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Author(s): Donald Crummey

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SOCIETY, STATE AND NATIONALITY IN THE RECENT HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ETHIOPIA

BY DONALD CRUMMEY

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

EVENTS since 1974 have challenged fundamental assumptions about Ethiopian history. When the Därg overthrew Haile Sellassie I, it eliminated both property as a basis for class rule and the monarchy and adopted Marxism-Leninism as its ideology. Wars with the Somali Republic and with the Eritrean liberation fronts called the country's borders into question. In 1984 famine undermined centuries-old ways of making a livelihood.

What are we talking about when we talk about Ethiopia? What is its geographical content? What is its social and cultural meaning? These are contemporary questions, but they ask for a re-thinking of the country's past, and demand answers which only the past can give. They challenge a very young historiography, albeit one which deals with deep and varied historical consciousness and in doing so draws on a much older tradition of scholarship. Unfortunately, space precludes consideration of anything other than contemporary analytical scholarship, which dates, in its most immediate sense, to two developments of the 1960s: the founding of what was then Haile Sellassie I University and its History Department; and the doctoral training of a cohort of scholars, primarily at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. Many of those trained at S.O.A.S. later taught in Addis Ababa, thereby increasing their interaction with each other.*

A concern with analysis, synthesis, and the integration of its material into narrative distinguished the new historiography from the earlier, historically-oriented work of philologists. For methodological and conceptual reasons many of its early products dealt with the nineteenth century and with external relations. The nascent tradition emphasized archival sources, and adopted an Africanist perspective which privileged the way in which modern states arose from a matrix of European imperialism and indigenous response. It was further shaped by the fact that none of its foreign scholars had

* Since frequent reference will be made to the *Proceedings* of the International Conferences and Congresses of Ethiopian Studies, details of venue and publication are listed here:

Third (Addis Ababa, 1966). Addis Ababa, 3 vols., 1969.

Fourth (Rome, 1972). Rome, 2 vols., 1974.

Fifth (session A: Nice, 1977). Ed. J. Tubiana. Rotterdam, 1980. (session B: Chicago, 1978). Ed. R. L. Hess. Chicago, 1979.

Sixth (Tel-Aviv, 1980). Ed. G. Goldenberg. Rotterdam and Boston, 1986.

Seventh (Lund, 1982). Ed. S. Rubenson. East Lansing, 1984.

Eighth (Addis Ababa, 1984). Ed. Taddese Beyene. Addis Ababa (Institute of Ethiopian Studies); Frankfurt-am-Main (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Universität), 2 vols., 1988.

Ninth (Moscow, 1986). Moscow (Nauka Publishers). 6 vols., 1988.

Tenth (Paris, 1988). Forthcoming.

mastered either Amharic or Ge'ez. Most of the early S.O.A.S. theses fit a common mould.¹

The most important early studies, the only ones to rest predominantly on Ethiopian sources, were by the S.O.A.S.-trained faculty members of HSIU, Tadesse Tamrat and Merid Wolde Aregay. Tadesse based himself on a large corpus of Ge'ez materials arising from the period between the emergence of a medieval kingdom around 1300 and a series of great upheavals in the sixteenth century.² Much of it was published, some in chronicle form, but the bulk consisted of hagiographies, and was essentially fragmentary. Tadesse's enduring achievement was to synthesize the fragments into a narrative of principal developments, one of whose leading themes was institutional continuity from classical Aksum. He identified the Emperor Zär'a Ya'qob (r. 1434-68), through his creation of a religious nationalism, as an architect of Ethiopian identity. Merid dealt with the succeeding two centuries. He, too, faced the challenge of fragmentary sources: a disjointed chronicle tradition, and a large body of Portuguese materials.³ Merid's achievement was to clarify the role of major institutions, particularly of the military regiments known as *ch'äwa*, in the country's national life, and to cast the story of their fate within the context of ethnic movements and political and administrative reorganization over the entire region. Still unpublished, his work has not had the impact it deserves.

In some ways the most characteristic piece of the first stage in the development of a modern Ethiopian historiography, and its *magnum opus*, was Sven Rubenson's *The Survival of Ethiopian Independence*.⁴ Unlike his other foreign contemporaries, Rubenson had mastered Amharic and could realize his conviction that Ethiopian documents should be central in reconstructing the country's history.⁵ Yet he told a story of international survival, whose major theme was incomprehension: the failure of Europeans to appreciate Ethiopian national pride and resolve. As an exploration of the major sources for, and some of the major themes of, the nineteenth century, this book will guide scholars for the foreseeable future. Yet its publication in 1976, as the revolution built to its first climax, was ironic in two ways. Firstly, the study rests on an unexamined belief in the integrity of the Ethiopian national tradition and its expansive tendencies. Secondly, Ruben-

¹ M. Abir, 'Trade and politics in the Ethiopian region, 1830-1855' (1965), subsequently published as *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes. The Challenge of Islam and the Re-unification of the Christian Empire 1769-1855* (London, 1968); R. Caulk, 'The origins and development of the foreign policy of Menelik II, 1865-1896' (1966); D. Crummey, 'European religious missions in Ethiopia, 1830-1868' (1967), subsequently published as *Priests and Politicians. Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia 1830-1868* (Oxford, 1972); R. Darkwah, 'The rise of the Kingdom of Shoa 1813-1889' (1966), subsequently published as *Shewa, Menilek and the Ethiopian Empire 1813-1889* (London, 1975). See also in the same period and vein: H. G. Marcus, 'Britain and Ethiopia, 1896 to 1914: A study of diplomatic relations' (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1964).

² Tadesse Tamrat, 'Church and state in Ethiopia 1270-1527' (1968), subsequently published as *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527* (Oxford, 1972).

³ Merid Wolde Aregay, 'Southern Ethiopia and the Christian Kingdom 1508-1708, with special reference to the Galla migrations and their consequences' (1971).

⁴ London, Stockholm and Addis Ababa, 1976.

⁵ See here also Rubenson's earlier work, *King of Kings. Tewodros of Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa and Nairobi, 1966).

son directed little attention to the Ethiopian state and none to its social context. These themes would loom large in studies which followed.⁶

By the end of the 1980s the context of Ethiopian historiography was very different from what it had been twenty-five years earlier. An Ethiopian state, albeit transformed, had survived and created an array of new institutions. Marxism had become the language of scholarly discourse. Social structure and social conflict were central issues. Moreover, the generation of the 60s had matured and been enriched by fresh colleagues from graduate schools in both the U.S. and the U.K. Ethiopian documents and materials loomed larger in research.⁷ A new generation emerged, and the History Department of what is now Addis Ababa University assumed its rightful role as the institutional home of Ethiopian historiography.

Recent work has privileged class and class relations, the economy and its impact on society, and has tried to locate political institutions within a social context. Attention has broadened to include ethnic groups, most prominently the Oromo, beyond the old Abyssinian core. Social anthropology has been engaged more systematically. Oral information is used much more, while the quest for written texts continues, with an emphasis on administrative documents. The Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935–6 has moved to the sidelines.⁸

The great famines of 1974 and 1984 have spurred a movement towards agrarian history, in which James McCann has played a prominent role.⁹ McCann's study of the rural political economy of Lasta combines interviews (although not in Lasta), archival materials, and a major set of administrative records, the personal archive of *Ras Kassa Haylu*.¹⁰ McCann identifies a steady decline over the past sixty years in the prosperity of Lasta and increasing ecological stress thanks to mounting population pressure. He situates the province's socio-economic trajectory within the framework of the development of the modern Ethiopian state and its growing demands on its subjects.

⁶ Other books in a similar vein to *Survival* were: H. G. Marcus, *The Life and Times of Menelik II. Ethiopia 1844–1913* (Oxford, 1973); and Zewde Gabre-Sallassie, *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia. A Political Biography* (Oxford, 1975).

⁷ Richard Caulk was a leader in incorporating original Amharic materials, primarily written but also oral, into his work: 'Religion and the state in nineteenth-century Ethiopia', *J. Ethiopian Studies*, x, 1 (1972), 23–41; and 'Armies as Predators: Soldiers and Peasants in Ethiopia c 1850–1935', *Int. J. Afr. Hist. Studies*, xi, 3 (1978), 457–93.

⁸ But see, as an exception, A. Sbacchi, 'Italian colonialism in Ethiopia, 1936–1940' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1975), published as *Ethiopia Under Mussolini. Fascism and the Colonial Experience* (London, 1985); also *idem*, 'Ethiopian opposition to Italian Rule, 1936–1940', pp. 583–99 in *Proc. Fifth Int. Conference (Session B)*. See also Haggai Erlich, 'Tigrean politics 1930–1935 and the approaching Italo-Ethiopian war', pp. 101–31 in *Proc. Sixth Int. Conference*; A. Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War: The Italian-Ethiopian Campaign, 1935–1941* (Oxford and New York, 1984); and M. Glover, *An Improvised War. The Ethiopian Campaign 1940–1941* (London/New York, 1987).

⁹ James McCann, *From Poverty to Famine in Northeast Ethiopia. A Rural History 1900–1935* (Philadelphia, 1987), and his article 'A Dura revolution' in this issue.

¹⁰ McCann grounds his account of agricultural production in the anthropological literature, especially the work of A. Hoben, *Land Tenure Among the Amhara of Ethiopia. The Dynamics of Cognatic Descent* (Chicago/London: 1973). See also D. Bauer, *Household and Society in Ethiopia. An Economic and Social Analysis of Tigray; Social Principles and Household Organization* (East Lansing, 1977).

There are other contributors to this important theme and an increasing mobilization of resources to address it. Richard Pankhurst sketched some of the main issues,¹¹ while Joanna Mantel-Niecko has explored the conceptual framework of historic land tenure, and Svein Ege's dissertation at the University of Bergen showed an unusual sensitivity to agrarian class relations.¹² I explored the marginalia in the Ethiopian manuscripts of the British Museum, and tried to turn them to the purposes of social history.¹³

The largest project in this area is my own study of historic land tenure and its social context, supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities.¹⁴ Two co-workers, Shumet Sishagne and Daniel Ayana, members of the History Department at Addis Ababa University (AAU), are helping to survey the land holdings of, and property-related documents registered in, the principal monasteries and endowed churches of Bägémder and Gojjam provinces. With additional assistance from faculty members of the department the project has recorded both written and oral materials which contain many insights into class relations, and which promise greatly to extend our appreciation of the variety of forms of land holding and transfer practiced from the seventeenth through to the twentieth centuries.¹⁵ However, none of this scholarship has yet uncovered any Ethiopian materials prior to 1935 which arise from, and are descriptive of, processes of agricultural production or management. For the foreseeable future our understanding of agricultural productivity will have to be rooted in direct studies relating to the last fifty-five or sixty years and, for earlier years, on backward extrapolations and the qualitative insights offered by observers.

The Department of History at AAU has grasped this nettle. In April 1985, it dedicated its third annual seminar to the theme of 'Land Use and Agriculture in Ethiopian History',¹⁶ and committed itself to an on-going research project on 'Land Tenure and Agricultural Development' focusing primarily on the period 1941-74. Merid Wolde Aregay argued that the prime factor limiting agricultural productivity in historic Ethiopia was its land

¹¹ Richard Pankhurst, *State and Land in Ethiopian History* (Addis Ababa, 1966).

¹² J. Mantel-Niecko, *The Role of Land Tenure in the System of Ethiopian Imperial Government in Modern Times* (Warsaw, 1980); S. Ege, 'Chiefs and peasants: the sociopolitical structure of the Kingdom of Shāwa about 1840' (Hovedoppgave dissertation, 2 vols., University of Bergen, 1978).

¹³ Donald Crummey, 'Gondarine *Rim* land sales: an introductory description and analysis,' pp. 469-79 in *Proc. Fifth Int. Conference (Session B)*; 'Family and property amongst the Amhara nobility', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xxiv, 2 (1983), 207-20; and *idem*, 'Three Amharic documents of marriage and inheritance from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', pp. 315-27 in vol. 1, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*. See also R. Pankhurst, 'An eighteenth-century Ethiopian dynastic marriage contract between Empress Mentewwab of Gondar and Ras Mika'el Sehul of Tigre', *Bulletin of S.O.A.S.*, XLII, 3(1979), 457-66.

¹⁴ National Endowment for the Humanities, Research Division, Interpretive Research Projects, Grant No. RO-21457-87, 'A History of Ethiopian Land Tenure and its Social Context.'

¹⁵ See, for example, Donald Crummey and Shumet Sishagne, 'The lands of the Church of Däbrä S'āhay Qwesqwam, Gondär', paper presented to the Tenth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Paris, 1988, and forthcoming in the conference proceedings.

¹⁶ *Proceedings of the Third Annual Seminar of the Department of History* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1986).

tenure system which 'deprived the peasant of the will to work and to seek improvement'.¹⁷ This argument extended an earlier one, in which Merid suggested that a low level of technology was related to an equally low level of class differentiation in early modern Ethiopia, and that both were attributable to the failure of the country's 'ruling classes to develop traditions and institutions for the secure ownership and transmission of property and offices'.¹⁸ Additional papers at the symposium include Bahru Zewde's useful 'Bibliographical Prelude to the Agrarian History of Pre-Revolution Ethiopia' (pp. 9-24), and contributions by younger members and recent graduates on peasant conditions, the links between food and commercial crops, responses to food shortages, and on the economic basis of social conflict and of political power, much of the research for which had been carried out for theses or in seminars.¹⁹

Sub-themes of the emerging agrarian history of Ethiopia have been drought, famine, and peasant responses to natural disaster. The Great Famine of 1984 stimulated a large, polemical literature,²⁰ which, in turn, revealed how little attention historians had previously paid to this subject.²¹ The geographer Mesfin Wolde Mariam, in a study inspired by events long before 1984, documented a steady growth in the spread and scale of famine during the 1960s and 1970s,²² and located its causes in subsistence agricultural production and its wider political context. McCann argued that population growth, unchanged agrarian practices, and the growth of the

¹⁷ Merid W. Aregay, 'Land tenure and agricultural productivity 1500-1850', pp. 115-29 in *Proceedings*.

¹⁸ Merid W. Aregay, 'Society and technology in Ethiopia: 1500-1800', *J. Ethiopian Studies*, xvii (1984), 127-47. How well these arguments sit with the materials being generated by the NEH project remains to be seen.

¹⁹ Asnake Ali, 'The condition of the peasantry in Wallo, 1917-1935: a review of the traditions', pp. 1-7; Daniel Ayana, 'Coffee and food crop production for self-sufficiency: the case of W. Wollega, an outline', pp. 47-56; Guluma Gameda, 'Some notes on food crop and coffee cultivation in Jimma and Limmu *Awrajas*, Kafa administrative region (1950s to 1970s)', pp. 91-102; Teclehaimanot G. Selassie, 'Wayto response to food shortages', pp. 161-4; Shumet Sishagne, 'The economic basis of conflict among the Nuer and Anuak communities', pp. 131-44; Tekalign W. Mariam, 'Land, trade and political power among the Oromo of Gibe region, a hypothesis', pp. 145-59. In a related, but slightly different vein, see also Irma Taddia, 'The land tenure system in the Eritrean highlands according to European colonial sources', pp. 299-308 in vol. II, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*.

²⁰ See, for example, Jason W. Clay and Bonnie K. Holcomb, *Politics and the Ethiopian Famine 1984-1985* (Cambridge, MA, 1986); Robert D. Kaplan, *Surrender or Starve. The Wars behind the Famine* (Boulder, CO, 1988); John Clarke, *Resettlement and Rehabilitation. Ethiopia's Campaign Against Famine* (London, n.d.). In a less polemical vein: K. Jansson, M. Harris, A. Penrose, *The Ethiopian Famine* (London, 1987); and *Northeast African Studies*, ix, 2 (1987), a special issue directed to issues of famine and food security.

²¹ R. Pankhurst's much cited 'The great Ethiopian famine of 1888-1892: a new assessment', *J. Hist. Medicine and Allied Sciences*, xxi (1966), 95-124, 271-94, remains one of the few historical treatments, recently joined by Abdussamad H. Ahmed, 'Peasant conditions in Gojjam during the great famine 1888-1892', *J. Ethiopian Studies*, xx (1987), 1-18.

²² Mesfin W. Mariam, *Rural Vulnerability to Famine in Ethiopia 1958-1977* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1984); see also *idem*, 'Vulnerability to famine in rural Ethiopia 1958-1977', pp. 511-21 in *Proc. Seventh Int. Conference*.

state conjoined to produce crisis.²³ Clearly, famine and the integrity of peasant agriculture call for large-scale, ongoing, co-ordinated research, for which Dessalegn Rahmato and Adhana Haile Adhana offer important insights. Their work documents the many strategies with which peasants have recently coped with drought, highlights the importance of small livestock, and points out how policies and practices of both the imperial and socialist states have undercut these strategies.²⁴

Agrarian history reflects the region's rural character. However, recent historiography has also explored urbanization, a field pioneered by Peter Garretson with his still unpublished S.O.A.S. Ph.D. thesis.²⁵ Richard Pankhurst followed with two compendia which typically drew on an imaginative range of sources without always commanding them or deploying them to resolve the analytical issues involved.²⁶ However, the importance of the topic and the constraints of insisting on original research by undergraduates without the resources to send them to the field has resulted in a large body of research on Addis Ababa, its neighbourhoods, the major provincial towns, and such urban institutions as schools and hospitals. Of 290 history B.A. theses between 1963 and 1985, when the first list was drawn up, 59 or 20.3 per cent dealt with urban topics. However, between 1986 and 1988 the proportion rose to 61.1 per cent, the total being 88 out of 144 theses submitted.

The centenary of Addis Ababa in November 1986 served as an occasion for a conference which pulled together some of this work. The proceedings contain papers on the antecedents to Addis Ababa, the evolution of the town itself, urban features, and on the future.²⁷ The highlights include Bahru Zewde's study of 'Early Safars of Addis Ababa: Patterns of Evolution' (pp. 43-56); Eshetu Assen on 'The Growth of Municipal Administration and some Aspects of Daily Life in Addis Ababa 1910-1930' (pp. 79-95); David

²³ 'History, drought and reproduction: dynamics of society and ecology in northeast Ethiopia', pp. 283-303 in Douglas Johnson and David Anderson (eds.), *The Ecology of Survival. Case Studies from Northeast African History* (London/Boulder, 1988). In the same volume see also David Turton, 'Looking for a cool place: the Mursi, 1890s to 1980s', pp. 261-82; and McCann's 'The social impact of drought in Ethiopia: oxen, households, and some implications for rehabilitation', pp. 245-67 in Michael H. Glantz (ed.), *Drought and Hunger in Africa: Denying Famine a Future* (Cambridge, 1987).

²⁴ For example, Dessalegn Rahmato, 'Aspects of peasant survival strategies in Northeast Ethiopia', pp. 97-124 in S. Ege (ed.), *Development in Ethiopia. Proceedings from a Conference at the University of Trondheim, 9-10 March 1987* (Dragvoll, 1988); and Adhana Haile Adhana, 'Peasant response to famine in Ethiopia, 1975-1985', *J. Ethiopian Studies*, xxi (1988), 1-56; a revised version of his precocious B.A. thesis of 1987.

John Iliffe has recently addressed some of the issues involved here in an essay which provides rich and stimulating food for students of Ethiopian history: *The African Poor. A History* (Cambridge, 1987), ch. 2.

²⁵ P. Garretson, 'A history of Addis Ababa from its foundation in 1886 to 1910' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1974).

²⁶ Richard Pankhurst, *History of Ethiopian Towns from the Middle Ages to the Early Nineteenth Century* (Wiesbaden, 1982); *idem*, *History of Ethiopian Towns from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to 1935* (Wiesbaden, 1985).

²⁷ Ahmed Zekaria, Bahru Zewde and Taddese Beyene (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa, November 24-25, 1986* (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, AAU, 1987).

Chapple's 'Some Remarks on the Addis Ababa Food Market up to 1935' (pp. 143-60); and Techeste Ahderom's magisterial 'Basic Planning Principles and Objectives taken in the Preparation of the Addis Ababa Master plan: Past and Present' (247-70), which reproduces, amongst other gems, Le Corbusier's extraordinary Fascist-commissioned design in 1936 for the city (p. 250). Meanwhile, research has proceeded on the development of such towns as Baher Dar, Gondär, Näqämté, Shashamané, and Jijiga.²⁸

Urban history brings one firmly into the twentieth century, a field pioneered twenty years ago by Addis Ababa undergraduates. Important themes concern the nature and development of the state, the emergence of an intelligentsia, and the growth of commerce. These were clearly exposed in Richard Caulk's chapter for the *Cambridge History of Africa*, which offered the first analytical survey of the period from c 1900 to 1941.²⁹ Harold Marcus has contributed two substantial, archivally-based, books: the first instalment of a two-volume biography of Haile Sellassie, and a study of Ethiopia's relations with Britain and the United States in the 1940s and 1950s.³⁰ His mode is narrative, rather than analytical, and the methodology is traditional. The biography contributes to the debate over the emperor's personal role in Ethiopia's political and institutional development. The second book illuminates both an important period of American influence and the failed coup of 1960. Marcus is now the most widely read of Ethiopianist historians, although he has probably influenced the field more through his graduate students and the creation of two leading publishing vehicles,³¹ than through his own writing.

Other historians have rejected personality as a factor in their efforts to conceptualize the modern Ethiopian state and to locate its institutional development within a social context. Bahru Zewde has drawn on Perry Anderson in his discussion of the 1920s and early 1930s.³² He argues that the process underlying the period was one of transition from feudalism to capitalism, from the inherited form of indigenous society, in a direction led

²⁸ Seletene Seyoum, 'A history of Baher Dar town: 1936-1974' (M.A. thesis, AAU 1988); Bahru Zewde, 'Gondar in the early twentieth century: a preliminary investigation of a 1930/31 census', *J. Ethiopian Studies*, XXI (1988), 57-81; Tesema Ta'a, 'The process of urbanization in Welega, Western Ethiopia: the case of Nekemte' (History Dept. paper, AAU); Benti Getahun, 'A history of Shashemene: from its foundation to 1974' (M.A. thesis, AAU, 1988); and Tebebe Eshete, 'A history of Jijiga town from 1891 to 1984' (M.A. thesis, AAU, 1988).

²⁹ Richard Caulk, 'Ethiopia and the Horn', in A. D. Roberts (ed.), *Cambridge History of Africa*, VII, 1905-1940 (Cambridge, 1986), 702-41; see also the bibliographical essay, pp. 866-71.

³⁰ Harold G. Marcus, *Haile Sellassie I. The Formative Years, 1892-1936* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1987); and *idem*, *Ethiopia, Great Britain, and the United States 1941-1974. The Politics of Empire* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1983).

³¹ The interdisciplinary journal *Northeast African Studies*, and a monograph series which has produced almost twenty items, some of them outstanding: Haggai Erlich, *Ethiopia and Eritrea During the Scramble for Africa: A Political Biography of Ras Alula, 1875-1897* (East Lansing, MI, 1982); and the prize-winner by Kay Kaufman Shelemay, *Music, Ritual, and Falasha History* (East Lansing, MI, 1986).

³² 'Economic origins of the absolutist state in Ethiopia (1916-1935)', *Ethiopian Studies*, XVII (1984), 1-29. See also *idem*, 'Some aspects of post-liberation Ethiopia (1941-1950)', pp. 277-89 in vol. 1, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*.

by the world economic order. Critical developments included the growth of both a cash nexus influencing land-holding and land sales, and a unified domestic market with increasing centralized control over customs revenues.³³ The latter re-oriented the country's leading notables away from military prowess toward the amassing of capital, a trend best represented by Täfäri Mäkonnen and his great rival, Haylu Täklä Haymanot of Gojjam.³⁴ He concludes that Haile Sallassie's rise is best explained by 'the hard and solid facts of land and finance'.³⁵

Commercialization of the state suggests a fresh pertinence to older studies of commerce, a field pioneered by Richard Pankhurst and Mordecai Abir.³⁶ Recent work has highlighted slavery and the slave trade with opinion divided on many issues. Did the trade decline in the 1920s and 1930s, and, if so, why?³⁷ Others have tried to contextualize the trade either locally or at an aggregate national level, with a marked tendency emerging simultaneously to downplay its economic importance and to emphasize its persistence over a large area indeed.³⁸ Clearly, we need more work both on slaves as a factor in Ethiopia's commerce, and, even more, on slavery as a domestic social institution.

Meanwhile, serious interest is developing in the origins of Ethiopia's modern intelligentsia, a topic first raised as such by Addis Hiwet whose account of the group known as the 'Japanizers' drew attention to their role

³³ Dessalegn Rahmato argues that the relevant comparative context is that of 'modern-day post-colonial states' rather than 'post-medieval monarchies of either western or eastern Europe': 'Political power and social formation in Ethiopia under the Old Regime: notes on Marxist theory', pp. 463-78 in vol. 1, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*.

³⁴ For a graphic account of the avarice of Haile Sallassie, and for many other insights into the workings of the Ethiopian state and the formation of its foreign policy, see John H. Spencer, *Ethiopia at Bay: A Personal Account of the Haile Sellassie Years* (Algonac, MI, 1987).

³⁵ Shiferaw Bekele has contributed to the general issues involved here with studies of the Addis Ababa-Jibouti railroad, which emphasize the political consequences of the designs which international capital had on Ethiopia: 'The railway, trade and politics: a historical survey, 1896-1935' (M.A. thesis, AAU, 1982); *idem*, 'Some notes on the genesis and interpretation of the tripartite treaty', *J. Ethiopian Studies*, XVIII (1985), 63-79.

³⁶ Pankhurst's best-known work is his *Economic History of Ethiopia 1800-1935* (Addis Ababa, 1968), which, for all its redundancies, confusions, and errors remains a point of departure for many important issues. Abir's first monograph, *Ethiopia: The Era of the Princes*, was very much in the S.O.A.S. 'trade and politics' mode of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

³⁷ Marcus, *Haile Sellassie*, 49; Jon Edwards, 'Slavery, the slave trade, and the economic reorganization of Ethiopia, 1916-1935', *African Economic History*, XI (1982), 3-14; J. McCann, "'Children of the House": slavery and its suppression in Lasta, Northern Ethiopia, 1916-1975', pp. 332-59 in S. Miers and R. Roberts (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1988).

³⁸ Tekalign Wolde Mariam, 'The slave trade in the economy of Jimma', pp. 309-18 in vol. II, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*; *idem*, 'Slavery and the slave trade in the kingdom of Jimma (ca. 1800-1935)' (M.A. thesis, AAU, 1984); Timothy D. Fernyhough, 'Serfs, slaves and *Shefta*: modes of production in Southern Ethiopia from the late nineteenth century to 1941' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1986); and Abdussamad H. Ahmad, 'Gojjam: trade, early merchant capital and the world economy 1901-1935' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1986).

in articulating, and thereby trying to mould, Ethiopia's changing relations with the external world.³⁹ Later contributors maintained the emphasis on how the intelligentsia propagandized on behalf of the country's commercialization, its opening to world capitalism, and the rise of Haile Sellassie. Irma Taddia and Tekeste Negash have pushed back into the nineteenth century and raised the issue of an emergent national identity.⁴⁰ At some point these studies should come together in an integrated account of Ethiopia's commercial and institutional development down to 1935 illuminated by the perceptions of its own intellectuals.

Meanwhile, the revolution and the search for the roots of social unrest dominate studies of twentieth-century Ethiopia. On the revolution, scholarly publishing has gone through two stages, the first consisting of attempts to catch the essence of unfolding epic events. Four of these will endure: the Ottaways' for its immediacy; Markakis and Nega's for articulating the viewpoint of the Left opposition; Halliday and Molyneux's for its conceptualization; and Lefort's for the richness of its texture.⁴¹ Institutionalization – from the founding of the Workers' Party in 1984 to the declaration of the People's Democratic Republic in 1988 – inspired a second wave of four books.⁴² For all their differences they agree on the internally transforming character of the last fifteen years and on their impact on the regions beyond the country's borders. Clapham catches the Ethiopian ethos particularly well;⁴³ while Markakis sets developments into a regional perspective, and forcefully raises some central issues.⁴⁴ What are the roots of social protest and rebellion in Ethiopia? What has the revolution revealed about national and class identities? How has the Ethiopian state developed; and just how does it differ from its neighbours to the east and west? We have seen that

³⁹ Addis Hiwet, *Ethiopia: From Autocracy to Revolution* (London, 1975), 68–77; R. Caulk, 'Dependency, Gebre Heywet Baykedagn, and the birth of Ethiopian reformism', pp. 569–81 in *Proc. Fifth Int. Conference (Session B)*; and Bahru Zewde, 'Economic origins'.

⁴⁰ I. Taddia, 'Un Intellettuale Tigrino nell'Etiopia di Menelik: Blatta Gäbrä Egzi'abeher Gilay 1860–1914', *Africa*, XLIII, 4 (Rome, 1988), 574–602; Tekeste Negash, 'Blatta Gebre Egziabeher Gila Mariam and his works: a sketch towards a political biography of a nationalist', pp. 1–21 in his collection *No Medicine for the Bite of a White Snake: Notes on Nationalism and Resistance in Eritrea, 1890–1940* (Uppsala, 1986). Randi Balsvik has extended the story in the opposite direction with her account of *Haile Sellassie's Students* (East Lansing, MI, 1985).

⁴¹ David and Marina Ottaway, *Ethiopia. Empire in Revolution* (London and New York, 1978); J. Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Nottingham, 1978); F. Halliday and M. Molyneux, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (London, 1981); and R. Lefort, *Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution?* (London, 1983).

⁴² Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge, 1988); John W. Harbeson, *The Ethiopian Transformation. The Quest for the Post-Imperial State* (Boulder, 1988); Edmond J. Keller, *Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Bloomington, IN, 1988); and John Markakis, *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (Cambridge, 1987).

⁴³ See his *Haile Sellassie's Government* (London, 1969) which had done the same thing, nineteen years earlier.

⁴⁴ Markakis also benefited, as had Clapham, although this time more indirectly, by his long association with the Horn. See his *Ethiopia. Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Oxford, 1974).

historians have begun to tackle the last question. Work on the first has been underway for some time.

In 1976 Kidanemariam Mengesteab submitted his undergraduate thesis for AAU on 'The Careers of the Mesazgi Brothers, Banditry in Eritrea, 1941-1951'. Its merits, which Eric Hobsbawm highlighted for a wider audience,⁴⁵ inspired a number of further studies, some of which appeared in my 1986 collection, *Banditry, Rebellion, and Social Protest in Africa*.⁴⁶ These studies have established banditry as an Ethiopian social institution important for the expression of dissidence, but not necessarily for popular resistance.

Gebru Tareke has given these issues their most thorough treatment and placed them in the context of three major uprisings, all of them peasant-based, against the government of Haile Sellassie: the Wāyané Rebellion in Tegray, 1943; Balé, 1963-70; and Gojjam, 1968.⁴⁷ Resting on British and Ethiopian archives and on interviews with participants, his study refutes any notion of peasant passivity or disinterest, but supports the view that they were inherently non-revolutionary; and, by siting his revolts in the context of a modernizing, absolutist state in Ethiopia, reinforces the absence of direct peasant political action in much of Ethiopian history.

Eritrea has called forth a considerable literature on resistance and revolt, much of it polemical and inadequately documented, in no way reflecting the seriousness of the issues with which it deals.⁴⁸ A younger generation offers hope of a better situation. Lloyd Ellingson produced the first carefully argued account of Eritrean politics over ten years ago.⁴⁹ More recently, Irma Taddia has produced a major study, drawing on British and Italian archives,

⁴⁵ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (second ed., Harmondsworth, 1981), Preface.

⁴⁶ R. A. Caulk, 'Bad men of the borders: *Shum* and *Shefta* in Northern Ethiopia in the nineteenth century', *Int. J. Afr. Hist. Studies*, xvii, 2 (1984), 201-27; distinct recension at pp. 39-104 of Bahru Zewde (ed.), *Proceedings of the Second Annual Seminar of the Department of History (AAU)* (Addis Ababa: 2 vols., 1984). See also D. Crummey, 'Banditry and resistance: noble and peasant in nineteenth-century Ethiopia' (pp. 133-49); T. Fernyhough, 'Social mobility and dissident elites in northern Ethiopia: the role of banditry, 1900-69' (pp. 151-72); and R. Caulk, "'Black snake, white snake": Bahta Hagos and his revolt against Italian overrule in Eritrea; 1894' (pp. 293-309) in D. Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London, 1986). Merid Wolde Aregay has discussed unrest at an earlier period: 'Millenarian traditions and peasant movements in Ethiopia 1500-1855', pp. 257-62 in *Proc. Seventh Int. Conference*.

⁴⁷ In his 'Rural protest in Ethiopia, 1941-1970: a study of three rebellions' (Ph.D. thesis, Syracuse University, 1977), now reworked into a manuscript entitled 'Ethiopia: power and protest. Peasant revolts in the twentieth century'. Some of Gebru's material was published as: 'Peasant resistance in Ethiopia: the case of Weyane', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xxv (1984), 77-92. He extends his argument in 'Preliminary history of resistance in Tigray (Ethiopia)', *Africa*, xxxix, 2 (Rome, 1984), 201-26.

⁴⁸ Bereket Habte Selassie is the most senior Eritrean to publish, but his book is disappointingly thin: *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa* (New York and London, 1980). Richard Sherman provides a reasonable outline from the Eritrean perspective: *Eritrea. The Unfinished Revolution* (New York, 1980). The reader will find the main issues addressed in B. Davidson, L. Cliffe, and Bereket H. Selassie (eds.), *Behind the War in Eritrea* (Nottingham, 1980). None of these contributions rivals, in their solidity, G. K. N. Trevaskis's *Eritrea: A Colony in Transition* (London, 1960).

⁴⁹ L. Ellingson, 'The origins and development of the Eritrean liberation movement', pp. 613-28 in *Proc. Fifth Int. Conference* (Session B) and 'The Emergence of Political Parties in Eritrea, 1941-1950', *J. Afr. Hist.*, xviii, 2 (1977), 261-82.

of the colonial impact on the Eritrean countryside, and on agrarian life.⁵⁰ Her discussion of policy discounts the idea that Italian colonialism differed essentially from that of other European powers.⁵¹

Shumet Sishagne is using Ethiopian government archival materials in Asmara to explore politics under British and Ethiopian rule in the 1950s and 1960s.⁵² By contrast, Jordan Gebre-Medhim has argued the case for a peasant-based nationalism in Eritrea,⁵³ while Tom Killion, on the basis of a regional study, which embraces Ethiopia and Djibouti, of the emergence of a working class, claims a formative role for the proletariat in the creation of Eritrean nationalism.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, work has continued which views the earlier history of Eritrea primarily from an Ethiopian national perspective. This was the thrust of Haggai Erlich's thesis,⁵⁵ and still more recently of the papers published on the centenary of the Battle of Dogali, a major Ethiopian victory over the Italians which took place in Eritrea.⁵⁶

Eritrea, and the struggle for its future, obliquely raises the question of ethnicity. Its population is heterogeneous. Its nationalism has drawn strength from appeals to minorities, at the same time as ethnic rivalries and ethnic ties to Ethiopia have sapped it. All over the region the Ethiopian revolution has unleashed, or reinforced, ethnic consciousness. Undergraduates at Addis Ababa University anticipated the importance of this issue in a number of theses dedicated to non-Semitic speaking peoples in the years before the Revolution. Of the 103 theses accepted then in the History Department, 76 dealt with Ethiopian topics, and, of the 76, 13 or 17.1 per cent dealt with peoples other than the Amhara or Tegray.

Studies of such peoples have grown in prominence and sophistication, as evidenced by the recent collection edited by Donham and James. With a series of studies straddling the Ethiopia-Sudan border, their book documents the varied ways in which the Abyssinian centre incorporated peoples on its

⁵⁰ Irma Taddia, *L'Eritrea - Colonia 1890-1952. Paesaggi, strutture, uomini del colonialismo* (Milan, 1986). See also Tekeste Negash's collection of essays, *No Medicine*; and the published version of his Uppsala Ph.D. thesis: *Italian Colonialism in Eritrea, 1882-1941: Policies, Praxis and Impact* (Uppsala, 1987).

⁵¹ See also her earlier studies of Italian land policy and of private investment: 'Sulla politica della terra nella Colonia Eritrea', *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, 1 (1984), 42-78; and 'Intervento pubblico e capitale privato nella Colonia Eritrea', *ibid.*, 11 (1985), 207-42.

⁵² Shumet Sishagne, 'Power struggle in the Eritrean secessionist movement' (M.A. dissertation, AAU, 1984). See also *idem*, 'Notes on the background to the Eritrean problem (early 1950s to the 1960s)', pp. 180-213 in *Proceedings of the Second Annual Seminar*; and 'The genesis of the differences in the Eritrean secessionist movement (1960-1970)', pp. 447-67 in vol. 11, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*.

⁵³ Jordan Gebre-Medhin, *Peasants and Nationalism in Eritrea* (Trenton, NJ, 1989). See also Tesfatsion Medhanie's *Eritrea. Dynamics of a National Question* (Amsterdam, 1986), which, although critical of both the Eritrean liberation movement and of the Ethiopian government, adopts an Ethiopian national position.

⁵⁴ Thomas C. Killion, 'Workers, capital and the state in the Ethiopian region 1919-1974' (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1986).

⁵⁵ H. Erlich, *Ethiopia and Eritrea* (cited in n. 31). See also *idem*, *Ethiopia and the Challenge of Independence* (Boulder, 1986).

⁵⁶ Taddese Beyene, Taddesse Tamrat, and R. Pankhurst (eds.), *The Centenary of Dogali. Proceedings of the International Symposium, Addis Ababa-Asmara, January 24-25, 1987* (Addis Ababa, 1988).

periphery and its differing impacts upon them.⁵⁷ Donham's introduction, something of a *tour de force*, firmly roots the collection in the social and political development of the Ethiopian empire. While it does not shirk from violence and exploitation, its assessments are nuanced. Garretson's contribution, 'Vicious cycles: ivory, slaves, and arms on the new Maji frontier' (pp. 196–218), is typical in its deft movement between capital and province, and in its balancing between Ethiopia and the Sudan.⁵⁸ On the basis of the private archive of the Moroda family, Triulzi discusses the relationship between one of the most powerful Oromo provincial rulers and his Addis Ababa overlords.⁵⁹ His sureness of touch derives from earlier research on the Bela Shangul kingdom, research which integrated an even wider range of materials into a study of ethnic identity, mode of production, and domination and resistance.⁶⁰ Yet another contributor, Charles McClellan, has recently published his own book on the Gedeo, which documents the different stages through which Ethiopian rule went in the area, and the corresponding changes in the Gedeo response.⁶¹ He discusses the *nāftāñña-gäbbar* relationship, land alienation, the development of a commercial crop (coffee), and cultural and political assimilation.⁶²

Taddesse Tamrat has applied the techniques and concerns of ethno-history to the peoples of the central highlands, re-reading his medieval sources in the light of oral traditions, ethnographic data, and toponyms.⁶³

⁵⁷ Donald Donham and Wendy James (eds.), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia. Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1986).

⁵⁸ See also Garretson's earlier 'Manjil Hamdan Abu Shok (1898–1938) and the administration of Gubba', pp. 197–210 in *Proc. Fifth Int. Conference (Session A)*.

⁵⁹ A. Triulzi, 'Nekemte and Addis Ababa: Dilemmas of provincial rule', pp. 51–68.

⁶⁰ A. Triulzi, *Salt, Gold and Legitimacy. Prelude to the history of a No-man's Land. Bela Shangul, Wallagga, Ethiopia (ca. 1800–1898)* (Naples, 1981). See also Triulzi's earlier 'Social protest and rebellion in some Gäbbar songs from Qëlläm, Wällägga', pp. 177–96 in *Proc. Fifth Int. Conference (Session A)*; and 'Center-periphery relations in Ethiopian studies: reflections on ten years of research on Wellega history', pp. 359–63 in *Proc. Seventh Int. Conference*.

⁶¹ Charles W. McClellan, 'Coffee in centre-periphery relations: Gedeo in the early twentieth century', pp. 175–95; *idem*, *State Transformation and National Integration: Gedeo and the Ethiopian Empire, 1895–1935* (East Lansing, MI, 1988); and 'The Ethiopian occupation of northern Sidamo – recruitment and motivation', pp. 513–23 in *Proc. Fifth Int. Conference (Session B)*.

⁶² Others have also contributed recently to the histories of southern peoples, notably Ulrich Braukämper and Werner Lange, who build on the tradition of *Kulturgeschichte*: U. Braukämper, *Geschichte der Hadiya Süd-Athiopiens von den Anfängen bis zur Revolution 1974* (Wiesbaden, 1980); and *Die Kambata* (Wiesbaden, 1983). Lange has substituted a sometimes vulgar marxism for *Kulturgeschichte*, but it does not wholly vitiate the substantial work he has done on the Käfa region: *Gimira (remnants of a vanishing culture)*, his Ph.D. dissertation at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1975; and *idem*, *History of the Southern Gonga (Southwestern Ethiopia)* (Wiesbaden, 1982).

⁶³ Taddesse Tamrat, 'Processes of ethnic interaction and integration in Ethiopian history: the case of the Agaw', *J. Afr. Hist.* xxix, 1 (1988), 5–18; *idem*, 'Ethnic interaction and integration in Ethiopian history: the case of the Gafat', *J. Ethiopian Studies*, xxi (1988), 121–54. One of Taddesse's junior colleagues, Tecele Haimanot Gebre Selassie, has done an ethnohistorical study of a hunting-gathering people who live by Lake T'ana: 'The Wayto of Lake Tana: an ethno-history' (M.A. thesis, AAU, 1984). See also Tecele Haimanot's 'YäGumare Särg: initiation ceremony among the Wayto of Lake Tana', pp. 234–43 in *Proceedings of the Second Annual Seminar*.

His study of the Gafat is magisterial. Jim Quirin has laid the foundations for a history of the Fālasha (or Bētā Esra'él) which meets contemporary Africanist standards;⁶⁴ while Steven Kaplan has also outlined his own version.⁶⁵

This corpus notwithstanding, the Oromo dominate the emerging scholarship on southern Ethiopia, the bulk of the material concerning them as yet confined to unpublished theses. Mohammed Hassen's S.O.A.S. thesis re-evaluated the available materials for their earlier history with an emphasis on the southwestern region.⁶⁶ Negaso Gidada's Frankfurt dissertation dealt with the Sayo of western Wälläga.⁶⁷ Both scholars emphasized social structure and the emergence of class societies, concerns which the next generation, better placed to carry out field work, have echoed and developed. Tesema Ta'a, yet another graduate of Michigan State University, has worked on much the same area as Negaso, but with better, and more recent, access to oral traditions.⁶⁸ In 1984 Guluma Gemedä and Tekalign Wolde Mariam returned the focus of Oromo studies to the Gibé region with master's theses on state formation, in the one case, and slavery and the slave trade in the other.⁶⁹ Daniel Ayana has brought the story forward into the twentieth century by investigating the impact of Protestant missions on Wälläga.⁷⁰ All these works share a common methodology of oral history,

⁶⁴ James Quirin 'The Beta Israel (Felasha) in Ethiopian History: caste formation and culture change, 1270-1868' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1977); *idem*, 'The process of caste formation in Ethiopia: a study of the Beta Israel (Felasha), 1270-1868', *Int. J. Afr. Hist. Studies*, xii, 2 (1979), 235-58. See also David Kessler, *The Falashas. The Forgiven Jews of Ethiopia* (London and New York, 1982); and Robert Hess, 'An outline of Falasha history', pp. 99-112 in vol. 1, *Proc. Third Int. Conference*.

⁶⁵ Steven Kaplan, 'A brief history of the Beta Israel,' pp. 11-29 in *The Jews of Ethiopia. A People in Transition* (Tel Aviv/New York, 1986). Both Kaplan and Quirin draw on the work of Kay Shelemay: see above, footnote 31; also her contribution to *The Jews of Ethiopia: 'The Beta Israel in twentieth-century Ethiopia'* (pp. 40-9).

⁶⁶ Mohammed Hassen, 'The Oromo of Ethiopia, 1500-1850: with special emphasis on the Gibe region' (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1983).

⁶⁷ Negaso Gidada, 'History of the Sayyoo Oromoo of Southwestern Wallaga, Ethiopia, from about 1730 to 1886' (Ph.D. dissertation, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1984).

⁶⁸ Tesema Ta'a, 'The Oromo of Wollega: a historical survey up to 1910' (M.A. thesis, AAU, 1980); *idem*, 'The political economy of Western Central Ethiopia: from the mid-16th to the early 20th centuries' (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1986).

⁶⁹ Guluma Gemedä, 'Gomma and Limmu: the process of state formation among the Oromo in the Gibe region, c. 1795-1889', unpublished M.A. thesis, AAU, 1984; *idem*, 'The process of state formation in the Gibe region: the case of Gomma and Jimma', pp. 129-52 in *Proceedings of the Second Annual Seminar*; and *idem*, 'Markets, local traders and long-distance merchants in southwestern Ethiopia during the nineteenth century', pp. 375-89 in vol. 11, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*. See also Tekalign Wolde Mariam, works as cited above, note 38; and *idem*, 'Some patterns of slave acquisition in the kingdom of Jimma Abba Jiffar (c. 1875-1932)', pp. 214-33 in *Proceedings of the Second Annual Seminar*.

⁷⁰ Daniel Ayana, 'Protestant missions in Wollaga: a study of the activities of the missions and the local converts 1898-1935' (M.A. thesis, AAU, 1984); *idem*, 'The concept of *Waaqa* and the missionaries: a preliminary study in the grafting of Christianity on a traditional belief in Wollega', pp. 105-28 in *Proceedings of the Second Annual Seminar*; and *idem*, 'Some notes on the role of village schools in grafting Protestantism in Wollega: 1898-1935', pp. 329-36 in vol. 1, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*.

which they deploy to the enrichment of Ethiopian historiography by extending it far beyond the Abyssinian core which previously had confined it.

New methodologies, new themes, and new geographical areas: the story is not complete. A number of scholars have breathed new life into the documentary tradition of Ethiopian studies, while others have made important contributions to the study of earlier periods. Few of these scholars take questions of society, state, or nationality as central concerns. Nonetheless, their work is vital to those who do.

Few Ethiopianists can match in either volume or importance Bairu Tafla's textual publications. In 1977 he brought out the first full length chronicle of the reign of Yohannes IV (r. 1870–89);⁷¹ and followed it in 1981 with a multifaceted study of Ethio-German relations, to which he appended 35 documents.⁷² In 1987, he published a very important early twentieth-century text by As'mä Giyorgis, almost 400 pages of document plus facing translation, dedicated to the Oromo and their role in Ethiopian history.⁷³ The full value of the work will take decades to appreciate.

Getatchew Haile has been involved in an even larger enterprise, which again will take decades for other scholars fully to absorb: the cataloguing of the thousands of reels of the Ethiopian Monastic Microfilm Library.⁷⁴ This corpus includes all the major manuscripts, and many minor ones, from most of the churches in Shäwa and Wällo provinces, and many in Gojjam and Gondär. Occasionally its new material, which Getatchew highlights, consists of extended texts, but more commonly of fragments, addenda, varia, and marginalia. Getatchew has also served as a model in producing a series of articles and monographs which no serious Ethiopianist can avoid.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Bairu Tafla (ed.), *A Chronicle of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872–89)* (Wiesbaden, 1977).

⁷² Bairu Tafla (ed.), *Ethiopia and Germany. Cultural, Political and Economic Relations, 1871–1936* (Wiesbaden, 1981).

⁷³ Bairu Tafla, *Asma Giyorgis and his work. History of the Galla and the kingdom of Sawa* (Stuttgart, 1987). Bairu's textual editions benefited from his command of the sources, which, in turn, rested on his earlier career as historian of the later nineteenth-century nobility and literati. See his articles in the *J. Ethiopian Studies*: 'Three portraits: Ato Asmä Giyorgis, Ras Gobäna Daci and Sähafé Tezaz Gäbrä Selassé', v, 2 (1967), 133–50; 'Four Ethiopian biographies: Däjjazmac Gärmamé, Däjjazmac Gäbrä-Egzi'abehér Moroda, Däjjazmac Balca and Kántiba Gäbru Dästa', vii, 2 (1969), 1–31; 'Two of the last provincial kings of Ethiopia', xi, 1 (1973), 29–55; 'Some aspects of land-tenure and taxation in Säälälé under Ras Dargé 1871–1900', xii, 2 (1974), 1–9; and 'Ras Dargé Sahlä Selassé, c. 1827–1900', xiii, 2 (1975), 17–37.

⁷⁴ Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa, and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville*, vol. iv: *Project Numbers 1101–1500* (Collegeville, MN, 1979). The most recent volume is ix: *Project Numbers 3501–4000* (Collegeville, 1987). William F. Macomber started the cataloguing and has continued to play an important part in the project.

⁷⁵ See, for example: 'The homily of Ase Zär'a Ya'eqob of Ethiopia in honour of Saturday', *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*, xiii (1982), 185–231; 'A new look at some dates of early Ethiopia history', *Le Muséon*, xcv, 3–4 (1982), 311–22; 'Inside the royal confinement', *Northeast African Studies*, iv 1 (1982), 19–52; 'Documents on the history of Asé Dawit (1382–1413)', *J. Ethiopian Studies*, xvi (1983), 25–35; 'The end of a deserter of the established church of Ethiopia', pp. 193–203, and 'Materials on the theology of

Sven Rubenson has embarked on the publication of an *Acta Æthiopica* for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, 'a chronological series of Ethiopian...correspondence, treaties, etc.', a corpus which he is creating.⁷⁶ Volume I draws on seventeen different sources, for material of political and cultural interest as well as diplomatic. Manfred Kropp has undertaken the long-overdue project of mastering the general chronicles, in the process of which he has provided us with some valuable fragments and insights.⁷⁷

Joe Michels, on the basis of a site survey of central Tegray province, suggests a radical reinterpretation of 1700 years of early Ethiopian civilization, shifting the dominant image from continuity marked by steady growth and then decline to a cataclysmic series of episodic regroupings.⁷⁸ Steven Kaplan has used a comparative perspective to heighten the social and cultural setting of many of the great medieval monastic figures.⁷⁹

Early modern studies have also taken on new life. Mordechai Abir has provided a reliable, regionally-oriented reading of the principal sources for the period, but one uninformed by the insights of Merid Wolde Aregay, by a firm grasp of social structure, or by a nuanced approach to ethnicity.⁸⁰ Emeri van Donzel has widened the sources by the inclusion of Dutch East India Company records from the National Archives in the Hague, and by

Qeb'at or unction', pp. 205-50 in *Proc. Sixth Int. Conference*; 'Ethiopian, Christian captives in the territory of the *Arämi*', pp. 113-19 in *Proc. Seventh Int. Conference*; 'The unity and territorial integrity of Ethiopia', *J. Modern African Studies*, xxiv, 3 (1986), 465-87; 'A history of the *Tabot* of Atronesä Maryam in Amhara (Ethiopia)', *Paideuma*, xxxiv (1988), 13-22.

⁷⁶ S. Rubenson with co-editors Getatchew Haile and John Hunwick, *Acta Aethiopica*, 1, *Correspondence and Treaties 1800-1854* (Evanston/Addis Ababa, 1987). Some of these documents have been published by others in different editions: Girma-Selassie Asfaw and David Appleyard with E. Ullendorff, *The Amharic Letters of Emperor Theodore of Ethiopia to Queen Victoria and Her Special Envoy* (London, 1979); David Appleyard and A. K. Irvine with R. Pankhurst and Bairu Tafla, *Letters from Ethiopian Rulers (Early and Mid-Nineteenth Century)* (London, 1985).

⁷⁷ For example: 'Täf We'etu und Täf Naccäw in den Äthiopischen Chroniken', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, xxvi, 2 (1981), 267-71; 'Zur "Kurzen Chronik" der äthiopischen Könige', *Oriens Christianus*, S. IV, LXV (1981), 137-47; 'An hypothesis concerning an author or compiler of the "Short Chronicle" of the Ethiopian kings', pp. 359-72 in *Proc. Sixth Int. Conference*; 'The Ser'ata Gebr. A mirror view of daily life at the Ethiopian royal court in the middle ages', pp. 219-32 in vol. 1, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*; and 'Les premières querelles théologiques d'Abuna Salama III en Ethiopie', *Annales d'Ethiopie*, xiv (1987), 101-16. Hans A. Dombrowski has published one new example of the tradition on which Kropp is working: *Tanasee 106: Eine Chronik der Herrscher Athiopiens* (Wiesbaden: 2 vols., 1983).

⁷⁸ Joseph W. Michels, 'The Axumite kingdom: a settlement archaeology perspective', pp. 173-83 in vol. vi, *Proc. Ninth Int. Congress*.

⁷⁹ Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia* (Wiesbaden, 1984). See also *idem*, 'Ezana's conversion reconsidered', *J. Religion in Africa*, xiii, 2 (1982), 101-9; 'The Ethiopian cult of the saints. A preliminary investigation', *Paideuma*, xxxii 1-13; 'Christianity and the early state in Ethiopia', pp. 148-67 in S. N. Eisenstadt, M. Abitbol and N. Chazan (eds.), *The Early State in African Perspective. Culture, Power and Division of Labor* (Leiden, 1988).

⁸⁰ M. Abir, *Ethiopia and the Red Sea. The Rise and Decline of the Solomonic Dynasty and Muslim-European Rivalry in the Region* (London, 1980). See also *idem*, 'Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa', in Richard Gray (ed.), *Cambridge History of Africa*, IV: c. 1600-c. 1790 (1975), 537-77.

completely re-editing an Arabic account of a 1640s Yemenite embassy, which together fundamentally shift our understanding of foreign relations in the seventeenth century.⁸¹ Finally, Sevir Chernetsov is asking stimulating questions arising from an intimate knowledge of the chronicle sources.⁸²

A cadre of professional, analytical historians of Ethiopia has emerged in the last three decades. It has many achievements to its credit. It has limitations as well. All male, it has shown no sensitivity to the issues raised by feminism.⁸³ Work on Islam poorly reflects, in volume, its importance in the country's life and history. Hussein Ahmed has made a solid beginning, but many more labourers are needed.⁸⁴ Religious weaknesses mask ethnic and geographical ones. Current personnel and research are heavily skewed toward the agricultural peoples of the western part of the country and do not do justice to the pastoralists, or to the agriculturalists of the eastern highlands.⁸⁵ Finally, we must face the appalling fact that the last one-volume history of the country, produced in English for a general audience, came out in 1935!⁸⁶ This deficiency is only partly offset by the relevant chapters of the *Cambridge History of Africa*, published between 1975 and 1986.

The resources for a new history exist. The last three decades have seen the main processes and developments identified and clarified in the area included in, or immediately affected by, the Ethiopian state. Ethiopian historians are doing a good job of looking at agrarian issues, at ethnic formation and identity, at the evolution of state and society, and at their changing relations with a wider world. They have produced a series of widening syntheses and

⁸¹ E. van Donzel, *Foreign Relations of Ethiopia 1642-1700. Documents Relating to the Journeys of Khodja Murad* (Leiden 1979); and *idem*, *A Yemenite Embassy to Ethiopia 1647-1649. Al-Haymi's Sirat al-Habasha. Newly Introduced, Translated and Annotated* (Wiesbaden, 1986). For a single new text of importance for the sixteenth and early seventeenth century it would be hard to beat Donald M. Lockhart and C. F. Beckingham's *The Itinerario of Jeronimo Lobo* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1984).

⁸² S. B. Chernetsov, 'The "History of the Gallas" and death of Za-Dengel, king of Ethiopia (1603-1604)', pp. 803-8 in vol. 1, *Proc. Fourth Int. Congress*; 'Who wrote "The History of King Sarsa Dengel" - was it the monk Bahrey?' pp. 131-6 in vol. 1, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*; and 'Medieval Ethiopian historiographers and their methods', pp. 191-200 in vol. v, *Proc. Ninth Int. Congress*. LaVerle Berry has also contributed to the understanding of the Gondär period: 'Factions and coalitions during the Gonder period, 1630-1755', pp. 431-41 in *Proc. Fifth Int. Conference (Session B)*.

⁸³ But see here Chris Prouty Rosenfeld's study: *Empress Taytu and Menilek II: Ethiopia 1883-1910* (London/Trenton, NJ, 1986); and her 'Eight Ethiopian women of the *Zemene Mesafint*, 1769-1855', *Northeast African Studies*, 1, 2 (1979), 63-85.

⁸⁴ Hussein Ahmed, 'Studies in Islam: retrospect and prospect', pp. 40-60 in vol. 11 of *Proceedings of the Second Annual Seminar*; and 'Introducing an Arabic hagiography from Wällo', pp. 185-97 in vol. 1, *Proc. Eighth Int. Conference*. See also Kassim Shehim, 'The influence of Islam on the "Afar"' (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 1982). There has also been an attenuation of interest in the church and its varied roles in the twentieth century. For an exception, see Haile Mariam Larebo, 'The Ethiopian orthodox church and politics in the twentieth century,' *Northeast African Studies*, ix, 3 (1987), 1-17 and x, 1 (1988), 1-23.

⁸⁵ Although see here the work of Said S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The Case of Sayyid Mahammad Abdille Hasan* (Cambridge, 1982).

⁸⁶ A. H. M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia* (Oxford, 1935). The latest printing in my possession was in 1978. It differs from the 1935 version in its nine-page chronology bringing events down to 1944.

have integrated their discussions with the concerns of historians working on other parts of Africa. As Wendy James has remarked:

...the old line between the study of Ethiopia and the rest of Africa should finally be breached, and one of the most important centres of economic, political and cultural influence in the continent be drawn into the mainstream of African studies.⁸⁷

As state and society in Ethiopia continue to develop and redefine themselves, the country's historians are well poised to contribute creatively to the process.

SUMMARY

Events since 1974 have challenged fundamental assumptions about Ethiopian history, calling in question the country's borders and internal coherence, the nature of its social order, the centrality of its monarchy and Zionist ideology to the maintenance of the polity, and the viability of the peasant way of life. In so doing they challenge a young, but vigorous, historiography, one founded in the 1960s with the creation of a History Department at what is now Addis Ababa University and of an international coterie of scholars. Its early stages were marked by archivally-based studies of Ethiopia's international emergence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and of trade and politics. Its later stages were marked by a steady growth in the number of contributors and in the emergence of major new themes many of which depend on the use of indigenous sources, both oral and written. Class and class relations; economy, state, and society; the Kushitic- and Omotic-speaking peoples; the use of social anthropology – such are the concerns of contemporary historians of Ethiopia. These concerns inform new work on agrarian issues and on the roots of famine, on urbanization, on the nature of the twentieth-century state, on the revolution itself and on the roots of resistance and social unrest, and on ethnicity. Meanwhile, more traditional work continues to glean insights from the manuscript tradition and to bring to light major new texts both Ethiopian and foreign. The article surveys this material and concludes by noting the persistence of certain limitations – the lack of work on women or on pastoralism, the scarcity of it on Islam, the heavy emphasis on that part of the country lying west of the Rift Valley, and the absence of an integrating synthesis – and the prospective integration of work on Ethiopia into the mainstream of African historiography.

⁸⁷ In the Epilogue to *The Southern Marches*, 249.