

TEWODROS IN HISTORICAL FICTION

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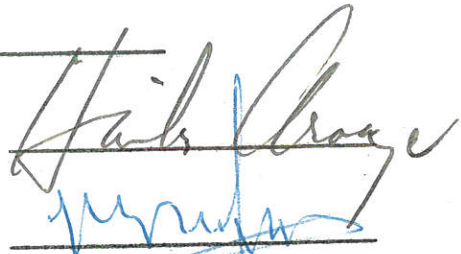
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INTRODUCTION

The chief of Quara, the lion of Meqdalla
Fresh is his story everytime recounted¹

So goes an Ethiopian couplet in showing how much appealing the stories of Emperor Tewodros' exploits are; and truly enough, interest in the Emperor who could inspire awe, affection, and bewilderment at the same time is still throbbing. As is clear from a closer study of Ethiopian historical fiction, next to the Italian invasion and occupation of the country, and in comparison with the other emperors, Tewodros is the most popular historical theme which has inspired Ethiopia's notable writers. Until now six important works having Tewodros as their theme have been produced, and they are:

NOVELS

Amharic:	<u>Author</u>
1. <u>Tayitu Bitul</u>	Mekonnen Endalkachew
2. <u>Yetewodros Enba</u>	Berhanu Zerihun
3. <u>Ande Lennatu</u>	Abbe Gubenna
English:	
• <u>Warrior King</u>	Sahle Sellassie Berhane Mariam

PLAYS

Amharic:	<u>Tewodros</u>	Girmachew Tekle Hawariat
English:	"Tewodros"	Tsegaye Gebre Medhin

"In their days," says Tsegaye Gebre Medhin, "these were widely read and accepted."² Abbe Gubenna, the prolific writer who had been bitterly criticizing Haile Sellassie's regime, prophesied: "In the hearts of the Ethiopian future generation, Tewodros will still sparkle like a jewel."³

In light of this ever-live interest in Tewodros, then, this study has been undertaken with the following two objectives in mind. The first is to critically examine Ethiopian historical fiction (with particular emphasis on the written one) and to establish the symbolic values that Tewodros carries in the portrayals. The second is to determine the literary worth of the **six** fictional works listed earlier.

Eventhough it is novels, plays and folk poetry that are examined in this study, they have all been categorized under "fiction" with the sole aim of differentiating them from actual historiography. Nevertheless, as they have the dual nature of being fictional and historical, so too is the approach taken in this study both literary and historical. On the basis of this, the study has been supplemented by interviews (with Tsegaye, Sahle Sellassie, and Berhanu), by folk poetry (related to Tewodros and compiled from already existing sources), and by an introductory historical sketch of Tewodros.

The interviews, the folk poetry, and the historical sketch have been presented in the form of appendixes at the end of the thesis. In the appended interviews, where the nature of the questions requires the views of all three authors, their answers have been presented following the questions. But where the question is specific to a particular work, only the answer of that work's author is given under it. Except for Berhanu's answers, which were given in Amharic and translated here into English, the questions as well as the answers of the other two authors were all in English. Moreover, as Berhanu and Sahle Sellassie have given their answers in writing, the complete texts have been presented without any edition. But as Tsegaye's was a taped one some edition related to grammar, repetition, and incomplete utterances has been done after the transcription and then this one finally edited by Tsegaye himself.

Finally, the careful reader of this thesis is advised to go through the appendixes, especially the part with Tewodros' historical sketch, before reading the body of the thesis. This is so that he can easily grasp the historical premise on which the analysis of the portrayals is based.

CHAPTER I

THE LITERARY WORTH OF THE FICTIONAL WORKS

The attempt in this chapter is to show through a comparison and contrast of the major fictional works what their literary merits and demerits are. In this respect, the discussion on the plot schemes and the characterizations will try to identify the shortcomings in the handling of these in some of the works. In the part dealing with the characterization, a comparison of the written historical fiction with the oral one will also identify the basic personal traits that both of them attribute to Tewodros in their portrayals.

I. HISTORICAL FICTION OR QUASI HISTORY? Strivings to treat almost every recorded incident in the history of Tewodros stand out as common features in many of the fictional works examined in this study. And this "historicism" in these works leads the fiction reader to wonder whether the intentions of their authors have been to create a literary representation or to present quasi history. Obviously, since their authors claim, in their prefaces, to be artists and not historians, their intentions must have been to produce literary representations of the past age by using history as raw material.⁴ In spite of this claim, however, what we are actually given in most of the works are not literary representations, but sketches of the history of Tewodros and essays refuting the unfavourable criticisms directed against him. With some shades of differences among them, the portrayals in some of the works like Girmachew's Tewodros and Abbe's AndeLennatu constitute such historical sketches which undermine their literary values. These works fail to select the kind of historical conflict whose artistic recreation will unfold the "most essential and most important normative connections of life" in the destinies of the historical personalities and of the traditional society. Discussing the problem of the artist in this regard and pointing out the mission of his art, Georg Lukacs wrote:

Obviously, no literary character can contain the infinite and inexhaustible wealth of features and reactions to be found in life itself. But the nature of artistic creation consists in the ability of this relative, incomplete image to appear like life itself, indeed in a more heightened, intense and alive form than in objective reality.... [The] essential features and all-important laws of life must

appear in a new immediacy as the unique personal features and connections of concrete human beings and concrete situations. To achieve this new immediacy, to re-individualize the general in man and his destiny is the mission of art.⁵

But the said fictional works are prevented from achieving this "new immediacy," this re-individualization of the "general in man and his destiny," by their preoccupation with what was observable on the surface of life, and hence with the naturalistic manner of recreating social developments. In its striving to produce an exact account of Tewodros' political life, for instance, Girmachew's Tewodros goes to the extent of extensively supplementing the portrayal with footnotes which give additional historical information. Commenting on this play's slavish faithfulness to factual details, Thomas Kane says:

[It] makes the usual mistake of attempting to write a drama which is faithful to history rather than employing history as material from which to fashion a drama. It does not depart from the standard history of King Theodore's regime...⁶

As Tsegaye's "Tewdros" is essentially the same in its approach, Kane's criticism equally applies to it also. Unlike in Girmachew's play, however, we find in this one the use of an emotionally charged language and some dream symbolisms. But these still fall short of giving us a poetic insight into the past. The loose interconnection between the events, the absence of a historical logic in their developments, and the abstractness of the characters deny the work wholeness, vitality, and vividness.

In Ande Lennatu, the problem of selecting a typical situation for the material of the story is compounded by the author's attempt to use the work for refuting slanders and other negative criticisms directed against Tewodros. The preface of the work outlines all the unfavourable criticisms and then tries to refute these with counter arguments which are supported by favourable quotations from historical documents and the opinions of people acquainted with Tewodros. The main body of the work is finally used for the elaboration of these counter arguments which are supplemented by occasional fictitious incidents. In the process of arguing and refuting thus, the work strives to treat every event that has been recorded in Rubenson's historical essay on Tewodros and in the chronicle edited by Fusella. In pointing out these defects, Kane again says:

The book has been carefully researched and practically all the known historical facts appear to have been used in composing it, but an

apologetic strain appears throughout the story. Every unfavourable remark made against Theodore by contemporary writers is followed by a fictitious event designed to show that this was not so. Also much time is spent in explaining the historical background of the times.... The author constantly intervenes, explaining and pointing out the presumed motives of the Emperor's actions.⁷

Though the author claims that he didn't have any difficulty in moulding Tewodros' history into fiction, especially in the earlier part of the work, he is not confident enough to assert that the work's literary value will not be undermined by the apparent "historicism." In fact, he even goes to the extent of apologizing for the dry historical narrative which dominates the latter part of his novel.⁸

As in Ande Lennatu, the portrayal in Tayitu Biṭul also falls into a detached historical narrative of the life of Tayitu and Menelik. But unlike the preceding work, the author at least selects one major crisis situation which is based on Tewodros' attempt to force Tayitu into being his concubine. The weakness in the work lies in its failure to stop at the right stage of the conflict's resolution. When we compare this novel with Warrior King, however, we find it more superior in the intensity with which it portrays its central conflict while Warrior King is denied this intensity because of the lack of tension due to its preoccupation with narrating the many historical incidents in the rise of Tewodros.

As has been brought out in the foregoing discussion, the problem with many of the works is their striving after an exact picture, complete in all its details. The numerous factual details with which they are dominated prevent them from producing clearly demarcated representative pictures which can give a sense of immediacy and actuality to Tewodros' age. After all, the value of historical fiction lies in the representative, the symbolic activity of characters, "not in the controlling charm of genuineness, of the /this-did-so-occur/."⁹ If there is any historical work on Tewodros which attains this to some extent, it is Yetewodros Enba. In it there is no attempt to slavishly follow the standard history of Tewodros. Instead, one typical situation, the struggle of the old nobility and the clergy to overthrow Tewodros, has been selected as the focus of the story.

II. PLOT CONSTRUCTION

The attempt to present the life history of Tewodros without any selection of relevant incidents has a negative effect on the construction of the plot of such works as Ande Lennatu, Girmachew's Tewodros, and Tayitu Bitul. Emphasising this need for selection and economy, a noted novelist wrote: "The plot-maker expects us to remember, we expect him to leave no loose ends. Every action or word ought to count; it ought to be economical and spare; even when complicated it should be organic and free from dead matter...."¹⁰ But in the very first chapter of Ande Lennatu, for instance, we are told about the forced marriage and divorce of Hailu and Wolete Tekle, and about the humiliation that Hailu received at the hands of Maru. Though this much of background information is enough to establish the family background of Kassa, the author again devotes more than seven chapters to give us in detail the same background information. These seven chapters are filled with detached accounts of the social environment which we fail to appreciate in relation to young Kassa, and as a result our progress in enjoying the story is retarded. Since the bulk of the novel is filled with such isolated and incoherent accounts, and since the proportion of the treatment of the incidents is not determined by the degree of their relevance to the main story, the work is denied unity.

In Girmachew's Tewodros also, there is a very loose interconnection between the events and a lack of the sense of proportion in their treatment. The play is arbitrarily divided into scenes and acts which fail to show any change in the stages of the development of the situation. Act, one and two, for example, show us only one stage of the conflict: the preparation for war both on Menen's side and on Kassa's side respectively. These could have been presented in one act with two scenes showing each side. But instead these two acts are again divided into five scenes with the nature of their contents yet demanding no such divisions. We also find many other acts which devote a whole scene for presenting either the feeling of a character or his speech alone.

When we also examine Tsegaye's "Tewodros", we find no essential difference in plot construction which could give it the organic unity

that Girmachew's play lacks. Even the addition of the mock scenes showing the militant dancer and the shepherd, and the children mimicing Kassa and Wondirad could not help the play attain this quality. Not only this, these scenes also do not lend any originality to the play, for it still does not depart either from the main structural patterns or the character functions that we find in Girmachew's play.

In this respect, the first similarities we notice between the two plays are the two conferences held to decide the preparation for the coming war. In both plays we see in the conference in Gondar palace the Lord Chancellor sympathizing with Kassa and arguing against Menen and Ali in favour of creating an alliance with him.¹¹ In both plays Menen speaks about Kassa's being deluded by dreams, his lack of knowledge of Ethiopian history, and his prophecy's being only a myth fabricated and spread around by psychopants seeking his favour.¹² Even the tone and content of Menen's orders to Wondirad and Ali's warning to the latter are the same.¹³

In the conference on Kassa's side also, we find the same parallels in the two plays. In each play, the subject of the discussion is not limited to a specific issue - it rambles over Fear, Death, Honour, and the prophecy of Tewodros' rise. News of Wondirad's expedition brought by the messenger, the review of the army by Kassa, and Kassa's persuasion of Tewabech to stay behind are events which are reported in the same order in both plays. In this manner, thus, the two plays continue in their basic similarities throughout the construction of the plot. In spite of this essential parallelism, however, Tsegaye's acknowledgement does not allow us to suspect any borrowings from Girmachew's play. He says:

The author sincerely extends his acknowledgement to H.E. Girmachew Tekle Hawariat for the inspiration [emphasis mine] from his Amharic play on Tewodros, to H.E. Tekle Tsadik Mekuria and various foreign historians upon which this play is based.¹⁴

When we consider the two scenes showing the militant dancer subduing the shepherd, and the children mimicing Kassa's victory over Wondirad, we find that they are not integrated with the main events. They are merely external illustrations of the events and not part and parcel of the events themselves. In the first of these scenes, for example, we find no logical explanation to show its relation to Kassa. Neither does the

messenger help us to understand the scene's symbolic value, for what he says is so contradictory that he only adds to the already existing confusion. When he appears on the stage for the first time, he addresses the audience:

Good evening ladies and gentlemen You don't know who I am, although on your programme I am the messenger The hero is Kassa, or the future Emperor Tewodros II of Ethiopia. You may if you wish call him Kassa Making his wishes clear to others is my job - a new part that I am playing. For when I first knew him I was a cobbler How was I to know that he would soon become Emperor Tewodros the second! And I put aside my cobbler's tools and followed in his shadow! Dejatch Kassa - rising step by step - is to become Emperor! This is how it happened - how it had to happen!¹⁵

The role of the messenger here is mixed up; so is the plane at which he plays his roles. He is an announcer belonging to the audience's actual world and introducing to them who the hero of the play is. Yet, he at the same time tells them that he personally knows the hero and that he is his messenger, and thus places himself directly in the fictitious world. His switching in and out of the fictitious world in this manner makes the beholder abandon the play's make-believe world. Besides, from what stage in Kassa's rise this messenger is reporting is not very clear. He says that Kassa will become Emperor Tewodros II, and he at the same time tells us that he now prefers to be called Kassa instead of Tewodros; thus implying that Kassa is already an Emperor. The messenger therefore is not a link as Tsegaye claims him to be,¹⁶ but a destroyer of the play's illusory world and a source of confusion in the play.

When this messenger reports that "this is how it happened," and this is "how it had to happen," we have difficulty in understanding whether the next scene is meant to show how Kassa rose to power, or how he is predestined to rise to power. The scene, too, is as vague as possible, for the two characters - the militant dancer and the shepherd - do not give us any hint as to what bearing they have either on Kassa's rise or his marriage with Tewabech. In this scene, Kassa could not have been represented by the militant dancer who overwhelms the helpless shepherd, for that would then depict him as an oppressor and not as the initiator of glory and benevolence. On the other hand, he could not have been represented by the shepherd, for this helpless character is shown as

being barbarously murdered by the militant dancer. There is therefore a stage in Kassa's rise which led to his serving as the "Queen's bravest warrior" and to his marriage with Tewabech that has not been so far accounted for. In light of this, the scene symbolizing oppression is a superfluous one, since it is not specifically related to Kassa's destiny. The conclusion that can be drawn from this, therefore, is that the additional scenes do not help the play to be any more compact and structurally unified than Girmachew's is. The plot of this play remains then an imitation of the latter play's, since the slight changes/in the addition of these scenes/ are inconsequential and render it no more organic unity.

The problem of logical interconnection and division of the parts in the construction of the plot is also felt in T̄ayitu Bit̄ul. Besides the lack of unity arising from the presence of a detached historical account of the life of T̄ayitu and Menelik, which departs from the main focus of the story, the novel also suffers from the incoherence produced by the author's use of stage directions in the dialogues of the novel. The author tells us in the preface that he is intending his novel to be used as a basis for staging the story of T̄ayitu and Tewodros in the future. And to facilitate this future staging, he incorporates the stage directions in the dialogues of the novel. But this makes it very difficult for the reader to easily follow the progress of the dialogue. In this novel the presentation of the discourse thus assumes the following form:

T̄ayitu Bit̄ul:

.... She bowed low down.

Tewodros:

T̄ayitu Bit̄ul, come nearer.

T̄ayitu Bit̄ul:

With fear and anxiety, she came a little nearer.

Courtier:

He closed the door and stood outside.

Tewodros:

Dear, since you are the only one among many women who has struck my heart, it is my desire that you be my beloved.

Tayitu Bitul:

Your Majesty! Why do you implore me to commit a sin?
 Please, your Highness, purge yourself of this
 devilish temptation, said she and threw herself to
 the ground, begging him to let her live in peace.¹⁷

As is evident in these quotations, the mixing up of direct and indirect speeches, the intervention of stage directions, and the absence of quotation marks to guide the reader all combine to give the dialogue a certain sense of jerkiness and incoherence. As the same method is extensively used in the novel, it even leads to a confusion of the novel for a play, and that is why Kane mistakenly identifies it with a drama.¹⁸

In the development of plot, the use of flashback is an important means for providing background information that highlights the present. So also is foreshadowing for giving hints that subtly suggest the future turn of events thereby heightening the tension in the work of art. Both devices should serve to attain the smooth forward movement of the story and therefore must be used sparingly and in the right places and with the relevant incidents. The lack of proportion in the use of flashback and the absence of selection in the incidents with which the device deals are probably some of the structural problems that Sahle Sellassie rightly points out about Ande Lennatu.¹⁹

Yetewodros Enba and Warrior King, by contrast, show a more controlled and judicious employment of flashbacks. In Yetewodros Enba we are given the whole story in the form of a flashback. The first chapter of the novel begins with news of the death of Tewodros, and with his chief enemy, Aklilu, now become a monk, deciding to pass down to posterity the story of Tewodros' struggle with the nobility and the clergy. After this chapter, we are then presented with Tewodros' ascent to the throne, his proclamations, and then the hatching of the plot of the nobility and the clergy. The plot gradually unfolds itself and in the course of its development we are given brief flashbacks on Kassa as a youth. This brevity in the flashback and the author's skillful choice of the proper place for its appearance give the story more compactness and a smooth flow.

Warrior King, too, attains the same artistic qualities in its employment of flashbacks. As in Yetewodros Enba, the content of its flashbacks

are well integrated with the events in the rise of Kassa. This is done by first rousing our interest in the hero by a brief account of how Kassa's daring to attack Quara's district governor became the talk of the people there, and how the youth of the area were "hypnotically" drawn to this rebel. Our curiosity in the hero being roused thus, we, like the old peasant's wife, crave to know more about this rebel. The background information on him is then given in the form of a dialogue between the old peasant who tells the story and his curious wife who presses him for more details. Both the reader and the interested wife being ready for it, Kassa's life story upto the time of his rebellion against Menen is thus briefly presented in a closely knit manner without retarding the story's forward movement.

In the employment of foreshadowing as a device for developing plot, the authors of Ande Lennatu and the two plays are not skillful enough. Ande Lennatu's problem in this regard arises from its lack of consistency. At the beginning of Kassa's story, for instance, the author gives us in a flashback background information on how Hailu came to marry Atettegeb and begot this baby son, Kassa, by her. Then the author says:

In this way, Hailu married Atettegeb, who bore him a son, Kassa. Likewise Kassa also came to be one great compensation not only for Hailu, who had suffered at the hands of one overlord, but also for Ethiopia, which had suffered at the hands of many overlords.²⁰

The defect in this foreshadowing, as in many others, is that because we are given it when Kassa is only a baby, it lacks the art of subtlety and a sense of probability. Unless the author forgets that he is presenting his reader with a yet-to-be-known imaginary character and not with the actual Kassa, it is impossible for us to accept such a prediction under the given context. The directness of the disclosure of Kassa's destiny immediately drives us out of the fictitious world, thereby killing our curiosity. The only place where the author overcomes this defect is in the dream in which Tewdros's fall is subtly suggested by the shattering of the raft on which he is clinging to save himself from the storm which eventually swallows him.²¹

Tayitu Bitul also employs dreams to prophesy Tavitu's future. Lamenting over the loss of her husband and her children, Tayitu is seen praying for heavenly solace and soon in her dream an angel visits her in answer to her

prayer. She is told by the angel that her husband and children have become martyrs and that she, Tayitu, will have a great future in Shewa, where she will marry Menelik and that, though without bearing any child, she will live with him and rule the country for forty years.²² The weakness in this prophecy is that, besides being not directly related to the subject matter of the story, it also lacks subtlety as its content is entirely undisguised and too accurate in its factual details.

This same shortcoming is also found in Girmachew's Tewodros. In addressing his army, for example, Kassa says out of context that there will rise a patriot from Tigre who will fight to defend his religion and the nation's independence. The patriot from Tigre is obviously Emperor Yohannes, who was said to be a fanatic Christian and who also fought the Mahdists. In another occasion again, Kassa out of nowhere says that the sons of Sahle Sellassie shall come to power after him and lead the country to progress. By the sons of Sahle Sellassie, he means to refer to Menelik and Haile Sellassie, especially the latter since he also uses the name "Teferi".²³ The crudeness of this prophecy again lies in its lack of probability and disguise, for Tewodros could not have known about Haile Sellassie. Mekonnen and Girmachew have mistakenly tried to use prophecy for foreshadowing and thus failed.

The foreshadowing in Tsegaye's "Tewodros" appears to be inconsistent and spontaneous. As Kassa leaves his poor mother in order to "fight oppression," the messenger foreshadows his destiny by saying: "And he followed the setting sun through the darkness. Will he rise with the glory of the morning?" This piece of artful foreshadowing is further reinforced by what the messenger tells us of his impression of Kassa at Menen's palace: "I felt the great power that was to go beyond being a purgative dealer's son." But the effect of these two foreshadowings is immediately wiped out by the same messenger's undramatic announcement that Kassa is "the future Emperor Tewodros II of Ethiopia."²⁴ The foreshadowing is thus robbed of all due suspense and drama.

Probably because all these authors could not successfully blend the actual historical world with the fictitious world of their works in such a way that the illusion they create has a reality of its own, their foreshadowing and prophecies are too direct, inconsistent, and therefore inartistic. Instead of heightening the suspense of the conflict and the dramatic effect of the events, thereby securing our suspension of the real

world, they jerk us out of the fictional world by their directness.

III. CHARACTERIZATION

Character Delineation. The "historicism" that is apparent in many of the fictional works also influences character delineation negatively. "Inadequate artistic talent inevitably leads to sketchiness in the delineation of characters," says a noted Soviet literary critic.²⁵ As a result of this, many of the characters in the fictional works are abstract representatives of ideas and not really vital individuals. In Tayitu Bitul, for instance, Tewodros is only an incarnation of cruelty, while Tayitu is of nobleness. These two characters are not shown to have any other personal trait which make them ~~real~~ human beings. In the plays of Girmachew and Tsegaye, too, most of the characters are "tedious vehicles of abstract ideas." Because they are mere mouthpieces of their creators, nowhere are their personalities revealed in their action. In fact, they do not even act - they only speak. In Girmachew's play, though the characters speak in verse, what they say is without any poetic imagery and a power of conviction. In Tsegaye's play, too, though their language is full of emotionally charged adjectives, and varnished with poetic words, it is yet devoid of any genuineness or poetic insight. In fact, some of the characters in Tsegaye's play seem to be playing with words, as can be seen in what the messenger and Tewodros say here:

Desperate ones cannot even state with certainty what exactly it is they want out of life; because it is one thing and all things at the same time, being and not being, nothing and everything both in the same breath. (Messenger)

The petty, selfish, lustful chiefs make me do it. They force me to do it. They force me to shed the blood of the very people I would be more than willing to give my life for! May be they too are destined to make progress impossible, both for the people and for themselves; those centuries-old leeches! Those stubborn powerful puppets! And, AND blasphemous monstrous priests! Those interwoven evil webs! those eye-piercing cheap candlelights.²⁶ (Tewodros)

In discussing the problem of abstraction in the expressions of characters, Lukacs observed: "The character must give adequate expression to those thoughts, feelings, experiences, etc, which move precisely him in precisely this situation."²⁷ But what we see in these two plays is characters speaking in the abstract, with most of what they say either unrelated

to the issue at hand or to what the other characters say or even being a repetition of what has already been spoken by another character. Thus in both plays, while the issue at hand is to decide about the coming war with Menen and Ali, we find Kassa and his men philosophizing in the abstract about such matters as Love, Truth, Honour, Death and Providence.²⁸

The attitude of the authors of the two plays towards their hero is that of glorification. In Tsegaye's Tewodros, for instance, Kassa is so much idealized that he is shown to be patriotic even at the age of six. Telling his poor mother about what he felt at the age of six when the dying monk at the convent spoke to him, Kassa says:

He told me of one who shall rise glory descending upon him from the seven Heavens, bidding him plant a cross of unity in the heart of mother Ethiopia. His words fired me with strength and I felt as if I were newly born.²⁹

And to lend to this "budding" patriotism some sense of genuineness, Kassa is shown throughout the play while talking about his dreams, visions, burning desires, etc, to bring about national unity and benevolence. Yet, these fail to convince us of his sincerity because they are only words, words, and words again. His ideals are not shown to be motivated by concrete situations and to develop by degrees - they are given from the start. Neither are they rendered tangible by his actions, for he is not shown to be capable of action. Since he exists only in words, he is without any human flaw or worry - he is a flittering vision, a spirit of unity.

Ande Lennatu, too, does not overcome these defects of characterization. Here, too, Tewodros is a mouthpiece of the author. He is not sufficiently motivated in his actions, especially in his aspiration to bring about national unity. "It is always bad if an author adores his own hero," says Engels to Minna Kautsky.³⁰ And Abbe always adores Tewodros, sometimes even calling him the "hero of heroes." Yet, he nowhere creates the really valiant Tewodros. The only place where the author successfully delineates Kassa is in the description of his young mind. This is revealed in the naivety of Kassa's belief when he as a child of seven watches the raid, by Yimam's men, of the convent school and says to himself:

St. Tekle Haimanot will wipe them out by his miracles before they pass the Church gate How is it that such men could dare to enter the sanctuary? How is it that Holy Tekle Haimanot does not do some-

thing to stop them? Oh, no! Tekle Haimanot will strike them with a thunderbolt before they evacuate from the holy ground!³¹

When we consider Warrior King, we find Tewodros very skillfully delineated in his early youth. As a young student at the convent school, he is successfully shown as a non-conformist and sharply differentiated from the other students who meekly submit to the discipline of the priests. As a young boy we see him defying the discipline of the priests, insulting them, harassing the students who spend their time poring over prayer books. We find him tearing manuscripts, and hunting birds and roaming in the bushes. Yet this individualization is not consistently carried over in the delineation of Kassa as a rebel leader. While playing the role of the nationalist leader, Kassa could be easily substituted by Gebreye or Gelmo without our feeling him missed. Unlike in the preceding works, however, Tewodros is not glorified in Warrior King. In fact, he even defies the attempt to portray him as a "unifier" and stands out better as a "Warrior", as can be inferred from the sweeping and successive military victories that his army scores under his leadership. But even here, his bravery does not come out as clearly as it could have been if the description of the wars he engages in has been more detailed and his role highlighted. To convince us about the valour of Kassa, it is not enough to tell us in one or two statements that Kassa is fighting in the thick of the battle or at the forefront. We need more details that create the really gloomy atmosphere of war, with its taste of blood and sweat, its smell of gunpowder and burning flesh, its sounds of warcries, screams and gun shots, its sights of panic stricken soldiers, bleeding wounds, torn off limbs and heaps of corpse - and, of course, the brave victoriously coming out of all these. Even if battles last only one or two hours, they are never without their suspense, for in them the life of every participant is at stake. For the reader to realize the suspense and to appreciate the real daring of the fighters, the novel should provide him with all the details from which the suspense springs out.

In Tsegaye's play and in Warrior King, the best portrayed character is Menen. In the play, she defiantly comes out as a haughty, aggressive, energetic and sharp-minded character. Her speech and action are characteristic of her masculine disposition. She is unwavering in her determination to wipe out her enemies. She is ruthless in her punishment, since she would readily order Wondirad to hang the corpse of her enemy in public.

She is as bossy and as arrogant as the overlords of her day, as can be seen in the way she bullies her Lord Chancellor: "Enough! Do you dare to contradict me? It is I who must decide what we must do." She is as proud and as aggressive as ever even when she is a captive. This can be seen in her refusal to receive any medical treatment under her captor in spite of her bleeding profusely from the wound, in her preference of dying than living and being humiliated by her enemies, and in her courage to call her captor a "fortune-hunting boy," a "cut-throat," and his wife a "traitress," a "black-sheep," etc.³²

In Warrior King, too, the author skillfully delineates Menen's masculine character with just a few strokes of description:

Woizero Menen was a bulky, elderly woman of fifty. Handsome in features, haughty in spirits, aggressive in talk, she had more of the trait of a man than of a woman; and she was proud of her masculinity. Not on rare occasions did one hear her boast that God had originally intended her to be a man but that for some inexplicable reason he changed his mind at the last moment and deprived her of the male symbol.

When she walked she trod the ground with the self-assurance of a bull with mighty horns; she walked slowly and heavily, with long strides, as if deliberately trying to hurt the very ground on which she stepped.³³

Menen's character has its imprint on her actions too. Her haughtiness is revealed in the way she interrupts the replies of her expelled governor; her bossy attitude in the manner in which she dominates the participants of the conference which is called to decide on the measure to be taken against Kassa. Her crafty character is apparent in how she tries to get rid of Kassa by sending him to fight the Turks ill-equipped, or in how she pitches Goshu against Kassa so as to get rid of both. She is defiant and never bows to others even when her life lay at their mercy, and we observe this in her aggressive attitude when she falls captive in the hands of Kassa. Her aristocratic love for power is boundless, and this manifests itself in her habits and manners which the author artfully depicts here:

Woizero Menen loved power and everything connected with it, including such things as watching people from a raised position. It was for this reason that she so often climbed the upper stairs of Atse Facil castle and sat - sometimes for hours - on the highest balcony of the massive structure, looking down upon the passers-

by. They looked much smaller than their normal size from a distance, like dwarfs in fact, and this magnified her power over them, which gave her a secret joy.³⁴

Eventhough Menen is not as skillfully delineated in Ande Lennatu and in Girmachew's play as she is in Warrior King and in Tsegaye's play, she is still the best drawn of their characters. Of course, Maru also is relatively well delineated in Ande Lennatu, but unlike her, he is too idealized. Menen's manners, thoughts, speeches, and actions are more revealing of her character. She is a rebellious character whose delineation dwarfs even that of Kassa. She is both a type and an individual in many of the fictional works.

Compared with the other works, Yetewodros Enba more successfully creates characters who are both types and individuals. Not only this, it also makes its characters act true to their nature. Tewodros comes out as a real patriot in the harmony of his ideals and his consistent efforts to lessen the hardship of the people as well as in his determination to break the resistance of those opposed to these efforts. Aklilu is a real type, whose scheming activity and propaganda campaign are representative of the opposition of the clergy. Gared also is as much a representative since his feudal mentality and the nature of his opposition are characteristic of the rebellious warlords then. Gebreye's devotion to Tewodros and his military capacity are also typical of the new nobility whose political power rested more on their military role and their loyalty to Tewodros than either on their hereditary right to govern or their tenure of land.

These main characters are not only types, but also really live individuals with sharply distinguishing personal traits. Tewodros is haughty, short-tempered, daring, violent and yet loving and open-minded. Aklilu is crafty, cowardly, revengeful and still persevering and regretful. Gared is crude, ambitious and yet daring and simple-minded. Gebreye is unsuspecting, but brave and honest. Unlike many of the characters in some of the other works, none of these are tedious vehicles of ideas, but real persons, complete with interesting traits of character.³⁵ "Realism, to my mind, implies besides truth of detail, the truthful reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances," says Engels.³⁶ And true to this observation, Berhanu has endowed each of his major characters

with typical actions under typical circumstances, ingrained in their personalities and destinies the essential features and all-important laws of life respectively.

Tewodros' Distinguishing Traits: In Ethiopian oral tradition, the dramatic personality of Tewodros stands out as the focal point of public interest than do his struggle and reforms. Also, as is apparent in the following pieces of folk poems, violence and bravery are marked as the personal features that distinguish Tewodros most.

The husband of Tewabech, the father of Meshesha
He whose brow glows like a burning flame³⁷

You failed to uproot one stem of hot pepper
Let it then inflame you, roast you and finish you³⁸

He and his horse, they were born on the same day
And to all Habeshas, they became their terror³⁹

Tiger of the field, lion of the jungle⁴⁰
Husband of Ethiopia, Kassa the Quararian

His horse is Abba Tatek, his name Tewodros
He is the hurricane scattering the enemy into thin air⁴¹

I have conceived this year
Oh! What may it be?
If I am to ever have a child,
May it then be a hero like you⁴²

In contrast to this focus of folk poetry, however, written fiction, with the exception of Tayitu Bitul, does not make Tewodros' personality its focal point. In it, more prominence is given to his struggle and attempted reforms rather than to his personality. In the personal interview with three of the authors whose works are discussed in this study, for instance, when asked what it was that aroused their interest in him, they all emphasized in their answers his national aspirations and reforms rather than his personality. It may be because of this that most of the chapters of their works have been devoted to portraying Tewodros' political struggles rather than to revealing Tewodros the man. This, however, does not mean that the authors gave no place to Tewodros' personality. In the same interview, for instance, Sahle Sellassie compares Menelik and Tewodros and then says: "Tewodros is more amenable to creative writers because of the dramatic nature of both his actions and his personality."⁴³

In Tayitu Bitul, however, it is the personality of the man rather than his national significance that occupies the major part of the work. Only in the latter part of the novel, where Tewodros is shown committing suicide, is he referred to as a patriot of national significance.

The difference, therefore, in the place of Tewodros' personality between oral fiction and written fiction is that in the former it plays a primary role while in the latter it plays a secondary role. Be it primary or secondary, however, as the personality of Tewodros is given some attention in written fiction, it is still necessary to identify the personal features that are shown as distinguishing him most.

Except for Tsegaye's "Tewodros," all the other fictional works show violence as a typical character of Tewodros. Their difference in this respect lies in their explanation of the nature of this violence. In Ande Lennatu, for instance, Tewodros is shown to resort to brutal acts only because he is forced to act thus by external circumstances and not because he is cruel by nature. In the latter part of the novel, where Tewodros is shown carrying out punitive measures by the mutilation and burning of people, the author explains that this cruelty in Tewodros is a new phenomenon that arose out of grief, deep sorrow, frustration, and the "wickedness" of the people.⁴⁴ The justification for this explanation is pointed out by referring to the fact of Tewodros' lamenting after every act of violence the suffering he has brought on others. This is what is implied in what Tewodros says after one of his punitive expeditions:

The people of my country! Have I not been enthroned with the will of God? Is it not your duty to stay in peace and await the benevolence that I am to bring to you? Why is it that you, with your malice which can drive even the Holy into devilry, force me to deny you the organs which God has bestowed upon you?⁴⁵

In Warrior King, though the violence of Tewodros is not fully revealed, it is nevertheless evident in some of his actions. As a child Kassa knocks together the heads of his convent schoolmates and kills innocent pigeons. As a shifta he kills peaceful traders, but, paradoxically enough, he does not regret this killing while he does so in the case of the pigeons. Kassa argues that the killing of the pigeons is cruelty as it is done for amusement only, while that of the moslem traders is not since it is done for survival, "to start a career somewhere".⁴⁶ He inflicts a painful death upon

Wondirad, who has called him the "son of a Kosso-seller," by forcing him to drink a whole jar of Kosso.⁴⁷ Yet, when Menen scornfully calls him to his face "an ungrateful lowlander and the son of a Kosso-seller," he patiently swallows the insult and prevents Gebreye from physically assaulting her.⁴⁸ As Emperor Tewodros he orders the cold-blooded shooting of eighty highway robbers who have refused to lead a normal life.⁴⁹ And what will he do if the people, incited by the clergy, rebel against him? His secretary tells the bishop: "He will in no time subjugate the people by his sword if you lead them into revolt."⁵⁰ As is evident from this discussion, therefore, we see no attempt in Warrior King to gloss over the violence of Tewodros with all kinds of lame excuses as in Ande Lennatu.

In Yetewodros Enba, Tewodros is portrayed as being short-tempered and wrathful. In the assembly of his new appointees, for instance, Tewodros outlines for them the modernization program he has envisaged and invites them to air their views on it. The new nobility who have already been displeased with the present promotions begin to oppose the program with seemingly naive counter arguments. We see at each counter argument Tewodros trying hard to control his mounting anger:

.... Emperor Tewodros tried to be patient; but to do so must have been an ordeal for him. He softened his tone. Don't they see my dream? I must make them understand, he decided.

.... His face began to redden. But he was at pains to swallow his wrath....

.... The stifled storm in Tewodros erupted His face was ablaze in anger "Enough!" said he in a loud angry voice. The hall became dead silent. Everyone who had criticized the program shrank back in his seat.⁵¹

After thus revealing the violent temperament of Tewodros, the novel then shows us the magnitude of Tewodros' violence by describing to us the details of the massacre of the rebel Gared's men. Gared has fallen in the war. Bell, too, has sacrificed himself while trying to protect Tewodros. The war is already over since Gared's men are fleeing in retreat, but,

.... Supporting Bell's body, Tewodros yelled at his army not to spare any of Gared's men. What happened after this was not fighting but butchery. The heads of people were chopped off like leaves. No one dared to fight back like a man. Many flew in every direction to save their lives while some were on their knees begging for mercy. But none were spared. About five hundred of those who were killed were people who had surrendered.⁵²

Tewodros' violence is here shown to be so intense that once it erupts, it has no regard for human life. But regret is always what follows after every act of cruelty. We see Tewodros, for instance, passively allowing his soldiers to burn the town of Gondar, and watching the spectacle of inflamed people running around in terror during that night of the battle of Gondar. Yet, afterwards, he is seen bitterly crying over the suffering he has caused on others.⁵³ Though he would wrathfully order the massacre of many hundreds to avenge the death of one friend, he would yet coolly ask Aklilu, his most avowed enemy who incited the two rebellions, to leave him alone. Surprised at this calmness, even Aklilu, who has expected the wrath of Tewodros to tear him into pieces, says, "I never thought that you, too, could feel grief, show compassion, and bitterly cry like other men."⁵⁴

In Girmachew's Tewodros also, Tewodros is portrayed as a violent man. Tewodros himself expresses this fact when he says:

In my attempt to unify the country, if I don't get help and cooperation from my people, if they hinder me with evil intentions, I shall then be their bitterest enemy. I shall not show any mercy even if they shed tears of blood.⁵⁵

But as in the other works, this play also shows that Tewodros is not totally heartless, as he is seen to be full of regret after the act. When, for instance, during the confrontation with Napier, Gelmo advises him to revenge themselves upon the white prisoners, Tewodros regretfully replies:

In the past, we have been very brutal to our people. Should we now leave them to the mercy of the revengeful white army by killing their men? No, I say let us leave them in peace for God's wrath has fallen on us. We would rather die without inflicting any more suffering now.⁵⁶

When we examine Tayitu Bitul, however, we find Tewodros portrayed not merely as a violent man, but as an inhuman brute. In the other works so far examined, Tewodros' wrath is mostly earned by criminals, political opponents, or those who have wounded his pride and brought shame on him. None of these works show Tewodros inflicting suffering on others for purely personal satisfaction, without the other party in some way having to blame for it. But in Tayitu Bitul, Tewodros is seen bringing pain and death to innocent victims who have in no way harmed him. In the story of this novel, we see Tewodros drunk with the beauty of Tayitu and trying to force her into satisfying his sexual lust. When she refuses to abandon her husband

and her children, he is maddened by her stubbornness and threatens to give her to the lions. This intimidation failing, he forces her to walk naked in a public gathering, followed by her husband and children. As this again couldn't bend her to his will, he deliberately provokes a quarrel with her husband and falsely accuses him of inciting Tayitu to shame him publicly. Then unable to quell his wrath, he orders the cold-blooded murder of the husband and the children, and their heads are cut off on the spot.

Thus in Tayitu Bitul, Tewodros' cruelty is shown as having no human bounds. Yet, even in this novel too, Tewodros is shown to regret his brutal acts. In a letter his wife writes to Tayitu, she says of him:

.... recalling the innocent people he has cruelly butchered, he wails in the middle of the night He shivers and cries, reproaching God why he has ever been created. In grief he says to himself that his people might now think that he is enjoying the night in sound sleep. But would they know that, as the day brings suffering to them, the night brings to him the pains of a pricking conscience?⁵⁷

In direct contrast to the violence in Tayitu Bitul, Tsegaye's "Tewodros" does not really show him as a violent man. In this play, it is true that Tewodros regretfully speaks of shedding blood, but nowhere do we see him shooting people in cold-blood, or ruthlessly butchering them. In fact, nowhere do we see him inflicting even the slightest pain on others let alone shedding blood. When Menen, for instance, calls him to his face a "traitor", "cut-throat", and an "upstart", the wrath that we see boiling in him in the other works is nowhere here. He is instead as cool as a patient school teacher trying to deliver a sermon to a naughty student. Tsegaye's argument for not showing the violent actions of Tewodros is that this has already been overdone by foreign writers with the aim of tarnishing his reputation and destroying his image. And so he thinks that Ethiopian writers should not focus on this aspect of Tewodros; rather they should reveal his great ideal and compensate him for his good deeds.⁵⁸ With this belief of the author, therefore, though it is reported in the play that Tewodros led his army in wars, and though young Menelik and his own wife blame him for bloodshed in these wars, neither Tewodros' temperament as portrayed here nor any of his actions prove that he could be greatly angered let alone show atrocity. Even in the wars he is said to have engaged in, there is nothing to show that he is in any way more violent than the ordinary soldier. Besides, no one is expected to refrain from shedding

blood in wars, and no one will be considered as violent because of it.

As has been apparent from the foregoing discussion, therefore, except for Tsegaye's play, historical fiction shows violence as the most distinguishing feature of Tewodros' personality. Moreover, in written historical fiction, what makes this violence uniquely different is shown to be its resulting not in happiness and satisfaction for Tewodros, but in pains of grief and sorrow. Also, of all the other personal features that are shown as distinguishing him, it is his violence that has been relatively widely treated in both the oral and written historical fiction.

Next to his violence, the other important personal feature that historical fiction shows to mark Tewodros' personality is his bravery. In every battle fought, Tewodros is reported to be striking left and right in the thick of it, or leading his men right at the forefront. Nowhere is fear reported about him. In most of the battles that he fights, he almost always comes out the victor. That is why Abbe says in his novel's preface: "When all other aspects of Tewodros have been found to be controversial, only his bravery has been undisputed."⁵⁹

Over and above his sweeping military victories, the one act of Tewodros that most of the fictional works have unfailingly shown as being symbolic of his heroism is the dramatic manner of his death. This fact is clearly acknowledged even in Tayitu Bitul, which gives him the role of the villain. At the time of Tewodros' death, the author characterizes him as: "he whom a large army could not stand in his face, the patriot whom no enemy could ever dare to defy."⁶⁰

In many of the fictional works, the violence and bravery of Tewodros are usually portrayed in connection with his strong pride. In the same novel, for instance, Tewodros tells to the foreign prisoners to inform Napier:

I have never bowed to my enemies, for my basic trait is never to kneel before others. I shall never dishonour my country by surrendering myself out of fear. I am my own master, my own life, and my own death.⁶¹

In Ande Lennatu, too, when Bardel tells him that the reply to his letter was given by the foreign minister and not by Napoleon III, Tewodros' pride is wounded and he boastfully says: "Before he feels proud of his

uncle's valor, he should realize that my daring compares not with his, but with his uncle's."⁶² In Tsegaye's "Tewodros" also, the same pride is seen to goad Kassa. We learn from the messenger that it was with pride and revenge that Kassa awaited the arrival of Napier's forces. And later when Napier asks him to surrender himself, Kassa defiantly replies,

If I surrender to him it will be humanly impossible for him to catch, or even touch my arms. Tell him it is fire! It will burn him. He, Kassa, who has made the habit of handling powers like babes in his arms cannot now have others handling his arms for him.⁶³

More or less the same tone of defiance can be felt in the reply of Girmachew's Tewodros also. In Warrior King, too, we sense this same pride driving Kassa to wage wars of vengeance. When Menen sends him a joint of meat by which to heal the wound he has received in the battle with the Turks, he openly declares,

I have long suspected her hatred and contempt towards me, but now I have proved it. I vow to God I shall be revenged upon this woman.⁶⁴

The visionary element in Tewodros is one important feature which sharply contrasts with his violent temperament, and which is shown to mark his personality. It is only in Tayitu Bitul that Tewodros is portrayed without this visionary element. In this novel, Tewodros is not even a God-fearing Emperor let alone a visionary one.

But in Tsegaye's play by contrast, Kassa is not only pious, but also full of visions since his early youth. In explaining why he has to go on fighting the Gondar regime, for instance, he says:

I heard voices calling me "Tewodros! Tewodros!" Me! Tewodros! yes, voices entreating "Rise!" They warned me of the evil intent of the Turkish force. They consoled me with the weaknesses of Ethiopia's dividers: they repeated, "Rise!"⁶⁵

The same theme of **visions** coming to Tewodros is repeated in Girmachew's play also. In Warrior King and Ande Lennatu, the prophecy associated with the name "Tewodros" is strongly believed in by Kassa and later we see him assuming this name in the hope of being the great man of the prophecy. So we hear him say in Ande Lennatu: "I took the throne name of "Tewodros" with the belief that God would be by my side in fulfilling the great task He had chosen me for."⁶⁶ Incidentally, this striving to be the man of the prophecy also reveals the ambitious nature of Tewodros. Besides, there is

also his aspiration to conquer Jerusalem to affirm his ambitiousness, and this is clearly evident in the following piece of folk poem:

No master are you,
 No servant am I,
 If Jerusalem sends you not
 Loads of perfume in tribute.⁶⁷

In Yetewodros Enba, there is a constant reference to the dreams of Tewodros to show the visionary element in him. Watching the inflamed town of Gondar, for instance, Tewodros meditatively reproaches his Creator saying: "Did you not mean me to bring benevolence to my country, to cause her advancement and the rebirth of her glory?"⁶⁸

In historical fiction, thus, Tewodros has been most identified by traits of violence, bravery, pride, ambition, and the visionary element. However, though these are portrayed as the most important distinguishing features, there are still other less emphasized ones characterizing his personality in individual works. There are no works, for instance, which portray Tewodros as acquisitive; instead it is his generosity which is portrayed in Tsegaye's and Sahle Sellassie's works. In Tsegaye's play, for instance, we hear Kassa ordering the distribution among his followers of all the riches that Haile Melekot had hidden for his son Menelik. In Sahle Sellassie's novel also, we see Kassa generously giving money to the midwife and also sending a bigger sum to the old peasant, Mulatu. Except in Tayitu Bitul, nowhere is he characterized as a liar and suspicious man. In all the other works except the two plays, Tewodros is portrayed as a man of action and firm determination.

CHAPTER II

THE SYMBOLIC VALUES OF TEWODROS

It has already been stated that violence and bravery characterize Tewodros in oral literature. These two features were also given symbolic meanings by the people of his time. Thus in the folk poems his violence, on the main, signifies neither tyranny nor naked brutality but "ruthlessness to the enemy." This might have been because his violence was seen by the authors of the poems mostly in relation to his struggle with the nobility and clergy, and also in the light of the suppression of the rebellions incited by these oppressors. Thus we have such poems which show this aspect:

The son of Hailu, Kassa the Quarian
Oh! God forbid his wrath!
Woe! to Dejazmaches and Kings
For none will be spared.⁶⁹

In wisdom, Gondar's clergy have surpassed,
Before Abba Tatek's horse, they flew and vanished.

No shields, no spears under Tewodros
But ploughs and hoes, the cobbler's bags and goods;
Brothers! back to your fields, back to your trades!
Better toil on your fields, better pay your taxes
If you want to keep your dear feet,
If you want to save your hands,
Refuse to pay heed to this,
And they will be chopped off like leaves ⁷⁰
And you will be the stem without branches!

Also since he is often identified with the fire, the tiger and the lion, Tewodros signifies great daring. Not only this, but the manner of his death is also taken as an act of heroism, as is apparent in this piece of poem:

You used to despise the King of Gojam
You used to scorn the King of Tigre
Aye, what a daring! What a courage!
For yourself is the only hero you ever killed! ⁷¹

Unlike in written historical fiction, however, Tewodros does not signify unity, progress, or national independence in oral literature. When we consider written historical fiction, we find his violence mainly signifying the same "ruthlessness to the enemy." As in oral literature, we find the portrayal of his violence being linked with the suppression of rebellions

incited by the clergy and the nobility. Thus, in defending himself against Henry Stern's accusation of shedding blood, Tewodros says, "Is it when undertaken by me that punishing criminals becomes murder?"⁷² In Tsegaye's play also, in defending himself against young Menelik's accusation of killing too many people, he says, "... they make me do it! The petty, selfish, lustful chiefs make me do it."⁷³

Both in Warrior King and Yetewodros Enba also, the violence is not seen in any different light. Warrior King shows the summary execution of the eighty highway robbers in the light of Tewodros' proclamation forbidding lawlessness, and their refusal to abide by it and lead normal life.⁷⁴ In Yetewodros Enba, Tewodros inflicts all that suffering only in his attempt to suppress the two rebellions incited by members of the nobility and the clergy. Berhanu himself says that it was "the greatness of the cause he stood for and the numerousness of the obstacles that hindered its realization" that make Tewodros' violence essentially different from that of the other feudal lords.⁷⁵

Thus in most of the fictional works, the violence of Tewodros does not signify either tyranny, or brutality. In T̄ayitu Bit̄ul, however, even though the last chapter shows this violence directed against rebels, too, the main purpose of its portrayal is to expose the brutality of Tewodros. The concentration in this novel is on showing the arbitrary nature of the violence and its inhuman quality. We see Tewodros victimizing innocent people like T̄ayitu's children and inflicting a painful death by chopping off limbs, throwing people from cliffs, and burning them alive. His tyranny is apparent in what he is made to say often. At one point he says to T̄ayitu: "Listen, dear! Don't you know that I am over and above your husband, the Sacrament, and the Law? Understand that what I say is the Law!"⁷⁶ In contrast to the other works and oral literature, therefore, Tewodros' violence signifies tyranny and brutality in T̄ayitu Bit̄ul.

In the portrayal of Tewodros, what this novel has in common with the other works is the meaning it attaches to Tewodros' death. Even T̄ayitu, who has suffered much at his hands, considers the suicide as a martyrdom when she says:

You the victorious Lion of Judah! I can see that rather than bringing shame to your motherland by surrendering yourself, you

preferred dying by your own hands. The blood that trickles down your mouth proves that you have sacrificed yourself for the honour of your country. Patriot Tewodros, I forgive you. I pray that your soul rest in peace amongst those of martyrs in Heaven.⁷⁷

But this acknowledgement is no more than a lip service, for it is given here only to show the nobleness of Tayitu. The predominantly negative portrayal which puts Tewodros as a murderous tyrant is incompatible with any acceptance of him as a martyr. In Ande Lennatu, Yetewodros Enba, and Girmachew's Tewodros, however, this acceptance is clearly evident even in their dedications in which they indirectly put Tewodros' death as martyrdom.⁷⁸ Abbe, in fact, goes to the extreme when he says while introducing a drawing of Tewodros: "This was what the famous Ethiopian, who was created for his country, lived and sacrificed both his comfort and life for his country, looked like."⁷⁹ Tsegaye also gives us more or less the same impression throughout his play, for in it Tewodros is shown to have no different life other than the "noble national cause" for which he exists. And at about the time he is to shoot himself, Tewodros affirms this same thing when he says to his son: "I have to be away If I don't I shall be betraying mother Ethiopia I shall be betraying Africa!"⁸⁰

In none of the fictional works that portray the death of Tewodros is the act presented as mere suicide, or even as a gesture of personal pride alone. In all, it is portrayed as a self-sacrifice to preserve national honour, and in many, it, coupled with his daring and sweeping military victories, presents Tewodros as a symbol of great heroism.

In contrast to oral literature, written historical fiction identifies Tewodros with unity, independence and progress. This, however, is with some slight differences within itself. For Tsegaye, for instance, more than progress, Tewodros symbolizes unity and independence. In the interview, Tsegaye says that Tewodros fought colonialism, and that "the unity of today is part of Tewodros."⁸¹ Part of this, of course, is a bit exaggerated, since the British did not come to colonize Ethiopia, but only to free their men who were chained by Tewodros. In line with the author's ideals of unity and national independence, however, we find in the play that Kassa's dreams, talks, and thoughts have no other intent than that of realizing Ethiopia's unification and protecting its independence against the threat of Turkish aggression. In Girmachew's play, however, it is the identification of

Tewodros with unity, more than with independence and progress, that is prominently felt. This can be seen in the fact that even his rival, Haile Melekot, praises Tewodros for his high ideal of unifying the country.⁸² The play has only very few references to independence and progress, while its whole emphasis is on the unification ideal.

Similarly, though there are occasional references to defending the country's independence against the Turks, and to modernizing it, it is this ideal of unity that is prominently portrayed in Warrior King. This can be seen easily if one considers the objectives of the rebels in the light of what they are able to achieve:

To pull down the government of Woizero Menen and of Ras Ali, to reunite the dismembered provinces of the country; to re-annex the lost territories on the Sudan border and the Red Sea coast; to rebuild, in short, the Ethiopian Empire that was, and to lead it to fame and glory as in the days of Atse Facil.⁸³

In Ande Lennatu and Yetewodros Enba, too, this ideal of unity stands out high. But again, apart from the same occasional references to the Turkish threat, Tewodros is not portrayed as a symbol of national independence. In contrast to the others and in a degree lesser than unity, however, these two novels portray Tewodros as a symbol of progress. In identifying Tewodros with progress, Ande Lennatu devotes one whole chapter to deal with Tewodros' relations with Plowden and Bell, and also to describe his technological innovations at Gafat.⁸⁴ In Yetewodros Enba, we see in the conservative nature of the counter arguments posed by his appointees that Tewodros is by contrast a far more liberated and progressive man. After all, the main reason why he is so much ruthless in avenging the death of John Bell is because this counsellor has been the "window through which Tewodros peeped into the distant civilized world." The author tells us that through this "window," Tewodros has acquired much enlightenment on the ways of establishing schools, combating diseases, and expanding commerce and industries.⁸⁵

CHAPTER III

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE POLITICAL PORTRAYAL OF TEWODROS

I. HIS IDEALS AND STRUGGLE

The Two Plays. In Tsegaye's play, unity is extremely idealized and Kassa's attempt to attain it is also seen as an act to end oppression. Thus we find Kassa sadly recalling the massacre of his convent school-mates and telling his poor mother of the words of the dying monk:

He told me of one who shall rise, glory descending upon him from the seven heavens, bidding him plant a cross of unity in the heart of Mother Ethiopia the all-embracing motherland which I love no less than I love you, "Emaye" And now I must leave - to wage war against oppression....⁸⁶

The perpetrators of this oppression are said to be people like Empress Menen and Ras Ali, whom Kassa characterizes as "devouring anarchists" and "vampires of the day who divide their country against herself."⁸⁷ But it is to serve precisely these same "vampires" that Kassa goes, for we learn from the messenger of his services under Menen and of his being "knighted" Dejach Kassa - "the Queen's bravest warrior."⁸⁸ The play does not show us Kassa's war against oppression before his elevation as the "Queen's bravest warrior." Nor does Kassa's service under this Queen prove his real opposition to the oppressors. After the marriage scene, we hear from Menen of Kassa's rebellion, and from Ali of his "threat to the throne."⁸⁹ But Kassa declares to us that he has risen to serve the Ethiopia that has "dwindled and shrunk," and that he has no petty ambition to take the throne: "I'll show with the help of God that the fire in me, the angry gulf in me... is greater than petty ambition ...!"⁹⁰ But his wife attests to the contrary when she rhetorically asks him: "Can it not also be true that you married me without love? That my grandmother sacrificed me as an instrument to choke your impatient ambitions?"⁹¹ To prevent his ascendance to the throne Menen sends Wondirad to subdue Kassa and later she herself goes to fight against him. But both are defeated and Kassa thus takes the throne. At this stage the messenger announces: "And now Kassa has become Emperor Tewodros II of Ethiopia. In spite of protests both from abroad and at home, proclamations are sent to the countryside. No longer was slavery allowed - every man was free!"⁹² Just as simple as that! The mere seizure

of the throne and the passing of proclamations make every peasant free, as if by the shaking of a magic wand! This portrayal of Kassa as a "savior" is not convincing, for it lacks verisimilitude.

Moreover, except that Menen and Ali resent his taking away the throne from them, we see no other contradiction between Kassa and them in regard to their national goals. After all, Menen, too, is as much patriotic as he, since she also dreams of unifying the country and rebuilding its ancient glory if only Kassa will not hinder her efforts. Thus she says to Kassa: "That is my Ethiopia! The Ethiopia that my ancestors worked on! But how can I build her with such stumbling blocks like you barring her progress? You are helping her crash, tearing her down, not helping her stand on her feet!"⁹³ So also is her Lord Chancellor, who, too, is shown to be aspiring to defend the country's independence against the Turks and hence struggling for the creation of an alliance with Kassa to strengthen the defence force for this. Thus he too says: "Should we weaken our force by pitting it against that of Kassa's and expose our country to a foreign intruder? Even now the shadows of Turkish troops fall across our border. We need Kassa by our side! We must persuade him back. We must."⁹⁴

In the light of this therefore, as far as the people are concerned, what difference does it make to them whether it is Kassa or Menen or the Lord Chancellor who poses as their "unifier" and "liberator" as long as he or she cannot effect any substantial change in their living conditions? It is in its inability to clearly and correctly answer this question that Tsegaye's "Tewodros" fails as an artistically perceived critical social commentary upon the ideals and struggle of Tewodros.

This failure, however, is not particular to Tsegaye's play alone, for with some degree of differences it is also felt in some of the other works. Girmachew's play being the main source on which Tsegaye's play was based and its portrayal of the main events being in the same light, it also has the same weaknesses. The fact that Tsegaye's Kassa comes from a peasant family and Girmachew's Kassa is linked with the Solomonic dynasty does not make any substantial difference to the people, for in both cases Kassa as an Emperor has a class interest basically opposed to the peasantry's. In these plays, Kassa should have been portrayed in terms of the objective consequences of his actions as the highest representative of the new

nobility and not in terms of his subjective wishes and ideals.

If there is any difference in the political portrayal of the two plays, it is in the attitude taken toward the method of effecting unity. In Tsegaye's play, the violent methods of Tewodros are considered as justified and necessary as can be understood from what Kassa himself often says. One of Kassa's generals also echoes the same thing when he says:

Kassa's cause is not to waste people's lives ..., it is to lay a foundation upon which man's dignity is to be built. Such a foundation demands blood and that is more important than mere death - for any people.⁹⁵

In Girmachew's play, on the other hand, it is held that violence is totally unnecessary, be it directed against the nobility, or the peasantry. This indiscriminating judgement is repeatedly made in the preface, in Wube's criticism, and also as given here in Haile Melekot's criticism of Tewodros:

Tewodros' aspiration to unify the country is a great ideal for which he should be highly acclaimed. But to attain this unity and the good will of the people toward his rule, he needs tact and patience. So far, it is in this regard that Tewodros has blundered, for he has relied solely on a show of force and brutality.⁹⁶

Since Girmachew fails to show us any contradiction between the interests of the new nobility and the old warlords, it is not unnatural for him to oppose the use of force against the latter. To him, the question of conflicting interests is not apparent, for he portrays the struggle in the light of emphasizing good will, love, patience, cooperation, etc.

Ande Lennatu. In contrast to the preceding two works examined, Ande Lennatu has some degree of success in showing us the old nobility's internal life (the degree of their corruption) and their ceaseless struggle for regional power. Its greatest problem in the political portrayal is that of consistency and thorough objectivity.

In portraying the hegemonic interest of the old nobility, for instance, we are shown Dejach Maru marrying and remarrying his niece and daughter to various prominent feudal lords, with the sole aim of one day becoming a king with the help of the allies this political marriage can win for him. He is also reported to be carrying out raids to expand his governorship over the regions of other warlords. At one stage we see how this ambition of his brings him into conflict with Wube and Yimam, two other war-mongers aspiring

like him to create their own petty kingdoms. We see Yimam raiding Maru's territory, burning churches, and plundering the peasantry just like Maru used to do. Maru also wages a retaliatory war on Yimam, in the name of the Christian people, of course, but is eventually defeated and forced to retreat. Hearing news of his relative Kebite's death in the war and of the capture by Yimam's men of his niece's son, Kinfu, however, Maru decides to go back and avenge them, but eventually dies in the war. Yet this death is presented in the portrayal as a sacrifice for the cause of the people. By characterizing it as a martyrdom, the initial economic, political and personal motives that underlay Maru's death are suddenly abandoned.

In the portrayal of Kassa's rise also, we observe the same inconsistency. While he is under the service of Goshu, we are told that Kassa has been displeased with this warlord for not appointing him over some region. Then we see Kassa turning to rebellion, plundering the Shankilla peasants, and with some of his followers, taking control of the areas around Quara. Eventually, he is offered Ali's daughter in marriage; but when Menen orders him to serve as a subordinate to her vassal, he flatly refuses on the grounds that he deserved the full governorship of Quara. This being not granted him, he rebels against his in-laws and begins raiding their region and plundering the peasants living in it.⁹⁷ In spite of this apparent personal ambition of Kassa and his constant harassment and plunder of the peasants, the author makes his hero declare: "I am not the initiator of hardship; I am the cause of its end."⁹⁸

Again, when Kassa's growing power poses a threat to Ali's hegemonic position, the latter mobilizes Wube's and Goshu's forces to crush the former. Wube agrees to participate in the war only in order to show his loyalty, and Goshu because Ali has promised to reward him with Kassa's region. Yet, the author glosses over this economic and political motive when he puts the issue as a question of good will, for he constantly reminds us that it is jealousy that drives Goshu to participate in the war on Kassa.⁹⁹

In spite of the author's constant assertion of Kassa's benevolent motives, what stands out most prominently in his deeds are his striving to rise to power, and his constant harassment and plunder of the peasantry. After his rise to power, too, we see Kassa making proclamations which, on the one hand, promise to abolish poverty, while, on the other hand, sanctioning the status quo and protecting the interest of the feudal lords.¹⁰⁰

The only positive aspects observable in these proclamations are the demands of subordination under one central authority and of the payment of taxes by everyone to this authority. These measures immediately bring him into conflict with the old nobility who used to enjoy their own autonomy and collect their own taxes in the heyday of the warlords. Though these two measures of Tewodros intensify the power struggle between the new and the old nobility and though the weakening of the latter is in the interest of the peasantry, the people yet do not come out in open support for Tewodros. Though their low level of class consciousness is partly to account for this denial of support, the primary reason is their dissatisfaction with Tewodros' failure to alleviate their problems of oppression and exploitation, and in fact later on his worsening these hardships by harassing and plundering them in his punitive expeditions. The condition thus being very ripe for them, the clergy and feudal lords renew their age-old alliance and begin to exploit this dissatisfaction of the peasantry, eventually rallying it behind their rebellions against Tewodros. We thus see Tewodros isolated from both the people and the old nobility, and trying to suppress both of them with equal ruthlessness.

The tragedy of Tewodros here lies in his attempt to break the power of the warlords without yet allying himself with the only powerful force in the society - the peasantry. He fails to understand that the only condition for ensuring the people's support lies in his total break-away from the nobility and complete identification with the peasantry by offering it tangible economic benefits. But Tewodros fails to see this solution and instead we hear him blaming the people:

Whenever the people killed my soldiers and harassed me, I have shown my clemency and refrained from taking any measure of revenge. I have prohibited my soliders from harassing or plundering the peasantry. By severely punishing the offenders in this matter, I have tried to maintain peace and order. From amongst themselves, I have appointed for them chiefs and lords. After all this, why are the people harassing me again? What more do they want me to do?¹⁰¹

Just like Tewodros, the author also fails to see the conflict of interests as the cause underlying the opposition to Tewodros. He attributes it partly to Tewodros' failure to claim on time his descent from the line of Queen Sheba and King Solomon. He thinks that the nobility who worshipped the descendants of Solomon and lived on tracing the family

lineage of their emperors now found it impossible to accept Tewodros as their Emperor.¹⁰² This, of course, is not historically substantiated for, already before the rise of Tewodros, it was a common phenomenon to see a powerful warlord declare himself king by virtue of his sheer military power. The opposition of the old nobility therefore arose out of their desire to protect their old privileges - not defense of the Solomonic line.

The other cause for the opposition, as the author implies in this characterization of Tewodros, is ill-will and misunderstanding on the part of the people:

Emperor Tewodros was a great man who was created without there being the right people to lead, who day and night laboured to see his people become great, civilized, and prosperous. He was one whose noble deeds were abandoned and who, hated by the people, also detested them and finally suffered a terrible fall. But, while this fall was a great relief for Tewodros, it was a big shame for Ethiopia.¹⁰³

Thus in Ande Lennatu, the ideal of unity, and its implications for solving the major problems of the peasantry, its bearing on the power struggle between the old and the new nobility, and the objective factors that brought Tewodros' fall are not consistently and critically appreciated.

Tayitu Bitul. In the portrayal of Tewodros in this novel, the author's intention is not to present Tewodros as a symbol of unity, but, by exposing his violence, to show him as an out-and-out tyrant. The author's attitude towards Tewodros' attempt to centralize the administration is that it created chaos and disharmony in the society and destroyed the 'glorious' ancient administration.¹⁰⁴

The last chapters of this novel are so much filled with hyperbolic glorifications of Menelik and Tayitu that there is no doubt about the author's reactionary, out-and-out royalist outlook. Throughout this novel there isn't even a slight suggestion of the need for reforming the old society, let alone appreciating the political significance of Tewodros' reforms and establishing their socio-historical place. The intention of the author, as is evident in the moral lessons he outlines at the end of the novel, is to glorify the so-called descendants of the Solomonic line, and to preach passive acceptance of their rule.

Warrior King. In contrast to the other works which give little room

to the peasantry, Warrior King turns its attention towards this class and gives some of its members a place in some of the incidents in the story. Since this recognition of the peasantry, however crude it may be, is a healthy sign in a work of art, Warrior King deserves credit for this effort. In the novel we find such characters as Kassa, Mulatu, Gebreye, Gelmo, and the embittered footsoldier drawn from the peasantry and being assigned some role in the events of the story.

Nevertheless, Warrior King has not succeeded in giving a really conscious and active role deserved by members of the class which was then the basic motive force of the society. Mulatu is merely a narrator and a passive observer. Though Gelmo is reported to be the initiator of the nationalist movement and Gebreye one of its prominent leaders, they both play no decisive role in the interest of the peasantry and are only Kassa's puppets. They cannot take any initiative or act independently. Besides, with Kassa's ascent to the throne and the rebels' hold of power, both Gelmo's and Gebreye's class position radically alters and, inevitably, they become members of the new nobility. As for Kassa, in spite of his reported peasant background, his ambitions throughout the novel are focused on holding power. In the portrayal, it is apparent in each major action of his that he isn't the type to link his fate with that of the peasantry. Of the other peasant characters, only the embittered footsoldier is shown to be critical of Kassa's ideal of unity, but even this reservation of his is motivated by frustration, for Kassa fails to give him recognition and raise him up the social ladder. Besides he appears only once in the story and has no influence over the course of events. Hence, the portrayal of these characters is not comprehensive enough for us to readily take them as being fully representative of the peasantry.

As opposed to the other four works already examined, Warrior King also possesses the merit of portraying Tewodros as no more than a nationalist. Here, there is no claim of Tewodros as a liberator of the peasantry. However, the novel fails to consistently portray Tewodros as a disinterested genuine nationalist. In the portrayal of the rise of Kassa, we are told that besides neediness, it is the desire to one day become the great king of the prophecy that drives him into rebellion. Later again we are informed of his consenting to lead the rebellion against the Gondar regime because he wants to secure for himself Quara's governorship, now in the hand of

Menen's vassal. Thus we find a primarily personal motive underlying Kassa's opposition to the regime.

As his rebellion grows in strength and this governorship becomes within his reach, however, Kassa is seen to suddenly assume the role of the unifier. What objective condition motivates him to pursue this goal is not clear. But we hear him say when Menen and Ali promise him the governorship of Quara: "They want me to betray the cause! ... to commit political suicide!"¹⁰⁵ We know that Kassa has still not abandoned his ambition of being the great man of the prophecy. Yet, as if the monk's prophecy that Kassa "shall one day become the greatest ruler that this country has ever produced"¹⁰⁶ is synonymous with a rule by the people, Kassa now disgustingly talks of Menen's intention to marry him to Ali's daughter as a plot to make him rich and a member of the ruling class.¹⁰⁷ The novel here fails to make us somehow aware that Kassa as the greatest ruler of the prophecy is no different from Kassa as a member of the ruling class, whether this comes through political marriage or through military victory over Menen and Ali.

Throughout the novel, this apparent disharmony between the hidden personal motives and the professed national 'cause' constantly crops up and robs Kassa of a unified image. As opposed to his words, his actions show his lust for power. The rebels, for instance, are said to have the aim of overthrowing Menen's regime, reuniting the country, rebuilding the Ethiopian Empire and leading it to the fame and glory it enjoyed in the old days.¹⁰⁸ But the moment Ali gives them Quara and Dembia, we see them losing their initial nationalist vigour. After two years of rule over these regions, when Gelmo hears that Ali and Menen are inciting Goshu against them, he asks Kassa in surprise:

But you have been sending tribute to the government in Gondar for the last two years, and you have shown no disloyalty to the regime in all that time. Why should they provoke you to arms again?¹⁰⁹

And the answer Kassa gives is that because Menen's pride has been wounded she wants to revenge herself on them.

So far in the portrayal, we have been shown the process of attaining unification equated with the process of Kassa's rise to power, and not in terms of its benefit for the people. If there is any critical insight into the hollowness of this unity, it is that which is shown by the foot-

soldier. Disappointed by the incessant battles that he has fought under Kassa without any due reward, this embittered footsoldier asks what all the fighting has been for and gets the stereotyped reply: to attain national unity, to rebuild the Empire's ancient glory. Fed up with these catchwords, the footsoldier remarks:

Words, words, words, and yet more words. For how many years have we heard words repeated again and again? And what have we accomplished? Unity? We are as far from it as when we chased out Menen's governor from Quara.¹¹⁰

This criticism of Tewodros' effort for unity, however, fails to identify the factors that hinder its complete realization, or to suggest how it could best be achieved. Besides, the footsoldier's criticism serves to show only the inconsequential nature of the unity, not its national and historical significance. Thus, in spite of the author's claim that the true unifier of Ethiopia is Tewodros,¹¹¹ his Warrior King does not convincingly show its hero as a genuine unifier.

"If I had any socio-political purpose in writing Warrior King," says Sahle Sellassie, "it was to reveal the falsity of this popular myth (that God divided his people into the hereditary rulers and the ruled) in an indirect manner."¹¹² In so far as this means portraying Tewodros' gradual rise from an obscure peasant background to the position of emperor, then the novel is undoubtedly successful in its refutation of the "popular myth."

Yetewodros Enba. In the political portrayal of this novel, we observe no apparent disharmony between Tewodros' personal motive and his professed national goals. Neither do we see national unity being equated with Tewodros' rise to power. In establishing the setting, the exposition has tried to show how the attainment of unification serves the people's interest. On his ascent to the throne, we hear Tewodros' proclamation: "Farmers, till the soil! Merchants, continue with your trade! Artisans, feel no shame in your trade! Let the rulers administer public life with benevolence. Let the soldiers maintain peace and order."¹¹³ We are told by the author that as a result of Tewodros' concerted national effort, the livelihood of the people has begun to show signs of improvement. Thus he says:

Though the social base of the warring princes who dismantled the country and put up their own petty kingdoms has not been destroyed, it has been weakened. The people have accepted the establishment of

one central rule, and they now have a sense of belonging to one nation. Peace and order have been maintained. After years of despondency and idleness, a new spirit for work is prevailing all over Ethiopia. Now that no overlord can rob him of his produce in the name of taxes and tributes, the farmer feels secure and works on his field with all his heart at it. So also are the merchants and craftsmen in their respective trades

If there is any one who is displeased with this, it is the warlord. No longer can he enjoy arbitrary privileges, for now taxes and tributes have to go directly to the state treasury. It is also the clergyman that is now displeased, for he cannot now parasitically live off the produce of the peasants. The new proclamation has stipulated that those priests who can live on collected taxes should be no more than seven to a church.¹¹⁴

We thus gather from these explanations of the author that Tewodros' ideal of unity also serves the interests of the peasantry by lessening their burdens. We also see in these reforms of Tewodros the interests of the nobility and the clergy being frustrated. The author tells us that because of the establishment of a central government, the warlords cannot now enjoy the privileges they used to enjoy when they had their own petty kingdoms. They cannot now collect taxes, but they are required to pay to the central government. They can no longer judge over the people, for that role is now assumed by Tewodros. The clergy also can no longer live off the produce of the peasants; they are required to toil on the land and pay taxes like other ordinary men.

Thus, since their past privileges are being threatened by Tewodros' reforms of unity and modernization, the old nobility and the clergy begin to resist his rule. Gared, as a representative of the old nobility who craved for the heydays of the Mesafints, is shown while rallying support for his rebellion to overthrow Tewodros' rule. Aklilu, identified as a representative of the clergy, is shown while manipulating the peasantry's feudal prejudices and superstitions so as to turn it against Tewodros. In the alliance of Aklilu and Gared we can see the harmony of interests between the clergy and the old nobility and also how these two groups unite and struggle in the face of a common enemy who dares to defy their interests.

In Yetewodros Enba, therefore, how the breaking of the nobility's hegemony and the attainment of unity can benefit the people is to some extent explained. So also is the antagonism that arises when Tewodros attempts to impose his reforms on the old nobility. Besides this, the novel also points out some of the causes for the fall of Tewodros. According to the

author, the major cause for his fall is the use of violence. Thus we hear the author commenting:

Tewodros has not yet found the basic clue to the realization of his ideal. What is it that makes Ethiopia's unity stay permanently secure? Through sheer military power, Tewodros has been able to fix together the dismantled provinces. But the people of a country cannot be forcefully tied together with a rope as if they were a baggage - their good will is absolutely necessary for their unity. Unless there is friendship between them, even neighbors cannot peacefully live together Besides, it is only the law that has permanence; power and the powerful cannot stay for ever Tewodros himself will one day pass away. His army, too, will be disbanded. And this means that the force that has kept the country united is removed and that there remains only a vacuum.¹¹⁵

The author here is correct in pointing out the absolute necessity of the people's voluntary unity. But he is short of showing us that the disunity arose not because the people wanted it so, but because the warlords preferred it that way so as to exploit the people more intensively. In view of this, the old nobility would naturally resist any power that attempted to deny them these privileges. In this case, unity could be attained only by breaking their resistance with force. Criticism of force from the point of view of the people is justified, while that of force directed against a reactionary, moribund class is historically unjustified. Force after all is the midwife of a new society and we see its historical justification in the following comment of Engels. Analyzing the price that late 19th century Russia had to pay in the process of capitalist development, he says:

The process of replacing some 500,000 large landowners and some eighty million peasants by a new class of bourgeois land proprietors cannot be carried out but under fearful sufferings and convulsions. But history is about the most cruel of all goddesses, and she leads her triumphant car over heaps of corpse, not only in war, but also in peaceful economic development. ... But on the other hand, capitalism opens out new views and new hopes. Look at what it has done and is doing to the West.... There is no great historical evil without a compensating historical progress.¹⁶⁶

The other fact that the author again correctly points out as contributing to the fall of Tewodros is the Emperor's failure to understand the mentality of his people. When Tewodros, for instance, hears about the clergy's propaganda campaign against him and about how this propaganda began to incite the people to rebel against his rule, he feels bewildered and begins to detest the people. Commenting on this attitude of Tewodros, the author says:

Tewodros could not understand that the significance of his great ideals of unity and modernization were beyond the comprehension of the people. It was the words and ideas of the local priest, who spoke their language, felt and accepted their prejudices and superstitions, baptized their babies, prayed over their dead, gave them consolation with the words of God, that appealed to them. It was what he said and did in the name of their churches, their meadows and their parish that made sense to them and that moved them to action.¹¹⁷ But Tewodros could not understand this. He was biased and enraged.

From what has been discussed so far, we can see that the portrayal reveals that Tewodros' lack of the people's support, his violence on them, his failure to understand their ideological bondage to the clergy, and the harassment he received from the constant rebellions of the warlords and the clergy were factors that contributed to his eventual fall. Though all these were undeniably factors that helped bring Tewodros' fall, the portrayal still fails to put these in their proper perspective. The people's support for Tewodros was withdrawn because he failed to make meaningful changes within the feudal setup and because he later on worsened their hardship by his devastating punitive expeditions. But this factor has not been given the necessary elaboration and emphasis, and shown as being basic to Tewodros' fall.

In regard to Tewodros' ideal of modernization, too, the portrayal could not bring out the fact that the objective conditions conducive to their materialization were lacking in the country. In the traditional society of the time there was neither the capital nor the entrepreneurs nor the kind of consumers that were necessary for the development of a market economy. As in the West, there was no well-developed branch of craft production to serve as the base for Tewodros' modernization.¹¹⁸ Failing to grasp this objective requirement for the transformation of the traditional society, the portrayal presents Tewodros' modernization scheme as something attainable given only the understanding, good will and cooperation of all members of the society. That is why it shows us Tewodros trying to persuade his new officials to cooperate with him in his plan to modernize the country and why these members of the nobility are shown to oppose him out of either naivety or ill-will.¹¹⁹

II. TEWODROS AS A TRAGIC HERO

Wherein lay the tragedy of Tewodros: in a primarily personal flaw or in an historical error? To correctly answer this question, we must first

examine the nature of the tragic conflict. Tewodros came at a time when the dismemberment of the country necessitated unification as a condition for the existence of the society as a single political entity. It was then a time when the incessant power struggle among the semi-independent warlords caused many local wars which tended to disintegrate the cohesion of the society and to retard the growth of the productive forces. The warlords' constant plunder and harassment of the peasantry discouraged the increase of production and drove many of its members to the unproductive spheres of life such as banditry and military career. It was therefore a time of political instability for the rulers and insecurity for the peasants, a time when might was right and anarchy the norm of political life.

Hence, when Tewodros appeared on the political scene, the security of his rule as an absolute monarch depended on his success in ending the political instability by effecting a strong centralized government. The maintenance of law and order through the ending of the semi-autonomous warlord rule came out as the immediate task of the central government and its military force. Not only this, putting an end to the stagnation of the economy by a regeneration of production and trade, and the transfusion of a new spirit for work and innovation became important tasks which this central government should achieve if it had to stabilize the society and ensure its own survival. Tewodros spontaneously recognized the need for fulfilling some of these and he thus attempted to put into effect some of his reforms. His aspirations in this respect were therefore in conformity with what was then historically demanded if the society were to advance. Given the life style of the semi-independent warlords, however, the evolution of such a strong central authority was incompatible with their political, economic and social interests. The conflict was thus inherently present in the very objective situation itself, for if Tewodros had to rule over the country as an absolute monarch, he had no choice but to pursue national unity as his objective and so to attempt to subordinate the power of the warlords. Besides, Tewodros' personality itself being of a patriotic disposition, the objective basis for the ideal of unity was also given a subjective reinforcement. This inability of Tewodros to abandon his objective therefore constituted one of the basic conditions necessary for a tragic conflict.¹²⁰

The second condition of the tragic conflict lay in Tewodros' inability to attain his objective successfully. Tewodros and his followers were not

hereditary rulers; they came either from the lower nobility or from the discontented peasantry. Their political power lay mainly in their military might. On the other hand, both their enemies, the nobility and clergy, were economically, politically, and ideologically more powerful than them, and their political experience greater enough to allow them to easily mobilize the peasantry behind them. In the conflict between the two sides therefore, Tewodros' success in achieving his national objective together with his desire to rule as an absolute monarch lay in his ability to isolate his enemies either by winning away the peasantry or attaining their neutrality. But to win the peasantry away from their "patrons" demanded an intensive propaganda campaign and a radical measure that would shake them out of their lethargy and break away their "loyalty" to their old masters. But, since the clergy had a better ideological hold over the peasantry, Tewodros' propaganda wouldn't have been effective in the face of this. Given the class interests of the peasantry and the objective opposition of these with those of the clergy and the nobility, the most radical measure that could rally them behind Tewodros was the alleviation of their hardship through meaningful changes in the existing feudal relationship. This measure would probably have shown them in actual practice that the cause of their slavery lay in their having to produce for and support those who perpetuated their hardship and thus brought them in direct confrontation with their oppressors. But Tewodros didn't do this, and as long as he remained a representative of the feudal class and a protector of its interests, a genuine and lasting alliance with the peasantry was out of the question. It is true that he attempted to nationalize the revenue from the land held by the Church, Yet, apart from weakening the economic base of the clergy, this couldn't alter the condition of the peasantry. As feudal as he was, therefore, Tewodros left intact the economic base of the feudal lords and thereby sanctified the oppression and exploitation of the peasantry. Moreover, his violent treatment of the peasantry made them more amenable to the clergy's propaganda against him and thus his measures left him without winning him any ally from the major classes.

Tewodros was thus forced to fight enemies by far stronger than him and to attempt to carry out the historically progressive task of attaining national unity. But his class limitations which disabled him from winning the

alliance of the peasantry and thus crushing the powerful resistance of the clergy and the nobility, blocked the way for achieving his objective. His contradictory position, i.e., his attempt as a representative of a moribund class to fight alone the interests of sectors of that same class and yet to carry out certain historically progressive tasks thus constituted the tragic conflict. In this conflict the "error" lay not in a primarily personal flaw, but in a historical one. In this context then, his heroism lay in his striving to attain a historically progressive objective, and his tragedy in his having to fail, in spite of it. He was therefore a tragic hero whose position was similar to those of Sickingen and Hutten, the two heroes of the German writer Ferdinand Lassale. Commenting on the efforts of these two knights, who, as representatives of the nobility, tried to liberate the peasantry, Engels says:

I do not in the least dispute your right to depict Sickingen and Hutten as having intended to emancipate the peasants. However, this put you up at once against the tragic contradiction that both of them were placed between the nobles, who were decidedly against this, and the peasants. Here I dare say, lay the tragic collision between the historically necessary postulate and the practical impossibility of putting it into effect.¹²¹

The problem with the portrayals of Tewodros in Abbe's and Tsegaye's works is that they, too, depict their hero as a liberator of the peasants. Not only this, they also fail to see the historical "error" which brought Tewodros' tragic fall. For them the fall came about only because of the opposition of the nobility and the clergy and not because Tewodros' feudal class position disabled him from winning the alliance of the peasants and then crushing this opposition. In the portrayals of Tayitu Bitul, Yetewodros Enba and Girmachew's Tewodros, however, the cause of the tragic fall is attributed to Tewodros' personal flaw: to his violent methods. In both cases therefore, the feudal class position of Tewodros is not seen as being decisive in the tragic fall. To conclude with the words of the Soviet critic Anver Zis, "The nature of tragedy is preconditioned from both a class and a historical angle,"¹²² and that therefore the personal factor was not decisive in the tragedy of Tewodros. His being a tragic hero was determined by class and historical factors.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In the preceding analyses of the portrayals of Tewodros, this study has tried to bring to the light the merits and weaknesses of the fictional works. Accordingly, we have seen that, except for Yetewodros Enba, and Warrior King to some extent, the other fictional works were burdened by a slavish adaptation of the standard history of Tewodros and that this undermines their literary values. This "historicism" imposes incoherence and looseness in the structural organization of the works and denies them the organic unity that a work of art should possess. The numerous factual details make their body amorphous and their image diffuse. Because most of the characters including Tewodros are used as mouthpieces of the authors they are too abstract and over-idealized. Except for Warrior King and Yetewodros Enba again, the rest are unsuccessful in their employment of flashback. The flashbacks in Ande Lennatu are unbalanced in their proportion, repetitive in their content, and unintegrated in their relation to the main story. As a result, they retard the smooth forward movement of the story and distract the attention of the reader. The foreshadowings in most of the works are poor because they are too direct and devoid of any elements of suspense and probability. In Girmachew's Tewodros and in Tayitu Bitul, there is also the error of trying to use prophecy for purposes of foreshadowing.

The major weaknesses in the literary qualities of the works have their root in the low level of the literary heritage. When compared with that in the West, the literary tradition, especially that of employing history as raw material for creative writing, is still at the stage of infancy. Most of the authors are only amateurs and have acquired whatever skills they have mainly through their own individual efforts. The absence of well-established literary journals, publishing houses, and literary societies can indicate some of the unfavourable circumstances under which they embark upon their literary creations. Unlike as in the West, the tradition of literary criticism has not been well-developed and so these authors haven't had the kind of literary "schooling" which could have shown them their shortcomings and helped them develop their skills. As a

result, most of the writers are "unconscious technicians" whose employment of literary devices suffers from spontaneity and inconsistency. In the face of these difficulties then, some of the literary weaknesses of the works are only understandable.

When we examine the portrayal of Tewodros' personality, we find that both written and oral historical fiction show ambition, violence, and great daring as Tewodros' distinguishing personal traits. As different from oral literature, however, written fiction also shows pride and the visionary element as major traits inherent in the personality of Tewodros.

Both written and oral historical fiction portray Tewodros as a symbol of great heroism. Both of them take his violence for "ruthlessness to the enemy," except Tayitu Bitul, which identifies Tewodros with tyranny. In contrast to oral literature the fictional works portray Tewodros mainly as a symbol of unity. Besides this, Tewodros is also a symbol of progress in Ande Lennatu and Yetewodros Enba, and national independence in Tsegaye's "Tewodros".

In spite of the great concern that Ethiopian writers showed for Tewodros' national efforts, their works could not give us a critical appreciation of his ideals. In most of the works the political portrayals could not consistently present the traditional society as being divided into antagonistic classes with irreconcilable interests. As a result we find such works as Ande Lennatu and Tsegaye's "Tewodros" failing to see the essentially exploitative and oppressive class role of Tewodros and presenting him instead as a liberator of the peasantry. Since social advance is not seen as the outcome of the class struggle, most of the portrayals entertain the political belief that social evils like oppression, poverty, and backwardness could be eliminated through reforms made from above, given only the good will and cooperation of all members of the society. Hence, we find such works as Ande Lennatu and Girmachew's Tewodros attributing the conflict between the nobility and Tewodros to the lack of good will, cooperation, tolerance and tact on one or the other side. On the basis of these subjective factors these works attempt to explain the poverty and backwardness of the nation and also the fall of Tewodros. As the focus of all the portrayals has been on the members of the ruling class, the fact of the peasantry's being the basic motive force of the traditional Ethiopian society has not been fully

brought out. As a result of this, none of the works could give an active social role to the representatives of the peasantry and thus successfully refute the traditional belief that history is the work of individuals, especially those from the ruling class. As the objective conditions which made national unity a necessity have not been fully grasped, the ideal of unity has been attributed to a purely subjective factor, to Tewodros' patriotism alone. Due to such weaknesses, therefore, these fictional works have not succeeded in enlightening their readers about the true nature of the political conditions at the time of Tewodros, the magnitude of the problems that confronted him and the historical significance of his national efforts.

The fictional works' failure to portray the political ideals of Tewodros objectively is partly due to the class background of some of the authors and partly due to the absence of the tradition of employing the critical realist method in the comprehension and reflection of social life. Mekonnen Endalkachew belonged to the old landed nobility and it was therefore within his interest to gloss over the class contradictions in the traditional society and to underscore the historical significance of Tewodros' national efforts. The rest of the authors fail mainly because of their defective consciousness which blurs their understanding of the dynamics of social life.

In spite of the thematic and technical weaknesses the fictional works are not without their merits. Except for Tayitu Bitul and Girmachew's Tewodros, which are complete apologies to the ruling classes (traditional and modern), the other works have tried to show their commitments to the fate of the people. However crude this commitment may be, it is still a healthy trend in the development of Ethiopian historical fiction. In spite of its uncritical presentation, Ande Lennatu's portrayal of the life style of the warlords does give us some insight into the degree of corruption of these chiefs. Yetewodros Enba's political portrayal also gives us an insight into the progressive nature of some of Tewodros' ideas, the harmony of interests between the clergy and the nobility, and the forms of the struggle these two oppressors employed in their opposition to Tewodros' efforts. The two plays serve to inspire national patriotism, which, given

the proper channelling, can be used to strengthen the people's solidarity in times of national crisis. In their technical aspects, too, the works do possess some literary potentials. The successful employment of dreams in Ande Lennatu, and Tsegaye's "Tewodros" shows that this is a literary device whose potential can be more fully exploited in future creative writing. Besides its skillful employment of flashbacks Warrior King also has the literary merit of creating such a sharply individualized character as Empress Menen. Yetewodros Enba's excellence over all the other works lies in its judicious selection of one representative situation, its relatively high blend of history and fiction in the process of developing this situation, and in the relative freedom of its characters from being used as mere mouthpieces. Since no nation's literary culture grows out of a vacuum, these works, therefore, serve as stepping stones in the development of Ethiopian literature. Whereas their shortcomings can serve as lessons for future writings, their creative merits help to enrich the nation's literary heritage.

Appendix A
PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH AUTHORS

Question: DID YOU HAVE ANY SOCIAL PURPOSE IN WRITING YOUR WORK ON TEWODROS?
IF YES, WHAT WAS IT?

Berhanu: When a book is written, it is naturally for some political, social, and moral purpose. When I wrote Yetewodros Enba, I had some purposes. One was to expose some of the mistaken views about Tewodros which were presented by some writers in the past. It was to show that Tewodros was a patriot and not a power-hungry shifta. The other was to show how the enemies of benevolence could spread around their poisonous activities, and cause much evil and destruction. The activities of such people have been revealed in the subversive roles that the character Aklilu plays.

Sahle Sellassie: Kassa (Tewodros) was basically a 'son of the people'. He had no claim to royal blood. And yet he ascended the throne, thus brushing aside the Ethiopian popular myth that God divided his people into two: the hereditary rulers who had a monopoly of power, by the grace of God, and the ruled whose lot it was to follow the rulers and to sheepishly submit to them.

If I had any socio-political purpose in writing Warrior King, it was to reveal the falsity of this popular myth, in an indirect manner.

Tsegaye: Plays are written, as other works of art are, with a definite measure of social service. My writing on Tewodros came out from two experiences. One was I saw Dejazmach Girmachew's Tewodros as a student. That was when I was about seventeen. I remember the part where Tewodros felt slightly apologetic when he spoke about his background. He was made to say that he had a background somewhere in the mysterious hierarchy of the Solomonic Dynasty. At my age of seventeen then I was critical about the situation that was then. From what we had been told of the ideal Tewodros, the Tewodros with whose ideal we were brought up in the elementary and high schools, we felt

that this purgative dealer's son was one of us. That was why I felt somewhat cheated when I saw the play, as they were then taking him away from us the angry youth of the time! This was one of the factors that led me to write the play.

The other was that when I came to write the play, I was influenced by a friend, a professor Caplan, a dramatist from the United States who came on the grant of Fulbright to teach drama in the university. He was trying to establish a university students' drama club and also a theatre department which he never managed to. Professor Caplan, being the sort of person that he was, came up to me and said, "I have got to present a play. I can't present one in Amharic and here you are scribbling at plays in Amharic day in and day out. One of my commitments in the grant is that I present a play on Ethiopia, but I am leaving in the next two months without having produced one. Why don't you write one in English?" I wasn't altogether eager about it then because I was working on another play, "Joro Gedif", one of those short one act plays. The next day I tried to look up for some reference notes and so I started writing. While I spoke, Caplan typed, and I think it took us some nine days to finish the play.

The social service aspect of it was that, as had been traditional with the other writers, Tewodros was used as a stick with which to hit back at the decaying royalty then. In his days, when the great part of the world was in the grip of the colonialists, there was this Tewodros who belonged to the poor and who came up to sort of reunite the dismantled Ethiopian nation, who stood against the colonialists, and in a sense, fought imperialism. That was the ideal personality with which we had been brought up. To this extent, I tried to make the play serve such a purpose and the university students seemed to have liked it then.

Question: SO IT WAS ON THE BASIS OF YOUR YOUTHFUL INSPIRATION AND IDENTIFICATION WITH HIM THAT YOU WROTE THE PLAY?

Tsegaye: Yes; and he was a symbol, one whom folklore, elders and other writers talked of as being the better person who came from among the people.

①
Question: WHAT ETHIOPIAN WORK OF HISTORICAL FICTION, IF ANY, INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE YOUR HISTORICAL NOVEL?

Berhanu: Before I wrote Yetewodros Enba, if there were any works of historical fiction that inspired me, they were Dejazmach Girmachew's play Tewodros and Bitwoded Mekonnen's play on Abune Petros. I had come to understand from both plays that it was possible to write historical fiction on the lives of distinguished historical personalities. I don't recall any Ethiopian works of historical fiction before these two.

Sahle Sellassie: No historical fiction of Ethiopian origin inspired me to write Warrior King. What did inspire me positively or negatively was my reading of history in connection with Tewodros. I had to read and study some twenty books on Tewodros before I could construct a clear image of the hero of my novel. mp

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Question: IN GENERAL TERMS, WHAT IS YOUR APPRECIATION OF SUCH WORKS AS ANDE LENNATU, WARRIOR KING, TSEGAYE'S "TEWODROS", GIRMACHEW'S TEWODROS, AND TAYITU BITUL?

Berhanu: Of the works on Tewodros, I admire more Tsegaye Gebre Medhin's "Tewodros". In this work, the character of Tewodros as well as of the other personalities, has been very well portrayed.

Sahle Sellassie: Ande Lennatu is a voluminous book and perhaps the major historical novel to be attempted in Amharic to date. It portrays the Ethiopian society of Tewodros' time with a degree of success. But there are certain technical shortcomings in the novel, such as the handling of flashbacks requiring some way of making the reader aware that it is flashback, or the use of too many characters without assigning them any necessary role, probably with the sole intention of being faithful to history. Generally speaking, it would have been a much better book if it were more streamlined in structure.

Yetewodros Enba. The story is compelling. It also has psychological insight. But the major characters (Aklilu and Gared, and even Tewodros himself) are like images in a broken

mirror. They appear, at the initial stage, to be not fully motivated. The only straight and consistent character, among the major ones, is Gebreye.

Tsegaye's "Tewodros". It has dramatic power. The language is strong. However, it seems that Tsegaye has depended too much on Girmachew Tekle Hawariat's Tewodros as his source material. There are also points that are questionable when seen through the spectrum of historical truth, for instance, calling Tewabech "princess" in spite of her having no royal blood.

Girmachew's Tewodros. A light, enjoyable, historical drama in verse, by our Ethiopian standard only.

Tayitu Bitul. I don't consider this book as a piece of serious work. It was meant only to defame Tewodros; it lacked balance.

Tsegaye: Except for Tayitu Bitul, I think the works you have mentioned and that of mine share common weaknesses, in that we have slightly over-idealized Tewodros' personality. Tewodros lived when China and the rest of Asia, and almost all of Africa were in the grip of the colonialists. When Britain was the Empire in whose territory "the sun never set" and the names of whose kings and queens were the law and god for the colonized world, the fact of a poor purgative dealer's son coming up and saying "no!" to it was tremendously inspiring. It had left a big mark in the conscience of the rest of the colonized world. Of course there were Mzilikazi and also Chaka Zulu, and these did have their share of inspiration. But none of them came on the level of that of Tewodros, who had his own empire and who challenged Britain at the battlefield. So, when we idealized him, it was with this glaring historical fact in mind. Again, Tewodros stood for modernization when he wanted the missionaries to make machinery instead of prayers and made them produce instruments that were parts of a modern culture that did sustain a modern war. Tewodros knew why the British Empire and the others had the upper hand and he, therefore, meant to have these things implemented in the nation's material culture. Hence our ideali-

zation of Tewodros was realistically supported and should be looked at from this aspect as well.

Question: OF THE WORKS THAT I MENTIONED JUST NOW, WHICH ONE DO YOU THINK IS ARTISTICALLY WELL DONE AND WHICH ONE SUFFERS FROM CERTAIN WEAKNESSES?

Tsegaye: Tayitu Bitul is mostly abusive of Tewodros and I don't think it was very well constructed as a creative work either. It has a slight political smearing and wasn't intended to make Tewodros what he was. It was written to spite those who had idealized him, to hit back at the then angry youth and, through him, at those who thought well of him. The rest, as I have said, except for over-idealizing the personality of Tewodros, were much better constructed and would do very well. In their days, these were widely read and accepted. Abebe's in particular was much more read than that of ours, particularly than that of mine which could not have been read as widely for it was written in English.

Question: WHAT ASPECT(S) OF TEWODROS' LIFE AND/OR PERSONALITY AROUSED YOUR INTEREST IN HIM?

Berhanu: What aroused my interest most in Tewodros' life was the manner of his rise and his fall. His rising from a village level opposition, together with his friends, and being able to destabilize the Gondar regime was something that I found very fascinating. Equally fascinating was his vowing that none shall catch his arms and eventually his committing suicide.

Sahle Sellassie: What aroused my interest in Tewodros is his humble family background and his great aspirations in life as well as his determination and will to attain his aspirations.

Tsegaye: I think I have mentioned it already. His background serves as a symbol for the oppressed of the Third World. He had an appreciable personality and a big heart. He never lived above his generals and was a close friend to them. He felt he was one of them and on that basis gave credit to people like Gebreye, Gelmo, and Aleme. This aspect of his having that touch of the masses, his sensitiveness for the oppressed is what I appreciate

the most. But above all, Tewodros was a symbol of independence and set the first small light of hope in Ethiopia and for the rest of the colonized world that was in darkness.

Tewodros had fought Menelik's father and brought Shewa under Gondar; yet he had the humanity to take care of Menelik, to make of him the strong personality that he later was. Menelik had got tremendous inspiration from Tewodros during his stay with him for the great part of his youth. Hence, Menelik's unification of Ethiopia had been in the school of Tewodros. Yet, Menelik also came to sort of play the game which Itege Menen played on Tewodros when she let him go to the Dervishes to fight them alone. This aspect of Menelik robs him of the sympathy which Tewodros won. Still Menelik also has achieved much and it is obvious that he was the founder of modern Ethiopia. Menelik's war against the colonialists at the battle of Adwa shows his achievement. He practically reunited Ethiopia and kept it that way. Because of this, Menelik also has a considerable amount of respect. But when it comes to the actual idealizing of the personality of Tewodros' type, Menelik's isn't one for this. Besides, why one continues to give credit to Tewodros is something rooted in our tradition of sympathizing with the weak. Tewodros was a weak boy, a poor boy, one of us, but also one who succeeded in raising himself up to that level. Menelik was the son of a king and he doesn't easily win our sympathy.

Question: IN YOUR WORK THE VIOLENCE OF TEWODROS APPEARS TO BE GIVEN LITTLE ATTENTION. WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THIS?

Sahle Sellassie: In Warrior King I dealt with Tewodros' life upto the time that he becomes Emperor. There are symptoms of his violence even at this stage, for example, the way Dejach Wondirad meets his death, and the summary execution of bandits soon after Tewodros' coronation. But the real violence of Tewodros appears towards the end of his reign which Warrior King does not deal with.

Tsegaye: I should think that was because others, particularly European travellers and British court writers, have seen to it and have played it up unfairly. They have ~~over~~-exposed the Tewodros who burnt, mutilated, and killed; this, of course, is supported to a certain measure by history. But they tried to expose this aspect in order to kill the Tewodros who was the inspiration of the oppressed. I am aware of the killing but contend that his brutality has been exaggerated. One has to save his image for Africa and I felt I had to do a little of my share in the saving of his image for the oppressed world who really appreciated him. If it comes to burning, to killing, to mutilating, none equals the British Queen of the period. In the scramble for colonies, nations have been exterminated. There were no whites in Australia; a whole continent's aboriginal people have been exterminated there. Tewodros made no such mass destruction. Napoleon, who has burnt, mutilated millions, is still a French national hero, in fact a world hero about whom much praise has been written. Whereas Queen Victoria was a great murderess, the West sees her as an inspiration. Now, Tewodros hardly figures to that level of mutilation. His achievements for us, his ideal for the oppressed world (eventhough he was tribalistically limited) has, in a sense, created the demand for independence. He was one of the earliest Africans who said "no!" to the colonialists and so, if this aspect of his brutality has been over-exaggerated, I would't be surprised. When writing the play, therefore, I felt that much had been done to smear the name of Tewodros and very little to compensate him for his good qualities. We should try to sort of save him for those who correctly appreciated him, and we did appreciate him. We are aware of the cruelty seen in him, of his tribal and religious limitation, but it is nothing when compared with that which Napoleon or Queen Victoria has shown, or with the success he has achieved.

Question: WHEN YOU VIEW THE VIOLENCE OF TEWODROS IN CONTRAST TO THE VIOLENCE OF HIS PREDECESSORS AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES IN ETHIOPIA, DO YOU THINK THERE ISN'T ANYTHING TO MAKE IT UNIQUE, TO MAKE IT WORTH GIVING SOME ATTENTION TO IN YOUR WORK?

Tsegaye: As I said, one should give it attention, one should be fair. But he has been unfairly dealt with by those who saw to it that his name was smeared in order to psychologically undermine Africa's struggle for independence then as now. If you destroyed the symbol then you have managed to destroy the aspiration, the one ideal by which oppressed people fight for their independence. I didn't think that the violence was very important or was the one factor that must be exposed. It wasn't my role to do so. You know that his weaknesses are supported by historical facts; they are there for all to see, but these were not the important aspects of his personality on which to build national consciousness. As I said, Yohannes has achieved a lot for Ethiopia, but one doesn't go around saying and writing that Yohannes helped the British colonizers who came up to destroy Tewodros. We want to save his good qualities because he managed to throw away the neighboring Dervishes, who were inspired by the British to take our land. Yohannes stood firm to keep Ethiopia in one and he sacrificed himself while on such a mission. That is the aspect to write about, but leave the undermining to the enemy. Yes, he tried to force everybody into Christianity and did it so fanatically, but what of it? If we keep on dealing with the weaker aspects of our historical personalities, we shall be left with nothing to build on our cultural heritage, and we would be measuring our heroes by the stick which the colonialists have forced upon our complex.

Question: IN REGARD TO UNIFICATION, MUCH OF THE PRESENT ETHIOPIA TOOK SHAPE UNDER MENELIK II. YET IT WAS TEWODROS AND NOT MENELIK THAT SYMBOLIZES UNITY, AND IT WAS TEWODROS AND NOT MENELIK THAT INSPIRES YOU AS WELL AS MANY OF THE OTHER HISTORICAL FICTION WRITERS. COULD YOU TELL US WHY THIS WAS SO?

Berhanu: Eventhough it was during the reign of Menelik that much of Ethiopia's unification took its present shape, its foundation was laid by Tewodros. By overthrowing Gondar's rule of the Messafints, Tewodros was able to bring Gojam, Gondar, Tigre, Wello, and Shewa (which were ruled by different Messafints)

under the centralized rule of one Emperor. Menelik was able to achieve the unification of Ethiopia only by starting from where Tewodros left off. Hence, Tewodros will be seen as the symbol of Ethiopia's unification.

Sahle Sellassie: In my view Menelik II is not a unifier; he is an empire builder, and a successful one. The true unifier of traditional Ethiopia is Tewodros.

Tewodros is more amenable to creative writers because of the dramatic nature of both his actions and his personality.

Tsegaye: When we look back at the period before and after Tewodros, we clearly see in him certain weaknesses of a tribalistic and fanatical nature. But then we also know that Tewodros meant well, in that the unity of Ethiopia came first for him. The ~~weakening~~ Muslim-Oromo family background of the royal Ras Ali and Itege Menen, eventhough these two were later christened, scored its own limitations against them, not only because they were strongly inclined towards the muslim minority of Gondar but because Christian Gondar saw fit to rally strongly behind Tewodros. If we were to survive as one nation, the unification of a dismantled Ethiopia by crushing the small renegade kings was the first thing to be doen, and Tewodros stood up to fulfil this dream of the divided Ethiopian masses. His final failure in this mission was caused not only by the British scramblers, but also by the various small feudal dynasties that had dismembered Ethiopian unity. These had their own small crowns and naturally felt very badly about Tewodros' wanting to bring them all under his umbrella. As such, it was these small lords who supplied guides and facilitated Napier's expedition, and for this, they, particularly Yohannes, were given arms by the British. Therefore, what he had suffered through the small kings and feudal lords won Tewodros a certain measure of historical sympathy. It is true that he had been overtly harsh in his expeditions, but then the times were when only a united Ethiopia could stand against colonialism. Without this unity, the history of Ethiopia might have been different.

Question: IN YOUR NOVEL, THE VIOLENCE OF TEWODROS IS GIVEN CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION. BUT WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES HIS VIOLENCE ESSENTIALLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF HIS NEAR PREDECESSORS OR HIS CONTEMPORARIES FOR IT TO DESERVE SUCH ATTENTION?

Berhanu: Tewodros had a great intention to unify Ethiopia, to renew its old glory, and to establish a new system. But when this aim of his failed to materialize for various reasons, he used to be greatly indignant and did commit many acts of cruelty. What makes his violence essentially different from that of his predecessors and contemporaries is the greatness of the cause he stood for and the numerousness of the obstacles that hindered its realization.

Question: WOULD YOU CALL TEWODROS A MAN OF PARADOXICAL NATURE? WHY?

Berhanu: I don't think that Tewodros had a basically contradictory nature. Of course, at one time mercifulness and at another brutality had been manifest in him. But I think that Tewodros was one who stood for a benevolent cause, for a great cause. In view of this, it is possible to say that he was by nature a well-meaning man. He loved other people; he was trusting and compassionate. But toward those who he believed had hindered the fulfilment of his aim, he showed great wrath, great brutality.

Sahle Sellassie: Tewodros was certainly a paradoxical man. Otherwise how can one explain, for instance, the fact that Rassam, the British consul, was his friend, and yet was put by him in chains? Or how is it that before he committed suicide he did not order the execution of his foreign captives who were the cause of his war against Napier? etc...

Tsegaye: Of course, he did behave paradoxically: so did Christ himself! Tewodros had shown human frailty; he did take to drinks in the latter days of his life, particularly after the loss of Princess Tewabech, the daughter of the Oromo-muslim ruler of Gondar whom he killed. Now that's parado~~x~~ for you! He acted with acute brutality to the Oromo kingdom of Wello, which he had subdued,

but which eventually rose up again and earned his wrath. He wasn't really consistent in such aspects and he did show conflicting personalities. But, I still think that came from his tribally prejudiced upbringing of that period. He didn't have much of an education to call his own. You know he had hardly anybody to look up to and therefore had to set his own example and his own discipline. In taking the law by force into his hand, he did show, in the latter days of his life, personal frailties and tremendous flaws. I am sorry for him, but I like him!

Question: WOULD YOU CONSIDER TEWODROS A POLITICAL MARTYR?

Berhanu: Yes; the failure of the fulfillment of his national aspirations and for this reason his taking his own life make him a political martyr.

Sahle Sellassie: I wouldn't consider Tewodros a political martyr. Far from it! It is true that he had neither been understood well nor accepted fully by the conservative society of the time, especially by the Gondares. But he himself did not understand the people he was ruling. For lack of patience and tact he reverted to violent punishment of those who would not bend to his will. This led to his final downfall. Incidentally this shows that Tewodros was primarily a warrior, and not a statesman like Menelik II.

Question: WOULD YOU ACCEPT TEWODROS AS A POPULAR HERO, AS ONE WHOSE POLITICAL INTERESTS WERE COMPATIBLE WITH THOSE OF THE PEOPLE? WOULD YOU, FOR INSTANCE, TAKE HIM AS ONE WHO DIED FOR THE CAUSE OF THE PEOPLE?

Tsegaye: Otherwise, he would not be the national symbol he really is. He would be wrongly thought of as one who died to keep only his private throne and as one who fought for the single ambition of being another petty king. The fact is that he fought colonialism and fought for the unity of Ethiopia. Isn't that compatible with the people's interest? What is, then? This he proved by having reunited parts of Ethiopia

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and this unification was in the interest of a strong people. Since a strong people need a united country, that was the cause for which Tewodros stood and died. You can't therefore, altogether separate him from the people he stood for because the unity of today is part of Tewodros. Despite the harsh manner in which he went about achieving it he did manage to lay the foundation stone of a new Ethiopia. That foundation was what the British fought against; this symbol is still one which they are trying to destroy.

Question: IN YOUR NOVEL, PERSONAL MOTIVES (SUCH AS THE SECURING OF THE GOVERNORSHIP OF QUARA MOTIVATING HIM TO ACCEPT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE REBELLION, OR THE WAR OF "VENGEANCE" AGAINST MENEN'S REGIME BECAUSE OF HER FAILURE TO GIVE HIM DUE RECOGNITION) SEEM TO BE IMPERATIVE FOR TEWODROS TO FIGHT FOR THE "NATIONAL CAUSE." THIS PRECEDENCE OF THE PERSONAL OVER THE NATIONAL SEEMS TO ROB THE CHARACTER OF A CONSISTENT IMAGE. WHAT IS YOUR COMMENT ON THIS?

Sahle Sellassie: Personal motives do play an important role in Tewodros' struggle for the national cause; these, however do not precede the national cause; they complement it. If the personal motives were cut out the story would become too idealistic, in other words less realistic.

Question: YOUR TEWODROS APPEARS TO BE A LITTLE ABSTRACT AND A LITTLE IDOLIZED. WHAT IS YOUR COMMENT ON THIS?

Tsegaye: It is "our" Tewodros comrade, and I think I did say how and why Tewodros has been idolized by the Ethiopian people and by the oppressed people of Africa, and as a writer I reflect that sentiment. It is a heritage passed down to us by our heroic generation of the past, and we try to bridge him over to the young generation, as is our duty. Tewodros reflects the people's cultural sentiment of his period, culture here meaning the heroic embodiment of a people harassed by colonialism, what the people are most proud of both in their spiritual and economic achievement; in short, what they are in the conditions of their

existence. As a people's history develops, and as a people advance in their technology and culture, the writer of that period interprets national heroes to that new culture. I understand, for example, that a film is being done on Tewodros by a British company. From what I have been told by a friend who had read the synopsis, I know that the violence of Tewodros and another aspect that I am hardly acquainted with, an aspect where Tewodros made a certain lady walk naked, presumably when he was drunk, have been depicted with particular emphasis in this film. To the so-called "new-right" Western generation, who is a consumer of pornographic films (in this case, naked black flesh on white cloth), it must mean something. As the exposition of such degenerate aspects is motivated by both political and commercial interests, as well as by the desire to distort Tewodros' image for the Third World, it has very little to do in our interests or those of the Third World. For us, he remains a value by which we fought colonialism; the value which inspired other oppressed people who used that symbolism to fight the oppressors. Besides, the exaggeration of his violence is politics again for those who wanted to see that his ideal is distorted in order to divert the Third World audience from its pains of exploitation. Fortunately, the Third World has very little time for this because it has to attend to the pains caused by ignorance, hunger, and the rest of what is inflicted on it by the greed of imperialists.

Question: IN YOUR PLAY, THE ROLE OF THE MESSENGER SEEMS TO BE NOT CLEARLY DEFINED. AT ONE POINT, HE IS A DETACHED COMMENTATOR AND REPORTER LOOKING AT THE WORLD OF THE PLAY FROM OUTSIDE. AT ANOTHER, HE IS A CHARACTER BELONGING TO THAT FICTITIOUS WORLD AND CARRYING MESSAGES FROM ONE CHARACTER TO OTHERS. WHAT IS YOUR EXPLANATION OF THIS?

Tsegaye: This is not an approach which I used for the first time. It has been used as a means for alienation from the emotional involvement on the stage, as a means for making the audience to be more practical in its judgement of the scene on the stage.

It is useful to detach certain characters who will link the story for us, particularly when the subject we are treating is a historical personality whose lifetime achievements have to be linked and his story to be presented realistically. You bring him back into involvement with the other characters when you once more want to involve the audience. This approach in play writing had been used in the last century, mostly by the Spanish school of theatre that presented historical plays in this form. I tried to adopt that technique; I didn't start it.

Question: AS A PROLIFIC WRITER OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION, YOU MAY BE WELL AWARE OF THE SITUATION IN REGARD TO LITERARY DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR COUNTRY. WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY CRITICISM PROPER?

Tsegaye: At this stage of our revolutionary development, the aspect of creative criticism is lacking to a very great extent. Journalistic writing has replaced art criticism, eventhough the two professions are separate. Whatever a work of art is, it is in the final analysis a reflection and transformation of the society on one hand, and is corrective and instructive on the other hand. It is an indication of the progress of that society. Criticism of art is also criticism of the regressive aspects of a given culture. A critic's eye is hence the eye of his people, which sees the weaknesses of their culture, is at once one with the people in order to give them stimulus and mass will to advance. He sees it in the interest and with the eyes of the people. But, in order to be the eye of the people, one should not only be well versed in the people's diverse cultures, but should also make himself a part and parcel of the people. This he must do so that he does not interpret a thing with a journalistic detachment, with a photographic eye. He must involve himself as much as the actor involves himself in a given character. He has to permit that culture to penetrate and form part of his personality in order to be one of the people, understand and show the experience of the people and interpret

their culture to them in their own eyes. Using only the detached mind and the distant photographic eye of aloofness, repeating certain dogmatic terminologies in regard to the people's culture is no criticism. A critic must be a sensitive artist who is committed to the people's values in order to detect and feel the internal personality of the people whose life he interprets back to them and through them alone, to the world. His eyes are of the people looking ahead towards the goal they are aspiring for. To support the critic's eye of reference, there should, of course, first be established an art and culture institute which should scientifically study the cultures of the diverse nationalities. This is something we are very much lacking today in revolutionary Ethiopia. One does not, for instance, know what the richness of the Konso culture is except to blindly venture on petty bourgeois journalistic assumptions and willful distortions so far! Taking too much for granted has always been the failure of the bourgeois class intellectuals. A journalistic group ventures to the north, south, and east of Ethiopia with the eyes of the camera, comes up with dances and gymnastics, and then has the audacity to interpret to us what the sensitive value of a certain nationality is all about! This is not even journalism let alone criticism of cultural values.

Appendix B

FOLK POETRY RELATED TO TEWODROS

1. በቲያደርስ የለም ጋሻ
ጣረስ ይቫላል በጣረሻ፤
ጣረስ ይቫላል መገበር
እድ አገርን ይዞ ለመኖር፤
አላርስም ያሉ አልነገድ
ከላላው እንደ ገንድ ።
/ ገሪማ፣ ገፅ፣ 104 /
2. ዓሊን አይቫል ላይ ጉጉንም ገር ገራ
ታገሎ የጣላቸው ሁሉንም በቲራ
ለኢት የጸያ ቢሆን ነው ከአምላክ ባላደራ ።
/ ገፅ፣ 57 /
3. ብዙ ጊዜ ሆናት ደህና ባል ከጣቸ
አሁን ገን በታጠቅ ይኸው ታረረቸ ።
/ ገፅ፣ 57 /
4. ልበሴንም ገረፈው ለበሰው እርዘኛ
በረፍቶም ነፃው አረደው ነፍጠኛ
እህሌንም ዘረፈው በሰው ቀለበኛ
ንጉሥ የቀረቻ ጥቂት አጣርኛ
ምነው ሆድ ለይዘርፈ አርፎ እንድተኛ ።
/ ወልደ ጣር ያም፣ ገፅ፣ 38 /
5. አገራን ዘረፈው እያለው ደስ ደስ
ዎቹ በጌምድራ ፈንታው እስኪደርስ ።
/ ገፅ፣ 38 /
6. መላው የጉጃም ሰው፣ መላው የተገራ ሰው ተይዞ በምጥ
የእንገሊዝ ጠኪዎቹ መጥተው ቢይዙት
ተገላገለ አሉ ይህ ሁሉ ፍጥረት ።
/ ተክለ ዳዲቅ፣ ገፅ፣ 36 /
7. የሸዋ የጉጃም ተበትኖ ከብቱ
የወሎ የተገራ ተበትኖ ከብቱ
ገዛው አባ ታጠቅ ሰብስቦ በሀብቱ ።
/ ጣና ከሠላሴ፣ ገፅ፣ 245 /

8. ተያይዘው ነገሠና
 እባብ ጠፋ በጉዳና
 ወንበዳም ሄደ ምነና
 ገበያቸንም አለ ፈሰሰ
 ጋለዎቻቸንም አለቸ ፈርነሰ
 / ፋሴላ፣ ገፀ 23 /
9. የኢትዮጵያ መሳፍንት ቀስና ቢያምራቸው
 ከሳ ጳጳስ ሆኖ ሁሉን ባረካቸው ::
 / ገሪማ፣ ገፀ 187 /
10. የጉንደር ከሀናት በጥበብ በለጡ
 ከአባ ታጠቀ ፈረሰ ሸሸተው አመለጡ ::
 / ገፀ 199 /
11. ቋረኛው ከሳ የጎይሉ ልጅ
 አምላክ ከጠቡ አያደርሰ እንጂ፤
 ቢጥል ቢሰረጅ ተገል ቢገጥም
 ራስ ደጃዝማቸ ገገሡ አይመርጥም ::
 / ገፀ 57 /
12. ሰባቱ ደጃዝማቸ ሰምንተኛው ከሳ
 ምርት አደረጋቸው ወቅቷቸው ተነሳ ::
 / ገፀ 102 /
13. የኮሶ መድኃኒት ከሳ ቢያጠጣቸው
 የኢትዮጵያ መሳፍንት ሁሉ አስቆጣቸው ::
 / ገፀ 187 /
14. አርባ አራቱ ደብር ተጨንቀ ሲሸበር
 ምንኛ ጠገብ ተተኩሰ ጉንደር ::
 / ፋሴላ፣ ገፀ 40 /
15. በልጅነታቸው አህል ያልቆሱ
 ምንኛ ጠገቡ አባ ተተኩሱ ::
 / ገፀ 40 /
16. ፊታውራሪ ቸኩል ሸጣው አልቀበት
 እንዲያው ተገጠልጥሎ ገንዳን አየሁኝ ::
 / ጣናቱ ሥላሴ፣ ገፀ 283 /

17. የጌጃምን ገገሥ ሲንቀ ሲንቀ
የተገረገም ገገሥ ሲንቀ ሲንቀ
ወንድ ታላረስዎ ገለጠም አያውቀ ::
/ ዓለማ የሁኑ ገፀ 28 /
18. ጠላቶቹን ሁሉ አጭዶ አንድ ገብስ
መቀደላ ተጠለፀ ራሱን በራስ ::
/ ተክለ ፍዲቅ፣ ገፀ 36 /
19. እኔ ብቻ ልገዛ ነጩ ነገሩ
እዚያ ላይም ሄደው እንዳያስቸገሩ ::
/ ገርማቸው፣ ገፀ 107 /
20. ሥጋ አብላጥ ወንድሜ ሰው ይፈርድብሃል
እኔም ድሃ ነኝ አንተም ታርደሃል ::
ይህን ተናገረ እንዴት በጉድ ወጣሁ
መንጠልጠያ ባገኘ ከሰማይ በወጣሁ ::
/ ገሪማ፣ ገፀ 105 /
21. ጋላ ባባ ሄደ ሊገባ አገሩን
እያመሰገነ ደጃዝማቸ ካሰገን ::
መሸጋገሪያውን እንዲያ ሰንፈራው
ካሰ ደለደለው መገጭን በሰው ::
/ ገፀ 105 /
22. አባ ታጠቅ ካሰ ሱሪ መስፋት ሲያውቀ
ገጣጥመው ሰፈና ሁሉን አስታጠቀ ::
ሁሉ ታጥቀ ነበር እስከ ቁርጭጭጫቱ
ያባ ታጠቅ ሱሪ ተባቱ ተባቱ ::
/ ገፀ 187 /
23. እርሱና ፈረሱ ተወልደው ባንድ ቀን
ለመላ ሰበሻ / የ / ሀኑት ሰቀቀን ::
/ ገፀ 199 /
24. ጉንደር ብጠይቀው ውጋ እንዲሰጡ
እኔም ተጠምቼ ተቃጠልኩ አለኝ ::
/ ገፀ 199 /
25. ጋረድ ዋተ እንኳን ተቀበረ
ያንተ ወንድም ነጩ እንፈራው ነበረ ::
/ ገፀ 144 /

26. ሞጣ ቀራንዩ ጉጃም ተሸበረ
 ልቡን ያለጤነ ቀጭ ማንም አልነበረ ::
 / ዓለማየሁ፣ ገፀ 43 /
27. ሞጣ ቀራንዩ ምነጡ አይታረክ
 በረሳ ላይ መጣሁ ከዚያ እስከዚህ ድረስ ::
 / ተክለ ጫቅ፣ ገፀ 30 /
28. ጠጅም እንዳያምረጥ ደር ጠጥቻለሁ
 ሥጋም እንዳያምረጥ ቋገጣ ሰቅያለሁ
 ቢሻገኝ ከፀንደጄ ካባቱ እበላለሁ ::
 / ገፀ 30 /
29. በሰንሰለት ታሰር ዓመት ካራት ወር
 ማንን ዋስ አደርጌ ተፈታ ጌገደር ::
 / ገፀ 30 /
30. አንድ እግር በርበሬ መንቀል አቅቷቸሁ
 አንድዶ ለብልቦ አቃጥሎ ይፍጃቸሁ ::
 / ገፀ 30 /
31. ዐፄ ተያደርሰ እጅግ ተቀረጹ
 የሸዋን ሰጡ ሁሉ እጅ ነስተውኝ ሄጹ ::
 / ወልደ ማርያም ፣ ገፀ 21 /
32. አንጥረኛው ብዙ በተያደርሰ ቤት
 ባል አልቦ አደረጉት ይህን ሁሉ ሴት ::
 / ገፀ 31 /
33. እግዚርና ንጉሥ ተጠልተው ቀጭ
 ቀዳስ ሚካኤልን ዳኛ እስከቀመጡ
 እግዚር በገራ ነጭ ንጉሡ በቀን
 በል ፍጅና ሰጠኝ ሲለው ሰማሁኝ ::
 / ገፀ 38 /
34. የኔታ ደጃዝማቸ ሁልጊዜ ደገነት
 ዛሬ እንኳ ለድሃው እንባ እስተረፉለት ::
 / ገፀ 45 /
35. ማጌረሰስ ሚሸቱ ታገርሰው
 ቋጩን በምን ያበሰው ::
 / ፋሴሳ፣ ገፀ 13 /

36. ፍቅሩን ጨርሶ ጠቡን ሲያመጣው
የሰላም ገደል ዘንጅር አይወጣው ::
/ ገፅ 28 /

37. አለቀ ይሉኛል ይለቅ አባታቸው
እኔም አልናገር እኒያም ስም የላቸው ::
/ ገፅ 40 /

38. አምላክን መሰሎ ተያደርሰ
ንዑና ጡሩ ሲል ሰውስ
ሰኛ-መቅደላ ተጨነቀ
ሰው መሆኑ ታወቀ ::
/ ማኅተሙ ሥላሴ፣ ገፅ 51 /

39. ቁሀ ስትጣገት ዳኛው እያደሳ
ባፋረዱ እንጅ እትሀ ምን ልበሳ ::
/ ገፅ 133 /

40. ወይ አልተቀደሰ የባረኩት ሰው
ንጉሥ መስቀልያን ቢተውት ምነው ::
/ ገፅ 227 /

41. የታጠቀ ጌራዴ ብረት የነበረ
እየቀላ ሄደ ደም እየመሰለ ::
/ ገፅ 247 /

42. ይማርልኝ ብዬ በጌምደር ሰድጄ
ቀለም ገባው አሉ እሳት ሆነ ልጄ ::
/ ገፅ 262 /

43. ይሰውኝ እንደሆን ጃንሀይ ልምከርያ
የሰው እንጨት ማንደድ እንገዳህ ይብቃያ ::
/ ገፅ 262 /

44. ጌንደርን ለማልቀስ ብሄድ በቀደም
ነደ አር አገኘሁት ተቃጥሎ በጣም ::
/ ገፅ 276 /

45. ለባሕር ማዶ ሰው መቀያ ደግሰ
ዳግማዊ ባሉብ መጣ ተያደርሰ ::
/ ገፅ 186 /

- 46. ምዕመናን ሁሉ እንኳን ደስ ያላቸው
ወደ እየሩሳሌም ደርሷል መሄዳቸው ::
/ ገፅ 186 /
- 47. ታጠቅ ብሎ ፈረሰ ከሰ ብሎ ስም
አርብ አርብ ይሸበራል እየሩሳሌም ::
አንተም ጌታ አይደለህ እኔም ሌሌ
የእየሩሳሌም ሰጩ ከልጣኔ በርዎሉ ::
/ ዓለማየሁ፣ ገፅ 29 /
- 48. አባ ታጠቅ ከሰ ነገር ሲያሰላሰል
ባሕሩን ያስባል መረብ ጣይ ይመስል ::
የታጠቅ ፈረሶች እንዴት ያሸከባሉ
ባሕር ማዶ ጤሬ መልቀም ያስባሉ ::
/ ተክለ ጭቅ፣ ገፅ 26 /
- 49. እንበሳው መቀደላ ተገተ አየሁት
ሰጩ እያዩ መሸሸ ነገር ሆኖበት ::
/ ገርማቸው፣ 107 /
- 50. ዓማ ጌራቸ ጡሉ የተያደሩሰ ፈረሰ
አንድ ጥርጉ ሆነ መቀደላ ሲደርስ ::
/ ገፅ 107 /
- 51. ሱራህ አረንጓዴ ጌራዳህ ባለወርቅ
በጣም አምርብ ሃል እንተ ብቻ ታጠቅ ::
/ ገፅ 109 /
- 52. የሜዳ ነብር የጣካ አንበሳ
የኢትዮጵያ ባል ቋረኛው ከሰ ::
/ ገሪማ፣ ገፅ 57 /
- 53. የተዋበቸ ባል የመሸሸ አባት
የሚያታለው ገንባሩ እንደ እሳት ::
/ ገፅ 57 /
- 54. ወይዘሮ አተጠገብ ምናል ብተሸጥ ከሰ
ሰበሻን የሚያሸር መልሶ መላልሶ ::
/ ገፅ 105 /
- 55. የታጠቅ ፈረሶች ብዙ ነው ሀብራቸው
ሌሎች በነሱ ዘንድ ጥርጉ ብቻ ናቸው ::
/ ገፅ 187 /

56. አባ ታጠቀ ከሰ ጠቸ ሥጋ ለበሰ
ከሊቦ እስከ እዘዘ በኩል ቀን ደረሰ ::
ፈረሱ ነው እንጂ ነፋስ የሆነው
ያተጠገብ ልጅሰ ሲፈጠር ሰው ነው ::
/ ገፅ 199 /
57. ዘንድር አርገዛለሁ ምን ይህን ምን ይህን
ከተወለደ አይቶ ጠንድ እንዳንተ ቢሆን ::
/ ገፅ 242 /
58. የቋ ባላባት የጠቀደላ አንበሳ
ሰርክ ዕለት አዲስ ነው ታሪኩ ሲነሳ ::
/ ገፅ 242 /
59. ከእንገዲህ ጠቀደላ ቀለብ አይነሰው
ቸሎልኛልና ያን ወገደኛ ሰው ::
/ ገፅ 242 /
60. ተይጥ አንቸ ሴት ደግ አስከርባል
የታጠቀ አሸከር ምን ቀን ይሸባል ::
ያንን ያጩደው ማን ይመስላል ::
/ ገፅ 242 /
61. ዳር እስከ ዳር ይዞ የገዛው ንጉሠ
እንዲህን ስሱ ጠበንጃ የሚገርስ ::
/ ጠልደሣር ያም ፣ ገፅ 62 /
62. በዚያ በጠቀደላ ጩኸት በረከተ
የሴቱን አላውቀዎ ጠንድ አንድ ሰው ሞተ ::
/ ገፅ 62 /
63. አያቸሁት ብያ የኛን አብድ
አምስት ጋዎቹ ይዞ ጌታባ ሲወርድ
ጠዶ ጠዶ በሴቱ በነገንጭት ለጸዶ ::
/ ገፅ 3 /
64. አያቸሁት ብያ ያንበሳውን ሞተ
በሰው እጅ ጠቀትን ነውር አድርጌት ::
/ ጠልደሣር ያም ፣ ገፅ 62 /
65. ፈረሱ አባ ታጠቀ ሰው ተያደርሰ
ጠላት የሚበቱን እንዳውሉ ነፋስ ::
/ ተክለ ጭቅ፣ ገፅ 26 /

66. ታጠቅን ባል ብሎ ማን አዎኖ ይቆርባል
ሴሰኛውን ንጉሥ ያራ ተን ማዕዘን ባል ::
/ ገፅ 26 /

67. ቪ ፈረስ ከኋላው ቪ ፈረስ ከፊ ተ
ቪ ብረተ ከኋላው ቪ ብረተ ከፊ ተ
ይህን ሳታይ ዎተቸ ኮሶ ቫጭ አና ተ ::
ይህንን ሲሰማ ያገራል ሳጠሉ
ማናተም ቢላቸሁ ምንተዋብ ናተ በሉ ::
/ ገፅ 31 /

68. አባተና አና ተ አሳንድ አልጠለቶ
አባ ታጠቅ ከሳ ያው አንቶ ያው አንቶ ::
/ ገፅ 36 /

69. ገደልን አንጻይሉ ጡተው አገኗቸው
ማረክን አንጻይሉ ሰው የሉ በጻቸው
ምን አሉ አንገሊዛቸ ሲገቡ አገራቸው
ለጠራ አይወቅም ተንኩለኛ ናቸው ::
/ ገፅ 36 /

70. አንደ ዐፄ ተያድርስ አሳ የሁም ኩሩ
በመጡ አንገሊዛቸ ምክር ሊማከሩ
ባርዎዎ ሸጉዋቸው ሳያነጋገሩ ::
/ ማኅተሙ ሥላሴ፣ ገፅ 200 /

71. ዐፄ ተያድርስ ባተ መልካም ናቸው
አኋላ ቁር ፍ ስ ሄድ አ የኋቸው ::
/ ገፅ 231 /

72. አርባ ጠዎ ጠዎ ፋሲካ ሲደርስ
በአፈር ገደፈ አሉ ያበሻ ንጉሥ ::
/ ፋሲላ፣ ገፅ 49 /

* 73. ተገፍ ተ ተገፍ ተ ሸፍ ተ ቢጠባ
አሁን ቀቤ ሆነ ሳለም የሚበቃ
/ ገርማቸው፣ ገፅ 108 /

74. ጠንደዎቹ ሁሉ ወደ ኋላ ቁር ተው
ደበደቡት አሉ ብቻውን አገኙ ተው ::
/ ገፅ 108 /

75. አንድ ወንድም ነበረ ሲቤህ የሚረዳ
እኔ ብቻ አይደለሁ አገርም ተጉዳ ::
/ ገፀ 108 /

76. ፍር ሃትን ለጉንደር፣ ፍር ሃትን ለጉጃም፣
ፍር ሃትን ለተገራ፣ ፍር ሃትን ለወሎ
ፍር ሃትን ለሸዋ እኔ አላስተምርም
ሸገጤን ጠጥቼ እላቀሁ ኩርተም ::
/ ገፀ 108 /

77. አይቀጋም እንጂ ጠመንጃ ተኩሶ
አይቀጋም እንጂ ዛብ ይዞ ገሰገሶ
ወትርም ልማዱ ነው ጉጃሜ ለልቅሶ ::
/ ገፀ 59 /

78. ልጠይቅህ ሳስታ እኔን ብትጠላ
ስለምን አረድቸው ጭጉን ሳር በበላ ::
/ ማኅተሙ ሥላሴ፣ ገፀ 102 /

79. ጭጉን አርደህ በልተህ አልጠገብክምና
ደግሞ አርድል ሃለሁ እዚያው እመጣና ::
/ ገፀ 263 /

80. ጉጃምን ብንቀጣው በእሳቱ ተቀጣ
ወሎን ብንቀጣው በነፍሱ ተቀጣ፤
ይብላግ ለወራሄ ይብላግ ለሰቀጣ ::
/ ዘነብ፣ ገፀ 32 /

81. እስቲ ጠይቀልኝ ርቃ ሳትሄድ
እቲጌ ተቀበቹ ሚስተናት ገረድ
እጅግ ሥር አዋቂ ተላንተና ሞተቸ
መድኃኒቱን ምሳ ታበላግ ነበረቸ ::
/ ወልደ ማርያም፣ ገፀ 22 /

82. ይህ አረገራጊ
አቲና ወጊ
ራሱን ታጣቂ
ወገሱን ሰባቂ ::
/ ገፀ 25 /

83. መይሳው ካሳ ባጭር ታጣቂ
ዘመድ ከዘመድ አይባላቂ
የኢትዮጵያ ባል የኢየሩሳሌም እጩ ::
/ ተክለ ዳዲቅ፣ ገፀ 26 /

APPENDIX C

TEWODROS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: AN INTRODUCTORY SKETCH

When asked as to what aspects of Tewodros' life and/or personality aroused his interest in him, Berhanu replied that it was the Emperor's dramatic rise to power and the equally dramatic manner in which his life ended. To the same question, Sahle Sellassie replied that it was his "humble" family background and his determination to attain his "great" aspiration in life. For Tsegaye, it was his "sensitiveness" for the oppressed, and his background which "serves as a symbol for the oppressed of the Third World" that was a source of inspiration.¹²³ When we also examine the prefaces of Abbe and Girmachew, we find that they emphasize his background, his aspirations and struggles, and his fall, while Mekonnen concentrates on his violence throughout his work.¹²⁴ Since these were important aspects in the life of Tewodros as well as in the political struggle then, and since it is on these factors that the fictional works focus it is essential to give a brief outline of the historical background. This is all the more important if the reader is to easily appreciate the literary appraisal of the fictional works on Tewodros.

Tewodros, whose name before his coronation was Kassa, was born about 1820.¹²⁵ His father, who died while Kassa was still young, was said to have been the governor of Quara before he was ousted from the governorship and driven into exile by Maru.¹²⁶ His mother, who brought him up until he was of school age, was said to have lived in poverty, making her living by selling Kosso.¹²⁷ That Kassa came from the lower stratum of the nobility and not from a royal family is clear from the fact that he himself says in his first letter to Queen Victoria: "My Creator has raised me out of the dust [and] given me power"¹²⁸ Furthermore, apart from the derogatory epithet ("the son of a kosso-vendor") that he received, his low family background is clear from Zenebe's report wherein it is pointed out that due to it Kassa received much humiliation and degradation while he was at the palace of Empress Menen.¹²⁹ In tracing Kassa's genealogy, Rubenson says that with regard to the generations closest to Kassa, "we find a number of men with the rank of 'dejasmach' and an occasional 'ras' or two, as well as on Tewodros' mother's side a few priests and other churchmen of some

importance." In view of this, Rubenson says that "birth and family connections provided him with more expectations than the average boy around Gondar at the time."¹³⁰

As he grew up, Kassa is said to have served under his brother Kinfu,¹³¹ and under Goshu as well as other chiefs before he eventually became a rebel.¹³² Why Kassa became a rebel is not yet definitely established. But according to Zeneb, it was because Menen imprisoned her vassal Bitewa, under whom Kassa was serving at Quara, and that Kassa wanted to escape from meeting the same fate.¹³³ Through time he came to gather some followers and to assume control of the area around Quara. At about 1845 as Kassa posed a threat to the government of Gondar, Ali and Menen tried to win him over by promising him the governorship of Quara and by giving him Tewabech in marriage.¹³⁴ Though this arrangement worked for some time, it couldn't reconcile the two sides permanently and both sides began to strengthen their forces for war.¹³⁵ Finally, in a series of wars with Menen, Ali, Wube and other prominent feudal lords, Kassa was successively victorious and sealed this victory by taking the crown in February 1855.¹³⁶

Kassa's dramatic rise to power signified a turning point in the history of the country. This is because it marked the beginning of changes in the feudal pattern of government in which

... provinces and districts belonged almost by hereditary right to certain individuals and families who taxed their subjects at their own discretion, paid an often nominal tribute - and sometimes none at all - to the central authority and used the rest for their private household and armies.¹³⁷

In view of the suffering inflicted upon them by such a rule, the people had been aspiring for a better administration, and this desire of theirs had been widely disseminated in the prophecy associated with the name 'Tewodros'. When therefore Kassa identified himself with their aspirations by assuming the throne name of 'Tewodros', the people (especially the Amharas) welcomed him, at least initially, with praise for his bravery and hope in the future, as can be seen in these pieces of poems from their oral literature:

Christ would himself bring Tewodros after a long period of corruption, perversity, and lawlessness, of the rule of imposters and women, of war, famine and trials and tribulations of every kind Confusion, hatred, abuse, plunder would pass away and the fear of the Lord would reign upon the earth. (the prophecy)¹³⁸

Seven were dejasmach, the eighth Kassa himself
He threshed them into granules, pounded them and rose. ¹³⁹

Ali at Ayishal, Goshu at Gorgora
He fought and vanquished them each
For God may have meant him to redeem Ethiopia. ¹⁴⁰

Emboldened by his military victories and encouraged by the aspirations of the people and the objective conditions then, Kassa embarked upon a series of reforms to create a united and modernized empire. Thus, during his coronation, he is said to have proclaimed:

I swear by this crown worn by my ancestors that I shall gather under my authority all the provinces which in the past have belonged to this Empire. ¹⁴¹

This proclamation of Tewodros was very much in conformity with what was then strongly demanded by the concrete situation. Describing the state of anarchy at the time of the Mesafints, Abir wrote:

With the decline of imperial authority, the regional governors, although officially still owing allegiance to the King of Kings and through him to his guardian, strengthened their position within their own provinces to the point where they could be considered semi-independent, and the governorship of each province became hereditary. While the most powerful regional lords were warring among themselves, especially for the position of the guardian of the Emperor, the provincial governors would transfer their allegiance from one important leader to another, according to circumstances. However, even the authority of the different provincial rulers was not secure. District governors tried to establish their own little empires; and the many claimants to power in each region expedited the process of fragmentation and disintegration of the empire. ¹⁴²

The dismemberment of the country by the ever-warring overlords, besides hampering its smooth development and increasing the people's hardship, was undermining the country's strength to survive as an independent entity. The Turks and especially the Egyptians, tempted by a booty of slaves, gold, and ivory, were already encroaching upon the borders of the country and ready to exploit the situation prevailing then. Discussing the attitude of these predatory powers, Plowden's brother wrote:

The Turks claim the whole of the seacoast on the mainland as far as Babelmandeb and Abyssinia itself as a Pachalic The Egyptians on the north-west frontier, having no pretensions to sovereignty, are actuated only by territorial ambition or religious fanaticism. Both give effect to their respective ideas by attempts on the sea-coasts of Abyssinia, and by raids into the frontier Christian provinces

of Abyssinia. They destroy villages, plunder cattle and other property, and carry off the women and children into slavery, offering to the inhabitants the choice of the Koran as their only means of escape from the sword.¹⁴³

To reverse this precarious position of the country's independence and to save the nation from the anarchy that was threatening its continuity from within, various reforms including unification were urgently needed. So also was a strong central government to put these into effect. Given this situation, therefore, the task of fulfilling these needs naturally fell on the shoulder of anyone who aspired to rule securely over the whole empire. At the time, such a man was Tewodros, who, according to Plowden, "is persuaded that he is destined to restore the glories of the Ethiopian Empire, and to achieve great conquests...."¹⁴⁴ Tewodros planned to effect his reforms on two parallel lines. On the one hand he tried to complete the unification of the country by militarily subduing the semi-autonomous warlords and by appointing personally loyal and salaried feudo-bureaucrats in their place. On the other hand he tried to establish a modern national army under his direct command. Describing Tewodros' reforms in this respect, Plowden wrote:

The arduous task of breaking the power of the great feudal chiefs - a task achieved in Europe only during the reigns of many consecutive kings - he has commenced by chaining almost all who were dangerous, avowing his intention of liberating them when his power shall be consolidated. He has placed the soldiers of the different provinces, under the command of his own trusty followers to whom he has given high titles, but no power to judge or punish; thus in fact, creating generals in place of feudal chieftains, more proud of their birth than their monarch, and organizing a new nobility - a legion of honour dependent on himself and chosen especially for their daring and fidelity.

To these he gives sums of money from time to time, accustoming them to his intention of establishing a regular pay In the common soldiers he has effected a great reform, by paying them, and ordering them to purchase their food but in no way to harass and plunder the peasants as before.¹⁴⁵

As can be understood from what Plowden wrote, the establishment of a central government was thus effected by curbing the power of the overlords and by reorganizing the army. To get the necessary finance for running and strengthening the central government, Tewodros also attempted to transfer to the state the revenues from the land held by Church¹⁴⁶ and

the subdued nobility. Besides this, his preventing his soldiers from plundering the peasants, according to Morgan, "allowed for greater productivity and increased government revenues."¹⁴⁷ The advantage of this reform (in the army) to the peasants can best be appreciated if one considers it in relation to the situation at the time of the Mesafints:

In a situation of continuous war, when districts and provinces often passed from one hand to another, law and order was non-existent. The armies of many nobles, who in most cases had to live off the land, ravaged not only the domains of their master's enemies, but the country which belonged to him as well. Desperate farmers, seeing their crops burnt or taken away from them time and again, often became soldiers or highway men preying upon the caravans and ravaging the land of their neighbors. The economy of the country continually declined¹⁴⁸

In addition to disciplining the ravaging habits of the soldiers, Tewodros also tried to maintain general security for both peasants and merchants by severely punishing thieves and bandits. This also encouraged both production and commerce. "As regards commerce," Plowden wrote, "he has put an end to a number of vexatious exactions, and has ordered that duties shall be levied only at three places in his dominions."¹⁴⁹ As this enhanced the development of commerce, it too began to provide the government with revenues.¹⁵⁰

His intimacy with John Bell and Walter Plowden, and his observation of European technology convinced him that his country was very much behind the Western World. In his attempt to modernize his country, he felt that the European countries could help him and thus he tried to establish diplomatic relations with them.¹⁵¹ In a letter he sent to Queen Victoria, Tewodros wrote, "We, the people of Ethiopia, are blind; enlighten us."¹⁵²

He wrote his letters and other official communications in Amharic thereby encouraging writing and learning in the vernacular language.¹⁵³ In his attempts to introduce technological innovations he "took active steps to recruit instructors, engineers, builders and artisans of all kinds to develop the resources of the country."¹⁵⁴ Rubenson also reports that according to Dufton, Tewodros "entertained the project of sending to England and France some of his more intelligent subjects, to learn useful arts and manufactures."¹⁵⁵

As is clear from the nature and consequences of these reforms, Tewodros

thus posed a serious threat to the interests of the regional lords and the clergy. The attempt to transfer to the central government the revenues from the land held by the Church and nobility tended to weaken the economic position of these two oppressors of the people. His curbing the power of the various warlords and his appointing salaried government officials in their place temporarily broke their political hegemony. His attempt of technological innovations tended to undermine the prevalence of the conservative ideology of the clergy, and countered the nobility's reactionary social value which despised physical labour in general, and labour attached to craft work in particular. Thus, since these reforms objectively served to promote the advancement of the society, they were historically progressive.

However, Tewodros' reforms were not revolutionary measures that could radically alter the economic organization of the society or improve the political position of the people. The technological innovations that he attempted could not take root because "he lacked any social or institutional base upon which to build."¹⁵⁶ Analysing this problem, Morgan wrote in her brilliant article on Tewodros:

The conditions which made possible the acceptance of innovations in Europe did not pertain to Ethiopia. There was neither significant international trade, nor contacts with the outside world; no urban centers or large markets; neither a developed currency system nor a division of labour conducive to establish one.

Since the society was so organized as to prevent the peasantry from identifying the source of their oppression and since conditions were not conducive to the evolution of an indigeneous trading or wage earning class to challenge the stratification and values of the Christian Empire, ... true change was not possible.¹⁵⁷

To implement some of his reforms, Tewodros could have tried to rally the majority of the people behind him by alleviating their economic problems through some form of emancipation of the peasantry. Instead he confirmed the pre-existing feudal relations by proclaiming:

Lords and Ladies who claim the tenure of land! I have given my sanction to your right to whatever was your fathers'! But woe to you if you don't give up rebellion!¹⁵⁸

This sanction was tantamount to official approval of the continuity of the master-servant relationship that existed between the feudal lords as well as the clergy, and the peasantry. Instead of abolishing or significantly reducing the exploitation of the peasantry, his political reforms

intensified it, for, as Morgan puts it, they consisted of

... appointing government officials who competed with the nobility for the revenues of the land. In his desire to create a strong central government, Tewodros concentrated his efforts upon breaking the political hegemony of the nobility; however, their position was essentially unaltered.¹⁵⁹

Tewodros' reforms thus could not radically alter the society, but only intensified his contradiction with the clergy and the nobility without, however, winning him the support of the people. Rebellion began to mushroom in every province and his solution for it, as is clear from what he was reported to have said to Rassam, was to rely mainly on his military power to crush it:

If I go to the south my people rebel in the north; and when I go to the west, they rebel in the east. I have pardoned the rebels over and over again; nevertheless they persist in their disobedience and defy me. I am now determined to follow them into every corner, and shall send their bodies to the grave and their soul to hell.¹⁶⁰

But military force without any popular backing could not crush the rebellious nobility. In fact as the violence and plunder began to be directed against the people, on suspicion of their aiding the rebels, it drove more of them to the side of the rebelling nobility, for the peasants eventually began "to identify their continued abuse with the demands of the central authority."¹⁶¹ Wolde Mariam reports that as the conflict with the representatives of the clergy was intensified, the lot of the peasantry was worsened for the Emperor began to levy more taxes on them.¹⁶²

Thus the road to his fall was paved by the intricately contradictory situation that he was in. He could not fully reconcile himself with the nobility and the clergy, for, lacking any hereditary right to rule in any major part of the country, he was compelled to evolve a strong centralized government with a personal following in order to securely rule over the whole empire. But, as the evolution of such a government was incompatible with the political, economic and social interests of the nobility, the conflict between him and this powerful class became inevitable.

Tewodros was therefore in a tragic situation which again was worsened by his failure to peacefully settle his differences with the Europeans. His attempt to force the British (by imprisoning their men) to send him technicians led to the encounter with Napier's forces. Already by 1865,

Tewodros' empire consisted of only parts of Begemdir, Amhara, and Wollo,¹⁶³ and by the beginning of 1868, his hold over the empire was reduced to only the control over Maqdella. Undeterred by Tewodros and assisted by ambitious chiefs like Kassa (later Emperor Yohannes), the British expeditionary force crossed the highlands and confronted Tewodros' army at Maqdella.¹⁶⁴ Apparently, the already demoralized, much deserted, and ill-equipped army of Tewodros could not prevent the military victory that its well-disciplined and well-armed adversary could win over it, and the war was soon over in favour of the British. To crown his easy victory, Napier demanded the surrender of Tewodros himself. To this, Tewodros sent the reply, "A warrior who has dandled strong men like infants will not suffer himself to be dandled in the arms of others,"¹⁶⁵ and eventually died a heroic death by his own hands in April 1868.

Though Tewodros failed to attain his ends, his efforts did give a sense of direction to his successors. Both Emperor Yohannes and Menelik II owe their success in attaining national unity to Tewodros' efforts. Both of them had spent a part of their life with Tewodros and were hence in a position to acquire political experiences and draw lessons from Tewodros' failures.¹⁶⁶ Besides, they unlike him, were under favourable circumstances when they attempted national unification. By the time they took this task, the regional chiefs had been considerably weakened by Tewodros' campaigns. While Tewodros had no secure base, both Yohannes and Menelik had strong family ties and solid power bases in their respective regions. Whereas Tewodros' financial resources were very limited, Menelik had an abundance of these through his conquest of the south.¹⁶⁷ But the most important advantage that his successors had over him was the support they got from both the clergy and the nobility. Tewodros attempted to attain unity by completely subordinating the regional powers under his authority and replacing many of the overlords by his own appointees. His successors, on the other hand, demanded only recognition of their high office and did not try to do away with the semi-autonomous rule of the regional chiefs as long as these remained loyal.¹⁶⁸ It is thus that we can explain the rule of three kings at the same time: Emperor Yohannes as the paramount chief, Menelik next to him, and then King Tekle Haimanot in Gojam. While Tewodros with his land reforms antagonized the clergy, his successors secured the alliance of these by revoking his reforms and by protecting for them their old privileges.¹⁶⁹ Tewodros' failure here lay mainly in his inability to win over

the peasantry towards his side and to completely crush the power of the nobility and the clergy. Yohannes and Menelik were successful because the nobility and the clergy were not as much opposed to them, since their power was not really challenged. On top of these, there was also the difference in their personalities to account for some of their successes. He was haughty and violent and this tended to alienate him from potential allies. Plowden himself attests to this when he says: "The worst points in his character are his violent anger at times, his unyielding pride as regards his kingly and divine rights, and his fanatical religious zeal."¹⁷⁰ But his successors, especially Menelik, were tolerant and this helped them to at least minimize some of the opposition to their efforts. They were also better than him in diplomatic maneuvers and could easily exploit the differences among their adversaries.¹⁷¹ These, therefore, are the factors that make Tewodros' national efforts uniquely different from those of his predecessors and successors. Considered in light of the political and social conditions of his day, the historical significance of his national efforts lies in their essentially forwardlooking nature and in their objective opposition to the values and life styles of the warlords and higher clergy of the time.

Perhaps it is these values coupled with the bold manner in which he tried to realize them that keep the spirit of Tewodros alive today. In the past, especially towards the end of his rule when rebellions besieged him from all sides and when he resorted more and more to punitive measures of a violent and plundering nature, his people abandoned him and joined the side of his enemies. His national efforts were not fully appreciated or given the kind of symbolic values as are found in the fictional works about him. In fact, even his death at Maqdella was taken as a relief by some of his people and this found expression in such folk poems as the following:

The whole people of Gojam
The whole land of Tigre,
They ached under the pangs of labour;
When the English doctors treated him,
The whole lot of them were relieved.¹⁷²

After the country was liberated from the Italian occupation, however, the attitude towards Tewodros was radically changed. Writing^{ab} out the revival of Tewodros' memory, Rubenson says: "While his name in

the past was almost a byword for terror, there is a tendency among the younger generation of Ethiopians today to see him as the symbol of all that is dearest to their hearts: equal opportunity for all bold and progressive policies, and the unity and greatness of Ethiopia."¹⁷³ Given Tewodros' peculiar position, such an identification with him is not unnatural. Describing the imposing quality of Tewodros, Plowden wrote: "Some of his ideas may be imperfect, others impracticable; but a man who, rising from the clouds of Abyssinian ignorance and childishness, without assistance and without advice, had done so much, and contemplates such large designs, cannot be regarded as of an ordinary stamp."¹⁷⁴ And such a man has been able to inspire not only the youth, but literary men also. The writer Abbe declared: "At present, what is being done to revive the memory of Tewodros proves that more than with the values of the people of his time, Tewodros' aspiration is in better harmony with those of the present and future generation."¹⁷⁵ Abbe thus produces a voluminous novel in which he attempts to portray Tewodros as a savior of the people, and, by so doing, indirectly defies the oppressive regime of Haile Sellassie. The same is true with Tsegaye's play, and the author himself says: "Tewodros was used as a stick with which to hit back at the decaying royalty then."¹⁷⁶ From the dedications in the works of Berhanu and Girmachew, we can deduce that these two writers saw Tewodros as a martyr. Considered in light of Haile Sellassie's shameful act of fleeing the country and abandoning his people to the axe and spade of the Italian fascists, the portrayal of Tewodros' defiant death at Maqdella was undoubtedly a challenge to the cowardly "lion of Judah." As long as the Ethiopian people look back to their past history for national inspiration and for the reaffirmation of their pride, the lion of Maqdella can be no man of "an ordinary stamp" to ignore.

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159. Morgan, p. 263.
160. Ibid., p. 261, citing Rassam.
161. Ibid., pp. 261f.
162. Wolde Marima, Yate Tewodros Tarik, edited and published in Amharic by C. Mondon - Vidailhet with the title Chronique De Theodros II, roi, des roi d' Ethiopie, (Paris, 1971), pp. 25, 27.
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164. Sven Rubenson, The Survival of Ethiopian Independence (London, 1978), p. 259.
165. Ibid., p. 265.
166. Ibid., Harold G. Marcus, The Life and Times of Menelik II (Oxford, 1975), pp. 21, 23, 30.
167. Ibid., pp. 22, 73-76.
168. Ibid., pp. 54-56, 68.
169. Pankhurst, pp. 95-96, 100-102, 118-119.
170. Plowden, p. 456.
171. Marcus, pp. 38-40.
172. Tekle Tsadik, p. 36; see Appendix B, No. 6.
173. Rubenson, Tewodros, pp. 11-12.
174. Plowden, pp. 450-59.
175. Abbe, p. 17.
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ABSTRACT

Of all the national efforts of Ethiopian emperors, those of Tewodros are the most highly appreciated by the present public. This may be because he was the one who under difficult circumstances strove to reunite and rebuild the crumbling empire. It was he who for the first time seriously challenged the power of the nobility and the clergy and thus practically disproved the inviolability of the old status quo. Those who were aspiring for radical changes in the semi - feudal regime of Emperor Haile Sellassie therefore easily identified themselves with Tewodros. In this respect, he alone has inspired some six of the major writers to produce plays and novels which tell the story of his exploits. These works are: Ande Lennatu, T̄ayitu Bit̄ul, Warrior King, Yetewodros Enba, and Tsegaye's and Girmachew's Tewodros. There being little or no systematic study of these fictional works so far, this study has been undertaken to provide such a literary appraisal. In this context then, it has been the objective of this thesis to find out what Tewodros symbolizes for these writers and also to determine what the literary worth of these fictional works is.

As the nature of the works examined has been fictional and their contents historical, so the approaches employed have been both literary and historical. Moreover, in order to maintain the objectiveness of the thesis, the actual analysis of the literary texts has been supplemented by an introductory historical sketch of Tewodros, interviews with three authors of the works examined, and a compilation of folk poetry related to Tewodros and collected from already existing sources.

After an examination of the six works and the folk poems, this study has arrived at the conclusion that while oral literature focuses on Tewodros' personality, most written historical fictions, however, pay more attention to his national efforts. Though both written and oral historical fiction see Tewodros' violence as "ruthlessness to the enemy" and though both portray Tewodros as a symbol of heroism, written fiction alone associates with Tewodros such symbolic values as national unity, national independence, and progress. T̄ayitu Bit̄ul, however, identifies Tewodros only with tyranny. In spite of most of the written historical fictions' preoccupation with Tewodros' ideals and national efforts, they are not successful in presenting these in their proper socio-historical perspective. Most of the political


portrayals could not consistently see the traditional society as being divided into antagonistic classes with irreconcilable interests. As a result, the works attribute the opposition to Tewodros to such subjective factors as the lack of cooperation, understanding, tact and tolerance on one or the other side. Accordingly, social advance is seen not as the outcome of class conflicts, but as the making of individuals who effect reforms from above. As the focus of all the portrayals has been on the members of the ruling class, the fact of the peasantry's being the basic motive force of the traditional society has not been forcefully established.

Apart from these shortcomings most of the works also suffer from technical weaknesses which tend to undermine their literary values. These weaknesses are the slavish adaptation of the standard history of Tewodros, the lack of organic unity in their plot schemes and smooth flow in their narratives, the abstractness of their characters, and their inartistic employment of flashbacks and foreshadowings. The only works which have been able to overcome some of these weaknesses are Warrior King and Yetewodros Enba.

In spite of these weaknesses, the concern that most of these works have shown for the most epical events in the lives of the people indicates a positive trend in the development of Ethiopian historical fiction. Besides, some of these works like Yetewodros Enba do succeed in giving us **Some** insight into the nature of the forces that were opposed to Tewodros. In their technical aspects, too, some of the works like Yetewodros Enba do possess literary qualities such as the judicious selection of one representative situation in the course of whose development characters and events unfold their essential natures. The use of dreams in some of these works indicates that these are potential devices that could be fully developed and exploited in future writings. In comparison with each other, however, Yetewodros Enba and Warrior King come out as the best of these fictional works both in regard to the treatment of their themes and the employment of devices like flashback and description. While the shortcomings in many of the works may teach future writers by negative examples, their literary qualities surely serve to enrich the tradition of creative writing.

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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