

Economic and Social Innovation during the Last Years of Emperor Mənilək's Life and the Short Reign of Ləj Iyasu

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The last years of Emperor Mənilək's life, and the brief reign of his grandson and successor Ləj Iyasu, tend to be ignored in the history of Ethiopian modernization. This period was however not insignificant in the story of development. Influenced by the advance of market forces, and by the old Emperor's earlier modernizing agenda, the years 1909-16 represented a continuation of the previous reform era, and witnessed continued modernization.

Introduction

Mənilək's Innovations and their Influence

Modernization in the immediate post- Mənilək period was in its infancy. The old Emperor's reign had however witnessed several important innovations. Earlier developments included the establishment of the Jibuti-Addis Ababa railway; the telephone-telegraph system, a Russian-run hospital, the Bank of Abyssinia; the Mənilək School; and the postal service. Pankhurst (1968).

The Ethiopian Government, by Iyasu's time, also operated a mechanical flour mill, a printing-press, and a munitions factory. Four private industrial enterprises were also in operation: a saw-mill, a grinding-mill, a tannery; and a soap-factory. Montandon (1913: 375-6); Garretson (2000: 148-50).

Ministerial Appointments

Iyasu's reign witnessed several interesting political appointments. The most important was that of Nəgadras Həylä Giyorgis as the country's first Prime Minister. Just as Mənilək had set up Ethiopia's first Cabinet, his grandson appointed its first Prime Minister. A Minute Book for 1915, kindly made available by Wolbert Smidt, reveals that the Ministers reported to Həylä Giyorgis regularly. The importance of this administrative arrangement was emphasized by the chronicler, Gäbrä Əgzi'abh.ər Eləyas. He declares that 'all the government administration' was in Həylä Giyorgis's hands, and that 'all the nobles used to gather around his house to obtain his favour'. He adds: 'As Pharaoh... entrusted Joseph with all his money ... so Iyasu entrusted Həylä Giyorgis with all his money and the government administration'. Mers'é Həzen (2004: 147, 151); Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 323).

Iyasu's reign also witnessed the appointment of two foreign-educated Ministers. (1) Dəgəzmač Abraha Ar'aya, a kinsman of Emperor Yoh.annəs. Abraha, who had studied in Eritrea, and Italy, was appointed Minister of the Interior. He was chosen, according to

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Ethiopian historian Märs'e Ḥazän, 'precisely because he was considered knowledgeable about the ways of modernization', and began, the chronicle says, to run his Ministry on 'modern', i.e. European, lines. His appointment was popular among the capital's foreign community. (Mersé Ḥazen (2004: 106-7); Gebre-Igziabher and Molvaer (1994: 325).

(2) Täsämma Əšäte, who had studied in Germany, was an intellectual, musician and singer, who had learnt to drive, and 'worked his way', according to the Syrian businessman Habib Ydlibi, 'through his wife', who was a Princess. Iyasu, who sometimes lived in Täsämma's house, appointed him as the first Minister of Posts, Telephones and Telegraphs. Täsämma was also put in charge of the capital's very popular thermal baths, which were frequented by Iyasu and his court, and were a lucrative source of Government revenue. Ydlibi (2006:200). Täsämma later imported Ethiopia's first gramophone – which reportedly could sing in several languages! (Mersé Ḥazen (2004: 111-2); Gebre-Igziabher and Molvaer (1994: 322).

Economic & Financial Developments

Extension of the Ġibuti Railway

Innovation in Iyasu's time, as in that of Mənilək, centred largely on Addis Ababa, then little more than two decades old, but rapidly expanding.

The most important technological development of Iyasu's reign, and one which brought one of his grandfather's principal achievements to fruition, was the extension of the railway to Addis Ababa. This extension, was agreed on 6 April 1913 when Iyasu and General Famin, the French vice-president of the railway company, concluded an agreement for the construction of the final stretch of line from the Awaš river to Addis Ababa.

This agreement was also psychologically significant in that it overcame the widespread belief, recorded by the capital's resident pharmacist Dr Mérab, that the Awaš constituted a 'sacred frontier', which no foreigner should ever cross. This was thus, he claims, a happy time for enlightened Ethiopians, who wanted their country to enter the modern world, but a sad one for those mistrusting Western civilization. Mérab (!922: II, 626); Prouty (1986: 340).

Construction of the line made steady progress. Iyasu and his cousin Täfäri Mäkönnən (later Emperor Ḥaylä S'əllase) entrained for Ġibuti in April 1915; and the railway finally reached Addis Ababa on 21 May. Guèbrè Sellassié (1931-2: II, 628). Around this time Iyasu allocated land for the city's railway station. Ydlibi (2006: 247).

Hydro-Electric Power

A no less exciting innovation, in 1911-12, was the harnessing of hydro-electric power from the Aqaqi river, with two 74 horse-power dynamos supplied by a Manchester firm. (F.O., *Diplomatic and Consular Report for 1911-1 on the Trade of Abyssinia*, p. 13).

Banking, and Printed Money

The Bank of Abyssinia developed significantly in the post- Mənilək period. Originally operating in a small hut in Ras Mäkönnən's compound, the bank moved in 1910 to a specially- built stone structure. Designed by an Italian architect Vaudetto, it was constructed by his compatriot Castagna.

The Bank also expanded in the provinces. It had originally begun with two provincial branches (in Harär and Dere Dawa), but three additional ones were opened in 1912: at Däse, Gore, and Dämbidolo. Mérab (1922: II, 124); Pankhurst (1965: VIII, 394-5).

A further innovation, in 1915, was that of bank notes, of 5, 10, 100 and 500 thaler denominations. Such notes were at first accepted only by foreign merchants, who found it inconvenient to rely solely on silver coins, 500 of which weighed 14 kilos. Guèbrè Sellassié (1930-1: II, 596).

Two French banking institutions, the Banque de l'Indochine and the Compagnie de l'Afrique Orientale, likewise established themselves in Addis Ababa in 1915. Bouicoiran, (1918: XI, 201). Contact with Ğibuti also led to the circulation of French currency at Dere Dawä, and along the railway. Mérab (1922: II, 595).

Another development was the Ethiopian postal authority's introduction in January 1912 of money-orders, which were 'much appreciated' by the capital's Ethiopian population. Tristant (1977: 471); Eadie (1924:174-7).

Commercial Consciousness

This period witnessed intensified Ethiopian commercial consciousness. The Bank of Abyssinia's annual report for 1911 states that merchants had stopped burying Maria Theresa thalers. 'Many Abyssinian chiefs' had therefore begun putting their money into commercial concerns – and were 'only too willing to contract with European merchants' for the sale of ivory, coffee, wax, and civet. (F.O., 1294/27541 *Annual Report of the Bank of Abyssinia*, June 1911).

Attempted Reform of State Finances

Soon after assuming power Iyasu became aware, according to Märs'e Həzän, of the need to reform the Ethiopian tax structure. He gave orders, Gäbrä Igzi'abeh.er records, for a review of Government property - the first in Ethiopian history. He instructed the Chief Controller, Aläqa Märäwi Sə'əlu to examine the Palace supply of 'tools and weapons, silver, gold and furniture', and to investigate State revenue and expenditure, and outstanding loans. This study revealed that expenses 'greatly exceeded' income, and that loans were greater than assets. Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 342-3). Other 'mismanagement' was discovered. Mersé Həzən (2004: 124-5).

Faced with this report Iyasu appointed a new Minister of the Pen: S.ähafe Tä'əzaz Afäwärq, who was reportedly well qualified for his job, as he had been a secretary since childhood, and had worked 'faithfully and peacefully' with his predecessor, chronicler S.ähafe Tä'əzaz Gäbrä S'əllase. Aläqa Märäwi was later replaced by Empress T.aytu's former secretary, Ato Wäldä Mäsqäl Tariku, who was assisted by a group of young men, who had studied foreign languages, and accounting. They comprised three Christians, and two Muslims, one an ex- interpreter at the Turkish Legation.

The situation uncovered was so serious that some State offices were sealed. It was found that many loans were ignored, and money and property missing. Iyasu ordered those responsible to be indicted in the *Čəlot* (royal court of justice). Many officials were prosecuted, and some imprisoned. Those implicated included the Finance Minister, Bägərond Yəggäzu. This earned Iyasu 'many enemies', not only because of the investigation, but also because he used it as a pretext to have officials he disliked 'charged, dishonoured and harassed'. Mersé Həzən (2004: 125, 159-60).

Distinction between State Funds and the Monarch's Personal Funds

Iyasu was apparently the first Ethiopian ruler to draw a distinction between state property and the monarch's personal property. After Mənilək's death the latter's widow, Empress T.aytu, asked for a share of her husband's wealth, but Iyasu (who had no liking

for his grandfather's widow), replied: 'The gold and the silver in the Palace are for the government of the people,... it is not the Emperor's or your [private] property'. He nevertheless gave the old lady several thousand *berr*, and 'allowed her to take all the gold and silver jewellery in her store'. Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 348).

Addis Ababa Land Ownership

An important development of this time related to Addis Ababa land tenure. Land in and around the city in Mənilək's day had been allotted at the Emperor's pleasure. With the growth of the town, the erection of stone structures - and uncertainty as to the political future, the nobles pressed for greater security of tenure. Charles. Rey, a British businessman, reports (1927: 183-4) that when Mənilək fell fatally ill 'a number of the big chiefs became nervous', fearing that a future monarch might dispossess them. They therefore persuaded the Regent, Ras Tässäma, to grant them title deeds, 'sealed in due form for their [hitherto] temporary possessions'.

Addis Ababa Urban Growth

This period witnessed the continued expansion of Addis Ababa. Dr Mérab estimated that a hundred stone structures were erected between 1908 and 1913, by which time two hundred were in existence.

Brick-building began around 1907, and four brick factories came into existence in the next few years. One was owned by Castagna, and the others by Greeks. Mérab (1922: II, 130).

Addis Ababa Municipality – and Guards

A notable achievement of Iyasu's reign was the founding by Ḥaylä Giyorgis of an Addis Ababa Municipality. 'Working faithfully and making diligence his guide', Gäbrä Əgzi'abh.er says, he established a municipality 'like that of the European system'. To ensure law and order Ḥaylä Giyorgis appointed municipal night guards. Established in 1914 as an elite force, they came mainly from the north of the country, whence they had earlier been recruited for the Italian invasion of Libya. Having been in the Italian colony of Tripoli, they were known as *Trimbule*. They were armed with Italian Albin rifles, i.e. those used by Italy's Alpine troops. Mersé Ḥazen: (2004: 148-9).

The Trimbule, perhaps because of their subservience to a foreign power, were not highly respected by Iyasu. He is said to have delighted (like Emperor Bäkaffa before him) in riding around at night incognito. When stopped by the Trimbule he allegedly sometimes fired at them. Mersé Ḥazen (1924: 147, 162): Gebre-Igziabher and Molvaer (1994: 323).

The Trimbule, as northerners, were independent of the Šhäwan nobility – but as a European-trained, and -equipped, squad, foreshadowed Ras Täfäri Mäkonnen's army of mercenaries who had served with the British East African forces in World War I.

Municipal Regulations on House-Letting

The growth of the capital led to the enactment of urban regulations. A decree of 14 November 1913 stated that persons letting houses, and breaking their agreements, created trouble for the Government. Landlords and tenants were accordingly ordered to register their transactions at a police station - and anyone violating an agreement could be fined 10 thalers. Eadie (1924:190-1).

Imperial Hotel, and Smaller Private Hotels

The Imperial Hotel, founded by Empress T.aytu in 1907, subsequently underwent important reorganisation. It was re-opened in 1909, when it was taken over by a Greek entrepreneur, M. Bololakos, who further developed it. Mérab (1922, II, 122).

This period also witnessed the establishment of several smaller private Addis Ababa hotels. The first, according to Dr Mérab, was opened in 1909. An increasing number of restaurants, cafés and drinking houses also came into existence at this time. Mérab (1922, II, 122).

Foreign Merchants and Entrepreneurs

Numerous foreign merchants and entrepreneurs, mainly Armenians and Greeks, arrived in the capital in this period. They included an Armenian import-exporter, Sevadjian, and a Greek liquor-dealer, Kallinikos, both of whom came in 1909; a Greek grocer, Kiouisis, and an Armenian ironware dealer, Mesropian, in 1910; two Greek entrepreneurs, Doucas, and Sarris, and an Indian businessman, Abdul Hussein Akbarally, in 1911. Among arrivals in 1912 were an Armenian watchmaker, Antranikian, and a Greek entrepreneur, Panayotato. Foreigners arriving in 1913 included a Greek restaurateur, Costantinides, and baker, Hadjigrigoriou; and two Armenians: a café and billiard-room proprietor, Knadjian, an import-exporter, Israelian, and a Greek businessman, Theodossianes. Arrivals in 1914 included a Greek iron-monger, Dritsonas, and a Greek import-export firm, the Liverato brothers, an Indian importer, Bhagvandas, an Austrian commercial representative, Alfred Abel, and a German actor turned pharmacist, Hakim Zahn. Among those arriving in 1915, the last year of Iyasu's rule, were two Armenian craftsmen, Margossian, an ironsmith, and Kehyayian, a tanner and saddle-maker. That year also witnessed the coming of representatives of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Zervos (1936: 187-204).

Aliens' Registration

This influx of foreigners was followed by changes in their legal status. Frenchmen had been given protected status by the Klobukowski, or Franco-Ethiopian, Treaty of January 1908. Early in the following year, it was agreed that this privilege should apply to all Europeans. (*Semeur*, 528).

Increasing foreign immigration led to the enactment of a further decree on 28 May 1913. It stated that aliens not registered with Consulates were no longer permitted to reside in Addis Ababa, and that unregistered foreigners should register forthwith. Consul-less foreigners wishing to acquire Ethiopian nationality had to present proof of allegiance to the Ethiopian Government. Eadie (1924: 186-8). Many foreigners, Armenians in particular, thus acquired Ethiopian nationality.

Proposed Elimination of Eucalyptus Tree

Difficulties relating to the fast-growing eucalyptus tree, which Mənilək had introduced two decades earlier, came to the fore in this period. Iyasu's Minister of Agriculture issued a decree on 21 March 1913. It stated that the old Emperor had introduced the eucalyptus because the area of the capital was virtually treeless. His intention, according to the edict, was also to introduce other trees, with useful wood and edible fruit. Trial had established that these, among others, included the mulberry that yielded fruit, while its leaves were edible by livestock and could serve in silk production. The decree stated that Iyasu thought that a 'tree with such advantages' should be cultivated. The eucalyptus, by contrast, 'destroyed the soil', 'dried up' the land, 'sucked the wells dry'

and killed other plants. Persons cultivating eucalyptus trees were ordered to eradicate two-thirds of them, and replace them with other trees supplied by the Ministry. Eadie, (1924: 177-81).

Dr Mérab recalls that this decree applied to both Ethiopians and foreigners - only the *Abun* and foreign legations were exempt. Persons disobeying the decree were liable to have their trees pulled up, and confiscated, and could be fined 100 thalers. Within three days the majority of Ethiopians and many foreigners had complied with Government orders, and former eucalyptus fields were reduced to pot-holes. Mérab (1922: II, 129).

Addis Ababa Church-Building

Iyasu continued his grandfather's programme of Addis Ababa church-building, by founding one of the city's larger churches: Mädh.ane 'Aläm church at Qäčäne. It was completed in July 1911. Mérab (1922: II, 129).

This church was entrusted to Iyasu's Father Confessor, Wäldä Giyorgis, whose hostility to foreign brands of Christianity was reminiscent of that of Emperor Yoh.annäs a generation earlier. Wäldä Giyorgis urged his young master to 'eradicate' the Protestant and Catholic faiths. He declared that missionaries claimed to teach the Gospel, but were actually bribing people with gifts of clothes and sugar, and corrupting their character, so that that they would no longer honour their government or love their country. He went so far as to claim that missionary converts were spies, who in the event of invasion would serve as guides for the enemy. Iyasu was reportedly much influenced by Wäldä Giyorgis's teaching, and responded by arresting a number of Mission school students, several of whom were flogged. Mersé H̄azen (2004: 108-9); Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 326).

The great Church of Giyorgis, which Mənilək begun, was also completed at this time. Built by Castagna, it was inaugurated by Iyasu in 1912 on the seventh anniversary of the Battle of 'Adwa. Mersé H̄azen (2004: 108-9); Mérab (1922: II, 129); Montandon (1913: 382).

Asmāra Consulate

Realising the importance of relations with the Italians in Eritrea, Iyasu's government established Ethiopia's first Consulate in Asmāra in the Summer of 1915. The post of Consul was given to a nobleman, Wässāne Zamanel, who spoke French, and was said to understand wireless telegraphy and the sending of telegrams. Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 345).

The consulate had a staff of six, and was supplied with an Ethiopian flag, a royal seal, portraits of Mənilək and Iyasu, a map of the Ethio-Eritrean frontier, and uniforms for two guards (Minute Book: 49-50). Wässāne was reportedly in contact with non-Italian Europeans, who briefed him on Italy's aggressive intentions. Gebre-Igziabher and Molvaer (1994: 345).

Dere Dawa Municipality

Iyasu's Syrian aide Ydlibi was appointed Governor of the railway town of Dere Dawa on 28 February 1915. He established its Municipality, and re-organized its police – providing it with salaries and uniforms. A prison service was also set up, and some new road-building undertaken.

Particularly important was the Dere Dawa customs, which, according to his daughter, May Ydlibi, was her father's 'creation from A. to Z. He designed the buildings, devised the forms and registers, and taught each employee his duty, from that of the Guard up to

that of the Manager'. Ydlibi also engaged two Europeans. 'one as Manager and the other as Chief Clerk responsible for the statistical work'. Ydlibi (2006: 221).

Ydlibi also attempted to reorganize the Harär taxes, and showed, his daughter claims, that its tax revenues, running at 600,000 thalers, should have been 'at least three million'. Ydlibi '2006: 212, 228-9; n.d. 182).

Two Small New Towns

Iyasu founded two small new towns. One was Gəšan in Wällo, where his mother was buried. Mérab (1922: II, 270). The other was Wäyna-Hara, in Adäl, to which he gave his horse-name, T.əna, or T.ənaye. There he reportedly donned Muslim dress, to win the support of the local population. Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 348).

Slave-raiding in Gəmira

In 1912, the last year of Mənilək's reign, Iyasu undertook an expedition to Gəmira, land of the Šanqəlla, or dark-skinned people. This campaign, Ethiopia's last large-scale slave-raid, was reminiscent of his grandfather's expedition to Wälayta (formerly Wälamo) in 1894. Both operations were characterized by extensive seizure of slaves, and had significant demographic implications for Addis Ababa. Mérab (1922: II, 625).

Iyasu's expedition was carried out, Dr Mérab believed, by 5,000 soldiers, whose behaviour shocked educated Ethiopian opinion. Märs'é Hazän observed that Iyasu should 'not be praised' for his action Mersé Həzen (2004: 118), while Gäbrä Əgzi'abh.ər recalls that the prince and his men 'captured those he captured and killed those he killed'- and allowed his followers to kill as they wished, giving 'their lust to kill full reign'. At the end of the fighting, the defeated Gəmira chiefs pleaded to Iyasu that they had never had any intention of refusing to pay their taxes, or resisting his army, but that the latter had 'destroyed them in a surprise attack'.

Iyasu spent three months in Gəmira, after which he assigned the survivors, 1,785 men, women and children, to his followers, whom he instructed to take to Addis Ababa. Many Gəmiras were settled near Iyasu's compound toward the north-east of the capital, in an area named Gəmira, and along the road to Ent.ot.o. There 'they built houses', Gäbrä Əgzi'abh.ər states, 'planted vegetables and trees, and bore children'. Mersé Həzen (2004: 124); Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 335); Mérab (1922: II, 261).

Iyasu took a personal interest in these ex-slaves: 'he chose youths from among them and made them blowers of trumpets of various kinds and beaters of royal drums' – thus developing a royal band. He also employed the old men 'as wood-cutters and gardeners'. Mersé Həzen (2004: 124); Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 337).

Big-Game Hunting

The Ethiopian Government, aware of the depletion of wild animals, issued a decree on 23 August 1913, recalling that big-game hunting had previously been prohibited. Orders were accordingly repeated that anyone hunting should immediately return to their homes. Eadie (1924: 188-90). This decree seems however to have been largely unenforceable.

State Consolidation

Expeditions in Quest of National Integration

Iyasu, like many earlier monarchs, spent much time on expeditions – which took him all over the country. Gäbrä Əgzi'abh.ər states that the prince wished to inspect the entire empire, and all its borders. He accordingly gave orders, on 11 September 1911, for his followers to clear forty metre wide highways in all directions. Seven months later, on 13 April 1912, he rode northwards, with only 200 horsemen, to Däse.

Many of Mənilək's old courtiers followed Iyasu, as they had his grandfather, but he dismissed them, brusquely, saying: 'When I set out with young men... to subdue areas not under effective government, you should not have followed me...'. Arrogantly he added, 'You cannot run as fast as us. You have grown fat. You have become old'. His courtiers accordingly returned to Addis Ababa. Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994, 327). Iyasu's favourite, Täsämma Əšäte nevertheless accompanied his master. Mersé Həzen (2004, 116). Märs'é Hazän (162) confirms this account, declaring that Iyasu mocked Menilek's obese old officials, calling them 'My father's prize sheep or goats'. Sometimes, however, he reportedly disturbed them by saying to them, 'Let your wife come to see me'. This clash between the young ruler and his grandfather's former followers represented a rite of passage between the old era and the new, between the era of the aging Mənilək and that of his young, but still untried, grandson.

Iyasu, according to the chronicle, won considerable acclaim for the speed with which he rushed around the country, on horseback. A *qənə*, or traditional poem, Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 324) declared:

'You do not know whether he [Iyasu] will come by night or by day.
'Take care not to be found idle [when he comes].
'Iyasu... is faster than rain'.

Such expeditions show that Mənilək's grandson, though a child of the 20th century, was likewise in the tradition of his earlier predecessor Tewodros. Both rulers shunned the comfort and luxury of fixed capitals - and were renowned for the rapidity of their marches.

Iyasu, the chronicle states, was generally accompanied by only about 300 men. 'He travelled fast', and 'never warned his soldiers in advance'. Telling only a few of his most loyal officials in secret of his plans, he would mount his horse, T.ena, while 'his chosen soldiers would mount quickly..., with their guns on their shoulders, and be on their way'. Dispensing with the immense number of soldiers and camp-followers traditionally accompanying an Ethiopian army, he had few supply problems. Wherever he went, 'the governors and peasants would provide fodder for the horses and bread for the soldiers, and oxen as meat'. Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 334).

Iyasu's Expeditions, and Addis Ababa Life

Iyasu's frequent departures from the capital had important consequences, particularly when he was accompanied by a significant number of followers. One result, noted by Thesiger on 3 November 1912, was 'a depressing effect on trade'. (F.O., 403/1293/49890, Thesiger to F.O., 2 November 1912). Dr Mérab on the other hand held that the capital at such times was quieter, and free from molestation by the soldiers, who might number at least 10,000, including importuning drunkards. Merab (1922, II, 625).

Another effect of Iyasu's expeditions was that his Ministers were left leaderless, and freer to make their own decisions – or sink into inertia. Mérab (1922: II, 625).

Däse

One of Iyasu's expeditions took him to Däse, where he stayed with his father Ras Mika'el, governor of Wällo, and reportedly 're-organized the government'. Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 332).

Security

Whether because of, or despite, Iyasu's frequent expeditions, Ethiopia on the eve of World War I was widely regarded as militarily stable. A British Foreign Office note of 9 July 1913 argued that the country was 'not likely to break up', and that, if it did, the chiefs would 'unite to resist any aggressor. It added that anyone attempting such aggression, 'would find a very difficult task before them'. (F.O., 1572/31574, F.O. Minute of 9 July 1913).

Proposed European Tour

Ethiopia was by then so poised for modernization that Thesiger felt, in the Summer of 1912, that Iyasu should be invited on an educational tour of Western Europe. Discussing this with Abunä Matewos, he explained that he considered it 'excellent' if the future ruler should 'have some knowledge of Europe' and 'see for himself what civilization could do for a country and understand the new influence which was beginning to play upon his country'.

Thesiger accordingly asked Matewos 'whether he had not thought of suggesting that Iyasu should visit Britain, France and Italy'. The Abun expressed himself 'in favour of the idea', and declared that the Ethiopian Ministers 'might be persuaded' to agree to Iyasu's absence 'for a period of six months'. Elaborating on his personal analysis of the possibility of Ethiopia's modernization, Thesiger continued:

Abyssinia is now at the parting of the ways, the old feudal system is worn out and can never be re-established; new influences are now at work and new desires have been created among the people,...the country must either accept civilization or drop out of existence as an independent Power. Modern ideas are getting a certain hold among the younger generation, but are strongly opposed by the old chiefs of Menelik who would resist all innovations by force if necessary.

...Yasu will have to decide which of the two parties he falls in with, and I would strongly recommend that, before he has taken a decision, he should be induced to accept the chance of seeing what the strength of modern civilization is. He is now of an age to appreciate what he sees, and if his tour through Abyssinia were to be followed by a visit to England, France and Italy I believe the lesson he would learn would have an inestimable effect on the future of Abyssinia.

(F.O., 371/34842, Thesiger to F.O. 26 July 1912).

This proposal was however rejected in London. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Grey, replied, on 13 September, drawing attention to what he termed Iyasu's 'precarious position', and argued that 'the danger that his absence at a critical moment might have... might be held to outweigh the advantages...' (F.O. 371/34842, E. Grey to W. Thesiger, 13 September 1912). The British envoy's initiative thus came to naught, and, as events transpired, sealed Iyasu's fate.

Social Development and Reform

This period witnessed not insignificant developments in education and medicine.

Education

Iyasu gave some encouragement to modern education. On 16 July 1911, he went to his alma mater, the Mənilək School, founded by his grandfather three years earlier, and awarded prizes. The first prize, of 100 thalers, went to Abäbä Yəbsa, son of an Oromo nobleman. (Mérab (1922, II, 127).

A year or so later, on 24 November 1912, the Alliance Française inaugurated a French school. Entrusted to the Frères de Saint Gabriel, it had a French orientation, that balanced the Anglophile bias of the Mənilək School which was run by Coptic Egyptian teachers. Mérab (1922, II, 128).

Printing-Presses, and French-language Newspaper

Printing expanded significantly in this period. In May 1911 Iyasu inaugurated a new printing press, the Imprimerie Ethiopienne, the equipment for which had earlier been imported by the French trader Léon Chefneux. A further printing-press was introduced in 1913 by a French businessman, M. Devages. Zervos (1936: 271).

Ethiopia's first foreign-language newspaper was launched at this time by another Frenchman, Léopold Polart. Published weekly it was entitled *Le Courrier d'Ethiopie*, and printed on Devages's press. Zervos (1936: 270).

The Mənilək Hospital, and Dr Mérab's Pharmacy

Faced with the closure of the old Russian Red Cross hospital in 1906, Iyasu's government in 1910 established a new hospital, the Mənilək II, which was situated on site of the earlier institution. Mérab (1922: II, 131).

That same year, on 1 December, Dr Mérab, a Georgian, founded the capital's first pharmacy - and named it the Pharmacie la Géorgie. Mérab (1922: II, 124).

Smallpox Vaccination

The Ethiopian Government was much concerned by the apparently growing incidence of smallpox. A decree by Nəgadräs Həylä Giyorgis, as Minister of Commerce and Foreign Affairs, was accordingly issued on 11 March 1912. Stating that the disease had 'entered the country', it ordered Addis Ababa inhabitants to go for vaccination, either at the Mənilək Hospital, or by veterinary surgeons at nearby Gulläle. Vaccination, the edict stated, was *gratis*, and took 'no more than five minutes'. Eadie (1924:163-4).

This edict was followed by a second, issued on 9 August 1913. It stated that, though numerous vaccinations had been given, many people had not been treated, and had caught the infection and died. Unvaccinated persons were accordingly instructed to be vaccinated without delay - at a fee of two *piastres* per dose. Eadie : 1924: 180-1).

Jigger-fleas

This period apparently witnessed a northward expansion of jigger-flees. This was reportedly caused by increasing contacts between Šäwa and Boräna - where the insects were earlier prevalent. They were accordingly called Moyale, after the Boräna settlement of that name. Mersé Həzen (2004: 154).

Thermal Baths

A much appreciated innovation in Addis Ababa, a city virtually without piped water, was the establishment in 1911 of thermal baths at Fəlwəha. Personally patronized by Iyasu, they were entrusted to Täsəmma Əšäte, under whom annual receipts rose, according to Dr Mérab, from five or six hundred to 2,000 thalers. Mérab (1922. II, 152); Mersé Həzen (2004, 162).

Increased Coffee-drinking

Improved transport, and increased geographical mobility, led meanwhile to changes in social life. Contact with Muslim traders and others resulted for example, according to Märs'e Hazän, in the Šäwa peasants adopting coffee drinking. This custom had previously been common among Muslims, merchants, *qaləčas*, or witch-doctors, and *nəft.ännöč*, or armed settlers, but now gained popularity among village women, who started drinking associations. More and more people became addicted to coffee. Mersé Həzen (2004: 154).

Legal Developments

Several notable changes in laws affecting economic life took place at this time. Two of the most important related to tithes and inheritance.

Tithes

One of Iyasu's most important reforms sought to overhaul the cumbersome system of tithes instituted by Mənilək. Four officials and a secretary would travel around the country at harvest-time, and inspect the threshing-floors, to determine how many *dawala*, or 100 kilo sacks, a peasant should pay as tax. These officials, who expected to be feasted, consisted of a village headman, a rich landlord, and two elected elders. Until they had decided upon the tax the peasant was forbidden from moving his grain - even if was in danger of damage by the rain or vermin.

This delay had two major problems. One was that peasants often seized the opportunity to tamper with stored harvests - so that inspectors might find that it consisted more of chaff than grain. A second problem was that inspectors often had insufficient time to visit threshing-floors - thus obliging peasants to search out all four officials - who were tempted to over-estimate crop yields- thus causing the peasants much suffering.

Iyasu recognized that the feasting of officials constituted an unjust burden on the peasants, and that their obligation to search out the officials was likewise onerous. He therefore decreed, 'Let the peasant gather his harvest, and declare its amount under oath; tax collectors are not required'. This order reportedly much pleased the people, and led to an increase in taxes - for people feared to break their oath. Mersé Həzen (2004: 114-15).

Inheritance

A second reform related to inheritance. Formerly when persons died childless, their land and houses were forfeited to the Government, and no funeral service was provided.

Iyasu abrogated this situation, and declared: 'Even if childless, let a person bequeath his or her property to a trusted relative, and let the latter provide a funeral service for the dead. The Government should no longer inherit such property'. Mersé Həzen (2004: 115); Gebre-Igziabiher and Molvaer (1994: 328-33).

Summary and Conclusions

The process of modernization initiated by Mənilək - and facilitated by market forces – continued during Iyasu's reign. This witnessed a consolidation of the Cabinet system introduced by Mənilək, as well as the appointment of the first Prime Minister, and the first two foreign-educated Ministers. Economic developments included the extension of the railway to Addis Ababa; and an expansion of the Bank of Abyssinia, with a new headquarters building, three new provincial branches, and the introduction of both paper money and postal orders, as well as the establishment of two French banking institutions, increased commercial consciousness, and the circulation of French currency along the railway line. Iyasu attempted to reorganize State finances, and allegedly for the first time drew a distinction between state funds and those of the monarch.

Addis Ababa, the site as in Mənilək's day of most innovations, continued to expand. Private land ownership was established, as well as a Municipality, with rent control – and municipal guards. Further stone buildings were erected, and the foreign trading community grew. The old T.aytu hotel was reorganized, and several other hotels, restaurants and drinking-houses set up. Registration of aliens was introduced, and many Armenians acquired Ethiopian nationality. An abortive attempt was made to scale down the town's dependence on the eucalyptus tree, and to introduce mulberries. Work on the Giyorgis church was completed, and a new church, that of Qäčäné Mädh.ane 'Aläm, erected.

Outside the capital a Consulate was established in Asmära, and the railway town of Dere Dawa expanded. A Municipality was set up, with a lucrative customs post. The administration of Däse was reportedly improved, and two small new towns, Gəšän in Wällo, and Wäynä-Hara, founded.

Iyasu undertook expeditions to bring the country, and in particular its periphery, under greater control. His absence from the capital enabled the Minister's to work under reduced supervision – but may also have contributed to governmental paralysis.

Iyasu was responsible for the last great Ethiopian slave raid, a bloody expedition to Gəmira. Many slaves were taken to Addis Ababa, where some were enrolled in a Palace band. Legislation was enacted, probably ineffectively, to curtail big-game hunting.

Progress was however achieved in education and health. The old Mənilək School, which Iyasu had attended, continued to turn out graduates – and a new school was operated by the Alliance Française. A new French-run printing-press was inaugurated, and published the country's first foreign-language newspaper. The earlier Russian hospital having closed several years earlier, a new one, named after Mənilək was founded. Vaccination for smallpox was introduced. Addis Ababa acquired popular thermal baths, and its first pharmacy, run by Dr Mérab. This period also witnessed a marked expansion in coffee-drinking – and possibly of jigger-fleas.

Legal reforms included an edict to improve the system of tithes, and substantial changes in the inheritance system to improve the lot of the peasantry.

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