**Statement**

This Tsome Deggua book comprising various types of songs that is originally composed by the senior scholar of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church known by the name of St. Yared. When we talk about St. Yared, we have every reason to also study his biography touching on his upbringing and general background. This famous author of Ethiopian Orthodox Church books who is also composer of church music was born in the Ethiopian Holy town of Axum in 505 A.D. His father is known as Abiyud or Yisihak and his mother is known as Kiristina or Tawkiliya. St. Yared was originally educated under his uncle called Gideon specializing in religious studies. St. Yared gradually grew to spiritual maturity so as to later be in a position to hear even the voice of angels from heaven. He describes this in his song saying “Waay Zaima zesemaiku besemay imelaikt kidusan” which means that he got the songs from the holy angels in heaven. This likens him to the Apostle Paul who in 2 Corinthians 12:1-5 is said to have been caught up to the third heaven. St. Yared composed the Tsewatime Zaima from 540-560 A.D. St. Yared composed this in the church and monastery named after the well known saint and apostle by the name of Abune Aregawi. The church is located on Mount Damo and the monastery is known as Debre Damo. Singing this in Ge’ez, St. Yared said “Yihewutsiha melaikt inte besemaiat yihewutsiwa melaikt isme mahidere melekot tsodkiwa werkihu sine hintsiye lekidist bête kiristain.” That means that even the angels in heaven visit this church and that he himself went around the church three times and was amazed by the beauty of the church.

This is in memory of the event before Easter when Hosanna (Palm Sunday) in the highest was sung as the Lord entered Jerusalem riding on a colt and went round the temple, as explained in Mathew 21:1-13. This spiritual formality is still being observed in our churches as the Ark of the Covenant was carried annually from the churches. Up until his return to his original place in Axum, he composed other songs like “Kidist webitsihit sebhat weburikt kibirt weli’lt”, which ends with another composition called Anketse Berhan in which he glorifies St. Mary by songs of praise. St. Yared composed various Tsewatiwe songs. Out of the 14 such songs including various songs, Tsome Deggua is one. This is usually sung from Lent season up to Easter. Tsome Deggua is prepared in three stages sung in three periods of time called Yohannes, Astemirho and Fasika. Although Deggua teachers have classified it in three categories, other scholars have likened it to the four gospels of the Bible. The four classifications are known as Yohannes, Astemirho, Tsom and Fasika.

Beginning from the earliest times, Deggua is being sung and prayed with in Ethiopia’s major monasteries and churches, especially during Lent. When examined carefully, Deggua songs, their melodies, their composition, organization, message and phraseology as well as literary beauty are indeed superb in style and substance.

To fully understand Tsome Deggua, one has to have a thorough understanding of Ge’ez. It is also necessary to carefully study all aspects of the Tsome Deggua. Scholars and theologians agree that this song has the potential to divert believers’ total attention and fixing it God. They also believe that St. Yared’s songs are too holy to be mixed with anything worldly. They say that singers need to first of all liberate themselves from anything considered profane or worldly to sing this song.

St. Yared composed Tsiwative Zaima based on the holy scripture of both Old and New Testaments as well as the observations of other church scholars of other ages. Both the writing style and the messages are strikingly attractive.

Tsome Deggua, among others, contains particularly captivating passages some of which reads, “Kula Halefi Wefelasi Wekulu Kemelibs Yibeli Antes Egziyo Lealem Tinebir” which means the present life which we value so highly is all vanity compared to what is in store for believers in the life after death Tsome Deggua is said to have even the power to attract angels to our earth.

Tsome Deggua is therefore very popular and highly valued in our church. All Zaima songs in our country have been written on parchments with local writing materials and kept in the sanctuaries carefully. Thanks to the blessings of modern printing technology, all those worthy scriptures have now been sorted out in orderliness and printed and circulated in all churches in the required numbers.

It is hoped that other songs will also be preserved and circulated likewise. At the end of Tsome Deggua, there is a separate composition especially devoted to the praise of St. Mary that is sung on St. Mary day during Lent. This is composed by the well known Mezgebe Deggua teacher of the St. Giorghis Diocess of Genete Tsigie in Addis Ababa. This is believed to be of a very high spiritual value written by this same teacher by the name of Merigeta Baynesagn Sahlu.

This is also used in religious schools as worthy lessons capable of edifying the church.

It is widely believed that Zaima or song notations cannot be taught to students easily. Such a venture may be time wasting both for the disciples and teachers. We have a separate book entitled, ‘Biography of St. Yared and Zaima notation. There is also another book published separately containing Zaima/songs along with their notations to guide liturgical services. All these publications make our churches the custodian of precious religious documents including Tsome Deggua. Our church will continue to exert every effort to publish these worthy documents in a modern way making sure that Tsiwatiwa Zaima is made available for all present and future generations.

Tensae Zegubae Printing House