

**MENELIK II: HISTORY FOCUSED ON ITEMS MENTIONED ON THE
PROCLAMATIONS OF 1909.**

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Abstract

Menelik was central to the unity of Ethiopia. Menelik unified Ethiopia by removing despotic and corrupt rulers of different southern regions and placed them under the central governance from Addis Abeba. He applied the “never again policy” to remove starvation from his subjects during drought events. He entered rational treaties with colonials that surrounded Ethiopia. Ethiopia has a written language, and when he discovered that the colonials had added phrases in the language of a signed Treaty, he opposed the offending article, and when a colonial sent an invading army to enforce its will, Menelik II used a united Ethiopian force to defeat it. A case in point would be the 1896 Battle of Adwa against an invading European power. The world recognized the freedom of Ethiopia since the 1896 Adwa victory, and the ensuing October 23, 1986 Addis Abeba Treaty. It became a symbol and hope for non-white people across the world. On the other hand, it also served as an affront to white supremacists that wrote strategies and even conquered Ethiopia, and to this day, their strategies continue to destabilize Ethiopia. This paper will focus on the various struggles Ethiopians went through to retain an independent Ethiopia that continues to be an example for Africa.

Key Words: Aste Menelik, Adwa Victory, Wuchlae Treaty, Queen Taytu, Italian Invasion

INTRODUCION

“There was never a time when united Ethiopians lost to an enemy; it is non-existent in history.” Menelik II, 1909.

“It is for this advice that I assembled you; to strengthen unity. Perhaps disunity may come after I have gone, and would lead to the disappearance of the country to the merriment of the enemy, or result in our country going away or our people being exiled (or governed), or that what I worked for and assembled would not be destroyed, the country becoming disunited again—such is my fear.” Emperor Menelik II, May 1909.

The above prophetic words of Menelik II were read to the nobles including members of Council of Ministers that were summoned to the palace. The Emperor's sickness began with occasional difficulty of walking, which slowly affected all his system (Zewede, 2005) until he was in bed when his proclamation was read. The prophetic words in his letter came to pass as the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF or Tigray LF) aided by the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) marched to Addis Ababa, a century later, in 1991. The full text of Emperor Menelik II's proclamation of May 1909 to Ethiopian nobles that the Emperor summoned to his palace, (Tekl Tsadiq Mekuria, 1983 EC, p. 630), which I translated, reads:

I, Menelik II, announce... this issue to Ethiopian princes, nobles and their people. Listen to me carefully because the issue will yield dividends and profits, promote freedom to our country, strengthen our forces, multiply our wealth, foster tranquility and provide us health, and keeps enemies away at a distance. Lack of love among governors and generals and the officers of the soldiers and people brought division into Shewa, Tigray, Gondar, Gojam—region-centeredness. Atse Tewodros said rise up to the people and let me unite the country and started unifying; the cruelty of the subjects annoyed him; he started unity and died. ... Atse Yohannes said stand up to the people and started morality (Christening), he also taught unifying. However, his goals were not met.

I, Menelik II became King of Shewa for 24 years and never took a vacation even for a day. Instead, I am unifying what Gragn had destroyed. I made Harar submit and brought it to reunite with the rest of Ethiopia; I determined what belongs to the government and the citizens, and the Indian Ocean is my boundary. Ogaden, lowlands, Arusi, Borena, Sidamo, Kembata, Kefa, Gamu Gofa, Jima, Goma, Liqa Welega, Illubabor, and all these places. My people became many, and my country gained freedom.

Poverty and hunger, commotion and confusion were removed from the people. Now, by the grace of God it has been 17 years since I reigned as an Emperor. All together, I ruled for 41 years. All these happened or were achieved because Ethiopia was ruled by the permission of one entity, and under the rule of one order (power). Unity is stronger than steel, and the old adage states “two lazy folks are better than one strong man” or “Two are better than one.” Our forbearers (the Aksumites) ruled across the ocean Southern Arabia under unity. However, when they were divided, Gragn burnt them by fire for 15 years. There was never a time when united Ethiopians lost to an enemy; it is non-existent in history.

It is for this advice that I assembled you; to strengthen unity. Perhaps disunity may come after I am gone, and would lead to the disappearance of the country to the merriment of the enemy, or result in our country going away or our people being exiled (or governed), or that what I worked for and assembled would not be destroyed, the country becoming disunited again- such is my fear. Who can live and not see death, or who can escape the power of the grave? -says Psalms. [ዳዊት እስመ አልቦ ሰብእ ዘየሐዩ ወአይፈኝሉ ለሞት ይላልና -Psalms, 89-48 in Ge'ez].

Therefore, afterwards following me I want to announce my heir to you. Born from my daughter W/o Shewagared and Ras Mikael, Iyasu is the heir to my throne. Give him recognition; follow him.

After this letter of May 1909, it was necessary to provide his proclamation of a heir in public in the presence of foreign dignitaries at *Jan Meda*, in Addis Abeba.

This paper is guided by Menelik II's May 1909 proclamations. Menelik II traces his Royal lineage to Menelik I, the son of King Solomon of Jerusalem born about 900 B.C., who spoke many languages and read many books.

The Ottoman Empire supported a Jihad against Christian Ethiopia, which Ethiopians have known as the Gragn wars of 1529-1543. The fifteen-year war had resulted in large part of Ethiopia, mainly the southern region being unprotected by the central Ethiopian government. Since Prince Henry (1394-1460) established a naval school in Portugal, by the turn of the 16th century the Portuguese began colonization and the rest of European countries, Spain, Britain, Germany, and France followed suit.

Colonials of the Ottoman Empire, through Egypt as their vassal state, and European countries adversely affected Ethiopia. Europeans sent Christian missionaries that were used to spread colonial aspirations. The missionaries significantly affected coastal areas, particularly during the Era of Princes. Menelik was one of four emperors who worked for the unification of Ethiopia after the Era of Princes.

Menelik knew and interacted with the other three unifying emperors at different stages. Tewodros took Menelik as prisoner and he soon married him to his daughter Aletash. Menelik was a king when Yohannes IV was emperor, and the two wished to cement relations by getting Yohannes IV's son Araya marrying Menelik's daughter Zewditu. Menelik's beloved nephew and general was Ras Mekonnen, the father of Haile Selassie (formerly Teferi Mekonnen). Teferi was treated as son in Menelik II's palace.

Later, Teferi was crowned Emperor Haile Selassie. Menelik was a consequential and transformative leader. Menelik II had established the Council of Minister. The Council of Ministers enabled Lij Iyasu to serve as Emperor even though the bed ridden and sick Emperor Menelik was alive. Then, the council of Ministers deposed Lij Iyasu, and they crowned Empress Zewditu, Menelik's daughter and appointed Teferi Mekonnen (later Haile Selassie) as regent.

Guided by Menelik II's 1909 proclamation this report briefly describes the following highlights of Ethiopian history.

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1. THE 16 CENTURY JIHAD WAR AND DISUNITY OF ETHIOPIA

A. Brief notes of Ethiopia before the Jihad Wars of 1529-1543

The Ethiopian domain ruled by a Christian Kingdom changed in size over time. A Portuguese Embassy had visited Ethiopia from 1520-26, and Francisco Alvarez, the Chaplain of that embassy, had written that the Ethiopian territory stretched up to Suakin (Sawakin), some fifty miles south of Port Sudan. Emperor Yeshaq (1413-1427) ruled over Ethiopia including coastal area up to the Indian Ocean, and his soldiers gave the name Somalia to coastal region by the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. His younger brother, Emperor Zere Ya'iqob (1433-1466) ruled over Ethiopia including Mogadishu, by the Indian Ocean. Thus, Ethiopian coastal and maritime regions stretched from Sawakin to south of Mogadishu. Yet, since the Birth of Prophet Mohammed, whose relatives Ethiopia had given a refuge to, and despite his decree that his followers should not touch Ethiopia, some Muslim Sultans had adversely affected the traditional Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. Greater troubles to Ethiopia happened during the Ottoman Empire, which included its support of Jihad against Ethiopia in the early 16th century.

Throughout the world, the turn of the 16th century was important. The naval school established by Prince Henry in Portugal had allowed Portugal to colonize countries, such as part of India and Brazil. Other Europeans followed suit. The Ottoman Empire was another menace. Its ship arrived in Ethiopia near Arqiqo on 1557. Ethiopia was adversely affected by the Ottoman Empire not only through its vassal, Egypt, but also through its support of a Jihad War. The Ottoman Empire had the fiction that Habishtania was its territory, and particularly the British sought and secured permission from Istanbul to colonize parts of coastal Ethiopia. This section focuses on the Jihad War, and the reunification that Emperor Menelik mentioned in his May 1909 letter to his nobles and Council of Ministers.

B. The Jihad War, 1529-1543

Ahmed, the son of Ibrahim of Gaza (Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi) lived in Zeyla. Ahmed is locally known as Gagn (left handed). As was the tradition of Ethiopia, it did not matter who ruled a region, the ruler pays tribute (taxes) to the Kingdom. Several Sultanates governed Zeyla in succession. Sultan Abu Bakar had moved the Sultanate to Harar in 1520. Ahmed Gagn killed Sultan Abubakar of Harar and replaced him by a puppet Sultan, who refused to pay tribute to Emperor Lebne Dengl (1508-1537). The Emperor sent the governor of Waj and his Christian soldiers to collect taxes from Harar, but they were defeated in their effort. Then, he sent his brother-in-law, Ras Degahalen, the governor of Bali to Harar. They collected materials from Harar and surrounding areas, but musket gun trotting followers of Ahmed Gagn forced them not cross the Awash River. The Ottoman Empire through its vassals in Yemen was supplying the muskets and munitions to Gagn. Gagn and

his followers marched across Ethiopia burnt churches looted the rich adornments and endowments of churches, beheaded, and killed priest and Christian followers. The wars continued even during part of the reign of Emperor Gelawdewos (1540-59). Gragn's pillage and destruction of Ethiopia lasted for 15 years (from 1529-43), until he was killed near Gondar by a bullet from Portuguese soldier, one of the 400 who had come to help Ethiopia. But the effects of the Jihad linger to this day.

C. Migration of Boren and Beryetuma tribes

Gragn had defeated the governors and Christians of Waj and Bali and rendered the southern region of Ethiopia unprotected by the central regime. Also, in the wake of the Gragn Jihad War, whatever the exact condition that caused a migration, the Boren and Beryetuma tribes migrated north, east and west into the undefended lowlands and highlands of Ethiopia. The Christian dynasty had relocated its main quarters from Shewa to Gondar. It is amazing that even Baherenegash Yeshaq in the north (current day Eritrea), who was an appointee of Libne Dingl, has changed his allegiance to Turkey and acquired the title Pasha.

Under the promotion of the Turks and in support of the rebellion in the north, the sultan of Harer, Muhammad ibn Nasir went to war against Emperor Zerse Dengl (1563-97), the third in a succession to Lebne Dengl (after Gelawedewos, and Minas). The sultan was captured and executed and the Turkish military status of Harer was removed. Zerse Dengl visited Ennary (now Illubabor), built a church in Gamo Gofa. He entered the walled city of Harer and placed central rule over it. He included a couple hundred militias from the Boren and Beryetuma tribesmen in his military expedition to the north to Mereb Mellash. Bahrenegash Yessaq and his Turkish supporters were killed, and Turkish squatters from Arqiqo were removed. Zerse Dengl rebuilt the Aksum Tsion Maryam Church to replace the one destroyed by Gragn. Later, Emperor Fasilides built a bigger Cathedral of Aksum Tsion next to the old one that Gragn had destroyed. Much later, Haile Selassie built yet another church of Aksum Tsion.

2. ZEMENE MESAFINT (ERA OF THE PRINCES) 1769-1844

A. THE INITIATION OF ZEMENE MESAFINT- RAS MIKAEL SEHUL

After the Jihad wars of Gragn 1529-44 and the migration of the Boren and Beryetuma tribes, the seat of the Christian kingdom moved from Shewa to Gondar. Emperor Fasilides built the castle at Gondar. Subsequent emperors including Bekafa expanded

the castle. Bekafa's son Emperor Iyasu II had indicated to his mother that his child Iyoas born from Bersabeh, a Ga**a, should be crowned. Iyasu II's will was implemented upon his death. The imperial court had Lords from Amhara and Oromo stalk. Ras Mikael Sehul, a lord from Adwa, Tigray was appointed reagent. In a rage of anger, Mikael Sehul had the young Emperor Iyoas (1755-1769) killed, and had appointed the brother of Emperor Bekefa to become an Emperor. Then, in less than half a year, Mikael killed the emperor that he had appointed. Ethiopians rebelled and removed regent Mikael. The troubles initiated by Mikael's activities began the Era of Princes (Zemene Mesafint 1769-1885). In the era of princes, coastal Ethiopia suffered greatly from activities of European powers that sent missionaries and consuls, and the Ottoman Empire, and Turco-Egyptian incursions¹.

Was emperor Menelik II referring to this period when he wrote about the well-known disagreements in the north?

B. THE HOUSE OF YOHANNES IV (PREVIOUSLY KASSA MERCHA)

After the British military expedition to Ethiopia, they ransacked Maqdela, the capital city of Ethiopia. Upon their exit from Ethiopia, their general, Napier gave armaments (guns, canons and munitions) to Dejach Kassa Mercha, for his support of the British expedition.

Though, Tekele Giorgis II (formerly Wagshum Gobeze), who was the husband of Kassa Mercha's sister had declared himself emperor of Ethiopia (1868-1871), and had showered great titles to Kassa Mercha, they had to fight. Kassa Mercha won, and he became Yohannes IV (1872-1889) emperor of Ethiopia. He caused King Menelik to pay tribute to him after March 21, 1878 (Paulos, 1999, p.57). Yohannes IV tried to defend Ethiopia the best ways he knew how. He spread and defended the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church (EOTC). He defended northern Ethiopian from invasion by Egyptians. Simultaneously, King Menelik worked on unify southern Ethiopia. However, this was a period where European colonials used all sorts of tactics to occupy coastal territories, islands and maritime properties of Ethiopia.

¹ British Consul Plowden's activities in the Habab and Mensa were aimed at decoupling that region from Ethiopia and had made it very difficult for princes of Zemene Mesafint and later Emperor Tewodros to govern the region. According to Rubensen (1978, p.144) "It was the developments in the Bogos and Mensa in the 1850s that created the favorable climate for further colonial undertakings. ... Here Eritrea was in fact conceived. " In fact, in a letter of 20 November 1858 from Plowden to Marlmesbury, Plowden had proposed that Egypt must possess Ethiopia to give a blow to Emperor Tewodros' infant authority unless he submits to the dictates of Britain (Rubensen 1978, P.187). Yet, Tewodros had to avenge the death of Plowden who was killed in a battle with Lij. Garred of Quara who was a nephew of Tewodros. If Negusse, a self-appointed governor of Tigray that Tewodros later executed, was right, Lij. Garrad was in the service of Negusse when he killed Plowden. Plowden was replaced by Consul Cameron. Cameron's activities, some of which were not sanctioned by the British foreign office were very instrumental to his imprisonment by Tewodros. Britain sent a military expedition to attack emperor Tewdros.

To cement relationships by marriage, Ras Araya (Yohannes IV's son) married Zewditu (Menelik's daughter). Araya died and widowed Zewditu returned to her dad. The son of Araya, born from another woman, was named Gugsä. Gugsä Araya organized 20,000 Askari soldiers and got support from Italy as he aspired to become Emperor of Ethiopia. This contest was unsuccessfully lodged against another claimant to the throne, Ras Mengesha, whom Yohannes IV named as an heir to the throne. Ras Mengesha was not the son of Yohannes IV, though the Emperor had named him an heir when the emperor died in Metema in a battle against the Dervish. Previously, Dejach Debeb, a relative of Yohannes IV, wished to become emperor and had written a letter to Queen Victoria, indicating that the throne belonged to him because he was a dependent of Ras Mikael Sehul by a male line, as opposed to Yohannes IV who claims it from a female line. Dejach Debeb guided Italian occupation forces on their journey from Saaiti to Asmara. Did they know that Ras Mikael Sehul was never an emperor? Mikail was a regent ("enderassai") to young Emperor Iyoas, whose father was an emperor (Iyasu II, the son of Emperor Bekafa) and his mother (Bersabeh) was of a Gala Origin. At any rate, after the death of Yohannes IV, King Menelik, who is a claimant of the Solomonic dynasty, had announced that he is emperor of Ethiopia. We will deal with ascendance to emperorship of Ethiopia shortly. Facts and dates are stubborn realities. Yohannes IV died on March 10, 1889. A couple of months later, on May 2, 1889, Menelik entered an agreement with Italy through Count Antonilli for friendship and trade, known as the Wuchale Treaty ("wul"). It should be underlined that Italian occupying forces had moved from the lowlands ("qola") to the highlands ("dega") to Asmara and thence to Mereb River before Menelik signed the Wuchale Treaty.

Was emperor Menelik II referring to this period when he wrote about the well-known disagreements in the north?

3- THE EGYPTIAN MENACE

Ethiopia had interactions with Egypt for centuries. Some of the menacing activities of Egyptian governments or their colonial governors are briefly described below.

A. AKSUMITES RULED SOUTH ARABIA: PATRIARCH RELATED ISSUES

The 4th Century Emperor Ezana's rule extended from Merwe of current day Sudan to parts of Southern Arabia. The Aksumites ruled Southern Arabia until the birth of Prophet Mohammed. By the 4th Century AD, Emperor Ezana had sent an alien to Alexandria and requested that a patriarch be sent to Ethiopia (Taddesse, 1982). The messenger was ordained patriarch and sent back as Patriarch (Aba) Selama. Ezana put the cross on his coinage and Ethiopia became the first country to profess Christianity in the manner (Munro-Hoy, 2002). Egypt used to send patriarchs to Ethiopia until Emperor Haile Selassie stopped such practice in 1951. The arrangement of receiving Patriarchs from Alexandria was problematic, particularly after the ruling regime in Egypt professed the Islamic religion. Several Ethiopian emperors had problems receiving patriarchs, and some had to threaten that they would march and attack Egypt. (Taddesse, 1982). The

situation worsened in the 16th century when the Ottoman Empire supported Ahmed (Grag), who waged a Jihad War against Christian kingdom of Ethiopia. Emperor Menelik had mentioned in his May 1909 letter to the noble that he had to reunite the country that was disunited since Gragn. Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire. Though Egypt was attempting to gain independence from the Ottoman Empire, it would become a colony of Britain in 1882 after acquiring huge debt for its unsuccessful military incursions in Ethiopia. Since the 19th century, with the impending opening of the Suez Canal, Egypt gained an economic basis for its menacing against Ethiopia.

B. KHEDIVE ISMAEL'S EXPEDITIONS

Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire, and its local ruler was had the title Pasha. Famous among these Pashas was Ismael. He had extended his rule to the Sudan. He became rich and powerful and asked the rulers at Istanbul that he should be called Khedive (prince). The port authority (nayab) of Massawa was an Egyptian, and a subject of the greater Ottoman Empire. In the old days, all that Ethiopian tradition required was for a regional authority to pay taxes. Tradition did not require that the authority be an Ethiopian citizen. Such tradition was exploited by alien regimes to weaken Ethiopia, particularly during the Era of Princes (1769-1855). On June 16, 1847, a Turco-Egyptian force landed at Arqiqo (also called Dehono, located next to the island of Massawa) burnt the village and built a fort. Ras Wube (grandfather of the Wife of Menlik II), governor of the area had to send less than 3000 soldiers and drive away the Turco-Egyptian forces from the mainland. All the while, the British Consul Plowden was dissuading Ras Wube from evicting the invading Turco-Egyptian forces. In the 1860-70s, Mr. Werner Munzinger, a Swiss, served as vice-consul to Massawa for Britain, then for France, and subsequently became Egyptian governor of Massawa, who probably bought land in the Bogos before he became a Pasha of Egypt (Rubenson, 1972). Munzinger served the Napier expedition against Emperor Tewodros (1868) by helping build roads and gathering information from locals. Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868) had begun reuniting Ethiopia. The British had sent a military expedition led by General Napier to oppose the will of Tewodros, but he committed suicide instead of giving them victory.

As the British expedition was departing Ethiopia, they gave some armaments to Dejach Kassa Mercha of Tigray province for his cooperation. Dejach Kassa later became Emperor Yohannes IV. The death of Emperor Tewodros in 1868 had emboldened Egypt and their European advisors to conquer Ethiopia. Munzinger was eager for Egypt to take the Bogos, with Keren as its capital, and other Ethiopian territories. An expedition to Bogos by Egyptian forces met no local resistance, because European Christian missionaries and the British consul Plowden had earlier worked hard to psychologically decouple that region from Ethiopia. At any rate, led by American and European as well as Egyptian officers the Khedive of Egypt organized military expeditions in 1875 including the following.

B1. The 1875 Gundet battle: 1ST Expedition to Mereb Melash, near River Mereb

A Danish, Colonel Arendrup was hired to command a large Egyptian army and invade Ethiopia through the north. On November 12 (2 Hidar, others say Nov 15/16) 1875, Yohannes IV confronted half of Arendrup soldiers whom he had left at Gundet and then marched to the Gudagude valley. Egypt lost at both fronts. Arendrup lay dead after a battle of 1 hour at Gudagunde.

The Egyptians left behind 2,000 to 2,500 Remington rifles, 14 to 16 canons and rocket studs with ammunitions⁴. Yet, instead of taking further military actions against the Egyptians in the Bogos or Massawa, Yohannes wrote letters to European leaders and sent Kirkham along with 100 Egyptian prisoners to Massawa. Kirkham was imprisoned at Massawa and died 6 months later.

B2. The March 1876 Gura battle, 2nd Egyptian expedition, 5 miles south of Dekemahre

Khedive Ismail wanted to avenge the annihilation of his soldiers in the Gundit battle. He organized a well-armed large army of 15,000 solders commanded by Egypt's defense minister Pasha Mohammed Rati. The USA General Loring was in 2nd command, and Ismail's son served as chief of staff. They arrived in Massawa and marched to the highlands. Dejach Wolde Mikael, governor of Hamasen, who likely was bribed by Munzinger, changed sides and was given the title of Ras by Pasha Ratib. Ratib arrived 40 miles south of Asmara and built a fort at Gura with 5000 to 6,000 armed soldiers, and a smaller one at Kayakor. The Khedive sent a letter to Menelik to inform him of the impending Egyptian punishment of Yohannes IV and requested a quick response from Menelik acknowledging the message. Instead, Menelik sent 500 to 2000 soldiers to Yohannes IV and ignored the Khedives request for a response. In hard fought battles, that included Ethiopians attacking forts, the Egyptians were defeated. Ethiopian victory would have been achieved with little loss on their side had it not been for the fact that they laid siege of the fort at Gura for two more days after the main battle (Rubenson, 1976).

As reported by the French traveler, Aranaux the Gura victory in the north was celebrated in Shewa for three days. More significantly, Khedive Ismail's dream of colonizing Ethiopia was forcibly stopped. Yohannes IV told the Egyptians to leave the fort at Gura and from Bogos and go back home. However, since Yohannes IV did not remove all Egyptians out of Ethiopia, negotiations about the Egyptian invaders and claims went on for 7 more years.

B3. Expedition 2. From the Gulf of Tajura to Awsa

Pasha Munzinger was ordered to occupy Awsa and control the caravan routes to Welo and Shewa. At 3:00 AM on 27 October 1875, Munzinger and 150 of his well-armed Egyptian soldiers and 500 Danakil followers were killed by a band of Afar Ethiopians. Killing Munzinger was perhaps one of the most significant contributions to the independence of Ethiopia delivered by its warriors at Awsa at that time (Rubenson, 1976).

B4. Expedition 3. From Zeyla to Harer

The Khedive had sent ships to the ports of Zeyla, and Berbera. By July 18, 1875, Pasha Muhammad Rauf occupied Zeyla. He then advanced and occupied the walled city of Harer by early October. He stayed in Harer for 10 years until, due to an impending attack by Menelik, a British envoy sent from Aden arranged for the withdrawal of the Egyptian garrison by 1885. However, Britain had already plans to possess the ports of Zeyla and Berbera and the rest of northern Somalia before the departure of Egyptian forces and established a British colony in Somali.

During the ten years stay in Harer the Turco-Egyptians, whom the locals called Turks, had rekindled the Moslem faith in the walled city. They also had Islamized the surrounding largely Oromo pastoralists and farmers from whom they gathered taxes. By 1887, Menelik had re-incorporated Harer and Harerghe and placed the region on a large economic and political footing².

Reunification of Ethiopia began by Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868). Subsequently, Emperor Yohannes IV (1878-1889) with King Menelik under him, and after King Menelik became Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, had pursued the same goal as Tewodros. However, the stressful battles with Egyptian forces had defocused Ethiopia, so France colonized Djibouti, 1999 (a Shewan port called Abuko), Massawa was given to Italy by Britain in 1885, and Britain colonized the ports of Zeyla and Berbera by a firman from Istanbul (agreement) in 1888. As the British pursued a Turkish faction, Turkey owned Ethiopian ports, and Mogadishu, which was part of Bari, was lost to Italy.

Egypt's expeditions to Ethiopia were very expensive for Khedive Ismael, who was unable to pay back for his expensive expeditions. It turns out as commented by historian Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria in 1982 EC, although Egypt had acted to colonize Ethiopia, it was Egypt that became a colony of Britain. By contrast, Ethiopia retained its independence. Egypt while under Britain and subsequently after its freedom from colonialism started another economic reason for harassing Ethiopia. This time it has to do with damming the Nile River. This is further described below in a section on the root treaty.

4. THE ROOT TREATY, OCTOBER 23, 1896

Because Ethiopia uses its own written language, Amharic with its own script, it is possible to compare what the same treaty interpreted in a European language and in Amharic mean. Unfortunately, some of the treaties contain additional verbiage,

² Footnote Semitic-speaking Muslim townsmen of Harer, and Semitic-speaking framer-traders amongst the largely pastoralist Oromo lived in Harerghe before and during the Egyptian expedition. The phrase Semitic speakers are used here not to slight the Cushitic speakers. Rather it is to counter the surprise that some alien historian allude to as they recount that Semitic speakers had lived southeast of the Main Ethiopian rift valley.

which does not exist in the equivalent Amharic version. Two examples that involved Emperor Menelik II are given below.

A. The Wuchale Treaty, Adwa Victory and the October 1896 Addis treaty.

On May 2, 1889, Menelik entered an agreement with Italy through its representative for friendship and trade, known as the Wuchale Treaty (“Wul”). It is to be underscored that the Wuchale Treaty was entered a couple of months after the death of Yohannes IV, who died on March 10, 1889. Yohannes IV had abandoned the effort of surrounding the Italian forces at Fort Saati, 26 kilometers from Massawa and had ascended to the plateau to engage Gojam, and then marched to Metema. He hadn’t left behind a military unit to obstruct and disallow the ascent of Italian forces to the northern plateau of Ethiopia. The Italians marched to Asmara and the region up to the Mereb River.

When Menelik signed the Wuchale Treaty, more than likely Menelik II was letting Italian forces administer the regions that they had already occupied. It is to be emphasized that all Menelik II’s treaties with Europeans were done with his belief that the Europeans would be gone in due course of time. This may explain why the Wuchale Treaty, at least temporarily, gave a chunk of coastal northern Ethiopia for Italy to administer. However, the Italian version of Article 17 of the Treaty that made Ethiopia a protectorate of Italy was unlike what the Amharic version stated, and was unknown to Menelik II during the signing of the Treaty, or to Ras Mekonnen who signed a version of it while he was sent to Italy. Menelik II’s diplomatic efforts at changing the Italian version of article 17 did not succeed and he had to resolve it by attacking the invading Italian force. However, due to a severe famine in Ethiopia, Menelik had postponed his intention to go to war against Italian forces immediately. He had forgiven his subjects during this period of famine from payments of tributes to him, thereby gaining him the endearing title Emye Menelik (kind mother Menelik). Menelik II paid with interest the funds that he had received in the Wuchale Treaty and marched to defeat invading Italian forces at the famous Adwa battle of March 2, 1896, that lasted less than one day.

The victorious Menelik II returned to Addis Abeba with many Italian prisoners of war, and signed another treaty on 23 October 1896, which revoked the Wuchale treaty. The Addis Abeba treaty serves as the root treaty for any and all treaties and convention that Emperor Menelik II entered with European powers. That treaty caused Ethiopia to gain respect as a free country in the eyes of the world. However, it had angered white supremacists, who basically are engaged in refighting the 1896 battle of Adwa to this day in the vain attempt of changing history by destabilizing Ethiopia. The white supremacists are not to be underestimated for they can hire Ethiopian ethnic entrepreneurs who work to weaken Ethiopia.

B. THE 1902 TREATY: COLONIAL BRITISH CONCERN ON THE NILE RIVER

The May 15, 1902 treaty, signed in Addis is written in English and Amharic, and both are agreed to be authoritative and equal, though it is understood that Emperor Menelik

follows only the Amharic version. Remarkably, in articles III and IV of the Treaty the Amharic version clearly shows that Emperor Menelik had knowingly signed no document regarding the waters or territory of Ethiopia that will outlast the eviction of Britain from Sudan, or contradict the Root Treaty, the October 23, 1896 Addis Abeba Treaty. What he understood was the Amharic version of the Treaty. The English versions had additional phrases that are not found in the Amharic version. In all cases, the 1902 treaty does not present Egypt as a co-signer.

Included herein are article III and IV, both in English and in Amharic and my translation of the Amharic to English. The document used for the translation is the one that was commented on by Ullendorff (1967).

1A1: Amharic version Concerning Article III

፫ኛ፣ ክፍል።

ጃንሆይ፣ ዳግማዊ፣ ምንይሊክ፣ ንጉሠነገሥት፣ ዘኢትዮጵያ፣ ከጥቁር፣ ዓባይና፣ ከባሕረ፣ ፃና፣ ከሶባት፣ ወንዝ፣ ወደ፣ ነጭ፣ ዐባይ፣ የሚወርደውን፣ ውሀ፣ ከእንግሊዝ፣ ጋር፣ አስቀድመው፣ ሳይስማሙ፣ ወንዝ ተዳር፣ እዳር፣ የሚደፍን፣ ሥራ፣ እንዳይሠሩ። ወይም፣ ወንዝ፣ የሚደፍን፣ ሥራ፣ ለማሠራት፣ ለማንም፣ ፈቃድ፣ እንዳይሰጡ፣ በዚህ፣ ውል፣ አድርገዋል።

1A2. Article III (my translation into English of the Amharic).

His Imperial Majesty Menelik II, King of Kings of Ethiopia agrees to inform and agree with England before constructing and allowing others to construct structures across the Black Nile, Lake Tsana, and the Sobat River that would completely block the passage of waters to the White Nile.

1A3. Article III English Version (Ullendorff, 1967, p.643)

His Majesty, the Emperor, Menelik II, King of Kings of Ethiopia, engages Himself towards the government of His Britannic Majesty not to construct or allow to be constructed any work across the Blue Nile, Lake Tsana or the Sobat, which would arrest the flow of their waters into the Nile except in agreement with His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Sudan.

1A4. Comments on Article III

During his visit to England on July 1924, Ras and Crown Prince Teferi met with Prime Minister McDonalds of Britain in his office. Regarding the 1902 treaty, Teferi told McDonalds that because Britain was regarded as Ethiopia's friend, Menelik II had indicated that he would inform the government of Britain, but not seeking their permission. When McDonald told Teferi that it would be nice to get engineers from the USA to construct dams. Teferi retorted "the main point is that we want you to recognize

that the work of damming of the Nile shall be determined by us No one present at that meeting brought any objection to what Teferi had said .” (Zewede, 2005, p.467)..

As also commented upon by Professor Ullendorff (1967, p.642), Article III in the Amharic does not contain the Government of the Sudan in it. This clearly demonstrates that Emperor Menelik was well aware that he was making an agreement with Colonial Britain that will be removed "lekeko iskhed" from the region as indicated in article IV below.

The English version of the treaty included additional verbiage that is not indicated in the Amharic version. Menelik signed treaties with colonials knowing full well that they will be removed. Hence, I agree with comments of Ullendorff given above. Indeed, as per root treaty of October 23, 1886, Menelik II could not have had a different meaning of the 1902 Treaty than was emphatically asserted by Crown Prince Teferi.

1B. Concerning Article V of the 1902 Treaty

1B1. Amharic version of Article IV

፬ኛ፣ ክፍል።

ጃንሆይ፣ ዳግማዊ፣ ምንደሊክ፣ንጉሠገሰት፣ ዘኢትዮጵያ፣ ለብሪታንያና፣ ለሱዳን፣ መንግሥት፣ ከባር፣ ወንዝ፣ ላ ይ፣ ከኢታንግ፣ አጠገብ፣ በእየ፣ ፬፣ ማእዘን፣ ፪፣ ፪፣ ሺ፣ ሜትር፣ የሚሆን፣ ፩፣ ቦታ፣ የንግድ፣ ከተማ፣ እንሠድሩበት፣ ያወሳሉ። በዚህ፣ ቦታ፣ የሚኖሩ፣ ሰዎች፣ የእንግሊዝ፣ መንግሥት፣ ሱዳንን፣ እስ ከለቅ፣ ድረሠ፣ በሱዳንግዛት፣ ስረዐት፣ ተዳኝተዉ፣ ይኖራሉ። ይኸንንም፣ የተዋሰኑትን፣ ቦታ፣ የጦርና፣ የፖለቲካ፣ ነገር፣ እንዳይገቡ፣ ሁለቱም፣ መንግስታት፣ ዉል፣ አድርገዋል።

1B1) Article IV (my translation of the Amharic into English)

His Imperial Majesty Menelik II, King of Kings of Ethiopia has lent to the Government of Britannia and Sudan a four sided plot of land measuring 2000 meters on the sides for building a commercial town by the Baro River. The people of that plot of land shall be governed in the manner of the Sudanese administration until the government of England gives up Sudan. The two governments have agreed not to introduce war implements and political issues in the borrowed land.

1B3. English version of Article IV (Ullendorff, 1967)

His Imperial majesty the Emperor Menelek, King of kings of Ethiopia engages Himself to allow His Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of the Soudan, to select in the neighborhood of Itang on the Baro River, a block of territory having a river footage of not more than 2000 meters in area not exceeding 400 hectares, which shall be leased to the Government of the Soudan to be administered and occupied as a commercial station so long as the Soudan is under the Anglo Egyptian Government. It is agreed between the two High Contracting Parties that the territory so leased shall not be used for any political or military purpose.

1B4. Commentary

Article IV makes it abundantly clear that Emperor Menelik agreed with Britain in the fullest expectation that the agreement is valid only until Colonial Britain gives up its colonial reign over the Sudan. This thought is spelled out in Article IV. This is how Ullendorff (p.654, 1967) puts it: "The passage 'so long as the Soudan is under the Anglo Egyptian Government' is rendered in Amharic 'until the English Government gives up (lekeke) the Sudan'. The English version did not include the clear statements about the duration of the treaty that are spelt out in the Amharic document.

The two articles cited here demonstrate that Emperor Menelik II did not make agreements in Articles III and IV of the 1902 Treaty that will be binding on Ethiopia after the British are evicted from Sudan. Clearly, much later Egypt has no basis in the 1902 article that would allow her to justifiably claim that she has an agreement with Ethiopia that would give her the power to be consulted or to have the veto power to disallow Ethiopia from placing dams across the Ethiopian rivers to the Nile. That it may have agreement with the Sudan, which might have given a certain percentage of Nile waters to Egypt and another to the Sudan, may only apply for that body of water, after it reaches and then passes through the Sudan.

As with his 1896 Treaty with Italy, Menelik II gave a part of Ethiopia to be temporarily administered by alien governments. Treaty making by giving part of Ethiopia and its inhabitants to be governed by an alien force is objectionable. However, in both cases, there are articles in the treaties, which stipulate that the agreement is temporary and nontransferable to others. Perhaps the frame of reference of Menelik II's thinking, which might help gauge the spirit of his treaties may be gleaned in Article II of the 1900 convention that is based on the Italo-Ethiopian 1896 Treaty. Article II of the 1900 Convention states that "The Italian Government binds itself not to cede or sell to any other power the territory comprised between the lines Tomat left by His Majesty Menelek II, to Italy"(Brownlie, 197). Clearly, the territory is Ethiopian and Italy was afforded administration over it. Moreover, in the last paragraph of the 1900, it is stipulated, "... in mutual agreement, have written this convention, in the Italian and Amharic, both to be considered official save that in the case of error in writing the Emperor Menelik will rely on the Amharic version, and in witness of their approval have sealed it with this seal". In the case of the Anglo-Ethiopian 1902 Treaty, as shown above, Article IV makes it clear that the agreement will last so long as colonial Britain does not give up its dominion over the Sudan.

4. AFTER THE ADWA VICTORY

A. A SYNOPSIS OF MENELIK II'S PROJECTS AFTER VICTORY

After the Adwa Victory, Menelik II worked diligently and methodically to attain unity and worked hard to modernize the country. The following include some of his achievements as a leader. Emperor Menelik focused on the development of Ethiopia.

- a. He established central governance from Addis Abeba for all regions of Ethiopia including for the reunited southern regions.
- b. He instituted and/or caused the functioning of modern agencies and services such as railway, roads, telephone and telegraph, schools, etc.
- c. He imported of Eucalyptus tree from Australia to Ethiopia.
- d. He gave decrees and proclamations that oppose slavery, and giving pejorative names to working people.
- e. He established the “never again Policy.” The “Never again will my people die from famine” involved creating a” national storage supply of grain and honey.” The policy was continued during the reign of empress *Zewditu. The inhabitants of Tigray province were among the first beneficiaries of this policy (Wosene, 2016).*
- f. He negotiated with colonial powers and signed agreements (treaties or convections) consistent with the Addis October 23, 1896 as root directory.
- g. He created the Council of Ministers that will help govern Ethiopia. The Council of Ministers (CM) served as cabinet ministers while he was actively engaged, that took over governance while he was sick from repeated strokes, but was still alive. The council worked in the reign of his successor. We shall learn more on the role of Council of Ministers shortly.
- h. Even when suffering a stroke and in bed, he attended some government functions.
- i. He negotiated with colonial powers and signed agreements (treaties or convections) consistent with the Addis October 23, 1896 as root directory.
- j. He named his successor in 1909 he died on December 12, 1913.

Emperor Menelik II’s death was kept secret from his people for a long time.

B. COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (CM).

On October 26, 1907, Menelik established for the first time in Ethiopian history a Council of Ministers [Cabinet Ministers] composed initially of 7 individuals (Table 1). This was among his enormous political contributions to Ethiopia. He introduced the names of the Council of Ministers to representatives of foreign government and informed them that Ethiopia is no longer dependent on the work of one person only. He told everyone that “God willing” he has started the Council of Minister composed of seven individuals (Table 1- Paulos, 1999 EC, p.359).

After 15 days of announcing CM, Menelik II provided guidance for the ministers to follow. He essentially told them to work diligently and provide service to people impartially, but not to extort the people, and that he will provide funds to the ministers. However, rules and regulations governing the activities of each Council Minster were not established. The members of the council were trusted followers of Menelik, many of them were groomed by the emperor from young ages before he raised them to high ranks. One example of such member is Fitawarari Habtegiorgis, the Defense Minister of

Ethiopia. Many of them could genuinely feel that they knew what Menelik II would have wanted them to do. Buildings for the various ministries were not constructed. As was the tradition then, things operated by experience gained through interactions. The individual cabinet ministers used their residences to work from. Clearly, the development of ministries was in its infancy.

As the need for more minister-level work was recognized, Menelik II added two more ministries: Metaferia (Azaj) Ministry of Palace, Mekonnen Tewend Belay (Qegnazmatch) Ministry of Works (Table 1). Also, Byene Yemer (Lij) was appointed to serve under Ministry of Palace as officer for telephone and telegraph.

Table 1 List of members of Ethiopia's 1st Cabinet Ministers–Menelik II (** refers to two individual the two Germans attempted to blackmail, see text.)

October 26, 1907. Firsts batch of council of ministers		
Name	Title	Minster of:
1. Nesibu	Afe Neguse	Justice
2. Habte Giorgis	Fitawrari	War
3. Gebre Selassie	Tseafi Tezaz	Pen
4. **Mulugeta	Bejerond	Treasury
5. Ketema	Lique Mekuas	Interior
6. Haile Giorgis	Negadras	Commerce and foreign affairs
7. Welde Tsadiq	Kentiba	Agriculture
Two more appointed after 15 dyays		
8. ** Metaferia	Azaj	Palace
9. Mekonnen	Qegnazmatch	Works

Menelik II sent them a letter reminding members of council them to be impartial after 5 months of its establishment. It was wonderful that Menelik II established the Council of Minsters, which could manage the functioning of the government even when he became sick. Though the nature of Menelik II's sickness was not known at his time, when he became sick. We may ascribe stroke as his sickness. Since August of 1907 Menelik suffered repeated attacks by stroke. He was unwell on his 63rd birthday celebration of August 19, because he suffered a stroke two days earlier. By 1908 Menelik suffered another mild stroke while visiting the Marry Church at Entoto. He was hit again by another stroke on May 18, 1908. This time his speech was impaired and could walk only with a helper holding him. His wife took special care of him and the court after his return two Addis 23 days later. Subsequently he would suffer more cases of strokes. Even as the Council of Ministers could operate while Menelik II was sick, it, however, was unfortunate that the council did not benefit from continued interaction with Menelik II.

C. INTERFERENCE BY THE GERMAN DELEGATION IN ADDIS ABEBA

By 1909 strange things were afoot. Alas, European delegates did not allow the Council of Ministers to gain experience and establish a constitutional monarchy. Rather, they were busy gaining influence to satisfy the needs of European governments that they represented. At a time when Emperor Menelik II was suffering strokes and in bed, the following effort of the German delegation shows the point.

The German representative Dr. Zintgraff (1st Charges d'affairs), and another German citizen, Dr. Steinkuhler who served as doctor to the sick Menelik II were engaged in a blackmail of two members of the young members of Council of Ministers, presumably with an intention to place Ethiopia under their influence. The two Germans had claimed that they suspected two ministers of Menelik II's cabinet had given poison to Menelik II, and they required that these cabinet ministers should not be allowed to enter and work in the palace. Otherwise, they threatened that they would not treat the sick Menelik II (TTM, 1883, p. 622). Paulos (1999 EC, p.468) relates how two previous French physician

of the emperor had disagreed with poison being the problem of the emperor. [HG's comment: In what basis of medical science could the Germans know that the cabinet ministers poisoned the emperor? Even as we consider that they may not know at that time about stroke, the claim of the two Germans was as bogus as their rationale for violating the Hippocratic oath that doctors ought to tend to the patient. But, Ethiopian officialdom will politely check mate the irrational German behavior by applying different strategies and tactics.]

To avert the damage of blackmailing of two of his cabinet ministers that the Germans were peddling Menelik II had to take a multi-pronged approach. He had to allay any fears of hindering the good relations with Germany that he needed for modernizing Ethiopia. He also had to clear the bad name that the Germans have given to two of his cabinet ministers. Accordingly, on one hand Menelik wrote a letter to Emperor Willhem II, about the problem surrounding the German doctor. In the letter, Menelik II implicated the language translator (Kentiba Gebru) as a possible troublemaker and expressed sorrow at the German counselor for his collusion. On the other hand, since the accused ministers of the cabinet went in hiding for fear that Menelik II's supporters would kill them, Menelik II wrote the following decree (Awaj) to his people within 3 days of the blackmail conducted by the Germans.

Awaj.

"Do not touch my kids, those whom I fostered, Bejeron Mulugeta and Azaj Metaferia. Don't see them in bad light. If an investigation showed that they have fed me poison, I will punish them myself. Until the matter is investigated do not be cruel to them. If you disobey my word and you looked at them below their previous honor, I swear in the name of Mary that no go-between will save you from me [my wrath]." Menelik II's Awaj, Translated by HG: from Paulos (1999 EC, p. 462).

The decree allowed Bejerond Mulugetta and Azaj Metaferia to come out from their place of hiding.

To further allay the fears of the two Germans in Addis, Menelik II and his wife had suggested that the allegation by the Germans be investigated by Ras Bitwoded Tesema Nadew and Foreign Secretary, Bitwoded Haile Giorgis. Yet, Zintigraff was providing all kinds of excuses and wished the investigation to proceed rapidly (TTM 1983, P. 624). Apparently unrelated, Fitawrari Habtegiorgis held a meeting in which the German counselor and Zintigraff were present. The Germans stuck to their story of the poisoning of Menelik II by Mulugeta and Metaferia, and went on further to claim that Empress Taytu wished to take power by making Menelik lame. They also suggested that the Empress had agreed with the British to bring forces from the Sudan (Paulos, 1999 EC, p. 463). It appears that the Germans were given the pleasure of expressing themselves, while the palace and the Council of Ministers pursued strategies and tactics that would meet the challenge. Such was the environment that led Menelik II to announce who his heir will be.

D. [1909-1913] MENELIK II - LIJ IYASU TRANSITION AND THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.

The period of transition from Menelik II to Lij Iyasu is crucial to the understanding of Ethiopian history of the 20 century. The Council of Ministers had asserted itself in this and subsequent era. Menelik II gave three proclamations: 1) May 1909 to nobles in his palace making Lij Iyasu the heir, 2) the May 19 to the public making Lij Iyasu the heir, and 3) November 1, 1909 to the public making Ras Tesema a regent. It might well have been fortunate that he gave these proclamations, as it is believed that essentially brain dead by November 1, 1909. Most of the information below is abridged from books in Amharic by historian Tekele Tsadik Mekuria (1983 EC) and from Paulos, (1999 EC). Below, I give my translation of the Amharic proclamations.

1) On May 1909, Menelik II summoned the nobles to his palace. He had his proclamation read to them (TTM, 1983 EC, p. 630). The proclamation is included at the beginning of this report.

2) On May 19, 1909, Menelik II's proclamation concerning his heir was read at Jan Meda to ministers, nobles, foreign dignitaries, the clergy, and the public (TTM, 1983, p. 631). Below is a translation of that proclamation from Paulos, (1999 EC, p, 463-464), who indicates that it was read at Jan Meda.

Children of my country Ethiopia, my children, my friends, let me provide you advice that God has revealed to me. I hope that God will place my advice in your hearts. When Atse Tewodros died all his people began to outcompete each other, with one wishing to be a ruler of the other's region, another wishing to be rich by killing yet others; and all perished by achieving nothing. After that, you know about the people of Atse Yohannes. Without a national calamitous disease, without any attack by aliens, you have seen how due to jealousy they fought and killed each other.

Now then, my kids, my friends do not harbor jealousy against each other. Let you not say I will take the region of the other. As I have made you live in harmony, I beg of you that you continue live in harmony. If you are of one heart and if you do not fight and kill each other due to jealousy, you will not render our country to any alien. No bad thing will happen to our country. So that no wind passes between you, work hard from your stations and protect the country. Call each other brothers and support each other. Help each other and keep Ethiopia's enemy out of its borders. If Ethiopia's enemy leaves one region and pushes the boundary of another region, do not say because the enemy did not come through my border I do not care and do nothing. Support each other and go to the border and defend it and repel the enemy from wherever he may have come. Do not wait until the enemy comes to each of your homes.

I write the advice for your sakes; as for me, by the grace of God, have I not reigned for a long time? However, since I am human, how can I say that I will live so much longer? Now then, as per my wishes, if supported by God, and if by the grace of God my son Iyasu lives long enough for you, be with my kid and protect your country. I have entrusted him to you. A person who is entrusted is because he is trustworthy. Now, upon my trust of you I am going to give my kid to you, foster him. Make him grow by providing advice through wisdom. Help him with your labor. Support him with your advice. I entrust my kid to you and entreat you to protect the country along with my son. What, due to ignorance of leaders, and disagreement of people, used to be divided regions of our country Ethiopia, I have mediated and toiled very hard to enlarge it. You should work along with my son, to enlarge Ethiopia but not to make it smaller by giving away a smidgen of land. Protect it. Place development projects in your imagination. May the God of generous Ethiopia support you?

To the one who veers off from my word let his soul in heaven, his flesh on earth up to his grandchildren be cursed. And so long as I am alive I curse those who veer off from my wish

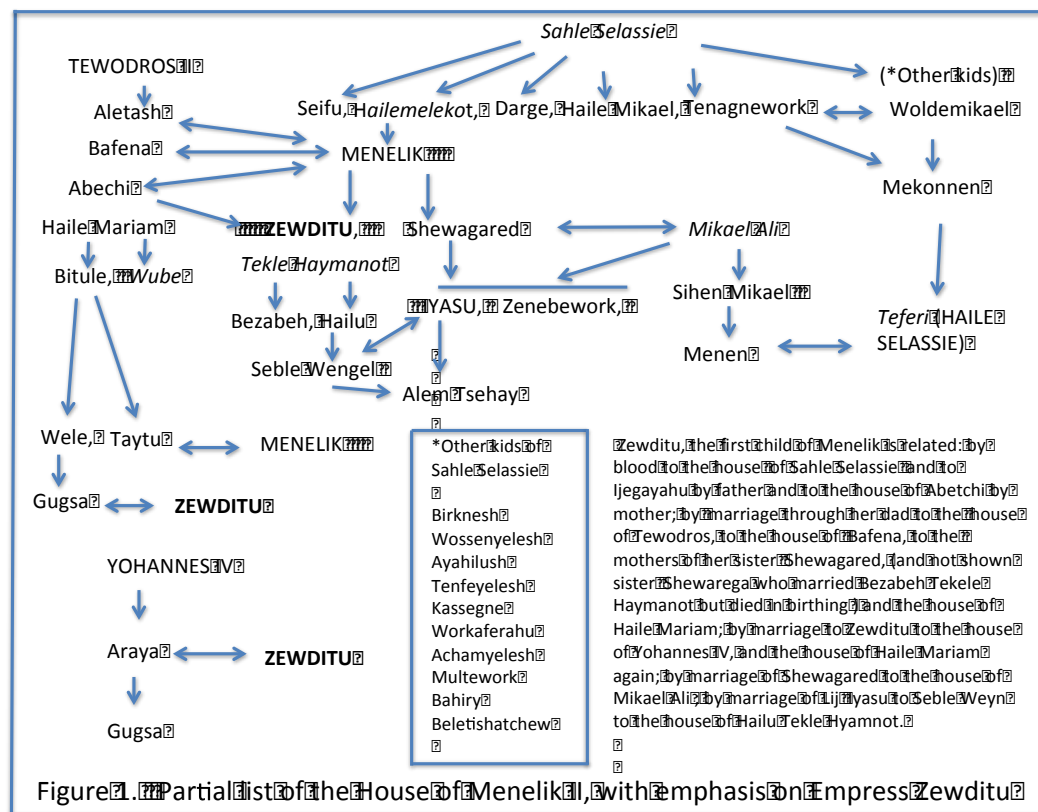
3) On November 1, 1909, Menelik II's proclamation made Ras Bitwoded Tesema Nadew, regent ("mogzit") of Lij Iyasu (Teke Tsadiq Mekuria, 1983 EC, p. 632-633). Below is may translation from the Amharic text.

The Conquering Lion of the tribe Judah, Elect of God, I, Menelik II, Emperor of Ethiopia

My dear compatriots, my kids and friends,

I ruled up to now by the will of God and without you annoying me. Because of your love for me, and your united effort, no enemy has violated Ethiopia. As I recently notified you, by the will of God since my crown prince, my son Iyasu is born from Shewarega and Ras Mikael, I have appointed Ras Bitwoded Tesema Nadaw as regent ("mogzit"). I have no other son. He is the keeper of my Kingdom. I did this because I do not want you to worry because I stay at home; However, I curse anyone who may use my son to do one or the other evil thing. Let the curse of Judah curse and of Arios befall such evil doers. May the earth reject those who disobey my word, may they bear black dogs; my curses apply to all who I had promoted and given high civilian and military ranks if they disobey my wish. Even when I am gone, my curse applies to all who do not follow my son. My curse may apply also to my son and the reagent Betwoded Tesma if my son would not listen to your advice, his brothers and fathers and does undeserved evil deeds.

Tekele Tsadiq Mekuria, p. 632-633, wrote that Lij Iyasu was 12 ½ years old when he was proclaimed a heir. He also indicated that since Dejatch Nadew was a regent to young Menelik, the son Ras Tesema Nadew was selected to become a regent to Lij Iyasu. Zewede (2005, p.86) indicated that Menelik II was not only physically immobile but he was also brain dead by November 1, 2009.



Different power bases in Addis Abeba interpreted Menelik's proclamations differently. Empress Taytu believed that the heir would assume power only after the death of Menelik II. So, on behalf of Emperor Menelik II, she appointed Dejach Teferi (future Emperor Haile Selassie) governor of Harar after removing Dejach Balcha Saffo from the governorship. Dejach Gugsu Wele became Ras and governor of Begemider. As indicated on Figure 1 Gugsu Wele was married to Zewitu Menelik. Dejach Seyoum was renamed Ras Hailu Teklehmanot and made governor of Damot and Agew Medir, replacing and removing Ras Bitwoded Mengesha Atikem (according to TTM, 1983 EC, for this to happen, Ras Bitwoded Mengesha reportedly cried that Menelik II must be dead). Later, Lij Iyasu would marry W/o Seble Wengel Hailu.

Also, Empress Taytu disagreed to a requirement by Ras Tesema Nadaw for Ras Gugsu Wele to come to Addis and give his version of an accusation by relatives of a deceased person that Ras Gugsu had allegedly killed.

On March 21, 1910, Fitawerari Habtegiorgis had assembled a meeting of ministers at his house, in the presence of Ras Tesma Nadaw. They determined that Empress Taytu should merely take care of the sick Emperor Menelik II, and she should desist from running the government. Ras and regent Tesema was selected to inform Empress Taytu to desist from functioning as governor, and restrict her work at Nursing Menelik II. Though she had protested, Empress Taytu had stopped her governing activities as of March 22, 1910 (Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria, p. 649).

That action by the Council of Ministers, also disallowed any appointments by Empress Taytu except for the appointment of Dejach Teferi as governor of Harar. Historian Tekele Tsadik Mekuria had commented that the ministers were also attempting to counter the rumored possibility that Empress Taytu might move the seat of government to Gondar.

It is illustrative to share an important anecdote. On December 1909, when Dejach Abraha and his officers, who rebelled against Menelik II, were brought to court for judgment "at the time that Lij Iyasu was heir", the court voted to impose the death penalty against Abraha and his codefendants. Menelik II who was in attendance, but was so sick and could not speak, waved his head. The court changed its verdict and jailed Dejach Abraha at Debre Hayk (Paulos, 1999 EC, p. 492). This would show how Menelik continued to serve his country even when he was so sick, and how "Dagnaw" Menelik was merciful, and how his judicious determination provided hope even to the vanquished. Was this judicious temperament infused in the Council of Ministers?³

Indeed the Council of Ministers had assumed powers and had disempowered Empress Taytu and had authorized Ras Tesema to appoint people to different positions. However, whether he could cause Lij Iyasu to maintain imperial decorum and etiquette depended on Lij Iyasu. It turns out that others did not easily persuade Lij Iyasu, and Ras Tesema was displeased. Disabling Empress Taytu from running the government did not solve the problems of Ethiopia or of Regent Ras Tesema. In fact, Ethiopia was faced with another challenge. Ras Tesema died on April 11, 1911, when Lij Iyasu was 15 years old.

Ras Abate Boa Yalew, Dejach Yegezu and other nobles and ministers held a meeting to require Iyasu to have a new regent, and for him to maintain imperial decorum. Lij Iyasu came to that meeting and told them that he will act according to their wishes. However, fearing that Ras Abate wished to be a

³ The story that Menelik II was brain dead by November 1, is contradictory to the history note presented by Paul regarding the December judgment of Abraha, described just above. Moreover the Council of Ministers changed the reign to that of Lij Iyasu by March 1910]

regent and would empower Empress Taytu, others including Fitawrari Habtegiorgis and Ras Lulseged, wanted Lij Iyasu to rule without a regent and thus opposed the purposes of the Ras Abate's called meeting. Fearing war between Lij Iyasu and Ras Abate, on May 29, 1911, the Ethiopian Bishop and Etchege interceded, and Ras Abate under pressure from Habtegiorgis was exiled to his governorship, Kembata. Hearing of the news Ras Mikael came from Welo to Addis Abeba, caused the sending of a spy to Kembata, after which Fitawrari Habtegiorgis was declared governor of Kembata, and he sent his representative (enderase) as governor.

Lij Iyasu resided in Ras Tesema's house, then in Ras Mikael's houses at Addis or in Dessie, Welo. Hearing of a revolt of inhabitants of Gimira against Dejach Mulugeta, Lij Iyasu at the age of 17 went there and pacified the region. Upon returning to Addis, Lij Iyasu's men wanted Emperor Menelik II to be transferred to Ankober, and for Lij Iyasu to reside at the Palace. Lij Iyasu's supporters and the Menelik II's Palace guards exchanged gunshots on February 9, 1913, that killed about 12 people. The Bishop and Etchege interceded and stopped the fighting, and on December 21, 1912 (sic), and in the council of ministers a letter was shared to the public in which they denied that any one had attempted to move the sick Emperor from his palace. They recounted how Menelik II had asked everyone to be united. The council also had to placate Lij Iyasu by exiling the chiefs of the palace guards to Gonder and Begemidir and appointing new ones in their places (Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria, p.656)

Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria, p. 656, commented that it was good that the Council of Ministers had denied the intention that led to the incident, for it pacified the public. Also, he intimated that had the palace guards not used firearms the Emperor would have been transferred peacefully.

Emperor Menelik II died on December 13, 1913. He was buried at Se'el Bet Medhanialew Church without the public being told. Lij Iyasu played gugsu (throwing sticks at the opposing team while on horse back) that faithful day, even after hearing of the death of Menelik II, his grandfather. Qegnazmatch Gebregiorgis cried at his home for days saying that he had received the news that his brother "Sahle selassies had died". Then he gave a ceremonial lunch at Addis Alem Debre Church to commemorate the 40th day of the death of Sahle Mariam.

Qegnazmatch Gebregioris was Menelik's servant, and Sahele Mariam was the Christian name of Menelik. Menelik died on December 13, 1913 (Tahsas 3, 1906), and was buried at Se'el Bet Medehanealem Church (Tekle Tsadiq Mekuria, 1983 (EC), p. 667).⁴

An astonishing incident happened when foreign delegates felt that they could interject their interests when they found that Menelik II was sick. Apparently, two German (Menelik II's Doctor, and the German representative) were afraid that Ethiopia might side with the colonials of Britain, France, and Italy. Accordingly, they focused

⁴ By all accounts Menelik was a wise man beloved by his people for his generosity, his dispensation of Justice and his foresight. They called him Emye, a term of endearment given to a mother. They called him (his traditional horse's name) "Dagnaw" a term indicating that he was judicious and applied justice. He was beloved more than his was feared. He did not brag he was fair but firm. He had placed storages for grain and honey for his people to use during the march to Adwa, to confront an invading enemy. Yet, he delayed his battle plan by a year due to excessive drought. These qualities had allowed him to take Ethiopians to a battle of an invading army and defeating it at Adwa. He brought Italian war prisoners to Addis and signed the October 23, 1896 treaty, which became the root treaty for his subsequent agreements with colonial powers. After these experiences, Menelik II focused on economic vitalization of Ethiopia. His experience with arranging storages grain at different sites while marching to war might have allowed him to envision the policy of "never again will my people die from famine." He established national storage supply of grains and honey, in preparation of food for his people in times of drought. Perhaps the creation of the Council of Ministers was one of the main political institutions that he established for Ethiopia. The council held Ethiopia together even in the years of greater advances by colonials and while Menelik II was sick and in bed, and after his death. Of course, a reexamination of the role of council is a welcome effort as a way of learning what was, and lamenting on what could have been. However, no amount of criticism can change history. It was, and the fact that it was cannot be changed by subsequent actions. Below I shall comment on what happened during the time when of the Council of Ministers was powerful.

only on how to influence the powerful in Ethiopia. They seemed to prefer one group of Ethiopian officials to others, perhaps as their way of sowing disunity among Ethiopians. The lie that they peddled involved two particular ministers whom they identified had poisoned Emperor Menelik II was merely a smoke screen for their political shenanigans. However, Ethiopia survived because of strategies and tactics the Ethiopian officialdom used to defocus the enemy. The aliens were confounded with different sounding approaches from separate corners of leadership. The offending aliens may complain of inefficiency forgetting that their stupid political strategies are being rendered meaningless. No less could have been expected of Ethiopian officialdom. It was in such an environment that Menelik II made his proclamations of naming his heir in May 1909, and appointing a regent in November 1909.

Concluding Remark

Four power centers had immediately been created by Menelik II's proclamation of Iyasu as heir. They are 1) the Council of Ministers, 2) Empress Taytu, 3) Ras Tesema Nadew, 4) Lij Iyasu. Though the roles of neither the Council of Ministers or of Empress Taytu were mentioned in Menelik II's proclamations, he certainly did not contemplate to disallow the functioning of these loyal and essential parts of his reign. However, problems started to appear because Menelik II had not articulated the roles of Empress Taytu and the Council of Ministers.

Should the heir or the regent to an heir assume any powers before Menelik II is dead? Emperor Menelik II had expressly ruled out that any one should assume power before his death (see his proclamation making a regent to Lij Iyasu). Apparently, Ras Tesema and members of the Council of Ministers thought otherwise. That thought does not make them right. Firstly, they would appear to doubt the loyalty of Empress Taytu. Secondly, they would be giving credence to rumors. When the Council of Ministers ordered Empress Taytu to desist from running the government, on one hand they were contradicting the spirit and the essence of the Advice that Menelik gave them in the palace on May 1909. On the other hand, as Menelik II fostered many of them since their younger ages, they might have believed that it was how Emperor Menelik had willed for the Council of Ministers to run the daily activities of the government. If the latter, the Council of Ministers (the Minister of Justice, Afe Negus Nesibu in particular) ought to have dealt with the allegation that Ras Gugsa Wele had killed an individual and arrived at a judicious verdict. Since the regent, Ras Tesema Nadaw was not a member of the Council of Ministers, there is no legal basis for him to address Empress Taytu's actions. More importantly, the council could have reminded Empress Taytu who gave the region governed by Ras Mengesha to Ras Hailu was in a direct violation of May 1909 advice that Menelik II gave to nobles, and therefore it should not be allowed to happen. Reminding her would have allowed her to see the errors of her ways so that all may learn from each other and govern Ethiopia. Instead, they asked her, to desist from functioning in her role of appointing officers on Menelik II's behalf. Four problems arose from the action taken by the Council of Ministers. 1) They denied themselves the opportunity to request Empress Taytu to discipline Lij Iyasu as a queen mother. 2) They antagonized people loyal to Taytu. 3) They dishonored an Adwa Heroine and angered the conscience of dignitaries who may not wish to downplay the role of the Empress. 4) They unnecessarily appeared to be emperors and above the law though Fitawriri Habtegiorgis commanded thousands of soldiers who have been stationed in Addis Abeba. However, by what authority would the Council of Ministers enable the functioning of an heir before the death of an Emperor? It ought to be underscored that Menelik II did not abdicate his throne. He merely proclaimed who his heir would be. He did so to allay any fears and to remove ambiguities regarding his successor. Ras Tesema was not a regent of Emperor Menelik II as the Emperor was being taken care of by a more able wife and Empress. Ras Tesema is a regent of Lij Iyasu, who ought not to begin his rule over Ethiopia before the death of Emperor Menelik II, though he might learn how to do it by observing court proceedings. That the Council of Ministers was beset with a dilemma ought to have caused it to think deeper and harder on how to resolve such problems for Ethiopia. A constitutional government run by representatives and headed by a monarch would have been consistent with the wishes of Menelik II. It would have solved the ambient problems that beset the Council of Ministers. What a missed opportunity? Yet, I would not blame the Council of Ministers

for not achieving that desirable governance because by that time the country had not yet acquired sufficient experience outside of autocratic monarchy.

Lij Iyasu was a kid, 15 years old by the time the appointed regent, Ras Tesema died in 1911. Another regent was necessary to provide him with counsel as intimated by Ras Abate and many others, which was precisely what Menelik II had ordered in his proclamation of November 1, 1909. Instead of acting on innuendo and rumors, and doubting the loyalty and sincerity of dignified Ethiopians, why couldn't the Council of Ministers rise to the occasion? Instead, some nobles and members of the council had opposed the need of a regent for young Iyasu. Those who opposed Ras Abate and his group had violated the letter and spirit of what Menelik II had admonished and ought not to have been done. They had Menelik II's curse befallen them and subsequent generations.

A student of Menelik II's Council of Ministers would recognize that the concept of Council of Ministers was new to Ethiopia, both to the appointed ministers, and Ethiopians at large. Though, Lij Iyasu furthered the role of the cabinet ministers and even appointed a prime minister from among them (Table 1), Negadras Haile Giorgis [the husband of Lij Iyasu's favored sister, princess Sihen Mikael], certain sectors of the public opposed it or they were instigated to revolt against it. It was unfortunate that the council members did not have sufficient time during the active reign of Menelik who might have established a firmer approach on how it would work.

History would vindicate Ras Abate Boa Yalew for his concern that Menelik II's heir young Iyasu needed a regent. Wouldn't the firing at Menelik II's palace guards on February 9, 1913 after Lij Iyasu returned from his expedition to Gimira indicate that they were attempting to evict Menelik II from his palace? Wouldn't predating the incident to December 21, 1912, as indicated in the report of by the Council of Ministers imply that some important members of the Council of Ministers had already prepared a document that would falsify the incident had the removal of the emperor failed? The whole incident of firing at Menelik II's palace was bizarre. It vindicated Ras Abate's expressed concern that Lij Iyasu needed a regent. At the called meeting of ministers and lords at which Ras Abate spoke of the need to appoint a regent for Iyasu, it is to be remembered that both Ras Lulseged and Fitawrari Habtegiorgis had opposed the need of having a regent for young Iyasu. In a short while, there was no love lost between the Council of Minister and the young Iyasu. Did the Council of Ministers handle their responsibilities methodically and successfully? Without any legal foundation, they had empowered Lij Iyasu to the throne before the death of Menelik. Lij Iyasu took his neice by his fathers side, the wife of Ras Lulseged and sent her to marry Dejach Teferi (future Emperor Haile Selassie) a relative by his mother's side (Figure 1). At any rate, a couple of years later, it is alleged that they blackmailed Lij Iyasu for not respecting the Orthodox faith. Indeed the council had persuaded the patriarch to absolve them from the curses of Menelik II. Then they unseated a living emperor, Lej Iyasu. They required Zewditu to divorce her husband and they crowned her Empress Zewditu (1916-1930). Simultaneously they crated Dejach Teferi as Ras and Regent. Such activities did not go without a fight. King Mikael (former Ras) wanted to place his son back on the throne. In that battle, Mikael would kill Ras Lulseged (his former son-in-law by marriage to w/o Menen, the ambient wife of Ras Teferi) at Tora ber. Days later the victories King and Regent Teferi (grandson-in law-of Mikael—Figure 1) and Fitawrari Habtegiorgis placed King Mikael in chains at the battle of Segele. What a shame that Ethiopians had to fight against each other and kill each other. What a missed opportunity that the Council of Ministers was unable to fathom in a timely fashion what Menelik II had advised them of, on May 1909 at his palace and subsequently at Jan Meda. Yes, they had Menelik II's curses removed by the Patriarch when they deposed Lij Iyasu. But, what about the sound pieces of advice that Menelik II shared with them? They killed each other, didn't they? As the old adage, "throw the rock and hide the hand" had it, did not the Council of Ministers usher in the transition of monarchs? Its inability to write a legal foundation for its existence would not serve it well. Subsequently, the first batch of the council members was deposed allegedly as a consequence of a revolt of the Mahle Sefari, (militia that protected Addis Abeba) in 1918. The role of the Council of ministers were diminished, and eventually replaced by cabinet ministers to an autocratic monarch (1930-1974). There is no vestige of Council of Ministers from 1974 to the present, where application of justice is replaced by political expediency of the ruling entity.

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