

THE ECONOMIC REORGANIZATION OF ETHIOPIA  
DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD: 1918-1935

By

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## ABSTRACT

### THE ECONOMIC REORGANIZATION OF ETHIOPIA DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD: 1918-1935

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During the interwar period, 1918-1935, the expanding state apparatus of the Ethiopian government exploited infrastructural improvements to extend and preserve relations of production that limited growth and stunted economic development. Claimants to the powers and privileges inherent in Ethiopian kingship vied over the proceeds of long-distance trade with an eye towards monopolization, not maximization.

Growth and development also suffered from European efforts to fashion a suitable investment environment. Unable to dominate local economic affairs, England, France and Italy instead blocked the others from succeeding.

The dissertation stresses ideology and superstructure because the most valued political and economic rewards within Ethiopia were philosophically prescribed, and because economic behavior and decision-making met conventional constraints upon behavior.

The first four chapters examine chronologically Ethiopia's interwar political economy. Contrary to continuing conventional belief, Ras Tafari overthrew Lij Iyasu, not because political-

based rumors suggested that Iyasu exhibited Muslim tendencies, but rather to steer long-distance trade through Shoa. Tafari responded to a series of internal and external challenges to his authority. By 1930 and his coronation as Haile Selassie, an improving infrastructure permitted the Emperor to consolidate the transfer of provincial wealth to his capitol, and to maximize his control over the long-distance trade, predominately coffee and hides.

Chapter five focuses upon European efforts to fashion a legal framework in order to succeed economically in Ethiopia, all in disregard of Ethiopia's existing superstructure. Throughout, they ignored Ethiopia's right to fiscal, legislative, and judicial affairs by establishing European controls over internal policy. The result was another brake upon Ethiopian development.

The final chapter examines the main cause for the economic development that did occur. Indian and Arab merchants had long been willing to adapt to Ethiopia's superstructural constraints. By accepting modest rates of return on their investments, these merchants successfully dominated local brokerage, marketing, and banking. Throughout the period, they worked harmoniously with the central government and kept their distance from the European powers. This chapter made use of a previously undiscovered resource, the 550 volumes of the Consular Court. These breakdowns in economic order provide an on-going record of how the economic order was meant to function.

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For Cheryl

## FOREWORD

I wrote this doctoral dissertation in the early 1980s. I successfully defended it in 1988. I simply note my memorable conversion from History to Computing. By 1986, I was AVP for Computing and Information Technology at Princeton University, where I worked for 24 years until I retired in 2010.

My 1988 committee imposed no new requirements, but very soon after the defense, my adviser, Harold G. Marcus, privately demanded in writing that I read several books and reconsider my conclusions. I would like to record here, apart from my faith in my findings, my reasons for refusing to comply.

In late 2017, my wife Cheryl and I, motivated by the me-too movement and by superficial e-mail blasts about the Nassar affair from two MSU Presidents, reproached Marcus for his treatment of Cheryl, me, and many others during the period that we were at MSU. An independent firm, Kroll, investigated our complaints. They contacted many witnesses, collected copious evidence, and vindicated our accounts.

Only after that report was issued, in mid-2019, MSU finally discovered proof of my successful dissertation defense. For the granting of the degree, made retroactive to 1988, we wish to thank Dean Thomas Jeitschko and Dr. Rebecca Campbell for their genuine empathy, their personal support, and their uplifting doggedness in addressing this decades-long travesty. MSU remains deeply

troubled, but there is some hope, owing to the very recent emergence of these progressive administrators.

Regrettably, we cannot thank the administration of the MSU History Department, the MSU College of Social Science, or MSU's OIE, who marginalized and re-victimized us for more than a year, or my fellow MSU Ethiopianists, who were contacted by Kroll but who declined to testify in the recent investigation.

We have both lived without the PhD or its benefits for more than three decades. It may be too late for the extensive research I had charted, and it is certainly too late for a meaningful career in academia. Fortunately, my work at Princeton contributed to the ubiquitous use of computing and networking throughout the curriculum and higher education. I was part of something professional and truly cool. Add 44 books, two US Chess Championships, an entry into the upcoming World Correspondence Chess Championship final, and a term as Mayor of Hopewell Township that resulted in new, highly restrictive zoning and a Master Plan that places environmental concerns well ahead of commercial interests.

Cheryl has also had a very productive career in editing, in writing, and in teaching youngsters in Asia to read and write well. It is not the career in Africa she sought, and MSU deserves that blame as well.

Cheryl and I remain proud of the principled stand we took in 1988, to abandon seven years of effort so as not to validate MSU's

unworthy African History program. Tragically, our well-mannered protest failed. We recently learned, with much sorrow, that Marcus continued to wound others. We remain hopeful that MSU will finally acknowledge the pernicious culture that enabled such sexual abusers to flourish, and to take meaningful steps to ensure that MSU will never again tolerate such behavior.

This dissertation, itself a product of Marcus's Ethiopianist program, has not been read since 1988. It is, itself, an artifact of that flawed era. The bibliography and two appendices are missing, the casualties of time. But the original product, and the conduct of that era, revealed only now, may finally speak.

Jon Russell Edwards

Pennington, NJ

October, 2019



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## INTRODUCTION

When I began the research on this dissertation in 1979, I had a much different agenda than I have now. Influenced by a historiography that stressed progress, economic process, and African initiative as part of a transition towards a more synchronic "African" African history, I undertook the study with an implicit belief that the Ethiopian economy experienced, during the interwar period, a progressive reorganization, leading to a rise of a class of merchant capitalists and improvements in material life throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, during the period, hides and coffee did effectively replace slaves and ivory as Ethiopia's key export products. The central government's incorporation of southern areas of production did accelerate Ethiopia's involvement in the world economy. And there were important advances in transportation, communications, and services, especially in and around Addis Ababa. I am, however, now much less impressed with the intrinsic importance of these infrastructural developments.

In trying to reconcile my data, I have come to believe that the state apparatus of the central government and the extension of the highland superstructure, far from transmogrifying the economy, extended and preserved relations of production that limited growth and stunted development. In particular, claimants to the powers and privileges inherent in Ethiopian kingship fought over the

proceeds of trade and production with an eye towards monopolization, not maximization. Their goal was not modernization, but rather the extension of a very conventional basis of authority. The development of the infrastructure served the goals of these few individuals, and not Ethiopia's economic development.

In addition, the data suggest that Ethiopian growth and development also suffered from European pressure to fashion a climate suitable for foreign investment. Europeans sought free trade, arms embargoes, extraterritoriality, the abolition of slavery, and frontier stability, all of which involved Eurocentric perspectives on how Ethiopia ought to be ordered. In particular, the Tripartite Treaty of 1906 and the Klobukowski Treaty of 1908 ignored Ethiopia's political and economic philosophies by seeking to impose foreign control over judicial, commercial, and legislative affairs. Foreigners interpreted local conditions and events primarily in terms of their own western experiences and, as a result, rarely took into consideration the philosophical underpinnings of political and economic activity in Ethiopia. By required expenditures and priorities alien to local policy makers, foreign "interests" in many cases diverted resources from areas in which the Ethiopian state professed need.<sup>2</sup>

In arriving at these conclusions, I have stressed ideology and superstructure for two main reasons. First, I believe that the most important political and economic rewards within Ethiopia were

philosophically prescribed. Therefore, it would be impossible, I think, to understand political and economic behavior in Ethiopia without placing actions within the conventional constraints upon behavior. I do not think, for example, that I could now adequately describe Ras Tafari's motives without placing his actions within the context of his pursuit of the prerogatives of kingship; nor would I describe the mechanism by which tributes were forwarded to Addis Ababa without including at least a sense what paying tribute meant to those who paid it and those who received it. Secondly, I believe that Ethiopia's difficulties with Europe, in spite of their severity, owe not so much to conscious conspiracies in the foreign capitals as they do to the conflicts of economic and political philosophies between Europe and Ethiopia.

Historical analysis of economic decision making and of international contact have underemphasized ideology and superstructure, owing generally to confusion attending the terms, and particularly to an unfortunate tendency to view ideology as a "false consciousness" outside the historical process. The proletariat's long inaction frustrated Marx to define ideology as an evil coopting of behavior, perpetuated in order to prevent workers from coming to understand that their labor generates surplus value for capital interests. In German Ideology, Marx therefore described ideology as a distorted reflection in consciousness of real social relations. Reality, or "true consciousness," became the true nature of social relations,

knowable through an understanding of Marx's philosophies, but elusive, because individuals tend to be blinded by the ideologies that falsely depict the relations of production in which they are involved. According to Marx, "reality" determines the content of ideology; relations of production generate false notions, by distorting experiences and by creating particular class positions from which subjects' observations are determined. As a dream constituted from the residuals of reality, ideology for Marx has no history. Instead, ideology remains outside of the only existing history, that of individuals materially producing and reproducing their existence.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the best-known dissent is Althusser's. He rejects the notion of false consciousness, instead interpreting ideology as an organic and indispensable part of every society and every social identity. Since there is no Marxian social reality or "true consciousness" to experience, subjects adopt, accept, and know that which gives meaning to life, that which satisfies unaskable and unanswerable questions. Specifically, Althusser defines ideology as "a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." For Althusser, ideology, as a social universal, is not the product of relations of production, but rather, instrumental in reproducing them.<sup>4</sup>

I reject the notion of ideology as false consciousness, not simply because Marx's definition awkwardly places many beliefs outside the realm of historical investigation, but more

importantly because ideologies, however different they may be from our own, form a sincerely held ethical basis for existence. I am impressed by Althusser's schema, but for the purposes of the dissertation, I can accept Lovejoy's definition of ideology as a system of ideas pertaining to social and political subjects which justify and legitimate culture. As such, ideology can be regarded as an articulated body of thought, as a legitimization of authority, and as the basis for ascendancy to power.<sup>5</sup>

In the writings of both Marx and Engels, superstructure is a broad, almost indeterminate concept. They meant the word to embrace the whole of social life apart from the base, but neither defined the concept at length or even differentiated the base clearly from the superstructure. In his preface to "The Critique of Political Economy," Marx defined the economic structure of society "as the real base upon which legal and political superstructure rises and to which particular forms of social consciousness correspond." He seemed to expand the definition in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte:

Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought, and views of life. The whole class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations. The single individual who receives them through tradition and upbringing may imagine that they form the real motives and the starting point for his own activity.<sup>6</sup>

Although superstructure remains an indeterminate concept in the literature, there is a general consensus that the

superstructure embraces legal and political tradition, as well the philosophical underpinnings of society, but there is considerable debate regarding the relationship of the superstructure and the base. Is the superstructure determined and changed by the social and economic formations, or is it relatively autonomous? The question is important, not only with regard to the nature of change, but also, as Callinicos has pointed out, for political reasons.

For if the superstructure is simply a reflex of the productive process, then the social revolution does not require the active intervention of revolutionaries but can be achieved thanks to the automatism of the economy. If, on the other hand, political and ideological factors are relatively autonomous, then the need for conscious organization and preparation is clearcut.<sup>7</sup>

I have no desire to take part here in the political debate. On the basis of my data, I suspect that the superstructure was relatively autonomous, but it is my hope that others, with better access to information, will examine Ethiopia's superstructure in far more detail.<sup>8</sup>

#### Chapter summary:

Chapters one through four examine chronologically the interwar political economy of Ethiopia, with emphasis upon factors that determined economic growth and development. Chapter one focuses on the events leading up to the 1916 "coup d'état" that placed Tafari Makonnen in power. I suggest that Lij Iyasu followed



a conventional program, in which he sought to establish firmly the center of the political economy in Wollo. To that end, he avoided Addis Ababa and actively sought to redirect long distance trade through his home province. His platform, however, alienated Shoa, whose alternative program of establishing Addis Ababa as the center of the empire was similarly geared to the monopolization, not the maximization of revenue. Shoa's leaders, from 1910 on, increasingly opposed Menilek's appointed successor by playing on Europe's fears and "interests," and by spreading rumors that fundamentally questioned Lij Iyasu's right to rule. The coup d'état of September 1916, had as its root a contest over the powers and privileges inherent in Ethiopian kingship, especially the right to collect and distribute revenue from land, and control over long distance trade through Harrar and from the rich areas of production to the south and southwest.

Chapter two examines the period from the coup to 1921, the year in which European demand for primary produce finally recovered. The politics of succession dominated the period; Unable to rely upon proceeds from long distance trade, and unable to assert his legitimacy, Tafari clung to power by responding to a series of challenges in carefully prescribed ways, all in the pursuit of the prerogatives of kingship. During these early years, there was no coordinated economic platform, only a daily fight to obtain power. Before Tafari might distribute lands and honors to trusted devotees and family, he would require unchallengeable

authority to make decisions. It was a slow, conventional process, one that required patience and understanding.

Chapter three covers the years between 1921 and 1928, a period in which Tafari slowly increased his writ until, by 1928, he had obtained the title Negus. From 1921 on, the export economy rebounded, but external pressure and internal political competition over the powers and privileges inherent in Ethiopian kingship continued to impede Tafari's efforts to personalize the proceeds from long distance trade. During the period, the forced sharing and delegation of authority, as well as the central government's continual need to foil separatism and external aggression required so huge a commitment of court time and revenue that no single economic program could emerge. In addition to many other events, the chapter focuses on Ethiopia's campaign to enter the League of Nations in 1923-4. Perhaps better than in any other event, the motives of the competitors for power were evident.

By 1928, Tafari had substantially freer reign. Chapter four examines the impact of Tafari's economic and political program, now revealed. To be sure, there was an aura of progress, supported by the promulgation of a European-style constitution, the appointment of several western advisers, the creation of a national state bank, and the implementation of numerous new edicts. There were, in addition, impressive new infrastructural projects, including road building, the development of communications, and the assembling of a small air force. But the program supported

economic growth, not development, at least in the sense that the central government under Haile Sellassie sought the monopolization, not maximization of revenue. None of the changes were designed to alter the philosophical underpinnings of imperial domination; rather, the improved infrastructure facilitated the extension of that superstructure and the transfer of provincial wealth to the capital.

Chapter five focuses on the economic and political implications of the Tripartite Treaty and the Klobukowski accord. I argue that both treaties were written and interpreted in callous disregard of Ethiopia's superstructure which, as a consequence, helped to retard Ethiopia's growth and development. The Tripartite Treaty ignored Ethiopia's economic and political sovereignty by establishing, to the government's continuing frustration, an effective veto power over important economic projects within Ethiopia. In addition, the Klobukowski Treaty ignored Addis Ababa's right to control fiscal, legislative, and judicial affairs by establishing Europe's claim to control the character of internal policy. To be sure, the Ethiopian government continued to exercise its prerogatives in these areas, but far less effectively than if they had had European cooperation and support.

Finally, chapter six examines the root of the cause for what economic growth did occur. By adapting to the superstructural constraints on Ethiopia's economy, and by accepting modest rates of return on their investments, Indian and Arab merchants

successfully monopolized brokerage, marketing, and banking in long distance trade through Addis Ababa. In the long run, they were willing to work with the government in Addis Ababa, especially in their commitment to exporting through the capital. By working harmoniously with the central government, and by keeping sufficient distance from the Tripartite powers, the expatriate traders were guaranteed the favor of the court. As a result, the Indians and Arabs were able to develop the export trade and promote a system of informal banking which further inspired commerce, and which facilitated the transfer of revenue and goods between Addis Ababa and the provinces. The chapter draws in particular upon the records of Britain's consular courts in Ethiopia. The economic disharmony preserved in the 550 volumes of FO 915 in the Public Record Office helps explain the day-to-day functioning of expatriate economic order.

## Notes

1. In my approach, I was influenced by the debate in economic anthropology over non-western economic decision-making. "Formalists," led by E. Firth and G. Jones, claim that neoclassical economic analysis is wholly applicable to non-westerners; that we need only extend the analysis of their decision making to include factors like kinship, leisure, and ritual. Substantivists, led by K. Polanyi and G. Dalton, have argued that non-westerners ought to be studied rather in non-materialist terms of reciprocity and redistribution.

In the late 1970s, I was anxious to support the formalist perspective, and to demonstrate, like T. Schultz, P. Curtin, E. Alpers, and many others, that Africans were not mindless economic participants in stagnant societies, but rather pragmatic frontiersmen with a persistent history of experience in adapting to and exploiting change, instability, and migration. Most relevant then to my research were the findings of Polly Hill, who suggested that the migrant cocoa farmers of southern Ghana moved quickly and aggressively into capitalist agriculture, all the time measuring the range of strategies between full commitment to cocoa and maintenance, or expansion of food production.

In part because I perceive the importance of ideology in economic and political decision-making, I have become increasingly dissatisfied with the discussion. None of the formalists had reconciled the place of ideology in western or non-western economic behavior, while substantivists too greatly stress ritual, ceremony, and ideology as conventional obsessions unfathomable by western economic theories.

2. Although it is not my principal intent, it seems reasonable to suggest that viewing ideological conflict as the basis of Europe's disharmony with Ethiopia provides the dependency school with a more satisfying and more provable hypothesis. The revisionist literature on dependency and underdevelopment was originally a response to a colonialist perspective that asserted that Europe's impact in Africa had been beneficial. The counter view demonstrated that Europe's contact created infrastructural diseconomies that exploited African production and life. The dependency arguments, however, generally lacked an adequate explanation of the mechanism by which "exploitation" occurred. The literature subtly stresses conspiratorial actions or emphasizes the evitable workings of

capitalism in traditional societies, when it might have focused, as I have in part attempted to do, on the consequences of long-term contact between contradictory belief systems.

3. K. Marx, The German Ideology, 1970; among many references, see the discussion in Center for Contemporary Studies On Ideology, (London, 1978) and Franz Jakubowski, Ideology and Superstructure in Historical Materialism, (New York, 1976).
4. L. Althusser, "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus, "Lenin and Philosophy. (London, 1971); Gregor McLennan, Victor Molina, and Roy Peters, "Althusser's Theory of Ideology," in Center for Contemporary Studies, On Ideology. (London, 1978); Simon Clarke et al, One-Dimensional Marxism, London, 1980); Paul Q. Hirst, "Althusser and the Theory of Ideology," Economy and Society, 5,4 (1976).
5. Paul Lovejoy, The Ideology of Slavery in Africa, (London, 1981).
6. K. Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. (Moscow, 1954); K. Marx, "Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," in K. Marx and F. Engels, Selected Works, (Moscow, 1975).
7. Alex Callinicos, Althusser's Marxism, (London, 1976), p. 11.
8. There is every indication that this will occur, given the current research interests of D. Crummy and the papers presented by Ethiopians at the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Lund, 1982.

## CHAPTER 1

"...no longer a King:" Lij Iyasu of Ethiopia

"And the King, if he becomes a heretic, from that moment on he is no longer a King, but a rebel."

Fetha Negast (Aba Paulos, translation)

"The Prince denied absolutely that he either was, or could ever become, a Muslim, as he realized that such a course must cost him his throne and probably his life... but I have no belief in Lij Iyasu's assurances."

FO 371/2593 Report on Lij Iyasu's meeting with the Italian Minister, in Thesiger to Grey, 24 May, 1916.

"A charge of heresy against the Emperor has been the most effective challenge to his authority."

John Markakis, Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity, p. 35.

"Hear, O Christian People of Ethiopia: Our religion and government were suffering and being destroyed; therefore, for the protection and benefit of our religion and government, the people of Ethiopia assembled and appointed the daughter of the Emperor Menilek as Empress and Ras Tafari as Heir to the Throne. Because this has been done with the consent of all, go and rejoice."

Shoan proclamation of 27 September, 1916. English translation in FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, 29 September, 1916.

It is often said that historians ought to wait fifty years before writing the history of important events. Archival records and diaries become available, and the ideologies, beliefs, and myths of the time can often be seen in dispassionate perspective. Not always, however; historical accounts of the events leading to the Ethiopian coup d'état of 1916 remain obscured by a surviving cloud of myth and ideology.<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, Europe's interests and concerns in 1914 shaped the perspectives of its diplomats. The ongoing war in Europe, the continuing Dervish threat in Somaliland and in the Ogaden, and the succession crisis in Ethiopia prompted considerable meddling in Addis Ababa, and more importantly perhaps, never encouraged much appreciation for the economic and political factors which motivated local decisionmakers. Preferring merely to pass on the information reaching their embassies, diplomats rarely examined taxation, tribute, or trade. Amazingly, they even avoided analysis of political and economic events. Most of the historians of the period have accepted Europe's data at face value, and as a result, present the view that Lij Iyasu, Menilek's appointed heir, was an arrogant prince turned towards Mecca, hostile towards the Allies, consumed by syphilis, epilepsy, and drink, and reckless in his sympathies with the Germans and the Turks.<sup>2</sup> Some contend that Lij Iyasu cohorted with Islam and the Central Powers to rouse a national, anti-Imperialist, non-Christian, and anti-Shoan coalition.<sup>3</sup> Such an impulsive if



"progressive" dream could not have occurred to a man reared for highland kingship.

On closer examination, I believe that the evidence suggests that Lij Iyasu pursued a conventional economic and political program, and that he was neither a Muslim nor an ally of the Central Powers. With a power base in Wollo, the prince sought to reroute long distance trade northward, avoiding the Shoa capital of Addis Ababa. Moreover, following the precedent of centuries of Ethiopian leadership, he toured the country to promote his authority and project his legitimacy in the provinces, and more efficiently to collect tax and tribute revenue. He actively campaigned to monopolize all revenue derived from the long-distance trade, a policy bound to trouble those in control of important import-export markets. He steadfastly maintained an outwardly neutral foreign policy, in order not to alienate potentially powerful foes and, in keeping with his role as defender of the country and of the national religion, he campaigned subtly but effectively against the Dervish movement in the east. And, at Shoa's expense, he favored the granting of lands to his northern followers and devotees. In all of these actions, Lij Iyasu created and sustained powerful enemies, and ironically provided the means for his own downfall.

The approach of the Europe-backed railway towards Addis Ababa and Ethiopia's growing commitment to exportation through Jibuti coincidentally aligned Europe's interests with Shoa's. After

devastating nineteenth century wars and famines throughout the north, Shoa had emerged as the center of Ethiopia's political economy. The central province tapped the rich southern and southwestern areas of production, firmly controlled the rich markets and coffee fields of Harrar, and commanded access to the coast and therefore the proceeds and the "benefits" of the long-distance trade in coffee, slaves, ivory, and arms. By threatening to transfer the national power base northward to Wollo, and by seeking and finally assuming dominion over Harrar and its rich import-export customs house, the prince simultaneously alienated Shoa, with its obvious desire to preserve command over the long distance trade, and the Europeans, who could not understand, within the context of their immediate concerns, the prince's aversion to Addis Ababa. Instead, the diplomats, who were by this time firmly established in the Shoan capitol, gleefully preferred to take in and pass along considerable Shoan gossip, most of which referred to Lij Iyasu's response to the threat in the east. Unbeknownst to Europe, the rumors were themselves an important if conventional form of political opposition.

Mohammed Abdullah Hassan, leader of the Salihiya brotherhood, the so-called "Mad Mullah" of Somaliland whose risings resembled those of the 16th century's Mohammed Gran, terrorized the Ethiopians and Europeans during Lij Iyasu's formative years, and the young prince pragmatically organized a pacification of Islam. Simultaneously, Turkish war propaganda, which threatened Europe

and Ethiopia by inciting jihad in the Horn, ironically cast Lij Iyasu as the leader of the very jihad he sought to stop. No one ever proved Lij Iyasu's apparent religious and political transformation; rather, all the evidence is suspect, uniformly distorted by the prince's foreign and domestic detractors.

The coup d'état of September 1916 from which Ras Tafari (Haile Sellassie) emerged as heir apparent, had, as its root, the constitution of land distribution in Imperial Ethiopia and indeed, control over the rich areas of production in Harrar and in the south and southwest. Competition between Lij Iyasu's Wollo following and the existing Shoan administration for the prestige, power, and wealth inherent in Ethiopian kingship featured an ideological battle, fought by intrigue and the spread of rumor. The British Minister, Wilfred Thesiger, on whose writings many researchers depend, naively and paranoiacy accepted Shoan gossip that Lij Iyasu was a friend of Islam, of the Mullah, and of the Turks. Meanwhile, as Europe fought war and British Somaliland fought Jihad, Europe pressed for superstructural "reforms" in the Horn, and Ethiopia faced its "succession crisis". Under such unprecedented circumstances, the European diplomats, and especially Thesiger, were particularly anxious to find a sympathetic, "progressive" ear in the Ethiopian administration. They found Tafari Makonnen, whose command over gossip, over Europe's sensitivities, and over the proceeds from taxation and trade facilitated the prince's overthrow. In no sense was the Shoan

and European movement against Lij Iyasu a "revolution", as contemporary historians like Mosley and Sandford suggested. On coming to power, Tafari would resume control over Harrar and the southwestern trade, but there would be little change in the prerogatives of Ethiopian kingship, in the manner of promoting and preserving legitimacy, or in the fact that relations of production would continue to serve the imperial state.

Rumors were an integral part of imperial "parliamentary" procedure. The ideology of Ethiopian kingship cast the sovereign as the guarantor of peace and prosperity, as the source of honor and benefit, as the military leader, as the defender of the national religion, as the head of the executive, as the owner of all property, and as the agent of change.<sup>4</sup> In theory, nothing could be done without his sanction. The ideology discouraged delegation of authority and encouraged conformity; A leader's strength could be judged by his independence in decision-making, while for others, to innovate, deviate, or disagree was to meet penalties of various kinds. Particularly during "succession crises," however, landed interests sought direct "family" involvement in imperial affairs, since the number and strength of one's landed adherents could be threatened by the imperial prerogative to assign land to relatives and devotees. Distributing rewards solidified the sovereign's legitimacy but simultaneously eroded existing interests, a slow process of consolidation over enemies, which, to outsiders appeared as political chaos and economic stagnation. Military

opposition to the ruler required a clear majority, hard to guarantee where openly voiced displeasure is unphilosophical. Rather, opponents maneuvered carefully, flowering their arguments subtly. They also spread rumors.

The Fetha Negast, the "Law of the Kings", an ideational charter for Ethiopia, required the sovereign to support the Orthodox religion, to oppose the relinquishing of state prerogatives to foreigners, and to have proper genealogical claims to kingship. Opposition to leadership, therefore, conventionally followed one of three courses: Enemies might question the sovereign's commitment to the Christian faith, they might pass tales concerning his relationship with foreign powers, and they might gossip about his genealogy. Through the centuries, successive claimants to the throne have faced seemingly repetitious charges: that they favored Catholicism or Islam, that they had sold the country to foreigners, and that they were the descendants of slave women. In the course of my research, with humorous frequency, I have been hushed into private corners to hear that Tafari's real father was an Indian trader of Harrar, that he was secretly a Catholic, that Ethiopia's current leader had "bastard" connections to the "royal" family, or that the current government was selling the nation to Russia. Some things never change.

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Menilek, then Lij Iyasu and finally Tafari subordinated the prerogatives of families who, if not by heredity, at least by custom, had a hold on the land. In this way, and through a series of political marriages, the emperor and his state had slowly guaranteed subjects' allegiance. For his wife, Menilek had chosen Taitu, of Semen ancestry and from the line of the Gondarine monarchy, and had a daughter marry the Muslim head of Wollo, Ras Mikael, Lij Iyasu's father.<sup>5</sup>

As early as 1910, the diplomatic correspondence records the dissatisfaction of Menilek's Shoan descendants with Lij Iyasu's Muslim heritage.<sup>6</sup> The issue of the day, however, was the Empress Taitu's formation of a party intent on securing the regency and the kingdom for her own family. Following Menilek's crippling illness in November 1909, the government had passed to the Council of Ministers and to Ras Tassama, as regent for Lij Iyasu. Strained relations between Tassama and Ras Walde Giyorgis, the two most powerful chiefs of the Shoan party, favored the queen's party, especially since Lij Iyasu declined to return to Addis Ababa, inclined neither to recognize the Taitu's orbit or Tassama's warrant. Amid the uncertainties, the queen strengthened her hold on the north; her brother and nephew held Tigre and Begemdir, her cousin married Ras Hailu of Gojjam, and she appointed Dej. Balcha to oversee the state's most important customs collection in Harrar.<sup>7</sup>

The impending struggle against Shoan domination of imperial affairs could not overcome the advantage the province's central and southern economic base had over the impoverished north. The north had suffered through the violent campaigns of the Emperor Tewodros in the 1850's and early 1860's, and the rinderpest epidemics and famine of 1890-1892 depleted northern herds. And as the land suffered, continuing population growth further fragmented land holdings, increased the competition for land, and intensified efforts to cultivate it. While all of these factors intensified the effects of each successive famine, they also contributed to the success of the Shoans, who by the end of the nineteenth century had gained control over the more fertile lands to the south and the southwest and who had gained control, by the turn of the century, of the trade routes connecting these southern areas of production with the sea at Jibuti.

Outnumbered and isolated, and unable to sustain large enough forces in the north, the empress and her adherents were obliged to surrender unconditionally to the Shoan party in March 1910. She was required to withdraw from public life, most of her appointments were cancelled, and her troops returned to their districts. The younger Shoan nobility, to ensure Shoa's supremacy and a basis for their mobility, reestablished the regency government.<sup>8</sup>

On the death of Ras Tassama in April 1911, the fifteen year old prince, pursuing unchallengeable authority in Ethiopia, began to alienate the younger Shoan princes and Menilek's landed

aristocracy.<sup>9</sup> Both sought a voice and tenure in government during Menilek's illness and, like Lij Iyasu, resented the council whose ministers in their eyes had no legitimate claims to regency, power, or respect. Lij Iyasu might have balanced the interests of the council and the Shoan chiefs, listening to both yet holding the casting vote. But delegation of authority was ideologically unsatisfactory, and the prince followed a more customary course; he fashioned a party of his own, giving lands to new men at the expense of the older adherents and the younger aspirants of Menelik, the most important of whom were imprisoned or closely watched. He also began to assume a more evident imperial image. A new government seal cited him as "Son of Menilek, King of Kings of Ethiopia," and he could now frequently be observed beneath the red umbrella reserved for the monarch.<sup>10</sup>

One result was the creation of an anti-Lij Iyasu clique, first organized around Ras Abata, Ras Tassama's brother-in-law, and composed of many who had opposed Taitu. Tales suggested that Abate sought to become regent, and perhaps emperor, and that the prince had compromised himself by wanting to become monarch before Menilek died. In a showdown requiring Ras Mikael's armed intervention, Lij Iyasu won, after a fashion. The struggle that ensued seemed to confirm that Ras Abata had conspicuously harbored personal ambition, and the premature attempt to oust the prince was a blow to Shoan party unity. The Ras submitted to the prince, who exiled him to Walamo, where he was later chained on the pretext of



supporting a local rising. In turn, Lij Iyasu agreed, through the mediation of the abun, to consult the council of ministers while Menilek lived, in return for recognition as his rightful heir from the Shoans.<sup>11</sup>

Lij Iyasu and his "family" were strengthened, but he still had to reckon with continuing Shoan jealousies, the lack of funds, the discontent of the poorly paid soldiery, and the mounting claims of his followers for lands as the price of their support. With his father's army in Addis Ababa, the prince summoned provincial leaders there, to reaffirm trust, to deprive lands from those in whom he had little confidence, and to fill imperial coffers with provincial tribute. New appointments included Nagadras Haile Giyorgis as Minister of Foreign Affairs and the nagadras' brother as Minister of Finance. His success spurred rumors, perhaps, too, a poisoning attempt in July.<sup>12</sup> It was then that the prince grew tired of Addis Ababa and its intrigues, and anxious to strengthen his power throughout the empire, he left the Shoan capital in 1912, ostensibly on a punitive expedition to the eastern lowlands.

The political integration of Ethiopia had often depended upon a mobile center, and new emperors, in particular, had established their capitals amid their followers, periodically relocating upon the periphery for provincial control, for reliable collection of tribute, and for distributing the burden of supporting imperial troops. These were important considerations for Lij Iyasu, who followed the conventional course of action. By leaving Addis Ababa,

he could collect tribute and solidify Wollo as his base of operations. He could also leave behind the intrigues of the capital. Away from the capital, Lij Iyasu visited monasteries and 'built' churches to express his devotion, throughout the southwest he collected tribute that would otherwise have been delivered to Shoa, he dispensed justice to exercise his prerogatives, and he killed an elephant to manifest his manhood. He spent Easter in Wollo, for his father's counsel and to talk with Walde Giyorgis in a favorable setting.<sup>13</sup>

His lengthy absence irked the Shoans and the Europeans. The former considered the prince's gain of popularity and revenue to be at their expense. The absence of provincial chiefs delivering tribute to the gibbi simultaneously lowered Shoan revenues and depressed trade through Addis Ababa, since the retinues' demand for cotton goods, the staple import, declined dramatically. The long-distance trade was threatened, and every effort had been made to dissuade the prince from leaving Addis Ababa, but Lij Iyasu understood that leaving Addis Ababa would leave behind the intrigue of the Shoan court. Moreover, like Tafari later, a strategy of waiting would aid his consolidation, because the expected death of Ras Walde Giyorgis would leave the Shoans without a clear leader. Eventually, he could expect to gain sufficient writ to reassign control over provincial lands and to exercise other prerogatives without challenge. For the moment, the prince told the Shoans that if they wanted him to stay, they would have to recognize his

authority and give him the crown. Not surprisingly, the Shoans replied with antipathy.<sup>14</sup>

Not only was Addis Ababa the center of Shoa's universe, it had also become the core of Europe's diplomatic and commercial interests. Unlike earlier times when foreign envoys travelled with the wandering sovereigns, the ministers were now firmly attached to the city to which the railway approached and in which their banking and commercial institutions had agencies. The longer the prince stayed away, the greater their frustrations grew. Bankruptcies followed the trade depression, the British Bank of Abyssinia suffered its most difficult year in its mediocre history, and diplomatic affairs, from arms control and extraterritoriality to the railway and fears of German influence, all were ignored.<sup>15</sup>

Rumors suggested discord between Ras Mikael and Ras Walde Giyorgis, others suggested that Lij Iyasu had ordered that Menilek be poisoned, while Shoan administrators hinted that spending time in 'Islamic provinces' weakened Lij Iyasu's chances for accession.<sup>16</sup> There was also an inclination among Europeans to confuse the mood of Addis Ababa with that of the nation. Thesiger suggested that Lij Iyasu's prolonged absences "lessened his popularity," and that "the country is tired of the present misgovernment." His alliance with the Shoans was firming.<sup>17</sup>

The intrigues continued. Shoa pressed for Lij Iyasu's return, he again stressed that he would do so only if Shoa would allow official accession. Escorted by 20,000 well-armed troops, the

prince finally returned to the capital on 1 February 1913 and, within a week, he had put down a revolt apparently organized by a group of lesser officers. Once the action started, the Shoan leadership on whose support the officers had relied, rallied instead behind Lij Iyasu's superior arms. In the future, more careful preparations would be necessary. The prince, who use the opportunity to replace the Shoan guard with his own soldiers, celebrated his success ostentatiously, an important manifestation of superiority. Still the Shoans, who clearly understood their defeat, encouraged the Europeans to conclude that the celebrations grew from the prince's impulsive "boyish" nature. Only the French Minister reported that provincial government still functioned, and that the experiences of Addis Ababa ought not reflect badly upon the prince. Like the other European ministers, however, he perceived no serious threat of internal or external rebellion.<sup>18</sup>

Lij Iyasu again vacated the capital to visit monasteries and "build" churches, and to collect taxes and tribute throughout the empire, including Shoan-controlled areas which had not before forwarded revenue to him. He also reacted to the problems in the east.<sup>19</sup> Mohammed Abdullah Hassan had become a modern symbol of Mohammed Gran, of Somali unity and of freedom from the infidel. His power and reputation grew quickly, and he declared a jihad against the British colonial administration and against the Christian Ethiopians, who had extended their empire into the Somali Ogaden in the late nineteenth century. Cooperation between the

defending powers allowed an uneasy peace, broken in 1908 by daring raids in the Ogaden. In Northern Somaliland, British forces concentrated along the coast, freeing the interior for the Dervishes, who by 1912 dominated the protectorate. Raiders attacked Berbera, and even Mohammed Abdullah claimed to be losing control of the jihad, intimating that attacks were occurring without his orders.

News of these raids reached Lij Iyasu, as did reports of a massacre of three hundred soldiers just off Wollo's eastern escarpment. In an expedition described by the British Minister as carried out "for his own amusement," Lij Iyasu could not quash the jihadi fervor. The lowland population further united against him, and his soldiery, knowing that lowland infertility and its pastoral populations provided insufficient rewards for military service, expressed strong if customary disdain of off-highland campaigning.<sup>20</sup>

Back in Addis Ababa, Menilek's death considerably strengthened Lij Iyasu's party. In January 1914, the nobility gathered in Addis Ababa to discuss the future of the empire. The prince's forces, estimated at 250,000, stood ready to check Shoan resistance. Compromises delayed Lij Iyasu's hoped for coronation but allowed Ras Mikael's crowning as Ras of the Rases, King of the north.<sup>21</sup> Further dampening Walde Giyorgis's prestige in the north was the rebellion of his nephew, Tigre's Dej. Gabre Sellassie. In putting his authority behind quashing the alleged revolt, it has

been suggested that Lij Iyasu acted too strongly, moving without investigating the facts, but the prince feared general warfare between Walde Giyorgis and Ras Mikael, and subsequent Italian encroachment. He bolstered the ascent of Wollo through transferring arms, revenue, and the empire's treasures there, while discouraging communication with and assistance to Walde Giyorgis. Mikael emerged from the northern rebellion with additional territory, extending his hegemony northward and into Lasta and Yejjju, while Lij Iyasu strengthened his alliances with Ras Hailu of Gojjam and Ras Demise of Wallaga.<sup>22</sup> On the outbreak of war in Europe, the prince readied to fight Eritrea, in the event Italy joined the central powers. Rome for the time remained neutral, of course, and the mobilization was postponed.<sup>23</sup>

Following the emperor's death, the consolidation proceeded apace, but it created important malcontents. After marrying Lij Iyasu's half-sister, Nagadras Haile Giyorgis obtained the title of bitwaded, Dej. Balcha's province of Sidamo, and the presidency of the council of ministers, replacing Fit Habte Giyorgis whose Boran province was thereafter rumored in Jeopardy. The prince's former tutor, Fituari Telahun, replaced Afanegus Stefanos, while Nagadras Igazu and Lij Bayena, Lij Iyasu's protégés, became Ministers of Finance and Post. The Mayor of Addis Ababa was promoted Dejazmatch and given the Shoan Ras Lul Segad's province of Kambata. Meanwhile, Ras Mikael redistributed his new northern additions among his Wollo following. The Shoans were chagrined further that Ras Walde

Giyorgis's forces had been checked, both by the Wollo party and by an incapacitating bout of dysentery.<sup>24</sup>

Rumors took on more intensity. Talking with Shoan soldier-settlers following Dej. Balcha's removal, the British Consul for southern Ethiopia concluded that Lij Iyasu's popularity was falling apparently because he was leaning towards his father's first religion. Addis Ababa rumors absurdly intimated that Mikael supported the religious heresy of Sost Lidat, and the prince was accused of paying insufficient regard for the mourning of the emperor. Lij Iyasu countered with a quick trip to the monastery Debre Libanos. Soon after, rumors suggested that Walde Giyorgis had received his stock of arms from the hated Italians.<sup>25</sup>

Progress throughout the empire allowed the prince to turn his attention to the Shoan-controlled east. With the building of the railway towards Addis Ababa, the walled city of Harrar was gradually losing commercial prominence to Dire Dawa. Nonetheless, both cities remained, until the railway reached Addis Ababa in 1917, the empire's largest and securest revenue source. A local consul estimated the total revenue of the 1916 Harrar government at \$3.7 million MT, an amount easily rivaling Addis Ababa's draw from the provinces. A significant share of Harrar's revenue derived from taxes on Harrar coffee, a rich variant high in demand and then Ethiopia's principal export. Lij Iyasu, however, could not force the provincial administration to forward its revenue, and indeed, the Shoan leadership in the town under Dej. Tafari was

able to convert the revenue into a large, well-armed and maintained force within easy distance of Addis Ababa. Lij Iyasu's Wollo party consistently therefore sought the revenue and arms which control of customs and administration would secure. At first, Lij Iyasu avoided Shoan control by negotiating with individual merchants, exchanging customs' immunity for modest advances. The policy was arbitrary, and angered Shoans and allied merchants. Complete fiscal control demanded closer supervision, and Lij Iyasu consequently appointed a Syrian devoté, Hassab Ydlibi, as director of customs and police in both cities, and he gave mining concessions in Harrar to a Greek entrepreneur.<sup>26</sup>

The early successes of the Central Powers, their pan-Islamic propaganda, and Italy's continuing neutrality in the war simultaneously alarmed imperial Ethiopia and provided the prince's enemies with a "legitimate" excuse for their opposition. Victory might have placed the Germans in Jibuti and the Turks in Khartoum, while conceding the Italians, unhampered by war, a forward policy in the north.<sup>27</sup> After visiting the European legations in April 1915, Lij Iyasu declared that Ethiopian neutrality was essential, at least until the course of the war became clear. In foreign affairs, he discussed only minor matters, reserving Judgment and frustrating the powers on everything else.<sup>28</sup> As the European diplomats grew angrier, they increasingly sought and found a sympathetic ear in the Shoan leadership, who confessed that they were "unfortunately" powerless to act on Europe's desiderata.



Rome's entry into the war in May calmed some local fears that Italy intended to pursue a forward policy in Eritrea, but the eastern situation worsened.<sup>29</sup>

To stir Islamic confidence and to draw the attention of the Entente, the Central Powers propagated bombastic literature, some with reference to Lij Iyasu's apparent Islamic sympathies. Reports circulated of raids in the Ogaden, of considerable movement among Muslims following the Turkish call to arms, and of alliances between Mohammed Abdullah and the leading Muslims of Ethiopia. The imperial administration recognized its long standing oppression in the conquered provinces as a stirring force, and Lij Iyasu, while leading further expeditions into the east, understood the need to placate Islamic opinion.<sup>30</sup> He thus named as sub-Governor of the Ogaden the Muslim Abdullahi Tsadeq, a former agent of Menilek. At the same time, he met prominent Muslim leaders in Harrar and arranged political "marriages", really treaties of friendship since there were no religious or civil ceremonies involved, with the daughters of Muslim leaders in Jimma, the Ogaden, and the Danakil. One daughter also married the son of Ras Hailu of Gojjam and a sister married Ras Demisie of Wallaga.<sup>31</sup> Ironically, Lij Iyasu's activities combined with the Turkish propaganda to convince several Europeans, particularly Thesiger, that the prince supported the Turks and led the very Jihad he sought to prevent.<sup>32</sup>

By turning to the east, even in opposition to the sayyid, Lij Iyasu heightened British fears of the Dervish and intimidated Shoan

interests in Harrar. Conquered by Ras Makonnen for Shoa in 1887, Harrar province remained with his son, Dej. Tafari, who, with Harrar's wealth, was iso facto the strongest of the young Shoan aspirents.<sup>33</sup> Many urged Tafari to move against the prince in early 1915, but Lij Iyasu's "threat" to Harrar could not then attract "national" concern, since Shoan interests were principally affected.<sup>34</sup>

Instead, rumors increased in number and force, focusing primarily on aspects of Lij Iyasu's eastern policy. Ydlibi, who naturally met intense opposition from Tafari's group, was described as a Turkish sympathizer and a "European of the lowest sort." HMG Harrar Consul, H. Dodds, passed on the word to Addis Ababa, whose Tripartite Ministers opposed the appointment. A Syrian escapee from Turkish military service, and married to a Greek, Ydlibi was hardly a friend of the Central Powers. Nor was his advice poor. He promised the progressive customs' reform for which the Europeans clamored, he insisted on the appointment of an Ethiopian to the railway board of directors in face of French opposition, and he advised imposition of the wartime money supply controls which both Lij Iyasu and Ras Tafari later implemented.<sup>35</sup>

Talk concerning Lij Iyasu's cultivation of Muslims was true, in so far as he sought to dilute their militaristic ardor, but Thesiger's belief that he was guided "more by personal feelings than by political motives" and that there was widespread resentment of Lij Iyasu "in the countryside" shows that Thesiger was greatly

influenced by the Harrar dispatches from Dodds, an admitted friend of Tafari. In every dispatch, Thesiger spoke of "fresh evidence" of Lij Iyasu's conversion, but each dispatch cited only Dodds' description of the same event, the prince's unconfirmed visit in April 1915 to a Harrar mosque. By June, the British Minister expressed his conviction that Iyasu "is at heart a Muslim and is entertaining thoughts of one day putting himself at the head of Mohammedan Abyssinia... and of proclaiming a Muslim Empire." In Thesiger's view, the heir's continuing support for the church was meaningless.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, rumors from the north intimated Mikael's desire to replace Walde Giyorgis. The Shoans felt helpless. They certainly opposed the increased influence of Wollo, but lack of information from Dessie on Lij Iyasu's intentions fed anxiety. Through the rumor mill in November 1915, the Shoans suggested the creation of two separate governments, one for domestic matters under Lij Iyasu in Dessie, the other for international affairs in Addis Ababa. The proposal, which seemed contradictory but nonetheless met with Thesiger's approval, reflected Shoa's increasing concern with Lij Iyasu's power and with the growing weakness of their own position in Harrar and over the proceeds of long-distance trade. According to the scheme, Ras Mikael would gain the entire north, while Walde Giyorgis would become an overlord of the south.

Lij Iyasu, of course, ignored the compromise. The opposition remained fragmented, his men occupied key governmental positions,

and the forces at his command were the largest and best equipped in Ethiopia. The offer was not, as Thesiger felt, an "appeal to his vanity," but rather a proposed delegation of authority, a relaxation of the prerogative to allot land, and a return to the early nineteenth century's Zamana Masafint, an era of divided, bickering leadership.<sup>37</sup>

In early 1916, Lij Iyasu's rapprochement with eastern interests attracted more attention. He built and armed forts in the Ogaden and Danakil, he sent letters to various Muslim and Somali leaders, including the seyyid, and he invited several Ogaden leaders to Addis Ababa. But by guarding against jihad, he allowed within Christian Ethiopia the possibility for dangerous intrigue. Tafari incorrectly explained to his good friend Dodds that he was ignorant of and opposed to the motives underlying Lij Iyasu's dealings with the "Mullah," whose friendship the prince "seemed to seek." Thesiger instructed Dodds to counsel Tafari privately, to explain that HMG would not protest Lij Iyasu's actions in order not to endanger Tafari, a leader "so clearly innocent" in dealings with the seyyid and so well disposed towards Britain. He also told Dodds to retain Tafari's confidence and encourage him to speak more openly of Lij Iyasu's connection with the Mullah. Tafari hardly needed the invitation.<sup>38</sup>

In late January, Dodds reported that a deputation and a machine gun from the "Mullah" arrived in Harrar apparently in response to letters and arms sent by Lij Iyasu. Though British

Somaliland officials voiced no concern, Thesiger was personally convinced that Lij Iyasu would surely now funnel arms to the dreaded Dervish in alliance with the Ottomans.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, near Assab, Italian authorities intercepted a letter "demonstrating" the prince's Muslim descent. It did not carry his seal, but to those in opposition the meaning seemed clear.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, Lij Iyasu was said to have given land to mosques in western Ethiopia. In the capital he was judged responsible for a boating accident in which Tafari almost drowned. From Shoan officials, Thesiger learned confidentially that Lij Iyasu was feared and detested by the priests, whose daily prayer was said to be: "Since we can do nothing, may God kill him soon."<sup>41</sup> Several Shoan leaders expressed a perhaps selfish despair about the future of the country, while intimating that the prince adopted Muslim dress and customs when in the lowlands.

Lij Iyasu never so acted in Addis Ababa, but the impressions nonetheless confirmed Thesiger's conviction that the prince's policies were cruel and personal in nature, and he protested in February to Haile Giyorgis, now Minister of Foreign Affairs. The bitwaded doubted that arms had been sent to the Mullah, or that Lij Iyasu would dress like a Muslim, and claimed he had not heard of the Harrar deputation. He would enquire of Lij Iyasu and Tafari.<sup>42</sup>

The frustration of ignored "interests" and the paranoia from the European war confirmed Thesiger's solidarity with the Shoans.

He continued to associate Lij Iyasu's eastern policy with instability in British Somaliland despite the governor's assurances to the contrary, and the prince's intransigence on matters of importance further convinced Thesiger that Lij Iyasu had allied with the central powers. The youthful ruler repeatedly refused to allow the export of mules and raw materials wanted for the war effort, to negotiate Ethiopia's neutrality, to accede to reform proposals, to facilitate construction of the French railway, or to permit the construction of a Lake Tana dam.<sup>43</sup> And Lij Iyasu's continuing excursions alienated the European ministers whose interests and business depended on what the Shoans could circumstantially provide, an administration and an economy centralized in Addis Ababa.

Lij Iyasu asked Thesiger to appreciate the difficulty of negotiating important matters during the war, but the Englishman still pressed. For breaking Ethiopia's neutrality, Thesiger offered nothing, recommending only that an understanding would necessary require 'reform' in Ethiopia and negotiation of Tana. The prince hankered for the revenue in the dam contract, but Ethiopian negotiation could become serious only when imperial political consolidation and direct control over the Lake area were assured, for Haile Selassie not before 1932.<sup>44</sup> Thesiger's fuse was short. In May 1916, delays in Tana discussions induced Thesiger to protest Lij Iyasu's policies. The Foreign Office, hearing of the difficulties, conceived an absurd effort to place a pro-British

abun in Ethiopia, and they hoped for the prince's early death, which they believed his apparent sympathies with Islamic culture "make likely."<sup>45</sup>

Tafari, who at the start of 1916 accompanied Lij Iyasu to Addis Ababa, had good reason to suspect that he would not be allowed to return to Harrar. The prince's agents already had assumed control over the province's government and customs, and Lij Iyasu's devotees openly discussed reassigning Tafari to one of the remote southern provinces. Other indications suggested that Tafari's position was increasingly weak. Thesiger's protest to the bitwaded confirmed that Tafari had been openly involved in the rumor mill. By enticing troops from Tafari's forces, the prince provided a means for provincial control in Harrar. Much to Tafari's rancor, Lij Iyasu already had local officers and peasant leaders cite the wrongs of Tafari's administration.<sup>46</sup> The presence of an Ogaden delegation augured a further airing in Addis Ababa of complaints against the Harrar administration.<sup>47</sup> Tafari also feared the expropriation of the funds in his Harrar account with Mohamedally & Co.<sup>48</sup>

In Addis Ababa, therefore, the atmosphere was charged. After only a few weeks, the first gossip was heard of a coup against Lij Iyasu. Wrote Thesiger: "There is no doubt that plans are being discussed to remove Lij Iyasu from the throne, and it only remains to be seen whether the chiefs can combine sufficiently to ensure success." The presence of the Ogaden chiefs furthered Thesiger's

notion that Lij Iyasu had converted to Islam and supported jihad, and his support of the Turks seemed sure on 29 April when he reportedly gave to the Turkish Minister an Ethiopian flag carrying a crescent and the inscription; "God is great and Mohammed is his prophet."

The prince vociferously denied his involvement and chained an impersonator. Surprisingly, none of the European 'crown-watchers' could confirm the incident, and all the evidence remained highly circumstantial. Still Thesiger was convinced that Lij Iyasu's religious and political transformation was complete. He recommended an official protest of the prince's dealing with the "Mullah," and of the increasing incidence of his Islamic conduct.<sup>49</sup> Only the skepticism of the French minister delayed the action. Meanwhile, Lij Iyasu determined to set the record straight with the Europeans.

May and June meetings clarified his relationship with the powers, with the Mullah, and with Islam. In privacy with Count Colli, Lij Iyasu explained that his internal policy sought

to pacify his Ogaden and Danakil Muslim subjects, who were a source of anxiety to him, without having recourse to force as, owing to climatic and other causes, the issue with any war with them must be doubtful or at all events attended by severe losses, and that once this was done, he would turn his attention to internal reform. The Prince denied absolutely that he either was, or ever could become, a Muslim, as he realized that such a course must cost him his throne and probably his life.

He acknowledged correspondence with the "Mullah" and Ogaden leaders, and also receipt of the machine gun, "an old and worthless



weapon" received by Tafari and not yet turned over to him. He firmly denied sending arms or ammunition to the Mullah, whom he described as an outlaw and bandit on a large scale, but with whom he had exchanged letters "for the purpose of preventing trouble between the Dervishes and Abyssinia."

Colli was relieved with Lij Iyasu's acknowledgement of the danger of allowing the Central powers to use his 'internal policy' for creating dissension between Ethiopia and the Tripartite powers. Lij Iyasu recognized that Germany and Turkey could give Ethiopia no aid and that any action against the Tripartite powers could only result in disaster for Ethiopia.<sup>50</sup>

Thesiger had no belief in Lij Iyasu's assurances. On 22 June, in an audience with the prince, the British Minister reviewed the Entente's capture of Mecca, Taif, and Jeddah. In the naive conviction that he could thereby turn the prince from Mohammed, he emphasized the revolt against the Turks by the Sherif of Mecca, the principle descendent of the prophet and guardian of the holy city, now under British protection.

In essence, Thesiger tried to impress the prince with the folly of a course he never considered. He referred to Lij Iyasu's Muslim "policy," asserting that the latter's correspondence with the "Mullah" and the Muslim tribes, his relations with the Turkish counsel, and his openly expressed sympathies with Islam, had created a very bad impression in Britain and had endangered diplomatic relations.

Again, Lij Iyasu reviewed the danger of jihad in Ethiopia where Muslims outnumbered Christians. The Turkish proclamation of jihad recalled the invasion of Mohammed Gran, and his alarm for the safety of Ethiopia had led to his present policy of making friends with the Muslim tribes in the country. As for the Mullah, he "was merely playing with him in order to keep him quiet and far from Ethiopia." He complained indignantly that everyone seemed too ready to listen to rumors about his Muslim sympathies, and declared that, as King of Kings of Ethiopia, a country which had been Christian for well over a thousand years, it was impossible for him to become a Muslim. He declared his faith in God, his allegiance to the Ethiopian Church. He swore by his ancestors and his crown that he never harbored any design against British interests, emphasizing that he was fully aware of the folly of such a course. He predicted much closer relations after the war.<sup>51</sup>

Although from May through July while the prince stayed in the capital, Thesiger and his staff observed no signs of islamic tendencies, the British minister remained convinced that the prince was at heart a Muslim, and that Islam dictated his policy.<sup>52</sup> As usual, Lij Iyasu left Addis Ababa before the rains, intent on being far away before the September feast of Mascal, when full wells and water-courses, and abundant forage and grain have always allowed more active intrigue, most visibly represented by the yearly parading of troops. Thesiger had insisted on discussing reform of Ethiopia's judicial and financial structure, far too

ambitious to negotiate during wartime. Under the circumstances, he was angered at the prince's premature and secretive departure.<sup>53</sup>

Turkish manifestos continued to exhort jihad among the Somalis, and the British Minister paranoicly felt the necessity to "weaken, in any way possible, Lij Iyasu's hold over the Ogaden."<sup>54</sup> As late as 19 September officers in British Somaliland assured Thesiger that the risk from Lij Iyasu was minimal, if even conceivable. Nonetheless, the British minister, who supplied the French and Italians with information on the eastern situation, amplified Harrar accounts that the prince attended the Bairam festival in Dire Dawa, that he now dressed and ate like a Somali and wore a Fez, and that he would join the "Mullah" to attack Berbera and Hargeisa.<sup>55</sup>

Tafari now moved to overthrow the prince. In Harrar, Dej. Imaru, Tafari's cousin, and Graz. Bellata, Tafari's confidential telephonist, "revealed" to Dodds that Lij Iyasu had sent more rifles and ammunition to the "Mullah." The report coincided with the shipment of arms to Ogaden forts.<sup>56</sup> A Catholic missionary and confidant of Tafari's, Monsr. Jarosseau, who is frequently quoted regarding Lij Iyasus transformations, perceived the imminent change in Harrar administration as a threat to continuing religious work, and he predicted a massacre of Christians.<sup>57</sup> As "proof" he noted the widespread local display of proclamations exhorting jihad.

Ato Petros, Tafari's confidential attendant, an old friend of Dodds and a frequent intermediary between the two, arrived on 7 August to "learn the truth of Lij Iyasu's behavior, particularly as regards his dealings with the Mullah and his attitude towards Islam." Dodds encouraged him to speak freely. Petros asked whether the Entente would, in the event of a break, support Tafari against the prince. He said that the dejazmatch was upset with Lij Iyasu, and while he had no desire for the crown, "the time had come to save the country from ruin." On "confirmation of Lij Iyasu's behavior," Tafari would immediately approach the Tripartite Ministers. If assured of their support, Tafari would make a speedy descent to Dire Dawa to face the prince.<sup>58</sup> The conspiracy had been struck.

A culmination of his attempt to control the long-distance trade, Lij Iyasu on 13 August incorporated Harrar province, carefully patronizing local interests. Since his "Eastern policy" sought to lessen anti-highland fervor, he promised an end of Shoan taxes and returned some jurisdiction to local leaders.<sup>59</sup> Of course, Thesiger promptly concluded that Harrar was being transformed to Britain's disadvantage into a "Muslim province," even though Lij Iyasu's Christian followers held the governorship and other important posts.<sup>60</sup> Lij Iyasu's action brought the conflict to a head; Agitation in Addis Ababa culminated in two late August meetings. The Shoans summoned Lij Iyasu to the capital, but there

was no chance that he would return for Mascal. Tafari therefore prepared to move the army to Harrar.<sup>61</sup>

The coup d'état nearly failed several times. The bitwaded choked an early attempt by claiming to have no definite proof of Lij Iyasu's heresy, and by preventing with a large following an already reluctant abun from pronouncing Lij Iyasu's excommunication.<sup>62</sup> The prince thereafter ordered the banishment of Tafari and the conspirators, but the ongoing rains prevented his return with his army to Addis Ababa to ensure their departure. Thesiger felt the September 1 failure made the situation more serious, "as Lij Iyasu will think himself all powerful and may push his Muslim policy beyond all bounds." He had delayed an official protest for fear that it might tend to reverse the trend of events in Lij Iyasu's favor, but he now believed that Tripartite involvement now essential.<sup>63</sup>

Tafari, who left his money and son in the charge of the British minister, lost no time in organizing a second attempt. A second-hand account detailing new heresies soon reached Addis Ababa. In a meeting among Somalis in Jijiga, Lij Iyasu apparently emphasized the need for friendship and peace, severe punishments for those who disobeyed, and his intention to recover Ethiopia for Islam. According to Dodds' Shoan informants, the prince declared himself a Muslim, distributed arms, but asked for patience in moving against the highland. The incident was not confirmed but it

conveniently provided the final proof for the Shoans, who now openly charged that the prince had betrayed them.<sup>64</sup>

A joint Tripartite protest on 12 September meant to "serve as a definite warning and strengthen the hands of those Abyssinians who were attempting to restrain the Prince in his Muslim policy."<sup>65</sup> With Tripartite "sanction", Tafari had less trouble unifying the opposition. To the long list of unprovable accusations, the Shoans could now rightfully argue that the prince had angered the foreign powers. Under great pressure, Haile Giyorgis acquiesced. With reluctance and to the end asking for and never receiving proof of Lij Iyasu's heresy, the abun on 23 September excommunicated the prince and released everyone from oaths of fealty.<sup>66</sup> Propagandist proclamations of "revolution" mixed fact and fancy, summarizing Lij Iyasu's transgressions against Church and state. The dossiers were hardly, as one historian suggests, vivid and devastating. Authority was parceled among Menilek's daughter Zawditu, the Council of Ministers, and the new heir apparent, Ras Tafari.<sup>67</sup>

In Harrar, to Thesiger's amazement, Lij Iyasu vowed before the priesthood his loyalty to the church and nation. The British Minister could not understand why the prince had not merely confirmed his allegiance to Mecca and gathered his Muslim armies against Addis Ababa.<sup>68</sup> The subsequent military campaign between Wollo and Shoan forces is well known.<sup>69</sup> In the end, against Wollo's considerable stockpile of arms, Shoa was fortunate to win. Like Menilek's victory at Imbabo over Gojjam's Tekle Haimanot in 1882,

the battle of Segale on 22 October 1916 secured for Shoa continuing control over both the long-distance trade and the allocation of land. For the condition of the peasantry, there was no difference.

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Usurpers in Ethiopia were often "haunted by a consciousness of the weakness of their position."<sup>70</sup> The same may be said of Ras Tafari. In his autobiography, Haile Sellassie revealingly justified his rancor towards Lij Iyasu in Shoan, not national terms. He rued the prince's creation of a Wollo party, his siphoning of customs' revenue, and his absence from the Shoan capital. At length he censured the taking of Harrar. Concerning Lij Iyasu's religious conversion, he reproduced Shoa's propagandist dossier; his own words were ineffectual. He associated Lij Iyasu's transfer of arms to Wollo with the prince's exaggerated Mohammedan descent through the Wollo line. He also presumed that "the people" attributed Lij Iyasu's take-over of Harrar to his Islamic sympathies. On foreign affairs, without discussing Lij Iyasu's connection with the jihadic east, he concluded only that the prince's correspondence with eastern leaders upset the Europeans. Ironically, Haile Sellassie corroborated the essence of the Shoa-Wollo conflict without substantiating the charge of heresy.<sup>71</sup>

In the years to come, Lij Iyasu's popularity remained high. It would weigh on Ras Tafari.

## Notes

1. For a similar account of obfuscation, see Felix N.C. Okoye, "Dingane: A Reappraisal," JAH X,2 (1969) 221-235. There are few events in Ethiopian history more shrouded in mystery and deception than Lij Iyasu's dethronement. Several researchers of Ethiopia have remarked privately that the ancient regime consistently discouraged investigations into the life and times of the former prince. It is far more distressing that Lij Iyasu's Amharic chronicle, reportedly seen in Addis Ababa's National Library in the 1950's, is now missing.
2. Among many examples, see G. Lipsky, Ethiopia, New Haven (1962); L. Mosley, Haile Selassie: The Conquering Lion. London (1964), pp. 66-86; C. Sandford, The Lion of Judah Hath Prevailed. London (1955), pp. 94-5. These accounts describe the prince as "not unintelligent, but irresponsible and dissolute...clever and intelligent despite a certain irresponsibility... degenerate... indolent and intemperate... almost certainly an epileptic and subject to violent brainstorms...and a shabby tyrant with hardly a discoverable virtue." Mosley, p. 69, concluded: "He tortured, massacred, and raped his people and enslaved them in thousands. Yet Ethiopians remember him today with a gentle sigh rather than with the heavy groan which his misdeeds would seem to merit. Such a clever young man, they will tell you; so full of promise and ideas. What a pity he dabbled with Islam and had such venal advisers; he might otherwise have made a great Emperor."

Mosley concluded: "This is arrant nonsense which is in danger, if it is not corrected, of getting into the Ethiopian history books..." Indeed!
3. H. Marcus, The Life and Times of Menelik II. Oxford (1975). R. Greenfield, Ethiopia: A New Political History, London (1965)
4. For a more extensive discussion on the ideology of Ethiopian kingship, see Chapter 1, and J. Paul and C. Clapham, Ethiopian Constitutional Development: A Sourcebook. (Addis Ababa, 1967).
5. Bairu Tafia, "Marriage as a Political Device: An Appraisal of a Socio-political aspect of the Menilek Period 1889-1916," Journal of Ethiopian History. 10,1 (1972); The best account of Ethiopian diplomacy and politics during the reign of



- Menilek is H. Marcus. Menelik: see also K. Darkwah, Shewa, Menelik and the Ethiopian Empire 1813-1889. London (1975).
6. PRO: FO 371/1043 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 10 Feb. 1911 p9.
  7. For more detail on Taitu's program see Greenfield, p.133; Marcus, pp. 241-2; and PRO: FO 371/1043 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 10 Feb. 1911, pp. 1-2. Taitu hoped to place on the throne Ras Gugsu, the son of her brother, but the source of her power, her familial tie to Menilek, postponed action as long as the emperor lived. Nonetheless, she sent arms to Wolye, who was rumored to be preparing for his own coronation, and thereby induced the Shoans more carefully to guard their command over imperial prerogatives.
  8. D. Crummey, "The Violence of Tewodros", JES X,2 (1969); R. Pankhurst, "The Great Ethiopian Famine of 1888-1892: A New Assessment," Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences. 21, 2-3 (1966); Marcus, pp. 244-8; PRO: FO 371/1043 Thesiger to Grey, 10 Feb. 1911, p. 2.
  9. Marcus, pp. 247,251; PRO: FO 371/1294 Thesiger to Grey, 22 April 1912.
  10. QD: Guerre 1914-1918 Ethiopie 1617 Brice a MAE, 26 Dec. 1914; PRO: FO 371/1294 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 22 April 1912 pp. 1,3,9; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 2 Oct., 1913; FO 371/1878 Thesiger to Grey, 19 Dec., 1913; Marcus, pp. 246, 252-5. Jealousies blocked the nomination of Walda Giyorgis as regent, and, following a "course of least resistance," allowed Lij Iyasu to act more independently, though under Shoan vigilance.
  11. There were even suggestions that certain Shoans, including Abata and Walda Giyorgis, sought to create a republic independent of the prince. Marcus, pp. 253-7; PRO: 371/1294 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 22 April 1912; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1913.
  12. Marcus, pp. 256-6; PRO: FO 371/1294 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 22 April 1912, pp. 2-3.
  13. The trips had nothing to do with Lij Iyasu's supposed superstitious fear of the coming railway. PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, 25 Nov. 1915. For long discussions on Lij Iyasu's trips outside the capital, see PRO: FO 371/1293 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 1 Nov. 1912; FO 371/1294 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 26 July 1912; FO 371/1294

- Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 29 Aug. 1912; FO 371/1571  
 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1913; FO 371/1571  
 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 11 March 1913; FO 371/1571  
 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 12 Sept. 1913, p. 2; FO 371/1881 Intelligence Report for 3 October 1914; FO 371/2227 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for December, 1914; P. Garretson, "Maji and Ethiopian Domination of the Southeastern Sudan," Unpublished paper presented at the Conference on Southern Ethiopian Studies, Stanford, 1982; Consolata: x-216 Magi Mission to Padre Chiomio, 1 July 1938; Marcus, p. 259 is likely correct in concluding that Lij Iyasu, to demonstrate the need for an early coronation, stayed away also to prove the government's inability to function without his presence.
14. PRO: FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 12 Sept. 1913.
  15. PRO: FO 371/1294 Report on the Bank of Abyssinia in Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1912; FO 371/1570 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 26 Dec. 1912; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1913 pp. 3,7,8,10; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 March 1913; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 12 Sept. 1913.
  16. PRO: FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1913, p. 2; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 2 Oct. 1913; FO 371/1880 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1914; FO 371/1881 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 May 1914.
  17. PRO: FO 371/1879 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 7 Jan. 1914, p. 1.
  18. PRO: FO 371/1570 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 26 Dec. 1912; FO 371/1570 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 11 Feb. 1913; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 7 Feb. 1913; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Tilley, Addis Ababa, 23 March 1913; Marcus, p. 259.
  19. PRO: FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 March 1913; FO 371/1879 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 7 Jan. 1914; R. Hess, "The 'Mad-Mullah' and Northern Somaliland," JAH V 3 (1964) 415-434; R. Hess, Italian Colonialism in Somalia, (Chicago, 1966).
  20. PRO: FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Tilley, Addis Ababa, 23 March 1913; FO 371/1571 Byatt to Harcourt, 11 June 1913 in CO to FO, 21 June, 1913; FO 1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 19 April 1913; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 March 1913; FO 371/2227 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for

- Dec. 1914; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 19 Nov. 1915; Thesiger to Wingate, Addis Ababa, 2 Nov. 1915.
21. Marcus, pp. 261-5; Sudan Intelligence Report (hereafter SIR) for Dec. 1914, January, 1915; PRO: FO 371/1878 Doughty-Wylie to Grey, Addis Ababa, 2 May 1914; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 Nov. 1920 lists the arms captured in 1916 from the forces of Ras Mikael.
  22. The best detail is in PRO: FO 371/1878 Doughty-Wylie to Grey, Addis Ababa, 2 May 1914; also see FO 371/1878 Doughty-Wylie to Grey, Addis Ababa, 16 May 1914; FO 371/1881 Addis Ababa Intelligence Reports for May and April, 1914; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 March 1915.
  23. PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 26 May 1915; The threat from Eritrea was probably not exaggerated. Italian documents provide only an inkling of military preparedness, but their government's readiness to partition Ethiopia at Versailles (see Chapters 3 and 4) and their policies in the late nineteenth century leave no doubt that Ethiopia's fears were not naively xenophobic. In April, the Italians were reported building bridges across the river Setit and to have placed a flag at Nogara in the Tigrean highlands. Evidence of military marshalling in Eritrea, the presence of Italian agents at Adwa, and rumors of the continued distribution of Italian munitions throughout the north motivated Lij Iyasu to send a fact-finding expedition northward in May, and increased government alarm at the Italian minister's repeated protestations of innocence. Colli insisted that shipments of arms to Dej. Gabre Sellassie merely fulfilled a long-standing agreement with Menilek. Given Italy's oft-stated determination to check all arms infiltration (see chapter 4), however, the British minister was probably correct in concluding that the policy coincided with Italy's obvious tendency "to look upon the whole of Abyssinia as an area of Italian irredentism." For years Italy would control northern communications, distribute arms to northern chiefs, and establish "commercial" agencies, whose continued support in spite of consistent losses suggests their importance as sources of intelligence. European press reports in April predicted that Italy might well join the Central Powers in alliance with the feared Turks; Haile Giyorgis estimated that Ethiopia would then have no choice but to take on Eritrea. Italy's entry into the war on the side of the Allies, and British and French pleas for northern peace calmed the situation.; PRO: FO 371/1878 Doughty-Wylie to Grey, Addis Ababa, 2 May 1914; FO 371/1878 Doughty-Wylie to Grey, Addis

- Ababa, 16 May 1914; FO 371/1881 Addis Ababa Intelligence Reports for April, May, June, and July; FO 371/2593 Postlewaite to Cairo, Gederef, 11 Jan. 1916 encl. in McMahon to Grey, Cairo, 1 Feb. 1914;
24. Marcus, p. 268; SIRs for Nov. and Dec. 1914, and for Jan. 1915; P. Garretson, "The Naggadras, Trade, and Selected Towns in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ethiopia", IJAHS 12,3 (1979) 416-439; PRO: FO 371/1881 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for May, 1914; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Wingate, Addis Ababa, 3 May 1915; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Wingate, Addis Ababa, 14 July 1915.
  25. Greenfield, p.31; PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 16 July 1915; FO 371/2228 Hodson to Walker, 8 Feb. 1915 encl. in Walker to Sir H.C. Belfield, Addis Ababa, 9 Feb. 1915.
  26. QD: Guerre 1914-1918: Ethiopie 1627 Affaires Commerciales. "Rapport sur le system de douane en Abyssinie", Addis Ababa, 8 Mar. 1918 encl. in de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 30 Mar. 1918; SIRs for Dec. 1914, Jan and Feb, 1915; PRO: FO 371/1881 Doughty-Wylie to Grey, Addis Ababa, 1 Aug. 1914; FO 371/2227 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for Jan., 1915; FO 371/4396 Report on the Harar Mining Concession, encl. in Campbell to Lockhart, London, 4 June 1920.
  27. PRO: FO 371/2227 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 7 March 1915; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 14 April 1915.
  28. Such letters, including those sent to Muslim leaders, were well preceded. See, for example, Sven Rubenson, "Shaykh Kasa Haylu," Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Ethiopian Studies, Lund, Sweden, 1982.
  29. PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 26 May 1915. When the news of Italy's entry into the war reached the council of ministers, Habte Giyorgis expressed his relief: "Now that means three or four more years of peace for Ethiopia; Italy will go to war and her legs will be broken."
  30. PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 19 Nov. 1915; FO 371/2227 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for March, 1915; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 21 June 1917; FO 371/1881 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for September 1914 and FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, 22 Sept. 1915 record that even Tafari so feared Ogaden instability that he applied for permission to pacify the Rer Ali. There is, however, no

documentary evidence to indicate how "successful" such expeditions might have been.

31. Marcus, p.261; Greenfield, p.137; PRO: FO 371/1881 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for May, 1914; FO 371/2227 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for March, 1915; Even Thesiger, in FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 23 Aug. 1916, admitted that these marriages seemed to be "taking the place of more regular treaties of friendship." Nonetheless, by 1916, the British minister concluded: "All this tends to show that Lij Iyasu's Muslim schemes are on a larger scale than one had hitherto thought possible, and may even embrace the idea of emulating Mohammed Gran and once again seizing all Abyssinia for Islam with the help mainly of the Somalis united under the Mullah as their only possible leader... Whatever his ultimate aims may be, there can I think no longer be any doubt that Lij Iyasu's policy looks to the Muslim tribes for its completion, and I am inclined to believe now that it is directed more against his own country than against us."
32. No one has yet examined the Turkish diplomatic archives on the subject. See Genghiz Orhonlu, "Turkish Archival Sources on Ethiopia," IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici. Rome 1974, pp.455-480; H. Scholler, "German World War I Aims in Ethiopia - The Frobenius-Hall Mission," in J. Tubiana ed. Modern Ethiopia, Rotterdam, 1980 found no new insights in the German diplomatic material, while Bahru Tafla, Ethiopia and Germany: Cultural, Political, and Economic Relations, 1871-1936. Wiesbaden, 1981 en passant confirmed that the Allied blockade of the Central Powers inhibited communications and the development of an understanding with the Ethiopian leadership. Both agree that Lij Iyasu allied with the Turks and the Germans, (and Bahru even cites Scholler as the 'proof'), but neither offers a shred of German diplomatic evidence to support the case.

Much of the Entente correspondence was apparently intercepted by Tripartite authorities on the coast, as evidenced by the apparently sparse files in the West German archives. Only two such letters, however, one each from the Turkish and German ministers in Addis Ababa, remain in the Tripartite files. Both were intercepted in 1916 by the French at the coast near Tajura and were forwarded leisurely to Paris. While the dispatches are long, they are remarkably void of fresh evidence or insight. They comment generally about Ethiopia's growing internal instability, and they parrot the same incidents emphasized by Thesiger. Interestingly, however, neither tie Lij Iyasu's apparent

behavior to any change or the cementing of his relationship with the Central Powers, and neither recommend rapprochement with the prince. Certainly, more intensive investigations might be carried out in Turkey, but it seems clear that if the Central Powers had hoped for a politically meaningful friendship with Lij Iyasu, they would not have so crippled him by implicating the Christian prince in their eastern propaganda. QD: Guerre 1914-1918 Ethiopie 1622 Von Syburg to the German Foreign Office, Addis Ababa, 3 Dec. 1916 and Mazhar to Constantinople, Addis Ababa, 4 Dec. 1916, both encl. in MAE Minute, 15 March 1917.

33. R. Caulk, "The Occupation of Harar: January 1887," JES, IX 2 (July, 1971), 1-20
34. PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 March 1915.
35. PRO: FO 371/1881 Addis Ababa Intelligence Report for Sept. 1914; FO 371/2227 Addis Ababa Intelligence Reports for Dec. 1914, Jan. and Feb. 1915; FO 371/2227 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 7 March 1915; FO 371/2227 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 March 1915; FO 371/2228 Walker to Grey, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1915; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 23 Aug. 1916.
36. Marcus, pp. 266-269; PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 27 Feb. 1915; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 28 April 1915; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 March 1915; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 16 June 1915.
37. PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 16 June 1915.
38. Tafari was also upset by Lij Iyasu's expropriation of Harrar forces for forts at Khorahoi, Dagabur, and Imi. PRO: FO 371/2593 Report on Muslim propaganda in Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 1 June 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 29 Jan. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Dodds, Addis Ababa, 21 Aug. 1916. Although Tafari shared Lij Iyasu's concern about the troubled east, Thesiger's reasoning was: "Dej. Tafari is in no way implicated in, but on the contrary is opposed to these intrigues with the Mullah, and to make an official complaint would give the prince the opportunity he is seeking to remove him from his post on the plea that we had brought serious charges against him, thus shouldering the blame for an unpopular act upon us, and satisfying his own jealous resentment against Dej. Tafari. We might thus lose a chief who is well disposed and gain in his place some officers

who would be merely a creature of Lij Iyasu's carrying on more secretly the very intrigue which the Prince does not dare ask from the Dej." Tafari had successfully courted a 'progressive' image. For a plethora of material on 1915 and 1916 raids and disturbances in the Ogaden, see FO 371/2595 pp. 1-464 passim.

39. See note 28. Marcus, p. 272; PRO: FO 371/2393 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 19 Jan. 1916; FO 371/2595 Memorandum, encl, in Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 19 March 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 7 May 1916.
40. The Governor of Italian Somaliland also saw no direct danger from Lij Iyasu, whose actions he interpreted within the context of internal Ethiopian politics. PRO: FO 371/2593 Rodd to Grey, Rome, 12 May 1916.
41. Mosley, p. 80; PRO: FO 371/2595 Thesiger to Wingate, Addis Ababa, 7 March 1916; In a statement that reflects Thesiger's interests and prejudices far more than Lij Iyasu's, the British minister continued: "At the same time, I found that to a far greater extent than I had believed, he is the center of the government and the only source of authority. Nothing of the slightest importance can be done without his sanction and, as he is entirely occupied with his own pleasures and such business as interests him, consisting mainly of punitive raids in person against the offending villages, all the more urgent matters of the kingdom are necessarily brought to a standstill. Lij Iyasu allows no remonstrances, accepts no advice, and the older officials of Menilek's time are frankly in despair as to the future of their country." FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, AA, 14 April 1916.
42. QD: Guerre 1914-1918 Ethiopie 1617. Affaires politiques generales. Brice à MAE, Addis Ababa, 4 May 1916; PRO: FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 14 April 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 12 Jan. 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 27 Jan. 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 1 Feb. 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 13 April 1916.
43. See Chapter 6. PRO: FO 371/2593 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 3 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 23 Dec. 1915; FO 371/2593 Italian Embassy to FO, London, 18 June 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 11 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 7 May 1916.

44. PRO: FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 8 May 1915; FO 371/2228 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 26 May 1915; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Wingate, Addis Ababa, 17 Feb. 1916.
45. PRO: FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 7 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 9 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Collier Minute to Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 14 April 1916; FO 371/2593 Sperling Minute to Thesiger to HM Commissioner (Berbers), Addis Ababa, 16 May 1916; FO 371/2594 Sperling Minute to Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 Aug. 1916; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 8 Mar. 1918; FO 371/11574 Gasalee Minute to Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1926.
46. Edward Ullendorff trans. The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Sellassie I: 'My Life and Ethiopia's Progress' 1892-1937. (Oxford, 1976) (hereafter Ullendorff, trans. Autobiography) p. 44; PRO: FO 371/2593 Thesiger to HM commissioner (Berbera), Addis Ababa, 16 May 1916.
47. PRO: FO 371/2593 Thesiger to HM Commissioner (Berbers), Addis Ababa, 17 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Rodd to FO, Rome, 19 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 9 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 4 May 1916.
48. PRO: FO 371/2594 CO to FO, 2 Oct. 1916.
49. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 3 Aug. 1916.
50. PRO: FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 9 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 24 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 1 June 1916.
51. PRO: FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Tilley, Addis Ababa, 23 Mar. 1913; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 21 Feb. 1913; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 1 June 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1916.
52. Thesiger found Lij Iyasu to be intelligent and pragmatic, and particularly when the prince remained in Addis Ababa for long periods, the British minister was even complimentary towards the Ethiopian ruler. As soon as Lij Iyasu left Addis Ababa, however, the feelings recorded in Thesiger's diplomatic dispatches change profoundly. While Lij Iyasu was in Addis Ababa between May and July 1916, Thesiger, his staff, and the other European ministers, observed no blatant signs of any Islamic tendencies, but, soon after the prince's departure to Harrar, Thesiger remarkably concluded that the 'Jekyll and Hyde' Lij Iyasu was now comfortable only in the company of



- Muslims. PRO: FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 24 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 1 June 1916; See also FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Tilley, Addis Ababa, 23 March 1913; FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 21 Feb. 1913; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 July 1916.
53. Near East. 38 Aug. 1923; PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 3 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 4 Aug. 1916.
  54. PRO: FO 371/2593 CO to FO, 21 June 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 3 Aug. 1916.
  55. The French minister, whose information from the Jibuti hinterland ought to have confirmed Thesiger's suspicions, instead had only the British minister's word that Lij Iyasu was becoming a Muslim. Brice gave only half-hearted support to Thesiger's pleas for Tripartite against Lij Iyasu, until late August, when the French government, at HMG's strong request, instructed their minister to join Thesiger and Colli.
- QD: Guerre 1914-1918 Ethiopie 1617 Affaires politiques générales. Brice à MAE, Addis Ababa, 4 May 1916; Ethiopie 1617. Brice à MAE, Addis Ababa, 28 May 1916; Ethiopie 1617. Brice à MAE, Addis Ababa, 17 Sept. 1916; PRO: FO 371/2594 CO to FO, 19 Sept. 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 July 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 4 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 9 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 Aug. 1916.
56. PRO: FO 371/2594 Dodds to Thesiger, Harrar, 3 Aug. 1916 encl. in CO to FO, 19 Sept. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Dodds, Addis Ababa, 21 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2594 CO to FO, 9 Oct. 1916.
  57. PRO: FO 371/2594 Precis of Abyssinian Intelligence Received in Somaliland during the week ending 26 Aug. 1916 encl. in CO to FO, 19 Sept. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Dodds, Addis Ababa, 2 Aug. 1916, encl. in Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 23 Aug. 1916.
  58. PRO: FO 371/2594 Precis of Abyssinian Intelligence Received in Somaliland during the week ending 26 August 1916 encl. in CO to FO, 19 Sept. 1916; FO 371/2594 CO to FO, 10 Nov. 1916; At about the same time, Dodds had a long meeting with Lij Iyasu. The prince told the major: "You have something on your heart, and I have something on mine. We must be frank with

one another and be friends." He recognized the need to have Britain as a strong foreign ally and agreed with Dodds that the Somalis could not be trusted. Ydlibi later intimated to Dodds that Lij Iyasu was anxious to pursue treaties of friendship with Britain, and that the rumors concerning the prince's conduct were vastly exaggerated. Dodds paid no heed.

59. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 23 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Dodds, Addis Ababa, 21 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to HM Commissioner (Berbera) encl. in Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 17 May 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1916.
60. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Dodds, Addis Ababa, 21 Aug. 1916, encl. in Thesiger to Grey, 23 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2594 Precis of information received in Somaliland during the week of 26 August 1916, encl. in CO to FO 19 Sept. 1916; FO 371/2594 Precis of information received in Somaliland during the week of 9 Sept. 1916, encl. in CO to FO 9 Oct. 1916; Thesiger protested Lij Iyasu's action to Bit. Haile Giyorgis, who could only pass on the charges to Lij Iyasu.
61. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 Aug. 1916.
62. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 1 Sept. 1916.
63. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 31 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2594 Precis of information received in Somaliland during the week of 2 Sept. 1916, encl. in CO to FO 2 Oct. 1916.
64. QD: Guerre 1914-1918 Ethiopie 1619 Affaires politiques générales. Brice à MAE, Addis Ababa, 1 Sept. 1916; PRO: FO 371/2594 Precis of information received in Somaliland during the week of 2 Sept. 1916, encl. in CO to FO 2 Oct. 1916; FO 371/2594 CO to FO, 4 Sept. 1916; FO 371/2594 Precis of information received in Somaliland during the week of 26 Sept. 1916, encl. in CO to FO 26 Oct. 1916; FO 371/2594 Precis of information received in Somaliland during the week of 23 Sept. 1916, encl. in CO to FO, 23 Oct. 1916; Zelleke, p.8.
65. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 27 Sept. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 29 Sept. 1916; Two days after the coup, Thesiger admitted: " The joint note which was presented by the Legations certainly precipitated matters in so far as it brought home to the minds of those who were still wavering the seriousness of the position, and the risk

the country was running of being embroiled with the Entente powers, and decided then to act without further delay."

66. Mattama Sellassie, Zeker Neger. Addis Ababa, pp. 520-5; Zelleke, pp. 11-13; P. Gilkes, The Dying Lion. (London, 1975); PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Dodds, Addis Ababa, 21 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, 4 Sept. 1916; FO 371/2227 Doughty-Wylie to Grey, Addis Ababa, 5 Dec. 1914. The best accounts of Shoa's pre-coup deliberations are in QD: Guerre 1914-1918 Ethiopie 1620 Affaires Politiques. Brice à MAE, Addis Ababa, 6 Oct. 1916, which contain daily summaries of the events of 27-29 September.

Zelleke and Gilkes suggest that the abun's reticence, overcome according to the French sources only at the point of a gun, had its foundation in long standing Church divisions. I have not been able to confirm Gilkes's argument (p. 12) that Matewos and Petros supported Tafari and Iyasu respectively. To the contrary, French evidence emphasizes that Petros, the Shoan Echege, not Matewos, led Church action against the prince.

67. Marcus, p. 277.
68. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 21 Oct. 1916; A telegram from Tafari ordering Fit. Gabru immediately to arrest Lij Iyasu was instead delivered directly to the prince, who summoned the priests and made them swear to excommunicate any unfaithful soldiers and chiefs. At the same time, he swore, on the cross and bible, that he was a true Christian and faithful to Ethiopia's interests. The next day, Dodds, hoping to avoid reprisals against Europeans in Harrar, assured the prince that Britain had had nothing to do with the internal conflict in Shoa, and that "he should not think for a moment that they even had acted on the advice or consent of the Legations."

Around the same time, and almost certainly on Lij Iyasu's order, written proclamations were circulated proclaiming Lij Iyasu's orthodox Christian identity, his kingly presence, and asserting through genealogies his Solomonic right to rule. One such document is preserved in Archivio Eritrea, Pacco 1008, encl. in Asmara to CO, 8 September 1916.

69. Though the Wollo army obviously drew considerable support from Christians, Tafari proclaimed that the forces of imperial Christianity had defeated Mikael. QD: Guerre 1914-1918 Ethiopie 1620 Affaires politiques, Tafari à Brice, Addis

Ababa, 28 Oct. 1916; Guerre 1914-1918, Ethiopie 1622, Affaires politiques, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1917.

70. M. Perham, The Government of Ethiopia, (Evanston, 1969) 70.
71. Ullendorff, trans. Autobiography, chapter 6; When confronted by the allies to contribute to the war effort in 1917, Tafari reviewed the recent past. He stressed that Lij Iyasu had refused to enter the war, and legitimized the gossip by claiming that the prince had privately boasted: "If I take any part it will be with the Germans and Turks... Knowing that I [Tafari] was a friend of the allies and being afraid that I might oppose him with the army of Harrar, he took away Harrar province from me. But all these plans, thanks to the help of the Almighty, failed to come to realization." The Europeans were of course convinced that Tafari was a modern spirit, and that they could count on him in all their policies. To the extent that Tafari can be clearly distinguished from the prince, it is not so much in his policies but in his effectiveness in dealing with the Europeans. He continued: "As for me, you know that since the revolution I have been busy with the war against Negus Mikael, with the Coronation of the Empress Zawditu and, lastly, with the army which I had to send to Magdala against Lij Iyasu, and for these reasons I have been unable to realize the desire of my heart and join the Allies." PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1917.

## CHAPTER 2

"'...one of your Brethren:'"

The Survival of Ras Tafari, 1916-1921

"The King you appoint must be one of your brethren."

Fetha Negast (Aba Paulos, translation)

"If there is one thing about kings...it is that more often than not they were hard up."

J. Hicks. A Theory of Economic History., p.81

"Meet the new boss; same as the old boss."

P. Townsend, "Won't Get Fooled Again?" Who's Next

The era from Ras Tafari's rise to power in 1916 to the Italian invasion of 1935 was an important one in Ethiopia's economic history. Coffee and hides industries in the south and southwest effectively replaced slaves and ivory as Ethiopia's principal foreign exchange earners and as commodities whose control further strengthened and solidified imperial authority. Shoa's authority conventionally required control over long distance trade, while the new exports facilitated, and indeed encouraged, a growing commitment to a fixed capital. As a consequence, two new themes dominated: first, centralized control over a cash crop production required increased state coercion over the south; second, the new

objects of production would increase the value of southern land and intensify competition over its distribution and reproduction.

Ras Tafari has been lauded for orchestrating this imperial consolidation, for what seem to me to be unimportant reasons. Throughout the historiography and the contemporary sources, he is uncritically praised for having personally tamed a great and growing long distance trade, for having engineered the expansion of a central bureaucracy, for having reformed Ethiopia's internal administration with "model provinces" and centralized customs collection, and for having converted customs revenue into a powerfully armed, "modernizing" state. But I feel that the most widely circulated primary materials and most of the secondary sources themselves reflect precisely the image Tafari and his party sought to project to westerners, who were and remain committed in their thoughts and actions to bourgeois notions of progress and change.<sup>1</sup>

The long-distance trade was at best paltry, never providing the state apparatus with sufficient revenue for the projects Tafari perpetually touted, and in Eurocentric terms, accounting for rates of growth in Ethiopia far below those of neighboring states. As for what growth did occur, it was the railway, European demand, and the activities of Indians and Arabs far more than Tafari or the state which provided the catalyst.<sup>2</sup>

The "serenity" of "model provinces" like Harrar and Arussi owed less to "progressive" state tendencies or administrative

reform than to the fact that the railway eliminated slow, producer-exploiting movements by imperial troops through the countryside between Addis Ababa and Harrar.<sup>3</sup> Most importantly, an increasingly centralized and "efficient" bureaucracy merely facilitated the consolidation of imperial authority, further perpetuating in the highland and extending over southern and southwestern areas of production the conventional exploitation of producers' surplus for the preservation of the state. From the perspectives both of the reproduction of relations of production (i.e., by concentrating on the role of the ideological state apparatus in perpetuating the philosophical underpinnings of economic activity) and of Ethiopia's long experience with central highland expansionism and consolidation, "progress," at least as a term used to connote "modernization," has little economic meaning in the interwar Ethiopian context.

There were, to be sure, important and lasting infrastructural changes, like the building of roads, schools, and hospitals, and the development of long distance trade, but there was little meaningful progress, if the term is taken to mean or imply evolution towards less exploitative relations of production. During the period, state-benefitting relations of production and reproduction were thoroughly extended over Ethiopia, but it was a process to be characterized as good, modern, or progressive only by the standards by Fage's now discredited, ahistorical praise of African state systems. As Wrigley has suggested, we need not search

for the dignity of African history by giving false praise to the existence and consolidation of large states.<sup>4</sup>

Ras Tafari consolidated Ethiopia, not so much by taming long-distance trade, or by controlling its revenue, and not through a more equitable redistribution of producers' surplus, but conventionally, by accommodating more effectively than had Lij Iyasu the dominant ideologies of Ethiopia and Europe. Within Ethiopia, he placed the power and privileges of the Solomonic throne against landed interests seeking decentralization of prerogatives and privileges', especially the warrant to control and redistribute land. For the Europeans, most effectively during his early years, he preserved his standing atop an independent Ethiopia by appeasing, consciously and instinctively, western economic philosophies.

Every visible policy, therefore, had two inseparable aims: First, to further the idea that Tafari Makonnen alone had the right to exercise the prerogatives of kingship and control the destiny of Ethiopia; and second, to instill in Europe the idea that only Tafari could and would reform Ethiopia along "progressive" European lines. Among his most significant accomplishments, therefore, was the fact that, by not alienating the foreign community, and by leaving the Europeans with a profound sense of confidence in his reign, Tafari could still the foreign and local opposition that had led to Lij Iyasu's downfall.



For all that has been written about Ras Tafari's "modern" efforts to establish his control, and to convert its profits into an infrastructure at times European in appearance, it was the superstructure, the philosophical underpinnings of Ethiopian conduct, which shaped the nature of state domination and which established the moral basis of the empire's internal and external relations. The politics of Addis Ababa, so often perceived as progressive against conservative, or as the forces of modernization against tradition,<sup>5</sup> comprised rather an agonizingly slow contest to determine first how centralized Imperial prerogatives would be, second the extent of control over the proceeds of trade and provincial production, and third how great a claim to Solomonic privilege might reside in the person of one man. In his consolidation over the multi-ethnic state, Ras Tafari was above all else a creature of highland Ethiopia; his position, his status, his training, in essence his philosophy, shaped the consolidation and marked him as very much a conventional politician.

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Tafari's most difficult interwar years were those between 1916 and 1921. Enhanced legitimacy and power might fundamentally require a stable and growing economy, but the European conflict and the post-war depression stifled Ethiopia's foreign trade and customs revenue. Lij Iyasu remained at large and, in the minds of

many Ethiopians, if not Europeans, the legitimate ruler. Meanwhile, the powers, though professing their faith in Tafari's "reform-minded" leadership, scarcely hid their intent to partition the country after the war. Without sufficient revenue, and compromised in every prerogative by the rival authority of Zawditu and the Minister of War, Habte Giyorgis, Tafari had little choice but to marshal his resources carefully and stay in the capital where he might satisfy the capital-bound Europeans and watch his local rivals more carefully than had his predecessor.

Remarkably, Tafari succeeded; It was no small accomplishment. He did so, I would suggest, because, far better than Lij Iyasu, he well understood and maneuvered around the accepted ideology of kingship. His government in Harrar provided a revenue base and an available army, but Tafari well knew that secure succession required several "ideological" actions. First, it was essential to dishonor, discredit, and preferably incarcerate Lij Iyasu. Second, Tafari would require the unchallengeable warrant to bestow lands and honors on those who supported him.<sup>6</sup> Otherwise, landed interests would continue to block Tafari's command over the long-distance trade and the proceeds of provincial production. Third, particularly as the 1919 Peace Conference approached, the ras would have to sustain, for European consumption, the illusion of Ethiopia as a growing, modern, unified state with progressive leadership. Fourth, just like Lij Iyasu, Tafari slowly but consistently would move to replace ministers and provincial leaders with more trusted

men more intimately tied to his career. Throughout the interwar period, Tafari succeeded in carrying out these planks. In the first six years of his reign, however, the success was at the expense of the considerable time and energy required for this political consolidation. Long term economic strategy had perforce a lower priority.

To succeed, Tafari, unlike Lij Iyasu, committed his reign to Addis Ababa, for at least two reasons. First, a fixed Shoa capital at the railhead would help to stabilize relations with Europe. The European ministers were now established in the capital and, as was clear from their dissatisfaction with Lij Iyasu, expected to be able to deal year-round with a stationary administration. Second, in spite of his success over Lij Iyasu and Wollo, intrigue persisted and Lij Iyasu's return to power remained a possibility, in Shoa's mind if not in Europe's. Staying in Shoa would provide Tafari with security and enable him to keep firmer control over imperial intrigue.

By staying at home, however, Tafari would need to intensify the ideological efforts required to stabilize the economy and polity. Without repeated trips outside of Addis Ababa, Tafari had to establish his control over provincial revenue and trade and prevent the north from undermining his local prerogatives and privileges by projecting throughout the empire a Solomonic image sufficiently strong to compel revenue and respect to Addis Ababa.

Simply put, to exercise power effectively he had to convince the ideologically faithful that he deserved power.

It was a tall order. The greater the external and internal pressure, the more opponents would openly intrigue by questioning or ignoring his right to rule and by spreading parliamentary divisive rumors concerning his character. Time and again, adversaries would charge that Tafari, briefly educated in Harrar by French Capucins, had "Catholic leanings," or that his reliance upon Tripartite assistance in 1916 and his "progressive" rhetoric was proof that he had "sold the country." <sup>7</sup> The result for Tafari was an almost endless circle of frustration and inaction, requiring a cautious pursuit of power, a careful cultivation of legitimacy, and the discrediting of his rivals. He followed the politics of survival, not the processes of modernization.

In this chapter, I have summarized the contradictions in some detail, in order to demonstrate the ongoing seriousness of the political situation and Tafari's consequent inability to initiate even a small economic transformation. Before he might distribute land and honors to trusted followers and devotees, he would require the indisputable power to make decisions. If the succession crisis, at its height during these years, was fundamentally a contest to determine who would control the proceeds of long distance trade and the prerogatives of kingship, it was also a battle fought tooth and nail at every moment and over matters which certainly seemed unimportant to outsiders. Tafari would not be able to put forth a

clear economic program until the end of the 1920s when he gained clear writ in decision-making.

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The rise of coffee and hides industries aided Tafari's centralization. These commodities were well suited to the railway and could easily be drawn to the capital. Moreover, their production would generate increasingly greater revenue than the main exports of the nineteenth century, slaves and ivory, whose supplies were fast depleting and whose trades bypassed the capital and its railway.<sup>8</sup> Between the coup of 1916 and 1921, however, several factors inhibited the development of cash crop production, making the consolidation of personal authority a more immediate priority. First, paltry European demand for primary produce depressed the export market, to the point of bankrupting numerous expatriate firms and blocking the success of new efforts. Second, prohibitively high silver prices reduced the supply of the Maria Theresa thaler, a problem exacerbated during the war by the Tripartite powers' blockade of Austria, whose mints supplied the thaler. Third, transport rates along the entire long-distance route from the sources of production to European markets remained prohibitively sufficiently high to eliminate any profit exporters might otherwise have obtained.

Indeed, from 1916 to 1928, the only item able to generate a profit from its export was the thaler itself, because its silver

value far exceeded its official worth in Ethiopia. For Tafari, control over the remaining sources of revenue, particularly provincial tribute, above all demanded the widespread perception of a strong central government, with an unchallengeable sovereign at its head. In this regard, the terms of succession were unfavorable to the ras, and he consistently sought to change them.

Having struggled repeatedly to defend landed interests, the Shoa nobility had had no desire to appoint an all-powerful monarch. Tafari's genealogical claim was weaker than Ras Kassa's and Dejazmatch's, whose descent lay in Shoa's senior lines, but Tafari already had a good rapport with the Europeans, and his apparently flexible personality made him appear to the older nobility as less powerful and easily controlled. He was thus a strong candidate for the throne, but "not strong enough to force the council to make him Emperor." The compromise of September, 1916 therefore divided power into relatively equal shares; Menilek's daughter Zawditu would become Empress, and Tafari Makonnen, ras and heir to the throne, with ill-defined powers.

In his autobiography, Haile Sellassie retrospectively claimed that the coronation of 1917 made him regent, which the foreign community conceded, but there was no such proclamation in 1916 or 1917, nor did his seal so signify. From the start, he exercised judicial prerogatives and limited authority on moot matters, but Zawditu and the council of ministers insisted on an equal role in important political and territorial considerations. For their role

in the coup, Habte Giyorgis as Minister of War and Igazu as a leading member of the advisory council would also gain a special place in decision-making.

The terms of succession thus required Tafari to share his imperial prerogatives and to delegate considerable authority; without full writ, Tafari would continue to face persistent rivalries in and outside of Addis Ababa. He would not be able to challenge effectively the claims and privileges of Menilek's ministers, who clung to their provinces, to their titles, and to their influence in decision making. At the same time, northern provincial leaders, like Ras Seyoum, Ras Hailu, and Ras Gugsa, courting decentralization, rarely proffered needed tribute revenues to an Addis Ababa government they perceived as less than legitimate, in decline, and incapable of exerting its influence.<sup>9</sup>

The unavoidable result was limited revenue at a time when the government could ill afford it. The lowered world demand for Ethiopian products, hides, skins, wax, ivory, and Harari coffee, reduced foreign exchange and imports. And other factors impeded the economy. There was a wartime scarcity of Red Sea steamer transport, Ethiopia prohibited grain and cattle exporting, and France cut back the schedule of the railway that had only just reached Addis Ababa. Without an active export trade, local merchants were unable to sustain the purchase of imports. Indian and Arab traders partially compensated by providing cheaper Asian textiles, but an inactive export market left merchants unable to

finance large orders of incoming goods. At the same time, silver currency prices had inflated, owing to the needs of war, America's silver policies, and the blockade of Austrian mints. Like Lij Iyasu, Tafari tried to conserve the country's resources by prohibiting export of Maria Theresa Thalers, but Addis Ababa merchants, finding in the thaler their only profitable export, smuggled the coins in great numbers past limited and easily bribed enforcement. Consequently, the country's money supply shrank considerably, and though no estimates of its size were ever offered, all commercial experts concurred that shortages of the thaler stifled investment and severely limited long-distance trade, all to the government's disadvantage.<sup>10</sup>

Ras Tafari therefore had neither enough revenue nor authority to improve his standing. He was overwhelmed with claims of all kinds, the majority of which he could neither grant nor refuse without creating a host of malcontents.<sup>11</sup> Personal interests and rivalries complicated discussions over appointments. Rising anew, Taitu, who always exerted influence over Zawditu, insisted that Ras Gugsa, Zawditu's husband, reside in the palace. It seemed again like the situation in 1911, particularly since Ras Abate had himself been released from jail. Factions of Ministers in turn opposed the Habte Giyorgis or Haile Giyorgis, small officers who had participated in the "revolution" clamored for appointments, while important officers, especially Dej. Balcha and Bedjirond Igazu, wanted promotion to ras.<sup>12</sup>



In Addis Ababa, Tafari carefully analyzed the intrigue. Given the weakness of the economy and the government's penury, political survival demanded strong efforts to project an image of unchallengeable authority. Tafari's weakness was manifest, however, by the forced sharing of imperial prerogatives and the delegation of responsibility. For the time being, Zawditu and the council of ministers had considerable autonomy, distributing honors, and joining executive discussions on matters like land distribution and foreign policy. Under the circumstances, few decisions of importance were made. Tafari could not rashly alienate his co-conspirators, for they were actively responsible for his new status and what legitimacy he now had. Instead, while compromising on decisions of state, Tafari watched for opportunities, expanding his following, pressing the Europeans for prestige-building arms and planes, making a show of Ras Mikael's chained entrance into Addis Ababa in December and, at Zawditu's February coronation, requiring the attendance and fealty of the provincial rases, many of whom arrived in Addis Ababa for the first time since the coup.<sup>13</sup>

Nonetheless, continuing indecision on matters of political importance eliminated the possibility for implementation of long-term economic plans. Intrigue blocked expeditions to capture Lij Iyasu and to put down continuing provincial instability. Wollo remained rebellious, despite Mikael's capture, and the Addis Ababa administration was far too preoccupied with its own immediate

concerns to act.<sup>14</sup> Provincial armies mobilized in Addis Ababa to fight Lij Iyasu, leaving a rebellious southern countryside unattended, while their members clamored for far more promotions, rewards, and countries than were available.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, Shoa postponed the final occupation of Wollo until secret compensation for Walda Giyorgis could be negotiated. Presumably this would include his appointment in February as Negus, but the main portion of Wollo was now given to Ras Wolye, Taitu's brother and Ras Gugsa's father, probably to pacify the former Queen and her family, and to keep Gugsa from Addis Ababa where he might challenge for the throne.<sup>16</sup> To be sure, it was gossip, but the ever-presence of rumor itself reflected the weakness of the government. Meanwhile, Ras Walde Giyorgis withheld support for the new regime, while trekking toward Wollo, ostensibly seeking control over Mikael's captured lands.

Late in 1916, a small army of 14,000 finally marched to the Wollo frontier, but no further, without agreed orders from Addis Ababa. Tafari's priority was Harrar, racked during the coup by massacres of the Muslim population and still in turmoil. Forces that might have hunted Lij Iyasu went instead to Tafari's province to calm the new leader's only reliable source of revenue.<sup>17</sup> Walda Giyorgis, meanwhile, occupied Dessie before the Shoan troops. He remained there, providing important logistical support, though outwardly declining to aid Ras Demisie and Habte Giyorgis battle both Lij Iyasu and the Wollo forces under Ras Mikael's army

commanders, Ras Imer and Fit. Bezu, who had not yet submitted. On 28 December, the Wollo forces again were defeated, though Iyasu once more escaped capture. Walda Giyorgis complained to Addis Ababa that Wollo had been promised to him, and while trailing the Shoan forces, looted the countryside of its cattle and crops. The combined devastation of Wollo would be felt severely for many decades to come.<sup>18</sup>

Instability in Addis Ababa and the countryside continued to give importance to short-term needs over all long-term desires. Rumors in Addis Ababa suggested that Lij Iyasu had descended into the Afar desert, ostensibly to reemphasize his Islamic nature, but the deposed Prince collected his forces at Magdala, the amba-fortress reputed to be the Christian highland's securest bastion. Its steep cliffs and easily defensible by-ways could thwart Ethiopian military technology. More importantly, perhaps, the mountain provided for Lij Iyasu a powerfully symbolic parallel, since the fortress was well remembered for Emperor Tewodros's battle to retain his Christian throne against foreign intrigue and local "usurpers". His position there would remain a reminder of Tafari's inherent weakness.<sup>19</sup> The government forces made no attempt to attack and, though rumored to have had few supplies, Lij Iyasu had sufficient resources to garrison his troops for six months whereas the Shoan forces had trouble finding supplies locally.<sup>20</sup>

Addis Ababa hoped that Zawditu's coronation and Walde Giyorgis's promotion might quiet the Empire, or at least unite the

highlands, but successive days brought news of revolts in Simyen, Wolkait, Wojju, and Wogara. In Wollo, "Muslims," driven to desperation by the looting, exactions, and brutality of the Shoan forces, unsuccessfully attacked Dessie. In the south, most notably Arussi, insurrections followed the prolonged absence of the garrisons called up to serve in the campaign at Segale. Simultaneously, in Addis Ababa, discontent among the soldiery and officers grew; most had been away from their lands since September, were impoverished, and pressed to return home.<sup>21</sup>

Politically and financially, Tafari had only scarce resources, and could not respond forcefully to the instability throughout the empire to the demands of the soldiery. The soldiers remained in Addis Ababa, unpaid and unrewarded. And if sent home, it was increasingly clear that they might not agree to return to Tafari's support. If retained in the capital, however, the possibilities of mass insubordination would grow.

Barely two weeks after the coronation, Thesiger doubted that the soldiery would again consent to campaign in the north, but the provincial instability soon seemed to ease.<sup>22</sup> The Simyen revolt collapsed: Genyaz. Ababa, a deputy of Lij Iyasu, surrendered to Walde Giyorgis, while Ras Seyoum of Tigre, who had theretofore ignored Addis Ababa's summons, was now en route, seemingly ending the threat of northern succession. Meanwhile, Tafari repeatedly proposed expeditions against Magdala, knowing that his personal

leadership over Addis Ababa's combined forces would positively influence their standing.

The opposition, however, whose influence derived from the decentralization of privilege and therefore, for the moment, from the preservation of imperial weakness, argued that Lij Iyasu's army was too widely dispersed to justify Tafari's involvement. Tafari's limited authority could not prevail, either in these political concerns or on the larger issues of political and economic centralization.

Instead, Habte Giyorgis, Ras Kassa, and Ras Abata, the latter given districts in Wollo after five years imprisoned at Magdala, left for the amba-fortress. Tafari anxiously prayed that the combined, if limited, force might capture Lij Iyasu, since provincial unrest would otherwise continue, Addis Ababa intrigue would grow, and the economy would continue to stagnate.<sup>23</sup> By June, Shoan troops had surrounded Magdala, but the onset of the rains ruled out any action. Persistent gossip continued to suggest that the ras remained too willing to consider foreign ideas and far too friendly with Catholics. Taking care, therefore, not to breed parliamentary opposition, Tafari could do little more than to issue a series of promises to Europe. Nonetheless, the army required rifles and ammunition, and Ras Kassa insisted that only planes could defeat Magdala, where food appeared to be more plentiful than Shoa had anticipated. Tafari could not have appealed by himself to Europe for help without courting more rumors that he

was again selling the country, but he now had Ras Kassa's support. In an important if cautious act, he petitioned the empress and the ministers to approach the Europeans for the technology which stability and consolidation required.<sup>24</sup>

To court Europe and to persuade them again that he was Ethiopia's most appropriate heir, Tafari warned Europe of another Lij Iyasu-led Muslim outbreak, and he emphasized his "commitment" to economic and social reform. He complained of his impotence, of his inability without Europe's support to enact the reforms for which the Europeans clamored. But he expressed his intent to impose his will over Lij Iyasu and his "allies," the so-called "pro-German" opposition of Afa-Negus Telahun, Dej. Igazu, and Graz. Bayena. In essence, Tafari had appealed for European aid on the ground that his political and economic consolidation would eventually provide an administration that would be responsive to Europe. His talk struck a very favorable chord. In Tafari, and in no other Ethiopian leaders, the Europeans sensed a "progressive" and "modern" spirit; and they found his willingness to support their war effort particularly encouraging. The ras would embargo arms to the Mullah, ship foodstuffs to Aden and Jibuti, and allow finally the export of some thalers.<sup>25</sup>

It is interesting to note that none of these policies differed significantly from Lij Iyasu's and, like the prince, Tafari would gain from them; economically, he would share the customs revenue from the new exports; Politically and diplomatically, he might

gain European cooperation against the east and prove his goodwill. In this, of course, Tafari successfully differentiated himself from Lij Iyasu. As a consequence, he acquired a long-term basis for strengthening his personal consolidation, even if significant economic change and the implementation of his promises to Europe remained far off.

A good measure of Tafari's success in gaining Europe's sympathies was the considerable concern and an increased desire to support the Ras when he adroitly explained to Thesiger that only sense of duty kept him from resigning the regency and returning to Harrar.<sup>26</sup> He was a good politician. Like Lij Iyasu, the ras had sent messages of friendship to Germany and Turkey after taking office; even after the assistance of the Tripartite powers, neutrality remained a sensible course. Now, however, as the course of the war had become clear, Tafari proposed officially to join the Allied cause. He dismissed Germans and Turks from the country and proposed to send Ethiopian troops to Europe. Direct involvement might place Ethiopia at the most comprehensive Peace Conference yet in the world's history. At very least, it might help to safeguard the country from impending talks on partition, it might promote her international standing, and it might possibly break the Allied wartime arms embargo on the Horn, which already stalled 16,000 American rifles at Jibuti and inhibited the loan of Tripartite planes for use against Magdala. At a minimum, the offer of support would confirm the ras as a friend of the victors.<sup>27</sup>

Tafari's plan was comprehensive, in that it addressed most of the empire's short-term political difficulties, but the Europeans were not fully interested in lending their support. They were certainly willing to support the ras philosophically, since his program and manner seemed clearly to complement their own, but they ignored planks which would have speeded Tafari's political and economic consolidation, at the very least by speeding the capture of the ex-prince. The eclipse of Lij Iyasu and the "Mullah"<sup>28</sup> reduced the Allies sense of the Muslim danger in Ethiopia and in the east, and they saw now less cause for joint action. Britain still watched the Ogaden and the southern frontier, but these were areas in which Italy and France now confessed to little interest or knowledge; Moreover, Britain trusted Tafari to settle the frontiers as soon as he established his writ.<sup>29</sup>

Tafari's offer of Ethiopian allegiance did seem attractive to the European ministers, who optimistically agreed that a treaty would finally stifle the propaganda of the Central Powers, break the back of what they perceived as Lij Iyasu's "Muslim" movement, presumably end political infighting in Ethiopia, and reduce the danger emanating from a German mission presently at the coast.<sup>30</sup>

Prior to any allied discussions of Tafari's proposal, however, the negotiations were aborted. Naively believing that Tafari's proposals would be general knowledge among the Ethiopian ministers, the French minister de Coppet broke the ras's confidence in a Jibuti speech and in private discussions with Bej. Igazu.<sup>31</sup>



The diplomatic faux pas revitalized dangerous claims that Tafari was selling the country and conspicuously complicated the personal rivalries for the powers and privileges inherent in kingship. Igazu almost certainly had knowledge of Tafari's policy, but he reminded Tafari in front of the imperial court that the ras had had no right to broach such matters with the Europeans without the knowledge and consent of the Council. Igazu might now have accused Tafari of open intrigue with the Legations, as many post-coup rumors suggested; the ras was therefore obliged to involve Zawditu, Igazu, and the ministers more fully in the diplomatic negotiations, yet another compromise of Tafari's political prerogatives. For breaking Ethiopia's neutrality, the ras's political rivals added new conditions so inflated as to stress Tafari's administrative subservience and to embarrass him in front of the Europeans. Ethiopia would now require 30,000 modern rifles with 6 million cartridges, as well as more explicit guarantees of independence and of Ethiopian participation at the postwar Peace Conference.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, Tafari had yet to break the power of the ministers, but his relative position was slowly improving. Among the most influential ministers remained Haile Giyorgis, the government railway controller and the Negadras of the Addis Ababa market. He had held the latter position under Menilek and Lij Iyasu for the better part of two decades, and obtained his wealth and influence, not by direct control over personal lands, armies, or adherents,

but by tapping customs revenue at the major Imperial markets. As Garretson has suggested, Haile Giyorgis, and perhaps the negadrasas as a group were among the first Ethiopians directly involved in the money economy. With established personal control over the revenue derived in Addis Ababa from Ethiopia's burgeoning long-distance trade in primary produce, the bitwaded had become a wealthy and threateningly independent national figure, whose allegiance and support for Tafari's own centralization of national wealth would be contingent upon the preservation of his own position. However, as a former adviser of Lij Iyasu, and without a large provincial soldiery, Haile Giyorgis was an easy target; Tafari therefore avoided his counsel, and slowly stripped him of his responsibilities.<sup>33</sup>

In July, Zawditu Joined Tafari in calling for Haile Giyorgis's arrest on the grounds that he was anti-Shoan. The bitwaded had refused to relinquish his last post as governor of the Addis Ababa market, and more ominously by the standards of the local political scene, he was charged with communicating with Lij Iyasu. Without incident Ras Demisie arranged his capture and the seizure of his property. It was an important first trial of strength between Tafari and the ministers. The former's success would enhance his prestige and his control over state revenue, though problems persisted. In August, Igazu bluntly refused Tafari's orders to join Habte Giyorgis near Magdala, and Tafari's attempts to appoint

Negadrases in Gore, Gambela, and Begemdir were successfully opposed by local governors.<sup>34</sup>

Whatever gain might have accrued from firmer control over Addis Ababa's customs was negated by steadily worsening international trade and the onset of worldwide depression. High cotton import prices, low demand for Ethiopian hides, skins, and coffee, and transportation shortages continued to restrict sales, to limit further the money supply and government revenue, and to encourage already frequent public hoarding of silver. Indeed, of all the external factors, the largest impact came from the worldwide silver crisis. Wildly vacillating silver prices in the Horn during and just after the war owed not just to Ethiopia's inability to affect the price of silver, but more to cutbacks in world production and to fluctuating demand in Europe and the Orient. The European war decreased worldwide silver production from 1914's 220,000,000 ounces to 1916's 157,000,000. Meanwhile, its increased use in the production of weapons and in battlefield communications sharply raised the price of the metal. When the silver worth of the thaler exceeded its exchange value in the local markets, an Ethiopian trade already depressed by poor international economic conditions ground to a halt. Merchants spent the bulk of their time speculating in currency and petitioning European and Ethiopian officials for permission to export the silver-rich thaler; It was, so to speak, the only game in town, and Tafari was quick to play. He gave permission to export

to businesses in which he had a share of the profits, while taking credit from the diplomats for his "progressive" stance. The two-faced policy, however, did not lessen his difficulties, nor provide long-term economic and political solutions.<sup>35</sup>

Succession politics perpetuated the crises. In August, the discontinuance for many days of telegraphic communication between Addis Ababa and Wollo convinced the Shoan government that Lij Iyasu's forces were likely again to rise. Reports reflecting ongoing intrigue further warned that Walde Giyorgis's movement with 7,000 troops near Wollo might coincide with an attempt in Addis Ababa to overthrow Tafari. Risings in Tigre brought further anxiety, and the central government therefore retained Ras Seyoum longer in the capital, despite his third oath of loyalty to Shoa, in the fear that he might join Lij Iyasu and frustrate Shoa's consolidation. A crisis was expected to coincide with the Masqal ending of the rains, and Tafari therefore took the precaution of ordering reinforcements from Sidama and Harrar to the capital. At no time did he have the time or inclination to attempt an economic reorganization based on the exportation of southern produce; demand for southern coffee and hides remained slack, and the political situation too chaotic.

In the minds of European observers, the situation seemed only now to be "resolving itself more and more into a personal contest between Ras Tafari and Lij Iyasu, and between Shoa and Wollo, and the longer the result remains undetermined, the more marked will

become the tendency of the provincial chiefs to stand aloof and avoid assistance to either side."<sup>36</sup> The nature of the battle, of course, remained as it was before the coup. Now, however, it was Tafari who sought to retain rather than wrest the prerogatives of kingship.

It would be a long battle, one for the moment dominated by provincial instability and Tafari's continuing efforts to dishonor, discredit, and incarcerate the ex-prince. At Magdala, owing probably to finally diminishing supplies, Lij Iyasu launched his attack on the Shoan forces. Aided by Walde Giyorgis's forces, Habte Giyorgis triumphed; Ras Imer was captured; Fit. Bezu died in battle. Again, Lij Iyasu, with a small company of followers, avoided capture, and was again rumored by Shoa to be en route to the "Mullah" and the east.<sup>37</sup> In January, 1918, the former leader surfaced near Dessie, though Tafari and the Shoan commanders insisted that Lij Iyasu had fled the battle and died.<sup>38</sup>

The gossip might for a time frustrate political opposition by casting the ras as the only rightful Solomonic heir. It was an obvious and overused ploy by the Shoans who, without the physical and financial resources to consolidate their authority, sought with ideas to discredit their rivals and win legitimacy. Tafari continued his efforts to project a strong, Solomonic image. He led a short symbolic mission to the sacred Christian monastery, Debre Libanos, to buy Ras Abate. Thereby, Tafari gained an opportunity to identify himself more closely with the church and with the

northern campaign, and to firm his alliance with Ras Kassa by rewarding him with Ras Abate's lands.<sup>39</sup> He also proposed to identify himself with the successful northern action by leading his forces to meet the returning army. He might thus have avoided Mascal intrigue and bolstered his chances for a clearer economic and political ascendancy. Dej. Igazu, however, kept the crisis alive.

After the arrest of Haile Giyorgis, the leadership of the council had fallen to Dej Igazu, whose influence was particularly strong because the minister of war was out of town. Igazu found the empress' ear and suggested that Tafari had exceeded his powers by selling the country to the Europeans and enriched himself at the expense of the government. He organized a counter coup for 27 September, with the apparent support of his godfather; Ras Demisie, and of Menilek's former bodyguard, the Mahal Safari. Ever active palace spies alerted Tafari, who averted the coup in spite of his scattered supporters. He ordered Demisie to a distant province, he expelled the bodyguard to Arussi, and he assembled 5,000 of his Harrar troops in the capital. There would be no confrontation until Habte Giyorgis returned.<sup>40</sup>

The succession crisis continued to follow conventional lines, in that the rivals for the powers and privileges inherent in Ethiopian kingship never pursued or continued a restructuring of existing relations of production. Every player in the imperial struggle hoped to extend personal hegemony by distributing lands to followers and devotees, but only Tafari had two important

advantages. He could draw his troops quickly to Addis Ababa from Harrar, and his youth promised to outlast the opposition. Indeed, his standing benefitted by the death of Taitu in February and Walde Giyorgis in March, though the north remained chaotic. Hoping not to weaken his rise to power by sharing with provincial interests the prerogative to redistribute the lands of the deceased, Tafari for a time concealed the deaths. Nonetheless, the news leaked, and the situation daily seemed to grow worse. Ras Seyoum's son was reported in revolt, while disturbances dotted Wollo, one district of which "declared itself a republic," refusing Shoan overlordship. Lij Iyasu was rumored to be waiting for the spring rains, when the swelling of the rivers on Wollo's frontier with Shoa would allow unopposed recruiting. In Eritrea, the Italians were said to be massing troops on the Tigre border. The best solution seemed to be a large Shoan expedition capable of remaining in the field for several months to settle disorders, to reaffirm weak Imperial alliances, and to end finally the threat from Lij Iyasu. Tafari requisitioned three trains a day to bring his Harrar forces to join those of Habte Giyorgis and Dej. Balcha already in Addis Ababa. Again, however, planned expeditions met delays. Lieutenants and soldiers openly refused to march, citing inadequate supplies of grain and supplies in the north and their frustration of having already served in two campaigns without having received lands in compensation. Able to bring adequate supplies by train, the Harrar troops were well provisioned, and

well willing to serve Tafari's Imperial aspirations, but the ras could not leave the capital without the ministers and their troops in attendance.<sup>41</sup> Tafari's continuing political impotence undoubtedly impelled moves now against the ministers.

Only Ras Kassa's forces went to Wollo, and the north remained unsettled, but the presence of Tafari's troops in Addis Ababa allowed his second and to date most important confrontation with the ministers. By sharing in decision-making and checking the actions of Ethiopia's leadership, the ministers had prevented Lij Iyasu and now Tafari from acquiring unassailable power. Sharing and delegating authority was not only a clear sign of weakness, but the ministers would also directly block Tafari's program to secure his political consolidation and control over southern surpluses by rejecting land grants and political appointments in the richest southern lands. Menilek's original appointment of ministers, like many of Tafari's later acts, was designed in part to appease Europe by creating a "progressive" image of Ethiopian administration.<sup>42</sup> Menilek's 1907 "delegation of authority" to the council of ministers has been judged by some as a modern recognition of the administrative complexity of a changing world. Yet, in 1907, without delegating authority, Menilek merely conferred cosmetic western titles upon existing agents, men who would continue to owe their positions and therefore their allegiance to the crown, for they could never have a hereditary claim to power. The emperor's commander, Habte Giyorgis, became



Minister of War. His archivist and chronicler, Gebre Sellassie, became Minister of the Pen. The overseer of customs and trade, Haile Giyorgis, became Minister of Commerce. Without altering the internal hierarchy of power, the appointments enhanced Europe's image of Menilek as a modernizer at the very time that the new Tripartite Treaty of 1906 seemed to threaten Ethiopia's immediate existence.<sup>43</sup> After the emperor's death, however, the result was political divisiveness, heightened by the succession crisis. During the ensuing years, the ministers retained only a tenuous claim to prestige and privilege, throughout feeling pressure from the better recognized claims to power of hereditary land holders and of Solomonic aspirants. It was not Menilek's intent, but his Shoan descendants allowed the ministers to have enough power to limit the autonomy of Lij lyasu, and now Tafari.

Unlike the Prince, however, the ras would eliminate the ministers entirely, a policy which began with the deposition of Haile Giyorgis and continued now, in March 1918. The Addis Ababa soldiery and 700 officers, almost certainly under Tafari's sponsorship, directed their discontent against the ministers, demanding their dismissal, ostensibly on the charges of corruption, neglect of duty, and misuse of public funds. The charges were trumped up, but nonetheless effective. In fact, the soldiers were anxious to ally with those able to distribute rewards of land and viewed the ministers as void of such powers and as political obstacles. As a group, therefore, the soldiers could be

and were repeatedly used by Solomonic aspirants as a strong force for personal centralization. Within the week, the movement succeeded. The state dismissed all the ministers and confiscated their lands and property. Only Igazu resisted; he was soon arrested and chained by Tafari's men.<sup>44</sup>

Tafari's ambitions had gained considerably, but the removal of the ministers merely removed one source of intrigue; Addis Ababa rumors continued to criticize all of Tafari's actions and rhetoric, inhibiting his ability to grant concessions and to patronize Europe with promises of reform.<sup>45</sup> An effective economic program would require more patience. For the moment, Tafari sought commissions for concessions, particularly since other sources were providing little revenue, but he could only grant charters to economic activity in the areas he controlled directly. In 1918, Mohamedally and Company, for example, obtained a salt monopoly in Harrar, while important French and British concessions were limited in print and practice to the eastern province. Tafari carved Colonel Sandford's Mulu farms out of personal estates near Addis Ababa.

Many of the concessions fulfilled an additional objective. Repeated Allied victories had lessened the value of breaking relations with Germany but helped Ethiopia to conjecture that Italy might soon pursue another forward policy in the north and that the powers might jointly investigate the partitioning of the country. Allowing the concessions to export cattle and grain might calm European resentment of Ethiopia's wartime export embargoes. In

addition, increased French investment in Ethiopia might keep them in Jibuti, where they would impede possible schemes by Britain and Italy to divide up the Horn. Tafari therefore allowed the export of Harrar cattle and grain and granted broad mineral and agricultural concessions in Harrar province to well capitalized British and French groups. In return, the ras received some income and gave Europe enough reason to hope for comprehensive change once he solidified his place on the throne. He expressed his determination to reform the extraterritorial system, and to appoint European advisers to each branch of his administration, if only Zawditu would approve.<sup>46</sup> There were, of course, no such reforms, since the ras had little desire to do so and important changes could not be forced past triumvirate decision-making, but it was at very least convenient for Tafari to have a plausible excuse for the Europeans, who jointly bemoaned the empress's "conservative" tendencies.

Court intrigue continued to impede Tafari's program, as did the outbreak of influenza in November 1918, which by one estimate killed nearly 20% of the Addis Ababa population. The town and markets were deserted; city services shut down. Tafari, Zawditu, and other notables and troops sequestered themselves, seeing no one, lest the disease strike. Despite their precautions, Habte Giyorgis and Tafari fell ill; Nightly rioting and looting were unchecked, and the European ministers reported the chaos despairingly. Thesiger announced that he had lost what little

respect he had for a government now seized by panic, and without any semblance of authority; he was disgusted with his inability to pursue any business, even to get Tafari to commit troops to digging graves in the capital. Colli, always the optimist, recommended that Italy lead discussions at the Peace Conference on finding the most prompt and effective method of imposing Europe's will on Ethiopia's government, which no longer seemed to be a "serious organization." In one ill-fated stroke, it seemed that Tafari had failed in holding European perceptions at bay. When the epidemic had abated in December, in perhaps his most candid moment, the ras spoke in "blank despair of his poor country," of the failure of his efforts to improve her position, and of his conviction that "her end was now in sight." <sup>47</sup> He was nearly correct.

The apparent failure of Ethiopian government had its first repercussions in the far south where the diplomatic stakes with Britain were high, but where central control, for obvious reasons, remained minimal. Tafari continued to promise eventual frontier stability to the British, who had little understanding of or sympathy for the inherent difficulties along the border or, when it came to matters of regional interest, for the political constraints on the ras. Without consulting Addis Ababa, HMG invaded the southern border district of Gaddaduma in order to stop what northern frontier district officials regarded as general instability. In the short and long term, however, Britain's invasion had little impact on the southern frontier; rather, its

policy added unwelcome pressure on the central government and further drained needed time, money, and men needed for imperial consolidation.

Britain's action and Ethiopia's response had little to do with the realities of the southern frontier; decisions were instead influenced by sets of ideas only vaguely defined as interests and desiderata. Britain required frontier stability and protection for its subjects; Tafari's concerns were tied to his personal consolidation and in the long run the exploitation of southern and southwestern areas of production. Neither had much interest in the reality of the frontier. By pushing established cultivators off the rich highlands onto semi-arid terrain, Menilek's nineteenth century expansion had forced many far southern agriculturalists to rely more than before on a pastoral or semi-pastoral existence. When displaced, former cultivators competed with agriculturalists from Boran to Maji, raiding, hunting, and poaching. The new competition among pastoralists drained further an already dwindling cattle population.

Ivo Strecker's little known study of the Hamar is the only lucid account of this transformation. While the British and Ethiopian governments interpreted the systematic raiding of semi-pastoralists like the Hamar as criminal acts, Strecker's information shows that the protagonists viewed their own actions as heroic attempts to rebuild their own herds. The remaining handful of lowland cultivating gabbar could not comfortably

support northern garrisons. Usually stationed in such "diseased" and "unproductive" lands for only a short time, soldiers relied for "survival" and for future insurance on "taxing" and raiding expeditions for cattle, ivory, and, to a much lesser extent, slaves. Frequent changes in governorships, surprisingly large exports of cattle through Moyale to British East Africa, and especially Habte Giyorgis's march in 1916 from Boran to join the Shoan forces involved extensive out-migrations of cattle.

Remaining behind in the late teens were only a handful of soldiers, many of whom became or joined the shifta to survive. To escape the pressure on their already dwindling herds, pastoralists tended to migrate to British East Africa, where lower taxes prevailed, where access to water holes would not be challenged, and where they would not be tied as agriculturalists to less productive lowlands. In January 1918, neftenya, whose sense of a "frontier" more resembled control over a fixed subject-population than the European notion of a fixed line, and who therefore assumed that the British were plotting to siphon off their dependents to British lands, unsuccessfully petitioned the British administration for their return.<sup>48</sup>

British interests, on the other hand, demanded a defined, frontier line with a stable administration on each side; the fact that the British had barely 1,000 men in Kenya to keep order did not deter Nairobi from laying the blame for the southern "chaos" on Tafari and his government. Indeed, the situation was no less

serious anywhere else along Ethiopia's new frontier, but Britain had the reports of Arnold W. Hodson, its consul in southern Ethiopia, who regularly dispatched ethnocentrically tainted accounts of hostility and conflict. In Hodson's view, Nairobi ought to have annexed Boran province, although, in the short run, British and Ethiopian reinforcements might jointly investigate and diffuse the situation.

Britain's subsequent pressure for the amelioration of frontier conditions intensified, and Tafari, unlikely to commit state resources to remote provinces in even better times, hoped rather to placate HMG with more promises of future action. Britain's responses, however, only complicated the succession crisis by creating the impression that Tafari was either selling the country or that he had insufficient support from the Europeans. In addition, the government now had to commit resources needed elsewhere for the consolidation. Thesiger first pressed Tafari to sanction the appointment of a new British consul to Maji, where considerable slave trading and slave raiding were said to be further complicating the frontier situation. In 1917, Thesiger proposed Henry Darley, "a fearless adventurer without too many scruples as to the niceties of international laws, with a wonderful command over the natives,"; once again Tafari promised his approval, conditional only on Zawditu and the ministers. The ras might tolerate Hodson, whose observations would compromise the Fit., but Maji was a major slaving center, and naive or self-

interested European observers would only complicate Ethiopia's international relations. Darley, in particular, was persona non grata, owing to existing charges from 1911-2 that he was a murderer and a poacher. There were therefore excuses and delays through 1918, irking Thesiger and prompting Sperling, at the time of the Addis Ababa epidemic, to mutter: "It would not surprise me to find that Ras Tafari and the Minister of War get sick every time Parley's name is mentioned."<sup>49</sup> Now, in February 1919, Parley's appointment was grudgingly allowed. The end of the world war, the approach of the Peace Conference, the recent murder of a British official in British East Africa by shifta, the growing perceptions of Ethiopian government incompetence, and Britain's threatened occupation of Gaddaduma required a lessening of international tensions, and at least the appearance of good faith on the frontier question. Nonetheless, in the hope that Parley's dispatches might be tempered, Tafari insisted that his stay be brief, and that he be accompanied by a second officer. The stage was now set for a continuing series of misunderstandings, all generated by Parley's ethnocentrism, enthusiasm, and his tendency to exaggerate.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to allowing Parley's appointment, Tafari hoped to patronize Britain's frontier fervor by promising cooperation with local British agents against shifta. Thesiger had other ideas. He casually misinterpreted a conversation with the ras, claiming later that he had extracted a commitment to allow the invasion of Gaddaduma. Tafari and the government disputed the commitment, but



to no avail. The invasion by British East African forces on 25 April accelerated Ethiopia's fears of a coming partition, greatly complicated succession politics, and forced the government to give its highest priority to its diplomatic concerns.<sup>51</sup>

Britain's invasion coincided with other potentially serious developments, all of which demanded serious government attention. Negotiations for the rupture with Germany had stalled long before peace was declared in Europe. Italy was thought to be massing troops on the Eritrean frontier. The 1918 epidemic gave the Europeans horrific impressions of local administration. And the approach of the peace "settlement" augured discussions on Ethiopia's partition. The Ethiopian administration certainly would have preferred a less decisive end to the war, especially when de Coppet confirmed reports from Ethiopia's European agents that Britain and Italy hankered for Jibuti, and possibly too for a mandate or a forced imposition of economic, political, and social "reforms." He offered French assistance in conveying Ethiopian missions to Europe. Individually, the French and British ministers suggested privately that Tafari submit Ethiopia to their protection; to this brazen confirmation of the danger to Ethiopia, Tafari strategically promised to consider their offers carefully. Further to placate European opinion, and at the French minister's suggestion, Ethiopia soon thereafter issued edicts prohibiting the trades in slaves and arms, while Ras Kassa intimated through an agent that Ethiopia might accept a Mixed Tribunal like Egypt's, if

only the country could preserve her independence. These were not, however, meaningful reforms, "progress," or part of some long-term economic policy that would significantly alter relations of production throughout the empire.<sup>52</sup>

The crux of Ethiopia's strategy was to send "congratulatory" missions to Britain, France, Italy, and the United States. Leaving Addis Ababa without diplomatic powers in April and May 1919, the unofficial missions stood ready to take any opportunity to counter dangerous discussions or if invited to enter the Peace Conference or the new League of Nations. In America, the mission would approach President Wilson, whose 14-point rejoinder to Lenin stressed his anti-colonialist stance, if discussions in Paris threatened Ethiopia's sovereignty. It was an expensive but, in the minds of the Ethiopian government, a necessary precaution.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, the Italians aggravated the diplomatic threats. They had joined the Allied war effort under the supposedly secret 1915 Treaty of London and, under its article 13, now sought compensation. The Italian Colonial Ministry put forth extensive claims on Ethiopia, but the urgencies of European security and frontier settlements far outweighed long consideration of the Horn, which was discussed only fleetingly. Ethiopia's mission to Europe helped to remind the peace conference that the country had not been a belligerent state. Britain, with both inflated commercial hopes in its Abyssinia Corporation and confidence that France would cling to Jibuti, therefore sought to compensate Italy

elsewhere. Ironically, Britain came to welcome France's intransigence, as HMG could more forcefully argue its claim to British Somaliland. Italy received only Jubaland and a lease on the port of Kismayu from Britain, and a few minor border rectifications in North Africa from France. For the moment, Italy expressed its satisfaction with its African settlement; in the years to come, however, the Fascist government would increasingly voice its' outrage with the inadequate compensation of 1919.<sup>54</sup>

The subsiding of the diplomatic threats revived the politics of succession. The ras had hoped to lead the Ethiopian mission to Europe, to impress the Europeans, to stave off peace conference machinations, and to confirm his prerogatives as the head of the executive. Moreover, by taking all the leading nobility, he could minimize for a time at least the possibility of rebellion in Ethiopia. At a January 1919 meeting, however, Habte Giyorgis's soldiery and lesser officers vetoed Tafari's suggestion.<sup>55</sup> It was symptomatic of triumvirate intrigue and a clear indication of the limits on Tafari's authority. Aspirants to land and privilege pressed Zawditu and the Minister of War to share the prerogatives of kingship with Tafari, in order that rewards for service might be more easily obtained and less liable to Imperial obligations. Zawditu was particularly pressed to dispense justice and to allocate hereditary land rights to new governors and officers. For months, rumors circulated Addis Ababa. Numerous stories attacked Tafari's personal character and patriotism; he was blamed for the

epidemics, for allowing exports of cattle and grain to Europe, for "selling the country" to the French Bayard group and to the British Abyssinia Corporation, for religious sympathies for the Catholics who educated him, and for the European reforms he "approved." And with more frequency, Tafari was held to be the bastard son of Mohamedally, the "favored" Arab merchant of Harrar. Habte Giyorgis meanwhile was berated for Gaddaduma's instability, and for seeking power in Addis Ababa while his troops were needed in the south against the British. For a time, market gossip also predicted that the minister had been intriguing with the late Ras Demisie and others to replace Tafari with Fit. Taye.<sup>56</sup> It was, perhaps, the most intense "parliamentary" debate since the coup d'état. The intrigue peaked on 4 May, when thousands of soldiers, again under Tafari's direction, now demanded the dismissal of the last minister, Habte Giyorgis.

The following period was among the most critical for Tafari's survival; the documentary sources give careful coverage of the ras's conflict with the minister of war and demonstrate the continuing importance of rumor as a political weapon. Most importantly, however, the conflict confirmed triumvirate rule and therefore failed to reduce the limitations on Tafari's power. Without unchallengeable prerogatives, he would remain unable to strengthen his personal command over long distance trade and over the rich areas of coffee and hides production.

Tafari's immediate charges cited the Fitawrari's opposition to government measures, possibly an oblique reference to the ras's desire to lead the European missions, as well as the continuing presence of the Minister of War's forces in the capital, despite Britain's recent invasion of Gaddaduma. The following day, at the palace, Zawditu, Tafari, and the Abun listened as available chiefs voiced their disgust with triumvirate disharmony and prayed that its instigators might be found and punished. Zawditu replied that she knew of no problems; Habte Giyorgis was as her father, and the Ras as her son. Nonetheless, she would send deputations to the soldiery and to the Minister of War, who was with his forces at his gibbi.

Tafari disclaimed any involvement, and blamed Habte Giyorgis for organizing an attempt to bolster his own personal causes. "As for himself, he had been given full powers long ago by the Empress to administer the country, and there was accordingly no need for him to intrigue against anyone; moreover, the fact that he had not increased his personal force was clear proof that he had nothing to fear." <sup>57</sup> The speech was briefly well received, but it was soon noted that Tafari's troops were arriving by train from Harrar and that his own compound was being carefully defended. Moreover, Tafari reportedly had spread money among the soldiers, inciting them to oppose Habte Giyorgis and to spread gossip. The minister was far blunter. Leaning forward toward the British Charge, and speaking in "unusually excited tones," he responded to the reports

being circulated locally by idle "Catholics," a purposefully derogatory reference to Tafari's controversial education and association with French Capucins: "The Ras says he had nothing to do with the troops who plotted against me... Well ask them one thing. Ask them where their leaders went at night. Did they come to me or the Empress or did they go to Ras Tafari?" <sup>58</sup>

Tafari and Habte Giyorgis both sought the kind of European support that mattered in 1916. The former again stressed his empathy for western reform and assured the British that he would surely not have opposed their occupation of Gaddaduma if only he had had full powers; the latter revealed that Tafari continually betrayed to Ethiopian officials the confidence of his discussions with the European ministers. In essence, both fought to portray themselves as the true friend of Europe, while in reality both were motivated by the desire to control personally the prerogatives and the command over provincial surplus inherent in kingship. The following weeks remained tense. Provincial forces arrived in Addis Ababa without Tafari 's approval, strengthening his opposition, and there seemed to be no certainty when or if nearby troops, including those of Ras Kassa's, would commit themselves.

Quietly, Tafari's opponents prepared formal accusations detailing the now generally held conviction that the ras had plotted against Habte Giyorgis in order to usurp more easily all of Zawditu's power. With increased vigor, local rumors stressed Tafari's selling of the country to Bayart, and particularly his

arrogance in granting the concession without having consulted his triumvirate partners. Campbell believed local gossip that "almost the entire country is against him," and that owing to Habte Giyorgis's larger local force, "if he does resist, he will certainly be killed or chained. If he does submit, it is rumored that the Empress would probably give him an important province in the north... The Abyssinians fear that if he were allowed to return to Harrar he would intrigue with the European powers..."

The gossip probably reflected a compromise offer to Tafari, but unlike 1916, there was no Tripartite consensus to force action against him. The irrelevance of the anti-Catholic fervor and of the issues cited against Tafari meant that the conflict was much less meaningful to the Europeans than that of 1916. And as the Versailles talks proceeded and Britain increasingly avoided discussions about the partitioning of Ethiopia, HMG, confident that recent British investment in Ethiopia would prosper so long as no second "revolution" paralyzed trade, more and more saw Tafari as its hope for sympathetic, progressive rule in Ethiopia. For the moment, they would join France in supporting Tafari.<sup>59</sup> In essence, the ras's "progressive" image among the Europeans and his commitment to Addis Ababa had greatly helped to keep the intrigue from overwhelming him.

More serious internal and international uncertainties now prompted the court to reconcile Habte Giyorgis and Tafari. Zawditu called several meetings to calm intrigue, and the abun threatened

to excommunicate anti-state bickerers. Authority thus remained triply divided, and accordingly weakened. The simplest decisions had to be twice countersigned, and few were therefore made. When Ethiopia's missions to Europe, likely at Tafari's instigation, called for the Ras's urgent attendance to counter mounting European imperialism by demanding the maintenance of Ethiopia's sovereignty and admission into the League of Nations, the triumvirate indefinitely delayed the decision. Imperial government awaited the end of the rains and the intrigues of Masqal.<sup>60</sup>

In early August, the mill passed rumors of two new movements. Tafari apparently sought support among local leaders against Habte Giyorgis, while a second planned Tafari's arrest. Both were common knowledge, and the town prepared for rebellion. Tafari played for European support by supplying the opinion that Fit. Taye, a proposed successor, was bigoted, unintelligent, and anti-European; the ras also requested books on constitutional reform to impress Europe again with his "modern" leanings. Again, he called up Harrar troops, and promised lucrative government posts to several supporters. His nominations were ignored, however, underscoring his weakness and the possibility of rebellion. Zawditu herself put forth her uncle, Dej. Habte Mariam, as Minister of Finance, and another adherent, Dej. Katama, as Minister of the Interior. To Campbell, Tafari bluntly retorted that the former knew nothing of finance, while the latter was an ignoramus already found wanting as a minister. In the ras's view, it was a clear test of his writ



and a threat to end what control he maintained over dwindling state revenue.<sup>61</sup>

Current rumors measured Tafari's weakness and confirmed his continuing inability to determine policy. The gossip stressed that the soldiery, dismayed with government disorder and the reestablishment of the ministerial posts against which they had campaigned, now prayed for Lij Iyasu to return and reassert order. It is difficult to assess how profound the danger may have been to Tafari or to the future of the triumvirate, since hearsay dominates the evidence, but the European ministers vocally agreed that their interests were threatened. Certainly, the soldiers again had a motive in opposing ministers who could only obstruct decisions to redistribute land. Faced potentially with a return to 1916, Campbell petitioned his Tripartite colleagues to issue collective support for Ethiopian government under the "progressive" leader. Again, the ras's policy of projecting himself as a forward-looking monarch had paid dividends. The French minister agreed with Campbell, but Colli, who admitted that the situation was bleak, still claimed that there was nothing but rumor to go on. Acting on a flimsy basis might risk a snub from the Ethiopians, and more importantly, in confidence with the British Charge, Colli admitted that Tafari's downfall would prejudice France's interests in the Horn far more than Britain's or Italy's. Boucoiran and Campbell therefore acted separately, spreading the word among Ethiopia's politicians that Europe would not tolerate a change in the

hierarchy. Tafari thus was maintaining power, and indeed, firming his authority, not by marshalling non-existent proceeds of long-distance trade, but rather by projecting effectively an image of progress and modernity for the Europeans. His European support might breed underlying contempt and charges of selling the country, but it also represented a powerful force which granted him more time in office to project within Ethiopia an image of a Solomon-like leader carefully exercising the prerogatives of kingship.<sup>62</sup>

The European ministers' intervention clearly affected intrigue and, in the end, helped to perpetuate at least a semblance of unity behind Tafari. Movers against the ras had hoped to oblige the government to send an expedition north, where Tafari might be arrested without jeopardizing local European interests and without incurring immediate foreign animosity. Unexpectedly, however, Zawditu silenced the intrigue. At a palace meeting on 13 September, she spoke again of Tafari as her son, confirming his power to rule, requiring Haile Mariam to acknowledge the ras as master, and days later acknowledged Habte Giyorgis as her "representative." As a consequence, Masqal passed quietly. For the moment, agitation against Tafari diminished, and his troops returned to Harrar. To Dodds, the ras confessed that the government had little control outside of Addis Ababa, and could not introduce reforms or establish order, but that he himself was in a stronger position than only eight months previously, and he would now try to do his best.<sup>63</sup>

Peace was short-lived, and the promised reforms remained low priority. On 30 October, confident that the renewed calm allowed European initiative, Dodds presented terse demands for reform to the triumvirate. The British Consul argued that, despite three years of existence, the new government had not settled a single matter. The long frontier remained chaotic, trade was stagnating, the Tana Treaty was no closer to fruition, and reforms begged for implementation. Coincidentally, on the same day, Colli, using the excuse that he would soon be recalled to Italy, launched an unprecedented tirade before the nobility against Ethiopian government corruption and incompetence, with particular and perhaps revealing emphasis on the French Bayard deal in Harrar. Within government circles, or at least by those opposing Tafari, the European initiatives were interpreted as Europe's dissatisfaction with the Ras; within the week, fresh intrigue surfaced. Several officials, reportedly at the instigation of Ras Gugsa, Dej. Habte Mariam, and Dej Balcha, produced charges against Tafari. The charges questioned once again Tafari's commitment to orthodox Christianity and his relationship with foreigners. Added to these standard complaints were new charges that the ras had connived with Britain in the Gaddaduma occupation, that he had "placed his face on a new issue of stamps without authority," that the appointment of a new legal adviser, the French de Bellefonds, owed to the ras's friendship with French Catholics, and that he secretly arranged with Bayard for the delivery of two airplanes,

which were now in Jibuti in face of the empress's fear that they might "deprive her by force of the crown and throne." Locally, there was an attempt to burn the Roman Catholic Church. The signs of growing opposition were clear, and Tafari again called up his troops, distributed favors, and publicly refused Bayard's gift, which he claimed to want only to improve mail and transportation services. Once more, the French and British ministers campaigned for an end to intrigue and disorder, warning that the powers would not tolerate any situation endangering European life. Following this clarification of Europe's mixed signals and Tafari's strengthening of local forces, Zawditu ordered the arrest of Ras Tafari's seven accusers, regarded locally as pawns of the battle.<sup>64</sup>

Tafari's position seemed considerably more secure; he had overcome the ministers and survived Masqal intrigues. He would now have a further opportunity to enhance his legitimacy by capturing Lij Iyasu, a step without which he would not be able to affect a personal consolidation over the economy or polity. Soon after the quashing of the movement against Tafari, the deposed Prince, now near Makalle, informed the central government, through Ras Seyoum, that "he could no longer endure his present existence and desired to surrender." Some observers suggested that the devastation of his home provinces had undermined the possibilities for further resistance, while others intimated that his long tenure in the low countries and a steadily deteriorating syphilitic condition had worn on his bravado. It seems far more reasonable to assume that

Lij Iyasu continued to seek reinstatement to the Solomonic throne. He petitioned provincial chiefs for support, and the capital long gossiped about his secret political funds, of his influential government friends, and of a coming second "revolution." Since many of their comrades had died in the 1916-1917 campaigns, and since rewards, though now delayed, were expected by custom to compensate the services already rendered, the majority of the Shoan elites and their soldiers continued to oppose Lij Iyasu. There was, nonetheless, burgeoning support for the Prince from the lesser provincial chiefs and soldiery, many of whom were not likely to receive rewards and favors despite the removal of the "obstructive" ministers.

Continuing intrigue left Tafari unable to distribute lands and honors to his followers and therefore perpetuated his difficulties in fashioning a personal consolidation. Priests reminded Zawditu of their prophecy that Lij Iyasu would return to the throne after a three-year absence, and Count Colli, who finally left Ethiopia in February 1920, had time enough to unsettle further his European and Ethiopian colleagues. He spread the word that Tafari and the Empress were bickering again, and that the majority of Ethiopians prayed for Lij Iyasu to return to power. He also insisted that the leaders of Lasta, Begemdir, and Wollo were intriguing for the Prince's return, and that he intended to recommend that Italy now support Lij Iyasu. Whatever the nature and origin of Colli's policy, he added to the ongoing intrigue and

certainly underscored the growing need for Tafari to imprison Lij Iyasu before further political and economic reconstruction could proceed.<sup>65</sup>

The Prince, however, remained elusive, complicating the intrigue in Addis Ababa. To "surrender," Lij Iyasu requested lenient and comfortable "confinement" in Tigre with Ras Seyoum, who reportedly now promised that he would never submit to Tafari. The Shoan government rushed a mission to Seyoum, with members representing the different triumvirate positions, and ordered the Tigrean to arrest Lij Iyasi. The Prince easily "escaped to the Danakil," confirming in Addis Ababa the ominous impression that he had allied with Ras Seyoum against Shoa. Actually, the former leader retreated to Makalle. Conflict remained unlikely, since many of Tigre's important men, including Dej. Kassa, Seyoum's son, remained confined in Addis Ababa, and since Tafari's spies insisted that Seyoum was still loyal to Shoa, but the central government again seemed incapable of functioning while Lij Iyasu remained free.<sup>66</sup>

Capturing the Wollo leader might therefore have been the highest priority, but triumvirate politics and the weather delayed action. Northern campaigns again were planned and then postponed, ostensibly to await news from Seyoum. In Addis Ababa, continuing limitations on Tafari's prerogatives limited his effectiveness. As part of the continuing efforts to assert his authority, the ras imprisoned several opponents on the shallow grounds that they had

communicated with Lij Iyasu and with the German legation. More serious actions were delayed by the onset of the summer rains. Market rumors persisted that Seyoum intended to join forces with Iyasu against Shoa at Masqal as soon as the rains ended. Piacentini, a new Italian minister, even intimated that the ex-prince had Zawditu's full support. Tafari actively countered the gossip with a strong presence. He openly expressed his satisfaction with the current political situation, and again told Europeans that his reign would soon strengthen to the point that he would be able to impose meaningful economic and social reforms. In a less guarded moment, he admitted however that so long as Iyasu was free and near Ras Seyoum, local intrigue and provincial unrest would persist and hamper his administration. And, in an extraordinary statement, he revealed the insecurity of his position and also his underlying commitment, as Ethiopia's leader, to perpetuate existing relations of production. He confessed to Dodds

a certain amount of anxiety as to the attitude of the soldiery and lower classes in Abyssinia, who talk in a vague and general way of their rights to a greater independence and a voice in the government of their country. Some, the Ras tells me, even hint at the advantages of a Bolshevik government. The Ras compares this spirit to the wave of Bolshevik feeling which is overrunning the rest of the world.

Ironically, the statement at once revealed the basis of Tafari's ideological compatibility with the Europeans. The west might hope for social and economic reforms that would facilitate their own economic involvement in the country, and Tafari might work for

more personal control over the polity, but neither obviously could tolerate any radical reorientations of the superstructure. Interestingly therefore, the statement in no way lessened Europe's faith in the ras's "progressive" tendencies, which in the long run had to involve more a commitment to western economic ethics than to the welfare of Ethiopians.<sup>67</sup>

Masqal passed quietly, and Britain withdrew its troops from Gaddaduma in October 1919, but important diplomatic misunderstandings persisted. The Ethiopian government continued to perceive great pressure and to devote its energy to calming Europe. On the southern frontier, for example, Hodson had optimistically assumed that the occupation of Gaddaduma would settle local affairs sufficiently to guarantee the return of Boran tenants. Northern Frontier District officers agreed that the tenants exploited valuable grazing and watering in Kenya, and their return might greatly stabilize frontier relations with Ethiopia. By October, however, as banditry and raiding persisted, and as Oromo continued to migrate southward, Hodson withdrew his guarantee, recommending instead that Britain quickly occupy all of Boran province, or at very least firmly delineate the border.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, the Foreign Office received its first reports from the Maji mission of Darley and Athill.

Suddenly to the British, the situation in Maji seemed far worse than that in Boran. Locally, the gabbar system had worked calmly under Ras Walda Giyorgis, whose long tenure in office was



interrupted, however, by his reappointment to Begemdir in 1910. The rapacious departure of his forces and of successive governors had in only ten years transformed the area. Increasingly through the decade, raiding, poaching, and slaving stripped the area of cattle, foodstuffs, ivory, and directly and indirectly of people. Local slaving may well have been at its height, as Darley and Athill suggested, owing to the increased demand for slaves in the wake of the 1919 influenza epidemic, which was said to have decimated the north's slave population. But the depopulation of the southwestern frontier, observed by this mission and by every subsequent traveler to the region, stemmed not only from the slave trade, but more from the organized resistance and to out-migrations in the wake of northern brutality and the more limited carrying capacity of the land. Pressures on the reduced gabbar population subsequently impelled neftenya who remained increasingly to tap the declining supplies of slaves and ivory, activities over which the central government had even less control after the mobilization of troops towards Addis Ababa in the period after 1916.<sup>69</sup>

In November 1919, Darley and Athill thus entered an area far less peaceful and prosperous than the former remembered in 1910. The exaggerated report read, in part:

The whole country... has been completely depopulated... The country is desolate except for bands of robbers and murderers perched on hill-tops. Food is unprocurable. The age of each successive raid can be easily gathered by the height of the bush on former homesteads. The Abyssinians have no food, and to get it they must go further and further afield. This means British

territory. We have just marched from the border - 18 days march without seeing a single soul. All have been exterminated or have fled.

Again and again they described incidents of slaving, poaching, and raiding. Several accounts detailed sorties well into British "territory," where ivory, cattle, and slave sources were less depleted, and one ridiculously estimated a caravan at 10,000 slaves. Their attempt to point out the frontier line was ignored by governors who already claimed control over subjects well inside lands claimed but as yet unoccupied by the British colonial administration.<sup>70</sup>

As I have already indicated, the Foreign Office was interested neither in the subtleties of the frontier situation nor in the conventions of Ethiopian expansionism. Nor did they understand that Darley's 10,000 figure and the attributing of "depopulation" totally to slavery were gross distortions. Rather they assumed at once that the depopulation of the frontier, including British subjects, was owed entirely to slaving and slavery. Recalling that Ethiopia had briefly been mentioned for membership in the League of Nations during the 1919 peace conference, the Foreign Office announced that it would certainly oppose an application from a nation so "incompetent" in managing its own territory. Meanwhile, in discussions with Tafari, they pressed to secure the appointments of more "progressive" governors in all sensitive border areas, though such changes could have little meaning in the context of ongoing conduct on the frontiers.<sup>71</sup>

Britain's continued emphasis on securing more "progressive" governors characterized its effort to reform Ethiopia in Europe's image, in ignorance of Ethiopia's superstructure. Frontier instability was deeply rooted in the extractive relations of production and reproduction in Ethiopia's south, and no single governor could afford or want to stabilize otherwise unproductive lands. Most importantly, for the central government, financing a standing army on the frontier would have been a ludicrous priority amidst revenue shortages and the need for troops in an unsettled north. Tafari, who fervently opposed any foreign intervention in the carefully nurtured prerogative to distribute lands, also understood the anxieties that the Maji Governor, Dej. Desta, and his peers would feel if Britain could successfully oust imperial appointees on highly subjective grounds. Still, the ras had to appease Europe: He therefore recommended that Britain oppose, but only on the basis of his youth and inexperience. In that way, he argued, he could oust Desta without jeopardizing his own position. Ironically, Desta was educated with Tafari and was also the same age.<sup>72</sup>

On 19 June 1920, in spite of Dodds constant complaints, Zawditu promoted Desta and agreed to his return to Maji. Her reasons for so doing remain unclear, but the decision provoked a powerful and threatening reaction. Dodds proceeded immediately to the palace, and tabled an ultimatum:

if Her Government insisted in their attitude in respect to the Frontiers the responsibility for any eventuality

on those Frontiers would rest solely and entirely on the shoulders of the Abyssinian government; that His Majesty's Government had done all in its power to work with the Abyssinian Government over Frontier affairs, but that, in future, they could accept no responsibility whatsoever in their connection. In conclusion, I told Her Majesty ... that I had been instructed by my Government to inform the Abyssinian government that, in view of their continued inability to maintain order in the frontier districts, Her Majesty's Government must reserve to themselves the right to reoccupy Gaddaduma at any time should occasion require...

The next day, Tafari to calm Dodds, announced that, "in view of the friendship which the Ethiopian government fosters for His Majesty's Government," Desta would not proceed to Maji, that his conduct, already exonerated by an Ethiopian commission, would be reinvestigated, that Tafari himself would designate a superintendent of Maji, that a new Consul, B. Hawkins, could proceed as Consul, and that henceforth the frontier line would be respected. In the years to come, the issues of the frontier and slavery would continue to haunt Ethiopia's international relations. Tafari's promises calmed the moment, but obviously could not be fulfilled. Serious patronization of European "interests" would continue to be required.<sup>73</sup>

As Masqal approached, Iyasu's continuing freedom brought on yet another crisis. A Tigrean mission to Addis Ababa assured the government of Seyoum's loyalty but said nothing of his relations with Lij Iyasu. Vague rumors, particularly among the soldiery, spoke of Tafari's incompetence, and of Lij Iyasu's coming revolution. Others expressed dissatisfaction with the continuing

division of Imperial power. Serious also were charges that the ras again was selling the country. The continuing "parliamentary" descent would calm only when Lij Iyasu could be removed as a factor in the succession crisis and when one figure could dominate decision-making. Otherwise, every one of Tafari's efforts to order the polity and economy would be challenged on similar grounds.

For example, to placate the British over the frontiers, to prove to the British and Italians that the Bayard concession was not a monopoly, and to gain badly needed revenue, Tafari had quietly sold the mineral rights to Harrar province to the British backed Abyssinia Corporation for 20,000 pounds sterling. Far more than Bayard's, the terms of the new concession resembled a monopoly, and the French minister in August launched a vigorous crusade against it, renewing the local charge that Tafari had jeopardized the nation by selling off its parts. The accusations seemed ludicrous to the foreign observers, but Tafari, who understood the dangers of descent, searched quickly for a way out of the deal. He cancelled the contract, a 2000-pound sterling bonus being the company's single greatest profit in its short history.

Meanwhile, northern provincial instability underscored the helplessness of Addis Ababa government so long as Lij Iyasu remained free. From the north came alarming news that Ras Hailu, in an unauthorized attack, captured Fit Shifara, a Shoan spy carefully situated by the central government near Lake Tana as an observer of all communication and movement among the rulers of the

north. Hailu insisted that Shifera was a brigand, and that punishment was merited, but the arrest only aroused suspicion in Addis Ababa that Hailu had now secretly joined forces with Lij Iyasu and Ras Seyoum.

The acts were possibly part of a concerted move against Tafari, for on 14 September, Dej. Beru, leader of the empress's guard, openly informed Zawditu that he and all the higher chiefs in Ethiopia sought Tafari's expulsion and Lij Iyasu's return; he petitioned for her support. Again, Britain and France, and not Italy, were prepared to oppose internal disorder, which never materialized. Very formally, Zawditu summoned Tafari, and, after a short conference, arranged for a tribunal. Before the afa-negus, the Abun Matewos, and the government's elder statesmen, Beru was charged immediately with treason and condemned to death. Co-conspirators, including one member of Ras Seyoum's mission to Addis Ababa, were arrested. Masqal thus passed quietly. Tafari was wholly pleased with the outcome, explaining that Lij Iyasu now was surely finished. It only remained to capture him.<sup>74</sup>

In the north, Lij Iyasu retreated to Ras Gugsa's land, "near the Danakil." He was thought to be considering entering Axum, a Christian, spiritual sanctuary which would symbolically remind all involved that he and not Tafari was the rightful Christian heir to the throne. From Axum, he would be difficult to displace. Addis Ababa contacted Gugsa, who, though he would not get directly involved, agreed not to oppose a Shoan legion sent to arrest the

Prince. In February 1921, the Shoans, under Fit. Desta Damtu, finally succeeded, creating another large problem of where and how the former ruler would be detained. Tafari proposed Harrar, where effective internment would allow the ras finally to cement his standing and to proceed with the process of personal consolidation. In Addis Ababa Tafari deceptively argued that a direct route to Harrar would avoid possible unrest in the "Muslim" provinces through which Lij Iyasu would otherwise cross. Others, including Zawditu, asked instead that Iyasu be held by representatives from the triumvirate near Addis Ababa, where Iyasu's presence would subtly yet constantly limit Tafari's ascendancy.

In May, after the entire Harrar army and several southern legions had reached Addis Ababa, Tafari and the government left for Dessie, to meet Gugsa and the returning Shoan guard. It was essential for Tafari to capitalize on Lij Iyasu's arrest and to place himself atop Ethiopia's government. Immediately, he made important decisions. He demanded and obtained the homage and tribute of Hailu and Seyoum. Publically exercising his prerogatives, Tafari confined Seyoum for failing to arrest Iyasu. And he granted lands and honors to those in the successful mission. For his important role as leader, Desta Damtu received the title of dejazmatch and Tafari's daughter in marriage. For the moment, Lij Iyasu would serve time at Koromash, north of Addis Ababa. Taking no chances, the ras consented to the location only if the

Prince were chained with six feet of silver chain, day and night, to Tafari's uncle, Walda Sellassie.

Iyasu's ultimate destination was Sellalie, Ras Kassa's domain, an unpleasant compromise for Tafari. Kassa's power would proportionately grow, Lij Iyasu would not be far from Addis Ababa, and the ras could not feel completely secure until the prince's venue was Harrar. Nonetheless, Ras Tafari returned in style to the capital. The feasts and processions that followed reflected more power, prestige, and legitimacy.<sup>75</sup> His consolidation was now well under way.

In his autobiography, Tafari fittingly concluded that Lij Iyasu's capture brought "great benefit to the country in the progressive spread of peace and security." The words are vague yet meaningful; they appropriately convey Tafari's own frame of reference. Between 1916 and 1921, Tafari faced questioned legitimacy, the forced sharing of imperial prerogatives, well established, northern hereditary rulers whose own similarly molded prerogatives conflicted with the principles of empire, perpetual threats of foreign intervention, and an economy too paltry to generate sufficient state revenue. The capture of Lij Iyasu, however, would symbolize for Tafari a great turning point. The jailing removed the single largest obstacle to imperial legitimacy, over the course of the coming decade the Ras would in fact gain unchallengeable prerogatives, and the burgeoning cash crop economy, stimulated by rebounding European demand, would



finally generate needed revenue by 1922. And with unchallengeable prerogatives would come the unveiling of his economic program.

By 1920, electric lights and paved streets had aided the infrastructural transformation of Addis Ababa. Increasing revenues through the next decade would accelerate such developments, while helping to keep Europe at bay and allowing a more efficient tapping of cash crop production. All of these developments, however, would in no way transform the conventional relations of production in Ethiopia. For all of his rhetoric as a great reformer and modernizer', Tafari, once given full authority in decision-making, would work hard to secure his personal command over the proceeds of production and over long-distance trade. His policy would extend the superstructure, not modify it.

## Notes

1. Among many examples, see Robert Hess, Ethiopia: The Modernization of Autocracy. Ithaca, 1970; Edward Ullendorf, The Ethiopians. London, 1960; Peter Schwab, Haile Selassie I: Ethiopia's Lion of Judah, Chicago, 1979.
2. see Chapters 5 and 6.
3. R.A. Caulk, "Armies as Predators: Soldiers and Peasants in Ethiopia," IJAHS XI:3 (1978) 457-8. For vignettes on persisting injustices under Tafari's rule in Harrar see PRO: FO 371/13113 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 1 March 1928.
4. J.D. Fage, "Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Context of West African History," JAH X:3 (1969) 393-404; C.C. Wrigley, "Historicism in Africa: Slavery and State Formation," African Affairs 70 (1971) 113-24.
5. This kind of rhetoric unfortunately dominates the literature. One reads too often of "post Menilekian neo-conservatives... progressives... modernizers... and traditionalists," phrases which seem to me to say less about history than about the historians who write it.
6. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 20 Sept. 1916.
7. PRO: FO 371/2854 Archer to Long, Berbera, 27 March 1917, enclosed in CO to FO, 1 June 1917.
8. Jon Edwards, "Slavery, the Slave Trade, and the Economic Reorganization of Ethiopia, 1916-1936," African Economic History 11 (1980) 3-14; Charles McClellan, "Reactions to Ethiopian Expansionism: The Case of Darasa, 1895-1935," (Ph.D.) Michigan State University, 1979; idem, "Land, Labor, and Coffee: The South's Role in Ethiopian Self-Reliance, 1889-1935," African Economic History 9 (1980); Harold Marcus, "The Infrastructure of the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis: Haile Sellassie, the Solomonic Empire, and the World Economy, 1916-1936," Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies, Chicago, 1979.
9. PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 22 Feb. 1917 suggests that Shoans considered Walda Giyorgis a possible replacement for Tafari if the latter proved to be unfit; FO 371/9993 Annual Report on Abyssinia for 1923, p. 2,

- enclosed in Russell to MacDonald, Addis Ababa, 16 Feb. 1924; E. Ullendorff ed., My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, p. 63; Harold Marcus, "Genesis of an Ethiopian Monarch: Haile Sellassie, 1916-1918," Horn of Africa. 3:4 (1981), p.47: QD: Guerre 1914-1918, Ethiopie 1622, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 19 Mar. 1917.
10. R. Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia 1800-1935, Addis Ababa, 1968, p. 430; PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 29 Mar. 1917; FO 371/3125 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, Feb. 1918; FO 371/5509 Rey Memo on railway encl, in Rey to Dodds, Addis Ababa, 4 Sept. 1921; FO 371/2853 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 3 Jan. 1917; FO 371/2853 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, Bertie to FO, 22 Jan. 1917; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 8 Mar. 1918; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 18 Merchant petition of 25 Nov. 1917; K Serie, Ethiopie 10, de Coppet à MAE, 18 Dec. 1918; Federal Reserve Bulletin for 1916-1918, volumes 3 and 4; also see Chapter 7.
  11. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 38 Nov. 1916.
  12. PRO: FO 371/2594 Summary of the Events of 15-19 October encl. in Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 21 Oct. 1916; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Dec. 1916; For more detail on Shoan appointments in late 1916 see Thesiger to Wingate, Addis Ababa, 29 Dec. 1916.
  13. In attendance at the coronation were Walda Giyorgis, Rases Kassa, Hailu, and Seyoum, and the European governors of the Sudan, British Somaliland, and Jibuti. In Tafari's own estimation, "the political atmosphere... was grave for invitations of this kind." On 11 Feb. 1917, the Abuna Matewos anointed Zawditu with the oil of kingship and placed the Imperial crown upon her head... Tens of thousands of soldiers and colorful bunting lined the streets, and the fest involved weeks of feasting. All were impressed save the Europeans hungry only to negotiate vested interests. Ullendorff, ed., My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, p. 56; Marcus, "Genesis..."; PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 22 Oct. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 23 Oct. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, AA, 1 Nov. 1916; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 27 Feb. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917.
  14. PRO: 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 30 Nov. 1916; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 3 Jan. 1917; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 9 Nov. 1916.

15. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 16 Oct. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 30 Nov. 1916.
16. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 23 Oct. 1916; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Dec. 1916; FO 371/2858 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa; 3 Jan. 1917.
17. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 8 Dec. 1916; details of the Harrar massacres of Muslims and the aftermath are in FO 371/2594 Dodds to Thesiger, Harrar, 15 Oct. 1916; FO 371/2594 CO to FO, 30 Nov. 1916; and FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 31 Oct. 1916.
18. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 3 Jan. 1917.
19. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 3 Jan. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 23 Apr. 1917.
20. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1917.
21. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 27 Feb. 1917.
22. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 27 Feb. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 1 May 1917; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 7 Feb. 1918.
23. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, 27 Feb. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 6 Sept. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 27 Sept. 1917.
24. USG: 884.00/101 Aden to SS, 1 Oct. 1919; PRO: FO 371/2853 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 10 Sept. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 6 June 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 21 June 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 23 April 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 19 June 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1917.
25. Also see Chapter 5; PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 6 June 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 19 June 1917; Tafari's idea, according to Dodds, was to place a European adviser in every branch of the administration, "to work with and instruct the Abyssinian heads of each department." Similarly, he would appoint

advisers to the governors of the provinces and hire one to guide himself in the general administration of Ethiopia. See Chapter 4 for the consequences of and motives behind such "progressive" appointments when Tafari finally had sufficient sway in 1928 to begin making them. FO 371/3497 Dodds Memorandum encl. in Balfour to Curzon, Versailles, 26 July 1919; Ironically, of course, Europe gained little more "economically" from Tafari than they had from Lij Iyasu. The concessions they obtained were doomed from the start to stagnation (see Chapter 5), while wartime grain exports were curtailed by severe famine in Ethiopia and consequent claims that the Ras was selling the country. FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 10 Jan 1918; By 1928, Campbell, now at the Foreign Office, noted about Tana that "Iyasu, who was more powerful than ras Tafari, dared not go further and, were Tafari to do so, he would lose his position over it." FO 371/4388 Campbell minute to Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 25 Feb. 1920.

26. Tafari was well aware that the Versailles conference would, like its Brussell's predecessor, produce many changes in the maps of Africa. He was also acquainted with the supposed secret 1915 Treaty of London, which he no doubt associated with the accurate rumors that Italy sought Jibuti as part of its wartime compensation. The memories of Adwa and Italian aggression were never far off; said Tafari: "...the fear of Italy is in the blood of every Abyssinian." PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 1 May 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 6 June 1917.
27. It seems likely that Tafari hoped to negotiate the matter quietly, in fear that common knowledge of the allied wartime arms embargo would negatively influence Ethiopian public opinion. Nonetheless, it is clear that Tafari had consulted with Zawditu and the ministers about the advisability of negotiating; to be sure, many questioned its advisability, but there were apparently few if any disagreements over the conditions proposed by Tafari. PRO: FO 371/2853 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 10 Sept. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balbour, Addis Ababa, 9 June 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 19 June 1917; FO 371 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 2 July 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1917.
28. Caplan, pp. 377, 411, 412; PRO: FO 371/2854 Archer to Long, Berbera, 27 Mar. 1917 encl. in CO to FO, 1 June 1917.

29. At the time of the coronation, the governor of British Somaliland discussed these matters with Tafari, Ras Kassa, and Habte Giyorgis. The Ethiopians were uninterested in Britain's solution, the appointment of a British officer over the Ogaden, but they at very least expressed their readiness to discuss other alternatives. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 20 Sept. 1917.
30. Caplin, pp. 411-2; PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1917
31. PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 25 July 1917.
32. The last condition was that Ethiopia retain after the war her recognized properties in Jerusalem. PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 17 July 1917; also see FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 July 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 25 July 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 25 July 1917. Even after the ministers were dismissed, Tafari could not negotiate. In early 1918, Germany had forced Russia to make peace, and news of German successes on the western front reached Addis Ababa. The "pro-German party was said to be strengthened; but the point was that Tafari still had insufficient authority to negotiate the broach personally with the allied powers. Tafari admitted to Thesiger in April 1918 that he could only reopen the negotiations if the amended terms were considered. FO 371/3127 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 24 Apr. 1918; FO 371/3127 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 23 Apr. 1918.
33. Peter Garretson, "The Naggadras, Trade, and Selected Towns in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Ethiopia," IJAHS 12,3 (1979) 416-439; PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 July 1917.
34. Garretson, "The Naggadras...", p. 438; PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 16 Aug. 1917.
35. For more detail on trade and economic "development" see chapter 6. Federal Reserve Bulletin. 7 (1920) and 8 (1921); PRO: FO 371/2853 Wingate to FO, Cairo, 11 Jan. 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 15 Aug. 1917; According to one prospective trader, commercial conditions in Addis Ababa were deplorable, not only owing to ongoing speculation and depression, but also to rife blackmail and extortion among government officials and traders. FO 371/3125

- V. Dervaniades to Messrs Dervaniades & Co., Addis Ababa, 27 May 1918 encl. in Department of Trade to FO, 25 Sept. 1918; FO 371/3125 "Note on a letter written by Victor Dervaniades dated Addis Ababa, 27 May 1918 addressed to E. Logarides", encl. in Department of Trade to FO, 25 Sept. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 10 Jan. 1918.
36. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 29 Aug. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour., Addis Ababa, 8 Aug. 1917.
37. Ullendorff, trans., My Life and Ethiopia's Progress: PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 Aug. 1917; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 10 Jan. 1918.
38. PRO: FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 30 Nov. 1917; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 10 Jan. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 7 Feb. 1918.
39. PRO: FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 19 Dec. 1918; To block possible intrigue, Tafari and the returning commanders frustrated an attempt to pass final days in the north, where her close association with Negus Walda Giyorgis might spur intrigue.
40. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 6 Sept. 1917; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 27 Sept. 1917; Campbell suggested that "Lij lyasu might have been captured with comparative ease in the early days at Magdala, but the chiefs who were sent to capture him, Ras Demisie, Dej. Merid, and others, were his friends and made no attempt to fulfill their duty." FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 7 Feb. 1918.
41. PRO: FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 7 Feb. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 16 Mar. 1918; FO 371/3126 Italian Embassy to FO, 27 Mar. 1918; FO 371/3126 Rodd to FO, Rome, 29 Mar. 1918; FO 371/3126 Italian Embassy to FO, 5 Apr. 1918; FO 371/3126 Italian Embassy to FO, 9 Apr. 1918; FO 371/3126 Rodd to FO, Rome, 12 Apr. 1918.
42. See, for example, the works of Mosley, C. Sandford, and R. Greenfield.
43. see Chapter 5; Marcus, Menilek. pp. 228-9; Jon Edwards, "'...lest he multiply horses unto himself,': The Economic Impact of Tripartite Policy in Ethiopia 1906-1935," paper presented at The Conference on Northeast African Political

- Economy, Michigan State University, April, 1983; Harold G. Marcus, "A Preliminary History of the Tripartite Treaty of December 13, 1906," JES: PRO: FO 371/3126 Italian Embassy to FO, 2 Apr. 1918. FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1 Dec. 1920.
44. Marcus, "Genesis...", pp. 48-9; Greenfield, p.56; Ullendorf, trans. My Like and Ethiopia's Progress; Caplin; PRO: FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa 21 Oct. 1918; FO 371/3126 Italian Embassy to FO, 17 Apr. 1918; FO 371/3126 Italian Embassy to FO, 19 Apr. 1918; FO 371/3126 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 5 Apr. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa 16 Mar. 1918; FO 371/3126 Italian Embassy to FO, 2 Apr. 1918; FO 371/3126 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 26 Mar. 1918; FO 371/3126 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 18 Apr. 1918; Feelings among the soldiery were so strong still in Feb. 1920 when pardons were given to several of the ex-ministers that protests to the government intimated that the former officials would be shot if they were not ordered out of the capital. It is likely that this incident, recorded in FO 371/4392 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1920 reflects both the continuing fervor for land and the Ras's drive for Solomonic centralization.
45. PRO: FO 371/3126 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 26 Mar. 1918.
46. see Chapter 5; PRO: FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Oct. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 11 Nov. 1918; FO 371/3494 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 10 March 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds Memorandum, Addis Ababa, nd., received in the FO 19 Aug. 1919.
47. PRO: FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 17 Nov. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 2 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 10 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3127 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 2 Sept. 1918; FO 371/3127 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 8 Sept. 1918; FO 371/3127 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 18 Sept. 1918; FO 371/3494 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 2 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3494 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3494 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 31 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3496 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 2 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3496 Campbell to FO 10 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 26 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918.



48. The activities of groups like the Hamar, as well as the taxing expeditions of neftenya and shifta probably combined to increase the pastoral predilections of agricultural and semi-pastoralists of the lowland in view of a growing need to remain mobile. Ivo Strecker, "Traditional Life and Prospects for the Socio-Economic Development in the Hamar Administrative District of the Southern Gemu-Gofa: A Report to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission of the Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia," April, 1976. Outmigration from Borana to British East Africa divided British authorities between a desire to protect the refugees and an unwillingness to deprive their own subjects of limited water and grazing. For a good summary, see FO 742/16-17 passim; FO 371/9995, Coryndon to CO, 7 Apr. 1924; FO 371/11559 Dickinson to Nairobi, Meru, 13 Mar. 1925; and FO 371/16097 Glenday to Bentinck, 3 Nov. 1931. A contemporary observer in Kaffa, F. Bieber, Kaffa. (Munster. 1929-23) 1:20, attributed low population density to outmigrations in the wake of Menilek's expansion, which here brought extended conflict, long resistance, and eventual defeat. de Halpert noted that successive governors of Kaffa had assured their own material needs by securing large estates through purchase or expropriation. The remaining populations "preferred working for these great landlords, for they were thereby protected from the extortions of the petty officials and soldiers. Owing to the diminution of the population, there was competition for labor as well as a tendency for the gabbar to escape to the estates of the large landlords, who were glad in an era of labor scarcity to keep them as tenants and often prevented them from being reclaimed. Travelers were often struck by the air of peace and prosperity in the land owned by these great nobles, as it was in marked contrast to the surrounding countryside that, although equally fertile and productive, was covered by half empty forest,...a direct result of the lack of public security and misrule of the Amhara officials." M. Perham, The Government of Ethiopia. 320. A. Orent "Lineage Structure and the Supernatural: the Kaffa of Southwestern Ethiopia," Ph.D. Boston University, 1969, pp. 44, 104 reports that the cattle herds remain well under their nineteenth century numbers owing to the devastating raiding of the period, and that Kaffitcho still hide today on the approach of strangers. Migrants to the Kaffa coffee lands may well have come from Maji, an area of heavy slaving activity and reportedly depopulated. Among many references, see FO 371/15383 Whalley to Barton, Maji, 18 May 1931, which describes the heavy taxes billeted on gabbar. and a subsequent migration north. For extensive references on other areas

along the southern and western frontier, see note 26 in Edwards, "Slavery, the Slave Trade...".

Frontier delineation was often proposed, but never seriously. Limiting the "dar-agar" conquered by Menilek would open Tafari to charges of selling the country, and Britain long hoped to avoid the issue until more substantial colonial settlement reached the area. For Britain, the present moment seemed inopportune. Publicizing the issue might jeopardize Tana negotiations, or discourage Ethiopian reforms, while unnoticed publication might convince Ethiopia that Europe had no effective means of applying pressure. And, "we would lose a card to play later." Thesiger concluded that the only reasonable course involved the appointment of "progressive governors, active prevention of incursions in British East Africa, and more effectively implementing the arms embargo. See Chapter 5; FO 371/3496 Ras Tafari to Campbell, Addis Ababa, 20 Aug. 1919 encl. in Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Aug. 1919; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1 Dec. 1920.

49. PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 20 Sept. 1917; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 31 Oct. 1918; FO 371/3126 Wingate to FO, Cairo, 27 July 1918. Sperling minute to Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 24 Jan. 1918.
50. Caplin, p. 390; PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 22 Feb. 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 20 Sept. 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Bowring, Addis Ababa, 2 Oct. 1917; FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Oct. 1917; FO 371/2855 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 5 Dec. 1917; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 19 Mar. 1918; FO 371/3126 Wingate to FO, Cairo, 27 July 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 30 Oct. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 31 Oct. 1918; FO 371/3127 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 8 Feb. 1918. In a moment of frustration, Campbell remarked: "This Darley affair is a bore. The Abyssinians are past masters in pin pricks and shards of the medieval ages. I do wish that we could give them a really rude awakening and I am sure that it would not surprise them as they are half expecting it..." FO 371/3126 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 1 Nov. 1918.
51. By March, HMG's case against Ethiopia was outlined. "For over ten years they have allowed their subjects to raid our borders for slaves, cattle, and ivory and have always refused to punish the offenders or grant compensation. They have never attempted to control the arms traffic with the result that

all the tribes along their border are now armed with rifles sold to them by the Abyssinian chiefs. They encourage the trade in slaves so that... Kaffa and fertile districts of the southwest are now entirely depopulated and it is impossible to obtain food for man or beast on the fifteen days march from Jimma to Magi. They permit the manufacture and sale of the most poisonous kinds of alcohol freely throughout the country. In spite of their treaties, freedom of commerce is unknown and European subjects are illegally taxed and pillaged by every small chief without the possibility of compensation... To these accusations neither Abyssinia nor France can offer any defense and I do not think, if Great Britain and Italy were to draw up an indictment on these lines, that even M. de Coppet could continue to maintain that Abyssinia only needed good advice in order to enter at once on the path of civilization and reform." FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 11 Mar. 1919; FO 371/3495 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 Feb. 1919; FO 371/3496 Northey to CO, 28 Feb. 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 20 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3496 Lawrance to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 30 May 1919; In June, Campbell discovered that the Legation interpreter, present at the meeting with Tafari and Habte Giyorgis, also denied that the "occupation" had been sanctioned. "He replied that the Abyssinians said that we 'might go and take water at any wells that would be useful'" and that the Amharic word which he had translated as "stay" rather had the meaning of a short rest of a few hours or a day, but no longer. See FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 June 1919.

52. PRO: FO 371/2855 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1917; FO 371/3127 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 8 Feb. 1918; FO 371/3127 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 23 Apr. 1918; FO 371/3127 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 4 June 1918
53. PRO: FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 17 Oct. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Oct. 1918; FO 371/3126 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 11 Nov. 1918; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 13 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3494 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 6 July 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 9 July 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 July 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 9 Oct. 1919; FO 371/3494 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 10 Mar. 1919.

54. also see Chapter 5. R. Hess, JAH 3 1963; A. Iadarola IJAHS 8 1975.
55. see Chapter 3; PRO: FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1919.
56. Caplan, p.26; PRO: FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 May 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 12 July 1919, enclosed in Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1919; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 13 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3496 Dodd to Hubbard, Addis Ababa, 9 June 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 9 Oct. 1919; FO 371/3497 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Feb. 1919; FO 371/3499 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Oct. 1919.
57. E. Ullendorff, trans. My Life and Ethiopia's Progress; PRO: FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 May 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1919; FO 371/3496 Lawrance to Curzon, 30 May, 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 June 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, 22 June 1919.
58. Dodds' sympathy for Tafari helped to quiet the intrigue. The quote continued: "'And another thing: When you or other ministers or consuls go to the Ras and talk to him in secret, you think him worthy of your confidence. I tell you that he betrays your secrets and is unworthy of your trust.' I (Dodds) could not help feeling moved by the old man's words, and Count Colli, to whom I related the conversation, told me in secrecy that the words were perfectly true, as he has reason to know that on several occasions the Ras has betrayed the confidences of himself and other ministers. I could only say to the Fitaurari that Ras Tafari really had the interests of his country at heart; that, as he had already admitted during our conversation, he was the most natural heir to the throne; and that, instead of planning his banishment, he must keep him near and try to mold his character to a more generous shape." FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds memo, Addis Ababa, nd, received at FO 19 Aug. 1919.
59. PRO: FO 371/3496 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 4 Nov. 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1919; FO 371/4392 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4392 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 18 Feb. 1920; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 16 Aug. 1919.

60. see Chapter 3. PRO: FO 371/3497 Campbell to FO, Addis. Ababa, 25 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3497 FO to Campbell, 12 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 July 1919.
61. PRO: FO 371/3497 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 8 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 3 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 10 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 23 Aug. 1919.
62. PRO: FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 13 Sept. 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 21 Sept. 1919.
63. PRO: FO 371/3497 Dodds to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 9 Oct. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 17 Oct. 1919.
64. Ullendorff, trans. My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, p. 64; PRO: FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 30 Oct. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 12 Nov. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 30 Oct. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 17 Nov. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 3 Dec. 1919.
65. E. Ullendorff, trans. My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, p. 61; PRO: FO 371/3497 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 22 Dec. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 27 Dec. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa 28 Dec. 1919; FO 371/4391 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4391 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 18 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4391 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa 21 Feb. 1920.
66. PRO: FO 371/4392 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4392 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 18 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4392 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 21 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 17 Mar. 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 29 Mar. 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Apr. 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 6 May 1920; FO 371/4396 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 8 June 1920.
67. E. Ullendorff, trans. My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, p. 61; PRO: FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 April, 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 6 May 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 May, 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 July 1920.
68. The NFD Commissioner, HB Kittermaster, and Hodson urged HMG to retain Gaddaduma "at all costs," but Sperling cautioned

"we are bound by the Tripartite Agreement to maintain the political and territorial status quo in Abyssinia. Any encroachment by us on the Abyssinian territory in the south might lead to much more serious encroachments by Italy in the north, and increase the difficulties of the already difficult, and still unsettled, question of Italian compensation in Africa." Sperling minute to FO 371/3496 Campbell to FO, 11 June 1919; FO 371/3496 CO to FO, 26 Aug. 1919; Caplan, p. 13-4. The campaign against the Gaddaduma rebels ended in July, but it seemed increasingly clear that effective Ethiopian administration would not materialize. At the very moment that the FO came to thirst for Gaddaduma, the CO reluctantly ordered its withdrawal. FO 371/3496 Lidderdale minute to Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 6 Oct. 1919; Hodson reports in FO 371/3496 passim and in FO 742/16 passim. See especially FO 371/3496 Hodson to Campbell, Boran, 30 Sept. 1919, enclosed in Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 16 Nov. 1919.

For a summary of events in 1920, see FO 371/4391 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 4 Sept. 1920; FO 371/4391 Hodson to Dodds, Boran, 13 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4391 Hodson to Dodds, Boran, 18 July 1920; FO 371/4391 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 4 Sept. 1920; FO 371/4391 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 20 Dec. 1920.

69. See the articles and books of Darley; P. Garretson, "Maji and Ethiopian Domination of the Southern Sudan, 1897-1935," unpublished paper; Edwards, "Slavery, the Slave Trade...", note 26.
70. Darley's accounts have been treated with intense skepticism, particularly by those who have read his book Slaves and Ivory or the articles he submitted to the Anti-Slavery Society and the popular British press. His official dispatches to the British government, however, are unusually detailed, and while they contain exaggerations and eurocentrisms, they are confirmed not only by the independent chronicles of his fellow traveler, Athill, and by every contemporary observer, including Hawkins, Bieber, P. Chiomio, but also by a host of recent anthropological studies, like those of Stauder and Sobania. I note with satisfaction that P. Garretson and S. Miers, both of whom have written on Maji, take the same view.

P. Garretson, "Maji..."; S. Miers and N. Sobania(add); Darley's dispatches are in the Foreign Office Confidential Print for 1919. See FO 403/450 pp. 176-183, 229-246. See also FO 371/3498 Darley to Sperling, 2 Sept. 1919; FO 371/3498 Darley report of 27 Aug. 1919 enclosed in Allenby to Curzon,

- Cairo, 31 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3498 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 21 Sept. 1919; FO 371/3498 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 22 Sept. 1919; FO 371/3498 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 7 Nov. 1919; FO 371/3498 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 17 Nov. 1919.
71. PRO: FO 371/3498 Sperling and Lidderdale minutes to Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 17 Nov. 1919; FO 371/3498 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 22 Sept. 1919; FO 371/4390 Seymour, Lidderdale, Curzon, and Lockhart minutes to Curzon to Dodds, 17 Aug. 1920.
72. PRO: FO 371/3496 Lawrance to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 30 May 1919; FO 371/3498 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 9 Jan. 1920.
73. PRO: FO 371/4391 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 June 1920; FO 371/4391 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 June 1920; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 2 Nov. 1920; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1 Dec. 1920; FO 371/4396 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 8 June 1920.
74. PRO: FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 6 Sept. 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 16 Sept. 1920; FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1920.
75. PRO: FO 371/4394 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 2 Dec. 1920; FO 371/4397 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 20 Dec. 1920; FO 371/5505 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Dec. 1920; FO 371/5505 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 3 Feb. 1921; FO 371/5505 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 21 Jan. 1921; FO 371/5505 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Mar. 1921; FO 371/5505 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1921; FO 371/5505 Cane to FO, Addis Ababa, 25 July 1921; FO 371/5505 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 4 Aug. 1921

### CHAPTER 3

"...neither to the left nor to the right":

Consolidation and the Limits on Growth 1922-1928

"The King must swerve neither to the  
left nor to the right"

Fetha Negast, Aba Paulos trans.

Even though Lij Iyasu remained close to Addis Ababa, a thorn in Tafari's side, his internment calmed the political situation. Tafari's legitimacy and his claim to the prerogatives of kingship firmed, but triumvirate rule continued to impinge upon the extent of the ras's writ, especially upon his need to personalize the proceeds of long-distance trade. And the stakes were growing.

Macroeconomic statistics for the period are poor, but price and export data clearly demonstrate a long-term decline in the traditional slavery and ivory export trades. Imperial coffers required alternative export-revenue producers, a factor well realized by both Iyasu, who had hoped to route the new exports through Wollo, and now Tafari. In late 1921, a resurgence in European demand for primary produce raised coffee and hides prices sufficiently to provide a solution. The following table<sup>1</sup> illustrates the dramatic change for coffee:



TABLE I  
'ABYSSINIAN' COFFEE EXPORTS VIA THE JIBUTI RAILWAY,  
IN METRIC TONS

1910	245	1919	2	1927	7,090
1911	190	1920	71	1928	7,650
1912	125	1921	280	1929	7,730
1913	397	1922	2,240	1930	6,272
1914	203	1923	1,747	1931	8,421
1915	198	1924	4,653	1932	11,412
1916	230	1925	5,864	1933	6,602
1917	180	1926	6,035	1934	9,408
1918	9				

The new exports were both well suited for cheap and efficient shipment on the newly completed railway connecting Addis Ababa with the sea and met a world demand transcending the production limits of the traditional exports. And in contrast to the slave trade, there were few barriers to entry in coffee and hides production. Everyone could air-dry and market otherwise wasted hides, and many southerners could pick wild coffee or plant and harvest bushes. Moreover, coffee and hides were divisible into small units, each of low value per unit of weight. As such, the legitimate trade involved southern subject populations more directly in the money economy and created more wealth for the aristocracy and for a growing monied class.

It would be easy, however, to exaggerate the magnitude of Ethiopia's growth and development. In an infrastructural sense, there were significant events. Money from long distance trade allowed the expansion of transportation and communications. Technical improvements regularly graced Addis Ababa. However, while available evidence is subjective at best, it nonetheless seems clear that material life improved very little if at all for the empire's subject populations, inherently because growth and development were shaped and constrained by important superstructural factors, particularly by the central state's uncompromising need to monopolize control over production and trade. Certainly, the introduction and reproduction of new taxes and of empire-benefitting relations of production secured the north's dominance over southern surpluses and forced the commercialization of cash "crops" which had heretofore been marketed only locally. Nonetheless, the advance of a wage labor force and the distribution of new progressive imports, which some have cited as evidence of a great economic transformation, was surprisingly limited, especially in the context of an increasing scarcity of labor relative to land in southern coffee production.<sup>2</sup>

The main economic themes of the interwar period, it seems to me, must not be confused with the obvious infrastructural developments in and around Addis Ababa. The growth of long distance trade, and the visible improvements in finance, transportation, and communication have all been narrowly defined as symptoms of

progress, but in at least three ways they facilitated a consolidation of imperial authority that aimed to preserve and extend, and not transform, the conventional relations of production and the distribution of wealth, power, and privilege. First, the new exports demanded by Europe could now be directed through Addis Ababa, giving the state much firmer control over the proceeds and benefits of long-distance trade. Second, the central government shaped the infrastructure specifically to extend and preserve relations of production more efficiently throughout the newly conquered areas of the south and southwest. Third, the arms and revenue that derived from consolidation over long-distance trade allowed the central government to extend the infrastructure and superstructure more widely. In essence, Addis Ababa could use the roads and planes to extend and then justify imperial rule, facilitating its reproduction, legitimizing tribute and tax payments, and minimizing instability throughout the conquered areas.

Most investigations into the interwar Ethiopian economy have sought the means by which the central government transferred wealth to the capital. Studies by Markakis, Hoben, and McClellan confirm that the central government reaped revenue from taxes on both agricultural surplus and trade and from provincial tribute. But these studies, by concentrating on the infrastructure of revenue collection, have not examined its superstructure. Fundamentally, to tap provincial wealth and to stay in power, Ras Tafari and the

central government had to extend, maintain, and reproduce relations of production that supported and legitimized their position and status. To be sure, infrastructural developments made revenue transfers, the movement of goods, and the extension of ideas more efficient, but I must emphasize that the economic process was still a conventional one. The central government, and conspicuously Tafari, still sought legitimacy with its conventional prerogatives. The thesis calls into question the applicability of Eurocentric notions of progress and development, especially since the central state's economic priorities and policies directly bridled growth and development.

Development was bridled, not only by the imperial extension of state-benefitting relations of production, but also by several other factors. First, during the 1920s, the empire, jealous of its control over long distance trade and communications through Addis Ababa, stifled or diverted trade which would otherwise have been efficiently handled through other ports. It was a policy that encouraged the monopolization, not the maximization, of long-distance trade. Particularly during the 1920s, before the Shoan government could obtain firm, centralized control over provincial export posts like Gambela, Moyale, Asmara, and Gederef, Addis Ababa actively opposed all efforts to improve conditions in or to extend trade through these ports, in the fear of losing revenue and its monopoly over arms imports to rulers like Ras Nado in Gore and Ras Hailu in Gojjam.

Second, the Addis Ababa government's continuing need to foil both separatism and imperialism. required so huge a commitment of time and money that economic consolidation was often sacrificed for more immediate needs. Throughout the 1920s, the result was an agonizingly phlegmatic continuation of succession politics and of interminable crises. In the period between 1921 and 1928, with European pressure on slavery, Tana, and territory never far off, and with internal challenges always a threat, Addis Ababa successfully defended its image of Ethiopia as a progressive state, but at enormous and lasting cost. By working to convince Europe that its regime was often sacrificed for more immediate needs. Throughout the 1920s, the result was an agonizingly phlegmatic continuation of succession politics and of interminable crises. In the period between 1921 and 1928, with European pressure on slavery, Tana, and territory never far off, and with internal challenges always a threat, Addis Ababa successfully defended its image of Ethiopia as a progressive state, but at enormous and lasting cost. By working to convince Europe that its regime was forward-looking, and by committing resources to establish its legitimacy, the imperial government easily avoided important decisions concerning important superstructural contradictions, such as the minority status of the government and the non-representation in government of Ethiopia's varied minorities. Through extraordinary, and insightful diplomacy, Tafari preserved both his own legitimacy and superstructural inequities.

Third, imperial political intrigue over the prerogatives inherent in kingship, particularly the right to distribute lands and honors, made a more equitable distribution of wealth unthinkable and continued to impede Tafari's plans to maximize long distance trade revenue. Unlike Menilek, Tafari had no interest in the slave trade, which increasingly avoided Addis Ababa and did not supply him with revenue. Instead, he sought throughout the period to develop and tax the "legitimate" trade by appointing his own personnel as leaders of southern markets, by extending credit for coffee cultivation, by granting coffee land to migrating northern settlers, by building and improving roads from the coffee markets to Addis Ababa, and by selectively lowering customs dues as an incentive for the production and movement of coffee through the capital, where his agents tapped the customs revenue.

The policies, insofar as they favored Tafari's coffers and standing, generated considerable intrigue, since the other aspirants to power and privilege had similar ideas. Tafari placed high priority on replacing a decentralized southern provincial administration with his own appointees. The latter might direct the coffee crop efficiently to Addis Ababa and, more loyally, forward tribute personally to the ras. Southern governors had derived considerable autonomy and wealth from their holdings in slaves and as partners in and taxers of the trade. Moreover, governors like Balcha in Sidama and Nado in Gore had rarely proffered to the central government a tribute that was sufficiently

proportional to their local surplus, arguing instead that gabbar labor and service were barely sufficient to support their garrisons.

The consolidation, however, was slow in coming; the era, like its predecessors, was marked by a series of seemingly never-ending crises, all inhibiting the ras's program. He met considerable resistance directly from Zawditu, Habte Giyorgis, and the Abuna Matewos, who all obtained personal influence from the number and strength of their adherents, and who all favored decentralization, or at least more individualization of Solomonic privilege. Throughout the 1920s, competition over appointments to the increasingly valuable southern coffee lands guided imperial intrigue, which thereby limited more effective infrastructural improvement and economic growth. Concessions were granted haphazardly and ineffectively, and individual control over customs remained a far greater priority than the volume of the long-distance trade. Indeed, at no time before Ras Tafari became negus in 1928 did the government have sufficient consensus to affect a single, articulate economic strategy. The only imperial unity stemmed from implicit acceptance of empire-serving relations of production, even if many parties might vie over its proceeds.

Tafari therefore maneuvered carefully, in the early 1920s succeeding modestly by appointing negadrases and some minor officials throughout the coffee districts. Gradually, too, he challenged the decentralized aristocracy, increased government

revenues, drew export crops towards Addis Ababa, and gradually defined tribute payments in terms of his growing legitimacy. In diplomacy, too, successes were slow in coming, but merely representing the crown in serious negotiations confirmed prerogatives, enhanced his legitimacy, and justified tribute. Ironically, on becoming negus in 1928 and emperor in 1930, and on obtaining finally his first taste of unchallengeable authority, Tafari would face a depression far worse than that of 1916 to 1921. Imagery, not revenue, would remain the key to economic and political consolidation.

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The dramatic shift to coffee and hides exporting in the 1920s required very little active government intervention because, in the short run, the production cycle was little affected. Coffee grew wild or with little cultivation throughout the south and southwest, particularly in the districts of Jimma, Sidama, Limmu, Gera, and Kaffa, but only small quantities were exported during the nineteenth century. Southwestern, or "Abyssinian" coffee was bulky, expensive to transport, of inferior quality to "Harrari" coffee, and could not attract high enough prices to justify its collection and export.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, owing to church prohibitions against the drinking of coffee, northern demand was limited to non-Christian areas where beans were not locally grown.<sup>4</sup> Opposition to coffee lessened over the course of the century, in part because



Menilek himself drank the brew.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, most "Abyssinian" coffee was consumed locally, traded regionally, or left to rot. New coffee trees take three to five years to mature<sup>6</sup>, but there was abundant wild and semi-cultivated coffee to satisfy export requirements during the 1920s. Abba Jifar in Jimma and neftenya in nearby occupied territories increased coffee planting on previously unoccupied or "unproductive" lands<sup>7</sup>, but cultivation usually amounted to little more than clearing brush from wild trees or occasionally replanting bushes in a more orderly fashion.<sup>8</sup> In either case, increased "cultivation" did not require much government intervention.

Rather, increased European demand for coffee coincided with an ongoing transition in southern areas of production from tribute to taxation, a process that allowed the government, through the consolidation of its authority, to augment revenue. In the early years of the occupation, Officers and neftenya received gabbar in proportion to rank, merit and years of service; local headmen or balabats collected and delivered payment, which depended on soil quality, crop types, the number of livestock, the size of the household, and the number of gabbar supplying the garrisons. In the early years of the occupation therefore, gabbar maintained social distance from neftenya and preserved stability and flexibility in production. And by the first-generation following conquest, fixed taxes, or asrats, replaced less precisely defined

billets, inducing many who had fled the violence and arbitrary charges of the conquest to return.

By the 1920s, however, northern control of southern surpluses more directly alienated both labor and land, facilitating the production and marketing of coffee and giving the government an opportunity, by proving and sustaining its legitimacy, to attract a larger share of producers' surplus. The increasing settlement of northerners and the return of the soldiery after Lij Iyasu's capture in 1921 greatly facilitated the demand for the fixed supply of land and labor. McClellan, for example, notes that, for Sidamo, movement onto rich coffee land had taken place gradually since 1913, but that the primary surge in the settler population came in 1922, at a time of accelerating prices for coffee. The competition for southern lands and the demands for gabbar labor greatly intensified, as did the marketing of coffee. The number of disputes between neftenya and incoming settlers grew, especially over expansion into newly awarded and formerly uncultivated coffee lands in forest and ethnic buffer zones. But the government, by appointing loyal followers and by slowly asserting its prerogatives to measure and dispense land and to settle disputes, acquired an increasingly legitimate right to and a greater share of the profits.<sup>9</sup>

Other changes limited the need for active central government intervention in production. As the division of landholding and the larger settler population terminated the need for garrisons and

communal tribute, local markets and towns appeared along long-distance trade routes. And neftenya, moving from their forts to settle directly upon the land, could themselves dictate what crops could be grown. In this way, local populations could respond directly to new world market incentives for the production of coffee; little central government intervention was required.

For most of the subject populations, however, there was little material improvement or increase in their control of the agricultural surplus. McClellan emphasizes that in Sidamo, cultivation of coffee and northern grains endangered local ensete production by reducing labor required for its care, by diminishing its acreage, and by reducing pasturage required for fertilizer. The economic activities of the subject population were further restrained: Gabbar might trade in small inter-ethnic markets commodities, carrying low profit per unit, in order to pay taxes, but few could penetrate the long-distance trade dominated by northerners and their non-Christian agents. The result was a close landlord-tenant dependency, in which, apart from liberally required labor services, gabbar continued to owe between a quarter and a third of their yearly crop.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout, the state sought to gain sufficient legitimacy in order to extend and preserve its authority over subject populations. At first, garrisons reproduced relations of production by the threat and power of superior weaponry. By the 1920s, with more intimate settlements, more subtle ideological

efforts were required. By no means quickly, northerners introduced their law, dress, language, and religion. In Sidamo. redistributing gabbar among incoming settlers weakened local kinship ties and claims to land through kinship, and sometimes transferred gabbar away from sacred Gada sites. Throughout the south, Gada and clan councils would continue to function, but with substantially less authority. Instead, imperial laws and courts prevailed, in most cases favoring the claims of northerners as the new founders, clearers, and cultivators of the land.<sup>11</sup>

In areas given "internal autonomy" for submitting to Menilek, there was a similar transition. Again, there would be little direct intervention by the central government in production. Instead, the emperor and his successors increased the profitability and possibility of exporting local production towards Addis Ababa by requiring the sultan of Jimma, in whose jurisdiction was the most important southwestern market and area of production, to construct roads and bridges towards the Shoan capital. What many travelers perceived as Abba Jifar's "hobby of road building" was rather part of Menilek's, and later Tafari's program to secure revenue and to sustain their rule. Moreover, Addis Ababa could tap the proceeds of production indirectly but more efficiently by sharing Jimma's customs and by requiring from the kingdom the largest tribute in the southwest, a compensation for the absence of neftenya with whom production otherwise would have to be shared. By the 1920s, to pay its obligations to the north, Abba Jifar had no choice but

to levy new local taxes and to place new demands on labor; the result, as in other more formally occupied southern areas, was to increase the marketing of coffee and hides.<sup>12</sup>

While the north had no direct control over Jimma's production, the south's increasing importance in long distance coffee and hides trading encouraged a closer relationship. A significant percentage of all "Abyssinian" coffee was marketed in Hirmata, the commercial center of Jimma. Many travelers cited Jimma as the premier coffee growing region in Ethiopia after the devastation of Kaffa in 1897, but recent surveys suggest that Jimma probably shared that status with Sidamo, the other Gibe kingdoms, and the western provinces of Walaga and Illubabor. Nonetheless, most of the "Abyssinian" coffee bound for Jibuti was probably marketed at Hirmata, making the town a key target for northern commercial control. Of the fifteen concessions exporting "Abyssinian" coffee to Jibuti, twelve had stations at Hirmata; five had their only site at that market. Moreover, contemporary travelers generally agreed that Hirmata was the entrepot for the coffee from Kaffa, Gera, Guma, and to a limited extent, Limu and Sidamo.

During the 1920s, the area's increasing importance induced Addis Ababa to obtain and preserve strong local influence in decision-making. Already in Addis Ababa and in areas under his direct control, like Harrar and Dire Dawa, Tafari had appointed negadrases to supervise local markets. Ostensibly, the negadrases were charged "to diminish corruption and inefficiency," but in

reality, they guaranteed that local taxes and trade would be undertaken in the interests of the central government. The appointments understandably disturbed local interests, as well as rivals for the powers and privileges inherent in control over long distance trade. In fact, before Lij Iyasu's capture, Tafari's ambiguous position allowed regional leaders and court opponents to overrule the ras's attempts to appoint negadrases in Gore and Wallega. But Tafari kept trying. When European demand recovered in 1922, a newly established Ministry of Commerce appointed a Shoan negadras, Muse, to Jimma and the surrounding Gibe area. He transformed customs and tribute into fixed payments personally transferred to Addis Ababa. And, like the negadrases in the conquered coffee regions, he regulated justice and he rescheduled periodic markets to funnel merchants, coffee, and hides through commercial centers toward the Shoan capital.<sup>13</sup>

These government efforts proceeded very slowly throughout the 1920s, not only, as I shall argue, because of court and international intrigue, but also because the aspirants to power and privilege persevered to monopolize rather than maximize trade. Shoan aspirants could only control trade if it passed through Addis Ababa; other economically attractive routes were avoided. The existing, albeit less developed export route through Gambela and Khartoum to the Red Sea via Port Sudan, for example, remained throughout the period the most profitable outlet for most of the southwest's exports. But no matter how attractive the route may

have appeared, regional governors and merchants had little means or authority to exploit it. To the extent that their writ allowed, Tafari and the court guarded against the diversion of trade through Gambela, Gederef, Moyale, and Italian Somaliland, areas where the central government's share of customs' revenue before 1930 was low or non-existent, and certainly less proportionately to that received directly in Addis Ababa. Throughout the decade, nagadrases and new roads, communications, and improved security funneled trade towards Shoa, while many activities and concessions, like Britain's quest for Tana, met imperial disfavor in large part because they involved the development of roads and trade connections with the non-Shoan "ports." Tafari also probably limited concessions that favored Sudan trade from working in the Jimma area. Only one of the firms exporting coffee from Jimma had a post in Gambela, and that post had been established in 1908 under Menilek.<sup>14</sup>

Trade through Addis Ababa, however, met exorbitant carrying charges along the French railway to Jibuti. Astutely, Tafari and his government in unison worked to lower these French-controlled rates, which obviously worked to limit the profitability of Ethiopia's foreign trade. They negotiated hard to create alternate export routes through British and Italian Somaliland, and they hoped to create an Ethiopian port through which duties, even if high, would at least revert directly to the state. But no lasting solution could be found; perhaps, French payments to Tafari may

have tempered his opposition. In any event, with no alternative to passing their goods through Addis Ababa, some merchants in desperation used camels and mules as slow but cheaper alternatives to the railway.<sup>15</sup>

By discouraging or blocking alternative long-distance trade routes, frontier instability ironically aided Shoa's centralization of trade, but it would be wrong to suggest that the Addis Ababa government therefore nourished its border crises. The ever-present danger of foreign intervention and the impracticality of committing scarce labor and capital to intractable peripheral posts dominated Addis Ababa's thinking. Slavery, slave raids, and poaching were fundamentally unimportant issues in the context of Tafari's internal consolidation, but Europe, and particularly Britain, placed the "problem" into the international arena, where the legitimacy of an Ethiopian state under Ras Tafari could be challenged. For many reasons the central government could not afford to act, which infuriated the tripartite powers and allowed domestic and foreign charges of governmental incompetence. It remained an issue on which decentralizers and aspirants to the throne could challenge Tafari's authority, legitimacy, and prerogatives, in part by searching for sympathetic Europeans. At the court, Tafari could argue that the only solution to frontier instability was the centralization of authority.

To the Europeans, he would continue to portray himself as the only "progressive" hope for order. Those seeking decentralization



of privilege and production instead searched for a bolt hole from European intervention, in the conviction that they could thereby shun Tafari and his centralization while with impunity continuing to extract revenue from the frontier. The result throughout the early 1920s was continuing intransigence in Addis Ababa, chaos on the frontiers, and imperial promises which the economic and political priorities of the day would never allow to be kept. The threat of foreign intervention was never far away.

The complex slavery-frontier issues continued to influence the politics of succession and Tafari's consolidation. Despite the Ethiopian government's promises in 1920 and 1921, there was little police action on the frontier. Desta remained in Addis Ababa, still as governor of Maji, but, according to Hawkins, "in a very chastened mood." Britain's new consul proposed returning Desta to Maji, where the British representative might watch him carefully; some authority was needed, he argued, and dismissal might only induce Desta's troops to ravage the area of its remaining resources. Tafari gladly accepted the suggestion, since Desta's return might diffuse the tension and calm his opposition.

Moreover, to reassert his "sympathetic" stance on the frontier issue, the ras put forth another idea. He suggested that Britain might now agree to a temporary border adjustment, in which Ethiopia would gain the Boma plateau south of Maji. He argued that the diplomatic success would help him to consolidate his position and give him the needed authority to demarcate the border. It was

a brilliant policy. He could not have promised to "respect" the frontier, since agreeing with Britain's interpretation of the border might limit the claims made in Menilek's time and subject him to charges of "selling the country." Now, however, he would appear progressive and alive to the issues troubling Britain, and his opposition could scarcely object to an agreement would add territory to the empire.

Ironically, Britain too had no desire to demarcate the frontier. The Sudan and Kenya administrations had not yet settled the frontier areas, and the Colonial Office had no desire to seek "adjustments" without broader and stronger claims. Britain, therefore, shared the responsibility for the aborted negotiations, but Dodds still leveled the blame on Ethiopia. He responded that HMG would not make concessions to help the Ethiopian government extricate itself "from a position created by their own negligence." Instead, Britain would rely on temporary measures, which now meant reoccupying Gadaduma briefly in 1921 and having their southern consuls closely watch raiding and slaving. Their activities did nothing to lessen international tensions.<sup>16</sup>

The tensions would continue, exacerbated now by new reports. In Boran, Hodson and Northern Frontier District observers feared new raids on British East African subjects driven by the dry season towards the wells at Gadaduma. Employing their "right" to reoccupy the district, they ordered the second invasion in January 1921, just before receiving Dodds' strenuous plea that, given Ethiopia's

efforts to please HMG over Maji, reoccupation would be regarded as a "churlish act on our part."

I still maintain that our occupation of Gadaduma last year was a well conceived policy, and I am sure that it has had the most salutary effect on the minds of the Abyssinian government. At that time, however, we were far from a solution of the Maji question and the Abyssinian government viewed all frontier matters with apathy. The conditions are now changed. The Abyssinian government is more alive to their responsibility in frontier matters. We may I think confidently hope for good results from the Hawkins appointment.<sup>17</sup>

Tafari's success in convincing Dodds of Ethiopia's good intentions brought quick results, if little action. When the Governor of Kenya pressed for Habte Giyorgis's return to Boran in 1921, the Fitawrari, occupied with Lij Iyasu's capture, could only send a representative to stay year-round at Gadaduma. With Dodds urging, NFD reluctantly accepted the emissary as a sign of good faith, and again evacuated the Gadaduma area in July.<sup>18</sup>

Soon, however, the arrival of the new consuls aggravated the situation and would, by 1923, influence the extent to which Tafari could successfully shape the consolidation. Their accounts substantively corroborated the official reports of Darley and Athill. Along the 300-mile border strip between Boran and Kaffa, Hawkins charted active bands of poachers and found no settlers, but only signs of long abandoned habitation. In Kaffa, he found no effective government, swarms of shifta, only occasional patches of cultivation "though traces of former cultivation abound," and he

concluded that the populace had been "practically wiped out or carried north as slaves."

The account was exaggerated to the extent that it implicitly implied that northern slavers had depopulated vast areas of the countryside. Outmigration and concealed cultivation more likely explain what Hawkins saw, but his dramatic reports naturally generated considerable excitement and concern. Nonetheless, the Foreign Office was convinced that its hands were tied. Given the fact that Britain monopolized the source of all European information on southern Ethiopian slavery, slave trading, and frontier raiding, reform proposals might only prompt suspicions and protests from the French and Italians. Others might only assume imperialist motives toward regions far removed from their spheres of activity. Moreover, increased public exposure would certainly alienate Ethiopia and stiffen internal opposition to the impending Tana negotiations.<sup>19</sup>

Agitation and pressure emerged from a different source, the British Anti-Slavery Society, and within a year, the triumvirate would face substantial international criticism. The issues raised by the society had little relevance to the issues considered important to the British and Ethiopian governments, but the increasingly feverous world opinion, far out of proportion to the size or budget of the society, could not be avoided. In January 1922, a contentious series of articles appeared in the Westminster Gazette, written by Barley and Dyce Sharp, an Addis Ababa Legation

doctor. Both charged that vast areas of southern Ethiopia had been depopulated by slave raiders and traders, and that slaves were even employed in Britain's Addis Ababa Legation. Soon thereafter, the press agitation spread to the Yorkshire Post, the New Statesman, the Times of London and New York, while the Anti-Slavery Society, through partisans in parliament, pressed what the FO frustratingly called a "childish succession" of questions upon the government. Meanwhile, an ally, Sir Arthur Steel Maitland, New Zealand's delegate to the League of Nations, placed a discussion of African slavery, with emphasis on Ethiopia, on the League's agenda for September 1923.

The Foreign Office retained its determination to avoid discussing slavery in Ethiopia, in the conviction that Britain would be badly served by the debate. Rowland Sperling, the Assistant Secretary, felt that the Ethiopian government might retract Britain's few economic privileges, quashing their hopes for economic supremacy, and he believed that Britain's plans for the dam at Tana would vanish were the country to "disintegrate inevitably under the weight of international disgust over slavery." Britain therefore offered only a minimal response to the League. To the particular consternation of the Anti-Slavery Society, who hoped for League controls, the FO responded to the League of Nations' call for relevant information with only a minimal report on the British Empire. And when the Society's friends pressed in parliament, Whitehall compiled with a carefully

edited White Paper which purposely whitewashed the scope of slavery and slave trading in Ethiopia.<sup>20</sup>

Though the Foreign Office discouraged the publication of other articles in the British press and refused to provide information to the Anti-Slavery Society, the Ethiopian government assumed that Britain had taken a large role in the controversy as part of an onslaught of Ethiopian sovereignty. Britain's policy in Addis Ababa exacerbated the feeling. Fearing that France and Italy might take pleasure in misrepresenting Britain's official interest in slavery, the Foreign Office instructed Russell to show the articles personally to Tafari, to disclaim responsibility but nonetheless to advise the Ethiopian government "to remedy the existing conditions without loss of time so as to obviate the possibility of the press or other European countries taking up the same tone which might lead to serious consequences."

Russell incorrectly anticipated that Tafari would not take the situation seriously. Indeed, all Addis Ababa was aflutter, and each of the government factions prepared alternative plans. Tafari, who spent so much time shaping his image, and who, with newly imported printing presses, was slowly realizing the manipulative power of the press, could not have understood the relative freedom of Fleet Street, or the fact that former British officials might publish without their government's blessing. To Colonel Sandford, the ras absurdly lamented that the British had done nothing for him, though he had helped them by overthrowing

Lij Iyasu. Now, Tafari continued, the British were even opposing him. In Aden, pending negotiation of a Tripartite arms ration scheme, Britain blocked the import of machine guns bought by Ethiopia's mission in 1919 to the United States, and now British officials were printing the "most injurious things" about Ethiopia. Asked by Sandford whether general conditions had improved in Ethiopia during the last two years, Tafari answered in the affirmative. He naturally must have considered Lij Iyasu's arrest, his personal successes, and the improvement in the export economy. But Sandford disagreed. He emphasized the continuing frontier raids, minor assaults, the death of a foreign traveler, and an anti-European incident. Tafari, who used Sandford as a barometer of British feeling, took the colonel's warning that the Tripartite powers "must be getting very uneasy at the trend of affairs" as a serious if somewhat ludicrous threat.<sup>21</sup>

Again, Tafari sought to appease Europe with promises of reform and order. He ordered the cleaning of the streets, and, to the bemusement of foreigners, he enjoined his compatriots to dismount their mules on meeting Europeans. Later, he reviewed the articles in detail with Russell. Unlike his European peers, and to Tafari's continuing regret, the Englishman held no faith in Tafari's promises of progress. Indeed, his response demonstrated an extremely Eurocentric perspective, one completely out of tune with life in Ethiopia but one which emphasized for Tafari the continuing international dangers. The British minister gave Tafari and the

government no credit for the real infrastructural changes of the 20th century, and he repeatedly described the ras as dilatory, nonchalant, and without conception of organized government. Summarizing his blatantly racist views, Russell rambled:

It is a false idea that all has changed since then, and that even the sanitary habits of the Abyssinians, previously excellent, have suffered a sad deterioration under the present regime. What Menilek did was to keep order in the land. He did this by a ruthless practice of those mutilations and hangings which are objected to in the 'Westminister Gazette'. There is much that is wrong with Abyssinia. As the writers of these articles say, justice is corrupt, public security is imperfect, and the Abyssinian government are ignorant of the blessings of trade. These are faults with which nations who can claim a higher civilization might also be reproached. Whatever shortcomings there may be here, I fear we must not expect these articles to cure them. Ras Tafari has heard of them and asked me for them. I have caused translations to be made and given to him... If he is informed, as no doubt he will be, of the authorship of these articles, he will feel that his friendship has been abused, and he will conclude that Englishmen, contrary to what he had thought, are not to be trusted.

In an "unofficial and friendly" capacity, he also warned Tafari that Ethiopia remained in a critical position and would soon lose her independence. He concluded: "Nearly all Africa had been absorbed by the European powers. I named... a dozen sovereign States... which had been annexed, all within my own recollection, by one or another of the Powers... It was no wonder that many men believed that it was only a question of a few years before she would share the fate of the rest of Africa."<sup>22</sup>

Understandably, Tafari and his government perceived Russell's "advice" and the Anti-Slavery Society press as a coordinated threat



to Ethiopia's sovereignty. For the moment, Tafari sent a large shipment of the crown jewels to Aden for safekeeping, but a long-term solution would have to be found, especially since the international tension had dangerous domestic implications. Just the hint of instability and foreign dissatisfaction revived the rumors and provided the pretext for rebellion. Tafari's shipments of personal funds outside the country, negotiations over a railway extension, and a western gold deal prompted new charges that he was selling the country. Only an official government edict and the ras's pledge of substantial funds to local merchants calmed the city.<sup>23</sup>

Russell kept up the pressure. The Englishman's difficult experience and final success in manumitting the slaves of Legation workers should have showed him that, even on a small scale, slavery was both benign and well entrenched. Nonetheless, he proposed a series of reforms aimed at ending slavery in a generation. At the same time, on the Red Sea in June 1922, the HMS Cornflower intercepted a dhow carrying 26 slaves from Tadjura to Arabia. A Foreign Office minute correctly moaned: "that the news would bring out a special edition of the Westminster Gazette." In Addis Ababa, the captured slaves' arrival in August caused a sensation. Publicly, Ethiopians admitted that Britain had "brought the truth of their accusations"; all Tafari could do was to order the public hanging of two slave traders and deliver official certificates of liberation to the freed slaves.<sup>24</sup> The FO wondered what might follow

real European initiatives. In addition, Tafari hoped to distract Britain with new talks on Tana. He had insufficient powers to negotiate alone, and likely feared renewed charges of selling the country when he insisted in July and repeated in August that no one, not even Zawditu or Ras Hailu ought to be consulted.<sup>25</sup>

Amid the furor over slavery and the planning of a state voyage to Aden to rescue a stalled American arms shipment, Mascal passed quietly for the first time in a decade. Contemporary accounts nonetheless suggest considerable intrigue between Tafari and Habte Giyorgis, and reinforce the idea that, at least for the moment, centralization and consolidation were proceeding only very slowly. The Fitawrari opposed Tafari's plan to outlaw the sale and ownership of firearms, probably because the new policy would favor the centralization of weapons to the ras's advantage. For his part, Tafari sought to dispatch the minister of war to Boran now that the north had quieted.

The internal limitations on their authority were reflected by the continuing "parliamentary" gossip. Tafari continued to sidestep charges that he was selling the country, an oblique reference now to the reopening of the Tana negotiations. The Fitawrari claimed that he had forced Tafari to Aden, to save the country from its sale. And Habte Giyorgis arranged the release of the former Bitwadded Haile Giyorgis, spawning further rumors that Lij Iyasu would soon return to power. Again, the gossip amused the foreign community, but it served to demonstrate that Tafari had

not at all quashed the opposition, and that the politics of succession were fully alive.

Naturally, he continued to court authority by promoting his image at home and abroad. His first trip outside Ethiopia, to Aden, successfully opened Ethiopia's access to arms, if only briefly, and it cast him as much more than a closely watched regional leader. And in Aden, despite pleas from his allies to remain on the ground, Tafari bagged a "progressive" elephant by becoming the first Ethiopian to fly. It was a superbly symbolic act; like Lij Iyasu's hunting expeditions, it established to Ethiopians his courage; it would give European court admirers much about which to write.<sup>26</sup>

Tafari's efforts to sow a "progressive" image, however, could not contain Russell's eurocentric ramblings and western dismay over slavery. And by furthering a local image that Tafari's leadership was ineffective and that the ras was collaborating with foreigners, new negotiations with Europe would work to perpetuate the politics of succession and further delay the consolidation. The British minister was not alive to these aspects of the politics of succession. When Tafari returned to Addis Ababa, Britain hoped to speed Tana negotiations secretly past the Italians, but Russell, against Tafari's suggestion, broached the subject openly with the triumvirate in May.

To the Foreign Office's regret, their Addis Ababa minister revealed the nature of the discussions to a French adviser, who

quickly informed his Italian colleagues. More importantly, Russell too bluntly approached the Ethiopian government:

If the Ethiopian government so wished, the dam could be made with their consent and to their advantage. If they refused, they might gain a little time, but the interests which required the construction of the dam were too great to be ignored and, in the end, the dam would be made whether the Ethiopian government wished it or not.

Russell's negotiations were thereby doomed from the start, though the Englishman and the Foreign Office ultimately blamed failure solely on Italian obstructionism. Meanwhile the upcoming League meeting, and continuing press and parliamentary agitation over slavery in Ethiopia prompted Tafari to aim his own propaganda at heading off foreign intervention. To demonstrate Ethiopia's good faith and continuing actions against slavery, Tafari, in the Morning Post of 3 April, revealed a scheme to free and then train slaves to patrol Ethiopia's lowland borders, where they would be "better suited" than northern soldiers to fight slavers. In the London Times, the ras assured Britain that "the whole question of slavery was engaging the attention of the Abyssinian government," and that, while Ethiopia would provide the League with all relevant information, Tafari would frown on League intervention unless similar interventions were made in French Somaliland, Eritrea, and in the bordering British territories to the south and west, where slavers and slave traders also operated.<sup>27</sup>

International pressure, however, failed to dissipate; inexorable pressure from the Anti-Slavery Society to take the

matter to the League of Nations again focused the Ethiopian government's attention on slavery and, more significantly, revealed clearly for the first time the interests of the various parties in the succession crisis. By mid-1923, Ethiopia clearly perceived a coming international crisis. The Quai d'Orsay had urged Tafari to apply for membership in the League, which might at last provide a guarantee of independence, safety from the slavery issue, and adequate armament. In July, however, Italy quashed a preliminary French proposal to invite Ethiopia to Geneva. No reasons were required, but Italy clearly seemed to eye Ethiopia's independence. At the same time, in parliament, the Anti-Slavery Society accelerated its campaign, inducing a rift in the Foreign Office between Sperling, who hoped to quiet the debate on slavery, and Curzon, Prime Minister and an elder statesman more philosophically committed to the anti-slavery cause. Reading a Sperling-written note before the House of Lords, Curzon was viciously compromised; he subsequently rampaged through the correspondence on slavery, forcing more active consideration of the issue. The public display previewed for Ethiopia what they hoped to avoid in Geneva.<sup>28</sup>

In June, the makwannent approved the idea of applying for admission to the League as a counter to European pressures, but infighting over the mission's composition delayed action, demonstrated the limitations on Tafari's authority, and clearly delineated internal differences over the nature of political

consolidation. The Anti-Slavery Society had hoped to force Ethiopia's entry, in the hope later of inducing League intervention; clearly the triumvirate had different ideas. Tafari plotted to lead the mission to Geneva, where his direct diplomacy might forestall international pressure and confirm his legitimacy at home and abroad. At the same time, domestic opponents worked to keep Tafari at home, in order that a successful mission would preserve Ethiopia's sovereignty without giving credit to Tafari, thereby perpetuating the contest for the powers and privileges inherent in kingship. Without success, Tafari and his party petitioned to go to Europe at the head of a delegation composed of the leading chiefs whose presence would guarantee peace at home. By August, however, mounting concern that the League consider Ethiopia's application before the discussion on slavery might take place required that the mission's compromise leader, Dej. Nado, force his march from Gore to Addis Ababa at the height of the rainy season, leaving for Europe after only two days of priming.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, in strict secrecy, Tafari telegraphed Ethiopia's desire for application to Geneva. In 1919 when Ethiopia first considered League entry to forestall Peace Conference deliberations on Ethiopia, Tafari learned that admission obliged the presence of "influential and intelligent" representatives to promote serious discussions, to provide adequate protection against excessive League criticism, and to give meaningful responses to League questions. Apart from forestalling the slavery

debate, Tafari therefore anticipated few results from the 1923 session, whose members were authorized neither to negotiate with the League nor to undertake any agreement nor to commit Ethiopia to any international obligations.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, Ethiopia's successful entry into the League of Nations was a setback for Tafari's personal consolidation. Many have incorrectly claimed that entry into the league was his clever diplomatic success, but Tafari's secret correspondence through the Quai d'Orsay confirms that the ras only wanted admission if he could claim all the credit, to enhance his international reputation, to build his image, his legitimacy, and his standing at home. Given the recent Corfu affair, in which Italy had run roughshod over league guarantees, Tafari had no naive faith that entry into the world body would secure Ethiopia's independence or territorial integrity.

Rather, his plan had two parts. Preferably, he sought to lead Ethiopia's mission to Geneva, to monopolize the glory of admission and to frame Ethiopia's league obligations as a mandate for personal consolidation and centralization. Failing direct participation, he sought in every possible way either to delay the league's consideration or to bring about the mission's failure; both scenarios might allow him subsequently to lead a second successful mission. Instead, to Tafari's dismay, Ethiopia gained admission to the League without his presence in Europe. It was a triumph for the empress and the Minister of War, who both perceived

that membership so obtained in Europe's "secret society" would guarantee arms and independence for Ethiopia and confirm their share of the prerogatives of kingship. As importantly, they felt that entry into the League would provide, on issues like Tana, the frontier, and slavery, a bolt hole from the Europeans sufficiently large to encourage a wider distribution of wealth and privilege, and greater autonomy from Tafari.<sup>31</sup>

Tafari's intrigue is most clearly seen in his personal correspondence retained at the Quai d'Orsay. On arrival in Europe, the ras's personal representative, Ato Fassika, delivered a private note to the French appealing that they or the league insist on the immediate appearance of Tafari and the principal Ethiopian chiefs in Geneva for the September vote. Tafari's message to the French ministers emphasized that the mission's composition and authority was far too limited to deal effectively with the league, while the ras's presence in Geneva, or at least in Europe at the time of the vote, would make all the difference. Back in Addis Ababa, Tafari petitioned the French charge, Boucoiron, to arrange transportation for him by French warship in order that he could arrive in Europe on time for the Geneva proceedings. At the same time, he asked that the French help in persuading the league secretary to delay the vote for admission until the Assembly's fourth session, to give time "to prepare all that concerns it."<sup>32</sup>

The French were distressed. Delays might jeopardize Ethiopia's application and French gains in the Horn, and there was



insufficient time to arrange a warship, which they felt in any event might alienate Britain and Italy. The French therefore pocketed Tafari's message, adding no force to his planned intrigue. Instead they urged him to send full diplomatic powers to the mission.<sup>33</sup>

In Geneva, discussions proceeded far more smoothly than Tafari or anyone else could have anticipated. Italy feared that Ethiopia's entry into the league might end her isolation, safeguard her independence, and Jeopardize existing or potential Italian interests. Nevertheless, Rome reversed its opposition to Addis Ababa's application, because it could not do so successfully. Any serious blockade would unnecessarily infuriate Ethiopia and other league states, and fervent support might even win friends in Addis Ababa. Italy expected that Britain in the end would also support the application, but London reasoned differently. HMG assumed that French-inspired entry would open Ethiopian frontier to French arms and give Paris further dominance over long distance trade. Britain was also swayed by the advice of the racist Russell, who naively reported that Ethiopia had made no progress even infrastructurally. Russell also emphasized that admission would smugly turn Ethiopia's head, making reforms and British interests harder to realize. Britain's opposition to the application and its request to fashion stringent anti-slavery obligations seemed arbitrary and without premeditation; And it met a strict French defense.<sup>34</sup>

Convinced by arguments that admission would stimulate civilizing reforms, other committee members quickly followed France's lead, watering down the obligations proposed by Britain. As the September session drew to a close, however, the Ethiopian delegation remained powerless to accept new commitments on behalf of the governments to respect the arms restrictions of the 1919 Treaty of St Germain and periodically to send information regarding slavery to the league. In a new precedent, the committee pushed to settle admission, bypassing the mission and contacting Addis Ababa directly for a decision. Undoubtedly amazed by Europe's accommodating attitude, Tafari again urged the French to wait until he might arrive in Europe, but the French fervently pressed his seemingly inactive government. Only three days before the league adjournment, Nado sent his reaction, advising acceptance "to guarantee Ethiopian arms and independence." Finally, on the last night, after long deliberation, the court accepted admission. Habte Giyorgis and Zawditu had reason to be satisfied, as were the French, who found apparent snubs from Tafari inexplicable under the circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

The Addis Ababa government contemplated its new position, testing its "secured" independence by officially castigating Britain and Italy for Geneva obstructionism<sup>36</sup>; they also "fulfilled" their league obligations, which seemed so vague as to be no conditions at all, by appointing a special commission to draw up edicts on slavery and arms. The documents, quickly

released, seemed comprehensive, and pleased anti-Slavery groups, but they patronized Europe far more than they brought internal reform.<sup>37</sup>

The arms edict brought the government into congruence with league stipulations, by outlawing unauthorized possession, import, export, manufacture, and trade of arms. The slavery edict again imposed heavy fines for the trade, and provided for the emancipation of some slaves, without abolishing the legal status of slavery itself.<sup>38</sup> It also established liberation courts, whose judges were to keep a census of slaves, to issue certificates of liberty, and to assist those freed to obtain work. If enforced, the legislation would have brought all weapons under centralized Ethiopian government control and ended slavery in a generation by freeing all slaves born henceforth or those whose masters died. In practice, however, the government confiscated weapons only in rebellious areas and emancipated fewer than 4000 slaves during the 1920s. The edicts do appear to have driven the trade underground. More transactions occurred under the guises of gifts or unclaimed collateral, while the traffic increasingly avoided legitimate trade routes, moving mostly at night and in much smaller numbers.<sup>39</sup>

Nonetheless, Tafari's inability to tie the new programs to a personal consolidation of legitimacy and authority delayed his efforts both against internal foes and against other claimants to the powers and privileges inherent in Ethiopian kingship. His "failure" at the league made it difficult for him to use the edicts

and their enforcement as a means to extend authority into the provinces. He had no exclusive prerogatives nor any mandate to appoint slavery judges throughout the south. Nevertheless, the existence of the slave bureau provided good propaganda for the Anti-Slavery Society and a symbol of imperial preeminence over the southern provinces, but very little more. Provincial governors, who naturally resented any challenge of local prerogatives, ignored Tafari's "anti-slavery crusade" and impeded the efforts of the slavery judges.

As a result, few judges were "conscientious," while many, especially those placed in frontier areas, developed and maintained close ties with slave entrepreneurs. Meanwhile in Addis Ababa, the frequent appearances of anti-slavery police provided more pageant than enforcement, since slave markets had already abandoned the city. Tafari and the government prepared elaborate dossiers on emancipation, opened a new school for freed slaves, and had more slave traders hung in the capital.

Tafari's opponents might have hoped that entry into the league would provide a bolt-hole from European imperialism, but the events of late 1923 and early 1924 did not support their desires. Hyperbolic articles about Ethiopian slavery continued to appear in Europe's press. More dramatic, however, was the August to September 1923 Corfu affair, in which the league, despite collective security, did nothing in the face of Italian aggression. The Ethiopian government and its official press were disappointed by

the lack of league action; even the local rumor mills were alive to the fact that league complacency bode no good for Ethiopia's long-term well-being.<sup>40</sup>

The government continued its program of self-defense, advertising its right to sovereignty, not only with propaganda related to the new edicts, but now with a state visit to Europe. After personally directing preparations of policy and imagery so extensive that the European ministers all criticized its obsessive detail (of course Europe's own preparations were equally extensive), Tafari, accompanied by a large entourage of leading chiefs and attendants, left Ethiopia in April 1924 in search of the conspicuous diplomatic success that had eluded him the year before. His tour of nine countries in four months is most often described in glowing terms, as Ethiopia's emergence from centuries of isolation, and as a profoundly progressive influence on Tafari's rule.<sup>41</sup> Many have presumed that Tafari's autobiography, by treating the trip at great length, reflected Europe's impact on his thinking. Unquestionably, the trip was important, but for a different set of reasons.

Merely by representing Ethiopia before European royalty and government, Tafari could at once portray himself at home and abroad as Ethiopia's legitimate heir to power, secure a higher place for Ethiopia in the eyes and minds of Europeans, and by scoring diplomatic triumphs, he might solidify his personal standing at home. He astutely pursued the image of a "progressive" Solomon,

precisely what he knew Europe hoped to perceive, but the mission induced little reform and was hardly a success. Among many accounts, the Manchester Guardian remarked that "They are no mere savages, crowned with traders top-hats, in second-hand braid, but absolute rulers as old as England." And Tafari impressed many Ethiopians with statesmanship and leadership. But he failed to convey a meaningful sense of Ethiopia's needs and views to the diplomats, and he was unable to bring home any diplomatic concessions to prop up his personal control over the economy and polity. As a consequence, he returned to a skeptical, Machiavellian court with nothing more tangible than lavish gifts and stories.<sup>42</sup>

To placate Tafari during the league discussions, France had been the first European state to extend an open invitation for a state visit. Even though he had been unsuccessful in 1923 at the league, the ras persisted in trying to frame Ethiopia's new obligations to Geneva as a mandate for his personal rule, and he succeeded in fashioning the trip as Ethiopia's acquired obligation for good relations. He overcame rivals' objections by making heady promises about all that he could accomplish, by delegating considerable authority in matters related to the trip, by promising to refer all treaties, concessions, and declarations to Addis Ababa, and by setting out a nationalistic agenda to which both decentralists and supporters could not object. To be safe, each faction would send along its own representative to watch him carefully.

Throughout Europe, Tafari stressed Ethiopia's new standing with the league in order to press for five important policy objectives, all designed to secure Ethiopia's international standing and Tafari's own position at the head of the state. He coveted a seaport, preferably Jibuti, through which the state, and potentially he himself might further control the proceeds from long distance trade. He hoped to break the tripartite arms blockade, for his own and Ethiopia's security; he offered Britain a compromise over Tana, which would diminish an important international threat towards Ethiopia and secure for him further control over northern economic and political interests, especially over Ras Hailu's. He hoped to obtain a more adequate and more personal share over Gambela's customs revenue, and finally he aimed to eliminate the extraterritorial obligations that demeaned his legitimacy and the sovereignty of the country he claimed to represent.<sup>43</sup>

In another international failure, Tafari failed to obtain each of the five objectives. Before leaving Addis Ababa, Tafari had broached the subject of Jibuti with the French minister, who soon thereafter heard that Italy was considering offering a port on the Red Sea in exchange for a railway concession to Wollo, and that Britain might exchange Zeila and a railway corridor through British Somaliland for the right to construct the dam at Tana. In Paris's view, negotiations regarding competing railways would counter the letter and spirit of the Tripartite agreement. The

French ministry nonetheless feared the possibilities. For revenue, Jibuti depended almost entirely on the Ethiopian transit trade, and while the Quai d'Orsay agreed that Tafari, given France's recent aid at the league, was brazenly belligerent and without any lawful claim to coastal land, the very existence of Jibuti now seemed threatened. Refusal of Tafari's enormous request might soon thereafter ruin Jibuti without compensation, while some understanding might at least provide France with a substantial yearly rent and a secured political future in Ethiopia. Gaussen therefore informed Tafari, just prior to his departure, that, at very least, arrangements could be made for Ethiopia to share Jibuti's facilities.<sup>44</sup>

When Tafari arrived in Paris, however, three factors changed France's position. Premature press reports stimulated hostile public opinion. Second, the Governor of Jibuti vociferously argued that any change in the status quo would ruin the economic foundation of the colony. To complicate the climate, Tafari, encouraged by his conversation with Gaussen, pressed for a territorial cession, not for a temporary lease of land. Not being subtle, the ras emphasized that Jibuti was his preference, but he would settle, if necessary, for a British or Italian port. He emphasized that Ethiopia, as a non-signatory party, had no obligation to respect the Tripartite treaty's protection of the Jibuti monopoly, nor any of its interpretations regarding territorial annexation. The Quai d'Orsay felt soundly pressed, but



in face of pressure from colonial officialdom and the public, they refused even to lease Jibuti. They boldly countered that an Italian railway through Assab would surely compromise Ethiopia's independence and cross unreasonably difficult terrain at exorbitant costs; dealing with Britain, they emphasized, would entail the "Tana sacrifice." And the French carefully reminded Tafari that Britain never retreated from occupied areas.<sup>45</sup>

Throughout Europe, Tafari also failed to obtain the other objectives central to his program. Each of the powers ignored his request to revise the articles of the Klobukowski Treaty that limited fiscal, judicial, and legislative sovereignty.<sup>46</sup> Diplomats either confessed their ignorance of the treaty, or else responded with their own pleas for judicial, frontier, administrative, and financial reform. In Britain, the prime minister and Foreign Office officials listened but never responded to his ideas of building the Tana dam with American engineers and Ethiopian capital, and of increasing Ethiopia's share of and control over Gambela. Amongst themselves, the tripartite powers had agreed to ignore all arms requests, pending a policy review. London permitted the purchase and export of a single rifle, which Tafari in his annoyance refused. In Britain, proposals concerning the Zeila seaport, buying the British-dominated Bank of Abyssinia, and on Gambela made little impression on upper-level but badly informed dignitaries, like R. MacDonald, who could only emphasize repeatedly that the issues were new and unfamiliar to him. The

proposals made so little an impression, in fact, that when negotiations proceeded on these matters in the years ahead, British officials were completely unaware that Tafari's position had already been clearly stated. Repeatedly, Tafari offered to lengthen his stay, in Paris for a seaport, in Britain for Tana, and everywhere for arms, in the frustrated hope of garnering a personal diplomatic sense.<sup>47</sup>

On returning in August, Tafari, unable to point to any of his promised diplomatic successes, now met the scheming of an angry, suspicious, and jealous court. Elders complained that Tafari had spent large sums of money pointlessly in Europe, apparently only with the aim of presenting himself before the European royalty and press. Some who had accompanied the mission were "irritated at the sight of his constant exaltation above themselves, and ... their hostility to him has grown on this account." Wild rumors circulated that Tafari had "sold the country" by arranging for the export to Europe of highland children; market rumors blamed the ras for every wrong, including the sale of the country to the Catholics in a new concession, the Belgian alcohol monopoly, now deemed responsible for temporarily high grain prices.

The rumors and intrigues were serious signs of political opposition. Minor officers, and many soldiers and government officials, spurred on by members of the court, now denounced Tafari for treachery to the nation. Soldiers, following Habte Giyorgis's harangues, demonstrated against the taxes introduced to pay for

the European trip, and against the exports of grain and cattle, whose supplies in the capital were slim and whose prices were high.<sup>48</sup> The political climate allowed Zawditu to appoint a new council of eighteen advisers, whose reported function to counsel the Empress far under-shadowed the true purpose, to force Tafari to delegate his authority. Unable to demonstrate the utility of the trip, Tafari had no choice but to submit all foreign and domestic matters to the counsel.

The tensions culminated in two abortive coups, one in April 1925, and the second in August. In both cases, Tafari's spies alerted him to the danger. He arrested all of the conspirators, or at very least their representatives. By surviving the political activity at Mascal, Tafari might have felt somewhat more secure, despite the continuing rumors that Lij Iyasu had had a hand in each of the coup attempts. It was, however, the threat of foreign intervention that secured Tafari's authority. At the beginning of his reign, Tripartite threats had helped the ras to move against the prince. Now, under renewed pressure concerning slavery and the Tana negotiations, competitors to the privileges and powers inherent in the throne had no choice but to support Tafari, lest there be no sovereignty and authority to gain or inherit.<sup>49</sup> Britain's quest for Tana was the first problem; by pursuing the dam geopolitically, and not directly with Addis Ababa, HMG unwittingly but predictably outraged the Ethiopian government. Tafari, whose position could only benefit with the passing of time

and the ostentatious exercise of power, benefitted most clearly from the unity required within Ethiopia to respond to the threat.<sup>50</sup>

The continuing shortages of and the growing international demand for cotton indirectly challenged the basis of Addis Ababa's government. Convinced that there could be no expansion of the Sudan's cotton output without careful regulation of the waters from Tana, Gezira officials pressed the Foreign Office to reopen negotiations. While Italian opposition had had little or nothing to do with the failed negotiations of 1922-1923, the Foreign Office and their new minister, C. Bentinck, now accepted Russell's 1923 recommendation to eliminate all misunderstandings with Italy, in the absurd belief that Ethiopia would surely grant the concession in the absence of Italian opposition. None of the British ministers anticipated any adverse reaction to an Anglo-Italian entente over Tana, and all were convinced that HMG could not again afford to allow Ethiopia to refuse the Tana scheme. They were mistakenly encouraged when Tafari, in pursuit of his 1924 agenda, hired an independent engineer to study the lake. Bentinck concluded: "...we must be assured of the support of both France and Italy before we reopen the question. We must have something to offer, and perhaps be in a position to threaten. We must be able to strike, with no possibilities of a refusal."

Obscure indications from French officials naively convinced the FO that France, with no apparent rival interests, would never oppose the negotiations for the construction of the dam; they

therefore avoided to mention that they were discussing the question with Italy. The agreement of December 1925 took the form of an exchange of notes much along the lines suggested by Italy after the 1919 Peace Conference. In a clear modification of the Tripartite agreement, Britain would "permit" Italy exclusive economic influence in western Ethiopia and would support Rome's construction of a railway connecting Eritrea with Italian Somaliland. In exchange, Italy would support, or at least not oppose Britain's negotiation for Tana. Britain's policy, of course, failed to take into consideration the constraints of Ethiopia's continuing succession crisis politics, the domestic conflicts between Addis Ababa and Ras Hailu, Tafari's 1924 suggestions, and most importantly the extent to which Ethiopia and world opinion would object to the notion that Italy might somehow hold exclusive economic influence in another sovereign state.<sup>51</sup>

Pressure on slavery was the second problem. While Britain negotiated with Italy, the reports urged by the Anti-Slavery Society were finally arriving at the Foreign Office. Soon after Ethiopia's admission to the League of Nations, Whitehall realized, to its surprise and relief, that its opposition in Geneva had been wrongly based. Ethiopia's new commitment to furnish information on slavery obviated any legal or ethical responsibility Britain might now have to publish or distribute its consul's reports on slavery. The league's slavery commission, meanwhile, had little bite and could exert no meaningful pressure on Ethiopia. In June 1925, when

the Anti-Slavery Society pressed in Parliament for the publication of British consular reports on slavery in Ethiopia, the Foreign Office could therefore respond that disclosures would prejudice Ethiopia, the status of the consuls, and do more harm than good for British policy in the Horn. But the Anti-Slavery Society, convinced that HMG hoped to conceal the scandal of Ethiopia's social conditions for economic and political reasons, accelerated its pressure for the procuring and publication of more information. The political savvy of the society far outweighed its numbers.<sup>52</sup>

In spite of the Foreign Office's reluctance, the society succeeded in requiring parliament to order new reports on slavery, slave trading, and raiding. To the dismay and amazement of the Foreign Office, the new dispatches starkly contradicted Sperling's image of benign and dignified practices; they seemed far too important to pigeon-hole. Only the account on Harrar, a city far from the frontier and the main slave trade routes, depicted slavery as a mild social institution. All the other consuls forwarded more unsettling descriptions. The account from Hodson, now the consul in Maji, caused the greatest stir. In a dispatch of 22 March 1925, which arrived in Britain in November, he claimed to have photographic confirmation that vast areas of the south and west had been depopulated and that every neftenya's household had three or four young slaves recently captured or confiscated in lieu of taxation. He continued

What a scandal the whole thing is! The Belgian atrocities could not have been worse. What makes the matter worse

is that these tribes are of fine physique, having their own laws and customs, and are by no means niggers in the accepted sense. The Mocha and Kaffa people, for instance, are almost Mongolian in colour and appearance, and I am sure were never intended by nature to act as serfs to anyone. I have been told by eye-witnesses of the horrors that happened in the past. Enormous gangs of tiny children, together with men and women, taken from their own particular villages and exposed to all the hardships of long treks; driven through this wet and cold country with very little food and no clothes, some in chains, and, when ill or tired, left to die in the road. When the raids take place, the villages are surrounded in the dark by the raiders, blowing trumpets and utterly bloodthirsty yells to stampede the inhabitants. The huts are then set on fire and the old men and women ruthlessly speared or shot as they rush out panic stricken, only the younger ones being of sufficient value to capture. These raids are even now occurring.

Ignoring the racism inherent in the reports, the Foreign Office was dismayed; its reaction would further trouble the Addis Ababa government. The Ethiopians seemed "unable to help themselves, though no good and much harm will be done by any attempt on our part to pillory them for the state of affairs disclosed." Still, the British ministers understood that they themselves could affect no change, and that attempts to do so would only alienate Ethiopia and risk the Tana negotiations. They therefore contacted France and Italy, in the hope that the Tripartite powers might collectively persuade the League to impose reforms "without wounding [Ethiopia's] amour propre or infringing upon their sovereignty." Ever anxious to promote an outcry over Ethiopia, Italy agreed to the discussions, but the French, whose Addis Ababa-bound representatives knew very little about slavery

and the slave trade, continued to resist involvement. There were, therefore, no discussions on slavery for the time being, but Tafari and the central government, by following the emotional treatment in the European press and through candid discussions with French officials, well understood that entry into the league had not sufficiently guarded their sovereignty from the passions and polemics of Europe.<sup>53</sup>

There was probably no disagreement between Tafari and the court over the dangers inherent in Anglo-Italian entente and in potential tripartite action in Ethiopia; still, Habte Giyorgis and Zawditu were reportedly more adamant in opposing discussions with Britain over Tana. Tafari clearly worked to cast the court as more "conservative" in foreign affairs, undoubtedly in order to appear friendlier and more "progressive" toward the Europeans. In truth, the court merely opposed any measure, negotiation, or treaty that would work to give more authority, or even the appearance of more authority, to Tafari. They therefore required the ras to include others in all diplomatic contacts. Yet, while preparing the central government's defense to Europe's initiatives on Tana and slavery, Tafari nonetheless portrayed himself as Europe's single strong supporter; he cited his Tana engineering expedition as proof of his "progressive" intentions.<sup>54</sup>

Confidential sources had already warned the Ethiopian government of the ongoing Tana discussions, but Britain and Italy first mentioned the agreement to Tafari in January, weeks after



the signing. The secretive nature of the discussions and now, the long delay in receiving a copy confirmed to the government their apparent jeopardy. Tafari quickly expressed his concern and resentment, but he withheld final comment until the powers forwarded the documents. Still, Workneh emphatically stated that the agreement clearly compromised Ethiopia's sovereignty, confirmed Italy's expansionist motives, and damaged HMG's prospects for Tana. He told the British minister that Rome would never get its railway, and that Britain could only now get the dam if it agreed to Tafari's idea of internationalization. Bentinck responded that the French railway represented an adequate precedent for foreign-directed infrastructural development, but Martin correctly answered that an unchallenged monarch like Menilek could accomplish what divided authority now could not.

Bentinck did not understand the subtleties of shared authority and he had placed undue faith in what he perceived as Tafari's "progressive" leanings, but he did caution his government, after reading the Anglo-Italian notes for the first time in January, that the two powers had taken insufficient regard of Ethiopian sensitivities. Despite growing Foreign Office frustration, he maintained again and again that the notes, which included blunt expressions like "control of the sources of the Nile... demands on the Ethiopian government... common action... protection of the dam... construction of corridors to the dam" were unfit for submission to the Ethiopians. For six months,

Bentinck and Colli rewrote and edited the notes while Addis Ababa grew steadily more convinced that the delays and the European press's fervor over slavery would culminate in proceedings against Ethiopia at the League of Nation's September meeting. Mussolini, who had by now ordered military preparedness in Eritrea, added to the hubbub with bombastic speeches against Ethiopia. Market rumors in Addis Ababa predicted imminent war with Italy and saw Britain using the slavery issue as a lever to get the dam. The entire town equated the Anglo-Italian entente with a coming partition of Ethiopia.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, on 10 June, after agonizing diplomatic delays, Britain and Italy rejected their ministers' new notes and ordered the presentation of the original set to the Ethiopian government, with only some "small" changes. The British minister had hoped to offer verbal assurances, along the lines of the League of Nations covenant, concerning Britain's formal interpretation of the notes' much-criticized language, but his authorization limited him to expressing only Britain's continuing friendship for Tafari and Ethiopia. With French encouragement, the Imperial government petitioned the League, asking whether Ethiopia ought to tolerate such pressure, and whether Britain's allocation to the Italian government of economic rights within Ethiopia constituted a transgression of Ethiopian sovereignty.<sup>56</sup>

To Tafari's benefit the long months of foreign pressure and apparent intrigue calmed political infighting in Addis Ababa.

Unlike the situation before 1924, working to preserve independence was far less internally divisive. The threat of foreign invasion threatened all of the court families equally and allowed Tafari to exercise his diplomatic prerogatives more independently. He also thereby obtained marginally more freedom to act. In April, with Ras Kassa's aid and no obviously voiced opposition, he assumed control over Ras Kabada's province of Wollo, in spite of the latter's payments to Zawditu. Tafari fashioned an indictment against Kabada in terms of the latter's activities in the slave trade. Slave traffic did pass through the province, and Ras Kabada surely benefited from it, but the charges were made to impress Europe and the court at the very moment that the slavery issue seemed to threaten the nation's independence. Europe would perceive Tafari as a modernizer while the court would understand that the charges necessarily appeased Europe and worked to lessen international tensions. Meanwhile, Tafari gained more direct control over Lij Iyasu's political base.<sup>57</sup>

To the government's satisfaction, diplomatic initiatives, including several official complaints to the league, further calmed the international pressure. In parliament in July, officials tried to calm mounting criticism by emphasizing that the agreement with Italy had no binding effect on Ethiopia and could not be used to obtain the dam through coercion. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopians generally regarded the proceedings as "a withdrawal through fear of public opinion" from an original partition scheme

and from the cession of future economic privileges. Meanwhile, to Rome's disgust, anti-Italian articles appeared in the Addis Ababa press, including exaggerated accounts of the Corfu incident. The foreign press picked up the theme. Amid the mounting international criticism, the Tripartite meeting on slavery, often postponed but finally held on 3 August, accomplished nothing on Britain's agenda. For different reasons, France and Italy both frowned on either a league appointment of a slavery commissioner or League support for Hakim Workneh's proposed slavery school. The Ethiopian government had skillfully delayed Europe's imperialistic machinations, and Tafari, by using the foreign pressure to stall internal infighting, had emerged a much stronger leader. Towards his further success, the deaths of Habte Giyorgis and the Abun now rewarded his patience and allowed him to accelerate his consolidation.<sup>58</sup>

The deaths gave Tafari far more sway in government, in making appointments and in exercising the prerogatives of kingship; but Zawditu and Ras Kassa remained an obstacle to his full economic and political consolidation. Both Kassa and Tafari remained on a now smaller Crown Council, to which they jointly claimed the authority to appoint. They subsequently placed loyal, sometimes second rate or otherwise unthreatening figures in ministerial posts. Apart from Zawditu, therefore, only Kassa might now challenge Tafari's political sway in Addis Ababa and his economic and political consolidation. Kassa remained Lij Iyasu's keeper, despite Tafari's repeated efforts to transfer the prince to Harrar,

and while the regent claimed to trust Kassa "like a brother", and while he consulted him daily about state business, he privately confessed that he never knew about what Kassa was thinking and he carefully discouraged Habte Giyorgis's army of retainers from migrating to Ras Kassa's camp.

When, therefore, Tafari appointed his own adherent, Dej. Mulu Geta as the new Minister of War, he carefully divorced the position from its ownership of Borana, which he conveniently held in trust as crown land. By so doing, he more easily attracted the support of Habte Giyorgis's landed adherents, and especially the bulk of the 16,000 soldiers in the fit.'s army, who in "gratitude" forwarded to him a share of their yearly revenue. In compensation, Kassa obtained Habte Giyorgis's Arussi for his stepfather, Dej. Wolde Tsadik and districts in Walamo. Zawditu succeeded only in reappointing Zallaka to the Ministry of Finance, replacing Mulu Geta, but Tafari and the new Minister of War manoeuvred to retain supervision over the better part of the customs revenue. All of the changes and promotions spurred new rumors that the Empress, Kassa, and the Tsafai Tazaz were aiming to replace Tafari with Lij Iyasu; Zawditu's secretive May trip to Salale spurred more rumors that she would privately arrange a coup with the prince. No meeting occurred, however, though letters were exchanged. There would be no coup attempt in 1927.<sup>59</sup>

While Zawditu lived, Tafari could not actively consolidate the southern and southwestern areas of production, even if he could

derive revenue through customs from their long-distance trade. Nonetheless, growing ascendancy did allow him to exercise his prerogatives visibly by undertaking serious negotiations with Europe. Tafari and the government confidently felt that the League had impeded foreign imperialism against Ethiopia, but Tana remained Britain's foremost interest. While Ethiopia emerged better able to express its points of view, Tafari remained convinced that HMG might be satisfied and Ethiopia might retain its independence only if he lessened Britain's frustration over Tana with an internationalized concession. Moreover, he might use the concession to strengthen his finances and his standing throughout the north. Indirectly in January 1927 Tafari informed Bentinck that negotiations would proceed if Britain were to submit, privately to him, a draft Tana treaty. He alone, he insisted, would take the documents to Zawditu and her advisers. Tafari also made it clear that the success of the negotiations would again depend upon their internationalization. He intimated that a third-party ought to build the dam, and that Ethiopia would share the profits derived from Sudan's improved irrigation. Moreover, to safeguard Addis Ababa as the center of the political economy, any road or concession would have to lead to the capital. On 3 May, purposely just prior to an Italian state visit, Bentinck presented Tafari with Britain's offer, which guaranteed handsome annual payments but also involved building roads to the Sudan and exclusive roles for British engineers.<sup>60</sup>

Negotiations were delayed by several events. For the moment, Tafari conveniently blamed delays on Zawditu's "conservatism," but for weeks, Tafari was preoccupied with the arrangements for the visit of the Italian delegation led by the Duke of the Abruzzi, who sought to exchange Ethiopian access to Assab for a transport corridor connecting the Italian port with Wollo. The week-long visit featured elaborate efforts to portray the ras's administration in progressive terms; there were long parades of some quarter million troops, ceremonial exchanges of decorations and presents, and numerous receptions in the new imperial quarters finished for the occasion. Tana negotiations were stymied, however, by renewed agitation over slavery. After visiting Addis Ababa, an Egyptian bishop, whom Tafari had cultivated to influence the coming nomination of a new abun, lectured in Cairo on slavery using indiscrete quotes from P. Zaphiro, the Oriental Secretary in Britain's Addis Ababa legation. The Egyptian Gazette published excerpts, which shortly arrived in Addis Ababa.

Zaphiro flatly denied having made the remarks, at Britain's request the bishop telegraphed his uncertainty concerning the source of his information, and Bentinck believed that the Italian minister instigated the controversy to undermine the Tana negotiations. Tafari and the government, still sensitive over the last year's veiled threats and all the more tuned to the impact on Ethiopia of such foreign publications on slavery, insisted that, at a minimum, Zaphiro ought to take a lengthy leave of absence.<sup>61</sup>

Although incoming consular reports reminded the Foreign Office that Zaphiro's alleged remarks were wholly accurate, and despite their reluctance to accede to another Ethiopian "sacking" of a British official, HMG had no desire to raise the slavery issue in face of ongoing Tana negotiations. Still, Bentinck was reasonably convinced that Ethiopia's often harsh diplomatic language on Tana bore the marks of frustration on other issues.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, in July, Tafari resumed negotiations, and in conversations with Bentinck, he elaborated on the proposals given to MacDonald in 1924. To this end, Worqneh left for New York to contract the "neutral" engineering firm of J.G. White. Again, the Foreign Office was dismayed. Tafari's counterproposals offered no guarantees for many technical and security considerations, a road to Addis Ababa would involve greater time and expense, Tafari seemed greatly to exaggerate the building costs and final benefits of the dam, and negotiations with a third party seemed to abrogate the terms of an existing 1902 Anglo-Ethiopian agreement. Nonetheless, Tafari stood his ground. Relations with Ethiopia were for months quite tense, but the Foreign Office realized in the end that construction by a foreign firm was not in itself objectionable, so long as a technically adequate dam could thereby be built. J.G. White checked out as a reputable firm, and HMG reluctantly agreed that it was the best way of circumventing Ethiopian "obstructionism."<sup>63</sup>



The resumption of negotiations relieved foreign pressure on Ethiopia, all the more so because London would now maintain its official ignorance on slavery. More immediately, however, Britain, partly in the hope of securing better relations and the dam, now approved one of the items on Tafari's 1924 agenda, giving him direct control over western customs. Ras Nado and Ras Gugsa had derived considerable revenue and autonomy by developing the export routes through Gambela and Gallabat. Tafari had therefore opposed the construction and development of roads and communications that might facilitate such exports, in no small part because the central government's share was small. In 1926, for example, it was only 8600 pounds, which Tafari refused to accept on principle. Previous sums had been even less, owing to monies skimmed off the top by local officials and by the Sudan government as compensation for cross frontier raiding. After his London meetings in 1924, Tafari continued to argue that Britain had had no right to establish and maintain custom's houses on Ethiopian soil. He would, however, be willing to accept a substantially increased rent, preferably one collected directly by his own negadrases.

After a lengthy telegraphic correspondence, Sudan officials, in the naive belief that they might thereby monopolize western revenue to Ethiopia's disadvantage, agreed to collect Sudan's customs fees in the Sudan. In return, they proposed that the Sudan would retain Gambela, yet have no future responsibility for forwarding Ethiopia's share of revenue. The news drew enormous

pleasure from Tafari, who naturally assumed that he had finally obtained control over western revenue. Articles in Berhanenna Selaam praised the strengthening of Anglo-Ethiopian relations, and Tafari appointed a negadras to oversee the collection of revenue. Only in February 1927 did HMG awake to the dangers of their own proposal; Tafari, who was interested in diverting exports through Addis Ababa, might now set export-inhibiting charges in the west. Having found an issue, however, which would bolster Anglo-Ethiopian relations just when Tana negotiations were opening and just after the height of the tensions from the Anglo-Italian accord, Bentinck pressed the negotiations forward. Final agreement was reached only in 1928. The 5% limit on Ethiopian customs collection would fall well short of the control Tafari desired, but the ras nonetheless had procured a valuable victory for centralization and bolstered his personal standing at home.<sup>64</sup>

Tafari's growing ability to assert himself coincided with the empress's illness and her decline from influence. Rumors continued to question Tafari's ultimate legitimacy and his right to the prerogatives of kingship, but the ras nonetheless converted growing autonomy into his first visible moves to consolidate the southern areas of production. In December 1927, the empress fell gravely ill from dropsy or pneumonia. The usual market rumors predicted foreign invasion or Lij Iyasu's return should she die. There were also tales, from high level sources, that Tafari's Greek doctor, Zervos, was directly responsible for her Majesty's illness

and also for the recent deaths of the Abun and of Lij Iyasu's sister, who had died shortly after having expressed a wish to visit the ex-leader. One official privately intimated that, like the abun, Zawditu would at first recover, then grow ill, and recover again. Zervos might thereby gain her favor, but the third illness, according to the prediction, would be fatal.<sup>65</sup>

The rumors, which turned out to be true, were an attempt to check Tafari's growing ascendancy, but they could not stop a now unopposed Tafari from moving to consolidate the southwest. Already, he and his followers controlled lands from Harrar to Lasta, with more limited claims through Borana. Still, the bulk of the richest coffee land in the south remained in the possession of decentralists like Balcha in Sidamo, Nado in Gore, and Abba Jifar in Jimma. It was difficult, and perhaps impossible amidst triumvirate competition and tripartite intrigue to challenge these leaders openly; now, however, Tafari made his first serious overtures to assume more personal dominion over the rich areas of production in the south and southwest.

Dej. Balcha of Sidama and Ras Nado of Gore remained the two Menilek-appointees most powerfully opposed to Tafari's consolidation and centralization. Both had become powerful, independent leaders with access to a large army and revenue. Balcha, however, had directly alienated Tafari by taking the governorship of Harrar during Lij Iyasu's reign, by seeking export routes for Sidama coffee which avoided Addis Ababa, and by

repeatedly ignoring his imperial "responsibilities" to pay tribute and to place his troops at the call of the government. Nado, who had gained a substantial national and international reputation by leading Ethiopia's delegation to the Peace Conference in 1919 and to the League in 1923, and by accompanying Tafari's 1924 European tour, likewise impeded the ras's program by monopolizing revenues from coffee and hides exporting through the Sudan. Tafari moved first in Gore, where the coming Gambela treaty would allow greater governmental control over revenue only if he could infiltrate the western administration. Until now, Tafari had opposed infrastructural improvements which would facilitate trade with the Sudan, but the new treaty and his new freedom prompted a new policy.

The ras began to acquire thousands of acres in and around Gore from the heirs of Dej . Gunami, who had himself purchased the land from local Oromo using "devious methods." Numerous appeals from Oromo and from Ras Nado went unheeded before Tafari's newly appointed bailiffs, who used their jurisdiction to bypass the Gore administration. The largest tract of newly acquired land included the area through which a British consortium proposed to construct a road from the highland down the escarpment to Gambela on the Baro river. Rumors in Gore correctly predicted that Tafari, with his son-in-law Fit. Desta Damtu, would themselves sponsor the road construction. Imperial pressure on Nado continued to increase. An Addis Ababa order for mobilization directed two thirds of Nado's

forces to proceed against pretended European encroachment on the western frontier. Nado refused, assuming that he and his soldiery would die in the diseased lowland while Tafari proceeded locally with consolidation.<sup>66</sup>

Tafari obtained more immediate success with Balcha. After repeatedly claiming that he was too ill to travel, Balcha finally arrived in Addis Ababa with several thousand troops to face charges of mistreating his subject population. According to official stories, he subsequently refused to prostrate himself in customary fashion before Tafari. Reportedly, he sounded drums within the imperial compound, he refused palace feasts, and he openly queried why the ras occupied Lij Iyasu's regency. In his autobiography, as justification for moving against Balcha and assuming dominion over important southern coffee lands, Tafari cited Balcha's interference before 1916 with his own rule in Harrar, peasant complaints of ill treatment and misgovernment in Sidamo, and Balcha's long intransigence in facing these charges. In essence, the basis of the conflict was Balcha's refusal to acknowledge Tafari as master and as Ethiopia's legitimate ruler. Ras Kassa's and his forces were summoned, the Fitcha guard around Lij Iyasu was strengthened, and Tafari posted his own men around Balcha's camp and, taking no chances, on the hills to the north in the direction of Lij Iyasu's jail. Meanwhile, Balcha's own men were invited to join the regent's forces. On 17 February, amid considerable tension but without a violent confrontation, Balcha

was deprived of his provinces and his property. The imperial treasury claimed his money, and Tafari assumed the right to his cattle, his sheep, and most importantly, to redistribute control over some of the richest coffee lands in the south.<sup>67</sup>

Zawditu and her adherents had no choice but to confront Tafari's growing strength. She easily drew support from other Menilek-appointed military officers and landholders, who would perceive Balcha's dismissal as a threat to their standing and position. Again, rumors circulated the capital, blaming Tafari for recent grain and food shortages and opposing the ras's recent negotiations with Italy as selling of the country. Tafari insisted that he kept the empress and her advisers well informed of all diplomatic maneuvers, but local gossip asserted that he had received substantial bribes from the Italians and, much more importantly, that he had never consulted Zawditu before signing the treaty.<sup>68</sup>

The course of the ensuing coup attempt is as vague as the rumors and myths that moved it, but Tafari at long last emerged with exclusive control over imperial decision-making. On 6 September, after a long siege, many of Zawditu's followers surrendered. Tafari's success prompted several decisive steps. On the 19th, he convened a meeting of the government leaders, ostensibly to announce the names of those implicated in the recent coup effort. Instead, his supporters read a prepared statement extolling the regent's accomplishments and calling for his

promotion to negus with full and unchallengeable imperial prerogatives. The ras himself stayed away to avoid the appearance of ambition. Those present were reportedly so surprised that there was no discussion, and the proposal was quickly approved.

Two days later, after some reflection, Zawditu and her supporters offered some resistance, causing the French minister to fear a general coup. The empress stressed the lack of precedent for having two "kings" in the capital at one time, or else the need for another regent should Tafari accept kingship over a particular area. Moreover, if he were to remain in the capital, over what would he be king? The ras expressed shallow satisfaction with his current standing, while his family offered a simple compromise. Tafari would become "His Majesty Tafari Makonnen, Heir to the Throne of Ethiopia and Regent Plenipotentiary." Under tremendous pressure, and unable to seek help from Ras Kassa, who would probably not have intervened and whose troops were in any event too distant to matter, the empress acceded to the clarification in the imperial power structure.<sup>69</sup>

The quickly arranged coronation in October was an impressive confirmation of Tafari's legitimacy. He had rejected Zawditu's hope for an immediate, private crowning in favor of a large ceremonial before the nobility and the foreign dignitaries; He would spare no expense to impress his prerogatives over Ethiopia and to prove his "progressive" leanings to the Europeans. The week-long festivals in Addis Ababa and Harrar featured banquets,

parades, troop reviews, and church ceremonies, all replete with singing and colorful bunting and dress. European visitors recorded favorable impressions of the "modern" quarters hastily erected for their convenience, and all commented, after their talks with the new negus, that he had gained unchecked authority to modernize the country.<sup>70</sup>

Already, from 1916 to 1928, he had added to already large Harrar holdings the whole of Wollo, lower Arussi, held by his uncle, and most of Borana. Now, of course, he could accelerate his campaign to isolate Menilek's and Zawditu's appointees in the frontier and coffee provinces, and to transform the rich coffee districts into personally directed revenue-producing fiefs. In the years to come, no longer shackled by delegated authority, Tafari could fully reveal and actively pursue his program of consolidation.

Negus Tafari Makonnen, soon to be Emperor Haile Sellassie, would now face only sporadic political opposition. His obstacles would rather be the great depression and growing Tripartite frustrations. But on the Sunday morning of 7 Oct. 1928, on taking the crown from Zawditu, Tafari could boast "that he had become King in accordance with the wishes of his people, and with the consent of all the important provincial chiefs." It was with personal satisfaction that he recalled: "We received the crown from the hands of Empress Zawditu, and the festive day passed off with dignity."<sup>71</sup>



## Notes

1. Zervos, p. 157.
2. For the raging debate, see C. McClellan, "Land, Labor, and Coffee: The South's Role in Ethiopia's Self-Reliance, 1889-1935," African Economic History 9 (1980); H. Marcus, "The Infrastructure of the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis: Haile Sellassie, the Solomonic Empire, and the World Economy, 1916-1935," Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies (Chicago, 1979); J. Edwards, "Slavery, the Slave Trade, and the Economic Reorganization of Ethiopia 1916-1935," African Economic History 11 (1982).
3. H. Henin, "Ethiopie," Recueil Consulaire Belge CXXXVIII 2 (1907) 140.
4. See, for example, C. Isenberg and J. Krapf, Journals Detailing their Proceedings in the Kingdom of Shoa. (London, 1843) 190, 445-6; J. Harris, The Highlands of Aethiopia. (London, 1844), II 20, 341; P. Mérab, Impressions d'Ethiopie (Paris, 1921-9) III 480-95.
5. Mérab, III 480.
6. A. Speletta, L'Agricoltura Coloniale XI (1917) 124.
7. Most of the planting occurred in buffer zones near the border and the king's lands, much of which had been reserved for hunting.
8. Teketel Haile-Mariam, "The Production, Marketing, and Economic Impact of Coffee in Ethiopia," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University (1973) 31-5.
9. The best accounts are in C. McClellan, "Reactions to Ethiopian Expansionism: The Case of Darasa, 1895-1935," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University (1979) 111-138, 223-236; Markakis, chapter three; Mislu Gugsu, "Estate Administration in part of present day Jibat and Mecha under Fitawrari Habte Giyorgis," unpublished M.A. thesis, Haile Sellassie I University (1974).
10. McClellan , "Reactions...", 267-72; Markakis; Holcomb; Garretson.
11. McClellan , "Reactions...", 267-72; Shack; Abeles.

12. Triulzi; Cerulli, 75-6; Montandon, 86.
13. Imperial Ethiopian Government Central Statistical Office, Report on a Survey of Kefa Province, 24; Zervos, p. 156; M. Gruhl, The Citadel of Ethiopia (London, 1932) 146, 211; McClellan, "Reactions...", 207; Garretson, IJAHS.
14. British Parliamentary Sessional Papers, Report for the Years 1911-2, 30; Idem, Report for the Year 1910 24. See Edwards, "The Political Economy...", note 81.
15. Many still considered camels and mules an alternative, and southwestern merchants frequently complained about the heavy customs taxes and increasing railway rates. Spaletta, 204-6; Zervos, 150, 156; ASMAE 54/36-147 Cora to MAE, 19 Nov. 1930; PRO: FO 371/5509 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 March 1921; FO 371/43999 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1 December 1920; FO 371/12352 Mohamedally and Co. to Bentinek, Addis Ababa, 9 Sept. 1927; US Dept, of State 884.773 Aden to Park, Aden, 31 March 1925.
16. PRO: FO 371/4390 FO Minute (Lockhart), 19 Nov. 1920; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 2 Nov. 1920; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1 Dec. 1920; FO 371/4390 Curzon to Dodds, 17 Aug. 1920; FO 371/5501 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 6 Dec. 1920; FO 371/5501 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Dec. 1920; FO 371/5501 CO to FO, 7 Jan. 1921; FO 371/5501 Northey to CO, Kenya Colony, 16 Dec. 1920; FO 371/5501 Hawkins memorandum, nd, enclosed in Dodds to Curzon, 6 Jan. 1921; FO 371/5501 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 March 1921
17. PRO: FO 371/5501 Northey to CO, Kenya Colony, 16 Dec. 1920 enclosed in CO to FO, 25 Jan. 1921; FO 371/5501 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Dec. 1920; FO 371/5501 Hawkins to Lockhart, Maji, 20 Mar. 1921; FO 371/5501 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 6 Dec. 1920.
18. PRO: FO 371/5502 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 10 May 1921; FO 371/5502 Ras Tafari to Russell, Addis Ababa, 25 April 1921; FO 371/5502 CO to FO, 12 Aug. 1921; FO 371/5502 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 18 Aug. 1921; FO 371/5502 CO to FO, 22 Aug. 1921; FO 371/5502 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 9 Sept. 1921; FO 371/5502 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 22 Aug. 1921; FO 371/5502 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 Aug. 1921; FO 371/5502 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 17 Nov. 1921; FO 371/5502 Notley to Churchill, Kenya Colony, 13 Sept. 1921 enclosed in CO to FO, 24 Oct. 1921.

19. PRO: FO 371/4399 Curzon to Dodds, 17 Aug. 1920; FO 371/5501 Hawkins to Lockhart, Maji, 20 Mar. 1921 enclosed in Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 21 Jan. 1921; FO 371/7147 FO Minutes to Parliamentary Question (Cavendish Bentinck) 1 Mar. 1922.
20. PRO: FO 371/7147 Sperling minute to Parliamentary Question (Cavendish Bentinck) 1 Mar. 1922; FO 371/7147 FO Minutes to Westminister Gazette Extract, 18 Jan. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 14 Mar. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 24 Feb. 1922; FO 371/7147 Sandford to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 4 Mar. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 Feb. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 7 Mar. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 25 Apr. 1922; FO 371/7148 Anti-Slavery Society to Duff Copper, 18 May 1922; FO 371/7148 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 23 Aug. 1922; FO 371/7148 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Sept. 1922; FO 371/8404 FO Minutes to Parliamentary Question (Cavendish Bentinck), 22 Feb. 1923; FO 371/8404 FO Minute (Sperling), 25 July 1923; FO 371/8404 FO Minute (Sperling), undated; FO 371/8404 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 27 June 1923; FO 371/8404 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 June 1923; FO 371/8404 Russell to Tyrrell, Addis Ababa, 23 May 1923; FO 371/8405 Sperling Minute to Russell to Tyrrell, Addis Ababa, 5 July 1923.
21. PRO: FO 371/7147 FO Minutes to Westminister Gazette Extract, 18 Jan. 1921; FO 371/7147 Sandford to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 4 Mar. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 24 Feb. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 Feb. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 Apr. 1922; FO 371/7148 Sperling minute to Anti-Slavery Society to Duff Cooper, 18 May 1922; FO 371/7148 Balfour to Russell, FO, 6 June 1922; FO 371/7149 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1 May 1922.
22. PRO: FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 24 Feb. 1922; FO 371/7148 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Sept. 1922; FO 371/7148 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 23 Aug. 1922; FO 371/7148 Seymour minute to Steel-Maitland to MacNeil, 5 Dec. 1922; FO 371/7148 Proceedings of the Cornflower in Admiralty to FO, 18 Sept. 1922; ADM 53/74083 Cornflower log, 28 June 1922; G. Montandon, "Slavery in Abyssinia," Westminister Gazette. 6 June 1922.
23. USG: 884.01/- Aden to State, 4 April 1922; 884.00/124 Aden to State, 8 Nov. 1922; 884.00/125 Aden to State, 17 Jan. 1923; PRO: FO 371/7147 FO Minutes to Westminister Gazette Extract, 18 Jan. 1922; see Chapter 5.

24. PRO: FO 371/7148 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Sept. 1922; FO 371/7148 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 23 Aug. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 24 Feb. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 Apr. 1922; FO 371/7148 Admiralty to FO, 15 Aug. 1922; FO 371/7148 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Sept. 1922; FO 371/7148 Minutes to Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 16 Aug. 1922; FO 371/7148 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 4 Sept. 1922; FO 371/8404 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1 Mar. 1923; FO 371/8406 FO Minute (Dodds) 21 Aug. 1923; SIR Dec. 1922; The Morning Post, 3 Apr. 1923.
25. Again negotiations flagged, when Tafari resuscitated an old English promise to pay 10,000 pounds a year, retroactive to the signing of the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement of 1902. At very least, the ploy allowed an economically and politically pressed Tafari to test Britain's Tana resolve while delaying the negotiations. PRO: FO 371/7150 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 7 Aug. 1922; FO 371/7150 Dodds to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 28 July 1922.
26. USG: 884.00/124 Aden to State, 8 Nov. 1922; PRO: FO 371/8408 Addis Ababa Monthly Intelligence Report for March, 1923; FO 371/7152 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 17 Oct. 1922; FO 371/7147 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Nov. 1922; FO 371/7146 Ras Tafari to King George V, Addis Ababa, 25 Apr. 1922; FO 371/7146 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 11 Jan. 1922; FO 371/7147 Geddes to FO, Washington, 24 Mar. 1922; FO 371/7148 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 11 Mar. 1922; FO 371/7147 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 Feb. 1922; FO 371/7150 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 7 Aug. 1922; FO 371/7151 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 7 July 1922; FO 371/7152 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 7 Oct. 1922; FO 371/7152 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 25 Oct. 1922; FO 371/7152 CO to FO, 11 Nov. 1922.
27. "Abyssinia and Slavery," Morning Post. 3 April 1923; "Traffic in Slaves", Times. 9 April 1923; Morning Post. 17 Aug. 1923; PRO: FO 371/8403 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 23 Dec. 1922; FO 371/8403 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 2 Feb. 1923; FO 371/8403 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 May 1923; FO 371/8403 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1923; FO 371/8403 Russell to Warner, Addis Ababa, 5 July 1923; FO 371/8403 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1923; FO 371/8404 M. della Torretta to Curzon, Italian Embassy, 3 Oct. 1923; FO 371/8404 Curzon to M. della Torretta, 20 Oct. 1923; FO 371/8404 Russell to Tyrrell, Addis Ababa, 23 May 1923; FO 371/8405 HM Consul to FO, Geneva, 4 July 1923.

28. On 13 September 1923, Curzon minuted: "As the department knows, I think it has been consistently wrong in the advice it has given me about slavery in Abyssinia. It has taken a parti pris without, so far as I can see, any sufficient justification, de Coppet's report was merely a compilation, quite obsolete, and bearing no relation to the facts of today. Now I am told on the authority of our representative that 'it gives a true and accurate survey of slavery in Abyssinia' and that in one important particular he himself has done an injustice to de Coppet. The sooner the department revises its views about this question the better." PRO: FO 371/8406 Curzon minute to Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 13 Aug. 1923; Iadarola, 611; FO 371/8405 HM Consul to FO, Geneva, 4 July 1923.
29. PRO: FO 371/8405 Ras Tafari to League of Nations, Addis Ababa, 3 Aug. 1923; FO 371/8405 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 10 Aug. 1923; FO 371/8404 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 27 June 1923; FO 371/8409 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 14 Aug. 1923; FO 371/8409 FO Minute (Tyrrell), 5 Sept. 1923.
30. PRO: FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1919.
31. PRO: FO 371/8406 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 20 Aug. 1923; FO 371/8406 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 22 Aug. 1923; FO 371/8409 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 14 Aug. 1923; FO 371/11561 Plowman to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 23 Jan. 1926.
32. QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 15 Aug. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Note pour Monsieur le President du Conseil, nd.; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Addis Ababa, 31 Aug. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Addis Ababa, 8 Sept. 1923.
33. QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Addis Ababa, 20 Aug. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Charge (Rome), 22 Aug. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Addis Ababa, 8 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 16 Sept. 1923.
34. PRO: FO 371/8409 FO Minute (Sperling), 29 Aug. 1923; FO 371/8409 FO Memorandum for Lord Cecil, 3 Sept. 1923; FO 371/8409 Note by Sir R. Rodd on the Abyssinian Request for Admission to the League of Nations, received in the FO, 29 Aug. 1923; FO 371/8409 FO Minute (Tyrrell), 5 Sept. 1923; FO 371/8409 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 14 Aug. 1923; FO 371/8410 Tufton to Sperling, 15 Sept. 1923; FO 371/8410 C.W. Orde to Sperling, 11 Sept. 1923; Iadarola; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à Gout, Geneva, 7 Sept. 1923; K Serie,

- Ethiopie 11, Note pour M. le Director des Affaires politiques, 13 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Addis Ababa, 14 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clausel à Gout, Geneva, 12 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à Gout, Addis Ababa, 13 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à Gout, Geneva, 15 Sept. 1923.
35. "Abyssinia and the League," Near East. 20 Sept. 1923; PRO: FO 371/8410 Tufton to Sperling, 15 Sept. 1923; FO 371/8410 League of Nations Proposal by Special Sub-Committee, nd.; FO 371/8410 FO Minute (Kelly), 5 Oct. 1923; Belgian Archives: AF/4 Note on the League of Nations; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Note pour M. le Director des Affaires Politique, 13 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à MAE, Geneva, 12 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à MAE, Geneva, 14 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à Gout, Geneva, 13 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 16 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à Gout, Geneva, 15 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 19 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Addis Ababa, 21 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 21 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à Gout, Geneva, 19 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Addis Ababa, 22 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 24 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 26 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Clauzel à Gout, Geneva, 27 Sept. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 11, Note pour M. le President du Conseil, 3 Oct. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 12, Gaussen à Gout, Addis Ababa, 4 Dec. 1923.
  36. QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 11, MAE à Addis Ababa, 14 Sept. 1923; PRO: FO 371/8419 Ras Tafari à Prime Minister, 18 Sept. 1923.
  37. Amharic versions are in QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 13-15; Istituto Africano. English and French translations are contained in the de Halpert papers, Rhodes House.
  38. de Halpert papers, Rhodes House; A. Zervos, L'empire d'Ethiopie, (Alexandria, 1936), 50-53.
  39. de Halpert papers, Rhodes House; PRO: FO 371/10873 Zaphiro Report on Slavery, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 1 June 1925; FO 371/13104 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 7 Feb. 1928; FO 371/8406 Plowman to Curzon, enclosed in Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 22 Sept. 1923; FO 371/16996 Bentinck report, enclosed in Harris to Peterson, 4 Apr. 1933.

40. PRO: FO 371/9989 Russell to MacDonald, Addis Ababa, 18 Apr. 1924; FO 371/9990 Graham to MacDonald, Rome, 20 Jan. 1924; FO 371/10877 Zaphiro Memorandum on Abyssinian Affairs, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 9 Sept. 1925; FO 371/11561 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 28 Jan. 1926; E. Ullendorf, ed., My Life and Ethiopian's Progress.... p. 83.
41. Mosley; Sandford.
42. PRO: FO 371/10877 Zaphiro Memorandum on Abyssinian Affairs, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 9 Sept. 1925; E. Ullendorf, My Life and Ethiopia's Progress..., chapters 15-21.
43. see Chapter 5.
44. QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 12, Note de M. Chauvel sur l'Ethiopie et sur Djibouti, 22 Nov. 1923; K Serie, Ethiopie 12, Gaussen à Gout, Addis Ababa, 7 Jan. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 12, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 12, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 12 Feb. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 12, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 19 Feb. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 12 Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 10 Mar. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 13, Gaussen à M. de Bellesfon, Addis Ababa, 1 Apr. 1924.
45. QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 12, Proces-Verbal de la reunion tenue le mercredi le 27 Fev. au MAE, au sujet de l'accès de l'Ethiopie à la mer; K Serie, Ethiopie 13, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 15 Apr. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 13, Proces-Verbal de la séance tenue le 7 Mai 1924 par les Delegates des Departments MAE et M. des Colonies; K Serie, Ethiopie 13, M. des Colonies minute, 15 May 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 13, Note rédigé par M. de Bellefon, sous-chef de bureau a la Dir-Politique, au sujet d'une conversation du Prince Regent d'Ethiopie sur la question de Djibouti; K Serie, Ethiopie 13, Minutes concerning Ras Tafari's conversation with M. de Peretti, nd.; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Note pour M. le Director des Affaires Politiques, 5 June 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Chapon Baissac à M. des Colonies, Jibuti, 1 June 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Visit of Ras Tafari with M. de Beaumarchais, 1 July 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Chapon Baissac à M. des Colonies, Jibuti, 3 July 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Chapon Baissac à M. des Colonies, Jibuti, 29 June 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, MAE Minute, 26 July 1924.
46. see Chapter 5

47. QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 13, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 10 Apr. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 13, Gaussen à MAE, 17 Apr. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Note pour M. le Director des Affaires Politiques, 5 June 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Visit of Ras Tafari with M. de Peretti, 28 June 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Visit of Ras Tafari with M. de Beaumarchais, 1 July 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 2 July 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, MAE Minutes Note relative a l'accès de l'Ethiopie à la mer, 12 July 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 31 July 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 14, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 9 Aug. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 15, Gaussen a MAE, Addis Ababa, 17 Oct. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 15, Gaussen a MAE, Addis Ababa, 11 Nov. 1924; K Serie, Ethiopie 15, M. des Colonies a MAE, 15 Jan. 1925; PRO: FO 371/9989 Allenby to FO, Cairo, 3 May 1924; FO 371/9991 Graham to MacDonald, Rome, 27 June 1924; FO 371/9991 Russell to Murray, Addis Ababa, 30 June 1924; FO 371/9991 Knatchbull-Hugessen to Springrice, 4 July 1924; FO 371/9992 FO Minute (Murray), 15 July 1924; FO 371/9992 Minutes on the Prime Minister's interview with Ras Tafari, 16 July 1924; FO 371/9992 MacDonald to Bullock, 31 July 1924; E. Ullendorf ed. My Life and Ethiopia's Progress..., chapters 15-21.
48. Tafari was even unsuccessful in convincing Britain and Italy to dismiss their Addis Ababa ministers, whose attitudes the ras easily perceived as callous and totally unsympathetic. Both had consistently portrayed Tafari in less "progressive" and flattering terms than most other Europeans in Ethiopia, prompting the ras to comment that "none of the representatives now in Abyssinia know the Abyssinians, and that none of the ministers, as in the old days, ever put the Ethiopian side or point of view of a question to their respective governments." PRO: FO 371/10874 Annual Report for 1924, parag. 7, enclosed in Russell to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 7 Jan. 1925; FO 371/10877 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 13 July 1925; FO 371/10878 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 26 Oct. 1925; FO 371/10877 Zaphiro Memorandum on Abyssinian Affairs, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 9 Sept. 1925; FO 371/11574 Annual Report for 1925, parags. 113-115, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1925.
49. PRO: FO 371/19877 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 13 July 1925; FO 371/10877 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 24 Aug. 1925; FO 371/10877 Zaphiro Memorandum on Abyssinian Affairs, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 9 Sept. 1925; FO 371/10877 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1925; FO 371/10878 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 26 Oct. 1925; FO 371/11574 Annual Report for



- 1925, parags. 11-15, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1926.
50. For more detail on this short period of economic prosperity, see chapter 6.
51. PRO: FO 371/8403 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1923; FO 371/8403 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 3 July 1923; FO 371/8403 Russell to Warner, Addis Ababa, 5 July 1923; FO 371/8403 M. della Torretta to Curzon, Italian Embassy, 3 Oct. 1923; FO 371/8403 Curzon to M. della Torretta, 20 Oct. 1923; FO 371/9985 Russell to MacDonald, Addis Ababa, 1 Feb. 1924; FO 371/9986 Russell to MacDonald, Addis Ababa, 9 Apr. 1924; FO 371/9986 MacDonald to Ras Tafari, 19 July 1924; FO 371/19872 FO Memorandum (Murray), 24 March 1925; FO 371/10872 Graham to Chamberlain, Rome, 10 June 1925; FO 371/19873 Graham to Chamberlain, Rome, 7 Nov. 1925; FO 371/10873 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 7 Oct. 1925; FO 371/10873 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 27 Nov. 1925; FO 371/10873 Graham to FO, Rome, 27 Dec. 1925; FO 371/11574 Annual Report for 1925, parags. 32-33, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1926.
52. PRO: FO 371/9985 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 6 Dec. 1923; FO 371/9985 Fourteen Walker despatches, dated between 5 June 1913 and 19 June 1922, enclosed in Russell to Warner, Addis Ababa, 11 Jan. 1924; FO 371/9985 Russell to MacDonald, Addis Ababa, 21 Mar. 1924; FO 371/9985 Home to MacDonald, Dargila, 22 Mar. 1924; FO 371/9985 Russell to MacDonald, Addis Ababa, 18 Apr. 1924; FO 371/9985 Bullock to MacDonald, Addis Ababa, 9 Oct. 1924; FO 371/9986 Hodson to Russell, Mega, 4 Nov. 1923; FO 371/9986 Summers to Russell, British East Africa, 10 Oct. 1924; FO 371/10874 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 Oct. 1925; FO 371/10874 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 28 Oct. 1925.
53. see note 52; PRO: FO 371/10872 Murray Minute to Lugard Memorandum, 3 Sept. 1920; FO 371/10873 Chamberlain to Bentinck, 15 Oct. 1925; FO 371/10873 Ronald Minute to Lugard to FO, 22 Mar. 1925; FO 371/10873 FO Minute to House of Lords Debate, 13 Mar. 1925; FO 371/10874 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 Oct. 1925; FO 371/10874 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 28 Oct. 1925; FO 371/11571 Wigram to Murray, 6 Apr. 1926; FO 371/11571 Crewe to Chamberlain, Paris, 9 Apr. 1926; FO 371/11571 Crewe to Chamberlain, Paris, 23 Mar. 1923; FO 371/11571 FO Minute (Murray), 15 July 1926.

54. PRO: FO 371/11560 Plowman to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Jan. 1926; FO 371/11571 Plowman to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 23 Jan. 1926; see correspondence in FO 371/11560-5.
55. PRO: FO 371/11560 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 4 Dec. 1925; FO 371/11560 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 27 Jan. 1926; FO 371/11560 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 Jan. 1928; FO 371/11560 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 29 Jan. 1926; FO 371/11560 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1926; FO 371/11568 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 9 Feb. 1926; FO 371/11560 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 19 Feb. 1926; FO 371/11561 Graham to Murray, Rome, 18 Feb. 1926; FO 371/11561 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 22 Feb. 1926; FO 371/11562 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1926.
56. PRO: FO 371/11563 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 10 June 1926; FO 371/11563 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 15 June 1926; FO 371/11564 Graham to FO, Rome, 23 June 1926.
57. PRO: FO 371/11563 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 16 June 1926; FO 371/11564 Graham to Chamberlain, Rome, 2 July 1926; FO 371/11564 FO Minute (Locker-Lampson), 7 July 1926; FO 371/11564 Maclean to Chamberlain, 19 June 1926; FO 371/11572 Record of Slavery Meeting with France and Italy, FO Minute, 3 Aug. 1926.
58. PRO: FO 371/11574 Bentinck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 19 Feb. 1926; FO 371/11574 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 26 Apr. 1926; FO 371/11574 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 7 May 1926; FO 371/11574 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 21 May 1926; FO 371/11574 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 12 Dec. 1926.
59. PRO: FO 371/11566 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 29 Nov. 1926; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1926; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 18 Dec. 1926; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 19 Jan. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 1 Feb. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 8 Feb. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 28 Feb. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 Feb. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 3 May. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 31 May 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 10 June 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 11 July 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 26 Aug. 1927.

60. PRO: FO 371/11575 Chamberlain to Maclean, 3 Nov. 1926; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 6 Jan. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 6 Jan. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 Jan. 1927; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1927; FO 371/12340 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1927; FO 371/12340 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 7 Mar. 1927; FO 371/12340; FO Minute (Ronald), 5 Apr. 1927; FO 371/12341 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 10 May 1927; FO 371/12341 30 May 1927; FO 371/12341 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 25 July 1927; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 1 Apr. 1927; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 8 Oct. 1927; FO 371/12348 Dobinson to Patrick, Addis Ababa, 1 Dec. 1927; FO 371/12348 Dobinson to Patrick, Addis Ababa, 25 Oct. 1927; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1927.
61. PRO: FO 371/12344 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 26 Apr. 1927; FO 371/12344 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 23 Apr. 1927; FO 371/12344 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 10 May 1927; FO 371/12344 Chancery to Egyptian Department, Cairo, 8 May 1927; FO 371/12344 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 5 May 1927; FO 371/12344 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 May 1927; FO 371/12344 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 30 May 1927; FO 371/12344 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 31 May 1927; FO 371/12345 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 25 June 1927; FO 371/12345 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 27 June 1927; FO 371/12345 Bentinck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 2 July 1927; FO 371/12345 Zaphiro Memorandum, Addis Ababa, 18 July 1927; FO 371/12345 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 13 Aug. 1927; FO 371/12350 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 27 May 1927; FO 371/12350 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 28 May 1927; FO 371/12350 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 28 Nov. 1927.
62. PRO: FO 371/12344 Bentinck to Lloyd, Addis Ababa, 19 Jan. 1927; FO 371/12344 Hodson to Murray, Whitby, 24 Apr. 1927; FO 371/12344 Home, Hodson, and Plowman despatches, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 5 May 1927; FO 371/12345 Bentinck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 2 July 1927; FO 371/12347 Minutes to Bentinck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 19 May 1927; FO 371/12351 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 14 June 1927.
63. PRO: FO 371/12341 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 10 May 1927; FO 371/12341 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 30 May 1927; FO 371/12341 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 25 July 1927; FO 371/12341 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 26 Sept. 1927; FO 371/12341 Patrick to Bentinck, 29 Sept.

- 1927; FO 371/12341 Bentinck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 6 Sept. 1927; FO 371/12342 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 8 Oct. 1927; FO 371/12342 Department of Overseas Trade to Hamilton-Gordon, 7 Nov. 1927; FO 371/12343 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 14 Dec. 1927; FO 371/12343 FO Minute (Murray), 11 Nov. 1927; FO 371/12343 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 12 Nov. 1927; FO 371/12343 Rey to Murray, Addis Ababa, 10 Dec. 1927; FO 371/13099 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 Dec. 1927; FO 371/13099 FO Minute (Patrick), 5 Jan. 1928; see correspondence in FO 371/13099.
64. PRO: FO 371/11574 Walker to Murray, Gore, 13 Oct. 1926; FO 371/11575 Maclean to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 June 1926; FO 371/11575 Schuster to Murray, 5 Oct. 1926; FO 371/11575 Schuster to Murray, 14 Oct. 1926; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 31 Dec. 1926; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1927; FO 371/12348 Lloyd to FO, Cairo, 26 Feb. 1927; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 Feb. 1927; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 12 Mar. 1927; FO 371/12339 Malkin minutes to Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 12 Dec. 1926.
65. Greenfield, pp. 148, 156, 159-60; PRO: FO 371/13101 Abyssinian Intelligence Report No. 1 for Nov. 1927, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 13 Dec. 1927; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 29 Dec. 1927; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 23 Jan. 1927; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 4 Feb. 1928; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 10 Feb. 1928; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 21 Feb. 1928; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 9 Mar. 1928; FO 371/13101 Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 4 May 1928; FO 371/13101 Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 7 June 1928.
66. PRO: FO 371/12339 Walker to Bentinck, Gore, 8 June 1927; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1927; FO 371/12348 Lloyd to FO, Cairo, 6 Feb. 1927; FO 371/12348 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 Feb. 1927; FO 371/13101 Walker to Bentinck, Gore, 23 Nov. 1927; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 4 Feb. 1928; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 10 Feb. 1928; FO 371/13113 enclosures in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 7 Mar. 1928.
67. E. Ullendorf ed. My Life and Ethiopia's Progress. chapter 24; PRO: FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 21 Feb. 1928; FO 371/13101 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa,

- 9 Mar. 1928; FO 371/13101 Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 4 May 1928.
68. PRO: FO 371/13102 Dunbar to FO, Addis Ababa, 7 Sept. 1928; FO 371/13102 Dunbar to FO, Addis Ababa, 22 Sept. 1928; FO 371/13102 Dunbar to FO, Addis Ababa, 25 Sept. 1928; FO 371/13102 Dunbar to FO, Addis Ababa, 26 Sept. 1928; FO 371/13102 FO Minute (Ingram), 28 Sept. 1928; FO 371/13102 Dunbar to Cushendon, Addis Ababa, 11 Sept. 1928.
69. E Ullendorf, ed. My Life and Ethiopia's Progress. pp. 154-5; PRO: FO 371/14598 Annual Report for 1928-9, parags. 9, 65-9, enclosed in Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 28 July 1930; FO 371/13102 Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 16 Oct. 1928; FO 371/13100 Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 22 Oct. 1928.
70. PRO: FO 371/13103 Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 Oct. 1928; FO 371/13103 Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 22 Oct. 1928; FO 371/13103 Hamilton-Gordon to Cushenun, Addis Ababa, 2 Nov. 1928.
71. E. Ullendorf, ed. My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, p. 156.

## CHAPTER 4

"...never be made afraid by them."

"When thou goes out to war against thy enemy, and thou seest horses, chariots, and a people more numerous than thy own, never be made afraid by them."

Fetha Negast, Abba Paulos  
translation, p.274.

Finally, by 1928, Tafari had freer reign. The succession politics which had dominated the earlier period and limited the possibilities for his personal consolidation might now have given way to the sort of "modernization" and "progressive" restructuring which contemporary Europeans, several modern historians, and a surprising number of Ethiopians have associated with Tafari. Unquestionably, during the period from 1928 until the Italian invasion, important infrastructural and structural changes occurred with increasing regularity. There was, to be sure, an aura of "progress." Tafari, as Emperor Haile Sellassie, promulgated a Japanese-style constitution, he appointed several western advisers, he purchased the Bank of Abyssinia and transformed it into a "more reliable" and more loyal state bank, he promulgated a plethora of "progressive" sounding edicts, and, he sponsored and directed new and impressive infrastructural projects, like road-building, a wireless system, the expansion of the army, and the building of an awe-inspiring if fragile air

force. Undeterred by a jealous court, he also secured unchallengeable control over the rich areas of production.

The changes, however, quickly bring to mind the arguments concerning growth without development.<sup>1</sup> Tafari's policies, impressive as they sound, were motivated by and directed at creating a firmer basis for personal rule, not by notions of sponsoring broadly based economic development or creating a more egalitarian society. Tafari designed the infrastructural changes to personalize and maximize revenue, since he could only conceive of "Ethiopia" in the most personal terms. He had earned legitimacy and the prerogatives of kingship; unfettered, he could structure the empire to serve his reign, even if the economic and political strategies might not be in the best interests of Ethiopia's producers and long run needs.

I shall argue that the emperor, finally freed from constant triumvirate jealousies and bickering, able finally to pursue a personally designed restructuring of the political economy, merely placed personal power and standing ahead of Ethiopia's growth and development. Seemingly "progressive" infrastructural improvements impressed Europeans and some historians, but they were not in any sense "forward-looking" reforms. Rather, they were insightful but predictable stratagems for extending, strengthening, and preserving the conventional ideology of kingship, and at an unfortunately exorbitant cost. The new roads, hospitals, concessions, banks, electric lights, wirelesses and laws most

assuredly symbolized for European observers their own faith in "progress", but none of these changes even remotely altered the philosophical underpinnings of imperial domination. Rather, the improving infrastructure allowed Haile Sellassie to extend his imperial superstructure more profitably throughout Ethiopia. The emperor could now more effectively draw revenue through Addis Ababa, where the emperor, without opposition, could appropriate an ever larger share of revenue. It was a conventional imperial policy which fundamentally equated the nation's welfare with the growth and the power of the monarchy.<sup>2</sup>

After his coronation as king, Tafari's standing grew steadily stronger. He assumed more direct control over Habte Giyorgis's soldiers and over the empress's bodyguard. He also exercised his prerogatives to dispense land with more vigor. In the west, he gave Juma, Kaffa, Gore, and Beni-Shangul to trusted devotees, including Desta Damtu, Dejj. Makonnen Wasani, and Dejj. Assafa. Many other followers obtained positions in the administration and/or land. And, with increasing regularity, he assigned Zawditu's followers to remote territories.<sup>3</sup>

Few obstacles remained in the path of unchallengeable legitimacy. Tafari might now concentrate on tapping more efficiently the proceeds from the southwestern areas of production, and the central bureaucracy could operate with far more singleness of purpose. In other words, no other authorities could require Tafari to delegate authority. By 1930, his staff



dominated the Council of Advisers, the Imperial Bodyguard, the railway administration, customs collection, the judicial system, and the major coffee regions. Most of the changes, of course, involved only a reshuffling of personnel, a transferring of more loyal followers to positions of responsibility. There were no superstructural changes in the hierarchy of redistribution; producers would merely forward surpluses now toward new, "more legitimate" authorities. Western political observers, however, were quick to perceive progress, if for no other reason, than the administration now proceeded, to their way of thinking, more "efficiently." Legitimacy, the exercise of prerogatives, and perhaps most importantly high commodity prices and growing production brought more taxes and tributes to the capital. Tafari seemed to have more independence in negotiations, and his administration clearly had more cash to spend.<sup>4</sup>

Ras Gugsa Wolye, possibly in conjunction with his ex-wife, Zawditu, worked to keep the politics of succession alive, to preserve and defend the possibility of decentralized power and legitimacy and access to the prerogatives of kingship. From November 1929 into the early months of 1930, he organized revolts near Dessie, an area depressed in the aftermath of Shoa's defeat of Lij Iyasu and still harboring strong supporters of the prince. Gugsa Wolye and a force of approximately 10,000 men refused discussions with the Addis Ababa government, and they were said to

have promises of support from Ras Seyoum, Ras Hailu, and Ras Gugsa Area in the event the campaign succeeded.

It is not possible to judge whether Gugsa Wolye actually received commitments from the others, but, as the opposition would now discover, Tafari was by now clearly too strong to oppose openly. Still, by conditioning his support to Tafari, promising assistance only if guaranteed ownership over all conquered lands, Ras Seyoum created the impression in the capital that he might not in the end prove to be reliable. Ras Hailu and Gugsa Area provided no greater assurances. Even Zawditu responded curtly to a request from Tafari, Ras Kassa, and the abun to repudiate her connection with her ex-husband.<sup>5</sup>

Tafari therefore responded quickly. Without consulting Zawditu or other members of the council, he mobilized his forces, dispatching his new minister of war, his cousin Ras Imaru, and his son-in-law Dej. Desta with a contingent of over 30,000. It was, perhaps, the first time since 1916 that he had acted in so important a matter without delegating authority; the significance would not be lost on other aspirants to the powers and privileges inherent in imperial kingship.

On 31 May, Tafari's force defeated the opposition, but the ras's victory was greater still. Zawditu, his final obstacle to uncontested imperial prerogatives, died two days later. There would be considerable speculation concerning her death; one physician to the court, Dr. Garobadian, claimed that Tafari had

ordered her to be poisoned, a charge which recalls one of the conventional techniques of imperial accession. The rumor circulated Addis Ababa, but, perhaps as a reflection of Tafari's ascendancy, no one openly questioned what is now the accepted account, that the empress succumbed to compounded illnesses worsened apparently by her priest's recommendations of cold-baths. In either event, Tafari would no longer need to delegate his authority. Tafari's accession would end Triumvirate competition and accelerate his reorganization of the state. He would now reveal his philosophy and the nature of his policies.<sup>6</sup>

Like his predecessors, Tafari attempted to break free of the Egyptian Church, not owing to a desire to modernize the state and its religion, but more fundamentally to exercise his prerogatives and to control more directly the benefits that could accrue from supremacy over the Church. After Zawditu's death, one of Tafari's most important problems was the selection of a new abun. He openly stated his desire to obtain "progressive" Church leadership by eliminating Egypt's monopoly on consecrating Ethiopian bishops, in essence breaking free of the Ethiopian church's dependence on Alexandria.<sup>7</sup> His efforts, in the end unsuccessful, were predictable and conventional. All Ethiopian leaders sought independence from Egypt and a direct link to the abun, in order to obtain more direct leverage over the Church. Locally appointed bishops, if able to nominate an abun, could allow sovereigns to gain far greater influence in selecting the leaders of the Church, facilitate the

use of excommunication as a weapon of authority, and provide more control over the spread of ideas, especially those concerning the legitimacy of the state and its leaders. Menilek, for example, used excommunication as an effective tool against "rebels," as did those who had opposed Lij Iyasu.<sup>8</sup> Until now, the church had been a weak link in the ideological state apparatus, since the state had little influence over church appointments and insufficient say, in the preparation and promulgation of religious ideology. Understandably, therefore, Tafari, as king and soon as emperor, hoped to exercise his prerogative as "defender" of the Church as actively as possible. The throne name, Haile Sellassie ("power of the trinity") certainly reflects the desire.

Alexandria, however, frustrated Tafari. The Coptic Patriarch appointed one of Tafari's choices, and he also broke precedent by consecrating five Ethiopian bishops, usually a sufficient number to nominate an abun. However, he deprived the abun of any authority to appoint new bishops, and he ruled specifically that the bishops had no authority to constitute a synod. Tafari proclaimed the change as the dawn of a new era, but he would nonetheless have to proceed in his Church dealings in the same, conventional manner as his predecessors. He undoubtedly, however, obtained solace by the fact that he, and within Ethiopia only he, had called for and received an abun, whose very presence further legitimized Tafari and Shoan imperial policy. Among his first acts, the abun

excommunicated Gugsä Wolye and placed the imperial crown upon the new emperor.<sup>9</sup>

The coronation was perhaps the clearest contradiction, cast as a "progressive" and "modern" event, yet one which aimed to preserve and solidify the status quo. Haile Sellassie could obtain confirmation of his legitimacy by the presence of important dignitaries from home and abroad, by the presence of his impressive military, including demonstrations in the air, and by the obvious lack of any opposition. The ceremonies were impressive and carefully composed. To impress his new dignity upon the Europeans, Haile Sellassie received the foreign delegations in the throne room, sitting there cross-legged "after the manner of the Turkish Sultans." He contemplated the building of a new palace, and he commissioned an imperial train.<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps the emperor's most conspicuously "modern" act, the promulgation of Ethiopia's first constitution on 16 July 1931, slightly altered the infrastructure but merely confirmed the superstructure. Haile Sellassie conceived the document as another means of consolidating authority while portraying for the Europeans a "progressive" image. The constitution mostly codified existing practice and entered into law the emperor's images and notions of his own authority and standing. An imposing Palace ceremony for the Europeans and for leading Ethiopians symbolically confirmed the emperor's consolidation. Most of the leading ecclesiastic and civil authorities, including the rases,

ministers, the abun, and the itchege, had not previously seen the document they were now presented to sign, confirmation of the fact that the emperor no longer had to delegate authority in decision making.<sup>11</sup>

In his speech and in his interpretation of the new basis for his empire, the emperor emphasized several of the most important ideological planks of his program. He stressed that the constitution confirmed the unitary nature of the empire under his rule and the priority of the national interest over individual ambition.<sup>12</sup> The document asserted the emperor's ultimate control over land, his power to remove the landed nobility from their lands and titles, and it provided for the formation of a parliament whose primary function, even by the immediate reckoning of the European ministers, would now keep provincial leaders like Ras Hailu and Ras Seyoum, drawn to the capital by the coronation, in powerless Addis Ababa offices where the emperor could watch them carefully.<sup>13</sup>

Further, the articles of the constitution carefully reflected the ideology of kingship. The emperor would remain, in theory, the ultimate authority in Ethiopia; he would retain no obligation to delegate authority, and only the monarch would have the "constitutional" power to confer titles, to declare war and peace, to make new appointments, to command the army, and to promulgate decrees. To the Europeans, the constitution was a surprise, one reflecting Haile Sellassie's "progressive tendencies," though few predicted far reaching or immediate consequences. Barton, the most

cynical of the Europeans, felt that the new constitution was "perhaps intended to lend an aura of democracy to the emperor's autocratic government. The aura is very faint, a watery rainbow, and about as substantial." Nonetheless, he mustered what optimism he could muster, concluding that the constitution was "a move in the right direction, and ... the Ethiopian people are granted as much political liberty as they could digest at this stage of their development." <sup>14</sup>

Contemporaries and historians have interpreted the spate of legislation after 1929, like the constitution, as evidence of the emperor's progressive platform, but the new laws, passed owing to the decline of Haile Sellassie's opposition, were "progressive" only in the sense that they demonstrated the growing power of the state. Like the emperor's other policies, the laws simultaneously furthered the conventional consolidation of the empire while projecting an image of "modernization."

Stronger laws regarding slavery conveyed to foreign critics the seriousness of the emperor's purpose, but fewer than 4000 slaves were freed during the period. The emperor also raised the number of slavery courts from 48 to 62, and he agreed to finance six judges, five in the richest coffee growing regions, from the central government budget.<sup>15</sup> Haile Sellassie never specified his intentions, but it seems clear that he supported the anti-slavery efforts, not out of compassion for slaves or sympathy with the anti-slavery cause, but because it appeased Britain and furthered

his consolidation at a reasonable cost. Far more than slavery, slaving and slave trading served provincial and, as far as the emperor was concerned, destabilizing interests. The emperor, undoubtedly, therefore, intended to counter the trade effectively through appointments in coffee areas which would generate rather than siphon off revenue.<sup>16</sup>

By establishing the new civil, criminal, and commercial codes and by abolishing conventional judicial systems like the *afarsata* and the *liebasha*, the emperor asserted his prerogatives as the ultimate judicial authority. To a greater degree, he intended that the law of the land would depend, not on decentralized, local practices, but on the central government. He could also now claim that Ethiopia's judicial system, in practice and now on paper, had been modernized. The argument was important, for it aimed at the Klobukowski Treaty clause that Ethiopia could regulate and tax the foreign community if and only if the country's judicial system sufficiently resembled Europe's.<sup>17</sup>

Another edict ordered the playing of a new national anthem at national and international occasions, yet another symbol of imperial legitimacy at home and abroad. And there were other 'improvements'. He standardized military ranks to impress Europe with the image of improving efficiency, he institutionalized his prerogative over appointments and ranks, sanctioning his right to place adherents in high positions. Another law forbade provincial governors from travelling with large retinues and reserved for the



emperor the status inherent in large displays of followers. In effect, provincial authorities could no longer assemble their military forces 'legally' without first having obtained the express permission of the crown. Perhaps the most revealing of the emperor's new legislation received the least comment from the Europeans. Well aware of the use of rumor as an important form of political opposition, he announced substantial fines for anyone caught fabricating or spreading gossip. As one of the few measures that had no clear relationship to the apparent modernization of the state, the European ministers dismissed the measure in humorous language as another indication of Ethiopia's sensitivity to criticism.<sup>18</sup>

Unopposed in decision-making between 1929 and the end of the interwar period, the emperor also appointed a number of Europeans and one American to "advise" his ministries. Contemporaries and several historians have viewed these appointments as "progressive," but the emperor was still pursuing a conventional program aimed to cement his standing, his conventional prerogatives, and his image among Europeans as a progressive modernizer. He used the appointments to pacify Europe on the outstanding diplomatic issues of the day, like arms, slavery, frontier instability, extraterritoriality, finance, and he used the advisers as sources of diplomatic information and domestically as "proof" of his writ in decision-making. Many, like the British F. de Halpert in the Ministry of the Interior, the Swede, M.

Kolmodin in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the American Colson in the Ministry of Finance arrived with high hopes of reforming Ethiopia in their western image. Despite his rhetoric, reform was not what Haile Sellassie had in mind. Most of the advisers' suggestions were well intentioned but philosophically alien to Ethiopia's and the emperor's own needs. None were implemented.<sup>19</sup>

The experience of the advisers counters the notion that their appointments speeded "internal reform." In response to continuing British pressure against slavery and frontier instability, the emperor strengthened on paper the anti-slavery edicts, he received an Anti-Slavery Society delegation, and he appropriately appointed the Englishman, de Halpert, to advise a new slavery department in the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>20</sup> de Halpert's program, however, called for foreign consultation on provincial appointments, was expensive, and stressed emancipation, all unattractive to an emperor jealous of Ethiopia's sovereignty, pressed financially, and not anxious to challenge without good reason the society's philosophical and economic attachment to slavery.<sup>21</sup> By the end of 1933, therefore, de Halpert resigned, frustrated because his proposed budget had been slashed, his salary had not been paid, the main judge and the Secretary-General of the Slavery Department were in chains, proposed laws remained unratified, the cashier had absconded with cash, and most importantly, because he felt that

the emperor was far more willing to respond with words than with actions.<sup>22</sup>

The other advisers fared little better. The emperor used Colson to legitimize increases in consumption and excise taxes in face of European objections, but he ignored the American's pleas for other reforms, like the establishment of a gold standard and the publication of the government budget. Legal advisers were appointed to dispel Europe's dissatisfaction with judicial process in Ethiopia, but none even remotely influenced the emperor to compromise his judicial prerogatives. They could not have. Likewise, army advisers might lessen Europe's opposition to arms imports and help to train the emperor's personal bodyguard, but none were allowed to have any influence in the general organization of the country's military. The emperor had worked far too hard only now to risk widespread military improvements that could only jeopardize his control.<sup>23</sup>

Contemporary Europeans and many historians have also praised the emperor's military "progress." I contend that the improvements were overrated, and more importantly, that the emperor's efforts make more sense as another infrastructural improvement designed and implemented to further and to sustain the emperor's consolidation. Despite continuing Tripartite, particularly British and Italian efforts to stifle the government's importation of arms, the emperor succeeded in purchasing a small quantity of weapons from Europe. In 1928, for example, when Tafari's coronation as

Negus calmed conspicuous opposition to military consolidation under his command, the new king actively courted the technology which could effectively sustain his authority by projecting and protecting his legitimacy. Therefore, in addition to his small air-force and the appointment now of a loyal Minister of War, he soon acquired a small number of tanks, armored cars, and machine guns, and he engaged two Swiss and six Belgian officers to train his personal bodyguard. The 2100-man "standing-army" frequently paraded ostentatiously around the capital, displaying the new weapons at the emperor's disposal, but they were never quartered as a unit, they participated together in battle only once, they received salaries only occasionally, and then only in a nickel currency which little drained the imperial coffers and met scorn among merchants. Their main reward remained land and the influence that accrued for serving the emperor directly.

Undoubtedly, Haile Sellassie intended to impress Europe and the empire with the growing sophistication of the military, but Ethiopia's army remained in its organization and composition a testament to the empire's hierarchy. The movements of troops through the countryside were less numerous and less exploitative than they had been in Ethiopia's past, in large part because the fixed capital in Addis Ababa eliminated the need for rapacious tours of the empire. And, in emergencies, troops could be brought quickly and without incident by train from Harrar. Nonetheless, the military's outlook towards producers remained unchanged. They

never ceased to draw supplies from local producers, who were encouraged to accept without question a superstructure that justified the hierarchy, the redistribution, and the isolation of power and privilege.<sup>24</sup>

Freer reign also allowed accelerated developments in communications. Throughout the interwar period, decentralized interests had opposed the development of transportation and communication ties with the capital in the fear that the such 'improvements' would only further centralize government control and power.

However, without opposition since 1928, the emperor constructed roads, built wireless stations, and assembled a small air-force, all to consolidate his authority throughout the country. The new endeavors were begun, not as part of a ceaseless commitment to modernization and progress, but rather in pursuit, through the most effective possible means, of extending and sustaining conventional imperial domination over a huge, disparate empire. The policy would bring the influence of his court more directly to the provinces and draw more trade and customs revenue to the capital, and away from the other, less profitable export "ports." Access to superior weaponry had allowed previous highland expansions, but an improving infrastructure would permit faster consolidation. Instead of relying mainly on ethnic and religious affiliations to sustain the payment of tribute and tax, the emperor could now contact remote officers and move imperial troops quickly;

in essence, the emperor now had the opportunity to consolidate more territory more effectively than his predecessors.

One infrastructural 'improvement,' the extension of a wireless system throughout the empire, worked to firm legitimacy and extend imperial control more effectively. The system, erected between 1931 and 1933, only allowed the provinces to communicate with the capital. The emperor could therefore exercise considerable and immediate control over the provinces, without fear that others might use the system for their own ends. The system greatly enhanced his control in decision-making and furthered the image of modernization. Haile Sellassie carefully regulated the distribution of receiving sets, sending them only to key areas and personnel, and he continually tried to replace the Italian engineers in the main facility with his own personnel. In this task, he was unsuccessful, with unfortunate consequences, since the Italians had broken the palace's code and had, at least by their own claim, an ear to the emperor.<sup>25</sup>

In a similar vein, the emperor fully understood the power of the press, and he continued to exercise firm control over printing. The few printing presses were under his control, all the more reason why he found it so difficult to understand the comparative freedom of the press in the west. All of the state's publications were carefully prescribed.

Like the wireless and the press, the introduction of planes allowed the emperor to extend his authority while cultivating his

image with the Europeans. For many years, the triumvirate had blocked the introduction of aircraft. Bayard's were returned, and Zawditu twice opposed their acquisition on the grounds that Tafari might monopolize their use to further his personal standing and solidify his control over the provinces to her detriment. Europe dismissed her response as "conservative" and "anti- progressive," without realizing that she was in fact correct.

Now, the airplanes would speed communications with the capital, further centralize decision-making, provide overwhelming logistical support in warfare, and carry a symbol of unchallengeable imperial authority to the provinces. The emperor also used them to drop a few bombs and propaganda during the Italian invasion. Moreover, like the wireless stations, the emperor could strictly regulate the use of planes by limiting airstrips to important, friendly provincial centers. To be sure, there were many mishaps, and for westerners, many amusing incidents. But the planes were very effective in conveying an image of omnipotent power to the provinces. The pre-war air-force never consisted of more than 10 operational craft, but planes were nonetheless instrumental in the mission to capture Lij Iyasu in 1932, in suppressing the Gojjam rebellion, in the incorporation of Jimma, in the actions against Gugsu Wolye, and in transferring governors to and from their posts. Political opponents, reduced in Addis Ababa to carefully veiled criticism, stated their reservations against the new technology, especially when the

emperor's uncle died in an air mishap while fighting Gugsä Wolye, but the emperor, through the use of another communications device, the newspaper, justified the policy with an interesting and subtle use of words:

It is rumored that there are certain men who are talking a lot in town about the danger of flying in an airplane so as to discourage the heart of the people. Persons of this sort are certainly the enemy of the government and self-interested only, because there are several persons in this world who encounter great difficulties, and even die, for the sake of their government... Some die from the fall of a horse when riding either for pleasure or on an errand for their government, and is it worthwhile for a person to say that so and so died of this and that he would never ride a horse...

Everybody knows that His Majesty King Tafari brought these airplanes for the greatness and benefit of Ethiopia and all of us ought to thank His Majesty for this...

Nagadras Afa-Worq... says... that even women fly in airplanes... that in America women servants fly from one market to the other to buy the food required by their masters.<sup>26</sup>

Although other recent rulers, including Tewodros, Yohannis and Menilek, had all made efforts to improve Ethiopia's roads, Haile Sellassie between 1929 and 1935 greatly accelerated these efforts and won, as a consequence, further praise as a modernist. Like Menilek's building of the telephone and telegraph systems, however, the new roads greatly helped to strengthen the emperor's power by connecting the reaches of the empire to and centered political and economic activity around Addis Ababa. These were infrastructural developments from which the emperor could control the benefit.<sup>27</sup>



The emperor considered ten projects; each road involved a set of strategic political and economic objectives. Those undertaken were directly financed and controlled by the emperor and his closest associates, including Belategheta Herui, Dej. Imaru, Hakim Worqneh, and his sons.

One project would expedite contact with Ras Kassa's forces and Lij Iyasu's prison at Fitcha. Another would connect the capital to Tana, establishing a firmer basis for a proper dam agreement with Britain and further orienting the northern provinces towards Addis Ababa and away from economic and political contacts with Eritrea and the Sudan. A third project, completed during the period, connected the capital with the emperor's new "fiefs" in Sidama and Boran, expediting trade with and payments of tax from the southern coffee regions while keeping a watch on the southern frontier. A road connecting Harrar with the railway at Dire Dawa, long planned and completed during the Italian occupation was meant to control Hararge transit, under a monopoly held by the emperor's son. Another would explore the Zeila-Harrar route as an alternative to the exorbitant railway, to help the emperor to develop the trade of Eastern Ethiopia, to generate additional revenue from long distance trade, and in the end to help prepare the defense against the Italians. The road to the southwest was, however, the most important of the projects, in terms of the trade it might potentially carry, the tolls and tariffs it would generate, and the attention it received. During the years preceding the Italian

invasion, construction towards Jimma proceeded slowly, but steadily. By 1935, the road finally reached Jiren. The depressed coffee prices after 1932 lessened the benefit for the state, but the government unquestionably had much less trouble than ever before controlling the political and economic matters of the southwest.<sup>28</sup>

The customs from an increasing long-distance trade filled the treasury, financed the development of the Addis Ababa-centered infrastructure; and by 1932, there were very optimistic projections for the southwestern trade. However, Ethiopia's growing dependence on the exportation of primary commodities would by 1933 seriously impede the emperor's program.

Consistently high European demand for coffee and hides had sponsored locally high prices and sustained a healthy export economy between 1922 and 1932. For coffee, during the "boom" years between 1926 and 1929, prices averaged over \$MT10/farasula, and never fell below \$8MT. Assuming an effective, consistently applied 10% government tariff, imperial revenues from southwestern coffee alone rose from \$MT370,000 in 1927 to \$MT645,000 in 1932. Increases in the early 1930s were sustained, surprisingly perhaps, by the persistent depreciation in the foreign exchange value of the local silver currency, stimulating exports and shielding the economy from the vicissitudes experienced elsewhere.

Sharp increases in the world silver price during and after 1933, however, emphasized the state's sharp dependence, not so

much on world commodity prices for coffee and hides, but upon the relative exchange value of silver. As in the period between 1916 and 1919, the government again imposed a strict embargo on silver exports in an impossible effort to keep smugglers and entrepreneurs from exporting thalers to the detriments of the money supply and the local price structure. As a consequence of the money supply decline and the rise in the price of silver, coffee and hides prices fell to levels so low, to \$MT4 in the case of coffee, that merchants could not draw produce to central markets; the dollar value of the export trade fell to their lowest levels in more than a decade. The government, now pressed by the weight of expenditures on roads, planes, the railway, the purchase of the Bank of Ethiopia, the coronation, the army, the wireless, drew less than \$300,000 from the coffee crop.<sup>29</sup>

The emperor also strove to obtain a settlement with Britain over Tana. For London's benefit, he argued that he had always favored construction of the dam, a statement which surprisingly did not anger the Foreign Office. Tafari had a different set of reasons now for supporting the negotiations. For the first time, he was strong enough to monopolize the profits, and he had sufficient power to survive the force of any charges that he might contemplate selling the country. Most importantly, perhaps, the payments for the coronation, new weapons, roads, the wireless, and the Bank of Abyssinia, had strapped his finances at the very moment that silver depreciated, starting commodity prices and Europe's

demand for Ethiopia's main exports on a tumble. Already in 1929, Negus Tafari indicated his desire to conclude the negotiations, again along the lines of the 1924 proposal. In both subtle and obvious ways, he made it clear to Britain that he had sufficient autonomy to negotiate and to sign the deal. He extended personal invitations to the White Corporation and the British Government, hoping to convene meetings in Addis Ababa; he promoted new expeditions to the lake, and he sent personal representatives to the Sudan to push developments.<sup>30</sup>

Ironically, at the very moment the emperor pursued the issue, Britain and its representatives in the Sudan lost their interest. The depression that had helped to spark the emperor's involvement in the potentially remunerative deal hit the Sudan hard, with a cotton price fall coming on top of serious declines in the yield and quality of the Gezira crop. Large expenditures on Tana suddenly seemed wholly out of the question. Now, for the first time, Sudan officials questioned whether the dam, which aimed fundamentally to aid the cotton crop, could ever prove profitable. The result frustrated Haile Sellassie much more than Britain, particularly as Italian threats added to Ethiopia's need for revenue.<sup>31</sup>

From 1929 through 1933, in a series of meetings and discussions with Tripartite representatives, Haile Sellassie worked to settle other outstanding diplomatic issues. Although the emperor resolved few international misunderstandings, the mere fact that he alone negotiated agreements without having to delegate

any authority confirmed his prerogatives and daily demonstrated the extent to which he had consolidated the empire. No longer did the diplomatic correspondence record tales that he had sold the country, or that deals with the Europeans compromised his Christian faith.

He pressed for Judicial reform, he succeeded in buying and assuming control over the Bank of Abyssinia, and he continued to try to obtain access to arms and a seaport by tying important negotiations, like Tana, to these considerations. At a cost of 125,000 pounds, he transformed the British-dominated Bank of Abyssinia into a "national" bank, one which he could control more directly. The deal allowed Britain to walk away from a losing concern, at a moment when they retained little hope for British commerce in the Horn, and it allowed the emperor to gain more direct control over the country's money supply. The emperor's best chance at a good seaport, Zeila, disappeared in face of the abortive Tana negotiations; in the end, too, the effort accelerated France's turn from Ethiopia. The Emperor did work hard to curry favor with France. He approved the completion of the Addis Ababa railway station, long sought by the French, and he joined the French minister in opposing two mutually threatening railway strikes. But the French were frustrated by the railways continuing losses, accelerated by the depression, by the tripartite powers' opposition to railway expansion to the southwest, and by the increasingly apparent failure of French interests to dominate

Ethiopia's commerce. The Quai d'Orsay did not therefore accommodate the emperor in Jibuti, declining to continue talks concerning a cession or lease.<sup>32</sup>

The consolidation increasingly routed long-distance trade through Addis Ababa, but the financial crisis lessened the governments total revenue from imports and exports. In an effort to expand trade further at a time of revenue shortfalls and low commodity prices, the emperor required more immediate control over the important centers of production and influence. In the southwest, Haile Sellassie would move against Jimma, and, to gain a larger share of revenue and proceeds from northern land, he aimed to lessen the influence of leaders like Ras Hailu, whose downfall would also facilitate a money-making deal on Tana.

The 1931 opening of Parliament, another modern-sounding institution, in its practice limited the power of leaders like Hailu by holding them in the capital. As a result, the emperor could carefully oversee his primary opposition, keep them well removed from the sources of the power and revenue-base, and force them to funnel goods and men towards the capital rather than towards Eritrea and the Sudan. The strategy paid off in many important ways. The emperor kept Hailu at bay, increasingly frustrating the leader of Gojjam. More importantly, Hailu had no alternative than to hold sufficient monies in the capital to keep his followers supplied and fed. Used by Hailu's agents and by Indian traders, the funds represented capital for Addis Ababa

cinemas and taxi cabs; from Hailu's perspective, the investments were unintentional, since the ras would almost certainly have preferred putting his money to work at home, but they nonetheless tied Gojjam more directly to Shoa, ironically helping the finances of the central state and limiting the extent to which Gojjam might pursue economic contacts with the Sudan. Consolidating authority, gaining further economic and political control over the north, and gaining the right to negotiate effectively with the British still required that Haile Sellassie pursue Gojjam more actively.<sup>33</sup>

In April 1932, Ras Hailu, in an unexpected visit to Zaphiro, "unboomed" himself on the subject of the emperor's recent treatment. He doubted that he would ever be allowed to return to Gojjam. He complained that, during his extended time in Addis Ababa, the emperor had encouraged the citizens of Gojjam openly to vent their "ancient" charges of injustice. Most of the charges, he declared, were clearly evil rumors; some accused him of conspiring openly with Gugsä Wolye. The Shoans, he insisted, watched his every move in order to degrade him with false charges and fines. Already, the emperor's chilot had demanded \$80,000 MTD in compensation. The emperor's campaign proceeded in conventional ways, by using rumors to question Hailu's power, prerogatives, and his right to rule. Subtly but clearly, Hailu now sought British support, with only slightly veiled promises of Tana in return for foreign aid. The British, with their faith in Tafari, offered no response.<sup>34</sup>

Naturally, Hailu could not challenge the emperor's superior armament in Addis Ababa, especially given his easily confiscatable investments in the capital. Rather, he opposed the emperor in the most conventional of ways. He retaliated by spreading rumors, and, with his most trusted followers, he conspired to free his still-popular son-in-law, Lij Iyasu. According to the plan, Ras Hailu and the prince would join forces in Gojjam, where the threat of the central government's expropriation of land would guarantee a strong following. Ras Hailu would continue to work for European assistance. At first the plan worked well. When Ras Kassa visited Addis Ababa, Ras Hailu's agents bribed Lij Iyasu's sentries and freed the prince. The plan, however, soon failed. The emperor sent his most trusted adherents, his cousin Dej. Imaru and his son-in-law Desta Damtu to capture Iyasu before the rains. At the end of a short campaign, which was dominated more by rhetoric, rumor, and propaganda than by military maneuvering, the emperor's forces captured the prince. Captured letters and confessions, some of which were likely forged and forced, confirmed Ras Hailu's role in the escape, allowing his arrest and finally an excuse to incorporate Gojjam. In addition, by virtue of the careful removal of Lij Iyasu to Harrar, the emperor vastly expanded his authority relative to Ras Kassa; and, of course, the emperor's opponents, who might have hoped for an eventual return of Lij Iyasu to power, had been dealt a very severe blow.<sup>35</sup>



Rebellion in Gojjam for many years limited the benefits that might have accrued to the emperor from gaining more direct control over local land and privilege. In the southwest, however, the emperor's policy gained more immediate results. Balcha's fall from grace, and the deaths of Habte Giyorgis and Ras Nado allowed closer control over the areas of production in Sidamo, Boran, and Gore. The patterns of northern settlement remained unchanged, but the central government could now command a greater share of trade, taxation, and tribute to Addis Ababa. The most important center of southwestern trade, however, the kingdom of Jimma, remained nominally independent, a contradiction in this age of imperial consolidation. Already, Jimma forwarded the largest provincial tribute, partly in compensation for the absence of neftenya, but the Jimman entrepôt of Hirmata also commanded a large portion of the southwest's coffee and hides trade, the revenue from which now formed a substantial part of the central government's budget. Controlling every facet of the trade grew yearly in importance, especially when the worldwide depression lessened Europe's demand and the price of these commodities. The emperor therefore put more force, available perhaps for the first time, into consolidating the southwestern kingdom.

Already by 1930, northerners were assuming dominion in Jimma. Abba Jifar, paralyzed and on the verge of death, gradually relinquished command to his second son, Abba Dula. The new leader, however, watched northerners, as the southwestern road neared

completion, assume important administrative positions in the kingdom. Gradually, Amhara authorities, judges, and police took charge over the central market, now named after Haile Sellassie. In preparation for northern settlement of fertile coffee lands, the Shoan negadras also initiated the construction of Christian churches so long resisted by the Muslim Abba Jifar. Inevitably, perhaps, the new policies initiated rebellion. Abba Jobir, the sultan's grandson, replaced Amhara police with Jimmans and, as in Gojjam, the conspicuous involvement of Shoans in local affairs occasioned considerable unrest. Incidents in the commercial quarter left sixty dead, including one of the negadras's attendants.<sup>36</sup>

"Instability" provided the pretext for incorporation. The emperor acted quickly. Articles in Berhanenna Salaam "justified" the central government's involvement in terms which could not conceal the emperor's objective of maximizing his control over the export economy. Jimma, the article reported, an area "much admired" for its "rich and fertile country" was now courting ruin. Unless important changes were made, the article concluded, "woe to the country which tends to bring its own destruction."

In December 1933, Dej. Wolde and 2000 troops and a large staff of clerks, engineers, and priests arrived in the commercial quarter. Two imperial planes buzzed overhead, and the force celebrated a Christian service outside the sultan's palace. Within days, central government officials centralized local taxation as

well as the payment of market and customs dues. The churches and planes were little more than symbols of central government predominance; for the citizens of Jimma, the most lasting effect was the redirection of their surplus to a "more legitimate" authority.<sup>37</sup>

The emperor's consolidation was successful, in the sense that he had obtained more legitimacy than any leader since Menilek, and he had substantially personalized the political economy. By the end of the interwar period, however, the consolidation was also incomplete, as Ethiopia's uncoordinated response to the Italian invasion demonstrated. The diplomatic and military events preceding and following the outbreak of hostilities in October 1935 are well documented and discussed elsewhere. The Italians overcame geography, apparent highland unity, and guerrilla tactics with vastly superior arms, resources, and communications, unchallenged dominance of the air, and with the use of chemical weapons. It is important to note, however, that the emperor's campaign against Italy, at least before the fall of Addis Ababa in May 1936, reflected the shallowness of the consolidation. Northern Oromo frequently rebelled, and there were important desertions to the Italians, including Dej. Haile Sellassie Gugsu, the son of Ras Gugsu Area. Other rases retained their loyalty, in face of the mutually threatening Italian advance, but, especially throughout the north, they fought individualistic campaigns. Several observers believed that the Ethiopian forces would have fared far

better against Italy had there been more coordinated, lateral communication. Interestingly, in Harrar, where the emperor's forces proceeded with far greater unity in action, the troops defended better, and with far fewer desertions.<sup>38</sup>

Haile Sellassie's campaign for personal consolidation was one of several factors inhibiting economic and political development in Ethiopia. The next chapter discusses another important factor, the economic and political consequences of Tripartite foreign policy.

## Notes

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2. PRO: FO 371/14598 Annual Report for 1929, p. 4, in Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 28 July 1930; FO 371/15389 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 9 Feb. 1931; FO 371/15389 Barton to Marquis of Reading, Addis Ababa, 19 Sept. 1931; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 59, de Reffye à MAE, 10 April 1930; K Serie, Ethiopie 60, Baelen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 13 July 1933; K Serie, Ethiopie 60, Baelen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 28 Sept. 1933.
3. PRO: FO 371/14598 Annual Report for 1929, p.5, in Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 28 July 1930; FO 371/16101 Annual Report for 1931, p. 3, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1932; FO 371/19189 Annual Report for 1934, pp.2-3, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1935.
4. PRO: FO 371/14598 Annual Report for 1929, pp.1-2, in Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 28 July 1930; FO 371/16101 Annual Report for 1931, p. 3, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1932; FO 371/19189 Annual Report for 1934, p. 3, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1935; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 59, de Reffye à MAE, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1931.
5. PRO: FO 371/14595 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 7 Jan. 1930; FO 371/14595 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 7 Feb. 1930; FO 371/14595 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 4 March 1930; FO 371/14593 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 2 April 1930; FO 371/14593 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 25 March 1930; FO 371/14593 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 7 April 1930; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 59, Note to the Minister of War, 14 Jan. 1930; K Serie, Ethiopie 59, de Reffye à MAE, 11 Feb. 1930; K Serie, Ethiopie 59, de Reffye à MAE, 10 April 1930.
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8. See chapter 1.
  9. PRO: FO 371/13830 Lloyd to Chamberlain, Cairo, 30 March 1929; FO 371/13830 Lloyd to FO, Cairo, 5 June 1929; FO 371/13830 Dunbar to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1929.
  10. PRO: FO 371/14595 Troutbeck to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 25 April 1930; FO 371/14595 Troutbeck to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 16 May 1930; FO 371/14596 Troutbeck to FO, Addis Ababa, 7 May 1930; FO 371/14598 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 17 Nov. 1930; FO 371/15388 Barton to Murray, Addis Ababa, 16 Dec. 1930; FO 371/15389 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 13 Jan. 1931; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 61, de Reffye à MAE, Addis Ababa, 14 Nov. 1930.
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  12. PRO: FO 371/15389 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 27 July 1931; FO 371/15389 Barton to Marquis of Reading, Addis Ababa, 3 Nov. 1931; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 59, Lacheze à MAE, Addis Ababa, 16 July 1931.
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  15. PRO: FO 401/32, Report to Lord Noel-Buxton, enclosed in FO to League of Nations, 26 April 1932; de Halpert papers, Rhodes House, MSS Afr. s. 1459 (1), p. 21.

16. de Halpert papers, (1), p.120.
17. Jon R. Edwards, "... and the King Shall Judge': Extraterritoriality in Ethiopia, 1908-1936," Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Lund, Sweden 1983; see also chapter 5.
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19. PRO: FO 371/16101 Annual Report for 1931, p. 7, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1932; FO 371/16996 Annual Report for 1932, p. 7, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 12 Jan. 1933; FO 371/14589 Troutbeck to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 10 May 1930; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 15 Aug. 1932; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 20, de Reffye à MAE, Addis Ababa, 4 Jan. 1929; K Serie, Ethiopie 59, de Reffye à MAE, Addis Ababa, 17 Dec. 1930; K Serie, Ethiopie 60, Baelen à MAE, 27 Oct. 1934.
20. PRO: FO 401/32, Report to Lord Noel-Buxton, enclosed in FO to League of Nations, 26 April 1932; de Halpert papers, (1), pp. 17,21,43,72,84,85,87-95.
21. Ibid., p. 28; Hampshire County Record Office, F. de Halpert Papers, 17M78/147 de Halpert to his mother, Beatrix, 8 Feb. 1934.
22. de Halpert papers, (1), pp. 43, 102.
23. PRO: FO 371/14598 Annual Report for 1929, p. 5, in Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 28 July 1930; FO 371/16101 Annual Report for 1931, p. 4, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1932; see chapter 5.
24. PRO: FO 371/14598 Annual Report for 1929, p. 5, in Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 28 July 1930; FO 371/16101 Annual Report for 1931, p. 5, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1932; FO 371/16996 Annual Report for 1932, pp. 3-4, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 12 Jan. 1933.
25. PRO: FO 371/16101 Annual Report for 1931, pp. 6-7, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1932; FO 371/16996 Annual Report for 1932, pp. 5,7, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 12 Jan. 1933; FO 371/16996 Annual Report for 1933, p. 5, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 6 Jan. 1934; FO 371/13832 Waterlow to Patrick, Addis Ababa, 16 Dec. 1928; FO 371/13832 Waterlow to FO, Addis Ababa, 5 Jan. 1929; FO 371/13832 FO

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29. PRO: FO 371/16996 Annual Report for 1932, p. 4, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 12 Jan. 1933; FO 371/16996 Annual Report for 1933, p. 3, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 6 Jan. 1934; FO 371/19189 Annual Report for 1934, p. 3, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1935; FO 371/13838 Intelligence Report, in Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 4 March 1929; FO 371/13838 Gore Intelligence Report, enclosed in Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 7 March 1929; FO 371/14592 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 March 1930; FO 371/15385 Tyrrell to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 19 Jan. 1931; FO 371/15385 Record of Conversation, (Mack), 11 Feb. 1931; FO 371/15385 Hornsby to Hoare, Cairo, 2 Feb. 1931; FO 371/15385 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 26 Jan. 1931; FO 371/15385 FO to Lorraine, 19 March 1931; FO 371/15385 Troutbeck to Barton, Addis Ababa, 13 April 1931; FO 371/15385 Lorraine to FO, Cairo, 22 April 1931; FO 371/15385 Troutbeck to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 6 April 1931; FO 371/15385 Lorraine to FO, Cairo, 14 May 1931; FO 371/15385 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 1 July 1931; FO 371/15385 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 5 Sept. 1931; FO 371/15389 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 13 Jan. 1931; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 17 May 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 10 Nov. 1932; FO 371/16102 Broadmead to Simon, Addis Ababa, 7 June 1932; FO 371/16997 Intelligence Reports for the three months ending 31 Dec. 1932, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 18 Feb. 1933; FO 371/16997 Intelligence Reports for the three months ending 31 March 1933, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 12 May 1933; FO 371/16997 Intelligence Reports for the three months ending 30 June 1933, in Broadmead to Simon, Addis Ababa, 3 Aug. 1933; FO 371/16997 Intelligence Reports for the three months ending 30 Sept. 1933, in Broadmead to Simon, Addis Ababa, 26 Oct. 1933; QD: see especially discussions in K Serie, Ethiopie 134, Affaires Commerciales 1930-1935, K Serie, Ethiopie 135, Relations et

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35. Berhanenna Salaam, 16 June 1932; Berhanenna Salaam. 30 June 1932; Berhanenna Salaam, 21 July 1932; Berhanenna Salaam 20 Oct. 1932; PRO: FO 371/16102 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 May 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 31 May 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 2 June 1932; FO 371/16102 Broadmead to FO, Addis Ababa, 7 June 1932; FO 371/16102 Broadmead to FO, Addis Ababa, 13 June 1932; FO 371/16102 Broadmead to Simon, Addis Ababa, 7 June 1932; FO 371/16102 Broadmead to FO, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 14 June 1932; FO 371/16102 Broadmead to Simon, Addis Ababa, 21 June 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 28 June 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 25 July 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 7 Oct. 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 3 Oct. 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 11 Oct. 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 19 Oct. 1932; FO 371/16102 Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 3 Nov. 1932.
36. Jon R. Edwards, "The Political Economy of Ethiopian Expansionism, a Case Study: Jimma 1884-1934," unpublished research paper.
37. Ibid.; Zervos, p. 343; Berhanenna Salaam, 5 May 1932; Berhanenna Salaam. 12 May 1932; Berhanenna Salaam. 12 July 1932; PRO: FO 371/19190 Trapman Report on Jimma, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 16 July 1935.
38. PRO: FO 371/19189 Annual Report for 1934, in Barton to Simon, Addis Ababa, 25 Jan. 1935; FO 371/20934 Annual Report for 1935, in Roberts to Eden, Addis Ababa, 13 Jan. 1937; FO 371/20934 Annual Report for 1936, in Stonehewer-Bird to Eden, Addis Ababa, 18 Mar. 1937.

## CHAPTER 5

'...lest he multiply horses unto himself':

The Economic Impact of Tripartite Policy in Ethiopia, 1906-1935

"It is improper for you to appoint over yourself an alien and an infidel, lest he multiply horses, women, gold, and silver unto himself."

Aba Paulos, trans. Fetha Negast

Throughout the interwar period, Britain, France and Italy sought to fashion a suitable climate for their investments and "interests." The Europeans also sought free trade, concessions, extraterritorial rights, the abolition of slavery, frontier stability, and the development of the export infrastructure, revealing their notions of how Ethiopia ought to be ordered. In particular, the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 and the 1908 French Treaty of Amity and Commerce ignored Ethiopia's sovereignty, by prescribing foreign control over judicial, commercial, and legislative affairs, by demanding expenditures and priorities irrelevant to local needs, and generally by failing to consider the philosophical underpinnings of Ethiopia's economic activity (in other words, judging local affairs and conditions only in terms of western experience).<sup>1</sup>

Both treaties were written and applied in callous disdain of Ethiopia's (superstructure) and therefore provide a second explanation for the country's lack of interwar growth and

development. Nonetheless, I must stress from the outset that I have found few conspicuous conspiracies in the records of the European Foreign Offices or Consulates. Rather, I have repeatedly confronted ways of thinking, "interests," and ethics irreconcilable with their Ethiopian counterparts. The results frustrated all involved, for Ethiopia's economy grew much slower than it otherwise might have, the empire's consolidation proceeded much more cautiously, and the Europeans obtained far less profit from Ethiopia's economy than their most pessimistic predictions anticipated. European actions were imperialistic because they consistently placed their own "interests" above Ethiopia's to obtain what they wanted. But at no time did they think they were harming Ethiopia.

A growing literature on early 20th century Ethiopia has suggested that "foreign capital deeply penetrated and maintained control over the major economic sectors of the country," increasing Ethiopia's dependency on the west. Some have even suggested that the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 between France, Britain, and Italy was an engine of growth, by giving foreigners a "free hand in Ethiopia", exposing the country to markets in the metropole.<sup>2</sup>

My hypothesis is rather that by the interwar period, the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 and the French Treaty of Amity and Commerce (Klobukowski) of 1908 effectively discouraged and inhibited Ethiopian growth and development. The treaties formed Europe's "white policy," by which Britain, France, and Italy sought

with ethics and capital to colonize Ethiopia's internal administration.<sup>3</sup> The three powers confidently determined that Ethiopia, with relatively untapped markets and raw materials, was a potentially wealthy and ready field for European economic activity. With faith, European entrepreneurs and concession hunters searched for Ethiopian El Dorados. In the end, however, every significant European scheme failed, and Ethiopian development suffered for two interrelated reasons.

First, by virtue of the Tripartite Agreement, to which Ethiopia was never a party, no concession or opportunity could be pursued, no economic program placed in force, without the joint consent of Britain, France, and Italy. Each power's passionate conviction that it alone had the paramount interest to defend, and that it alone ought therefore to develop Ethiopia's rich potential encouraged use of the obstructionist veto offered by Article 2, whose provisions intended ironically to calm competition and open the country for European endeavor. Instead, rather than encourage legitimate openings for its own enterprise, each power increasingly opposed the activities of its rivals, preferring the status quo to any change which might offer the others' nationals political influence and further opportunities for capital penetration.<sup>4</sup>

Second, spurred on by frustrations, Europe stressed the prerequisite need to reform Ethiopian economic laws and practices, all deemed inimical to capitalistic economic growth. At every turn,

the Europeans faced a judicial system antithetical to their own commercial standard, a property regime which inhibited its acquisition by foreign capital, civil laws offering no privileges for European business practices, a customs regime which gave state and local charges precedence over the volume of the long-distance trade, and state monopolies precluding priority for individual European concessionaires.

Through interested interpretations and mistranslations of the 1908 French Treaty of Amity and Commerce, the Europeans pushed to transform the tariff, judicial, monopoly and legal systems, in the conviction that Ethiopia could only thereby develop. Most probably, Europe's capital intensive endeavors in commerce, agriculture, and mining could not in any event have prospered in an economic environment legislated and dominated by a state apparatus overwhelmingly concerned with its own preservation, but expatriate Indian and Arab merchants rarely failed to turn a modest profit by accepting rather than battling Ethiopia's superstructure.<sup>5</sup>

Europe's inability to accept, and their determination to reform the philosophical underpinnings of Ethiopian economic conduct simultaneously threatened the state and its consolidation while excluding all efforts to develop Ethiopia within contexts determined by Ethiopians. Amid these Tripartite machinations, the Ethiopian state was a treble loser: investments were directly discouraged by the powers, the capitulatory legislation impeded



the state's ability to benefit through taxation and other means from what growth did occur, and the Ethiopian government's nationalistic determination to temper the application of the Klobukowski accord, and to bypass the Tripartite limitations by approaching neutral states, in the end frustrated their principal guarantor of independence, the French, into acquiescing more willingly in Italy's imperialism.

Ironically, the Tripartite Treaty was intended to calm international competition and create favorable conditions for investment. By 1906 the three European powers feared the consequences of Menilek's death. Since each might seek advantage from any domestic disorder, the agreement committed them to harmonious involvement in Ethiopia. Politically, the treaty recognized existing pacts, some of which accepted Italy's claim to a protectorate over Ethiopia, but bridled such pretensions under commitments to maintain intact the political and territorial status quo, in no way to infringe the sovereign rights of the emperor of Ethiopia, and to abstain from internal intervention in the event of internal change.

Economically, the treaty intended to stifle potential competition and prepare Ethiopia for European capital, first by defining the powers' paramount interests, second by directing that no concession or opportunity threaten the interests of any other power; third by stipulating that they cooperate with and inform each other in order to protect their respective interests,

suspending all action in the event of disagreements; and fourth by warranting that the powers, particularly France with Jibuti and the railway, not discriminate in any matter of trade and transit. The treaty recognized France's interest in completing the railway, whose construction by 1906 had stalled at Dire Dawa owing partly to British and Italian intrigue.

For Britain, the agreement reserved both future railway expansion to the west of Addis Ababa and the building of the dam at Lake Tana to control the headwaters of the Nile. With Ethiopian government permission, Italy might also build a fanciful rollercoaster-railway west of Addis Ababa connecting Eritrea and Somalia. On a disruption of Ethiopia's status quo, a euphemism for Ethiopia's disintegration, the treaty defined reversionary zones, exclusionary areas for economic and political expansion. France would thus obtain the railway and its "hinterland," Italy, the northern and central regions through which the colony connecting railway would pass, and Britain received what little remained along the southern and western frontiers. In theory, Britain protected the flow of the Blue Nile; France, Jibuti's trade with Addis Ababa; and Italy, a vague acknowledgement of its 19th century agreements.<sup>6</sup>

Despite such 'harmonious' intentions, the vaguely defined interests exacerbated existing international tensions, foster new ones, and made concessions far harder to obtain in face of consistent Tripartite intrigues. Most significantly, the agreement stalled infrastructural improvements. The powers hoped to draw the

long-distance trade in opposing directions through their different reversionary zones, partly in the conviction that their interests in the Horn would thereby predominate when Ethiopia disintegrated, in their view likely to occur sooner, not later. Britain promoted trade towards Kenya, British Somaliland, and especially the Sudan, while Italy pressed for its share through Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. Simultaneously, in support of the railway, Jibuti, and its "hinterland," France supported long distance trade and the redistribution of provincial wealth through the capital. Even before its completion to Addis Ababa, the railroad carried more than 80% of Ethiopia's long-distance trade, guaranteeing that France's foreign trade interests resembled Shoa's. Over time, France's dominant role in the import-export economy sustained not only the de facto alliance with the imperial government, but also jealousy and intrigue with Britain and Italy.<sup>7</sup>

Anxious themselves to dominate long distance trade and the potential profits of Ethiopia, both Britain and Italy had no difficulty finding reasons to oppose France's economic policies. Both argued that the Quai d'Orsay's close alliance with Shoa and her short border with Ethiopia allowed and indeed encouraged Paris to ignore such frontier-related problems, as slavery, the slave and arms trades, poaching, and raiding, issues which perpetually dominated the regional diplomacy of London and Rome. As a consequence, both worked repeatedly to drive the French from the Horn, in the conviction that Paris's obstructionism of

"Tripartite" economic and political interests could only thereby be ended. The result ironically was a much clearer obstructionism, but one led by Britain and Italy. The best example is their opposition of the French Bayard concession, discussed below. However, their obstruction of the railway was of more lasting importance.

Throughout the interwar period, Britain, with Italy's encouragement, refused to exercise its exclusive right under the Tripartite Agreement to extend the railway to the west, blocking all proposals, some by well-endowed, legitimate concerns. Both hoped to quicken France's withdrawal from the Horn, or at very least not add to their incentive to stay; instead, their negativism retarded the development of long-distance trade and its benefit to the state. Without an extension west of Addis Ababa, the railway, lacking a sufficiently efficient means of attracting southwestern produce, produced only minimal profit. To the state's further detriment, the railway's French directors, to compensate for the subsequently low level of trade, established exorbitant railway, freight, and tariff charges, further discouraging long distance trade, infuriating Addis Ababa, encouraging both alternate export routes and Ethiopia's search for an independent seaport, and ironically allowing Britain and Italy, who were indirectly to blame, to charge that the higher rates countered the spirit of the agreement.

Even during the first world war, Europe eyed, planned, and paranoicly protected potential post-war investments. Obviously, the coup and economic recession had little to do with Europe's enthusiasm, although the railway had reached Addis Ababa in 1917, presumably giving the world economy easier access to Ethiopia's primary produce. Indeed, European entrepreneurs expected the armistice to rejuvenate demand for Ethiopia's commodities, and each of the powers contemplated new economic endeavors in the country to establish commercial dominance and thereby enhance their claims at the coming Peace Conference, where deliberations about territorial adjustments and wrangles over the partition of Ethiopia were expected. Italian compensatory demands under the "secret" 1915 Treaty of London were vast, and implicitly included a mandate over Ethiopia. Underlying Rome's memoranda on new commercial developments was the notion that prospering Italian concessions would strengthen their post-war bargaining position.

France was alone in its support of the Shoan regime, large because the railway served France and Shoa alike. France therefore worked to secure permanent economic dominance by promising continuing support for the government and by offering to trade ready access to arms for commercial favors and privileges.

Unlike the French, most British officials considered partition the final practical solution for Ethiopia; To secure their future interests in the region, Foreign Office ministers therefore looked favorably upon Thesiger's plan to amalgamate all

of the existing British owned and operated enterprises into one economic endeavor, the Abyssinian Corporation. By so doing, they reasoned that they could head off foreign competition, capture complete control of Ethiopia's import and export trade, and permanently establish England as the prominent economic and political power in the Horn. The venture would, they felt confident, drive France from the Horn and ease Britain's efforts both to end the regional arms trade and to secure its rights to Tana.

Grand thoughts prevailed. Sperling minuted, "Assuming ... that the plan is even half as successful as is ... suggested, the investment will be as good in its way as the high price paid by the United States for Alaska." <sup>8</sup> During its planning stage, the leaders of the Abyssinian Corporation pondered vast agricultural and mining schemes, recapitalizing the Bank of Abyssinia, minting Maria Theresa Thalers, building roads, opening display rooms for Ethiopia's products in London and Khartoum, and buying and operating Red Sea steamers. Thesiger, who strove for Britain's "complete control of the Abyssinian trade... to develop it along our own lines," wrote that the Abyssinia Corporation "would give us to a very large extent control of the market in the southern half of Abyssinia and the Syndicate thus formed would be a very powerful one as they would control the import trade of cotton goods and the export of raw materials." <sup>9</sup>

The Foreign Office and Thesiger repeatedly denied having a role in the corporation, but their involvement matched their interest. Thesiger wrote a letter to adorn the first company prospectus, and he came to London specifically to support the scheme. The prime minister applied unprecedented pressure to sanction the issue of Abyssinia Corporation stock, in spite of Treasury's repeated concerns and objections.

The interference of the Foreign Office not always produced wanted results. In keeping with the London's paranoia of all things French, Sperling blocked negotiations for the British extension of the railway or a merging of French and British activities. Again, the ministers voiced the fear that such economic cooperation would enhance the worth of French enterprise and impede their expulsion from the Horn.

And when, in late 1918, Abyssinia Corporation leaders suggested that they proceed more cautiously in an obviously uncertain economic climate, perhaps by first sending small missions to the country to investigate the commercial environment and to evaluate the immediate potential of various investments, Sperling interceded. He informed the board of directors that, given the coming scramble for concessions, days would be intolerable. Meanwhile, in a private minute, Sperling confessed that "as the future of the country will inevitably come up in Paris, it is well worth while that we should be able to point to some genuine British

interests such as this corporation, which will lend weight to our views concerning the future of the country." <sup>10</sup>

France was anxious to protect their Harrar "hinterland" from economic encroachment, and it feared intensive new British and Italian economic initiatives; Paris was determined, moreover, to recapture what they perceived as pre-war French domination of the import-export trade. They therefore gave similar support to the firm of M. Achille Bayart et Fils.

In discussions with the British minister in 1917, de Coppet learned the nature of Britain's new economic initiatives. Sounding de Coppet on the subject of a possible cession of Jibuti, Thesiger arrogantly proposed that the post-war peace conference ought to exclude France from the Horn. The Englishman meant to sound the French minister on one of the Foreign Office's main desiderata; if anything, however, the conversation lessened whatever small chance there might have been to lessen France's presence in the Horn.

From that moment on, de Coppet actively pursued new economic and political initiatives to counter the explicit British threat. To block partition efforts, he urged Ethiopia to send its mission to Europe in 1919. To prohibit the other powers from successfully monopolizing commerce, he pressed French commerce to expand activities in the region. And to secure the Shoan alliance, de Coppet assured Tafari that, as Ethiopia's natural friend and protector, France could best eliminate the threat from Britain and Italy if only Ethiopia would grant to it commercial supremacy.



Bayart immediately came to Addis Ababa, where he entertained on a lavish scale and distributed gifts, including machine guns, an airplane, and channeled considerable backsheesh to Tafari through a trusted minister, Kantiba Wasani. Soon thereafter, Bayart obtained what would prove to be abortive concessions over Addis Ababa's water supplies and transport, and he pursued potentially promising projects like roadbuilding, hospital construction, expanded postal services, Kaffa coffee plantations, and similar opportunities in Harrar, Wollo, and Gojjam.

Another French concern, the Compagnie Afrique Orientale, under M. Michel Côte, opened an Addis Ababa branch in search of concessions and a possible railway extension to the southwest. Most significantly, however, in December 1918, Bayart apparently received a mining monopoly over all of Ethiopia from the new Minister of Mines, the former Kantiba.<sup>11</sup>

The new concession caused a stir. Britain and Italy immediately argued, and France denied, that Bayard's concession countered the letter and spirit of the Klobukowski Treaty's anti-monopoly clause and article two of the Tripartite Agreement. Tafari assured the powers that the concession was not a monopoly, saying that he would gladly grant similar concessions to the others, but his promises did not lessen the pressure.

Disturbed by Tafari's apparent lack of understanding of the evils of monopolies and convinced that the Ethiopian government merely hoped to lessen the mounting pressure for partition,

Thesiger was even more concerned that France's new activities would force up the price for Jibuti in a post-war exchange. Repeatedly and with considerable evidence, the French denied that Bayart's concession was a monopoly; to stop intrigue, de Coppet even suggested limiting the firm's activity to Shoa and Harrar, France's immediate "sphere of influence." However, the kantiba and Bayart's Addis Ababa agent, Vorrières, both died during the post war influenza epidemic, the latter leaving no accounts and the former no receipt for the million-franc purchase.

Amid charges of selling the country, Tafari had little desire to recognize the monopoly; nor could he refund Bayart's money, which apparently had disappeared. Naturally, Bayart insisted that the concession was his and, to assure the Europeans, that it was not a monopoly, but an agreement limited to the French sphere.<sup>12</sup>

In late 1918, an already frustrated Bayart proposed to the Abyssinia Corporation that the two ventures unite. The British group expressed interest, particularly since Bayart might bring to a combined concern already procured concessions and fresh capital. But the Foreign Office again opposed any consideration of Anglo-French cooperation. Convinced that British commercial dominance would thereby suffer, and that France would never then be forced from the Horn, the Foreign Office instructed Campbell, its Addis Ababa charge, to counter "the great activity of France." Therefore, to test the assurance from Tafari and France that Bayard's was not an exclusive claim, Campbell pressed for a mining concession over

the whole of Harrar province, while the Italians sought similar rights in Wallaga. Campbell persistently berated Tafari and the government over the Bayart affair until, to obtain the money and to still Tripartite intrigue on the eve of the Peace Conference, Tafari granted the Harrar concession.

Campbell and the Foreign Office immediately brought tremendous pressure to bear upon the Abyssinia Corporation, who felt obliged though content to accept the 20,000-pound deal without sufficient analysis or any prospecting. Within two weeks, the Abyssinia Corporation leadership realized the worthlessness of the concession. The mineral capacity of the area was unproven, and the local infrastructure and political climate would in the short and long run prevent prospecting and mining. Only the Foreign Office seemed pleased.

Unaware of the unprofitable nature of the new claim, de Coppet immediately launched his own protest, arguing that the Abyssinia Corporation's new concession was itself more a monopoly than Bayart's, and that under the Tripartite Agreement exclusive rights to prospecting in the French Somaliland "hinterland," now claimed by Bayart, were reserved to French entrepreneurs.<sup>13</sup> Bayart also applied pressure. Conveying the nearly accurate impression that the Foreign Office ran the Abyssinia Corporation, Bayart showed Tafari Thesiger's letter in the company prospectus and emphasized that Sir C. Rey, the general manager, served prominently in the British government.

Rey had in fact been only a low-level administrator, but Tafari was in a difficult spot. He had granted the concessions in his own province of Harrar, likely to maintain secrecy and to derive a greater share of the revenue, but the claims and protests of the foreign interests now assumed more national and international importance. As a result, local intrigue stressed Tafari's selling of the country. At the same time, French opposition to the British Corporation, their casual talk of their Jibuti "hinterland," and the Tripartite powers' consistent perception of concession agreements as monopolies contravening the 1906 agreement, all smacked of coming interference in internal affairs at the approaching Peace Conference.

The ras therefore responded forcefully. He offered to refund the Abyssinia Corporation's investment in Harrar, and he publicly refused to accept Bayart's airplanes. Coincidentally, the British Corporation's figurehead spokesperson, Lord Lugard, arrived in Addis Ababa to learn that the Harrar concession was unworkable, impractically situated, and another in a series of outrageously poor company investments. Gladly, he accepted the offer. Ironically, in this instance, French obstructionism had saved the company from an even quicker demise.<sup>14</sup>

Though the Europeans would later recognize Tripartite obstructionism as a factor, they blamed their failures more immediately upon the post war trade depression and the "insuperable" obstacles of Ethiopian commerce. Of course, Indian,

and Arab traders, who willingly conformed to the existing economic climate, at the very least operated above the margin during the same period; but, spurred on by their governments, the concessionaires often recklessly pursued profits.

In their first year, for example, the Abyssinia Corporation lost 150,000 pounds. It cited adverse exchange fluctuations, abnormally high freight rates, poor communication, the troubles of finding tonnage at favorable moments, the heavy drop in prices of hides, wax, and Maria Theresa Thalers, but not inability to accept the conditions and constraints of Ethiopian commerce. No member of the Addis Ababa board of directors had the slightest prior experience or knowledge of local trading conditions, the company's organization was extravagant, wasting over 45,000 pounds in the first year, and purchases of raw stocks were rarely if ever covered with forward sales. In London, shareholder W. Benson captured the moment: "I think it is unique, even in the annals of the city of London, for shareholders to meet at their first general meeting confronted with a loss of fully half their capital. (Hear,Hear)"<sup>15</sup>

Given continuing French involvement in Ethiopia, Tripartite economic policy remained competitive and paranoiac to Ethiopia's disadvantage. Throughout the interwar period, for example, the Europeans vainly sought to monopolize control over capital in Ethiopia. The success of trading operations would depend upon reasonable rates of interest and, particularly, given the difficulties of communication and transportation, a sufficient,

ready supply of cash. The Europeans therefore assumed that healthy economic endeavors in Ethiopia would require a carefully regulated money supply; naturally, they asserted, with an appropriately haughty air, that only they were ever qualified to regulate it.

To a large extent, these assumptions undermined their banking operations. From its beginnings around the turn of the century, the officials of the British-dominated state bank, the Bank of Abyssinia, attempted to "educate" Ethiopians to the worth and importance of banking. With other Europeans, they argued that western banking techniques and capital would soon convert Ethiopia's high potential into spurting growth.

Under European management until 1930, however, the bank foundered, owing ironically to the directors' failure to educate themselves to the ideas governing economic and political conduct in Ethiopia. Initially the original founders pocketed 200,000 pounds of the bank's capital as their "commission." Then, there were huge capital losses when the Addis Ababa directors approved vast numbers of loans to landed nobility without collateral or guarantees in the conviction that a refusal to loan would breed hostility toward the European-run institution. However, the only real result of the loans, besides losing capital, was temporarily to lower local interest rates, costing further profits and not, as one bank official put it, "breaking the Empire's trade monopoly."

Already by 1912, the bank struggled with insufficient capital, unable to meet legitimate trade and state needs, and

directors remained fearful that their deficiencies might be revealed lest their claim as a state monopoly be called into question. Frequently, to hide their predicament, the bank's officers quoted absurd terms to prospective clients, while Thesiger admitted that the Bank's chief preoccupation seemed to be "the thankless task of reclaiming money advanced in the past." Only one dividend was ever issued to the bank's shareholders; the Board of Directors in Cairo could never, in good conscience, call for fresh capital.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, while the original concession required the Ethiopian government to deposit state revenues with the bank, and granted the institution the sole authority to issue currency, Menilek and his successors withheld these funds and rights in the belief that the bank was being run as a British enterprise and not as a state bank applying government policy. Ethiopia's leaders, for example, were incensed in 1913 by the bank's unannounced change in leadership, by its unauthorized promotion of the Gambela trade, and by its frequent efforts to issue banknotes without the government's backing or authorization. Not surprisingly, Ethiopians refused these notes as payments, and none were long used. Absence of government treasury funds further restricted the bank, leaving real control over investment capital in the hands of Indian and Arab long-distance traders. By the interwar period, therefore, the British-dominated Bank of Abyssinia had little working capital, little or no control over the money supply, and

no effective method of issuing currency. Its position hardly warranted their unbounded enthusiasm.

After the end of the first world war, therefore, when Thesiger initiated the amalgamation of British commercial interests, he stressed that the new Abyssinia Corporation would prosper if and, only if, the Bank of Abyssinia quickly reorganized with fresh capital and emphasized on local decision-making.

At first, the scheme seemed assured when Tafari, who hoped for a real state bank, supported reorganization. The British minister incorrectly interpreted the ras's support as approval for British commercial dominance. Tripartite intrigue, and not Thesiger's misunderstanding with Tafari, however, aborted the scheme. Though British investors predominated, the Bank's founders included French and Italians. When Britain broached the subject of the reorganization, therefore, France and Italy, each with burgeoning interests in the Bayart and Ostini schemes, made it clear that changes would have to include larger French and Italian investment and more equal representation on the Board of Directors. The Quai d'Orsay went further, arguing that if reorganization did not proceed, Paris, with a growing need for local investment capital, might have to open a French-funded bank in Addis Ababa.

Ever fearful of French expansion, the Foreign Office reversed its stand, despite the possible consequences for new British investment in Ethiopia. Even if capital might temporarily be insufficient, existing arrangements, the Foreign Office argued, at



least guaranteed for Britain the preponderate banking influence in Ethiopia. Ironically, Sperling was probably correct when he concluded that the "Bank's concession is as solid as any concession can be in Abyssinia."

Tripartite competition continued to block the introduction of new banking concessions. The French and Italians had an easy time convincing Ethiopia that the Bank of Abyssinia was a one-sided enterprise, but they had considerable difficulty in providing an alternative. Primarily after World War I, but sporadically throughout the period, France and Italy pressed for freshly financed, non-British banks.

The Bank of Abyssinia's charter cast it as the only possible state bank, but there was in theory no reason why private, non-state banks could not operate. Indian traders, for example, lent capital to their contemporaries, but London always perceived the Indian banking as an insignificant force.

Britain reacted to European competition much more seriously. European banking competition would challenge an existing British interest and was therefore, in the Foreign Office's view, a threat and a clear abrogation of the letter and spirit of the Tripartite Agreement. Throughout the period, France and Italy took the warning seriously and, as a result, suffered, as the British, with insufficient capital for their endeavors.<sup>17</sup>

As if fighting an emotional cause in another time and place, Britain preferred to level on France the blame for all its

frustrations, not just those in banking. Throughout the period, though with passion during the Abyssinia Corporation's "development," Britain hoped to acquire Jibuti and the French Addis Ababa-Jibuti railway, or else quickly develop an alternate and viable export route, in the conviction that British commercial ventures would otherwise be blocked by France's commercial administration. The Abyssinia Corporation's first losses stemmed from the Jibuti port's obstruction of food and currency exports. There were also high railway rates and export tariffs, the latter in apparent contravention of article 6 of the Tripartite Agreement. The colony's governor argued repeatedly that wartime legislation and Jibuti's precarious dependence upon taxes from the transit trade justified its policies, but Britain only increased its resolve to purchase or trade for the colony, or at very least build up Gambela or develop an alternative route to Zeila.

Moreover, if France remained in Jibuti, Italy and Britain feared that a post-war glut of arms would funnel through the French colony, complicating already difficult border crises. And, the Foreign Office feared that, were the Abyssinia Corporation to succeed, its dependence upon the railway might ironically bolster France's profits and her stake in the Horn. In such a scenario, thought Sperling, France's quid pro quo in a Jibuti cession would increase.

Paris, of course, rejected Britain's offer of a trade for the Gambia, and throughout the 1920s defended its high tariff and

railway freight rates as essential for the maintenance of the colony and the railway. Real and potential commerce suffered as a result throughout the 1920s, but the real loser was the imperial government. Britain's anti-French paranoia not only blocked repeated proposals for the extension of the railway, which might otherwise have carried much greater volume and allowed lower freight charges, but also kept the arms required for consolidation and perhaps even for frontier stability from reaching the capital.<sup>18</sup>

In other matters also, Tripartite competition inhibited the growth of the export economy. Britain's Tana interest threatened Italy's claim to a northern economic hinterland and, later, France's railway and port, when negotiations augured alternative rail links with the Sudan or the cession of Zeila to Ethiopia. Throughout the interwar period there were, it seemed, no compromises when it came to obtaining individual concessions.

In fact, on only one subject, economic reform, could the powers unite, in principle if not always in practice, since all three were convinced that success required economic conditions suited to their interests. As the Jibuti railway progressed towards Addis Ababa, and as the number of expatriates processing exports and imports grew, so did the urgency with which the diplomats combined to secure capitulatory rights in Ethiopia. The French pressed for reforms to protect, and thereby guarantee, foreign, and preferably French economic penetration in Ethiopia, thus

spurring transit through an otherwise unprofitable Jibuti. Italy looked for all opportunities to penetrate Ethiopia commercially and to challenge Addis Ababa's sovereignty, building its case for an eventual mandate over an "uncivilized" and "uncooperative state." Great Britain, like the others, saw in economic reform its only hope for successful investment in Ethiopia, particularly after successive British commercial operations failed during the 1920s.<sup>19</sup>

The key to their combined effort was their interpretation of the 1908 Klobukowski Treaty. In 1907 when Menilek proposed negotiating a new commercial treaty, the French Government saw an opportunity to secure its interests in Ethiopia. By an oversight, they had never ratified their commercial treaty of 1897, and its sparse provisions seemed all the more inadequate before the burgeoning prospect of French investment in exportation.<sup>20</sup> In addition to obtaining most favored nation status, therefore, their special envoy Klobukowski arrived in May determined to settle all outstanding economic affairs. Accordingly, the Quai d'orsay instructed him to prohibit export-damaging monopolies, to secure foreigners' rights to acquire property, to commit long distance trade to the railway, and to obtain exclusion of French subjects from Ethiopian jurisdiction.<sup>21</sup> Despite his healthy sovereign contempt of international agreements, Menilek had recently negotiated a spate of commercial treaties.

With the French, the emperor hoped to increase to 10% the allowable customs' duty, surpassing the 8% limit which the former commercial treaty had extended by most favored nation status to the new holders of commercial treaties.<sup>22</sup> KIobukowski quickly agreed to the new duty, as long as the 8% limit could be maintained for the products of the troubled French wine industry.<sup>23</sup> The other matters took longer, but throughout the emperor sought to preserve the status quo.

The Amharic version confirms that Menilek played a vigorous role in shaping the treaty;<sup>24</sup> unaware of mistranslations, the monarch could not have predicted the implications of Europe's interpretations. He altered KIobukowski's clause seeking unrestricted commercial activity for French traders, by placing his prerogative to grant monopolies on par with French government procedure, and by preserving those concessions already in operation. He subordinated foreigners' rights to acquire property under the vague "according to the custom of the country," undoubtedly designed to maintain personal supervision over land sales.<sup>25</sup>

Most importantly, he countered KIobukowski's pursuit of full capitulatory rights, offering instead terms confirming both existing judicial procedure in cases involving foreigners and his own judicial sovereignty.<sup>26</sup> Following slight, though later important modifications, Klobukowski accepted the offer as the best possible "under the circumstances." <sup>27</sup>

In its final form, article 7 contained a vaguely worded representation of the judicial system then applying to foreigners in Ethiopia. Cases between French subjects were recognized as under French jurisdiction. Disputes between French and Ethiopian subjects, which had theretofore been settled diplomatically,<sup>28</sup> were similarly to be administered by an Ethiopian judge with appeals before the emperor. In this "Mixed" or "Special" Court, the law of the defendant would apply. This was Menilek's only concession, minimized by the fact that such affairs had often taken foreign jurisprudence into consideration, by the preservation of his own prerogative as the court of final appeal in Ethiopia, and by the safeguarding of the empire from international judicial interference.

Predictably, perhaps, the French and later the other two Tripartite powers, after their own failed attempts to improve on these terms, placed considerably different interpretations on article 7. From the French, but not the Amharic version of the treaty, the French consul could be interpreted as a co-judge in mixed cases, and the emperor could be required to apply the law of the defendant in Chillot, thereby eliminating any application of Ethiopian legislation to foreign defendants.<sup>29</sup> So, for example, any attempt by the Ethiopian government to tax or otherwise regulate the growing foreign merchant community could be disregarded, since foreign defendants could and did argue that only their own British, French, or Italian law could legitimately apply.<sup>30</sup>

It was the final paragraph of article 7, however, over which the first judicial discord developed. The French sought to protect arrested and convicted nationals, but Klobukowski had impetuously signed the treaty before receiving the Quai d'Orsay's final instructions on the subject. Even after the envoy's successful appeal to Menilek to add a clause at the end of the article, the sense of the Amharic version remained that the French consul could protect the dependent only in cases between foreign subjects, not in "mixed cases."<sup>31</sup>

On reading the treaty, the Italian and British ministers agreed that it essentially admitted Ethiopian jurisdiction over Europeans, at a time when the influx of foreigners made difficulties daily graver.<sup>32</sup> Even after the mistranslations became known in 1912, the European ministers felt that they could not under any circumstances admit the Ethiopian point of view and thereby expose their subjects to methods of justice and detention "too medieval to be applied to 20th century Europeans."<sup>33</sup> The three powers agreed that their unity was essential in all matters touching article 7, or "the Ethiopian government would be encouraged to minimize the small privileges we now hold."<sup>34</sup>

The Tripartite legations reasoned that they would be in a difficult position if representations to the Ethiopian government were formally refused, as seemed likely. The British minister Thesiger therefore proposed that the question remain in abeyance, for the moment, pending possible negotiation of a treaty in which,

as a compromise, the Ethiopians as a minimum could build a proper facility for jailed Europeans.<sup>35</sup> But Menilek's death, the chaos of Lij Iyasu's years, and the outbreak of war in Europe mitigated pursuit of judicial reform.

Nonetheless, improvement schemes and reform proposals continued to surface. In 1916, for example, at the very moment the Tripartite powers joined in expressing their "dissatisfaction" with Lij Iyasu's government, Thesiger drew up a scheme of reforms "to be imposed... if necessary, by force" after the war. Naively, he assumed that Tafari's "progressive party" would support reforms "so clearly aimed at improving the general condition of the country"; in the end, of course, he gave his full support to the ras whose "recentralization of administrative power in Addis Ababa" would facilitate the introduction of these "most necessary reforms."

Thesiger's ideas, which he leaked to Tafari, called for a European jurist to judge all foreign defendants, and for European financial and commercial advisers to control all customs houses, to run the treasury, to establish a central government budget, to fix and ensure the payment of provincial tribute, to protect merchants from blackmail and extortion, to minimize or eliminate taxes along the main caravan routes, to advise on all concession negotiations, to guarantee freedom of commerce, and to control local markets.<sup>36</sup>



The Italian Minister, Count Colli, believed that the most propitious moment for reform would follow the war, when the prestige of victory would give the powers a freer and more potent hand to reorganize Ethiopia's internal administration and perhaps to modify the Tripartite Agreement to conform to the powers' emerging interests. de Coppet recognized that the Tripartite Agreement had already served its purpose for France, since the railway now had reached Addis Ababa; But allied cooperation seemed to him more important than ever, to bring about what he described as economic conditions more satisfactory for European enterprise.<sup>37</sup>

The proposals would have been fanciful even during calmer times, but the transition to a new government, the ongoing war in Europe, and the diplomat's overly optimistic confidence in Tafari's "commitment" to reform placed the proposals temporarily on the shelf. The Europeans were convinced that Tafari "means well, and undoubtedly intends to try and reform his country," but that some time would be necessary to allow for the consolidation of authority in Addis Ababa. Besides, HMG felt certain, though incorrectly, that France's arms policy at Jibuti somehow indicated the Quai d'Orsay's opposition to reform. If only France could be driven from the Horn, or if arms regulation could somehow be achieved, the Foreign Office felt certain that the Tripartite Agreement, as "a living instrument," would give to the powers "a whip hand over Abyssinia... increasing our influence in other questions." <sup>38</sup>

Though the war effort in Europe made reforms a relatively minor issue, the powers were nonetheless prepared to join together in the event that Ethiopia denounced the Klobukowski Treaty, possible for the first time under the terms of the last article in August 1919. In the Europeans' view, abrogation of the agreement would bring on a diplomatic crisis likely to hasten partition. Already under considerable pressure, Tafari and the Ethiopian government, in addition to seeking a seat at the Peace Conference and sending "congratulatory" missions to Europe, made it clear, despite their continuing disgust with extraterritoriality, that the treaty would not be challenged.<sup>39</sup>

On the eve of the Peace Conference, the post-war depression and the commitment to the new European concessions intensified the pressure for reform. Reacting to the economic distress and to the chaos attending the 1919 epidemic, Colli denounced government mismanagement and weakness. He personally recommended that the only course for Britain and Italy was the joint imposition of reforms, if necessary, by force. He denounced French policy, asserting that de Coppet sought primarily to sow distrust and suspicion of Britain and Italy in the minds of the Ethiopians and to obtain trade monopolies under the guise of defending Ethiopia's sovereignty. Thesiger felt that Tafari was clearly in favor of wide-ranging reforms but had until now insufficient warrant to affect them. Any ultimatum, he feared, would necessitate military occupation and likely undermine the one leader who might in the

end give Europe what it needed. Therefore, he paved the way for Britain's Peace Conference initiatives.

In a full meeting of the Addis Ababa legations, Thesiger suggested the precedent of Britain's 1868 invasion, when "reforms" were facilitated by the cooperation of provincial leaders. Ethiopia, he now suggested, might divide itself willingly into four kingdoms, with the east and west under British, the south and north under Italian influence. Britain and Italy, he preposterously concluded, could then guarantee Ethiopia's territorial integrity, on the condition that each region accept reforms under European supervision. France would be compensated "elsewhere."

de Coppet reacted bitterly. Under instructions, the French minister opposed any change in existing Tripartite relationships. Instead, he offered a strongly worded, eleven-part reform program, which, if enforced, would negate any need for other, irreversible measures. It called for the immediate application of existing anti-slavery laws, registration of arms and a ban on their trade, state control of alcohol, acceptance of Europe's interpretation of article 7, foreigners' rights to buy and sell land, simplification of customs procedures, freedom of religion, and widespread use of European advisers.<sup>40</sup>

On paper, the French ideas for reform were more comprehensive than Thesiger's or Colli's, but Caplan suggests, and I am inclined to agree, that France, far more than hoping for reform, hoped to

forestall the partitioning of Ethiopia now openly sought by the other Tripartite powers. Thesiger and Colli argued that the new plan might only perpetuate disorder, while reaping for France considerable political and economic benefit in Ethiopia. For these reasons, the British and Italians declined to place their full support behind de Coppet's scheme, preferring instead to proceed with high hopes for partition at the Peace Conference.<sup>41</sup>

Under the open and mounting pressure, Tafari responded with several interrelated ideas. At France's suggestion, Ethiopia sent "congratulatory" missions to the peace talks, offered advisory positions to French and English subjects, and, in the strongest language, he renewed his commitment to reform. All the initiatives seemed to fail. On Britain's and Italy's suggestion, the Europeans agreed to ignore the missions, at least to the extent of refusing meaningful discussions with them. Despite Britain's long protestations for foreign advisers, and to Tafari's utter bewilderment, HMG declined the ras's invitation to send a financial counselor, preferring, first, in an uncommon act of Tripartite loyalty, to obtain consent from the other powers. France had no such scruples, and gladly sent a judicial adviser, Maurice de Bellefonds.

Both Britain and Italy, however, argued strenuously that an appointment given only to a Frenchman countered the spirit of the Tripartite agreement. Tafari, who must have been frustrated with such hard to please "'allies," continued to try. In October 1919,

he called a meeting of the nobility to discuss immediate reforms along European lines. Later, with good effect to Campbell, he likened Ethiopia to Japan, explaining that ignorance underlay the empire's difficulties; that strong initiatives and reforms were necessary to deter foreign intervention. Nothing more than renewed verbal promises for reform resulted, and all seemed lost in the wake of the epidemic that left the capital, in the eyes of the Europeans, unusually chaotic. Tafari admitted his powerlessness, but still assured Europe that no one else in the country might ever be able to reform the country.<sup>42</sup>

Ethiopia owed its continuing independence, not only to the effectiveness of Tafari's reform promises, but also to conflicting Tripartite self-interests. At the Peace Conference, the urgencies of European security and of frontier settlement far outweighed consideration of Ethiopia, which in the end was reluctantly discussed within the context of Italian compensatory demands. There would be, however, no call for a mandate. Addis Ababa's instability had calmed, and Ethiopia in any event had not been a belligerent state. There was, moreover, a persistent rumor, especially when it became clear that France would cling to Jibuti, that, if pressed, Ethiopia would ask for a French, and not a British or Italian protectorate. With France still in the Horn, the Tripartite agreement would apply in the event of partition; but splitting up the country along the lines specified in the agreement would have left much less territory to Britain than to

her allies. Britain therefore looked to compensate Italy elsewhere, and came to welcome France's intransigence over Jibuti. HMG could thereby more strongly defend both its claim over British Somaliland, and its inflated commercial hopes in the Abyssinian Corporation, which, at the moment, seemed only full of promise and would, the Foreign Office feared, never succeed under an Italian administration.

Instead, Britain recommended a joint note, "in polite but firm language," backed by armed frontier demonstrations, if necessary, that the powers would not permit further internal troubles or misgovernment working "against the interests and general progress of Ethiopia herself or their own interests." If Europe were to invest and operate in Ethiopia, it would only be if a "stable government" could be guaranteed under a "reform-minded" Tafari. An administration under Lij Iyasu, or under the "uneducated, unintelligent, and ... obstructive Empress" would not be permitted. Otherwise, "the signatory powers will no longer be responsible for the maintenance of the independence of the Ethiopian Empire." In the end, instead of a protectorate over the Horn, Italy received only Jubaland and a future lease of Kismayu from Britain, and a few minor Tunisian border changes from France.<sup>43</sup> Ironically, if only by virtue of intense Tripartite competition, the peace process confirmed Ethiopia's independence. It also, of course, perpetuated the diplomatic importance of the 1906 and 1908 agreements.

Soon after its unsatisfactory settlement, Italy again sought to bypass the Tripartite Agreement, or at very least transmogrify its terms. In 1919, the Italian government invited Britain and France "to consider the backward state of development in Ethiopia... [where there are] customs at variance with the laws of civilization, ... [keeping it] very far from attaining the economic well-being which is warranted by its extent, its wealth, and its fertility." Citing Ethiopia's inability to progress and its continuing refusal to accept Tripartite assistance, Italy called for a "policy of efficacious collaboration for the progress of Abyssinia." Specifically, Italy would support Britain's quest for Tana and recognize France's economic hinterland west of Jibuti in return for an enlarged sphere of influence and help in negotiating the colony connecting railway specified in the Tripartite Agreement. Britain quickly refused the offer, disagreeing that Tana fell within the Italian sphere of influence, and, with France, deciding to pursue the economic reforms that would aid their interests.<sup>44</sup>

The rejection of Italy's scheme confirmed the 1906 Agreement as the cornerstone on interwar Tripartite policy, without lessening its inherent contradictions. For example, to bring trade to the railway, the Franco-Ethiopian railway administration proposed to construct a road from Dire Dawa to Harrar and sent surveyors to investigate the possibilities of feeder lines and railway extensions to Gojjam and Jimma. de Coppet denied any

intention of extending the railway to the west, since the 1886 agreement reserved that concession for Britain, but he stressed openly that railway profits would depend upon the successful tapping of the southwestern produce. Accordingly, he sounded the British charge, who remained convinced that Gambela would be hurt by such French activity.

In fact, Britain longed to oppose all French activity, but the Abyssinia Corporation was involved in similar road building schemes in the west. Nonetheless, the Foreign Office instructed Dodds to oppose all railway extensions, which it feared would threaten the dream of British commercial dominance, bolster French defiance on the arms question, and especially raise the price of acquiring Jibuti. Similarly, Italy opposed a railway extension toward Wollo, arguing that the 1906 treaty restricted France to opportunities solely along the existing railway. For the railway, such obstructionism meant low profits, lower volume and therefore less customs revenue, no branch lines or feeders, an inability to finance and justify proper rolling stock and warehousing facilities, and ironically, higher transit prices for railway using firms like the Abyssinia Corporation. Transit rates were, in fact, so high that many merchants, particularly Indians and Arabs, found small but acceptable profits in the alternate camel route to Zeila.<sup>45</sup>

While Tripartite competition for economic opportunities remained fierce, the growing realization that existing concessions



were failing bolstered unity on the re-form issue. Already by 1920, Bayard had left the country for good, and the Abyssinia Corporation was hopelessly mired in debt. The powers soon seemed to cooperate. They presented united protests concerning arbitrary customs charges in Addis Ababa, they pressured Ethiopia to rescind the wartime ban on Maria Theresa Thaler exports, and they continued to express their concern with the judicial system.

But the trade depression which lasted through 1921 drained such economic initiative. The judicial system plodded along: Jurisdiction in cases between foreign subjects took on more regular form, following the establishment of Consular Courts by France, Great Britain, Italy, and Germany. "Mixed" Court procedure developed by convenience. In purported fulfillment of the provisions of the Klobukowski Treaty, cases were argued in a small room over the Post Office by representatives of the Ethiopian government and the legation concerned. Unresolved cases were referred to Ras Tafari. The ministers agreed: the system had little changed - it had considerable room for improvement, though it "served a want." <sup>46</sup>

The issue of economic reform continued to surface and, indeed, came to the fore when the world and the Ethiopian economy began to rebound. By 1921, the number of British Indian and Arab traders and their litigations was quickly growing in response to the opening of profitable markets for Ethiopian products in Europe. Meanwhile, the Abyssinian Corporation rapidly plunged towards

liquidation, owing in part to unresolved judicial affairs.<sup>47</sup> Colonel Sandford, the General Manager of the Abyssinia Corporation, summarized Europe's frustration, pressing the Foreign Office to remove the "obstacles of trade.":

...the prize for which we are all struggling – commercial control of the resources of the country, to mention only one aspect of the question, is well worth having, and ought not to be relinquished. The Foreign Office were a factor, however much it would embarrass them to acknowledge it, in inducing the British investor to put money recently into Abyssinian enterprises. But it is not necessary to harp on this. There are many excellent reasons... why the British government cannot afford to lose any opportunity of sharpening the future of Abyssinia so that it shall not develop on lines antagonistic to British interests. British traders in Abyssinia have every justification, therefore, for expecting the active assistance of the British government in furthering their legitimate interests... The point I want to lay stress on is that it should not be a matter of very great difficulty to remove these obstacles. True it would mean an active interference in the affairs of Abyssinia, but the lawless conditions on our frontiers and the resuscitation of the slave trade within our own borders...are already reasons and not merely excuses for such interference.<sup>48</sup>

The new British minister to Addis Ababa, Claud Russell, took up the challenge. In late 1921, he renewed the reform issue with a vigorous proposal. His draft to Tafari called for a properly constituted Mixed Court such as the one in Egypt "which made [that country's] development possible." The proposal sought equal judicial powers for the consul, and a similarly constituted Chillot with HM minister sitting beside Tafari. For good measure, Russell required that foreign legations handle all detained and convicted subjects. Notwithstanding Foreign Office confidence that there was

"nothing in the agreement to which the Ethiopian government could object," <sup>49</sup> the treaty fell before "xenophobia" and court intrigue. There was no question of accepting such absurd terms, but Tafari, hard pressed by Zawditu and her party, passed the burden of rejecting the agreement to the empress while advertising his own image as reformer and modernizer to the Europeans. He commented to Russell that he would have willingly signed the treaty if so authorized, adding that Russell and the foreign community might now see some of the difficulties of his position.<sup>50</sup>

Further to appease the Europeans while consolidating his authority and shoring his prerogatives, Tafari in 1922 established a more permanent court to handle cases between foreigners and Ethiopians.<sup>51</sup> Tafari called it the Special Court, the title "Mixed Court" being carefully eschewed so as to avoid the analogy with Egypt. The court would have a single Ethiopian magistrate, with the foreign consul present. Appeals would be to Tafari's Chillot, preserving Ethiopia's interpretation of article 7. Finally, the ras brought in the new legal adviser, de Bellefonds, to draw up the Reglement Provisoire Judiciare, a document defining Special Court procedure and affirming Ethiopia's judicial sovereignty. The diplomatic body retorted that they would accept the reglement only if Tafari confirmed the European interpretation of article 7; Russell's 1921 terms were in essence put forth again.<sup>52</sup>

Tafari refused to reply to the diplomatic insult, and the reglement, though apparently placed into practice, was never

officially ratified by Europe. The powers were not displeased, since they reckoned that the Ethiopian judge would not be able to apply the reglement's highly technical and cumbersome language. de Bellefonds admitted to a certain naivety in purpose, exclaiming before the diplomatic body that he had drawn up the document in the belief that the Ethiopian government would soon be sufficiently embarrassed to call a European judge to run the court.<sup>53</sup>

By excluding the possibility of resolving judicial disputes through diplomatic channels, precisely the method reserved by the Italians and British to bypass the treaty, Tafari's regularization of mixed litigation ironically intensified Tripartite opposition to Ethiopia's application of the terms of the Klobukowski Treaty. In the European view, the new court was a "bear garden." Never contemplating their own responsibility for the court's procedural difficulties, the powers complained that its methods were chaotic, its conduct faulty, its delays interminable. The judges they argued, had no independence, ruling almost exclusively for Ethiopians, while in those few cases decided "favorably," it seemed impossible to get judgments executed.<sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, the number of cases before the court quickly accelerated, owing to the boom in economic activity, the encouragement of litigation by the growing number of European lawyers in Addis Ababa, and to the apparent passions of the expatriates to sue.<sup>55</sup>

On the eve of Tafari's European trip in 1924, the legal situation seemed anarchical, and the diplomatic body collectively

informed their governments to raise the issue, further frustrating the regent's unsuccessful pass from capital to capital in search of an Ethiopian port. The Tripartite powers urged that he hire a European judge for both the Special Court and Chillot, while the Belgians offered the services of a more disinterested judge.<sup>56</sup>

Tafari's response now appeased no one. As he would six times during the 1920s, he changed the judge in the Special Court,<sup>57</sup> and on return to Addis Ababa, he issued the Law of Loans, an apparent attempt to bring Ethiopia's law in congruence with Europe's. Like the slavery and arms proclamations issued at the same time, the new legislation had no immediate impact, in this case because the European community, with diplomatic encouragement, haughtily ignored Ethiopia's jurisdiction.

Despite Tafari's efforts to appease Europe and to gain control over Ethiopia's economic order, the European ministers and the investors they advised increasingly doubted that any enterprise could succeed unless meaningful reforms were first enacted. The following quote from Russell captures the moment, demonstrates the change from Thesiger's perceptions, and helps to explain why Britain so willingly exchanged the 1925 notes with Italy:

According to my information and experience, no developments are in progress in this country as would lead one to regard it as a desirable field for British enterprise... The experiences of the few British enterprises that have attempted business in Ethiopia is profoundly discouraging. The Abyssinia Corporation, the Abyssinia Development Syndicate, and the East African Trading Company... operated on distinct lines in different fields, and all three have failed. Ethiopia

may well be... potentially one of the richest countries in the world, but the produce of the country avails little to the trader when means are lacking to get and move it, and when it is doubtful whether the government of the country will allow one to retain the produce of his labor." <sup>58</sup>

All the ministers agreed. Radical reforms were required before the powers could again risk large capital expenditures in Ethiopia.

Now with less optimism in their ability to develop Ethiopia, Britain signed over to Italy the right to develop its "sphere of influence" in Western Ethiopia. Britain intended that the exchange of notes, besides eliminating obstacles to Tana negotiations, would eliminate or at least minimize Tripartite competition and let Europe ramrod important projects past Ethiopian sensitivities.

Ironically, however, the attempt to "rationalize" Tripartite economic activity instead institutionalized obstructionism. Now for the first time, the powers, and especially Britain, urged their own nationals against investing in Ethiopia. With amazing frequency, the Foreign Office ordered its representatives to discourage British economic activity and investment in any area that the Italian government might now perceive as lying in its sphere of economic influence, in the fear that Rome otherwise would disregard its obligations under the 1925 agreement and oppose Tana talks. In a series of cases, therefore, including several backed by reputable corporations, the Foreign Office blocked large investments in Ethiopia. Italy and France, though increasingly interested, still refrained from investment in the west,

preferring projects in the north and east, closer to their colonies.<sup>59</sup>

Europe may therefore share a large measure of the responsibility for the continuing lack of meaningful development in Ethiopia, but the three nations preferred to level the blame solely on the Addis Ababa administration. At issue by 1925 was Europe's insistence that the application of the law of the defendant in the Special Court required its application on appeal to Chillot. Tafari correctly countered that nothing in the treaty expressly obliged him to consult foreign consuls or to judge according to foreign law, though in deference to European pressure, he often asked for foreign opinions and occasionally incorporated them in his judgments.

The conflict came to a head when Tafari sentenced three British Somalis to death for murder. All agreed on their guilt, but the Europeans were anxious to avoid the precedent of a death penalty. The ras's private secretary was informed that HMG were "satisfied that no case had been made out against any of the accused which under the law of any civilized country would warrant their conviction and punishment." <sup>60</sup> The British refused to turn the condemned men over to the Ethiopian authorities, and threatened to publish a report on the subject "so that the world may know the nature of Abyssinian justice." <sup>61</sup> Now frequently expressing the humiliation of Ethiopia's capitulatory position, Tafari asserted

that it was his sovereign right to execute the Somalis, and threatened to so appeal before the League of Nations.<sup>62</sup>

However, before the growing threat of Anglo-Italian entente, Tafari sought to ward off possible league inquiries into slavery, frontier affairs, and justice. Therefore, he reluctantly reversed his decision on the Somalis, requiring them only to pay blood money, and he moved rapidly to place judicial affairs on a less controversial basis.<sup>63</sup> Just prior to the league's meeting that would consider the exchange of notes, Tafari announced that a Swiss judicial adviser would arrive the next year, and he issued a new Reglement specifying that the Chillot would be replaced by a Court of Appeal in which there would be some European participation.

A crisis in 1926 was thus avoided, and the diplomatic corps postponed judgment of Tafari's reglement until the arrival of the new judicial adviser, Jacques Auberson. By 1927, however, it was clear that Auberson would not assume an active role in the Special Court or Chillot, and to the further chagrin of the foreign community, the Swiss adviser recommended to a favorably disposed Tafari that judicial change ought to proceed at a more gradual pace.

On this advice, Tafari gladly retracted his previous offer, suggesting now that the Special Court be divided into two halves to expedite the enormous case load, and that a subsidiary court of appeal likewise deal with the plethora of minor cases. In essence the regent was no longer willing, on paper or in practice, to



compromise his sovereign duties in the Chillot. The French minister, on hearing the news, castigated Tafari on the issue, threatening that France would no longer be disposed to guarantee Ethiopia's independence nor expedite the arms question.<sup>64</sup>

To the diplomatic body, though, the main issue was the procedure in the Special Court, and the protection it could offer their subjects. Proposals and counter proposals went back and forth. The ministers suggested setting up a court much along the lines of Egypt's, while Tafari offered to engage a foreign judge for the Special Court to join two Ethiopian judges. There seemed no acceptable compromise. Tafari had been successful in preserving his prerogatives, but at the heavy cost of the powers' growing frustration.

Tafari's freer reign by the end of the decade allowed not only his coronation as Haile Sellassie, but it also permitted the sovereign to shape his program for fiscal, legislative, and judicial autonomy. The spate of legislation from 1929 to 1931 was designed to advertise his legitimacy, his sovereign rights, and his command over the foreign community, while strengthening his control over the domestic economy. The code of laws of 1930, in particular, struck directly at the provision which specified that extraterritorial rights would cease when Ethiopian legislation met Europe's standards. Expectedly, of course, the powers dismissed the reforms as inapplicable within Ethiopia's economic context.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile Ethiopian nationalists did not fail to notice the disappearance of extraterritorial provisions in Turkey, China, and Persia, and the emperor now referred to the Klobukowski accord as "restrictions on sovereignty to be curtailed rather than elaborated or improved." <sup>66</sup> In March 1931, a Greek lawyer, M. Politis, arrived to advise Haile Sellassie on ending the capitulatory regime. While free under its terms to denounce the 1908 Agreement with only one year's notice, Politis cautioned that the Ethiopian government would be ill advised to do so. If it did, he argued, foreigners and their capital would desert the country, and the subsequent crisis might well attract league or other intervention. Other reforms could be attempted, and in that spirit the monarch soon after announced that in view of the increasing amount of litigation in mixed cases and the emperor's other responsibilities, the appeals court would consist of five Ethiopian notables. Further reforms would follow.

Simultaneously, Haile Sellassie for the first time insisted that foreign law would not apply in Ethiopian government cases against foreigners. In essence, he had defended his right to legislate foreigners and wield authority over the expatriate merchant community by making them subject to Ethiopian government regulations.

The diplomatic body, however, rebuffed the attempts. The judicial reforms did not address the principle issues, they argued; in disgust the ministers voted unanimously to boycott judicial

process in Ethiopia. Further they informed the emperor that they would not condone application of any imperial law on a foreign subject without the joint consent of the Tripartite powers, a defiant disdain of Ethiopia's judicial sovereignty.<sup>67</sup>

Haile Sellassie's offensive against extraterritoriality was inopportune owing to world economic pressures on imperial finances. European demand for Ethiopia's main exports, coffee and hides, plummeted, while the fall in the value of silver reduced the thaler's purchasing power to import stifling depths. The imperial budget was thus severely strained by losses in customs' revenue at a time when the emperor's consolidation program included capital intensive items like building roads, purchasing arms, planes, and the British dominated Bank of Abyssinia, and staging the coronation.

Following the advice of Politis and his new American financial adviser, Colson, Haile Sellassie therefore imposed new and heavy consumption and excise taxes on already depression-pressed foreign imports. The Klobukowski Treaty had limited the tariff to 10%, but Colson and the emperor correctly explained that the powers had not previously objected to other similar taxes, and that technically the new charges were not customs' duties. After a long discussion, the diplomatic body again dissented; a more limited tariff increase would be tolerated only if the Ethiopian government agreed to the European interpretation of article 7.<sup>68</sup>

The quest for revenue also encouraged Haile Sellassie to offer westerners new alcohol, salt, oil, and mineral monopolies, but again, with an uncommon unity, the Tripartite powers responded angrily. They argued that the Klobukowski Treaty limited the Ethiopian government only to the granting monopolies identical to those in force in France. And citing the terms of the Tripartite Agreement, they argued that other monopolies could be regarded as harming an individual power's interests by inhibiting "free trade." Ethiopia responded that the application of the Klobukowski Treaty to the other powers by virtue of most favored nation status directly implied that monopolies could be granted to a power as long as the concession resembled those existing in all three countries. Indeed, Italy and Britain had themselves extended similar arguments when defending the Ostini and Abyssinia Corporation concessions.

The legalities had become so convoluted that, as late as 1930, France argued simultaneously in favor of its salt monopoly while opposing another salt scheme. By 1931, in response to the emperor's new fiscal initiatives, all agreed that Ethiopia's attempt to preserve its "sovereign right" to grant monopolies and concessions of all kinds "in disregard of its treaty obligations" would not be tolerated. Monopolies offered to non-Tripartite countries were actively protested and, in the end, most were retracted. The treaty question remained unresolved, however, and the emperor steadfastly

asserted, at least in his discussions with the ministers, his right to regulate all of the empire's economic policies.<sup>69</sup>

Negotiations on both judicial and monopoly concerns stalled, in essence confirming Haile Sellassie's fiscal, legislative, and judicial prerogatives. In the end, however, the frustration of the powers brought grave consequences. By 1934, almost every article of the Klobukowski Treaty had festered in unhealed wounds. The French felt particularly slighted, having expected tangible rewards for their support of Ethiopia's independence at the Peace Conference of 1919, for the entry to the league in 1924, and in face of Anglo-Italian entente. In a remarkable 28-page expose, France's Addis Ababa minister assaulted Ethiopia's application of the treaty. Article 1 required Ethiopian government encouragement of Jibuti trade, but recent developments in Eritrea, Gambela, and British Somaliland had lowered Jibuti's share of Ethiopia's transit from 75% to 60%. Development of Zeila threatened to lower the share still lower. The sale of land to foreigners, allowed briefly by Menilek, was prohibited by Lij Iyasu and Tafari, the latter paying often exorbitant prices to regain land under foreign ownership.<sup>70</sup> The monopoly clause had been disregarded, as much by the powers as by Ethiopia, and there were of course the long-standing disputes over tariff and judicial policy.<sup>71</sup> The result was to turn France further from Ethiopia, one less obstacle to Mussolini's Ethiopian adventure.

The struggle over extraterritorial rights in Ethiopia was fundamentally a contest to shape the philosophical underpinnings of Ethiopia's economy. By steadfastly asserting his prerogatives, the emperor ultimately lost; so too the economy, its Ethiopian character wounded by capitulations and its strength miring without the infrastructural developments that a less self-interested world might have helped to create. Through it all, it is understandable why Haile Sellassie, on re-entering Addis Ababa in 1941, was determined not to restore the capitulatory arrangements of the interwar period. His second edict restored his legislative and judicial prerogatives over foreigners, an assertion of legitimacy and sovereignty.

The failure of European economic initiatives in Ethiopia, no better typified than by the image of the Abyssinia Corporation's oak-lined board room in Addis Ababa, was a demonstration that their economic ideas were out of step with the commercial realities of Ethiopia. The blame for Europe's frustrations and failures ought to fall not on evident commercial constraints of the area's infrastructure and superstructure, but rather on Europe's inability to understand and adapt to the existing economic environment. The growth of the interwar economy, the rise of coffee and hides industries, and the development of the import-export infrastructure owed not so much to the efforts of the Europeans, but to another group of foreigners. Ethiopia's Indian and Arab traders far better understood and operated within the constraints

of economic activity in Ethiopia and became, as a consequence, the catalysts for what interwar economic growth did occur.

## Notes

1. I have already presented many of the ideas and much of the material in this chapter. I introduced the subject of extraterritoriality at the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies and again at the University of London. See Jon Edwards, "'...and the King Shall Judge': Extraterritoriality in Ethiopia, 1908-1936," Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, (Lund, 1984). I first examined the economic implications of the Tripartite Agreement in my "'...lest he multiply horses unto himself': The Economic Impact of Tripartite Policy in Ethiopia, 1906-1935," which I presented in 1983 at Michigan State's Conference on the Political Economy of Northeast Africa, later published in Northeast African Studies Vol. 6,1,2 (1984).
2. The quotes are from Desta Asayeghn, "A Socioeconomic Analysis of Schooling in Ethiopia," Northeast African Studies 4,2 (1982) 27-46. Similar comments were presented verbally at Lund in 1982 by D. Crummey and Bahru Zewde.
3. The first use of the expression "white policy" is in a minute by Clark in PRO: FO 371/193 Marquis de San Guiliano to Grey, 26 Dec. 1907. The expression is never defined better than as a "keystone of the Tripartite Agreement," but I take it to mean the fashioning of "conditions" favorable to and conducive of European economic practices.
4. see my "'...lest he multiply horses unto himself".
5. see Chapter 6; see also my "'...and the King Shall Judge': Extraterritoriality in Ethiopia, 1908-1936" Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, (Lund, 1984); see also the Appendix for the French and Amharic texts of article seven.
6. The best analysis of the making of the Tripartite Agreement is Harold G. Marcus, "A Preliminary History of the Tripartite Treaty of December 13, 1906," Journal of Ethiopian Studies; See the Appendix for the English text of the agreement.
7. PRO: FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Wingate, Addis Ababa, 7 Feb. 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Wingate, Addis Ababa, 28 Feb. 1916; FO 371/2593 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 6 July 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 3 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 1 Nov. 1916; FO



- 371/2595 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 16 Mar. 1916; ((add Cora, Min-Max citations and note)); QD: Guerre 1914-1918, Ethiopie 1627, XI Affaires Commerciales II, Report on the Ethiopian Economy enclosed in de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 21 May 1917.
8. PRO: FO 371/3125 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 10 June 1918.
  9. PRO: FO 371/3125 Thesiger to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 31 May 1918.
  10. PRO: BT 31/24275/152116 Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Abyssinia Corporation; FO 141/485 Files and extracts on the Development of Trade and the Formation (by amalgamation of existing firms) of a Single British Trading Company. Abyssinia Corporation; FO 371/3125 Wolmer to Sperling, 24 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3495 Wolmer to FO, 10 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3495 Chamberlain to Curzon, 16 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3495 Abyssinia Corporation Prospectus; FO 371/3495 Wolmer to Hubbard, 9 Apr. 1919; FO 371/3495 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 Mar. 1919; see also FO 371/800 for Chamberlain's attempts to force acceptance of the Abyssinia Corporation upon the Department of the Treasury.
  11. PRO: FO 371/3125 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1918; FO 371/3494 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 28 Oct. 1919; FO 371/3495 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 23 Dec. 1919; FO 371/3495 Lord Derby to Curzon, Paris, 21 Mar. 1919; FO 371/3495 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 Mar. 1919; FO 371/3495 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Mar. 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 21 July 1919; FO 371/3495 Wolmer to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 20 Sept. 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 12 July 1919 enclosed in Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 22 July 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 6, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 26 Aug. 1918; K Serie, Ethiopie 6, MAE Minute, 11 Dec. 1918; K Serie, Ethiopie 34, Enquete sur le Commerce Anglais, Italian, Americain, et Japonais en Ethiopie pendant la guerre 1914-1918, enclosed in de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 18 Dec. 1918; K Serie, Ethiopie 34, Pierre Alype à MAE, 22 Oct. 1919; K Serie, Ethiopie 34, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 30 Oct. 1919; K Serie, Ethiopie 38, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 27 June 1918; K Serie, Ethiopie 38, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 23 Oct. 1918; K Serie, Ethiopie 38, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 17 Dec. 1918; K Serie, Ethiopie 38, de Coppet à MAE,

Addis Ababa, 1 Mar. 1919; K Serie, Ethiopie 38, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 7 Dec. 1919.

12. PRO: FO 371/3125 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1918; FO 371/3495 Erlanger to Tyrrell, 18 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3495 Italian Embassy to FO, 9 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 5 Nov. 1918; FO 371/3495 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 38 de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 27 June 1918; K Serie, Ethiopie 38, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 17 Dec. 1918.
13. PRO: FO 371/3125 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1918; FO 371/3495 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 23 Feb. 1918; FO 371/3495 Lord Derby to Curzon, Paris, 21 March 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 23 July 1919; FO 371/3495 FO to Campbell, Addis Ababa, 30 July 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 21 July 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 30 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3495 Wolmer to Sperling, 15 Jan. 1920; FO 371/3497 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Feb. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 10 Dec. 1919; FO 371/3499 FO Memo on the Jibuti Railway 20 Mar. 1919; FO 371/3499 Lidderdale Minute to Lugard to Sperling, 17 Oct. 1919; FO 371/4396 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 Aug. 1920; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 Apr. 1920; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 38, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 25 Sept. 1920.
14. PRO: FO 371/3125 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1918; FO 371/3495 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3495 Lord Derby to Curzon, Paris, 21 Mar. 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 21 July 1919; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 10 Dec. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 17 Nov. 1919; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, A, 19 Nov. 1920; FO 141/485 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1919; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 38, Boucoiran à MAE, Addis Ababa, 15 Dec. 1919.
15. PRO: FO 141/485 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 23 June, 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 June 1919; FO 371/3495 FO to Campbell, Addis Ababa, 30 July 1919; FO 371/3495 FO to Campbell, Addis Ababa, 14 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 21 July 1919; FO 371/3495 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 30 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3495 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 8 Jan. 1920; FO 371/3495

- Wolmer to Sperling, 20 Sept. 1920; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 12 July 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 2 Dec. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1919; FO 371/3497 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 21 Sept. 1919; FO 371/3499 Lugard to Sperling, 17 Oct. 1919; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 19 Apr. 1920; FO 371/4395 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 29 Mar. 1920; FO 371/4396 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 27 Aug. 1920; FO 371/4397 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 20 Dec. 1920; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 38, Report of the Proceedings of the First Ordinary Meeting of the Abyssinia Corporation, held 2 Dec. 1920.
16. PRO: FO 371/1294 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 22 June 1912; FO 371/1570 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 26 Dec. 1912; FO 371/1879 Annual Report for 1913, enclosed in Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 12 Sept. 1914; FO 371/2595 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 19 July 1916; FO 371/2595 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 26 Dec. 1916; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 Sept. 1919.
  17. PRO: FO 371/1571 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 25 Mar. 1913; FO 371/1572 Grey to Thesiger, 24 July 1913; FO 371/1879 Annual Report for 1913, enclosed in Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 15 May 1914; FO 371/2595 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 26 Dec. 1916; FO 371/2595 McMahon to Grey, 1 June 1916; FO 371/3125 Holmes to Fanti, Addis Ababa, 22 May 1918; FO 371/3125 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 8 July 1918; FO 371/3494 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 31 Dec. 1918; FO 371/3494 Wingate to Graham, Cairo, 8 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3494 Rowlatt Memo, 14 Aug. 1919; FO 371/3494 Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 12 Sept. 1919; FO 371/3494 Campbell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 Sept. 1919; see Chapter 6.
  18. PRO: FO 371/4399 FO Minute (Sperling), 27 Sept. 1920.
  19. The European view is well represented by Jacques Auberson, Etude sur le Regime Juridique des Étrangères en Ethiopie, University of Geneva Ph.D., 1936; A.L. Gardiner, "La Jurisdiction concernant les etrangers en Ethiopie," Revue Gènèrale de Droit Internationale Public, 1928, pp. 713-729.
  20. QD: Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie, vol. 62, MAE to Lagarde, 16 April 1900; Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie 62, Note for the Minister, 26 Nov. 1906; Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie 65, MAE Minute, 7 Feb. 1906.

21. QD: Papiers d'Agents 95, Papiers Klobukowski, 23, Mission en Ethiopie, MAE Instructions to Klobukowski, 24 March 1907; see also Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie 62,65,66 passim.
22. The commercial treaties were with the United States, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Belgium.
23. QD: Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie 65, Klobukowski to MAE, 8 Aug. 1907.
24. See appendix for the Amharic and French texts of article 7.
25. See also Richard Pankhurst, Economic History of Ethiopia, 1800-1935. Addis Ababa, 1968, p. 165.
26. The British and Italians had unsuccessfully sought extraterritorial jurisdiction, and therefore supported Klobukowski's efforts, despite Menilek's repeated declarations to the British Minister that "nothing could influence him to submit to Consular jurisdiction and so allow himself, a Christian, to be reduced to the level of a mere Mohammedan potentate." Harrington and Colli had therefore recommended that the emperor appoint a European judge for "mixed cases," which itself risked Menilek's sensibilities towards international controls in Ethiopia, but Klobukowski assured them that the emperor would indeed accept Consular jurisdiction, by which all matters involving foreign subjects would fall under their consul's jurisdiction. It was immediately more important to the British and Italian governments to exclude their subjects from Ethiopian jurisdiction than to wonder over the course and nature of the negotiation, and they therefore gave the Frenchman their blessing. Menilek, however, rejected outright the envoy's proposal. QD: Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie 62, Klobukowski to MAE, 10 Sept. 1907; PRO: FO 371/192 Hohler to Grey, Addis Ababa, 2 Oct. 1907.
27. QD: Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie 65, Klobukowski to MAE, 11 Dec. 1907.
28. Gardner, p. 714.
29. Neither version specifies whether the emperor had to apply the law of the defendant in the Chillot, and indeed the Amharic version merely states that the emperor Judges appeals. The Amharic version notes that the foreign consul may be present during "mixed" trials, while the French text has the consul "assisting" the European judge. Both versions mention two judges, whom the French interpreted to be the

European judge and the assisting French consul. The Ethiopian government insisted that "the judges" must refer to the Ethiopian judge and his Ethiopian assistant. The Amharic version gives the emperor the power to judge on appeal, while the French requires the judgment in the emperor's Chilot. This last subtlety, however, was never disputed.

30. British Indian and Arab traders, for example, claimed the privileges of Article 7 by virtue of Britain's most favored nation status, which ironically covered "fiscal" but not judicial affairs. See note 32.
31. Only the origin of this mistranslation can be explained on the basis of available archival materials. After KIobukowski's appeal, the final word of article 7 was changed to the gerund form, and two more words were then added. The change was made only on Menilek's copy, explaining why later Ministers of Foreign Affairs at first disputed that the change had even taken place. The Amharic version clearly indicates that the Ethiopian authorities were required to inform the consul and hand over the defendant only in cases between French subjects. The French version carries a far more general sense, giving the consul such jurisdiction in "mixed" cases too.
32. Britain's most favored nation status applied to fiscal but not judicial matters, and while the French, Italians, and Ethiopians remained unaware of the limitation, the British were not anxious to defend their application of extraterritorial Jurisdiction only on the principle of custom and usage. The only such precedent found was for the Solomon Islands. The Foreign Office therefore joined the Italian government in looking for an opportune moment to negotiate terms "less liable to Menilek's interpretation of the law," preferably eliminating entirely Ethiopian jurisdiction when the defendant was foreign. PRO: FO 371/1043 Langley Minute to Bertie to Grey, 22 Nov. 1911; FO 371/1043 Ball Minute to Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 18 April 1911; ASMAE, Eritrea 24, Colli to Governor, Eritrea, 18 June 1910.
33. PRO: FO 141/437 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 14 Aug. 1912.
34. PRO: FO 371/1293 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 19 July 1912.
35. PRO: FO 371/1293 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 27 Sept. 1912; FO 141/437 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 15 Aug. 1912; QD: Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie 62, d'Apchier to MAE, 4 Mar. 1912. The matter had lain in an uneasy peace until April 1911 when

an Italian engineer accidentally steamrolled over an Addis Ababa child. Although judiciously acquitted by the Ethiopian judge, the engineer had spent three days chained to a local policeman in what the European ministers felt was a clear transgression of the last paragraph of article 7. Then Minister of Foreign Affairs Igazu countered that the Amharic version did not require that the foreign prisoners be handed over to their consuls. While his specific arguments were imprecise (see note 31), subsequent comparisons of the French and Amharic versions of the Treaty revealed that the Ethiopian government's compliance in such matters was in fact limited to affairs only between French subjects. In the opinion of the French attaché, Count d'Apchier, however, detention, judgment, and punishment were three parts of a greater whole. Application of the law of the defendant in mixed cases, he argued, removed all Europeans from the application of Ethiopian laws, and if such cases therefore involved French judgments and sentences, then French detention should also apply. Owing to the blatant mistranslation of the treaty, Thesiger and Colli agreed that d'Apchier's argument was weak, and that it was not a propitious moment to press the issue.

36. PRO: FO 371/2594 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 10 Aug. 1916; FO 371/2595 Thesiger to Grey, Addis Ababa, 16 March 1916; FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917.
37. PRO: FO 371/2596 Italian Embassy to FO, 10 Oct. 1916; QD: Guerre 1914-1918, Ethiopie 1623, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 5 April 1917; Guèrre 1914-1918, Ethiopie 1623, de Coppet a MAE, Addis Ababa, 25 April 1917; Guèrre 1914-1918, Ethiopie 1627, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 18 Jan. 1918.
38. PRO: FO 371/2853 Minutes to and text of Italian Embassy to FO, 19 Oct. 1917.
39. PRO: FO 371/2854 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 Apr. 1917; FO 371/3496 Campbell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1918.
40. PRO; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 17 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 26 Dec. 1919; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 13 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 5 Feb. 1919; FO 371/3496 de Coppet's Program of Reforms, enclosed in Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 Mar. 1919.
41. PRO: FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 Mar. 1919; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 26 Dec.

- 1918; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 10 Dec. 1919; Andrew Stephan Caplan, "British Policy Towards Ethiopia 1909-1919," Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1971, Chapter 6.
42. PRO: FO 371/3494 FO Minute (Hubbard) 25 June 1919; FO 371/3494 Thesiger to Sperling extract enclosed in Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 Feb. 1919; FO 371/3496 Thesiger to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 20 Jan. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 9 Oct. 1919; FO 371/3497 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 30 Oct. 1919; Fo 371/3499 Lidderdale Minute to Campbell to FO, Addis Ababa, 3 Sept. 1919.
  43. Iadarola, p. 606; Caplan, Chapter 6; PRO: FO 371/4390 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 12 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4395 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 29 Mar. 1920; FO 371/4396 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 8 June 1920; FO 371/4396 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 8 June 1920; FO 371/4399 Lugard to Curzon, 3 Aug. 1920 enclosed in Curzon to Dodds, 17 Aug. 1920; FO 371/4399 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 10 Sept. 1921.
  44. Iadarola, p. 606; Caplan, chapter 6; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 35, Action economique Franco-Anglo-Italienne en Ethiopie, remis par M. Tittoni, 25 June 1919; K Serie, Ethiopie 38 de Coppet a MAE, Addis Ababa, 27 June 1918; PRO: FO 371/3495 Memorandum on Franco-Anglo-Italian Economic Activity in Ethiopia, enclosed in Italian Embassy to FO, 18 Nov. 1919; FO 371/3497 Sperling Minute to Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 2 Dec. 1919; FO 371/4392 Baccari to Sperling, 4 Mar. 1920.
  45. PRO: FO 371/2854 Graham to Bertie, 19 Feb. 1917; FO 371/3125 Villiers to Sperling, 18 Mar. 1918; FO 371/3499 FO Memo on the History of the Jibuti Railway, enclosed in Thesiger to FO, Addis Ababa, 19 Feb. 1919; FO 371/3499 Dodds to FO, Addis Ababa, 20 Oct. 1919; FO 371/3499 Wolmer to Sperling, 5 Feb. 1920; FO 371/3500 Dodds to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 22 Oct. 1919; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 12 Feb. 1920; FO 371/4390 Dodds to Sperling, Addis Ababa, 31 July 1920; Fo 371/5509 Report on the Railway enclosed in Rey to Dodds, Addis Ababa, 4 Sept. 1921 .
  46. Gardiner, p. 714; PRO: FO 371/5502 Russell to FO, Addis Ababa, 15 Oct. 1921.
  47. See, for example, Bahru Zewde, "The Fumbling Debut of British Capital in Ethiopia: A Contrastive Study of the Abyssinian Corporation and the Ethiopian Motor Transport Company Ltd.," Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, (Lund, 1984).

48. PRO: FO 371/9994 Russell to MacDonald, 27 March 1924.
49. PRO: FO 371/5502 Hudson Minute to Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 15 Oct. 1921.
50. PRO: FO 371/7149 Russell to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 10 June 1922.
51. For more specific detail on the establishment and working of the Special Court see H. Scholler, "The Special Court of Ethiopia," Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, (Lund, 1984).
52. PRO: FO 371/7151 Dodds to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 21 July 1922.
53. Ibid.
54. Such European descriptions of the Special Court abound. Among many references, see Gardiner, p. 723; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 12, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 29 Mar. 1924; ASMAE Affari Politici 1038 Bova Scoppa to MAE, Addis Ababa, 31 Mar. 1924; PRO: FO 371/13837 Dunbar to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 23 Mar. 1929.
55. From 45 cases in 1922 to 178 in 1923. On average there were approximately 150 cases a year involving British subjects throughout the decade. See my "An Introduction to Foreign Office File 915: The British Consular Court in Ethiopia, 1912-1938," NEA: A Journal of Research on North East Africa 1:2 (1982).
56. Belgian Foreign Ministry: AF-4, dossier 10.603 Abyssinie Gerard à Hymans, Addis Ababa, 17 May 1924; PB(Asie) 326/711-700, 20 May 1924; 326/711-726, 28 May 1924; 251/711-708, 22 May 1924; PRO: FO 371/9992 Record of the Conversation between MacDonald and Ras Tafari, 16 July 1924; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 13, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 10 Mar. 1924. The relevant files in the Italian foreign office are unfortunately missing.
57. See Scholler for a list of the Special Court judges.
58. PRO: FO 371/8410 Russell to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 1 Oct. 1923 enclosed in Department of Overseas Trade to FO, received 6 Nov. 1923.
59. PRO: FO 371/11570 Johnson Mathey and Company to FO, London, 6 Jan. 1926, enclosed in Bentinck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1925; FO 371/11570 Murray to Johnson, Mathey, and



- Company, 7 Jan, 1926, enclosed in Bentinck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 11 Dec. 1925; FO 371/11570 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 30 Jan. 1926; FO 371/11570 Minute (Field) of 10 Mar. 1926, to Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 30 Jan. 1926; FO 371/11570 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 9 Feb. 1926; FO 371/11570 Bentinck to FO, Addis Ababa, 16 Apr. 1926; FO 371/11570 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 9 Apr. 1926; FO 371/11570 Graham to FO, Rome, 22 May, 1926; Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 29 May, 1926; FO 371/11570 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 4 June, 1926; FO 371/11570 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 2 Dec. 1926; FO 371/12339 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 21 Nov. 1927.
60. PRO: FO 371/10874 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 16 Nov. 1925.
  61. Ibid.
  62. PRO: FO 371/10874 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 23 Nov. 1925; FO 371/11558 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 10 Feb. 1926.
  63. PRO: FO 371/11558 Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 6 Feb. 1926; QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 15, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 21 Dec. 1925; K Serie, Ethiopie 16, Gaussen à MAE, Addis Ababa, 23 Mar. 1926.
  64. QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 18, Gaussen à Ras Tafari, Addis Ababa, 22 Apr. 1927; PRO: FO 371/13111 Annual Report for 1927, p. 7.
  65. This is contrary to the opinion of Dame M. Perham, The Government of Ethiopia, Evanston, 1969, p. 141.
  66. PRO: FO 371/15392 Troutbeck to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 28 Feb. 1931.
  67. See correspondence in QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 135 and in PRO: FO 371/15389, 15392.
  68. A lengthy discussion of the consumption and excise taxes is in K Serie, Ethiopie 135, 136, and in FO 371/15392, 16101.
  69. PRO: FO 371/14597 Troutbeck to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 13 May 1930; FO 371/14597 Troutbeck to Murray, Addis Ababa, 20 May 1930; FO 371/14597 Barton to FO, Addis Ababa, 21 June 1930; FO 371/14597 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 16 Sept. 1930; FO 371/15389 Barton to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 12 Feb. 1931; FO 371/15389 Troutbeck to Henderson, Addis Ababa, 3 Apr. 1931;

QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 137, de Reffye à MAE, Addis Ababa, 9 Feb. 1931; K Serie, Ethiopie 137, de Reffye à MAE, Addis Ababa, 16 Feb. 1931.

70. This may help to explain why P. Garretson, "The Development of Addis Ababa's Land Tenure, 1886 to 1935," unpublished research, 1980, found only 162 foreign landholding registrations at the Addis Ababa municipality, and why several prominent foreign merchants owned no land. It may also cast some doubt on the importance of such "new" forms of land tenure.
71. QD: K Serie, Ethiopie 136, M. Baelan à MAE, Addis Ababa, 24 Aug. 1933.

## CHAPTER 6

No "flourish of trumpets":

The Expatriate Merchants of Ethiopia 1916-1935

I have already argued that the machinations of the Tripartite powers and imperial relations of production and reproduction constrained and inhibited Ethiopian growth and development during the interwar period. If only modestly, growth did nonetheless occur, owing primarily, I shall argue, to the activities of Indian and Arab merchants. Though relatively few in number, these merchants successfully monopolized brokerage, marketing, and banking in long distance trade through Addis Ababa, for two reasons.

First, unlike their European counterparts, these dealers, by and large, were willing to accept or adapt to infrastructural and superstructural constraints. To be sure, they complained often and many failed, but instead of relying upon the prospects for reform, they pursued small scale commerce and, by European standards, rather modest rates of return on their investments.

Second, while they often petitioned the Addis Ababa government for better roads, lower taxes, and enhanced security, they never represented a threat to imperial relations of production and reproduction. Their Addis Ababa-centered organization, their direct ties with Bombay, Aden, and Jibuti, and consequently their dependence on the railway for importing and exporting fully

complemented Tafari's policy of coercing trade through the capital. At no time need the government have feared that the Indian and Arab expatriate merchants would, like their Wollo and European competition, consider the development of export routes which bypassed the capital. Moreover, by working harmoniously with the Addis Ababa government, and by keeping visible distance from Tripartite policies, the "expatriate" group could find and keep the favor of the imperial court.

As a result, the relationship between this expatriate community and the imperial government strengthened with time. By the interwar period, harmonious interests allowed the merchant community, and especially its leaders, to introduce and dominate a system of informal banking, which encouraged long distance trade and facilitated the transfer of provincial revenue and goods to Addis Ababa. The result, of course, solidified the standing of the government and the expatriates, since informal banking expanded the volume of long-distance trade and therefore the government's customs revenue. Moreover, transfers of money by phone and on paper minimized currency fluctuations, lessened the severity of shifta activity, and helped to regularize the payment of provincial tribute.

Most importantly, perhaps, the gains in the volume and security of trade involved no compromise of imperial prerogatives, a constant fear in all deals with Europe. Indians and Arabs were willing, in the provinces as well as in Addis Ababa, to accept the

superstructural constraints inherent in long distance trade. In theory and practice, a non-Christian's profits could not buy land or otherwise garner political or judicial favor; for permission to trade, non-Christian agents would always depend on local elites who, by working with a selected number of agents, could more efficiently and effectively control trade and its revenue. Only a very few Indians and Arabs acquired land, and in those cases Ethiopia's rulers worked hard to get it back. Significantly, there are no cases of expatriate merchants using land in conventional ways to acquire or sustain political or economic influence. Undoubtedly, this aspect of the expatriates' relationship with Ethiopia's elite sustained the merchants as non-threatening economic agents. Likely, then, it was the expatriate merchants' willingness to accept landlessness and political marginality which attracted them to Ethiopia's rulers, who, by so doing, could avoid dealing with Europeans who sought land and fundamental political and economic reforms as a precondition for their activity.

To develop these points, I will draw on three principal sources. The most important is the Public Record Office's file FO 915, the records of the British Consular Court and of the Special (Mixed) Court, both of which operated in Addis Ababa between the years 1912 and 1938. This legacy of extraterritoriality is both impressive and invaluable. These 558 volumes contain, in rather excruciating detail, 25 years of court proceedings in Addis Ababa. By focusing on instances in the breakdown in the capital's economic

and social order, it is possible to gain insights into the actual day-to-day functioning of that order. There are also a limited number of cases that deal with more national economic and social issues.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to describing the activities of locally based traders and the informal banking network that I describe below, the files contain thousands of Amharic documents. The evolution of the language in these documents reflects the changing perception of the trading community to their economic environment. I urge linguists and other interested parties to pursue the subject.

For the dissertation, I have concentrated on three types of cases: first are the bankruptcies, which contain useful reflections on the general economic conditions in Ethiopia as well as evidence of just how close to the margin of disaster the majority of expatriate merchants operated. Most of the cases include detailed analyses of the causes of the bankruptcies, and many provide original account ledgers.<sup>2</sup> The civil and criminal cases include loan, wage, contract, and rent disputes, robberies, marital squabbles, physical assaults, and so forth. The cases document societal growing pains and throw occasional light on interethnic conflict, provincial economic organization, and informal banking.<sup>3</sup> In addition, there are also the huge files detailing the losses sustained in the Addis Ababa riots of May 1936, giving a detailed snapshot of the inventories and operations of the capital's merchants.<sup>4</sup> Of particular interest are the records

of the Special Court, which operated between 1922 and 1936. These cases, between Ethiopian and British subjects, place Indian and Arab activities within the perspective of the entire long-distance trade and clarify the extent to which extraterritorial jurisdiction affected economic practice.<sup>5</sup>

I have also collected over 150 petitions to the Ethiopian government from the Indian and Arab merchant community. These are culled mainly from the diplomatic archives, and they address the relationship of the community to the government, and the sorts of problems faced in both the short and the long term.<sup>6</sup> In addition, I have also used the economic and commercial information easily available in traveler's accounts, notably Zervos and Dunckley, and in contemporary commercial studies, like those of Boucoiran, Cora, Mackereth, and Park.<sup>7</sup>

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As Ethiopia's long-distance trade expanded in the early 1920s, it became increasingly centered in Addis Ababa, where a foreign commercial community grew accordingly. Estimates by travelers indicate that the 560 Indian and Arab traders of 1910 had grown to approximately 3,000 in 1935, with the steepest acceleration in the population coming in the early twenties with the rejuvenation of European demand for primary produce. The number of other nationals grew at similar rates: Greeks, from about 330 to 3,140, and Armenians, from 150 to 2,800.<sup>8</sup> These Europeans

prospered as storekeepers, stationers, druggists, bakers, liquor peddlers, garage owners, photographers, watchmakers, shoemakers, tailors, hairdressers, and restaurant owners. By contrast, in their number and to the extent to which they controlled volume, the Indians and Arabs dominated long distance trade.

Not surprisingly, the number of Consular and Special Court cases involving hides and coffee dramatically increased between 1921 and 1935, at the very time Ethiopia's dependence upon these exports grew. During this period, over 80% of these cases involved Indian and Arab traders and their agents, confirming their integral role in the burgeoning export trade from the southwest. The details of individual cases and the letterheads contained in the files suggest that, already by 1924, the expatriates had concentrated their export operations in the southwest, with agencies in all the important coffee districts, and therefore had moved their centers of operation from Dire Dawa and Harrar to the new railhead at Addis Ababa.

Although Indian and Arab traders as a group dominated brokerage, banking, and marketing in long distance trade, and profited sufficiently to expand the magnitude of their operations consistently throughout the 1920s, a very small group, consisting of firms like Mohamedally & Co., Badruddin, Moolji, Jiwaree, Akberali, and Uirjee, controlled the bulk of the community's profits. These large traders averaged more than MT \$100,000 gross



a year, although Mohamedally turned over a million.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, many small firms failed.

Judging from the court cases, small Indian and Arab traders pursued one of two options. Either they worked as provincial agents for larger concerns, or if they had or could acquire sufficient capital, they could open their own import-export operation. Most of those in the second group began operations with only MT \$200 to MT \$300, and consequently operated with considerable difficulty. Typically, they would borrow more capital at relatively high rates of interest, usually around 1.5% a month, and take most of their goods on credit from other local traders.

Testifying before the British Consul on the subject of insolvencies, one of Mohamedally's agents suggested that commodities so acquired were often of relatively poor quality and only marginally saleable. While new merchants certainly aspired to turn debts into ready cash, to repay creditors, to expand business, and to transfer profits if not also themselves back home, the majority instead acquired stagnant stocks, large debts, and entered a cycle of indebtedness to the larger entrepreneurs. Even with their independence, therefore, small merchants' profits continued to support the larger operations.<sup>10</sup> Small merchants frequently complained to the court that their debts prohibited expansion of business or involvement in long distance trade; and large merchants certainly had no incentive to increase competition by releasing the indebted from their obligations.

With so many Indian and Arab traders operating at or near the margin, it is remarkable that during the interwar period, there were only forty-four Addis Ababa bankruptcies, with the following yearly distribution.

TABLE II

YEAR AND NUMBER OF BANKRUPTCIES IN THE BRITISH CONSULAR COURT

1912	2	1927	6	1932	4
1916	2	1928	1	1933	3
1921	3	1929	3	1934	4
1924	1	1930	3	1935	1
1926	6	1931	2	1936	1

Most insolvents, and all of those failing during the 1930s depression, claimed to have acquired unrecoverable losses from activities in trading and currency speculation. In most cases, merchants had hoped for "better times ahead", but now conceded before the court that their position was hopeless. Over 75% of the bankruptcies, however, were contested by larger merchants, on the grounds that insolvents had liquidated often modest holdings, transferring profits to India and leaving their creditors in the lurch. More to the point, perhaps, bankrupts owed larger merchants substantial sums, and were now of course unable to repay loans and obligations.<sup>11</sup>

In only three cases were charges of wrong-doing substantiated to the satisfaction of the court, but many of the cases, and

particularly those involving the largest amounts, leave the clear impression of fraud.<sup>12</sup> Books and papers were often freshly drawn in the same hand and ink; day ledgers were often withheld. And most creditors wrongly insisted that they could legally repay relatives and friends before declaring bankruptcy, a policy which repeatedly gave non-relatives little opportunity to recoup losses. Knowing that monies already redistributed to relatives could never be regained from the court, larger merchants, and particularly Mohamedally and Co., to whom a remarkably high average of 50% of insolvents debts were owed, pressed repeatedly to avoid insolvencies. As the court appointed assessor in most court cases, the firm invariably urged insolvents to resume their practices with new loans. In 1924 however, Mohamedally lost a precedent-setting case in which two merchants, with losses stemming from the post first world war depression, owed Mohamedally MT \$1,169 out of total liabilities of MT \$1,864. The insolvents offered the court no coherent records, and several local merchants testified that the pair had previously transferred large sums to India, in the apparent hope of escaping the mediocre prospects of the small Addis Ababa trader.<sup>13</sup>

Writing for Mohamedally, the lawyer, Col. Sandford, concluded that

If the present insolvents are permitted to escape from their responsibilities to produce adequate accounts, or worse, to be left in a position of having assets in India, possibly transferred there illegally, which do not come under the view of the court, a blow will be

struck to the system of trading credit which exists, for better or worse, in this town.<sup>14</sup>

The petition for insolvency was nonetheless granted, and two men departed for India. Possibly as a result, a rash of insolvency petitions followed, even during relatively prosperous times. Interestingly, all were now filed by merchants with liabilities in the MT \$10,000 to MT \$100,000 range, and all but one of the petitions were granted by the court. Nearly all claimed to have encountered insurmountable difficulties with fluctuating exchange rates and commodity prices, but every case also involved charges levelled by the leaders of the merchant community that large sums of working capital had first been transferred out of the country.<sup>15</sup> The charges could not be proved, and remain speculative,<sup>16</sup> but it is important to note that during the period in which the increased number of petitions for bankruptcy were filed, between 1925 and 1928, provincial production, commodity prices, and currency exchange rates remained far more stable than for any other interwar period, as is illustrated in the appendix on the graph of weekly prices and rates.<sup>17</sup> During the depression years of 1930 to 1935, fraud charges were levelled much less vociferously and less frequently. Insolvents during this period had acquired much smaller liabilities, larger merchants consequently had much less interest in combatting claims, and most bankrupts' claims were easily substantiated in terms of the glaring economic crisis in Ethiopia. These were insolvents right at the margin, unable through diversification or economies of scale to survive long slack

seasons, low demand, and wild fluctuations of exchange and commodity prices.<sup>18</sup>

While there was local disagreement concerning the extent to which larger merchants were affected by insolvencies, it seems clear that the diversified and stable organization of firms like Mohamedally, Moolji, and Uirjee, allowed them to absorb losses much more easily than their poorer colleagues. By virtue of the substantial amounts involved, large creditors were the first to claim the remaining assets of insolvents. More importantly, none of the larger merchants lost cash. In every recorded case, with the single exception of a small personal loan to a relative, loans between Addis Ababa's merchants consisted of advancing merchandise, again usually poor-quality seconds invoiced at prices five to ten percent higher than their cash value.<sup>19</sup> Interest charges on such goods remained at 1.5 to 2% a month, above the 8% rate specified for loans in Tafari's 1924 Law of Loans, but the rates had their precedent in long practice, were explained by merchants as necessary in a risky, speculative, and unpredictable market, and were never challenged by the government so long as loans to Ethiopians remained at or under Tafari's limit.<sup>20</sup> Loans repaid at such exorbitant rates certainly cushioned the blow of bankruptcies for large merchants. While their transactions with insolvents were much less extensive, cash losses for small creditors were of course proportionately more harmful.

By virtue of its stability, diversity, and its coordination with Shoan policy, the commercial organization of the large import-export merchants generated modest but stable profits, even during the depression. The largest merchants, for example, monopolized the informal banking sector, which involved several interrelated operations. First, there were bills of exchange connecting Addis Ababa financially with the regional trading centers in Aden, Jibuti, and Cairo. Although they were large by Ethiopian standards, firms in Addis Ababa like Mohamedally, Jiwaji, and Akberali were themselves agents of operations with larger regional headquarters in Jibuti, Aden, or Bombay.

The sensitivity of primary commodities to world prices, the risks inherent in transporting cash, occasional Ethiopian government regulations against exporting specie, and the increasing need to respond quickly to world demand required that currency transactions and transfers occur efficiently on paper. The contemporary convention among East African Indian traders, and among most traders around the world only decades before, was the bill of exchange, by which demand for currency could be satisfied without risk and physical movement of cash.

One could obtain credit in Jibuti, for example, by reciprocating in Addis Ababa for a businessman from the port. In the same way, a merchant could transfer funds from Aden or Jibuti to Addis Ababa. Such foreign exchange devices were very often used, if their continual mention in the files can be taken as an

indication, but the references are made in passing, and only rarely, in but two cases, form the focus of litigation. It may be that such "international" cases were considered outside the jurisdiction of the court, since no judgments were tended in either case, but it seems to be far more likely that these foreign exchanges worked fairly smoothly and efficiently throughout the period, if for no other reason than the fact that bills were most often arranged for the transfer of funds between two branches of the same firm. One merchant went so far as to suggest that such devices, possible only with the development of communication with Addis Ababa, had freed merchants from the difficulties and responsibilities of transporting cash from the coast, eliminating delays and allowing long distance traders to turnover their stock in the capital more than once in a year. The new conditions undoubtedly spurred the growth of the expatriate population in Ethiopia.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps it was the success and the ease of bills of exchange which induced their use within Ethiopia. The merchant capitalists and the southern oligarchy developed a similar system of credit, for convenience, to avoid risk and internal currency fluctuations that had previously inhibited trade, to overcome periodically limited currency supplies, and with the encouragement of the central government. Businessmen wanted to finance purchases of coffee and hides, and governors in the rich coffee areas were obliged to transfer revenue to Addis Ababa. Internal bills of

exchange not only facilitated cash transfers but, in at least two cases and likely many more, also allowed expatriate provincial agents to extend short- and long-term credit to soldier-settlers for the expansion of the coffee economy.

The bills, or hewala, first appeared in a 1915 court case, and the number of references quickly accelerated. From the forty interwar cases involving internal bills that I have examined, two interesting points emerge. First, and perhaps not surprisingly, only the richest merchants and their agents distributed the bills. Mohamedally and Company were involved in more than a third of the suits, with the rest fairly evenly distributed among the other large import-export firms, including Akberali, Jiwaaji, Badruddin, Moolji, and Virjee. Second, with only two exceptions, one in Bali and the other in Sidamo, all the bills involved cash transfers with three southwestern coffee areas, Jimma, Walamo, and the area of Lekempti.

Though the number of such cases during the period increased, the importance of bills of exchange is difficult to measure. By the 1930s, form documents of the court included spaces for information regarding bills of exchange, clearly indicating their use. But perhaps the most instructive indicator of their importance is the fact that, in all the records of interwar caravan robberies, only smaller merchants ever claimed to have lost currency. It seems likely, therefore, that larger merchants were not only able to avoid transporting large amounts of currency, but unlike lesser



merchants, were also able to obtain cash in the main southern coffee districts without first selling cloth and luxuries at a loss.<sup>22</sup>

Large merchants also benefitted from the economies of scale inherent in vertically organized operations. Large firms had permanent agents and storage facilities in the coffee areas, adequate credit in the capital and in the provinces, large teams of contracted muleteers, and warehouse facilities in Addis Ababa. These factors resulted in further advantages. Large quantities of coffee and hides could be purchased and stockpiled when prices were low. Larger teams of muleteers enhanced security. And Addis Ababa warehouses, for which lesser merchants were invariably charged relatively high rates per unit of export, allowed for often lucrative commodity speculation. Small merchants, by contrast, might hire individual negadies to deliver goods on a contract basis during the peak trading seasons, and depended on others for warehousing and for procuring adequate supplies of specie and cloth, sometimes available only at high prices.

Profit rates among the merchants were therefore significantly different. Firms like Mohamedally paid negadies less on average per mule load, while smaller operators shipping coffee during the peak season inevitably found a sellers' market in labor and a buyers' market in coffee.

Meanwhile, several large firms themselves processed hides and coffee for export in facilities at Jibuti, services for which

lesser merchants would owe commissions. Mohamedally's judicial role should also be emphasized. The firm's officers throughout the period dominated the local Chamber of Commerce and consistently served as advisers and officers of the consular court. The judicial records do not suggest that improprieties occurred, but it should not be surprising, given the firm's local importance and political influence, that it won over 80% of its cases in which the court rendered judgment.<sup>23</sup>

For this reason, and others, political opponents and one of Tafari's biographers have speculated about the relationship between Tafari and the Mohamedally firm. In addition to their success in the court, Mohamedally and Co., with the ras's permission, obtained a national salt monopoly, tracts of land in Addis Ababa, and the right to export specie notwithstanding strict Ethiopian government restrictions. Noting Tafari's conspicuous economic favor for the firm throughout the period, local opponents privately suggested that the Indian owner was in fact Tafari's father. The rumor is interesting as an example of political opposition, but it also reflects the strength of the regent's relationship with the Indian firm.

The large firm was able to sustain its strong relationship with the Shoan leader in large part because their interests coincided. Mohamedally and Company was not only the largest import/exporter in Ethiopia, but more importantly, it was also committed to trading through Addis Ababa, at a time when

substantial British, French, and Italian interests vied powerfully to attract trade in directions which would not have so profitably benefitted imperial coffers. In addition, the firm had standardized and regularized its payments of customs, it had worked closely with both Tafari and his father in Harrar for more than 20 years, commanding well over MT \$1,000,000 in business there a year. The company had also proven its loyalty to Tafari and Shoa in 1916 by passing manufactured information to Thesiger and by securing some of Tafari's family revenue. The firm also provided relatively unbiased brokerage and banking, useful functions given the government's distrust of the Bank of Abyssinia. Most importantly, perhaps, Tafari owned a piece of the company.

Mohamedally and Company, as President of the Chamber of Commerce and as the acknowledged leader of the Indian community, was often successful in petitioning the government for reform. Indeed, the many petitions from the expatriate merchant community to improve the local infrastructure often drew favorable responses, if for no other reason than the fact that the community shared the government's main economic interest, to draw the long-distance trade through Addis Ababa. Most petitions, for example, criticized exorbitant railway rates and charges at Jibuti, policies which Tafari also regretted, and sought the simplification of customs procedures, which the ras in the earlier years supported to the extent that he might gain further control over government revenue. Certainly, the Indian petitions did not

threaten the government as much as the "revolutionary" reforms sought by the Europeans.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Mohamedelly in particular, and the Indian firms in general, represented no threat to imperial consolidation or to the reproduction of relations of production in Ethiopia. Long-distance trade through Addis Ababa naturally supported consolidation and centralized government, and even the richest merchants, who were not permitted to acquire land and its attendant power, could never seriously threaten the established order. The Mohamedally firm was exceptional in that, during the 1920s, their favored position with the government and with the consular court had allowed them to increase their holdings in the commercial quarters of Addis Ababa and Jimma, but such gains were quite modest.<sup>25</sup>

The only tracts of land in the capital available to foreigners had been acquired during a two-year interval under Menilek when, for reasons which I do not know, foreigners were briefly permitted to purchase and register land. Only these tracts could be and were exchanged among foreigners,<sup>26</sup> and Tafari often went out of his way, in two estate cases paying exorbitant fees, to reacquire these lands. In only two bankruptcies and several civil cases, Mohamedally, as the major creditor, acquired property already held by foreigners.<sup>27</sup> Most of the commercial properties used by merchants, however, was leased by prominent Ethiopians. Certainly, too liberal a policy might in time allow permanent acquisition of prerogatives, prestige, and power vested in land, conceivably to

the point of allowing expatriates to participate in political process. It made far more sense to require that merchants owe their primary allegiance to landed interests, and to Tafari in particular, in their import-export operations.

Fundamentally, the basis for the strength of the expatriates' relationship with the imperial government lay in the extent to which these merchants accepted the imperial superstructure, particularly the regulations against foreign ownership of land. None of their petitions called for it or for a change in the government's attitude toward foreign tenure. By contrast, the Europeans claimed access to tenure, not only because of the precedent set in 1911-1913, but more importantly by virtue of their reading of the 1908 French treaty with Ethiopia. According to that document, foreign land holding would be regulated ideally by the prevailing customs of Ethiopia, whatever that might be held to mean at any given time.

Ethiopians and Europeans naturally argued in favor of their interest, increasing each's frustration while leaving real control with Tafari and the government. The regent could argue, for example, that the prevailing custom of Ethiopia forbade landownership by foreigners, while Europeans stressed the practice during the short period following the treaty's signing. In their insistence on reform, however, European entrepreneurs placed themselves at a disadvantage next to the Indian traders, whose apparent acceptance of the land regime placed them in good stead

with the administration without really having much effect on profits; only the largest merchants would in any event have been able to afford land.

In retrospect, it is plainly obvious that European concessionaires and merchants could not compete effectively with the Indian traders, who far better understood the "difficulties" of commerce in Ethiopia. As a matter of course, for example, Indian traders handled four currencies. Goods incoming from Europe were credited in francs or more usually in pounds, local transactions occurred using Maria Theresa Thalers, rail transport was invoiced in francs, and sea freight and many local loans were figured in rupees.<sup>28</sup>

In sharp contrast, Europeans prayed for some method of standardizing and regularizing currency practice in Ethiopia, especially since the silver based thaler frequently fluctuated wildly owing to sporadic demand and supply, temporary shortages, and the reliance on Austrian mints. Rather than look for profits in speculation, an activity that kept some Indian traders in business, the Europeans hoped to avoid fluctuations by conventional methods.

In 1931-2, they supported the scheme by Colson, the American financial adviser, to promulgate a gold standard scheme, in the hope of reducing Ethiopia's dependency on silver currency. At other times they supported abortive Ethiopian government attempts to issue a new silver coinage carrying Menilek's image, and they

pressed the government continually to allow the Bank of Abyssinia to exercise its chartered right to issue bank notes. Needless to say, none of the schemes succeeded, not simply owing to their European inspiration, but more importantly because none were in step with the realities of Ethiopian commerce. Ethiopian negadies refused new currencies, whose metallic worth remained unproven. Moreover, the thaler remained an accepted standard along long distance trade routes, owing to its attractive appearance, the ease with which wear could be identified, and its proven silver content. The low silver content and less attractive appearance of the Menilek thaler gave it little support within Ethiopia. The gold scheme found no support in a government whose holdings and wealth were invested in thalers. The only new metals used in currency were tin and nickel, cheap substitutes which Tafari could force as payment upon reluctant but obliging government workers. And the Ethiopian government never seriously contemplated giving the British-dominated Bank of Abyssinia any important fiscal responsibilities until the emperor in 1930 bought and transformed it into a loyal state institution.<sup>29</sup>

Europeans also had a difficult time adjusting to the work ethic in trading. Dunckley, the general manager of the unsuccessful Abyssinian Produce and Trading Corporation, for example, often complained that trade tended to dominate the entire day. In peak or rainy season, the trader's day was filled with countless callers, cups of coffee, cables, and cigarettes. An avid polo

player, Dunckley tried to institute a five-and-a-half-day work week, to find soon to his chagrin that his employees seemed to have nothing better to do than stay around the office. And even after many years in Addis Ababa, he had considerable difficulty adjusting to the conventional practices and profit margins of Addis Ababa.<sup>30</sup>

Commonly, the capital's long-distance traders either contracted with negadies to deliver provincial production to the capital, arranged deliveries through Arab brokers, or dalals, or bought goods directly from incoming caravans. European houses, in a quest for orderly organization, preferred to work through the dalal; if they contracted negadies directly, or as they entered Addis Ababa, then they had to provide shelter, board, food for livestock, and firewood, aspects of trading which struck Dunckley and other Europeans as far too messy.<sup>31</sup> Instead, they unsuccessfully sought to legitimize the dalal. Their only visible success came in the form of a petition, joined by the larger Indian traders, which would have required that negadies, who contracted with a particular Addis Ababa merchant would not be allowed to sell goods to others unless the original consignee refused delivery.<sup>32</sup> There is, however, no record of anything having come of the petition. Rather, merchants, and particularly those with limited capital, continued throughout the period to entice goods from negadies at the outskirts of the capital in exchange for supplies and trade goods. The available data does not indicate the



extent of this activity, but the fact that it was dominated by smaller merchants suggests that its total volume was limited.<sup>33</sup>

Europeans also never quite learned the tricks of Addis Ababa trading. En route to the capital, negadies dipped hides in water and rubbed them in mud to increase their weight. Pebbles, husks, and broken beans were placed in with coffee. Vaseline and ground bananas were mixed with civet, whose loathsome odor helped to mask detection. Deriving profits from long-distance trade did not require scrupulous honesty, a value Europeans vainly tried to instill in their Guragi help. European lectures on how to inspect coffee, hides, and civet, and on how to weigh must have provided considerable humor for the Ethiopian help. More importantly, the Europeans had little understanding of the "tricks" of trade, and about balancing the seller's dishonesty with their own. The merchants often beat hides unmercilessly to lower their final weight. Scales could easily be manipulated, with "heavy" sacks, toe strings, or sticky weights. Some Guragis even had the ability to test by smell for the purity of civet. Those who have smelled musk might question the reliability the claim, or the sanity of the Guragi tester, but such claims, even if subjective, at least allowed for haggling over price. Attempting to run an "honest" shop, as difficult or impossible as it might have been, probably lessened profits for the persevering Europeans, and certainly increased their frustration.<sup>34</sup>

In the end, Dunckley's wife, Fan, concluded:

Thousands of pounds have been left behind in Abyssinia by British firms and traders. No Britisher, trading honestly and legitimately, can hope to compete with the innate trickery and underhand methods of the Greek, Armenian, or Arab. He cannot descend to their levels. He may think he has learned all the tricks and can forestall them, but these gentry will always have a fresh trick up their sleeves with which to surprise the poor Britisher. I believe there is not a single European- genuine European- firm that has ever made a profit in this country, and I have heard it said that something like fifteen firms have made the attempt since the War. Shortly after the War a very influential British concern [the Abyssinia Corporation] was formed, with plenty of capital and enormous resources, to trade in Abyssinia. It was born with a flourish of trumpets; it bought up rivals and did itself and the staff well; but so far as actual trading went it was a complete failure. There is today a house standing in Addis Ababa which has a room furnished like the board-room of a powerful financial company in the City of London. The walls are paneled; the table, capable of seating twelve or more, is of solid mahogany; and the padded leather chairs match the table. This was the headquarters of the business, which it bought lock stock, and barrel for 35,000 pounds... The business lasted- I think I am generous- three years, and this particular branch of the business was sold back to the original seller for 5,000 pounds.<sup>35</sup>

## Notes

1. For an index of the court records, see Cheryl A. Edwards, "FO 915: Index of the Records of the British Consular Court in Ethiopia, 1912-1938", unpublished, 1983; for other articles using the records see Jon Edwards, "...and the King shall Judge: Extraterritoriality in Ethiopia, 1908-1936" and Heinrich Scholler, "The Special Court of Ethiopia," Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, (Lund, 1984). For another study of merchants during a different period, see M. Abir. "Brokerage and Brokers in Ethiopia in the First Half of the 19th Century," Journal of Ethiopian Studies 3,1 (1965) 1-5.
2. The bankruptcies are in the following files: PRO: FO 915/2-12, FO 915/2-14, FO 915/13-2, FO 915/14-1, FO 915/40-1, FO 915/40-2, FO 915/40-3, FO 915/58-42, FO 915/76-1, FO 915/133-1, FO 915/133-2, FO 915/134-3, FO 915/135-4, FO 915/135-5, FO 915/136-6, FO 915/168-1, FO 915/168-2, FO 915/169-3, FO 915/170-4, FO 915/170-5, FO 915/170-6, FO 915/207-1, FO 915/248-1, FO 915/248-2, FO 915/249-3, FO 915/288-1, FO 915/288-2, FO 915/288-3, FO 915/327-1, FO 915/328-3, FO 915/366-1, FO 915/366-2, FO 915/367-3, FO 915/368-4, FO 915/396-1, FO 915/397-2, FO 915/398-3, FO 915/446-1, FO 915/447-2, FO 915/447-3, FO 915/447-4, FO 915/491-1, FO 915/529-1.
3. The Civil cases are in the following files: PRO: FO 915/(15-16), FO 915/22, FO 915/(26-27), FO 915/37, FO 915/(44-46), FO 915/(52-55), FO 915/(71-74), FO 915/(89-98), FO 915/(117-128), FO 915/(152-162), FO 915/(185-199), FO 915/(225-239), FO 915/(274-280). FO 915/(329-341), FO 915/(369-378), FO 915/(399-417), FO 915/(448-456), FO 915/(492-498). Included are the details of the first automobile, airplane, and motorcycle mishaps, of the affairs of Black Americans and West Indians looking for independence in Ethiopia, and of the abortive attempts by Europeans like Sandford and Duncley to secure for themselves Ethiopia's export potential in hides and coffee.
4. The statement of loss cases are in FO 915/(539-549).
5. see Edwards, "...and the King"; Scholler "The Special Court".
6. The merchant petitions appear haphazardly throughout the diplomatic files. Among many citations, see PRO: FO 371/4395 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 29 Mar. 1920; FO 371/4396 Dodds

to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 26 Aug. 1920; FO 371/4399 Merchant Community to FO, Addis Ababa, received 3 Sept. 1920; FO 371/5503 Dodds to Curzon, Addis Ababa, 21 Jan. 1921; QD: Nouvelle Serie, Ethiopie 65, Addis Ababa merchants à MAE, 28 May 1905; Guerre 1914-1918, Ethiopie 1624, de Coppet à MAE, Addis Ababa, 18 Dec. 1917; K Serie, Ethiopie 32, M. Getton à Min des Colonies, 7 Mar. 1922; Archives Nationales, F-12/7239, Rapports consulaire sur le commerce: Ethiopie, M. Ed. Trouillet à M le Director, Addis Ababa, 31 May 1906.

7. A. Zervos, L'Empire d'Ethiopie, Alexandria, 1936; F. Dunckley, Eight Years in Abyssinia, (London, 1935); M Boucoiran, "La situation economique de L'Ethiope," Reinseignments Coloniaux XI, 1918; G Mackereth, Economic Conditions in Ethiopia, (London, 1936; Also see articles by Sand-ford in Near East between 1923 and 1934, as well as articles like C. Sandford, "Reforms from Within Versus Foreign Control," International Journal, Mar. 1936 183-281.
8. Zervos, p. 415, Henin, p. 205, Merab, II, 104.
9. PRO: FO 371/2854 Dodds Report on Harrar Province, Harrar, 27 June 1917, enclosed in Thesiger to Balfour, Addis Ababa, 12 July 1917; The turnover of the noted firms is evident from the fees involved and nature of the following cases: FO 915/47-2; FO 915/47-5; FO 915/49-20; FO 915/65-110; FO 915/67-145; FO 915/68-178; FO 915/77-6; FO 915/78-12; FO 915/78-18; FO 915/78-19; FO 915/80-36; FO 915/108-1; FO 915/110-10; FO 915/111-12; FO 915/113-25; FO 915/114-29; FO 915/114-38; FO 915/116-65; FO 915/141-50; FO 915/146-87; FO 915/150-129; FO 915/172-13; FO 915/174-38; FO 915/175-57; FO 915/176-75; FO 915/177-65; FO 915/179-88; FO 915/182-127; FO 915/213-53; FO 915/214-81; FO 915/215-100; FO 915/215-101; FO 915/215-103; FO 915/216-107; FO 915/217-136; FO 915/265-101; FO 915/268-117; FO 915/268-119; FO 915/310-108; FO 915/311-115; FO 915/348-7; FO 915/356-42; FO 915/432-39; FO 915/438-58; FO 915/438-59; FO 915/438-60; FO 915/464-8; FO 915/521-49; FO 915/521-51.
10. Apart from the plethora of related material in the court files, the best single overviews of small merchant activity are in PRO: FO 371/12344 Taylor Memorandum on insolvencies, 12 September 1927, enclosed in Bentinck to Chamberlain, Addis Ababa, 15 September 1927; FO 915/136-6 Taylor memorandum regarding the methods of Indian traders and some probable causes for petition for insolvency, 10 Feb. 1927.

11. See especially PRO: FO 915/40-1; FO 915/40-2; FO 915/40-3; FO 915/58-42; FO 915/76-1; FO 915/133-1; FO 915/133-2; FO 915/133-3; FO 915/135-4; FO 915/136-6; FO 915/170-4; FO 915/170-6; FO 915/207-1; FO 915/248-1; FO 915/249-3; FO 915/288-3; FO 915/328-3.
12. PRO: FO 915/40-1; FO 915/40-3; FO 915/76-1.
13. PRO: FO 915/76-1.
14. PRO: FO 915/76-1 Col. Sandford, writing on behalf of A.M. Mohamedally, to HBM Consul, Addis Ababa, 18 June 1924.
15. see note 11.
16. Records of the Bombay archives might throw considerable light on the subject.
17. see Appendix on price data.
18. PRO: FO 915/288-1; FO 915/288-2; FO 915/288-3; FO 915/327-1; FO 915/328-3; FO 915/366-1; FO 915/366-2; FO 915/367-3; FO 915/368-4; FO 915/396-1; FO 915/397-2; FO 915/398-3; FO 915/446-1; FO 915/447-2; FO 915/447-3; FO 915/447-4; FO 915/491-1.
19. PRO: FO 915/76-1 Official Receiver's report, Addis Ababa, 9 June 1924
20. The 1924 Law of Loans was not an important legal instrument in Addis Ababa. The Amharic version, available at the Istituto Africana, is a translation of a French pamphlet on loans, itself contained in the de Halpert papers at Rhodes House. I am sure that Tafari promulgated the codes, not so much to regulate the expatriate community, but, in light of Ethiopia's recent entry into the League, to impress Europe and to fight the Klobukowski Treaty. According to its conclusion, the 1908 Agreement could be terminated should Ethiopia bring its laws into congruence with Europe's. The Law of Loans was undoubtedly therefore a stab at extraterritoriality.
21. PRO: FO 371/1294.
22. The most instructive of the cases are PRO: FO 915/87-120; FO 915/213-53; FO 915/304-75; FO 915/308-97. FO 915/11-31; FO 915/91-16; FO 915/101-16; FO 915/127-61; FO 915/308-97.

23. PRO: FO 915/15-9; FO 915/22-3; FO 915/23-2; FO 915/26-15; FO 915/27-32; FO 915/32-53; FO 915/34-21; FO 915/36-91; FO 915/37-11; FO 915/47-5; FO 915/49-20; FO 915/77-5; FO 915/87-120; FO 915/107-1; FO 915/119-9; FO 915/137-2; FO 915/140-29; FO 915/166-1; FO 915/176-58; FO 915/197-62; FO 915/210-23; FO 915/211-25; FO 915/212-40; FO 915/213-53; FO 915/215-101; FO 915/232-14; FO 915/238-35; FO 915/340-43; FO 915/340-45; FO 915/348-8; FO 915/356-42; FO 915/361-69; FO 915/367-1; FO 915/453-20.
24. see Chapter 5 and Appendix.
25. PRO: FO 915/40-3; FO 915/168-1.
26. This may help to explain why Peter Garretson, "The Development of Addis Ababa's Land Tenure, 1886-1935," unpublished research, 1980, found only 162 foreign landholding registrations at the Addis Ababa municipality, and why several prominent foreign merchants owned no land. It may also cast some doubt on the importance of such new forms of land tenure.
27. PRO: FO 915/67-174; FO 915/121-31.
28. PRO: FO 915 passim.
29. The main source for prices and currency rates is Le Courrier d'Ethiopie. which was published weekly between 1913 and April, 1936. In each issue, the newspaper published a summary of the futures market. It is not clear how the prices were established, or who assembled them, but I assume that at very least the prices were gathered in a relatively consistent manner. I found most of the available run at the Versailles Annexe of the Bibliothèque Nationale. I have found others at L'Ecole des Langues Orientales, in the Camp Microfilms at Michigan State University, and scattered in the records of the European archives. The run is nearly complete after 1926, when the publisher switched the operation from Jibuti to Addis Ababa.
30. Dunckley, chapter 12.
31. Ibid.: see especially the correspondence of Sandford and Dunckley in PRO: FO 915/332 and FO 915/334. See also the correspondence between Rey and Sandford in the Rey Papers, Rhodes House.
32. PRO: FO 915/119-9.

33. In PRO: FO 915, there are hundreds of such cases.
34. Dunckley; Mackereth; Park; Again, a plethora of such cases in PRO: FO 915.
35. Dunckley, pp. 152-3.