. ጣ-ና      ደ -ጅ ልጉ- ጠ -ና

**täqäbayoč**

mā - ta -na      mā-ta -na      dā-jə lən-tā-na  
 መ - - ጣ -ና      መ. ጣ -ና      ደ -ጅ ልጉ-ጠ -ና

**rhythmic stamping**

Figure 8a: Hoya Hoya, extract of section 2

ho-ya ho-----ye zə-na      täw sə-tän-də-gä-mə-na  
 ሆ -ያ ሆ - - -ዬ ዝ-ና      ተው ስ-ጠኝ ድ- -ገ- -ም -ና

ä---rā bā-qa bā--qa gu-ro-rwa-cin nā-qa  
 አ - ረ በ -ቃ በ - ቃ ገ- ር- ሯ- ችን ነ - ቃ

Figure 8b: Melody variations of section 2



Each verse line possesses an internal rhyme, i.e. a rhyme that happens appearing within a single line. In the verse line shown below, the bold highlighted syllable **na** (ና), for instance, represents an internal rhyme. Likewise, the syllables of the verse lines in table 2a is highlighted bold.

መጣና መጣና / ደጅ ልንጠና  
*mätana mätana* / *däǰə ləntäna*

Each verse consists of 12 (sometimes 11) syllables. Pronunciation and accentuation of words, coupled with the number of syllables, may create slight melodic and rhythmic variations. While the melody presented in Figure 8a may be considered as standard, Figure 8b demonstrates two additional variations of this standard line.

Regarding the lyric, this song section is performed by the time the boys’ group approaches the front entrance or gate (that is often closed) of the selected homestead. The boys through their songs plead for the guard or any member of the household to open the gate of the chosen homestead, singing the verse lines 1-3 in order to get access to the

premises of the house and continue their performance. If the gate is still not opened, verse lines 4 and 7 are sung. With lines 8 and 9, the boys express their exhaustion and aching throat due to singing, which intensifies the plea and request for the gate to be opened.

**Song Section III:** This song section (Table 3a) begins in the moment when the boys’ group gets permission to enter the house or the host family to step inside welcomes it. The call and response lines are relatively short, particularly parts of the chorus. While the lead singer steadily adds new text with different messages in his song lines (Table 3b), the *täqäbayoc’s* response is limited to a single syllable ‘*ho*’ throughout this section. The musical notation in Figure 9 demonstrates this call and response pattern.

Further verse lines praise family heads (fathers and/or mothers). The rhymes in table 3c refer to male family heads or men, while the lines in table 3d praises mothers or women for their beauty, their special skills in cooking, spinning, cleaning and generally in taking care of their households and families are mentioned in the text.

Table 3a: *Hoya Hoya*, song part 3 (see also figure 9)

sl	mp	A/T	original script	translation
1	f	A	ሆ ያ ሆዴ	<i>Hoya hoye!</i>
	g	T	ሆ	<i>Ho!</i>
	f <sup>1</sup>	A	ሆ ያ ሆዴ	<i>Hoya hoye!</i>
	g	T	ሆ	<i>Ho!</i>

Table 3b: song part 3; text lines of the awraḡ (see also Figure 9)

vl	original script	translation
2	እዚያ ማዶ ሆ ጭስ ይጨሳል ሆ	There is smoke over there
3	አጋፋሪ ሆ ይደግሳል ሆ	A host is having a feast
4	ያቺን ድግስ ሆ ውጭ ውጭ ሆ	I overeat at that feast
5	በድንክ አልጋ ሆ ተገልብጬ ሆ	...and lying down on a mini bed
6	ያቺ ድንክ አልጋ ሆ አመለኛ ሆ	The mini bed – so uncomfortable
7	ካላንድ ሰው ሆ አታስተኛ ሆ etc.	... with no space to accommodate more than one person etc.

The musical score consists of four systems, each with two staves. The top staff is labeled 'awraḡ' and the bottom staff is labeled 'täqābayoç'. The music is in a 2/4 time signature with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The lyrics are written below the notes, with Amharic script above and English translations below. The 'täqābayoç' part consists of a single note 'ho' on a whole note in each measure.

**System 1:**  
 awraḡ: ho-ya ho---ye ho---ya ho---ye ə---ziya ma---do chəs ya--chä---sal  
 ሆ-ያ ሆ-----ዩ ሆ---ያ ሆ---ዩ አ-ዚያ ማ-----ዶ ጭስ ይ-ጨ-ሳል  
 täqābayoç: ho ho ho ho

**System 2:**  
 awraḡ: ya-can da--gə--s wu--che wu---che bādank a--l---ga tā--gäl-bə---che  
 ያ-ቺን ድ-ግ-ስ ው-ጭ ው-ጭ በድንክ አ-ል-ጋ ተ-ገል-ብ-ጬ  
 täqābayoç: ho ho ho ho

**System 3:**  
 awraḡ: ya-çi dank al--ga a---mä-lä---ña yaland sä-----wu a---tas-tä---ña  
 ያ-ቺ ድንክ አል-ጋ አ-መ-ለ-ኛ ያላንድ ሰ-ው አ-ታ-ስ-ተ-ኛ  
 täqābayoç: ho ho ho ho

**System 4:**  
 awraḡ: ka-landə sä--wu a---tas-tä---ña  
 ካ-ላንድ ሰ-ው አ-ታ-ስ-ተ-ኛ  
 täqābayoç: ho ho

Figure 9

At this point, it would imperative to explain the biblical connotation of the above-mentioned lyrical lines. At first, the call-response lines Hoya hoye! Ho ሆያ ሆዩ ሆ! (table 3a) allude to ‘my honored lady’, ‘my blessed mother’ or ‘my honored father’. In practice, the singing group, of course, addresses the heads of families they are visiting, while simultaneously spiritual figures, like the Virgin Mary the Lord Jesus Christ, God, Holy saints and apostles are symbolized (Woldu 2012; Abebe and Tadesse 2015; Mengistu 2015).

Next come verse lines 2 and 3 (Table 3b), which,

እዚያ ማዶ ሆ ጭስ ይጨሳል ሆ  
*It is smoking over there*

አጋፋሪ ሆ ይደግሳል ሆ  
*a host is having a feast*

narrate the biblical history of the Israelites who were freed from the enslavement of Egypt. On their journey back home, too much cloud or fog resembled smoke (ጭስ). During their long and tiresome journey in the wilderness, it was Saint Michael, the Archangel, who guarded them (Exodus 23:20).

*Then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen. The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was cloud along with darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus, the one did not come near the other all night. (Exodus 14:18-20).*

The word ጭስ (*chis* = smoke) stands for ‘the pillar of cloud’, while the word አጋፋሪ (*agafari*

= host at a feast) refers to Saint Michael, the guardian and protector.

The next verse lines, 4 and 5:

ያችን ድግስ ሆ ውጭ ውጭ ሆ  
*I overate at that feast*

ከድንክ አልጋ ሆ ተገልብጬ ሆ  
*lying down on a mini*

replicates the biblical narrative, as well. The feast refers to Saint Michael’s deeds, who - with the blessing of God – provided manna (food) for the Israelites for 40 years, until they reached their final destination, the Promised Land, Jerusalem. In the song, Jerusalem symbolizes the ‘small bed ድንክ አልጋ (*dənk alga*)’.

*The sons of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate the manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. (Exodus 16:35; see also Joshua 5:12; Acts 7:36; Abebe and Tadesse 2005).*

The next verse lines are 6 and 7

ያቺ ድንክ አልጋ ሆ አመለኛ ሆ  
*That bad mini bed*

ካላንድ ሰው ሆ አታስተኛ ሆ  
*which has no space for more than one person*

The content of these verse lines, again, is concomitant with the Israelites whose total number at the time of their departure from the desert of Egypt was 600,000 (Exodus 12:37), but those who were blessed to enter the “Promised Land” were only Joshua and Caleb.

*Surely, none of the men who came from Egypt, twenty years and above, shall see the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they have not wholly followed Me, except Caleb the son of*

*Jephunneh, the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the Lord" (Numbers 32:11-12; Deuteronomy 1:8; Abebe and Tadesse 2005).*

Besides the above discussed and presented lyrics, which deal with biblical chronicles, the verse lines below praise heads of the households or family members, i.e. mothers, fathers and elders. Accordingly, the rhymes in table 3c praise male family members including heroes for their open-handedness and courage.

Contrary to table 3c, the lyric in table 3d are dedicated to female family members

(mothers or other women in the house), complimenting them for their beauty, their special skills in cooking, spinning, cleaning and overcoming their responsibility of supervising their households and families<sup>11</sup>.

The next rhymes, in Table 3d, refer to both men and women.

Besides the lyrics represented below, nowadays lyrics exclusively narrating the biblical story of the Transfiguration are increasingly gaining due attention. This, however, takes place during church ceremonies after a liturgy. Table 3f shows an extract.

Table 3c: song section 3; text lines of the *awraiġ* (see also Figure 9)

original script	translation
ወይ የኔ ጌታ / የሰጠኝ ሙክት	The sheep my master gave me
እግንባሩ ላይ / አለው ምልክት	..... has a sign on its forehead
መስከረም ጠባ / እሱን ሳነክት	I was able to eat it until <i>Mäskäräm</i> (New Year) dawned
የኔማ ጌታ / የገደለበት	At that very spot where my master defeated his enemy
ስፍራው ጎድጎዶ / ወሃ ሞላበት	.. a trench was created and filled with water.
እንኳን ሰውና / ወፍ አይዘርበት	Let alone humans, not even birds are seen
የአሞራ ባልቲት / ወሃ ትቅዳበት	Left for the female raven, to fetch water
የኔማ ጌታ / የሰጠኝ ካራ	The machete my master gave me [the head of the house]
እዚህ ብመዘው / ጎንደር አበራ	.....glitters as far as <i>Gondär</i> [town], whenever I pull it out.
በጌታዬ ቤት በጉልላቱ	On the apex of my master's home .....
ወርቅ ይፍሰስበት በእናት በእናቱ	may gold rain on it over and over again.
የኔማ ጌታ ጌታ ነው ጌታ	My master, head of this house, is the master of masters....
ሲቀመጥ ሲያምር ሲቆም ሲረታ	.... full of grace and charm, seated or standing.
የኔማ ጌታ የሰጠኝ ላም	The cow that my master gave me...
አስር ዓመት ያረገች በዓለም	..... is still alive with complete health for the past ten years now..

Table 3d: song section 3; text lines of the *awraǧ* (see also figure 9)

original script	translation
የኔ ማ እመቤት / መጣንልኸ	My Lady, we are coming to pay you a visit
የቤት ባልትና / ልናይልኸ	..... to witness your efficiency in cooking and family care
የኔ ማ እመቤት / የጋገረችው	That bread my lady has baked
የንብ እንጂራ / አስመሰለችው	..... is a wonderful <i>ənjära</i> , that resembles a beehive
የኔ ማ እመቤት / ብትሰራ ዶሮ	When my lady cooks chicken sauce
ሽታው ይጣራል / ገመገም ዞሮ	..... the scent of its delicious aroma smells from a distance.
ወይ የኔ እመቤት የፈተለችው	The cotton my lady has spun by hand
የሽረረት ድር / አስመሰለችው	..... resembles a spider’s web.
ሸማኔ ጠፍቶ / ማርያም ሰራችው	Was woven by no weaver; but St. Mary herself.
ለዚያች ለማርያም / አዘኑላት	Have mercy for St. Mary
ዓመት ከመንፈቅ / ወሰደባት	.... because it took her 1.5 years to finish the weaving.
ወይ የኔ እመቤት / ብትሰራ ዶሮ	When my lady cooks chicken sauce
ሽታው ይጣራል / ገመገም ዞሮ	The scent of its delicious smell is felt across the hills;
የማነው እንዠርት / ከግልገሉ ላይ	Whose spindle is that in that basket?
የዚያች እመቤት / የቀጭን ፈታይ	It belongs to that lady – known for her fine spinning style;

Table 3e: song section 3; text lines of the *awraǧ* (see also figure 9)

original script	translation
የዚህ ቤት ጌቶች / እንደምን ናችሁ	How are You, both – owners of this house?
በዓመት አንድ ቀን / መጣንለላችሁ	Here we are coming to pay our annual visit.
በዓመት አንድ ቀን / ለመጣ እንግዳ	For a guest who shows up once a year
እራቱ መክት / ምሳው ፍራዳ	lamb dish is served for dinner and beef dish for lunch

Table 3f: *Hoya Hoya*, spiritual lyric (see also figure 9)

original script	translation
ቡሄ በሉ ! ሆ!	Say <i>Buhe</i> , all of you! Ho!
ደዳም ልጅ ሁሉ! ሆ!	All children of Adam! Ho!
የኛማ ጌታ ፣ የአለም ፊጣሪ	Our Lord! Creator of the Universe
የሰላም እምላክ፣ ትሁት መካሪ	The Lord of peace and kindness!
ድምጽህን ሰማና ቡብሩህ ደመና	Heard your voice through a bright cloud
የቡሄው ብርሃን ለኛ መጣና	Here comes the <i>Buhe</i> light to bless us
ያዕቆብ የሃንስ ሆ! እንዲሁም ጴጥሮስ	Jacob, John and Peter
እምላክን አዩት ሆ! ሙሴ ኢልያስ	Look unto our Lord! Ho-- Moses and Elijah
አባቱም አለ ሆ! ልጄን ስሙት	His Father [God] said: Listen to my Son [Jesus Christ]
ቃሊ ነውና ሆ! የወለድኩት	Because he is my promise! He is my child

**Song Section IV:** This section consists of a call and response pattern. At first, the *awraḅ* sings the two melody phrases h-l that are repeated by the *täqäbayoc*. Then, this can be sung 2 to 3 times applying different lyrics shown in Table 4. An extract of this song section is reproduced in musical notation in Figure 10.

After having intensively praised the host family in the previous song section, it is time to ask for the reward, which may be money, *mulmul* bread or other items.

During the course of the day, several groups of singing boys with the same song *hoya hoye* may visit a family. The family, in this case, has the right to inform the group that it has already been visited by another group and rewarded them for their praise songs. In such circumstances, boys do not (and should not) anticipate a reward. Hence, they leave for the next homestead to sing *hoya hoye*, thus extending holiday wishes.

**Song Section V:** This part sets in as a post-reward version of the song. In that lyric, they thank the family for its generosity and hospitality. The lyric, in other words, aims at wishing the family to be blessed with perfect health and long life, coupled with wealth, happiness, as well as good harvest with grace from the Almighty God (Table 5a; see also Figure 11). Finally the boys bid farewell to the family, express their wish to be there for the coming year's *Buhe* and depart for the next destination<sup>13</sup>.

Additional verse lines praise the male master of the house (Table 5b; see also Figure 12). The structure of these verse lines particularly fit to the second, third and sixth song sections.

13 The *hoya hoye* song has functional similarities with the New Year's song performed by girls, *abäbäye hoy*. In both songs a group moves from house to house to perform a specific song expecting to be rewarded at the end according to the tradition.

Table 4: *Hoya Hoya* song part 4 (see also figure 10)

sl	mp	A/T	original script	translation
1	h	A	ሆያ ሆዩ ጉዴ	<i>hoya hoye</i> ; Oh, my God!
	i		ብርዋን ብርዋን ይላል ሆዴ	My heart desiring that reward money
	h	T	ሆያ ሆዩ ጉዴ	<i>hoya hoye</i> ; Oh, my God!
	i		ብሯን ብሯን ይላል ሆዴ	I am desiring that reward money
2	h		ሆያ ሆዩ ጉዴ	<i>hoya hoye</i> ; Oh, my God!
	i		ጩዋታ ነው ልማዴ	I am a fun-loving person
3	h		ሆያ ሆዩ ጉዴ	<i>hoya hoye</i> ; Oh, my God!
	i		ሙልሙል ይላል ሆዴ	I am eager to get the mulmul (reward bread)

awrag ♩ = 150

ho---ya ho-----ye gu-de ba---rwan ba-rwan ya-lal--ho--de  
 ሆ-----ያ ሆ-----ዩ ጉ-ዴ ብ-ሯን ብ-ሯን ይ-ላል ሆ-ዴ

täqäbayoč

ho---ya ho-----ye gu-de ba---rwan ba-rwan ya-lal--ho--de  
 ሆ-----ያ ሆ-----ዩ ጉ-ዴ ብ-ሯን ብ-ሯን ይ-ላል ሆ-ዴ

Figure 10: *Hoya Hoya*, extract of section 4 (see rhythmic stamping in figure 8a)

Table 5a: *Hoya Hoya*, song sections 5 (see also figure 11)

sl	mp	A/T	original script	translation
1	j	A	ዓመት ዐውድ ዓመት	Every year comes this Holiday
	k	T	ድገምና	Come again
	<sup>1</sup> j	A	ዓመት	Every year!
	<sup>1</sup> k	T	ድገምና	Come again
2	j	A	የጌታዬን ቤት	In the house of my master.
	k	T	ድገምና	Come again
	<sup>1</sup> j	A	ዓመት	Every year!
	<sup>1</sup> k	T	ድገምና	Come again
3	j	A	ወርቅ ይገነብብን	May gold rain!
	k	T	ድገምና	Come again
	<sup>1</sup> j	A	ዓመት	Every year!
	<sup>1</sup> k	T	ድገምና	Come again

Figure 11: *Hoya Hoya*, extract of section 5 (see rhythmic stamping in figure 8a)



Table 5b: *Hoya Hoya*, song sections 6 (see also figure 12)

sl	mp	A/T	original script	translation
4	l m	A	ክበር በስንዴ	May your wheat harvest be abundant!
		A	ክበር በጤፍ	May your <i>teff</i> harvest be abundant!
		A	ምቀኛህ ይርገፍ	May your haters diminish!
5	l m	A	ክበር በስንዴ	May your wheat harvest be abundant!
		A	ክበር በጤፍ	May your <i>teff</i> harvest be abundant!
		A	ምቀኛህ ይርገፍ	May your haters diminish!

The figure shows a musical score for two parts: 'awraḡ' (top) and 'täqābayoč' (bottom). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 150. The lyrics are written in Amharic script and a phonetic transcription. The Amharic lyrics for 'awraḡ' are: ክበር በስንዴ, ክበር በጤፍ, ምቀኛህ ይርገፍ. The phonetic transcription is: kə--bār bäsənde kə--bār bā--te--fə mə--qāñah yəṛ-gā-fə. The Amharic lyrics for 'täqābayoč' are: ክበር በስንዴ, ክበር በጤፍ, ምቀኛህ ይርገፍ. The phonetic transcription is: kə---bār bā-sən--de kə---bār bā-te--fə mə---qāñah yərgā----fə.

Figure 12: *Hoya Hoya*, extract of section 6 (see rhythmic stamping in figure 8a)

## Conclusion

It is obvious, that both the *Buhe* celebration with all the holiday activities and the *hoya hoye* song evoke nostalgic feelings to all those who spent their childhood singing it in groups and enjoying the company of one another. The same serves for the girls' song *abābaye hoy* performed for the Ethiopian New Year. Nevertheless, the tradition is in constant transformation and redefinition. Hence, *Buhe* or *ənqutataš* songs and the related customs that existed three or four decades ago are, obviously not the same today. Social, cultural and political changes have influenced the musical landscapes as

much as they have influenced and changed the way of thinking of the generation in present-day Ethiopia.

Nowadays, new lyrics are inserted to the existing melodic-rhythmic structure of the *hoya hoye* song and are partially or fully replacing the original lyric. The text contains the same structure as the original one, but, their content may be political opposing the current government or satirical<sup>14</sup>. Other lyrics narrate about current social and cultural

14 Keeping the frame of the original *hoya hoye* lyric, the internet (including social media portals) is also full of new texts, among other things, written and posted by activists residing in the Ethiopian Diaspora.

matters. The new lyrics often do not necessarily make sense compared to the traditionally used song text. The content of other lyrics that are often used nowadays is exclusively religious, mainly narrating the biblical story of the Lord's Transfiguration as shown in Table 3f.

In big cities, such as the capital Addis Ababa, some boys' (or adult men's) groups use the *hoya hoye* song purely to make business, i.e., asking for money (demanding money). They use lyrics they created for this very purpose, i.e., begging for money and if people refuse to reward them, lyrics with insult or curse would follow. Unlike the traditional style of wandering from house to house-singing *hoya hoye*, boys nowadays go to restaurants, cafes and other commercial establishments and bother business owners and their clients with constant begging. Such boys no longer are interested in *mulmul* bread, but money only.

Changes in the sphere of music are reflected in people's musical behaviors (Nketia 1962: 5). Therefore, the study should focus on finding out the reasons of such changes along with possible acculturation processes and problems related to and resulting from it. This research approach is important in order to find out to what extent the existing musical culture has faced external influences and which part of it is still practiced.

Due to the oral tradition of the *Amara* and many other Ethiopian communities, every member of a given society is usually capable of understanding the musical rules. This includes songs and their arrangements and performance styles. Of course, it is obvious that different levels of perception exist depending on various backgrounds and matters. Kubik (1983: 326) mentions them in

relation with: "a) individually different background of the person; b) affiliation to different sub-cultures; c) affiliation to different age groups". With regard to the *Yoruba* of Nigeria, fairy tale songs, Kubik (1988: 271) talks about a similar relationship between the song leader and the accompanying choir in a song performed alternately.

However, a real understanding would not only diminish because of regional distance between cultures, but there are also time gaps that need to be taken into consideration as well, since cultures are always subjected to changes (Kubik 1988: 326).

The phenomenon of self-restriction that is observed in many African countries lead to the fact that in time of extreme economic and social changes, the lack of knowledge and the search for expertise of traditional cultures as a decisive factor of the social instability becomes noticeable. This process also created a number of conflicts between different generations and ethnic communities. Even the proverbial continuity of wedding customs including all appropriate artistic and cultural activities does not remain spared of it. The impoverishment of the repertoire and the one-sided presentation, which is gradually emerging, is only one part of the obviously perceivable change. Very far reaching are the symptomatic indicated changes in the aesthetics, moral conceptions and in the self-awareness of the different ethnic communities. Of course, in the old Ethiopia history strong upheavals have occurred, but they were relatively gradual and thus left time for a stabilizing reflection of artistic articulations and for the adoption of new traditional elements, e.g. in the recent verse

poetry, in warrior's songs or in the professional *azmari* groups. At present, such processes take place with a fast speed and under the already existing critical conditions of material and technical dependence that cause discrepancies particularly between the differently developed societies of this weak agricultural country that are far beyond the traditionally rooted opinions. Addis Ababa is an example for the fact that above all the migrated poor city dwellers suffer under the loss of their double roots; i.e. the rural and the ethnic. The gain of modern possibilities of making decisions must, for instance, be settled with the renouncement of the traditional dignity of a wedding, whereas rich families are able to afford the luxury of professional musical support and recognized originality. Even though the new development is irreversible, it is nevertheless, it is time to steer this not in all points negative and/or destructive vision through calculated researches and publications, active dedications and careful documentations of still existing cultural evidences.

Apart from its religious connotation, the *hoya hoye* song should preach love, togetherness, and respect to one another, communal enjoyment as well as traditions and cultures. It should not be used as a means to beg and to reflect intolerance towards others as well as to express political dissatisfaction.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that *Buhe* or *Däbre Tabor* with all activities that accompany the celebration, i.e., the whip cracking and torch lighting, the symbolic meaning of the singing boys' group, the song and its lyrical content, the *mulmul* bread and its meaning, should continue be handed over from generation to generation

as a religious-cultural asset. This, however, can only be realized, if children of the present generation are properly taught about the significance of honoring and preserving their culture, tradition/custom and identity, a task that should be given due attention and priority by parents or close family members.

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