Habasha, Abyssinia and Ethiopia: Some Notes Concerning a Country’s Names and Images

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to explain briefly the origin of the names Habasha, Abyssinia and Ethiopia as well as their derivatives. It also draws attention to the positive and negative attitudes of the educated and politically conscious Amhara and Tigreans concerning the use of the aforementioned appellations by outsiders. It continues to enumerate some of the mythical, conventional and scholarly images that have been associated with these names in the imagination of men and women at different periods of history, beside the self-images perceived by the Amhara and Tigreans about themselves and their country and which they project to others.

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The existence of centuries-long connections, across the Red Sea, between the Arabian Peninsula and the northern highland regions of northeast Africa, commonly known as the Horn of Africa, is agreed to. In view of the geographical proximity of the African regions to southwestern Arabia and the Hijaz, the Arab peoples living in these parts of Arabia were the most favourably positioned to take the lead in maintaining the relations between the two sides of the Red Sea. Archaeological, classical Greek, early Muslim Arabic sources and the surviving Ethiopian manuscripts and chronicles report at some length on various aspects of such relations.1

The Arabs are said to have consistently used the names Al-Habasha or Habasha, and Habash to refer to the kingdom of Aksum and its people and their Amhara-Tigrean successors. In the same way they used the matching appellations Ahabsh, Hibshaan and Hubush as the collective

generic names similar to Habash. Sometimes the names were used to refer to neighbouring areas in the Horn of Africa as well. On a few occasions, however, the name Habasha was employed with so much vagueness in Arabic sources, as some classical Greek and mediaeval European writers used the name Ethiopia to designate almost all the lands and peoples located beyond the southermost limits of the Sahara. The Arabs, unlike some European writers, do not confuse the name Habasha with India2

It has sometimes been suggested that the name Habasha, meaning "mixture" or of "mixed blood", was applied to the Aksumites in the first place because "it was how they presented themselves to the Arabs". The validity of this suggestion is questionable.3 The alternative, seemingly more plausible, suggestion is that the names Habasha and Habash were originally derived from Habashat; the name of a South Arabian Sabaean
biographies of the Prophet (Siira), were a group of small tribes or clans who were at first allied with other groups against Quraish, but afterwards allied themselves with them.

The ethnic identity of the Ahabish and their importance in Meccan society in the early seventh century has been the subject of dispute. The opinion of Lammens is that they consisted of Abyssinians and other negro slaves gathered to a nucleus group of nomad Arabs, and that they constituted the mercenary forces on which the Meccans depended for ensuring the safety of their trading caravans and their city as well as serving them as personal retinues and escorts. Critics of this view pointed that, as reported in the sources, the Ahabish were free Arabs, not negro slaves, were confederates, enemies of Quraish and later became their allies (hulafa); and that there is no evidence to substantiate Lammens's claim that they had much military importance for the Meccans. The name Ahabish, however, is said to have been employed in Yemen in reference to the Abyssinians.

Habesh and Habeshistan were the names which the Ottoman Turks gave to their Africa coastlands of the Red Sea and neighbouring lowland possession that were constituted into a separate province; the Pashalik of Habesha or Habeshistan in 1557. The territory extended from Sawakin in the north to include Massawa and Arkikio up to Zeila on the Gulf of Aden in the south, including Jidda and its immediate environs on the opposite coast of the Red Sea. In 1830 the Ottomans finally transferred all claims over the region to Muhammad Ali, the Pasha of Egypt.

The name Habshi, on the other hand, was used in a similar inclusive manner in the Indian sub-continent in tribe, some groups of which had emigrated and eventually settled on the fertile and temperate northern highland regions of the Ethiopian province of Tigre and southern areas of Eritrea at a very early date in the distant past where they contributed to the formation of the later kingdom of Aksum.

The name Habashat appears in a number of South Arabian inscriptions showing evidence of their actual presence in certain districts, with clear references to their relations with Aksum. It occurs as reference to the core region of Aksum; when the designation was intended for the people of Habashat the term Ahbash is used. This led Irvine to conclude: “... it is possible that in Sabaean and Aksumite Ge’ez the name simply represented the later Arabic Habasha, Abyssinia. Reference in pre-Christian Aksumite inscriptions to the subjugation of the Habasha perhaps in reference to the ancestors of the Tigrinya - speaking people of eastern Tigre province. The term Habashat also occurs in an inscription of Ezana, the fourth century king of Aksum, where the royal title of the monarch in Ge’ez reads: “King of Aksum, Himyar, Kasu, Saba, Habashat, Raydan and Saihin, Tsiamo and Beja”.

The other names Ahabish, Habshi and Habesh/Habeshistan which appear to be associated with the Arabic terms Habasha and Habash deserve a brief mention. In Watt’s definition the name Ahabish is a plural form which means either ‘Abyssinians’ as derived from Habash or companies or bodies of men, not all of one tribe”, derived from Uhbush or Uhbusha. Another opinion is that the name has been applied to “men who formed a confederacy either at a mountain called Al Hubshi or at a wadi (valley) called Ahbash.” The Ahabish who were mentioned in the
mediaeval times as an appellation given for the communities of descendants of African slaves, the majority of whose ancestors were brought from regions of the Horn of Africa. They provided the officers and soldiers of the armies of the different ruling dynasties. Their commanding officers often rose to high positions of power and influence, toppled their ruling masters and took power for themselves.¹³

The terms Abyssinia and Abyssinians, the European equivalent of the Arabic terms Habasha and Habash, were used with increasing frequency from the thirteenth century onwards. The names appear to have made their way into the various European languages through the Portuguese, whose own name for the country Abassia was itself a loan-word from the Arabic Habasha.¹⁴ A number of linguists have indicated that the terms Habasha and Habash in the Ethiopic Ge'ez, Amharinya and Tigrinya languages are the indigenous names for the country and its peoples. Ullendorff writes: “Tigrinya speakers themselves call their language habesha, i.e. ‘Abyssinian’ par excellence”.¹⁵

Ethiopia was deliberately chosen as the new official name of the country, in preference to Abyssinia, when it was admitted to the League of Nations in 1932.¹⁸ Aethiopes, from which the name Ethiopia is said to have originally been derived in classical times, is a Greek word consisting of two components; Opis which means ‘face’ and Aieth meaning ‘burnt’, i.e. literally “burnt faces”. Ethiopia, therefore, was the designation which the classical Greek and Latin writers used to mean the “Land or country of dark-skinned peoples”.¹⁹ The name is said to have been associated with the ancient Greek legend which reports that “Phoebus’s golden chariot had passed too close” to the torrid zone “leaving its people permanently sun-tanned” as a result.²⁰

In fact, by using the names Ethiopia and Ethiopians the classical Greek writers actually referred to the Nubian kingdom, with its capital first at Napata and later at Meroe, located immediately to the south of Egypt and its peoples. At other times the reference was extended with so much vagueness to include almost all the lands and peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, northeast Africa, southern Arabia and India.²¹

Educated and politically conscious Amhara and Tigreans alike use the terms Habasha and Habash in informal conversation when referring specifically to their country and to themselves as a collective entity. Yet, most of them object, sometimes vigorously, to the use of the same terms or their European equivalents Abyssinia and Abyssinians by outsiders. Instead, they prefer that foreigners refer to their country and to themselves by the official names of Ethiopia and Ethiopians.¹⁶ In their view the original Arabic name Habasha, from which the names were derived, had the derogatory connotation of “mixed” or “impure”
The name Ethiopia appeared for the first time in an Aksumite Greek inscription referred to by Cosmas Indicopleustes in the middle of the sixth century where mention is made to the subjection of the people “to the west as far as the country of Ethiopia and Sasu.” The reference here is to the kingdom of Meroe on the Nile according to the current Greek usage of designating everything located to the south of Egypt as Ethiopia”.23 In the same context Cosmas reports in his Christian Topography that: “from Axum to the land of incense called Berbera, which, lying on the ocean coast, are to be found not close to but far from Sasou, the furthest region of Ethiopia; it is a journey of some forty days.24 The first specific application of the name Ethiopia to the modern Ethiopian region appears to have been made after the Graeco-Syrian Bible was translated into Ge’ez, the old Ethiopic language, where the Hebrew name “Cush” was translated into Greek as "Ethiopia".25 It was from then onwards that the name Ethiopia, to which several biblical references are made, came to be increasingly appropriated for the Christian state and successor of Aksum. The association was continued still further when a new dynasty claiming legitimate descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba came to rule over the country in 1270. Its ruling monarchs styled themselves Negus Nagast Za Ityopya, i.e. “King of Kings of Ethiopia.”26

The various conventional and scholarly images associated with Ethiopia and the Ethiopians in the popular imagination of men and women at different times over the centuries as well as the self images perceived by the Ethiopians of themselves and presented to others are equally interesting as the different names of the country. Donald N. Levine has outlined five main conventional images of Ethiopia as: (1) a faraway place, a remote country in terms of geographical distance and from knowledge; (2) a land of pious and just peoples; (3) a savage country; and (5) a bastion of African independence.30
Mention is also made in classical Greek writings of the pious and just “Blameless Ethiopians” who are loved by the immortal mythical Olympian gods who go off to feast with them and to take part in their sacrificial rites. The same image is extended to particular individuals of high moral character who were reputed for being pious and just like the Nubian King Sabacos and Abed-Melech the Ethiopian officer at the court of King Zadekiah.

The image of Ethiopia as a magnificent and mighty kingdom included reference to both the ancient kingdom of Aksum and its successor the mediaeval Christian Ethiopian state. Aksum was ranked as “the third among the great powers of the world”, the valued ally of Byzantium whose kings were referred to by the honorific Byzantine title of basileus. The Christian Ethiopian kingdom was described as “the magnificent, powerful and rich country, the legendary kingdom of Prester John, and the prospective ally of Christian Europe against the Muslims.”

The contrasting image of savage Ethiopia goes back to the description given by Diodorus of “the other Ethiopians’ living to the south of Meroe being “entirely savage and display the nature of a wild beast…” and “… are as far removed as possible from human kindness to one another.” Other Latin writers continued to portray the Ethiopians as “the most hideous of men” and their country as "a land of fearful monsters.” Similar images survived into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The British travelers James Bruce was so shocked and repulsed by the bloodshed of the civil wars of the late eighteenth century that his overwhelming obsession was “how to escape from this bloody country.” In the latter half of the

Four additional conventional images of Ethiopia have been suggested: the two parallel images as (6) Africa's Switzerland, and as (7) Africa's Tibet by Richard Greenfield as well as (8) an island of Christianity and as (9) a land of continuous famine in need of foreign relief by Hussein Ahmed. Moreover three major scholarly images of Ethiopia are said by Levine to have dominated academic studies of the country: (1) as an outpost of Semitic civilizations; (2) as an ethnographic museum of peoples, and (3) as an underdeveloped country.

Classical Greek writers report practically nothing of positive value about the mythical country they referred to by the name of Ethiopia and about its inhabitants the Ethiopians except that the Ethiopians were dark-skinned people and the most remote of men. In the words of Homer, "the distant Ethiopians, the farthest outposts of mankind, half of whom lived where the sun goes down, and half where he rises"; and that they lived "at the earth's two verges, in sunset lands and lands of the rising sun". Later Herodotus locates them at "the end of the earth", while Aeschylus reports about "a land far off, a nation of blank men … men who lived hard by the fountain of the sun where is the river Aethiops".

Europeans writers of the early Christian times, on their turn, made use of Hellenic assumption and biblical references to the country in order to produce their own image of “far away Ethiopia” meaning all nations “in the metaphorical sense”. The image of remote Ethiopia, however, has persisted well into the nineteenth and twentieth century, where Ethiopia was viewed as being remote from understanding, “unknown ... if not unknowable”, and “a country of which it is impossible to speak the truth".
communities in the United States and the West Indies. The Bantu independent churches in South Africa that separated themselves from the control of the European Christian missions adopted the name Ethiopia for themselves. For their leadership the name Ethiopia meant that their churches “enjoyed not only the biblical apostolic succession but also a link with an actual independent Christian African monarchy.”

For many African political activists in the colonial era, such as Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Jomo Kenyatta, the image of independent Ethiopia was a powerful symbol and a source of inspiration for the attainment of independence and self-determination for their colonized countries. The image also inspired the emergence of Marcus Garvey’s movement among the Afro-American communities in the United States which aimed at expressing black self-assertion and pride. Similarly, the image motivated the growth of semi-religious cults in the West Indies with the aim of asserting black empowerment, self-assertion and renewed identification with Africa. Some groups adopted the original name of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Sellassie I before his coronation, Ras Tafari, in calling themselves the Rastafarians. Another group of Afro-Americans in the United States, who were motivated by a desire to return to Africa, travelled to Ethiopia in the 1920s with the aim of settling there to “assimilate Ethiopian culture and establish roots”. A final effect of the image of independent Ethiopia manifested itself in the movements of protest against and condemnation of the Italian Fascist invasion and occupation of Ethiopia in 1935-36 launched by many groups of Africans and Afro-Americans in Europe, the United States, the West Indies and nineteenth century the Amhara were described as “object slaves to superstition, possessed by unscrupulous greed and possessing neither amusement nor intellectual resources.” The Ethiopians at large were dismissed as “an uncultivated mass of mingled race ... imbued with the characteristics distinguishing the least civilized beings”; a “nation of primitive tribesmen led by a barbarian.” In the mid 1930s the fascist Italian government launched a propaganda campaign describing Ethiopia as so savage and primitive as well as badly governed so as to justify its 1935-36 invasion and occupation on the pretext of a “civilizing mission.”

Of far reaching significance is the image of Ethiopia as “the bastion of African independence which became widespread in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. To begin with, Ethiopia was the only African country that was created by one dominant group, the Shawa Amhara, imposing their rule over a larger number of other ethnic groups and not by European colonization. In contrast to most of the peoples of Africa, who were subjected to alien conquest and domination, the Ethiopians fought against Turco-Egyptian, Sudanese Mahdists and Italian adversaries ending in the ever-memorable victory over the invading Italian forces at the battle of Adwa, on 1st March 1896. As a consequence they succeeded in securing the survival of their country’s independence and sovereign status, at least for a generation, after the death in 1913 of Emperor Menilek II, under whose leadership the victory at Adwa was accomplished. From then onwards the image of Ethiopia, the independent African country, and “the longest-lived independent Christian kingdom in the world”, began to make its impressive impact on Africans and Afro-American
description, Ethiopia was “a Christian island in an ocean of unbelievers.” However, this notion of Ethiopia as a Christian island reflects an unwarranted inattention to the centuries-long presence of the Muslims and the adherents of traditional religious beliefs in the country.\(^{52}\)

Hussein Ahmed has raised objections to what he regards the “misinterpretation” made by Ullendorff and Trimingham, who asserted that “the role of Islam and Muslims in Ethiopian history and culture was of marginal significance.” Instead, he argues that present-day Ethiopia and even Abyssinia of the northern and central highlands should be regarded as a “multi-religious society”, in view of the long presence of the Muslims and of the followers of traditional religion in the country. He contends that Islam must be recognized as “an integral part of the history of the formation and development of the Ethiopian state and culture.\(^{53}\)

The synonymous stereotype image of Ethiopia as “an isolated Christian kingdom” is best demonstrated in the often quoted words of the eighteenth-century historian Gibbon: “Encompassed on all sides by the enemies of their religion, the Aethiopians slept for a thousand years, forgetful of the world by whom they were forgotten.”\(^{54}\) Gibbon’s exaggerated contention has been challenged as historically unsubstantiated and misleading. It is true that Islam has continued to penetrate in the surrounding regions and into the Ethiopian highlands, but the Ethiopian state and the Christian Orthodox church had survived. The struggle for survival has continued throughout the centuries into modern times and the resultant success in doing so can hardly be associated with centuries of sleep.\(^{55}\)

Many modern observers have been impressed by the picturesque splendour of Ethiopia's mountainous environment and by the country's periodic detachment from the current political developments taking place in the wider outside world giving rise to the parallel images of Ethiopia as Africa's Switzerland as well as Africa's Tibet.\(^{46}\) The relative isolation of the northern and central highland and regions, where the Ethiopian Christian kingdom/state was geographically located, has impressed many observers. The image of Ethiopia as "a Christian island" is expressed in the statement made by Emperor Zar’a Yaqob (v.1434-1468): “Our country Ethiopia [is surrounded by] pagans and Muslims in the east as well as in the west” in the context of his conception of the confined situation of his kingdom in a religious sense.\(^{47}\) Almost the same words were used by Ras Wolde Sellassie, an Ethiopian governor of Tigre Province, in a letter to King George III in 1810, in which he complained that his country was surrounded by pagans, presumably meaning Muslims, on all sides including the sea.\(^{48}\) In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, Emperor Menilek II (r.1889-1913) equally referred to his country as “an island of Christianity surrounded by paganism”, obviously meaning Muslims, in his 1891 circular letter to the heads of the European states.\(^{49}\) European scholars too have invoked a similar notion; Trimingham writes: “...the Christian state in northern Ethiopia was a beleaguered fortress in the midst of a sea of Islam.\(^{50}\) In Enrico Cerulli’s
The Muslim images of Ethiopia and the Ethiopians have played a significant role in determining the relations of the Islamic world with the country. The traditional biographies of the Prophet, The Siira reports on the Prophet’s affection for Bilal Ibn Rabah, a freed Ethiopian slave and the second male convert to Islam after Abu Baker as well as the first mu’azzin (caller for prayer) in Islam, and for his fellow Ethiopian people.56 The early Muslim groups who were subjected to hardships and persecution by the Meccan Quraish leadership were advised by the Prophet to undertake the hijra (religious migration) to Ethiopia (al Habasha), where there was “a king under whom none are persecuted. It is a land of righteousness where God will give you relief from what you are suffering.” The same sources and some Ethiopians Muslims assert that the king, Al Najashi Asham, who protected the Prophet Muhammed’s followers who took refuge in his country, had “declared his belief in the Prophet’s mission.” The sources add that on hearing of the Najashi’s death, the Prophet gathered some of his followers and led them in praying for his soul. A well-known saying of the Prophet reads: “Leave Al-Ahbash in peace as long as they do not take the offensive”: hence, the genesis of the exoneration of the Ethiopians from the early jihad wars.57 Several Muslims writers have written complementary treatises on the noble character of the Ethiopians. Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200 or 1208) wrote a work titled “Tanwir al-ghbash fi fadl as-Sudan wa Al-Habash”, i.e. The lightening of Darkness on the Merits of the Blacks and Ethiopians. The Egyptian Al-Suyuti (d. 1505) wrote "Rafc Sha’n al-Hubshan", i.e. The Raising of the status of the Ethiopians, which was later summarized in his Azhar al-Urush fi akhbar al-Hibush (Flowers of the Thrones on the History of the Ethiopians). A similar work is that of Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Baqi Al-Bukkari Al-Makki Al Tiraq al-Manqush fi Mahasin al Hubush (The Coloured Brocade on the Good Qualities of the Ethiopians).58

The last, though not necessarily the least important, conventional image of Ethiopia and the Ethiopians is that to which Harold Marcus referred as “the black man who turned white” in discussing changing European attitudes towards the country and its peoples in the period 1850-1800.59 He demonstrates how the news of the defeat of the invading Italian forces by the Ethiopians at the battle of Adwa on the ever-remembered day of the 1st March 1896 produced almost incomprehensible shock and astonishment among most contemporary Europeans. Italian causalities amounted to nearly 7,000 dead, 1,500 wounded and 3,000 war captives. Five days after the battle the Italians conceded defeat, sued for a cease-fire and the start of peace negotiations. The unbelievable had actually happened. The army of “a civilized European nation” was successfully defeated at the hands of “an African chief and his warriors”.60 Many Europeans were compelled to reconsider their prejudices about the Ethiopians at least as distinct and different people from the rest of black peoples in the world who were considered to be inherently inferior and incapable of such an outstanding undertaking.

In order to present a new appraisal of the Ethiopians some Europeans began a process of “semi-Europeanization” of the Ethiopians by “painting them white”, attributing to them many European qualities and characteristics. Emperor Menilek II, previously dismissed as a “semi-
superior to that of illiterate peoples who adhere to traditional religious beliefs.62

The eminent Italian Ethiopianist Carlo Conti Rossini was the first European scholar to bestow the memorable label of “a museum of peoples” on Ethiopia when he wrote in 1929: “... l’Abissinia è un museo di popoli.”63 His major objective was to illustrate the ethnic, linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of the peoples living within the confines of Ethiopia’s borders. Critics of this view have regarded that to see Ethiopia as “a mosaic of distinct” people is to overlook the many features they have had in common, ... and to ignore the numerous relationship they have had with one another.64

The image of Ethiopia as “an underdeveloped countries” is usually presented in the writings of economists and political scientists. Similar to the case of most underdeveloped, politely referred to as developing countries, the assessment is usually made in relation to the standards in the United States and Western Europe; with the focus centered on the urban centers. The countryside is almost totally ignored, though it is where the majority of the inhabitants who are also the agricultural producers actually lived. They were the section of the population who have always been the main victims of the recurrent cycle of epidemic and drought-induced famine.65 Famine condition in 1989 and 1989-90, for example, affected several millions of peoples; the journalist and television reports of which stirred the consciences of peoples and governments all over the world. It was primarily from the United States and Western Europe that relief was sought.66

A different category of images of Ethiopia and the Ethiopians is the scholarly type which resulted from the academic study of Ethiopian society and its culture. An outstanding one of such images is that of Ethiopia as “an outpost of Semitic civilization”, which has as its basic features two main views. Firstly, that the Amhara and the Tigreans of the northern and central highlands are identified as the “true” Ethiopians or the “Abyssinians proper.” Secondly, that the basic elements of their culture are derived from early South Arabian Semitic influences. Two shortcomings of this view have been observed. One of them is that it neglects the significant contribution of the non-Semitic elements in Ethiopians culture. The other is that it contributes to the discredited contention which considers cultures of peoples with written languages and world religions to be
Most of the basic constituents of the self-images that the Christian Semitic-speaking Amhara and Tigreans conceive about themselves and their country and which they project to outsiders are contained, together with a variety of other tradition and narratives, in the Ethiopic national sage the Kebra Nagast, (Glory of Kings), compiled in the early fourteenth century.67 The most significant of these self-images is that they are the “Elect of God, His Chosen People.” This is elaborated and detailed through progressive stages that may be briefly outlined as follows. The legendary link of the Ethiopian monarchs with King Solomon has provided them with blood connections with the House of David and ultimately with Christ. This genealogical link replaced an older tradition which reports that the Aksumite kings were descendants of Noah through Ham and his grandsons Aethiop and Aksmawi. Their royal female ancestor, the Queen of Sheba, Makeda, had adopted Judaism on her visit to Solomon in Jerusalem. Yet, simple conversion to Solomon's faith by itself would still exclude the Ethiopians from the “Covenant with God” and confirms their status as slaves, the descendants of Ham.68

The reversal of the status of the Ethiopians was effected by the clandestine transfer of the Ark of Zion from Jerusalem to Ethiopia by Menilek’s retinue that consisted of the first-born sons of the nobles of Israel and Azariah, the son of the Israeli high priest Zadok. On their return to Ethiopia with the Ark of Zion Makeda abdicates in favour for Menilek, who was crowned King, the first of the line of Solomon’s descendants. In view of being the first born of Solomon’s three sons; the other two were Rehoboam and Adrami, who became kings. But because the other kings proved to have

been wicked and morally corrupt, the king of the Ethiopians became supreme over all other kings, protected and blessed by the possession of the Ark of Zion, “feared by all and fearing no one”. At the last stage it is claimed that as the Jews rejected the divine mission of Christ and the Ethiopians accepted it and readily converted to Orthodox Christianity, the Ethiopians took over the place of the Jews as the Elect of God, His Chosen People.69

As God’s chosen people the two dominant Ethiopian groups, the Amhara and Tigreans, are claimed to have been divinely selected and entrusted with a national mission to promote and protect the true faith of God. In fulfilling their mission they are empowered by religious and moral obligations, and provided with the justifications to conquer and subject inferior non-Christian alien groups to their domination. Conquered peoples are to be converted to Orthodox Christianity and assimilated culturally while at the same time the Amhara and Tigreans themselves should continue to safeguard and protect their political domination, their ethnic purity and the superiority of their distinctive culture. These, therefore, were the origins of the self-image of the Amhara and Tigreans as superior, and dominant groups.70

An equally significant self-image which the Amhara and Tigreans have of themselves is that of a proud people with an ancient, glorious and prestigious history. Their history is particularly ancient as it is claimed to go back in the far distant past to the tenth century B.C.; hence, the boastful reference to “three thousand years of existence.” It is held to be glorious and prestigious in view of their claim that their first king Menilek I, the founder of their royal dynasty, was the first-born son of king Solomon.71
The unearthing in the Afar country in 1974 of what is believed by some archeologists to be part of the remains of the earliest female ancestor of man, named "Lucy" by foreigners and "Dengenash", i.e. "You are Marvelous" by the Ethiopians, may push the date of the beginnings of Ethiopians history to three and a half million years ago. Viewed in this context Ethiopia may be considered as a possible cradle of mankind.72

The image of Ethiopia as a unitary national state has been conceived by the ruling imperial monarchy and its allies the traditional aristocracy and the ecclesiastical leadership of the Orthodox Church as well as by the military junta of the regimes that followed them. This view is based on the fiction that the peoples of the Ethiopian state "have lived together ... in war and peace ... as citizens of Ethiopia" and "had defended their country against external enemies as Ethiopians". Accordingly, Ethiopia's integrity and unity should be safeguarded at all cost in the face of secessionist movements of self-determination staged by marginalized ethnic groups within the country.73 An opposite image of Ethiopia as an oppressive Shawan Amhara dominated colonial state is held by the leaders and the rank and file of the secessionist movements. In their view, the Shawan Amhara had participated in the 'scramble' for Africa with the European colonial powers and that they conquered peoples that were considered culturally and racially inferior. Moreover, the Shawan Amhara rule in the conquered and incorporated territories exhibited all the main features of European colonialism in Africa.74

Footnotes


26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.


34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., p. 3.

36. Ibid., p. 3-4.

37. Ibid., p. 4-5.

38. Ibid., pp. 6-8.

39. Ibid., pp. 9-10.


64. Levine, Greater Ethiopia, p. 21.
68. Ibid., pp. 98-102.
69. Ibid., pp. 104-406.
70. Ibid., pp. 107-109.
73. Ibid., pp. 163-164.

41. Levine, Greater Ethiopia, p. 11.
42. Idem., Wax & Gold, p. 3.
45. Levine, Greater Ethiopia, pp. 13-14; Marcus, op. cit., p. 4.
51. Connah, op. cit., p. 68.