



# Aethiopica 6 (2003)

International Journal of Ethiopian and Eri-  
trea Studies

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BAIRU TAFLA

**Personalia**

*In memoriam Sergew Hable Selassie (Sərgəw Hablä Šellase) (1929–2003)*

Aethiopica 6 (2003), 211–215

ISSN: 1430–1938

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Published by

Universität Hamburg

Asien Afrika Institut, Abteilung Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik

## Personalia

### In memoriam Sergew Hable Sellassie (Sərgəw Hablä Šellase) (1929–2003)

BAIRU TAFLA

We regret to announce the death of the Ethiopian historian, Dr. Sergew Hable Sellassie, and we express herewith our deepest condolence to his family. He died of illness at the age of 74 in Munich in January 2003. His funeral took place in the same city in accordance with the rites of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the presence of the Ethiopian community in Bavaria as well as relations and friends from other parts of central Europe. He is said to have been survived by his divorced wife, five grown-up children and three grandchildren.

Sergew was perhaps the only Ethiopian scholar in the 20<sup>th</sup> century who specialised in antiquities. But he was also very well at home in other aspects and periods of Ethiopian history. He devoted all his life to teaching and research within and outside his native country. The areas of political and cultural history as well as biographical studies are obviously predominant in his publications, most of which are impeccable in their substantiation and interpretation. His linguistic talent must have been a great asset in his research work, as he could access local and foreign sources in Greek, Latin, German, English, French and Italian in addition to his mother tongue (Amharic) and the classical language (Gəʿəz) with which he was acquainted already in his childhood.

Born of Märigeta Hablä Sellase Zäwde and Wäyzäro Zäwditu Dästa in Addis Abäba on 17 June 1929, he received a thorough church education at home as well as at the Holy Trinity School in the same city before he enrolled in 1949 in the centre of theological learning in Corinth, Greece. Four years later he was admitted to the University of Athens from where he graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity in 1957. He subsequently studied history at the University of Bonn (Federal Republic of Germany) where he attained the degree of Dr.phil. in 1960.

Returning to Ethiopia, he lectured on and researched about ancient Ethiopian history for more than eighteen years at the Department of History of the Haile Selassie I (later Addis Abäba) University. He was the first

Ethiopian academic to hold the chair in the field of history which was earlier (and to some extent until much later) in the hands of foreigners.

It was while serving here that he participated from its very inception in the Ethiopian Mss. Microfilm Library project, better known by its acronym: EMLL. He became a member of the pioneering committee in 1971 and subsequently became director of the project as well as in charge of procurement, selection and initial cataloguing of the manuscripts. Anyone who has done some research in Ethiopia understands how tough accessing manuscripts can be. Four years later in fact Sergew was charged with the responsibility of the actual microfilming (cf. the foreword and introduction of volumes 1–6 of the EMLL Catalogue). By the time he resigned from the project in 1978 to work abroad, his team had successfully filmed over 7,000 manuscripts from the collections of various churches, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, the National Library and individuals in Addis Abäba, Šäwa, and Wällo. The well-done ten or so volume catalogue by Dr. William F. Mcomber and Dr. Getatchew Haile, which encompasses the identification and descriptions of most of these works, is today a valuable guide to students of Ethiopian studies.

Sergew attended as many of the international conferences related to his field of specialisation as he could such as the international conference of Ethiopian studies and the international conference of Sudanese studies, each time contributing a paper (see a list of his publications below). He also attended the Second Vatican Council at the order of Emperor Haile Šelassie I in the early 1960s (cf. F. Heyer, *Die Kirche Äthiopiens: Eine Bestandsaufnahme*. Berlin & New York, 1971, pp. V and 219).

Another aspect of his activity worth mentioning is that he worked in other institutions of higher learning as a guest lecturer and/or researcher. In 1967–68, he was fellow in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. In 1972 and in 1983–84 he won the Fulbright Visiting Fellowship at Harvard University in Boston, and at Princeton University, New Jersey, respectively. In 1979–80, he worked in the University of Heidelberg (West Germany) as a visiting professor. In 1980–81, he worked as a cataloguer of Ethiopian manuscripts at Leiden University, the Netherlands. In 1988–90, he was the editor, co-ordinator and contributor to the first church lexicon in Amharic under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture in Addis Abäba.

Time did not allow us to compile a complete list of his works. We could not even check the accuracy of all those mentioned in his curriculum vitae kindly provided by his brother, Ato Sebat who works with the United Nations, or those mentioned in footnotes of the works of other people. Luckily quite a few have been included in Wilhelm Lockot's *Bibliographia*

Aethiopia (Äthiopistische Forschungen 9 and 41) while some others could be located in our institute's library. The following list should in any case be regarded as merely partial and tentative:

### I. Books

- Beziehungen Aethiopiens zur griechisch-romischen Welt (Bonn 1964).  
Bibliography of Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History (Addis Abäba 1969).  
Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270 (Addis Abäba 1972).  
Bookmaking in Ethiopia (Leiden 1981).  
Short Biographies of Some Well-Known Ethiopian Artists 1869–1957 (Addis Abäba 1984).  
Yase Menilek Yäheywät Tarik ["Biography of Emperor Menilek"] (Munich 2000).

### II. Articles

- "New historical elements in the Gedle Aftse" in: *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9/1 (1964) pp. 200-03.  
"Church and state in the Aksumite period" in: *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa 1966, I–III* (Addis Abäba 1969) I: pp. 5–8.  
"The expansion and consolidation of Christianity c. 350 to 650" in: *The Church of Ethiopia: a Panorama of History and Spiritual Life* (Addis Abäba 1970) pp. 7–9.  
"The period of reorganization" in: *The Church of Ethiopia: a Panorama of History and Spiritual Life* (Addis Abäba 1970) pp. 31–41.  
"Die aethiopische Kirche im 4. bis 6. Jahrhundert" in: *Abba Salama* 2/2 (1971) pp. 43–75.  
(co-author: Belaynesh Mikael) "Worship in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church" in: *The Church of Ethiopia: a Panorama of History and Spiritual Life* (Addis Abäba 1970) pp. 63–71.  
"The Establishment of the Ethiopian Church" in: *The Church of Ethiopia: a Panorama of History and Spiritual Life* (Addis Abäba 1970) pp. 1–6.  
"A history of Aksum: the successors of Caleb" in: *Rural Africana* 11 (1970) pp. 30–37.  
"The teaching of Ethiopian history at Haile Selassie I University" in: *Dialogue* 3/1 (Addis Abäba 1970) pp. 43–52.

- “Source material for ancient and medieval history of Ethiopia” in: Congrès International des Africanistes – deuxième session, Dakar 11-20 décembre 1967 (Paris 1972) pp. 115–30.
- (co-author: Merid Wolde Aregay) “Sudanese-Ethiopian relations before the nineteenth century” in: Yusuf Fadl Hasan (Ed.), Sudan in Africa: Studies Presented to the First International Conference Sponsored by the Sudan Research Unit, 7-12 February 1968 (Khartoum 1971) pp. 62–72.
- “The problem of Gudit” in: Journal of Ethiopian Studies 10/1 (1972) pp. 113–24.
- “Yared” in: Yämämheran dems [= “The Voice of Teachers”] 1/1 (1965 YG = 1972/73) pp. 15–17.
- “The Geʿez letters of Queen Eleni and Libne Dingil to John, King of Portugal” in: IV Congresso Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma 10–15 Aprile 1972) I–III = Problemi Attuali di Scienza e di Cultura 191 (Roma 1974) I: pp. 547–66.
- “Giorgis Zegasetcha: Teacher and Author” in: Journal of Ethiopian Education 8/1 (1975) pp. 15–32.
- “Two leading Ethiopian writers” in: Journal of Semitic Studies 25/1 (1980) pp. 85–93.
- “An early Ethiopian manuscript: EMMML 8509” in: Ostkirchliche Studien 40 (1991) pp. 64–80.
- “Source for the history of Dabra Libanos” in: Journal of the Archives of Ethiopia 1/2 (1993) (Publication unavailable for the inclusion of the page numbers).
- The following entries have been published in The Dictionary of Ethiopian Biography – From Early Times to the End of the Zagwé Dynasty c. 1270 A.D. vol. I (Addis Abäba 1975): ‘Abraha, 5f.; ‘Aksumawi, 16f.; ‘Angabo, 22; ‘Arwé, 25f.; ‘Atnatéwos, 30; Bétä-ʿEsräʿél, 41; Dawit Geb sawi, 47; ʿÉzana, 61f.; Gäbrä-Krestos, 66; Gäbrä-Mäs qäl, 67; Gregentius, 75; Kaléb, 96f.; Mälakya-ʿAksum, 107f.; Moses, 120; Qérellos, 135; Sadqan, 140f.; Yared, 179f.
- The following entries have been published in: The Encyclopaedia Africana: Dictionary of African Biography 1–20. 1: Ethiopia-Ghana (New York 1977): Abraha, 43f.; Armah, 51f.; Ezana, 63f.; Haile Sellassie I, 78-84; Kaleb, 92f.; Sayzana, 128; Yared, 178f.

### III. Edited/Co-Edited and Contributed to

The Church of Ethiopia: a Panorama of History and Spiritual Life (Addis Ababa 1970).

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Äthiopien: Texte und Fragen. Herausgeber: Evangelisches Missionswerk im Bereich der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Berlin in West e.V. (Hamburg 1980).

The Journal of the Archives of Ethiopia (Atlanta).

Bulletin of Ethiopian Manuscripts.

Amharic Church Dictionary (mimeographed and distributed in Addis Ababa in 14 instalments – 1974–1990 – under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture).

In memoriam Harold Golden Marcus (–2003)

BAIRU TAFLA

We regret to note here the passing away of another distinguished historian of Ethiopia, Dr. Harold G. Marcus, and we express herewith our condolence to his wife, Cressida, his daughter, Emma Rose Drabik, and all his close relations and friends. He is said to have died of “cardiac arrest following complications from an ongoing heart condition,” at the age of 66 on 15 January 2003. Harold Marcus is well known to all students of Ethiopian history not only through his numerous and impeccable works, but also through his frequent participation in conferences and symposia as well as through his lively class and public lectures. In so far as we do not, however, possess reliable records on his life, we take the liberty to quote extensively from the germane obituary promptly issued to the “H-Africa LISTSERV” by Prof. Melpage of Michigan State University and edited by Prof. Jim McCann of Boston University, which will be followed by a short list of his publications compiled at random from some bibliographical works and footnotes.

“A graduate of Clark University, he [Harold] received his Ph.D. from Boston University in 1964 after studies with the anthropologist and historian, Daniel McCall. His dissertation research took him for the first time to Ethiopia, which became the focus of his academic interests for the rest of his life. He also studied and wrote more widely on African history, and on the development and decline of colonialism in Africa and worldwide.