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IS NÄWA BÄG'U AN ETHIOPIAN CROSS?*

Ewa Balicka-Witakowska

When Mrs. Diana Spencer visited the Ethiopian monastery of Tādbabä Maryam in Sayint¹, in search of icons attributed to St. Luke², an unusual cross was drawn from the 'əka bet and shown to her. According to local tradition it belonged to John the Baptist, who used it when he baptized Jesus. This is why the cross is called *Näwa Bäg'u* (ነዋ በገዑ), i.e. "Behold the Lamb" (cf. John 1, 29). The cross is believed to have the miraculous power of healing blindness.³

The traditional attribution transmitted by the monks of the monastery is based undoubtedly on a legend connected with emperor Ləbnä Dəngəl. This legend tells of the coming of a fragment of Christ's Cross from Egypt to Ethiopia, together with other valuable relics, among them the cross of John the Baptist.⁴

It is generally said in Ethiopia that the piece of the Holy Cross is in the possession of Ēgzi'abher Ab church on Amba Gəšen.⁵ Tādbabä Maryam possesses, however, besides *Näwa Bäg'u*, the hair of St. Anne and the bones of St. George⁶, both mentioned in the narration on Ləbnä Dəngəl.

Näwa Bäg'u is a processional cross, today without its staff⁷ (Pl.I), which measures 20 x 16cm and is made of chased silver or silver-dipped bronze.⁸ The frame is in the form of an elongated quatrefoil decorated with three small Greek crosses and with an ornament in the form of drops and trefoils, and embraces the flared arms of the central cross. It has the form of a flat box with a cover. Inside, there is a bronze figure of the Crucified Christ in high relief. The silver or silver-plated cover is decorated with engravings: on the outside a sitting angel above which there is the inscription *Mika'el* (Pl.II); on the inside a standing angel with the inscription *Gabrə'el* (Pl.III). On the reverse side of the cross there is a third engraving of a six-winged figure, with his head in the form of a romb, labelled *Suraf'el* (Pl.IV). The angels have gilded halos; their wings and clothes are gilded, too, but only every other section or fold — the remaining folds or sections being silver-plated. On the front of the shaft there is a sculpture of the head of a ram with long horns, in silver or silver-plated (Pl.V).⁹ The reverse side of the shaft is decorated with an incised cross.

Among the processional and hand crosses known today from Ethiopia¹⁰ *Näwa Bäg'u* is totally unique, especially in respect to its form and the three-dimensional figure of Christ placed in its interior. Among questions which could be asked concerning this unusual object, there are many which still cannot be answered thus far.¹¹ Here we would like only to try to establish whether the cross is a product of Ethiopian art or of foreign provenance.

* * * * *

To judge from the repertory of crosses from Ethiopia, bronze¹², as well as copper, was the material preferred for cross making up to the 15th century. Crosses of pure silver are very rare before the 17th century.¹³ Gilding was a technique applied quite frequently, especially for bronze crosses, but only from the 17th century.¹⁴ Earlier examples of crosses made with goldsmith techniques are rare and most probably imports.¹⁵

Among Ethiopian crosses, the framed ones belong to the group of works now regarded as the earliest. They are dated, in some cases, to the Zagwe epoch but most often to the 14th and 15th centuries. Besides the oval, double oval and pear-shaped frames, the form of the quatrefoil frame, more or less elongated, also occurs (Pl.VI). Their superior and side finials are usually decorated with small Greek crosses. Often they are accompanied by woven bands, looped zig-zags, cables or circles.¹⁶ These, however, do not occur in *Näwa Bäg'u*. It does not have the two rings on both sides of the shaft, through which a piece of material — symbolizing Christ's garments according to tradition — was often drawn. On our cross, this function was possibly filled by the long horns of the ram's head.

Such a sculpture, although placed differently, can also be found on the bronze cross of the

monastery of Abrāntant, Waldəbba (Pl.VII)¹⁷, which belongs to the class of short armed crosses emerging in the 15th century. The ends of their arms are usually decorated with a cable band and ribbon loops forming circles surmounted by a pattée cross.¹⁸ The cross of Abrāntant is distinguished from the rest of the group by unusual encrustation of blue glass.

The authors who wrote on *Nāwa Bäg'u* and the cross of Abrāntant are not sure if the heads of the rams belonged originally to the respective crosses. Since the shaft is a part which is most often changed and repaired, it cannot be excluded that the head could have been added later. In any case, we can suppose that its function on *Nāwa Bäg'u* was not only that of decoration. Putting together the head of the ram and the Crucifixion is not accidental. The ram, the animal God caused to be placed in a thorny bush so that Abraham might sacrifice it in place of his son, was conceived as the symbol of Christ crowned in thorns and sacrificed for mankind. This idea was not unknown in Ethiopia. In early churches, e.g. Gännätä Maryam, Lasta, or Qorqor Maryam, Gär'alta, the sacrifice of Abraham is a part of the iconographic programme of the wall paintings as a symbolic scene instead of the Crucifixion.¹⁹ One of the liturgical texts for the Festival of the Cross, *Mäsqäl*, reads: "They saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. The shrub, that is the Tree of Forgiveness — the Cross; since the Cross won — Death was defeated. The power of His Cross explains it".²⁰

* * * * *

One of the characteristics which distinguishes *Nāwa Bäg'u* from other crosses is its central part, which is a cruciform box closed with a cover of the same form. It imparts to the work a character of a reliquary, inside which there is a representation of the Crucified Christ, instead of a relic. This is a type which, as A. Frolov remarks in his detailed study on the reliquaries of the True Cross, reflects para-dogmatic beliefs.²¹

The use of a cover, which screens the inside of a reliquary, expresses the idea that the presence of God — since it is He who inhabits it — should be kept secret. It is also a practical application of the rule according to which the liturgical implement revealing the secrets of God's Wisdom should not be displayed for the laity.²²

Among the cross reliquaries which are known today, there is none like *Nāwa Bäg'u*. However, pectoral Byzantine and Oriental crosses meant for containing particles of the True Cross could be regarded as the actualization of the ideas mentioned above. These are, for instance: the cross in the treasury of the Cathedral of Monza (Pl.VIII), the cross in the Benaki Museum (Pl.IX) or the crosses in the Działyński collection in Gołuchów, Poland, and in the Dumbarton Oaks collection.²³ All of them open. Inside, each contain a movable cruciform plate decorated in different ways, which has a cavity for the relic of the Wood of the Holy Cross. The Crucifixion is represented on the obverse of the outer part of the reliquaries. It is fully visible, since what should be concealed in these cases are the relics.²⁴

Reliquaries of different types, including *staurothecas*, must have been known in Ethiopia at least since the coming to the country of the fragment of the Holy Cross and other relics. Besides the story mentioned above, connected with Ləbnä Dəngəl, the Ethiopian tradition ascribes the same events to two other emperors: David and Zār'a Ya'qob.²⁵ There is a narration on the latter contained in *Maṣḥāfa ʾĪfət*²⁶, where it is said that in the church on Amba Gəṣen a gold casket containing a fragment of the Holy Cross was put into a gold cross and placed on a golden pedestal. The text ascribes the work to Franks, i.e. European artists.²⁷ An almost identical relation can be found among the historical notes of the MS. British Museum Or 481.²⁸ Although both texts are of a rather late date²⁹, it is very probable that they are based on authentic documents relative to ʿĒgzi'abḥer Ab church and the cult of the Holy Cross which developed there.³⁰

We can surmise that the cross described in the texts mentioned did exist, and was the work of foreign artists just as the stories say it was. In the monastery of Daga ʿĪstifanos, a bronze processional cross is preserved (Pl.X). Both front and back are inlaid with gold and glass. On the central part, screening the cavity for relics, there are figures in high relief of the Crucified Christ

and *Maiestas Domini*.³¹ There is also an inscription: "This cross has been given by the king Zār'a Ya'qob to [the monastery] Dābrā Nəgwādgwad for the eternal life of his soul".

Of course, we cannot be sure if this is the cross described in *Maṣḥāfa Tefut*. This is an alluring hypothesis, however, and some facts make it even very probable. Firstly: the cross is decorated with the Crucifixion in high relief, which is a highly unusual phenomenon in Ethiopia, the only known analogy being *Nāwa Bäg'u*. Secondly: in the description of the reliquary in *Maṣḥāfa Tefut* the word *qāmaṭar* is used, which can be translated as 'open-work' or 'filigree'³², but it can also designate a box of any form made in such a metalwork or goldsmith technique which was unknown to the Ethiopians.³³ Doubtless, the cross of Daga Ḥṣṭifanos represents such an alien technique (open-work and, especially, encrustation). Few examples of encrusted crosses are known from Ethiopia, moreover they are thought to be imports, e.g. another cross in the Abrāntant monastery (Pl.XI), which is even named Jerusalemian or Egyptian. What is most important, however, is that the cross from Daga Ḥṣṭifanos, according to the donor's inscription, was intended for Dābrā Nəgwādgwad. From the chronicle of Zār'a Ya'qob it is known that he founded a church by that name in Amhara³⁴, but on the other hand, according to *Maṣḥāfa Tefut*, Dābrā Nəgwādgwad was the original name of Amba Geṣen.³⁵

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Let us turn back to *Nāwa Bäg'u*. Here also, as is the case with most similar reliquaries, the cover has a double function — it protects what is inside and gives an additional area for decoration, increasing the possibilities for developing the iconographical programme of the object. The artist engraved an angel on each side of the cover and enclosed a third figure on the reverse side. What is amazing about the engravings is their unusual elaborateness and precision of work. It is not just lines that give the outline of the figures. The lines are supplemented with punctures, which bring out the design very clearly. The figures, in correct proportions, have been skillfully composed within the fields of the cross. Most of the details have been made with high accuracy, e.g. strands of hair, the toes, the short and long features of the wings, as well as varying structures of the folds of the garments. The garments of the angel on the outside of the cover bring out his sitting position; those of the angel on the inside allow us to discern his undergarments extending below his cloak, the fold of which form an ornamental volute. Both angels have regular facial features and characteristic short, boyish haircut. Gabriel and a six-winged figure are presented frontally, but Michael in three-quarter profile. The latter sits resting his head on his hands, with his elbows resting on his knees — the position resembling Joseph in the Byzantine Nativity scenes.

In the Ethiopian processional crosses engraving was the most often used technique. Besides many examples of engravings of a rather schematic character as, for instance, the crosses IES No.4651 or No.4428 (Pls.XII, XX), there are some other crosses showing that the artist tried to follow the styles of the miniature painting he knew, e.g. the cross IES No.3970³⁶, or that of Wāqət monastery, Tāmben (Pl.XIII), which are comparable to the miniatures of three manuscripts: the Gospels *Senodos* and *Ta'āmra Māryām* of Amba Gəṣen and *Lāḥa Māryām* of Betālāḥem church near Dābrā Tabor³⁷; the crosses IES No.4142 (Pl.XIV) and No.4486³⁸ are comparable to miniatures of the so-called Gunda Gunde school.³⁹ From the 18th century, the figures on almost all crosses are modelled on the painting style called the second Gondarene (Pl.XV).

The engravings of *Nāwa Bäg'u* have nothing in common, however, with any of the groups mentioned. On account of the elaborateness of the detailed workmanship, they display similarity to two silver crosses of the Lalibāla type, usually dated to the 14th-15th centuries — one from Maryam Dəngəlat church, Tigre (Pl.XVI) and the second of unknown origin⁴⁰ (Pl.XVII). In both cases, the engravings represent the Crucified Christ. His somewhat elongated but well proportioned body is shown with many carefully drawn anatomical details. The same carefulness is seen in the drawing of the folds of the *perizonium*. Moreover, on the second cross, the figure of Christ is brought out from the background by contrasting the bright smooth surface of his body against the dark, punched background. The same contrast was brought out on the

frame between the vegetal forms and their background. Another interesting detail of this cross is the lamb engraved on the upper part of the shaft. It is presented in full, with its head surrounded by a halo. It stands on a stylized branch — a symbol of the shrub of Abraham's sacrifice.

Both silver crosses are decorated with zigzags on the tops of the frames and at their feet with small wings, which are the result of a far-advanced stylization of fish or dolphins. J. Dorresse showed that those ornaments belong to the usual repertory of Coptic art.⁴¹ Also very Coptic in character are interlace and vegetal ornaments engraved on the frames of the crosses. All these elements suggest that both crosses could have been produced in Egypt. The most significant, however, is the inscription IC XC over the Christ, which does not occur on objects of Ethiopian provenance.

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The elaborate engravings of *Näwa Bäg'u* contrast with the figure of Christ, which is made rather rudely (Pl.XVIII). His long and thin arms have very large hands. His feet are also large. His chest is a bulged, unmodelled triangle. His long hair falling on his arms reminds one of a kherchief. The facial features have not been sculptured, but only marked with strokes. The knees, however, have been clearly modelled, as well as the *perizonium* with the belt and folds accentuated by quite deep cuts.

This representation of the Crucified Christ belongs to the early Christian type *Christus triumphans*. His body outstretched on the cross follows the shape of the cross. His eyes are open, the head is kept upright, the whole figure seems to stand in front of the cross, rather than be fastened to it. This impression is strengthened by the fact that no traces of the nails can be seen on his hands and feet. An obvious archaization is made by depicting Christ directly on a liturgical cross without the historical one. Such a type of image occurred sometimes on early pectoral crosses⁴² often of Coptic provenance.⁴³

The representation of the Crucified Christ on Ethiopian processional crosses is not rare. In fact, these are the objects which have preserved the oldest known examples of this scene from Ethiopia.⁴⁴ The living *Christus victor* is represented on them as on *Näwa Bäg'u*. These are, however, the only similarities between *Näwa Bäg'u* and these crosses. The bronze cross IES No.4104 (Pl.XIX)⁴⁵ depicts a young or rather childlike Christ, clothed in a *colobium*, with feet and hands nailed to the cross. Christ on the cross IES No.4651 (Pl.XX)⁴⁶ also wears a *colobium*. Another type of Jesus, with his head slightly turned to the right but with open eyes, with his feet and hands nailed and clothed in a long *perizonium* with a belt, is shown by two silver crosses mentioned before.⁴⁷ Christ in a *perizonium*, already dead, with his head surrounded by a cruciform halo, can be seen on the bronze cross IES No.3988 (Pl.XXI).⁴⁸

The most conspicuous difference between the *Näwa Bäg'u* Crucifixion and those on the crosses described above, is the using of high relief in the former and engraving in the latter cases. Apart from the cross of Zära Ya'qob, which was almost surely an import, we do not know either high relief or sculpture in the round Crucifixion from Ethiopia.⁴⁹ This is most probably because the religious art of Ethiopia accepted neither sculpture, nor images of any similarity to sculpture. We find this rule formulated in the official publication of the Ethiopian Church edited in 1970, where in the section on the sacramentals we read: "The Cross is one of the most important of the Ethiopian Church emblems, which symbolizes the redemption through the death of Jesus Christ. In every church there are many crosses of wood and silver, some small and some large, bearing the picture of the Crucifixion. The Crucifix is unknown, since graven images are not allowed".⁵⁰

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Another question concerning the images on *Näwa Bäg'u* is whether the artist just put together some popular motifs without a deeper meaning, or whether he planned to express a definite idea through the juxtaposition of specifically chosen motifs. As was already pointed out

above, the ram's head, whether original or added later, combined with the figure of Christ on the cross, should accentuate the sacrificial character of His death. The appearance of a cherub or, according to the inscription, of a seraph⁵¹ on the reverse of the Crucifixion is well grounded too. The creature presented here according to the text of the Apocalypse (4, 6-11), i.e. with one head and six wings, indicates that the Cross should be regarded as the visible throne of Christ's invisible kingdom.

It is not clear, however, what rôle is played by the angels on the cover. They are deprived of all attributes and it is only the inscription which tells that they are Michael and Gabriel. Were it not for the inscriptions, we could surmise that they are any two angels, for instance those nameless angels which often accompany the scene of the Crucifixion. They were usually shown either with a gesture of acclamation, as adoring Christ or moaning over him. If we take a closer look at the angels on *Näwa Bäg'u*, we see that they fit very well in the latter category. The angel on the outside of the cover supports his cheek with his hand, which is the typical gesture of grief, the other stands with lowered clasped hands — this is a gesture of grief, too. However, the angels are called Michael and Gabriel and it can hardly be surprising, since both archangels hold a prominent position in the theology and devotion of the Ethiopian Church. In Ethiopian art they are the most often represented angels, usually on both sides of Mary with Child, with swords and processional crosses in their hands. If the inscriptions were added later, as we suppose, the man who wrote them had probably such a scene before his eyes. It cannot be excluded that the introduction of the archangels to the iconographical programme of *Näwa Bäg'u* was due to a preconceived idea, organizing all the pictorial elements of the cross. It could be understood as follows: one of the most important functions of Michael, who among the seven archangels stands closest to God, is to intercede for sinners. He is also the herald at the general resurrection. Gabriel is the messenger of good news. The rôle of cherubs and seraphs is to praise and glorify God and witness by their presence to the eternal sovereignty of Him, who has died on the cross. The victory over Death announced by Gabriel has been accomplished. In the presence of *Christus triumphans*, venerated by the celestial powers, sinners are introduced by Michael, who intercedes for them with the victorious.

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As we can see from the above analysis of *Näwa Bäg'u*, there are very little grounds for regarding the cross as an object of Ethiopian art. The most important argument for this attribution, based on the presence of the Ethiopian inscriptions, is easy to abolish. It is known that the providing of such inscriptions to foreign works of art in Ethiopia was a widespread practice, especially when their iconography was different from that known in the country.⁵² It seems that this was the case of *Näwa Bäg'u*, since Michael and Gabriel are represented here without their attributes usual in Ethiopian art.

Let us list other indications of non-Ethiopian origin with *Näwa Bäg'u*. According to a tradition preserved in Tädbabä Maryam monastery, the cross comes from Palestine. Also the Palestinian or Egyptian origin of the cross is indicated by the story connected with Ləbnä Dəngəl.⁵³

The technique of bronze gilding became widespread in Ethiopia only from the 17th century and applied first of all to the Gondarene crosses — *Näwa Bäg'u* definitely does not belong to this type. The Ethiopian provenance of all older crosses to which the gilding technique was applied is dubious.

The unusual decoration by the ram's head occurs elsewhere only on the cross of Abräntant which is probably an import, judging by its unusual material and technique.

The reliquaries for the preservation of the relics brought to Ethiopia were either of foreign provenance themselves or produced in Ethiopia by foreigners — as we are told by *Maṣḥāfa Tefut*.

The type of cross which could be opened as a kind of little shrine does not occur in Ethiopia except in *Näwa Bäg'u*.

The engraving technique on *Näwa Bäg'u* is rather complicated and without parallel on other Ethiopian crosses. The figures are drawn with skill and presented with details to which

Ethiopian artists did not pay much attention. The most similarities to our cross in this respect are displayed by the engravings of two silver crosses which most probably were produced in Egypt.

The figure of Christ in high relief has no parallel in Ethiopian art, which is only natural if we consider the rules of the Ethiopian Church in this respect.

Some arguments drawn above also give suggestions as to where the *Näwa Bäg'u* cross could come from. It could either be from Palestine or Egypt, in both cases regions with which Ethiopia had had close religious contact. If we try to compare *Näwa Bäg'u* with similar Palestinian objects, we shall have difficulties, since it is not easy to find a similar cross absolutely known as a Palestinian work.⁵⁴ The Coptic crosses, however, are relatively numerous. At least three among them display traits reminiscent of *Näwa Bäg'u*: two processional crosses kept in the Benaki Museum, inv. nos. 11421 and 11422 (Pl.XXII)⁵⁵ and the cross from the former collection of Königliches Museum in Berlin (Pl.XXIII).⁵⁶ All of them have the same form as *Näwa Bäg'u* — a central cross with flared finials surrounded by a quatrefoil frame. Its decoration — each of the arms of the quatrefoil surmounted by a simple pattée cross, is also common. Moreover, the cross of the Benaki Museum, no.11422, is similar to *Näwa Bäg'u* in its drop-shaped ornament.

If we accept the Coptic provenance of *Näwa Bäg'u*, we still have to explain the problem of Christ's figure in high relief, since the Coptic Church is also regarded as having reservations as to sculpture in the round and sculptured crucifixes.⁵⁷ It seems, however, that if this form of art was totally discarded in Ethiopia, in Egypt it was partly tolerated.⁵⁸ The Crucifixion with a three-dimensional figure of Christ does occur on several Coptic liturgical implements, e.g. on the bronze censers: from Amba Shenuti monastery (today in the Coptic Museum in Cairo) (Pl.XXIV); in the collection of Prince Johan Georg of Saxony, from Akhmin (today in the Louvre); from Mar Musa el Habashi (today in the British Museum)⁵⁹; on the pectoral crosses: in the Dumbarton Oaks collection and in the Coptic Museum in Cairo (Pl.XXV)⁶⁰; in the British Museum⁶¹; two in the Berlin Museum (von Gans collection)⁶²; on the cover of a copper bowl in the Coptic Museum in Cairo; on the upper part of the central bronze cross decorating a large tomb door in that museum (Pl.XXVI).⁶³

The two last examples, as well as many other Coptic bronze objects, come from Fayum, which seems to have been eminent in the production of large scale metal articles, particularly in copper and bronze.⁶⁴ Perhaps, but this is only a tentative hypothesis, it was in one of the Fayum workshops that our cross, together with the figure of Christ, was made. As to the engravings, the technique of incising and gilding make us think of a greater artistic center, possibly Alexandria itself.

NOTES

* I received the photographs of *Näwa Bäg'u* cross from Mrs. Diana Spencer and I wish to thank her for her help and permission to reproduce them.

1. The monastery was an important religious center. During the reign of Lalibela its abbot, entitled patriarch, was also governor of the north-west provinces of Ethiopia, cf. Sergew Hable Sellasie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270*, Addis Ababa, 1972, p.268. The emperor Gälawdewos gave special privileges to the monastery, cf. W. E. Conzelman, *Chronique de Gälawdewos (Claudius) roi d'Éthiopie*, Paris, 1895, pp.150-153, 156, 163. The emperor was buried in the monastery, as were some of his successors. Tädbabä Maryam was also an important center of church education.
2. D. Spencer, "In Search of St. Luke: Icons in Ethiopia", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, X, 2, 1972, pp.67-95.
3. *Ibid.*, p.73.

4. J. Perruchon, "Légendes relatives à David II (Lebna Dengel) roi d'Éthiopie", *Revue Semitique*, 6, 1989, p.166. This story is also known in other versions, but the cross of John the Baptist is mentioned only in that connected with the emperor Ləbnā Dəngəl.
5. A. Caquot, "Aperçu préliminaire sur le Maṣḥāfa Ṭēfut de Geshen Amba", *Annales d'Éthiopie*, 1, 1955, p.102n; Aymaro Wondmagegnehu and Joachim Motovu (eds), *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Addis Ababa, 1970, p.70.
6. Spencer, *op. cit.*, p.77.
7. According to what was observed by D. Spencer, the cross is no longer used in services but is always kept in the church treasury.
8. The cross is regarded as having great holiness and, as D. Spencer has experienced, it is impossible to take it one's hands. She got permission to photograph it only during her second visit to the monastery. From a distance she could not, however, observe exactly what techniques were used in the production of the cross.
9. Cf. note 8.
10. *Koptische Kunst. Christentum am Nil*, Villa Hügel, Essen, 1963, nos.492-518; E. Moore, *Ethiopian Processional Crosses*, Addis Ababa, 1971; *Religiöse Kunst. Äthiopiens. Katalog der Ausstellung im Forum für Kulturaustausch des Instituts für Auslandsbeziehungen*, Stuttgart, 1973, nos.38-61; Murad Kamil, "Die äthiopische Prozessions – und Anhängerkreuze", *Ethnologische Zeitschrift*, 1, 1975, pp.69-108; W. Korabiewicz, *La croix copte et son évolution*, Varsovie, 1976; C. Fabo Perczel, "Ethiopian Crosses at the Portland Art Museum", *African Arts*, 14, 1981, pp.52-55; see also a few previously unpublished objects in St. Chojnacki, *Major Themes in Ethiopian Painting*, Wiesbaden, 1983, figs. 45ab, 80ab, 158ab.
11. One of the most important tasks would be to find out the age of *Nāwa Bäg'u*, because so far no dating attempt has been made. It is, however, a very difficult problem to solve. Firstly, no scholar can see it closely in order to get knowledge on the techniques used. No paleographer has uttered an opinion on the inscriptions. A comparison with other Ethiopian crosses is of no use, since *Nāwa Bäg'u* is unique in its class. A similarity of *Nāwa Bäg'u* to some Coptic crosses does not tell us anything about the time of its production, since we do not know how old the Coptic crosses are either. An indication seems to be only the iconography of Christ. His long hair falling on the arms and the *perizonium* are similar to the type which occurs in the Middle-Byzantine period. On the other hand, the living *Christus triumphans* is seldom met after the 15th century, even in peripheral art.
12. It is most often a melt of copper and tin, sometimes of lead and zinc, Moore, *op. cit.*, p.4.
13. The examples known today are: the cross from Maryam Dəngəlat church dated to the 14th century and similar cross of unknown origin, cf. Pls.XVI, XVII; the cross of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (further IES) no.4484, dated to the 15th century, cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, Pl.XXIII; the cross IES no.4142, dated to the 15th-16th century, cf. *Religiöse Kunst. . . op. cit.*, p.193; the cross from Maryam church in Sawne, cf. Gigar Tesfaye, "Reconnaissance de trois églises antérieurs a 1314", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, XIII, 2, 1975, pl.Ic.
14. E.g. the cross of Narga Səllase, cf. *Koptische Kunst. . .*, no.503; the cross IES no.4433 from the 18th century, cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, figs.48-49; the cross IES no.4670 from the period 1682-1706, *ibid.*, fig.36. Some others are made in gilded brass, e.g. the cross IES

no.4195 from the beginning of the 17th century, *ibid.*, figs.39-40; the cross IES no.4193 from the period 1730-1755, *ibid.*, fig.47.

15. The cross IES no.4142 mentioned in note 13 is decorated with small concave discs of gold fastened with silver pins. Only a few of these remain; the cross IES no.3970, dated to the 15th century, is made in gilded bronze, cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, fig.19; the cross from Daga Ḥṣṭifanos monastery, dated to 1434-1468, has openwork encrusted with glass and gold, cf. Pl.X; the cross from Abrāntan monastery in Waldəbba dated to the 14th-15th century cf. Pl.XI, for its detailed description see Girma Elias, "The Monastery of Abrentant in Waldibba", *Abbay* 8, 1977, p.118; C. Lepage, "Recherches sur l'art chrétien d'Éthiopie du X^e au XV^es. Résultats et Perspectives", *Document pour servir à l'histoire des civilisations éthiopiennes*, 4, 1974, p.46, mentions two crosses inlaid with gold and gilded in Mika'el church on Amba Dära.
16. Cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, figs.7-14. The most similar in form to *Nāwa Bāg'u* is the cross IES no.3988, cf. Pl.XXI. Here, however, the whole of the quatrefoil is filled with woven bands and the cross which is in its center is very small.
17. This cross was first published by Girma Elias, *op. cit.*, p.118, who also mentions another cross with a ram's head without any statement on the place of its preservation. It should be a cross connected with the emperor Ṭāṭṭodəm (Ṭāṇṭāwədəm) – Zagwe dynasty.
18. Cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, pp.29-31, figs.20-21.
19. Cf. C. Lepage, "Peintures murales de Ganata Maryam, (rapport préliminaire)", *Documents pour servir . . .*, 6, 1975, fig.6. The painting from Qorqor Maryam is not published.
20. B. Velat, *Études sur le Me'erāf commun de l'office divin éthiopien*, Patrologia Orientalis XXXIII, Paris, 1966, p.258, text p.60.
21. A. Frolow, *Les reliquaires de la vraie croix*, Paris, 1965, p.11.
22. *Ibid.*, p.31.
23. For a detailed description of the crosses cf. A. Frolow, *La relique de la vraie croix. Recherches sur le développement d'un culte*, Paris, 1961, pp.246-248; M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, Washington, 1965, t.II, no.98, pl.LIII.
24. On the cross of Monza, the Crucifixion is engraved on the obverse of the cruciform plate, which is fitted into the interior of the cross. It can be seen, however, since the cover is made of a piece of rock crystal.
25. In Caquot, *op. cit.*, pp.91n and Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, Oxford, 1972, p.267, all texts transmitting this tradition are quoted.
26. Caquot, *op. cit.*, pp.101-107.
27. *Ibid.*, p.104. In the story, the reliquary is described three times, each time a little differently. One of the versions says that the golden cross containing the relic was placed, not on a pedestal, but in a golden box, which in its turn was put in a wooden box inlaid with gold. Another version says it was placed in a silver case, which was put into a bronze one and this, in its turn, into an iron coffer. From this unclear record it can be understood that the relics closed in a golden cross reliquary were displayed during services on a pedes-

tal near the altar (cf. *ibid.*, p.103) to be later put away into the treasury closed in a whole set of boxes.

28. Folios 208v-209r.
29. *Maṣḥāfa ʾĪfūt* – ‘the Book of Ethiopian Genealogies’ exists in only one manuscript (Tadesse Tamrat, *op. cit.*, p.267, note 2, suggests the existence of a copy of this document in the Institute of Archaeology in Addis Ababa), kept in ʾĒgziʾabḥer Ab church on Amba Gəṣen. It is read publicly once a year on the feast of the Invention of the Holy Cross (Mäggabit 10th) According to informants, neither close examination nor copying is allowed. It should contain the text of the Gospels, Senodos and a series of historical documents concerning the history of the Ethiopian church, cf. Caquot, *op. cit.*, p.90. It cannot be excluded, however, that just this book was shown to D. Spencer, cf. her “Trip to Wag and Northern Wällo”, *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, V, 1, 1967, p.103. She saw a manuscript with many miniatures, which usually accompany the Gospel text. The book was called by the priests “Zār’a Ya’qob’s prayer-book”. D. Spencer was allowed to photograph the miniatures, but not the unilluminated beginning of the manuscript (historical notes?). To judge on the basis of the miniatures, the manuscript should be dated to the second half of the 15th century. As to the historical text relating the arrival of relics to Ethiopia, A. Caquot thinks that it is one of the pseudo-historical compilations widespread in Ethiopia at the end of the 18th century. The manuscript, British Museum Or.481, was written most probably for the emperor Fasilides (both the writing and the miniatures corroborate this dating). The historical note is most probably from the 18th century, too.
30. Caquot, *op. cit.*, p.96; Tadesse Tamrat, *op. cit.*, p.268, associates the arrival of the relics with the mission of Pietro Rombulo.
31. The photography of the cross was published for the first time in *Koptische Kunst*. . . , Kat. No.492, after by E. Hammerschmidt, *Äthiopische Handschriften von ʾTānāsee*, 1, Wiesbaden, 1973, Abb.12, and in Murad, *op. cit.*, Abb.13. In all cases only the reverse with the *Maestas Domini* scene is seen.
32. Caquot, *op. cit.*, p.104.
33. In Amharic ቀጣጥር, *qāmaṭar* – I. Guidi, *Vocabolario amarico-italiano*, Roma, 1901, p.252 – ‘filigrane?’, after Säwasaw of Moncullo – ‘voglio, crivello’; E. Gankin, *Amharsko-russkij slovar*, Moskva, 1969, p.286 – ‘prosčivanie’; A. d’Abbadie, *Dictionnaire de la langue amariñña*, Paris, 1868, p.262 – ‘filigran’; in Arabic, قِطْر qimaṭr, qamāfir – E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, London, 1885, p.2565 – a repository for books or writings made of reeds woven together; in Greek *kampra*, ‘case’, *kámpsā*, ‘basket’, H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, 1968, p.873.
34. J. Perruchon, *Les chroniques de Zar’a Ya’qob et de Ba’eda Māryām*, Paris, 1893, p.52.
35. Caquot, *op. cit.*, p.95.
36. Moore, *op. cit.*, fig.13.
37. Spencer, *Trip to Wag* . . . , *op. cit.*, p.105, 107; E. Heldaman, *Miniatures of the Gospels of Princess Zir Gānēlā, An Ethiopic Manuscript dated A.D.1400/1*, Saint Louis, Missouri, 1972, figs.143-150; O. Jäger, *Äthiopische Miniaturen*, Berlin, 1957, Abb.3, 3, 9, 12, 15.
38. Moore, *op. cit.*, fig.28.

39. Its description cf. C. Lepage, "Esquisse d'une histoire de l'ancienne peinture éthiopienne du X^e au XV^e siècle", *Abbay* 8, 1977, pp.74n.
40. A photograph without any information has been published by J. Leroy, *Éthiopie. Archéologie et Culture*, Paris, 1973, fig.91.
41. J. Doresse, "Nouvelles recherches sur les relations entre l'Égypte Copte et l'Éthiopie: XII^e - XIII^e siècle", *Comptes Rendues de l'Accadémie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, juillet-octobre 1970, pp.560-561.
42. A rich repertory of crosses of the type in: M. von Bárány-Oberschall, "Byzantinische Pektoalkreuze aus Ungarischen Funden", *Wandlungen Christlicher Kunst im Mittelalter, Forschungen zur Kunstgeschichte und Christlichen Archäologie II*, Baden-Baden, 1953, pp.207-251.
43. E.g. the gold pectoral cross from Alexandria, today in the British Museum, cf. O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities. . . of the British Museum*, London, 1901, no.286, pl.V. On other crosses of Egyptian provenance cf. E. S. King, "The Date and Provenance of a Bronze Reliquary Cross in the Museo Cristiano", *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia, Memorie*, vol.II, Roma, 1928, p.201 et note 62.
44. The earliest known Crucifixion scenes in wall-paintings today date from the 17th century, on icons from the 16th century. The earliest Crucifixion scenes in the manuscripts from the 13th and 14th centuries represent the type of so-called *crux nuda*; the earliest known miniature with Christ on the cross, in the Kəbran Gospels, comes from ca.1412.
45. Moore, *op. cit.*, pp.17-18, dates the cross to the 12th-13th century. This early dating is based on the iconography of the image of Christ and on the archaic form of the inscription.
46. *Ibid.*, p.18. The author thinks that the cross comes from the 13th-14th century, but in this case the dating is a very difficult task, since the cross was never quite finished.
47. C. Lepage, "Les croix éthiopiennes", *Les dossiers de l'archéologie*, 8, 1975, p.76, writes that the crosses would not be post-14th century.
48. Moore, *op. cit.*, p.21, dates the cross to the 13th-14th century. It would then be the earliest representation of Christ dead on the cross known from Ethiopia. In the manuscripts this type appears in the 15th century: the Gospels of Gunda Gunde (nos.162 and 180, according to the list of the manuscripts from this monastery by R. Schneider) and *Lāḥa Māryām* from Betālāḥem church near Däbrä Tabor.
49. The crucifix from Ḥgzi'abḥer Ab church on Amba Gəṣen is new, cf. Spencer, "Trip to Wag . . .", p.102, as well as the wooden hand cross with the figure of Christ in low relief in the collection of W. von Armin, cf. Korabiewicz, *op. cit.*, il.24. The few crucifixes known in Ethiopia were often gifts from Europeans, as for instance that which Iyasu I received from the French consul, cf. *The Red Sea and Adjacent Countries at the Close of the Seventh Century as described by Joseph Pitts, William Daniel and Charles Jacques Poncet*, W. Foster (ed.), London, 1949, p.139.
50. *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church . . .*, *op. cit.*, p.70.
51. It seems that it is a cherub, rather than a seraph, which is represented here. The inscription, which gives the name of the figure, was probably added later, as in the case of the

angels. The seraphim, as opposed to the cherubim, were often represented with eyes strewn over their wings, but differentiation of both kinds in the iconography was not always clear. The images of seraphim and cherubim occur very seldom in Ethiopian art. For the early period one can mention the miniature of the Nativity in Zir Ganela Gospels, where a creature with a romboid head, two pairs of wings, a kind of base instead of the legs and the pair of hands holding the processional crosses, is called cherub, cf. Heldman, *op. cit.*, fig.13, or the miniature from the manuscript published by C. Lepage, "Révélation d'un manuscrit particulièrement fascinat de l'Éthiopie au 15^e siècle", *Connaissance des Arts*, 274, 1974, p.96, where the cherubs or the seraphs are represented as angels standing on small wheels.

52. E.g. the triptych with Pantokrator from Mädhane 'Alām church in Tādbabä Maryam; the triptych from Yämmadu Maryam called *ṣə'al gəbṣāwi* cf. Spencer, "In Search . . .", pp.77, 80; the Limoges triptych from Maryam Dəngəlat church, cf. *Rock-Hewn churches of Eastern Tigray. An Account of the Oxford University Expedition to Ethiopia 1974*, Oxford, 1975, the plate facing p.8; the icon from Dābrā Ṣahəl in Ṣäre; the triptych from Wafa Iyasus church, Gogḡam, cf. Chojnacki, *op. cit.*, figs.158, 192. Ch. Poncet writes that when he gave the emperor the miniatures of the saints he had brought from Europe, the names of the saints in Ethiopic were inscribed on them, cf. *Red Sea . . .*, p.139.
53. C. Lepage points out that most of the really old crosses treated as relics are considered, by the tradition of the churches where they are preserved, to have been brought by their founders from Jerusalem or Egypt, cf. "Recherches . . .", p.46.
54. A. Grabar, "La précieuse croix de la Lavra Saint Athanase au Mont-Athos", *Cahiers archéologiques*, XIX, 1969, p.112 note 23.
55. According to a letter from Lascarina Bouras, the keeper of the Byzantine collection in Benaki Museum, to whom we would like to express here our thanks. The photography of the cross no.11422 was first published in W. Korabiewicz, *Śladami amuletu*, Warszawa, 1974, il.162.
56. O. Wulff, *Altchristliche und mittelalterliche byzantinische und italienische Bildwerke*, Teil I, Berlin, 1909, Pl.XLIV, Nr.963.
57. J. D. Cooney, "Problems of Coptic Art in Coptic Egypt", *Papers read at a symposium held under the joint auspices of the New York University and the Brooklyn Museum*, New York, 1944, p.39; A. A. King, *The Rites of Eastern Christendom*, Roma, 1947, t.I, pp.383-384.
58. See e.g. E. L. Butcher, *The Story of the Church of Egypt*, London, 1897, vol.I, p.409, where a description of the church of St. Mena in the Mareotis decorated with statues by Al-Bukri is quoted.
59. *Koptische Kunst*. . . , no.203; Johann Georg Herzog zu Sachsen, *Striefzuge durch Kirchen und Klöster Aegyptens*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1914, pp.72-73, Pl.108; Dalton, *op. cit.*, no.540. Their Egyptian provenance was discussed by G. de Jerphanion, "Un nouvel encensoir syrien et la série des objets similaires", *Mélanges Syriens offerts à René Dussaud*, Paris, 1939, t.I, p.311.
60. Ross, *op. cit.*, vol.II, no.15, pp.21-22, pl.XXIII; J. Werner, "Zwei byzantinische Pektoral-kreuze aus Ägypten", *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, VIII, 1936, pp.183-186.
61. Dalton, *op. cit.*, no.286, pl.V.

62. King, *The Date and Provenance . . .*, tav.XXX, fig.19.
63. Both objects are described in M. H. Simaika Pacha, *Guide Sommaire du Musée Copte et des principales églises du Caire*, Le Caire, 1937, p.43.
64. Habib Raouf, *The Coptic Museum. A General Guide*, Cairo, 1967, pp.72-73.

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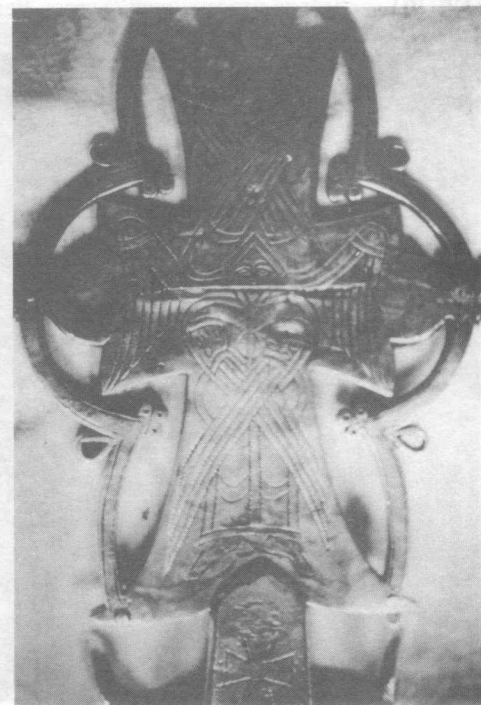
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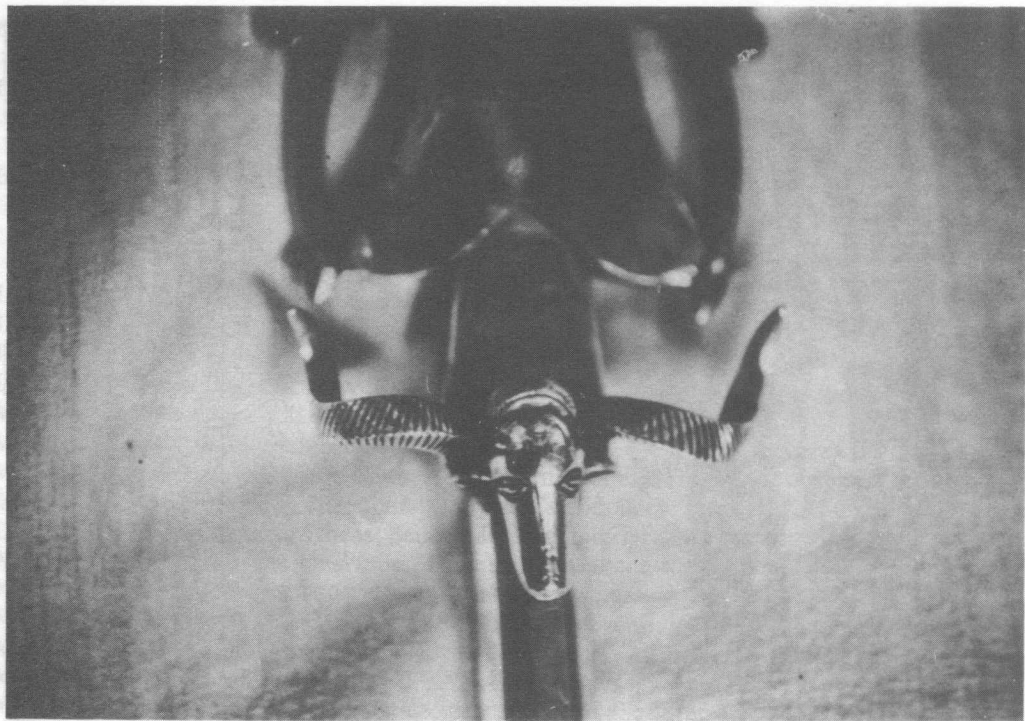
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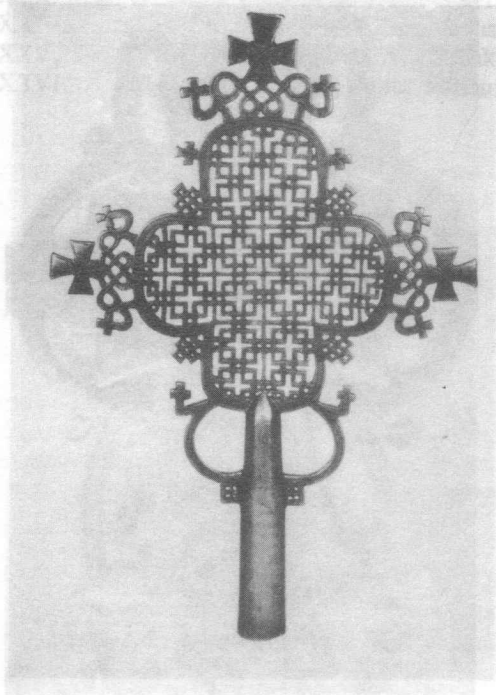


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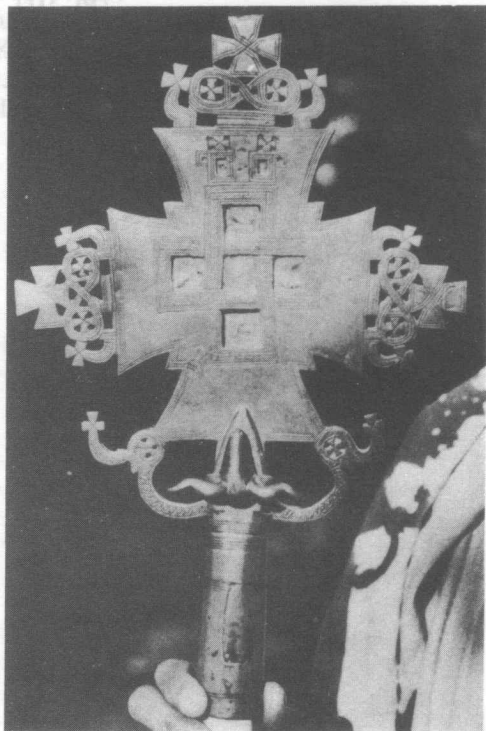


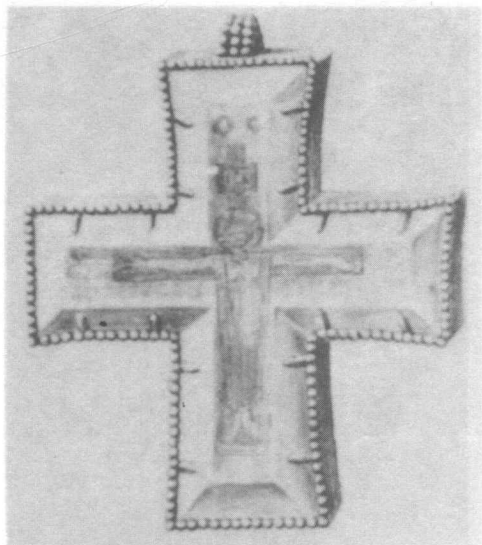
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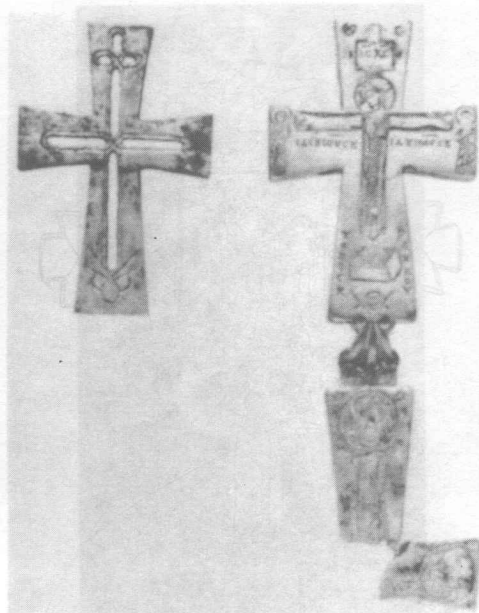


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(Pl. VIII)



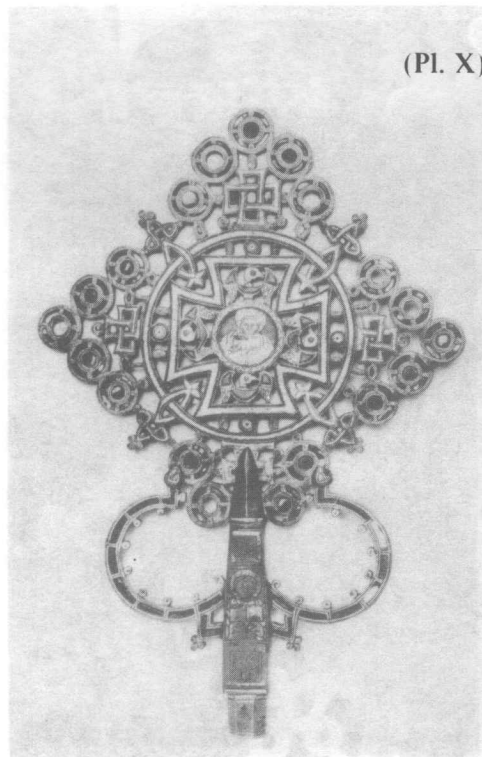
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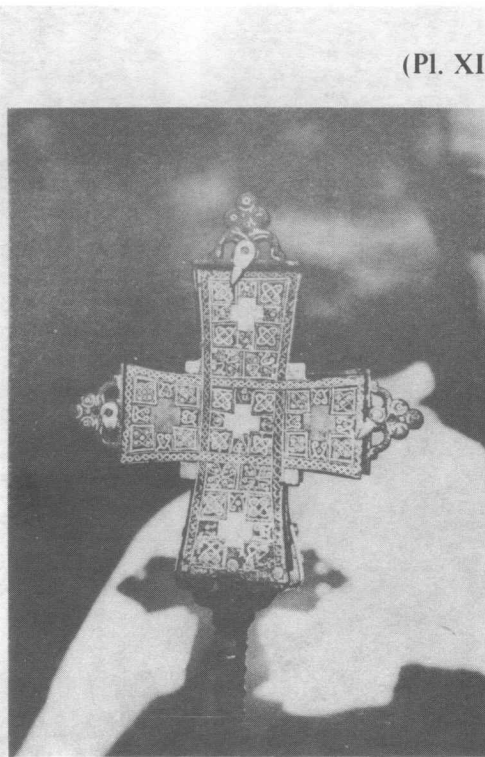
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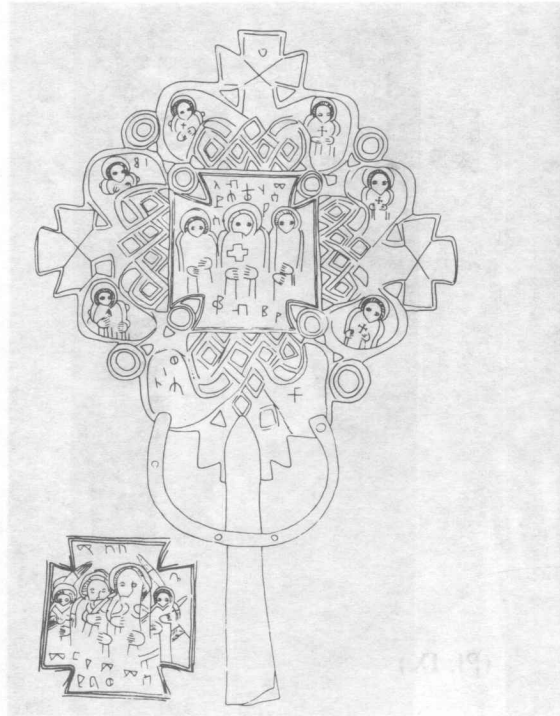
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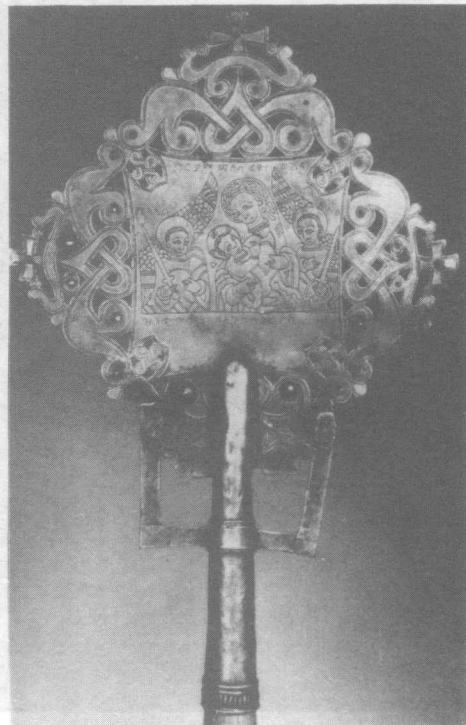
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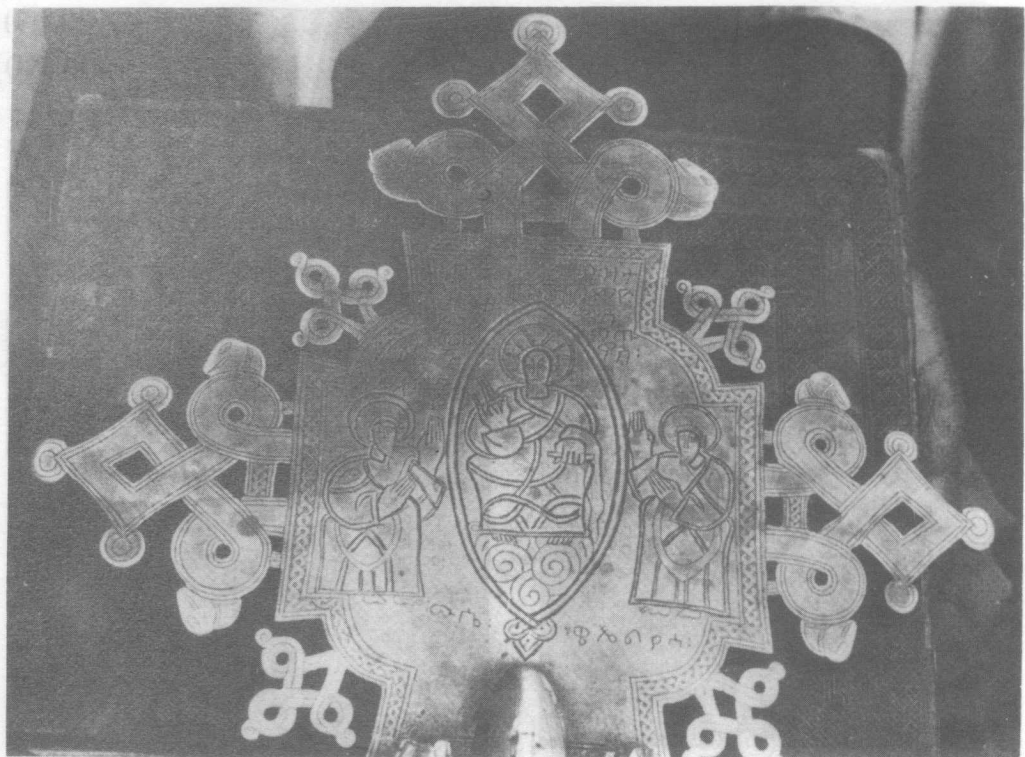


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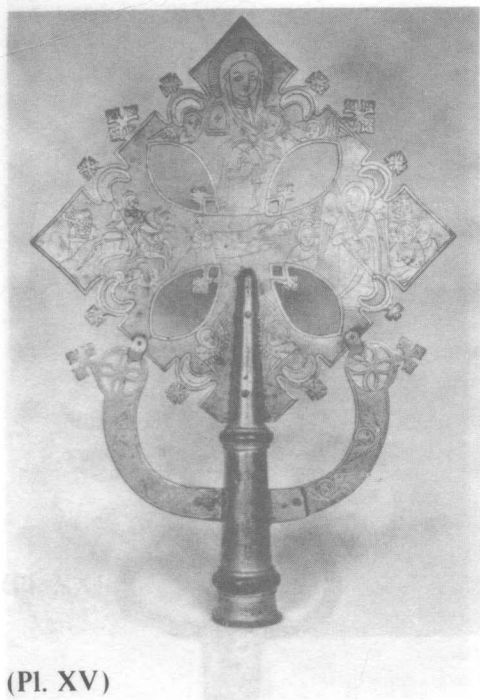


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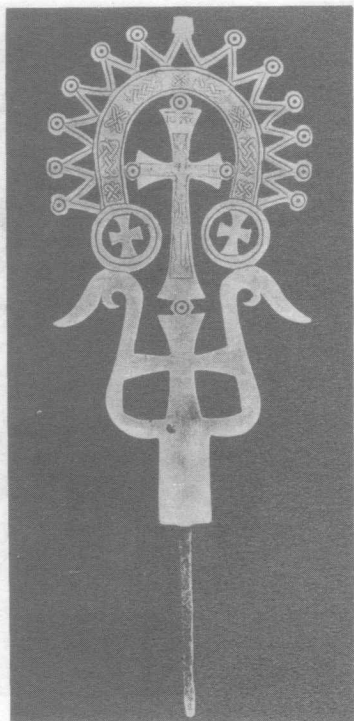
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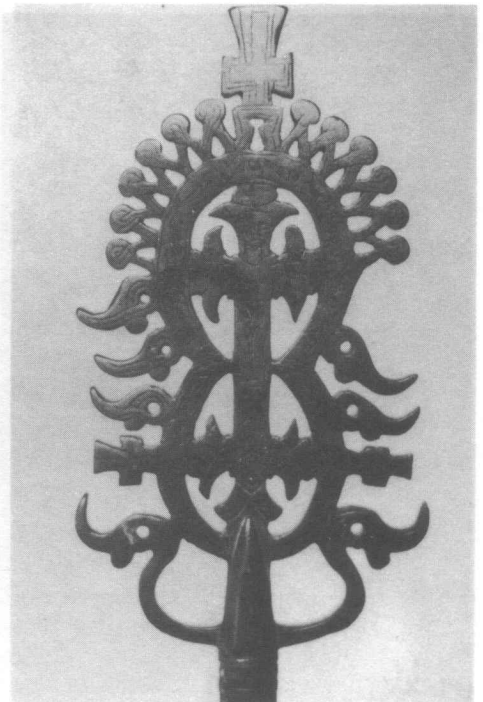
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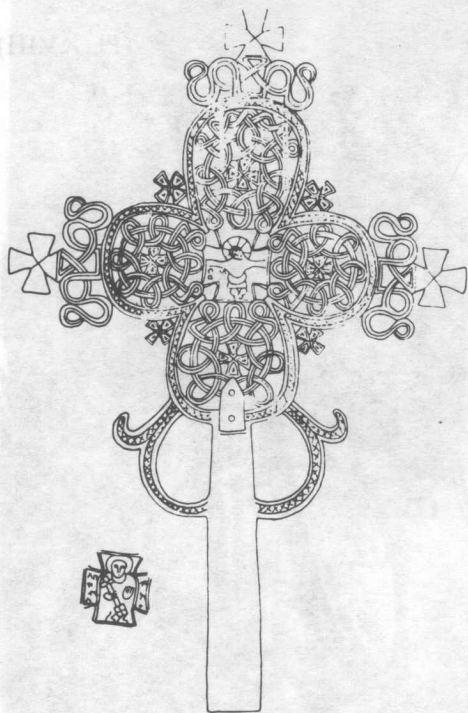


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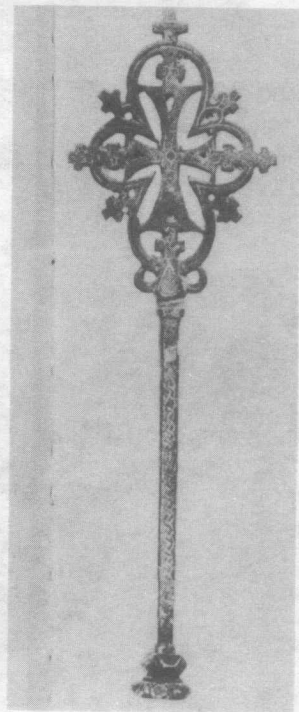


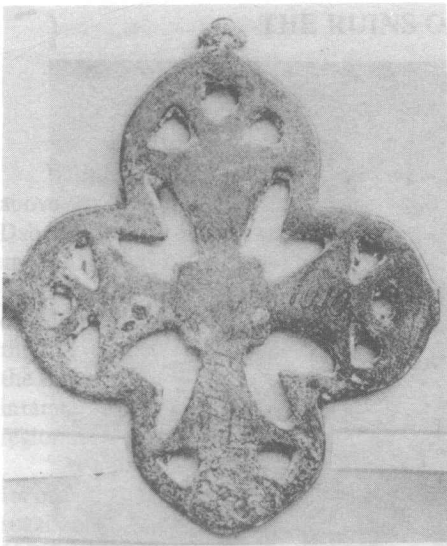
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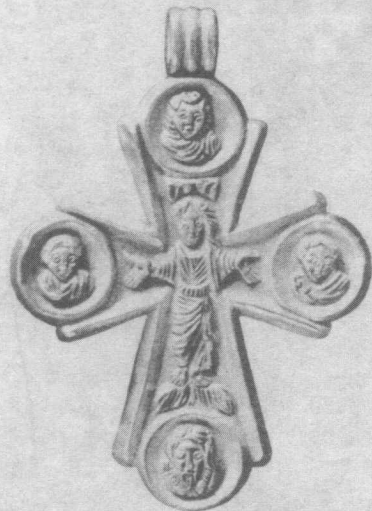


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(Pl. XXV)



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