



Aethiopia 18 (2015)

International Journal of Ethiopian and
Eritrean Studies

HANNA RUBINKOWSKA-ANIOŁ, University of Warsaw

Review

‘L’Ascension du Ras Tafari & la Naissance de l’Éthiopie Moderne (1916–1930)’, *Pount*, Numéro Spécial 7 (2013)

Aethiopia 18 (2015), 279–281

ISSN: 2194–4024

Edited in the Asien-Afrika-Institut
Hiob Ludolf Zentrum für Äthiopistik
der Universität Hamburg
Abteilung für Afrikanistik und Äthiopistik

by Alessandro Bausi

in cooperation with

Bairu Tafla, Ulrich Braukämper, Ludwig Gerhardt,
Hilke Meyer-Bahlburg and Siegbert Uhlig

Bibliographical abbreviations used in this volume

- AE* *Annales d'Éthiopie*, Paris 1955ff.
- ÄthFor* Äthiopistische Forschungen, 1–35, ed. by E. HAMMERSCHMIDT, 36–40, ed. by S. UHLIG (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner (1–34), 1977–1992; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (35–40), 1994–1995).
- AethFor* Aethiopistische Forschungen, 41–73, ed. by S. UHLIG (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998–2011); 74–75, ed. by A. BAUSI and S. UHLIG (*ibid.*, 2011f.); 76ff. ed. by A. BAUSI (*ibid.*, 2012ff.).
- AION* *Annali dell'Università degli studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'*, Napoli: Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale' (former Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli), 1929ff.
- BSOAS* *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London, 1917ff.).
- CSCO* Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 1903ff.
- EAE* S. UHLIG, ed., *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, I: A–C; II: D–Ha; III: He–N; in cooperation with A. BAUSI, eds, IV: O–X (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010); A. BAUSI in cooperation with S. UHLIG, eds, V: Y–Z, *Supplementa, Addenda et Corrigenda, Maps, Index* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2014).
- EMML* Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa.
- JAH* *The Journal of African History*, Cambridge 1960ff.
- JES* *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa 1963ff.
- OrChr* *Oriens Christianus*, Leipzig–Roma–Wiesbaden 1901ff.
- PdP* *La Parola del Passato. Rivista di studi classici*, Napoli 1946ff.
- PICES 8* TADDESE BEYENE, ed., *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Addis Ababa (26–30 November) 1984*, I–II (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies–Frankfurt am Main: Frobenius Institut, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, 1988–1989).
- PICES 10* C. LEPAGE and É. DELAGE, eds, *Études éthiopiennes: Actes de la X^e Conférence internationale des études éthiopiennes, Paris, 24–28 août 1988* (Paris: Société française pour les études éthiopiennes, 1994).
- PO* *Patrologia Orientalis*, 1903ff.
- RIÉ* É. BERNAND, A.J. DREWES, and R. SCHNEIDER, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumite et axoumite*, I: *Les documents*, II: *Les planches* (Paris: (Académie des inscriptions et belle-lettres) Diffusion de Boccard, 1991).
- RRALm* *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche*, Roma, 1892ff.
- RSE* *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici*, Roma, 1941–1981, Roma–Napoli, 1983ff.
- SAe* *Scriptores Aethiopici*.

‘L’Ascension du Ras Tafari & la Naissance de l’Éthiopie Moderne (1916–1930)’, *Pount*, Numéro Spécial 7 (2013) (Bièvres: Les Éthiopiens Associés). 232 pp. Price: 24.00. ISBN: 978-2-9524-9648-3; ISSN: 0554-873X.

The period in Ethiopia which began with the declining health of Mənilək II around 1910 and ended in 1930 with the coronation of Ḥaylä Śəllase as Emperor has, in recent years, begun to attract an increasing amount of attention. *Pount* issue number 7 (2013) is devoted to the period 1916–1930, perceived as a time when modern Ethiopia was being shaped through the activities of *ras* Täfäri Mäkʷännən. This issue of *Pount* is not the only recent publication dealing with different aspects of the period. Empress Zäwditu’s reign, seen through the perspective of Täfäri’s role in the events, is also the main subject of the *Annales d’Éthiopie* (number 28 of 2013), while the earlier period (1910 to 1916) has been discussed in a book edited by Eloi Ficquet and Wolbert Smidt on ‘The Life and Times of Lij Iyasu of Ethiopia’ (2014).¹

This interest should not come as a surprise, partly because the publications fill a gap in the available literature on twentieth-century Ethiopian history, partly because of the attractiveness of the subject. The period in question was a time of great change, when the country had to find its place in a rapidly changing world.

In the reviewed publication, the strengths and weaknesses of Täfäri’s position during this period are discussed from different points of view. The book is made up of nine interesting contributions. Their aim is not to provide an overall analysis of the period, nor is it to paint a complete image of Täfäri’s politics at the time. This short period was so rich in events and of such a complicated nature that time is still needed before this kind of analysis can be published. The authors chose particular examples of political events and discuss the period through the lens of different aspects of the period to show various perspectives on the path to power of one of the most interesting and important politicians of the twentieth century.

The volume concentrates on Ethiopian–French relations, French involvement in Ethiopia, and the French perspective on Ethiopia during the period in question. However, there are some exceptions, out of which is the contribution by Hideko Faerber-Ishihara, ‘Le *ras* Tafari à la recherche d’un pays frère: les premiers contacts avec le Japon’ (pp. 136–159), who presents the first contacts between Ethiopia and Japan. During Ḥaylä Śəllase’s era, those Ethiopians who believed that changes were necessary for Ethiopia often perceived the Japanese experience as a model of successfully intro-

¹ See the review of Stéphane Ancel in this volume (pp. 276–278).

duced modernisation. The author presents the contacts between the two countries in the 1920s and the presence of the Japanese delegation at Ḥaylä Śəllase's coronation in 1930, mainly from the Japanese perspective.

The volume begins with Didier Morin's careful analysis of the role of written and oral transmissions in the removal of *ləḡ* Iyasu, 'Prise de parole, prise du pouvoir: la destitution du leg Iyasu (27 septembre 1916)' (pp. 19–37). The author concentrates on the political aspects of the manner of transmitting messages related to power, in this case the written sources which were used to name Iyasu as the heir to the throne, and then the texts which listed the arguments against him being in power.

Irma Taddia rightly indicates *ləḡ* Iyasu's father, *nəḡus* Mika'el as 'the main activist in the events that followed Iyasu's deposition' and discusses his role during the 1916 revolution and the battle at Sägäle (which decided the fate of the revolution). The article 'Negus Mikael and the destiny of the Ethiopian monarchy in 1916' (pp. 39–49) is the only contribution written in English.

Alain Rouaud's 'Le Ras Tafari contre l'esclavage & l'admission de l'Éthiopie à la SDN (1923)' (pp. 51–81) discusses the question of slavery and the slave trade at length, in the context of Ethiopia's admission into the League of Nations in 1923.

Täfäri's trip to Europe in 1924 was an important event for Ethiopia, and attracted a lot of attention in the countries he visited. In the volume under review this finds its reflection in several contributions. Katia Girma translated a part of Ḥərüy Wäldä Śəllase's account of Täfäri's trip to Europe, the part describing Täfäri and his entourage's visit to Paris: 'Le Ras Tafari à Paris (1924): Un récit du *blatta* Heruy Wäldä-Sellase traduit de l'amharique par Katia Girma' (pp. 83–105). In 1924, following Ethiopia's admission into the League of Nations, *ras* Täfäri Mäk'ännən paid visits to a number of European countries with the aim of emphasizing the existence of an independent African Empire on the world map. The text is interesting as a written Ethiopian account providing the Ethiopian perspective without repeating known facts. However, it does not provide information which would not already have been known to those interested in the topic. Täfäri's visit to Europe is also part of the description of Ethiopian–Italian affairs against the background of the 1928 'Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration' discussed by Federica Guazzini ('Le Ras Tafari et la pacte Italo-Éthiopien de 1928', pp. 107–133).

Another enlightening perspective of the future Ḥaylä Śəllase's activities and methods of running the country is to be found in Alain Gascon's 'Le Ras Teferi, Prince homme d'affaires' (pp. 175–191). The author provides a glimpse of the period through an analysis of the economic activities of the regent and of its impact on his and the country's situation.

Reviews

The first contribution by Lukian Prijac, 'Les «parrains» du Ras Teferi, Léonce Lagarde et Mgr Jarosseau: Protecteurs ou agents d'influence?' (pp. 161–173), discusses Tafari's relations with the French minister in Ethiopia and his adviser at the League of Nations, Léonce Lagarde, and with a French Capuchin and Tafari's tutor, Mgr Jarosseau. Another contribution by the same author, 'Le couronnement du *ras* Tafari et la délégation française (2 novembre 1930)' (pp. 193–213), deals with the presence of the French delegation at Ḥaylā Šəllase's coronation, the event which marked the end of Tafari's path to power and the beginning of his official rule as the Emperor of Ethiopia. It is an interesting view not only of the French delegation as such, but, most of all, of the coronation as a part of the Empire's symbolism of power and its legitimation.

The volume also contains a chronology of the period, both according to the Ethiopian calendar and the Georgian calendar, beginning from 1889 CE, when Mənilək was proclaimed Emperor, and ending in 1942 CE, when Ḥaylā Šəllase, after returning to Ethiopia in 1941 CE, proclaimed a final *awəḡ* prohibiting slavery and the slave trade (pp. 13–15). There is a small genealogical tree (which includes only two of Ḥaylā Šəllase and Mänän's sons: Asfa Wäsän and Mäk^wännən) beginning from the Šəwan ruler *nəguś* Sahlä Šəllase (pp. 16–17); there is also a bibliography (pp. 215–232). A number of photographs and copies of Ethiopian documents (i.e. in Morin's and in Prijac's articles) add to the value of the publication.

Hanna Rubinkowska-Anioł, University of Warsaw

BAHRU ZEWDE, *The Quest for Socialist Utopia: The Ethiopian Student Movement c.1960–1974*, Eastern Africa Series, 16 (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 2014). xvi, 299 pages, 3 maps, 13 photographs, bibliography, index. Price: £ 50.00. ISBN: 978-1-84701-085-8.

At long last an historical event that seems to have had some significance in the political development of Ethiopia has been successfully and fairly treated in this monograph by an author who personally experienced at least part of the process. A number of publications briefly mentioned the student movement of the 1960s and 70s, and later some dissertations on some aspects of the movement were written abroad, but a long time had to pass before this detailed description and scientific analysis was available.

The university students who informed themselves about politics through their readings of books on politics as well as through various sources of information about student movements abroad, began to criticise against the