

ASPECTS OF TIGRINYA LITERATURE

(UNTIL 1974)

BY

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to study the origin and development of Tigrinya as a written language—a topic that has so far received little scholarly attention. As time and the easy accessibility of all the relevant material are limiting factors, this investigation is necessarily selective.

Chapter One takes stock of all available writing in the Tigrinya language from its beginning in the middle of the last century up to 1974.

Chapter Two briefly investigates the development of written Tigrinya to serve varying functions and ends and the general direction that its development took.

Chapter Three provides a glimpse of the breadth and variety of literature incorporated in the Eritrean Weekly News published in Asmara by the British Information Services from 1942 to 1952. The E W N represented the sudden birth and development of a secular writing and provided a tradition and a reservoir of literature on which Tigrinya fiction later drew.

Chapters Four, Five and Six deal with Tigrinya fictional literature on the basis of selected themes v. g. historical and political themes (Chapter Four), prostitution and approbation against dissolute life (Chapter Five), and education and success (Chapter Six).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Professor E. Ullendorff, as my supervisor, provided the necessary guidance that the writing of the thesis required. I am especially grateful for his insistence backed up by meticulous corrections that translations of passages into English must be as faithful as possible to the Tigrinya original. Dr. David Appleyard patiently studied the thesis in detail and suggested useful insights and improvements regarding the manner of discussion, the style and the presentation. Needless to add that his correction of the language was invaluable as well.

I should like to express my sincere thanks to the staff of the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, and to the staff of the Oriental Manuscripts section of the British Library for making available copies of the Eritrean Weekly News as well as uncatalogued Tigrinya books.

I am finally indebted to the Africa Educational Trust without whose financial grant, covering both tuition and living expenses, I could not have carried out this research.



ABSTRACT

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## ABBREVIATIONS

EO	Ethiopia Observer
EWN	Eritrean Weekly News
GSAI	Giornale della Societa asiatica italiana
JA	Journal asiatique
JES	Journal of Ethiopian Studies
RSE	Rassengna di studi etiopici
RSO	Rivista degli studi orientali
Tna	Tigrinya
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift fur die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ZA	Zeitschrift fur Assyriologie
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft.

NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTION.

The system of transcription followed is that generally used nowadays in works on Ethiopian languages, in particular by E. Ullendorff and W. Leslau.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF TIGRINYA LITERATURE.

#### 1. Linguistic, geographical and cultural context.

There are over seventy languages spoken in Ethiopia.

However, 75% of all Ethiopians speak just four languages viz.

Amharic, Tigrinya, Oromo and Somali.<sup>1</sup> Tigrinya ranks next to Amharic as the major Semitic language, but comes third in number of speakers. Although an official census has never been taken in Ethiopia, and estimates have varied through the years, the figure of four to five million Tigrinya speakers can be suggested as reasonable.<sup>2</sup>

Along with seven other Ethiopian languages, Tigrinya

1. M. L. Bender, ed., The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia, East Lansing, Michigan, 1976, p.1.
2. In Bibliography of African Christian Literature, London, 1923, p. 7, C. F. Rowling and C. E. Wilson gave the number of Tigrinya speakers then as 300,000. This is an impossibly low figure. The figure they gave for Amharic speakers was, on the other hand, 3,000,000 and that appears fairer. E. Ullendorff's estimate of 1,300,000 Tigrinya speakers in 1945 (The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia, London, 1955, p. 21) was probably nearer the mark than any other. Bender, op. cit., p.13, suggests the figure of 3,560,000, while Bereket Habte Selassie in Conflict and Intervention in the Horn, New York, 1980, gives the population of Tigray alone as some 5 million (p.87) and that of Eritrea as over 3.5 million (p.48). Tigray is predominantly Tigrinya-speaking and at least half of Eritrea's population also speaks Tigrinya. Bereket's estimates bring up the number of Tigrinya speakers to some six million. This may be a slightly inflated figure.

belongs to the Semitic linguistic family.<sup>3</sup> The name of the language itself is related to the geographical name "Tigray", a province found in northern Ethiopia. The people call themselves "Tägaru" in the plural, and "Təgraway" in the singular. They also call themselves "Habasha" and their language 'HLገ: ሐበሻ:' (the speech of the Habasha)<sup>4</sup>

E. Littmann suggests that the original name of the language is "Təḡray"<sup>5</sup> He also mentions other forms of referring to the language. "Besides this the natives have other names.....viz. zārāvā ḥavašā and zārāvā kəəštān."<sup>6</sup> The former means "language of the Habasha" and the latter "language of the Christians."

Although the present name of the language Tigrinya is related to the geographical name of the province of Tigray, it is spoken further north in a large part of Eritrea, further west in parts of the province of Begemider, and further south in parts of the province

3. The others are Ge'ez, Tigre, Amharic, Harari, Gurage, Gafat, and Argobba.

4. This manner of referring to the language, particularly current among the Tigrinya speakers of the Eritrean highlands, is well illustrated in the title of the book መጽሐፍ ሐዘን ሐበሻ-ኢጣልያን: Asmara, 1938 (A Primer of Habasha and Italian).

5. E. Littmann, A Preliminary Report of the Princeton University Expedition to Abyssinia", Z A, 16 (1902), p. 165.

This view seems well-founded as the first printed Tigrinya book (1866) had the title ወንጌል ሐዘን ሐበሻ: ርዕሰ ጳጳስ (Holy Gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ in Tigray). Ge'ez manuscripts reveal older names for the language. See footnotes 12 and 13 (p.6) below.

6. Littmann, op. cit., p. 166.

of Wollo. Tigrinya

"is spoken in an area largely identical with that of the old Aksumite Kingdom, and may thus lay claim to being — at least geographically — the direct successor of Ge'ez. Its territory covers the eponymous Tigray province, the three highland regions of Eritrea, Hamasien, Seraye, and Akkele Guzay, the fringes of the administrative divisions of Keren and Massawa....."7

It also extends "as far south as Lake Ashangi and Wojerat district; it then crosses the Takkaze westwards to the Tsellemti and Wolkayt regions".8

In mode of occupation, the Tigrinya-speaking people are sedentary agriculturalists and in religion, almost all adhere to the Ethiopian Orthodox faith while small minorities follow Islam or the Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity. As the Tigrean and Eritrean highlands as well as the Eritrean coast is the area where Axumite civilization arose and prospered, the Tigrinya speakers are particularly its closet heirs. However, they share the legacy of that civilization with the Amharas to the south and west as well as with the Agaws of Lasta and of parts of Gojam and Begemider.

The Tigrinya-speaking block of the Tigrean and

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7. E. Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, London, 1973 (3rd ed.) p. 121.

8. Op. cit., p. 35

Eritrean highlands is:

"historic Abyssinia par excellence. ....and the people who speak this language are the authentic carriers of the historical and cultural traditions of ancient Abyssinia..... The same system of social structure and land tenure as well as cultural affinity extend beyond the artificial administrative border (ie. with Eritrea) into the Tigrai. Eritrea was always an artificial creation, for the people on both sides of the frontier are one in race and civilization." 9

The latter part of the above remark is historically attested to by the fact that when Fascist Italy had occupied the entirety of Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941, it quite appropriately merged the two provinces into one administrative division. "After the Italo-Ethiopian War, the entire Tna were united in a Greater Eritrea but this arrangement came to an end shortly after the liberation of Ethiopia."10

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9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.



## 2. Tigrinya literature: early beginnings to 1900

Throughout this chapter, all traceable Tigrinya material is intended to be treated in one form or another. The justification for this procedure in relation to Tigrinya literature is its relative paucity. In circumstances where literatures are in a state of incipient development, it seems permissible to treat all of the available written material in terms of literature. Remarking on studies of Amharic literature which could justifiably apply to Tigrinya literature as well, A. S. Gerard writes:

"Most early studies of Amharic literature had to deal mainly with devotional and didactic works as well as with genuine creative writing. This is inevitably the case with all nascent literatures: historians of Old English or Old French writing devote considerable attention to chronicles, homilies and saints' lives which have little, if anything, to do with the literary art." 11

The earliest references to the Tigrinya language, which also include some Tigrinya words, are found in some Ge'ez books written in the 15th century. In Gädlä Libanos and Gädlä Filipos, Tigrinya is called "nägarä Aksum"

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11. A. S. Gerard, "Amharic Creative Literature: The Early Phase", J E S, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1968, p. 39.

(language of Axum).<sup>12</sup> In Mäshafä məstirä sämäy wämədər, composed by Bähaylä Mikäel, Tigrinya is called 'ḥabäsi' (Habasha) and 'nägarä ḥabäsi' (the language of the Habasha).<sup>13</sup>

A manuscript in the British Library (Or. 2263) which contains a short Tigrinya-Turkish as well as a Tigrinya-Arabic vocabulary belongs to the same category as the above. This one is dated as belonging

12. In "Canti Popolari tigrari", Z A, Vol. 17, 1903, p. 23 C. Conti Rossini reproduces the following from Gadla Libanos :

Mir V: «ታሪኩ ለሀገሪ ነጻነት ታሪክ» «Qwa» means in the language of Aksum Qwaqwa,» Both the Ge'ez and the Tigrinya words mean "raven"

Mir XI: «ዛብላዊ፣ በገረጽ፣ ከጎረቤት፣ ለሰውነት፣ ውስተ፣ ርዕሰ ገዢ»  
 «That which is called 'mästära' (comb) in the language of Aksum which women tie in their hair.»

13. The following are from J. Perruchon's Le Livre des Mystères Du Ciel et de la Terre, Paris, 1903, pp. 19-20. They give first the Ge'ez and then the Tigrinya words for a few animals.

« ዘሽመ፡ ፊፊፊፊ፡ ዘውኅቱ፡ በሐበሲ፡ ሐርማዝ፡ ብሂ፡ »

"named *ḡālfāl* which in Ḥabäsi means 'harmaz' "  
(elephant)

« ወሽጦ፡ ፋቤርቫ፡ ዘውኅቱ፡ በሐበሺ፡ ነፃዐር፡ ብሂል፡ »

"and named 'yabherad' which in Habasi means 'nāmar' (tiger)

« ወበጦ፡ ፍጥፍጥ፡ ወበሃገረ፡ ሐበሪ፡ ዝኣብ፡ ብሂል፡ »

"and named 'ḥanḥant' and which in the language of Habäsi means 'ḥa'ab' "(hyena)

« ነርፍ፡ ዘኸመ፡ ተመፅ፡ በሃገረ፡ ሐበኒ፡ »

"beast named 'tämän' in the language of the Habäsi" (snake)

to the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>14</sup>

Of European travellers, Henry Salt appears to be the first to include a glossary of Tigrinya words. The four-column list of words headed by English and followed by Amharic, Tigre (ie. Tigrinya), and Agow includes terms of nature and of kinship, names of domestic animals, parts of the body, numbers, adjectives, colours, etc.<sup>15</sup> Another traveller to Ethiopia, C.T. Lefebvre, reproduces in a couple of pages a short

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14. S. Strelcyn, Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired since the year 1877, London, 1978, p. 183.

He reproduces in full the Tigrinya-Turkish vocabulary which consists of only eight words, and a part (fifteen words) of the Tigrinya-Arabic vocabulary.

The first two Tigrinya words in both vocabularies are "ሃላ፡" and "ተቀመጥ፡" ("Come!" and "Sit down!") and their Turkish and Arabic equivalents are given in Ethiopic script

« ሃላ፡ ብሂ፡ ገረ፡ ተቀመጥ፡ ብ፡ ወ፡ ተር፡ ... » (Turkish) (F. 6<sup>ra</sup>)

« ሃላ፡ ብሂ፡ ተክ፡ ተቀመጥ፡ ብ፡ ኣ፡ ገረ፡ ስ፡ ... » (Arabic) (FF 6<sup>ra</sup>-12<sup>vb</sup>)

15. Henry Salt, A Voyage to Abyssinia and Travels into the Interior of that Country, London, 1814, Appendix I, pp. XVIII. The list of English words is 181, although a Tigrinya equivalent is not given for every one of them.

Tigrinya dialogue of practical value.<sup>16</sup> Both travellers wrote the Tigrinya in Latin script.

The first documented attempt to write substantial tracts in the Tigrinya language, although again in Latin script, was undertaken by Nathaniel Pearce.<sup>17</sup> He made a translation of the Gospel of St. John into Tigrinya sometime in the 1820s. Ullendorff reproduces what he considers the most successful passage in Pearce's translation and that comes out very poorly.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1830s, Samuel Gobat (later Bishop of Jerusalem) commissioned the translation of St. John's Gospel. "It was written on paper, consists of 140

16. C. T. Lefebvre, Voyage en Abyssinie exécuté pendant les années 1839-1843, pp. 411-421. His "Dialogue Tigréens" is preceded by a grammatical outline of pronouns and verbs and a conjugation of the verbs "to have" and "to do". The following are taken from his 'dialogue'.

"Quel est ton nom?" Simka maniyou?" (p. 419)

"La route que tu as suivie Batu zemasçakhayou mangaddi  
est-elle boisée? dour iyou?" (p. 420)

"Quelles sortes de graminées Mentaye ainete ouklli  
y trouve-t-on? irekkebe?" (p. 421)

17. Nathaniel Pearce accompanied Henry Salt, and lived in Ethiopia from 1805 to 1819.
18. E. Ullendorff, Ethiopia and the Bible, London, 1968, p. 70.

pages and was given by E. Ruppel to the Frankfurt municipal library".<sup>19</sup> Other Tigrinya works, written again in the 1830s, are translations of the Four Gospels. "The first manuscript was owned by E. Rödiger, and the first chapter of St. John according to this version was printed in Praetorius' Tigriñasprache. The other manuscript ..... is in the Berlin library."<sup>20</sup>

The translation of the Four Gospels by Dabtara Matewos, which existed in manuscript form as early as the 1830s, was not published until much later.<sup>21</sup>  
This translation made with the assistance of Rev. C. Isenberg was printed in Chrischona, Basle, Switzerland in 1866, under the title መገሐኒትና፡ፋርስያንና፡ዕብራይስጵና፡ግሪክ፡ነጻነጽ፡በተጠየቀው፡እስከ፡አሁን፡ጀምሮ.  
The Tigrinya language employed was that spoken in the Adwa-Aksum area. After Dabtara Matewos' translation, the next piece of written Tigrinya are some sixty

19. Ethiopia and the Bible, p. 69.
20. Ibid. John I: 1 & 2 on page 1 of the annotated 5-page reproduction in print at the end of Praetorius' work reads: "ቀዳማዊ፡ ያሐንዊ፡ ንቡወን፡ ያሐን፡ ነብኸግዚኣብሔር፡ ጸዊ፡ ኸግዚኣብሔርወን፡ ንቡ፡ ያሐንዊ፡ ኸዚወ፡ ኸኣንባብ፡ ቀዳሞ፡ ነብኸግዚኣብሔር፡ ጸዊ ፤ ፤" »  
Grammatik der Tigriñasprache in Abessinien, Halle, 1871.
21. Dabtara Matewos also wrote a "dictionnaire géographique" for Lefebvre, op. cit., pp. 103-117, which includes a list of geographical terms, of principal mountains, rivers, provinces and towns of Abyssinia.

proverbs, written in Ethiopic script, published in ZDMG by Franz Praetorius between 1883 to 1888.<sup>22</sup>

A work which encompasses a representative sample of Tigrinya literature ranging from the religious to the fable type is J. Schreiber's Manuel de la Langue Tigräi, part II, published in Vienna in 1893 (part I published in 1887). The Tigrinya texts are on the left-hand columns while their equivalent French translations are on the right hand columns. The first and second sections are religious in content with the first dealing with the story of Genesis, the birth and resurrection of Christ, and the parable of the vineyard workers, while the second section deals with the exemplary life of Christ. Both are in simple, narrative Tigrinya and comprise 23 pages in all.

The third section contains a dialogue between a master and his servant discussing the plans for and execution of a voyage. It is conversational Tigrinya and, in a way, the first of its type. The fourth section relates the events of the times in the form of a correspondence between a Father Yulyos and some five correspondents, presumably attached to Catholic missions in

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22. ZDMG 37 (1883), pp. 443-450; 38 (1884), pp. 481-485; 39 (1885), pp. 322-326; 42 (1888), pp. 62-67.



di lettura in lingua tigrina containing also a sample of Tigrinya texts. Vito also wrote two other related works, one being a Tigrinya grammar and the other Tigrinya vocabulary.

Vito's first work is a valuable source for Tigrinya literature, in that a sample of Tigrinya poetry and of the lyrics of Tigrinya songs is written here for the first time. Although the bulk of the work comprises of stories, and a smaller section of Tigrinya sentences and expressions, it nevertheless contains eleven pages of poetry and eight pages of songs.

After Dabtara Matewos' Gospels in Tigrinya and Schreiber's and Vito's texts, the next significant work in Tigrinya literature is Dabtara Fässəha Giyorgis' record of his travel to and stay in Italy published in Rome in 1895. He is from Yeha and the rather long title of his work is ብዛቲባ፡ ኣንጉብ፡ ጠብያ ፡ ንኢጣልያ ፡ ለዐንጉባን ፡ ናዙ ፡  
ሓገር፡ ኣዙተ፡ ኣውን፡ ብግርኣ፡ ኣብብላ፡ ጠብኣ፡ ዘበኡ፡ ጠብኣኡን - ብኣገርኡ፡  
 (About the author's journey from Ethiopia to Italy and about the impressions made on him by his stay in that country in Tigrinya). L. Ricci remarks of this work "che e una primizia per tuta la letteratura etiopica moderna (sia in tigrino che in amarico)".<sup>26</sup>

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26. L. Ricci, "Letteratura in lingua tigrina," Storia della letterature d'Oriente, ed. O. Botto. Milan, 1969, p. 885.



Fässäha Giyorgis went to Rome in the early 1890s "where he taught Ethiopic grammar and rhetoric and studied Latin and Italian. He subsequently wrote a narrative of the Queen of Sheba, a history of Aksum, a study of the etymology of Tigre place names, and an account of his visit to Italy, all of them in Tna. He was also responsible for the publication of the Psalms of David which was printed in Italy by Carlo de Luigi with some of the letters in red - at that time an innovation."<sup>27</sup>

Fässäha Giyorgis may justly be considered the father of Tigrinya literature, being the trailblazer in terms of secular literature, even if this consisted of a travelogue and legendary histories, or stories. Learned journals continued to put out Tigrinya material whenever possible. A one-page text is reproduced in L'Oriente by Ignazio Guidi in 1894 while twelve Tigrinya riddles are recorded in the same journal by F. Gallina of the Istituto Orientale in Naples. The next work of Tigrinya literature is Dr. C. Wingist's Sillabario nella lingua tigrina published in Asmara in 1896. This is the first Tigrinya book published on native ground, although the press was founded and owned by the Swedish Evangelical Mission. Leslau describes it as a 76-page book

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27. R. Pankhurst, "The Foundations of Education, Printing, Newspapers, Book Production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia," EO, Vol. 6, 1962, p. 257-258.

containing riddles, proverbs, common sayings, and tales. The last appear to be translations from European sources and not the folk tales of the region.<sup>28</sup>

In 1893, C. Conti Rossini contributed to GSAI 10 a ten-page text consisting of legends in Tigrinya. Dr. K. Wingist translated and had published Part 1 of Comp. della Dottrina Cristiana (86 pages) in 1899. And G.M. Bianchi's Dizionario e frasario eritreo published in Milan in 1900 contains about 26 pages of Tigrinya expressions and sentences.<sup>29</sup>

The preceding pages have aimed to present as comprehensive and exhaustive a picture as possible of 19th century Tigrinya literature excluding dictionaries, glossaries and grammatical outlines. The development of Tigrinya literature up to the period 1900 may now be summed up.

Tigrinya manuscripts (translations of the Gospels) date back to the 1830s, but the printing of the Tigrinya vernacular did not commence until 1866. Both at first and for a long time to follow, it was given impetus by European missionaries and especially

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28. Annotated Bibliography, p. 189.

29. Op.cit., p. 184.

by the Protestant spirit which in Europe and America had attempted to bring the Bible to every household.

Although the initial encouragement came from foreigners, we may note that, as with Amharic literature which was pioneered by Dabtara Zeneb and Aleka Wolde Maryam, those who pioneered the development of Tigrinya literature, Matewos and Fässäha Giyorgis, were also dabtaras. Further, they came from the Adwa-Axum area ie. from Tigray. This contrasts markedly with the development of Tigrinya literature in the 20th century which, with the exception of the translations and works of Aleka Tewolde Medhin of Adwa and possibly of a few others, almost exclusively developed in Eritrea and by authors from that region of the Tigrinya-speaking block. However, the above statement needs qualification as regards Wäldä'ab Wäldä Maryam who comes from Tigray and who is generally considered the creator of modern Tigrinya.<sup>30</sup>

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30. While he confirms Tädla Byru's allegation about his Tigray origin, Wäldä'ab nevertheless asserts that he has as much right to comment on the fate of Eritrea. «*ገሃደገ ሃርገራ ሃዛሊገ ለወገዝ ዘከረ ሰገዝ ኢኣ?*» FWN No. 222, (Who then has the right to speak about Eritrea).

In "Letteratura tigrina", Le Civiltà dell'Oriente, ed. G. Tucci, Rome, 1957, Vol. 2, p. 58, M. M. Moreno assesses Wäldä'ab's role in the development of Tigrinya literature in the following terms: "Waldä'ab Waldamäryām merita di essere segnalato a parte come creatore del moderno tigrino, nel quale egli ha introdotto e accreditato numerosi neologismi, escogitati con ingegnosa e rispettosa dellapurezza, dell'eloquio insieme con uno stil nuovo che, lungi dal far violenza alla lingua, ne valorizza le attitudini...»

By and large, Tigrinya literature in the 19th century had a good and early start. In fact, Ricci's above-quoted remark about Fässəha Giyorgis' travelogue as being one of the first for all modern Ethiopian literature including Amharic sums up this situation succinctly. For varied and multiple reasons, however, Tigrinya literature in the 20th century will be found lagging far behind Amharic literature, both in terms of abundance and in quality of content.

One other point can be made about Tigrinya literature in the 19th century, and that is that, apart from Dr. Wingist's two books which were both published in Asmara, all the Tigrinya books or texts in journals mentioned so far were all published in Europe, the largest production being 1000 Tigrinya Gospels printed a year or so prior to the British expedition to Magdala presumably by the British and Foreign Bible Society.<sup>31</sup> The printing press in Eritrea, however, has a much earlier history than the publication of the above Tna books and texts in Europe.<sup>32</sup> A Lazarist father,

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31. R. Pankhurst, "Foundations of Education....." Op. cit., p. 248.

32. Of all Ethiopia, it is here in Eritrea that printing presses first started.

Lorenzo Biancheri, set up a small printing press in Massawa in 1863, called himself printer to His Majesty Emperor Theodore and published an Amharic catechism early in 1864. With his death a few months later, his press was destroyed.<sup>33</sup>

Following Biancheri's example, Lazarist missionaries installed a small printing press in Keren in 1879 and published religious Amharic books, for the most part, although they also published in Tna Orations of Father Baudraz and the Christian Doctrine. From the time of the fall of Keren to the Italians in 1888 till the transfer of the press to the Catholic Mission at Asmara in 1900 the press seems to have solely printed announcements in Italian and Amharic for the Italian military command.<sup>34</sup>

The printing press which was to dominate the scene in the first four decades of the 20th century in terms of publishing Tna literature was that of the Swedish Evangelical Mission first set up at Moncullo in 1885 and later transferred to Asmara in 1895. Other than those mentioned above, an Italian Military Press was set up in Massawa in 1885, and the first commercial press, again in Massawa, was established in 1890. The press of

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33. R. Pankhurst, op.cit., p. 149.

34. Ibid.

the Corriere Eritreo was also set up in Massawa in 1891, and started issuing a weekly politico-commercial newspaper of that name. All the last three presses seem to have published only in Italian.<sup>35</sup>

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35. Ibid.

### 3. Tigrinya literature: 1900 to 1942

With the exception of a few school texts, most of the works published in Tigrinya during the first four decades of the 20th century were primarily religious. Almost all were published by the Swedish Evangelical Mission at Asmara. The first two decades of Tna literature were especially dominated by the works and translations of Swedish missionaries. This dreary picture is however, mitigated by the collections of texts by European scholars reproduced in various learned journals dealing with Oriental studies. We also find at least one native author writing literature of a more secular nature, a novellette dhq h49889 (An Ethiopian) and a historical work on the First World War nh7ht: qCB: y3y4: qhg0:  
ng0: 4t9604 (The World Flares up on account of Two Beasts).<sup>36</sup> Dr. K. Winquist, a missionary doctor stationed at Bäläza, some 10 kilometres north of Asmara, who wrote a Tigrinya Reader and a Tigrinya Catechism at the end of the 19th century now translated two Biblical stories: Storia Sacra (162 pages) and Racconti Biblici (70 pages) both published in 1901.<sup>37</sup> He then had published in

36. Ricci, "la letteratura tigrina" op. cit., p. 887.

37. C. F. Rowling & C. E. Wilson, Bibliography of African Christian Literature, London, 1923, P. 7. The books published by the Swedish Evangelical Mission Press at Asmara enumerated on this and the following page are all taken from the above-mentioned Bibliography, p. 7, and Supplement to Bibliography of African Christian Literature, p. 4.

1910 Dottrina Cristiana (260 pages), again a translation, and the second part of his Catechism Comp. dela Dottrina Cristiana (62 pages) in 1912.

Another Swedish missionary K. Nystrom translated and had published a service book Hymnbook I (134 pages) containing 101 hymns in 1907 and two Tna Readers Sillabario I (137 pages) in 1911 and Sillabario II (127 pages) in 1922.

By far the most prolific writer and translator of all the Swedish missionaries was O. Eriksson. He translated a service book Hymnbook II (292 pages) in 1914 and translated the following works on Christian Doctrine and Morals: Sia La Luce (360 pages) in 1912, Tesoro del Cristiano (430 pages) in 1918 and Tracts (600 pages) probably in the same year. And he had published Help for Preachers: Sermon Outlines (25 pages) in 1911, Sermoni Brevi (142 pages) in 1912, The Giver of Promise (140 pages) in 1912, Cio che deve Sapere Agni abessino (128 pages) in 1913, Corn from the Field of God (365 pages), Credi in Gesu (63 pages) in 1913 and an Almanaco (26 pages) whose year of publication is not specified.

A missionary who translated something other than religious material was C. Christaller. His Manuale di Aritmetica (72 pages) was published in 1923 and it is the first Tna arithmetic book.

Apart from the Swedish missionaries, two native Tna-speakers wrote and published Tna works as well.



S. Sayon's La Verita Rivelata (60 pages) was published in 1911, while Gäbrä Səlasse's Avvertimenti (78 pages) was published in 1913.

This monotonous picture of religious works in Tna is, as mentioned earlier, broken by the contribution of scholars to various learned journals. Enno Littmann's contribution of a 4-page text to WZKM in 1902 is one of the very first in the 20th century.

Enno Littmann's major collection of texts was in the Tigre language. However, along with a few others,<sup>38</sup> we have this short text in the Tigrinya dialect spoken in the Tanben region. This text is, therefore, interesting not only for what it contains but also as one base text for those who wish to study dialectal differences in Tna, and wish to compare the Tanben dialect with other dialects of Tna.<sup>39</sup>

Wäldä Tənsäde, a young monk from the Tanben region, wrote the text for E. Littmann. It is an assortment of extremely short stories and moralizing texts.

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38. E. Littmann, "A Preliminary Report...." op.cit., p. 166-167, lists those other texts.  
 These were: (Rendering into Ethiopic script mine)  
 (a) ልውሐዋ፡ኣቲዊ፡ነተኩዎ፡በብላላላዊ፡ተክነቡ፡ኢዘገደ፡፡  
 (Fable: Beasts of all varieties assemble to hunt.)  
 (b) ዛጊ፡ኣቡሃ፡ገብረ፡መንፈስ፡ፉዑስ፡፡ (The Story of  
 Abuna Gabra Manfas Qəddus)  
 (c) ሩፋ፡ዛጊ፡ኣኣብ፡ገደዓ፡ዛጊ፡ኣመፋሰኣ፡ታቦተ፡ልዮንን፡፡  
 (The Story of Axum and of the Coming of the Tabernacle of Zion.)  
 (d) ዛጊ፡ሃዘ፡ካኤብ፡፡ (The Story of Emperor Kaleb)  
 (e) a number of traditions about the ancient kings and the ruins of Aksum.
39. For a study of the dialects of Adwa, Akala Guzay and Hamasen, see Leslau, JA, 231 (1939), p. 78-115.

In a short paragraph, a story about Emperor Kaleb's expeditions to South Arabia is told. The moralizing texts are derived from an authority called Abuzarād (or perhaps Abu Zared). And they treat of the things that he said were good or bad for the body and for the soul.<sup>40</sup> There is also a short paragraph referring to what Socrates taught of justice and the good state.

In the years 1903 to 1906, Conti Rossini reproduced in ZA, 17, 18, 19, songs, poems and elegiac verses numbering 165 in all, with their equivalent Italian translations and additional notes. They are for the most part, two to four-line poems of love; some, again, are short two to three-line poems expressing desertion, enmity, sarcastic and direct insults. The rest are mostly long poems ranging anywhere from five lines to two and a half pages each, treating of historical topics like war and family feuds. Verses of mourning semi-sung in praise of close relatives or illustrious warriors and poems of social satire are also included.

Jacques Faïtlovitch's reproduction of 88 pages of Tigrinya poetry in GSAI, 23 published in 1911 must rank as one of the richest sources of Tigrinya poetry. But with very few exceptions, they are eulogistic verses of mourning, and are all of the same genre of poetry. All the same, the collection can be considered

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40. This section (op.cit., p. 212 and p. 214) has its Amharic parallel. See S. Strelcyn, "Les écrits médicaux éthiopiens", JES, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1965, p. 91.

quite comprehensive for this type of poetry. The poems are, besides, from the various regions of the Tigrinya-speaking block.

His main source is Dr. Wingist's collection, but Tāwäldä Mädhən, a native Tigrinya-speaker attached to the mission at Bäläza, is also mentioned as an additional source.

In this collection, there are a few poems strikingly different from the chief subject of this collection viz. eulogistic mourning verse. They refer to the Italian colonialism of the period and whereas some are laudatory and full of hyperbolic praise, the others are openly condemnatory and critical.

Other than reproductions of collected texts by European scholars, two native Tna-speakers published three books in the decade between 1910 and 1920. The first is Yosef Näsih's ሥነ ሥርዓት: (Proper Manners) published in Rome in 1910. Yosef Näsih was a Catholic priest and judging from the title, it is perhaps a book of advice on correct and good manners. The other two works are those of Sängal Wärgənäh and both were, again, published in Rome in 1916. The first has the title ሐሳብ ኢትዮጵያ: (An Ethiopian) whose content can be described with the availability of a copy. The second has the title ብሔራዊ ጥያቄ ስንጥር ላይ ስለገጠመው ጥያቄ ሃሳብ, evidently a historical work on the reasons for the eruption of the First World War.<sup>41</sup>

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41. Ricci, "La letteratura...." op.cit., p. 887.

Another important historical critique but written in Amharic, seems to have been incorporated in Sia Luce (already mentioned earlier). This critique was made by Gäbrä Həywät Baykädaññ, one of Ethiopia's foremost intellectuals. Although a native Tigrinya-speaker himself, G. H. Baykädaññ makes a critique in Amharic of Afäwäraq Gäbrä Iyäsus's work ከሙከራ ምኒልክ (Emperor Menelik) by presenting a less praising and perhaps a more objective appraisal of Emperor Menelik's reign.<sup>42</sup>

There were other works published in the second decade of the 20th century. The Catholic Mission in Asmara produced መሰረተ ቴክኒካል ስራ (Book of Technical Education) in 1912 dealing with business, the elementary principles of technology, and general human affairs.

And the Italian Colonial Administration in 1917 published ከረገፍ ግዛት ሃይማኖት (Eritrea: Italian Colony) containing notes on the administrative, economic, commercial and cultural life of the Eritrean colony. Perhaps again under the auspices of the same administration, another work entitled ጠቃሚ ሰዎች ስራ ላይ ስራ ላይ ስራ (Famous People: on account of their work, their knowledge and their love) was published in the same year of 1917./a work on the lives of prominent Italian personalities of the past and current periods.<sup>43</sup>

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42. Op.cit., p. 884-885,

43. Op.cit., p. 884.

The second decade of the 20th century also saw the appearance of two Tigrinya monthly magazines, both produced by foreign religious missions. The first entitled መልእክት : ሃላም (Message of Peace) which started publication in 1909 and continued until 1915 was put out by the Swedish Evangelical Mission, while the second by the Catholic Mission of the Cappucin Order started publication in 1916 and had the title የፍጥረት ሃላም : ነፃነትና ፍትሕ (The True Friend of the Ethiopian People).<sup>44</sup>

Coming back to reproductions of Tigrinya texts by scholars, Conti Rossini in the 1911-1912 issue of RSO, 4, reproduces about six pages of text, along with notes in Tigrinya adding up to about one page. These short texts deal with the legend of the Queen of Sheba (about 3 pages) and about another 3 pages of very amusing legendary versions on the transition of power <sup>from the Zagwe dynasty to Yekuno Amlak and about the migration</sup> from Lasta to Eritrea of the Agaw and their subsequent genealogies in the latter region.

The year 1922 saw the second edition of መጻሕፍት : ሃላም (64 pages). (A Primer of Tigrinya), first published in 1905 by the Swedish Evangelical Mission in Asmara.<sup>45</sup> The Tigrinya Readers put out by this mission

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44. Op.cit., p. 885,

45. Annotated Bibliography....., p. 188.

including the one by Wingist in 1896, seem to have numbered four in all. But it is not clear whether they were all different in content. Only access to all the different Readers can ascertain that.

In this same decade some three other manuals on the Tigrinya language came out; they all contain, at the least, Tigrinya sentences and dialogues, while some contain letters and texts. These were Manuale tigray-italiano-francese published in Rome in 1912, Sillabario ed esercizi di lettura in lingua tigrina published in Asmara in 1914, and Manuale de letture scelte italiane-tigrai ad uso delle scuole indigene published in Asmara in 1916.<sup>46</sup>

By far the most important Tigrinya work of the 2nd decade, however, is J. A. Kolmodin's compilation of the traditions of Šä'azäga and Hazäga entitled ሂገዳጵ ስዕል (270 pages) published in Rome in 1912. This is a monumental work recording the history not just of these two areas in Hamasen but touching on all Ethiopian history. The dialect is that spoken in Hamasen and is, thus, an invaluable source for the study of that dialect. The French translation was published in Uppsala in 1915.

The next two decades from 1920 to 1940 did not see much development of Tigrinya literature. Manuals on the language in Tigrinya and in Italian continued

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46. Ibid.

to be published in Italy in cities like Rome, Milan and Naples. And in Asmara itself, ቀዳሳተ ሙሉ ፍጥነት (151 pages), a Reader in Tigrinya only, was published in 1928 by the Swedish Evangelical Mission, while a book on learning Italian, in Ethiopic script, was published by the Fransiscan Press in 1938 with the title ሙሉ ፍጥነት ለብሔር ከብሔር - ከግልጽ.<sup>47</sup> However, the most important work of this period was Wäldä'ab Wäldä Maryam's ሙሉ ፍጥነት ለብሔር ከብሔር - ከግልጽ (A Primer on Tigrinya) published in Asmara in 1935. It proved popular and went through many editions.

Another interesting work published in those two decades was a biography of Abba Täklä Haymanot of Adwa who was born in 1825 and died in 1902.<sup>48</sup> This is about the only biographical work in Tigrinya and of a native, although even here it is the biography of a religious figure and not of a historical personage. It is to be remembered, however, that a Tigrinya biographical work containing biographical sketches of Italian figures was published as early as 1917 in Asmara.

A more secular collection of Tigrinya texts was that documented by W. Leslau for his study of Tigrinya dialects reproduced in JA, 231, 1939. These were texts in two different dialects viz. those of Adwa and Akälä

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47. Op.cit., p. 187.

48. Op.cit., p. 186.

Guzay transcribed from two native speakers viz. Mäsfan Zäläläw of Adwa and Tākḷe Gurmū of Akkele Guzay. They contain brief historical sketches, descriptions of the Masqal Festival, stories and fables.

Some three years after the Italians occupied all of Ethiopia, the Italian administration started publication of a Tigrinya periodical called ተግርኛ ነጥረት (Ethiopia Renewed) in 1939.<sup>49</sup>

In 1940, Conti Rossini published a work on grammar entitled Lingua Tigrina (278 pages) in which he included a 10-page collection of Tigrinya texts in transcription. They deal with seven topics: three of which are short historical accounts, while the other four deal with 1) Abyssinian measures of grain and yarn 2) various points of customary law 3) Abyssinian military titles 4) Tigrinya military commands.

This period closes with the monumental work: Conti Rossini's Proverbi, Tradizioni e Canzoni Tigrine (332 pages) published in Verbania in 1942. The first part contains 489 proverbs in transcription with translation and additional notes. The second part is a book of genealogy ገጥማዊ ልዩ ልዩ (21 pages) written in Ethiopic script. The genealogy was written down by a priest from Sälläma, a district in Saraye awnaja. An Italian translation follows the text, at the end of which is an alphabetical index, in transcription, of the proper names mentioned in the text. The third part contains 86 poems, in Ethiopic script, followed by

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49. Ricci, "La letteratura....." Op.cit., p. 887.



translation and notes. They are from many parts of the Tigrinya-speaking block—from Hamasien and Akkele Guzay as well as from Agame and Inderta.

The following year, Eugenio di Savoia-Genova and Giovanni Simonini published 432 Tigrinya proverbs in R S E 3 (1943), in Ethiopic script with Italian translation. They were all collected in Säraye, and the original collection of 670 proverbs was reduced to 432 in order to avoid inclusion of those proverbs already recorded in Conti Rossini's work published a year earlier.

In the same year, E. Littmann published 24 proverbs from Wingist's collection in Z D M G 97 (1943), in transcription. He also published a one-page text in Ethiopic script in R S E 6 (1947). It is on the Axumite legend of the dragon, one of nine legends he had collected from an Axumite priest during the Expedition he had led to the area at the turn of the century.

#### 4. TIGRINYA literature: 1942-1974.

The development of Tigrinya as a written language and literature enters a new stage in this period. In the earlier periods, we saw that Tigrinya was written for evangelical purposes by foreign missions, Swedish and Italian, or was compiled from oral traditions by scholars. There were, of course, the original and secular works of Dabtara Fässəha Giyorgis, among a few others. But they were exceptions. The post-1942 period transformed such works into the rule. This was possible because the British Administration

(1941-1952) encouraged the development of Tigrinya, not only as a medium of instruction in the primary schools but also as a medium of expression in newspapers and books. The biggest single factor in its development was, in fact, the founding of a weekly newspaper in Tigrinya, Eritrean Weekly News under the auspices of the British Information Services.

The formation of a "Tigrinya Language Council" in 1944 best illustrates the hopeful prospect with which this period opened. Among other objectives, the Council aimed to adopt a fairly standard spelling system, and to adapt the language to modern needs by determining in what manner and from what language sources essential new terminology was to be coined. However, the active life of the Council did not last long. Of its sorry state five years later, E. Ullendorff wrote, ".....it was a matter of disappointment to many when the initial enthusiasm ebbed, political considerations entered the picture, and the committee became moribund."<sup>50</sup>

With the end of the British Administration and Eritrea's federation with Ethiopia, Tigrinya as a medium of instruction in primary schools continued until 1962, since which period it has been gradually replaced by Amharic.<sup>51</sup>

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50. Africa, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1949, p. 64.

51. J. Markakis, Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity, London, 1974, p. 157, writes:  
 "Following the elimination of Eritrea's federal status and the taking over of its administration by the Ethiopian government in 1962, Amharinya was gradually imposed as a language of instruction at the elementary level and Tigrinya was eliminated fairly quickly."  
 See also R.L. Hess, Ethiopia: The Modernization of Autocracy, Ithaca and London, 1970, pp. 163-164.

The suppression of Tigrinya as a language was to play a significant role in the development of an Eritrean independence political movement in the 1960's and 1970's. Although it is not the purpose of this dissertation, the relegation of Tigrinya to secondary status by the Ethiopian government, after it had had official status in the decade between 1952 and 1962 was one of the political dynamites that started the Eritrean liberation movements. Political explanations aside, it is in this third period that Tigrinya as a written language and literature started to develop.

The period opens with the publication of a document of the customary law of Säraye: ሥርዓት ክልከመ ምክርባ (Asmara, 1944). A Rome edition with an Italian translation was published in 1948. Notables of the area, chiefs and elders of the community compiled it although some controversy arose later as to whether the initiative was indigenous or Italian.<sup>52</sup> This work which is 213 pages, including its Italian translation, is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the laws of persons, the family, and obligations, while the second deals with succession, crime, procedure, church, and other varied areas. Another work on customary law ሥርዓት ከተማ (127 pages) was published by Petros Silla Press in Asmara in 1946.<sup>53</sup>

A considerable work of Tigrinya literature in this period is Abba Ya'qob Gäbrä Iyäsus' ዘናን ተፈኝ ምስክር ነፍሱ ቀዳሞት

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52. See E. Ullendorff's review in African Affairs, Vol. 53, No. 211, 1954, pp. 175-176.

53. This work is not available at SOAS or British Library.

(136 pages). Published in Asmara at the British Administration press in 1950, it contains stories, fables, poems, riddles, songs and proverbs. The stories and fables number 100. The poems, songs and riddles comprise 12 two-column pages. The proverbs, arranged in alphabetical order, number 3300.

Abba Gäbräyäsus Haylu published a novel ሐሳብ፡ሀገሩ፡ (A Story) in 1949-1950. It is 61 pages long (whole book: 73 pp.) and it appears to be the first Tigrinya novel. At the end, it includes a patriotic poem in praise of Ethiopia and a 6-page excerpt in verse from his ፋቴዎድሮስ፡ተግድሮሽ፡ (Tragedy of Tewodros) which seems never to have been published in full anywhere. One striking fact about this work is that it is not only the first Tigrinya novel, but also that it was written in manuscript form in 1927 but could only get published some 22 years later through money lent to him by the "Ethiopia-Eritrea Unionist Party."

About the closest thing to a theological work is that of Tāwāldä Mādhān Gäbru's ሃላውና፡ክምካላ፡ (Existence of God) (186 pages) published in Addis Ababa in 1947. One of the six sections of the book is a translation from Elsie Winqist's 'Testimony of the New Testament about the Old Testament'. The other sections deal with the existence of God, the Church, ancient history ranging from Babylonia to Rome, and a chronology of biblical history. There is a final page on the Hebraic calendar.

The same author translated a 58-page work ሐሳብ፡ሀገሩ፡ (Man's Heart) from Amharic and had it published for the

second time (1st edition 1927) in 1957 in Asmara. It has a few illustrations.

In 1959, a Breviary of Mary, a translation from Father Alfonso Musarelli's original work was published as መግረጽ ግንባራ (130 pages) in Asmara under the auspices of Fransiscan Cappucin brothers. The translation seems to have been by Abba Agostinos of Hebbo.

The second and revised edition of the classic allegorical novel, John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (Tigrinya: መገረ ነርስተሪያ ቀሃንን ቡንያን ብሔራዊ ዝረከየ) was published in Asmara in 1970. The first edition, translated from the English by Teres de Pertis and Bayru 'Uqbit, was published much earlier in the century in 1933/34.

A translation of a more secular literary classic was that of Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe by Musa Aron. This 89-page translation (Asmara, 1957) was from the simplified edition of James Baldwin. Other translations of novels include Mark Twain's Adventures of Tom Sawyer as ገንካሳላ ፋኖ ሰው-የር (214 pages) (Asmara, 1967/68) by Fəqadu Gäbrä Sallase and J. Meade Falkner's Moonfleet as መንፍካላ (132 pages) (Asmara, 1966/67) by Täsfa 'Egzi'o Gäbrä 'Egzi'abher from Michael West's abridged edition.

There are two translations of Shakesperean plays by the same person. Yosef Habta Mika'el translated Romeo and Juliet from Käbbädä Mika'el's Amharic translation. ሮሜዮ ይከሰታ (92 pages) was published in Asmara in 1968/69 while the translation of Macbeth, ማካበት (112 pages) was published in 1972, again in Asmara.

The production of text-books which had a good start during the British Administration declined and disappeared altogether in the Federation and post-Federation periods. However, it left its mark. One of the impressive works of this nature was መጽሐፍ ንጉሥ ከተዋደኑ ፍልጠን ንጉሥ ነፍረ (Reading Book in General Knowledge for the Third Grade) (123 pages) (Asmara, 1946). Prepared by H.F. Kynaston Snell, the Director of Schools, the rendering into Tigrinya appears to have been by Māmhar Asfaha Kaḥsay. It has sections on biology, physics, mineralogy, and agriculture. It also has a general reading text at the beginning and a very brief and rather random world history at the end.

Even earlier than the above text, Māmhar Yāshaq Täwäldä Mādhān prepared and published text-books of arithmetic and geography. Chapter 3 (p. 13-24) below contains a discussion of a book review of his መግኒት - ቀደሚያ ግጥሞች (Introduction to Arithmetic) (100 pages) (Asmara, 1944/45). His ግጥሞች ግጥሞች (Geography in Tigrinya) (131 pages) (Asmara, 1943/44) explains certain basic geographical terms and concepts. It also contains a relatively long discussion of transport methods, a few diagrams, and some sketch maps of Africa and one of Eritrea.

During the Federation, an impressive lexicographical work was published. Abba Yohannēs Gābrä 'Jgzi'abher's መዝገበ-ቃላት ንግሥት-ክፍል (Tigrinya-Amharic Dictionary) (855 pages) (Asmara, 1956/57) makes an outstanding contribution to the study of the language. Where words are limited and peculiar to certain regions of the Tigrinya-speaking

block, the author indicates this fact in a bracket following the word in Tigrinya. He does this, up to a point, for loans as well.

It is only of this last period that we can really talk of Tigrinya fictional literature. The last three chapters of this thesis deal with three selected themes in order to throw some light on the development of this aspect of Tigrinya literature. However, the eleven works discussed in those three chapters are not exhaustive samples of the more than fifty fictional works written in Tigrinya up till the period ending in 1974. Most of these works were written in the post-Federation period at the time when Tigrinya had ceased to have official status. Under the circumstances, better education and easier publishing perhaps account for this development.

## C H A P T E R   T W O

### DEVELOPMENT OF TIGRINYA AS A WRITTEN LANGUAGE.

#### 1. The milieu and social context of written Tigrinya.

In the Christian part of Ethiopia, the art of writing has always been closely linked with the church.<sup>1</sup> Less often, its association has been with magic, and the word 'ፀሐፊ' (scribe) at times also connoted 'magician' or 'sorcerer' (Tna:ፀሐፊ or 'ፈክሪ'). Purely secular matters which did not relate to the religious were hardly ever recorded. Where they were, as in the chronicles of Emperors, the assumption that kings were 'elect of God' underlay the undertaking of such a task. This tradition precluded the development of both written Amharic and written Tigrinya. However, written Amharic fared slightly better. There exist some 14th century songs composed in honour of the Kings, and religious writings produced under Jesuit influence in the late 16th and early 17th centuries but it was under Theodore (1855-1868) and Menelik (1889-1913) that Amharic received increasing royal encouragement and was subsequently made Ethiopia's official language in Article 125 of the Revised Constitution of

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1. Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity,.....  
p. 143,



1955.<sup>2</sup>

The development of Tigrinya as a written language consequently suffered adversely from the double influence of Ge'ez and Amharic. This is concisely expressed by Ullendorff thus: "Tna literature is still in its beginnings. Due to the absolute domination of Ge'ez and, to a lesser extent, the political prestige of Amharic as yänəgus k<sub>w</sub>' ank<sub>w</sub>'a, Tna has never enjoyed the dignity of a written language."<sup>3</sup> However, it must be noted that he is here describing the state of written Tigrinya in the pre-1942 period.

The writing of Tigrinya seems to have begun and developed as a response to varying needs. The first use of written Tigrinya was for religious instruction and this occurred during the immediate pre-colonial and subsequent colonial periods. C.W. Isenberg appears to have been the first person to encourage the writing of Tigrinya.<sup>4</sup> Missionary concern paved the way for scholarly interest with Praetorius who wrote the first Tigrinya grammar.<sup>5</sup> He was soon followed by many other scholars who compiled glossaries, collections of folklore, oral tradition, and customary law, etc.. As a subject for

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2. The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia....p.15-17; An Amharic Chrestomathy .... pp.1,11,12. See also The Amharic Letters of Emperor Theodore of Ethiopia to Queen Victoria and Her Special Envoy, Oxford, 1979, pp. XV-XVI.
  3. The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia..... p. 22.
  4. "His achievement stands out as eloquent testimony to the service rendered by missionaries in opening up hitherto obscure languages" Amharic Chrestomathy.....p. 3.
  5. See footnote 20, p. 9 in Ch. 1.

scholarly investigation which it now began to assume, Tigrinya came to receive more attention primarily during the Italian colonial period, and this continued, up to a point, during the British Administration Period as well. The first native secular writer, Dabtara Fässəha Giyorgis, appeared in the 1890's, but his example was not followed for a long time thereafter.<sup>6</sup> Missionary, scholarly and colonial interests continued to dominate the scene until a significant change occurred with the founding of the E W N in 1942. Here, the literate Tigrinya speaker, primarily from Eritrea, found an easy and accessible medium. The development of written Tigrinya for political and media expression and additionally for secular education thus began and thrived during the British Administration Period.<sup>7</sup> These aspects of written Tigrinya declined thereafter for obvious political reasons. The Ethiopian authorities frowned equally on the concept of the 'free press' as well as on the use of vernaculars other than Amharic for educational purposes. However, the ground-work furnished by E W N and Tigrinya writing during the

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6. See p.13, Ch.1.

7. The British Administration provided an atmosphere conducive for free expression as well as for political organization. In "From British Rule to Federation and Annexation", Behind the War in Eritrea, Op.cit., pp. 35-36, Bereket Habte Selassie writes: "Political agitation was made possible because the British permitted a measure of freedom of speech and association. The British also established an active press and information service which published and broadcast in English, Tigrinya and Arabic, news on the progress of war in Europe and other issues. These two parallel developments spawned prominent political activists and commentators, some of whom would be destined to play important roles in the

(Continued on next page)

British Administration was sufficient to enable the emergence of Tigrinya fictional literature, however scanty. Tigrinya's new role and function for the purpose of creative writing began to assume form and substance in the fifties and sixties, i.e. primarily in the federation and post-federation periods.

Unlike Ge'ez for which rustic churches and remote monasteries provided the setting, the social context and milieu for the writing of Tigrinya was urban rather than rural. An additional and significant difference is that the foreigner, in the person of the missionary, the scholar, and the colonial administrator or employee, historically took the initiative in having Tigrinya put into writing. He also continued to dominate the scene for a considerable time. Only with the establishment of E W N did the language come into its own and become an everyday written medium for its native speakers—at least for the literate segment of Eritrean society. For with a few exceptions, the contributions to this paper were not from foreigners but from Tigrinya speakers.

One of the major obstacles for the development of Tigrinya literature, as for Amharic literature, has been the low level of literacy in the country as a whole. Although the level of literacy varies from region to region and the rate is comparatively high in Eritrea, it still represented less than <sup>a</sup>third of the population in 1969. "The level of literacy across the country varies

from 56 per cent in Addis Ababa and 27 per cent in Eritrea to 4.3 per cent in Gamu-Gofa, 3.5 per cent in Harar and 3 per cent in Wollo."<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Ge'ez influence.

As the first use of written Tigrinya was for religious instruction, initial influence in syntax on scriptural Tigrinya came from Ge'ez.<sup>9</sup> There is no visible influence from the only other likely source-Amharic. As written Amharic itself was not really developed until the early part of this century and as Tigrinya had already started to be written in the latter part of the last century, it would be untenable to suggest that written Amharic could have initially had any meaningful influence on written Tigrinya, at least at the outset. As the only well-developed written Ethiopian language at the time, however, Ge'ez could predictably be expected to have had some influence. This is all the more plausible as both Dabtara Mattewos and Dabtara Fəssəha Giyorgis-pioneers in the writing of Tigrinya-were both clerics trained in Ge'ez.

In a passing comparison of the syntactical relationship of Ge'ez, Amharic and Tigrinya to Semitic

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8. R.L. Hess, Ethiopia: The Modernization of Autocracy, Ithaca and London, 1970, p. 157.

9. J. Schriber (Manuel de la Langue Tigray, Vienna, 1887, p.VII) writes: "Le tigray des evangiles publiés par la société biblique de Bâle diffère trop du langage parlé et porte trop l'empreinte d'une traduction du Ge'ez."

syntax, Ullendorff regards Ge'ez as, on the whole, retaining the basic ideas of Semitic syntax,<sup>10</sup> while he considers Tigrinya and Amharic syntax as further removed. He writes, "Tna syntax is almost as far removed from the Semitic type as is Amharic syntax."<sup>11</sup>

A brief, cursory glance at a few selected scriptural passages in Ge'ez, Tigrinya and Amharic having the same semantic content but with the Tigrinya passages separated by almost a century reveals an initial Ge'ez influence which is soon superseded by the development of a written Tigrinya syntax which closely corresponds to that of the spoken. This is best illustrated by examining (a) the position of the verb in a sentence and (b) the relative positions of the subordinate clause and the main clause. The passages below are taken from John:1.6 (Set A) and John: 1.4 (Set B) respectively. Dabtara Mattewos' Tigrinys version of the Gospel was published in Basle in 1866; the Bible Society's Tigrinya version was published in Asmara and London in 1956/57 while the British and Foreign Bible Society's Amharic version is a 1933 reprint of the 1886 edition.

- Set A-(1) Ge'ez version: ወሀኩ ከሐወቲ ብሔር ስተኤ ነወ፡ ሕያዎኅበ፡ ሕግዚኡ ብሔር፡ ዘስመዑ፡ ያሐንስ፡፡  
 (2) Mattewos version: ነበሌ፡ ስብ፡ ከተሐክሩ፡ ከሕዝብ፡ ሕግዚኡ ብሔር፡ ያሐንስ፡ ዘስመዑ፡፡

10. The Semitic Languages of Ethiopia.....p.10.

11. Op.cit., p. 22.

- (3) Bible Society's Tigrinya version:

የሃንሰ ዝስሙ ስብኣ ካብ ካምካካ ተክኢሉ ተጓዥኦ።

- (4) Bible Society's Amharic version:

ሰው፡ሃቢ፡ሰኢጣዚአብሔር፡የተካካ፡ሰሙም፡የሐንሰ፡።

Set B-(1) Ge'ez version: ሰቱ፡ሐዋዮ፡ወኑ፡ወሐዋዮስ፡በርሃ፡አንጸክ፡አመጸው፡ወኑ።

- (2) Mattewos version:

ሰኢኡ፡ሐዋዮ፡ሃቢኡ፡ሐዋዮስ፡በርሃና፡ሃቢኡ፡ጓዥኦ።

- (3) Bible Society's Tigrinya version:

ሃዋዮ ካብኡ ሃቢኡ ፡ኸታ ሃዋዮ ከኣ በርሃን ስብ ሃቢኡ።

- (4) Bible Society's Amharic version:

ሐዋዮ፡በርሃ፡ሃቢኡ። ሐዋዮም፡የሰው፡በርሃ፡ሃቢኡ።

(a) The position of the verb in a sentence.

In Ge'ez, the verb can occupy an initial, a medial or a terminal position. In present-day written Tigrinya, the verb normally occupies a terminal position A(3) and B(3) as in Amharic B(4) . In the earliest sample of written (printed) Tigrinya, we find the verb occupying any of the three possible positions in a sentence much like Ge'ez. Consider A(2) where "ሃቢ" is initial or B(2) where the second "ሃቢ" is medial. We see, therefore, that there is a shift of the position of the verb from initial or medial to terminal in the development of written Tigrinya. This shift may be attributed to the increasing effort and attention writers may have exerted to have the written language

correspond to the spoken.

The Amharic sentences A(4) and B(4), both taken from the reprint of the 1886 edition, clearly exhibit two different syntactical principles—a Ge'ez and an Amharic-Tigrinya one. A(4) like A(2) is almost syntactically identical to the Ge'ez one: Verb + Subject + Adjectival subordinate clause + adjectival phrase. From this we may conclude that the syntax of early written Tigrinya, and, to an extent, of early written Amharic too, was influenced by that of Ge'ez. However, the case is different with B(4) which corresponds to Amharic syntax proper. The similar structures exhibited in the Tigrinya sentences A(3) and B(3) are also instances of Tigrinya syntax proper.<sup>12</sup>

(b) The relative positions of subordinate clauses.

The shift in the position of the verb entails changes in the relative positions of the main clause, subordinate clauses and phrases. Thus in A(1), the order is: main clause + subordinate clause 1 + subordinate clause 2. Both subordinate clauses qualify the subject. The same order is followed in A (2) and A (4) although in the latter the last clause is a co-ordinate one. In both instances, however, the Amharic and Tigrinya sentences follow the Ge'ez syntax.

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12. M.L. Bender and H. Fulass in Amharic Verb Morphology, East Lansing, Michigan, 1978, pp. 3-4, suggest a 'Cushomotic' syntax base (ie.verb-final), among others, for both Amharic and Tigrinya.

The structure is substantially different in A(3): subordinate clause 1 + subject + subordinate clause 2 + main clause. This type of sequence, with perhaps minor variations, would now be regarded as standard. Describing an essentially similar situation in Amharic, Ullendorff writes, "The verb is placed at the end of a sentence, and subordinate clauses are 'encased' and precede the main clause."<sup>13</sup> An examination of any number of random Tigrinya passages reproduced in this dissertation would confirm this general rule of Tigrinya syntax.

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13. An Amharic Chrestomathy..... p. 8.



### 3. Style in written Tigrinya.

As is generally the case with many languages, Tigrinya is written in a different style from its spoken form. Spoken Tigrinya comprises of shorter sentences, sometimes even incomplete, while written Tigrinya typically comprises of complete sentences which contain embedded in them many clauses held together by the use of conjunctions and relative pronouns, but most often by the use of gerunds. The degree of such structure in a sentence may vary from writer to writer, but almost invariably every author will have sentences with a number of clauses. An extreme form of this tendency to join perfectly separable clauses is furnished by the following passage from the novel ንመን'የ ዝነግሮ? :

« ህፁብ ክብኡን ክጽኡን ክብ ሃኒመን ነክፀሊ ሓዲ ብዳግ ሓዲ ብገዛ ክሠርሑ ውጪኦም ምሽቲ ምስ ይቆም ተገብሮን ብኢያም ዘውሓም ወፍ ብርሐም ስቲቶም ሓዊ ክብ ምቅሃሙ ሞቶም ህሳፍ ሓዲ ክቆም ነንክቶኦም ምስክቡ ስብክቶን ዘበቶን ገጽታ ክብኡ ክተላ ምስ መቡ ድላ ሓዲ ስብኡ ብምሳን ቀሩብ ዓገም ነጸንፎም ነኩ ክመሳከሩን ክዳሃሉን ነክፀሊ ስብኡ ክኢኦም ልቦም ምስ ቀስነ ፈተው-ፎ ምስ ክግረቱ ድላ ገንግዚክብሮም ክመስገኑም ዝረከብዎ ተክ ነቦም ክበገቡን ክስክቁን ይቆም ምስ ዝበገሉ ኃቢሮም ክመሳከሩምን ክገንኩምን ሓፊኹ ናፍ ናክሚ ናፍ መሃን ኤፊ ናፍ ጠቐካ ሃርሞን ኃቢሮም ክሓስቡኩን ክስቅርቅሩን ክሓሃኩን ምርክፍ ከሚሉ ስብኡ ገንኛ ሓቲኩ ፍፁም ጋ ሽ ጥፍ ፡፡ » (p.18) .

The above long and clumsy sentence constitutes

an entire paragraph by itself. This style is not unique to the author of this work, nor even to written Tigrinya. Such awkward style is markedly noticeable in much Amharic writing as well:

"Long and complex periods without adequate marks of punctuation naturally form the major stumbling block. The relative complexity in its various guises, represents the central feature in this process of subtle and intricately poised enclosures and encasements. .... In modern Amharic- and especially in the language of the newspapers- we frequently find periods of very great length extending at times to half a column. Experience shows that even native speakers of Amharic have a difficulty over the organization and ready comprehension of such sentences." 10

Although it can be readily admitted that the written form in any language can accommodate more complicated sentences than the spoken form, the type of style illustrated above stretches both propriety and the reader's powers of comprehension. It is perhaps an inevitable stage in a literature that is struggling to be born. More to the point, the grand 'Johnsonian style' characterized by excessive length as much as by bombast is not totally unfamiliar in the earlier phases of even well-developed literatures.

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10. Op.cit., p. 9.

#### 4. Increasing Orthographic Precision.

##### (a) Inconsistency in the use of some of the letters.

Written Tigrinya exhibits a development of increasing precision and standardization in its orthography. More orthographic inconsistencies occur in early written Tigrinya than in later writings. Such inconsistencies exist on two planes. The first regards confusion in the vowel order within the same letter, while the second manifests itself in a fairly free interchange of some letters which have different sound values. In the first type of orthographic inconsistency, the first orders of ከ, ዐ, ሀ, ሐ, ኀ are confused and often interchanged with their fourth orders ካ, ባ, ህ, ሐ, ኀ respectively. The first set mark consonant plus vowel 'ä' while the latter denote consonant plus vowel 'a'. In the second type of inconsistency, the difference in sound between ሀ and ሐ and also between ከ and ዐ is not taken account of. They are treated as if they were homophone letters as, indeed, they are in Amharic. The case is entirely different in Tigrinya where ሐ and ዐ are pharyngals, while ሀ and ከ are glottals. However, there is no sound distinction between ሐ and ኀ in Tigrinya, both representing the voiceless pharyngeal fricative.

Hundreds of instances of orthographic inconsistencies of both types, even nowadays, could be cited here. It is, however, simpler to illustrate the situation by focussing on the sentences reproduced above on p. 41-42.

In sentence A(2) which is an 1866 rendering in Tigrinya, five instances of non-correspondence between the sound of the letter (assuming no phonetic changes over the last century) and its graphic expression can be identified:

(i) In the word 'ክተክክሌ', 'ክ' should be written as 'ካ' (ii) in 'ክግዚክብሔር', 'ክ' should be 'ካ' (iii) in 'ክግዚክብሔር' again, 'ሔ' should be 'ሄ' (iv) & (v) in 'የሐንስ' there is a double non-correspondence: 'ሐ' should not only be 'ሀ' in terms of sound, but also 'ሃ' in terms of vowel order. Such orthographic precision would render them respectively as 'ክተክክሌ' ('əttälə'ake), 'ክግዚክብሔር' ('əgzi'abəher) and 'የሃንስ' (Yohannəs). By contrast with A(2) above, the same sentence ie. A(3) in the Bible Society's version of 1956/57, written almost one hundred years later, shows no orthographic inconsistency. Similarly B(2) demonstrates orthographic and phonetic non-correspondence by utilizing 'ሐ' in 'ሐዋወት' perhaps due to Ge'ez influence, whereas the sound would suggest the use of 'ሀ' for 'ሀዋወት' (həywät) as the correct graphic rendering. The Bible Society version, here again, testifies to correct usage as in B(3).

The source of inconsistency and non-correspondence of phoneme and grapheme is perhaps the traditional mode of learning the alphabet. Even in the relatively scholarly surroundings of the monasteries, the child is made to learn the alphabet without distinction between the mentioned vowel differences in the same letter, or sound differences in the two sets of letters 'ክሀ' and 'ሀሐ'.

In this connection, Kidanä Wäld Kəfle's comment in ጠጽሐፈ፡  
ሳዋስ፡ጠግሥ፡ጠጠዛገበ፡ቃላት፡ሐረሕ፡ (Book of Grammar and  
 Verb and a New Dictionary) (Addis Ababa, 1956) is quite  
 enlightening as regards the need for vowel differences  
 in the first and fourth orders of the said letters.

« ባሉበት ጠግሮ ከፍ ማስሰጠትና ቃል ጠግገን  
 ታች ፡ ዝርዝር ማሳየት ነው፤ ከግሕዝ  
 ግን ቀህ ስሑ ያከውም፤ በግ ገጋ ያዳ  
 በድምፅና በመልክ አይደሉም ነገሩ ስሑ፡  
 ከዐና ሀሐጎም ከሉበያቸው ከካላ  
 ከሃሐጎ አይደሉም ናቸው፡፡ » (p.6).

"The feature of the fourth order  
 is to cause the opening of the  
 mouth, the clarity of the sound,  
 and the showing of the detail.  
 The first order does not have  
 any of these. As በግ ገጋ ያዳ  
 (bä, ba, gä ga, dä da) are diff  
 erent in sound and in appearance,  
 so are ከዐ and ሀሐጎ (ä'ä and  
 hä, ha, hā) different from  
 their fourth order forms of ከካ  
 and ሃሐጎ (a, 'a and ha, ḥa, ḥā)".

Further investigation is perhaps required to es-  
 tablish whether this is a genuine tradition or a false  
 explanation made to fit otherwise irregular circumstances.  
 However, Ato Wäldä 'Ab Wäldä Maryam also states the  
 problem in one of the monthly issues of ነገረ (Revolution)  
 (Cairo, 1973), and further remarks on the additional

dimension in Tigrinya of the different sound values of ከባ and ሀሐ . However, as a copy is not available, only mention can be made of it here. In any case, Ato Wäldä 'Ab as editor of the Eritrean Weekly News from 1946 to 1952 did much to bring about increased orthographic precision and standardization by the meticulous example of his own contributions to the paper.

(b) Changes and development in punctuation.

As can equally well be said for Amharic, punctuation in written Tigrinya has yet to be standardized. However, we note an interesting development in Tigrinya punctuation which we do not find in Amharic. This is a change in the use of the two-dot word marker: In Ge'ez, Amharic as well as in early written Tigrinya, this sign served purely as a word-marker as is amply demonstrated in all the sentences on p.41-42 above, except for sentences A(3) and B(3). In the latter two sentences, words are marked off from each other by a simple interval in space as in English, and, indeed, in many other languages. While dropping the two-dot punctuation as a word-marker, sentence B(3) does not discard it altogether, but assigns to it a new function: that of a clause-marker.e.g. “ ህፃናዊት ከብዙ ነበረች፡ ከታ ህፃናዊት ነፃ ነበረች ስህ ነበረች ፡፡ ” (p.42 above). This change in the function of the two-dot marker is not confined to the Bible Society's version, but is prevalent in E.W.N and in almost all the novels. The new function of the two-dot marker is more traditionally fulfilled by ፤ or

even sometimes ÷ . An instance of the second type of punctuation is provided in the following passage:

« ትምህርቱ ነውን ዝበቐህ ፍልጠታ ነበር ÷ ግዳ ብጦት ክቡኩን ክሓኩን ዝኣክልፍ  
ትምህርቱ ንሳብ ቋርጽ ሓሳብ ግበረ :: » (ኸግሊኛ ቀይመት ኣባ.፡፡) (p.1)

As the use of punctuation is not yet standardized, the same sign becomes a simple phrase-marker in the same book some pages later.

« ከኣላጥህ ግን ÷ ነቲ ዓብይቤ ዝቀረገ ገሪ ነገር ለግሊሊ ከኣይ ክምዘ  
ዓቢ ሕፍሊት ዝቀየ ተስምዖ :: » (ኸግሊኛ ቀይመት ኣባ.፡፡) (p.24)

The introduction of ? to mark interrogation is too obvious to require illustration here. However, the use of : and ; as clause markers, the introduction of " " ! to mark direct speech and exclamation respectively as well as the use of the glottal stop marker ' in between two letters may all be illustrated from the following passage:

« ኣባ ባግቡ ንስተላግ ሂሳብ-ዎ ምስ ክቡ፡ ለግርፍባቶ ንዘዝተጸነፋኡም ኣንስቲ፡  
« ኣላቶሩ ርኽኢን » ቢኩ ኢግዳቶን ብውጽጢ ሓቡ ቀህንጦ ነበረ፤ ኣንተላን  
ምቹኡ ኣምግላ፤ ስኩነ፡ ብሓሪ ኣላባባቶ ኣሊኩም ኢንጅና-ክኣው ዳርጋ  
ዝነገሩኡ ዚሳኡ ቋሓቶ ክሓቡ ኢዳውቱ ሊኦ ሃሞ ሓንገሽ ምስኣቶም  
ኢዳውቱ ኣኣ ኣንተዘቀተላኡኩስ ንቑራብ ጊሄ ጠጠው ቢኩ ኢርኽቶም  
ተመነሃ፡ ነዙ ህረቶኡ'ውን ነቶም ለግዳቶ ገሪኦም፡፡ ንኩም ግን « ኣብ  
ዘዝነከሊ ዚዳውቱ ቋሓቶ ኣንርኢ ጠጠው ኣንድኅሪ ኤልና ዓኡ ንግዳምና  
መኸስ ኣንምከስ፤ ንዓናቶ ዓኡ! » ኣናቡኩ ብኤቶ ከሓባም ለገራም፡፡  
ኸው ብዙኅ ገዘን ተስምዖ፡፡ ቋሓቶ ኣናኢ ጋጠሙም ነኡ ብቑንኣት  
ኣናጠላም ኢንዝን መሪከ፡፡ » (ለግርፍባቶ ወደሂ ምስ ኣምግላፋ) (p.87)

5. Lexical Borrowings from Italian, Arabic, English and Amharic in Written Tigrinya.

This section will provide only a sample view of the range and extent of the lexical borrowings in Tigrinya from Italian, Arabic, English and Amharic as found in Tigrinya literature. Some loans are only transient, some others send deeper roots and, in time, become indistinguishable to the native ear from indigenous forms. Still others are purely technical terms for which the language could not provide equivalents and which, in any case, have gained currency throughout the world.

Lexical borrowings are influenced by social, political and economic factors. Thus the period of the Italian colonization of Eritrea and the five-year occupation of Ethiopia (Tigray included) would predictably generate more lexical borrowings from this source than at any other time before or after. The British Military Administration would change the direction of borrowing away from Italian and towards English. As a source of borrowing, English, however, outlasts the Administration period as it remains Ethiopia's second official language to this day. The incorporation of Eritrea into the Ethiopian state, where Amharic is the official language would similarly cause an influx of words into Tigrinya from this source, although, in this instance, the process antedates the modern political situation.

The social factor of the presence of Moslem communities, however small, among Tigrinya-speakers would make



Arabic loans natural and likely. To this effect, Leslau writes,

"Out of an estimated number of 365,000 Tigrinya speakers in Hamasien, Serae, and Akkele Guzay, there are 16,900 Moslems. True, the Moslems speak mostly Tigrinya, but there are also many Arabic speakers. It is, therefore, not surprising to find a certain amount of Arabic loanwords in the Tigrinya vocabulary." 11

The figures above for the Tigrinya speakers and the Moslem communities within them are, of course, now grossly off the mark. The point, however, is that this social factor has and will continue to play a significant role in the borrowing of Arabic words into Tigrinya.

The commercial penetration of towns and villages by Arab traders or Arabic-speaking Moslem traders in the past has been a relevant economic factor in causing an influx of Arabic loanwords in Tigrinya. This peaceful and non-coercive commercial inroad provided a conducive situation for borrowings from Arabic which, as a result of the unobtrusive manner of their initial appearance, probably had and still have a greater chance for a longer and more permanent life-span than, say, Italian loans.

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11. Wolf Leslau, "Arabic Loanwords in Tigrinya", Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 76 (1956), p. 204.

Except for Leslau's "Arabic Loanwords in Tigrinya" (See below) other lexicographical studies concentrating on loans have not been carried

out. However, both Bassano's Vocabolario Tigray-Italiano<sup>12</sup> and Abba Yohannēs Gäbrä 'Īgzi 'abher's ግዛገገ-ጥጥር<sup>13</sup> (Dictionary, Tigrinya-Amharic)

indicate the sources of some loanwords in passing, as the object of either is evidently not such a study.

Abba Yohannēs furnishes Ge'ez, Amharic, Arabic, and Greek sources, but his work has the shortcoming of lumping together loans from other European languages under the generic term "ፊጊ" for "ፊጊዳ" (European foreigner).

Italian, Arabic, English and Amharic loans are listed below in that order.<sup>14</sup> They are mostly picked from the fictional works, although a few are from E W N. The list is not exhaustive but merely intended as a sample.

#### Italian loans.

1. ግዛገገ (flag): in ግዛገገ ሰላሳ (p. 47). Recorded by A.Y. Gz. (p. 392) as ግዛገገ (ፊጊ). Also by F.D.B. (p.1080) /<sup>It.</sup> 'bandiera'.

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12. Francesco da Bassano Vocabolario Tigray-Italiano e Repertorio Italiano-Tigray, Roma, 1918, hereafter F.D.B..

13. Abba Yohannēs Gäbrä 'Īgzi 'abher ግዛገገ-ጥጥር ግዛገገ-ጥጥር Asmara, 1956/57. (or 1955/57) (In Tna 1948/49), hereafter A.Y.Gz..

14. The following abbreviations are used: It. -Italian; Ar. - Arabic; Tna - Tigrinya.

2. ስልዳዳ (Soldier): in ወጋኢት ሰላሳ (p. 60).  
 Rendered ወተላታ within brackets  
 following word in the book. Also  
 in ጠጠሙ ሄንደሪክ ሳንዲ (p.91).  
 It. 'soldato'.
3. ፋሺስት (fascist): in "ከብ ቀበሌ ነፃ ዘርኝዎ ወልደን ነን  
 በሽ ዘላምናንን ያሁሉ ነተከቸን  
 መልቀሽ ::" ናፃ ኤርትራ ስሙናዊ ገዛጣ  
 No. 167. Recorded by A.Y. Gz. (p. 824)  
 as ፋሺስት . It. 'fascisti'.
4. ብሽጣኤት (bicycle): in ጥፋ ነፃ ያቀፋ! ስንት ያመጣኝ ይ! (p. 83).  
 ብሽጣኤት in ዓጣፋ ድክሌ ሥቆፋ (p. 51) and  
 in ባሕሪያዊ ተፈሪዮቻችን (p.12) It.  
 'bicicletta'.
5. ኦራንጅ (orangeade): in ኦፋሳቢያን (p.11). It.  
 'aranciata'.
6. ባኒ (bread): in ኦፋሳቢያን (p.25) and in ዓጣፋ  
ድክሌ ሥቆፋ (p.48). It. 'pane'.
7. ጥቃ (rubber): in ኦፋሳቢያን (p. 27). It. 'gomma'.
8. ማርሻፔዲ (pavement): in ነጉሱ ጎሳሬ ሄዶ ነፃነት ያገኘበት (p. 17,  
 p.48). It. 'marciapiede'.
9. አልቤርጎ (inn, hotel): in ነጉሱ ጎሳሬ ሄዶ ነፃነት ያገኘበት (p.52).  
 It. 'albergo'.
10. አውቲስቲ (driver): in ነጉሱ ጎሳሬ ሄዶ ነፃነት ያገኘበት (p.52).  
 It. 'autisti', pl. of 'autista'.
11. ሻርት (shirt): in ኦፋሳቢያን (p.82). It.  
 'camicia'.

12. ቢራ (beer): in ከኩ 256 ነቁ 544 ዓክዖ 47C  
(p. 52). It. 'birra'.
13. ጣፊያ ሙታንት (T-shirt and shorts): in ካፋጢጋሃ3 (p. 82). It. 'maglia' and 'mutante'.
14. ሌካዖ (embroidery): in ፍቼር3-ፍጎጎጎ ካብ ጠርዚ ዝጎደደደ3 (p. 45). It. 'ricamo'.
15. ታኒካ (tin can): in ፍቼር3-ፍጎጎጎ ካብ ጠርዚ ዝጎደደደ3 (p. 46). It. 'tanica'. Recorded by F.D.B. (p. 382). N.B. Recorded by Leslau as Arabic loan (p. 211).
16. ግዖ (wool): in ፍቼር3-ፍጎጎጎ ... (p. 47). It. 'panno'.
17. ግሐዝ ካፓቲ  
(Suitcase, Coat): in ፍቼር3-ፍጎጎጎ ... (p. 63). ግሐዝ  
in ዓጠፋ ያሕሌ ሥቕፋ (p. 48) and in  
ጠጠጠ ነገረባባ ዓገረ (p. 34).  
It. 'valigia' and 'cappotto'.  
The latter recorded by A.Y. Gz.  
(p. 627) as 'ካብርታ : (ፊሊ) '.
18. ግፊታ (bar-girl): in ፍቼር3-ፍጎጎጎ ... (p. 76). It. 'barista'.
19. ቢያንቲ (guard): in ፍቼር3-ፍጎጎጎ ... (p. 77). It. 'piantone'.
20. ተኖ (can of tuna fish): in ጠጠጠ ነገረባባ ዓገረ (p. 22). It. 'tonno'.
21. ዚንክ (corrugated iron): in ካፋጢጋሃ3 (p. 16). It. 'zinco'.
22. ካሮጎ (hand-drawn cart): in ካፋጢጋሃ3 (p. 57) and in ጠጠጠ ነገረባባ ዓገረ (p. 79). It. 'carrozza'.

23. ከተረፍ (lottery): in ከፋላባርጥ-3 (p. 53). It. 'lotteria'.
24. ከአፄ (money, coins): in ከፋላ ሕላፊ (pp. 12, 51, 57).  
Recorded by F.D.B. as ከአፄ (p. 168).  
It. 'soldo' (Pl. soldi).
25. ከገንዘብ (gate): in ፍቅር-ፀገሃ (P. 19). It. 'cancello'.
26. ከሽህ ከሽህ  
(Kitchen, to cook) in ፍቅር-ፀገሃ (p. 85). Also  
in ወጠጠ ሄንዳባ ሳንዶ (P. 55).  
Recorded by A.Y. Gz. (p. 603) as  
< ከሽህ : (ፈረ) - ወጠጠ : ስቴ : ከሽህ : ከሽህ : ከሽህ : >  
Also recorded by F.D.B. (p. 598) as  
< ከሽህ >. It. 'cucinare'.
27. ቢያት (plate): in ወጠጠ ሄንዳባ ሳንዶ (p. 106).  
It. 'piatto', (plural: piatti).
28. ቨሎ (veil): in ወጠጠ ሄንዳባ ሳንዶ (P. 112).  
Also in ከፍገግ ፍገግ (p. 21). It. 'velo'.
29. ቨሎ (canteen,  
water bottle): in ከፍገግ ፍገግ ተገባሪ ገባሪ ወጠጠ  
(p. 57) and in ከፍገግ ፍገግ  
(p. 57). It. 'boraccia'.
30. ክልተ (culture): in «ምክረት» ናፍ ክርክር ከሙናዊ ሕዝብ  
No. 178. It. 'cultura'.

Arabic loans.

1. ስንዳፍ ሳካላ (flag): in ወገኑት ሳካላ (p.47). Recorded by Leslau (p.213). Ar. Saṅṣaq 'alāma .
2. ሳዋዝ (Mr., Sir, foreigner): in ወገኑት ሳካላ (pp. 25, 26, 32, 60, etc.). Recorded by A.Y. Gz. as 'ሳዋዝ (OL) - ሳዋዝ: ጌታ' (p.627). Ar. ḥawāja .
3. ዛብግያ (police) in ሐላ ዛጋታ (p.9). Recorded as 'ዛብግያ: [OL?] - ወታደር: ዛብግያ' by A.Y. Gz (p. 627). Also by Leslau (p. 213). Also recorded By F.D.B. (p. 734) as 'ዛብግያ' Ar. ḍabāṭa.
4. ፋኑስ (lamp): in ሐላ ዛጋታ (P.19). Recorded by Leslau (p. 212). Ar. fānūs.
5. ሳዋዝ (time): in ሳዋዝ ጊዜ. ሳዋዝ ሳዋዝ ሳዋዝ ሳዋዝ (p.2). Recorded by Leslau (p. 212) Ar. 'iwān.
6. ሳግላ (work): in ሳዋዝ ጊዜ. ... (p.18). Recorded by A.Y. Gz. (p.180) as 'ግዛታዊ: (OL) — በሰዓዊ መስራት' Also by Leslau (p.212). Ar. šuḡila.
7. ሮሻን (terraces): in "የግዛታ ሳዋዝ" ሳዋዝ ጊዜ. ሳዋዝ ሳዋዝ No, 180. Recorded by Leslau (p.212). Also recorded as 'ሮሻን' and 'ሮሻን' in A.Y.Gz. (p.277 & P. 282 respectively) but no foreign source is indicated. Also recorded by F.D.B. (p.146) as 'ሮሻን' and 'ሮሻን' Ar. rauṣān.

8. መንደሪ (handkerchief): in ጽሁፍ ቅዱስ ኣዲ (p.5) and in ኣፋጠሊነት (p.20). Also መንደሪ (plural) in መጠኑ ኣንዳብሩ ዓንዱ (p. 118). Recorded by Leslau (p. 211). Ar. mandīl.
9. መርሐገ (welcome): in ዕጵሉ ድኅ ተማህሩ ንሓሳብ ማዕዘን (p.36). Ar. marḥāba.
10. መሳከን (store): In ኣፋጠሊነት (p. 72). "መሳከን" in ኣጠቓቕል ህጻናት (Introduction ህጻናት). Ar. mahzan.
11. መቐጽጽ (not authenticated): in ኣጠቓቕል ህጻናት (p. 51). Ar. maḡṣūš.
12. ሚስኪን (poor): in ኣጠቓቕል ህጻናት (p. 69). Ar. miskīn.
13. ከንፎቶ (box): in ኣፋጠሊነት (p. 11). Also in ፍቕር-ፍህረት ... (p. 53). Ar. sanduq.
14. ኣንቡክ (ጸሐፊ) (boat): in ኣፋጠሊነት (p. 104). Note that the explanatory word in bracket is itself an Arabic loan, but a more common one. Ar. sanbuk for 'ኣንቡክ'. 'ጸሐፊ' recorded by F.D.B. (p.803). Also by Leslau (p. 211). Ar. ḡalba for 'ጸሐፊ'.
15. ማከፊዝ (safely kept) in ወጥኡ ኣገራዊ ስነ ምጽኢታት ዩኒቨርሲቲ (p. 76). Ar. mahfuza.
16. ከፍታ (alms): in ፍቕር-ፍህረት ... (p. 18). Also in ኣጠቓቕል ህጻናት (p.2). Ar. sadaqa.

17. ዘንቢ (palm-leaf basket): in ከፋላባላ (p.15). Also in ከፋላባላ (p. 5). Ar. zambil.
18. ከፊር (first): in ከፋላባላ (p.14). Ar. awwal.
19. ጥቅን (note-book) in ከፋላባላ (p. 14). Ar. karras.
20. ጽንጣ (suitcase): in ከፋላባላ (p. 36). also ከፋላባላ (p. 57). Ar. santa.
21. ባንድ ጽንጣ ክርብ :  
(packet, cigarettes, matches): in ጽንጣ ጽንጣ ክርብ (p. 24).  
'ክርብ' Recorded by Leslau (P. 211).  
Ar. ባንድ bako ; ጽንጣ sijara  
ክርብ kibrit.
22. ክርሲ (stool): in ከፋላባላ ... (p. 45).  
Ar. kursi.
23. ተምሪ (date): in ፍጥረት-ጽንጣ .... (p. 79).  
Ar. tammr.
24. ፍቅር (religious figure, fakir): in ጠጠር ክንፍላ ላባ (p. 95).  
Ar. faqir.
25. ህክምና (treatment): in ጠጠር ክንፍላ ላባ (p. 95).  
Ar. laj.
26. ሽሕጻን (plates): in ጠጠር ክንፍላ ላባ (p. 106).  
Recorded by F.D.B. (p. 219).  
Also by Leslau (p. 211). Ar. şahn.
27. ጽንጣ (partnership): in ጠጠር ክንፍላ ላባ (p. 114).  
Recorded by A.Y. Gz (p. 333).  
Ar. şaraka.



28. ነቢኝ (wine): in ነገረወጥሥ (p. 19, 21).  
Ar. nabit.

29. ቱፋኝ (apple): in ፍጥር-ፍጥረት .. (p. 46).  
Ar. tufah.

### English loans.

1. ትራጂካ (tragedy): in ሐሳ 43ተ (Introduction Np.).
2. ሆስፒታል (hospital): in ዋና ከተማ .. (p. 80).
3. ባር (bar) in ዋና ከተማ ... (p. 79). Also  
in ጦርነት (p. 36, 37, 42, 48, 49,  
etc.).
4. ሳይክሎጂ (psychology): in ዋና ከተማ ... (p. 83).
5. ክሊንግ (alcohol): in ክፍል 17 (p. 17).
6. ሙሳፊካ (mechanic): in ፍጥር-ፍጥረት (p. 78).
7. ኪቶ (litre): in ክፍል 17 (p. 54).
8. ፓርቲ (party): in ክፍል 17 ... (p. 47). also  
in ፍጥር-ፍጥረት ... (pp. 17, 18).
9. ኤሌክትሪክ (electric): in ክፍል 17 ... (p. 57).
10. ቴያትር ኪነማ  
(theatre, cinema): in ጥንታዊ ጥንታዊ (p. 6).
11. ማግኒት (magnet): in ባለሙያ ፍጥረት (p. 12). Also  
in ጥንታዊ ጥንታዊ (p. 69).

12. አስከፊት (ወሰተኛ) in ከፋጣሪነቱን (p. 21).  
(hostess):
13. አንካር (anchor): in ከፋጣሪነቱን (p. 105).
14. ጥጃማ (pyjama): in ፍቅር-ዕድሜ (p. 28).
15. ትፕ ሎካርድ  
(tape recorder): in ፍቅር-ዕድሜ (p. 18).
16. ፕሮግራም (programme): in ዓጣፊ ድህረ ምጽዋ (p. 8).
17. ነርቭስ (nerves): in ዓጣፊ ድህረ ምጽዋ (p. 92).
18. ቴሌግራም (telegram): in ጠጠረ ህንጻባፋ ሳንቲ (p. 26).
19. ጅት (Jet plane): in ጠጠረ ህንጻባፋ ሳንቲ (p. 31).
20. ባናና (banana): in ጠጠረ ህንጻባፋ ሳንቲ (p. 115).
21. ዲሞክራቲካዊ (democratic) in ከፋጣሪነቱን (p. 1).
22. ሚሊዮን (million): in ከፋጣሪነቱን (p. 4).

#### Amharic loans.

1. ቀዳሜ ቤት (seating): in ጣፋ 43ተ (p. 26), Tna. 'ከፍ አካ' or 'ከፍ ቤት'.
2. ከምዓት (week): in ጥጣርና ዓመቱ አፋ (p. 40).  
Amh. 'ከምዓት' Tna. 'ከሙዓት'
3. ጥብቅ (invitation): in ጥጣርና ዓመቱ አፋ (p. 43). Tna  
'ጥቅሙ'. Amh. 'ጥብቅ'.

4. አብረ (clothes): in በድህረ ገጽ 10464... (p. 3). Amh.  
<አብረ> Tna. <አብረ>.
5. ሆቶን (Our Lord...): in አባጣሪነት (p. 53). Tna.  
<ሆቶን>.
6. <sup>ሆሳዕን</sup> (something or other): in አባጣሪነት (p. 55) Tna.  
<ሆሳዕን ሆሳዕን> OR <ሆሳዕን>.
7. በቂ (sufficient): in በአጭር ገጽ 44... (p. 46).  
Tna. <አጭር>.
8. ነጻቲ (nun): in ግዛቱ ይህን ይህን (pp. 4, 5, 6, 7,  
etc.). Tna. <ነጻቲ>.
9. ነጻቲ (I agreeing): in ግዛቱ ይህን ይህን (p. 46), Tna.  
<ነጻቲ ነጻቲ>.
10. ነጻቲ (I recall) in ግዛቱ ይህን ይህን (p. 103).  
Tna. <ነጻቲ ነጻቲ> OR <ነጻቲ>.
11. ነጻቲ! (So!): in ግዛቱ ይህን ይህን (p. 93). Tna  
<ነጻቲ!> OR <ነጻቲ!>.

# CHAPTER THREE

## LITERARY AND OTHER THEMES IN THE ERITREAN WEEKLY NEWS.

### 1. Periodical Literature in Tigrinya.

Periodical literature in Tigrinya appeared for the first time in the second decade of the 20th century. This took the form of two monthly magazines, both produced by foreign religious missions. The first entitled ጠልሐንቲ ሰላም (Message of Peace) which started publication in 1904 and continued until 1915 was put out by the Swedish Evangelical Mission. The second entitled ናባ ህዝቢ ኢየሱስ ኢየሱስ ኢየሱስ (The True Friend of the Ethiopian People) was published by the Catholic Mission of the Cappucin Order and started publication in 1916. As both were initiated and maintained by religious missions, it is to be expected that the bulk of the material would be religious in nature. However, it would be worthwhile to examine these publications to see if there is any secular material at all.

Three years after the Italians occupied all of Ethiopia, the Italian administration started publication of a Tigrinya periodical called ተሐዘነት ኢየሱስ (Ethiopia Renewed) in 1939. It would again be worthwhile to investigate if literary material, unrelated to crass propaganda, figured at all in this periodical.

The first truly secular and non-partisan periodical to appear in Tigrinya was the weekly newspaper ናባ ኢየሱስ ሰላም

(Eritrean Weekly News). Published under the auspices of the British Information Services from 1942 to 1952 and under the Eritrean government during the last four months of 1952, this weekly newspaper acted as a great impetus for the development of Tigrinya literature. This chapter is devoted to examining that singular contribution.

Other periodical publications followed in the wake of Eritrean Weekly News. Under the auspices of the Ethiopia-Eritrea Unionist Party, Eritrean residents living in Addis Ababa founded in 1945 a weekly newspaper called ፍጋዒ ንፍጋፍ፡ ፍጋ ሃፃፃ፡ ማግኒት፡ ፍጋ ቅፕ፡ ፓክፕ ሓፕ፡ ማግኒት፡ (The Voice of Eritrea: Forum for Advocating the Cause of Independence and for Expressing Correct Political Opinions). Its Amharic counterpart የንፍጋፍ ፍጋዒ ፡ የሃፃፃ ማግኒት፡ የቅፕ ፓክፕ ሓፕ፡ ማግኒት፡ (Voice of Eritrea: Forum for Bringing Independence and for Expressing Correct Political Opinions) had started publication a year earlier. Both the Tigrinya and the Amharic weeklies were partisan newspapers which favoured the union of Eritrea with Ethiopia. The Tigrinya paper stopped publication with the coming of federation, while its Amharic counterpart continued for some time.

The same unionist political grouping published two weeklies, both at irregular intervals. The first entitled ኢየሱስ (Ethiopia) was published in Asmara in Tigrinya and Arabic in 1947, while the second weekly entitled ኃይለሥላሴ (Unity) was published, again in Tigrinya and Arabic, from 1950 to 1962.

Other political groupings also ran weekly newspapers. Between 1950 and 1952 Wäldä 'Ab Wäldä Maryam

edited the Tigrinya weekly ሓዲስ ኤርትራ - አንድ ስልክ ስለላት ኤርትራ (One Eritrea: Voice of the Eritrean Independence Alignment).. As is clear from the title, it was the organ of the political group fighting for independence. With the federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia, the weekly የሓዲስ ኤርትራ (Voice of Eritrea) took its place. Published at irregular intervals in Tigrinya and Arabic, it continued publication until 1954 when it was suddenly suppressed.

Between 1950 and 1952, the weekly ኢንዱስትሪያል ዲቪዮፕመንት (Union and Development), was published irregularly with articles in Tigrinya, Arabic and Italian. ሓዲስ ኤርትራ (New Eritrea), organ of Eritrean ex-colonial soldiers, was publishing articles, again in the same three languages in the earlier years of 1947-50.

It follows from the above list that Tigrinya periodical literature, with the exception of the Eritrean Weekly News, developed as a mouthpiece for specific religious or political groups. The Eritrean Weekly News was succeeded by the twice-weekly (Tuesdays and Fridays) ዘመን (Times) which, some 84 issues later, became a daily on November 10, 1953. Zāmān is not only smaller in the size of its four pages, but it is also only half-Tigrinya, the other half being in Arabic. With that, a decline in the quality of Tigrinya periodical literature becomes immediately noticeable, for the latter is inferior to its progenitor in terms of incorporating vigorous and free discussion of ideas and politics. Let us now briefly look at the background of the Eritrean Weekly News.

## 2. Background of Eritrean Weekly News.<sup>1</sup>

E W N was owned by the British Ministry of Information. It was part of the war effort as Britain, Ethiopia, Eritrea, all three parties, wanted to get rid of the Italians. Such war effort would naturally bar from print contributions favourable to Mussolini or to Fascism in general. Other than that type of proviso, there were no restrictions. E W N was founded in August, 1941 with E. Ullendorff as editor and Ato Wäldä 'Ab Wäldä Maryam as assistant editor. On E. Ullendorff's departure in 1946, Ato Wäldä 'Ab Wäldä Maryam became editor.<sup>2</sup>

Of its early beginnings, E. Ullendorff, the paper's first editor, writes:

"Eritreans took a passionate interest in this new venture which inculcated in them a sense of pride in their indigenous language and culture. .... It was the policy of the paper to encourage original contributions and to publish them with a minimum of editorial interference, generally without changes in style, grammar, or spelling." <sup>3</sup>

A contemporary and favourable evaluation of the paper's purpose, extent of circulation, as well as of its impact on the development of the Tigrinya language is contained in the issue of December 20, 1945. In an

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1. Hereafter E W N .

2. This information on the background of E W N was provided verbally by E. Ullendorff.

3. "Four Tagrañña Poems" J E S, Vol. 5, NO. 2, 1967, P. 123.

article entitled “ናቀ ማሕተም ማበብን ጥቅምን” (The art and use of printing), Giovanni Prota remarks:

« ናቀ ኤርትራ ስሙናዊ ጽሕፈት፡ በዘፋ ካልገኘው ሰብአዊ  
ጥንቃቄ ዜግበር፡ እኔ ልካለሁኑ ልማ ንስጠውን ንምክፈትና  
ክገቡ ስከ ገላጥኑ፡... እኔ ፍቅሩን ማገፈግላዊ ሓሳብን ክብ ልገኩ  
ክገቡ እናግባብን እናተናፈቅን ተሳታፊ ክኮ፡... »

ብናቀ ክትሓታፍ ማክ. ማዕከላዊን በፎካልና በፎካል ዜግቶ ዘከ  
ቀድሞን (ብሓንጥኡ ፤ ጽሕ ካሉኩ) ... ንሰባዊ ክብ ንገልጽ ሃገር  
ዚክተሙ፡ ብኩዳኑ ሃፋናዊ እውን ዚቐድሱ ብዘቱ ሓሳብ ቀድሞ  
ክብ በኣ ክሳካፈኩ ንምክፈትና እዚኦም ክብ፡

እዚ ጽሕፈት ዚክተሉክ ቀንቁ ነገር፡ ስጥንቃቄ ትክብ  
ክብ ስከ ዘካ፡ ክብ ማሕተም ናብ ማሕተም እናተመሳሰለን ስር  
እናተመሳሰለን ተሳታፊ ክኮ፡... እዚ ጽሕፈት ዚክተሉ ክብ ናቀ ክገኝ  
ስሙናዊ ሃላፊ ክብ ናቀ ክከከተ፡ ንሰባዊ ልማ ክብ ናቀ ልክ፡ ጽሕፈት  
ናቀ ማሕተም ዘተሳሰለ ናቀ ብከሓት ስጥኑ ተከትን ሃላፊን ክብ፡... »

"E W N is prepared with much care without partiality, and its purpose is the education and modernization of the people. Thus its impact and spiritual force on the people is increasing and ever expectantly awaited. In the format of its publication as well as in its increasing circulation (about 7,000 copies per issue), I dare to firmly testify that it is on a par with those published in other countries and considered superior.

The Tigrinya language in which this paper is published is being nurtured and is developing from day to day and sending deep its roots. .... And it is not only my hope and cherished expectation, but that of many others as well, that it will progress from its present weekly



basis to be published first on alternate days and then on a daily basis."

After the end of the British Administration period in mid-September, 1952, the name 'E W N' was retained for the remaining four months of the year. (The collection at the British Library shows this to be the case). Thereafter, it continued to be published under the title ዘመን (Times). The total number of issues under the auspices of the British Information Services is 520 plus a further 15 with the same title but under the auspices of the Eritrean Government of Ato Tädla Bayru. Relative to all the available writing in Tigrinya, E W N occupies a significant position both in terms of the volume of production and in terms of its literary content thus qualifying it as a rich source for scholarly investigation.

The newspaper guaranteed a wide latitude of 'freedom of expression.' This sets it alone and apart in the history of publishing (be it of newspapers, books, or other material) in Eritrea and Ethiopia.<sup>4</sup> This unique quality would make its examination worthwhile even on the entirely non-literary plane of the 'politics of freedom of expression' in the region.

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4. A somewhat similar 'freedom of expression' prevailed in Ethiopia between February, 1974 and September 13, 1974. Other than being a brief period, it was more a consequence and a side effect of a very fluid political situation rather than a matter of a deliberate and well thought-out government policy.

### 3. Format of E W N

The E W N always comprised four pages. Each page has four columns and may contain photographs and/or sketches. The top of pages 2, 3, and 4 has the issue number as well as the day, date and year. The front page of every issue contains the title 'ናፋ ኤርትራ ከሰባዊ ገጠማ' printed in very bold letters, "The Eritrean Weekly News" in smaller print, the day, date, year and price of issue in both Tigrinya and English, the price per issue being 5 cents E.A.<sup>5</sup> It included the place of issue (Asmara) in English as well as the following statement, again in English:

"'The Eritrean Weekly News' is published every Thursday by the British Information Services, Eritrea, and printed at the Government Press. Communications should be sent to the publishers."

On the top right-hand corner of the front page, it contained the following statement in Tigrinya:

« ናፋ ኤርትራ ከሰባዊ ገጠማ፡፡ ምክንያታዊነቱ (interchange,  
ንኣገላግሎት issue No.167) ቀረጸ፡፡ ናፋ ሓፂ ሓገዝ  
ምክንያቱ ከሰባዊ ገጠማ ግና ሓገዝ ኣብ ኣገራዊ ዘገኘ ኤፑሞ  
ምክንያታዊነቱን ሓገዝ ኣብ ኣገራዊ ዘገኘ ኤፑሞ  
ድሞ ናፋ ኣብ ኣገራዊ ዘገኘ ኤፑሞ ኣገራዊ ኣገራዊ  
ዘገኘ ኣገራዊ (interchange ከሰባዊ ገጠማ, issue  
No.167) ኤፑሞ፡፡ »

"Eritrean Weekly News is published for your sake. However, for it to be of true aid to you, your assistance is needed. So it is its cherished expectation

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5. E.A. refers to the currency used all over East Africa by the British Government then.

(our entreaty) that you will help us by sending your advice, opinions and if need be your criticism."

After Eritrea's federation with Ethiopia, the newspaper was published for four more months under the same title, and in place of the above, the top right-hand corner of the front page simply carried the statement: "ብሓርቲ መንግሥት - ኤርትራ ዚኣተገበ ስሙናዊ ገጽጣ" >>

(A weekly newspaper published under the auspices of the Eritrean Government). It is perhaps significant that the influence of Amharic is already detectable in the short phrase above v.g. 'መንግሥት-ኤርትራ' in place of 'መንግሥቲ ኤርትራ'. The Tigrinya equivalent for the Amharic 'መንግሥት' is 'መንግሥቲ'. As it stands, the phrase 'መንግሥት-ኤርትራ' is neither Amharic which, if it were, would have been 'የኤርትራ መንግሥት' nor Tigrinya proper as that would then have read 'መንግሥቲ ኤርትራ'.

On occasion, the bottom right-hand column of the front page sometimes carried the following statement regarding the publishing authority and the address to which articles must be sent.

<< 'የዋ ኤርትራ ስሙናዊ ገጽጣ' ብሓርቲ ዘናዊ ሚኒስትር  
ተርፍ ኤርትራ ኣብ ቤት ማእተፎ መንግሥቲ ኣብ ኣስ  
መሪ ቀኢተፎ:: ነቲ ኢኣተመልከፎ ፋይልዲያ ሉሉ  
ናብ ዘናዊ ሚኒስትርና ናብ መንግሥቲ ዩ.  
ኮሚሽኒ ሽ። (34) ኣስመራ ስዊድን: >>  
(No. 161 and No. 167).

"E W N" is published in the Government Press, Asmara under the auspices of the Eritrea Ministry of Information. Send

all that you want printed to  
the Ministry of Information,  
34 G. Lorenzini Avenue, Asmara."

At other times, a very unusual and important news  
item like the following occupies this bottom right-hand  
corner of the front page.

«

ምልክታ  
ንቑሎ ጠቅላይ ነመታዳሪ

ናቀ ኤርቶ ጠቅላይ ነመታዳሪ ብሪታኒክ ጸሐፊ በኖፋ ብሮጅኔል ታዲራ  
ጊዜ ናቀ ነመታዳሪነቱ መዘጋጀት ንብሪታኒክ ሊ.ጼ. ድረ ነቀኪፊኒም ያም  
ዚህቡ ብስኬር ከከጣን ምድር ዓገር ፡፡ ነዘም መዚ ነመታዳሪነቱ  
ንቑሎ ጠቅላይ ነመታዳሪ ከከጣን ነዘም ነዘም ገደብ ታዲራ ጊዜ ነቀ  
ውጣኝ ሌቲ ድክራት ነቀ ነዘም ናቀ < ሊጌክ ነቀ > ወንጌል ታዲራ  
ዝላሉ ነዘም ፡፡ (No. 217

"

Notice

Departure of Governor-General

There is talk among Administration  
sources that Brigadier-General  
Benoy, Governor-General of Eritrea,  
will soon hand over his post to  
Brigadier R.G. Drew. The succeed-  
ing official has, up till very  
recently, been deputy head of  
'Civil Affairs' in the War Office  
in London."

Before proceeding now to describe the typical con-  
tent of each of the four pages, it is well to remark here  
that there is one feature of the E W N which often makes  
an aspect of it difficult reading. This is its frequent  
resort to the use of Ethiopian numerals instead of the  
standard and universal Arabic numerals. For the modern  
Tigrinya reader, without any background in Ethiopic, it  
creates an awkward situation where he may find himself  
spending some time deciphering the unfamiliar numerical

system.

The front page of E W N would most often contain world news in brief under the headings “ክስተዋደኽ ወሊ ሓኪም” (Selections of World News) or “ክስተዋደኽ ናፋ ሓኪም ዜና ስምንቲ” (Selections of the Week's World News). This would usually take no more than one column. The other three columns would contain official pronouncements or news about important developments in Eritrea or in other countries. The speeches of the Governor-General (e.g. No. 217; October 24, 1945), the proclamations of the British Administration (e.g. No. 344; April 7, 1949), official statements and announcements (e.g. No. 195; May 23, 1945), would invariably be on the front page, although their continuations may appear on the following pages. An important political development elsewhere in the world, say the independence of India (No. 195; May 23, 1945), messages of goodwill from the newspaper to the Eritrean people (e.g. No. 161; September 27, 1945), the work of the U.N. Commission on Eritrea (e.g. No. 393; March 16, 1950), important and relevant press conferences, say that of the Ethiopian Foreign Minister (No. 463; July 19, 1951), etc. would also take precedence on the front page. After the transfer of the administration to the Eritrean Government of Ato Tädla Bayru, the work of the Eritrean parliament (e.g. No. 13, December 18, 1952) consistently occupies the first page, and earlier sometimes more ephemereal items like a job advertisement (No. 167; November 8, 1945), or the showing of a film like “ኢትዮጵያ ተሳፋሪ ናት” (This is Ethiopia) (No. 245; May 15, 1947).

Sensational news like the throwing of hand grenades in the city of Asmara (e.g. No. 253; July 18, 1947) predictably also occupies the same page. It may now be summarized, therefore, that the front page, in the main, contains world news in brief, important developments in Eritrea and elsewhere, government statements and official speeches, important press conferences, etc..

It is more difficult to characterize the contents of pages 2 and 3. For our purposes, it is more useful to consider the two pages together, as their contents are similar and can interchangeably appear on either page. Unlike most newspapers the world over, it is difficult to talk of an editorial article in the E W N. Although there are occasional articles by the editor or by the head of the British Information Services on the second or third page, they fall more within the realm of individual contributions (or messages of goodwill in the latter instance) rather than of editorials. The lack of editorial articles thus distinguishes E W N, not necessarily favourably, from the average newspaper.

The easiest way of describing the contents of pages 2 and 3 may be simply to state that they are all contributions other than those normally contained on the front and back pages. The typical contents of page 4 are much simpler to characterize. They are chiefly sports news and reports, and all types of notices, announcements, general invitations, etc.. They sometimes include elegiac dirges for the deceased. On occasion, letters to the editor are

also to be found on this fourth page.<sup>6</sup>

The primary concern of this chapter is to look into the contents of pages 2 and 3 and their continuations, if any, on page 4. The articles to be found on these pages are vast in range and scope. It is best simply to state here that they have literary as well as non-literary themes and that even those articles with strictly non-literary themes will be examined.

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6. The above generalization is valid in the main, but important political and other articles are found on this page occasionally.

#### 4. Literary and Other Themes in the E W N

The type of themes that should primarily concern us here would be short prose or verse narratives, and short prose or verse dramas or any combination of these. As it turns out, there is none of the former, while there is much of the latter in the form of skits and sketches. Poetry and belles-letters which are neither part of narratives nor dramas are evidently subject-matter fit for investigation as well.

Other than the above, the E W N is full of themes which are not literary but exhibit an impressive use of language all the same. Political disquisitions and partisan contributions are sometimes characterized by such lucidity of language in the exposition of a view or the refutation of an argument that this kind of material would have been worth discussing under the heading 'political literature' although this has not been done in this chapter. When the smooth flow of the prose, the beauty of the syntax and the richness of the imagery employed is particularly impressive, 'moralistic-didactic' writing has been included.

Borderline cases exist between the strictly 'literary' and the headings indicated above. This type of situation obtains when a literary genre, say a poem, is used to convey a purely political message. This is quite widespread in the E W N and renders all the more reasonable the inclusion in this chapter of literature with political or other non-literary themes. In such overlapping instances, there is much discretionary scope for their inclusion under



the one or the other heading.

Ephemeral material like news items or commentaries on topical events, for example, the decolonization of India, have been excluded as has been technical instructional material, say on hygiene, forest conservation, poultry-keeping, etc. Notices and advertisements, regulations and proclamations, sports news, etc. have also been left out. Thus, although non-literary themes have been included, they are only those which, in my judgement, have indirectly but closely influenced the development of Tigrinya literature. For novelists treating historical and political themes, education and self-improvement, etc. wrote their works (with the exception of Sängal Wärqənah and Abba Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu) well after the founding of E W N. As the sole body of Tigrinya secular literature in the 1940's, E W N is bound to have greatly influenced not only their language, but even the manner in which they treated their themes. For an explicitly admitted relationship (even to the extent of including passages taken verbatim from E W N), see the discussion of ገጽ ፩፡፩፡፩፡፩ in Chapter 4 (p.101-102) below.

## 5. Moralistic-Didactic Writing.

Moralistic-didactic writing is wide and varied in its content which ranges from positive exhortations or admonitions to acquire education to the bolder censure of the excess number of saints' days that are declared non-working days in the Christian countryside on pain of anathematization.

A contribution by Täs fay Bahta, a teacher, in the issue of March 16, 1950 (No. 393) has a telling proverb for a title "ዘቀተላላሊ ካሳፍኦን ዘቀተወፍሊ ካሳፍኦን" (He who is not learned can not save and a stone which is not carved and polished can not grind). A similar theme is the subject of a contribution by Aser Gäbrä Mädhān, most probably a woman contributor as Aser sounds like a corruption of Aster. Its title is again a proverb: "ከወሳተ ሳሙኑ ከሳሙኑ ስላላ ሳሙኑ ፆጽንቅኑ" (For want of studying for seven years, they remain ignorant for seventy).

The issue of No. 357 has two contributions from two priests on a single theme v.g. censure of the excessive number of saints' days.<sup>7</sup> The first has the title "ከር ድህነት በላሉ ከር ስላግጥ ከላሉ" (The root (cause) of poverty-saint's day; the root (cause) of illness - cold (tuberculosis)).

- 
7. These carry weight and significance if they are criticism from within the ranks of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as they most likely are, although the title <ቀሺ> (Priest) applies to protestant priests as well while <ካባ> (Monk) applies also to Catholic priests.



The core of the argument, however, is the following:

« ሼ መጻፍት ሥቴክ ዳውጥቲ መጻክካ  
 ንመጽሐፍ ኦፊት ሳሥረቲ ቃካ  
 ኢየሱስ ካብመደን ነገራይ ነገራይካ  
 ብመንገድ ዮሐንስ መስኪኑካ  
 ነፃ ነብ ሕጌ ፈጣሪን ሕግ ኩብ ዓሰራካ »

"Work on six days;  
 vow not to work on the seventh  
 The Book of Torah of Ten Commandments  
 Jesus did not come to  
 annual or to subtract from.  
 In the Gospel,  
 John has testified on her (the Torah's) behalf  
 Is it then that Man's Law  
 is more solid than the Creator's Law?"

In the same issue Qāši Kaḥsay Gābrä presents the same Biblical argument to support the case for working on traditional saints' days. He quotes the divine commandment in Ge'ez « ተግበር ተግባርክ ስድስት ነሐተ » (Do your work on six days). He further cites the divine injunction to Adam « ስሜ ብካህ » (Work and live! - an approximate rendering of "Live by the sweat of your brow"). St. Paul's admonition « ዘቀጥሩ ካብካህ » (He who does not work; let him not eat) is also referred to. More interesting than the allusion to biblical pronouncements, however, is the mention of a previous article in E W N entitled « ህዝብን ቀበዝኡ ምግብ ብን ቀውዝኡ ካኦ » (Population is increasing while the food supply is relatively decreasing). He utilizes this reference to the end of providing a supportive argument that is secularly, albeit economically, valid. In this fashion,

he transcends purely theological bounds and arguments.

The exhortatory type of article is perhaps best illustrated by Täs fay Bahta's article "ዘቀተገህሊ ኣባዮኡን ዘቀተወ ቅሊ ኣባዮኡን" referred to above. The contributor is a teacher and explicitly addresses himself to parents. The chief tenet of his article is that parents dampen the enthusiasm of their children to go to school. We learn that he informally conducted an investigation amongst parents to discover:

« ንገሌኡም ወክሊ ኣናቀተኝኩ ነገም ዝረከብኩዎ...  
 ንባቶም ናብ ቤት-ትምህርቲ ንምስገዳ ጽክሪ ዘብ  
 ኮም ምስገንጊያ... ኣቲ... ትምህርቲ ናብ ዕብሩሃን  
 ንህሃንን ዚመርኡ ከኣ ዘፋሃኒ ኢቶ ለገኡ ኣቶም  
 ባዜ ጊዜ ዚመሃሩ ዘኣገሩ ቆካቡ: ብዛህባ ስጋዊ  
 ጥበባን ፍጥነትን ኣምበር: ብዛህባ ኣቲ መንገዲ  
 ካዊ ጥበባን ብዘኣ ጽሑፍ ነም ዘኮገረ ስኣ  
 ዝረከቦ ኢቶ:: >>

"As I have found out from some parents whom I questioned, the reason for their reluctance to send their children to school is that the education they receive does not lead them on to become deacons and priests. That is because they have seen that children who go to school nowadays learn about the material arts and sciences and that they are backward in the spiritual sciences (arts)."

To the above parental rationalization, his counter-argument is sound and effective.

« ግናላ ሙሉን ብዛቱ ስጋ፡ ስጋ ነኝ  
 ብዛቱ ሙሉን ቆቁሙ ካረገብን ኢዩ...  
 ካብ ዓካደ፡ ሃይደ፡ ሰባ፡ ሳባ ዓባላት  
 ሙሉኸኸቲ ንምፍዳ፡ ካተፈጥሩ፡ ገሊጽ፡  
 ብሙሉሳ፡ ገሊጽ ነኝ ብስጋዬ ሙሉኸ ፍካ  
 ቀላብዩን ቀስሙዩን... ስከ ኣዚ ኣውን ነዚ ነን  
 በባኑ ዝኣኑ ፍጥረቲ ጽሕፍቶ ንምፍካ፡ ንቁ  
 ካብ ናብቲ ብዛብ ነንበባኑ ዝኣኑ ዓባላት ንምህ  
 ርቲ ዚመሃሩ ንምህሮቲ ምስዳዲ፡ ግፍን ሆ  
 ፍኪ ኣሊ፡ ግብኣ ኢዩ፡ »

"However, it is not found that  
 the spirit exists without the  
 flesh, as the flesh does not  
 exist without the spirit. All  
 people have not been created  
 to fulfil the same type of  
 mission in the world. While  
 some achieve greatness and fame  
 through the spiritual path,  
 others achieve it through the  
 worldly path. Therefore, in  
 order to know this varying na-  
 tural writ, it is necessary, al-  
 beit proper, to send children  
 to school where they may learn  
 a varying type of education."

Parental reluctance to send their children to school  
 does not affect only boys whom they would prefer to pur-  
 sue priestly vocations, but girls as well whom they would  
 either marry off at a very early age or keep around to  
 help in domestic chores.

« ከወልደ ኤርትራውያን ነውን ፣ ከምን ናብ ሌት  
 ትምህርቲ ኪሰሩ ቀርኻይ ኣኩዋ። ... ግናኹ ፣ ከምቲ  
 ንዕቅ-ተባሕቶ ... ትምህርቱም ንምቅራይ ዚግድዱ  
 ምዃን ፣ ከምኡ ነኪ ፣ ንዕቅ-ኣንስቶ ትምህርቲ ኣፋጠ  
 ፍቓወን ኤቶ፡ ኣናበኩ ንወልደም ካብ ልወንታ ትምህርቲ  
 ኣናመንጠኩ ብቅጠጡኹ ዘመርህውውን ሓዲው ነኪ፡  
 ንሓዲር ሌቱም ዚጽዝውን ልወኪ ኣኩው። ዕቅ-ኣንስቶ  
 ... ኣብቲ ንሓዲር ዘድኪ ነገራት ፣ ልወኪ ኣብ ልወ-  
 ኤቱ ፣ ኣብ ካተሓባብያ ቅኣው ፣ ኣብ ኣመሓዳሪ ሌት  
 ብዘኸ ትምህርቲ ካሊኣን ግድን ዘድኪ ኤቶ። ኣተላባ  
 ህሊት ሂል ኣንስተቲ ፣ ድቡቕ ሓዲር ንምግባር ልወኪ  
 ኣኪኩዋ ካብ ስብኣይ ኣገተ ተፈቶሎት ኣኪ፣ ከምቲን  
 በጽካ ምንግርና ካልኣን ንህሊት ዘድኪ ግድን ኣንስቶ ነብ  
 ቀላኒት ፣ ኣብሊትን ጽውዒትን ሓዲር ብስፊትን ብካልኣኡ  
 ግብብን ኣባኣብር ኣገኣኣል። ከምኡ ነውን ኣተላባህሊት ሂል  
 ኣንስተቲ ፣ ንዕቅ ናቂ ድቡቕ ጠባባን ስነ-ስርዓትን ኣርኻይ  
 ነቁና፡ ብናኣዳ ዚግባኡ ልወኪ ኣተላባጽን ኣባላጽን  
 ከም ኣገኣኣል፡ ንበላህ-ሌት ነውን ካብ ካህ ዘላበባ ሓገዝን  
 ዕገፍን ኣባኣብር ከም ኣገኣኣል ግርግር ባህብን።

ኣምበኣርኩን ልወኪ ... ንኣወላዲን ኣወልደን ናብ  
 ሌት ትምህርቲ ኣናስዱኩም ዕኪ፡ ንዚመድኡ ጊዜ ኣድል  
 ልወኪ ። ከምዚ ብምግባርኩም ፣ ዕቅ ኣንስቶ ካብ ድቡቕ  
 ተሓዲንካ ምዃንግርን ካብ ትኩረት ሂሮት ካብ ምኣዳ  
 ንኤድኡን ኤዳን ፣ ዕቅ ተባሕቶ ነኪ ፣ ነቲ ኣብ ድቡቕ  
 ዋም ዘካ ነገር ኣካከቱምን ድቡቕ ፍቓድምን  
 ኣናወፊዱ ካላን ደቡብን ኣብ ደቡብኡምን ኣገኣኣል።»

"Nowdays, Eritrean girls are also seen to be going to school. However, like they force their sons to interrupt schooling, parents also snatch their daughters in the middle of their schooling and marry them off early or keep them around to help in the household on the pretext that education is not useful to girls. It is necessary that girls acquire much education for what they need for their family life, namely education in handicrafts, in child upbringing, in the management of a household. Even if her luck prevented an educated girl to make good of a marriage and is divorced, she can live with her honour and dignity intact by being a seamstress or engaging in some other craft unlike those other women who would not know of any other way of earning a livelihood except that of engaging in prostitution. Moreover, as an educated girl can be an example of good conduct and manners to her children and bring them up and guide them in a praiseworthy way, there is no doubt that she can also be of the utmost help and support to her husband.

Now then, parents! do rather prepare your sons and daughters for the future by sending them to school. By doing thus, girls will be saved from engaging in prostitution by dressing prettily or from serving as maids under strangers, and boys will build and beautify their country which awaits them eagerly by putting their skills and goodwill at its service."

An article which deals with the decadence that city life can bring to girls is Wäldä Sällase Bahta's



“ ካሳፋናን ገብረት ካተገኘን ” (Our sisters and city life)

(No. 389, February 16, 1950). Three columns long, it eulogizes the city as a depository of art and science and as a gathering place for eminent authorities and experts. However, he argues that as much/<sup>as</sup>the city attracts the cream of society, it also attracts the scum.

And in the middle of it all get caught the innocent young men and women who are lured to the city by its promise of style and splendour, with girls suffering more from the strains and pressures.

“ ነዚ ዘመናዊ ዝሰነ ገብረት ነዚ ንምርኅቶ፡  
 ትሓር ነክ ካብቲ ንቡ ንካልኦት ዘውፍዮ  
 ጣዕምን ምጽኑን ተሳቲፊቲ ንምካን ብተሓሳኑ  
 ኤርፋፍውያን ዩኡ-ካንብኦቶ ካብብ ቀሽተንን  
 ካብብ ዓዳንን ወጺኦን፡ ገሒኦን ብክፍሎምና፡፡  
 ኢኦን ነክ፡ ማከኑ ነተን ክፍሎምና ንምርኅብ  
 ጣምባር ዘብከን ካዋልቲ ፈቐቶ መንገዱ መን  
 ገዱ ዓንዛዘር ነክብካ፡ ብዘኡ ነገራትን ክመልከን  
 ንኣተመሃራ፡ ካብ መጻከኦን ንዝጠፍኦ ክገጥሞ  
 መሒኦን ኣብዚ ቀረብቲ ካሎዎ፡፡ ”

"In order to see this modern life and further to partake of the sweetness and comfort it provides to others, many Eritrean girls leave their homes and villages. Some become maids, and those not lucky enough to work as maids become vagrants in the streets learning much evil and many bad habits, and live here like lost sheep."

There follows a partial inventory of what the contributor thinks are some of the evil and bad habits.

« ነቲ ጠጦራዊን ዚኑባር ዘኮ፡ ናቶ ነተጦላ ነገሩኡ  
 ንብሊት ንምርካብ፡ መጠን ዘቀብኩ መከተ ክዘውጅ፡ ናብ  
 ጠገክ ዘቀብኩ ቋላኢን ሳይከላኢን ኣናገሪ፡ ካብ ገድ ኣዘ  
 መሃዳን ፊተውተንን ነሐሳይላ ዓሳብ ክኮወ፡... ነ  
 ምኡ ኣውን፡ ኣቲ ንቃላ ሕዝቢ ጭዋን ሕፅርን ዚገ  
 ብሮ፡ ልዕኪ ብረኖሻ ዚበጽሖ ነባሪን ተሰፊን፡ ኣብ  
 መንጎ ኣዳብዕ፡ መሃኡ ኣብ መንጎ መሃኡ ክቆላገን  
 መመልከቲቶን ዚገብሩ ቃጂር፡ ይገብሩ ርኢኻ ኣገ፡  
 ቲን፡ ጉንጭኻን ነፍፍርኻን ቀቆሖ ከኣኻ ምኻር  
 ኣብኣን፡ ነምዚ ዝበከ ኣገብን ንብሊት፡ ሓፍሳት  
 ዘቀብኩ ንብሊት፡ መሃኡ ንብሊት ኣንከሳት ተባሂ  
 ኩ ቀድሞ፡ ኣቲ ጭዋን ሕፅርን ኢነሳይ ዚኸ  
 ኣሉ ሕዝቢ፡ ኣቲ ኣብ ነተጦላ ሠራዊ ኣቲ ዘዘበ  
 ከዪ ኖብብን ብገላትን ካብ ካልኦት ተክፎተ፡  
 ምስቲ ናቶ ገሃኢ ርኢኦ ኣገብን ንብሊት ነምዚ  
 ከሰጥሞስ ንምግባር ዚገብሩ፡ ክብሊት ግርሞን  
 ኣዋኪሩ ሃገሩ ዚሕኩ ሕዝቢ ንጉፍ ኢዩ፡ »

"In order to forget the bad life of the city which enchains them, they frequent excessive drinking and go to undignified merry-making and dancing and flee from the faces of their relations and friends..... Further, to put on dresses above the knees, to hold cigarettes in between your middle finger and index finger, to arragne your hair in long afro, to paint your cheeks and lips red is not what makes a people well-mannered and impressive. Such a life style is one without a sense of responsibility and is called animalistic life. That people which can be considered well-mannered and impressive is only

that which goes to the city, to borrow from others the superior arts and methods and struggles to harmonize them with its own life style and thus manages to maintain the honour and dignity of its women."



ብዙ -ብዙ መውረፋትን ፈተውቲ ስካሉን  
 ነገረዘብኩ : ነገረደም ሞቶቶም ሕተረገቡ  
 ነገረዘብኩ : ነገረደም ጦርቱ ስቀረን  
 ነገረደም ነገረ ጦርቱ ስኔ ዝነበሮም ብዙ-  
 ነገረደም ነገረደም ነገረደም ነገረደም

"As you all know, it is widely  
 rumoured and told as news that  
 hyenas were found dead last  
 week on their different days  
 in the Orthodox Christian and  
 Moslem cemeteries in the city  
 of Asmara. As some of the  
 rumour goes, those hyenas found  
 dead are not real hyenas but  
 men who became hyenas in order  
 to dig out corpses from the  
 grave and eat them. As some  
 of the rumour-mongers further  
 say, one or two of the hyenas  
 found dead there had golden  
 earrings on their ears and gold-  
 en teeth in their mouths (on  
 their gums)!"

The contributor of the article went to the Orthodox  
 Christian cemetery to check for himself and saw two dead  
 hyenas there. On asking some people there if there were  
 any more dead hyenas which he might not have seen, he  
 received the following answer:

« ኢህዲ ድካ ክኣሊኦም ብገምቡን ናብ ሆስፒ  
 ታሪ ወኪዮምዎም ኣምበር : ወርቁ ስኔ ዝነ  
 በሮ ካሊኦ ኣውን ነበረ ነበረ : ካነ ነካ  
 ናብ ሆስፒታሪ ካብቲ ምኣንቲ ነርኣቶስ :  
 ካብኣኣኦም ናብ ገምቡን ካሊኦም ካሊኦ  
 ወ. ብርግኡ ዝኣኣሊኦም ኣሳብኦም ኣሳ  
 ንባገና ብተኣኣሊኦም ኣሳ : ንገባም ካሊ  
 ኣኣሊኦም ኣምበር ... ኣንባሊ ... ኣን  
 ባሊ ኣሳብኦም ካሊ : »

"'But now they took them away to the hospital in a truck; however, there was another with a golden tooth' they said. And on my part, I asked them again, 'Is there anyone amongst you who has really seen it being put in a truck so that I may go to the hospital and see for myself?' 'They told us so... We don't know.... we don't know' so saying they went away."

The article concludes with an attack on such senseless rumour-mongering and with an even stronger one on such beliefs.

« ከሁሉም አንብብኩት ፤ የዘጋጠነው ፡ ስለሆነ-  
 ቤክው ጥራት የዘላለማዊነት ፡ ነገሩ ነው-ንን  
 ርገ-ድን የደርግ ምዕራባ ድቡቅ አቶሃሳን ፡ ግብ  
 ዚ ዘግባሉ ግን ፡ ንሱ ፡ ነቲ ሰነድ እያ ሥራህ  
 'አተራግረ ፡ ክብ ልሳክ ፍጥረት ድማ ሕተኛው  
 'ባብ ሃክሩ ዝሓበረን ዝሰከዱን ፍጡር ፡ ዝ  
 ብኡ ሓሰውን ኡዩ ፡ በርባዕተ ማሳውራ  
 ቀለቀድ ፡ ጭፍ ያው ድኡ ፡ ሌላ ፡ በድኒ ወ  
 ቀባ በፋኪ ፍሒሩ ቀበላህ ኡዩ 'አናበሉካ  
 ምሕማዱን ምጥርጣሩን ኡዩ ፡ »

"Honourable readers! it is not good to talk of that which you have not seen and have only heard of from removed sources as though it were actual and real. What is even worse is to pass on rumours and to suspect that man, created in the image of God, appointed master over creation, and above and superior to all other creatures, becomes a hyena, walks on all four limbs, grows a tail and digs out human and animal corpse

or fatally injured cattle and eats them."

We may now proceed to look at the play on the same theme. The author is Abba Domäniko, most probably a Catholic priest.

In this play entitled «ዝብኣን ወግረዳን» (The hyena and the fox) impersonations of the two animals conduct a long dialogue. In the opening part, the hyena tells the fox that he is going to town to visit his cousins. The fox is astonished and asks:

«ወግረዳ :: ኣቶይ ኣብቲ «ካቶሊክቲ ኣንገላጽቲ» ዝብልዎ ተባቢኻዎ ዝርከቡ ኣንቲብኩ ይኣለ ::

ዝብኡ :: ንኪ ናባቲ ኣቶይ ኣብኡ ፤ ኣረ ኣቶይ ቀኑረ ቀኑረ ነይሮ ስባይ ዚውሃኩ ከባቲ ከባቲ ስባ ኣዛብኣ ዝሓኩ :: »

"Fox: Do you mean those found imprisoned in what they call 'the zoo'?

Hyena: Of course not them! Rather it is those who in the daytime stay human like their fellow human beings and become hyenas in the nighttime."

To the disbelief of the fox, the hyena remains adamant that it is true. His answer is a 'no', though, when the fox presses on him whether he had witnessed any such metamorphosis. However, he continues to assert that it is true as everybody is agreed on its authenticity. So the fox suggests and persuades that the hyena himself turn into a man. He finally agrees and they discuss the procedure.

« ወላርያ :: ነመቱ ጌሮም ዲቆም ነዛብኝ ዝላኩ።

ዝብኡ :: ሓንቲ ልጃንገር ጌሮም ጠፍ ባብኪያ ነሞ ድጎር ንዕኪቲ  
ነዛብኝ ነውን ተብኩ።

ወላርያ :: ኣኒ ልጃንገርን ሓፍ ዝረከብኻ ክኃድ ዲቆ።

ዝብኡ :: ኣንቁሒ ተሓውን። . . .

ወላርያ :: ኣነ ካብቲቶ ሠክስተ'ርባሒ ዝሓውን ልጃንገር ከምቲኝ  
ኣሞ ብኡኡ ጌራ ክቋርጣኝ።

ዝብኡ :: ክቋርጣኝ? ኣሞ'ለኪ ንንግፍ ኣብኪ ጽዑ ዝገብረኪ ክፈርኡ። »

"Fox: How do they become hyenas?

Hyena: They use a branch to cover themselves and they  
then become hyenas within the same day.

Fox: Can it be the branch of any tree you find?

Hyena: I don't know; it may be so.

Fox: Let me get three four branches from there and  
cover you with them.

Hyena: 'Cover you?' Let's just see you touch me and then  
you will see what I will do to you."

The first installment of the play (May 3, 1951)  
ends at this point. We pick the continuation on up in  
Issue No. 453 (May 10, 1951). The hyena, in the end,  
agrees to metamorphose. The fox covers him with two  
branches, but in vain. In the end, the hyena changes  
the substance and line of discussion.

« ዝብኡ :: ቅድሚ ጉኡ ስብ ነዛብኝ ተሓኑ ኢባ ዝበልኡ'ምበር ነዛብኝ  
ስብ ተሓኑ ካብብኡን። ኣኩቶ ነኝ ክውርቶ ዝስዓህኡም ኢቶ'ምበር  
ብዓባሃዊ ዝረከብኻ ካብኡን። ዝሓነ ሓፍቲ ንሳቶምስ በቲ ኢቶ  
ክኣከቶም። ካልኣ ቁፋሪ ብመገድኡ ነቶም ተበኪዑ።

ወላርያ :: ክኣ ካብኣኡ ስብ ሓርቲ ኣንቁሒ ዘቀስኒገሮ ኣንቋቶ ብኢሒ ክሓ  
ነኒ ኢቶ። »



Hyena: What making it all up! Just wait and listen to the whole story. When they went to the man he indicted and asked him, the man admitted saying 'Yes, it is me!.'

Fox: Did he admit to it as soon as they asked him?

Hyena: No! He had initially tried to deny the allegation.

Fox: How did they then bring him to admit it?

Hyena: When they beat and beat him with a stick, he said, 'yes! yes!'.  
'yes! yes!'".

The fox then asks the hyena if he would there and then admit to having eaten a goat if he were beaten. The hyena said he would admit as he would not stand the double injury of hunger and beating. Thus the fox demonstrated the invalidity of admission of guilt under duress and brought the whole belief into ridicule.

7. POETRY.(a) Elegiac Poetry.

E.W.N. contains many elegiac poems. The custom of reciting such poems in praise of the deceased in semi-musical melody is a well-established one among Tigrinya-speakers as it is also among Amharic-speakers. In many communities, there are even professional mourners who, armed with a bare outline of <sup>the</sup> deceased's past, compose elegiac poetry apparently improvising on the spot. Such poetry is not recited at all funerals, the status of the deceased in the community often being the determining factor. As a sampling of elegiac poetry let us refer to two poems.

The first is “ከብ ቀብሪ ነፃ ዘርኝፉ ዓረስ ወልድ ኣሩባን ዘኣገዓነገዱ ቅሁሪ ኣከተቶስ ልወልቀስ ” (Mourning poem recited at the burial of Ato Zär'ay, son of the lion of the tribe of Judah) in Issue No. 168 (Nov. 8, 1945). Zär'ay is a historic and heroic personality<sup>8</sup> whose death would not only predictably elicit the recital of a lengthy elegiac poem at a symbolic burial in his country, but later on also inspired more than one work of drama in Amharic as well. The poetry is also a commentary on the mood and history of the times. A typical elegiac poem often centres around the deeds of the deceased at the same time that it establishes a selective link with the more illustrious ancestors and mentions

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8. See footnote in Chapter Four, p. 154-155.

the birthplace and environs of the deceased. Thus the death is viewed not merely as a cessation of an individual life but also as a link with the past and an inspiration for the future. Let us take a few lines from the funeral dirge on Zär'ay.

« ነገሩ ዝወደገ ነገረባብ ቀረፍር !  
 ለቀ ገመገማታቸው ለቀ ገንገራቸው ዘቀረፍር !  
 ንቡቱ ዘቀፈረህ ንኣዘገብዎ ዘቀፈረ፡  
 ሳቡ ብዝ ደረፊ ብሰብኣ ነፍፍረ፡  
 ነብ'ቲ ለሞክረው ርሞፍ ብገብረው'ኛፍረ፡  
 ነብ ለሞክረው የሞክረው ሰባኤቱ የፈረፈረ፡፡  
 ለወጪ ተስፋፋሪው ሳርገሞፍ ገርገረ፡  
 ሃላኩ ነፍሱን ሃላኩን ገዛቱን ቀረፈረ፡፡ »

"How much this young man dares!  
 He is not shy before their officials  
 or before their king!  
 He does not fear il Duce;  
 he dares their people  
 When they insult his country with many lips.

He dances with a sword  
 in the centre(middle) of Rome  
 He dances in circles as he smites men.  
 The son of Täsfindiras,  
 untameable elephant,  
 While others are cowed down,  
 he triumphs."

The second poem is prefaced by an article « ላቢቶ ሓዘን » (Great sorrow) (Issue No. 168). In praise of Däjazmač Kassa Səbhat, an Agame feudal chieftain, it is

composed by a social peer, Däjazmač Abrəha Tässäma, the son of a prominent feudal chief in Akäla Guzay, Eritrea. In this poem, the reference is not so much to a particular battle or a particular deed associated with the deceased as to the general sense of loss and grief that would be felt in many parts of the country on the passing away of such a prominent leader of the community. Let us consider a few lines.

« ካብ ዓዲጣፍኑ ካብ ፩ ነው-ነሐሴ'ዩ ሞቲካ ተስምዐ ብዜና  
ካብ ምኡኡ ዓገመዩ ሞቲካ ተስምዐ ብዜና :  
ካብ ፋባፍታ፡ ተምፀን፡ ገረፋፍታ፡ ሓፍፀን፡ ሞቲካ ተስምዐ ብዜና  
ካብ ክንደርታ፡ ሸጎ፡ ድምባካ፡ ካፍፍላዩ ሞቲካ ተስምዐ ብዜና፡ ....  
ቤተ ስብካ ክናበኩ ኩፀረ ድባሕዳኣን ቀፀደና ....  
ድጋዩ ሓጽናርካ ክናበኩ መንዛዩን ኤፋ ዚመደልና፡  
መንንንንን ክናበኩ ኪሸልመና ኤፋ ኪሸመና፡ ....  
ካብ ሃረር ተረፍካ ካንካ መና፡፡ »

"Has your death been heard as news  
in 'Adi Grat, in Kältä Awla'alo  
Has your death been heard as news  
in the entire 'Agamä?'  
Has your death been heard as news  
in Tagray, Tāmben, Gärä'alta and Haramat  
Has your death been heard as news  
in 'Andarta, Šäre, Šāmbila and Adiyabo?  
While your family was saying  
'He will come to us today or tomorrow'  
While your brave retinue (servants) were saying  
'When is he coming for our sake'  
While your officials were saying  
'He is going to give us gifts, and appointments'  
You stayed behind in Harar,  
becoming nothing"

The enumeration of places where his death will be

felt is meant to convey the breadth and extent of the area where his social standing and presence used to be recognised. The reference to his retinue, officials and kinsmen also establishes that he was a man who could dispense gifts and appointments to whomsoever he pleased, that he was, in short, a man of great power and consequence. This poem is additionally interesting in that it contains an occasional feature in Tigrinya elegiac poetry - the poetic licence of including a few semi-formulaic Amharic lines. See for example the last three lines below.

« ወፋዜዝር ሳፓመ ብላከት ብላገዳ ሕዘና፡  
 ወፋዜዝር ፪ ነውካህኦ ብላከት ብላገዳ ሕዘና፡  
 ወፋዜዝር ሳፓመ ብላከት ብላገዳ ሕዘና፡...  
 ነገረህህ ሞተ ሃሳብ ሳፓመ ሕዘና፡...  
 ነገረህህ ሞተ ሃሳብ ነገረህህ ሕዘና፡  
 ምሳክነትን ሕዘና ገደደደ ሕዘና፡  
 ሃሳብ ወገንህን ነገረህህ - ነገረህህ ሕዘና፡፡  
 ሕዘና ሕዘና ሕዘና ሕዘና ሕዘና፡  
 ሃሳብ ነገረህህ ሕዘና ሕዘና፡፡ »

"Ladies of 'Agamä!  
 weep and grieve excessively  
 Ladies of Kältä Awla'älo!  
 weep and grieve excessively  
 Ladies of Haramat!  
 weep and grieve excessively  
 As Kasse, the (rain-bearing)  
 cloud of Hamlä has died  
 As the sun has set (disappeared)  
 and the beacon light has dimmed.  
 It would be better for you now  
 to go to the nunnery  
 As your brother Kassa is  
 not retrievable henceforth.

May God give you the strength  
(to bear the grief), Dājazmač S bagadis!  
The great man, Kassa,  
has been separated from you."

b. Panegyric Poetry.

Two samples of Tigrinya panegyric poetry may be cited here. Both are in praise of the British Administration of the period. In the first one, "ንዝ ገበረኤገ : ሓዲሱ ገበረኤ ሓዲሱ ንገረኤ" (For one who has rendered you great aid, either reciprocate in deed (in kind), or proclaim his good turn by word of mouth) (No. 165), the poet writes in praise of King George VI as he also draws attention to the extent of the British Empire and the influence of British power at the time—1945.

« ሓዲቶ ገብረኤገ 'አንተዬካ ተጓዢኑ: ...  
ሓዲቶ 'አንተዬገበረኤ ያካኔኑ:  
ነቁ ዘቲምከስ ናብ 'አንተዬካ: ...  
ካፍሪቃ ኑሃብር ብካኑ:  
'ካስፊ'ውን ኑሃብር ብካኑ:  
ኤውሮፓካ ኑሃብር ብካኑ:  
ጥልቂ ዝሓካቡ: ነቂሖ ሕክማኑ:  
ከካምን ኑምህርቱን ሊብብና ብካኑ »

"If Emperor George rises  
Before his enemy eats dust  
He does not return home.  
Africa lives by him  
Asia lives by him  
Even Europe lives by him;  
Deep his thought,  
long his objective,  
We have found peace  
and education through him."

In obvious reference to the role of British troops in the liberation of Ethiopia and Eritrea from Italian occupation, the poet writes:

« ሐዘቁ ጊዮርጊስ ዋልቷና ጸግሷና፡  
 ነጻዓቁ ነጻመዝግኝ ዘግግብኛለሁ፡  
 ቁጽፍ ቁጽ ነፍሲኩ ምክንያትና፡  
 ነብ ርሐኼ መጸኢኩ ናብ ሃገርና፡  
 ገገንዙብና ድቡ ብሐዋልና፡  
 ሐረሃኝ ምስ ሃገር ዝረገግብና፡፡ »

"Emperor George, our shield, our refuge,  
 Is it not proper for us  
 to praise you much!  
 He shed his children's blood for our sake  
 He came from afar to our country;  
 Was it on account of our money  
 or our strength  
 That we have found liberty and country."

The second poem has the simple and telling title «ምስጋና» (praise) (No 168). This is prefaced by a short article relating the expropriation of 300 hectares of good farm land by the Italians in 1934 in order to build an air base to help launch/<sup>their</sup> invasion of Ethiopia. This expropriation lasted up till 1941. The Americans took over the land in 1942 and fenced it with wire. In 1944, the Americans left and the British Governor of Eritrea returned the land to the farming community of the area.

« መንግሥቲ ነጻግጤዝ ብኣገሊኝ ዝወዳኣኝ፡...  
 ሓሊሲታቶ ሓኪፊኩ ብሰነዳ፡  
ወቀኩኩ ወቀኩኩ ወቀኩኩ ሃገቱ ብግዛቱ፡፡ »



"Oh! English government,  
 You who came forth via Keren  
 Because of you,  
 good times have come for the farmer  
 Woe to him! Woe to him! Woe to him!  
 to the non-diligent in your time."

The poet suggests in strong terms that the money circulating among the community during the presence of the Italians and Americans brought no meaningful benefits.

« ሌገን ጣልያን ነገረዋ ዘቀከረና፡  
 ገሌገላ ኣመራን ነገረዋ ዘቀብልና፡  
 ኣሞ ድማ ፩ ቅውም ነገር ነገገለና፡  
 ጥፋሕና ምስተፈና ጥፋሕ ኢድና፡  
 ሙዲናና ሣፍናን ገገዛና፡  
 ናበያ መጠፋና ናብ ኣኖና፡፡ »

"We picked lots of Italian francs  
 We gathered lots of American shillings  
 And yet we did not do  
 any significant thing with them  
 Empty we were left,  
 empty-handed;  
 After the passage of days and nights  
 to our houses we return  
 To our land,  
 to our mother."

He exhorts everyone to work hard so as to gather plenty, and praises farming and condemns wage earning.

« ኣዋልድ ሳዓቶ ተቀጥኻ ኣክል በካ፡  
 ንሕፃ ንሕሊን ንኣብኡን ጉልጉካ፡  
 ነግበልክ ኣሕኪ ዳዕዳ ጣፍ ወከካ፡  
 ነፃኣቱ ሥርናዩ ንገረዋን መጽካ፡  
 ኣንቲ/ክናዩ ዲጊም ሸቶኪ ዋሉኣና ሓካ፡፡ »

"Women of my village(district)  
 rejoice and ululate  
 Let us men farm and you women  
 remove the tufts of grass  
 So that we may eat grain,  
 the honeyed white 'ṭaf'  
 So that we may harvest wheat  
 and gather millet;  
 Why should we work as wage labourers  
 henceforth, when we have our black porous soil.

(c) Exhortatory Poetry.

Edward Ullendorff gives a sample of exhortatory poetry taken from E W N in the Journal of Ethiopian Studies (Vol. 5, No. 2). The following two poems from later issues merely add to the variety. The first one is a condemnation of negative character traits and tendencies as it is also a generalized call for building a solid foundation for the society's future. The title of the poem is « ምስክርና ተግዝኦን » (Advice and Admonition) (No. 183).

« ምስክር ነገረሁኝ ነገረሁኝ :  
 ከሰላም ሳክም ከጥገናም ሄድሁኝ  
 ከፍቅራም ሄድሁኝ : ...  
 ዘቀንሰውን ጣዳ ሐሰት ለመረጠጥ :  
 ጥፋኝ ነገረሁኝ ንሐሰቶች ...

« ጥፋኝነት ከጥበቃዎቻችን ዘጥኖ  
 መውሰድ፡  
 ዘጥኖቻችን ጥፋኝነት ሳይሆን፡  
 ዘጥኖቻችን ጥፋኝነት ሳይሆን፡  
 ከሰላም መንገዱ ራሱ መዘንጋታት፡...  
 መንገዱን ከጥፋኝነት ዘጥኖቻችን ማድረግ፡ »

"Let me give you advice  
 so that you may be wise;  
 In this world, do not be  
 in a race for position.  
 Why do we not become instead  
 thinkers and investigators (inquirers)  
 That destruction shall descend upon  
 backbiters,  
 That destruction shall descend upon  
 those who circulate rumours about things  
 that are not.  
 Why do they not farm instead  
 so as to accumulate wealth.  
 Why do they not engage in trade instead  
 so as to accumulate wealth.  
 They incline men away  
 from the right path.  
 They conspire at night to destroy buildings.

The above admonition is followed by a construc-  
 tive call to work for society's future.

« ንቡብታ ብክንድኑን ንድረግ መንገዱ ቅንብቴ፡  
 ንድቅና ንደንቅዎ ዘብርስ ርስቴ፡  
 ንሕና ንሉኑኦም ክፍክምቲ ፍመርቴ፡  
 ይቅና ያሉኑ መካኒቲ ሌደምቲ፡  
 ክባከፈናንዩ ምሁራን ሓበባቴ፡...  
 ክባከፈናንዩ ናቶ ሓቂ ሓክባቴ፡  
 ንርዕሶም ዘቀላህስ ንሕዝቦም ክፍቀርቴ፡  
 ዘቀንዘምዎም ድክ ዘቀንዘውን ሓንቲ፡፡ »

"Come! Let us clear the right road in unity  
 So that an indestructible legacy  
 may await our children.  
 Let us be the initiators and beginners  
 for their sake.  
 Let our children complete and  
 close the task,  
 Do we not have great men of learning  
 Do we not have men who care for truth  
 Men who do not love themselves  
 but their people.  
 Why do we not then listen to them  
 and become one (united)."

The second poem by Gorfū Abrāha from Adwa, Tagray  
 (No. 227) condemns drinking, dancing and smoking. Let  
 us look at the part that condemns dancing as that sounds  
 strange nowadays.

« 'ዛ ዳንኪ ዚብልዎ ኣንታ ኤደ ንሱ፡  
 ባቂዎ ምንዘርና ክመሃን ኣንሱ  
 ነዛ ስጋ'ፍፊክስ ንነፍሲ መሲካ  
 ክብ ገሃኒዎ ኣሰኑ ኣሕፉያ ተፍብሳ  
 ንስኦ ቀፍኣቦስ ስልቴካ ክብ ክበሳ  
 ነስሓ ጥፋቶ ኤቶ ናቶ ይሓር ወቐሳ... »

"What is she which they call 'dance'  
 Committing adultery standing like animals  
 She destroys the flesh  
 and has commenced to destroy the soul,  
 She sends the soul to hell  
 and has it burn.  
 To please the flesh,  
 you commit yourself to a problem,  
 The latter-day judgement is only repentance.

The poet equates dancing with sin. The novelty of the form of dance and the closeness with which man and woman dance obviously shocked the poet who must have had a strong puritanical streak.

(d) Political Poetry.

In issue No. 224, Kidānā Tāmā also has a 37-line poem entitled "ሃረፍ ሳርኅኅ" (Ardour for liberation). It is a unionist poem as the following quote well attests.

« ነገሩ ሃዘንገወካ ደሞ ሕዝብ ሃዘኑ ከረፍ  
 ምስ ዓፄና ሕንገህ ዓፄሪ  
 ብሕዳወታ ሕንገህ ተዘፄሪ  
 ሕንገሪ ዓመታት ነፋሪኩ ሕንጽበ ሳሪ  
 መካከላን ነፍሴ ምስ ሕጻኝ ተደምቢሪ »

"May I narrate the story of my country  
 Eritrea  
 She has gone blind  
 although she has eyes,  
 She has become invisible  
 although she has life,  
 How many years has it been  
 that she has been awaiting liberation  
 When will she see herself  
 united with her mother.

It continues with an eulogy of liberty.

« ከብ ማህል ከብ ደባ ነፃነት ጥሪያል፡ .....  
 ዛገቱ ተመሳሪ ነፃ ከሞላ ነፃ ነገረ፡  
 ንክህለብንም ያርሳህ ነፃነት ልከና፡  
 ነፃነት ስለሆነ ነፃ ንደህረው ማለብህ፡  
 ነፃነት ስለሆነ ነፃ ያውጥ ስለፍጥ!! »

"Liberty is sweeter than milk,  
 than honey .  
 Learn the history of the present  
 and of the past ,  
 Lead (Guide) your people,  
 those of you who are capable  
 and with knowledge ,  
 Preach liberty -  
 the light of the living ;  
 Preach liberty -  
 the peace of the dead!"

Qäši Yäṭbanäk's 27-line poem in No. 230 has a similar theme. The 42-line poem by Gäbrä Yohannäs Täsfa Maryam in No. 233 utilizes three personifications: the Unionist Party, Rabiṭa, and The People to convey its strongly unionist message. After the first two contending parties air their views, the People are made to give an 'impartial' appraisal which also, conveniently for the poet who was a well-known Unionist, happens to be an unwavering call for the union of Eritrea and Ethiopia.







claim to be sick is one where they also gain dominance over their husbands, which status they will not find on the morrow. On such a day they gain victory over their husbands and fulfil and satiate their love for fun for which they had thirsted like for water."

He describes a very common manifestation during such scenes of "possession" --- the ability of the "possessed" to speak in a language that she, under normal circumstances, is not known to speak.

« ነተን ነገራት ነገሮች ጋራን ሐዘና  
ከብ ዘብካኩ ጠላኬ ጣን፡ ነቷ ያ  
ጣም ቋንቋ ትጣርኛ ነጥፋቴጣን  
ከንግዳን ጋምዘራቱ ቅብጥ ነፍ  
ወስጥኑ ጣጥምን ፍክራን ጋም  
ጣር ነጥፋቴ ጣን፡፡ »

"On the day that the worst women claim that they are seized by a geni, even the deaf one who does not know the Tigrinya language not only speaks it but does not at all find it difficult to add decorum to it and to recite poetry and war songs."

He mentions an instance of a Danakil woman speaking in Tigrinya as well as the common feature of Tigrinya-speaking 'zar' women speaking Amharic.

« ነጥብክር ነገረ ገዢ ጠላክረም ገሃገሃር  
ጥም. ጣጥኑ ጠላኬ ጠላቀክ፡ ነብ  
ጠንቅ ያፋ ቁጥጥረ ጠላካ፡፡... ክብረ

« ወጥጦ ጥቅኝ ነገሪት ካንቢት ባንቢት  
 ብናቶ ንግርኛ ንናተካህ/ያ ንዘካ ሊክሉ  
 ወን ::... ዘር ዝሓዘተን ምሓሃን ነገሪት ::  
 ካሊ ካብ መንገድ... ኣቲ ብንቲ ለግግግ  
 ግግግ ግግግ ሓፍካ ካሊ ካንቢት ምሓሃ ::...  
 ቋንቋ ንግርኛ ካብቶ ባካ ተግሊፍቶ ባካ ኣንተሓተኩም፣  
 ኣቲ ምህን ኣቶ ዘሃርባ ዘኮ ኣምቦር ምህን ኣንባባሃ ኣንባባሃ  
 ብንግርኛ ኣንተተሓተብኩም ካብኩም ምህን ኣንባባሃ ኣንባባሃ  
 ኣብቶ ግራሽ ካብኩም :: ካብተን ንግርኛ ዝቋንቋ ኣንባባሃ ::  
 ምህን ካምባሊቶ ኣቶ ብምባል፡ ብካምባሊ ንዘሃርባ ኣከባ :: >>

"Now then on Maskaram 17, 1943  
 (Eth.C.), ie. Masqal day, I  
 passed the day among the Danakil.  
 Inside the 'g<sup>w</sup>ädäla' I saw two  
 Danakil women dancing and jump-  
 ing in the Tigrinya fashion.  
 They told me they were zar-  
 possessed. In the middle of  
 it all, one started singing  
 'Mammayä Mammayä, Mammay  
 Sadäla'. When I asked where  
 she learnt the Tigrinya language,  
 her husband told me that it is  
 the 'gannen' (geni or devil)  
 that is enabling her to speak  
 and that when not so possessed  
 by him, she would not hear if  
 you spoke to her in Tigrinya.

The affair is not solely  
 this. Also among the Tigrinya-  
 speakers, there are those who  
 claim that their 'gannen' (geni)  
 is Amharan and therefore speak  
 Amharic."

One interesting feature of 'zar' possession is that  
 it occurs on festive occasions. Masqal day mentioned in  
 the above passage is typical, and appears to be the one  
 most favoured by 'zar' cultists. After having explained  
 the reason for the custom and described one of its signifi-  
 cant manifestations - expanded linguistic ability - the

contributor of the article suggests to the husbands of such women one effective method of countering the custom—the use of the stick.

« ሂጽባብ አርገሽ፡ ብሄራህን ስብአቱ ዝላገሰህ  
 ከበቶህ ሃብቱን ሃምሑን ዝመሳከክ ነ  
 በር ነጻጽጽጽ ካልቶ ጠጪወኒክ ሓዲ  
 ሃገር ነቡ። ነብሳዊ ፍጻሜ ጽቡቕ ፍካዊን  
 ሃም በርበሬ ነብሻ ዝመርር ሓካግን ኤፋ ። »

"Now then, if you are truly a man and your wife has this and similar failings, there is one remedy for her. And this is, the will and the stick (whip) which is as bitter as the pepper of abəšo."

(b) The custom of mourning.

In a courteously titled article « ከሌላ ሳዩስ ካሕቀተኛ ፊተተኛ » (Honoured fellow paternal clansmen! Brothers and friends!) Dä Mähari 'A. in Issue No. 161 (September 27, 1945) critically examines the custom of mourning. As he contributed his article right after the loss of his daughter, the message is unusually potent and poignant, not to say earnest in the extreme. He prefaces his article thus:

« ብዛዕቡ ጠፋቀስን ቀብርን ፍጻሜ ነጻህን  
 ነጻህን ጌዜ ነብ ልብ ሕርጽርጽ ቀብከኒ  
 ስክ ዝነበረ ሓዲ ሳንቀጽ ነጽሕፍ ነብሰን  
 ነፋረ ኤፃዎ ኮሞ ነቲ ሓዘን ነብ ነጻዲቶ »

ከብ ዘካታወረ ሳከበቁ ነገልጽ ቀጠለ  
 ካረ ኤቤ ፡፡ ስከልኡ ኣዋን ኣንተዝ  
 ገልጽ ፤ ራሴ ዘፃጸመካን ኣብ ኣ  
 ገዳ ተመላ-ሰንቆርቢት ኣኣተዋኽ  
 ኤድካን > ኣክሰክ ግራኡ ኩብ  
 ጀግናዎታዊ ነቀረ ፡፡ >>

"As I have for long felt strongly  
 disturbed in my heart on the  
 issue of mourning and burial  
 and thought of writing on the  
 topic, it is incumbent on me  
 to express my thoughts now that  
 sorrow has entered my household.  
 If I were to express it on any  
 other occasion, some people  
 might have poked fun at me by  
 saying 'As you would not feel  
 the pain, why don't you put your  
 hands into a basketful of snakes!'"

What the article specifically condemns as unnece-  
 ssary is the custom of "ካልካዊ ቀብሪ" (second burial).  
 This is a custom which enables all kinsmen and friends  
 who, for reasons of distance, inconvenience, or lack of  
 being informed, missed the actual burial to attend a sym-  
 bolic second burial. The custom was devised to avoid  
 continuous and intermittent arrivals of such kinsmen and  
 friends to express condolences and open the old wound,  
 however unwittingly. He recognizes the validity of the  
 custom in former times but argues against its continua-  
 tion in changed times and circumstances. His most im-  
 portant argument is that the day or days spent travelling  
 to and fro to attend a second burial could be critical

for a peasant farmer and affect the quality and quantity of what he expects to harvest.

« በዚ እዋን ዘኸሰኹ ኣዋገን ኣተቶ ሓኩ  
 ኣገታቶ ባሕኪ ? ... ከምን ቀላምን ኣና  
 ባብቴናን ለሽንገራናን ቡዙሕ ተካዋዊጡ ኤቶ  
 ዘኩ :: ... ጌሓቶ ኣብ መስከረም ብቅኒ ዘርኽ  
 ዓቲር ስኩ ዝሓረፈኹ፡ ንመክቀስ ወፋ ንቀብሪ  
 ኤኩ ኣውያኑ ነውድኹ ልብባ ኣባፈቐሊን፡ ቅኒ  
 መስከረም ኣብ ተሳካ፡ መሬት ዝፈፀሞ፡ ሕውሮ ድ  
 ሙድ ኤቶ'ሞ ኣገሓደ ድካታት ኣክብተቶ ዝቐዘመ  
 ዘቴዊታም በምበጣ ተገላጸው ነግሶት ስራ ዘቴዊታም  
 ሳገራቶ ድግሩ ብናተቶ ቀብሪ ኣገተ ተስገጉ ብርቱብ  
 ይገኛም ኤቶ ዘሰኹም፡ ኣኩ ገላቶ ዚጠቓመኒ ድግሩ  
 "ኣኩ ወሓድን ፊታውገሩን ይግለግሉ ሓዘን ቀሳብክክልኩን  
 ኣናበኩ ብሓሳ ሓዚኹ ኣንተመረቐኒ ኤቶምበር  
 ኣኩ ካልኣኪ ጥቓሚ ባብኩን፡ »

"In the times we live in, what  
 is the need for all this?  
 Our manner of life and our ways  
 have changed much now from  
 former times. My heart has not  
 permitted me to call for a  
 mourning or a burial as my  
 daughter has died in Mäskäräm,  
 the season for sowing (planting)  
 peas. The season of Mäskäräm  
 is one for blind intensive  
 ploughing and it would be a  
 great misery for my many poor  
 kinsmen if they are driven out  
 for the third time on account  
 of attending a second burial  
 I call for, after having had  
 their crops eaten by locusts  
 twice already. What would be of use to me would be  
 if kinsmen and friends deeply  
 felt sorrow for me in their  
 hearts and blessed me by saying,

'May you not come across a second sorrow.' All else is of no use."

He suggests an alternative to a second burial—a simple letter of condolence.

« ዘርዝሮ ህይወቱ ዘህይወቱ በላይ ርቀኛ  
 ይገባ ነገሩን ለሁሉ ሃላፊ ነገሩን  
 የሕይወቱ ስሜት ወረቀት ምልክት  
 ነገሩን ንዝህይወቱ ምልክት »

"Let him who can make it come to the burial, but it does not appear correct to me to bear grudge on the one who lives far away and could not make it. It would be better if we got used to express condolences through the written message."

Following the article, a 33-line poem reiterating the same message follows.

(c) Child Marriage.

Issue No. 179 (January 31, 1946) carries an article entitled « ብሃካባ ምርጫ ቁካታ » (About child marriage). The contributor, Qäsi Ar'aya Mika'el, evidently a priest, argues that nature herself has determined the minimum age for reproduction. Consequently, he proposes the minimum age of marriage for boys to be eighteen and for girls to be twelve, although he states his own preference of twenty for boys and fifteen for girls. It is noteworthy that he should think that marriages at ages below his suggested







(d) Traditional vs. modern marriage.

There are very many articles in E W N as well as at least one book የፊልሳፊያ and many passages in the various novels which condemn not only parental arrangement of marriages but also the extravagance of traditional weddings.

«ኢየሱስ ጥላላ—ከብሔራዊ ዘመን ገናገላ ዘመን ዘመን >>

(Engagement and marriage- the custom in our country which continues even up to this day) (No. 436) censures pre-arranged marriage and praises and recommends modern marriage where the bride and bridesgroom make the decision for themselves. The article is by a teacher, Täsfa Maryam Haylä. This is quite predictable as exposure to Western education often turns teachers to proselytizing modernizers.

The setting, described in prose, is a 'mead-house' where two close friends, both quite tipsy, decide to marry the daughter of the one to the son of the other. The marriage, however, is not well-provided for and is doomed to fail.

«ጥላላውን ጥላላውን ገዛ ገንዘብ  
 ጥላላውን ጥላላውን...  
 ጥላላውን ጥላላውን ጥላላውን  
 ከብሔራዊ ዘመን ገናገላ ዘመን >>

"The bride and bridesgroom having no funds to establish themselves on The smallness of available funds causes disharmony between them.

Soon, they request divorce and obtain it. The writer of the article contrasts this with a more novel situation.

« ነቲ ነዘይ ገሌኦም ነዘረ ሂሉም  
 ቀርኢዎም ንሕደቶም ባሕሮም ...  
 ጠባይ ቀምርም ሀብቶም ነዘረኦም ነሐም  
 ብሉ ጠባይ ሓመካን ምስ ሌከጡ ወረቆቶ ቀርኢኦም ነሐ  
 ደባኤ ነሐም::  
 ንከላኦም ፍታዎ ነዘረኦም ነዘረ ክላቶ ነሐም ...  
 ተቀጥጥኦም ቀርኢኦም ቀምርኦም ነሐም ነሐም  
 ንዘከላኦም ቀርኢኦም ተቀጥጥኦም ...  
 ነቲ ነዘረኦም ቀርኢኦም ነሐም ስባኦ ነዘረ  
 ባሕር ቀርኢኦም  
 ነዘረኦም ነሐም ቀርኢኦም ነሐም ስባኦ ነዘረ:: »

"Some of them are favoured by God.  
 They see their fiance themselves.  
 They study her character to determine  
 if she is suitable.  
 Then when they know her character and habits,  
 they write her asking to be engaged to her;  
 And if she likes the proposal  
 she agrees saying 'all right!!'  
 Happily they get engaged and then taking a vow,  
 they get married.  
 Thence forever they live in love.  
 This pleases everyone more than the former type  
 And God is happy  
 that they live in peace."

Another article « በዛህን ሕይወት መርሃን » (About engage-  
 ment and marriage) (No. 440) by Täsfaşəyon Yohannäs mentions  
 earlier contributions on this topic to justify his own.  
 Written in verse, the theme here is censure of extravagant  
 spending on weddings.

« ነዘረኦም መርሃን ነዘረኦም ነሐም  
 ንዘረኦም ነዘረኦም ነዘረኦም ነሐም ...  
 ገሌኦም ቀርኢኦም ስባኦ ነዘረኦም  
 ስባኦ ነዘረኦም ቀርኢኦም ነዘረኦም ነሐም  
 ወርቅ'ውን ነዘረኦም ነሐም ነዘረኦም ነሐም:: »

"What is the method (sense)  
in the manner of our marriage  
Except impoverishment for the rich  
and ruin for the poor  
Let us stop the big disease of  
'festive joy for a night'  
Let the fat cattle alone;  
let the sacks of grain be stored.  
Do not let gold flow  
for the sake of honour for a night."

(e) Drinks and Drinking.

Many Tigrinya novels have for their theme the censure of prostitution and dissolute life. Some articles in E W N dealt with that concern much earlier. In No. 436 an article by Mängəst Ab 'Andämaryam has the title « መስተ ልኩን ጥፍኣት ኢያ ፡፡ ናብ ክብሊ ኣንተ ኣካዋዮን ናብ ርኣሲ ይድፋብ » (Drink is the messenger of ruin: though you send it to the belly, it ascends to the head). The contributor eloquently enumerates the negative effects of drinks and drinking.

« ኣቲ ንስቶትኻ ዝሃበሊ ኩባ ኣፈኛ፡፡ ነቲ ጥፋቶ ድቡቓን ዝሃበሊ  
ሱባ ሕሙምን ጥባኝን ነቲ ጥንቁቓን ኣርቶብን ዝሃበሊ ኩባ  
ዩማ ዝኒባን መንዛርን ዚገብሮ ናብ ጥፍኣት ዚመስል ናገራኡ  
ኣመራ ስግራን ጣና ነቲ ጉዳይ መደኣ ኣምኪኡ ኣናር ኣባ . . .  
ኣብ ብዙሕ ድልኡን ባኣስን ፍልጠታን የብድሕ፡፡ ከኣይም  
ሱባ . . . ካብ ምብሃሕ መስተ ኣተከሕኦ ጥራርኡ ይጸኣቶ  
ካበዱኡ ፍጽባኡ . . . ኣቲ መርዚ መስተ ናብ ስፍራ-ር  
ዒመቲ ቀብሪ፡፡ ኣኣምሮኡ ቀዝብሊኡ ኣቲ ኣምሃርቲ .  
ኢቐበሉ ዚጸኣሉ ዝሃበሊ ሓንጥኡ ፋኖታ፡፡ ሃህሓ፡፡  
ክከተኛን ዝንጉሕን ካቶ ተርፍ፡፡ »

"The evil habit of drinking leads to ruin and makes the quiet talkative, the healthy man sickly and stooping, the cautious and composed man scattered and adulterous, and by making the (dangerous) cliff appear like (harmless) plain, it leads to much hatred, fighting and division. On account of the excess of drinks, the voice of a regular drunk coarsens and his stomach contracts. The poison of the drink passes into his blood vessels; his mind loses balance; his brain which used to be able to receive education dries up. He becomes and remains dull, negligent and forgetful."

9. Book Reviews.

A word of caution about the use of the term 'book review' is necessary. Although the meaning of the term here is not stretched beyond its essentials, there is no such developed literary genre and tradition in Tigrinya. The paucity of the books published in the language sets a natural constraint to that. However, in the few 'book reviews' found in E W N, we see the rudiments of what could have developed and may still yet develop. The focus of this section is thus on some of the few book reviews available of Tigrinya works, literary as well as non-literary.

Issue No. 215 (October 10, 1946) has one such review of a literary work. The reviewer, Asser Gäbrä madhən, gives his review the title “ጊዜ ሃፍርዖ ዘክነኛት ቅዱሳን-ሃገር” (The worthy thing that time can produce), a witty extension of the book's title በቅበተ ጊዜ (The conservation of Time) - evidently suggesting that among the invaluable things that time can produce, a book is one. The author of the work, Abba Ya'aqob Gäbräyāsus had much earlier (No. 169 November 22, 1945) contributed an article on the same theme and with a similar, if somewhat longer title. “ክብሩ ጊዜ፣ ጊዜ ወርቅ ነፃ፣ ጊዜ ሕይወት ነፃ፡፡” (The Value of Time; Time is gold; Time is Life).

The reviewer praises the contents of the work in the following words at the same time that he includes a few exemplary quotes from it:

« ካብቲ ክብሩ ዝረከብ-በዮ ዓብ ወከላ ለገሰ ሆኖ ዘገኘ  
 ምዃራት ገሊሑ ድሞ ሓምሌ ቀብሪ ፤ ርኅሩክ ወሃብ ስብ  
 ጊዜ ተዋሂቡዎ ካብ:: ስከዚ ድሞ ነፍሱ ወሃብ ስብ: ስከዚ ካብ  
 ዋህቦ ጊዜ ጸብዲብ ሕዝብ ካብ ቅድሚ ካምሓኒ ካብብ  
 ካብ... »:: ቀዲሱ ድሞ ሓምሌ ቀብሪ ፤ ርኅሩክ  
 ወሃብ ስብ: ንሓዲ ኤቶ ነሃ ወሃብ ንሓዲ ለዘንተፍ: ልብሲ  
 ዝሓነ ጊዜ ተዋሂቡዎ ካብ:: ሓዲ ካብ ኤቶ ኤቶ ወሃብ  
 ወርቂ ዝሓነ ጊዜ ካብ ሓዲ ርኅሩክ ካብ ሓዲ  
 ብጸቓምን ንሓዲ ዓብሒ ካብ ካብ ለዘንተፍ  
 ሓዲ ካብ ወርቂ ዝሓነ ጊዜ ካብ ሓዲ ርኅሩክ  
 ልብሲ »:: ካምሓኒ ድሞ ካብ ዘመሰገነ: ብሓዲ  
 ጊዜን ብሓዲ ልብሲ ዓብ-ስብ: ብሓዲ ርኅሩክ  
 ዘገኘምን ሓዲ ብሓዲ ንካምሓኒ ንካምሓኒ  
 ሓዲ ዘሰውን ወሃብ ንካምሓኒ ንካምሓኒ ሓዲ  
 ዘሰውን ሓዲ ብሓዲ ካብ ሓዲ ርኅሩክ ካብ  
 ልብሲ ሓዲ ካምሓኒ ካምሓኒ ካምሓኒ:: »

"Of the advice found there which  
 tastes sweeter than honey, some  
 of it says, 'Time has been app-  
 orted to every man. And for  
 this reason, every man is going  
 to appear before the Lord to  
 give account of how he utilized  
 his portion of time....' Then  
 further on, it says, 'For every  
 man, be he a learned or an idle  
 man, has been given equal time.  
 But whereas the learned utilize  
 their golden time for the bene-  
 fit of themselves and their  
 friends, the idle spend their  
 golden time on frivolous under-  
 takings.' Moreover, I felt ha-  
 ppy skimming through similar  
 parts of the book which show  
 that it is through and by time  
 and the age span of men that acts  
 which are useful or useless and  
 that actions which serve and

elevate or ruin and humiliate a people are done."

The review contained in Issue No. 170 (November 29, 1945) is not of a literary work; it is of a text-book of arithmetic. While so doing, it praises the work of the Education Department of the British Administration for encouraging the publication of text-books in Tigrinya and, in passing, contrasts this with the failure of religious missions to produce text-books for subjects like science, geography, arithmetic, etc.

« ቅዱሳን ያህል ወ- ስራዊት ነገረዉ፡ ያህል ያህል ነገር ነገር  
 ስራዊት ወ- ስራዊት ነገረዉ፡ ያህል ያህል ነገር ነገር  
 ስራዊት ያህል ያህል ነገረዉ፡ ያህል ያህል ነገር ነገር  
 ስራዊት ያህል ያህል ነገረዉ፡ ያህል ያህል ነገር ነገር  
 ስራዊት ያህል ያህል ነገረዉ፡ ያህል ያህል ነገር ነገር  
 ስራዊት ያህል ያህል ነገረዉ፡ ያህል ያህል ነገር ነገር  
 ስራዊት ያህል ያህል ነገረዉ፡ ያህል ያህል ነገር ነገር  
 ስራዊት ያህል ያህል ነገረዉ፡ ያህል ያህል ነገር ነገር »

"Although the Evangelical Catholic Church or Missions strove to prepare some books and materials for use in their schools before the advent of British troops, they were, nevertheless, not able to leave books such as readers, or of science, geography, arithmetic and the like which were good enough for schools."

It then goes on to say a few kind words about the author who had apparently prepared other text-books as well:

ሩ ማ-ፋ- ተወልዶመድኅን፡ ናቱ ኣብያተ-ጉምህርቲ ኤንስፕ  
 ሃባር... ናቱ ንባብን ናቱ ጽኑግቴፊያን መሃከቶቲ ድሒፊያ  
 ብዘመድኡ፡ ኣንገሆ ኮሚ ድማ ፩ ገድ ዝሓዘ መድሓፍ ቀጺ  
 ድሪ ካም ዘውድኡ ብሓካቻ ፊት-ጉምህርቲ ቀንገር ካሎ፡፡...  
 ኣቶም ደሓፊ ባሕሪም ኣሳተ መቐድም መሃከቶቶም  
 ካመክሪቶምዎ ኣገም ዘኮጢ ድማ፡ ኣቶም ብሓጽ፡ ን  
 ሕዝቢ ዚጠፉም መሃከቶቲ ኣጽሕፊ ዚድከቡ ከባኝ፡  
 ኣዚ ልዩታት ኣዚ መሃከቲ ገደፎምኪ ዝበዘሙን ዝሓ  
 በዱን መሃከቶቲ ዚድከቡ ቀግብሮም፡፡ ”

"It is told by the Director of  
 Schools that Mamhar Y. Twäldä-  
 madhän, Inspector of Schools,  
 has produced a one-hundred page  
 arithmetic book, having earlier  
 finished a reader and a geogra-  
 phy book..... As the author him-  
 self indicates in his preface,  
 may those who henceforth want  
 to write books for the benefit  
 of the people use this as basis  
 for writing more and bigger  
 books."



10. Articles on the Tigrinya language.

In issue No. 157, Masfān U'qəbay in an article entitled « ብሓሽብ ንግሕግጥ ቋንቋታት » (On mixing languages) argues against the then common tendency in the cites of Eritrea to mix foreign and native words rather too freely. He states that the knowledge of languages other than one's own is a very commendable thing.

« ነገሮቲ ሓደ ከገም ኩባኣቶ ገበኩዎ፤ ሓንቲ ቋንቋ  
 ዚፈልግ ሓደ ኩባኣቶ : ነብተ ቋንቋ ዚፈልግ ነብተ  
 ኩባኣቶ : ስከተ ቋንቋ ዚፈልግ ስከተ ኩባኣቶ  
 ኢዩ'ም ናቶ ነብኡ ነገር ወፋስ ናቶ ነብኡ  
 ሕዝቢ ቋንቋ ንግሕግጥ ነብሊፉን ነ  
 ጽምን ዚህብ ነገም ገሓሂ'ውን ጣኩደ  
 ነገር ኢዩ ፡፡ »

"As one wise man said, 'He who knows one language is one man; he who knows two languages is two; and he who knows three languages is three men in one.' Thus it is evident that the knowledge of the language of another country or another people is useful and honourable (admirable)."

What the author strongly censures is thus not the knowledge of other languages as the unnecessary hybridization of Tigrinya with other languages. To illustrate his point, he reproduces an anecdotal story about an old man asking a young man for direction. The youth replies:

« በዛ <ጢያ> ሕደኝ ካጢካንታም ሂሳብ፡  
ካብ'ታ <ካንታኮ> ሕደኝ በዝበዳኡንታም  
ቀንቲ <ቦርታ> ቀያኡ ካንቲርካኒ ኢሉም፡  
ንኣኝ ብ<ዕስፋሌ> ቀሒጣንታም ፍርድባ በኩ፡  
ድቀር ቀላ <ካንቲኮ-ሮኮ> ካፋሊክታ ኢሉም፡  
ካንቲኮባ ካጣክ ንኣ ኢያ፡፡» (underlined words are Italian)

"Go along this 'road'. When you arrive at that 'corner', you will see a red 'door'. You leave that to your 'right' and take a turn. You will then find a 'red entrance'. That is Father so-and-so's house."

There is one ironical fact about the whole article, though. He commits the same mistake he is railing against. His very first sentence contains the Italian loan 'ጥልቅ' (culture) for which there is, at least now, an appropriate Tigrinya equivalent 'ጥህራ'. His first sentence reads:

« ናቶን ቋንቋ፡ ናቶን ነጠቱ፡ ምርካብ፡ ገብቲ ንዓቶብ  
ተዋሊዙዎም ዘኮሉ ዓብዓቲ ዚበሃል ርዳካቶ ሓዲ ጸባዎ  
ዝሓላ ካዲሊፍ ካቶሊዳኡ ናቶን ንኣሉ፡፡ »

"We may not have properly understood that having your own language, your own culture is one of those fortunes given to men which is considered great."

The articles in issue no. 306 entitled "ᄃᄃᄃᄃ"  
(Our language) by Asfəha Kahsay and in issue no. 309

entitled « ቋንቋና ስብሐት ስጥረት ምዝብ » (Our language: About speaking by mixing foreign words) by Kidana Gäbrä Tānsa'ä have the same theme. The first article reproduces sample Italian and Arabic word interjections in the middle of Tigrinya dialogue.

Wäldänki'er's article « ኣኖካ ገሌጥን ሓፋኖካ ንናፋቶ ስብሐት ቋንቋና » (In lieu of her mother, she misses her aunt: About our language) (No. 460) gives Italian expressions commonly and widely used by Tigrinya-speakers in the cities. At the same time, he gives perfectly appropriate Tigrinya equivalents for them and emphasizes that there is no need at all for the currency of the Italian expressions.

There are many other articles regarding various aspects of the Tigrinya language and its development. In March and April of 1946, a running controversy between Fässäha Şäyon Haylä and Bayru 'Uqbit regarding the importance, evolution, genealogy, etc. of the Tigrinya language appears to rage on. The controversy opens with Fässäha Şäyon's article « ዚመጽኡ ኩነታት ቋንቋ ንግርጽ » (No. 184) (The future circumstances of the Tigrinya language) in which he writes:

« ቋንቋ ንግርጽ: ኣቲ ብዛንታን ብወከዱን ቀዳመቲ: ብብዛዚ  
 ዚሓሰብ ስባት ግና ካከባቲ ቋንቋ ኤፋድኤ ኤይ: ብዛንታን  
 ብወከዱን ቀዳመቲ ማከተቶ: ብላጽ ፲፯ ንግረዝ ኤይ'ሞ:  
 ናቶ ኤፋድኤ ዛንታን ወከዱን ኪምርመር ከኾነ መግለጽን መሪ  
 ድኣን ከቶና ንባ ቅድም ንቐርብ ማከተቶ ኤይ: »

"Of Ethiopia's languages, the Tigrinya language comes first in terms of history and genealogy and third in terms of the number of its speakers. What I mean by the phrase 'first in terms of history and genealogy' is that she (Tigrinya) is the eldest daughter of Ge'ez and therefore comes first for the purposes of illustration and explanation in any investigation of Ethiopia's history and genealogy."

In « በሐይቅ ልጅ » (Eldest daughter of Ge'ez) (No. 186) Bayru'Uqbit challenges and ridicules the above contention. The debate between the two continues in Nos. 187 and 189. A follow-up of the debate would be too involved to include in this brief survey of the literature of Eritrean Weekly News.

## CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL LITERATURE

A number of the novels discussed in this chapter are set during recent historical periods, primarily in Eritrea and to a lesser extent, in Ethiopia. These include ግሪ ዛገታ (A Story) by Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu (Dr. Abba), (Asmara, 1949), ወገኑት ሰላት (The Dawn of Freedom) by Täkläy Zäwäldi (Asmara, 1953) and ገሳጽ ሰላም ከወጣ (Haylom of Asmara) by Yäshaq Yosef (Asmara, 1966/67).

ዋዳ ኣኣ ሰቆቶ ! ስኣን ዓዓፎኪ ካፋ'የ ! (Alas! My children! For Want of Drawing Attention to!) and ንሓን'የ ዛግሮ? (To Who Can I Tell?) both by Abäba Täsfa Giyorgis (Asmara, 1967 and 1973/74 respectively) and ኣፋንኪክ (Let Us Not Be Divided) by Mäsgäna Tākästä' (Asmara, 1966/67) have fictitious countries as their setting. They do so, perhaps, to circumvent censorship regulations, or to disguise and to render obscure or opaque their comments on the contemporary political and social scene in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Although all six novels are categorized as historical and political literature to distinguish them from the rest of Tigrinya fiction, a further distinction can be made between them. Specifically, the first three can be seen as historical novels while the last three are political ones. The former pay relatively greater

attention to historical conditions, while the latter give greater weight to political commentary.

Based on their use of historical material and of the time setting, three kinds of historical novels are often distinguished: (a) fictionalized history where actual historical persons and actions are the basis of the novel; (b) historical romance or period novels in which the past is used merely as an exciting and exotic background for adventures; and (c) the historical novel proper, where there is an authentic historical background but where the chief characters and actions are fictional.<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of the above classification, the first three Tigrinya works to<sup>be</sup>/dealt with are historical novels. It is difficult to identify an historical romance or a fictionalized history category in Tigrinya literature. The situation is different in Amharic literature.<sup>2</sup>

1. I. E. Watts "Novel", Encyclopaedia Britannica, U. S. A., 1970, p. 674.
2. Apart from Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu's 116-line "ጥፋ ሳፋ ተፈረ" ሮስ ቅጥተ ርኅሰት" (Emperor Tewodros' Suicide) incorporated at the end of ብሔራዊ ሐሳብ, there is no fictionalized drama or fictionalized history in Tigrinya. Amharic has quite a number of fictionalized histories and dramas as well as historical romances. Abbe Gubäñña's አንድ ልጅ (Sole Child to His Mother) is a long (602 pages) fictionalized history of Emperor Tewodros, while Gärima Tafärä's አባ ተጠቅ ማሳ (Abba Taṭäq Kassa) and የጠላት ልግ ነጥሞ ሕይወት (The Bell of Trial: From Massawa to Matama) are fictionalized dramas of Emperors Tewodros and Yohannes respectively. An instance of an historical romance in Amharic is Mäkonən 'Ändalkäccäw's የደም ዘመን (Era of Blood).

A. Historical Novels1. ሐይ 435

Of all the works that fall under the above heading, ሐይ 435 is easily the most impressive. Liddell, a well-known authority on novels, distinguishes between those which call for serious literary criticism and those which are beneath such criticism.<sup>3</sup> ሐይ 435 deserves serious criticism and must in addition be ranked among the finest pieces of Tigrinya literature.

As the first work of fiction in the language, so far as I can establish,<sup>4</sup> it is assured pride of place in the development of Tigrinya literature. In addition, its high literary quality is only equalled again, in my opinion, in ሞረጃላ ሞረ ምስ ገጠገጽ (My Mark! Wine with my Bread!) by Yəshaq Gäbrä Iyāsus (Abba) published twenty-three years later in 1973. However, unlike the latter and much longer novel (305 pages) which draws much from religious lore, the theme of ሐይ 435 is completely secular. It is,

3. Robert Liddell, A Treatise on the Novel, London, 1958, p. 20.

4. Sängal Wärgənäh's ሐይ ኢየሱስ (An Ethiopian), Rome, 1916 (See p. 19 and p. 13 of Ch. 1 above) has been described as a novelette by L. Ricci. It can be argued that like most Tigrinya works of fiction, ሐይ 435 is also of the 'miniature novel' genre. However, the precise classification of such works is not the purpose of this study.

furthermore, one account, albeit in novel form, of one African's reaction to the colonization not only of his own country, but also to that of another African country, Libya, in which conscript soldiers from Eritrea were used to pacify Arab and Berber resistance to Italian colonial penetration.

The novel, which was written in 1927, was published only some twenty-two years later when "ናዩ ኢትዮጵያን ኤርትራን አንድነት ማኅበር" (Ethiopian-Eritrean Unionist Party) lent the author the necessary funds for its publication. On a voyage for education abroad, at the age of eighteen, Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu observed with sadness the absurd predicament of his compatriots on their way to Libya.<sup>5</sup>

Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu was one of nearly forty students who attended the Pontificio Collegio Etiopico in the Vatican and who came to Rome in six groups prior to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. He arrived there on September 23, 1924. He studied for his

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5. In the introduction (not paginated), the author writes of the circumstances inspiring his work:

«ኣዙ ሓዲ ዛጅታ ተላሂኩ ዚጎተጎጥ ዘኮ ማዕብሩ ፲ ቀደም ወፊ. ፲፯ ዓመቲ ኣንገኸኹ. ንኣምሳሪቲ ቢክ ሓዲ ጣፊያን ኣንገኸኹ፡፡ ባሕሪ ኣናተጎርኩ ዝተከፈለኩ ሞላኢትን ፲፯ ዓመትኩ ድረስ ናብ ኣዲስ ላቢያ ተላኪኹ ነገር ዚጎተጎጥ ዘኮ ኣንገኸኹ ዘኮ ኣንገኸኹ ኣሎ፡፡»

"This book, being published under the title 'A Story', recounts the impressions which were aroused in me by the sight of my brothers who were conscript soldiers. This was early on when I was eighteen years old travelling for study to Italy."



doctrinate of philosophy and theology in the above college in the Vatican where he was also ordained a priest. In 1932, he returned to Eritrea and was later employed in the Ministry of Information.<sup>6</sup>

The author wrote his work in 1927 while still a student and some three years after his arrival in Rome. It can be suggested here that, in the interim period between his arrival and the actual process of writing, he read much literature and developed a keen sense and judgement of what fiction-writing ought to be.

The plot of ሳዕዲ ሳዕዲ is simple, but the manner in which it is told shows impressive narrative ability. A robust young man, on coming of age, voluntarily joins the Italian colonial army and leaves for Libya.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Richard Pankhurst, "The Foundations of Education, printing, Newspapers, Book production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia," EO, vol.6, No. 3, 1962, p. 276.
  7. The historical factor leading to the phenomenon of voluntary enlistment and widespread conscription into the colonial army is succinctly summarized by Francois Houtart, "The Social Revolution in Eritrea", Behind the War in Eritrea, ed. Basil Davidson, Lionel Cliffe and Bereket Habte Selassie, Nottingham, 1980, p. 86-87: "Italian colonialists regarded Eritrea, with its temperate climate, as ideal for their settlement schemes. In the highlands where settled agriculture was practised, vast areas of the most fertile land were expropriated on various pretexts. These lands were simply handed over to Italian settlers for them to set up commercial farms. The area of land for pasture and cultivation was drastically reduced. Peasants in the already densely populated plateau found it difficult to ensure their subsistence way of life. Farming lots that were already parcelised became more and more fragmented..... With the deterioration of his subsistence production, the Eritrean

(Continued on next page)

There he heroically survives many battles and tribulations and returns home after three years to find his father alive but to learn that his mother had died.

In spite of the fact that Təkʷabo, the hero, is an only surviving son of his parents, the love of adventure and the mistaken expectation of fortune to be gained prevail over the filial duty to be near his parents, marry in his locality, continue the family line and eventually support his parents in old age. However, ገጽ 434 does not dwell long on characterization; in fact, it does not have to. We do not know much about Təkʷabo other than that he is a universal type—the adventure-inspired 'soldier of fortune'. There is no need to know more. "The principle of characterization in literature has always been defined as that of combining the 'type' with the 'individual' — showing the type in the individual or the individual in the type".<sup>8</sup> Intentionally or otherwise, Gäbrä Iyāsus Haylu has managed to show the universal type in Təkʷabo, the individual.

The simplicity of the plot and the scant characterization of the hero are not, therefore, what make

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7. (Continued from last page) peasant had either to migrate to the towns or to be recruited by the colonial army to serve as cannon fodder in the Italian wars of conquest — 60,000 Eritreans fought in Libiya alone."

8. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, London, 1955, p. 23.

the work stand out so prominently. The particular merit of ሳዩ 435 is rather in the meticulous manner in which background and setting are skillfully used to generate the right mood of receptivity for the message of the novel: propaganda against colonialism. Effective presentation of background and setting convey to the reader the absurdity and incongruity of the presence of the Eritrean conscript in the immense and merciless deserts of Libya-as the following passage amply demonstrates:

« ቅርኒት ምድሪ በዳ ፍደም ዘዳገጦይ ቅርኒት ነቶ፤  
 ሓገቲ ነው ነቶብል ነቶ ሓገቲ ልምድቲ ሣኒሪ ክስር  
 ማቶ ዝብኩም ነቶ ክብርክባኩን፤ ክብ ክብርክባኩ ሐ  
 ዳን ሒንደን ዝህገገርን ነቶም ሓመድን በቶ ብረክባኩ፡፡  
 ምግብር ነቶ ቅርኒት ነቶ ሓገቲ ብኩ ነቶ ግን ተቆ  
 ሓገቲ፡፡ ነቶ ሓገቲ ሓሳቶ ቅርኒት ድምጺ ሓሳባቶ ተከ  
 ምድ፤ ነቶ ምድሪ በዳ ግን ድምጺ ሓገቲ ቡፍ ዝብኩም፤  
 ዝነፍሩ ክሰቡ ዝብኩዎን፤ ዘቶ ነቶም ሓመድ  
 ሓገቲ ዝብኩም ነቶ ዝመስል፤ ሓገቲ ወፍኑ ምስ ተቆ  
 ልባ ክስር ድምጺ ዝብኩም ዘብሮ፤ ሓገቲ ወፍኑ ምስ  
 መሊ፤ ንቶ ዝብኩም ተጨዝ ዘብኩ፤ ሓገቲ ክስር  
 ብ ብኩክኩ ሓገቲ ምድ፤ ድምጺ ሓገቲ ሓገቲ ዘኩ ነቶ  
 ነቶብል፡፡ ሓገቲ ክብርክባኩ፤ ነቶ ሓገቲ ክስር ንቶ  
 ወፍኑ ወፍኑ ዝብኩም፤ ዘቶ ሓገቲ ዘንዝቶ  
 ዝኩክ ክስር ምድሪ ነቶብል፤ » (p. 21-22)

"The sight of the desert is decidedly a disturbing one. Not a single tree moves under the wind; not a single thriving blade of grass, not a trace of water are to be seen. All you see ahead of you is only sand, fields of sand, valleys of sand, and piles of sand. In its vastness it is like the sea, but it is the very opposite of the sea in all respects. In the sea, you see fish and you hear the sound of waves; but in the desert, you do not hear the sound of a single bird or see flocks of birds flying past. The desert looks as if it suffers from the weight of an immense frying pan. The sky is always uncovered; there is no trace of clouds. The sunshine is always severe; there is no wind blowing. Your patience is stretched; you ask yourself whether you are in the land of the dead or in the land of the living. Oh! What a contrast with the fertile land of Ethiopia where greenery is seen, where winds always refresh, where streams cascade."

Literature has been regarded as having a cathartic function since the time of Aristotle. Although initially applied to describe the function of enacted literature (vg. drama), this view gradually came to dominate the function of literature in general. But literature does not always relieve us of emotions; sometimes it triggers them. While some literature is cathartic, therefore, there is also the incitant type of literature.<sup>9</sup> 44 435 is clearly of the latter

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9. Theory of Literature, p. 27.

type; it is propagandistic.

"It would be easier if there were always a clear-cut line between, say, art and propaganda. But there is not. Most of the great nineteenth-century novels were written as propaganda -- not perhaps primarily so, but certainly incidentally so. It is easy enough to see that Uncle Tom's Cabin is a piece of propaganda.....but what about the propaganda elements in Dickens?"<sup>10</sup>

ቀዳሚ ዛገቷ is unquestionably written with intent to rouse the patriotic sentiment of Eritreans, to instill in them a deep sense of determination to fight for their freedom. The last three sentences of the novel make this evident:

« ናቶ ናብቴና ነገር አባባታንን ፤ መመከት ሕውን  
 ንጽፋንን ንጽኢናንን ባርብ ፡፡ ሕዙ ሕዙ ሊብስን፤  
 በዙ ሕዙ ተጠቂሷና ነጻ ናብቲ ሕብዱ ስራና ነቁኢና  
 ነቁኢና ነብቲ ስከግርናን ነብቲ ስፍኢ ነንና፤ ግሉ  
 ያን ነጻ ነገረዘክባ ቀጥብረና ነቁ፤ ነገረዘክባ  
 ዝረረሃኩና ዘባቢኩ ሰባ፡፡ ረቀና ዘባቢኩ፤  
 ቀና ዘባቢኩ ሓለፍባ ነገረዘክ ሕንድካኩ > ጽኢ  
 ናና ሞቶቲ ሕባ፡፡ ግን ንኩ ዘገገገና ዘመን  
 ባሕርኩና ፡፡ » (p. 11).

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10. Daiches, David, A Study of Literature, Ithaca, 1948, p. 57.

"To think of the condition of our existence is to render oneself sleepless; it persists in lowering one's morale. In spite of our being reduced to this fate, in spite of our being oppressed thus, we do not seem to know, after wandering around aimlessly, anything better than to end up as conscripts and labourers. The Italians do as they please with us, because there is nothing they fear from us. 'A people without a leader, a people without a leader! The Abyssinian people without a leader, what else can they expect?' Our morale is dead. May a time come which will resurrect it."

The fact that it was published in 1949, some three years before the end of British Administration, with funds advanced by the Unionist Party could have won over some adherents to that party. About this, however, we can only speculate, and can not now ascertain the extent of its circulation or the impact on its readers. A novel like 444 is, therefore, three things in one: a piece of propaganda, a good work of art and a commentary on the historical phenomenon of colonial armies. A novel can indeed serve all three functions;

".....Modern novelists often try to put across their meaning through both the relation of events they describe to the events of real life today and through the pattern as a whole. They thus produce a species of art which claims some of the qualities of history and which is therefore open to both historical and aesthetic appraisal.....  
Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath

could be assessed either on a historical standard (which is the relation of what he writes to the actual problem of migratory workers?) or on a literary one (how illuminating a picture of the human situation does he present?). As a matter of fact, The Grapes of Wrath could be conceived as having three functions -- rhetorical, historical and literary (or aesthetic)." 11

ገጽ 435 opens with the lines:

« ነገሩ ነገሩ ጠላቱኒ  
 ጥላቱኒ ያ ጠላቱኒ » (p.1).

"My father and my mother!  
 Give me your blessings!  
 Had it seemed to me that it would  
 ean going to Tripoli?"

Here the son is kneeling before his parents and pleading for forgiveness and blessings just before he departs for Tripoli. An element of remorse regarding his decision to enlist is contained in these very first lines. Almost immediately, there is a flashback to the circumstances of his birth. As the last of six children, the rest of whom all died in their infancy, the mother named him Təkwabo Mădhane Alám (Alms of the Saviour of the World, or Spared by the Saviour of the World) but he came to be called Təkwabo for short.

He grows up to be a strong and healthy child. The climate of the times in which he grew up is best

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11. A Study of Literature, p. 62.

illustrated by popular song couplets. To the adolescent's:

« ደህ ሳንገባ ፡ ደህ ሳንገባ  
 ልብደ ዘገባ ደህ ሳንገባ » (p.6).

"Had better be a girl(woman)!  
 Had better be a woman!  
 He who does not go to Libya  
 had better be a woman."

in response to which the younger children would sing  
 back:

« ፋረስ ፋረስ  
 ነግሳጽ ልጅ በህ » (p.6).

"Tripoli! Oh Tripoli!  
 Till I grow up, wait for me!"

When he became a young man, Takwabo disappeared from home one day and voluntarily enlisted in the colonial army. Faced with the fait accompli, the parents see him off from Asmara on his way to Massawa and thence to Libya. Women, seeing off their relations, sing songs of sorrow:

« ባሉ ልጁ ፋረስ ልጁ  
 ደህ ሳንገባ ፋረስ ልጁ  
 ገብረ ገብረ ገብረ ገብረ » (p.10).

"The train comes covered with soot  
 Your very sister, head bowed, weeps  
 (And) The robust young man goes  
 hunting in search of bread (wealth)"

From this point on until nearly halfway through, the novel reads like a travelogue with brief impressionistic sketches of Port Sudan, the Suez Canal, Alexandria, of sea voyage in general and of Libya's desert scene. It then switches to arguments which



focus on the Libyan resistance fighters' just cause and the unjustifiable commitment of the Eritrean soldiers on the side of the Italian colonialist. It has the Arab describing the Eritreans as 'ሳብዳ ማሳዋሕ' (p. 29) (Slaves from Massawa) and, even worse, giving a proverbial turn (only the Tigrinya equivalent is written) to the blood enmity formed as a result:

« ካረሰሰ ካረሰሰ  
ዳዎ ሳብዳ ካረሰሰ » (p. 29).

"If forget you must  
The blood of the Habasha do not forget."

Contrasting descriptions of the Arab, the Abyssinian and the Italian way of fighting follow (pp. 35-40). After giving a graphic account of a battle and the heroism of the Eritrean contingent, a most ironic but effective sentence follows: « ያህሉኝ ሥዕሊኝ ነበረ ንሳብዳኝ ካረሰሰ ተገረጸ ነበረ ንጣሪኝ ነበረ » (p. 40). "Thus it became total victory for the Abyssinians — No! I am wrong; it became total victory, rather, for the Italians." The use of irony, such as the above, is well mastered by Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu.

The author is also remarkable in his capacity to weave neatly into the fabric of his narrative socio-logical and anthropological observations which, in the hands of a less able raconteur, would come out dull and dry. The following lengthy quotation, for example,



"These people of the desert, known as Bedouins, live in a land which is dry and does not get rain in summer or winter and cannot, therefore, support much agriculture. It would seem to me that they would have died of starvation if they did not have livestock. However, God does not deprive people in all respects. In their country, the tree that grows under conditions of scanty water is the palm date and it makes their staple food. Moreover, they make an alcoholic drink from it by piercing it. As for the land which has a spring (ie. oasis), it is impressive. They say that you would wonder whether you were in paradise or on earth. For the greater part of the time, they live near this kind of place. Their merchants also sojourn there en route. The Arabs' descent is of the line of Ishmael, son of Agar, Abraham's maid. Their complexion is fair; however, the heat has slightly tanned their faces. They are handsome; they are on the tall side. Their women dress like the women in our lowlands and because they are always covered they are fairer in complexion than their men. Their elders are respected, dignified and with flowing beard. The men are covered from head to heel; they wear turbans on their heads. It would be a cause for marvel to see an Arab or a Bedouin empty-handed. If they cannot find a gun (and that is the weapon they cherish most), they carry a spear, a sword or a dagger. Truly, their character is not praised; they are unreliable, treacherous, begrudging and, where conditions allow, merciless.

They have many good qualities to balance for this, though; they uphold their religion and they will not miss their daily prayers for any reason whatsoever. They are hospitable to strangers. In addition, the most impressive quality about them is that they are freedom-loving."

Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu also knows how to provide comic relief. The above detailed description of the Bedouin and his way of life is followed by some very amusing anecdotes (pp. 32-35) although at the expense of the Bedouin. Only the shortest (not necessarily the funniest) of the anecdotes is here reproduced:

«... ከመቼ ሃካም ቀኝ አዋጅ፡፡ ንሐቶ ዘረዳኝ  
 አውን ሳይሳይ ታሪክ አደረሰኝ፤ ታላቁን ሃገራትን ካለ  
 ሳይ መጽሐፍ ወረ ብጣል፤ ዝተዳረገ ዝቐደሰኩም  
 አዲ፡፡ ሳይ ከብኣቶ ሰበቁ ነገራት ይመስሉ ቀረብኝ  
 ናብ ሳይ ደራሲ ሰበቁ ገንዘብ ሂሳብ በዝሓብ ቀረ  
 ጤፍካ መጽሐፍ ቅዱስ ሥርሓቱ በኮ፤ ድራቅ  
 ሲኮ ተቐበሉ፤ ተመኪኑኝ አንተገደኝክን ኣለሰ፤ ካል  
 ኣቶ ሣኪሣቶ አንተ መደኸክን ቅባ፤ ኣቶገበርኩ  
 ዎን > ቀብኩም፤ መቶ ቅዱስ ተመኪኩኝ አግሪ  
 ተሰኪኩኝ ሳብኩኝ መጻኢ ከላይ ሳይ ካልኩ ተመር  
 ሳይ ካልኩ፤ ኣሰ ከበቀተ ነገራት ይመስሉ አዎ፤  
 መጽሐፍ ቅዱስ ያደረገኝ አዲ > በኮ፤ ካልኩ ሰላ  
 ኣንከኝ ከተመኪኩኝ ንኣኝ ዝኸውን ንኣኝ መጻኢ  
 ካኝ ሥርሓቱ ሲኮ ካልኩ አዋጅ ኮሎኒ ሣህራዊ  
 ቀኸውን አዲ ካልኩ መቼት ካልኩ አዎጽኣኝ > በኮ፤  
 ካልኩ አንተገደኝክ መቶ ደራሲ ኣረ አንታዊ ካልኩ  
 ካንደተኣ አክበተኣ አተደግብኩ፤ ኣኝ ቀረጤፍካ ዝግ  
 በር ሥራክ ካቶተመንን አዲ፤ አገር ሰላ ካልኩ  
 አንተደረገኩኝ አንከኩኝ ገንዘብኝ > በኮ፤ ብኩሪ ሳ  
 መቶ ዝሓብ ሥራክ ካልኩ ይደረግ፡፡» (p. 32-33).

"The reason is that they are lazy. Here are a few stories which illustrate this fact. The stories and materials I have reproduced are from an Italian book (of information).<sup>12</sup> As his wife's date of delivery was approaching, the husband went to a carpenter, gave him money and asked him to make a crib for the baby. The carpenter received the money and promised to make the crib. When the man went to the carpenter to fetch the crib, there was not any made yet. He returned for a second time, and for a third time and the carpenter would only reply 'I have not made the crib yet'. Years passed by. The baby for whom the crib was intended had been born, had grown up and was married when at twenty years of age, he said to his father, 'Father! My wife's date of delivery is approaching. I need a crib for the baby.' The father replied, 'Just before you were born, I had asked the carpenter, the son of so and so, to make me a crib for you. He would surely have made it by now; so go and bring it from him.' The son went to the carpenter who replied (rather impatiently), 'Why do you nag me so? I do not like work which has to be finished in haste. And now, if you do not want me to make the crib at all, here! take your money!' The carpenter had not completed a work order given him twenty-one years before."

Does the above passage indicate that Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu endorses the bigoted stereotype of the Bedōin? Or is his pointed information that he took the stories

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12. To account for his relative mastery of the narrative technique, it was suggested (p. 134 above) that Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu might have read much literature. The above sentence establishes, first hand, that he did read at least some light and amusing Italian literature, however prejudiced that might have been.

from an Italian book intended to ridicule the purveyors of such anecdotes? From the tenor of the novel in general, it would appear that the second interpretation would be surely the more valid. Or perhaps the author never considered the subtle implications of recounting such stories, and intended no more than providing a comic relief. Nevertheless, the puzzle remains.

To return to the plot, after three years in Libya, Təkʷabo returns to Asmara. There he notices that the Eritrean guards at the railway station treat foreigners including Indian Banyans and Yemeni Arabs (ገላጥን and ሃሳኒ) <sup>13</sup> with deference, while they treat their own compatriots with contempt. He records that such observations led to the popular couplet:

« ኣብዓፋ ኣብዓፋ መግሊኒ ጉፋቲፋ  
ሃላፍ ላዕሙ ገፋፋቲ ላቀፋቲ » (p. 55).

"Lord! Oh Lord! Have mercy on me  
The soldier has come to despise his own race  
(or those of his flesh and bone)"

In concluding a discussion of the novel, it is appropriate to quote a short poem which best summarizes its theme and propagandistic intent:

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13. The implicit surprise at the deferential treatment given to Indians and Arabs is because, unlike the Italian colonialists, they could not exert any form of coercion.

« ነገሩን ለሰጠ ሀገሩ ላይ ስህተት  
 አለ በገሩን ማግኘት ስህተት  
 መጠናቀቅና ማግኘት ስህተት » (p.60).

"The young man has left in order  
 to gain blood-money  
 The father survives on a measure  
 of grain purchased from the market-  
 place (How humiliating for a  
 peasant farmer!)  
 Truly, except our tongues,  
 our morale is dead."

It is sad that a story-teller of such ability  
 and relevance wrote only this work. Tigrinya literature  
 would have been richer had he written more. As it is,  
 only one or two of his successors measure up to the  
 standard he established,

2. ወገኑ ሰላሳ

Täkläy Zäwäldi in ወገኑ ሰላሳ utilizes historical material as background more concretely than does Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu in ሳላ ዛገሩ. The first work further encompasses a wider time span which stretches through four generations and covers three distinct historical periods: pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial Eritrea.<sup>14</sup>

The theme of the plot is essentially straightforward: resistance to the Italian invader and colonizer. Whereas in ሳላ ዛገሩ Təkwabə was a volunteer recruit, in ወገኑ ሰላሳ, the sons of Aytä Məsgun, Rāzānā and Haylu are forcibly conscripted into the colonial army. The country they set out to help pacify is, at first, Somalia. Haylu, however, survives these campaigns only to be again forcibly conscripted and this time sent to Libya.

Gäbrä Iyäsus Haylu in ሳላ ዛገሩ bemoans the lack of a sense of outrage against colonialism on the part of his compatriots; in contrast, Täkläy Zäwäldi portrays the Eritrean as ceaselessly resisting both at the onset

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14. The period of British Administration is treated in this work as post-colonial. As the title indicates, this was viewed as the prelude to independence.



of the colonial period and throughout its duration.<sup>15</sup>

15. Trevaskis' account in Eritrea: A Colony in Transition 1941-1952, London, 1960, p. 29 lends support to Gäbrä Iyāsus' theme rather than to Tāklay's: "In Eritrea the Italian citizen was a principal; the Eritrean an auxiliary..... He remained subject to discriminatory legislation..... And yet there was no Eritrean discontent. It was averted by a calculated policy of 'bread and circuses'..... Throughout the Italian regime the Eritrean remained content, docile and obedient to his rulers."

This observation would be correct if one meant that the Eritrean people as a whole did not show any spontaneous or organized opposition. However, it cannot account for the many instances of rebellion and resistance by Eritreans individually or in groups. Bahta Hagos' rebellion, in spite of initial collaboration, was significant. It followed in the wake of Italian legislation appropriating land and making it state domain.

Richard Pankhurst in "Italian Settlement Policy in Eritrea and its Repercussions, 1889-1896" Boston University Papers in African History ed. J. Butler, Vol. 1, Boston, 1964 (p. 147) writes, "The various acts of expropriation had a profound influence on the Eritrean people. As a report of the Italian Società per il Progresso delle Scienze noted, they 'provoked the discontent of the native population,' and induced an atmosphere of rebellion which led in due course to war between the Italians and Ethiopians.....The most significant manifestation of this discontent was the rebellion of Dejazmach Bahta Hagos, the chief of the Akele Guzai, on December 15, 1894." It must also be noted here that there would have been many Eritrean soldiers in Ras Alula's army whose record in resisting colonial incursions is perhaps the most impressive in Ethiopian history, though the main body of Alula's army would most likely have been from his native province, Tigray.

More recently, the contribution of Eritreans to the overall Ethiopian resistance (1936-1941) is outstanding. Salome Gabre Egziabher in "The Ethiopian Patriots 1936-1941" EO Vol. 12, No. 2, 1969, writes, "....Kenazmatch Andome Tesfasion (1892-1939) deserted the Italian ranks with 500 soldiers and all their war equipment." (p. 79) and again: "In the Akaleguzai province of Eritrea there was a man by the name of Dejazmatch Zewdu Hagos who also helped Aqa Seleba, who later became a Kenazmatch, to escape..... The Italians did not do anything to Dejazmatch Zewde because they were afraid of a general revolt in Akele Guzay... (p. 80)

(continued on next page)

The story begins in May, 1851 and ends in the middle of the British Administration Period. Close to an entire century is compressed into this slim volume (ninety-one pages). Not only is the reader's sense of time strained as a result, but none of the historical periods is treated with any depth at all.

Wäldäzgi talks to his son Mäsgun about God, king and country, especially about how Ethiopia had been fortunate in that its brave kings were constantly able to ward off foreign invaders. When news of the Italian invasion of Assab and Massawa is heard, years have passed and Mäsgun has become the father of five. The people of 'Addi Sälam' (Land of Peace or Village of Peace) are mobilized. Wäldäzgi is dissuaded from joining because of old age. Although the battle is lost, Mäsgun fights bravely and even rises to a position of leadership.

Too old to meet the invader in person, Aytä Wäldäzgi can only give words of encouragement and blessing to his son and the other men going to face the enemy in battle. Despite defeat in battle, Mäsgun does not give up but instead becomes a guerilla fighter. Only after four years is he persuaded by the community elders

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Continued

The escape of Aqa Seleba and his 29 men was a dramatic one. Aqa Seleba and his men, who had already planned their escape, escaped with 13,500 guns, 6,000 rounds of ammunition, 5 cannons with all the necessary spare parts, 30 Alpine guns and some 12 long guns....." (p. 81).

For more instances of Eritrean resistance see footnotes on p. 154 and p. 155 below.

to give himself up and settle down to a normal life.

Accommodation with the hated invader cannot, however, last long for a person such as Məsgun. The torch of freedom burns too fiercely within his heart. When, one day, an Italian Commissioner addresses the people of 'Addi Sälam and orders them to contribute two men from each family for the Somali and Libyan campaigns, that fire possesses him to the point of destruction. Məsgun castigates the colonizer and sharply chides them for wanting to be left alone to till the rocky patches of land unfairly allotted to them by the colonial authorities. Commissioner Grasso draws out his pistol and shoots Məsgun dead on the spot.

Muse's manner of resistance is very different from that of his father who met <sup>the</sup> enemy in a head-on collision. The son is more deliberate in his methods, for he is self-educated to a considerable degree and a relatively sophisticated colonial government employee working in the city. ~~With~~

With four of his friends, Muse crosses the River Marab into Ethiopia. When we next hear of him, he is organizing exiles in the Sudan and, along with others, preparing the groundwork for Haile Selassie's re-entry into Ethiopia with the aid of the British.

Eritrean resistance to the Italian colonialist is not limited, however, to this one family. In a village gathering, Aytä Aqlom and Abäy Näyru speak out against the injustices of the Italian colonizer and

speak optimistically about the hope of liberation.  
 Upon being reported to a commanding officer by a native  
 soldier called Kābdu Amlaku (His belly is his God),  
 they are imprisoned. The ninety-year old Aytä 'Aqlom  
 dies after only one night in jail. The whole commun-  
 ity mourns his death and the author uses the oportun-  
 ity to present a beautiful sample of traditional eu-  
 logistic mourning poetry.<sup>16</sup>

« ወዓ! ወዓ! ወዓ!

ቀቂ ዩቶ ካተ ሳፍኩም ሕዋዓም ረከፈ

ካብ ሓሙዩ ተቀብሎ ነምዚኩ ተሪፈ

ሠክተኦም ዩቶም ስከ... (ክብሪ ባዕሊ) ገከ ክብ በናዬረ

ገከ ነርቡኪ ብጥፋኑ ሃረግፈ

ነዚ ሃኩ ጭንቁ ብሳፍኩም ካካከፈ

ዘርገዕባል ነቀብኩ ቀልቦም ነቀከኔፈ

ዘፋርካል ዝና (ፊሪካ) ንሕዝቦም ገደፈ :: ...

ሕወም ነገርም ካብ-ዳክንባ'ሞ ካብዚ ተከፊኩ ተከፍኪፈ ::

ክሠርም ጣዳ ፋጥከልን ንዝተረፈ

ብዙኅ ነቀንዛረብ ነካ በብዘርፈ

ኸዝኒ ... (በርገደኪ) ብዙኅ ኢቶ ካክናፈ

ዩጊም ቶካክከና ሓዩ ካፈ

ካምኣክን ፋቀበክኣኩም ካብ ገኣኑ ምዕሪፈ » (p. 67-68).

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16. See p.22-23 of Ch.1 which refers to Fraïtlovitch's  
 collection of this type of poetry.

"Woel Woel Woel 17  
 Is it true that Aytä 'Aqlom's life  
 has passed away  
 Covered in the earth,  
 the fact this easily resigned to?  
 His three sons for.....  
 (the honour of the foreigner) were  
 mowed down by bullets in Benadir  
 and Tripoli  
 With patience he endured all this  
 suffering  
 Without incoherently rambling,  
 without losing his composure  
 He left for posterity an unforgett-  
 able example (history)  
 His solid deeds are too many  
 to be enumerated here  
 May the imprint of his footsteps  
 set for the sake of the survivors  
 Let us beware, though, not to say  
 too much on varied subjects  
 For the ears of .....  
 Bärgädäli have many wings  
 We may as well end the eulogy here  
 (with the wish)  
 May God welcome you in his  
 rest-house in Paradise."

This short eulogy in verse captures the mood  
 of resistance and the seething anger within better  
 than pages of descriptive prose would have done.  
 Where Tigrinya novelists utilize traditional modes  
 of expression, and most of them do not, they lend  
 to their works a greater aura of authenticity and  
 credibility. Thus by weaving this short eulogy into the  
 main fabric, Tāklay Zāwāldi succeeds in greatly en-  
 riching his narrative. It would be appropriate to  
 mention here that he is treading on familiar ground  
 as his other work ገጥማዊ ቅጥጥር (Ancestral Lore),  
 Asmara, 1949 is precisely on traditional lore.

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17. "Aqlom" means patience. It is unusual for a name and  
 has generally been employed in this work to emphasize  
 the quality, and four lines down to provide a pun.

This technique of utilizing a traditional mode of expression to describe an incident, to mirror traditional mores as faithfully as possible, or simply to present folkloric subject-matter directly is not peculiar to Tāḳlay Zāwāldi. A few other novelists do so as well, but the best utilization of this technique (specifically the presentation of folkloric subject-matter) is made by Yəshaq Gābrä Iyāsus (Abba) in ማርቅ  
ነዚ ጠፋሪ ምስ ኃምበኛቱ.

To return to the theme, resistance to the Italian colonialist is not confined to home ground.<sup>18</sup> Dawit, Məsgun's third conscripted son, who as a brave soldier reached the highest rank possible for a colonial soldier, was demoted and jailed in Libya. The cause for his incarceration was his demand for an explanation for the better treatment of Libyan Arabs and the discrimination

18. There is, incidentally, a very dramatic historical instance of Eritrean resistance abroad. "Patriot resistance to the Italians.....was evident even in Italy itself where in 1937 an imperial ceremony was held to commemorate the first anniversary of the occupation of Addis Ababa. An Eritrean youth aged twenty-one named Zerai Deress was sent to Rome to present some captured Ethiopian trophies, including a sword, to certain high officials at a function attended by both Mussolini and the King of Italy. Zerai did not know that he would have to present these in a public place where he could become an object of ridicule. In the middle of the parade his eyes lighted on the captured gold Lion of Judah which the Italians had removed from its stand near the Addis Ababa railway station. Identifying himself with Ethiopia's shame he knelt to pray. Two policemen tried to move him, but he turned furiously upon them, drew the ceremonial sword and killed five fascist officials before he in his

(Continued on next page)

perpetrated against men of his own colour.<sup>19</sup> Later, his resistance assumes a more substantial form than this merely plaintive demand. After his transfer from the Libyano to the Somali front, Dawit takes the first opportunity and defects to the Ethiopian side where he joins the patriots, at first inside Ethiopia,<sup>and</sup> later those in Kenya.<sup>20</sup>

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18. Continued turn was brought down by gunfire. Seriously wounded he was taken to hospital and some years later he died in an Italian island prison." Richard Greenfield, Ethiopia: A New Political History, London, 1965, p. 242.
19. For the substance of this demand included for the purpose of general discussion of the sub-theme of racism underlying the three historical novels discussed in this chapter, see p.177-178 below.
20. There are here again (See p.144-150 and p.154-155 above) historical instances of Eritrean soldiers deserting the colonial army and joining Ethiopian patriot forces. "Many Eritreans were recruited into the Italian army, but some of them did not stay there for long. .... For example in Southern Ethiopia out of the 4,000 strong Eritrean army stationed in Somalia, 12 men deserted under Gerazmatch Gebrai and 1,500 deserted under the leadership of Fitawrari Tegai Negussie. These men deserted with all their equipment including 40 heavy and light machine guns. These Eritreans were followed by about 5,000 Italian troops with armoured cars and 15 bombers. The Eritrean troops fought and captured some of the Italian troops and their ammunition. According to one account, 1,500 Eritrean soldiers joined Ras Desta at Dollow. Seifu Abawollo, who claims to have been with Ras Desta until his capture, says that 600 Eritreans came to join Ras Desta at Adolla on February 20, 1936. On February 13, according to Ato Gebre Wolde, 350 Eritreans joined Ras Desta, while around 500 who deserted lost their way and went to Kenya. They are said to have been taken to Kenya by some Englishmen who promised to bring them to Ras Desta. According to the oral recollection of the Eritreans themselves around 600 to 1,000 of their number were with Ras Desta." Salome Gabre Egziabher "The Ethiopian Patriots...." p. 79.

In a scene towards the end, Haylu walks with his nephew Kəbrom, the eldest son of his brother Rəstu. The sight of unionist partisans proudly waving the Ethiopian flag provides the occasion for an interesting, perceptive and vaguely prophetic dialogue between nephew and uncle:

« ኣፅ ኣዛ ሂዞሙዎ ዚዞኑ ዘኮላ በገዳቶ ዕካሞ ኣዚኣን ኣበቁ ዝነበሉ ኤፅ? »

ኤኩ ኣውን ንሓወቦኩ ሓተቶ፡፡

« ኣዛ ኣቶኣፅ ዘኮላ በገዳቶ ዕካሞ ኖቶ ካብቲኣናን ካብሓገቲኣናን ዝነበሉ ጥንታዊቲ በገዳቶ ሓካሚና ኤፅ፡፡ ገሕና ነቀተወከድና ኣብ ነገርና ስክ ዝነበሉ ኣነን ካብኣን ካብቲኣና ብዝነገሩና ኤፅ ኣንፈሐጣ ኣጽህበር ቅድሚ ጽፂ ኣብኤናፅን፡፡ ኮሚ ገሕና ርኤና ክንመውቲ ነበረና ዲርጓ ዘቀሞትና ኤፅ፡፡... »

« ኣፅ! ኣዚ ዝተዛረብኻቶ ቃል ኣብ ኣኣምሮቶ ተከቶኒ ኣብ ኣሰጽጦተኣን ሥጋኣን ኣውን ተከኡሮስ ናፅነት ኣንታቶ ማከት ክጽወ ዝገባ ኣረፈኡኒ ኣኩ፡፡ ኣነ ዝዳህቶ ዝነበርኩ ኣነ ክጽወ ዘበከ መሪኹ ኤፅ፡፡

ጣናኣን ንኮላ ዩኣ ትፈሐጥ ኣጽህበር ክጽወ ቅድሚ ኮሚ ዝረከብናቶ መጥቃቲ ነቀንፈኡብስ ኣንታቶ ምግባር የድኢ? ኣብ'ዚ ቅድሚ ኮሚ ዝነበርናቶ ዘኮናቶን ጭንቅን ኮኣነትን ወደኣናኣን ኣብ ክብ ዝበከ ምስ ዱቅ ኮላ (ምስቶም ጥቀ ቅንና ዝነበሩ ነቀተፈኢ'ውን ዘመጥፈርባና) ንብሉት ጭውነት ኣንበጽሖስ ክመቐ ዝመስከ መገዲ ምንዝ ቀድሐየና? » ኣናበከ ሓተቶ፡፡...

« ኣዚ ኣተዛረብኻቶ ቃል ብዘሕ ገሪመኒ ኣኩ፡፡ ገሕና ኣንድበቶ ዝነበርና ናፅነት ጥፋቶ ኤፅ፡፡... በከዝ'ውን ንኣኩ ሓከውካ ጥፋቲኣ'ውን መሪከዝካ ክብ ወፍሪ ኣናተጠንቀቅካ ምንባር ኣቲ ኣውራ ዘድኢ ነገር ክፍኑዩ ኣቆስጽኣካን? » በኩ፡፡

« ርግጽ ኤፅ ክጽወ ኣኩበኩ ዘኮላ ምስ'ቲ ኖቶ ቀዳሞቲ ካብቲኣና ዝነበረ ኣክያቶ ቀስጥጥብ ነቶ ናኣውን፡፡ ኮሚ ጣን ሓክም ስክ ኣተከመጠቲ ወድ ኩብ'ውን ኣናተከመጠጠ ቀጥቶ ኣኩ፡፡ ኣቲ ጥፋቲና ዘኩ ኣክያቶናን ጠባቶናን መንፈስናን ኣንተ ዘቐከሞኣ'ውን ህዋን ዕብላን ኣንፈኣብ ኣቀመስኣን ኤፅ'ሞ በዚ ምኣን ፆኣ'ዚ ኣውን ናፅነት ቀዳሞቶ ስፍሖቲ ክጽወኣኣ ኣከተውኡናስ ኣቲ ዝጥባን



« ገዛበብን ካልነቀ አጥምቲ ህኝ ሕዝብና ያምዕባፍ ህገርናን መንግ  
 ሥፋናን ያመሠራ ህም ምላህ ካገርድክ ዋግብኝ » እናበክ አበሮም ተዛሉ።  
 « ስለህን መቼ ጎደዋል ! እዚ ስሉ ሓኅብኪ ህበቶ ካምጽኻላቅ ? መሳህነነ  
 መሃዝሃቅ ? እያመለከር አብኪ ኮፊዚ ዘኩናዮ ኣዋገሪ እዚ ስሉ ጣጣ  
 ካሎ ? እዚ ኣገተክቶስ ጓኑሳኡም ጓገድፈፈኩም ጓሕና ግን ድሮ  
 ጊዜና ካህሉ ኤቲ » እናበክ መሊፑ። (p. 89-90).

"Elder brother! Where had it been—  
 this flag that they are waving  
 around?" he asked his uncle.

"This flag that you see is the flag  
 of our fathers and grandfathers  
 and it is an ancient one. Your  
 father and myself know of it only  
 from what our fathers, in whose  
 time the flag was still flying  
 told us; we have never seen it  
 before. If we were to die follow-  
 ing the very day we saw it on, we  
 would not count it as death...."  
 he (the uncle) spoke thus to him.

"Elder brother! The words you spoke  
 have sank into my mind and have  
 penetrated into my flesh and bones  
 and they have clarified to me what  
 freedom is. And the explanation I  
 wanted was exactly this sort.

However, with all due res-  
 pect to you, what ought to be done  
 in order that we shall not suffer  
 again from the type of invasion  
 which we already experienced?  
 And what path must we chart in  
 order to achieve a decent standard  
 of life (even of the same level as  
 that of our former masters) and  
 extricate ourselves from the suffer-  
 ing and deprivation we were under  
 and still are in?" he (the nephew)  
 asked him.....

"I am amazed at your words. All  
 we were expectantly waiting for  
 was just independence..... Thus,  
 therefore, do you not think that  
 the most important requirement is  
 to draw one's sword and keep vigil  
 against invasion?" he (the uncle)  
 said to him.

"It is so and this view might

conform to the way of our forefathers. But nowadays, because the world has changed, so does man keep on changing. However, as I think that we shall not develop or achieve fulfilment unless we change the defective aspects in our ways, characters, and ethos, we must realize that independence is only a first step and that the more difficult and longer one is that which involves the building up of our country and state and the development of our (human resources) people." Kəbrom thus spoke.

"Listen, my nephew! Where did you get all these ideas from? When did you conceive them? In that case, then, it means that, in the times we live in, there is this type of concern. If it be so, we leave the matter entirely to you; as for us, our time is already up." So saying, he (the uncle) blessed him.

It often happens that an author expresses his own views through the characters he creates. Where different viewpoints vie for dominance, the unconcluded debate that ensues in the mind of the narrator is mirrored in the opposed stands that two characters in a dialogue are made to adopt. In this work, Tāklay Zäwäldi conveys his deep sense of concern about the future through the forward-looking youth, Kəbrom. Through Haylu, the uncle, he expresses relief and contentment at seeing the close of the colonial past.

The flow of the narrative of ወገኑ ሰላሳ is smooth, but the pace is too fast as such a vast time span is compressed into so few pages. The characters are little more than mere mouthpieces for the author's

views, and with the exception of Məsgun there is no discernible attempt to develop them.

On the whole, Qəddis Səyyid demonstrates a reasonable degree of faithfulness not only to historical fact but also to the plausibility of the narrated events. There is rarely an incident or detail that appears far-fetched. In the main, the events of the narrative proffer a likeness to life as it might have been. It could, however, be argued otherwise with respect to the death in jail of the ninety-year old Aytä 'Aqlom following his impassioned address to the community of 'Addi Sälam'. Although the death, which follows a night in jail, is a realistic possibility for a man that age, the incident itself seems to have been contrived merely for the sake of highlighting the mood of resistance against the colonial presence. It heightens effect, but it intrudes into the plot rather abruptly and obtrusively.

This novel was published in 1953, one year after the federation of Eritrea and Ethiopia. The exact date of printing, Mäskäräm 1, is the very date of the first anniversary of the federation. Although the author does not point this out in his preface or elsewhere, it would have been most evident to his readers at the time that it was a work dedicated to commemorate the day of union between Ethiopia and Eritrea. To the author, who must have been a middle-aged man then, this day

and its symbolism would have been close to sacred.

The entire work is pervaded by a deep love of independence and freedom on the one hand, and a deep grief and sense of outrage at the colonial past on the other. To the author and his contemporaries, the wounds of the colonial past would still have been too fresh to forget. There is no question that the writer had great patriotic feelings, in the broader sense of the earlier patriotism that then cut across the terms "Eritrea" and "Ethiopia", which today tend to signify two different peoples and countries. The value most saliently, strongly and repetitively expressed in the novel is the preciousness of freedom and independence, the indispensability of the patriotic sentiment and the need to persevere even where all prospects of freedom appear bleak. The meaninglessness of life without freedom and the resultant tragedy of being the plaything of a foreign master is effectively portrayed. It is a work intended to be a reminder of <sup>the</sup> painful and ugly past in the tradition of the "lest we forget" novel.

3. ገጥሞች ላይ ያለው ሥልጣን

Yashaq Yosef's ገጥሞች ላይ ያለው ሥልጣን focusses on the intense activities of the various political factions and groups which operated in Eritrea during the British Administration.<sup>21</sup> As a result, his writing reads more like a sample of poor political journalism than a novel.

The protagonist, Hylom, is a member of the political group fighting for union with Ethiopia which reveals the author's particular partisanship.<sup>22</sup> The work attempts to convey emphatically the justice of

21. For a detailed account see: Lloyd Ellingson "The Emergence of Political Parties in Eritrea 1941-1950" Journal of African History, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1971, pp. 261-281.

22. It was a significant group. Trevaskis (p. 60) writes of it: "In the event a society known as the Mahaber Fekri Hager or Love of Country Association, and dedicated to uniting Eritrea with Ethiopia, came into being during 1942. .... The tone of its propaganda was attractive; its reasoning convincing. Ethiopia was a country where the Abyssinian was master; where he was not battered on by Europeans; where Arabs, Jiberti and Moslem tribesmen were under his control; and where the Abyssinian of even modest education could expect to rise to position and power. Propaganda of this type had a telling effect. During 1942 the agrieved Asmara intelligentsia was rapidly, if unobtrusively, converted to the Ethiopian cause; by the end of the year the Asmara Advisory Council had acquired a pronounced pro-Ethiopian outlook."

that cause by contrasting a very negative picture of the other political groups as against the Unionis Party. It is predictably dedicated to members of the Unionist Party — incidentally also to the memory of the author's deceased brother.

At the outset, the protagonist tells us his name, birthplace and circumstances of upbringing. No sooner has this been said, however, than we are given a glimpse of his early unionist activities. This sets the tone for the remainder of the novel. He informs us that he often appeared before the United Nations Commission on Eritrea,<sup>23</sup> and that he moved about as a member of ማዕከሪ ማንካሰቱ ሌክ ሕተው (The River of Life Youth Association) parading the slogans: « ሃገሩ ሃገሩ፣ ናፅነቱ ናፅነቱ፣ ኢየሱስ ወፋ ሞቶ » (My Country! My Country!; Freedom! Freedom!, Ethiopia or Death!).

Immediately following this piece of autobiographical data, compressed inside two pages, is an episode which falls within the nature of the narrative mold. Employing to good effect a traditional scene of a grandson sitting at the feet of his grandfather, some very important events from history are recounted; the periods of famine locally referred to as Zämān Šorok,

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23. For accounts of the role played by the U.N., see: Barid Abuetan "Eritrea: United Nations Problem and Solution" Middle Eastern Affairs, New York, Vol.2.No.1,1951 35-35, and Duncan C. Cumming "The Disposal of Eritrea" Middle East Journal, Washington, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1953, p. 18-32.

Zämān Akahida and Zämān Kubaya;<sup>24</sup> and the coming of the Italian colonialists.<sup>25</sup>

A short chapter (pp. 5-8) is devoted to an account of the ordeal the grandfather went through when, as a young father of four, he was bringing back to his village in the highlands grain purchased from Massawa. This accords well with historical facts. R. Pankhurst in "Italian Settlement Policy....." loc.cit. (p. 124) writes, "The population of most parts of the country was decimated, while thousands of famine victims abandoned their homes and farms and made their way to the coast in the hope of obtaining imported grain." (underlining mine).

The Italian occupation of Eritrea followed in the wake of the Great Famine (1889-1892), to which the above quotation and probably also the above account of the grandfather's ordeal allude. The grandfather goes

24. Zämān Šorok (Era of Typhus) appears to have been a period of epidemic which affected both cattle and humans. Zämān Akhida (Era of Betrayal) was so called, because even relations and friends could not help each other out, as the starvation was so severe. Zämān Kubaya (Era of the Cup) must be derived from the small measure used for the purchase of grain. It is not clear whether all three names refer to the Great Famine (1889-1892) or to that and other periods.
25. For a brief account of the Italian penetration of Eritrea see Longrigg, Stephen H., A Short History of Eritrea, Oxford, 1945, p. 114-120.

on to recount his encounter with "ዘፋፋፋፋፋ ልሳስቲ ፍጥረት ሰብ" (p.8).  
(new human creatures whom I could not recognize).

« ያህል ነገር ነገሩ ዝፈለግኩዎ ነዝያዎ ጸሓፊ ወታዕባይነት  
ኣዚካቶም ብምድዋዕ ዝመጹ ኣኣሞ ንሰገናቲ ዘም  
ርሑ ዝሃበኒ ነብፋም ቀዳሞት ነገሩን ደከሰኒ ያ  
ቂ ኤጣልያ ኤፋም ፡፡ » (p.11).

"As I later came to know, those  
white soldiers who came from  
Massawa and were heading towards  
Sägänäyti were among the first of  
the Italian colonialists."

A poem referring to the uprooting effect of  
colonialism follows. It portrays the negative im-  
pact on the morale of the populace due to the impri-  
sonment of some of the more prominent figures of the  
Eritrean highlands following their resistance, in  
one form or other, to Italian colonialism.

« ጣልያን ምስ ኣተወ  
ነኩሳኣት ዩኒፍኣት ካብ ዝነገሙ  
ሐሞሽናቶ ብኣኩሉ በሪሱ  
ሠራዊታቶ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ተሃኪታቶ ብኣኩሉ በሪሱ  
ጸብታቶ ኣካላ ጉዞታቶ ብኣኩሉ በሪሱ ...  
ንሱ ኣንጽሕሪ ኣኪሱ  
ዩኒቨርሲቲ ዘፋርኡበ ፈውሱ  
ኣፍሪካና ቡራ ኣፍሪካ ንሱ > ተገሃዱ፡፡ »



« ኣዚ በላቴ ሐወሎን ከገብረ ወገኛን  
 ብኣቶ ተደካ ባሕሪ ነገሩ ምሉኡ  
 ከፋተ ግርሙ ኣብ ሓሰብን ናኡሪን  
 ተደርብዮም በስሊኮም ምስ ጠፍኡ  
 ዛገጥሞ ናፋ ኣንደርደርቲ ገረር  
 ኢዩ ን በኣኒ ፡፡ » (p. 11-12).

"Since the Italian came  
 And Colonels and Generals became Kings  
 The people of Hamasen have all been  
 uprooted  
 The people of Säraye Şaläma, of Tākälä  
 have all been uprooted  
 The people of Qola and Akälä Guzay  
 have all been uprooted  
 Once he (the colonialist like a snake) bites  
 however hard one searches,  
 the cure for it cannot be found  
 He has destroyed us; may his own roots  
 be destroyed,' it was said.

"This poem of bitter death-bed struggle  
 was composed after your uncle  
 Kāntiba Wäldat, Bälata Tädla,  
 Baḥri Nägassi Märaç and Aytä  
 Gərmu were thrown in jail in  
 Assab and Nakura and left to  
 rot there.' He (the grandfather)  
 said to me." 26

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26. The list of prominent figures who paid dearly  
 for resisting Italian incursions indeed suggests  
 a certain level of Eritrean resistance to Italian  
 colonialism contrary to Trevaskis' view quoted on  
 p. 149 above.

With the exception of the above-mentioned instances of incursions into the past which are recounted in a reasonably narrative fashion, the rest of the work is contemporary political reportage. So literally is this pattern followed that parts of a unionist poem, and a political article of the times, both of which appeared in Eritrean Weekly News, are reproduced. The poem from the issue of Thursday, Tārī 16, 1947 A.M. was contributed by Gäbrä Yohanəs Täsfa Maryam.<sup>27</sup> The political article from Thursday, Tahsas 5, 1946 A.M. is quite short and reads:

« ነ ሕዝቢ ነጋሪት

ነገረዘገ ያደገረ ነገ

ብሔሩ ከሞላ ዕቅድ ሃገርና አብ ኢቁና ኤያ ዘካ። ነገረዘገ ገዳሪ

ኤገረዘገ ያደገረ ነገ ኤገረዘገ ገዳሪና ሃገርና ባሕርና ነገረዘገ

ከሞላ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ

ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ

ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ

ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ

ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ

ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ ነገረዘገ

ነገረዘገ ?

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27. The contributor is perhaps the same Gäbrä Yohanəs who was given the title of Dājazmač later. If so, he later became one of the four Eritrean members of the Ethiopian-Eritrean Federal Council. In 1975, he was assassinated and it was widely believed that the Eritrean Liberation Front did so as punishment for his strong unionist past.

« ነፃነት ካፈለግን ዝባልቲ

ሰፍሎ ንኢሳይያስ

ኤርትራውያን » (p.15).

"Oh People of Eritrea!  
The English will depart.

Truly, today, the fate of our country is in our hands. Thus, therefore, so as to ensure our future prosperity and to administer our country in union with our motherland Ethiopia, let us not be foolish today; Moslem and Christian alike, let us unite and love one another. Although we follow two different religions, let us not forget that we are the same people. Religion is only a matter of faith or worship and not a matter of race. Our origin, our root is the same; let us not be foolish.

Let us therefore make known and show that our aim is to be united with our motherland, Ethiopia, and that that is our sole desire and goal.

To whom?

To those who need to know.

Long live Ethiopia!

Eritreans."

Yashaq Yosef's political reportage through Haylom continues with an account of a demonstration held in Tära'amni which ends in violence between the followers of the two principal opposing factions, the Unionist Party and the Moslem League.<sup>28</sup> A popular couplet of the time which alludes to the

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28. "Each major party (the Unionists and the Moslem League) claimed the support of an overwhelming majority of the population." E. Ellingson, loc. cit.,

violence went.

« ኣብቲ ንቦ ንቦ ተራ ኣምሂ  
ኣካሂ ኣካሂ ሊሊ ኣገጢኡኒ » (p. 20).

"Up on the hill,  
Up on the hill of Tara 'amni  
Allah, Allah,  
God spared me."

This sounds like a couplet designed to present a derogatory image of the Moslems as weaklings mercifully spared by Allah from the wrath of the brave Christians. It betrays the general prejudice of the Christian populace.<sup>29</sup>

A description of another political rally, this time at Meda Abunā Petros, follows. It is no coincidence that it was held on the annual November

Note 28 continued from page:

p. 62-63, Regardless of the truth of the claims of either party, they were nevertheless the two main factions. In contrast with the Unionist Party, the Moslem League advocated independence.

29. Trevaskis (p. 30) writes, "The influence of the Coptic Church over the lives and behaviour of the Eritrean Tigrinyans cannot be overstated. This to some extent accounts for the severe intolerance of the Christian for the Moslim minority. With few exceptions the Jiberti or 'elect', as the Moslems are known, are denied any rights in land, are treated as social outcasts, and live as traders and craftsmen. Not surprisingly the great majority have today sought refuge in the less intolerant society of the towns."

religious festival of ሕዳር ዳንቤ ማርያም ክህበላቲ  
(the Asmaran St. Mary of Zion), for the collaboration  
of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church with the Unionists  
was no secret.<sup>30</sup>

The assembly is disturbed by the command of a  
British officer to his troops to keep the Unionist  
partisans in line. To do so, the troops hit the peo-  
ple with the batons they were carrying. Perhaps such  
action as this described in the novel as well as emer-  
gency legislation enacted later on reinforced the  
unionists' allegations and suspicions of the British  
Administration's hostility to their cause.<sup>31</sup>

30. "By 1942 every priest had become a propagandist in the Ethiopian cause, every village church had become a centre of Ethiopian nationalism, and popular religious feast days such as 'Maskal' (the Feast of the Cross) had become occasions for open displays of Ethiopian patriotism. The cathedral, monasteries and village churches would be festooned with Ethiopian flags and the sermons and prayers would be delivered in unequivocal political language. (The Abuna's Epiphany address in 1942 was characteristic.)" Trevaskis (p. 60).

31. "The Ethiopian Government, through the Unionist Party, continued to criticize the B.M.A., accusing it of thwarting the efforts of those who espoused the irredentist cause and of abridging common freedoms of assembly and speech. The B.M.A. could hardly be accused of <sup>abridging</sup> common freedom; considering the circumstances, it allowed maximum self-expression within the limits of order." L. Ellingson, loc.cit., p. 266.

The Unionists go to the office of their president to complain about this action. He addresses them eloquently and closes with an anecdote about an old, blind Roman senator who tells the Senate that he wished he were also deaf rather than suffer the suggestion by a fellow Senator that Rome submit to her enemies. The protagonist dubs this president of the Unionist Party the Asmaran Cicero (ካሳሙኒ ሳካሮ).

Political tempers, however, were not always so subdued. Haylom recounts that beginning on the afternoon of Lākatit 14, and going on until Lākatit 16, 1950 (A.D.), there was much shooting and bomb-throwing in the city of Asmara which left hundreds dead on both the Christian and Moslem sides.<sup>32</sup> He mentions in particular the killing of Abrāha Yared, a native of Asmara and a cobbler, by a half-caste British soldier. The reader, however, is not enlightened as to the

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32. A close historical parallel to this fictitious rendering is found in Trevaskis (p. 68). "On 28 August (1946) a few Sudanese troops celebrating the Moslem holiday at the close of the Ramadan fast became involved in argument with some Christian Abyssinians in the Asmara marketplace. A Christian Abyssinian mob soon collected and attacked the Sudanese. One was stoned to death; the others escaped to carry the news to their comrades in the barracks. Immediately, about seventy of them careered murderously through Asmara's native quarter armed with weapons ransacked from the armoury. During the two hours or so before they were finally brought under control they killed forty-six Christian Abyssinians and wounded more than sixty others. Nine Italians were also wounded."

reason behind the prominence given to this victim. It can only be assumed, under the circumstances, that Abrāha Yared's standing, formal or informal, in the unionist movement must have been unusually high.

This unexplained interjection only serves to confirm the author's lack of mastery of the narrative technique. The character of Abrāha Yared has not been built up — his name has not even been mentioned until this point. No sooner does he come on to the scene than he disappears. His exit is as instantaneous as his entry. In fact the two events are simultaneous. If Abrāha Yared was politically important and significant, the author should have shown in what that importance and significance lay. If the manner in which he was killed was particularly shocking, again the author ought to have described how. If, on the other hand, his innocence sent ripples of shock through the community, then that ought to have been conveyed as well. As it stands, the prominent mention of Abrāha Yared's death is unaccounted for and only adds proof to the narrator's lack of skill.

Soon after this account, the political theme of the novel is abruptly shelved. Haylom's unconsummated love for a certain Akəbārāt along with brief samples of the love letters he wrote to her follow. This digression from the main theme is pointless. It is neither warranted by the flow of the political

narrative so far, nor can it be said to provide relief from the grave tenor of the main theme.

The last chapter closes this technically and aesthetically defective novel with a note of ambiguity. A decade or so after the politics of the early forties, Haylom is working as a teacher when he is suddenly brought to the police station on the basis of false charges made by an informer. In court, Haylom gives his name as "Eritrea" and his nationality as Ethiopian.

« ከብ ከሥመሪ ዝላበሉ ወዲ ከሥመሪ ብምግኒቶ  
 ሳይቶ ኤርትራ ስከ ዝላኒ ኣውን... < ስመዓ-  
 ኤርትራ ኤቶ > ኣናበሉኩ ዝሓበርኪዎ ከብላኩ  
 ብሃገራዊ ኤቶቶቲያ ዘግኣተባ ኣናተሓበንኩን  
 ኣናሳራሪኩን ብካፍሊኩ ኣናተሓሳኩን  
 ብሓገጥኩ ኣኣብር ኣኮሎኩ ፡፡ መምህራ ባ  
 ፍቓፍ ወካዶን ፍቓፍ ሳድን ፍቓፍ ሕዝ  
 ብን ኣገልግሎት ሃገርን ኣጠናቂቑዎ  
 ስከ ዝመሃራኒ ሳይቶ ከሥመሪ ሃገራዊ  
 ኤቶቶቲያ ከም ዝላኒ ዝምከሩ መንኣ  
 ስቶ ምግኒቶ ብኤርትራ-ዊነተቶ ብዘኣ ጊዜ  
 ብሓበን ገኣድኩኩ » (p. 47-48).

"As my home is Eritrea and as a native of Asmara who grew up there..... I live in happiness taking joy, pride and satisfaction in the double situation of being an Ethiopian national at



the same time that I do not forget the slogan I raised saying 'My name is Eritrea.' As my teacher had properly taught me the love of parents, of country, of one's people, and of the need to be of service to one's country, I expressed many times to him with pride that as a native of Asmara, I belong to the country Ethiopia, and that I am an Eritrean youth."

This clumsily formulated passage indicates a crisis of identity that Haylom seems to be facing. He claims to be both Eritrean and Ethiopian. He could comfortably have been that were it not for the detectable unease in that dual identity. He appears to be subject to a tug of war between Eritrean nationalism on the one end, and "Greater Ethiopian" identity on the opposite end.<sup>33</sup>

The view that politics in Eritrea since the mid-forties has reflected this generalized crisis of identity and widespread tension can arguably be presented. Whereas in the early forties and fifties, a significant

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33. In Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society, Chicago, 1974, p. 40, D.N. Levine speaks of the historical experience of "Greater Ethiopia" as a unified whole. He writes, ".....After they had separated into different tribes with distinct cultures, the peoples of Greater Ethiopia did not live as discrete isolated units. For the last two millenia, at least, they have been in more or less constant interaction through trade, warfare, religious activities, migration, intermarriage and exchange of special services."

segment (half or close to half of the Eritrean population was for union with Ethiopia, disenchantment with Ethiopian (more specifically, Shoan) hegemony at the close of the fifties seems to have sent many members of this initially pro-Ethiopian block towards an Eritrean nationalist cause.<sup>34</sup> Although there is nothing to indicate that Haylom's political career followed the same course, he is not the same staunch unionist at the end of the novel that he was at the beginning.

To recapitulate then, this work utilizes the novel form very inadequately — merely for the purpose

34. Däjazmač Tädla Bayru, once head of the Unionist Party and the first elected Chief Executive of Eritrea, joined the leadership of the Eritrean Liberation Front in the late sixties.

Trevaskis (p. 130-131) wrote of such likelihood with impressive perceptiveness: "Undue Ethiopian interference in Eritrean affairs might also provoke a dangerous, if not immediate, reaction on the part of the Eritrean Abyssinians. Because the Unionist Party accepted Ethiopian instructions when it depended on Ethiopian support, it should not be supposed that the Unionists of yesterday will dance as happily to Ethiopian tunes tomorrow. .... It is for Ethiopia to make her choice. The temptation to subject Eritrea firmly under her own control will always be great. Should she try to do so, she will risk Eritrean discontent and eventual revolt, which, with foreign sympathy and support, might well disrupt both Eritrea and Ethiopia herself.... It is to her own interest as well as to Eritrea's that she should ensure that the Federation survives in the form its authors intended. The future of the Federation and indeed of the whole group of young countries in North East Africa is likely to be affected by the course that Ethiopia takes. She has acquired a great responsibility."

of political propaganda. Even this aim gets confused near the end. The narrative effect, if not intent, does not come out at all. The story proceeds in jerks. Told in the first person, it reads more like a court witness' account of disjointed political events rather than an interesting work of fiction.



"Truly, our morale is dead. It is not as though you were serving your own state and thus gaining recognition and honour, or as though you were considered a human being and thus able to express your heart's thoughts 35 with total confidence. What is it like then? It is a life of fear and constant sycophancy. It is a life where you are regarded as an infinitesimal trifle in the eyes of those white people. It is a life where you are not shown sympathy even when you are advanced in years; it is a situation where they consider you a different creature who is not descended from Adam as they are."

In ወገኑ ርሳሳ, Tāklay Zāwāldi has one of the characters, Dawit, directly complain to his Italian superior about racial discrimination. He expresses his outrage against the better treatment given to the defeated Arabs as compared to the discriminatory treatment shown to the loyal Eritrean troops:

« ነዚ ተገድዶ ዘኮ ነገር ኣግዚኡሉ ልሳን  
 ሰብን ዘቲኡኦ ኣብ ንሱ ንሱ ክርክርውያን  
 ቅድመዘኦ ኮኦ ማዕርነቱ ሂሳብዎም  
 ዘኮሎም ክህሉ ዝተገዛዘሩሉም ኢና። በዚ

35. The idiom of 'the heart thinking' is common in both Tigrinya and Amharic. A popular Amharic song couplet goes:

« ገሉ ገሉ ኣብርሃው ዉግው ኣቀበቱን  
 ልብ ያለበው ነገር ኣጥገኝ ስከቱን :: »

"Push on! Keep on climbing up the slope  
 The object of the heart's thought is not  
 obtained on the very same day."

The latter (the Italian), however, replied, "These about whom you are speaking today are whites, whereas you are blacks. For this reason, you cannot be treated on a par with those whites."

It is an unlikely dialogue. It is hard to imagine the Italian officer replying in those crude terms to his immediate subordinate. In spite of the colour barrier, one would expect an explanation more subtly woven. The author, however, has chosen to present the problem quite literally in black and white. Perhaps he did so feeling that any alternative euphemistic circumlocution would

fail to convey his point.

In አቶሪያው ግራፊካ, the allusion to racial discrimination is more specific and concrete than in the other two novels. It is more starkly exposed with segregation in buses and cinemas mentioned specifically.

« ምን ልገኜ አወቅብኝ ነባንከርሮ ተከላከሉና  
 ሲሳጡ ነባንክቱ ተከላከሉና  
 ብገዛኝ ሃገርና ብገዛኝ ሳክና  
 ብገዛኝ ማሪናና ብገዛኝ ሃብቱና  
 ዩንቅርና ጭብብና አባላንን ለሳኪያና  
 ራዥክቱ ምውጃኝ ለከዝላባኝ ኤፌ. ካብ ሃገርና »

(p. 16).

"We have been forbidden to ride  
 on the same bus as the white man.  
 We have been physically stopped  
 from going into the same cinema.  
 (And all this) In our own country,  
 in our own home  
 In our own land,  
 in our own estate  
 This is not because we are weak,  
 but because ignorance weighs on us  
 It is because the fascists have refused  
 to leave our country."

Haylom goes on to cite two incidents:

« ስከዚ ነጠፋኝ ነክ ሐዲ መጻፍት ምስ  
 ሐፋሮፋ ናብ ቅዱሳን ኢየሱስ ሮማ ነብ  
 ጥብና ይገመገሙኝ ንግሥቲ ኤልሳቤጥ  
 ሸቡ ሊያክ ሮማ ዝተሰየመ ዝነበረ ነ  
 ወፍቡስ ተከቶልኩ ነገሩ ነቲ ሰባቶ  
 ዝቐርብ ሐንጊቲ ብድህሪ ነብ ነገሩ  
 ነበረ ነቲ መስገብ ብፍጹም ወንበር ዘፋ  
 ነበረ ቦታ ነኩተወና፡፡ ግቡኣና ነጠፋና  
 ድሞ ናብ ዝቐከናቶ ቦታ ብመጠውና ብ  
 ያሕና፡፡ » (p. 16).

"In order to try it out, one day I boarded a bus with my aunt in front of Cinema Roma on Queen Elizabeth II Avenue, then known as Viale Roma. The half-caste ticket-collector ushered me towards the back of the bus into a corner which looked like a kennel and had no seats. We paid the fares and went to our destination, standing all the while."

The second incident which involved being barred from entering a cinema arose as a result of his not wearing shoes. It is, nevertheless, considered by Haylom to be another instance of racial discrimination. On the face of it, it appears more an instance of class discrimination, but in the colonial situation the two oftentimes overlapped.



« ሐዲ ወርሐ ይኸሌ ሕዚ... ናብ ኒጅም  
 ፕሮ ዝብሃል ሲነማ ሕውን ነብና ሕፃን  
 (ሐወቀ) ሮፊቶች ነቐርጽ ሕንተዳከባ  
 ናንባሳ ሕፃን ሕፃን ነዚ ምስካ ዘኮ ቆ  
 ልዓ ግን ልዕልዓ ዘብኩ ከከ ዝሓነ ነብኩል  
 ኢዩ > ተባሂኩ ተሰብኩልኩ... » (p. 16-17).

"A month after this.....we went  
 to a cinema called Impero and  
 there when my brother wanted to  
 buy a ticket, he was told 'we  
 can sell you a ticket, but we  
 cannot sell one to the boy who  
 is with you for it is forbidden  
 to sell to anyone without shoes  
 on' and thus was I prevented  
 from getting in."

Haylom further recounts that these were not  
 just isolated incidents but part of a wider phenomenon  
 of segregation and the colour bar.

« ንዓብባ ነብኩል ዝነበረ ሲነማ ጥፋ  
 ክፋነበረን፡ ክብ ልማክክል ነተላ ኒዛወር  
 ተረጎሞ ተግፊኒ ናብ ናቐ ፓሌስ ልማክክል  
 ዝተዳገቦንኩሩ ጊዜ ነኩ፡ ክብ ገር ኒጅም  
 ፕሮ ነቐሩ ሕውን ክግክግኩት መዘተ ዝተ  
 ሰብኩልኩሉን ዝተዳገቦንኩሉን ዝርከብ ነቐ  
 ነሐን፡፡ በብዓፋኑት ሕዝባዊ ለቲቲ ንዓብባ  
 ነብኩል ነጅም ዝነበረ ነብ ወዲ ሓገር ዘቐሰ  
 ሕፃን ነቐ፡፡ ሕዚ ልማ ንክኩስ ከሓ ሓዲ  
 ነፍቆርን ንዓብባቶስን ሓዲ ሓገዝ  
 ነጅም ፡፡ » (p. 17).

"It was not only the cinema which was forbidden to natives. There was a time when I was shut inside a police station for having been found walking in the centre of the city. The refusal to serve me drinks and the eviction at Bar Impero is not to be forgotten either. That all types of public places were forbidden to natives is a fact well-known by all compatriots. This pushed every person to love his country and to participate in such a movement."

These phenomena are related as testimony; they are not woven into the fabric of the narrative. As pieces of political history, though, they stand the test of truth well. For Trevaskis (p. 30) writes:

"The first major problem was posed by the Racial Law and a body of subsidiary legislation designed to enforce racial segregation, confer social and economic privileges on Italian citizens, and generally uphold the principle of 'white superiority'. There was every justification for the immediate annulment of this whole body of offensive law. But at a time when the temper of the Italian population was a matter of anxious concern to the Administration, there was much to be said for leaving matters as they were. In the event, the Administration adopted a prudent and cautious course. At first no formal action was taken but British Administrative and police officers were tacitly instructed that none of the discriminatory laws should be enforced. Subsequently as each became a dead letter it was formally repealed."

The treatment of this sub-theme would have been enriched if comparisons were made with other African works which deal with the same subject-matter. The phenomenon of the colour bar existed widely in colonial Africa, and continues to this day in South Africa. It is more than likely, therefore, that a number of works would deal with it — a failure to do so would in itself be significant and telling. For the present, however, I can make no more than indicate a possibly fruitful line of inquiry.

B. POLITICAL NOVELS

Since the mid-forties when political parties were allowed legal existence during the British Administration, Eritrea has been the one region in Ethiopia where politics has played a relatively more prominent role in the everyday life of the society than in other parts of the country. It is striking that, under such circumstances, so very few political novels have been written. I have been able to trace only three novels which may appropriately be discussed under this heading. They are ዋፋ ነፃ ያ ቀፋ ! ስንጥ ምምሳገን ! (Alas! My Children! For Want of Drawing Attention To!) and ንሙንፃ ዝነገረኛ? (To Whom Am I to Tell It?) both by Abäba Täsfä Giyorgis (Asmara, 1967 and 1973/74 respectively) and ነፃን ልክክ (Let Us Not Be Divided) by Məsgəna Təkästä (Asmara, 1966/67). The last work is not discussed here.

In contrast, Amharic has a larger and more impressive set of political novels. Abbe Gubäñña's ነፃነቴም (I Shall Not Be Born) and ምሳገንክም - ስፋፍ ነፃነጥ (Məlkä 'am The Sword of Flame) come to mind. Haddis Alämayyāhu's ፍቅር ነፃነጥ ወጽዖር (Love Until the Grave), generally considered the best work of Amharic fiction, is also primarily a political novel, although its range of criss-crossing themes and sub-themes does not make this obvious at first glance.

The role censorship has played in discouraging

the writing of political novels can not, of course, be overstated. While restrictive censorship discourages the development of literature in general, its impact would necessarily be greatest on political novels in particular. It is for this reason perhaps that the political novels that do exist are not particularly impressive.

Abäba Täsfa Giyorgis can be considered one of the major writers of Tigrinya fiction. Only a few others can claim two or more works to their names. Moreover, regardless of the quality of her novels, she would be assured a place in Tigrinya literature for the simple reason that she is the first and, so far as I can establish, the only woman novelist up till this day. Since especially her second novel ገጠንና ግጥም? deals almost exclusively with matters pertaining to politics, it stands out as the chief sample of political fiction-writing in the language to date, whatever its aesthetic merits or demerits.

1. ዋፋ ነፃ ስፋፋ! ነፃን ያገኛልን?!

This work precedes Abäba Täsfa Giyorgis' second political novel by six years and is inferior to it. It lacks a clear political vision in so far as no particular philosophy underlies the work. Its inclusion in this chapter is, however, justified on the grounds that it lists an inventory of social ills primarily ascribable to maladministration, and, in the end, transforms the head of state into a reformer who purges the bureaucracy and appoints officials of ability and integrity.

The novel revolves around the vicissitudes of the life of one family. The ills of society and their eventual remedies are primarily reflected by what happens to various members of this family. This is a convenient technique and makes for an economy of characters. However, it is not as impressive in the plausibility of the events it depicts. While some of the episodes are realistic, others are too far-fetched.

The wretched living conditions of the people of a fictitious country called Gärämbit (topsy-turvy) are described sometimes in credible terms, and at some other times in outlandish fashion. The latter is done by having close to impossible things happen to individual citizens of Gärämbit - a girl is given a sleeping pill, taken

abroad to Finiḳā<sup>1</sup> and made a slave there; a fifteen-year old boy, a door-to-door egg-vendor, is given a candy-covered sleeping pill by a Finiḳawi shop-keeper, brought to Finiḳā, castrated and made to do women's work. Such incidents bring back to mind the former days of Arab and Ottoman slave-raiding for Oriental courts. They appear implausible for the sixties of the twentieth century, which appears to be the time setting for the novel.

Central to the work is the success story of the family of Ato Yākä'alo (Mr. Capable). Initially a peasant family, they move to the city, after a period of drought, followed by locust plagues, forced them out of Gäṭār Säṇay (The Good Countryside). Once resettled in Kätäma Mäskäräm (The City of September)<sup>2</sup>, they are able to

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1. 'ḴḴḶ' sounds very close to the Ge'ez 'ḴḶḶ' (Phoenicia) ie. present-day Lebanon. It is true that there is a sizable Arab merchant community in Ethiopia (including Eritrea), but the majority is Yemeni and not Lebanese. Perhaps the semblance between 'ḴḴḶ' and 'ḴḶḶ' is coincidental and not intended to suggest Arab commercial dominance in Eritrea or Ethiopia.
  2. The beginning of Mäskäräm is the beginning of the New Year. It is also the month of the Masqal flower marking the end of the rainy season and heralding the season of flowers (ወርሐ ሐገ) . It has the quality of spring and of rejuvenation to it. The naming of the city thus is, therefore, probably intended to symbolize a new beginning for the family.

earn a decent income and give their children proper schooling. Ato Yäkä 'alo starts out as a road-digger for \$1.00 a day, but very soon acquires a mason's skills and begins to earn \$5.00 a day. The wife, Wäyzáro Täg<sub>o</sub>stu (Mrs. Patience) sells foodstuffs to help supplement their income. They do well and move into a four-room house after only a short while.

The story of the family is one long success attributable to a combination of self-exertion and upright conduct. It is a story of "virtue is its own reward" as is exemplified better as the narrative unfolds and we come to learn of what social heights two of the children manage to scale. The didactic message is clear: clean, hard work by parents and diligent studiousness by children ensure peace and harmony domestically and success and recognition socially.

For the children, however, success comes circuitously. Were they not a story of the absurd, Gäbrä Mika'el's initial misfortunes would have crushed a less persevering man. A son-in-law to Ato Yäkä'alo, he is married to Zäwdi who, unlike her sister Rahel, complied with her parents' wishes to interrupt her regular schooling in order to start a family. However, both husband and wife continue evening courses. He attends language classes and obtains certificates in Arabic, Italian, English and French. Zäwdi gets qualifications in typing and English.



The studious Gäbrä Mika'el decides to leave his earlier clerical post and applies for an advertised job in Kubanaya Bära'ay.<sup>3</sup> His application is rejected on close to absurd grounds. Not only is he told that he lacks ten years' experience, but also that he is not fluent in Hebrew and Greek. The author's imaginative licence is inexplicable here. Although the setting is in a fictitious country and not strictly in Eritrea or in any other part of Ethiopia, the names of the characters and places make the locale clearly somewhere in that region. If so, Arabic, Italian, and English would be not only useful, but also almost essential for conducting business transactions. The addition of French is not surprising either. But the inclusion of Hebrew and Greek as prerequisites for a job is a preposterous flight of fancy.

The undaunted wife of Gäbrä Mika'el, Zäwdi, advises her husband to study Hebrew and German. Here again, the substitution of German for Greek is whimsical in light of the reasons for the rejection of his last application. Following his wife's advice, Gäbrä Mika'el, in any case, studies these two languages for two years, at the end of which he possesses relative

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3. Is 'ሰብኣዊ' a metathesis of 'ሰብኣዊ', although ኣ and ከ are distinct? If so, the name Kubanaya Bära'ay would mean Ox Company Ltd. The word "ox" in Tigrinya has also the figurative and pejorative meaning of "fool". Is the name then chosen to suggest that it is a Fools' Company?

mastery of six foreign languages.

The polyglot Gäbrä Mika'el now applies for yet another job, this time in Kubanaya Gädädä (It has become worse Co.Ltd.). His application is rejected for lack of knowledge of Greek. In the meantime, after four years of marriage, twins are born to them. We are not told how Gäbrä Mika'el managed to support his family during those four years. The time lapse so noticably unaccounted for in terms of employment is followed at the end by Gäbrä Mika'el's departure for Finiqa.

It must be recalled that a prosperous Finiḳawi community thrives in Gərəmbiṭ. Gäbrä Mika'el perhaps thought that he might even the score by going to their land and acquiring wealth there. If that were his hope, he is severely disappointed. As a native of Gərəmbiṭ, he finds out that he can not even obtain a work permit. He gives up after four months of trying and decides to go back to his country. Just before he does so, however, a drunken Finiḳawi beats him up in the middle of the street. Curiously he, the victim, is taken to the police station and jailed there for two months. In topsy-turvy land and neighbouring Finiqa this should not come as a surprise to us.

Resentment of the Finiḳawi community in Gərəmbiṭ is evident. When upon his return, he recounts his misfortunes in Finiqa to his wife, Zäwdi relates to him the Finiḳawayan's mischief here at home. She cites

the case of a twelfth-grader who creates employment for himself by opening up a shop only to be sent bankrupt immediately by Finiḡawayan shopkeepers who league together to undersell him.

The novelist, however, does not transform the Finiḡawi community into an all-purpose scapegoat. In fact, society's major shortcomings are squarely ascribed to its own deficient internal mechanisms. This is accomplished by presenting two lucid accounts of corruption as they directly and indirectly affect two members of the family. One is an account of bribery, the other of nepotism.

Ato Yākā'alo's son-in-law via marriage to Rahel, Ḥalāngay Saltānā is a successful businessman until he starts squandering his money through excessive drinking. The quality of his family life is perceptibly sinking when one day a friend comes to his rescue.

“ንሐከንጋባ ካብ ናቶ ጽንፈ ሓዘቶ ዘውጽኡሉ ልዩ ምዃን ካብ'ውን ኣድሃበ::... < ነጻቶ ተፅኑን ንሓናባ ንክቓ ኣላላጅብ ሓርካባ ንዛፊብዎ. ኣሞ ገኪ ክምዚ ናተ ፊቴባ ኣገተ ኣገንካ?:: < ኣንቲ ሓርካባ ፊቴባ ቱክ ክመባ ጌሪ ክኣውን! ኣምበር ኣነን ቱን ም በከኒ ብተፈጥሮ ኣህ ተዛባባ ኣባ::’ < ዘረባ ቱክ ክኣፊ ኣምበር ናባ ሕጻን ፍቓዕንን መን ክስተብህከኩ:: ኣገተኣኒ ፪፻ ፊርቺ ክተምድኣ ኣኮካ::’ < ዋቶ ኣንቲ ሓርካባ ፪፻ ፊርቺኣ ንምንቲቶ ኣባ ጉቦ ቱቶ::’ < ኣንቲቶ ጉቦኩ መካከባ ኣምበር ጉቦን ፊርብ ኣኮም ኣቱብፊደን ኢ ዋም ክተጥፍኡና ጉቦ ዝብልዎ ቃልኪ ካብ ኣፍካ ኣተውጽኡ::”

(p. 34).

"He concentrated his thinking on how to pull Ḥalāngay out of the abyss of misery.....'Whether it succeeds or fails, let us go and talk to my friend Šāqa Ayajəbo (Šāqa Unperturbed) and see whether you may not get the post of a judge like me'. 'My friend! How can I get the post of a judge! As I am by nature a good talker though, I would have been only too happy.' 'As long as you are a capable talker, who would take note of the law and justice? Even then, though, you must bring \$200.00.' 'Oho! my friend! What is the \$200.00 for. Is it a bribe?' 'What bribe? It is just for the introduction. He does not even come near to a bribe, let alone receive it. Be careful that you do not destroy us. Do not even utter the word 'bribe' from your mouth.'"

The bribe procures the desired result. His own wife is shocked that such an irresponsible family man is appointed a judge. The event, however, illustrates one phenomenal malady of the society-bribery.

A less happy development for the family is Nəwāra's failure to secure employment. After four years of agricultural education in Brazil, he returns home and applies for a job in an agricultural company. As he is more than amply qualified for it, the personnel director, Ato Aygədu (Mr. Unbothered) promises to employ him. In the meantime, however, a fast-talking nephew convinces his uncle Ato Aygədu to employ him instead. Later the nephew triumphantly soliquizes:

« ነገሩ ከሰራ ሰራ ስንት ዘጠነዋል ለሰራ ሰራ ነገሩ »

(p.49). "What is required these days, my friend, is not



« ከዘመን ጥራትም አወጣጥን አዋጅጥን ስብከትን አጥብቅን  
 ገመገማዎችን ለተ-ሰጥንን ሥራዬ ነፍሰጠና ገረጠኝ  
 ዘመናዊነት ሥራዬ ምረጥሰና ፤ ፍብሬና መመሐጃዬ  
 ነቲ ሣብ ወዳኔ ሰጥብሬ ዘመድኝ ዝነበረ አቆፈረ ብናፋ  
 ሐገር ፍርያቶ ምተተካኔ' ሞ ሩፋ ሃገርና ነጥፍ  
 ማረ ምስብጠና ምተረገገደ ። » (p. 55-57)

"The rich of our country do not invest their money on establishing industries, developing schools and increasing the number of hospitals and clinics. Instead in a manner very akin to the proverb 'The deaf knows only one tune' 4, they spend their money on dust, stone, cement and sand..... On finishing their buildings and beautifying them, the owners let them out at the rate of four or five hundred dollars a flat. When they see foreigners and the wealthy pay without as much as a murmur, and they get to relish the flavour of the money, they cause the locals headaches and the lives of tenants much misery by raising the rents from \$20.00 to \$40.00 and from \$100.00 to \$250.00. True! It is not improper to ask tenants to pay

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4. The proverb alludes to a deaf man who at an early age had the power of hearing and knew the 'hit' tune of the day, so to speak. However, unaware that other tunes have come and gone since, he keeps on whistling and humming that same tune for the rest of his life. The proverb is often applied to unimaginative people with a mono-directional approach to life.

higher rents to a proportional extent as agriculture is developing, as employment is rising, and as wealth is increasing. But, in our case, our standard of living is the same old one; there are more of us without jobs than with; if, under these circumstances, our rents rise up with every new dawn, what shall our children eat (feed on) ?...  
 ...If only landlords could think deeper into the future, they would have secured a greater income and a higher esteem. If, for instance, those wealthy people of the country who could afford to have more than two villas built reached an agreement, established a firm and started big industries, their incomes would be many times over those they would derive from house rents. They would have profited for themselves at the same time that they would benefit their people. All those of us boys, girls, men, and women who persist in bothering our government and our families by clamoring for jobs would have thus found employment and improved our lives. The products imported from abroad at high prices would have been (replaced) substituted by national products and the development of our country's economy would have been assured."

Such and other major problems of society are discussed often in the family circle. Gäbre falls ill and is admitted into a private clinic which, however, he soon leaves for a government-run hospital. This gives him occasion to compare and contrast the services in both places, and judges the services of the government-owned hospital better. That observation triggers a lengthy criticism of society at the family

gathering which ends with Ato Yākä'alo exclaiming  
 “ዋዳ ኣላ ባቀቀ ! ሰኢኡ ምዃሪ ሃገሩ!” (Alas! My Children! For Want  
 of Drawing Attention to the Problems) upon which the  
 family decides to inform the country's head of state,  
 Marshall Tānsa'e, of society's grave condition.

Here, the author gives us a glimpse into the  
 character of the country's leader which is in substan-  
 tial contrast to that of the members of his cabinet.

“መሃርሕቲ መሃርሕቲ ዝኣክብሩ ነብሲቲ ዘቀቀስሙ  
 ኣላን ንዓባን ኣላን ዘቀቀስሙ ኣላን ዘቀቀስሙ  
 ዘቀቀስሙ ዘቀቀስሙ ኣላን ፡፡  
 መሃርሕቲ ግን ብሓገርኡ ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን  
 ዓባይን ጽቡቕን ዓባይን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ፡፡  
 ኣላን ኣላን ባሕሪ ኣላን ባሕሪ ኣላን ባሕሪ ኣላን  
 ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን  
 ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን  
 መሃርሕቲ ፡፡ ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን  
 ዘላን ምሓራምን ምሓራምን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን  
 ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን  
 ኣላን ኣላን መሃርሕቲ መሃርሕቲ ኣላን ኣላን  
 ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን ኣላን” (p.73).

"The Marshall's colleagues were  
 not sufficiently educated; their  
 objective was solely of the type  
 which said, 'I and for myself'  
 and not 'my brother and for my  
 countryman'.

Marshall, however, was by  
 nature generous, just, truthful  
 and one who wished well for his  
 countrymen. Without saying 'Let  
 me control everything; let me



do every thing' and believing that many heads are better than one, he gave authority and entrusted responsibility to those whom he regarded capable. Forgetting that they were public servants, these people amassed and acquired indescribable wealth and property for themselves, oppressed the people in education and suppressed their other rights, but managed to put across to the Marshall an image of loyal public servants."

It is against this background that the responsible initiative of Ato Yākā'alo's family is well received by the Head of State. Disguised like an ordinary man, he ventures out into the streets of Gārāmbiṭ at night. He notices that there are indeed too many drinking bars; that night alone he counts seventy-nine bars and brothels as against the report given him earlier that there were only fifteen drinking bars in the entire city. He even sees his prime minister, General Qarṣāt (General Constipation) and another high official of state drinking in one of those bars. He observes the wretched condition of the homeless poor. In one scene which he found moving, he sees a poor man's wife in labour pains by the side of the street. Once home, he orders a servant to take her to hospital and to give the husband \$50.00.

He continues his private investigations the next day. In order to test the way in which the bureaucracy is run, he enters an office with a credible case. The official there, however, attends to his request only after he hands him a bribe of \$30.00. This was the last

straw for Marshall Tənsa'e. Fully satisfied with the results of his investigation, he decides to act. He calls in all his ministers, admonishes them for all the corruption, and banishes them all to the island, Däset Həlqə'em where they all die finally.

Marshall Tənsa'e reorganizes his government and staffs it with entirely new blood. Of those included in his new cabinet, Nəwārā and Gäbrä Mika'el are two. The former is made the minister of agriculture while the latter is appointed the minister for community development. The rest of the cabinet is also filled with highly educated persons.

The rejuvenated and purged regime executes new policies and legislation. In the agricultural field, grain-donating countries are asked to build dams and provide tractors instead. In education, schools are built all over the country and in every village.

Free press is instituted and freedom of expression upheld. Brothels are closed and ex-prostitutes are made to take six-month rehabilitation courses.

Drinking hours are regulated and allowed only from 9.00 to 12.00 A.M. in the morning and from 4.00 to 8.00 P.M. in the evening. “ኃፍከና ዝጥቁኑ መስተ” (p.85)

'Drink hazardous to health' is forbidden, although this is nowhere defined at all. As a result of all these new policies, Gərəmbit prospers. Marshall Tənsa'e is fondly referred to as 'Resurrection of the Second Christ.' His picture is hung in every home, shop and

office. The author assures us that he deserves all this adulation as he, among other things, worked from twelve to thirteen hours a day. After having thus started his country on a certain course of prosperity, he dies following a ten-day illness. The whole country mourns his death deeply.

Although this political novel deals with social ills, its portrayal of them is very bland. It reads like a dull, expository inventory and fails to evoke a sense of indignation, if that were its aim. It lacks realism and contains many preposterous incidents in its narrative. It contorts and compels incidents towards its implicitly set end of telling a politically relevant story. It is aesthetically poor, and didactically weak.

In its political vista, it cannot surpass the idea of a dictatorship. All it does is to provide a benevolent dictator with the high military title of Marshall. Worse, it sanctions personality cult as is evident in the likening of the reforming head of state to a second Christ. It does not, even in passing, mention democracy, political parties, parliament, etc. This is especially surprising as Eritrea had, during the British Administration, a number of political parties, and as it elected its first two Chief Executives during the first few years of its federation with Ethiopia, and, further, as its parliament lasted until 1962, the year of its dissolution. It thus neither reflects nor

is true to the limited democratic experience of the Eritrean polity. Lacking any vision or any worthy hint towards an effective structuring of political, economic and social institutions, it is a failure as a novel aspiring to political relevance or potency, if that were its purpose. It is equally deficient on purely aesthetic grounds as it has neither a well-knit plot that proceeds sensibly nor any well-developed characters with any convincing presence and existence.

2. የላባ ሳንባዳ ገጽታ ?

This is Abäba Täsfa Giyorgis's second novel. Also with a definite political hue, it is stronger and more graphic in its portrayal of the abominable conditions society is caught in, and, therefore, more successful in its purpose. As in her first novel, its setting is an imaginary country called Hermän - a purely fictitious word with no meaning to it like Gərəmbiṭ (topsy-turvy) had.

There are significant narrative and technical similarities between this work and her first. In both instances, the family moves from the countryside to the town following a natural catastrophe. Furthermore, the state of society is persistently commented upon by the family and its failings are exposed through unpleasant episodes that happen to the family as a whole or to particular members of it.

Like the first, this work also lacks political vision - but it is, on balance, a better one because it is less naive in the treatment of its theme. What makes it superior to the first novel is not so much a more sophisticated political sense, as the fact that this latter work does not, in the end, recommend the simplistic measure of a bureaucratic purge by a benevolent ruler as the ultimate remedy. It starts and ends as a critique of society — in this sense, it leaves manifold possibilities

open for improving the political, economic and social setup of society. It does not suggest, as the first work did, that 'philosopher-marshalls' are all that need to be conjured up in order to guarantee a good state and a good society. The propensity of many countries in the Third World to be taken over by 'military redemption councils' is akin to that which is sanctioned by the first novel - this second work does not even entertain it. ገጠን ገጠን is thus more impressive in its restraint from proposing an all-too-facile solution — it is content to merely diagnose the maladies of the body politic.

The narrative starts with the joining in wedlock of the children of two noted families in two neighbouring villages separated by a river. I would suggest that this marriage is only meant to be symbolic of the union in federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia. Under this assumption, the river separating the two villages becomes the fictitious analogue of the River Marab separating Eritrea and Tigray, while the two prominent intermarrying families would be Ethiopia and Eritrea. It may be noted here that a somewhat similar familial symbolism was used by Eritrean Unionists and Ethiopian authorities in the 1941-1952 period in their agitation and propaganda campaigns. The picture boldly and broadly painted was that of the reunion of a lost daughter (Eritrea) with her mother (Ethiopia) with the inevitable suggestion of a mother knowing what is best for her child. The

novelist, here, however prefers to use the symbolism of marriage with its inescapable implication of a contractual agreement between two equal partners. More than two decades of union with Ethiopia could have tarnished the image of the idyllic reunion of daughter and mother for Eritreans. Hence the author's preference for the legalistic imagery of marriage between two equals, which contract, by its very nature, envisages divorce in case of breach of agreement, is quite understandable.

Bäläy Asbu from the one village is married to Rahya Gobäna of the village across the river. After five years of marriage, the first son <sup>ʿ</sup>ṣub (Marvel) is born. Two years later Šəšay (Plenty) and then a year later, the twins Nəwärä (For the Tale of It) and Sä'arä (He became victorious) are born.

The village has the beginnings of modern institutions and the family obviously has a high regard for education. For not only is <sup>ʿ</sup>ṣub sent to school and not to herd cattle as was more customary, but on his completion of Grade Four, he starts teaching his parents the alphabet. As many adults show a keen interest in acquiring literacy, however, two teachers soon undertake voluntary adult literacy programme in the evening and <sup>ʿ</sup>ṣub's parents enrol there.

Life in Hermän, evidently underdeveloped, is under the mercy of the forces of nature. One day, an epidemic cattle disease arises and ravages the villages and kills off all the cattle. Worse, it is followed by

an epidemic of typhus which kills off many people, young and old. 'Īsub's grand-parents, both maternal and paternal, die from the epidemic, and Sā'arā, one of the twins, also dies soon after.

The family leaves the village and moves to a town called Na'ami.<sup>5</sup> There, the parents start life anew while the children continue their education. On finishing school, sub goes to Wəḥiṭa (She Swallowed) city for university education, where his social conscience is deepened by discussions with his fellow students who came from all the fifteen provinces of the country. As a result, his correspondence with his parents increasingly tends to detail the nature and extent of the problems prevailing in the society as a whole. Such use of the form of correspondence gives the work an immediacy and presence which it might otherwise have lacked, for the greater part of the novel comprises of such letters from 'Īsub to his parents. Utilizing this form to good effect, the whole range of major problems faced by the society is covered in a manner generating the various moods of urgency, outrage and proximity. An instance is the problem of land tenure and tenancy

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5. This is inconsistently written as 'ḡḡḡ' and 'ḡḡḡ'. The transcription shall be as above except in reproduced passages, where the specific orthography in the passage will be adhered to.



about which he hears from one of his friends in the university. The following excerpt from one of his letters to his parents describes the anguish of his friend.

« ሥድርኩ ካብቋም ንጥቆቶ ሩዋናቶ ማሌት »  
 ዘሐርሐኤም'ዎ ካብኩ ድመ ርባህ ጥሬ-  
 ሽከ ዘመከሩ ብዘክ ደገም ዘረገቡ ሰባት  
 ኣቋም :: ዋናቶ ማሌት ኣንተ ብሐቂ ኣንተ  
 ብጣፍሲ ዘሐዝዎ ብዳኒሪ ኣቋም ድግቶት  
 ዘተረጎበ ሃብቲ ደገብምን ኣቑሊምን ባሕኡ  
 ቋምን ኣብ ውሒጣ ኣቑመጡ ፍረኣቲ ::  
 ኣዚ ኣሕሱብ ኣኮ ኣመራኒ ውጡ ፍረኣቲ  
 ዋዋኡ ኣበቶ በጃሲኣ ኣምፍ ኣናበክ ን  
 ሕዝንዝን ድመ ብዘክ ጊዜ ፍስምያ » (p.21).

"His family is one of those (share-croppers) tenants who, farming for landlords and taking only a fourth of the produce, find themselves under severe strain. The landlords, regardless of whether their ownership of the land was based on a true claim or on iniquity, are seen living in opulence, luxury and arrogance in Wahiṭa city. When Amina ponders over this state of affairs, I hear him often sorrowing thus: 'Oh! what misery, my father!, Would that I suffered in your (stead) place, my mother!'"

Another excerpt, so similar (faithful) in its details to the 1973 Wollo/ famine also evokes outrage against an administration incapable of either thwarting such a mass famine, or dealing with it effectively

once it breaks out. On seeing so many dead from hunger on the roadside, Amina and his friends suffer very great shock.

« ነገሩና ህጻን ኤፍብ ዝተወከድናካ ለሀላፊነት  
 ሊገምና... ጓምንታዩ ኣዚ ነፋርኤና ዘፋፍዎ  
 ናና? ... ኣዛ ሃብታም ሃገር ኣንገላጽ ንባ  
 ቋኽ ንጥቢባብታ ነተብኢኡ ኣታክኣኢኪ ኣ  
 ጓታዩ ወሊዩ? ... ለሀብቁኢ ናባዚ ፍጻሜ  
 ን ሞቲን ክመገምን ድክሃኒን ጽፍናን  
 ኣንታዩ ነን ፋጠውን? ... »

ኣዚ ጽንቁዚ ዝወሊዩን ፪ ቀንታዩ  
 ግራፋ ክፋጥናን ብወሐድ ፬ ፪ ፋጥና። ምስ  
 መሳሪያታና ኣሴገ ጌርና ብዛዕብኡ ተሳቲ  
 ልና ክብ ከበ ሥልጣን ንግነቶርቦ ንገዳኡ ክኮና  
 ዝረከብናዮ ያገም ኣብዚ ክጽኢኡክክ ኣፋኢኡ  
 ልን። ዝሓሳ ጥቂቲ ሓቂ ክብኡክክ ኣፋኢኡ  
 ኣብ ኣሞ ዛንታ ናባዚ ክከቋቋ ኣኒታ ኣዚ ሓቂ  
 ለሀላፊነት ክብ ጽሑፍ ስፊኒ ትርኢቲ ኣጠውን።  
ምስ ኣዚም ክብ ፪ ጽኢ ንካህኪ ብጽጽታን ብኡ  
ለገም ስርዓቱን በዓሉን ተክርባም ዘከላ ናፋ  
 ሥን ዝምድና'ኳ ኣንተዘፋብኡኩም ጽቂ ሃ  
 ገርኩም ሃርሞን ኣብም'ሞ ንብላኡኩም  
 ኣፋኢኡም። » (p. 25-26).

"We all, like Job, cursed the days  
 on which we were born..... Why  
 did we not die before seeing this?  
 .....What has befallen this  
 rich country which (has) would have  
 the capacity to feed even its neigh-  
 bours, let alone its (own) children?

..... What (might) may be the origin of this hunger, death, sickness, poverty and oppression? .....

This calamity did not befall only these two villages, it befell at least 32 villages. I cannot write you here about the obstacles we faced when, as students, we held a meeting to discuss the situation and prepared to present the case to the authorities. However, as truth can never remain hidden, you shall one day see written down the story of these miserable (revolting) conditions. Even though you may not have blood-kinship with the more than one hundred thousand people who have perished from famine, typhus and smallpox, weep for them all the same as they are your fellow countrymen of Hermán."

The peculiar situation of Eritrea as a region where the Eritrean Liberation Fronts have been fighting for independence for a long while looms large in the background of the novel. So allusions to it abound, where it haunts the characters in the novel like an ever-present ghost. Occasionally, it comes to the very fore, with hardly any disguise at all. Consider the following passage where Aboy Zär'u (Father Zär'u) convenes and addresses the village assembly thus:

« ነገሩም ላሊ ጥንቀቅን ጥንቅቁኛለን ነገ  
 ሌብ ሓፃ ነገረብኩም ብዘነገሩኑልላ ርሳ  
 ባቶ ነብ ገዛቶ ነቶቶ ነብ ዝጠፍኡ ፲  
 መርኒ ፩ መርኒ ሓጠኑ ነቱሉ ሓጠኑ

« ገፋኝ ዘቀብክ ዓክን ፡፡ ሕዝብ ክሉ ወፃዕ  
 ነቓቤ ነብ ቤተሰብ ነብ ዘመድኡ'ኳ ይገኝ  
 ሓዲ ዓመት ገፋኝ ይ'ላቶ ስኬት፡፡ ይኣና  
 ናበቶ ነቐዱም? ዘብኤ ድቶ በኤስያም?  
 ሙሐዲ ድቶ ወኪዱም? በርቲ ድቶ መን  
 ጢልያም? ኤፊ ኤዚ ያምዋር ኤዚ ኤን  
 ታቶ ኤቶ ጉዱ? ነብ ነ-ካፋና ነብ ተወልዱኩ  
 ነ-ካፋና ንድክዱም ፡፡ » (p. 41-42).

"Oh! (you) people of this village!  
 I have gathered you in order to  
 talk about my predicament as well  
 as yours. Wherever I go, there is  
 no one who does not say 'It is  
 eight months, six months, a year,  
 two years since my son disappeared.'  
 It is now one year since my own  
 youngest child and son Agabe left  
 my house for good, and has not been  
 heard of since. Where have (all)  
 our children gone to? Have the  
 hyenas devoured them? Have the  
 floods claimed them? Has light-  
 ning struck them? What is behind  
 this vanishing? As they are the  
 children of us all, let us  
 search for them."

This address generates a heated discussion which  
 goes on for three hours. Here, the author appears con-  
 cerned to show the other side of the coin. One man  
 rises up, in the end, and addresses the gathering in  
 an entirely different spirit.

« ነብራን ስመዕኒ ነቐ ዘርቡ ኤምዑናና  
 ጠፊኡና ጭንቁም ተከቲና ሞቶም

« ኣንተ ሰባኛም ሌላኻም ኣንተ'ኸጢ  
 ሃክዎኛም ንፍኸኛ ቀብኩ ኣኸጢ :: ርዕ  
 ዩም ብድጋብ ኣብ ገፊኑ ነባሉ ኣንተ  
 ሰባኛ ኣባሪኪኻን ህውነተኛን ዘባሩ  
 ቡንን መዕገርገርን ኣባ ገሃበሪ :: ነታ  
 ዓቕና ሃዊሉ ህውነት ንዘባሪጠ-  
 ነህውሉን ነባሉ ቀላውን :: ኣዓም ካል  
 ኦት ኣዓም ብሥራኽ ኣብ ዝበገጠ-  
 ነተማታኑ ነባሉም ንሕክም ነባኛም  
 ንዓና ነባታኛም ቀጥጢና ኣኸጢ ::  
 ስካ ንፍላጎን ተግዳሕን ከበ ሥጪማንና  
 ኣንቢሆ ኣምህርቲ በዚሉ መሃሪኪ ከፀጂዑ-  
 ነዚ ሓሉ ነጂፖ ዝሰጸ ዘመን ኣፀጂቶ ቀርሃ  
 በ በኩ » (p. 49).

"Honourable listeners! Father Zār'u  
 is saying 'our children have dis-  
 appeared; their predicament is hid-  
 den from us - if they are dead, let  
 us find (recover) their bodies;  
 (and) if they are alive, let us  
 know of their condition of existence?  
 We do not know if his son has gone to  
 some unbecoming place. He was, in  
 any case, mischeveous, quarrelsome  
 and troublesome. Having made enough  
 trouble here, he may have gone on  
 to commit more mischief in a commun-  
 ity which did not know of it before.  
 As for the others, they have gone to  
 cities where they have found employ-  
 ment and are not only maintaining  
 themselves, but are even caring for  
 us, their fathers. On account of  
 able and responsible officials, we  
 see that education has spread and  
 agriculture has developed. Whoever  
 rejects all this and leaves, may  
 the wild beasts find him."

This above view is supported by another speaker, whereupon Aboy Zär'u delivers an eloquent and impassioned rebuttal - so impassioned that the strain kills him that same evening.

« ነገሩን ለሀገር ህብረት ካልጠበቀን ? አርባ  
 ካልጠበቀን ? ስብ ማሕረኩ ገራፅ  
 ካለ ምጉዣን ለፋ ፋርቅን ካልወጣን ?  
 ፊጅቁ ሰብሶ ጽግሕ ስብ ካል ካለ  
 በከን ? ስበቀቱ ዝወከብካ ካልጠከረን ?  
 ሁል ጉልባባ ቀከላ ፊቅዶ ለሀገራችሁ  
 ገዛ ካልነፈተን ? ጽጋብን ሐቅን  
 ፋፋሕን ካሎ ? ካንቱም ዘፋዩቁ ካ  
 ሰታፋም ጉረካክቲ ቀጽከኩም ነገሩ  
 ፋፋ ጉዳይዎ ካላላቲ ጠኩዎም  
 ቀክክሉ ለፋፋሕ-ም ለፋፋ ጠገኑ  
 ቀጠሎ » (p. 43).

"Is it then claimed that cattle are not hungry? That agriculture has not deteriorated? That people have not abandoned their farms and spent their days on litigation in courts? That judges have not wearied applicants by endless procrastination? That women have not been disclaimed by the very men who sired their children? That girls have not uncovered their heads and opened (houses) brothels by the roadside? Is it earnestly claimed that it is a time of plenty, of truth, of justice? You people would then be

children not deserving of their parents - you would hide your wounds, you would dig your own graves, you would disown your children. Enough! May your assembly turn to (become) an assembly of wolves."

Another passage which touches on the wider problem of urban migration but which also appears to allude to the Eritrean problem in particular is the following:

« ነቲ ዋና ሽባር ሰባት ነባ ገጠናት  
 ንተመገባ ናኡሙ ብመገኣኦ ዘጥብኩ  
 ቊደሪ ኣናመዱ ኣቲ ነተመገባ ዩ  
 መገ ንተኩ ኣቲኦገ ኣብ ርካሲ  
 ዘጥመደኩኣ ብዘጥገ ኣብደሚ ፲፩  
 ዓመታ ዝሃበሪ ኣብያተ ሥራሕን  
 ድሕሪኡን ግግሩን ምንም ተመሳሳሪ  
 ከኣ ዘሃበሪ ኣብ » (p.12).

"The major problem was the massive migration of people from the countryside to the city of Na'ami. Over and above the sheer physical incapacity to accomodate all the migrants, there were no new factories, offices or commercial establishments other than those established eleven years previously."

In the above rendering of the problem it is interesting to note that the period of stagnation is roughly equivalent in length of time to the post-federation period of 1962-1973. This is most probably not coincidental. The author here is perhaps

obliquely hinting at the cause of stagnation - union with Ethiopia on a provincial basis. This is not to suggest that it does or does not tally with actual developments. But some such thinking has been a popular one amongst many politically-inclined Eritreans.

Other problems relevant to the wider Ethiopian society, but also applicable to Eritrean conditions, are discussed at length. The long-drawn out process of litigation, the corruptibility of judges by bribes, and the destructive effect of all this is eloquently described as in the following passage:

[illegible]



ጥገኛ የጥቅም አገልግሎት ያገኙ ግራም ተባብሮ ጥራት ያላቸው ጥገኛዎች  
 ዘላቂነትን ማሳደግ አለባቸው ብለው ይናገሩ፡፡» (p. 13-14).

"Even though the villages of Mānān used to conduct their affairs with due propriety, there were, nevertheless, disputes, albeit negligible in number, on the ground limits of farms, on the intrusion of mules into cultivated land, etc. When disputants thus sought arbitration, the judge who could with ease conciliate between them, would instead explain to the plaintiff the seriousness of the harm done to him, while he would tell the defendant that the plaintiff has no truthful (valid) case. Thus he would tender (make) the case graver than it need have been. In order to win the case, each party separately carries bribes to the judge, who, as a result, finds it difficult to give a verdict. He would say that they should take the case to Na'āmi as it was too serious for him to settle. With the judge refusing to dispense justice, the intransigent disputants take the case to Na'āmi as advised, instead of appointing elders to arbitrate between them. Those advanced in age suffer from the length of the journey, the heat of the sun and hunger, while the young see the hitherto unseen and get used to drinks and other habits which they would not have dreamt of or ever considered before."

In contrast to this, the process of justice in the olden days is pictured as having been fair, simple and direct.

«ጥገኛ ነገረደኛ ህግ በጥገኛ ተከታይ  
 ለጥገኛ ጥገኛ ህግ በጥገኛ ተከታይ  
 ትክክልና ያለው ህግ በጥገኛ ተከታይ»

« ቅዱስ ዘውድቼኩ ዝሃበኒ፡፡ ነቲ ጽዕ  
 ድማ ነቲ ክብ ፍጹሚ ኩባን ክጽኣኣን ገተ  
 ቅበኡ ሐካፊነት ብፍርሂ ብጥንቃቄ ብጣሉኝ  
 ድኻ'ምበር ብጽኣ መካ ክፋርኡዎን ፡፡ ከከዚ  
 ንክተባኡኩ ኡናሒቲ ብመገፍት ፍለብ  
 ከፋ ሊቀቅከቶ ንክተባሃሃኩ ቅጻፎ  
 ስልቤት ጥፍኣት ምኡነት ኡናከሊፍኤ  
 ኡናገንጾ ኡናመኣሊ ፋመርኡ ስከ ዝሃ  
 ቢ ኡቶ » (p.10).

"When a village head is elected, elders gather and put laurels on him after determining that he is not corruptible through bribery and that he is a lover of justice, truth and rectitude. And the village head would regard the responsibility given him before men and God with awe, care and propriety and not with negligence or indifference. Thus, therefore, he would reconcile enemies and would explain, guide and advise people, say, disputing the ground limits of farms that the consequence of such arguments would only be ruin."

It is not that the author wishes to paint an idyllic picture of the past, but in order to emphasize the unhappy situation of the present, she is, time and again, compelled to fall back on the past. The general conditions at present are summarized in the following passage.

« 7h 25.1 ynf 1974 k7Hf 20 k54-1+am.

ክላሳ ነከል ድክታት ድማ መኪነም

Участник 546-Участник 9064 Участник 7166

የገጽ 11: አዘጋጅ አባታችሁ ለገጽ 11 ለሚገኝ

የግን ለኒያህርቲ ተፈካክባ ::<sup>39</sup> (p. 15).

"While a few rich individuals grew richer, the poor grew poorer and the cost of living rose and dissatisfaction increased. People could not unite as they were divided on the basis of tribe, religion, and education."

Contrast the above passage with the spirit of community and co-operation that used to obtain earlier:

«የአንድ ድምፅ ብላጭ ካለ ወንጀሊዝ ገዢና ገባጭ

[illegible]

ተገቢውን ሕተመቼክ ድክ'ምበር ናቶ ሕጋዊ ሰጥኦታት

ወፍ ትጠቅምታች ወፍ ደግሞ ሃብቷማች ነፋሳበረጌ።

ኅዲሮም መስኖ ሐዲሲ ፋወርቲ ማንገድቲ ፋዲርግ

ቀንዳም ከመፋ ጌሬ ከም ሄገህላገላም ያህልገሉን

የመከላከል ምክር ቤቱ የሰነድ ማረጋገጫ ሰነድ

ከከ ዝነበረ ስራዎች ጋር ያሉትን ጽሑፎች ላይ።

በርቶን ንጥፍካቶን ዓመፀኛን ስነስሜን ሃገርን ስከ

ዘፋነቦቹም ብመገፈገፍ ርጉኑኑ ነበሩ፡፡ ጸሐፊው ነገረ፡

በሃንዳብ፣ በሙሉ ንሃረግውያን ሕንተሐከቶ

ይህ ሰነድ ለሰነድ ማረጋገጫ የሚያገለግል ነው።

44 444123 : : (p. 11).

"There was not a farmer who would stay at home for lack of a pair of oxen. The land of Hanima was divided between the people of Hanima on 'diesa' 6 lines and was not the property of a few lucky individuals, or of officials, or of a few wealthy people. As they collectively built dams, dug irrigation canals, cleared roads and collectively discussed and deliberated on how their village could prosper and then collectively implemented their deliberations, they were all well-off, healthy and well-fed. As they did not know of theft, malice, injustice and greed, they were of calm spirit. If a cattle epidemic suddenly came and impoverished the people of Hanima, it was an unexpected catastrophe, and not a consequence of laziness."

It is not only the political, economic or strictly social problems that are discussed in this work. It is perhaps singular in its indictment of the educational system criticizing it at two levels. Is it relevant, or practical? And does it have a correct philosophical basis? The following two passages roughly correspond to the two-tier criticism respectively, although in the latter passage there is an overlap of the functional and philosophical basis of

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6. "Diesa" is village ownership of land where periodically plots are redistributed by lot among the residents. It is also known as "Shehena". For a more detailed discussion of this specific form of land tenure, see S. F. Nadel, "Land Tenure on the Eritrean Plateau", Africa, vol. 16, NO. 1, 1946, pp. 1-22.

education.

« በኛ ንጽህርቲ ኣብ ኣዘገባ ገጠርን ብብዝሃ  
ተሰላፊ ቆሪቡ ኣንታ ኣባይ ዝመሀሩ ተማህሮም  
ድማ ኣንታ ኣገብሩ ኣባይ? ተባህሩ ስከ ዘፋጽ  
ናሕን ዘፋህሩን ድማ ተማህሮን ዘዘው ኣጽዕሮ  
ተማህሮን ኣኣሰርሖኩ ኣብድኣ ኣኣሰርሖኩ ዝባ  
ንኣ ኣተማሙቲ ኣዋን ኣፋህሮን ፡፡ » (p. 12)

« ሐቂ ምስ ጠፍኤ ፍትሒ ምስ ተኣኣሂ  
ሐረጎታቶ ኣመጥኑ ኣብ ኣተማ ምስ ኣባ  
ቆሪቡ ኣብቲ ስከ ኣዘበኣ ምሕረስ  
ኣፋኣተሪ ኣብ ባህሪም ዘባድንዑኩን ዘባ  
መሐባዳኩን ፈሪሃ ኣገብረኩሎ ረፍፍሃ  
ኩን ፍቕሪ ሓይምን ኣሕፃፍምን ዘባድርኩ  
ሐቀኛ ፍጠራ ዘቆረሰሙኩ ኣኣይም ሓቆሞምን  
ኣኣኣፍምን ሥራኡ ዘፋረኡሉ ናብ ኣገባብ  
ንጽህርቲ ምስ ኣባ መሪቕ ቅሪኡ ዝብኣ ስከ  
ኣፋ ፍጽሃ ገምሃብ ድማ ብቆቆኦ ፡፡ » (p. 14).

"When opening many schools in the cities and the countryside, as it is not studied beforehand, what children are going to study and what they will do on finishing school, the result for school-leavers has been one of wandering aimlessly. There has not been a time where, once educated, you manage to get employment, to feed your belly or to cover your back with clothes."

"With the absence of truth and justice, and with the departure of the farmers to the city for litigation, the children could not

carry on the farming which their fathers neglected. For their wishy-washy ( ከጥላታል ) (neither here nor there) education was not based on a study of their culture, or towards its improvement; it was not based on learning the fear of God, or on cultivating the love of country and brethren, or on acquiring true knowledge, or on teaching them for jobs commensurate to their strenghts and abilities. Thus it was that there was none around to give the earth even as much as a glance, and thus it was that the earth became too stingy to give forth fruit."

In another letter to his parents, 'ገህጽ recounts the state of a country called Hagärä Qəbṣät (Land of Finality) where the ruler ገጠላይት ገዳላ (Gädilä is neither Amharic nor Tigrinya, although the whole name suggests the meaning 'Mrs. I have killed') confesses to her years of misrule on her deathbed. There is not much doubt left in the reader's mind that this is an obvious reference to Ethiopia. To highlight the sometimes tragic state of affairs, he relates to his parents the death by suicide of a Grade 12 student who has a 79% pass, when university admission was raised to 80% because of shortage of space in the university.

Towards the end of the book, we find ገህጽ's mother brooding over her immense personal problems. Nəwärä disappears nobody knows where, although there are strong suggestions that he might have joined the Liberation Front. ገህጽ himself leaves for study abroad. There is a hint that ሽጽይ either got pregnant or lost

her virginity. To add to it all, constant bickering develops between her and her husband. In the last sentence of the book, 'Jsub's mother in despair asks «ንህንገሩ ዝኣገሮ?» "To Whom am I to tell it then?"

This novel was printed in 1966 (Eth.C.) — a most tumultuous year in Ethiopian history when the old order was being shaken to its roots with nothing viable yet taking its place. It was a year of extraordinary flux and fluidity. The novel hardly disguises its loathing for the powers that be. The fact that it could get printed at all must be attributed to the substantial freedom of speech and press that prevailed during the six months of the Endalkatchew semi-government. One can not otherwise imagine how this book could have passed the censors.

The values and views expressed by the novel are those of the angry young men and women of Ethiopia (inclusive of Eritrea) — angry at the technological backwardness, social injustice, mass misery, hunger and disease prevalent in their society. The plot is not central to the work; it merely serves as background for the views to be expressed by the main character, 'Jsub. The events narrated seem to be there simply to provide a context and a setting for arguments that are forwarded with vigour and lucidity. The snag is that this work, like ሿägaye Gäbrä Mädhən's ሀሀ ሰላሳ ጦር, (1974), a political drama in Amharic, came a little too late in the day to be of any

significance other than to literary history.



## C H A P T E R   F I V E

### PROSTITUTION AND APPROBATION AGAINST DISSOLUTE LIFE.

The magnitude of prostitution in the urban centres of Ethiopia (including Eritrea) and, even more pertinently, the outrage it engenders in many people's minds must account for the relatively extensive treatment or reference it receives in much of Tigrinya (and Amharic) literature. For it is an "institution which is even today widely regarded as alien to the traditional Ethiopian way of life."<sup>1</sup>

The vague beginnings of the profession possibly date to as far back as the period of the shifting capital of medieval Ethiopia. Subsequently, after the founding of Gondar in 1636, we find many foreign travellers referring to its existence at varying length, while the chronicle of Emperor Iyasu I (1682-1706) mentions a 'prostitute's' house in passing. The development of trade along the Red Sea coast in the nineteenth century, the founding of Addis Ababa in the 1880's, the colonization of Eritrea, and later the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941) all contributed to the growth of prostitution.<sup>2</sup> The Italian

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1. R. Pankhurst, "The History of Prostitution in Ethiopia", JES Vol. XII, 1, 1974, p. 159.
  2. Ibid.

presence appears to have particularly accelerated the growth of the profession in Eritrea.

"The establishment of the Italian Colony of Eritrea, and the coming of large numbers of Italian soldiers, officials, and colonists, in most cases without their wives, led to a considerable growth and commercialisation of prostitution which soon reached unprecedented proportions."<sup>3</sup>

Prostitution did not decline with the departure of the Italians, however. With increasing urbanization and the consequent migration of many young women from the rural areas to the towns and cities, its growth continued unabated. Thus it is that we find a number of Tigrinya and Amharic works treating prostitution as a major theme, while many others allude to it.

ወርቅሃ (Wärqaha) (Asmara, 1966) by Musa Aron deals exclusively with this theme. ነቢያ ነቢላ (Prostitute) (Addis Ababa, 1956) by 'Inanu Agonafar, a pseudonym for the well-known author Nägäs Gäbr'ä Maryam, is an Amharic novel which does the same. This Amharic work is included in this chapter for the purpose of comparison and contrast in the two literatures' treatment of prostitution. ወንግሪ ለጸሐፊ

3. Op.cit. p. 167.

(Who is the offender?) (Asmara, 1965, 2nd ed.) by Ar'äya Bälay is, in its second half, an account of the life of its heroine who abruptly turns to prostitution after a sad end to her romance.

In both Aläm Sägäd Täsfu's አዳጋጋጋ (I have not inherited) (Asmara, 1963) and in Ar'äya Bälay's አዳጋጋጋ (I did not exist) (Asmara 1960) extravagant spending on and indulgence in prostitution lead the heroes' lives to near-ruin. ሁሉም ግራግራ (Every night, a wedding night!) (Asmara, 1967/68) by Abräha Gäbrä Həywat does not, on the other hand, deal with prostitution directly. This work is rather a censure of the 'dissolute' style of life in general as exemplified in certain types of night-clubs where the demarcation between drinking, dancing and prostitution is not always that clear-cut. ንጋግሽኝ ማለፍ? (Whom am I to tell it?) (Asmara, 1973/74) contains an incidental reference to such a life style. It is the subject of a short disapproving observation by the narrator who regards it as the cause of domestic unhappiness and turmoil.

ጠጠር ሃገራዊ ግንባ (The He-goat of Father 'Andu's Household) (Asmara, 1960) by Bärhä Ar'äya contains a lengthy episode where a hitherto loyal and responsible family head frequents the house of a woman who brews and sells beer. This touches upon a relatively traditional and socially tolerated form of prostitution. The novelist's treatment of it evokes laughter rather than outrage and appears to

be a light-hearted rebuke of the behaviour of Father 'Andu. It does not attempt to be a criticism of the loose life of beer-brewing women or the dangers that this poses to society.

In Abäba Täsfa Giyorgis' ወፋ ነፃ ዕቃ፣ ስንገረኝ ግጥም/ክንፍ ዕ፣

(Alas! My Children! For Want of Drawing Attention to) (Asmara, 1960) where sweeping political, economic and social reforms are instituted at the end and covered in a space of four pages, the abolition of prostitution and the rehabilitation of prostitutes occupy more than two pages (pp. 84-86). This demonstrates the relative gravity with which the author, interestingly enough a woman, views the problem.

The manner in which the different novels approach the theme shows significant similarity as well as considerable variance. ወፋ ነፃ and ገገጽ ነፃ are, as it were, explorations into the psyche of the prostitute. They give us glimpses into the recesses of the prostitute's mind. They appear to pose and answer the following questions; What image of herself does the prostitute form? Does she revel in her new-found role or does she deplore, resent, or curse her condition? What sustains her in it? Does she derive satisfaction and pride or disappointment and humiliation from the range in the status and number of her clientele? Does the experience harden and embitter her to the extent that she loses all moral scruples, or is its

effect on her character minimal? Does it transform the structure of her personality for the worse, or does it leave it unscathed? Does she regard herself a victim of circumstance who could not help but fall on bad times? Or does she not express any nostalgia for the 'normal' life?

Milly and Miss Kell are essentially contrasting types. The former accepts prostitution heart and soul. She does not show any remorse, not even on the occasion of her tragic end — only a profound irritation that she lost all her 'power and glory' with the disfiguring and disabling effects of a car accident. On the other hand, the heroine of Miss Kell never quite comes to terms with her profession, let alone relishes it. In Miss Kell?, the treatment of the theme is akin to that of Miss Kell. The heroines in both works are in what we may label the category of the 'reluctant prostitute'

The other novels do not endeavour to take us into the private world of the prostitute — her anguish, her pride, her regrets, her hopes, her acceptance or rejection of her role. They leave the personality of the prostitute alone. Instead, they touch on how prostitution affects the life of the unwary customer at the individual level and how it distends the moral fibre at the level of society. The picture of prostitution that they paint ranges from that of a mild, dangerous snare to that of a quicksand which draws its victim, both practitioner and customer, deeper and deeper into itself to cause them ruin and

perdition.

From the works treating prostitution and 'dissolute' life at length or making more brief references to them, a typology of prostitution can be made. It is a broad and arbitrary one, but it may be illuminating.

### 1. Types of Prostitution.

In this attempt at a typology of prostitution, we can distinguish between three kinds: (1) the traditional semi-prostitute who brews and sells beer or mead, (2) the apprentice prostitute who works as maid or waitress in a beer-house, mead-house or in a brothel, (3) the full-fledged prostitute who is a member of a brothel, runs her own house/bar, or is a 'madame' who owns and runs a brothel.

The traditional semi-prostitute in the person of a beer-brewer is variously referred to as 'ሽቃጢት ስዋ' and 'አላቀቀት ስዋ' (beer-seller and beer-brewer respectively) in ጠጠ ዝንግላ ሳንገራ (p. 36-38). The owner of an 'አንጻሪስ' (p.10) (mead-house) is referred to with the generic 'ሃላጪት' (brewer) in ጠረፋ (p. 14), although she is ordinarily also called 'ጠጋኪት' (mead-brewer). The latter type is richer and generally considered more urbane and sophisticated than the former. We come across a 'ጠጋ ስዋ' ሴት in ገጽ አጻጻፍ (p.11) who employs the heroine as maid.

There is a sense in which the beer- brewing or mead-brewing woman should not be considered a semi-prostitute.

For as often as not, the relationship she forges with men is of an essentially non-monetary and semi-permanent type. Further, beer-brewing or mead-brewing is for a number of women solely a means of livelihood and not a licence for prostitution. A single woman, widowed or spinstered, who cannot engage in farming in rural society or who regards a maid's job in the towns demeaning may resort to this form of livelihood. In the event, beer-brewing or mead-brewing shows initiative and even allows scope for gaining esteem in the community provided the drink she prepares is of sufficiently high quality. There is, in fact, very little stigma attached to such an occupation. Respectable members of the community including local officials, the clergy and heads of households can drink in such a beer or mead house.

Villages and small towns which are the sites of weekly markets and/or local courts of justice, and/or local centres of administration as well as bigger towns and cities have their public beer and mead houses; other villages would not normally have them. It is an institution which, for its existence, presumes a clientele coming from various localities for trade, litigation or some such reason. By providing drink for the itinerant merchant, traveller, plaintiff or defendant, local V. I. P., or simply the ordinary thirsty passer-by or local resident, the beer or mead brewer performs an essential service for the community which is much appreciated. In fact, the

owner's love life, smacking more of coquetry than of business, is marginal to the enterprise. In quite a significant number of cases, however, it becomes semi-prostitution.

A rather typical portrait of such a traditional semi-prostitute emerges in an episode in መጠን ሃገራዊ ሃገራዊ. The picture we get of the beer-brewer whom Abboy 'Andu befriends is that of a gentle, domestically-inclined woman whose services, for all practical purposes, could hardly be distinguished from those of the housewife. Not only does she unfailingly prepare delicious chicken dishes for her rather regular customer, but she even provides fodder for his mule as well.

« ነፃ ስለቀፈ ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት  
 ባሕር ወርሃ ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት  
 ነፃነት ነፃነት ... በታሪክ በታሪክ በታሪክ  
 ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት  
 ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት  
 ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት  
 ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት  
 ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት  
 ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት ነፃነት » (p. 36).

"This woman took good care of him by cooking chicken sauce on the successive mornings that he came... ... He was coming every third, fourth day riding his speedy mule. On his descending from the mule, she would tie it to the 'šabaka' tree in front of the house and provide it with edible residual



grains and winnowed hay."

The beer-brewer is thus portrayed as a considerate, none too business-like woman. Even more significantly, she is regarded acceptable and respectable enough to mother 'Aboy 'Andu's child. For the initial motive behind his befriending her was his relations' suggestion to start an affair with a woman who might bear him children. That hope never materialized. « ካዚ ካሉ ካገገሉ ካላዊ ካቲ ዝሓከሉና ውሳኔ ካተጠበከክ ከይገባን... »

(P.38) (While doing all this, his hope of getting a child was not fulfilled.)

We do not have as detailed a portrayal of the mead-brewing woman as the above in any of the other works discussed in this chapter. However, there is a vague depiction all the same. Mead presumes a richer clientele than beer, and whereas a reasonably large village may have a beer-house, only the more important villages have mead-houses. But every small town has at least one mead-house, while the larger towns and cities have several. The image that the mead-brewer has of herself is quite high. She is not only likely to consider herself an enterprising woman, but is generally considered so by society as well. A telling and not so unusual conceit of such a woman is succinctly depicted in the following passage from ፊትኛ ነጻፊ

« ከሐላ ወዛዘሮ ባላችን ቀዳሳን ሕይወት ስለነበረች ከሐላ  
 ስላለች ወዛዘሮ ሆኖች ስለሆነች ስለሆነች ስለሆነች ስለሆነች  
 ስለሆነች ስለሆነች ስለሆነች » (p. 13).

"My name is Wäyzäro Bayuś Yädängətu.  
 (Let them be alarmed on seeing you)  
 It has been a long time since I  
 started living in Addis Ababa.  
 Perhaps you have heard of my fame."  
 (underlining mine)

The fame she alludes to can only refer to the quality of her mead, for that, rather than the beauty of the brewer, determines the spreading of the reputation of a mead-house. This, in turn, chiefly depends on the quality and purity of the honey used for brewing. Many mead-brewers nowadays utilize a certain proportion of sugar as a substitute for honey. This is, of course, not appreciated by the average customer, let alone by the connoisseur. A likely criticism of such a mead-house runs along the lines: «ከሐላ ቀላ ምሽት ስለሆነች ቀላቅታ» (p. 15) (My lady! this sugar-mead scratches the heart). It is an idiom suggesting that it gives rise to an acidic sensation in the throat and further down.

As indicated above, what makes or breaks a mead-house is the quality (or lack of it) of her product. Nevertheless, she may also engage in prostitution. The following passages from ነፃነት ክፍል hint at this.

« የሰባራው ዓፋን ነባክሌቷ ዋላቅ ማህንኔ በመቃታት ፤  
 የህኔ ተፈላጊነት ማዘር ባባቸን ያካስዋላቸው መሆኑ በባሕቱ  
 በመጥፋት ትከላከል ይቻላል ። » (p. 14).

"As the eye of the drunkard surveyed in my direction more than in the owner's, the fact that this did not please Wäyzäro Bayuś began to be manifested in the orders that she gave me from day to day."

Again on p. 16:

« በባክሌቷና በህኔ መካከል ያከሰተ  
 መተሳሰብን ህፃናዊነት ማሳደግ ፤  
 ማረጋገጥ ከመቻላቸው የመፈራረቅ  
 ምኞት ሁሉ በተቻለ መጠን ማሳካት  
 ይቻላል ። »

"So that the trust between the owner and myself would be increasingly strengthened, I began to flee from, in as far as possible, all those men whom she wanted for friendship (romance)."

It is thus clear that Wäyzäro Bayuś is not only interested in the mead business, but also in some of her customers as well. The young heroine of ገጽ ፩, therefore, wisely decides not to pose a threat to her boss and deliberately avoids the attentions of those customers whom her employer finds attractive.

The apprentice prostitute works as maid or waitress in a beer-house, mead-house or brothel. At fifteen years of age, we find Wärgəha working as maid in an 'ኤንዳላስ' (mead-house). This involves pouring mead for customers, washing glasses, giving out change, etc. All the while, nonetheless, a process of acclimatization to prostitution take place.

« ከብዙ ጊዜ ሕዝብ በሕጽ ስላሉት ዘፋኔነት  
 ቃካትን ርክፍቶም ዘፋኔነት ሲሰጥን  
 ከተሰላሰሉት . . . ሕፃን . . . ስላሉት  
 ሰርዞ ስርዞታችን ፍጥነት ሲሆን ይህ ዓይነት  
 ቀጥታዊም የሕመም ሕክምና በመፈጸሙ  
 ቅርጹ አገላለጽ ተከራሪም ስላል ሆኖ ሆኖ  
 ዘፋኝነት ሲሆን አገላለጽ ሲሆን ሲሆን  
 ይህም ከሆነውም . . . » (ፆ. 11).

"At this time, she observed many (types of) people she had never seen before and heard many 'words' she had never heard before..... The....drunks were not in the least perturbed about touching those parts of her which should not be touched, attracted as they were by her appearance (beauty) and the shape of her figure as Wärgəha came holding glasses and bottles to pour them mead."

She finds this manner of treatment irritating at first, but she soon becomes accustomed to it -- even to

enjoy the admiration lavished on her. One instance of such an extravagant attention paid to her was the night when three customers brought along with them a minstrel whom they instructed to play on the 'ṣṣ' (a one-stringed musical instrument) to a lyric they composed in praise of her beauty.

« ወርቅሃ ወርቅሃ ውሳዳ ሐዳሽ ሄጃግ !  
 ዳሕሪ ለወሐንዕሪ ነፃዝረብ ዘረባ  
 ራራ ነፃገንዝ ዘለወሐን ስንባ  
 ዳሕሪ ነስናንዝ ዘለወሐን ስንባ  
 'ቴ ዳጉሪ ርሄሐንዝ ሃሕኢ ስንባ  
 ወርቅሃ ወርቅሃ ውሳዳ ሐዳሽ ሄጃግ ::» (p. 13).

"Wärgəha Oh! Wärgəha! native (daughter) of  
 Ḥadās'jmba!  
 No conversation may follow after (seeing)  
 your beauty.  
 Your large eyes look like flowers  
 Your white teeth look like a shawl of milk  
 That hair on your head is a flower (wreath)  
 of kohl  
 Wärgəha Oh! Wärgəha! native (daughter) of  
 Ḥadās'jmba."

In spite of such profuse praise and encouragement, she nevertheless remained the apprentice prostitute for quite some time.

« ዝላኒ ሓፋኑ ግና ወርቅሃ ስሕ'ሂ  
 ቀዳማቶ ስጉምቲ ናፋቲ ዘሕፍር  
 ዘንቲካ ሄንተ ጽላሊት ግና ዘዳ  
 ፍሬ ስብ ስክ ዘፋቲሂኩ ዳንግል

ኛካ ዐቅፎ ነገሩ ሳላመተ ምልክቱ ነበረ  
 'ነገሩ ላይ ስለሚገኝ' (p. 13).

"But all the same, even though Wärgäha began the first step of her shameful (life-) story, since she did not as yet come across a man who would force himself on her, she worked in a mead-house for a whole year, retaining her virginity all the while".

After thus spending a year in the mead-house which is now alternatively referred to as 'ነገሩ ላይ' (p. 14) Wärgäha decides to take a better-paying job. This time, her apprenticeship continues at the house of a full-fledged prostitute.

« ቁሳሌ ብዙኛ ምድካሞን ምሕታታን ነኝ ነገሩ ላይ  
 ሐንቲ ውርቀቲ አመንገዬ<sup>4</sup> ስሌት ሊጠራ ነገሩ ካለበት  
 ነገሩን ተከናዊታ ሐድሽ ሰዓት ጀመርኩ » (p. 14).

"After much searching and inquiring she found employment in the house of one well-known prostitute upon which she left the brewer's and started work at her new job."

For yet a few more months, she remains the apprentice. For her, the leap to full-fledged prostitution

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4. The literal meaning of 'አመንገዬ' is 'adulterous woman'. However, as the context clearly establishes that it means 'prostitute' here, it has been translated accordingly.

takes place unexpectedly on the second night of a short three-day period during which the owner is away. A regular customer comes into the house and she fails to persuade him to leave. He makes advances. She protests in vain — a protest which months of apprenticeship had gradually but surely weakened.

« < አኅ ሂልኑ ኣባ ዘኮሎ > ኣናበኣ ኣቶ

በኣባልኡ ህቀኣቶ።

ኣቲ ባቦኡን ሕልናኡን ዘጥፍኤ ስጥፍፍፍ

ጣና ፤ <ገንዘብ ኣኡ ኣህበሲ ኣባ ባሙ

ጸቶ ቅርኺ ኣህበሲ ኣባ > ኣናበኣ ገህ ጥቶ

ኣቲ ገንዘብ ኣውጺኦ ኣርካፊ። ርዕሰባ

ጣና ብፍርሂ ኣንቀጥቀጠኣ።

ዓጺሙ ፤ <በኤ ኣንሺ ሓስርተ ቅርኺ >

ምስ በኣ ገና ራዕሴ ባዛ ነቀተፊከጣ ነታ

ሓስርተ ቅርኺ ጩበጠኣ ናብቲ ከብኣ ተሃብ

ኣናጠሙተኣ ቲኣሽ ሕጻን ሓሽ ነም ዝ

ባዛ ኣስናና ኣገኣታን ኣንቀጥቀጠኣ ዘሓል

ፊሃቶ ጓላቲ ኣገኣታ መልኦ። ብኤቶ ኣንኣፍ

ምስ ኣበኣ ሓሽ ሓሽ ጠኪም ኣብ ሓረት መሰቐኣ።” (p.17).

"Saying 'I am a virgin', she tried to defend herself. But the drunken man who had lost his self-respect and conscience took out and showed her some wrapped money saying: 'As for money, I am going to give you. I am going to give you five dollars.' But Wäraqäha shook with fear.

When, repeating the offer, he said, 'Here! take ten dollars!', she was caught with great fright and unconsciously grabbed the ten dollars. Staring fixedly at the man, her teeth and body began to chatter and to shake just as though she had malaria; a cold sweat filled her entire body. When he as much as touched her with his hand, her heart betrayed her and she fell on the bed."

It was in such traumatic manner that Wärqəha became a full-fledged prostitute, fully in the profession in the literal sense. From this point on, her services as a woman are, on the whole, available to the man who is able to pay the price — her body is turned into a commodity with a given market price. The prostitute at this level is discussed in greater detail in the discussion of the works ጠርፋሃ, ገፈጽ ነፃሪ and ጠንቅ ሰባሪ? It suffices here to state that the full-fledged prostitute is essentially different from the semi-prostitute or the apprentice prostitute. Before going into that, however, let us have a brief look at the apprenticeship of the heroine of ገፈጽ ነፃሪ and a slightly longer one at a certain other undefinable status of woman known in Amharic as 'ፀን-ጣር ልጅ' (thigh-maidenhood).

ገፈጽ ነፃሪ's heroine becomes an apprentice prostitute in a mead-house after leaving the man with whom she has been co-habiting. However, as her apprenticeship, unlike Wärqəha's, did not take place while still a virgin, the transition to prostitution is not portrayed as something





like Abäbäč, Askalä, Tərfe, Bogaläč,  
 .....were all once my employees."

Such was the initiation into apprenticeship of ḡḡḡḡḡḡ heroine. Other than the semi-prostitute, apprentice, and full-fledged prostitute, there is, finally, an uncertain status of woman which falls between that of common-law wife and concubine. Some people would choose to consider this type as a mild form of prostitution as its sole basis is the economic supremacy of the male over the female, subjecting the latter to total dependency on the former. The Amharic term which describes a situation of this kind is 'ḡḡḡḡḡḡ' (thigh-maidenhood) and the female party to this relationship is called 'ḡḡḡḡḡḡ' (thigh-maid). Such a woman serves both as maid and bed-mate (thigh-mate); she is a cross between wife and maid. Although I do not know of an equivalent term in Tigrinya, the custom, in my judgement, is not limited solely to the Amharic-speaking regions of Ethiopia, but is rather more widespread, although wherever found, it is limited to urban areas.

A somewhat similar situation is described by Trevaskis as 'contractual prostitution'. After pointing to the Racial Law prohibiting sexual intimacy between the races during the Fascist period in Eritrea, he writes:

"These were, however, seldom enforced, and the Eritrean concubine who was invariably a Christian Abyssinian, became an established element in many Italian households. In many cases, the relationship between patron and concubine was coloured by a genuine affection; in others it was no more than contractual prostitution. But whatever its nature, it came into being because the Abyssinian woman found the Italian male economically more attractive than the Eritrean".  
(p.50) (underlining mine)

It can be argued that neither the situation Trevaskis describes nor the custom of 'thigh-maidenhood' should fall under the term 'prostitution' as the female party is under no duress to oblige any bidder for her affection other than her benefactor-cum-master. It is for this reason that I have not included the 'contractual prostitute' in the suggested typology. However, both the custom of thigh-maidenhood, and the concept of 'contractual prostitute' are pertinent enough to include in a discussion of this kind. Indeed, the initial post-marital stage in the life of the heroine of 1648 796 appears to be very close to this type of situation. There is thus justification to consider it at the least a conducive softener, even if not strictly a type of prostitution itself.

Following her divorce, the heroine of 1648 796 leaves Dässe for Addis Ababa where she hopes to live with her aunt. A male bus passenger promises to help her trace her aunt, but, as it transpires, she ends up living with him for two and a half years. Of her

ambiguous status in this household, she says:

« ሚካኔነቴ በተገቢነት ማታም በሰማን ያልተሠለኝ ፤

ግርድናዬ በዕለጠጠዝ ያልተከፈለ » (p. 11) (My status as wife (was) not sanctioned by church ceremony or by common-law agreement; my status as maid (was) not assessed in terms of salary). More graphically describing her alternating opinions about her status, she recounts:

« መጠጥ ጭን ያከው ቀን <ሃግሬን ሃጠ  
 ሲጽኝ > ቀካቴ ። ግረፍ መሆኔ ባስማኝቴ ።  
 ነገሩ ነገሩ ስባክግር ወዘሌጅ የመጣ ሃገራዊ  
 <ሌጅ መሃበርና ሃገ መሆን ሃክባጥ> ከማክቴጅ  
 በካፋ ባጭን ባገጥናዬን ያመስግናል። ያደንቅ  
 ልጅ።... ሃዚህ ካፋ ሚካኔ መሆኔ ባስማኝቴ። » (p. 9-10).

"On a day when drinks weigh (heavy) on him, he would say 'Wash my feet!'<sup>5</sup> I then feel I am a maid. When now and then he comes home sober (not drunk), over and above saying 'A woman must be respected and free'

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5. Washing a man's feet is not, traditionally speaking, proof of contemptuously treating a woman as maid. In the countryside, wives often wash their husbands' feet. In ጠገናትና ሀገራት (already discussed in the chapter "Historical and Political Literature"), we find the following passage on p. 7-8: « ነብ ገዛ ያምነ ክብሩ በጥላታ ሌተ፣ ከም ሃገጥካጥካጥ ማርያም ኢያ ሃገጥ ሃገጥ ብላ ገዛ ያምነ ሚና ብላ ያምነ ተከላጠፈ... ይህ ሃገጥ ሃገጥ » (On entering home, my wife, blessed like our Lady the Virgin Mary that she is, washed my feet with warm water and after kissing them... she fed her children supper". The heroine of ሂተኛ ጸሐፊ, on the other hand, considers such washing of a man's feet a maid-like chore.

he would praise my womanly domestic skills and appreciate them.....  
On this kind of occasion, I feel I am a wife."

This ambivalent situation could not last indefinitely however. Painfully aware that it did not provide her any long-term security, the heroine of ከተና አዳሪ leaves this man and starts work as maid in a mead-house. She comments of this turn of events:

« ከዚህ የተቀና ሆናና መብከና ነገር ነበረ ሁኔታ ከንግድ ጠፍቶ ነገረ»

ከተና ለመር 10 ብር ቀጠሏት (P. 11) (My luck became smooth (positive) and a mead-selling woman employed me for ten dollars a month over and above providing me with food and lodging). This development squarely put her in the category of the apprentice prostitute. It is for this reason that it was suggested above that 'contractual prostitution' or 'thigh-maidenhood' may be rightly regarded as conducive softeners towards prostitution proper.

To recapitulate: there is the traditional semi-prostitute, the apprentice prostitute, and the full-fledged prostitute. The 'thigh-maid' or Trevaskis' 'contractual prostitute' should not, in my judgement, be deemed as engaged in prostitution. Let us now trace the subject of prostitution as theme or object of reference in Tigrinya fictional works as well as in one Amharic novel. መርኅ, ከተና አዳሪ, መንገድ በዓለት? and የግዛት-የግዛት መርኅ will be discussed at some length.

As MC24 and 1618 446 pursue the theme of prostitution with a singular determination, they are closely examined together; the rest are studied separately.

2. DC44 and 16+5 446

These two works deal exclusively with prostitution, but their approach to the subject shows significant differences. Whereas Wärgəha drifts into the profession almost by choice, the heroine of 16+5 446<sup>6</sup> does so by force of circumstance. There is an attempt to portray Wärgəha as a person with a character aberration; 16+5 446's heroine is, on the other hand, presented as one with hardly any chance of escaping an inexorable fate. The reader can not sympathize with Wärgəha, whereas he is induced to commiserate with the latter. Wärgəha belongs to the class of prostitutes who would regard their profession as an easy avenue to success and are not in the least perturbed by the moral consequences that this may entail for themselves or for society. 16+5 446's heroine is in that other class (more likely the majority) which find themselves reduced to their despised profession by external factors beyond their control. In short, 16+5 446's heroine is portrayed as a victim, while Wärgəha is depicted as a basically amoral person bordering, at times, on depravity.

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6. A glaring defect of 16+5 446 is that she has no name. However, as the story is narrated in the first person, this namelessness of the heroine does not, in any way, detract from the readability of the work as such.

The purpose of Musa Aron and 'Jnanu Agonafar, authors of ወርቅሃ and ሴተኛ አዳሪ respectively, in writing their novels is stately didactic. The preface (not paginated) to ወርቅሃ contains the following passage.

« ኣኒሆ ኣምበክር 'ወርቅሃ' ኬክ ዝከሙኣዎ  
 ሉብ-ወክድ ለላዕሊኡ ኣዘርግኡ ኣኩሉ ::  
 ነፍሱ ኣብ ውሽጣ ዘኮ ዘኣዘንን ዘኣፍርን ዛንታ  
 ተሰቢ-ብሉይ ብወግንሉይ ኣብ ኣንጅና ዝከበካ  
 ዩቀንስቲዮ ዝበዛኣካ ሃገር ኣመፃ ጌርና  
 ካም ኣንሀንጽ ኣብ ኣኣሰን ነዚ ሕጽ ዘኮ  
 ወከቶ ኣመፃ ጌርና ካብዚ 'ናፃ ሕፍሊን ንብሊን'  
 ኣንጽጽልዎ ካም ኣንጽጽቲን ኣንግግዎቲን  
 ብኣኣቲና ኣዘግግር :: »

"Now therefore, I present the novel which I have called 'Wärqä'. In all humility, I remind each of you to note the sad and shameful story contained in it and to think on how we can construct a 'country which has women clothed in virtue' and, further on how we can protect the present generation from this 'life of shame'."

'Jnanu Agonafar reveals a similar purpose towards the end of the book.

« ኣተላቤ ለቲ ኣዓመጡ ገብቶውን ኣዓፈቲ ገብቶውን  
 ንብሊንቲውን ኣዓፈቲ ገብቶውን ኣዓፈቲ ገብቶውን  
 ወታዕቲውን ኣመፃፃቲ ገብቶውን ወታዕቲ ገብቶውን  
 ሓገብቶውን ቶኮ ኣንጽጽልዎ ገብቶውን ኣዓፈቲ  
 ሌጃን ኣመፃፃቲ ኣዓፈቲ :: » (p. 130).



"If there are girls who leave school, and wives who divorce their husbands and ruin the warmth of their family life and wish to spend their lives as prostitutes, it is fit to share my experience in order to help them quickly to change their minds."

Such concern as the above indicates the alarm with which many Ethiopians view prostitution. The novelists do not merely stop there, though. In their varied ways, they attempt to suggest credible motives or factors that lead a woman to take up this profession. In ጠርቆሃ, there is a reference to the possibly manifold reasons behind a woman's decision to take such a course. However, this is not found in the main body of the work, but again in the unpaginated preface.

« ኣብዚ ሊገጽናዮ ዘኮና ሳመታቶ በሽታቶ  
ዚቐጸሉ ኣሳና ገሌኤን ብዘገመን ገሌኤን በዳ  
ጌቦን ገሌኤን ተግዲዶን ገሌኤን ነኣ ፈጽሞ ኣብ  
ኣዝዩ ነፍሶቹ ዚጠብኡ ናቶ ምንጪና ቀካቶ ዩኡ  
ምብካ ነምዘከዎ ዚስኢኦ ነገረዉ ዘኮ ኣ  
ቀመነኩንን »

"No reader would miss the fact that in the times we live in, thousands of our sisters are swimming in the sea of prostitution, which must be greatly despised. Some get into it because of deprivation, some others because of frivolity; some get into it by force of circumstances, some others by volition."

In ኢተኛ ኣፀሪ, practically every turn in the life of the heroine presents her, as it were, with sufficient

cause for going into prostitution; first a child marriage that does not last, then an ambiguous role between maid and wife to an insensitive man, and finally service as a waitress in a < taj bet > (mead-house). After over twelve years in the profession, the heroine tries to fathom the reasons that led her into and sustained her in it.

[illegible]

"Even now, I can not tell whether I got into prostitution by choice or by force of circumstance. What

brought me to the city from the countryside may have been childish dreams and the hope of self-improvement. What pushed me from the role of wife and later maid to that of a prostitute was a fate, beyond my control, of not knowing what to cling to. When I assess the years I have spent as a prostitute, I see that, on the one hand, I have been liberated from the cruelty of men and from many customs and some deeds which oppress women, while, on the other hand, I see that I have been debased in flesh and spirit as well as in mind." (underlining mine)

The above passage attests to the author's impressive sensitivity to the problems arising from women's secondary position in society. The condition of women, it is unequivocally stated, requires their liberation 'from the cruelty of men and from many customs and some deeds which oppress women.' So complete is the author's sympathy with that condition, that he would disregard the debasing of the 'flesh and spirit' that prostitution entails for its female practitioners and emphasize the saving grace of its liberating effect. Indeed, this is a very severe indictment against the customary oppression of women. It is to the novelist's credit that he did so at a time when women's movements were not yet in vogue anywhere.

For 'Inanu Agonafar, an instance of the 'many customs .....which oppress women' is washing men's feet. In 16+8 496, the heroine considers this as evidence of being treated as a maid. This contrasts sharply with

Täkläy Zäwäldi's attitude in ጠያሕ 5444 where the hero praises the same act as evidence of his wife's being 'blessed like our Lady, the Virgin Mary' (see p. 240 above). It is a measure of the enlightenment of the author of ጠያሕ 5444 that he considers as oppressive this custom which, in rural Ethiopia, is a normal and expected duty of the housewife.

Wärqaha is led to prostitution by the urge to escape the poverty of her surroundings and neighbourhood as well as her frivolous love for beautiful dresses. Although her mother died during childbirth, her father, a night-guard, brought her up as best he could. The paternal concern for his daughter is best illustrated by the touching gesture he made on her finishing primary school at age ten. « ግብ ቶሎሁኝ ካተከሁኝ ን ን ጠጥጠርቱ ጊዜክ ልብቶኝ ጭጣጥ ተከብሮ ገዝክካ » (p. 5-6) (He was so happy that he borrowed money and bought her a good pair of shoes — her first pair.)

The item purchased as well as the trouble incurred to procure it only go to prove the very poor circumstances of the family. It is, therefore, not unnatural that after her fourth year in junior and secondary school, she starts dreaming of moving out of the miserable and dingy house she grew up in as well as of wearing beautiful and expensive dresses. For a successful school-girl, the decision to leave her father's house determined never to return to it is atypical

behaviour. Girls of that educational level often take up a short secretarial course or a nursing training to alleviate their circumstances of material inadequacy. The path Wärgäha chose was not, in any sense, even remotely inevitable.

Away from home and totally on her own, she starts work as maid in a mead-house thus becoming an apprentice prostitute. From this point on, her life is one successful climb upwards in her chosen profession of prostitution. On leaving the maid's job, she rents a room and begins soliciting from the streets. After working for two years in a bar, she leaves for Khartoum <sup>7</sup> where she stays for three and a half years and saves more than sufficient money to come to Hadaš 'Imba and open her own bar. Soon selling the bar, she opens a hotel in her name. Her business prospers and she buys herself a car. With the new status of a businesswoman, she achieves a measure of respectability to the point where invitations to weddings and similar functions are extended to her. Using such openings to decent society, she engages in corrupting housewives and school-girls until a car accident

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7. Such travel to the Sudan for similar purposes apparently existed even a century earlier. "The business (prostitution) was apparently so lucrative that slave-dealers used its reputation, according to Wylde, as a lure to attract women from the Ethiopian highlands, with the result that there had been 'quite a business made of decoying pure-bred Abyssinian women to Gallabat, where they were told that they could make plenty of money by immoral purposes', but 'once being got there, they were regularly sold to the slave dealers.'" R. Pankhurst, The History of Prostitution...p. 165.

disables and disfigures her permanently. Her business goes bankrupt. She contracts tuberculosis whereupon she is confined to a sanatorium for six months. She escapes from the sanatorium and drowns herself in a lake nearby.

The course of the life of 16th 446's heroine is markedly different. Married off by her parents at the age of twelve, she lives with her husband in Dässe for three years. Divorced, she comes to Addis Ababa in search of an aunt, but a male bus passenger takes her to his home instead where she lives for two and a half years in an undefined relationship. She leaves him, works as maid in a mead-house, and soon starts the life of a full-fledged prostitute there. After a while, she moves on to Wäbe Bärräha, the principal red-light district of Addis Ababa. In love with a customer with whom she forges a loyal and steady relationship, she gives birth to his son after one year.

She moves into Gädam Säfär nearby and sells just drinks without sleeping with men. This does not last, however, as the father of her son dies in a car accident. That development forces her to resort to prostitution again. Her baby dies from malnutrition. For a while, she seriously considers all the available means of birth control, but rejects the idea altogether. On becoming pregnant again, she terminates the pregnancy by using herbal

medicine which nearly proves fatal. Reluctantly, but unhappily, she continues in prostitution, while at the same time she decides to write her autobiography to warn others of the degradation inherent in it.

Comparison and Contrast between ጠርቅሃ and ነፍሰ ነፍሴ .

Wärqəsha becomes a prostitute in her native city, while the country-born heroine of ነፍሰ ነፍሴ moves from the town of her marriage to the capital city of Ethiopia before she starts engaging in prostitution. Both start work as maids in mead-houses, but whereas Wārḡsha succeeds meteorically to the pinnacle of her trade, ነፍሰ ነፍሴ heroine comes across one unpleasant incident after another which all bar her from making any significant headway in her profession. ነፍሰ ነፍሴ heroine is not happy with her situation and never quite gives up the possibility of returning to normal social life. In this regard, the reason behind her dismissal of voluntary sterilization is revealing:

« የከሁኑ ሥራዬ ተከውጦ ገላ ነግሳቼ፤  
 ይኮኑና ጌዳዳ ተገኝተው የተገኘ ነ  
 ር የሚገጥሙኝ ሲሆን፤ ዛሬ መሃንን  
 ሆነው በመቅረታቸው ሲያዝኑ የምስ  
 ማቸው ሌቶች ይደሉ በክሄም ካሉ የ  
 ሚዳርስ መሆኑ ስከታወቀኝ ነው።» (p. 83)

"If I change from this job, get married, and perchance manage to lead a life of comfort and wealth, I realize that the fate of those

women who are sad because they are sterile would also befall me."

Even as a full-fledged prostitute, she falls in love with one customer and thereafter staunchly declines the offers of others. The following passage demonstrates that clearly.

« የባህ ገለቷ ለመጠጥ ሕንጻዥኛ በሚሆን ነ  
 ዚህም ነዚያም ጋር ስላት ነምታቸ በመሆን  
 ሌላ ነዚህ ወዳጅ ጋር በመሄኔ ፤ ሕርኒ  
 ላባት ነገሩን የሚሰጥ ስም ተሰጥቶታል ፤ የጥንቅቅ  
 ወዳጆቿም ሆኑ አዲስ የሚመጡ ይምገሙታል  
 ቶካ ቶካና ነበር። » (p. 59)

"In order to help sell the owner's drinks, I would spend the evening drinking with this and that man. However, as, at the end of the evening, I always went with my friend (lover), the label 'she has a husband' was given me, and my old friends as well as new customers started to be indifferent towards me."

Wärgäha is the determined prostitute not only out to make money, but to transform as much of the world as possible in her own image to the point of meticulously planning and succeeding to corrupt housewives and school-girls. A woman of immense ego, she concludes a \$100.00 bet with two of her regular customers to procure them two housewives, just to prove her dearly held point that all women had loose morals.



« ከምስክርነት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ዘከላ ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ከሕይወት ዘከላ ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት

መንግሥት ይህንን ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት

"The purpose which sends Wärgäha scurrying up and down is this. She spread her trap with all her might not only to win the one hundred dollars from her customers, but also to give proof that she was a determined woman who would make her claim good and that she was capable of achieving practically anything that she set her mind to.

Who is he who can turn her back? If up to this day she had not come across anyone who could stop her from achieving whatsoever she desired, who would stop her henceforth?"

Wärgäha had the opportunity of education and there was no good reason for her to run away from her father's house. In this, she is very much like Ayən Aläm, a prostitute briefly mentioned in ሕይወት ሕይወት.

« የሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት  
 ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት ሕይወት

"The causes that forced her to be a prostitute are unlike those which forced most of us into prostitution like being divorced or wanting for means of support. She is, on the contrary, the daughter of a big man who fled to Addis Ababa without having been treated with wrath, and who became a spinister without ever having got married."

Although ገፈሪ ካፋሪ heroine also had three years of schooling, she was married off at the age of twelve, which marriage lasted for only three years. She then had little choice but to look for a means of livelihood somehow. Even then, if the man she had co-habited with for two and a half years had treated her decently or even simply clarified her role — be it that of maid or common-law wife — she would have most likely led a decent life. Wärqəha, on the other hand, threw all her opportunity to the winds with reckless abandon, and revelled in her new-found role of prostitute.

Musa Aron develops Wärqəha's character slowly and effectively until she becomes more and more an embodiment of evil through sheer, unscrupulous ambition to succeed, through a fixation to flatter her insatiable ego and vanity and meet society with an attitude of implicit diabolical vengeance. Not that the prostitute's ambition to climb upwards is peculiar to her, as exemplified in Ayən Alām's (see p. 120) following poem, but that Wärqəha lacks all moral restraint.

« ኣኔ በዚ ሞያ ኣመፍረ ከቓጣ  
 ኣሕዋሕዝኻ ጅምራ ጋዲ ካፋ ትገገግ  
 ነቢ ሓካቤ ነቢ ምዃራት  
 ዛሬን ተክኒኡኻ ቁርኻ ካከ ኣጓሸት »

"When I made the move to take up this profession  
 My aim and my wish was to climb upwards  
 Upwards from the modest beginning of a kiosk;  
 Today though I am defeated and give up  
 that hope"

Wärqəha succeeds to the top of her profession, though. With each upward climb, she casts aside irrevocably all the moral restraints which the culture and the society impose. She is the totally alienated, uprooted, glamour-loving success woman. In this, she is very much like Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie, (Doubleday, 1900) who callously ruins the responsible family man who initially encouraged her to start on a successful career of a glamorous star .

The heroine of ከተኛ ኣዳሪ represents the prostitute in conflict with herself who never really resigns to her fate. She is ever taking steps towards a decent self-rehabilitation, but the odds are against her and she keeps sinking back into the gutter. ከተኛ ኣዳሪ's fate can be ascribed more to the failings of society rather than to any inherent character weakness in the heroine. The many passages where she debates with herself show that amply:

« ኣኔ ካልሠራተቲ ሓክም ፎርነኛ ሆኜ ስግዝን  
 ቆይታዚ፡፡ ፋምህርቲ ከዩሮፒኛ የሕዛብ ኑሮዎን ከመጣኝ  
 ንኩሪ ሞከርኩ፡፡... በኣንድ ፊት ዩባዎ ሓክም በሚላ  
 ሕገው ሙያ ተሰማርቼ... ከመንገዱ ካሕከናዎ  
 ህፋሊን፡ ከግህሉና ካልመጣኝ ነገርን በመጽኃፍ፤  
 በዚህኛ ሙሉ ላለመጣኝ፡፡ ቀላም ሆኖ የመጥፈ፡ የመጥፈ፡  
 የመጥፈ፡ ምኞት ኣንጻራ ከኖር ኣቋቋም ? » (p. 104)

"I have lived, not knowing what to  
 cling to, a captive to a world I  
 did not make. I have tried to im-  
 prove the quality of my daily ex-  
 istence, though handicapped by lack  
 of education ..... On the other  
 hand, I took up a profession which  
 the world disapproves of..... I  
 feel guilty about reducing my  
 spirit and mind to shame and about  
 bequeathing a tabooed life style  
 to the culture and custom of the  
 society. Even then, however, how  
 can the wish to live, to grow and  
 to improve one's lot be condemned?"

The occupational hazards of prostitution are  
 better related in ነፍሱ ካዳሪ than in ጠርፋሃ or the other  
 Trigrinya novels. The heroine of ነፍሱ ካዳሪ contracts  
 syphilis first, and sometime later gonorrhea.  
 Wärgäha's only occupational hazard is an incident  
 where a customer forces his way open into her house  
 pushing her against the edge of the wall and bruising  
 her. That requires an immediate dressing in the hos-  
 pital and it permanently leaves a round scar on the  
 right side of her forehead.

From the conclusion of the novel 0644, it is obvious that Musa Aron appears to have a dualistic world view — one of good and the other of evil. Whereas this novel relates the story of the evil Wärgəha, he promises that he will write a sequel to this which will be the story of the good Wärgəha. This latter was onetime classmate of the evil Wärgəha. No such ethically ordered premises underlie the work of 1645 746.

3. መንግሥት ሰላሳ ?

Arä 'äya Balay's መንግሥት ሰላሳ?, first published in 1955 with a second edition in 1958, approaches the theme differently from the two novels discussed so far. Almaz, an only daughter of well-to-do parents, goes into prostitution after a broken romance involving desertion by her boyfriend who, during courtship and final consummation, had been promising to marry her. The loss of her virginity to him precludes the possibility of her considering a decent married life, given Eritrean society's traditional prerequisite of virginity on marriage.

The plot has two discernible parts: the build-up of a romance between a young boy and girl attending the same school, and the abrupt and callous ending of the romance by the boyfriend leading the girl into prostitution overnight. In this chapter, only the latter part of the plot is subjected to examination.

As in the previous two works, the purpose of the novel is didactic. Narrated in the first person, Almaz Bärrhe says that she is writing this story "ካብ ደግ ሓገድ" (from the world of loneliness) in which she lives to advise those who may have started but not yet irreversibly passed onto her world to return to the warmth of family life and to those already in family life to hold on fast to it. She confesses that what initially appeared a glamorous romance to her was only

fleeting and transitory and which, in the end, led to her ruin.

An only child born to a well-to-do family after fifteen years of marriage, she grows up pampered. Initially a good student, her concentration begins to wane once she enters a co-educational secondary school. The mother forewarns against Almáz's decreased interest in school work, but the father is forgiving and forbearing on the grounds that marriage, rather than education, must eventually count for more with girls.

The reason for her decreased interest in school work and her final expulsion was the stirrings of a new love for Mulugeta Barhanä, a schoolmate of hers. On a ማርያም ክስተርካቅ<sup>8</sup> weekend in Massawa, she loses her virginity to him. As of this event, Mulugeta slowly draws away from her until, one day, he sends her five fifty-dollar notes with the note «ናፋ ፍቅርኪ ዋጋ» (the reward for your love). Deeply disturbed, she goes out of her home and wanders aimlessly in the city until she suddenly realizes

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8. This is a religious anniversary in honour of St. Mary which falls on ፒጾሪ 21 every year.

that it is too late in the night to return home. A car stops by, and the man inside offers her a lift. He takes her to his house and she finds herself sleeping with a man she met for the first time. The man gives her some money, and the next morning, she leaves for "the city of solitude" where she still lives.

Although this "city of solitude" to which she goes is identified physically as Massawa, it is evident that the city she refers to as such is a mental construct. It is the internal world of dejection and loneliness she finds herself in that she terms "the city of solitude."

Once in Massawa she is employed as cashier at a bar, rents a small room and becomes a prostitute. Like Yt8 Y88/5 heroine and unlike Wärgəha, the locale of her prostitution is different from her home town. This is a more typical picture as prostitutes generally consider their profession humiliating and would rather be engaged in it in a locale where family relations, old friends and acquaintances are not likely to come. They prefer as much anonymity as they can possibly secure.

After saving some money, she moves from the small room she first rented to a three-room house and starts selling drinks and entertaining at home. A certain Hadgu, one of her regular visitors, persuades her that having children is important. Very much like



the heroine of የፊት ሕይወት, she stops going to bed with others. Soon they start living together, and she gradually stops selling drinks altogether. She becomes pregnant after a while. Instructed to transfer to Asmana, Hadgu asks her to go with him, but she refuses to do so on the grounds that she would be ashamed to go back to her native city where her cohabitation would not be as highly esteemed as ordinary marriage. When he actually is transferred, she becomes so upset that the baby dies in the womb a few days later. It is taken out after an operation; her general health, nevertheless, declines. One afternoon, sitting by the sea shore, she decides to write a book on her life, goes home, and begins it.

In the final chapter of her story, she attempts to distinguish between 'love' and 'lust' and says that Mulugeta's feelings for her were only of the latter type. She tries to pinpoint the root cause behind all that which went wrong. In retrospect, she feels that her father was, perhaps, too indulgent as exemplified by his oft-repeated assurances and extreme leniency

« ያምን ሙከራዎች ዘላቂ ነፃ ምስክርነት  
 ቀደም ነፃ ነኝ ዝላቀቀክኝ ነፃ ልሳኝ  
 ሥልጣን ዝነበረኝ ግምት ፍርሒ ዋሽኩ ብዘሐ  
 ሠራ ነፃ ነፃ ልሳኝ ፋምህርቲ ዝነበረኝ ነፃ  
 ነፃ ዝላቀቀክኝ ፍቶ ሙከራዎች ምርኅሮ  
 ኣውን ዝላቀቀክኝ ኣኣ ኣሰራ ኣሰራ

ሃሳታቸው ስለሚባሉ ሃሳታቸውን ይጻፉ  
 ሃሳታቸውን ለሌሎች ለማሳወቅ ሃሳታቸው  
 ለሌሎች ለማሳወቅ ሃሳታቸው ለሌሎች  
 ለማሳወቅ ሃሳታቸው (p. 116)

"It was when the level of the fear of my parents decreased that I took to heart the matter of breathing fresh air with Mulugeta. I reneged on my faith in education and became Mulugeta's captive on hearing the paternal words 'With a father like me around, what harm can reach you? Is not my wealth for you? Of what use is education for a girl anyway?'"

She does not think that her trust in Mulugeta was wrong, but that his whole conduct was dishonourable. Although indicating her father's pampering attitude as a possibly primary contributing factor, she wonders up till the end about what went awry. The answer to her question seemingly remains as open-ended and as unresolved as ever when, in the closing sentence to her book, she asks "መን'ቱ ሰላሳ?" (Who is the offender? or who is to blame?) Incidentally, the title of the work derives from this puzzlement.

The final question is, in a sense, a rhetorical one. For the dedication of the book gives a clue as to what the author considers might be the right answer.

« ሥነ ሥርዓት ለሕዝብ ለማድረግ  
 ለሕዝብ-ሥርዓት ሥርዓት ለማድረግ

ካሁንባቸውን ጥላቻቸውን ማረጋገጥ ይገባል።  
 ይህም ማረጋገጫ ወይንም... »

"To those parents who bring up their children with the proper discipline, feed them as well as educate them properly, and thus provide their country with worthy and self-exerting citizens.....»  
 (underlining mine)

It is telling of a traditionalist orientation on the part of Ar'äya Bälay that the novel never questions whether the blame, fault or offense does not squarely lie on the custom which equates pre-marital loss of virginity with disqualification for marriage. For although Mulugeta could be blamed for being deceitful, Almaz can not be censured for having trustingly loved him to the point that she did. Neither should the blame be heaped upon the loving father of an only child. Were the novelist more enlightened, he could have raised the issue of the validity of the hallowed customary requirement of pre-marital virginity in a changed era and circumstance.

Of the combination of factors that drive Almaz into prostitution: (1) the pampering indulgence of a father (2) despair after a broken romance (3) the conviction that her loss of virginity automatically dimmed any prospect for marriage, the last one ought to be considered as the most critical. The author, however,

suggests the first as the most determining, and would like his readers to believe that lack of stern paternal guidance can lead girls astray. Contrast this with OC4.4 where, in spite of strict paternal guidance, the heroine succumbs to prostitution through fickleness of character as well as an ambition to climb socially presumably via the easiest route open for her. OC4.4 is, however, similar to OC3.1. OC4.1? in the sense that social factors are not made to figure prominently as causes for prostitution as they do in 16+5 4966. Indeed they can not do so in OC3.1. OC4.1? as Almaz happens to be the daughter of well-to-do parents unlike the heroines of the two other works.

In contrast again to the heroines in the two other works, Almaz's switch into prostitution is abrupt, unforeseen, almost instantaneous. Wärgəha's entry into this profession, although traumatic because she was a virgin, occurred after more than a year's work as an apprentice in a mead house and in a brothel, while that of 16+5 4966's heroine took place after marriage, cohabitation with a man, and, finally, work as maid in a mead-house. The last two, as it were, gradually and quite consciously drifted into prostitution. With Almaz, it catches her unawares and it happens overnight.

4. ምሽት-ምሽት ጠርፋ

In contrast to all the above three novels, Abrəha Gäbrä Həywät's ምሽት-ምሽት ጠርፋ (Every night, a wedding night!) does not deal with the theme of prostitution per se as with that of 'dissolute' life in general as typified by the "goings on" in night-clubs.

It is difficult to regard it as a novel, since there is no development of either plot or character. It is, more accurately perhaps, a cross between an allegory and belles-lettres; it endeavours to convey a spiritual message by the use of symbols. It provides a macabre setting and raves against the pleasures of the flesh. It is doubtful that it is only against prostitution that the work preaches; it is, more credibly,<sup>a</sup> highly pietistic outrage against the material and carnal aspect of human existence. This attitude is prevalent in the Orthodox Christian Abyssinian ethos where the spiritual life is praised and the material life is denigrated out of all proportion. There is an indication in the preface (unpaginated) that the author has had Ge'ez religious education as exemplified in the following quotation.

« ካሕደረ ካሕደረ ሴት ጸግዚኑ ወክረግኒ ምቅላግሐ፤  
 ሰብኢከ ዘበከርከደፃ ግበርካደላው ወበከምካፋፃ ፊጠ  
 ሮካደላው ሐሰኩኒ ካላወ ቀፋፋኩኒ ። »

"While the cow knows the house of its master and the donkey knows the field where it may rollick, men whom I made in my own likeness and created in my own image searched for me in order to kill me."

This is clearly then the work of a man deeply steeped in the religious tradition of Abyssinia who finds the modern pastime afforded by night-clubs deeply revolting. The illustration on the front cover of the book shows the curtained entrance to the night-club called Məṣāt Məṣāt Mār'a. A dumb-founded observer looks on, from a safe distance, at the curious-looking customers of this night-club — human from the waist on up and beasts and snakes from the waist down.

The narrator, carrying an invitation card, approaches a man and asks where the wedding is being held. The latter tells him that there is no particular wedding — it is the 'ሻ' (shed) of «'ሐሐሐሐሐ ሐሐሐ ሐሐሐ ሐሐሐ» ("Weddings Eternally" Every night a wedding night!). Unlike the normal shed, however, this one has no natural greenery covering it. It is decorated, instead, with artificial leaves, branches and flowers. This descriptive contrast is obviously meant to convey the sterility and vacuousness of the hedonistic style of life. Once inside, he notices that the shed is as wide as the horizon and as high as the sky. It is clear, here, that the shed is meant to symbolize the whole earth, while the activities within symbolize the worldly

life in general.

A hostess leads him from the bigger hall to the <አከፋኝ> (inner room for more important guests). On the way, he notices posters on the walls reading:

« ይኸ ፍርቂ ከቂረ ሐገስ!  
ናቀ ሥልጣኑን ለታ!  
ዘፋኝነቱ ከፋጠካቸው ነፋ!  
ቀኔ ስብ ከቂረ ነፋቱ ! » (p. 9)

"Joy after midnight!  
The place for the modernized!  
He who does not get drunk does not improve!  
Man during the day, beast during the night!"

He does not like the inner room and goes back to the great hall where the coming of the bride and brides-groom is announced. The narrator vainly searches for them only to be told that everyone in the 'das' is really the bride and bridesgroom. When he expresses surprise that it could not possibly be a wedding night for those who looked old enough to have seven or eight children, one person answers:

« ናቀ ሃፋጣኝነት ገዳቀ ካሉ ካንተ ዘፋኝነት ናቀ  
ክፍሉን ስራ ዘመን ወጥሶ ናቀ ሃክም ፍፋጣ  
መወዳኝነት ምልክት ካሉ :: » (p. 14)

"If you will not say that I am delving into religious matters, I would venture to say that this is a sign of the end of the eighth millenium or of the eve of doomsday."

Here, we have an allusion to the popular belief in Christian Abyssinia that this last millenium before

doomsday is a decadent and evil one. The author's inclusion of this belief into his work indicates that this is how he, like many of his tradition-bound countrymen, characterizes this epoch and that its unmistakable trade-mark, for him at least, is the night-club.

The narrator finds out that the 'das' is built on top of a grave-yard and that, now and then, human bones pierce upwards and appear on the floor, but that this does not in the least bother those dancing. The dancing 'orgy' continues. The music for the dance is provided by:

« ብሩቅ ተጓዥ ሕያውብክቷ ፕብሩቅ ሕፋሕፋ ለሀካ  
 ሕፋፕ ብሩቅ ለሀካ ሕያውብክቷ ፕብሩቅ ሕፋ፣ ሕሰሮ... » (p. 16)

"The long pipe of cunning, the trumpet of evil, the flute of wrongdoing, and the drum of iniquity....."

An illustration shows this strange semi-human, semi-animal band playing on their instruments.

The noise of the dance-floor renders sleepless the dead lying underneath. They leave the land and go to the sea from whence they will cross over to the land of the living where music is played by Ezra and where the conversation is sane and fruitful.

Disgusted with the night-club, the narrator heads for home where, near his house, he sees a large crowd of



people gathered to mourn the death of a very rich neighbour.

The rich man is buried in the expensive tomb he had had ordered built beforehand. As he got rich by unfair means, however, his misdeeds are spread in gossip fashion right after the burial: « ዘቀዘርኑ ዘላዕጽ ፡ ዘባንበሮ ዘኣህ ል፤ ዘቀበሐኖ ዘኣሌ... » (p. 46) (Harvesting what he did not sow, claiming what he did not deposit, gathering what he did not scatter.....). His friends and relations, doubly grieved by this gossip, try to forget their sorrows by going to Məšāt Məšāt Mär'a night-club on the very night following his burial. Here, at the end, we are told that the night-club was built, after all, on top of a 'ሰውራ ለበቅብር' (p. 48) (an invisible grave) and not on the grounds of an actual cemetery. We may ask, here, whether the night-club itself is not an invisible one and whether it is not merely a symbolism for the hedonistic way of life.

C H A P T E R   S I XE D U C A T I O N   A N D   S U C C E S S

In E. W. N. , many articles extol the benefits of modern education.<sup>1</sup> In Tigrinya fiction, this concern assumes the status of a major theme in at least four novels and of a secondary theme in many others and is, in fact, the single most pervasive subject throughout the literature.

In most of the works, the protagonist, almost invariably from a humble family, achieves success through education which is regarded primarily as a means of escaping his background of poverty. At the end of the process, he is shown living comfortably and helping his family. This approach reflects the general misery prevailing in society and the drive to overcome it where possible. Many of the writers believe that education is the surest route to salvation available.

The attitude expressed to traditional education is in contrast with the above. The primary motive there was the desire to enter the Church and/or the related wish to make spiritual progress.<sup>2</sup> The chief reason for

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1. For a discussion of one of such articles, see Ch. 3, pp.81-84.

2. The distinction is valid as entry into the Church could sometimes be motivated solely by the economic consideration of acquiring the right to farm the rather richly endowed Church land.

such an attitude was, of course, the indissolubility of education from the Church: "Traditionally, the nucleus of Ethiopian education is formed by the ancient institution of church schools."<sup>3</sup> Although the most erudite and learned among those who attended such schools formed a relatively privileged class of judges, chroniclers, scribes, counsellors, etc. in court circles, the purpose of such education was generally not secular success as much as ecclesiastical service. For this as well as for a more mundane economic reason, it remained limited in its extent. "Church education.....never achieved anything like mass education, perhaps because the economy's employment opportunities did not require it".<sup>4</sup>

Modern education was initiated in Eritrea by Swedish missionaries who established a school first at Monkullu near Massawa around 1866 and soon after in Adi Ugri, Asmara, Belesa, Gheleb and Zazega. By the beginning of the 20th century, there were over 100 students in Swedish mission schools. A Roman Catholic school was also started in Keren by 1880 with some seventy girl and eighty boy boarders, and five hundred day students. Others were founded at Akrur, Halai and Massawa. Even much earlier, a Lazarist school for boys had been founded at Alitena in 1847. With the turning

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3. E. Ullendorff, The Ethiopians.....p. 199.

4. R. Pankhurst, "The Foundations of Education...." p. 241.

of Eritrea into a colony, missionary education was supplemented by that of the Italian military authorities who set up schools to teach primarily their new recruits the Italian language plus a little arithmetic and geography.<sup>5</sup>

The setting up of Eritrea's educational system had to await the advent of the British in 1941. Although the period of the British Administration was brief, the system it established was to have a far-reaching impact especially as regards the development of Tigrinya as a written language. The use of Tigrinya as a medium of instruction in the schools was both novel and welcome. The number of children attending government schools, although small both by present-day standards and in absolute terms, was impressive nevertheless for its time and is better appreciated when contrasted with the spirit and substance of education during Italy's colonial rule. "The Italians provided only elementary schooling for Eritreans during their occupation of the country, and in 1950, under British rule, only some 10,000 Eritrean children were attending school."<sup>6</sup> The last part of the above quote mentions only the figures but neglects the significance of the departure that educational policy in Eritrea took under the British in that the latter set no upper limits to the Eritrean student's educational aspirations.

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5. Op.cit. p. 254-256.

6. Ernest W. Luther, Ethiopia Today, London, 1958. pp.140-141.

Ullendorff's account of the development of modern education in Eritrea is that it was "set on its course during the British caretaker administration by an exceptionally able and enthusiastic Director of Education" and that it took great strides forward during the ensuing years of the Fed<sup>e</sup>ration and post-Fed<sup>e</sup>ration periods.<sup>7</sup>

The treatment of the theme of education and success in Tigrinya fiction does not reflect the varied aspects of its genesis briefly sketched above. Thus we do not encounter a mission-educated character as a central or even as a secondary figure. A school setting going back to the British Administration Period does not exist in any of the works. Nor does a missionary or even merely a foreign teacher, of whatever nationality, figure at all in any of the novels. Implicitly as well as explicitly, the initial educational setting appears to be that of the Fed<sup>e</sup>ration and post-Fed<sup>e</sup>ration periods.

Most of the works dealing with this theme have one common feature. After finishing secondary school, the hero often ends up winning a scholarship for study abroad — Europe, America and in one instance Brazil. This feature of foreign study may be accounted for in terms of one or a combination of any three factors.

(a) A few Ethiopians (including Eritreans) did go

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7. The Ethiopians..... p. 194.

abroad for higher studies. E. Ullendorff, for instance, writes:

"Apart from the students who make use of the educational opportunities now existing in Ethiopia; several hundred of the ablest young Ethiopian men and women are pursuing their studies abroad, especially in the United States, Britain, Canada and Germany. Many have already returned to their country with degrees in Arts, Science, Law, Engineering, Agriculture and Medicine. Among these are a few who now hold senior appointments in the central government as well as in the provinces." 8

(b) The fact that higher education has not developed locally may again provide the explanation. There is, of course, one institution of higher learning in Eritrea—Asmara University—but it is very recent, being established at the same time as or only shortly before the time of writing of most of these works. Of its difficult beginnings, Markakis remarks:

In 1967 Haile Salassie inaugurated a new university in Asmara. This project was promoted by an order of Italian Catholic nuns who operate a secondary school in that town. The zealous sisters waged an effective lobbying campaign to raise their school to university level, despite woefully inadequate resources and the opposition of the university authorities in Addis Ababa. Eventually they succeeded in winning the Emperor's blessing and a financial grant

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8. The Ethiopians ..... p. 202. See also Anatomy of a Tradition Polity.... p. 154.

for their project. In 1972  
this institution was taken  
over by the state."<sup>9</sup>

The considerable interval necessary between inauguration and the need for the university to establish a name for itself would tend to preclude the use of a local setting for higher education in Tigrinya fiction. E. Ullendorff comments:

"Of late, even a university has been established at Asmara, but inevitably it will take time for standards to evolve and for professors of the requisite calibre to come forward."<sup>10</sup>

3. Traditional education presumed that the student should travel far and wide to satiate his thirst for knowledge. Sylvia Pankhurst writes:

"Youths who devote themselves to any branch of higher learning in the Church must quit their parental home and take up residence in the school of their choice, where they share the communal life, the simple fare and numerous fasts."<sup>11</sup>

In one sense, therefore, the writers' insistence on their heroes' going abroad may be regarded as a modern equivalent of the traditional itinerant scholar. There is further the aura of sophistication that foreign travel lends to its

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9. Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity.....p. 152

10. The Ethiopians.....p. 194.

11. Ethiopia: A Cultural History.....p. 237.

subject, even when it is done simply for the purpose of education. To imbue one's hero with that kind of aura only adds lustre to the profile of his character.

In Tigrinya fiction, education is not regarded within the traditional mold — as a route to the Church and spiritual progress. Nor is it regarded within its modern framework at its noblest level — ie. as an end in itself, as the pursuit of knowledge 'for its own sake'. There is no portrayal of a scholar or of a scientific researcher whose incessant intellectual labour helps mankind to move one step further in its effort to decipher and control nature and society.

The role of the educated man as a social reformer is discussed at varying lengths and with differing depth in some of the works. However, it is nowhere rendered as the singularly outstanding role, although the problem of transition from a traditional to a modern society would have warranted such a treatment in at least one or two works. This contrasts with the situation in some Amharic fiction where Ar'aya in ክርክሪ and Gudu Kassa in ፍቅር፡ክስተት፡በፍቅር (Love Until the Grave) are basically social reformers and critics.

It is now appropriate to enumerate the novels that deal with education and success as their major theme. Bärhä Ar'äya's ወጣት፡ክንፍ፡ፋገፍ (The He-goat of Father 'Andu') (Asmara, 1967/68, 118 pages) is perhaps the best of all the works on this subject. Taraqa Nəgusse's ጥገራ፡ፋገፍ፡ክፍ (The Needy Succeeds) (Asmara, 1965/66, 69 pages) and Tä'ama



Fətwi's ገጥሙ ሁሉ ለጥጥር ነው (The Things of this World are all transient) (Asmara, 1970/71, 58 pages) are not only much shorter works but also more amateurish. This is quite understandable in that the authors of both works are only seventh graders and evidently very young. Amdä Mikael Malu's ገጥሙ ሁሉ ለጥጥር ነው (The Fortunes of a Poor Student: A Lesson for the Rich) (Asmara, 1965/66) is a very short and compressed work (50 pages) as well. This last work will not be discussed in this chapter, however.

1. OMM: 43894: 438-:

This work combines the recreational and utilitarian functions of literature rather well. It provides much amusement at the same time as it carries an instructive message. Both of these aspects will be discussed at greater length below.

Barha Ar'aya has also written a -fictional Tigrinya work published a year earlier than the fictional work. ጥሪ ሐገረ (Crazy January) (Asmara, 1966/67) describes the hectic activities associated with January - the season of marriage conveniently chosen by tradition to come right after the gathering of harvest. Bärhä Ar'äya's description and castigation of the extravagance of traditional marriage festivities in this work is amply echoed in his novel in the precedent-setting simplicity of the hero's manner of marriage.

The hero of Ḥammīl ʿAzīz Aʿarāfom, comes from a very poor family whose sole property were an ox called Habti (Wealth), a cow named Tārḥas (May she multiply!), and her calf Ṣagʿaru (The Hairy One), and a donkey called Kābrāt (Dignity). Cattle are customarily given names, but not donkeys. The naming of the donkey and the choice of the name which is contrary to the pack animal's popular image of stupidity are probably meant to convey poignantly a picture of extreme poverty. An even more startling device employed by the author to heighten such effect is the funeral dirge that he has Father ʿAndu compose and recite when a sudden flood drowns

and takes away Tərḥas and her calf, Šägʷaru.

ከብ: ሃፋስት: ዘከላላ: ከፀጌ  
 ከብ: ጊንዳ: ዘከላላ: ከፀጌ  
 ከብ: ላይት: ዘከላላ: ከፀጌ  
 ከርሐስ: ከፀጌ: ለከላላ: ምስ ደጌ  
 ምስ ምላሽ ከራዊት ራሳ  
 ብደራስ ተዘጋጅ ከገት ብቆት  
 ከፀጌ ተዘጋጅ ጠፍኤት ከራዊት  
 ናብ ከምላሽ ከብደራስ ጠቀስባ ገጽ (p. 16)

Ye vultures found in Nafasit  
 Ye vultures found in Ginda  
 Ye vultures found in 'Aylat 12  
 Have you seen my cow Tərḥas along with Šägʷaru,  
 With her calf that is grey-coloured?  
 I was unvigilant, become forgetful  
 through sleep in broad daylight.  
 I am dispossessed of my cow;  
 She is lost for all future time.  
 Tell of my mourning;  
 Convey my grief to God.

For A'aräfom, though, the above incident is only one proof of poetic justice. “ ወዮ ምግብ ናብቲ ደብኡ ከናብረዎ ስና ከንሽጦ ዝነበርና ..... ተክሊቡ ..... ! ተክሊቡ ..... ! ተክሊቡ ..... ! ከንሆ ክቼ ምስ ውሒቹ ነፋሳ ምዚኡ ንከምና ወገደዎ” (p. 19) (The water which we were adding to her milk and which we were selling.....accumulated.. ....! accumulated.....! accumulated.....! And lo and behold! It has now come in the form of a sudden flood and taken away our cow). This observation of his, at an early point in the novel, also sets the seal on the honesty and integrity of A'aräfom which remain the high points of his

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12. Näfasit, Ginda's and 'Aylät are all places by the course of the river Dərfo, with Näfasit and 'Aylät at the highest and lowest points of the three. The suggestion here is that vultures at all the places above could find scattered the various parts of the cow and calf to feed upon.

character to the end. The mixing of water with milk to which A'äräfom alludes requires elaboration.

A'äräfom's parents could send their son to school only by selling the cow's milk and using the proceeds for his clothes, books and note-books. Tärhas used to give four bottles of milk a day which sold for Eth. \$2.00. On the advice of a neighbour, A'äräfom's father starts adding two bottles of water to four of milk, thus profiting an additional dollar a day. The thinness of the milk alerts a customer as A'äräfom reports to his father: " ከሚ ልገሮ ስለቀረ ካብተን ወጥሮ ጊዜ ደባ ነፋውንባሉና ዓረጋልና... ነዚ ደባሉም ከምስ ነገጽቶ ነፋኑ ነቁ ቀጠኑ ተስረዱ፤ ገነ ማቶ ተጽወኩ ነኩሁም በከፋሪ..." (p.6). (Today, one woman, one of these of our regular customers.....said to me, "What has happened to your milk? It appears to me that it has grown thin. Are you adding water to it?")... The father vehemently protests at the suggestion and claims that the increase in the yield is easily accounted for by the fact that his whole occupation now centers solely around the cow, leading her to good pastures and good watering spots.

An unexpected incident exposes the fraud, though. The donkey broke the big jar of water in the night. The next day, A'äräfom not only could not find water to wash his face with but also took just four bottles of milk. When the next morning, he noticed a newly bought water jar and moreover took six bottles of milk, the inference was clear

and inescapable. He corners his father into admitting his habitual adulteration of the milk but fails to persuade him to give up the practice. The incident of the flood does so, however, and A'aräfom feels vindicated.

The loss of their cow and calf meant the loss of cash income for A'aräfom's family but it did not interrupt his schooling. A'aräfom's mother bought several hens. By selling the hens as they grew older and saving the proceeds as well<sup>as</sup> the money from the sale of the eggs, they were soon able to buy a cow again. When the cow gave birth to a calf and<sup>the</sup> parents decided to sell the milk as before, A'aräfom insisted on a condition -- that he alone would milk the cow and that water should not be added to the milk. The father agreed, but as a guarantee A'aräfom had him enter an oath. «ሕቴ ነክ ዘበካዎ ኪዳን ብስያዎ ካብዚ ክብሪኦር ክኣተዎም» (p. 23). (As he (the father) agreed, he (A'aräfom) had him enter an oath in the name of God).

The novel's inventory of woes and fraud ends early, however, and humour begins to take its place. When at a geography class in the third grade, the teacher asks the students to locate America on the map, only A'aräfom is able to do so. The teacher subsequently asks: «ንክመህገ ገረሳብ ስብ መን ቀብሃሉ » (p. 214) (What is the name of the person who found America?) The whole class raise their hands «ተመሃሮ ብብንካብ ሓዲ ዲያህኪ ነቀጥያዎ ክሰረፍዎ! ኢኦም ሞ ክስኩ» (p. 25) (The students together in one voice

replied to him 'A'əräfom'!). The teacher and A'əräfom laugh at the students' folly. It is left to A'əräfom to tell the class that it was Christopher Columbus who 'found' America.

On completion of secondary school, A'əräfom is employed by Ethiopian Airlines which makes free air travel possible for him and his immediate family. Ato 'Andu boards a jet plane to go to A'əräfom's city of work. Once aboard the plane, Ato 'Andu causes a hilarious riot when, in an effort to look out of the window, a passenger unwittingly steps on his feet. The latter stands up furiously and creates a scene.

“ንኣቶ ነገረግዳኒ ..... ተረገድ...! በኩም : ንሱ  
 ድማ ግዳፊና ያሆ .....! ኣባረኣሉምን .....!  
 በኩም :: ንሱም ግን ፲ ዕውር .....! ጠንባር .....!  
 ስኩምን ታቶ'ሞ ዘቀጥርኡ ኤኩም ብዝመከሰኩ : ንሱ  
 ሳኢ ግዑፋ ህፃር ድሉ : ኤኩ ኣብ ያህፍፋሮም  
 በድሌ ..... ኣቲ ዝረገድም ኣዘኩም ዝሰምሩ  
 ስብኣቶ ኣባሎን በኩ'ሞ ንሱም ሳኢ ኣንታቶ  
 ኩፋን ዘቀሰምሉ .....! ኣንታ ወሳኒ .....!  
 ዘቀጥርዎ ..... ወጪ ስበቶ .....! ኤኩም  
 ኣቲ ድሉ በቲ ግድማ ትሰባሉ ነምዘካ ስኩ  
 ቀተሰም ያም : ስብኣቶ ኣንተኩንካ ንዓናቶ  
 ዲገ ንውዳኡ ኤኩም መከሰኩ ኣሞ :  
 ኣቲ ሕዝቢ ብስሓቕ ተሰብተሉ ::” (p.32-33)

"And you have the audacity to step on me.....! May you be stepped upon.....!" he (Father 'Andu) said to him (the passenger) whereupon the latter said, 'Please leave us alone!.....I had not seen you .....!' But Father 'Andu replied, 'Blind .....! (Can't you see?)..... Cross-eyed.....! (Clumsy.....!) And why can't you see?' Wondering to himself whether the peasant was sane or not, the passenger said, 'Here is a man who can not hear ( listen) !' to which Father 'Andu replied, 'Why can I not hear.....! You vagrant.....! Undisciplined .....Mother's boy.....!' And as though unaware that the plane was travelling in mid-air, further said, 'If you are a man worth your salt, come on out and let us have a fight!' at which point everybody roared with laughter."

It is not solely at the expense of rural folk that the reader has his laugh. The above contrast between the sophistication of the city man and the rawness of the peasant is matched, in places, by pleasantries at the former's expense, as well. City folk, especially city girls unacquainted with traditional household chores, also receive the sharp edge of the author's wit and humour as will be shown below.

Once in his son's city of work, Father 'Andu relaxes and spends a good time. A 'arāfom, in his turn, goes to visit his parents where the latter insist on his getting married. The father urges their selection of a bride for him, whereas the mother is more open to the idea of a man choosing his own bride. All the same, though, she recounts

humorous stories of marriages which failed (pp. 75-88.)  
and all happen to be instances of the man choosing his  
own wife.

A 'aräfom marries a woman of his choice soon after.  
As a city girl unacquainted with the traditional baking  
of 'ጣታ' (ənjära), she fails to bake any on a day when the  
maid had taken leave by proceeding about it in the most  
unthinkable manner.

“ ወቀዘሮ ወርቅነሽ ቀግብርኑ ኢካ ሴቲናቶ ዘፋኒፊኑ  
ባሕካ ካንታንጎንጎን ካንታብል ተቆጻጺላ ነቲ ልዕ  
ጥግ ከም ቢያቲ : ሸሐኒ : ጽብቲ መሲኡዋ  
< ስበቲ ቀሽሽ ወሐካ ንክቲብሃል መጽሐፍ  
ፋሐድብ > ከምዝብሃል ነተን ከዳሚቶም ኢዛ  
ሊካኡ : በዚ ሊካኡ ፎፎርቂ ጥፋቴ ኣናወልወኩት’  
ያ ጣታ ስከንጢታ ተብላዓና ዝነበረት : ኢካ ብካ  
ምና < ኣሞ > ጥፋቴ ብዳህዳ ፎፎርቂ ሓደበቶ ካብኡ  
ወቶ ከመቶ ዝበከ ዳህዳ ጣፍ ሳፋኒ ባብኡ ስኒ  
ባብኡ ነቶቲ ጽንብልብል ነቶቲ ተዳጊቶ ወጽ  
ኢካ ኣሞ ካብኡ ኣንደርዲቴ ከምኡ’ውን ሌሌ  
ሓ ንስብላያ ዳዊላ ብላንተብኡ ትግብር ጽኑ  
ጣብር’ምበር ዝሰንከትኦ ኣንተሰንከትኦ ኣኮ  
ኣቶ መጥግ ኣናቐርሓሉ ዘዘሰንከትኦ  
ጣታ ሌጃህሃህ ኣናበከ ኣብቶኒ ኢካ ተዛረበ  
ቶ’ሞ : ኣሌፊም ኣካ ወቶ ኣዲኡ ዘዘንተዎኩ  
ታፊካ ዘኪኒ ብዘሓ ስሓቐ : ” (p. 106-107)

"Although she had never tried it  
before, Wäyzäro Warqənäs decided  
to bake 'ənjära, knowing that other  
women do. Very true to the proverb



'In order to be considered a skilled housewife, a priest's wife washes books', Wäyzäro Wärqənāš washed the clay oven disc with 'Omo soap' thinking it to be much like plates or cooking pots. As she was washing it, she was cursing the maid saying, 'The dirty one! And she was cleaning it with this dirty cloth and then baking the 'anjara and feeding us that!'<sup>13</sup> The white 'ጣፋ' (ṭaf) came out eyeless, toothless and in rounded balls. Desperate and also frightened she called her husband and told him, 'Do what you will! Whatever I bake is cut by the clay oven disc into pieces that open up, and I can not do any better'. Recalling the stories his mother told him, A'arāfom laughed heartily."

The woman he married was an educated secretary, but she was not a traditional housewife. Nor did their marriage follow the traditional pattern. He married her in a simple ceremony in the Municipal office of the city where he worked. To placate temporarily his parents who insisted on a proper wedding feast, he had sent money to help towards buying the necessary provisions. On arrival with his wife, though, he notifies them that he does not want a wedding feast. To their question: "ከዚህ ለጉሉ ሃገሪክ ለግዳ ሳይገባቸው ዘኩና ሌላ ሃገሪክ የሆኑ?" (p. 95-96) (What becomes of all these provisions which we have bought?), his answer is simple and to the

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13. The clay oven used for baking 'anjära is frequently wiped with cotton-seed oil to make its surface non-sticky. The cloth used for this purpose naturally turns black and greasy.

point: "ከብቻ ቅዱስቲ ክብርታዎ ተክተውዎን ኔታግብዎን ካዚ ንኣመቲ ክጽንብኩዎ  
ዝኣኸል ኣቶ" (p. 96) (You put it into your holy believes  
and nourish yourselves on it; it is enough to last you a  
year.)

A 'gräfom's break from such tradition is not con-  
fined to the four walls of his family home. He takes it  
out into the open to the large gathering at church on his  
wedding day. The following is an excerpt from his bold  
address:

"ገፊኡ መርሓ ካብ ጠቐሙ ጉድኣቱ ከታ  
ዝበዛኡ ክስተውፊኦሉዎ ከምዚ ናተቶ ክኔ  
ግብኒ ብመሃኑ ክርክያ ንኣላብኦሉዎ ኣቶ ክ  
ብዚ ክብ መሃኡኦሉዎ መርሓ ንኣብ ኔታር  
ቐከፋ መጺኤ ዘኮሉ ኤኩ ዘረብኩ ብዝመፈረነ፡  
ክብ ምዃሪው ዘረብኩ ንመፍሪዱ ቤተ ክር  
ስቲያን ሓመብት መሃኑ ቆርቺ ሂበኩዎ  
ክኮሉ ኤኩ ክብ መንበኒ ተቐመጠ፡፡" (p. 105)

"I have come in your midst that  
you may bless my marriage, and  
in order that I may be exemplary  
to you and that you may do as I  
have done realizing that the harm  
of a big wedding is greater  
than the benefit.' Having spoken  
this, he said, in his closing  
address, 'I am giving you \$500--  
for the repairing of the church'  
and sat".

The role of the educated man is thus portrayed not

solely as one who improves his own and his family's fortune, but also as one where, both by exemplary behaviour and open campaign as above, he is the sober and balanced social reformer. Sober because of the cool, rational approach to the unnecessary waste weddings customarily involve, and balanced because of the protagonist's regard for the community's piety as manifested in the generous cash gift he extends to the community for the repair of the church. Such admirable portrayal of the educated is not evident in the other fictional works.

At the same time that he calls for discarding the old custom of expensive feasts and is thus modernist and forward-looking in this, he is also one who frowns and scoffs at any slavish imitation of European ways. This is made abundantly clear in his bride's and his own studied dressing of traditional costumes on their wedding day.

« ስላሃ ሐሙስ ቀን ከቀጥታ ከቤት ሳይሆን  
 ለሰው ሃገራዊ ፍቅር ከቤት ሳይሆን  
 ለሀገራዊ ሰላም ሳይሆን ለሀገራዊ  
 ግብረሰብነት ሳይሆን ለሀገራዊ ግብረሰብነት » (p. 97)

"When it got to be about 5.00 a. m., they (the bride and bridegroom) wore their national dresses and also put on their gilded cloaks and went to church to make the vow of marriage."

A 'gräfom, however, does not simply let the matter rest here. In his address to the church gathering, he pointedly refers to the unbecoming efforts of couples who lived in European-style clothes.

“ሐይ ነብተ ስባት ከብ ነገሩ ነገረዉ  
የተቀ ብናቱ ሃገራዊ ልብብረ ከሐይ  
ብናቱ ሃገረዉ ነገ ገገረዉ ዝገረዉ...  
ብናቱ ሐረገሩ ነገ ገገረዉ ነገረዉ ‘በሐ’  
ዝገረዉ ተገረዉ ገገረዉ ሐረገሩ ነገረዉ...” (p. 104)

"Instead of wearing their national dress and putting on their country's cloaks like I have done, some people (one or two people) went in European cut of dress and hire what is called 'a veil'".

Such remarks confirm A'aräfom not merely as intent on discarding obsolete customs in his culture, but also as a person determined to uphold what is worthy in tradition.

At a different level, the educated man, through the hero of this work, is shown to be an innovator. He introduces the new but simple practice of the use of the community register for births and christenings, and for marriages.

[illegible]

"The god-father priest<sup>14</sup> had them take the vow and exchange rings in the manner proper to the occasion. As A räfom had ascertained beforehand that the village did not have a marriage register, he brought two registers from the city where he lived —the city which was also the seat of the papacy! After the necessary explanation, he presented to the head priest the two registers—one for the registration of marriages and the other for the registration of births and christenings."

A 'äräfom's innovationary departure from tradition does not stop here. The customary pose of modesty assumed by the bride in the form of covering her face is absent in his wedding.

« ካታ ማርያም ብረቂቅ ባሕር ጥፋት ተቆ  
 ልብባ ተቆኪላ ሃርኤ በከ ዝሃበረ፡ቅ  
 ድሞ ባሕር ካብቲ ሓፂ ተፋካቶ ዘቆ  
 ፍክኛ በከ ዝሓቅ፡ ንክርካቶ ስተክ  
 ድቆኛቶኛ ነሃ፡፡ » (p. 99)

"As the bride's face was covered only with a thin shawl, it was quite visible. And as this had never before been seen in the village, people pushed each other much in an effort to see her."

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14. Every Orthodox Christian adult or family chooses a priest who acts as his spiritual guide, counsellor and confessor. This priest also officiates at all important family gatherings and ceremonies.

To sum up, then, omm 43404 434 presents the twin positive effects of education — concern for social reform as much as individual success. The hero, A 'gräfom, represents a harmonious personality combining within an integral and undivided self the best of the old and the new.



« ድክሪ ቅሬታ ብካዎናቸው ጓወዱም ኪዳን በአገር  
 ተዘወዱ ኪዳንም ስላድረዎት ጓድም ሃክናል ሃተላማ  
 ካላገኘ ካሸጡ ሃዱ ስላዳም ያስተመሰረኩኝ ከጓረ  
 ካላም ካተጓ ዘቆመናናላን ሃሲ ካላሰካረ ካለ ሃላኒ  
 ካላሲ ስኛና ካላተሰከናቸው ካላላረ ኪዳንም ተዘረዱ  
 ጓድገደቱ ጓድገላ ሃተጓ ያምሃርቲ ካወሰዱ ሃሲ  
 ካላላከ ካተጓ ዘቆመናናላን ሃላከ በኩል ፡፡» (p. 3-4)

"All right! my son! Come Masqal and I will put you in school" he (the father) said. On his (the son's) inquiring "Do we have money?" (the father replies) "Yes! Do not feel perturbed about money. Even if we do not have money, it is all right. Do not worry. We can sell an ox to send you to school." He felt very sad and said, "If you have to sell an ox, I do not want to go to school." He (the son) became angry and said, "If you sell an ox, what will you farm with?" He (the son) went outside saying "You have now made me sad!" The father said, "Come now! Cheer up! In that case, we will sell some grain instead to send you to school". (The son) "What will we eat?" "It is all right! God will provide for us. Come, my son!" So saying, he (the father) had him sit down. The son spoke to his father, though, saying, "If you have to sell anything, I do not want to go to school."

After some time, he sent his son out to play saying "Go now and play!". He (the father), on his part, went to town to sell some grain. Returning after the sale, he said to his wife, "Here! take it! When I ask you to fetch the money we saved, you will give the money back to me. If we otherwise told him we had sold some grain, he would be angry." The following morning, he said to his wife, "As I am taking Abay to school, give me the money we saved."



Because of the extremely low annual per capita income of the average Ethiopian family, the degree of sacrifice involved in sending one's children to school is often considerable. This is all the more striking when one takes cognizance of the fact that the governmental education system in Ethiopia — private and missionary education being only marginal — is free at all stages, from the elementary up to the university level. What the average parent finds hard to overcome, then, is not tuition fees as these do not exist, but the provision to his child of clothing and simple school aids.

Once in school, Abay proves to be an excellent student. However, his father dies when he is in the fifth grade. Desperate, he tries to drown himself in a nearby lake but is picked up by a boatman who rescues him and takes him into his care. The wife does not want him around, though, and succeeds in having him driven out of the house by telling fabricated scandals allegedly committed by him. This is Abay's second ordeal after his father's death. Quite undaunted, he sells his bicycle and watch and continues to go to school by selling chewing gum in his spare time in the evenings. After a while, he goes to his mother whom he finds re-married. The step-father, however, forces the mother to choose between divorce and sending her son away. Abay leaves his mother's house, becomes homeless and squatting in the street recites a sad poem to passers-by many of whom give him coins. Thieves take his clothes and coins while asleep on the side-street. Bitter, he himself escapes from a cheap

restaurant without paying for the \$0.50 worth of food he ate the next day. Thus the unfortunate Abay is forced by circumstances to commit a petty crime. It is quite out of character, however, and remains the single dishonest incident in his life.

One day, he chooses a spot by which many students pass and composes and recites a poem which both expresses his condition and urges every student to appreciate schooling. (p. 15-16) The next day, a group of them come up to him and advise him to ask for help in a written statement which he could then show around in bars. “ከብ ኣንድ መስተ ኣቶ ድተ-ፍ ባብርከም ነበረ፤ ነምኡ ኣንድ ገበረ ኣስርተ ቅርጺ ዝለውጥ ኣሃበ።” (p. 17-18) (He would enter bars and present his piece of paper. In that manner, he collected about \$10.00). The next day, he collected even more — \$20.00. Very shortly, he enrolled in school again, having invested some of his money into the purchase of a shoe-shiner's kit. He would thus attend school in the daytime and shine shoes in the evenings. His performance in school continued to be very good and he finished school at the top of his class. He was then sent to America for four years' study on a government scholarship. On his return, he was given a job in Addis Ababa where he lived and raised a family.

The story of Abay's poverty, educational problems and final success end in the first twenty pages of the novel. The rest is a story of how he met his first wife, and on her death, his second. The first bore him five children and the second wife bore him three. His troubles

however, basically ended with his education. We do not, as in ወጠጠ ጸገረኛ ሳንታ, see Abay attempting to engage in reforming his immediate community, if not his society at large. Nevertheless, we are presented with Abay's views of the state of society in a number of poems he recites to his second wife. They are all didactic poems. The first entitled "ፋቅርን ይኮታን" (p. 46-48) (Love and Prayer) advises on the need for harmony in society and for prayer for the individual. It could be more appropriate for a priest's sermon than for a seventh grade student author. The same could be said to apply to his poem: "ገንጌን መስተን ሐይቅና ንግረ ሃገረ ነገረና" (p. 48-51) (Let us stop the habit of cigarettes and drink; let us all respect elders). Other than the message which the title obviates, the poem contains a praise for education as well as for its instrumentality to achieve 'everything'.

« ፋቅርን ከተረከብኩም ሐይቅንም :

ፋቅርን ከተረከብኩም ተመሳሪ .....

ፋቅርን ከተረከብኩም

ዘከራከም ከላ ማርኻ ፊደል ነገረ ንግረኑ :

ፋቅርን ከተረከብኩም የመስከረም

ምስ ሳለሙም ነገረ ዝርድ አሉም :

ሐይቅ ግን ትስራቁ ትደርድሩ ከሆኑም :

ደህና ግን ግን ግን ነገረኩ ከሆኑም :

ምንገደ ንግረ ነገረኩ

ፋቅር ከሆኑም ፋቅርንም ቀድሞ :

(p. 49-50)

"Love education all of you in unison;  
 Love education! learn!....  
 He who does not like education  
 He will always live on the pavement.  
 Education is indeed marvellous;  
 You will realize that when you are grown up.  
 But now you laugh and play;  
 Later, you will say 'Woe! Woe!!  
 If you want to achieve everything  
 Continue your education unwaveringly."

A third poem concerns itself with the unbecoming  
 behaviour, and new dressing habits of girls. (pp.51-54.)

« CDL ያህን ክወዳኝ ያስገድ ሀሳብ ነፃ  
 ሐዲር ገጽን ከፍተሰደንን ከፍሬክንን ገሃኪ ሃገሩ ፡  
 ሐዲር ገጽን ከፋጥነት  
 ጓላሳና ከፋጥነት » (p.53)

"It is all right, by comparison, to be loose  
 and go out with boys.  
 Worse, they have destroyed the  
 country's culture by wearing short dresses.  
 Do not wear short dresses;  
 Otherwise, you will get us all cursed."

This is evidently a reference to the mini-skirt  
 fashion. The book was published in May, 1971 — not  
 exactly the high year of 'mini'. Considering the time  
 lag involved between its zenith in Europe and its adop-  
 tion in a rather traditional society (even in the urban  
 areas) like Ethiopia's, the comment above was probably

not out of touch with the times.

A fourth poem is curious in that its title and its content are not related in any visible way. Though entitled «*ሥራሕ ዓብሪያ ተሳኬኑ ያስከን አባተሳከነን*» (p. 54-56) (They say there are no jobs; it is not quite so.), the content is primarily a praise of the Emperor Haile Selassie.

«*ጃጊሆሞ ከቦና ጃጊሆሞ ከቦና  
ንሕና ይኮሩ ነገረሰላሴንዎ ኬና: ...  
የራሳን የሰላም ኬላም ትርጉሙ  
ካልነ ጣን ከፋርግግሩ ኬላ: »* (p. 54)

"Our father-Your majesty- Our father-Your majesty!  
We will pray for you;  
You are the one who looks after the poor;  
Others do not do so."

The last poem dares everyone to write poetry and insists that it is within the average man's range of abilities. The author thinks he has shared his 'wisdom' to his fellow country-men and urges everyone else to do so. A rather amusing couplet goes:

«*ዘኮና ሕንገሩ ነገሩን የህዝብና  
ካብ ያሳሉ ያበዘሉ ፍልጠኝ »* (p. 58)

"If we share what we have (our knowledge) to our people  
Our knowledge would be more than those of whites."

3. የግሪክ ቀደምት ሂሳብ

Unlike in the previous two works, it is nowhere stated in this one that Alāmayoh Dārās, the protagonist, comes from a poor family. If there is any indication at all, it is that his parents must have been reasonably well-to-do. For Alāmayoh continues with his studies for two years after his parents' death without any external assistance. First, he lives off the savings they left him and later off the sale of furniture. His initial well-to-do background comes out clearly in the conversation he has with the school director.

« ሥጵሪ ቤትክ ካብ ዝሞቲ ፍ ሓላፊጽ  
 ካንተኹን ገደፍኻ ካላፍቶ ፊርማ ተሰጥ  
 ሂሳብ ? ኢኮም ሕፃ ካፍሊኩኩ ::  
ክግሪኽ ካላፍቶ ÷ ካን ጥፋታ ሥጵሪ  
 ቤተ ዘሐዳግዎ ቀጥሎኻ ገንዘብ ካምኑ  
 ካውን ማህተሙ ናፋ ገዛ ካፍሊኩኩ ኔረ  
 ካብ ትምህርተኻ ካንካከሉኻ ገንዘብ  
 ማህተሙ ካፍሊኩኩ ካውን ሸፍጠ  
 ማህተሙ ካብ ዘርዘረ ካላፍቶ » (p.2-3)

"If it is two years since your



« መዋዕላርቲ ዘፋብካ ንኑምህርቲ ደብከል  
 ነተብካ ጠባባ ዝተባህከኑ ኣውን ምስቲ  
 ነምህርቲ ካልኣን ትሕቲን ገረ ይናቢሩ ስከ  
 ዝሓላ ብጠባባ ንኑምህርቲ ምስገብኑ ኣቶ  
 ዝነበረ ፡፡ » (p. 10)

"Alāmayoh Dāräs spent four years and six months working and studying day and night without rest. As I have mentioned to you earlier, he was all the while diligent and meritorious in his studies. Moreover as he had combined diligence in study with good conduct, he was admired and praised for his character—that thing (quality) which has no peer and stands a shoulder higher than education."

After the four and a half years mentioned above, he took part in an examination for scholarships with sixty-four others, and became one of six to qualify for it. The scholarship is to Moscow and lasts for a four-year period. On his return from study in Russia, he goes to Addis Ababa where he is given a \$600.00 a month job. Before starting work, though, he takes permission to go to Asmara to see his classmates and teachers. It appears naive that he should expect to meet them all after a four-year absence considering the very fluid nature of student populations. Predictably, he finds out that almost half of the students had left the school and that many of the teachers had been assigned to other awrajas. Most of all, he learns that the Director of the school had been transferred to Harrar. On



his return to Addis Ababa, he re-establishes contact with his former school director and a little later sends him as አባ ወረ (Father of suitor in marriage) with other 'ገጣጣኞች' (Intermediaries) to the family of the girl he eventually marries.

As in the previous work ሃይማኖትና ልማት, the major theme of education is discussed in the first twenty pages. The rest deals with the protagonist's romance and marriage. There is, nevertheless, a striking parallel between the romances of the heroes in both novels. In neither work is the marriage arranged by parents or relations. The milieu in which boy meets girl is limited and similar. It is not at a party or at friends' houses. It is rather the frequenting of a drinking-place that enables initial acquaintance as well as the development of romance.

In the previous work, Abay falls in love with the girl who serves 'mes' (mead) in her relations' 'mead-house'. He marries her and has five children from her. After her death, he sees another girl in the same mead-house whom he marries again and from whom he has three children. In this work as well, Alāmāyoh's romance is with a girl who helps her parents in her spare time in a bar they own, but at the same time goes to school in the daytime. He falls in love with her, marries her and has a son from her.

We see that in all three works, education is the key to success. In the latter two, this involves university study abroad; in the former, completion of secondary school is sufficient. The first third or so pages alone are devoted to the process of education; the rest deals with romance leading to marriage and the raising of a family. It is an inescapable conclusion that success, according to these works, does not comprise solely of financial well-being achieved through education, but additionally implies a married life and a responsible citizenship.

LIST OF TIGRINYA FICTIONAL WORKS

1- ሐፃከም ክፍሐኒ (መምህር)

ዓመት ድህረ ሠጽቶ

ክሊመንት 1960 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 101

6- ቀከታ ኪዳነ

ዓከም ቸክሳተ

ክሊመንት 1962 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 137

2- ልጅም ቀሰሳቶ

ዘቀጠዓገላዊ ቅጥቶች

ክሊመንት 1964 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 95

7- በርሀ ክርክያ

መጠጠ ሃንዳባላ ዓንዱ

ክሊመንት 1960 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 118

3- መ-ነ ክሮን

ክምገፋፍክ

ክሊመንት 1959 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 94

\*8- በርሀ ክርክያ

ጣሪ-ሲብሊ

ክሊመንት 1959 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 110

4- መ-ነ ክሮን

መርቆሃ

ክሊመንት 1958 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 119

9- በርሃ መስፋን

ዓከም ዝፋፋፍክ ፅቡቅ ክፍሌክን

ፃዕን ክፋፋፍክ ፊጣፊጣ ክፋፍክን

ክሊመንት 1957 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 84

5- ምስግና ተሰከተ

ክፋንፊክ

ክሊመንት 1959 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 49

10- ተስፋ መርያም መልክ ገርገሪ

ባሕርም ያፍረክኪ

ክሊመንት 1962 ዓ.ም.

ገጽ 77

\* This is not a fictional work in the strict sense.

11- ተስፋ ነጻዊነት ገብረ ነጻዊነት

11- ሐሳብ ዘላቂ ስብ ተሰጥፎ ነቶ

ክሊመንት 1952 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 339

16- ክስረት ተስፋ (መምህር)

ሐሳብ ዘላቂ ነጻዊነት

ክሊመንት 1957 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 84

12- ተስፋ ዘላቂ

መጋቢት 5447

ክሊመንት 1946 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 91

17- ክስረት ተስፋ (መምህር)

መጋቢት (ዘላቂ ነጻዊነት)

ክሊመንት 1960 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 64

13- ተስፋ ንጉሠ

ገብረ ነጻዊነት

ክሊመንት 1958 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 71

18- ክስረት ተስፋ (መምህር)

ንጉሠ መጋቢት

ክሊመንት 1962 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 41

14- ንጉሠ ሐዋርያ መጋቢት

ደቡብ ወንጌ - ሐዋርያ

ክሊመንት 1962 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 56

19- ክስረት ተስፋ (መምህር)

ነገሥት መጋቢት

ክሊመንት 1961 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 43

15- ክሊመንት ገብረ

ክሊመንት

ክሊመንት 1963 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 119

\* 20- ክስረት ተስፋ (መምህር)

መጋቢት (ናብ ደም ደቡብ)

፩ ዓመት

ክሊመንት 1959 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 82

\* No. 20 should precede 17.

- 21- ነርከያ በከፋ  
መንግሥት በክከኛ  
ክሊመንት 1955 ዓ.ም (፩ ዓመት)  
ገፅ 117
- 22- ነርከያ በከፋ  
አፋሃርሃ-3  
ክሊመንት 1960 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 64
- 23- አበባ ተከፋ ጊዮርጊስ  
ንመንግሥት ዝነግሮ?  
ክሊመንት 1966 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 65
- 24- አበባ ተከፋ ጊዮርጊስ  
ዋቀ አሳዳቂ ! ከከን ያምጸክሃለሁ!  
ክሊመንት 1960 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 87
- 25- አብርሃ ገብረ ሕይወት  
ምስክር-ምስክር መርህ  
ክሊመንት 1960 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 48
- 26- ዓምላ ሚካኤል ማኅረ  
ሁለት ዓመት ተገባጥሞ የሚገኝ ማምረ  
ክሊመንት 1958 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 50
- 27- ዐቅባባ መጋዘን ገብረኤል  
ናፋ ያምጸክር ይብላሉ  
ክሊመንት 1959 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 113
- 28- የሁለት ዐመር (ዐ.ገረብስ)  
ክሊመንት ከምስክር'ረ?  
ክሊመንት 1959 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 187
- 29- ቀስቀሳ አብርሃም  
ጊረጊረ ራስ ሞት  
ክሊመንት 1960 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 69
- 30- ቀስቀሳ ይኮፍ  
አንድም ፍቅር ሄደኝ  
ክሊመንት 1960 ዓ.ም.  
ገፅ 104

31- ቀከሳቅ ያከፋ

ኃይለማርያም ሙሉ አሰራር

አሰራር 1959 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 48

36- ገብረ ሃይለማርያም ሐሳብ

ሥራ

አሰራር 1959 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 118

32- ቀከሳቅ ያከፋ

አንድነት ፍቅር ንብረት

አሰራር 1962 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 106

37- ገብረ ሃይለማርያም (አገ)

ሥራ

አሰራር 1962 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 61

3

33- ቀከሳቅ ገብረ ሃይለማርያም (አገ)

ሥራ ሥራ ሥራ ንብረት

አሰራር 1965 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 305

38- ገብረ ሃይለማርያም (አገ)

ሥራ ሥራ

አሰራር 1960 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 145

34- ቀከሳቅ ገብረ ሃይለማርያም

ሥራ ሥራ

አሰራር 1960 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 108

39- ገብረ ሃይለማርያም

ሥራ ሥራ ሥራ ንብረት

አሰራር 1963 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 58

35- ቀከሳቅ ገብረ ሃይለማርያም

ሥራ ሥራ ሥራ ንብረት

አሰራር 1961 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 87

40- ቀከሳቅ ገብረ ሃይለማርያም

ሥራ ሥራ ሥራ ንብረትሥራ ሥራ

አሰራር 1960 ዓ.ም.

ገፅ 64



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