Some Amharic Sources for Modern Ethiopian History, 1889-1935
Author(s): Peter P. Garretson and Richard Pankhurst
Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of School of Oriental and African Studies
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/615935
Accessed: 15-12-2015 09:20 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.
SOME AMHARIC SOURCES FOR MODERN ETHIOPIAN HISTORY, 1889–1935

By Peter P. Garretson

(with notes by Richard Pankhurst)

Emperor Menelik’s reign (1889–1913) opens a new era in the kind of sources that the historian has at his disposal for the analysis of modern Ethiopian history. During his reign printing presses were set up in the country and spurred a gradual growth in the more widespread use of Amharic, not just as the spoken but also the written language of the imperial court. This is not to say that the Gə’ez literary tradition in Ethiopia disappeared altogether, for some chronicles in Gə’ez continued to be written after 1935, often very similar in form and content to those which have survived for the Gondarine and earlier periods of Ethiopian history. However, Menelik’s reign, and the official chronicle of it by Gəbrə Sallase, mark a significant departure, not least because the chronicle was written in Amharic and not in Gə’ez.2 There are a few earlier published literary works in Amharic, the songs of the kings of the fourteenth century being the most significant, but it should be emphasized that the Gə’ez tradition continued parallel to the Amharic in the form of tarikā nāgāst, i.e. the history of kings. Some of these are now preserved at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa, like the Gondarine tarikā nāgāst which belonged to Nagus Wälðä Giyorgis, the valuable biography of the grandson of Emperor Tewodros (1855–68), Mäsäṣə, and a published biography of Ras Makonnen.3

[Dr. Garretson's view that Gəbrə Sallase's chronicle, and Menelik’s reign in general, mark a 'significant' point of historiographical departure may not be accepted by all Ethiopici. Gəbrə Sallase's chronicle, it should be noted, was not in fact the first such work to be written in Amharic, for all three known chronicles of Emperor Tewodros had been written in that language generation earlier. Evidence of Tewodros’s interest in Amharic is to be found in the beautifully written text in that language of the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Mark which he had produced and which later found its way into the British Museum (Or. 733). Tewodros's role in the emergence of Amharic was indeed so significant that Edward Ullendorff has observed that it was Tewodros 'who gave the greatest encouragement to Amharic literature as a plank in his general programme of Imperial unification' (E. Ullendorff, The Ethiopians, London, 1966, 156). Further support for the argument that the reign of Tewodros rather than that of Menelik should be regarded as the point of departure is voiced by Joseph Tubiana, who, attempting the admittedly difficult task of identifying periods in Ethiopian history, observes, 'The reign of the Emperor Theodoros II may be considered the opening of . . . Modern Times. But, on the other hand, the death of Emperor Theodoros in 1868 marks the end of an important period', from which he concluded, 'The reign of Theodoros is in itself a long turning in Ethiopian history. We may consider it as the transition between the traditional Amhara Kingdom, and the Modern Ethiopian Kingdom of today' (J. Tubiana, '“Turning points” in Ethiopian history', Rassegna di Studi Ethiopici, xxx, 1965, 164, 166). R.P.]

During the period 1889–1935, external sources also became more prolific. The trickle of foreign visitors to Ethiopia, until the last quarter of the nineteenth

2 This paper will confine itself largely to Amharic sources and leave to one side material in Gə’ez, Tagrañña, and Oromo (or Galla). Written Tagrañña and Oromo are basically a phenomenon of nineteenth-century missionary involvement in Ethiopia. Also, I have not undertaken a survey of oral material.
3 See the manuscript and book catalogues of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies; Haylä Giyorgis, Zenahu lä–Lx’ul Ras Makonnen 'The History of His Royal Highness Ras Makonnen', Addis Ababa, date not known.
century, turned into a steady stream of travellers and sportsmen. Numerous foreigners came as permanent residents after the battle of Adwa in 1896. More important were the diplomatic representatives accredited to Ethiopia and appointed to provincial centres as well as to the capital. Their reports added substantially to the documentation of the country.

[Garretson's observation that foreign literature in the Menelik period became 'more prolific' than that produced by the 'trickle' of earlier visitors should perhaps be qualified to take account of the spate of works produced by travellers in specific periods, notably the 1830's and 1840's, during the reign of Tewodros in general, and in particular at the time of the Magdala campaign which is as well documented as any of the reign of Menelik. The 'turning point' in respect of travel literature, as indeed of the innovations associated with that reign, would seem to have been, as Garretson so rightly explains, the battle of Adwa which was followed by the coming to Addis Ababa of numerous foreign diplomats and other travellers whose writings provide a rich store of documentation. R.P.]

Bibliographies of published works on Ethiopia in Europe are readily available, but no single guide yet exists for the diplomatic and colonial archives of Britain, France, and Italy concerning Ethiopia. A brief comment on them may, therefore, be helpful. The British Foreign Office records are accessible up to 1945; those of the French Foreign Ministry until about 1950; and


those of the Italian Ministero degli Affari Esteri, until 1922. The British reporting tended to concentrate on the south and the west of Ethiopia, particularly on Gambela, the Kenya border, and lake Tana. The French were pre-occupied with matters concerning the railway and the Harar and Aussa hinterland of their colony in Jibuti. The Italians devoted much of their energy to gathering information about Tigre, Begemdir, and Dessie in the north and about the provinces of Arusi and Bale in the south and east. In addition to these three collections, there are missionary archives in several countries and a variety of other archives scattered throughout the world. The missionary archives are largely beyond the scope of my knowledge, and I shall not deal with them. There is diplomatic material in the U.S. Department of State and in the German and Turkish Foreign Ministries. The last is of particular interest for the 1911–16 period when Laj Iyasu, the uncrowned emperor of Ethiopia, was in power. Belgium has interesting material, particularly for the period covering her military mission to Ethiopia in the 1930’s.

[Earlier Belgian material in published form by H. Henin occurs in the Recueil Consulaire Belge of 1907. R.P.]

Jibuti may have material bearing on Ethiopia, but the records of the Franco-Ethiopian railway have yet to be discovered. Egypt, with its long history of contact with Ethiopia, is another possible but as yet not fully exploited mine of information, especially as regards the contacts of the Coptic church with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Egyptian control over the Bank of Abyssinia.

[The Bank, it should be explained, had been established by the National Bank of Egypt, and was closely linked thereto. R.P.]

The Central Records Office in Khartoum has a good deal of material on Ethiopia which is well catalogued. Much can be found on the following subjects: the issue of lake Tana and the Nile river, delimitation of borders (including Eritrea and the Sudan Ethiopian border down to Lake Rudolf), Ethiopian relations with the Mahdiyya, consular reports from southern and western Ethiopia, and reports of Ethiopian ‘ raiding ’ activities in northern and southern Sudan. Finally, the League of Nations’ archives in Geneva contain a great deal of material on the problems of slavery and background on the Italian intervention and subsequent invasion of Ethiopia.

[Though foreign diplomatic archives relating to Ethiopia are largely uncatalogued—and from the Ethiopian point of view dispersed in capitals throughout the world—it should be mentioned that a fairly extensive collection of microfilms of such materials is to be found at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, and that Professor Sven Rubenson, who arranged for much of the original filming, has recently catalogued them. R.P.]

8 For an indication of missionary sources for the mid-nineteenth century in Ethiopia, see D. Crumley, Priests and politicians, London, 1972.
9 Neither Willi Loepe working at Zurich on Alfred Ilg and the Jibuti railway, nor Richard Caulk of the University at Addis Ababa have been able to locate this material.
10 An over-all catalogue of this material has yet to be published and provincial and district archives have yet to be fully explored and catalogued.
The main thrust of this paper will not be directed towards European sources but will aim at Amharic sources in Ethiopia, accessible or otherwise, for the study of modern Ethiopian history. There is a good deal more material available in Amharic than I had foreseen when I went to Ethiopia in 1971–2, but much of it is very scattered, and even certain published material is at times hard to locate, since Ethiopia as yet has no law of deposit. Thus the historian has reason to be grateful for the collections at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and J. F. Kennedy Library, both housed in Addis Ababa University, and for the efforts that they have made to assemble newly published material, unsystematic though it might be at times.\textsuperscript{12} Endeavours to collect unpublished material continue, for it must not be forgotten that Ethiopia is one of the few areas in Africa where there is at least the potential of tax and trade receipts for internal and external trade, instructions to governors, and instructions to and reports from boundary commissions.

[Despite ceaseless efforts by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, and others, to press for a law of deposit for the preservation of printed books no such legislation was enacted until after the 1974 revolution when the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia enacted a proclamation \textquoteleft for the deposit of printed materials in the Ministry of Culture and Youth\textquoteright. This decree, however, to the University's chagrin, granted the privilege of deposit only to the National Library of Ethiopia instead of, as the Institute had always proposed, to both the National and University libraries. The creation of more than one depository library had seemed to us essential in view of danger of fire, etc. R.P.]

[Notwithstanding the absence of any law of deposit the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at its inception in 1963 began issuing two bibliographical series: \textit{Ethiopian Publications}, an annual listing by subject of books, pamphlets, annuals and periodical articles published in Ethiopia, edited by Professor S. Chojnacki and others (and more recently by Atu Dogafe Gabrij Sadiq), and a list of \textit{Current Periodical Publications in Ethiopia}, under the same editorship, which has appeared every other year. The former work was later supplemented by Christianne Højér's \textit{Ethiopian publications} (Addis Ababa, 1974) which covers the years from 1942 to 1962. A fairly comprehensive bibliographic record is thus available for works published in the country for the entire period since the liberation. Taken with Stephen Wright's catalogue (see below) this means that the only major bibliographic lacuna is for the five years of the Italian Fascist occupation (1936–41). R.P.]

\textbf{Material published in Amharic.} Indispensable for the historian working on the period before the Italian invasion of 1935 is Wright's bibliography of works published in Ethiopia before 1935.\textsuperscript{13} Organized according to presses publishing during the period, it is cross-referenced for easy checking either by author or by date of publication. Unfortunately, the list is not exhaustive and the entries catalogued are not always easily obtainable.

[In Stephen Wright's defence it should be noted that this bibliography, as stated on its title-page and preface, was confined to books in the National Library of Ethiopia and the Haile Sellassie I University. The work is complete within its own terms of reference and makes no claim to cover publications not then included in the said collections. Also of interest for the student of early Amharic printed literature is Haruy Woldà Sollase, \textit{Catalogue des livres rédigés en langue guzë et amharique}, Addis Ababa, 1998, and Pierre Comba's \textit{Inventaire des livres dans la collection éthiopienne à la bibliothèque de l'Université Collège d'Addis Ababa, avril 1959}, Addis Ababa, 1961. R.P.]

The first printing press was established in Addis Ababa in 1893 but encountered many technical difficulties. Better ones were later imported but periodically broke down and for lack of spare parts do not seem to have been in use for extended periods. Some imperial proclamations are said to have been printed on these machines, but none seems to have survived.

[Valuable material on the beginnings of printing in Amharic is to be found in M. Cohen, 'La naissance d'une littérature imprimé en amharique', \textit{Journal Asiatische}, cccvi, avril–juin 1925, 348–63, as well as in J. I. Eadie, \textit{An Amharic reader}, Cambridge, 1924, which contains

\textsuperscript{12} See below. The postal address of both these institutions is P.O. Box 1176, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Both, unlike the National Library, have relatively efficient xerox facilities.

\textsuperscript{13} S. Wright, \textit{Ethiopian incunabula}, Addis Ababa, 1987.]

One important entry Wright missed was *Le docteur nouvellement venu*, a fascinating pamphlet which gives us the first example of an Ethiopian press being used as an instrument of propaganda on behalf of the government. In this case it is a justification of Empress Taytu's actions in 1910 when she was unjustly accused by a German doctor of having poisoned her husband, the Emperor Menelik. Also published during the period 1916-35 but not covered by Wright's *Ethiopian incunabula* are two newspapers, *Amaro* and *Borhananna Sâlam*. The first appeared in various forms during the years 1911-35 and the second from 1925 up to the Italian invasion. Both are a mine of information for government proclamations, trade statistics, background information, and obituaries. *Borhananna Sâlam* particularly reflects the late Emperor Haile Sellassie's views, since he was the founder of the newspaper. It has more coverage of internal Ethiopian affairs, while *Amaro* concentrated on foreign news; unfortunately neither has an index. Meanwhile in Eritrea Gâbrâ Hâywât Baykâdān published an article on Menelik in *Borhan Yâshu* in 1912.


Mentioned in Wright's *Incunabula* and written shortly after the events of 1916, when Ras Tafari, later Emperor Haile Sellassie I, was made Regent, and Menelik's daughter, Zâwditu, became Empress, is a fascinating work by Näggadras Gâbrâ Hâywât Baykâdân called *Mângastonna yâ-hazb astàddâl* 'Government and administration of the people'. It is an important work, since it is virtually the only critique of the policies and administrative machinery set up by Menelik from the point of view of one of the few foreign educated Ethiopians, a group known at the time as the 'progressives'. Unfortunately, he died while relatively young.

[Reference may here also be made to Afâ Wärq Gâbrâ Iyäusus, *Guide du voyageur en Abyssinie*, Rome, 1908, a work in Amharic and French, which, despite its title, contains interesting social criticism by an educated Ethiopian. R.P.]

Published after the Italian occupation but containing a wealth of selected documents from Menelik's reign is the *Zokrâ någâr* edited by Mahtämâ Sollâs-e; 19

---

14 Addis yâ-mâyttut hâkimod [sic]. Dare Dawa, 1909/1916-17. This pamphlet is also to be found in the Quai d'Orsay, N.S. Ethiopia, 10, pp. 43-52.

15 Parts of *Amaro* for 1911–16 are available in microfilm at the IES but parts for later years are also at the National Library.

16 Parts of *Borhananna Sâlam* are available at SOAS and the British Library, but a few of the missing copies can be found at the IES and National Library in Addis Ababa. A third possibility is the religious newspaper *Gohâ Šâbah*. However, I have been unable to obtain detailed information concerning it.

17 A translation of this can be found in L. Fusella, 'Menelik e l'Etiopia in un testo amarico del Bâykâdân', *AION*, NS, iv, 1952, 119-43.


as a source it must be treated with some caution, one of its main aims being to extol the achievements of the reigns of Menelik and especially Haile Sellassie, and to point out how numerous the modernization and improvements of the latter era have been. Documents are often undated or wrongly dated, especially those of Menelik's period. Yet it is one of the very few sources of published Amharic documentation of Ethiopian history, and the new edition of 1962/1969–70 has a voluminous index, even if many of the errors of the earlier edition have not been corrected. Another work dealing specifically with aspects of land tenure is by Gábrá Wáld Ëngada Wárq 20 and has been translated into English. 21

At the end of a long imperial tradition lies Gábrá Sollase's chronicle of Menelik's reign which has at last been published in Amharic, 22 although it has been available in a French translation since 1932. 23 The lavish effort put into the French edition does not seem to have been emulated by Blätta Márs'e Hazán, and there are a few typographical errors. Another genre, with a history going back for centuries, consists of eulogistic poems or accounts of the royal family or important nobles. Many of these have been published in the post-Menelik period of Ethiopian history. 24 One of the most striking of this kind of work was Dagmawi Menilk by Afá Wárg Gábrá Íyássu, extolling Menelik's reign and similar to the memoirs and autobiographies which were written later. 25

The most prominent of the published autobiographies is that of the late Emperor Haile Sellassie. Vol. 1 covers his life up to his arrival in Geneva in 1936, 26 and vol. 11 deals largely with the Italian occupation period, but the last chapter concerns the post-liberation negotiations with the British. 27 One of the most interesting parts of the autobiography deals at some length with the uncrowned Emperor of Ethiopia, Laj Íyasu.

[An English edition of the first volume, translated and extensively annotated by Edward Ullendorff, has recently appeared under the title The autobiography of Emperor Haile Sellassie I: 'My life and Ethiopia's progress', 1892–1937, OUP, 1976. Also significant for any study of the late monarch's thinking prior to the war is an article attributed by Marcel Griale to the Emperor and entitled, 'La verité sur la guerre italo-éthiopienne. Une victoire de la 'Civilisation' par le Négoue', supplement to Fu, juillet 1936. R.P.]

One other autobiographical work should perhaps be mentioned, *Malkam betasiboč*, by Ethiopia's former Prime Minister, Makoönun Ëndalkačāw.28 Unlike the late Emperor's autobiography, it stresses more frankly and strongly themes central to success in traditional Ethiopian politics, the family, attendance at court, intrigue, and the ups and downs of political life in the capital. It is one of the few books available through which, with careful reading between the lines, one can begin to understand more clearly the role of women in political life, chiefly through the manipulation of marriage alliances. Short but uneven biographical sketches of the period can be found in Haruy Wälida Sollase's *Yā-hoyyeŭt tarik* which includes most prominent figures in Ethiopian life from the 1890's to the early 1920's.29 It can be supplemented by Mahțamā Sollase's *Če bālāw*,30 a much more recent and accessible work. (Also useful in this context are foreign diplomatic personality reports of contemporary figures.) 31 Much less frequently employed as a source are the elegies or tāskar published on the anniversaries of the death of many important Ethiopians.32 Invariably eloquent, they are generally longer than obituaries and often contain some nuggets of fact.

[A collection of some 70 of the above-mentioned pamphlets is to be found at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. Other holdings of that Institution include a sizeable collection of avaj, or proclamations, in Amharic dating from 1916 onwards, numerous pre-war wedding invitations, theatre and racing club programmes, commercial advertisements, etc. of value to the social historian of the times. Also of possible assistance to scholars are some 500 unpublished biographies for the period covered by Garretson written for the Dictionary of Ethiopian biography, only the first volume of which, covering the period up to 1270, has thus far appeared (Addis Ababa, 1975). Several score biographies of the period also appeared in the first volume of *Encyclopedia Africana* published in New York in 1977. R.P.]

Although they largely fall outside the scope of this article, mention must be made of the voluminous corpus of material concerning the arbañinoc or patriots of the Italian occupation period.33 More has been published in Amharic on this five-year period than on the 47 years that preceded it. However, most of it must be carefully handled, taking into account provincial bias and the still highly charged political controversies that surround the events of those

---


31 One example of many is in FO 371/20940/6140 for May 1937, on pp. 198-210.


years. Furthermore there is uncertainty of the degree to which such works, in the general absence of references, are based on documentation, memory, or interviews. The introductory years, however, of some of the biographies can be useful. For instance Käbbädä Täsämma's Ya-tarikmastawwása, although mostly concerned with the occupation period, begins with several chapters covering the years 1916–35. Of particular interest are his charts comparing the hierarchy of the court during Menelik’s and Zäwditu’s reigns. These reveal surprising changes that took place in the nobility of the court and in particular the status of women in its hierarchy.

Before passing on to unpublished works one should mention that there are various popular and eulogistic works that were published before and after the Italian occupation. The most widespread in Ethiopia is by Tákála Sádaq Mákuriya, which is a general history of Ethiopia and the basic text of the secondary school history courses.

[Work is currently in progress on the reinterpretation of Ethiopian history (see below), and it may be presumed that Tákála Sádaq Mákuriya’s works, with their emphasis on kings, may be replaced or rewritten in ‘socialist’ terms. R.P.]


[It may be of interest to scholars outside Ethiopia to note that, as a result of an agreement between the then Haile Sellassie I University and Syracuse University in the United States, a large part of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Library was microfilmed in the early 1970’s. Items filmed, and thus available at both institutions, include the entire collection of Amharic publications printed prior to 1955, virtually all Ethiopian periodicals (excluding propaganda publications of foreign embassies in Addis Ababa) up to the date of filming, and a number of foreign works on Ethiopia deemed to be particularly rare. R.P.]

[Besides the libraries in the country students of the period covered by Garretson have to take into account the by no means insignificant libraries of Ethiopians abroad, notably in Italy, and at the Faìtlovitch Library, a part of Tel-Aviv University Central Library in Israel. For pre-war Ethiopian publications identified in these libraries by Professor Strelcyn see S. Strelcyn, ‘Les Incunables’ éthiopiens des principales bibliothèques romaines’, Rassegna di Studi Etiopici, xxv, 1971–2, pub. 1974, 456–519, and idem ‘Les Incunables’ éthiopiens de la Collection Faìtlovitch (Université de Tel-Aviv) et de l’Istituto Orientale di Napoli.’ RSE, in press. R.P.]

Unpublished material. Unpublished material in Ethiopia is scattered in private hands or sometimes in archives that are inaccessible. The most tantalizing and inaccessible of all the archives is that of the Ministry of the Pen or, as the holder of the office was called, the Sähafe Tä’azær. Few have been allowed

---

34 Däjazma Käbbädä Täsämma, Ya-tarik mastawwása, Addis Ababa, 1962.
36 I shall deal with the possibility of local and provincial archives in the next section when looking at each province individually.
access to its files, and it is often claimed that they no longer exist, but were, in the common phrase ‘destroyed during the Italian occupation’. Much has been destroyed or has decayed over the years, but at least some of Menelik’s correspondence and proclamations remain, and the chances are that more has survived from the period of Ras Tafari’s Regency (1916–30) and the early years of his reign as emperor (1930–5). It appears that the material that survived the Italian occupation was passed to the Ministry of the Pen after the war and then to the Prime Minister’s office. Mahtamä Sollase probably only published a fraction of the total material that survived in the Zekrā nāgār.

[Report that the Ministry of the Pen archives were moved to the Prime Minister’s office would seem to be unfounded. These archives are still, as of 1976, in fact at the Menelik palace, efforts by three successive Presidents of Haile Sellassie I University to have them transferred to the latter institution having proved fruitless. At the time of annotation there is, however, renewed talk of the establishment of a department of national antiquities under the newly established Ministry of Culture and Youth. R.P.]

The second major archival source is, of course, the records of the church, those of the central administration of the church at the Patriarchate in Addis Ababa, and those at each individual local church. There is a good deal of speculation as to what these archives might actually contain. Recently compiled lists of churches, their location, founders, and foundation dates certainly exist.37 Belletu Mengestu, a recent graduate of the University at Addis Ababa, was also allowed to see a carefully selected series of letters to and from Abunä Mattewos, the Egyptian head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from 1881 to 1926. The correspondence appended to her fourth-year B.A. paper 38 was only a very small fraction of the total material dealing with Mattewos, and one hopes that further material of this nature may be accessible in the future.

[Some indication of data to be found in Ethiopian churches is to be gleaned from an unpublished catalogue of manuscript holdings in Addis Ababa churches compiled some ten years ago by Dr. Haylï Gæbrï’el Dañ in the possession of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, IES MSS 491, a, b, and c. Valuable information on church holdings is also provided in the Bulletin of Ethiopian Manuscripts, a ‘trimester publication’ of the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, P.O. Box 30274, founded and edited, since 1974, by Dr. Sargaw Hæblä Sollase. R.P.]

Unpublished material is also found at the National Library in Addis Ababa. In the past it contained more of interest, like the chronicle of Loj Iyasu’s reign,39 but what has happened to it and some other documents is unclear. The National Library does, however, still have one of the original copies of Gæbrï Sollase’s chronicle of Menelik’s reign.

A fourth but growing depository is the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University, which among other manuscripts possesses a photocopy of Asme Giyorgis’s Yä-Galla tarik.40 Written just after the turn of the century, this source by a Roman Catholic educated Ethiopian, is of great interest for the years of Menelik’s reign which it covers until shortly after the turn of the century.

[An English translation by Bayru Tafla and Balaynäš Mika’el, both of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, is thus far unpublished. R.P.]

37 Volker Stitz and Donald Crumney both pointed these out to me, but I was unable to see any of them personally.
38 See Belletu Mengestu’s 1972 fourth-year history paper at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies entitled ‘A short biography of Abune Mæfæwos [sic] (1881–1926)’. I have this information from several different sources in the History Department at the University at Addis Ababa; see particularly Aby Demissie’s fourth-year paper of 1964, ‘Lij Iyasu: a perspective study of his short reign’.
40 The original is at the Bibliothèque Nationale, MSS Ethiopiens No. 302.
More unpublished material is available at the Institute for ready consultation than in any other part of Ethiopia. A few examples might give an idea of the kind of material to be found there. For instance, there is a biography of Násibu Zámánu'el, a reforming mayor of Addis Ababa and later a general on the southern front in the war against the Italians, written after the occupation by one of his retainers. Similarly, there is another biography, of Dājazmač Gārmame, one of Menelik's trusted advisers. There is also a report on the province of Bela Ŝangul by Bākura Ŝoyon written after the occupation.

[Mention should also perhaps be made of the Institute's archive of letters of a number of Ethiopian personalities, among them of Ras Amru Haylā Sallase. The Institute likewise possesses a significant body of manuscript material on the Ethiopian patriots, most of it donated by the late Dājazmač Dāmasse Wāldā Amanu'el, sometime president of the Ethiopian patriotic association which Wāyzārit Ŝāhay Barhanā Sallase has been using for her projected book Five years of guerrilla warfare. R.P.]

On the same campus is the History Department of the University at Addis Ababa and a word should be said about its efforts to gather material, copies of which are generally deposited at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. The most accessible of the material has found its way into final year essays submitted by history students as partial fulfilment of the B.A. degree. Most of these essays deal with selected and generally narrow topics of Ethiopian history and emphasis is placed on the gathering of hitherto untapped documentary and oral sources. Although the quality varies considerably, the standard of the best is remarkably high, and the gathering of source material is very often most useful. Plans have also been made at the University to publish Acta Aethiopica, a series of Ethiopian royal and princely letters, treaties, and other written acts of state, principally from European and other archives. The plan is to cover the whole of Ethiopian history from the earliest times, but the vast bulk of the material will be drawn from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

A word should also be said about the archives of the Law Faculty of the university. They contain some interesting documents, mostly quite modern, particularly extracts from Berhanonna Śalam, many with accompanying translations. Finally just south of Addis Ababa at Nazret is the gathering point for fragmentary local Capucin missionary material that remained in Ethiopia when the portion of more general interest was shipped to Toulouse. Several large files of letters, mainly dealing with Shoa and Ḥarar, remain in Nazret.

Another category of unpublished material, that in private hands, is generally held by old-established families or by amateur local historians. Most of the more important families had, in their individual courts, some retainer who would be expected to write a chronicle of the foremost member of each family in each generation. Only a very small portion of these accounts has been discovered. Also, many of these families probably have saved private letters,

41 Gulläät, Yā-Dājazmač Nāsibu Zămānu'el tarik, IES MS 216.
42 Qāňňaţmač Hayle Zālliği, Yā-Dājazmač Gārmame yā-høyed masked tarik. This is catalogued as a printed book despite being in fact a typescript. Another is by Siraq Fāqāqā Sallase of Dājazmač Abba Wāqaw, IES MS Nol. 400.
43 Bākura Ŝoyon Ţolahun, Yā-Asosa Bōni Ŝangul tarik', IES MSS 359 and 362.
44 The first volume to appear will be devoted to early nineteenth-century letters.
45 These are in two large files known as Amharic Correspondence No. I and II and include letters from Menelik's reign up to 1935.
46 These last two categories will be gone into in greater detail in the next section. I am not including here private manuscript collections of scholars.
47 Proof of this can be seen for instance in the biographies mentioned above of Nāsibu and Gārmame. See nn. 41 and 42 above.
either individual ones or as a collection. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suppose that some noble families have, in certain areas of the country, preserved land charters as proof of ownership of land that has recently changed hands. Allied to this is the possibility of genealogical material in a written form, used in connexion with the proof needed to claim ownership of land. Religious books, Bibles, the Ethiopian synaxarium, etc., often contain this and similar material on blank pages.48 Praise-songs or gattom of important historical figures were sometimes written, although many are in fact only oral. Amateur local historians are, perhaps, possible sources that can be of great assistance: Qānnazmā Tāklā Haymanot in Aksum,49 Abba Gārima in Gondar,50 and Tāsisa Ebba in Wāllāga51 to name but a few. However, many of the above points can be clarified by looking at the situation separately in each individual Ethiopian province.

Unpublished material by province
Shoa. Known unpublished sources are perhaps more abundant for this province than for any other in Ethiopia. One category that has so far proved very fruitful, in Shoa in particular, has been Ethiopians who have had very close contact with Europeans. Thus the private diaries of Azzaj Wārqnāh Ḥšātu52 and Kēnef Deddas,53 as well as some of the papers of Tāsfa Sollase,54 have come to light. Azzaq Wārqnāh (sometimes known as Dr. Charles Martin) was educated in India and qualified as a doctor there and in Britain. He did not return to the land of his birth until 1899 when he was 34 years old. From that time until 1949 he kept an almost daily diary in English which describes not only personal matters but also much of the current political situation, and gives a running account of his involvement in the affairs of the capital and the economic life of Ethiopia. Kēnef’s diary presents different problems. Unlike Wārqnāh’s it is in Amharic; as a priest he was much more concerned with the religious life of the city, and long descriptions of the foundation of new, and the restoration of old, churches are frequent. More importantly because his entries were not made daily, dates became confused and the historian cannot be positive that the original manuscript was not amended at a later date.

[An unpublished autobiography of the Russian-educated Ethiopian Fitawrari Tāklā Hawaryat also exists, and a xerox copy of it is known to have survived the arrest of the author’s son Blatta Garmaččaw in 1974. R.P.]

Other very promising sources are in the hands of the traditional noble families of Shoa. Besides the royal family, one of the most prominent families which is known to have a large amount of private papers is the Ras Darge/Ras Kasa family. Ras Kasa supposedly has written 14 books, several of which have been published. Two of the unpublished ones are reportedly on historical

48 I have encountered this at various churches in the Addis Ababa area, Šentotto Maryam for instance has books donated at various times by Empress Ṭaytu and Dājazmā Bahá. [Full details of such records are listed in Haylā Gābr’el Dań’s above-mentioned catalogue of manuscripts in Addis Ababa churches. R.P.]
49 I must thank Patrick Gilkes for this information.
50 I heard of him through LeVerle Berry.
51 Bahru Zewde has found him useful while doing research.
52 These are in the possession of the family.
53 A copy is in the possession of Aleme Eshete at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies.
54 I am grateful to Sandro Triulzi for pointing out to me the existence of these papers at Lazarist House, Mesfin Harar Road, Addis Ababa. Tāsfa Sollase was one of the translators of Gābrē Sollase’s chronicle.
subjects. Other material in published or unpublished form may be in the hands of the following families: Ras Täsiimma/Ras Mäkonnan Ḫandalkaččaw, Ras Gobäna, Däjažmač Gärname and Ras Näsibu Zämanu'el whose father was Empress Taytu’s Azzaj. Besides these families, others that might be expected to have material would be the families or retainers of: Nagus Wäldä Giyorgis, Fitawrari Habtä Giyorgis, Afä Nagus Näsibu, Ras ūmruru and Wayzäro Bafäna. Oral research on these families is often a stepping-stone on the way to letters or chronicles that may be in their possession.

Dr. Drewes, on a recent visit to SOAS, referred to the possibility of Islamic material in Arabic and local languages, mainly on local saints, and this too might be a fruitful area of inquiry. Furthermore, not all the churches in Shoa have by any means been investigated, particularly for the modern period. Even the paintings in the churches can be of some use, like Maryam zä-Säyon at Addis Aläm which glorifies Laj Iyasu and many of his retainers, for their hierarchical standing in the court is clearly revealed by their proximity to or distance from him. Needless to say, to get at the manuscripts in the churches themselves and to see the land charters is a very much more difficult process than examining, and perhaps photographing, the church paintings.

[It is, however, interesting in this connexion to note that the abundant land charters in the British Museum have thus far scarcely been studied though their existence was already noted a century ago in W. Wright’s Catalogue of the Ethiopic manuscripts in the British Museum (London, 1877), on p. 344, under the heading ‘Deeds of gift, donations, grants etc. (gwollat), in Ethiopic and Amharic’. R.P.]

Also the ‘strip cartoon’ popular art which is so much in evidence today, might prove to be of some use especially if those painted before 1935 could be located.

[The holdings of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies include some 40 of these ‘strip cartoons’, as well as several traditional paintings depicting battle scenes, banquet at Menelik’s court, etc. The location of many other such paintings, mainly in European and North American museums, is noted in R. Pankhurst, ‘Some notes for a history of Ethiopian secular art’, Ethiopia Observer, x, 1, 1966, 6-80. R.P.]

Gojjam. Across the Blue Nile from Shoa lies the province of Gojjam. Many of its churches have barely been explored, let alone investigated for historical texts. However, several chronicles have been discovered concerning the royal house of Nagus Täklä Haymanot. The most accessible is attributed to Aliqa Täklä Iyäsus 55 and covers not only Nagus Täklä Haymanot’s reign, but also the early part of the career of his son Ras Haylu. Two other chronicles of the Täklä Haymanot family are said to exist, one copy at the church of Däbrä Marqos in the capital of the province, and another at Däbrä Ḩeleyas. The main families to approach for private papers would be the descendants of Ras Haylu, Ras Mängäša Atikäm, and others. Lives of the many arbaññoč or patriots during the last war might also prove useful. 56

Harar. Since the author of Yä-Galla tarik, Asme Giyorgis, was resident in Harar the question should be raised whether other Ethiopian Catholics who lived there have left behind as yet unearthed material. Certainly the collection in the Institute of Ethiopian Studies contains originals, microfilms, and photocopies of material from the province and city of Harar. 57 These include taxation and court cases in Arabic and Amharic which may be of use in writing a social history of parts and perhaps the whole of the province. The documents cover virtually every year from 1908 to 1927. Other parts of Harar province may also

55 This is attributed to Aliqa Täklä Iyäsus, IES MS No. 254.
56 See p. 298, n. 33.
57 See MSS 734, 794 and 797–826. Each of the last series of MSS (i.e. 797–826) contain volumes averaging 300–400 folios.
have local archival material, since they were among the first to get a Westernized form of local government in the ‘model provinces’ scheme. A topic concerning which a great deal of oral and perhaps written material might be gathered would be the Ethiopian campaigns against Muhammad ‘Abdallāh ʿHasan (the so-called ‘Mad Mullah’). Very little work has been done on this up to now from the Ethiopian point of view, and the generals who led the campaigns against him, like Fitawrari Gābre, are sure to have wanted to pass their names on to posterity. There is also a likelihood that there is more than just oral material on local saints and religious leaders, some of whom would be associated with opposition to Menelik’s expanding empire.

[The Institute of Ethiopian Studies’ collection of materials on Harar, which owes much to the initiative of Ato Tayyū Hayle, formerly Public Relations Officer at the University, also contains records on births, deaths, and marriages in the city. R.P.]

Wållo. North and west of Harar lies Wållo, another province with great potential for historical texts. The most important families of the area are the Bştul family, of which Empress Ṭaytu was a member, and that of Ras Mika’el. The latter is the most promising, but there have been certain political difficulties in getting access to material because of Mika’el’s associations with his son Laj Iyasu. These and other families are likely to have documents and many of Wållo’s churches have yet to be tapped for historical documents.

Begemdir. To the west of Wållo lies the province of Begemdir with Gondar, a traditional capital, as its centre. Continuations of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gondarine chronicles exist and it is most likely that they will be discovered eventually. One of the important families of the province is the Bştul family, which included Gugsa Wåle, and Admasu and Ayyālu Borru. Nagus Wåldå Gìyorgīs’s reign in the province should have been extensively recorded, and the Muslim and Christian families that controlled the long-distance trade of the area for so long might also be a source of material. Furthermore the central and provincial archives in the Sudan may be able to throw some light on these topics.

[Historians planning to work in the Gondar area can expect to obtain valuable help from Gìyorgis Mållåå, Registrar of the Public Health College, who is keenly interested in the traditions of the area and acquainted with both local scholars and possible informants. R.P.]

Tigre. Much could still be retrieved from the numerous churches of the northern province of Tigre. Several chronicles of Emperor Yohannes have been found there, as well as one of Ras Alula. Thus it would be strange indeed if others do not exist of Yohannes’s son, grandson, and great-grandson, Ras Mångåša, Ras Soyyum, and Ras Mångåša Soyyum, respectively. Other important families are those of: Dåjazmaq Gåbrå Sallåse, Ras Gugsa Ar’aya, and Ras Såbat. Archives at the vårdå or district level for the period before 1935 are known to exist, including tax returns and a certain amount of correspondence, and it is conceivable that similar vårdå archives exist in Wållo and Begemdir.

[Useful biographies and an extensive bibliography on this region and period are provided in Zewde Gabre-Sellsasse’s Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: a political biography, Oxford, 1975. R.P.]

Eritrea. Eritrea stands apart from the other provinces of Ethiopia, since it is the only province to have been a colony for the greater part of the period

---

48 Information from Dr. Andrzjeiwski.
49 The Institute of Ethiopian Studies has copies of a Dåbrå Barhan MS and one from the family of Nagus Wåldå Gìyorgīs.
50 For instance, And Ålem Mulaw in a recent fourth-year paper presented to the History Department gives examples of tax and customs receipts.
1889–1935. Thus the problems concerning archival material on the spot are quite different, and the amount of material for even detailed regional studies is very much greater, especially in Italy. Also the Martini Library in Asmara has a large collection of books (some 25,000), and may also have some of the Africa Orientale Italiana records. Eritrea is perhaps the most promising area in Ethiopia, but it may be difficult, of course, to do work there. Here it is not only a question of trying to gather private papers from noble families, but also trying to track down local Italian, governmental and missionary material, a proportion of which may have been sent back to Europe.

[Garretson is, I fear, over-optimistic about the Martini library which never possessed any archival material on A0I, but only printed materials, i.e. books, pamphlets, and journals. Library holdings in these areas have with the passage of time been sadly depleted, but the collection still justifies some attention. R.P.]

[Indispensable for any investigation of Eritrean personalities, as well as Italians in Eritrea, is G. Puglisi, Chi è dell’Eritrea, 1952, Asmara, 1952. R.P.]

Southern and western Ethiopia. Jimma is one area of Ethiopia where Arabic chronicles about Abba Jifar and his descendants are known to exist [and are in possession of the present head of the family Abba Jobir. R.P.], but there are difficulties of access.63 In the rest of the south and the west there is no such long tradition of literacy as in the highlands to the north, although oral work may well reveal more. However, some of the most promising areas are the following: Gurage (where there is a local historian called Mâmhâr Mulat); Wàllàga (especially the Joti, Dàressa and Kumsa families), and Ilubabor (Majîd ‘Abbûd has written some accounts of the early years of Ethiopian administration).64 Lastly, the kingdoms of Aussa, Kaffa, and Bela Šangul within Ethiopia are supposed to have had ‘mirrors courts’ to the one in Shoa, and one might expect them to have had a court chronicler as well. Certainly Alieb Ahmad Dafalla, a graduate of the history department of the University at Addis Ababa, found some letters from the Sultan of Bela Šangul.

[Dajazmač Tavyâ, grandson of the famous faith-healer, Arussi Zimmâbet also known as Gifî Arussi, is in possession of two manuscripts relating to her life, and the possible existence of works on other such personages cannot be ruled out. R.P.]

It is clear, then, that there is a good deal of Amharic material that has yet to be fully utilized by the historian. One of the ways that new material might best be retrieved is by a series of regional studies on various parts of Ethiopia, to clear away many of the confusions that exist, concentrating on some of the more important families and archival sources of each area. Finally, one of the priorities should be an attempt to concentrate on aspects of social and economic history in order to counteract the innate bias of Ethiopian historiography towards the study of personalities and political events.

[Prior to the 1974 revolution the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and the History Department of the Faculty of Arts began one such regional study in Jimma, which resulted in the collection of a considerable body of oral history on tape which has thus far, however, not been studied. R.P.]

[The need, emphasized by Garretson, to ‘counteract the innate basis of Ethiopian historiography towards the study of personalities’ seems, at the time of annotation, likely to be realized to the full, though scarcely in the manner he had anticipated. The direction of current thinking in official Addis Ababa University circles can be gathered from the final report of a committee on reorganization of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies which stated, in July 1976, that research priorities should be based on the aim of building ‘a general and comprehensive knowledge of Ethiopian society and cultures’, that ‘Ethiopian society should be analysed and reinterpreted in socialist terms’, and that ‘priorities should be given to areas that have not been touched up to now in terms of cultural groups, mode of life, historical periods, and levels of analysis’. R.P.]

63 Information from Dr. Andrzejewski and others.
64 Information from Bahru Zewde.