

ETHIOPIAN PHILOSOPHICAL WORK HATATA: HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL REALITY

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Abstract: For several years, debates have raged as to whether Africa has a distinct written philosophical tradition. This article seeks to argue that there is indeed a distinct written philosophical tradition in Africa. The article explores the various ways in which this phenomenon has been expressed and its unique contribution to global thought. Additionally, this article discusses how African thinkers such as Zara Yacob have used expressions of their philosophy to address pertinent social and political issues on the continent. Ultimately, the importance of this African philosophical legacy must not be underestimated, as it serves both an important academic purpose and offers insight into African societies over time. This article seeks to examine the philosophy of Zara Yacob, an Ethiopian philosopher. Zara Yacob's philosophical position encompasses metaphysical, epistemological and ethical aspects and is aimed at expanding the scope of Ethiopian-based philosophy. Claude Sumner was a key figure in introducing the influential works of Yacob to a wider audience within the realm of philosophy. The research involved the implementation of rational analysis through principles and techniques of logic.

Keywords: Zara Yacob, Sumner, Hatata, Rationality, Ethics, Eurocentric, Ethiopia, Africa

Introduction

The historical development of philosophy has largely overlooked Africa, and philosophy as a mental exercise has been seen as a Western individual pursuit. Non-Westerners, especially Africans, have been excluded from proper discourse. To counter this, it is essential to identify a genuine philosophical tradition in Africa and introduce African contributions to the world of philosophy. Understanding the nature of African philosophy can be accomplished by studying the work of African philosophers such as Zara Yacob, who provide insight into present-day realities and add new dimensions to our understanding of existence. This approach not only helps to challenge the Western ideological discourse but also offers valuable insights for our daily lives. The philosophical work titled "Hatata" by Zara Yacob demonstrates the existence of distinct philosophical traditions in Ethiopia. Through this written account, Zara Yacob's "Hatata" serves as an illustration of a philosophical text originating in Africa. The 17th-century Ethiopian philosopher Zara Yacob was a man who transcended the cultural forces of his time by arguing for the rationality of the human heart (Teshome 2016, p. 431).

Zara Yacob's "Hatata" or method is also an example of a written philosophical version in Africa that involves analyzing arguments with conceptual clarity, logical analysis, and validity. This is particularly important in Africa, where many sources of philosophy are

considered oral and collective. The role of the Canadian philosopher and Ethiopian by choice Claude Sumner in introducing Zara Yacob's works to a wider audience is also notable.

Claude Sumner's role in rediscovering Zarayacob's Philosophical treaties

Sumner's research on classical Ethiopian philosophy played a significant role in debunking the fallacy that Africans lack history and philosophy (Presbey and George 2012, p. Viii). He is the philosopher who, for the first time, translated and introduced the works of ZaraYacob and Woldehywot from the ancient Ethiopian language Ge'ez to English. The works of Sumner in introducing the Ethiopian philosophy proved that there is written philosophical work in Africa (Presbey and George 2012, p. ix). Philosopher Zara Yacob's country of Ethiopian fighters, armed with spears as their primary weapon and a few rifles, were able to defeat the mechanized Italian army with mechanized force and possessed the latest modern weaponry, ranging from tanks to machine guns, fighter planes, and gas bombs. This historical event refutes the western claim that Africans have no history.

Ethiopia, an ancient country, boasts a long-standing tradition of written philosophy that has been concealed for a considerable period of time. Only recently has this philosophical work gained prominence. The credit for bringing Ethiopian philosophy to the forefront goes to Claude Sumner, who hails from Canada but adopted Ethiopian nationality. Sumner is regarded as a prominent scholar in regard to the discourse on the existence of African philosophy because of his tireless efforts in championing and augmenting written Ethiopian philosophical work (Presbey 2003, p. 139-158). It is Sumner who introduced the philosophical thoughts that existed in Ethiopia to the world (Fasil 2017, p. 21-22)

"Classical Ethiopian philosophy" is the most well-known publication among the numerous works that Sumner authored (Wiredu 2004, p. 24). In classical Ethiopian philosophy, he translated and analyzed the treatises of Zara Yacob and Woldhywot. The effort he made to prove that Zara Yacob 'Hatata'/treatises was the work of the Ethiopian philosopher when challenged by Carlo Conti Rossini, who claimed that "Hatata's real Author is Padre Giusto d' Urbino and not the work of the Ethiopian philosopher Zara Yacob was very expounding. As Masolo (2010, p. 5) sees, Claude Sumner's attempts to introduce modern Ethiopian philosophical thought to the rest of the world are manifestations of a philosophical culture that gained momentum distance from the immediate environment. Zara Yacob, being unsatisfied with existing interpretations of reality, particularly those made available through religious teaching, introduced a new interpretation of truth. Although Christian values exert a lasting influence on the Ethiopian philosophical tradition, a distance is also attained for Masolo (Masolo 2010, p. 5). Major components of Zara Yacob's philosophy are devoted to religious disputes and issues in the philosophy of religion, such as theodicy and the nature of the divine. Zara Yacob succeeded in overcoming such objectives in his "Hatata" by inquiring about every possible philosophical question to reach a certain conclusion. Thus, for Masolo, The works of Claude Sumner on Ethiopian philosophical thought in the seventeenth century, especially on Zär'aYa'eqob, WäldäHeywät, and Skændes, are important sources of dynamic moral thinking beginning with the influence of early Christian expansions in the upper Nile Valley in the fourth and fifth centuries, from which seventeenth-century Ethiopian moral thinkers became relatively independent (Masolo 2010, p. 5).

Issues on authorship of “Hatata” and its implications

As shown above, while discussing the contribution of Sumner to the development of Ethiopian philosophy, we observed that in Ethiopian philosophical scenery, there is a significant debate concerning the authorship of the “Hatata”. On the one hand, there is an argument that Zara Yacob is an Ethiopian thinker who authored the treatise; on the other hand, there is an argument that the “hatata” is Western and Catholic in origin. The writer of this article argues that the author of “Hatata” is no doubt Zara Yacob. His philosophy originated in Ethiopia, an ancient country on the African continent where humans originated for the first time. If the West denies that there is no philosophy in Africa, this means that (Lucy) Australopithecus aphaeresis, which is the oldest humanoid remnant ever discovered in the Afar Plain in the northeastern part of Ethiopia, is false. In a true sense, civilization originated from where human beings first existed. Africa is the origin of human beings, and philosophy is one part of civilization.

Carlo Conti Rossini, who argues that Zara Yaqob is not Ethiopian and that there was no such philosopher named Zara Yacob. According to this claim, the “Hatata” is a Western author residing in Ethiopia, and there is no such author, in reality, as Zara Yacob. It is further assumed that a 19th century European wrote the treatise/“Hatata”. The first philosopher who refuted such a view was Sumner, who wrote, "The philosopher is original in many ways. He began his treatise with the story of his life" (Sumner 1985, p. 224). We can understand who Zara Yacob is by reading the autobiography of the writer "Hatata". The autobiography reflects the author's background and the context in which his philosophy emerged. This idea is supported by Habte, who claims that "Hatata" was written by Zara Yacob, the claim that it was written by Italian Jesuit D' Urbino is a fabricated account (Habte 2002, p. 131). Hallen further stated about Zara Yacob: The most prominent Abyssinian philosopher of the seventeenth century was the man named Zar'aYa'aqob (1599–1692). The remarkable text he produced during his lifetime has as its English-language title *The Treatise of Zar'aYa'aqob*. The original Ge'ez language was known as the Hatata. This term, hatata, deserves careful consideration because of its methodological implications (Halen 2002, p. 7). Zara Yacob begins his autobiography by praising God who he considers just and witnessing what God has done to him. Zara Yacob claims that God is the creator of all things, the beginning, and the end. In Zara Yacob's philosophy, he acquired reasoning as a way to reach the truth. It is God that implants the power of human reason and the power to philosophize on all issues, including the divine. The Italian writer Carlo Conti Rossini denied the authorship of Zara Yacob according to Alemayehu: “I thought he was a man who wanted to tarnish the image of Ethiopians, to praise Italy” (Alemayehu in Daniel 1995, p. 54). This Eurocentric approach informs classic accounts of Western history that negate the existence of logic and rationality in the Ethiopian context and Africa in general. It is the denial that no country defeated Italian colonial power. History tells us that Ethiopia is the only Black Country never colonized. It is the country seen as an emblem for other colonized countries and initiated them to fight for their independence. We can infer from the Eurocentric statement that Africans in general have no history or philosophy. The writing of Carlo Conti Rossini is the continuation of others, such as Hegel, who wrote by saying ‘Africans have no history’. They excluded Africa from a philosophical circle, which in reality is intolerable. One of the good examples that disprove Carlo Conti Rossini's justification according to Alemayehu is that it is the culture and day-to-day experience of Ethiopian scholars who

memorize in their heart and orally say the words of David and regret going somewhere without this book (Alemayehu in Daniel 1995, p. 58). Zara Yacob took the book of David with him when he flew to the cave. If he were a foreigner living at that time when fleeing to the cave, he would perhaps say he flown with my Bible and rest with the New Testament, not with the book of David (Alemayehu in Daniel 1995, p. 58). This typically echoed Zara Yacob's behavior as an Ethiopian scholar.

Like the grand philosophies of Western thinkers expressed in the name of dialectic, materialism, and the limitations of human knowledge, a hierarchical relation develops between Europe and the rest of the world. However, the realities of Ethiopian history, art, culture, and politics disprove what the white wrote about Africa in general. They presented Africa from an entirely Eurocentric perspective. I disagree..., as well as with the general sense that Africans are somehow outside the mainstream of human achievement, would be entirely negated by the full acceptance of a universal African heritage for all of humanity. This, after all, is the truth that has now been firmly established by scientific inquiry (Hall 1950, p.9). The treatise of Zara Yacob and other African philosophers disclose how Africans are critically engaged with the most significant philosophical questions taking place on African land.

The first and most obvious is that philosophy in the African context did and does have a history. The documented reflection of individuals such as Ptah-Hotep, Zara Ya'aqob, and Anton Wilhelm Amo is impossible today or to ignore. In addition, the heritage they (and other thinkers too numerous to do justice to here) have bequeathed to their continent, and the world deserves the recognition it for so long has been denied" (Hallen 200, p. 12).

The rich history of philosophy in the African context is undeniable, as evidenced by the documented contributions and reflections of African thinkers such as Ptah-Hotep, Zara Ya'aqob, and Anton Wilhelm Amo. The heritage of these philosophers has been queathed to their continent, and the world is invaluable and ought to be embraced by all. Even though there are many more influential African philosophers who are beyond the scope of this discussion, their contributions must also be recognized for their immense cultural legacy.

Alongside mythological, religious, and scientific pursuits, Africans, like the rest of humanity, also use philosophical analysis to make sense of their existence.

It is difficult to determine the real history and works of Africans from what white people said and write. It is also difficult to perceive the reality of Africa from what many of the West's are tagging. However, it is vital to recognize that there was a great philosophical and scientific tradition in Africa. The record of Zara Yacob shows how there was a critical undertaking by the Africans themselves. This can be known to the world only when Africans start to work and write about their history and culture through their efforts.

According to Hall (1950, p. 13), the history of Africa has required a much-needed shift from the traditional Eurocentric perspective. No longer is Africa reduced to a mere continent at the outskirts of world history; rather, it is placed at the center as a powerful and influential entity in its own right or free from what foreigners subsequently imposed upon it. This approach allows for a much more nuanced, unbiased, and accurate understanding of African history, culture, and politics. It also has the potential to lead to the recognition of African influence on the wider world in all areas of life. Ultimately, this shift in perspective serves to highlight the importance of African contributions to global history. In his words,

Overall, the history of Africa has been presented from an entirely Eurocentric or even a Caucasocentric perspective, and until recently, this topic has not been adequately reviewed. The penetration of Africa, especially during the last century, was important, but today, the realities of African history, art, culture, and politics are better known. The time has come to regard African history in terms of what has happened in Africa itself rather than simply in terms of what non-African individuals did when they first traveled to the continent (Hall 1950, p. 13).

It was in the seventeenth century that the African philosopher Zara Yacob realized the existence of God through critical investigation. This does not mean that people at the time did not believe in the existence of God. Christianity came to Ethiopia in the 4th century, and Islam came to Ethiopia in the 7th century. This is the time when some of the Western countries were not on the map of the world. As an individual philosopher, Zara Yacob from Africa reached the level of consciousness that Hegel wrote in realizing substantial objects of existence, such as God. Zara Yacob's rational and ethical philosophy is a witness for African consciousness that has attained the realization of any substantial objective existence—for example, God—or law—in which the interest of man's choice is involved and in which he realizes his being.

In the *Hatata*”, after he thanks God who has done many things in his life, Zara Yacob tells us the place of his birth, the date, and the status of his family. He claims, "I was born in the lands of the priest of Aksum. However, I am the son of a poor farmer in the district of Aksum; the day of my birth is the 25th of Nahase 1592 AD... by Christian Baptist I was named Zara Yacob" (Zara Yacob in Sumner 1985, p. 230). This shows that Zara Yacob lived in an agrarian economy, inherited a religious background, and lived in early modern Ethiopia. Then, as some said, it is difficult to say that “*Hatata*” was written or borrowed from foreigners because, as we understand from the author's autobiography, he was born in Aksum, a place in Ethiopia. Above all, when he told us why he was afraid to return to his birthplace and instead preferred to move from place to place, what he reasoned was evidence that his original place was in Ethiopia. Zara Yacob repeatedly made use of places in Ethiopia from different moments in his life and served as points of investigation. He also mentioned his relatives in Aksum. Here, it is important to ask whether Zara Yacob was a foreigner. How was he moved from place to place in a noncitizen country? At the same time, the author of *Hatata* wrote that he was born to a poor farmer in the district of Aksum. It is clear how it was difficult for a foreigner to be a farmer in traditional Ethiopia during that time. This further confirms his Ethiopia. Farmers in Ethiopia at the time were earning their living by plowing small plots of land or by tenants for the landlords, which made ridiculous for Europeans to be farmers or tenants at the time Zara Yacob lived. Second, during the time when Zara Yacob lived, war and religious controversy occurred, which made it difficult for noncitizens to be successful at resolving such controversies.

Zara Yacob's encounter with foreigners played a crucial role in his philosophical approach. Such an encounter is found in his discussions of the 'frange' and their part in religious disputes. Zara Yacob explained the “frange” (foreigners) by making them outsiders who are interested in imposing their religious belief on others while discussing the belief of different people. He indicated "Once I asked the 'frange' (foreigner) scholars ...many things concerning our faith: he interpreted them all according to his own faith..." (Zara Yacob in Sumner 1985, p. 234). The statement by Zara Yacob clearly shows that he is native to Ethiopia and that the man for whom he asked was a foreigner. It also affirms that

each culture imposes its own beliefs and that the nature of truth is concealed in diverse interpretations of universal reality.

Zara Yacob mentioned two types of scholars. He refers to the indigenous ones to which he belongs and the foreign ones that question conventional beliefs. Thus, we further elaborate on the evidence that Zara Yacob is an Ethiopian population. It is important to read the comparison that he made between those who he said the scholars who were an Ethiopian and those who said the 'Frang' who were foreigners for whom he did not belong. 'Frang' refers to Amharic foreigners, especially white foreigners, in most cases. It is possible to understand his sayings from his word; Thanking God for saving me, I went to the house of my master. After this, I left for another school to study the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. I have studied this topic for ten years; I learned the interpretations of both Frang and our scholars. Oftentimes their interpretations did not agree with my reasoning, but I withheld my opinion and hid in my heart all the thoughts of my mind (with emphasis) (Zara Yacob in Sumner 1985, p. 231). From this statement, we found "the Frang and of our scholars". The frang, in this case, is the foreign, for which he said our scholars are the Ethiopians.

The African philosopher Kwasi Wiredu also stated that "long time that Ethiopia has the tradition of written philosophy" (Wiredu 2004, pp.-24). This testifies to the authorship of Zara Yacob in arguing that the "Hatata" are genuine to Ethiopia. Hatata" is the result of individual pursuits of convention and diverges from the adaptation style of most trends in Ethiopian philosophy. Thus, "Zara Yacob philosophy is an original work, the first of his reflection and not a translation or an adaptation from foreign sources, as most Ethiopian literature is" (Sumner 2004, p. 173). The treatise is from the son of poor farmers in Ethiopia. This can easily be understood from the life history of the author of "Hatata". Zara Yacob wrote his first autobiography in 1667 with the urge of Wolde Heywat, who was his disciple. His autobiography reveals who Zara Yacob is. This challenges the pervert /temama/ idea of the West and, at the same time, some African intellectuals who trained in Western universities and said that the work was not that of the Ethiopian philosopher but rather Italian. From 'Hatata', we can conclude that African philosophy both in written and oral form existed for centuries.

According to Habte, the controversy surrounding Zara Yacob's authorship exists because he is African. This denial comes in two major forms: one denying the potential for philosophy to emerge from Africa and the other claiming that all African philosophies owe their origin to Western ideas. "... Other finds philosophical thought cannot have existed outside Europe. Some such critics tell the lie that Zara Yacob philosophy was taken from the West." (Habte 2012, p. 132), which is a false fabrication.

The writer of this article argues that there has been a literate tradition in African philosophy, in the same footsteps as that of the Western. While there are several important ancient philosophers, such as Socrates, who is largely known to us through the reports of others, the tradition has developed increasingly as one that pays careful attention to a written argument in addition to the fact that the oral tradition is not unique to Africa. As we studied in the history of philosophy, Socrates, who is the founder of social, moral, and political philosophy and conceived as the father of Western philosophy, not left anything in written form. It is Plato who is the mouthpiece of Socrates as he wrote in the Republic. Even though it is difficult to admit that the discourse in the republic is truly what was materialized like

many parts of the world, we can conclude from the experiences of the two philosophers that there was an oral culture in Athens, which is part of Europe.

In the context of understanding the unique nature of African philosophy, Richard Bell argues for the need to develop different methods for approaching other cultures. Considering the various modalities of African existence and the only recent development of the written tradition in Africa, aesthetic, oral, written and other accounts must be considered alongside one another. There are various aspects of African identity that are critical, dialogical, and reflective and help us decipher philosophical thoughts (Bell 2002, p. x-12).

As Appiah puts it, there is a significant parallel between recent traditions in African philosophy and the nature of Western philosophy in that both aspire to an individualistic and written philosophy. Zara Yacob's "Hatata" are written accounts. Thus, Later, African philosophy looks more familiar to those who have studied the conventional history of Western philosophy: the literate traditions of Ethiopia, for example, which can be seen in the context of a long (if modest) tradition of philosophical writing in the Horn of Africa. The high point of such writing has been the work of the seventeenth-century philosopher Zar'aYa'ecob. His work has been compared to that of Descartes (Appiah 1998, p.2014 Routledge<<http://www.routledge.com/>

As Teodros Kiros further observes, Ethiopia in particular and Africa in general have had written tradition. "Zara Yacob becomes the first self-conscious founder of the philosophical tradition in Ethiopia" (Teodros 2004, p.183). He gave an original and the first autobiography to Ethiopia. " Hatata", which means "investigation" or "searching", is mainly concerned with viewing the mistakes of some religions and treating various ethical and rational issues, respectively. At the heart of the "Hatata" of Zara Yacob, there is an attempt to search for the truth through critical investigation.

Reason and ethical principles in "Hatata"

Zara Yacob tried to answer many questions using his philosophical investigation called "Hatata". He wondered about the manner in which different religious followers were involved. They believe in what they hear from others rather than investigating through God's given reason (Teshome 2019, p.65). Some of these issues are questions of reality, truth, morality, and how people perceive these issues (Teshome 2019, p. 65). It is through 'the light of reason 'in the heart of human beings that all the questions are investigated, not by what we heard from others as many believers do. God to Zara Yacob created man with a reason to distinguish truth from false truth. This is the reason in the heart that strives human beings to perfection (Zara Yacob in Sumner 1985, p. 242). This approach allows us to determine and answer these questions. Truth can be discovered through the intelligence set in the heart of human beings (Zara Yacob in Sumner 1985, p. 236). To ZaraYacob, to find answers to the questions human beings aspire to know has to seek it with a reason that God is endowed in us. He is a rationalist philosopher who advocated for the priority of reason. He believes "reason" is a chief source of knowledge and advances the need for critical examination to establish truth (Teshome 2019, p. 434).

Zara Yacob's ethical principles include the principle of harmony, the equality of all men, the right of women, respecting living by the fruit of work, and other Golden rules. He discussed two kinds of law, the law of God and humans. In the daily life of humans, the law of humans has checked with the Law of God. The main reason is that human beings

are not perfect by nature. God gives us "reason" that leads to perfection. God gives humans to exercise willpower. This willpower must be checked by the law of God to avoid confusion. "God sustains the world by his order which he has established... because the order of God is stronger than the order of men" (Zara Yacob in Sumner 1985, p. 240).

Zara Yacob's ethical philosophy is centered on the principle of harmony, which emphasizes good practices that bring health, stability, and happiness to human beings. He believed that an action's morality is determined by whether it advances or degrades overall harmony in the world. Yacob referred to God as the deity, and he believed that human actions must conform to God's actions to avoid punishment. Evil actions that do not obey God's will lead to punishment. Yacob's philosophy aimed to motivate human beings to do good things that are beneficial in life. His philosophy placed emphasis on human dignity, tolerance, nonviolence, and mutual responsibility.

The equality of men. To Zara Yacob, God does not show favoritism or prejudice toward any human being, regardless of sex. We can understand this by simply using our reasoning and logic. Men and women are created equal by God and given complementary roles, each of which is essential for the continuation of generations. Contrary to both the laws of God's word and nature, all words touched by women who menstruate are impure. Zara Yacob's ethical principles, 'respecting living by the fruit of labor', were observed when he obtained a job in Habtu, the rich man's house teaching his son, and copying Plaster of David. This time, Zara Yacob started living by the fruit of his work. He thanked God who gave him this chance praise bless his work. Zara Yacob believes God bless all the work of your hands for who works hard than living in other ways that God dislike. He promoted monogamous marriage. In the Golden rules, he mentioned that killing, stealing, lying, and adultery have to be prohibited.

The social basis of Zara Yacob philosophy

Zara Yacob lived in a time of civil and religious unrest in Ethiopia. The main cause of the unrest during the time was that King Susenyos was persuaded by the Portuguese Jesuits to convert from the orthodox to the Catholic religion. Historically, in Ethiopia, the country has suffered from religious conflict for a long time. The main conflict in the country's history from the religious aspect was between Muslims and the Orthodox Christian Church, and the second conflict was between Orthodox Christians and Catholics Christians. Here, it is important to know that, in the fourth century in the Aksumite Kingdom, Christianity became the state religion of the country. Christianity in Ethiopia at the time was the Orthodox Christian Church, which was influenced by the Coptic Christian Church of Egypt (Hall 1950, p. 36). A new Islamic religion came to Ethiopia in the 7th century when Prophet Mohammad followers and relatives were impeached and fled to Ethiopia after they suffered hardship in their place in Mecca. That is, in 615-616, the first Hegira, "al-hijra al-'ula, was to Christian Ethiopia. The Prophet's first followers, the Sahaba, persecuted in Mecca and Muhammad, were ordered to seek asylum with the Christian king, al-najashi Ashama, of al-habasha." In Ethiopia, they were welcomed by the Christian king and started living peacefully (Erlich 2013). This shows the country's role in the expansion of world religion (Adejumobi 2007, p. 6). Since Christianity came to Ethiopia in the 4th century, a significant number of Ethiopians became a land for the Christian church, which continued after the 7th century to host a large number of Muslim communities (Adejumobi 2007, p. 6). However, gradually after the number of followers increased, they came into conflict with

the Christians. In 1501-43, the invasion led by Ahmad Ibn Ghazi, also known as Gragn in Amharic, called the “left-handed”, declared the Jihad war against Ethiopia. It was at this time that Ethiopia required military support from the Portuguese. The Portuguese repel the Muslim invasion with well-armed soldiers led by Christopher Da Gama and killed Gragn. Thus, the Jesuit Missionaries introduced Catholicism, and King Susenyos (1607-1632) was converted. Portugal imposed Catholicism on the people of Ethiopia. From this time on, as the philosopher wrote, all those who were not converted to the Catholic religion were persecuted (Zara Yacob in Sumner 1985, p. 231).

From these historical acts, it is possible to conclude that Zara Yacob’s philosophy is the result of both internal and external factors that led to controversies over time. The war of Muslims led by Ahmad Ibn Ghazi (Gragn) and the Portuguese forces that impose Catholicism can be considered external forces, and the conflicts among different religious groups in the country are internal factors. From these factors, we can conclude that the social and political problems of the country were the result of the birth of Zara Yacob’s philosophy to address the problem of the time. This is because when the accusation was brought against him due to his teaching, he fled to the cave where he meditated on the Psalms of David and wrote his critical reflection by hiding himself in a cave near the Tekeze River.

The researcher believes that both the social and political factors, even those that were created before he flees to the cave, had an impact on the beginning of his philosophy. It is the opinion of the writer of this article that the conflict and the division among believers in the name of God were nuisances for Zara Yacob and, at the same time, the source of his critical thinking. To exclude himself from this confusion, Zara Yacob avoided taking sides with any religious faith. Instead, he tried to understand things and connect them to the reality that he thinks is true. This helped him to transcend the idea of the society of the time. He reasoned that will is the critical source of ethics and concluded that God is revealed to reason and discredited organized religion as the way to know God. According to him, our faith should not be based on what we heard from others but rather on the intelligence that God gives us to reason. Zara Yacob reflected his opinion on followers of different faiths because he witnessed that followers of every religion claimed their faith was correct and that the other’s faith was untrue. In other words, they were defending their faith as true while refusing other faiths. Truth is interpreted according to the believers’ faith to which they belong (Zara Yacob in Sumner 1985, p. 234).

Zara Yacob is a philosopher who educated himself about the historical circumstances that were formed in his country and into his society. Thus, Zara Yacob’s philosophy is born out of existing reality and the contradictions of the human condition. He produced philosophical ideas from the historic instants of the time that was created in the society in which he was living in. The historical circumstance of the time was religious violence and conflicts in the seventeenth century in the African country of Ethiopia. In the context of animosity between various religious beliefs and controversy regarding the divine, Zara Yacob situates personal rational faith as the ultimate judge. Zara Yacob, rather than seeking truth in established religion, appealed to the reason that, according to him, was the last authority in the search for truth. The reason that Zara Yacob is located in the heart is that *āyine libona* (light in the heart) refers to deep thinking and rational investigation.

Zara Yacob attended traditional religious training within the Coptic Church while accustoming himself to the teachings of the Catholic Church introduced by the Portuguese

Jesuit missions that had been in Ethiopia since the middle of the sixteenth century. This gave him a chance to learn about both religions. After this time, he was well equipped with the doctrine of all religions in his place and concluded that rather than being loyal to the particular religion, he sought to initiate a dialog and tried to make himself whole sided by learning others' religion. Zara Yacob's philosophy concerning religious pluralism seeks to establish a secular model for achieving coexistence among members of different religions. His ideas surrounding fasting, marriage, and women's rights challenge the traditional assertions of his faith and attempt to push the boundaries of toleration and understanding. Following in the footsteps of philosopher John Hick, Yacob understands that religion is uniquely complex because each faith claims to teach its believers absolute truth—often at the cost of treating other faiths with inferiority or examining them from a biased standpoint (Hick 2005, p. 1). In response, Yacob offers an alternative approach where individuals are encouraged to employ their own rationale and come to decisions through self-reflection and introspection. This type of inclusive outlook is key in helping us navigate our increasingly globalized society and foster acceptance among diverse societies with divergent beliefs.

The central issue that motivated Zara Yacob's philosophy was how each religion professes to have the truth. In such a context rather than surrendering to the views of the Catholics, Orthodox, Jews and Muslims, who all say that they have the truth, he chooses to perform further analysis. Such an analysis is going to be made possible for God who gave us a reason, and we could discover the truth through the power of our intellect. He finally concluded that truth is one. I would simply argue that Zara Yacob is not ignorant. However, he was armed with the knowledge that allows him to transcend the thinking of the people of the time. Instead of seeing things partially, he tried by himself to reply to the confusion he observed through reasoned thinking or critical investigation.

Several times, in this work, Zara Yacob lived at a time when there was no agreement between religions in Ethiopia. In brief, such disorder was expressed by the power struggle introduced by the Portuguese imposition of Catholicism on the state religion orthodox Christian. The fierce debate in the search for authentic religion among different religious truths during the time forced Zara Yacob to critically investigate truth through the methods he developed, called 'Hatata'. From these historical facts, King Susenyos was persuaded by the Portuguese Jesuits to convert from the orthodox to the Catholic religion. Zara Yacob avoided taking sides with any religious faith, and even the religious faith the king was converted to. This testifies that Zara Yacob was skeptical toward all religions, which he pictured as distorting reality. For him, one finds religious truth as expressed in religion and religious truth as accessible to human reason. He reasoned that will is the critical source of ethics, and he concluded that God is revealed to reason that is found as "the light in our heart" and discredited organized religion as the way to know God because it is only this light that helps human beings to know God. This feature of Zara Yacob's philosophy started from his life in society. He familiarized himself with new ideas such as 'The rationality of the heart', not from scratch but his experiences in the cave and the knowledge of the Bible. Zara Yacob's philosophical view has many societal implications, especially for ideas related to ethical life. His ethics aim was to outline the situation under which human beings harmoniously live with nature. This is possible, according to him, when we investigate truth through the rationality of the heart. According to his rationality, reason

should govern rather than believing in what is simply heard from others. He developed the most prominent ethics principle of harmony.

Zara Yacob's philosophy created a rational and critical foundation for ideas passed down by Ethiopian communities from generation to generation. He critically examined many issues, including ideas such as the nature of the Supreme Being, the meaning of equality, and other issues discussed in his "Hatata". Thus, he questioned conventional wisdom as a starting point of analysis. He laid the foundation for Ethiopian philosophy by raising many issues that have to be addressed through philosophizing. Keeping its originality, Zara Yacob's philosophy speaks so powerfully, from such a privileged original standpoint at the outset of Ethiopian philosophy. For the writer of this article, it is difficult to understand either Ethiopian or African philosophy unless we properly understand the foundational and pioneering influence of our predecessors, such as Zara Yacob. His philosophy shows the prospect of an indigenous response to African problems and the beginning of a written tradition complimenting oral philosophical accounts in Africa.

Conclusion

The seventeenth-century philosophical work of Zara Yacob "Hatata", which transcends the reality of the time, is the result of both internal and external issues that led to controversies. Zara Yacob, as a philosopher, exercised the use of logic over the immediate environment and developed an all rounded philosophy arising from his and the life of the society he was living. The contribution of Sumner in introducing the works of Philosopher Zara Yacob is immense. His large publications provide permanent evidence for his contribution to Ethiopian philosophy. For the first time, he translated the works of Zara Yacob, which were written in the Ge'ez ancient Ethiopian language, to English.

Zara Yacob's "Hatata" affirms meaningful philosophical heritage in Ethiopia and Africa at large. The "hatata", as a fundamental work of Yacob, is widely quoted and comprehensive in Ethiopian philosophy. In this writing, he asserts the unique thought of God existing before any material is being and explains his idea about soul, freewill and predestination. Furthermore, the writing emphasizes the clear renaissance of ancient Ethiopian philosophical thought by using an ontological notion in the face of its antiquity.

Philosopher Zara Yacob's "Hatata" reveals the distinct philosophical reflections that have existed in Ethiopia since ancient times. Western scholars have long questioned the presence of philosophy in Africa, yet Yacob's works provided undeniable proof of the contrary. Indeed, Ethiopia, being nestled within the African continent, is a cradle of mankind, and its heritages serve as evidence that it is also a cradle of philosophical thought and civilization.

There was/is strong debate regarding the authorship of "Hatata"; however, there is no doubt that the authorship of "Hatata" is a rational grand contribution of Zara Yacob. His philosophy originated in Ethiopia, an ancient country on the African continent and an ancient country that is the cradle of human beings. Zara Yacob, an influential Ethiopian philosopher, adopted a rational and logical approach to the existence of God, truth, and ethics. He wrote about his philosophy in "Hatata", analyzing the existence of God and outlining ethical principles such as the Golden Rule, mercy, and work and identifying certain forbidden practices such as killing, stealing, lying and adultery. His analysis represents a logical and rational approach to relevant questions of morality.

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