



Textual Value of an Ethiopic Woman Hagiography: Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos

Zewdie Gebreegziabher; Abba Petros Solomon

Department of Linguistics and Philology, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

E-mail: zewdiegz@yahoo.com

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Abstract

The hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is a 17th c. manuscript and as a local Saint hagiography, it was written in the Ethiopian manuscript tradition by an Ethiopian scribe. The hagiography of saints in Ethiopia is a main literary genre that has invaluable evidences about the saints' period in a unique form. It provides information about the major events that had taken place relating to the life, works, miracles and the various spiritual struggles of men and women saints. In addition to that it also describes about the bishops, the political situation, the Kings, the name of several places of that time, . . . and the events relating to the life of the saint. Therefore, hagiographies are important genre for the contemporary religious life and in general for the history of the country. It is rich in vital information used as a source material to social, historical, cultural, political, geographical, architectural, archeological, theological, linguistic, philological, and different fields of studies. The hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos provides information for different study and as a hagiography of a local woman saint; it is a pivotal text for gender study. It shows how women were strong spirit in monastic life and struggling in defending their faith and country. This article is a part of the PhD dissertation work of the main author of this article at Addis Ababa University on a prominent Ethiopian woman saint with the title of "Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos: Critical Edition with Annotated Translation."

Keywords: *Woman hagiography; Textual Value; Hagiography; Gädl*

1. Introduction

As a literary type the hagiography (*Gädl*) of saints has invaluable information about the saints' period with additional significance evidences of the past.¹ The word "*Gädl*" is a GƏ'Əz term and it comes from the GƏ'Əz root word (verb - *gƏ'ss-*) '*Tägädälä*'; which literally means 'contending or to compete or *to fight*' (*spiritually*). It is similar to the word "*Tägädäl Gädlä sänayä bä'haymanot*' which

¹ Esposito Joseph J., 1994, "*Hagiology*" The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol.5, Chicago, 615, Marrasini Paolo, 1982, *Ethiopian Hagiography: history of facts and history of ideas. International Symposium on History and Ethnography in Ethiopian Studies*, A.A.U. Nov. 18-25, 288

means Fight the good fight of faith; (1 Tim. 6□12) and also 'sänyä Gädlä Tägädälku' which means I have fought a good fight" (2 Tim. 4□7-8)² Then the word 'Gädlä'(Gädl) is a title taken together with name of the main existing acts of Saints and Martyrs venerated by the EOTC, like 'Gädlä Hawaryat, Gädlä' q'iddusan'. In the same manner we say Gädlä' St. Fəqərtä Krəstos. Therefore, "Gädl" means the good 'fight', 'combat', 'struggle', 'warfare' or 'battle' of saints for their faith until they triumphed and received their incorruptible crown of righteousness from God. It also indicates to a Codex (*māshafä, branna or a book*) which contains the life, work, struggle, tribulation, covenant, mälk'ə and grace of a Saint.

The word "Gädl" has also a similar meaning to the Greek word 'hagiography' and with the Latin word 'Vita'. The Greek word 'hagiography' comes from the two Greek words 'hagios' (ἅγιος) means "holy or Saint" and 'graphia' (Γραφία) means "to write". Thus hagiography refers to writings about the lives of saints and Hagiology is the study of saint's lives through the examination of holy writings. And with the Latin word 'Vita' (*life; plural form, vitae*). In the history of hagiography, the word 'vitae' or Act (*Gädl*) indicates that 'life' like vitae of 'Saint Antony.' The word originated from Latin: life. It shows the acts or life of saints. The term hagiography describes literary products related to the veneration of the saints. In Ethiopian context, it covers a number of genres or different types of texts: Vita or Acts (*Gädl*), Miracles (Ta'ammər), Homilies (Dersan), Hymns and hymnological compositions of different kinds, accounts about the translation of relics, and a number of smaller texts like monastic genealogies, prayers, etc.³

Then the hagiography of saints remain mainly vital to realize the history of Christianity and the character of the contemporary society and it play a important role in the construction and understanding of the medieval history of the Church and the Country. Therefore among the hagiographies of Saints, 'Gädlä⁴ St.Fəqərtä Krəstos' is one of a manuscript (*māshafä, branna*) that contains the life and deeds of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos, a great martyr, nun and a 17th century prominent saint of the EOTC. She is known mainly for her zealous struggle with Catholic Jesuit missionaries during their attack on Orthodox Christianity in the reign of Aše Susənyos (1605-1632)⁵ and she is also known as the founder of the two great communal Monasteries that are still active in North Wällo province. These are, her first monastery Ramä Däbrä Səna Kidanä Məhrät St. Fəqərtä Krəstos Communal Monastery in the district of Rayya, and her second monastery, where she lived until her last time on earth and her precious holy relics were buried, Gädamä Səhat Əmä'muez Kidanä Məhrät St. Fəqərtä Krəstos Communal Monastery in the district of Mäqet, Gärägära, Fəlaqit.

Thus, St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is regarded as one of the defender of the Faith of Orthodox Christianity and is generally venerated as a great martyr, a monastic and a prominent Saint. Like the several great men and women Saints of the EOTC, St. Fəqərtä Krəstos had played a vital role in the religious and social life of the 17thc period of Ethiopia⁶ and has a Gädl written entitled "Gädlä' St. Fəqərtä Krəstos." This Gädl is the hagiography of a local saint that contains the narration of the life, the struggles and the deeds of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos written by a local scribe. The hagiography narrates how St Fəqərtä Krəstos has suffered during the reign of Aše Susənyos and struggled without fear of death for her faith. During her struggle, St. Fəqərtä Krəstos appeared in front of Aše Susənyos⁷ to reprimand

² EOTC, 1988, *Commentary of St. Paul Epistles*, A.A.

³ Denis Nosnitsin, 2005, *Hagiography*, EAe, vol.2, p. 969, Steven Kaplan, 2005, *Gädl*, EAe, vol. 2, p. 642.

⁴ Kədane Wold Kəfle (Aleqa) 1948, *Māshafä Säwasāw wä Mäzgäbä qalat* Artistic printing press, p. 301

⁵ J.M. Harden'1926, *An introduction to Ethiopic Christian Literature*. p.27; Kənfä Rəgb Zäläkä, 1975, "Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Tradition", JES vol. 13, AAU, p. 68, No. 40

⁶ Denis Nosnitsin, 2005, *Hagiography*, EAe, vol.2, p. 969, Amsalu Tefera, 2011 E.C., 'Näqe'a Mätsahəft' AA, Jajaw PP.

⁷ EOTC 2000 E.C., *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church History from the Birth of Christ to 2000 E.C.*; A.A. Tənsa'e Zägubä'e Matāməya bot, Käfyäläw Merahi: 1998, "The spiritual and Social Life of Christian Women", AA, Käfyäläw Märahi, 2000. *the spiritual life of women*, AA,

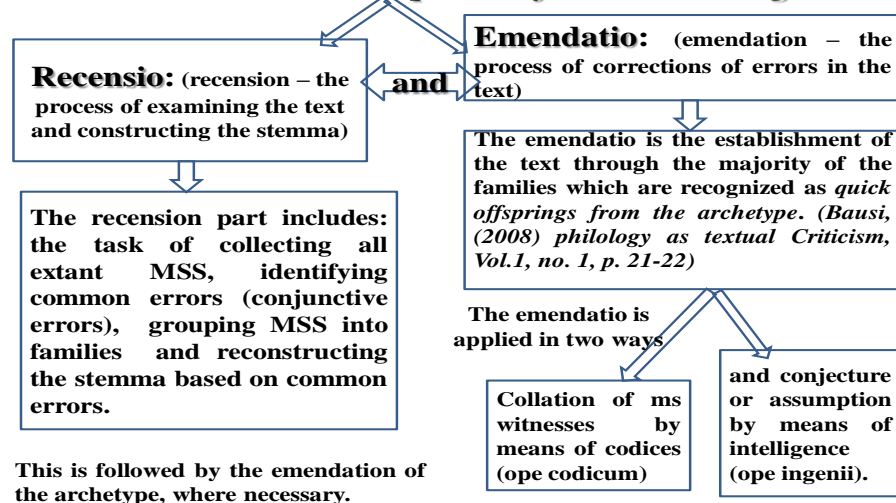
him and said “*O you fool, impure and apostate [the follower] of Religion of Afrəngawi (foreigners).*” The Gädl obtained from Däbrä Ləbanos Communal monastery said: “. . . And there came an order from King Susənyos saying: on that woman together with her husband, make worse the flogging.” Then she endured all the cruelty of the Emperor with her husband Zära Krəstos and her spiritual sisters.

2. Research Method

This research is conducted based on the source data of the *six MSS* made of vellum obtained from the three monasteries. These are the two ancient monasteries that were established by her and Däbrä Libanos Abunä Täklä Haimanot Monastery. In her first Monastery of Ramä Däbrä Səna Kidanä Məhrät St. Fəqərtä Krəstos Communal Monastery, the researcher obtained *one vellum* ms. and from her second Monastery of Gädamä Səhat Ĕmämuez Kidanä Məhrät St. Fəqərtä Krəstos Communal Monastery, obtained four vellum ms. Lastly at Däbrä Libanos abunä Täklä Haimanot Monastery obtained one composite vellum ms which was written with the hagiography of St. Krəstos Sämra. St. Krəstos Sämra is a 14th/15th c.⁸ Ethiopian female Saint. So the researcher of this study photographed for the first time all MSS made of vellum and took measurement of all. It is understandable that in the process of copying each ms. by different scribes, the MSS are not free from error due to various reasons and all the MSS have variants from each other. As far as the researcher knows, there is no philological research done so far in any of the philological methods. Therefore, the text needs critical edition to produce a reconstructed text and the researcher carried out critical edition with annotated translation based on Neo – Lachmannian Method.

Besides, the codicological and content description of all the manuscripts are discussed; philological and linguistic reflections, and literary analysis and investigation of the text are also considered. The values of Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos (religious, historical, social, ethical . . . value) are examined as well. Finally, a Critical Edition and Translation of the text with annotation are examined and presented with apparatus. Therefore, all the collected Mss. of Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos, their whole text from the beginning to the end are investigated in the process of this edition.

This Method is composed of two basic stages



Märqorəwos Aräga, 1998 E.C.: “- *The History of Ethiopian Saints 5th book.*, Sirgew Hable Selassie (D/r). 1982 E.C., *Amharic Church dictionary*: Ethiopian microfilm agency, AAU. vol. 11, p. 134-35.

⁸ Denis Nosnitsin, 2007, *Krəstos Sämra*, EAe, vol.3, p. 445.

3. Significance of the Study

The hagiographies of saints are important part of literature and they constitute themselves a peculiar genre. They are rich in providing valuable and vital information of historical, geographical, cultural, political, social, philological, linguistic, architectural, archeological, and theological nature through their remarkable narratives of the saint's period. This explains why many philologists are showing more and more interest in the study of the hagiography of saints. Therefore this study will have a vital contribution in the study of manuscripts in philological system of Ethiopia in general and the study area in particular. And it is expected to produce constructive philological and other results in different dimensions. For that reason, the researcher believes that this study will have the following significances, both now and in the future.

✓ *This Study Provides Some Fundamental, Vital and Genuine Information about the Period*

St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is one of the 17th century popular Ethiopian saints and she is a great martyr and nun in the EOTC. And her hagiography is very important text to provide valuable information on the events of the Saint's period. It describes the reaction of the Emperor and the Ethiopian monastic communities, priests and laymen on how they opposed and resisted the Jesuits and the Emperor. In addition it also narrates how the controversies arose in relation to the conversion of King Susənyos to the Catholic faith and makes it clear how he eventually returned to his former faith. Hence this study is significant to fill the gap in the construction of the medieval history of the Church and the country⁹.

✓ *It Helps to Understand the Struggle, Contribution and the Hagiography of Women Saints*

Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos demonstrates the role and contribution of women saints of the period and provides information about early Christian martyrs and nuns, including Biblical holy women. As a hagiography of an indigenous woman saint it expounds Ethiopian women saints' strong spirit in monastic life and their struggle in defending their faith and country from the challenges posed by the Jesuit missionaries. It is clear that one of the major causes of failure of the Jesuits mission in Ethiopia was not only the rejection of the common people but also the resistance of dignified men and *women*. Large groups of priests, nuns, monks and laymen refused to accept the decree of the King and the mission of the Jesuits. Regarding this, Leonardo Cohen said that:

Finally, uprisings of noblemen and *women* who refused to submit to the ruler, along with rebellion and opposition on the part of large groups of priests and monks, made Emperor Susənyos withdraw from some of his previously held positions. He proclaimed freedom of religion in the Empire and later on abdicated on behalf of his son.¹⁰

Additionally, her hagiography is also important to further study the hagiography of other woman saints who are highlighted in her Gädl. It contains the names of some holy women, monastic mothers and martyrs of early Christian church, such as: St. Barbara, St. Hilaria and St. Euphraxia, St. Irene, St. Senaser, St. Awgania, St. Arsema, St. Soliyana, St. Akrosiyas, St. Petriqa, St. Pi'stes, St. Alapees and St. Agapees. In addition to the local saints such as Emma Sänkore and Emma'wättät and particularly, her *mälkä'* mentions the names of twenty three (23) holy women found in the Holy Bible, (Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Dina, Tamar, Rehab. Ruth, Jochebed, Deborah, Hannah, Bathsheba, Judith, Esther, Elisabeth, Maryam Enta efre'at, Salome, Maryam, Martha, Samaritan woman, a woman of Canaan, Phoebe) in relation to the narration on her life in expression of amazing theological mystery or qəñä.

⁹Kənäfä Rəgb Zäläkä, 1975, "Bibliography of the Ethiopian Hagiographical Tradition", JES vol. 13, AA U, p. 57.

¹⁰ Leonardo Cohen, 2009, *The Missionary Strategies of the Jesuits in Ethiopia (1555-1632)*, p.16

Although the main work of this study is to produce a Critical Edition on Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos, as the hagiography a women saint, a few related issues on the overview of hagiography of women saints is also presented by the researcher.

✓ ***This Critical Edition Will Be the First Work on Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos***

As stated earlier, despite that St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is a prominent saint of the EOTC and has a key contribution towards the Church and the Ethiopic history, her Gädl has not yet been studied, critically edited and translated to any foreign language,¹¹ microfilmed, catalogued and foliated. In this study the hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is photographed, foliated, investigated, critically edited and translated in order to answer the relevant research questions of this study. Therefore, this Critical Edition will be the first and original work on Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos.

To Conclude, This Study Has Critical Importance:

- ✓ In filling the recognized gap of this period in the philological study of Ethiopia in general and the study area in particular.
- ✓ It helps the readers to easily understand the contents and physical characteristics of Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos.
- ✓ It serves in better exploring the history, Theology, culture . . . of the time.
- ✓ The edited and translated text is important to other scholars especially English speakers.
- ✓ Philological analysis and discussion of the text will be important to scholars who want to conduct their study from a different perspective.
- ✓ The contribution of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos to the Country and the Church could be well recognized and her monasteries could present new tourist attraction opportunities.

4. Results and Research Contributions

The main goal of the study and the expected result of this research is to produce a Critical Edition and annotated Translation of *Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos*. In this study, the researcher produced a new production to a body of knowledge from philological point of view. The English translation will have a valuable contribution to philologists and the EOTC in different aspects.

The Gädl details the intervention of Jesuits in the religious administrative and affairs of the country and the Church and its adverse consequences on the Church and the Country. Therefore, it provides additional information on the contemporary historical and religious events of the era. In this regard the Gädl presents critical information of the time and is important to construct the historical, political, ethical and theological events of the 17th c. It also provides a clear and vital view on the great role and contribution of women in the Church and the Country.

5. Textual Value of Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos

The contribution of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos to the Church and the Country is exemplary both for men and women. She has defended her faith, evangelized the Gospel to the unbelievers, built churches and founded monasteries. She was a good monastic leader and had lived in three ways of life in an

¹¹Kəñäfä Rəgb Zäläkä , 1975, “*Bibliography of the Ethiopian Hagiographical Tradition*”, JES vol. 13, AAU, p. 71, No 52; Amsalu Tefera, (Dr.), 2011, *Neqe’a Metsaheft*”A.A.p.211 No.472, Sərgəw Hablä Səlass’ə (Dr.), 1969, “*The Bibliography of Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History*”, p. 56-58.

unusual way and was influential in all aspects of her life. Therefore, St. Fəqərtä Krəstos has become a source of encouragement for women who had served in the Church and the nation as of her time to the present day. Her hagiography is also a great value to the Church and the country in all aspects. In the Tradition of Christian hagiography, the primary aim of the scribes in writing the life history of the saints is to seek blessings and to honour the saint by recording their life and works. Principally, Christians read and use the lives of saints for their religious values. However the texts have secondary values as we will see here. St. Fəqərtä Krəstos has added values such as historical, religious, ethical, social, and gender values. Some of these are illustrated as follows.

5.1. Historical Value

The hagiography of the saints, as a literary type, besides recording the life of the saints, contains rich historical information. The hagiography of saints is therefore significant in understanding the historical aspects of the Church and the state at the time of the saint. It is common to find different historical affairs relating to the life of the saint mentioned directly or indirectly. Hagiographies provide information about several issues such as the daily life, the food and drink, the names of other saints, bishops, kings, governors, monasteries, churches, rural and urban societies, gender relations, military and political situations, cultures, rivers, towns, etc. of the period cited in the Gādl.¹² The hagiographies of saints are essentially vital to understand the history of Christianity in particular and also the real character and culture of the society in general. These texts are key sources for anyone who wants to know about the history of the past. For that reason the texts play a significant role in the reconstruction of the history of the saint's period.¹³

Likewise, as a 17th c. hagiography, Gādlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos has a great historical value in many aspects. We find different historical information relating to the bishops, monks, priests, kings, administrators, laymen and missionaries of the time. The Gādl provides detailed information about the religious controversies that have arose because of the efforts of the Jesuit missionaries to proselytize and the edict of King Susənyos, and the reaction of the people to those acts, as this is also part of history.

The Gādl also gives information on names of places of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos' time. She traveled from place to place to seek blessings from the monasteries and to find out where her God-permitted place was. Therefore, the Gādl contains the name of places like Aringo, Gedama Šənəka, Wägda, Wä'natəb wa' Tənbabs, Gedamä Bint, Bəhərə Zemas, Əldba, Machəmatəsəni, and Zəewis. Most of these places are unknown today. The Gādl has much value in the study the regions and places in the history of the 17th c. Ethiopia.

Since ancient times, the Ethiopians have been travelling to Jerusalem in pilgrimage to the holy places. On their pilgrimage, they have been partakers and witnesses of the miracle of the Holy Fire that happens each year on the Tomb of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gādlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos describes that St. Fəqərtä Krəstos has been a partaker of this miracle together with her spiritual children and other people that have come for the celebration of the annual miracle of the Holy Fire in Jerusalem.

The miracle of the Holy Fire is one of the greatest miracles that have continued for years from its first manifestation. This fact has been documented and witnessed by the accounts of different travelers, historians, Church fathers, chronicles and other documents.¹⁴ Gādlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is one more historical witness and asset in this series and her Gādl narrates this historical event as follows:

¹² Hiruie Ermias, *Journal of Afroasiatic Languages, Hisotry and Culture*. Vol. 10. No. 1,2021, page 4 -5,

¹³ Kənäfä RəgəbZ. 1975: JES. vol.13, AAU, p. 57.

¹⁴ Haris Skarlakidis , (2011), *Holy Fire: the Miracle of Holy Saturday at the Tomb of Christ, Forty-five Historical Accounts* (9th – 16th c.) Athens.

[95] On the day of His Resurrection, they entered [in the church] with all men and women, peoples and gentiles, gathering together, they held lamps without fire in their hands, from the old to the infants. Then they said, to us who believe in your resurrection, may you send down your light on us. At that time there came a great light inside the church. Many from among the gentiles believed and got baptized. Our mother St. Fəqərtä Krəstos said, as I have heard so have I seen of the miracle [the Holy Fire] of our Lord on His Sepulture every year.

5.2. Religious Value

As a religious text, the Gädl has several important religious beliefs. It has detailed information on several doctrinal issues, with regards to the services of the Church, and practical Christianity. Among them: on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, Soteriology, Christology, Pneumatology, Mariology, and Liturgy; and on the Mysteries of the Church such as Baptism, Holy Communion, Holy Matrimony, Priesthood, and Confession. It has also accounts pertaining to practical Christianity such as defending of the faith, evangelization or missionary activities, monastic life and the like.

The major religious issues that are found in the Gädl are briefly shown below.

On the Holy Trinity

The Mystery of the Holy Trinity is one of the main teachings of the EOTC. The Gädl, as customary of the Ethiopic manuscript traditions, begins with the mystical expression of the Holy Trinity that the Church has received and kept from the holy Apostles and the early Church fathers. The religious value of the Gädl is in keeping and passing such ancient doctrinal teaching of the Church from generation to generation. The mystical expression of the Holy Trinity found in the hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is as follows:

[1] In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, One God, we begin with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Name of the Holy Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, of Three Hypostases and three Faces and three Names that never separate from His existence and His Highness is unapproachable, [He is] united in His Trinity before the [existence of the] world, and no one excels Him and no admixture upon Him, [and] seated on His Throne in His co-equality, in one kingdom and with one commandment, and with one counsel, co-equal in authority, and the flow of His mercy never dries up every dawn.

On Soteriology and Christology

Soteriology and Christology are also the main doctrinal teachings of the EOTC. Soteriology deals with the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ for human beings and Christology is the central teaching of the church regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. In the hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos, we find the doctrinal teaching of the EOTC on Soteriology and Christology reflected and discussed. The Gädl narrates on the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and the Christological teaching of the Church, as has been passed down from the holy Apostles and the early Church Fathers.

The Gädl states how God created the world and that He gave a commandment to Adam and Eve and that they couldn't keep His commandment, and as result of their transgression, that they had separated themselves from God. Then God sent His only Son and became man and saved human beings from death and the effects of sin. So the hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos tells about this as follows:

[2] O this, how His primordial deeds! is wonderful and amazing! Creating the world, He established its governance and one creature transgressed His commandment with the counsel of his

adversary resembling Eve who [Originated] came out from his side. And he realizing [his transgression] cried before Him. And He gave him hope in his days. That in later time He sent His Only Son who is from Himself, He saved him and redeemed him [Adam], becoming Incarnate from him, became flesh without separating from the bosom of His Father. He is consubstantial [with His Father] in His existence. He suffered and died He delivered Adam from Hell and let him enter into his happiness, redeemed him by His own blood, rose from the dead and on the fortieth day ascended unto His Father.

In her hagiography, we also find an amazing expression on Christology stating the Godhead of Jesus Christ and that He is the Son of God before the world and later that He became the Incarnate Word of God by being born from the Holy Virgin Mary.

[74]And our mother Fəqərtä Krəstos said to them, we are from the tribe of God the Living, the creator of the heavens and the earth, who are baptized in His Name, and partook of the flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Everlasting (early, before time and creation) and the Son of Mary later in His Second Birth, and now He saved our body from this fire on this earth, and again our Lord will save us from the fire of punishment.

On Pneumatology

Pneumatology is the branch of Christian theology that deals with the Holy Spirit and is also the main doctrinal teaching of the Church. The hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos speaks about the descent of the Holy Spirit after the 10th day of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. In addition to this, the Gädl also shows how the Holy Spirit reveals mysteries and hidden secrets to human beings. For example, the Apostles spoke in different languages of the world when the Holy Spirit descended upon them.

[3]And on the tenth day, He sent His Holy Spirit to His Apostles and He made them speak in the tongues of the world, [in the language of] Parthians, and Medes and Elamites. They taught all men the Nativity of Christ, of His Incarnation from Mary, and as He has given us His holy Flesh and His precious blood, that He will come again in His glory together with His thousands and thousands of Angels, that He will judge the living and the dead accordingly. In such a Lord, I believe in and worship.

And also St. Fəqərtä Krəstos has spoken in an unusual way during the day of her baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon her.

[12] And the Paraclete descended upon her and hovered over her head, and she said, blessed be the Lord my God who made me reach unto this hour so that I receive the rite of Baptism of Christ.

On Mariology

In Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos we find descriptions and narrations about the Holy Virgin Mary, her help and intercession to St. Fəqərtä Krəstos when she was in great trouble during her pilgrimage and her later life and also about the deep love that St. Fəqərtä Krəstos had for her.

On the Mysteries or Sacraments of the Church

Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos speaks on the Mysteries of the church in different ways, for example, on Baptism, Holy Communion, Matrimony, Priesthood, and Confession.

Baptism

The Gadl describes her baptism on her eightieth day and this shows how the EOTC has kept her teaching and the practice of the rite of Baptism without change throughout the ages. This is an evidence and important information on child baptism and baptismal day.

[11] And when the period of their purification was finished, they brought her into the Temple of our Lady Mary on the eightieth day as our mother Eve entered Paradise [on the eightieth day] from the day of her creation and [as] our father Adam entered into Paradise of Edom, a place of eternal bliss after God created him. And like them entered this infant in order to receive the baptism of Christianity. After this, the priests gathered and read the book of baptismal rite and performed the [mystery] of Baptism upon her according to the canon of Christianity, and gave her the [baptismal] name of Maryam Šādala, as the Holy Spirit inspired them.

When those who were unbelievers came to faith, she miraculously made a stream of water spring from the ground for the purpose of their baptism.

[69] At that time she said to the elderly priests, baptize them. They stood and read the book of baptism, baptized them and named them in baptismal names, and gave them the Holy Communion.

On the Holy Communion

Her hagiography recounts, on several occasions, on the mystery of the Holy Communion and how the Christians partake of it.

[12]. . . And then the priests [entered] started the Divine Liturgy and she partook of the holy mystery saying amen and amen and O Christ my Lord, may this flesh and blood of yours be for the salvation of my soul and body, may, forever Amen.

The Priesthood

Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos contains important doctrinal and liturgical issues of great relevance for today. Some of them could serve as guidelines to address the issues raised by some in relation to priesthood with respect to gender. In this regard, Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos provides vital confirmation on the service of priesthood; as to who gets ordained and performs the service. St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is a saint who has attained a very high spiritual level by the grace of God. Her journey from place to place was not a common act as she passed the wilderness overshadowed by a bright cloud, and frequently spoke with the Angel of God, and God sent His Angel to her when she wanted help.

Not only this, but she was also speaking frequently with the Mother of God, the Holy Virgin Mary and other saints. Our Lord Jesus Christ had also appeared to her several times and blessed her work and gave her a covenant. She had also done many miracles, casted out devils, healed the sick, cleansed lepers and those possessed of the devil were saved when they believed in her prayer and they were healed from their sicknesses. We find in her hagiography accounts relating to this issue as follows:

[86] . . . [And] they lived there and our mother Fəqərtä Krəstos righteous was doing miracles and wonders with her hand, casting out devils and healing the sick and lepers were cleansed and those possessed with the devil were saved healed from their sicknesses when they believed in her prayer.

.All these things are not related to the role of men and women in the Church but are a matter of one's relationship with God and his/her sanctity of life. The attainment of such spiritual virtues and graces has nothing to do to one's gender. However, unfortunately, some confuse this with that of the priesthood. The priesthood is only confined to a male. Even among males, it is only very few that are called to this service. This is because the priesthood is not a gift of salvation but a gift of serving others and conferring the grace of salvation of God through the Church. Thus the service of priesthood is not for everyone.

Thus, even though she had attained a very high level of spiritual grace and was given the power to do miracles in His Holy Name, she didn't circumvent the Church Tradition but instead strictly abided by it. However, she has never tried to go beyond the canon of Church by trying to perform the works of

the priesthood. Even when she was in a difficult situation during her journey where there was not even one priest to baptize the new converts, her reaction was to ask God in prayer to send her a priest. She completed her life without ever performing the works of priesthood. All the activities pertaining to the Mysteries of the Church her life were performed by priests as aforementioned.

As her hagiography tells, she was a great evangelizer every where she travelled. When the people believed and came to faith, she did everything necessary for the new converts. However, when it comes to baptism, the service of liturgy, consecration of churches and the altar, she reserved such services to the priest monks that were with her during her journey. One day she converted the unbelievers and wanted a priest to perform the Mysteries of the Church. Then she prayed unto God and suddenly bishop named Abba Zämäläkot was raised among the reposed saints. She was shocked and fell down but he raised her and told her that God sent him to her when she prayed to Him. Then she asked him what to do with the new converts. He replied her saying we should build a church. Then when he prayed with her, priests and deacons rose from the dead for the liturgical service. The following texts found in her hagiography show this issue clearly:

[80] And while she was saying as such, there stood on her right side a great monk. At that time she fell down and prostrated at his feet.[And] He said to her, stand up, o my daughter, I have come by your prayer and supplication. She asked him saying, from where are you, o my father? He replied to her, saying, formerly I was ordained a bishop [and] came from Jerusalem and preached that country, [and] they believed and were baptized, and I passed away.. [And then] came a heathen king and he demolished the temple in which I was buried, burned it, and killed my [spiritual] children, [and] the faith perished [for] five hundred and twenty eight years. And today when you called, God sent me unto you. And, the blessed Fəqərtä Krəstos said, what shall we do? He said from now on let's build a church at this place.

After she performed the miracles to get the water, she left the work of baptism to the elderly priests.

[69] And from then onwards our queen Fəqərtä Krəstos stood and prayed, [and] after her prayer she was energized by the power of the Holy Spirit, and took the rod of cross in her hand and smote the ground once and twice and thrice and on the fourth smiting a stream of cold water gushed out, and opened its mouth till it became very deep, gushing like the source of a river. At that time she said to the elderly priests, baptize them. They stood and read the book of baptism, baptized them and named them in baptismal names, and gave them the Holy Communion.

[71] And after these things, they set out and went their way in peace and reached the place of Zobəl. And there she built cells and separated prayer quarters for men [monks] and women [nuns] and made a community of saints in their respective places like Saint Eugenia and as the blessed Arsema. In those days, the time came to build churches by her miraculous hands and she hewed white stone in the name of our Lady Mary Mother of God [Theotokos] and arranged for the ordination of priests and deacons and all the servants for her community. After arranging things as necessary, Emma meu'ze hid herself with eight of her servants, and two of her sisters she appointed them as abbesses over the community of the holy virgins.

We also find among her miracles in the hagiography related to this issue in *miracle two* that the work of receiving confession is that of the priesthood. There was a woman whose sins were so many and her iniquities without a limit. She came to St. Fəqərtä Krəstos, beseeched her prayers and supplications and told her what she had done. At that time St. Fəqərtä Krəstos told her to confess her sins to a priest whose name was so and so. The woman did as she had commanded her.

The Saint's hagiography is therefore an important evidence showing that women could attain a very high spiritual level by the grace of God as any one of the men saints, but, the work of priesthood is only reserved for men. The Orthodox Churches including the EOTC have kept to this date this Tradition

coming down from the early Apostolic Church.

On the Resurrection

St. Fəqərtä Krəstos was resurrected from death after she had died in martyrdom. She renounced the world and became a nun after being resurrected from the dead by the power of God. Besides, she had also made others to rise from the dead by her prayers and by the remains of her body.

On Apologetics

Apologetics is the defending of one's faith. The hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos has a religious value in that it demonstrates how the faith is defended with a fervent struggle to the extent of the sacrifice of one's life. The Gadl tells us how her husband St. Zär'a Krəstos and St. Fəqərtä Krəstos including her sisters, other fathers and Christians suffered to defend their faith. They chose death instead of renouncing their faith fearlessly professing before the Emperor. Eventually, they witnessed till the Emperor returned back to his former faith. So Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos narrates how the bishop, the priests, Zär'a Krəstos and St. Fəqərtä Krəstos, other men and women Christians had defended their faith becoming the apologist of their days.

On Missiology

Missiology is the study of the missionary activity of the Church. In Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos we find her missionary activities narrated at several places. St. Fəqərtä Krəstos was zealous in bringing people to the knowledge of God. One day, during her wandering, she got idol worshipers and human eaters and they tried to eat her with her sisters but by the grace of God, she converted them to Christianity and destroyed their idols.

[75] And they said, is there a god other than this tree? She said [to them], where is your worship? They showed her the place, and arriving there, she made the sign of the cross on her face saying, I make the sign of the cross on my front and back in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit One God. At that time the demons and devils that were upon the trees fled and their idols fell down and were broken and smashed. [And] then they ran and raced and shouted over to their people. And all came together and said to our mother, by what act did you smash our gods?

[76] And our mother Fəqərtä Krəstos said to them, our Lord is existent above the seventh heavens, but this one is not a God but is a creature. They took stone in order to stone her [but] she was hidden from their faces. As such in this acts died five men among them, and they started eating them. At that time our mother Fəqərtä Krəstos abscond them and [they] suffered from hunger, and did not succeed in killing her. They said to her, o our mother, may you forgive us, as hunger and thirst has bringing so much suffering on us, [as] our waters and rivers have dried up. She replied to them with a word of joy saying, if I give you food and drink and cloth, would you believe in my God who created us?

[77] They replied saying, yes, we will believe, provided that you give us all, o our mother! And then she turned her face towards the east, stretched out her hands and prayed unto God. And at the end of her prayer came an Angel and said to her, let all be according to your desire and what you have thought [prayed for] will be done for you, says to you our Lord, o handmaid of God. And saying these [things], [the Angel] ascended in front of her.

Thus Gädlä St. Fəqərtä Krəstos shows the missionary activity during her period and the fact that women are not secluded from this major activity of the Church.

5.3. Social and Ethical Value

The hagiography of saints records the narration of the practical life of men and women saints and thus could serve as a model for Christians. The narration in the Gadl about the saint's life attracts and leads the listener and the reader to the life of sanctity.¹⁵ So the hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos shows how to live as a Christian. Her kindness and zeal to bring others in to goodness is also expressed in many ways. We can see some of the virtuous works of her parents found in her hagiography as follows:

[19]And thus they lived in virginity and purity by serving God in fasting and prayer, prostration and vigilance, and they used to wear sackcloth secretly. They were passing the day in church standing in prayer and they were passing the night in sea with prayer. And in the morning they hurry to church, sometimes for prayer and at other times for the partaking of the Holy Communion. And they gave their money as alms time to the poor and the needy every day and every hour.

[20] . . . And they were washing the feet of strangers and receiving them and giving them all that they wanted, they fed the hungry and gave drink to the thirsty.

In her Gadl we also find that she had restored the men-eaters in to regular food eaters and living normal life as other people. One day, on their way to Jerusalem, she reached to a place where the people were men-eaters. They took her and about sixty (60) of her servants to eat grass, put out their eyes and locked them in a dark house for four months. After four months, they were taken out of the house to be eaten by them for a holiday, but they found out that the face of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos and her disciples was as bright as the sun. Bewildered, they asked them saying, "What are you, people?" St. Fəqərtä Krəstos replied them saying: "We are Christians" and advised them not to eat human beings, who are the temples of God. And they asked her what else to eat? When she departed from Rama Kədanä Mihrət, she had taken grain of seeds for her servants and then she grew the wheat in one day, harvested it, dried it, and grounded it for food. Then she tasted it and gave it to them to eat. When they ate it, it was sweet to them. Then she taught them the word of God and how to eat and work. Eventually, they became baptized by the priests and she built six churches for them. Then she did miracles at that place and taught them how to seed crops and plants.

[72]And after this, our mother went and arrived at the country of human-eaters who had tails. And these men who were hunters of men met these virgins, caught them and tied them and took them to their leader. He ordered and they blinded their eyes and cast them into a house of darkness. They started feeding them grass and they stayed there praying.

[73] And after that, all the people of the country [of human-eaters] gathered to eat them, and took them outside, [and] set fire and cast them by tying with chain of iron, and there stood these nuns. And our mother St. Fəqərtä Krəstos said to them, do not be afraid and frightened, o my daughters, rather pray and beseech unto your Lord, so that what you wished would be done to you, life on this earth and the kingdom in heaven. And then they prayed with tears and the fire became cool over them. And they [the human-eaters] set fire again and cast them into it [but] became cold as dew, and again saw that they [the virgins] are well. They marveled and said to them where are you from?.

Then she taught them what type of food to eat and how to. And she said to her servants, take out all fruits of cereals of corn, barley and wheat . . . and she prayed and blessed in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, One God, and sowed the seeds in their fields.

¹⁵Derek Krueger, Apr., 1999, *Hagiography as an Ascetic Practice in the Early Christian East*, The Journal of Religion, Vol. 79, No. 2, The University of Chicago Press, pp. 216-232 (17 pages).

[78] . . . And on this day, she prayed unto God [and] rain came down and the rivers flooded, [and] the crops came out and sprung up and there came harvests and ears of grain in one day. And she said to them, drink [this water] and eat this crop as this is better for you, instead of eating humans. And they said to her is this plant edible? They started eating and drinking. And it became sweat in their mouth like honey. At that time they marveled and became astounded.

5.4. Leadership Value

The hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos also shows the acceptable leadership of women in the Church. Women are not excluded from leadership in the Church and they have served as abbesses in convents and other necessary administrative areas as needed. Her hagiography shows this fact in the several narrations of her life and struggle. During the time of persecution and martyrdom, she was encouraging and leading the Christians to be steadfast in the faith to receive martyrdom. Her exhortation as well as exemplary life was a positive influence during those years of martyrdom. When she became a nun after her martyrdom and resurrection from the dead, she was again serving as a spiritual leader for many nuns. During her pilgrimage, there were priest monks that were serving in priesthood and about two hundred nuns that were travelling with her. She was leading a community of monks and nuns during her journey. These things testify to her effective leadership quality.

Again, when she was founding her two monasteries, she had *arranged* all the required for the functioning of the monastery, including the bringing of priests and deacons to the monasteries. The monks did not resist because she, a woman, was their leader, but rather they obeyed and followed her leadership.

Again when the issues arose in the monastery that she was leading because the men and women living without spatial seclusion, she separated the place of monks and nuns. Finally, when she was about to repose, she had appointed one of the nuns to be an abbess for the monastery. Therefore, the hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos shows the leadership quality of the saint and this in turn shows the fact that women are active participants in the leadership of the Church outside of the priesthood. Among other things, women serve as abbesses in the monastery of nuns. In convents, the abbess is the leader in managing the affairs of the convent but elderly priest monks are assigned for the priestly service of the Church. This Christian practice that is shown in her hagiography is still continuing in the EOTC.

5.5. Gender Value

The hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos, as a Christian woman hagiography, clarifies gender issue; between men and women in the EOTC. It primarily demonstrated that sainthood and the writing of hagiography is not related to gender but it is related to one's spiritual life, i.e., his or her relationship with God. As aforesaid, the Church honors women without any bias starting with the honoring of the Mother of God the Holy Virgin Mary beyond and above all creation. The Church honors all men and women saints equally and canonizes them as saints, consecrates churches and monasteries in their names, writes their hagiographies, commemorates them and makes celebrations during their feast days, allows the believers to be called by their names, etc.

So the hagiography of St. Fəqərtä Krəstos is of great gender value in practically showing the fact that the Orthodox Church never undermines women. The Church books including hagiographies show how the Church gives honor to women saints and all Christian women. However, we don't deny the fact that there are some men who do not have adequate knowledge about the true and basic teaching of the Church, and look down upon women and regard them in an inferior manner based on their own personal view and some social bias. This is completely contrary to the teaching of the Church right from her inception. The Church gives due respect to all Christians, i.e., men and women irrespective of their gender. Infact, the Church is often called and referred to in the "female gender" in resemblance of the

motherly, caring, loving, life bearing nature of a mother. In addition to this, we find the names of more than twenty three (23+) early women saints and mothers mentioned in her Gäd. The salutations in her Melk'ä are also expressed with the names of Biblical and other women saints in a mystical way.

Conclusion

Hagiography is a literary genre that narrates about the life and struggle of the saint and other events significances regarding to the time. Though the major purpose of the writing of the hagiography is revealing the graciousness of God and the spiritual struggle of the saints, in addition to that, they contain invaluable information. Her leadership quality during her martyrdom and monastic life is also of great significance and a source of inspiration for Christians in general and women in particular. Then the hagiography of saints has a great value and it furnishes us much resources and information and could serve as inputs for different studies.

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