What is “Zemenawinet”? – Perspectives on Ethiopian Modernity



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The cover image was provided by Bekele Mekonnen, an Ethiopian based Sculptor & Poet, Assistant Professor of Fine Arts at the School of Fine Arts and Design (Addis Ababa University). Currently the collection of Ato Mesfin Gebreyes Oda.

Bekele Mekonnen Nigussu, born in 1964 in Ethiopia, joined the School of Fine Arts and Design at Addis Ababa University and taught for four years there. He was then awarded a scholarship for pursuing further studies in Moscow, Russia, at the State Fine Arts Institute. Majoring sculpture, Bekele Mekonnen completed his Masters of Fine Arts with Honors in 1993. In addition, he was both awarded a grant by the Chicago Artists International Program (2002) and with a Fellowship by the Scholar Rescue Fund (2006). Following the latter, he worked at the Maryland Institute, College of Arts, for eight months. Throughout, Bekele Mekonnen was invited by diverse art institutions and communities around the world to work and exhibit as well as lecture (i. e. USA, Italy, Germany, Ethiopia). The exhibition rooms he displayed his art works at include the following: Addis Ababa Alliance éthio-française (ENQUOQILISH, 2004), LELA Contemporary Art Gallery (CHANCE AND CHOICE, 2008) and the New York Chelsea Art Museum (The LITTLE SPACE, 2006). Currently, Bekele Mekonnen teaches at the School of Fine Arts and Design at Addis Ababa University holding an Assistant Professorship. In 2001 he served as a director for two terms at the same school. In general, Bekele Mekonnen's works tend to deal with social criticism in a highly poetic and metaphoric manner.

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Preface

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is a German political foundation committed to the values of social democracy. It runs various projects in more than 100 countries, promoting dialogue on democracy and development. To that end, FES supports and organizes public forums, in which prevailing political and societal topics are discussed. FES, in cooperation with Addis Ababa University and the Goethe Institute, has been organizing lecture series since 2005; the first lecture series organized under the theme 'Democracy and the Social Question' ran from 2005-2008 and the contributions to this series were documented in a publication produced in the year 2010.

The current series aims at critically exploring different perspectives on Ethiopian modernity. Ethiopia, a country dating back to 3000 BC, endowed with diverse ethnic groups, cultures and resources, has coupled its various traditional norms and practices with modernity. Ethiopia is also on a fast track developmental process, which aspires to give room to individual liberty and prosperity. However, many of these 'modern practices' are imported from abroad, forms that at times challenge and confront local contexts and culture. This leads to a specific Ethiopian process of modernity or "Zemenawinet".

This publication is one attempt to analyze "Zemenawinet". FES would like to continue to exchange ideas about these developments with its partnering organizations, the Addis Ababa University and the Goethe Institute, and would like to express its gratitude for including FES in this continued dialog.

Arne Schildberg
Resident Representative

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Introduction

The idea of *Zemenawinet* came from Professor Andreas Eshete, President of Addis Ababa University from 2002-2010. Recognizing that the discourse of Ethiopian modernity largely refrains from discussing the ambivalence and plurality of modernity in terms of Ethiopia's historical and cultural experiences, Professor Andreas Eshete suggested a lecture series on *Zemenawinet* to discuss the maze of contestation and opposition within Ethiopian modernist studies. The fourteen lectures conducted from March 2009 to November 2011 are the collaborative efforts of the Goethe Institut Addis Ababa, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Addis Ababa University. *Zemenawinet* replaced the lecture series entitled *Democracy and the Social Question*. This series was also organized by the three institutions.

Zemenawinet called on a range of interdisciplinary scholars to consider issues of modernity within national and international contexts. A wide range of subjects related to Ethiopian modernity were consequently presented by scholars from all spectrums of Ethiopian intellectual thought. Complex aesthetic, political, and philosophical questions governed the discussions that explored Ethiopia in multiple ways—its history, its language, its literature, its rich cultural heritage, and its patriarchy.

In the series' most theoretical and provocative essay, *Modernity: Its Title to Uniqueness and its Advent in Ethiopia*, Andreas Eshete issues the philosophical construct of modernity's uniqueness and explores the disciplinary identity and purpose of modernity as an inquiry of thought. He interrogates the variegated narratives of the experiences of modernity and its intellectual enterprise.

Leaving aside worries about the emergence of modernity and its causes, we can arrive at rich characterizations of modernity that people with different historical and ethical perspectives can accept. A special feature and self-image is that modernity is the end, not of course chronologically, but, in the Hegelian sense, categorically and as history defined as the realization of human

freedom. It is in this respect that modernity is a vindication of the values of the Enlightenment and, more directly, of the ideals of the French revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. Modernity thus marks the decline or end of religious and traditional authority, including the authority of the past.

Eshete's essay principally charts the central values of modernity and, more importantly, the significance of fraternity as one of modernity's imperative ideals:

> 'The public ideals realized in the modern age are ideals for all human beings. In that sense, fraternity is a central idea of modernity. It is undeniable that modernity provides the possibility of shared values, aims and bonds amongst all human beings and peoples and hence the modern form of solidarity I call fraternity. Indeed, it is striking that it is only in the modern age that we are all contemporaries. Modernity is the era where humanity shares a common destiny.'

In the second part of his essay, Andreas Eshete looks into specific contexts that he thinks are unique to Ethiopia, and which he believes offers highly vibrant contributions to the debates surrounding modernity. In this regard, he invokes the resonance of the Ethiopian Student Movement that he says, not only disrupted the realm of Ethiopian politics in a radical way, but one that also played a critical role in the making of Ethiopian modernity. He looks into recent global anti-capitalist movements that have fundamentally altered the notion that capitalism is the only successful economic system. He says that current inequities of the global capitalist system have given rise to a worldwide popular consciousness against capitalism, henceforth announcing that socialism is undeniably back on the agenda. He evaluates the striking similarities of the radical socialist imaginaries and sensibilities of the Ethiopian Student Movement to contemporary global experiences and states:

> What is arresting about the anti-capitalist protests is that deep doubts about capitalism itself are now vividly visible in the citadels of capitalism. My immediate motive for

> invoking the anti-capitalist protests here is to indicate that there may yet be reason to resist the widespread temptation to declare the death of socialism, a leading public ideal of modernity embraced by the Ethiopian Student Movement. Though, I am certain that there is no single explanation for the rise of modernity anywhere, I shall now propose that the Ethiopian Student Movement was a midwife of Ethiopian modernity.

On another spectrum, Baye Yimam investigates the overlapping relationship of language, culture and identity and the construction of the 'modern' within this framework. Although several studies have been made on language as a central body that constructs identity, little research has been made on the consequence of Ethiopian modernity for language. In his essay *Modernity, Language and Identity*, Yimam argues that modernity is "a transform of the past". He adds that "its main characteristic features are partly innovation and partly retention of the distinctive features of the past and the socio-cultural relations therein, through a process of revision and total transformation." He asserts that if modernity is such that it is "internally motivated or externally induced, or both," it is imperative to look into "what such changes would mean in the study of language." Accordingly, he navigates modernity's discursive effects and implications on language.

In *What Were They Writing About Anyway? Tradition and Modernization in Amharic Literature,* Yonas Admassu examines the intellectual context of the making of Ethiopian modernity as he foregrounds multiple imaginaries about what it meant to be modern for Ethiopian literary intellectuals. Admassu also problematizes the intellectual's idealized and abstracted conventional preconceptions of modernity, particularly those who set the foundational narrative for the Ethiopian Student Movement, of whom Andreas Eshete referenced to having had played a midwifery role in Ethiopian modernity. While the political economy of modernity which Ethiopian scholars deliberate so much upon is inescapable, the cultural space opened up by this political economy is what Admassu is interested in. He "focused on two generations of writers whose outlooks and points of view, while certainly opposed, nevertheless shared the same concern of seeing 'their' Ethiopia wake from its centuries-old slumber and join the

community of modernized nations." Admassu concludes that the distinct role these intellectuals played in the articulation of Ethiopian modernity was very crucial in shaping its evolution.

Bahru Zewde, Ethiopia's prominent historian, focused on historiography. In *Evolution of Professional Historiography in Ethiopia,* Bahru Zewde gave an account of the Ethiopian historical profession by engaging with historical theory, historical method and professional historiography. His insight into professional historiography bears the following:

> There are a number of features or characteristics that define professional historiography. The first one is what I would call full-time pursuit of historical investigation, almost invariably in a university or academic setting. Another important feature of professional historiography is the debating and discussion of research findings in seminars and conferences.

Perhaps the most original of *Zemenawinet's* essays is Katrin Bromber's *Improving the Physical Self: Sport Body Politics and Ethiopian Modernity*. I say original because this will be the first time in Ethiopian scholarship that bodies are analyzed in the context of sport, with particular emphasis on the social construction of sport bodies in the framework of Ethiopian modernity. In this observant essay, Bromber lays out the various elements of athletic bodies that were draped with signatures of modernity. Looking at the period from 1920 to 1974, Bromber concentrates on Ethiopian modern sports, which she says was "already codified and regulated by international bodies." She says the expansion of modern sports "saw the elimination or exclusion of "traditional" sports from schools, the armed forces and sports clubs, and led to their almost total neglect in systematic studies on sports in Ethiopia outside the field of ethnography and heritage." Bromber strongly believes that studies on the social history of sports in Ethiopia "might contribute to the debate on Ethiopian modernity."

In the last ten years, Ethiopian major cities have witnessed massive transformations in the area of development that have resulted in new social conditions. Perhaps, Ethiopia is a fitting example to the crisis facing African cities. As with many African cities, the country's modernization

trajectory has often neglected the core issues of the urban poor and the breakup of indigenous infrastructures, which have resulted in the creation of complex problems of critical concern. Many people have become victims of rapid projects of modernization and development. This notion of development and modernization has brought about uncompromising changes in social structures in which traditional networks and strategies are literally decimated. Neighborhoods have been dismantled and neighbors who have lived together for decades are separated. Along with their separation, came the obliteration of profound and necessary community organizations. Massive numbers of people have been displaced to the outskirts of cities to accommodate road constructions and high-rise buildings. Road construction has become a fetish of modernity and safe and simple refuges no longer exist where boundaries keep being resituated.

Architects Elias Yitbarek and Fasil Ghiorgis deliberate upon these changes of development and the corollary reality of the actual lives that have been challenged by these changes. In his essay *Reflections on the Urban Changes of Addis Ababa, "Slums": Change and Modernity,* Yitbarek stresses **"**the importance of learning from the positive features of slums and transferring these attributes into urban redevelopment schemes." On the other hand, in the essay Modernity *and Change in Addis Ababa***,** Fasil Ghiorgis talks about the challenges to modernity, focusing on the city's changing social fabric. He claims that Addis Ababa was known for "its class mix where rich and poor harmoniously lived side by side." He argues that "in terms of social and cultural qualities, modern planning has a lot to learn from the spontaneously grown urban fabric of Addis Ababa." "Unfortunately", says Ghiorgis, "with growing urbanization and new real estate developments being exclusively built for upper classes, and the rapid rise in low and middle income condominium housings financed by the state, a gradual segregation between different classes is emerging."

Elizabeth Giorgis' *The Beginning of Ethiopian Modernism: A Brief Synopsis on the Inception of Ethiopian Visual Modernism (1957-1974)* reveals the discursive and philosophical limitations and drawbacks of Ethiopian modernism, and its interpretation in the Ethiopian imaginary. Engaging with non-Western contexts of modernity, she interrogates modern Ethiopian art

within the debates and parameters of African modernism, and thus establishes a space to analyze specific languages of Ethiopian modernist expressions. Focusing on prominent visual artists, such as; Gebrekristos Desta and Skunder Boghossian, who are widely believed to be pioneers of Ethiopian modernism, Giorgis looks at Ethiopian modernism, along with its local and global trajectories and contentions.

In addition to these lectures, in this issue we have also included the lecture given by Mr. Denis Thieulin, Head of Cooperation of the European Union Delegation to Ethiopia. In his lecture entitled, *the Impact of Development Aid on Modernization in Ethiopia: the EU Perspective*, Mr. Thieulin talks about the curve of development and aid and about the course taken in the Ethiopian government's modernization strategy in depth.

The intellectual and political history of Ethiopia has been totally absorbed by an authoritative academic ontology. Imaginatively exploring distinct pasts and discourses that are harnessed to powerful social sources and that are forged within wider matrices of power; this series attempts to critically engage the different ways of negotiating the validity of social and political thought of Ethiopian modernity. The borders between disciplines and divisions of knowledge have become increasingly permeable. Such cross-disciplinary work in the field of modernity has produced exciting works of interdisciplinary examination in modernist epistemology, ontology, and representation. How did the meanings of Ethiopian literary texts, visual narratives, linguistics and sport perform in articulating Ethiopian modernity? How did this discourse relate to the hegemonic narratives of Western modernity? How did the early modernists fashion responses to the larger paradigm of European modernity? Despite their history of not being colonized, how did they apprehend an alterity that excluded them from its discourse but simultaneously imposed itself upon the prevailing discourse? How did power relations condition the production, dissemination and reception of these visual narratives, texts and linguistic expressions? By positing such questions, *Zemenawinet: Perspectives on Ethiopian Modernity* attempts to examine the intellectual and cultural contexts of the making of Ethiopian modernity.

Ultimately, this series, being one of the few attempts of its kind, argues for a critical interrogation of how the history and culture of Ethiopia engaged the larger context of modernity. This project is therefore a first attempt to navigate the multiple points of Ethiopian intellectual and aesthetic realms from a cultural, historical and comparative context. It emphasizes that the meaning of Ethiopian modernity can only be consequential if it is examined through changing conditions of global modernity and the formal and conceptual representations that reinforce such changes.

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Modernity: It's Title to Uniqueness and its Advent in Ethiopia

I

There have been varied, truly impressive attempts by towering talents - among them Hegel, Marx, Weber - to establish that modernity was born in the right place at the right time. Success or failure, this exercise itself manifests a conspicuous mark of modernity: historical self-consciousness or a capacity to step back from our own time and to compare it with others. That said the claim stated at the start is highly controversial. Though there is considerable convergence on birthplace - the West - there is little agreement on the birthday of modernity. The dispute over the advent of modernity is bound up with competing claims about the conditions decisive in the making of modernity: the ascetic sprit of puritan Protestantism, free labor, the rise of towns, modern science, and new opportunities for trade, industrial manufacture and varied new technologies. I doubt that either the key originating elements can be definitively singled out or when or where it first made its appearance can be fixed with finality.

It may well be that the quest for the advent of modernity is a category mistake as G.M. Trevelyan suggests: "Unlike dates, periods are not facts. They are retrospective conceptions that we form about past events, useful to focus discussion, but very often leading historical thought astray".[1] More importantly, rival claims about the advent of modernity rest on conceptions of human history that cannot be sustained. I do not believe that there is an overarching rational explanation of human progress. Perhaps the most developed theory of this kind is that offered by Marx and intricately developed by the late Jerry Cohen. Roughly, Marx proposes, first, that there is, throughout history, a necessity to improve the technical forces of production. Second, social forms undergo change so that arrangements hospitable to technological improvement

1 Trevelyan, G.M. *English Social History*. London: Longman Press. 1978.

always prevail. The attempt to account for all social change as driven by the necessity to march in step with technological innovation seems implausible, not least because it involves the glaring anachronism of projecting peculiar features of the modern world onto the entire past.

Still, the historical self-consciousness of modernity noted earlier, as well as a sense of its uniqueness, can exist in the absence of any commitment to grand narratives about the course of human history. Consider, for instance, Virginia Woolf's astonishing observation occasioned by the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition. "On or about December 1910 human nature changed. All human relations shifted - those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature."[2] Note the striking similarity between this pronouncement and the famous description of the modern age in the Communist Manifesto: "Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed fast-frozen relations with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air all that is holy is profaned and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind."[3] It is of little importance that Marx's remarks were made in the middle of the nineteenth century and Virginia Woolf's in the first decade of the twentieth century. After all, it was after the Second World War that the salient features of the modern world that we identified are fully realized in the European corner of the world that they inhabit. As Perry Anderson points out: "After 1945, the semi-aristocratic or agrarian order and its appurtenances was finished in every country. Bourgeois democracy was finally universalized. With that, certain critical links with a pre-capitalist past were snapped. Mass production and consumption transformed Western Europe along American lines."[4] Both Karl Marx and Virginia Woolf capture defining features of the modern age well before it became entrenched in practice.

2 Woolf, Virginia. *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*. London: Hogarth Press. 1924.
3 Marx, K and Engels, F. *The Communist Manifesto*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. 1967.
4 Anderson, Perry. "Modernity and Revolution". *New Left Review* I/144 March April 1984.

Leaving aside worries about the emergence of modernity and its causes, we can arrive at rich characterizations of modernity that people with different historical and ethical perspectives can accept. A special feature and self-image is that modernity is the end, not of course chronologically, but - in the Hegelian sense - categorically; of history defined as the realization of human freedom. It is in this respect that modernity is a vindication of the values of the Enlightenment and, more directly, of the ideals of the French revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. Modernity thus marks the decline or end of religious and traditional authority, including the authority of the past. Nietzsche's declaration that God is dead or what Weber famously called "the disenchantment of the world" or Marx "the holy profaned" and is nowadays named 'secularization' is a defining mark of modernity. An important consequence is that modern government or the exercise of coercive power in modern society calls for legitimization. The disenchantment of the modern age has other wide ramifications. The modern world manifests a break with religious authority and, with that, the acceptance of religious toleration. Even though its pedigree can be traced to religious toleration, modern toleration extends far beyond matters of faith to encompass secular conceptions of personal and public good or fundamental beliefs about the meaning of life. Political toleration in modernity is a generalization of principles of religious tolerance of rival personal and collective conceptions of the good life. Thus we can say, following John Stuart Mill and Isaiah Berlin, that pluralism is a deep fact of modernity. As John Rawls puts it: "The diversity of religious, philosophical and moral doctrines found in modern democratic societies is not a mere historical condition that may soon pass away; it is a permanent feature of the public culture of democracy."[5]

The fact that there cannot or should not be a shared conception of the good or the meaning of life in the modern world means, for one thing, that personal and public life cannot be of a piece. Indeed, rivalry over the good or the meaning of life dictates a division between the private and public domain. The nature of the two domains and their relation is a central concern of modernity. For instance, the modern value of autonomy is upheld, both to protect the individual from public demands and interferences, as well as to realize the individual's

5 Rawls, J. *Political Liberalism.* New York: Columbia University Press. 1995.

choice and experimentation, among diverse forms of life. The private-public distinction has enabled the cultivation and refinement of the personal, the eccentric, the intimate and personal relationships, a matter to which art forms - say, the novel - and certain styles of art, minister. The shift in comparative importance between the private and the public is a subject of complicated debate and negotiation. Diversity or pluralism in modern life means that matters of ultimate value do not centrally figure in public life and political agenda. Instead, they chiefly thrive in the private life of individuals and in free associations of individuals. On the other hand, ethical questions previously left to individuals to settle on their own are now matters of public concern and decision: for instance, questions about who is to live or die. But given pluralism, the justifying grounds on which public morality and public institutions resolve ethical questions necessarily tend to be procedural, including practices of rational conversation and persuasion. The pluralism of modern life may well mean that justice is the first, indeed, the only good of society. I will come back to the ethical consequences of disenchantment.

Let me stress that the thesis that the modern age sees itself as unique because, for the first time, the possibilities of human freedom are realized is shared by otherwise rival ethical and political outlooks. Modernity in the sense of the end of history is endorsed by Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Weber. Hegel's is of course the formative account of the thesis, a thesis which became popular through Kojeve. Of late, the thesis has been adopted by countless liberals , such as; Fukuyama to support a triumphant reading of the conclusion of the Cold War in favor of the West.

To profess the end of history is not, of course, to welcome the end. For instance, though Weber was convinced that the modern age is terminally disenchanted, he was disquieted by the consequent sovereignty of instrumental reason in practical life. In Marx, too, there is a clear verdict that the public forms of the modern world realize all the possibilities of freedom. In his Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, what he has to say about democracy is representative. "Democracy is the resolved mystery of all constitutions. Here the constitution is returned to its real ground actual man, the actual people and established as its own work. The constitution

appears as what it is, the free product of men."[6] Marx is saying that there can be no better title to legitimate rule than self-government. Yet, Marx of course saw, perhaps better than anyone, the ills of capitalism and bourgeois democracy. Still, he was confident that capitalism would itself yield the means and agents capable of overcoming its own disabilities. Hence, modernity is unique because it either represents the full realization of freedom or because it furnishes all the conditions necessary for the achievement of freedom. The political values of modernity – democracy, liberty, equality, material betterment - are secular and cosmopolitan in scope. The public ideals realized in the modern age are ideals for all human beings. In that sense, fraternity is a central idea of modernity.

The ethically lofty characterization I am offering with respect to modernity's uniqueness is not meant to suggest that the actual emergence of modernity was benign. The rise of capitalism involved war, conquest, slavery, exploitation, ethnic cleansing and the like. Indeed, some have argued that modern ideals and practices may themselves encourage certain sorts of crimes. For instance, it is suggested that genocide and ethnic cleansing are among the risks of early democracy, because under democracy, the bounds of citizenship and sovereignty coincide. Similarly, the decline in the modern world of social hierarchy based on customary, religious or traditional belief may have fostered pseudo-scientific, biological views of racial superiority.

Despite this dark record, it is undeniable that modernity provides the possibility of shared values, aims and bonds among all human beings and peoples and, hence, the modern form of solidarity I call fraternity. Indeed, it is striking that it is only in the modern age that we are all contemporaries. Modernity is the era where humanity shares a common destiny. I cannot possibly show this here. But let me illustrate it with a few examples.

Consider the first pre-modern people to be studied by anthropologists - - scholars that were beginning to see themselves as scientific ethnographers - - were colonial subjects engaged in commercial agriculture and trade. Malinowski, a pioneer ethnographer, says: "The empirical

6 Marx, K. *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1970.

factors which the ethnographer has before him in the Trobiands, nowadays, are not natives unaffected by European influences but natives, to a considerable extent, transformed by the influences".[7] He proposes something he dubbed "the anthropology of the changing native." "Changing", I assume, under the sway of modernity. It is also perhaps worth noting that the discipline of sociology arose from the conviction of the uniqueness of the modern world and its pervasive reach.

My second example of how in the modern age we are all contemporaries concerns Haiti. Many, including Susan Buck-Morss, have noted that the Haitian revolution abolishing slavery at the turn of the 19th century was a black French revolution[8]. Closer to home, self-conscious resistance to imperialism is evident at the Battle of Adwa, nearly a century after the Haitian revolution. The victory at Adwa consolidated the sovereignty of the modern Ethiopian nation-state. It is noteworthy that political unification of the German nation was completed only in 1871, just twenty-five years before Adwa; and Ethiopia's adversary at Adwa, Italy, was born in 1870, a year before. Again, in the second encounter with Italy, it is no exaggeration to say that Ethiopians were the first to resist fascism. The initial European reaction to the fascist invasion was an appeasement of Italy's imperial ambitions. Mao Ze Dong speaks of the novelty of the guerilla struggle waged by the patriots. Finally, in the 60s, Ethiopian students and women championed causes akin to those of their western counterparts, at about the same time and in the same spirit. Hence modernity belongs to everyone: modernity is not just a shared destination, it is a shared destiny, and a shared public culture.

Even though I have not embraced the theories of history mounted to underwrite modernity, I have gone along with the ambitious conclusion of these theories: the conception of modernity as a realization of human freedom. Is the modern age, then, to be credited with unqualified human progress? Unfortunately, as we all know all too well modernity has a dark underside. Let me briskly say a few words on the dark side of modernity. First, paradoxically the dark side is connected to a shining dimension of modernity, a dazzling movement of the arts called

7 Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul .1922.
8 Buck-Morss, Susan. "Hegel and Haiti." *Critical Inquiry*, 26,4 Summer 2000.

modernism, which flourished in Europe from about 1890 to 1930. Modernism's insistent call was for the destruction of the bourgeois world to make space for a new one found resonance in Fascism and Nazism. Roger Smith in a book titled: Modernism and Fascism: the Sense of a Beginning in Mussolini and Hitler explores the entanglements between modernism and the ideology of National Socialism.[9] The fact that these ideologies had champions among leading figures of modernism is well known: T.S. Eliot's anti-Semitism, Ezra Pound's allegiance to Fascism are infamous examples. The war crimes committed by national socialist regimes deployed the modern state, modern propaganda, a modern bureaucracy, a modern army and modern weapons. Thus evil was done by distinctively modern means and institutions. The Holocaust, Hiroshima and other grave evils of the twentieth century demonstrate that moral progress is radically reversible. Central to these evils is racism: a blindness to the souls of others. Accordingly, they manifest a deep failure in fraternity. Put differently, they also show the ethical depth of fraternity, for in its absence liberty and equality have little or no weight. After the Holocaust, one philosopher said that humanity as a species does not have a moral title to survive. His suggestion is that if human beings were to disappear, this would not be a tragedy over and above the tragic loss of individual human lives. This may sound extreme, but it is an understandable reaction to the fact that modern humanity freely and zealously chose to do away with innocent lives on the grounds that some human lives have no worth. Genocide has been committed since not only in Europe but also in Asia and in Africa, including in Ethiopia. So we must admit that moral progress can suddenly lapse. The descent into barbarism can never be ruled out.

What I said about the dark side of modernity shows that modernity and its champions can be shown to be innocent of the common charge of utopian or millennial hope. All the same, it may still be possible to speak of moral progress. No one now can reasonably deny that, say, slavery or taking innocent life is wrong. What no one may reasonably seek to reverse may well be a credible criterion of human progress. Regrettably, we cannot thereby count on the fact that nobody will ever again be enslaved or the innocent slaughtered. Theory and theoretical assent may not

9 Smith, R. *Modernism and Fascism: the Sense of a Beginning in Mussolini and Hitler.* London: Palgrave Mac millan. 2007.

contribute to progress. In saying this I join Hegel and Marx. In the Preface to the Philosophy of Right Hegel holds that philosophy cannot make a contribution to history. The owl of Minerva, a symbol of wisdom, flies in the dusk, when the day's work is over. For Marx, despite the Eleventh theses on Feuerbach, the ideal society is a society in which men can appreciate the significance of their actions and the actions of others without the benefit of theory. Transparency in human relations is a public ideal for Hegel and Marx alike.

Let me conclude with tentative gestures on new directions for moral progress in the modern world. To get clear on the nature and arena of moral advance, it is helpful to recall the public consequences of disenchantment, provided that disenchantment is here to stay, a possibility that is beginning to look improbable with widespread religious revival in every salvationist faith both in the West and the rest. The persistence of diversity in modern public life means that when it comes to robust conceptions of the good life-say, the quest for knowledge or beauty-individuals and free associations may have stronger ties to people and communities outside their own. Given pluralism, the distinctness of modern political communities may not mark internal ethical cohesion within political communities or amongst them. Increased economic and political interdependence, together with rapid advances in communication, indicate that the fate of the earth and the well-being of peoples may depend on actions, actors and structures beyond the bounds of the nation-state.

Still, the nation-state is not entirely ethically irrelevant. It can still coerce its own citizens; and, if powerful, it can do away with other states and peoples. Hence the importance of placing firm ethical bounds on the internal sovereignty of the nation-state as well as on its title to international action. To meet the more positive demands of justice we need to look at political society as well as the society of peoples and states beyond it. Liberals and socialists agree that justice in the modern world is essentially a matter of equality. Equality in political freedom is not often challenged, although securing equal worth of the right to vote or to run for office is far from assured even in mature democracies: for instance, the U.S Supreme Court recently granted corporations the right to spend unlimited funds on political candidates in any political

elections. This undermines the right of citizens to an equal say on decisions on political offices or choices of public policies. The decision will also bear on fairness in international practice, where corporations are major actors. Beyond vast differences in wealth and power, there are differences in natural assets that get in the way of equality. Some are highly gifted with beauty, charm, intellectual or physical talent; assets resistant to easy redistribution, while making the lives of those thus favored by nature go well. Nonetheless, what is produced by deploying these or other natural and social assets can be redistributed.

Moreover, we all believe in the dignity or intrinsic value of human life and in the ethical equality of human lives or that nobody's life can inherently matter more than anyone else's life. Moreover, with pluralism, there are no projects of intrinsic value such that their pursuit overrides human claims to equality. The dignity and equality of human lives is therefore a deep moral fact of modern life. Accordingly, the vast inequalities in life; prospects within and across societies in a modern world of opulence is an affront to ethical decency. Those who enjoy a disproportionately large share of the means of a worthwhile life risk making the earth uninhabitable for future generations. Second, they now deprive the poor within their societies and around the world the opportunity to lead meaningful lives. How could a few deserve to live so well at the expense of the disadvantaged multitude and countless future generations? Along with Jerry Cohen, we can ask: "If you are an egalitarian, how come you are so rich?" Given the presumption of equality, to be deserving; the rich must show us that with less inequality the poor would fare even worse. It is impossible to believe that a more egalitarian domestic and global arrangement would result in even greater suffering for the poor. But if that is correct, those better off have to retreat either to the brute claim "it is ours" or that they have the might to see that it remains theirs. These are not ethically reasonable or attractive options. A world closer to equality, beyond serving justice and warding off social evil arising from inequality, would shield us from regress into public evil by extending the reach of fraternity.

II

The anti-capitalist protests recently held, among other sites, in the financial centers of New York City and London are a welcome counterpoint to the triumphant spirit that appeared to have overtaken the West since the end of the Cold War. The triumphant posture finds expression in a widely shared sense that fundamental debate on how best to arrange public life - political or economic - has finally come to an end. Almost everyone now seems resigned to the inescapability of some form of liberal capitalism as mankind's ultimate public fate.

Against this backdrop, the anti-capitalist protests, like the Arab uprisings, by which they were in part inspired, caught the world completely by surprise. Even then, it took some time before the protests attracted the attention of either the press or of public officials. The neglect was no doubt encouraged by the fact that the anti-capitalist protests were orderly, peaceful and entirely unencumbered by a leadership, an organization, an ideology, or even designated spokespersons or demands, a dazzling departure from traditional anti-capitalist public action - trade unionist or leftist.

Beyond its evident novelty, the anti-capitalist protest is welcome because capitalism's singular triumph is, as Jerry Cohen once suggested, largely a matter of what is sometimes called adaptive preference formation: We tend to tailor our choices and values to fit the world. A given option is deemed the only or the best course merely because it is available. (Conversely, as in the fable of the fox and the grapes, something is devalued or undervalued just because it is not within reach). Though irrational, adaptive preference formation can be tenacious. Even though the Western economic system is clearly in the grip of a grave crisis from which nobody has managed to chart a clear course of escape, nowhere is there a noticeable turn away from capitalism itself. What Thomas Kuhn said about what he calls normal science to characterize a ruling scientific theory holds here: when confronted by recalcitrant crises, the communities of believers remain faithful to the beleaguered theory until a viable alternative is found.

What is arresting about the anti-capitalist protests is that deep doubts about capitalism itself are now vividly visible in the citadels of capitalism. In voicing protest, critical and impassioned citizens of mature capitalist democracies seem to be joining in solidarity with spatially distant victims of capitalism, inhabiting impoverished parts of the world. Noting the endless testimonials on the web by the many Mohamed Bouazizs the Tunisian vendor whose self-immolation sparked the Arab uprisings of the US, an American observer comments: "The protesters in Zuccotti Park seem to have heralded the membership of a significant portion of our population in a new form of Third World …"[10]. My immediate motive for invoking the anti-capitalist protests here is to indicate that there may yet be reason to resist the widespread temptation to declare the death of socialism, a leading public ideal of modernity embraced by the Ethiopian Student Movement.

A deeper motive is movingly captured by the Nobel laureate, Harold Pinter, who says:

> "There exists today widespread propaganda which asserts that socialism is dead. But if to be a socialist is to be a person convinced that the words 'the common good' and 'social justice' actually mean something; if to be a socialist is to be outraged at the contempt in which millions and millions of people are held by those in power, by 'market forces', by international financial institutions; if to be a socialist is to be a person determined to do everything in his or her power to alleviate these unforgivably degraded lives, then socialism can never be dead because these aspirations never die."[11]

Though I am certain that there is no single explanation for the rise of modernity anywhere, I shall now propose that the Ethiopian Student Movement was a midwife of Ethiopian modernity. Before I spell out the claim, let me enter a few caveats, caveats registered earlier regarding modernity's uniqueness. First, I had suggested that contested accounts of the historical causes of modernity and disputes over its defining features make it difficult to fix modernity's birthday or birthplace with finality. Second, I had suggested that with modernity, we are all at once contemporaries. For instance, I mentioned that Malinowski, a pioneer practitioner of the science,

10 Michael Greenberg, "In Zuccotti Park," *The New York Review of Books*. November 10, 2011.

11 Cited in Brian Barry, *Why Social Justice Matters*. Cambridge: Polity. 2005.

said that the first natives or pre-modern peoples to be studied by anthropology were leading lives that were subject to the influence of the modern world. Indeed, through exploration, trade and conquest virtually all peoples and places were drawn into the orbit of modernity. Third, even if we agree on the cluster of characteristics constituting modernity, there is a crucial distinction between the advent of the idea of modernity, on the one hand, and its psychological and institutional realization, on the other. To highlight the distinction, let me cite three recent theses about the origin of modernity. In a book titled: The Rise and Fall of Alexandria: Birthplace of the Modern World (2006) Justin Pollard and Howard Reid argue that the mental or intellectual furniture of modernity had been cobbled together already in Alexandria before the city's loss of its celebrated library. In support they offer: The rich mathematical knowledge of Euclid and Archimedes; atomism and heliocentrism in physical theory; and radical secularism in respect to the meaning of life. The second is Stephen Greenblatt's The Swerve: How the World Became Modern (2011). According to Greenblatt, a key to how the world became modern can be found in the rediscovery of Lucretius in the Renaissance, and in the way that Lucretius's naturalist, humanist philosophical vision deeply shaped the natural and human sciences that gave birth to modernity. Third, recall Perry Anderson's judgment that a clean break with a pre-modern past and a full realization of modernity was achieved in Europe only in the wake of World War II, when ruling dynasties were succeeded by bourgeois democracies, Fordism entered production, and a consumerist culture started to spread in the wider society.

In Ethiopia, too, it would not be surprising if leading ideas of modernity were to be convincingly traced to some distant visionary sage, say, a Zarayaccob or to an early radical sect ,such as; the Dekike Stephanos. There is also little doubt that ideas of modernity were sharply articulated and forcefully advocated by the likes of Gebrehiwet Baykedagn in the illustrious generation that Bahru Zewde dubs the early modernizers. Moreover, Ethiopia's leaders, at least since Tewodros, manifest evident self-consciousness in regards to modernity's promises and perils. They were resolved to introduce modern systems of administration and to harness modern technology, both to defend Ethiopia's independence and to deploy her rich human and material resources effectively.

Still, I maintain it is with the Ethiopian Student Movement that all essential elements of modernity - popular legitimate rule by free and equal citizens, the abolition of all privileges of birth or inherited position, equality of faiths and cultural communities, industrialization and secularism - were championed and advocated together in the name of socialism.

Why did the Ethiopian Student Movement urge a transition to modernity under the aegis of socialism? The aim of the Student Movement was not merely to win intellectual adherence to the ideas and ideals of modernity. Nor was there an intention to persuade a favored prince or an elite that modernity offered a worthy practical vision for Ethiopia. Instead, the quest of the Student Movement was the urgent, practical realization of its ambitious agenda by a mobilized citizenry. Socialism was championed because it would serve the aspiration to bring about modernity by revolutionary means.

Hannah Arendt once suggested that it is only natural that a revolution is predetermined or shaped by the kind of regime it targets. The allure of socialism would prove easier to appreciate if we take notice of what was special, say, in contrast to colonial Africa, in what Ethiopia was up against. Gaining entry into the modern world posed peculiar problems for Ethiopia, problems that did not readily arise in the rest of Africa. Although colonial rule had exploited cultural diversity and authority to white supremacist advantage, its overriding mission was to abolish African traditions, institutions and identities. In contrast, the limited foothold of modern institutions in imperial Ethiopia served not to supplant but rather to strengthen the relics of a pre-modern past. An absolutist crown, an established religion, an official language and privileged public culture became constitutionally entrenched, institutionally bolstered by a standing army and a bureaucracy and their claim to legitimacy cultivated and instilled through modern schools and media. For most of Africa, as seen in the ruling ideologies of the time ,such as; Negritude, liberation could be seen as becoming free from what is unmistakably alien and affirming what was deemed truly one's own. For Ethiopia, emancipation was a rather different matter of going against the grain, calling for a clean break from a political landscape and a public culture that deeply defined our collective self-identity. Socialism provided a powerful weapon for exorcising our received self-image, thereby enabling a decisive defiance of absolutist public authority as well as the debilitating claims of inherited class and cultural privilege.

Moreover, socialism's appeal importantly turned on its reach beyond political freedom. Nkrumah's 'seek ye first the political kingdom', though a fitting slogan for the anti-colonial straggle, could not meaningfully address the plight of the countless victims of those enjoying the privilege of birth and inherited position in Ethiopia. By championing the many socially marginalized and economically exploited, socialism promised not just popular sovereignty but also social justice. To bring down the pre-modern pillars of empire was also to free and empower the multitude of despised, disenfranchised and dispossessed. Upholding the cosmopolitan ideals of socialism thus afforded a sense of allegiance and belonging to the Ethiopian populace. Accordingly, there was then a rare, happy harmony between universalist ethical demands and particularist attachments. Ethiopian socialists could reasonably feel the nationalist pride manifested by Cubans in their revolution or by the Vietnamese in their triumphant wars of resistance waged against Western imperialism. Let you think that I am tendentiously singling out the Student Movement to cast in the honorific role of midwife of Ethiopian modernity, let me conclude with brisk remarks, first, about the disasters to which we were exposed by the Student Movement and, second, about another possible candidate for the station of midwifery.

Despite its evident attractions and its limited success in paving Ethiopia's release from a pre-modern past, the commitment to socialism harbored varied costly illusions, illusions that are a legacy of scientific socialism or the view that the ethical ideals of socialism, such as; freedom, equality and fraternity are bound be honored in practice, provided we march in step with history. One illusion is that questions of political justice can be sidestepped if pride of place in policy and practice is accorded to the disenfranchised and dispossessed. However, after so many demonstrations of painful failure, it is now plain that there is no reason to suppose that a regime avowedly championing the poor and powerless while enjoying their support can be counted upon to respect the dignity of equal and free citizens. Indeed, the socialist cause was usurped in Ethiopia by the military to seize state power and to consolidate a tyranny that trampled on the rights and freedoms of citizens with mindless brutality. The military regime followed in the footsteps of the populist tyrannies of the twentieth century, a few notoriously installed into political office by winning in competitive democratic elections.

A second illusion was that a few critical measures - among them, nationalization and state control of economic allocation and distribution - would yield economic growth and justice. How could peasants be expected to overcome poverty just because they are freed from obligations to landlords? Just how could their meager resources and their primitive technology spontaneously create the wealth necessary to launch an industrial economy? Neither freedom from hunger and poverty nor the turn to industry was accomplished. To the contrary, farmers became subject to obligations to the state more onerous than those previously exacted by landlords. Moreover, the military regime was determined to kill its political opponents and to wagie genocidal campaigns against movements rising in dissent and revolt. Peasants were forcibly recruited to fight in protracted wars mounted by government against its own citizens and communities.

The illusion that political and economic justice would prevail once precedence is given to the disadvantaged many and their interests is a voluntarist shadow of scientific socialism's materialist optimism. Roughly, the idea is that in a pre-capitalist setting a revolutionary regime can jump start an industrial economy, as well as speed the emergence and ascendance of the working class, through control of the productive resources of society and the mobilization of the laboring and neglected majority. Thus, over time , it can join in scientific socialism's faith whereby material abundance achieved by a large, organized working class under advanced industrial production leads to a society where equality triumphs. The envisaged inevitability of public virtue invites a complacent, quiescent attitude to ethical reflection, political deliberation, as well as to public organization and action. Such quiescence makes the public vulnerable to modern barbarians bent on dominance and it makes them hostages to the vagaries of nature and economic fortune. It is ironic that the theory disarms the very subjects it aims to deliver from dependence, destitution and injustice.

To be disabused of these and related illusions fostered by scientific socialism comes to taking two brute facts of society seriously: namely, coercion and scarcity. As long as our collective life requires resort to coercion, there is no acceptable alternative to institutional arrangements that respect the freedom and equality of citizens. Put differently, on no account must we indulge the

folly of faith in the elect person or body that can be entrusted with unrestrained command over the coercive powers of the state just because the authority is thought to reliably guide us or the favored agents of revolution to some earthly paradise that history had ordained.

No worthwhile public aims, including the ideals of socialism, can ever justify a sacrifice of democratic values and practices. The persistence of scarcity, in turn, imposes an obligation of justice to minimize the limits material scarcity places on the pursuit of meaningful lives for members of our community and for future generations. Together with discharge of this obligation, justice also demands that we seek the equality of citizens in respect to the ability to enjoy the means necessary for leading a meaningful life - the ethical aspiration that animates the anti-capitalist protests.

Finally, though unhappily I cannot discuss it now, let me end by pointing to another candidate for the title of midwife of Ethiopian modernity. I have in mind the brief but brilliant modernism that blossomed in the arts roughly coincident with the heyday of the Student Movement. To cite only a few of the leading figures: Skunder Boghossian and Gebrekristos Desta in painting; the poetry of, again, Gebrekristos, Mengistu Lemma, Solomon Deressa and Yohannes Admassu; the stories and novels of Sebhat Gebregziabher and Dagnachew Worku among many others; the work of Tsegaye Gebremedhin and Abate Mekuria in drama; the journalism of Gedamu Abraham and Solomon Deressa.

The modernists turned away from the lofty and the representational to look anew at the everyday, the ordinary and the marginalized in ways that both self-consciously explore the possibilities of their chosen art form and bear the signature of the artist's individual style. Unfortunately, there was little interplay between the modernity of the Student Movement and the modernism of the new generation of artists except on rare public occasions ,such as; the poetry recitals on College Day and the mediacy of exceptional individuals like Yohannes Admasu, who belonged to both the world of beauty and the world of action. Nonetheless, the sensibility of modernism vividly exemplified essential virtues of modernity: individuality, freedom, bold exploration of

novel possibilities and a robust worldliness. Even though, it may not have prompted change in the institutions and practices of the practical world, Ethiopian modernism furnished a powerful expression of the ethos of modernity. This ethos matters, for without a spirited culture, modernity, as many had feared, is liable to lack enchantment, life, and substance, extending to most little more than the transient and uniform satisfactions savored in a consumer society.

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Evolution of Professional Historiography in Ethiopia

Introduction

Within the general theme of *Zemenawinet*, I have been asked to tackle the subject of professional historiography. Let me begin by expressing my gratification - and the gratification of so many other historians - at the growing interest in history that we see in Ethiopia today. It is almost incredible to watch the number of historical books that are being published and the avid readership that has been growing. Even more surprisingly, I have even come across students who have been contemplating deserting fields like science to history, this to the immense mortification of their parents.

As we are gratified by these developments, we have to be careful to distinguish between history and memory. This is because what we are actually witnessing is a very encouraging and positive development of people recollecting and reminiscing about the past. That is a very important basis, nay often a solid foundation, for history and historical reconstruction. Indeed, I am already on record that all memories should be written down. But this should not be mistaken for history. It is from such memories and reminiscences that history will eventually have to be written and developed.

What Do We Understand by Professional Historiography?

Let me begin by pointing out the essential components of professional historiography. There are a number of features or characteristics that define professional historiography. The first one is what I would call full-time pursuit of historical investigation, almost invariably in a university or academic setting. It is a full-time engagement in historical training and investigation, which

means it combines teaching and research. This entails the symbiosis of teaching and research. Research enriches teaching and in return it stimulates research. The teacher always uses his students as a kind of sounding board for his research findings; their reactions give him the first indication as to whether he is really on the right track. In effect, the classroom provides a useful testing ground for new ideas.

Another important feature of professional historiography is the debating and discussion of research findings in seminars and conferences. It is even more important for the teacher/ researcher to have his ideas and research findings presented in seminars and conferences so that colleagues will react to them and give him feedback - positive or negative - to help the researcher to eventually polish his findings and come up with a much better result than would otherwise be the case.

Yet another element of professional historiography is the dissemination or publication of research results through peer-reviewed journals or in the form of referred books. This is quite important. Many people write books. But the yardstick of professional historiography is that research results or manuscripts that are to be published as journal articles or books are actually subjected to a critical review by those who know the subject. It is only after the reviewers have certified that the manuscripts are publishable that they are published. This is not to be seen as a negative exercise. Most often, it is a positive one. In fact, most of the comments that readers and reviewers give actually enhance the quality of the manuscript.

Finally, professional historiography should have a scientific and objective basis. This involves the weighing of multiple evidence, of writing on the basis of not just one evidence but after having cross-checked multiple sources and different accounts. Not only should various sources be used but they also have to be shared with the reader through meticulous documentation. That is why most standard historical works can sometimes be quite boring for the general reader because half the page is so often covered with footnotes. But those footnotes are essential to verify whether the writer is on the right track. They are also useful to scholars, who would like to pursue the leads provided by the footnotes and make their own further enquiries.

That is as far as the scientific component is concerned. The objective basis of professional historiography lies in the need to understand before judging. The motto of historians, if there is such a thing, is "first understand, then judge." This is the principle promoted by the famous 19th century German historian, Ranke, who introduced the concept of *einfuehlen,* which has the meaning of the historian living the life of the person or subject he/she is investigating and trying to understand why he/she was doing what he/she was doing.

Measured by the above yardstick, therefore, one could say that professional historiography is fairly recent in Ethiopia. It goes back only to the early 1960s , when the Department of History and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) were established at about the same time at Haile Sellassie I University. Sven Rubensen and Richard Pankhurst were foundational figures not only as the first leaders of the two institutions but also for initiating a tradition of historical research in their respective institutions. The Department and the Institute have been closely associated from their birth. Although linguists and anthropologists have also been affiliated with the IES, historians have tended to play the preponderant role. Five of its nine directors to date have been historians.

There were other concomitant developments that promoted the growth of the historical profession. The beginning of the tradition of the International Conference of Ethiopian Studies (ICES) in 1959 was one. The conferences had been going on somewhat intermittently at the beginning but have taken place fairly regularly since the 1980s. Another development was the founding of the Historical Society in the 1960s, even if it died off in the 1970s. Yet another fascinating experiment worth emulating, even today, was what used to be called the Interdisciplinary Seminar of the Faculties of Arts and Education, at which instructors of the various departments of the two faculties presented papers. Such then, was the atmosphere in which professional historiography was born and fostered in Ethiopia.

But, to say that professional historiography started in Ethiopia in the 1960s does not mean that it does not have antecedents. In fact, it does have lots of antecedents. That is why I have used the word "evolution" to define the topic of my lecture.

The Chronicles

The origins of Ethiopian historiography can be traced back, first and foremost, to the chronicles. Of course, people tend to have a rather negative review of chronicles, and to be called a chronicler is somewhat degrading. True, chronicles do have their problems. One of them is the tendency to give a supernatural rather than a natural explanation to historical events. The leading intellectual of early twentieth century, Gabra-Heywat Baykedagn, was alluding to this deficiency when he wrote: "If our chroniclers are to be believed, Ethiopian kings and rulers have no match in world history in their need for the intervention of angels and devils." What prompted this damning assessment was the fact that most chroniclers, rather than explain historical processes through human agencies, tend to attribute victories or defeats to the intervention of God or Satan, respectively.

A second drawback of chronicles is their aversion to quantification. They rarely give even estimates of the size of an army. Rather, they would describe a big army with such phrases "as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands of the sea." This can mean anything from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands. A third drawback has been their inaccessibility to the lay reader because they were almost invariably written in Ge-ez. It is only in the nineteenth century that they began to be written in Amharic. As always, the reign of Tewodros, which has three chronicles in Amharic, is a trailblazer in this regard. The last of the chronicles is that of Menelik, by Tsahafe Te'zaz Gabra Sellassie and was also written in Amharic. One has to pay tribute in this respect to Ato Alemu Haile, who has been translating some of the medieval chronicles from Ge-ez into Amharic. This is a development that has to be welcomed and encouraged.

The above weaknesses notwithstanding, we cannot totally dismiss chronicles. They do have certain undeniable merits. The first is the remarkable continuity of the tradition of chronicle writing, from the first chronicle of Emperor Amda Seyon in the 14th century to the last one in the early 20th century. For every reign, we have at least one chronicle and sometimes two or even three. Thus, they do provide a remarkably continuous story. Very often, chronicles are the only available source. One has no other recourse, especially for the medieval period. So, one cannot dispense with them. It is only after the 16th century, when foreign travelers start coming to Ethiopia -the Portuguese first, the Jesuit missionaries next-that we begin to have other sources.

Thirdly, describing as they do, in considerable detail, the events and happenings of a reign, chronicles provide a highly indispensable narrative base. They may not be analytical, but one cannot be analytical without the proper narrative base. They also give meticulous attention to chronology. True, the chronology that they provide is often relative rather than absolute, with phrases like "in the 15th year of his reign". But one can easily make the arithmetical calculations to arrive at the absolute date.

Partly arising from the negative connotations that they evoke and partly because of their inaccessibility, chronicles have not been fully tapped by historians. What they have been used for is mostly for the religious and political information they provide, or for the linguistic value that they have for textual analysis. I think that, if they dig deep, social and even environmental historians could find a number of marginal references, which they could use to draw important conclusions.

The Pioneers

The second major antecedent to professional historiography is provided by, what I have called, the "Pioneers of Change". I have discussed them at length in my book by that title. For our purposes, I will just highlight here their most major contributions. The most prominent of them was Gabra-Heywat Baykadagn, who gave us the following fascinating description of what he characterized as proper or genuine history in his writing Atse Menelik and Ethiopia:

> "History can be of use only if it is authentic history. And it is not easy to write authentic history, for it requires the following three God-given qualities: first, a keen mind to observe past deeds; second, an impartial spirit to pass judgment on them; and third, an impeccable writing style to communicate one's observations and judgments."

The above description contains a number of important elements of historiography: Keen observation, objectivity in judgment, and effective communication. The last mentioned is an important point because some of the most famous history books are famous; not only for the research that went into them but for the style of their writing. There was, indeed, a time when history was considered a branch of literature. Some of the most famous English historians (Gibbon, McCauley, etc.) acquired their fame because of their elegant writing styles. Nowadays, the scientific element in history has tended to overshadow the literary one.

What Gabra-Heywat did not underscore is the element of industry, which is a very important element of historical research. Industrious application, rather than keen observation, is the true ingredient of historical research. You have to work hard. You have to read a lot. I think that Alaqa Tayya, Gabra-Heywat's contemporary, represented an improvement when he compared the writing of history to the work of a bee. Just as the bee has to work hard, moving from flower to flower collect nectar and produce honey, so does the historian have to read a lot of books to reconstruct history. There is no substitute for that. As it turned out, as perceptive and analytical as he was, Gabra-Heywat did not produce that much in terms of historical writing. It was others who really worked hard and were able to produce some of the precursors of modern professional history. Probably the most successful in this regard was Blatten Geta Hiruy Walda-Sellassie. In many respects, he was the most prolific of the pioneers, having had four historical works to his credit.

The Transitional Figure of Takla-Tsadeq Makuria

The third antecedent that I would like to highlight is what I would consider a kind of transitional figure. I have also called him "a bridge" elsewhere. This refers to Ato Takla-Tsadeq Makurya. He is particularly famous for his short history of modern Ethiopia, from the reign of Tewodros to Haile Sellassie. I think that one could call him, arguably, the most successful amateur historian in Ethiopia. He did not have any professional training. However, he applied himself to writing history from the early 1940s on. He has come up with a list of publications that puts to shame many of the professional historians. What distinguishes him is the way he wrote history in response to practical exigencies. It was to cater to the needs of society and state that he wrote quite a number of his books. Thus, the famous book "From Tewodros to Haile Sellassie" was written in a matter of only two weeks because there was an urgent need for a school textbook. Likewise, the trilogy on Ethiopian unity---during the reigns, successively, of Tewodros, Yohannes and Menelik---that he wrote towards the end of his career, was clearly provoked by the Eritrean secessionist movement. The trilogy shows meticulous research and careful documentation; the author had indeed benefited from Ethiopian government funding to work extensively in the European archives.

Takla-Tsadeq also wrote three volumes for the period of Ethiopian history before Tewodros – *Nubia, Axsum, Zagwe; From Yekuno Amlak to Lebna Dengel*; and *From Lebna Dengel to Tewodros.* These three volumes were of a much higher quality than the popular *From Tewodros to Haile Sellassie*. The success of Takla-Tsadeq can be explained largely by his use of the medium of Amharic. Thus, he could communicate directly with his Ethiopian audience. That is why his books were in and continue to be in high demand. By contrast, Ethiopian professional historians have tended to write almost invariably in English.

Achievements of Professional Historiography

The first most conspicuous achievement of professional historiography has been in the realm of training; from undergraduate to postgraduate. The undergraduate program started in the early 1960s, the MA program was launched in 1979 and the PhD in 1990. This training produced thousands of historians who were deployed to various sectors of society, mostly in secondary school history teaching. With the opening of the graduate program, you have staff development, to begin with for Addis Ababa University, but more recently for the regional universities as well.

The second major achievement was in the sphere of both faculty and student research. For a long time, student research was embodied in the Senior Essay, which had its glorious years in the late 1960s and early 1970s. There was a decline in the late 1970s, until it picked up once again in the 1980s, which was also the beginning of more advanced student research, first through the MA theses and then through the PhD dissertations.

Likewise, at the IES, a good deal of historical research was conducted, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, when the IES was staffed with senior researchers like Bairu Tafla and Tsehay Berhane Sellassie, even if the latter eventually abandoned history in favor of social anthropology. The Department of History initiated and sustained a worthy tradition of annual departmental seminars in the 1980s. The International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies also started to be held fairly regularly during the 1980s. From 1984, when the 8th conference was held in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the IES, Ethiopia became not only the fulcrum of the conference series but also the centre of Ethiopian studies.

Another important achievement of professional historiography has been the shift in thematic focus from political and religious history to economic history, pioneered by Richard Pankhurst, as well as to urban and, to some extent, to social history. While religious history in general might have been in decline, Islamic history witnessed great impetus, thanks largely, to the works of Hussein Ahmed. Until Hussein came onto the scene, the standard reference for Islam in Ethiopia

was Trimingham. Through sustained and diligent application, Hussein was able to reinterpret Islamic history and to examine its multiple facets.

Likewise, there was a shift of the geographical focus from the Semitic North to the Cushitic and Omotic South. This shift has been achieved, thanks largely, to the skillful exploration of oral sources. In this respect, the contribution of historians like Richard Caulk and Donald Crummey, who joined the Department of History in the mid-1960s, was significant. They brought with them the new methodological revolution that was taking place on both sides of the Atlantic. Graduates of the famous School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, they came with the conviction that to write the history of a country or people, it is not absolutely essential that you have written sources; that you can do that through the careful and skillful use of oral resources. So, what they did was to send students to the field to do oral interviews and come up with a much better Senior Essay than they used to do in the past. The University Service played a crucial role in this regard, because it was during their service years that students conducted most of the research for their Senior Essay. The fostering of external linkages was yet another achievement of professional historiography. Ethiopian historians developed strong links, particularly with American universities, even if most of the senior faculty had their training at SOAS. University of Illinois at Urbana Champagne (UIUC), Michigan State University (MSU) and Boston University emerged as strong and steady partners, providing between them PhD training for a total of a dozen of Ethiopian historians. In addition to training, there were research collaboration projects, most notably the joint IES-UIUC environmental history project in the second half of the 1990s.

While religious history in general might have been in decline, Islamic history witnesses great impetus, thanks largely, to the works of Hussein Ahmed. Until Hussein came onto the scene, the standard reference for Islam in Ethiopia was Trimingham. Through sustained and diligent application, Hussein was able to reinterpret Islamic history and to examine its multiple facets.

Limitations and Challenges

While the achievements described have been notable, professional historiography has been handicapped by some limitations or has faced certain challenges. One of the most obvious limitations has been what I have called the obsessive focus on modern history. That is very alarming development in a country whose history stretches back to at least two thousand years. As it stands, there is no replacement for Sergew Hable Sellassie and Taddesse Tamrat, who specialized in ancient and medieval Ethiopian history, respectively, or for Merid Wolde Aregay in early modern Ethiopian history for that matter. All efforts to train faculty in these areas have been unsuccessful. Only Shiferaw Bekele has tried to fill the gap with some insightful reinterpretations of early modern Ethiopian history. The recent establishment of the Department of Archaeology is an encouraging development in this respect, as new archeological findings will hopefully rekindle interest in our ancient and medieval past, which could be as fascinating as the modern.

A second limitation is the underdevelopment of gender, social and environmental history. It is true that the Department dedicated one of its annual seminars (Zeway 1999) to gender history. But that has not been followed up by any serious application to gender history. With regard to environmental history, the IES-UIUC collaborative project cited above was a major achievement. But it also needs serious follow up, along the lines of the serious work in environmental history being conducted by Donald Crummey and Jim McCann.

Another serious challenge is continuing with the important work in Islamic history pioneered by Hussein Ahmed, whose untimely death leaves a yawning gap in this respect. There is also a need for greater inter-disciplinary research, particularly in conjunction with social anthropology, linguistics and literature. There is also a need for greater integration into the African historiographical mainstream. This has been one lingering deficiency of Ethiopian historiography, even if this inward looking character is not confined to the historical discipline in Ethiopia. This is all the more surprising when one bears in mind the SOAS input of the 1960s

and 1970s. A great step forward was taken when the Department of History co-hosted with the Forum for Social Studies the 4th Congress of the Association of African historians in 2007. This momentum has to be maintained.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about the poor dissemination of research results. This is particularly the case with the many Senior Essays, MA theses and PhD dissertations that have been written in the Department. Many efforts to publish these have come to naught. I remember, in particular, one occasion when Harold Marcus took a sabbatical from MSU, shut himself at the School of Graduate Studies and came up with a list of publishable theses. But nothing durable came out of the exercise, which means that quite a lot of historical wealth remains inaccessible to the general public. Recently, there has been an encouraging trend of students taking the initiative and having their MA and PhD theses published.

Related to this is the overreliance of most professional historians on the medium of English. There are only a few exceptions. Two of our graduates translated their Senior Essays into Amharic. I also took time to translate my *A History of Modern Ethiopia* into Amharic, and it is quite evident that the Amharic version has been in greater demand in Ethiopia than the English one. There is, in short, a wide constituency for books written in Amharic and we should begin to cater to that constituency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to point out that modern or professional historiography is a relatively recent phenomenon, only about half a century old. But, as I have tried to show, it has deep roots. One can say that the historian's craft has been refined over the centuries. The Pioneers have improved on the chroniclers. Ato Takla-Tsadeq has improved on the Pioneers. The professional historians have been trying to improve on Ato Takla-Tsadeq. In the process, there has been considerable achievement made, in both training and research. Yet, so much more remains to be done in terms of thematic research and also in terms of joining the African and global mainstream of historiography

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Modernity, Language and Identity

Introduction

In this presentation, I use the term *modernity* to refer to any major socio-cultural changes located between the past and the future, but with a scope that may extend a bit to both. In temporal terms, this is what is called the relative present. Such major changes stem from the past, where existing distinctive features get negated in favor of a new set of features. These features trigger the emergence of a relatively new socio-cultural reality. The new reality, which is a transform of the past, is what I will refer to by the term *modern*, which is in part, a negation of the past and heraldic of the future. Its main characteristic features are partly innovation and partly retention of the distinctive features of the past, and the socio-cultural relations therein, through a process of revision and/or total transformation. The purpose of the revision or transformation is to develop a relatively better set of features (strategies) of collective survival, through the use of cultivated creative capacity, that heavily rests on necessity and freewill.

The overall result of the changes or transformation is the attainment of a sense of security and meaning which, one would hope, the new socio-cultural reality would provide. In other words, relationships in the new reality would be relatively more humane, inclusive and intellectually liberating than ever before. In short, the new reality should be more ensuring, creative, humanistic and therapeutic for the ills of the past that triggered the changes to come about in the first place. One would cite, in this regard, for example, the Axumite, the Zague, and the Godarine periods of Ethiopian history as loci of such major changes in art and architecture; the medieval sectarian movements of the Stephanite order for freedom of conscience; Tewodros's visionary attempt towards the emergence of a culturally transformed and politically united Ethiopia in

the mid 19th century; the introduction of Western, alias modern, education in the 20th century, which produced a generation of vanguards that assumed a midwifery role for Marxist oriented changes, but then lost itself in the process, pretty much like the visionary monarch, who also became victim of his own vision and design when both got derailed amid internal and external forces.

In light of the above understanding of the concept of modernity as a state of change or transformation, either internally motivated or externally induced, or both, I try to make a cursory overview of what such changes would mean in the study of language; a phenomenon which I take to be an objective tool of sense construction, identity formation and maintenance.

Language and Modernity

In the history of the field, there have been points across times and places, where language was defined as an object of empirical enquiry more so than as a subject of speculative excursion into its (divine) nature and/or mundane use. This trend had its roots among the ancients of Greece, Rome and Alexandria, the Paninian tradition in India, and that of the Arab grammarians in the Middle East. The speculations centered on language as a mental representation, a divine light in the terminology of Descartes, with external manifestations in the form of different tongues that serve as expressions of senses and identities of speakers. In current discourse, language is understood as a set of expressions of various genres, all of which emerge from shared linguistic knowledge of social constructs in which it (language) serves as their means of sense construction and identity formation. Underlying this sociological view, is the fact that language and sense have an independent but interactive existence, where sense gets its form from language and language gets its communicative relevance from sense.

In order for language to serve as a means of sense construction, or identity formation, it must itself be viewed as a construct of more basic sets of categories, which organize themselves into larger constituents. In classical terms, such basic categories are what are called Onoma and

Rhema, two Greek terms, which roughly correspond to 'names' and 'actions', respectively, with a third category, conjunctive, serving them as a connective. Terms of Onoma combine with that of Rhema to form larger structures, which serve as a means of expression or construction of larger sense units in events of communication.

Such a functional definition of language as a means of sense construction is a departure from the established wisdom that viewed it as only a tool of sense expression. The difference between the two functions of sense expression and sense construction lies on a priori assumption that takes sense as a construct in its own right and that language serves as its expression, in which case, the latter is viewed as a kind of conduit. This view was to find its negation in a counter assumption, which took sense as having no independent existence, but as an object that gets constructed in terms of other senses and with which it forms a network of relationships of contrast and/or complementation in domains of communication. It is this contrastive or complementary relationship that delineates one sense from another in events of communication.

The three categories of forms were later corroborated with a sub-set of categories. whose function is to specify or modify the basic ones. These include what came to be known as adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and prepositions, all of which are relational in function. They situate objects and events in temporal and spatial locations or align them with attributes of all types, such as; dimension, color, etc. With these sub-categories added, the total set became eight. This was considered universal in terms of which almost all the words of Greek and Latin were to be defined, classified and their dictions to be prescribed by the pedants of the day. The words of vernaculars - a term pejoratively used to refer to the non-literate languages of Europe, and, by extension, to all others overseas - should fall neatly into this universal set. Those that fail to do so would be branded primitive and their speakers to be considered uncivilized and/or vulgar, simply because their use of language is not in accordance with the prescribed standard of both diction and style.

It was also the case that what was considered as language was primarily that which was written. The spoken variety was considered adulterated, and hence, impure since it is a product of both

the learned and the illiterate. Among the written languages, were Greek and Latin in which literary masterpieces, such as; the Odyssey, for example, had been produced by the best and most creative minds of the time. The difference between the written and the spoken, the pure and the adulterated, extends itself to cultures, which were also valued as high and low, and for both of which language was to serve as their written and/spoken medium. The low variety is often associated with the rustic and the vulgar spoken language, and the high with the literate and the urbane. This characterization led to a sociolinguistic and cultural dichotomy among users of the same or different languages.

A rough analogy in favor of such a characterization of languages, cultures and peoples may be drawn, for example, from the following Amharic couplets:

'manner of dressing up is untidy'
'manner of speaking is ill-enunciated'

Untidy attires accompanied by ill-articulated senses serve as a marker of non-literate rural folks, against urban literates whose style of life may have the semblance of *modernity* '*zämänawinnät*' and whose style of speech/writing a flavor of urbane diction, both of which lend themselves to a distinctively chauvinistic tendency that invites the term z*ämänay or* z*äbänay, a state of 'excessive arrogance'* as its expression. This is often made in reference to the monarchy, which assumes divine power and to the literati that claim a level of supremacy over the non-literate mass. Thus the proverbial expressions:

'Lunatics and z*ämänay* speak their mind'
'A king is inviolable as the sky is uncultivable'

Such analogues are in consonance with the assumption that language, written or spoken, is not just a conduit of sense as hinted at above; it is also a means of identity formation and expression, as was pointed out earlier on, thus reminding us of the often quoted sociolinguistic dictum:

"Speak so that I know you."

Knowledge, in this respect, refers to both the sense of an expression and the essence or state of mind of the person who produces it. In other words, essence is to the mind of the speaker as sense is to the word of the language which he/she uses in constructing it (sense), in the course of communications in varying contexts. Support for such speculations about sense and essence also come from the following Amahric and Geez expressions of rationalist tint:

'Mind becomes visible as one utters'
'And you know them from their fruits (= words)'

Such statements attest to the fact that *we are what we speak*, and *what we speak is also what we think we know* at any point in time and space.

Irrespective of its form, spoken or written, language is thus understood as a reflection of a mental state – an essence - as well as a description of a physical object – speech that reflects the former, to both of which, modern linguistics of the Chomskyan School subscribes, but with a departure from the age old thinking that language is only writing - a product of a learned mind. This is in denial of the fact that speech is as old as man, whereas writing is as old as 'civilized' man, that is, symbol-using man.

It is the link between the two states, the mental representation and the physical realization, alias articulation, in the form of speech and not writing, which has been a major preoccupation of many rationalist philosophers of the Platonic, Cartesian, Humboldtian, and Chomskyan tenets. To these, one would add two 17th century homegrown rationalists, Zära Ya'kob and Woldä Hiywät, who were contemporaries of Descartes; and Däbtära Zännäb and Hiruy Wolde Sellassie of later times, whose rationalist thinking pervades their literary works as attested, for example, in M*äs'hafä C'äwata Sïgawi Wämänfäsawi* and W*ädaje Lïbbe*, respectively.

Going back to the basic categories to which all languages ought to subscribe, one would entertain the idea that it is possible for genetically related languages like Greek and Latin to behave so,

while it is equally implausible for the so called vernaculars of Europe and many others spoken elsewhere to deviate from the universal set, and therefore, to be labeled primitive. For example, languages like modern English may neatly fall into the Greco-Roman categories, since they have adjectives and adverbs, whereas this is not always the case for other languages in which adjectival and adverbial notions are expressed by means of other categories. Consider, for example, the English sentence in (1) and its Amharic counterpart in (2):

(1) John drives slowly

(2) Kasa bä-ziggita yi - näd -al
K. by-slow 3MSG-drive-PRES
Lit. 'Kasa drives with slowness'

In English, the manner of doing things, such as; driving, is expressed by adverbs, such as; *slowly* derived from the adjective *slow*. In Amharic, the same adverbial concept is expressed by a prepositional phrase which is derived by merging the preposition *bä-* and the noun *zïggïta* 'slowness'. The contrast suggests that Amharic does not fit into the categories of English and, by extension, into that of Greek and Latin as it lacks a lexical category, adverb.[12]

To prescribe that all languages should fit into the Greco-Roman paradigm of categories is to deny the existence or to downgrade the status of such languages as Amharic, which have adverbial functions, but do not have adverbial lexemes in their vocabulary as expressions. One would extend the same argument to adjectives, which are lacking in many languages, and as a result, in such languages, adjectival notions are expressed by other categories, such as; stative verbs. Examples of such languages include Oromo, in which, we find structures like the following, where a stative verb *guddate* 'become big' is used in a context where an adjective is expected[13].

Tulluu-n gudd-at-e
T. Nom big-MD-PF
'Tullu got big'

12 Getahun Amare. 1995. Issues of Time and Place Adverbs in Amharic. *African Languages and Cultures.* Vol. 8:2. (126-136)
13 Oromo has also adjectival expressions with the copula d'a as in the following examples: Tulluu-un goddaa d'a, T-nom big be, 'Tullu is big'.

The fact that languages use different means for expressing or constructing senses, and describing manners of doing things implies that language is a capacity of infinite creativity and variety, and that each language, as a social expression, is a unique reflection of a capacity that gets mediated through the expressions of its speakers. These speakers also constitute a unique social construct defined by their shared mental capacity (competence) and by their particular use (performance) of it as determined by specific contexts.[14] A structure with a stative verb is, thus, the same as a structure with an adjective, in terms of its sense and the essence of the person that produces it.

The fact that a language does not have adjectives or adverbs in its vocabulary does not necessarily imply that such a language is less efficient in expressing adjectival notions, nor does it suggest that it is primitive or inferior to any other language that may have a multitude of adjectival words in their stock, nor does it warrant the argument that speakers of such languages as Amharic or Oromo are less civilized, or more vulgar than others. The difference between any two languages is a matter of variation in the particular use of the same human linguistic capacity, in its richness and flexibility in actual use, more so than in the attitudes that societies may harbor towards speakers of varieties that may sound different or unpleasant to their ears.

Such negative attitudes are not infrequent and may not even be far from home. Speakers of languages with pharyngeal consonants are often identified as sounding hoarse in contrast to those others whose languages lack such sounds and, as a result, their speech sounds soft and pleasing. Such subjective statements of contrast were not infrequently made with regard to the difference between, say, Amharic on the one hand, and other languages like Tigrigna, on the other, which have pharyngeal sounds.[15] On a much broader scale, prejudices of the same sort are not hard to find among African elites, who think that they get more comfort from the use of colonial languages like French than from their mother tongues, alias local vernaculars, which in the eyes of their colonial masters, are sub-standard if not vulgar. Leopold Sedar Senghor is one such person to have been quoted so much for his attitudes towards Africans and African

14 Chomsky, Noam. *Knowledge of Language, Its Nature and Use*. Praeger. 1986.
15 Gebre Amlak, Beemnet.

languages vis-à-vis that of French and its speakers, to one of whom, he was also wedded.

> We Africans are cultural hybrids, and if we feel as Negroes, we express ourselves in French, because French is a language with universal vocation, so that our message is also addressed to the French and to other men. French gave us a gift of its abstract words – so rare in our mother tongues. In our mother tongues the *words are naturally haloed with a halation of sap and blood*, whereas *French words radiate with a thousand of fires, like diamonds, rockets which clarify our night, (emphasis mine, B.Y)* [16]

This same attitude was emulated by people like President Nicolas Sarkozy, who, in a speech he made at the University of Dakar, paid special tribute to Senghor for his love of the French language by extensively quoting from what he called the 'grande voix' (great message) of Senghor to the youth of Senegal. Both Senghor's 'grande voix' and Sarkozy's sanction of it were met by a rebuff from a disgruntled Senegalese, who, in the same source, said, "I have no praise for him (Senghor) neither is his path one I would want to follow." This is a statement of blatant negation of the colonial mentality which Senghor, and by extension others like him, had cherished so dearly, and which Sarkozy praised so profusely[17].

From a formal linguistic point of view, no language is poorer or richer than any other language; nor is a language more pleasing or discomforting than any other. Each is as pleasant to the ears as it is easy to the tongues (organs) of its speakers; each is also efficient and sufficient for the perception and expression of the culture of its speakers. Differences across languages are inevitable and unavoidable as they (languages) are sets of expressions differently organized from different sets of objects, that is, sounds and words. Higher level variations come from their local or social contexts of use, which is always the case, since we are all speakers of dialects and not necessarily of languages, the latter being abstractions of the former, and as such mental representations. I may speak, for example, a variety of Amharic that is used in the locality of

16 Senghor, Leopold, S. *Point on Africa*. The Bolgger. October 2009.
17 Some parallels can be drawn here between the classical languages of Geez and Arabic on the one hand, and the modern Semitic languages on the other, with regard to the same concept of purism defining the former and vulgarism characterizing the latter.

Wollo and also a variety that is spoken in Addis Ababa, which is considered standard, because of its use by the power elites who are *zämänawi,* and, hence, also *zämänay* to those others who may sound rustic in their speech and also look clumsy in their outfit, as the above couplets put it. The attitude people may have towards my identity may, thus, vary according to the particular variety I use, and the type of attire I appear in. I may be identified as 'a vulgar elite' by those who speak the Addis Ababa dialect because my Wollo variety sounds strange if not rustic to them; and I may be labeled ' a modern elite' if and when I use my Addis Ababa dialect, which as stated above, is an expression of power, thus *zämänawi and also zämänai* . At such macro (social) levels, the variety one uses serves as a marker of his/her social or local identity, no less as an expression of his/her sense and/or essence.

In many Ethiopian languages, plural expressions are restricted to things that have relevance in the lives of people. It is not the case that anything which can be counted or measured has a plural marker, contrary to what we find in languages like English, for example, in which any noun refer ring to an object that can be counted is used with a plural morpheme. This is a contrast that exists between or among speakers of languages in the way they perceive, count or measure things and determine their values in terms of their social or economic relevance.[18] For example, in some languages, the word for *hen* is used with the plural marker whereas the word for *bird* is not, though both *hen* and *bird* are countable. However, since *bird* has little or no social or economic value or relevance compared to *hen*, it is not used with a plural marker; instead, it is used as a generic or collective term for the entire species of birds. Observe the following Amharic expression in this connection.

Doro-wočč-u as-čäggär-u
hen-pl-def cs-trouble-3PL
'The hens created problem'

And compare the above with the following:

18 Sperber, Dan. and D. Wilson. 1986. Relevance: Cognition and Communication. Oxford: Blackwell.

wäf as-čãggãr-ã[19]

bird cs-trouble-3MSG

'Bird creates problem'

The contrast suggests that language is an object of sense construction or expression. It is not, and cannot be uniform in its use across societies, or even across native speakers of the same language, who may view relevance differently. For example, the word *pork* has contrastive relevance among Catholics and Muslims. For the latter, it is a reminder of sin whereas for the former, it could be a delight for the palate. And yet, both Muslims and Catholics may belong to the same social construct in which they share the same linguistic capacity but differ in their use of it and valuation of things, for which they use the language as expressions of grammatical features such as number.

Conclusion

In summation, I want to wrap up this cursory presentation on language, modernity and identity with a note that language as a means of sense expression or construction on the one hand, and identity formation and maintenance on the other, has the unavoidable effect of polarizing its users into contrastive, though not always conflicting, identities or sub-identities that assume differential power positions. Those that are empowered through, say, education, which serves as a stepping stone or gateway to modernity and hence to power, feel elevated much more so than those who are not. Education is one such domain in which language is pedantically applied

to facilitate both the grooming and the transition of power to the few, often to the alienation of the masses. In this respect, one would cautiously conclude that Ethiopian modernity and perhaps that of others like us, whose sense of modernity is a derivative of the colonial past, and/or the neocolonial present, is a feature of enlightened self-service, much more than a beacon of those universal human values stated at the beginning of this presentation.

19 Of course one can use the plural waf-occ-u 'the birds' in a context where the reference of wafoccu is to a specific flock of birds.

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Reflections on the Urban Changes of Addis Ababa

"Slums": Change and Modernity

Background

This essay reflects upon the ongoing urban change in Addis Ababa. It stresses the importance of learning from the positive features of slums[20] and transferring these attributes into urban redevelopment schemes. The essay does not seek to preserve the physical fabric of slums. Rather, it highlights the responsiveness of slums to city dweller's way of life and their livelihoods. It cautions against the skewed influence of architectural modernism, which focuses solely on material aspects over cultural needs. It calls for exploring the notion of 'another modernism' in redeveloping slums; an alternative modernism that does not take culture as its excuse to preserve slums, but rather accepts the need for redeveloping slums while responding to the socio-economic requirements of the low-income majority who reside in slums.

Change

Change in this essay is understood through three filters: scale, speed and depth. Scale refers to the visibility and magnitude of change and speed refers to the tempo of change, while depth refers to whether the change is structural or cosmetic/superficial. The scale, speed and depth of the ongoing urban change in Addis Ababa can be considered as intense and forceful. Its magnitude can probably warrant the use of the term 'transformation' rather than change. This

20 Owing to its associated derogatory connotation, the use of the term 'slum' was largely considered inappropriate. As a result, more neutral terms that capture the diversity of settlements and the potential of slum dwellers had been in use. Following the mid 1990s however, the term slum was re-introduced in the development discourse as organizations formed by dwellers in some countries started to refer themselves as 'slum dweller' organizations.

is to say that while the term change could easily associated be with a gradual movement from one state to another; transformation captures extreme change characterized by large scale, high speed and structural depth. An unprecedented urban transformation has engulfed Addis Ababa, following decades of deep slumber. The construction of roads, high rise buildings and condominium housing blocks are transforming the city for good, lending to it a new sky line. About 80,000 condominium housing units have been built since 2004, with many more to come. Even more visible are the new roads crisscrossing the city that thrive to create a well connected network of thoroughfare.

One of the major factors that necessitated the ongoing transformation of the city is rapid urbanization and the ensuing challenges that come with it. It is true that many developing countries are urbanizing at high speed. The main reasons for rapid urbanization in developing countries are rural-urban migrations, the increase of populations within the city itself and the redefinition of the city's boundary, as it continues to spread and set new territories and city demarcations. The rapid urbanization in Addis Ababa is also a consequence of parallel situations. This predicament has burdened limited existing infrastructures, social facilities and basic necessities, such as; housing. It has resulted in further overcrowding of previously crowded settlements. As a result, more than seventy percent of the neighborhoods and housing units in the city are considered slums. These houses, which are commonly known as 'kebele houses' are generally single storey mud and wood constructions and are occupied by the majority of low income people. It should also be noted, that rapid urbanization plays to be the major factor that has hindered bridging the gap between housing demand and supply. It is estimated that more than 300,000 housing units are required to address backlog demands and to replace dilapidated slums.

As compared to other parts of the city, the pressure for change is extremely high in the inner city. Low income households are persistently coerced by the market and the government to move their domiciles. Due to the relatively available trunk infrastructure and utilities in the inner city, there is also a tremendous pressure from both the government and developers to redevelop the

'kebele' housing dominated slums. The inner city covers less than 12% of the total area of Addis Ababa. It is home to about 40% of the population that is estimated to be 3 million. The master plan earmarks the entire core of the city and its intermediate zone for renewal and upgrading respectively. It can thus be said that, with the exception of the expansion area, the entire city is set for transformation.

The question then is what had been done to address the need for transformation. Most of the ongoing transformations of major scale are government driven. The condominium housing, the regularization/legalization of informal settlements, the 'eco city' upgrading in the inner city settlements, the impressive road construction and major core city renewal activities are all government sponsored. The main issue, however, is whether the emerging change is responsive to the cultural and material needs of the city's inhabitants and particularly of the city's majority low income residents. I argue, that there are positive elements to slums that could be transferred to emerging neighborhoods and condominium housings.

Slums and Modernity

The use of the word slum dates back to the 16th century, at the time signifying 'squalid, overcrowded and wretched housing's of the West. Later, during the 19th century, the word was used in quotation marks associated to crime, drug abuse, epidemics etc. In the 20th century, following the need to use more precise terms, words, such as; 'tenement houses' are used interchangeably with shanty houses, squatter settlements, informal housing, spontaneous settlements and low-income communities. In the case of Addis Ababa, the term slum refers to the deteriorated physical condition of settlements, rather than the social connotation that it was associated with in Western contexts. In most cases, the slums of Addis Ababa are not seen as segregated places of hopelessness and crime. On the contrary, the close social network prevalent in Addis Ababa's slums provided a cushion for vulnerability and risk.

Despite their physical conditions, there are numerous positive features of slums that could be considered when developing new neighborhoods. The first is the street life in slums. Roads in

the slums of Addis Ababa are not just paths or thoroughfares. They are rather vibrant places of multi-tasking. Domestic activities and home based businesses extend and flow out into the streets. The usual scenery has views of drying laundry hanging across the streets, women preparing food in make-shift kitchens, street vendors selling goods as well as the movements of pedestrians and vehicles. Furthermore, the streets are a social space of interaction. One can say that the livelihood of most low income people living in slums depends on the connection between the housing units and the streets. The numerous activities on the streets and the small kiosks of punctured fences lend the streets both vibrancy and safety.

Other elements that exist in slums are pockets of shared spaces. These are voids between housing units used for living, with household chores and larger communal activities. These spaces, depending on their varying sizes and locations, can accommodate from the smallest outdoor activities, such as; manual coffee grinding, to the largest activities, such as; erecting tents for weddings or funeral occasions. Thus, the spaces are amenable for private, semi-private/semi-public and public activities, which are highly desirable and responsive to the culture.

Nevertheless, slums are generally perceived as signs of backwardness and spaces that are defiant to modernity. The term modern, as elusive and difficult as it is for definition, has great influence in setting a goal for urban changes. In the world of architecture and urbanism, modernity is associated with industrialization and is the universal “cultural expression of the machine age.” It is characterized by abstract forms, industrially produced building materials, efficiency and order through the zoning of engineering and is generally the creation of rational man.

The influence of European modernism has become so potent that it has engulfed the disposition of all aspects of life of developing countries, such as; Ethiopia. The prerequisite of European modernism had been industrialization. Its drawbacks are being extensively debated during the current age and, particularly, its exasperated characteristics of neglect for cultural aspects that have resulted in a dehumanized and faceless urban character. Such debates are sidelined in countries like Ethiopia, as the urgent concern for politicians and donors is the hurried expedition

to the universal conception of European modernity. Developing countries, such as Ethiopia, are trying to replicate similar values, simultaneously demolishing essential and significant components of their cultural fabrics. Witness the ramifications of such on the increased construction of Addis Ababa's condominium housing, which is partly replacing demolished slums. Despite the impediments that these have brought upon the cultural fabric, one must also, nevertheless, recognize the advantages and the contributions of condominium housing towards alleviating the daunting housing challenge that the city is facing. In fact, condominium housing has numerous constructive elements in terms of affordability, easing the crucial housing shortage, creating relatively decent housing, creating job opportunities and invigorating the construction and transportation industries.

It is nonetheless important to deliberate on indigenous values that had traditionally been constructive and productive while contemplating modernity and modernization. A reflection is therefore in order to seek lessons from the positive elements of slums and their possible implementation in new housing neighborhoods. This may require further interrogation of classical modernism and inspiration may be sought from what some authors refer to as 'another modernism;' a concept that blends the health and technology aspect of classical modernism with the positive qualities of indigenous assortments, such as; slums. The point of departure of 'another modernism' is generally the effort to be inclusive of culture in all attempts of modernism. For instance, it is argued that Africa is not lagging behind the so called developed countries but that on the contrary the continent enjoys a diversified way of life that the developed world lacks. It is argued, that this reality by itself is a manifestation of modernism or what can be referred to as; 'another modernism.' This argument, however, inadvertently advocates the preservation of the physical conditions of slum areas, in which often people reside in appalling conditions in African cities. The reason being, the prevalent discourse of 'another modernism' masks the need for material development by focusing on culture. Therefore, this essay propagates a divergent 'another modernism' that recognizes the need for the improvement of the physical condition of slum areas, while, at the same time, responding to the socio-economic requirements of low income people.

Conclusion

New housing neighborhoods should be designed; taking into account both the material and cultural needs of the majority of low income people. Fulfilling the requirements of health and affordability is central. Of equal importance are the issues of creating places/spaces that strongly enhance the socio cultural and economic activities of people; places that combine space, context and social interaction. We need to aspire to have more neighborhoods that enhance a sense of belonging, making their residents proud to identify themselves with the area, hence, contributing to boosting their identity. This calls for looking at neighborhoods, not as a mere collection of housing units as if people were numbers, but also as places that satisfy their social, cultural and psychological needs.

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Modernity and Change in Addis Ababa

A Brief History of Addis Ababa

Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia was founded in the latter part of the 19th century. Menelik; the founding monarch of the city, allocated large tracts of land to important personalities of the state, such as; regional rulers, military chiefs and the clergy, after the city was founded. Following this development, these personalities and their followers settled in the new capital from the late 1880s onwards. The earlier settlements were based on existing feudal and military style type camps, where the dignitary of a region settled on top of a hill and administered his *sefer*. A *sefer* is an area similar to a military settlement or camp, with a buffer zone in between. These village-like settlements or camps were separated by natural boundaries, such as; rivers and steep slopes. The main inhabitants of any one particular *sefer* were soldiers, priests and civil servants, who were related or acquainted to the dignitary of that particular *sefer*. In those days, one had to traverse steep slopes, streams and winding paths to go from one *sefer* to the other. Thus, the structure of Addis Ababa was that of a multi-centered semi-rural settlement. Once the capital started to look more permanent, Menelik successfully diverted the older trade routes, by dint of making Addis Ababa the center for customs collection. The revenues from customs collection increased the income of the royal court and financed the construction work of the city. Hence, Menelik gradually transformed Addis Ababa into a political and commercial center.

The terrible famine, which lasted1889 -1892, forced more people to migrate from the rural areas to Addis Ababa. The migration of people and the increasing number of nobility, who resided in Addis Ababa after the 1890s, forced the Emperor to modify traditional forms of land tenure and

taxation, in order to support the growing population. Traditionally, urban land belonged to the throne; citizens could be granted or denied the right to own land and use it.

Besides his desire to acquire large quantities of arms, Emperor Menelik was also interested in technology. Many modern technological innovations were introduced to Ethiopia during his reign. Unlike his conservative dignitaries, he was curious about new discoveries. For instance, Menelik was not only the first Ethiopian to drive a car but he also received the first driving license. The birth of the capital also coincided with a period of new discoveries in Europe. The victory of Adwa contributed to the positive image of Ethiopia and attracted foreigners to Addis Ababa. Some of the foreign immigrants, who came after the victory of the Battle of Adwa, such as; Indians, Armenians and Greeks, were involved in construction work and introduced new building techniques.

Menelik's Modernizing Ventures of Addis Ababa

After the fire of 1892, which destroyed the old Ghebi (palace) and its environs, more ambitious construction activities began to emerge that expanded upon the previous facilities. With the coming of modern materials and techniques, a gradual change in the external appearance, finishing and durability of buildings was evident. The earlier structures were built with open verandahs on the perimeters and the roofs covered with thatch. After the arrival of the railway line in Addis Ababa, the open verandahs were gradually covered with glazed wooden curtain walls and the roofs were covered with corrugated iron sheeting. The shiny corrugated iron sheet roofs changed the appearance of the city, thus giving Addis Ababa the images of modernity and change.

The buildings of the early period of Addis Ababa are living proofs of its development. They showed the ambitions of the nobility and the coming together of diverse skills from different countries. The buildings exemplified the gradual change from a predominantly agrarian society into an urban one. This change was perceived as a process of "modernization."

Road construction in Addis Ababa first started in 1901. The road leading to Entoto, the place where Addis Ababa was first configured, was built in 1904. The city later moved to where it is presently. The first office of the municipality was located near Arada on the northern side of Mahatma Gandhi Street. The winding road leading to Entoto Mariam was built under the supervision of the Italian engineer Castagna. The inclined surface was first leveled by manual digging, then paved with stone and completed with the addition of gravel. The work was very labor intensive. The Emperor and his court depended mainly on foreigners and, particularly, on Europeans to introduce and operate modern innovations. The Emperor formed an advisory council consisting of foreigners, the French Leon Chefneux and the Syrian Idlibe amongst many others. It was later, and after the arrival of the railway in Addis Ababa in 1917, that Ethiopians started to fully participate in new inventions in technology. This led to an increase in the amount and in the diversity of imported items.

Different imported commodities, such as; kerosene and abjedid (white cotton textile used for clothing and building materials) found their way into the market. Bringing their agricultural products, peasants living around Addis Ababa would sell them in the markets to purchase imported commodities. The residents of Addis Ababa bought their daily necessities directly from the open market until shops eventually started to supply most commodities. In those days, it was assumed that being urban or being a city dweller was being 'civilized' or 'modern,' being exposed to new innovations and to an urban life style.

Addis Ababa Before and After the Italian Occupation

Ras Teferi was coronated in 1930. He administered the nation from 1916-1929 and gradually built up and consolidated his position both at home and abroad. He traveled to Europe in 1924 in an effort to promote his country and to learn from the industrialized world. After his visit to Europe, the number of motor cars increased in Addis Ababa, thus necessitating additional paved roads. In later efforts in modernizing the city, foreign engineers and planners found out that Addis Ababa's spontaneous growth settlements were not conducive to modern infrastructure

development. Roads had to be introduced into existing neighborhoods by slicing through private compounds. During the coronation ceremony of Emperor Haile Selassie, efforts were made to make the capital look clean and modern in order to receive dignitaries.

During the Italian occupation of 1936-1941, the city underwent a massive transformation. The existing settlements were considered incompatible with the vision of the Fascist regime. A new city master plan was urgently prepared to create the capital of Italy's East African colonies. The Italian master plan, which was based on the ideals of the fascist leaders, tried to exhibit Italian presence and domination in the urban space. It used architecture and planning as one of its main tools, not only to display its ideals but also to modernize the traditional state. Segregation between Italian and indigenous quarters was, consequently, one of its main features. A grid layout was super imposed onto the organic form of the city. Insertion of a new government center amongst the existing Ethiopian imperial compound was a demonstration of colonial domination. Architecture and urban design were used as a means of displaying colonial power and superiority.

It was also planned that the indigenous population would be settled according to their ethnic origin and religion, in areas designated for them. Interestingly, the main ideas of modern planning during the Italian fascist rule, which promoted zoning and segregation, did not last long, as zoning and gridiron layout was completely alien to the spontaneously grown *sefers*.

Almost all the buildings built during the first years of the occupation had two stories and were built of stone masonry that used local techniques that fit with Italian needs. After the end of the Italian occupation, a new master plan was prepared by British planners. In the 1960s, the capital was introduced to modern high rise buildings on selected locations. The idea was to change the city's landscape. Despite this effort, the city remained predominantly low rise during the following decades, with large slum areas.

Today, one can still observe traditional looking settlements in Addis Ababa, together with medium and high rise buildings. Unlike most African cities, historically Addis Ababa's social fabric had been mixed, where, until recently, rich and poor lived in the same neighborhood. This state of affairs had been a subject of discussion amongst many scholars. Some considered the city's combined assortment of activities, as well as its class mix, as chaotic, while others applauded it as healthy and natural. In fact, urban sociologists claim that the relatively low crime rate that Addis Ababa is known for was mainly as a result of its class mix, in which rich and poor lived harmoniously side by side. In terms of social and cultural qualities, modern planning has a lot to learn from the spontaneously grown urban fabric of Addis Ababa. Unfortunately, with growing urbanization and new real estate developments, which are built exclusively for upper classes, and the rapid rise in low and middle income condominium housings, financed by the state, a gradual segregation between different classes is emerging.

The lack of designated public open space, with the exception of Jan Meda and Meskel Square, has also become a serious challenge for the city. The well being of urban dwellers is dependent on open spaces that are reserved and designed for parks, sport activities and public meeting places. The open spaces that the city took for granted in the past are quickly disappearing. As city planners build higher buildings and density increases in the city, the need for green open spaces becomes all the more pertinent. The high price attached to land is also pushing developers to build densely, simultaneously creating poor urban design qualities. At the same time, decision makers are more interested in income generated from land through lease, rather than leaving open spaces for public use. Eventually, this state of affairs will result in a city that looks developed but will not properly meet the needs of its people.

In-spite of the fact that modernization via the development of urban areas and infrastructure is desired; it is weakening and changing the earlier qualities of the city. The social mix that had been unique to the setup of the city is gradually being eroded by medium and high rise housing

blocks. Wide streets and ring roads can be signs of modernity and can also facilitate vehicular traffic, but unfortunately, they also minimize public interaction and activities taking place in urban spaces.

The outskirts of Addis Ababa are being filled with upper class real estate developments, which are gradually segregating themselves as gated communities and where residents commute to the city center by car. This suburbanization has increased vehicular traffic, consequently bringing about high energy consumption and air pollution in the city. More highways attract more cars, resulting in dreadful congestion, which has become a chronic problem of so many cities of the developing world.

As almost all our urban planners, architects and engineers are trained according to the ideals of widely accepted notions of modernist planning; it had not been possible to develop city plans that are compatible with the existing fabric. Amongst planners and architects, it is widely thought that the more glittery and higher the buildings, the more modern the city becomes. We have yet to understand and to find the appropriate type of modernity for our cities, which should combine the positive aspects of local knowledge and context with adopted foreign innovations.

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The Beginning of Ethiopian Modernism: A Brief Synopsis on the Inception of Ethiopian Visual Modernism (1957-1974)

Introduction

"Elusive as it may be," says Salah Hassan, Africa is a complex intellectual construct that means different things to different people'. However, it is sure that Africa is also a diverse and highly complex historical entity. In that context, whatever it is that we mean by "African" including of course African modernism, is the product of this historically complex entity and global presence. African as a concept may signal commonality in the sense of a shared historical experience, but it is by no means a product of cultural similarities. Then, what is African modernism? From the outset, two points should be emphasized:

> The plurality of modernity, even in its European context,
>
> The realization that there are other modernisms beyond the European context.[21]

Hassan challenges traditional notions of modernism by introducing the ambivalence and plurality of modernism in a review of the exhibition "Short Century, Liberation and Independence.[22] This is an exhibition that challenged the colonial ontology and gave new importance to the creative principles and personalities of African liberation and independence movements. While scholars, like Hassan, have been key to challenging modernity's assumptions that have guided the social, political and cultural analysis of modernism, the discursive effects and implications of exhibitions like 'Short Century' have also been far reaching in contexts of cultural representation.

21 Hassan, Salah. *From the Editor*. NKA Journal of Contemporary African Art. Fall/Winter. 15 (2001): 13.
22 *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994*, a landmark exhibition exploring African culture through art, film, photography, graphics, architecture, music, literature, and theater held at the Contemporary Art Center in New York in 2002.

Okwui Enwezor, the curator of 'Short Century,' valorized the heroes of the struggle, many of whom were artists and poets, who made efforts to define the collective experiences of marginality. Hence, one could say that the trajectory of African modernism took its fundamental root in diasporic artists of the liberation and independence movements and their politicized philosophy, which became a vital discourse in challenging European cultural primacy. As Okwui Enwezor also states, "Independence and liberation movements in Africa found critical and philosophical approaches in the fact that they announced themselves as political and social movements and as a philosophy of culture." [23] The discursive boundary of African modernism has since deployed itself as a distinct category of modernism, by taking on the task of clarifying the complex and contradictory relationship of modernity.

Complex aesthetic, political, and philosophical questions continue to dominate discussions of African modernity and modernism, exploring an alternative way to understand their trajectory beyond familiar discourses. It is also within this complementary discourse that one can interpret Ethiopian modernism, not only to understand its historical trajectory but also to problematize prevailing notions of modernity and modernism and the limitations of its Western genealogy.

The Beginning of Ethiopian Modernism

If one was to periodize the historical trajectory of modernity and modernism in Ethiopia, one would focus on the period from 1941-74; the reign of Emperor Haile Selasssie I. It is especially important to assess the imaginaries and sensibilities of modernity in Emperor Haile Selassie's time, not only because his modernist projects are widely discussed among Ethiopian intellectuals, but also because his reign significantly charted the course of Ethiopian modernism. It was during his reign that a new genre of literature, art, and music flourished. His reign marks the beginning of a phase that enabled conditions for the rise of modernism. The 1950s and 60s, the period after the Italo-Ethiopian War and the heyday of the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie was also a time during which the movement of African decolonization peaked in radical popular

23 Enwezor, Okwui (2001). The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994: An Introduction. In Okwui Enwezor (Ed.), *The Short Century*, Munich: Prestel Verlag. p.11.

consciousness with scores of innovations in theater, literature and art throughout the continent. Ethiopia during the 1950s and 60s was politically significant for African activism and was a distinct hallmark of Pan-Africanism. The pursuit for continental unity took root in Addis Ababa in 1963, when heads of African states convened at a historic meeting at the Organization of African Unity.

While Ethiopia became the hub for the discourse of an African modernity in the making, it is also unfortunate that a strong and stable intellectual culture of Ethiopian modernism, which should have captured the contradictory profile of Ethiopian modern art and the adaptation of indigenous and exogenous practices, which covers all the predicaments of the modern world, failed to assume currency. While Pan-Africanism, Addis Ababa being its home, was articulating the deeply politicized search for multiple experiences of black identity, Ethiopian scholars were looking at projects of Ethiopian modernity in a narrow range of meaning that ignored the discursive space of its multiplicity. This same non-judicious narrative of modernity and modernism continues to filter into the archival and pedagogical accounts of Ethiopian modernity and modernism. Conventional preconceptions by Ethiopian historians of modernity and modernism are often still confused with processes of modernization, circumscribed in projects of nation and Empire.

Moreover, scholars recap the fact that Ethiopia had never been colonized and, therefore, is not part of the colonial experience. Indeed, what makes Ethiopia unique in the colonial discourse of modernity and modernism is the fact that the country had never been colonized. While this may be the fact, one should not lose sight of the significance of power relations in the relationship of Ethiopia and the West as one that is often margin to center, far from being free of colonial influence or domination. The failure to include the parameters of social, political and cultural analysis of colonialism in the understanding of Ethiopian modernity, within the assumption of not being colonized, has, therefore, dismissed essential paradigms that are relevant to an analysis of history. Critical thinking about Ethiopian modernity and modernism should incorporate colonialism and its legacies and the impact it had in political thought, collective

identity, historical memory and in literature and the arts. It is within this discursive space of colonialism and its legacies that I want to explore Haile Selassie's space of modernity and shed light to a meaningful discussion of the beginning of Ethiopian visual modernism and its subsequent trajectory.

The Space of Modernity in Haile Selassie's Ethiopia

The project of modernity in the national space of Haile Selassie's Ethiopia was given much attention, shortly after the Emperor's return from exile.[24] The variety of modernizing projects that the Emperor deployed directly after his return from exile were helpful as a discursive strategy in the production and reproduction of the Emperor's image as a modernizing subject. The modernization projects, nevertheless, were too few and became gradually abstracted from the social contexts that the Emperor depended on for his own significance and efficacy. Rhetoric needs a pragmatic return and the Emperor's modernizing projects became increasingly imaginary and the country was seen as hardly changing. Consequently, his symbolic and institutional dimension was severely challenged in a mass uprising in 1974, which threw him out of power.

Indeed, in the years immediately following the Italian-Ethiopian War, Haile Selassie was occupied with reworking his power in productive ways, in what can be said was image building following the repercussions of the War. The image of the modernizing Emperor; 'His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, elect of God, conquering Lion of the tribe of Judah' with lineage close to Solomon and David became a symbolic and marketable. Artists began to embellish paintings of his portraits. His images often appeared in the church alongside those of religious figures.

What exactly were Emperor Haile Selassie's modernizing projects and how successful were they? Could the image of the Emperor's modernity have been given far greater power over our

24 The Italians under Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and were ousted by Ethiopian patriots and by the British in 1941. The Emperor went into exile in 1936 to Bath, United Kingdom and did not return until the ousting of the Italians in 1941. The Emperor is well known for his speech at the League of Nations, in which he appealed to the League for help against the Italians.

imagination than the real thing? Could it be argued that the Ethiopian experience is devoid of the legacy of a complex colonial African past and if so, how had the hegemony of the West worked with and against cultural identity? How might we map or narrate modernism in such a context in Ethiopia? While these questions are vitally relevant to rethinking Ethiopian modernity and modernism, my focus in this paper is on one aspect; the educational infrastructure of the Fine Art School. This was initially established within the Emperor's framework of modern education and it continues to filter into the visual arts even now.

Scholarship, Education and the Rhetoric of Modernity

One cannot talk about the inception of modern education in Ethiopia, including the education of fine arts, without the critical engagement of its Western genealogy**.** Although serious scholarship that looks into the conjunctures of Haile Selassie's space of modernity and modernism has yet to be produced, Ethiopian academics, like Messay Kebede, have written about the serious shortcomings of Haile Selassie's modernizing projects. They have gone as far as saying that it was the Emperor's Eurocentric educational policy that debilitated the production of serious scholarship and that contributed to the Emperor's own demise, and to the eventual uprising of the 1974 revolution. Messay Kebede claims: "Besides the cultural drawbacks of colonization and neocolonialism, the fact that Ethiopians became psychologically decentralized, as in any colonized country, even though they were not submitted to colonization, confirms the universally uprooting impact of Western education."[25]

Indeed, this legacy of Eurocentric dominance continues to haunt present day educational institutions and subsequent scholarships. It has been key to the epistemic excision of local and traditional scholars. It can be argued that while the modernity rhetoric has played a role in rallying the population and in enhancing political power, it has also allowed and exacerbated an 'Otherness' through the epistemological trap of a Eurocentric definition of Ethiopianism,

25 Kebede, M. (2003). The Roots and Fallouts of Haile Selassie's Education Policy. UNESCO Forum Occasional Paper no.10. Retrieved April 20, 2007 from http://text.unesco.org/tt/portal.unesco.org/education/admin/ev.php?URL_ID=52590&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201&reload=1164018696

whichhas marginalized the production of critical scholarly knowledge. It is within this crucial epistemic construction of modern education that I look into the trajectory of the Fine Art School, the birthplace of Ethiopian visual modernism.

The Fine Art School

The Fine Art School was established in August, 1957, when the promotion of modern culture became important for the Emperor to make Ethiopia be perceived as cultured in the modern world. The School was within the Emperor's paternalistic regimen of modernity, where art and literature were considered to have important repertoires of contents. While the Emperor upheld the national culture of traditional Ethiopian art and sought to preserve it in the face of foreign influences, he also entrusted the fantasies of progress and innovation in modern art. In his speech at the opening of the School, on August 17, 1957, the Emperor said: "We supported the establishment of this school because we think that modern artists would combine traditional methods and send their creative works to the modern platforms of the West, letting the world know that Ethiopians are also part of the modern world."[26]

The Emperor applauded a tradition, which constituted beliefs and values that revolved around the monarchy, as the creator, nurturer, and protector of the nation. At the same time, he reproduced the idea of the State as patron, promoter, and protector of that tradition. The State's ideal of the 'modern' was nevertheless circumscribed within Western values and institutions, with the West being perceived as superior. At the same time, it engaged in a discursive formation of the grandeur of the nation. Hence, the nation was discursively formed as the 'Other' as it was simultaneously being deconstructed from being the 'Other.' The fact remained, nevertheless, that despite the Emperor's domestication oratory of the nation's grandeur and glory, the entrenchment of Eurocentric epistemology, based on the Emperor's infrastructure of modern education, took root during his time. The Fine Art School also factored into that network, although its institutional manifestation of the Emperor's demarcated notion of modernity was ambiguous and, at times, challenged the Emperor's idea of 'modern.'

26 Fere Kenafir: Collected Speeches of Emperor Haile Selassie. (1963). Addis Ababa: Berhanena Selam Publishers

The School's main progenitor and mastermind was Ale Felegeselam, who had studied painting at the Chicago Art Institute. Although the Emperor's symbolic support towards the opening of the School represented him as a true patron of arts and culture, it was Ale Felegeselam's struggle, more than any state sponsored program, which eventually gave rise to the opening of the Fine Art School. It is important to note that prior to the opening of the School, artists like Ale Felegeselam had been sent abroad to study art. Among the few who were sent abroad were Agegnehu Engeda and Zerihun Dominick, who both studied painting in France, and Abebe Wolde-Giorgis, who studied sculpture in France. Besides these few artists, who were sent abroad prior to the opening of the school, artists who are considered to be the pioneers of Ethiopian modernism also came back from being abroad after the opening of the School; Skunder Boghossian who studied in France, Afework Tekle in the United Kingdom, and Gebrekristos Desta who studied in Germany. All of these artists all come back to leave an impact on the Ethiopian creative scene.

Like many of the educational institutions in the country, the Fine Art School opened up with not many students (sixty), a deficient curriculum, inadequate intellectual resources, a shortage of teachers and a pattern of education that, initially, did not yield much for critical discourse, regarding its utility. Besides Ale Felegeselam, who started the School with so much hard work, enthusiasm and optimism, the School was initially staffed with European personnel. Some lacked proper training and used marginal Western discourses to reflect on artistic theory and practice. Some were trained artists, while others were just there by chance. For instance, Herbert Seiler, who studied sculpture in Austria and who came to Ethiopia in a motorcycle adventure that took him first to Egypt, taught sculpture in the School. Seiler later became known for his bronze portraiture works of the Emperor.

Many say that Seiler used Tadesse Gizaw's copper and bronze works techniques. Gizaw was trained as an industrial designer in the United States of America. While Tadesse Gizaw's work was known for its stellar and superior design, Seiler was the sculptor extraordinaire, who was commissioned several times by the Emperor to do work for the palace, as well as for many governmental institutions. The representation of Europeans as the sole originators of ideas

prevailed, despite the Emperor's rhetoric of an Ethiopian modernity that should extract the best of indigenous Ethiopian thought and practice.

The Fine Art School started to formulate ways in which artists could articulate their sense of self in a wider social and political context. The School also sent young students abroad soon after its opening. While the production of art changed significantly from its traditional repertoire, the problem was that artists came back from abroad with their visual voices less distinct than one would wish them to be. Art production was not structured by the geographic variety and the cultural diversities that had contributed to the aesthetics of modernism. The particularities of Ethiopian modernism, except in the works of Skunder Boghossian, failed to be articulated in the works of the artists who had come back from being abroad. With the aesthetic codification of European modernism intact, what was interesting in the works of these artists was the deconstruction of the idea of the nation and the monarch, which had preoccupied the regime.

These artists returned to Ethiopia determined to modernize their country visually. The only problem was their uncritical evaluation of notions of modernity and modernism. What type of modernity and modernism should Ethiopia follow? Their answer to this question was ambiguous and tentative. These artists, just as the regime was, were enamored by European modernity and modernism. Nevertheless, their fascination represented the freshly invented but unproblematized languages of modernity and modernism that they had just gotten acquainted with abroad. They signaled reference to the 'modern' as one who was sophisticated and restless, destined to have a great impact on tackling backward thoughts. They fell short of deliberating on the normative status of Western modernity to construct a different view of modernity, characterized by local needs and cultural forces.

Here, one is inclined to ask why the movement of African decolonization that had its locus in Addis Ababa, failed to influence visual artists of the period; in articulating a decolonized culture that had engulfed the continent during this period. Frantz Fanon said:

> Decolonization, never passes unnoticed for it bears upon being, it fundamentally modifies being, it transforms spectators crushed by inessentiality into privileged actors,

> seized in a quasi-grandiose manner by glare of history's floodlights. It introduces a proper rhythm into being, brought by new men, a new language, and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men. But this creation receives its legitimacy from no supernatural power; the colonized 'thing' becomes man in the process by which it liberates itself.[27]

As Fanon said, the dramatic experience of decolonization in Africa created a philosophy and an epistemology that inspired the best of African creativity. Decolonization's dialectic addressed the ordeals of colonialism and the change in attitude of colonizer/colonized on two categories. On the one hand, it responded to Western modernism in a nativist approach, inspired by the richness of the African past, which motivated artists to explore the potentials of their African heritage. The other side of the dialectic was the imperative to mark a space for local identity in the language of the 'Other', which recognized cross cultural affinity, as well as contrast within a critical approach to the relationship between European modernism and the new localized and nuanced version of African modernism. Therefore, the history of the decolonization movement has been, in the main, a movement toward the local, articulated in two different approaches of the local. What makes Ethiopia different in this trajectory is the fact that the country had never been colonized except for a brief period of Italian occupation, between 1936 and 1941.

Ethiopia was unlike other African countries, where the larger implication of colonizer/colonized relationship created a fundamental disjuncture in the history of the colonized and where colonial discourse defined the colonized as a non-redeemable 'Other.' The inner working of this type of 'Otherness' was neither the ideology nor the discourse of Ethiopian formal social and political thought, although a different feeling of 'Otherness' inconspicuously manifested itself in intellectual thought and analysis. The fact that; Ethiopia was backward and that European remedies to backwardness should be implemented, prevailed and overwhelmed all areas of intellectual thought. This same sort of 'Otherness' was apparent in the works of artists. The independence and liberation movements that had engulfed the continent for a new African

27 Fanon, F. (1965). The Wretched of the Earth. New York: Grove Press.

identity produced different experiences of independence for the Ethiopian emergent elite, who were unfamiliar to the colonial structure.

The elite, instead, entered this movement and took account of colonial dominance and decline through the movement's cultural context, which had forged unities across independence struggles. Given that Addis Ababa was the home for the Organization of African Unity and because Ethiopia was, thus, a rallying site for Pan-Africanism, the city was transformed into a vibrant hub of cultural intersection. Debate had raged in intellectual life over cultural problems. Issues, such as; the changing environment in fashion and, particularly, the mini skirt, music and art production took center stage at the discussion forums, less its critical perspective. On the other hand, budding intellectual students, who thought Marxism was the way towards modernity, challenged the Emperor's self assumed path of Ethiopian modernity. These students turned the unsettling uncertainty of complete submission to European modernity to yet another conception of Marxist modernity; a modernity that was wholly amalgamated and without the objective realities of the country. Marxism- Leninism's progressive moral appeal, hence, framed a simulacrum space of Marxist political and social thought. This new social movement galvanized the intellectual to suppose a theory of power and social change, not necessarily or primarily against the colonial power's cultural hegemony, but against the ambiguities of modern citizenship in the Ethiopian state.

This was the institutional and ideological context within which Ethiopian visual modernism was produced. The ambivalent construction of Ethiopian modernity of the 1950s and 60s also found its ultimate expression in visual art beginning in 1957; the year the Fine Art School opened. Coming to terms with the challenges of modernity that conceptualized the composition and political behavior in the context of Ethiopia had become daunting for the artists of the Fine Art School of the 1960s. The educational infrastructure did not provide students a platform on which to engage modernity and modernism's specificity and multiplicity. Neither did artists who came from abroad to teach in the School facilitate any kind of platform. Student artists of the School, nevertheless, assumed the total consciousness and originality of an Ethiopian

culture in the making of modernity because they significantly altered the artistic ambience of Ethiopian modernism.

If one looks at the works of art produced then, one sees a form of aesthetics, showing an authoritarian voice of European high modernism that did not explore the interplay of domination or resistance, but, which, nevertheless, opposed narratives of the State. In often technically flawless European modernist aesthetics, student artists like Tadesse Mesfin and Yohannes Gedamu, produced works that were devoid of the narrative of monarchy and nation, which they thought was backward and wary. From this perspective, they established their weight on the official narrative of the regime.

From all of the artists who came back from being abroad, it is considered that Gebrekristos Desta and Skunder Boghossian were the principal artists to have defined, not only the production of art in the School, but modern Ethiopian art as well. Indeed, the return of Gebrekristos Desta in 1961 from West Germany and of Skunder Boghossian in 1965 from France and the United States, significantly altered the production of art in the School. Notwithstanding this fact, it is nevertheless important to critically analyze the impact of these artists on the artistic scene, digressing from the popular perception of Boghossian's and Desta's effect on Ethiopian modernism. It is true that debate had waned over cultural production and, particularly, over modern art. A fertile setting had emerged for the critical appraisal of Ethiopian modernism. The artistic scene had changed emphatically from its traditional repertoire and many of the artists, who had come back from being abroad and their students, were engaged in new and experimental works. Unfortunately, the intellectual, institutional and educational infrastructure that could have engaged the production of art to a significant discourse of modernism was absent. Critical scholarships, which should have fore grounded essential discourses of European modernism and its interplay with cultural productions of the non-West, were glaringly nonexistent.

For instance, while the works of Picasso were being glorified as being the foundation of modernist aesthetics, its problematic relationship to African art was never deciphered. Although Picasso and company self-consciously subverted the colonial stereotypes of the 'grotesque'

and the 'primitive,' their method was, unfortunately, intended to only critique civilization by embracing an imagined 'primitiveness' of Africans, whose 'authenticity' they opposed to a 'decadent' West. The 'Africanism' of Picasso had become the ruling class of aesthetic judgment in the 1920s and 30s, during which time it saw itself as a beneficiary of a mystical and innate gift from African art objects (L'Art Negre). It was in the 1940s and 50s, just around the time that the Fine Art School opened, that African diaspora artists, who were influenced by the first avant-garde movement of the arts (the 'Africanism' of Picasso), fundamentally altered the aesthetic view of much of modern African art. The Parisienne avant-garde was severely critiqued for its reductive view of African art objects. With symbols and signs, African diaspora artists of the 40s and 50s appropriated the Parisienne avant-garde's modernist techniques and mediated their own coherent meaningful images. One could say that by appropriating and juxtaposing their own symbolic figures, African artists narrated the complexities of their societies and skillfully asserted that Africans were no longer relegated to looking at themselves through the eyes of others, but rather through their own gazes.

However, the debates and counter debates that had enraged African artists, whose countries had recently defeated the colonial shackles, were completely absent in the educational discourse of the Fine Art School. I also argue that it was also only Boghossian, who opened up a new horizon and definition of colonial subjectivity by challenging essentialized concepts of Ethiopian identity, done within a strategic structure of representation. Boghossian had been part of the same debate of African artists during his stay in France. Gebrekristos Desta accounted for only certain dimensions of modernity. Both Boghossian and Desta were modern but their take on modernity differed. Boghossian's works created meanings and values, without essentializing notions of cultural identity. If one is to look into Boghossian's paintings from 1966-1969, such as; *Juju's Wedding,* one sees the existence of a whole different world, which came through from African mythological cryptograms. He found this in the Ethiopian Church iconographies, just as he had found it in Paris at the Musee de l'Homme in Trocadero, only this time he was able to unite these two together. He situated agency in the core of past analysis that shed light on present day knowledge. He explored new possibilities against the marginal perception

of the oppressed, promoting a conscious model of modernity that valorized those aspects of intellectual and creative activity, which were excluded from mainstream art projects. By positing a historical continuity of 'Africanness' or 'blackness,' extending from early civilizations of Africa, to Ethiopian Orthodoxy and its variant expressions, he skillfully managed to combine two seemingly contradictory themes; a traditional approach towards cultural self-definition and its complex tie with the historical development of European art.

On the other hand, Desta articulated a different form of visual modernism. Despite his training in Germany during the heydays of Abstract Expressionism, Desta's works, during this period and later until the revolution of 1974, profoundly explored German Expressionist styles. At a time when abstract art was alien to many Ethiopians, Desta insisted that modern art, particularly in its abstract form, mirrored discourses of modernity and that one had to embrace this style of art, despite its density and complexity to the Ethiopian artistic sensibility. He saw modern art as modernity's stamp of power and authority. He portrayed ambivalence, moral doubt and anxiety towards the vernacular culture.

The nuances of a localized modernism failed to be appropriately articulated in Desta's works. In many of his comments, European modernity transcended regional identity in its supposedly unique ability, to address human problems despite his works' subtle depiction of his Ethiopian experiences, which he could not escape. The intellectual elite, such as; Solomon Deressa, who wrote about his works at the time, also fell short of articulating to the larger public about the local nuances of his work. On the one hand, they were just as animated as Desta about the novelty of European modern art, and on the other, they were not trained art historians and critics, who could significantly engage his works to task. He was, nevertheless, the most vocal in demystifying the features of the nationalist narrative of flag, nation and Empire. He frequently talked about tradition being backward and irrational; he strived for a completely rational, modern society.

The Emperor, nevertheless, supported the works of both Gebrekristos Desta and Skunder Boghossian, who challenged his regime in differing articulations. Even in trajectories of contention, a different discursive formation of power that was not only negative, but also productive, had emerged. The Emperor used his power to create an image of being 'modern'; as one who supported the arts, even though the arts criticized his stance. For instance, Afework Tekle, Gebrekristos Desta, and Skunder Boghossian all received the outstanding achievement prizes for modern art from the prestigious Haile Selassie I Foundation, despite of Desta's and Boghossian's contestatory articulations of the Emperor's ethos.

Desta's experimentation with an unmediated modernity came to an end after the revolution of 1974 when the socialist military junta took over, bringing mayhem and cruelty by their gruesome rule (1974-1991). His later works, especially the ones made in 1979, evoked socially critical tableaux over life. Desta forged a drama of social protest in many of his later works. He narrated themes of repression and misery, which were prevalent in his country. It was in 1979, at the height of the infamous 'Red Terror' of the military junta, when thousands were labeled reactionaries and were slaughtered on the streets of Addis Ababa in the name of Marxism-Leninism, that he worked on paintings, such as; *In the Third World* and *In the Grotto* (to be found today in the Modern Art Museum Gebre Kristos Desta Center). Through these paintings, he narrated the intricate dialectics of trauma and the aftermaths of genocide. Once enamored by European modernism, Desta's works manifested the confusion and disillusionment during later years. Like many African countries of the time, Ethiopia was part of the Cold War battalion. The forces of capitalism and communism staged coups and revolutions in the African continent through 'aid and assistance.' Ethiopia was one battlefield in which this war was fought. Desta could no longer ignore the intricacies of modernity's discontents.

Have Boghossian and Desta had an impact on the innovations of art students of this time? Did they fundamentally alter the educational infrastructure of the Fine Art School? Gebrekristos Desta reiterated to his students about the use of the imagination in works of art, rather than its representational form, as a paradigm of the modernist idiom. If Desta believed or understood

the larger philosophy of the modernist's unity of propensity and autonomy, he did not succeed in instilling it in his students. On the contrary, for Desta's students, such as; Tadesse Mesfin, the legacies of European modernism were confined within distinct boundaries of representational art. I argue that he could not convince his students of both the artistic and conceptual aspects. This is because he neglected a larger perspective of cultural signification that would have been relevant for these students; addressing the social, historical and cultural experiences of the Ethiopian reality, within the larger paradigm of modernist expression.

The critical evaluation of European modernism that Skunder Boghossian also brought, did not entrench itself in his students. Boghossian brought back from Paris the technical dexterity of European art and according to Deressa', "the awesome depth of the continent wide black African perception of mystery."[28] His works, after returning to Ethiopia, left an incredible mark on the trajectory of Ethiopian modernism, where Boghossian's signature continues to tremendously filter into works of contemporary artists. Regrettably, many students copied his works from a purely aesthetic perspective, without really comprehending the third space in which he was trying to position himself. Moreover, the School also lacked trained art historians and theorists, who could have critically taught the theories being followed by African modernists like Boghossian. Moreover, students were admitted to the Fine Art School from 8th grade, which also contributed to the limitations in understanding the complex narratives of anti-colonial and independence movements that Boghossian was totally immersed in.

At the time, it was fashionable for older intellectuals to seek prestige, with an emerging viewpoint and sensibility that valued and symbolized fragmentation and existential doubt in artworks and poetry. The intellectuals insisted that this was free from imposed meaning. The popularity of self-discovery in art was an essential feature, especially, for the few art critics of the time, like; Solomon Deressa and Kifle Biseat, who had just returned from the West. Thus, a hallmark of the young students of Skunder Boghossian, was a fashionable and a vogue rejection of tradition. Therefore, their artistic career began with a lack of intellectual ability to fully communicate

28 Deressa, S. (1997, January-February). Skunder in Context. *Ethiopian Birr,* 2.

the crisis and schisms of modernity that Boghossian tried to articulate. Within this context, the making of Ethiopian modernism in the visual arts discounted the evaluation of important issues in the discourse of modern art. Forms of modernist expression presented themselves without the artist's visual and critical contributions to discourses of modernism in Ethiopian art history. The unconditional capitulation to European social norms led to the failure of early modernism as a movement. Moreover, the corpus of ideas that is imbued in Marxism, proved to be influential to the intellectuals, who yearned, most emphatically, for modernity and all of its promises.

The paradox and ambiguity of Ethiopian modernity and modernism at its inception and the problematic trajectory that it has taken was quickly amalgamated to yet another kind of European modernism, which imbued itself with Marxist ideals and took the trajectory of Ethiopian modernity and modernism towards a new ideological scene. No crisis had been so profound to the trajectories of arts and culture than the introduction of Marxism to Ethiopian history, from which new trajectories of authority, memory and identity-formation emerged.

Conclusion

I have attempted to show the paradox and ambiguity of Ethiopian modernity and modernism at its inception. Haile Selassie's politicized historical memory was also demolished, due to the horrendous famine in 1973 and the immense poverty that then confronted the population. Consequently, his symbolic and institutional dimension was severely challenged in a mass uprising in 1974, which resulted in him being thrown out of power. Ethiopia entered a period of profound political, economic, and social change, combined with a period of socialist experimentation. The next seventeen years witnessed a revolution imbued with narrow empiricism.

The creative arts movement in the Fine Art School that was simultaneously being subjugated and reproduced in the latter part of the Emperor's reign was, literally, extinguished. Seventeen years of socialist leadership took a toll in the production of the creative arts. Today, the Fine Art School, which had been amalgamated into Addis Ababa University, is battling with a curriculum

that is dated and with scholarships that lack a critical examination of the social context of Ethiopian contemporary art, which should be looking into the relationship between art and representation. The School has produced many artists but the lack of art historians, critics, and critical scholarship has left it intellectually bankrupt.

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Improving the Physical Self: Sport Body Politics and Ethiopian Modernity, ca. 1920-1974

Introduction

Writing about modernity, entails struggling with a vexed category; both in terms of it as an analytical tool and as an ideological construct. The African historian Frederick Cooper rightfully points out that, firstly, "Modernity represents a powerful claim to singularity: it is a long and continuing project, central to the history of Western Europe, and in turn defining a goal to which the rest of the world aspired…." In its singularity, it must, secondly, "be defended against others who may knock at the gate but whose cultural baggage renders the mastery of modernity unattainable." It should therefore be considered "an imperial construct, a global imposition of specifically Western social, economic and political forms that tames and sterilizes the rich diversity of human experience …."[29] To escape the teleological trap of singularity that consigns all non-Western societies to a constant state of catching up, the 1990s saw publications on -*modernities* – flagging up a pluralistic approach ---mostly adorned with nominal qualifiers, such as; "alternate", "multiple" or "African" to denote non-Western forms of progress. *Ethiopian modernity* could be encompassed by this last strand. Furthermore, studies by Paul Gilroy on the *Black Atlantic*,[30] for example, or Kwame Anthony Appiah on notions of race and identity, indicate the multiple sources of what has been conceived as "Western" modernity.[31] As a universal category, modernity's genealogy must be conceptualized and studied in its multiplicity and in its historical depth.

As a way out of this terminological and conceptual dilemma, Frederick Cooper suggests taking

29 Cooper, Frederck. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2005, 113-114
30 Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso. 1993.
31 Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *In My Father's House*: *Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. London: Menthuen. 1992.

a closer look at the way progress is talked about in various contexts and languages. In the Ethiopian case, the Amharic term *zemenawi-seletane*[32] (modern civilization) seems to have been such a *Begriff.* The historian Paulos Milkias stresses that:

> "… the image of the new political order was drawn in terms of a new ideology: *Zemenawi –seletane* (modern civilization), has an anti-clerical connotation. Emperor Tewodros (1855 to 1868-KB) first introduced *Zemenawi-seletane* to Ethiopia but the word did not come into general use until the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930 to 1974-KB), not only was Tewodros anti-clerical, but he saw the development of Ethiopia as going necessarily against the influence of the church. Tewodros' urgent desire to secularize political life in Ethiopia, nevertheless, did not become a reality until Haile Selassie's accession to the throne.[33]

Haile Selassie himself spoke of "Modern Ethiopianism."[34] Apart from being a modernist project, it was first and foremost a nationalist project with ideological implications, such as; defining the highland culture as a benchmark.[35] *Zemenawinet*, a translation of Ethiopian modernity, reduces its temporal validity to the time span of global social optimism; from the inter-war period to the 1970s, i.e.; the reign of Haile Selassie, as well as to the development projects and critical or legitimizing discourses that accompanied this interval. Both terms, *zemenawi-silitane* and *zemenawinet*, render modernity a normative category insofar as they conceptualize it as progress. In contrast, James G Ferguson argues for non-linear, variation-centered models of social transformation that include unfulfilled expectations and unexpected change.[36] Ethiopia is obviously one case in hand, which can substantiate Ferguson's claim.

Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis' criticism of recent works on Ethiopian modernity takes a similar direction. Apart from drawing attention to the synonymous use of modernity, modernization

32 Except for quotes, the transcription of Amharic terms indicates seven vowels. Plosive or glottal consonants have not been shown.

33 Milkias, Paulos. The Challenge of Modernity. *Seleda. The Modernity Issue*. 2002 (3,4), I.

34 Haile Selassie. Modern Ethiopianism, 2 November 1961, in: The Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Information (eds.), *Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie First, 1918 to 1967*, Addis Ababa, Artistic Printers Limited 1967, 458.

35 Milkias, Paulos. *Haile Selassie: Western Education and Political Revolution in Ethiopia*. Cambia Press 2006. 53-55.

36 Ferguson, James G. Global Disconnect: Abjection and the Aftermath of Modernism, in: Peter Geschiere/Birgit Meyer/Peter Pels (eds.), *Readings in Modernity in Africa*, James Currey 2008, 8-16.

and modernism, she criticizes the intellectual discourse for largely neglecting the totality of political, social and cultural phenomena, including the simultaneous coexistence and interconnectedness of the "non-modern (mythical)" and the "modern (objectivist)". She calls for a meaningful discussion that "constructs the process of modernity within the discursive space of its multiplicity and cultural specificity."[37] In the Ethiopian case, this implies giving due weight to religious and mythical aspects.

Apart from the argument that stadiums have become the "new churches", the link between religious holidays and sporting events are cases in point. As shown during the early days of St. George Sport Club, religious belief had a significant influence on the player's conception of soccer. "They used to bury a holy book under their goal posts when they were playing against other teams. They believed that the holy book itself had a power of preventing the ball from being scored against them and they associate their victory to the help given by the Holy Book, rather than because of their own skills."[38] Here, the pivotal role of the Orthodox Church in knowledge production and in daily life comes into the picture. Furthermore, the divine status of the Emperor as a crucial factor for the implementation of projects bringing progress has to be taken into consideration. His appearances at sport events, the promotion of physical education, as well as the inclusion of a disciplined and healthy body in his conceptualization of "the modern" Ethiopian elite was part and parcel of subject formation as a social process.

However, if we take seriously James F. Ferguson's argument of the non-linear, which also includes unexpected changes, we have to investigate what kinds of subjects have actually been formed. We have to go away from the success stories to narratives of failure. It is part of an attempt to assess the argument's coherence with other discourses about the sportive human body, as a social text. Sport is, thus, understood, not merely as a bodily movement, but as a semiotic system in a state of permanent reconfiguration. Its interrelated signs have been historically

37 Giorgis, Elizabeth Wolde. Charting out Ethiopian Modernity and Modernism in: Elizabeth Giorgis, Salamisha Tilett and Dagmawi Woubshet (eds.), *Ethiopia: Literature, Art and Culture*, Callaloo, Johns Hopkins University Press. 33, 1 (2010), 82.
38 Tola, Sintayehu. *The History of St. George Sport Club,* unpublished Bachelor of Arts thesis, Addis Ababa University 1986, IES, SEN, 11.

invested with meaning and are modified according to specific contexts.[39] As part of the inter-subjective horizon of comprehension, *Bewegungskulturen* are an expression of the *Zeitgeist*.

Looking at a period from 1920 to 1974, which largely coincides with the reign of Haile Selassie, I concentrate on modern sports, i.e., sports already codified and regulated by international bodies. Their expansion through "civilizing", colonizing and imperial projects, as well as related historical events, such as; the two World Wars, were facilitated, on the one hand, by the prevailing notions of improvement. On the other hand, they spread rapidly, particularly in the urban centers, because "modern" was associated with a Eurocentric archetype, a historically exclusive pattern, rendering discourses on alterity problematic, if not impossible. This legacy saw the elimination or exclusion of "traditional" sports from schools, the armed forces and sports clubs, and led to their almost total neglect in systematic studies of sports in Ethiopia, outside the field of ethnography and heritage.[40] Descriptions, such as; those by Fikru Kidane, of games played in the *Piazza* areas of Addis Ababa in the post-war period, substantiate the need to include transformed and newly introduced games, (e.g., from neighboring Djibouti, in the debate on sport and leisure in Ethiopian modernity.)[41] These games, most probably, found their way into schools and were played during break times. However, this observation does not imply the definition of sport as a leisure activity per- se, albeit it falls into the category of "serious leisure."[42] As a semiotic system, sport should be analyzed in terms of the "micro-physics of power", regardless of whether or not it is linked directly to production processes.

Michel Foucault's groundbreaking work on social institutions in the form of schools, prisons

39 Here, I follow German cultural studies, which analyses sport as a semiotic system, not unlike that of language. For a theoretical discussion, see Monika Fikus/Volker Schurmann (eds.), *Die Sprache der Bewegung. Sportwissenschaft als Kulturwissenschaft*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2004.

40 Systematic studies were carried out by Tesfay Shiferaw, *Neber Sport,* Addis Ababa 1981; Yibeb Gorf, *Bahl Sport,* Addis Ababa 2000; Worku Yeshiwas, *The Development and Significance of Traditional Games in Ethiopia with Special Reference to 'Genna"; 'Tegle' and 'Feres Gugs',* unpublished Bachelor of Education thesis, Kotebe College of Teacher Education. 1995.

41 Kidane, Fikru. *Yi Plaza Lidge*. Addis Ababa 2009, 31-26.

42 The term denotes "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting in nature for the participant to find a career there, acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge and experience." (Robert A. Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals and Serious Leisure,* Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press 1992, 3.).

or hospitals, and its application to various colonial contexts, verifies that the human body was the privileged target when it came to putting in place such powerful "technologies" , such as; rules, discourses and procedures into operation. I argue that alleged places of leisure, such as; the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), university sports clubs and fashion shows, constituted spaces of subject formation. As Jan-Francois Bayart points out, social institutions in colonial Africa were not only "replete with coercive procedures", but provided "at the same time a range of modes of subjectivization whose attraction has been largely underestimated."[43] Whether Ethiopia was colonized or not is irrelevant to the validity of this argument. As will be shown with regard to dress codes; "modes of subjectivization" becoming "stylistics of the self" and an "affirmation of the self" and, last but not least, their contestations. If Bayart's dialectic between subjection and subjectivization holds true for all forms of social institution, it should allow for the reading of institutionalized sports as an element of Ethiopian modernity, which originates from multiple trajectories but acquires its persuasive force from a Eurocentric narrative of universal progress.

The first section looks at sport in relation to the military institutions that mushroomed during Haile Selassie's reign. It is important to note, that the introduction of sport, as a means of creating efficient bodies for the army was part of a larger project that broke radically from the concept of the "natural warrior", which deemed modern military training and contemporary military tactics "a waste of time and a mark of one's fearfulness."[44] The second part discusses sport in Ethiopia from a leisure perspective. African studies and history have already questioned the applicability of the work-leisure paradigm that still influences our conception of sport, exempting elite sports. Taking the examples of the YMCA, university sports and modern fashions, I will demonstrate that sport was part of a discourse on self-improvement, though permanent self-surveillance which, in the case of university sports, seems to have failed in its aims. The final section focuses on two interrelated issues: the Emperor's use of sport as a powerful symbol to bear witness

43 Bayart, Jean-Francois. Fait Missionaire and the Politics of the Belly: A Foucauldian Reading, in: Peter Geschiere/Birgit Meyer/Peter Pels (eds.) *Readings in Modernity in Africa,* Oxford: James Currey 2008, 92-92.

44 Seyoum, Sileshi. *The History of the Imperial Body Guard*, unpublished Bachelor of Arts thesis in History, Addis Ababa University 1986, 17.

to his interest in developing a healthy nation and the institutionalization of sport in schools to achieve this goal. The paper concludes with several thoughts on how studies on the social history of sports in Ethiopia might contribute to the debate on Ethiopian modernity.

Military Reform and the Production of Conformable Bodies

In the period of European industrialization, sport cannot be conceptualized as the renaissance of an ancient world phenomenon. This argument was unfolded, with great conviction, by sociologist Norbert Elias in his work on the functional character of competitions at the French Royal Court in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Elias illustrates how knights' tournaments (*Rittersplete*) secured the king's domination and the balance of power.[45] Sports history is aware of similar cases in other parts of the world. A common Ethiopian example is wrestling at the Imperial Court of Tewodros (1855 to 1868). Wrestling (*gibgib* or *tigil*) served as a peerless demonstration of the Emperor's power. His best wrestlers were obliged to fight against British settlers and rewarded with valuable military equipment.[46] Wrestling in the rural areas was a form of entertainment at post- harvest feasts. It was likewise a means of gaining honor and glory for the local community. *Gibgib* and especially *feres gugs* (a fight on horseback with a shield and spear/stick, today generally associated with the Orthodox Christian's Christmas), *genna* (an Ethiopian version of hockey common during the Orthodox Christian Christmas festival), must be conceptualized as demonstrations of military prowess.[47] It is therefore not surprising that equestrian sports became an essential training feature of the military institutions established in the inter-war period. Cadets at the *Guenet Military Training Centre*, established in 1934, learned to ride and groom horses in preparing for cavalry services.[48] The *Military Preparatory Secondary School*, the institution from which candidates for the *Haile Selassie I Military Academy* in Harar, were selected and were trained, reserved no less than fifty units for equestrian sports.[49]

45 Elias, Norbert. Das hofische Ritterspiel als ein Symbol Gesamtgesellschaftlicher Machtbalance, in: Norbert Elias/Eric Dunning, (eds.), *Sport im Zivilisationsproze*, Munster: Lit 184, 82-84.
46 Last, Jill. *Ethiopian Festivals: Sports, Games, Celebrations, Occasions and Pilgrimages*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Tourist Commission 1982, 10.
47 Although women were formally excluded from these "martial" sports, the Ethiopian Equestrian Association acknowledges the existence of female *feres gugs* fighters in the official publication *Ethiopian Equestrian Association, Ethiopian Riders and their Horses,* Addis Ababa: Artistic Printing Enterprise 2005, 92.
48 Mamo Eshetu H/Mariam, *The History of the Haile Selassie I Military Academy from its Foundation to 1977,* unpublished Senior Paper History, Addis Ababa University 1990, 7.
49 Whether equestrian sports was a training unit of the *Imperial Body Guard,* before and after the establishment of the Imperial Body Guard Training School in Qabena (1946-1953), remains unknown.

The need for modern military institutions in Ethiopia and the lack of qualified local personnel prompted the usage of foreign expertise. Emperor Haile Selassie contracted military officers from various countries, including Russia, Switzerland, Belgium, Great Britain, the United States of America, and later, from Israel. As of 1929, German, French, Rumanian and Armenian officers served in Air Force training centers.[50] Norwegians trained the marines, while Japanese officers instructed the members of the special security forces.[51] The most important military training institution, the *Haile Selassie I Military Academy* in Harar, was built up with the know-how of an Indian military mission. While Ethiopia made use of foreign military expertise, Ethiopian soldiers, on the other hand, served in the *King's African Rifles* in Kenya or in Italian contingents trained in Tripoli (Libya) prior to World War II. In the 1920s, Ethiopian cadets were sent to the *Ecole Speciale Militarie de Saint-Cyr* in France.[52] During the Second World War, thirty two Ethiopians received training at the *Saba Saint George Military School* in Sudan.[53]

This circle of influence from at home and from abroad led to a growing number of individual and team sports in the army, all of which became an integral part of military training and cadet leisure activities. Apart from lawn hockey, a key component of the Ethiopian festival culture in the form of *genna,* and the Far Eastern martial arts, the spectrum encompassed modern sports only. At *Haile Selassie I Military Academy*, for example, regular activities included such team sports as; soccer, volleyball, basketball, cricket, hockey, lawn tennis, swimming, boxing and cross-country, as well as track and field as individual sports. The Academy organized sports along military lines; with a sports committee at the top and the Deputy Commander of the Academy as its President. On a semester rotation basis, one officer was responsible for one particular sport. His plans were implemented by the sports officers. The principal sporting event in the Armed Forces was *The Emperor's Banner*, a bi-annual competition. Depending on weather conditions, athletes from various military training institutions competed for covered titles. Due to their excellent training conditions, Academy cadets had very high chances of winning.

50 Pankhurst, Richard. An Introduction to the History of the Ethiopian Army. Unpublished Ms., Archives of the Debre Zayt Imperial Ethiopian Air Force. 101st training Center, 1967, 52; cited in: Mamao Eshetu, *Haile Selassie I Military Academy*, 3.
51 Lefever, Ernest W. *Spear and Scepter: Army, Police, and Politics in Tropical Africa.* Washington D.C. The Bookings Institution 1970, 139.
52 Pankhurst, Richard. *Introduction*, 25-26.
53 Eshetu, Mamo. *Haile Selassie I Military Academy*, 8.

> All kinds of facilities were available at the Military Academy for the various games and sports mentioned above, including a gymnasium ,which was said to be one of the best in Eastern Africa by the standards of the time. Therefore, physical fitness and endurance had been given one of the highest priorities at the Military Academy.[54]

The outstanding facilities and the pre-selection of physically fit young males for the military, the high degree of discipline and, last but not least, the continuous food supplies facilitated the emergence of successful athletes from the army context. The first athletic "heroes", such as; the legendary Abebe Bikila, and most of the Ethiopian sports clubs that burgeoned after World War II, belonged to the army or the police.[55] Until now, Olympic victories have been crowned by rank promotions.[56]

For athletes like boxer Shambel Ayel Muhamed, an army career was his first priority rather than that of a sports career. He joined the army in 1952 at the age of nine. According to him, Wednesdays at the cadet school were reserved for sport. While taking part in a regular fitness unit, Shambel Ayel saw the celebrated Abebe Mekonnen, a light-weight champion, who had competed for Ethiopia in the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo. Inspired by his example, Shambel Ayel asked for permission to join boxing lessons. His subsequent boxing career included participation in the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich and in Moscow in 1980. After his retirement from boxing, he continued on as a coach in army and civilian sport clubs.[57]

Success stories, nonetheless, should not conceal the fact that in the country's initial boxing phase[58], i.e. prior to and during World War II, Ethiopian athletes were systematically excluded

54 Ibid., 41.

55 Beyene, Gezahegne. *Emergence and Development of Boxing in Ethiopia*. Unpublished Bachelor of Education thesis, Kotebe College of Teachers Education 1998,6.

56 When Derartu Tulu won the first Olympic medal for Sub-Saharan Africa, she received the title "Heroine of Sports" but also became the first Ethiopian female major. She trained at and competed for the Prison Palace Sports Club.

57 Interview with Shambel Ayel Muhamed, in: *Yekibur do/r artist Telahun Gesesse Metasabiya Yeboks Shamplyuna,* Addis Ababa 2009, 3.

58 According to current knowledge, boxing or any other form of fist fighting did not exist in Ethiopia as it did in Ghana, for example, where the local variation *asafo atwele* influenced "modern" boxing as introduced under British colonial rule. For further details, see Emmanuel Akyeampong, "Bukom and the Social History of Boxing in Accra: Warfare and Citizenship in Pre-colonial *Ga* Society", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35, 1(2002), 39-59.

from training facilities and competitions on racial grounds. The clubs in the urban centers in Eritrea and Addis Ababa denied access to local young men with boxing ambitions. Competitions between Italian club members and Ethiopian boxers were clearly fixed in advance. The same is true for the situation in the British Empire Forces, whose services in Ethiopia continued until 1951. According to the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement of 31 January 1941, a British military mission trained the Ethiopian army and the police force.[59] Historical photographs from that period indicate that British and, above all, Indian sports officers actively promoted the training of Ethiopian boxers.[60] Boxing matches between "white" personnel, normally officers, and Africans were, nevertheless, prohibited. White South African troops even went so far as to attempt the perpetuation of the strict color bar that was established during the Italian occupation.[61] Well into the late 1940s, procuring a boxing license was almost impossible for an Ethiopian.

Although the military institutions established during the inner-war period and after World War II constituted important sites for the promotion of modern sports, primarily in the interests of keeping their cadets fit, they were not the only places for sport-related activities that would discipline the bodies and minds of young Ethiopians. Continuing with the example of boxing, the next section looks at urban "leisure" institutions, which played an important role in subject formation.

Leisure, Sports and the Cultivation of the Ideal Personality

Scholarly discussions on the category of "leisure" have seriously questioned Victor Turner's distinction between work and leisure as separate spheres of action.[62] A wealth of academic literature provided convincing examples of how modes of work organization affected leisure and how the restlessness of modern subjectivity, to use George Simmel's term, required 'rational' recreation. Leisure, thus, became a symbol of modernity, resulting in highly specific ideas on society as a whole, as well as on genres of industrial leisure, such as; film, art and sport.

59 Pankhurst, Richard. *The Ethiopians: A History*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1998, 254.
60 Photograhic and Manuscript Collection, Institute of Ethiopian Studies. Addis Ababa.
61 Pankhurst. The Ethiopian. 252.
62 Turner, Victor. *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Paj 1982.

African historians contributed to the study of leisure by relating it to colonialism, African nationalism and urbanization. In discussing this growing body of literature, Emmanuel Akyeampong and Charles Ambler stress the fluidity of the concept and call for a thorough examination of how and by whom activities are conceptualized as leisure. For example, institutions, where sport was used as a means of self-improvement and of coping with unemployment, usually resorted to a discourse on 'rational' recreation rather than to notions of 'fun'.[63] The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) is a case in point. At the personal request of the Emperor, who later became its patron, the first Ethiopian YMCA branch was founded in 1951. It took up its work in 1953 in the Arat Kilo quarter.[64] Similar to the U.K. template, it combined inward looking character development and outward looking religiosity, with the idea of a muscular Christianity. Incorporating sport as a morally positive activity became a powerful strategy for the creation of a certain life style, as well as a legitimate form of self-improving leisure.[65]

The gyms and boxing rings, to return to our example, became a magnet for local young men from all social strata and religious affiliations. American boxing coach Edward Simon supported and promoted local talent, an example of which was the legendary heavy-weight champion, Seiifu Mekonnene. Seifu, also known as *Tibbo* (Amharic for "knockout"),[66] who joined the YMCA in 1966 at the age of thirteen. Before taking an interest in boxing, he made a career out of body-building and went on to become one of Addis Ababa's most renowned body-builders. Representations of sturdy, muscular bodies in public spaces and in the press should be further analyzed, with regard to local and imported conceptions of the male body in the 1950s and 1960s. European patterns of bodily representations, which evolved from the sport photography of the 1930s and 1940s, and the US body building cult of the 1960s, made their mark in the Ethiopian press. The covers of the annual publications ,such as; the *Inter School Athletic Association*, the *Armed Forces*

63 Akyeampong, Emmanuel and Ambler, Charles. *Leisure in African History: An Introduction.* The International Journal of African Historical Studies 35, I (2002), 6.

64 From its beginnings in Addis Ababa, the YMCA spread to twenty-three centers in eighteen cities between 1955 and 1968. For further information, see www.africaymca.org/30.0. html (accessed 28 December 2010) and (16 February 2011).

65 Coleman, Simon. Of Metaphors and Muscles: Protestant 'play' in the Disciplining of the Self, in: Simon Coleman/ Tamara Kohn (eds.), *The Discipline of Leisure, Embodying Cultures of 'Recreation'*, New York: Berghan Books 2007, 42.

66 See www.ethiopian-this-week.com/2011/01/ethiopian-boxing -legend-seifu-mekonnen.html (accessed 2 March 2011).

Sports Day or the *University Sports Day* displayed scantily clad muscular male bodies, usually brandishing a spear to underline the aspects of defense. Magazines, like the monthly *Menen,* published photographs of YMCA body-builders, along with news of the Ethiopian victory in the *African Cup of Nations* in 1962.[67] Arguably, this may have been because an athletic male physique was associated with ethical behaviors, through the institutional philosophy. Hence, Seifyu Mekonnen's biography as follows:

> Relatively speaking, in a short period of time, he became a star. With a celebrity like status, he used to be invited to all private parties and clubs in the city. His status and strong persons gave every social gathering the mantel of peacefulness and no invitee everdared to disrupt a party when *Tibbo* was present. Although Seifu enjoyed going out to parties often, he was also conscious of his health and his well-being. He never abused substances and avoideddrinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes and taking drugs.[68]

Whereas the YMCA and other similar institutions drew attention to improvement in terms of spiritual health, the discourse on sport and higher education went beyond the rhetoric of *mens sena in corpora sano*. In at least two ways, it was linked to the nation, the first of which referred to leadership qualities that embraced the need for moral and body control. At a graduation ceremony in 1959, the Emperor made clear that "he, who would be a leader, must pay the price of self-discipline and moral restraint. This contains the correction and improvement of personal character, the checking of passions and desires, and the exemplary control of one's bodily needs and drives."[69] The second alluded to the responsibility of dispersing pedagogical knowledge in the field of sports.[70] Educating sport teachers became a goal in the early 1960s and was followed by the offer of a diploma course in physical education at the Haile Selassie I University in 1965. Since the subject clearly lacked appeal, the training of sport teachers was conducted in summer courses. Teachers with a minimum knowledge of physical education and at least two years of teaching experience were trained on the premises of the Menelik II

67 *Menen* January 1963, 9.
68 www.seifutibo.org/Biography. html (accessed 28 December 2010).
69 U.A.A.C. 6th graduation, 17 July 1959, in: Ministry of Information, *Selected Speeches*, 15.
70 "Sports for unity", *News & Views*, 15, November 1963, 11.

School. Successful participation resulted in a salary increase of 50 birr (approximately $25).[71] The project petered out after three years. A fundamental change first occurred in 1970, when the *Addis Ababa College of Teacher Education* (renamed Kotebe College of Teacher Education in 1976) began offering a diploma course in Health and Physical Education.[72]

Apart from training specialized teaching personnel, university colleges designated sport as a compulsory extra-curricular activity. According to the *Journal of the University College Sport Day* of 1956, students could choose from volleyball, softball, soccer, lawn tennis, badminton, hockey, archery, fencing, boxing, weight lifting, and track and field.[73] Foreign university staff were also encouraged to use sport facilities on and off the campuses.[74] A daily time slot from 5:00 to 6:15 p.m. was reserved for sports. Ethiopian students competed at national level as of 1956, with four Ethiopian track and field athletes participating in the *Universtade* in Turin (Italy) in 1970.[75] Despite a multitude of sport activities, a critical evaluation of the physical conditions of university students in 1973 came to a somewhat negative conclusion.

If we try to assess the situation in our institution of higher learning as related to the matter of sport, it seems that we are under-exercised; we have become onlookers rather than participants in this noble effort. The age of mechanization has brought with it so many elements of comfort that people have lost some of their physical strength. The unenthusiastic attitude we hold towards sports deprives us of even the minimal physical activity essential for healthy living, and the only way out of this is through broad programs that shall produce new standards of excellence in the field of sports, for it is through mass active participation that better standards can be achieved.[76]

71 "Ye and amet yegmnastik memhran kors", *Journal of the Inter-School Athletic Association* (1958/59), 17.
72 Gebreyaw Teshager. *The Historical Development of the Health and Physical Education Department in Kotebe College of Teacher Education*. Unpublished Bachelor of Education thesis, Kotebe College of Teacher Education, 1997.
73 Sport, *Journal of the University College of Addis Ababa Sports Day*, March 1956. 16.
74 "University campuses are equipped with softball, soccer and basketball fields. Tennis courts are available and are very popular with foreign staff (once they become used to the altitude). There is a golf course in Addis Ababa. Swimming in lakes and rivers is generally unsafe but there are swimming pools at hotel resorts. Horse back riding, fishing and camping are popular recreational activities." Haile Selassie I University AA, 1966. *Information for Foreign Staff*, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 369.43 Misc. papers, 6.
75 Ye Alem Akef Universiti Sport Federesn. *Journal of the University College of Addis Ababa Sports Day*, June 1970.9.
76 The Value of Student Participation in Sports in Institutions of Higher Learning." *Journal of the University College of Addis Ababa Sports Day,* February 1973, 13.

The assessment did not only hint at a case of "failed" subject formation in the sense of James G. Ferguson's unfulfilled expectations. It also shows that sport was conceptualized, more and more, in terms of a mass movement. On the one hand, it served to identify talent and on the other, it countered tendency of spectator rather than active sport. Both aspects were also discussed in the Ministry of Education and, notably, by the *Ethiopian Olympic Committee.* We can thus speak of a shift in the overall sports policy during the early 1970s.[77]

The evaluation also hints at the fact that students may have had an understanding of leisure other than its "modern" notion of a temporal residual category to be filled with improvement activities. They may have seen it as "time to waste" or; as the *Addis Reporter* classified it:

> Leisure is not – and should not be- killing time. On the contrary, it is the moment when one tries to put meaning anddimension to one's life. When one is unaware of the existence of time, leisure needs no external help; if it is a state of mind.[78]

The intention here was not to spoil the free time spent on the typical weekend activities of the male urban "leisure class," i.e. endless chats with friends while drinking *tella* or *tej*, parties, clubs and brothels on Saturdays, followed by recovery on Sundays, in overcrowded spaces, such as; football stadiums or hotel pools. Instead, the magazines encouraged their readers to visit art galleries or the cinema. Nonetheless, sport was never mentioned as a useful pastime or as an element of a cultured lifestyle. Hence, it is not surprising that university students were less than keen to participate in sports activities on a regular basis. They possibly felt like the "unenthusiastic" miners in the Northern Rhodesian copper belt, who justified their absence from soccer training with the excuse that; they were not paid overtime for that kind of "work."[79]

The perception of sport as a socially inacceptable activity has been thoroughly explored, particularly with regard to gender issues. The normative and regulatory regimes valid for all members of society are part and parcel of their upbringing and education. Depending on the

77 Tessema, Yidnekachew. *Pilot Study to Re-organize and Promote Sports in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa, November 1973, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, MS 796, 332 YED.
78 The Excitement Game of Leisure, *Addis Reporter*, 21 April 1969, 18 (my emphasis)
79 Akyeampong, Emmanuel and Amber, Charles. Leisure in African History: An Introduction. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, 5.

local specificities, these may result in a conditioning to permanent self-surveillance. *Yilunnta*, the "what others might say about me" frame of mind is a powerful tool for the regulation of social behaviors.[80] In the context of sport, the frequent cause of resentment is not so much the physical activity itself, but the inacceptable mixing of genders, the uncontrollable inculcation with new ideas and, last but not least, the violation of dress codes.

In the 1960s, motivating large sections of the Ethiopian population for regular sports activities presupposed a normative deviation. An essay written by a university student during this period suggests that an Ethiopian girl of "good character" should be reserved in manner, dress and speech, not least in front of males and the elderly.[81] Photographs from the 1930s, however, show male and female pupils exercising and performing in public short clothes.[82] In order to underpin arguments for a progressive policy on women, journals in the 1950s published visual material that displayed women in short sports attire. The *Ethiopian Observer* illustrated an article on the opportunities to be gained by ensuring gender equality in the revised version of the Ethiopian constitution of 1955 with a photograph of a female athlete in a short outfit.[83] This indicates that short clothes on the sports ground were less problematic than wearing a miniskirt in the streets of Addis Ababa. As in other parts of the world, the miniskirt simultaneously became a symbol of the modern woman and a marker of social decadence. It thus served as a gateway to debates on diverse political issues. For radical circles in the Ethiopian Student Movement, the miniskirt represented a powerful imperialist influence and was perceived as a red herring in the context of political struggle. With the motto "A student movement is not a fashion show", the student journal *Struggle* commented on a fashion show that took place at the *University Women's Club* in 1968:

80 Eva Poluha's interpretation of *yilunnta* as the experience of considerable shame neglects this anticipatory mental stress inherent in this category. Eva Poluha, The Power of Continuity: Ethiopia Through the Eyes of its Children. Uppsala: Nordika Afrikainstitutet, 14, cited in Daniel Mains, *Neoliberal Times: Progress, Boredom, and Shame Among Young Men in Urban Ethiopia*, American Ethnologist 34, 4 (2007), 660.
81 How Is an Ethiopian Girl of Good Character? in Wolf Leslau/Thomas L. Kane (eds.), *Amharic Cultural Reader*, Wiesbaden: Harassowitz 2001, 55.
82 *Das ist Abessinien*, Leipzig: Goldmann Verlag 1935, 35.
83 The Ethiopian Women. *Ethiopia Observer*: Journal of Independent Opinion, Economics, History and the Arts, 3,3 (1957), 76.

> This western dress (is) an effective means of invading and corrupting our national culture. We do not want to labor much discussing the prostituting effect of the mini-skirt ---but we do not want to pass without mentioning that the mini-skirt has sown, and itwill in the future sow, the seeds of obscenity---obscenity of the worst kind.[84]

As in other newly independent African countries, notably those with an anti-capitalist orientation, male students judged female consumer culture in terms of its negative connotation on social progress and highlighted their arguments with concrete action.[85] Less radical voices rejected the miniskirt as a form of cultural deterioration through "excessive modernism."[86] Others saw the shape of the average Ethiopian woman's legs as an obstacle to wearing this item of clothing.[87] Critical voices, primarily from the university, condemned the sexist representation of the "modern" woman as *femme fatale*.[88] Although a similar discussion on short sports attire seems to have been absent in the press of the 1960s, a link between the miniskirt and bare legs at the sports ground seems plausible. Forty years later, a young man from Jimma declared that "in Ethiopia, there is *yilunnta*. We are not free here. I like to play sports but in Ethiopia I can't wear shorts. People will talk about me and insult me."[89]

In contrast, several studies have concluded that sports attire allowing for unrestricted bodily movement contributed to the acceptance of other fashions. Cycling was the motor behind trousers for women, while lawn tennis liberated European women from the corset. "Sportswear, which was confined to a specific purpose, was tolerated more easily than earlier attempts at fashion reform linked to emancipator concerns."[90] Interestingly, one of the few positive arguments to emerge in the Ethiopian newspaper discourse on the miniskirt was vaguely

84 A Students' Movement is not a Fashion Show, *Struggle* 2,4 (1968), 13.
85 For post-revolutionary Zanzibar, see Thomas Burgess, "Cinema, Bell Bottoms, and Miniskirts: Struggle Over Youth and Citizenship in Revolutionary Zanzibar", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, 2-3 (2002), 301.
86 Jiddah and Infidels in Addis, *Addis Reporter* 23 May 1969, 6-8.
87 The 'New Look' in Addis, *Addis Reporter* 6 June 1969, 3.
88 Utter Nonsense!, *Addis Reporter* 6 June 1969, 3.
89 Quoted in Daniel Mains, Neoliberal Times: Progress, Boredom, and Shame Among Young Men in Urban Ethiopia, *American Ethnologist* 34, 4(2007), 669.
90 "Die zweckgebundene Sportmode, die nur fur eine bestimmte Tatigkeit gebraucht wurde, konnte leichyer toleriers warden, as fruhere Reformvorstobe, die mit emanzipatorischen Anliegen verbunden waren." (Birgit Horzer/Irmgard Trummler "Mode im politisched Wandel. Ein Spiegel weiblicher Emanzipation?" www.unigraz.at/ausstellungen.2000-moder_im_politischen_wandel.pdf.accessed 7 January 2011, translation KB).

associated with sport: "the mini skirt does liberate the legs and makes catching the bus (or taxi) in the rainy season far easier."[91] Furthermore, worn in the right places, both the miniskirt and short sportswear caused no offense, i.e., short sport attire in indoor gyms and miniskirts in private indoor space.[92] The sole exception for freedom to wear sports attires was the sports festivals, where hundreds of young boys and girls performed gymnastics in short attire in the Haile Selassie I stadium in the presence of high-ranking government officials and th e Emperor himself.

Sport, Education and the Rhetoric of Empire

There seems to be a consensus in sport studies on the temporary unifying potential of sports at communal, national and international levels. Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" are invoked live in stadiums and in other social spaces. With regard to sportswear as a representation of communal or national sentiment, academic literature has, so far, been focused on fan cultures and global sport sponsorship. The display of a sportive ruler as a symbol of a strong and healthy nation has increasingly caught academic interest, but it still lacks in depth study. So far, it seems to be clear that the relationship between sports and the ruling elite cannot be reduced to so called "royal" sports, such as; horse racing, falconry or polo. Swimming seems to have been a favorite past time of the Ethiopian royal family.[93] It was, as any other kind of sports however, never used as a branding strategy of the modern ruler, as in the case of Mao Tse-tung and Josef Stalin. The similar view between manual labor and sport might have prompted a negative message rather than a positive one.

Furthermore, displaying Haile Selassie on the cover of the monthly magazine *Menen* playing *genna* in traditional dress rather than modern sportswear plays with the most powerful legitimizing principle of Ethiopian royalty.[94] The same issue published a photograph of the winning team in shorts and shirts, translating the game from its symbolic function of cultural

91 Minis in Jerusalem,' *Addis Reporter* 6 June 1969, 3.
92 'New Look' Arouses Comments,' *Adds Reporter* 6 June 1969, 3.
93 The Manuscript Collection of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies holds numerous photographs from the 1950s and 1960s showing the Emperor's family and himself bathing in Lake Langano.
94 Front page, *Menen* December 1961.

representation into a modern competitive context.[95] The sport sociologist Karl Heinrich Bette refers to the semiotic configuration of presidents or prime ministers in sportive setting as the "involvement horizon" of politicians, state institutions or political parties.[96] The relationship between the last Ethiopian Emperor and the acclaimed Abebe Bikila is but one example.[97] Haile Selassie also played a decisive role in excluding Apartheid South Africa from the Olympic family. Last but not least, the necessary structures for the integration of Ethiopia into the global sport system were established during his reign.[98] When the Ethiopian National Soccer team won the third African Cup of Nations in 1962, the players and sports officials were invited to the palace. The Emperor used the occasion to personally decorate the champions but also to give some advice:

> The human power is weak. Only God's power is not weak. By playing and winning calm and skillful, you have filled your country with pride and Us (His Majesty - KB) with joy. What I wanted to tellyou is the following: look carefully after your life and health, but do not be egoistic. Serve your country and remain victorious. I trust you.[99]

The same article that included the above quotation also emphasized that the aim of the YMCA sports programs was to improve the body, as well as the social behaviors of its members. The rhetoric of character building through sports and the respective slogans of "fair play" and "learning to lose" found their way into the various institutions of learning. It would be interesting to know if this type of rhetoric was already in place in the early days of modern schooling, when so-called traditional games were still a component of school life. Before being replaced by modern sports and the introduction of sport as a compulsory subject, games like *genna* underwent a certain "domestication." The typical playing field, which could extend to one and half kilometers, was reduced to a small space in the school compound. The number

95 Ibid., 6.
96 Karl-Heinriche Better. Sportsoziologie. Bielefeld: Transkript Verlag 2010, 8.
97 Skillfullydescribed by Paul Rambali, *Barefoot Runner. The Life of the Marathon Champion Abebe Bikila*, London: Serpent's Tail 2007.
98 Wolde Bezabih/Gaudin Benoit. The Institutional Organization of Ethiopian Athletics. Annales d'Ethiopie 23 (2007-2008). 471.
99 Ityupiawiyan bikwas bica yetewenu saihonu lelochem liyu liyu isportochin yiketatelalu, *Menen,* January 1963.

of players, which normally included half a village, was confined to carefully selected pupils. A photograph of the French School in Addis Ababa, taken in 1907, shows the French teaching staff monitoring the game.[100]

The picture is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's "micro-physics of power," where specific disciplinary techniques directed at the body produced subjects and shaped their conduct. "The "docile body" geared by an "indefinite discipline" worked through a system of surveillance and did not need arms, physical violence or material constraints. "Just a gaze. An expecting gaze-."[101] Institutions, such as; modern schools and military barracks, were perfect sites in which to perfect the exercising of this 'gaze' in Ethiopia. Educating citizens to become committed servants of the Imperial progress project likewise implied the systematic introduction of modern sports, through compulsory physical education classes in schools and military institutions.[102] The secondary schools in Addis Ababa were ideal sites to inscribe compliant perceptions of the body into the future elite; the "pioneers of change"[103] or the "transmission belts" of Ethiopian modernism in the post-war period.

Physical education was taught by French and Egyptian teachers at Menelik II School, from as early as 1907. Its designation as a compulsory subject, however, did not emerge until the late 1920s and was, for the most part, restricted to institutions of higher learning.[104] Although little is known about the actual content of the classes, photographs from 1935 suggest gymnastics.[105]

100 Ghiorgis, Fasil and Gerard, Denis. *Addis Ababa 1886-1941. The City and Its Architectural Heritage*. Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2007, 286.
101 Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books Ltd. 1977, 215.
102 Similar to military institutions elsewhere, Ethiopian cadet schools and military academies were a vital component of the educational sector along with government and mission schools.
103 Bahru Zewde's term refers to the first generation of "modern" intellectuals.
104 Lakew Yigsitu, Ye-ityopia sport wiididir, *Ethiopian Interschool Sports Competition Magazine* (Addis Ababa: 1988, 28) dated the introduction of physical education at Entoto Vocational and Technical School in 1925, Empress Menen School at around 1930, and at the Kokebe Tsbah Haile Selassie I School at approx. 1931 (cited in Negussie Alemu, *Addis Ababa Inter Schools Sports Competition. Past, Present and Future Perspective*, unpublished Bachelor of Education thesis, Kotebe College of Teacher Education 2001,11).For the introduction of sports at Menelik II School, see Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia. The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century.* Oxford: James Curry 2002, 24.
105 *Das ist Abessinien*, 35. The photographs show gymnastic performances on the occasion of the Swedish monarch's visit to Ethiopia in 1935.

The post-war period saw a strengthening of physical education on a broader basis. Apart from the establishment of a Department of Physical Education in the Ministry of Education, sport was introduced to the primary school curriculum (Grade 1-6). Activities varied in accordance with technical equipment and the personal inclination of the primarily non-Ethiopian teaching staff.[106] Empress Menen School, the first girls' school, favored gymnastics. Apart from drama, school debates and music, the members of the school board regarded sport as an essential tool for the development of a well rounded personality.[107] Ball games in boys' schools took priority because, as the official rhetoric repeatedly highlighted, they were the perfect method to instill team spirit and the idea of fair play. According to the 1952 annual publication *Ethiopian Inter-School Association,* headmasters and physical education teachers also recognized the potential of gymnastics and technical track and field disciplines to identify and to promote individual talent. In the annual intra and inter school competitions that were introduced in 1950, young athletes could gain credit points for their schools, which translated into moral and material rewards.[108]

Looking at sport as an institution, these annual competitions, which soon included schools from all over the country, were a key instrument for the linking of Ethiopian athletics to a global sport system. The *Ethiopian Inter-School Athletic Association*, founded in 1950, played a decisive role in this process by adopting the rules and regulations of the *International Amateur Athletics Federation* and adapting them to local conditions.[109] Furthermore, with the Deputy Minister of Education as its president and the General Director of Education as chairman of the executive committee, the association involved high-ranking officials from the start. Well into the 1960s, however, the remaining members of the executive committee were all teachers or sports officers from Europe, Canada and the United States. Whereas in the first decade athletes were classified according to physical criteria, such as; height and weight, from 1962 onwards, participants competed in two separate divisions (Grade 1-8 and Grade 9-12). The division into age groups (10-14 years and 15-18 years) did not occur until 1986.[110]

106 Up until the 1960s, physical education was taught by sport teachers and sport officers from Sweden, Great Britain, France, the USA, Canada, Egypt and India.
107 Girls' Education, *Ethiopia Observer. Journal of Independent Opinion, Economics, History and the Arts*, 3,3 (1957), 76.
108 *Journal of the Ethiopian Inter-School Athletic Association,* Addis Ababa: 1952,11.
109 *Journal of the Ethiopian Inter-School Athletic Association*, Addis Ababa 1951, 13.
110 Negussie, *Addis Ababa Inter Schools Sports*, 12.

In the light of his disposition in 1974, the absence of the Emperor from the finals of the *Inter School Athletic Competition* in the Haile Selassie I Stadium, an occasion he had used without interruption from 1951 to 1973 to demonstrate his interest in the athletic success of the younger generation, acquires a symbolic meaning. Although Haile Selassie's overthrowing generally marks a rupture in Ethiopian history, a closer look at sport might alter this perception to one continuum. In 1973, Yidnekachew Tessema stressed in his *Pilot Study* the need to re-organize and to promote sports in Ethiopia, by involving all strata of society, by using limited resources more efficiently, by establishing sport science in institutions and by promoting elite sports. These ideas were to become the basis of the socialist sports policy during the next two decades. Yidnekachew Tessema's biography, in particular, and the development of sport in Ethiopia, in general, might be a suitable case to test periodization, which would limit Ethiopian modernity to the period prior to 1974.

By Way of Conclusion

The issue of periodization goes hand in hand with the demand to be more consistent in conceptualizing history as multi-layered. As an important part of subject formation, physical culture, in general, combined with sport, in particular, is one such layer. It is a gateway for the study of how subject formation, as part of social transformation in Ethiopia, was conceptualized by diverse actors. This process probably did not require acceptance of the notions of improvement by large sections of society. It needed institutions. In the Ethiopian case, I have argued that military institutions and notably those that facilitated army personnel training had the greatest potential to put ideas about improvement of the bodily self into practice. As shown, this not only refers to the hierarchical command structure, but it also refers to favorable material conditions, including; the availability of food, equipment and qualified coaches. Furthermore, selection processes ensured physical fitness as a prerequisite for entering a cadet school of the Military Academy. Discipline as the overarching principle of all aspects of army life was a perfect match for the ground rule of sport, i.e., that talent needs discipline and self-control if it is to grow. Last but not least, institutions, coaches and most of all the subjects, who are formed, must have a strong conviction about a belief in disciplining and accept the measures that might lead to

success. The Weberian blueprint of the modern as secular rationalism, clearly, does not fully apply to a reformed Ethiopian army or a sports club.

The relation between belief and improvement was likewise present in institutionalized leisure. In the case of the YMCA, muscular Christianity combined the spiritual with ideas of moral and bodily improvement of the self and, hence, of society as a whole. Similarly, higher learning, with its quasi-sacred, elitist status, coincided with ideas of controlled behavior and healthy bodies. Accordingly, both students and officials, including Haile Selassie himself, conceptualized the perfect university graduate as a potential leader. The "exemplary control of one's bodily needs and drives,"[111] as the Emperor phrased it, not only included health through sport but also the appropriate dress code. As the discussion on the miniskirt indicates, perceived modernity had its repercussions, not least when it was gendered, and this may also have affected the sports sector. Sources, other than magazines published by "Western" editors for an Ethiopian urban readership, should be reviewed to obtain a multi-faceted impression.

Haile Selassie, the instigator of "modern Ethiopianism," combined dress and a sportive pose, as well as presence at major – traditional and modern- sporting events in order to portray himself as rooted in tradition and at the same time as being progressive in thinking, i.e., an enlightened monarch. The substantial investment in education during his reign included the provision of sports facilities and improved hygiene standards in boarding schools. Fikru Kidane recollects that during his school days in the 1950s and 1960s, the Ministry of Education launched a program that gave boarders in Addis Ababa the opportunity to avail of the hot springs in Fil Wuha for a weekly shower.

Further studies on sport and Ethiopian modernity should give greater attention to the connection between the various fields, such as; that between education and military structures through sports and dress codes. Military training institutions are to be conceptualized as part of the educational system. The first Ethiopian physical education teachers were retired army officers.

111 U.A.A.C. 6th graduation, 17 July 1959, in: Ministry of Information, *Selected Speeches*, 15.

The Ethiopian Scout Movement, which was established in 1933, opened its own school in Addis Ababa and spread to all secondary schools during the 1950s. A further area of research should be sport, architecture and urban planning. The significance of the Haile Selassie I Stadium as a symbol of progress, a site for international competition and a place of sociability is a case in point. Studies of parallel development are unavoidable if the dichotomy between traditional games and modern sports is to be overcome. Hockey and its local version *genna*, both of which were played during the same period, albeit in different contexts, is a good illustration. Such an undertaking would enhance research efforts with valuable empirical material and endorse the idea that progress should be measured from a non-teleological perspective. Finally, it is necessary to broaden the focus from idealized sports personalities to diverted or subverted projects and strategies. Such an endeavor will help to get away from investigating attempts of subject formation, to approximate answers of what subjects have actually been formed.

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What Were They Writing About Anyway?

Tradition and Modernization in Amharic Literature

The article, a summarized version of which I am going to read tonight, appeared in the 2010 special issue featuring, in the main, Ethiopian literature and art, has as its subtitle "modernization in Amharic literature." And that is what it is going to address: how the idea of modernization has been conceived of and represented through literature in a context that puts two perceptions or images opposite each other, while at the same time making the opposition both the context and the very material out of which whatever type of representation has been spun. Paralleling the two perceptions, I have focused on two generations of writers, whose outlooks and points of view, while certainly opposed, nevertheless shared the same concern of seeing "their" Ethiopia wake from its centuries-old slumber and join the community of modernized nations. While doing so, however, I am equally intent upon capturing the two different, almost irreconcilable, temperaments characterizing each, for that mattered, in the final analysis, as to where their engagements, particularly those of the latter generation, led, their good intentions notwithstanding, with the consequences of which our present life is still charged. While speaking of modernization as part of my topic, I have chosen to content myself in letting any ramification emerge out of any discussion that may follow my presentation. This is, perhaps, at the risk of disappointing some who might have come here to have their fill of understanding such concepts as "modernity" and "modernism," particularly as they have been conceived of and articulated during the preceding presentations in the series.

I. **Where it all starts**

Today when "globalization" is not just another buzzword thrown around at workshops, conferences and symposia but something to be reckoned with as the ruling edict of the day, we still have to grapple with the idea of Ethiopia as a persisting enigma:

- On the one hand, we have this idyllic place, an image of remoteness buried in the recesses of a past that has been as enduring as it has been glorious—a wonderland of natural bounty, whose people have been described as so "blameless" that they were beloved of the Greek gods who made frequent visits to them, led by none other than the thunderbolt-wielding Zeus himself; a people at whose "banquet side Poseidon [the god of the waters, earthquakes and horses] lingered delighted," as also did Iris [goddess of the rainbow and messenger of the gods] "to partake of the rites to the immortal gods." This perception of the country still lingers with an even stronger grip on the psyche of poets and politicians alike, extending its reach further into the past, this time around, as the 'enviable origin' of the human race, whence the Amharic epithet *Dinqnesh*-Lucy.

- On the other hand, is the dismal reality of poverty and backwardness that it represented when it crossed the threshold of the twentieth century a hundred years ago, and still had nothing significant to show for it all. This is what ailed the early twentieth-century writers, who voiced their concerns directly, by addressing their ideas of change to the powers that be, or indirectly through fictional works in the didactic tradition. Granted, so they seemed to say, that the country's past had been as glorious as glorious could be, but where did it all go? Where did we miss the turn that other nations were quick to recognize and embark onto, leaving us out in the cold, while we, its children, still boast of the thirteen months of sunshine in which we alone seemed to bask? Or, as some angrily intimated, were we that loath to part with our bumpy ride on our dignified mules, rain or shine?

In the first group, we have such as Aleqa Tayye. In words that seem to echo those of Diodorus about the Ethiopians "being the first to honor the gods" and to be "endowed .[with their] favors," and at the same time wondering loudly as to what stopped us dead in our track, Aleqa Tayye wistfully asks what seems to have been an unavoidable question in a letter to Emperor Menelik II:

> It is the Almighty God, impartial in His ways, Who created the children of Adam and the whole Universe. In so doing, He did not bless one part of humanity with a fully-developed intellect while ushering out the other with only half. The Holy Book tells us that He created all people equal. If that be the case, how come then that the peoples of Europe and Asia, and some in Africa, managed to acquire learning and wisdom**, *while we, the Habashas, who, as distinct from the non-believers, were the first to receive the Laws of Moses and who, circa 308 A. D., had already become Christians*, *could not press forward in*** acquiring enlightenment both materially and spiritually? (Emphasis mine.)

Behind the supplicatory tone of Tayye's words, with which he addressed a number of suggestions to Emperor Menelik as solutions to the country's ailment, is couched a helpless feeling of dejection and anger at the incredible complacency of its people, no less than that of its rulers. Here is a country that had been boasting millennia of sovereignty and yet, at the time Tayye wrote, there it was using the Maria Theresa thaler as the country's official currency. And so much for sovereignty, as a solution to which he suggests that Menilk mint his own currency bearing his own image, which is no mere technical matter.

The same general situation, the same state of affairs that also made Gebre-Hiywot Baykedagn exhort the 'people' in the following words: "What befell you, oh people of Ethiopia! When are you going to awaken from your deep sleep and open your eyes to get even a glimpse of all that is going on in the rest of the world!" Gebre-Hiywot's concern is even more vehemently articulated by Tamirat Amanuel with an in-your-face tone that would make the exhortations of the others sound no more than a whimper. Tamirat's tone speaks louder than his words about the kind of

impatience his likes had at the time with mere glorification of a past that has only served as the source of the scornful words of, such as those of Gibbon.

It would do you some good to sometimes venture abroad, for such experience would certainly broaden your intellectual scope, while at the same time ***bringing down your conceited self-perception, as one equaled by none but yourself, and sending it crashing to pieces at your feet. You will find that the self-aggrandizement with which you are puffed up is of no moment when you leave your cocoon of a home and look far out beyond your limited horizon.*** I see no other panacea, in moments, such as; this, ***when people like you drivel on about their own greatness, to deflate this pride of yours*** than reading the books many a traveler wrote about Persia, China and others.

> ***When you find out that millions of people have no idea even of your very existence and have lost no sleep regretting the fact,*** then will be the moment to ***own up to your own utter emptiness***. In saying all this, I am in no way suggesting, even remotely, that people should simply abandon their settled lives and aimlessly wander about like a deranged person. What I am saying instead is that people should strive towards acquiring knowledge even without having to remove themselves from the coziness of their domiciles. ***All of you, who think of yourselves as noblewomen or noblemen, please be advised that your learning so acquired would do not one bit of harm to your [assumed] nobility***. What is more valuable, do you think, than knowledge? ***Powerlies in knowledge*** — so tell us the Latins [Europeans]. I beseech you, therefore, ***not to deprecate learning***. And I hereby urge you to read *Mahidere-Birhan Hagere Japan*, and I'll tell you that, without toiling much, and without even having to cross *Angerebb*, ***you will have reached the furthest ends of the globe*** and returned home safe and satisfied. [My emphases.]

Tamirat's words were written 27 years after Tayye's and it seems that nothing was happening in that ancient and proud country—proud in its slumber? (The deprecation of knowledge that Tamirat warns against is almost identical with Taye's, which he gives as one of the reasons

for Ethiopia's 'backwardness.') Our pioneers of change may be humble of temperament and cautious in their approach, but as these words of Tamirat clearly demonstrate, there was also a lot of 'collective anger' quietly simmering inside them. Some were guarded, to be sure, but there were also those for whom waiting any longer was not something that the country could afford. There is more than just a whiff of radicalism involved in the reforms suggested and, in some cases, about how those reforms *should be* implemented, as we shall see below. In this regard, one only needs to look at, as one instance, the list of the reforms that Gebre-Hiywot Baykedagn suggests in his critical essay which includes, among others, tax and taxation; military; education; law; and commerce. But the following tops them all:

> Tenth, ***let religious freedom be declared***. Many are the people who may not understand the good in religious freedom. So, it would do us good if we took note of the following. Our people believe that the *tewahido* faith is the most eminent among all the faiths. So be it, ***but what good did it do us?*** Religion is a matter of the heart. Consequently, it is for ***the Heavenly King and not the earthly one*** to intervene in. It would, therefore, prove advantageous to our government if the teachings of the Gospel, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's" were heeded. (My emphasis.)

Given the Ethiopia of the time in which Gebre-Hiywot wrote his essay, this is utter madness! Separation of state and religion! This, at a time when Gebre-Hiywot himself lamented the persecution of certain individuals at the hands of the clergy, no less than those of the officials of the court, in spite of the allegiance that they showed to their government and the dedicated service they rendered to it. To repeat what I said earlier, there indeed was an undercurrent of radicalism involved in the reforms envisioned by at least some of the pioneers, which should not necessarily cancel out the prudence with which the writers carried themselves. It is against this general background of the reformist vision of the pioneers of change that we should explore the literary engagements of the early twentieth-century writers, two of whom I single out as my focal points for the discussion that follows. In the second group, those who used literature as their vehicle transmit their messages. There are two on whom I particularly focus: namely,

Hiruy Wolde-Selassie and Wolde-Giyorgis Wolde-Yohannes.

To all intents and purposes, we can say that the turn of the Ethiopian twentieth-century coincides with the birth of Amharic literature as a secular undertaking, that is, as a marked shift away from the celestial preoccupation that characterized Ge'ez literature. The inaugural of this young literature saw the publication in Rome of Afework Gebre Iyesus's *Lebb Wallad Tarik* in 1900, Ethiopian calendar (1908 G.C.). The story depicts, or envisions, the creation of a new Ethiopian cosmos out of the chaos of a persisting war between two communities, Christians on the one hand, and what the narrator refers to as 'infidels' on the other. It was a war marked by senseless destruction, the parties to which were equally intransigent and seemed never to relent. With the usual *deus ex machina*, characterizing such tales as *T'obbiya* (as it is now popularly known) at work, the war comes to an end with the conversion of the king of the 'infidels' to Christianity, made possible by his marriage to T'obbiya (the eponymous heroine of the novelette). In effect, the book can be said to capture Afewok's vision of a new Ethiopia as a harmonious, peaceful, and stable nation made up of the unity of the once unrelenting enemies.

Afework's description of the war between the two communities, as exhaustive and senselessly destructive as it was persistent, lends itself to a reading by extrapolation that he could possibly have had in mind the many drawn-out wars Ethiopia passed through in the past, but particularly the almost 100-year, intermittent wars among the different warlords of the 18th and 19th centuries. The whole stretch is known as the *zemene mesafint* (era of the princes). It would not be too far-fetched to surmise that Afework was tired of the senseless wars and that he may have used his work to call for peace and stability and allow the country a breathing space for it to embark on the path of development, which seems to have eluded it for centuries past.

Historically speaking, the publication of the novelette also coincides with that period in the country's history when it began enjoying a relative stability, though not the kind of harmony and peace envisioned by the work itself. Tewodros, who seems to have started it all with his vision of a untied and modernized Ethiopia, had a helping hand from Menelik II. Menelik's victory over the Italian forces at the Battle of Adwa gave him leverage in his recognition by outsiders

as the single most important sovereign to be reckoned with in the region. Menelik might not have been quick enough to use the opportunity to pick up where Tewodros left-off and to open up the country to the outside as could have been done, if we go by Gebre-Hiywot's words. Still, it is only logical that our pioneers of writers, who were perhaps biding their time, should use the moment to voice their concerns about the 'backwardness' of the country and to give form to their ideas of its modernization along Western lines. At the time, quite a few of them (including Tayye) had been 'out there' and had seen enough to be stirred by what they witnessed. So, what were they all about?

II. First Phase: The Humble Trailblazers

Unlike their literary progenitors who wrote in Ge'ez for almost fourteen centuries and who were perfectly at home with what they wrote, cuddled as they were in the bosom of an ideology that gave them the protection of Caesar and God alike, the pioneers of Amharic literature, who wrote in the early decades of the twentieth-century, found themselves forced to tread a social, cultural and political landscape that was, in effect, an uncharted terrain. But this uncharted terrain was not one from which every contour of the familiar was erased. The unfamiliarity in question has to do with that kind of discomfiture and apprehension generations everywhere felt, when suddenly finding themselves in a no-man's land between two cultures ready to go to war against each other. They were wedged between an intransigent 'feudal' oligarchy and an equally dogmatic clergy on the one hand, and with an illiterate citizenry completely ignorant of what was transpiring anywhere beyond the threshold of their homesteads for subjects, on the other. So, they had to determine what to write, for whom, and, most importantly, how to deliver their messages.

Under the existing circumstances, because they knew a clash was inevitable between the modernization they espoused and the tradition in which they themselves were nurtured, they believed that 'our tradition' must be guarded against the incursion of what they considered to be undesirable influences, particularly in the spiritual/cultural domain. Yet they were no less eager

about the change that needed to be made. They therefore wanted—at least—to play the role of peaceful mediators, whereby the accommodation of the new would not crowd out, much less sweep off, what is still valuable and worth its weight in gold in the centuries-old legacy. But they also knew that history was on the side of the stranger—modernity with all its paraphernalia, in whose favor they had quite a few things to say. And this is where their ambivalence would turn into a debilitating disquietude. Yet, in some cases (e.g. Heruy and Wolde-Girogis), the writers seem to have felt that it was "tradition" that should cede more if it must avoid being crushed altogether under the newcomer's weight. After all, it is that same tradition in which they were nurtured and which even informed their own favorable attitudes toward modernization. The question confronting them, therefore, was not whether change must come (since it had, like the proverbial camel, already squeezed itself neck-up into the tent), but to what extent and how generously or delicately it ought to be entertained by them without offending the sensibilities of the traditional polity and without themselves losing much in the bargain. As far as they were concerned, Ethiopia could not remain what it had been for centuries and still lay claim to membership in the "community of modern nations." She could no longer afford to remain "forgetful of [a] world by whom she was forgotten."

The burden, then, both of reminding and remembering the world, of embracing and being embraced by that world, they thought, fell squarely on their shoulders. But prudence and caution, they thought and believed, should be their one staple without which they cannot do. They knew that they would meet with resistance both from the nobility and from the Church, as from the general population where things mattered, never mind that they had the tacit blessing of Teferi (later Haile Selassie). Young and enthusiastic about modernization as he seemed at the time, Teferi himself was at the mercy of the same nobility and clergy, the latter being an even more potent adversary. So they had to move with caution and operate, as would a surgeon on a delicate organ, to remove what excess of tradition there was without incapacitating the body politic as a whole. Reform, alias transformation in current parlance, was the agenda.

Their project, though well-intentioned, was, objectively speaking, one that involved some undermining of the cultural/ideological base on which the traditional polity stood--and firmly.

They knew it involved risk—in fact, a lot—but what they feared most was neither being banished from the polis nor incurring divine ire and being condemned to 'Fire Everlasting'. The possibility of banishment from the polis was not a remote one, as they knew very well from a number of cases. Rather, what they seemed to be wary of was the forces they would have unleashed if the changes they were sure had to be made and the vision they had of a new Ethiopia had gained quick and uncritical acceptance among the growing elite of the time. And such an elite, as might have been too eager to go the "ways of Europe" all the way, was already in the making (one can be certain at least about Gebre-Hiywot and Tamirat, a taste of the extent to which they were willing to go we already had had).

Their temptation, then, was quite a Temptation, in the Scriptural sense, but they were mere mortals. The centrifugal forces of history were beckoning them, paradoxically, as willing victims of a situation not exactly of their own making. To succumb altogether to this aspect of the temptation would have meant been hurled out into a cultural void and being lost forever. On the other hand, to stick adamantly to "our roots" would have been to submit to the centripetal forces of isolationism and parochialism and to abandon, in the process, the very vision they had set out to realize. They consequently had to play the role of "apostles" of change, who at the same time regarded "our own" with a curious mix of jealousy and pride. As far as they were concerned, whatever was to result from the meeting (and mating) of tradition and modernity had to be an amalgam in which traces of the past would not be obliterated, or the influences of the modern present would not be rejected out of hand. The future would be an alloy in which past traces and present imprints would both maintain their individual substantiality, the strength and quality of this alloy naturally to be determined by the purposes to be served by it.

And yet, their dream of seeing their Ethiopia marching into the modern era was so strong that the possibility of balance that they sought to strike between the two might necessarily tip to the side of modernity was not lost on them. They therefore launched their project of modernization by targeting what they considered to be harmful and anachronistic in the culture informing their works, and for which much of the respect they had remained intact.

They may not have all equally been aware of it, but these pioneers' project was one of undermining the system, but only as a matter of default. In other words, whatever undermining took place later on was a necessary by-product of the reformist project that they undertook, which puts them in stark opposition with those derring-do writers who came some decades later, for whom 'undermining the system' was a professed vocation, not something contingent upon something else that they did, or intended to do.

The pioneers wrote in a situation in which the urban-rural divide was beginning to take shape. Of course, the balance still tipped toward the rural–the latter depicted as the seat of long-settled, even ossified—the breeding ground for ever-changing values. In this setting, the problem they faced was the following. They may be able to negotiate their way—willy-nilly—in urban settings, which have opened up to the outside world. But what were they to do with the rural areas, where culture operates with such a primordial force that the very people they intended to benefit from their scheme would not be the last, or the least, to put up the most serious resistance where "things really mattered"! Such contradictions provided both the subject matter of the literature and the strategies adopted by the writers to negotiate their way around (or through) whatever dilemma, ambivalence, or anxiety stood in their way.

The writers approached their project with this inevitable apprehension that acculturation always brought with it. Tradition has its values and history cannot be ignored; and there was a lot in modernity that was also a fool's gold. Yet their focus appeared to be not so much on what needed to be avoided in what the West provided (some of them didn't seem to have seen enough to be able to determine what would go and what wouldn't) as it was on what must be altered, or removed from, within their own culture and in their own views of Ethiopia, and their perception of the world they were attempting to make part of theirs.

The writers so engaged knew that, in the absence of cultural transformation, material progress alone would serve nothing more than a superficial change in the ways of the flesh. So, some aspects of that culture must be altered, while others must simply be abandoned or shelved in the stacks of memory, for that, too, constitutes part of 'our history'.

It was thus that Heruy Wolde-Selassie and Wolde-Giorgis Wolde-Yohannes, for instance, rose up pen in hand, but ever so circumspect in their approach, against such practices as child marriage, arranged marriage, lavish feasts at weddings, the ostentations of the so-called faithful (even among the clergy), etc. While positively speaking, they also engaged the issue of education in the tradition of the West, which they believed was the key to modernization and development. As we shall see below, this was a sore subject among the clergy in particular, who had a vested interest in keeping educations of the West away and to sticking with their own.

Both Heruy and Wolde-Giyorgis address the issue of education/knowledge–the 'modern' (read European) vis-à-vis the traditional (Church education). Let me start with Heruy's *Addis Alem*, in which a foreign-educated character confronts and challenges his traditional community (read polity) on issues of traditional practices, symbolizing to him, sheer ignorance and waste, including wedding feasts, mourning rituals, and other attendant beliefs and attitudes. The character, Awwoqe by name (a metaphor for enlightenment) wins the day by literally winning one of the clergy (a relative or friend of his father's) to his side, a deliberate, seemingly naïve, and unrealistic representation, but imperative for one with a utopian vision. Who is to controvert a clergy member when he says *Awwoqe knows* (Awwoqe *yawqal*!). I will come back to Heruy for one more, brief discussion of what I consider to be his most daring work.

In his book entitled *Ag-azi,* Wolde-Giyorgis picks up the thread where Tamirat left off and prefaces the polemic between the two sides, with an artfully drawn picture of what it means to venture abroad and see different places. The tone he uses speaks of the pain he was going through to make his intended readers one with him, or vice-versa. "Would it be like a bland fasting-day [vegan] food that you couldn't relish if I told you about things that you never beheld? How best could I tell you so that my beholding may become yours as well? How best to explain it all to you?" The sense of helplessness Wolde-Giorgis feels is clear from the tone–the care he takes to avoid sounding belligerent (to which compare Tamirat's). The ability to persuade the intended targets in a situation clouded by the darkness of ignorance and barricaded by a willful resistance on the part particularly of the clergy and the nobility is as all-important as his

earnest desire to communicate his vision, a stance my generation could have learned a lesson or two from.

He tells his reader of the wonders of riding trains, of cruising the oceans in ships in the awesome sight of the galloping surfs, of flying across the heavens in airplanes and experiencing the pleasure of watching the earth from ON HIGH. At the same time, however, he uses this tone to give the cue to his character on how to engage the heart, not the intellect, of his family/relatives (read 'community'). Good will is everything. Why, if this is the case, Wolde-Giyorgis presents his character—his own creation—as a bit too combative, which obviously doesn't sit well with the sensibilities of his relatives, whose intransigence is symbolized by the character's mad-as-a-hornet aunt, who interrupts her *injera*-baking chore to give him a taste of her cudgel of a stirring-rod (*mamaseya*)? I think that this is deliberate. Wolde-Giyorgis, as much as he wants to send his message home, is more interested in pointing to the fact that tact is everything, that conviction without the ability to convince ends in unnecessary resistance, if not total rejection. The intensity of the argument between Ag'azi (the main character) and his relatives is there to demonstrate the futility of highbrow-ism in any attempt to change people as it also points to the formidability of the project at hand. Eventually, at any rate, the heated argument, which continues for a long time, finally seems to cool down with Ag'azi's [read Wolde-Giyorgis's] position winning the day through the soothing intervention of Ag'azi's uncle. So, at last, everybody seems to have recognized that because the mountain cannot come to Ag'azi (the mere mortal that he is) Ag'azi must go to the mountain. Hadn't Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs" (Matthew 19:14). Enlightenment had beckoned and Ag'azi must go!

As I have pointed out toward the beginning of this essay, the humility and decorum of these writers, with which they expressed their thoughts, should not deceive us into thinking that they were not willing, or ready, to delve into issues that had the potential to send tremors through the status-quo, if anybody had bothered to pay mind to them. Let me take the reader back to Heruy and his *Yelibb Hassab: YeBirhanenna YeTsion-Mogesa Gabitcha ('Some Food for Thought:*

The Marriage of Berhane and Tsion-Mogesa'). This obviously didactic fiction reads like a counsel on the proper form of marriage, delivered against the background of a culture in which child-marriage (read girls) was a standard practice in most parts at least of the northern highlands of Ethiopia with which I am familiar. Still more, it urges that the couple-to-be (especially the girl) enter the contract of their own free will as against the usual arrangements made by families, unbeknownst to either party, but especially to the girl. The author has been careful to leave intact one traditional clause: namely, that the would-be couple should get the blessing of the family and the elderly, not just ride away with a "just married" sign posted on the back of their mules after being pronounced 'husband-and-wife.' That is what *Yelibb Hassab* ostensibly is, which is as it should be.

To writers of Heruy's intellectual disposition, the question of child marriage, perceived and understood as being perfectly natural by the communities practicing it, was no issue to be probed into as mere anthropological curiosity, or as one of the residues of society's "primitive practices." Neither was it an object of detached contemplation. It was, rather, a living social problem that one ought to consider with as much urgency as the times allowed and seek solutions to. It is only proper and logical for Heruy to have picked out one of the most pernicious practices of the time (traces of which are still alive even as we speak). That Heruy was deliberate about his choice of subject matter, as well as his characterization of his protagonist as a precocious seven-year she-child, to the consternation perhaps of many a realist today who might see in Heruy's attempt nothing more than a naïve dabbling in fantasy. All the better for him, however, if he must thwart possible danger for picking up a thorny issue, in a deadpan manner.

We need not, in fact, go beyond the first few pages of the book to see that Heruy was up to something more serious and controversial, even dangerous. To make things short, let me leave out the details and point that Heruy was definitely engaging the issue of what many years later was to become the resounding slogan of "women's liberation." That he was up in arms against the domestication of women and their introduction to the public sphere is firmly, but prudently, inscribed in the first episode of his book, in which he champions the education of girls.

Presented with six alternative types of education, his precocious would prefer if she were given the opportunity to go to school. She rejects the first three alternatives all having to do with domestic chores—baking and cooking, brewing beverages, and spinning—and as readily opts for the last three: reading, writing, and handicraft (specifically knitting and embroidery). She was later trained by an elderly she-*menokse* (nun) who just conveniently happened to be living in the vicinity! In relating what he does, as he did as follows, I can only see Heruy vividly leaning sideways on his *mekkedda* with an impish grin written all over his face:

> *Question: Would you like to be instructed in the art of baking* **injera**?
> *Response: Why should I exhaust myself with all the grinding, dough-mixing, grill-heating and baking routine when I can just send for* **injera** *or* **dabbo** *for only two, utmost four,* mehaleq?

It is in terms of Tsion-Mogesa's somewhat wryly expressed *rejection* of the domestic alternative, which appears to be *deliberately* fore grounded, that her *ready* acceptance of the last three alternatives is articulated. The rejection is of paramount significance. I read it as Heruy's way of saying that "a woman's place is not (***only***) in the home," for he can't have it all in one sweep. It also indicates that foremost in his mind (as well as the others') was not so much on what needed to be avoided in what modernization has to give, as it was on what must be altered or removed from**,** on what must be ***negated,*** within their own culture and in their own views of Ethiopia**.** The reason for this seems to me that all Ethiopia had been experiencing in her long history was a series of stumbling blocks in the form of a sickening resistance to change, any change that is perceived as disturbing the 'calm' of a centuries-old slumber! Do away with the domestication of women! The marriage story was after all an artifice, well-intentioned, but an artifice all the same. That is Heruy for you, ever on his guard against his version of the time's pharisaism (or phariseeism).

Even more insightful, it seems to me, is Heruy's choice of setting for the particular episode—the family, the domestic sphere—which says more than just a little about his keenness as to where

the solution for the said problem must begin. The transformation must begin from within, at the microcosmic level of society, and spread out to embrace the community and, of course, the different institutions as the embodiment of myriads of (given the particular context negative) values. That, it seems to me, is why Heruy emphasizes the ***rejection*** of those alternatives, which only serve the perpetuation of the domestication of women and, conversely, which give patriarchy a new premium on its hold to power. The move is a dangerous one, to be sure, but one that was taken anyway!

Knowing, therefore, the risk involved in even entertaining such a radical idea that undermines the power of patriarchy, which must include the Church, Heruy, ever so cautious, is not willing to take a chance. So, he has the family's father confessor come into the picture at the end of the said episode, as also at the beginning, to secure his blessing and puts the following words in his mouth:

> Do you see, oh my daughter, you are just like Maria, Martha's sister. Martha used to spend ***all her day preparing food***, whereas her sister was enamored of hearing the words of the Book. When Martha, angry with her sister's ways, got mad at her, our Lord [Jesus] said to her: 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. ***Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her*** (Luke. 10:38-42). (My emphases.)

The priest is no fool either, for all that he did in turn was pass the buck to the Rock on which stands the Church. Who is going to controvert this except for the incontrovertibly recalcitrant among the clergy, or the nobility, or even the laity? The point of this all, once again, is that those pioneers of writers, as humble and prudent as they were, actually had something of the radical in them biding its time. If they had had their way, they would have it bloom into a hundred flowers, without ruling out the possibility of the backfire that it also represents.

Even with all this, they consistently approached their vocation with a prudence that can be said was fundamental to their upbringing, to their very nature. The important thing here is not what they had to say for themselves so much as it is how they ought to make themselves heard. As enthusiastic for change as they were, it must not be forgotten that the writers were loyal to the monarchy and the Ethiopian ideals that it symbolized. They were also reverential of the teachings (principles) of the founder of the Church, with which the particular clerical institution and those who run it may not necessarily be in accord with, as Heruy has attempted to show in his *Addis Alem*. One thing is for certain, however, to the writers of this generation; that there was no contradiction between living and working under a monarchy and espousing modernization. For, "aren't England and Japan monarchies?" Haven't they moved so far ahead of us without having to do away with their respective systems? To them, there was still a lot of wisdom left in the adage: *"the firmament cannot be plowed and the monarch(y) cannot be held to account."* Yes, change in the direction of liberalization but not if it meant "disturbing the hive to the core," as Gebre-Heywot Baykedagn said about the cost involved in trying to bring change to a people or to a society to whom the past meant everything. Hence, their insistence on prudence and caution, neither of which cancels out their desire for, and the necessity of, change.

III. Phase Two: Plowing the Firmament, or, the Daring and the Unruly

What of the literary progeny of the Heruy's? In one sense, 'standing things on their head' would describe their literary engagement. Or, to put it a little bit differently, we find them at the other end of the spectrum, with the different shades in between characterizing the different intensities of temperament and attitude they exhibited at different moments. In general, however, the answer lies in the refutation to the adage cited at the end of the previous section, expressive both of the issues at stake for them and the strategies they adopted in going about their business of subverting a system that had long-overstayed its welcome.

Whereas Heruy's generation had faith in the young Teferi/Haile Selassie (who was just about forty when he ascended the throne) and was optimistic about the restoration of Ethiopia's 'glory'

under his aegis, the generation of writers that emerged beginning in the late fifties and continued until 1974 was of a breed that saw in the Emperor and the system a totally different picture, with very little, if any, positive qualities to attribute to them. Whereas, Heruy's generation could be easily discerned and safely described as 'homogeneous' both in outlook and temperament, the young generation was a mixed lot: disillusioned, sad, angry, outright rebellious, skeptical and, in a few cases, almost nihilistic. They also gathered from varying backgrounds with a tempo that hardly gave them time to familiarize themselves with each other or with their new surroundings. The period after the 1950s, but, particularly, after the aborted coup d'état of December 1960, teemed with such temperaments and moods, as would make it difficult to trace any one single strain that one could confidently speak of as characteristic of the period or the individuals populating the generation. This should not come as a surprise. An upheaval was already in the making and in the absence yet of any single orientation or a positive program of action (in the strictly political sense). Everyone, so it appeared, was intent upon chipping in their share of ideas and feelings in an apparently random fashion. Only their *general negation* of the system seemed to hold them loosely together, which brought forth what appeared to be a miscellaneous collection of disparate, but not altogether insensible, ideas.

The Ethiopia this new breed of writers knew (or thought it knew) was not the Ethiopia of legend, that land of milk and honey of which countless writers, including Samuel Johnson, had written about; it was not the "bread basket of Africa" about which official propaganda boasted (if it was, then it was just a basket without the bread); neither was it that "land of thirteen months of sunshine" that the then Ethiopian Airlines and Tourist Organization proudly advertised. If anything, Ethiopia was a dismal reality punctured all over with poverty, disease, ignorance, oppression, exploitation, greed, corruption, and every imaginable social ill—perhaps more than its share. In short, there was nothing promising in sight, which made their disillusion of a different hue from that of their predecessors. The Emperor's once awesome image seemed to have faded, overnight, into a grayish mist of eerie awfulness. The jolting experience of the 1960 coup, might have opened the radicals' eyes a wee bit too wide for them to see more in their power, where probably what they saw was only a mirage.

It needs no overstating that this generation's belief was that things must change, and in quite a radical way, for hasn't a good half-century elapsed between the first of the early twentieth-century writers and this group! And as the days moved farther away from 1960, things were not getting better, as one would have hoped they would from the lessons of the coup. Disillusion was displaced first by sadness, then anger—sheer anger. 'The view from Arat Kilo' of the then Ethiopia showed what little trace of optimism there was (or seemed to have been) left as totally non-existent. So came the moment gradually, but gathering more and more momentum surely, when the students of the then University College and, later, of Haile Selassie I University, decided: no compromise, no false hopes, no illusions about past glories or future promises, unless, of course: "*the firmament was plowed and the monarch(y) was called to account*!" And by none other than themselves!

That was the actual coming-of-age of the "Ingrates" who bit the hand that had been feeding them for so long! True, they had the cautious and the moderate among them who believed in the "good intentions" of the Emperor, 'if only the nobility and the corrupt elite then inhabiting the bureaucracy didn't stand in his way.' For him to continue blazing the trail, he himself had helped to chart as an enthusiastic, young crown prince and, later, as a young emperor. The general feeling, however, was that it was time for quite a substantial change. This feeling, no doubt, had rubbed-off onto a good number of the population, as was to be witnessed a few years later, though with an unexpected turn for the worse. But I digress.

The task the writers of the sixties and early seventies assigned to themselves was that of exposing the socio-political system for what 'it really was'. Even those among them who were decorous enough not to go over the limits in their enthusiasm were, at times, caustic in their critique of the system, something indicative of their desire for a substantial (but not revolutionary) change. In some cases, there was satisfaction with the same kind of constitutional monarchy intimated by the engineers of the 1960 coup d'état. The engineers of the coup had expected that the jolt would wake up Ethiopia and hurl it into the changes that they envisioned for it. Their dream turned into a nightmare when the Emperor flew into his capital about three days later and Royal

vengeance began to take its toll. Then, Ethiopia resumed its slumber and the monarchy held itself with an equanimity that seemed to say: "*The King is Alive, The King is Never to Die!"* It took fourteen years before the inevitable happened.

Five years after that fateful coup d'état, one writer, Haddis Alemayheu, who belonged to the earlier generation chronologically but to the younger breed of writers in some of his ideas and beliefs, had one of his characters in his well executed novel (and a real Amharic classic), *Fiqir Iske Meqabir,* speak of the social system as a "*heap of loosely piled rocks*", which would one day "*come crumbling down of its own when the pieces at the bottom start giving way under the weight of those at the top,*" unless the system was transformed in ways that reflected the humanity of the subjects over which it ruled. Eight years later after the publication of Haddis's novel, these words were to prove so prophetic, and the neglect of those words by the powers that be to prove so deadly, when the February 1974 revolution caught everybody by surprise. It is of interest to note the irony of this fictional warning, which appears to be taken out of a letter Haddis Alemayehu wrote (and submitted to the Emperor in his own handwriting) in the aftermath of the aborted coup, humbly advising that substantial measures be taken, or else! The advice fell, as expected, on deaf ears, with the price paid exactly as prophesied in the novel. The Amharic saying *"he who refuses to heed the repeated counsel of the wise should be left alone to learn through the trials and tribulations proper to his contumacy"* could never be more apt than it was at that moment.

Though Haddis's critique of the system was more acute and of a more radical nature than that of the early writers, I submit, with some apprehension, that his stance was *essentially* reformist, particularly in the political sphere, perhaps not going beyond the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. The words he put in his character's mouth are a clear indication of the caution he advises in going about the business of bringing about the desired change, which, this time around, the 'revolutionary activists of Haile Selassie I University, immersed deep as they were, in Marxist-Leninist politics (and polemics!), did not seem to heed, what with the excitement of seeing a centuries-old monarchy go to smithereens overnight!

While the majority of the writers of this new generation continued the task of slowly chipping away at the cultural and ideological base of the feudal system, first by hitching their critique to such themes or subject matters as "marriage-of-unequals," "prostitution" (as much a lamented condition then as now), "hypocrisy," "nepotism," "greed," then "corruption," "injustice," "police brutality," etc., others were less courteous in the way in which they went about their business. They were, in fact, impetuous and flippant in the eyes of their targets. They also were, in a sense, many manifestations of Gudu Kassa ("the mad one") in *Fiqir Iske Meqabir,* who speaks the words cited in the previous paragraph. The difference this time being that they made sure they were heard through sheer defiance, bordering on the same highbrow-ism that Wolde-Giyorgis seems to have cautioned against in his *Ag'azi*.

Probably the most uncompromising breed of writers of this phase consisted of the then students of the University College of Addis Ababa, whose critical attitude towards the system gradually developed into an open challenge that was later to prove deadly to the government, but also to their own generation in a way they could not have anticipated at the time. Poetry was the chosen medium for the dissemination of their ideas of change. They had no illusions about nursing a system that had long been ailing. Neither was their enthusiasm for hastening the death process a gesture of mercy-killing accorded to a suffering terminal patient. Although the subject matter tackled by the different writers varied, as the writers themselves were many and coming from different backgrounds, they were all united by the single aim of *"unsettling"* the system. There didn't seem to be any time for pondering the alternative(s). Or, it has been settled (consciously or otherwise) that a revolution will do it all, and this, as a matter of general consensus.

But, if the Ethiopian "symbol" of the Solomon-Sheba legend—the monarchy—must go (a fait accompli to some), it was only within the logic of such a process that it must be replaced by another symbol, another hero—and one, moreover, of their own making. It is one of the paradoxes of history (or, is it?) that such a hero should be provided by the very system against which the new generation rose-up-in-pens. One such hero was readily provided by nineteenth century Ethiopia in the person of Emperor Tewodros II, who is still venerated as the architect of

Ethiopia's unity and 'trendsetter' for its modernization. Considering, however, the supposedly humble origin of this new hero, considering even more the fact that he was up in arms against the numerous plundering warlords and the "abominable parasites" of clergy, and not least, his defiant gesture of committing suicide rather than surrendering to the Napier expedition at Meqdela, considering these and other traits (real or perceived being immaterial) worthy of a hero, it would not be so much of a paradox that the new generation's paragon of virtue should be taken out of a past that was not seen (was never to be seen) in any favorable light by the students. Certainly, heroes are not made out of the blue.

It is thus that three writers in particular, (at least) committed themselves to celebrating this "newfound" hero: Tsegaye Gebre Medhin in an English play, titled *Tewodros*; Berhanu Zerihun in a novel titled *Yetewodros Inba* (literally, "Tewodros's tears"—read 'Tewodros's Agony'); and Abbe Gubegniya in a drawn-out novel titled *And Lennatu* (An Only Child to His Mother). All said, between these three writers, Tewodros was (and must be) drawn larger than life, whatever blemish or fault that he had being conveniently overlooked.

Better yet for this "fortunate" generation, the 1960 coup d'état provided it with an even more glamorous hero in the person of General Mengistu Neway, the "true son" of Ethiopia, who proved to be courageous enough to defy the Emperor, his own protégé, in broad daylight as one who inflicted upon the country a slow death. Two heroes of humble origin! Mengistu was celebrated in at least one poem, by the late Yohannes Admassu, titled "*Hazentegna Innate* ("my bereft mother').

The incorporation of these heroes in the writings of the day was, I think, less a matter of blind adulation accorded to the individuals themselves than it was a way of telling the powers that be, especially the aristocracy and the nobility, that their so-called Blue Blood was simply common red (one of the powerful lines that Tsegaye Gebre Medhin used in his play about Tewodros's detractor, Empress Menen, Sr.). It was also that their persons were of the same flesh and bone as the man on the street; and that behind their pomp hid only hypocrisy and their own fear of

the people, whom they had always mistrusted. In short: yes, *'the firmament can be plowed and the king can be held to account'*! (It does not matter that the *Kibre Negest* cautions that it is not for the ordinary mortals to rebuke the King!) As a sub-text to this open defiance, the fiction (I didn't say 'myth') of divine intervention in the affairs of the society was also being gradually deconstructed. We are now in the domain of history, which requires, as it were, seeing things for what they are! Nobody pronounced (or dared to pronounce) God dead! But the two-pronged attack, one of which was directed at the Church as another political institution of a different tincture, was more than a clear indication of the aim of undermining the ideology supporting the different beliefs and values of the ruling class (which, by a trickle-down-political-economy of socialization, was also internalized by the "masses" after the latter's social values have been hidebound and ossified). The change must be thorough—win-it-all or die in the process.

The poems of the college students, read annually at the close of the University College Day celebrations to an audience that brought 'patrician' and 'plebeian' together as equal participants in "politicization," were effective, all the more so, because of the manner of their dissemination through reading. In these poems, State and Church, the Siamese twins of power at its highest, were challenged. The social system, with all its ills, was laid bare. Questions of what or who exactly constituted "Ethiopian" were raised. The various outputs of Western technology were condemned, until the challenge progressively assumed global dimensions, to include the condemnation of capitalism/imperialism as an accomplice of (better yet as the force behind) the local exploiters and oppressors.

Amongst the poems read at the different times then, the following had a significant impact on their audiences (titles are rendered in English): Tammiru Feyyisa's "The Destitute Speak," in which the victims of poverty and oppression are made to relate the conditions of their own wretched *existence*; Yohannes Admassu's "Submit to Cross–Examination" (Richard Greenfield's rendering), in which we are presented with an "anatomy of a dying order," to snatch Christopher Caudwell's words; Abebe Worke's "Just Spare Me My Tongue," in which the speaker happily permits the powers that be to take away all his sense organs but his tongue, that poisoned dart that can stand up to the edges of the sharpest of swords; Ibsa Gutema's "Who [actually] is *the*

Ethiopian?" a caustic critique, in one sense, of ethnicism, which the system used for its divide-and-rule scheme; Hailu Gebre Yohannes's "Gift of Damnation," in which he curses the inventors of all the imaginable technological products—the spinning gin, the car, the telephone, the radio, etc., adding, in each case, "If that's why you invented it," since, after all, only the haves stood to benefit from their inventions. To the common people and the intellectuals of the time, these and more other poets were virtual firebrands. To those in power, they were a bunch of irresponsible ingrates who bit the hand that fed them, but, who had become by this point ready to devour the whole body politic, nothing short of that, therefore dangerous!

But there is another slant to what this new breed of writers wrote. Although their main target was the socio-political system, which by that time was characterized as "feudo-bourgiois," they were never sparing when it came to their own self-examination and self-criticism. The disillusion that they had about the system seems to have turned, by some alchemy, into disillusion about themselves, about their perceived capacity as educated intellectuals. Some despaired on account of their impotence to do anything, whether for themselves or for the people, the tax payers who saw them through school all the way to the end. Beginning with some of the poems, and later in some of the novels, the intellectuals of the day were equally rebuked for being too complacent and for the comforts they indulged in while all around them everything smelled of death. They criticized themselves for being detached from the people and for cultivating meaningless, alien values that encouraged selfishness to the point of being narcissistic, therefore insensitive to the needs of others. Their education was seen as hollow, too bookish for them to be able to speak the language of the "masses." They saw themselves as a confused lot, neither belonging here nor there, all in a cultural limbo to which they could attach no meaningful label. To the exposition of these traits of intellectuals were given such novels as the late Dagniachew Worku's *Adefris* (after the eponymous hero of the novel, and which literally means "one who muddies [the watering hole?]," but also "trouble maker" as well as "muddleheaded"), a commentary on the confusion of the university intellectual and the gap between the language of the so-called revolutionaries of the day and that of the folk, whose actual needs, problems, and values were not understood by the former.

Another novel, *Ke'admas Bashagger* (beyond the horizon), by the late Be'alu Girma, depicts the confusion and the indecision characteristics of the hyphenated-intellectual. He is painfully straddling a spiked, metal fence between two cultures, neither of which he seems to know better than the other, that is, if the pain from the spiked fence would ever give him the break to even consider. This is in short, the intellectual in a total cultural void ending up making good neither out of one or the other.

It is against this backdrop of literary engagement and other activities attendant to it (also as a complement to it) that the student movement of the sixties and seventies spread to embrace workers, taxi-drivers, teachers, and high school students, culminating in the 1974 "revolution," which some characterized as the "creeping coup." Creeping or not, the 'revolution', as also General Mengistu's coup, seems to have opened, what to not a few today may seem to be, a Pandora's box. The poets, playwrights, novelists and essayists of the day had quite something to contribute to the revolution, at the same time making the highest possible sacrifice any such situation demands or brings forth. It may be that revolutions are wont to devour their own children. But when we look at portrayals of the likes that the said books present us with, the tragedy lies in the unavoidable thought that the intellectuals' lot of being devoured started long before the revolution dropped out of the blue, as it did, making all of what happened look like a gruesome cannibalistic ritual.

If this phenomenon we call sacrifice is computable, particularly after what we saw happen at the time of the so-called 'Red Terror', I do not want to have anything to do with any attempt to do so. One can only wonder at the mysterious ways that history, not very much unlike the gods, operates, whether to hold us in its awe or to numb us in the chill of its indifference. The rest, as they say, is history, hopefully one that will refuse to be repeated! Which translates for me into the undeniable fact, that we still have a lot of stock-taking to do to provide, in yet another turn, the same history with the opportunity to refuse to be repeated, which history is represented by not a few of us here tonight.

Denis Thieulin, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Ethiopia

The Impact of Development Aid on Modernization in Ethiopia: the EU Perspective

Introduction

Let me first express my great appreciation to the organizers, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the Addis Ababa University and its Faculty of Humanities, as well as the Goethe Institut for making this discussion possible. I do believe that this initiative will enrich the vibrant debate on development in Ethiopia put to the forefront by the Growth and Transformation Plan. It will provide, primarily, an opportunity to discuss issues from a different angle, beyond the traditional and sometimes distorted relationship between aid providers and aid recipient countries. So, today, I would be pleased to contribute to some "food for thought".

When I was contacted by Arne Shildberg, the Director of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, I was immediately enthusiastic and tempted by the theme of the lecture. But then when I started to try and structure my reflection, I came to the realize that the concept of modernization is going far beyond donors preoccupations, that through modernization we touch the essence of people's aspiration for a different life, a better life and an ideal model of society. Having discussed this with some Ethiopian colleagues, I have also discovered that *Zemenawinet* is more than a static word, more than the translation to Amharic of the English word of modernity. I understand that *Zemenawinet* is a cultural move, expressing the current transformation in the lives of people in Ethiopia, at least those who benefit from the ongoing development of the country. In my mind, I compare it with the *Movida* in Spain 20 years ago, which expressed the rapid change in Spanish society along a fast economic development process.

On the European Union side, despite my efforts, I did not find a reference to modernity or modernization in official literatures on European Union development aid. The only link I found was a technical reference to the modernization of production means in developing countries

but nothing with regard to the sense of impact on social life and response to social and cultural expectations. I found this gap interesting. For me, this shows the relevance of current debates, beyond the impact of development aid on modernization, the question on how to have a better match between development partners' objectives and recipient countries desires.

In order to keep the debate concrete, the lecture is organized around three main themes. First, the relationship between the European Union and Ethiopia from the angle of development aid: the place of the European Union, and why and how we cooperate. Second, it is about modernization and even though we don't refer to it in our literature, the point of view of a development partner will be given. What does modernization mean for us? How do we see modernization in Ethiopia and what are its challenges? The third and last theme is about the impact. Here**,** I will limit my comments to the question "is modernization imposed?" and refer to the recently set up aid effectiveness principles we apply in Ethiopia. I will finally come to my conclusions**.**

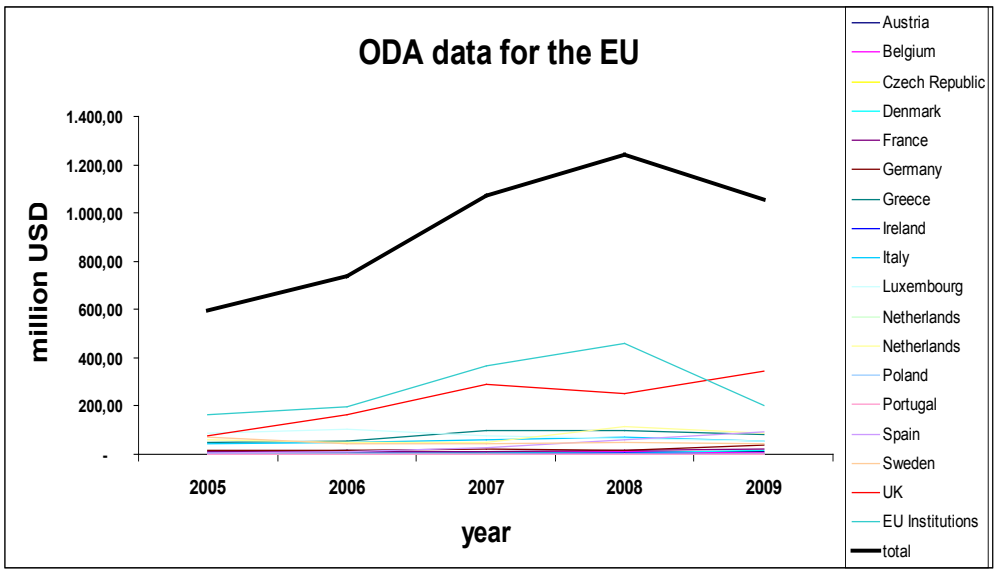
European Union Ethiopia: A Long Standing Partnership

Ethiopia has ratified the first Lomé Agreement in 1975, and by doing so has become part of the ACP countries (Africa Caribbean Pacific). Since 2000, we are under the regime of the Cotonou Agreement and it is worth noting that Ethiopia has the biggest cooperation program financed under the European Development Fund, an instrument financed by European Union Member States and managed by the European Commission. 644 M€ of grants are earmarked for Ethiopia for 2008-2013.

More importantly, the European Union partnership is not limited to European Union institutions, European Union Member States are also active in the country. The European Union is changing. The European Union is becoming stronger and the recent coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, in December 2009, has built new dimensions to the European Union, which will progressively emerge in the following years. We already see it within the sphere of foreign relations with the creation of a new European External Action Service, the appointment of Catherine Asthon

as High Representative, where she plays the role of a European Union Minister for Foreign Affairs. The nineteen European Union Member States represented in Ethiopia by the European Delegation will speak with a single voice. In the same vein, it will impact upon and progressively harmonize all of our European Union cooperation activities. Taking the European Union as a whole, our weight will be considerably reinforced. As the European Union, we represent a major partner for Ethiopia. Our historical presence will remain important for the country in the future, alongside other emerging partners, following the natural trend of globalization.

As the European Union, we provide an annual average of 800 million EURO of ODA to Ethiopia. This represents 30% of the total ODA going to Ethiopia, 50% of the grants and two third of the bilateral aid. That support is given quasi exclusively through grants, and therefore, there is no need to pay it back. On trade, European Union remains a vital partner, with 25% of Ethiopian exports going to the European Union market. Trade flows will remain important due to the physical proximity of the European Union, as for example, for cut flowers. Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) from the European Union is also quite substantial. From 2000 and 2008, an average of 600 M EURO has been invested annually in Ethiopia by European Union private investors. The below figures on ODA data for the European Union between 2005 and 2009, illustrates the potential for a greater impact by the European Union acting as a whole, rather than through separate bilateral relationships.



Another vital link between the European Union and Ethiopia is related to migration flows. Remittances coming from the European Union are an indirect source of financial flow. Even though, there are no official figures, by assessing frequent use of informal channels, we can estimate an annual remittance of 800 M EURO comes from the European Union. This certainly has a significant impact for an important fringe of the population, in terms of safety nets. The Ethiopian diaspora in the European Union, while rather limited compared to in the United States, is influential and its role in the modernization process deserves specific discussion. On top of that, an average of 80 scholarships for 4 year periods are awarded every year to Ethiopian students through the Erasmus Mundus program; this allows students to attain a masters in any one of the 27 countries that are members of the Union.

EU: Why and How do we do Development Cooperation?

The question on why we do development has its own significance. To respond to this question, in 2010 the European Union organized a world-wide consultation on what it could do in development cooperation in the future, based upon a green paper. The theme was *EU development policy in support of inclusive growth and sustainable development – increasing the impact of EU development policy.* It shows that for the European Union, the legitimacy of aid is not granted and that there is a need to move toward a more modern concept of aid, taking into consideration a higher impact (value for money), along with the need to support more inclusive growth in order to tackle poverty, as well as to better integrate climate change and food security challenges. It is interesting to note that in the past the European Union aid has been driven mainly by moral obligations. Would this be because of guilty feeling during this post colonial era, which could apply to almost all ACP countries except Ethiopia, or could this be because of the influence of charity businesses? Christianity background has certainly played an important role in this. The ambition of the European Union green paper is to move from a moral obligation oriented development cooperation towards a more result oriented approach based on inclusive growth. Even if new ideas emerge, the tension between the two motivations for development cooperation will remain. This also reflects the diversity of expectations

for cooperation development in Europe, including; moral obligation, preventing migration pressure, developing new markets for European Union enterprises and preserving stability in Africa. Such diversity of motivations shows that development cooperation is not conceived from the European Union side as a tool to promote modernization, as might have been the case in the former era of colonialism, more than half century ago.

On "how" we do cooperation, the key feature is the unique format of partnership provided by the Cotonou Agreement. ACP countries always commend the quality of this truly equal partnership, and Ethiopia is the first in recognizing that. No financing decision can be taken without the formal approval of the government. No payment can be made without the signatures of the government and of the European Union delegation.

Another important feature is the affirmation of European Union values called "the fundamental and essential elements of the Cotonou Agreement", such as; democratic principles, human rights and the fight against corruption. Those principles underlie our development cooperation activities. In addition, the principle of dialogue is key; the Agreement provides a framework for such dialogue, through what is called "Article 8 Political Dialogue". Any divergent opinions or cross messages should be discussed before any decision is taken. Last but not least, civil society has been granted an important role in the EU-ACP countries development cooperation process, being present in the validation process of programming, in the accountability process through reporting and also in acting as implementing partners.

The way we conceive of and carry out development cooperation will also be influenced by the current general trends that can be summarized as follows: (i) aid from traditional partners will stabilize in the short and medium term due to the financial crisis, with the notable exception of the climate change agenda, for which financing flow is expected to sharply increase in the next years; (ii) financial flows from emerging countries will continue to increase, most likely through public and private investments than through traditional forms of aid; and (iii) in Ethiopia, private investments (FDI - Foreign Direct Investments) will overtake the volume of external aid

in the coming years, meaning that those financial flows should get more attention; be it in terms of effectiveness or in terms of impacts on the modernization of the country. These issues will also deserve specific attention.

European Union: What Do We Do on Development Cooperation?

Here we are referring to development cooperation managed by European Union institutions, regardless of the bilateral programs implemented by European Union Member States. An average of 230 M euro is spent annually. The bulk of European Union cooperation is provided by the European Development Fund (EDF) mentioned earlier, which represents 644 M euro for 2008-2013. Three focal sectors have been selected; (i) transport and regional integration (39%), (ii) rural development and food security (20%, including environment; productive safety net program, support to the Ethiopian Commodity Stock Exchange and to livestock) and (iii) macroeconomic support and good governance (39%, including support to protection of basic services and to justice, gender and local civil society). Outside those focal areas, activities are limited to de-mining and culture.

Complementarily to the EDF, other cooperation activities are financed by the budget of the European Commission and are mainly implemented through international NGOs: 50 contracts representing a total of 120 M euro in the area of food security, water supply, energy and health, representing about 10% of our annual disbursements. In addition to this, humanitarian support is provided through ECHO, the European Office for Humanitarian Aid. Some activities are financed by the European Investment Banks for a total of about 20% of European Union disbursements. For the latter investment, programs remain limited compared to other countries like Kenya or Uganda.

Before moving to modernization and its challenges, the main message regarding the European Union- Ethiopia partnership is the importance of European Union in terms of as a development and economic partner for Ethiopia. The current change in the way for the European Union to do cooperation, which we can consider as our own modernization process, has the principle of equal

partnership dominating our relationship, the consideration of EU values in our partnership, as well as the relative decline of the importance of aid, compared to other financial flows, which contribute to the economic development of the country, such as; private investments. All these elements inform the European Union contributions to the modernization process in Ethiopia.

Modernization in Ethiopia and its Challenges

We have already evoked the absence of the word modernization in the glossary of European Union development literature. Modernization, or modernity, as I will not here make a distinction between the two nuances, covers a broad scope of meanings. I will, therefore, for the purpose of this lecture, define modernization as; the expected outcome of the national development process. It affects people's livelihoods; infrastructures and technologies, people's lives; education, health or women's condition, covering for instance, the reduction of Female Genital Mutilation practices (improvement to which the EU is proud to contribute) and social organizations, like the move from traditional rulers based organization.

As a European Union official, I would like to define modernization as; the process that gives access to overall human rights for the population, starting from social rights (food security, basic services) and including the common understanding of human rights, which cover the rule of law and democratic principles. In short, I would say that modernization is defined by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and good governance.

I would like to make it clear that the purpose of European Union development aid is not to sell a model of society but to sell its own vision of modernization. The way that the European Union conceives as its role is; to create a conductive environment that allows Ethiopians to decide by themselves what kind of society they would like to build and which vision of modernization they would like to pursue. The European Union supports access to overall human rights but it belongs to Ethiopians themselves to compose the full score of the modernity they desire.
Looking at modernization from an Ethiopian point of view, we should acknowledge that it constitutes the internalization of an ineluctable trend in an always closer and changing world.

It is an effect of globalization and of the villagization of the world, produced by the circulation of ideas, goods and people. What is important is to integrate those elements of change into a chosen evolution of the society, which should not be subject to an evolution dictated by the outside. Modernization also reflects the universal aspiration of people to attain a better and different life, being part of the universal questioning of human beings regarding their destiny. Somewhere, modernization is the resulting process of such universal aspirations and growing external influences. It is important to see modernization as a concept of life and not to limit it to the consumption of technologies.

Finally, the spirit of modernization drives the national development agenda, in the Ethiopian case, the "Growth and Transformation Plan" (GTP). In that sense, GTP is defining modernization, first as a general enrichment of the population with the objective to access the status of middle income country by 2020. The role of "zemenawinet" in the drafting of the document, as well as in its translation of the vision for the future of the country and its people, is deserving of specific discussions. In Ethiopia as elsewhere, the modernization process is not ongoing without any risks or challenges, which may lead to social costs that we had better avoid.

The first challenge is not to succumb to the siren's song of modernization coming from elsewhere. Ideas and "recipes" coming from outside should be filtered, internalized, "ethiopianised" and revisited, in accordance with the local context and, particularly so, with the local culture. This brings to mind the case of one project that we are financing in the region of Shashemene to develop biogas production. Biogas is produced from vegetal decay and from human excrement. While the first component is successful, the second has failed due to the strong opposition from beneficiaries, whose culture believes it unthinkable to use an energy produced from human dejection to cook their daily food. A simple analysis of the local culture and an anthropologist's eye would have prevented this failure.

A second challenge is to thwart the trap of thinking on behalf of beneficiaries themselves, to impose a one line vision and to have a top down approach. Not associating with the beneficiaries in defining development strategies that lead to modernization and to the corresponding decision

making process is also detrimental. Modernization is not a unique goal to be imposed on all. Modernization should accommodate the diversity and the reality in Ethiopia, with its ethnic outlines and its federal feature. While some efforts have been made, for instance through the consultation process of the GTP, there is still room for improvement; room for improvement, which could probably be exemplified, especially with regard to the absence of consultation with the private sector on price caps and on pastoralism. This choice of modernization was imposed by the Federal government, without considering its cultural environment. For the latter, modernization is seen as resettlement with the provision of basic services, denying the secular culture of nomadic pastoralists. In reality, the unique way to adapt to a tough environment that is marked by recurrent drought is to move to seek elsewhere for water and grazing for cattle.

A third challenge is to avoid the pitfalls of considering the short term benefits in terms of modernization, without considering the long term sustainability. Food aid is an archetype in Ethiopia. The country has benefited from food aid for decades without, until recently, having any strategy to develop food security and without having to address the issue of food shortage with a long term vision in mind. I have to say that in this the development partners have not fully played their role and while they have been contributing massively to food aid, they have also passively encouraged the status quo. Food aid in the past, as in the 80s, was clearly misused for political purposes. The situation has been reversed with development partners strongly pushing the food security agenda of the government and the corresponding structural reforms that are still needed. Infrastructures might be another illustration of little importance given to sustainability concerns. This is evidenced by the weakness and quasi absence of environmental impact studies and consultative processes, which are often sacrificed because of the speed required by the transformation agenda. Another issue for infrastructures is the insufficient consideration given to maintenance in public budgets and capacity building activities, which may significantly alter their life expectancy and compromise the economic return on investment. Roads are good examples of an impressive expansion of infrastructure network not followed as it should be by an expansion of maintenance capacities.

Another key challenge, from my point of view, is that the modernization process cannot be defined in isolation. There is a need to look at and to analyze what is happening outside, to confront Ethiopia's vision with an exposure to new ideas, to encourage the movement of goods, services and people and to engage in dialogue with neighboring countries. Respective modernization processes within each neighboring country, necessitates interaction with each other through infrastructure connections, commercial exchanges, circulation of information and ideas, and movement of people. Doing so will encourage peace and stability in a volatile region and will better ensure the sustainability of the modernization process engaged in Ethiopia.

At this stage, in giving key messages from a development partner's point of view, I would like to stress the following. First of all, to make modernization a success there is a need to work with people, to ensure the participation of beneficiaries and to get their full support. Our role as a development partner is to support the national development agenda but also to warn, when necessary, on possible risks and challenges, while leaving the final decision to the country. And finally, as the European Union, what is important is to help provide the framework, the conducive environment and the inputs that will respect overall human rights, and will make possible and sustainable an Ethiopian driven modernization process.

Impact of Development Aid: Is Modernization Imposed?

The theme of the lecture is about European Union development aid and on the modernization process in Ethiopia, and also about the impact of the first on the latter. Regarding the impact, I would have had the possibility to look at the question of measurement as we need first to be able to measure before being able to assess an impact. It would have provided enough material for a specific lecture as, for some time, the European Union has integrated a monitoring and evaluation system as part of its methods to ensure cooperation, encouraging in the same vein partner countries to progress in the same direction. Looking at the GTP, we can see that monitoring and evaluation is at the heart of the reporting system, even if some weaknesses have yet to be addressed. But I deliberately choose to limit my remarks to the question, which

I think is touching the essence of today's debate from an Ethiopian point of view which is, "is modernization imposed?"

To this regard, we should first refer to the aid effectiveness principles to which traditional development partners adhere to, since 2005, since the signing of the Paris Declaration. We are not talking here about words or theoretical international commitments, but about a real ground swell, which has dramatically changed the spirit and the way of doing cooperation for all the traditional development partner's, who are signatories of the declaration. Two of the five key aid effectiveness principles are "ownership" and "alignment". Ownership reflects the right and the duty of a country to set up its own development agenda, not by being dictated to from outside, and alignment reflects the duty for development partners to support the countries' development agenda. All those principles are followed with regular surveys and the corresponding indicators and assessments are published regularly by OECD. It will soon be the case in the framework of the preparation of the fourth high level forum on aid effectiveness planned in Busan, South Korea, at the end of 2011.

Those principles of ownership and alignment prevail in Ethiopia, certainly even stronger than in other developing countries. There is a political will to define its own path for development. This is clearly evidenced by the recently approved Growth and Transformation Plan, and there is no doubt that the rich history of the country, with its legendary resistance to several attempts of colonization, has paved the way for the strong ownership that we all know today. It is worth noting that our experience as development partners is that the country has the ability to say no to a financial support if the corresponding program does not fit with the national development agenda. Alignment is well respected too in Ethiopia where traditional donors are using more and more multi-donors government led programs like PBS (protection of basic services) and PSNP (productive safety net program). For the whole European Union, for instance, 45% of the European Union development funding is channeled through this kind of government led programs, which is certainly a record amongst development partners. My message is that if there is one country for which we can say that donor's modernization vision has not been imposed; it

is Ethiopia, because the country has been successful in setting up its own development agenda and because donors are willing to align with it.

Conclusion

Keeping in mind that conclusions are not definite but, rather, act as contributions for further debate, I would like to outline some aspects that I consider key in our reflections as to how to better engage with modernization in Ethiopia. First of all, the European Union has neither the intention nor the capacity to dictate what modernization would, should or could be in Ethiopia (or in any other developing country). As the European Union, we are fully engaged with the aid effectiveness agenda. Our impact on modernization is filtered beforehand by a strong local ownership. Our purpose is to indirectly impact upon modernization by supporting and providing inputs through a broad support of human rights, including social rights, which are at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We consider that being modern is; first; tackling poverty and hunger by providing basic services, while consideration of all human rights, including the rule of law and democratic principles, will ensure the sustainability of the modernization process. This reflects European Union values, which we place at the heart of our strategy for development cooperation.

The new European Union dimension, given by the Lisbon Treaty adopted in December 2009, should make European Union support to the national development agenda even more effective. The Growth and Transformation Plan gives an opportunity to develop a European Union joint cooperation strategy, which should include all European Union partners and like minded donors. World-wide the European Union Green Paper, published in 2010, acts as a signal of a common European Union will to change the way of cooperation, so as to have a greater impact on modernization in Ethiopia, with an increased focus on aid effectiveness, growth and food security. Those positive changes in the European Union cooperation strategies and modalities are our own way to becoming more modern.

Our responsibility, as a development partner, is to support the national development, in line with our international aid effectiveness commitments. Also, we have to be honest by admitting that key challenges need to be addressed. This is part of our duty, in terms of accountability, vis a vis our taxpayers and Parliaments. Although the modernization process in Ethiopia has full control of the agenda, we think that citizen participation, despite the efforts made, remains weak and this may lead to a disconnection with people's desires. Finally, public opinion is still giving a lot of credit to the impact of external aid, which is still very much a reality in Ethiopia. However, the balance in terms of the source of financing is changing quickly. To this regard, more attention should be paid to the effectiveness of and to the impact of private investments, which count more than aid in the modernization process of this country.

What is "Zemenawinet"? – Perspectives on Ethiopian Modernity

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