

The Restoration of the Gojjamis power

4.1 Yodit⁷⁹ Gudit, The Agew Queen

Yodit in Geez means "beautiful." In Hebrew it originates from the word Yodia, "to know," which in modern Hebrew means "Jewishness". In the Amharic dialect in Ethiopia, the name "Yodit," has come to mean "Buda", "one who is a sorcerer" or "one who has a special magical power." (As previously mentioned, "Buda" has taken on a negative connotation.) Today these magical powers are attributed to the inhabitants of the province of "Gojjam." Yodit, an Abyssinian queen who took power in the beginning of the 10th century, has been associated with the different regions of Abyssinia during her wars of restoration against the Hadis. Different names were given to her and the Orits: Budas, Tebibans, Kylas, Gojjamis, Falashas. Yodit and the Orits destroyed Axum who under Ezana had robbed the original Shebatic seat of power from the Orits. The region that accepted the conversion to Christianity was later called Amhara, or "one who knows the truth," as opposed to the region of Gojjam, meaning "non-believer" or "gentile".

The connotation of the name "Buda" caught on after 1270, when the restoration of the Shoan-Solomonic Dynasty began. The word Buda originated from the "Yodit". It should be noted that after 1270, both the Amharo and the Tigrophones called the queen "Yodit-Gudit", meaning Yodit the Evil, the enemy of Christianity and the sign of evil deeds, because she burned down the Axumite cathedral. This cathedral was the most important religious site in the Axumite empire. Among her own people, Yodit was better known as "Esato", meaning "fire."

Yodit was an Orit woman of extraordinary beauty. As the daughter of "Gedion IV", she ruled approximately around the period of 975 AD. After destroying the Coptic Hellenized Axumite institution of Alexandrian hegemony, Yodit restored the Solomonic line to the Orits and permanently destroyed the Axumite legacy. Her rule marked a crucial turning point in the Ethiopian history of Axum and in the Amhara kingdom of Ankober.⁸⁰ Yodit not only restored the legacy to its original line, but she also re-established the Amharic language as the official language of the state (replacing Axumite Geez, which had been tainted with elements of the Greek language). The new Amharic language was a version of the *lingua franca*, the language of the ancient Meroëtic Kingdom of Sheba.

For the Abyssinian Orits, who refused to accept the Egypto-Hellenic hegemony, Axum (after its 4th century AD conversion to Christianity) represented the essence of evil. The Gojjam Orits/Agews fought for years in

⁷⁹Yodit during her exile in Syria was inspired by the legend and adventures of the Yehudit, who killed the General Holpherne at the time of his conquest the city of Betule in Judah in the time of the Asmoneens.

⁸⁰Lesan, Falasha Anthology, p. 55.