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## **TOWARDS A GLOSSARY OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TÄWAḤƏDO CHURCH TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS: THE SCHOOL OF GƏ'ƏZ POETRY (QƏNE BET) IN FOCUS**

The Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church (EOTC) is well known in its traditional schools that traces back to the Aksumite period, specifically following the introduction of Christianity. This article aims at exploring technical words and expressions used in the traditional schools of the Church, with a special focus on the School of Gə'əz poetry, commonly known as 'Qəne Bet, ቅኔ ቤት'. This school has played an indispensable role in the Ethiopian Christian literary treasures for centuries transmitting the knowledge of theology, poetry, exegesis, and linguistics, predominantly by means of oral literature. Qəne Bet is the school where traditional students are supposed to be trained in composing their own poem, having practiced and recited some poetries composed by their teacher (the poet). The article comprises more than eighty technical terms and expressions collected from printed books, focus group discussions and personal experiences. These specialized words and phrases are used by Qəne teachers (poets) and students in the teaching-learning process and/or during the ecclesiastical rites, and an entry is made for each term. As the traditional schools are likely to be deteriorated time and again, preserving the linguistic heritage of such glossaries, used in some other schools, and making them known to the scholastic world is very crucial, for several of them are merely transmitted orally.

**Keywords:** Qəne, terms, traditional school, conjugation, Gə'əz poetry.

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**Эфиопия Православие Тэвахэдо шіркеуінің  
дәстүрлі мектептері глоссарийін қалыптастыру:  
гээз тіліндегі поэзия мектебі (Qəne Bet)**

Эфиопия Православие Тэвахэдо шіркеуі (ЕОТС) дәстүрлі мектептерімен кеңінен танымал, олардың тарихы Аксум дәуіріне, әсіресе христиандықтың қабылдану кезеңіне дейін барады. Бұл мақалада шіркеудің дәстүрлі мектептерінде қолданылатын арнайы терминдер мен тұрақты сөз орамдары қарастырылады, ерекше назар гээз тіліндегі поэзия мектебіне – Qəne Bet («Поэзия үйі», ቅኔ ቤት) аударылған. Бұл мектеп ғасырлар бойы эфиоп христиандық әдеби мұрасын сақтап, дамытуда айрықша рөл атқарып, теология, поэзия, экзегетика және лингвистика салаларындағы білімді негізінен ауызша дәстүр арқылы жеткізіп келген.

Qəne Bet – шәкірттер ұстазы (ақын) шығарған поэзия үлгілерін жаттап, орындағаннан кейін өз бетінше өлең құрастыруға машықтанатын мектеп. Мақалада баспа деректерінен, фокус-топтық талқылаулардан және автордың жеке тәжірибесінен жиналған сексеннен астам арнайы терминдер мен сөз тіркестері ұсынылады. Бұл сөздер мен сөз орамдары Qəne ұстаздары (ақындары) мен шәкірттері тарапынан оқу процесінде немесе діни рәсімдер барысында қолданылады; әрбір терминге жеке түсіндірме берілген.

Дәстүрлі мектептердің уақыт өте әлсіреп бара жатқанын ескерсек, осындай глоссарийлердің тілдік мұрасын сақтау және оларды ғылыми ортаға таныстыру аса өзекті, себебі олардың едәуір бөлігі бүгінгі күнге дейін тек ауызша түрде беріліп келеді.

**Түйін сөздер:** Qəne, терминдер, дәстүрлі мектеп, етістік жіктелуі, гээз поэзиясы.

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**К глоссарию традиционных школ  
 Эфиопской православной церкви Тэвахэдо:  
 на примере школы поэзии на языке гээз (qəne bet)**

Эфиопская православная церковь Тэвахэдо (ЕОТС) известна своими традиционными школами, история которых восходит к Аксумскому периоду, особенно к времени после принятия христианства. Цель данной статьи – исследовать специальные термины и выражения, используемые в традиционных школах Церкви, с особым акцентом на школе поэзии на языке гээз, известной как Qəne Bet («Дом поэзии», ቅኔ፡ ቤት). Данная школа на протяжении веков играла незаменимую роль в сохранении и передаче эфиопского христианского литературного наследия, распространяя знания в области богословия, поэзии, экзегетики и лингвистики преимущественно устной традицией.

Qəne Bet – это школа, где учащиеся должны овладеть навыками самостоятельного сочинения стихотворений после предварительной практики и декламации образцов поэзии, созданных их наставником (поэтом). В статье представлено более восьмидесяти специальных терминов и выражений, собранных из печатных источников, в ходе фокус-групповых обсуждений, а также на основе личного опыта автора. Эти специализированные слова и обороты употребляются учителями (qəne-поэтами) и учениками как в процессе обучения, так и во время богослужебных практик; для каждого термина составлена отдельная словарная статья.

Учитывая, что традиционные школы постепенно утрачивают своё значение, сохранение лингвистического наследия подобных глоссариев (используемых и в других школах) и их введение в научный оборот представляется крайне важным, поскольку значительная их часть до настоящего времени передаётся исключительно в устной форме.

**Ключевые слова:** Qəne, термины, традиционная школа, спряжение, поэзия на гээз.

## 1. Introduction

Considered to be established by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwəḥədo Church at Aksum, the history of traditional schools traces back to the Aksumite period, possibly following the introduction of Christianity. Expanded in various parts of the country, it has served as a center of learning for several centuries, offering a traditionally structured curriculum with various levels of study in accordance with the Church's tradition. In each traditional Church School, there are a variety of specialized words and phrases that teachers and students use during their study practices and/or liturgical rites (Chernetsov 2014, 228a–229b). However, the condition of the schools has been steadily declining, perhaps due to the growing influence of the modern educational system. As a result, these unique terminologies associated with the processes of learning (practice) and ritual performance seem to be at risk of disappearing unless they are thoroughly studied and properly documented.

As far as the researcher's insight, only few scholars have made valuable contributions in this regard, documenting technical words employed in certain schools or professions. For example, Mersha (2011) published an insightful article that includes a glossary of terms related to the Ethiopian manuscript culture and practices, particularly those used

in manuscript production. Similarly, Andualem Ermias (2025) compiled an extensive reference work titled '*A Reference Dictionary of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwəḥədo Church Terminologies*', which brings together a wide range of terms used in the Church's liturgical rites and traditional educational contexts.

Gə'əz is the oldest known Ethiopian language that was spoken and written during the Aksumite Empire, at least since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE (Ullendorff 1951). Continued until the second millennium AD, it ceased to be a spoken and replaced by Amharic, remaining the language of Liturgy (Maria, et. al. 2019). The Gə'əz grammatical stud, known as 'Sawəsəw, ሰዋስው' in the school of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ፡ ቤት), is deliberately divided into four different sections that keep their own identifications, specializations and scopes. They are namely known as: 'Gəśś, ግሥ', 'Rəba Qəmr, ረባ፡ ቅምረ', 'Rəba Gəśś, ረባ፡ ግሥ' and 'Aggābab, አገባብ' (Hiruie Ermias 2018, 4). This study specifically emphasizes on the terminology employed in the School of Gə'əz Poetry (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ፡ ቤት) along with those of used during the ecclesiastical rites. The School of Gə'əz Poetry is the second or third level of the Church schools where the students learn Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) along with grammar and vocabulary.

If one needs to be certified as a teacher of Gə'əz poetry, he is required to go through different steps,

such as composing his poem (Mäq<sup>w</sup>ṭär, መቅጠር), telling it to the teacher (Mängär, መንገር), performing in divine office (Mäqqāñät, መቅኘት), composing all poem types (Mämulat, መሙላት), hearing the other students' composition and giving them criticism (Masnäggär, ማስነገር) and making prompt composition (Mäzräf, መዘረፍ) respectively. One is considered to have been a master of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) if he is able to compose all types (Mulu Bet, ሙሉ፡ ቤት) of it at once, without any preparation (Chernetsov 2014, 228a-229b; Zanetti 2014, 727°; Habtemichael Kidane. 2014, 283b-286a; Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 180; 290; Chaillot 2002, 87).

## 2. Qəne and Its Peculiar Features

### 2.1 Qəne and Its Types

Derived from the Gə'əz word 'qänäyā, ቀነየ (lit. to worship'), Qəne is a genre of Gə'əz literature composed by choristers (poets) to express adoration, praise or thanksgiving during the celebration of the Divine Office (Admasu Jembere, 1963, 9; Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 284b). Its beginning remains debatable since some scholars argue that its origin is Bible, while some others suggest that it is attributed to Saint Yared the hymnist in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, for he includes several hymns containing Qəne names, such as Mibāzḥu, Wazema, Yəṭbarāk (Šəllase) Zä-Yə'əze, Māwāddəs and Kwəlləkəmu in his hymnal book known as: 'Mə'raf, ምዕራፍ' (Admasu Jembere, 1963, 10). Some also claim that it was formally started by some medieval time Church scholars. The Academy of the Ethiopian Languages (1980, 17), confirms that Qəne was started by Saint Yared during the reign of King Gäbrä Mäsqäl in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but the time when it mostly got the current structure was during the reign of King Zär'a Yə'əqob (1434-1468) by a known Church scholar Yohannəs Gäblawi<sup>1</sup>.

Regardless of its size, type and the way through which it is composed, any Qəne comprises two meanings, viz. wax (ሰም, Säm) that refers to its literal meaning, and gold (ወርቅ, Wärq) reflecting the inner or mysterious interpretation (Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 283b-286a; Chernetsov 2014, 228a-229b; Zanetti 2014, 727a; Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 173). *Since it is taught from simple to complex and from the shortest to the longest one meth-*

*odologically, the simple way and the shortest Qəne the students start to practice and compose are 'Säm 'əna Wärq (ሰምና ወርቅ)' and 'Guba'e Qana (ጉባኤ: ቃና)' respectively. Having studied the features of some previously composed poetry, learners compose their own poetry (Qəne) and present to their teacher to receive his criticism (Andualem Ermias 2025, 225a-226a).*

There might numeral types of Gə'əz poetries (Qəneyat) varied in their type, size and form, but the most common ones presented in the rites of Devine Offices properly and taught in the school (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ፡ ቤት) regularly are displayed in the table below (Admasu Jembere 1963, 18-23; Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 180 and Academy of the Ethiopian Languages 1980, 23):

**Table 1** – The Common Types of Gə'əz Poetry (Qəneyat)

No.	Name of Qəne	Phrases	Stanza
1	Gə'əz Guba'e Qana, ግእዝ፡ ጉባኤ፡ ቃና (lit. 'Gə'əz Assembly of Cana')	4	2
2	'Əzl Guba'e Qana, ዕዝል፡ ጉባኤ፡ ቃና (lit. "'Əzl Assembly of Cana')	4	2
3	Zä-'Amlakəyā, ዘአምላክየ (lit. 'Of My God')	5	3
4	Mibāzḥu, ሚበዝኑ (lit. 'How Are They Increased!')	8	3
5	Wazema, ዋዜማ (lit. 'Eve')	9	5
6	'A□□ər Wazema (ዐጭር ዋዜማ (lit. 'A Short Eve')	4	2
7	Šəllase, ሥላሴ (lit. 'Trinity')	11	6
8	Zä-Yə'əze, ዘይእዜ (lit. 'Today's')	11	5
9	'A□□ər Zä-Yə'əze, ዐጭር፡ ዘይእዜ (lit. 'A Short Today's')	4	2
10	Šahələkā, ሣህልክ (lit. 'Your Goodness')	7	3
11	Māwāddəs, መወድስ (lit. 'Praise')	18	8
12	Kwəlləkəmu, ኩልክሙ (lit. 'All of You')	20	9
13	'A□□ər Kwəlləkəmu, ዐጭር ኩልክሙ (lit. 'A Short All of You')	4	2
14	Hən□eha, አንዷ (lit. 'Its Building Structure')	3	2
15	Hawarəyatihu Kābābā, ሐዋርያተሁ፡ ክበበ (lit. 'He Ordained His Apostles')	4	2
16	Gə'əz Kəbr Yə'əti, ግእዝ፡ ክብር፡ ይእቲ (lit. 'She is the Glory')	8	4
17	'Əzl Kəbr Yə'əti, ዕዝል፡ ክብር፡ ይእቲ (lit. 'She is the Glory')	8	4
18	Gə'əz 'Əṭanā Mogār, ግእዝ፡ ዕጣነ፡ ሞገር (lit. 'Gə'əz Throwing of Incense')	18	7
19	'Əzl 'Əṭanā Mogār, ዕዝል፡ ዕጣነ፡ ሞገር (lit. "'Əzl Throwing of Incense')	18	11

<sup>1</sup> The name 'Gäblawi' is derived from the local village name called 'Gäblon (Gäblat)' located at Wadla (Lasta), North Wollo (Academy of the Ethiopian Languages, 1980, 17).

## 2.2 Peculiar Features of Qəne

There might be numerous features that make Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) different from other traditional schools and poetic elements. Some of them, such as structure, mode of chant, transmission and innovation, are briefly presented hereafter:

- **Structure:** Every kind of Qəne has its own pattern called 'Zema Ləkk, ዜማ ለክ' that indicates the number of words, phrases and rhyming lines. Regardless of its size, type and the way by which it is composed, any Qəne has its own rule that the poets have to follow; otherwise, the poet could be criticized as if he is less educated, for it could be difficult to chant it if it is said in a Devine Office. The Qəne composed out of such pattern is called 'Gutt, ጉት, and it is not chanted in any ecclesiastical rite of the Church (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 168-171, 205).

- **Mode of Chant:** Unlike many other poetries, each Gə'əz Qəne has its own formal mode of chant; it could be chanted in one of the three modes of chant, known as 'Gə'əz, ግእዝ', 'Əzl, ሰዝል,' and 'Araray, አራራይ'. Some of the Gə'əz poetries (Qəneyat), such as *Guba'e Qana* (ጉባኤ: ቃና) and *Kəbr Yə'əti* (ክብር: ይእቲ), have more than one mode of chant.

- **Transmission:** Qəne is mostly transmitted from generation to generation orally, so could be placed under oral literature in the Ethiopian Christian tradition. Thus, unlike other Ethiopic texts, it is hardly possible to find it recorded in manuscripts; it is merely published in ... entitled 'Mäzgäbä Qəne, መዝገበ: ቅኔ (lit. 'Treasury of Poetry')' and 'ዝክረ: ሊቃውንት, Zəkrä Liqawənt (lit. 'The Memory of Scholars'); cf. Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 284b.

- **Innovation:** During the teaching-learning process and in any liturgical rite where Qəne is supposed to be performed, the learner or the poet is required to present a new innovation. In other words, new compositions are supposed to be presented in every ecclesiastical context; the poet, otherwise, could be undermined and criticized if he presents Qəne that is previously said by any other poet (Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 284b).

## 3. Source of Data (Terminology)

Most of the terminologies, for which entries are made, were predominantly gathered from two sources, viz. printed books and personal experiences. Dictionaries, like Kidan Weld Kifle (1948), Leslau (1991) and Kane (1990), Andualem Ermias (2025), and books written on Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) and traditional schools, such as Yä-Gə'əz Qəneyat

(1980 E.C.) and Habte Maryam Werkneh (1962 E.C) respectively.

Personal and interpersonal experiences were also other means where the words and phrases were collected from. Personally, I am a bit acquainted with several terminologies, for I had joined the School of Gə'əz Poetry (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ: ቤት), in Däbrä Eləyas and Däbrä Marəqos, and I spent three and two years therein respectively, learning Qəne. Any student who joins *Qəne Bet* has to write/copy his own dictionary traditionally called 'Gəśś, ግሥ' to study words. Accordingly, when I was writing my own dictionary, I used to record some terms that are orally common in the school but were not found recorded, and this note was used to refer back some words and phrases therefrom.

Besides, I made focus group discussions with two teachers of Gə'əz Poetry (Qəne), namely, Haile Eyesus Mengiste and Pawulos Birhane, both of which are graduate in Gə'əz Language and Literature at Holy Trinity University.<sup>2</sup> In the focus group discussions, I have got many terms, some of which are not found in any printed materials in the context they are presented here. For instance: Mə'awā, ሚጫ (lit. 'Sticky') and Mäntäq, መንጠቅ (lit. 'To Snatch') and 'Agobär, አጎበረ (lit. 'Canopy') are known and employed merely in verbal settings in the traditional School of Gə'əz Poetry (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ: ቤት).

## 4. Terminology

'Abənnät Təmhərt Bet, አብነት: ትምህርት: ቤት (Gz.): Lit. 'Original School'; also known as 'Guba'e Bet, ጉባኤ: ቤት, (lit. 'The House of Congregation'), is a name designated to the traditional schools of the Church, and it has been used as an academic institution for a long time.

'Abəšo, አብሽ: a powder of a stimulant seed, 'datura stramo-mium', which has hallucinogenic effect. The traditional school students, particularly those who attended a school of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) take it mixed with honey to enable them learn the poem within short period of time, for it may take four to five years to study all forms of it; cf. 'Əā Fars, ሰፊ: ፋርስ (Chernetsov 2014, 229b).

'Abiyy 'Anqäś, ዐቢይ: አንቀጽ (Gz.): Lit. 'Major Verb', include the four verb types, such as 'Qäd-däsä, ቀደስ' (qadamay, ቀዳማይ = past), 'Yəqeddəs,

<sup>2</sup> Both of them have taught Qəne in Goğğam for a long time, and currently they have been teaching Gə'əz language at Addis Ababa.



ይቁድስ' (Kalə'ay, ካልዓይ = future), 'Yəqāddəs, ይቀድስ' (Zänd, ዘንድ = infinitive) and 'Yəqāddəs, ይቀድስ' (Tə'əzaz, ትእዛዝ = imperative) forms of Gə'əz verbs used in the process of conjugation (Säwasəwä Gə'əz 1992, 13).

**'Aggäbab**, አገባብ (Am.): Preposition, is one of the four parts through which Gə'əz language is studied traditionally, and they are classified into three types, viz. (1). 'Abiyy 'Aggäbab, ዐቢይ: አገባብ, (lit. 'major prepositions'), such as 'Əsmä, እስመ (for)', 'Alla, አላ (but)', 'Əmmä, እመ (if), etc.; (2) Däqiq 'Aggäbab, ደቂቅ: አገባብ (lit. 'minor prepositions'), like 'lä, ለ (to)', 'Dibä, ዲበ (on)', 'Wəstä, ውስተ (in)', etc.; and (3) Nə'əus 'Aggäbab, ንኡስ: አገባብ (lit. 'small prepositions'), such as 'Əm, እም (from)', 'I, ኢ (not)', 'aw, አው (or)', etc. (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 210-211; Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 86-88; Hiruie Ermias 2018, 4; Dillmann, 2005, 468-471).

**'Agobär**, አገበር (Am.): Lit. 'Canopy', refers to certain phrase or a rhyming line found in some Gə'əz poetry (Qəne), for instance, the second phrase and the forth rhyming line of Šəllase (ሥላሴ).

**'Arə'əstä Gəss**, አርእስተ: ግሥ (Gz.): Lit. 'The Heads of (Gə'əz) Verbs', are the main verbs used as an exemplar for the conjugation of other verbs in the tradition of the school of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne). Concerning the number and type of theses verbs, there seems to be no agreement among the three known schools of Gə'əz poetry, namely, Wäšära, Wadla and Gongǧ. However, the common ones accepted by the majority of the scholars include: qätälä (ቀተለ), qäddäsä (ቀደሰ), baräkä (ባረከ), maḥräkä (ማህረከ), tänbälä (ተንበለ), sesäyā (ሴሳየ), köhlä (ክህለ) and ṭomärä (ጦመረ). Each of which them has its verbal troops (Šarawit, ሠራዊት) used in conjugation (Hiruy Ermias 2016, 314; Säwasəwä Gə'əz 1992, 6; Kidan Weld Kifle 1948, 61).

**'Asärä Nägaši**, አሠረ: ነጋሢ (Gz.): Lit. 'The Steps of the King', refers to the last three and five verses of Gə'əz poems called 'Gə'əz and 'Əzl 'Əṭanä Mogär' respectively. In both cases, their strophes are usually composed to praise or comment the contemporary King, thus, the contents are mostly different from the first ones that are usually religious As to Admasu Jembere (1963, 17), each are counted separately, for their contents or mysteries differ from their main subjects, i.e., 'Əṭanä Mogär. (Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 691b; Leslau 1991, 76b; Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 283b-286a; 390a-390b' Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 179).

**'Asnäggari**, አስነጋሪ (Am.): refers to the causative form of the verb 'ነገረ= to tell'. so is to mean

Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) scholar who is able to let students tell him what they composed and gives them criticism (Andualem Ermias 2025, 355a). '

**'Asräǧǧ**, አስረጅ (Am.): Explanatory, a word, such as 'Əsmä, እስመ', 'Kämä, ከመ' and 'Amṭanä, አምጥነ', presented to elaborate the story in Gə'əz poetry (Qəne), during its interpretation, in the school of Qəne (Dillmann, 2005, 537).

**'Aššärtu Märahəyan**, ዐሠርቱ: መራሕያን (Gz.): Lit. 'The Ten Leaders of Verbs', the Gə'əz pronouns by which all verbs change their form based upon them in the conjugation process. They are namely: (1) 'Anä, አነ (I), (2) 'Nəḥnä, ንሕነ (We)', (3) 'Antä, አንተ (You: 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular masculine)', (4) 'Antəmu, አንትሙ (You: 2<sup>nd</sup> Person plural masculine)', (5) 'Anti, አንተ (You: 2<sup>nd</sup> Person singular feminine)', (6) 'Antən, አንትን (You: 2<sup>nd</sup> Person plural feminine)', (7) 'Wə'ətu, ውእቱ (He)', (8) 'Wə'ətomu, ውእቶሙ (They: 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural masculine)', (9) 'Yə'əti, ይእቲ (She)', (10) 'Wə'əton, ውእቶን (They: 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural feminine); cf. Säwasəwä Gə'əz 1992, 21; Kidan Weld Kifle 1948, 77; Dillmann, 2005, 202-204.

**Bəhil**, ብሂል (Gz.): Aforesaid, a term designated to Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) that was presented by a poet before and performed again by another poet, so he (the performer) is disregarded for his plagiarism.

**Bet Mämča**, ቤት መምቻ (Am.): Lit. 'House Hitter', the last sounds of the words alike or rhymed in each line of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne), in the tradition of the school (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ: ቤት); cf. Desta Tekle Weld 1962, 209.

**Bet**, ቤት (Gz.): Lit. 'House', refers to the last sound of each line of the rhyming stanza, such as Gə'əz poetry (Qəne), image (Mälkä', መልክእ), etc.; cf. Bet Mämča, ቤት መምቻ (Desta Tekle Weld 1962, 209).

**Bə'ahe**, ቢሄ: refers to the fourth rhyming line (bet, ቤት) of a Gə'əz Qəne called 'Mäwäddəs, መወድስ (lit. Praise)', and it is not found in any other Gə'əz poetry (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 283).

**'Əṭā Fars**, ዕፁ: ፋርስ, (Gz.): Lit. "The Tree of Persia", is a drug that traditionally used by Ethiopian Church scholars to assist them in memorization of the subject what they learn. The name 'Persia' might be the contry from which the plant is said to have originated; cf. አብሽ, 'Abəšo (Pankhurst 2014, 200b).

**Fəčč**, ፍች (Am): Meaning, the interpretation of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) given by the Qəne master (poet) to enable his students to understand and take it as an exemplary, in the teaching-learning system of the traditional school (Qəne Bet ቅኔ: ቤት).

**Fəls, ፍልስ** (Gz.): Variation, the situation in which the end sounds of the words in each line of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) becomes different, in the system of traditional school of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne Bet ቅኔ፡ ቤት); Andualem Ermias 2025, 697b.

**Fənnawä Qəne, ፍናወ፡ ቅኔ** (Gz.): Lit. 'The Paths of Poem', refers to the ways through which Gə'əz Qəne are composed. There are hundreds of ways of composing Gə'əz poetry (Qəne), and Sämənna Wärq (ሰምና ወርቅ), Lit. 'Wax and Gold', Həbr (ኅብር), Lit. 'Union' and Nəṣṣəṣər (ነጽጽር), Lit. 'Analogy' are the common ones.

**Gäbir Tägäbro, ገቢር፡ ተገብሮ** (Gz.): Lit. 'Active-Passive', the common grammatical errors that could happen because of the disagreement between a subject and verb, noun and adjective, etc. in composing Gə'əz poetry (Qəne); cf. Andualem Ermias 2025, 641a-641b.

**Gutt, ጉት** = Lit. 'Heaved', refers to a special, but informal, method of teaching and/or learning Gə'əz in either verse or prose forms, which requires the learner's deep thinking (natural aptitude) to understand its meaning, usually double and mysterious. Nevertheless, it is not common to use it in the ecclesiastical service of the Church (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 168-171, 205).

**Lä-'Alām, ለዓለም** (Gz.): Lit. 'Forever', refers to the sixth rhyming line (bet, ቤት) of a Gə'əz Qəne called 'Māwāddəs, መወድስ (lit. Praise)', and it is not found in any other Gə'əz poetry (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 283).

**Gəśś Mawräd, ግሥ ማውረድ** (Gz.): To Conjugate, the practice of teaching students the ways the different verbs conjugate in the traditional school system of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) (ቅኔ፡ ቤት, Qəne Bet); cf. Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 144.

**Gəśś, ግሥ** (Gz.): A verb, it refers to the seed of words (Zär', ዘርእ) that conjugates in different ways in the Gə'əz vocabulary learning (see Rbaḥ Qəmmər, ርባክ፡ ቅምር). Any Gə'əz Poetry (Qəne) consists of at least a verb (Masärəya 'Anqäs, ማሰርያ አንቀጽ) and a subject (Balä Bet, ባለ ቤት); see Muya, ሙያ (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 144).

**Guba'e Bet, ጉባኤ፡ ቤት** (Gz.): Lit. 'The House of a Congregation', also known as "Abənnät Təmhərt Bet, አብነት፡ ትምህርት፡ ቤት (lit. 'Original School'), is a name designated to the traditional schools of the Church.

**Hərmät, ጎርመት** (Gz.): Lit. 'The particles of Letters', the different features of Gə'əz verbs containing the semi-vowels: 'Wä, ወ' and 'Yä, የ', in the conjugation process. The semi-vowels 'Wä, ወ' and 'Yä, የ', may disappear in the conjugation process of

Gə'əz verbs, for they could be changed into complete vowel. For instance, the future forms of 'Fätāwä, ፈተወ' and 'wädäyā, ወደየ' are 'Yəfättu, ይፈቱ' and 'Yəwāddi, ይወዱ', not 'Yəfättaw, ይፈትው' and 'Yəwāddəy, ይወድድ' like in other verbs (Säwasəwä Gə'əz 1992, 7, 23-25).

**Həyyānt Qəne, ህየንተ፡ ቅኔ** (Gz.): Instead of the Poem, refers to some elements of the book of antiphonary (Dəgg'wa, ድጋ), usually məltan, play the role of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) in some occasions, such as on Easter (Habtemichael Kidane. 2014, 284a).

**Kə'a(ho)ñña, ኢ(ሆ)ኛ**: refers to a kind of error of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) that occurs when the last two phrases of a rhyming line of the poem are rhymed (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 182).

**Ləwwuṭ, ለዉጥ** (Am.): Distinct, the situation in which an unrelated phrase is inserted in a Gə'əz poetry (Qəne), in the traditional school system (ቅኔ፡ ቤት, Qəne Bet).

**Mäggabe Məstir, መጋቤ፡ ምስጢር** (Gz.): A Steward of Mystery, a title given to a clergyman who is knowledgeable and certified in teaching Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) (Chernetsov 2014, 228a-229b).

**Māmulat, መሙላት** (Am.): Lit. 'Filling', refers to the situation through which the student are able to compose all kind of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne), from Guba'e Qana (ጉባኤ፡ ቃና) to Māwāddəs, (መወድስ) in the traditional school of Gə'əz poetry (ቅኔ፡ ቤት, Qəne Bet).

**Mandärdärəya, ማንደርደርያ** (Gz.): Lit. 'Stepper', is the medium line of Gə'əz poem, and it is read aloud since it contains the core point, such as the gold and wax, of the poem. In Mibāzḥu (ሚበሐኽ), Zä-'Amlakəyā (ዘአምላካየ), Wazema (ዋዜማ), Šəllase (ሥላሴ) and Zä-Yə'əze (ዘይእዜ), it is found in the second line (Bet ቤት), while in Māwāddəs (መወድስ), Gə'əz 'Əṭanā Mogār (ግእዝ፡ ዕጣነ፡ ሞገር), and 'Əzl 'Əṭanā Mogār (ዕዝል፡ ዕጣነ፡ ሞገር) in the third, fourth and sixth lines respectively; the rest poems do not have such form (Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 101a-101b; Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 182).

**Mängär, መንገር** (Gz.): Lit. 'Telling', the act of saying one's composed poem (Qəne) to his teacher to get his criticism: approval, disapproval or improvement cf. Andualem Ermias 2025, 100b.

**Mäntäq, መንጠቅ** (Am.): Lit. 'To Snatching', is a situation in which a Gə'əz poet understands the secret of the poem of the other poet (after he says one/two rhyming lines) and says the next part, particularly the central idea or theme of it, when performing in a Divine Office.

**Mäqqäbäl**, መቀበል (Gz.): Lit. ‘To Receive’: the practice of repeating Qəne loud what the poet (Qəne Zārafi, ቅኔ ዘራፊ) says when composing Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) to his students. The term can also refer to chanting, personally or in-group, immediately after the choir leader (Märi Geta, መሪ ጌታ); cf. Andualem Ermis 2025, 91a.

**Mäqqāñät**, መቀኝት (Gz.): the level of composing poem (Qəne), particularly the one known as ‘‘Əṭanā Mogär, ዕጥነ፡ ሞገር’’ and presenting it during a Divine Liturgy (Habtemichael Kidane. 2014, 284a).

**Mäzräf**, መዝረፍ (Am.): Lit. ‘To Rob’, refers to the process of composing Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) spontaneously, with no more preparation. The poet is considered to be a master or an expert of Gə‘əz poetry whenever he is able to compose the all types of Qəne (Mulu Bet, ሙሉ፡ ቤት).

**Mäq‘əṭär**, መቀጥር (Gz.): Lit. ‘Counting’, refers to the process of composing one’s own Gə‘əz poem (Qəne) in the traditional school of Gə‘əz poetry (ቅኔ፡ ቤት, Qəne Bet); cf. Andualem Ermis 2025, 92b.

**Märahut**, መራኹት (Gz.): Lit. ‘Keys’, the five sequences of Gə‘əz letters (the 1<sup>st</sup> (Gə‘əz, ግእዝ), the 4<sup>th</sup> (Rabə‘, ራብዕ), the 5<sup>th</sup> (Ḥaməs, ኀምስ), the 6<sup>th</sup> (Sadəs, ሳድስ) and the 7<sup>th</sup> (Sabə‘, ሳብዕ)) with which the Gə‘əz verbs begin; there is no verb beginning with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sequences in the process of conjugation (Säwasəwä Gə‘əz 1992, 6).

**Marraqäq**, ማረቀቅ (Gz.): Lit. ‘To Make Sophisticated’: the practice of analyzing Gə‘əz poem deeply, considering its ‘gold’ and ‘wax’, to make it much more vivid to the learners. The ‘gold’ refers to the true story or event, while the ‘wax’ does its analogical interpretation (Maimire 2021, 25-26).

**Mäsbär**, መስበር፡ (Gz.): To Break (a Rule), the practice of composing and performing Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) erroneously, using more or fewer words than the proper one (Andualem Ermis 2025, 86a).

**Mäšfiya**, መጽፊያ (Gz.): Slapping, one of the lines of Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) where chanting with a fast beat of sistrum and drum is started. It is found in the fourth lines of Wazema (ዋዜማ), Šəllase (ሥላሴ) and Zä-Yə‘əze (ዘይእዜ), while in the seventh line in Gə‘əz ‘Əṭanā Mogär (ግእዝ፡ ዕጥነ፡ ሞገር). It is also found in the ninth line of Mäwāddəs (መወድስ) or K‘əlləkəmu (ክላክኤም) and Əzl ‘Əṭanā Mogär (ዕዝል፡ ዕጥነ፡ ሞገር). This is not attributed in the remaining Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 182).

**Mäskot**, መስኮት (Gz.): Lit. ‘Window’, the shortened form of Gə‘əz Qəne called ‘‘A□□ər Wazema, ዐጭር፡ ዋዜማ’’ (Andualem Ermis 2025, ).

**Masnäggär**, ማስነገር (Gz.): Lit. ‘Making Some One to Say Something’, refers to the Qəne teacher’s duty through which he hears his students’ Qəne and gives them criticism (Andualem Ermis 2025, 540).

**Masqärrät**, ማስቀረት (Gz.): To Make Absent in, the ability to capture Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) verbally hearing once from the poet or the teacher in the school or during an ecclesiastical service.

**Mawräd**, ማውረድ (Gz.): Lit. ‘To Bring down’, the practice of performing Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) called ‘ክብር፡ ይእቲ, Kəbr Yə‘əti’ in a Divine office (Andualem Ermis 2025, 135).

**Mäzrat**, መዝራት (Gz.): Lit. ‘To Sow’ refers to the practice of telling Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) to the audience aloud, after the composer uttered it once, in the teaching-learning process or a Divine Office.

**Məstir**, ምስጢር (Gz.): Lit. ‘Secret’: the hidden meaning of Gə‘əz poetry, which is found with an investigation in the tradition of the school of Gə‘əz poetry (ቅኔ፡ ቤት, Qəne Bet); cf. Andualem Ermis 2025, 145a.

**Mə‘a□□a**, ሚጫ (Am.): Lit. ‘Sticky’: one of the errors of Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) that occurs when the last sound of a word is alike with the first sound of the other word that follows (e.g. Betä Täwnet, ቤተ፡ ተውነት).

**Mulu Bet**, ሙሉ፡ ቤት (Gz.): Lit. ‘Full Verses’, refers to all types of Qəne (from Guba’e Qana to Mäwāddəs), and one is considered to have been a master of Qəne if he is able to compose all of them at once, without any preparation (Habtemichael Kidane. 2014, 284a).

**Nə‘us ‘Anqäš**, ንኡስ፡ አንቀጽ (Gz.): Lit. ‘Minor Verb’, refers to the two Gə‘əz verbs, such as ‘Gäbir, ገቢር’, ‘Gäbirot, ገቢሮት’, and ‘Wddəso, ወድሶ’, ‘Wddəso. ወድሶት’, usually conjugated next to the major verb (‘Abiyy ‘Anqäš, ዐቢይ፡ አንቀጽ). Such verb are called ‘minors’, for they are unable to function as a major verb in sentence construction (Säwasəwä Gə‘əz 1992, 19).

**Qämär**, ቀመር (Gz.): Lit. ‘Formula’: an overwhelming grammatical structure of the Gə‘əz language that is taught in the tradition of the school (ቅኔ፡ ቤት, Qəne Bet); cf. Andualem Ermis 2025, 210b.

**Qəne Bet**, ቅኔ፡ ቤት (Am.): School of Poetry (Qəne), the second or third level of the Church schools where the students gain their knowledge of Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne), grammar and vocabulary (Chernetsov 2014, 228a-229b; Zanetti 2014, 727°; Habtemichael Kidane. 2014, 283b-286°; Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 180; 1962, 290; Chaillot 2002, 87).



**Qəne, ቅኔ** (Gz.): poem, a genre of Gə‘əz literature composed by a chorister (Däbtära, ደብተራ) to express adoration, praise or thanksgiving during the celebration of the Divine Office and the Divine Liturgy, after the distribution of the Communion. Contained two meanings, i.e., wax (Säm, ሰም) and gold (Wärq, ወርቅ), it could be composed of different lines, from two (Guba’e Qana, ጉባኤ: ቃና) to eleven (‘Əzl ‘Ətanä Mogär, ዕዝል: ዕጣነ: ሞገር), cf. Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 283b-286a; Chernetsov 2014, 228a-229b; Zanetti 2014, 727a; Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 173.

**Qə‘anṭa, ቋንጥ** (Am.): Lit. ‘Dried Meat’, designated to Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) speculated to be composed some days before it is performed in the Divine Office. In this case, the composer could be disregarded for his work, supposed to be a rehearsed composition (Andualem Ermias 2025, 233b).

**Rəbah Gəss, ረባሕ: ግሥ** (Gz.): Conjugation, a method through which the Gə‘əz words, the seed (Zär, ዘርእ), are conjugated in traditional school of Gə‘əz Qəne (ቅኔ: ቤት, Qəne Bet); cf. Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 50; Hiruie Ermias 2018, 4).

**Rəbah Qəmmər, ረባሕ: ቅምር** (Gz.): Formula of Conjugation, the method that mainly indicates the features of Gə‘əz verbs to conjugate commonly known as root and/or seed (Zär, ዘርእ); cf. Yägəss ‘Amäl, የግሥ ዐመል, (Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 50; Hiruie Ermias 2018, 4; Säwasəwä Gə‘əz 1992, 4-6).

**Ruq ‘Ənna Qərb, ሩቅ እና ቅርብ** (Am.): Far and Close, refers to a situation in which things that are far apart are presented for comparison in Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne), in the traditional school system (ቅኔ: ቤት, Bet).

**Šahələkä, ሣህልክ** (Gz.): Lit. ‘Your Goodness’, a type of Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne), containing seven phrases and three rhyming lines (bet) and sung in Gə‘əz mode (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 178).

**Sämənna Wärq, ሰምና ወርቅ** (Am.): Lit. ‘Wax and Gold’, is a common term for specific rhetoric used in Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne), the Ethiopian traditional poetry. Regardless of the number of lines, the ‘wax’ and the ‘gold’ refer to the literal and inner meanings respectively; the former one denotes the analogy of the mystery of the poetic work, while the latter does the factual event or story. Hence, it is commonly described as the art of creating verses with apparent and hidden meanings (Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 284a; Nosnitsin 2014, 507a-509°).

**Säqoqawä Dəngəl, ሰቆቃው: ድንግል** (Gz.): Lit. ‘Lament or Elegy of the Virgin’, Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne) devoted to Saint Mary, which tells of her sorrow and distress caused by various tribulations

during the Flight to Egypt. The poem is divided into 53–55 stanzas (the number and sequence vary between different copies), and it is sung in the Qəne Maḥəlet as part of Sunday hymn, following the Maḥəletä Səge, particularly during the season of the flower (Zämānā Šəge, ዘመነ: ጽጌ); cf. Witakowski and Witakowska 2014, 534b-536a.

**Šärawit, ሠራዊት** (Gz.): Lit. ‘Troops’ refers to group of Gə‘əz verbs of which conjugations are based on one of the forms of the heading verbs (‘Arə’stä Gəss, አርእስተ: ግሥ). For Instance, ‘Wäd-däsä, ወደሰ’, ‘Wäddäsä, ወስከ’ and Fäššämä, ፈጸመ’ are the troops of ‘Qäddäsä, ቀደሰ’, one of the heading verbs, so they are conjugated in its form (Säwasəwä Gə‘əz 1992, 6-7; Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 70).

**Säwasəw, ሰዋሰው** (Gz.): Lt ‘Step, Ladder’, the study of Ethiopic grammar, glossary, vocabulary, conjugation, etc. of the Gə‘əz language in the traditional school system (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ: ቤት). Traditionally, ‘Azzaž Sinoda is considered to be the composer of Säwasəw, but no proper source that bears his name. From the publication point of view, Ludolf discussed the Säwasəw tradition and published an extract in 1691 AD. Its grammatical parts contain conjugational elements, such as verb (Gəss, ግሥ), noun (Səm, ስም), prefix and suffix (Mə‘əllad, ምእላድ), etc. (Meley Mulugetta 2014, 562b-564a; Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 854b; Leslau 1991, 521a).

**Šäyyaf, ጸያፍ** (Gz.): Offensive, the situation in which some forbidden words, such as taboos, are inserted in composing and performing Gə‘əz poetry (Qəne), in the traditional school; cf. Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 753a.

**Tämäk‘əsəyəyan, ተመኩሰይዖን** (Gz.): Lit. ‘Namesakes’, are Gə‘əz verbs that have similar spelling (homograph) but with different meanings during their conjugation process. For instance, verbs in similar spelling and pronunciation but with different meanings, like ‘Fäṭḥa, ፈትሐ’ = ‘to untie’ and ‘to passed judgment’ (Säwasəwä Gə‘əz 1992, 32-53).

**Tämärahi, ተመሪ** (Gz.): Lit. ‘One to Be Guided’, refers to a choir (chorister) who chant Qəne, which is told by a Poet, with melody (Zema, ዜማ) in the liturgical services. When doing so, both of them stand towards the east, the choirmaster at the back and the chorister at the front of the choirmaster (Sokolinskaia 2014, 786b; Leslau, 1991, 358b; Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 607b).

**Tələlləf, ትለልፍ** (Am.): Transferring, the practice of modifying a subject regardless of the grammatical rule, in the system of traditional school (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ: ቤት).



**Wəllatē Fidāl**, ውለጤ ፊደል (Gz.): Transposition of Sounds, the situation in which the students converse by changing the place of characters (Fidāl) in Gə'əz words, like 'ነከ, nāko' instead of 'ከነ, konä', in the tradition of the school of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne); cf. Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 753a.

**Yägəśś 'Amäl**, የግሥ አመል (Am.): The Manner of Verbs, the way that each Gə'əz verb is conjugated based on its head (አርእስት, 'Ar'əst) verb that it is categorized under, in the tradition of the school of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne).

**Yägəśś 'Awaḡ**, የግሥ አዋጅ (Am.): Lit. 'The Proclamation of Verbs', various rules in which different verbs are conjugated in the tradition of the school of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne Bet).

**Yä-Mahəbār Qəne**, የማኅበር ቅኔ (Gz.): = Communal Poem, the students' the poem the students perform in their own congregation, usually on Friday evening, in the traditional school system.

**Yämisäma Ənna Yämaysäma**, የሚሰማ እና የማይሰማ (Am.): The Hearing and Non-Hearing, the situation in which a living and nonliving things, such as man and stone, are presented for comparison in Gə'əz poetry (Qəne).

**Yä-Qəne Muya**, የቅኔ ሙያ (Gz.): Lit. 'Profession', the function of a word in Gə'əz Qəne, and its role could be: subject (Balä Bet, ባለ ቤት), verb (Masärəya 'Anqäś ማሰሪያ አንቀጽ), adjective (Qəşşäl, ቅጽል), exclamation (Qalä 'Agganno, ቃለ አጋኖ), adverb (አንቀጽ አጎላማሽ, 'Anqäś 'Aggolamaš), direct object (Täsabi, ተሰቢ), etc. (Habte Mariam Werkneh 1962, 147; Kidane Weld Kifle 1948, 86-87).

**Yäzema Ləkk**, የዜማ ልክ (Am.): Measure of Melody, a rule set to quantify the words and their characters, such as syllable and pronunciation, in the process of composing a poem, Gə'əz poetry (Qəne); Andualem Ermis 2025, 598.

**Zäräfi**, ዘራፊ (Am.): Lit. 'Robber', refers to Gə'əz poetry (Qəne) an expert who is able to compose several poems spontaneously, without taking time to think; Habtemichael Kidane 2014, 283b-286°.

**Zä-Yəbe**, ዘይቤ (Gz.): Lit. 'He Who Says', could have different meanings in various contexts,

but here it is to mean the ability to understand Gə'əz language.

**Zəraw**, ዝርወ (Gz.): Lit. 'Scattered', a sort of Gə'əz verb containing derived (bastardized) letters, that is, 'ኧ, h<sup>w</sup>ä', 'ከ, k<sup>w</sup>ä', 'ጐ, g<sup>w</sup>ä' and 'ቈ, q<sup>w</sup>ä'. Since they are out of the troops (Šärawit, ሠራዊት) of the headings verbs ('Arə'əstā Gəśś, አርእስተ፡ግሥ), they are conjugated by their own style, for instance, 'h<sup>w</sup>älläq<sup>w</sup>ä, ኧለቄ', 'Yəh<sup>w</sup>e-lləq<sup>w</sup>ə, ይኔልቀ', 'Yəh<sup>w</sup>älləq<sup>w</sup>ə, ይኧልቀ', 'Yəh<sup>w</sup>älləq<sup>w</sup>ə, ይኧልቀ', 'h<sup>w</sup>əlq<sup>w</sup>ä, ኧልቄ', 'h<sup>w</sup>əlq<sup>w</sup>ät, ኧልቄት', 'h<sup>w</sup>əlaq<sup>w</sup>ə ኧለቀ', etc. (Säwasəwä Gə'əz 1992, 53-54).

## 5. Conclusion

It is perceived that the first traditional institute of education was established by the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähədo Church in the Aksumite time. It was established following the introduction of Christianity, aiming to provide students for various ecclesiastical ministries. Despite declining time after time, the school system, classified by different levels, is still practical. The primary purpose of this study was to collect and organize different terminologies that are used during study practices and liturgical services of the traditional school of Gə'əz poetry (Qəne Bet, ቅኔ፡ ቤት). Accordingly, I gathered more than eighty terms most of which are Gə'əz and Amharic, from various sources, predominantly printed books, focus group discussions and personal experiences, and an entry has been written for each term. Some terms and expressions are likely to be known merely orally in the target school, thus one may not be able to find them in any written source unless he/she joins the school formally. As far as the traditional school system is getting declined time after time, each term in each traditional school level should be recorded and preserved with its respective definition.

### Abbreviations

- Am. = Amharic
- Gz. = Gə'əz
- CE = Common Era
- Cf. = Compare
- Lit. = Literally

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