

Introduction

This article uses new archival evidence to reframe the controversy that has raged since the 1910s over the authorship of the *Ḥatāta Zār’a Ya’əqob*, a philosophical autobiography set in seventeenth-century Ethiopia. We demonstrate that, already in the context of the Catholic mission to evangelize the Oromo people of southern Ethiopia in the 1850s, accusations were made against a Capuchin missionary, Fr. Giusto da Urbino (1814–56), to the effect that he had endorsed, edited or even forged this text. Catholic authorities promptly attempted to suppress the *Ḥatāta Zār’a Ya’əqob*, then known as the *Wärqe*¹—‘Wärqe’ being another name for the eponymous narrator Zār’a Ya’əqob—which they identified in an 1857 report as a “true Lucretius of Ethiopian literature.”

Drawing on over thirty unpublished documents from archives in the Vatican, Rome, Paris, and London as well as archival documents only parts of which have previously been discussed in the context of the authorship dispute, we show that Giusto da Urbino was suspected of authoring the *Ḥatāta Zār’a Ya’əqob* as early as 1857.² We provide a detailed account of this early controversy, drawing on contemporary correspondence sent from

¹ Spelled variously in the relevant documents as ‘Uorche,’ ‘Wuorque,’ ‘Wurqie,’ ‘Wargie,’ ‘Warqie,’ ‘Oarqie,’ with or without accentuation.

² The article refers to archival documents preserved at: the Archivio Storico della Congregazione per l’Evangelizzazione dei Popoli, ‘de Propaganda Fide’ (henceforth ‘ASPF’): *Africa Centrale, Etiopia, Arabia* (henceforth ‘AC–E–A’) and *Egitto, Copti* (henceforth ‘E–C’), Rome; the Archive of the Apostolic Nunciature in Paris (Archivio della Nunziatura apostolica in Parigi, henceforth ‘ANP’), now incorporated into the Vatican Apostolic Archive, Vatican City; the Archivio Storico della Società Geografica Italiana, Rome (henceforth ‘SGI’); the Archivio Generale Cappuccini at the Collegio internazionale S. Lorenzo da Brindisi, Rome (henceforth ‘AGC’); the Archivio Provinciale Cappuccini Firenze (Florence); the archives of the Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises (henceforth ‘NAF’), Bibliothèque nationale de France (site Richelieu), Paris; the Fondo Carlo Conti Rossini kept at the Archivio Storico of the Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Rome; the Fondo Giuseppe Sapeto kept at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma (Castro Pretorio), Rome; and the Cardinal Wiseman Papers preserved at the Westminster Diocesan Archives, London (henceforth ‘WDA’). Unless otherwise stated, all transcriptions and translations from French and Italian are by Lea Cantor, and those from Gə’əz by Jonathan Egid. All transcriptions are purely diplomatic, and maintain archaic formulations. We employ the field-standard method of transliteration of Gə’əz and Amharic outlined in Siegbert Uhlig, Baye Yiman, et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. Volume I: A–C (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003), xix–xxi. Quotations always retain the original method of transcription.

Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan, France, the Vatican, and Italy. We re-assess two documents laying out the initial accusations that Giusto edited, annotated or was otherwise associated with the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya 'eqob*: an anonymous letter composed in Amharic that was the source of the initial allegations (written a month after Giusto da Urbino died in September 1856), and the report composed by a Lazarist missionary—Giuseppe Sapeto—that defended Giusto.³ Separate unpublished documents detail how Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò (Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide) and other Church officials and missionaries in Paris, London, Alexandria, and Khartoum sought to suppress evidence of Giusto's possible hand in authoring the text and to stop the publication of the text itself.⁴ Several (in many cases unpublished) notes and letters written by top Catholic officials in 1857–61 also illustrate their concerns that Giusto's patron, Antoine d'Abbadie, would publish a heretical work that Giusto had authored.⁵

The present study is the first to consider the entirety of Giusto's French correspondence with Antoine d'Abbadie, preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, in light of the records kept in the Vatican's Propaganda Fide Archive and Apostolic Archive.⁶ It also takes into account Giusto's extant Italian-language letters to his sister Sara

³ While these two documents were discussed by Claude Sumner and Nicola Trozzi in the 1970s and 1980s, we show that they have been overlooked in recent discussions. Claude Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy, vol. II: The Treatise of Zār'a Ya 'eqob and of Wäldä Həywāt: Text and Authorship* (Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, 1976), 189–199; Nicola Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob We-Walda Hiywat e P. Giusto da Urbino* (Chieti: Marino Solfanelli, 1986), 61–70. Sumner provided an English translation of the relevant Amharic and Italian sources as well as a transcription of the Amharic source. Trozzi provided transcriptions of both the Amharic and Italian sources.

⁴ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1286r, fol. 1324v; ANP, 102, fol. 226r. We discuss these documents in detail in §2.3 below.

⁵ ANP, 102, fol. 219r; ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1323r–1324r (see also the draft of this letter: ANP, 102, fol. 221r–222r); ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1374r (see also the draft form of this part of the letter: ANP, 102, fol. 223r); ANP, 102, fol. 226r; ANP, 102, fol. 233r. See §2.3 and §3.2–3 below.

⁶ While passages from Giusto's surviving French-language correspondence with Antoine d'Abbadie (kept at the BnF) have been published and analyzed by Anaïs Wion and Nicola Trozzi, many unpublished sections of this correspondence have until now been completely overlooked. Anaïs Wion, ““Lettres du R. P. Juste d'Urbain” à Antoine d'Abbadie. Manuscrit BnF NAF 23852, fol. 3–128v. Notes de travail” (2012), <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02863840>; Anaïs Wion, “L'histoire d'un vrai faux traité philosophique (*Ḥatātā Zār'a Yā'eqob* et *Ḥatātā Walda Heywat*). Épisode 1 : Le temps de la découverte. De l'entrée en collection à l'édition scientifique (1852–1904),” *Afriques* (2013), <https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.1063>; Anaïs Wion, “L'histoire d'un vrai faux traité philosophique (*Ḥatātā Zār'a Yā'eqob* et *Ḥatātā Walda Heywat*). Épisode 2 : Le temps de la

Cortopassi, his uncle Francesco da Urbino, his mentor Giusto da Camerino, and his friend Costantino Nascimbeni.⁷

We assess the plausibility of the accusations against Giusto by examining his unconventional philosophical ideas and his missionary record. We trace scarcely-discussed elements of Giusto's late missionary career, when he was offered an assistant bishopric in Ethiopia and a role as the 'Gə'əz interpreter' ('interprete etiopico') at the Vatican, at a time when he was considering apostasy while in exile in Egypt. Finally, we note Giusto's strange habit of disavowing his authorship of works composed in or about Gə'əz during his missionary career, including before the alleged discovery of the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob*.

We argue, even so, that this evidence is insufficient to establish that Giusto in fact wrote the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob*. What it does show is, first, that Giusto was not a faithful missionary, that he held unorthodox views, and that he had longstanding conflicted attitudes toward authorship that make such a forgery at least plausible. And second, that the officials involved in assessing the accusations *were* familiar with some of Giusto's unorthodox ideas, even if they evidently had not read the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob*. They mistakenly assumed, without conclusive evidence, an obvious continuity between Giusto's own unorthodox materialist and atheist doctrines and the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob*. While elements of continuity

démystification et la traversée du désert (de 1916 aux années 1950),” *Afriques* (2013), <https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.1316>; Nicola Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, esp. 49–60; Nicola Trozzi, “Il P. Giusto da Urbino e l’ascesa di Teodoro II al trono di Etiopia,” *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* 43, no. 2 (1988): 213–230. Claude Sumner’s study (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II), which examined the Vatican sources, did not include Giusto’s letters to d’Abbadie.⁷ The letters to his sister were partially published in the Italian original by Giovanni Sforza in 1914 and in English translation by Claude Sumner in 1976 (Giovanni Sforza, “Un lucchese compagno del P. Guglielmo Massaia in Africa [1846–56],” *Memorie della R. Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, Serie II, 64, no. 1 (1914): 2–24); Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy*, II: 203–204, 282–297). Until 2023, many of the original letters had been kept at the Archivio Storico dei Cappuccini di Monte San Quirico, Lucca, before being transferred to the Archivio Provinciale Cappuccini in Florence, where we were able to consult them. A letter to Giusto’s uncle is reproduced by Sumner in English translation (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 276–282) and is also now preserved at the Capuchin Archive in Florence. The letters to Giusto da Camerino, now preserved at the AGC, remain unpublished and have not been discussed in secondary literature. The letters to Nascimbeni survive through extensive quotations in Tarducci’s intellectual biography of Giusto da Urbino (Francesco Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino, missionario in Abissinia e le esplorazioni africane* (Faenza: G. Montanari, 1899)).

can be identified between some of Giusto's other ideas and the *Ḥatāta*, his early accusers in the Church were not aware of these affinities. Further, given that most of the echoes with the *Ḥatāta* in Giusto's correspondence postdate the alleged discovery of the text, we cannot discount the possibility that they might be the result of Giusto having himself been influenced by the *Ḥatāta*. The affinities between Giusto's own thought and the *Ḥatāta*, in short, do not necessarily support the case for forgery.⁸

This article then, re-establishes the terms of the authorship debate, and it also reframes the intellectual history and cultural politics of the subsequent scholarly controversy—shedding new light on the 'discovery' of the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya 'əqob* and its journey to Europe, the accusations presented against the man believed by some to be its forger, as well as the motives of other key actors in Ethiopia, Paris, and the Vatican at these early stages of the reception of the *Ḥatāta*.

1. Background

In 1848, two French scientists of Irish-Basque descent returned to Paris after their decade-long wanderings in Ethiopia. The two were brothers Antoine d'Abbadie (1810–97) and Arnaud-Michel d'Abbadie (1815–93).⁹ They began publicizing their scientific findings: geodesic data, lexical and grammatical works on Ethiopian languages, and eventually the largest collection of Ethiopian manuscripts yet assembled in Europe. Antoine d'Abbadie hoped to bring Catholicism to Ethiopia, and in 1845 petitioned the pope to establish a mission that would preach to the largely 'pagan' Oromo people.¹⁰

⁸ Wion, "Épisode 2," especially §29.

⁹ Uhlig, Yiman, et al., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* I: 25.

¹⁰ Antoine d'Abbadie, letter of 9 March 1845 to Cardinal Giacomo Filippo Franzoni, Prefect of Propaganda Fide (ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 4, fol. 547r–548v). On the significance of this letter: Guglielmo Massaia, *I miei trentacinque anni di missione nell'alta Etiopia. Memorie storiche. Vols. I–XII* (Rome: Coop. tipografica Manuzio, 1921–30 [1885–95]) [henceforth '*Memoirs*'], Vol. I, ch. 1, 2 and Giusto da Urbino, letter of 28 December 1846 to Antoine d'Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 5r). Documents from the mission refer to the Oromo

The establishment of the mission to the Oromo (*Vicariato apostolico dei Galla*) ensued, and by April 1846 the mission was entrusted to Capuchin friars led by Guglielmo Massaia.¹¹ Antoine d’Abbadie supported the mission financially;¹² in addition to their spiritual labor, missionaries ‘in the field’ would send back geographical and linguistic information for the brothers to improve their scholarship, and, crucially, manuscripts for Antoine’s growing collection.

Two texts in particular from d’Abbadie’s collection have generated scholarly interest over the past 120 years: the *Ḥatäta Zär’a Ya’əqob* and the *Ḥatäta Wäldä Ḥəywät*.¹³ This pair of philosophical discourses, allegedly written in seventeenth-century Ethiopia, are composed in Gə‘əz, the language of the late-antique Aksumite empire, which ceased to be spoken between the tenth and thirteenth century but which lives on as the liturgical and literary language of Christian Ethiopia. Some have claimed that the *Ḥatätas* inaugurate a tradition of Ethiopian philosophy or African philosophy more generally, and even demonstrate that “MODERN PHILOSOPHY BEGAN IN ETHIOPIA at the same time as in England and in France.”¹⁴

people of central and southern Ethiopia as ‘Galla,’ an Amharic/Gə‘əz term now considered pejorative. We opt for the endonym ‘Oromo,’ except when quoting original documents.

¹¹ Massaia, *Memoirs* I: ch. 1, 5. Trozzi, “Il P. Giusto da Urbino,” 214; Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino*, 49. For Antoine d’Abbadie’s role as the founder of the mission, see Guglielmo Massaia’s letters in Guglielmo Massaia and Antonino Rosso (ed.), *Lettere e Scritti Storici Minori, Vols. I–V* (Rome: Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, 1978)—e.g. those of: 25 April 1848 to Padre Felice Fenech da Lipari (I: 147); 4 December 1850 to Antoine d’Abbadie (I: 232); 25 November 1852 to Cardinal Franzoni (I: 366); 18 January 1853 to Arnauld-Michel d’Abbadie (II: 9); 15 April 1853 to Baron Joseph Crépin du Havelt (II: 12); 5 December 1853 to Arnauld-Michel d’Abbadie (II: 18); 1 March 1858 to Antoine d’Abbadie (II: 125 = NAF 23851 59r); and 5 September 1865 to Cardinal Barnabò (III: 278).

¹² Massaia, letter of 21 February 1851 to Antoine d’Abbadie (Massaia, *Lettere* I: 245).

¹³ English translations of quotations from the *Ḥatäta Zär’a Ya’əqob* and the *Ḥatäta Wäldä Ḥəywät* are taken from the 2023 translation: Zara Ya’qob and Walda Heywat, *The Hatata Inquiries: Two Texts of Seventeenth-Century African Philosophy from Ethiopia about Reason, the Creator, and Our Ethical Responsibilities*, ed. Wendy Laura Belcher, ed. and trans. Ralph Lee, ed. and trans. Mehari Worku (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2023). In the continued absence of a critical edition, we provide reference to the folio number of the d’Abbadie manuscript 215 (the only manuscript containing both texts, ‘Abb215’)—preserved at the BnF, Antoine d’Abbadie Collection, MS d’Abbadie 215. Throughout this article, references to the *Ḥatäta* in the singular refer to the *Ḥatäta Zär’a Ya’əqob* and not the *Ḥatäta Wäldä Ḥəywät*.

¹⁴ Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 275. For further exploration of the place of the *Ḥatäta* in African philosophy, see Anke Graness, “Authorship and Authenticity as Challenges for the Historiography of Philosophy in a Global Perspective,” in *In Search of Zär’a Ya’əqob: On the History, Philosophy, and Authorship of the Ḥatäta Zär’a Ya’əqob and the Ḥatäta Wäldä Ḥəywät*, ed. Lea Cantor, Jonathan Egid, and

The better-known work is the *Ḥatāta Zār’a Ya’əqob*, a philosophical autobiography that traces the life of its narrator Zār’a Ya’əqob from his birth in the region of Aksum, his education in the traditional Ethiopian Orthodox system, and his exile from Aksum in the face of political turmoil caused by religious civil war following the conversion of Susənyos (ca.1571–1632) to Catholicism, which forced the narrator to take refuge in a cave sometime in the 1630s.¹⁵ Here he meditates on the relationship between God and his creation as well as the nature of evil, arguing for a pre-established harmony between the *śər’atā fətrāt* (the ‘precepts’ or ‘order’ of creation), their *fəṭari* (creator), and the faculty of *ləbbuna* (understanding, intelligence, ‘reason’¹⁶) in humans that allows us to discern it, using the normative standard provided by the faculty of *ləbbuna* to criticize contemporary social practices such as slavery, asceticism, and the oppression of women. The *Ḥatāta Wäldä Ḥəywät*, allegedly composed by Zār’a Ya’əqob’s disciple Wäldä Ḥəywät, develops the philosophical arguments of the earlier work into a system of social ethics.

Modern commentators have focused on those elements of the *Ḥatāta*’s philosophical system that appear to approximate those of contemporary seventeenth-century works in Europe. The centerpiece of Claude Sumner’s influential interpretation of the first *Ḥatāta* was

Fasil Merawi (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024), 199–215; for its status in medieval philosophy, see John Marenbon, “Zār’a Ya’əqob, Mediaeval Philosophy, Forgery, and Authenticity,” in *In Search of Zār’a Ya’əqob*, 105–20; for its place in the history of Eastern Orthodox philosophy, see Peter Adamson, “The Place of Ethiopian Philosophy in the History of Philosophy,” in *In Search of Zār’a Ya’əqob*, 159–74; for its place in the broad sweep of Ethiopian intellectual history, see Brooh Asmare, “The Dialogue between Zār’a Ya’əqob and the Nine Saints,” in *In Search of Zār’a Ya’əqob*, 175–86; for its place in early modern Ethiopian literature, see Eyasu Berento Assefa, “Zār’a Ya’əqob and Wäldä Ḥəywät: Exceptionality and Situatedness of the *Ḥatātas* in the Ethiopian Intellectual Tradition,” in *In Search of Zār’a Ya’əqob*, 121–38.

¹⁵ The Ethiopian calendar is seven or eight years “earlier” than the Gregorian calendar owing to a different calculation of the date of the Annunciation: October 2024 in the Gregorian calendar is Mäskäräm 2017 in the Ethiopian calendar. We will always cite dates in the Gregorian calendar unless clearly signposted as ‘E.C.’

¹⁶ This gloss on *ləbbuna* is defended by Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy II: passim*, and also briefly by Wendy Laura Belcher and Ralph Lee, “Translation Principles,” in *The Hatata Inquiries*, 59. For further discussion of the difficulties in translating *ləbbuna*, see Jonathan Egid, “In Search of Zār’a Ya’əqob: Introduction,” in *In Search of Zār’a Ya’əqob*, 45 with note 166; Jonathan Egid, “Appendix II: Gə’əz Philosophical Wordlist,” in *In Search of Zār’a Ya’əqob*, 253–54.

a parallel between Zär'a Ya'eqob' and Descartes' 'rationalism'.¹⁷ Sumner followed in the footsteps of the text's earliest interpreters, Boris Turayev and Enno Littmann, who rendered the phrase *bərhanä ləbbuna* (the light of reason) as свет разума and *lux intelligentiae* in Russian and Latin respectively, embedding in their translations a parallel with Cartesian terminology.¹⁸ According to the narrative of the first *Ḥatāta*, the text's philosophical ideas would have been developed in the same decade, the 1630s, as Descartes' *Discours de la méthode*.

Others have remarked upon the conception of God presented in the *Ḥatātas*.¹⁹ Strikingly, the *Ḥatāta* generally uses *fāṭari* or 'creator' (or less frequently *Āmlak* or 'Lord') to refer to God, as opposed to the much more common term *Ēgzi'ābher* (the standard Gə'ez term for God, literally 'Lord of the Land' or 'Lord of the Nation'). This terminology seemed to the late Getatchew Haile—one of the most influential scholars of Gə'ez literature of the last 50 years—to speak to a kind of deism, a God less personally and directly involved with human affairs than that of revealed religion.²⁰

¹⁷ Claude Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy, vol. III: The Treatise of Zär'a Ya'eqob and of Wäldä Həywāt: An Analysis* (Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, 1978), 66, 70–72, and also *passim* in Claude Sumner, *Classical Ethiopian Philosophy* (Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press, 1985). This account is largely replicated in Teodros Kiros, *Zara Yacob. A Seventeenth Century Rationalist: Philosopher of the Rationality of the Heart* (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 2005) as well as in Dawit Worku Kidane, *The Ethics of Zär'a Ya'eqob. A reply to the historical and religious violence in the seventeenth century Ethiopia* (Rome: Pontificia università gregoriana, 2012).

¹⁸ Boris Alexandrovich Turayev, "Abbyssinskiye svobodnyye mysliteli XVII veka; 'Ethiopian Freethinkers of the Seventeenth Century'," *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya; Journal of the Ministry of Education* (1903): 443–447. For an English translation of the latter article, see "Abyssinian Free-Thinkers of the Seventeenth Century (Boris Turayev, 1903)," trans. Justin E. H. Smith, in *Zär'a Ya'eqob and the Authorship Dispute: A Sourcebook*, ed. Lea Cantor and Jonathan Egid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Enno Littmann (ed.), *Philosophi Abessini: sive vita et philosophia magistri Zar'a Ya'qob eiusque discipuli Walda-Heywat philosophia* (Paris: Typographeo Reipublicae, 1904).

¹⁹ Boris Alexandrovich Turayev, "Abbyssinskiye svobodnyye mysliteli XVII veka"; Theodor Nöldeke, "Zwei abessinische Deisten," *Deutsche Rundschau* 9 (1905): 457–459. For an English translation of the latter article, see "Two Abyssinian Deists (Theodor Nöldeke, 1905)," trans. Jonathan Egid, in *Zär'a Ya'eqob and the Authorship Dispute*.

²⁰ Getatchew Haile, "The Discourse of Wärqe: Commonly Known as Ḥatāta zä-Zär'a Ya'eqob," in *Ethiopian Studies in Honour of Amha Asfaw* (New York: Self-published, 2017), 51–71, reprinted with corrections in *In Search of Zär'a Ya'eqob*, 51–65.

Both *Ḥatātas* present a remarkably unconventional conception of religion for their seventeenth-century Ethiopian setting. There is no mention of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary or of the Trinity in the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob*, and its author displays a marked disdain for institutional religion across the board: Ethiopian and Coptic Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, and the religion of the 'Indians.'²¹ In part this critique is grounded in the 'irrationality' (the disagreement with the normative standard provided by *labbuna*) of particular practices such as slavery, asceticism, astrology, and polygamy, but also in a critique of tradition as grounds for knowledge. At the heart of this critique is an insistence on thinking for oneself, which is only possible by means of the individual's exercise of *labbuna*.

The first mention of the works in either European or Ethiopian sources is in the correspondence between Antoine d'Abbadie and one of the four friars on mission to the Oromo: one Giusto da Urbino.²² In a letter of 1852 sent from Däbrä Tabor, Bägemdər, in the Ethiopian highlands, Giusto announces to his patron that he has discovered a book that would be of keen interest to him. He describes it as "a kind of novel or biographical story written by a deist philosopher from the time of the Portuguese," providing a potted summary of the protagonist ("a canon of Aksum"), the narrative ("persecuted for religious reasons; he fled to the woods and, [...] having become disgusted by all revealed religions, he began to think") and the results of the protagonist's meditations ("there is a creator God [...] Praying is good; Christianity is false, Islam is false, as are all other revealed religions").²³

²¹ ወሰብ : ህጻኖች (literally: 'and the people of 'Hind', i.e. Indian people or 'Hindus'), Abb215 12r.

²² No definitive record exists of the texts in either Ethiopian or European sources before the da Urbino-d'Abbadie correspondence dating to 1852–53 (1852 in the case of the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob*: NAF 23852, fol. 25v–26r; 1853 in the case of the *Ḥatāta Wäldä Ḥəywär*: NAF 23852, fol. 32v).

²³ NAF 23852, fol. 25v–26r (= Letter of 20 September 1852): "une espèce de roman ou histoire biographique écrite par un philosophe deïste [sic] du temps des portugais [sic]"; "un chanoine d'Aksum"; "persécuté par motif de religion : il s'enfuit dans les bois et [...] ayant prit [sic] dégoût [sic] à toute religion révélée il se mit à [sic] penser"; "il y a un Dieu créateur. [...] La prière est bonne. Le Christianisme est faux, l'islamisme est faux, comme toute autre religion révélée." Translation from the French taken from: Anaïs Wion, "The History of a Genuine Fake Philosophical Treatise (*Ḥatātā Zar'a Yā'eqob* and *Ḥatātā Walda Heywat*). Episode 1: The Time of Discovery. From Being Part of a Collection to Becoming a Scholarly Publication (1852–1904)," *Afriques* (2021), trans. Lea Cantor, Jonathan Egid, and Anaïs Wion, <https://doi.org/10.4000/afriques.3178>. Originally

The first manuscript, *Manuscrit BnF Éthiopien Abbadie 234* ('Abb234'), included only the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob* and was copied in Giusto's hand, possibly from a manuscript discovered in 1852. The other manuscript, *Manuscrit BnF Éthiopien Abbadie 215* ('Abb215'), which Giusto allegedly discovered in 1854, contained both the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob* and the *Ḥatāta Wäldä Ḥəywät*. Both manuscripts date from the mid-nineteenth century and were copied, according to the da Urbino-d'Abbadie correspondence, from older, perhaps original manuscripts.²⁴

Giusto was expelled from the country in 1855 owing to the anti-Catholic persecutions led by Emperor Tewodros II and *Abunä Sälama III*, the metropolitan of the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwähädo Church from 1841 to 1867. Giusto died soon after in Khartoum, in September 1856.²⁵

When d'Abbadie died forty years later, his Ethiopian manuscripts—including the two *Ḥatātas*—were bequeathed to the Académie des Sciences, and in 1902 the collection was

published as Wion, "Épisode 1." The passage is also quoted in Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 49; Wion, "Lettres du R. P. Juste d'Urbino," 10–1; and (partially and in Italian translation) in Carmelo da Sessano, "Giusto da Urbino," in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*: Volume VI (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1951), col. 863.

²⁴ On this possibility see the very clear and useful discussion in Wendy Laura Belcher and Jeremy R. Brown, "Manuscripts of the Texts," in *The Hatata Inquiries*, 9–16; Brown and Belcher, "Appendix 2: Scribal Intervention in Abb 215 and Abb 234," in *The Hatata Inquiries*, 189–92; see also Egid, "In Search of Zār'a Ya'əqob: Introduction," 5, 36–38; Getatchew Haile, "The Discourse of Wärqe," 51–65. Wion ("Épisode 1," §§36–37) has argued that Abb215, which Giusto claims to have purchased, was copied by the *däbtära* Gäbrä Maryam, who had also copied Abb200 and 211.

²⁵ Giusto's date of death is mistakenly thought by most scholars to be 22 November 1856, based on a letter which (according to Tarducci) Giusto's friend Costantino Nascimbeni received on 4 January 1857 from Fr. Marcellino da Piobbico. Marcellino da Piobbico and other members of the Capuchin Order apparently received the official notification of Giusto's death directly from the office of the *Generalato di Roma* (Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 192, with note 488; Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino*, 155–156, with note 1), hence why the date of death it mentions is taken to be reliable. However, a copy of an inventory of Giusto's belongings compiled on 27 September 1856 by the Austrian consulate in Khartoum and sent to the Propaganda Fide by the Apostolic Delegate to Egypt, Perpetuo Guasco, proves—*pace* Sumner—that Giusto was already dead in September 1856 (ASPF, E–C, Vol. 19, 605r, 617r; see Trozzi, "Lo Hatatā Zar'a Yā'qob", 23–4, note 54). This is consistent with a letter Guasco sent to d'Abbadie on 25 November 1857 (NAF 23852, fol. 124r) and with two letters which the Capuchin missionary Léon des Avanchers sent to d'Abbadie in 1857 and 1859 (his letter of 12 July 1859 = NAF 23852, fol. 123r mentions September 1856 – see the copy in d'Abbadie's hand sent to the Vatican = ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 7, fol. 19r – and his letter of 25 January 1857 = NAF 23852, fol. 150r mentions 24 September [1856]). Massaia (*Memoirs* III: ch. 9, 92; *Lettere* II: 120 = letter of 29 November 1857 to Fr. Cesare da Castelfranco) appears to misremember the date of Giusto's death as having occurred in October 1856.

deposited in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.²⁶ In 1904 Boris Turayev produced an edition and Russian translation of the first *Ḥatāta*,²⁷ while Enno Littmann published an edition and Latin translation of both *Ḥatātas*.²⁸ The first *Ḥatāta* in particular was also noted by orientalists including Theodor Nöldeke, Carl Bezold, and Carl Anton Baumstark, the latter of whom declared that the *Ḥatāta* “is entitled to a place of honour in the midst of the most important confessions of world literature on account of its simple strength, its deep, serene and sure sincerity.”²⁹

The reception history of the *Ḥatātas* changed completely with the work of the Italian orientalist Carlo Conti Rossini (1872–1949). In 1916, he noted the supposed singularity of the texts in Ethiopian literary history and questioned their authenticity based, *inter alia*, on the testimony of one *Abba* Täklä Haymanot.³⁰ The latter was a Catholic convert in the Lazarist mission to Tigray of Giustino de Jacobis (1800–60) whom Conti Rossini claimed to have met decades after the events. According to Täklä Haymanot (*apud* Conti Rossini), Giusto had secretly collaborated with a *däbtära* named Amarhəññ and a priest named Goššu, to ‘copy’ and disseminate a heretical book entitled ‘Uorché’ which was said to promote freemasonry.³¹ Conti Rossini also claimed that Täklä Haymanot went further, alleging that

²⁶ See the 1859 catalogue of these manuscripts by d’Abbadie himself: Antoine d’Abbadie, *Catalogue raisonné de manuscrits éthiopiens appartenant à Antoine d’Abbadie* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1859). For later catalogues, see Marius Chaîne, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens de la collection Antoine d’Abbadie* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1912); Carlo Conti Rossini, “Notice sur les manuscrits éthiopiens de la collection d’Abbadie (Suite),” *Journal Asiatique* 2, no. 11 (1913): 5–26.

²⁷ Boris Turayev (ed.), “*Ḥatāta Zār’a Ya’əqob*. Issledovaniye Zara Yakoba. Ispoved abissinskogo svobodnogo myslitelya XVII veka,” *Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniya (Imperatorskogo) Russkogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva* 16 (1904), 1–62.

²⁸ Littmann (ed.), *Philosophi Abessini*.

²⁹ Theodor Nöldeke, “Zwei abessinische Deisten,” *Deutsche Rundschau* 9 (1905): 457–459; Carl Bezold, “Rezension der Edition Littmanns,” *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 28, no. 20 (1907): 1242–1244; Anton Baumstark, *Die christlichen Literaturen des Orients* II (Berlin and Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1911), 58: “verdient in der ungeschminkten Kraft ihrer rücksichtslosen und doch abgeklärt ruhigen Wahrhaftigkeit einen Ehrenplatz neben den hervorragendsten Selbstbekenntnissen der Weltliteratur.” Translation from the German taken from Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 64.

³⁰ Carlo Conti Rossini, “Vicende dell’Etiopia e delle missioni cattoliche ai tempi di Ras Ali Deggiac Ubié e Re Teodoro: Secondo un documento abissino,” *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei* 25 (1916): 425–550 (see especially 497–498, with note 3).

³¹ A *däbtära* is an unordained scholar versed in the teachings of the church, who may take on work as a scribe or a musician or partake in magical rituals. Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. Volume II: D-Ha (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 54.

some of those who had seen the book believed it to have been falsely attributed to this ‘Uorché’ and that it had in fact been written by Giusto himself.³² The reliability of Conti Rossini’s report is not unimpeachable.³³ We have no manuscript evidence of Täklä Haymanot’s original testimony, and Conti Rossini admitted his source was indirect: “The translation [from the Amharic or Gə‘əz original to Italian] that I am publishing here is conducted on the basis of a copy, not always felicitous, which a nephew [or grandson, ‘*nipote*’] of the author, one Gare (Gabra) Medhín, now also dead, made for me on the basis of the original.”³⁴

In 1920, Conti Rossini argued that the true author of both *Ḥatātas* was their supposed discoverer, Giusto da Urbino.³⁵ Besides Täklä Haymanot’s testimony, Conti Rossini presented philological considerations and an argument concerning the supposed incompatibility of rationalistic philosophy and seventeenth-century Ethiopian culture, which over the next fifteen years he developed in service of Italian fascist propaganda.³⁶ Europe’s

³² Conti Rossini, “Vicende,” 497–498, with note 3.

³³ Even Sumner (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II, 64–66, 181, 197, 250), one of Conti Rossini’s most vocal critics, passes over this difficulty. See however Wendy Laura Belcher, “The Authorship of the *Hatata Inquiries*,” 29–31.

³⁴ “La traduzione, che qui pubblico, è condotta sopra una copia, non sempre felice, che un nipote dell’autore, un tale Gare (Gabra) Medhín, or morto anch’esso, mi fece sull’originale” (Conti Rossini, “Vicende,” 427). We were unable to locate any Amharic or Gə‘əz original of Täklä Haymanot’s memoir-length testimony in the Carlo Conti Rossini Archive preserved at the Archivio Storico of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei in Rome. Note however that in 1920 Conti Rossini provided what appears to be the Gə‘əz original of the portion of Täklä Haymanot’s testimony concerned with the accusations against Giusto: Conti Rossini, “Lo *Hatatā Zar’a Yā’qob* e il Padre Giusto da Urbino,” *Atti della Reale Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, Rendiconti, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 29, no. 5 (1920), 213–23 (see 218, note 2).

³⁵ Carlo Conti Rossini, “Lo *Hatatā Zar’a Yā’qob*.” For an English translation, see “The *Hatatā Zar’a Yā’qob* and Father Giusto da Urbino,” trans. Lea Cantor, in *Zār’a Ya’əqob and the Authorship Dispute*.

³⁶ See most explicitly Carlo Conti Rossini, “L’Etiopia è incapace di progresso civile,” *Nuova antologia* (1935): 171–177 (especially 172). For an English translation, see “Ethiopia is Incapable of Civil Progress,” trans. Lea Cantor, in *Zār’a Ya’əqob and the Authorship Dispute*. For the background of Conti Rossini’s claim that the *Hatāta* was impossible in seventeenth-century Ethiopia, including the context of Italian Hegelianism, see Jonathan Egid, “Hegel and the *Hatāta Zār’a Ya’əqob*: Africa in the Philosophy of History and the History of Philosophy,” *Hegel Bulletin* (2024), 1–24. On the intellectual foundations of Conti Rossini’s racism, his politics, and the possible racist motivations behind his rejection of an Ethiopian authorship, see Neelam Srivastava, “Debating the *Hatāta*: Carlo Conti Rossini and Italian Racial Theories,” in *In Search of Zār’a Ya’əqob*, 139–56; see also Nicola Camilleri and Valentina Fusari, “Tra scienza e amministrazione: Carlo Conti Rossini durante e dopo la dominazione coloniale,” *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 6, no. 3 (2022): 195–232.

Ēthiopisants almost unanimously came to accept Conti Rossini's argument that the works were forgeries.³⁷

This consensus was challenged by scholars including Amsalu Aklilu, Alemayehu Moges, and Claude Sumner, and today the authorship debate rages on.³⁸ Recently, Getatchew Haile has provided original philological arguments for the *Hatātas*' authenticity while Anaïs Wion has argued the case for forgery.³⁹ In the new English translation of the *Hatātas*, Wendy Belcher provides an extensive synthesis of earlier arguments, in addition to providing original considerations, coming down strongly in favor of an Ethiopian authorship.⁴⁰ Jonathan Egid has provided an alternative account of the authorship debate, and argues for the

³⁷ Both Turayev and Littmann revised their assessment that the works were authentic (Boris Alexandrovich Turayev, "Abissinskaia literatura," *Literatura Vostoka* 2 (1920), 152–61; Enno Littmann, "Compte rendu de Ethiopica & Amharica de George F. Black, The New York Public Library, 1928," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 23, nos. 8–9 (1930), 653–56). Enrico Cerulli and Ignazio Guidi noted their agreement with Conti Rossini (Enrico Cerulli, "Giusto da Urbino," *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1933); Ignazio Guidi, *Storia della Letteratura Etiopica* (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1932), 77. Eugen Mittwoch and Jean Simon developed Conti Rossini's philological arguments (Eugen Mittwoch, *Die amharische Version der Soirées de Carthage mit einer Einleitung: Die angeblichen abessinischen Philosophen des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1934); Jean Simon, "Le Ḥatātā Zār'a Ya'qob et le Ḥatātā Walda Heywat," *Orientalia Nova Series* 5 (1936): 93–101). For English translations of the articles by Mittwoch and Simon, see, respectively: "The Supposed Ethiopian Philosophers of the 17th Century," trans. Jonathan Egid, in *Zār'a Ya'qob and the Authorship Dispute*; "The Ḥatātā Zār'a Yā'qob and the Ḥatātā Walda Heywat," trans. Jonathan Egid and Lea Cantor, in *Zār'a Ya'qob and the Authorship Dispute*.

³⁸ Amsalu Aklilu, "Zār'ä Ya'qob Fälasasəfaw," *Tarik : gazette d'information archéologique, historique et littéraire* 1 (1961): 11–13; Alemayehu Moges, "Ḥatātā Zāzār'a Ya'qob, Ityopyawi Fälasasəf" (B.A. thesis, Haile Selassie I University, 1961 E.C., 1969). Sumner (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II) argued separately for an Ethiopian authorship and against a Giusto da Urbino authorship, drawing on original philological arguments (such as statistical studies of comparative word and sentence length) and for the first time also drawing on the archives of the Capuchin missions in Ethiopia and some of Giusto da Urbino's correspondence. For an English translation, see "The Ḥatātā of Zār'a Ya'qob, Ethiopian Philosopher," trans. Hewan Semon and Brooh Asmare, in *Zār'a Ya'qob and the Authorship Dispute*. For a range of divergent views held by scholars today, see *In Search of Zār'a Ya'qob*. For a detailed account of the authorship debate, see Egid, "In Search of Zār'a Ya'qob," 1–47. For a different account of the debate's historiography, see Belcher, "The Authorship of the *Hatata* Inquiries."

³⁹ Getatchew Haile, "The Discourse of Wärqe" (these arguments are endorsed by Belcher, "The Authorship of the *Hatata* Inquiries"); Wion, "Épisode 1"; Wion, "Épisode 2." Wion's arguments are supported both by European scholars like Manfred Kropp and by Ethiopian scholars such as Daniel Kibret and Fasil Merawi (Manfred Kropp, "A statistic and stylistic approach for resolving the problem of authorship of Ḥatātā Zār'a-Ya'qob," presented at the Presented at the International Seminar on Zār'a-Ya'qob Fälasəfawi in May 1992, forthcoming with updated annotations in *Zār'a Ya'qob and the Authorship Dispute*; Daniel Kibret, *Yälelläwən fälasəf fälläga ənna leločč* (Addis Ababa: Agios Printers, 2011 E.C., 2018–19); Fasil Merawi and Setargew Kenaw, "Is there an Ethiopian Philosophy? Rereading the Hatetas of Zara Yaacob and Walda Hewat in the Context of Knowledge Production," *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities* 15, no. 1 (2020): 59–75; Fasil Merawi, "Examining the *Hatātas* as a Foundation of Ethiopian Philosophy," in *In Search of Zār'a Ya'qob*, 217–26.)

⁴⁰ Belcher, "The Authorship of the *Hatata* Inquiries."

undecidability of the question of authorship on the balance of evidence currently discussed in scholarship.⁴¹ None of these discussions takes into account new archival evidence, presented in this article for the first time, attesting to early accusations of forgery against Giusto da Urbino in the late 1850s.

2. The Early Accusations Against Giusto da Urbino

The figures directly implicated in the early accusations and counter-accusations were involved not in Giusto's Capuchin mission to the south, but in an existing Lazarist mission based in the northern highlands and led by Giustino de Jacobis.⁴² This mission, which would produce a saint in de Jacobis and a martyr in his disciple Gäbrä Mika'el, preached primarily to the Orthodox Christians of Tigray in the highlands of modern-day Eritrea.

The first Lazarist to arrive in the Horn of Africa in 1838 with the d'Abbadie brothers was Giuseppe Sapeto. For the first six years his role was primarily that of missionary, but in 1844 Sapeto was recalled to Europe, accused by the Congregation of Propaganda Fide of violating his vow of chastity and contracting syphilis from encounters with locals.⁴³ He was nevertheless sent back to Ethiopia in 1849 and would return periodically over the coming decades as a political intermediary—attempting to persuade Napoleon III to intervene in Ethiopian politics around 1855 and, after giving up the habit in 1862, and establishing the Colonia di Assab ('Asäb), Italy's colonial foothold in East Africa, by purchasing land on behalf of the Rubattino Shipping Company in 1869–70.⁴⁴ It was against this background of

⁴¹ Egid, "In Search of Zär'a Ya'eqob," 1–47.

⁴² For a general source on the Lazarist mission, see M. Coulbeaux, "Mission d'Abyssinie," in *Les Missions Catholiques Françaises au XIX^e Siècle. Vol. II*, ed. Jean-Baptiste Piolet (Paris: A. Colin, 1900–03), 1–44. For an English biography of de Jacobis, see Giustino de Jacobis and A. Devin, *Abyssinia and its Apostle*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Herbert (London: Burns and Oates, 1867). See also Massaia, *Memoirs* I: ch. 1, 1 for the point that the Lazarist Mission in Abyssinia was deeply intertwined with the Oromo Mission.

⁴³ Siegbert Uhlig and Alessandro Bausi (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. Volume IV: O-X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010), 533.

⁴⁴ Uhlig and Bausi (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* IV: 533.

ambivalent missionary service, active political agitation, and deep knowledge of the region that in July 1857 Sapeto composed an extensive report for the Vatican in response to the initial accusations against Giusto da Urbino.

Two Ethiopian Catholic converts in the northern Lazarist mission played a central role in the early stages of the controversy. While Täklä Haymanot is not explicitly named as one of Giusto da Urbino's accusers in the Vatican archives, it has been suggested that he was the author of the anonymous letter in Amharic, which first connected Giusto to the *Ḥatāta*.⁴⁵ If we assume, with Trozzi and Sumner, that he was the anonymous accuser, then we would have a straightforward connection between the 1856 accusations and Conti Rossini's alleged source in his 1916 and 1920 works.⁴⁶ What we do know from Vatican archives dating to the 1840s–60s is that Täklä Haymanot was an educated Tigray-born scholar who knew Gə'əz and successfully taught the catechism to Catholic converts.⁴⁷ He was also reputedly one of the best priests of the Lazarist mission led by de Jacobis.⁴⁸ He was born around 1812, making it possible for him to have met Conti Rossini in his old age, as Conti Rossini later claimed.⁴⁹ The identity of the second accuser, one Wäldä Gäbrə'el (identified as [Abba] Walda-Gabriel[e], D. Gabriele or D. Gabriele Walda in Italian sources), another Ethiopian Catholic convert in the de Jacobis circle,⁵⁰ is more certain—as we will now see.

⁴⁵ Sumner (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 181, note 458 and 189) justifies this conjecture on the grounds that Fr. Francesco da Bassano reportedly recognized the letter's calligraphy as that of Täklä Haymanot.

⁴⁶ Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 9, note 11 and 23–24, note 54; Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 187–89, 197, 213, 250.

⁴⁷ Giustino de Jacobis, letter of 25 March 1846 to the Propaganda Fide (ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 4, fol. 552v).

⁴⁸ Massaia, letter of 22 May 1864 to Cardinal Barnabò (Massaia, *Lettere* III: 84 = ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 7, fol. 574r).

⁴⁹ According to Giustino de Jacobis's letter of 25 March 1846 to the Propaganda Fide (ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 4, fol. 552v), "Abba Teclaymanot" was 34 years old in 1846. This sets his birth date around 1812, making him 90 years old on his death in 1902 (the latter being the date of death reported by Conti Rossini, "Vicende," 425).

⁵⁰ Massaia, letter of 21 September 1850 to Cardinal Franzoni (Massaia, *Lettere* I: 212).

2.1 The Anonymous Letter

The first accusations against Giusto appear in the anonymous letter written on 22 October 1856,⁵¹ originally composed in Amharic and handed to Wäldä Gäbrä’el so as to be delivered to the Propaganda Fide in Rome. A loose Italian translation was produced by Sapeto in his report on the accusations.⁵²

Amharic (and Gə‘əz and Italian) original of anonymous letter ⁵³	Translation of the anonymous letter ⁵⁴	Translation of Giuseppe Sapeto’s Italian translation ⁵⁵
<p>አመ፡ ፳፪ለጥቅምት፡</p> <p>መልእክት፡ ኀበ፡ አባ፡ ወልደ፡</p> <p>ገብርኤል፡ ካቶሊካዊ፡ ሰላም፡ ለከ፡</p> <p>እግዚአብሔር፡ የሁሉ፡ ምስሌክ፡</p> <p>አሜን።</p> <p>አቡነ፡ ጁስቶ፡ ከሰላማ፡ በተገኘ፡</p> <p>ጊዜ፡ የተናጋገሩትን፡ ነገር። ወርቁ፡</p>	<p>[In Gə‘əz]</p> <p>On the 22 Ṭəqəmt. Letter to</p> <p>Abba Wäldä Gäbrä’el,</p> <p>Catholic. Peace to you. God</p> <p>be with you, amen.</p> <p>[In Amharic]</p>	<p>On 22 October</p> <p>Letter to Abba Walda-</p> <p>Gabriel the Catholic;</p> <p>greetings, may God’s peace</p> <p>be with you, Amen.</p>

⁵¹ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1287r.

⁵² An English translation of the Sapeto report (written in Italian) and of the anonymous Amharic letter appended to it was published by Sumner (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 189–96). Trozzi also published a photo of the Amharic letter (ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1287r) together with the Sapeto report in the Italian original (ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1289r–1293r) as an Appendix to his 1986 book (Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 61–66).

⁵³ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1287r.

⁵⁴ Translation by Alessandro Bausi: cf. Sumner (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 189) for an alternative English translation.

⁵⁵ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1289r–1289v: “Ai 22 ottobre | Lettera ad Abba Walda-Gabriel Cattolico; ti saluto, la pace di Dio sia con te, amen. | I discorsi tenuti insieme dal Padre Giusto, quando si trovò con abba Salama; come Egli abbia avuto il libro chiamato Oro mio; e come l’abbia dispensato ad altri, e tutto ciò che per fama ha udito dire, faccia osservare al Cardinale, o al Patriarca dei Romani, affinché non si trapianti in Etiopia una bugiarda spina, ché noi abbiamo udito, che sarà rimandato in Etiopia. | Questa carta, veduta che l’abbia, non la mostri a nessuno, fuorché al Cardinale. | [...] Io qui sossegnato [sic] ho veduto questa Carta, ela [scil. ‘e la’] giudico conveniente al bene Cattolico. de Jacobis.”

<p>የሚባል፡ መጻፍ፡ እንደ፡ ተቀበለ፡ ለሰውም፡ እንደ፡ ሰጡ፡ በወሬ፡ የሰሙትን፡ ጉሉ፡ ለከርዲና፡ ወይም፡ ለሮም፡ ሊቀ፡ ጳጳሳት፡ እንዲያመለክቱ፡ ለኢትዮጵያ፡ ጉለተኛ፡ እሾህ፡ እንዳይተከልበት፡ ወደ፡ ኢትዮጵያ፡ ይመለሳሉ፡ ሰምተናልና፡ ይህንን፡ ወረቀት፡ እርስዎ፡ አይተው፡ [word with three letters erased]፡ ሌላ፡ ሰው፡ አይየው፡ ከካርዲናል፡ በቀር፡</p> <p>Io qui sossegnato [sic] ho veduto questa Carta e la giudico conveniente al bene Cattolico.</p> <p>de Jacobis</p>	<p>The conversations had when <i>Abunä Ġəsto</i> (Giusto) met with <i>Sälama</i> (III); all he/they heard through hearsay, that he received a book called <i>Wärqe</i> that he gave to the people: let him report [all this] to the Cardinal or to the Pope of Rome, so that a second thorn might not be planted in Ethiopia; since we have heard, he will go back to Ethiopia.</p> <p>After you have seen this [piece of] writing, do not let anyone else see it, except the Cardinal.</p> <p>[In Italian]</p> <p>I here the undersigned, have seen this Document, and judge it befitting of the Catholic good.</p>	<p>The things Father Giusto said, when he found himself with abba Salama; how he had the book called <i>My Gold</i> [<i>Wärqe</i>]; and how he handed it out to others, and all that you heard from rumors, make all of this known to the Cardinal, or to the Patriarch of the Romans, so that a lying thorn not be transplanted in Ethiopia, given that we have heard that he will be sent back to Ethiopia.</p> <p>Do not show this document, now that you have seen it, to anyone other than the Cardinal.</p> <p>[...]</p> <p><i>I here the undersigned, have seen this Document, and judge it befitting of the</i></p>
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	de Jacobis	<i>Catholic good.</i> de Jacobis
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The anonymous author accuses Giusto da Urbino of meeting with *Abba Sālama*, the head of the Ethiopian church, and of receiving a book named *Wärqe*, which Giusto then “gave to the people.” The author advises that a cardinal or even the pope himself be alerted to this enigmatically named ‘second thorn’⁵⁶ which must not be planted in Ethiopia. The author also cautions Wäldä Gäbrə’el not to share it with anyone other than an unspecified Cardinal in Rome, presumably the Prefect of Propaganda Fide, Cardinal Barnabò.

Sapeto observes, plausibly, that “[t]he last few words of the letter, ‘other than the Cardinal,’ were added in Amharic with a European pen, and do not seem to be in the hand of the author of the letter.”⁵⁷ Giustino de Jacobis apparently endorsed the letter’s contents in his own hand, in corrupted Italian: ‘sossegnato’ seems borrowed from the French ‘soussigné.’

2.2 The Sapeto Report

Sapeto begins his report by raising questions about the motives of the anonymous author:

“why does the accuser remain anonymous, and write to the least educated monk [i.e. Wäldä Gäbrə’el] which the Catholic Mission has over there?,” before answering his own question:

“[s]o as not to compromise himself, and because Walda-Gabriel was due to come to Rome.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ As Alessandro Bausi has noted in correspondence, Sapeto renders this as ‘lying thorn,’ a gloss based on a misreading of two very similar-looking Amharic words, ሕላተኛ (‘false, lying’) versus ሕለተኛ (‘second’). The similarity is purely graphic (rather than semantic or phonetic).

⁵⁷ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1289v: “Le parole ultime della lettera, “fuorché al Cardinale,” sono state aggiunte con penna europea, e non paiono dell’autore della lettera” (emphasis in the original).

⁵⁸ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1289v: “[...] perché il denunciante conserva l’anonimo [sic], e scrive egli al monaco meno istruito che abbia colà la Missione Cattolica? [...] Per non compromettersi, e perche [sic] Walda-Gabriel veniva a Roma [*scil.* ‘a Roma’].”

Sapeto suggests that since Wäldä Gäbrä'el was due to come to Rome anyway, he would be able to present the anonymous accuser's case in person, without the paper trail that formal accusations would leave. It is noteworthy that the reason for Wäldä Gäbrä'el's trip to Rome was to clear up doubts that had arisen in connection with his Catholic Christening.⁵⁹ His motives might thus not have been entirely innocent: facilitating a denunciation of heresy could be exactly what he needed to establish his conversion and commitment to Catholicism.

Sapeto also objects to the irregularity of the accusations: “remaining anonymous in serious matters of this kind, in which it appears that the apostasy of a Capuchin Missionary is at stake, makes us reasonably suspect that the denunciation is slanderous.”⁶⁰ Even if the accusations were true, “the channel used to denounce him is neither legitimate nor appropriate.”⁶¹ He cautions against condemning Giusto as a heretic on the basis of accusations made “by an anonymous person, who also does not formulate any explicit accusation” and who “admits to not having seen anything, and to having merely heard this or that rumor about the accused,” correctly emphasizing that nobody involved in the accusations appears to have seen or read the text.⁶²

Sapeto then turns to de Jacobis, who as we saw added his signature to the anonymous letter: “I here the undersigned, have seen this Document, and judge it befitting of the Catholic good.” Sapeto remarks that “the style and mysteriousness of these words would make me reject as false the signature of Monsignor the Vicar if I didn't know his character.”⁶³

⁵⁹As revealed by archival records at the Propaganda Fide. See, e.g., ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1130v = Note of 14 (?) October 1856 written on behalf of Cardinal Barnabò.

⁶⁰ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1289Ar: “[...] l'anonimo in simili gravi materie, nelle quali pare trattarsi dell'apostasia di un Missionario Cappuccino, ci fa ragionevolmente sospettare, che la denuncia sia calunnia [...]” The manuscript says ‘materie’—not ‘malerie’ (*pace* Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 62), which is not a word.

⁶¹ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1289Ar: “il canale scelto per la denuncia non è legittimo, né competente.”

⁶² ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1289Ar: “da un anonimo, il quale anche nonformola [*scil.* ‘non formula’] nessuna accusa esplicita”; “confessa di non aver veduto nulla, esolamente [*scil.* ‘e solamente’] d’aver inteso questa o quella diceria sul conto dell'incolpato.”

⁶³ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1289Av: “lo stile e'l [*sic*] mistero di queste parole mi farebbono rigettare come falsa la segnatura di Monsignor Vicario, se non conoscessi il suo carattere.”

Precisely what Sapeto insinuates concerning de Jacobis' character is unclear. Perhaps he has in mind de Jacobis' zeal, verging on fanaticism: Massaia's correspondence with the Propaganda Fide reveals that de Jacobis had directed his "excessive zeal" against Sapeto himself,⁶⁴ perhaps when, as we have seen, the latter was accused of violating his vow of chastity.⁶⁵ Another possibility is that Sapeto means to denounce de Jacobis' ill will toward Giusto. In late 1855 Giusto wrote to Antoine d'Abbadie about slanderous accusations made by the Lazarists against the Capuchins, alleging that Massaia was responsible for the persecution Lazarists suffered at the hands of *Abunä Sälama*. Giusto also wrote to his patron that de Jacobis had once criticized Giusto for going to an Orthodox church, even though Giusto had accompanied de Jacobis' Lazarist associates, as was customary (according to Giusto) among Catholic missionaries.⁶⁶

Turning to the substance of the anonymous letter, Sapeto remarks that the accusations center around: (1) Conversations between Giusto and *Abba Salama*; (2) The dissemination of a book called *Wärqe*; and (3) Everyone's gossip [*dicerie*] about Giusto.⁶⁷ In the letter accompanying his report, Sapeto also writes that Giusto wrote "additions or clarifications" to the "*Oarqié*," suggesting some kind of editorial intervention on Giusto's part⁶⁸—an intriguing possibility to which we will return.

The first accusation concerns Giusto da Urbino's supposed heresy, even apostasy. Sapeto reports that Wäldä Gäbrä'el had the following to say about an encounter between

⁶⁴ "zelo troppo severo"; The context is a letter of 31 January 1851 to the Propaganda Fide reporting on Massaia's first encounter with Sapeto in March 1850, in which Massaia defends Sapeto's character. Massaia, *Lettere* I: 236–7.

⁶⁵ For Giusto's allusion to Sapeto's humiliating downfall from the status of "great priest" ("grand prêtre"), see NAF 23852, fol. 53r (= Letter of Easter Day 1854; partially quoted in Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 22, note 50).

⁶⁶ NAF 23852, fol. 98r–98v (= undated letter, probably of October or November 1855).

⁶⁷ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1290v: "1° Discorsi del Padre Giusto con Abba Salama; 2° Spargimento d'un libro chiamato *Warqié*. 3° Dicerie di tutti sul Padre Giusto."

⁶⁸ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1284r: "con le aggiunte o sue dilucidazioni [sic]." See the full English translation of this letter in Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 190–191.

Giusto and *Abunä* Sälama: “When asked by abba Salama whether he believed in the Trinity, Giusto answered that he believed only in charity, or rather in love, but that in Rome they believe in it, although he could not know whether it was true, being unable to understand it.”⁶⁹ Continuing to summarize Wäldä Gäbrä’el’s account of the gossip, the report notes that Giusto “told Mr Bel [*scil.* Bell], a Protestant Englishman, that he believed the reformed religion to be truer than the Catholic one”⁷⁰—a very serious accusation—and further that “for this reason the same Englishman told the *abun* that he could allow Fr. Giusto to live freely in Abyssinia, since he would in no way take part in the faith of Rome, which he also repudiated in the presence of the Abun.”⁷¹

An eyewitness account from another Protestant, the British consul Walter Plowden, tells quite a different story. In a letter of 27 June 1855 addressed to de Jacobis and seen by Propaganda Fide authorities, Plowden reported that Giusto refused to stop teaching doctrines contrary to the faith of the bishop of Alexandria and of the *Abunä*, and was thereafter exiled from Abyssinia by Emperor Tewodros II.⁷² According to Plowden, John Bell—Wäldä Gäbrä’el’s ‘Mr Bel,’ who was in fact British-Maltese and was known for his sympathies toward Catholics⁷³—interceded on Giusto’s behalf, but only to guarantee that Giusto would not re-enter Abyssinia.⁷⁴ This conforms to Giusto’s own account of his confrontation with

⁶⁹ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1290v–1291r: “I discorsi del Padre Giusto con abba Salama sono [...] ch’egli abbia detto, domandato dall’abba Salama se credesse alla Trinita [*sic*]; credere soltanto alla carita [*sic*], o meglio all’amore, ma che in Roma ci credono, abbenche [*sic*] egli non potesse sapere se fosse vero, non potendolo capire.”

⁷⁰ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1291r: “ch’egli dicesse al Sig Bel [*sic.*], inglese protestante, ch’egli credeva più vera la religione riformata della Cattolica [...]”

⁷¹ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1291r: “e che perciò questo medesimo inglese dicesse all’*abun*, ch’il P. Giusto poteva lasciarlo liberamente in Abissinia non partecipando in nulla alla fede [*scil.* ‘alla fede’] di Roma, la quale anche rinegasse alla presenza dell’Abun.”

⁷² ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1029r–1029v. See Trozzi, *Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 67–69, note 2, for a partial transcription of this letter (in the original French). This defense of Giusto is echoed by Massaia in his much later *Memoirs* (III: ch. 9, 91–2) even as he criticized Giusto harshly for other failings, painting him as a reformed and repentant Catholic.

⁷³ For John Bell’s “amphibian faith” (“fede anfibia”) as the son of a Catholic mother and a Protestant father and his general “affection” for Catholics, see Massaia, *Memoirs* I: ch. 14, 106.

⁷⁴ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1029v. See also Giusto’s letter of 15 April 1855 to Antoine d’Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 79r; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 69, note 2 and Wion, “Épisode 1,” note 47) for Bell’s role in protecting him against anti-Catholic persecution.

Abunä Sälama in a letter to the Propaganda Fide: after being jailed for 15 days, thanks to Mr Bell's intervention he managed to evade grave punishment, and instead faced expulsion from Abyssinia.⁷⁵

The second, vaguer allegation reported by Wäldä Gäbrä'el is “[t]hat he [Giusto] made himself the Master of new doctrines which tended to destroy Catholicism and the Christian religion,”⁷⁶ and is especially important given what comes next in the report: namely, Giusto's putative role as editor and disseminator of the *Wärqe*. Going on to describe the offending work in greater detail, Sapeto quotes from a now-lost letter written by de Jacobis and apparently conveyed to the Propaganda Fide by Wäldä Gäbrä'el, dating to 27 October 1856:

It is said therefore that he [*scil.* “the only Italian who knows Geez in Europe”] had the unfortunate talent of digging out of the dust such a book in Geez which had been altogether forgotten, and which, *based on what I have been told about it*, is truly atheist, a true Lucretius of Ethiopian literature. It is said that seven copies, each of which is accompanied by a laudatory discourse [*discorso encomiastico*] of the *Editor*, are starting the satanic fire of pure materialism in the heart of Abyssinia.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 965r–965v (= Letter of 22 August 1855; see the English translation in Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 156–160). The episode is also mentioned in Giusto's letter of 7 June 1855 to d'Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 80r–81v; see Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d'Urbino,” 21), in his letter of 1 November 1855 to his friend Nascimbeni (*apud* Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino*, 129ff.) and in his articles for the *Spettatore Egiziano* in 1856 (on which see further Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 69, note 3; Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 298–308, especially 308).

⁷⁶ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1291r: “Ch'egli si facesse Maestro di nuove dottrine tendenti a distruggere il Cattolicismo [*sic*] ela [*scil.* ‘e la’] religione Cristiana.”

⁷⁷ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1291r–1291v: “Dicesi dunque aver egli [*scil.* “lo solo italiano che sappia il Gheez in Europa”] avuto il tristo talento di cavar dalla polvere un cotale libro Gheez dimenticato affatto, e che, per quanto mi vien detto, è un vero ateo, un vero Lucrezio della letteratura Etiope, e che sette copie, tutte munite d'un discorso encomiastico dell'*Editore*, vadano attaccando il fuoco infernale del materialismo pretto nel cuore dell'Abissinia.” (emphases in the original).

De Jacobis does not name Giusto explicitly in his letter, and only refers to him obliquely; Sapeto complains about de Jacobis' lack of transparency, since Sapeto himself—another Italian with great competence in Gə'əz—might have fallen under suspicion.⁷⁸ For the first time, we have a description—however inaccurate—of the work, predating the cursory overview given in d'Abbadie's catalogue of 1859: the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'əqob* is presented as a forgotten atheist work, 'Lucretian' in some unspecified sense—perhaps in the sense that it was thought to advocate what de Jacobis characterizes as “pure materialism,” which he feared would ignite a “satanic fire” in Ethiopia. But even de Jacobis admits he is relying on second-hand accounts (and given that atheism and materialism are not at all themes found in the *Ḥatāta*, we have reason to think his sources are unreliable). Moreover, he signals no suspicion that Giusto might have authored the work; rather he accuses him of digging up an old and *forgotten* book, and daring to write in its favor, in the form of a laudatory preface or commentary.

Sapeto's further comments about the dissemination of the book ('*Warqié*') also explicitly impute to Giusto editorial and commentarial interventions, rather than outright forgery. Sapeto glosses the anonymous letter as claiming that Giusto has kept the book “close to him,” that he has “commented upon” and has “had copies made of” it.⁷⁹ Speaking again *in propria persona*, Sapeto characterizes it as “a book (as far as I remember) of the Gnostics,” which will “bring scandal upon the Catholics.”⁸⁰ Importantly, these are not accusations that Giusto himself *wrote* the book.

Sapeto's final line of defense of Giusto against what he takes to be slander turns on questioning de Jacobis' sources for the contents of the book: “he has not seen the atheist

⁷⁸ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1291v–1292r.

⁷⁹ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1291r: “[...] di ritenere presso di sé, d'averlo comentato [sic], [d'averlo] fatto copiare [...]” The anonymous letter however doesn't say anything about Giusto 'commenting' on the work.

⁸⁰ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1291r: “[...] un libro (per quanto me ne ricordo) dei gnostici”; “con iscandalo dei cattolici.”

book, nor the *laudatory* discourse, and everything he says is based on hearsay, which in Abyssinia is 99% of the time false.”⁸¹ According to Sapeto, de Jacobis relies on unreliable rumors only because he “wishes for him [Giusto] to be punished and sentenced before it has been ascertained that Fr. Giusto really has erred.”⁸²

In his letter of 27 October 1856, de Jacobis apparently also implicated the d’Abbadie brothers, referring to them only as “the *Editors* of Geez books in Paris.”⁸³ Sapeto comments that the d’Abbadie brothers “were continuously in touch with Fr. Giusto, to whom they sent monetary help.”⁸⁴ Given the gravity of de Jacobis’ implied accusation against Antoine d’Abbadie, to the effect that he planned to support the publication of a heretical work, Sapeto again expresses indignation at his brazenness.⁸⁵

Still, Sapeto feels compelled to say more about Giusto’s alleged culpability. His final word on the matter is rather poetic: “[m]y heart is more inclined to bestow upon the tomb of the apostle the crown of glory than the anathema of a rebel against God and the Church,”⁸⁶ describing Giusto as “a very serious, pensive man, sharp in his words and often swiftly sardonic.”⁸⁷ This explains, in Sapeto’s view, how people could have so badly misunderstood Giusto’s views as to accuse him of promoting a work of unqualifiable heresy. Recounting a conversation with Giusto, Sapeto recalls that “[t]his last quality [i.e. sardonicism] of his made me pass over some of his affirmations which ran counter to the faith—for instance, [in

⁸¹ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1292r: “egli non vide il libro ateo, né il discorso *encomiastico*, etutto [*scil.* ‘e tutto’] il suo dire è basato sopra relazioni, che in Abissinia 99 su 100 sono false” (emphasis in the original).

⁸² ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1292r: “[...] Monsignor De Jacobis vorrebbe, che fosse punito e giudicato avanti d’essere certo, se veramente il P. Giusto abbia mancato.”

⁸³ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1291v: “gli *Editori* dei libri Gheez di Parigi” (emphasis in the original).

⁸⁴ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1292r–1292v: “furono sempre in relazione col P. Giusto, al quale mandavano soccorsi di danaro.” For Antoine d’Abbadie’s financial support of Giusto via Walter Plowden, see e.g. NAF 22430, fol. 89r with fol. 90r; NAF 23852, fol. 47r; and NAF 23852, fol. 52r (see also NAF 23852, fol. 88v; NAF 23852, fol. 96r; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 16, note 32).

⁸⁵ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1292r–1292v.

⁸⁶ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1292v: “Il mio cuore è più disposto a deporre sulla tomba dell’apostolo la corona di gloria che l’anatema del ribelle a Dio e alla chiesa.”

⁸⁷ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1292v–1293r: “era uomo molto grave, pensieroso, acuto nel parlare e spesso lestamente satirico.”

regards to] the immortality of the soul, the eternity of suffering—and which favored Protestantism,” excusing Giusto on the grounds that he likely meant “to test my limited knowledge (*la mia poca scienza*) and to make fun of unbelievers.”⁸⁸ He also notes that Giusto was drawn to “Magnetism” and to “Mesmerism,” adding that Giusto had once told him in jest that “*magnetism will be the religion of the world*.”⁸⁹

The report concludes with a striking suggestion:

Meanwhile, following his death, and taking advantage of his name, some in Paris or in London might print the book *Warqie*, and in light of this I think it would be advisable that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda be vigilant, to see if this were ever done, so as to ban the publication of any such book, which would bring infinite ills to Abyssinia.⁹⁰

This final comment is very intriguing. First, it points to a fear that Giusto’s name would somehow be overtly associated with the text: was he to be identified in its pages as a commentator or editor? Second, the first editions of the text were not to be published for almost half a century. It is hard to imagine who would have been responsible for the attempt to publish the works in Paris save for d’Abbadie—a possibility to which we return in §2.3 and §3.3 below.

⁸⁸ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1293r: “Quest’ultima qualità mi fece passare sopra alcune sue proposizioni, che avversavano la fede: esempigrazia l’immortalità dell’anima, l’eternità [sic] delle pene, e favorivano [sic] ‘e favorivano’] il protestantismo”; “per provare la mia poca scienza, e per burlarsi degli increduli.”

⁸⁹ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1293r: “Magnetismo”; “Mesmerismo”; “il magnetismo sarà la religione del mondo” (emphasis in the original).

⁹⁰ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1293r: “Intanto dopolasua [sic] ‘dopo la sua’] morte profittando del suo nome alcuni in Parigi o Londra potranno stampare il libro *Warqie*, epperiò credo, che sarebbe bene che la Sacra Congregne di Propaganda facesse colà vigilare, per vedere se mai ciò venisse fatto, onde impedire la stampa [sic] ‘la stampa’] d’alcun libro simile, che recherebbe male infinito all’abissinia [sic].”

Intriguingly, however, in a letter of December 1855, the Capuchin missionary Léon des Avanchers, who had been involved in the Oromo mission out of Aden in the early 1850s, wrote to Giusto from Rome informing him that Giusto's former mentor, Giusto da Camerino, now Cardinal Recanati, wished to encourage him to approach the Congregation of Propaganda Fide to get permission to print an unspecified book of his in Europe.⁹¹ One wonders what book was at issue, and why it remained unnamed. Des Avanchers wrote cryptically: "try your best to get approval to come to Europe, and all will be resolved easily."⁹² As we discuss further in §3.1, Giusto was never to return to Europe, even when the opportunity to do so arose.

2.3 The Notes of the Prefect of Propaganda Fide and of the Apostolic Nuncio in Paris

The most significant aspect of Sapeto's report is its explicit recommendation that the church "ban the publication of any such book." Even more significant is an as-yet unpublished note—a kind of completed 'to-do' list—showing that Vatican authorities moved to suppress the *Ḥatāta*. It is unclear whether they acted solely on the basis of Sapeto's fears, or whether they had independent reasons to believe the text was to be published. At any rate, the note, composed on 20 July 1857 on behalf of Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò, Prefect of Propaganda Fide, registered the following actions:

I wrote to Mgr Guasco, and Mgr Knoblecher urging them to gather the writings of the late Fr. Giusto, and to send these to the S.C. [*scil.* the Sacred Congregation]. In

⁹¹ NAF 23852, fol. 141r (= Letter of 7 December 1855).

⁹² NAF 23852, fol. 142r (= Letter of 7 December 1855): "tachez [*sic*] d'obtenir de venir en Europe alors tout s'arrangera facilement [*sic*]."

addition I urged the Apostolic Nuncio [i.e. the papal envoy] in Paris, and Cardinal Wiseman to see to it that the book Warqié not be published with the name of the late Fr. Giusto.⁹³

Figure 1 – Note of 20 July 1857, written on behalf of Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò

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(ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1286r)

⁹³ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1286r: “Si scrisse a M^r. Guasco, e M^r. Knoblecher pregandole [*scil.* pregandoli?] a raccorre i scritti del fu P. Giusto, e spedirli alla S.C. [*scil.* Sacra Congregazione]. Inoltre si fece preghiera al Nunzio Aplicō [*scil.* Apostolico] a Parigi, ed al Card. Wiseman perchè procurassero di non far pubblicare col nome del fu P. Giusto il libro Warqié.”

120. Luglio 1853
 si scrive
 a m^r. Guasco, e m^r. Knoblesher
 pregandoli a raccogliere i scritti del
 p^r S. Sapeto, e spedirli alla S. C.
 Inoltre si fece pregliare
 al Nunzio Apostolico in Parigi, ed al
 Card. Wiseman perché procurassero
 di non far pubblicare col nome del p^r
 S. Sapeto il libro "Wangie"

Sapeto's warnings were thus taken very seriously by the Propaganda Fide. His suggestions were implemented in Cardinal Barnabò's correspondence with the most senior Catholic clergy in the most significant imperial capitals, Paris and London, as well as leading Catholic authorities in Egypt and Sudan: Perpetuo Guasco, Bishop of Fez and pro-vicar and Apostolic

Delegate to Egypt;⁹⁴ Ignatius Knoblecher, pro-vicar Apostolic of Khartoum; Carlo Sacconi, the papal envoy in Paris; and finally the famous Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, Archbishop of Westminster and Cardinal Priest of Santa Pudenziana in Rome.

In the early days of the Oromo Mission, Massaia had made Guasco the main intermediary between the Mission and Europe, tasking him with coordinating the receipt of supplies and liaising with ecclesiastical authorities, and granting Guasco power of attorney in his absence.⁹⁵ This explains why the Congregation of Propaganda Fide contacted Guasco in Alexandria, rather than Massaia, who in the summer of 1857 was in Oromo lands.⁹⁶ (As late as March 1858, Massaia still knew precious little about the circumstances of Giusto's death.⁹⁷) Given Giusto had passed away in Khartoum a few months earlier, leaving behind many manuscripts, it is also easy to see why Knoblecher was contacted.⁹⁸ The papal envoy in Paris, Carlo Sacconi, was asked to liaise with Antoine d'Abbadie in order to stop the publication of the *Hatāta* in Paris. The reason for Cardinal Wiseman's involvement is less certain, although we know that, as a fervent supporter of Catholic missionary activity, he had been approached to support the Oromo mission from the late 1840s.⁹⁹ He also met with

⁹⁴ Massaia's *Memoirs* I: ch. 2, 9.

⁹⁵ Massaia, *Memoirs* I: ch. 3, 16.

⁹⁶ For Guasco's response, confirming he was trying to get hold of Giusto's belongings (including his books) from Khartoum, see ASPF, E-C, Vol. 19, 565r = Guasco, letter of 8 August 1857 to Cardinal Barnabò (see also Trozzi, "Lo *Hatatā Zar'a Yā'qob*", 23–4, note 54).

⁹⁷ See his letter to Antoine d'Abbadie of 1 March 1858 (= NAF 23851 60v = Massaia, *Lettere* II: 126–7). He was not even aware of Giusto's death at the start of 1857 (see his letter of 1 January 1857 to Giusto = *Lettere* II: 102–3; Trozzi, "Il P. Giusto Da Urbino," 217).

⁹⁸ Following his passing, Giusto's manuscripts were left at the Austrian Consulate in Khartoum (for the Consulate's inventory of his belongings, dated 27 September 1856 with Knoblecher's signature, and copied on 28 September 1856, see ASPF, E-C, Vol. 19, 617r; Trozzi, "Lo *Hatatā Zar'a Yā'qob*", 23–4, note 54). Knoblecher, an Austrian citizen from Škocjan (formerly St. Cantian) in present-day Slovenia, was responsible for gathering the manuscripts, which were sent to Guasco in Egypt (ASPF, E-C, Vol. 19, 605r = Guasco, letter of 17 November 1857 to Cardinal Barnabò; see Trozzi, "Lo *Hatatā Zar'a Yā'qob*", 23–4, note 54) and then on to Rome (see NAF 23852, fol. 124r = Guasco, letter of 25 November 1857 to d'Abbadie, sent from Cairo).

⁹⁹ See Fr. Venanzio da Torino (Minister General of the Capuchin Order in the period 1847–53), letter of 11 March 1849 to Cavaliere Giusti: WDA, W2/1/4, no. 6; Massaia, letter of 1 June 1849 to Fr. Venanzio da Torino (Massaia, *Lettere* I: 163).

Massaia during the latter's visit to London in 1851, during which Massaia had secured funding for the Mission from the British government.¹⁰⁰

The orders issued to these authorities specified the need to disassociate Giusto's *name* from the *Ḥatāta*. Presumably it was feared that Giusto would somehow have contributed to the work *in propria persona*—at the very least as some sort of editor or commentator. Dating to 20 July 1857, this note predates by almost sixty years the commonly accepted date for the beginning of the authorship dispute.

On 7 August 1857, another note—also unpublished until now, and again written on behalf of Cardinal Barnabò—records: “Mgr the Apostolic Nuncio has taken the necessary measures to prevent the publication of the work, which is presumed to be by the late Fr. Giusto da Urbino, a missionary in Abyssinia.”¹⁰¹ This note reveals that leading figures in the Catholic Church in Rome suspected Giusto da Urbino of *authoring* the work, making it imperative that the Nuncio in Paris, Carlo Sacconi, block the publication of the *Ḥatāta* in Paris.

Another heretofore unpublished note preserved in the archive of the Apostolic Nunciature in Paris provides further evidence that Giusto was suspected of authoring the work. Sacconi and others apparently feared that d’Abbadie would go so far as to publish the work under Giusto’s name:

It is supposed that one Abbadie is in possession of several writings of the late Father Giusto da Urbino, missionary in Abyssinia; and that he intends to publish ~~them~~ the

¹⁰⁰ For Massaia’s visit to London and meeting with Cardinal Wiseman, see Massaia, *Memoirs* I: ch. 18, 149–51 and his letter of 24 February 1851 to Cardinal Franzoni (Massaia, *Lettere* I: 246).

¹⁰¹ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1324v: “M^r. Nunzio Aplicō ha fatte le dovute pratiche per impedire la pubblicazione dell’opera, che si suppone del P. Giusto da Urbino Miss^o. in Abissinia.”

work Wargié [sic] in the Geez language at the Imp. [*scil.* Imperial] Printing Press under the name of said missionary.¹⁰²

In December 1857 Sacconi would receive reassurances from d’Abbadie that no such publication was planned,¹⁰³ and duly informed the Congregation of Propaganda Fide.¹⁰⁴

However, as late as August 1858, Cardinal Barnabò was still concerned enough about d’Abbadie’s reported possession of an offending text, presumably the *Hatäta*, characterized as “a certain poisonous manuscript [...] in Geez,” as to urge Sacconi to ensure that no Gə‘əz work in d’Abbadie’s collection be published without the Vatican’s approval.¹⁰⁵ Though the letter does not mention Giusto by name, discussion of a ‘poisonous’ manuscript that might be published by d’Abbadie strongly suggests that Cardinal Barnabò was referring to the very same *Wärqe* which had been the subject of so much discussion and concern in the Vatican over the previous year.

¹⁰² ANP, 102, fol. 226r (undated): “On suppose qu’un nommé Abbadie est possesseur de plusieurs écrits du feu Père Giusto da Urbino missionnaire dans l’abyssinie [sic] : et qu’il a l’intention de ~~les~~ publier à l’Imprimerie Imp. [*scil.* Impériale] sous le nom du dit missionnaire un ouvrage Wargié [sic] en langue gheez” (emphasis in the original). This note was presumably written sometime between the time Barnabò first contacted Sacconi about stopping the publication of the *Wärqe*, on 20 July 1857 (ANP, 102, fol. 219r; see Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 191), and the time Sacconi reassured Barnabò that no such work was to be published by d’Abbadie, on 12 December 1857 (ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1374r; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 7–8, note 8).

¹⁰³ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1374r (see also the draft of part of the letter: ANP, 102, fol. 223r) = Sacconi, letter of 12 December 1857 to Barnabò. Part of this letter is referenced by Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 7–8, note 8. See further §3.3 below.

¹⁰⁴ Sumner (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 196–197, n. 495) claims that “[a]fter the memoir of Sapeto to the Propaganda Fide of July 1857, no more references to *Wärq’e* are to be found in the Archives of the Propaganda.” Pace Sumner, Sacconi’s letter of 12 December 1857 to Cardinal Barnabò explicitly refers to the *Wärqe* (“Wargié”).

¹⁰⁵ ANP, 102, fol. 233r (= Barnabò, letter of 19 August 1858 to Sacconi): “un tal manoscritto velenoso [...] in gheez.”

3. Assessing the Accusations

High-ranking Church officials thus suspected at a very early date that the *Wärqe*—i.e., the *Ḥatāta Zār’a Ya’aqob*—might be a forgery of Giusto’s making.¹⁰⁶ In the back and forth of accusation and counter-accusation discussed in §§2.1–3, it might seem unclear why the prospect of the work’s publication and its association with Giusto was considered significant enough to merit swift action. Three questions are especially perplexing: Why would Giusto have endorsed, disseminated, and/or forged a heretical work? How plausible is it that the work was to be published in Europe? Why did this so worry Church authorities?

Vatican officials were not concerned to prove that the work could not possibly have been produced in seventeenth-century Ethiopia (as Conti Rossini later sought to do); rather, they were concerned that, on the one hand, a heretical, anti-Catholic work might spread in Europe and Ethiopia, and on the other, that the work would be associated with a Catholic missionary.

As for the potential forger, Giusto da Urbino, he does not seem to have had the goal of somehow promoting or validating Ethiopian philosophy, even as he strongly believed that Ethiopians were capable of philosophical reflection on the same level as Europeans.¹⁰⁷ Instead, if he did forge the works, he was plausibly driven to do so in order to promote his own idiosyncratic, and arguably heretical, philosophical and religious ideas by disguising them as foreign and ancient. If indeed he was the true author of the *Ḥatātas*, he would of

¹⁰⁶ For a rare acknowledgement that doubts about Giusto da Urbino’s possible role in authoring or editing (“presunta redazione”) the *Ḥatāta* emerged among officials at the Propaganda Fide shortly after his death, see Giovanni Pizzorusso, “Giusto da Urbino,” *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 57 (2001): https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giusto-da-urbino_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/. However, Pizzorusso does not provide any evidence to this effect.

¹⁰⁷ See the remarkable letters of 30 September 1848 to his friend Nascimbeni (*apud* Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino*, 92–4) and of 20 September 1848 to his sister (now lost but quoted by Sforza, “Un lucchese compagno del P. Guglielmo Massaia in Africa [1846–56],” 23–4).

course have needed an exceptional grasp of the Gə‘əz language, or collaborated closely with others who did. As a matter of fact, Giusto authored several linguistic works on the Gə‘əz language (including two dictionaries and a grammar, discussed in §3.3, parts of which he wrote before the alleged discovery), and also had close ties with local literati, both ordained priests and *dābtārat*, who would have used the language daily, and whose linguistic assistance he acknowledges in his writings.¹⁰⁸

Giusto’s writings reveal a brilliant, deeply conflicted and tortured personality, capable of periods of extreme productivity and joy, but also of extended melancholy, despair and suicidal ideation. An account of Giusto’s psychological profile was pioneered by Francesco Tarducci, who relied mainly on Massaia’s *Memoirs* and on Giusto’s Italian correspondence with his friend Costantino Nascimbeni.¹⁰⁹ While these sources provide evidence for Giusto’s longstanding struggles with depression and for his conflicted relationship with his faith and the church, they make no mention of the *Ḥatāta*. Giusto’s psychological portrait has since been elaborated by Nicola Trozzi and Anaïs Wion, both of whom consulted Giusto’s correspondence with his patron Antoine d’Abbadie and related it to the *Ḥatāta* authorship debate.¹¹⁰ We have been able to construct a more detailed picture still, having revisited the entirety of Giusto’s surviving correspondence with d’Abbadie, but also his Italian-language letters to two of his family members as well as to senior members of the Propaganda Fide and other members of the Lazarist and Capuchin missions. We also considered his work on the Gə‘əz language predating the ‘discovery’ of the *Ḥatāta*.

¹⁰⁸ For reasons of space, we cannot here elaborate on the extent of Giusto’s linguistic abilities in Gə‘əz.

¹⁰⁹ Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino*. Conti Rossini’s (“Lo *Hatatā Zar’a Yā’qob*”) account of Giusto’s psychology also relied mainly on Tarducci and Massaia, although it drew on some additional evidence from Sforza.

¹¹⁰ Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*; Wion, “Épisode 1”; Wion, “Épisode 2” (especially §§27–28).

While Claude Sumner's wide-ranging study of the authorship debate engages with many of the relevant archival documents preserved in Italy, it is often partial and misleading in its assessment. Besides erroneously denying that a possible da Urbino authorship of the *Ḥatāta* was ever in question before Conti Rossini,¹¹¹ Sumner also claimed that Giusto's letters to the Propaganda Fide demonstrate that "[o]n all the substantial points of the Catholic religion the agreement is complete: God, Jesus Christ, the Church, obedience to her and apostolate within her jurisdiction"¹¹²—a conclusion that is belied by Giusto's explicit reflections on his impertinence vis-à-vis his superiors. In assessing the religious content of Giusto's correspondence in the years 1846–56, Sumner did not consult the all-important letters held at the BnF in Paris that Giusto wrote to d'Abbadie. This would account in part for his erroneous conclusion that Giusto consistently maintained the appropriate Catholic stance on revealed religion.¹¹³ Giusto's correspondence with d'Abbadie was first examined in detail by Trozzi in 1986—that is, a decade after Sumner published his book-length study on the authorship question.¹¹⁴ In addition, even though Sumner quotes a passage from Giusto's correspondence which makes reference to the "onnipotente mano del Creatore" (translated by Sumner as "the Almighty Hand of the Creator"), he makes much of the fact that Giusto's correspondence with Catholic authorities does not refer, as one might expect from the putative author of the *Ḥatāta*, to the Creator.¹¹⁵ In fact Giusto invoked the Creator repeatedly elsewhere in his correspondence, including in three letters written prior to the alleged

¹¹¹ Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 198, 250; see Conti Rossini, "Vicende," and Conti Rossini, "Lo *Hatātā Zar'a Yā'qob*."

¹¹² Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 166, 255. Trozzi (*Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 38, note 99) cites Sumner approvingly on this point.

¹¹³ See also Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 136–7.

¹¹⁴ Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*; Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II.

¹¹⁵ See the letter to his sister of 15 February 1847, *apud* Sforza, "Un lucchese compagno del P. Guglielmo Massaia in Africa [1846–56]," 10; partially quoted in English by Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 138. For the denial that Giusto's correspondence with the Propaganda Fide refers to the Creator, see Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 174.

discovery of the *Ḥatātas*. One of these, written to d’Abbadie of 9 March 1852, even invokes the Creator in Gə‘əz.¹¹⁶

3.1 Giusto’s Heresy?

As early as the 1840s, Giusto was suspected of holding unorthodox religious beliefs. In addition to de Jacobis’ insinuations, he was also suspected of sympathizing with or even converting to Protestantism. This allegation is mentioned by Giusto in a letter to d’Abbadie of 28 November 1855, just under a year before the accusations were launched against him at the Vatican. While Giusto called the accusation slanderous, much like he had dismissed de Jacobis’ insinuations about his affinity for Ethiopian Orthodoxy about a month earlier,¹¹⁷ his defense against this second accusation is extremely telling: “The slander according to which I have become a Protestant horrified me, for I would not change my religion, even if I was convinced that my religion was false...!”¹¹⁸ That he might have forsaken his religion

¹¹⁶ Apart from his letter to his sister of 15 February 1847, see: his letter of 9 March 1852 to d’Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 19v; see Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 7–8): “God the Creator of all” [እግዚአብሔር፡ ፈጣሪ፡ ከሉ, a not uncommon Gə‘əz term that appears in both *Ḥatātas*, at Abb215 12v and Abb215 33v]; his letter of 26 August 1852 to Nascimbeni (*apud* Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino*, 119): “from our good Creator” (“dal nostro buon Creatore”); his letter of 15 June (with insertions dated to 10 July and 21 July) 1853 to d’Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 37v): “my creator” (“mon créateur”); his letter of 18 September 1853 to d’Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 42r; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 23, 25; Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 14; Wion, “Episode 1,” §42): “of the creator of the human mind”, “like a revolution of the creature against its creator” (“du créateur de l’esprit humain”; “comme une révolution de la créature contre son créateur”); his letter of Easter Day 1854 to d’Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 52r; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 52): “her creator,” “my Creator” (“son créateur,” “mon Créateur”); his letter of 5 May 1854 to d’Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 55r and fol. 56v; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 53–56, Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 18, Wion, “Episode 1,” §44, and Wion, “Épisode 2,” note 25): “the will of the Creator” (“la volonté du Créateur”), “knowledge of its creator” (“la connaissance de son créateur”); his letter of August 1854, which he started on 24 July 1854, to d’Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 61r; see Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 19 and Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 60): “my Creator” (“mon Créateur”); and his letter of 27 November to d’Abbadie (with addenda dated to 15 December and 25 December) 1854 (NAF 23852, fol. 75r): “the will of the Creator” (“la volonté du Créateur”). Sumner consulted the works by Sforza, “Un lucchese compagno del P. Guglielmo Massaia in Africa [1846–1856]” (see Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: especially 138) and Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino* (see Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: e.g. 67–72, 313, 325)—in which two of the relevant letters (predating the ‘discovery’ of the *Ḥatātas*) are quoted.

¹¹⁷ See NAF 23852, fol. 98r–98v (= undated letter, probably of October or November 1855), discussed in §2.2.

¹¹⁸ NAF 23852, fol. 102r (= Letter of 28 November 1855; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 38, note 100): “la calomnie qui aurait dit que je suis devenu Protestant m’a épouvanté, car je ne changerais point de religion, même si j’avais la conviction que ma religion fût fausse ... !”

privately, even if he would not do so publicly, is confirmed by his further statement that: “I might in that case not be a believer, but I would not publicly profess another religion.”¹¹⁹

These claims in Giusto’s own hand not only suggest that Giusto had religious doubts, but also confirm that he would have denied having such doubts to his superiors. They therefore serve seriously to undermine Sapeto’s, Carmelo da Sessàno’s, and Claude Sumner’s defenses of Giusto as holding sincere Catholic beliefs.¹²⁰ There is a striking parallel here between Giusto’s unorthodox stance on religious belief and the following passage from the *Hatäta*:

As for me, I lived with human beings, seeming like a Christian to them. But, in my heart, I did not believe—except in God the creator of everything and the protector of everything [...]. I thought to myself and told myself: ‘Is it a sin in the eyes of God if I appear to be what I am not [a believer] and deceive men?’ But I said to myself: ‘Men want to be deceived.’¹²¹

Giusto had commented on this exact passage in an earlier letter to d’Abbadie, noting that Zär’a Ya’eqob was only superficially committed to Christianity.¹²²

Giusto’s uncertain commitment to Christianity suggests some merit to the accusation that he wasn’t even convinced about basic tenets of Catholicism, such as the Trinity (a tenet

¹¹⁹ NAF 23852, fol. 102r: “Je pourrais dans ce cas ne point croire, mais je ne professerais pas publiquement une autre religion.”

¹²⁰ Carmelo da Sessàno, “Giusto da Urbino,” col. 863; Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 166, 255 (see also Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 38, with note 99).

¹²¹ ወኣንሰ: ነበርኩ: ምስለ: ሰብኣ: እንዘ: እመሰለሙ: ከርቲያናዊ: ወባሕቱ: ውስተ: ልብዩ: ኢያአምን: እንበለ: በእግዚአብሔር: ፈጣሬ: ኩሉ: ወዳቃቤ: ኩሉ: በከመ: ውእቱ: አለበወኒ: ወሐለይኩ: ወእቤ: ይከውነኒኑ: አበሳ: በኀብ: እግዚአብሔር: እስመ: እትመሰል: ዘኢኮነኩ: አማኔ: ወከመዘ: አኀይሎም: ለሰብኣ: ወእቤ: ሰብኣሰ: ይፈቅዱ: ከመ: ይኀጥዎው: Abb215 29r–29v; We here modify the Lee-Belcher-Mehari Worku translation, most significantly in the final line: we depart from their “people are willing to deceive others” in favor of the more direct, word-for-word “men (ሰብኣሰ) want (ይፈቅዱ) to be deceived (ከመ: ይኀጥዎው).” Incidentally, this is also how Giusto interprets the line in a letter of 10 February 1853 to d’Abbadie (= NAF 23852, fol. 32v; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 50; Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 13; and Wion, “Épisode 1,” §14): “He [Zar-a Yaiqob] says that [...] he deceived men because they want to be deceived” (“Il [Zar-a Yaiqob] dit [...] d’avoir trompé les hommes parce qu’ils veulent être trompés”).

¹²² NAF 23852, fol. 32v (= Letter of 10 February 1853; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 50, Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 13, and Wion, “Épisode 1,” §14).

also glaringly absent from the *Ḥatāta*). Giusto at one point in early 1856 complained to d'Abbadie that the latter's Catholic fervor threatened his own projects: "I thought I saw in you ultra-Catholic sentiments which I had to respect, even though they upset all my plans."¹²³ Already in mid-1854, he had told d'Abbadie that "[y]ou are still *too* religious for me."¹²⁴ Given that d'Abbadie was reportedly a devout Catholic and the founder of the mission of which Giusto was a part, Giusto didn't stand to gain anything from downplaying his religious sincerity.

There is also the question of Giusto's stance on deism. One way to understand deism is to see it as a commitment to a creator-God, whose works can be known by reason alone without the need for revelation. As we saw, Giusto identified the *Ḥatāta Zār'a Ya'eqob*, upon initially 'discovering' it, as a deist text—without, however, explicitly endorsing its contents. The recurring theme of an impersonal creator-God throughout his personal correspondence is striking.

Finally, there is the even more serious allegation of atheism as recorded in Sapeto's report. Talk of atheism is belied by the *Ḥatāta*'s continuous invocations of God as creator, its quoting of the psalms, and the form of its central meditations, which are philosophical prayers to God. God the creator is radically transcendent, but humans can reach out to him through prayer from our "rational soul."¹²⁵ On the one hand, the mischaracterization of the *Ḥatāta* as an atheist work demonstrates that those responsible for it were ultimately unfamiliar with the text itself, and likely confused rumors circulating on Giusto's account with the contents of the text with which he was associated. On the other hand, Giusto himself thought of the *Ḥatāta* as tending toward an *atheist* conclusion—at least according to Antoine

¹²³ NAF 23852, fol. 105r (= Letter sent from Cairo on 17 January? 1856; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 36, note 96): "J'ai cru voir en vous des sentimens ultra-catholiques que j'ai du [sic] respecter quoiqu'ils renversassent tous mes projets."

¹²⁴ NAF 23852, fol. 59v (= Letter of 14 July 1854): "Vous êtes toujours trop religieux pour moi" (emphasis in the original).

¹²⁵ ወንፍስ ነባቢት Abb215 17r. The expression could also be translated as the "speaking soul."

d'Abbadie's catalogue of his collection of Ethiopian manuscripts, published just two years after the Vatican-ordered suppression of the text.¹²⁶ It is unclear why Giusto would have drawn this inference: the *Ḥatāta* hardly speaks to atheism. D'Abbadie, for his part, suggests the following grounds for the inference: the text "showcases a soul almost entirely devoid of any religious sentiment."¹²⁷ Whatever Giusto's own reasons, if we take seriously de Jacobis' contention that Giusto endorsed the contents of the *Ḥatāta* in a "laudatory discourse," it might turn out that Giusto was sympathetic not only to deism but even to (what Giusto interpreted as) a form of atheism. Yet, in a letter of 1853, Giusto had affirmed unequivocally that he believed in Providence, described as 'my Creator'¹²⁸—an affirmation compatible with deism and indeed the *Ḥatāta*, but not, on its face, with atheism. One explanation for these apparent inconsistencies is that his exegesis of the *Ḥatāta* changed over time, much as his own philosophical views seem to have evolved over time (as discussed below).

According to Sapeto's report, Giusto was drawn to "Magnetism" and "Mesmerism." Giusto's own correspondence confirms this. Writing from Cairo on 4 October 1855, Giusto asked d'Abbadie for a treatise on animal magnetism, a request he repeated in a letter of the 22nd of the same month.¹²⁹ A month later he repeated the request that d'Abbadie "send me a book addressing animal magnetism, on the existence of which I have experiments which I will present to you later." He added: "I assure you that this magnetism is something real, that it is not all charlatanry."¹³⁰ This after saying, in an earlier letter: "it [magnetism] may be

¹²⁶ d'Abbadie, *Catalogue*, 223–4.

¹²⁷ d'Abbadie, *Catalogue*, 224: "montre une âme à peu près vide de tout sentiment religieux."

¹²⁸ NAF 23852, fol. 37v (= Letter of 15 June 1853): "mon créateur." See similarly NAF 23852, fol. 42r (= Letter of 18 September 1853 to d'Abbadie; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 25; Wion, "Lettres du R. P. Juste d'Urbain," 14; Wion, "Episode 1," §42) for his belief in Providence and its association with the creator.

¹²⁹ See NAF 23852, fol. 93r for the letter of 4 October 1855; NAF 23852, fol. 96r for the letter of 22 October 1855.

¹³⁰ NAF 23852, fol. 102r (= Letter of 28 November 1855): "[...] je vous ai prié de m'envoyer quelque livre qui traite du magnétisme animal sur l'existence du quel [sic] j'ai des expériences que je vous soumettrai après. [...] je vous assure que ce magnétisme est quelque chose de réel, que ce n'est pas tout de la charlatanerie."

diabolical, but there is therefore something true about it, it is therefore not charlatanry.”¹³¹

Evidently, Sapeto was wrong to think that Giusto’s enthusiasm for the subject was merely in jest.

Finally, there is Giusto’s association with materialist views. In a letter of February 1856 Giusto dismissed materialism as a “dreadful doctrine” and a “curse.”¹³² But in his last surviving letter to d’Abbadie, he entertained materialism on philosophical grounds—building on tentative arguments already laid out in an earlier letter:¹³³

In the desert I would stay for up to six hours on my camel, lost in abstraction in my pneumatic (if that is the true term) and providential meditations, and I always ended up with the same problem: Being myself a spiritual, intelligent being, why am I only able to conceive of matter? For *spiritus*,¹³⁴ πνεῦμα [sic],¹³⁵ *روح*,¹³⁶ *روح*,¹³⁷ etc, etc? in all languages it is only wind or air, which is matter. A people always has its language which corresponds to its ideas.¹³⁸

Giusto’s claim that he is unable to conceive of anything other than matter, based on an argument that the languages of various nations incline speakers towards a material conception

¹³¹ NAF 23852, fol. 95v (= Letter of 16 October 1855; quoted in Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 66, note 1): “Soit diabolique, mais il y a donc quelque chose de vrai, ce n’est donc une charlatanerie.”

¹³² NAF 23852, fol. 109v, 110r (= Letter of 10 February 1856 with an insertion dated to 14 February): “désolante doctrine,” “malédiction.”

¹³³ For the earlier letter, see NAF 23852, fol. 55r–56v (= Letter of 5 May 1854; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 52–56, Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 17–18, Wion, “Épisode 1,” §44, and Wion, “Épisode 2,” note 25).

¹³⁴ Latin for ‘air, breath, spirit, mind.’ Cf. *spīrō* ‘I breathe; I blow, exhale.’

¹³⁵ πνεῦμα is ancient Greek for ‘air, wind, life, breath, soul.’

¹³⁶ *Gə’əz* for ‘spirit, spiritual essence, spirit (angel or demon).’ From the root *nafasa*, ‘to blow (wind).’

¹³⁷ Arabic for ‘spirit, soul, essence, life, breath,’ and the usual Arabic translation of the ancient Greek πνεῦμα.

¹³⁸ NAF 23852, fol. 118v (= Letter of 28 June 1856 to d’Abbadie): “Dans le désert je restais jusqu’à 6 heures sur le chameau abstrait en méditations pneumatiques (si c’est le vrai terme) et providentielles et j’aboutissais toujours a [sic] ce problème : Etant moi un être spirituel, intelligent, pourquoi ne puis-je concevoir que matière ? car spiritus, πνεῦμα [sic], *روح*, etc, etc ? dans toutes les langues ce n’est que le vent ou l’air qui est matière. Un peuple a toujours son langage correspondant a [sic] ses idées.”

of the spirit, is obviously unseemly for a missionary preaching Catholic dogma. There is however no sign of such a materialist doctrine in the *Ḥatāta*.

It is worth noting, however, that Giusto's earlier correspondence suggests he was initially more willing to contemplate the immateriality of the soul. In a letter written just over a year after the 'discovery' of the *Ḥatāta*, Giusto had contemplated versions of the doctrine of the immateriality and immortality of 'spirit' and 'metempsychosis': "Besides, rather than being skeptical about the spirituality of the human soul, I believe that even the soul of wild animals and perhaps even that of plants is spiritual."¹³⁹ It is hard to miss the connection to the *Ḥatāta* here, which makes the point that "[i]t's almost like they [domestic and wild animals as well as plants] have a soul."¹⁴⁰ The chronology nevertheless leaves it open that Giusto might here have been influenced by the *Ḥatāta* itself.

Longstanding concerns about Giusto's personal character and mental (not to mention spiritual) wellbeing are also well attested. In July 1846, only three months after being appointed to head the Mission, Massaia threatened to send Giusto home,¹⁴¹ and weeks later depicted Giusto as a contrarian, refusing to perform mass, too prone to negative sentiments about the Mission and harboring extravagant opinions. At this point he thought him "rather more witless than perverse."¹⁴² Later that year, Giusto told his mentor Fr. Giusto da Camerino, then Prefect of the College of Capuchin Missionaries, that he had embarked upon the mission because "God wanted me in this mission, *almost against my will*."¹⁴³ Giusto's

¹³⁹ NAF 23852, fol. 56r (= Letter of 5 May 1854; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 55): "Du reste au lieu d'être [sic] incrédule à la spiritualité de l'âme [sic] humaine moi, je crois que même l'âme des animaux brutes et peut être [sic] même des plantes est spirituelle."

¹⁴⁰ ወይመስሉ፡ ዘለሙ[እንስሳ፡ ወኣራዊተ፡ ገዳም][ዕፀወ፡ ገዳም]፡ ነፍስ፡ (lit. "and it seems that they have a soul"), Abb215/234 21v. Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 28–29 picked up on this echo between Giusto's correspondence and the *Ḥatāta*.

¹⁴¹ Letter of 9 July 1846 to Fr. Venanzio da Torino (Massaia, *Lettere* I: 37).

¹⁴² Letter of 15 September 1846 to Fr. Venanzio da Torino (Massaia, *Lettere* I: 64; partially quoted in English translation by Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 68 and in the Italian original by Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 12–13, note 21): "più scemo che perverso." See also his letter of the same date to the Secretary of the Propaganda Fide, in which he presents Giusto as being demotivated in the mission (Massaia, *Lettere* I: 61).

¹⁴³ Letter of 4 December 1846, heretofore unpublished and preserved at the AGC (no archival code): "Iddio m'ha voluto in questa missione, e *quasi contro mia voglia*" (emphasis added).

reluctance to fulfill his apostolic duties is also a central theme of Massaia's later *Memoirs*, which lament Giusto's excessive devotion to the Gə'əz language.¹⁴⁴

By the mid-1850s, his superiors needed him to take on the role of assistant bishop, a responsibility he repeatedly declined. After multiple expulsions from the Ethiopian highlands and serious illness, Massaia had decided to nominate two *vescovi coadiutori* or, 'assistant bishops' of the *Vicariato apostolico dei Galla*,¹⁴⁵ who would administer the mission across different territories while he was away, and who would succeed him as leader if Massaia were to die. Despite longstanding reservations about Giusto's credentials as a missionary, Massaia decided on 20 June 1854 to nominate Giusto along with his close friend and fellow missionary Cesare del Castelfranco for the job.¹⁴⁶ On 16 August 1854, Giusto wrote to Cardinal Franzoni, then Prefect of Propaganda Fide, declaring that he found himself "canonically prevented from accepting the assistant bishopric."¹⁴⁷ In spite of his (by his own account) impertinent response to the Propaganda Fide before his formal nomination had been issued, on 27 September 1855 Giusto was officially nominated to Rome as *vescovo coadiutore*.¹⁴⁸ In mid-November, he wrote to d'Abbadie that Perpetuo Guasco "horries me in telling me that my election will be confirmed, followed by the Pope's precept," and "that in fact it will always be impossible for me to accept, that I will never betray my conscience and that nobody can force me to do so."¹⁴⁹ Later that month, he tells d'Abbadie: "I have

¹⁴⁴ Massaia, *Memoirs* II: ch. 11, 98–9; III: ch. 9, 90–2 (see Conti Rossini, "Lo *Hatatā Zar'a Yā'qob*," 217; Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 71).

¹⁴⁵ See also Simon, "Le *Hatatā Zar'a Ya'qob*," 93, note 2; Trozzi, "Il P. Giusto Da Urbino," 217; Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 71, 182–7.

¹⁴⁶ Letter to Cardinal Franzoni of 20 June 1854 (Massaia, *Lettere* II: 54–55). For Giusto's close friendship with Cesare, see e.g. his letter of 14 May 1846 to his friend Nascimbeni (*apud* Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino*, 52), in which he presents Cesare as "a great companion given to me by Providence" ("ottimo compagno datomi dalla Provvidenza"), and his letter of 26 August 1846 to his mentor Giusto da Camerino (preserved at the AGC; no archival code), in which he presents Cesare as his confidant.

¹⁴⁷ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 827v: "canonicamente impedito di accettare il coadiutorato" (emphasis in the original). This letter is quoted in English translation by Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 154–6.

¹⁴⁸ NAF 23852, fol. 99v (= Letter to d'Abbadie of 14 November 1855; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 33, note 83).

¹⁴⁹ NAF 23852, fol. 99v (= Letter of 14 November 1855 to d'Abbadie; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 33, note 83): "m'epouvante [sic] en me disant qu'on confirmera mon élection suivie du précepte du Pape"; "que

written a very strongly worded letter in order for my *No* to be accepted. If they accept it I am saved; if they don't accept it I will be lost and there will be no going back: indeed a further refusal would be seen as contempt, and in Rome one does not forgive this sort of contempt.”¹⁵⁰

By November 1855, the offer of the assistant bishopric had been altered to allow him to return to Europe as the official Gə'əz interpreter (“interprete etiopico”) and representative of the mission in Rome and Europe more widely, while Cesare led the mission in Oromo lands.¹⁵¹ This might have seemed the best of both worlds for Giusto: rising to a new title with the Vatican-sanctioned opportunity to continue his Gə'əz studies, a mandate which Massaia thought would finally convince Giusto.¹⁵²

Perhaps in response to Giusto's continued unwillingness to take on the position, on 10 January 1856 Cardinal Franzoni wrote to d'Abbadie to approve Giusto's travels to France for “a brief stay.”¹⁵³ By early 1856, the Propaganda Fide also unofficially allowed him not to take the bishopric.¹⁵⁴ On 6 February 1856, Giusto wrote a letter to the Propaganda Fide announcing that he no longer wished to travel to France, preferring instead to “sacrifice

d'ailleurs il me sera toujours impossible d'accepter, que je ne trahirai jamais ma conscience et que personne ne peut m'y contraindre.”

¹⁵⁰ NAF 23852, fol. 101r (= Letter of 28 November 1855 to d'Abbadie; emphasis in the original): “J'ai écrit une lettre très forte pour faire accepter mon Non. Si l'on l'accepte je suis sauvé ; si l'on ne l'accepte pas je suis perdu sans retour : car un refus ultérieur serait censé un mépris, et à Rome on ne pardonne pas un mépris de ce genre.”

¹⁵¹ See Massaia's letter of 18 November 1855 to Giusto (Massaia, *Lettere* II: 85), offering him the role of “interprete etiopico” and “Procuratore plenipotenziario nello spirituale e nel temporale presso tutte le Congregazioni di Roma e di Europa.” See also his letter of 8 November 1855 to Cardinal Franzoni, pitching this new Europe-based mandate for Giusto: ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5, fol. 1221r (= Massaia, *Lettere* II: 72; partially quoted in English translation by Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 184–5 and mentioned by Simon, “Le Ḥataṭā Zar'a Ya'qob,” 93, note 2).

¹⁵² See again Massaia's letter of 8 November 1855 to Cardinal Franzoni (ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 5; fol. 1221r = Massaia, *Lettere* II: 72; partially quoted in English translation by Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 184–5).

¹⁵³ NAF 23852, fol. 107r: “breve dimora.” See also NAF 23852, fol. 110r (= Giusto da Urbino, letter of 10 February 1856—with an insertion dated to 14 February—to Antoine d'Abbadie).

¹⁵⁴ According to Giusto's letter of early 1856 to d'Abbadie (NAF 23852, fol. 104r). See also Léon des Avanchers' letter of 7 December 1855 to Giusto (NAF 23852, fol. 142r), which suggests that Fr. Cesare da Castelfranco was to be appointed bishop *in lieu* of Giusto.

myself without delay in order to try and offer assistance to poor Mgr Massaia and the Mission.”¹⁵⁵

Meanwhile, Cesare was leading the mission in Oromo lands in Massaia’s absence, when in early 1857 he became the object of an “enormous scandal” (*enorme scandalum*).¹⁵⁶ Just three months before Sapeto’s report was drawn up in defense of Giusto, Cesare became subject to an edict of excommunication. He was accused not just of breaking his vow of chastity, but of taking two wives.¹⁵⁷ Massaia now had a major public embarrassment on his hands. Giusto’s potential disgrace would not be the first but the second case of a Bishop (or would-be Bishop) in Ethiopia misbehaving. The church could not have tolerated any publicity around his involvement with the *Wärqe*.

Most serious of all is Giusto’s explicit contemplation of apostasy in the final year of his life. Archival materials (some of them unpublished until now) suggest Giusto personally contemplated apostasy, and at times considered himself a bad missionary.

In a letter dating to Christmas 1855, Giusto reprimanded d’Abbadie for formally contacting the Propaganda Fide to have his trip to France approved through official Church channels.¹⁵⁸

[I]n Rome I will from now on be a bad missionary; in this way you have prevented me from being fully bad, and fully good. You have made me አፃጉል:¹⁵⁹ which one can

¹⁵⁵ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1037r: “sacrificarmi senza indugio per tentare di portar soccorso al povero Mgr. Massaia ed alla Missione.”

¹⁵⁶ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1261v–1262r = Massaia, letter of 9 April 1857 to Cesare da Castelfranco = Massaia, *Lettere* II: 109–110.

¹⁵⁷ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1261r–1261v = Massaia, letter of 9 April 1857 to Cesare da Castelfranco = Massaia, *Lettere* II: 109. For Cesare’s excommunication, see also Massaia’s letter of 8 December 1856 to Cardinal Barnabò (= Massaia, *Lettere* II: 94–7); Massaia’s letter of 21 April 1857 to Cardinal Barnabò (= Massaia, *Lettere* II: 113–4); and his letter of 29 November 1857 to Cesare himself (Massaia, *Lettere* II: 115–20).

¹⁵⁸ NAF 23852, fol. 103r; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 31–2. D’Abbadie had written to the Propaganda Fide on 14 December 1855 seeking approval for Giusto’s prospective stay with him (at d’Abbadie’s expense) in France (ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1009r; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 31, with note 79).

¹⁵⁹ Apparently a variant spelling of አፃጉል, a rare word which does not appear in dictionaries, but which in modern Amharic can mean ‘disappointing,’ ‘upset’ (as in, if someone cancels long-anticipated plans, one might

translate as *neutral* or *ambiguous*. But with you I will lose nothing. If you had favored my wishes, I would be an apostate in Rome, and if you hadn't written I would be a martyr whom they wanted to make a bishop; now I am *nothing* there.¹⁶⁰

Earlier letters reveal that Giusto hoped to go to France without going through proper Church channels, which, as the above passage suggests, he saw as an opportunity to leave the Church.¹⁶¹ He twice asked d'Abbadie to procure him a passport in the name of "Just D'Urbini," without "any monastic title."¹⁶² Initially it seemed like d'Abbadie was opposed to facilitating Giusto's illicit escape,¹⁶³ but a later letter from Giusto suggests he may have changed his mind in late 1855. There Giusto bemoaned that the late arrival of a set of d'Abbadie's letters had made his escape to Europe impracticable: it "was not impossible for me while I was still unknown, having recently arrived, with your 100 thalers in my pocket, without Rome knowing where I was and without the Egyptian authorities knowing where I

say 'you've made me አገጥል'), or alternatively 'purposeless,' 'dysfunctional.' A political ruler might also be said to be አገጥል, in the sense of 'insignificant, bad, useless,' etc. We could thus make sense of the relevant passage as 'you've ruined my prospects,' 'you've made me confused and unable to act this way or that.' Giusto again uses the term in his letter of 10 February 1856—with an insertion dated to 14 February—to d'Abbadie (= NAF 23852, fol. 110r) and in his letter of 30 March 1856 to d'Abbadie (= NAF 23852, fol. 113r).

¹⁶⁰ NAF 23852, fol. 103r (see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 32): "a [sic] Rome je serai désormais un mauvais missionnaire ; ainsi vous m'avez empêché d'être [sic] tout à fait mauvais, et tout à fait bon. Vous m'avez constitué አገጥል : qu'on peut traduire neutre ou ambigu. Mais avec vous je ne perdrai rien. Si vous aviez favorisé mes vœux, je serais un apostate à Rome, et si vous n'aviez pas écrit j'y serais un martyr qu'on voulait faire évêque [sic] ; maintenant j'y suis nul" (emphasis in the original).

¹⁶¹ See NAF 23852, fol. 81r (= Letter of 7 June 1855 to d'Abbadie; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 34, with note 88); NAF 23852, fol. 82v (= Letter of 17 June 1855 to d'Abbadie; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 34, with note 88), and fol. 101r, 102r (= Letter of 28 November 1855 to d'Abbadie; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 34).

¹⁶² See again NAF 23852, fol. 81r (= Letter of 7 June 1855 to d'Abbadie; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 34, with note 88) and NAF 23852, fol. 82v (= Letter of 17 June 1855 to d'Abbadie; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 34, with note 88): "tout titre monacal." For d'Abbadie's reference to Giusto as an 'ex-missionary' ("Ex-missionnaire"), see NAF 23852, fol. 101r (= Letter of 28 November 1855).

¹⁶³ See NAF 23852, fol. 99v (= Letter of 14 November 1855 to d'Abbadie); NAF 23852, fol. 101r, 102r (= Letter of 28 November 1855 to d'Abbadie); and NAF 23852, fol. 103r (= Letter of Christmas 1855 to d'Abbadie; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 31).

was headed.” But now that his extended stay in Egypt had alerted authorities to his whereabouts, it had become “almost impossible” for him to leave.¹⁶⁴

This letter suggests that Giusto had planned to leave Egypt undercover, and that d’Abbadie may have come around to facilitating his escape to France, in the knowledge that Giusto intended to leave the Church. Giusto added:

In coming to hide away in your Library I wanted to enter into oblivion; I wanted it to be said: he *must be dead*, let’s *not dwell* on it. I would have been your [*illegible word*¹⁶⁵] in Geez printing, your Librarian, or your copyist, whatever pleased you, but Fr. Just would be dead. This new *me* without a name would have vegetated for a while beneath your shadow, producing little fruits without a name that you could pick, and then in blessing you, I would have left you in order to return to the Eternal.¹⁶⁶

It is perhaps doubtful that Giusto literally meant to fake his own death, in the event that he had been able to escape Egypt *incognito*. A later letter dating to 14 February 1856 makes it clear however that he considered permanently leaving the Mission, and disobeying the

¹⁶⁴ NAF 23852, fol. 105r (= Letter of 17 January? 1856): “ce qui n’était [sic] pas impossible pour moi inconnu, récemment arrivé, avec vos 100 thalers en poche, sans que Rome sût où j’étais [sic], sans que les autorités d’Egypte sussent où j’allais”; “presque impossible.”

¹⁶⁵ This word looks like pr[?]te. Trozzi offers the strained reading ‘probe’ (Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 34).

¹⁶⁶ NAF 23852, fol. 105r (= Letter of 17 January? 1856; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 34): “En venant m’ensevelir dans votre Bibliothèque je voulais rentrer dans le néant ; qu’on eut [sic] dit : Il doit être [sic] mort n’y songeons plus. J’aurais été votre [*illegible word*] à l’imprimerie giǝz, votre Bibliothécaire, ou votre copiste, ce qu’il vous aurait plu. mais le p. Just aurait été mort. Ce nouveau moi sans nom aurait végété quelques [sic] temps sous votre ombres [sic] en produisant de petits fruits sans nom que vous auriez pu recueillir, puis en vous bénissant je vous aurais quitté pour rentrer au sein de l’Eternel.” (emphasis in the original). For a similar passage suggesting a plan to escape from Egypt to France *incognito* in an earlier letter, see NAF 23852, fol. 74r = Letter of 27 November 1854; see also the later letter of 30 March 1856 = NAF 23852, fol. 113r.

Congregation of Propaganda Fide in a “spirit of contradiction.”¹⁶⁷ It is also clear that he was determined to kill Giusto-the-authorial-voice—the author and compiler of Gə‘əz works.

3.2 Giusto’s Disavowal of Authorship

Giusto’s correspondence reveals a conflicted personality: he displays a remarkable independence of thought and indeed insubordination towards Massaia, d’Abbadie, and the Propaganda Fide, but at other times a groveling submission to the same figures; he displays intense love and appreciation for his new homeland and its peoples, but also denigrates and resents it. What is most relevant to assessing the allegations that he faked a heretical text in Gə‘əz follows a similar pattern: the contradiction between, on the one hand, his literary ambitions and desire to have his work known to a scholarly audience, and on the other his desire to hide and renounce his involvement with any such projects. It is this dialectic of openness and concealment which Wion places at the center of her case for forgery; in her view, Giusto had the personality traits that made it plausible that he forged the work so that his philosophy would be known in Europe, but wrote it under an Ethiopian pseudonym to avoid personal recognition and/or blame. It was the desire to make his own philosophical ideas known to the European scholarly community, while avoiding personal recognition, that putatively formed the motivation for an elaborate forgery.¹⁶⁸

Our comprehensive examination of Giusto’s surviving correspondence provides a detailed picture of how these personality traits manifested themselves in his literary production and patron-client relationship with d’Abbadie. Giusto repeatedly expressed his

¹⁶⁷ NAF 23852, fol. 110r (= Letter of 10 February 1856 with an insertion dated to 14 February): “esprit de contradiction.”

¹⁶⁸ This dynamic is explored in some detail in Wion (“Épisode 1”; “Épisode 2”), although many key passages attesting to Giusto’s reluctance to be recognized as an author are not discussed by her.

intention to write *autobiographical* works, which he hoped d’Abbadie would publish.¹⁶⁹ In a letter dating to 1854, he even expressed his plan to write a solemn “profession of Faith” in Gə‘əz—to be written “in accordance with the intelligence which God has given me”—which he hoped d’Abbadie would publish in French.¹⁷⁰ And yet, he emphatically distanced himself from works to which he had previously been ardently committed.

The theme recurs in his correspondence and writings. In 1854, he asked d’Abbadie “to publish in some newspaper in Paris a line (without naming me) concerning the barbaric character of that bishop [*scil.* Abunä Sälama]”¹⁷¹—before authoring, *in propria persona*, a series of strongly worded articles in early 1856 in the *Spettatore Egiziano* denouncing Abunä Sälama.¹⁷² In 1855, he asked d’Abbadie to destroy his letters going back to 1847¹⁷³—the year in which he had begun to learn Gə‘əz.¹⁷⁴ His motivation may conceivably have been to erase evidence that for almost a decade he had been developing the linguistic skills needed to author (or have a hand in authoring) a work in Gə‘əz. Furthermore, he admits in a letter to d’Abbadie most likely dating to March 1856 to having burnt many of his own manuscripts.¹⁷⁵ As discussed in §3.1, in early 1856 he also imagines himself printing works for d’Abbadie, as

¹⁶⁹ See e.g. NAF 23852, fol. 42r (= Letter of 18 September 1853 to d’Abbadie; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 23, note 54, Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 14, and Wion, “Épisode 1,” §42, §53 with note 76); NAF 23852 fol. 60r (= Letter of 14 July 1854 to d’Abbadie; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 23, note 54); NAF 23852, fol. 79v (= Letter of 15 April 1855 to d’Abbadie; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 23, note 54 and 26, note 60); NAF 23852, fol. 95v (= Letter of 16 October 1855 to d’Abbadie; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 33).

¹⁷⁰ NAF 23852, fol. 65v (= Letter of 15 September 1854 to d’Abbadie; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 57): “profession de Foi”; “selon l’intelligence que Dieu m’a donnée.”

¹⁷¹ NAF 23852, fol. 73r (= Letter of 27 November 1854 to d’Abbadie; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 68): “que vous publiassiez dans un journal quelconque a [sic] Paris une ligne (sans me nommer) relative au caractère barbare de cet évêque [sic].”

¹⁷² These articles were published on 29 January, 8 February, and 18 February 1856, and written while Giusto was in exile in Egypt (Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 69, note 3; see the English translations of these articles in Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 298–308).

¹⁷³ NAF 23852, fol. 96r (= Letter of 22 October 1855; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 32, note 82). In NAF 23852, fol. 102r (= Letter of 28 November 1855), he asked him to destroy *all* of his letters down to late 1855; see also NAF 23852, fol. 105r (= Letter of 17 January? 1856). In NAF 23852, fol. 99r (= Letter of 14 November 1855), Giusto had briefly changed his mind about the need to burn his letters.

¹⁷⁴ For Giusto’s earliest description of the Gə‘əz language, see his letter of 29 November 1847 to his uncle, Fr. Francesco da Urbino, now preserved at the Capuchin Archive in Florence and reproduced by Sumner in English translation (*Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 279–80).

¹⁷⁵ NAF 23852, fol. 121v; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 23–24, note 54, Wion, “Épisode 1,” §28, and Wion, “Épisode 2,” note 27.

a ‘me’ without a name, producing ‘fruits’ *without a name*—whereas in December 1854 he still spoke of producing “fruits of my labors,”¹⁷⁶ a phrase used in the *Ḥatäta* itself (ፍሬ፡ ገማየ፡ färe ṣamayä).¹⁷⁷ As Wion has noticed, Giusto had already used this very phrase, in Gə‘əz, in a letter to d’Abbadie *predating* the alleged discovery of the *Ḥatäta*.¹⁷⁸ Given the chronology, this is one of the rare instances of an echo between Giusto’s correspondence and the *Ḥatäta* which cannot be explained away by the text’s putative influence on him.¹⁷⁹

These considerations add weight to Wion’s already developed case for the psychological plausibility of Giusto writing the *Ḥatäta*, proceeding to disavow authorship, but then (and this is not noted by Wion) nevertheless cautiously endorsing the text, in the form of a *discorso encomiastico*.¹⁸⁰

Another aspect of this strange dialectic of exposure and concealment is that, after seeking some fame and recognition from d’Abbadie, as soon as he gets it, he rejects it and opts instead for the anonymity of the missionary life he had earlier rejected. This takes two forms: prevarication over Massaia’s offer of a bishopric, and indecision over returning to Europe for two prestigious roles—either assisting d’Abbadie with his manuscript collection, or even serving as the Vatican’s “interprete etiopico.” In his correspondence with his friend Costantino Nascimbeni in 1855–56, Giusto boasts of being invited by powerful people to return to Europe, but laments that “[w]hat one gains in fame one loses in independence.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ “fruits de mes travaux,” NAF 23852, fol. 74v (= Letter of 27 November 1854, with an addendum dating to 25 December 1854).

¹⁷⁷ For the *Ḥatäta Zär’a Ya’əqob*, see Abb215 23r–23v; for the *Ḥatäta Wäldä Həyiwät*, see Abb215 54v.

¹⁷⁸ NAF 23852, fol. 17r (= Letter of 1 March 1852); Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 6–7; Wion, “Épisode 2,” §§10–11; and Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 27, note 65.

¹⁷⁹ Wion, “Épisode 2,” §§11–12.

¹⁸⁰ Wion is aware of Sapeto’s report via Sumner’s translation of it (see Wion, “Épisode 2,” note 4), but does not elaborate on the implications of the *discorso encomiastico* or “laudatory presentation,” as Sumner translates it (Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 188, 195).

¹⁸¹ Tarducci, *Il P. Giusto da Urbino*, 152: “[...] Ce qu’on gagne en célébrité on le perd en indépendance [sic].” For similar passages in the d’Abbadie correspondence, see NAF 23852, fol. 15v (= Letter of 25 October 1851; Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbain,” 5 and Wion, “Episode 1,” note 36), NAF 23852, fol. 24v (= Letter of 10 September 1852), NAF 23852, fol. 53r (= Letter of Easter 1854; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 22, note 50) and NAF 23852, fol. 75r (= Letter of 27 November 1854, with an addendum dating to 25 December 1854; Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 30, note 75).

Comments of this kind suggest that Giusto was deeply conflicted about earning recognition, whether because he wished to conceal an act of a forgery or because of his mental struggles with authorial responsibility (or both). This is especially apparent in Giusto's stern injunction to d'Abbadie in a letter of 22 October 1855: "You will never publish anything in my name, even after I am dead."¹⁸² In fact, in a heretofore unpublished passage dating to just ten days *before* the alleged discovery of the first *Ḥatāta*, Giusto wrote to d'Abbadie offering him his services on Ethiopian literature, adding: "I do not seek glory. May my name be forgotten even while I am still alive."¹⁸³ Two years later, he told d'Abbadie that he hoped that his name would be "forgotten *forever*."¹⁸⁴

3.3 Antoine d'Abbadie's Role

We now turn to the role of Antoine d'Abbadie, the man who was on the receiving end of many of Giusto's most extraordinary confessions and who was independently suspected by Vatican authorities of facilitating the publication of a heretical work in Gə'əz. None of d'Abbadie's side of the correspondence with Giusto survives—not even, somewhat unusually for d'Abbadie, in the form of drafts or carbon copies in his own archive. One wonders whether such records were intentionally removed.

D'Abbadie had a longstanding relationship with the Paris-based *Imprimerie impériale* (known as the *Imprimerie nationale* before 1852 and after 1870), which saw him personally take charge of creating and purchasing their Gə'əz typeface at his own expense.¹⁸⁵ In his

¹⁸² NAF 23852, fol. 96r (see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 32, note 82): "Vous ne publierez jamais rien en mon nom même après ma mort."

¹⁸³ NAF 23852, fol. 24v (= Letter of 10 September 1852): "Je ne cherche pas de gloire. Que mon nom soit oublié même de mon vivant."

¹⁸⁴ NAF 23852, fol. 75r (= Letter of 27 November 1854, with an addendum dating to 25 December 1854): "que mon nom soit oublié *à jamais*" (emphasis added; see Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 30, note 75).

¹⁸⁵ See e.g. the letter he sent to the Director of the Imprimerie nationale (later to become the Imprimerie impériale) in Paris on 29 May 1851 (= NAF 22431, fol. 323r) concerning the Gə'əz typeface he had designed and engraved for France's main printing press.

correspondence with d'Abbadie, Giusto himself mentioned in late 1854 that he had “copied and had copies made of precious MSS. [*scil.* manuscripts],” and implied that d'Abbadie intended to have copies of these made in Europe once Giusto returned there.¹⁸⁶

Furthermore, d'Abbadie appears to have misled church authorities about the absence of a text known as *Wärqe* in his collection. In December 1857, the papal envoy Carlo Sacconi, who had been contacted by the Vatican that summer to stop the publication of the *Wärqe* “with Father Giusto’s name” in the *Imprimerie impériale*,¹⁸⁷ reported that d'Abbadie “told me that for now he is solely working on preparing the publication of a few of his studies on astronomy [...] and that these studies have nothing to do with religious matters.”¹⁸⁸ D'Abbadie told him that “[a]mong the roughly 200 Manuscripts which he possesses in the Geez language, there is no work or book called Wargié,”¹⁸⁹ further adding “that such a word is not even proper to the specified language [i.e. Gə‘əz], and that for this reason there must be a mistake or misunderstanding in writing it [*scil.* the word].”¹⁹⁰ This response is suspicious: *wärq* is hardly an unusual term in Gə‘əz, meaning ‘gold’ and serving in various forms (e.g., *wärqe*, *wärqu* or *wärqənäh*) as common names, as well as figuring in the famous *sämənna wärq* or ‘wax and gold’ technique of rhetoric in Gə‘əz poetry. It is highly unlikely that

¹⁸⁶ NAF 23859 fol. 74v (= Letter of 27 November 1854, with an addendum dating to 25 December 1854): “J’avais déjà copié et fait copier des MSS. précieux [...] Vous me désespérez en me disant à votre retour en Europe j’en ferais [*sic*] faire des copies...”

¹⁸⁷ Cardinal Barnabò, letter of 20 July 1857 to Carlo Sacconi (ANP, 102, fol. 219r): “col nome dello stesso Padre [*scil.* Giusto da Urbino].” Sumner partially published this letter in translation (Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 191). The Nuncio’s response to the Propaganda Fide, dating to 7 August 1857, is preserved in the Propaganda Fide Archive (ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1323r–1324r; see also the draft of this letter: ANP, 102, fol. 221r–222r).

¹⁸⁸ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1374r (= Sacconi, letter of 12 December 1857 to Barnabò; see also the draft form of this part of the letter, ANP, 102, fol. 223r): “m’ha detto, che pel momento non s’occupa d’altro che di preparare la pubblicazione d’alcuni suoi studi astronomici [...] e che li medesimi non hanno alcun rapporto a cose religiose.”

¹⁸⁹ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1374r (see also the draft form of this part of the letter, ANP, 102, fol. 223r): “Tra li 200 circa Manoscritti in lingua Gheez ch’Egli possiede, non v’è alcun’opera, o libro intitolato Wargié.” This part of the letter is quoted by Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 7–8, note 8.

¹⁹⁰ ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 5, fol. 1374r–1374v (= Sacconi, letter of 12 December 1857 to Barnabò; see also the draft form of this part of the letter, ANP, 102, fol. 223r): “si sostiene da lui che tal [*sic*] parola neppure è propria dell’indicata lingua, e che perciò vi dev’essere stato errore, od equivoco nello scriverla.” Part of this quote appears in Trozzi, *Lo Hatata Zar-a Yaiqob*, 7–8, note 8.

d’Abbadie did not know this word. Still, it is possible that he did not recognize *Wärqe* as the text’s alternative title. Given his diligence, however, it seems unlikely that he did not notice that the first page of Abb215 reads: “by Christian baptism, I was named Zara Yaqob, but people call me Warqe.”¹⁹¹ While he stopped short of publishing the *Ḥatäta*, d’Abbadie went ahead only two years later with the publication of his Catalogue, in which he ascribed “pure deism”¹⁹² to the *Ḥatäta*, and named its supposed discoverer, Giusto da Urbino.¹⁹³ He even sent a copy of this Catalogue to the Propaganda Fide in 1859.¹⁹⁴

Despite their suspicions of d’Abbadie over his possible role in plans to publish the *Wärqe*, between 1858 and 1859 Carlo Sacconi and Cardinal Barnabò repeatedly corresponded with him in the hope that he would give the Vatican access to the Gə‘əz and Amharic typeface that he had developed at the *Imprimerie impériale*.¹⁹⁵ Giuseppe Sapeto himself was behind the Vatican’s efforts to obtain d’Abbadie’s typeface for use in Rome.¹⁹⁶ D’Abbadie duly cooperated. In 1861, perhaps hoping they would return the favor, he took the liberty of contacting Propaganda Fide authorities to request Giusto’s Gə‘əz–Latin dictionary, this time attaching a copy of Giusto’s will. This document suggested that Giusto had bequeathed all of his manuscripts to him.¹⁹⁷ Perpetuo Guasco—whom the Propaganda Fide had contacted four years prior about preventing the publication of Giusto’s writings—had

¹⁹¹ Abb215 1v: ወበጥምቀተ፡ ከርስትና፡ ተሰመደኩ፡ ዘርእ፡ ያዕቆብ፡ ወሰብእሰ፡ ይቤሉኒ፡ ወርቁ።

¹⁹² d’Abbadie, *Catalogue*, 212.

¹⁹³ d’Abbadie, *Catalogue*, 224.

¹⁹⁴ We know this from a letter he sent to Sacconi on 26 April 1859 (ANP, 102, fol. 247r), and from a letter he sent the Vatican on 11 February 1861 (= ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 7, fol. 18r). Sacconi also appears to have mentioned, in a letter of 17 April 1858 (which survives in draft form), d’Abbadie’s apparent plans to go to Rome in May 1858 to confer with the Vatican concerning the publication of his Catalogue (ANP, 102, fol. 230r); but as Barnabò’s letter of 19 August 1858 to Sacconi reveals, d’Abbadie never made it to Rome (ANP, 102, fol. 233r).

¹⁹⁵ See ANP, 102, fol. 234r (= d’Abbadie, letter of 8 August 1858 to Sacconi); ANP, 102, fol. 236r–236v (= Sacconi, draft letter of 9 August 1858 to Barnabò); ANP, 102, fol. 238r (= Barnabò, letter of 7 January 1859 to Sacconi); ANP, 102, fol. 241r (= Sacconi, letter of 7 March 1859 to d’Abbadie); ANP, 102, fol. 244r (= d’Abbadie, letter of 15 March 1859 to Sacconi); NAF 22430, fol. 108r (= Barnabò, letter of 15 December 1859 to d’Abbadie).

¹⁹⁶ See ANP, 102, fol. 231r–231v (= Sapeto, letter of 21 July 1858 to Sacconi).

¹⁹⁷ The will, dating to 21 May 1856 and certified by Léon des Avanchers on 12 July 1859, is preserved at the BnF (= NAF 23852, fol. 123r–123v). A hand-written copy of the will is appended to d’Abbadie’s letter to the Vatican of 11 February 1861 (= ASPF, AC–E–A, Vol. 7, fol. 18r–19r).

informed d'Abbadie in November 1857 that Giusto's manuscripts had been sent to the Propaganda Fide,¹⁹⁸ where they were entrusted to Sapeto.¹⁹⁹ Cardinal Barnabò replied to d'Abbadie in 1861, declining his request and questioning the validity of Giusto's will,²⁰⁰ following consultations with Sapeto.²⁰¹ Given the orders the Vatican issued to Guasco and Sacconi, and suspicions of the d'Abbadie-da Urbino relationship, it is unsurprising that d'Abbadie's request was never approved.

An extraordinary revelation d'Abbadie made to the Propaganda Fide in this back and forth over the dictionary may have sounded further alarm bells. Giusto, it turns out, had tried to *renounce authorship* of the dictionary that best showcased his sophisticated knowledge of Gə'əz,²⁰² with a view to having it published under d'Abbadie's name instead. D'Abbadie speaks of:

an Ethiopian dictionary compiled at my request, and which the humble apostle [i.e. Giusto da Urbino], in one of his letters, encouraged me to publish *under my name*, *since among the vanities of this world, he had also renounced the vanity of authorship*. But I took care to disavow this temptation by declaring in my catalogue the true origin of this lexicon.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ NAF 23852, fol. 124r (= Guasco, letter of 25 November 1857 to d'Abbadie, sent from Cairo).

¹⁹⁹ See Barnabò's letter of 18 March 1861 to d'Abbadie (= NAF 23852, fol. 2r) and his earlier letter of 18 January 1858 to Sacconi (= ANP, 102, fol. 227r).

²⁰⁰ See again Barnabò's letter of 18 March 1861 to d'Abbadie (= NAF 23852, fol. 2r).

²⁰¹ ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 7, fol. 31r–32v (= Sapeto, letter of 13 March 1861 to the Propaganda Fide, with a note on the back written by the Secretary of Cardinal Barnabò).

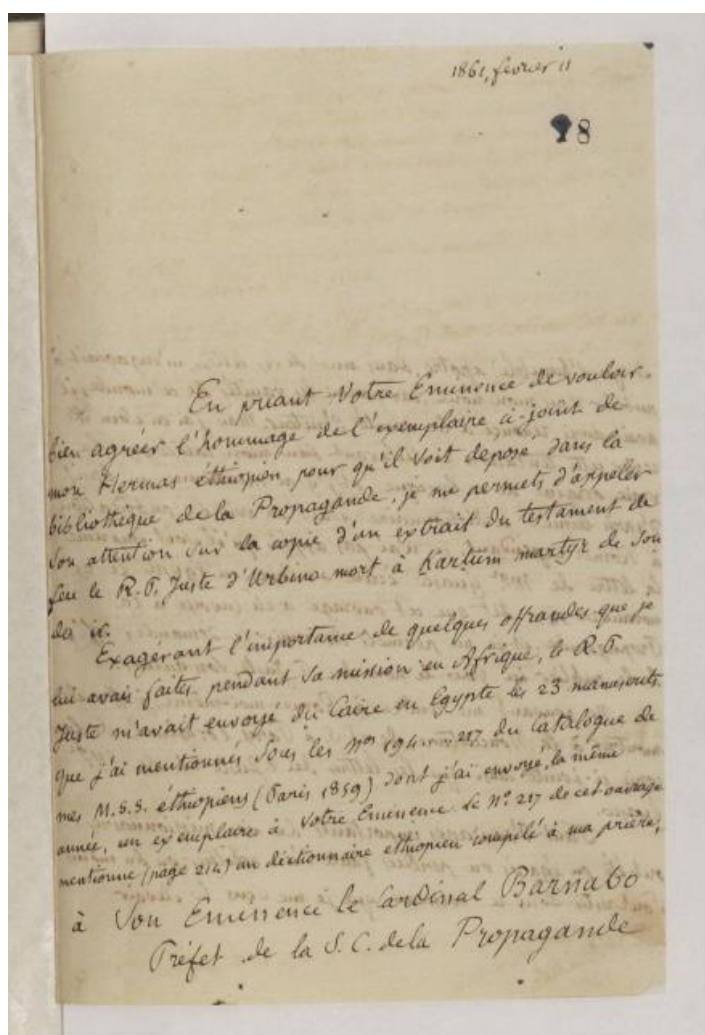
²⁰² This dictionary, completed between 1850 and 1854, is preserved at the Fondo Giuseppe Sapeto (as *ms. Orientale 134*) at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma. This manuscript was used and then edited, in photographs provided by R. P. Exupère de Biarritz, in the edition by Sylvain Grébaut, *Supplément au Lexicon linguae Aethiopiae de Auguste Dillmann (1865) et édition du lexique de Juste d'Urbino (1850-1855)* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1952), see iii.

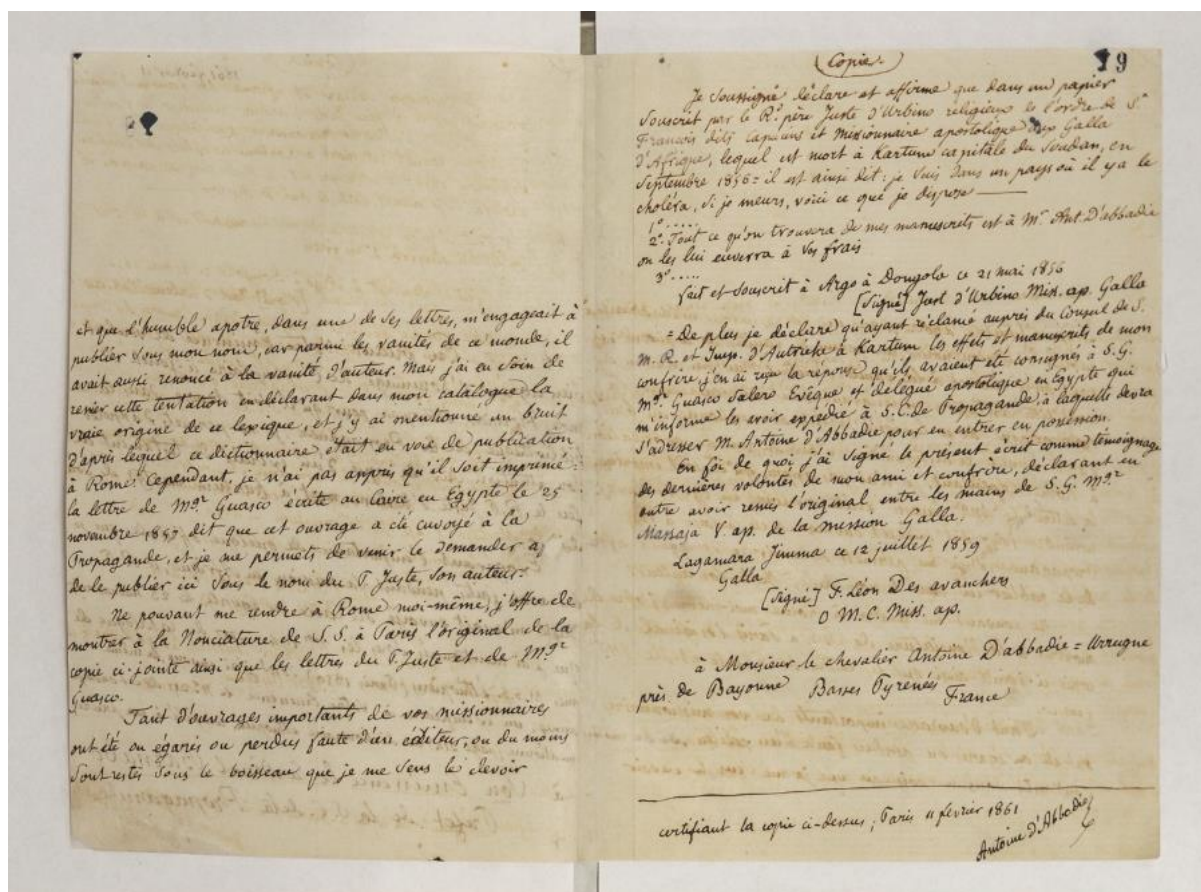
²⁰³ “un dictionnaire éthiopien compilé à ma prière, et que l'humble apotre [sic], dans une de ses lettres, m'engageait à publier *sous mon nom*, car parmi les vanités de ce monde, il avait aussi renoncé à la vanité d'auteur. Mais j'ai eu soin de renier cette tentation en déclarant dans mon catalogue la vraie origine de ce lexique.” ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 7, fol. 18r–18v (= Letter of 11 February 1861 to Barnabò); emphasis added. A draft version of part of the letter also survives in d'Abbadie's archive at the BnF (= NAF 22432, fol. 486r).

Figure 2 – Antoine d'Abbadie, letter of 11 February 1861 to Cardinal Alessandro Barnabò

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(ASPF, AC-E-A, Vol. 7, fol. 18r-19r)





In a letter to d'Abbadie of 1854, Giusto had referred at length to the dictionary, expressing his hope that it would be published, but cautioned: “Let me remind you that I will not allow that anything ever be published in my name.”²⁰⁴

A more rudimentary Latin-Gə‘əz dictionary and grammar that Giusto wrote largely in 1849 (three years before the supposed discovery of the first *Ḥatāta*) similarly includes a clear renunciation of authorship, added in 1853, with Giusto bemoaning “[t]he inexactness and the sterility of the following grammatical principles,” which “force the author to protest that he no longer recognizes them as his own.” He refused to be held accountable for his work, insisting that “no one can take advantage of it in his [i.e. the author’s] name.”²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ NAF 23852, fol. 59v (= Letter of 14 July 1854): “Je vous repète [sic] que je ne permettrai jamais qu’on publie quelque chose en mon nom.”

²⁰⁵ SGI, MS 247, fol. 123v: “L’inesattitudine e la sterilità dei seguenti principii grammaticali”; “obbligano l’autore a protestare ch’egli non li riconosce più come suoi”; “che nessuno possa prevalersene in suo nome.” (This passage is cited in English translation by Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 219.) See also SGI MS 247, fol. 3v.

At the end of 1853, Giusto had declared to d’Abbadie that he would never publish his grammar under his own name.²⁰⁶ At the start of the following year—just before allegedly recovering the full text of the *Ḥatāta Wäldä Ḥəywāt*—he had again written: “As for my Grammar and any other work, good or bad, even a masterpiece, I would never publish it and I would never allow it to be published under my name.”²⁰⁷ He continued in this vein, writing: “I offered them [*scil.* my Ethiopic scribbles] to you so that if you found something useful in them you could remold it in your own way and then publish it anonymously or under some other name, such as that of the academy or institute, or some other literary society.”²⁰⁸ His reasoning is simple, and perhaps relevant to the question of his putative motivations for composing a forgery: “This is so that my work doesn’t perish with me—I who am very perishable.”²⁰⁹

Conclusions

The archival materials presented in this article fundamentally transform our understanding of the origins of the *Ḥatāta* authorship dispute. The anonymous letter discussed in Giuseppe Sapeto’s report demonstrates that as early as 1856 Giusto da Urbino was associated with the *Wärqe*, though at this stage he was only suspected of disseminating this literary ‘thorn’ that would do damage to the Catholic missions in Ethiopia. The Sapeto report shows that Giusto

²⁰⁶ NAF 23852, fol. 47r (= Letter of 24 December 1853).

²⁰⁷ NAF 23852, fol. 49r (= Letter of early 1854; see Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbino,” 14, Wion, “Episode 1,” note 36, and Wion, “Episode 2,” note 28): “Quant à ma Grammaire et a [*sic*] tout autre travail bon ou mauvais, fut-il [*sic*] un chef d’œuvre je ne le publierai jamais, et je ne permettrai jamais de le publier en mon nom.”

²⁰⁸ NAF 23852, fol. 49r (= Letter of early 1854; see Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbino,” 15, Wion, “Episode 1,” note 36, and Wion, “Episode 2,” note 28): “Je vous les [*scil.* mes barbouillages éthiopiens] offrais afin [*sic*] que si vous y trouviez quelque chose d’utile vous auriez pu le refaçonner à votre manière et puis le publier anonyme [*sic*] ou sous un nom quelconque comme de l’academie [*sic*] ou de l’Institut, ou autre société littéraire.”

²⁰⁹ NAF 23852, fol. 49r (= Letter of early 1854; see again Wion, “Lettres du R. P. Juste d’Urbino,” 15, Wion, “Episode 1,” note 36, and Wion, “Episode 2,” note 28): “C’est à fin [*sic*] que mes travaux ne périssent pas avec moi qui suis très périssable.”

was suspected of being still more closely involved. In particular, the head of the Lazarist mission, Giustino de Jacobis, reportedly identified Giusto as the author of a *discorso encomiastico*, endorsing philosophical ideas that would ignite “the satanic fire of pure materialism in the heart of Abyssinia.” Sapeto himself warned that the work might be published in Paris and London, and urged the church to ban the book should measures be taken towards its publication.

These archival documents were previously discussed by Sumner and Trozzi in the 1970s and 1980s, though their significance has been overlooked by scholars since. Completely unknown however were several notes found in two Vatican archives, which show that the Prefect of Propaganda Fide and the papal envoy in Paris took the accusations seriously enough to act immediately on Sapeto’s recommendation to suppress the work. Most significantly for the authorship debate, the notes also suggest that Giusto da Urbino was not only taken to be the ‘discoverer’ and prospective editor of the *Ḥatāta*, but was also suspected of being its author. These new discoveries are the earliest evidence of suspicions of a Giusto da Urbino authorship. Remarkably, they arose in 1857–58, just under sixty years before the commonly stated date of 1916 when Conti Rossini first raised his doubts. As a result, Claude Sumner was wrong to affirm that the Propaganda Fide archive provides no evidence of Giusto da Urbino being suspected of authoring the text.²¹⁰ *Pace* Sumner, the authorship controversy began not in 1916 with Conti Rossini, but in 1857 at the Vatican.

Additional sources discussed in this article—many of them unpublished and unknown to the academic community—demonstrate that Giusto’s character and religious rectitude were in question as early as the late 1840s, and that his philosophical interests were far more eclectic and original than previously suspected. They also show that Giusto regularly disavowed authorship of other works composed during his time in Ethiopia—a tendency

²¹⁰ Sumner, *Ethiopian Philosophy* II: 198, 250.

which we demonstrated predates the ‘discovery’ of the *Ḥatäta*. We also showed that Antoine d’Abbadie may have deliberately misled the Vatican in his communications about the *Ḥatäta*.

While these pieces of evidence contribute to the balance of arguments developed over the past century for the forgery thesis, they are not sufficient, individually or collectively, to clinch the case in favor of forgery. Taken together, however, the discoveries presented in this article place the origins and motivations of the authorship debate on a new footing.²¹¹

Lea Cantor (Peterhouse, University of Cambridge)

Jonathan Egid (SOAS, University of London)

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