



**ANCIENT and MEDIEVAL  
ETHIOPIAN HISTORY  
to 1270**

"The study of history  
is the best medicine  
for a sick mind".

LIVY

BY  
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1972**



## PREFACE

Since 1961 when I began teaching Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History at the old University College of Addis Ababa, I have been interested in writing a book on the same subject. As the sources were scattered in different places, I realized that the task was not an easy one. Fortunately the Haile Selassie I University provided me with all facilities so that I was able to visit various places and collect material. For the same purpose, I was released from my teaching assignments for one semester in 1963 and spent the time on research in Northern Ethiopia. The financial and moral support of my University encouraged me to take the matter more seriously and in 1963 I produced the first draft. Hereafter, I continued to work on this manuscript, improving the text and adding more material until 1967.

Another occasion was offered to me to concentrate on this work. In the 1967-68 academic year, I was granted sabbatical leave and the British Council agreed to pay my air fare to London. There I had a chance to consult many printed works and manuscripts in the British Museum. Meanwhile through the energetic efforts of Dr. Abebe Ambachew, then Secretary General of Ethiopia National Commission for UNESCO, I received a fellowship of six months from UNESCO and this helped me to work under better conditions. I am deeply obliged to the above institutions and to Dr. Abebe Ambachew.

### **To those Ethiopians and Foreigners who Contributed to the Ethiopian Studies.**

At the same time I received from Dr. E. A. Birney, then Director of the Imperial Ethiopian Embassy in Bonn and now Head of Cultural Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He did all he could to assist in the success of my work. He deserves many many thanks for his generosity, constructive criticism and wise advice.

Many other friends and colleagues also helped me in one way or another. Particular mention is due to Dr. Abraham Demoz, Ex-Dean of Arts at Haile Selassie I University, and Dr. Merid Woldemariam, Assistant Professor of History in the same institution. The former sought to establish a fellowship during the period of my sabbatical leave and the latter lent me his best advice which I found very useful.

Editing and typing the work involved many people. W/ro Selwynesh Mitnet of the Haile Selassie I University Press helped me in editing part of the manuscript. Mrs. M. White, from Britain edited the second half and typed it. My wife Selamawit and W/ro Mulu Alem Mengistu volunteered to type the draft. I thank all of them very much indeed.

Sergew Heblé Selassie  
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## P R E F A C E

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AE — *Annales d'Éthiopie.*  
 ACISE — *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici.*  
 AION — *Annuario dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli.*  
 AOUN — *Annuario dell'Istituto Universitario di Napoli.*  
 Bi. Or. — *Bibliotheca Orientalis.*  
 BSAC — *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte.*  
 BSGI — *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana.*  
 BSOAS — *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.*  
 CIH — *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum, pars quarta, Inscriptiones Himyariticas et Sabaeas.*  
 CSCO — *Cropus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.*  
 DAE — *Deutsche Aksum-Expedition*  
 EI — *Encyclopaedia of Islam.*  
 FHG — *Fragm. Hist. Graec.*  
 GGM — *Geographi Graeci Minores, ed. C.Mueller.*  
 GCS — *Geschichte der Christlichen Schriftsteller.*  
 JA — *Journal Asiatique.*  
 JEA — *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology.*  
 JES — *Journal of Ethiopian Studies.*  
 JSS — *Journal of Semetic Studies.*  
 JESHO — *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient.*  
 JRAS — *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.*  
 Migne P.G. — *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca.*  
 Migne P.L. — *Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Latina.*  
 OM — *Oriente Moderno.*  
 Patr. Or. — *Patrologia Orientalis.*  
 PICES — *Proceedings of the third International Conference of the Ethiopian Studies.*  
 RE — *Real Encyclopaedie.*  
 ROC — *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien.*  
 RRAL — *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Licei, Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche.*  
 RSO — *Rassegna di Studi Orientali.*  
 RSE — *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici.*  
 ZA — *Zeitschrift fuer Assyriologie.*  
 ZDMG — *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlaendischen Gesellschaft.*

### Transliteration

The transliteration of Ethiopian words still remains problematic. So far few efforts have been made to solve this problem and the result of such efforts has not earned the recognition of a large number of the scholars concerned. I think it would take quite a long time to apply a uniform transliteration.

The transliteration used in this book is based partly on suggestions made by the Ethiopian Languages Department of Haile Sellassie I University and partly results from modification for the purpose of simplicity. I also left those words whose spelling has been already accepted largely as they are, such as Addis Ababa, Meskal etc. Besides lack of diacriticals I did not use the necessary signs on the palantalized consonants. It shall also be noted that the fall of the accent in each word is very important. If the accent falls on the first syllable the second should not necessarily be transliterated. This is mostly happens in the sixth order. For example in the case of Amde Sion there is no need to transliterate the second syllable like this *Amide*, simply because the accent falls on the first syllable. Such cases are many and should be kept in mind.

In general the transliteration applied in this book is as follows:

a) The seven orders:

o = he,    o' = hu,    z = hi,    v = ha,    z = hé,    u = hi,    o' = ho.

b) Letters

he = ሀ ሁ ሂ ሃ ሄ ህ ሆ ሇ ለ

le = ሊ

me = ሜ

se = ሜ ስ ሰ

re = ረ

she = ሸ

qe = ቀ

be = ቤ

te = ተ

che = ቸ

ne = ነ

gne = ኘ

a = አ ሰ ሶ

ke = ከ

we = ወ

ze = ዘ

ze = ዝ

ye = የ

de = ደ

je = ጆ

ge = ገ

te = ጠ

tche = ጠ

pe = ቶ

se = ጸ ሰ ሶ

fe = ፈ

pe = ፕ

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