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Personality and political culture in modern Africa: studies presented to Professor Harold G. Marcus

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edited by

Melvin E. Page
Stephanie F. Beswick
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CONTENTS

Introduction

1 Medieval Nubian Dynastic Succession
   The Editors 1

2 Orality, State Literacy and Political Culture in Ethiopia: Translating the Ras Kassa Registers
   Jay Spaulding 7

3 Constructing Colonial Power and Political Collaboration in Italian Eritrea
   Irma Taddia 23

4 On the Origins of Mass Nationalism in Urban Tanzania: Muslim Townspeople and Petition Protest during the Interwar Years
   Laird Jones 37

5 A Religious and Ethnic Kaleidoscope or a North/South Frontier? Dinka/Baqqara Relations Across the Kir/Bahr al-Arab River
   Stephanie F. Beswick 49

6 Pan-African Dialectics: Ethiopia, Africa and the African Diaspora, 1941-1974
   Fikru Gebrekidan 65

7 Personality and Political Culture in Ethiopian History: The Case of Emperor Tewodros
   Donald Crummey 79

8 "French Africa": Faidherbe, Archinard and Coppolani, the 'Creators' of Senegal, Soudan and Mauretania
   David Robinson 91

9 Nineteenth Century Diplomacy on Mount Kilimanjaro: Rindi of Moshi Reconsidered
   James Cox 107

10 Gambeila: An Imperial Anachronism
   Robert O. Collins 119

11 Settlers and the State: A Political Biography of W.H. Timcke
   Tony Woods 135

12 Ras Welde Li’ul and the Establishment of Qwaran Ascendance in Mid-Eighteenth Century Ethiopia
   LaVerle Berry 149

13 A Reassessment of Lij Iyasu’s Political Career, with Particular Emphasis upon his Fall
   Tibebe Eshete 163

14 The Tales of Yoseph and Woransa: Gedeo Experiences in the Era of the Italo-Ethiopian War
   Charles McClellan 181

15 Haile Sellassie’s Hands-Off Direct Rule: Blata Ayele Gebre and the Hareri Kulub Movement of 1948
   Tim Carmichael 195

Notes on Contributors
INTRODUCTION

The annals of Africa's long and varied contacts with alien cultures testify to the presence of pervasive change in the political life of the continent over the centuries. Some historians have chosen to attribute change primarily to externally impinging factors such as invasion, conversion, dependency and imperial incorporation, or have evaluated change more impersonally in terms of intrusive economic and social forces abstractly conceived. Other historians have preferred to visualize historical change in African political life as primarily the creation of ideas and individuals generated by African culture itself. An inherently fruitful tension binds these alternative historiographical approaches; surely both natives and aliens have contributed to the historical transformation of African political culture. Analytical generalization often exposes patterns of hidden meaning amidst the bewildering array of empirically observable events, yet the drama of an individual human life may well contain experiences that challenge the limits of any interpretive dogma. Harold G. Marcus is prominent among those scholars who have emphasized the role of African leaders in shaping the transformation of diplomatic and political destinies. His studies of the Ethiopian emperors Menilek II and Haile Selassie I, in particular, situate powerful individuals within their national and international historical contexts, and argue persuasively that personality is a crucial element in understanding political culture. In this volume students and colleagues of Professor Marcus offer tribute in the form of studies that draw inspiration from his example.

The first six studies explore situations in which the contributor's quest for understanding of social structure and broad historical process takes precedence over the personalities of the individual African participants; in doing so, these studies introduce much of the stage setting against whose backdrop the personal biographical dramas that follow were to be played out. A major feature of this setting is the politically centralized state. Jay Spaulding introduces the very old northeast African tradition of statecraft in its medieval Nubian manifestation. He emphasizes the role of matrimonial arrangements and kinship ties in maintaining discipline and hierarchy within an hereditary landholding elite. James C. McCann analyzes the implications for African statecraft, in its late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Ethiopian manifestation, of the birth of new technologies for institutionalized control through the adoption of Amharic, the dominant vernacular, as a vehicle for the creation and preservation of written documents to establish an administrative record. Colonial governments imposed by aliens brought with them a keen appreciation for the power of the written word. Irma Taddia draws upon hitherto-unexploited records from Italian Eritrea to demonstrate both that the authorities deliberately framed their policies
and conduct to attract numerous African political collaborators, and that many Eritrean leaders of the day responded positively to this appeal. Yet in other contexts colonial rule often inspired resistance. Laird Jones traces the formation of an organized opposition to British policy in the Mwanza region of Tanzania during the years between the World Wars on the part of initially-accommodating Muslim merchants. Their disaffection was motivated both by colonial policies of economic "development" that marginalized them, and by the introduction of a favored caste of "Asian" competitors.

Independent Africa, for good and for ill, has derived much from the political, intellectual, and socioeconomic fabric of the colonial age, but also yields a potential to redefine the given realities of received political culture. Stephanie F. Beswick studies how the increasingly negative effects of an originally colonial ethnic policy formulated in a remote urban capital have worked themselves out on the ground over recent generations in one rural situation as an unnecessarily painful boundary between adjoining pastoral communities. Fikru Gebrekidan follows three decades in the growth of an African consciousness, forged in response to European racism, that has inspired and challenged Ethiopia to assume leadership roles on behalf of the continent and the African diaspora. Within a periodization established by the passage of the African state through precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial ages, the studies introduced above name as important and perennial variables in historical process the factors of race, kinship, ethnicity and language, religion and ideology, institutions of economic production and exchange, and technologies for the exercise of political control that range from landholding institutions to diverse ingenious systems for establishing and maintaining clientage to the rise of bureaucracies practicing written record-keeping or bearing arms. These are some important elements of the historical setting within which the protagonists of the biographically-focused studies to follow acted out their destinies.

Of the biographical studies, the first five introduce individuals who significantly transformed their historical environment. Preeminent among these was the formidable reunifier of his country, the nineteenth-century Ethiopian emperor Tewodros. Donald Crummey draws upon the experience of the emperor's career to analyze the role of personal leadership qualities, of violence, and of ideology across the wider span of modern Ethiopian history. No less influential in another and broadly contemporary African context were the nineteenth-century French imperial founders of the colonies that were to become the modern nations of Senegal, Mali (formerly Soudan), and Mauritania. David Robinson finds that L. L. C. Faidherbe, Louis Archinard, and Xavier Coppolani left their respective personal imprints both upon these lands and upon the empire into which they incorporated them. James Cox reexamines the career of the nineteenth-century Chagga leader Rindi to expose a keen diplomatic acumen that understood how to create tangible forms of power through
diverse alliances both African and European. In the account of Robert O. Collins a series of strong-minded British agents, largely through force of personality, maintained for half a century a profitable but precarious commercial entrepot at the river port of Gambela, an Anglo–Egyptian Sudanese enclave deep inside western Ethiopia. Tony Woods unrolls the maverick political career of W. H. Timcke, a white settler whose failure as a small tobacco planter at the hands of an unsympathetic colonial establishment eased the redirection of his considerable organizational abilities toward incipient Malawian nationalism.

The final four biographical studies focus upon individuals who were more nearly shaped by history than the masters of opportunity. Archtypically a product of his culture and time was the eighteenth-century faction-builder and strongman Welde Li'ul, close kinsman to the royal house and, as analyzed by LaVerle Berry, the master of Ethiopian imperial destiny for half a century. Tibebe Eshete offers a dramatic revisionary interpretation of the doomed Ethiopian emperor Lij Iyasu as a martyr for multiculturalism and tragic hero. Charles McClellan introduces protagonists of humble status from the Gedeo community of Ethiopian imperial subjects; for them, the era of Italian occupation afforded modest and sometimes unexpected opportunities for advancement. Tim Carmichael critiques the Harar governor Blata Ayele's handling of insurgent Somali nationalism on Ethiopian imperial soil. The extremely diverse experiences of the subjects from both sets of biographical studies afford many opportunities to test generalizations about political culture.

The recent flow of academic chic from Marxism to Postmodernism, as Tony Woods correctly observes, has carried the mainstream of Africanist scholarship from the sociological syntheses of the 1970s to the psychologizing abstractions of the 1990s without pausing, however briefly, at any sort of intervening concrete reality. The studies of the present volume contribute to a critique of fashionably excessive generalization, as the very human individuals introduced herein work out their respective personal destinies. Wherever people are seen to behave in ways the prevailing theoretical discourse would not have anticipated, it would be well to summon the insight of Charles McClellan that principled "idealism tends to be the luxury of those who have a broader range of options." The embrace of a personal perspective provides a sound vantage point from which to explore both the constraints upon and the opportunities available to a historical protagonist. If conventional truisms are thereby challenged, so be it.

The concept of "race," for example, epitomized by some as the touchstone of modern African history or even the central issue of the twentieth century, did not spring organically from the soil of Ethiopian experience. Rather, according to Fikru Gebrekidan, only when the emperor Haile Selassie was restored to the throne during World War II did he begin to find it expedient to receive instruction in the practical utility of racialist politics from a variety of American or American-trained ideologues.
For reasons concerning which his Gedeo or Eritrean subjects could undoubtedly have elaborated, it was easier to kindle unqualified metaphysical passion for the Lion of Judah at the safe distance of Kingston, Jamaica or New York City. Nor was the line between black and white necessarily a hostile frontier across the wider terrain of colonized Africa. Rather, close scrutiny of individual experience reveals a much more complex and variegated range of relationships, along which continuum the brutal confrontations of fashionable academic discourse provide only one extreme. Collaboration, Irma Taddia insists, is quite as important a theme in the history of colonial Eritrea as is resistance, an assertion that evokes particularly deep resonances from the studies of James Cox, Charles McClellan and Tony Woods. "In many cases," Taddia writes, colonial power "resulted from compromises that were made between colonial subjects and European authorities." From this perspective one may best appreciate the contribution of David Robinson; the generals who created French West Africa in a very real sense performed their most difficult and important conquests in France, through the annexation for themselves as "africains" of an ever-wider province of the official mind of the imperial establishment. (Conquering West Africans was considerably less difficult, and the routine could usually be delegated to other West Africans.)

Conventional Africanist discourse holds a set of rather fixed moralizing expectations concerning the historical role of the state. The precolonial state is usually construed in positive terms and sometimes, notably at the hands of Afrocentrists, is greatly romanticized. The colonial state, in contrast, receives a negative assessment, while the governments of independent Africa are understood to share a Manichaean heritage within which ancient authentic virtue strives against recently-inflicted alien evil. Building upon the historical experiences of uncolonized Ethiopia as a point of critical reference, the contributors challenge the received assumptions of the conventional paradigm in many ways.

Jay Spaulding suggests that the often fragmentary evidence from early times should be read in terms of the perhaps less sanguine but better understood realities of the more recent past. Several of these latter figure conspicuously in the study of Donald Crummey, who stresses the violence, the immense human cost, and the deliberate ideological self-deceptions implicit in state-formation. Some of this is apparent in LaVerle Berry's analysis of the rise to power of Ras Welde Li'ul in a context where control over land and subjects comprised the principal focus of acquisitive attention, and more may be found in James Cox's account of Rindi of Moshi, where dominance over commercial routes and connections was also an important objective of power-seekers. When viewed against a realistic backdrop of precolonial political culture, the alien regimes imposed by conquest during the nineteenth century and their modern heirs often seem to differ in degree rather than in kind. (In the case of Gambeila, an alien colonial enclave within an independent African state discussed by Robert O. Collins, it would be
Introduction  5
difficult to distinguish between what was colonial and what was not.) The studies below afford a stimulating variety of points of comparison.

Bitter contests among dissident fractions of the ruling landholding elite, for example, may be seen both in LaVerle Berry's eighteenth-century Ethiopia and in Tony Woods' colonial Malawi; significantly, in both cases the elite struggle for control of the land was also extended into an abstract ideological arena of controversy in order to mobilize non-elite support. Governmental assertion of control over trade and of access to trade was not only a central theme in the career of Rindi but lies at the very heart of the political culture of the colonial age as examined at Mwanza by Laird Jones and at Gambeila by Robert O. Collins. Stephanie Beswick traces how successive colonial regimes in the Sudan manipulated the subject peoples' sense of ethnic identity for their own purposes, the better to shape and render predictable the desired types of intergroup interactions; this is precisely the sociological setting within which Tibebe Eshete's Lij Iyasu embarked upon his attempt to redefine Ethiopian national identity, and Tim Carmichael's Blatta Ayele suppressed the Somali Youth League. The technologies of control do not necessarily provide reliable criteria by which to distinguish between what is authentically African and what is alien and colonial. Thus the rise of vernacular literacy as a tool of administration and a vehicle for the conduct of political culture, introduced in the Ethiopian context by James C. McCann, was equally characteristic of Irma Taddia's colonial Eritrea. Or again, revolutions in modes of transport might take the form of a colonial railway in Tanzania or motor transport in independent Ethiopia, but the effects were comparable; the former crippled a community of Muslim African traders while the latter destroyed an enclave of alien white traders. In short, the studies offered here tend to see significant similarities among states and continuities between historical periods; they do not lend support to theoretical visions of radical discontinuities in political culture between the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial state.

Biography is one of the methodological strands that lies close to the heart of the historiographical enterprise, a truth perhaps less obvious to Africanists, given the nature of their sources, than to colleagues in some adjacent fields. Inspired by the example of Harold G. Marcus, the contributors to the present volume offer studies that seek to situate real individuals in their historical contexts, whether to transform the world or to be shaped by impinging circumstances. At the deepest level the object of this scholarly endeavor would be to realize a synthesis between the kind of knowledge one gains through personal acquaintance with that to be derived from dispassionate understanding of objective circumstances. We hope that this quest may be found worthy, even if its goal has been perhaps but imperfectly achieved.
MEDIEVAL NUBIAN DYNASTIC SUCCESSION

by Jay Spaulding

Introduction
Among the distinguishing character traits in the political personality of the precolonial, northern Nile valley Sudan was the assignment of important roles to women; a synthetic overview could hardly fail to notice ill-defined but ubiquitous "matrilineal influences" in the conduct of public life.¹ One such practice, in the view of Ibn Khaldun, most ambitious and influential of Arab historians, constituted a fatal flaw that doomed polity in medieval Nubia:

Then the clans of the Juhayna Arabs spread over their country, and settled in it. . . . The kings of the Nubians set about holding them back, but lacked strength. Then they proceeded to win them over by marriage—alliances, so that their kingdom broke up, and it passed to some of the offspring of Juhayna through their mothers, according to the custom of the barbarians by which possession goes to the sister and the sister's son. So their kingdom was torn to pieces.²

Ibn Khaldun’s interpretation of events may be criticized on the grounds that it exaggerates both the numbers and the destructive tendencies of Arab immigrants.³ It also errs conspicuously in its treatment of medieval Nubian dynastic succession practices, for in no instance known did anyone’s sister ever take possession of a throne.⁴ Nor has subsequent scholarship, despite advances in many other aspects of Nubian studies since the fourteenth century, significantly improved historical understanding of medieval Nubian dynastic succession; Ibn Khaldun remains a preferred authority.⁵ The present study opens a reconsideration of this important but as yet imperfectly conceptualized theme in medieval Sudanese history.

History is a form of reasoning about the human experience that employs evidence derived from primary sources, evidence originating at the time and place under discussion, to test interpretive ideas. Good history establishes a structure of sound inference that accounts for all or most of the relevant array of data. (Bad history

⁵ For example, see William Y. Adams, Nubia: Corridor to Africa (Princeton, 1974), 463.
focuses obsessively upon one or a few inferential links.) From the privileged perspective
of an Omniscient Other, it may be that facts speak for themselves; where evidence is
limited, however, it is important to examine critically the analytical and
organizational principles by which inferences are drawn. For example, the sparse data
presently available for consideration of dynastic succession in medieval Nubia do not
yield self-evident conclusions; rather, they demand explicit specification of the
concepts to be employed in their interpretation. Of foremost pertinence among these, in
modern scholarship concerning medieval Nubia, has been matrilineality.

Prevailing scholarly images of African matrilineality normally derive from the
discipline of anthropology, and more specifically from the structural–functionalist
tradition that undertook to explore fully the social ramifications of kinship principles.
The textbook model of matrilineal society constructed by this interpretive school
tended to be abstracted from observation of the small-scale, stateless societies of
Central Africa’s “matrilineal belt.” In matrilineal society, one learns, the things that
matter are conveyed between generations from mother’s brother to sister’s son.6 Some
historical evidence concerning medieval Nubia, exemplified by the comment of Ibn
Khaldun cited above, has seemed to invite interpretation in terms of the conventional
structural–functionalist model of matrilineal society.

At the dawn of the 1960s this task was begun—though significantly never
completed—by a team of distinguished anthropologists, the Kronenbergs.7 Intending to
ground their historical reconstruction of medieval society in a sound understanding of
the observable present, they first examined the implications for social structure,
within the microcosm of the individual Nubian village community, of an hypothesized
transition out of a putatively matrilineal past into an indubitably patrilineal present;
they concluded that no dramatic social rupture would have been required, but merely a
restatement of familiar realities in new terms. The anthropological model had yielded
a plausible paradigm of historical change. Yet as the decade lengthened
archaeologists and historians accumulated increasing evidence that medieval Nubia,
in contrast to the textbook exemplars of African matrilineality, was a centralized state
society with a clearly–differentiated hereditary elite. Most medieval evidence
concerning succession practices concerned succession to the Nubian throne; was it
judicious to assume that kings necessarily followed the same rules that bound their
subjects? Moreover, it became clear that the Nubian throne, in complete defiance of the
conventional matrilineal model, often passed from father to son.8 By the mid–1970s the
only way to save matrilineal succession in medieval Nubia was to confine it to certain

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6 For a brief but meaningful encounter with the conventional model of matrilineal society, see
7 A. Kronenberg and W. Kronenberg, "Parallel Cousin Marriage in Mediaeval and Modern
limited periods, and to postulate one or more reversals of succession practices on the part of the monarchs. The explanatory power of the conventional model of matrilineal society had reached its limit.

The Funj kingdom of Sinnar (c. 1500–1821 A.D.) was the last, largest, and in some important respects, the best known realm in the long succession of precolonial northern Sudanese kingdoms, a sequence whose history has been aptly epitomized by William Y. Adams as a "continuous narrative of the cultural development of a single people." While understanding of the ruling institutions of Sinnar is not complete, considerably more information about its dynastic succession practices is at hand than may be found among the sources for medieval Nubia. The present study tests the available evidence from medieval Nubia, admittedly fragmentary and inevitably inconclusive, against an interpretive model derived from the better-documented institutions of Sinnar. While this heuristic technique has obvious methodological limitations and dangers, it is nevertheless far more conservative historiographically than the currently fashionable analytical practice of evaluating medieval Nubian dynastic succession in terms of the inheritance practices of the Bemba or Yao. If dynastic succession in medieval Nubia was in any sense "matrilineal," it was "matrilineal" in terms alien to the conventional anthropologically-derived model, and it is not unreasonable to seek an alternative vision in the culture of subsequent Nubian experience.

A Medieval Nubian Law of Succession?

Discussion of dynastic succession in medieval Nubia has tended to assume that there must have been a fixed rule of succession that granted one royal heir precedence over another. This inference flows logically from sources in which contemporary commentators offered interpretations of what the rule of succession might be.

Two of the most persuasive sources give apparently straightforward confirmation of conventional matrilineal proprieties. Ibn Hawqal, who visited Nubia in about 955, put it this way:

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9 Adams, Nubia, 463, postulates at least two changes; early and late matrilineality would seem to have been interrupted by a long age of patrilineal succession to the throne "in the usual Christian fashion."

10 Adams, Nubia, 5.

11 Jay Spaulding, "The Funj," chap. 2 of The Heroic Age in Sinnar (East Lansing, 1984), 21–38; Part I more generally.

12 For an expression of this commonly-held assumption one may cite the analysis of Munro-Hay, "Kings and Kingdoms," 106, which rests upon the conventional anthropological model of matrilineal descent: "By marrying his cousin, Nuity had sown up the succession by not permitting the intrusion of another into the royal line, an arrangement which Zacharias proposed to break."
"It is a tradition . . . that on the death of a king, his sister's son takes his place, to the exclusion of any other relative, even the king's own son or any other member of the family."\textsuperscript{13}

Similar are words of the \textit{History of the Patriarchs} (1077–1093):

For [it is] their custom, when the king dies, that his son is not made king in his stead, but the son of his [the king's] sister is made [king].\textsuperscript{14}

Yet the apparent clarity of both testimonies must be qualified through reference to the concrete apologetic contexts in which they were given. Ibn Hawqal appended his comment to an account of the actual change of rulers that took place during his visit; skeptical Mediterranean readers should be made to understand that by Alodian rules it was legitimate for Astabanus, the son of Yurki, to succeed his maternal uncle Asabius Karjuh the son of Juti. Similarly, pious Coptic folk should know that by Makurian rules it was acceptable that King Basil succeed his maternal uncle, nor should aspersions be cast upon the latter's son, who had come to Alexandria to be made a bishop. Upon close examination, therefore, it is perhaps not so certain that the pattern exemplified by these two cases, however normal and appropriate, was necessarily the only legitimate form that Nubian dynastic succession might take.

The suspicion that heirs other than a sister's son might also legitimately succeed to the throne is confirmed by a third contemporary source of high quality, Abu Salih the Armenian (late 1100s):

It is said to be the custom among the Nubians, when a king dies and leaves a son, and also a nephew, the son of his sister, that the latter reigns after his [maternal] uncle, instead of the son; but if there is no sister's son, then the king's own son succeeds.\textsuperscript{15}

In practice, the number of known instances in which a king's son succeeded his father on the throne is sufficient to cast doubt on Abu Salih's assumption that this happened only when no sister's son was available as a candidate.\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, it is indicated elsewhere that a son of the king's paternal uncle could also succeed to the throne.\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, one legitimate Nubian monarch was neither the nephew nor the son of any king.\textsuperscript{18} It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that no clear rule of succession to the

\textsuperscript{13} Giovanni Vantini, \textit{Oriental Sources Concerning Nubia} (Heidelberg and Warsaw, 1975), 163.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 217.


\textsuperscript{16} For a discussion and sources, largely epigraphical, see Munro–Hay, "Kings and Kingdoms," 105.

\textsuperscript{17} Vantini, \textit{Sources}, 497 (al-Mufaddal).

\textsuperscript{18} George I of Makuria; see below.
medieval Nubian throne may be inferred from the available sources, and tempting to suggest that perhaps there was none.

An Elective Kingship?
In Sinnar, when a king died his successor was chosen by a panel of high court officials from among a rather numerous constituency of candidates whose eligibility was determined through descent from appropriate forbears (the courtiers also having the right to depose and execute an unsatisfactory monarch). If a similar system of elective kingship obtained in medieval times, it would account for the diversity of kinship relations to be observed among succeeding generations of Nubian kings; sons, sister's sons, or other individuals of appropriate descent might be chosen at the discretion of the electors.

If a system of elective kingship similar to that of Sinnar existed in medieval times, it would have required the presence of an influential royal court. At the present state of knowledge, Adams has concluded, it is uncertain "whether the royal power was limited in practice by any sort of governing council." Surviving Nubian documents name a number of titled officials, but with the partial exception of the *Nommen* or Queen Mother, neither status nor function may be properly ascertained. Yet if its powers and personnel remain obscure, a court there was; the tenth-century visitor to Dongola, Ibn Salim al-Aswani, called it "the Council of the Great One of Makuria," an expression that differs enough from expected idiom to suggest the possible literal translation of Nubian terminology. Anecdotal evidence clearly indicates that powerful individuals around the throne, whether titled courtiers or not, did indeed exercise very significant influence over the kings. For example, when invading Egyptians captured the Queen Mother and Queen Sister of Makuria during the invasion of 1292, the reigning monarch appealed for their return on the grounds that in Nubia "it was only the women who direct the kings; therefore he asked that his mother be sent back to direct him." In fourteenth-century Makuria, a royal candidate, eligible through heredity but who came to the throne by force and somewhat under foreign duress, hesitated to be crowned with the royal regalia after seizing power "out of respect for the prerogative of his maternal uncles, claiming that he was merely preserving their exclusive rights." (He

20 Adams, *Nubia*, 467, rightly warns that despite the Byzantine quality of some of the titles one should not assume that the offices named necessarily resembled those of their Mediterranean counterparts. A similar caveat may be advanced in regard to the derivation of meanings for medieval Nubian titles from modern Nubian usages; for an example see Ali Osman, "New Lights on Medieval Nubia," *Nyame Akuma* 10 (1977): 47–50.
23 The present author’s translation of al-Nuwayri is given here; see Mus’ad, *al-maktaba*, 230 and Vantini, *Sources*, 486.
later had himself crowned, possibly with the uncles' consent). Very indicative were the careers of two powerful men named Zacharia, both of whom served as de facto rulers of Makuria and played the role of king-maker. The first, a son of King Mercurius but not eligible to succeed him, brought to the throne no less than three eighth-century kings in turn. The second, while administering the country, married a princess, fathered a son, made him king, and sent him away on a perilous and unprecedented diplomatic mission to Baghdad. While these examples, mere fortuitous survivals in an extremely sparse literature of sources, do not suffice to prove that Nubian courtiers routinely elected Nubian kings, they are certainly consistent with that interpretation.

A Royal Matrilineage?
In Sinnar, the right to rule was transmitted to male monarchs by successive generations, through the female line, of the daughters of a remote legendary ancestress. The princesses who conveyed noble status to their offspring constituted one of the fundamental political resources of the kingdom, and their disposition among subordinates as legitimacy-bestowing mates formed one of the most important mechanisms of statecraft. Within the hierarchy of noblemen the structure of authority was couched in an idiom of kinship by which, in the first instance, a son–in–law must obey the superior lord who gave him a wife capable of producing noble heirs, while subsequently any nephew—even the king—was subject to his maternal uncle. It is not likely that the highly distinctive kinship practices of the Funj nobility would have been identical to those of any group among the subject commoners of their day, whether conventionally matrilineal or otherwise; however, it is quite possible that they may have resembled—indeed, have been historically derived from—the corresponding institutions of the medieval period.

How much of the Funj paradigm summarized above finds resonance in the surviving records from Nubia? Medieval sources allow a fairly precise definition of the hereditary criterion by which admission to the constituency of potential monarchs was determined; as in Sinnar, one must be the son of a woman of the royal house. Clear testimony appears in Michael the Syrian's account of the regency of the eighth–century Makurian strongman Zacharia:

He was not of royal descent—without which it is unlawful among them to become king—but he had a son of a woman whose family was of royal descent. . . . They crowned him king, while his father ruled the kingdom until such time as the boy became of age.

George I of Makuria thus had no hereditary claim to the throne other than the status bequeathed to him by his mother. Confirmation may be found in the person of an

24 Vantini, Sources, 40 (John the Deacon).
25 Ibid., 317 (Michael the Syrian).
26 Ibid., 317; see also the account of Barhebraeus, 420.
anonymous thirteenth-century Makurian nobleman "who was one of the leading princes and had the right of succession to the throne."\(^{27}\) He was however neither the son of a king nor a sister's son, but merely the child of King Shamamun's maternal aunt; his hereditary claim—authentic though never realized—derived like that of George I exclusively from his mother.

Other possible medieval Nubian parallels to Funj dynastic political practice have left visible but less conclusive traces in the documentary record; one may recall the ability of the king's maternal uncles to deter the coronation of a successor, and note the apparent survival between eras of the term sawakira (singular, sokari) for commanders or princes.\(^{28}\) The fact that medieval Nubian kings seem to have practiced polygyny opens the door to the possibility that they, like the Funj to follow, stood at the apex of a pyramidal system of political marriages among the elite that included the gathering and redistribution of noble women as wives.\(^{29}\) In one instance it is possible to demonstrate that Nubian kings, like their Funj counterparts, bestowed wives for the purpose of incorporating subordinate provincial lords into the dynastic discipline of the royal family. The Kanz al-Dawla, after about 1200 the Islamic lord of a part of the erstwhile Eparchate of Nobatia, had been linked to his master the Christian high king of Makuria by marriages that in due course generated typical Funj patterns of family relationship. Thus King Kudanbes of Makuria could address the commander of an irresistible Egyptian invasion:

If it is the will of Your Majesty to appoint a Muslim to rule Nubia, this man [the Kanz al-Dawla] is actually a Muslim, [and also the] son of my sister and as such he is my legitimate successor.\(^{30}\)

It is not likely that the dynastic ties between Makuria and Nobatia were new when exposed to history under the duress of the fourteenth century; rather, it is more probable that they had always formed an important part of the constitution of the "United Kingdom of Nubia." Ibn Khaldun's previously–cited comments on the marriage of

\(^{27}\) Ibn al-Furat; see Mus'ad, al-maktaba, 269; Vantini, Sources, 541.

\(^{28}\) Vantini, Sources, 482–82 (al-Nuwayri) and 545 (Ibn al-Furat). Arabic sources gloss sokari/sawakira as amir/umara'; most interpreters, including the present author, have rendered the term "prince(s)," but R. S. O'Fahey prefers "commander(s)."

\(^{29}\) According to Abu Salih the Armenian, the king of Makuria, (whom he identifies in this passage as an "Abyssinian"), had always taken numerous wives up to the recent reign of the sixteenth–seventh Alexandrian patriarch Sinthus; when chided by the prelate, the king and his people "began to have each of them one wife only" (Vantini, Sources, 339–40), but clearly this reform had not yet won complete acceptance in Abu Salih's day (late 1100s). For a comparative perspective one may note the long if reluctant toleration of concubinage, particularly by the elite, in Latin Christianity; concubinage was legally abolished only by the Fifth Lateran Council of 1514. For a discussion, see James A. Brundage, Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe (Chicago, 1987).

\(^{30}\) al–Nuwayri; see Mus'ad, al-maktaba, 229; Vantini, Sources, 484. Actually, the Kanz al–Dawla was not quite a legitimate successor, as his subsequent deference to his mentor's maternal uncles (introduced above) revealed. Nor could a provincial governor normally succeed to the throne of Sinnar; when sufficient medieval evidence becomes available, attention must be paid to the upward and downward donation of noble wives, which established a hierarchy of noble status among their children.
intrusive Arab chieftains to Nubian princesses probably derived exclusively from the experience of the Kanz al-Dawla, but if other instances should come to light they may be interpreted in the same context. Similarly, while the available fragments of evidence hardly admit of reasoned speculation, the scattered references to family relationships between the royal houses of Makuria and Alodia, and the occasional claims of one kingdom to dominance over the other, should be read together in a similar spirit. 31

Conclusion
While much remains to be learned about dynastic usages in both medieval Nubia and in Sinnar, sufficient evidence is at hand to justify the use of the better-known institutions of the Funj as a heuristic guide to the interpretation of medieval data.

31 Munro-Hay, "Kings and Kingdoms," 107, 109; Welsby and Daniels, Soba, 7.
ORALITY, STATE LITERACY, AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN ETHIOPIA: TRANSLATING THE RAS KASSA REGISTERS

by James C. McCann

Between October 1918 and November 1935 Leul Ras Kassa Haylu, a close associate of Ras Tafari Makonnen (later Haile Sellassie I), kept a written register of proceedings and edicts at his court. As absentee governor of several important areas of the northern highlands, Kassa recorded and indexed in his register 671 separate transactions concerning judicial procedures, taxation, court budgets, land registration, and appointments for his local agents. Despite Ethiopia's millennium-long tradition of literacy, these documents in their form—a collated, indexed, and bound collection—and their content represent probably the earliest example of a systematic, secular use of literacy for public administration in Ethiopia. While my long-term goal is to translate and annotate these documents, my immediate task is to examine the meaning of the documents as expressions of political culture. In particular, I wish to examine the Ras Kassa registers as signposts of a transition from orality to literacy in politics, and economic discourse as an expression of expanding central state authority.

Ras Kassa's documents tell us about specific political transactions, but perhaps more importantly they provide insights into a major watershed in political culture. I therefore intend to examine aspects of text (events recorded, language, orthography, aesthetics of production) with consideration of context (why a written form? what relation did the written register have to more common forms of political communication? how was this oral-to-written transition related to the dominant political economy? what relationship to the chronology of central state expansion?).

Description of Documents
The total corpus of these documents consists of 671 documents/transactions recorded on 483 leaves bound in two separate volumes. The leaves are of modern, lined notebook paper stitched together between a thin leather binding. The first volume covers the period from September 1917 to December 1934 and includes materials from all of Kassa's governates. The second volume covers only the province of Bagamder. The documents are entirely in Amharic, including use of Amharic numerals. Each of the volumes has a table of contents listing document subjects in the order in which they appear. Though tattered and decomposed in places, probably from being buried in a church yard during the Italian occupation, the registers are nonetheless legible.

I became aware of these documents in the course of a series of interviews with Fitawrari Nabiyyaleul Takla Tsadik, a secretary/retainer to the late Ras who had preserved them among a collection of redacted religious tracts and historical
memorabilia. I photocopied the originals, deposited one copy in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, kept one copy, and returned the originals to Nabiyauleul. In the initial state of analysis my research assistant and I prepared a preliminary table of contents listing date, subject, and form of each document together with page numbers and document numbers. I subsequently interviewed Nabiyauleul about the setting and methods of the registers' composition.

Context: The Political Economy of Modernization
Although the process of central state expansion had been in progress since Emperor Menilek's accession in 1889, the rise of Ras Tafari Makonnen to the position of head of government in 1916 accelerated its pace and shifted its emphasis. If Menilek's state set about responding to the age of imperialism through traditional forms of expansion, Ras Tafari sought to build a modern authoritarian state. In the north, and to a large degree in the south as well, two policies dominated imperial state actions after Tafari's accession as regent. The first was the policy of "fiscalism," in which the state attempted to generate its revenue in cash from new sources—mostly from the coffee-based rural economy of the south and west—to pay for ambitious programs of defense and infrastructure development. The second overall goal was to break the economic and political base of the traditional rural elite who still held northern governorships and dominated the local political economy of trade, land distribution, and income rights that bound peasant producers to local elite and created a bar to expansion of central state authority. The defense of the state in the inter-war years required both centralized control over the historically unruly north as well as revenues in cash and kind to support a modern standing army and a new salariat. By the early 1920s Ras Tafari had been successful in creating conditions right for the effective assertion of central government power over the traditional prerogatives of the local elite.

Leul Ras Kassa Haylu was perhaps Tafari's most important ally in the process of reforming administration as a means of preserving autocracy. The scion of a late nineteenth-century political marriage, Kassa spent his early youth in a rural Lasta, the heartland of northern conservative Christianity, receiving a traditional ecclesiastical education in Ge'ez and Amharic. His later youth was spent closer to the imperial court where relatives schooled him in the arts of warfare, the scriptures, and government affairs. As a young man Kassa accompanied the emperor on campaigns of conquest to the south as well as northern campaigns, which affirmed central government control of the traditional Christian north. In 1909 he served as Ethiopia's representative to the coronation in London and visited Jerusalem. Kassa therefore had an excellent vantage point on the foundations of rural culture and the formative processes of the modern state. In 1914 Italian minister Giuliano Cora described young Kassa as "serious, intelligent, and quite modern."

From the beginning of his tenure Kassa proceeded to install a new administrative, judicial, and fiscal structure to systematize procedures and put in place a cadre of loyal
state functionaries. These actions included new regulations for the tithe, customs, and military service; judicial procedures were streamlined and centralized; local censuses were mandated and church revenues regularized. Although often couched in moralistic Christian metaphor, the purpose of these reforms was in very specific terms to break the economic base of the local elite and expand the reach of the central state.

Kassa, like Ras Tafari himself, understood the threat of European imperialism and was aware of the broad outlines of European colonial practice in taxation and record-keeping. A central feature to Kassa's efforts to codify customary law, regulate fiscal procedures, and eliminate prerogatives of local elite therefore was the systematic use of record-keeping. The registers thus go far beyond simple sources of facts about local rule and state policy in the formative years of the modern imperial system: the use of the written word itself was a weapon to restrict local privilege as well as an important sign of a larger battle to reorder the norms of political culture. Kassa's insistence on the use of tax receipts issued to illiterate peasants, customs ledgers, judicial transcripts, and the use of official seals to avoid malfeasance and forgery was an attempt to transform an oral, ambiguous political culture based on local political relations to a verifiable, accountable written one focused on the new political center.

**From Orality to Political Literacy**

A millennium-long tradition of clerical literacy as part of highland Christian society should not presume its use in political communication. The Ethiopian alphabet, derived from Aramaic and Old Phoenician, was bound up with the spread of Christianity, but not the state. Though Amharic appears in a few royal songs of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and during the brief ascendancy of Roman Catholicism in the seventeenth century, the main body of Ethiopian literature until the nineteenth century was composed in the liturgical language, Ge'ez. The written royal chronicles that, until the mid-nineteenth century, were composed in Ge'ez served less to record events than to associate secular leadership with the symbolic legitimizing power of religious dogma. The use of the vernacular Amharic language in written form and for overtly political purposes is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of Ethiopian literacy.

The expansion of the scale of politics with the renaissance of Red Sea trade in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and the political consolidation of the traditional Abyssinian highlands under Emperor Tewodros II (1855–1868) brought on an increase in political correspondence and the exploratory use of both the Amharic vernacular and its written form for non-ecclesiastical purposes. The transition to Amharic in the nineteenth century was rapid: by 1840 extant official letters in Amharic outnumber those in Ge'ez by five to one.1

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The Amharic language only achieved status as an official written language at the court of Tewodros. The emperor was an erratic but charismatic reformer with a vision of military and fiscal modernization in which the use of vernacular language formed part of his overall strategy. Though classically trained in Ge'ez, the Emperor used scribes, including a personal secretary Aleqa Zenab, to produce written Amharic texts, including a large body of letters to foreigners, the first Amharic royal chronicle, tax records, and palace inventories. As a result we have a body of documents that serve as a mid-nineteenth-century benchmark for the development of Amharic as a written language.

The evidence from Tewodros' documents reveals a written language and body of political documentation and communication only in embryonic form. The inconsistency of spelling of place names, dates, and use of figures indicates not a lack of erudition in language as much as the absence of conventions in its written form. The heavily formulaic letters were written almost exclusively to foreigners; they were clearly not the means by which he communicated his political will to his constituents or his enemies. The tax records and inventories, as remarkable as they may be as precursors of modern fiscalism, were inconsistent, undated, and uncollated. Thus, it is obvious that the emperor and his functionaries never used these materials as the basis for governance. In fact, his tax records were found by a British soldier after the 1868 Battle of Maqdala under the royal bed along with letters to his concubine.\(^2\)

This evidence strongly suggests that despite the presence of literacy historically, the political culture of the Ethiopian state and the dominant form of social discourse was fundamentally oral. Despite the power of the written word in particular contexts—land grants or liturgy—oral performance and the creative use of verbal ambiguity constitutes highland society's most prized social attribute. Semmna Warq ("wax and gold"), the oral poetry of double entendre has been a primary social idiom and what Donald Levine has called the genius of Amhara culture. In court as in the domain of local politics the power of a litigant was less the precision of the evidence than the quality of oral performance.\(^3\)

In regional politics actors preferred fluidity and ambiguity in relations between patron and client. Political careers depended more on subtle shifts in alliances and patronage rather than a fixed set of hereditary rights to office or privilege. Political communication was primarily oral because the political actors preferred it to be. The absence of clear rules to succession to office and to privileges dominated traditional highland political culture; thus resistance to written codes of taxation or patron/client obligations was widespread in Ethiopia until the beginnings of modern imperialism.


\(^3\) Donald Levine, Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture (Chicago, 1974), 5.
Written forms implied a fixed body of principles and procedures that could be verified and used as a means of control. Local officials and elites sought the ambiguity of oral form since it was context bound and often fleeting. Janet Ewald argues that the literate rulers of Taqali in Sudan's Nuba mountains chose orality over literacy as the basis for political relations because the written word had the power to exist independently of the people who created it, whereas oral communication is embedded in historically specific social relations. The shift from oral to written forms of political communication thus constituted an arena of what Pauline Peters has called a "struggle over meaning" as well as form.

The increasing attempts by the central state to use administrative literacy as a means to codify political relations parallels the rise of the penetration of the modern world economy. The state's desire to standardize taxation and fix previously ambiguous obligations went hand in glove with the need to substitute fixed and reliable revenues in cash for fluid, locally negotiated tribute relations. Tribute was as much a symbolic representation of authority as a payment, while fixed taxes were a more purely financial transfer. Ewald argues:

> A connection seems to exist between orality and gift exchange on the one hand and literacy and commodity exchange on the other . . . Like the gift, orality is embedded in a unique social context. Spoken, face to face communication takes place only in human interaction. In contrast to gift reciprocity, market exchange reifies goods or labor into commodities. Standardized taxation, instead of a system of various tributes, likewise commoditizes goods . . . Documents themselves are in a sense commodities, transforming words from sounds carried on living breath into objects that live independently of their creators.

Written records thus threatened local political relations that historically were the product of a fluid, situational mix of social, economic, and political factors.

Since orally-based political culture tended to preserve local autonomy, the centralization of state power required the breaking down of orally based relations. Kassa's assertion of written codes of obligations, duties, and procedures were part of a transition to a new order of political culture. Tewodros' efforts at tax records and vernacular literature had been an early but unfocused effort, but Kassa's documents represented the mature form.

### Language, Orality, and Text

The transition from orality to literacy in political culture is also evident in the testimony of the texts themselves. Just as the evolution of state literacy paralleled the growth of involvement with the global political economy of Victorian imperialism, the evolution of the documents reveals the suppression of orality. Most nineteenth-

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5 Ibid.
century documents appear to have been written by secretary/scribes, even in cases where the principal was known to be literate. Texts appear to have been dictations or perhaps transcriptions rather than composed in written form.\(^6\) This form allowed the occasion to retain the power of the spoken word while the written version fixed the moment in time.

The language and form of mid-nineteenth-century documents suggests their relative weakness vis-à-vis the more powerful oral culture. The transformation of the temporal, oral dimension of speech to the spatial, fixed dimension of writing meant the evolution of new linguistic structures and nineteenth-century documents suggest that process was incomplete. The language of nineteenth-century texts convey the strength of the oral form. Punctuation was erratic, particularly use of the *arat nateb*, which in the modern written language indicates end of a sentence; in nineteenth-century forms it often indicates only breath pauses.\(^7\) Syntactically, the use of subordinate elements to precede the referent most common in modern written Amharic is absent in speech and frequently ignored in nineteenth-century documents.

Tewodros' letters and most tax records generally appeared on loose scraps of paper that had begun to be imported at that time while some tax records appeared as marginalia in religious texts. No standard form for either letters or tax receipts was evident in Tewodros' materials, suggesting the difficulty of and perhaps lack of intent to use these documents as tools of standardization. The lack of dating on the majority of nineteenth-century correspondence argues strongly for their role as minor players in the conveyance of political information. Most importantly, nineteenth-century documents, particularly letters, contain very little substantive information.

By contrast, Kassa's registers and the documents within them constituted a substantial evolution of the written form as a purveyor of political messages in the detail of information contained and the complexity of meaning within the written format. Not only are the Kassa registers dated and organized, but they were bound, i.e., placed physically in relation to one another. Thus, they were meant precisely to overcome the ambiguity inherent in orality in political relations. The register provided a precise account of what orders had been given, when, to whom, and in what sequence. The intent was to serve as verification of an oral transaction—written orders preserved with dates, seals, and addresses could not easily be denied by subordinates.

**Evidence of the Texts: Events and Process**

Specific documents reveal the importance of the written form and context. The presentation of material in the Kassa registers is organized and purposeful, quite dry in terms of the absence of metaphor, allusion, and hyperbole prominent in liturgical texts.

\(^6\) Asfaw Girma-Selassie and David Appleyard, with Edward Ullendorff, *The Amharic Letters of Theodore of Ethiopia to Queen Victoria and Her Special Envoy* (London, 1979), xxiii.

\(^7\) Ibid., xxi.
The documents are bound and organized chronologically; 73 percent of the documents are
dated with a clear trend toward more precise dating from the earliest to the latest.
Each volume contains a table of contents that contains a document number (though the
documents themselves are not numbered) and the first line of the text, which usually
but not always reveals the addressee and often the type of transaction. The very first
document in the bound version specifically sets out procedures for distribution of the
tithe and the prescribed method for recording it. The emphasis on written form is
telling: the document not only instructs local officials in how to register payments in
grain but admonishes them to use an official seal and forbids the use of pencil.

The imposition of state literacy on an orally-based tradition required systematic
procedures that produced records that were comparable, retrievable, and verifiable.
The mechanics of registration thus occupy an important place in many of the documents.
Document 84, for example, details eighteen specific procedures for protecting and
authenticating written records of tax receipts, including the use of seals and ways to
detect forgery. Document 147 gives directions on how to take minutes of meetings and
record them in the register, presumably the same style used by Kassa himself. Kassa
also lays out penalties for judges whose scribes commit errors in recording, but making an
interesting exception of a certain Qagnazmatch Admasu because "he is illiterate." Document 173 even specifies the annual budget for ink and paper consumed by local
officials. Orality, however, is still an important metaphor since in Document 13 Kassa
admonishes his readers to "sema" (listen!). In several documents Kassa referred
directly to the relationship between his subordinate officials and the peasantry,
intending to limit traditional local prerogatives of extraction. In Document 53, for
example, Kassa fixes the tax rates for newly settled areas and for release from corvee
labor.

Conclusion: Shadows in the Cave
The documents contained within these registers give us a closer view of the inner
workings of rural administration than from any source to date. They thus represent an
African voice telling us about the response of a non-colonial society to the exigencies of
modernization in the age of maturing colonialism. At the same time, however, the
documents themselves allude to the fact that they represent only half of a dialogue
between the state and rural society. In Document 83, for example, the register refers to
petitions from rural folk "great and small" appealing for a return to former taxation
procedures. In Document 53 the edict on banditry, unemployment, and vagrancy alludes
to incidents, events, and implied knowledge for which we have no direct evidence. For
historians it is a Platonic cave where we rely upon shadows of historical action rather
than hard evidence of social reality.

A major challenge to this study therefore may be to determine the fate of
"companion" documents, the local records, registers, tax receipts, and peasant petitions
referred to in Kassa's register. If they were kept as ordered they would reveal actual
tax receipts, litigation, and local census data over a decade and a half. Thus the imposition of state literacy would have produced not only Kassa's register but created a potential bonanza of rural documentation. Do these documents exist? Were they ever produced? Little if any evidence of these companion documents exists, though to date, historians may not have been looking for them in the right places. If these materials exist, they will provide evidence of local political economy, class relations, and economic life; but equally as important, they will suggest the evolution of a political empiricism, the development of a secular political language in written form, and an indicator of the extent of penetration by a political culture prescribed by an expanding central state.
CONSTRUCTING COLONIAL POWER AND POLITICAL COLLABORATION IN ITALIAN ERITREA

by Irma Taddia

Colonialism implies resistance: this aspect of colonial history has been considered many times in recent African historiography, for there are substantial reasons to emphasize this phenomenon when considering the anti-colonial struggle in African societies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One can reasonably argue, however, that resistance was not a universal reaction on the part of African colonial subjects; the complex web of relations between colonial government and its subjects cannot be reduced to one unique reaction and response. Historians of Africa must avoid generalizations and should encourage research based upon local material rather than derived from European sources alone. Moreover, historical research should be limited to particular historical periods and to precise colonial situations; through the use of this methodology different African contexts may be compared.

Resistance appears not to have been the only response to the colonial encounter; African societies were of a more flexible nature during colonialism and some took advantage of colonial power, emerging as valuable political mediators. Resistance and collaboration, therefore, are both aspects of colonialism that should be included in analysis. Colonial power was not only an imposition from above; in many cases it resulted from compromises that were made between colonial subjects and European authorities. Colonial governments often sought to avoid negative feedback by promoting a policy of consensus and by constructing a new equilibrium of power; the result was the emergence of a complex society comprised of both colonial and indigenous elements that were interrelated.

The Horn of Africa provides an interesting case study on this topic. The recent important discovery of hitherto–unknown archival material concerning the former Italian colonies constitutes the basis for this reflection on colonial Eritrea. During the last two years I have come across some sources—in both Italy and Eritrea—completely unknown to previous scholars who dealt with Eritrean society and its history during Italian colonialism. These sources provide an opportunity to begin a new historical reflection on Italian Eritrea that highlights different aspects of colonial history.


2 These colonial documents will be quoted extensively. The "Archivio Eritrea" is the only colonial archive that survived in Italy; the others were largely destroyed during the Second World War.
Little research has been done on resistance and protest in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Eritrea/Ethiopia, and with few exceptions the great bulk of the historical work done so far has been based on excessively abstract and sweeping generalizations. Only the most famous revolt in the Eritrean highlands during the first years of Italian colonialism, that of Bahta Agos, has been analyzed extensively by scholars.

Colonial Eritrea has been the object of historical work derived primarily from Italian documentation and focusing upon political relationships; that theme is well developed in the literature, but local situations have scarcely been considered. The equilibrium of power, as well as the interaction between colonized people and the colonial government, have been but poorly investigated. Moreover, very little attention has been paid to the impact of colonial politics at the local level; particularly neglected is the role played by Italy in modifying the indigenous political situation by transforming the regional autonomous ruling class of precolonial Eritrea into colonial subjects. This neglect is surprising, for there are many documents on the political situation in Italian Eritrea preserved in colonial archives that still deserve attention. Such documents enable one to examine the political control held by the Italian government and the reactions of the people at a local level. This literature affords an opportunity to analyze in detail the political interaction between the two actors of the colonial drama, and it highlights the complexity of reactions to colonial expansion.

One cannot speak abstractly of a general resistance to colonial domination since there are also examples of the strategic choice of a policy of collaboration. The present study analyzes two aspects of the political collaboration between colonial government and Eritreans in the construction of a new equilibrium of power in colonial Eritrea. The first of these is the deliberate pursuit of a policy of collaboration on the part of the colonial authorities themselves directed toward the Eritrean subjects. The second is collaboration induced by a spontaneous response of colonized people toward the foreign authorities, a local reaction to colonialism perhaps uncommon elsewhere.

In considering the first aspect, political collaboration promoted by the colonial authorities, one may focus upon the emergence of a clear and fully conscious "indigenous" policy carried out by the Italian government at the beginning of its rule. This policy expressed itself through the desire to establish positive relations with

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5 Evidence may be found throughout the analyses of Italian historiography from the study of A. Del Boca, Gli italiani in Africa orientale. Dall’unità alla marcia su Roma (Bari, 1976) to that of N. Labanca, In marcia verso Adua (Torino, 1992).
colonial subjects rather than to emphasize the differences. The understanding of Eritrean life and patterns of social behavior became a matter of acute importance to the colonial power; the collection of historical data concerning many aspects of the precolonial period must be regarded as a technique for studying the society at the grass-roots level in order to discover grounds for a new political equilibrium.

In order to begin the policy of collaboration, a precise knowledge of the Eritrean precolonial power structure was required. This latter therefore became the object of many perceptive discussions in Italian Eritrea, and a great deal of documentation concerning local chieftains has come to light. These documents were written by colonial civil servants but were ultimately based on social accounts and historical data of the colonized people themselves. Particular attention was given to the private lives, political contacts and social relations of the precolonial political authorities. Biographies of indigenous chiefs and other relevant figures such as religious authorities have been the object of many monographs written during the early colonial period. The available documents show clearly that the colonial government was very accurate in gathering information about the local power elite in order to maintain its authority by promoting a political equilibrium. Many files on record in colonial archives exemplify this intention to create political collaboration in Italian Eritrea through the collection of documents dealing with the private lives and daily political situations of the people.6

The collection of biographical material in the colonial period can be analyzed in terms of the search by the Italian administration for a collaboration-seeking policy. At the same time, this policy was clearly intended to serve the aim of social control. We know little about this aspect of colonial history, although it is well documented in the colonial archives.7 The collections of indigenous biographies by anonymous colonial civil servants—obviously written on precise orders—are indicative of a need that was felt particularly keenly during the early colonial period. Italian colonial policy was very accurate in the collecting of material on the political structure and daily lives of colonized people, in order to establish better contact with them. These biographies concerning local chieftains represent a body of data that would be difficult to assimilate unless pursued for a specific purpose, namely to prevent all possible forms of opposition.

Italian colonialism made a particular effort to understand the power situation in Eritrea and the political milieu of precolonial Eritrea in order to establish a form of

6 Interesting material on this topic may be found in the files of the "Archivio Eritrea" and the "Archivio Storico del Ministero dell’Africa Italiana," both preserved at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome. For details see the notes to follow and the bibliography of Taddia, L’Eritrea colonia.

7 Surprisingly this material on indigenous power relations has scarcely been looked into; colonial historiography has preferred to focus primarily upon the politics of empire, economic matters, and the religious question. Despite its relevance to historical discourse the source material concerning the life of the Eritrean highlands remains virtually virgin terrain, and many aspects remain to be uncovered.
potential collaboration. At the outset of colonial rule the Italian government had to choose between a policy of repression and one of collaboration. This dilemma was soon resolved in favor of the latter. Seen in this light, the government's demand for information on the local power structure obviously appears as a means of obtaining a more effective political collaboration.

Italy, as a colonial power, did not suppress the existing hierarchical structure of political power; rather, she tried to modify it. Traditional authorities were considered to be indispensable as mediators as well as serving as instruments of coercion. It was through the local authorities that colonial power was transmitted. The policy of indirect rule that Italy seemed to support in fact implied a rigid control from above. While a certain degree of customary law was maintained, native colonial officials were nonetheless selected with great care.

Within certain limits Italian policy was based on the use, selection, and adaptation of traditional chieftains in order to fulfill colonial requirements; the purpose of the collection of biographical information was to facilitate the selection of new chieftains. The colonial government tried to find powerful figures in order to strengthen the political structure and thereby ensure its own authority. Erstwhile precolonial chiefs were able to survive into the colonial era only if they were officially recognized by the colonial administration through the offer of a salary in return for their allegiance. Once legitimated, the chiefs were endowed with varying degrees of authority; they became responsible for law and order in their territories and were entrusted with the task of promoting colonial law. Ultimately, they served both as mediators and as a form of hostage. Their most important functions included the collection of tribute, the settlement of legal controversies, the organization of agricultural labor and the distribution of arable land. These duties were institutionalized by precise directives coming from the administration. The chiefs were appointed directly by the government of Eritrea, in whose name they exercised their authority. They were kept under strict supervision and were sworn to abide by Italian laws.

The meticulous collection of information involving an extensive web of informers, primarily concerned the territory of the Eritrean colony; Ethiopian Tigray, however, was later included. The aim of this policy was to construct possible alliances in order to prevent an eventual opposition or to forge new alliances with the dominant class in Tigray in order to ensure a productive relationship and peaceful coexistence. This was a period of particular importance to the politics of "greater Ethiopia," and that explains why the areas south of the Mareb were also counted amongst colonial concerns.

Paradoxically, the settlement of the Eritrean border and the defeat of Adwa encouraged the Italian government to intervene in the Ethiopian empire and its politics with a view toward promoting territorial expansion. The policy of conquest was never abandoned. The discourse of colonial collaboration provides evidence of a stimulating
political debate between two rival parties. It is easily documented in colonial records, and testifies to the attitudes of colonialism towards the reshaping of policies in the light of local context. Further reflection and analysis on this topic needs to be done; in the footnotes I have listed the main documents that enable one to appreciate the relevance of colonial reports on indigenous chiefs to the writing of a social history of the colony.\(^8\)

One may speak of a policy of collaboration in at least two senses. So far I have analyzed the demand by Italian civil servants for documentation, a demand manifested through the collection of biographies of relevant authorities in precolonial Eritrea that may thus be seen as evidence of a collaboration-oriented policy issuing from the upper levels of colonial society. I have elsewhere analyzed this phenomenon in colonial Eritrea from an historical perspective.\(^9\) Little research, in contrast, has been carried out concerning the other aspect of collaboration, i.e., collaboration in the form of a spontaneous indigenous response to colonialism at the grass roots level. So far, few documents are known that deal with the reactions of the Eritreans themselves to the opportunities for collaboration proposed by the colonial government. Newly discovered archival material, however, does address these reactions. Two different archives, namely the Ellero collection in Italy\(^10\) and the Addi Caieh regional archive in Eritrea\(^11\) illuminate this offer made by some of the colonial subjects to collaborate at the political level. Both these collections provide a valid source for the study of colonial history from the point of view of the Eritreans themselves. The great bulk of both valuable collections consist of letters addressed by Eritreans to the colonial government. This correspondence, filed as "Lettere Tigrine," can help to analyze a particular colonial situation and illuminate a precise political response to colonialism.

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8 See L. Bellini, Cenni storici sul Tigray e notizie biografiche sulle persone principali e più influenti di questo regno nonché degli altri paesi d’Etiopia che possono avere ingenza sulla parte future dell’Eritrea e del Tigray (Asmara, 1892); Archivio Eritrea, Rome, pacco 164, Biografie dei capi indigeni della colonia Eritrea (Asmara, 1903); Archivio Centrale delle State Rome, Fondo Martini, scat. 8, fasc. 23; Governo della colonia Eritrea, Direzione Affari civili, Biografie dei capi d’oltreconfine (Asmara, 1903); Ibid., scat. 8, fasc. 24; Lettere e notizie di capi indigeni; Ibid., scat. 16, fasc. 54; Governo dell’Eritrea, Biografie dei capi d’oltreconfine (Asmara 1903); Archivio Storico Ministero Africa Italiana, Rome, pos. 24/1, fasc. 17; Raccolta di lettere di capi e di notabili dell’Etiopia, Archivio Eritrea, Rome, pacco 1042; Specchi dei capi etiopici 1895–1933); Ibid., pacco 234; Notizie genealogiche della famiglia Morgani da principio fino al suoi membri attuali (1922), Ibid.; pacco 1044.


10 See the Ellero Papers preserved at the Dipartimento di Discipline Storiche, University of Bologna; a preliminary account of this material may be found in I. Taddia, "Un funzionario fra ricerca scientifica e colonialismo: Giovanni Ellero," Africa (Rome) 48, 1 (1993): 24–34.

11 Archivio della regione dell’Akkele Guzai: "Lettere tigrine al commissariato, 1”; file 1.5.1, "Lettere Tigrine 1899"; 1.5.2, "Lettere Tigrine, December 1899"; 6.4.3, "Lettere con Fittaurari Ailu 1902"; 6.5.4, "Lettere con Degiazmac Desta"; 7.27.5, "Lettere amariche di gente della colonia di oggetto vano 1902"; 10.12.6, "Lettere tigrine 1904"; 89.9.7, "Lettere tigrine 1903."
These letters are an unusual source in many respects, but particularly because they provide an example of a response to colonialism other than resistance.

The politics of collaboration in colonial Africa in general has scarcely been investigated. Postcolonial nationalist historiography has emphasized resistance, the privileged political response to colonialism; both African and European scholars have not only stressed this perspective, but also generalized it as a characteristic of all colonized African societies. Only recently has an alternative perspective begun to emerge in African historiography; indigenous colonized people were not necessarily "innocent" in regard to the process of colonial domination.¹² Africans often exploited the colonial situation for themselves; among other things, colonialism can be seen as an instrument by which a part of the colonized population used the internal dynamics of the colonial regime in order to develop favorable conditions for itself. In this sense some scholars may argue that colonialism was a joint "Afro–European Experience" or an "Afro–European Affair."¹³ While the broad discussion may remain open, I would like to introduce here some new material that examines in detail the collaborative form of reaction to colonial power in Italian Eritrea.

The first set of documents considered here are in a private collection, the Ellero Papers, which are now to be found at the Department of History at the University of Bologna.¹⁴ The second set constitutes the only remaining colonial archive in Eritrea today, (the others were brought back to Italy after the Second World War); it is now preserved at Addi Caieh, the main town of the Eritrean highlands region of Akkele Guzai.¹⁵ The Addi Caieh archives, relevant to many aspects of the history of colonial Eritrea, are the only regional colonial archives to be fully preserved. The other districts, Hamasen and Sera'e, do not afford comparable archival material and their documentation has been less systematic. Moreover, almost all the colonial material is now preserved in Italy and can be consulted in Rome at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Akkele Guzai archives are therefore the most important colonial documentary sources available in Eritrea today. Taken together, these two collections constitute an important discovery for the history of colonial Eritrea.

¹³ Ibid., 133.
¹⁴ See note 10 above. The Ellero material is now being studied by a team of scholars from the Universities of Bologna, Venice, and Naples, who are working to produce a catalog and samples of the most important material. In press are three volumes: the first deals with the Amharic documentation (edited by Uoldelul Chelati Derar, I. Taddia and Alessandro Gori); the second volume deals with the Italian documentation (edited by Gianni Dore and Chelati); while a third volume (edited by Dore and Taddia) contains historical reflections on the most important material. The present study cites only letters written in Amharic, which of course constitute only a part of the Ellero Papers.
¹⁵ See note 11 above. I am deeply indebted to Acherit Seyum for drawing my attention to the uniquely important file of Addi Caieh material in Asmara and for helping me to photocopy all items related to Tigrayan letters.
The Ellero Papers are completely unknown to scholars, since they have only recently been acquired by the Department of History of the University of Bologna, having been stored until 1991 in the attic of a private house in Bologna, along with the Ellero private library, since the death of Ellero in the 1940s. They were discovered only recently and totally by chance. It is perhaps more surprising to note that the Addi Caieh archive, although carefully cataloged during the last three years, has not been given attention, nor has it been mentioned by previous scholars despite its importance; in fact, very few people know of its existence. The collections have many characteristics in common and the material they contain may be considered together as a single corpus. It is surprising how similar many of the documents are, given that they were preserved randomly in two separate archival files. They appear to have been collected by the same person, perhaps, I would suggest, by Ellero himself, whereupon they were separated by accident upon his death in the aftermath of the Second World War. If one accepts such an hypothesis, then the young anthropologist who collected both oral and written material on precolonial Eritrean history would seem to have been one of the most important Italian civil servants in regard to historical consciousness. Moreover, Ellero's unpublished field notes and anthropological work afford a unique survey not only of Eritrea, but also of many other areas of the Ethiopian empire.

The "Lettere Tigrine" kept in these two separate archives constitute a single collection of letters addressed by Eritrean subjects to the Italian colonial government of Eritrea during one period. In general, the authors were local political figures who referred to the Italian bureaucracy for many reasons relating to their daily living conditions or political or legal matters, as well as to request various permits. The exceptional nature of this documentation needs to be stressed, for private letters were rare in Eritrea/Ethiopia before the twentieth century.

So far as is known, in historical Ethiopia official letters were exchanged between rulers for political purposes, but there are no references to correspondence among less exalted figures of Ethiopian society. These new documents therefore record a


17 The young Eritrean scholar Aceret Seium mentions a catalog of this archive that may be consulted in Asmara at the "Centro di studi etiopici" of Father Ezio Tonini. To the best of my knowledge the only published reference to this archive may be found in Uolelul Chelati Dirar, "Colonialismo e religioni in Eritrea: La 'costruzione' di una identità nazionale, 1890-1936" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cagliari, 1995).

18 The style of the letters is the same and the content similar; all letters were translated by the colonial bureaucracy. Ellero was taken prisoner by the British army and died in a shipwreck on his way to detention in South Africa. For this reason one may suppose that the collection of documentary material he left in Asmara survived only in part, and was sent to Italy in these dramatic circumstances.

19 The unpublished Ellero notes contain material relevant to anthropology and deal mainly with the regions of Wolait, Enderta, and Scire. Only a few of his notes on these areas of great interest were ever published in his lifetime or issued posthumously by Carlo Conti Rossini. A complete list of Ellero's published material may be found in Dore and Taddia, "I documenti inediti."
substantial shift in the nature of Ethiopian society and have to be located within a specific socio-historical context. In the late nineteenth century there was a significant evolutionary change in Ethiopian literature, a transition marked by the passage from religious or court forms to a secular literature. Under the rule of Menilek (1889–1913), a new Amharic literature came into being. The first Ethiopian/Eritrean intellectuals who freely expressed their thoughts appeared in this period, since their writings were no longer commissioned exclusively by the ruling power. Writing became more occasional; notably, a new kind of travel literature was created, based upon private curiosity and observations of the world both internal and external. Meanwhile, private literature of an informal nature such as diaries, letters and notebooks appeared for the first time in modern Ethiopia, and although these works were few in number they marked the passage towards a new form of literary source. These literary innovations can be seen as one of the most important aspects of Ethiopian culture during this period, and they should certainly have a profound effect upon the reconstruction of Ethiopian history.

I would like to examine the relationship between Ethiopian society and the kind of source material available to historians, for clearly there is a connection between new trends in Ethiopian literature and the historical events related to the phenomenon. The emergence of a new informal literature in Ethiopia/Eritrea in the place of works commissioned by the authorities—the letters considered here can be seen as one aspect of this development—coincides significantly with the beginning of colonial rule in Eritrea and the imposition of a strong European influence upon independent Ethiopia. While the relationship between Ethiopian documents of a private, informal nature and Italian colonialism has not yet been given full consideration by scholars, I believe this new form of literature that began to emerge during the nineteenth century may be seen primarily as a product of colonial influence. Colonialism forced a revision of all aspects of traditional society, including ways of writing and thinking. The private documents I deal with, the letters, diaries and memoirs, are most interesting representatives of the new Ethiopian literature of modern times. They provide valuable information on the Ethiopian historical situation, and for the first time there is mention of the personal opinions of people concerning Ethiopian internal politics. This new literature is mainly intellectual and can be seen as testimony to a new ideology that was independent of the traditional political power structure.

Italian colonialism must be examined from the inside and not only from a European perspective. To date, Ethiopian history has largely been documented and reconstructed through the use of European sources such as diplomatic archives, colonial


21 For the new intellectual milieu in Ethiopia at the beginning of this century, see the introduction to La foi des peres anciens, ed. Berhanou Abbebe (Stuttgart, 1986), 3–54.
papers, and eyewitness accounts. All material that spoke the idiom of European culture was privileged, whereas important material for the reconstruction of Ethiopian history from within has only recently begun to be collected. The Ethiopian source material I have presented here provides an example of the possibility of documenting from within, through indigenous sources, the local response to colonial domination. Colonialism must be seen as an important factor influencing local source material, and historians of twentieth-century Ethiopia/Eritrea have access to various sources that were unknown to earlier periods.

This essay deals with the change in attitudes that colonialism brought to Ethiopian society, transforming its culture during the later nineteenth century. Colonialism may thus be analyzed in two ways; either as a political phenomenon that provoked a political response (collaboration or resistance), or as a cultural phenomenon that contributed to the secularization of Ethiopian literature, giving rise to new documentary sources of informal origin that were not influenced by the traditional political structure.

Letters were not common in old Ethiopian culture, where oral transmission was the traditional form of communication; there was little written correspondence in Ethiopia before the end of the nineteenth century. A contemporary observer wrote, "Letters are not much used--(of late years, however, somewhat more frequently)--all correspondence, even at the greatest distance, being confined to verbal communications by confidential messengers." Letters may be considered a modern form of expression that arose under the influence of political events and the secularization of Ethiopian literature at the turn of the century.

The documents discussed here differ greatly from material published by previous scholars, nor have they much in common with recently published collections of primary source materials in the form of official letters, each written for a particular

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governmental purpose, mainly for diplomatic relations and for international treaties. Rubenson, to be sure, includes in his collection some private letters of no diplomatic importance, but the great bulk of his published correspondence consists of letters officially exchanged between Europeans and Eritreans. The letters of a public nature were generally exchanged between very well-known people who played an important role in Ethiopian diplomacy with Europe. The few private letters included in the Rubenson collection, however, do speak of the "daily life and social affairs of people of various classes" and reveal "changes in the intellectual and political climate, in the mentality of the Ethiopians in general and their attitude towards and knowledge about the outside world in particular." This is the beginning of an approach to be further encouraged. My documentary sources, for example, all address the daily lives of people without any official commitments to a political power; they show what ordinary people thought about Italo–Eritrean relations and how Tigrayan people related to the colonial power structure.

Most of the correspondence is written in Amharic, the official language of those in power and the main form of communication in nineteenth–century Ethiopia and Eritrea. Very little material in the Tigrinya language for the same period is known, but documents in both languages need to be analyzed in detail. The Ellero Papers consist of many documentary sources in Italian, such as notes, fieldwork material, and Ellero's memoirs. The private letters considered here represent a valuable part of the unpublished material from Ethiopia. On two different visits to Addi Caieh I was able to consult the unpublished letters as well as the available catalog. The documents in the archive refer to various subjects; political issues, diplomatic questions, religious arguments, and other topics relevant to colonial discourse. The file titled

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26 See the collections of *Acta Aethiopica* published in two volumes by S. Rubenson and respectively entitled by the editor *Correspondence and Treaties 1800–1854* (Evanston and Addis Ababa, 1987), and *Tewodros and His Contemporaries 1855–1868* (Addis Ababa and Lund, 1994).


28 Most of the correspondence, though it speaks about Eritreans, is written in Amharic. The style is common to much Ethiopian literature of the nineteenth century as Amharic replaced Ge'ez as the dominant written language. The transition to Amharic as the standard written language took place in all parts of the historical empire, including Tigray province and colonial Eritrea; thus even where the language was not spoken, Amharic became the language of power and was used in correspondence. Little Tigrinya literature exists for the period of Menilek, and it remains virtually unknown to scholars. For some letters in Tigrinya, see I. Taddia, *Un intellettuale tigrina.*

29 Most of the material, among which the importance of the letters should be stressed, remains to be cataloged. For the material preserved in Addi Caieh, see the catalog cited above in note 17; the first volume of a catalog for all the Ellero Papers is forthcoming. Most of the material, among which the importance of the letters should be stressed, still remains to be cataloged.

30 Dore, "Etologia e storia."

31 Taddia, "Un funzionario."

32 During extensive visits to the region of Akkele Guzai in 1992 and 1994, and especially its main town Addi Caieh, I reproduced the main documentation regarding letters preserved in this regional archive. I am deeply indebted to Acheret Seium for assisting me in this work and for providing me with a number of interviews with the town's oldest inhabitants.
"Lettere Tigrine" is a source of particularly great importance to historians.\(^{33}\) The correspondence in this file is significant for a number of reasons. It was written during the colonial period and thus testifies to the kind of relations that existed between Eritreans and the colonial power. Although there are examples of protest and rebellion, the attitudes of Eritreans towards colonialism were in many ways ones of compromise and collaboration. Many letters testify to a form of collaboration between the colonial bureaucracy and the erstwhile precolonial elite. This attitude is surprising and can be seen as the most original aspect to emerge from the documentation.

An initial survey of the material and a reflection on the context in which it was created must be made before analyzing in detail the historical significance of the documents. The material on Ethiopia contained in the Ellero Papers consists of 264 original letters addressed by colonial subjects to the Italian government. In the letters are included the sender’s signature and seal, and apart from the original document itself, most files contain an Italian translation of the letter by a colonial bureaucrat. Only a few letters exchanged between Eritreans themselves are to be found in the files and such cases are exceptional. The letters were written from various areas of colonial Eritrea and cover a long period, from the years of the Menilek era well into the twentieth century. The oldest letter dates back to 1880 whereas the most recent one dates to the period of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in the 1930s.\(^{34}\) The letters are normally addressed to the Italian Residente (the principal regional colonial authority) of Akkele Guzai, one of the three highland areas.

All the correspondence was cataloged and registered by Italian civil servants of the Residenza in the main town of Addi Caieh. Similar documentation pertaining to the other two highland areas is rare in the colonial collections, so that the Addi Caieh material stands out as the most important corpus in regard to local life during colonialism. Most of the 264 letters deal with various aspects of the colonial situation and are representative of the people colonized in this period. I will outline the main themes. By close analysis, some problem areas and questions relevant to colonial history may be emphasized.

The first and probably most significant theme is the offer of collaboration made by erstwhile precolonial authorities to the new Italian bureaucracy of colonial Eritrea. The Ellero file contains more than thirty documents that clearly reveal the role played by a part of the ruling class in Eritrea in supporting colonial power in return for substantial benefits and rewards. Of the most important letters, I will cite here only the most interesting ones. The desire to collaborate was expressed via friendly words and greetings in the request for the protection of the colonial authorities. There are

\(^{33}\) See above, note 11.

\(^{34}\) For an introduction to Eritrean letters, see Taddia, "Un funzionario." For a full catalog, see A. Gori, I. Taddia, and Uoldelul Chelati Dirar, I documenti etiopici del Fondo Ellero and my introduction to I documenti in amarico e tigrino negli archivi italiani ed eritrei concementi lo scambio di corrispondenza (lettere del XIX e XX secolo), both forthcoming.
many such letters, for example document 31: "Lettera di Fitaurari Chidanu Hiscet al Commissario dell'Acchele Guzai Giovanni Tornari (20 febbraio 1915)."\(^{35}\) In one case a fee is specifically requested from the Italian government in exchange for maintaining public order ("servizio di tutela dell'ordine pubblico") in the colony; this is document 76: "Lettera di Balambaras Tesfai al Cavalier Roberto Tonini (13 dicembre 1927)."\(^{36}\) This letter is particularly interesting for historians as the most explicit concerning the creation of a political alliance.\(^{37}\)

Two other documents, both derived from the Menilek period, are witness to a positive attitude towards the colonial government and a particular form of political collaboration; these are document 241: "Lettera di Degiazmac Abraha al Residente Tenente de Rossi (21 dicembre 1903)" and document 242: "Lettera di Degiazmac Guga al Capitano De Rossi."\(^{38}\) There is also a letter, important because it is one of very few written by a woman, from the wife of Ras Sebhat requesting collaboration and the protection of her husband from the colonial authorities; this is document 244: "Lettera di Uoizero Desta al Commissario dell'Acchele Guzai Cavaliere Giovanni Tornari (30 Iecatit 1930)."\(^{39}\) There are other relevant letters that may be found in the catalog.\(^{40}\)

A second theme documented by the Ellero Papers, though perhaps less decisively, is the familiar one of protest. Colonialism did not tolerate direct forms of political protest, so that the only documents included in the Ellero Papers that express protest against the Italian government are requests by the religious authorities of colonial Eritrea for the return of their endowments of *gult* lands.\(^{41}\) For example, document 17 is a letter of protest from a religious authority who had been dispossessed of his *gult* lands: "Lettera di Mehmer Cherezadik (Debra Libanos, Acchele Guzai) al Residente italiano ad Addi Caieh, 1 settembre 1929."\(^{42}\) Similarly, document 15 is a request to the colonial

\(^{35}\) I cite the documents according to the system of numbering found in the colonial file.

\(^{36}\) See note 35 above.

\(^{37}\) For the original text, see the collection edited by Gori, Taddia and Chelati cited in note 34.

\(^{38}\) See note 35 above.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.


\(^{41}\) For the politics of the nationalization of land in the Eritrean highlands during colonialism, see Taddia, *L'Eritrea colonia*.

\(^{42}\) See note 35 above.
authorities for better living conditions: "Lettera di Mehmer Ghebriet (Enda Johannes, Tedrer) al Residente italiano (8 marzo 1930)."\(^{43}\) It must be noted, however, that protest is a minor theme out of the whole of the correspondence.

The presence of the religious community was much more evident in another context, that of political collaboration with the Italian government. Most of the letters written by the religious authorities are testimony to an intense collaboration with and sympathy for the colonial government. Some of the most important examples include document 143: "Lettera di Mehmer Garemascal (Enda Johannes, Tedrer) al Commissario Dalla Porta e al Residente italiano (8 luglio 1931)"\(^{44}\) and document 199: "Lettera dell'Abuna Petros (Debra Marcos) al Tenente De Rossi (29 Megabit 1897)."\(^{45}\) Letters requesting collaboration with the Italian colonial administration illuminate a significant component of the colonial encounter, the desire of Eritreans to participate as protagonists within the life of colonial society.

Testimony to the prevalence of collaboration is also evident in Tigray, which was part of independent Ethiopia.\(^ {46}\) A number of interesting letters deal with the desire for collaboration on the part of independent authorities in Tigray, thus expressing a tilt toward Italy. The independent ruling class in Tigray sought future cooperation from Italian authorities in anticipation of a possible extension of Italian authority into their area. Although Tigray's political authorities were ostensibly interested in preventing any further expansion of colonial rule, the documents under review here provide eloquent testimony to the willingness of some members of the elite to serve the adjoining colonial government.

Similar in value to the Ellero Papers are the files at Addi Caieh.\(^ {47}\) This regional archive recorded various requests made to colonial authorities. The documentation again concerns correspondence between two actors, the colonial government and the Eritreans.\(^ {48}\) Eritrean letters are cataloged and divided into eight different files,\(^ {49}\) while two special files deal specifically with Fitawrari Ailu and

\(^ {43}\) Ibid.

\(^ {44}\) Ibid.

\(^ {45}\) Ibid. For the details of such letters, see Taddia, "Un funzionario."

\(^ {46}\) In the light of eventual Italian expansion, the relevance of correspondence in Tigray is an important example of a collaboration-seeking policy that included also other independent territories. Among the most important documents of this genre are: document 14, "Lettera di Chegnazmac Lemlem Ulode (23 ottobre 1926)"; document 58, "Lettera di Begirondi Zeghie al commissario regionale dell'Acchele Guzai Tonini (20 Mescherem 1920)"; document 63, "Lettera di Behre Seium Tsera al Maggiore Tonini (27 Meggabite 1917)"; document 79, "Lettera di Degiazmac Guebre Selassie (del Tigral) al Tenente De Rossi (8 gennaio 1903)."

\(^ {47}\) See note 11 above.

\(^ {48}\) Among the most original documents of the collection are those of a religious nature, and the documents related to the political administration of the area during colonialism. No one has consulted these files so far.

\(^ {49}\) See note 11 above.
Dejazmatch Desta. A great part of the correspondence consists of the exchange of greetings and gifts, as well as the request for various permits from the Italian government. Unlike the Ellero Papers, the Addi Caieh archives have preserved all the correspondence, including not only appeals by the subjects to the Italian bureaucracy, but also the replies issued by the Residente and other colonial civil servants to Eritreans. The most interesting dossier, "Lettere tigrine, 1903;" contains letters that reveal the beginnings of a confidential and clearly collaborative relationship between Eritreans and the Italian government. The Eritrean elite, the nobility of the precolonial period, assumed the burden of maintaining colonial order, upholding Italian law and cooperating with the colonial administration. Italy seems to have favored indirect rule and more flexible forms of political control in her oldest colony. This sharing of political power, however, was intended to be a particular form of control, rather than a concession.

It is surprising to note the tranquillity of the colonial milieu and the absence of real political conflict. Eritreans seem to have acknowledged the important role Italy played in all aspects of daily life in colonial Eritrea. Italy was invoked as the arbiter in land disputes, in commercial transactions, in deciding rights over grazing lands and more generally in everyday matters. The colonial political structure was not questioned and the role it played was clearly accepted. Such good relations help explain the need for the exchange of greetings, gifts, and favors. Much of the surviving correspondence, notably among the Ellero Papers, deals with the exchange of information and the need for good relations with the local elite across the border in Tigray. This Ethiopian province emerges as a strategic area for Italian Eritrea, and a main aim of colonial policy was to develop close relations with it. The correspondence with Tigray concerns both political relations and local matters such as transit permits, customs, the punishment of thieves, escapees and disputes over livestock.

Colonialism brought about an extended reflection upon authority and power and it inspired a wide range of complex and diverse responses. To be sure, many reactions in the form of protest can be documented in colonial relationships. Yet the appropriation of power also and inevitably entailed compromises and negotiations. For this reason I would like to present a new argument in opposition to the widespread analysis of colonialism solely in terms of resistance and protest. Domination and resistance are not the only paradigms through which colonial society may profitably be analyzed. The policy of collaboration must also be considered; certainly, collaboration between the two actors in the colonial experience affords fertile ground for discussion in the historical consideration of Italian Eritrea.

50 See respectively file 6.4.3: "Lettere con Fitaurari Hailu, 1902" and 6.5.4: "Lettere de Degiazmac Desta, n.d."

51 See document 87.9.7 quoted above.
ON THE ORIGINS OF MASS NATIONALISM IN URBAN TANZANIA: MUSLIM TOWNSPEOPLE AND PETITION PROTEST IN MWANZA DURING THE INTERWAR YEARS

by Laird Jones

Considerable scholarship has been devoted to the popular heroes of mass nationalism in Tanzania, those young teachers, clerks, and government bureaucrats who led the TAA, and later TANU after World War II.¹ Far less rigorous attention, however, has been paid to their initial supporters: African merchants, urban tradespeople, or rural co-operative members. This imbalance is most pronounced in analyses of the origins of mass nationalism, where the intellectual and political development of the leadership has often been assumed to be synonymous with that of the broader movement, while the influence of initial supporters' earlier political struggles has been discounted or omitted.

The seminal study of mass nationalism in the Mwanza region, Andrew Maguire's Toward 'Uhuru' in Tanzania (1969), is a case in point. While Maguire briefly framed the local, prewar origin of mass nationalism with a discussion of Muslim traders, striking dockworkers, ethnic associations, and peasant protest, the focus of his study was a postwar organizational history of TANU. More importantly, Maguire contended that it was changed postwar conditions, in particular official promotion of urban African shopkeepers and rural co-operatives, that created constituencies for mass nationalism; and together with local government reform provided political opportunity to a young generation of new elites.²

This essay will, in a small way, attempt to redress the imbalance in the mass nationalist literature by examining Maguire's category of "Muslim traders." Contrary to his assertion that African urban commercial opportunity was provided by official reforms during World War II, Swahili, Manyema, and Sudanese and other African Muslim merchants had been active in Mwanza Town throughout the colonial period. As early as the turn of the century they had reached a political accommodation with the colonial regime. As this relationship unraveled during the interwar years, however, Muslim merchants increasingly organized and lobbied to preserve their economic and political position. By the advent of mass nationalism, therefore, many within the Muslim community were sufficiently alienated from the colonial regime to join in,


² This is a synopsis of the arguments presented by Andrew Maguire in chaps. 2, 3, and 4 of Toward 'Uhuru' in Tanzania (Cambridge, 1969).
gradually translating their demands for local autonomy or group rights into a broader desire for political independence.

Defining Terms
Maguire’s category of “Muslim traders” was perhaps intended as a vague catchall for those urban, Muslim or Swahili speaking Mwanza residents already involved in local politics and commerce, since as he applied it, Maguire actually referred to the local leadership of the African Muslim community. This community was comprised largely of the descendants of Arab, Swahili, Manyema immigrants, Sudanese soldiers and local converts, joined obviously through their faith, but also culturally through the adoption of Swahili language, culture, and dress. Only a minority were truly traders, as the community also included crop buyers, livestock traders, rentiers, clerks, tradespeople, sailors, porters, and market gardeners. It is not surprising that they would all be characterized as “traders” or business people, however, since their political culture was still very much influenced by the ideology of coastal merchant capital, and therefore their leaders were prominent merchants.

Coastal Compounds
The early Muslim community at Mwanza was the product of a mid-nineteenth-century coastal trading diaspora. Its members relied upon their shared religious and cultural norms to form relations of trust among themselves, and with distant trading partners in other upcountry settlements or down on the coast. They also stressed religious piety as well as Arabic or Swahili dress, language, and social customs to differentiate themselves from the indigenous population, and thereby maintain greater exclusivity over long-distance trading connections.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Muslim merchants and their dependents settled in separate enclaves or compounds, negotiating with

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3 Within the text, Maguire used the terms Muslim trader and Muslim town dwellers interchangeably, though he did briefly distinguish the makeup of the community. Similarly, John Iliffe in A Modern History of Tanganyika referred to “traders and urban notables,” though without designating them as Muslims.

4 In a brief discussion of “Swahili political culture and national integration,” Henry Bienen contended that African traders in Mwanza Town were commonly referred to as Swahili, regardless of whether they were Muslim or from the coast, since Swahili language and culture had so permeated town life. Tanzania, 45.

5 Anthropologist Abner Cohen, in an essay entitled “Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas,” in The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa, ed. Claude Meillassoux (London, 1971), theorized that ethnic trading diasporas were a rational response to political fragmentation. That is, in the absence of a co-operative network of states, long-distance traders faced numerous problems of information gathering, transport of goods, establishing credit and trust relations, creating a system for arbitrating disputes, and maintaining an authority structure with sufficient sanctions. Trading groups that maintained exclusivity or distinctiveness based on ethnicity or religion, Cohen further argued, were able to overcome these hurdles. By limiting admission of new members, providing a common language and cultural basis for communication and understanding, and most importantly, a religious or legal framework for authority and relations of trust, such groups could trade with confidence over great distances.
indigenous Sukuma authorities for trading rights and access to land and labor. By several accounts, these trading compounds had populations of fifty or more, made up of translators, guards, porters, carpenters, sailors, and farmers, both slave and free.\(^6\) The coastal settlements were not permanent, however, their populations rose and fell with the caravan and ivory hunting seasons, and entire settlements sometimes relocated given changed commercial or political fortunes.

Leadership in all matters came from the prominent traders: they headed individual compounds, organized the labor of their dependents, led prayers, and represented the community’s interests before indigenous Sukuma authorities. To this extent, upcountry enclaves were obviously a local recreation of coastal society, albeit on a smaller scale and under a different political regime. Just like plantation owners on the coast, compound leaders employed a paternalistic, "household" ideology, appointing themselves the interpreters of law and religious doctrine, the organizers of production, the distributors of necessities, the granters of protection, and the sponsors of community events.\(^7\)

**Colonial Merchants and Shopkeepers**

On the eve of German colonization many of the coastal caravan compounds were already in decline. Coastal traders were losing their grip on long-distance trade: the slave trade had never flourished in the region, and the ivory had played out. Early German expeditions further facilitated the break up by attacking those coastmen allied to the Muslim party in Buganda, forcing many prominent traders to flee. Much of the Muslim population that remained, resettled within the Mwanza *ntemiship*, in the vicinity of the new German station.

More importantly, during the German occupation the Mwanza region was transformed by the arrival of steam transport: a rail link to Kisumu across the lake in 1901, and regular steamer service to Mwanza Town in 1903. These connections permitted the import of vast quantities of industrially manufactured trade goods, and the export of regional agricultural commodities. Colonial officials levied cash taxes, imposed corvée road construction, and made cash crop production compulsory. Meanwhile, several metropolitan and coastal trading houses established branches in Mwanza

\(^6\) Franz Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), 112.

\(^7\) Fred Cooper in *Plantation Slavery on the East African Coast* (New Haven, 1977) argued that on the nineteenth-century coast, social and economic organization, or at least their ideological underpinnings, revolved around the leadership of Muslim patriarchs. Given the weak coercive powers of the Zanzibari state, such paternalistic and decentralized leadership was necessary in order to maintain a viable slave society.

Upcountry, slavery was a less significant part of business and community organization; yet the patriarchal, household ideology was retained. Beverly Bloser Brown, in her dissertation, "Ujiji: The History of a Lakeside Town, c.1800–1914," (Ph.D. diss. Boston University, 1973) found this pattern to be the case in a caravan town similar to Mwanza. She identified similar coastal groups in Ujiji: Arab and Waswahili traders, Waungwana middlemen and laborers, and a limited number of slaves. Most were organized into large commercial "household" enclaves.
Town, and over the next decade several hundred Asian immigrants arrived via the rail steamer, many of them establishing shops in the hinterland.

Some of the coastal traders were able to adjust to the new colonial economy. A 1908 trade license survey found them to comprise nearly a third of the merchants in the region, as shown below:

**Table 1. 1908 Mwanza District Valuation List.**
(Number of merchants per category)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valuation (Rupees)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Wholesale</th>
<th>European</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Arab/Swahili or Sudanese</th>
<th>Ethnicity unclear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 200,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100–180,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–60,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–30,000</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–16,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8–10,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–6,000</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>95</td>
<td>10–12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen, however, most were poorly financed, and therefore had difficulty competing with metropolitan firms or Asian immigrants in new ventures like the wholesale trade or shopkeeping. Consequently, coastal Muslims clung to the fringes of the colonial economy.

Most survived by exploiting previously acquired skills or connections to indigenous leaders. For example, several who owned dhows transported goods to and from lakeshore ports, feeding the railway steamer, while others continued to draw upon local porters to organize regional caravans. Those formerly in the ivory trade reoriented their hunting organizations toward wild game, and entered the hide and skin trade. Many also took up the regional cattle trade, using ties to local herdspeople. A few eventually became prominent tannery owners. Finally, those with agricultural land concessions from the Mwanza *ntemi* turned to cash crops, in particular sugarcane.

**Commercial Workers**

Just as many coastal traders made the transition to the new colonial economy, so too did their former dependents. Some workers continued to labor for their former leaders, while others moved to town, becoming the core of an emerging commercial working

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class. They established distinctive neighborhoods, and continued to stress Swahili language, dress and culture, using this together with Islam as the basis by which to absorb new arrivals from the coast, other towns and the garrison, as well as new local converts.

Many former compound residents continued on in their previous work for the coastal traders. In particular, many were sailors in the lake dhow fleet, and remained settled in the Kirumba area just outside Mwanza Town. Others remained professional porters or caravan leaders, boat builders, construction workers, or craftspeople. The emerging mercantile and cash crop economy, however, also presented new opportunities. Many of the clerks and buyers in metropolitan or local firms were from the Muslim community. In particular, they predominated in hide grading and buying, as well as the rice trade. Muslims were also well represented among urban tailors, and rural tannery workers.

Commercial opportunity in Mwanza Town continued to attract a steady flow of newcomers, who together with new converts settled in particular along the Tabora Road. By the time of the 1926 ethnic census, the "coastal" or Muslim community accounted for one-quarter of Mwanza Town’s African population, with approximately 534 identifying themselves as Manyema, and 465 as "coastal" or Swahili. Most gained access to housing or land through the aegis of the former compound trading elite. And within the Muslim community attended the mosques, schools, and events that the Muslim merchants sponsored.

Political Accommodation
During the German occupation, the Muslim community exercised considerable political influence, far beyond its numbers or commercial impact. First German military commanders, and later civil officials sought to use the remaining compound traders' ties to indigenous leaders, as well as their commercial networks, in order to govern both Mwanza Town, and outlying trade settlements. Therefore, they frequently consulted the Muslim community's liwali, and eventually entrusted him with a number of informal administrative functions.

The office of liwali was originally an appointed post as the Zanzibari sultan's governor, and generally was held by the most prominent trader within an upcountry trading enclave. The liwali was looked to as head of the Muslim community, though his powers were largely limited to religious persuasion and commercial sanction. The coastal trading community at what became Mwanza Town did not rise to prominence until the later nineteenth century, and therefore did not have a liwali until the early 1890s. The first was Abdulla bin Ali, a very successful cattle merchant with a number of

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10 The office of liwali was perhaps best analyzed by Norman Bennett in Mirambo of Tanzania 1840–1880 (New York, 1971).
agricultural enterprises and four dhows in the lakeshore trade. While his connection to the Zanzibar regime remains unclear, he certainly did mediate disputes between other merchants, interpret business law, and witness contracts and property transactions. Moreover, he repeatedly negotiated settlement terms and labor arrangements with the Mwanza ntemi, Makongolo.

With the establishment of German hegemony, the Liwali Abdulla bin Ali retained a strong, if legally ill-defined role. He acted as a town official, being referred to as the "Bürgermeister" by some, and as an advocate for the overlapping, coastal and Muslim Asian commercial communities; mediating local disputes, serving on commissions, and relaying the concerns of merchants to the administration. Moreover, prior to the establishment of the civil administration in 1906, he convened the only commercial court in the region. Finally, Abdulla bin Ali aided in the German administration's promotion of rural cash crop production by extending his influence to regulate the activities of Mwanza traders in the countryside.

Declining Position
Following the transition to British rule, however, the Muslim community's political influence lessened dramatically. In part, this was due to its gradual economic marginalization. Muslim, African merchants were largely absent from the cotton boom of the early 1920's, and increasingly regulated and restricted in those trades in which they did compete, such as the dhow transport, cattle, or hides. The community's political decline stemmed as well from altered British colonial policies. During the interwar years officials pressed indirect rule policies that divided the Muslim community into "Arabs" or "coastal" Africans, yet identified all as aliens, leaving them insecure in their businesses and property.

Arab Land Claim Cases
The first political challenge came during the cash crop boom of the mid-1920s. Since the declaration of the British Mandate, merchants across Tanganyika had protested for more secure property rights, in particular, grants of freehold or right of occupancy, so that they might acquire mortgages on properties occupied under kiwanja tenure. In 1926 the British administration finally consented, but did so largely in order to further its own agenda. Officials were anxious to revise and consolidate rural indirect rule, and also to further delineate legal, ethnic, or racial categories. Hence, grants of right of occupancy or freehold were, as much as possible, to conform to the boundaries of townships and trading centers, and not to intrude upon the jurisdiction of rural Native Authorities. Moreover, they were to be required of Europeans, Asians, and Arabs; Africans were to continue to reside on crown land, or in urban areas under kiwanja tenure.

11 According to testimony given during the Arab claims cases in 1928, longtime Mwanza residents contended that Liwali Abdulla bin Ali arrived sometime after 1890 and died in 1913.
Muslim merchants in Mwanza were an impediment to the implementation of new property relations, however. Many occupied plots or lands that might qualify for freehold, having been acquired through indigenous authorities more than thirty years earlier. Much of the land, moreover, was agricultural and lay outside Mwanza Township or nearby trading centers, within the jurisdiction of the new Native Authorities. Furthermore, the legal racial status of some in the community was open to interpretation. Officials preferred to designate most as "alien natives" offering them *kiwanja*, but forcing them to make special appeal as Africans to change their commercial property to right of occupancy, if they desired to sell, lease, or rent it. Others, however, who either claimed or were assigned Arab designation, had little choice, for if they wished to retain control over their property, they must either succeed in gaining freehold, or pay right of occupancy rents.

By 1928, in response to the *kiwanja* conversion circular, the district administration had received twenty–two freehold claims by at least fifteen Arab claimants concerning thirty–four properties; but local officials were at a loss as to how to rule on them.\(^{12}\) German record keeping, by all accounts, had been poor, thus few claimants could produce deeds, and moreover, many had never been required to gain title. The Muslim community, nevertheless, continued to press their claims, explaining their dilemma in audience and also offering a petition to Gov. Cameron during his Mwanza visit that July.\(^{13}\) Shortly thereafter, the Land Office and Secretariat intervened, appointing an Arab claims commission, comprised of the Acting Land Officer, the Mwanza District Officer and an official surveyor.\(^{14}\) This commission was to gather documents and testimony, and instructed to grant freehold only within narrowly defined parameters: pre–German settlement, continuous occupation and Native Authority support of the claim.\(^{15}\)

Most of the claimants made long and determined defenses of property claims. They engaged lawyers, wrote to former German officials, and collected affidavits from surviving indigenous authorities, longtime residents, and elderly Swahili tenants. Though many of their cases dragged on for years, in the end most were successful in retaining their property. Moreover, the claimants' ability to marshal local testimony pressured the commission to compromise, and reinterpret the "pre–German occupation" clause of its charge to mean occupation prior to the 1906 civil administration. And, even in those cases that were disallowed, the property was not auctioned, but instead minimal right of occupancy rents were assessed to the claimants.

\(^{12}\) Schedule of Claims (Arab). TNA 10158:76–81.

\(^{13}\) The petition was presented by a committee of seven local merchants, representing the Arab Association. TNA 10158: 41.

\(^{14}\) Acting Land Officer to the Arab Association, 22.8.28. TNA 10158: 42.

Marketing Reform

Mwanza's African traders were also threatened further during the commodity bust of the Depression years. The colonial administration sought to "rationalize" the rural economy by regulating markets and transactions, while restricting access for "uneconomic" middlemen or petty traders. Consequently, like many smaller Asian shopkeepers or roving buyers, most of Mwanza's Muslim African traders persistently lobbied for licensing exemptions and greater market access. Some in dhow transport, hide tanning, or groundnut buying were unsuccessful, and eventually driven from business; Mwanza-based African cattle traders, however, proved remarkably adept at maintaining their position. These cattle traders not only exploited their economic skills, but also employed legal action, petition protests, and personal lobbying efforts with considerable effect.

Since the inception of the lake steamer service to Mwanza, African cattle traders had been shipping live cattle across the lake to Bukoba, where cattle poor but coffee rich farmers paid premium prices for fresh beef. The lake route was vital, since it was much quicker than an overland drive, and therefore permitted a faster turnover of capital invested. The steamer also delivered the animals in better, more salable condition. The traders obviously possessed considerable purchasing skills, assembling networks of contacts among Mwanza region herdspeople, and Bukoba region itinerant butchers. And, not surprisingly, several of the traders gradually amassed small fortunes. They cycled their capital through rental houses and market gardens in town, and properties in rural trading centers, and of course, in further rounds of cattle buying. They also parleyed their wealth and client networks into leadership roles in the Mwanza Muslim community.

The Mwanza-Bukoba cattle traders faced a number of impediments, however. During the 1920s KUR steamer freight rates were set much to the disadvantage of petty traders. Moreover, many of the traders were the victims of customs house and dockside corruption. Hence, the traders hired a lawyer and drafted documents to form a syndicate. They pooled their cattle as one shipment, booking entire lighters and thereby receiving preferential rates normally reserved for large colonial firms. They also worked out a complex loading and payment scheme whereby the cattle were moved, watered, and fed enroute from holding areas above Mwanza Town, to the awaiting auctions in Bukoba. Moreover, they persisted in making complaints to the railway and local administration until a 1929 investigation led several customs clerks to be reprimanded for extortion and bribery.

The Veterinary Department was also a persistent menace. Various officers considered African cattle traders prime facilitators of livestock disease, since they

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16 Buckley, Act. PC, Lake Province to DO Mwanza, 2.5.30. TNA Acc.215 PC50/3: 2.
17 Ernest Adams, Controller of Customs, DSM to Superintendent of Customs, Mwanza, 21.5.30. TNA Acc.215 PC50/3: 5.
were deemed uneducated cattle handlers, and frequently moved cattle great distances.\(^\text{18}\) Thus, they were presented with numerous licensing and cattle movement permit restrictions, and periodic district quarantines. The traders responded by enlisting the support of district officers and tax collectors, grateful to the Mwanza men for putting cash into rural households. They also quickly got behind government supervised markets in the late–1920s, since there were fewer movement restrictions on cattle purchased there. At one point, they actually petitioned for more such auctions, a ploy that won them continued support from Provincial officials who had originally pushed the plan.\(^\text{19}\)

The gravest threat to the cattle traders, however, came in 1928 when an administration backed, settler owned beef canning plant was opened just outside Mwanza Town. It had numerous monopoly privileges, and more importantly, perceived African traders as uneconomic competition, and therefore sought to drive them from the market. The company tried to exclude them from auctions, spread rumors about them among the administration, and even resorted to dumping cattle at a loss on the Bukoba market in order to ruin their rivals.\(^\text{20}\) Mwanza cattle traders suffered through several difficult years, but outlasted this competition largely through the resilience of their networks, a broad capital base, and keen trading skills. The settler firm eventually spent itself out of business, and the African traders came back more strongly than ever by the mid–1930\(^{\text{s}}\).\(^\text{21}\)

**Challenging the Liwali**

There was one final issue that did galvanize the entire Muslim community, and that was local African leadership. From the mid–1930\(^{\text{s}}\) onward, many Mwanza Town residents became increasingly disenchanted with administration appointed urban African officials, and eventually launched a petition campaign for local control over their offices. At stake were British attempts to co-opt the office *liwali* into the civil service, and transform it into an urban indirect rule post. Many Muslim townspeople, however, contended that the office had been stripped of its local legitimacy, and control over it should return to the community.

During the mid–1920\(^{\text{s}}\), as an afterthought in their reformation of rural indirect rule, the British authorities expanded the role of the town *liwali*, while at the same time exerting more control over his appointment and duties. Under the British the *liwali* oversaw local tax collection, maintained tax rolls and records, levied fines and

\(^{18}\) Act. Director of Veterinary Services to C. Sec. DSM, 15.1.29. TNA Acc.246 PC52/1: B2.
\(^{19}\) R. W. Taylor, Treasurer to Senior Veterinary Officer, Mwanza, 23.7.32. TNA Acc.215/489/I: 15.
\(^{20}\) Marine Superintendent, KUR, Kisumu to Senior Veterinary Officer, Mwanza, 2.11.29. TNA Acc.246 PC52/1: 52; Mr Grazenbrooks's Report, with R. W. Taylor Treasurer to C. Sec., DSM, 15.7.30. TNA 12453/II: 265A–2.
\(^{21}\) R. W. Taylor, Treasurer. Minute to Governor, 15.7.34. TNA 12453/III: 592.
collected fees, enforced the township rules, presided over his court, and supervised a small staff of assistants, jumbes, clerks, and policemen.\(^\text{22}\) Moreover, the liwali's jurisdiction was expanded from simply the Muslim or African business community, to overseeing the affairs of all African township residents. This did not necessarily make him a powerful man, however, since all of the liwali's duties were circumscribed by European officials who set tax rates, wrote the township rules and so forth.

While British officials might have convinced themselves that the offices of liwali and jumbe were in keeping with local tradition, African merchants perceived them in their modified form as illegitimate and threatening. The British had not consulted locally, and had repeatedly chosen to appoint non-commercial outsiders to the posts. In 1924 they brought in a carpenter and clerk from Tabora named Juma Issa. When he resigned in 1929, they selected another non-Mwanza resident, Hassan bin Abdullah, who had also previously been a government clerk. In addition, the jumbes were predominantly from the coast, and in fact, only one during the interwar years, Said Abdulkhkar, had any local commercial experience.\(^\text{23}\) Not unexpectedly, the liwali did not always consult prominent townspeople, and consequently, many of his new administrative tasks or court powers encroached upon the domain of local notables: mediating disputes, regulating behavior, or dispensing patronage.

The situation became unbearable during the late 1930s when the administration appointed a young court clerk from the coast as liwali, bypassing any local candidates.\(^\text{24}\) Many household and neighborhood leaders, referring to themselves as the town elders, submitted a series of petitions objecting at first to the selection of an outside candidate. Later petitions, signed by a wide cross section of townspeople, objected to specific actions taken by the new liwali, and finally to modifications made in the office itself.\(^\text{25}\) It was most interesting that the elders defined eligibility for local leadership through religion, occupation and residency, not ethnicity. That is, they argued the liwali should be a pious Muslim and trader like themselves, and should share the interests of the town. He did not, however, have to be from a specific ethnic group in the region, nor even have been born in the town.

This protest was not immediately successful. It certainly worried colonial officials, who admitted among themselves that their position was legally untenable. However, they did not immediately back down. Instead, the dispute gradually became moot as the liwali's authority was later parceled out to a new, ward based, urban government devised after the war. Much more significant was the fact that the Muslim community had united with other townspeople to protest the administration's urban governing policies.

\(^{22}\) T. Revington, Act. DO to PC, Lake Province, 5.3.38. TNA Acc.215/1478: tattered page.

\(^{23}\) Personnel File—Said Abdulkhkar. TNA Acc.246 S2/ii/7: 43A.

\(^{24}\) DO Tanga to DO Mwanza, 10.2.38. TNA Acc.246 S2/ii/6: 5.

\(^{25}\) Benedicto Ikuru to Gov. Sir Wilfred Jackson, 12.11.44. TNA Acc.215/1478: 75–6.
From Local Autonomy to Independence

The founding of the local TAA branch in February 1945 was an important formal step towards building a mass nationalist movement in Mwanza. Within a few years, supporters transferred their allegiance to TANU, and again the Mwanza region produced a number of dynamic, young leaders. Yet, these institutional and biographical milestones should not obscure the impact of earlier protests or disputes. Interestingly, the Mwanza TAA's "figurehead" officers and the majority of its initial membership were drawn from the urban, Muslim community. Moreover, Muslim candidates won a majority of Mwanza wards in the 1952 local government elections. These candidates and their supporters were not products of the mass nationalist movement, nor were they mobilized by a generation of new elites. Instead, they were activists, very much informed and motivated by two previous decades of local protests against the colonial policies.

The influence of the Muslim community and the substance of earlier protests were also reflected in the local TAA platform. Multiracial and multiethnic banners stemmed not simply from the speeches of new leaders, but from bitter experience in protests against property-related and urban indirect rule policies. Economic opportunity demands did not originate from government empowered, postwar African shopkeepers, but from the experiences of many regulated traders during the depression years. And finally, attempts to gain greater local autonomy, however backward looking or reactive, were an important first step toward demanding independence.

This struggle was significant, nonetheless, since it both involved many prominent African townspeople in an effort to challenge the legitimacy of the colonial urban government, and because it led them to advocate greater autonomy in their local affairs. Moreover, this autonomy was not defined in particular cultural, religious, or ethnic terms, but instead was based on the much broader notion of residency.

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27 Ibid., 71.
A RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC KALEIDOSCOPE OR A NORTH/SOUTH FRONTIER? DINKA/BAGGARA RELATIONS ACROSS THE KIR/BAHR AL–ARAB RIVER, (SOUTH SUDAN)

by Stephanie F. Beswick

The political personality of the Sudan is one of conflict; not only does this country have the distinction of Africa's longest civil war, it has experienced two centuries of conquest by the Turks, the Mahdi, the British and various independent Muslim military governments. The south has hosted the greatest strife, and perhaps the scene of some of the most ferocious and bloodiest fighting over the last two centuries is that of the plains of the Kir/Bahr al–Arab river.¹ It has been argued that historically, this river is a frontier representing an ideological and physical barrier between the Arab Muslim north and the African non-Muslim south in the Sudan.²

To be sure, the length of today's civil war in the Sudan leads one to believe that for centuries Africans and "Arabs" or Muslims and non-Muslims have never lived side by side in peace. Yet, a closer view of the history of this region cannot support this assumption, at least in terms of relations between the Islamic Baggara and non-Islamic Dinka. Although religious and cultural practices have always remained discrete among these two pastoral groups, economic and sociopolitical integration has frequently taken place. I argue the region only becomes a sharply defined "frontier" when political and military forces outside this zone find it expedient to create an ethnic divide. If these external pressures are absent, the Kir/Bahr el–Arab river region reverts to an ethnic kaleidoscope during which the Baggara and Dinka achieve peaceful socioeconomic and political integration.

This paper focuses on those Dinka and Baggara living immediately adjacent to the Kir/Bahr el–Arab river banks; in the south, the Tuic and Malwal Dinkas (Bahr el–Ghazal Province), and on its northern banks, the Ngok Dinka, the Islamic Baggara, Humr–Missiriyya (southwest Kordofan) and Rizeiqat (southern Darfur).³


² This is a commonplace in the discourse regarding north-south relations in the Sudan.

³ The Tuic and Malwal are adjacent to each other and located approximately at the northwestern extent of Dinka territory south of the river and north of the southern town of Aweil. Further south and east are the towns of Gogrial and Tonj, which are peopled by the Raik Dinka and the Luo. Damazo Dut Majak, interview by author, April 1995, Los Angeles, California, a Dinka from the this region. See also Godfrey Lienhardt, Divinity and Experience (Oxford, 1961). The
The Dinka and Baggara Prior to the Turkiyya (1821)

According to documented sources, neither pastoral group appears to have originated in this region and over the last three centuries the Baggara infiltrated from the west, while the Dinka expanded from the southeast.4 Although both the Dinka and Baggara have largely remained discrete political, cultural, and religious units,5 they also share certain commonalities. Militarily, both peoples were evenly matched possessing no firearms but utilizing spears. Centuries of close contact yielded some religious, economic, and cultural infusions; for example, the Dinka and Humr are totemic and share identical totems. For both, the principal form of wealth and power is cattle, and theft and murder are settled with cattle payments (blood money).6 Up to the period of the Turkiyya (1821), the Dinka and Baggara commonly raided each other as well as plundering and fighting among themselves for cattle.7

Having emigrated into the region, both groups integrated, to a degree, with those inhabitants already residing in the area. Thus, there is a similarity in the ethnic composition of both the Dinka and Baggara. In 1740, certain sections of the Ngok moved north across the river settling in present-day Kordofan. Finding Begi peoples, a subgroup of the Luo, they warred and later made peace, and integrated with these non-pastoral iron workers. Other Begi moved farther north and west integrating with the Islamic Baggara. South of the river, there also existed many Luo (now known as Shatt) who preceded the encroaching Malwal and Tuic Dinkas. These iron workers were also incorporated, if not fully integrated, by those Dinkas expanding northwards. Hence, for centuries the Luo peoples on the northern and southern banks of the river have formed a

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Missiriyya are the most easterly of the Baggara on the Bahr al-Arab, and their neighbors are the Pellaita section of the Humr. See N. Yunis, "Notes on the Baggara and Nuba of Western Kordofan," *Sudan Notes and Records* 6 (1922): 203; and Ian Cunnison, *Baggara Arabs* (Oxford, 1966), 7.


social subgroup within the Dinka and Baggara, adding to a substratum of ethnic homogeneity within the region.8

Yet the Baggara and Dinka have never integrated, economically, socially, or religiously, although only a shallow river separates them. Henning Siverts has argued that if passing an ethnic barrier requires a complete transposition involving the abandonment of home, family, and entire way of life, most people will not take the step, except under desperate circumstances.9 I suggest this partially explains the lack of Dinka/Baggara integration over the centuries and their continuance as discrete entities.

Nevertheless, it is also probable that, once situated on the banks of this river, the Dinka and Baggara periodically arranged marriage alliances. For generations each Baggara section has used the same specific route north and south between their rainy and dry season camps. The need to maintain forage and fodder for the animals necessitates that these roughly parallel routes not approach each other laterally, east or west. Hence, these orderly, annual migrations along comparatively fixed routes very likely ensured the same groups of Baggara and Dinka periodically met for years at the river banks. Intelligence reports of this period state both Ngok Dinka and Baggara chiefs arranged intermarriages with the Tuic Dinka so that their herds could approach the rich Tuic grazing grounds south of the river. The northerners, both Dinka and Baggara, were willing to offer their daughters at low rates of bridewealth to achieve access to southern pastures.10 Thus, relations in the past were not always martial. However, with the Turkish invasion of 1821 the modern country of the Sudan began to take shape. In nascent form, a frontier ideology of antagonism between north and south emerged giving birth to a political personality of almost continual conflict.

The Turkiyya (1821–1881) and the Changing Balance of Power on the River

In 1821, the Turco-Egyptians entered the Sudan as the first external force to seize control of the region since the Pharaohs.11 As Muslims, the Baggara were naturally favored by the regime over their non-Muslim Dinka neighbors to the south and east. It marked the historical beginning of external forces ravaging the south for its resources

8 Stefano Santandrea, Ethno-Geography of the Bahr el Ghazal (Sudan) (Bologna, 1981), 126. Situated in Baggara territory within the Islamic state of Darfur, these Dinka readapted their political system from that of segmental authority to one with a concentration of power in one chief. See Francis Mading Deng, The Man Called Deng Majok (New Haven, 1986). See also Santandrea, The Luo of the Bahr el Ghazal, 129-31.


10 Many thanks to Dr. David Decker for kindly allowing me use of his research notes conducted in southern Kordofan including the northern banks of the Bahr al-Arab, in May 1987. They include interviews with a number of Baggara, particularly those of the Humr-Missiriyya and also the Ngok Dinka. See also Sudan Intelligence Report (hereafter referred to as SIR) 137, February 1927.

11 P. M. Holt and M. W. Daly, A History of the Sudan (London, 1979), 47.
and the Baggara acquiring superior weaponry in a bid to dominate their Dinka foes across the river.

The White Nile and Overland Trade Routes

In 1839–1841 explorations of the White Nile were ordered by Mohammed Ali. Two trade routes dominated the region: the White Nile, commonly called the river route, and the older, less accessible, overland route crossing the Bahr al–Arab river en route to the Islamic sultanate of Darfur and points farther north. Shortly thereafter, the southern Sudan was flooded with European and Muslim traders. Initially they came to barter for ivory, however, it became more lucrative to trade in slaves, and by the 1860s, there developed a thriving business on the White Nile.12

Prior to 1850, there is scant mention of Baggara raiding the Dinka for slaves across the Bahr al Arab although it is possible they participated in organized raids under the authority of the Sultan of Darfur before 1850. After this period, however, the Baggara began to acquire guns and horses.13 By midcentury, the Kir/Bahr al–Arab started to become an important slaving frontier, from which caravans to Darfur delivered up to 1,000 slaves each trip. When the Egyptian authorities closed the White Nile route in the early 1860s, in a bid to end the slave trade, the traffic traversing the Bahr al–Arab river increased. The incessant demand for slaves in the booming markets of Darfur further encouraged the Baggara to raid the Dinka across the river. The Sultan of Darfur alone possessed 1,000 eunuchs.14 The balance of power along the river had now altered radically, in favor of the Baggara.

At this time the Baggara allied themselves with powerful Sudanese Muslims. Among them, the slaver al–Zubayr Rahma Mansur (a Ja’li Arab educated at Khartoum) who became notorious for building his slaving empire, Deim Zubayr, in the Bahr al–Ghazal. With the aid of Madibbu Bey Ali, the chief of the Rizeiqat, Zubayr secured a route for slave caravans leading northwards across the Kir/Bahr al–Arab to

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These merchants built enclosures (zerbas); the most powerful and successful were John Petherick (1853–1863), Alphonse de Malzac (1857–60), Ambroise; and Jules Poncet (1860-1869), A. Johan Kleincznick (1853-70), Ai Abu-Amuri (1853-1880), Rahma Mansur Zubeir (1856-80), Biselli (1860-70), Mohammed Abu-Sammat Ghattas (1866). See, Santandrea, A Tribal History, 21.


14 From June 1878 to March 1879, the Egyptian authorities captured sixty–three caravans containing 2,000 slaves; however it was believed that 80 percent of caravans escaped without detection. Gray, A History, 66, 127; Santandrea, A Tribal History, 30; R. S. O’Fahay, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in Dar Fur," Journal of African History 14, 1 (1973): 31.
the markets of Darfur and Kordofan. By formal agreement, he paid the Rizeiqat fees for safe passage across the river.\footnote{Richard Hill, \textit{Egypt in the Sudan}, 1820-1881 (London, 1959); H. C. Jackson, \textit{Black Ivory and White; or the Story of El Zubeir Pasha, Slaver and Sultan, as Told by Himself} (Oxford, 1913).}

The Baggara not only sold the Dinka they captured in raids across the river, but also kept large numbers of them as agricultural laborers, housed in separate villages with their own sheikh, also a slave. The brunt of the trade fell upon those communities immediately south and southwest of the river including the Malwal and Tuic Dinkas. By the end of the 1860s a ferocious war raged between Baggara and Dinka.\footnote{David Decker research notes. See also Gray, \textit{A History}, and Collins, \textit{Land Beyond the Rivers}, 186.}

It was not so much the taking of captives that alienated the Dinka, for they had traded their children for food during famines for centuries, and raiding for women and cattle is common among pastoral peoples in south Sudan. Even some Dinka sold slaves on a small scale during the last century.\footnote{In the last century, Vayssiere reports he bought a Jur slave from an Arol Dinka who traded as far as Darfur, which took 18-19 days by forced marches. Vayssiere, "Ivory Buying," 166-67. See also Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," in \textit{Tribes Without Rulers}, ed. John Middleton and David Tait (London, 1958). Because of starvation, many Dinka throughout the centuries were forced to sell their children in the markets of Darfur for a nominal fee, in the hopes of saving the rest of the family; see Vayssiere, "Ivory-Buying," 137. This practice continues today. See Colin Campbell and Deborah Scroggins, "children up for sale as 20,000 hungry refugees seek a way out," \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, Section A, 1, April 15, 1988.}

Rather, it was the punitive expeditions of the Arab and European slavers, aided by the Baggara introducing a new and more violent form of captivity. Armed enclosures (zeribas) sprang up everywhere, with thousands held captive. According to Na’ym Shuqayr, the Syrian intelligence officer based in Cairo at the turn of the century, the most prized of slaves were first the Ethiopians and then the Dinka. He notes the barbarism of how many were made eunuchs before being forced to march in chains under very harsh conditions to the slave markets in the north. Many died en-route.\footnote{Na’ym Shuqayr, \textit{Tarikh al-Sudan al-Qadim} (Cairo, 1903), 51.}

Prior to development of the slave trade, Dinka/Baggara battles had not been waged with a view to inflicting high casualties.\footnote{According to Dr. Robert Collins, the Dinka did not generally aim for high casualty rates while raiding other Dinkas or Baggaras until war became more violent. Interview by author, August, 1994, Washington, D.C.} Now the Dinka changed battle strategies and the killing increased. Noting the violent enslavement of their own people during raids, they responded in a similar fashion. According to Chief Pagwot Deng, the practice of enslaving people "Baggara style" now included torturing captives "where people are crippled and their testicles are pricked."\footnote{Deng, \textit{Africans of Two Worlds}, 140-42.} But even as warfare between many Dinka and Baggara intensified, the river did not yet form a clear barrier, and some Dinka–Baggara alliances survived. The Ngok Dinka in Kordofan

15 Richard Hill, \textit{Egypt in the Sudan}, 1820-1881 (London, 1959); H. C. Jackson, \textit{Black Ivory and White; or the Story of El Zubeir Pasha, Slaver and Sultan, as Told by Himself} (Oxford, 1913).

16 David Decker research notes. See also Gray, \textit{A History}, and Collins, \textit{Land Beyond the Rivers}, 186.

17 In the last century, Vayssiere reports he bought a Jur slave from an Arol Dinka who traded as far as Darfur, which took 18-19 days by forced marches. Vayssiere, "Ivory Buying," 166-67. See also Godfrey Lienhardt, "The Western Dinka," in \textit{Tribes Without Rulers}, ed. John Middleton and David Tait (London, 1958). Because of starvation, many Dinka throughout the centuries were forced to sell their children in the markets of Darfur for a nominal fee, in the hopes of saving the rest of the family; see Vayssiere, "Ivory-Buying," 137. This practice continues today. See Colin Campbell and Deborah Scroggins, "children up for sale as 20,000 hungry refugees seek a way out," \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, Section A, 1, April 15, 1988.

18 Na’ym Shuqayr, \textit{Tarikh al-Sudan al-Qadim} (Cairo, 1903), 51.

19 According to Dr. Robert Collins, the Dinka did not generally aim for high casualty rates while raiding other Dinkas or Baggaras until war became more violent. Interview by author, August, 1994, Washington, D.C.

20 Deng, \textit{Africans of Two Worlds}, 140-42.
maintained friendly relations with their Baggara neighbors to the west, the Humr–Missiriyya.\textsuperscript{21} This alliance is but one that survived ongoing north/south conflicts.

Between 1870 and 1884 the Turco-Egyptian government removed many of the slave merchants such as Zubayr, and attempted to bring the region under limited control. In this endeavor it failed, largely because the Turco-Egyptian government recruited these same prominent merchants, previously employed by the zeriba lords, to serve as its administrative personnel. In their new capacity, however, they extended the slave trade under their own initiative.\textsuperscript{22} Paradoxically, by the early 1880s, a new relationship between Baggara and Dinka developed; war between them halted and alliances developed on a large scale.

The Temporary Unification of the Dinka and the Baggara
For the first and only time in history a temporary, military unification occurred. Because the Baggara found they could no longer benefit from uniting with traders such as Zubayr, numbers of Rizeiqat proceeded to raid those caravans they had previously agreed to protect.\textsuperscript{23} Many others welcomed the end of Turco-Egyptian imperialism, largely because of the oppressive taxation on their cattle. The Baggara were the first to convert to the cause of the Mahdi, the Sudanese holy man who conspired to rout the Egyptians from the Sudan. Supported by his most trusted disciple and successor, Abd'allahi, a Ta'aisha Baggara, this group formed his cavalry corp in the early years. Shortly thereafter, the jellaba, Sudanese merchants primarily of Dongolawi origin who had been expelled from the Bahr al-Ghazal, along with many refugees fleeing the harsh taxation in Kordofan, also joined the revolution.\textsuperscript{24}

The Dinka, like the Baggara, had always viewed the "Turks," whether they were merchants or government representatives, as "powerful cattle robbers." As early as 1868, Ja'far Pasha had ordered the Shilluk and Dinka to pay tribute equivalent to 15,000 English pounds. Hence, although the Egyptian administration had attempted to halt the slave trade, the Dinka had no love for them. With both the Dinka and Baggara sharing a violent dislike of the colonial Egyptian administration, temporary alliances developed between both groups. Shortly thereafter, the Madhi sent emissaries to the Bahr al-Ghazal to encourage Dinka alliances to aid in the campaign

\textsuperscript{21} The Ngok Dinka Chief, Kwol Arob, maintained friendly relations with the Missiriyya Baggara Paramount Chief, Ali Massar and according to his grandson Babo Nimir, the relationship between the Ngok Dinka, the Missiriyya and the Homr predated their grandfathers. See Francis Mading Deng, Recollections of Babo Nimir (London, 1982), 11, 59.

\textsuperscript{22} Deng, Africans of Two Worlds, 130-31; Santandrea, A Tribal History, 19. The traveler Schweinfurth stated "nowhere in the world can more inveterate slave-dealers be found than the commanders of the small detachments of Egyptian troops." Georg Schweinfurth, The Heart of Africa, vol. 2 (New York, 1873).

\textsuperscript{23} Shuqayr, Tarikh al-Sudan al-Qadim, 71.

to expunge the oppressive and unpopular foreign government. To this end he was successful.

Maqbula and the Dinka/Mahdist Marriage Alliance
According to oral account, a female Dinka Malwal, Maqbula, aided in one of the most historically significant alliances of the period. The position of Maqbula in history is controversial. According to one account, Kwac, the Dinka Chief Aweil, acted as an emissary for the Malwal Paramount Chief Deng Dit, during which a temporary alliance developed between his section of the Malwal and the Mahdist forces in the Bahr al-Ghazal. During this period Maqbula was "given" to the Mahdi by Deng Dit to cement the Dinka/Baggara alliance.  

It is also believed Maqbula encouraged the Dinka to join the Mahdist cause by using her networks among the Malwal Dinka community in the south. After this period, a number of Dinka joined the Sudanese holy man and shortly thereafter received guns from the Mahdists. Successfully reconquering the Bahr al-Ghazal, the Dinka and Baggara accomplished their goal in the spring of 1884, when many Sudanese in the Egyptian army joined the Mahdist insurgents. Soon after this, the Egyptian administration in the Bahr al-Ghazal collapsed.

It is not believed that the Mahdi ever married Maqbula; today, however, many Dinka claim she became one of the Mahdi's concubines, and is the mother of the famed Mahdist holy man, Abdul Rahman. The resurgence of wars across the river, continuing well into the next century, left many Dinka bitter about this alliance for at the beginning of the Mahdiyya, the Baggara resumed raiding their Dinka neighbors for slaves and cattle.

The Mahdiyya (1881–1898): Famine and the Rearming of the Baggara
No sooner had the Egyptians been routed from the Sudan than the Dinka discovered the Mahdists' objectives paralleled those of their predecessors: full-scale slavery not only returned but intensified. The Mahdist general, Karam Allah, once again, exploited the Bahr al–Arab trade route. But, his wrath was not reserved for

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26 Lueth Ucec, interview by author, Ames, Iowa, September, 1993. Lueth Ucec was a commander in the first civil war in the Sudan and spent a considerable amount of time collecting oral reports in the field in the 1960s and interviewed Kwac, still alive at that time.

27 Dr. Mum Kou, a Bor Dinka, Dr. Isiah Deng, a Cic Dinka, Musa Adam an Agar Dinka, and Martin Koshwal, an Atuot Dinka, interview by author, Hamilton, Canada, November 1993. This information was also confirmed by Dinka historian, Lazarus Leek Mawut, interview by author, Boston, Massachusetts, in April 1994. It has always been common for the Dinka and Baggara to marry the daughters of chiefs to rival clans to build alliances. The Ngok Dinka also supported the Mahdi by incorporating him as a powerful spirit of the sky into their religion during this period. Deng, Africans of Two Worlds, 30. See also Collins, Southern Sudan, 23.

28 Kou, Deng, Adam, Koshwal, interview; and Mawut, interview.
southerners alone; certain Baggara also felt the brunt of this powerful general. During this period he cut off the heads of sixty-three Rizeiqt sheiks, while Ngok Dinka Chief Kwol Arob was despatched to Omdurman where he remained under house arrest for some years.29

Economic conditions on the Bahr al–Arab river worsened and from 1889 to 1892 the country suffered the devastation of famine. Exacerbating the situation, the Mahdi's successor, the Khalifa, ordered the Humr to his capital at Omdurman and then ransacked their lands on the Bahr al–Arab for cattle. However, within a few years many Baggara returned home and, lacking food, began to pillage the Dinka once again.30

Towards the end of the century, the Khalifa attempted to control Baggara raids of the Dinka for purposes of state. He sent two military expeditions south across the Bahr al–Arab, supplying the Baggara with weapons, and encouraging the destruction of the country as far south as Bor. McLoughlin argues 400,000 Southerners died of disease and 700,000 in warfare.31 Chaos reigned on the plains of the Bahr al–Arab.

Yet, even under these violent conditions, the Baggara north of the river were no more allied to the government than their Dinka neighbors to the south. Rizeiqt Chief Maddibu Ali had defied the Khalifa and lost his head while his son, Musa Maddibbu, was imprisoned by the Khalifa in Omdurman. He finally escaped after the defeat at Karari and, on returning to the Bahr al–Arab was captured by the Missiriyya and held for a year. Shortly after being released he was re-arrested and imprisoned for another year by the Sultan of Darfur, Ali Dinar, for failing to pay tribute.32 Nor were all sections of the Dinka allied peacefully, for intra Dinka and Dinka/Nuer raiding was also commonplace at this time.33 Thus, even under the Khalifa, the Kir/Bahr al–Arab region was never firmly demarcated into a sharp boundary between Muslim and non-Muslim, nor that of African versus Arab. However, in 1898 the British defeated the Mahdists at the battle of Karari, marking the beginning of the Anglo–Egyptian Condominium and the most peaceful period in Sudan's recorded history.

29 Ibid.; Santandrea, The Luo, 197.


31 Alex De Waal, "Some Comments on Militias in the Contemporary Sudan" in Civil War in the Sudan, ed. M. W. Daly and Ahmad Alawad Sikainga (British Academy Press, 1993), 148; Dinka Chief, Makuei Bilkuei who witnessed the Mahdist invasion (Deng, Africans of Two Worlds, 135); Peter F. M. McLoughlin, Africa, (October 1962), 387.

32 It was some time later, when his brother, Isa Madibbu, wrote to the British governor general, that he was finally released. A. B. Theobold, Ali Dinar Last Sultan of Darfur 1898-1916 (London, 1965), 44-46.

33 As late as 1924 two sections of the Twij (Tuic) decided to settle their differences by battle. See SIR 163 May 1924. See also Robert O, Collins, The Southern Sudan, 1883-1898: A Struggle for Control (New Haven, 1964).
The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium (1898–1956): The British and the Rise of the Mediators

During the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, the British were never more than a slender presence in the southern Sudan.\(^{34}\) However, over five decades they radically altered Dinka-Baggara relations. By trial and error they restructured the predatory socioeconomic societies on both sides of the river by enforcing their own brand of administration and acting as mediators during times of disputes. Military and political frontier ideology broke down between the Dinka and Baggara, while marital and political alliances increased. By the end of the Condominium period, the African/Islamic frontier had dissipated.

Baggara-Dinka Relations at the Beginning of the Condominium

During the Turkiyya and Mahdiyya, Dinka/Baggara relationships became one of mutual economic and predatory dependence. By the first decade of the twentieth century, British intelligence reported both groups were continuously raiding each other for women, cattle, weapons, cooking utensils, and any other items needed for survival.\(^{35}\)

Gayle Rubin argues that women in many societies are the key currencies of exchange; they are given in marriage, taken in battle, exchanged for favors, sent as tribute, traded, bought and sold. Meillassoux also argues it is more economical to raid outside societies than to finance the development of a slave society within one's own environs.\(^{36}\) Up to and including the early part of the Condominium the abduction of women translated into wealth on both sides of the Kir/Bahr al-Arab, for females became important commodities for both economies. For centuries the Baggara abducted Dinka women for agricultural and household help and concubines.\(^{37}\) When the Condominium introduced money for bridewealth payments it also became lucrative for the Dinka to abduct Baggara women, but for different reasons. Previously, cattle formed the primary currency of exchange in Dinka society and the high cost of bridewealth meant many could not afford a wife. With the new money economy, bridewealth debt could be offset by abducting Baggara women for economically-minded Dinka men in need of a wife.\(^{38}\) Instead of cows, the bridewealth for a Baggara women often involved


\(^{35}\) Dominic Akeg Mohammed, a Western Tuic Dinka, interview by author, Miami, Florida, August 1991; SIR 165, April 1908; Lazarus Leek Mawut, Dinka Resistance to Condominium Rule 1902-1932 (Khartoum, 1983), 46; Francis Mading Deng, The Dinka of the Sudan (New York, 1972), 79. Deng argues that small-scale raids aimed at cattle and women were the order of the day before the appearance of the British.


\(^{38}\) The extended Dinka family was expected to help in making payments and contributions to help with bridewealth payments. Hence, many Dinka accumulated life-long debts. Andrew Mayen, a
money; thus her bridewealth yielded to her surrogate Dinka family a means by which to buy more cattle and increase their wealth.\textsuperscript{39} After decades of abduction of women, it is not unreasonable to argue that although the sociocultural and political economies of the Dinka and Baggara remained discrete entities, the genetic barriers between both on the Bahr al–Arab began to break down. However, not all Dinka/Baggara marriages involved abducted women.

As mentioned earlier, political marriage alliances between Dinka and Baggara prove that the African–Islamic frontier was not always a harsh reality and there is at least one example where a Dinka clan supported the Baggara over their own people. From 1900 to 1918 the Missiriyya–Humr Baggara Paramount Chief, Ali–Jula, was married to a Maraug Dinka woman, Hajir, from one of the several sections of the Ngok. Because of this alliance, the Maraug provided protection for the Humr–Missiriyya when they moved cattle and slaves through their territory after raiding other Dinka sections, south of the river. The Maraug would inform any pursuing Dinka that the Missiriyya had headed in a different direction. Not surprisingly, the Maraug were "off–limits" for slave and cattle raiding by the Humr–Missiriyya.\textsuperscript{40} Nevertheless, many other Dinka and Baggara found it lucrative to continue raiding each other. Meanwhile, Britain's objective in this region was to discourage raiding and warfare.

\textit{The British and the Beginning of Enforced Peace on the River}

To administer the south the British needed peace; however, warfare along the Bahr al–Arab continued for decades.\textsuperscript{41} As late as 1912 the Rizeiqat, mounted on fast horses and well–equipped with firearms, were still conducting slave raids into Dinka territory.\textsuperscript{42} The ebb and flow of warfare continued until after the First World War, when intensive government intervention brought it to a halt.\textsuperscript{43}

However, initial peace–making attempts illuminated a paradox that has existed throughout documented history. The inauguration of official boundaries
increased tensions rather than reducing them. As pastoralists the Baggara and Dinka believed they had the right to secure good grazing land for their cattle, wherever that might be. Hence, both rarely responded favorably to formal barriers, particularly if their herds were in need. Throughout the Condominium, the British imposed a number of boundaries between the Dinka and Baggara, and instead of decreasing border stress, they intensified it. Neither believed the boundaries to be fair, and hence, ignored them.44

The most controversial boundary in Sudan's history is that of the Southern Policy of 1930, which aimed to formally divide the northern Islamic Sudan from its non-Islamic counterpart in the south. According to Sudan Intelligence Reports and confidential letters from administrators in the region, this policy was essentially a failure during the Condominium period. The Dinka and Baggara crossed into each other's territories continuously after 1930.45 However, this boundary eventually spearheaded nascent Southern nationalism although it was not until independence that the Southern Policy of 1930 became an important precedent for southern self determination from the north.

In the long run, the British-imposed boundaries were more useful for British administrators than the people they governed as they allowed British district commissioners to find a niche for themselves, one never before undertaken in the Sudan by an external force; that of mediators. With these "official" north/south frontiers in place, the British could directly control native administration. Particularly on the plains of the Kir/Bahr al–Arab river.

"Native Administration" on the Bahr al–Arab

When the opportunity arose, the British intervened to ensure that Baggara and Dinka chieftainships were assigned only to those willing to respect British authority and peace with their neighbors. The Baggara were advantaged in that chieftainships already existed, so there was a choice of legitimate candidates. In 1918, the British allocated the regency of the Missiriyya Baggara to a man called Nimir, largely...

44 In 1912 a boundary was fixed between the Malwal and Rizeigat, however, the government agreed to permit Baggara hunting parties to cross the river periodically, whereupon raids on Dinka herds resumed. Again in 1924, the British erred on the side of the Baggara by fixing another boundary twenty–five to forty miles south of the river in Dinkaland. Both the Ngok and Tuic Dinka Chiefs violently objected and wars continued. In the meantime, rival Dinka groups raided each other, and war raged as the Malwal and Baggara thrust into Tuic Dinka territory. See SIR 238 May 1914; SIR 137, February 1927; SIR 136, June 1932.

45 See S. Beswick, "Southern Sudan." During the Condominium, however, the degree of Dinka/Baggara non-interest in British-imposed boundaries was frequently made clear. In 1932 the Malwal Dinka and their herds moved north into designated Humr Baggara grazing grounds. See SIR 136, June 1932. As late as 1945, District Commissioner Eliot Balfour argued that it was impossible to stop the Baggara crossing the borders south, for they did it constantly. See K. D. D. Henderson, Set Under Authority (Somerset, 1987), 139.
because he was closely allied to the Ngok Dinka Chief, Kwol Arob. When Nimir died in 1924, the British selected his son, Babo Nimir, for exactly the same reasons.46

The Ngok differ from other Dinka groups in that they replaced segmental authority with a concentration of power in one chief. Thus, legitimate leadership existed and the British could easily impose their own choice of paramount chieftainship on these Dinka. Like that of the Baggara, the final choice was made by the British, and yet the candidate was also legitimate in the eyes of the populace. In this case, Chief Kwol Arob was adamant that his son, Deng Majok, not succeed him, believing he was too close to the Baggara and preferring his eldest son, Deng Abot, who "did not want the Arabs at all." However, the British "elected" Deng Majok and blocked Deng Abot's succession, because the former made it known he was willing to accept peace with the Missiriyya Baggara Chief, Babo Nimir.47

On the other hand, the British recognized few paramount chiefs among the Dinka south of the Kir/Bahr al-Arab. Dinka societies appeared to have no centralized authority, and a government chief representing his entire section was an alien concept. To control these large numbers of people, a new form of leadership had to be invented. Thus, Dinka notables were forced into the roles of Arab sheikhs and whenever one of them did not cooperate with the British, another was appointed independently of traditional leadership.48

In actuality, there were religious leaders present in the south during this period but the British failed to allow their development as political leaders. One example is Cyer Dit and another is the Tuic Dinka leader and holy man, Ariendit. Had he lived, Ariendit could have introduced the beginnings of nationalist leadership in the southern Sudan, lacking at independence, for he drew a huge following among many Dinka clans in the 1920s.49 However, fearing his power over so many thousands of belligerent Dinka, and noting he had managed to do what few other southern leaders had done (by uniting several different sections together), the British crushed him.50 Instead of

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46 Officially District Commissioner Crawford, Kwol Arob, and other Baggara chiefs selected the new chief. Those Missiriyya who had joined the Mahdiyya campaign were blocked by the British in their bids for leadership. Deng, Babo Nimir, 15.

47 Deng, Babo Nimir, 54-55.

48 John W. Burton, "Pastoral Nilotes and British Colonialism," Ethnohistory 28/2 (Spring 1981): 127. However, the British believed that if the land chief could be bolstered into a stronger position, he would have some influence over his people. Willis, "Deng," 197. See also Collins, Land Beyond the Rivers; Titherington, "The Raik," 166. In the past Dinka chiefs were limited to a particular function such as chief of cattle, war chief, chief of the hunt, land and leopard chief, medicine man, and protector of fishing; see C. A. Willis, "The Cult of Deng," Sudan Notes and Records 11 (1928): 197.

49 In February 1914 this powerful spiritual leader, believing the British to be a serious threat to Dinka self interests, led the Kordofan and Meshra Dinka to destroy the British police post at Anwaj and later attacked another at Khor Akwia. See SIR 161, February 1922. See also R. O. Collins, Shadows in the Grass (New Haven, 1983), 33.

50 In 1921, the government feared Ariendit would "strike in great force . . . in which case the whole Dinka will probably rise." Some months later, over a thousand Dinka launched a sustained assault on government troops, which was finally repulsed with heavy Dinka losses. On March 7,
making a diplomatic compromise and cultivating this Dinka leader (as they did with the Mahdi’s son and holy man, Abdul Rahman), the British neutralized Ariendit by imprisoning him for fifteen years in Omdurman. Thus, the British imposed their choice of leadership to ensure peace on the plains of the Bahr al–Arab, and to this end were successful. Unfortunately, the final denouement guaranteed the Dinka would pay a higher price than the Baggara. In imposing their own brand of leadership on the Dinka south of the river, and ignoring many of their legitimate authority figures, the British destroyed and discouraged budding nationalist southern leadership. The result was total Dinka dependence on British administrators while discouraging viable southern leadership to complement that of the north.

The Development of the British Mediating Role

Nevertheless, in their most powerful and successful roles in the southern Sudan, the British successfully broke down north/south tensions on the Bahr al–Arab. Unwilling to invest heavily in military pacification of the south, British administrators developed a less expensive niche for themselves, never before introduced by a Khartoum government: that of bipartisan mediators. Shuttle diplomacy and peace–keeping missions were inaugurated with annual meetings of Dinka and Baggara chiefs.51 District commissioners also began to present themselves as a bipartisan police force by pressuring the Dinka and Baggara to return stolen possessions and people after raids. By the 1920s the British on both sides of the river had become successful as mediators capable of settling potentially serious disputes.52 Tensions on the Bahr al–Arab reached their lowest ebb.

British Impartial Governorship on the Bahr al–Arab and the Longest Peace in Recorded History

Just prior to independence, the Bahr al–Arab region had become politically and economically stable for the first time in recorded history. To control the south, the

Captain Hewit marched on Unading from Wau along with Governor Wheatley. Ariendit was there to greet them. Surprisingly, rather than wage war, the chief surrendered. This peaceful act forestalled a general Dinka uprising. Nevertheless his compound was burnt, and the thousands of Dinka massed about his village dispersed with machine gun fire. Soon after Ariendit was shipped by steamer to a military prison in Omdurman, where he was interred until 1936. Collins, Shadows in the Grass, 35-36.

51 The practice of mediating had its roots in the early part of the century when a meeting was arranged between the Paramount Chief of the Dinka Malwal, Chak Chak (Awtutiek) and Rizeigat Baggara Sheikh, Musa Madibbu. On this occasion both parties agreed to end their inter-tribal quarrels, and from then on Dinka and Baggara chiefs met annually. Damazo Dut Majak, a direct descendent of Awtutiek, interview by author, Los Angeles, California, December 1994; SIR 163, February 1908. Throughout the Condominium the colonial presence was confined to the riverbanks and the government set up patrol posts. By 1922 the Tuic grazing grounds on the south of the river were heavily patrolled by government forces to stop the wars between the Ngok, Humr, Tuic and the Nuer from the east. With time, hostilities began to subside. See SIR 137, February 1927.

52 SIR 165, April 1908. Mediating duties involved settling potential disputes. See also SIR 172, May 1923; SIR 163, May 1924. It also involved fixing blood money payments (diya) (the customary compensation for homicide, payable in cattle or money) after raids. See SIR 137, November 1930.
British had, by trial and error, imposed a tenuous peace and within a few decades their brand of shuttle diplomacy and diplomatic peace-keeping efforts had had a great impact. Humr Baggara families now hired Dinka servants and herders, since the British outlawed the slave trade. In exchange, the Dinka earned food and clothing and a small wage.\textsuperscript{53} Many Humr camped regularly near Dinka settlements to make "brotherhood."\textsuperscript{54} In Kordofan, the Ngok Dinka voted for Baggara political leadership as the Missiriyya Humr and Ngok Dinka now fell within one council. Babo Nimir's father-in-law, (also the Mahdi's grandson), secured a politico-religious seat in parliament with substantial Ngok Dinka support. Humr–Ngok and Rizeiqat–Malwal relations had now improved and marriage alliances increased.\textsuperscript{55} Before independence, the British suggested Chief Deng Majok move back to join those Ngok south of the river; however, Deng rejected the idea.\textsuperscript{56} Clearly a modicum of trust between Dinka and Baggara had developed; frontier ideology was hardly evident.

Although the river region was developing into a melting pot by independence, the key factor sustaining political stability, British mediatiorship and an impartial government in Khartoum, was now absent. Had the British remained in the Sudan, the north/south frontier may well have disappeared. But the short–lived peace imposed during the Anglo–Egyptian Condominium was built on socioeconomic and political constructs requiring the mediators' continuous presence in the region. When the British granted independence to a partial, Islamic, northern Sudanese government, the entire structure collapsed, largely because the Dinka and many other southern groups were encouraged collectively to rely on the British, and given no opportunity to build a national or regional leadership of their own.\textsuperscript{57} This left the non-Muslim Dinka more vulnerable and defensive than the Islamic Baggara. Predictably, ethnic rivalries resurfaced, tensions increased, and the river once more became a symbolic north/south boundary.

**Independence (1956) and the Resurrection of Frontier Ideology**

At independence, the Bahr al–Arab predictably reverted to conditions resembling those of the Turkiyya and Mahdist periods; the region once more became unstable. Sudan's

\textsuperscript{53} Abdel Monheim Younis, a Muslim Fertit Southerner, who reported viewing Dinka men working in Baggara fields while traveling by train en-route to Khartoum from the south, interview by author, Massachusetts, April 1992. See also Cunnison, "Women Among the Humr," 29; Baggara, Arabs, 67. For the role of wage labor in the transition out of slavery, see also Paul Lovejoy, *Slow Death for Slavery: The Course of Abolition in Northern Nigeria, 1897-1936* (Cambridge, 1993).


\textsuperscript{55} De Waal "Civil War in the Sudan," 146.

\textsuperscript{56} In 1929 the British had incorporated the Ngok Dinka region, south of the river, into Kordofan District Headquarters, to provide unity. See SIR 137, July 1, 1929. Deng, *Babo Nimir*, 60.

\textsuperscript{57} Two decades later, in 1972, when the south was granted a limited self government, the factor of undeveloped leadership was still in evidence. See Beswick, "The Addis Ababa Agreement."
political personality of war resurfaced, with the Bahr al–Arab region taking center stage. The Khartoum government’s renewed support for the Muslim Baggara ensured an economic and political imbalance, and old rivalries and historically–long grazing disputes returned. Lacking any significant southern leadership or protection against their long–term Islamic foes, the southerners became defensive and war was imminent.58

External Pressure: Islamic Partiality Towards the Baggara

In the 1960s the Khartoum government resurrected the long–standing and volatile issue of boundaries, by re–drawing them in favor of the Baggara. The Humr were now allowed to graze in distant parts of Dinka country because it was deemed “government land.” Predictably, tensions and fighting erupted between both groups.59

As anxieties increased, the melting pot of people on the Bahr al–Arab plains was forced to redefine itself. By 1965, hostilities between the Humr and the Ngok developed, after twenty–five years of peaceful coexistence including joint membership in the Dar Missiriyya Rural Council. The Ngok town of Abyei, on the frontier between the Bahr al–Ghazal and southern Kordofan and Darfur, became a bone of contention. Whereas the Ngok had wished to remain with the north in 1956, just prior to independence, they now petitioned unsuccessfully to have the town officially returned to the southern region. As trust between the Baggara and Dinka disintegrated, numerous deaths resulted in connection with the emerging southern rebellion against northern Sudanese hegemony. Many Ngok, ruled by the northern administration, revolted joining the southern rebels.60

The vacuum left by the British posed another problem: unwillingness of the Dinka and Baggara to accept each other in positions of authority. Racist attitudes resurfaced, especially those of Baggara towards Nilotic district commissioners. In 1971, President Nimayri abolished the now unreliable system of native administration and inter–tribal conferences. Although the south had limited self–government, southern chiefs could appeal to no northern leaders in times of Baggara–Dinka disputes.61

In 1983, with the beginning of the second civil war in the south, history repeated itself. The Khartoum government, like the Khalifa of the previous century, armed

58 Tensions rose immediately, for there was no impartial third party to mediate in times of strife. Initially, Baggara Chief Babo Nimir attempted to fill the vacuum. However, at this juncture, few southern or northern chiefs existed to mediate in times of trouble. Deng, Babo Nimir, 47-49.

59 Persistent fighting between the Rizeigat, the Missiriyya and their Dinka neighbors, the Malwal, Tuic and Ngok, over water and grazing rights transformed the Bahr al–Arab region, once again, into a war zone between southerners and northerners. In 1965 in a massacre at al–Muglad, over 200 Ngok were shot and burned to death. De Waal, "Civil War in the Sudan," 144.

60 Elias Nyamllel Wakoson, "Civil War in the Sudan," in Daly and Sikainga, Civil War in the Sudan, 33. See also articles in the periodical Southern Sudan, 4 and 6 December (1980): 3-8; Deng, Babo Nimir, 60.

Baggara militias against the Dinka who formed the backbone of the southern rebel group, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA). During this time slavery returned to the south as the Baggara made war on their old foes. Marriage alliances decreased. The Baggara no longer married their daughters to either the Dinka or other members of their own clans. Now exogamy was no longer practical; family alliances constituted a liability in a politically and economically volatile region, where, raiding one's neighbors was necessary for survival.

In March of 1987 the Rizeiqat of El Diein executed a pogrom and slaughtered over 2,000 displaced Dinkas who had fled north during the war. According to Obat, the Rizeiqat conducted this slaughter with the connivance and covert collusion of the Khartoum government. Frontier ideology, perhaps almost non-existent thirty years ago, was now here to stay.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that the plains of the Kir/Bahr al–Arab river are a highly volatile melting pot of polyethnic groups in which an ethnic "frontier" only becomes a harsh reality when political and military powers beyond the region impose their political agendas. During the last two centuries military power in the region has been tilted towards the Baggara, encouraging a reification of an Arab–African frontier. Yet, in times of equal power between Dinka and Baggara or when peace is imposed by an external power, frontiers largely dissipate. Prior to the Turkish conquest Baggara and Dinka, while raiding each other for cattle, built marital, religious, and economic alliances. Likewise, during the peaceful Anglo–Egyptian Condominium period highly skilled British mediatorship enforced a peace on the Bahr al–Arab encouraging the breakdown of a frontier between north and south or African and Muslim. In the last four decades, however, this melting pot has been destroyed in favor of utilizing the Islamic Baggara to spearhead various northern Islamic governmental agendas nourishing the Arab/African and Muslim/non–Muslim frontier.

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62 In 1986, militias (murahalin), comprising Rizeigat and Missiriyya recruits, were consolidated by Prime Minister Sadiq Al Mahdi, utilizing his historical politico-religious connections with the Baggara; see G. Obat, "The Jebellein Massacre," Information Africa Faith and Justice Network (Washington, D.C., January 1990), 2.


64 Decker research notes.

65 It was later labeled the "El Daein Massacre of March 1987." The massacre was sanctioned by the Khartoum government who armed the Baggara against their Dinka neighbors. It was believed they provided critical logistical support to the southern resistance movement, the Sudanese Peoples’ Liberation Movement. Mahmud and Ali Baldo "Al Diein Massacre, Slavery in the Sudan," 17.

by Fikru Gebrekidan

This paper attempts to locate modern Ethiopian national identity in a pan–African political milieu. A phenomenon associated with Africa's colonial experience was the rise of a pan–black identity among educated Africans. Ethiopians did not share Africa's colonial experience in the same intensity and, therefore, did not develop a similar pan–African perspective until the mid–twentieth century. The country's age–long isolation from Africa and its relative proximity to the Middle East have in fact prompted many Western writers to portray Ethiopia as a non–African polity.1 Edward Ullendorff, a reputed Ethiopianist, devoted a whole volume to the study of the "historic Abyssinia and the cultural manifestations of its Semitized inhabitants."2 For the renowned Harvard anthropologist, Carleton Coon, the Amhara and the Tigray of Northern Ethiopia constituted a branch of the Caucasoid racial type.3 An even more popular view among historians was that the Ethiopians were Hamites, a brown offshoot of the European race.4 Some writers described Ethiopians as whites altogether. However black in complexion, Ethiopians were not "Negroid," wrote John Gunther. They "considered themselves to be white," and looked down upon Europeans and Americans as "pink."5

It is against this background that an attempt is made here to reconstruct the historic links between Ethiopia and the African world at large. This paper is concerned with the Africanization process of Ethiopian national consciousness on one hand, and with Ethiopia's trans–oceanic links with Western blacks on the other. The first half of the paper explores the antecedents of African awareness among the Ethiopian intelligentsia as well as Ethiopia's place in the politics of African nationalism. The second half highlights Ethiopia's cultural and spiritual interactions with Caribbean and American blacks. A central theme throughout the paper is Haile Selassie's dynamic leadership role, both in the shaping of Ethiopia's African consciousness and in the strengthening of racial ties with New World blacks. This essay is therefore a


3 Carleton Coon, The Races of Europe (New York, 1939), 449-56.


discourse on the role of personality in the shaping of history, as well as a study of cross-cultural relations and identity.

Although Italian occupation of the Northeast African nation ended in May 1941, Ethiopian independence in the early 1940s was little more than nominal. Haile Selassie was forced by the 1942 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty to compromise his government’s sovereignty in return for economic assistance from Britain. The treaty entitled the British to take charge over Ethiopian finances and fiscal policy, and also to control the police and the judiciary. According to that treaty, Haile Selassie’s government could not exercise such a basic national prerogative as the ability to declare war without the consent of the British. The treaty put the eastern border district of Ogaden under British military administration. Eritrea, historically part of Ethiopia but an Italian colony since the 1890s, was already mandated to British trusteeship by the League of Nations following Italy’s 1941 withdrawal.6

It was against this background of Italian and British colonial presence that Ethiopia’s African consciousness began to manifest itself. In the last chapter of his autobiography, Haile Selassie discusses his frustrations in dealing with the overbearing and racist British attitude. He was outraged by British interference in his domestic politics, particularly by their attempt to create unrest in the borderlands through ethnic agitation. On one hand, the British allocated the Ethiopian government such a skeletal budget that it was not even able to pay individual salaries. On the other hand they amassed to themselves whatever equipment the Italians left behind during their flight. "The British took all the military equipment captured in our country," the Emperor stated, "openly and boldly saying that it should not be left for the services of blacks." He reminisced the popular resentment against the British in the following terms: "We drove out one white man only to replace him with another . . . If this was the result of everything, then what was wrong with the Italians?"7

Ethiopia's post-war process of national consolidation began in earnest after the signing of the second agreement between Ethiopia and England in 1944. The second Anglo-Ethiopian agreement diminished Britain's influence on the country, and the monarchy regained its pre-war absolutism. This was followed by the British withdrawal from most of Ogaden in 1948, and by the UN decision to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia two years later.8

By the 1950s Ethiopia had emerged as an important regional actor in African politics, albeit under US paternalism. The main driving force behind Ethiopia's growing involvement in African affairs in this period was Haile Selassie, whose personal conviction in collective security dictated greater participation in continental politics. The Emperor understood the precariousness of Ethiopian independence as long

8 Zewde, History of Modern Ethiopia, 181-84, 7.
as the rest of the continent remained under European rule. To that end, he extended moral, political and, to some extent, economic and military support to African freedom fighters.

Nelson Mandela, the celebrated anti-apartheid hero, was one of many Africans who received military training in Ethiopia. In 1962 Mandela visited Ethiopia on two separate occasions, the first to attend the PAFMESCA\textsuperscript{9} conference and the second for military training. In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela described how impressed he was by his eight–week–long military drill on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. "Our program was strenuous," he reminisced. "We trained from eight AM until one PM, broke for shower and lunch, and then from two PM to four PM." They practiced target shooting, learned how to handle firearms, were taught how to concoct explosives and how to demolish mines, and a range of other guerrilla warfare techniques. As he returned to South Africa, Mandela felt proud of his recent metamorphosis from a political activist into an actual freedom fighter. "I felt myself being molded into a soldier and began to think as a soldier thinks, a far cry from the way a politician thinks," he noted in his memoir.\textsuperscript{10}

In addition to providing such military training, Ethiopia served as a safe haven for a number of Mau Mau fugitives from across the border. Ethiopian sympathy for the Kenyan freedom fighters could even be seen in names of nightclubs and hotels. In the 1950s and '60s, it had become fashionable for bars and nightclubs in Addis Ababa to bear East African names. Such night spots included the East Africa Bar, Uhuru Bar, Kenya Bar, Kilimanjaro Bar, and Jomo Kenyatta Bar. Many other night spots were either named after one of the African heroes, as in Patrice Lumumba Bar, or they simply bore the name "Africa," as in Africa Hotel, Africa Night Club, and African Unity Bar.\textsuperscript{11}

In the area of education, Ethiopia made available hundreds of scholarship opportunities to students from various parts of the continent through the Haile Selassie Prize Trust Fund.\textsuperscript{12} Considering that most Ethiopians were illiterate and poor, the granting of scholarships to foreign students may sound bombastic and pretentious. For Haile Selassie, however, such were the sacrifices African states had to make if they were to overcome colonially–drawn psychological and cultural barriers. "The African people cannot come to know and understand one another simply through the use of maps," the Emperor thus explained to a group of university students. In his view,

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Pan-African Freedom Movement of East, Southern, and Central Africa.
\end{footnotes}
academic and cultural exchange programs promoted Africans' awareness of each other and helped establish a concrete basis for pan-African solidarity.\textsuperscript{13}

In the diplomatic arena, Ethiopia played an important role in the anti-colonial struggle.\textsuperscript{14} In the UN and other international platforms, Ethiopian diplomats constituted a major lobby group on African affairs, especially in denouncing the racist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia. In November 1960, Ethiopia and Liberia, Africa's only signatories to the League of Nations, indicted South Africa at the International Court of Justice over the issue of Namibia. Once known as German Southwest Africa, Namibia was trusted as a mandate administration to South Africa by the League of Nations after the First World War. Ethiopia and Liberia challenged the legality of South Africa's prolonged presence in Namibia. The case dragged on for six years, until July 18, 1966, when the Court finally dismissed the charges on technical grounds.\textsuperscript{15}

In the socioeconomic arena, the Ethiopian Airlines (EAL) also became a pioneer in linking Africa by air. Besides being less developed, air travel in colonial Africa was long and expensive, since it often involved a circuitous flight via Europe. Between 1960–61, the EAL procured landing rights in Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Liberia. This immediately transformed the airline into becoming the first trans-African carrier with direct flight schedules between East and West Africa. As its own publication put it, the EAL was now to Africa what the trans-Siberian railroad had been to Russia more than half a century earlier.\textsuperscript{16}

However significant the above-named contributions, Ethiopia's lasting imprints on African politics lay in the pan-African arena, for, beyond any other factors, Haile Selassie's personal mystique as Africa's eldest statesman was responsible for the creation of the Organization of African Unity. The drive for African unity began in earnest after the 1957 independence of Ghana, until then the Gold Coast. In April 1958 Kwame Nkrumah convened in Ghana's capital, Accra, the First Conference of Independent African States to discuss the basis of African unification. Ethiopia was represented by Prince Sahle Selassie, Haile Selassie's youngest son. Whereas Guinea and Egypt sided with Ghana in calling for a united states of Africa, Ethiopia and Liberia adopted a more cautious position. In fact, Haile Selassie's written message to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Teshome Adera, \textit{Nationalist Leaders and African Unity} (Addis Ababa, 1963), 89.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Endalkatchew Makonnen, "Ethiopia's Role in Emergent Africa," \textit{Ethiopia Observer} 5, 1 (1960): 8-13.
\item \textsuperscript{15} This legal battle is the longest and most documented case in the history of the International Court. For primary sources, see International Court of Justice, \textit{Southwest Africa Cases: Ethiopia Versus South Africa; Liberia Versus South Africa} (Hague, 1966); University of California African Studies Center, \textit{Ethiopia and Liberia Versus South Africa: The Southwest Africa Cases} (Los Angeles, 1968). For a South African perspective, see South African Department of Information, \textit{Ethiopia and Liberia Versus South Africa} (Pretoria, 1966).
\end{itemize}
the conference stressed only the need for peace, collective security and unity of purpose.\footnote{Haile Selassie, \textit{Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty} (Addis Ababa, 1967), 189.}

The Accra conference was followed by an even larger international gathering in the Ethiopian capital several months later, out of which was born the United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa, ECA. In his inaugural address at the opening of the ECA, the Emperor stated emphatically the need for economic cooperation among Africans in order to end their dependence on the ex-colonial powers.\footnote{Ibid., 192-99.} "The economies of the African states," he explained, "have too long existed as separate, self-contained, isolated entities." Lest the vision for a united Africa remain a mere mirage, African leaders should strive together toward the transformation of their continent into a single economic block.\footnote{Ibid., 195.}

The Second Conference of Independent African States was held in Addis Ababa in June 1960 and was attended by nine countries. Ethiopia and Ghana continued to be on the opposite spectrum on the issue of unification. Nkrumah's position was that Africans should first "seek the political kingdom" and everything else would follow. Haile Selassie on the other hand saw close economic cooperation as a prerequisite for the achievement of political unity. He therefore proposed the construction of trans-national roads, the establishment of an African development bank, the merging of Africa's international air services, and the setting of cultural and educational exchange programs. Without such fundamental economic restructuring, he concluded, African freedom was nothing more than a smoke screen behind which the ex-colonial powers continued to exploit the continent.\footnote{Ibid., 199-204.}

As the nine independent states gathered in Addis Ababa, crisis was fermenting in the Congo, later Zaire, which was to drastically alter the course of pan-Africanism. Congo had gained independence from Belgium in June 1960. What began as a Congolese army revolt against its Belgian officers during the independence euphoria had, by fall 1960, escalated into a national civil war. There were three major rival factions involved. On one hand, supported by Belgian and South African mercenaries, were Moise Tshombe and his Katangese secessionists. On the other hand, Patrice Lumumba and Josef Casavubu, prime minister and president respectively, each had his faction along ethnic and regional lines. Subsequent intervention by an African coalition force under UN auspices could neither contain the civil war nor protect Lumumba from being murdered by his opponents.\footnote{Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, \textit{Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism} (New York, 1969), 148-56.}
A radical pan-Africanist and an advocate of a centralized Congo state, Lumumba had become the embodiment of Congolese nationalism in the eyes of many Africans. His death in the hands of the CIA-backed opposition forces in January 1961 caused a split in the Pan-African movement. As a result of the Congo fiasco, Nkrumah and his radical camp became ever more convinced of the idea of unification as the only path for Africa's political salvation. The conservative states, by contrast, continued to support Lumumba's political opponent: Casavubu and Casavubu's vision of a loosely-federated Congolese state. In order to express their support to Casavubu and what he stood for, the conservative states, most of them French speaking, met at Brazzaville Congo in December 1960 where they formed the Brazzaville Group. Following its 1961 conference in the Liberian capital, the Brazzaville Group later came to be known as the Monrovia Group. The creation of the Brazzaville/Monrovia club in turn prompted the radical states of Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Egypt, and Morocco, all of them supporters of the deceased Lumumba, to meet in the Moroccan city of Casablanca and form the Casablanca Group. Ethiopia joined neither group, preferring to remain neutral instead.22

Nigeria hosted the third conference of independent African states in January 1962. The Casablanca member states boycotted the meeting because of Nigeria's active membership in the Monrovian club. While attending the tension-ridden Lagos conference, Haile Selassie explained that his country belonged to neither the Monrovia nor the Casablanca camp. Ethiopia belonged to one group only, "the African group":

We will join in any deliberations. We will consider any plan. We will debate any proposal anywhere, and at any time; provided that it contributes to the maintenance of world peace, the development of Africa's human and material resources, and the protection of this continent's legitimate interests.23

In Lagos the Emperor embraced for the first time the concept of a singular African state. Unlike the Nkrumites, however, who insisted on unconditional and immediate dismantling of colonial boundaries, Haile Selassie regarded unification as a gradual, evolutionary process. His Lagos proposal specifically called for the creation of an "Organization of African states." Such a supra-national organization, in the Emperor's opinion, would not only serve as a clearinghouse for African political and economic problems, but also advance further the move toward political unity. Because of the absence of the Casablanca states from Lagos, this proposal was left hanging.

It was not until the May 1963 Addis Ababa summit that Haile Selassie's idea received serious attention and became the founding principle of the OAU.24 In 1962-63 Ethiopia served as a host for two pan-African gatherings. The first and the less known

22 Ibid., 154-59 and 161-76.
23 Haile Selassie, Selected Speeches, 219.
24 Ibid., 223-24.
one was the PAFMESCA conference, held in February 1962. The PAFMESCA conference was originally conceived by Julius Nyerere, president of the recently independent republic of Tanganyka. Nyerere believed strongly in regional federations as being the building blocks of a gradual yet total African integration. In organizing this conference, Nyerere hoped to explore ways and means of creating such federations at the regional level. Besides Tanganyka and Ethiopia, delegates to this meeting came from Somalia, Uganda, Sudan, as well as from the various colonial territories in eastern and southern Africa.25

The PAFMESCA gathering was particularly memorable for Nelson Mandela. Ethiopia had always held "a special place" in Mandela's imagination, and the prospect of visiting that country had attracted him more than a trip to anywhere else. "I thought I would be visiting my own genesis, unearthing the roots of what made me an African; meeting the Emperor himself would be like shaking hands with history." What he saw in Ethiopia during the PAFMESCA gathering left a lasting impression on Mandela.

Here, for the first time in my life, I was witnessing black soldiers, commanded by black generals, applauded by black leaders, who were all guests of a black head of state. It was a heavy moment. I only hoped it was a vision of what lay in the future for my own country.26

Unlike the 1962 PAFMESCA conference, which bore no lasting results of any kind, the May 1963 African summit in Addis Ababa was a watershed point in the history of pan-Africanism. It was attended by all heads-of-state from both the Casablanca and the Monrovia groups. In his opening address, Haile Selassie spoke of unification as an evolutionary process, since existing political and ideological differences impeded immediate transformation. He then presented a modified draft of his Lagos proposal on the creation of the Organization of African Unity. Among other things, he explained, the OAU would pave the way for total integration, aided by similar trans-national institutions like the "African university" and the "African development bank." The Emperor also suggested the formation of a joint African defense structure for mutual protection against foreign aggression. His draft did not fully satisfy either camp. It was, nonetheless, regarded as the final synthesis of ideas and a logical compromise, hence its unanimous approval and the birth of the OAU. The idea for an African university and common defense were not considered. But an African development bank was established in Khartoum the next year, in August 1964.27

If Haile Selassie's involvement in African affairs could be characterized as pragmatic, his relations with the black diaspora were, by contrast, idealistic and

26 Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom, 255-56.
27 Haile Selassie, Selected Speeches, 241-57.
sentimental. New World black awareness of Africa in the nineteenth century had been confined to the western portion of the continent because of Liberia's peculiar history as a black American colony. Interest in Northeast Africa emerged after the 1896 Ethiopian victory over the Italian colonial army at Adwa. Ethiopia's fame as the last bastion of African independence attracted some black visitors, and by the 1930s a small group of Garveyites had settled in Addis Ababa. Finally, interest in Ethiopia reached its climax during the 1935-36 Italian invasion, when blacks everywhere rallied behind the Ethiopian cause.  

In 1943 Yilma Deresa, Ethiopian deputy Minister of Finance, traveled to Washington to solicit material and financial aid for his government. Among his missions in the United States was a visit to Howard University, where he made an arrangement for some black teachers and technicians to come and work in Ethiopia. Accepting Yilma's invitation, two groups of blacks arrived in Addis Ababa in 1943 and 1944, each consisting of a half dozen individuals. The first group included teachers and technicians. Notable among them was William Steen who became editor of the Ethiopian official English newspaper, the Herald. The second group of blacks arrived in 1944 and were mainly airmen and airplane mechanics from Tuskegee. The group was led by John Robinson, an air force pilot who had served in Ethiopia during the 1935-36 war. Whereas the Tuskegee team returned to the United States in the late 1940s, Robinson opted to stay in Addis Ababa training Ethiopian pilots and technicians. He died in Ethiopia in 1954 a few days after a fatal air accident.  

David Talbot, a naturalized American of Guyanese origin, was perhaps the best known black immigrant in Ethiopia. From the time of his arrival in the country in the mid–1940s until his death in 1988, he served the Ethiopian government in different capacities. He replaced Steen as the next editor of the Herald. Under him, the Herald grew from being a weekly pamphlet to becoming a major influential daily paper. Talbot also ran the English language broadcast on the national radio service; and was later appointed director of African affairs in the ministry of foreign affairs. Among his literary contributions are three volumes on Ethiopia, dealing with such wide ranging

28 The two standard works on the black reaction to the 1935 Italian invasion of Ethiopia are: William Scott's Sons of Sheba's Race: African-Americans and the Italo-Ethiopian War, 1935-1941 (Bloomington, 1993), and Joseph Harris's African-American Reaction to War in Ethiopia, 1936-1941 (Baton Rouge, 1994). Both works also deal with the African-American ties with Ethiopia before the war.

29 Harris, Reaction to War in Ethiopia, 142-44.

30 Ibid., 144-51.

31 Scott, Sons of Sheba's Race, 69-80.

issues as history, international relations, education, commerce, government, agriculture, the Church and the role of the press.  

A Minnesotan by birth, Homer Smith had migrated to Russia in the early 1930s hoping to find a colorblind society there. Disenchanted by communist totalitarianism, Smith left Russia for Ethiopia in 1946. During his sixteen-year stay in Addis Ababa, 1946–1962, Smith served as a news correspondent for the Associated Press; ran the Mennen Magazine, Ethiopia’s first women’s forum; and also contributed scholarly articles to Ethiopian journals.

A physician from Texas, Charles Diggs, reached Ethiopia in 1947 by way of Paris. Diggs proceeded to open the first health clinic in the town of Debre–Birehan, about seventy-five miles north of the capital. Later on he moved to the eastern city of Diredawa where he ran another health clinic until his death in 1970.

The last black travelers to reach Ethiopia in the 1940s were James Piper and his wife Helen, originally from Montserrat. After a four-year stay in the country, the Pipers returned to New York in 1952 to finalize a special land grant arrangement between the Ethiopian government and the Ethiopian World Federation, the New York–based back-to-Africa movement. As a gesture of gratitude to the wartime black support, the Ethiopian government had offered five hundred acres of cultivable land to the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF). The donated land was situated in the Rift Valley district of Shashemene, about 160 miles south of the capital. The EWF was charged with the task of recruiting volunteer blacks—preferably those with farming skills—and sending them to Shashemene.

The Pipers were the first to take advantage of this generous offer and return to Ethiopia in the mid–1950s. The Shashemene settlement grew rapidly in the mid–1960s as dozens of West Indian families arrived in southern Ethiopia, following the Pipers’ example. A home to more than a hundred black emigres, Shashemene is now a source of special spiritual significance. Considered by many Rastafarians as the “black man’s promised land,” Shashemene continues to attract a number of West Indian pilgrims every year.

The 1950s echoed the birth of a militant student movement in Ethiopia, which added another dimension to Ethiopia’s post-war links with Caribbean and American blacks. Matriculation in European and American universities had availed many young Ethiopians of the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other blacks. While

34 Homer Smith, Black Man in Red Russia (Chicago, 1964), see postscript.
36 Horace Campbell, Rasta and Resistance: From Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney (Trenton, 1987), 222.
abroad, they witnessed Western racism firsthand; watched the unraveling of the civil rights movement in the American South, and read such nationalist writers as Fanon and Nkrumah. In short, they came to think of Ethiopia in global, pan-African terms.38

Evidential of this new political trend were a number of campus publications that expressed the students' sense of solidarity with Asian, African, and black American political aspirations. Such publications also reflected the students' increasing mistrust and suspicion of the West. A student poet thus captured the collegians' disenchantment with America in the wake of the Kennedy assassination:

Wake up to see your America Abraham Lincoln
What a backwardly moving nation it has become,
Alas America—I woe thee, pity–pitiable.
What a Civilization, what progress?
Africa for Kennedy it weeps,
And at thee America it laughs,
As each and every colored in thee does

As Ethiopians began to identify with black America in the 1950s, so did black Americans come to learn more about Ethiopia. A leading intellectual to whom Ethiopia remained a lifelong fascination was W. E. B. Du Bois. In one of his last works, The World and Africa, he described the Ethiopian leadership as a benevolent monarchy. By pitting "the capitalist nations against each other," Haile Selassie had tactfully kept Ethiopia outside the sphere of European influence, argued Du Bois. The Emperor made deals with the Dutch to construct sugar refineries, with the Swedes to run the new air force school, with the Belgians and the British to train the army and the police respectively. "The land is rich and plentiful," Du Bois added. "There is no race nor color prejudice, and intermarriage is encouraged." Du Bois understood, however, that Ethiopian post-war progress rested entirely on one man's shoulders. He therefore wondered which political path Ethiopia would follow should the Emperor die. Would it be "a capitalist private profit regime, or an increasingly democratic socialism; or some form of communism?"40

Malcolm X visited the OAU headquarters at Addis Ababa in November 1963, three months before his assassination. While in the African capital, an arrangement was made for Malcolm X to address the Addis Ababa University campus audience at the students' insistence. "His extremely powerful voice," it is said, "his excellent choice of words, but above all, the conviction and enthusiasm with which he spoke, kept all in the meeting literally spellbound." Whereas Du Bois's writings on Ethiopia

38 Balsvik, Haile Selassie's Students, 206-11.
39 Ibid., 199.
represented black intellectual perspectives, Malcolm X's trip to Addis Ababa demonstrated the growing practical links of political activism. His appearance in Addis Ababa in essence symbolized the crossroad point at which the Ethiopian pan-African crusade converged with black American militancy.41

Parallel to the Shashemene land grant and the students' pan-African idealism was the launching of evangelical activity in the Western hemisphere by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The initiative for this came from the new world blacks themselves who asked the Ethiopian Church to deploy branches abroad. Active efforts to spread the Faith began in 1952 with the dispatch to Trinidad of two Ethiopian priests: Gebre-Yesus Meshesha and Ato Abera Jembere.42 In 1954 the Ethiopian Church acquired plots of land in Trinidad, and was given recognition as a legal religious body on the island two years later. Abuna Theophilos, then assistant patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, visited Trinidad in 1959, during which he ordained twelve deacons and two priests.43 Trinidad has since been a home to "numerous" Ethiopian churches with tens of "thousands" of followers.44

The first two churches in New York, St. Michael the Archangel and the Holy Trinity Ethiopian Orthodox Church, were established in 1959. During the dedication ceremony alone, which was presided over by Abuna Theophilos, about 275 African-Americans were baptized. Following New York's exemplar, several Ethiopian churches would spring up throughout the United States, especially after the influx of thousands of Ethiopian refugees to North America in the 1970s and 1980s.45

Since the 1930s Jamaica had been a major center for a strong pro-Ethiopian sentiment. The first branch of the Ethiopian Church was set up on the island in May 1970 under the leadership of Archbishop Yesehaq. This branch became simply known as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and was housed at Kingston's Ebenezer Methodist Church.46 In the process of recruiting new converts, Father Yesehaq was often confronted by individuals who insisted to be baptized in the name of "Ras Tefari." "It was an extremely sorrowful and unforgettable moment for me at the registration meeting at Ebenezer Church," he reminisced, "especially when some Rastafarians angrily demanded to know, 'Who is Christ?!'"47 Patience and persistence consequently enabled Father Yesehaq to convert a large number of Rastafarians to the Ethiopian

41 Balsvik, Haile Selassie's Students, 200.
44 "Ethiopian Orthodox Church Marks 40th Year in TT," Trinidad Guardian (December 7, 1992).
45 Yesehaq, Ethiopian Tewahedo Church, 191-93.
46 Ibid., 204-7.
47 Ibid., 208.
Faith, resulting in the opening of several more branches of the Church throughout the island. 48

In addition to the role played by the Church, Haile Selassie’s travels in the United States and the Caribbean helped strengthen Ethiopia’s links with diaspora blacks. During the June 1954 official trip to the United States, Haile Selassie received an honorary doctoral degree from Howard University. While in New York, he toured Harlem, where he attended a Sunday service at the Abyssinian Church, one of the oldest independent black churches in North America. On this particular occasion, the service was conducted by the Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, the well-known black congressman and social activist from Harlem. 49

During his second call on the United States in October 1963, the Emperor paid a short visit to the Lincoln Memorial, the spot from which Martin Luther King had recently delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. 50 Although his aides had announced that the Emperor would grant no exclusive media interviews, an exception was made for Ebony, an African–American monthly. Having been chosen as the first chairperson of the newly founded OAU, the Emperor used this interview to emphasize the unity of purpose between Africans and African–Americans in their quests for freedom and equality. 51 The Emperor concluded his United States tour with a stop at the UN headquarters in New York, where he spoke strongly against Western acquiescence to the minority–ruled racist regimes of Southern Africa. This particular UN speech was made popular in the 1970s after the Reggae star, Bob Marley, used it as lyrics for one of his major hits, "War." 52

In 1966 Haile Selassie became the first African leader to visit the Caribbean nations of Trinidad, Haiti, and Jamaica. His week-long Caribbean tour began in Trinidad on April 18, where he was warmly welcomed by the island’s prime minister, Dr. Eric Williams. Among the special events for the occasion was a reception at the Medahne Alem Church in Port of Spain, which was attended by the Emperor and his entourage, as well as by thousands of Trinidadians, many of them in traditional Ethiopian attire. The next day, Haile Selassie spoke in the parliament. He visited the island of Tobago on the third day, where he attended a service at the Selassie Church. Before leaving Trinidad for Jamaica, he chose a spot in the capital for the construction of the St. Mary Ethiopian Orthodox Church and laid down the first stone of its foundation. 53

48 Ibid., 210-17.
52 Haile Selassie, Selected Speeches, 374.
53 Ethiopian Information Ministry, Janhoy Be Karibian Desetoch (Addis Ababa, 1966), 1-3.
Haile Selassie's visit to Jamaica was a high point in the island's national history. April 21, the date of his arrival, was declared a public holiday by the Jamaican government to honor the historic moment. The welcoming crowd at Palisadoes, Kingston's international airport, was estimated at fifty to one hundred thousand, the largest gathering ever. In great anticipation, celebration had begun the previous night with the arrival of thousands of Rastafarians at the airport from all over the island. Ethiopian flags, African dresses, palm leaves, drums, and fireworks gave the whole reception a carnival–like atmosphere. As soon as the imperial plane landed, however, law and order broke down when an exuberant Rastafarian crowd charged into the airport terminal. It took a full half hour and a personal appeal to the crowd by the Emperor before the runway was cleared for disembarkation. Because of the chaos, the special red-carpet reception and the military salute were canceled, and the monarch had to be whisked out of the airport in great haste.

Notwithstanding the anarchy and confusion, the whole procession was described as "a welcome of superlatives" by the Daily Gleaner, the island's major newspaper. "There never has been in the whole history of Jamaica," the Gleaner stated, "such a spontaneous heart-warming and sincere welcome to any person—whether visiting monarch, visiting V.I.P., or returning leader of any Jamaican party."54 Another article in the Gleaner described an interesting meteorological anecdote that coincided with the Emperor's arrival in Jamaica. It had been raining profusely around the Palisadoes airport when Haile Selassie's plane flew in to Kingston. But as soon as the Emperor's plane landed, the downpour stopped and the sun burst out through the dark clouds. For the thousands of Rastafarians at the scene, this was perceived as a sign of Haile Selassie's divinity. The mesmerized Rastafarian crowd, the Gleaner reported, exploded into such a joyous "roar" as "had never been heard at Palisadoes before."55

During the three-day stay in Jamaica, Haile Selassie's tight schedule ranged from speaking to a packed audience at the stadium to meeting with Rastafarian dignitaries. On April 22 he addressed the Jamaican parliament for a half hour. To underscore his personal commitment to universal education, which was the major theme of the speech, the Emperor promised the construction of a new secondary school in Kingston at his own personal expense as a gift to the Jamaican people.56 On the twenty-third, the Emperor and his entourage arrived in Montego Bay by train to another spectacular welcome. On the twenty-fourth, they left Jamaica for Haiti, where they would spend the next two days before flying back to Ethiopia.57

55 Ibid., 14.
56 After completion, the school was named in his honor as Haile Selassie I Secondary School, the name under which it still operates.
57 Ethiopian Ministry of Information, Janhoy be Karibian Desetoch, 38-42.
This paper has explored social and political links between Ethiopia and the African world at large. Although Ethiopian independence had long remained a beacon of hope and inspiration for peoples of color, there were only sporadic contacts between Ethiopians and other blacks prior to the 1930s. Ethiopian pan-African consciousness did not therefore emerge until the 1940s in reaction to Italian and British colonial presence in the country. In the 1950s Ethiopia was catapulted onto the center stage of the pan-African scene both by Haile Selassie's conviction in collective security and by the intelligentsia's search for a broader trans-African identity. By the early 1960s Ethiopia had become a prominent African state without whose leadership role the creation of the OAU would have been impossible. A major tribute to Ethiopia's efforts in bringing a semblance of unity to the continent has since been the choice of Addis Ababa as the seat of the OAU, hence Africa's de facto capital.

The post-war decades similarly marked a sharp surge in Ethiopian interest in New World blacks. However small their number, American blacks were among the first groups of Western expatriates to serve in Ethiopia in the wake of the Italian departure. Although most of these blacks later returned home, some stayed permanently in Ethiopia. David Talbot and John Robinson were two such exemplars whose lifelong commitments to the country left a positive impression. Links between Ethiopians and new world blacks became even more conspicuous in the ensuing decades by the transplantation of the Ethiopian Church in the West, as well as by Haile Selassie's periodic trips abroad. By the late 1960s Ethiopia had thus come a long way. The medieval Ethiopian self-perception as an outpost of Christianity was now shattered, replaced by new sets of cultural and sociopolitical convictions, through which Ethiopia became part and parcel of a much larger African world.
PERSONALITY AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN ETHIOPIAN HISTORY: THE CASE OF EMPEROR TEWODROS

by Donald Crumme

The emperor Tewodros provides a rich point of departure for thinking about Ethiopia's historic political culture and the role of personality in it. Recent events have underlined both the necessity for a reassessment of these issues and the pertinence to them of Tewodros's example. A single, widely-accepted framework for scholarly thinking about Ethiopian history emerged from the History Department at Addis Ababa University during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. However, in May 1991 that framework was called into question by the collapse of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the coming to power of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Several challenges to the older interpretive paradigm deserve consideration.

The EPRDF and its Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) espouse the view that Ethiopia's meaningful history is essentially 100 years deep, events preceding the mid-nineteenth century having little relevance for contemporary political understanding or action. (Paradoxically, this view gains added force from the fact that it is also promoted by one of the major opposition parties, the Oromo Liberation Front.) The EPRDF has launched Ethiopia on its second revolution in less than twenty years, a second that marks as radical a departure from received norms as did the first. The masters of the first revolution, the Derg, embarked Ethiopia down the path toward revolutionary socialism; their models were the "people's democracies" exemplified by the Soviet Union. The EPRDF, though shaped by the same Leninist "vanguard" tradition of political organization and leadership, has launched a reorganization of the country according to the principles of ethnicity and regionalism, which it seeks to combine. Whereas the Derg endorsed and carried forward many elements of the prerevolutionary regime's understanding of Ethiopian history, notably the conviction that Ethiopia is more than the sum of its constituent ethnic parts, this principle the EPRDF rejects; rather, it gives priority to ethnicity and articulates no higher or more inclusive vision of what Ethiopia might be. Since the victory of the EPRDF there has been a dramatic increase in the salience of ethnicity in political discourse; an issue

1 Themes to which Harold Marcus has contributed in a number of studies, most notably in The Life and Times of Menelik II of Ethiopia, 1844-1913 (Oxford, 1975) and Haile Sellassie I. The Formative Years, 1892-1936 (Berkeley, 1987).

previously discussed in muted tones has come to the fore. In that respect the discourse of Ethiopians has taken a notable step toward that of their Kenyan neighbors, for all the differences that continue to mark the political culture of the two countries. While the Ethiopian centralist tradition, defended by both the monarchy and the Derg, has lost political purchase, it is not without advocates; many intellectuals continue to support it, as do many peasants and functionaries. But for the time being the EPRDF and the TGE have succeeded in threatening if not silencing these voices and in marginalizing their organizations.

Tewodros is a good point of departure for re-examining historic Ethiopian political culture. He is universally accepted as having started the modern revival of the monarchy; even Haile Sellassie conceded that point. Enduring interest arises from the ambivalence that his successors, most notably but not only Haile Sellassie, exhibited towards Tewodros. His example was most recently brought to the center of Ethiopian politics in the last days of the Derg leader Mengistu Haile Mariam. As the insurgent EPRDF forces moved relentlessly towards Addis Ababa, Mengistu evoked the memory of Tewodros, of his cannon factory at Gafat, and of the British march on Magdala. It was a chilling evocation, though fortunately the implicitly threatened *Gotterdammerung* never took place. Mengistu's instinct for self-preservation was greater than Tewodros', and besides, he had somewhere to go. Consideration of Tewodros raises at least three major issues concerning Ethiopia's historic political culture: the importance of the leader, and hence of individual personality; of violence as a recurrent factor; and of ideology as a rich mine for legitimation and communication. Specifically, to what extent did Tewodros consciously stand within and draw upon a political tradition, and what was his attitude, clearly complex, towards established religion in the person of the Church?

**Personality**

After a century in which the fate of the country has been profoundly influenced by three individuals—Menilek, Haile Sellassie and Mengistu—few observers of Ethiopia could doubt the importance of leadership, and hence of personality, as a factor in politics. (The role of Meles Zenawi in current developments underlines the point.) To be sure, some influential trends in contemporary thought resist this idea. Social history, for example, emphasizes groups, and rightly demonstrates how the lives of individuals are shaped by broad social and economic forces, while other factors, notably technology and culture, are also at work. These forces establish the framework of possibility within which leadership is exercised and determine a leader's opportunities and limits. Yet we would be mistaken to suppose that all political systems are similarly configured, so as to set the same limits and offer identical opportunities. Political

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systems are always more or less highly institutionalized, but in diverse ways; moreover, conditions also change over time, so that different epochs are likely to offer leaders a range of more or less pregnant opportunities for political choice.

The last century and a half of Ethiopian political history, from Tewodros to Meles, provides numerous examples of the essentially patrimonial character of the historic monarchy and the underlying importance of prominent individuals in social and political affairs. Ethiopia's historic monarchy was decidedly autocratic. Given its time depth and the scope of its sway, measured both in numbers of subjects and extent of territory, the monarchy was necessarily institutionalized. But all the institutions resembled the physical layout of the royal camp in that they pointed inward toward the person of the monarch. Formal councils existed but had little independent life, for the nobility never took on a corporate character that would have allowed it collectively to check the power of the monarch. Such a system magnified the personal role of the ruler.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought to bear upon Ethiopia alien forces that dwarfed any individual and engulfed each successive ruler in an ever-expanding network of relationships to the often acquisitive outside world. While prominent historic political actors of earlier times such as Amda S'eyon, Zar'a Ya'qob, Ahmad ibn Ibrahim, Susenjos, Iyasu I, Mintiwab, and Mika'el Sehul undoubtedly shaped the fate of the country in their day, the impinging forces of the last two centuries magnified the importance of the decisions of contemporary African and Asian rulers. Alas, we have no ready conceptual framework that allows us to theorize these momentous choices, nor a model that affords an objective measure of their impact. Yet the questions remain: What choices did Tewodros make that another ruler might not have made? What impact did his personality have on Ethiopian political history?

Tewodros made the decision to end the Zamana Masafent by fiat through seizing the throne for himself. His success in doing so profoundly influenced both his contemporaries and his successors, and has shaped historiographical understanding of the action to the extent that alternative possibilities have been obscured. From the vantage point of 1850 at least two different scenarios seem plausible, each of which would have produced an outcome different from what in fact ensued. Tewodros might have chosen to act as king-maker rather than king, opting for a role comparable to that of Mika'el Sehul; this would have entailed working through a puppet emperor, a course of action with obvious limitations but, as the broadly comparable experience of Meiji Japan suggests, a course also endowed with significant opportunities. Tewodros chose to sweep this option aside with propaganda to the effect that it represented

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4 The work of Donald N. Levine points in these directions. See his Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture (Chicago, 1965), and Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society (Chicago, 1974).

5 For example, see Taddesse Tamrat's discussion of Zar'a Ya'qob and the structure of the royal court in his Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270–1527 (Oxford, 1972), 240, 268–85.
decadence; this was a choice, however compelling it may appear from hindsight. Alternatively, Tewodros might have curbed his ambition, or have failed in his attempt to establish himself as King of Kings in such a way as to discredit the option in the eyes of posterity; in that case, Ethiopia might have gone on to experience the latter half of the nineteenth century in as divided a political condition as it had experienced the first. Revival of the monarchical state was by no means inevitable, nor was it achieved solely by force of arms. Tewodros not only bequeathed to his successors Yohannes and Menilek the practical example of how a strong man might make himself emperor, he also made ideological choices that established a template for them. Ethiopia's ideological heritage, far from constituting a straitjacket, offered a variety of thematic options that granted considerable significance to a leader's individual decisions, and to an extent not generally appreciated Yohannes and Menilek followed the path laid down by Tewodros. This issue will be explored more fully below; here, it is important merely to stress the importance of the individual leader's ideological choices.

Violence
By the standards of his place and time Tewodros was a violent figure. He started his career as a shefta, won his way to the throne on the battlefield and spent much of his time as emperor in military campaigns. The latter years of his reign, especially the four years from 1864, were marked by turbulence and repression; he sacked the former national capital of Gondar and conducted bitter campaigns in Wollo, and later Bagemeder. This violent facet of his personality probably assisted Tewodros's rise to the throne, but it made the process of re-establishing the monarchy bloodier than it need have been and more costly to the ordinary people who bore the brunt of his fury.

The violence of Tewodros's personality and its impact on subsequent Ethiopian history raises the more general question of the place of violence across the broad chronological sweep of the Ethiopian experience. Violence plays such a prominent part

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6 The decadence of the Zamana Masafent as a point of departure for the redeeming role of "Tewodros" is a major theme of the chronicle that he sponsored. Dabtara Zanab, YaTewodros Tarik, published as Enno Littmann, ed., The Chronicle of King Theodore of Abyssinia (Princeton, 1902), Amharinya text only. The only complete translation into a European language is M. M. Moreno, "La cronaca di re Teodoro attribuita al dabtara 'Zanab,'" Rassegna di Studi Etiopici 2 (1942): 143-80.


9 The best account of Tewodros's career remains Sven Rubenson, King of Kings: Tewodros of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa, 1966).

10 A chronicle written after the emperor's death vividly captured the ethos of these years; see Walda Mariam, Mas'ha Tarik ZaTewodros Negusa Ityoppya, published as Chronique de Theodoro II Roi des Rois d'Ethiopie (1853-1868) d'après un Manuscrit Original, ed. Casimir Mondon-Vidalhat (Paris, n.d.).
in Ethiopian history that one must see it as a part of the country's political culture. In this Ethiopia is not unique, for violence is an intrinsic feature of all states, and contemporary parallels to the Ethiopian examples cited here may be found also in many other lands. Nor is violence by any means the only facet of Ethiopian political culture; indeed, part of the discussion to follow introduces a developed body of Ethiopian ideological ideas that stood as a counterweight to the practice of violence. Nonetheless violence played a vital role in the modern revival of the Ethiopian state, and during the last twenty years has had a searing impact on the country. If alternative forms of political behavior are now to prevail, the roots of historical patterns of violence must be squarely faced.

Every succession to the throne from 1855 to 1890 was determined on the battlefield.11 Both Tewodros and Yohannes, the first modern emperors, came to the throne through the institution of sheftentat.12 "Bandit" and "rebel" are both reasonable renderings of the term shefta, a term whose semantic range entails outlawry and violent rejection of the established order. This suggests there was a precarious balance in early modern Ethiopian politics between law and lawlessness, and that violence was embedded in the very construction of the state. While these features are probably intrinsic to all states, Ethiopians have been obliged to confront them in their distinctively Ethiopian manifestations.

Ethiopia's historical experience with violence was by no means limited to the modern period; it may be perceived in all earlier periods open to investigation. Consider the early Solomonic era. Yekuno Amlak claimed the throne by slaying his predecessor on the battlefield. His succession was militarily contested by a number of male relatives. Amda S'eyon and Zar'a Ya'qob were the most distinguished members of the dynasty. Amda S'eyon's main claim to fame is his vigor as a campaigner and his military successes in expanding the area under his rule. Zar'a Ya'qob is better remembered for his achievements in the area of church-state relations and his authorship of several books of theology; nonetheless he made extensive use of physical terror as an instrument with which to impose religious uniformity, and was as active on the battlefield as were his dynastic predecessors and successors.13

Or again, consider the convulsive years from 1529 to 1632; they witnessed an Islamic jihad, followed by the wars associated with the Oromo migrations, to be


13 For Amda S'eyon and Zar'a Yaqob, see Taddesse, Church and State, esp. chaps. 4 and 6.
capped by the turbulent reign of Susenyos. Conventional understanding of this century obscures how the violence of the Solomonic state contributed to it and how much of that violence turned inward as the century wore on. The account that Ahmad ibn Ibrahim sponsored of his jihad reveals its violence. This may be a stylistic device not to be taken literally, yet it does reflect on the temper of the age. Moreover, the terser, more prosaic Christian accounts of the relations between the Solomonic state and its tributary Muslim states before the jihad provide ample contextualization for this particular example of institutionalized religious violence. The reign of Sars'a Dengel was one of unusual harshness for his subjects, thanks to the depredations of the royal armies. His reign led to a fundamental crisis of state and class relations, which was only partly resolved by a period of intense civil war at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Religious violence ensued, thanks to Susenyos's attempt to use Catholicism as an answer to the problems that the reign of Sars'a Dengel had brought to the fore; the struggle continued through the seventeenth and eighteenth and into the nineteenth century in the form of sectarian disputes within the Orthodox Church. Theological disputes intensified by rivalries between different monastic orders not only cost the participants humiliation, but also bodily harm and frequently even their lives.

There is no need to belabor the point with a discussion of the many campaigns of the early Gondar emperors, of the civil strife that brought down the Gondar kingdom, and that then replaced it during the Zamana Masafent, or of the processes through which the modern Ethiopian state emerged.

One should not exaggerate the importance of violence in Ethiopian history, however, for that is far from the whole story of Ethiopian political culture. The state rested upon the productive activities of millions of farmers and herders, activities that required a social order and regularity achieved through the set of institutional relations called gult. The state also created institutions for the peaceful resolution of conflict; Haile Sellassie's conduct of chelot is but the most recent example of an

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16 For example, see Zar’a Ya’qob’s treatment of Badlay, king of Adal, in Jules Perruchon, Les Chroniques de Zar’a Ya’qob et de Ba’eda Märyäm, rois d’Éthiopie de 1434 à 1478 (Texte Éthiopien et Traduction), Précédées d’une Introduction (Paris, 1893), 65–66. For a campaign by one of Lebna Dengel’s generals in 1527, see Rene Basset, Études sur l’Histoire d’Éthiopie (Paris, 1882), 13, 103.

Ethiopian ruler devoting large amounts of time and energy to dispensing justice.\textsuperscript{18} The elders of each community distributed land and arbitrated disputes, while national, regional and local leaders of the Church actively promoted peace and reconciliation. Finally, Ethiopian culture maintained a rich ideological tradition upon which Tewodros, his predecessors and his successors all drew.

\textbf{Ideology}

Ideology is a body of ideas, thoughts and symbols used to persuade and influence. Although ideology may be imposed by force, and although certain forms of ideology glorify force, ideology begins to function as a body of thought where force ends; it attempts to influence thought and behavior by reaching beyond the range of instruments of violence or, where such have already been deployed, by rendering them unnecessary. Since the thirteenth century, if not also before, the Ethiopian state has drawn upon an indigenous Zionist ideology that legitimated the rule of a line of kings ostensibly descended from Solomon and Sheba. While this ideology has conventionally been interpreted far too narrowly in terms of mere dynastic legitimacy, Donald Levine has shown that it was really a national charter replete with social and cultural meanings, while Taddesse Tamrat has shown how it served as a political charter.\textsuperscript{19} The career of Tewodros provides examples of how pliable and flexible it was.

Tewodros drew on Solomonic ideology in a number of different ways: in the apocalyptic appeal of his regnal name that promised salvation to the kingdom, in his claim to divine election as \textit{seyuma egzi'abeher}, and in his insistence on the centrality of Christianity and the institution of the Church to the destiny of the Ethiopian state and nation.\textsuperscript{20} In his understanding of Ethiopian history Tewodros was profoundly influenced by the Gondarine period, and on several occasions he drew from it examples with which to fortify arguments in public debate. To broadcast his message he manipulated a rich set of symbols drawn from the Solomonic tradition, in particular his name, his title of \textit{negusa nagast} and his regnal slogan \textit{yaKrestos barya}.

Tewodros was also an innovator within the Solomonic tradition. His predecessors as emperors had practiced royal seclusion; they wore a veil in public and held court from behind a curtain, communicating through their \textit{afa negus}.\textsuperscript{21} These practices Tewodros abandoned in favor of a much more open style, a style also adopted by his successors to one degree or another. Tewodros's predecessors on the throne had followed the marriage practices of the nobility, who had multiple, simultaneous liaisons whose legal status ranged from concubinage to full marriage. Imperial divorce and remarriage had been very frequent. It was thus a radical step indeed when Tewodros

\textsuperscript{19} Levine, \textit{Greater Ethiopia}, chap. 7; and Taddesse, \textit{Church and State}, 248–50.
\textsuperscript{20} These points are elaborated with citations to the sources in Clrummey, "Imperial Legitimacy and the Creation of Neo-Solomonic Ideology."
\textsuperscript{21} Eike Haberland, \textit{Untersuchungen zum Äthiopischen Königtum} (Wiesbaden, 1965), 163–70.
adopted for royalty the practice of the clergy: strict indissoluble monogamy sanctioned by Holy Communion. In this his original devotion was so strict as to question the propriety of a second marriage after the death of his first wife Tawabach.22

Conventional historiography has wrongly taken most of these things for granted. In all these areas Tewodros made choices that influenced not only his own conduct but that of his successors, for they followed him in flexible interpretation of the Solomonic legacy. For example, consider the question of dynastic succession, which Tewodros had tried to leave open. The issue eventually did arise during the latter years of Tewodros's reign when his legitimacy, measured by terms he himself had set forward, had come under attack.23 His soon to be victorious rival and successor Yohannes fronted the issue out by claiming Solomonic descent through the female line, and justified this departure from the accepted norm by reference to none other than Jesus Christ. Was He not, Yohannes's chronicler asked rhetorically, the son of David through Mary his mother? Tewodros's successors also imitated his use of pregnant slogans and symbols. Thus Yohannes styled himself the "King of Zion" (Negusa S'eyon), a claim that not only embraced the whole Solomonic legacy but also and subtly turned to his advantage his Tigray origins; was he not associated with Aksum, at once the local source of Ethiopian kingship, since kings were traditionally crowned there, and also the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant, purloined from Solomon's temple by his son Menilek I? A number of other specific innovations of Tewodros in the realm of ideology were also maintained by his successors, even when there was no obvious reason to do so; these included the abandonment of seclusion, royal monogamy, support for Tawahedo theological doctrine, organizational unity for the Church, and within the Church structure the primacy of the office of bishop.

Solomonic ideology, sometimes in vestigial form, has continued to be of importance in Ethiopian political culture throughout the twentieth century. The case of Haile Sellassie requires little comment other than to observe that he was so successful in projecting his own reading of Solomonic ideology that he has confused much subsequent discussion. It was he, for example, who helped to limit it through focus on the issue of dynastic descent. Mengistu Haile Mariam and the Derg succeeded in imposing at the national level a Soviet reading of the Marxist–Leninist legacy, yet virtually at the origin of this enterprise, as early as 1977, they began to appeal to an Ethiopian patriotism that had been profoundly shaped by the Solomonic legacy. Much the same may be said for Meles Zenawi and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. Despite the rhetoric of post-colonial nationalism in the case of Eritrea and of ethnic nationalism and regionalism in the case of the TPLF/EPRDF/TGE, the fate of both Eritrea and Ethiopia still lies in the hands of Abyssinian people, heirs to the sociocultural script of the Solomonic myth. Solomonic ideology, if only in a residual

22 Rubenson, King of Kings, 56.
23 Crummey, "Imperial Legitimacy and Neo-Solomonic Ideology," 20–22, 31–33.
form, played a role in the rise of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the TPLF through the sense of history and mission which, as Levine has pointed out, it gave to the Tigrinya-speaking people.²⁴

History
Part of the continuing appeal of Tewodros is his image as a revolutionary, someone eager to move Ethiopia forward into a new future. This kind of revolution is closely involved with patriotism, another strand in his continuing legacy, for some of the urgency about change comes from pride in Ethiopia and a concern at its standing in the world of nations, from a sense that it may be lagging behind.²⁵ This revolutionary image dominates both popular and scholarly understanding of Tewodros, and obscures the extent to which he was rooted in and shaped by a specific historical tradition. Yet it is clear that as King of Kings Tewodros was profoundly shaped by what he knew of the past; an immediate past that he rejected, in the name of a deeper past whose glories he sought to revive and on whose precedents he sought to build.

Tewodros built himself up as the one who ended the Zamana Mesafent, the era of decline and disintegration; to establish his own claims, he disseminated propaganda about its decadence.²⁶ But at several liminal moments he revealed his knowledge of Ethiopian history. The first moment came early in his reign, in September 1856, during a confrontation with the Church over a variety of issues among which property was the most prominent. Tewodros sought to recover from the Church some of the lands that the Gondar kings had granted to it as gul; he wanted the gul lands to support his troops. The clergy replied that he should follow the example of his predecessors and move around the country on a seasonal basis, drawing his sustenance from the tribute of a regular succession of different provinces. The details proposed closely reflect patterns in the chronicle of Iyasu the Great, although it remained for the emperor to draw this specific inference.²⁷ He replied to the suggestion with the charge that the clergy made this proposition simply to get him into their hands so that they could murder him as they had murdered Iyasu. Although the surface account of the incident in Tewodros's chronicle is a bland narrative in simple sentences, the exchange was complex and deeply informed by a sense of history and precedent. The moment was indeed

²⁴ Levine, Greater Ethiopia, chap. 7.
²⁵ Rubenson, King of Kings, 47. This mix of attitudes characterized the leaders of the 1960 coup d'etat; see Bahru Zewde, A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855–1974 (London/Athens, OH/Addis Ababa, 1991).
²⁶ The best source is his own chronicle, Zanab, YaTewodros Tarik, but its themes are reflected in a variety of contemporary sources. Rubenson discusses some of these issues in his King of Kings.
important, for it came in the second year of his reign and marked a turning point in the relations between the contending parties.

Tewodros made a second concrete historical reference at another important moment. As opposition to him grew, in 1863 he confronted the challenge to his legitimacy through the issue of an edict concerning his origins. "I am on the throne of my fathers," he claimed, "from Abraham to David and from David to Fasil. . ."28 Of the long list of Ethiopian kings, running back to Aksumite times, it is significant that Tewodros should evoke the name of Fasil, founder of the Gondar kingdom. Fasil's reign, from 1632 to 1667, had begun the most recent glorious era of the Solomonic kings. The legacy of the era was evident wherever Tewodros turned, from the town of Gondar itself, to the churches and palaces that dotted the landscape through which he moved, to the social relationships that had carried down from the gult grants of its rulers. Tewodros derived his sense of what was normative for the kingdom of Ethiopia and for Ethiopian kings from what he understood of the glorious era initiated by Fasil.

The Church
Sven Rubenson, in his seminal account of Tewodros, blames his inability to realize his goal of a reconstructed Ethiopian kingdom primarily on Tewodros's failure to come to terms with the Church.29 He provides a clear and well-documented account of the emperor's quarrels with the clergy in general and with the bishop, Abuna Salama, in particular. However, these disputes should not be allowed to obscure the measures Tewodros took to build up the Church and the extent to which he succeeded in laying a template for the next century of institutional relations between the Church and the Ethiopian state.30

Conclusion
The case of Tewodros draws attention to three facets of Ethiopia's historic political culture: the importance of individual leadership, and hence of personality; its intrinsic violence; and the wealth and flexibility of Solomonic ideology. There are of course other facets, some of which may be best illuminated from a different point of departure. The Ethiopia of Tewodros is but one of many examples of the importance of leadership in autocratic, pre-capitalist states; certainly nineteenth-century African history offers many similar cases. Moreover the importance of leadership, and hence of personality, was much enhanced by the epochal choices that Europe's expanding capitalist economy

28 I am indebted to Professor Sven Rubenson for access to a copy of this edict. Originally issued in Amharic, it is available now only in a French version, published in Le Tour du Monde in 1863 by the traveler and consul Guillaume Lejean.
29 Rubenson, King of Kings, 67-73, especially 72.
Presented; decisions made by leaders in the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century shaped the destiny of nations. Tewodros also forces one to recognize the importance of violence as a component of Ethiopian political culture; granted he was an unusually violent figure by the standards of his time, nonetheless his rise to power draws attention to the importance of the institution of *shefnten* in the careers of many Ethiopian nobles, and of warfare in determining the fate of the country and its rulers throughout history. Yet just as it is important to recognize the violence of Ethiopian politics, it is also important not to exaggerate it, for violence was counterbalanced by many institutions and by ideology. Tewodros deployed Solomonic ideology skillfully and innovatively, setting an example to be followed for over a century. His example confirms the importance of ideology in general and exposes some of the hidden potential of the Solomonic ideology in particular.

Ethiopia's political resources are being tested to their limits by events of the 1990s. The times call for a quality of leadership the country has not enjoyed for many decades. Violence has become the arbiter of the country's fate, and only a consciousness of how strong a component within Ethiopia's political culture it actually is will allow concerned Ethiopians to contain and limit it. Finally, only a critical appreciation of the breadth and richness of Solomonic ideology and of its contributions to the country's development will allow Ethiopia to move beyond it.
"FRENCH AFRICANS": FAIDHERBE, ARCHINARD AND COPPOLANI, THE "CREATORS" OF SENEGAL, SOUDAN AND MAURITANIA

by David Robinson

In late 1944 French intellectuals began to think of the role that the "Empire" had played in the liberation of France and in the life of the nation generally. Robert Delavignette, a former colonial official and head of the colonial training school,¹ and Charles-André Julien, an emerging historian of Algeria, combined to publish Les constructeurs de la France d'Outre-Mer² to commemorate the debt to the colonies by publishing the main "action" texts written by the pioneers of the First and Second Empires.

The creation of the Second Empire began, it is usually assumed, with the conquest of the Algerian coast in 1830. Thomas Bugeaud, one of the constructeurs, played a leading role in the expansion of the French coastal enclave in the 1840s and put his mark on the character of colonial administration.³ The next significant step in the story of the Second Empire was expansion in Senegal in the 1850s, where the chief architect was another constructeur, Leon Louis César Faidherbe. Faidherbe established the outlines of not only the French territory of Senegal but crucial elements of what became French West Africa. He ran a forceful, sometimes brutal administration, possessed a useful knowledge of indigenous societies and their weaknesses, and demonstrated a capacity for manipulating information to advantage for metropolitan consumption.

This paper deals with Faidherbe and two other Frenchmen who can be classified as constructeurs for West Africa: Louis Archinard, and Xavier Coppolani. The three men were the architects, respectively, of Senegal, Soudan (Mali) and Mauritania. In imperial circles they were all africains. They had no intention of settling or retiring in Africa; they were "African" in the same way that they were "Imperialists," part of a closed system whose members lived in cycles of going out to the colonies and returning to the metropole. Faidherbe was first an algérien and then a sénégalais; he was also a mauritanien and soudanais by vision, and he followed expansion to the Niger in the

¹ The Ecole Coloniale became the Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer under Delavignette's leadership in 1937. He had served in French West Africa and was one of the leading intellectuals of the empire. William Cohen, Rulers of Empire. The French Colonial Service in Africa (Hoover Institution Press, 1971), 99-104, 143-48.

² Paris, 1946. The work appears in a series edited by Charles Braibant and entitled, "Les Grandes Professions Francaises: Collection d'Anthologies," and is dedicated to Felix Eboué, the first black Governor General who had recently passed away.

1880s with great interest. Archinard was the archetypical *soudanais* and the leader of the clique that lobbied for *soudanais* interests in Paris, when he was not on the ground in West Africa. Coppolani was a Corsican who became *algérien* in his formative years, used his Algerian Islamic expertise to become a *soudanais* and then the *mauritanien* who would "pacify" the last big block of French West Africa. His career was interrupted by assassination in 1905, but his imprint on "his" territory remained every bit as great as Faidherbe's and Archinard's on "theirs."

These men left their mark on the land, peoples and institutions of West Africa to a remarkable degree. In part this was due to French military superiority and the confidence borne of a sense of intellectual and cultural superiority over African societies. In part it was due to the extraordinary energy, efficiency, and ambition of the individuals, and the fact that each operated on the "frontier" of French expansion at a given moment. But it was also because the French regime did not pay careful attention to their arena of activity. Where cabinets and citizens might watch closely over the Mediterranean theater, they paid much less attention to what was going on in West Africa. These activities fell under the less prestigious Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, and under the specific supervision of the even less prestigious *infanterie de marine, artillerie de marine* and *troupes coloniales*. Under these conditions ambitious men could create a legacy for themselves.

Faidherbe, Archinard and Coppolani "constructed" their territories when they were in the prime of life, in their thirties, and ambitious for further achievement. None were distinguished students, but they distinguished themselves by their subsequent actions and, in the case of Faidherbe and Coppolani, by their scholarly writings. Each knew well the requirements for metropolitan support of a local agenda, and took advantage of that knowledge and of annual furloughs to manipulate the understanding of key officials. Each had a trusted team of collaborators who left their mark on the territories and in many cases stayed on after the *constructeur* had left.

The story of the three men and their "constructions" is ultimately about the political culture of French colonialism. As African history has emerged as a field of research and teaching over the last forty years, scholars and generalists have sought to remedy the weakness of the African perspective in the precolonial and colonial histories of the continent. In the process the distinctions among European initiatives, the variations in time, the conflicts among departments, and the impact of individual personalities have been neglected. For French rule in West Africa, this neglect has

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4 By the time of Archinard and Coppolani, *sénégalais* had come to mean a conservative no longer interested in imperial expansion.

5 A separate Ministry of Colonies was created in 1894. For this and the whole story of expansion in West Africa, see Sydney Kanya-Forstner, *The Conquest of the Western Sudan. A Study in French Military Imperialism* (Cambridge, 1969).
continued, with the exception of a few scholars such as Sydney Kanya-Forstner and Yves Person.6

Faidherbe and the "creation of Senegal"

Of the three men in question, Faidherbe (1818–1889) is by far the best known.7 He is prominent because he stands at the beginning of the French empire in West Africa, remained an articulate and influential "republican" exponent of expansion for the rest of his life and—in contrast to some of his fellow generals—played a respectable if not heroic role in the Franco-Prussian War.

Faidherbe got his training as engineer at the Ecole Polytechnique and the Metz Engineering Corps. He spent six years in Algeria sandwiched around a period of service in Guadeloupe. His Algerian experience corresponded to the tenure of Bugeaud, and gave him exposure to the Arabic language, Islamic societies, hard and harsh military campaigns, and the institution of bureaux arabes, all of which would play a large role in his approach to Senegal. His stay in Guadeloupe corresponded to the abolition of slavery in the empire (1848), and his declarations against slavery have passed into his image in French texts.8

In 1852 Faidherbe arrived in St. Louis, the capital of the network of French posts in Senegal, as the head of the Engineering Corps. He gained valuable experience over the next two years by traveling up the Senegal River and down the coast and directing public work projects. At some point during that time he developed a close relationship with the Bordeaux commercial houses that dominated French commerce around Senegal, and especially with Maurel and Prom. By the end of 1854, and partly through Bordeaux' intervention with the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies, he became governor, and he served in this position longer than any other person in the nineteenth century (1854–1861, 1863–1865).

Faidherbe was an Army man serving in a colonial outpost under the Navy. He began his service as Governor as a chef de bataillon and was already a général de brigade by 1861. He chose his team carefully, from the Army, Navy, civilian and indigenous groups. One key figure was Louis Alexandre Flize, who had been working for the government of Senegal since 1846. Flize became the head of the Bureau des Affaires


8 See Delavignette and Julien, Constructeurs, 232ff; Georges Hardy, Faidherbe, 11–17.
Extérieures, the critical office for political and diplomatic action under the direct control of the governor. Another officer, with recent military experience in Algeria and knowledge of Arabic, took command of a key post on the river, while a graduate of the military school of Saint Cyr played a key role as a boat captain and expedition leader.9 Two Navy men were important for Faidherbe's activities after 1859: Hyacinthe Aube and Aristide Vallon. Both became admirals in the Navy in the 1880s: Aube would serve as Minister of the Navy, while Vallon became the Senegal deputy to the French parliament.10 Faidherbe also enlisted the support of two members of the moderate Catholic community of St. Louis—Frédéric Carrère, who served as Judge of the Imperial Court, and Paul Holle, a mulatto officer who served in key posts along the river. And, not least, he gained the loyalty of the two most prominent Muslim notables of St. Louis: Hamat N'Diaye Anne, who became the head of the Muslim Tribunal that the governor established in 1857, and Bu El Mogdad, who worked in the External Affairs Bureau and accomplished many diplomatic missions with good effect.11

Faidherbe's reign is usually described in terms of campaigns against two principal enemies. The first, in terms of time of encounter, was Muhammad al–Habib, the emir of a loose confederation of Moors in Trarza, the southwestern corner of Mauritania. The Trarza Moors had dominated for some time the trade, political life and even the land of the Wolof region of Walo, just east and north of St. Louis. For some time the French had paid them tribute for the right to trade in gum arabic, the main export commodity produced along the river, and had thus contributed to the reinforcement of the emir's power. But Faidherbe and the Bordeaux houses saw that French dominance required a different relationship. By timing, quick strikes and diplomacy Faidherbe got the Trarza leaders to accept a French protectorate of the lower Senegal valley.12

Faidherbe's second enemy was more formidable, and much more famous in imperial annals.13 Al–Hajj Umar Tal was waging holy war in the Senegal River valley when Faidherbe took power. He designed his campaigns along a west–east axis, recruiting followers and weapons in the Senegambian zone, and using them to wage war against the Mandinka and Bambara states to the east, between the Upper Senegal and the Middle Niger river. His followers were Muslim, especially Fulbe like himself, and his opponents were non–Muslim, or at least lived under regimes that made no pretense to Islamic practice.

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9 Pascal de Negroni and Paul Brossard de Corbigny, respectively. For Faidherbe's collaborators, see Saint–Martin, *Le Sénégal sous le second Empire*, 257ff.
11 On the contributions of these two men to the French image in Senegal, see Robinson, *Holy War*, 211ff.
The conflict came when Faidherbe and Umar competed for the same space along the Senegal River. In 1855 Faidherbe established a fort to support commercial operations at Medine in the Upper Senegal under the command of Paul Holle, and its presence hampered the west-east campaigns of recruitment. In 1857, Umar laid siege to Medine at the height of the dry season. He was not able to use his advantage in numbers to storm the fort before Faidherbe, using the rising waters of the river to get his gunboats to the scene, raised the siege and dealt some terrible blows to the Muslim forces. The battle of Medine has gone down in French and Senegalese historiography as an epic confrontation of two resourceful, brilliant men, and has become part of the mythology of both.14

Umar responded to his defeat and large-scale desertions by conducting a massive recruitment campaign in his home area, the middle valley of the Senegal River, in 1858–59. What was remarkable about that year, when Umar secured perhaps 40,000 followers to carry the holy war to the Middle Niger, was the absence of any large-scale confrontation between the two sides, and this is undoubtedly a tribute to the careful restraint of the ideologically opposed leaders. Faidherbe and Umar, once the main body of holy warriors had moved east, allowed their agents to begin negotiations about a division into geographical spheres of influence. The "west," corresponding to Senegal, would be for the French, while the east, which would eventually become colonial Soudan, would be for the Umarians. Such an agreement was drafted and, though never ratified, served as a modus operandi for franco-umarian relations for the next two decades.15

The Umarian episodes reveal the style of Faidherbe. He was always well informed and clear about his objectives; he alternated between thrust and parry, attack and negotiation, stick and carrot, military and commercial initiatives. Once Umar had moved his center of gravity toward the Middle Niger, Faidherbe saw an opportunity for linkage with French commercial interests.16

Faidherbe’s intervention in a third zone, the peanut basin and specifically Cayor, was even more important for the ultimate shape and character of Senegal.17 By the 1850s it was clear that peanuts would eclipse gum as the major export commodity of the region. The governor, with the support of most of the Bordeaux merchants, moved to exacerbate divisions within the Cayor royal house and attract the support of some semi-autonomous Muslim communities in the northern reaches of the state. After a

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14 One might say that Senegalese identity is positioned between Umar, its native son who fought against "paganism" and European intrusion, and Faidherbe, the architect who designed the institutions, understood Islam, and forced Muslims to accept European overrule. See Robinson, Holy War, 370–75.
15 See Robinson, Holy War, chap. 6.
16 See Robinson, Holy War, chap. 5.
number of expeditions and false starts, and considerable loss of life, he secured a preponderant position in the area, a few treaties, several small posts and a telegraph line. Cayor would constitute the core of the peanut basin for several decades, and Faidherbe helped ensure its subservience to French interests.

During these initiatives in Cayor, Faidherbe honed his skills as a manipulator of information for Paris and dealt sharply with opposition from every quarter, even within the commercial establishment of St. Louis. In 1859 he replied to the managers of the Devès and Chaumet Company, which had close ties with commercial interests in Cayor, in harsh terms:

In sending me a collective letter and protesting against my decisions, you arrogate to yourselves rights that you do not have. I will limit myself this time to a simple warning and not call you before the Administrative Council, but you should know that in the future, using my powers under Articles 32 and 54 of the *Ordonnance Organique*, I will oppose any effort on your part that would tend to weaken the respect that is required by the Government.

Faidherbe became a master at selective reporting to the Ministry of the Navy in Paris. He manufactured threats, made promises on which he could not deliver, and camouflaged his unauthorized initiatives. In the words of Yves Person, Faidherbe created the tradition of aggressive action in West Africa:

This obsession, which joined disdain for civilians to the pretension to be sole capable of judging local situations, prepared these [military] men for the systematic violation of instructions. An overly aggressive attitude ran the risk of irritating the Ministry, but Faidherbe found the solution by camouflaging aggressive actions as measures of security, and in stroking the old French chord of territorial sovereignty. He inaugurated a tradition of indiscipline and hypocrisy, which he held in check himself, but which became the custom of his successors.

Faidherbe has often enjoyed a reputation as a fighter against slavery. He presided over the emancipation declaration of 1848 in Guadeloupe, and the "abolitionist" image has followed him ever since. In fact, the record shows that he set down the policy of selective emancipation that the French followed consistently in West Africa. One of his successors, in explaining the practice of sending back refugee slaves who belonged to allies, said: "One must always follow the spirit of the

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18 The manipulation of information for the metropole and for Senegalese is well documented in Oumar Ba, *La pénétration française au Cayor*, vol. 1: 16 décembre 1854–28 mai 1861 (Dakar, 1976). The dates correspond to Faidherbe's first term as governor.


21 Faidherbe dedicated his most important work, *Le Sénégal et la France dans l'Afrique Occidentale* (Paris, 1888), to Victor Schoelcher, the best-known French abolitionist, and evoked his memories of the slave trade to the Antilles.
confidential circular [of Faidherbe in 1857], that is, do nothing to displease the people with whom we are friends." But Faidherbe went further: he was not above and beyond engaging in the slave trade when he felt it necessary. When his commander in Bakel took some 500 Umarian prisoners in campaigns in 1856, and then sold them into domestic slavery at the local market, the governor explained the incidents away and conveniently omitted them from his own works, the *Annales sénégalaises* and *Le Sénégal* published in the 1880s.

Faidherbe is unusual in the story of French expansion by virtue of the long role that he played well after his retirement from active service. From the mid-1870s he was increasingly paralyzed and confined to an apartment in Paris, but he used his reputation, his position as Senator (from 1879), and his intelligence and keen interest in West Africa to stay abreast of events and to intervene selectively, but with great effect, on decisions in the 1880s. His former subordinate and brother-in-law, Hyacinthe Aube, became the Minister of the Navy during that period. Faidherbe was in close contact with Joseph Gallieni, who served as Commandant Supérieur of the Soudan in 1886–88 and whose star was rising in the imperial firmament, and with Louis-Gustave Binger, and he supported Binger's plans to explore the Soudan and Ivory Coast. In fact, one can say that Faidherbe enlarged upon his earlier notions of expansion to formulate a kind of blueprint of the Soudan that was very influential in policy-making circles throughout the decade of the 1880s.

Archind and the "creation of the Soudan"

Like Faidherbe, Archinard began his African command with a collection of posts from which to extend French influence. In his case the posts were literally strung along a line of advance stretching from Kayes, on the Upper Senegal, to Bamako on the Niger. They were the product of the first wave of renewed expansion after the mid-nineteenth century. Beginning in 1878, under Governor Brière de l'Isle, the French became militarily active in the upper river valley. In 1880 the governor and the Ministry agreed on a new structure, the *Commandement Supérieur du Haut Fleuve*, and invested it with an aggressive and ambitious officer, Gustave Borgnis-Desbordes. Desbordes, following in the Faidherbean tradition, exceeded his orders constantly, but he persuaded the relevant officials in Paris to support him—against the opinions of

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22 In 1869 letter of the Governor to the Commandant of Salde, contained in ANS 13G 148, no 81. Also cited in Robinson, *Chiefs and Clerics*, 113.

23 For a summary description of these episodes, see Robinson, *Holy War*, 171–72. See also Barrows, "General Faidherbe," 485–93. Faidherbe's works were published in 1885 and 1889, respectively.

24 See for example AOM, *SENÉGAL* VII 21 for 1840–95.

successive governors in St. Louis, who were more inclined to conservative and commercial positions. He completed the string of posts with the construction of the fort of Bamako in 1883.

Louis Archinard (1850–1932) was one of Desbordes' principal assistants—and an excellent apprentice in the school of expansion. Indeed, as Kanya–Forstner writes, Archinard put his mark permanently on the Soudan and the soudanais:

With the appointment of Louis Archinard as Commandant Supérieur in 1888, the Sudanese Military came into their own. Under his leadership, they shrugged off the last restraints of metropolitan control, completed the conquest of the western portions of the Sudan and created a military empire worthy of comparison with Algeria in the heyday of the Armee d'Afrique.

Archinard served as Commandant Supérieur, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel, for four critical years: 1888–1891 and 1892–1893. During that time the Soudan became officially independent of the governor of Senegal, and many ambitious military officers came under the influence and training of the Commandant.

Archinard was 38 years old in 1888. He grew up in a Reformed Protestant family, oriented himself very early toward a military career, and received his main military and engineering training, like Faidherbe, at the Ecole Polytechnique. He graduated near the bottom of his class, and this probably affected his choice of service, the Navy. He selected the Artillery Section, where many of his future soudanais colleagues were also located. He received his first military experience in Indochina, before embarking for Senegal and the campaigns of Borgnis–Desbordes. The two men established a close bond during that time. Desbordes was based at the Ministry of Colonies while Archinard was in charge in the Soudan, and his support, often against considerable opposition, was critical to Archinard's achievements.

Like Faidherbe, Archinard saw his mission as expansion from a fragile collection of posts by waging war on two fronts. To the north and east lay the remnants of the Umarian state, under the nominal control of Ahmad al–Kabir, the eldest son. Ahmad reigned principally from Segu, on the Middle Niger, but he tried to maintain his

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26 The best account of the expansion into Soudan is Kanya–Forstner, Conquest, 55ff. The Commandant Supérieur was ostensibly subordinate to the governor in St. Louis, but the military men who assumed this position consistently circumvented his authority, and the new territory and its officials were officially declared independent of Senegal in 1894.

27 Kanya–Forstner, Conquest, 174. The "heyday" in Algeria corresponded to the period of Bugeaud.

28 For a brief biography of Archinard, see Kanya–Forstner, Conquest, 174. For an extensive hagiography, see Jacques Méniaud, Les Pionniers du Soudan, avant, avec et après Archinard (1879–1894), 2 vols. (Paris, 1931). Méniaud was also a Navy officer, and his military orientation marks the organization, style, and tone of his volumes.

29 Kanya–Forstner, Conquest.

30 The most recent source is John Hanson and David Robinson, After the Jihad: The Reign of Ahmad al–Kabir in the Western Sudan (East Lansing, 1991).
authority over Nioro and the western garrisons as well. By the time Archinard assumed command, Ahmad had left his son in charge in Segu, moved to Nioro, and put down a brother who had revolted against him. He sought to maintain the arrangement that had been endorsed by Faidherbe, but by 1888 it was clear to him and most observers that the French were determined to eliminate him.\textsuperscript{31}

For Archinard it was critical to portray Ahmad al-Kabir as a powerful threat against French expansion and civilization. The "Tokolor Empire," as he and his contemporaries were wont to call it, was made up of fanatics and would never truly negotiate a settlement or coexist with the French. Ahmad was coordinating an anti-French league bonded in Tokolor ethnicity and a Tijaniyya Muslim identity.\textsuperscript{32} The strategy worked: the Ministry provided the funds, men, matériel and authorization to destroy the last garrisons of the Umarian state. In April 1890 Archinard took Segu; in the process he captured the large group of women attached to the royal family and distributed them to the indigenous allies of the French.\textsuperscript{33} In January 1891 he took Nioro, while in May 1893, during his final campaign, he expelled Ahmad from the last Umarian center, Bandiagara, and put Ahmad’s brother Agibu in his place.

The second enemy was a much greater military threat. Samori Ture, working from the savanna and woodland settings of the Mandinka of the Upper Niger, constructed a powerful and relatively well integrated state by the 1880s. He posed a quite serious challenge to expansion into the areas that became Guinea and Ivory Coast, as well as the Soudan, and caused extensive damage to several French contingents over a decade. He was finally captured only in 1898—by soudanais, some of whom had seen their first service under Archinard.\textsuperscript{34}

Archinard galvanized a much larger team than Faidherbe, a team that had enormous impact on the French empire. The three most famous members were Charles Mangin, who became a general and the architect of African recruitment for French military service; J. P. Marchand, explorer and conqueror in Central Africa and leader of the Fashoda expedition; and William Ponty, later the Governor of Soudan and

\textsuperscript{31} Kanya-Forstner, Conquest, 176ff.

\textsuperscript{32} For the tortuous construction that Archinard and the Governor of Senegal made, see Kanya-Forstner, Conquest, 181–82, and Robinson, Chiefs and Clerics, 149–50, and especially 150n. For the important role of the "Tokolor Empire" in the justification for the conquest of the Soudan, see John Hanson, "Generational Conflict in the Umarian Movement After the Jihad: Perspectives from the Futanke Grain Trade at Medine," Journal of African History 31 (1990), and "Umarian Migrations in the Late Nineteenth Century Senegal Valley," Journal of African History 35 (1994).

\textsuperscript{33} The Umarians probably resented the distribution of the women from the Segu harem more than any other single act of their long history of relations with the French. Those who accepted the "gift" of Segu women were marked as collaborators with the colonial authorities; among their number were Mademba and Agibu. Agibu asked for and received a large share of the women and children for safe-keeping. See ANS 15G 75, 15G 76, 15G 78, and 1D 121.

\textsuperscript{34} The definitive work on Samori, with extensive treatment of the French who engaged him, is Person, Samori. His relations with the French are also extensively treated in Kanya-Forstner, Conquest.
Governor General of French West Africa. He had African allies as well, most conspicuously Agibu Tall, whom he placed at Bandiagara as the "king" of Masina, and Mademba Sy; a St. Louisian telegraph operator, intelligence source and jack-of-all-trades, who became the Fama or "king" of Sansanding. But Archinard did not have the intelligence operation or the patience to choose leaders who might exercise some real influence over his new subjects. Instead, he left in place an authoritarian military network that quickly frustrated the effort to establish civilian rule in the Soudan in 1894.

Archinard engaged in the fabrication and manipulation of information on a much larger scale than Faidherbe. He learned this from his predecessors, and especially from Borgnis–Desbordes and Gallieni. On the eve of Archinard's departure in 1888, Gallieni wrote him a letter of advice:

If you follow my example, you won't pay any more attention to the missives of M. Billecoq & Co [the Colonial Department] than you think necessary. The Commandant Supérieur . . . can alone decide what measures have to be taken, especially on matters affecting the political situation. Everything I accomplished during these two campaigns [of 1886–7 and 1887–8] was done in spite of the Ministry which was always afraid to commit itself, to say nothing of Saint–Louis which panicked at the hint of any action . . . . Everything was done on my own initiative, despite the objections of Saint–Louis and the criticisms of everybody. And I advise you to do the same.

The soudanais team, by their consistently aggressive and unauthorized actions, produced a growing chorus of critics. The cost and cost overruns mounted, and there was no strategy for tapping into commerce or investing in development, in short no way of providing revenue. Gallieni, who had played a critical role in Archinard's appointment, became increasingly disenchanted, and with him most influential policy makers in and around the Ministry. By the time Archinard ended his term as Commandant Supérieur in 1893 and returned to Paris, his support had dwindled to a few military people such as Desbordes, and the pressure to turn the Soudan over to a civilian administration was irresistible.

But even then, even as Governor Albert Grodet sought to transform the command structure in 1894, Archinard was writing instructions to soudanais in the field about what to do during the campaign of 1893–1894, when he was no longer in charge. This was carrying the Faidherbe tradition of indiscipline to new extremes. One result of the military momentum that Archinard created was the ill–fated Bonnier expedition to Timbuktu, in which a whole French column was annihilated.

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35 For their roles under Archinard, see Kanya–Forstner, Conquest.


37 See Kanya–Forstner, Conquest, 215ff. On the attitudes of the soudanais military to Grodet's civilian administration, see, for example, Général Henri Gouraud, Souvenirs d'un africain. Au Soudan (Paris, 1939), and Henri Labouret, Monteil. Explorateur et soldat (Paris, 1937).
Archinard did not have the same impact outside of military circles as Faidherbe. He had no "humanitarian" reputation and made no pretense about supporting the end of slavery in the Soudan; indeed, he did not consider that he was required to respond to anyone but his military superiors. He is remembered sometimes for giving his blessing to the establishment of Spiritan and White Father missionaries, in the areas that were demarcated "non-Muslim": certain areas of the Mandinka along the line of posts, and societies such as the Bambara. The missionaries had positive memories of him. He did not have the same intellectual impact as Faidherbe, but he did leave his name upon the Umarian library of Segu, which he sent back to Paris in 1890 and which became the Fonds Archinard at the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Despite the opposition that he aroused, Archinard continued to enjoy the protection of powerful allies in military circles, and he moved up the hierarchical ladder of achievement. He became a general and advanced through the ranks of the Legion d'Honneur. He did not play a major role in World War I, perhaps because of age, but he did preside over a number of military and colonial activities.

Coppolani and the "creation of Mauritanian"

Xavier Coppolani (1866–1905) followed a very different trajectory into his West African service. He was born in Corsica, not France, and to very humble beginnings. His family moved to Algeria to seek new opportunity during his childhood, and it was there that he acquired his lycée education, his familiarity with Arabic and his knowledge of Islam. He was not a military man; indeed from a civilian post he moved into scholarly pursuits and acquired his first visibility as co-author of the enormous compendium on Muslim Sufi orders in Algeria. With its publication Coppolani became an "expert," part of the École algérienne of Islamology and indeed its foremost young exponent. He stressed the brotherhood, its lodges and networks, as the keys to understanding and controlling Muslim societies.

But Coppolani worked for an administration with a strong military orientation. He did not see an easy path to an administrative or scholarly career in Algeria, at least not one commensurate with his talent, vision and ambition. He did see

39 See Noureddine Ghali et al., Bibliothèque Umarienne de Segou (Paris, 1985). This catalog of the Fonds Archinard, renamed the Umarian library, contains a short introduction on the history of this collection brought from Segu by Archinard.
41 To the best of my knowledge, the only published biography of Coppolani is the one done by his friend and collaborator, Robert Arnaud, Un Corse d'Algerie, 1939. See also Cécile Frébourg, "Le Corse en Mauritanie. Xavier Coppolani (1866–1905). L'Islam au Service de la France," (mémoire de maîtrise d'histoire, Université de Paris, VII, 1990).
opportunities in the desert, where the French were expanding from two directions: the Algerian administration of Governor General Jules Cambon and the Soudan administration of Governor de Trentinian, who had taken over from the soudanais and the failed civilian regime. Coppolani now cast himself as a Saharan expert, and he accepted an invitation from Trentinian in 1898 for a mission among the nomads of the Soudan.43

Unlike his predecessors, Coppolani did not work within any single bureaucratic structure. He came from Algeria, which fell under a Governor General and the War Ministry. He was "loaned" to the governor of the Soudan, who fell under the French West African Federation that was part of the now separate Ministry of Colonies. A few years later he would need the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to bring pressure to bear upon colonies to authorize his work in Mauritania. But he did demonstrate the same ability to impress and persuade at each point where his vision and mission were threatened. And it is likely that, had he been in a conventional military chain of command, at this late point in French expansion, and with fresh memories of the excesses of the soudanais, he would never have been allowed to pursue the "pacification" of Mauritania. Much more than his predecessors, he was a man of the "frontier": the bureaucratic frontier, the frontiers of French expansion, and the constantly changing frontiers of nomadic societies; he relied, perhaps excessively, on his charm and power of persuasion.

The mission in 1898 was to study the frontier and gain the submission of nomads: the Moors and Tuaregs who lived in the northern confines, where Algeria and the Soudan were now drawing their boundaries. These nomads lived in the Saharan and sahelian zones; in the French ethnographic paradigm they were "natural Islamic races" who might respond favorably to an algérien who was scholar and administrator, fluent in Arabic and familiar with Islam. Coppolani was their man, or at least Coppolani portrayed his expedition, in company with his algérien colleague, Robert Arnaud, as a great success. The widely circulated report ended with a trenchant suggestion: establishing French control of the far western Sahara, under the name of Mauritania, through a policy of peaceful extension or "pacification."

Coppolani spent 1900 and some of 1901 in France working for his Mauritanian proposal. He secured the support of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the President of the Republic, and Ernest Roume, the new Governor General of French West Africa, who was of a more "imperial" frame of mind than his Senegal–oriented predecessors.44 The factor that probably worked most in Coppolani's favor was Morocco. The northwestern corner of Africa fell within the sphere that the French expected to control, and yet it

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43 De Trentinian organized a number of explorations and expeditions during the last two years of his term as governor of the territory. AOM, Série géographique, Soudan III 4, Exploration et missions, 1894–1904.

44 For Roume's role, see Frebourg, "Coppolani," and AOM, Missions 115, Coppolani.
was still independent, in close contact with the British, Germans and Spanish, and had "designs" on the Sahara.\textsuperscript{45} The Moroccan unknown, and the expansion of the colonial regime of Algeria to the south, gave new value to the "empty" desert.

At the same time Coppolani launched a new journal, the \textit{Revue Franco-Musulmane et Saharienne}, with a patronage committee that included the leading lights of the French imperial and diplomatic world. In the publication he and his collaborators articulated their view of France's greatness as a \textit{puissance musulmane}, a nation that had a special vocation for ruling over Muslim societies, assuring them of its benevolence, and even creating a kind of paid Muslim clergy.\textsuperscript{46} The journal and Coppolani's articles gave him as much scholarly visibility as Faidherbe had enjoyed when Governor of Senegal; they marked him as probably the leading French exponent of "Islamic" policy at the time.

In 1901 Coppolani began to prepare his Mauritanian program in St. Louis, which would be the capital of the territory of Mauritania as well as Senegal. He solidified his rapport with Ernest Roume, who became the Governor General early in 1902. He built his team: some were \textit{aléériens} such as Arnaud, others were \textit{soudanais}; some were civilian and some military in background. He made great use of Bu El Mogdad Seck II, the son of the interpreter and diplomat who worked with Faidherbe.\textsuperscript{47} The team gradually expanded as the French domain in Mauritania expanded, and many stayed on after Coppolani's death.

The first year or campaign, 1902–1903, was devoted to Trarza, or the southwestern corner, just north and east of St. Louis. The second year, 1903–1904, was devoted to Brakna and adjacent zones, to the north of Podor. The third year, 1904–1905, was to be devoted to the Tagant, the zone east of Brakna; in May 1905, at the edge of the desert and a considerable distance from the Senegal River and any French reinforcements, Coppolani was assassinated by Moors who slipped into his camp at night. It would take four additional years before the French, under Colonel Henri Gouraud, the \textit{soudanais} who captured Samori, could take the center of resistance, the Adrar.\textsuperscript{48}


\textsuperscript{46} The purpose of the journal was expressed in the first number of the first volume, 1.1, 5–5–1902, "to study the Muslim world in its political and religious organization ... and seek the means to make our Muslim subjects evolve in the direction of progress ... and to demonstrate our deep interest in making use of religious leaders who have been won over to our cause. ..." The patronage committee was filled by prominent exponents of French expansion, including Eugene Etienne, Rene Basset, Louis–Gustave Binger, Joseph Chailley–Bert, Andre Chautemps, François Deloncle, Charles Dupuy, Gabriel Hanotaux, and Henri Poincare. The journal apparently discontinued publication at the end of 1903.

\textsuperscript{47} The best source on Coppolani's team is Commandant Gillier, \textit{La pénétration en Mauritanie. Découverte—Explorations—Conquête—La police du désert et la pacification définitive} (Paris, 1926).

\textsuperscript{48} Ironically, Mauritania in the wake of Coppolani’s assassination got a military administration that resembled that of the Soudan in the 1880s and 1890s in many ways; several of its colonels, who commanded the territory under the title of Haut Commissaire under the Governor
Coppolani's approach depended upon working with the marabouts or *zwaya*, the division of Moorish or *baydan* society that concerned itself with religious and commercial matters. The *zwaya*, whom he had encountered in the Soudan exploration a few years before, were organized in networks of traders, scholars and religious specialists over large areas, and they provided a semblance of order in an otherwise chaotic zone. In the case of Mauritania, Coppolani could not have asked for two more influential and cooperative marabouts than the two men he met in his travels in Trarza in 1901–1902, and he relied much more heavily on them than Faidherbe and Archinard had depended on their African allies.

Sa'ad Bu (c. 1848–1917) had been a close ally of the French for thirty years. After the death of his father he moved, in about 1870, from the distant Hodh to Trarza. From that point on he developed a significant following in St. Louis and began a pattern of annual visits. St. Louis masons built his residence in Touizit and some 100 pupils from the town were studying in his school in the 1880s. By the mid-1880s he was brokering colonial interests in Salum and establishing the pattern of collection tours, to sustain his camp in the Trarza desert. In the 1890s he assisted a number of missions of exploration in the desert. In the early 1900s he became important as a counterweight to his brother, Ma-El-‘Ainin, who was the galvanizing rod for *baydan* resistance to Coppolani's "pacification" and the subsequent conquest.

An even more indispensable ally for Coppolani was Sidiyya Baba (c. 1862–1924). He was the grandson of Sidiyya al-Kabir, who had kept his distance from the colonial authorities in the mid-nineteenth century. Sidiyya Baba broke this pattern in 1898, when he made his first trip to the colonial capital. From that point on he became a frequent visitor and visible friend of French Islamicists and other officials, and especially Coppolani. He came to St. Louis in November 1902 to support the "pacification" program, over the opposition of many merchants as well as *baydan*, and

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51 Bu El Mogdad wrote a report on his journey that can be found in the Archives of Mauritania. Sidiyya stayed at the Bu El Mogdad residence, and he received an important contribution from the Devès family to construct his library. See Amadou Diagne Yaya, son of Gaspard Devès' maternal brother, interview by author, 19 March 1985.
wrote a eulogy after his friend's assassination. Coppolani and his successors consulted Sidiyya Baba constantly about the campaign against Ma-El-'Ainin.

Coppolani followed a pattern similar to Faidherbe with respect to slavery, emancipation, and the existing social hierarchy. He complained at some length about the continuing baydan raids into Senegal to seize animals, women and children and the complicity of St. Louisian traders in such a system. But he could not afford to alienate his main indigenous allies, who were large slave owners themselves, and he gave no indication that he intended any significant attack on baydan slavery. To use the language of Faidherbe, he would "do nothing to displease the people with whom we are friends." In terms of manipulation of evidence, he was no less adept at presentation and packaging than his predecessors. He realized that Governor General Roume provided the essential cover for his mission and that the limitations that he imposed must be obeyed. At no time, then, did Coppolani move deliberately against his orders, in the pattern of Archinard. He did, however, keep "pushing the envelope" of possibility, and it is likely that had he survived and continued to enjoy some success, he would have implicated the French in a "pacification" of the Adrar in 1905-1906. As it was, his death made the French engagement in Maurtania irreversible.

Conclusion

The three africains and constructeurs of Senegal, Soudan and Maurtania offer significant contrasts. Archinard operated in the most narrow frame of reference, the infanterie and artillerie de marine within the Navy, and he reflected least about the institutions of government in "his" African territory. His team was entirely military, while his African allies brought little legitimacy to their tasks. Faidherbe had a broader base. He was an engineer by training, located within the Army but seconded to the Navy, and he knew how to cross bureaucratic boundaries. He chose his subordinates and allies carefully, and left a significant institutional heritage for his successors in Senegal and French West Africa. Coppolani had to forge his own path, and knew how to secure critical support from key European and African collaborators. He was a civilian who relied on small elite military units for protection and selective raiding. He was sensitive to the need to use and create institutions, but never got the opportunity to fashion his own, and we cannot see the results of what he would have created in Maurtania.

At the same time, all three men show similar ability to "carve out" territory and create traditions and institutions. They were ambitious, opportunitistic, and authoritarian; they were men of strong personality, presence and persuasive ability; they knew how to divide the opposition, of whatever kind, in order to dominate it.

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53 Coppolani, in his report to the Governor General on 1 July 1904, gave great credit to the role of Sidiyya (AOM, MAURITANIE IV 1 1902-4).
They learned from their predecessors and a tradition of West African service, invention and manipulation; Coppolani learned from the schools of the *soudanais* and Faidherbe, while Archinard absorbed the lessons of the aggressive Senegalese administration of Faidherbe. All three men operated at the frontiers of French interest and thus at the frontiers of French control. They were able to manufacture and manipulate information, pursue their missions and "create" their territories without serious reprimand or recall. Or, in the case of Archinard, the recall came too late to change the course of events in the Soudan, and it did not seriously impede his military advancement.

What ultimately matters about this article and the configuration of men is what it says about Africa, or about European ideas of Africa. For a certain period, in a certain social and psychological space, it was possible for ambitious men to establish agendas, boundaries and institutions. Since these men and their French contemporaries did not face, or did not think that they faced, any African civilizations worthy of consideration, they could become *africain*, that is, fashion their own African identities. Through the institutions that backed them and sometimes questioned their knowledge and truthfulness, through the teams and traditions that they left behind, they have bequeathed an enduring legacy to West Africa.
NINETEENTH CENTURY DIPLOMACY ON MT. KILIMANJARO: RINDI OF MOSHI RECONSIDERED

by James Cox

The nineteenth century witnessed a commercial explosion on the East African coast that put increasing demands for ivory and slaves on the hinterland. Inland communities experienced social and political upheaval as they scrambled to meet these changes. On the southern slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro this disruption caused the Wachagga to consolidate from over one hundred chiefdoms to about fifty.2 By the end of the century, the dominant Chagga rulers had drawn in external forces to sustain their political positions in their struggle to meet the coastal needs. Rindi of Moshi, or Mandara as nineteenth-century Europeans called him, emerged as one of the leaders who secured his position with the aid of outside alliances. In the process, Rindi transformed a small, weak chiefdom into one of Kilimanjaro's dominant powers. His success in controlling outside access to the mountain meant that by the 1880s the name "Mandara" became synonymous with "Chagga people" and "Kilimanjaro" to those Europeans planning to visit the area.3 To outsiders Rindi became "King Mandara of Chagga."4

Early historians of the Wachagga believed that Rindi based his regional diplomacy on Kilimanjaro's petty politics of personal revenge and clan rivalry.5 Others, without analyzing his own diplomatic goals, have portrayed Rindi as a player juxtaposed between Great Britain and Germany.6 More recent research has drawn connections between Kilimanjaro's political upheaval and the struggle to control trade routes. Sally Falk Moore stated that to understand the individual careers of local Chagga leaders they must be understood as players in their regional political

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1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts & Letters, East Lansing, Michigan, March 11, 1994.


4 Rindi, "Invitation from the King of Chagga," Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record 3 (1878): 448.


In a larger study of Tanzania, John Iliffe briefly analyzed Rindi from this framework to understand the political and economic effects of long distance trade at the local level. This approach is important in understanding the role that Rindi played in the development of Kilimanjaro. I suggest that Rindi’s diplomacy with external powers represented his attempt to influence the growing regional political economy that tied Kilimanjaro to the coast. He secured Moshi’s dominant role in trade with the coast and influenced the political development of Kilimanjaro to his own advantage. Rindi’s success is testimony to his vision for shaping Kilimanjaro’s political development during his lifetime.

During the nineteenth century, Mt. Kilimanjaro served as a provisioning stop for caravans from Mombasa until the danger of attack escalated in mid-century. That Johannes Rebmann, in 1848, could find only one Swahili guide who had been to Kilimanjaro indicates that there was little direct contact with the coast at that time. As Kilimanjaro was declared as a provisioning station on the inland trade route, however, its value as a source for ivory and slaves increased. Those caravans that targeted Kilimanjaro went to its early ivory and slave markets at Kilema and Machame, which lay some twenty miles apart in the southeast and southwest parts of the mountain respectively. Moshi lay between these two chiefdoms, situated behind the southeast corner of Mount Kilimanjaro, at a recessed point on the southern slopes where the east-west and north-south ridges converge. This recession isolated Moshi geographically from the caravan routes that passed by the southern base of Kilimanjaro on their way to Maasailand and Lake Victoria, and left it with a chronic food shortage in an area otherwise noted for ample water and intensive agriculture.


8 See John Iliffe, A Modern History of Tanganyika (Cambridge, 1979), chaps. 3 and 4; see also Moore, Social Facts, 20–21.

9 Stahl, History of the Chagga, 306; John Lamphear, “The Kamba and the Northern Mrima Coast,” in Pre–Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900, ed. Richard Gray and David Birmingham, (London, 1970), 88; Lamphear’s argument is that the Wakamba were the principle trading people inland and served as the connection between the coastal and the inland peoples; Rebmann told Charles New that the route was safe in 1849–49, but by 1871 the danger had increased considerably; see Charles New, Life, Wanderings, and Labours in Eastern Africa: With an Account of the First Successful Ascent of the Equatorial Snow Mountain, Kilima Njaro, and Remarks upon East African Slavery, 3d ed. (London, 1971), 293.

10 Stahl, History of the Chagga, 44–50; on Kilimanjaro ivory, see J. Lewis Krapf, Travels, Searches, and Missionary Labours, during an Eighteen Years’ Residence in Eastern Africa (London, 1860), 261, 417; and Richard F. Burton, Zanzibar; City, Island, and Coast, vol. 2 (London, 1872), 116; on the ivory trade, see Lamphear, 95–96.


12 Throughout this paper my references to Moshi refer to what is now known as Old Moshi, which represents Rindi’s old chiefdom. After World War I, the British built the modern town of Moshi at the base of Mt. Kilimanjaro.
This fact forced the Moshi Wachagga to depend on supplies from elsewhere on the mountain well into the twentieth century.\(^{13}\)

Rindi must have first grasped the importance of the long distance trade routes as a child, when he was exiled to Kirua after his father's death.\(^{14}\) Traders regularly visited Kirua, which lay next to Kilema, and Rindi saw the benefits that they brought to the chiefdom. It was in Kilema, however, where Rindi would have begun to understand the role that outsiders could play in shaping mountain politics. Kilimanjaro was once again receiving Arab and Swahili caravans from the coast by the late 1850s and with them came the early European visitors.\(^{15}\) Rindi had seen Rebmann in Kilema in 1848, and later met Baron Claus von der Decken there in 1861 and 1862. During Decken's second trip, Rindi lured him to Moshi.\(^{16}\) Growing coastal contacts led to increased outside influence on mountain politics. When Decken returned to Kilimanjaro in 1862, Rindi’s mother asked the European to settle in Moshi to elevate her son’s status as a ruler on Kilimanjaro.\(^{17}\) Her actions illustrated the increased status that a stranger could give to a chief, and the potential value that Rindi’s early contacts with Europeans had.

Rindi returned from exile following the death of his uncle around 1860, but his position as Moshi’s new ruler was tenuous. He required outside assistance to secure his own position and to reunite the chiefdom under his central control.\(^{18}\) The emergence of Moshi as a dominant force in southeastern Kilimanjaro must have occurred after Decken’s visits in 1861 and 1862, because his experience reflected a Rindi who was politically vulnerable. When Rindi finally was secure enough to begin his own wars of conquest on Kilimanjaro, he joined with Ndesserua of Machame to target Kirua, Kilema, and another southeastern Kilimanjaro chiefdom, Marangu.\(^{19}\) Stahl and Dundas analyzed these campaigns in terms of local politics, but they also appear to represent attempts to control the trade routes near Kilimanjaro. Political and military control over the southeastern corner of the mountain allowed Rindi to reroute and dominate caravan trade in order to make Moshi a trading center at the expense of

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14 Ibid., 231; Dundas, *Kilimanjaro*, 82.
Kilema, as well as exploiting the area for the agricultural resources that Moshi lacked.

Following these early campaigns against his southeastern neighbors, Rindi also sent Moshi warriors to assist in Machame’s campaigns against caravan stops outside of Kilimanjaro. Together, Ndesserua and Rindi organized raids against Arusha Chini, Upare, and as far as Usambara. These areas lay along the Pangani River caravan route, coming up from the coastal towns of Pangani and Tanga. Control of the Pangani route to Kilimanjaro from the south offered Moshi and Machame better access to caravans reaching Kilimanjaro than did the Mombasa route coming from the east. Although successful in its early stages, this alliance collapsed after the rebellion of one of Ndesserua’s vassals in Kibosho broke ranks to start a rivalry with Moshi that would end only after Rindi’s death. The intense antagonism that later developed between Rindi and the rulers of Kibosho centered on political dominance of Kilimanjaro and control of the inland caravan trade.

The end of the Machame–Moshi military alliance marked the decline of Rindi’s early political strength on Kilimanjaro since his initial military successes had depended on Machame assistance. In addition to Machame, the Warusha, from Mt. Meru, were particularly important in helping Rindi maintain control of Kilimanjaro’s southeast corner. Following the end of the Machame partnership, Rindi began to look east in search of political and economic gain. In forays into Rombo (eastern Kilimanjaro), Moshi warriors and their Warusha allies successfully defeated a combined Usseri–Kibosho force that had controlled much of Rombo. Following this victory, Moshi and Usseri, itself a Rombo chiefdom, united and together subjugated Rombo politically and economically, after which Rindi turned on Usseri for its cattle. Usseri, however, eventually succeeded in resisting Moshi’s attacks. In the aftermath of Rindi’s setback in Usseri, Kibosho attacked and devastated Moshi, forcing Rindi into exile in Machame under Ndesserua’s protection until he was politically strong enough to regain control of Moshi some years later.

There is some debate about when Rindi was exiled to Machame. Stahl placed Rindi’s return to power in the late 1860s, and argued that New was in Moshi after Rindi reclaimed control of it. Bruno Gutmann placed Rindi’s return to power in 1876, and European visitors to the area during the 1880s claimed that Rindi testified to having regained control of Moshi during the second half of the 1870s. Rindi would therefore

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20 Dundas, Kilimanjaro, 87.
22 Dundas, Kilimanjaro, 87–88.
23 Stahl, History of the Chagga, 242–44; Dundas, Kilimanjaro, 87–89.
have been exiled shortly after the missionary Charles New's visit in 1871.\(^{24}\) When Rindi's exile in Machame actually occurred is of little importance here; what matters is that Rindi's policies changed little throughout his life. He used local military and political allies to control trade routes approaching Kilimanjaro and to lure outsiders to Moshi. He focused first on attracting Swahili to settle in Moshi and later he tried to convince Europeans to settle there.\(^{25}\)

Controlling the trade routes meant Rindi could monopolize the merchandise entering and leaving Kilimanjaro. Toward that end he began importing guns from the coast. Moore estimated that after the 1850s, the only trade items that produced wealth for the Wachagga were cattle, guns and gunpowder.\(^{26}\) This fact tied in closely with Rindi's expansionist policies, since captured cattle represented one by-product of successful raiding, which in turn depended increasingly on guns. Moshi's trade links therefore contributed to its successful cattle raiding enterprises. To maintain access to guns, Rindi encouraged coastal traders to settle in Moshi and exchanged slaves and ivory with them for guns and other European goods. The gun trade appears to have successfully armed Moshi warriors. New saw "a large number" of them armed with muskets in 1871, and, in 1883, Rindi rejected Thomson's personal gift of a common Snider rifle because it was a "porter's rifle."\(^{27}\)

Iliffe maintains that Rindi initially acquired these weapons to challenge Kibosho's growing power and credits him for having made firearms plentiful in the 1870s.\(^{28}\) Sina came to power in Kibosho during the early 1870s, and under him Kibosho reentered the caravan trade that increasingly centered on slaves and guns.\(^{29}\) Through Sina, Kibosho developed a regional diplomacy that mirrored Moshi's in an attempt to defeat Rindi until his death in 1891.\(^{30}\) Stahl labeled Sina the greatest Chagga ruler and militarist, but he was no match for Rindi's diplomacy, which succeeded in keeping Europeans away from Kibosho until the German colonial period.\(^{31}\) The Kibosho–Moshi rivalry seems to fall largely on the caravan trade. Lying above the source of the


\(^{25}\) Stahl, History of the Chagga, 245–46; Dundas, Kilimanjaro, 90.

\(^{26}\) Moore, Social Facts, 28–29.

\(^{27}\) New, Life, 389; Joseph Thomson, Through Masai Land: A Journey of Exploration among the Snowclad Volcanic Mountains and Strange Tribes of Eastern Equatorial Africa, rev. ed. (London, 1887), 84; Johnston believed that the Snider was the most plentiful gun in African hands throughout this period and therefore carried little weight as a present. See Johnston, Kiliman–Njaro, 88.

\(^{28}\) Iliffe, A Modern History, 59.

\(^{29}\) Ibid., 59; Stahl, History of the Chagga, 166–70; Georg Volkens, Der Kilimandscharo: Darstellung der allgemeineren Ergebnisse eines fünfzehnmonatigen Aufenthalts im Dschaggalande (Berlin, 1897), 136–37.

\(^{30}\) Dundas, Kilimanjaro, 92–93.

\(^{31}\) Stahl, History of the Chagga, 175.
Pangani River, Kibosho profited from the Pangani trade route as a slave and ivory market for Swahili traders. Rindi’s long preoccupation with that route becomes clear as it offered a chance to cut Kibosho off from the caravan trade and to dominate all of the Chagga chiefdoms.

Kilimanjaro’s slave trade was another byproduct of the intense regional raiding. Rindi initially traded slaves obtained from outside Kilimanjaro, such as Wapare and Wameru captives, along with Chagga prisoners of war. This would suggest the slave trade was already victimizing Chagga chiefdoms as early as the 1860s. Sir Harry Johnston thought that Rindi had originally been overthrown by an alliance of Chagga chiefdoms, resisting his constant attacks for slaves. Moshi was so active in the trade during New’s visits that it was transporting slaves itself to Taveta, bypassing coastal slave traders who normally escorted prisoners to slave markets. Intensive slave raiding continued throughout the 1880s, to judge from Johnston’s observations. Rombo remained a favorite target for cattle and slaves, as well as Upare to the south. In 1889, when he passed through Ugweno in the northern Pare Mountains, Hans Meyer observed a land depopulated of humans and cattle from raids attributed to Rindi.

Rindi’s early campaign into eastern Kilimanjaro must be analyzed within the context of this struggle to control the trade routes. Not only did Rombo’s geographical position command the eastern caravan approach to Kilimanjaro, but it had also been a source of ivory in the late eighteenth century. Control of Rombo, therefore, provided an important trading commodity and the ability to control the Mombasa trade route itself between Taveta and Kilimanjaro. Charles New’s observations suggest that Rindi succeeded in subjugating Rombo by 1871, and he used it to dominate the eastern trade route between Taveta and Kilimanjaro. New met a trader who was unable to go to Kilimanjaro because of a dispute with Rindi. New’s contact did not mention Kilema as an alternate trading destination, so Rindi probably cut it off from the caravan route after Decken’s 1862 trip. Furthermore, the Wataveta, who lived to the east of Kilimanjaro, feared that New might fall in league with Rindi once the missionary got

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32 Ibid., 165–66.
33 Volkens, Kilimandscharo, 229.
34 Johnston, Kiliman–Njaro, 97.
35 New, Life, 365–66; see also Johnston’s comments on New’s ill-fated 1873 trip, Johnston, Kiliman–Njaro, 11.
38 Hans Meyer, Ostafrikanische Gletscherfahrten; Forschungsreisen in Kilimandscharo–Gebiet (Leipzig, 1890), 89, 194.
to Kilimanjaro. So, by 1871 Rindi appeared to have complete control of the caravan trade in southeastern Kilimanjaro although he would continue to try to expand his power and subjugate Taveta during the 1880s. As a consequence, all of Chagga territory on Kilimanjaro became closely associated with Rindi by Africans along the eastern caravan route.

No Chagga chiefdom could have carried out all this raiding alone. In the beginning Rindi relied on Ndesserua’s support. The Warusha also were an important key to Moshi’s military success during Rindi’s rule. They were involved in the early campaigns in southeastern Kilimanjaro and the regional raiding off the mountain that Moshi participated in with Machame. Having helped reinstate Rindi in Moshi after his exile in Machame, the Warusha retained their important role in Moshi’s military campaigns during the rest of his reign. They already had a reputation as allies of Rindi when New was in Moshi, and in 1883, Joseph Thomson estimated that Rindi had about 1,000 Warusha warriors on hand. Rindi used the Warusha for four things: to get food; to capture slaves; to defend Moshi; and to terrorize the caravan routes. In return, the Warusha got a share of the spoils. Stahl argued that Rindi used the Swahili caravan traders to counterbalance his heavy reliance on the Warusha, because the traders offered access to guns that neutralized Warusha numbers. This may be true, but throughout his career Rindi remained dependent on Warusha support to maintain Moshi’s position on Kilimanjaro.

Rindi sought to make Moshi a new target for traders who were heading to Kilimanjaro. According to Decken, caravans were already visiting Moshi in 1862. Rindi’s early campaigns with Warusha support against his southeastern neighbors aimed at controlling the area and at diverting trade from the older established caravan markets like Kilema. Judging from New’s observations, Moshi’s domination of the caravan trade was complete by 1871 when slave traders were journeying to Moshi instead of Kilema. Nevertheless, strongholds of resistance like Taveta did continue to exist, and Rindi coveted them. The increased caravan trade in Moshi, however, depended on the success of Rindi’s military alliance with the Warusha. They helped to control rival Chagga chiefdoms and they were also able to retaliate against Swahili caravans that did not deal satisfactorily with Rindi.

41 Thomson, Through Masai Land, 64.
42 New, Life, 413–14; Thomson, Through Masai Land, 75, 119.
43 Stahl, History of the Chagga, 249.
44 Ibid., 247.
45 New, Life, 391.
46 Thomson, Through Masai Land, 64.
47 Stahl, History of the Chagga, 248–49.
One way to divert traders to Moshi was to intercept them before they reached Kilimanjaro. Decken, New, and Joseph Thomson all had encounters with Wachagga in Taveta that contributed to their going to Moshi. Rindi must have been just as willing to divert caravans that were not accompanied by Europeans. Furthermore, trade route rumors of danger caused travelers with other plans to divert to Moshi. Thomson sought Rindi's protection when he heard some 2,000 Maasai lay ahead of him. Earlier, New had witnessed a similar event when a contingent of supposedly Maasai warriors forced a caravan to flee into Moshi for protection. Thomson's experience proved to be just as much of a fraud as New's; his Swahili guide Sadi had hoped to get a reward from Rindi for diverting Thomson's party to Moshi. Sadi had been with both Decken's and New's trips to Kilimanjaro and had tried similarly to disrupt them. In New's case, not only did Sadi divert the caravan to Moshi, but he helped to destroy it. Sadi appears to have had a standing agreement with Rindi to lead caravans to Moshi whether or not they intended to go there.

By 1884 Rindi had also established a small Swahili settlement at his Moshi court that participated in the slave trade and served as advisors to Rindi. A permanent Swahili presence gave Rindi a Swahili letter writer to maintain written contact with the coast. He also sent Chagga emissaries to the coastal towns of Tanga and Zanzibar. Rindi also sent Sayyid Barghash, the Sultan of Zanzibar, an elephant tusk as a present. He was so successful in making trade links with the coast that the British Consul-General in Zanzibar reported in 1884 that Zanzibar controlled the trade coming out of Kilimanjaro because it controlled the Moshi trade. These diplomatic maneuvers to contact the coast in search of potential allies and symbolic gestures of friendship propelled Rindi to the top of Kilimanjaro politics.

Establishing such ties with the coast allowed Rindi to bring a third outside group permanently to Kilimanjaro. The British linked Rindi's personal identity with Kilimanjaro just as the Wataveta did at the time of New's visit. His communication with the coast and his control of the trade routes to Kilimanjaro made Rindi important in European eyes. This was important, because although he controlled the trade routes in the 1880s, enemies surrounded most of his own territory. Since New's visits in 1871 and 1873, Rindi had been in contact with the Church Missionary Society's Freretown

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48 Decken, Reisen, 2: 45-47; New, 365-66; Thomson, Through Masai Land, 70.
49 Thomson, Through Masai Land, 75, 97; New, Life, 390-91.
50 Thomson, Through Masai Land, 69-70.
52 Stahl, History of the Chagga, 249.
54 See for example Johnston, Kiliman–Njaro, 94.
55 Johnston, Kiliman–Njaro, 94, 204, 235.
mission through Sadi, who delivered Rindi’s letter to Freretown inviting the missionaries to set up a station in Moshi. Rindi exchanged letters with the missionaries and encouraged them to build a mission in Moshi. They did this seven years later in 1885, but Rindi failed to get what he really hoped for through a permanent British presence at his court. When Bishop Hannington visited Moshi that year, Rindi said that "[h]e want[ed] guns and gunpowder, and if [he could not] have them, the next best thing [was] a white teacher to live in the land." He made similar demands on E. A. Fitch when the missionary established a permanent C.M.S. presence in Moshi later that year.

Judging by Rindi’s demands on the C.M.S. missionaries, he failed to get the amount of guns that he needed to compete with Kibosho and to maintain complete control of the caravan trade. Although the C.M.S. also failed to supply the guns that he wanted, its missionaries in Freretown did link Rindi up with Sir John Kirk, the British consul at Zanzibar. Rindi’s contact with Kirk made the British think that Rindi was probably the most influential of the chiefs on Kilimanjaro. According to Johnston, the Moshi Swahili had initially built up the reputations of the British and Kirk, which led Rindi initially to seek Kirk out and unsuccessfully request Johnston to put Moshi under the protection of Great Britain. When Johnston arrived at Moshi in 1884, Rindi saw a chance to establish direct formal relations with Britain. Johnston’s presence at Moshi would suggest to other Chagga chiefdoms that Britain supported Rindi’s personal ambitions on Kilimanjaro. Perhaps more important and more immediate for Rindi, was the opportunity to get some cannon and have British officers train Moshi warriors, as the British officer General Matthews had done for the Zanzibari army. Rindi bluntly told Johnston: "I want you to be my Bwana Mafiu (General Matthews)."

Before Rindi received any protection from the British he signed agreements in 1885 with both Zanzibar and Germany. First, a Zanzibari representative visited Rindi at a time when Kibosho was threatening Moshi. General Matthews followed up this initial visit and formalized the agreement between Moshi and Zanzibar, recognizing Rindi as the paramount chief of Kilimanjaro. In exchange, Rindi accepted Zanzibari suzerainty over all of Kilimanjaro. Rindi withdrew from these agreements several weeks later when he signed a similar treaty with German representatives and his initiative then moved into the hands of European diplomats involved in negotiating

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56 Rindi, “Invitation,” 448; Stahl, History of the Chagga, 251.
57 Rindi, "Invitation," 448; Bishop James Hannington, "Bishop Hannington's visit to Chagga,” Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record 10 (1885): 611; Stahl, History of the Chagga, 251; Fitch and Wray, “The First Year," 555; similar demands had been made of Johnston, see Johnston, Kiliman–Njaro, 135, 164.
59 Ibid., 105–6.
the Treaty of Berlin. His actions appeared confused, since he had given up ties with Great Britain, a country that he appeared to respect and with which he had established a close trading relationship, only to accept an arrangement with another European country that had little previous contact with him. Rindi appears to have offered up his small state to the highest bidder, just as he told the C.M.S. missionaries in 1885 he would be willing to do.

Rindi continued to practice his own brand of diplomacy, although Moshi had fallen under German control through the Treaty of Berlin. Much as he had done years earlier with the Sultan of Zanzibar, Rindi sent an emissary in 1888 to Kaiser Wilhelm II with an elephant tusk. In return, Rindi was presented Lohengrin’s helmet and cloak from the Berlin Opera House. Having only recently lost control of Machame to Kibosho, Rindi pointed out that he had not received the cannon that he needed. Even though the Germans failed to help Rindi as he had hoped, they ultimately defeated Sina. Kibosho’s submission to German strength returned Moshi to political predominance on Kilimanjaro, if only for a period of months. During the “Arab Revolt” of 1889–1891, Sina allied himself with the Sultan of Zanzibar, forcing Germany to retaliate by destroying Kibosho’s military power, though Sina lived on to 1897.

During the early 1880s a new rival appeared on Kilimanjaro to challenge Rindi’s diplomatic skills. Marealle of Marangu had emerged under Sina’s tutelage to serve as a threat to Moshi. By the mid 1880s, however, they had split and Marealle cooperated with Rindi during raids around Kilimanjaro and the Pare Mountains. The Pare chief Ghendewa of Ugweno invited Rindi to Upare to help him carry out attacks along the Pangani River trade route. Rindi and Marealle joined together in this opportunity to add cattle to their herds and gain more slaves and guns through the caravan trade. Ultimately, Rindi and his Chagga ally turned on Ghendewa after successfully pillaging the rest of North Pare for cattle and slaves. The effects of these raids were what Meyer observed in 1889.

Rindi and Marealle eventually turned on each other because they were both competing for European support. Marealle successfully brought Johnston to Marangu in

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60 See Bennett, “The British on Kilimanjaro,” 232–34; Johnston says that Rindi signed the Zanzibari agreement because he feared a German intervention, see Johnston, Kiliman–Njaro, 100.

61 Fitch and Wray, “The First Year,” 555, 559.

62 Stahl, History of the Chagga, 37; Meyer, Ostafrikanische, 78, 85; Iliffe, Modern History, 100; Rindi must have been disappointed in the aid Germany provided in general. German forces at Moshi before the “Arab Revolt” were minimal; twenty in total; see Rochus Schmidt, Geschichte des Araberaufstandes in Ost–Afrika: Seine Entstehung, seine Niederwerfung und seine Folgen (Frankfurt am Oder, 1892), 190.


64 Höhnel, Discovery, 198; Isaria N. Kimambo, A Political History of the Pare of Tanzania c. 1500–1900 (Nairobi, 1969), 139–40; Dundas, Kilimanjaro, 93.

65 Dundas, Kilimanjaro, 93–94.
1884 after the latter, tired of dealing with Rindi, left Moshi. This event, according to Stahl, represented the first of many European visits to Marangu at Moshi’s expense, irritating Rindi and elevating Marangu in the eyes of Europeans. Marangu would serve as an alternative base to Moshi’s heavy-handed ruler. The Teleki Expedition that Ludwig von Hohnel accompanied avoided Rindi altogether when it stopped at Marangu in 1887. This slight apparently led Rindi to send a devastating raid against Marangu after the Europeans had left. The struggle between Rindi and Marealle continued until Rindi died in 1891, several months after German forces allied with Moshi defeated Kibosho. After that, Marealle used Rindi’s diplomatic techniques to make Marangu the new African political force on the mountain. Signalling the ascendance of Marealle, the Germans moved their station from Moshi to Marangu.

When Johnston was on Kilimanjaro he wondered why there was so much blood being spilled in a land that offered so much to its people. Moore has answered his question by pointing to the struggle to control the trade routes. In doing so, Moore has implicitly indicated the need to redirect African historical research toward individuals and local politics for a better understanding of the effects that European intrusion brought to Africa. This biographical sketch of Rindi’s political life has sought to build on Moore’s and Iliffe’s understanding of the relationship between local political activity and the larger political economy in which it played a part. Placing Rindi’s diplomacy within the larger context of socioeconomic development in the Kilimanjaro region shows that his policies represented an attempt to have Moshi benefit from those changes. Rindi actively brought in outside African, and ultimately European, assistance to aid his local struggle for control of the caravan trade.

Approaching African history from the local political level illuminates the African–European relationship, in this case during initial contact with each other, that is often lost in larger, macro-economic studies. Using Rindi’s diplomatic initiatives as an example, Europeans represented another alternative source of power and wealth that could be tapped for African purposes. More importantly, biographical analysis at the local level serves to empower Africans and make them players in their own history. They become active participants who helped shape how Europeans saw and understood Africa, instead of passive victims of European colonialism.

This paper has suggested reevaluating the political events of nineteenth-century Mt. Kilimanjaro and in particular the diplomatic actions of Rindi of Moshi. In her analysis, of Rindi, Stahl took him to task for being a failed military leader who had to rely on outside support in order to succeed in his plans. Rindi’s legacies to his people,
she maintained, were guns and a diplomacy that ultimately made Europeans the arbitrators of Chagga affairs. For her, Sina of Kibosho was the one who could have succeeded in slowly bringing political unity to the Wachagga if the European powers had not intervened on behalf of Rindi. What Stahl failed to do was to place Sina and Rindi into the larger regional context in which they were fighting to be a part. Even though Sina might have been the greater military leader of the two, he failed to dominate Kilimanjaro because of Rindi’s diplomacy. Rindi’s success is a testament to his diplomatic skills. He succeeded by using local and regional alliances to control the caravan trade to Kilimanjaro and to create an image of himself that forced outsiders to see him as the paramount chief on the mountain. As this paper is only an outline of Rindi’s activities, further research in greater depth must be done for historians to gain a better understanding of the political economy of nineteenth-century Kilimanjaro. A regional political analysis would integrate Kilimanjaro’s political events and show how its leaders helped shape East African trade in a larger context.

71 Stahl, History of the Chagga, 256–57.
72 Ibid., 364–65.
GAMBEILA: AN IMPERIAL ANACHRONISM

by Robert O. Collins

On 15 May 1902, after complicated and somewhat prolonged negotiations, Emperor Menilek II of Ethiopia signed the Anglo–Ethiopian Agreement that established his western frontier with the Anglo–Egyptian Sudan.¹ The most important concession that the British obtained from Menilek was his agreement not to construct any facility that might obstruct the Nile waters without first consulting Britain and the government of the Sudan. He also agreed, at British insistence, to lease a commercial station at Gambeila at the upstream limit of navigation on the Baro River. Originally located fully one hundred fifty miles inside Ethiopia, the station was later moved several miles farther down the Baro to a site more easily accessible to steamers, which could only approach the station at all during the weeks of the annual season of high water. The British were eager to secure this post in order to tap the rich coffee and beeswax supplied by western Ethiopia, both of which were much in demand in the Sudan; in return the lowland traders were prepared to offer salt, cloth, and ever-increasing quantities of absinthe (illicit liquor). The post lay only about fifteen miles from the sharp escarpment that leads up to Sayo, the capital of Wallaga Province, or thirty-five miles from Gore, the capital of Ulu Baboor Province.

The importance of Gambeila was that it lay at the foot of the Ethiopian massif overlooking the great Nilotic plain that stretched almost without limit to the west and south. During high water from June to November it was accessible to the steamers of the Sudan government that transported the coffee and wax to the markets of the northern Sudan, an enterprise that not only yielded profits for the traders but provided much-needed revenue to the Sudan government and its Steamers Administration.

Gambeila was named after an Anuak chief, reputed to have been over a hundred years old, who was living there as a sort of hermit in a solitary tukl (hut) when the first Sudanese customs inspector, Ahmad Effendi Rifat, arrived in 1905. Article IV of the Anglo–Ethiopian Treaty of 1902 defined the territorial extent of the station as 2,000 meters along the north bank of the Baro River and no more than 4,000 acres beyond the river. The lease was to last as long as the Sudan was under Anglo–Egyptian control, and the enclave could not be used for any military or political purposes. Menilek

himself was enthusiastic about granting the enclave as a commercial station, for he was eager to promote the exchange of Ethiopian coffee for Sudanese salt from Port Sudan.2

Gambelia was a miserable place, and one of several perennial administrative sore points in relations between the Sudan and Ethiopia that arose from an ill-advised delineation of the frontier. In 1903 Major Charles W. Gwynn conducted a boundary survey of the border fixed on paper by the previous year's treaty. Instead of following the fundamental principle of aligning the frontier along the Ethiopian escarpment, he found it more convenient simply to follow the course of various rivers below the escarpment. Despite Gwynn's subsequent defense of his actions, the fact remained that rivers do not automatically make good international boundaries, and least of all, as here, in cases when people of the same society live on either bank under different governments.3 The station could only be reached by steamer from June to November and remained cut off throughout the dry season when the Baro disappeared into a mere trickle. At the height of the rains the enclave was an island in a swamp, out of which rough tracks made their tortuous way up to the highland towns of Bure and Gore.

The population of Gambelia, surrounded by the Anau, never numbered more than some 400 Greek, Armenian, Indian, and Sudanese traders, but their presence over the years produced profits for themselves, the Ethiopians and the Sudan government. C. H. Walker, who replaced Ahmed Effendi Rifat as the commercial inspector, reported in 1911 that the value of Sudan exports to Ethiopia had jumped dramatically from 8,397 Egyptian pounds in 1909 to 65,000 in 1911.4 This prosperity, however, was not reflected in the ambiance of the beauties of Gambelia. Nor did it ameliorate the feelings of the Ethiopians, many of whom were inclined to be jealous of the British commercial presence deep within their country. Their local rivalries, however, nourished by the diplomatic skill of the British agents on the frontier, prevented any united Ethiopian effort to absorb the enclave.

By 1920 Gambelia possessed a shed and a house furnished with a table and a bed for the customs inspector. All the stores for six months had to be brought up before the river fell in November. The warehouses and merchant compounds lay strung out along the river bank, but sanitation consisted merely of a series of holes dotting the acreage behind. Malaria was endemic, and after the last steamer departed downriver there was little to do and a lot of loneliness within the enclave. Few Ethiopians ever came to

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2 Marcus, "Ethio-British Negotiations," 89.


4 According to Sudan Intelligence Report 210 (January 1912), exports grew from 8,397 Egyptian pounds in 1909 to 13,656 in 1910 and 65,000 in 1911; the corresponding figures for imports were 16,600, 17,439 and 26,000.
Gambeila because of its reputation for fever, and as of 1920 no Ethiopian official of any importance had yet visited what by then had come to be known as "the cesspool."

The real problem for Gambeila was not its lack of amenities (which were improved after 1920), but the fact that the officers placed in charge of the enclave, although entitled "customs inspector," were much more than officials collecting duty on coffee. They also had to face countless questions of jurisdiction in a border territory the Ethiopian government did not control, where the competing rivalries of western highland barons were matched by hostilities between Nuer and Anuak on the plains. In the middle were the merchants, who wanted to trade with as much security as they could muster along the trails up from Gambeila to Gore and who cherished as much freedom as they could win from the Ethiopian tax collectors. As one well-informed observer put it, "the situation in the station suffers from having no one to refer to, the Customs representative has little authority and questions outside his powers are the affair of no one in particular and get no attention."

As problems accumulated, the abandonment of the enclave was considered. Yet there was revenue to be had from Gambeila, if only the Sudan government could exert its control more widely in order to promote the trade of western Ethiopia. What Gambeila required, said veteran inspector C. H. Walker, was a man with "Moral Authority." By 1920 Walker had been installed as British consul at the strategically advantageous position of Gore; the governor-general in Khartoum approved the transfer of Gambeila from the Customs Department to the broader oversight of Upper Nile Province and appropriated some 5,000 Egyptian pounds toward improvement of the enclave. On 15 September 1921 Colonel J. F. H. Marsh arrived to take command.

Colonel Marsh, according to a confidential assessment by his superiors, might have been designed for Gambeila by the Almighty; Marsh was

a man of 43 who having been in command of a British Battalion finds it difficult to bear any other discipline but his own, and he thrives on an independent job like Gambeila. He is the son of the town clerk of Ryde, and was himself a solicitor until the war discovered his military capacity. He has no pretensions to breeding, but is very typical of his sort, honest, rather blunt, quite devoid of any literary or aesthetic appreciation, a Philistine, but an efficient and conscientious public servant, who hates not getting his own way and generally has quite adequate reasons for having it . . . He does not mind living alone at Gambeila indefinitely, and although he tries to disassociate himself

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6 K. C. P. Struve to Lt. Col. R. M. Fielden, Civil Secretary, 17 October 1920, NRO, UNP, 1/14/62.

7 C. H. Walker, British Consul, Gore to C. A. Willis, Director of Intelligence, 31 December 31 1920, NRO, UNP, 1/14/62.

8 Fielden to M. Wheatley, Private Secretary to Governor-General, 27 December 1920, NRO, UNP, 1/14/62.
as far as he can from the Sudan Government, so as to have his own show, he is amenable enough. He considers without joking and with every justification that his business is to keep British prestige high in Abyssinia so far as he is locally able and he certainly does so.\(^9\)

Marsh wasted no time. Officials and police of the Customs Department were sent packing, sanitation was regularized, and gardens to help provide the enclave with food were laid out. Marsh soon made himself arbiter of the border, storekeeper, chief clerk, judge and jury, and financial comptroller. During his first year at Gambeila he reorganized the warehouses; he collected nearly 5,000 Egyptian pounds through the 6 percent duty on some 2,000 tons of coffee alone, the freight of which on Sudan government steamers yielded another 15,000 in revenue. Salt imported from Port Sudan generated another 15,000 pounds in income for the steamers that had hauled over 55,000 bags to Gambeila.\(^10\) Demand for Sudan salt in western Ethiopia soon reached such levels that the Ethiopian government decided to impose a heavy tax upon it.

The new salt tax appears to have been the idea of Dejazmatch Walda Mikael, who arrived at Gore in August 1922. Not only was salt required for life itself, but its universal value also made it a good medium of exchange. Western Ethiopia being devoid of salt, over a thousand tons a year passed through Gambeila and up into the highlands on the backs of porters, later mules, and from 1936 by motor transport, largely in exchange for coffee. Dejazmatch Walda Mikael sought to profit from the passage of this valuable commodity by introducing a tax of one Maria Theresa dollar for each kilogram of salt. This would have effectively ended the Gambeila salt trade because French salt from Djibouti could be brought overland more cheaply. The anticipated loss to the Sudan government in customs revenue alone was estimated at 6,000 Egyptian pounds a year, a figure that did not include the Sudan steamers' loss of hauling charges or the disruption of trade through the removal of an important commodity exchanged for coffee.\(^11\) Not only did Walker succeed in returning the salt tax to its customary level, but he also convinced Walda Mikael to invest a portion of the profits from the salt tax in improving the track down the escarpment through Bure to Gambeila.

The battle over taxes at Gambeila never ended, however; local Ethiopian officials sought ways to generate revenue at the expense of the merchants, who continuously appealed to the British consul at Gore and the district commissioner (as he

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\(^9\) Struve, Memorandum, 10 October 1926, Struve Papers, Sudan Archives, Durham (hereafter, SAD).


\(^11\) One Egyptian pound was equivalent to 8.85 Maria Theresa dollars. According to SIR 337, August 1922, salt imported through Gambeila had amounted to 1,099 tons in 1919; 1,178 tons in 1920; and 1,260 tons in 1921.
was now called) at Gambeila to preserve the principles of free trade. When not fighting the extortions of Ethiopian tax collectors, Marsh and Walker devoted their efforts to prodding the Ethiopian officials to build a road for motor transport down the escarpment. By 1924 several thousand tons of coffee each year were being carried to Gambeila by porter, a method not only slow and expensive but also hazardous to the porters if the track was not kept clear of thorns. The principal difficulty for Walker was the construction of a bridge over the Birbir River, and he spent hours badgering the Ethiopians to build it. It was not until 1935 that the Ethiopian government completed the motor road and the bridges.

Although Walker was known at Gore as His Britannic Majesty's Consul, his salary and the expense of the consulate were paid by the Sudan government, which also defrayed half the expenses of the other British consulate in western Ethiopia at Maji. (The colonies of Kenya and Uganda shared the remaining half.) Walker was succeeded by Captain E. N. Erskine in August 1928, by which time the value of coffee and other products passing through Gambeila were averaging 300,000 Egyptian pounds annually. Esme Erskine, like his predecessor, soon became a dominant figure in western Ethiopia. He established a special mixed court to protect foreigners over whom the Ethiopian government did not exercise jurisdiction. With Sudan government funds Erskine created an imperial residency on a hill overlooking Gore, with a sumptuous residence, outbuildings, barracks to house ten special constables, a stable, and a pack of hounds.

The same year Erskine arrived at Gore, J. K. "Jack" Maurice arrived to replace Colonel Marsh, who had retired in 1928; except for a brief interruption during the war, Jack was to remain at Gambeila for twenty-one years until his own retirement in 1949. Gambeila was worth the effort. Both the British and Menilek wanted it for badly needed revenue. The trade was rich, mostly in coffee, and accounted for 70 percent of the annual value of all Sudan trade with Ethiopia from the end of the First World War to the Italian occupation. In 1936 a record 4,500 tons of coffee passed through Gambeila downriver into the Sudan. Except for the disastrous depression years of 1931 and 1932 when the value of the Gambeila trade dropped below 100,000 Egyptian pounds, the normal annual value of trade through the enclave during these interwar years averaged between 250,000 and 300,000. This yielded 15,000 to 18,000 Egyptian pounds in customs duties alone, and the profits from the haulage of coffee by steamer from Gambeila was one of the largest single sources of revenue for the Sudan government.

Although Gambeila's principal purpose was commercial, it also became a conveniently neutral site where, under the withering gaze of Jack Maurice, the

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12 These issues are discussed at length by Walker in his correspondence and reports of 1922-25, with Major J. H. Dodds, Charges d'Affaires, Addis Ababa; Governor-General, Khartoum; and Claude Russell, British Minister at Addis Ababa, NRO, UNP, 1/14/64.

13 The value of the trade varied from a high of 470,710 Egyptian pounds in 1925 to a low of 161,076 in 1931. See "Value of Trade with Abyssinia, 1921-1935," UNP, Malakal, Gambeila, in the Southern Regional Government Archives, Juba (hereafter, JA).
inevitable and innumerable frontier disputes could be pacified if not reconciled. Such was the case in March 1932 when a nasty conflict between the Anuak of Ethiopia and the adjoining Murle of the Sudan was settled. The conference was attended by A. G. Pawson, governor of the Sudanese province of Upper Nile, and his Ethiopian counterparts Ras Mulugheta, governor of Gore, and Fitawrari Haile Mariam the acting governor of Sayo province. Agreement was swiftly reached. The Murle captives were returned, and the Ethiopian government paid compensation to the Murle forthwith. An important feature of this Gambeila Agreement was Ras Mulugheta's assurance, after prodding by Erskine as well as representations directly to Addis Ababa, that the Ethiopian government intended to establish a more–than–theoretical administrative presence along the frontier. Ras Mulugheta recommended to the emperor that Qagnazmatch Majid Abud be assigned as Ethiopian frontier agent to carry out the terms of the Gambeila Agreement by asserting the power of the Lion of Judah over the Nuer and Anuak of Ethiopia.\(^\text{14}\)

Majid Abud al–Ashkar was one of those remarkable characters drawn to Africa as by a magnet. Esme Erskine at Gore and Jack Maurice at Gambeila thought Majid "a paragon of virtue" compared to the Ethiopian officials with whom they had to deal. F. D. Corfield and Martin Parr, in contrast, regarded him as a distinctly evil man. G. L. Elliot–Smith thought him "a professional soldier of fortune endowed with all the qualities to success in that line. He is tough, brave and intelligent, perhaps more accurately cunning and one must add mercenary and unscrupulous."\(^\text{15}\) One cannot help but like Majid Abud.

Majid was a Syrian Druze born in 1884 in a small village near the source of the Jordan river in Lebanon. His parents were killed by Turkish brigands and Majid was reared in a Syrian orphanage in Jerusalem, where he learned carpentry. At nineteen he accompanied a Danish missionary to the Hadramaut, where he experienced a host of adventures that culminated in his being sent as the head of a mission from the sultan of Lahej to Ras Makonnen in Harar in 1906. He liked Ethiopia, and worked for a time with a German merchant until taking a position with Idliba Hassan, the son of an Arab Syrian Christian and an English mother, whose Kordofan Rubber Company was trading in gum at El Obeid. Having learned to speak and write Amharic, he became Idliba Hassan's manager in Gore; there he soon won the confidence of the Ethiopian governor Ras Tassamma, through whom in 1914 he received, ultimately from the emperor Lij Iyasu, a beautiful estate at Gomera near Gore.

Majid repaid his benefactors with loyalty. In 1916 the emperor gave him command of a punitive expedition to chastise the Anuak of the western lowlands, who


\(^{15}\) G. L. Elliot–Smith, "Notes on Majid Abud," Elliot–Smith Papers, SAD.
had refused to recognize Ethiopian sovereignty and were waging guerrilla war against enemies across the frontier in the Sudan. Majid's association with Lij Iyasu made him highly suspect in the eyes of the next Ethiopian government, however, and for ten years he lived quietly on his estate at Gomera. In 1932 however, probably at the urging of Erskine and Ras Mulugheta, Haile Sellassie appointed him the Ethiopian Frontier Agent.\(^\text{16}\)

Majid's career as Frontier Agent was mixed at best, but he fared no worse than others, past or present, who have ventured into the politics of the Baro Salient, as Ethiopia's lowland possessions in the extreme west were termed. His primary purpose was to assert Ethiopian authority over the Anuak and Nuer who inhabited the Salient. From the perspective of British observers at Gambeila and Gore it seemed at first that his mission, accompanied by 360 ruffians described as Ethiopian soldiers, might be successful. But while Majid went out of his way to propitiate the Anuak, the Nuer were considerably less impressed by the prospect of becoming dutiful subjects of the Emperor of Ethiopia. The result, probably foreordained by the ill-conceived boundary between Ethiopia and the Sudan, was renewed violence. In May 1934 Majid Abud returned to Gambeila bearing the rank of Qagnazmatch and the new title, "Imperial Agent for the Nilotic Tribes of Ulu Baboor [Gore] and Sayo-Wallega Provinces"; his authority was promptly ignored by both the Anuak and the Nuer. While collecting taxes on 26 May, his force, despite its machine gun, was overwhelmed by the Baro Anuak. Majid was rescued from annihilation only by the intervention of Maurice and his police from Gambeila, a sanctuary that the Anuak never attacked.\(^\text{17}\)

Thus ended Ethiopian attempts to control the Baro Salient; the next to try would be the Italians.

On 3 October 1935, Italian troops crossed the Eritrean frontier into Ethiopia, and they reached Makale in early November. The advance was renewed in February 1936, and it ground irresistibly forward; Haile Sellassie left Addis Ababa on 4 May 1936, and on the following day Marshal Pietro Badoglio entered the capital. On the western frontier the situation had suddenly changed. Instead of chaotic and tiresome tribal hostilities brought on by the failure of the imperial Ethiopian government to assert its authority over the region, one could now foresee the arrival at the very gates of the Sudan a resurgent European power whom the British government had made considerable effort to appease. On the one hand, the strength of Italy in Ethiopia might bring stability to the turbulent frontier. On the other, that very strength could create a force capable of threatening the Nile waters and the lifelines of empire.

Gambeila was particularly crucial, for it was the conduit for goods and people out of the provinces of western Ethiopia; to abandon it to the Italians would not only

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\(^\text{17}\) *Sudan Monthly Record*, May–June 1934.
damage British prestige but would seal off the region's only outlet to the outside world. The Sudan would lose control of the Baro and up to 300,000 Egyptian pounds worth of merchandise warehoused in Gambeila itself. Meanwhile, the collapse of the Ethiopian army had loosed upon the land bands of well-armed soldiers who had turned to brigandage; if given an opportunity they might well descend upon Gambeila to pillage it. At a meeting of 15 May 1936, at the palace in Khartoum, Sudanese Governor-General Stewart Symes ordered that Gambeila be strengthened and that the Boma Plateau, site of the second British consulate of western Ethiopia at Maji, also be occupied before the Italians could reach either. The district commissioners should "assume more direct control with less meticulous observance of the frontier."18 In June some seventy special police from Kordofan were sent up to Gambeila by the first steamer with machine guns and barbed wire. There Maurice was already at work clearing a landing field; it was ready by September.

The following month Erskine quietly evacuated the Gore consulate, since he could no longer assume any responsibility for the preservation of internal order in western Ethiopia.19 When he arrived at Gambeila his bodyguard of fifty Anuak were put to work guarding the rusting vehicles of the Ethiopian Motor Transport Company, as to turn them loose upon the population was unthinkable. There were few other refugees, save an occasional high Ethiopian official. On 17 December 1936, two Italian generals, twelve officers, and a hundred Italian troops motored to Gambeila while planes flew overhead. Jack Maurice rose to the occasion and served refreshments. An Italian reporter waxed lyrical, describing Gambeila as "the Venice of Africa," but Maurice lamented that "the population can't understand the tribal behaviour and loose morals of the white aviators."20 For the moment, Maurice and the Italian administrators settled down to enjoy amicable relations. Italian pilots punctuated the boredom of the Gambeila routine by flying out live crocodiles for presentation to Marshal Rodolfo Graziani; what the notoriously bloodthirsty commander did with these man-eaters no one at Gambeila knew. The simulated cordiality could not last.

For the moment the Italians were quite happy to accept a British presence at Gambeila in the person of Jack Maurice, for he could do little harm, and indeed his enormous experience and prestige was a most valuable asset. Although constantly reassured that matters at Gambeila would remain quite normal, within six months Maurice perceived that "business as usual" was not going to continue much longer. To his superiors in Khartoum he wrote: "I always feel that anything that anyone of them does is with one view in mind, namely that the thin edge of the wedge towards a more

18 Symes to Lampson, 9 May 1936, NRO, UNP, 1/49/353; Parr to Corfield and Elliot-Smith, 16 May 1936, JA, UNP, Malakal, SCR/93/H/1.
19 See J. K. Maurice, DC, Gambeila, to Gillan, September 5, 1935; Parr to Maurice, 16 May 1936, "Note by Martin Parr, May 19, 1936," and "Note on Sudan Policy in Gambeila Enclave, August 12, 1936," NRO, UNP, 1/42/310.
20 Maurice to Gillan, 27 December 1936, NRO, UNP, 1/42/311.
powerful hold on the enclave, which seems to me that as more and more Italian companies come in and fill the place up with their personnel, cars, etc. must at long last become a stranglehold.\textsuperscript{21}

By June 1937, it was abundantly clear that the Italians had three definite objectives at Gambeila: to control the trade, to use Gambeila as a base from which to reconnoiter the river system of the Upper Nile Province, and to assert their authority in the Baro Salient. The Italians soon moved to concentrate the coffee trade in the hands of their own companies to the exclusion of merchants traditionally trading with the Sudan. Maurice had warned the Sudan government in May that the Italians were squeezing the merchants very hard. E. G. Coryton came up from Malakal with the first steamer in June to hold discussions with the Italian commissioner, Lieutenant F. Senni, who made it quite clear that Italy claimed sovereignty over the enclave and undoubtedly would have pressed for complete control were it not for the fact that the Sudan government controlled the steamers.\textsuperscript{22} The Italian objective was stated more bluntly two years later:

The British intention at Gambeila is to drive all the trade of west Ethiopia towards the waterways of the Baro and Gila for the Sudan. Behind the Greeks Danielei's and the Gellatiley's who built the Gambeila–Gore road the shadow of the rapacious hand of John Bull outlines itself clearly. They were well aware of the immeasurable riches of the territory of Gore and Sayo. The thorn of Gambeila is no small annoyance. How can we be free of it if the principal entry [sic] is that of freeing ourselves from the English at Gambeila and of putting to good use the great riches of west Ethiopia? Their political dreams are shattered and their hopes for occupying the provinces of west Ethiopia have vanished. We must get rid completely of every sign of English territorial dominion even if masked within our Empire.\textsuperscript{23}

By autumn, the Italians had consigned all Gambeila trade to the Societa Anonima Navigazione d'Eritrea (SANE) and the Societa Nazionale d'Ethiopia (SNE). They bought up the coffee and other products at a fixed and commercially low rate, and any of the traditional merchants who offered competitive prices were fined the difference. The Italian administration in Ethiopia was hard-pressed for foreign exchange and did not wish to see a quarter of a million pounds' worth of produce exchanged in the Sudan.\textsuperscript{24} The need for foreign exchange also worked to the disadvantage of the Gambeila merchants. In addition to granting export licenses creating a monopoly for SANE and SNE, the Italian authorities insisted that all commercial transactions be conducted in lire at a fixed rate of exchange. In western Ethiopia lire was worthless money, and the Gambeila merchants who had traded for

\textsuperscript{21} Maurice to Gillan, 2 June 1937, NRO, UNP, 1/42/310.
\textsuperscript{22} E. G. Coryton, Governor, Upper Nile, to Gillan, 24 June 1937, NRO, UNP, 1/42/311.
\textsuperscript{23} Report of Major Colacino, 23 February 1940, NRO, UNP, 1/42/309.
\textsuperscript{24} F. D. Corfield to Gillan, 28 September 1937, NRO, UNP, 1/42/311.
years on fair terms suddenly found themselves financially strangled, and so they departed. By October 1939 there was only one Sudanese merchant remaining in the enclave, and one Greek. The once flourishing commercial area had been reduced to a mere transit station for Italian imports and exports. Gambeila never recovered.25

By the early spring of 1937 the Italian commissioner at Gambeila was already making plans to organize a river reconnaissance as soon as the Baro was navigable. Commander di Fregato Silvio Montanarella arrived at Gambeila in May. A member of Marshal Graziani's staff and an officer in Italian naval intelligence, he was well known for his travels and explorations. As he discussed the geography and river systems of the frontier with Maurice, he revealed that Gambeila had suddenly assumed considerable importance to the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. "The conquest [of Gambeila] was undreamt of," he assured Maurice, but Italian control in western Ethiopia required a more assured means of communication and transportation for military supplies. Montanarella leased the river steamer Pope Pius XI from the Italian missionaries in the Sudan and proceeded to investigate the Baro, Pibor and Gila rivers.

Of more immediate importance were the arrangements being made in Khartoum in May through which the Societa Anonima Navigazione d'Eritrea had made an agreement with Contomichalos, Darke and Co., the well-known Khartoum trading firm with long-standing experience at Gambeila, to ship over 10,000 tons of trade goods into the enclave. Certainly this was yet another step toward the Italians controlling Gambeila trade, H. A. Nicholson, head of the Department of Economics and Trade, warned his superiors. That, in turn, would undermine the British presence and thereby weaken any position the Sudan government might have if the question of the rights secured under the 1902 treaty with Menilek came up in negotiations with the Italians.26 As far as the British government was concerned, they wanted this pestilential little enclave to cause no trouble that might disrupt their policy of conciliating the Italians. Maurice was instructed to make whatever arrangements he could with the Italians "with the idea of carrying on normal commercial activity."27

There could be little doubt, however, that as soon as war was declared between Britain and Italy, (in the event, on 10 June 1940), Gambeila—this mighty bastion of twenty policemen with four machine guns, and of course, Jack Maurice—would probably be the first British stronghold to fall to the might of the resurgent Italian empire. Jack was ready to leave. He was fifty-seven years old and sick, and he did not much relish the idea of spending the war in an internment camp. He had even devised a code word

25 See correspondence between Maurice and Gillan, and particularly H. A. Nicholson, Department of Economics and Trade, to Gillan, May 24, 1937; Acting Governor-General to D. V. Kelly, Cairo, 11 October 1937, NRO, UNP, 1/42/310-1; ”Note on Infiltration of Italians into Gambeila” and ”Trade Situation at Gambeila,” 13 July 1937, JA, UNP, Malakal.


27 Lampson to Acting Governor-General, tel. 71, 11 June 1937, NRO, UNP, 1/42/310.
for evacuation, namely "boots." There had not been another Englishman in Gambeila for seven months or more, but he had been told that the flag must continue to fly until war was actually declared, and was given the cheerless admonition "to pull himself together and hang on."

Fortunately, Governor-General Symes was able to use his close personal friendship with the Duke of Aosta, the viceroy of Italian East Africa, to arrange a safe-conduct for Maurice and his men from Gambeila; on 6 June, Dr. Cesare Laporì, the Italian commandant at Gambeila, told Maurice that they could leave at once so long as they surrendered their arms and left the radio intact.28 Maurice left immediately in a canoe and reached Malakal on 28 June, greatly relieved and none the worse for wear. The governor of Upper Nile Province, C. H. Armstrong, took the war much too seriously; he solemnly called together all his senior staff to a top secret meeting in which he announced the fall of the first British post to the Italians—Jokau, at the junction of the Baro and Pilbor rivers, which consisted of six thatched huts and as many African policemen. The European war on the Upper Nile had begun.

Governor Armstrong ("General" Armstrong, as his subordinates sardonically began to call him), was clearly in his element. During World War I he had distinguished himself by winning the DSO, MC and the Croix de Guerre. He had never forgotten, and now he treated the Upper Nile as if it were the Western Front. Armstrong's war plan asked the British forces to stand on the defensive, holding the posts of Nasir and Akobo until reinforcements could arrive to recapture Gambeila and the Baro Salient and drive the Italians out of western Ethiopia. "UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DO I WANT UNNECESSARY RISKS TAKEN DURING WAR TIME," intoned the "General."29

Though sound in conception, these orders were promptly ignored by Armstrong's district commissioners for the Nuer and Anuak. Captain A. H. A. Alban had been decorated with a DFC and the Belgian Croix de Guerre in France. Captain H. A. Romilly at Nasir, feared by the Italians as "the hyena," had fought with the Somerset Light Infantry in Mesopotamia. They lost no time in striking at the Italians in the Baro Salient to gain the singular distinction of being the first British forces to fight on enemy soil in the Second World War. Even academics joined the game, and with unbridled enthusiasm; the anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, nicknamed "The Poet," penetrated toward Pochala with fifteen armed Anuaks to gather useful information.30

28 See: C. L. Armstrong, Governor, Upper Nile, to George Bredin, Deputy Civil Secretary, 22 May 1940; Maurice to Newbold, 24 May 1940; Newbold to Armstrong, 3 June 1940; British Consul-General, Addis Ababa, to Symes, tel. 32, 8 June 1940, all in NRO, SECURITY, 11/10/50.


Yet clearly the Italian position in western Ethiopia was not going to collapse under the onslaught of two district commissioners and an anthropologist with a handful of loyal Anuak. Armstrong was more interested in waging serious war, and gathered his forces in preparation for the dry season of 1940–1941. There was a battalion of the King’s African Rifles, two companies of the Force Publique from the Belgian Congo, and the Upper Nile Scouts, a hastily-assembled irregular troupe of some 500 Nuer and Anuak who regarded the offensive against the Italians as one grand razzia. The veteran Nuer district commissioner H. G. Wedderburn–Maxwell once again rode to the hounds in pursuit of Italian forces, while Frank Corfield led the mounted police, known for the occasion as the Maaban Field Force, with the same methodological accountability that had earned him an M. B. E. in the finance department of the Sudan government. For the poor Italians huddled in the garrisons of the Baro Salient, Addis Ababa was almost as distant and inaccessible as was Rome, and they soon found themselves overwhelmed by the éclat of the African, British and Congolese forces—of whom the Upper Nile administration spread the disinformation that they were all cannibals. Gambeila was captured on 22 March 1941, and by April the Upper Nile campaign was over. General Gazzira, who commanded the Italian forces in western Ethiopia, surrendered officially on 6 July 1941.31

The defeat of the Italians did not resolve the never-ending frontier problems. British officers were re-established at the western Ethiopian consulates, Alban at Gore and R. C. R. Whalley at Maji, from whence he was to administer western Ethiopia as part of the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration. Essential to a more stable administration between the Baro and Lake Rudolf, however, was a rectification of the boundary. At first the victory revived British hopes that the time had come for the Sudan to acquire the Baro Salient and to that end Douglas Newbold, the civil secretary, took the initiative in December 1941.32 C. G. “Bill” Davies, the governor of Upper Nile Province, promptly responded with a provisional map, which with some redrafting in Khartoum soon delineated a more viable frontier. All the Nuer were to become Sudanese; so would the Anuak of the Baro and Gila and even the Masango of the foothills of the Oromo country, to be administered by Jack Maurice in a new district with its headquarters at Gambeila.33 Newbold sent the map, together with the Sudan case for acquisition of the Baro Salient, to the British ambassador in Cairo; he urged the Foreign Office to place the Baro Salient under British military administration as a first step toward annexation, in order to facilitate its transfer when an Anglo–Ethiopian treaty should be signed.34 Jack Maurice, who had returned to Gambeila in the wake of the Congo troops, contributed the helpful claim that all Anuak recognized

31 "Upper Nile War Diary," NRO, UNP, 1/40/301.
33 C. G. Davies, Governor, Upper Nile, to Newbold, 18 January 1942, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
34 Lampson to Foreign Office, 15 January 1942, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
British authority. But as in the years before the war, the British again found
themselves seeking to exercise power in territory they may have in effect possessed, but
that they could not claim to rule.

There was strong feeling both in London and in Addis Ababa that the war against
the Italians in East Africa had been fought to restore the emperor to his dominions,
which Britain had shamefacedly allowed the Italians to conquer; one could not extract
territorial concessions from him as the price of British assistance. Sylvia Pankhurst,
Professor Berridale Keith and Sir Sidney Barton were outspoken advocates for ending
the British military administration in Ethiopia as soon as possible and returning the
country intact to the rule of Haile Sellassei.35

By June it was apparent that any thought of retaining the Baro Salient had
disappeared. The British military administration in Ethiopia was terminated,
including that in the Baro Salient, which latter reverted to Ethiopian administration
under Qagnazmatch Seife. The British position at Gambeila simply went back to what
it had been in 1934. Newbold was philosophical: "Maurice by his generous temperment
and personal acquaintance with various Abyssinian notables probably does more good
neighbourliness than the average D.C. It is his job to be a frontier agent and maintain
contacts and keep us supplied with local information and do what he can to protect
Anuak [and] Nuer in the Salient against Gala [Oromo] or Amhara oppression."36
Although Upper Nile provincial governor Davies wished to curb the independent and
iconoclastic Maurice with his peculiar methods of administration, he had to admit
that at fifty-eight Jack Maurice at Gambeila was "one of the few unchanging things in
an unstable world."37

Jack Maurice returned to Gambeila after the war in the wake of the triumphant
allied victory, but Gambeila was never to be the same again. The principal reason for
the decline of the Gambeila trade was the opening of western Ethiopia to truck traffic
on roads built by the Italians during their years of occupation since 1936. They had also
taught the Ethiopians how to control Gambeila despite Jack Maurice. By 1945
Gambeila was overrun by some sixteen Amhara officials and a hundred police; this
formidable Ethiopian presence, Maurice complained, had little to do but "drink, fight,
rob, and wander about the place to the annoyance of everyone."38 In the spring of 1945
the Ethiopians imposed a business profits tax upon Gambeila; like the monopolist

35 Newbold to Davies, 25 January 1942, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
36 Newbold to Davies, 1 June 1942, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
37 Davies to Newbold, 10 June 1942, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347. For a discussion of the frontier
problems of the Baro Salient in distinction to the more particularistic and commercial concerns at
Gambeila, see Faisal Abdel Rahman Ali Taha, "The Problem of the Baro Salient," Sudan Notes and
38 Maurice to Newbold, 21 April 1945, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
policies of the Italians it was designed to force out all foreign merchants.\textsuperscript{39} Harassment followed in a variety of frustrating ways, such as the Ethiopian demand for Maurice to turn over the seals used to stamp commercial papers. In the succeeding year a large Ethiopian force marched through the Baro Salient, but still Maurice hung on, determined not to leave despite sickness and discouragement. His teeth were falling out and trade was at a virtual standstill.

In December 1946, the Ethiopian government ordered that the Maria Theresa dollar, the standard medium for commercial transactions for 150 years, no longer be accepted as legal tender. It must now be exchanged for Ethiopian dollars at a rate fixed at only a quarter of the value of the old coinage on the world’s currency exchanges. For the foreign merchant this was tantamount to confiscation, and confiscation in fact it became for anyone caught attempting to obtain full value for his coin on the black market. The final blow to the Gambeila trade came with a later order, in January 1947, that whoever wished to trade in Gambeila must first obtain a passport in person from Addis Ababa.\textsuperscript{40} This hardship, combined with the currency regulations, effectively ended Sudanese trade with Ethiopia through the enclave and destroyed any hope of revenue, the \textit{raison d’être} for the existence of a Sudanese presence in Ethiopia. Maurice summed it up in his inimitable fashion to Freddy Kingdon at Malakal: “After all my nineteen years here this last year has taxed all my ingenuity, tact and last patience . . . trying to make it [Gambeila] into a more or less wholesome station, not a place of trouble, intrigue, arguments, disagreements, and filth.”\textsuperscript{41}

While the policies of the Ethiopian government were clearly designed to drive out the non–Ethiopian merchants from Gambeila, the Sudan government was not about to rush to their aid despite the fact that some of their merchants had been trading in the enclave under the British flag for twenty, even thirty years. The Department of Economics and Trade at Khartoum was reluctant to release the foreign exchange the merchants required to purchase Ethiopian coffee or to free up steamer space to transport it. In fact, the commercial future of Gambeila was of no importance to them, for the trade was mostly in the hands of Levantine rather than ethnic Sudanese hands. British officials could not justify giving the Gambeila trade high priority on the hard–pressed steamer services when postwar Brazilian coffee could be purchased at Port Sudan for 10 percent less than Ethiopian coffee coming through Gambeila.

In the last analysis, however, transport was the key factor in ending the Gambeila coffee trade. The Italians had constructed roads into western Ethiopia, and it was cheaper and quicker to transport the coffee from the highlands by truck. Thus Ethiopian coffee could be in the shops of the Gezira in two days via the roads through

\textsuperscript{39} Sir Hubert Huddleston, Governor–General, to Lord Killearn, British Ambassador, Egypt, 15 May 1945, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
\textsuperscript{40} Maurice to Newbold, 14 January 1947, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
\textsuperscript{41} Maurice to F. D. Kingdon, Governor, Upper Nile, n.d., NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
Kurmu and al-Rusayris, whereas Gambeila merchants had to wait for the rainy season for transport on the river, meanwhile locking up their capital and incurring substantial storage costs and losses. Ethiopian restrictions were not conducive to Sudan commerce, of course, but it was the economics of transportation introduced by the Italians that killed the Gambeila trade. "It is clear that the only basis for maintaining Gambeila was really a political one and not trade," it was now concluded. Why Gambeila was regarded as a political asset no one seems to have questioned, and all appeared satisfied by the mystical answer that the continuation of a British presence in the enclave was for "reasons best known to the central government." In fact, the Sudan government clung to Gambeila as a card—once an ace, now a deuce—in the hope of reviving the negotiations to rectify the frontier. "However, time would appear to be short," wrote the governor of Upper Nile province in 1950,

for the lease of the enclave, I understand, terminates when this country ceases to come under Anglo–Egyptian control. So in winning her independence Sudan will lose Gambeila and whatever value it has for bargaining with Ethiopia.43

In 1949 Jack Maurice retired to England after twenty–one years in Gambeila, hopefully not too ill to continue to ride to the hounds on a donkey, which had become one of his favorite eccentricities. His departure, perhaps even more than the decline in trade, closed another minor chapter about a remote and pestilential outpost in the history of imperial Britain.

Once Jack Maurice had left the end came inexorably to the Gambeila enclave. In 1951, Kanyazmatch Asfaw Abege informed Captain Harry Dibble, who had replaced Maurice, that he no longer had the right to judge or imprison anyone. The surviving merchants were bullied and browbeaten to buy in Ethiopian currency despite the refusal to exchange surplus dollars for Egyptian pounds. In 1954 Asfaw Abege simply announced to Dibble that Ethiopia was taking over the enclave upon his departure on 30 October 1954. This was much to the annoyance of the Sudanese, but with eminent good sense M. O. Yassein, the acting governor of Upper Nile, realized that the end of Gambeila was at hand. No longer would Upper Nile steamers call at Gambeila, and the last of the merchants were finally leaving. "I think," the acting governor concluded, "it is far better for our future relations with Ethiopia if we read the signs of the changing times now and decide courageously to bring the agreement of May 15, 1902 about the enclave to an end."44

42 "Meeting in Department of Economics and Trade on June 21, 1948, to discuss Gambeila Coffee Trade," and J. Roper, Director of Customs to J. W. Robertson, Civil Secretary, 19 July 1948, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
43 J. Longe, Governor, Upper Nile, to Robertson, 10 August 1950, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
44 M. O. Yassein to Permanent Undersecretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 15 and 24 September 1954, and 2 February and 30 March 1955, NRO, UNP, 1/47/347.
On 24 April 1956, a Sudanese delegation consisting of Sayyid M. O. Yassein and the permanent undersecretary from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met in Addis Ababa with the Ethiopian vice minister of Foreign Affairs, Blatta Dawit Ogbagzy and, from the Finance Ministry, Ato Menassie Lemma, and agreed to hand over Gambeila to the Imperial Ethiopian government on 15 October 1956. The Sudanese were particularly concerned that hydrological measurements would continue. And so it came to pass that the Baro Salient passed firmly into Ethiopian hands. For the next seventeen years of the First Sudanese Civil War it remained a sanctuary from which southern Sudanese guerrillas erupted to harass the Northern Sudanese army in its vain attempt to establish control over Upper Nile Province for Khartoum. On the eastern Sudan frontier nothing of significance really changes—only the players.
SETTLERS AND THE STATE:
A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF W. H. TIMCKE

by Tony Woods

Biography has become a neglected field in African historiography. As Africanists generally have struggled with neo-Marxist and post-modern paradigms, their emphasis has been either on the structural or subjective aspects of society rather than on individuals themselves. Such a tendency is regrettable because a biography can in fact illuminate important structural themes and subjective realities. An excellent example of this capacity can be found in the political biography of W. H. Timcke, a colonial planter in Malawi. Timcke's biography illustrates the divisiveness of the colony's unofficial community, the settlers' animosity toward the state, and European receptiveness to indigenous aspirations.

Timcke was one of the ex-servicemen who established themselves in Cholo immediately after the First World War. Little information exists about his early years in Malawi, but by the mid-1920s, he had established the 874 acre Kasembereka estate.¹ He not only grew tobacco on this estate, but he also "derived an income by the letting of ground for Indian stores," including those in the area known as "Timcke town."² The mid-1920s were an especially prosperous period for Malawi's planters, and like many of the protectorate's tobacco farmers during that era, Timcke was doing quite well.³

This prosperity strengthened the planters' determination to influence government policy more, and many, including Timcke, began to agitate for a more active role in administration policy making. But participating in government was a far trickier process than the planters imagined. Not only was the colonial administration not interested in sharing power, but the unofficial community itself was riven by deep divisions.⁴ This kind of divisiveness was not entirely unexpected since colonial Malawi suffered from a serious fractionalization of classes.⁵ In particular, the protectorate's

¹ Arthur Westrop, Green Gold (Bulawayo, n.d.), 39, 162.
² Westrop, Green Gold, 162.
³ Westrop reports that Timcke was doing so well that he refused an offer of five pounds per acre for land that Westrop's partner hoped to buy. Westrop, Green Gold, 39.
European community consisted of people in a wide range of occupations: merchants, small planters, large planters, transportation people, large corporations with their employees and representatives of metropolitan firms.

Often these differences led to the creation of local and occupational associations that sought to represent a specific group. The unofficial community had for years tried to unify these various class fractions under the rubric of the Nyasaland Chamber of Commerce, an organization founded in the 1890s to promote the unofficial community's ambitions. But many Europeans, especially smaller planters outside the Blantyre/Limbe area, felt that the Chamber did not adequately represent them, and discontent about this association lingered throughout the Protectorate's first forty years. As prosperity tenuously spread in 1925, that dissension blossomed into action when the "majority of the planting community . . . formed" the Nyasaland Planters Association. This organization's hopes were abundantly clear when its first secretary, L. S. Norman, asked that "government will accord recognition to & consult the new body on all matters pertaining to the welfare of Agriculture generally."

Timcke clearly played a prominent role in the formation of this new organization. He was elected to the Association's first executive committee. He was also determined to make sure that the new organization got as much support as possible. Shortly after the N.P.A.'s founding, the Cholo Planters Association, which Timcke chaired, sent a letter to the government complaining about the planting community's lack of representation. And when the N.P.A. sent a delegation to Zomba to meet with the governor in June 1926, Timcke was one of the association's four representatives.

But Timcke was not only prominent, he was also controversial. Soon after the June 1926 meeting, the Chief Secretary bitterly complained that Timcke had misrepresented the administration's position at a 17 July meeting of the N.P.A. In particular, the administration noted with distress that "the press report [of the meeting in the Nyasaland Times] further stated that Mr. Timcke said 'here was another matter where the Governor at a deputation had promised to do one thing and then sent a letter declaring that something different has been decided upon.'" In this instance, Timcke was allegedly referring to a gun ordinance being proposed. But since the Chief Secretary had just sent a letter to the N.P.A. about the meeting with Cheston

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6 N.A.M., Historical Manuscripts [hereafter H.M.], NY 5/1/1, L. S. Norman, Secretary, N.P.A., to Chief Secretary, 6 October 1925.
7 Nyasaland Times, 9 October 1925.
8 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, Cholo Planters Association to Chief Secretary, n.d. Although the letter is undated, it is filed immediately after L. S. Norman's initial letter.
9 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, Chief Secretary to the N.P.A., 4 August 1926. The deputation apparently consisted of Messrs. Cheston, Timcke, Ingall, and Withers, all of whom clearly hoped to obtain the government's recognition of the N.P.A. as the official voice of the territory's planting community.
10 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, Chief Secretary to N.P.A., 4 August 1926.
11 For a report of the meeting, see the Nyasaland Times, 17 July 1926.
and Timcke, the report indicated that he was clearly implying that Zomba was dealing in bad faith with the planters.\textsuperscript{12}

Given Timcke's later relations with Zomba, it is not surprising to hear such an implication from him, but in this instance Timcke and the N.P.A. insisted that the misunderstanding stemmed from the territory's class fractionalization, specifically the Blantyre elite represented by the local newspaper and the planters from other districts. The N.P.A. insisted that "the executive committee [of the N.P.A.] is surprised to learn that His Excellency takes note of the obviously prejudiced account of the Annual General Meeting of this Association which appeared in the local press."\textsuperscript{13} And there is no doubt that the N.P.A. and Timcke sincerely believed that R. H. Hynde, the proprietor of the local newspaper and a strong Chamber booster, was bitterly antagonistic towards them. In October, Timcke warned F. S. Withers, another N.P.A. activist, that he should "watch your step with Hynde, his object is plain, he wants to discredit the N.P.A. . . . [and make] the Chamber as before to be the great Pooh Bah."\textsuperscript{14} And in November, an N.P.A. memo insisted that a \textit{Nyasaland Times} reporter named Burston acknowledged that his reports were biased and argued that "of course you must realise that I have my job to hold down; Mr. Hynde, you know, is very much against the N.P.A. and actually I was writing under his instructions."\textsuperscript{15}

Nor is it hard to believe that Mr. Hynde was capable of distorting his reporting to suit his own purposes. For years, Hynde had been publishing inflammatory and often suspicious pieces that conformed to his own idiosyncratic political beliefs.\textsuperscript{16} And Hynde undoubtedly supported the Chamber of Commerce in its struggle to retain its preeminent position.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, it is not hard to believe that Hynde, who was after all one of the Protectorate's first settlers, bitterly resented the apparent pretensions of newer settlers, like Timcke, who wanted to upset the status quo so arduously created by establishing new organizations. Certainly he and Timcke shared a "certain personal animosity" that was amply demonstrated by Hynde's assertion that he had "no intention of inflicting [a letter from Timcke] on our readers."\textsuperscript{18}

What made Timcke remarkable in this imbroglio was that once the fray had been joined, he did not shrink or flinch. Indeed, even though he was not appointed to an

\textsuperscript{12} N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, Chief Secretary to N.P.A., 28 June 1926.

\textsuperscript{13} N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, N.P.A. to Chief Secretary, 17 August 1926.

\textsuperscript{14} N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, Timcke to Withers, 15 October 1926.

\textsuperscript{15} N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, Memo, author unknown, n.d. Unfortunately, the author of this memo did not sign it, and historians therefore have a difficult time attesting as to its veracity.

\textsuperscript{16} For more on this, see Woods, "The Myth of the Capitalist Class."

\textsuperscript{17} See for instance, N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, Hynde to Withers, 11 November 1926.

\textsuperscript{18} N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/1, J. C. Sanderson to F. S. Withers, 13 December 1926; \textit{Nyasaland Times}, 13 August 1926. Sanderson's letter was about negotiations to end the imbroglio affecting the planter community, and the Hynde-Timcke dispute was undoubtedly one of the relationships about which he was speaking. Hynde was replying to a five page letter of criticism about the paper sent in by Timcke.
N.P.A. committee that met with the Chamber to reach an accommodation, he nevertheless bombarded his N.P.A. colleagues with increasingly obstreperous and vociferous advice. For instance, in October, he advised F. S. Withers that "you must try and get Sanderson and Hayter to strafe Hynde if he persists in trying to wreck all attempts at unity." In December, he was even more critical:

Re the Chamber report it made me swear. I think that Cheston and Seale are rather hasty in cutting out the only means of publicity until there is another paper started. I am not very enthusiastic re the 'one body' stunt, it is just a wheeze of Govt. to play off the Chamber against the NPA, unfortunately we have to play up to the namby pamby . . . By the way whatever you do, don’t let Cheston compromise you with that anti-planter body, the East Africa Board.

And by December 1927, Timcke was advising Withers that "I hope you will not concede a single point to the die-hards, you have gone a damn long way now."

Timcke did not confine his activities to advice though. He was also militant in other ways. Most notably, he used the Cholo Planters Association as cudgel to push through his program. As early as July 1926, he informed Zomba that "the [Cholo Planters] Association shall on all major subjects of General Public interest make its representations to Government through the medium of the N.P.A." As discussions between the N.P.A. and the Chamber dragged into December of the same year, Timcke further reinforced his views when the C.P.A. unanimously passed a resolution "that this association is of the opinion that the Nyasaland Planters Association, as constituted, is the most suitable body for Planters Associations to use as the medium for making representations to Government on ALL SUBJECTS OF GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST."

But Timcke also displayed a remarkable talent for changing his mind as the dispute over unofficial representation moved into 1927. Despite his vehement support of the N.P.A., he still attended a meeting organized by the Chamber on 2 December 1926 even though the N.P.A. leadership boycotted the get together. He also admonished Withers for failing to attend, noting that "you made an error in refusing to attend." But this incident was clearly a product of Timcke's ambitiously wishful thinking since the Chamber remained obstinate about any reconciliation.

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19 N.A.M, H.M. NY 5/1/1, Timcke to Withers, 16 October 1926.
20 N.A.M, H.M. NY 5/1/1, Timcke to Withers, 9 November 1926.
21 N.A.M, H.M. NY 5/1/2, Timcke to Withers, 27 December 1927.
22 N.A.M, H.M. NY 5/1/1, Cholo Planters Association to Chief Secretary, 31 July 1926.
23 N.A.M, H.M. NY 5/1/1, C.P.A. to N.P.A., 1 December 1926. This letter was obviously calculated to help the N.P.A. in its fight with the Chamber.
24 N.A.M, H.M. NY 5/1/1, Timcke to Withers, 2 December 1926. It is interesting to note that Timcke's apparent defection predated his admonition to Withers to avoid giving in to the hard liners.
The clearest manifestation of this obdurate attitude came when the N.P.A. tried to break the deadlock by holding a meeting based on proportional representation. In this instance, associations would send one representative for every fifteen members they had. Such a scheme worked quite well for the N.P.A. with its 174 members. And this type of meeting would also favor Timcke's Cholo Planter's Association, whose fifty-three members entitled them to four delegates and far outnumbered the smaller local associations in other districts.

But the Chamber, whose membership was so small that it would be swamped by the combination of other associations, and its leadership ultimately decided that the "committee [of the Chamber] unanimously agreed that it could not accept your invitation to the meeting of the 17th instant on the conditions laid down in your letter." Even more telling, when the meeting itself was held on 17 February, not only did the Chamber not send representatives, but it also indicated that while it was "at first willing to attend . . . [it] subsequently took umbrage at the wording of the N.P.A. letter [of invitation] and then refused to attend."

The N.P.A. leaders were astonished by the Chamber's apparent duplicity. F. S. Withers, the Planters' Association secretary, complained that he had reached an agreement with the Chamber and that "no other [invited] body complained to me that it [the letter of invitation] was impertinent. It is my honest opinion that this allegation is nothing more than an unscrupulous attempt to dis-credit me and the body for which I act as Hon. Secretary." Others echoed Withers' confusion and dismay. R. C. Wood asserted that "I consider that to make the statement that the letter [of invitation] is impertinent is simply ridiculous. There is not one impertinent word in it from beginning to end." Perhaps most importantly, Timcke stated that "judge of my surprise to have Hayter get up and state that the reason that the Chamber did not attend was because you wrote an impertinent letter to them and that they decided to ignore you and the conference."

But besides surprise, Timcke also found himself in the uncomfortable position of having to refute press accounts to his colleagues in the N.P.A. In this case, he had to contradict reports about his apparent torpedoing of any agreement by misrepresenting

26 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/2, Timcke to Nyasaland Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, 4 February 1927. It is worth noting that in comparison to Cholo's fifty-three members, the Mlanje Planters Association had nineteen members while the Fort Johnston Planters Association had only fifteen members.
27 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/2, Nyasaland Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce to N.P.A., February 12, 1927. The "conditions" referred to were the proportional representation scheme. The Chamber had some thirty-six members at this time, giving it only three potential delegates.
28 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/2, Record of Meeting held on 17 February 1927.
31 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/2, Timcke to Withers, 20 February 1927.
the N.P.A. positions to the Chamber leadership at various times, most particularly the December meeting. Timcke insisted that

I explained that the chamber were only invited to FRAME a scheme and that no suggestion was made that the scheme would be binding on anyone until same had been approved by the Associations. . . . I pointed out that so far from ignoring you that they had written you stating that the reason they could not attend was because of the terms of the letter, not the Tone of the letter.32

But Timcke's allies were becoming weary of his agitation and behavior. His attempt to act as an intermediary had not only failed, but it also exacerbated growing ill feelings towards him. L. S. Norman provided a tantalizing hint of these feelings when he complained to F. M. Withers that "once Timcke has anything to do with a meeting there is not much chance of squeezing anything in."33 And when the N.P.A. choose its officers and board in 1928, the association showed its opinion by leaving him out of office and off the executive committee.34

Any concern Timcke might have felt about his loss of prestige and power in the N.P.A. were undoubtedly offset by several other factors. The first was that he still could obtain positions as an unofficial member of government commissions. For instance, in July 1927, he joined the Director of Agriculture, the administration's Treasurer and Mr. Tait Bowie on a commission convened "to consider the question of the revision of existing motor licence fees and petrol dues."35 When the territory's various associations met in August 1928 to try and find a new framework for settler unity, Timcke was elected to a committee that was investigating the Kenyan Convention of Associations as a model for Malawi.36 Finally, he was on the Convention of Associations Tobacco subcommittee in 1929.37

Timcke could also get solace from his ascendancy in Cholo. The vehicle for Timcke's ambition in this district was the Cholo Planters' Association, an organization he came to dominate thoroughly between 1926–28.38 Timcke's use of the C.P.A. as a

32 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/2, Timcke to Withers, 20 February 1927.
33 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/2, Norman to Withers, 7 January 1927.
34 East Africa and Rhodesia, 208, 13 September 1928. Timcke was not the only one who did not return to the executive committee. But of the prominent players, such as Ingall, Cheston, Withers, and Tennett, only Timcke and Burberry Seale were prominent names who did not return.
35 Nyasaland Times, 22 July 1927.
36 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/3, Minutes of Associations' Representatives' Meeting, 10 and 11 August 1928. Each association in the country sent two representatives to this meeting and an earlier one held on 9 July. Timcke was a representative of the Cholo Planters Association, and he joined Messrs. Burberry Seale, Tait Bowie, Ingall, Thorneycroft, Hadlow, and Sanders on the committee.
37 N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/4, Report of the Tobacco Sub Committee, 16 July 1929. The Convention of Associations was the body established to represent the unofficial community in 1928. It in essence incorporated the territory's various associations into one representative body.
38 It is interesting to note that by 1928, Timcke had put his name on the C.P.A.'s letterhead, an unprecedented action during this time. See N.A.M., S 1/1395/23, Cholo Planters Association to Chief Secretary, 14 March 1928.
base for action and debate led even critics like Hynde to admit that "the Cholo Planters Association seem to have quite a little Parliament of their own."³⁹

Timcke's enthusiastic leadership did more than assuage his ego; it also led the district's planters into novel activities. An excellent example of this involved co-operatives. Timcke was an enthusiastic backer of co-ops. In the summer of 1926, he reminded the Cholo Planters Association that the tobacco "RING, in America, made conditions so intolerable for the producer, that several huge successful co-ops, were formed."⁴⁰ He followed up the implicit suggestion that the Cholo planters should form co-ops by establishing the Farmers Co-operative Society (Nyasaland) in January 1927.⁴¹ Although this new corporation, "with a capital of £ 10,000," was "formed under the auspices of the Nyasaland Planters Association and Cholo Planters Association," there is no doubt that Timcke and the C.P.A. were its principal instigators.

In December 1926, Timcke agreed to allow the N.P.A. to participate in the formation of the co-op. But he warned M. Withers that "at present 27 shares have been bespoke, 24 planters in the Cholo district have asked for 26 shares of £50 each. The idea is to make the scheme general but if no support is coming from other quarters the activities of the Co-op will be in the Cholo area."⁴² And while it is unclear who else participated in the scheme, what is certain is that Timcke was the chair at its second annual meeting in 1929.⁴³

Nor can there be any doubt that the co-op was both successful and popular. F. S. Jolson, the editor of East Africa and Rhodesia, commented shortly after the co-op's founding that it "appears to have reached satisfactory initial support."⁴⁴ That support undoubtedly reflected small planters' deep animosity towards both merchants and large corporations. Less than two months later, a correspondent to Jolson's journal clearly made this point when he reported that "for some time, extending over a period of years—when they were mostly well in debt—planters in Nyasaland have been of the opinion that the local stores were charging higher prices than they should for various agricultural necessities, that they were, to put it bluntly, profiteering."⁴⁵ And the organization's initial success continued for some time. By the end of June, another of Jolson's correspondents reported that "the newly-formed Co-operative Society is enrolling new members daily, and has already succeeded in compelling merchants to

³⁹ Nyasaland Times, 22 May 1928.
⁴⁰ Nyasaland Times, 3 August 1926.
⁴¹ Nyasaland Times, 7 January 1927.
⁴² N.A.M., H.M. Ny 5/1/1, Timcke to Withers, 2 December 1926.
⁴³ Nyasaland Times, 22 March 1929.
⁴⁴ East Africa and Rhodesia, 7 April 1927, 905.
⁴⁵ East Africa and Rhodesia, 26 May 1927, 1139. The letter in this case was from a correspondent known as Kabulu.
reduce their price of fertilisers substantially."\(^{46}\) And even in 1929, after two years of catastrophic losses in the planting community, the co–op still reported a 6 percent dividend.\(^{47}\)

The success of the co–op led Timcke and his cohorts to begin examining other ideas. Most notable amongst these was a land bank. In the initial meeting of the Convention of Associations on 9 July 1928, both the N.P.A. and the C.P.A. suggested that a land bank be established.\(^{48}\) The C.P.A. joined the South Nyasa Planters Association at the next meeting to ask again for a land bank.\(^{49}\) Such an institution would have been of enormous benefit to a planting community increasingly distressed by falling commodity prices, of course, and Timcke’s determination to help the "little men" was evident even though his scheme never panned out.

Timcke’s championing of the smaller planters also came out in his rhetoric. He complained about Imperial Tobacco’s role in both Malawi and the United Kingdom, arguing that "one does not have to be an alarmist to foresee the time when the trust will control 100% of the Home Market."\(^{50}\) He also complained that the "manufacturer at present is getting the Lion’s share and that the producer is getting very little."\(^{51}\) Timcke also attacked the power of large corporations with his slogan of "try the co–op first."\(^{52}\)

But large corporations were not the only target for Timcke’s attacks; he also aimed much of his venom at the colonial administration. In both the Convention of Associations and the C.P.A., Timcke raised questions about administrative economies and efficiency. What particularly galled him was the policy of granting a home leave to administration officials every two years. In 1928, he suggested that home leaves be granted every four years and a free baggage allowance eliminated.\(^{53}\) Timcke also made sarcastic comments even about government committees on which he served. In 1927, he reminded the Motor Licence committee that "the Nyasaland Government were nothing, if not original, and it was quite original for terms of reference to outline a policy beforehand."\(^{54}\)

Timcke did more than hector the government in public meetings; he also made serious demands for increased government activity, especially in Cholo. Perhaps the

\(^{46}\) *East Africa and Rhodesia*, 23 June 1927, 1273.

\(^{47}\) *Nyasaland Times*, 12 March 1929.


\(^{49}\) N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/3, Minutes of meeting, 10 and 11 August 1928.

\(^{50}\) N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/3, Minutes of Convention Meeting, 9 July 1928.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) *Nyasaland Times*, 22 May 1929.

\(^{53}\) *Nyasaland Times*, 22 May 1928; N.A.M., H.M. NY 5/1/3, Convention of Associations minutes, 10 and 11 August 1928.

\(^{54}\) *Nyasaland Times*, 22 July 1927.
best example of this agitation involved the question of a permanent police officer for Cholo. Throughout the late 1920s, crime rose alarmingly in Malawi, particularly in tobacco districts where thieves stole green tobacco from the fields.\textsuperscript{55} The Cholo settler community had long desired a police officer, but as crime grew in the late 1920s, they became increasingly vociferous.\textsuperscript{56} At a 13 March 1928 meeting of the C.P.A. attended by the Provincial Commissioner of the Southern Province, the association instructed Timcke to inform the Chief Secretary that a police officer was an "urgent necessity" since "the inefficient and apathetic way in which crime is investigated in this District has given cause for considerable dissatisfaction for some time."\textsuperscript{57} And even though Zomba lacked the financial resources (and, one suspects, the desire) to post an officer in Cholo, it is interesting to note that both the District Commissioner and the Provincial Commissioner strongly supported Timcke's request.\textsuperscript{58}

Timcke's agitation and activities soon gained him a reputation as a radical throughout the Protectorate. In 1927, F. S. Jolson's Nyasaland correspondent reported that:

The Governor has promised to visit the Cholo district, jocularly termed the stronghold of the 'Red' element in the local planting world, and judging from the letter sent out to members of the Cholo Planters Association, His Excellency may have an embarrassing experience.\textsuperscript{59}

Other planting families also asserted that Timcke's "red" Cholo had become a place that considered itself beyond Zomba's rule and "outside" the Protectorate's accepted norms.\textsuperscript{60}

Such a reputation was very ironic since Timcke's endeavors in Cholo were ultimately so short lived. For the recession that began in 1927 not only destroyed many of the Cholo planters, but it also left Timcke in a precarious position. Westrop records that Timcke abandoned tobacco cultivation after the 1920s and never took it up again. Instead, he was forced to live on the rents from his stores rather than from cultivation.\textsuperscript{61} Timcke's economic demise undoubtedly caused his resignation as the chair of the C.P.A.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{55} Nyasaland Times, 18 March 1927; Nyasaland Times, 31 May 1927.
\textsuperscript{56} The settlers' original requests had occurred in 1923, see N.A.M., S 1/1395/23, P.C.S.P. to C.S., 23 April 1923; a police cadet had consequently been sent in 1924, but his presence did not mollify the planters.
\textsuperscript{57} N.A.M., S 1/1395/23, C.P.A. to C.S., 14 March 1928.
\textsuperscript{58} N.A.M., S 1/1395/23, P.C.S.P. to C.S., 8 October 1928; D.C. Cholo to P.C.S.P., 8 October 1928; P.C.S.P. to C.S., 11 October 1928.
\textsuperscript{59} East Africa and Rhodesia, 21 July 1927, 1371.
\textsuperscript{60} Source unattributable.
\textsuperscript{61} Westrop, Green Gold, 162.
\textsuperscript{62} East Africa and Rhodesia, 25 April 1929, 1036. H. W. Ross replaced Timcke.
But Timcke’s resignation did not mean that he no longer tried to effect policy. For instance, in 1935, Timcke initiated a campaign against the administration’s practice of seizing tax defaulters’ wives until the defaulters paid their arrears. Timcke began this crusade by bitterly complaining to the Blantyre District Commissioner about “the prevalent practice of detaining the wives of native tax defaulters.”63 In particular, Timcke was upset that seizing wives “has been the customary practice for some years” even though government officials had questioned it in the mid–1920s.64 Nor was Timcke content to complain solely to the administration; on 22 January the Nyasaland Times published a letter from Timcke criticizing the administration’s attitude towards this issue.65

The administration was not pleased to say the least. Lon Ramsay, Blantyre’s D.C., complained that the real problem was “the comparatively loose ‘marriages’ which so frequently take place” and added that taxes were inevitably paid when the wives were seized.66 And Ramsay’s superior, J. C. Abraham, minuted the Chief Secretary that:

In 1931, Mr. Timcke detected an error in the Blue Book. He now imagines he detected abuses in native administration. . . . He prefers to rush into print in the local press making allegations against the method of tax collection to support his odd views regarding the production of economic crops. Personally I find him as amusing as Edgar Wallace. It will be apparent that although Mr. Timcke may be wrong 99 times out of 100 and there is always the odd chance he may be right for once, this is not the once.67

Abraham did add, however, that the practice did exist even though the Executive Council had disapproved of it in 1924.

What really worried the administration was the possibility that the question would be taken up by organizations outside Malawi that it could neither control nor ignore. The Nyasaland Time’s assertion that “the practice has to be stopped, and we intend to pursue the matter until it is stopped” did little to allay these concerns, and the administrators tried mightily to nip discussions about wife–seizing in the bud.68 But the state’s efforts did not include giving Timcke any credence despite the government’s red–faced admission that the practice existed. Even though Timcke sent Ramsay “a list of natives wives have been illegally detained,” Abraham dismissed

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63 N.A.M. S 1/377/24, Timcke to D.C. Blantyre, January 1935.
64 N.A.M., S 1/399/24, Timcke to D.C. Blantyre, 23 January 1935; P.C.C.P. to C.S., 24 January 1924.
65 Nyasaland Times, 22 January 1935.
67 N.A.M., S 1/399/24, Minute, J. C. Abraham to C.S., 30 January 1935.
68 N.A.M., S 1/399/24, Minute by G.F.S., 1 March 1935; Nyasaland Times, 26 February 1935.
the allegations at a meeting with H. B. Wilson and Mr. Hess, the editor of the Nyasaland Times.69

But the genie was now out of the bottle, and Timcke's complaint, undoubtedly fueled further by Timcke's actions, was gaining a life of its own. In its February 1935 issue, The African Observer bitterly complained about the practice of seizing tax defaulters' wives and further added that

the fact of the matter is that the policy of indirect rule requires drastic reorganization; there is nothing in this world that can put the clock back, and the last ten years have seen such drastic changes that adaptable methods of government must be found.70

The administration again reacted vigorously, bitterly commenting that the Malawian press, and by implication other news organizations, had agreed to muzzle itself while the matter was investigated.71

But press reports in Zimbabwe were far less problematic than the raising of this issue in the House of Commons. The 25 April Nyasaland Times reported that Mr. Graham White, Labour M.P. from Birkenhead, questioned the government about the seizing of wives in Malawi.72 Parliamentary questions were a bane for all colonial administrators, and the governor very quickly reassured his superiors that all was well while his chief secretary sharply reminded all local administrators to discontinue the practice of seizing defaulters' wives.73

Getting the question raised in Parliament reinforced Timcke's determination. One day after the Nyasaland Times report, Timcke complained to Chief Secretary Hall that he "was not informed of the enquiry to be held." Moreover, he added that the investigation that did take place was "rather superficial." Finally, he announced that he felt the Secretariat was "dilatory" in its performance of duty.74 And Timcke continued to needle the government about its apparent lassitude. Through August and September, Timcke complained about alleged abuses by the state.75

The government again refuted Timcke's allegations, insisting that Timcke's animosity towards Zomba, rather than real concern about the indigenous community, was responsible for the accusations. Lon Ramsay, the Blantyre District Commissioner, informed J. C. Abraham, the Senior provincial Commissioner, that a police

72 Nyasaland Times, 25 April 1935.
74 N.A.M., S 1/377/24, Timcke to C.S., 26 April 1935.
75 N.A.M., S 1/377/24, Timcke to C.S., 8 August 1935; Timcke to C.S., 21 August 1935; Timcke to C.S., 23 September 1935.
commissioner investigating Timcke's charges stated that Timcke "was present throughout the interview [of a witness] at his special request, and [Timcke] stated that his personal interest in the matter was political."\textsuperscript{76} And Abraham minuted the Chief Secretary that the cases were "mainly hearsay evidence distorted by Mr. Timcke's mischievous obsession in the matter of tax collection."\textsuperscript{77}

But was Timcke's obsession purely mischievous? In many ways, a convincing case can be made that it was. Timcke's long term animosity towards the administration had hardly been lessened by the administration's inaction during the economic collapse between 1927 and 1929. Moreover, the restrictions on tea production that aimed at protecting tea producers prevented Timcke from switching to that crop after he abandoned tobacco.\textsuperscript{78} Such inhibitions were bound to fuel Timcke's animosity towards government and commercial concerns, and he undoubtedly delighted in embarrassing both when the opportunity occurred.

Moreover, as a settler, Timcke could scarcely be regarded as champion of indigenous rights. The public statements made by organizations with which Timcke had been associated showed that they had not always been a strong defender of the African community's rights. For instance, in early 1927, the Nyasaland Planters Association's quarterly report stated that the association's policy was "to make the country fit for white men to live in."\textsuperscript{79} A year later, the same association added that

\textit{it appears that a determined effort is being made to turn Nyasaland into a 'Black' country—i.e., a country such as the West African territories, where the European planter cannot exist—and that a certain amount of propaganda is being indulged in. Such a policy... is disastrous.}\textsuperscript{80}

Such sentiments were hardly amenable to a philosophy of helping indigenous inhabitants.

The sentiment of the associations was not necessarily the sentiment of their members, and there is compelling evidence that Timcke was concerned about the best interests of the Protectorate's indigenous community. Pachai points out that Timcke gave both advice and material assistance to Nyasaland's early nationalist movements.\textsuperscript{81} And the nationalists themselves left data that confirms Timcke's

\textsuperscript{76} N.A.M., S 1/377/24, Lon Ramsay to S.P.C., 28 September 1935.
\textsuperscript{77} N.A.M., S 1/377/24, Minute by J.C.A., 29 September 1935.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{East Africa and Rhodesia}, 24 March 1927.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Nyasaland Times}, N.P.A. Quarterly Report extracts, 6 March 1928.
\textsuperscript{81} B. Pachai, \textit{Malawi: The Making of the Nation} (Bristol, 1973), 233. Unfortunately Pachai does not offer any information about the sources from which he derived his information about Timcke.
influence and support. Following Timcke's tragic death in 1946, Charles Matenga, the Nyasaland African Congress' president, gave a stirring memorial in his presidential speech to the Third Conference of the N. A. C. In this eulogy, he noted that:

Timcke took a keen interest in advocating to Government and the public the advancement of the African community. It was through [his] initiative that the Government abolished the system of arresting African women for non-payment of hut taxes . . . Also it was through him that Government appointed a Committee of Enquiry on the incidence of the emigrant natives, the finding of which led the Government to see that once our people had gone abroad for work, they return back to their homes . . . It can truly be said he was one of the few Europeans who felt that Africans deserved consideration if they were to progress both economically and educationally, and I am sure you will all agree when I say [we] . . . have lost . . . a companion and father.82

Such a full tribute by a nationalist leader amply demonstrates that at the very least Timcke's actions had led the early nationalists to view him as "a champion of our cause."

One can, of course, question when Timcke developed his sympathy with the nationalist cause. Was his acceptance of African nationalism a product of his experiences in the late 1920s when many realized that plantation economics alone could not build up Malawi's economy? Or were these beliefs that he held as early as the mid-1920s and that had actually driven him from the fold of the highly biased N.P.A.? Unfortunately, the sources remain silent about these questions. But in many senses, they are irrelevant. What Timcke's sympathies show is that at least some fractions of the European community saw the future as it had to be and acted upon that vision.

Ironically, much of the reason for the inevitable failure of Malawi's settler community stemmed from its own divided character. Here again Timcke's political biography gives insight. His querulous relations with his fellow settlers demonstrates the deep divisions within the unofficial community. This group was clearly no monolithic capitalist class; instead, it was a fractious community splintered into various class fractions. The competition amongst these fractions helped stultify adequate responses to various crises as they struggled against each other and hindered their ability to expand economically.

The settlers' fractionalization also made them relatively impotent in Protectorate politics. Timcke was undoubtedly correct in asserting that the administration's policy was to keep the unofficial community divided. Ironically, the state's disregard gave them one unifying principle, distrust of and animosity towards Zomba. It is fascinating to realize that planters hated the government as much as, and frankly probably more than, the indigenous community.

82 N.A.M., PCC 1/4/1, President's Address, 3rd Annual Conference of the N.A.C., 23 September 1946.
Political impotence was not the only outcome of the settlers' fractionalization. European class fractions also established different relations with the indigenous community. Timcke, who for all intents and purposes had become a rentier, became a pro-nationalist. But there were other European responses other than the N.P.A.'s to the African population. For instance, the central region planters reached a rapprochement with the indigenous community in their region through the extension of share cropping. And it is in this sense that Timcke's nationalism was emblematic of the European community; by the 1930s and 1940s, the majority of settlers had realized that they needed to work with the African community to prosper. While most did not go to Timcke's extremes, it is worth noting that they did reach their own accords.

These aspects of Timcke's life reinforce the utility of biography in African history. This settler's biography reflects broader themes in Malawi's history and debunks several myths. And it shows that structural as well as subjective reality can be easily demonstrated through the recitation of an individual narrative. The lessons learned from Timcke are lessons from a real person rather than a paradigm, and as such they are well worth heeding.

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83 See Woods, "Why Not Persuade Them to Grow Tobacco."

84 And in a sense reflected indigenous sentiment, since of course most Africans did not support the nationalist cause at this point.
RAS WELDE LI’UL AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF QWARAN ASCENDANCE IN MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ETHIOPIA

by LaVerle Berry

One of the most interesting phenomena of the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the interaction of politico-military factions and coalitions. While coalitions and the factions of which they were composed are not unique to this era, for the first time the historical record is complete and detailed enough to permit the researcher to identify and to follow the dynamics of the factions and coalitions with reasonable assurance. This is especially true of mid-eighteenth century materials. The purpose here is to examine the functioning and leadership of one of the coalitions during the period of its rise to paramountcy.

Coalitions and the factions that composed them were a natural outgrowth of Amhara-Tigray social structure in which patron-client ties were the basic unit of social organization beyond the local level. On the basis of patron-client ties, provincial nobles gathered about themselves a number of retainers, who in turn commanded the allegiance of their own retainers and so on until the process stopped with the last patron-client link at the top and bottom of society. Each noble’s personal retainers formed the core of his supporters and were the men on whom he could most closely rely.

A network of leader-follower cores extended from top to bottom of Amhara-Tigray society. These cores were the building blocks of factions on the local and district

1 The records of this period may be relatively complete and detailed, but they are also few in number. By far the most useful are the detailed or long chronicle of the reign of Iyasu II, and the account of James Bruce, the famed Scottish explorer and traveler who lived in Gondar from February 1770 to December 1771 and who left a quite detailed account of the main personalities and events of the day. Ignatius Guidi, ed. and trans., Annales Regum Iyasu II Et Iyo as, in Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium: Scriptores Aethiopici, Series Altera, Tome 6, 2 vols. (Paris, 1910 text; Rome, 1912 trans.); James Bruce, Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile in the Years 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772, and 1773, 5 vols. (London, 1790). A parallel account of the principal insurrection in the reign of Iyasu II in late 1732 is contained in Ignatius Guidi, "Due Nuovi Manoscritti della ‘Cronaca Abbreviata’ di Abissinia," Rendiconti Della Reale Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei, Serie Sesta, vol. 2 (Rome, 1926), 357-421. Other notable Ethiopian sources on this era are concerned with theological matters (see fn. 3).

levels. Above the district level, factions grouped themselves into one of two loosely–organized blocs or coalitions that contended with each other for domination of the state. At the head of each coalition stood that noble who at any given time commanded the most powerful district or provincial faction in that camp. Such a noble retained his command until he either died or was defeated in battle.

At least three factors lay behind the formation of factions: the political ambitions and competitiveness of Amhara–Tigray nobles; deep–seated antagonisms and rivalries between various districts and regions of the kingdom; and a quarrel over theological dogma that split the Ethiopian Orthodox Church into two warring camps, Kibat (Unctionists) and Tewahido (Unionists). The split in clerical ranks coincided with regional rivalries so completely that the two coalitions and the factions that composed them may for convenience be labeled Kibat and Tewahido, respectively. There is no evidence, however, that these terms were applied to corporate groups other than clerical ones during the so–called “Gonder Period” of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and their employment here does not indicate that ecclesiastical concerns in any way took precedence over military and political ones. Such concerns, however, reinforced and exacerbated rivalries in lay ranks and contributed substantially to the matrix that bound factions and coalitions together.

The crucial factor within both factions and coalitions was leadership. The essential requirement was a nobleman in command of resources (income and retainers) who also possessed the military and diplomatic skills necessary to win on the battlefield and to negotiate alliances. Having once risen to the position of district or provincial warlord, a truly ambitious nobleman could aspire to leadership of one or the other camp in what had become a well–established, two–way contest for supremacy in matters of state.

In the mid–eighteenth century, Kibat was the dominant coalition. It was under the leadership of Welde Li’ul, a nobleman from the district of Qwara to the west of Lake Tana. The stages whereby the coalition under Qwaran leadership achieved power and consolidated its hold on the kingdom are the focus of the present study. At least five such stages can be identified. They unfold successively during a twenty–year period between the late 1720s and the late 1740s.

The career of Welde Li’ul spanned an era considerably broader than this twenty–year period, beginning well before the 1720s and continuing until his death in 1767.

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3 The theological aspects of Kibat and Tewahido are discussed in Ignazio Guidi, "Uno Squarcio Di Storia Ecclesiastica Di Abissinia," Bessarione 8 (1900–1901): 10–22, and "La Chiesa Abissinia," Oriente Moderno 2 (1922–1923): 186–90. In brief, the controversy revolved around the manner in which the body of Christ was joined with its divinity. The Unctionists held that the union was effected through annointment by the Father, implying a degree of subordination in the Trinity. The Unionists, strict monophysites, believed that the two natures were joined through "union" of the World with the Flesh. In terms of geography, the division between the two camps was roughly centered on Lake Tana. Districts to the east and north were nearly all Tewahido; those to the south and west were uniformly Kibat, as was Tigray north of the Mereb River. Within this broad division of territorial allegiances were individual districts that belonged to the opposite camp.
James Bruce, the Scottish traveler who visited Gondar in 1770 and 1771, tells us that Welde Li’ul was the eldest of six children of a nobleman of Qwara.\textsuperscript{4} One of his siblings was Mintiwwab, favorite wife of Emperor Bekaffa (r. 1720–1730). Mintiwwab not only had found favor with Bekaffa, but she had also become adept at influencing court policies. The Qwarans focused their hopes for the eventual control of the throne upon Mintiwwab’s son, Iyasu, born in 1723, who was indeed destined to rule from 1730 to 1755 as Iyasu II.

Welde Li’ul is first mentioned in the chronicles in 1716 when he helped reincarcerate Bekaffa after discontented Tewahido nobles attempted to crown him at the time of the enthronement of Dawit III. We hear nothing more about him until the early 1730s, but during the later years of Bekaffa’s reign, he doubtless held military and perhaps court appointments secured through Mintiwwab’s intervention. Although not named directly, he was surely one of the nobles who helped enthrone Iyasu in September 1730, these men being Mintiwwab’s close relatives and associates.\textsuperscript{5} The enthronement, done in haste and secrecy immediately upon Bekaffa’s death, was the first stage in the Qwaran bid for hegemony. To facilitate acceptance of a boy-king and to help ensure Qwaran hegemony at court, Mintiwwab was crowned queen and made regent the following November.

The man in charge of crowning Iyasu and his mother was Grazmatch Niqolawos, great uncle of Mintiwwab and Welde Li’ul. Niqolawos’ fortunes had risen concurrently as Mintiwwab gained influence at Bekaffa’s court in the later 1720s.\textsuperscript{6} By then, he had gained both standing and responsibilities at court, and he was head of the faction of nobles and soldiers behind Mintiwwab and Iyasu. Niqolawos receives little treatment in the royal chronicles—certainly far less than Welde Li’ul—but he clearly served as mentor and role model for his great-nephew, who proved a worthy understudy and successor.

A series of crucial events in the early 1730s enabled Welde Li'ul to emerge from the shadow of his great-uncle and to show the mettle of which he was made. Foremost among them were two rebellions in 1730 and 1731 that were intended to drive out the Qwaran faction and the young king it had so recently installed.\textsuperscript{7} While both were unsuccessful, the second was the more serious because it enjoyed widespread support and because it pitted rival factions within the Kibat coalition against Niqolawos and his allies at a time when they were still struggling to consolidate their control over Kibat.

\textsuperscript{4} *Travels*, 2, 609–10.

\textsuperscript{5} Guidi, *Annales Iyasu II*, 29–31. All references are to the translation.


Both Niqolawos and Welde Li’ul played major roles in defeating these rebellions, and their victories left them in undisputed control of Kibat forces.

As a reward for their achievements, Niqolawos received the much-coveted titles of ras and bihtweded, and Welde Li’ul was made bilaténgéta. In early December 1732, however, Niqolawos died, which was the signal for a renewed uprising against Qwaran rule. Centered in districts and provinces on the east and southeast of Lake Tana and led by Tewahido nobles and clerics, it was by far the most serious opposition the Qwaran nobles had yet faced.

The gravity of the situation is reflected in the attention the royal chronicler gives it, and although he attributes actions and decisions to Iyasu and Mintiwwab, Welde Li’ul was unquestionably the person in control. During the course of what culminated in a two-week siege of the palace compound in Gondar, it was Welde Li’ul who devised the strategy of defense, gave orders to subordinate commanders, and at times personally led troops on forays out of the palace gates. His task was a difficult and dangerous one: the rebels were well led, they far outnumbered the forces gathered around Welde Li’ul, and their cause was enormously popular, even in Gondar. Many prominent nobles and their retainers either refused to join in defending the throne or went over to the rebels altogether. What forces Welde Li’ul managed to pull together were fearful and pleaded repeatedly for negotiations rather than hostilities.

The situation inside the palace compound soon became desperate. Water supplies ran low, parts of the compound as well as nearby neighborhoods of Gondar were set ablaze, and the abun and ichégé excommunicated the king, the regent, and all of their supporters from the house of Orthodoxy. Most ominously, heretofore loyal commanders and their soldiers continuously defected to the rebels. Only with the greatest exertion did Welde Li’ul rally his dwindling and hard-pressed forces, fending off repeated assaults on the castle compound and even proffering peace as he awaited the arrival of reinforcements. Despite his best efforts, the situation was grim by the

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8 Bihtweded, "the only beloved," was by tradition the highest court appointment; by this era, it entailed both administrative and military duties. Ras, "head," was a rank originally given to the commander of a regiment, but it had evolved into the highest military title. By the eighteenth century, these two appointments had been combined, making ras–bihtweded the title of the most powerful noble in the kingdom. Bilaténgéta, "lord (or master) of the pages," was originally the steward in charge of the royal court.

9 Two detailed accounts exist of this rebellion. One is given by the royal chronicler, who attempts to put the best face possible on what was obviously a highly dangerous ordeal for Mintiwwab and her kin. Guidi, Annales Iyasu II, 54–80. The other, equally descriptive, presents a starker account that accentuates the weakness and unpopularity of the Qwaran faction. Guidi, "Due nuovi manoscritti," 381–406.

10 A third account of the rebellion is in Bruce, Travels, 2: 621–27. Bruce picked up details of these events forty years after they happened and makes clear the central role Welde Li’ul played in the defense of the castle compound.

11 The abun was the metropolitan or spiritual head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; he was by tradition an Egyptian Copt. The ichégé was the head of the monastic community of Tekle Haimanot and the most senior Ethiopian cleric.
time Oromo soldiers from Damot and Gojjam appeared and lifted the siege. The rebellion thereafter swiftly collapsed. The three chief rebel leaders were hanged, and the royal pretender they had supported was forcibly returned to his mountain prison. Victory, however, could not mask the fact that the Qwarans were enormously unpopular or that they had all but drowned in the Tewahido tide.

In recognition of the preeminent role he played in overcoming the Tewahido rebellion, Welde Li’ul was made bihtweded, and shortly thereafter he was granted the title of ras as well, appointments he held throughout the remainder of his life. He thus not only succeeded his great-uncle as the most powerful warlord of Qwa, but he now emerged at the head of a triumphant Kibat coalition that had finally achieved mastery over throne and kingdom. As the undisputed arbiter of the land, Welde Li’ul was but the latest in a succession of noblemen to attain such status since the mid-seventeenth century.

The defeat of the Tewahido opposition brought an end to the major challenges to the Qwaran bid for hegemony, and although lingering discontent occasionally flared into rebellion, the Kibat coalition under Welde Li’ul was never again seriously threatened. Meanwhile, work was already well underway on at least two major buildings—a palace for Iyasu in the royal compound in Gondar, and a church, Debre Tsehai Qusquam, on the slope of a hill just outside the capital. Construction on both structures was suspended while the Qwarans dealt with their Tewahido opponents. It resumed only in the mid-1730s after the kingdom was firmly in Qwaran hands.

Iyasu’s castle and Debre Tsehai Qusquam, like prior buildings erected at royal behest in Gondar, were stone structures fashioned in the so-called “Gondar style.” This was an architectural tradition by now long associated with the Ethiopian monarchy that was seemingly utilized to enhance the image and power of its royal sponsors. The fact that such constructions were undertaken while Iyasu’s ascent to the throne was still under challenge is an indication of the necessity the Qwarans felt to cultivate the kingly image and to employ one of the hallmarks of royal legitimacy to bolster Iyasu’s claim to the throne and its prerogatives.

Among the several structures Iyasu commissioned is one of special significance. According to Bruce, the young king built a third dwelling just north of the imperial compound opposite his new palace. 

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12 Several Gondar-style structures were initiated during Iyasu’s reign, but only Debre Tsehai Qusquam is described at length in the detailed chronicle. The church is attributed to Iyasu and Mintiwab. Destroyed in the early 1880s by Sudanese Mahdist forces, it has been replaced by a cement church, which lacks the charm of the original. Guidi, Annales Iyasu, 2:52-54, 89-90, 95-114. Bruce, Travels, 2: 633-34, is the source of the information on the two palaces discussed here.


14 Travels, 2: 633-34.
subsequently rebuilt, this building is certainly the two-story stone edifice that stands today beside the government quarter in upper Gondar. Completed at some unknown date, it is a faithful reproduction of a Gondar-style castle, albeit on a distinctly reduced scale. Iyasu's intentions—or rather those of the Qwarans—in building it are not recorded in the royal annals. What does seem clear, nonetheless, is that this miniature castle, constituted in an architectural style previously reserved exclusively for royalty, at some point became the preserve of none other than Welde Li'ul.15

Nowhere in the official records of Iyasu's reign is this structure mentioned. By tradition it is known as the ras gimb (ras's castle). Two references in the chronicles in 1767 and early 1768 to the "seat of government of the bihtweded" are surely to the same building.16 Of all the castles in Gondar, it alone is not attributed to a specific scion of the royal house. In view of Iyasu's minority and the predominance of the Qwaran regency, Mintiwab and Welde Li'ul must have made the decisions regarding the construction and disposition of the ras gimb.

If the castle was assigned to Welde Li'ul, as seems likely, this act merely confirmed the exalted status of the ras—bihtweded, who evidently felt entitled to live in a style commensurate with the strength of his arms and the kinship of his blood. Nonetheless, the decision to appropriate a Gondar-style castle by a non-royal official, however powerful, was an act of supreme arrogance and an usurpation of prerogative on a colossal scale. It established a dangerous precedent and compromised the integrity of the very institution through which the Qwarans sought to rule.

Concomitant with castle and church construction came a third step in the establishment of Qwaran ascendancy over the kingdom—that of doctrinal supremacy within the Orthodox Church. By the time of Iyasu's reign, the debate over contrasting views of the Trinity was beyond resolution. Just as nobles and their followers united for purposes of seeking control of political affairs, so, too, did clerics join together in pursuit of supremacy in religious doctrine.17 For at least a century, clerical doctrine and sanction had played a crucial role in cementing Kibat and Tewahido coalitions together. For both nobles and clerics, the aim was to elect a king who would champion their cause against that of their opponents, providing titles and offices to the nobles and decreeing the primacy of either Kibat or Tewahido beliefs. The preferred forum for declaration of doctrinal preference was the ecclesiastical synod, a convocation of

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15 The date at which this occurred is quite uncertain. It may not have happened until the reign of Iyasu's son and successor, Iyo'as (1755–1769).

16 The "ras gimb" is quite familiar to the inhabitants of Gondar. The references in the chronicle date to the reign of Iyo'as. Guidi, Annales Iyasu, 2: 236.

priests and monks from the most important churches and monasteries of the kingdom who debated under auspices of the royal court and the highest officials of the realm.

As with the secular component of the coalitions, the lines of clerical contention were clearly drawn, with long-term opponents aligned against each other. At the heart of the doctrinal quarrel were the two major houses of Ethiopian monasticism—Tekle Haimanot of Shewa and Èwostatéwos of northern Tigray. The former espoused Unionist (Tewahido) beliefs, the latter, Uctionist (Kibat). Tewahido monks were predominant in Waldibba, southern Tigray, Lasta, and Wag. The followers of Èwostatéwos were attached to the churches and monasteries of Gojjam, Damot, Qwara, and Tigray north of the Mereb River. As already mentioned, ecclesiastical oppositions paralleled secular oppositions in these same districts and provinces, and they helped mold nobles, soldiers, priests, and monks into factions and alliances.

The establishment of Kibat supremacy in the 1730s differed in at least two aspects from the pattern of earlier decades. First, the doctrinal story centered not around Iyasu as king or even Welde Li'ul as head of the paramount coalition, but rather around Mintiwwab, and second, neither in the 1730s nor at any time during Iyasu's reign was a clerical synod convoked at which doctrine was debated. Indeed, rather than a confrontation and devastating defeat for one side or the other in a public forum, the norm before the reign of Bekaffa, Kibat was merely confirmed as official policy on the occasion of the dedication of Debre Tsehai Qusquam.

Because Mintiwwab and her kin were from Qwara, a Kibat stronghold, there could be no doubt about their doctrinal preferences. These had come clearly into play in the later years of Bekaffa's reign, when Mintiwwab had succeeded in shifting the court's doctrinal leanings from Tewahido to Kibat and in securing appointments for her relatives. The death of Bekaffa and the succession of Iyasu changed nothing so far as the court's doctrinal orientation was concerned. As Bekaffa had never convened a synod, a policy seemingly designed to defuse the clerical debate, so apparently did Mintiwwab see no reason to summon hostile clerics to a debate that would only inflame passions that had already contributed to rebellion in Tewahido ranks.

During the initial years of Iyasu's reign, the court's doctrinal preferences were well known and no official pronouncements were made. The dedication of Debre Tsehai Qusquam in April 1737, however, provided an opportunity for public confirmation of what had been up to now an established if unproclaimed policy. As the edifice neared completion, Mintiwwab assigned 200 clerics, all obviously selected for their Kibat beliefs, to the church. Following a clumsy challenge to their competence in the

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18 See Guidi, Annales Iyasu, 2: 12–15, for the establishment of Kibat in Qwara and Mintiwwab's acceptance of Kibat teaching.

19 Berry, "Coalition Politics," 223.

liturgy and scriptures inspired by Tewahido partisans, Mintiwwab solicited the clerics’ views on doctrine. When they responded in unanimity with the standard Kibat formula, Mintiwwab was ecstatic, hailing them as her brothers and friends, "for you profess the creed that I myself profess."21 At her bidding, Abune Kristodolu threatened them with excommunication should any ever abjure their Kibat convictions. After this exercise, Mintiwwab consigned them to their new duties and lands, having clearly indicated the court’s preferences on the doctrinal issue.

This episode was not without irony. Kristodolu was a Tewahido stalwart who understood the subtleties of the doctrinal debate, yet he had been compelled to sanction the Kibat beliefs of the Debre Tsehai Qusquam clergy. Like the Tewahido clerical establishment as a whole, he had little choice but to acquiesce under the weight of royal convictions and to accept the eclipse of the Tewahido doctrinal cause. The constellation of personalities and beliefs at court was always subject to change, however, and the episode at Debre Tsehai Qusquam was hardly the final act in the Kibat–Tewahido drama.

During the years of castle and church construction and the settlement at least temporarily of the doctrinal issue, the army had received almost no attention, but the soldiers now demanded their due. Beginning in 1741, Ethiopian armies made armed forays into the lands occupied by the Berta, Gumuz, and other peoples who inhabit the hilly terrain between the Ethiopian plateau and the lowlands of present-day Sudan. Dark-skinned peoples known collectively as the Belew or the Shanqilla by the highlanders who held them in contempt, many seem to have been peaceful agriculturalists and cattle-keepers. At least some groups were tributaries of the kingdom by the mid-eighteenth century.22 These factors notwithstanding, they became the object of repeated raids that involved killing, the seizure of captives to be sold into slavery, and the capture of cattle, sheep, and camels.

The most significant venture of the royal army to the west involved a reckless and ill-conceived attack on the Funj kingdom of Sinnar in March and April 1744. All regions contributed soldiers to the army, which marched under command of the kingdom’s senior generals, including Welde Li’ul.23 The undertaking clearly involved an underestimation of the abilities of the Funj, probably the result of recent victories over borderland Belew, and a failure of military intelligence. After several days’ march during which the element of surprise was lost, the Ethiopian forces suffered a

21 Guidi, Annales Iyasu, 2: 111.

22 In 1745 one of the Belew chiefs appeared in Gondar to render homage and to pay tribute. He complained that although he had been a vassal for four years, Iyasu had nonetheless raided his country, killing warriors, carrying away men, women, and children into slavery, and driving away herds of animals. To protect his people, he sought and received recognition of his vassalage. Guidi, Annales Iyasu, 2: 131–33.

23 The Sinnar expedition is narrated in Guidi, Annales Iyasu, 2: 122–26. Bruce, Travels, 2: 635–42, provides important details.
humiliating defeat on the banks of the Blue Nile. Welde Li’ul, Iyasu, and other commanders barely managed to escape. Whole units were routed, captured, or slaughtered, and the most revered holy relics, taken along to ensure victory, fell into the hands of the Muslim Funj and had to be subsequently ransomed at great price.

Remnants of the defeated force straggled back to Gondar. Along the way they raided loyal Belew, thus acquiring at least some booty to show for their efforts. Twenty-five years later, Bruce heard tales about the disaster at Sinnar, which he attributed to restless soldiers of the army who had urged their commanders “to undertake a war of which there was no need. . . .”

Bruce, however, was wrong. There was a need for the war—or for at least a war—to provide the soldiers and their commanders with booty in the form of slaves, cattle, horses, etc. It was to satisfy the voracious appetite of what had become a rowdy and undisciplined fighting force that the Sinnar campaign had been undertaken without due regard for the army’s preparedness or the resolve of the enemy. Welde Li’ul and other senior officers were certainly aware of the need to fulfill the expectations of the units under their command. Their mistake was in allowing unbridled avarice to get the better of their considered judgment. The problem was not that they undertook a war of which there was no need, but rather that they undertook the wrong war in response to compelling military necessity.

By the mid–1740s, the central provinces and districts of the kingdom—Amhara, Bégemdir, Damot, Gojjam, Qwara—were firmly under Qwaran control and united in the Kibat coalition under Welde Li’ul’s leadership. Having recovered from the disaster at Sinnar, the Qwaran faction turned its attention to Lasta, Wag, and Tigray, provinces long identified with the Tewahido cause and by now quite autonomous. Serious unrest had surfaced in Lasta in 1732 and again in 1735, but it had been contained by Dejazmatch Ayo, governor of Bégemdir. When Lasta and Wag raised the standard of revolt yet again in 1746, Welde Li’ul and his Kibat commanders decided upon military action not only to bring Lasta and Wag to heel, but also to assert their control over Tigray and its quarrelsome nobles.

At the head of an army composed of units from Qwara, Amhara, Gojjam, Damot, and Shewa, Welde Li’ul and Iyasu marched in November into Wag, Lasta, and Muslim districts along the eastern edge of the northern plateau. In a one-month campaign, the royal army pillaged and burned villages, in the process killing large numbers of opponents. Many captives were taken, mainly in the Muslim districts, to be sold into slavery. Rebel leaders who submitted received royal pardons. Iyasu also appointed new officials and commanders, among them Wag Shum Tewodros, and tribute was levied and collected.

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24 Bruce, Travels, 2: 641.
25 Guidi, Annales Iyasu, 2: 50, 88–89.
26 Ibid., 138–42. Wag shum was the title of the ruler of Wag.
With the submission of Lasta and Wag, Welde Li'ul directed his army northward into Tigray, along the way attacking the Muslim Azebo Oromo. Tigray was in the hands of Dejazmatch Weldé, a loyal commander whose homeland seems to have been in eastern Tigray and who accompanied the royal army on its westward trek. The real target of the campaign was Sihul Mika'él, an ambitious warlord whose headquarters were at Adwa. Mika'él had collected up a considerable army with which he was contending with Weldé for supremacy in Tigray. Additionally, he had also shown himself none too eager to acknowledge Qwaran supremacy, having declined to submit before Iyasu when the young king appeared in Tigray in 1744. It was to deal with Mika'él's arrogance and defiance that Welde Li'ul marched into central Tigray in December 1746.

As the army advanced toward Adwa, the lords of Tigray, heretofore loyal to Mika'él, appeared one after the other before Iyasu and made public submission. Some brought gifts and tribute, and some sought to intercede on Mika'él's behalf. Even though the court granted a pardon, Mika'él still hesitated, unwilling to give up and submit. He subsequently changed his mind when the royal army surrounded his stronghold, Amba Semayata. Besieged on all sides by an enormous host and steadily deserted by his retainers and their soldiers, Mika'él finally surrendered. He appealed to Welde Li'ul for protection and prostrated himself before Iyasu and the court officials. Having been pardoned, he was led off to Gondar in chains, together with his personal retainers, all in the care of Welde Li'ul.

Perhaps more than any other development, the submission of Sihul Mika'él confirmed the transcendence of Welde Li'ul. Even in the royal annals that amplify the role of Iyasu, it is clear that Welde Li'ul, not Iyasu or any other officer, was in charge of matters in the field and at court. Indeed, all negotiations with Mika'él, including the terms of surrender, went through the ras-bihtweded's hands. Nothing was done without his approval, and whatever course of action he decided upon was the path taken. As Bruce reported on the basis of what he heard years later, Mika'él "... had been advised not to trust the king's oath of forgiveness unless he had likewise that of Welde de l'Oul." Not surprisingly, Mika'él refused to deal with anyone except the ras-bihtweded.

Mika'él's challenge to Qwaran supremacy extended to matters beyond purely military considerations. His Tigray supporters were staunch Tewahido partisans who wished to restore Tewahido dominance in ecclesiastical as well as in political affairs. In an effort to garner clerical support, Mika'él made the daring move of seating a rival to the abun in Gondar. He thus wielded a double-edged sword in his challenge to the

27 The campaign against Mika'él is narrated in Guidi, *Annales Iyasu*, 2: 143-47.
Qwarans: in addition to the sizable army he had recruited, he obviously hoped to use a Tigrayan abun to rally Tewahido clerics (and nobles) across the kingdom to his cause.

Abune Krestodolu had died in 1737, and it was the process of replacing him that gave Mika'el an opportunity to secure an abun of his own liking. Several years were required to find a replacement for Krestodolu, but by early 1746 a candidate named Yohannis had arrived and been installed in Gondar. Six months earlier, however, a merchant had brought a Syrian ecclesiastic to Mika'el, who, realizing the potential that the Syrian represented, recognized him as abun. For a year and a half, the Syrian functioned as an abun, ordaining priests, blessing parishioners, consecrating churches, and locating himself, appropriately enough, at holy Aksum. As the inhabitants of Gondar became aware of the Syrian abun in Tigray, doubts arose about the identity of Yohannis. The question of which ecclesiastic was the true abun had the effect Mika'el no doubt intended—it strengthened his hand and weakened that of the Qwarans.

A subsidiary purpose of Welde Li'ul's campaign into the territories beyond the Tekezzé, therefore, was to deal with the "Tigrayan abun." This particular task actually fell to Iyasu. While the ras-bihtweded escorted Mika'el to Gondar, Iyasu marched to Aksum, arrested the Syrian cleric, and in January 1747 brought him to Gondar for interrogation. His presence in the capital aroused acrimony and debate among the clergy and brought the Kibat-Tewahido doctrinal schism into the open for the first time since the early 1730s.

Any hopes the Tewahido establishment had for a renascence or vindication, however, were soon dashed. In February the court summoned the nobles, high ecclesiastics, and the populace of Gondar to an assembly before the palace at which Iyasu and Mintiwwab demanded to know from whence the Syrian had come and by what ecclesiastical authority he had been sent. When the hapless cleric confessed that he was Syrian and not Egyptian as required by the canons of the Ethiopian church, and that he had been sent against his will upon news of the Ethiopian metropolitan's death, his fate was sealed. He was condemned and sentenced to have his right hand cut off, but the court commuted this to immediate expulsion from the kingdom. All priests and deacons he had blessed and churches he had consecrated had to undergo ordination anew at the hands of Yohannis, hailed at last as the true abun. So far as Welde Li'ul and the court were concerned, the demise of the Syrian abun meant that the Qwara-led Kibat coalition had completed the elimination of its Tigray-Tewahido rivals.

The imprisonment of Sihul Mika'el in Gondar, however, hardly signaled the end of troubles in Tigray or in Lasta and Wag. In 1747 the latter two provinces rebelled again, among other things rejecting the court's recently-installed wag shum. The court

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29 The account of the two abuns is in Guidi, Annales Iyasu, 2: 127–30, 148–50.
30 Ibid., 148.
31 Ibid., 149.
placed the matter once more in the hands of Dejazmatch Ayo, who in early 1748 pillaged Lasta and Wag and installed yet another nominee as wag shum.\textsuperscript{32}

By mid–1748 at the latest, Mika’él had been freed from detention and permitted to return to his former haunts. Once back at Adwa, he maintained at least the semblance of loyalty by rendering tribute in gold, silver, and gifts to Gondar. Such tribute would have been much welcomed at court, and Mika’él’s ability to deliver it may be the explanation for his release and promotion to dejazmatch in September 1748, with Tigray as his government.\textsuperscript{33} By then he had rebuilt his army and resumed his quarrel with Weldé. Only once, in 1749, did the court in the person of Iyasu intervene and bring a temporary halt to the warfare between the two warlords. Thereafter, Weldé was abandoned to his fate. He fell in battle in early 1752, leaving Mika’él in uncontested mastery of Tigray.

Mika’él’s humiliation at Semayata seems to have taught him to temper his ambitions and to accept his subordinate status, at least for the time being. Whatever the reason, he never again challenged Qwaran hegemony so long as Welde Li’ul was alive. Instead, he played the role of loyal retainer and even sought to ingratiate himself with the Qwarans. But while Mika’él acknowledged Qwaran overlordship, he was in reality merely biding his time and planning for the future.

The five successive stages by which the Qwarans established their predominance over the kingdom are clearly delineated in the record of the years from the late 1720s to the late 1740s. Beginning with the accession of Iyasu II to the throne and the creation of a regency in the person of Mintiwwab in 1730, the Qwarans then had to suppress a series of rebellions in the early 1730s to retain control of the throne. Thereafter, they sponsored construction of churches and palaces in Gondar and officially proclaimed the supremacy of Kibat doctrine in the Orthodox Church during the mid–1730s. Finally, they subdued the outlying and most recalcitrant provinces of the kingdom in the mid–1740s.

More than any other person, Qwaran ascendance was the creation of Welde Li’ul, who possessed the military skills and the political judgment that made Qwaran domination possible. Needless to say, he did not act alone; important roles were played by Mintiwwab, by his brothers and other members of the Qwaran faction, and by his allies and their soldiers who composed the Kibat coalition. But the success of factions and coalitions depended first and foremost upon able military leadership, and in the case of the Kibat coalition in mid–eighteenth century Ethiopia, that leadership came from one man above all others—Welde Li’ul. The system of domination he constructed and commanded remained intact throughout his lifetime, a powerful tribute to the man and his abilities.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 150–51, 153.

\textsuperscript{33} The chronicler provides no justification for Mika’él’s release and rehabilitation, but he does praise the Tigrayan for his tribute payments. Ibid., 155.
Photo 1: Castle in the Gondar royal compound attributed to Iyasu II (and Mintiwab). It displays numerous characteristics of Gondar-style architecture, including a square roof tower, decorative battlements, and decorated windows in full-arch.

Photo 2: The ras gimb (partially restored), patterned after older buildings in the nearby royal compound.
Photo 3: The ras gimb, showing battlements and two towers.
A REASSESSMENT OF LIJ IYASU'S POLITICAL CAREER, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS UPON HIS FALL

by Tibebe Eshete

Emperor Lij Iyasu is one of the most enigmatic political figures in Ethiopian history. Existing historical sources about him, originating in the smear campaign that followed his deposition in 1916, are overwhelmingly biased. They charged Iyasu with apostasy, that is, converting to Islam, from which other subsidiary accusations also followed. Subsequent scholarly analysis of Iyasu, in turn, has too often merely echoed the coup makers' official indictment against him. No reliable image of the king has emerged, and his story remains shrouded in mystery. The present study reconsiders the circumstances surrounding Iyasu's fall. In contrast to widely-held views, it argues that the king was overthrown because his bold and novel actions to rebuild Ethiopia according to new assumptions contradicted core values of the received political tradition.

Internally, Iyasu set out to redefine Ethiopia itself; his vision allowed diversity, and his message stressed the importance of establishing reciprocally balanced two-way relationships between the old imperial heartland and the newly-incorporated peripheries. This approach to national unity proved to be incompatible with the established thinking of the entrenched nobility. In his conduct of external affairs Iyasu was inspired by the idea of reviving national glory. Translated into action, this meant restoring ancient frontiers and breaking the sense of siege imposed by the absence of an outlet to the sea, a program that could hardly fail to result in open clashes with the colonial powers who had encircled Ethiopia. In short, Iyasu's initiatives frightened both the established interests within Ethiopia and her alien imperial neighbors. These restless and acquisitive forces conspired together, united in the common purpose of removing a young ruler perceived to be dangerous. Iyasu thus found himself beset by problems with very wide ramifications. He may not always have adopted the strategies best suited to the achievement of his aims, but it was his lofty goals themselves, and not any small error of practice, that brought about his ultimate downfall.

The Setting: An Outline of Events
As early as 1906, the foreign signatories to the Tripartite Agreement that defined Ethiopia's borders expressed concern about the future of the realm following the passing of the aging emperor Menilek, who had no son. The issue concerned Ethiopians too, and in 1907 the emperor, recognizing his failing health, took a wise step in establishing a
cabinet of ministers, largely comprised of traditional courtiers, to fill any future crucial gap in leadership. In May 1909, Menilek summoned princes, notables from the provinces, religious leaders and other important officials. Having reminded them of the political tribulations caused by succession disputes following the deaths of the recent emperors Tewodros and Yohannes, he designated Iyasu as his successor. Iyasu he placed under threat of excommunication should he deviate from the established traditions of Ethiopian kings; the dignitaries, in turn, would face the same penalty if they betrayed Iyasu.1 Finally, in 1909 a regency council was established, headed by Ras Tessema Nadew.2

There is no full explanation as to why Menilek named Iyasu his successor; as the emperor's grandson he was an obvious candidate, but by no means the only available one. Though no overt protest was registered at the time, not all the old guard of the palace were pleased with Menilek's choice of successors. The first direct threat to Iyasu came from Menilek's ambitious wife Taitu Bitul, whose power and influence at court had been increasing since her husband's first stroke in 1906. Taitu wanted Menilek's daughter Zewditu, who was married to her nephew, to succeed her father. As she united key families through marriage alliances and appointed her own favorites to important positions, the nobility came to fear that Taitu was executing a hidden agenda to establish a northern hegemony. In March 1910, the queen was removed in a successful palace coup; the masterminds were Fitawrari Habte Giorgis and Ras Tessema, but the brunt of the movement was borne by the Mehal Sefari, a special unit of the imperial army attached to the palace.3

With the sudden death of Ras Tessema on 10 April 1911, Iyasu became the de facto ruler of Ethiopia, and appointed a man of his own choice, Dejazmatch Lul Seged, as the new regent. This was a bold first step taken by the young prince to assert his independence, and the rift between Iyasu and some of the ambitious nobles could be traced from this moment, for several officials had coveted the regency and they sought to obstruct Iyasu from exercising full authority. With the death of Menilek in 1913 Iyasu assumed full power and began to use his position to take more serious steps. On 31 May 1914, he crowned his father Ras Mika'el as the king of Wallo and Tigray, a position that made the new negus the dominant figure in northern Ethiopia. To some, it seemed that Iyasu was imposing a new form of northern hegemony at the expense of Menilek's old Shoen elite.

Iyasu made regular visits into outlying regions of the empire to familiarize himself with the people and experience frontier situations at first hand. He felt that

3 Chris Prouty, Empress Taitu and Menilek, 1883–1910 (Trenton, NJ, 1986), 333. The Mehal Sefari may be compared in broad terms to the so-called Qelib of Mengistu Haile Mariam; the Qelib were a special guard who lived and ate in the palace while protecting the military dictator.
these areas were vital to the survival of Ethiopia, but was aware that the manner by which they had recently been incorporated into the empire left some wounds that needed to be healed. He saw the need to develop a more inclusive vision of the Ethiopian nation by putting greater focus upon the neglected peripheral parts of the country. However, his motives were viewed with suspicion both by the nobility and by the neighboring colonial powers, who closely followed his movements. It was while conducting one of these visits to the periphery that Iyasu was deposed, in a coup hatched by conservative members of the aristocracy in collaboration with foreign powers who viewed him as a potential danger to their interests. Contrary to the weight of prevailing opinion, there was much more to the young king’s brief reign than apostasy, as the following reassessment from both an internal and an external perspective will show.  

The Internal Dimension
Iyasu represented a challenge to the political establishment of Ethiopia in more ways than one. Growing up amidst the Byzantine politics of Menilek’s court taught him a hatred of gerontocrats. He was disgusted by the giddy artifices that suffused court life, nor did the demands of feudal etiquette and the extravagance surrounding banquets and public festivities fit his taste. Iyasu did not hide his ill-feelings toward the older generation of the nobility, and he expressed his disrespect by refusing to be counseled by them, either making decisions personally or consulting a picked group of younger advisors. His trips to the provinces were often undertaken without even informing senior officials of his government, a slap in the face of the old guard. In contrast to former rulers he avoided regalia and pomp; he hated to be surrounded by a large entourage and always preferred to be attended by only a few soldiers.

Iyasu liked to tell the nobility that they were running out of steam. Once, for example, while on a trip to Adal in 1911, he discovered that old guard officials were following him with their own soldiers uninstructed; he arranged a banquet for them, at the end of which he declared his disapproval of their coming. "You ought not to have followed me without my permission," he said to them in an aggressive tone. "You can no longer keep pace with us. You have grown fat, and have become old. You subdued (unruly areas) in my father's following in your time; let it be enough for you. Go back to the task each of you must perform." The generation of grandfathers had done their share in empire-building, but their day was over; now it was the turn of the younger generation to finish the task. There are also recorded instances in which Iyasu is known to have offended his seniors' pride by referring to them as "my father's fattened

4 Exceptions may be found in the works of Harold Marcus and Bahru Zewde. For a good account and critical analysis of Iyasu, see the last chapter of Harold G. Marcus, The Life and Times of Menelik II (Oxford, 1975), and the first chapter of Marcus, The Formative Years of Haile Sellassie I, 1892–1936 (Berkeley, 1987). A similar analysis is given by Zewde, Modern Ethiopia, 120–25.

5 Molvaer, Chronicles, 327.
sheep." This was a startling move for a young prince groomed in a feudal court culture that placed great value on seniority and age. Iyasu’s statements, however, should not be interpreted as expressions of hatred toward the nobility, but rather that they should recognize him as his own person and allow him to pursue his own political career; he would not be satisfied with a mere role of imperial figurehead.

Meanwhile the simple life style he adopted was anathema to the nobility. Gebre Egziabher Elias, supposed to be the chronicler of Iyasu, describes him as a person who did not carry drums while traveling; he was not interested in surrounding himself with an aura of dignity, but preferred the companionship of a few soldiers. Iyasu's lack of decorum and the empathy he displayed toward common people did not ingratiate him to the nobility. In short, Iyasu's general style of leadership was perceived by the nobility to be anti-status quo. Clearly, he abhorred the mannered style of the aristocracy. Informants who knew Iyasu personally say that he wanted to be seen and treated as an ordinary person. It is not wholly clear what motivated him, but perhaps he wanted to identify himself with the rank and file in order to establish a solid political base anchored in the lower sections of society. Emperor Haile Sellassie, in his autobiography, suggests that Iyasu had been advised by some individuals to reduce the power and rank of the great nobles of Menilek's time so that he might elevate to office the humble.

According to Bahru Zewde, young Iyasu's note of impatience in dealing with the older nobility ultimately touched the ailing emperor Menilek himself, for "the aged monarch's protracted illness, the refusal to die, left Iyasu in a state of political limbo." When Iyasu as heir-designate attempted to rusticate Menilek from the capital to Ankober early in 1913, his forces clashed with guardsmen loyal to the moribund emperor, and especially the Mehal Sefari corps under the command of Fitawrari Gebre Mariam Gari. When Iyasu succeeded in crushing this resistance he introduced a major reshuffle. Gebre Mariam was removed from his post and replaced by Dejazmatch Tessema Gezmu; the defeated officer was arrested, exiled to Gojjam, and his property, as was customary, was confiscated. Moreover, Iyasu also demoted and sent to minor posts in the provinces a number of palace officials alleged to have been involved in the incident. Although Iyasu did not disband the Mehal Sefari, he developed toward it an attitude of hatred that expressed itself in occasional rebuffs. With the benefit of hindsight, Iyasu's chronicler placed this event at the root of the conspiracy which, as it unfolded, eventually brought about the fall of Iyasu, for many

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6 For further details, see Merse Hazen, "YeTarik Teztaye be Abeto Zemen Iyasu, Zemene Mengist," (Addis Ababa University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1935 E.C.), 28.
7 Molvaer, Chronicles, 332.
9 Zewde, Modern Ethiopia, 123.
of those who had lost their former positions at that time joined in opposition to Iyasu and played an active part in the plot.\textsuperscript{10}

Even before Iyasu was firmly seated in the political saddle, he began to assert himself as ruler by adopting his own promotion policies. He appointed young and enlightened men to responsible positions. He gave ministerial posts to men such as Bejrond Yigezu and assigned well-educated governors to frontier outposts; for example, the German-educated Negadras Astatqe was made governor of Illubabor, while the Kentiba Gebru became one of his advisors in foreign affairs. Iyasu's new appointments threatened Menilek's old guard. Conspicuously, in making Negadras Haile Giorgis Wolde Mika'el his new President of the Council of Ministers, Iyasu made an implacable enemy of the ousted incumbent, the formidable War Minister Fitawrari Habte Giorgis, already smarting from his rejection as regent in favor of Lul Seged on the death of Ras Tessema. Meanwhile, moreover, Dejazmatch Balcha was removed from the governorship of Sidamo, which was given to Bitweded Haile Giorgis, while Iyasu bestowed the lucrative post of Negadras of Harar to a Syrian merchant named Yedlibi. For the moment Harar remained under the governorship of the future emperor Tefari, but he was soon transferred to Kaffa. The disaffected nobility correctly perceived Iyasu's appointment policy as a sign of his determination to upset the status quo.

The crowning frustration to the Shoan nobility was Iyasu's decision to make his father the king of the north, the Negus of Wallo and Tigray. The coronation of Mika'el at Dessie took place amid undue pomp; Abune Petros, emperor Yohannes' bishop, officiated at the ceremony, while a high-level delegation comprised of Ligaba Wolde Gabriel and the Finance Minister Bajrond Yigezu Behabte was dispatched from the capital to represent Iyasu. Fifty thousand men attended the coronation, according to one report.\textsuperscript{11} It is difficult to say what motivated Iyasu to make his father a king while he himself was still referred to by the titles of Lij or Abeto. Ras Mika'el must have had a strong influence upon his son, for the two maintained close working relations through the occasional exchange of visits and the regular use of the recently-introduced telephone line.

Whenever Iyasu encountered a major threat to his position the Ras intervened directly. In 1911, for example, Ras Mika'el marched from Wollo with an army of 8,000 men to defuse the tense situation that followed an unsuccessful conspiracy to topple Iyasu led by the Wagshum Abate Bwayalaw. Mika'el arrested Abate and sent him to Magdala for confinement. Guizot\textsuperscript{12} Iyasu went to Dessie on several occasions to meet with his father, probably to receive counsel on major issues. It is tempting to suggest that Iyasu felt the elevation of his father to Negus would provide more protection against opposition forces. The move can also be interpreted as part of a program

\textsuperscript{10} Molvaer, \textit{Chronicles}, 339.

\textsuperscript{11} File 884, xx, 4396, American Consular Director to Secretary of State, 6–1–14.

\textsuperscript{12} Molvaer, \textit{Chronicles}, 325.
gradually to establish a northern hegemony while nibbling away the Shoan establishment piecemeal.

Finally, it may be that Iyasu felt insecure to be crowned emperor of Ethiopia while still the son of a mere provincial governor. A consular report of the day stressed this interpretation: "it is common talk that Iyasu feared to be crowned because he was not the son of a king. For this reason this greatest political move was made. The event had more significance than a superficial observation would convey."13 Whatever Iyasu's motives, the coronation of Mika'el exacerbated the suspicions of the Shoan nobility, who were gradually gathering as a political force around the nucleus of the War Minister. The Shoans were particularly sensitive to Mika'el's background as an Oromo and a Moslem.14 The American consul assessed the situation prophetically: "once the fanaticism of the Christian population is aroused it would mean a bloody civil war followed possibly by the intervention of England, France and Italy."15

Iyasu also represented a cultural challenge to the core values of the Ethiopian ruling class, steeped as they were in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. He acknowledged Islam as a political reality and a factor in the life of the nation, and he was prepared to recognize the rights of Moslems as Ethiopians rather than second-class subjects. Iyasu viewed himself as the ruler of a nation whose people subscribed to different religions; from his unusually progressive outlook, the Moslems were as much Ethiopians as were the Christians, and the ruler, whoever he might be, should not impose his religion. His views were expressed succinctly by Locket: "If it was to be his destiny to rule over a country divided between two religions, there had to be a way of addressing to [sic] both of them without betraying either . . . the Crescent had to be incorporated into the imperial crown as [was] the Cross."16 For example, while Iyasu built the Qechene Medhane Alem church, and visited and granted donations to the monastery of Debre Libanos, he also saw nothing wrong with giving grants to support the construction of mosques in Hararghe province.17

Iyasu's notion of the nation clashed with the myopic view of the traditional nobility. The clergy and secular officials suspected him of showing a leaning toward Islam because of his frequent visits to the peripheral lowland parts of Ethiopia inhabited by Moslems. One of the accusations leveled against Iyasu illustrates, through the symbolically potent idiom of food, the difference between his approach to

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13 File 884, xx, 4396, American Consular Director to Secretary of State, 6-1-14.
14 The appointment of Mika'el as king of Wollo and Tigray was bitterly opposed by Dejazmatch Gebre Sellassie of Tigray, who revolted unsuccessfully against Mika'el. Seyum Mengasha was elevated to the title of Ras and made governor of Tigray under Negus Mika'el. See also Prouty, Taitu, 341.
15 File 884, xx, 4396, American Consul General to Secretary of State, 6-1-14.
17 Almost all sources for Iyasu claim, without citing any evidence, that he built mosques in Harar and Jigjiga. My own field research indicates that none of the extant mosques of Jigjiga owes its origin to Iyasu.
national integration and that of his opponents: "He claims that he ate flesh and cattle slain by Moslems," the charge read, "in order to extend frontiers [and to] win hearts. But these Somali Moslems have already been brought to heel and do not need diplomacy."18 "Iyasu's task," as Marcus aptly expressed it, "was nation-building, not imperial exploitation. His message of brotherhood and social equality threatened those who ran the state."19 Once in Harar, for example, Iyasu served a banquet to Christian and Moslem notables in a common tent to exemplify unity; the Moslems were pleased to have the privilege of being treated equally with the Christians, according to Gebre Egziabher Elias, while the latter experienced the occasion as defiling.20

In the praiseworthy new and broader picture of Ethiopia perceived by Iyasu the peripheral rim land, Dar Ager, was just as important as the heartland core, Mehal Ager. He undertook to strengthen the bonds between the core and frontier regions not only through occasional personal visits, but also through the establishment of patrimonial links between the imperial house and the Moslem chiefs of Adal, the Somali, the Aderi, and the Oromo chiefs of Jimma and Wallega. The often cited and overworked assertion that Iyasu was simply carried away by unbridled lust needs to be reassessed. As a young and handsome prince, it is possible that he was not totally innocent in this regard; one cannot fully explore his heart. But it is absurd to interpret his motive for spending many days in the deserts of Adal and the Ogaden primarily in terms of the fulfillment of sexual desires. Rather, marriage alliance had always constituted part of the fabric of feudal politics in Ethiopia, but it had hitherto operated mainly within the bounds of the ruling circles of the core areas. Iyasu, through his ties to prominent Moslem families, was merely adapting a familiar institution of traditional political culture to a new set of historical situations. In order to address the issue of national integration, he was attempting through his liaisons to foster a climate of trust between the state and the people in outlying regions recently incorporated through conquest.

Iyasu's emphasis upon the lowland peripheries was inspired in part by his commitment to the vision of a Greater Ethiopia as articulated by his imperial grandfather in Menilek's famous April Circular of 1891. The young Iyasu found the coasts, including the ports, in the hands of European colonial powers who were claiming territory along the Ethiopian borders. Moreover, the Regent Ras Tessema alerted Iyasu to the conspiracy among Britain, France and Italy to partition Ethiopia according to the Tripartite Agreement of 1906. As Iyasu rose toward the pinnacle of political power his attitude toward these three powers became increasingly negative, and he was determined to restore what he assumed to be Ethiopia's ancient frontiers. A former loyal guardsman who had accompanied Iyasu during his trips to Djibouti recalled that

19 Marcus, Formative Years, 15; see also Marcus, A History of Ethiopia (Berkeley, 1994), 114.  
20 Molvaer, Chronicles, 352.
once while on a tour at sea Iyasu had hoisted the Ethiopian flag, saying that this place was once ours, and though now in the hands of foreigners, he would restore it.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, one of the possible reasons why Iyasu was not crowned was his decision not to do so until he successfully restored Ethiopia's ancient frontiers, including its sea ports.\textsuperscript{22}

The outbreak of World War I offered Iyasu a chance to capitalize on the crisis among the various warring powers to advance his own agenda. He was no pawn of Germans or Turks, but rather, he skillfully manipulated the hostilities between Allies and Central Powers to serve his own political objectives. Iyasu paid special attention to the Moslem peoples living along the colonial frontiers, for he realized the importance of winning their confidence and enlisting their support for his dealings with the adjoining colonial powers. Iyasu preached the message of unity and the defense of African frontiers against any intruders.

As part of his overall strategy to acquire a network of loyalties throughout the lowland provinces he had made periodic visits to the Ogaden, Kaffa, Wollega and Bene Shangul. Since 1911 he had made repeated trips to the Afar region, culminating in his marriage to the daughter of the Negadras Abker, for the support of the Afar was indispensable to any move he might make against the Italians or French.\textsuperscript{23} In 1914, Iyasu's father mobilized a huge northern army that caused considerable anxiety among Italian officials in Eritrea, as it stood poised to advance into the colony.\textsuperscript{24} Meanwhile, in June 1914 Iyasu visited the southern part of Ethiopia. He spent some days with the chief of Jimma Aba Jiffar and took the Oromo leader's daughter as his wife. From Jimma he went to Wallega, where he was well received by the two leading local Oromo chiefs, Jote Tulu and Dejazmatch Kumsa, with whose families he also concluded marriage alliances. His purpose, as his chronicler explains, "was to become related to them by getting children from the daughters of all great nobles, for his main idea was to get back the coast of Ethiopia by unity and cooperation."\textsuperscript{25} In his southern trip Iyasu also met Dejazmatch Mustafa and Sheik Khojali, the two Islamic rulers of Bene Shangul, who brought him gifts of gold. Iyasu admonished them: "Be strong in your respective areas; watch the frontier of your land so that no foreigner will trick you. Be on your guard."\textsuperscript{26} Taken as a whole, these actions of Iyasu during 1914 laid the foundations for a fundamental change in the country's political culture.

\textsuperscript{21} Informant: Ahmad Abdullahi.

\textsuperscript{22} Molvaer, Chronicles, 335.

\textsuperscript{23} Iyasu is credited with founding the towns of Tenaye and Wara Hara in the northern part of the territory of Adal as his royal sites.

\textsuperscript{24} Iyasu had placed Wosene Zammuel as the Consul General of Ethiopia in Asmara so that, from that vantage point, he could follow closely the activities of the Italians.

\textsuperscript{25} Molvaer, Chronicles, 336.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
Harar and its lowland environs, comprising about a third of the area of Ethiopia, were especially attractive to Iyasu. Harar was important as an Islamic center, and near it passed the railway to Djibouti that provided Ethiopia's only transport link to the outside world. Harar was the best strategic location from which to spur the colonized Islamic peoples around the coastlands of the Horn to revolt against their alien masters, whose territories bordered eastern Ethiopia, or from which to launch a possible Ethiopian invasion of the European-dominated coastal lands. During 1915 Iyasu made several extended visits to the Hararghe region, notably the outpost of Jigjiga, in the hope of winning the Ogaden Somali to his side and forging a military alliance against the colonial powers with the formidable Somali patriot Mohammed Abdille Hassen. Iyasu gathered the Moslem notables of Hararghe, notably the Somali, and outlined for them his innovations in internal policy that were to stress redressing the injustices of the past. In a speech at Jigjiga he told the chiefs of his desire to create a nation that would equally serve the interests of both Christians and Moslems; "My strongest desire," he said, "is that all natives of Ethiopia should be of one heart and watch the country's frontier. Even if we differ with respect to religion, still you must not forget that we absolutely have to unite in love of our country."^27 The message of love, unity and defense of the nation's frontier came from the heart of a young ruler whose vision of the future rested upon new assumptions about Ethiopian nationhood.

Iyasu approached the Somali in a style marked by simplicity, with little pomp and without a large entourage. While not all the details of his discussions with the Ogaden are known, his message clearly implied an end to forcible rule. Having recognized the futility of attempting to rule the vast Ogaden homeland from a few garrison centers, particularly in the face of mounting hostility from the local populace, he proposed to link his administration to that of the Ogaden themselves through their traditional offices of Sultan and Gerad. Iyasu's honest approach was appreciated by the Somali, who chose to call him by the Islamic name of Elias—not by mistake, but as a mark of their confidence and respect.

While visiting Harar Iyasu took practical steps to raise local confidence. He replaced the older security apparatus with a new police force composed of Somalis, Oromo and Arabs.\(^28\) While previous governors such as Ras Makonnen had occasionally distributed robes of honor and other marks of distinction to Islamic notables on an \textit{ad hoc} basis, Iyasu undertook to regularize and systematize the practice in order to link his administration to traditional local institutions. Iyasu is reported to have placed a Danakil man, assisted by some Arab personnel, in charge of the affairs of Dire Dawa.\(^29\) Most importantly, he appointed as deputy governor of the Ogaden a man named Abdella Sadiq, an Aderi notable who, while assisting Ras Makonnen in the governance

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 353.

\(^{28}\) Haggai Erlich, \textit{Ethiopia and the Middle East} (London, 1994), 90.

of Moslems in Hararghe, had distinguished himself in furthering social and economic coexistence between Christians and Moslems. Abdella Sadiq became a close companion to Iyasu and an advisor to him on Islam and the affairs of the lowland Horn. Iyasu made frequent visits to Abdella's home, which became for Iyasu a second palace where he could relax, perhaps by taking part in bercha, the ceremony of chewing chat, or engage in confidential consultations with Moslem elders and community notables. Erlich states that Iyasu married one of the daughters of Abdella Sadiq, but the testimony of Iyasu's chronicle seems to indicate that he did not.

Iyasu hoped to forge an alliance with the Somali leader Mohammed Abdille Hassen, who had been fighting a war of jihad against the British since 1889. Early in the conflict Ethiopia had joined Britain in campaigns against the Somali leader, but after the Illig Conference of 5 March 1905, Menilek, feeling betrayed by the British, made secret contact with him via Abdella Sadiq, then customs director in Harar, and Haji Jamma, a man who had served as an interpreter for the British. Menilek offered Mohammed Abdille Hassen the governorship of the Ogaden in return for his allegiance, but technical problems prevented consummation of the negotiations. Iyasu too might have preferred Somalia to be part of Ethiopia, but he was prepared to approach Mohammed Abdille Hassen as an independent ally. We do not clearly know how the negotiations between the two leaders were conducted. Abdella Sadiq, because of his earlier experience and newly attained position as deputy governor of the Ogaden, must have played a pivotal role, while according to Erlich the Turkish consul Mazhar Bey, whose seat was in Harar, was also instrumental; he maintained close contact with both rulers and promised Ottoman support for their joint ventures. Iyasu proposed combined military action against the colonial powers in the Horn of Africa, and though no written document is available to confirm it, the Somali leader seems to have welcomed the idea. As a gesture of commitment Iyasu sent Mohammed Abdille Hassen

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30 Zewde, *Modern Ethiopia*, 120; Erlich, *Ethiopia*, 88. Abdella Sadiq was the son of a rich Aderi merchant, whose wealth was considered second only to that of the deposed emir. He was made Ra’is al-Muslimin (Head of the Muslims) of Harar by Menilek. Menilek also used him in his dealings with the Ogaden Somalis. He was one of the leaders of the Ethiopian delegation sent to Istanbul in 1905 to negotiate the restoration of the Ethiopian monasteries in Jerusalem. He is said to have traveled as far as the United States, where he met the president by falsely presenting himself as being on a government mission. In 1910 he was arrested and accused of forging Menilek’s seal while he was abroad. File 884. xx, 3496, American Vice-Consul General’s Report, February 18, 1911.

31 Molvaer, *Chronicles*, 559. Gebre Egziabher Elias recounts an incident where Iyasu was attracted to a beautiful Aderi girl whom he wished to court, but upon learning that she was his friend Abdella Sadiq’s daughter he refrained, saying “Oh, it was my sister.”


33 Erlich, *Ethiopia*, 83.
arms and ammunition, along with a German technician named Emile Kirsch to assist him in the repair of weaponry and the construction of defense systems.\textsuperscript{34}

By the summer of 1916 Iyasu had succeeded in contracting a marriage alliance with Mohammed Abdille Hassen’s daughter; in August he sent a mission to Taleh, the Mulla’s headquarters, to fetch his bride, but Iyasu’s fall in September prevented the actualization of the marriage.\textsuperscript{35} Although there is need for more substantiating data, it is clear that Iyasu’s skill as a negotiator had turned a once implacable enemy into an ally and friend.

Some scholars believe that Iyasu intended to establish a Moslem empire centered on Harar in cooperation with Mohammed Abdille Hassen. Erlich, for example, suggests that Iyasu was inspired by his father and later by Mazhar Bey to pursue the grand idea of establishing a Moslem state in the Horn.\textsuperscript{36} It has also been suggested that he planned to set up a kind of confederated state between Ethiopia and Somalia, though no evidence has yet come to light to confirm the veracity of this claim.\textsuperscript{37} But such speculations may be far-fetched, for it is doubtful that Iyasu would have gambled away his own base of power in the traditional northern Ethiopian bastion of Christian polity for the sake of a dream. A more plausible interpretation would be that his design was to drive the European powers out of the Horn and to secure a coast for Ethiopia. To serve that purpose he established dynastic, political and military alliances, and extended sympathetic support to Muslims.

The External Dimension

The crisis of the First World War afforded Iyasu an opportunity to pursue his objective of rebuilding Ethiopia. In order to achieve his goal of gaining new territories and securing a sea coast, he sought to establish cordial relations with the Germans, and later the Turks, on the basis of mutual reciprocity and community of interests.

Iyasu’s relations with the Germans were not established overnight. Rather, German influence in Ethiopia had been increasing steadily since the signing of the Treaty of Commerce and Friendship on 7 March 1905. A German legation was established in 1906, and the pace of German interest in Ethiopia picked up between 1913 and 1916. In January 1913, the new German minister, Frederick von Syburg, stated

\textsuperscript{34} Rey Beachy, \textit{The Warrior Mullah} (London, 1990), 117. After encountering difficulties with the Mullah, Emile Kirsch was fated to die in the desert, suffering from hunger, thirst, and scorching heat while trying to escape.

\textsuperscript{35} Robert Hess, \textit{Italian Colonialism in Somalia} (Chicago, 1966), 146. Some sources suggest that he was married to the Mullah’s daughter; Erlich (Ethiopia, 89) simply states that "he was reported to have been married to the Mawla."

\textsuperscript{36} Erlich, \textit{Ethiopia}, 84–89.

his government's wish to guarantee the integrity of Ethiopia; this was not only a good index of Germany's intention to play an active role in the Horn, but also a flagrant violation of the Tripartite Agreement.\textsuperscript{38} Meanwhile, as young Iyasu assumed personal power, German agents made concerted efforts to win his favor.\textsuperscript{39}

At the outbreak of World War I the overall German strategy was to compel the Allied powers to commit large forces to the defense of their colonies, thereby weakening their position in Europe and the Middle East. This goal could certainly have been served by involving the Allies in conflict with Ethiopia, and by fomenting rebellions and insurgencies in parts of the Horn such as Somalia and the Sudan where anti-British movements existed. The Sudan was central to German strategy since it could directly threaten the British position in Egypt and the Middle East; Ethiopia was the key, however, because of the proven fighting tradition of her people and her centrality to the geopolitics of the region, and the Germans needed the support of the Ethiopian leader.\textsuperscript{40} Iyasu, though not inclined to execute assignments for the Germans, was willing to coordinate his own agenda of interests with theirs.

Early in 1915 Leo Frobenius led a mission to clarify German strategic aims to Iyasu; the famous Africanist, however, was arrested by the colonial authorities in Eritrea while attempting to cross the Ethiopian border, and another mission led by Salmon Hall in June enjoyed no better success. The Germans nevertheless managed via other channels to sneak a letter bearing the strategic essentials to their minister Von Syburg, who contacted Iyasu and sent an agent named Jenson to the prince's father, Negus Mika'el.\textsuperscript{41} The German plan was to induce the Ethiopian authorities and Mohammed Abdille Hassen as well to invade Allied territory so that the Turks could press on to Egypt while the Germans would successfully fight the British in East Africa; in return, the Germans promised to recognize all territorial gains the Ethiopians or Somalis might make.

The results of Von Syburg's diplomacy are disputed; he claimed that both Iyasu and his father had consented to the German plan and had begun military preparations accordingly, but this assertion is not confirmed by other evidence.\textsuperscript{42} There is no indication that Iyasu officially committed Ethiopia to enter the war on the German


\textsuperscript{39} Edward Westermann, "In the Shadow of War: German Loans and Shipments to Ethiopia, 1935–1936," Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, 1037. Iyasu had several German friends such as Flair, Holts, and the Austrian, Schwimmer. Schwimmer was the head of the Ethiopian delegation that was sent to Vienna in 1914, whose main purpose was to purchase arms; see Tefa, Ethiopia and Germany, 132–33.

\textsuperscript{40} On the importance of the Sudan to German plans, see Ulrich Braukamper, "Frobenius as Political Agent: Journey to Eritrea," Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, 555.


\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
side. Concerning the Ethio-Somali alliance against the British, Iyasu had already taken the initiative himself, and what he now expected from the Germans was military assistance. Certainly Iyasu was enthusiastic about promised German support for future Ethiopian conquests at the sea coast; as far as he was concerned, the expressed desire of the Germans was to enable him to gain Djibouti.

Germany was not alone in trying to draw Ethiopia into World War I against the Allies; Turkey also played an important role. Turkish friendship with Germany was cemented through a defensive alliance proposed by the Turks and concluded on 31 July 1914. Given the influence of the Turks in the Middle East and in other Islamic societies, the Turkish idea of stirring up a pan-Islamic revolt against hostile European states proved very attractive to the Germans; for example, according to Scholler, the plan eventually conveyed by the Frobenius mission had originally been proposed by the Turkish ambassador in Switzerland. The Turks also seem to have established liaison with Mohammed Abdille Hassen, whom they began to style "the Emir of Somalia" in 1915.

Meanwhile, there is no reason to believe that the impulse for Iyasu's pro-Islamic policy came from the Turks, for it had been obvious as early as 1911, while his Turkish contacts probably began only with the opening of a Turkish consulate in Harar during 1913. The newly accredited Turkish diplomat Mazhar Bey appreciated Ethiopia's strategic significance to the impending conflict and undertook to exploit Iyasu's desire to reclaim the coast in order to lure him into the war on the Turkish side. "The Ethiopians want a harbor," he wrote to his superiors, "and if the British are thrown out of Ottoman Somalia, it might work to give Ethiopia part of the coast between Zeila and Bulhar and the territory between the coast and the eastern border of Harar."

The Turkish consul also made contact with Mohammed Abdille Hassen, largely through the auspices of Abdella Sadiq. Since the Somali leader was already waging an Islamic jihad against the British the Turks did not have to start from scratch, but they did promise him assistance so that his struggle could be prolonged and intensified. Mazhar was eager to see an alliance between Iyasu and Mohammed Abdille Hassen, and most of his activities in Harar were devoted to facilitating contact and understanding between the two so that they could begin joint military operations soon. But Mazhar Bey also played a double game, it would seem, for while promising to recognize Mohammed Abdille Hassen as the future leader of Somalia, he also assured Iyasu that Somalia would be under his sovereignty.

Mazhar Bey, in his dispatches to the Turkish Foreign Ministry, expressed repeatedly the view that Iyasu was firmly in favor of the Ottomans, but there is no

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indication that the prince officially committed himself to declare war on either Britain or France. Perhaps Iyasu hesitated to take this step because he had not yet sufficiently prepared the ground at home; the idea would not have been received positively by the Shoan nobility, nor had he yet been able to gather any large force from among the Moslems of Harar—though he was recruiting and training some, mainly from among the Ogaden Somali. His connection with Muhammad Abdille Hassen had not yet been placed on a secure footing. Moreover, it is likely that Iyasu preferred to bide his time until the Turks had scored some significant military successes, conceivably in Egypt. Meanwhile, Iyasu redoubled his recruiting efforts in Harar and increased the pace of contacts with Muhammad Abdille Hassen.

In his treatment of this episode in Ethiopian history, Erlich has said that Iyasu and his father made known their decision to enter the war during October 1915, and that during the year to follow the prince openly declared himself to be a militant Moslem and an implacable foe to those "imperialist oppressors of Islam," the British. It is doubtful that the sources cited are adequate to support this interpretation, however, and even if they do convey accurately some of the prince's words, they probably misread the opportunistic context in which he uttered them. Iyasu's sympathy for Islam was primarily political; he was desperately seeking the support of Islamic forces with whose aid he hoped to drive the colonial powers from the Horn.

Considering the other side of the coin the Allied powers, and particularly the British, came to view Iyasu as a dangerous monster. As the Turks issued a call for a pan-Islamic revolution in territories held by Allied infidels, and as Germans and Austrians stood ready to supply potential rebels with arms and advisors, British authorities began to follow keenly his every step. They feared that he was mobilizing Moslem chiefs along his borders to undertake raids into British colonial territory; for example, such anxieties surfaced as early as 1914 when Sheik Khojali of Bene Shangul visited Iyasu, and they reemerged whenever the prince conducted one of his visits to the Islamic peripheries of his realm. In Somalia the long resistance of Muhammad Abdille Hassen continued, while in the Sudan, at the outbreak of the Great War, Sultan Ali Dinar of Dar Fur heeded the pan-Islamic summons to revolt. As fighting flared up at intervals throughout northeastern Africa, the British took steps to nip Iyasu's plan in the bud.

Along the eastern border of Ethiopia the British spared no effort to block contacts between Iyasu and Muhammad Abdille Hassen. In 1916 they summoned Somali notables to Hargeisa to give their own version of the war; they warned the Somalis to be on

47 Ibid., 89-90. Erlich further mentions that Iyasu, while inspecting a parade of the new local Islamic forces in Dire Dawa on 21 September, waved a new banner, "an Ethiopian one with the Islamic Shahada [profession of faith] embroidered on it, complete with an Islamic red crescent."

48 FO 371/1884 Telegram message from His Imperial Majesty's Charge d'Affaires in Addis Ababa to Colonel Doughty, 2-9-14.
their guard against hostile propaganda, and portrayed Iyasu as just another Christian ruler who was approaching them in disguise in order to cheat them. The British commissioner A. Archer even proposed to annex the Ogaden if military exigencies rendered that expedient.\textsuperscript{49} The primary activity of the British, however, was directed toward the capital, where they adopted the strategy of embracing the Shoan nobility; since this court faction was bitterly opposed to Iyasu, opposition to his policies could easily be rallied around them.

Iyasu's long absences from Addis Ababa provided an opportunity for the British to play a principal role in the conspiracy that would bring about his fall on 27 September 1916. Though documents are lacking, it is reasonably obvious that they were working closely with coup leaders, particularly Fitawrari Habte Giorgis and Teneri. Meanwhile Thesiger, the British Minister in Addis Ababa, joined in the psychological warfare against Iyasu that preceded his deposition; he proclaimed Iyasu's apostasy long before the Shoan nobility dared to do so. In April 1916, after visiting Iyasu in Gore, he wrote: "the prince makes no secret of his sympathies for Islam, he lives solely in the house of Moslems and has adopted Moslem dress and customs."\textsuperscript{50} Thesiger proposed to the Foreign Office a technique by which to eliminate Iyasu; "the one solution," he wrote, "would be for the Entente Legation at an opportune moment to denounce the prince as a Moslem. We would then make a proclamation of the firm determination of our government to maintain the integrity of Abyssinia, asking the country to crown a new emperor, and decline all further dealing with the present Government until this is done."\textsuperscript{51} In the event, on 10 September 1916 the Allied Powers submitted a letter of protest to the Ethiopian government in which they accused Iyasu of interfering in the internal affairs of their colonies and warned that they would not tolerate further infractions against standing agreements. This harbinger of what was to come appeared only two weeks before the final denouement.

The Fall of Iyasu
Was Iyasu obsessed with the idea of restoring Ethiopia's coastline to the extent that he was unaware of the forces arrayed against him? Was he naive to rely on the oath the notables had sworn before Menilek? Was he depending upon the strength of his father to maintain a hold upon the old imperial heartlands? These questions may not be answered with certainty. It seems clear, however, that Iyasu was taken by surprise by the coup that ended his reign; there are no hints to suggest that he had been prepared for such an eventuality.

Iyasu left Harar on 8 October 1916 accompanied by a few loyal troops, having left orders for the deployment of the newly-organized corps of Somali and Aderi soldiers.

\textsuperscript{49} Beachy, \textit{Warrior Mullah}, 114.
\textsuperscript{50} Prouty, \textit{Taitu}, 342.
Dejazmatch Gebre Delel, in charge of Hararghe since the removal of Teneri, was directed to lead his forces up the road from Harar toward Addis Ababa to intercept the advance of insurgent Shoan forces from the capital. In the event, Gebre Delel moved his troops out of Harar but, upon reaching Chelengo, ceased to move. Meanwhile Iyasu and his loyal followers commandeered a train in order to engage the Shoans along their line of march. The two sides met near Asebe Tefri at Measo, where a pitched battle was fought on 8 October 1916. The result was a foregone conclusion, for Iyasu’s ill-organized troops, who may not have exceeded 1,000, could not stand against the well-prepared Shoan army of 15,000. Iyasu and other survivors of the clash fled into the Danakil desert in the direction of Tenaye, a city founded by Iyasu during one of his trips to Adal.52

The victorious army entered Harar the day after the battle and found it tense, for there were rumors that Somalis and other Moslems were arming themselves to resist the newly-arrived Shoan forces. Responsibility for security lay with Dejazmatch Balcha, who intervened decisively by ordering, as a pre-emptive measure, the arrest or massacre of all armed Somalis. Although Balcha succeeded in defusing the tensions that ensued within Harar when his troops went on a rampage and started shooting Somalis indiscriminately, he still had to face formidable and well organized attacks by the clans of the Ogaden. These Somalis made two serious if unsuccessful attempts to reach and join forces with Iyasu; at Babile, Balcha intercepted a large army advancing toward Harar and wiped it out, while a second and larger Somali force heading in the same direction suffered disastrous defeat in a battle fought near Jigjiga.53 Given the manifest support Iyasu had earned among the Somalis of the Ogaden, it is possible that he might have considered fleeing in that direction, had the conspirators not succeeded in taking him by surprise.

The coup of 27 September 1916 was too neat to allow one to believe that it occurred spontaneously or even suddenly. It must have taken a considerable amount of time to achieve what events would prove to be rare unanimity among the Rases, the other powerful lords, the elite and the clergy in removing a legitimate ruler; Habte Giorgis and the other coup ringleaders must have carefully worked out their plans while carefully heeding the advice of the Allied powers. The role of Ras Tafari, the future emperor Haile Selassie, is disputed. In his autobiography Tafari absolved himself from any involvement in the coup and presented his appointment as regent as something that was suddenly thrust upon him,54 while Mosley’s account gives one the impression that Tafari’s role in the coup was central.55 The attitude of Allied diplomats, who of

53 Arnold Hodson, Seven Years in Southern Abyssinia (London, 1927), 127; Mosley, Haile Sellassie, 100.
54 Haile Sellassie, My Life, 47.
55 Mosley, Haile Sellassie, 87–90.
course could not have worked in a vacuum, lends some weight to Mosley’s interpretation; a report from the office of the United States Consulate, for example, states that "the British Consulate spoke in the highest terms of this young man [Tafari] and I have no doubt but that the allied representatives have used their influence in having him proclaimed the prince regent."\(^{56}\) In this political setting, it is not likely that Tafari would have achieved supreme power by accident.

The coup-makers were bent from the start on ousting Iyasu from power and nothing less would satisfy them. No substantive accusations amounting to treason were made against Iyasu, nor was he given a chance to explain and justify his policies. What united the authors of the coup was not that Iyasu had become a Moslem but that his new national vision passed them by.\(^{57}\) The aging heroes of Adwa found themselves embarrassed and threatened with exclusion, for Iyasu mocked their complacency and smug confidence as pillars of a bygone era. The Shoan nobility acted not in the national interest, but in their own. They placed religion at the heart of the matter because it symbolized core cultural values among the population of the Christian north; for them, Islam raised the fearsome specter of the sixteenth century invading lowland hordes of Ahmad Gragne.

Perhaps there is something in the political culture of Ethiopia that does not tolerate the creation of a new mold of leadership. In the seventeenth century the emperor Susenynos, disgusted with the contentiously religion-centered attitudes of his mutually-destructive nobility, planned to recruit a new and obedient type of official baptized under the new faith of Catholicism; this precipitated a major civil war as a result of which he had to abdicate.\(^{58}\) Again in the nineteenth century, the emperor Tewodros attempted to introduce a new type of administration that did not rely upon the traditional nobility; he too found himself rejected by the political establishment and ousted. Iyasu thus shared a common fate with distinguished predecessors who had attempted to reform Ethiopian administration from the throne. Yet perhaps Iyasu’s case differed in his tendency to withdraw from the system both physically and spiritually; in his quest for a venue in which to practice the religious toleration and personal social egalitarianism that came naturally to him, Iyasu revived the spirit of old Ethiopia’s roving capital as he moved from place to place.

\(^{56}\) File 884. xx 4396, Director of U.S. Consular Service (Aden) to Secretary of State, 18–12–1916.

\(^{57}\) Upon hearing that he had been deposed from power on the grounds of alleged apostasy, Iyasu made a statement confirming his sincerity in being a Christian, and protested that stories of his affection toward Ethiopian Moslems had been misconstrued as evidence of his conversion to Islam. Iyasu’s actions had certainly aroused suspicions to that effect at the time, however.

THE TALES OF YOSEPH AND WORANSA:
GEDEO EXPERIENCES IN THE ERA OF THE
ITALO–ETHIOPIAN WAR

by Charles McClellan

In the fall of 1935, the Italians launched a two–front attack into Ethiopia, aimed at
revenging their defeat of forty years earlier and establishing Africa Orientale
Italiana (Italian East Africa), Ethiopia—the connector between their older colonies of
Eritrea and Somaliland. Along the southern front, the veteran commander, Marshal
Rodolfo Graziani, struck across the Somali frontier at Dolo; guided by the river systems
of Ethiopia's arid southern region, he pressed north and west into the provinces of Bale
and Sidamo.²

Four hundred miles to the north in Sidamo, in the area east of Lake Abaya along
the upper reaches of the Rift Valley escarpment, two Gedeo youth spent their days
herding livestock, planting ensete (better known as the false banana, the society's
staple), and seasonally harvesting coffee. On occasion, they traveled to nearby markets
to help kinsmen trade for life's other necessities. Yoseph, about thirteen, was born in
Mokensna near Dumarso; Woransa was a few years older, born in Badessa, but reared in
Golla, near Dilla. What follows is a description of their experiences in the Italo–
Ethiopian War.³

Despite official Ethiopian efforts over the last fifty years to paint this event as
a great nationalistic accomplishment encompassing nearly all countrymen, acting in
concert, vast numbers of Ethiopians did not share in this experience and the supposed
unity of effort has been much exaggerated. Ethiopians, instead, had a wide variety of
experiences; the tales of Yoseph and Woransa, presented here, bear witness to this fact.
These episodes cannot necessarily be viewed as "typical," but are representative.
Although strong patriotism was felt by many Ethiopians (to what extent can be

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² For a first–hand account of this campaign, see Graziani’s own Il Fronte Sud (Milan, 1938). See
also, Sandro Volta, Graziani a Neghelli (Florence, 1936).

³ This article is built primarily around the two following interviews: Interview 2323, interview by author, Dilla, Ethiopia, 27 August 1990; Interview 2610, interview by author, Addis
Ababa, Ethiopia, 2 June 1990. Information from other interviewees is also used, and cited, to
indicate affirmation, contradiction, or clarification of material gained from Yoseph and Woransa.
The author has employed a "liberal" translation of the oral material to create a more readable
format, but has taken great care to preserve both the intent and content of the interviewee's words.
debated), extensive interviewing of ordinary individuals indicates that there was a broad and complex range of attitudes. Even among those with professed loyalties to the Ethiopian cause, feelings were sometimes without much depth or conviction. Many of those who aided the Ethiopian government initially did so without much enthusiasm, and so could easily switch to the Italians later. Once again, when the tide of battle turned, they were able to rejoin the Ethiopians, some more out of a sense of necessity than duty.

People during the Italo–Ethiopian War did what they had to in order to survive, and adaptability was the key. The tales of Yoseph and Woransa certainly reflect these practical aspects of life. Some might describe them as "disloyal opportunists," and certainly Ethiopian "nationalists" are fond of such depiction, but the reality is that we all are driven to some degree by opportunism, the more so when we have real choices. For many though, the choices are often limited and unappealing; a particular course is followed merely because it offers more prospect of survival. Idealism tends to be the luxury of those who have a broader range of options.4

The Coming of the Italians
The months just prior to the Italian invasion saw much activity centered on Yirgalem, Sidamo's capital, as the governor, Ras Dasta Damtaw, the emperor's son-in-law, prepared a large force to contest Graziani's move. Tens of thousands, many with family members and retainers, congregated for training in the vicinity of the capital, awaiting orders to advance. There was great need to conserve and build food reserves for the long journey south while continuing, on a daily basis, to feed the huge assemblage. Workers busily improved the route south toward Neghelle, along the road to Dolo. Balabbats (low-ranking Gedeo officials who served the Ethiopian administration) ordered their indigenous subjects to carry food supplies to the capital to aid the cause; hundreds of Gedeo and others were soon on the way, toting man–loads of kocho (a processed form of ensete) and other necessities. There they heard reports that the "Taleya" [Italians] were soon to invade, but as Woransa said: "We were not sure who they were."5

Woransa was already in Yirgalem, serving the personal needs of the Gedeo balabbit, Chimburu Shunde, who had been imprisoned there for two years, allegedly for misappropriating tax revenues.6 When word of the Italian advance came, Chimburu

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4 A broader discussion of some of the issues in this section of the paper is contained in my "Observations on Nation, Nationalism, and the Italo–Ethiopian War," Northeast African Studies (forthcoming).

5 Interview 120, interview by author, Awassa, 22 August 1990, describes the preparations for war underway in Yirgalem. Interview 919, interview by author, Dilla, 27 August 1990, indicates that in addition to the supplies provided by the local populations, a tax of three Maria Theresa thalers was imposed on each household to support the war effort.

6 This may have been the official charge, but my research in Gedeo in 1974–75 indicates that Chimburu had been arrested and whipped for resisting the administration's efforts to measure the coffee lands within his district.
was released, a ploy, so Woransa believed, to influence the loyalty of the Gedeo during the campaign and help keep things quiet on the home front, where unprotected Qawe families would remain, vulnerable to danger from the indigenes around them.

When the order to move south came, Ethiopian forces advanced along a rough road recently improved by the Gedeo with Ras Dasta riding comfortably in his auto. They camped for a night at Chichu, accepting (or compelling) the hospitality of Wutie Nati, a wealthy Gedeo market tax collector. For the moment, they continued to live off of the supplies of the local populations, conserving their own limited rations for the battle ahead. Woransa and the Gedeo balabbat did not accompany them, but some Gedeo, privileged enough to have guns, did. A few weeks later, stories of the devastation inflicted upon Ras Dasta’s army began circulating. Casualties were high and many Gedeo and their Qawe companions were lost. Both the fierceness of the Italian attack that employed heavy aerial bombing and poison gas and the precariousness of Dasta’s support system, contributed to the disintegration of his army; survivors left to find their own ways home, their armaments and supplies abandoned on the battlefield. Subsequently, thousands would die from lack of water in a barren land, and stragglers were picked off by the indigene population, largely the Guji and Boran Oromo.

What remained of Dasta’s army retreated towards Neghelle, finding refuge in the forests around Wadera, some forty miles to the north of there. Dasta struggled desperately to hold his army together and reprovision it. Once again, balabbats commanded the local population to deliver supplies, this time to Wadera. Woransa was among these Gedeo sojourners. The route was difficult; rains impeded easy movement, and there was some danger of Italian bombing. The Italians, based now in Neghelle, bombarded Dasta’s positions daily, seeking to dislodge him. While Gedeo carriers transversed the Dibdibe marshes, hundreds of their donkeys and horses were entrapped in the mud and it became impossible to free them. As Woransa remembered

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7 My Gedeo informants used this term to refer to arms-bearing settlers from the north of Ethiopia; there was an unspoken implication that these were Amhara, but this was never explicitly so. From the time that the Gedeo were incorporated into the Ethiopian state in 1895, soldier-settlers (naftagnas) were provided with either gabbars (labor) or qalad (measured land) in lieu of their official salaries, the number or amount dependent on their rank and merit. Gedeo gabbars, in addition to a cash payment, provided their naftagnas with a variety of labor services; soldiers who received qalad acquired undeveloped land for which they then had to seek labor to work it. For a more thorough description of these arrangements, see my State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and the Ethiopian Empire, 1895–1935 (East Lansing, MI, 1988).

8 My previous research in Gedeo confirms that many local naftagnas did not return from Dolo, or from the war in general.

9 Interview 120, describes the horrendous conditions experienced at Dolo; Interview 102, interview by author, Yirga Chaffe, 7 April 1990, emphasizes the effects of the bombing and poison gas, which were decisive. In certain circumstances, Gedeo gabbars were given guns and accompanied their naftagnas into battle; one such was Interview 711, interview by author, Gwangwa–Wonago, 4 April 1990, who recalled having to eat the leather strips used for tying loads on donkeys in order to survive. He later joined the Ethiopian resistance. Another Gedeo gabbar, Interview 919, accompanied his patron to Dolo, but as an unarmed servant.
it: "We removed their supplies with great difficulty and left them [the pack animals] to their fate. The hyenas came out in the night scavenging the immobile animals and were themselves entrapped in the mud."

Moving through Guji territory towards Wadera, Woransa reported seeing the corpses of many of the Ras's followers "whose remains had been taken over by the termites." In towns along the route, he witnessed the hanging of Guji by the resident Qawe, who accused them of murder. The diminution of local authority with the start of the war and the easy opportunity to victimize desperate, solitary men returning from Dolo, stimulated revival of the traditional Guji custom of seeking *midda*, i.e., a trophy to prove manhood, often the genitals of enemy men. Woransa's impartial assessment was: "We had no way of knowing whether these men were truly murderers or whether real justice had been done."

The situation at Wadera was extremely precarious. Dasta's men had dug trenches, felling large trees for reinforcement. Lookouts called *qafirs* climbed trees or nearby hills to watch for Italian planes, and when the warning came "we doused our fires, but it was not always possible to eliminate the smoke so quickly." When the bombing began, everyone crawled into the trenches "like rats." It was during this time that Chimburu was raised in rank to Balambaras and his son Assafa made Qagnazmatch. Such public gathering had to be held at night for fear of the bombs. "Not only *balabbats*, but any person, even Gedeo, who could provide a mule load of flour for the army could receive a title," apparent evidence of Dasta's desperation.

As the Italians moved ever closer to Wadera and as their own food supplies dwindled, Woransa and his fellow carriers journeyed home "to return to our farming." Wisely they had buried small caches of food along the return route. While Graziani advanced toward Wadera, another Italian contingent moved northward from Agere Maryam, headed for Kavado where the two roads reconverged. This route took them along the western side of Gedeo. Units of Dasta's forces (led by Dejazmatch Gabra–Maryam) confronted them at Jabasirie and Bonde, joined by Chimburu and a few Gedeo, but the advance could not be halted and it continued on toward Dilla.\(^\text{10}\)

The Italians moved forward along the main roads, confronting any opposition they met, but undertook no immediate mopping up actions, leaving behind significant pockets of resistance. One such pocket was the Qawe garrison at Bule along the upper reaches of the escarpment. Soldiers there had everything to lose since an Italian victory would likely end Qawe dominance of the region. The Italians, meanwhile, made immediate effort to win the loyalties of Gedeo, distributing goods and favoring Gedeo children with bread. As Woransa noted, the Italians "ate the bread in front of

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\(^{10}\) Interview 919, provides good information on the fighting that took place in these locations. Ras Dasta would continue to resist the Italians with a small force of men for many months, first in northern Sidamo and later in Bale, Arussi, and Shoa, where he was eventually captured and executed by the Italians. A good eyewitness account of the Sidamo campaigns from the Ethiopian perspective is Seyfu Abba Wello, *Yetarik Qirs* (Addis Ababa, 1953 E.C.).
the children to demonstrate that it was not tainted, and they called to the children: 'Mario, Mario.' The soldiers at Bule, under the leadership of their shambal (garrison commander), Fitawrari Tasamma, were dismayed at the Gedeo response to the Italians, and once the latter moved north, they took retribution. The subsequent massacre that took place in Michille, an area just to the east of Dilla may have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Gedeo men, women and children. Survivors fled the region, seeking refuge elsewhere. Woransa's father, guided by his kayyo (accumulated blessings and good luck), led his family to safety, choosing to follow the Italians towards Kavado rather than move through the highlands where they might encounter Qawe forces. But before reaching their destination, they met others fleeing Kavado, who advised them to return home, saying "it was better to die in one's home village." Apparently the Italians near Kavado had encountered Ethiopian resistance. A battle with tanks and cannons ensued, which trapped many of the refugees between the competing forces, once again resulting in a terrible loss of innocent life.

Woransa's family felt it too dangerous to return home and so remained in Sidama country for a month where local elders permitted them to harvest the ensete of local residents who had fled. Woransa recalled that they also clandestinely visited Michille in the nights to steal grain from abandoned Qawe goteras (storehouses), grinding it into flour for more efficient transport before slipping away. "We could hear the hyenas screaming in the night as they scavenged for dead Gedeo; the whole area stank from the rotting flesh." These activities were quite dangerous since Qawe groups still prowled the area, compelling Gedeo families to provision them; these units might be encountered suddenly and at any time.

Given this local insecurity, Gedeo leaders approached the Italians, asking to be armed and trained so that they could protect themselves. The Italians acceded to this request quite happily, and soon a small bande (irregulars) force under Wutie Nati was formed (known locally as "Wutieke bande," the "bande of Wutie"). Calling upon all Gedeo to support them if only with spears, Wutie's force took the offensive, seeking to dislodge the garrison at Bule; the fighting at nearby Deneba was quite intense with heavy casualties on both sides. The Qawe fled north toward Gamba; the Gedeo pursued them and were joined there by Sidama bande as well as some ferenj (derived from the word "Frankish," but meaning generally "foreigner") forces. The subsequent Qawe defeat resulted in the release of Chimburu Shunde who now returned to serve as balabbat under the Italians until his death a few years later. The Gedeo celebrated

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11 Interview 507, interview by author, Hasse-Harro, 4 April 1990, was a Gedeo gabbar who carried supplies for his naflagna to Gamba. Although he did not participate in the battle, he did indicate that the confrontation there was intense, with many Gedeo fighting with no more than sharpened bamboo sticks.

12 Woransa's description here of the balabbat as a kind of Qawe "hostage" is interesting. Chimburu was popular among the Gedeo, particularly for his resistance to land measurement, and the Gedeo undoubtedly perceived him as a "reluctant collaborator." They were thus more willing to
this victory, exclaiming, as Woransa remembered: "Basha Bule me’eteni," i.e., "the evil ones of Bule are [now] gone." "Our lives became normal and we returned home to continue our farming." 13

The Italian Occupation
While local Ethiopian forces were meeting defeat, the Italians established their own permanent garrison in the area, on the plains at Dumarso, where the young boy Yoseph had his first encounter with them. Living nearby, Yoseph and his friends visited the Italian camp "to stare at the white people through the fence. They gave us bread ... and invited us into the camp to do whatever petty tasks we could manage." In this way Yoseph met Captain Zenchini (?) who employed him as a houseboy. Joseph was provided with food and shelter and allowed on occasion to visit his parents. 14

About a year later (presumably sometime in 1937), the captain was posted to Addis Ababa, and Yoseph went with him. Zenchini enrolled him in the Missione Consolata (Catholic Mission School) where, for the very first time, he received formal education. Several months later, his patron was posted as governor for Gogeti in Gurage, leaving Yoseph in Addis Ababa to continue his education, but "visiting me every six months and providing me with things I needed as would my own father." It was during this time that Yoseph converted to Catholicism and took a Christian name (his birth name was Gemedie). His conversion was not for convenience’s sake, but true, and he would practice Catholicism for the remainder of his life.

Yoseph’s school offered a three-track education. One track was "for children of my own social background. We were allowed to study up to Standard Four, and the only subject was Italian—reading, writing and speaking it." Students who completed the course were offered jobs by the Italians. "A number of us learned to read and write better Italian than the illiterate Italian soldiers." 15 Track two was for the children of the Ethiopian nobility and makwanent (princes of the royal blood) class. They were treated better and received a broader education, since the Italians at this time were

understand and forgive this association. The Gedeo had no trouble accepting him as a balabbat under the Italians.

13 Other Ethiopian ethnicities experienced similar feelings. In Dirashe in Gemu Gofa, e.g., people are reported to have exclaimed: "Our enemies, the devastators, their rule has come to an end and their robbery too." See Hansemo Hamela, "Internal History of the Dirashe (Gidole)" (senior paper, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1983). With the defeat of the Qawe forces, the Italians ordered the soldiers to return to their farms, but the soldiers protested, saying that since the Gedeo were now armed, it would be unsafe for them to do so. Interview 102, notes that the Italians then made it clear to the balabbats that for every Qawe killed in their territory, ten of their subjects would be executed. I have been unable to confirm this statement.

14 Interview 1907a, interview by author, Birbirsaela, 8 April 1990, presents a similar experience. This informant worked as a gaglie (servant) for an Italian at Banko, but unlike Yoseph, was never given the opportunity to leave the area or obtain education.

15 Beyond individuals like Yoseph who became fluent or near–fluent in Italian, many other Ethiopians such as house servants, mechanics, and drivers, learned a type of Pidgin Italian specific to their jobs. See Habtemariam Marcos, "Pidgin Italian?" (Faculty of Arts, Addis Ababa University, 1970).
trying to encourage their collaboration and wanted to provide evidence of their
generosity. Track three was for the children of European descent including Italians,
Armenians, and Greeks. Yoseph noted that when he first went to Addis Ababa he
knew neither Italian nor Amharic. He never had any formal training in the latter, but
picked it up in the streets, soon achieving more proficiency in it than in Italian. After
all, it was more essential to his own survival. Yoseph spent the war years in school,
under the wing of the Italians, undergoing a social and cultural transformation. He
would much appreciate the opportunities that the Italians provided him, but at the
same time could not close his eyes to, and found unsettling, the social and racial
discrimination they promoted.

Meanwhile, in Gedeo, Woransa farmed under the watchful eye of the Italians.
Gedeo had a strong sense that the yoke had been lifted. Woransa phrased it thusly:
"Shortly after the Italians arrived, the Gedeo gained power [once again]. The Qawe
had forced us to grind grain, cut grass and clean stables [for them], none of which the
Italians required." There was also some sense of progress. The Gedeo began to wear
modern clothing and to give up their more traditional wardrobe. Italian clothing was
available and relatively cheap. A wider variety of consumer products was evident, and
the number of small markets in Gedeo mushroomed. Some Gedeo found opportunity to
supplement their incomes, moving these items to remoter markets, an activity that had
been dominated in the past largely by the Qawe. For Gedeo, town residence emerged as
a possibility (given the absence of the Qawe), and places like Dilla began to grow.
Some people were able to build nicer houses, constructed from bamboo, although few
could yet afford corrugated iron roofing. "We also saw other methods of house

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16 The Italians made at least two specific efforts to win the collaboration of Ethiopia's
nobility. After their occupation of Addis Ababa in May 1936, they released many of the captured
nobility from prisons, encouraging them to return home peacefully to their estates, and accept Italian
rule. The nobility largely ignored this, and the policy came to an end with the assassination attempt
on the life of Viceroy Graziani in February 1937. Again in 1938–39, after an unsuccessful effort to
encourage the patriot movement, they proposed a cease-fire and amnesty for all who would negotiate and
lay down their arms. Yoseph reports that one of the individuals in his school was the son of the
patrol leader Ababa Aregay.

17 For a description of the educational system erected by the Italians, see Alberto Sbacchi,
_Ethiopia Under Mussolini: Fascism and the Colonial Experience_ (London, 1985); Richard Pankhurst,
"Education in Ethiopia during the Italian Fascist Occupation (1936–41)," _International Journal of

18 A Tigryan informant, Interview 1323, interview by author, Addis Ababa, 26 February
1990 and 12 March 1990, also spoke of this discrimination. See as well, Sbacchi, _Ethiopia Under
Mussolini._

19 These were among the labor obligations owed to the _naftagna_, see fn 5. Interview 919,
confirms this viewpoint. Another, Interview 2308, interview by author, Sugali, 4 April 1990, makes
the point more dramatically. He says that for all the Gedeo did for the Qawe, the latter's only
reward was the offering of occasional _sostega buna_, i.e., coffee made from thrice-brewed grounds.
Interview 1901, interview by author, Dilla, 25 August 1990, was less certain. The Italian yoke he
felt was just as burdensome as that of the Qawe.

20 Interview 919, indicated that traditional Gedeo garb such as the _bonkitcho_ (made from
animal skins) and the _fello_ (local cotton cloth) began to disappear.
construction. An Italian in Dilla named Rocci [?] built [houses] using baked clay bricks. Our people were very admiring of them." Gedeo traded their own coffee to more distant markets, avoiding the Qawe mediation of the past; the Italians did not interfere as long as a permit showing payment of the requisite tax could be presented.\(^{21}\)

Relations with the Italians remained quite friendly. With relative security in the region, Italians traveled by mule in the countryside "just as if they were in their own country," and were quite approachable. They encouraged traditional Gedeo celebrations and ritual events; the getela (dance of both supplication and thanksgiving) was performed frequently. They introduced sporting events for entertainment, among these competitions a "rope pulling event" [presumably tug-of-war], races, wrestling, and pole-climbing. As for the latter, the Italians would erect several large tree trunks and oil them heavily. They placed pots at the top filled either with ash or lire (Italian currency). Many climbers slipped before they got halfway up, but others soon learned to carry a little dust in their pockets to improve grip. If one reached the top and broke the pot of lire, all cheered his accomplishment. For everyone, this was a chance to relax, and "the Italians themselves were among the most enthusiastic supporters. They took photographs and exclaimed joyfully: 'Bene, bene'. These celebrations were exceedingly warm." Winners of the contests received cash prizes or merchandise.\(^{22}\)

These relations would cool by 1940, as a new feature of the Italian–Gedeo relationship was introduced. The Italian government made concessions of large plots of scrub land around the northern end of Lake Abaya to a private Italian firm that intended to grow cotton and wheat. An area designated for cotton was just to the west of Dilla; wheat was to be planted to the south of the city in what was called Dilla Kof. Gedeo were assigned the task of clearing the land of trees and brush and, once the soil was worked, planting the cotton seeds. "The fields had all been measured out and we placed the seed in designated spots along straight rows." Labor was drawn from a wide area with the local korro or shum (Gedeo officials ranking below the balabbit) supervising. "We brought our own tools and our own food. We would eat after work and then return home late in the afternoon. We were not paid. . . . Malaria was a problem in the area and some from the upper reaches of the escarpment became ill. . . . Those who did not show up or did not work hard enough were whipped. . . . We picked the cotton pods and placed them in an Italian storehouse. The pods were so huge."\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) Interview 1901, was less positive. He noted efforts by some Italian soldiers and goglies (indigenous Italian servants) to shake down those selling coffee, requiring them to pay bribes to avoid harassment as they moved to market.

\(^{22}\) Interview 402a, interview by author, Hasse–Harro, 4 April 1990, confirms this.

\(^{23}\) Similar experiences are described in the following interviews: Interview 508, interview by author, Gwangwa–Wonago, 4 April 1990; Interview 1901; Interview 2308. Italian efforts to promote cotton production are described in Haile M. Larebo, *The Building of an Empire: Italian Land Policy and Practice in Ethiopia, 1935–1941* (New York, 1994), 259–81.
Throughout the Italian period, the threat from local shefta or fanno (used by Gedeo to designate "bandit" or "renegade"), who periodically harassed Gedeo homesteads, remained. The bande were kept constantly busy trying to destroy them. Were these bande well paid for their services? "Do you think they worked for nothing?" Woransa responded, rather amazed at the question. "I know that they were. They had attractive clothes, shoes and appearance. They lived better than those of us who remained farming. . . . Many Gedeo wished to join the bande, many more than the Italians were willing to accept. Fortunate were those who got the opportunity." But the newly-achieved status of bande could also be problematical. In Guji territory, these irregulars sometimes seized livestock belonging to law-abiding Gedeo and Guji, claiming these were really the property of shefta. Occasionally, bande also tried to take advantage of Gedeo women. This was not a problem so much with the Italians, although their Somali soldiers were not innocent in this regard. Italian justice was good. Transgressors would be whipped or imprisoned, even Italians themselves, if the case against them could be proven.

The End of Italy's Occupation

By late 1940 British liberation forces had moved into Sidamo from Kenya, linking up with the Ethiopian resistance (the Fanno). Woransa recalls that the British had their own "bande," the reference here being to their professional, colonial troops from East Africa [and thus not the exact equivalents of the bande]. Woransa says of them: "They were very black men who had scars on their faces and ears. It was rumored that these men known as 'Jambo' were cannibals." At the same time, the Italians turned to
impressment as a means of recruiting Gedeo *bande*. The Gedeo, apparently sensing a shifting tide, resisted. Woransa reported that he himself was once captured by recruiters, but managed to escape. "Many *bande* were killed in these last few months of the war."

The British sought to coordinate their strategy with that of the *Fanno*, but had little actual control over their actions. Apparently feeling the imminent defeat of the Italians, one *Fanno* group led by Laqew approached a gathering of Gedeo at Baja Shunde's place in Bula, burning many buildings. "The *Fanno* wanted us to surrender and pay tribute to them as we had done before the war. An Italian named Burunto [apparently Bruno] confronted them near Alela and again at Kuka, but then fled the area." Our people really did not resist the *Fanno* for we had [increasing] dissatisfaction with the Italians who were overworking us on the cotton farms. Nearly all of us had been whipped, and this opened the way for the *Fanno*. Soon after, British aircraft roared overhead [Woransa imitated the sound of the engines] and bombed Dilla heavily. The Italians fled toward Wolayta and the *Fanno* reoccupied the land. Our people were then broken; they collapsed." With the return of the Qawe, "they reclaimed their estates. We surrendered, giving them food, sheep and some money. Hard times resumed as before. The *Fanno* hung a number who had collaborated with the Italians, even the wives of such men... We had to pay tribute again, larger than ever before. However the labor obligations were somewhat lighter."

The War's Aftermath

So ended the Gedeo experience with the Italians. Gedeo look back at this era, as do many other Ethiopians, with a degree of nostalgia. The Italians are remembered as friendly and generous people, much in contrast to the Qawe. Gedeo had been seething with discontent in the late 1920s and early 1930s (not unlike many other people in the empire). Localized acts of violence and community–supported legal challenges undertaken by the *balabat* evidenced Gedeo objections to Ethiopian efforts to measure their valuable coffee lands (which the Gedeo claimed as freehold), and distribute them to Qawe landlords, thus transforming the Gedeo into tenants. This effort was

these troops as "meat–hungry cannibals," possible indication that these were not so much indigenous views as Italian propaganda used to frighten those in their camp into remaining loyal.

30 Interview 507, identifies Bruno as an Italian commander who led the *bande* forces in their victory at Garamba. Another, Interview 419, describes him as one who held land in that area, and who used a tractor and local labor to try to grow corn and cotton. Interview 508, notes that he was driven from the area by invading British forces before the first crop could be brought in.

31 Given the high death rate among the Qawe, their sons and relatives laid claim to their land after the war. Many new settlers also arrived, having been rewarded by the government with land for their services during the war.

32 After the war, the government sought to move away from taxes in kind to taxes in cash. Land taxes were raised based upon the quality of the land, while corvee labor was abolished. *Naftagnas*, though, continued to demand such services for a while longer.

33 For further description of these efforts, see McClellan, *State Transformation*, ch. 4.
part and parcel of the state's larger objective of concentrating resources in its own hands and centralizing administration in Addis Ababa. Thus, by the time of the Italian invasion, the Gedeo were predisposed to support anyone who might destroy Qawe domination.

For the Gedeo, their response to the Italians was not a question of patriotism or nationalism. They had little developed sense of being Ethiopian, except administratively. The state had done precious little either to win their loyalty or bring them into the political and cultural mainstream. To be sure, a few Gedeo had made it. The balabbats and their subordinates had assimilated minimally and received some social and economic reward for their political cooperation. A few others assimilated more fully, accepting Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and joining the military, posted outside their homeland so that they would not remain as apparent role models. In reality, the system did not push assimilation (it merely assumed it would take place over several generations), for it had neither the resources nor will to absorb large numbers of Gedeo and other ethnics, preferring instead to utilize their productive capacities and resources to support a settler population and the broader interests of a centralizing state. The Gedeo did not view the state as supportive of or sympathetic to their own interests. To them, it was threatening, exploitative and coercive. The relationship between Gedeo and Qawe was generally remote, suspicious and often destructive, both physically and psychologically. The hurtful nature of this relationship seems highlighted in Woransa's account of the Michille massacre, related above. The Qawe did little to engender feelings of trust or security. While the Gedeo had little sense of the Italians, they certainly felt an uncertain future was preferable to a known past.

In time, the Italians too would disappoint, and the Gedeo again would face an unpleasant reality. The Italians lacked sufficient resources, but at least they did broaden opportunity. Yoseph was a beneficiary, and the Italian occupation unwittingly helped bring him into the mainstream. Ironically, it was his learning of Amharic rather than Italian that made the difference. Untainted by his Italian association, after the war, Yoseph served for a time in the Imperial Bodyguard, then became a postal official in Illubabor, before being employed for the remainder of his career with Ethiopian Airlines. His opportunity came at a cost, which became clearer to him twenty-five years later when he returned to Gedeo, for the first time since his youth, and found that he could communicate with his kinsmen only in Oromigna (the language of the Oromo), which he had learned in Illubabor. As Yoseph commented about his own life's journey: "When I left Gedeo I had little consciousness of Italy or Ethiopia. I identified myself as a Gedeo, but had little sense of what that really meant. After all I was very young and had not been educated in the ways of my people or initiated into their rituals." Yoseph had became an Ethiopian, but only at the cost of losing a
considerable portion of his own cultural past. "Had the Italians not come, I would be living the life of my relatives in Sidamo today," he deduced.34

For Woransa the Italo–Ethiopian War was largely one of riding the pendulum of changing times. There was a brief taste of freedom, an instant of opportunity, before the pendulum swung back. As Woransa put it: "The Italians were very persuasive and likeable people although you did not find out until later what their real motive was.... Had the Italian presence not been so short, the Gedeo would be a completely different people today." The "opportunity" perceived by the Gedeo was viewed by the government as "disloyalty," and after the war the Ethiopian Orthodox Church undertook a campaign to Christianize the Gedeo, assuming that a common religion would tie the Gedeo to the state and engender brotherhood. Instead, the Gedeo found themselves bemused, but also considerably agitated by these efforts. At huge assemblies called by the balabbbats, Orthodox priests placed the meteb (a cord sometimes bearing a cross, symbolizing conversion) around the necks of thousands of Gedeo, bestowed Christian names upon them, and administered Communion, declaring them all servants of God. Woransa recalled that the Gedeo "pretended to fast in front of the Qawe, but at night we would eat as much meat, butter, and eggs as we wished. Gedeo would say to those who tried to abide by the rules of the fast: 'You will die [all] shrivelled up.'" They would also say: "Mini gido ori hedebaan," i.e., "There is no road passing through one's house [No one knows what one does in the privacy of one's own home]."

Although Gedeo resistance to Qawe rule was not unknown earlier, the Italian occupation seems to have strengthened that resolve, spurred by the brief period of economic independence and cultural revival. Woransa also believed that after the British Liberation (he minimizes the role played by the Fanno), "there followed the teaching of the Gospel, another time during which the Gedeo achieved freedom." Here he refers to the activities of the Sudan Interior Mission that established itself in the area in the late 1940s, winning converts for Protestantism and providing access to elementary education and basic health services.35 Put off by an Orthodox Christianity that to them lacked real meaning and exuded considerable hypocrisy, Gedeo were attracted to the rival faith, if for no other reason than that the Qawe objected to its

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34 Another informant, Interview 402b, interview by author, Awassa, 24 August 1990, shared a similar experience with Yoseph, although after the war. He was raised by a Greek businessman, and then went to work for an Italian who owned a truck transport business where he learned the trade. He says of his experience: "I left the rural regions when I was only a kid and so I do not know most of the traditional [Gedeo] things. But at the bottom of my heart I have a deep feeling for them. My stomach churns to think of all the things [I have] missed out on. ... Our people have not moved to a modern life. Qawes wished to keep our people as no more than servants. Our people do not go to other places to search for opportunities. ..."

35 The S.I.M. reportedly built forty churches in Gedeo from 1946 to 1960. See Getnet Bekele, "The Peasant Rising of 1960 in Gedeo" (senior paper, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 1983), 27–28. Up to 1940 the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had erected twenty churches in the auraja, but from 1940–70 put up another twenty-six, possible indication of the rivalry that was taking place. See McClellan, State Transformation, 86.
presence. The Qawe along with the new Gedeo balabbat Assafa Chimburu sought to impede the growth of the competitor "by denying it [even] an inch of land in which to bury its dead."^36 For Gedeo, Protestantism was a way to snub the Qawe and achieve equality on their own terms.

This situation set the scene for the confrontation that took place in Gedeo in 1960. As noted earlier in this paper, Gedeo farmers nursed grievances concerning land going back thirty years or more. After the war, efforts continued to measure Gedeo land and distribute it to Qawe landlords, increasingly land in areas considered by the Gedeo their traditional heartland. The balabbat, Assafa Chimburu, like his father, used the courts to try to forestall this. Refusing to be bought off by the Qawe, he was thrown into prison for his perceived obstinancy. In the end, he sought a compromise by gifting some of the land in Wucheme, Amba, Bula and Michille to Princess Tanagnawarq, daughter of the emperor and widow of Dasta Damtaw. This would be sufficient, he hoped, to end claims by various Qawe to these lands, while the Gedeo peasants living on the land would be more content as tenants for the distant Tananyework than for local landlords. This strategy had some limited success, but ended in destroying Assafa’s career. In the final analysis, Gedeo resented the loss of their land and viewed him as a traitor, willing to compromise "true" justice. Assafa turned to drink for solace, ending up in an early grave.

Elsewhere in Gedeo, land cases from before the Italian war were still pending. A Gedeo delegation sent to Addis Ababa to give testimony in one such case was imprisoned on its return home. The emperor appointed a new awraja gezhi (administrator of a sub-province) who he hoped might produce a compromise, but to no avail. Gedeo began meeting secretly under the leadership of their heiychas (traditional judges and mediators), refusing landlords access to their lands or payment of rent (government taxes were not at issue). Additionally, they complained about exorbitantly high interest rates charged by the Qawe for credit. Some must also have remembered the incident of two years earlier (1957) when Qawe surrounded the Kofi market, beating and flogging everyone not wearing the meteb.

These tensions exploded in February 1960 when Gedeo peasants, harvesting the coffee crop of one of their number, were challenged by a group of armed Qawe landlords. When one of the peasants sought to speak for the Gedeo, he was shot dead by an intruder, and the landlords were then besieged. The situation escalated as Qawe from other areas arrived to provide support and government troops were sent in. The Gedeo sought to organize militarily, but found themselves greatly outgunned. In one confrontation in Dama where the violence began, 88 Gedeo were killed. The fighting then moved to Michille which was a hotbed of the resistance. There at least a hundred

^36 This information is confirmed by Albert Brandt, interview by author, Dilla, 4 June 1975. Mr. Brandt and his wife established the first S.I.M. mission sites in Gedeo with their arrival in February 1946.
Gedeo died in the fighting. The outburst lasted only a couple of days before it was quelled. A compromise was worked out, one that left a rather bitter taste in Gedeo mouths: the government would pay compensation for each Gedeo death and for loss of property; the heiychas were fined heavily for their participation; all rents were to be paid; and for those who were unwilling to do so, undeveloped and less desirable land outside Gedeo was made available where they could establish new lives as freeholders. Landlords were also fined substantially for taking matters into their own hands.37

Here twenty years after the Italian war, the Gedeo were still seeking justice, equality and opportunity within the context of the Ethiopian state. They might technically be Ethiopian, but for many Gedeo that was not necessarily a mark of merit. Historically, they have every reason to question their relationship to a state that has done so little to promote their inclusion; at the same time, they have invested too much in blood and sweat to want to end that association. The Gedeo experience in the Italian war demonstrates the multiplicity of choices made; some Gedeo undoubtedly have felt an alienation deeper than others. For the great majority though it is not so much an issue of loyalty as one of opportunity. For both Woransa and Yoseph, the Italian war provided a chance to change their lives and create a better future; their decisions to accept the Italians were not so much an embracing of the "ferenj" as an expression of disappointment in the failures of the Ethiopian state. Unfortunately, Ethiopia's rulers learned little from this experience. They remained content with preserving the old "Abyssinia," and little concerned about the need to foster a new "Ethiopia," an Ethiopia that seeks to include all of its diverse peoples and provides opportunity and equality for all. The failure to learn this lesson helps to explain much about the trauma and disillusionment inherent in the country today.

POLITICAL CULTURE IN ETHIOPIA'S PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION: HAILE SELlassie, Blata Ayele Gebre and the (Hareri) Kulub Movement of 1948

by Tim Carmichael

In 1948 the eastern Ethiopian city of Harer experienced political trauma that profoundly affected its future and that of its peoples. The crisis, known today as Kulub or Hanolato, marks a watershed in Harerí history and offers an example of Ethiopian national political culture in practice. Outside of Ethiopienist circles, it is also of interest to those concerned with Muslim/Christian relations or early forms of non-violent African resistance. Harerí, an independent Islamic city since about the tenth century, was conquered by the Christian King (later Emperor) Menilek in 1887. In return for acceptance of his rule Menilek offered the Harerí limited self-governance based on Islamic principles, rights that gradually eroded in succeeding decades. Beginning from at least 1946, however, the Harerí maneuvered to restore their political and social autonomy to the levels guaranteed to them by Menilek. In response, Deputy Governor Blata Ayele Gebre suppressed the Harerí movement, arrested thousands of people, confiscated personal and public properties and closed the madaris (Quranic schools).

The deputy governor’s heavy-handed response might seem an extreme overreaction, but is explainable at two levels. The first is international and concerns Emperor Haile Sellassie’s attempts to maintain Ethiopia’s territorial integrity throughout the 1940s. The looming threat of losing Eritrea and the Ogaden, with their large numbers of Muslims, left no room for him to consider perceived Islamic agitation elsewhere in Ethiopia. The second is internal and is rooted in Emperor Haile Sellassie’s newly restructured administrative apparatus that aimed at absolute centralization of power. Within it, officials like Blata Ayele depended solely on the emperor for their present and future positions and strove to prove their loyalty to him.

In this paper I contend that the tenseness of the international political scene at the time prevented the Ethiopian government from even entertaining Harerí

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2 See Rahji Abdella, "The Kulub–Hannolatto Movement by the Harari, 1946–1948" (senior thesis, Addis Ababa University, November 1994), which gives a good overview of the background to Kulub, Harerí grievances, and the emergence and unification of Harerí and Somali political groups. The oral testimonies that Rahji used were collected in Addis Ababa, while I gathered mine in Harerí. I would like to thank Ahmed Zekeria of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies for sending me a copy.
grievances, no matter how moderate or reasonably presented. Locally, Blata Ayele knew that the success of his political future was contingent upon his ensuring law and order, and in his zest to perform admirably he applied far more force than was necessary. It is noteworthy that in Harer recollections Haile Sellassie not only escapes blame for the official violence, but also is often mentioned as reasonable and just, in clear contradistinction to his local representative. Thus, in addition to accounting for the severity of government oppression that became a landmark in Harer historical consciousness, this essay also investigates how actively Haile Sellassie participated in his post-war provincial administration and raises questions about the self-image that he then wished to project. In order to understand what the Harer were trying to accomplish around 1947, it is first necessary to review aspects of Harer's history.

**Harer: Historical Background**

For centuries Harer had been the primary urban Islamic center of Ethiopia and had served as Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi’s home base during the famous sixteenth-century *jihads* against Christian Abyssinia. When Emperor Galadewos and his Portuguese allies defeated the Muslim forces and killed their leader in 1543, Harer attention focused much closer to home. Nur ibn Mujahid, successor to Imam Ahmed’s amirship and inheritor of his widow, built the wall that still surrounds the original town, possibly as protection against the growing numbers of Oromo pastoralists in the region. In 1577, the seat of the Islamic sultanate was transferred to Awsa, and although Harer remained a potent symbol of a great past for Ethiopia’s Muslims, scholars generally regard the following 300 years as a sort of Dark Age in Harer history, about which we know little more than the names of ruling amirs.³

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century the Harer and Oromo enjoyed a mutually dependent relationship. The Oromo cultivated Harer cereal fields and relied upon the town as an outlet for surplus produce and as a source for essential commodities such as salt, cloth and beads. In return, the Hareri extracted as much as 70 percent of the Oromo harvest as rent.⁴ As the century progressed, Harer’s economy rested increasingly upon the more militarily powerful Oromo, and Hareri political dominance was undermined by local disputants enlisting Oromo backing for their causes. The balance of power in the region favored the Oromo by 1875, when Egyptian forces occupied Harer as part of Khedive Isma’il’s dream of an African empire. The general population had suffered for nearly twenty years under the unjust rule of Amir Muhammad ibn Ali, who advantaged his Oromo allies to the detriment of his Harer

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subjects, but his tyranny came to an end when an Egyptian soldier strangled him during evening prayers only hours after the occupation.  

Although brief, the period of Egyptian rule had important consequences for Harer society. They improved the road from the coastal port Zayla, established postal services, introduced Egyptian currency, built an aqueduct to supply the town with fresh water, and erected houses. They ordered the registration of all marriages and divorces, real estate properties, houses, gardens and court cases. They started a hospital, improved other health services, and required the notification of deaths to prevent epidemics. During their stay, the annual number of caravans arriving to and departing from Harer multiplied and the economy prospered.

This period also witnessed transformations in the town's religious life. In 1875 The Egyptians found, apparently with some surprise, that Harer children learned to read and write Arabic (though they spoke it only with difficulty), the adults met in the evenings with qadis to study Islamic jurisprudence (of the Shafi'i madhhib), and some Harer were knowledgable about Egyptian literature and poetry, mathematical fundamentals, astronomy and the calculation of the Arabic, Coptic and Gregorian calendars. Despite these discoveries, the Egyptians thought there was room for improvement, and they raised an impressive new mosque, suppressed beer-drinking and qat-chewing, combatted "hommes de médecine" and "docteurs de miracles," and imported qadis to ensure better application of the law. They also pacified the uncooperative Oromo and Somali of the region and spread Islam among them. Ultimately, the Egyptian occupation of Harer checked the growing power of the Oromo, reinvigorated Islam and Islamic practice, and emphasized the cultural uniqueness of urban, Islamic Harer within the broader region.

Owing to political and financial crises at home in the early 1880s, the Egyptians evacuated Harer in 1885, but the Islamic revival they stimulated retained some momentum. Abdullahi ibn Muhammad, who was the son and grandson of amirs and well-known for his Islamic learning, was installed as amir by the departing forces. He followed the examples of his father and the Egyptians by trying to convert the Oromo


6 For conditions prevailing at the time of occupation, see Mohammad Moktar, "Notes sur le Pays de Harrar," Bulletin de la Société Khédive de Géographie 1, 4 (1886): 351–97.


9 Sabry, Épisode, 418–25; 429–30. The Egyptians thought that Harer's qadis crafted their judgments more to please their amir than to abide by the tenets of Islamic law. Moktar, "Notes," 364.

10 Sabry, Épisode, 427–28. It must be noted that Amir Muhammad ibn Ali earlier strove to convert the Oromo and restore the local power balance. Caulk, "Harâr Town," 380.
to Islam, and he "severely punished the laxity of the townspeople and all who came to Harär."  

Although many Oromo revolted and refused to pay taxes during his brief rule, his proselytizing efforts and his strict enforcement of Islamic practices later earned him kudos in Hareri traditions.  

During this period of heightened Islamic religiosity, the Christian King Menilek of Shewa conquered Harer. The town was situated on a major trade route outside Emperor Yohannis' control, allowing Menilek to import modern firearms to enhance his power. Harer's proximity to the sea facilitated communications with the outside world, in particular with the Italians, who like Menilek wished to weaken Yohannis' position in the north. Furthermore, Harer was in a rich province, whose tax revenues promised to swell the king's coffers. From the local perspective, however, the Battle of Ch'elenqo on 6 January 1887 marked the end of Hareri independence and the beginning of its subjugation to a Christian authority.  

Hareri informants in 1994 were universally agreed that Menilek made an agreement with the Hareri guaranteeing them certain rights, including religious freedom and limited self-government based on Islamic principles, in return for an annual tribute equal to that previously paid to the Egyptian government. Although Caulk mentioned that a few copies of this treaty were "cautiously shown" to him, an official written version has not been located. Popular beliefs about the agreement are crucial to a study of Kulub, since Hareri desires for at least a limited self-administration and the central government's non-interference in Islamic practices seem to have been the prime motivations for the 1948 movement.  

Other signs of discontent appeared much sooner. An influx of Christian administrators, soldiers and civilians accompanied the new Ethiopian administration in Harer creating new social tensions, and the local economy was dealt a severe blow in 1902, when the Djibouti–Addis Ababa railway bypassed Harer. The townspeople seem to have expressed their discontent along religious lines, adopting more conservative Islamic practices and articulating Christian/Muslim differences. For example, Islamic ideals, such as the prohibition on alcohol were increasingly respected, and Hareri women began to dress more modestly. A type of butterfly was named the Ahmāra kitāb ("Amharic book" or "Bible"), since "the cryptic and nonsensical markings on the wings

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11 Caulk, "Harār Town," 384.  
14 R. A. Caulk, "Menilek's Conquest and Local Leaders in Harar," (Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University [hereafter IES, AAU], n.d.). Caulk discusses various versions of the agreement, written and unwritten, 3–6. He probably saw the copies in the early 1970s. It is worth noting that one Arabic account of the conquest cites agreement upon the annual tribute, but mentions nothing of administration. See Muhammad, "The Relation," app. 2, 55.
were said to be like Amharic writing, and the opening and closing, and flitting about, were intrinsic to the image also." Furthermore, Hareri converts to Christianity and Hareri who married Christians were termed as though they were dead.15

Hareri dissatisfaction remained high until 1936, when the Italians took control of Harer and formally recognized and encouraged Islam as the region's leading religion. They built and repaired mosques, introduced Arabic into Islamic schools, and sent thousands of Muslims on the hajj to Makka. In Harer, Arabic was used for announcements and official decrees, attendance at the main Quranic school increased from 60 to 450, and Muslim colonial officials received lucrative state salaries.16 The Italians also began to give Harer a more modern appearance. They created and improved "streets and roads, municipal buildings, an electric power station, postal facilities, tele-communications facilities, a one-pipe water system, a tourist hotel, military buildings and a large number of villas."17 Despite Italian confiscation of some Hareri lands for these development projects, material life undoubtedly improved for Harer's Muslims, and once again Harer experienced a revival of Islamic practice.

In 1941, the Italians were forced to give up Ethiopia, and with British help Emperor Haile Sellassie regained his throne. Despite the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) that the British established in Ethiopia, Haile Sellassie immediately resumed his pre-occupation pursuit of the centralization of power upon which his plans for modernization depended. He again built up his government structures throughout the country and named a number of ministers to oversee their functioning. The newly installed officials "were led by a carefully balanced group of newly elevated patriots, officers from Gideon Force [the British-led troops with whom Haile Sellassie reentered the country], returned exiles, and ex-collaborators." By appointing individuals from the last category, Haile Sellassie guaranteed a certain practical experience in his administration, and attempted to overcome antagonism and resentment among Ethiopians.18

The most important personal qualities Haile Sellassie sought in his officials were absolute loyalty and obedience, and he preferred individuals of non-noble origins who owed their rise to power solely to him. In 1947 Blata Ayele Gebre, an ex-collaborator of humble stock, was made deputy governor of Harerge province.

15 Waldron, "Farewell," 252.
17 Waldron, "Farewell," 254.
Blata Ayele Gebre

Born in 1896 in Garamulata, near Harer, Blata Ayele attended the same Capucin Mission school where Haile Sellassie was educated.\(^{19}\) Blata Ayele’s career began in Dire Dawa, first in the railway; later in the Post Office, where he was one of the first Ethiopians to learn Morse code; and finally in Customs, where he became Director. He was then promoted to Acting Head of Customs in Addis Ababa. In 1929 he was named Director of the Municipality of Addis Ababa, "an appointment which always [went] to one in whom the Emperor [had] special confidence."\(^{20}\) He was suspended from this position in early 1932 for suspected graft, but nothing came of the charges.\(^{21}\) A few months later he became Head of the Special Court, which tried cases between Ethiopian nationals and foreigners, and he played an important role in establishing modern Ethiopian law.

Blata Ayele submitted to the Italians soon after occupation, helped them to develop the local judiciary, and took part in the search for those responsible for the 19 February 1937 assassination attempt on Marshal Rodolfo Graziani, the Italian Viceroy of Ethiopia.\(^{22}\) By April 1937, however, he was a prisoner at Asinara, Italy, where the famous scholar/colonial official Enrico Cerulli interviewed him.\(^{23}\) Marcus notes that Ayele’s stay in Italy lasted until 1939,\(^{24}\) when he was repatriated to Ethiopia, probably as part of Italy’s efforts to bolster local support for its government.\(^{25}\)

After Haile Sellassie’s return Ayele was appointed Minister of Justice, then in 1942 he was assigned as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in London, where he reopened the legation and made world news the following year with the comment that "Fascist blood would turn to water. The Ethiopians will not be satisfied until they can rip an Italian gullet."\(^{26}\) He returned to Ethiopia in 1947 and began an eight-year-stint as Hararge’s deputy governor.\(^{27}\)

\(^{19}\) Haile Sellassie I, King of Kings of Ethiopia, *My Life and Ethiopia’s Progress*, vol. 2, ed. and annot. by Harold Marcus et al., trans. by Ezekiel Gebissa et al. (East Lansing, 1994), 82, n. 152. Based on Harold Marcus’s research in the Public Records Office and on an interview, this footnote is the most complete published account of Ayele’s life. Ayele died in the coup attempt of 1960.

\(^{20}\) Department of State, Confidential Biographical Data, "Ayela Gabré," 9 July 1932 (Michigan State University microfilm collection).

\(^{21}\) Addison E. Southard to Secretary of State, #906, 23 February 1932 (Michigan State University microfilm collection).


\(^{23}\) Ibid., 215–16.

\(^{24}\) Sellasse, *My Life*, vol. 2, 82, n. 152.


\(^{26}\) *Negarit Gazeta*, Year 1, 27 August 1942, 55; *Time*, 14 June 1943, 36; *Negarit Gazeta*, Year 1, General Notice #1, 30 March 1942, 26.

\(^{27}\) Sellassie, *My Life*, vol. 2, 82, n. 152.
Governor-generalships were sometimes sinecures administered on the ground by deputy governors who exercised the same powers, and such seems to have been the case with Blata Ayele in Harer. According to a 1942 decree, provincial governors-general were responsible to ministers. In practice, however, those governors-general with some influence might deal directly with the emperor. Owing to Blata Ayele's good relationship with Haile Sellassie he likely possessed such privilege. I would nevertheless maintain that from the standpoint of political authority he would have preferred to be in Addis Ababa, closer to the emperor and to the possibility of another ministership. Blata Ayele would thus have sought to administer the region as effectively as possible in order to be invited back to the capital.

Kulub
For the Hareri, a brief respite occurred during the Italian occupation: who previously confiscated lands were returned to their original Hareri owners; Islam was encouraged; and Hareri were favored over Oromo in local administrative positions. When Haile Sellassie returned to Ethiopia, however, his administration revoked these Hareri gains and added insult to injury through policies such as assessment of back taxes for the years of the Italian occupation. Furthermore, the Hareri recount that they were then not able to find employment, especially in the administration; join the military; assemble publicly; use their own language or Arabic in official settings; and did not have access to quality facilities for Islamic education. Some Hareri consequently formed a political organization called the jam'iya al-wataniya or jam'iya hurriya al harariya. Highly conscious of Harer's long Islamic history, and certainly inspired by the recent Islamic revival under the Italians, their purpose was to regain the rights guaranteed to the Muslim Hareri by Menilek in 1887.

The jam'iya sent a group of representatives to Addis Ababa to present Haile Sellassie with a petition stating their grievances and requesting his help. Accounts

30 Ejetta Feyessa Basha, "Newcomers and the Peoples of Harar in the Early 20th century" (IES, AAU, n.d.), 4. If this information is valid the situation in Harer was unique, since the general practice was to grant pardons on taxation for the years of occupation.
31 Hajji Zekaria Abu Bokr, interview by author, 6 July 1994. These Arabic names mean, respectively, The National(ist) Organization and the Organization for Harer Freedom. Rahji traces the genesis of these names and although he notes that "it is generally called Jam'iya," he prefers to use "Watani" ("Kulub–Hannolato," 20). I use jam'iya, which was favored by my interlocuters. The group's meeting place was the home of Hajji Ibrahim Sulayman. Hajji Ibrahim Sulayman and Hajji Abdullah Sharif, interview by author, 7 July 1994; Rahji, "Kulub–Hannolatto," 50.
of their reception vary. Most informants claimed that Haile Sellassie was sympathetic and sent a letter back to Blata Ayele, who chose to ignore it. One individual maintained that Haile Sellassie gave the party a lukewarm reception and falsely promised to do something. In any case, the appeal led to no discernible changes in the situation.

Meanwhile, the Somali Youth Club (SYC), under the leadership of Maqtal Tahir, opened an office in Harer. A variant pronunciation of the organization's name later provided the crisis under discussion with the label "Kulub." The Harerí believed that the SYC sought to educate the Harerí and other peoples about freedom, and to stir things up a bit. In the Ogaden the SYC slogan was "Somalia hanolato, Ethiopia hadimto" (Long live Somalia, death to Ethiopia). This is where the term "Hanolato," which is interchangeable with the term "Kulub," originates. In Harer the goals and philosophies of the SYC and the jam'iyya apparently did not conflict, and Harerí joined both organizations in large numbers. Certainly, the groups shared a Muslim religious identity and a common sense of oppression, but at present little more is known by scholars about the specifics of their agendas in Harer. When news reached Harer that the Four Power Commission was coming to Muqadishu to ask Somalis what they wanted done with their country after the departure of the Italians, urgency compelled the SYC (by then reconstituted as the Somali Youth League – SYL) and the jam'iyya to collaborate and secretly send a thirteen member delegation to Muqadishu to inform the commission about the mistreatment of Harer's residents and the Ethiopian government's refusal to address these problems. The delegation then continued on,

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33 For example, Sulayman and Sharif, interview.
34 Hajji Ali, interview.
35 The Somali Youth Club was founded on 13 May 1943, aiming to "abolish the wasteful clan rivalries of the past and to establish a new conception of nationhood." It was renamed the Somali Youth League by late 1947, by which time it had evolved into an organized political machine. I. M. Lewis, A Modern History of Somalia: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa (London, 1980), 121-22.
36 Sulayman and Sharif, interview; Hajji Abd al-Rahman Abu Bokr and Hajji Zekaria Abu Bokr, interview.
38 Muhammad Ibrahim, interview by author, 7 July 1994. Rahji reports how SYC members, wearing badges on their chests, verbally harassed non-Kulub Harerí; see Rahji, "Kulub–Hannolatto," 43. However, he cites an unpublished document written by the individual most often mentioned in Harer as a traitor to his own Harerí community, and as a lackey of Haile Sellassie. It is possible that this harassment was done by another group founded by the government to try to divide the SYL and the jam'iyya. This group was described to me as the Somali League, headed by Farah Aidiid, and distinguished by the badges they wore on their chests; see Hajji Abd al-Rahman Abu Bokr and Hajji Zekaria Abu Bokr, interview.
40 Rahji, one of whose informants was a member of this delegation, breaks it down into eight jam'iyya members, four SYL members, and an independent. He also gives a detailed account of its reception in Muqadishu; see Rahji, "Kulub–Hannolatto," 41-49. I have not been able to find any
travelling to other Muslim countries including Saudi Arabia and Egypt to air their grievances.\textsuperscript{41}

Cairo was apparently initially receptive, but when they heard that the Harer'i did not have weapons or an organized underground guerrilla movement, the Egyptians said they could not help because they were occupied with the war in Palestine.\textsuperscript{42} King Faruk promised, however, to speak with Emperor Haile Sellassie on their behalf.\textsuperscript{43} Before he did so, the Ethiopian government evidently learned about the delegation and its mission through a radio broadcast from Muqadishu. It responded by subjecting the Harer'i to serious harassment.\textsuperscript{44}

On 20 January 1948, government forces seized the offices of the SYL and the \textit{jam'\'iya}, confiscating all documents and membership registers and arresting those then present in the offices.\textsuperscript{45} Members of both groups marched peacefully to the government offices to find out what was happening. Informants claimed that there were few Harer'i who had not joined one of the organizations, so the gathering must have been quite large. They added that Blata Ayele came out on the balcony and told the crowd that he could not speak with them all, and that they should select five individuals to meet with him inside.\textsuperscript{46}

Hajji Abd al-Rahman Abu Bokr, one of the quintet,\textsuperscript{47} recounted that after they were seated in Blata Ayele's office, in the presence of the governor-general of Harer, Prince Makonnen Haile Sellassie, the deputy governor held up a piece of paper and asked them if they sent some people to Egypt with a petition stating various

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\textsuperscript{41} All my informants, and Rahji, "Kulub-Hannolatto," 48–49. The Ethiopian Legation in Cairo later provided the following list of members of the group: Hajji Ahmad Adish (the leader), Hajji Ibrahim Abdulsalam, Muhammad Ahmad Yusuf, Adish Umar, Hajji Umar Gatu (Widato), Yunis Muhammad Yusuf, Yusuf Abdulrahman, Yusuf Shano, Muhammad Ismail, Haji Abukabir Faqi, Yunis Muhammad Adis Abo\'n, Adis Muhammad Adish, Muhammad Ismail (Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Blata Ayele Gebre, 11 Hidat 1941 [20 November 1948], no. 114/41, attachment). Based on comments following each name on the list, it appears to me that the two Muhammed Ismails are the same person. This list differs slightly from that compiled by Rahji, "Kulub-Hannollato,"\textsuperscript{47}.

\textsuperscript{42} Muhammad Abu al-Khays, interview by author, 10 July 1994.

\textsuperscript{43} Most of my informants said it was Faruk, but others said Jamal Abd al-Nasser. Rahji's interlocutors said it was Abdurahman Azam Pasha, the secretary of the Arab League; see Rahji, "Kulub-Hannolatto," 48.

\textsuperscript{44} Hajji Zekaria Abu Bokr, interview by author, 6 July 1994; Sulayman and Sharif, interview.

\textsuperscript{45} My informants agreed on this date (11 tir 1940, Ethiopian calendar, which is Epiphany), as does Rahji; Rahji, "Kulub-Hannollato," 50.

\textsuperscript{46} Sulayman and Sharif, interview; Hajji Zekaria Abu Bokr and Hajji Abd al-Rahman Abu Bokr, interview.

\textsuperscript{47} Account based on Hajji Abd al-Rahman Abu Bokr, interview by author, 2 July 1994; Hajji Zekaria Abu Bokr, interview by author, 6 July 1994; and the two of them together, 10 July 1994.
grievances.\textsuperscript{48} They admitted they had done so and explained that everything was written down in the letter he was holding, which was a copy of the one taken to the Four Power Commission and to the Arab countries, and which was one of the documents seized that day. Blata Ayele stepped out on the balcony and announced that discussions would take quite a while, so everyone should return home and wait until the following day for his response. Back inside, the governors spoke with the five Hareri for a few minutes and then asked them to wait while they checked on some things. After a few hours the five were arrested and jailed.

In the minutes from a meeting of the Harer Provincial Administration held the following day, Blata Ayele offered a slightly different version.\textsuperscript{49} He said that when the crowd gathered initially, he spoke with three elders and instructed them to select the most respected community leaders and have them return in the afternoon to present their thoughts in writing. When they came, at about four o’clock in the afternoon, they informed him that all of Harer’s Muslims were in full agreement with those who had been arrested the previous day, and they requested him therefore to issue a pardon and release them from jail. Furthermore, they acknowledged that they had sent the party of thirteen to Muqadishu in order to request that Harer be released from the rule of the Emperor’s government and that the Harerí be permitted to administer the region themselves. Surprised by their total lack of fear, Blata Ayele made them sign the paper that they had presented and then, armed with this proof of their cooperation with Somalis in Muqadishu and their conspiracy against the state, ordered their arrest.\textsuperscript{50}

The following morning, after news of the arrests spread, a meeting was held at the jum’a mosque, and the Harerí chose fifty other representatives. They went to the governor's office to inquire about the detainees, whereupon they were also arrested. Then government forces began going door to door, incarcerating more people and seizing Harerí private properties, including houses and land.\textsuperscript{51} The guardian of the tomb of

\textsuperscript{48} Since Prince Makonnen, the governor-general, was generally not involved in active administration, it is significant that he was present at this meeting with the deputy governor.

\textsuperscript{49} Those in attendance were: Hararge Governor–General Prince Makonnen Mesfin, Hararge Deputy Governor Blata Ayele Gebre, Hararge Director Qañazmach Walda Ammanuel Takle Haymanot, Abba Mazgaba Sellasse, Hararge Treasurer Qañazmach Yohannes Bitawefi, Hararge Police Chief Shalaqa Yimam Goshu, Gerazmach Ashagere Qurse, Fitawrari Almayahu Darbe, Fitawrari Gwangul Kolase, Hararge Justice Vice President Blata Asfaw Habta Gyiorgis, Hararge Army Commander Litanal Colonel Waqchira Sarada, Ato Tassew Ayala, and Ato Akilia Dajan; "Prosévéral," 14 Tir 1940 [23 January 1948], minutes of a meeting of the Harerí Provincial Administration, 1.

\textsuperscript{50} "Prosévéral," 4.

\textsuperscript{51} During this time many books and papers, including unpublished local histories were burned or carried away. Muhammad Abu al–Khays, interview by author, 10 July 1994.
Shaykh Hashim recalled that so many people were arrested that people viewed him as some sort of sorcerer (ținingay) since he remained free.\textsuperscript{52}

The Provincial Administration meeting was called the day after the mass arrests in order to decide what to do next. In his opening remarks, Prince Makonnen spoke repeatedly of the 'Hareri Muslims' (Yâdârî Islâmoch), implying that the movement possessed both ethnic and religious dimensions. He pointed out that at "this hour in which all Ethiopians must unite like they are one family," the Hareri had become individualistic and were trying to get the Four Power Commission to investigate the internal conditions of Ethiopia. Blata Ayele added that the administration really knew very little about the Kulub movement because they had no one who would provide them with inside information. He stressed the relationship between Kulub and Somalis in Muqadishu and the relevance of their combined activities to the issues of Eritrea and Somalia returning to their "Mother Ethiopia." He added that everything the administration had learned pointed to a collaboration between the Somalis and the "Islamic Organization" founded in Harer.

The meeting then shifted to a discussion of what to do. It was agreed that someone needed to go to the capital to brief the Emperor in person, but those assembled were undecided as to whether that should be Blata Ayele or someone else. The necessity of asking for external military forces to help control the local situation was debated, as was the need for an exhaustive search for caches of weapons. Finally, they considered the best forum—Harer or elsewhere—for the trial of the detainees.\textsuperscript{53}

Assuming responsibility for resolving the questions, Blata Ayele concluded the meeting by stating that additional troops were not necessary; that the trial should be held locally since the judges were more likely not to let the prisoners go (and that the judges should be carefully selected after some investigation); that the ultimate location for their incarceration would be determined by higher authorities; that the issue of hidden weapons was not important any longer; and that he would be the one to travel to the capital to speak with the emperor.\textsuperscript{54}

In addition to the mass arrests, the government took over public properties, including Hareri madâris. Several informants bitterly recalled that the main madrasa, which had been established and administered with private funds, was changed into a non–Islamic government–run school, which it remains to this day.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} Shaykh Abd al-Jawad, interview by author, 23 April 1994. He recalled that the only other adult male at large was the guardian of the tomb of Aw Abadir, the patron saint of Harer.

\textsuperscript{53} According to the Public Security Proclamation of 1942, "The Commissioner of Police may order the arrest without warrant and detention of any person who in his opinion would . . . be a danger to Public Security if he remained at large." But it added that "Any person so arrested shall without any delay be brought before the High Court"; Negarit Gazeta, Year 1, 30 March 1942, 8. Therefore, assuming that the Provincial Administration sought to abide by national law, there was a pressing need to determine the proper judicial jurisdiction.

\textsuperscript{54} "Prosévërväl," 11-12.

\textsuperscript{55} Hajji Zekaria, interview; Muhammad Abu–Khays, interview.
Since the jails in town were overflowing, some detainees were released but were required to report every morning to show that they had not fled. Meanwhile Harerī were prohibited from leaving Harer without special permission. Over the next few months, the authorities narrowed down the number of prisoners to eighty—one of the better educated, most politically active and locally knowledgeable, and shipped them off to prisons in Jimma, Gore and Gojjam.

During this crisis a division in the Harerī community, which I suspect first played out when Haile Sellassie returned in 1941, intensified. Some Harerī did not want to have anything to do with the central administration, while others wanted a démarche to defuse local/national tensions. Some informants reported that Harerī who lived in Addis Ababa, and their followers in Harer, wanted conciliation. The government, on the other hand, harbored no doubts about what it wanted. A letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Blata Ayele in late November 1948 expressed paranoia about the possibility of negative propaganda—of Ethiopia as an oppressor of Muslims—being spread among Arab countries, and instructed the deputy governor to utilize every means possible to get relatives of the Cairo group to convince them to return to Ethiopia. When a few Harerī approached the government soon afterwards, they were told that if the thirteen delegates who went to Egypt would come back then the government would release the eighty—one who were being held in jail. Not surprisingly the latter were not anxious to do so, fearing arrests and/or other reprisals.

56 Hajji Zekaria, interview.
57 Hajji Abdullah Sharif and Hajji Abd al-Rahman Abu Bokr described in detail the terrible conditions of their confinement.
58 This may loosely correspond to the two prominent political parties in Harer today, the all-Harerī Harerī National League, and the multi-ethnic Harerī Democratic Revolutionary Party. For further discussion of this division, see also Rahji "Kulub–Hannolatto," 56.
59 For a published example, see the only newspaper report of Kulub, "Abetuta," Addis Zaman, 2 Miyazya 1940 (10 April 1948), 1–2. This article contains a petition delivered to the emperor from "Ethiopia’s Muslims" on 30 Meggabit 1940 (8 April 1948). The petition refers to the harm done against the nation and its government by fifty worthless Harerī traitors, bemoans the threat of their actions to the long–standing unity between Ethiopian Muslims and Christians, and calls for their immediate and severe punishment. Clearly, this petition is sycophantic propaganda, but it is worth noting the delay between the crackdown in Harer and official acknowledgment in the press, the article’s failure to provide any details about the allegedly treacherous deeds, and its indications of divisions within the country’s Muslim community.
60 Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Blata Ayele Gebre, 11 Hidar 1941 (20 November 1948), no. 144/41; see also: Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Blata Ayele Gebre, 16 Hidar 1941 (25 November 1948), no. 180/41.
62 Rahji reports that the Muslim Brotherhood assisted the Harerī party in Egypt; Rahji, "Kulub–Hannolatto," 49. Given the Brotherhood’s interest in Islamic movements in other countries, and its information gathering activities, I suspect its archives contain valuable information about Kulub. See Richard P. Mitchell, The Society of the Muslim Brothers (1969; reprint, New York, 1993), esp. 172–73. If the Egyptian government ever makes public the Brotherhood’s documents, its connections with Ethiopian and other African Muslims would be well worth investigating.
To assure them, the Ethiopian officials arranged a meeting with Egyptian officials present as impartial witnesses, and all parties signed an agreement guaranteeing the Hareris's safety. Most of the thirteen Hareri delegates returned to Ethiopia and the eighty-one prisoners were released. The Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, Makonnen Habte Wold, then brought the prisoners, delegates and negotiators together at the National Theater in Addis Ababa and admonished them: "With your activities you Hareri created something like an abdominal disease. Since abdominal illnesses are incurable you are the permanent disease of Ethiopia. But since Haile Sellassie has said that you are to go free, you may go home."^64

Their return marked the effective end of the Kulub movement of 1948. Waldron's informants in the 1960s recounted that Kulub was "... the time when the integrity of the city was lost."^65 One local Oromo proverb refers to the event as: "On that day [Hareris] were eliminated from earth."^66 Certainly, Kulub still remains a vivid moment in the popular historical consciousness of the Hareri. Why did Blata Ayele react so harshly to the jam'iya, whose purpose was simply to increase Hareri rights to levels guaranteed by agreement with Menilek? The primary answer to this question lies in the threat that Ethiopia might lose Eritrea and the Ogaden. Haile Sellassie was not entirely politically secure, and to prevent these regions from breaking away from Ethiopia he needed to demonstrate internal stability and strength in order to promote a positive image of his administration to the world. Such an image could not be sustained in the face of widespread social unrest.

The International Context: Eritrea and the Ogaden

After his return to Ethiopia in 1941, Haile Sellassie's more militarily powerful ally Great Britain assumed effective control of Eritrea and the Ogaden. At that time, Britain sought to unite the Ogaden with the other Somali territories to form Greater Somalia. Similarly, they sought to separate Eritrea from Ethiopia and to carve it into two parts, one of which was to be joined with Sudan and the other with Ethiopia's Tigrayan highlands to constitute a separate state. Despite Ethiopia's continued claims over these territories, in 1944 it was forced to allow Britain to remain in the Ogaden, and in 1945 "the London Conference of the Allied powers rejected Ethiopia's claims to both Eritrea and the Ogaden."^67

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^64 Hajji Abd al-Rahman Abu Bokr and Hajji Zekaria Abu Bokr, interview. Rahji's informants recalled three days of "political education and propaganda"; see Rahji, "Kulub–Hannolatto," 53.

^65 Sidney Waldron, "Farewell," 255.

^66 "Gafas Adarenfa lafara yom haffe" (Basha, "Newcomers," 7).

The Ogaden's fate remained largely an issue between Ethiopia and Great Britain, but Eritrea's future was also a matter of concern to Italy, the Soviet Union and neighboring Arab countries and was taken up in the United Nations. While trying to convince the world of his point of view, Haile Sellassie also endeavored to weaken anti-Ethiopian forces in Eritrea. Although those wanting union with Ethiopia comprised the largest political bloc there, the emperor sought to inflame Muslim/Christian rivalries in order to undermine the growth of a separatist, Eritrean nationalism. The anti-Muslim sentiment that was generated led to numerous violent confrontations, and the religious tensions allegedly were followed closely by the Arab press. Well aware of how religious discord could weaken a country, Haile Sellassie encouraged it in Eritrea in order to ensure Ethiopia's control there, but he could not endure it closer to home. Furthermore, owing to his weak international diplomatic position he had no desire to foster poor relations with neighboring Islamic governments, especially those with close relations to Britain like Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Neighboring the Muslim Ogaden, and with long historical ties to the Arab world, Harer was simply too close to the action for any problems associated with Islam or its perceived persecution to be tolerated. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, based upon communications with the Ethiopian Legation in Cairo, informed Blata Ayele on 20 November 1948 that the Hareri in Cairo were spreading the false rumor that all Ethiopian Muslims were persecuted, and that this propaganda must not reach other Islamic countries. The Ministry added that the Ethiopian Government was attempting to solve the problem of the Hareris' presence in Egypt diplomatically, but requested Blata Ayele very carefully to coopt the Hareri in Harer to get their relatives and friends to return voluntarily and as soon as possible. To facilitate his task they appended a list of the Hareri in Cairo, their home neighborhoods in Harer and the names of persons believed to be in contact with them. Two individuals were singled out as being homesick and therefore particularly vulnerable to persuasion.

This letter—labelled Top Secret (tebeq mestir)—clearly shows that the central government was closely monitoring the situation. Also, it sought to resolve the problem quickly and with a minimum use of force, which might have generated bad press internationally and harmed Ethiopia's chances of regaining control over Eritrea and the Ogaden. The initial brutality of Blata Ayele's administration contrasts starkly to this careful, cautious approach and must therefore be explained. The trajectory of local events, which also illustrates the contemporary Ethiopian political culture in practice,

69 Ibid., 88.
70 Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Blata Ayele Gebre, 11 Hidar 1941 (20 November 1948), no. 144/41, plus attachment.
is best clarified by considering the structure and goals of Haile Sellassie's post-war government and the position of officials like Blata Ayele within it.

**The Local Context: Blata Ayele's Reaction to Kulub**

As mentioned above, after Haile Sellassie's return in 1941 his primary concern was to centralize power in his person. To do so he appointed, whenever possible, officials at all levels of the government bureaucracy whose loyalty to himself was unquestioned. The emperor tolerated little opposition and forbade any sort of organized political activity, especially if it threatened to establish institutionalized power apart from his own. If he disapproved of the conduct of any of his officials, or if he suspected any of them of becoming too popular or powerful, he reshuffled his administration accordingly. In this context, no position was secure, yet at the same time no fall from his grace was irreversible. As a result, there was considerable competition among the emperor's subordinates, and many long careers experienced rising and falling fortunes.

The coercive powers available to government officials, and governors—general in particular, were extensive and enabled these men to carry out the emperor's wishes and thereby prove their continued loyalty to him. Governors—general were responsible for law enforcement, taxation and the administration of justice, and they could order the arrest of anyone they suspected of challenging official authority and detain him or her for as long as they thought necessary. As Deputy Governor of Harerger, Blata Ayele possessed these powers and would have been aware of his potential to regain a ministership should he employ his powers skillfully. In the context of international threats to Ethiopia's retention of Eritrea and the Ogaden, SYL activities in nearby Jijiga soon provided him the opportunity to do so.

By 1946 the SYL had opened a branch office in Jijiga and hoisted its own flag. The SYL organized meetings and marches, "which were accompanied by chanting and slogans . . . meant to create an atmosphere of intimidation." The group also harassed American Sinclair Oil Company representatives who were surveying in the Ogaden. Ethiopian authorities were concerned about the long term national ramifications of these activities. The Ogaden's perceived importance to national security, strikingly phrased in a letter from Haile Sellassie to Blata Ayele, compounded these concerns.

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72 Markakis, *Ethiopia*, 301, 303.

73 Ibid., 303. See also note 53 above.

74 Esbete, "Root Causes," 18. Although the SYC was reconstituted as the SYL during this period, I refer to the organization only as the SYL for the sake of consistency.


76 "A house without a fence is not secure, and Ethiopia's most important fence is Somalia and its desert" (no date given). Original quoted in Esbete, "Root Causes," 14.
The degree of tension between the SYL and Ethiopian officials became apparent in June 1948, when Ethiopian police attempted to have the SYL flag lowered and an ensuing fight led to the deaths of about twenty-five League members.77

As the province’s deputy governor, Blata Ayele was in touch with Ethiopian officials in Jijjiga. Certainly well aware of Haile Sellassie’s maneuvering to regain the Ogaden and having received a letter from him emphasizing the importance of the region, Ayele would have been particularly intent on closely monitoring political developments there. As a high official, he would also have been aware of Haile Sellassie’s fear of organized political activity, and Prince Makonnen’s presence at the early meetings with the Harer indicates that the emperor would at least eventually be fully aware of the local situation and its potential.78 Although the violence in Jijjiga followed that of Harer, Blata Ayele’s evolving knowledge of the political situation and SYL activities in Jijjiga was surely a major factor in his actions towards Kulub in Harer. The opening of an SYL office in Harer must have been alarming in itself. But when he learned that the SYL and jam‘iyya had sent a combined group to Muqadishu to meet with the Four Power Commission, he must have assumed that the organizations had merged or, at least, had begun coordinating their actions.79 Well aware of the highly tense atmosphere in Jijjiga, which was to explode only six months later, he sought to prevent similar tensions from escalating in Harer, and thus aimed to crush the movement(s) completely. It is only after he did so that we have evidence of his consulting other administrative officials on how best to proceed.

Blata Ayele’s status as an ex-collaborator also helps to explain his heavy application of state force. As such, he was viewed by many as a “traitor and thus suspect.” Knowing that his career always depended upon Haile Sellassie’s support, but especially so after his cooperation with the Italians, he must have particularly “feared any misstep that might end [the emperor’s] patronage.”80 It follows that Blata Ayele was more concerned with loyally administering Haile Sellassie’s policies and

77 Eshele, “Root Causes,” 18. Tibbele follows Drysdale’s account. Lewis attributes these deaths to a riot that erupted when the eventual transfer of Jijjiga to Ethiopia was announced. Laitin and Samatar follow Lewis, adding that “at the same time, the Ethiopian secret service mounted a massive purge in Dire Dawa, Harar, and other towns to weed out SYL adherents and sympathizers.” Presumably, this process had been under way for at least six months, beginning with the crackdown on Kulub in Harer. John Drysdale, The Somali Dispute (London, 1964), 71. Lewis, A Modern History, 130. D. Laitin and S.S. Samatar, Somalia: Nation in Search of a State (Boulder, 1987), 64–65.

78 Prince Makonnen was Haile Sellassie’s favorite son. Harold G. Marcus, Haile Sellassie I: The Formative Years, 1892–1936 (Lawrenceville, NJ, 1995), 174; American Legation, Addis Ababa to Secretary of State, #1371, 21 May 1934 (Michigan State University microfilm collection).

79 In April 1948 a petition, “which requested the British Government to give the people of Harrar assistance in their movement for independence from Ethiopia,” was signed by at least two Somalis. One was Maktel Dohir (Maqtal Tahir)—see note 37 above), who was said to have been an SYL leader in Muqadishu, and also responsible for attacks on Sinclair Oil Company equipment in Dagabur; American Legation, Addis Ababa to Secretary of State, Airgram 2243, 16 May 1948 (Michigan State University microfilm collection).

staying in the emperor's good graces, than with determining and implementing plans more appropriate to the local situation or desired by the local population.

Post-Kulub Representations of Haile Sellassie and Blata Ayele
It is worth noting that, in 1994, Hareri recollections of Kulub condemned both Blata Ayele's unwillingness to entertain Hareri grievances and his unjustified use of intense force. The same accounts, however, contained measured praise for Haile Sellassie's readiness to receive an Hareri petition and consider their complaints. The "good guy/bad guy" dichotomy of Hareri reminiscences reinforces common assumptions about the emperor's self-representations and raises questions about how he ruled his country.

There is no debate that Haile Sellassie fostered a domestic image of himself as a divinely ordained emperor, above reproach or fault. In Harold Marcus' words, "he submerged his personality into the emperorship by making himself into an aloof and distant symbol, surrounded by a deep moat of ceremony, for whom the form, not the substance was paramount." In the Constitution of 1931, "the emperor's person was declared 'sacred', his dignity inviolable, his power indisputable." In fact, the subject of his powers occupied more than half the constitution, which was first drafted on the assumption "that all power emanated from the Emperor and could be enjoyed by others only in the form of temporary and revocable delegation by him." Haile Sellassie was also concerned with his image in international circles. As part of his conscious posturing, he subordinated his officials, yet distanced himself from them publicly. His representatives also facilitated the construction of these images, as when Makonnen Habte Wold insulted the Hareri to their faces, but allowed them to return home thanks to the emperor's magnanimity. Haile Sellassie was thereby able to take "personal credit for all that [was] praiseworthy," and "disclaim" all responsibility for the opposite." Indeed, the common distinction between him and his venal and heavy-handed representatives was articulated by groups as diverse as Tigrayan peasants recounting the 1943 Weyane revolt, urban Hareri remembering Kulub, and even foreign observers of the Ethiopian scene.

I suggest that this process could not have been successful across such a broad spectrum if the emperor did not personally follow and influence events taking place

81 Marcus, Haile Sellassie, 97.
83 Clapham, Government, 50.
84 Ibid., 52.
85 Markakis, Ethiopia, 228.
86 On Weyane, see Gebru, Power and Protest, 92. On foreigners, see Clapham, Government, 52. Clapham comments that the pursuit of such a status, in which one receives all praise but escapes all blame, is common to politicians the world over, but that Haile Sellassie was particularly adroit in attaining and maintaining this paradox.
throughout his empire. His information networks depended on his family members, often assigned to such posts as governor–generalships, while more qualified representatives effectively administered the country, constantly aware of the emperor's observers and informants. This arrangement provided the emperor's kin with wealth and prestige, assigned actual administration to more talented or respected individuals, and monitored those persons to ensure continued loyalty and adherence to the throne's wishes. The Kulub movement provides one example of how Haile Sellassie appeared to take a largely "hands-off" approach when, in fact, he and his explicit policies directly shaped events on the ground in the provinces.

Concluding Remarks

Through this essay I have used the term *jamʿiyya* to refer to the Hareri organization that sought to regain limited autonomy and secure official respect for Islam, and SYL for the Somali organization that strove to integrate the Ogaden and other neighboring regions into a "Greater Somalia." The term Kulub encompasses both groups and refers in particular to the government suppression of them in January 1948. These usages are in accordance with Hareri recollections. It has not yet been determined in the literature when and how, in Hareri popular consciousness, the *jamʿiyya* and SYL came to be encompassed by the label Kulub. I submit that the amalgam occurred after the crackdown, and that Blata Ayele's misunderstanding of the *jamʿiyya* and fears of the SYL helped to create the unity.

To conclude, uncertainty about the futures of Eritrea and the Ogaden prevented Haile Sellassie from tolerating perceived insurrections elsewhere that might raise doubts about the stability of his administration and Ethiopia's capability to regain and retain the contested territories. Locally, no matter how moderate Hareri demands may have been, Somali politics in the Ogaden led to Ayele's association of the Hareri *jamʿiyya* with the SYL in Jijiga. This viewpoint, along with his determination to prevent Somali nationalism from taking root in Harer, caused him to misinterpret events around him. Further, Blata Ayele was well aware of Haile Sellassie's intolerance of alternative sources of power, especially ones rooted in potentially enduring institutions, and of the importance of the Ogaden in the emperor's conception of Ethiopia. Blata Ayele's total dependence on the emperor, and the potential to regain a ministership, account for the vigor with which he set out to suppress Kulub and its organized structures. The physical force at his disposal as deputy governor guaranteed his success at crushing the movement. Lastly, modern Hareri representations of Haile Sellassie's and his deputy governor's styles of rule in Harer complement general published analyses and, when juxtaposed against the emperor's administrative structures, reveal the seemingly aloof monarch as directly involved in provincial administration during the post–war consolidation of his power.

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