

依索匹亞的托鉢與口傳詩歌：以*Hamina* 人為例

Timkehet Teffera

Hamina (哈密那)指的是*Amhara* 部族中，以托鉢為生，所代表的一種類似“階級”的一群人。*Hamina*人主要居住在依索匹亞偏遠的鄉鎮中心和東北部地區；而因地區不同，他們也被冠予不同的稱呼，如：*Abba Wuddie*, *Abba Gonda*, *Abba Ayireba and Lalibela*等，指的都是*Hamina*人。長久以來，這一群人數相當少的族群，因為他們祖傳的背景與傳統的生活方式，面對著被大眾所忽視與排擠的窘境，特別是來自*Amhara* 部族成員中身份及地位較好的一群。據傳，*Hamina*人祖先曾患過癲瘋病，所以他們的後代繼承了托鉢的權利，從村落到村落進行挨家挨戶的獻唱乞討。所獻唱內容是經由口傳詩歌中的讚美與祈禱部份。*Hamina*人堅信這種歌唱的傳統，會保護他們及家人免於受到癲瘋病所傳染。

*Hamina*人害怕在白天容易顯露他們的面孔而被認出，所以通常選擇在日出之前進行吟唱乞討的工作。至今為止，透過這種吟唱的托鉢方式，*Hamina*人從善心人士那裡接受所有的禮物(衣服、食物和金錢)時，這也是他們維持生計的主要來源。本論文將對托鉢的傳統作一個短暫的回顧；同時也對音樂作一個細部的分析。此外，對*Hamina*人在歷史的、社會的、文化的和經濟面向的過去與現在提出一些看法。

關鍵詞：依索匹亞、東非、*Hamina*, *Amina*, *Debrahom Dekkama*, *Abba Nezniz*, *Abba Woude*, *Abba Ayireba*, *Abba Gonda*, *Lalibela*, 癲瘋病, 獻唱—托鉢, 詩, 乞討, 少數族群, *Amhara*, *Tgray*, *Oromo*。

Mendicancy and Oral Poetry in Ethiopia: The Case of the *Hamina*

Timkehet Teffera

Abstract

The term *Hamina* refers to a group of people within the *Amhara* ethnic community, representing a kind of a “caste” due to their way of life with mendicancy. The *Haminas* who primarily reside in rural central and northern Ethiopia are named differently in the various regions. Among others *Abba Wuddie*, *Abba Gonda*, *Abba Ayireba* and *Lalibela* are some of these names by which the *Hamina* are identified. Ever since, this relatively small group of people faces neglect and exclusion by and from *Amhara* community members of better status and position, principally due to their ancestral background and traditional way of life. According to stories, the forefathers of the *Hamina* used to have suffered from leprosy so that their descendants inherited their right to practice mendicancy by moving from village to village and from house to house. This orally transmitted mendicancy bases poetic lyrics with praising and blessing parts. The *Hamina* have always believed that this singing tradition would protect them and their families from being imposed by leprosy.

The *Hamina* are afraid to show their faces and to be recognized during the daytime so that the singing is customarily carried out prior to sunrise. This livelihood has been the major means of income to date, since the *Hamina* receive all kinds of presents (clothes, food, and money) from charitable people. My paper will briefly discuss the tradition of mendicancy among this minority group. Parallel to detailed music analysis, it will also consider historical, social, cultural and economic aspects of the *Hamina* in past and present.

Keywords: Ethiopia, East Africa, *Hamina*, *Amina*, *Debrahom Dekkama Abba Nezniz*, *Abba Woude*, *Abba Ayireba*, *Abba Gonda*, *Lalibela*, leprosy, song-mendicancy, poetry, begging, minority, *Amhara*, *Tigray*, *Oromo*

General Overview: Human societies exist in a world of material objects, institutional rules and symbols with meanings they have created according to their social, cultural, political, economic and environmental circumstances.

In Ethiopia, certain groups or subgroups of people are symbolized as castes, simply because they are engaged in certain types of jobs/professions to make their living, i.e. working as blacksmiths, tanners, hunters, fishers, masons, potters, iron smelters, woodworkers, weavers, exorcists and sorcerers¹. Other people's groups whose occupation is fully or partially related with music and making music and who may be categorized as occupational minorities specifically in central and northern highland Ethiopia are the ደብተራ *Debtera*², አዝማሪ *Azmari*³, አስልቃሽ *Asleqash*⁴ and the ሐሚና *Hamina* whose music culture and repertoire this paper aims to consider along with their socio-cultural, socio-religious and historical backgrounds (see also Gelaye 2007: 18).

Very little has been written about the *Hamina* and their livelihood as song-mendicants in general and about the rich poetic style applied in their songs in particular. Based on materials I collected during my fieldwork in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2005, my paper will dwell on the singing (begging) practice of this group. The audiovisual recordings which I compiled in relation to this particular topic contain songs performed by two female *Hamina*, who provided me with first hand information about their livelihood and singing tradition through interviews and questionnaires.

The *Hamina*: The term *Hamina* refers to a social group believed to be afflicted with leprosy, primarily residing in the Christian Orthodox dominated central and northern highland regions of Ethiopia, representing one of the very distinct minority groups of the country. This vast geographic region covers today's *Amara* and *Tigray* as well as parts of the *Oromiya* Administrative Regions of central and southern Ethiopia. The latter specifically refers to the former province of *Shewa* including the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Furthermore, it is believed that some *Hamina* groups also reside

-
- 1 Tibebe (1995: 70) classifies these people's groups as "occupational minorities". Although these craftspeople contribute immensely to the economic wealth of their communities as service-rendering entities, the special skills they possess, unfortunately, led to their discrimination by the rest of society. In fact, other ethnic minorities in Ethiopia, have also been discriminated against and disregarded in the past, for reasons related to gender, ethnicity, and even religion. For instance, the *Bete Israel (Falasha)* who primarily inhabit the region of *Gonder*, faced segregation and isolation due to their Judaic religion. At times they were even forced to convert to Christianity (1995: 69 and 198). Furthermore, the *Falasha* community was also deprived of land and/or livestock ownership. So because of discrimination and loss of land and animals, the *Falasha* were forced to take up a craft specialty as potters and thus became essentially a caste, like other craft specialist groups.
 - 2 Apart from the versatile role of the *Debtera* within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as "musicians and liturgical practitioners", quite a large number of them are magicians and healers. (Shelemay 1992: 243)
 - 3 The traditional *Azmari* (the word is applied to both male and female musicians) are wandering musicians and entertainers. Ever since *Azmaris* predominantly led a "nomadic" life moving from place to place and entertaining their listeners of every social stratum, very often armed with the one-stringed spike fiddle, *Masingo*.
 - 4 The unique profession of the *Asleqash* (usually women's occupation) refers to vocalists who are specialized in mourning ceremonies, specifically funeral services. Among the *Amhara* for instance these professionals offer a wide range of traditional mourning songs.

Leprosy has ever since tormented human populations all over the world leaving the patients to suffer both physically and mentally. Unlike other epidemic diseases such as cholera and smallpox which usually break out in densely-populated areas, the bacteria of leprosy are found anywhere. Even though human beings are prime victims of microbes, leprosy-causing bacteria that leave the skin infected, make body parts and joints numb and leave fingers, toe nails and nose disfigured and/or deformed, are believed to exist in animals and even in soil.

Leprosy had and still has a disastrous impact on socio-cultural life of its victims in general and their relationship with non-affected members of their community/communities in particular. Historical accounts reveal to what extent this disease was comprehended and simultaneously misinterpreted in societies, among others, the belief by many that it is a hereditary disease. In addition, leprosy was considered as sign of punishment, rather than a disease, leading to the fact that those affected by leprosy have been labeled as sinners and impure.

In his article entitled “*The History of Leprosy in Ethiopia up to 1935*”, Pankhurst (1968) briefly explains this disease along with its social, cultural and religious impacts on both the victims of leprosy and their respective societies in the course of the country’s history. His comprehensive references are primarily based on Ethiopian literatures as well as written source materials provided by foreign visitors to Ethiopia, travelers, missionaries, diplomats and individual researchers among them physicians who made observations at different periods and in various parts of Ethiopia primarily from the sixteenth century up to the beginning of the twentieth century. In this relationship, Pankhurst gives details about the different approaches or attitudes as well as actions and reaction of successive Ethiopian emperors, rulers, governors etc. and their societies towards lepers and leper-mendicants. He further notes about their diverse official duties and roles, among others at war, in court, in the army and generally in day to day public life which reveals the extent of their generous treatment by society enjoying an unrestricted privileges at certain times. Pankhurst’s details furthermore refers to the Ethiopian traditional code “*the ፍትሐ፡ ነገስት፡ Fetha Nagast (Law of the Kings), which took an essentially empirical and humanitarian view of the disabling disease*” (ebd. 61). On the other hand though, leprosy sufferers have - to a great extent - faced physical isolation from the rest of society. In some regions they were at times even prohibited to beg by day, a situation which consequently forced them to create companies of beggars and move at night from house to house to request for alms. The reason that *Hamina* are generally described as pre-dawn singers may directly be related to this and numerous other factors.

In the Christian world leprosy is described through the biblical history as a skin disease. Consequently, references in the Old and New Testaments expose quite a lot about the notion of this disease. The Old Testament describes leprosy as a form of bodily and spiritual pollution and/

or permanent uncleanness, thus, calling for isolation of a leper from society. In only very few cases, exceptions were made to relieve the patient from harsh punishments. *“And he shall burn the garment, whether the warp or the woof, in woollen or in linen, or anything of skin, wherein the plague is: for it is a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire (Leviticus 13:52⁷).*

Contrary to the Old Testament, the New Testament regularly refers to this disease in conjunction with the healing miracles of Jesus Christ: *“When he came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said. ‘Be clean!’ Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, ‘See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (Matthew 8:14⁸).*

We may now take a closer look at the history of the *Hamina* from the socio-religious perspective of the Christian population in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church relates this disease with God’s will to test one’s faith. Mesele (2010: 66-67) for instance notes this: *“According to the ordinance of the Church, the mortification of the body is generally perceived as a sign of the impurity of the soul and corporeal sufferings as a means to cleanse that impurity. Given that everyone living in this world is impure or ‘leprous in soul’ (or pseudo lepers), corporeal sufferings befall chosen people whose devotion and patience God wants to test as a ‘leper in body’. Thus, it is believed that the latter will be rewarded in the hereafter. Those who missed the chance being ‘lepers in body’ will also be rewarded in the hereafter based on their amount of compassion and charity to the body lepers. Therefore, religious compassion and alms bridge the corporeal lepers to the soul lepers in the Orthodox Christian tradition”.*

Pankhurst (1984: 63) furthermore states that even though lepers in Ethiopia suffered under stigmatization and isolation, they were generally tolerated and *“never regarded as objects of horror, but rather of pity, even of sympathy, among Christians who remembered Christ’s treatment of them”* (see also Demozu 2003: 68). In addition to the negative attitude Christian Ethiopians and the rest of the society have towards lepers, these groups of people were at times stigmatized by those members of their own family who were not affected by the disease. The extent of stigmata, along with ‘mistreatments and neglects,’ may, of course, vary from place to place depending on the overall social and cultural circumstances of society. Nonetheless, the fact that the *Hamina* have experienced

7 See also the commands of the Lord to Moses and Aaron in Leviticus 14: 33-57 and in Exodus 19:6. See furthermore Edersheim 1994: 286-288.

8 Supplementary information may be found in Matthew 26:6; Mark. 1:40-45, 14:3; Luke 5:12-14; Psalm 133:2. Additional information may be accessed in Pankhurst’s (1984: 59-61) accounts concerning the conception of leprosy in the biblical chronicle in general and in the history Ethiopian Christian religion in particular as a result of his comprehensive studies of Ethiopian manuscripts, paintings, oral history and legends.

are likewise song-mendicants.

How often *Hamina* practice song-mendicancy, differs from place to place and also from one social group to the other. In general two types of song-mendicants may be distinguished. The first group refers to seasonal vagrants whose main occupation is based on agriculture and cattle breeding. These groups carry out their mendicant tradition once or twice a year, mainly after the harvest season (Mesele 1993: 2012). It belongs to a common practice that many of them move far away from their native villages, to avoid identification by members of society within their village. The second category of *Hamina* mendicants refers to permanent vagrants with no other occupation as well as no other ambition to make their living. Thus, they are continuously on the move throughout the year singing and soliciting for alms.

Hamina song-mendicancy is nowadays not only observed in rural areas, but also in urban towns and cities such as Addis Ababa where these groups of peoples frequently take temporary shelters by renting space in the area known as *Merkato*, western part of the city.

It so happened that, while I was in the midst of conducting my ethnomusicological fieldwork in Addis Ababa in 2005, where I had the opportunity to come across the two female *Hamina*, *Mebrat* and *Yekitinesh* (figure 2), who, along with other members of their community, were on a brief stay in the city deliberately to practice song-mendicancy.



Figure 2: *Mebrat Mitiku* (left) and *Yekitinesh Shimelis* (right)

Photo: T. Teffera, 16.03.2005, Addis Ababa

The number of the *Hamina* migrating into Addis Ababa and other major Ethiopian towns for the mere purpose of practicing mendicancy has registered a constant increase in the past decades. This can be related to the ever rising migration from rural area to urban centres, a common phenomenon in a third-world country like Ethiopia. Such uninterrupted migrations, in search of better life have caused socio-economic problems on the existing rapid population growth, in addition to the already high number of homeless urban dwellers who are less fortunate and forced to become vagrants⁹ due to

9 There is no doubt that the begging tradition on the one hand and that of alms-giving on the other foster unproductiveness. The extreme increase of vagrants, particularly in Addis Ababa, has largely been tolerated by the society. Until very recent time this problem has been disregarded by successive Ethiopian governments, who did not undertake respective measures to tackle this phenomenon on time.

their poor living conditions. It is my assumption that this situation might have spurred the *Hamina* to join these people and look for income-generating opportunities through begging by staying living in cities either temporarily or permanently.

In earlier periods, when the *Hamina* exclusively performed pre-dawn songs covering their faces to disguise their identity, there was principally no access to carry out fieldwork on the spot. Hence, Powne's (1968: 69) justifiable concern in accordance with this matter is understandable, since by the time he was conducting his ethnomusicological research in Ethiopia in the 1960s it was indeed hardly possible to discover the *Hamina* (he uses the term *Lalibela*) who would perform their songs during the daytime. Powne (1968: 71-72) points out the following: "*Nobody knows who the Lalibeloch are. You may see a severely afflicted leper in the street, but you do not know if he was one of the singers at your door that morning. In the daytime all the Lalibeloch except the obvious sufferers take their place as ordinary members of the village, tilling or working at some trade. They do not reveal themselves as the dawn singers and probably no one wants to identify these singers. But nobody sings their songs except the Lalibeloch themselves, and you will not find a Lalibela song included in any program of folk music. Their songs go unrecorded, tainted by the disease which taints so many of them; but passed on from generation to generation in this unique brotherhood. ...Doubtlessly the songs of the Lalibeloch would reward the student with a wealth of material if it were possible to find the Lalibeloch and talk to them; but they go unknown and unseen except for their enveloping clothes. One could hide a microphone by the gate and catch some of their songs; to do more than that, to persuade them to reveal their secrets, would require patient work to obtain their confidence*".

Indeed, *Hamina* songs are not performed by others outside their own cluster. However, we should not fail to notice that these songs are primarily related to their historical and hereditary backgrounds as well as their abandoned custom of "begging for alms." So due to the unique function of these songs and their message, no one would dare to perform same on other folk/traditional music events, since they would not fit any other occasions.

Furthermore, the concern in reference to the inaccessibility of *Hamina* songs for scholarly studies and preservation is quite understandable. Shelemay (1982: 128) similarly mentions the difficulty of finding *Hamina* (she also uses the term *Lalibela*) when she states that "*...despite several attempts, I was unable to contact Lalibeloch when I lived in Ethiopia from 1973-1975. In 1975, I obtained a single tape of their music from the archives of Radio Voice of the Gospel. This performance, slightly over six minutes in length, was not documented nor credited to a collector. In 1977, during a six week visit to Ethiopia, I was able to meet Lalibeloch...interviewed a couple and taped approximately twenty minutes of their music.*"

Compared to the situation in previous decades, the access to the *Hamina* and their music is

ritual songs. That is what makes *Hamina* songs unique; their clear contextual message as well as their role and function.

The orally transmitted singing culture of the *Hamina* has, in the course of time, developed its own characteristic features so that one may recognize their song from a distance. The distinct attributes of their songs thus are a) their melancholic (sad) melodies; b) their elaborated and free melodic ornamentation which, of course, differs from one vocalist to another. Apart from solo songs that may not include recitation parts, duets may be composed of both recited (speech) and sung (melody) parts that are accordingly executed by the respective singers. The songs are usually arranged in a cyclic form and in free rhythm. They, furthermore, contain 3 to 5 pitches which in terms of their intervallic relationship show close similarity to the traditional modes/scales, the so-called *Qinit*, used among music cultures of central and northern Ethiopia.

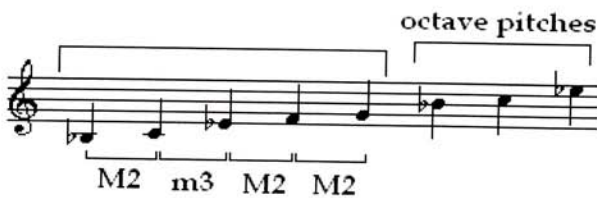


Figure 3

Song Analysis: The duet song under discussion is performed by my informants, *Mebrat Mitiku* and *Yekitinesh Shimelis*, I mentioned above. It consists of a multi-layered texture. Five pitches with approximate intervals of M2-m3-M2 and M2¹¹ (see the first five pitches in figure 3) play a vital role in the melodic structures,

with the first three also appearing an octave higher so that the tonal range is stretched to an octave and a fourth. It is not easy to transcribe this free rhythmic song in an elaborated manner. Therefore, in figures 4 - 6 excerpts of the repeatedly occurring cyclic melodic-rhythmic structures representing the song parts of each singer have been reproduced as outline and as musical notation (transcription).

The song is arranged consisting of both recited (speech) and sung (melody) sections accordingly divided among the two singers.

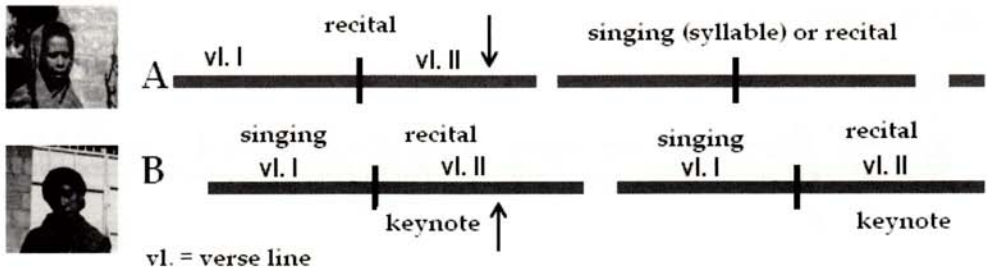
Regardless of which singer begins performing the song, one can perceive a clear division of role after a short while, due to the cyclic movement of the song with each course appearing again and again with slight melody variations.

The arrangement and/or structure of one cyclic course and the task of each singer may be explained as follows (see verse lines = vl. / figure 4):

Figure 4: Duet song outline performed by two *Hamina* (see also figure 5 and 6); arrow marks

¹¹ One should expect microtonal deviations, sometimes up to 100 Cents (1/2 tone). It is then very common that adjacent pitches with half-tone steps may also appear. These pitches are not so audible, but they serve as connecting pitches between the five pitches indicated above.

indicate the overlaps where both the singers recite different poems



Singer A starts with a recitation part, which is instantly picked up by singer B, virtually creating a canonic style of singing. Hence, singer B repeats the recited poem of singer A, lending it a melody¹². Singer B proceeds to the second, rhyming verse line, which she – this time – recites instead of singing it. In doing so, she exploits a single pitch b-flat which is the lowest pitch of the pitch sequence (figure 3), which seems to play a central role during the entire song, specifically in the parts of singer B often appearing as an ending pitch. In figure 5 the so far explained song part of singer B, namely verse lines I and II, is additionally demonstrated by means of musical notation.

Figure 5: Extract of a *Hamina* duet song; one cyclic movement of singer B, recorded by T. Teffera, 16.03.2005

verse line I ♩ = 110

ጸ: ካል-ጋ-ው: ው-ረ-ጅ-ፍ: ተ-ቀመጭ: ከ-ውን-በር: na te-qe-mech ke-wen-ber

ጸ kal-ga wu wu-re-ji-na te-qe-mech ke-wen-ber

verse line II

ካል-ጋ-ው: ው-ረ ጅ ፍ: ተ ቀመጭ: ከ ወን በር: አን ጅ: ካ ለሽ: ባ ገር: እ መ ቤ ቴ: እ ኛጭ: አ ን ቸ ገር::
 kal-gaw wu-re-ji--na te-qe-mech ke-wenber: an-chi ka-lesh ba-ber ጳ--me-be-te ጳ-nam a-ni---che-ger

12 As the song proceeds, one may notice that there are also certain instances where singer B does not automatically sing the recited verses of singer A. She may use totally different verses.

melody structure.

Table I: *Hamina* poems, Solo song and recitation of a *Hamina* from the region of *Shewa*, source: DW Radio-Interview, Date 2008(?)

	Amharic	Translation
1	በምድር፡ ላይ፡ ካልሰጡት፡ ካልመፀወቱት ይቀራል፡ ምድር፡ ላይ፡ ደበሎ፡ ነው፡ቤት።	It is worth giving alms to the needy/poor, because the earthly home never lasts ... it's temporary.
2	እስቲ፡ ፈልጉ፡ በዓለም፡ የሚቀር፡ ሰው፡ የሞትን፡ ገፈቷን፡ ምሬቷን፡ ሳይቀምሰው።	Would you ever find a person who lives on earth forever....without tasting the bitterness of death?
3	ይነጋል፡ እያልን፡ እያደረ፡ መሸ፡ እየመራረጠ፡ ዕቃውን፡ አሸሸ።	We were aspiring to see dawn, but the dusk came instead. He (God) kept on picking one after the other. ..taking them back to Him (referring to death)
4	ቶሎ፡ቶሎ፡ ሂዱ፡ ብልሃቱ፡ ምንድን፡ ነው? ድሮም፡ መንገዳችን፡ ፈትና፡ ኋላ፡ ነው፡ ዓለም፡ የምታልፈው፡ እንደዚህ፡ ብሎ፡ ነው።	Move faster folks; what's the matter with you? Our journey is set to follow one another (in death) That's how we leave this world behind.
5	መሥራት፡ ለአምካችን፡ መልካም፡ ሥራ፡ እንዲህ፡ ኖሮ፡ ኖሮ፡ ሞት፡ አይቀርምና።	All God wants from us is doing good on earth Because death will take over at the end of the day!

Figure 7: 12 Syllables/verse line

ካልጋው፡ ውረጅና፡ ተቀመጭ፡ ከወንበር፡
አንቺ ባገር፡ ካለሽ፡ እኛም፡ አንቸገር፡

vl. I	ካል	ጋው፡	ው	ረ	ጅ	ና፡	ተ	ቀ	መጭ፡	ከ	ወን	በር፡
vl. II	አን	ቺ፡	ባ	ገር፡	ካ	ለሽ፡	እ	ኛም፡	አ	ን	ቸ	ገር።
syllables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12

Table I shows part of the poems applied in the song in the original script, Amharic which is translated into English. Mention must be made that the translation was not easy and not always very pleasing, since the poetic significance of the lyric and its deep contextual implication fade away in the course of translation. In this relation Gelaye (2007: 22) for instance points out that “*translating Amharic poetry is not an easy task. In the process of translation, the Amina songs and poems might lose their poetic quality, rhythm, concision and depth of meaning. Sometimes, the rich local customs and metaphorical expressions are not easily translatable from Amharic into English. Amharic poems and songs, such as feelings of the performance, emotion, irony, onomatopoeic expressions might be missing in the process of translation.*”

Table I: Hamina Song Poems; recording: 25th March 2005, Addis Ababa; T. Teffera

	Amharic	English
1	ካልጋው፡ ውረጅና፡ ተቀመጭ፡ ከወንበር፡ አንቺ ባገር፡ ካለሽ፡ እኛም፡ አንቸገር፡፡	Get out of the bed and sit on the chair- Your presence will ease our problems.
2	(ወለላዋ፡ እመቤት፡) ወለል፡ አርጊውና፡ ይሙቀን፡ እሳቱ፡ ዕድቅ፡ አይሻልም፡ ወይ፡ ለላይኛው፡ ቤቱ?	Gorgeous Lady! Keep us warm with your glowing beauty, Isn't it better to be showered with earthly blessing for life after death?
3	ካልተበጠበጠ፡ ማር፡ አይኖንም፡ ጠጅ፡ እንደው፡ ደስ፡ ይሰኛል፡ ጥሩ፡ የሰው፡ ልጅ፡፡	Honey won't turn into wine unless it's mixed with water; I feel great about people with good manner.
4	አለሁ፡ በይኝና፡ ዕድሌን፡ ልወቀው፡ ናፈቀኝ፡ ጠባይሽ፡ ያ፡ የማይጎንጠው፡፡	Assure me of your presence and make me feel at ease; I'm missing that wonderful character of yours.
5	በሐምሌ፡ በነፃሴ፡ ይታጨዳል፡ ከሴ፡ አንቺ፡ አይደለሽም፡ ወይ፡ ያገሩ፡ እንደራሴ?	July and August is harvest time for <i>Kesse</i> ¹⁴ , Aren't you "the envoy" in the whole country?
6	ኧረ፡ ውጪ፡ ውጪ፡ ውጪ፡ አደባባይ፡ ግርማ፡ ጥገስ፡ አለሽ፡ ከትከሻሽ፡ ላይ፡፡	Please show up, show up in public- You have a graceful appearance at first glance.
7	በፍቅርሽ፡ ነው፡ እንጂ፡ በጠብሽ፡ ማን፡ ደርሶ? ለወደድሽው፡ ማር፡ ነሽ፡ ለጠላሽው፡ ኮሶ፡፡	Who would dare to disagree with you rather than maintaining your friendship? You are as sweet as honey for those you like and as bitter as <i>Kosso</i> ¹⁵ for those whom you hate.
8	አገሬ፡ ወዲያ፡ ነው፡ ገመገሙን፡ ዞሮ፡ ዝናሽ ነው፡ ያመጣኝ፡ እንደ፡ ወፍ፡ አብርሮ፡፡	My home town is far away across the mountain- It was your fame that brought me here flying like a bird.
9	አሥር፡ ብር፡ ሰጠኝኝ፡ እንደተለባሽ፡ የባንዲራው፡ ታማኝ፡ ያገሩ፡ ግማሽ፡፡	'She' gave me 10 Birr (ETH currency). The guard of the flag; the envoy of the country.

The content of these poems refers to a female individual (my mother), who is given due credit in recognition to her generosity and splendor. She is referred to as the “guard of the flag” and “the envoy of the country”, expressions that indicate the respect and her high social status. The use of laudatory nicknames of individuals is quite common in *Hamina* songs, thus showing similarity with other traditional song repertoires of central Ethiopia. Praise songs generally belong to the widely used poetic forms in the music culture of the *Amhara*. These are, for instance, observed in the traditional songs of the minstrel, *Azmari*, whose role is very vital in the society. We also find praise poetry applied in war songs known as *ሽለላ Shilela* and heroic recitals called *ቀረርቶ Qererto* and *ፉከራ Fukkera*. These are “the most widely appreciated poetic genres that are deeply rooted in the oral tradition of the Amhara

14 *Kesse* is also known *Dama Kesse*. It is a medical plant belonging to the species *Ocimum lamiifolium* of the Lamiaceae family. This plant is very well known and widely used in Ethiopian traditional medicine against colds and other ailments.
15 *Kosso* is a medical plant *Hagenia abyssinica*, *Rosaceae loe Vera = Curacao-Aloe*.

people of Ethiopia in general, in Goğğam in particular”¹⁶ (Gelaye 2006: 588).

In table II an extract of sample praise poems recited by two *Amina* from Goğğam and recorded by Getie Gelaye in 1997/98 is represented just to demonstrate the large variety of such poems.

The *Hamina* have a tradition to acquaint themselves with given circumstances, such as inquiring the name, status and other details about the owner/s of the house they plan to go for singing-begging, where they expect a good charity or alms. This will give them the opportunity to prepare selected poems ahead, inserting laudatory nicknames in order to please their benefactor /s. For instance, a *Hamina* song mendicant, who frequently received charity from a person known for his generosity and resides in his vicinity, suddenly heard of the demise of his benefactor. Consequently he went to the house of the dead to console the mourning family members, but also to express his grief over the loss of this humble individual. Hence, he sang a song of lament shown in table III.

Through the song text the song-mendicant expresses his sympathy for the deceased, remembering his generosity. The rhyming verses are successively performed in a fast tempo with very short breathing gaps. The song consists of long and short melody phrases that are variously arranged by the singer. As the musical notation shows in figure 8, at the beginning of each verse line the syllable (ኧ), put in brackets, consisting of the pitch set B-c[#]-e' appears. This syllable seems to serve as an introduction to each verse line.

Table II: Poems recited by an *Amina* song mendicant from *Goğğam*; recorded by Getie Gelaye 1997/98 in *Goğğam*, Ethiopia (see also Gelaye 2007: 23).

ኧረከ! ዓለሚቱ፥ ወየው! ዓለሚቱ	Oh! This world Woe! This world!
ገና ከልጅነት መርቆህ አባትህ	Your father has blessed you in childhood,
እስከ ዶሮ ጩኸት የዘለቀ ራትህ።	Your wealth lasts long to the end.
ኧረ! ምን በዕድልህ ለምን ይቀናሉ?	Oh! Why are they jealous of your fortune?
የድል እንጀራ ነው የምትበላው ሁሉ።	All that which you live on, is what you have earned.

16 It was customary in former centuries that war lords were accompanied by singers (both solo and group singing) chanting praise songs during long and tiresome journeys to battle. In this relation Gelaye (2006: 587) notes the following: “Praise poetry is one of the most developed and elaborated poetic genres in Africa. It focuses on the achievements of prominent figures, heroes, military and political leaders, etc., describing the character, personality, power and skill that make them superior to others. In Goğğam, as elsewhere in Ethiopia, a marked military tradition, taking revenge on an enemy, hunting and other special achievements of the people are highly regarded, and praised in war songs and heroic recitals. Indeed, it has been an important culture and tradition to praise the skills, adventures and exploits of emperors, kings, nobles, warriors and great war-leaders in poetry and songs.”

አንሰላው ፥ ስጋጃው ይነጠፍልህ	Let the bed sheets and the carpets be spread for you,
ብርሌው ፥ ብርጭቆው ይለቅለቅልህ	Let the <i>birille</i> and the glasses be rinsed for you,
ዙፋንና ፥ ግምጃ ይጋረድልህ	Let the throne and velvet be drawn for you,
ምን ሰብብ አለብህ በእናት ባባትህ	You've inherited no blemish from your father and mother,
ለግብር ያሰቡህ ልቅም ስንዴ ነህ።	You are pruned wheat intended for the holy Eucharist.
ልምቅ እንደ ስንዴ ጥሩ እንደ ውተት	You are pruned like wheat, pure like milk,
በሰባት አያትህ የሌለህ ክፋት።	Who has no blemish throughout the 7 th generation.

Only three pitches, namely B-c[#]-e' play a vital role in the melodic arrangement of the song.

Pitch A occurs only at two spots. Also the initial pitch, namely the possible keynote, of the sequence is unclear. However, as a whole it is most probably the *Təzətā Qəñət* with pitch A serving as the keynote of the five tone sequence of the traditional scale/mode. Pitch f[#] that would have completed the sequence of this *Qəñət* is not used in the song.

Table III: *Hamina* song of lament, Recorded by *Ayele Gugsä* in *Assela*, Ethiopia 1993

vl.	mp	Amharic	English
1	a	(ኧ) እሰዬ: እሰዬ: እሰይ: የኔ: አበባ:	Well, well my flower!
2	a ¹	(ኧ) ሞንሙዋናዉ:	Hey, Charming!
3	a ²	(ኧ) አወይ: ጉግሳው:	<i>Gugsä</i> (name of the demised),
4	a ³	(ኧ) የነ: እያሱ: አባት:	<i>ayāsū</i> 's ¹⁷ father,
5	b	ኧረግ: አለም: (3x)	Oh! This World! Oh! This World!
6	a	(ኧ) ወይት: ትሄዳለህ?	Where are you going to?
7	c ¹	(ኧ) ወይት: ትሄዳለህ: ስትል: ደፋ: ደፋ?	Where are you going to... rushing?
8	c ²	(ኧ) ወይት: ትሄዳለህ :ስትል: ደፋ: ደፋ?	Where are you going to... rushing?
9	d	(ኧ) ቤትህ: መሰለህ: ወይ: መደድም: ቢሰፋ?	Do you think it's your home, even though the place is spacious ¹⁸ ?
10	b ¹	ኧረግ: አለም: (2x)	Oh! This World! Oh! This World!
11	c ⁴	ያበላኝ: ነበረ:	He used to feed me,
12	c ⁵	ያበላኝ: ነበረ: እያግበሰበሰ:	he used to feed me abundantly,
13	c ⁶	ወይ: እያሱ:	Oh! <i>ayāsū</i> 's father, Oh!
14	e	(ኧ) የነ: እያሱ: አባት: እጁ: በሰበሰበ	<i>ayāsū</i> 's father; his generous hand perished.

mp = melodic phrase

Figure 8: Song poem of a song mendicant, Recorded by *Ayele Gugsä* in *Assela*, Ethiopia 1993

♩ = 200

a ----- se---ye a ---se ---ye a -- sey ye--- ne a --be--ba

a ----- mon-mwa - na-wu

a ----- wey gu --ga--sa-wu

a ----- ye -- ne a-ya- sun a -- ba -- ta

17 Son of the deceased; also other names of family members; i.e. brothers and sisters may be mentioned.

18 The deceased referred to in this sentence which – in other words - means: Why do you leave us? Do you think the grave is your home?

a e reg a le-m e reg a lem

a we-det ta he-da-le-ha

a we-det ta he-da-le-ha si-ti de-fa de-fa *gliss.*

a we-det ta he-da-le-ha si-ti de-fa de-fa

a be-ti-ha me-se-leh we-ya me-de-dam bi-se-fa

a e reg a le-m a e reg a lem

Conclusion: There is no doubt that leprosy has had immense negative impacts in Ethiopia. We need to put into question whether the tradition of song-mendicancy (including all types of beggary) might have encouraged attributes such as idleness, failure, laziness. Could this account refer to the *Hamina* and their song-mendicant (begging) tradition, in general? Do they really believe in their genealogical ancestry of leprosy and in the infliction with the disease, since this seems to be a justification to carry on the begging tradition that has prevailed until present time? Could the indiscriminate charity of Ethiopians have contributed to the increasing number of vagrants to an extent that has become difficult to distinguish between the genuine and the bogus beggar?

Before and even after the discovery of its biological cause, leprosy patients such as the *Hamina* were stigmatized and shunned. Even today, after a medical treatment for leprosy has been found and the disease has become under control in Ethiopia, the *Hamina*, in one way or another, are constantly associated with their ancestral background.

We must admit, though, that due to its prevalence, leprosy and the socio-cultural circumstances that were created because of the disease, have paved the way for the creation of art that influenced other cultural practices. This history of isolation the *Hamina* had to go through, coupled with despair

caused by physical inability to work and earn their living on the one hand and the struggle for survival on the other, must have forced them take begging for alms as the only solution to the problems they have been facing for generations. The deeply rooted religious belief and tradition of almsgiving in Ethiopia, however, did not help much to solve problems, but rather encouraged the increase of the number of hands longing for alms, namely the culture of begging (Demozu 2003: 81-85).

In order to abolish stigmatization and abandoning of the disabled in general, health centers in Ethiopia have been established since 1901 with the assistance of foreign countries. For the first time ever, leprosy sufferers began to be treated along with other patients, and it is believed that they will increasingly be accepted by the community and be able to enjoy participating in social activities in the long run. Disability prevention is ever more being considered as a priority by the present Ethiopian government. This will, hopefully divert the stigma that has existed for centuries of leprosy as a major social problem.

As mentioned earlier, it is clear that not all *Hamina* are lepers and not all lepers are *Hamina*. For that matter, it requires a concerted effort to use the media as a major tool to change the wrong perception and stigma associated with leprosy in Ethiopia, while at the same time, embrace all who have been infected by the disease in any possible development activities, so that they will be productive, thus avoiding dependency and begging. At the same time, providing proper medical care and treatment at an early stage to those who are diagnosed with the disease will minimize the number of those that are disabled and stigmatized because of the disease. Regarding the *Hamina* song repertoire which has developed over the past centuries, it is important to conduct in-depth studies to understand the rules of musical organizations, song structures, forms and styles and, last but not least, the poetic content of these songs which would partly reflect the historical, social, cultural and political background and state of the *Hamina* in past and present-day Ethiopia. Comparative studies of similarly segregated societies residing in other parts of the world that either suffered of leprosy in the past or are at present still confronted with it, will definitely be a great source of information on this very crucial subject matter and its consequences both from biological and social point of view.

References

- Demozu**, Woubishet. 2003. *Begging as a Survival Strategy: Conferring with the Poor at the Orthodox Religious Ceremonial Days in Addis Ababa*. Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Addis Ababa University. Addis Ababa.
- Edersheim**, Alfred. 1994. *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (Updated Edition). Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. Massachusetts.
- Gelaye**, Getie. 2005. *Ethiopian Contributions to the Study of Amharic Oral Poetry*. Stefan Bruene and Heinrich Scholler (eds.), 2005. *Auf dem Weg zum modernen Aethiopien*, Festschrift fuer Bairu Tafla. Lit Publisher. Muenster.
- _____. 2006. *Amharic Praise Poems of Däğğazmac Bälay Zälläqa and the Patriots of Goğğam During the Resistance Struggle Against the Italian Occupation of Ethiopia, 1936-1941*. In : *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Hamburg*. Siegbert Uhlig, (ed.). Wiesbaden. Harrassowitz Publisher, pp. 587-597.
- _____. 2007. *Songs and Blessings of the Amina in Goğğam*. In: *Annales d'Éthiopie, Musiques Traditionnelles D'Éthiopie*, Vol. XXIII 2007-2008, Olivier Tourney (ed.), Centre Francais des Études Éthiopiennes [French Center for Ethiopian Studies]. De Boccard. Paris, 2008: 18-37.
- Iiffe**, John. 1987. *The African Poor: A History*. African Studies Series 58, Cambridge University Press.
- _____. 2005. *Honor in African History*, Cambridge University Press, African Studies Series 107.
- Mesele**, Mesfin / መስፍን መሰለ. 1993. (Ethiopian Calendar = 2002 European Calendar). የሐሚናዎች ምርታንና እርግግን ማህበረ ባህላዊ አውጶና ይዘቱ. *The Blessing and Cursing of the Hamina, Its Socio-Cultural Content*. in: Baye Yimam (et al. Eds.), *Ethiopian Studies at the Second Millenium: Proceedings of International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Addis Ababa University Press, Vol. III, pp. 2012-2043.
- Pankhurst**, Richard. 1984. *The History of Leprosy in Ethiopia to 1935*. In: *Medical History*, January 28 (1), pp. 57-72.
- Patterns of Progress**. 1968. *Music, Dance and Drama*. Ministry of Information (ed.). Book 9. Addis Ababa.
- Powne**, Michael. 1968. *Ethiopian Music: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press, London.
- Tibebu**, Teshale. 1995. *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*. The Red See Press. Lawrenceville.
- Shelemay**, Kaufmann Kay. 1982. *The Music of the Lalibeloc: Musical Medicants in Ethiopia*. In:

Journal of African Studies. Vol. 9/ No. 3. Washington.

Teffera, Timkehet. 2001. Musik zu Hochzeiten bei den Amara im Zentralen Hochland Äthiopiens, Dissertaion Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXXVI Musikwissenschaft, Vol. 209, Peter Lang Publisher, Frankfurt am Main.

Online Publications

Kawase, Itshisu. 2005. 'Lalibeloc: Living in the Endless Blessing', Film made by Itshisu Kawase, <http://www.itsushikawase.com/lalibalocc.html>

Mesele, Terecha Kebede. 2010. Origin and Transformation of the *Hamina* Song-Mendicant Tradition. African Study Monographs, supplementary issue. Vol. 41, pp. 63-79 (URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/2433/108283>)

Mesele, Mesfin 2008. Song-mendicant culture of the *Hamina*. Deutsche Welle (DW /Bonn) Amharic Radio: Culture Program. Interviewer: Azeb Tadesse.

Worku, Adugna. 2008. Song-mendicant culture of the *Hamina*. Deutsche Welle (DW /Bonn) Amharic Radion: Culture Program. Interviewer: Azeb Tadesse.

Mitiku, Mebrat/Shimelis, Yekitinesh. 2005. Interview about the *Hamina* Culture and Music. Interviewer: Timkehet Teffera, Addis Ababa 16.03.2005.