

THE INTELLECTUAL IN THE ETHIOPIAN NOVEL, 1930-1974

BY

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The content of Modern African Literature in colonial languages was, by and large, determined by the nature of the political events before, during and after colonialism. In Ethiopia, however, the main themes of fiction were decided by issues pertaining to Western civilisation and the best ways of adapting it to Ethiopian conditions. The thesis examines the theme of progress through close study of the 'missionaries' of change, namely, the intellectual characters in Ethiopian novels. It takes four representative novels published between 1930 and 1974 as primary sources for the study. Other important novels related with our topic are briefly discussed in Chapter 1 and 2. The rest of the works which have thematic connections with the intellectual stratum are listed in the bibliography.

The first chapter presents the 'socio-literary' context under which Ethiopian literature, especially the novel, emerged and developed. The discussion on Geez and Amharic writing indicates the problems and contents of written literature before the emergence of the novel. The socio-economic history of Ethiopian society, and aspects of the literary production, distribution and consumption are examined to show the conditions under which social life and literary activities take place. Our material for this section comes from 20th century historical writings, newspapers and magazines.

The general principles that direct the method applied in the study of the novels are indicated at the beginning of the chapter. The modes of literary presentation are analysed along with the study of the image of the intellectual. Form and content are regarded as basically inseparable components rather than as independent units that demand separate treatment, since the different structures in the novels reveal the various themes and meanings. Our approach is informed by works that emanate from three sources: (i) the critical tradition of Europe: Swingewood, Laurenson, Lukacs and others; (ii) criticism in African literature: Wali Obiajunwa, Donatus Nwoga, Moore, Achebe, Ngugi and others; (iii) the various essays by Ethiopian critics: Bā'emnat, Tamrat, Mākbeb Gābāyāhu, Māngestu Lāmma, Sālāmon Dērēssa, Tāsfayē Gāssāssā, Yohannes Admasu and others.

The second chapter reconstructs the history of the Ethiopian intellectual and explores the images it is given in the novels. Our reading on the intellectual includes the works of Edward Shils, Antonio Gramsci and Tom Bottomore. The works on the Ethiopian intellectual include the writings of Pankhurst, Bahru Dāmessē, Alāmē, Germa, Assāfa, Lāggāssā and Balsvik. Basically two types of intellectuals are depicted in the novels: the traditional (priests, dābtāra, alāqa) and what we may call modern.

Chapter 3 examines the early progressive intellectual in Addis Alām. His main preoccupation is reform in the church and some of the religious practices. In Chapter 4, Araya, which deals with the period of the Italian occupation and the time just before and immediately after it, is discussed. It succeeds in introducing fresh ideas of progress but fails to weave them into its plot. Chapter 5 deals with Feger eskä māqaber. The novel takes a 'radical' dābtāra, a learned member of the

church, who professes reform in the social order. It is the first social novel which examines the problems of the society from a wide perspective. The last chapter studies the social and psychological problems of the hero in Kadmas Bašhagär. In Feger eskä mäqaber and Kadmas Bašhagär there are improvements in the use of dialogue, flash-backs and foreshadowings in narration. However, a deus ex machina determines the turn of events in the stories, especially towards the end of the novels.

The study has revealed that most of the intellectuals portrayed in the novels set out to change their society. They start with a high social mission and ideas of moral and material progress. The contrast between what they saw abroad and learnt inside their country, and the realities in their society, motivate their deeds. These actions are, however, determined by their whims rather than by an understanding of the complexities of the situation. Their inner drive, ill-informed about the pressures and intricacies, leads them to wishful thinking and practice. The result is withdrawal, disillusionment, alienation, death, or, at times, relative success. If the theme in African novels in European languages is the quest for self-identity, dignity and freedom in a colonial situation, and disillusionment in an independent but neo-colonial one, the major preoccupation of the Ethiopian novel is the search for models of social change and national unity within a neo-colonial context.

June 1988



DEDICATED

T O

My mother, Emmät Mäsqälē Wäldä Sellassē, my wife, Sälamawit Abäbä and  
our son, Yohannes Sälam Fäqadä

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## PREFACE

There is no standard transliteration of Amharic words in English. Some of the vowels and the consonants are represented by various symbols and diacritical marks. The diacritical marks used sometimes vary with the nationality of the author. It is not unusual to find Ethiopian names written in various ways, e.g. Afevork, Afewerk, Afawark, Afäwärq etc. I have tried to use the following style (see below) in the thesis. However, I have kept titles of articles as they are found in the original text. In the case of quotations taken from sources written in English the transliteration follows that of the author of the article or book.

Amharic vowels are transcribed as follows, and their approximate pronunciation in English is :

- ä pronounced as the 'u' in 'burn'
- u pronounced as the 'u' in 'pull'
- i pronounced as the 'i' in 'fig'
- a pronounced as the 'a' in 'fag'
- ē pronounced as the 'e' in 'bell'
- e pronounced as the second 'e' in 'even'
- o pronounced as the 'o' in 'scold'

The reader will come across the following Amharic consonants in the thesis. These sounds do not exist in English. The best the reader can do is to read them without the diacritical marks. Although differences in pronunciation can sometimes bring differences in meaning these should not bother the general reader. See the examples given below.

|      |                  |   |    |   |
|------|------------------|---|----|---|
| ቀ    | q (read as 'k')  | e.g., Fäqadä  | as | Fäkadä                                  |
| ጠ    | ṭ (read as 't')  | e.g., ṭälla<br>(meaning, 'a kind<br>of home brewed beer') | as | tälla<br>(meaning, 'it<br>rotted')      |
| ፀ, ፍ | ṣ (read as 's')  | e.g., Ṣällay<br>(meaning, 'one<br>who prays')             | as | sällay<br>(meaning, 'one who<br>spies') |
| ከ    | p (read as 'p')  | e.g. Ityopya  | as | Ityopya                                 |
| ኸ    | ñ (read as 'gn') | e.g. As in 'gagner' in French                             |    |   |

Gemination of sounds is shown by doubling the letter that represents the sound, e.g. Bäqqälä, tälla, etc. In the case of the 'sh' (ኸ), 'w' has been used to mark gemination, e.g. Kadmas Bašhagär.

A new year in the Ethiopian calendar begins on Mäskäräm 1, i.e. September 11. The Ethiopian calendar lags seven or eight years behind the Gregorian calendar. Between 11 September and December 31 the lag is seven years, and from January 1 to September 10, it is eight years. For example, in the Ethiopian calendar this year is 1980. On September 11, 1988, it will be Mäskäräm 1, 1981, and the difference between the two calendars will be reduced to seven years until January 1, 1989.

Many Ethiopian sources written in Amharic give their dates of publication according to the Ethiopian calendar. The months and dates are seldom mentioned. Consequently, giving the exact equivalent to the European reader is difficult. In this thesis both calendars are used. When the Ethiopian calendar is used it is followed by E.C., e.g. 1967 E.C. In other cases it is preceded with the name of the month in Amharic, and often including the dates of the relevant month, e.g. Yäkatit 25, 1967.

In some instances both dates are given, e.g. 1950 E.C. (1957/1958).

The names of the months and their approximate equivalents in English are given below.

|          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| Mäskäräm | September |
| Teqemt   | October   |
| Hedar    | November  |
| Tahsas   | December  |
| Ter      | January   |
| Yäkatit  | February  |
| Mäggabit | March     |
| Miyazya  | April     |
| Genbot   | May       |
| Sänē     | June      |
| Hamlē    | July      |
| Nähasē   | August    |

All translations in the thesis are mine unless stated otherwise.

|            |                            |
|------------|----------------------------|
| <u>AZ</u>  | <u>Addis Zämän</u>         |
| <u>BS</u>  | <u>Berhanena Sälam</u>     |
| HSIU       | Haylä Sellassē University  |
| <u>YED</u> | <u>Yä-Ethiopia Dems</u>    |
| <u>YZE</u> | <u>Yä-Zarēytu Ethiopia</u> |

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1. Social, political, economic, and literary conditions under which the novel emerged in Ethiopia.

## 1.1 Introduction

The basic premise of this study lies in recognising the significance of making a critical study of imaginative works within the social-historical and literary background of their production. It regards historical knowledge, both literary and social, as one of the important conditions that lead to better understanding of a creative work. Opting for the study of literature within the social-historical fabric of its production is not suggesting a new concept of literary criticism. It is probably as old as literature itself. Malcolm Bradbury says:

...literature in the past has been considered as an essential part of the experience of society...[and] equally, from the beginning of formal literary criticism in Plato and Aristotle, there has been an awareness of literature's fictiveness...its strange ways of transcending the environment from which it derives. (1)

According to Bradbury therefore today's controversy between critics 'who have put stress upon the autonomy of art, and those who have sought to see it as social expression' (2) has a long tradition which manifested itself in different ways throughout the centuries. He himself is emphatic about the need for awareness, and hopefully acceptance of 'certain basic and familiar truths' such as 'that literature is incomprehensible without some real sense of society, whether of our own time or that in which it was written.' (3)

Describing this relationship between literary understanding and knowledge of the society it depicts has always become one of the problems of literary criticism.

In their preface to The Sociology of Literature (1972),

Laurenson and Swingewood point out that:

In the English language there is no adequate guide to the social analysis of literature in the past or in the present and no published attempt to relate theory to research. (4)

The fact that Swingewood's discussion of 'the social theories of literature' is dominated by the ideas of European writers like Hippolyte Taine, Herder, Madame de Staël, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Georg Plekhanov and Lukacs suggests there was little interest in the social analysis of literature in the island. Laurenson was more frank when she stated seven years later: 'interest in the sociology of literature...Long established in Europe...has been treated...with neglect and suspicion' in England. (5) This attitude was however to change later and more emphasis given to the idea that since writers function within society their work should be examined through it. Among some of the factors that led to this 'spectacular shift' according to her, are:

The growing critique of positivism, the proliferation of empirical studies, the ambiguities of grappling with the complexities of protest and crises both in sociology and daily life, and an awareness of the relevance of literature and art to the understanding of social reality. (6)

Moreover, the boom conditions of the 1950s and those of inflation in the 1970s, the political movement of the blacks, women and others, the increased recognition of the subject by academics and the translation of the works of Lukacs, Goldmann and other Marxists are given as some of the factors which have contributed to this shift. (7)

The year before in an effort at 'systemising' current views, Jane Routh and Janet Wolff described 'broad conceptions' of the relationship between literature and society in their introduction to The Sociology of Literature : Theoretical Approaches. (8) They



trace five main conceptions. Firstly, a sociologically aware study of literature' focuses more on the study of literature. It is 'informed by, and makes reference to, the social coordinates and conditions of the literature' rather than concern itself with sociological problems or the development of theory. Secondly, a study which takes literature 'as a kind of sociology' provides the sociologist with data concerning values, attitudes and institutions which are otherwise inaccessible to the sociologist. Thirdly, there are studies concerned with a 'social genesis of literature'. These concentrate on the rise of literature in society. They are criticised for ignoring the 'imaginative qualities of a writer's work' and his individual creativity. Fourthly, there are studies which take literature as a 'social product and social force.' Critics such as Terry Eagleton understand literature as 'affecting society and continually involved in the process of social development.' The focus in the fifth approach is 'on the ways in which literature may affect society, and effect social change.' Brecht sees this approach 'as a positive feature of literature which committed socialists must use to advantage.'

One is tempted to choose one of these approaches and apply it to the study of Ethiopian novels. However, since each approach lacks in certain important factors that need to be included, and/or lacks specificity in some of its features it is difficult to opt for just one of these approaches. For example, a literary criticism which approaches literature as a social product and social force may be, as Routh and Wolff suggest, 'the most comprehensive.' However there are problems one has to deal with: how is one to determine the impact a novel has in affecting a society like Ethiopia? It may be acceptable that literature is a social force which is

'continually involved in the process of social development.'

However, how is one to measure the effect that literature has produced in this process as opposed or compared to the effect produced by other forces of social development? Besides, what exactly does one mean in saying that literature is a social product, for one could in turn ask 'What human social activity is not?' It is therefore essential that critics who subscribe to the view mentioned earlier enumerate certain criteria to better clarify their points.

Routh and Wolff consider the fourth approach as 'the most comprehensive' because it considers both literary analysis and the complex social reality in the study of literature. However, they believe it still has to take some ideas from other approaches 'for we need to know how literary products may be traced back to their social origins, as well as how a novel or an epic poem can itself be understood and analysed.' (9) Nevertheless the question of tracing a literary piece back to its social origins is relevant only in the sense that the work is to be understood and studied within that context. The context includes both the social - meaning the data we gather on the history, economy, politics, social life - and the literary, which embraces the history and development of literature in the society under consideration, and the conditions of literary production, distribution and reception. Awareness of these socioliterary conditions is believed to provide the ground for a better understanding of the novels. It must be noted, however, that we do not at all intend to suggest any kind of vulgar social or literary reductionism since we are aware that the way certain aspects or the totality of the socioliterary conditions of a nation affect the quantitative and qualitative development of its literature vary with

time and in degree. The effect each has on the other could be implicit or explicit, hidden or conspicuous. There are times when the socioliterary conditions may encourage the writing and publication of a certain genre of literature while silently discouraging other types. There may also be a case where an aspect of the socioliterary conditions, say rise in literacy rates or change in policies of censorship, may encourage the writing and production of certain genres at the expense of others. The fact is that one cannot generalise on these matters without due consideration of the specific socioliterary conditions of the country concerned. Any perception of the relationship between the literature and society of a certain people can be sound if it allows itself to be well aware of this requirement. It must be applied with extreme caution. However there are at least two major problems we have to raise and debate : the first is the question of the applicability of the so-called theory of 'great literature' to Ethiopian literary studies, and the second concerns the presence or lack of well researched and documented material to inform us sufficiently about the socioliterary conditions in the country.

It seems that great literary books are regarded by some critics of the sociology of literature as the sources of historical and sociological knowledge about the epoch they depict. Writing about the essence of his theory of criticism Goldmann writes:

...any great literary or artistic work is the expression of a world vision. This vision is the product of a collective group consciousness which reaches its highest expression in the mind of a poet or thinker. (10)

It is not clear whether a literary work that expresses the moods, values, ideas, of its period but which is regarded as being not great (by whatever criteria) would be taken to have expressed 'a world vision' or not. Goldmann does not seem to consider that various

societies could have their own criteria of defining and categorising what is literary and what is not. Laurenson's criticism of Goldmann's claim that only 'great' literature is 'suitable for the grist of his model' is not without foundation. Swingewood also considers this 'tendency to accept the traditional literary critic's view of the superiority of great literature' (12) as a major problem of the sociology of literature from Taine to Lukacs and Goldmann.

It may be suggested that the quality of a literary work is to be found both in its contents and its art. Our study of its manifest and latent elements, or, even preferably meanings, is in a way an expression of the depth of its contents and subtleties of its art. However, given the way the novel began and developed in Ethiopia we have to make allowances at the way we approach our texts; there is an evolutionary type of development both in the art and in the depth of handling subject matter.

The early novels in Amharic are studied more for what they might have in store for us about the period rather than for their artistic sophistication. These works present some social issues through the dialogues in the story and the direct interference of the authors. The use of language, creation of subtle imagery and symbols, or intricate characterization were not burning issues that bothered most of these writers. It will be sheer folly to search for subtle meanings and nuances in the early novels of the 1930s to the first half of the 1960s. The meaning and function they attributed to the novel was different. This means they do not fulfill Lukacs's criteria for the greatness of a novel which considers that the social basis of the greatness of a novel lies in the unity it depicts between the external

and internal worlds of man. Lukacs insists that one cannot be sacrificed for the other if the writer wants to achieve the portrayal of 'the complete human personality' with all its failures and successes, its complexities and conflicts. (13) On the other hand some of the novels that appeared from the mid 1960s to 1974 show a qualitative leap both in the choice and handling of subject matter and artistry. It is possible to treat these works differently. This is one other reason why 'models' or 'theories' which emerge from different socioliterary conditions cannot be applied in this work without appropriate modifications. Needless to say that they are helpful since they inform and guide the search for one's approaches.

The lacunae of researched documents in many areas of interest in this work is the second problem we shall examine next. The study of literature within the socioliterary context of its emergence and development requires knowledge of these socioliterary conditions. It is clear that the novels analysed in this work do not always give the larger socioliterary conditions. They provide only the textual context of the events they depict. Consequently we are required to gather this background material from other sources knowing quite well at the start that our achievements will be limited by situations beyond our control. The main problem concerns the state of historical research in Ethiopia.

It was probably Gäbrä Heywät Baykädaññ who first observed and bitterly criticised the poverty of Ethiopian historiography in his 'Aṣē Menelik and Ethiopia', an article published in 1912 in Amharic. Since his criticism is the earliest and very important it will not do him justice if we do not quote him at length:

Learning history is good for everyone. But it is compulsory for the man of the palace so that he may see the rights and wrongs of men of the past and so that he knows what is good for his government and country. The study of history is fruitful when it is the study of true history. The writing of true history is not easy. It requires the following three gifts of God. First an observing heart, to notice what has been done. Secondly an impartial mind, to judge on what happened. Thirdly clarity in language use, to make known to others what one has observed and judged. Our historians however err on these matters. They pay attention to the trivial instead of the most important. Rather than pronouncing the truth they narrow their hearts in prejudice. Since their writing is complicated it is incomprehensible to the reader. All this would be clear to us if we read the history of the kings in some manuscripts found at the palace and the convents. We realise that our historians are of two kinds. The first group may be called palace historians. These are flatterers who in search of their daily bread join the palace and write exaltations of the king to fulfill his command, and pass these extolments to future generations as history. The second type are the monks. What they write is also enormously biased for their priority lies in their personal benefits and not in the usefulness or uselessness of such writing to the people. Consequently they hail the king who fulfills their hearts' wishes "Saint! Saint!" But the king who extricates himself from ignorance and guided by an enlightened view makes efforts for the advancement of his citizens they call him "unholy"... (14)

Gäbrä Heywät further elaborates that the writing of history by monks while it extols those kings who favour the loitering monks and nuns by providing them with food and audience to the palace when they wished, fails to give due credit for those who spend their time by having roads, bridges and schools built. He also believes that since the Ethiopian people are not educated they do not want to hear the truth as it happened. He thought that if one explained to the Ethiopian people the facts of how a certain king came to power and why he later lost his throne they would not accept it. However, he argues that if these same events were presented to them in fantastic anecdotes of divine prophecy whose main characters are God, Satan, the Trinity, the Apostles, the Saints, the King etc., they would find such an approach easier to believe. Gäbrä Heywät says: 'If what is written as our history is all true then it was not heard of a person in the history of the world, who, like the kings and governors of

Ethiopia, badly needed the assistance of many saints and evil spirits [to rule]'. Gäbrä Heywät criticises the palace historians, the monks, and the ordinary people for the share each contributed to the poverty of Ethiopian historiography.

Although some of his views are questionable his assessment of Ethiopian historiography of the period is valid and his criticism unheeded to date. This ignominious predicament persists despite the expansion of schools, the establishment of a Department of History, and an Institute of Ethiopian Studies at HSIU, and in spite of travels by Ethiopians to famous universities in Europe and America. Some of the writing by professional historians follows the path set by palace flatterers and praise-maniac monks.

It seems it was around the mid-1970s that criticism of the deficiencies in Ethiopian historiography began to be made again by a few of those Ethiopians recently educated in the local university and sent abroad for further studies in History. Bahru Zäwdē noted 'the absence of comprehensive historical reconstructions' (16) in the study of the first four decades of the twentieth century. About a year later Gäbrä referred to Ethiopian historiography as elitist 'for its primary occupation has been with dynasties, rulers and their exploits in wars.' (17) He also agreed with Gäbrä Heywät that the writing of Ethiopian history was in the hands of 'glorified court chroniclers' and indicated that:

With the passage of time professional historians and other social scientists did not significantly change this trend. In fact in an apparent apologia Margery Perham remarked that "it is impossible to think of the Ethiopian people today apart from the present Emperor whose history, and whose ideas are being stamped upon them in these highly impressionable years of nationalist history"... (18)

Just like the chroniclers/some of the modern historians merge the individual and the people. They tell us that the history of the Emperor is the history of the people and the nation. However, Gäbru sees 'fresh and serious attempts' in the works of Michael Stähl, Addis Heyeät, John Markakis, Allan Hobben, Patrick Gilkes and Margery Perham. (19)

The social history crucial for our purpose in this study is hardly present even in the works of these authors. The recording of the history of the social lives and problems of people has been forfeited for the writing of the history of kings and the ruling elite, governments and diplomatic relations, the church and the new educational administrative institutions that were being established early this century. Sociological studies of readership, book publishing and authorship, literacy rates, book prices, book markets are almost non-existent. The absence of a published material on social history indicates the priorities of scholars lay elsewhere. Historical and other social science studies have not yet produced a profound and comprehensive analysis of the society: its mode of production, the production relations and the grass-root level life and ideologies that dominate it. The majority of pre-1974 works do not even indicate conscious efforts of understanding and writing history similar to, say, the Macaulay of nineteenth century England. Macaulay proposed the writing of what he considered a 'complete history', one which did not fully restrict itself in the writing of the history of sieges and battles, conspiracies and palace coups, administration and diplomacy at the expense of the history of the people. (20) He understood the need to write 'the history of the government, and the history of the people' where they can be shown in their 'inseparable conjunctions and intermixture.' (21) Macaulay



who saw major deficiencies in the writings of history of the past and his period thought that 'a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated.' (22) In our case, only the scattered notes found in history books, literary works, travellers' accounts, contemporary newspapers and magazines, and research into oral literature and history, remain to be the main sources at hand that could be used in the reconstruction of some picture of the social life, both material and spiritual, of the period 1900-1974. Such an undertaking is by itself a major area of research. We are therefore to focus on the available history books, newspapers and other documents for the material on the sociohistorical and literary conditions of this period. We shall touch upon the ancient and medieval period in order to sketch the historical precedents of the modern era but mainly to introduce the classical literary heritage of the two epochs.

## 1.2 Literature and Society to 1855

Ancient Ethiopian (23) history rotates around the history of the Axumite Empire whose emergence is tentatively dated around 100 B.C. and its 'rise to prominence...dates from the first two or three centuries of the Christian era.' (24) Axum is world famous for its stelae which date probably from the third or fourth century A.D. (25) It also had coins made of silver, bronze and gold minted with the engravings of the kings. The author of the Periplus reported that its Port Adulis 'was established by law' (26) and had imports 'among others sheets of soft copper, small axes, a little wine from Italy, gold and silver plate for the king, made after the fashion of the country, military cloaks, Indian iron, steel, and cotton-cloth.' (27) The early reconstructions of Axum by archaeologists and scholars like

Littman and others, has helped to bring out the glory of Axumite civilization with, among other things, its palaces, stelae, churches, sites of tombs, its irrigation reservoirs at Mai-Shum, its port at Adulis. Moreover its share in the commercial and cultural undertakings of the ancient world had given it the place of an established power.

One important aspect of its cultural features is the introduction of Christianity in the fourth century A.D. It took place through the conversion of the Axumite ruling class initially, and later, after over a century, through the teachings of the monks who emigrated from the Eastern Mediterranean, to the masses of people. (28) With the coming of Christianity to Axum, a new literature arose in Geez. This does not, however, mean Geez was put into writing after the introduction of Christianity. The inscription found in Akkalä Guzay and Yähä indicate the existence of a pre-Christian tradition in writing. The trilingual inscription of Ezana written in South Arabian, Geez and Greek indicate that Geez was written before the coming of Christianity. (29) However, it did not become the language of the church as soon as the country accepted Christianity. Some scholars have presumed Greek to be the initial language of the church and it was probably replaced after the translation of the Books of the Bible and the liturgy into Geez. (30) These writers surmise the cultural situation of the first six hundred years (A.D.) as follows:

During the first six centuries of its existence the indigenous culture of the Abyssinian kingdom was steadily developing and ousting the imported culture of Greece. The first king of whom we know had a Greek education; his successors in the third century used Greek as the official language of their public documents. In the fourth century Ge'ez was supplanting Greek as an official language, and the knowledge of Greek was probably declining. (31)

Although Greek was gradually replaced, it was one of what Ullendorf calls 'the formative elements that determined Ethiopian literature.' Ullendorf emphasises that the coming of the Semitic emigrants from South Arabia, the influence of Greek and the Orient were significant factors which had great impact on the formative period of Geez literature. (32) Professor Tamrat Ammanuël on the other hand, states that there is no evidence of any book written in the three languages: Greek, Sabeian, Geez, before the introduction of Christianity in the fourth century A.D. Since only the inscriptions on monuments and stelae have historical credibility, it is likely that Tamrat was not enthusiastic to suggest that Greek and Sabbeian had influenced Geez literature written since the coming of Christianity. (33) However, the religious relations that developed between Ethiopia and Egypt; the formation of an Ethiopian community in Jerusalem; and the fact that the first translators were Syrians indicate the presence of a variety of cultures, and the possibilities this provides for influence during the initial stage of the literature.

The period when translation into Geez started (34), and the first language from which the scriptures and the liturgy were translated into Geez, are not yet definitely known (See Jones and Monroe, Ullendorf, Budge). (35) Different periods and languages have been mentioned by various writers. Sylvia Pankhurst points out 'it was in any event produced much earlier than many of the European versions.' (36) The translators were, however, the Syrian monks who came to Ethiopia running away from the Byzantine religious persecutions.

Ullendorf believes that the translations of the Holy Scriptures rank among the best literary achievements of the Axumite period. (37) However the other works that belong to the Axumite period: Rules of

Pachomius, Kerillos (Cyril), Fissalgos (Physiologus) are also very important even if the original versions of these works are either non-existent or inadequate for profound scholarship. (38) J M Harden adds the Book of Enoch and the Book of Jubilees, both translated from Greek, into this category. (39) Unfortunately, however, we have no extant material from this period which extends from the dawn of Christianity to the seventh century. According to Harden, 'what is accounted the earliest of all extant, Ethiopic manuscripts is an Octateuch now at Paris which is generally believed to date from the end of the thirteenth century.' (40)

In a nut shell, the early period of Geez literature was dominated by translations of the scriptures, the liturgy and some other religious works. The following five hundred years in Geez literature are the most obscure in the history of the language. Nothing written before the late thirteenth century seems to survive. (41)

Medieval Ethiopian (1270-1855) (42) history is dominated by the myth of the restoration of the Solomonic dynasty, the consolidation of the land holding system, the wars with Graññ, the Oromo migrations, and the regional wars of the Zämänä Mäsafent (the Era of the Princes, 1769-1855).

The legend of the Solomonic line assumes the successive role of the same dynasty from the tenth century B.C. to the tenth century A.D. It told of the journey of the Queen of Sheba, supposedly Ethiopian, to King Solomon of Israel. She returned to Ethiopia pregnant. Her son Menelik I later travelled to visit his father and on his return brought the Ark of the Covenant and some priests with him. Menelik I thus becomes the founder of the legendary Solomonic line which ruled in succession until the tenth century A.D. when another

dynasty from Lasta, the Zagwē, interrupted its rule for about more than two centuries. The restoration of the Solomonic line in 1270 was recorded in Kebrä Nägäst, a document of the fourteenth century. This work provided the entire legendary basis of the Solomonic dynasty, and together with the Ethiopian Church served as the ideological weapon for the monarchy until its demise in 1974. The close relationship between the church and the state which began during the Axumite period developed extensively during the medieval period; the church laid down prerogatives of conduct for the laity enforcing loyalty to the state, and was granted land for its services. (43)

Despite the absolute power the ruling class had over the people and the economy its life style and culture seemed rather uncultivated. In his 'Society and Technology in Ethiopia 1500-1800', Märed writes that the Ethiopian ruling classes of the period lived and dressed poorly. They 'did not even enjoy the comforts of sandals, to say nothing of shoes or boots', and 'their best dish and best drink required little or no skill.'(44) The reasons for this low standard of life are stated as follows:

A ruling class, according to Veblen, cannot enjoy leisure until it has developed the necessary legal and governmental institutions which can guarantee its undisturbed enjoyment of the wealth derived from its properties. Once it has done so it can begin to enjoy the good things of life: good food, clothes, furniture and houses, and will even patronize religion, literature and other arts. As it is, in the long history of medieval Ethiopia, we do not find anything that can be considered as development or even gradual improvement in the technology of production and distribution. (45) (Emphasis added)

It appears therefore that since the ruling class of medieval Ethiopia did not develop any kind of 'intellectual entertainment' it had to while away its time as a spectator of the popular forms of entertainment such as folk music and dances (and perhaps the church 'dances' at the religious festivals and secular ceremonies) on top of the two main pastimes

mentioned by Alvarez : namely, horse riding and wrestling, and later on the court performances of dwarfs and jesters. (46) It is noted also that the establishment of Gondar in 1632 meant 'a court life of great splendour and refinement, of royal hunters and chessmasters, of beautiful queens and princesses' for the ruling class. (47) (Emphasis added) It seems with the establishment of Gondar as a permanent capital city, the life of the king and the ruling classes began to change showing signs of cleavage between town and country though the situation was to change again with the fall of the Gondar dynasty and the return to the moving capitals.

The medieval period is, however, known for its achievements in Geez religious literature. The fourteenth century is considered a period of literary renaissance and great literary activity mainly because with the restoration of the so-called Solomonic line religious literature began to revive. Translations which used to be made from Greek to Geez were now dominantly made from Arabic. New literary genres in Geez, such as the gädl and tä' amer began to emerge. The Synaxarium, a collection of the lives of saints which is read on the name days of the saints and martyrs, is described by Ullendorf as 'a fundamental work of Ethiopic literature.' (48) The historical works, like The Chronicles of Amdä Seyon, originally written in Geez, are considered to be the works of an eye-witness. (49) They mainly dealt with the king's campaign against the Muslims, and include some tales and anecdotes about Amdä Seyon, the king. They are among the first extant non-religious works in Geez.

Jones and Monroe emphasise the historical importance of these chronicles. They say that it was during this period that 'the contemporary history of Abyssinia began to be written.' They proceed

to add:

For the earlier period we possess only bald lists of kings, so contradictory and confused as to be virtually valueless, and popular romances, generally of a hagiographical character. From the fourteenth century we begin to get more or less contemporary chronicles compiled from the official annals kept by the king's scribe... (50)

Kebrä Nägäst was among the works in Geez discussed a great deal by scholars. Hargery Perham refers to it as 'the myth of the descent of the kings from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.' (51) She further points out that the book could be:

A sixth century Coptic collection of a number of legends current in eastern Mediterranean countries. These were translated in the fourteenth century into Arabic and shortly afterwards into Geez, though the legends of greater interest to Ethiopia were probably known earlier in that country. (52)

Hess on the other hand refers to it as a 'legend,' 'a story' or 'as an ideological weapon' used by the Shoan dynasty. (53) As to its original source, Hess firmly states that '...there is no conclusive evidence of the existence of the legend before the thirteenth century.' (54)

Harden calls it 'the native work' and adds:

It is in reality not history but romance, tracing back the origin of the kings to the beginning of the world and the lineage of the Abyssinian dynasty to the time of Solomon. (55)

A lot more has been written about Kebrä Nägäst. However, it is important to note that the book was written to fulfill certain historic and religious wishes. The Church and the state wanted a religious ancestor and wished to relate their pedigrees with that of the founders of their religious faith. (56) The fact that the importance of the book lies in its 'historic', religious and at times moral ambitions is brought out clearly by many writers.

The fifteenth century is referred to as the 'Golden Age' of Geez literature, (57) or as 'the culminating point in the development of

Geez literary activity.' (58) The biographical genres, the Acts and Lives of Saints and Martyrs that started during the last century were developed largely during this period. Three of the kings had literary inclinations; two of them wrote some original works.

King Zāra' Yaqob reacted against the spiritual practices of the day, which he did not personally approve of, by writing a book entitled Māshafä Berhan (Book of Light) which divulged and condemned the magical, heathenish and superstitious practices of the period. We also find a collection of hymns for the Saints' Day of the year in his name.

Zenahu lä abäw Keburan (Stories of the Honoured Fathers), a collection of anecdotes and sayings, appeared during this period which also witnessed the continuation of the writing of chronicles. So far, it was during this period that a greater variety of genres appeared, and more original works were written.

The development of Geez literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was affected by two important factors. The war against the Muslims and the Oromos was one of the factors which may have discouraged further original and new writing, and also brought about the destruction of the written material which already existed in the churches and monasteries. Most of the literature may have been ravaged with the demolishing and burning of the churches. Although the religious division which existed during the period may have slackened the pace of literary development some original works appeared as a result of the conflict: two important works by King Gälawdēwos (59) and few translations from Arabic. (60) Before the end of the century two works directed at rechristening those who turned towards Islam during the Graññ war appeared. The writer was believed to be Embaqom, himself a convert



from Islam. (61)

The writing of chronicles which took place in a small scale during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was now revived and developed because of the wars. Talking about the chronicle as a genre Harden says:

It starts with lists of the ancient kings and contains brief accounts of the reigns of the ancient kings and the kings from Yekuno Amlak to Lebna Dengel. A fuller story begins at the time of the Wars with Gagn. The chronicle comes down to the reign of Bakaffa (1730). There are longer chronicles also for the reigns of many of the kings from Zar'a Ya'Qob onwards...(62a)

Bahrey's History of the Galla (1953), however, is an original and important work of history which studied and analysed his own people and the Oromo invaders.

There were some contributions in two other branches of knowledge, namely, law and philosophy. The Fetha Nägäst (Law of Kings) is the first book on law that was translated from a work 'written in Egypt in the thirteenth century.' (62b) Although basically a religious work it also deals with secular aspects of life.

A major contribution, however, is the philosophical work of Zä'ra Ya'qob and his pupil Wäldä Heywät published under the title Enquiry of Zä'ra Ya'qob. (63) Harden expresses some sense of relief and appreciation when he says of this work: 'It is refreshing to find some originality in the midst of the dreary monotony of hagiology and stereotyped chroniclers that are met with for the most part elsewhere in the literature.' (64) Littman, on the other hand, not only appreciated the work of the two philosophers of the 17th century but accepted it as 'a real contribution to the history of human thought.' (65) Littman further adds:

A man like Zar'a Ya'qob gave utterance at the time of Thirty Years' War to thoughts which first became current in Europe at the time of rationalism in literature. (66)

Thus Bahrey's impartial approach to the writing of history was followed by the impartial philosophical work of Zära Ya'qob. He criticised Christianity, Islam and Judaism whenever he disagreed with their ideas. He was not partial to his own church. His philosophy included serious examination of both religious doctrines and various facets of secular life. His main pre-occupation, however, was consistent appeal to reason. Another book on philosophy, Māshafä Fälasfa Täbiban (The Book of the Wise Philosophers), is a collection of extracts from the works of the renowned Greek, Roman, Oriental philosophers and the writers of the Bible.

Geez literature began to decline at the end of the seventeenth century. Although the chroniclers of the kings continued writing there is an observable change in the use of language. The chronicles are found using Amharic words while writing in Geez thus introducing a hybrid of the two languages. Gradually Amharic takes the place of Geez as a medium for the writing of chronicles, and other works of both religious and secular character.

To summarise: Most of Geez literature was translated, and not originally written in the language. A study of our sources shows that there was no substantial interest in and recognition of the literary aspects of the literature. Except for the references made to the new genres that began appearing in the fifteenth century and the romance works in translation which appeared in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the interest of the scholars of Geez literature appears to be predominantly in its religious and historical contents. Sylvia Pankhurst indicates that according to R.H. Charles the Ethiopic version of the Book of Enoch is the only one that preserves the full text. (67) She further adds that the book of 'The Ascension of Isaiah is preserved

in Ethiopic only, The Book of Baruch appears to exist only in Ethiopic, The Book of Jubilees is preserved wholly only in Ethiopic, The Apocalypse of Ezra is preserved in full in Ethiopic and Arabic only. (68) Ullendorff stresses the importance of translated works like Rules of Pachomius, Keyllos and Fisalgos as the original versions of these works are either non-existent or inadequate for profound scholarship. (69) Jones and Monroe also join him emphasising the value of these works for serious research.

Whereas the religious content of Geez literature and the historic significance of some of the manuscripts and the translated works is repeatedly emphasised by many Ethiopicists the secular and literary values of the literature do not seem to come into the attention of as many scholars. The number of scholars who are aware of the latter aspects of Geez literature appears to be negligibly small. (70) It is clear therefore why Geez literature, except for the chronicles and some works of philosophy and law, is criticised for lack of originality. A study of the descriptive, expressive and the narrative structure of the language would have exposed the literary qualities of the various translated works. This is important in view of the fact that most of the translations tend to be adaptations or transformations rather than literal renditions of the original texts. The study of the application of language in these various works would have definitely shed new light on the literary history of Geez. Otherwise 'lack of originality' would be an expression of lack of variety in content, though even that is not clearly substantiated, rather than lack of originality in expressing new ideas. As far as its content is concerned it is evident that since the emphasis was on religious and historical works the search for secular literary works did not get as much enthusiastic attention.

It is true that Geez literature is highly influenced by the Church

and is inflated with Christian beliefs and doctrines. The Ethiopian Church and the country itself had restricted contacts with the religious and intellectual movements in the world. The relation the church had with the Alexandrian Coptic Patriarch was interrupted as a result of the spread of Islam in the Middle East and North Africa. Thus that the development of the literature from its inception was unique, and closely integrated with and influenced by the church is understandable. What is intriguing is the fact that the domineering religious and historical interest of the scholars of Ethiopic literature seems to follow the already set tradition which began with the translation of religious and historical material.

Ullendorf begins his chapter on Ethiopian literature by saying: 'Literature in Ethiopia means Geez literature - at least up to the 19th century when books in Amharic began to come off the printing presses.' (71) Though he deals with various nationalities in Ethiopia in one of his other chapters he does not say much about their literature. This seems to be because of the traditional but erroneous assumption that only written texts represent a literary tradition. Another reason is the fact that Ullendorf is not attempting to write about Ethiopian literature as such. He states: 'From Ludolf to the present day the main attraction of Ethiopic literature to European scholars has undoubtedly lain in all that this literature has preserved, in translation, of earlier and more original literary creations.' (72) This interest in the translated works arises as a result of their need to study Ethiopia's cultural and literary relations with the Christian orient. Consequently the study into 'the original aspects of Ethiopic literature' (73) was not given the main attention. Ullendorf himself suggests that his study of Geez texts is not to gain any pleasure but to study the character of the Ethiopian people. (74) It is not indicated, however, how the works which he

characterised as translational could be used in the understanding of 'the character of the Ethiopian people.' One also wonders which Ethiopians he is talking about; so much has happened from the fourth century A.D. up to 1960 - the date of publication for the first edition of his book.

Although Littman rightly says, 'The history of Ethiopic literature is far more a history of books and institutions than of men and ideas...'(75) he fully realises that 'the language was cultivated for literary purposes' (76) though 'mainly in the service of religion and the church.'(77) Sylvia Pankhurst's perception is different and rich with information. Most important however, is the attention it draws to the recognition of the literary contents in the works.

In addition to their literary contents the Ethiopian manuscripts preserved in the churches comprise historical and other records, the spare pages being used to record such matters as deeds of gift to priests, churches and so forth, the building of a church by one of the kings or other patron and the date of the event, in some cases the dimensions of the church, inventories of church property, lists of the Emperors with the dates of their reigns, and other historical events. (78) (Emphasis mine)

These 'literary contents' are not elaborated by Sylvia Pankhurst. She mentions that 'Poetry was cherished' (79) and adds that 'Ethiopia has a wealth of folk-tales based on religious traditions, historical incidents, village life, animals of the farm and the wild. The stories are characterized by humour, wit and patriotism. Some of them have been collected by European investigators, Marcel Cohen, Maurice Chaine, Wolf Leslau and others.' (80) Though she does not dig into the literary contents and merits of the works in Geez, it is Sylvia Pankhurst, among the early writers on Ethiopic literature we discussed so far, who remarks about the variety of other literatures apart from Geez. Her understanding of the term literature is wider in scope and richer in meaning.

It is interesting to note, by way of conclusion, that of the scholars

writing in English, it was Harden who has taken Geez literature as a topic for a book. The rest are talking about Geez literature either in passing or as part of a small chapter in a book that meagerly introduces the subject. Moreover there seems to be no detectable and significant difference among the sources briefly reviewed here. There is a tendency to paraphrase earlier works rather than enrich knowledge in the area. A strictly serious academic updating does not seem to be the main purpose of scholarship for many scholars of Ethiopian studies mentioned in this work. It appears that there is not much radically significant contribution in English after Harden's Introduction to Christian Literature, published in 1926. The works of Sylvia Pankhurst, Hess, Jones and Monroe, Ullendorf, Perham etc did not add much new knowledge to Geez literature scholarship.

### 1.3. Social, political and economic life, 1855-1974

We have seen that Ethiopian history traces its recorded beginnings from Axum (first century A.D.) or according to some writers before this time. The next 1000 years or more do not however, leave much on matters that interest us in this section. It is known that the next three centuries after the restoration of the so-called Solomonic line, towards the end of the thirteenth century, were periods of conflict between Ethiopian Christians and neighbouring Muslims in the South East. (81) The first half of the sixteenth century also witnessed an invasion by the Muslims led by their leader Ahmed Ibn al Ghazi who declared a holy war from Harar. His irresistible soldiers devastated the country. They were later defeated and driven out of the country with assistance from the Portuguese. The Jesuit missionaries who came with the Portuguese army wanted to impose Catholicism following the removal of the Muslims. Their attempt to convert the King first and then spread the religion among the people provoked rebellion among the peasantry costing the

life of Emperor Zä Dengel (1603-4) and the abdication of Susenyos (Markakis, 15). The Jesuits were expelled. Nevertheless 'the exhausted land of Ethiopia' did not get peace; a new force entered the Ethiopian territory on the south-east and on the western side. The Oromos (also known as Gallas) did not come to Ethiopia to raid it and return to their original homes. They came as a vast population which was determined to stay. (Markakis, 16-17)

The religious rebellions in the 17th century and the apostasy of two emperors from Christianity brought the legitimacy of the Gondar dynasty, which allegedly failed to fulfill its role as the symbol of Orthodox Christianity, to question. Imperial rule was again threatened by the decentralizing tradition of provincialism. Moreover the turmoil created by the Oromo presence and the continued and widespread harassment of the rest of the population 'coupled with the inability of the emperors who had become progressively secluded in Gondar - to provide effective protection' surrendered imperial rule to the provincial nobility gradually weakening and ultimately leading to the end of the Gondar monarchy (Markakis, 17-18).

Zämänä Mäsafent, the era of the princes, began with the fall of Gondar. The period 1769-1855 was characterised by internecine war between the provincial lords each struggling for supremacy. Numerous provincial dynasties were created; rivalries led to alliances with other provincial rulers, irrespective of religious affiliations, against local enemies; and sharp regionalist interests led to further division of the provinces to smaller entities. It was Kassa (later Emperor Tēwodros) who emerged from these socio-political conditions with the determination and zeal to restore a united Ethiopia which he managed in a decade (Markakis, 18-20). Although he was successful in uniting

the country politically his main problems with the nobility and the Church threatened the unity. Tēwodros understood that the power of the provincial nobility was based on their control of the provinces and their locally formed army. He designed to tackle this problem by dividing the provinces into smaller administrative units to be governed by his own officials, and by building a national army which consisted of members from the different provinces, and whose salaries were to be paid from the national treasury. The instructions to the national army were to come from the Crown or his appointee. The other force which was worth considering was the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Markakis summarises Tēwodros' view of the clergy as follows: 'Though a zealous Christian, Tēwodros had little respect for the clergy, whom he considered arrogant, corrupt and parasitical.' (Markakis, 20) The Church never failed from threatening the emperor's endeavours. Pressed for money to support his army he wanted to deny the church the tax exemption it enjoyed from its lands. The Church refused to accept his intentions and this led to serious conflict which had devastating consequences for the people and the country. This in turn permitted the vanquished nobility to discredit the emperor and rebel against him. Tēwodros replied with a series of 'brutal punitive campaigns.' Together with the Oromo raids, as Markakis aptly puts it, 'lawlessness once again claimed the Ethiopian countryside' (Markakis, 21) Tēwodros's letter to Queen Victoria which started off a chain process leading to the Napier Expedition of 1868 was the last straw. Unwilling to surrender to the English army, Tēwodros committed suicide, and violence was again unleashed in the country giving power back to the provincial lords. Yohannes IV became king of kings in 1872 but when he died in Hātamma in 1889 fighting the dervishes the throne went to Menelik II of Shoa (Markakis, 21-22).

The unification and expansion of Ethiopia was to gain real foundation during Menelik's reign, 1889-1913. Pressed by the threat of European



imperialism at the horn, lured by economic motive and striving for fertile land he pushed his empire to the south. The famine of 1889-92 also instigated migration to the south (Markakis, 24). During the four decades of his rule Menilik expanded the country, defended it against colonial aggression, and laid the foundation to the process of modernization which was to be continued by Haile Selassie. The decade after Menelik's victory over the Italians in Adwa is regarded as a period of consolidation and as the time when the expansion of his frontiers finally gave Ethiopia its present shape. (83) Since the period from 1900-1974 is crucial to our study of Ethiopian novels we shall try to treat it more closely than we have done with the previous centuries so far.

We have learnt, though very briefly, that most of the last six centuries of Ethiopian history were filled with raids and wars of one kind or another. Although the first decade of this century witnessed the consolidation of Ethiopia in the form we know it today the attempt to further strengthen this unity and the enthusiasm to modernise the state were faced with considerable threats both from within and without the country. The provincial lords in the south, south-east and south-west grew in power as they began holding large estates and distributing land to their soldiers, whose service and allegiance was directly to them. (84) Moreover, when Menelik fell sick in 1906 the question of succession brought new political uncertainties in the palace ultimately leading 'into an unprecedented system of intrigues, conspiracies, political and marital pacts and alliances unknown before and since in Ethiopian history. Byzantine-like 'deft practitioners of dark intrigues thrived'. (85) The bedridden Emperor who saw the increasing tension leading into another round of feudal violence announced the establishment of a Council of Ministers in 1907, the first cabinet in Ethiopia, and in 1908 he chose and proclaimed his grand-son Iyasu as successor and heir to the throne. (86) The announcement

of his successor led to further turmoil and conflicts which involved the nobility, the provincial feudal barons and the church leaders. (87) The establishment of the cabinet did not solve the problem of administration 'for power continued to be dependent on personal influence and military strength'(88) The coup of September 1916 ousted Iyasu and brought Zāwditu as Empress and Ras Tāfāri as regent and heir to the throne. The period of dyarchy thus begun (1917-28) was to continue with the usual conflicts between the provincial lords and the palace, now filled with Tāfāri's recruits (89) During this time, however, the internal power struggle gradually began to gather its forces around Zāwditu and Tāfāri and what each symbolised: Zāwditu the ultra conservatives, Tāfāri the 'liberal' nobility and the early progressives.

The ultra-traditionalists represented by Zāwditu were isolationist in their foreign policies and were completely opposed to any kind of reform, modernization and innovation. They were opposed to the banning of slavery for reasons related to their class interests: (1) the slave trade was a source of cash for some provincial governors;<sup>ant</sup>(2) the outlawing of slavery meant giving freedom for the serfs working on their farms. This was a challenge to Tāfāri and the liberal nobility who wanted to join the League of Nations which demanded the suppression of slavery in the country as a pre-condition for membership. (90) The liberal nobility represented by Tāfāri saw the benefits of contacts with the outside world. This group, writes Addis Heywät,

actively pioneered the imperative infrastructure for the modern state - trade, internally and with the world - capitalist system, cash economy, modern education, coercive institutions such as an army (initially praetorian), police, prisons etc. (91)

The third group in the socio-political life of the country during the period before the Italian invasion was the intellectual. Since this group was devoted to reform it aligned itself with the liberal nobility which was led by Tāfāri. Among this group there were some

individuals who attempted to study, analyse, and suggest solutions to the problems the country faced. The more radical wing of the progressives were more 'systematic' in their identification and analysis of the social, economic and political conditions, and more thorough in their suggestions of possible remedies. This was indeed a period of turmoil, challenge and probably a test for the educated in general; writers touched upon almost every aspect of social life in the intellectual forum of the period, Benhanena Sälam (Light and Peace), a weekly Amharic newspaper. The following could be taken as some of the representatives of this period: Gäbrä Həywät, Asbē Hailu, Därrēssa, Afäwäriq, MSW, Tamrat W Ammanuēl, Melkyas etc.

The radicals considered the ultra-traditionalists and their representatives in the lower administrative levels as parasites who vegetated on the produce of the peasantry; as a group which only possessed large estates with little or no interest to develop and utilise them; as barriers to the implementation of the reform-oriented policies of the government. In short they hold the landed aristocracy responsible for the backwardness of the country. These anti-feudal views were expressed in Berhanena Sälam by a good number of writers with various degrees of frankness and subtlety. That <sup>the aristocracy</sup> was a fetter to development and ruthless in its exploitation was aptly described by Asbē. Generally speaking, however, despite the efforts of the radicals and some of the innovations introduced by the liberal nobility 'by 1935 the syringe of social-political innovations had not gone deep enough to affect the body politic of the Gibbi (i.e. the palace.)' (93) We shall return to the role of the intellectual and deal with them in detail in the next chapter.

### The economic conditions

Agriculture, the main source of Ethiopia's economy, has scarcely advanced. Little progress has been made towards enhancing effective development in this vital source of life of the people. Some writers have pointed out that the insurmountable geographic features and the isolation of the country are the main causes of the backwardness of social and economic development. (94) Others have indicated the long absence of peace, the way of life of the war-lords, and the slave trade as the main factors hampering development. (95) Dässalänn points out that 'The medieval form of cultivation, the archaic implements employed and the low level of agricultural know-how' (96) were factors which encouraged backwardness because they allowed only small scale rural production until the beginning of commercial agriculture in the mid 1960s. He also considers lack of oxen and essential tools of farming as one of the problems of poor rural production. The peasants who could not provide their own implements had to look for assistance from others 'in exchange for their labour or a portion of their harvest.' (Dässalänn, 31) Those peasants without the means of cultivation not only constituted 'the poorest section of the peasantry' but were also 'easily victimised by adverse natural conditions', and 'were often forced to abandon their farms and migrate to urban areas in search of employment.' (Dässalänn, 31) Fragmentation of land into small-scale holdings or minor plots was another deterrent to improved production in agriculture. This was due to both the prevailing land holding system and peasant consciousness; the peasants believed 'that it was advantageous to have several scattered plots.' It must be borne in mind, however, that 'the unevenness of the quality of the land encouraged peasants to opt for fragmented holdings.' (Dässalänn, 31) The fact that new

techniques of production such as use of chemical fertilizers, high-yield seeds, use of better tools and improved methods of cultivation were largely unknown due to 'The reluctance of peasants to give up their traditional practices and try new techniques...' (Dässaḷänṅ, 31) has also contributed to the backwardness in the agricultural life of the country.

Various writers have mentioned the important deterrents of agricultural development in Ethiopia. They also indirectly explain why the Ethiopian peasantry was and is continuously falling victim of famine and disease despite agreement by scholars that 'by the standards of many rural communities in Africa, Ethiopian peasants are considerably advanced in farm management technique' and in spite of the fact that 'the Ethiopian rural producer is hard working, diligent, and competent within the limits of his knowledge has not been disputed by many.' (Dässaḷänṅ, 32) At this juncture, therefore, a brief discussion of the land holding system and the production relations between the landlord, the state, the church on the one hand, and the tenants and the landless on the other is pertinent.

Dässaḷänṅ writes that due to lack of 'reliable data' and 'because of complex and confusing tenurial structure that existed in the country before the land reform' no complex study of the agrarian system of 'the old regime' has been made. (Dässaḷänṅ, 16) However, he attempts to point out the salient features of the system though with awareness of the paucity of 'empirical evidence' which is 'either unavailable, partial, or of questionable quality.' His conclusions, which will be summarised below, were made 'on the basis of what is available.' (Dässaḷänṅ, 16)

The landholding system in Ethiopia during the era of the old regime was not monolithic. There were 'Both in the north and south ... a large number of landholding arrangements - perhaps as many as twenty different varieties...' (Dässaläññ, 17) Instead of examining all these varieties in detail in his book, Dässaläññ takes the core elements and groups them as follows: '... in the north, what is often termed the "communal" church and state tenures ... In the south, the tenures were church, state [state] and private.' (Dässaläññ, 17) To avoid the north-south dichotomization he further summarises the landholding system in Ethiopia in two broad categories: (i) usufructuary tenures and (ii) private tenures, and the first is divided into communal, church and state holdings. (Dässaläññ, 21)

The communal, or rest, system is a system where the individual can claim land rights if he can prove his descent from the original holders of the plot of land in question or the immediate inheritors of the land. Once a plot of land is in his possession he does not have the right to sell or transfer the land to others, by way of gift for example. His right is for life and when he dies 'the land was divided equally among all his children, male and female.' (Dässaläññ, 17) The system was widely used in Gojaam, Gondär, Wällo, Tegray and Northern Shäwa. Dässaläññ's research in Bahr Dar Awraja reveals that the main problem with this system was that it 'gave rise to excessive fragmentation of holdings.' (Dässaläññ, 18) The rest tenure not only allowed for continuous division and sub-division of plots, it was also one of the main causes for interminable disputes over claims of rights on the same plot of land on issues of closer ties to the ancestor. Such land was left unused. (Dässaläññ, 19)

The most common church land called sämon belonged to the state but the rights have been given to the church forever. The church leased this land 'in return for tribute or tax' which it used to support its activities, the clergy and others which render it service. (Dassalänn, 19)

The third and most important of the varieties of classifications of estate holding system were Madäria and Māngest. Some of the land held by the state (mainly in the southern regions) 'was leased out to cultivators ... A good portion of it was however given out to individuals (Madaria), or registered as government property (Māngest).' (Dässalänn, 20) Madaria land 'was granted to ex or incumbent officials, war veterans, patriots or persons who were considered to have provided meritorious service to the Crown in lieu of pension or salary.' (Dässalänn, 20). Depending on their choice, the holders may work on the land or lease it out to tenants, which is mostly the case.

The private holdings were lands expropriated mainly from peasants in the south distributed to government officials and loyal servants of the Emperor. However these lands are regarded fundamentally as the properties of the state for 'in so far as the authority of the state was concerned, the sanctity of private property was not recognised in principle or in fact.' (Dässalänn, 21) Thus with the introduction of a new state apparatus Haile Sellassē's control of power, which was before maintained by the regime's 'role in the allocation of resources' and its 'monopoly over the instruments of repression', was greatly inflated. (Dässalänn, 22) Dässalänn states:

On the whole, the vast holdings of the state were primarily used for political purposes: by grants of land the reigning monarchs sought to buy support and loyalty, or by threats of dispossession, to discourage opposition. (Dässalänn, 20)

Their role in achieving the aspired political goals was given more importance than the economic utility of these lands thus rendering life for the peasantry and the landless, to put it mildly, unbearable. The peasantry was bled by the soldiers of the kings and provincial warlords and the innumerable taxes it paid in grain, cattle, money etc. The free labour he, his wife and children surrendered to the landed aristocracy, the local gentry and the administrative representatives of the state at all levels was of gigantic proportions. Moreover on holidays or when a landlord was giving a festive luncheon or dinner the tenants provided eggs, chicken, sheep, butter, tef etc. This was known as Mattaya - a kind of 'forced gift.'

These were the main features of the economic conditions of Ethiopia as it entered the twentieth century. There was hardly any change in agricultural life and the instruments of production at the beginning of this century. The problems mentioned earlier were not tackled at all. (97) Just as there was no basic change in the political life of the society at large the economic conditions also remained by and large unchanged until the Italian Fascist invasion in 1935. The period 1935-41 was a period of Italian occupation, however, the Fascists never conquered the whole country during the five years of occupation. (98) When in 1941 Hailä Sellassē was restored to power mainly by the British, who wanted a ruler in Ethiopia who would serve their war-time interests, the patriots resisted. They were nevertheless not strong enough to stop him. (99) During the 1940s and 1950s the 'master-client relation' with the British consolidated Hailä Sellassē's power while it gave the British a lot of freedom in Ethiopia. His government 'totally rejected the slightest call for reform.' (100) In fact it further strengthened its relation with external forces (particularly with the United States)



during the fifties and sixties thus gaining more military strength. (101)

During this same period foreign and locally educated Ethiopians entered the bureaucracy. The educated elite were seduced by the high posts they were offered in the 'creaky bureaucracy' of the mid-fifties. Addis Heywät mentions Gärmamē as the only 'militant democrat;' he was charged and labelled by ultra-feudalists and conservatives in the various hierarchies of the bureaucracy as 'communist' and 'eccentric.' They were common allegations of the old regime against democrats. (102)

Some of the persons in the army and the intellectuals were later (December 1960) engaged in a coup d'etat. The brain behind it was Gärmamē Neway. Though the coup failed since it was not well organised and did not raise the main economic problem of land, it was the first serious challenge to Hailä Sellassē's absolute monarchy. (103)

Hailä Sellassē's government did not provide any answers to the inherent problems that led to the coup d'etat of 1960. Instead it escalated its methods and practice of repression. The peasant rebellion in various parts of the rural areas, the Ethiopian student movement in the major cities and the growing problem of oppressed nationalities along with the major economic, social and political problems challenged the regime during the sixties and seventies. (104) The sixties saw lots of student demonstrations which reached their peak in 1965 when students demonstrated under the slogan 'Land to the Tiller.' This was a major stride compared to the previous demonstrations. Student challenges and confrontations on both national and international issues continued in spite of imprisonment, beatings, and killings by the repressive machinery of the state. Social unrest in the rural and urban areas also mounted; major land reform was, however, delayed until after the popular revolution of 1974.

## 1.4 Literary conditions 1855 to 1974

The period from mid<sup>the</sup> nineteenth century to the first three and a half decades of this century could be said to have been dominated by the influx and domestic production of religious literature, mainly in Amharic. With the emergence of newspapers and journalistic writing at the start of the twentieth century concern for the secular aspects of life begins to draw more attention gradually leading to the publication of various essays, text books and literary works. Furthermore various attitudes to and concepts of literature begin to appear in the newspapers. It is these aspects of Ethiopian literature along with the conditions of literary production, distribution and consumption that we intend to introduce in this section of the chapter.

### 1.4.1 Religious literature in Amharic

We do not yet know the origin of Amharic both as a spoken and written language. According to Ullendorff it was probably spoken *from* the tenth century. (105) However, differing views have been expressed by other writers. (106) The first evidence we have so far pertaining to the written history of the language dates as far back as the fourteenth century in the poems written in praise of King Amdā Ṣeyon, and six other kings following him. These poems were first published in 1777 (Eth.cal) in Dājazmach Hailu Eshātē's book entitled Tarikā Nāgāst (History of Kings). (107) Their authors are not known as the writers did not sign their names for reasons of modesty. (108) The Amharic in which these poems were written is not the same as the Amharic we speak and write today as the grammatical structure is different, and as there are words in them we do not understand today. It is possible that this type of Amharic continued to be written, according to Professor Tamrat,

until 1599 E.C. (1607 Eu.C). However, there is no evidence of any work written in Amharic during the period 1555 to 1599 E.C. (1563-1607 Eu.C).

(109) There is no evidence to believe this is the earliest form of the language though it is the earliest written evidence we have of the language so far.

The next event worth noting in the history of Amharic writing is related to the coming of the Portuguese to Ethiopia. The Portuguese who came in 1541 to assist the Christian king of Ethiopia in the war against Moslems did not want to sit idle once they completed their initial duty in the removal of the Moslem threat. In fact Tamrat states that when they first established relations with the Ethiopian government it was agreed that their Catholic priests could teach in Ethiopia. (110) So the Jesuit missionaries started preaching their religion to the court, the clergy and the people at large. They chose the language most spoken by the ordinary person, Amharic, and started writing pamphlets in it thereby disseminating their religious doctrine and propaganda. This compelled the Ethiopian clergy to defend their monophysite Christian beliefs. They countered the Jesuit view by writing in Amharic, without abandoning Geez though. (111)

The great bulk of the pamphlets of this time is not extant in most libraries. Sergew says 'To our surprise, these works, at least as far as I know, are not extant in the major European libraries, including the archive of the Propagation of the Faith in Rome...' (112) He further suggests that some were burnt by King Fassilädäs following the expulsion of the Jesuits because of a popular revolt against the spread of Catholicism. Some of the work by the Ethiopian clergy is still extant. However, these original religious writings in Amharic

or translations made into Amharic by the clergy were not written purely in Amharic. The combination of Geez and Amharic in the writing of these works made the works difficult to understand as the majority of the people did not know Geez. (113) The major achievement of these works therefore is, according to Tamrat, their contribution to the beginning of the writing of Amharic, a language which was before considered by the clergy as 'the language of the illiterate.' (114)

The Zämänaä Näsafent may have not favoured the writing of literature since there isn't much work in Amharic attributed to this period. It is nevertheless possible that with the manuscripts in Tewodros's library there may have been Amharic books that have been destroyed. According to Aläqa Wäldä Maryam's chronicle there were 961 books gathered from the various churches. (115) According to Pankhurst there were 'no less than 981 manuscripts' in Tewodros's library before they were captured by the British army of the Napier Expedition, 1867 to 1868. Though some of these were returned to Ethiopian churches some fell into the hands of the soldiers and officers while about 350 manuscripts went to the British Museum. (116) That many Amharic books and pamphlets could have been hauled can be evidenced by a statement quoted in Pankhurst which states: 'Great destruction undoubtedly occurred in 1868: the German traveller Rohlf's reported that "the whole area of Mäqdäla at the withdrawal of the British was littered with Amharic books, loose leaves and fragments"' (Pankhurst, 246). Generally speaking therefore the period since the expulsion of the Jesuits seems to be an era of temporary literary slumber. Reference must, however, be made to Amharic religious literature produced as a result of the revived missionary activity during the nineteenth century.

The distribution of catechistic material which started in 1810 with the two hundred and twenty printed Geez Psalters sent by the foreign based The British and Foreign Bible Society continued with further dispatches of religious texts in Amharic. By 1853 about two thousand Bibles, six thousand Testaments and two thousand Old Testament Portions were printed in Amharic by the Society. These works 'were written in poor Amharic with an incorrect word order...' and were consequently referred to, in Mittwoch's words, as 'mission Amharic.' (Pankhurst, 247) Bible Society statistics indicate that during the thirty years between 1854 and 1884 over 38,000 volumes were printed in Amharic and about 12,000 in three other Ethiopian languages: Oromiñña, Geez and Bogos. (Pankhurst, 248)

The Chrischona Press in Switzerland produced the texts used by the Swedish Evangelical missionaries and the British and Foreign Bible Society. It issued translations of the New and Old Testaments in Amharic. Abu Rukh translated the New Testament into Amharic in 1870 and the Books of the Old Testament in three parts: part one in 1871 and the next in 1873. The Chrischona published numerous other tracts for the British and Foreign Bible society from 1864 to 1878. It produced a variety of religious literature in Tegrinñña in 1866 and in Oromiñña during the period 1870 to 1876. (Pankhurst, 249)

Nevertheless these productions of the Bible and other literatures were occasionally faced with resistance. Emperor Tēwodros who always asked the foreigners 'Have you brought me a gunsmith?' (Pankhurst, 247), was more enthusiastic in obtaining guns and gunpowder than in being flooded with religious books. Despite this fact however he preferred the Amharic versions to the Geez ones. What he said to the missionaries:

'I am tired of your books' (Pankhurst, 248) quite summarises the Emperor's reaction against the superfluity of religious books and tracts. According to Pankhurst, 'In 1880 Ras Alula and Ras Wäldä Mikääl are said to have obtained permission from Yohannes to burn all the Amharic books they could find.' (Pankhurst, 248) It is legitimate to surmise therefore that this antipathy to missionary literature may have produced some ill feelings against literature in general.

Menelik's enthusiasm in the production of religious works was more 'positive' than Tēwodros's. Pankhurst writes:

Out of the fairly considerable total of 98,304 texts it will be seen that 58,212 were in Amharic, 18,560 in Ethiopic and Amharic, 7,120 in Ethiopic, 5,000 in Tigrinya, 1,000 in Tigre and 10,587 in three different dialects of Gallinya. (Pankhurst, 263)

These are some of the works produced between 1882 and 1914. They consisted of the Bible, Testament, New and Old Testament portions. The Society's agency in Cairo distributed 24,172 scriptures from 1904 to 1916 (Pankhurst, 263). The Swedish Evangelical Mission in Eritrea had already started production in Amharic, Tegrä, Geez and Oromiñña during the late nineteenth century. (Pankhurst, 264) Menelik's interest in the printed Bible may have encouraged the volume of missionary publications to grow. Pankhurst refers to a report to the British and Foreign Bible Society where Menelik stated: 'Everywhere my soldiers are sitting on the ground, spelling or reading.' (Pankhurst, 263) Furthermore he states that Menelik 'is said to have distributed Amharic and Oromigna scriptures to his troops' in 1873. (Pankhurst, 263)

Apart from these missionary texts the other type of writing worth mentioning in Amharic, after the mid-nineteenth century is the revival of the writing of chronicles. Two biographical chronicles of Tēwodros were written in Amharic. These works by Aläḥa Zänäb and Aläḥa Wäldä

Maryam were the first to be written in an Amharic which is not highly mixed with Geez as was the case previously. There is also a third biography of the Emperor written in Amharic by a person whose name is yet unknown.

There were other works by Aläqä Zänäb, Aläqä Zäwäld and others written in Amharic. Books of history and geography were also produced by foreign writers before 1900. The situation was to change however during the first three and a half decades of this century since the publication of secular writing started and developed along with the religious literature.

#### 1.4.2 Secular writings

Following the introduction of printing facilities came the publication of religious works and newspapers which in turn contributed to the development of writing in Amharic. Publication began with the weekly politico-commercial newspaper Corriere Eritreo in Massawa in 1891. (Pankhurst, 249) However it was the handwritten Amharic weekly produced by Blatta Gäbrä Egziabhēr which could be referred to as the first Amharic newspaper. Pankhurst writes: 'A D Robert cites the librarian of the National Library of Ethiopia in 1946, as stating that this Eritrean distributed these sheets "before 1900" and that "50 copies were made of each issue".' (Pankhurst, 260) (118) He does not however give the details about the name, place and date of 'publication' of this newspaper.

The second Amharic weekly newspaper was established in 1902 by the Greek, Andrea E Kavadia. It was called A'emero. The earliest issues were handwritten. This newspaper stopped publication in 1903 because

of the delay in the arrival of the printing machinery promised by the enthusiastic Emperor, Menelik, and resumed publication in the latter part of 1914. It stopped again in 1916 to revive in 1924 and expand as an eight-page paper in 1926. Berhanena Sälam, a new Amharic weekly was founded in 1924. Two other papers, namely Käsatē Berhan, a quarterly; and Aṭbya Kokäb, a political weekly, began to appear in 1935 but stopped publication together with the other newspapers with the Fascist invasion in the same year. A brief discussion of A'emero and mainly Berhanena Sälam sheds some light on the early characteristics of Amharic writing during the pre-Italian occupation. The discussion is also important since it is a contention of this work that these works, which were criticisms of the social life of the country, have together with the objective conditions in Ethiopia influenced the nature of early Ethiopian novels. The preoccupation of the novel in Ethiopia from 1930-1974 has been to deal with social problems. The articles published since the establishment of the Amharic newspapers, and the stories and allegations advocating the advancement of modern education, health, trade, agriculture and the maintenance of a national unity were the immediate thematic precursors of the trend the Ethiopian novel was to follow.

The most recurring topics were concerned with the introduction of Western education, the problems these might bring in disrupting the age-old traditional way of life, the call for a strengthened unity, and the economic problems which emanate chiefly from the predominantly feudal production relations. The controversy and vagueness that surrounds these debates is too much to deal with here. The difficulty does not only lie in its bulk but also in the serious lack of clarity of thought and more importantly in the absence of a systematic approach to the issues under consideration. True, there were many writers whose names and



articles appeared in the papers regularly. However, these people did not develop a certain system of thought or philosophy. What they did was express their feelings on the various problems of the country. Moreover since, particularly at the initial stages of the newspapers, almost all opinions seemed to be considered for publication the opportunity was exploited by many who believed they had views to share. This resulted in the publication of all sorts of views on all sorts of topics, and the situation continued until the coronation of Ras Tāfari in 1930. It is with this background in mind that the following discussion of the main themes of the newspapers needs to be viewed.

'The use of the newspapers', an article written by Tammänä Hailu in 1926 gives the common view held by writers and readers of Benhanena Sälam about newspapers then. Tammänä writes: 'A newspaper is the truthful mirror through which the government sees the thoughts and lives of the people. Moreover, it is also the informative organ which the people read to know about the government's plans, achievements, and the legislations it makes. Therefore it is a big arena where the two parties meet.' (119) He further explains the spiritual (in its religious sense) and material functions of a newspaper. The role it plays as : a forum of criticism and self criticism; a rostrum on which the past is re-examined and re-told; and the future indicated is also pointed out in this article. It is, I think, this notion they held about newspapers combined with the fresh enthusiasm of seeing Ethiopia catching up with Europe that led the writers to unreservedly express their views in these two newspapers.

Emperor Menelik's reasons for founding A'emero were to benefit those involved in trade and agriculture and to assist governors and those working in government offices. It was conceived to be the mirror

which reveals to Ethiopian promoters of civilization the activities and progresses of people in foreign countries. (120) The overwhelmingly large number of articles, essays, stories and tales that focus on matters largely related with the modernisation and better unification of the country also indicate that these were urgent matters that occupied, at times to a degree of obsession, the attention of the emergent intellectual of the period and other contributors. (121) Many renowned intellectuals of the period before the Italian invasion expressed their views in these papers.

One of the recurring names in Benhanena Sälam is Fitawrari Därrëssa who wrote widely on education, civilisation, modernisation, the need for unity and cooperation, trade, agriculture etc. Like most of his contemporaries writing for Benhanena Sälam he defended the introduction of modern education and Western civilisation against the opposing views, articles, rumours and beliefs of the traditionalists. He wrote:

Who allows a man to live like his father? A man rather lives like the times. If the son of a poor man is told to remain poor would he say "All right!"? Or if a rich person's child is told "don't be poor" can he [manage to be poor]? Who really managed to live like his father? Observe everything [around you]. Our grandfathers used spear, however, our fathers did not choose to maintain the spear; they chose the gun ... That whose father travelled by foot made the train; and that whose father made trains travels by airplanes. Therefore we cannot stand by ourselves, separated from the rest of the world, and insist we want to live like our fathers. It will not suit us. Let us therefore, my brothers, learn, develop the skill and work like the rest of the world ... (122)

Därrëssa and many of his contemporaries (123) writing for Benhanena Sälam believed that education and development could be achieved only through unity and by working together. He wrote: 'If we think of only our individual selves we cannot make it in world politics. Whatever the case may be, if a man fails to stand with his fellow countrymen

and his country, and seeks his personal advantages he will be like a tree cut off from its roots; individual benefits may vanish in a short time while those of one's country are permanent.' (124) Unity was also believed to be achieved by gathering around the Queen and the Regent, Ras Tāfāri, and later around the symbol of Emperor Hailä Sellasē, who was portrayed as the father and sole promoter of education, civilisation, unity and freedom. These themes and others pertaining to the introduction and expansion of modern agriculture, industry and European civilisation in general are recurrent in the pages of Benhanena Sälam .from January 1925, and continue to dominate the scene, with some scattered variations on emphasis, for the next ten years. It is these same issues that creative writers chose to concentrate upon in their works. In addition to the articles in the newspapers there were books published which contributed to the fresh and enthusiastic endeavour of the early progressives. The publication of books before the Italian interlude is dominated by the production of a great deal of religious works, some text books and secular prose writings, and very few works that could be referred to as strictly literary. (125) In fact the precursor to the Ethiopian novel is a translation into Amharic of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress by Gäbrä Giyorgis Tärfä in 1892 which was followed by Onēsimus Iāsib's translation of Bunyan's Man's Heart into Oromiñña in 1899. (125)

John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress may have influenced Heruy Wäldä Sellasē who wrote a religious allegory of Bunyan's type which is entitled My Heart, Mr Friend in 1922/23. The first Amharic novel was, however, written by Professor Afäwäraq Gäbrä Eyyāsus and published in Rome in 1908 under the title Lebb wälläd tarik (literally "A Story born of Heart"). (127) Afäwäraq's novel is a romantic story which

depicts how the love between a beautiful Christian girl and a pagan king finally forces the king to be converted to Christianity. The work does not in any way reflect the mood of what was then discussed in the newspapers. Its aim is more in line with the religious works published so far rather than with the problems earnestly expressed in the newspapers. It was Heruy Wäldä Sellasē who used the novel form to portray a few of the social problems of the epoch. Of course, in addition to the short tales, fables and allegorical stories which appeared in Benhanena Sälam there were other narrative pieces published in 1918 and 1933. (128) None of these works exceeds thirty pages. However, since they narrate stories and depict the problems of the period, though by way of directly moralizing, they have been included in the discussion of the early forms of narrative prose works. Heruy's Yälebb Hassabb (The Thought of the Heart, 1930) and Addis Aläm (New World, 1932) are longer pieces that deal with the problems of modernization and cultural conflict. Heruy's catalogue of books published in 1928 mentions three titles by Afäwāṛq and describes each of them as 'roman'. These novels are not, however, available at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies Library. I have not met a person who has read or seen them; or read any document which told of their whereabouts. This leaves Heruy as the father of the 'purpose-oriented' novel in Ethiopia since it was he who first attempted to use the genre, before the Italian invasion, to depict the social problems of the 'New' Ethiopia.

The period 1900-1935 was therefore a period when, initially through the writings in the newspapers and later in the publication of various books, Ethiopian writing began to pay more attention to secular matters than it had ever done before. The contents of the Amharic newspapers,

the publication of books on the alphabet, agriculture, public and government administration, veterinary science, arithmetic, world history, geography and grammar support this view, and indicate the main areas where change was thought to be required. The few novelists and the other creative writers portrayed the problems that arose as a result of the conflict between the old and the new. The novelists *seem to have* used the genre at this stage to ... directly prescribe the type of change they thought was right. The discussions were not abstract at all. The problems were not regarded as logical entities which required logical solutions. The writers dealt directly with what they imagined was actually happening to their society. The actual circumstances and their various manifestations in different spheres of life were the basis of their enquiry, and to a lesser degree of their suggested solutions.

The five years of Italian occupation from 1935-1941 were a blow to Ethiopian literature. The printing presses in Harär and Jimma were destroyed and those in Addis Abäba utilized for Fascist propaganda. Since all the Amharic newspapers were banned the only 'paper' in circulation in the interest of the nation was Bandirachen (Our Flag), the political organ of the patriots which countered the propaganda published by the <sup>S</sup>~~A~~ Fascists. It was transported on mule-back and distributed to the populace; it was also dropped from planes. This did not, of course, keep up the enthusiastic beginnings and the stride the pre-Italian period newspapers manifested. Though oral literature was enriched by this tragic event written Ethiopian literature had to wait until the expulsion of the Italians to make new starts. When the Italians were finally expelled in 1941 they destroyed all broadcasting facilities leaving many problems for the period of reconstruction. Dealing with the disastrous impact of the occupation

period became the major pre-occupation and task of the nation and its literature.

The novels that appeared in the forties and early fifties mainly dealt with the five years of Italian occupation. Emphasis was made on the restoration of unity and the importance of protecting the country's freedom. The theme of modernization that began in the previous novels was also continued in the works of Germachäw, Wäldä Giyorgis, Assäfa, Ifäkonnen, Näzgäbu and Gätachäw .

Many novelettes, we may call them dime novels, were published from the late fifties to 1974. Most of them concerned themselves with the evils of the so-called modernization or Westernization process. They dealt with the emergent problems of marriage; the conflict within the family; the disparity in wealth and the consequences of poverty: killings, cut-throats, prostitution, the disintegration of rural life and migration to the cities; the impact of Western films, books, music etc on the youth and the traditional culture; the nepotism and embezzlement in the new bureaucracy and many other similar problems. The problems of the common man were taken as subject matter for a novel by novices of different educational background and ability of writing. Although these works are healthy signs for the spread and development of the literature their main contribution is probably more sociological than literary since they are poor in characterization, narrative technique, the use of language and in handling their subject matter.

The publication of dime novels continued and dominated the literary arena in the sixties and seventies. This was also the period when the Ethiopian novel made a remarkable achievement. When Haddis Alämayähu's Feger eskä mäqaber (literally Love unto the Grave, or Love unto Death) was published in 1965/66 it marked the beginning of a new trend in

Ethiopian novel writing. The book dealt with the major rural socio-economic problem of the country with the depth and extent hitherto unknown to Ethiopian literature. Vivid characterization of peasants, landlords and the clergy and <sup>the</sup> portrayal of natural beauty in a very lucid and beautiful language are the major qualities of the novel. One of the main problems of the Ethiopian novel has not been fully overcome yet. Haddis's narration abounds with accidents. Needless to emphasize that its qualities overshadow its shortcomings for most Ethiopian readers delight in the scenes of the love story between Säbla and Bāzabeh, meeting the many interesting characters, and vivid descriptions of scenes of rural and palace life.

Three other important novels appeared in the decade before 1974. The most important of them is Daññachāw's Adāfres (after the hero's name) published in 1969/1970. The author, a graduate of H S I U (now Addis Ababa University) and holder of a Master of Fine Arts degree from Iowa, gives a panoramic view of the Ethiopian society before the revolution. The novel is episodic and refined in the art of description and characterization. This is the first novel in Amharic which could seriously be compared with good novels in other parts of the world in the artistic devices it employs, its penetrating insight into the society it depicts and its powerful and beautiful language.

Bä'alu Germa's Kadmas Bashagär (Beyond Horizon) published in the same year as Adāfres, and Yāhellina Dāwāl (literally The Call of Conscience) published in 1974 are two important novels which dealt with the problems of the modern Ethiopian intellectual in a manner that is new to most of the earlier novels except Adāfres.

### 1.4.3 Conditions of Literary Production, Distribution and Consumption

Any consideration of the nature and development of the literature of a country has to examine the conditions that affected and influenced it. Robert Escarpit's Sociology of Literature discusses the type and nature of these conditions and the multi-faceted interrelationship that exists between them. His approach to the sociology of literature follows three stages: the first stage is gathering statistical facts about the conditions of literary production, distribution and consumption; the second is collecting data from 'the study of social structures ... political regimes, cultural institutions, classes, social categories and levels, jobs, use of leisure time, degree of illiteracy, the economic and legal status of the writer and bookseller and the publisher, linguistic problems, the history of books etc.' and interpreting the previous data through the latter; finally, through the application of the methods of general or comparative literature, specific studies, such as 'the evolution of a genre or style', are made. (129) His approach adds one more dimension to the customary two-dimensional approach in literary studies, i.e. the emphasis on the biography of a particular writer and the text of his work. According to Escarpit: 'Each and every literary fact presupposes a writer, a book and a reader; or in general terms, an author, a product and a public.' (Escarpit, 2) He is however aware that this threefold relationship is 'difficult to study' particularly when one embarks on writing its history. On the other hand, he is also convinced that 'the perspectives of history are obscured' by the two-dimensional approach.

Problems are bound to arise when one deals with each of these factors. If we were to glance at the Ethiopian situation concentrating



on the personality of the author brings various issues pertaining to finance, censorship, literacy. The literary work itself poses problems of language, technique, standards, content, and finally the type, number, and financial position of the reading public also introduces other impediments. It is very difficult to obtain satisfactory data on these issues even if we agree with Escarpit that 'it is essential that explorers of literature, whether biographers or commentators, historians or critics, attain a complete and undistorted view of all literary facts.' (Escarpit, 2) Though fulfillment of these requirements demands a rich tradition of documentation in the various aspects of social and literary life of the society we find it necessary to briefly introduce the situation in Ethiopia from the limited sources at hand. (130) However, Escarpit says that 'Up to recent times, ... the absence of documentation made the in vivo study of sociological phenomena in literature practically impossible,' (Escarpit, 6) even in Europe and America. According to him, it is during the decade that followed the Second World War that the situation changed, thanks to UNESCO'S role in taking 'systematic censuses' about the 'collective aspects of literature', and the investigations the book industry made about 'standardization and market studies.' (Escarpit, 6) (131)

As far as Ethiopia is concerned, it is not at the moment possible to know <sup>the following</sup> the size of reading material in various languages ; newspapers, magazines, books printed; the rate of literacy and the number of potential reading public at different epochs; and the nature of the book trade in Ethiopia chiefly because the printing presses and the book traders do not have a good tradition of record keeping. The writers' biographies (132), the socio-economic conditions under which they function, and the financial sources of their livelihood are not

sufficiently documented either. Here again we have a good example of the poverty of documentation despite the country's long history of writing. The written tradition was not accompanied with mass literacy and systematic documentation. The achievements in mass literacy were poor and the means for printing the literary heritage locally were almost non-existent until the late 19th century.

No accurate and trustworthy evidence that shows the literacy rate in Ethiopia, since the beginning of writing in Geez initially, and then in Amharic and other Ethiopian languages later, exists except for the scattered remarks found in the works of some European travellers. Blondeel, who was in Ethiopia from 1939 to 1942, wrote that 'the proportion of people able to read and write was then about the same as in Western Europe.' (133) Talking about the period before the nineteenth century Pankhurst states 'The level of literacy in former times was sufficient for the needs of the society of the period and compared favourably with that in many countries.' (134) He also defended Plowden's note of 1854 which indicated the daily decrease in the number of people who are able to read, in terms of 'the disturbed conditions of the mid-nineteenth century.' (135) Further retrogression seemed to follow during and after the Dervish 'ravages' in Gondar which brought about the closure of its renowned centre of learning. There was not much progress during the late 19th century. In fact, according to Pankhurst, 'Hahtama Sellassie remarks that the soldier of that time considered letter writing a shameful progression, while old Amharic proverbs place education at a discount, declaring, for example; 'The worst of beasts is the scorpion, the worst of men is the scholar...' (136) For the first decade of the twentieth century Mérab mentions ninety per cent illiteracy for places where Amharic is spoken as the first language and adds that 'only half of Menilek's first council of Ministers could read and write with ease,

that three could do neither, and that two others could only sign their names.'(137) Better strides in literacy are quoted by Mrs Sanford who states that:

Whereas in 1920 the boy on his household staff who could read and write was a notable exception, in 1935 among the same society there were few young men and boys who had not mastered the elementary process of reading and writing the Amharic script.(138)

The view that the number of people able to read is increasing is also observed by Eriksson of the Swedish Mission. However, he was apprehensive about the consequences of education on the youngsters' continued love of the town life and the parents' reproach of the missions for taking their children away from the villages.

What we have seen so far may provide a glimpse of the general situation; it does not, however, tell us much more than what we could have anticipated given the awareness of the growing number of schools in the country. Even for the recent period up to 1974 we have not found a detailed study of the rate of illiteracy; the estimates fluctuated between 95% and 97%.

The absence of the means for printing books, making them available in abundance, may be one of the factors that contributed to the slow advance of literacy. Books and manuscripts were available in churches, monasteries and courts within the reaches of the literate few only. The lack of means to reproduce various books and manuscripts created problems to the scribe and scholars of the period. It took the scribe many months to copy a manuscript by hand. Consequently students were forced to spend a great deal of their time in traditional schools learning things by heart from the priest teachers who also often taught them from memory.

Although the first printed book in Geez appeared in Rome in 1513

the establishment of the first printing press materialized only in October 1863. This does not, however, mean that there were no efforts whatsoever before this time. Aṣe Lebenä Dengel had written to the Portuguese King Manuel I asking him:

Send masters who can make figures of gold and silver, copper, iron, tin and lead, and send me lead for the churches; and masters of form to make books of our characters, and masters of gilding with gold leaf, and of making gold leaf; and this soon, and let them remain with me here and in my favour.(139)

In another letter to Diego Lopes, a member of the Portuguese mission, Lebenä Dengel had asked, together with other things, that 'all other masters that are necessary and of the best arts that are named' be sent to him.(140) The plea . in both letters, for what we may call tools of artistic production, was made side by side with those made for agricultural, military, housing and various decorations for the churches and the court. After the 16th century Lebenä Dengel(16th), Tēwodros and Sahlä Sellasē (19th) . . . show a great interest in acquiring the technological skills of Europe. Tēwodros's letter to Napier described himself as 'a lover of the mechanical arts.'(141) One of the missionaries of the 19th century wrote of Sahlä Sellasē: 'He wishes to make use of us as physicians, architects, artisans etc.'(142) Most of these wishes were not fulfilled though. The printing press of 1863, the first of its kind in East Africa, was established in Massawa (143) by Lorenzo Biancheri, a Lazarist father who called himself 'printer to his Majesty Emperor Theodore' and published an Amharic catechism which appeared early in 1864.'(144) His press was however destroyed when he died in September a few weeks after its establishment. The French Lazarist Fathers founded another printing press in Kärän(145) in 1879 and printed missionary texts which were mostly contributed by Däbtära Keflä Giyorgis and Jean Colbeaux.(146) Many of the early printing presses were established, predominantly by the various missions in the country, and their main publications were obviously religious.

Modern education, which was regarded as a threat to the oral means of preserving knowledge, urged Ras Tāfāri to form a group in December 1917, consisting of scholars selected from the various churches in the country. He entrusted them with the writing and translation of the Holy Scriptures. When the task was satisfactorily executed he imported and set up a small printing press in his palace in 1921 thus creating new opportunities for the printing of religious works. This printing press was later to become Berhanena Sälam HSI Printing Press when it was inaugurated by the Emperor in 1965. The main purpose of the press as reiterated in the Emperor's inaugural speech at the new, modernized and expanded Berhanena Sälam Printing Press in 1965 was two-fold. In his own words:

...primarily, as We have said on several occasions before, to create a centre for large scale translation, printing and distribution of the Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, and Our religious books, that were then available in Geez and only in manuscripts, so that the clergy, the monasteries and all Christian population of Ethiopia would have easy access to them. (Sic) Secondly, to provide for Our people adequate material so that they follow the day to day happenings both in other parts of the world around and within Our own Empire...(147)

The two most important goals were, firstly, the spreading of religious literature, and later on, the publication of newspapers. There is no direct reference to the role the printing press may have in the spread of mass literacy and the development of creative literature. Nevertheless, after the establishment of this printing press various books, newspapers, periodicals and magazines were published both before and after the Italian intervention in 1935. Many more printing presses were established after 1941. However, there is no document that records all the printed material,<sup>or</sup> the nature of the book trade, or the size of the reading public. Most of the replies the present writer received to the questionnaires he sent to the various printing presses in 1985 point towards the absence of such documentation.(148)

There <sup>been</sup> has no 'country-wide' attempt that dealt with the question of readership except J. Conacher's Readership Survey. Conacher visited all the provinces except three (Gamo Gofa, Bale, Arsi) and interviewed 213 people.(149) The purpose of his survey was 'to assess the needs of Ethiopia which can be met by Christian literature in Ethiopian and English languages'(150) and make relevant recommendations. Though his work is part of the Christian Literature Development Project the questions he presented to the interviewees were not all about religious matters and literature. Of the thirty-two questions posed to the respondents, eighteen were general questions, five on five named popular novels and books at the time of interview, five on three named magazines (two of which are religious) and only four questions about the Bible. May be we can have a glimpse of the state of readership in Ethiopia by summarising some of his results.

Almost two-thirds of his 127 respondents said they read or recalled reading recently a fictional work as opposed to books on education and religion. More than half of those who read fiction were students between grades nine and twelve. A good majority of them also answered that they read fiction in foreign languages as well though some have criticised the reading habits of students. Pandey said they read 'all sorts of Amharic books, Dale Carnegie, Ian Fleming, Agatha Christie and some stray magazines and journals.'(151) He added that when they borrowed classics from the library they returned the books without reading them.

More than 200 titles were named by Conacher's respondents. Haddis Alämayähu's Feger Eskä Näqaber was mentioned eight times. Of all the books originally written by Ethiopians in Amharic or English it is Feger Eskä Näqaber which earned the highest frequency of mentions. Amarä Hamo's translation of 'I loved a girl' by Walter Trobisch, was, however, named nine times.(152) Of the other Amharic novels Näkonen's

Aremuñ and Sāhay Māsfen, Abē's Sāyfā Nābālbāl was each mentioned four times; Germachāw's Araya three times and Afāwārq's Tobbia only once. Those who named Feger eskā māqaber made various comments when asked why they liked the novel. Some said it was because of its cultural contents and its stand against feudalism. Others said it was for the description of 'the old way of life as well as what it teaches.' (153) Conacher notes that 'many respondents judge a work of fiction according to whether or not they can give their moral approval to what the characters are presented as doing or according to whether or not there is a happy ending.' (154) He further adds that he has found some instances where readers judged a book 'by the writer's techniques'; this occurred in Addis Ababa and Asmara 'among those with secondary or post-secondary education.' (155) The respondents spent little money for buying newspapers and books. They preferred borrowing from friends to buying or borrowing from a library. (156) Of the forty-nine respondents to the question about their yearly expenses for buying books, newspapers and magazines, sixteen replied they spent two dollars or less, twelve replied they spent over two dollars but not over ten, and eleven said they spent ten dollars but not over thirty.

Some of the newspaper articles have mentioned some of the contemporary problems raised by the reading public. More recent examples are found in Tärbu's (a pen name?), Tärřäffä's and Ērmyas's articles to mention but a few. Ērmyas complained about the price of books and suggested that writers take some steps to bring an end to the fluctuation of book prices in the market. (157) Tärbu proposed that the quality of a book and its prices must be considered before determining retail prices since some works are charging prices they did not deserve. (158) Tärřäffä referred to readers' complaints about

the expensive price of books and said that the three major booksellers in Addis Ababa answered that it was because of taxes, freightage, postage, insurance, and the rise in the cost of living and salaries of employees. (159) We cannot, however, take the price of books as the sole reason for the smallness of the size of the reading public since the low standard of books published and the rampant poor reading habits are two other points to take into consideration.

Criticisms (160) made about the quality of most Amharic books are in most cases too general. They say the books are 'shallow,' 'literary garbage,' 'cheap,' 'unbearable to read.' Very few give reasons for the labels they give to these books. However, they suggest various ways of improving the quality of Ethiopian writing. The AZ editorial suggested that the establishment of publishing agencies alleviate the problem since such agencies will be selective in the works they publish. It is believed this will gradually help to set standards of quality for publication, indirectly contribute to improving the quality of books published and reduce the anarchy of book printing of the time. (161) Y E D on the other hand suggested that the censors should make it their duty to examine the quality and depth of a book before they permit its publication. Otherwise, it warned, these cheap books will not only keep being printed but they will spoil the taste of the public finally making them decide not to read Amharic books. (162) Engedaw Berhanu requests that educated critics write objective critical works and help the reader in selecting the good books from the shallow ones. He believes the criticism appearing on the newspapers is based on friendship and acquaintance. (163) Tärbu refers to an interview report made with the manager of Berhan Bookshop in which the manager complained that books worth 2000 birr (Ethiopian dollar) were stocked because there was no buyer. This is, according



to the manager, because the books are cheap in quality. He suggests that if one visited other bookshops one would find more books desperately waiting for buyers. Tärbu believes that the recent tendency to write a fast book to earn quick money for one's livelihood, and also to be known as a writer, are the main reasons for this predicament. He pleads that bookshops and writers should have some code of ethics to differentiate between worthy and worthless books before they are published. (164) Ērmyas proposes that it should be the duty of the Writers' Association to examine the quality of books before they are printed and sold to the public. (165)

On the other hand, Mäkkeb Gäbäyāhu, although he criticises the shallowness of the dime novels and other pot-boilers, thinks their publication assists the expansion of the reading public. He seems to firmly believe that it is not time to discuss which works are 'great' and which ones 'shallow' since Amharic literature is at its critical budding stages yet. It is a period of challenge for the literature, he emphasises. Besides, he says, the country has not produced enough literature to embark on these kinds of arguments. (166) Germay Berhanē hinted at one of the sources of the problem inherent in the so-called cheap or shallow books. He points out that an examination of contemporary writings indicates that exaggeration (hyperbole) and miraculous stories dominate the scene. Incidents that are humanly impossible to happen abound in these books. He attributes this to the traditional Geez literature which is rich in these miracle stories of the saints. Germay writes with the irony of the situation in mind. The fact that Geez literature is one of the important achievements of Ethiopian history but the lessons taken from it by modern writers are not so commendable in this case. (167) It was Pandey who attempted to shake the problem of quality in Ethiopian writing and the rampant

poor reading habits among the educated in general from its roots.

Bä'emnäät G Amlak published a series of articles in the late forties urging people to read and love books as they are the best ways for a people to achieve a higher stage of civilisation. He emphasised the importance of reading books if Ethiopians were to advance in education and catch up with the 'new' flow of European civilisation. He wrote in one of his articles: 'Is it not because Europeans are "chewing and regurgitating" [literal translation] books from morning to evening that they are able to achieve all this wisdom and attain a high stage of civilisation?' (168) Despite this outcry, (169) however, the public library which was newly opened at the time had only thirty to forty readers a day, and most of the readers went on Saturdays and Sundays. (170)

An anonymous article in Y Z E, slightly more than a decade after, provided a more detailed information about the National Library, known as Wämäzäkker Addarash, established in 1936, E.C. The number of readers who went to the library in the year 1950 F.C. was 42,051, and 64,179 in 1952 E.C., and at the time of writing the library had 13,670 books. (171) A University Library survey shows that, during the year 1967/68, one hundred graduate readers were registered as external readers in the university, however, 'only twenty-one borrowed books during the same year and a total of seventy-two books were borrowed. Out of these twenty-one readers, only six borrowed more than five books.' (172) This can only give us just a bird's-eye view of the conditions of readership. Though there is no available data to prove our point it seems that despite the understanding of the uses of reading and the wish expressed in many ways to increase the

size of the reading public the situation has remained at a deplorably low stage. The main reasons for this predicament may be sought in the traditional and modern schools.

The method of teaching in the traditional schools is largely oral. Most of the classical heritage of genē (Geez poetry) has not been sufficiently preserved mainly because of the little importance given to writing by the poets. Mängestu Lämna wrote that the great Ethiopian poets of the past considered writing their own genē as 'a sign of self-advertisement', thus they were withheld by their humility. Moreover, only 'few, even among the clergy, did actually write [and] the great poets and men of learning did not write at all.' (173) Since writing and composing poetry were regarded as two separate professions, Mängestu adds 'the scribe was rarely the same person as the poet.' (174) One may add another reason why classical genē poetry was not recorded. The poets considered poetry to be an art produced and 'consumed' immediately. They believed there was no room tomorrow for a genē composed today; it will be old and stale. Such an attitude must have encouraged the orality of culture to thrive and the tradition of writing and reading to slacken thus influencing the national characteristics and progress of literature.

The problem of reading habits may also be examined from the wider African perspective. Kebrä'ab refers to the first Congress of African Artists and Writers in 1956, which noted 'the acute shortage of books in Africa', (175) and emphasised the role of books in social, cultural, economic and political development. He indignantly adds: 'In 1973 (i.e. seventeen years later) there still exists a veritable book famine in Africa.' (176) He is talking about books which are relevant

to the needs of the society. However, he is aware of the problem of reading habits which may have hindered the vast production of books. One factor which, he thinks, discourages the habit of reading concerns the irrelevant textbooks that students are given when they first encounter books in the elementary schools in Africa. He states that only 10% of the texts were written by Africans while the rest were written by foreign authors, mainly American and European. So long as these books have no bearing on the lives and problems of African life the student is not expected to enjoy reading them or develop a habit of reading. Some of these books are given as gifts to African libraries either because they are outdated in their place of origin or because they are designed for purposes of cultural colonisation. Since the student does not understand them he develops antipathy towards reading. Moreover, the teaching books, as Pandey notes, are not graded. Shakespeare comes in grade four or five. (177) The comprehensive texts discuss subjects alien to the students. They talk about highways, skyscrapers, supermarkets, space-ships, and these are too far-fetched for the child's background. Since he is not informed about authors in his own language the child does not get the opportunity to learn reading with a purpose. In most cases, getting the reading material itself, particularly after completing the first literacy lessons, becomes a problem. People crave for anything readable and end up consuming cheap books which have invaded the commercial minded bookshops. The situation is frustratingly confused. Pandey's suggestions are: (i) to introduce literature courses at the secondary and junior secondary education; (ii) to improve the language of the students and stimulate their imagination; (iii) to give guidance to the most creative ones so that they do not shy away from the literary arena after scribbling a few ephemeral things;

(iv) and to prepare them with the critical faculty that will nourish their college education and life in general. (178) These suggestions may have helped to create a better environment for the rise of a respectable literature, both in Ethiopian languages and English, had they been implemented. Since there was no serious measure taken to save the situation there was no significant change in the reading habits before 1974.

Along with the problems discussed so far we may add some brief notes about book-trade and publishing in Ethiopia. A report by Kay Hale, a UNESCO Library Consultant, points out that the book-trade was concentrated in two main cities of Addis Ababa and Asmara, and there was no standard pattern of distributing books or fixing prices. She found the state of publishing confusing. She writes:

The publishing situation within Ethiopia seems so disorganized that, except in the case of church or mission publications, the bookseller cannot help but have difficulties in finding the "source" of local publications or even in getting information on what is available.... (179)

There is indeed a general lack of informing the public about the publication of new books by newspapers, magazines, libraries, radio, television etc. though at times we see that it is done 'selectively.' The media do not take it as part of their duty to publish newly released books. Their inertness is understandable as there is no definite way of getting the information. Most of the time communication about newly published books circulates among readers by word of mouth. That is partly why a good portion of the intellectuals do not know much about their own writers. That is why Ethiopian writers, at a panel discussion at Hailä Sellassē I University (HSIU) in 1970, commented: 'Coca Cola gets all the publicity it needs, but a writer' (180)

The deplorable state of the bookshops makes the situation worse. A report submitted to the Faculty Council of HSIU stated: 'Addis Ababa, indeed all Ethiopia, suffers from the absence of a first class bookshop: bookshops which offer the educated public a wide selection of well-written books at various levels, in many subjects.' (181) Täräffä asserts, after visiting the three major bookstores of Addis Ababa, namely: Menno, Ginnopoulos, Cosmos, that almost all of them were disorderly in their display of books. The reader was given a narrow selection of books because 'the shops depend on very few publishing houses [sic] for their supplies... [and] as the booksellers insist, the problem of censorship discourages booksellers from stocking their bookshops with first-rate books...' (182) Moreover, the book market like any other trade is governed by the laws of demand and supply rather than with making high standard and classical works available. The managers of Giannopoulos and Cosmos confirmed this fact while Menno said, according to Täräffä, 'Their primary concern is education and spiritual guidance.' (183) He suggested that the government and the community make efforts to render libraries in the country effective. He should have added the urgency of the need to organise publishing distribution and bookshops along with the establishment of an effective information system about the publication and standard of books.

It is the absence of these facilities and systems that led the Ethiopian writers to struggle to come up with their own solutions. Various attempts have been made to overcome the acute problem of publishing. Addis Zämän reported the establishment of an Association for Printing, Buying and Selling Books. The editorial hoped that this Association would open shops for selling books and newspapers not only in Addis Ababa but also in the rural and remote areas. It could

make a profit as well as spread knowledge in the country, the editorial suggested. (184) The Ethiopian Herald saw a determined effort on the part of the Ethiopian Literary Society to tackle its problems of publishing for the first time in its eight year history. It was noted that the Society was 'engaged in the process of raising money by staging plays and organizing other fund raising programmes.' (185) Five years later equb was taken as another means of overcoming the problem of publishing. (186) The members of equb contribute a fixed amount of money a week or a month, depending on their agreements, and lots are cast to decide the person who takes the collected money during a specific week or month. The equb continues until every member gets his lot. The 'winner' can use the money the way he chooses. In the case of the equb of the Ethiopian writers, however, the members must use the money for the printing of books only. Feqrä-Dengel points out that the acute problem of publishing cannot be solved by such means alone. He calls upon people who can generate capital to establish publishing firms and profit financially, and culturally by teaching the people 'the right kind of education and all the right messages that can bring about the general well being of the entire nation.' (187) The extent to which these endeavours have managed to obtain their goals is not known. One must conjecture that the chances for achieving anything substantial must have been gloomy.

Aside from the efforts made by the writers, even the Emperor's speech left much that was desired. When the Minister of Agriculture Germachäw, a novelist and chairman of the Writers' Society, (188) presented the winners of a literary competition to the Emperor he stated that the aim of the Society was to make it possible for writers to meet and exchange views and encourage them to write. Germachäw

added that it had not been possible to have their writings published and distributed for public consumption because of a shortage of funds. The only thing that came close to answering his suggestion in the Emperor's speech, was when the Emperor said: 'All of you who are writers must make great efforts in preparing books which explain what happened at the time and educate today's and tomorrow's generation. Since the Society was established to help writers, it must fulfill its aims.' (189) The Emperor's speech that appeared in AZ did not provide the solutions either. It only reminded the writers of their duties. So the Ethiopian writer continued to be his own publisher, proof-reader, and seller of his books. He lived in what was described by Mary Dyson, perhaps not too accurately, as a 'desert island of writing and publishing' (190) until the establishment of Ethiopia Book Centre and Kuraz publishers after the 1974 Revolution.



## 2. The Ethiopian intellectual in history and literature

### 2.1 Introduction

Many questions are raised by the ramifications of the word 'intellectual.' The various terms used to describe this group of persons and the categories that exist within this stratum are numerous. Indeed: 'What is an intellectual? Is he an educated man? What is the criterion for classification: formal qualifications like having degrees, diplomas, and certificates; professional category, function in society, exercise of political, economic or moral power ...?' Many other questions and criteria come to mind. Society had its 'intellectuals' at various times in its history. Before the introduction of Western education in Ethiopia, for example, the religious leaders, especially the clergy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, were regarded as the only educated group of the community. Since early this century another group of intellectuals began to emerge and develop. However, no serious attempt has emerged seeking to study this group and expose its features by classifying it according to educational qualifications, profession, social status, authority, role in society, political power, income, ideology, or evolution in history. As it stands, the historiography of Ethiopian culture does not deal with and record the way people lived: their norms, values, thoughts, wishes, hopes and fears, their dresses, habitats and work; in short, the expressions of their daily lives. Movements of intellectual groups within this fabric have not been traced. Social history is a neglected field of research. As a result, in the Ethiopian context, the literary critic is inclined to draw these aspects of social life from the literary texts and other writings. However there is no dependable mechanism to check and counter-check what the critic thinks he has found in these writings. This deficiency in turn rebounds upon the critical attempt to examine society or a section

of it via literature. The multiplicity of ideas expressed in the various prose writings published in the newspapers, magazines and journals offer some guidelines. Nevertheless since these are not collected and classified we shall have to depend, by and large, on the works of the well-known personages of each period though the lesser known figures are likely to emerge when required.

Many writers agree that there are two main types of intellectuals: the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. Some find it convenient to call the former 'religious' and the latter 'secular', or 'rural' and 'urban' or 'ecclesiastic' and 'bourgeois' respectively. The traditional (religious, rural, ecclesiastic) and the modern (secular, urban, bourgeois) can be further divided into other categories according to their main characteristics at different historical epochs and societies.

In his article 'Intellectuals', Edward Shils relates the rise of intellectual action to the religious preoccupations of ancient society and the human concern to know what exists beyond immediate social or individual experience. He describes two types of traditions of the intellectuals. The first and most important is the 'tradition of awesome respect and of serious striving for contact with the sacred.' (1) Great religious cultures of Islam, Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism have shown their interest and care for 'the sacred through the mastery, interpretation and exposition of the sacred writings.' (2) The 'philosophical intellectuals of the West', in antiquity, have also shown concern for the sacred. The secondary tradition of the intellectuals began when they stopped to share religious orthodoxy with the religious authority. This separation meant that most creative intellectuals were distrusted and scrutinised by the ecclesiastical, and civil authorities who in most cases have close ties with the former.

Shils deals with the religious and secular intellectuals from the point of view of their activities. In addition, he indicates that the intellectuals generally feel some sense of distance from the routine and the practical. Their tradition is remote from 'the practical routines of daily life, from the pleasures of the ordinary man, and from the obligations, compromises, and corruptions of those who exercise commanding authority in church, state, economy and army.' (3) These saintly beings are described as a species which is different or even alienated from ordinary people and social life around them. The intellectual is, therefore, according to Shils, a person who always searches for perfection, the best, the unknown. Its fascination for the sacred, in its initial religious search, and for truth, in its later secular enquiries, are the main driving interests that characterize this group. The emergence of intellectuals in history is thus described by Shils in terms of their activities.

Gramsci suggests that there is no 'unitary criterion' that enables one to distinguish intellectuals by their activities from other social groupings since their activities are diverse. He believes the criteria should be sought 'in the ensemble of the systems of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations.' (4) Besides in every physical labour there is a certain degree of intellectual activity and some kind of technical know-how in every intellectual work. The function of the performer (be it the entrepreneur or the factory worker) in society is, however, determined by the dominant function he has in social production. Hence, Gramsci's thesis that 'All men are intellectuals ... but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.' (Gramsci, 9) The key term is function in society since Gramsci thinks that the effort in making a distinction between intellectuals

and non-intellectuals is in reality an attempt to distinguish their immediate professional category, that is, whether 'their specific professional activity is weighted ... towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort.' (Gramsci, 9) Otherwise one cannot talk of non-intellectuals because 'Non-intellectuals do not exist.' Not only for the reasons mentioned before and because every person has some kind of intellectual performance outside his professional activity (like being engaged in artistic activities, debating his conception of the world, thinking about existing moral attitudes and introducing new ideas etc) but because, says Gramsci, 'homo faber cannot be separated from homo sapiens.' (5) (Gramsci, 9) Having drawn the general framework under which he envisages the concept he proceeds to propose two main groups of intellectuals: organic and traditional.

The organic intellectual is created along with a social group rising with 'an essential function in the world of economic production' to give 'homogeneity and awareness' of function to the social group in the economic, social and political areas. It has a certain technical capacity in its specific activity and other activities related to economic production, and functions as an organizer of society. It organises it in a way it is 'most favourable to the expansion' of its own class. It is 'organic' because: it emerges as a stratum of a rising social group which has essential functions in the economic, political and social fields ; it organises society using its technical capacity and other specializations in a manner that suits the social group; it is 'the thinking and organising element of a particular fundamental social class.' (Gramsci, 3) The bourgeois have the entrepreneurs, the elites among them and the specialized deputies who elaborate themselves with the development of the class to perform this

task of the 'organic' intellectual. The feudal lords had their technical military capacity that sustained them until they faced a crisis and lost it. The peasantry, though a fundamental social group, does not have its own 'organic' intellectuals 'nor does it "assimilate" any stratum of "traditional" intellectuals although it is from the peasantry that other social groups draw many of their intellectuals and a high proportion of traditional intellectuals are of peasant origins.' (Gramsci, 6)

On the other hand, the traditional intellectuals emerge from the previous economic structure 'as an expression of a development of this structure.' (Gramsci, 7) These categories of intellectuals, unlike the ones we already mentioned in our discussion of Gramsci, have historical continuity of the kind which seemed to be 'uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms.' (Gramsci, 7) The most important in this group are the ecclesiastics who are noted for the age-old monopoly in education, control of schools, setting standards of morality and justice, the philosophy and science of the age, and all issues related to the 'spiritual' aspects of life. In the worldly side of life they could be considered as the 'organic' intellectuals of the landed aristocracy. They had equal judicial status and shared land-ownership and privileges that came with property. As regards prestige and social function the medical men come next to them in importance. (Gramsci, 7)

Bottomore approaches the subject from a slightly different perspective. He asserts that intellectuals are found in all societies and mentions priests, poets, minstrels, and magicians as the intellectuals of the non-literate societies and lawyers, poets, officials, philosophers

and the like as those of literate societies. (6) Since he regards them to be 'the much smaller group of those who contribute directly to the creation, transmission and criticism of ideas' (7) he includes writers, social theorists, religious thinkers, political commentators, scientists and artists. (8) Bottomore is aware that the intellectual is 'most difficult to define, and their social influence ... most difficult to determine.' (9) That is why, maybe, he does not, like Shils, relate the group with the search for the 'sacred' and the 'true' and defines them by their jobs. He finds the precise determination of the boundaries existing within this group difficult. However, in addition to the two groups already mentioned (intellectuals of non-literate societies and those of literate societies) he talks of 'the modern intellectuals.' They have their origins in 'the universities of medieval Europe' and they developed along with the growth of the universities and humanistic tradition. They were 'not a priestly caste' for they were drawn from various social groups and were, to some degree, detached from the ruling classes and ruling doctrines of feudal society. It is this group, according to Bottomore, which 'produced the thinkers of the Enlightenment, and in France particularly, the intellectuals established themselves as critics of society by their opposition to the ruling class and to the church of the ancien régime. It is in this role, as critics of society, that the modern intellectuals have usually been considered.' (10)

This critical role of the intellectuals is also discerned among Russian intellectuals in late nineteenth century. During this time the term 'intelligentsia' was used to describe those intellectuals who opposed Tsardom and introduced Western culture into the country. Before the 1890s, in its broadest sense, the term referred to the educated

section 'which enjoys public prominence' while its narrow meaning embraced both the educated and the revolutionary. (11) They were in fact convinced they led the opposition to Tsardom until the 1905 Revolution. (12) After the 1917 Revolution, the Bolsheviks 'made a distinction between cultural or creative and technical intelligentsia: the former consisted of academicians, artists, lawyers, literary critics, physicians, playwrights, poets, professors, prose writers and people of culture and learning in general; under the latter rubric the party included agronomists, engineers, scientists, statisticians, technicians, and on the whole specialists in the area of industry and technology.' (13) The intelligentsia are not a separate class; they are a stratum between the two major classes, namely, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The major distinction was however between the 'old' and the new (Soviet) intelligentsia - the latter being loyal to the Revolution and the principles of Socialism.

In Africa beginning with the slave trade but more importantly because of colonialism a new intellectual of the modern type begins to emerge. Perhaps the earliest 'modern' intellectuals were what Jahn called the 'black guinea pigs' among whom Philis Wheatley, Ignatius Sancho, Anton Wilhelm Amo, are found; and Olaudah Equiano, Ottobah Cugoana, who are referred to as 'Slaves and Grand Seigneurs.' (14) Coming to Europe as slaves in the eighteenth century, the 'black guinea pigs' were admitted to European schools, principally for experimental reasons. Some proved to be writers, poets and professors. In the twentieth century we continue to have many educated Africans who as students began anti-colonial movements and later became the leaders of their countries, high government officials and political commentators. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nkrumah, Kenyatta, Nyerere, are among this group. Although some of these

intellectuals initially replaced the colonial master and his form of government, they were active in searching and providing new models of socio-economic and political structure. Nyerere is an outstanding experimentalist in this regard and Nkrumah also for various reasons. These intellectuals have played an important role as intellectual leaders throughout the continent and in many Third World countries. The intellectual in Africa has played and is still playing a major role in the political, social, economic and intellectual life of the continent.

The main groupings, activities and functions of intellectuals in society discussed in the works of Shils, Bottomore, Gramsci and O'Connor are relevant, though not wholly applicable as presented in these works, in the classification and historical understanding of the Ethiopian intellectual. Shils' description of intellectuals as persons immersed in the search for the 'sacred' and the 'true' does not appear to have notable representatives in twentieth century Ethiopia. Ethiopian scholars have indicated that the 'critical intelligentsia', according to Germa Amarä, or 'the new intellectual elite', in Assäfa Bäqqälä's phraseology, does not exist as a group in Ethiopia. This was the group that would have come nearer to Shils' intellectuals whose interest is to search into the unknown. Gramsci's 'organic' intellectual and the notions attached with it are useful but with a looser meaning of their role in economic production and their technical capabilities since most of <sup>the</sup> Ethiopian intellectuals were political advisors and civil servants. His discussion of the 'traditional' intellectuals is however directly applicable. The most suitable classification for our purpose is therefore Bottomore's and O'Connor's, and that because these are more broadly delimited and give more freedom of flexibility. This will be more evident as we proceed with our survey of the emergence and



development of the Ethiopian intellectual, its ideas, problems and achievements.

Ethiopian and expatriate writers (15) have used the words 'intellectual', 'intelligentsia', 'elite', 'nobility', 'hyphenated' with various qualifiers, to describe the Western educated Ethiopians beginning with the end of the last century. Alāmē's article written in Amharic, uses the word Mehur and it is difficult to guess what word he may have used had he written it in English. Bahru uses the term 'The Early Progressives' for Western educated Ethiopians during the pre-war period. Germa Amarä, Assäfa Bäqqälä, Donald Levine and Negussē Zärihun use the term 'intelligentsia' for the Western educated Ethiopians while Raphaeli and Greenfield opt for 'elite'. Since these writers contrast the intellectual with the old nobility or the old elite, one cannot fully ignore the possibility that they may be suggesting that the modern intellectuals are the 'new nobility'. Assäfa uses this phrase in his article with reference to the intellectual. Gädamu and Sälämon, in their joint article, have preferred to address the group as 'the hyphenated Ethiopian.' (16)

For the sake of convenience, partly following Bottomore, we propose to classify the educated Ethiopians in three categories: (1) the priests, the clergy or the ecclesiastics are those which have undergone church education only and are mainly in the service of the church, and the government; (2) the pre-college intellectuals are those who have had Western education both abroad and within the country before 1950; (3) the post-college intellectuals are graduates from the University College, Addis Ababa (later HSIU and now AAU), higher education institutes and secondary schools in Ethiopia, and those who graduated abroad from 1950-1974. The following discussion concerns the last two primarily because they dominate the literary scene in the country as writers and major

characters in the novels studied in this thesis.

## 2.2 The Pre-College Intellectuals (17)

The Western educated Ethiopians in the pre-college period are of three types at least: (a) those sent abroad by the contending missions in the country; (b) those sent, mainly by the government, for studies abroad; (c) those educated in the newly established schools within the country. However, long before the introduction of Western education in the country, Ethiopian monks and religious people<sup>had</sup> travelled to Jerusalem since the fifteenth century. They visited the Vatican and during their stay there, taught European scholars first Geez and then the culture, history and language of Ethiopia. The works of John Putkan, Job Ludolphus, and much later Ignazio Guidi, were the results of the teachings of these monks, the clergy and the däbtära. Ethiopians were also learning European history and Latin during their spare hours. Most of these Ethiopians educated in Rome before 1889 were, however, engaged in preaching Catholicism and assisting European missionaries in Ethiopia. (18) The number of Ethiopians going to the Vatican increased with the introduction of Catholicism by the Portuguese missionaries during the sixteenth century and the threat by the Moslem leader Granñ to abolish Christianity in Ethiopia. Consequently the monastery Sano di Stephano dei Mori gradually came to be known as Santo Stephano degli Abyssini. It gradually started to be a centre for Ethiopian studies where Europeans learned about Ethiopia from the monks and<sup>the</sup> religious people who stayed there. (19)

Increased contacts with the outside world during Tēwodros's reign created opportunities for studying in foreign countries. Some went

abroad in the late 1860s. During the reign of Yohannes three foreigners, namely, the British General Napier, the Russian adventurer Nicholas Ashinoff and the French scholar Halevy, made efforts to make the education of Ethiopians abroad possible. (20) Beginning with the first half of the nineteenth century, Ethiopians were sent to Europe by various Protestant and Catholic missionaries. Sending Ethiopian youngsters abroad was directly related with the conflicting interests of Catholic and Protestant missions in the country. The Catholics had two different groups: the Lazarists sent students from Tegraï and the Capuchin from the Oromo and other nationalities. (21) The Protestants sent students to the Bombay Scotland Protestant Mission, the St Creschona School in Switzerland, the Swedish Mission School in Stockholm and others. (22) Most of these Ethiopians were sent to study theology and language. As a result when they returned to their country they either taught and preached religion or served as translators to the Emperors and European visitors. They also assisted as advisers in matters pertaining to foreign relations. (23) The attitude of the clergy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the aristocracy, the landlords and the public towards these foreign-educated Ethiopians was, to say the least, very unfriendly. Since most of these intellectuals changed their religion when they returned from abroad, they were seen with great suspicion. This is probably why, as Alämē notes, they were not given high positions in government. Gäbru Dästa, one of the most prominent intellectuals of this group (24), suffered opposition and occasional imprisonment because the Bishop Mathewos and Empress Taytu opposed his previous Protestant affiliations and activities. (25) The way these intellectuals dressed and their eating and drinking habits faced public disapproval. There was widespread suspicion about the type of education they had in Europe and its use to Ethiopia. Since most of them studied theology and language, and since these were

regarded as threats both to the dominant religion and the well-being of the nation, they were suspected of spying for European governments. (26) It was not therefore possible for these Ethiopians to engage in any kind of meaningful change. They were very few in number; their training was restricted to theology and language; and they were seen as culturally alienated and dubious in their deeds and behaviour. They told many sad stories about Ethiopia's backwardness to European visitors, missionaries and travellers. Those who tried adventurous challenges were whipped in public. Gäbrä Maryam, who went with De Jacobis in 1841 to the court of the then ruler of Təgraj, made a speech in which he stated: 'Ethiopia is ruled by ignorant leaders. While Ethiopia is dark, Europe is light.' The consequences of this venture was forty lashes. (27) As the years passed they themselves began to change and went back to the traditional way of life, clothing, thinking. They were left with the languages they learnt, and when their clothes and shoes were tattered and worn out they had to go back to their traditional dresses. (28) . A tragi-comedy awaiting the satirical pen of a savant, we must admit. One point that needs reiterating is the fact that suspicion o . foreign-educated Ethiopians and the debate on this issue was to continue during the first half of this century and after. It assumed various faces and colours. (29)

During Menelik's reign the government began to send students abroad and establish schools within the country, making efforts towards the expansion of a Western type of education. According to Ašhäber G Heywät, Menelik argued: 'We need educated people in order to ensure our peace, to reconstruct our country, and to enable it to exist as a great nation in face of the European powers.' (30) His enthusiasm was met by opposition from the church. This may be one of the reasons which led

the Emperor to arrange with Abunä Matēwos the coming of teachers from the Copts of Egypt in 1906. The Copts were assigned to work in four places: Addis Abāba, the captial; Dässē; Harär; and Ankobär. (31) The language of instruction was French.

The first modern school, the Ecole Imperiale Menelik II, was opened by the Emperor in October 1908 and it catered for the children of the best families. Ras Emmeru and Ras Täfäri were among the first students of this school. Wärqu states that at the end of the nineteenth century an organisation which sent Ethiopians abroad was established. Hundreds of Ethiopians were sent abroad before the second Italian invasion in 1935. Pankhurst on the other hand states that there were about forty Ethiopians abroad during the Wälwäl incident. (32) Whatever the number of these Ethiopian students abroad might have been, between 1889 and 1935, the impact they had on their society when they returned, the attitude the society had towards them, and the socio-political intricacies that determined these relationships are important.

As Pankhurst's article 'Ethiopian Hyphenated Innovations' summarises with succinct clarity, from the fifteenth century the notion of 'progress' and 'innovation' was mostly related to the manufacture of arms. Ethiopian kings and emperors wanted to ensure their safety against foreign threats. In addition they wanted to gain supremacy in the struggle for power and territorial influence within the country. Emperor Tēwodros' efforts in this respect were outstanding. Menelik was preoccupied by the need to modernise the weapons of his army. A good number of students sent abroad by him had military training. (33) As far as Ethiopian rulers were concerned, says Pankhurst: '... firearms, constituting as they did, very literally, a matter of life and death, were the innovations in

greatest demand in the Ethiopian past.' (34) Though these rulers were resistant to foreign influence in religious and many socio-cultural spheres their enthusiasm for contributions in practical fields was extraordinary. This was more so especially in firearms and then in medicine, road building, church and palace architecture and other fields. (35) Until recent times, writes Pankhurst, social change

was acceptable where it led to the acquisition or maintenance of power, the prevention or conquest of disease, or the glorification of the sovereign. Innovations which failed to promote any such aim tended to be regarded with indifference or even with suspicion, in some cases indeed as a threat to the Ethiopian Christian way of life. (36)

This predicament begins to change with the beginning of Menelik's era.

Although the sending of students abroad, the establishment of Menelik (1908) and Täfäri Mäkonnen (1925) Schools, and the spread of missionary schools in the country increased the number of educated Ethiopians, their role was restricted. The major reasons that curbed their contributions may be sought: (1) in the nature and purpose of the education they had; (2) the prescribed and inescapable role they had to take in the struggle for political power at the time; (3) the aversion of the church, the aristocracy, the nobility and the masses to change; and finally in their own conception of 'change' and 'modernization.'

Though both Emperor Menelik and Ras Täfäri (and later Emperor Hailä Sellassē) advocated the spread of education and the advancement of the country to achieve the excellence and modernization of Europe and Japan, this ambition was not reflected in the courses given at Menelik II School, Täfäri Mäkonnen School, and the Ecole Francais, formally opened in Addis Ababa in 1912, could only produce graduates who could work in the new bureaucracies the country imported from Europe. The subjects taught were mainly languages, general courses in science, mathematics,

geography, history and sports. (37) Täfäri's inaugural speech on April 22 1925, at the opening of the school named after him, emphasised the need for establishing more schools and the instrumentality of education in the progress of Ethiopia. He appealed to the aristocracy and the feudal lords to build schools and encourage the spread of education in the country. This general appeal and enthusiasm may have gradually succeeded in defeating most of the influential members of the traditional elite which totally rejected the whole notion of education and progress. The fact that most of these students were later employed in government offices as clerks, accountants and interpreters may have ensured political victory to Haile Selassie by giving him better control of the new bureaucratic machinery. However, the education given at the time had not yet started directly addressing itself to the fundamental issues imperative to the modernization of the country, namely, agriculture, trade, culture, industry, etc.

Indeed, education contributed in creating, among some of the educated, 'a deep awareness of their country's problems.' (38) Among those educated abroad Afawärq and Gäbrä Heywät were prominent in understanding the intricate problems of the country and were outspoken in their criticism of the rulers, the nobility and the people. (39)

In the dialogues taking place between an educated Ethiopian and a foreign traveller, published in his Guide du Voyageur en Abyssinie, Afawärq touches upon the problems the country was engulfed in and the position of the educated person in this situation. The educated Ethiopian says, in one of the dialogues:

The authorities of the country eat, drink, sleep, and grow fat like Easter sheep at the expense of the poor public, which is continually and pitilessly robbed by them. (40)

Aware as he was of the problems and bitter as his criticism may be Afäwärq's educated Ethiopian character in the dialogue is found surrendering to the obstacles he encounters in his effort at modernization. A short extract from the dialogue will make this point clear:

the foreigner ; You who understand many things concerning Europe must be greatly appreciated by your compatriots.

the Ethiopian : Oh, monsieur, on the contrary, in my country I am considered the most ignorant person, especially when I tell of the things I have heard said by some of the Europeans which seem impossible.

the foreigner : Truly! How is that?

the Ethiopian : I remember having on one occasion said that the earth went round and that the sun was fixed. The people who heard me replied that it was my head which turned and not the earth ... they said to each other in a tone of commiseration that to live in contact with Europeans had spoiled my intelligence instead of developing it.

the foreigner's comment was that his friend 'made a mistake in speaking of something so difficult to explain to the people who, like St Thomas, cannot be persuaded except by something which they can touch with their hand.'

the Ethiopian : You are right. From now on if my compatriots tell me that the fly is bigger than the elephant, I will say, "Yes, it is the biggest animal in the whole world!" (41)

The foreign traveller sounds more pragmatic than his guide - the educated Ethiopian. However, the frustration of the intellectual is not without justification given the society he functions in and his approach to modify it. A society whose dominant features are feudalism, the slave trade, absolute rule by the king and his governors, and complete subservience to religion cannot be expected to embrace new ideas with wide open arms. It is bound to be self-perpetuating, repulsive to change, and suspicious of these strange ideas and the persons bringing them. Its fatalistic outlook to life, its high regard for military activities and contempt for manual labour and trade, its preference of



of God-given wisdom to formal education of any kind, encourage and foment negative attitudes to change. Technological know-how introduced without due consideration of the obstacles definitely risks complete rejection and subsequent hostility. It gives more strength to the clergy and the conservative nobility than the forces of progress.

The clergy used the high esteem bestowed on them to avert progress and the dissemination of progressive ideas. Gäbrä Heywät wrote that Ethiopians who had some kind of European education and made efforts to contribute to the enlightenment and advancement of their society were cursed, imprisoned and excommunicated. The educated were denounced as Protestants and Catholics or labelled atheists, spies, and sorcerers. He mentioned persons like Gäbru Dästa and Aläqa Tayē as illustration of these cases. He referred to another person who was stoned at the market in the capital city for criticizing the church.(42) There are many instances where the church raised sacriligious reasons to excommunicate, denounce and discredit the progressives. Laurent D'Arce mentions an instance where some monks were reported to have incited violent popular reactions.(43) Reactions to the introduction of the telephone, automobiles, trains, hospitals and cinemas generally regarded these things as works or 'machinations of the devil.' For example, the first cinema was called Säyṭan Bēt (lit. 'devil's house'). Berhanena Sälam attempted to popularize some of the new ideas to effect change in public attitudes towards modernisation. Some of the contributors attacked the so-called obsolete customs, called for the unity of the country and pointed out the urgent need for progress and centralization of the government. The magical solution for all the problems was, to almost all those writing in BS, EDUCATION. This magic word was considered dangerous by the Church and the conservative section of the traditional power elite. Hailä Sellassē had a different point of view. Therefore in addition to the type of

education given in the schools, the public attitude to change and the opposition by the church and the conservatives the political struggle of the period had considerable impact on the emergence and development of education, and the possible role of the educated in society.

After Menelik's death the struggle for power and the Byzantine intrigue in the palace broke out. Attitudes to education and change were among the factors that dictated the alignment of forces in the ruling classes. In the pre-war period two major groups are distinctly discerned: the conservatives and the progressives. By conservatives we mean all the nobility who did not at all lend ears to any notion concerning change. The progressives were those professing change and their vanguard from the nobility was Tāfāri. Among the progressives there were more radical persons who expressed reforms that were more advanced than the wishes of the progressives. Each of these groups and individuals had its own intentions as it expressed one kind of change or another, or when it rejected any change.

The educated Ethiopians, chiefly those educated abroad, were able to see the widespread ignorance in the country, the abject poverty under which the majority of the Ethiopian people languished, the absence of a strong central government and the outdated oppressive legal system. Their ambition was to reform these and other ways of running the country which they counted obsolete. The nobility's anti-progress attitudes emerge from their determination to hold on to their power and influence in the name of protecting and maintaining tradition; and from their inherent proclivity to suspect foreigners and what is novel. Hailä Sellassē, on the other hand, was enthusiastic in the spread of education and progress from the time of his regency mainly because he wanted to create an educated elite which could assist him in his struggle against the

reactionary nobility. He knew he could not fight against them all alone by himself. His main pre-occupation was not modernizing the country but the weakening of the aristocracy, the provincial governors and the feudal lords - an indispensable pre-condition of the time one must admit. Side by side with his enthusiasm for reform and expansion went his demand for loyalty from those he was educating. It was not his wish to snatch away power from the hands of the nobility and hand it over to the educated progressives. Recruitment to high government offices depended on loyalty and talent rather than class background. This confirmed that those who unflinchingly obeyed the criteria were guaranteed to climb up the socio-political ladder.

Simultaneously, it warned those who wished to deviate from these rules that they had nowhere else to go. Bahru wrote,

These men were his own creation, subject to his will, and summarily dismissed on failure. Thus Ras Tafari introduced his own aristocracy of merit, to oppose that of blood or wealth, symbolizing the polarity of the interests they represented and heralding the nature of the ideological conflicts that characterized the twenties and early thirties... It was (...) an attempt to arrest power from his traditional opponents and distribute it among his own loyal followers a process which would surely establish him in a strong position to control political life.(44)

The progressives were therefore faced more with divisive realities rather than unifying ones. The continuous demand for loyalty to the nation and its unity was becoming equivalent to loyalty to the Ras and the Emperor. Indifference, let alone defiance, was not to pass unpunished. Moreover the fact that opinions in the understanding and implementation of the ideas of change differed among the educated, depending on the kind and place of education, was another point in his favour. Fitawrari Täklä Hawaryat states that 'Education for Ethiopians during Menelik's and Zäwditüs times... could be considered as tourism and some Ethiopians stayed (abroad) only for half a year or so.'(45) He criticised the low level of education of the time in the country and added that 'Even those who had been abroad for some time had not brought back much on the

political aspect of life.'(46) Dr Hailä Gäbr'äl Dāñ ē pronounced that the mission educated had low quality education but were favoured for their contacts with foreigners. The graduates of Menelik School were also described by him as products of a general and superficial education taught by Copts.(47) We have also the more advanced intellectuals like Afäwärq, Gäbrä Heywät, Gäbru Dästa, Hakim Wärqenäh and a few of their like. There were church educated traditional scholars who acquired some knowledge of the English language, and were recruited into the hierarchy of power. There were others who travelled to Europe on visits and missions and as a result considered themselves qualified to express their own opinions on progress. All these 'groups' of educated men viewed their own ideas of change independently. The depth of these ideas was of course influenced by the educational status of each person, his exposure to foreign culture and his awareness and understanding of the extent and depth of his country's problems. Differences of opinion on what the right or wrong path to progress on few occasions subjects of open debate in the newspapers. However debates that take place in a society which personalises any criticism of ideas only encourage dissent among the persons involved rather than generate a healthy atmosphere of intellectual discourse. This may account, along with other problems we mentioned above, for the absence of a unified, realistic and comprehensive program among the educated. Each of them proposed what was the right way to progress in a manner that was fragmented and arising from personal wishes and whims.(48) Consequently their aspired role as vanguards of modernization was to remain unfulfilled. They became executors of what they were told rather than initiators of what was to be done. Bahru was right in saying;

A characteristic feature of the progressives was their unjustified optimism in their naive expectation of a new 'era' whereby all the evils of society, slavery, the gabbar system, and other forms of injustice - would suddenly vanish.(49)

Under these intellectual, social and political conditions appears Heruy's Addis Alām. Heruy's novel, published in 1932/33, is the only novel which attempted to deal with some of the problems of the pre-war period albeit peripherally and superficially. It calls for reform in the practice of marriage, the performance of wedding ceremonies, the mourning of the dead, and the preparation of täzkar. The major target of change, however, is the church and the religious routines in the society. In an essay published in BS Heruy had already emphasised the need to educate the clergy if they were to fulfill their religious duties. He wrote, '... (for) the priest also, in order to educate the ignorant, to convert the non-believers, to baptise the unbaptised, he requires education and knowledge,' (50) The article stresses that education is important in both secular and spiritual undertakings. The novel addresses itself to issues arising from the secular and spiritual aspects of life as well. However, it concentrates more on religious reforms and the institution of the church and less on the intrinsic cultural, economic and political conflicts of the time. Major problems pertaining to the political strifes of the period, the question of nationalities, the exploitative landholding system at work, the issue of slavery and others were not taken as subjects for the novel.

Germachäw's Araya, published in 1948/49, is set in the period just before the Italian invasion and it extends until their expulsion from the country. The setting was ideal to depict the complex nature of a modernisation process caught up in war and then continued after the struggle for national liberation from the occupying forces. Araya does not succeed in portraying the conflict between the old and the new as much as it does in presenting new ideas, in describing places and events, However, Germachäw is the first Ethiopian novelist to realise the significance of time and space in fiction. Moreover many of the detailed descriptions of events, locale, and historical personages cannot be simply dismissed

as mere fictional creations. The novel is one of the early Amharic novels that deserves the serious attention of historians, sociologists, and literary critics. Like most Amharic novels the style has a way of avoiding direct confrontation with the more conservative elements of the society. Ethiopian problems are often discussed and analysed by the foreign characters in the novel. The notions of progress and modernisation present in his novel go far deeper in their insight than those of Heruy, Wäldä Giyorgis, Mäzgäbu, Mäkonnen Zäwdē and the other novelists who were published about the same time as he was.

Wäldä Giyorgis's Ag'azi(1955/56), Mäzgäbu's Tebäbä Sellassē(1955/56) and Mäkonnen's Yääläm Säw Ermejja(1955/56) deal with the problems of modern education and progress. All the characters set out to be educated in the western style of education. In Addis Aläm, Awwäqä runs away from his parents and with the help of a foreigner he goes abroad to be educated. Araya leaves rural Täggulät, goes to Harär and joins a modern school. A French lady takes him to France. He stays for fifteen years (or more?) and returns with the intention of serving his country. In Ag'azi young Ag'azi is divided between two desires. Youth and curiosity encourage him to travel abroad while the idea of departing from his country and relatives instills a sense of fear in him. Initially the conflict is between him and his relatives who do not want him to go abroad. Once he has gone to the un-named foreign country the conflict between the old values of his country and the modernisation he wishes to see advancing in Ethiopia occurs in his mind only. There is hardly any struggle between earthly human beings. Biblical stories and characters frequently appear in the novel. There are cases where Ag'azi has direct dialogue with God, Jesus and David. Miracles and dreams bring him news of what is happening in Ethiopia, or, are used as ways of expressing the psychological trauma he lives through in a foreign land. Although many ideas of progress,

expressed in BS before, are raised, the writer handles them without the vitality, trueness to life and the striking sense of realism required if the novel is to accomplish its enlightening role. God, the saints and Hailä Sellassē seem to play a more prominent role in Ethiopia's progress, struggle for freedom and unity than the intellectual Ag'azi or its people do. The novel goes beyond reasonable limits in its glorification of Hailä Sellassē as do many other writings published in pre-1974 Ethiopia. One of the most conspicuous characteristics of the articles published in the newspapers since the 1930s, and the novels published in the first two decades of the post-war era is their inability to dissociate the notion of Ethiopia's modernisation, and the maintenance of its unity and freedom from the personality of Hailä Sellassē. Next to God, and sometimes along with him, Hailä Sellassē is portrayed as a symbol of all that is beautiful and great. He is uncritically depicted as a symbol of unity, progress, justice, kindness and heroism.

Mäzgäbu's Tebäbä Sellassē and Mäkonnen's Yääläm Säw Ermejja are among the novels of the time which adulate the emperor without reserve and deal with issues of progress. Most of the main characters in these novels as in Addis Aläm, Araya and Agazi begin their education in the traditional schools and are often attracted by the new Western styled schools. After doing some of their studies in the country they travel abroad for further education and return home to change the society.

There is a rare harmony between their ambitions and their actions. Awwäqä tries to change some of the customs and traditions in his village. His conflict with the clergy Säbagadis ultimately leads to the meeting of the church governors and the reviewing of some principles. In this and few of his other efforts he is presented as a successful intellectual. Araya fails to confront the challenges he meets in the government job he was assigned to take when he came back to Ethiopia. He does not

struggle to test in practice the various theoretical ideas of change expressed in the novel. Instead he shows some signs of success in the private farm he started on the land inherited from his father. When this is discontinued by the Italian invasion he joins the patriotic army and, unlike Ag'azi, fights the enemy. Ag'azi, the honest, loyal, naive citizen is taken by his overenthusiastic dreams about his country's progress. In his case there is hardly any action taken to implement these ideas or even test them through dialogue with other characters. Bezuayähu, in Yä-aläm Säw Ermejja, goes abroad after completing his studies in the traditional and modern schools in the country. On his return his behaviour disappoints his family and relatives. He wastes time and money on drinks and dancing. The enthusiasm and dedication he seemed to show before he went abroad melts away after he comes back. He dies tragically. On the other hand his friend and schoolmate Gärrämäw finishes his education in the traditional and the local modern schools and serves his government loyally. The author seems to be suggesting that the education provided locally, a combination of a large dose of the church education and a bit of that given in the new schools, is preferable to the superfluous education Ethiopians get abroad. Travelling to foreign countries for education is expected to make the person change his character, his cultural identity and assimilate foreign customs and ways of thinking. The favourable portrayal of Gärrämäw supports this view. Tebäbä Sellassē is a success story which differs from the struggles and failures of the characters we briefly mentioned above. Tebäbä Sellassē is a shepherd who leaves his village on the advice of an angel in his dream. He runs away from his family in Mänz seeking education. Arriving at Addis Ababa he meets the Emperor and is later sent to a boarding school. His intelligent performance earns him a scholarship to go to America. There he refrains from the pleasures of life dedicating all his time to his studies. He even repels the love that was offered him.



Tebäbä Sellassē is a highly moralistic story which is based on the catechisms each student faced at school and at home. It strengthens the view that unflinching loyalty and submission to the Emperor, and unswerving belief in God pave the way to success.

These are some of the prominent novels, published in the pre-college era and about half a decade later, that chose the problems of modernisation as a major theme. The educated characters are given a dominant role in the process of progress. In the post-college period, with the publication of novels like Feger Eskä Mäqaber, Kadmas Bašhağär, Adáfres, Yähellina Däwäl, to name only the most important ones, the tasks of the traditional and modern intellectuals begin to be portrayed in a different light.

### 2.3 The Post-College Intellectuals

The post-war period began with few educated Ethiopians that escaped Fascist persecution. Many Ethiopians were killed during the war, and especially on the date of the attempt to assassinate Graziani in 1937 and the events that followed it. Graziani massacred Ethiopians who were educated abroad.(51) Greenfield writes that because two to three hundred educated Ethiopians were murdered, 'Today amongst the educated there is to some extent a missing generation. Had they lived these men might well have communicated between those now under thirty-five or so and the proud and powerful older ruling generation which so much misunderstands them...'(52) There definitely was a generation gap though as Greenfield suggests, later communications would have changed very little. The reason why education was given an immediate attention again was, however, to quickly replace the western educated Ethiopians who were killed during the war and the occupation period, and to better modernise the government machinery. The first returnees were not to arrive before 1953.(53) Some of these returnees and the graduates of the University College, which was established

in 1950, begin to fill important positions in the system while the secondary school graduates and those of the technical and commercial schools joined the various echelons of the bureaucracy.

If discussions and studies of the intellectuals in Ethiopia, <sup>their</sup> history and socio-political roles were scantily, and seldom treated before, this was to change in the sixties and later. Ethiopians and expatriates begin to write articles in various local and foreign journals, magazines and in various books on Ethiopia. The sixties <sup>became an</sup> indeed, <sup>a</sup> important period in modern Ethiopian history of government and political activities. The abortive coup of 1960, the first Summit Conference of African Heads of States of 1963, the Ethio-Somalia war of 1964, the student movement which reached its highest peak in 1969 and marched on until the 1974 revolution, the one year University service programme, the peasant rebellion in Gojam in 1968 are few of the events that shared the limelight. The student movement has specially acted as the voice of opposition in the Ethiopian society beginning early in the sixties until the upsurge of the revolution. It is not therefore altogether surprising why some of the Ethiopian intellectuals should attempt to understand and analyse their history and role in the society during the same period. As the new generation of students started to uncompromisingly challenge Haile Selassie's government and the feudal system their elders began to evaluate the role of the educated Ethiopian since the post-war period and sometimes since the beginning of the reign of Menelik. The terms and classifications vary to a great extent. However, there is considerable agreement on the role the educated Ethiopians played in government and society and the problems they faced as intellectuals.

Two Ethiopian university teachers wrote two articles about the intellectuals in an attempt to reveal <sup>their</sup> professional engagements,

individual aspirations in life, social responsibility and the problems they recurrently faced but never resolved for a number of reasons. They made efforts to divulge the personality of intellectuals and the contradictions they lived in. Sälämon Dērēssa, a poet-critic, and the journalist Gädamu Abraha gave them a helping hand by mercilessly dissecting the intellectual character. Assäfa spoke of the powerlessness of the intelligentsia and stated that the traditional power elites which consisted of the negusä nägäst (the emperor), the makuwanent (the nobility), and the kahenat (the clergy) drew their strength and power from the crown, the land they possessed and the church respectively. Moreover 'the closely knit web of family relationships' bound them together. The Ethiopian intellectual or potential elite, he suggests, has either fully joined the traditional power elite or has been neutralized by it. What could have been 'the intellectual of opposition' has turned out to be 'an auxiliary elite serving the traditional power elite'. (54) He refers to them as : 'the new nobility', the 'new plutocracy', the 'auxiliary elite', the 'auxiliary traditional power elite' in his article and always with disapproval of their actions and with pejorative intentions. He regards the ambitions of the intelligentsia to be imitative of its senior kin, the traditional power elite, and it is heading through partnership, towards making itself an extension of its masters. (55)

Germa agrees with Assäfa that what he calls 'the critical intelligentsia' or according to Assäfa 'the intellectual of the opposition' could not exist in Ethiopia because the intelligentsia are employees of a government which pays them good salaries and adds that 'It is very difficult for economically dependent individuals to be intellectually independent.' (56) He argues that it is the saturation of government offices and the inability to accomodate all the graduates that creates the opportunity for the emergence of this group. When they take self-employed jobs, like being independent lawyers, farmers, doctors, writers, this economic independence

'makes them bolder in the expression of their ideas.'(57) Most of the writers agree that the Ethiopian intelligentsia is inclined to change and progress though it did not prove so practically. The reasons partly lie in the educational system and the socio-political structure of the society.

The educational system did not develop endogenously. Neither was it adopted to fulfil the needs of the country. The so-called western education was simply copied and that very poorly. It merely prepared the intelligentsia for better paid jobs and the luxuries of European styled life, cars, villas, flats etc. Degrees and higher diplomas are associated with well paid jobs and high status in the social hierarchy. If and when they achieve the desired positions they generally become complacent, or failing that they turn out to be frustrated critics of the establishment.(58) The source of frustration goes beyond the failure to obtain one's material wishes. It is also the failure to know what one wants spiritually. The intellectual was made to question the traditional beliefs and values he lived by before he went to school. When, due to his education, they became dubious, or, even, at times, shattered, he 'is left with no faith and conviction to sustain him in life. He suffers from a psychological void.'(59) Faith in God, gratification by one's pedigree, living in communal security and the like begin to share their monopoly by giving way to survival by individual efforts and accomplishments. For the hyphenated intellectual immobile life has changed into a mobile one following his geographic displacement from the rural communities to the urban. This newfound existence is not quite quiet at all for 'the period of the hyphenated Ethiopian is a period of tension - the tension of the transitional situation.'(60) He finds himself in the same situation as the country which is divided between two worlds of conflicting values. Surrounded with contradictions both internally and externally, he is

caught between the feudal feasting of raw meat and täjj, and the taste for bourgeois dishes and drinks. He prefers to wear western clothes, use their toiletries, drive their cars and live in apartments. When he pretends to be cultured he watches western films and soaps, 'listens' to classical music or leafs through Shakespeare, and devours the Time magazine. The BBC is his Gospel. The intellectual is therefore the 'unthinking, pliant and permanent' consumer and client of western industries. It is appropriate therefore that Gädamu and Sälämon ask, 'is such a status... an improvement on the proverbial 'hewers of wood and drawers of water ?'(61) The world of the hyphenated Ethiopian and those of the Third World countries is a world of such 'calamitous unreality' to which they are struggling to adjust.

Although this stratum is expected and expects to be an agent of change its role is either as Assäfa indicated auxiliary to the traditional power elite or because of its 'Black Skin, White Mask' predicament expresses its frustration in inactivity, indifference, negative criticism and various amusements. The worst of these, Germa writes, is 'the prevailing indifference and inactivity of the intellectuals.'(62) Under the pretext of the freedom of speech they remain indolent. Germa adds 'What is certainly more restrictive is the "internal-censorship" imposed by the intellectual upon himself.'(63) This misses the fundamental issue. As far as the government is concerned it did not in any way encourage the spread of inquisitive knowledge, meaningful speech, writing and freedom of forming associations. On the other hand Germa is right in saying that certain individuals have expressed thier views and have gotten away with it while others kept quite because of their self-imposed censorship. However, Germa's complete dismissal, without even dropping any hint, of those who were killed, imprisoned, expelled from the University or their jobs, banished to internal exile or put under house

arrest because they expressed their views is misleading. Moreover, in a confused society, the role and commitment of the intellectuals and their attitude to progress is destined to be fragmentary. Assäfa, Germa, Negussē and others have suggested that the Ethiopian intellectual appears to have lacked will-power, commitment, profound knowledge of the social realities, and remained a slave of its individual material obsessions, and victim of its psychological frustrations. The socio-political system of the country, the educational system of which the intellectual was a product, the lack of individual and group initiative within the stratum may be among the factors that contributed to his predicament. We would be underestimating the pressure and the constraints under which the intellectual functioned if we ignore these and other related impediments.

The educated Ethiopians had no organization which stood in opposition to the nobility or the traditional political system which they surely regarded as conservative. Greenfield refers to the formation of 'a political pressure group' known as Jeunesse d'Ethiopie(64) which discussed the policies of the government in the 1930's and published a newspaper. It constituted of foreign-educated civilians and members of the military. They considered themselves, in the words of one of the members, 'the bridge that the Emperor has thrown across to European culture.'(65) Their duty, along with the young who were being educated, was 'to complete the civilization'(66) of their country. Greenfield notes that they found themselves helpless without the Emperor. Evelyn Waugh thought they were 'ludicrously out of touch with the Ethiopian countryside'(67) However those who escaped the Graziani massacre had very little in common with the post-war generation whose rise was delayed until the early 1950's.(68) Ethiopia's occupation by the Italians triggered some educated patriots to question the political system in a very limited way. During the war the graduates of the Holeta Military College and a few who had

been at Saint Cyr in France established a group known as the Black Lions. Although some of them survived the war and became a political force in the 1950's 'their discontent had little consistency or basis in economics or political ideology.'(69) The associations of the patriots and their publications did not develop as a forum for debating new ideas since the issue they raised (sectarian Christianity, the Aristocracy, for example) were not any more important for the younger generation. Moreover the conservative ministers did not want the organisation to thrive, the patriot leaders who survived were either imprisoned or integrated to the system as government appointees and landowners.(70) It would seem, therefore, that these were the most conspicuous efforts of the intelligentsia to organize itself before the 1960's since Levine points out that, except for the nominal existence of the Teachers' Association, there were no formal associations. He refers to the existence of some 'conspiratorial groups' which were ineffective and short lived though .(71)

In 1954, when Ras Imiru left for India he gave the key to his residence so that it could be used as 'an informal club' for students returning from abroad. A reading and debating group which was in the offing broke because of the split between those educated in Britain and the U.S.A., and the increase in number of members of the Imperial Guard joining the group. In addition, the rivalry for leadership characterised the group. Its enthusiasm and determination to organise or establish a cohesive and strong organisation was inadequate.(72) The other attempt made to organise was the establishment of an alumni association. The first effort by four Oxford returnees failed because they were not able to register with the Ministry of Interior. Without this registration the association becomes illegal. Even making the Emperor the patron of the society did not help in obtaining the registration. Believing that people in court circles were suspicious that this group

would turn out to be the first Ethiopian political party, the group subsided for a time.(73) However, Gärnamē sent out invitations with new hopes of forming the same alumni of the Hailā Sellassē Secondary School towards the end of 1955. Having decided to proceed without registration the meeting elected him president. He was re-elected for a second year. Gärnamē discussed land reform with many educated Ethiopians, but the Security Department, which definitely abhorred these meetings and the association, must have secretly sown seeds of internal dissension. Be that as it may, tension and internal division followed the incidents of a social party at the University College Addis Ababa in 1956 where the graduates from abroad and at home 'slanged each other in Amharic - "local graduates", "American manufactures", and "English BAS failed".'(74)

Gärnamē was gradually getting disillusioned with the debates which never bore fruit. This may have encouraged him to test in practice in 1960 what he had written in his MA Thesis in 1954. He wrote, 'Political maturity is the degree of a people's political consciousness of the past, present and, to a certain extent, the future... The political maturity of Africans will not be found wanting... except in the general area of leadership.'(75) As Greenfield points out, Gärnamē must have had his own country at the back of his mind when he made this assumption in his work entitled 'The impact of the White settlement policy in Kenya.' He was wrong in assuming the presence of a widespread mass consciousness, among the Africans, which is eagerly waiting for any type of leadership. The conditions that led to the desperate actions of the 1960 coup, of which he was the intellectual leader, must be sought not only in his ideological and organisational mediocrity but also in the frustrations he faced in Addis Ababa, Wollayta and Jijiga.

After 1960, although some professional associations and those based



on kinship, and ethnic and school affiliations sprang into being, the situation did not change significantly. Even if the intellectual elites advised the Emperor on matters of various policies, they 'lacked power to effectuate decisions on their own, alone or as a group.' (76) The frequent shum-sher threatened those who showed wavering loyalty; däjj tenat broke what may have been left of their personal pride; and there were arbitrary punishments exacted on those who manifested the slightest defiance. Thus they competed amongst themselves to win the Emperor's favour and recognition rather than forming a stable and united group with substantial aims. Levine quotes one of the disgruntled intellectuals as saying that the role of 'vaguely talking about rights and reform has proved to be meaningless. There is only the talk over/a glass of whiskey or after some beers; otherwise nothing constructive.' (77) Though this frustrated person talks of efforts to put an end to this empty talk by forming a group based on 'an atmosphere of trust between suspicious and frightened young (people) who share the same ideas', Levine stresses that the 'Lack of solidarity in the modern educated classes persists.' (78) The sources of this disunity were, according to Levine, first, the place of education, as it determined one's status. Those educated in England and America are regarded highly though they also had their own rivalry between them. Later the division was to extend to a rivalry of distinction between those educated locally and the ones from abroad. These antagonisms, Levine writes, were 'particularly prominent around 1957' (79). Secondly, class and ethnic differences and, thirdly, government intrigue diverted attention away from unity toward competition for status and income thereby making the assimilated ones instruments of self-perpetration, and continued dissensus among the educated. Government intrigue, creation of fear by rumours and spying were renowned features of the old and new palace politics. The most skilled in these underhand schemes were admired, and sustained in government posts to render just these services.

The impact of 'the diversity of educational systems Ethiopians have been exposed to' on the individuals themselves and on the country's wish to progress along western patterns was pointed out by Sälämon and Gädamu. The intellectuals, who were described as 'contradictory members of contradictory grouplets of a renowned contradictory people', were regarded (may be prophetically as well)<sup>as</sup> '(quite possibly) the nightmare of a nation.'

(80) They added that deep in its heart, each grouplet wore a tag which said: 'Made in France', 'Made in England', 'Made in U.S.A.' and so forth. The model of progress these intellectuals proposed ridiculously varied according to their place of 'manufacture' and the idiosyncrasies of the individual. In some cases these methods of searching for models of progress could be irreconcilably different. (81) Conjoined with the absence of any visible tradition of discussion and logical persuasion between them this made the formation of any comprehensive system of ideas unimaginable. The Ethiopian intellectual did not cultivate a tradition of argument or discussion aimed at exploring the truth or understanding his environment. This is primarily because he:

has not succeeded in changing deeply-engrained mental dispositions of the Ethiopian ... Traditionally criticism of one's ideas were regarded as an attack on one's person. There is little sign of change from this traditional disposition among the moderns. (82)

Each attempts to score points over the other rather than make efforts to understand the other's views. Hence the problem of not being able to organise itself as a social force or as an influential community. In the absence of free, open and tolerant dialogue the chance of getting together as a group becomes sheer fancy. Though it may sound exaggerated, Germa's point was not utterly groundless when he stated: 'Every Ethiopian is a philosopher by himself....' (83) This predicament has contributed to the inability of the intellectual to construct some kind of 'systematic comprehensive ideology' like that of its African counterparts who rallied around the concepts of African socialism, Negritude, and Pan-Africanism.

Germa asserts that 'The Ethiopian intellectual is less aware of these movements and is less affected by them. As a result, his situation is that much the worse for it.'(84) The intellectual was not much aware of their existence to be affected by them or create its own body of principles influenced by them.

The problem of systematisation of thought is related to other shortcomings of the Ethiopian intellectuals. Their inability to explore knowledge through conversation, discussion, healthy debate and argument is one. It is from such traditions that an organised community with common principles and systems of ideas could successfully emerge. The other point lies in the fact that the meaning and purpose of education was not accurately defined. It was generalist in content and it was prescribed as a panacea for all the ills of the society. Its content had little to do with the immediate social problems. Its basis was not the existing knowledge in the country and the problems it is supposed to address later. Consequently these exogenous aims and goals were copied without due consideration of their relevance. However, despite this alienated educational background the intellectuals posed as agents of change. They did not have the resources or the intellectual make-up to form any coherent principles of understanding themselves and their society. They were dwarfed by the pseudo-education which, according to Azikiwe, 'encourages the existence of a privileged class of alphabetists...'  
(85) He emphasised that this type of education had 'no prospect of producing real leaders to guide and counsel the type of Africans that must come into their own, to-morrow.'(86) It was as early as 1937 that Nnamdi Azikiwe summed up the impact the educational system had on those who passed through it. He said,

Africans have been mis-educated. They need mental emancipation so as to be re-educated to the real needs of Renascent Africa.(87)

Germa believes that the *achievement* of meaningful emancipation depends

on the type of education students get in school. He says: 'As long as the school imparts ideas and ideals that are taken from foreign contexts, the Ethiopian student will never be able to really understand these ideas. The student will only use their ideas to pass examinations and write papers.' (88) He emphasises that a purposive education whose aim is neither to mould Ethiopians in the image of Europeans nor to make Ethiopians blindly dismiss whatever is foreign must be established. It should re-assess its traditions and teach what is useful by selectively taking from foreign civilisations. He argues the educational system should be based on this synthesis. Germa admits this is easier said than done as it is still very difficult to strike the magical 'Chemical Formula' that brings about this ideal synthesis. (89)

While Germa, Assäfa, Gädamu and Sälämon, Greenfield, Levine and other intellectuals dealt with the educated Ethiopians - ~~their~~ fragmented history, contemporary role and function in government and social life - the university students looked at the problems of the country from a different perspective. The former reiterated the auxiliary role of the intellectuals in serving the government and the rampant indifference they exhibited in the face of the myriad socio-economic and political problems Ethiopia was confronted with. They discussed some of the factors that made the formation of organisations, concerted systems of ideas and programmes impossible. The latter challenged the system as a whole by raising socio-economic and political questions among which their demand for the redistribution of land under the slogan 'Land to the Tiller' was to be the most fundamental and popular. The only 'organised' support to the 1960 coup which was instigated by some embittered Ethiopians in the military and civilian circles, came from the young University College students. Though it failed, the coup <sup>shook</sup> the roots of many widespread myths and unchallenged issues of government, tradition, history and religion. African students who came on scholarships from

the end of the 1950s had already begun nudging Ethiopian University students from their political somnambulism. They were to gradually learn that their country was in many ways different from what they were told it was and what they unquestionably believed. They were to see that their country was economically one of the most backward in the continent. They discovered that the church, tradition and the family had in unison injected in the people and the educated unflinching loyalty and obedience to the monarchy. Their awareness was to gradually grow into various modes of opposition culminating at their well known slogan of 1965 - 'Land to the Tiller'. The students were the only organised group which challenged the government, and conscientised secondary school students in the bigger cities, and, with the introduction of the Ethiopian University Service in 1964, the students and the people in the provinces. (90) The Peace Corps programme which brought American teachers to the schools also gave a shock to many students when they saw the informal dress, behaviour, and life style of the Americans. It was completely different from what they knew before.

The student movement grew in its challenges in 1969 and its influence spread in the secondary schools in Addis ababa and the provincial cities. The Struggle issue of this year published articles with straightforward Marxist dimensions. The assassination of a radical student leader, Telahun Gezaw, in late December brought bitter and massive student reaction both locally and abroad. Marxist ideology and anti-imperialist conviction dominated the student movement especially from this period on. The movement was to assume a more revolutionary role when it merged with the February popular rising in 1974. Workers, teachers, taxi drivers, the unemployed, Christians, Muslims, demonstrated in the streets of Addis Ababa putting various demands that reflected the class, nationality and religious oppressions which characterised the system. The students

joined these demonstrations and were determined to see the end of the monarchy. They played an important role in ensuring the continuity of the revolution by publicly exposing and challenging the superficial nature of the various solutions given by the regime to seduce one group or the other. They alertly followed the manoeuvres of the regime through the media and denounced its untiring efforts to dissuade the public by announcing cosmetic changes. Their tactic in April was to 'devote full time to the revolution and the dismantling of the then shaky regime of Hailä Sellassē.' (91) One should therefore agree with Lägässä when he concludes that 'student contributions to the revolution and to the ultimate overthrow of the Haile Sellasse regime were quite substantial.' (92)

As some writers have pointed out, however, the students and other critics of Hailä Sellassē's government, who mainly belong to the intellectual stratum of the society, did not have an alternative as such. As Balsvik notes they did not mention any leader or group to replace Hailä Sellassē. Even during the 1974 revolution the immediate task they embarked on, and that quite rightly at the moment, was to make sure the days of absolute monarchy were doomed. The real meaning of the slogan, before and following the fall of the crown, for a 'People's Government' did not seem to have been examined with its pragmatic implications. Though Balsvik suggests <sup>that</sup> student demands were influenced more by their education in schools and the university rather than by political experience, the role played by their growing awareness of the social realities cannot be overlooked. One cannot talk of the political consciousness of students of the decade before the revolution in a manner one does about those of the 50s and before. Moreover the fact that the depth and extent of the knowledge and experience most of them had was

not as profound as their well intentioned dedication and enthusiasm for change was not completely their fault at all. Given the exogenous education stuffed down their throats without due consideration of its relevance to the meaningful progress and overall transformation of the society; considering the absolutism of the monarchy, its sham constitution and the reclusive and suffocating political life in the country; taking into account the constraints imposed by the indigenous style of life, the church and tradition at large; students can only be applauded for all they did until the 1974 revolution, and judged more objectively and truthfully for the role they played in the process of its development. If there was any, somewhat organized, publicly known, dedicated and active 'intellectual of opposition' in Ethiopia before February 1974 it was primarily the students of the university, the secondary schools of Addis Ababa and those of the provincial cities and towns. (93)

The political awareness that emerged and developed among the students as a result of the events of the post-college period was not limited to the university and secondary school campuses. The impact of these events begins to show in the subject matter the Ethiopian writers chose. This is especially so after the coup of 1960. Dime-novels which complain about the problems of daily life began to appear more frequently than they did before. The problems they raised include: love, luck or fate, prostitution, nepotism, broken marriages and relationships, the problems of single parent children and their ordeal under foster-mothers. The issue of modernisation and national unity which dominated the literature seemed to give way to the problems of everyday existence. However, the style and profundity of the minds of the authors are

questionable. They dealt with the issues very superficially. Implausible, dream-like events dominate the stories. Some intellectuals have criticised these works harshly and dismissed them as cheap and futile attempts. Sälämon Dērēssa and Yohannes Admasu are among the first critics who wrote about these dime novels which swarmed on the literary arena from the 1950s.

Sälämon's criticism begins with the covers of these dime novels. He says: 'The same book comes out in all the pastel colours of the rainbow and all the books seem equally ugly, equally faded and equally badly put together.' (94) He states that the characterisation in these works is 'one-sided', the chronology in the stories confused, and he adds that there is 'little plot' in the novels. (95) He thinks they are 'written a trifle too fast - almost like a magazine article to meet a deadline', (96) and are filled with 'philosophical aphorisms' and 'standard Amharic clichés'. (97) Asking him to read an Amharic dime-novel, writes Sälämon, 'amounts to demanding a martyr's courage in the name of chauvinism.' (98) Since he is reading 'for pleasure' he is not worried about what language the novel is written in. Sälämon prescribes Somerset Maugham's books for beginners so that they could improve their writing techniques. He says: 'It may even be in the interest of national sanity to make Maugham's books compulsory reading for our would-be writers.' (99)

Despite the criticisms he makes against these works he finishes his article with a note of hope. He says, 'It is quite possible that our future Dostoeviskis may come out from under the overcoat of the undisciplined penny-wise pamphleteer.' (100) Sälämon's article indicates some of the defects of the dime-novels. However he does it in a harsh



and condescending way. He ridicules the writers instead of simply pointing out, in an article written in Amharic, what he considers the weaknesses in their writings are. It is doubtful if his last remark healed the wounds inflicted on those who read and understood his polemics.

Yohannes believed that 99% of the literary harvest during the period 1941-1968 was 'belash', (101) meaning 'useless' and suggesting 'rubbish'. The only exceptions he cited were Feger eskä māqaber and Eskä Wättach qärräch. He indicated that the novelists had not learned from the narrative techniques their elders used in Geez literature,<sup>or</sup> studied the style in the various forms of oral literature, or learned about writing techniques from foreign writers and critics. He believed the writers were not serious in what they were doing. He also ascribed the problem to the absence of trained literary critics and to the lack of effort to popularise the existing tradition in literary criticism. Honest and informed criticism, he thought, would have been educational to the writer; it may have contributed to the healthy growth of the literature too. The third problem he raised concerned language. He criticised the writers for not making efforts to improve their language by reading the works of Afäwärq, Heruy, Aläqa Tayē and others. The tone of his criticism is less harsh and less condescending than that of Sälämon. However, he is no less angry than he. According to Yohannes, the publications between 1941 and 1968 are characterised 'by quantity rather than quality, by superficiality rather than depth, by ugliness rather than beauty.' (102) However, he should have considered the novels of Germachäw, Bä'emnät, Abbē Gubännä and Berhanu Zäryhun in a different light.

During the post-college period (1950-1974) the plays and poems of

Ṣäggayē G Mādhen and Māngestu Lāmma : : dealt with the problems of modernisation and the conflict between the city and the country. Their criticism of the status quo is hardly visible though. The most direct and open attack on Hailä Sellassē's government and the feudal system came from the student poems at Hailä Sellassē University. The poems were read on the College Day in the presence of the emperor and other invited guests and officials. It began in 1959 but the radical content of the poems read heightened after 1961. Tamru Fayess's 'The poor man speaks' addressed the miseries of the masses, the injustice at the courts, the rampant nepotism in the bureaucracy and many other troubles the poor man was subjected to. A year later Yohannes Admassu's poem raised fundamental class issues, severely criticised the censors, and challenged the church. Since these poems were not published their influence was limited to the university students and the invited guests.

In addition to the dime novels, the works of other novelists, poets and playwrights and the College Day poems, three novels, which continued the intellectual's search for a model of progress, appeared. A fourth introduced the intellectual's search for individual freedom. Two of these novels will be discussed briefly in this section. These are Daññachāw's Adāfres and Bā'alu's Yāhellina Dāwāl. The other two, Feger eskä māqaber and Kadmas Baṣṣagār, will be studied in the thesis in detail.

Haddis Alāmayāhu's Feger eskä māqaber is the most important landmark in Ethiopian literature. It deals with the problems of the peasantry to an extent and with insight hitherto unknown in Ethiopian literature. The ordeals of the peasants are presented with informed detail. The arrogance, greed and reactionary views of the nobility are portrayed with the wealth of knowledge obtained from a close study

of its members. Assessment of the role the religious books ascribe to the church and the practice depicted in the novel reveal the loyalty of the clergy. They are depicted as close ideological instruments of the nobility. They seldom serve the poor people they profess to serve. The feudal order and its values, the church and the beliefs it failed to correct are seen destroying the lives of various members of society. The traditional intellectual is portrayed as the critic of the social system who warns of the dangers that lie ahead. Like the intellectual characters in the novels published in the pre-college period he provides a solution to the social ills. However, he does not play any practical role when the peasants rebel against the demands imposed on them by the feudal lord. Feger eskä mäqaber is written in beautiful and simple language. But like most Ethiopian novels, before and after it, it fails to escape from the problems of narration. Some of the events in the last third of the novel lose the verisimilitude which dominates the rest of the novel. As he approaches the end he loses control. However, this does not remove the credit he deserves for the excellence and the high standard he brought to the Ethiopian novel.

Bä'alu Germa's Kadmas Bašhagär reverses the usual theme in the Ethiopian novel that concerns the problems of the educated. Before Kadmas Bašhagär the intellectual characters were portrayed struggling to change their society. Modernisation and national unity were the recurrent problems these characters tussled with. They saw themselves as agents of change. In Kadmas Bašhagär the intellectual heroes are not outward looking. They prefer to look inwards. The aim of the main character is to understand and change himself. The problems that arise in the novel are constructed around his ambition to be an independent person, and an artist. He confronts problems that arise

from his family, his colleagues at work, and his close friend. The novel is impressive at the start, but as the story progresses the technical problems and the poverty of material in the novel become clear. Implausible accidents and an irrational set of murders resolve the problems the novel convincingly set out to tackle.

We have indicated that the generation gap that existed between the Ethiopians educated before and after the Italian occupation created problems of understanding between them. The post-war generation was exposed to, and grew up in, an environment differing from the environment of those who passed through the terrible experience of war. Their outlook on life and the programmes each of them thought indispensable differed a great deal. The generation educated before the war were the real force behind Haile Selassie's government after the war. They constituted the backbone of his government. Those educated after the war joined the ones before them, but they gradually show signs of dissatisfaction. By the time we get to the 1960s and the 1970s the educated Ethiopians, especially the students, begin to emerge as voices of dissent. Adäfres is perhaps the first novel that brings together intellectuals belonging to two or more generations. The ideas of change, culture, and civilisation held by the various members of the generation are presented in this episodic novel. However, whether the characters represent the dominant voices of their era is open to question. Daññachäw's Adäfres is important in many other ways. The novel presents a variety of characters from different classes and spheres of life. They exist both as individuals and as members of the community. This is a rare achievement in Ethiopian literature. The novel also attempts to question, as though from the roots, what is generally accepted as tradition. The effort Daññachäw puts into

reinterpreting culture by standardising some confusing terms and concepts is another contribution worth mentioning. He consciously uses oral literature (poems, songs, folktales, proverbs) not only to evoke local colour but mainly as effective stylistic devices. (103)

It was often heard within intellectual circles that the Amharic language was limited, narrow, and incapable of expressing subtle feelings and ideas. The beauty, power and expressiveness of Daññachäw's Amharic shook the foundation of such views. Unfortunately even the intellectuals who seemed to crave for a challenging literary work did not receive Adäfres with open hands. However, Sälämon Dērēssa, a poet and critic, is quoted by his friends as saying 'I wish I wrote the first twenty pages in Adäfres and died.' On the other hand, Berhanu Zäryehun, a novelist and a short story writer who had seven publications to his credit at the time, emphasised the language problem. We are not trying to say the language in Adäfres permits any lazy or effortless reading. Indeed the first ten or more pages may be hard to follow. There are also a few uncommon words that make our reading a bit difficult. But these should not be the focuses of critical attention as they can easily blur the grand achievements of the novel. Any criticism of the novel should not fail to recognise that Adäfres is a breakthrough in Ethiopian literature.

Bä'alu's ambition and achievement in Yähellina Däwāl are rather modest compared to Daññachäw's. The story revolves around Haddis Sahlē, a sophomore university student who goes to Suppē, in South-West Ethiopia, to teach for a year and earn some money. 'The philosopher of hand', as that was Haddis's nickname when he was at the university, observes the shortage of classrooms and teachers at the school in Suppē. He

decides to build some more rooms. The director of the school, the district police chief, merchants, daily labourers and parents pose many difficulties. However, with the help of an enlightened, influential feudal lord, his daughter and the community he finally fulfils his project. Without the assistance of the feudal lord his effort would have been useless. Perhaps this is one of the points the novelist wishes to make. He seems to be saying that the collaboration between the enthusiastic, educated youth and the enlightened lords could arouse the ordinary people to developmental activities.

The protagonist is preoccupied with the importance of education and manual labour for development. The belief that education is required to change Ethiopian society is found in many other novels. Bā'alu's novel differs from these works since it gives priority to education at the expense of all other activities. At the time when Suppē is suffering from severe drought the hero is deeply engrossed in the idea of building a school and in the actual practice of constructing it. The peasants are concerned with the drought and the fundamental problems of land and injustice. Haddis Sahlē, who thinks that only education leads to real change, concentrates on building his 'new church', the school.

His philosophy of work and his argument about the need to establish a new ideology based on the local economic and social organisations, rather than emulating eastern or western philosophies, adds new dimensions to the existing views on the subject. Haddis believes that the country's unity is threatened by the ideological tug of war among the educated stratum. However, the writer seldom presents ideas which contradict those of the main character, and whenever he does, the fictional

presentation is biased. The ideas raised in the student movements of the time are conveniently dismissed as sheer verbiage. Only Haddis comes up with ideas which Bā'alu's characters in Kadmas Bašhagär, both holders of MA degrees, did not even dream of. It is difficult to believe the ideas he expresses are his own. One asks 'Where does he get these ideas from?' There is no answer in the novel. The only justification can come from a view that sympathises with the writer's desperate effort to create a model hero, a hero whose exemplary actions the young, educated Ethiopians were expected to follow. Yähellina Däwäl is the last novel in pre-revolution Ethiopia that dealt with the theme of the search for a model of development. The nature of the quest changes in post-revolution novels.

### 3. The Pre-war Progressive in Heruy's Addis Alām (New World)

Heruy Wāldä Sellasē was born on Genbot 1, 1871 E.C. in Mārrha-bētē wārāda, at a place called Dān Abbo. (1) He went to church school at the age of ten to study Geez and Amharic. (2) After his marriage at the age of twenty-five he had four daughters and two sons. (3) He was appointed Director of the Addis Ababa Municipality where he worked from 1907 to 1914 E.C. He was then given the title of Belatta in Genbot and appointed as Chief Judge of the Special Court. In Teqemt 1916 E.C. he became advisor to the government until Māggabit 6 1919 E.C. and was then appointed, with a title of belattēn gēta, as Director of Foreign Affairs. On Miaziā 12, 1922 E.C. he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. (4) Heruy left Ethiopia during the Italian invasion. When he fell ill he was taken to Bath to join the Emperor and look for better medical treatment. However, medical care did not help. He was paralysed and confined to the wheelchair. He died in England on Māskärām 9, 1931, at the age of sixty. The body was later (Māskärām 11, 1940) taken to Ethiopia and reburied at the Trinity Church in Addis Ababa. (5)

Most probably Heruy was the first Ethiopian bibliographer to publish two catalogues of Geez and Amharic books found in Ethiopia. The first one, published in 1904 E.C., may have been inspired by a Scottish passenger, Alfred John, whom Heruy met while travelling from Oxford to London by train. Alfred John's inquiry about whether there were books written in Ethiopia and if a catalogue existed for those books incited Heruy to embark on the work on his arrival home. The Ethiopian Church scholars supplied titles other than the Old and New Testament Books. He added these to the list he made from his own



memory. The first bibliography has three hundred and eighteen titles and the second one, published in 1920 E.C., has five hundred and seventeen entries. Most of the entries are religious books written in Geez and Amharic. The titles in Geez are more numerous than those in Amharic.

Heruy published books of travel, advice, bibliographies, history and literature. He is best known for his Wādajē lebbē (My Friend, My Heart), published in 1915 E.C. This novel, which many think is influenced by Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (6) is about an allegorical journey the character and his conscience make throughout the 'world' : East, West, North, South. But this 'world' is not a physical one. The 'world' is a conglomerate of Christian religious books. 'East' symbolises the books of the New Testament; 'West' represents the Old Testament; 'North' is the Books of the liqawent (the church scholars); and 'South' denotes the books called Awaled. At the end of the journey the traveller thanks God mainly for nourishing him with the words of the Gospel, for being merciful, and patient with sinners. After saying his prayers he begs God to free him from evil and make him stronger in its presence by arming him with the necessary weapons to combat the Devil. Wādajē lebbē is a spiritual journey which leads the traveller from ignorance to knowledge. The knowledge is that of God and it is acquired from the various books of which the New Testament is given first rank recognition.

In its first form, Wādajē lebbē, Heruy's first literary work, was printed on the duplicating machine of the Municipality. He donated it to those who could not afford to buy it and sold it to those who could. Lamma's interview with elderly people of the time indicates that the work was popular. (7)

The next novel he published was Yälebb Hassab (1923 E.C.) (The Thought of the Heart). The story is about two youngsters who get married and live happily together. It is addressed, according to the author, to the person who wants a wife and the woman who seeks a husband. If they read the book carefully, Heruy guarantees, they will find here advice which will bring them satisfactory results. With Yälebb Hassab Heruy begins to deal with problems of earthly life in fiction. The parents of Şeyon, the heroine, are in conflict on what type of education she should receive. Heruy proposes an alternative to the dominant arranged marriages. He proposes simplicities instead of exuberant wedding ceremonies and feasts. Though its content was largely religious this was the first long 'narrative' written in Amharic to deal with the problems of life. (8)

In the introduction to his last novel, Addis Alām, Heruy stated that his purpose was to improve the old tradition and give it a new life. He attacked those who consider improving or changing the traditions as taboo. Citing the religious practices of the Jews he claimed that they have changed since the Old Testament. He made similar claims about the improvement Moslems made though he does not say what the changes were. Heruy is suggesting that the Ethiopian priests have not yet changed and it is in this line that he proposes practical improvements. (9) The improvement and enrichment of moral convictions and religious practice are recurring themes in Heruy's writings. His church education and his background, combined with what he saw while travelling abroad, have made him search for improvement in the secular as well as the spiritual aspects of life, with an emphasis on the latter.

These improvements are expounded in Heruy's non-fictional works, especially in Goha Sebah (1919 E.C.) and Mahedärä Berhan Hagärä Japan (1924 E.C.). Goha Sebah is written as a journal where extracts from religious and historical books and excerpts from various other books are found. Heruy's opinion and wishes about the state of religious life in the world are expressed in this work. If men do not have a religion, he believed, they will always be grasping. He thinks the fear of God and of the punishments of the earthly king should bring about restraint. The beginnings of his reform in religious practice (fasting, prayer, alms etc.) which he deals with in greater detail in Addis Alām are found in Goha Sebah and the other earlier works. (10)

The section with the title 'Education and knowledge of the kings and the light of the Gospel' subtly relates the conflict between the Ethiopian aristocracy and bishops to the case of Napoleon. Heruy points out that the antagonism and difference between 'kings and bishops' existed as recently as the reign of Napoleon. He indicates that the nobility and the aristocracy 'did whatever they wanted with the people' and shed a lot of blood because they were uneducated. (11) He admires Napoleon for his achievements and denigrates him for his failure, which Heruy attributes to Napoleon's arrogance. Heruy's ultimate purpose however, is not to write about France. His writing is aimed at censuring the irresponsible behaviour of the Ethiopian mākuwanent (nobility) and māsafent (aristocracy). They too were uneducated and had for a long time been the causes of bloodshed in the country. Although Heruy refrains from directly criticising them for their deeds, in Goha Sebah, his views of the kings, the aristocracy and the lords of France and Italy makes the parallel unavoidable to the reader. (12)

Scattered in this work are tacit outlines of the specific aspects of social life that demand improvement, namely: religion, morality,

administration, the church, norms and morals in everyday life etc. His arguments are not wholly religious or spiritual. He prescribes religious reform and moral renovation as solutions to social ills. The social message has its basis in religion.

Mahedärä Berhan Hagärä Japan is about what Heruy saw, and probably read, about Japanese civilisation. It contains writings about religion, politics, games, industry, the military, arts, history, customs and civilisation. It was inspired by his visit to Japan in 1924 E.C. as an honorary guest representing his country on the Coronation Day of Japan. He makes comparisons and contrasts between the two countries on small things like ways of greeting and major issues of religion and kingship. It is by no means systematic in its observations and presentation of these ideas. The purpose of the work was to 'popularise' Japan as a worthy example of modernisation.

Heruy wrote on various topics. Though he is a pioneer who introduced new forms into Amharic writing he remained drawn to religion and its related issues in his creative writings. The problems of modernisation mentioned in Mahedärä Berhan do not find any dominant place in his less spiritual novel, compared to Wädajē lebbē, of course, Addis Alām. Problems of agriculture, the palace intrigues, the land holding system, the new bureaucracy, urbanisation, prostitution etc. cannot be issues that have escaped the attention of a government official of his stature. His own problems as director of the municipality, chief judge and advisor to the government combined with his rural background and church upbringing could have supplied him with material good enough for a novel. However, Heruy did not write about these issues. His novel, Addis Alām, is a story about a curious young man who wanted to know about European ways of life since his childhood.

The stories he heard stimulated his interest in European education. But his wishes conflicted with the views of his parents. He suppresses his intentions until a Monsieur La Rousse comes to his village. The Frenchman employs him as a servant and takes him to Jebuti. . . Awwāqā leaves his village without telling his parents. On arriving at Jebuti he tells La Rousse about his wish to be educated in the manner of Europeans. The Frenchman offers to pay for his transport and takes him to France. He begins his education under the constant humiliation of Parisian children who laugh at his physical appearance and the colour of his skin. After staying for seven years he returns to his country.

We are not told of his age and educational background before he left Ethiopia. We have no clue in what language he talked to La Rousse and, until he learned French, how he managed to communicate with people when he arrived in France. Neither do we know about the type of education he had in France and what type of life he led there during the seven years of his stay. There are many things we have not been told though these things are crucial for our understanding of the character's change, direction, and nature of intellectual advancement. The writer simply tells us in the two pages of his eighty page novel about Awwāqā's wish to be educated, his running away from his village with Monsieur La Rousse, his subsequent trip to France, his stay for seven years there and final return to his village.

Heruy's interest is to describe the conflict between an educated Ethiopian and a traditionalist clergyman, and finally advocate or prescribe certain correct ways of life or action. His narration follows the style of folktales or the pattern of certain stories in

the Bible. Following these models, he goes to the main point of the narrative immediately. The first two or three pages resemble the beginnings of any of the Ethiopian folktales published in Engelf lämenē or Sekuwar'ena wätat or the short fables of Aesop. In these tales the names of the characters, human or animal, are mentioned, their place in the story briefly stated, then the story goes on. There is no vested interest to depict the setting or any attempt at detailed character description, biography, ideas, beliefs, tastes, traits of the hero. Heruy's Addis Alām begins in this manner.

The rest of the story in the novel is about the conflict in opinions between Awwāqā's parents, the conservative clergyman Sābagadis and the community in some respects. The first argument begins when they see him wearing a coat without the expected covering or shawl, the nätāla. He tells them that European dress is more convenient than the Ethiopian ones. One has to take off ones nätāla when ploughing but it is not so with the European dress, he tells them. Besides, Ethiopian dress is not easy to wear in the presence of officials since it keeps sliding off the shoulder and requires constant adjustment. The nätāla is not convenient to wear while going to the battlefield. It is only good to wear during the night and early morning when it is very cold. Moreover because it is white it easily gets dirty thus requiring frequent washing. But a coat is easily brushed and dusted. After this brief lecture he explains that the choice of clothing and food is a personal taste and they should not criticise him for what he prefers to wear. He argues that Indians, Chinese, Japanese and Egyptians wear European dress.

Listening to his story his relatives begin to think he has gone out of his mind. They tie him up and take him to ṭābäl, a spa.

Since Awwäqä is a firm person he refuses to remove his European coat. So they give up and untie him after one month. He begins to regret leaving Paris to come back to his country and starts thinking about possibilities of returning. His first confrontation ends with pardon. Neither side convinces the other. When his father, Ato Endälebbu, suddenly falls ill this takes his mind away from the thought of going back to Paris. Instead he sets out for Addis Ababa to fetch a doctor. This starts another dispute. His relatives insist that Endälebbu should not take any medicine from a foreign doctor as this will kill him. They ask him to take his father to a renowned traditional medicine man instead. Awwäqä begins to lose hope in his traditionalist relatives and decides to go back to Paris. But he is held back because he finds leaving his sick father morally embarrassing.

His father gets seriously ill and the relatives find it necessary to send a messenger to Endälebbu's sisters. Awwäqä decides to send the message by phone rather than sending a horseman who will take several weeks to get the message to Gondär and come back. When the telephone messenger delivered the message to Endälebbu's sisters in Gondar they ask him what 'telephone' is. The messenger answers, 'Exchange of words takes place through a wire made of copper. What usually takes a month to deliver now takes just a few seconds. It is a wisdom brought from the country of the färänj.' (8) The women do not believe him. They tell him that it is the first time they heard such a story. Although the men confirmed that they have heard about the telephone they have their own versions:

They say it is the devil that relays the words. Therefore the news that comes through the telephone cannot be trusted. For the devil says of the man who is not dead that he is dead, and of that who is not ill that he is ill. Therefore do not be alarmed ... (p.8)

In Tägguḷāt, Aqwäqä's attempt to explain what a telephone is meets further opposition. His relatives tell him that it is their fault to trust a person who has returned from Paris knowing quite well they all come back with their heads screwed up. These short interchanges of questions, surprises, answers and explanations stop and start freely without restriction of geographic setting as well. The discussion about the telephone that takes place in Gondär and Tägguḷāt are presented on the same page and without any explanation. The omniscient author is everywhere and in everyone's heart all the time.

The mourning ceremony after Endälebbu's death brings another topic for argument between Awwäqä and his relatives. The women cry, scratching their faces, tearing their dresses and beating their chests. The men pluck their faces and hair as they cry. Awwäqä contradicts their culture by refusing to follow what they were doing. He puts on a piece of black cloth on the left arm<sup>of his suit,</sup> and weeps quietly standing by his father's corpse. The priests stop the requiem mass alarmed by his behaviour. One of the mourners accosts him and tells him that he should mourn like the rest of the people: crying, screeching, scratching and plucking his face and hair. He refuses to obey by emphasising that doing so will not revive his father. He says:

Besides if my father goes to his Lord, Christ; to his eternal abode, the sky; one should be happy. Why should one feel sad? My father is sitting in the heavens with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He perambulates with the saintly angels in front of the Lord. ... There he meets the blessed and the martyrs. Why should I be sad because my father attained such a happy world?  
... (p.12)

Awwäqä takes the role of the preacher in his long reply. No one seems to come back at him. The established pattern of narration continues; his relatives are alarmed by something strange Awwäqä says or does,



they criticise him or ask him questions, he gives the answer and that is the end of it. The story goes into another 'stage' without gradually building up the plot structure. It takes another topic to more or less repeat the alarm, and the question, and the answer session.

Täzkar is one of the most important issues of disagreement in the novel. The conflict between Awwäqä and the priest Säbagadis is a tussle for some kind of reform in this traditional feast for the dead on the one hand, and a conservative firmness on the other. Awwäqä refuses to prepare his father's täzkar because he believes that it involves the participation of most of his relatives who should otherwise be working on their fields sowing the seeds for the next harvest. If they fail to sow now they will be dying of famine. He proposes to give some money to the church and the priests, and alms to the poor instead. Säbagadis argues there should be a feast in a manner that is unbecoming in a priest. He says:

If on the occasion of Ato Endälebbu's täzkar the priests are not able to get drunk and hit each other with wancha (x1) what is the point of saying a täzkar feast has been given. We do not understand the style you [the children of later days, literally] bring since you started travelling to Paris. ... If you do not give a feast with a minimum of 30 gan (x2) of tälla (x3) 5 gan of täjj (x4) and 20 bottles of aräqi (x5) I shall curse you ... (p.15)

Heruy's Säbagadis does not sound like a priest representing the church in any way. Although words and deeds are often at variance in this and many other institutions the church's attitude and teachings about consumption cannot be represented by him. It is more surprising

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- x1 a cup made of horn
  - x2 a large container made of clay used for brewing täjj and tälla and storing water
  - x3 a home-made local beer
  - x4 a kind of home-made wine made from honey : mead
  - x5 a spirit distilled at home from grain

to find Awwäqä switching roles with the clergyman. Although this is not the first time we encounter the character in this role it is difficult to adopt to the idea. Awwäqä's answer may clarify our point:

... please do not trouble me Father. Don't you know making a person drink beyond limits and making him drunk is improper? Besides haven't you read in the books that getting drunk is a big sin, and that a drunkard is forbidden from joining the priesthood? In the past, priests were falling on the streets of Addis Ababa as they returned from täzkar because they were drunk. Foreigners took their photos and made them a laughing stock by sending their pictures to their countries. ... Therefore I do not have the thought and wish to make a laughing stock of priests, who are considered to be the eyes of God, by making them drunk with täjj and aräqi. ... (p. 14-15)

Säbagadis's support for the preparation of the feast to drown the priests and beggars with drink and food is implausible. The official stand of the church and the laws pertaining to the conduct of priests, deacons, monks etc. are contrary to Säbagadis's outspoken view. (13) Even when priests advocate the preparation of täzkar they argue their point from a different angle. They would state that it facilitates the entrance to heaven of the soul of the dead person for whom the täzkar feast is given. One would expect Säbagadis to argue the role of täzkar in absolving the sins of the dead rather than take the unseemly role he strongly adheres to. Heruy was attempting to expose the indecency and unholiness of the priesthood so that Awwäqä's drive for reform gets full support. However, the lack of subtlety in the portrayal of his character, Säbagadis, causes the argument to lose its plausibility even if Heruy ultimately forces the organisation of a meeting of the leaders of the churches to discuss täzkar and other issues that need to be modified.

This is probably the beginning of Awwäqä's victory in his debate with his relatives, Säbagadis and members of the community. His

reformed opinions about tāzkar begin to be seen as more beneficial to the priests and deacons than the festivities of eating and drinking. The money he gave to the church, instead of preparing the tāzkar, was shared among the priests and deacons who used it to buy clothes for themselves, their wives and children. Heruy differentiates between 'tazkar of food and drinks' and 'tazkar of money'. Writing about the acceptance of the latter by the priests he says:

And the priests ... when they thought about the tāzkar of tājj and tālla they discovered the outcome is drunkenness, quarrelling with one's friends, and getting sick. On the other hand the tāzkar of money is free from drunkenness and any other illness. It saves one from poverty since one can buy clothes, meat, butter and the like with the money. (p. 18)

The change in the attitude of the clergymen in Awwāqā's vicinity and the debate between him and Säbagadis, we are told, 'was heard [in the provinces of] Shāwa, Gojjam, Gondär, Tegrē, Wällo, [and] in the central and peripheral parts of the country.' (p. 19) We assume it was transmitted orally though we question the speed at which it spread. It is when the news reaches the echägē (bishop) that he calls a meeting of the ecclesiastical scholars to discuss the issue. It is incredible that this can happen in Ethiopia in the mid-twenties (E.C.). Communication was scarcely available and efficient transport hardly developed. Heruy's exaggerated portrayal of the widespread influence of Awwāqā's ideas should be taken as an expression of the writer's feeling of the urgency for change rather than as a plausible depiction of the realities within the country. This is the framework within which we view the two meetings held by the council of the liqawent (church scholars) and the results of their deliberations in the novel.

The first meeting in Addis Alām initially restricted itself to the issue which triggered it in the first place, the tāzkar. The

disgrace brought to the church by the pictures of the drunken priests the foreigners took and exposed to the world was mentioned as one of the main reasons that led to the holding of the meeting in Addis Aläm. Moreover despite the fact that the church was highly regarded and favoured by the state, and the immense privilege it enjoyed with its leaders, it was not able to provide schooling for the children of the poor and help old people who did not have any children to look after them. It is stated in the novel that the priests share the alms brought to the church by the laity rather than put the money aside to fulfill the needs of the poor. The first council debates and accepts Awwäqä's reforms within this context. Asking people to prepare täzkar feasts is not only found ignominious to the church; it is also considered sinful just like fornication. One of the liqawent at the gathering makes a concluding remark:

If we get drunk at the täzkar feasts how can we teach others not to get drunk? The purpose of täzkar is to save the dead person from damnation and not to make priests drunk. Therefore täzkar should be replaced by the donation of money and the priests should refrain from going to täzkar feasts... (pp. 23-24)

Since täzkar had the role of providing students in the church, the disabled and the old with food and drinks, these resolutions do not pass unchallenged. The Council agrees to the suggestion that the person whose father or mother has died should give money to the priests but feed the poor and give them non-intoxicating drinks rather than organise the customary täzkar. Consensus is reached except for Malakä Gännät's proposition that since the people deal with grain and cattle it is difficult to demand that all of them pay in money which they are unlikely to possess. Payment in kind was allowed, and whenever the family of the dead could not afford a requiem mass, <sup>it</sup> should take place without any charge.

Awwäqä's influence in Addis Aläm takes a much wider significance than he initially anticipated. The Council raises other problems that had existed within the church for a long time. The members are called upon to consider these shortcomings during this unprecedented opportunity. The main issues are listed by Aqqabē Sä' at zä-wäldä maryam. He says:

- (a) that married priests who divorce their wives without sufficient reason should not be allowed to marry again;
- (b) that knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, or, at least the ability to read and translate the four Gospels should be a criterion to accept individuals into the priesthood;
- (c) a person who does not know the Geez language, who is not married in a church ceremony and is not loyal to his wife should not be made Aläqä;
- (d) that any title of the priesthood or deaconship should not be given in exchange for the payment of money;
- (e) the length of a mass for the dead should not be determined by the wealth or status of the deceased, it should be the same for every Christian;
- (f) deacons, priests and the däbtära should get married in a church ceremony;
- (g) that the customary belief that, if a priest or deacon is defiled, the Ark of the Covenant is regarded as deconsecrated or desanctified, should stop;
- (h) that, because the language of the church is Geez, when the Gospel is read, one of the liqawent (though not necessarily the priest) should interpret it into Amharic since few understand Geez and during mass the laity only admire the voice of the priest or deacon rather than understand what is said (pp. 26-30).

These points were not proposed as items of agenda for the next meeting in the novel. Within the statement of the problem the preferable solutions are also present. That is why the second meeting

of the liqawent in Addis Alām approved them with some laudatory short speeches by some of the participants. They agree that from that day on they should live by the words of the book (maybe they meant all the religious books or the Bible specifically) rather than by tradition (pp.67-69). When we see all of them change so fast we begin to wonder where the real problem was if all these speakers could stand up in the gathering and declare they have completely changed. They were the leaders who sanctioned with their blessings the perpetration of these practices which they are suddenly vowing to condemn. One is startled by their agreement to give up these age-old traditions so smoothly and just because of one man's influence. This is again a conspicuous indication of Heruy's consistent use of the characters and incidents he creates as mere vehicles of his own thoughts and wishes. As far as the ideas of reform he proposes are concerned it is evident that they cannot be popular at the time. Some of the things he criticised have not been changed to date - tāzkar, mourning the deceased, for example. Our contention is that the method of composition leaves much to be desired, even by the standards of his own earlier work Wādajēlebbē.

Awwāqä's tribulations increase as he is the writer's instrument of social criticism. Since his return from Paris his life has been that of constant challenge, distress, hardship and misfortune of one type or another. Despite the fact that the Council of the liqawent agree on the need for reform concerning tāzkar his relatives do not seem to understand his view on this matter yet. It remains mysterious to them. They mention it again as an excuse to blame him and introduce another problem. After all aren't they also mere instruments Heruy uses to express the views he wishes to express? Asked to build a

'house' on his father's grave to protect it from the scorching sun and rain, Awwäqä opts for having the date of birth and death of his father carved on stone and erected at the grave. Säbagadis notices the stone and criticises him for not building a proper shelter. Awwäqä replies that since his father is dead building such a shelter is meaningless as he does not live, dine, drink or enjoy himself in it. On the other hand the carved stone, he is told, will stay long and serve the purpose.

Heruy's style manifests an underlying theme of a struggle between 'evil' and 'good', the 'evil' being aspects of the traditional way of life which Heruy considers bad, and the 'good' being the wisdom, knowledge, reform which appears to be represented by Awwäqä. The distinct categorisation of phenomena, events and people into the simple formula of good and evil is probably a point of view the writer inherited from the Christian religion and Biblical writings. Since he sides with Awwäqä and wants him to win in all his arguments with traditionalists, the writer is tempted to exaggerate the views of reaction. The opinions of the people are exaggerated so much <sup>that</sup> at times they sound absurd. This reflects the writer's judgement and presentation, and the impact his whim for rapid change has on his writing. Here is another case in point.

Constant disagreements have dominated the interaction between Awwäqä and his relatives. Even when they wish to make him happy what they offer him turns out to be yet another reason for a row. They arrange a marriage without consulting him at all. Extremely shocked, Awwäqä refuses to accept the arrangement by telling them he does not want to marry a woman he has never met and whose character he has not studied.

He asks, 'What if, after getting married without studying each other's character, there arises a misunderstanding. What is going to happen to us?' (p.35) They reply:

If there arises a quarrel why should you be afraid? You will keep her if you like her. If you don't you pull her by the hand and push her out. Do you think there is any scarcity of women, for you, the son of Endälebbu? Who will stop you if you wanted to divorce one and marry another every week? (p.35)

This response is absurd and definitely a misrepresentation of the real conditions in the society. No doubt that men are privileged and dominant in the society. They can choose to divorce their wives and get married to another one. However, if relatives would argue, the way Awwäqä's do in this case, while arranging a marriage is very doubtful. Heruy's attempt is clear. He is concerned with, or, even annoyed at, the state of divorce which is incongruent with the teachings of Christianity and his own principles. In an effort to expose this and thrash it through Awwäqä's reply, he fails to do it plausibly. The French-educated Awwäqä, who, we were told, was impressed by European civilisation, is depicted as a person with more religious convictions than the people. The reply to his relatives bears some more imprints of his dedication:

That is what I was afraid of [referring to their reply]. Whoever it may be, once he is married there is nothing that separates him [from his wife] except death. Once two lovers are married they must make compromises and live together. Divorce is not permitted [by God?]. Therefore I will marry in a church service the woman whose appearance I have observed, whose character and knowledge I have examined, whom I have loved and is loved by her.... I will not marry the woman you have engaged for me. (p.35)

Awwäqä is in a way making a synthesis of two different cultures. He borrows the idea of choosing one's wife or husband from his Parisian heritage while retaining the one-man one-woman tradition but cleansing it from contemporary tendencies to divorce and adultery. He dismisses the warning that it is not easy for him to choose and marry as he will



not find a virgin girl who will look straight into his face let alone express her love to him in words. If she is brave enough she might tell him to ask her parents. Since Awwäqä is not looking for a girl who tells him to ask the permission of her parents before expressing her love to him he insists the arranged marriage be cancelled. When his relatives go to tell the family of the girl about the unprecedented failure of the engagement the father of the girl answers:

Oh! don't worry! This is a small matter! If he does not want to marry my daughter the loss is his. Does he think my daughter will fail to get a husband? Moreover what is this talk about getting married in a church ceremony anyway. Does he think that, so long as I am alive, my daughter will refrain from marrying various husbands she chooses to be imprisoned with him alone? Do not fear thinking that this will affect our friendship. (p.38)

Let alone at the time when Heruy was writing it is dubious whether such an attitude to marriage is openly expressed by a Christian Ethiopian family or person today. The reply sounds like one of the writer's efforts intended to sanction the actions of his hero who defied the wish of his relatives to go to Addis Ababa searching for the wife of his dreams. He strolls on the streets of Addis Ababa looking for an educated, civilised and good-looking girl. He finds her easily. They promise to get married and he asks her parents who ask her if she loved him. She says 'Yes!' It is all over. That is how Heruy puts it. All in one page. Heruy sweeps through scenes he ought to develop to quickly embark on the discussion of issues he considers indispensable. So he jumps directly to the wedding scene which becomes a battle ground for the two opposite attitudes to ways of celebrating the occasion.

Awwäqä goes back to Addis Ababa to get married and bring his wife to Tägguät. Although he leaves out his relatives from the small wedding party prepared in his house, his relatives go to the party without

being invited. His intention in not inviting them was to avoid the superfluous festivities that are customary in wedding ceremonies. People spend more money than they can really afford to make the event colourful, and food and drink are plentiful. They even go as far as borrowing. Awwäqä is trying to challenge this by making a small party and limiting the number of guests to a size that is incredible to accept. His kin and the rest of the villagers, although shocked by his deeds, refrain from raising any arguments. They start singing wedding songs in groups to make the party as delightful as possible. Nonetheless, Awwäqä comes and tells them their songs are too pornographic and indecent to be sung in a Christian wedding ceremony. He admonishes the däbtära for joining in what he labels as carnal merrymakings. Instead he thought they should be teaching about the significance of marriage and the union between husband and wife. He plays a record which he thinks is appropriate for the occasion and asks them to sing following the tune and words in the song or stop singing altogether. Proud as they are of their cultural heritage they tell him they see nothing wrong with the songs of their forefathers. The confrontation terminates when they furiously leave his house and go their ways. The gossip on their way home reveals their misoneism rather than the enraged temperament they were in when they left his house. Although the gossip is presented in reported speech a reconstruction into a dialogue, and a brief quotation, should suffice to give a taste of their opinion:

My dear relatives, do you see what Endälebbu's son has done to us? He prevented us from singing and he put the devil in his 'machine' and made it sing. I say! didn't they say there is no devil in the country of the färänj?

Oh! it is said that there is no devil in the country of the färänj only to fool us. They are travelling on the sky. How do you think they do it. They are using the devil of the air. We used to hear in our country that only the perfect and saintly trod on air. But today in the country

of the fărănj every person goes on air. Even this son of Endälebbu is putting the devil 'in the machine' [literally, 'in the iron'] and making it sing. (p. 47)

Awwäqä's views on marriage and wedding ceremonies get accepted by däbtära Addanqē who was walking with the angry and gossiping relatives of Awwäqä. This time, for a change, Heruy's views, normally presented through his mouthpiece Awwäqä are to be expressed by this däbtära. Addanqē explains to the group why he first thought Awwäqä was wrong and that he has now changed his mind because of five reasons: (i) he defends him on the question of divorce because children of broken families suffer the most as a result; (ii) separation impoverishes the man who keeps divorcing and re-marrying another because he has to share his wealth whenever <sup>a marriage</sup> splits up; (iii) if one is married it is very likely that he will be reserved thus keeping himself away from sin; (iv) a person who is loyal to his wife gets the special privilege of taking the Holy Communion and put himself ready for the fulfilment of the Covenant expressed by the Lord: 'He who has eaten my flesh and drunk my blood shall live with me'; (v) a person who remains loyal to his wife will protect himself from venereal diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhoea. Moreover it reduces the number of killings that take place when persons committing adultery are caught red-handed. (pp. 50-51)

Däbtära Addanqē's brief talk, we are told, provokes a debate among the group though this is not presented in the novel. In normal everyday life no serious issue seems to be resolved by logical persuasion at the scene where the debate takes place. The participants do not seem to admit, whenever this is the obvious thing to do, that they are convinced or they are prepared to think it over and see what happens. Their style is different. They listen to an argument and disperse.

Everyone thinks over the issue on his own. If they are all prepared to admit they were wrong a meeting is called. They apologise to Awwäqä, confess they have erred and ask for his pardon. This has happened<sup>for</sup> at least two of the major debates in the novel; the first on the question of täzkar and the second after the dispute on marriage.

After the break-up of the wedding ceremony Awwäqä is caught by surprise when a meeting is called in the village. He did not expect them to yield so easily and so soon maybe. The apology they asked was not only for their mistaken view on marriage and the argument they had about the wedding songs. It was a gathering where they confessed that they were wrong to make his life difficult. They now realise that in all the issues they discovered Awwäqä was always right. Evidently he was pleased to learn that, after all, he had made an impact on their views. However, he asks them to swear on two points as a pre-condition for reconciliation. Any relative of his father should stick to his present marriage, and whoever marries in the future should do so in a church ceremony and remain faithful. They in turn ask him to swear to genuinely pardon them for what they have done, and also beg him to reconcile his differences with the priest Säbagadis. He accepts both requests.

Reconciliation with Säbagadis and the priest's preaching to the Council of the liqawent draws Addis Aläm and Awwäqä's 'missionary' adventure to a close. His relatives send Shimäles to Säbagadis's house to tell him to reconcile with Awwäqä. The message also warned that Säbagadis should not try to discuss the problem which led them to a quarrel but should only go to Awwäqä and apologise admitting that he was wrong. Säbagadis agrees to the proposal without any hesitation and

seems to be delighted by it. He swears not to utter a single word during the reconciliation, except to ask for Awwäqä's pardon by falling on his feet as this is the form of soliciting for mercy of the person one has deeply hurt or offended (p. 60). But since Šäbagadis does not keep his word, the reconciliation fails and Awwäqä's relatives decide to take the matter to the council of the liqawent. Considering the recent events that took place at the meeting of the liqawent Šäbagadis feels threatened. He suspects that he might lose the case at the Council and even fears that Awwäqä might ask the Council to remove the prerogatives he enjoys as a priest. Travelling to other churches outside taggulat to seek advice is the best he can do. The Aläqa of St Mary's Church in Ankobär tells him:

Today, the time and men's knowledge have changed. It is better to do as the time [permits]. What time does not change is the matter of religion only. Matter of tradition if it does harm the king and government or the people, it is not a problem if one changed it by assessing its benefits. Therefore when your spiritual son dies you should give his clothing, hideskin, and bed to the poor if he is rich. If he is poor you should leave it to his poor wife and children. I do not think, you, the priests, should take and wear it. ... (pp. 63-64)

He also mentions other sanitary reasons for not taking the cloth of a dead person to wear it. Because if one wears the cloth of a dead person who died of a contagious disease one might contract the disease. So, says the Aläqa, referring to the advice he got from doctors, such clothing should be burnt. The reason for the failure of the reconciliation between Awwäqä and Šäbagadis was not only that Šäbagadis broke his word. It was because he mentioned that Awwäqä did not give him the cloth, wancha and hideskins of his dead father. Since the advice of the Aläqa and three others he consulted on his way back to Tägguulat did not coincide with his previous belief, he knew he was wrong. When at the end of the second meeting of the Council Awwäqä begins to inform the members about the unsuccessful reconciliation between him and Šäbagadis the priest does not give him a chance to finish. He falls on his feet and begs for his

pardon. Awwāqā pardons him but with the condition that Säbagadis makes clear to the liqawent his stand on täzkar, building a house on the grave of the deceased, and inheriting the clothes of the dead. Säbagadis tells him that he agrees with him on all issues but Awwāqā should not humiliate him by asking him to admit all this in front of the Council. Awwāqā agrees and he also falls on Säbagadis's feet and asks his pardon. However, after the reconciliation Säbagadis approaches the eqägē and asks his permission to preach to the council. He makes a self-critical speech which exposes what kind of person he was, the property he has amassed in the name of religion, that he was a man of the flesh rather than of the spirit. When he confesses his sins and criticises the learned liqawent of the Church for not correcting the wrong deeds of the uneducated priests and deacons he begins to overshadow the 'holy' Awwāqā. The seven page long, emotionally charged speech stimulates the Council members and the rest of the audience, and sends them home clapping and cheering. The reader who was <sup>for</sup> most of the time bored by the monotony of dry sermons, speeches, debates is caught unawares by this surprising change. Heruy is unpredictable at least in his final chapter. What we suspected to be another chance for his concluding but uninteresting speech turns out to provide an opportunity for an emotional experience absent in the work so far. Character is revealed, though still via the omniscient author. The novel concludes in a tone one least expected. Nevertheless even that is far from remedying the inherent shortcomings we have been trying to reveal.

Around the time Addis Alām was anonymously published (14) Afäwärq was criticising the festive indulgences of Ethiopian rulers, in his Guide Du Voyageur Abyssinie and other articles, and calling for the abolition of feudalism. Talking about the state of economic and social life Gäbrä Heywät was indignantly asking, '... is it to be said

that we, the people of Ethiopia, have freedom? ...' The essays in Berhanena Sälam and some of the books published during these early decades of the century were debating and discussing various issues of progress and development. The spread of education, the transformation of the concept and activities of agriculture, trade, the land holding system and banking; the improvement and systematisation of the tax system; the establishment of a standing and salaried army; the development of the industrial sector, were among the issues that captured the attention of a considerable number of writers of the times. The ideas unceasingly expressed by persons like Gäbra Heywät, Dërrëssa, Afäwärq, Melkeyas and others dealt with issues that were urgent and crucial then. Most of Heruy's writings, especially his novels, deviate from this dominant trend.

Even if the writing of 'a literary work' (we are using this phrase cautiously with reference to Addis Aläm for reasons the discussion has, hopefully, divulged so far),<sup>and</sup> the writing of essays or other books can take place within the same social context it is unwise, or even silly, to expect the outcome to be necessarily identical. Each writer, particularly in the unstable conditions these writers found themselves in, perceives the society in his own way despite the fact that the social context and tradition they all write in or about may be the same. Since it is an individual rather than a collective undertaking, what is written reflects the awareness and perception of the author. Whereas Heruy saw the importance of reforms in the Church and traditional marriage practices, Gäbrä Heywät, Afäwärq, Dërrëssa and some others saw reform in the more fundamental economic and political structures of the country as urgent. Heruy was overtaken by his educational background which had taken him to the heights of traditional scholarship. He had very little or none of the formal European education which Professor Afäwärq and (Dr) Gäbra Heywät had. His understanding and vision of society was

guided largely by his learning, knowledge of traditional life, and by what he knew of European and Japanese civilisations through his visits representing his government. This may be the reason for creating a character like Awwäqä with the educational background of the likes of Gäbrä Heywät and Afäwärq but with the soul and learning of Heruy himself. More about this later.

Addis Aläm follows the path Wädajē Lebbē and his other works had already taken. It warns what lack of morality, disbelief in God and the absence of genuine love in marriage could bring to society. These ideas did not, however, emerge as a result of alarming developments in commercialism and materialism, a threatening spread of cities and urban problems that follow, or, because of the advance in modern attitudes of life that took place to an extent that enormously threatens religious beliefs and practices. Such events had not taken place on that scale. It seems Heruy saw modern education, development and progress as material aspects of life which could be meaningful only in the larger context of religious conviction and practice. No doubt he had noticed a relative decline in the church and the part played by its priests. He ascribed the decline to the old laws of the church which he argued should be reformed. In the meantime he fed the flock with the words of God and with the little knowledge he acquired through his efforts. However important developments in the secular aspects of life may have been morality and religious life were given the indispensable cementing role in the society. The church, which was described in the Berhanena Sälam essays and in the works of later historians as the antagonistic force to change, was not directly confronted. Addis Aläm proposes certain mild reforms rather than openly ~~attack~~ what the author regards as the unacceptable degree of conservatism among the church intellectuals and leaders. Wädajē Lebbē's spiritual journey,



symbolically Heruy's perhaps, revealed that the journey to the North (meaning to the Book of the Liqawent) was full of arguments and unworthy debate. Perhaps this was why the Council meetings in Addis Alām were not as controversial as one rightly expected them to be. Since Heruy valued the church, both because of his religious belief and the education he had gone through, he did not wish it to be a bad example, and a negative force to change which cripples the efforts of his New World (Addis Alām). So through his characters in Addis Alām he plays the role of legislator of reform. His mouthpiece, Awwāqā was hardly challenged by the liqawent who were notorious for their misoneism.

The vitality of the church itself is not clearly portrayed. The strong tradition of Orthodox Christianity that dominated the lives of the laity for more than a thousand years is not depicted with the strong impact it had on the lives of the people. The intricate relationship between the lives of the clergy, the peasantry and the feudal lords is not presented with the importance it deserves. In fact there is no feudal lord or any member of the aristocracy who is given some noticeable role in the novel. Sābagadis does not present any serious confrontation to Awwāqā's proposals nor do the leaders of the church at the two councils. It is hard to accept that these characters represent the imperviousness of the church to change and criticism as they have failed to put up a convincing battle to defend the institution and the beliefs they stand for. They have been presented, while easily surrendering to the catechism of the new 'priest', accepting and believing his initiative and proceeding to change the age-old tradition overnight. In short, both the newly introduced reforms of Awwāqā and the old Orthodox tradition are not properly depicted in a conflict and struggle that characterises such confrontations. They <sup>have</sup> lost, in their

literary presentation, the liveliness they must have had in real life as socio-historical forces. The absence of the drama of human relations in Addis Alām rendered change in attitude and religious tradition easily achievable through argument only, via the meetings of the church leaders. There is hardly any casual and attractive dialogue. Questions, surprises, rigid interjections are counterposed against the sermon-like replies of Awwäqä. These are not artistically woven together with the routines of daily life. Instead they occur when the writer is ready to expose a topic through the instrumentality of his characters.

There are problems of characterisation as well. The identity of most of the characters is not distinguished. We know them as 'the relatives of Awwäqä', 'the people', and the 'liqawent'. They have no face, occupation or beliefs that specifically characterise each of them. The place they inhabit is known by name only. Awwäqä's intellectual role itself is dubious. Nowhere does he do or say anything that makes us believe he was educated in France and has lived there for seven years. The reforms he proposes do not match the type of education a person who stayed abroad for seven years is expected to have acquired. One would have thought that any of the graduates of the local modern schools of the times, with the right church background, could have made the same suggestions Awwäqä was making. Even if he is described as a young Ethiopian educated abroad, he is not portrayed as one. Our analysis does not reveal any evidence that befits the description. Contrariwise his ideas and ardent dedication to various reforms in religious life tempt us to draw a resemblance between him and the writer who was not formally educated in France or anywhere abroad. We have seen that Heruy was a respectable church scholar who, because of the various state offices he held, had opportunities,

which were otherwise rare then, except for a handful, to see parts of the modern world. What we find in Addis Alām is a character who has an inside, and penetrating knowledge of the church, and is aware of what was happening outside the country perhaps more than any other church scholar in the country at the time. It is the reformed traditional scholar who appears in the novel in the guise of Awwäqä. His ideology of life, all his ideas and comments better characterise him as an 'enlightened' churchman who understands the problems of the institution and religious life in society rather than as a young person educated in France who is trying to reform his society. It must be admitted that our assumption requires more biographical evidence to unequivocally support our case. Yet the way Heruy handles Awwäqä in Addis Alām before the meeting of the liqawent, and the way Heruy 'replaces' Awwäqä to manipulate the council of the liqawent are other textual clues that encourage us to maintain our view. Further knowledge of Heruy's actual efforts, if any, to reform the Ethiopian church is crucial to fully divulge the biographical elements of the novel. Nonetheless, considering the points we mentioned herein, observing the nature and control of his writing in general, and adding up the bits we know about his life, our assumption does not seem totally baseless.

One final remark needs to be made about Addis Alām and Heruy's other works. In Wadajē Lebbē the inward directed scrutiny is persistent in finding one's soul and strengthening one's belief in God, thus making life in this world morally rewarding and assuring salvation in the life after. The role Awwäqä plays in the transformation of the religious practices of a misguided people, priesthood, and church is essentially directed towards the same goal. Contemporary issues related to the traditional and modern type of clothing, mourning, medicine and the

telephone are raised peripherally. The most important issues are reforming the church and the practice of täzkar and next to these come marriage and wedding ceremonies. All reforms are viewed from the point of view of improving religious life though there are scattered instances which show the marginal economic benefits to be gained from them. However, the argument for reform in the attitudes to work is visibly absent in his work. The hands of the ordinary working people are chained by the multiplicity of religious holidays. Heruy's New World fails to recognise the urgency to change in these religious attitudes which were more stifling obstacles than those the novel highlights. This is possibly because all his dealings with religion seem to always direct us to a major ideological construct. His teachings about love, morality, God and reform, echoing the words and tone of the religious books, appear to lead one by the hand to the important question of unity. The problem of unity recurs in many of his works sometimes with understandable obsession. The contents of Lälef meker ..., Wädajé Lebbē, Coḥa Şebah, Mahedärä Berhan ..., and the views of reform in Yälebb Hassab and Addis Alām point at the creation of a united, modern and Christian Ethiopia. This should not take us by surprise as he had written, about six years before the publication of Addis Alām under his byline, that the primary aim of teaching the uneducated was also 'to expand the kingdom of God.' (16) Given the close ties between the church and the state, the expansion of this kingdom suggests the expansion of the kingdom of the king. In order to make this kingdom governable one of the basic criteria is achieving unity. The power struggles and the political strife of the period did not absolutely guarantee such unity at the time. One suspects that it was Heruy's fear of the possible disintegration of the country that made him perpetually preach love and brotherhood.

No direct exposition, exploration or reasoned debate of the issue exists in his major works. Sheer plea to unity, love, work and morality abound in his works but tacitly pointing to this goal. It is as though he is quietly addressing the audience or, as if he is pleading to them in his heart, asking them to relate these moral teachings to the immediate social realities whose peaceful continuity he seems to doubt. It may be difficult to guess what encouraged such a style or discouraged a more direct appraisal of the problem. There is no doubt, however, that the closedness of the society, the sensitivity of the issue, the apparent lack of a tradition for public debate of conflicting views such as this, and, above all, the nature of the government (which prescribed absolute control in political, social and economic life as the best method of conducting its prerogatives) have a lot to account for. The power struggles of the period were also lame excuses or good reasons, depending on how one views the events, to sweep away any inkling of direct public and government debate instead of encouraging it in any manner.

4. Searching for a model of development: the pre-college intellectual in Germachäw's Araya

In his Preface to Araya, Germachäw wrote:

It is clear why I was led to write this fictional story. Firstly, it is to reveal to the young who have the good wish to serve their country in the occasional problems they might encounter; and having known beforehand that there are many challenges (to be faced) while serving one's country so that they understand the importance of struggle, strength, patience and belief....

Secondly, it is to inform those who were not present, and remind those who were, about the tribulations thousands of Ethiopians suffered when Ethiopia was invaded by Italy. (1)

Germachäw's declaration on writing Araya has been justified by his readers and critics both immediately after its publication and later. An advertisement that appeared in Addis Zämän announced the publication of the novel and stated that the book was about the duty and moral worth of the young; that it gives various useful ideas that can be beneficial to one's country; that it describes the state Ethiopia was in in the past and all the progress she has made since; and that it deals with the Italian invasion and the patriotic struggle. It added that the novel was written in simple language and that it is readable and very informative to an observant reader. (2) An Ethiopian student in Britain, Assäfa Mängäsha, wrote that the novel 'has got all the essential qualities of a good interesting novel' and added that 'by avoiding repetition ... completely destroyed monotony which present-day Ethiopian writers seem to find a mountainous task to perform.' (3) He does not, however, elaborate what these 'essential qualities of a good interesting novel' are. Neither does he explain what monotony Germachäw broke. A remark he made about the use of language when he wrote that 'even casual conversation sounds like a carefully prepared speech' (4) is a credible point to be discussed later in this work. An anonymous short note on the writer touched

upon the ironic situation of the main character when it stated that 'The book is about a young Ethiopian, Araaya, [sic] who went abroad, to France, and came back "abroad"', (5) Mr T Tyutryumova, a teacher of Amharic at Leningrad University and the translator of Araya into Russian, said that he was attracted by the 'artistic merits' of the novel and 'its plot - the heroic struggle of the Ethiopian people against the Italo-fascist invaders.' (6) The novel has been summarily treated in general surveys by Gerard, Täsfayê and Däbäbä and in a more detailed manner in the works of Mäkkeb, Kane, Amarä, Asfaw and Feqrê. However, the style and the content of the novel have not been explored within the context of the society it sets out to depict and change. The descriptions in the novel and the ironic role of the foreign characters are not analysed. Moreover, the phases Araya's notions of change pass through are not studied. The descriptions of places, events and customs cannot be discarded as plainly fictional since there is a captivating sense of verisimilitude in their rendition. The debates aboard the ship during Araya's journey from France to Ethiopia deal with various ideas of progress, peace, war and democracy. They are ways of introducing new concepts though the irony is inescapable. On occasions like these Europeans are expected to articulate half-baked ideas about countries like Ethiopia. In Araya they seem to have enough knowledge to advise Araya on what he should do to enhance Ethiopia's development. This is because of the role Germachäw has assigned to the foreign characters in his novel. The Russian professor, Duval, Pontignac and the other foreign characters are the writer's vehicle. He introduces, expresses and explores new ideas and perspectives through the debates that take place between them.

Araya is an ..... novel which tells the story of a young Ethiopian from rural Täggulät. Having completed the basic church education at the age of thirteen (7) he travels to the eastern province, Harärgē, convinced that traditional education cannot bring development to a country. With the help of one of his father's friends he joins the French mission school in Derrē Dawa. A widowed French lady, Madame Debon Fuwa, comes to Ethiopia to forget her misery by going away from the surroundings that reminded her of the two children she lost during the first world war. This was a few months after the end of the war. She visits the school and talks to the teacher about her wish to take one of the students to France and educate him at her expense. She tells him that she would like Araya to be that student. He seizes the opportunity. He goes to France and after fifteen years, gets a certificate in agricultural education. After he has completed his studies *Madame Fuwa* wants him to get married to her grand-daughter and settle in France. Araya thanks Madame Debon Fuwa for the great favour she has done him by bringing him to Paris to educate him, and above all for her kind offer to marry her grand-daughter. He appreciates her love and generosity which made him heir to her wealth along with the rest of the family. However, he declines the offer to stay in France. Nor does he want to marry her grand-daughter, since the purpose of his travel abroad was to educate himself and serve his people. Because it is his wish and determination to see his country progress and catch up with the rest of the civilised world he tells her he cannot imagine staying in France. He says: 'How can I, by being partisan to my own benefit, silently observe when my countrymen live in darkness?' (p. 26) He politely admits that he cannot repay her for all she has done for him; only God can do that for him. The marriage proposal was unacceptable as he plans to spend most of the time working and since this



has lots of difficulties. Araya anticipates that problems will arise during his attempt to change his society. Marrying her grand-daughter who is brought up in a civilised society in a very comfortable style of life, would be unfair. Moreover, the society she goes to will be very strange to her and she will find it extremely difficult to cope.

Madame <sup>Fuwa</sup> appreciates his view and admires him for it. She does not push him to change his mind. Indeed she tells him that she believes she has seen the fruits of her efforts to educate him in the decision he has taken. She blesses him and bids him farewell. The advice she gives him and its presentation in the novel is reminiscent of the situation where Jesus says to his disciples: 'Go and spread the word!' Mme Debon Fuwa says to Araya, 'So ... Go! Serve your country. Go, help those [your] heroic fathers. The good things you have studied in this land of France, show ~~them~~ to your countrymen. ...' (p. 30)

Araya sets off to Marseille by train. He meets a Russian professor of history. They talk about love for one's country and the role of the educated in Ethiopia. The professor advises him what to do when he arrives home. Araya continues his journey by ship from the port at Marseille. Aboard the ship he meets the French bourgeois democrat, Duval; an old priest; Taytoh Minh the Asian and Pontignac, a French socialist. Discussions on various issues continue until the ship arrives at Port Said. After ten further days of political debate he arrives at Djibuti. Araya proposes a farewell drink before the group disperses. Duval takes the chance to talk about the freedom-loving, non-racial and democratic France, and like Mme Debon Fuwa and the Russian professor before him, advises Araya in his own way. He tells him to spread the love of freedom and the good name of France among his folk.

Araya meets the secretary of the Ethiopian Consulate at the railway station in Jibuti. They talk about issues more pertinent to Ethiopia and Araya leaves for Derrē Dawa, and via Derrē Dawa to Addis Ababa. After a night's stay in a hotel at the capital he goes to an unnamed Ministry and talks to the Minister and the director about his qualification. The Minister promises to arrange a meeting with the Emperor, Haylä Sellasē. A few days later he meets the Emperor who asks him about his educational background and future plans. Araya replies that he has studied agriculture but he is willing to serve wherever the Emperor assigns him. The Emperor sends him to the unnamed Ministry where the Minister gives him useful advice. Araya asks for permission to go and visit his mother before starting work, and he is granted the request. On his return he goes to work. However, the viciousness and jealousy of the Ethiopian director and the wickedness of the assistant, who is described as an 'eastern whiteman', cause difficulties for Araya. Good old Madame Debon Fuwa comes in his dream and tells him to change the road he has taken. He accepts her advice and resigns from his post to start a farming career on the land he inherited from his father. He travels to Wäbära, builds a new house and begins a new life. The Italian invasion interrupts his new-found existence. Araya joins the patriotic army and fights until the expulsion of the enemy five years later. The novel ends when, four months after liberation, he receives a letter asking him to work for the government. He accepts the invitation. At the end of all the discussions, debates and the resistance, the main character has not found 'the way' or 'the model' that he seemed to have been looking for. It is as though the search for the ideal formula that best helps his country's progress has ended with yet another set of questions. His final words are:

Yes, Ethiopia got back its freedom with a miracle that will always be admired. But would she sleep again as before? Has she observed and realised the merits of unity and the value of freedom during the last five years of hardship? Has she drawn any lessons from the damages the enemy inflicted upon her? Has she understood what the sources of civilisation and power are? Has she distinguished between her friends and supporters for the future? Would she remember her generous children who sacrificed themselves by shedding their blood for her?  
... (pp. 349-350)

The novel poses questions: what is it about? Is it about an educated Ethiopian who wants to transform his society and is confronted by the old traditions and the bureaucracy of the country? Is it about the second Italo-Ethiopian war? Or is it about the role of the educated in both progress and national liberation? There is no easy reply to these questions. Considering the writer's declaration in his preface and the epithet 'historical novel' that appears under the title of the novel one is inclined to accept that Araya is about all these things and more. But the many discussions and incidents appear to stand by themselves rather than as parts of an integrated whole. The story follows Araya's movements from Ethiopia to France and back and then to Tāggulāt, Addis Abāba, Wābāra and the different battlefields. Wherever he goes there is either a long debate on an issue or the writer gives us a lengthy description of a village, some beautiful scenery or tells us about the culture of a people, and the history of a certain place or the country. The first one hundred pages are general explorations of concepts of religion, nationalism, peace and war. Ethiopia is brought into the discussion occasionally. When his trip from France to Jibuti ends the discussions begin to directly deal with Ethiopian situations and problems. This takes slightly more than a hundred pages. The third part deals with the war against the Italians. About two-thirds of the novel is dedicated to the journey and the discussions that take place as Araya encounters various people.

There can be no doubt that Germachäw introduced new ideas to the Amharic novel. Notions of freedom and liberty, the spirit of the French Revolution, the role of priests and governments in contemporary society, and the socialist and the bourgeois sense of equality, are introduced in the novel through the opinions of Duval, the old priest, Pontignac, the Russian professor and Debon Fuwa. Colonial experience and practice are mainly dealt with through discussions with the Asian Taytoh Minh, Duval and the priest. Compared with Addis Aläm, Ag'azi and the other Amharic novels before it, Germachäw's Araya is the most richly sown with ideas. The problem lies in being able to artistically weave them with the story through distinct depiction of the characters who hold, and live by, the various ideas examined. This has proven to be an insurmountable test for Germachäw's sensibilities, imagination and skill.

The historical, biographical and other factual material is inseparable from the romantic and the fictional. The story would be unchanged if the history of Täggulät and its people were removed (pp. 179-181). Biographical statements about Haylä Sellassē as a person and as God's chosen one, are presented. He is not treated as a character in a fictional work but as the actual Emperor he was. The author's opinions and admirations are interspersed with facts about the Emperor. Menelik and various historical personages of Europe are mentioned to make analogies and contrasts. The campaign along the war front, from Addis Ababa to Maychäw, reads like a diary. Specific dates, populations of towns, for example, that of Dässē, are given. How long the Emperor's entourage stayed in a specific place and the method of travel used are presented accurately. The leaders of the different battalions are mentioned by their real names. Actual events of the Italo-Ethiopian war are described and the reasons for their occurrence

given through various types of public opinion. This was the case when the writer talked about Ras Mulugeta's abandoning Ambälaggê, a strategic place, to the Italians (pp.237-243). When the Emperor arrives at the scene of the battle, Maychäw, the number of soldiers in the various divisions is given. The battle of Maychäw is described in detail: dates, places, positions of the two warring armies, what time and why shooting began, what time the Ethiopians retreated before air attacks and the well armed Italian army, and when the battle stopped, are presented in what we can call an eye-witness account from a meticulously taken diary (pp.243-250). Indeed Araya was observing the battle while the actions described were happening. When he realises that the Ethiopians have lost he runs towards the enemy barricade, choosing to die rather than see the enemy enjoying its victory. His friends try to hold him but he is not in his right mind and does not know what he is doing. We are not told until this moment what he had been doing during the battle. It is at the end of the chapter, in fact the last paragraph, that the writer reminds us of him and his uncontrollable behaviour, and maybe a belated blind bravado too. What was he doing? Was he recording the events?

Some of the writing about the patriotic struggle reads like a historical monograph. Presentation of Ras Emeru's contingent army at Gorê, Dejazmach Feqrämaryam's at Yärär and Yefat, Basha Wälde's and Basha Tässäma's at Shäno resembles the presentation of historical writings. The writer refers, all in all, to thirty-seven patriotic leaders including the names of the places where they deployed the resistance fighters (pp.297-298). Ras Abäbä in Shäwa and Balambäras Gäräsu Dukki in the lowlands were the formidable resistance leaders. The Ras is especially compared to the Indian Hydar Ali, the Algerian Abdul Qadir, the Moroccan Abdul Karim, and the Ethiopian Ras Alula who

defeated the Italians at Dogali (p.321). The list of historical material present in Araya is much more than we <sup>have</sup> selectively mentioned here. Some of it like the references to Rases Emeru and Abábä are immediately recognisable. The veracity of some often leaves us with doubts. Their frequent, free and uncontrolled appearance, specially in the latter third of the novel, makes correct identification and analysis quite a heavy task. There are, however, instances where descriptions of the atrocious massacres by the invading army meaningfully relate to the actions Ethiopians take in return. In some cases, attempts to reveal the brutality, barbarism and destructiveness of war have been made:

At the beginning of Mäskäräm, at the end of the rainy season, when the whole country is flowers and shoots; when the birds and butterflies fly about awakening the valleys and the plains; when the sky which was covered with clouds for three months becomes blue and clear, and the sun spreads its golden rays on earth; when herdsmen sing on the hilltops as travellers walk by; when girls go to the river (to fetch water) and (to collect) firewood singing in the valleys and plains; in those enjoyable months of Mäskäräm and Teqemt when all creatures are busy searching for love and life the aeroplanes of Italy sprayed death and pain on Ethiopian peasants. Tens and twenties of planes hovered over the villages mercilessly dropping the perils of death. Poison, bomb(s), bullet(s) fell like rain [literally "rained"]. When the roads dried and (the overflowing) rivers subsided thousands of soldiers travelled in trucks, formed camps everywhere and invaded the country that had been unceasingly bombed before. By inciting former nationality grudges and religious antagonisms by propaganda they deployed the Moslems and the heathen to Amhara (Christian) regions, and the Christians to Moslem areas, causing internecine war among the people. Wherever patriots are reported to exist or pass through, was mercilessly looted, burned with fire, poison and bomb(s); the populace was massacred, taken captive, hanged and beaten (pp.314-315).

With the changing season everything was blooming and alive. Though the new season promised to be full of life, even if nature blossomed with hope, all was not allowed to take its own course. Man, the birds, the little girls and the environment suddenly their harmony. War destroys the vitality, music, serenity and beauty of life, bringing significant change to people's attitudes:

The one who yesterday was peaceful became a relentless warrior (today). The one who yesterday was not awakened by the love of his country became an implacable patriot. The one who yesterday has been thinking about his personal gains and individual peace gave everything away for his country and freedom. The one who yesterday feared death and thought of saving himself alone became an unappeasable patriotic hero today (pp. 319-320).

These are among the descriptions which go slightly beyond giving a picturesque image. They are integrated with the events in the story. As the Italian aggression intensifies the descriptions become more and more detailed and touching. They give an enriched rendering of the atmosphere, making the writer's sorrow and indignation evident. We understand why more and more people join the struggle. However, since most of these events are reported we neither see them happen nor can we participate in the drama. The writer, his protagonist, and other characters often report these actions as passive observers. They tell us what they see or hear happen as ordinary chroniclers rather than as skilled narrators.

We have said that the shift in setting provides the opportunity for describing the surroundings as well as creating chances for debates and exposition of ideas. The ideas raised and the physical environments described with the change of setting are not always intertwined in the novel. This may be because of the 'accidental' nature of the descriptions and discussions. Lukacs makes a distinction between what he calls 'crass accident' and 'incident' that is 'artistically "inevitable"'. The latter is not achieved by objective, thorough, detailed, conscientious description. It is obtained via the dynamic relationship of characters, objects and events because, according to Lukacs, description of objects, events and characters as social facts in fictional representation does not present the active inter-relationship that exists between them.

Sometimes the description of setting for its own sake itself becomes incidental, providing only the forum for the debates, discussions and other events. If, however, it is balanced artistically with these dialogues and discussions it becomes an integral part of the whole dynamics in the novel and loses its crass, accidental nature.

Incidental description can be used to accomplish other important ambitions. It can give a proper social milieu to the dialogue or any other scene following it. For this to be achieved the description must not stand by itself as if it is an independent entity having nothing to do with the characters. (8)

Lukacs is, of course, discussing the problem in relation to the works of great novelists like Tolstoy, Balzac, Scott and Zola. The points he raises apply to Araya because there are instances where descriptions seem to have been blended with actions in the novel. In the examples cited above the descriptions give the atmosphere and mood that dominated the environment before and after the attack by the Italians. The literary accomplishment at this point should not be underrated. Some warning should, however, be reiterated here. Descriptions bringing literary credit to the otherwise weakly structured novel are rare. Many stand independently. Some of these appear following Araya's solitary moments of travel. When he is on his own he looks at the sea, the lowlands and highlands and the author describes the scenery. Once the boat or the train has passed these places the importance of the descriptions ceases as well. In many cases they slip out of the reader's mind and memory as the scene changes and another set of descriptions and debates follow. They are important to Araya though. The delight Araya gets from the scenery, and the sense of pride and love he has for his beautiful country, stands out. The



historical writing in Araya is not integrated with the life of the characters but the descriptions generally stand as something detached and to be enjoyed by themselves. The active interplay between the characters and the setting is generally inadequate but for Araya the setting brings moments of revelation and access into a new world. Since he is a returnee he may as well have a chance to nourish his nostalgic cravings for his beautiful motherland. However, the price is monotony to the reader.

Perhaps the problem lies with the author's lack of a clear idea of what he wants to write about and how. The blend of history and fiction seems to have contributed to the confused status of the work. On the one hand the novel is replete with new ideas on development, politics, administration, democracy and colonialism. On the other hand it records certain social events and formal occasions such as the ejj mānsha scene at the palace. The home of a rich Ethiopian (possibly an absentee feudal lord who lives in Addis Ababa): the internal decorations, the household goods, the banquet he gives in his house and all the ritual that goes with it are described in detail. The descriptions of vegetation, wild life and the physical features of some of the regions, that of cities like Derrē Dawa and Addis Ababa are so detailed that it seems that Germachāw was writing a guide to the physical appearances of the places he so meticulously and beautifully describes. The work abounds in lists of names of the leadership during the war, casualties during the resistance at certain fronts, the number of prisoners sent to Italy, those killed at the Graziani massacre and other writings which bear the mark of historicity. Simultaneously we have to take the characters and the rather thinly plotted story as fictional. It is not unlikely that Germachāw's ambition could <sup>been</sup> have ~~to~~ put ~~into~~ this work everything he

knew and felt, or thought worth writing about at the time. It did not probably matter to him whether the work succeeded as a great novel or not. What did matter to him appears to be to express his ideas in some form as quickly as possible so that these ideas become influential in the reconstruction of the beleaguered nation. Otherwise, it is very difficult to understand why a person who 'devoured ... the great classics by Racine, Mollier [sic], La Rochefoucauld, Corneille, Tolstoi, Victor Hugo, Shakespeare and others' (9) could not differentiate between the writing of actual history and a historical novel. Although devouring the works of the great masters does not necessarily make the devourer a writer of their stature it may not be demanding too much to expect Germachaw, a person who already has the inclination to write, to have at least some inklings about this distinction. We are going into all these speculations based on the text, of course, to give the author and his work the attention and treatment they deserve. It is hoped that knowledge of a complete biography of the author and studies in social history will reveal more about the work and the novel. For now the work must speak for itself. It is a work of fiction which has ample delightful descriptions of nature and places, and a work of history and ideas. These ideas and the main character Araya call for attention.

From the start Araya is depicted as an exceptional person in society. Even at the early stage of his life, Araya understands that church education is too spiritual and not useful. He chooses to learn the wisdom of the färänj because we are told, he finds at the early age of thirteen that modern education is more practical than traditional education. Such exceptional talent, the writer knows, cannot be easily explained in terms of Araya's social background. So Germachaw justifies

this extraordinary perception and knowledge of his thirteen-year-old character from rural Ethiopia in terms of 'natural gift', unique ability and intelligence (p.16). We meet a character who is already very perceptive and endowed with abilities that enable him to see things that are difficult to envisage for many in his age group. He is not an ordinary young man at all. He is so special that everything seems to go smoothly for him, at least, at the beginning of the novel. Araya decides to go to the färānj school because of his extraordinary perception. He convinces his mother that he should pursue modern education without any problem whatsoever, because he is gifted. When he joins the French school in Harärgē it does not take much time for the teacher to identify Araya as the best among the students. He even volunteers to give Araya special lessons for an hour every night. But we are also told that Araya did not know French and the teacher did not speak Amharic. Before we finish asking how they managed to communicate, Germachāw tells us 'Since they have met heart to heart they understood each other without any interpreter' (.19). Even after twelve or more years of education in France and a one year tour to many European countries and cities the author tells us that Araya only expanded what he knew naturally. His reading in philosophy and science, we are told, 'was not able to create anything new' (p.23). This is contradicted elsewhere in the novel. After his return to Ethiopia Araya is described as a clean-hearted person whose ambitions are not based on personal gains and whose love for his country and people is boundless (p.116). He is always seen discussing national or international problems. Araya is portrayed as a person with striking good qualities and almost no weak points. This style of composition is, as we have indicated, one of the features that bedevil Ethiopian writing in general and the earlier works in particular. Descriptive presentation of a

character who is either too good and special or quite the opposite is a dominant characteristic of many Ethiopian literary works. Araya's characterisation is no exception. It is with this awareness that we pursue our study of the protagonist's ideas of change and government, and the actions he takes, if any, to achieve his goals.

We have indicated that his wish to change his society begins when he decides to go to a modern school. After the completion of his studies in France, it is again this determination to transform his country that dominates his talk with Madame Debon Fuwa. At this stage in the novel we do not yet know how Araya plans to change his society and what ideas and methods he intends to apply. Once he starts travelling from France to Ethiopia the novel begins to read like a mobile symposium on philosophy, society, history, political, social and economic change, issues of war and peace, and the like. Beginning with the Russian professor of history he continues meeting foreigners on his voyage. All the Europeans he meets know a lot about Ethiopia and its history. They tell Araya what they think is best for Ethiopia's developmental undertakings. The new ideas the writer wishes to introduce are presented with the authority and credibility of the foreign characters who themselves are members of the civilised world. That Araya is, at times, seen reflecting on his own on these debates and discussions may be preparing the ground for his later role as a propounder of change. These debates seem to be designed to give Araya and the author the liberty to explore various opinions without always bringing the issue closer to home. This would have been the case if the writer had chosen Ethiopian characters to express the views held by the foreigners. Even when Ethiopian situations are debated directly the most important points seem to first come from the foreigners rather than the Ethiopian Araya.

The Russian professor tells Araya that since Ethiopians are a really ancient people it is difficult to change the old traditions. The conflict and chaos following the new efforts to change are immense and must be handled with care so that they do not threaten the unity and freedom of the country, he says. The professor compares the Ethiopian situation with that of the Russia of Peter the Great and says to Araya:

Haylä Sellasē the First can bring what Emperor Menelik started to completion if you, the youngsters, are helpful and morally upright. Then, that you would make better strides in a short span of time and that you will achieve a good result is beyond doubt. (p.44)

The leadership of Haylä Sellasē, the unity of the country and the assistance the educated should give to the emperor is emphasised throughout the professor's speech. He designates Araya's generation as one which is destined to strengthen the basis of freedom and plan the path towards progress (p.41). Araya thinks a lot about the professor's long lecture after boarding the ship at the port in Marseille. He reviews his life story since leaving his country. He admits that there could have been many problems that the leaders of Ethiopia faced; however, he thinks that Ethiopia must have progressed by now though he does not know much about his country. Then he asks himself what kind of job he should take. Political and administrative posts in government, he says, are not acceptable to him. Preference is given to a post in the Ministry of Agriculture since he thinks he can contribute in farming and cattle breeding. He plans to explain to the Emperor the advantages modern means of agriculture and animal husbandry can bring to the country. After meeting Duval and the priest he meets Pontignac, a young Frenchman, who agrees with Araya's plans. They discuss the national and international barriers that hinder such development (pp.55-57). Araya's encounter with Taytoh Minh, an Asian who had just finished his training in a

polytechnic and is to return to his country after eighteen years in France, leads to a discussion of the colonial situation in Taytoh's country, and Araya's advantage over Taytoh because his country is not colonised (pp. 59-63). The debate on colonialism involves Duval, the priest, Pontignac, Taytoh, and Araya (pp. 72-86). They all admire Ethiopia's independence and talk of its greatness. Monsieur Duval, the bourgeois (pp. 48-50) and Freemason (p. 53) advises Araya to keep an eye on the Italians, reassuring him that the French have enough colonies. He warns that he has got clues from newspapers that the Italians are preparing for a second invasion. The same Duval, however, states that he does not find anything wrong in colonisation. He says:

Let me tell you. I love freedom. I seriously respect the rights of men. I am not boastful of my being Christian, but that I am a deomocrat cannot be doubted. Still I cannot pass judgement saying that colonisation is wrong as this would mean abandoning the colonies we have civilised with great efforts and blood. Besides France loves her colonial children; she guards and respects them ... (p.79).

Colonisation for him is using the natural resources which ignorant people have left unexploited. The priest also defends colonialism as a venture which has to be seen as the mutual exploitation of natural resources for the mutual benefits of both the colonised and the coloniser. That is the meaning of their brotherhood, freedom, democracy and Christianisation. Duval and the priest do not find anything wrong in colonialism but, at least, Duval is found speaking against the Italian design to invade Ethiopia. He seems to be saying that only the French are civilised enough to possess colonies. Of course, he also wishes to impress Araya whose political awareness is less impressive than Taytoh's. The long discussion on colonialism ends by justifying it in many ways. The various African and Asian peoples are presented as not having their own laws and systems of government. They are shown to be always fighting against each other and described as a herd of people who do not

know the value of the wealth around them. All these stereotype views are then taken as justifications to colonise them. Although these opinions are challenged in a two page speech by Taytoh, at the end they still occupy a dominant place in the novel (pp. 83-84). They are far more imposing on the reader's mind than the counter argument that follows. Germachäw's understanding and treatment of the problem in the novel is incompetent judging by the standards of many African writers. Moreover since it digresses many a time from the Ethiopian context we lose track of Araya's struggle to find solutions to his problems of modernisation. What began with the possible Italian scheme on Ethiopia brings the question of peace and war into the discussion. Socialism, fascism, imperialism, world peace, European missionary roles in civilising Africa, Asia, America (the Indians) (pp. 78-79), attitudes of east and west to religious and secular life (pp. 89-92) and the example of Japan in modernisation (p. 91) are introduced into the discussion.

One important outcome resulting from this brainstorming is Araya's realisation of the dangers hovering over Ethiopia's destiny. It makes him ponder over everything that has been said. Lying down on his bed he thinks about the intensive discussion on colonialism and Italy's renewed interest in Ethiopia. He says to himself:

... Truly, in what kind of dangerous and evil epoch do we find ourselves in. Until today I have never thought of all these issues. What appealed to me was the fertility of my country and the fruits it shall bear in the future. When did I (ever) think of the existence of such an enemy? Now I have found out the truth. I understand that it is the time of preparation for the hardship and struggle as there is not going to be peaceful life in the future!! ... (p. 86).

These ideas are not altogether novel to him. What the discussion has done is reawaken and firmly establish them as major aspects of the struggle he has <sup>been</sup> preparing himself for. Side by side with the efforts of modernisation he now begins to prepare for the colonial

invasion which appears inevitable. However what his ideas of change are, and <sup>of</sup> the methods of executing them, is not yet fully spelt out. These views begin to emerge, starting with the meeting with the secretary of the Ethiopian Consulate and the Consul in Jibuti. Before his arrival in the capital he discusses national problems with at least three Ethiopians.

The secretary and Araya do not agree over their proposed methods of inviting foreign capital into the country. Araya believes that Ethiopia should commit itself with an advanced wealthy country and try to quicken progress on the basis of give-and-take. The secretary prefers to give equal chances to America, Japan, Germany, Russia and the others. He thinks that when each of them tries to make the best for himself the country will benefit a great deal. Moreover, he adds, if any one of them tried to dominate the country or control its freedom the rest of them will get together to save her. He finds Araya's proposal very dangerous to the country. Their short but interesting palaver is followed by Araya's conference with the Consul. After listening to young Araya's enthusiastic and heated speech, the Consul warns that it will take much time before people understand the meaning of change and fully participate in the nation-building progress; and the outcome of the efforts made will be inversely proportional, thus frustrating the educated, progressive youth. However, Araya emphatically asserts that he will be patient but will not be broken by any obstacle that may come his way. Neither will he refrain from implementing whatever he ~~thinks~~ is right. Whether the people like it or not is not his concern, he says. He in fact argues that the old tradition must be shattered and the new one built instead, if need be by force (p.113). So long as one chooses the most determined and decisive leaders it should not be difficult to force the rest to follow. He further suggests that those



in the leadership who are determined to hinder the new initiative to development should be removed from office and replaced by the young. Araya does not see any difficulty in taking these measures since he believes the Emperor stands alongside the educated and the young. It must be pointed out here that Araya is contradicting what he said earlier about the pace development is likely to take in a country like Ethiopia. While criticising the excessiveness of the incisive censure of De Monfred, a French writer, against the officials in his book on Ethiopia, Araya had said:

... Indeed it is very difficult to reform traditions which are thousands of years old and establish an administration that is efficient and appropriate for the times. How is it possible to say, therefore, that all should be well and perfect in the life span of one generation? (p.58).

This probably is an important indication that Araya's ideas have not yet settled and matured. There is no doubt that he is full of enthusiasm since it always overflows during his discussions. The Consul's reply to Araya's methods is, however, informed by his experience in government. He points out that since the days of his regency the Emperor has struck a good balance between the old and the young and it is for that reason alone that political strife has lessened. He adds that the number of the young educated Ethiopians should grow before their voice is heard and becomes influential, and this can only materialise many generations later. Germachaw seems to agree with the Consul when he comments that Araya is only following his own enthusiasm and wishes, without understanding the real problems that hinder the implementation of these wishes (p.116).

At the Jibuti railway station, as he is about to leave for Derrē Dawa, Araya sees many foreigners who are travelling to Ethiopia. The importance of having laws of emigration, property ownership rights of

foreigners, marriage with foreign nationals and the status of children begotten from this form of wedlock, are raised. The need to attract foreign investment in major projects, an issue he had already discussed with the secretary, is brought back in his discussion with the Consul. Araya's welcoming attitude, opening the country wide to foreign capital, is questioned by the Consul who, like the secretary, finds the idea risky. Since he is afraid that the wealth of the people will fall into the hands of foreigners resulting in their economic, and subsequently political dominance over the indigenous people, he reckons Araya's proposal dangerous. Nowadays one might describe his fear as the fear of neo-colonialist exploitation of the wealth of the country by the knowledgeable, rich, foreign merchants and businessmen. Araya, however, cites the example of America, Australia, and New Zealand, who, he ignorantly states, have allowed millions of people to emigrate and these people have managed to play a major role in the world market. Araya observes: 'You say we have to go slowly, however, if we do so, time will work against us rather than us working with it. The era is of dynamism. Moving fast and determination are required' (p. 122). The Consul reminds him that the indigenous people of America, New Zealand and Australia benefitted very little from the development Araya is admiring. Before Araya replies the train whistles and the discussion stops. Araya leaves for Derrē Dawa.

The ideas are presented in this kind of piecemeal approach. Araya meets various characters with whom he discusses his topics. When he is finished with them others enter. All, Duval, Taytoh, Pontignac, the Russian professor of history and the priest are now gone. As he proceeds to Derrē Dawa so are the secretary of the Ethiopian Consulate in Jibuti and the Consul. Others will somehow emerge. It is from

these fragments that we are trying to construct Araya's notions of change. Since, as indicated earlier, most of these ideas do not occur in a more developed form or are not woven ~~into~~ the novel giving it a complex but some type of unified structure, our task is frustrating and tricky indeed.

The first series of discussions on the ship can be leniently described as conferences on general issues which have little to do with Ethiopia's problems of development directly. Araya's exchange of views with the two Ethiopians in Jibuti deals with Ethiopian issues from the point of view of three youngsters who advocate change but differ in the pace they ~~prescribe~~ and the method they believe should be applied. Araya now begins to talk in a more confident and authoritative tone. This is especially true when he talks about drinks and the relationship and difference between the pleasures of the flesh and spiritual joy. This takes place in Derrē Dawa when he meets some of his childhood friends and their neighbours whose consumption of alcoholic beverages he finds stunning. His travel from Jibuti to Derrē Dawa was, however, a quiet one. He was left on his own to look at the countryside and observe how little change had taken place since he saw it last, fifteen years before. Simultaneously he examines the silence of the foreign travellers in the train. He reflects on his discussion with Taytoh about the difference between European attitudes towards persons like Araya when they meet them in Europe, and during their encounter in Africa and Asia. He finds their acts hypocritical. Araya, however, begins to confront more important issues as he travels to Addis Ababa. He meets an old man whose views are traditional in many ways.

The 'old big officer', as he is referred to both by the author and Araya, criticises the new in terms of the changed behaviour of the youth, the depreciation of the value of money and most important of all the dangers the so-called new path to development brings to the security of the nation. Assessing the difference between the new path Ethiopia has embarked on and the existing way of life the officer considers the latter better. He believes that with the emergence of the former, life has become more expensive and the educated more contemptuous towards their own traditions. They do not make the people love them and follow them, he says, quite angrily. The brave soldiers and the unwavering commitment to religion were, according to him, the two important factors that helped the nation maintain its independence. Since no one is interested in feeding the soldiers because of the expense incurred, and since religion is being neglected and ignored, it is not clear for him how the country could defend itself if attacked by her enemies. For Araya, civilisation is required because there is a need to improve the quality of life. In order to enable the people to create wealth by their labour, use the wealth of the country in unison and live in peace and comfort, progress is necessary. He states that since the people administered by the same government are all equal it should take steps to abolish the exploitation of peasant labour and the holding of slaves (pp.138-39). This argument, however, is not palatable to the officer in all its parts. He questions Araya's statement about the equality that exists among men and states his conception of government. He says:

In the first place, when God created men, he created them as big and small. There is difference in knowledge, looks and behaviour. The ones on top are chosen to administer and rule. ... Since government is the father of a people, it leads and administers it as it sees it fit. It does not have to descend and seek the thoughts of its subjects. Government has power, and it is also a trustee. It is the guardian of a people not its servant. (p.139).

Araya seems to accept that there are differences between men. However, for him this difference is not natural. Nor is it based on power and wealth. It is education and the race for modernisation that has brought about inequalities among people and nations. As for government he has a very detailed proposal to make. He begins by describing what democracy is and the benefits the civilised world gained since adopting it as the basis of its administrative and governmental structure. However, he is reluctant to recommend that type of democracy for countries that are not properly developed. 'Because,' he says, 'setting a people who have been tied with ignorance, darkness, and custom suddenly free, it is feared, will bring them more harm than good' (p.149). Araya argues in favour of limited democratisation. He accepts the continuation of the appointment of government officials at the provincial, awraja (sub-province) and wäräda (district) levels. However, he suggests that local administrators and advisors, mayors and village heads be elected by the people. The criteria required and the procedures to be followed to realise this should be decided by the government (p.145). Araya sees four major advantages if such a proposal is put into practice. Firstly, it minimises the authority of the feudal lords. Secondly, such an arrangement provides the people with the chance to shape their own destiny. It removes some <sup>of the</sup> burden from the government while at the same time giving the people local independence and the freedom to develop their local communities and villages. Thirdly, since it is the residents of the community who elect their own leaders and advisors they will not suffer any injustice or oppression. He sees this system as facilitating the daily routines of administration and enriching the spirit of caring and co-operation. Competition between various communities might enhance development. Lastly, Araya finds the proposal useful for keeping the peace and security of the villages and the country at large (pp.144-45). Despite the officer's warning of the

difficulties entailed in executing such ambitions, Araya relies on the strength of Haylā Sellassē's government to confront them. He believes ignorance, the source of the obstacles, has to be tackled first. Since most of the people are not educated it is difficult to make them understand what is beneficial to them. He adds that there are not sufficient numbers of educated people to serve in various positions. The remedy for this, he thinks, is to spread education and train the required number of persons in one or two generations. (10) He insists that the education given should not be the type mission schools and other organisations provide to satisfy their whims and designs. An educational programme that aims at fulfilling the needs of the country should be drafted anew, he emphasises (p. 146).

Although Araya urges the spread of education he does so more cautiously now than when he gave full support to the investment of foreign capital without considering the risks involved. Since he believes there are certain customs and natural traits peculiar to each nationality, and nation, and he believes these are better than those of Europe, he warns that these should not be destroyed during the course of modernisation. The education given to the youth should agree with the good aspects of the existing customs and traditions. It must enrich and not destroy them. Genuine progress can be obtained only if the best of the traditions are protected and cultivated. Araya stresses this point by showing what he regards as the two aspects of civilisation. The first is concerned with improvements in efficiency, wealth and technology, and the second with the advancement and enrichment of spiritual culture. He thinks Europe has done well in the former but not so much in the latter. He says:

Today's European civilisation has become conspicuous because it has improved (the quality of) life and quickened technological progress. As far as spiritual development is concerned it is difficult to say it has advanced a lot. Therefore when we want to follow their footsteps we should observe, choose and follow

their progress whose goodness is established, and not accept everything in toto. We should not say we must emulate them in everything. The dangerous habits which came (upon us) following European civilisation do not appear to diminish in the future, they rather increase (p.148).

The bad habits Araya talks about are the spread of alcohol consumption, greed for money, craving for glittering goods, sexual promiscuity and prostitution. The best way to prevent the evil that accompanies progress, he says, is by educating the people rather than opting for a wholesale rejection of civilisation. The officer, he says, opts for rejection, but Araya argues: '[from] Now [on] Ethiopia cannot turn back. Once she has entered the flood that carries the world what she should do is keep well afloat and strengthen the boat so that she does not sink' (p.148). The officer's admission that he is old and has left the forum to the new generation brings the session to a close. However, there is an underlying tone of doubt when he wishes he saw all that Araya proposes put into practice. The last remark he makes to Araya is: 'Since our hope and belief lies in God, the God that protected her [Ethiopia] until today, let Him not forsake her' (p.163).

After arriving in Addis Ababa Araya tours the city, compares it with European cities and feels dejected. It makes him reflect more about the tiring task ahead of him. A few days later he meets the Emperor with the help of a minister. When the Emperor asks him how he plans to serve his country he mentions that he studied agriculture but is willing to take any job the Emperor wants him to (p.176). Haylä Sellassē assigns him to work in a ministry unnamed in the novel. Araya accepts the assignment and goes to see the minister the same day. The minister, we are told, tells him what his job is and gives him some advice. He warns:

Since you are a fresh, young returnee who grew up abroad and lived there for many years, you cannot have sufficient knowledge

of life in our country and the character of the people. I notice you are good-natured and filled with enthusiasm. However, you have to be careful so that your good nature does not change and your eagerness diminish. Maybe you now think everything will be straight and whatever is planned will be executed without much trouble. Perhaps you think all that is not executed properly is because of our negligence or that of the government. You may also feel sad when you discover that all you have seen in Europe and read in books is absent here. But since it is when you start work that you understand our endeavour and the difficulties we face you will find out later (p.177).

After listening to the minister's advice Araya asks for a one month holiday to see his mother before he starts working. On his return he starts work at the ministry. The nature of his job and his working relations with the director and other staff are not clear. The director visits him in his office, salutes him and tells him to take things easy. Araya writes proposals to which he does not get proper answers. We are not told what these suggestions were. We, however, hear that he resigns because he could not work with his bosses. The name 'Araya' means "example", but Germachaw's hero, who was intended to be exemplary to other educated Ethiopians in real life, falls short. Araya easily yields to the first test of real experience. The jealousy and incompetence of the director and his assistant are given as the main reasons for his resignation. All his enthusiasm, determination and drive to work erode unexpectedly quickly. We are informed that signs of laziness, frustration and hopelessness begin to take the place of his dedication, patience and eagerness to change his society. His action shows lack of the strength, endurance, fortitude and firmness which he had somehow made us suspect he had. Everything happens so fast ~~that~~ we find the state of affairs difficult to comprehend (pp.188-201).

We have seen Araya's proposed model of administration and the practice of a restricted democracy to the people. He fluctuates between over-enthusiastic dynamism and a moderate but programmed approach to progress.



Without any substantial reason being presented in the novel, he alters his views of imposing change on the people by force. He accepts that education is the best remedy to effect social reform. Yet he himself does not want to be part of the transformation process. He does not wish to work in the office he has accepted as his place of work. Nor does he attempt to modify it. Instead he resigns and retires to his father's farm to establish yet again another model. As the Ethiopian Consul in Jibuti and the minister in the office where he took a job suspected, Araya's enthusiasm melts before he has even finished talking about his plans. The real battle is between his illusion and the reality, between his self-acclaimed knowledge of the society and his own ignorance. There isn't much room for sympathy. The story indicates that he has been warned about the problems of the society by the Russian professor, many of his traveller friends on the ship, the two Ethiopians in Jibuti, and the minister. Moreover, his own views have at times coincided with their advice when he talked about progress in some instances. He admits that he has been away for a long time and does not know much about his country. This is evidenced by the scene at the palace, Germachäw's remark about him, his conversation with foreigners on his travel to Ethiopia, and <sup>a</sup> few other cases. His plans and actions do not seem to take this side of his character into consideration. It seems it is clear that Araya is a French educated but confused Ethiopian. He left Ethiopia at the early age of thirteen, lived in France for fifteen years and returned home carrying France in his head and Ethiopia in his heart. The heart beckons him to speed up progress and make Ethiopia a member of the civilised world. His head directs him towards imitating the examples and experiences of France. Neither his heart nor his head have a realistic knowledge and understanding of the complex Ethiopian society. Largely, his effort has been to emulate Europe or, even better, to bring the positive aspects of the new 'Motherland' closer to home.

The aim was not to use his knowledge to identify, study and analyse the problems of his society from scratch and try to find the solutions. Contrarily his struggle was how best to apply what he saw and learned in Europe. Surely he talks about some of these problems and suggests ways of adapting European methods to overcome them.

Our argument, however, lies in the inherent nature of Araya's approach rather than in the obvious manifestations in the text. Araya could not have completely ignored talking about the two traditions if he is to propose any remedies. That is always theoretically the case. Even if one talked about a hypothetical situation in the course of discussing the problems of progress in an underdeveloped country, of which one knows very little, the tendency is to debate how best to adapt the new experience, be it of the West or the East, in the process of modernisation. So long as one does not possess knowledge of the real situations in the country under consideration first, then, adopting European experience would mean imposing it as one's whims direct. It is this realistic and true awareness of both experiences that holds the key to the solution. However, since we know from the novel that Araya's knowledge of his country is meagre, his talk about striking a balance between Western experience and the Ethiopian way of life remains a theoretical excursion. That is why Araya cannot face the problems that he encounters in his new job. He looks brave and unbreakable when he talks about them. However, as soon as he joins the ministry, after returning from his visit to rural Täggulät to see his mother, he moans and resigns from his post. Because we are not shown either the problems he is confronted with or his struggle against them, we assess his character solely through the action he finally takes. We realise that Araya did not know what he was talking about. Although some of what he proposes looks impressive on the surface, when it comes to the basic

facts he cannot even fight his own battle with his bosses let alone change the whole nation. Fed up, 'so quickly?' one asks, with the intrigues and jealousy of his bosses, as he says. He ~~retires~~ to Wäbära, as though to a monastery.

His new choice,<sup>made</sup> with the guidance of good old Madame Debon Fuwa who came to his rescue by appearing in his dream, was to become a farmer. He goes to Wäbära where he has three gäšha of land he inherited from his father. Unlike many educated Ethiopians of his time he finds an alternative to working with the frustrating bureaucracy. His father's tenants and the slaves who were given 'some freedom' (p.206) receive him with the respect, honour and hospitality granted to landlords when they visit their land. He speaks to them through an interpreter about farming and Europe. The next day he surveys the land. Jäbäl Ahmär, Araya's farm in Wäbära, is described in detail. This five-page long description is important, since it is the new setting of his career, and it reminds us of Araya's infatuation or even obsession with the beauty of the country. The detailed description of the scenery also gives the reader a picturesque image of a place where nature is really bubbling over with life, movement, colour and music. Looking down from a ridge Germachäw describes the scenery as:

... A very fertile green land. It [the land] looks like a large round place which has a spout on one of its sides.  
... When the red, white, black [and] grey cow[s], ox[en], horse[s], mule[s] are seen scattered in the green fields they look like flowers (p.204).

Another example of his description is:

In the morning and late afternoon thousands of different kinds of birds storm the sorghum [plantation] The cries of the keepers of the harvest, the sharp sounds of their whip and the sling, the chaotic movements of the birds and the noise they make fills the air (p.205).

When Araya wakes up in the morning and goes outside his room Germachäw describes what Araya sees:

Since the morning dew has not fallen yet the grass and leaves reflect like ... diamonds, the ray [of the sun] that rests on them [thus] creating different fine colours (p.207).

We cannot argue that our translation does justice to his description. However, we can emphatically state that the physical features of the land the weather, the various trees, the small rivers that flow into the big ones, the streams, the rain, the green farms, the livestock in the fields and the singing birds in the forest are beautifully described (pp.202-205; pp. 207-208). The surroundings put Araya into a pensive mood. He begins to rethink the decision he has taken to come to Wäbära and regrets leaving his job despite his earlier determination to serve his country without yielding to the obstacles that come his way. He then quickly convinces himself that it does not matter where he worked so long as he keeps in mind that his ultimate goal is to serve his country and his people. He says to himself:

Whatever has happened has happened. Besides when I came here now it is not to better my life and gain wealth and peace. I will not stop helping my country and people. Never mind about that! Perhaps I can now better serve my country and produce better results than I can produce by working in an institution (office). Wherever I am and whatever the circumstances, if I am concerned about my country and people I can be of service and useful. I shall not abate my efforts (p.210).

Germachaw comments that Araya's new decision may produce results that are 'useful and exemplary' to the government and the country (p.210).

Within a week of his arrival at Wäbära Araya completes the plan and programme for his agricultural endeavours and the building of his own residence. Unable to find people who can build his house for him for a payment to be made in money, he follows the traditional practice of providing food and drinks for the groups assisting in the constructions. Araya observes the people are lazy and negligent and criticises their chewing chat, a stimulant leaf. They start working at eleven in the morning and stop around two or three in the afternoon. The impatient

Araya gets angry because things are not moving at the speed he wishes them to but realises there is nothing he can do to make the people change their habits. This is yet another instance which shows the incongruence between his thoughts and the reality around him. His readiness to change is not based on sufficient knowledge of the people. Germa chäw says, as though on his behalf, 'What can one do! One can only be like the country\* A job that should be finished in one month must be expected to be finished in three months. A job which should be done by ten people is going to be taken by thirty' (p.212). This understanding does not however influence the ambitious plan he makes in agricultural development and social transformation. The frustration he encounters in his attempt to build his house does not seem to bring any realism to his future plans. A person who brought carpenters, masons and daily labourers from Addis Ababa to finish the construction of his house in six months embarks on an extensive agricultural project. He imagines large plantations of grain, pulses, coffee and various fruits, ignoring the fact that he described the peasants as lazy and negligent. Furthermore he envisages a bigger project for rural development.

Araya contemplates how to alleviate the rampant ignorance and the poor conditions of health in the village. He thinks of using his money to build a school and a clinic. He thinks of forming a co-operative for the inhabitants and introducing social security schemes and pensions for the old. Organising the people to enable them to work together without being deterred by religious differences is part of his new plan for Wäbära. Eliminating religious and ethnic differences and resolving problems of boundaries are regarded as crucial to create a new spirit of working together for the common good of the community. Araya hopes that any

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\* The literal translation sounds odd but the intended meaning is similar to the saying: 'When in Rome do as the Romans do'.

success achieved in implementing these ideas in Wābāra would be exemplary to the neighbouring villages and believes it will be supported by the government. He is reluctant to work with a government whose aims include fulfilling these requirements nationally. Araya strives to set an example. At Wābāra he does not have to explain what he wants to do through the advice or approval of a minister or a director. He plays the role of the higher official whose guidance is not questioned by the peasants. In the 'Wābāra government' he is not confronted by incompetent and jealous masters. However, for all his thoughts, we do not see him executing his plans. Germachāw tells us that his life in Wābāra is a happy one. We are told of his efficient supervision of the work done on the farm. None the less, how he managed to convince the peasants whose ability to work he doubted, is not presented in the book. His plan for his farm and the village terminates with the Italian invasion. This is the beginning of Araya's role in the struggle for national pride and liberation, and the end of his ambition to modernise his society, at least in the novel.

After writing a letter to the Emperor expressing his willingness to die for his country, Araya is permitted to join the campaign to Maychāw. Once the Ethiopian army is defeated at Maychāw and massacred at Ashāngē, retreat becomes inevitable. The Emperor returns to Addis Ababa and travels abroad on the second day (pp.261-266). When the Italians approach to capture the capital city Araya makes a speech to his friends asking them not to accept Italian rule since their interest is in the land and not the people. He tells them that the Italians will exterminate Ethiopians and bring their own people once they get hold of the country. Araya warns the people not to fool themselves:

I am peaceful. If I follow their [Italians] rules, work and live honestly, and be obedient they will not touch me. Why should they trouble a poor worker like me? They are after major leaders of the people ... (p. 266).

In the rural area he prepares for guerilla warfare and asks the people to do the same. Araya had failed to challenge an individual bureaucrat in the office where he had worked but he now assumes leadership among his friends. He prepares them for a more bitter struggle than he ever faced in his life. They agree to go to Täggulät, Araya's birthplace, and commence the resistance struggle with the people there. He is elected leader of the guerilla army by the villagers. A five-man committee which functions as a local government and decides on matters pertaining to the resistance struggle and everyday routines of life, is formed, with Araya as its chairman. They recruit three hundred people into the young patriotic army. Thus Araya struggles with the patriots moving around Täggulät, Mänz, Yefat, Bulga, Ankobär and Tärä. He is wounded in the battle which takes place in an unnamed region between Bulga and Ankobar and goes to his mother's house in Täggulat to recover. When he regains his strength he leaves his pregnant wife with his mother and joins the patriots, whose leader was Ras Abäbä (p.330). After four years of struggle in the jungles and slopes of Ethiopia with the rest of the patriots independence is obtained and he returns to his family. Araya's best achievement in the novel is his struggle with the people for liberation. His personal ideas and plans for changing the society do not match the enthusiasm he showed. Nor does he sow seeds of hope by awakening awareness among the people he meets.

Two more points need to be raised about Araya. The first is about the conception of national unity expressed in his discussion with the resistance fighters. The second concerns his marriage to Sergutä during the struggle. In the case of the former we are interested in the main idea dominating his point of view, and in the latter our focus is in the manner the love scene leading to marriage is depicted in the novel.

The problem of national unity has been discussed in the novel in various contexts. No doubt it is an interesting theme that deserves to be treated in detail. However, Araya's blind outcry for unity masks the underlying ethnic chauvinism in his outlook. He does not question the inequalities that exist among the nationalities. Even when he states there are differences he does not ask why these differences exist, how they came about and what should be done to resolve them. One cannot completely resist the temptation to believe that he is consciously or otherwise, part of the status quo that exploits these differences to divide and rule rather than create genuine unity based on equality. Such an attitude sacrifices the possibilities for advancement in material and spiritual culture, and the strength, to be gained from diversity for sheer propaganda and platitudes. Educated Araya joins in this wholesale outcry for unity without considering the realistic problems that ignite and sustain it. There is no incident in the novel where Araya seriously reflects or makes one of his usual speeches on this question with due consideration of the inherent problems and possible solutions. Of course, in his plan for Wäbära, we catch him pondering on the possibility of bringing the people practising different religions together. However that is not saying much. Araya is either a politically ignorant person who cannot conceive the true nature of the issue or he is the type who wants unity with all the inequalities and atrocities that exist. One may argue that the principle he advocates is tactically correct to combat the Italian policy of dividing the people religiously and ethnically to weaken and conquer them. However there is no evidence in the novel that supports this contention. There is no essential difference between his views on this matter before, during and after the Italian invasion. He seems to be aiming for a unity that guarantees the regaining of independence and the return to power of the previous government. His plea for unity is no different from the many opinions expressed in the Amharic newspapers and official



speeches made until 1974. This is one more addition to the list of things Araya enthusiastically advocates to change or keep, depending on the issue, without knowing much about them. He is not an outcast in his behaviour though.

The depiction of his flirtation and marriage with Sergutä raises the problem of Germachäw's imagination, sensibility and grip of the plausible. The first time Araya and Sergutä meet is when he is working as leader of the patriotic army. The committee wants a person to go to the nearby city, Däbrä Berhan, and gather information about the Italian army there. It is agreed that if the messenger is a woman it would minimise suspicion. Sergutä's father suggests that his daughter could take the assignment. She is called to the meeting to get instructions. This is the time Araya and Sergutä first see each other and, according to Germachäw, are attracted to one another at first sight. There is no mention in the novel about what each felt towards the other, after this incident, until Dan'el joins Araya and the patriots escaping from the Italians. He comes with the bad news of the brutal massacre in Addis Ababa. At a gathering to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Naples two young Ethiopians attempt to assassinate the Italian Viceroy, Graziani, with hand grenades. The Italian soldiers open fire, massacring the Ethiopians. They randomly shoot men and women they find walking on the streets. For three days they swarm around the villages, streets and marketplaces with machine guns, bayonets, spades and axes mercilessly murdering people. Streams of blood flow and corpses are piled up all over the place (pp.306-307). Immediately after Dan'el's report of these events, Germachäw talks about the growing love between Araya and Sergutä. While the reader is waiting with anger to know the reaction of the patriots to this shattering news, wondering about the actions they might take, he is confronted with a delicate love scene.

Araya meets Serguta as he was taking a night walk. They both behave timidly for a while and tremble, not knowing where to begin. Araya starts:

Sergutä, I have lost my health since the first day I saw you. Day and night I have no thoughts but you. How shall I tell you the anguish in my heart. I love you. I love you very much. Give me some hope, one word and save me please, Sergutä. Say to me "I also love you" and let my heart breathe, please ... (p.311).

In a bizarre conjunction, Germachäw brings love and war into violent association. In all the previous scenes in the novel we saw Araya involved in serious discussions about the liberation struggle and other issues. Before this incident we were led to believe that the most important preoccupation in Araya's mind was the patriotic struggle. We were not given any clues about other things happening in his mind. We thus expect the news Dan<sup>1</sup>l brought to shock him and the resistance fighters, and incite a feeling of bitter resentment or even immediate revenge in another ambush. Instead the love scene follows. The tone is absolutely out of tune with the preceding report. In modern parlance it would be like taking an innocent Catholic girl to a horror or a Rambo film on the first date and, worse still, trying to embrace her whispering the words of love when Dracula feasts on its victim or trigger-happy Rambo goes wild with his machine-gun - a strange setting for sowing the seeds of love one must say. This is not to suggest that men cannot fall in love because they are preoccupied with war. The question is directed against the way the love between Araya and Sergutä is presented in the novel. Germachäw apparently thought that Araya could be a complete person only by marrying and starting a family. He suggests this when he writes about Araya's success in farming activities in Wäbära. Pointing out that Araya was happy he added that he needed to get married to make his happiness complete (p.225). Before Araya gets the chance to obtain this fulfillment the novel approaches its end. The writer's wish to see

him married perhaps led to these unpalatable love scenes which finally lead to the aspired wedlock. The love or marriage between Sergutã and Araya is in no way an integral part of the novel. However, Araya would be better without it.

5. Shaking the tenets of feudalism?: the däbtära, and the peasants in Haddis Alamayahu's Feqer Eskä Mäqaber

Feqer eskä mäqaber [Love to the Grave, lit.] is among the earliest Ethiopian novels dealing with aspects of the problems of social life in the country. It penetrates the subject with a breadth and depth unknown before in the literature. Its author, Haddis Alämayähu (1) was born in 1902 E.C. in the province of Gojam where the story in the novel is mainly set. His father was a priest and his grandfather a zēma teacher. Keeping within the family tradition, Haddis learned genē in the church schools at Däbrä Elyas, Däbrä Wärq and Dima until he was seventeen years of age. He went to Addis Ababa and spent two years in the Swedish school and four years at Täfäri Mäkonen School. After six years of modern education he went back to Gojam and worked in a customs office and as a teacher until the Italian invasion. During the war he joined the patriotic struggle but was captured in Tahsas in 1929 E.C., and taken prisoner to Italy until he came back to Ethiopia in 1936 E.C. at the close of the second world war. After his return to Ethiopia, that is to say between 1936 E.C. and 1966 E.C., he worked for almost half of his career in government, as an ambassador and delegate abroad, and for another six years as Director and then Vice-Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa. The last five years before the revolution he worked as a member of the Senate. He had served as a Minister of Planning and Development for three years before that.

Haddis relates that he started writing when he was a student at the Täfäri Mäkonen School. His first work was a play he wrote for performance in the school. He still remembers and recites the song he wrote as an introduction to the play, but he deeply regrets the fact that the manuscript of the play was burnt along with his other writings

and collection of books during the invasion. The incentive for writing came from the school teachers who appreciated his talent in acting. His love for the theatre and the support of his teachers encouraged him to start writing plays, poetry and prose. The period of imprisonment in Italy exposed him to foreign literature, enhancing his impulse towards writing. His principal admiration was for Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Victor Hugo. Dostoevsky is admired for his deep insight into human character, Tolstoy for portraying his epoch, and Hugo for his skill in story-telling. The first Ethiopian novel which attempted to accomplish a bit of each of these qualities was his first novel, Feger eskä mäqaber.

Before the publication of his novel he published two books. Temher t ena yätämari bêt tergum (Education and the Meaning of Schools) published in 1948 E.C. [1955/56] tried to point out the type and method of education he thought was appropriate to Ethiopia at the moment. He argues against mere imitation of Western education and emphasises the need to adapt it to the needs of the society. He notes the importance of including the best materials of the traditional schools in the curriculum. In his novel he extends this notion of compromise between the two educational systems into a compromise between the ruled and their rulers. His other work, Tärät Tärät Yämäsärät, published in the same year as the former, is a collection of stories written in the form of folktale narratives, to teach and entertain. But Haddis is known in Ethiopia more for his achievement in Feger eskä mäqaber than in these two books or even in his three later publications.

Feger eskä mäqaber, Haddis's first novel, was published in 1958 E.C. It has been reprinted at least thrice since then and read over the radio after the revolution. Most of the story takes place in Gojam and specially in a place called Dima. However the characters travel within

Gojam and outside it. The novel reveals the role the feudal order and the church play in social life. Priests, monks, the däbtära and the aläqa, rather than modern or Western educated intellectuals, are the intellectuals portrayed in the novel. The world of peasants, lords, the clergy, and the servants does not provide any room for the latter. Haddis attempts to portray the problems of social life in terms of the conflicts and struggles of the members of the society. There is no Araya or Awwäqä who travels to rural Dima to preach about reform and the advance made in Europe and the rest of the world. The novelist draws his characters from the resources available in the community to depict the contradictions he sees in the society and the forces of dissent within it. Two major institutions appear as dominant forces, influencing and determining the physical and spiritual life of the people. Values associated with the feudal order and kinship on one hand, and Christian beliefs and rules on the other, establish the basis and ideology of everyday life in Dima - Gojam. Many problems related to the nature of the feudal system and its partnership with the church arise in the novel.

All these problems are interwoven in the love story between Bäzzabeh, son of a poor farmer and Säblä, the daughter of the noble Mäshäsha. Bäzzabeh is the son of Bogälä, a peasant, and Weddenäsh, a woman of higher class than her husband. He runs away from his birthplace, Mankussa, to break the promise his mother has made to God vowing his lifetime service to the Church. He goes to Washära, Zuramba, and Däbräwärq and studies genē, zēma and the Old and New Testaments. Wishing to graduate as a genē teacher he goes to Dima. Fitawrari Mäshäsha, a feudal lord, asks him to teach his daughter Säbla after observing his talents and character in one of the festivities in his house. Säblä is a grown up girl whose youth is wasted in her father's house. He

maintains a strict surveillance over how she spends her time. She does not meet with young boys and girls of her age. Many who have asked for her hand in marriage have been ridiculed for their class background and unsatisfactory pedigree. However, the young teacher named Bāzzabeh enters her life and they fall in love.

Only Gudu Kassa, the critic of both Māshasha, the lord, and Moggāsē, the lord's father confessor, understands and sympathises with Sāblā. He knows about their secrets and encourages the couple to leave Dima and go to Addis Ababa before her father finds out. The first attempt fails and Bāzzabeh is forced to leave Dima on his own. He goes to Addis Ababa and finds a good job as a genē teacher. Hoping Gudu Kassa will fulfill his promise he rents a new house in a big compound and waits for Sāblā to arrive. But events in Dima take an unexpected turn. Māshasha has agreed to bestow Sāblā in marriage upon a person who supports him in his conflict at court with the peasants on his land. Sāblā does not want to marry him, though his class and lineage are agreeable to her father. On the eve of her wedding, Sāblā disappears and goes to Addis. In the meantime, Bāzzabeh, who has heard from a Gojam merchant about her projected wedding, is attacked by bandits on his way to Dima. Failing to find him in Addis Ababa she returns to Gojam. On her way she pauses for a rest before crossing the dangerous Abbay gorge with other travellers. She finds Bāzzabeh suffering from wounds sustained in the attack, and they ask for a priest to be called so that she can marry him on his death bed. This is successfully accomplished. Some years later Gudu Kassa meets Sāblā in the same place. The story ends with their death and burial in the same grave - hence the title of the novel. Sāblā's father and mother have died already in a riding accident as they rode down a dangerous slope in trying to stop Sāblā from fleeing.

Though melodramatic, especially in its last third, this novel has many cultural and social commentaries embedded in the story. The relation of the church and the clergy to the nobility, on one hand, and to the ordinary peasants, on the other, is strongly present in the text. The role of the church towards the peasantry and the nobility is energetically portrayed. The educational backgrounds of the traditional intellectuals are sharply contrasted. Aläqa Kenfu of Dima and Aläqa Nurē of Washära belong to a category differing from that of the priests Meherätu, Emmeru and Moggäsē. Aläqa Bälay stands out on his own as the learned preacher we briefly hear about from Boggalä (pp.24-25). Though Täklä Haymnot is described as a learned monk who spent most of his life travelling to various monasteries, what he does in the novel puts him in a place unworthy of his avowed duty. Moggäsē, the father-confessor of Fitawrari Mäshäsha is the most frequently encountered priest in the novel. He has very little knowledge, and exercises hardly any moral authority over his god-son and the family. The portrayal of most of the däbtära adds to the adverse image of priests like Moggäsē. The heads of the Addis Ababa churches are seen applying secular methods to the aggrandisement of their churches. A close examination of the deeds and ideas of these traditional intellectuals reveals the negative image they have in the novel.

Aläqa Kenfu and Aläqa Nurē belong to a special category higher than the priests and the däbtära. Both are highly qualified in the tradition of church scholarship and are celebrated teachers. We are told very little about Nurē. However, the detail we are given about Kenfu and the comparison made about the two of them in the dialogue between Kenfu and Bäzzabeh implies the high respect Nurē commands in the genē tradition. Kenfu is qualified in the study and interpretation of the books, Zēma,



zëmmarē Māwasit, Aquaquawm. In these he ranks with the great teachers in the field. In poetry his place is with the creator of qenē, the great Tāwanäy (pp.75-76). He spends most of his time reading manuscripts and books. Otherwise his main task is to teach students qenē, and himself participate in the oral recitation of Geez poetry.

Haddis describes the procedures followed in the teaching of qenē and some aspects of the lives of intellectuals like Kenfu. When it is time to begin a qenē lesson a bell is rung. The students, the teachers (lecturers), and the Māmeher, the chief teacher of the Dima school, the däbtära and the deacons all gather together outside in the compound of the school. For the students the event is academically important. For the däbtära and the deacons it is a cultural evening. Following Aläqa Kenfu, the student begins his lesson. The recitation of qenē (zäräfa) begins with the conjugation of different types of regular and irregular verbs. It then proceeds, starting with the shortest form of qenē (Guba'ē qana) and ending in the Mäwādes form. The teacher can repeat the cycle as often as he likes. It is left to his inspiration, though as in the case of Aläqa Kenfu there are times when the professor is stopped when he is seen to have entered some kind of trance. Some stop when they run short of qenē. To sustain the performance for a long time with full inspiration is a sign of the wealth and unlimited richness of the reciter. Aläqa Kenfu is at times carried away with his recitation; he forgets the world around him and plays with the righteous, the martyrs and the angels in the other world (pp.75-76).

Dima is one of the most respected schools in Gojam, if not in Ethiopia (p.71). Its most learned teacher, Aläqa Kenfu, is engaged in reading, teaching and reciting qenē. Except for the argument and

conversation about the genē recited the previous night, intellectual activity is limited (p.72). Excepting the short reference to the conflict between the different genē schools and their teachers, little is told about these teachers' functions. Other sources show that subjects such as astrology, philosophy of religion and life, law and history are given in the genē schools. However, Haddis does not mention them.(2) The intellectual role in social and religious life of these teachers, Aläqa Kenfu of Dima and Aläqa Nurē of Washära cannot readily be determined from his text alone. We are only told of their excellence in the subjects they teach and their talents in creating and reciting Geez poetry. It is not difficult to recognise that these scholars along with their best students have been keeping the tradition of the schools alive. Their portrayal in the novel omits their role as traditional intellectuals in monasteries who deliberate and philosophise on the problems of morality, ethics and religion in general. Haddis does not see or present them in this light.

Perhaps people like Aläqa Bälay, a learned priest we encounter in Boggalä's recollection of his preachings, are more important to the ordinary believer than the genē professors in the famous sanctuaries. Bälay talks against greed and lust, urging men to control their physical needs by spiritual strength. Only then can they be members of the society of the righteous and be nearer to God. If Christians are governed by the numerous needs of the flesh they would be acting like animals. According to Bälay, fasting is one of the ways of limiting the excessive needs of the flesh, thereby strengthening the spirit. Adultery and loyalty in marriage are discussed in his sermon (pp.24-25). Boggalä's reflection on Aläqa Bälay's preachings helps him to overcome his temporary problem with his wife, Weddenäsh, who could not give him

something to eat when he returned from a whole day's work on the farm. He was harsh in complaining to Weddenäsh. But remembrance of Bälays exhortations at the Church about controlling the needs of the flesh, and enriching spiritual strength helps him to reconsider his bitter feelings. He goes back to his house to apologise to his wife. Aläqa Bälays place in the novel begins and ends here. The lives of the faithful emerge against the background of his teachings about adultery, marriage and greed. Aläqa Bälays father confessor, Emmeru, one of the few priests who is portrayed positively performing his duty as a clergyman.

The other occasion that a priest is depicted positively as a religious person who helps ordinary persons get along in their day to day lives by sharing their troubles with them, is when Emmeru tries to convince Weddenäsh to remarry. Boggalä, Bäzzabeh's father, was her fourth husband. This tragic experience and the scandals which spread about her as one who carries a bad omen make her choose to live on her own. Emmeru notices her suffering and the burden loneliness has brought upon her life. It is he who tells her that she can overcome her sadness of bereavement only by marrying another person (p.12). When she condemns her bad luck and cries, when she remembers how people hurt her by reviling her in public, only Emmeru is by her side to console her (p.13). Emmeru finally convinces her, not without difficulty though, to marry Boggalä. We however, wonder where Emmeru was when, later in the story, Weddenäsh most needed his moral support during her husband's illness and death, and her subsequent loneliness. When Boggalä dies it is Meherätu, Boggalä's father confessor who appears in the scene, but does probably too little considering what one expects from a priest at the time.

Meherätu is portrayed as a person interested in the will of his deceased god-son, his legacy of money, and his own well-being, rather than as a religious devotee who is committed to serving the laity in time of troubles. Comfort and pity was his to give to the heartbroken, lonely, sightless Weddenäsh. But his priesthood does not make him more noble, or preferably more devout, than the rest of the neighbours who abandoned Weddenäsh to fate. Arriving after Boggalä's death, the first thing he asks is about the will the deceased had left. He goes to Weddenäsh's house at cockcrow, to avoid being infected by the contagion the neighbours believed Boggalä died from. She tells Meherätu that there is no will because she had left Boggalä on his own to find the tälla he asked for. Meherätu ridicules Weddenäsh for leaving the dying person alone searching tälla.(3) Weddenäsh's worry lay elsewhere. She is not sure how the burial ceremony is to take place. Though he offers her his servant Gäbrē to cleanse and prepare the corpse for burial he expresses his hope that God will save his servant for him. He mentions that he will send a shroud and suggests she will pay him later (pp.56-57). Meherätu leaves us with the impression that he is a priest who does not care about Weddenäsh's bereavement, the dreariness of her desolation and her frustrated existence without her son and husband. His interest in the legacy of money, the will, and his personal well-being in a moment of deprivation and misfortune characterises him as a hypocritical priest. A contrasted form of hypocrisy is represented in the character of Abba Taklä Haymanot. Täklä Haymanot came to Gojam, fleeing from his parents in the province of Wälläga, in protest against his castration when he was a child. His intellectual career includes the study of nebab ('reading'), zēma (church music) and genē (Geez poetry) in the various schools in Gojam. Since becoming a monk he has travelled to the different churches and monasteries and finally arrived

at Dima. He prefers loneliness to mixing with people and listening to conversation and talking (p.418). Because he speaks little and leaves his ideas unfinished, there is a tendency among people to interpret the little he has said in many ways and see him as 'a wise monk'(p.418). He lives in the cemetery and eats the food provided by the church. He receives money, clothing, food and drink from people who ask him to pray for them. However, he in turn gives most of the food to the poor and the sick. He always wears däbälo, tanned sheepskin, and a cap made of the same material. But the writer quickly adds that 'he is not seen giving money and drinks away'(p.418). This is where Täklä Haymanot and Meherätu converge. They join hands in their liking for money. But since Täklä Haymanot gives most of the clothes and food to the poor, people take this as evidence of his righteousness.

Clearly his deeds are not as sacred as they seem at first sight. Beneath the generous acts of giving away what was given to him to the poor, and beneath the däbälo and cap he wears, there is a different Täklä Haymanot. According to The Fetha Nägäst there are six obligations a monk should fulfil. Monks are expected 'to leave ... riches and worldly pleasure.' It is also stated that they should 'keep their bodies far from those [worldly] things which may impede them from obeying, and restrain their tongues from words that are useless both to him who utters them and to him who hears them ...'(4) In Feger eskä Näqaber, Täklä Haymanot does not fulfil these obligations. We have indicated his love for money. Moreover we see him drunk with täjj and aräqi at Mäshäsha's house while he was looking after Säblä' until all the effects of Bäzzabeh's 'spell' on her are worn out. Drunk and excited he admires the girl's beauty on her wedding day and even regrets being a eunuch (p.484). His worst violation of his obligations as a monk is his anecdote about a cross which descended from the sky. We know that Täklä Haymanot came to

Māshāsha's house to cure Sāblā from the alleged magical 'spell' Bāzzabeh has put on her. The panacea, he says, does not lie in the recitation of some verbal formula or incantation but in a cross that descended from the sky as a reward for saying his prayers for fifteen days and fifteen nights standing on one foot. There is nothing that this cross would not cure, he tells Māshāsha (p.420). Having fulfilled the obligations of a monk to wear 'skins pursuant to what was written about John the Baptist'(5) and rightly making his dwelling in various monasteries until he came to Dima to live in the cemetery, Tāklā Haymanot has however, as we have seen, broken some of the other obligations. The sheepskin dābālo and cap; his residing in the cemetery and giving most of the clothing and food to the sick and needy, conceal the real, unholy, greedy, lustful, drunkard monk. When he comes to perform his miracle with the supernatural spell in his God-sent cross he behaves against 'the will of the law' that prohibits all Christians from engaging in, 'worldly works ... such as sorcery, witchcraft, the making of idols or their ornaments, the evoking of demons, sorcerers and dancers ...'(6) His anecdote about the miraculous cross and its cunning magical power puts the monk among sorcerers. His love for money, his getting drunk and flirting with Sāblā, trying to seduce her, puts him among ordinary mortals. The image we got when he was first brought by Moggasē, to do wonders with the unprecedented love of Sāblā to Bāzzabeh, was that of a holy, sacred, religious and righteous person. But we realise that he is far below all these saintly qualities. He does not even live by the orders of the books defining the obligations of a priest, let alone that of a monk. He behaves and lives like an ordinary mortal who in the presence of a beautiful young girl fails to suppress the temptations of the flesh.

There is a discrepancy between the lives and religious vocations of persons like Täklä Haymanot, Emmeru and Meherätu. However, they are not seen defending the feudal order directly. The role and character of Abba Moggäsē is quite considerably different from theirs. Moggäsē is the father confessor of Mäshäsha. He is described by the writer as a person who does not deliberately offend people or hold grudges against them; whose services and 'good deeds' have no limits; who respects the people and fears quarreling with them. However, because of his hastiness and tactlessness, we are told, he has failed to get the respect, love and credit that his 'good work' deserves; and people consider his presence a burden. This is regretted by the writer (p.111). Haddis may have thought of such a nice but hasty and tactless priest who despite his 'good deeds' to the community is considered a burden wherever he went. However, the events and dialogues that involve Moggäsē do not substantiate this view. His tactlessness is always manifest in the novel when he chooses to support Mäshäsha's opinions at the oddest of moments. Often, he is either ridiculed by Gudu Kassa or reproached and told to shut up by his god-son. His interference in discussions and his wrong timing while doing so make some of the relatives of the Fitawrari and Mäshäsha himself uncomfortable. The real burden actually falls on Moggäsē himself because the criticisms and insults thrown at him are humiliating. His position as a father confessor of the feudal lord in the community is persistently undermined by his ineptitude and lack of authority. Given what the writer tells us about him it is not surprising that he takes reproaches, ridicule and insults without fighting or answering back. Even when Gudu Kassa calls him '[a person] who cannot control his saliva', meaning disorderly in speech, behaviour, conduct and wisdom (p.112) he has no reply.

Moggäse should be given some credit for the small effort he makes to prevent a duel between Mäshäsha and the lord Assägē because of the latter's cancellation of his marriage to the daughter of the former. Mäshäsha takes the change of heart as an insult to his forefathers and the aristocratic blood he so proudly talks of. Moggäse attempts to persuade him not to go to a duel but to resolve the problem through discussion. He did not doubt that Assägē is the offender who should apologise to Mäshäsha and pay compensation. Mäshäsha does not agree to Moggäse's suggestion. The church interferes and stops the duel. Assägē apologises and Mäshäsha is admonished by the church governors. Another effort Moggäse makes, looking at it from his point of view, is when he tries to intervene in a row between Mäshäsha and the peasants. The peasants working on his land come to congratulate Mäshäsha on the duel but without bringing him any gifts. Mäshäsha complains and takes the matter seriously. Moggäse interferes and asks for mercy telling him that he has told them to contribute money and buy an ox to bring as a gift to their lord. Moggäse's role here may look as if he is showing concern to the peasants. What he is actually doing is appeasing his god-son at their expense. Moggäse is asking them to do what they already find impossible to fulfil (p.176). Later in the novel, when a messenger of the peasants emphatically states the growing inability of the peasants to pay imposed gifts, Moggäse intervenes and criticises the old peasant. Moggäse calls him a trouble-maker who does not have the conduct of an old man, and asks: 'Have you come as a messenger of the devil?' (p.215). He goes further than this when he agrees with Mäshäsha who said that 'a bull and a peasant' will not behave properly unless they are burdened with loads. That is to say, the more pressure you put on them the more docile they become (p.176). Moggäse acknowledges this and states that if the peasants are allowed to get away with not paying the gift now, nobody is going to ask them to pay any tithe or tax in the future (p.218).



However, contrarily, Māshāsha's lawyer and counsellor on his property, Kāñhazmach Akalu, advises him to let the messengers go because he agrees with what the peasants say. Gudu Kassa approves Akalu's advice and wishes that he was a pope as he would have liked to strip Moggāsē of his authority as a priest and make Akalu Māshāsha's father confessor (p.220).

Moggāsē's role as an ideologist of the feudal lord's actions against the peasants is laid bare when he argues that giving Māwaya enna Māttaya (i.e. gifts) during holidays 'to the elect of God', the aristocracy and the nobles, is ordered by 'the religious books'. He says:

What the lord (i.e. Māshāsha) has said does not have a single mistake. It is all true. God made the rich differently from the poor, and the ruler from the ruled; if the lord, the master, is unjust [and] if [he] wrongs the poor it should be the government and, above that, God who should question [what he has done]. The poor have never proclaimed their own law and become their own judges, going beyond appeal (p.273).

The statement offers a sham recognition that the rulers could be 'unjust' and oppressive. However, since they are 'the elect of God' they can be questioned only by Him or by the government, which in a way is taken as His representative in the secular world. The poor are told that they cannot question their masters even while they are suffering injustices of incalculable proportions. This is a fundamental principle the church and the monarchy have used to buttress their authority in the real world. Moggāsē is trying to do exactly that in Feger eskä māqaber when he justifies Māshāsha's actions against the poor peasants by his religious references. His reverence for 'the elect of God' surfaces again in another incident where he talks about people endowed with respect, dignity, and honour from birth or 'in their mother's womb [literal translation]' if they belong to a higher class. His servile attitude to Māshāsha is exposed to ridicule.

Bāzzabeh refers to Sāblä without using what Māshāsha regards as

the appropriate form of respect in the language. Her father takes it as an insult to his aristocratic genealogy. Although his wife and relatives take the issue lightly, Moggäsē refers to the Bible, defending Mäshäsha's view that Bäzzabeh should address Säblä with the form of respect and not as his equal. He should address her as anttu or ersewo and not as anchi or essewa since according to Moggäsē:

Veneration does not go with age. What God has created differently and with more honour from the other is respected from its conception (p.194).

Like the rest of the clergy, Moggäsē is a failure both as a traditional church intellectual and in his duty as a priest. While his allegiance as a Christian and a priest is to favour right against wrong, good against evil, we see him serving the oppressive interests of Mäshäsha, the feudal lord. He applauds the values cherished by the feudal class and struggles to substantiate them by vague references to religious books which he does not mention by name. Moreover he is depicted as a subservient priest who uses his priesthood to his advantage. His frequent visits to Mäshäsha's house are motivated by the abundant food and drink. There is no determination on his part to stand for any moral principle. Though we are told he is the father confessor of one of the most important lords in the region, all the evidence in the novel erases this picture from our minds, since he does not have any moral authority over any member of Mäshäsha's family. Consequently, Haddis's description of Moggäsē's 'service and good work' as 'boundless' (p.111) become problematic as this good work is not portrayed in the novel. Moggäsē takes his 'spiritual guidance' from Täklä Haymanot, the monk, believing that 'God is nearer to him [i.e. Täklä Haymanot]' than He is to any other priest or ordinary person (p.417).

In Feqer eskä māqaber, even the venue of the Church, where the faithful are normally expected to remain silent while liturgical worship is taking place, loses some of its sacred mystery. On the three occasions where Church scenes are depicted in the novel, members of the congregation behave improperly. The women's fondness for Bāzzabeh emerges in a conversation taking place during prayers. Teru Wārq and Bālaynāsh both claim that they have been recognised by him. They compete amongst themselves, each making herself the favourite of his heart. Ferēwa intervenes reminding them they are in a church. This brings the dialogue to a halt (pp.42-43). In another incident, two women Seneddu and Dābritu, gossip about Säblä and her delayed marriage. We are told of the scandal surrounding her life through their conversation: that Māshāsha does not want Säblä to get married to an ordinary person; that he keeps her in the house and does not allow her to play and mix with the neighbouring children; and that she is twenty-four years of age but because her feudal father wants her to marry someone of his class and respectable genealogy her youth was, and is, being wasted away. The dialogue between Seneddu and Dābritu takes place in the church when Divine Liturgy is taking place. Fitawrari Assägē's wink at Säblä in the midst of prayers in the church, and pointing at her by way of making a pass, is perhaps the most amusing example. When she fails to notice his gestures Assägē starts criticising her for ignoring him, and he does so as though he is speaking to himself. But he speaks so loud people standing around him could hear him say 'How wicked of you! You don't recognise when a person suffers. Please, at least, turn towards me once, and smile (for me). Come closer, please!' (p.135). It is his servant who rescues him by reminding him that people in the church are listening and watching what he is saying and doing. Despite his old age Assägē openly behaves like a sex maniac, and worse still he cannot control his desire even in the church where only holy things

are performed.

The portrayal of lust, adultery and secret love affairs is an indirect commentary on the behaviour of people involved in these actions. We have seen that among those who declare themselves religious, people engaged in the service of God and the faithful, Täklä Haymanot was easily overcome by the desire of the flesh. Re'esä Däbr Isayeyas is a secret lover of Mäshäsha's wife, Teru'aynät. He is one of the many lovers she has, and he secretly meets her at Wäyzäro (equivalent to Mrs) Laqäche's house. Isayeyas, the vicar, secretly commits adultery with the wife of the feudal lord Mäshäsha, defying Aläqa Bälaya's preachings on adultery, and above all, the writings of the saints and disciples, and the Ten Commandments (p,312). Bäzzabeh's friend, Fätlä Wärq, another däbtära, has a secret affair with Mäshäsha's slave, Habtesh (p.357). Mäshäsha, the lord, had many concubines and is still left with Yässärash who lives nearby his house in Dima. Fita wrari Assägē was married and divorced many times before he wanted to get married to Säblä. There is no doubt that he kept concubines as well. The marriages and secret lives emphasise the hypocrisy among the feudal lords and ladies, the priests and däbtära. They hear Aläqa Bälay's preachings about the purity of the institution of marriage and the blasphemy involved in committing adultery, but they flagrantly live the lives they want. The puritanical love Aläqa Bälay talks about is shown in the lives of Bäzzabeh and Säblä and in the marriage between Boggalä and Weddenäsh. But the incidents that involve a priest, a däbtära or a monk, or a feudal lord or lady, are incongruent with Christian belief and ethics.

In Addis Ababa, nepotism, favouritism and bribery are not practices that exclusively dominate the secular bureaucracies. In Feger eskä

māqaber they are part of the employment scene in the church. Bāzzabeh is considered for a job at the Rufaēl Church with the help of Dābtāra Mānbaru, who wants to repay a favour to the merchant who took him there. Alāqa Sergew has to be paid one hundred Ethiopian dollars if he is to get the seat of the qenē master at the church. Since the job is well paid only those with many years of service, influential relatives and enough money for bribes could hope to get it. Nevertheless Bāzzabeh's excellent professional training in the tradition of Qenē Schools earns him the job. Not only because he will be an outstanding teacher but also because his presence will bring honour to the church of which Sergew is the governor. Indeed Rufaēl becomes famous after Bāzzabeh took the chair of the master teacher there. Since his teacher in Dima, Alāqa Kenfu, was a famous qenē master, this added to his fame and attracting students to the church. But the leaders of the Addis Ababa Churches begin to compete amongst themselves to take Bāzzabeh away from Rufaēl. Churches like St George and others, which are richer than Rufaēl, offered higher fees. Alāqa Sergew thinks that offering his only daughter in marriage would be a means of tying Bāzzabeh to his family and thereby helping Rufaēl to maintain its newfound status as the most important Qenē School in Addis Ababa (pp.458-9). The competition and intrigue is as despicable as the marriages that occur among the aristocracy and the nobility for reasons of class alliance and strengthening political power.

The masters of qenē, zēma and nebab teaching in the traditional schools, hold the highest position in the intellectual hierarchy of the Church and the society but are not directly engaged in any secular or religious activity in the community. The priests, the monk and some of the dābtāra are depicted in these roles. As intellectuals of the landed aristocracy their role and influence is minimal in the novel

though their clumsy efforts are noticeable. As messengers of God and the Church they are depicted as persons failing to fulfil their religious vocations. Moggāsē lacks the moral leadership he ought to have over his god-son Māshāsha. His effort to become the ideologist of feudal oppression, though unheeded by the peasants, serves as a small indication of the alliance between Church and aristocracy. The hypocrisy of the monk Tāklā Haymanot, and the priest Meherātu; the secret sexual practices of members of the church such as Isayeyas and Fātlā-Wārq; the nepotism and bribery involved in the churches in Addis Ababa while employing a person to the services of the institution; these and other portrayals of these intellectuals of the church present an image of the religion far different from the one which the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church know from preachings in the church or their reading in the religious books. The traditional intellectuals in Feger eskä māqaber do not contribute to social change or enhance moral awareness among the laity.

Other issues appear in the picture given of the church and its intellectuals in the novel. One of these is the continued practice of certain beliefs and their impact on individual and family life. Another concerns the exemplary gesture the church makes towards removing doubts about its primary allegiance to the feudal lords rather than to the peasants. And lastly, the ideas and criticisms of the only dissenting däbtära in the novel, Gudu Kassa, are directed against both the members of the church and of the feudal order. In this character, Haddis points towards a possible resolution of social and religious disorder.

Feger eskä māqaber shows the miseries the practice of selät (vows, gifts, and sacrifices) brings to a family, and an individual whose life and service are vowed or promised. The first and only son of Bogalä and

Weddenäsh suffers from various diseases during the first five years of his life. He escapes death by luck. His mother cannot bear his recurrent illnesses. She vows Bāzzabeh, her son, to St Mary, St George, St Gabriel, St John, St Michael. Whenever he shows signs of illness she anxiously vows to one of the saints offering her son's lifetime of service to the church if his life is spared (p.30). A conflict arises between her and her husband on the question of celibacy that goes with the principle of vowing his lifetime of service to the church. Having failed to convince his wife in his earlier suggestion to make their son a farmer, Bogalä worries about the implications of Weddenäsh's vow. He would not have minded if his son's future was less bleak. He believes Bāzzabeh will remain an onlooker to the pleasures of life. Moreover, since celibacy debars his son from having children, Bogalä is worried about the more practical problems in life. Bogalä ponders, 'When my energy decreases I have him to think he would help me. When he gets weak like me whom will he think of? Oh ... with what does one exchange the happiness one gets when the one whom one has begotten begets, and the one which one has planted bears fruit?' (p.41).

For Weddenäsh, however, her primary allegiance goes to fulfilling her vow. It is not up to her to decide what is good or bad for her son. It is for the tabot (the Ark of the Covenant) to care for him. 'Let them decide what is good for him. Let them lead him on the right path.' (p.37) is her answer. That is why she cannot accept Bogalä's suggestions and his suspicion that one day Bāzzabeh might break the vow. Her angry reply 'Why should he destroy his virginity? He won't.' (p.36) is met by Bogalä's firm answer:

Wishing to get married and establishing a family. Why did I want to get married? Why does everyone get married? Is it not because they want to? He, also, may want [to get married] like everybody else. Didn't God create him like He did every-one else? (p.36).

His argument does not make her change her mind. The real difference between what each of them is saying can be summarised as a choice between being a 'regular clergy' and a 'secular clergy'.

Celibacy is not a compulsory requirement to serve as a priest in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Often, two options are available to the priest. He may choose to be a 'regular clergy' who is celibate or a 'secular clergy' who is married. There are, however, 'some particular churches' which demand the service of 'celibate priests exclusively'. (7) It is not told in the novel why Weddenäsh opted for, as it appears now, the first alternative. What she initially promised was to devote her son's lifetime service to the churches (p.30). In the debate about their son's future Bogalä criticises her because, according to him, she said Bäzzabeh should be 'celibate'. This is the first time the word appears in their argument and it is Bogalä who first use it. We do not know why making Bäzzabeh celibate was required to secure his health. The vow has further implications in the novel.

Her religious background and all the influences of the Old Testament practices in everyday life explain Weddenäsh's insistence on her son's service to the church. In her society God is regarded as the creator and destroyer of life. Punishment for moral offences include famine, drought and epidemics. This belief is treated ironically in the novel. There is no suggestion of any offence on the part of the mother, the father or the baby against the deity to cause Bäzzabeh's illness. It is the severity of the various diseases that attacked the baby that lead his helpless mother to turn to the gods. The saints and angels are the intermediaries between her and God. The object of her gift is to secure God's favour and this is not an unusual practice in many societies. E O James writes that sacrifice is a gift given to supernatural beings



when one sought their assistance (8). But one definition of the word 'sacrifice' adds another dimension to the practice:

(from Latin *sacrificere*, 'to make holy') the act of offering objects to a God (or other supernatural being), thereby making them the property of the God and thus holy. (9)

What 'object' does Weddenäsh offer to God and the angels? She does not slay a goat or a bullock. She did not consider seriously her husband's suggestion of selling their two oxen and giving other 'gifts' to all the saints. She vows that her son must remain a celibate. Bäzzabeh is the sacrifice and the one to be saved: her vow makes him the property of God alone, and this makes him holy in her eyes. This holiness 'kills' something in his life. It strips him of one of the most important aspects of his life as a person. The problems that arise from this condition affect his parents. The vow has long term consequences.

As he grows up and becomes famous among the congregation his beautiful voice earns him popularity, especially among women.

Simultaneously, since he had to undergo the constant harassment of being called 'son of a vow' by the village kids he begins to ask questions.

'What is a vowed son?'

'It means the son of a tabot ... Son of Mary, Michael...'

'Am I not your son and daddy's?'

'Of course you are. You are my son and your father's. We begot you. They [meaning the tabot] brought you up. When you fell ill we entrusted them to heal you and be your guardians. We vowed to them and they saved you. They are guarding you now.'

'How about the rest of the kids. Who guards and brings up Bäqqälä and Tayē?'

'Nobody guards them.'

'Who cures them when they are sick?'

'Nobody cures them.' (pp.44-45).

The short dialogue with his mother makes him feel special. He begins to believe that he was watched over by the saints and angels, but he soon discovers that these flattering answers are not true. He begins to

question what really lay behind the whole idea of selät and the name calling of his friends. In spite of the interest girls show him he realises he cannot have amorous relations with them. Withdrawal and seclusion become his new style of life. He stops going to group songs, dances and other plays. After struggling with these problems from the age of fourteen until he becomes twenty-one he finally decides to change. The moment of awareness starts when he asks, 'For how long does one live like this? After having created me just like any other man why does He [i.e. God] not want me to live like any other man? No. God did not want this. It is my mother.' (p.46) Bazzabeh reflects about the celibates in the past and present, who without getting married, having a family or their own property, and without participating in secular life have spent their lives serving the church and God. In an interior monologue he decides to make his own choice:

I know there were and there will be people who live the life that is allotted to me to live now. However they must have chosen that life. I do not think someone else chose it for them. If there are those for whom others have chosen their lives for them, that is not right. Whatever the case I do not like, choose, want this kind of life. Let God pardon me when I say, "It is not life" (p.46).

His freedom begins when his choice forces him to leave his home and parents. However, his resolution to go away forbodes the misery of his parents. Weddenäsh's insistence to abide by her vow costs her and Bogalä a great deal during their old age.

In its belief and practice, selät (sacrifice) is used as one of the means of developing the story in the novel. When Bazzabeh leaves his birthplace, Mankussa, rebelling against the life imposed on him, he meets Säblä. The love story between them in Feger eskä Mäqaber is based on his flight from the practice when he abandons his home. This event has

a far reaching significance in the novel. One of the main characters in the novel is introduced through his early life and family background. His reason for fleeing is embedded in the belief systems of the church and society. Bazzabeh's plight reveals the impact of the belief systems on the individual and the family. If Bazzabeh had lived up to the expectations of his mother he would have remained celibate, serving the church all his life. This is not right as far as Bogalä, and later Bazzabeh, are concerned. His defiance of the vow and the choice of his own life, exposes him to the gods' wish to take revenge. This was Weddenäsh's concern, a lost battle now. But there is another socially important point in the novel. After Bazzabeh flees Mankussa, his parents struggle with difficulties. It is not accidental that Weddenäsh suffers most.

Weddenäsh blames God, since she believes it was He who gave Bazzabeh the courage to abandon his parents, and who made her blind. Weddenäsh had hoped that her son would be by her side to look after her in her old age, and to bury her when she died. All this was not to be, and she holds God responsible for her son's flight and her misery. But Bogalä is more cautious. He reminds her of her refusal to change her vow and explains that Bazzabeh's action was inevitable. He blames her for both her son's departure and the blindness she brought on herself by weeping day and night. He wants her to stop her rebuke against God, since He might make worse things happen to her. Whether as God's revenge or otherwise, worse things do indeed happen to her. Bogalä falls seriously ill and she finds herself alone. She questions what she reckoned was God's doing, at times accusing Him:

Why is God campaigning against me? What is the reason for his readiness to attack and rob me? Please, tell me, you people. Tell me. After making my son flee and my eyes blind what is the reason for His preparedness now to snatch away from me this

one who is like son, father, mother, and eyes to me? Have you ever seen, heard [or] known such atrocity? ... (p.51)

Returning to her husband she finds him dead. She too dies after seven days. Both die without being looked after by their only son. Weddenäsh is ignored by the community and by the priest. Her neighbours are sympathetic at first but they refrain from visiting her when they hear that Bogalä suffered and died from a contagious disease. Mehrätu, the supposedly selfless priest, is afraid to go to her and console her. The only one, Bäzzabeh, who could have shared her miseries abandons her and her husband to fate in his own struggle for freedom. The novel censures the belief in the mother's vows made on her son's behalf. The vows wreck family life and the tradition of sharing burdens in the family. The events in the novel make this criticism clear. This aspect of selät is tacitly condemned but the belief system of which this practice is only a part is not questioned.

There is an underlying suggestion that the hand of God is present behind Weddenäsh's grief, agony and desolation. This is not directly stated in the novel, but dramatised through the repeated warnings of Bogalä, who asks his wife to stop complaining against God. She does not stop lamenting and her misfortunes augment. As her miseries escalate she remembers what Bogalä had said in one of their arguments and she gets scared. He had said, 'Do not think God is short of miseries. Since He can accumulate (gather) lots of bad things and tribulations, tie them up together, and load you, you had better stop complaining at Him.' (p.55) She reflects on what her deceased husband had said and regrets that she did not consider his advice seriously. She wishes that they could live together again since she has now decided to heed all his advice as if they were 'the words of God' and the angel Gabriel (p.55). She addresses her apologies to the dead body of her husband, and regrets the

decisions she took to make Bāzzabeh live a celibate life, and her complaints against God when life became unbearable. Although these two acts are related to the ideology of the church and the belief system the society practices, the novel does not challenge this fundamental principle and the institution that represents it. The blame and criticism seem to be directed against the lay believer, Weddenāsh, rather than at the Church and its priests whose duty is to enlighten and educate the people. She learns the hard way - through her own bitter experience. The church and its members are not seen doing anything useful to eradicate such beliefs. The novel does not hold them responsible for their inaction. While indirectly criticising the practice by the effects it produced, responsibility is left to the individual, lay Christian who considers, as Weddenāsh does in this case, the slightest deviation from the existing religious practices to be a dangerous idea. As for Haddis, the writer, since his inclination to criticise certain aspects of a problem without connecting them to their possible source is one of the main characteristics of his work we are not caught unawares by his point of view. We shall indeed pursue this argument later when we discuss the conflict between Māshāsha, a warlord, and the peasants on his land. Let us now see the role the church plays in the duel which is to take place between two warlords. The presence of the tabot at the duel is a good example to show where the true loyalty of the church and its governors lies in the society. The events leading to the duel explain the necessity in the story.

The train of events leading to the duel begins with Fitawrari Assāgē's asking for Sāblä's hand and changing the terms of the marriage after her father, Māshāsha, had accepted the previous proposal. Originally he was prepared to marry her with all the honour due to a virgin girl. He later changes his mind and suggests that he take her as a Fätt, a

woman who has been married before and divorced (p.100). He does this because his advisers tell him about the rumour which spread the idea that his third marriage to a virgin is aimed at creating another occasion to collect money and gifts from the poor. The best way of removing these doubts, they said, was to change the conditions and offer to marry her as a woman rather than as a virgin girl. Māshāsha takes this as an insult. Though he was very angry and uncompromising at first he later accepts the advice of his relatives and agrees that Assägē should apologise and pay compensation. This decision was reversed because his daughter Säblä behaved unusually in response to her father's remark against Gudu Kassa, calling him 'unhealthy' in the mind. She answers back saying, 'It is a person whose mind is in disorder, and imbalanced, who says Aya Kassa's mind is off balance ...' (p.128). She cries and leaves the room. Māshāsha misunderstands the true causes for her anger and believes it is because Assägē changed the condition of marriage. But her reasons are based on her friendship and admiration for Gudu Kassa whom everybody, especially Māshāsha, always feels free to insult. This misconception makes Māshāsha change his mind. Though many persons tried to intervene, Māshāsha insisted that the insult to his honour and the pride of his forefathers could only be cleansed by blood. He says 'even the waters of the Nile and (Lake) Ṭana' cannot remedy the insult (p.141). Unwilling to stain the name and history of his family he challenges Assägē to a duel. But Assägē regrets the silly mistake he has made and tells Māshāsha in a letter that he has been misled by his advisors. He declares himself guilty and pleads to Māshāsha to name any punishment he likes as he would be more than happy to accept it. Since Māshāsha is prepared to accept nothing less than a duel he decides the time, place and weapons to be used.

It is here that the church is brought into the picture. Māshāsha's

advisor, Kännazmach Akalu, knowing that the duel can only be stopped if the Church intervened, arranges a way of stopping Mäshäsha with the two church governors of Bechäna and Dima. Assägē has already agreed that the church should mediate as he does not want to fight against a person he had always admired and respected since his younger days. But the arrangement interferes with the habitual religious practices of the people in Bechäna and Dima. Customarily the day of the duel, St George's Day, we are told, is a day celebrated on November 23rd E.C. at Dima each year by the people and priests coming from the surrounding regions (pp.155-56). However, this time, the doors of the church were closed when people went for prayers. Neither the yearly colourful celebration nor daily mass were taking place. We find this out with Mäshäsha when he goes to Church, as he usually does when he goes to war or hunting, to say his last prayers before the duel. Having found the compound deserted he takes it personally and says 'Is (St) George disappointed with me?' that such an unusual thing has happened? (p.155). He believed having that audience with his favourite saint guaranteed victory. He takes it as a bad omen that he cannot get the blessing of St George (pp.156-57). The inconvenience was created because the tabot was taken to the place where the duel is to take place. The two tabot were escorted by the governors of each church. The priests and the faithful who went to these churches to celebrate the Day were led to Färäsmēda, the venue for the duel, instead. Other priests from neighbouring churches and many people from these areas followed the tabot. The purpose of all this is to assist the church in stopping the duel. As Mäshäsha approaches Färäsmēda with his escort they contribute their share by shouting 'egzi'O!', a word used while appealing to God, a high official, or a master. The two aläqa, the governors of the two churches, speak in turn, telling Mäshäsha that it is because of people like him 'who know

Christianity in name and not in deeds'(p.167)that the two tabot went to Fārāsmēda, thus closing their gates. St George, Māshāsha was told, has come to save him from the 'eternal damnation' he is about to bring upon himself by destroying life. Alāqa Neway warns him that even his own soul (Māshāsha's that is) belongs to God for 'the soul belongs to nobody except God' (p.168). The speeches made by Alāqa Neway of Bechāna and Alāqa Ṭe'umä Lessan of Dima make Māshāsha abandon the thought of the duel. He seeks the mercy of the tabot by kissing the feet of the two persons carrying it. Assägē begs for pardon, falling on Māshāsha's feet, and the two giants are reconciled.

The position the Church has taken to stop the duel is based on the principle that destroying life created by God is sinful. Moreover it is argued that the tabot and the laity came looking for 'the lost sheep' following the teachings of Christ(p.169). However, these justifications are in conflict with the professions of the church in another sphere, since it does not quote these principles to intervene and stop Māshāsha's military campaign against the peasants on his land. When he ravaged and looted villages, killing people, the church, which preached a high regard for human life, did not appear at the scene. It seems it matters whose life it is that is in danger. One of its members, Abba Mogässē, supported Māshāsha's campaign against the peasants. He agreed with the feudal lord that if the peasants are not made to pay the māwaya, the gift, they will never pay it any more. Mogässē's justification of māwaya by quoting from a religious book, the Church's silence when Māshāsha deployed his army against peasants who proposed peaceful settlement to the problem they had with him, and the role the church played in the duel between the warlords, clearly show its primary allegiance to the feudal lords. Moreover, the discrepancy between the



preachings and the deeds of the church is not restricted to the church alone. It is also witnessed in the words and deeds of the two lords.

Though the catechism of the church governors prevented the duel, it was not put into practice or even thought of when Mashasha invaded the peasants. On the other hand, although Assägē, along with Akalu, secretly arranges for the mediation of the church, he does not see the problem in terms of sin and righteousness. Nor does Māshāsha. We are told by the writer that each of them begins to claim victory to himself as soon as reconciliation has taken place. Assägē believes that a duel with a dying old man is not worthy of a brave warrior like him. He regards it as shameful, like fighting against a corpse. He thinks there is more honour in 'kissing the feet of a corpse' and asking for pardon 'taking a mediating tabot' to the duel rather than in 'killing a corpse' (p.172). Māshāsha sees : the plea of the masses of people; the mediation of the two tabot, which he regarded as the mediation of God himself; the interruption of the usual sacred church ceremony on his account; and Assägē's kissing his feet asking for mercy as signs of his glorious victory. He imagines honour for himself and his forefathers as a consequence of his bravery in duelling with Assägē, who is younger and stronger than he (p.174). Though the church intervened to stop the duel on religious grounds, the two warlords do not see it in those terms. They hasten to claim victory rather than reflect on the duel as a sinful act of destroying life, and appreciate that it did not take place for that reason alone. For both Assägē and Māshāsha, gallantry and heroism are more important than the moral issues raised in the speeches of the two church leaders.

The voices of dissent in the novel are well represented among the various characters who are affected by the religious belief and the social

order that dominates the society. Gudu Kassa, Bāzzabeh and Säblä have been robbed of their choice in life. Bāzzabeh suffers because of his mother's vow and Māshāsha's idiosyncracies, and Säblä, because she is the daughter of a feudal lord who prides himself in his ancestry. Despite the fact that each belongs to two conflicting classes they suffer from the enslavement imposed on them by the social and religious system. Gudu Kassa is seen as an outcast because he does not agree with the ideas and deeds of many people in the community. These three individuals are oppressed in different ways, however. Their oppression unites them in their struggle. The dominant individual spokesman of dissent in the novel is the intellectual character, Gudu Kassa.

Gudu Kassa is a highly educated and enlightened dābtära whose knowledge of the New Testament, especially, is highly regarded (p.121). He can also boast about his blue blood, if required, as he is the son of Teru'aynät's elder sister. But since his father died when he was a child and his relations did not like him he was not brought up within the palace tradition. Instead he grew up with his mother, educating himself in church schools. He preached that the system he lived in was old, useless and needed to be changed. Since his opinion differed from those of the priests and the governors of churches, he dissociated himself from the church. Having no worthy friends to share his views with he created a 'private world'(p.123)and lived in it sometimes talking to himself and laughing on his own. People, especially those who gather around Māshāsha, take him for an eccentric, abnormal and bizarre person, hence the nickname, Gudu, 'alien, bizarre, strange'. He in turn called those who argued against change: 'slaves of tradition', 'animals', 'rocks' (p.122). The following quotation summarises his view about the social system:

The system of our society : the organisation, habits, customs and laws, is not made like a living social system; it is like a lifeless heap of rocks where one is piled upon the other; since it is made in such a way that the one on top lives by oppressing the one below, and the one underneath by carrying the one above, it is inevitable that the one below will recede as time passes; when this happens, an improved system of living beings, which depicts mankind as better than rocks, must be established so that the whole edifice does not collapse. When our social system was established, that it was made the way it is now may have been useful for the society at that time. But it is obvious that it is not useful for our society today. Be that as it may, any system is made by man so that it serves the society in its social life; that it [the social system or institution] was made to enslave and govern the society is like making an idol and putting the idol one has made in God's place and worshipping [it] (p.122).

Our purpose in quoting Gudu at length here is not to merely give him a chance to speak in his own words. The main task is to present one of the central statements which encapsulate his views about the social system. Feger eskä mäqaber can be analysed on the basis of what he is saying in these lines. They may be taken as expressions of the main principle around which his ideas and most of the events in the novel are constructed. However, this should not suggest any minimisation of the role of the church and the religious beliefs and practices it fosters in the community. After all, the system Gudu Kasse criticises, and urges to change, gets its effectiveness and dominance partly because of the ideological leadership of the church. However Gudu's criticism of the church or Haddis's portrayal of this institution, does not go very deep. Gudu speaks with anger that the church has become a 'den' for 'bandits' and 'robbers'. Most of the priests, apostles, governors (aläqqa), monks, deacons and däbtära are, he believes, liars who present themselves as sorcerers, magicians, and saviours, each hiding his true nature in his turban, cap and däbälo (tanned sheepskin). He broke with the church, he states, because he does not want to praise the name of God with these hypocrites (p.428).

His criticism, though severe, is not without limitations. Noticeably the two most important issues Gudu Kassa raises concern the social system and its oppressive values, and the church and the religious practice of the clergy. In both cases he poses as a critic who does not participate in any meaningful action to change or reform these situations. His view about the peasant rebellion hardly differs from the moderating role of the lord Akalu, Māshāsha's lawyer and advisor, except that he is more straightforward and harsh in his utterances. It is true that unlike many people around him he has thought and reflected on the values and malpractices he condemns. However, he has not dared to put these ideas into practice. He surrenders to the force of the 'bad tradition' he speaks so much about. His learning and conviction to the church do not take him beyond sheer verbiage for we do not see him making attempts to alleviate the major problems he speaks about. He tells us that his efforts to change the church were stopped because his opponents spoke about his eccentricities and cast doubt on his credibility. We neither know what those efforts were nor do we find him fighting back in some sensible but practical way. He is more of an onlooker than an active rebel. Society has drawn away from him because of his ideas, which many find bizarre and unacceptable. He has accepted their verdict and continues to live a secluded life, occasionally becoming involved in verbal battles but without devising practical ways of confronting this 'banishment'.

However, he has made <sup>a</sup> few individual positive attempts in his own family. He marries Enqoppa, a slave girl given to him as a present by his mother on the day he completed his studies. While his relatives are searching for a girl from a noble family he shocks them by marrying Enqoppa (p.330). However, he is not yet successful in making her a wife

who sees herself as an equal to him and shares his views without constraint (p. 372). He has tried to educate his two other male slaves enabling them to read and write (p. 371). But he tells Bāzzabeh that his efforts to change their attitude about themselves and life was not possible because they believed what others said about them rather than what Gudu Kassa has told them about their equality with others. They accept 'that they are not equal with others, that they are created for men and not as men' (p. 371) because many believe this and made them believe too. All this occurs, as far as Gudu is concerned, because of 'customs' and 'traditions'. He sees society divided into rich and poor, blacksmith and slaves, and other categories, by tradition. Different values, norms of behaviour and status are attached to all these groups by custom only. For example, the slave is for sale, the blacksmith is to be scoffed at, and the poor to be ruled by the rich, for no other reason than it was always thus (p. 334). He describes this order of things as 'a bad tradition based on injustice', and regrets the fact that any suggestion to gradually reform the condition of society is considered as an act of betrayal, to be punished severely (p. 334). He says that the so-called bearers of tradition either prepare the noose for his neck or alienate him from the community by calling him 'mad', 'eccentric' etc. When all the rich and the poor, the blacksmith and the slaves, the oppressor and the oppressed join hands and condemn a person for his ideas, Gudu states, the only choice is to think of the 'useless proverb' which says 'A truth which does not agree with tradition (habit, custom) is always a falsity' (p. 335).

Gudu Kassa sees the people in the community as 'prisoners of this tradition' (p. 335). He exposes the problems of society at various places in the novel. His perception is more clear and enlightened than that of the intellectual characters in the novels we have seen so far. However,

his analysis does not include recognition of the processes enabling a social order to function and perpetuate itself, its ideology, and the economic and political power of the rulers in that system. He does not delve deeper into the issue to get nearer to the true picture with all its complexities. Like the peasants in the novel who accept the payment of gämäta (a kind of tithe) through 'tradition', the enlightened Gudu Kassa explains the existence of the rich and poor, and the condemnation that comes from them, in the name of 'tradition'. In the search for an answer, Bāzzabeh wonders whether it is God, or, as Gudu says, 'tradition' that is responsible for the state of affairs in life, where those who have never wronged others are punished, and the evildoers continue their offence (p.463). He asks whether God allows injustice in society and how it is that He, 'the wisest of the wise', made this kind of judgement that even 'a village judge' would not make? (p.463). His theological speculation does not give him any clues of why social injustice dominates human life. Neither does it provide him with answers to his own personal predicament : whether God is going to make his life celibate or whether He is going to make the reunion with Sābāā possible. Whatever happens the outcome will be taken by him as God's decision (p.467). Both Bāzzabeh and Gudu Kassa fail to see the real forces that shape and cultivate the thoughts and beliefs of people. Having failed to see the reasons for the hostile reactions of the rich and the poor to his new ideas, Gudu Kassa deals with the problems of conserving these ideas.

Indeed the society may have no way, or need, for that matter, of preserving the novel ideas which it regards as useless in the first place. But Gudu Kassa is worried that this lack of a means of preserving these ideas is decisively important. Though the society considers them 'untimely' at a certain time they may be 'timely' and beneficial sometime

in the future. Gudu Kassa believes that such kinds of ideas, although they cannot change the harmful thoughts and deeds of a certain epoch, may be useful, if preserved, when the right time to apply them comes. If they are not preserved, his ideas and deeds will disappear with him when he dies. He rightly believes this is a sad predicament (p.370). Haddis's introduction to Feger eskä mäqaber and Gudu Kassa's dismay emphasise the need to preserve ideas : new and 'useful ones' in Gudu Kassa's view (p.370), and both good and bad cultural heritage in Haddis's view expressed in the introductory passage in the novel. This system of thought extends onwards into the idea of the survival of cultural forms, and self-preservation or individual survival Haddis's Ityopya men aynät astädadär yasfällegatal? (What kind of administration does Ethiopia require?) was written in 1955 E.C., three years before the publication of Feger eskä mäqaber, and published at the time of the revolution in 1966 E.C. In this work he has preserved his new and 'useful ideas' until they were 'timely' in his judgement.

Another personal venture of Gudu Kassa's was his challenge to Mäshäsha's obsession with his royal lineage. He confronts Mäshäsha for a more practical reason than he does in many of his verbal exchanges with him. The challenge is very important to him because he believes this outdated idea has damaged the life of a person he cares for. We are told by the writer that it is Säblä who listened to him without scorn even if the religious, philosophical, administrative and other issues he raises were difficult for her to comprehend (p.124). This is not surprising considering the fact that it was Gudu who stood by her side when the values of the system made her a prisoner in her father's house. She could not live like Habtesh, the slave girl, or like any of the ordinary peasant girls. Her youth and beauty are wasted because

of her father's snobbish aspirations. The society was unsympathetic to her predicament. It tortured her with rumours and hearsay instead. It is logical and sensible that she should like Kassa, not because she is his cousin but because he is 'the enemy of her enemy' (p.124); they both hate the 'old order' (p.125). Although Mogässē, the godfather of the family, taught her the Gospels, the Songs of David, the Laudation of Mary and other Biblical texts, Haddis tells us that it was Gudu Kassa who shaped her mind (p.125). Certainly some of her bold, indignant and biting responses to her father (p.410) do indeed sound like his. Because he cares for her, Gudu argues that she chooses her own husband. But his aunt, Säblä's mother, warns him that the shame he has brought to his relatives by marrying a slave cannot be repeated by marrying Säblä to a man of low birth. Kassa argues that what truly matters is not whether one is highborn but whether he is rich and has knowledge. He disagrees with Mäshäsha on the question of high birth but appears to agree that wealth is important. Mäshäsha believes that the ideal husband for his daughter must be of aristocratic blood and wealthy. Gudu tends to think that wealth and knowledge are the two qualities that bring honour to a person (p.412). He resists Mäshäsha's snobbery about his royal lineage.

Mäshäsha enjoys tracing his family tree to the great kings of Tegray, Shäwa and Gondär, and claims that he deserves at least the second highest rank in these provinces if not become a king in one of them (p.83). He seldom refrains from describing his daughter as a descendant of the Emperors Gälawdēwos (1540-1559) and Susenyos (1607-1632) (p.86), and of Queen Menttewab (p.126) and Queen Säbläwangēl (p.184). He considers his stay in rural Dima as a life among a herd of 'farmers and oxen' (p.84). Answering his wife, who asks about the family background of a person who asked to marry his daughter, he says 'His father is not a man, it\* is

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\* 'it' should have been 'he' in the translation. The intended pejorative meaning is best rendered if we use the former.



a farmer' (p.85). For Mäshäsha 'a peasant is created for the nobility and not like them' (p.27). Genealogy is so important to him he tells his wife that the time they live in is a sad one. He says, 'Wherever you go do you think a person who has a grandparent can be found? What you may find is one with a father, at most' (p.86). Gudu Kassa calls the couple 'strangers who live in a world that has passed a thousand years ago' (p.116). He charges rebukingly:

How is it that your bone and blood is different from [that of] others? Doesn't your blood stop [flowing] when you die? ... Doesn't your flesh fall off? Doesn't it decay? Doesn't it rot? Doesn't it putrefy? ... Doesn't your bone disintegrate and decompose? ... (p.119).

Though it is occasioned by the discussion about Säblä's marriage, Gudu Kassa's criticism of their ostentatious pride in their ancestry cuts deep into their aristocratic pretensions. His belief in the individual who struggles against poverty through his own labour, and the idea that he should get more respect than a person who squanders the wealth he inherited from his rich and highborn parents is not palatable to Mäshäsha, his wife and Mogässē. Returning to the matrimonial issue he asserts that only if they become remorseful and self-reproaching and change their snobbishness, or if both of them died, would Säblä's life be straightened. The solution to Säblä's problem seems to lie, according to Gudu Kassa, in either moral regeneration or the death of her parents (p.119). These are not, however, to be taken as accidental alternatives the writer or Gudu Kassa<sup>has</sup> suddenly stumbled upon. The choice between moral rejuvenation and ultimate destruction is the main idea pervading the novel. The conflict between the peasants and Mäshäsha, and the resolution of this confrontation further illustrates the collision of ideas and their resolution.

The conflict between the peasants and Mäshäsha is a prime example of class antagonism in Ethiopian creative literature. One of the many

novelties in Feger eskä mäqaber is its exposition of the dissenting voices in the community. Active dissent or expression of it is no longer restricted to the intellectual character. Gudu Kassa, Säblä and Bāzzabeh, who have all gone through various levels of church education, rebel both as individuals and as a group. But it is the first time in the Ethiopian novel when the oppressed peasants are depicted rebelling, as a group, against the ruling lord of their own community. They do so without soliciting the assistance of an intellectual to lead them. They choose their own leader and achieve some success in their struggle against Māshāsha.

The source of friction between them is māwaya or mättaya, a gift the peasants take to their lord on certain feast days. The peasants have already given Māshāsha bullocks during the Mäsqäl festival and Christmas. They cannot give him any during Easter because of the problems they have faced with their harvest and cattle (p.211). Māshāsha arrogantly asks who actually created the doctrine that anyone who has given māwaya during Mäsqäl and Christmas should not give during Easter. Since he considers his gult (10) (Land) as 'the price of blood' he claims he spilt at different battles, he attacks them for refusing his offering (p.211). The peasants' messenger criticises Māshāsha's aggressiveness and points out that the lords cannot live without the peasants and they without them. He describes their relationship as symbiotic and explains the problems they are facing. What they are saying is that they cannot pay māwaya for Easter because most of the crops they planted have been damaged by pests and the remaining harvest has been hit by hailstones (p.212). A lot of the livestock was killed by an epidemic. They are asking him not to make them pay when they are suffering so much loss. They assure him that they will fulfil their

obligation by paying the gāmāta, a kind of tithe determined and paid to the lord after official assessment of the yearly harvest and income of the peasants working on his land (p.215). Besides these, payments must be made to the meslānē and cheqa shum both in cash and free physical labour. But if their masters insist on asking them to pay what they do not have then they might even get to the point where they cannot pay the gāmāta, especially if the calamities they are facing escalate (p.213). They add that even if they decide to give these gifts in the future it is not because they are obliged to do so. It will be because they believe it is a gesture of good will (p.214).

Māshāsha takes their inability to pay him as 'rebellion' (p.216) despite the messengers' reassurance that their peaceful mission merely sought the lord's sympathy and understanding. Māshāsha orders the messengers to be chained and taken prisoner. Akalu interferes because he agrees with them that the only obligation on the peasant is the gāmāta (p.219). Māshāsha, who considers Akalu's handling of the peasants and the current problem rather soft, does not see the risk of confrontation with the peasantry if he imprisons their messengers. His rebuttal of Akalu's indication of imminent danger is:

Who has the peasantry plotted against and won? The peasant does not like weaklings. He loves the tough. You only have to tighten your grip. If your grip is strong the peasant does not stop being milked; you can milk him until your gan [a large container made of clay] is full. The peasant weeps and moans; if he finds a coward he threatens. But if he encounters the resolute and bold he surrenders at last. He pays what he is asked ... It is said in the proverb that "The peasant may be without something to eat but he is never without something to pay [to his master]" (pp.217-218).

This is the driving principle behind Māshāsha's dealings with the peasants. But Akalu, his advisor, believes that one can rule the peasants better with tact. He fully understands that they can crush anyone if they rebel in their own vicinity. He mentions three prior cases where they have done so in their controversy against three lords (p.218). For him 'The

peasant is patient like the earth. Just like the earth, it is ploughed, dug and stepped on. Just as the earth refuses to produce when it is 'fed up' (i.e. has given all that it possibly can), even if one ploughs and digs it, the peasant also refuses to pay when he is fed up and has had enough [of oppression]. After that, there is no power on earth, unless perhaps from the sky, to force him [to pay] (p.218). Akalu's view is regarded as surrender by Māshāsha. As a result he insists that the messengers be imprisoned. Gudu Kassa applauds and agrees with Akalu's approach to the peasant issue. He warns Māshāsha that if he imprisons the delegates he will not get an ounce of grain from his land. If he decides to use force against the peasants, Gudu tells him that he will himself be beaten up by the peasants and taken prisoner (p.221).

Māshāsha, however, ignores their warning and orders that they be imprisoned. But the delegates ask him to see a letter the peasants on his three gult (land) have sent to him before he imprisons them. The letter stated all the problems the peasants are subjected to and their decision to pay only the gāmāta (p.225) from now. The tone of the letter is still polite. They are seeking and begging harmony and reconciliation rather than violence. The only threat in the letter, which is understandable, is their warning that if anything happens to their delegates that the officials he sent to the peasants will face the same fate (p.225). They point out that it is only because he has power that they respect and fear him. Without that authority they tell him he is 'like one of the poor old [peasants]' among them (p.225). If he insists on using his power to attack rather than protect their interest, they state that they will take it that he is breaking the covenant that makes them tithe-payers to him (p.226). This means that the peasants would fight against them as if they were ordinary bandits if Māshāsha or any of his officials collect

the tithe (p.226). Infuriated by the contents of the letter Māshāsha prepares for an armed confrontation if they refuse to pay double the māwaya they were at first supposed to pay.

The messengers report the humiliation they suffered at Māshāsha's house to the peasants, and deliver Māshāsha's final message. Infuriated peasants suggest that they tie him up and hand him over to the government. Others want to kill him and make him an example for bad lords like him (p.253). They see his decision to confront them as an opportunity to terminate the relationship with him. They regard it as a chance to organise themselves and take over the administration of their region on issues that are local, like settling controversies that may arise among them. Māshāsha's officials take news of the decision of the peasants to him and he prepares to attack. He takes their refusal in a rather comic fashion. He sees it as an invitation to take all their livestock, butter, honey and money (p.259) comparing this to the three fattened bullocks he asked them to pay originally. He jocularly says, 'There is no kind [person] like a peasant' (p.258). Gudu Kassa takes his stubbornness as a signal to die and meet his ancestors who died four or five hundred years ago and found peace and solace there. Since he has perpetrated crime against the peasantry Gudu sees justice in his getting killed by those he has wronged (p.275).

Māshāsha sets out with sixty men, fifty of them armed soldiers (p.277). Knowing he is determined most of those who advised against the military campaign, including Akalu, joined him with seventy armed and <sup>a</sup> few unarmed men (p.288). When he reaches Ennamora, one of his three gult, he finds the place deserted, with only women and children in sight. He ransacks the place, killing bullocks and sheep, and plundering their houses.

Children and women are imprisoned and tortured to make them tell where the men have gone (p.289). He goes to Gulit after three days and does the same there for two days. The writer comments 'since it is easy to "extract" a lot of blood from his back [because he is whipped] rather than "extract" a little secret from the mouth of a peasant'. Mäshäsha does not get the information he wanted (p.290). Though Abäjjä's, the peasant leader, strategy was to capture Mäshäsha and his army without bloodshed (p.301) the sacrifice made turns out to be too much. Nonetheless the peasants finally lead Mäshäsha and his soldiers into a trap, which they enter. They are all taken captive by the peasant leader (pp.299-30). After seven days of captivity Assägê is ordered to take Mäshäsha and the delegates elected by the peasants under the leadership of Abäjjä Bäläw. What began as plunder and the peasant's defence against an armed campaign was to be settled in court in the capital of the province. It took more than a month before it was settled in favour of the peasants. Mäshäsha was stripped of all his rights on his three gult (land) and asked to pay two hundred Ethiopian dollars' penalty (p.395).

It has been indicated that moral regeneration of those who rule is an important component of reform in Feger eskä mäqaber. Failing to submit to moral rejuvenation means risking the utter destruction of the social order and <sup>the</sup> nobility's own ignominious death. This was Gudu Kassa's solution to Säblä's problem and her parents' role in it (p.119). The same theory is proposed in a more general sense in Gudu's speech about the nature of the social system and the way it ought to be transformed (p.122). The suggestion was that the rulers must minimise their greed and oppression unless they want to see the destruction of the whole system. The peasant rebellion is treated by Haddis on the same basis. Although Mäshäsha's arrogance and stubbornness costs him his right on his gult

the real message of the novel is not to encourage peasant uprisings as a solution to the sociopolitical problems of the community. The principal effort seems to be strengthening the writer's campaign for moderation and compromise as opposed to greed and arrogance on the one hand, or armed rebellion on the other. If Māshāsha had agreed with his advisor Akalu there would not have been any war and hence no victory for the peasants. The peasants achieve what they did not demand at first, not because they fought for it in principle from the start but because Māshāsha wanted to get what he did not deserve. They are portrayed as a group that is prepared to fulfil its traditional obligation to pay the gāmāta, so long as the recent imposition of māwaya is cancelled. They did not raise the most vital issue in their relations with Māshāsha. The source of conflict between him and the peasants should have been the practice of gāmāta and the power that goes with it. However, this key problem is not raised by the peasants until the controversy around māwaya gets really sour. Even then it is mentioned as a possibility that could take place if the calamities do not subside (p.213). For the first time the peasants are seen raising the fundamental problems and proposing solutions to the sufferings they live through daily. It all comes after they were provoked by Māshāsha's excessive demands for returns in spite of the catastrophe that has struck their cattle and harvest. Before that, their messengers addressed their case politely and with respect. They strive to convince him that they do not in any way wish to violate what tradition ascribes to him. They are prepared to pay what their fathers and forefathers have paid to his ancestors. The tone of their presentation sounds like a family appeal rather than that of negotiation between conflicting sides. There is no clear-cut and sharply marked class antagonism in their speech at the beginning.

Since similar situations are observed during the conflict between Assägē and Māshāsha one wonders whether people's attitudes towards him are influenced by reverence for his old age and admiration for his war record. The role kinship plays in the society may account for these attitudes. Haddis's portrayal of these scenes in the novel brings to mind Gäbru's words about 'the stabilizing role of kinship' in Gojam. He wrote that 'Both the lord and peasant believed or shared the notion that they were "linked by common ancestry"'(11). Moreover, as Professor Crummey points out 'lack of rigid stratifications'(12) in the society, and the commonality of intimate 'class contacts' may have influenced the tone of their discussion and the nature of their demands. But this harmonious tone and peaceful approach starts to fade when Māshāsha's notion to overburden the peasants augments.

Haddis begins to show us what the extent of their power and strength could be . The peasant messengers and their leader Abäjjä Bälāw emerge as mature, patient, careful and wise people. The control they have over the peasants indicates the acceptance they have among the people. The preparedness of the people to fight against Māshāsha's imposed payments shows their determination to challenge his authority. They are strong, organised, and believe in the cause they are fighting for. It is clear from the grievances expressed in the letter that the peasants have considerable awareness of the extent to which they have been exploited. It is also clear that Māshāsha's greed, arrogance and abuse of their patience and loyalty was more than they can bear. The conflict between Māshāsha and the peasants on his three gult depicted in Feger eskä māqaber is witness to their preparedness and ability to take far more serious steps than the writer allows them to. We sense from their speech, organisation and action that they cannot be stopped by the



Fitawrari and his escort. They no doubt could have challenged him on the gāmāta they are paying him and all the physical labour they render freely. They could have questioned the military, political and moral authority he exercises on them in the region. The portrayal in the novel permits these possibilities. Nevertheless, having shown us the strength and tact of the peasants, Haddis holds them back from going all the way to fight for complete emancipation. Maybe, in his heart, the writer does not trust the orderliness of the peasants. Yet their avoidance of Māshāsha's violence, at the expense of the torture he inflicted on their children and wives, proves their discipline. Perhaps he is afraid that if peasants take up arms and fight for their basic rights the whole social structure will crumble. This probably means complete anarchy to him which violates his advocacy for peaceful change without demolishing the established social structure. But he knows that the ones on top will keep oppressing the ones below unless the oppressed show them what they can do if situations are continually aggravated. So he wants to show people like Māshāsha that the peasants can be an invincible force, while still limiting the nature and extent of their struggle. He seems to be saying that the peasants can and do rebel when they are fed up with oppression; and whoever fails to loosen their chain of slavery risks being crushed in the conflict. However, the peasants revolt because they are provoked by Māshāsha. Their rebellion does not arise from their awareness of the social, economic and political conditions they live in. It is only when life becomes completely unbearable and all peaceful options are confronted with violence that they stand and fight. They are portrayed in this manner because the writer's main purpose is to change the rigid conservatism and arrogance of the gult owners. He wants them to achieve peaceful reforms before things go out of control. The solution therefore has a moral

direction rather than a military or political one. This moral consideration has to be made by the lord Mäshäsha and by implication the ruling classes of the time. It must be emphasised that the novel unequivocally reveals that when the peasants do rebel there is nothing people like Mäshäsha can do to stop them. But simultaneously they do not get victory through sheer force. To end it thus would be inviting revolution as far as the novelist is concerned perhaps. Their case had to be taken to court to get its final solution. The decision the peasants had already made when they rebelled is what is later presented as the decision of the court. There is a lesson here too.

Haddis Alämayähu wrote Feger eskä mäqaber from a position of compromise. The ideology that informs his novel is present in his other works and in a recent questionnaire he completed for the present writer. Nowhere does he suggest anything revolutionary or slavishly accept the existing conditions. In his book on the meaning of schools and education he refrains from favouring wholly the traditional church education or the modern, western education introduced during Menelik's reign. Since he believes that the survival of the society is based on the history, laws, customs and traditional administration that evolved since its establishment he argues that the new schools should take the existing systems of church and social education into consideration. The new schools should give considerable attention to this heritage and ensure the positive ones are enriched and maintained while the bad ones are removed. Otherwise, says Haddis, a modern education imposed without assessing its relevance and use to the needs of the country cannot be called Ethiopian at all. (13) The argument for a 'sensible' and practical compromise, or middle way, is also present in Haddis's introduction to Feger eskä mäqaber where he discusses his views on the 'old culture'. He writes: 'an old culture is not all thrown away or entirely kept

because it is old. The good and useful will be kept; that which can be improved is improved; that which cannot be improved is thrown away.' (p.10) Even the culture he regards bad, he says, must be removed from practice and not from the works of history and literature. If this is not done, he says, it will be difficult to know the history of administrative, political, economic and social development (p.10). More evidence can be cited from a reply he gave in the questionnaire. Asked to whom he is writing he answered 'To the members of the Ethiopian society belonging to the upper and lower classes: so that those found in the lower class know their right and struggle to be owners of their right; [and] those in the upper class, if having recognised the right of the lower classes do not make peaceful reconciliation, before it is too late, to make them understand that they will plunge into grave problems. I write to both sides.'(14) Moderation is the key point be it in education, culture and socio-economic change.

Haddis sees the society first endogenously. Whatever comes from outside the society he argues must be adopted in a way that satisfies the needs of the society. In Feger eskä Mäqaber, in his choice of the sources of change in the novel, his perspective is fundamentally endogenous. The peasants of Ennamora, Gulit and Gorgor rebel to achieve their goals. They elect their own delegates in their dealings with Mäshäsha, and their own leader in the war against the same. There is no member of the emergent Western educated Ethiopian who tries to tell and show them what to do. The peasants who are the real sufferers of Mäshäsha's policies organise and challenge him in their own way. Even Gudu Kassa of Dima is not involved in any direct way in the struggle, and does not assume leadership. Leadership is given to Abäjjä Bäläw, a person who is taken as an ordinary shefta, a bandit, by Mäshäsha and his type.

A shefta is an outlaw who goes to the forest and lives by robbing peasants and merchants. The reasons for taking to banditry are varied. A peasant dissatisfied with a local government representative, the decision of a court against him, which he reckons unjust, may lead him to commit a crime and take refuge in the jungle. A person might take revenge against one who had killed his relative or kin, or finding his wife committing adultery might kill both the adulterer and his wife, and start living as an outlaw. Any ordinary crime one has committed might make him decide to be a brigand, so long as he does not want to give himself up to the legal institutions that exist. Banditry has also been a form of struggle to political power. In his 'Banditry and resistance: noble and peasant in nineteenth century Ethiopia' Donald Crummey states that evidences in the Ethiopian chronicles and the writings of European travellers show that banditry was largely used by the noblemen as a weapon of ascendancy to political power. What Hobsbaum calls the 'social bandit' is, according to Crummey, 'a rare bird' in Ethiopia since 'characteristically the social bandit "takes from the rich and gives to the poor", and scrupulously observes the rights and interests of the peasants'. (15) Though the sources divulge many cases of shefta activity marked with armed outlawry the socio-political ambition behind them is regarded insignificant in the article. Thus in the case of the noblemen shefta, the institution, is a weapon for political power and in the rest of the cases it is largely an institution of robbery and crime. In all cases, however, Crummey seems to emphasise that both in the nineteenth and twentieth century Ethiopia, 'Next to merchants, peasants were the main victims of banditry.' (16) He cites many examples of peasant sufferance and their way of coping with bandits.

However, the shefta portrayed in Feger eskä māqaber is a popular hero among the peasants in his locality, though referred to as a shefta

by Mäshäsha and a few others. Abäjjä Bäläw was famous for governing Goncha and Sar Meder better than the government appointees, as Balambaras Metteku notes (p. 230). Haddis writes that the peasants believe that he was sent by God, like Jesus, to help the suffering poor; no bullet could kill him, because in all his battles he was protected by the wings of St Michael who rode on a horse alongside him during a war; and the government officials believed he wore a magical spell around his neck and that was why he did not die (pp. 230-231). The officials consider he is God's visitation against them. For the poor people he is a protector and guardian who stays as a shefta for seven years, and is loved by children, by the old and by men and women. Lots of oral poetry was composed and recited for him (p. 231). But how and why did Abäjjä become a shefta or more appropriately 'a social bandit'?

He did not become a shefta because he was personally ill-treated or wronged. His 'banditry' is a rebellion against the injustice committed against a helpless individual. The servants of Shemales, a lord, steal the cattle of the peasants but a certain Antanah Makkurya is falsely convicted and his cattle confiscated. He is imprisoned and dies in gaol. Abäjjä sells his cattle, buys a gun and goes to the jungle to revenge the blood of this poor peasant with whom he does not have any consanguinal relation. He kills the lord Shemales first and after that he plays the role of the law in Goncha and Sar Meder. He protects merchants and peasants rather than plunder and rob them as an ordinary shefta would do. When they are robbed he tracks the criminals and reclaims the property for the owners. Besides the peasants in these regions went to him to resolve their controversies. Most of what Hobsbawm says about social bandits applies to Abäjjä as well. A J Hobsbawm writes that social bandits;

are peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but also remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation<sup>17</sup>.

Abäjjä's reason for being a shefta is a vendetta against the rich. His seven years of shefta life are remembered as years of good service to the poor. His return to normal life following an amnesty confronts him with Mäshäsha and his outdated demands. In his role as leader of the peasants he tells his prisoner Mäshäsha 'unless I find it compulsory I do not like to see when blood is spilt' (p.301). He talks of defending the law which is made to protect the lives and property of the poor which is being used to plunder their belongings and destroy their lives. He treats his feudal captives nicely, giving them food to eat immediately after they were captured (p.302). He even talks to Mäshäsha admiring his heroism in the past, and denouncing his personal acts as barbaric and savage (p.302). Haddis Alämayähu has created a committed peasant leader with a strong sense of justice instead of the intellectual leaders portrayed in Addis Aläm, Ag'azi, and Araya. That is why we said Haddis attempts to give an endogenous solution to an endogenous problem by involving the people directly concerned with it. This is one of the interesting insights in the novel.

6. Self-introspection and the struggle to save oneself: the post-college intellectuals in Bä'alu Germa's Kadmas Bašhagär

Conflicts between the traditional way of life and the modern, between the old and the young are not new themes in the Ethiopian novel. We have shown that Awwäqa, Araya and Gudu Kassa confronted these problems to a higher or lesser degree depending on their situations. In their effort to formulate models of progress they faced various problems. The novelty in Bä'alu's Kadmas Bašhagär lies in the fact that these conflicts are constructed around a new central theme. Bä'alu's heroes do not struggle to change Ethiopian society. Their task is to change themselves first. The society neither sees nor understands their endeavours and difficulties. It has resisted the struggles of those who wanted to change it. It now stands in the way of those who try to change themselves. Bä'alu reverses the issue.

Educated Ethiopians have always been led to consider themselves as agents of change and progress. The educational and political systems injected the students with ideas of responsibility and the great tasks that await them. Since the opening of the first modern school in 1908 the role of these students as the future leaders of the country has been emphasised persistently. Many Ethiopian writers, essayists and novelists alike, have also written on this theme. In Kadmas Bašhagär, however, the intellectual who was hitherto depicted as a saviour in Addis Aläm, Araya and Feger eskä mäqaber is now a patient himself. Bä'alu suggests that changing oneself first is the most important revolutionary step the intellectual ought to take. He has to save himself before he embarks upon the task of saving his society.

Bä'alu Germa's Kadmas Bašhagär is the story of two intellectuals, Abärra Wärru and Haylä Maryam Kassa. In the story, the former predominates over the latter. The two have known each other since elementary school. They do their masters degree together at the University of California five years before the events described in the novel. For five years, after their return from America, they work in the civil services. Twenty years of friendship, the similar predicament they find themselves in, and the ambition they come to share are the cementing factors in their relationship. The only difference is that Abärra has problems related to the family whereas Haylä Maryam does not. Apart from that, both characters are portrayed as intimate friends sharing views about their society and especially their interest in art and literature. Haylä Maryam may appear more realistic than Abärra in his aspirations and more stable in his mind. But at the end of the day both of them are dreamers.

They are two frustrated intellectuals trying to make their lives meaningful to themselves. Resigning from his government job to become an artist is the meaningful act Abärra wants to embark upon. Continuing his writing while keeping his job is Haylä Maryam's option. The writer, Haylä Maryam, does not appear to have many problems standing in his way as he pursues his goal. However, the artist confronts a variety of problems coming from different sources. During the effort to overcome these obstacles we are given glimpses of the nature of the social and personal problems the intellectual grapples with.

The main intellectual character in Kadmas Bašhagär, Abärra, strives to achieve independence and to be an artist. The idea originally comes from his writer friend. In his attempt to realise these ambitions he



struggles against problems emanating from his own personality and those imposed on him by others. Amidst the interplay between these sources, two main varieties emerge, social and individual. The social problems come from two main directions: his family and the other educated characters in the novel. Abärra's upbringing and the educational system add to the intricacy of his predicament. An examination of Kadmas Bašhagär from these perspectives reveals the contradictions that threaten Abärra's ambition to be an artist. Through a close examination of the text we explore Bā'alu's competence in handling the theme and expose the technical problems that emerge. The lack of sufficient material to expound the predicaments of the characters creates difficulties for the interpretation of the erratic turn of events in the novel.

The traditional values of the society which deter Abärra from achieving his goal are presented in Abärra's dealings with his elder brother, Abatä; his mother, Bafäna; and Elfenäsh, Abatä's wife. These characters unite in their wish to see Abärra getting married and begetting a child. The prominent actor ceaselessly pushing towards the realisation of these demands is his brother, Abatä. The conflict between him and Abärra is multifarious.

Some of these problems relate to what Abatä regards as Abärra's failure in his job and the neglect of his responsibility to look after the family. Abatä is concerned over Abärra, his younger brother, who lacks promotion as a result of continually changing his job. He works with the Ministries of Education, Information, the Interior, and the University, during the five years of his working career. This restlessness is a disgrace to the family and their late father, Fitawrari

Wärqu (p. 58). Abatä disapproves of Abärra's friendship with Haylä Maryam, whom he sees as a bad influence, and regrets that they are not friends with Gädlu. He regards the successful career of Gädlu, Abärra's classmate, as a good example which Abärra should emulate (p. 58). Moreover he compares his own 200 birr salary with Abärra's 800 and criticises him for not improving his living conditions. Abatä is bitter about his brother because he thinks Abärra is not fulfilling his obligation to himself and the family. He earns four times the salary of Abatä, yet he has not built his own house and does not even help their mother financially. He has left the responsibility to his elder brother. Besides, Abatä believes that Abärra has ignored his indebtedness to his older brother who helped him complete his education. Though he has always regarded him both as a brother and a son he now feels that the closeness that should exist between them is absent. He goes as far as to ask Abärra's close friend, Haylä Maryam, to mediate between them but without apparent success. It ends up aggravating the tense relations between him and Haylä Maryam. Abatä begins to hold Haylä Maryam responsible for the growing distance between him and Abärra. He is jealous of their intimate friendship and believes that Haylä Maryam will lead Abärra to his ultimate doom (p. 19). He says to Haylä Maryam: 'You must be the devil standing between me and my brother' (p. 23). However, Abatä's constant pressure on Abärra about his job and promotion, helping the family, his earnings, and his recklessness in general, is only one side of Abärra's family problem.

The other duty all members of this family urgently want him to undertake is getting married and fulfilling the task Abatä was unable to accomplish. Abatä is more than fifty years old (p. 24). He has been married six times but is unable to get a child. All the evidence

in the novel points towards his sterility. For a traditionalist like him this is more than a personal disaster; the family tree must be perpetuated. He will not allow any obstacles to hinder it. That is why he does not compromise over the demand he puts to Abärra. There is no conflict or confusion in Abatä's mind. He knows what he wants though he is not capable of doing it. Therefore putting pressure on Abärra to get married and bear a child (or children) is his responsibility as an elder brother. Moreover he has the backing of their mother, Bafäna. She wants Abärra to get married to a woman of high birth and give her the chance to be a grandmother (p. 60). The harassment Abatä's present wife goes through every time she meets Bafäna has led Elfenäsh to join Abatä and Bafäna in the campaign to make Abärra accept marriage. Since Abärra has a soft spot for her he feels committed to her. He sometimes regards getting married for her sake as an act that would relieve Elfenäsh from the nagging she faces daily in the family (p. 62). Nonetheless, for a long time, he accepts the pressure he is undergoing.

Another aspect of Abärra's problem springs from his attitude to people working in his office and the working conditions there. Here Bä'alu attempts to tackle some aspects of the crippled bureaucracy of the time. The behaviour of the educated persons working in a government office is presented as part of the problem his intellectual hero grapples with. Tässämma, the gossip, is a smoker without matches. Under the pretext of looking for a light he goes from one office to the other, to talk about people, and especially his mother. Anyone wanting to spread a rumour relates it to Tässämma and he takes care of the rest. Bä'alu sarcastically states that Tässämma has got a phobia against sitting in one room, within the confines of four walls, on his own (p. 68). Abärra's secretary, Sännayet, is either knitting or visiting

her other friends in other offices. She says the ladies have 'a coffee association' (p. 73). Abärra finds this disgusting since he thinks the women are doing in the office what their mothers do in their neighbourhood (p. 73). But he forgets that the men gather in his office for the same reason. The drunkard Balcha takes two tots of an alcoholic drink before going to work in the morning. He is always moving from one office to the other to avoid the police and his creditors who look for him for various unpaid debts. Some of these pursue him for the house rents he failed to pay. To others he owed money for drinks he consumed on credit, or money he has borrowed and not reimbursed. Bäqqälä Roba is always smartly dressed. He wears perfumes. His specialty is to move around the offices talking about his conquests (p. 20). The secretary and the three civil servants are paid for a job they do not do. The description of one of the offices where 'the Trinity' as the writer calls them (p. 97), meet, evokes a repulsive setting. Bä'alu writes: 'The smell from Balcha's armpit and his shoes, Bäqqälä's perfume, and the cigarette smoke have started giving the office [Abärra's] a smell that does not exist in this world' (p. 70). He means the office stinks. The smoke is stifling. Everyone is having coffee and talking about 'the deficiency of the government' (p. 71). Abärra already finds these people disgusting. He cannot help intervening in their discussions, which he regards more as an excuse to blame others rather than oneself.

He challenges their continuous reference to the 'them' in the government. He asks:

“ You keep saying 'they'; who are they? And who are we? Instead of saying 'they', let's turn and look at ourselves ... Coming from Castelli or Lombardia, Ras or Ityopya Hotel it is us who pass by, belching at the beggars. Knowing that our compatriots dig the soil, eat whatever they get from it, die and get buried on that [very] soil without

scarcity going away from under their noses, even for one day; it is us who shower barrages of applications, morning and night, for an increment of salary on the top of eight and nine hundred birr (p. 72).

Abärra adds that he, his friends and their like are greedy. They do not co-operate when they are asked to make contributions for development. He is reiterating what Haylä Maryam told him about the permanent dependency of their type on their family and the government. He finds their complaints, which are not presented to the reader in the novel, baseless. He considers their criticisms and hearsay as their way of hiding their own defects and deluding 'their dirty conscience' (p. 72). His point is not taken seriously by his colleagues. Tässämma ridicules him by asking the others to applaud Abärra's speech. Another takes it as a deliberate scheme to interrupt the story he came to tell and jocularly asks Abärra whether he is 'groomed for appointment?' (p. 73). The dejected Abärra's only reply is yet another sarcastic interjection followed by a question put as though to himself: 'Ityopya's hopes ... But whose fault is it?' (p.73). It is a sad commentary he is attempting to make on the educated class who were, at the time, and before that, referred to as 'Ityopya's hopes!', especially in public addresses. This problem is raised in the debate between Abärra and Haylä Maryam in their effort to understand themselves and their place in society.

Abärra's other problem in his office comes from the pressure put on him by the Minister of the Interior. The minister calls him to his office and tells him that he admires his competence. He advises him not to try to get everything done at once but rather to take things easily and slowly. If he adjusts as advised, the Minister counsels him, he has a promising future. He suggests that getting married will facilitate promotion, since family responsibility is regarded as a

guarantee of acceptability in society. The Minister was, of course, asked to mediate between Abärra and his brother. Abatä knew the Minister. Having failed with Haylä Maryam he resorts to applying pressure on Abärra by sending the highest official in the Ministry. But what disturbs Abärra most is this role of being a mediator that ministers accept and play. He reckons that it is impossible to run a modern administrative system efficiently if ministers waste their time in reconciling contestants and mediating and listening to every person who comes with a complaint. He finds this very alarming (p. 80).

In addition to the problems that emerge from the family, his colleagues and the minister, Abärra struggles with his own problem. He strives to make an important decision about his life. We are aware from the beginning of the novel that Abärra is involved in self-searching. We see that he leads a comfortable life within the standards of his society. He lives in a furnished house, owns a car, goes to the big hotels for entertainment and drinks whisky. Material well-being does not, however, bring spiritual peace. We find him, at the beginning of the novel, struggling to find the meaning of his life. His self-introspection and his challenge to the meaning of the educational system indicate the emotional and intellectual turmoil he lives in. In a monologue he says:

“Who am I? What am I? A thing. And a valueless rotten thing at that. Who decided that I should be a thing? Myself? Or the society that produced me? Or [is it] the educational system I passed through? An educational system for what! What is the purpose of this system? [Is it] to make [one] gallop superficially? For what aim? The purpose of education was to make every individual know himself and his natural talent. But who am I?” (p. 8)

Abärra is asking important questions: was it the education he was given at the schools that was deficient? Did it or did it not prepare him adequately for life and work? Was the education he received in the

universities he joined locally and abroad superficial? He is attempting to understand himself though it is frightening when he says 'Who am I ... A thing?' (emphasis added). He sounds as if he has found hollowness inside himself. The voice is that of despair, dissatisfaction and emptiness. There is no sense of direction for answers yet. He is beginning to brood over his past, present and future, wondering whether he belongs to the forces of creativity or destruction. A good portion of the novel is a literature of repetitive self-examination and lamentation. There is yearning for a new faith. But it develops, not deepens, gradually and slowly in the work. Haylä Maryam's role is substantial in the process of search.

The search is not restricted to asking questions about the educational system. They attempt, though this is unclear to Abärra, to exchange views about what they should do in order to save themselves from the confused and frustrated life they lead. Haylä Maryam tries to bring some light into Abärra's tortuous, and tortured, introspection. Since he is the more realistic of the two, in the sense that he does not find himself repeatedly asking the same questions as Abärra does, he seems to know what they should do. He tells Abärra that they are not politicians and 'They are wasting their lives and time in vain' (p.32). Abärra agrees but adds that he thinks it is fate that 'has thrown them on this wrong path' (p. 32) and his tone suggests that there is not much that could be done about it. The only thing he can do is merely to exist. Since he believes that 'Thought has no end' (p. 6) the most important point is to get on with living. Abärra thinks 'Today' is the only time one is sure of. 'Tomorrow' is unpredictable (p. 8). For Haylä Maryam their predicament has nothing to do with fate, life or chance. He asserts that they are each responsible for the path they have taken and believes that only they

can improve or change the situation. For Haylä Maryam, the world is not totally dark and the individual is not wholly doomed to nothingness. Possibilities are many. One has to make a choice and be fully committed to it in order to achieve something worthwhile. Haylä Maryam sounds more enterprising and optimistic. He seems to understand their situation better than his friend, who does not see any way out.

Haylä Maryam believes the crux of the matter lies in the way they were brought up. He reflects on the problem with a sense of guilt, frankness and self criticism. He views their story, his and Abärra's, from childhood to the present, as a story of dependency and regards it as one of their main flaws. He argues that they were first dependent on their families; then on the government, both for their education and jobs. He asks, 'So far, what have we replaced? We have always taken.' Haylä Maryam thinks that the educated class have sponged off society and he believes it is time to change, since: 'There is no revolution better than campaigning on ourselves' (p. 33). But what is Haylä Maryam's notion of revolution? He elaborates it to Abärra as follows:

"The purpose of my life is writing and yours is [the profession of] art. You know it. I know it. Those who express themselves with their talent knowing the call of their soul[s] are god[s]; they are not a burden; they are not parasites; they are gods. ... So man's final aim is to be himself a god. Righteousness and heaven are the symbols for this if religion did not put them beyond the grave" (p.33).

There are two reasons behind Haylä Maryam's proposal. Firstly, he seems to be saying that since as educated persons they have always been dependent they should now attempt to free themselves. They should reverse the usual practice of taking from society by giving back. Secondly, he appears to suggest that the talented ones should not squander their time in jobs they cannot make any contribution in. They should rather pursue their artistic inclinations and through expressing themselves stop being 'parasites'. In fact if they made profound



advances following 'the call of their soul[s]' they can even be 'gods'. In both cases the individual gains independence and repays his debt through the work he produces in art and literature. However the choice is not equally easy and palatable to both characters. Haylä Maryam can manage to keep writing without having to resign from his job. It is not the same for Abärra, on whom the situation imposes other constraints.

The issues here concern his restless and indecisive character, and the serious doubt he entertains about his competence as an artist. The writer tells us that Abärra cannot take one issue at a time and think through a problem to the end. He describes Abärra's mind as one that 'gallops from one idea to the other' (p. 6). The urge to express himself remains unanswered because 'he has kept buried inside him the hope of becoming a poet, a writer, or an artist' (p. 6). Conscious realisation of his talent came after he started working in government offices. He doodled whenever work was slack. He became aware of his real talent as a result of these hasty drawings but he regretted that it was too late. The question he put to himself, 'Where have I been all this time?' (p. 65) bears the mark of his belated awareness which <sup>has</sup> led him to frustration, drunkenness and seclusion at the moment. However, as the novelist comments '... he could never be the [same] old Abärra after' (p. 65) the enlightenment he got about his talent. After his discussion with Haylä Maryam about taking his art seriously he looks at the casual drawings he had made of his secretary and his colleagues. He observes that 'the lines have no life'. Since he cannot relate himself with them he tears them up and throws them into the wastepaper basket. Tässämma asks him what he was tearing and his answer is 'My life'. This act is symbolic. It means he has

moved a step towards regeneration since in destroying the lifeless and meaningless drawings he is destroying his meaningless, frustrated past. The incident does not pass without reminding him of his childhood interest in art and the painful experience that followed it. He remembers the occasion when his elder brother snatched<sup>away</sup> his paper and pencil on finding him striving to draw his priest teacher. Abatä thinks it is wasting the money spent in buying the stationery. He punishes him by pinching and slapping him. The local priest joins in by making Abärra's punishment a warning to the rest of the children. But the crisis over art intensifies Abärra's disposition and his recollection of the frustrated attempts of his childhood add to his irresolute behaviour.

Bä'alu shows that his indecisiveness and constant procrastination of the steps necessary for the fulfillment of his goal result from the multiplicity of the problems he is facing concurrently. Haylä Maryam thinks that Abärra's postponement of his resignation is deliberate, but the problems are not as simple to Abärra as they appear to be to Haylä Maryam. He must decide to leave his job and accept his friend's offer to pay for his subsistence as the only means of survival. Settling his debts was also part of the problem he had to solve. The pressure from Abatä over marriage and children, and his commitment to his job do not relax. And now, falling in love with Lulit brings a new problem. The decision to get married further complicates the family finances. On top of all this he has grown to be unsure of himself as an artist since he began considering resigning from his job. Though he keeps telling himself, very assertively at that, that he is fed up with being a fat, 'blood-sucking' parasite 'without conscience' (p. 128), he is afraid that it might all be a sham. His opinion about himself as an artist might be a falsehood appearing to be real and genuine.

What if he fails? That is the dilemma he has not solved as he tells

Haylä Maryam:

"... What if I try and it does not work? What if I find it to be an empty feeling of creativity, a bubble of soap which dies with a small breeze of air ... rather than being a genuine natural talent? ..." (p.140).

He is not sure whether this is, as Haylä Maryam says, because 'genuine talent is shy' or whether it is because 'a mind that has gone mouldy, rusty and numb cannot suddenly rise and take command of itself' (p. 140). Even during the last of his working days he has not resolved these doubts. As he waits for his last salary payment, uncertainty casts shadow on the effort he makes to salve his conscience through dedication to art. Added pressure from his colleagues following his resignation makes the situation less bearable.

Although resigning from his job is taken as a move towards obtaining individual freedom and getting an opportunity to pay his debt to society, it brings more psychological constraints and financial problems. Since it came immediately after the arrival of a letter notifying him of an increase in his salary, Abärra becomes a centre of attention. His secretary cries as she types his resignation letter. Perhaps she, at least, thinks he is a good person (p. 133). Tässämma cannot understand why Abärra is not happy with the hundred birr increment he is given. He fails to see that Abärra is self-critical about earning a salary without fulfilling ones duties. His reaction to the increment is passive because of remorse. However, Tässämma, who thinks Abärra is literally mad, says: 'It is God who created the poor; it is not you. Let them scream, looking up [towards Him]. Why do you bother?' (p. 130). On the other hand Abatä thinks the only remedy is to take Abärra to the site for drinking Täbäl, holy water (p. 142). He takes Abärra's inability to settle in his job as a sign of madness. He finds it more

difficult to believe Abärä is sane when he resigns immediately after a salary increment. The rumours Bä'alu presents in the novel confirm this view though they give different reasons for Abärä's action. Few think that he has a fixation to leave a job when he is promoted. Some say 'they', meaning Abärä's enemies, perhaps, must have given him medicine to make him hate promotion. Others consider it is sheer 'foolhardiness and childishness' (p. 142) which makes him run away from responsibility. They believe he needs a good advisor. Those who do not understand him at all say it is because he loves money so much and is unhappy with the increments he gets that he keeps changing jobs. At a time when Abärä is struggling to discover whether he is a real artist or a charlatan, these rumours unsettle him. Looming over them all is the rumour Tässämma spread in the office. On the day of Abärä's resignation he tells him that he has heard that Abärä's wife was seen going to a hotel with another man. Abärä does not believe him at the time but the rumour, and a subsequent quarrel with his wife, make him consider committing suicide. Thinking that his marriage has broken, he anticipates how this might contribute to the gossip about his restlessness and impatience. He imagines people calling him a person who could keep neither a job nor a wife. But he is not strong enough to carry<sup>out</sup> his resolve (pp. 137-138).

Bä'alu presents marriage as a central issue that constantly threatens his hero's search for individual freedom. However, there is no instance in the novel where Bä'alu expresses his own opinion about the beliefs or actions of the characters point-blank. As a result his views about the marriage are not expressed in a direct manner in the novel. He either describes the events that happen or expresses the thoughts that prevail in the minds of the characters. There is evidence, however, where what a character says in a dialogue, in a

direct speech, is repeated elsewhere, almost word for word, in Bā'alu's comments rendered in reported speech. For example, when Haylā Maryam insists that Abärra makes a decision about what he wants to be Abärra says, 'I have decided ... I cannot remain a rotten cabbage because my brother wants a child ...' (p.84). But he gets married. Bā'alu tells us that Abärra is delighted because he observes the happiness his marriage brings to his brother and his sister-in-law. He adds that Abärra ponders on whether he is going to remain a cabbage by pre-occupying himself with marriage and children (p. 112). There are other examples where Bā'alu's comments coincide with the thoughts of his characters.

Detailed analysis of these instances reveals the extent to which the novelist controls his characters, and manipulates the story and the reader. Stylistic features indirectly disclose Bā'alu's opinions on the issues raised in the novel. These opinions are seldom met with in Kadmas Bašhagär because Ba'alu scarcely judges the actions of his characters in a straightforward manner. What we do here, therefore, is to find the place of marriage in the entire context of the main theme of the novel.

Abärra regards marriage as an impediment to his striving to become an artist. Marriage has been developed in Kadmas Bašhagär as one of the main areas of conflict between Abärra and Abatä. Haylā Maryam has warned that Abärra will be a vegetable, not an artist, if he marries. Both, Abatä and Haylā Maryam, demand that Abärra leaves some kind of heritage. They differ in their propositions. For Abatä the heritage is the perpetuation of the family and as Haylā Maryam states, his beliefs and ideas, which will pass into posterity through his child.

Abatä's sterility intensifies his pressure on Abärra. On the other hand, Haylä Maryam encourages Abärra to be an independent artist who will leave something valuable for posterity. In the midst of all this, Abärra becomes acquainted with a girl, Lulit. He meets the girl at night, on the day when Haylä Maryam proposes that Abärra should leave his job to give his time to art. Two important events take place on the same night and at the same place : an acquaintance with Lulit which could probably develop into a more meaningful relationship, and the embarkation on a new life as an artist. Abärra endeavoured to achieve the latter but paradoxically his whole life is ultimately determined by the former.

Of the two challenges put to him that night, the one he took most lightly has the strongest effect on his life. This challenge relates to Lulit. Lulit was not the kind of girl he could easily win and take. She seduces men and once they are trapped she abandons them. Sännayet, Abärra's secretary, says Lulit likes to see men suffering because she believes they are cruel (p. 77). Lulit calls herself 'an idol of the cruel' (p. 90). She is determined to make all men surrender for all of them are considered cruel, and 'all the cruel ones must bow down' (p. 90). Humiliated by men since her youth she sets out to take her revenge on them. Her stepfather, who came home drunk every night and beat her mother, made her hate men. Then a man rapes her and leaves her in the forest where he found her fetching water from the stream. Her stepfather accepts compensation and soon after her mother's death weds her to another man. The person whips her brutally when he discovers she is not a virgin. Embittered by her experience she decides to take vengeance on the male species and comes to Ambo, and then to Addis Ababa, escaping from her village Tullē. With the help of some persons, one of them a foreigner, she joins a girls' school and later

graduates from a commercial school. It gave her the money to buy the clothes she needed and the opportunity to meet men and take revenge. Her weapon was her femininity and her beautiful body. The body that some men used and abused would now be a sword to punish others. That was the genesis of Ba'alu's femme fatale. Many have suffered and the most recent victim is Gädlu. He is entirely subservient to Lulit. He pays her house rent, buys her clothes and pays most of her expenses. Ironically he gets the money from an old rich woman he has married for her wealth. But Lulit does not give him the love he desperately wants. She punishes him with her ravishing body, taking her clothes off in front of him. She delights in his suffering. She came to Abärra for the same conquest. Since she first went out with him she has wished to see him surrender as Gädlu does. Besides, she is fed up with Gädlu, and yet his surrender gives her a psychological boost. But for Abärra, whom the writer describes as a womaniser, 'taking two-three women a day' (p. 103) to his house, meeting Lulit was a disaster.

Abärra's acquaintance and subsequent marriage to Lulit aggravates his predicament. Although his relation with Lulit brings an extra pressure on him, he accepts her as a possible solution to all his problems. Before his resignation from his job, his affair with her takes an unprecedented turn when she asks him to marry her. Even after being told about his plan to quit his job she insists on her request. She wants to get away from Gädlu, and Abärra is her only resource. Bemused, Abärra asks, 'Is she a gift sent from heaven or [is it] the machination of the devil?' (p.108). She, however, surprises him even more by telling him that she prefers living with him in poverty rather than in comfort with one who has 'sold [betrayed] his conscience' (p. 124). She promises to support and facilitate the

realisation of his artistic venture. Abatä believes Lulit is not 'his equal', meaning she is ill-bred, and is of unknown pedigree. Moreover he tells Abärra he has heard that she is licentious (p. 113). But Abärra discounts his disapproval and marries Lulit for three reasons: for love, for his art and for his family.

Marriage brings some temporary answers. It revives interest and hope in everyone concerned. It looked as if an ideal marriage will terminate Abärra's unceasing confrontation with one kind of adversity or another. Inside Abatä's eyes, glimmers of hope begin to sparkle. His only advice now is to beg Abärra not to use any contraceptive. Not only because he believes it is unchristian, barbaric and goes against God's will, but because he has hopes of seeing Abärra's child (p. 111). Elfenäsh's face and life has grown full of enthusiasm. The tension between her and her husband Abatä has subsided. Abatä is no longer a frustrated drunkard staying out late. Abärra must be wondering how wrong Haylä Maryam was when he said 'The choice is simple - holding on to your salary, getting married and breeding children; or knowing your talent and become a creator? ...' (p. 83). Resigning from his job and getting married to Lulit was for Abärra like killing two birds with one stone until he discovers the secrets behind his wedding.

The obstacle that presents a threat to his new feeling of relief is the problem that concerns the money raised for his wedding without his knowledge. An interplay between obeying established custom and keeping one's pride lead Abatä to mortgage his house to raise money for Abärra's wedding. Their mother's house is rented to repay the mortgage. Abatä and his old mother, Bafäna, suffer in order to make



the wedding glamorous although Abärra had told them that he did not want any ceremonious feast. Abatä is trapped as well. His neighbours and friends would have taken his act as moving away from the usual custom if, as an elder brother, he had not prepared a good wedding for his younger brother. Besides, the respected name of their father Fitawrari Wärru is not to be dishonoured by being mean on such an occasion. Abatä is himself part of this tradition and cannot accept Abärra's refusal to a marriage ceremony. He believes his younger brother does not understand how important the event is for Abatä and himself. On the other hand Abärra considers the revelation of the debt as another obstacle. It meant he had to postpone his resignation as planned to settle the mortgage. It was a respite for Abärra, and an assertion of her commitment to him when Lulit volunteered to pay the debt. But the breathing space Abärra thinks he has found and the happiness his family believed they have gained suddenly come to an end.

The attempt in Kadmas Bashagär which began by portraying, however, inadequately, the struggle of the individual within the context of his family, his office and his own personal psychology, suddenly takes an unforeseen turn. The novel that seemed to embark on one of the serious problems, namely the intellectual and his place in society, abruptly changes course by spontaneous, irrational actions. The character who was depicted as an indecisive intellectual engaged in a struggle to be what he wants, now becomes a person who takes irrational measures in things involving human life. His actions are foreshadowed by Bä'alu's references to Abärra's spontaneousness (pp. 6, 14). However, events suggest that these statements were intended merely to justify the end of the story and are not integral parts of the characterisation of Abärra. On the basis of Abärra's hasty character and perhaps through

jealousy, a weakness reminiscent of his childhood days, the writer sharply terminates Abärra's quest. The gossip told by Tässämma about his wife's cuckoldry is enlivened in Abärra's mind when he telephones Lulit and is unable to find her. He relates the hearsay to the way she was immaculately dressed in the morning. He rushes to her office. After finding out from the guard the type of car she went in, he drives to the hotel Tässämma had mentioned. Before he breaks into the room which the owner of the car is occupying, he hears a shot (p. 146). He returns to his car to get his pistol. When he arrives at the room he finds a woman in the room, dying. He finally admits to having killed her.

Before the murder the story harped on Abärra's indecisiveness. He is unable to take the steps leading to the fulfillment of his greatest wish. The decision to resign was more rationally formed than the impulsive committing of a murder on the basis of what someone said. The resolve to kill a person is a more difficult one, especially under the circumstances; it demands serious deliberation. The confidence and love he has developed towards his wife is more convincing than the gossip that leads him to blind action. Besides this, the coincidence involving the car is hardly plausible. The type of car his wife went in is the same model as that of his closest friend, Haylä Maryam. He cannot have failed to know this and suspect the possibility that he had given her a lift. It is scarcely credible that he should find the same type of car when he arrives at the hotel, or that he would break into the room rather than wait and find out when the suspected couple come out. Bä'alu asserts all this, and adds the psychological motive, that he could not bear the thought of Lulit making love to someone else while he is waiting in the car. This has elements of plausibility. But before

Abärra breaks into the room he hears a shot, rushes back to his car, gets his pistol, and returns to the room to find a dying woman he does not know. Abärra has not fired a shot, and yet he goes to a police station and gives himself up to the police. Eventually he is sentenced to three years. There is no visible reason for creating an implausible incident to end the novel.

This abrupt twist in the novel may be partly explained by Bä'alu's style. He frequently introduces characters in the middle of a serious debate. The flow of the discussion is interrupted by their unexpected appearance. For example, when Haylä Maryam went to Abärra's house (p. 18) to suggest that Abärra leave his job in order to become an artist, Abatä arrives. The same evening they go to Gännät Hotel for an Easter Eve party. Haylä Maryam starts the topic again but he is interrupted by Gädlu and the circumstances that follow (pp. 34-45). He was able to tell him at the whorehouse at last (p. 46). Each time, however, a philosophical sounding sentence, like: 'We have been drinking bitter aloes from the chalice of life' (p. 33), is uttered and it begs to be elaborated and discussed further. But the interventions are, it looks, always timed to avoid the exhaustive treatment of the serious ideas raised. The novel is built to a plan of generalised discourses surrounded and interrupted by interjected incidents. The irrational murders that suddenly flood the novel can be explained as the culmination of these interruptions.

An examination of the topics Haylä Maryam wishes to write about sheds light on the problem. At the time Haylä Maryam was telling Abärra about his miserable childhood, Abärra expresses his eagerness to see him writing about it. Haylä Maryam tells him that he does not want to write about his miserable past as he has 'no desire to sing about loneliness and misery' (p. 49).

Instead he says he wants to write about the beauty of the world, man's basic goodness, and 'about the obstacles that hinder man's individual striving for a successful life' (p. 49). The various 'obstacles' that appear in Kadmas Bašhagär suggest Bä'alu's interest in this subject. Abärra's 'obstacles' are his social and individual problems, and the incident that leads him to the admitted murder and his ultimate imprisonment. The latter ended his struggle to become an artist. The more independent Haylä Maryam is killed by Abatä after Abärra's imprisonment. He suspects he had a relationship with Lulit. Haylä Maryam is sacrificed because of his effort to liberate and assist his artist friend. His own wish to write and publish ends when he is suddenly shot by Abatä. Though he did not like him, Abatä had no satisfactory reason to murder him. Abärra's mother dies, partly of old age and partly from the pain brought by her son's imprisonment. After shooting Haylä Maryam, Abatä commits suicide. His death coincides with the loss of his newfound hope in Abärra's marriage.

Two murders and a suicide form an appalling solution to the 'obstacles' noted by Haylä Maryam. The intention of the author, Bä'alu, is obscured by these melodramatic events. The solution for Abärra is imprisonment. The 'obstacles' include the problem of what Abärra said about Lulit when he was debating the possibility of marrying her. He had asked with wonder 'Is she a gift sent from heaven or [is it] the machination of the deveil?' (p. 108). The first murder arises out of his marriage to her and his subsequent jealousy. This suggests that the marriage is to be taken as the devil's intrigue. A further possibility is that, as Abärra and Haylä Maryam see it, though for different reasons, it is all God's act. When the woman, allegedly killed at the hotel by Abärra, asks 'Why?', meaning 'Why did you do it?' Abärra's answer is 'I also don't know why. Ask God!' (p. 176). His

own response to the accident is directed against God when he says: 'If there is a God who allows such coincidence to happen to His creature I see His jocularly, not his being a creator' (p. 147). His source of frustration as he enters the prison is God as well. The novelist poses the further possibility that the sudden twist of events is attributable to God, in defiance of the individual's struggle towards his independence and his art. This interpretation suggests a negation of freedom for the artist, since things that happened to Abärra are likely to happen to him. The author's intention is not explained, but left open to the reader's interpretation. Haylä Maryam's statement at the prison may be the ideas of the novelist. In a final scene, Abärra holds God responsible for what took place at the hotel and sees Him as a joker rather than as an object of worship. He blames Him for the added sorrow which has fallen upon him because of the death of his mother by saying 'I killed my mother, and I cannot bury her. I betrayed her both during her lifetime and her death. If God existed would he sentence a person to this accident?' (p. 155). Haylä Maryam seems to partly see the situation as positive. He replies to Abärra, 'Maybe God, with his wisdom, did it knowingly ... to lead you to where He wants....' (p.155). The suggestion is that his imprisonment will possibly lead him to achieving his ambition as an artist. However, the fact that the novel ends with 'Tomorrow is also another day ...' (p.188) makes his position doubtful.

This last sentence in the novel, uttered by Abärra, seems to encapsulate his view of a situation where chance is still a determining force. No one knows what is going to happen to him next. The protagonist seems to be saying that Man is not capable of deciding and doing what he wants. God, the devil, and the circumstances triggered

by either or both of them decide his fate for him. Man is seen as a helpless creature despite his struggle to positively change himself and his predicament. Some unexpected event can suddenly turn his efforts upside down. Life is generally presented as a consequence of chance rather than a result of planned efforts. However, even this summary view cannot be regarded as complete and final, since the concluding remark of the protagonist is preceded by gloom and hopelessness. The prisoners are depicted, by Abärä, as persons who are physically in prison but whose thoughts are beyond the horizon. The thing they have in common with the outside world is 'only the sun' (p. 185). Their lives and what they do is described as a dream. This side of their dream world is however dominated by the physical reality of the prison. We are told that Abärä begins to see their predicament as the newly found meaning for the drawings he plans to draw. Within the conditions of life in prison the writer mentions the hope of a new lease of life as an artist for Abärä. Bä'alu says that after his farewell with his wife, who came to visit him, Abärä 'brought back with him [to the cell] a new life and purpose' (p. 185). But we wonder whether he can really manage under the circumstances. How about what he sees and feels about conditions of life in prison. Don't these matter?

Observation of the presence of masters and servants in the prison makes Abärä think that the prison is a replica of the world he left outside. He sees that those who have the money, cigarettes, constant provision of food and other things they require, can order about those who have nothing. For a cigarette end and a morsel of bread they can make them do anything they wish, such as cleaning the toilet for them. He finds prisoners who spread/rumours like Tässämma. They work as informants for the prison administration for an extra ration or to get

a better place to sleep. He discovers that giving bribes and getting what you like, except bringing women in, is possible. This comes as an unpleasant surprise to him. The rotten smell, the lice, the lack of space, and the general conditions in the cell make him think how the struggle for survival in prison has made people lose their honour and pride. He sees himself falling down the ladder of life approaching the bottom. The social problems he talked about before his imprisonment stop being theoretical excursions when he reflects that his ultimate fate might be like one of the prisoners. The very thought of it shakes him violently and fear overtakes him. In a desperate response to the challenges of survival in prison he becomes part of the corruption. He bribes one of the bosses in the cell to get a better place to sleep (p. 158). Can this be an attractive place for the artist to work? Can it be a source of inspiration realizable at what is to be his domicile for three years? The answer to both questions seems to be negative. Had Abärä been a 'visiting' artist rather than a 'resident' one the situation may have been the reverse. Under the conditions it is hard to imagine that he can achieve in prison what he did not under the physical comfort he lived in. Outside the prison there was a better chance to secure the spiritual, spatial, and material needs for his artistic activity. This is especially true when one visualises the 'enclosure' (p. 182) he is in. This leaves Abärä with only one visible achievement, if we can call it such. We are told that reflecting upon the pressure exerted upon him, Abärä had once wished to be like Haylä Maryam (pp. 83-84). Haylä Maryam's parents are dead. Both his mother and father died of hunger when he was seven (p. 44). He now lives on his own with his books because 'Besides Abärä his books are his relatives and his friends' (p. 84). Abärä envied Haylä Maryam as he thought that would ease his problem. Ironically, however, this fleeting wish takes the chance to be fulfilled,

it appears, as a result of the murder he committed'. Abatä and his mother Bafäna, the sources of family pressures during his struggle to be an artist, are dead. Accidentally, or incidentally, Haylä Maryam, who offered to be his 'patron', most importantly a close friend, is sacrificed in the process. Lulit is given the freedom to do what she likes despite her wish to wait for him until he is released. Abärra now has no friend, no wife and no relatives. This state, being alone, is one of the priorities to be fulfilled before his renewed, but uncertain journey as an artist can begin. Paradoxically, freedom begins in its negation. He in prison, and his reduction to nothingness.

The events that occur in the third section of the novel however, contribute to the confused handling of an important theme in Kadmas Bašhagär. The uncertainties that later dominate the novel and change its course from a problem or social novel into a poor imitation of a Perry Mason or an Agatha Christie murder case cannot surely claim to be reflecting the domain of the unknown, and the preponderance of chance in life. Predestination is not the ideological basis of this novel either. The overall structure and content of the novel does not permit serious consideration of such assumptions. This raises the problem of disunity within a novel whose first two sections attempt to portray characters who seek to find some meaning in life or fulfil certain ambitions. In these sections the novel has tried to show aspects and problems of its individual characters. These problems are shown, though insufficiently, to emanate from the values that exist in the society. In its third section, trivial or extreme forces work against the interests of the characters. Crass accidents become agents responsible for their failure to realise their objectives.

The inherent problem of this novel is the underlying assumption



that personal independence could be achieved by an individual, introspective battle alone. Its treatment of the issue focuses on the personal strength or weakness of the character as the source of redemption. The protagonist tries to escape from the various problems that stand on his way. He does not seek personal freedom through realisation of the obstacles that stand in his way, and cannot find a realistic solution arising from these. The social problems that influence the outcome of the struggle are treated peripherally and lightly. Ultimately it is Abärräs willpower that is tested. The question does not lie in the fact that Abärra attempts to liberate himself. That the educated person takes himself, in Kadmas Bashagär, as a target or object of change is not the issue. The point is, how does he go about it, and how does his approach influence the content and style of the novel?

On the surface, the novel tempts us to think that it will have no problem in answering these questions. However, we soon understand the fundamental weakness pervading the novel. Presenting some aspects of Abärräs problems from the point of view of his relation with his family, his colleagues at work, his friend Haylä Maryam and from the point of view of his own background and psychology looks like a promising start. The layout of these conflicts is not, however, as well developed in the novel as it may sound. The problems that arise from these directions are capriciously treated.

There is, for instance, no convincing or direct presentation of Abärräs conflict with his family. Yet this aspect of his life is supposed to represent some of the traditional values that obstruct his endeavours towards personal independence. He is not portrayed seriously challenging their views or being sufficiently challenged by theirs. Most of what we know is obtained from the writers comments, Abatäs discussion with

Haylā Maryam, whose role in the family side of Abārra's problem is secondary. Abārra rarely confronts members of his family to settle his problems in one way or another. He deals with it at a distance, by thinking, moaning and complaining about it. There is lack of material to depict what Haylā Maryam sees as the fundamental difference between the old and the young. Haylā Maryam believes that Abārra and his type 'know what they want ... Therefore they are strong' (p. 129). But of persons like himself and Abārra he says:

"We don't know what we want ... We are on the look out. There can't be an understanding between that person who knows the meaning of his life and the one who doesn't... We do not believe in anything. We have no convictions. For we don't know ourselves, who we are ..." (p. 129)

The strength of the old and the lack of conviction of the new, and ignorance of the meaning of life, are recognised in this statement. This is one of the brief statements which passes without being developed in the novel. The cleavage between the old and the new is an important element of the theme in the novel, but it is not enough to be told that one is strong and the other weak. An essay could easily do that. In the case of the novel, one would have thought the novelist should have shown the strength of the old and the weakness of the new. Through action and dialogue the meaning and impact would have been more visible than the way it is presented.

A similar approach is used when Abārra questions and criticises his educational background. Since he sees it as the source of his misery he emphasises the role the educational system played in his present situation. He sees himself as a victim and the tone begs for the reader's sympathy if not for a disapproval equalling his own. But there is no hint whatsoever in the novel about what this educational system is and what is defective about it. There is no effort to expose the failures of this system or to show the struggle of the individual to change oneself as a process of changing the bad influences and the scars

it has left on the individual. It would have been interesting to show him practically struggling against the bad influences of the educational system on him or the new ironic style of life he has adopted as a result of his education. Bā'alu's mood is marred by perfunctory handling of vital issues. Working more actively and perhaps elaborately on the ironic contrast between the life of the beggars about whom Haylā Maryam thinks 'one needs to be hardhearted' (p. 100), and the life led by Haylā Maryam himself with his 'bosom friends', namely, 'a lighted cigarette, an opened book and a glass of whisky' (p. 17) would have enriched the text. Other weaknesses can be found. Either the novelist was shy or he lacked material to drive his point home. He did not proceed by presenting the various faces of the argument, and did not develop his work convincingly as a novel of ideas. Vague phrases replace dialogues and actions which would show the social implications of the educational system he so bitterly complains about.

The lack of material is observed in the manner certain criticisms were presented. There are few scattered criticisms of the educated people working in the civil service. Abārra and Haylā Maryam tend to dissociate themselves from people like Gädlu, Tässamma, Bäqqälā and Balcha though they are not seen dissociating or associating themselves with the state. Their criticisms are fragmental. Since Abārra and Haylā Maryam are not in any way prophets of social change there is no theme that connects these scattered criticisms. Abārra, for example, criticises the educated for not co-operating when they are called upon to contribute to development programmes. But there are incidents where the critic himself neglects his undertakings. The incident when Haylā Maryam and Abārra were talking in the latter's office is a case in point. The office messenger informs Abārra that someone wants to see him on business. Abārra tells the messenger that he is too busy to see his visitor at the moment. While criticising others for not showing extra effort,

Abärra shows heedlessness in his own official duty. Bä'alu immediately interferes and tells us that Abärra shook his head by way of regretting what he did. Haylä Maryam seizes the opportunity to make a remark about the bureaucracy in general and says:

"Don't worry. You are not the only one who gets a salary, especially a salary squeezed from the sweat of a peasant, by having private chats and drinking coffee [during office hours]. When everyone does it it becomes a custom ... and we have to be proud of it. But woe to my country!" (p. 128)

The issues raised here are some of the examples of fragmented criticisms which appear when the writer gets a chance to present them. They are not pursued in a coherent manner. They appear as short interjections that come and wither away as the occasion that provoked them changes. Relative continuity of vision and struggle is observed only in Abärra's effort, by way of repetitive introspection, to become an artist and Haylä Maryam's role to help him get there, rather than in the discussion of the problems of the society and the bureaucracy. This is perhaps because the novel is a type that registers some of the questions of the times, and not one that tries to explore or dramatise them through literary creation. Or perhaps, more likely, that is how/<sup>far</sup>the writer can penetrate into the essential problems of society or the psychology of his characters.

Another instance that illustrates the weaknesses in the presentation of ideas and actions in the novel, indeed a very promising opening had the writer worked on it, is the scene where Abärra and Haylä Maryam meet Gädlu at Gännät Hotel. In the short conversation between them Gädlu says, provoked by Haylä Maryam:

"You live beyond the horizon. In this world, one is a ladder for the other ... So, those who can reach the top need to have a special gift ... like me ... The likes of you who cheat themselves by shouting 'conscience! conscience!' [every] morning and night will remain being the stirrup iron. It was like this before. And nature has not changed its law now" (p. 36).

Gädlu would have been an interesting character to develop in the novel as his views are opposed to those of Haylä Maryam and Abärra. Besides he is educated and like them has a degree from the University of Addis Ababa. He has, however, chosen to follow the rules of the bureaucracy and those of success in the society to accomplish what he wants in life. He seems to be thinking the world is evil, competitive and relentless. So he plans and lives with the same attitude and pays the price required for success. But Abärra and Haylä Maryam find themselves in trouble because their thoughts and attitudes to life are on a different plane. Whereas Gädlu has chosen to participate in the competitive world without worrying about moral scruples, Abärra and Haylä Maryam wallow in spiritual instability and moral dilemmas because they want to do something positive with their lives. For Gädlu one person is a stepping stone to the other but they seem to believe promotion should be given on the basis of knowledge and merit. The verbal conflict briefly expressed in their meeting at the Gännät Hotēl does not continue after that short-lived discussion. But the same evening at Gännät Hotel the seeds of antagonism have been sown. Verbally the argument is over general principles of life but in the hearts of Abärra and Gädlu it is over a woman, Lulit, who was sitting alone near their table. If this was developed the novel would have minimised the repetitive discussions between Abärra and Haylä Maryam. Though we understand Haylä Maryam's supportive role in Abärra's efforts we feel that their views and opinions about many things are not sharply opposed. In fact they agree on almost everything they talk about. Bä'alu missed the opportunity to develop an educated character like Gädlu. Instead he created two characters who share many opinions. The story could have been enriched, in breadth and depth, if there was a struggle between contending intellectuals as well, but the novel does not do that. Gädlu and Haylä Maryam do not meet after that conversation.

Abärra and Gädlu meet at the court when Gädlu replaces Abärra as he leaves the witness box.

There is a noticeable lack of concord between Bā'alu's vision, the material he uses, and the means of expression he adopts. This discord is apparent in Kadmas Bašhagär. Although Bā'alu's achievement in Kadmas Bašhagär is considerable, there is a discrepancy in the interplay between 'vision, material and manner'. Writing about the importance of the interaction between these components of a work of art Donatus Nwoga wrote:

I take it that a work of art proceeds from the interplay of three elements - vision, material and manner. The artist has an experience he wishes to communicate, an idea, a significance; he has to find material adequate for the expression of this vision; he adopts chosen techniques and stylistic devices with which to deploy his material to his purpose.

The ideas Bā'alu communicates are not new. We agree with him that the problem of the intellectual is one of the most important problems of society. We might even add that it was, and still is, a topic that deserves more than mere literary attention. The question for the novelist, however, is 'to find material adequate for the expression of this vision.' The material in Kadmas Bašhagär, especially that related with the intellectual and the intellectual artist in society is very restricted and repetitive. The debate between Haylä Maryam and Abärra revolves around the same points, presented in various ways or words, on different occasions. The experience of these characters is limited. Consequently there is no dynamism in their thoughts and actions. Their talent lies in their ability to offer reflective statements of wisdom about certain issues. The structure the writer initially formulated to portray Abärra : in the context of his family life and the demands therein; in terms of his experience in his office; his life in bars, hotels, and with prostitutes and women; and most importantly in his

struggle to become an artist, is admirable. What Bā'alu lacks is the material to fill this framework with. The novel needs the blood and flesh required to give body, vigour and vivacity to the bone structure. The lack of material in turn dictates the style of narrative. It seems the shortage of material has encouraged, consciously or otherwise, the creation of accidents as one method or style of covering up the deficiency. The paradox, however, is these accidents gradually build up and ultimately make the shortcomings of the novel conspicuous.

By the standards of Amharic novels published before 1974, which are mostly dime novels, Kadmas Bashagär is a novel to be admired rather than criticised. A society which generally believes in the truth of folktales, Koranic tales, biblical stories about the miracles of Jesus, and accounts of the deeds of the Saints, will not have much difficulty in appreciating the story told by Bā'alu or any other novelist before or after him. The story needs to be sentimental, fantastic and tragic. The analogy with folktales and the biblical stories sustains the literary text. For the intellectual who scarcely reads Amharic novels, Kadmas Bashagär must have been interesting because it was about his adventures with women, drink, office chatting, and some of the problems he faces in the society. Moreover since it is the first real attempt at creating characters in a novel who are engaged mainly in self introspection and examination. of a kind, it was received with applause by many. The short, clear, beautiful sentences Bā'alu loves writing have made the novel readable and given an added lease of life to creative writing in Amharic.

## CONCLUSION

The thesis has traced the main channel of development in the Ethiopian novel. It emerged in the twentieth century following the steps taken to introduce Western education and civilisation into Ethiopia. Ancient and medieval Geez literature was religious in content. The literature in Amharic produced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was dominantly religious too. The emergence and development of secular writing waited until early this century. The recurrent wars in the country did not seem to give an opening for any kind of social, economic and literary development. There is no evidence, for example, for the existence of written literature as a form of entertainment or as a way of raising cultural and political awareness before the turn of this century. The ruling class entertained itself with traditional sports like horse riding and wrestling.

The introduction of Western education, the railway, banks, the bureaucracy, medicine, cars and other consumer goods early this century put the problems of earthly life at the top of the agenda. The newspapers provided a forum for discussing the emerging issues. The conflict between 'the progressives' and 'the conservatives'; the constant call for loyalty to orthodox christianity; the need for modernisation and the pace it ought to take, and what examples to follow, were among the issues raised. Another recurrent problem discussed by the writers in A'emero and Berhanena Sälam was the need for greater unity. Unity, religion and loyalty to the crown were treated as major components and requirements for progress. The first three and a half decades of this century saw the burgeoning of secular writing in Amharic.



The publication of essays in the newspapers, the printing of textbooks, books about agriculture and administration, novels and other literary works show the attention this new literature gave to earthly life. The intellectuals educated abroad and locally spoke with a new voice.

The creative works published at the time followed in the footsteps of the discussions in the newspapers. Some of the issues raised were taken as major themes in the novels. Heruy became the first Ethiopian novelist to publish novels whose primary intention was to serve some social purpose. The church and the practice of the religious life and of marriage are among the dominant subjects of his novels. Heruy saw cultural decay in the laws of the church, the teachings of the clergy, and the various manifestations of religious and secular life. In his own voice and through the voices of his characters he advocated that they be reformed. In the post-war era other novelists pursued the theme of modernisation. Germachaw Täklä Hawaryat's novel concentrated on change in the economic, technological and administrative aspects of life in society. They take precedence over religious and moral reforms. Haddis Alämayähu dealt with the landlord-peasant problem, the role of the church and the clergy in society, and some of the complex problems the social system imposes on its members. Ironically, however, the protagonist who criticises the priests, the church and the nobility is a product of the church. Bä'alu attempted to show the plight of the educated elite in a transitional society. The two intellectual characters are involved in self-analysis and examination rather than in the effort to change their society.

The novels appear to chart the chronology of social change. This impression can be illusory in some respects, however. In general,

changes in society were slight, or slow, or fragmentary. The differences in themes emerge mainly from the autobiographical nature of these works. The four main characters in the novels studied in the thesis have strong similarities with the writers themselves. Although Heruy tells us that Awwäqä is a French educated intellectual, the reforms he advocates and his concepts of modernisation do not measure up to the standard of education which Heruy suggests he had. His notions of modernisation tally with those of the church-educated but enlightened traditional intellectual, Heruy. Awwäqä is a vehicle for Heruy's ideas.

Germachäw, like his hero Araya, was educated in France and his field of study was, like Araya's, agriculture. He also returned from France just before the Italian invasion. The new depth and breadth of ideas in Araya, a feature lacking in Addis Aläm, is not accidental. It is a measure of the intellectual background of the two writers. Each writer emphasised issues considered important by his social and educational background. Haddis Alämayähu did not have the level of formal modern education Germachäw had. He had few years of education in the second of the modern schools, Täfäri Mäkonnen School, established in 1917 E.C. He spent the great part of his working life as a diplomat and as a government official. His traditional church education matches that of his hero Gudu Kassa. The critical attitude Haddis developed in the novel emerges from his experiences as a government official, his readings in literature and politics, his stay as a diplomat in America and England, and his close study of Ethiopian society from his youth onwards. Fragments of his personal life are presented through the characters Bäzzäbeh and Gudu Kassa. Gudu is a highly educated person in the traditional sense. However, the social philosophy he expresses and the reforms he proposes have the imprints of the experience, knowledge and political

consciousness of Haddis himself rather than those of the enlightened däbtära. The predicaments of the characters in Bā'alu's Kadmas Bašhagär are in part those of the intellectuals of the writer's generation. His novel came out when other intellectuals of his generation, academics and journalists alike, were writing about the same topic. He was himself a journalist at the time. The article written by Sälämon and Gädamu says the same things Bā'alu's novel tries to depict. Abärra's childhood, his educational background, the place of higher education abroad, the subject he studies, and his age, by and large tally with those of Bā'alu himself. Moreover when a critic suggested that Bā'alu's early wish was to be an artist and not a writer, the novelist conceded the insight with surprise. He added that Abärra's childhood efforts to draw the priest, and the beatings he received, were not totally fictional. He said they were based on his personal experience as a child. (1)

The autobiographical element explains why most of the characters in the novels that deal with the theme of progress are intellectuals. Moreover, it indicates why their point of view about development is one-sided. We see and hear only these intellectuals discussing the problems of development. They see themselves as agents of change. In their fictionalised appearances other members of society do not express their views about progress. What they want and what they expect to see done is not expressed from their point of view and in their own words. They only agree to or oppose the views of the intellectuals. The study shows that in a society of peasants the newly emerging intellectual imposes himself as a hero in these novels. He sees and presents himself as a messiah. Instead of attempting to study and depict social life and problems from various points of views and in several dimensions,

the novel became an instrument for expressing the whims and wishes of intellectuals. Most of the novelists wrote without what Henry James called 'the very stuff his [the novelist's] work is made of'. In a letter to W D Howells, written in 1880, James said, 'It is on manners, customs, usages, habits, forms, upon all the things matured and established, that a novelist lives - they are the very stuff his work is made of.' (2) These habits, customs and other manifestations of daily life are largely absent in most Ethiopian novels. However, Haddis Alämayähu's Feger eskä mäqaber and Daññachäw's Adäfres are the most important exceptions.

The academics who have written about the intellectuals and the novelists who portray this group agree about the wish of the educated Ethiopian to see his country make progress. Needless to say, if development means improving the lives of the ordinary man, the ordinary man, too, wishes the country to change and progress. The difference between the ordinary person and the educated one may be a difference in consciousness and knowledge. There are, of course, areas where one excels the other. The peasant farmer could be at his best, say, in using folk wisdom to tell when rain is due. This skill would assist the agricultural theoretician who is hampered by a lack of instruments. The peasant requires the expert knowledge of the agronomist to improve his farming. This simple symbiotic relation is one of the basic requirements to change and progress. However, neither the academic critics nor the novelists consciously emphasise and elaborate this point in their works. They seem to be concerned with the predicament of the intellectual as a stratum. They rarely say what this stratum ought to do to change this predicament. When they attempt to indicate certain solutions they harp on what the intellectuals do as a group and seldom

talk about what they can do with the people. The intellectual's problem and the solution he proposes are seen largely from his point of view and not from that of the complex society he lives in and aspires to change. In this respect, the novelists we discussed and the critics who wrote about the intellectual stratum converge. Neither group has considered the complexities of society as it functioned outside the novels.

Assäfa argued in his article that the intellectual in Ethiopia was either neutralised by the old nobility or has joined them fully. Indirectly, the characters in Addis Aläm, Araya, Ag'azi, Yaläm säw ermejja, Tebäbä Sellassé<sup>illustrate</sup>/Assäfa's opinion. Although these characters favour change they do so with loyalty to the government and especially to the Emperor, Hailä Sellassé. As Assäfa pointed out, their relation with the nobility is that of partnership and not of conflict. But the problem might lie in the nature of the relationship the novelists have with the government. Germa Amarä has pointed out that 'It is very difficult for economically dependent individuals to be intellectually independent'. (4) He believes that this independence comes only when the intellectuals are self-employed. And this occurs, he said, when the government bureaucracy is saturated, leaving graduates to find employment for themselves. This sums up the dilemma of the Ethiopian novelist. Almost all of these writers are, or have been, employees of the government. Writers like Heruy, Germachäw, Haddis, Bä'alu, Wäldä Giyorgis, held high positions in government. It is evident, perhaps, that they should write the type of novels they wrote: they could not write against themselves. This deserves further research. However, aside from their class and ideological positions it is doubtful whether all of these novelists could have been published if they have written something more radical.

It is possible that a serious novel which challenged the nobility and the reactionary aspects of the traditional norms, in favour of cautious progress, could have been published before Hailä Sellassē was crowned in 1930. The type of debates held and essays published in the newspapers before this time support this hypothesis. Besides it was politically expedient for Ras Tāfari to allow the publication of such a novel as he allowed the newspaper articles to be printed. He desperately needed to wear out the power of the nobility. However, such a novel did not appear. The nature of the articles appearing on Berhanena Sälam, and later in Addis Zärman and other newspapers, changed after he became emperor. The newspapers adulated him more than ever before, and they started carrying major coverage of the photographs of the members of the royal family. It is difficult to imagine the novelists could have published if they wrote radical novels during this time. The events that followed the Italian invasion, and their expulsion in 1941, did not encourage public expression of critical opinion either. The conflict between renegades and patriots, matters related with the issues of the nationalities in Ethiopia and the problems of economic reconstruction, must have made the situation fragile. This may in part explain why the writers, poets and novelists especially, embarked on the theme of modernisation and, above all, on the theme of national unity. It is probable that this is one of the reasons why writers like Germachäw did not write more directly and openly. The main character in Araya, for example, does not fight back when he is faced with bureaucratic problems. The novelist does not even mention the name of the ministry his hero works in, let alone allow him to openly express his criticism of the institution, the minister and his colleagues. Germachäw chooses to make Araya resign quietly and go to the rural areas.

The ramifications of the problem are far greater than we have pointed

to here. However, it is hoped that more effective research in social history and biographical work on the writers in the near future will make things clearer. The role universities and research institutes play in this, and in the search for the manuscripts written before the 1974 popular uprising cannot be underrated. Their support is crucial to literary research and the cultural consciousness that it brings. The reliance of novels like Araya, Feger eskä Mäqaber and others in the study of history is also an area that needs to be considered seriously. Descriptions of the physical features of landscape, of wars and traditions, and the depiction of social life - housing, dress, banquets, marriage ceremonies etc - found in these novels cannot be dismissed as wholly fictional.

Finally, a word must be said about the place of Ethiopian writers in the African literary scene. We have shown how Ethiopian vernacular writers, like their African counterparts writing in English or French, have attempted to deal with the immediate problems of the intellectual in society. However, they have remained, until now, unknown to the audience and many critics of the so-called Modern African Literature. Yet, if the recent tendency to urge African writers to write in African languages, strongly advocated by Wali Obiajunwa some two and a half decades ago, and by Ngugi and others during the last few years, continues to gain momentum, then, Ethiopian novelists (writers in general) will be better recognised as being among the early pioneers in this tradition. This presents a strong case for introducing some of the prominent Ethiopian writers into the African literary scene, and this thesis might open many eyes in this respect.

## REFERENCES AND NOTES

### Chapter One

1. Malcolm Bradbury, The social context of modern English literature, Oxford: Blackwell, 1971, xi.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, xii - xiii.
4. Diana Laurenson and Alan Swingewood, The sociology of literature, London: McGibbon and Kee, 1972, Preface, n.d.
5. Diana Laurenson (ed.), The sociology of literature: applied studies, University of Keele, April 1978, 1.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid, 2.
8. Jane Routh and Janet Wolff (eds.), The sociology of literature: theoretical approaches, University of Keele, August 1977. See pp. 4-5 for the following summary.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid as quoted on page 150.
11. Laurenson, 1978, 5.
12. Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972, 39.
13. Georg Lukacs, Studies in European realism, London: The Herlin Press, 1950, 2-8.
14. Gäbrä Heywät Baykädänn, 'Aṣc Menelik enna : Ityopya', c.1912, Mimeographed. Amharic, pp. 1-2.
15. Ibid, 2.
16. Bahru Zäwdē, Relations between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Ethiopian Frontier, 1898-1935, PhD Thesis, University of London, May 1976, 42.
17. Gäbru Taräjäänn, Rural Protest in Ethiopia, 1941-1970: A study of three rebellions, PhD Thesis, Graduate School of Syracuse University, 1977, 9.
18. Ibid, 10.
19. Ibid, 11.  
See also Bahru Zäwdē, 'Economic origins of the absolutist state in Ethiopia,' Journal of Ethiopian Studies, vol. XVII, Nov.1984, 1-29. He points out that in the attempts that have been made so far 'character analysis is deemed more important than social analysis' (2) He mentions few authors who, he believes, have made serious efforts.



20. Macaulay's Miscellaneous Writings, London: Longman, Green & Co., 1898, 100.
21. Ibid, 158.
22. Ibid.
23. Margery Perham discusses the vagueness surrounding the word 'Ethiopia' from the time of Homer until 1941, when Hailä Sellassē officially decreed that the name of the country be Ethiopia. See her The Government of Ethiopia, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969. (First edition, 1948), pp.13-15.
24. Introduction to Ethiopian History, Prepared by the Department of History, College of Social Sciences, Addis Ababa University, January 1983, 7.
25. Richard Greenfield, Ethiopia, A New Political History, New York: Praeger, 1965, 18.
26. Ibid, 19.
27. Ibid, as quoted on p.20.
28. Introduction to Ethiopian History, 1983, 10.
29. Edward Ullendorf, The Ethiopians, London, 1973 (First edition, 1960), 133.
30. A H H Jones and Elizabeth Monroe, A History of Ethiopia, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965 (First edition, October 1935, under the title A History of Abyssinia), 35.
31. Ibid, 34.
32. Ullendorf, 1973, 132.
33. Tamrat Wäldä Ammanuēl, 'Selä It-yopya dārāseyan,' n.d., mimeographed in Amharic, p.2.
34. Jones and Monroe say it was 'in the latter part of the fifth century' (page 34). Ullendorf states the translation was probably done 'from the late fourth or early fifth century till the seventh' (page 133). Budge says it was in the fifth century AD (in Sylvia Fankhurst, 125).
35. Sylvia Pankhurst quotes Ludolphus as saying 'They have it translated from the authentic Greek Text, tho' as yet it has not bin [sic] brought into Europe pure and intire [sic]' (page 124). Wallis Budge, as quoted in Sylvia Pankhurst, says 'There is no doubt that the original Ethiopic translation of the Bible was made from Greek, i.e. the Septuagint and not from the Coptic or Arabic.' He is however found denying that it was translated from the Greek and agreeing with Ignazio Guidi who says it was translated from the Syriac (S. Pankhurst, 125). S Pankhurst, on the other hand, is inclined to accept the opinion of Ludolphus because of the connection of the Church of Alexandria and the Church of Ethiopia (125). Jones and Monroe are of the opinion that the translation

of the New Testament was made from the Antioch text rather than from the Alexandrian (A History of Ethiopia, 1965, 35).

36. See also Budge, Ludolphus and Guidi in Sylvia Pankhurst, Ethiopia: A Cultural History, Essex: Lalibela House, 1955, 125.
37. Ullendorf, 133.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid, 23.
40. Ibid, 24.
41. This could partly be because of Yodit's invasion of the Christian kingdom in the tenth century, and because of the struggle for power that took place among the landlords after the end of the Aksumite period.
42. When Introduction to Ethiopian History uses the term 'medieval' in relation to Ethiopia it means the period from 1270 to 1527. (See p.26). Märed refers to 'the long medieval period from 1270 to 1800 (preferably 1855)' (See p.138). I have followed Märed's version here.
43. Introduction to Ethiopian History, 1983, 12.
44. Märed W Arägay, 'Society and Technology in Ethiopia 1500-1800', Journal of Ethiopian Studies, Vol. XVIII, Nov.1984, 127.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid, 144.
47. Introduction to Ethiopian History, 1983, 54.
48. Ullendorf, 1973, 19.
49. Ibid, 138.
50. Jones and Monroe, 1965, 55.
51. Perham, 1969, 35.
52. Ibid.
53. R Hess, Ethiopia, The Modernization of Autocracy, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1970, 37 and 38.
54. Ibid, 38.
55. J M Harden, An Introduction to Christian Literature, New York and Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1926, 26.
56. Sylvia Pankhurst, 1955, 100.
57. Harden, 27.
58. Ullendorf, 141.

59. The works referred to here are Säw enna näfs (Man and Soul) and Confession of Faith.
60. The reference is mainly to Habakuk's translations of Universal History and the Story of Baralam and Yosef (Baralaam and Josaphet); and Fäws Mämfäsawi (Spiritual Medicine).
61. These are Angäṣṣä Amin (Gate of Faith) and the Superiority of the Christian Faith.
- 62a. Harden, 34.
- 62b. Ibid, 99.
63. The philosopher Zära Ya'eqob should not be confused with King Zära Ya'eqob who reigned from 1434-1468.
64. Harden, 35.
65. As quoted in Harden, 99.
66. Ibid.
67. S. Pankhurst, 1955, 203.
68. Ibid.
69. Ullendorf, 1973, 134.
70. There are few Geez scholars who have strong arguments against those who dismiss Geez literature as merely religious and translational. The secular contents and the literary value of the literature are highly regarded by them.
71. Ullendorf, 131.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid, 132.
75. Harden, 21.
76. In S Pankhurst, 116.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid, 189.
79. Ibid, 116.
80. Ibid, 428-429.
81. John Markakis, Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity, Addis Ababa: Oxford University Press, 1974, 14. The following references to this work are given in the text.

82. See also: Introduction to Ethiopian History, 125-131.
83. Bahru, 1976, 43.
84. Addis Heywät, Ethiopia from Autocracy to Revolution, London: Review of African Political Economy, 1975, 54.
85. Ibid, 55; Bahru, 1976, 43.
86. Addis Heywät, 55; Bahru, 1976, 44.
87. Addis Heywät, 56.
88. Bahru, 1976, 44.
89. Addis Heywät, 60-61.
90. Ibid, 62-63.
91. Ibid, 62.
92. See Asbē Hailu, Berhanena Sälam, July 127. An extract is translated into English and published in Addis Heywät, pp.71-73.
93. Addis Heywät, 80.
94. Margery Perham, 1947, 177; See also Mäsfen's view in his Introduction to Geography of Ethiopia, 1972, 196-197.
95. Addis Heywät, 17.
96. Dässalännū Rahmato, Agrarian reform in Ethiopia, Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1984, 28. The following references to this work are given in the text.
97. Addis Heywät, 22.
98. Ibid, 86.
99. Ibid, 87.
100. Ibid, 88.
101. Gäbru, 449.
102. Addis Heywät, 90.
103. Ibid, 93.
104. See Gäbru, 1977; Addis Heywät, 1975; Palsvik, 1979; Laggässä Lamma, 1980.
105. Ullendorf, 275.
106. Reading R L Cooper's 'The Spread of Amharic' one is tempted to say that it must have been after the restoration of the so-called Solomonic line that Amharic was spoken. The writer states 'that between the ninth and twelfth centuries other languages replaced

- Giiz' (See Language in Ethiopia, 1976, 289). However, he does not mention any of the languages by name. Däbäbä Säyfu writes, 'some scholars say that the Amharic language began to be spoken in the eighth century.' (See his 'An Outline of the History of Pre-Revolution Ethiopian Literature', 1974 E.C., 35. In Amharic, mimeo.) According to Dr Sergew H Sellassē: 'Most probably Amharic began to be spoken widely during the reign of Emperor Lalibela (1185-1220)' (See his 'Amharic as a literary language prior to 19th century,' 1969, mimeo. In Amharic, page 1). Harden says, 'Amharic has been in Abyssinia the language of the court and state since about the end of the thirteenth century.' (Harden, 6).
107. Däbäbä, 1974 E.C., 36.
  108. Tamrat W Ammanuēl, 'Selä Ityopyä dārāseyan,' n.d., mimeo. in Amharic, 3.
  109. Ibid.
  110. Ibid, 4.
  111. Ibid.
  112. Sergew, 1.
  113. Tamrat, 3.
  114. Ibid, 4.
  115. Aläqa Wäldä Maryam, *Chronique de Theodoros II. Rois Des Rois D'Ethiopie (1853-1868)*. D'après un Manuscrit Original. Text Abyssin (Amharique), 1897 E.C., 40.
  116. Richard Pankhurst, 'The Foundation of Education, Printing, Newspapers, Book production, Libraries and Literacy in Ethiopia,' Ethiopia Observer, Vol.VI, 3, 1962, 246. The following references to this work are given in the text.
  117. The three dialects referred to are Ittu, Central and Southern.
  118. He further states that Gäbrä Egziabhēr's style was moralistic and 'emphasised the need for unity, strength and modernization and aroused considerable interest in court circles.' (Pankhurst, 260)
  119. Tammänä Hailu, 'The use of newspapers', BS, Nähasē 6/1918. Text in Amharic.
  120. Editorial(?), 'A note from A'emero', A'emero, Nähasē 16/1917. In Amharic.
  121. Both A'emero and Berhanena Sälam published articles reflecting the mood of the period although there is a difference in the degree and area of emphasis. Most of the publications of A'emero were dominated with foreign news and matters concerning Europe and the rest of the world. Compared to Berhanena Sälam the paper dealt more with world current events and the contemporary relation among European countries in the light of power politics and the balance of power, and less with Ethiopia and its problems. An

- examination of the issues available at the IES library covering, though there are some missing numbers, the period from June 14/1924 to August 31/1935 attests this remark. It was Berhanena Sälam which focused on local issues more than A'emeru did though Berhanena Sälam also occasionally covered overseas news and current foreign politics.
122. Därrēssa, 'A note about love of one's country, and schools', Berhanena Sälam, Sänē 18/1917. In Amharic. When Därrēssa talks about 'the rest of the world' he means America, Europe and particularly Japan whose exemplary achievements, he believed, Ethiopia should follow.
  123. Among those who contribute articles for Berhanena Sälam the following are some of the most regular: Dästa Metekē, Kidanä Maryam Abärra, SSM, Fäshah Weräd Habtä Wäld, Mika'ēl Melkeyas, Gäbrä Heywät Baykädāñ, Wäldä Giyorgis Wäldä Yohannes, Bäqälä Zälläqä, Heruy W Sellassē, Tamrat W Ammanuēl, Afäwäraq G Eyäsus, Mälaku Bäyan, Hakim Wärdänäh, MSW, etc.
  124. Därrēssa, op.cit.
  125. A complete bibliography of these early books does not seem to exist yet. The only sources we have are the advertisements published in the newspapers and the two bibliographies prepared by Heruy and published in 1912 and 1928. The 1928 bibliography entitled A Catalogue of Books, Written in Geez and Amharic, found in Ethiopia has 517 titles more than 75% of which are religious. There is another list published in mid-1929 which listed the books produced by the BSP; it includes the books listed in Heruy's bibliography. The publication of the various active missionaries are not included in Heruy's bibliographies.
  126. There are some translations made into other Ethiopian languages as well.
  127. This novel was later edited and published by the Ministry of Education under the title Tobbya - the name of the heroine - and it is better known by this title than by the original.
  128. Two works can be mentioned here: Därrēssa's Yato Menem laybäqanena yato meññot bākäntu tarik, Ethiopian Printing Press, 1918/1919, 8 pages. Näkbeb Dästa's Yato mäsanbät balenjännät tarik enna qetem, written in 1923/24, published in 1933/34.
  129. Robert Escarpit, Sociology of Literature, London: Cass and Co., 1971, 19. Further references in the text are to this issue.
  130. The few serious attempts in the study of Ethiopian literature are more of a history of the literary books; analytical studies are very recent phenomena. Researchers, be it literary critics, sociologists, historians, have not yet shown interest in the study of the three aspects of literary production, distribution and consumption. As a result what Escarpit calls 'regulated research' has not been possible to date since data in these areas is generally meagre, and very fragmented if and when available. Our effort in the following few pages is, hopefully, to construct a feel of the situation under which the Ethiopian writer functioned rather than

- embarking on the urgent and difficult task of filling this gap in Ethiopian studies: such undertaking may have to wait for an Ethiopian H Ellis, A Collins, Q D Leavis, Robert Escarpit, Ian Watt, Wellek and Warren, Victor Neuburg and their like.
131. R E Barker's Book for All and Pierre Monnet's Monographie de l'edition, which Escarpit says is 'The only official documentation on the book trade in France,' were published in 1956. There were, however, other English works dealing, in their own ways, with the ternary issues. Notable are Henry Havelock Ellis' A Study of the British Genius, London, 1904 (See Escarpit, 33); Q D Leavis's Fiction and the Reading Public, 1932; Ian Watt's The Rise of the Novel, 1957. In their 'new introduction' to Escarpit's Sociology of Literature, Malcolm Bradbury and Bryan Wilson mention A S Collins' Authorship in the Days of Johnson, 1927, and The Profession of Letters, 1780-1832, 1928, as English works dealing with questions related to literary financing (See Escarpit, 14). Richard Altick's The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public: 1800-1900 (Chicago and London, 1957) is mentioned by Escarpit though he puts the date and place of publication as 'Chicago, 1956' (Page 8) while Bradbury and Wilson put it as noted above.
  132. Some biographical sketches of Ethiopian writers are found in the newspapers and magazines published since early this century. There are also BA Theses in various departments in Addis Ababa University (mainly in the Departments of History, Ethiopian Languages and Literature, and very recently, Theatre Arts). Although these works contribute to our knowledge in this area, most of them are not satisfactory as they stand since they lack refinement in their method and wisdom in their judgements.
  133. As quoted in Richard Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia 1800-1935, Addis Ababa, 1968, 668.
  134. Ibid.
  135. Ibid.
  136. Ibid, 673.
  137. As quoted in Richard Pankhurst, Ibid.
  138. Ibid, 684.
  139. Richard Pankhurst, An Introduction to the economic history of Ethiopia from early times to 1800, London: Lalibela House, 1961, 292. Emphasis added.
  140. Ibid.
  141. Addis Helywät, 19.
  142. Ibid.
  143. Nominally under Turkish rule then.
  144. Pankhurst, 1962, 249.

145. Under Egyptian suzerainty at the time.
146. Pankhurst, 1962, 249.
147. Berhanena Salām Printing Press, Golden Jubilee 1921-1971, 1971, 62.
148. A questionnaire designed by the present author was sent to ten Printing Presses in 1985. The main purpose was to find out about the records they kept on books they printed and the nature of their business relations with writers. Three Printing Presses replied they did not have any records. Negd Printing Press said they did not have records of their printing since their establishment in 1940, however, it should be possible to find out from their 'Finished good receiving report' if it is available for the forty-six years. Shāwa Printing Press replied they did not have any record for what was printed before 1975. Yātābabārut printed receipts, agendas, calendars, student report cards and visiting cards. They said they never printed any book since their foundation in 1966. Two printing presses were not willing to provide answers to the questionnaires submitted to them. Tāsfa Gäbrä Sellassē Printing Press gave short written answers with a list of titles they published before 1974. They have published 105 titles before the upsurge of the revolution in 1974. All publications are religious. Tensa'ē Zāguba'ē Printing Press, which is the property of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church gave detailed replies to the questions set in the questionnaire. It stated it had a record of the forty-one years of its printing history but cannot provide the whole list for understandable reasons. The Printing Press printed religious books and various other books including novels, collection of poems, history books etc.
149. J R H Conacher, An initial readership survey of Ethiopia, Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society, Addis Ababa, 1969, 1-5.
150. Ibid, 5.
151. Anon (But must be S N Pandey), 'Apology for teaching literature in Ethiopian secondary schools,' The Ethiopian Herald, July 20/1971.
152. This may be because of the religious content of the book and because of the nature of the audience the survey might have concentrated on for its main aim which is assessing the requirements in religious literature.
153. Conacher, 26.
154. Ibid, 45.
155. Ibid.
156. Ibid, 52.
157. Īrmyas Germa 'Semota lādārasyan,' AZ, Hamlē 20/1964. In Amharic.
158. Tārbu, 'Yāmāṣaheftna yāmāṣehētoch waṣa,' YE, Hiazia 19/1960. In Amharic.



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160. See Editorial, 'Dersǎtena Dǎrasi,' AZ, Teqemt 13/1962; Editorial, 'Terat binorǎchǎw', YED, Sǎnē 25/1965; Engedaw Berhanu, 'Anbabeyan Gera gǎbban,' AZ, Hedar 21/1965; Mǎsfen Alǎmayǎhu, (Yǎsenǎṣehuf Chǎrǎfta,' AZ, Nǎhasē 10/1965; Tǎrbu 'Gǎṣ becha sayhon mǎṭaya yaṭṭu mǎṣaheft,' YED, Genbot 25/1962. All articles are in Amharic.
161. Editorial, 'Dersǎtena Dǎrasi,' AZ, Teqemt 13/1962.
162. Editorial, 'Terat binorǎchǎw,' YED, Sǎnē 25/1965.
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164. Tǎrbu, 'Gǎṣ becha sayhon mǎṭaya yaṭṭu mǎṣaheft,' YED, Genbot 25/1962.
165. Fǎjmyas Germa, op.cit.
166. Mǎkbeb Gǎbǎyǎhu, 'Kǎṭentawyan Mǎṣaheft,' Mǎnǎn, Genbot/1963, and 'Talaqu dǎrasi manǎw?', Mǎnǎn, Hedar/1964.
167. Germal Berhanē, 'Yǎṭentu senǎṣehuf tǎṣe'eno tezzeta,' YZE, Sǎnē 27/1962.
168. Bǎ'emnǎt G Amlak, 'Mǎṣehaf tǎmǎlkǎt,' AZ, Hedar 24/1942.
169. See also Bǎ'emnǎt G Amlak, 'Mǎṣehaf tǎmǎlkǎt,' AZ, Hedar 10/1942. Assǎfa Yergu, 'Mǎṣehaf tǎmǎlkǎt,' AZ, Ter 13/1942 and Yǎkatit 11/1942. Lǎmma Fǎyessa, 'Mǎṣehaf tǎmǎlkǎt,' AZ, Yǎkatit 25/1942.
170. Bǎ'emnǎt G Amlak, 'Mǎṣehaf tǎmǎlkǎt,' AZ, Ter 13/1942.
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174. Ibid.
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176. Ibid.
177. S N Pandey, 'Teaching of literature in secondary schools,' The Ethiopian Herald, August 11/1971.
178. Pandrey, July 20/1971.
179. Kay Hale, 'Report. Consultant's mission to Ethiopia,' Period reported: 9 July - 31 July 1972. Typed. 1-12. Reference is to p.6.

180. Pandey, July 20/1971.
181. Quoted in Täräffä, op.cit., 17.
182. Täräffä, 18.
183. Ibid.
184. Editorial, 'Senä şehuf kägan endiwäta,' AZ, Ter 19/1958.
185. Editorial, 'Literary Society,' The Ethiopian Herald, November 10/1968.
186. Feqrä-Dengel Bāyānä, 'The Literary Society,' The Ethiopian Herald, June 2/1973.
187. Ibid.
188. When the Society was established in 1953 E.C. the Chairman was Emeru Hailä Sellassē and the Emperor was its Patron.
189. Anon, 'Winners of literary competition given prizes,' AZ, Hamlē 6/1960. In Amharic.
190. Mary Dyson, 'Hyphenated publishing?', Addis Reporter, 1 28, July 11/1969, 17. See also Russell Howe, 'Authorship Ethiopian-style,' The Ethiopian Herald, May 16/1971. Reprinted from The Sun, Baltimore.

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds. and trans.), London: Laurence and Wishart, 1971, 8. All references to Gramsci in the text are from this work.
5. 'i.e. Man the maker (or tool-bearer) and Man the thinker.' (Gramsci, 9).
6. Tom Bottomore, Elites and society, London: C A Watts, 1964, 64.
7. Ibid.
8. Gramsci does not seem to be impressed by all those who consider themselves philosophers and artists when he writes: 'The traditional and vulgarised type of the intellectual is given by the Man of letters, the philosopher, the artist. Therefore journalists, who claim to be men of letters, philosophers, artists, also regard themselves as the "true" intellectuals.' (Page 9).
9. Bottomore, 64.
10. Bottomore, 65.
11. Richard Pipes, Russia under the old regime, Penguin Books, 1974. Reference here is to the reprint of 1982, 252; See also Andrey Kudryavtsev, 'The past and present of the intelligentsia,' Studies in Soviet Thought, 17 (December 1977), 331.
12. Timothy Edward O'connor, The politics of soviet culture Anatoli Lunacharskii, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1983, 30-31.
13. Ibid.
14. Janheinz Jahn, A history of neo-African literature, New York: Faber and Faber and Grove Press, 1968, 34-44.
15. Among the works on the Ethiopian intellectual we were able to trace so far, we find useful material in Alāmē, Bahru Dāmessē, Pankhurst, and the writings of travellers for the pre-war period; in Germa, Assāfa, Gādamu and Sālāmōn, Levine, Greenfield for the post-war period; and in Balsvik's well documented PhD Thesis and Lägässä's article on the role and history of student movements. There are

lots of scattered articles and notes in various newspapers and journals which we cannot deal with here because of the limited scope of our task. One hopes, though, that some profound research, whose aim is the sole study of the history, ideas, ideals, life, and practical roles of the Ethiopian intellectual in society, exhaustively documents and analyses these sources in the not too distant future.

16. The value of this article probably lies in its effort to deal with the dichotomy facing the educated Ethiopian individual. The various manifestations of hyphenation, the divided self, alienation etc, are described in their material and spiritual aspects in daily life.
17. Alāmē's article traces the development, nature and problems of intellectuals before 1889. I am indebted to him and the resourceful Pankhurst for this rather scantily treated period. See also Nāgash and Wārqu though caution is required in the case of the latter. Useful notes are found in the works of European travellers such as Parkyns, Flad, Rey, Farago, Vivian, Merab, Waldmeier, and in A'emero and Berhanena Sālam.
18. Alāmē Eshātē, 'A history of Ethiopians educated abroad before 1889', Ethiopian Journal of Education, Addis Ababa, 6, 1 (1973), 116-119.
19. Ibid, 115-116.
20. Richard Pankhurst, 1962, 253.
21. Alāmē, 122.
22. Ibid, 125, 136 and 141.
23. Ibid, 143-144.
24. See also Pankhurst, 1962, 251. Other prominent intellectuals of this period include Hakim Wārquenāh (also known as Dr Martin), Mahdārā Qal, Mercha Wārq, Berru Wārq, Onessimūs Nāsib.
25. Alāmē, 138.
26. For the controversy on the dangers and advantages of learning European languages and getting Western education, see A'emero, Hedar 27/1917, No 27, and Berhanena Sālam, Ter 14/1917 and Ter 21/1917. For other details refer to Alāmē, 132-133 and 146-148.
27. Alāmē, 145. He quotes Le Fevre as his source.
28. Alāmē, 146.
29. Alāmē, 147-148; Germa, 4. There were limited educational activities within the country carried by the foreign missionaries. Among the subjects taught by the Lazarist missionaries, in the school established in Kārān in 1872, were 'religion, languages, printing, carpentry, metalwork, agriculture and needlework.' (Pankhurst, 1968, 672). However it was difficult to find employment for these students since they were considered "'outcasts from their own people.'" (Ibid)

30. As quoted in Pankhurst, 1968, 674. See also Pankhurst, 1962, 256.
31. Pankhurst, 1962, 259.
32. Wärru Täggänn, 'The first Ethiopian student abroad,' Männän, Yäkatit 1, 1964, 16; Pankhurst, 1962, 271.
33. Richard Pankhurst, 'Ethiopian hyphenated innovations', Addis Reporter, 1, 29 (July 18, 1969), 16.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid, 15-16.
36. Ibid, 18.
37. Just before the second Italian invasion the courses given at Menelik School were: French, Amharic, English, Italian, Mathematics, Science and physical training and sports. (Pankhurst, 1962, 259). In 1924 Ecole Francais taught: 'Reading, geography, chemistry, physics and natural science, drawing, music, history, accounting, geometry, algebra and moral instruction, and devoted an hour a day to Amharic.' (Ibid) The curriculum of Täffäri Mäkonnen School 'included French, Arabic, English, mathematics, chemistry and physics, history, geography, gymnastics and sports, as well as Amharic.' (Ibid, 267) At the Lazarist, around 1924, 'The boys studied religion, history, geography, mathematics, Geez, Amharic and French, and the girls religion, reading, writing and domestic work.' (Pankhurst, 1968, 678) At the Swedish missions: 'Boys were taught religion, church history, Amharic, Gallinya, English, French, nature study, arithmetic, geometry, gymnastics and singing, but were expected to have a reasonable mastery of Amharic before starting on a European language. Girls were trained in needlework. Students had also to participate in manual work, but no crafts were taught.' (Ibid)
38. Pankhurst, 1968, 674.
39. We selected these two intellectuals because they wrote in greater depth about the problems of the country and were published during the first two decades of this century. With the establishment of A'emero and Berhanena Sälam and other newspapers before the advent of Fascist invasion many educated Ethiopians have aired their views. These two were however among the most prominent (if not the prominent) intellectuals of the period when judged by the contributions they have made in writing.
40. As quoted in Pankhurst, 1968, 675.
41. Ibid. I have done some editing to give it the semblance of a dialogue.
42. Gäbrä Heywät Bykädaññ, 'Aṣe Menelik enna Ityopya', 7.
43. In L'Abyssinie: etude d'actualite 1922-1924, Avignon, 1925, 104. My reference is to Bahru Dämessä's paraphrased version, Page 81.

44. Bahru Dämessē, The role of the progressives in Ethiopian politics, 1909-1930, BA Thesis, Department of History, HSIU, 1970, 51.
45. In an interview with Mängäsha Gässässä in 1963; as quoted in Bahru, 1970, 47.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid, 44 and 48.
48. For most contributors to Berhanena Sälam the key to modernization was education. In many cases their concepts of change and progress are more idealistic and less concretized. However, for Afäwäriq and Gäbrä Heywät equality, liberty and progress are achieved with the abolition of the feudal system.
49. Bahru, 1970, 44. An idea admittedly taken from Maurice Lachin and D Weljachew, L'Ethiopie et son destin, Paris, 1935, 109.
50. Hery Wäldä Sellassē, 'On the use of education', Berhanena Sälam, Hedar 2, 1919. No 45. In Amharic.
51. Robert Hess, 1970, 67.
52. Richard Greenfield, 1965, 240.
53. Markakis writes, 'The first group trained abroad and returned to Ethiopia in 1953.' See Markakis, 1974, 239.
54. Assäfa Bäqqälä, 'The Ethiopian elite and intelligentsia: a socio-historical profile,' Dialogue, Addis Ababa, 1, 1 (October 1967), 6.
55. Ibid, 6-8.
56. Germa Amarä, The modern Ethiopian intelligentsia and its evolution. A paper prepared in advance for the inter-disciplinary seminar of the Faculties of Arts and Education. HSIU, 1966-67, 14.
57. Ibid.
58. Maybe this is why Peter Duval Smith said, 'Some foreign observers believe that the hope of change lies with young intellectuals but I do not think so ...' [As quoted in Germa, 12].
59. Germa, 1966-67, 12.
60. Gädamu Abraha and Sälämon Dērēssa, 'The hyphenated Ethiopian,' Addis Reporter, 1, 6 (February 6/1969), 13. Part two appeared on February 14/1969.
61. Gädamu and Sälämon, February 14/1969, 10.
62. Germa, 1966-67, 13.
63. Ibid.
64. Germa should also be talking about the same group when he refers to the existence of the 'Young Ethiopian Movement' whose aims were

to quicken the westernization of Ethiopia. It does not seem the group made any contribution that mattered. (Germa, 6) Evelyn Waugh refers to them as: 'Jeunesse d'Ethiopie' (Page 25), 'The society of "progressive" Abyssinians' (Page 25), and 'The Abyssinian progressive party' (Page 50). See his Waugh in Abyssinia, London, 1936; Penguin, 1985. Page references are to the latter issue. Waugh believed the group had 'little real desire for change' (Page 25). He observed, '... a weekly visit to the cinema, a preference for whisky over tedj [sic], toothbrush moustaches in place of the traditional and imposing beards, patent leather shoes and a passable dexterity with fork and spoon were the Western innovations that these young men relished; these, and a safe climb to eminence behind the broad, oxlike backs of the hereditary aristocracy.' (Ibid)

65. Richard Greenfield, 'Some thoughts on the Ethiopian elite', Têwodros, 1, 1 (July 15, 1965), 40. See also Greenfield, 1965, 315.
66. Ibid.
67. As quoted in Greenfield, 1965, 315, from Waugh in Abyssinia, London, 1936. The words are Greenfield's, however, he does not give any page number.
68. Greenfield, in Têwodros, 41.
69. Greenfield, 1965, 225.
70. Greenfield, in Têwodros, 41.
71. Donald Levine, 'Class consciousness and class solidarity in the new Ethiopian elites,' in P C Lloyd (ed.), The New Elites of Tropical Africa, Oxford, 1966, 320. Levine does not say anything else about the groups which he calls 'conspiratorial.'
72. Greenfield, 1965, 354.
73. Ibid, 354-355.
74. Ibid, 356.
75. Quoted in Greenfield, 1965, 349.
76. Levine, in P C Lloyd (ed.), 1966, 316.
77. Ibid, 320.
78. Ibid, 320-321.
79. Ibid, 322.
80. Gädamu and Sälämon, February 7/1969, 18.
81. Germa, 1966-67, 2.
82. Ibid, 11.
83. Ibid.

84. Ibid, 13.
85. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Renascent Africa, London: Cass, 1968, 135.
86. Ibid. Emphasis his.
87. Ibid. Emphasis author's.
88. Germa, 1966-67, 14.
89. Ibid, 16. See Germa's article for further discussion of the issue. His ultimate suggestion is a solution which brings about change in the type of government and NOT in the fundamental questions of the means of production which is one of the major obstacles of development in many spheres of social life. It is an important factor accounting for the poverty, ignorance, ill-health etc. of the peoples of Ethiopia and Africa. The creation of 'the critical intelligentsia' or better still the intelligentsia which has re-discovered itself and has emerged with a new, able, conscious and harmonizing personality sounds like Plato's philosopher kings. When Germa talks about the intellectual and education he ignores the role of the people in this process of changing the society. One dies to ask 'What of the people? Where is their role in this big drama?' Germa, Azikiwe, and many other critics seem to take the educated Africans as the sole redeemers of society whether they are conservative, liberal, radical in their views. The intellectuals with socialist inclinations who find themselves in the same trap must have been quite considerable. (See Gramsci's discussion of the emergence of the new 'organic intellectuals'. Comparison with Germa's, Azikiwe's and many other views must be interesting).
90. See Laggässä Lamma, 'The Ethiopian student movement 1960-1974: A challenge to the monarchy and imperialism in Ethiopia', North East African Studies, 1, 1 (1979), 31-33; Randi Ronning Balsvik, Hailä Sellassē's students - rise of social and political consciousness. PhD Thesis, University of Tromso, Norway, 1979, XIV.
91. Laggässä, 41.
92. Ibid, 42.
93. For a more informed and detailed history of the Ethiopian Student Movement see Balsvik's thesis, 1979; and Laggässä's article, 1979.
94. Sälāmon Dērēssa, 'The Amharic dime-novel', Addis Reporter, Vol.1, No.1 (3 January 1969), 17.
95. Ibid, 21.
96. Ibid, 19.
97. Ibid, 20.
98. Ibid, 19.
99. Ibid, 21.



100. Ibid, 22.

101. Yohannes Admassu, 'The pace of fictional literature', Mänän,  
Genbot 1961, 13. In Amharic.

102. Ibid.

103. See my article in Thirteen Articles - Anthology. Compiled by  
Fäqadä Azäzä. Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature,  
Tahsas <sup>(1975 E.C.)</sup> pp. 111-133.

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1. Luigi Fusela, *Trois-essais sur la littérature Ethiopienne*, Paris: Aresae, 1984, n.p. See also Lamma W Maryam, 1963 E.C.; Albert Gerard, 1968, for biographical notes on Heruy.
2. Lamma W Maryam, *Yäbelattēn Gēta Heruy Wäldä Sellassē Yäheywät Tarik*, B.A. Thesis, Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature, H S I U, 1963 E. ., p.14. In Amharic.
3. Luigi Fusela, 1984, n.p.
4. Ibid. Some of these dates do not coincide with those mentioned in two publications of Berhanena Sälam. See the *Nähasē* 19, 1919 and *Miazia* 15, 1923, issues.
5. Lamma W Maryam, 1963 E.C., 50.
6. Stephen Wright, 'Amharic Literature', in Something, 1,1 (1963), 15. He suggests the translation of Bunyan's novel into Amharic in 1884 (the revised edition, 1951) 'probably had a profound influence in respect to both form and content, on the formation of the new Amharic literature.' See also *Mängestu Lamma*, 1967: 1-2; *Täsfayē Gässässä*, 1979, 7.
7. Lamma W Maryam, 1963 E.C., 42. It is appropriate to note that Heruy was made an honorary member of a society of scholars in Germany, and awarded a certificate of merit and membership in *Genbot* 1921 E.C. He was the seventh member of the society along with four university professors and two scholars. Ignazio Guidi, professor of Amharic and Arabic at the University of Rome was one of the first members of the society. (See Berhanena Sälam, *Genbot* 22, 1921 E.C.). See also Addis Zämän, *Miyazia* 7, 1942 E.C. where *Bäqqälä Alämu* complained, nine years after the expulsion of the Italians, he could not find any of Heruy's books in the shops. He pleaded that they be reprinted.
8. It must be noted, however, that there were short tales, fables and other stories published in the newspapers, and few of them as books, prior to Yälebb Hassab, which tried to deal with social problems.
9. Heruy Wäldä Sellassē, Addis Aläm, Addis Ababa, Goha Şebah Printing Press, 1925 E.C., 1-4.
10. See his Goha Şebah, *Täfäri Mäkonnen* Printing Press, 1919 E.C., 56-58.
11. Ibid, 174.
12. Ibid. See especially pp. 156-174.
13. See The Fetha Nägäst, 43.

14. Asfaw Damṭē says that Addis Alām was first published in 1905 E.C. as a work written 'by an Ethiopian who loves his country.' He suspects that the sensitivity of religious content of the novel may be the reason that led to the anonymity of the author (See Asfaw Damṭē, Yākatit, Hedar 1973, 27).
15. Gäbrä Heywät Baykādaññ, Māngestna Yähezb Astādadār, Addis Ababa, Tafari Mākonnen Printing Press, Yākatit 1, 1916. Reprinted in 1953 E.C., page 79.
16. See Goha Sebah, 195.

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### Chapter Four

1. Germachäw Täklä Hawaryat, Araya, Berhanena Sälam Printing Press, 1960 E.C., Preface, n.p. Araya was written between 1938 and 1939 E.C. and first published in 1941 E.C., in Asmara. The 1960 E.C. edition is used here. The novel is 350 pages in length.
2. Anon. "Araya - Addis Mashaf", Addis Zämän, Niazia 14, 1942, in Amharic.
3. Assäfa Mängäsha, "'Araya' summarised", The Lion Cub, 6 (Winter 1954), 43.
4. Ibid.
5. Anon. "Girmachew Tekle-Hawariat - Life and Works", Mänän, 10, 7 (April 1966) 30.
6. Anon. "Ethiopian Novel for Russian Readers", The Ethiopian Herald, January 13, 1960.
7. There are inconsistencies throughout the novel about Araya's age and the number of years he stayed in school and France. This does not have any serious bearing on the story. We are merely indicating one of the shortcomings in the novel that could have been avoided with a little bit of editorial effort.
8. Georg Lukacs, Writer and critic, London, Merlin Press, 1970, 110-116.
9. See Mänän, 1966, 30.
10. Note again that Araya is contradicting his previous, strongly expressed statement about the pace change ought to take. When the two Ethiopians suggested that it should be approached slowly he called them conservatives and declared that 'The era is of dynamism' (p.122). Now he is prepared to wait for one or two generations just to get the trained manpower which is ultimately to effect change (p.146).

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1. The biographical information summarised here is taken from the twenty-seven page questionnaire Haddis completed for the present writer.
2. Aymro Wändemagännähu and Joachim Motovu (eds.), The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Addis Ababa, The Ethiopian Orthodox Mission, 1970.
3. It is believed that if a dying person asks for tälla (a local beer) it is definite that he is not recovering. Thus there is no point in trying to find tälla for him. Meherätu is ridiculing the disheartened Weddenäsh because she left her dying husband alone trying to obtain the tälla he asked for.
4. Paulos Tzadua (trans.), The Fetha Nägäst, HSIU, Faculty of Law, Addis Ababa, 1968, 67.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid, 129.
7. Aymro and Joachim (eds.), 1970, 130-131.
8. E O James, Primitive ritual and belief, London, Methuen, 1917, 113.
9. 'Sacrifice', Encyclopaedia Britannica Micropaedia, Chicago, 1985 edition, 289.
10. 'A device similar to the medieval fief'. See Class and Revolution in Ethiopia, 1978, 22.
11. Gäbru Tarräqänn, Rural protest in Ethiopia, 1941-1970: A study of three rebellions. PhD Thesis submitted to the Graduate School of Syracuse University, 1977, 16 and 17.
12. Donald Crummey, as quoted in Gäbru, 16.
13. Haddis A lämayähu, Yätamehertenna yätämari bēt ter gum, Artistic Press, 1948 E.C., 101-112.
14. Questionnaire, Haddis 001, 1977 E.C., page 10-11. The questionnaire is prepared and is in the possession of Fekade Azeze.
15. Donald Crummey, 'Banditry and resistance: noble and peasant in nineteenth century Ethiopia', in Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund, 26-29 April 1982, Edited by Sven Rubenson. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1984, 263.
16. Ibid.
17. As quoted in Gäbru, 1977, 21.

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2. Henry James, The letters of Henry James, Vol.I, Selected and edited by Percy Lubbock, London: Macmillan and Co Ltd., 1920, 72.
3. Assäfa Bäqqälä, 'The Ethiopian elite and intelligentsia: a socio-political profile', Dialogue, Vol.1, No.1 (1967), pp. 6-8.
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- ርዕስ አገጽ ፮ ፡፡ ሰነድ ስርዓት በጋገ ውስጥ ፡፡ አዲስ ዘመን ፮ ገንቦት 3 ቀን 1960 ዓ.ም.
- የሰነድ አድጋሚ ፡፡ ሰነድ በየፊርቶ ፡፡ አዲስ ዘመን ፮ ሰኔ 20 ቀን 1960 ዓ.ም.
- ግብርና ስርዓት ፡፡ ደጋጋሚ ሰነድ ስርዓት ፡፡ አዲስ ዘመን ፮ ሰኔ 25 ቀን 1960 ዓ.ም.
- ግብርና ስርዓት ፡፡ ደጋጋሚ ሰነድ ስርዓት ፡፡ አዲስ ዘመን ፮ ሰኔ 26 ቀን 1960 ዓ.ም.
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- ርዕስ አገጽ ፮ ፡፡ ለተገቢ ደርሰት ፡፡ አዲስ ዘመን ፮ መጋቢት 30 ቀን 1961 ዓ.ም.
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- ይለግ ስርዓት ፡፡ ሰነድ ስሜት ለግብር ፡፡ አዲስ ዘመን ፮ ፕሮ 3 ቀን 1962 ዓ.ም.
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1ኛ ዓመት ቁ.4 የካቲት 1965 ዓ.ም.

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## GLOSSARY

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Abba          | A church title meaning 'father'.   |
| Aläqa         | Head of a church or parish church.   |
| Aṣē           | Emperor.   |
| Ato           | Equivalent to 'Mr'.  |
| Awrajja       | Sub-province.  |
| Belattēn gēta | A title given to a learned ecclesiastic.   |
| Berr          | Ethiopian currency, one US dollar is approximately equivalent to 2.2 - 2.5 <u>berr</u> .   |
| Chat          | A stimulant leaf when chewed.  |
| Chēqa shum    | A local chief or official.   |
| Däbälo        | Clothing made of tanned sheepskin.   |
| Däbtära       | A learned man of the church, scribe, cantor.   |
| Däjjazmach    | A feudal title denoting the nobleman's role during war - equivalent to general.  |
| Däjj tenat    | Periodic court or office attendance of officials or ordinary men to have their applications executed.  |
| Echägē        | Bishop.  |
| Equb          | A social organisation aimed at saving.   |
| Fitawrari     | A feudal title denoting the nobleman's role during war - commander of the vanguard.  |
| Färänj        | A general word denoting Europeans or whites.   |
| Gäbbar        | One who pays tribute, a peasant.   |
| Gäd1          | A story about the lives of saints, <u>acta sanctorum</u> .   |
| Gämäta        | A kind of tithe or tribute determined and paid to the landlord after the yearly harvest and income of the <u>gäbbar</u> (peasant) working on his land is assessed. |
| Gan           | A large container made of clay.  |
| Geez          | The classical literary and liturgical language of Ethiopia, also know as 'Ethiopic.'   |
| Grazmach      | A feudal title denoting the nobleman's military role during war - commander of the left column or flank.   |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Guba'ē qana   | A poem of two lines, especially in Geez.  |
| Gult          | A form of right for holding land; similar to fief.  |
| Kahenat       | The clergy.   |
| Liqawent      | Scholars, especially of the church.   |
| Madärya       | State land given to individuals: officials, war veterans, patriots.                               |
| Mäkuwanent    | The nobility.   |
| Mängest       | Government; 'Mängest land' is that which is registered as government property.                    |
| Mäsafent      | The princes, princesses, the aristocracy.   |
| Mättaya       | A kind of 'forced' gift peasants gave to the landlord or an official.                             |
| Mäwaddes      | A poem of eight lines, especially in Geez.  |
| Mäwasit       | A book of anthems, Antiphony of church answers.   |
| Mehur         | Intellectual, intelligentsia.   |
| Nätäla        | A shawl-like dress.   |
| Nebab         | Reading.  |
| Negus         | King.   |
| Negusä nägäst | King of kings; emperor.   |
| Qännazmach    | A feudal title denoting the nobleman's role during war - commander of the right column or flank.  |
| Qenē          | A word often referring to classical Geez poetry which is composed and recited (performed) orally. |
| Ras           | The next feudal title after <u>negus</u> ; literally it means 'head'; commander of an army.       |
| Re'esä däbr   | Head of a church, Archmandrite.   |
| Rest          | The communal landholding system widely used in Northern Ethiopia before Yakatit 1967 E.C.         |
| Sämon         | Church land.  |
| Selät         | Vows, gifts, sacrifices.  |
| Shum-sher     | Reshuffling of officers, ministers and other high ranking officials.                              |
| Tä'amer       | A book of miracles.   |

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| Tabot           | Ark of the Covenant.   |
| Tāzkar          | A commemorative feast for the dead.  |
| Ṭābāl           | Water believed to be curative or medical; holy water; spa.                                       |
| Tājǰ            | A local drink made of honey; a kind of mead.   |
| Ṭef             | <u>Eragrostis abyssinica</u> a very fine food grain; a millet-like cereal used as a staple diet. |
| Wanḩa           | A cup made of horn.  |
| Wārāda          | District.  |
| Wāyǰāro         | Equivalent to 'Mrs'.   |
| Zāmānā māsafent | Era of the princes (1769-1855).  |
| Zārāfa          | The recitation of <u>genē</u> .  |
| Zēma            | Church music, chant.   |