

The Figurative Expressions Employed in the Gə'əz Acts of St Mark the Evangelist: The Medium Recension in Focus

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Abstract

Saint Mark the Evangelist, whose vita is supposed to be composed in Greek and translated into Gə'əz in the 4th century, is one of the most venerated foreign Saints in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This article explores the figurative expressions employed in the Gə'əz version of the Acts of St. Mark the Evangelist, one of the first hagiographic texts within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church tradition. The figurative expressions employed in the manuscripts (Mss), which narrate the combat and martyrdom of St Mark the Evangelist, are analyzed well. Through a close literary and philological analysis, the study identifies and categorizes various figurative devices such as metaphors, similes, allegories, hyperbole and personification that enrich the narrative and literary depth of the text. The hagiographic text (Gädlä Marəqos) is currently preserved in seven Mss, which are said to be the product of 19th and 20th centuries. The main sources of the data are theses witnesses located in different Churches, Monasteries and libraries. When analyzing these figurative expressions, a special attention is given to how these devices use in the composition of the Vita of St. Mark, considering the spiritual authority, the portrayal of his miracles, and the expression of divine-human interaction. By situating the text within its broader linguistic and cultural context, the study contributes to the growing field

of Ge'ez literary criticism and deepens our understanding of the early Ethiopian Christian tradition.

Key words: St mark the evangelist; Gə'əz acts; Figurative languages and hagiography

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is well recognized in its long time writing tradition beginning with the remote past of the Aksumite kingdom that is 1st -7th century in the Common Era CE (Bausi, 2014, pp.37-39; Tanselle, 1990; Winslow, 2015, p.48). Hence, it is apparent that Ethiopians had a habit of writing on stones and other hard materials long ago, but it is unlikely to get hard and adequate evidence that attest whether the Gə'əz writing began before the birth of Jesus Christ (BCE). The oldest inscriptions on the obelisks of Mätära and Axum could date back only to the 2nd/3rd century CE (Ullendorff, 1951, p.28). However, Gə'əz has been the written language of Ethiopia at least since the beginning of the Christian era (Lusini, 2003, p.6; Tadesse Tamrat, 1970, p.2). As far as the development of Ethiopic (Gə'əz) literature is concerned, it can be classified into three ways: (1) direct **translation** of the literature, (2) **adapted** (into Ethiopic milieu) works and (3) **original** works (Andualem Ermias, 2021, pp.2-3; Getatchew Haile, 1981, pp.117-118; Tadesse Tamrat, 1972, p.2).

Saint Mark the Evangelist¹, one of the 70/72² Disciples and of the Four Evangelists, is one of the most venerated foreign Saints in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. His hagiographic text, with which this article is concerned, is estimated to have been originally composed in Greek and translated into Gə‘əz during the 4th century, soon after the introduction of Christianity, and then, a different recension, from Arabic into Gə‘əz in the 14th century (Getatchew Haile, 1981, p.118; Kaplan, 2012, pp.371-372; Lusini, 2003, p.2). The Gə‘əz Vita of St Mark the Evangelist is found in three recensions: **short**, **medium** and **long**. The short text is found in multiple-text MSs, most importantly, in the Acts of the Saints (Gädlä Qəddusan, **ገድለ: ቅዱሳን**), the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (Gädlä Hawarəyat, **ገድለ ሐዋርያት**), and in the Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church (Gə‘əz *Synaxarium*, **ሰንክሳር**).³

The middle and the long group on the other hand are situated in separate manuscripts or single-text MSs. The text of the medium group is preserved in seven separate MSs, whereas the long one in nine extant witnesses. Unlike the medium text, on which study is focused, the reading in the long one is divided by 202 parts (kəfl), so the text of each group is likely to be of different antecedents (Andualem Ermias, 2021, p.77). Based on the seven Mss collected from various locations, such as EMLL (Ethiopian Manuscript and Microfilm Library) and Churches, the study aims at describing the physical and content of the Mss, which narrate the combat and martyrdom of St Mark the Evangelist, before analyzing the figurative expressions employed in the text.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The purpose of this study is to analyze the figurative expressions employed in the composition of the Gə‘əz Mss that narrate the combat and martyrdom of St Mark the Evangelist. Hence, the main data sources of this article are the seven extant Mss dealing with the combat and martyrdom of St Mark the Evangelist. The witnesses, written in Gə‘əz are collected from various

¹ He was born in Cyrene, one of the Five Western Cities (Pentapolis), the present day ‘Libya’ around the beginning of the 1st century CE. His parents are belonged to the tribe of Levites of Jews: his mother is called ‘Mary’, one of the faithful women who used to follow Jesus Christ (Acts 12, 12), and his father ‘Aristopolus’. His Acts supports this as follows: ... ውእቱኪ: ቅዱስ: ማርቆስ: ቀደመ: ወበጽሐመ: ቀሪኔ: ሀገረ: ጳጳሞጲሊስ: እስመ: ውእቱ: ብሔረ: ፍጥረቱ: ... now St Mark came first to and reached Cyrene, a city in Pentapolis, for it was his native land (Getatchew Haile, 1981, p.124).

² The number of Disciples is attested to be 70 in the Bible, but it is sometimes recorded as 71 and 72 in some Ethiopic literatures including the Acts of St Mark (Andualem Ermias, 2021, p.3; 2025, p.87a).

³ The entry for St Mark on the Month of Miyaziya the 30th, in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church calendar and the 30th of Baramoudah in the Coptic one (Andualem Ermias, 2025, p.88a).

parish Churches, Monasteries and libraries like EMLL. The number is arbitrarily given to each manuscript to identify them easily in the process of describing and analyzing the figurative expressions employed in the Gə‘əz text. The data collected from the respective Mss are organized and analyzed in both numerical and word expressions. The numerical expressions are mainly employed in the physical description of the Mss, such as their size and folio number, whereas the word expressions did essentially in the textual description of the figurative languages. The number, the location and preservation code have been displayed in the Table 1.

Table 1
The Metadata Summary of the Mss

No.	Sigla	Location	Shelf Mark	Quire/Folio	Year (c.)	Material
1	[4]	Institute of Ethiopian Studies	IES-2160	9/85	19th	Parchment
2	[5]	Mänbärä Lə‘ul St Mark Church	EMLL 87	8/75	20th	Parchment
3	[6]	Mänbärä Šäba‘ot Holy Trinity	EMLL 1208	4/66	19th	Paper
4	[7]	Däbrä Šähay St Mark Church	UNESCO 6/38	7/53	19th	Parchment
5	[8]	‘Addi ‘Abun Täklä Haymanot	AATH-072	11/72	19th	Parchment
6	[9]	‘Addi ‘Abun Täklä Haymanot	AATH-071	15/136	20th	Parchment
7	[10]	Sälla Dəngay St Mark Church	008	6/63	20th	Paper

3. MANUSCRIPT DESCRIPTION

[4] Location = Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), heading = **ገድለ: ማርቆስ**, Gädlä Marəqos, shelf mark/code = IES-2160 (not catalogued), material = parchment with 9 quires bound with wooden boards, size = 14.5X12 cm with 89 folios and two columns, production Period = 19/20th century (F.67v. and f.69v: “**ጸሎቱ: ወበረከቱ: የገሉ: ምስሉ: ንጉሠ: ነገሥት: ምኒልክ: ... May His prayer and blessing be with the King of Kings Mənilək...**”). Content = Ff.1r.-66r: Combat and Martyrdom, ff. 67v.-81r: Miracles and ff. 81v.-84v: Effigy. *Incipit*: **በስመ: አብ: ... ንዌጥን: መጽሐፈ: ገድሉ: ለብፁዕ: ወቅዱስ: ማሪ: ማርቆስ: ... In the name of the Father..., we start the book of the Acts of the blessed and Holy Mari Mark...and desinit:እስመ: አቁሰልዋ: ዘልፈ: አስተዳሉ: ፈውሳ። prepare her salvation, for they frequently wounded her.**

[5] Location = Mänbärä Lə‘ul St Mark Church, adjacent to AAU, heading = **ገድለ: ማርቆስ**, Gädlä Marəqos, shelf mark/code = EMLL 87 (catalogued), material = parchment with 8 quires bound with wooden boards, size = 23X17.5 cm with 76 folios and two columns. Date of Production = 20th century (Ff.74v: **ዝንቱ: መጽሐፍ: ተጽሕፈ: በትእዛዙ: ለቀዳማዊ: ኃይለ:**

ሥላሴ፡ ንጉሠ፡ ነገሥት፡ ዘኢትዮጵያ... *This book is scribed by the order of Ḥaylā Šəllase I King of Kings of Ethiopia ...*, content = Ff.1r.-59r: Combat and Martyrdom and ff.59r.-74v: Miracles and salutations, *incipit*: በስመ፡ አብ፡ ... ንዌጥን፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ገድሉ፡ ለብፁዕ፡ ወቅዱስ፡ ማሪ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ... *In the name of the Father... we start the book of the Acts of the blessed and Holy Mari Mark...desinit*: ... እመኒ፡ አበስነ፡ በበሰብዕ፡ ሰብዓ፡ ጸሎትክ፡ ትኩነን፡ ባቅዑ። ...*Whenever we trespass seventy (times) in every seven; may your prayer be our deliverer.*

[6] Location = Mänbärä Šäba‘ot, Holy Trinity Cathedral (Addis Ababa), heading = ገድሉ፡ ማርቆስ, Gädlä Marəqos, code = EMLL 1208 (catalogued), material = paper with 5 quires bound with hard cover boards, size = 19.5X16 cm with 68 folios and two columns. Production Period = 19/20th century (F.55v: ጸሎቱ፡ ወበረከቱ፡ የሃሉ፡ ምስለ፡ ንጉሠ፡ ነገሥት፡ ሣህለ፡ ማርያም፡ ... *May His prayer and blessing be with the King of Kings Šahälä Maryam...*)⁴, content = Ff.1r.-55r: Combat and Martyrdom, and ff.55r.-63v: Miracles and salutations. *Incipit*: በስመ፡ አብ፡ ... ንዌጥን፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ገድሉ፡ ለብፁዕ፡ ወቅዱስ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ... *In the name of the Father... we start the book of the Acts of the blessed and Holy Mark...and desinit*: ...እመኒ፡ አበስነ፡ በበሰብዕ፡ ሰብዓ፡ ጸሎትክ፡ ትኩነን፡ ባቅዑ። ... *whenever we trespass seventy (times) in every seven; may your prayer be our deliverer.*

[7] Location = ‘Addi ‘Abun Täklä Haymanot (Təgray-‘Adwa), heading = ገድሉ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ወንጌላዊ, Gädlä Marəqos Wängelawi, code = AATH- 072 (digitized by Ethio/SPaRe), material = parchment with 11 quires bound with wooden boards, size = 30X23 cm with 76 folios and two columns. Content = Ff.1r.-57v: Combat and Martyrdom, and ff.55v.-72v: Miracles, *incipit*: በስመ፡ አብ፡ ... ንዌጥን፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ገድሉ፡ ለብፁዕ፡ ወለቅዱስ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ... *In the name of the Father..., we start the book of the Acts of the blessed and Holy Mark...and desinit*: ...ወዝንቱ፡ ኩሉ፡ ዘኮነ፡ እምትንብልናሁ፡ ለቅዱስ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ወንጌላዊ፡ ...*And all this that occurred is from the intercession of St Mark the Evangelist.*

[8] Location = ‘Addi ‘Abun Täklä Haymanot (Təgray-‘Adwa), heading = ገድሉ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ወንጌላዊ, Gädlä Marəqos Wängelawi, code = AATH- 071 (digitized by Ethio/SPaRe), material = parchment with 15 quires bound with wooden boards, size = 29 X22 cm with 139 folios and two columns. Content = Ff. 1r.-83r: Combat and Martyrdom, ff. 83v.-108v: Miracles, and Ff.110r.-133v: Effigy, *incipit*: በስመ፡ አብ፡ ... ንዌጥን፡ በረድኤተ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ወበረድኤተ፡ ጸሎታ፡ ለእግዝእትነ፡ ማርያም፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ገድሉ፡ *In the name of the Father ... with the help of God and with the helping prayer of our lady Mary, we start the book of the Acts ...and desinit*: ... ወተሃሉ፡ በልብክ፡ ከዊና፡ ጽሕፍተ። ... *May the salutation exist written in your heart.*

⁴ ሣህለ፡ ማርያም, Šahälä Marəyam is the baptismal name of Mənilək II.

[9] Location = Däbrä Ḥəruyan Sälla Dəngay St Mark Church (Tägulät-North Šäwa), heading = ገድሉ፡ ማርቆስ, Gädlä Marəqos, code = 08 (not catalogued), material = paper with 6 quires bound with wooden boards covered with stamped leather, size = 29X22 cm with 73 folios and two columns. Date of Production = 20th century (F.63r: ዝንቱ፡ መጽሐፍ ... ተፈጸመ፡ (በ)፲፱፻፳፪፡ ዓመተ፡ ምሕረት፡ በዘመነ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ወንጌላዊ ... This book ... was completed in 1962 (E.C) during the time of Mark the Evangelist...). Content = Ff. 1r.-48r: Combat and Martyrdom, ff. 48r.-60r: Miracles, and Ff.60r.-63v: Effigy and salutation, *incipit*: በስመ፡ አብ፡ ... ንዌጥን፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ገድሉ፡ ለብፁዕ፡ ወቅዱስ፡ ማሪ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ... *In the name of the Father..., we start the book of the Acts of the blessed and Holy Mari Mark... and desinit*: ... እስመ፡ አቆስልዎ፡ ዘልፈ፡ አስተዳሉ፡ ፈውሳ። ... *prepare her a salvation, for they frequently wounded her.*

[10] Location = Däbrä Šähay St. Mark Church (East Goğgam), heading = ዜና፡ ማርቆስ, Zena Marəqos, code = UNESCO 6/38 (catalogued), material = parchment with 7 quires bound with a wooden, leathered and decorated boards, size = 30X26.5 cm with 60 folios and three columns. Production Time = 19th century (F.37r: ጸሎቱ፡ ወበረከቱ፡ የሃሉ፡ ምስለ፡ ንጉሥነ፡ ተክለ፡ ሃይማኖት፡ ... *May His prayer and blessing be with our King Täklä Haymanot ...*)⁵. Content = Ff.1r.-53v: Combat and Martyrdom, and ff.26r.-38r: Miracles, ff. 38r.-52r: the Acts of Mercurius, and Ff.49v.-53v: Miracles of St Mercurius. *Incipit*: በስመ፡ አብ፡ ... ንዌጥን፡ መጽሐፈ፡ ገድሉ፡ ለብፁዕ፡ ማርቆስ፡ ... *In the name of the Father... we start the book of the Acts of the blessed Mark...and desinit*: ... ወአስተርአየ፡ እምኔሁ፡ ተአምራት፡ ወመንክራት፡ ...*And miracles and wonders were revealed from it.*

4. FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Several figurative expressions could be employed in the composition of the Ethiopic hagiographic texts instead of simply telling what a Saint did in the Church’s tradition. Revealing the miraculous deeds of Saints through an imaginative language, these writings create vivid pictures in the readers’ mind, using various figurative expressions, such as metaphors, similes and symbols that help us feel the Saint’s holiness and divine power. A saint might be described as a ‘pillar, Star, Lyre’, etc. of the Church to emphasize their vital role they played during their devotional life. For instance, in his book of hours (Sä‘atat, ሰዓታት), Abba Giyorgis of Sägla described St. Yared the hymnist as a ‘lyre’ of the Church: ሰአል፡ ለነ፡ ያሬድ፡ ካህን፡ ጥዑመ፡ ልሳን፡ እንዚራሃ፡ ለቤተ፡ ክርስቲያን፡ : *The sweet-tongue priest Yared, entrust to*

⁵ ተክለ፡ ሃይማኖት, Täklä Haymanot was the king of Goğgam (a certain province about 300 km far from the Capital) in the second half of the 19th century, so the MS could be copied in this time (19th century)

us, (for) you are the *lyre* of the Church. Through such figurative expressions, the texts could inspire, helping readers connect emotionally and spiritually with the lives they describe.

The figurative languages mostly used in the composition of the Vita of St Mark the Evangelist are: *Analogy, Personification, Metaphor, Allegory, Paradox, Simile* and *Hyperbole*. Each literary device has been examined from the text in its respective order as follows:

4.1 Analogy

ወበከመ፡ ንጹሐት፡ ጠባይዓቲሁ፡ ለእግዚአብሔር፡ ዘእንበለ፡ ነውር፡ ከማሁ፡ ውእቲኒ፡ ንጹሕ፡ ወድንግል ... *And as the nature of God is clean without blame, likewise, he (St Mark) is clean and virgin ...* ([4]: f.22v_a), ([5]: f.16v_a), ([6]: f.16v_a), ([7]: f.9v_a), ([8]: f.8v_b), ([9]: f.26r_a), ([10]: f.13r_a). Here, the author uses the clean nature of God to express the clean and virginity of St. Mark in the analogous expression.

እስመ፡ ከመ፡ ንኅብ፡ ታስተጋብእ፡ ቆዐ፡ ጽጌ፡ ወይን፡ እምኸሎን፡ ፅዕው፡ ከማሁ፡ ውቱኒ፡ አስተጋብእ፡ ትምህርተ፡ አምላካዊተ፡ እምኅብ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ ወእምአርዳኢሁ ... *as the bee collects a blossom of grapevine from all plants, he too collected the divine teaching from Jesus Christ and His Disciples* ([4]: f.26v_a), ([5]: f.20r_b), ([6]: f.19v_a), ([7]: f.11v_b), ([8]: f.18v_b), ([9]: f.32r_a), ([10]: f.15r_a). In this analogous expression, the educational background of St. Mark is compared to the work of the bee, as one is able to draw from the description.

ማርቆስ፡ ብሂል፡ አንበሳ፡ ብሂል፡ እስመ፡ ውእቱ፡ ይጥኅር፡ ከመ፡ አንበሳ፡ እስከ፡ አጽርዐ፡ ምሕራማተ፡ ጣዖት፡ ዘላሕም። *'Mark' means to mean a 'Lion', for he roars as a lion until he destroyed the temples of the idol of cow* ([4]: f.27r_a), ([5]: f.20v_b), ([6]: f.20r_b), ([7]: f.12r_a), ([8]: f.19v_b), ([9]: f.32r_a), ([10]: f.17r_a). As we one can refer from the text, the author compared the power of St Mark that destroyed the idol in his Apostolic Mission with the power of lion that destroys the cows.

እስመ፡ ከመ፡ ጽሩያት፡ አዕይንቲሁ፡ ለንስር፡ ከማሁ፡ ውእቱኒ፡ (ዮሐንስ) ፡ ጽሩየ፡ ሕሊና ... *as for clean the eyes of the eagle are, he (John) also is with a clean conscience ...* ([4]: f.27v_b), ([5]: f.21r_b), ([6]: f.20v_b), ([7]: f.12r_c), ([8]: f.22v_b), ([9]: f.32v_a), ([10]: f.17r_b). Here, the analogous expression shows the eyes of the eagle with the clean conscience of St. Mark the Evangelist.

ወሶበሂ፡ ይወጽእ፡ ትእዛዝ፡ እምኅብ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ይሰምዑ፡ ፀቱ፡ እንስሳ፡ ወይነግሩ፡ ለጳውጳ፡ ካህናተ፡ ሰማይ፡ ወእሙንቱ፡ ይነግሩ፡ ለሊቃነ፡ መላእክት ... *ወከማሙ፡ ፀ፡ ወንጌላውያን፡ ጸሐፉ፡ ትእዛዝ፡ ለልዑል፡ ሰሚሶሙ፡ እምኅብ፡ እግዚእነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ ወእሙንቱ፡ ወሀብሞሙ፡ ለሐዋርያት ...* *And when a command comes out of God, the Four Living Creatures hear and tell to the 24 priests of Heaven, and they too tell to the Archangels ... And likewise, the Four Evangelists wrote the command of the Most High, hearing from our Lord Jesus Christ, and they gave it to the Apostles* ([4]: f.28r_b), ([5]: f.22r_a),

([6]: f.21r_b), ([7]: f.12v_b), ([8]: f.23r_v), ([9]: f.33r_b), ([10]: f.18v_a). In this analogous expression, it states how communication between God and His Angeles takes place, comparing to how the Four Evangelists transmitted their Gospels to the Apostles.

ወበከመ፡ ፀ፡ እንስሳ፡ ኢይትረአዩ፡ ገጸ፡ በገጽ፡ ወይሱብሕዎ፡ ለእግዚአብሔር፡ በአሐቲ፡ ቃል ... *ወፀቱሂ፡ ወንጌላውያን፡ እንዘ፡ ኢይትረአዩ፡ ወእንዘ፡ ኢይትማከሩ፡ ጸሐፉ፡ አሐተ፡ ቃለ፡ ወንጌል ...* *And as the Four Living Creatures do not see, face to face and praise God with the same word... and the Four Evangelists as well, neither seeing each other nor discussing (together), wrote the same word of the Gospel ...* ([4]: f.28v_b), ([5]: f.22v_a), ([6]: f.21v_b), ([7]: f.12v_c), ([8]: f.24v_a), ([9]: f.33r_a), ([10]: f.18r_a). As we can see from this analogous text, the work of the Four Evangelists is analogously described with the appearance of the Four Living Creatures, for each group performed similar works without any personal contact.

ወበከመ፡ ፀቱ፡ አፍላጋት፡ እለ፡ ይነቅዑ፡ እምታሕተ፡ ፅዕ፡ ሕይወት፡ ወይሰቅይዎ፡ ለምድር፡ ... *ወአበዊነሂ፡ ፀቱ፡ ወንጌላውያን፡ ሰሚሶሙ፡ እምእግዚእነ፡ ኢየሱስ፡ ክርስቶስ፡ ሰቅይዎ፡ ለዓለም፡ በትምህርቶሙ።* *And again like the four rivers that spring out from the bottom of the tree of life and water the Earth ... And our Fathers, the Four Evangelists, watered the world by their teaching* having listened to Our Lord Jesus Christ ([4]: f.29v_b), ([5]: f.23r_a), ([6]: f.22v_a), ([7]: f.13r_c), ([8]: f.27r_a), ([9]: f.35r_b), ([10]: f.18v_b). In this description, the author compares the four rivers that origin from one source to water the Earth, with the Four Evangelists whose source of teaching is One God, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

(ወበከመ)፡ ፈለግ፡ ዘይውኅዝ፡ ያሥተፌሥሕ፡ ሀገረ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ከማሁ፡ ዮሐንስ፡ አስተፍሥሐ፡ አድያመ፡ ግብጽ፡ ወልበ፡ ከሎሙ፡ መሐይምናን ... *(as) a river (Gihon) that streams pleases the city of God, likewise John pleased the province of Egypt and the heart of all the faithful ...* ([4]: f.30v_b), ([5]: f.24r_a), ([6]: f.23v_a), ([7]: f.14r_a), ([8]: f.28r_a), ([9]: f.36v_b), ([10]: f.18v_b). Here, the teaching of St. Mark the Evangelist that pleased the provinces of Egypt is described by a river that pleases people (perhaps by watering their dry land) in this analogous expression.

4.2 Personification

ብፅዕት፡ ይእቲ፡ ምድረ፡ ግብጽ፡ እንተ፡ ኅብአቶ በውስቲታ ... *ቤተ፡ ልሔም፡ ሰደደቶ፡ ለዘተወልደ፡ ላቲ፡ ...* *Blessed is the land of Egypt that hid Him (Jesus) within her ...* ([4]: f.32v_a), ([5]: f.25r_b), ([6]: f.24r_b), ([7]: f.14v_a), ([8]: f.29r_a), ([9]: f.38v_b), ([10]: f.20r_b). In this expression, the author personifies the country Egypt.

ቤተ፡ ልሔም፡ ሰደደቶ፡ ለዘተወልደ፡ ላቲ፡ ... *Bethlehem deported him who was born for her ...* ([4]: f.32v_a), ([5]: f.25r_b), ([6]: f.24r_b), ([7]: f.14v_a), ([8]: f.29r_a), ([9]: f.38v_b), ([10]: f.20r_b). Here, the author personifies Bethlehem that she persecuted Jesus Christ to flee to Egypt that was blessed by hiding Him, as previously discussed.

ይትኃወይ፡ ሐቅለ፡ ገዳም፡ ወይየብብ፡ በድው፡ በርደቱ፡ ለክርስቶስ ... *The wilderness shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice by the descending of Christ ...* ([4]: f.35v_b), ([5]: f.28r_b), ([6]: f.27r_a), ([7]: f.15v_a), ([8]: f.30v_a), ([9]: f.43r_a), ([10]: f.22v_a). In this expression, the wilderness and dessert are personified, both being pleased by the descending of Christ.

4.3 Metaphorical Expressions

ቀዳሚሰ፡ ግብጽ፡ ይእቲ፡ ወዮምሰ፡ ሰማየ፡ ኮነት ... *Formerly, it was Egypt, but now it has become a sky ...* [4]: f.36r_a), ([5]: f.28v_b), ([6]: f.27v_a), ([7]: f.15v_b), ([8]: f.30v_b), ([9]: f.43r_b), ([10]: f.22v_b). In this metaphorical expression, the earthly place Egypt is said to be described that it is changed into a sky, for it received Jesus Christ by the time He was persecuted by Herod and fled to Egypt.

ርግብ፡ ፀዕዳ፡ ገበዋቲሁ፡ ዘሐመልማለ፡ ወርቅ፡ ወእክናፊሁ፡ ዘምዕዛረ፡ ፀሐይ፡ ወዘነቡ፡ ዘአዝፋረ፡ መብረቅ። *A white dove whose side is herb of gold; whose wings are brilliant rays of the Sun; its tail is of wreath of lightening* [4]: f.36r_a), ([5]: f.28v_b), ([6]: f.27v_a), ([7]: f.15v_b), ([8]: f.30v_b), ([9]: f.43r_b), ([10]: f.22v_b). Here, the author described the dove metaphorically, giving a peculiar characterization, such as its side with a herb of gold, its wings a brilliant rays of the Sun and its tail of wreath of lightening. This is a typical example of metaphorical expression, for doves have no such kind of body in the real world.

4.4 Allegory

ወትእምርተ፡ ትንሣኤ፡ ሙታንኒ፡ ገብረ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡ ላዕለ፡ ግብጽ፡ እስመ፡ ሦፍ፡ ዘስሙ፡ ፊንክስ፡ ሀሎ፡ ይነበር፡ በመካን፡ ፭፻፡ ዓመተ። ወእምዝ፡ ሶበ፡ ረሥእ፡ ያስተጋብዕ፡ አፈዋተ፡ እምነ፡ ዕፀው፡ በአክናፊሁ፡ ወይመጽእ፡ እስክንድርያ። ወይወፅእ፡ ካህን፡ ዘሀገረ፡ ፀሐይ፡ ዘይእቲ፡ እስክንድርያ፡ ወያስተጋብዕ፡ ዕፀው፡ ብዙኅ። ወይመጽእ፡ ውእቱ፡ ንስር፡ ወይጠፍሕ፡ አክናፊሁ፡ ወይወጽእ፡ እሳት፡ እምኔሁ፡ ወይውኢ፡ ኩሉ፡ ዕፅ። ወይዘንም፡ ዝናም፡ ወያጠፍእ፡ እሳተ፡ ዘቦቱ ውእየ፡ ሥጋሁ፡ ወአእፅምቲሁ። ወይትፈጠር፡ እምውእቱ፡ ዓፅም፡ ዕጂ፡ ወዕጂ፡ ያወጽእ፡ አክናፊ፡ ወመፍርኅ፡ ከዊኖ፡ በሠሉስ፡ ዕለት፡ ይልሕቅ። ወከማሁ፡ ይከውን፡ ዘልፈ። *And the Lord has shown the sign of the Resurrection of the dead upon Egypt with a bird whose name is Finkas that lives in a place for 500 years. And then, when it becomes old, it gathers spices from plants with its wings and comes to Alexandria. And a priest of the city of Sun, that is Alexandria, comes out and gathers much wood. And that eagle comes and claps its wings, so fire come out of it and the entire wood burns. And the rain rains and avoids the fire by which its flesh and bones are burnt. And a worm is created out of this bone; the bone brings forth wings, and it grows up being fearful within three days, and a similar event occurs usually* [4]: f.38r_a), ([5]: f.30v_b), ([6]: f.29r_a), ([7]: f.16v_c), ([8]: f.32v_a), ([9]: f.46r_a), ([10]: f.24r_b). Here, the allegorical expression is likely to narrate the death and

resurrection the Incarnated word (*Logos*) symbolizing with the story of the bird *Finkas*, from the theological point of view.

4.5 Paradox

አፍ፡ ቦሙ፡ ወጊዲይነቡ፡ ዐይን፡ ቦሙ፡ ወኢይሬእየ፡ እዝን፡ ቦሙ፡ ወኢይሰምዑ ... *They have mouths, but they do not speak; they have eyes, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear ...* [4]: f.47v_b), ([5]: f.39v_a), ([6]: f.38r_a), ([7]: f.21v_c), ([8]: f.41r_b), ([9]: f.57r_a), ([10]: f.31v_b). Here, the author uses these paradoxical expressions, which are spoken by the prophet David (Ps. 115, 5), in order to describe the irrationality of the heathens who made St. Mark suffer a lot.

4.6 Simile

ለቀዳማዊ፡ ገጹ፡ ይመስል፡ ከመ፡ ገጹ፡ አንበሳ፡... ወለካልዑ፡ ከመ፡ ገጹ፡ ላህም፡ ወለሣልሱ፡ ከመ፡ ገጹ፡ ሰብእ፡ ወለራብዑ፡ ከመ፡ ገጹ፡ ንስር። ... *the face of the first one looks like a face of lion ...* And the second (looks) like a face of cow; the third like a face of man and the fourth like a face of eagle [4]: f.27r_a), ([5]: f.20v_b), ([6]: f.20r_b), ([7]: f.12r_a), ([8]: f.22v_a), ([9]: f.32r_a), ([10]: f.16r_b). Simile, particularly *like* (*ከመ*, *kāmā*), is the main figurative language that the author mostly employs in several cases, during the composition of the Vita of St. Mark, and the presented ones are just examples.

ወሶቤሃ፡ ገሃደ፡ አስተርአዮ፡ በአምሳለ፡ ዘተርእየ፡ ለአርዳኢሁ፡ ... *then (Jesus Christ) clearly appeared to him in a way that He was visible to His Disciples ...* [4]: f.49r_b), ([5]: f.41r_b), ([6]: f.39v_b), ([7]: f.23r_a), ([8]: f.42v_b), ([9]: f.59r_b), ([10]: f.33r_a). The phrase “in the image of (*በአምሳለ*, *Bä’amsalā*)” is a common expression used in many hagiographical literatures when stating the revelation of God, or His Angel sent to the Saint or Martyrdom. Here, the author describes in what manner God appeared to St. Mark when he was in prison.

4.7 Hyperbole

ወእስፍንቱ፡ ነዮሙ፡ ሰማዕታተ፡ ግብጽ፡ እለ፡ ሰቀዩ፡ በደሞሙ፡ ሐቅላቲሆሙ፡ ... *And how many are the martyrs of Egypt, who irrigated their forests by their blood ...* [4]: f.36r_a), ([5]: f.28v_b), ([6]: f.27r_a), ([7]: f.16r_a), ([8]: f.30v_b), ([9]: f.43r_b), ([10]: f.22v_b). This description is a typical example of hyperbole that overstates the combat of the Egyptian martyrs, exaggerating that they watered the forest by their blood.

ወመልዐ፡ ደሙ፡ ውስተ፡ ኩላ፡ ሀገር፡ ... *And his blood filled the city throughout ...* [4]: f.50v_a), ([5]: f.42v_a), ([6]: f.41r_a), ([7]: f.24r_b), ([8]: f.43v_b), ([9]: f.60v_b), ([10]: f.34r_a). Here too, the description is highly exaggerated, for the blood of a person could not spread through a city.

5. CONCLUSION

The life of Saint Mark the Evangelist traces back to the

1st century AD, and his Vita is speculated to be composed in Greek language and translated into Gə'əz in the second half of the 4th century. The literary devices used in the Gə'əz Acts of St. Mark the Evangelist are found to have rhetorical and theological tools beyond its historical narration. The language devices include metaphors, similes, personifications, allegory and hyperbole that the author employed in the texts to signify the spiritual mission of St. Mark the Evangelist. Examining these figurative languages used in the text was the purpose of this study. This Gə'əz hagiographical text preserved in seven Mss located in different Churches and libraries are used as the main source of data. Accordingly, the physical description of the Mss and the figurative languages included in the text are examined in detail based on the philological discipline. This article indicates that employing literary devices enriches the meaning of texts enabling readers to have a deep understanding of narrations within the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Tradition. Through the analysis of such figurative expressions in the Gə'əz hagiographical texts, one may be able to gain literary, cultural and religious significances, determining the authors' style of language. Thus, emphasis should be given to the untapped Gə'əz literary treasure; researchers need to analyze the Gə'əz texts from various perspectives, such as historical, theological and, most importantly, literary point of view.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- EMML = Ethiopian Manuscript and Microfilm Library
F = folio
CE = Common Era
IES = Institute of Ethiopian studies
Ms/s = Manuscript/s
UNESCO = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization