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Description of document:	<b>US Department of State Self Study Guide for Ethiopia, August 2001</b>
Requested date:	11-March-2007
Released date:	25-Mar-2010
Posted date:	19-April-2010
Source of document:	Freedom of Information Act Office of Information Programs and Services A/GIS/IPS/RL U. S. Department of State Washington, D. C. 20522-8100 Fax: 202-261-8579
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United States Department of State

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

Case No.: 200701753

**MAR 25 2010**

I refer to your letter dated March 11, 2007 regarding the release of certain Department of State material under the Freedom of Information Act (Title 5 USC Section 552).

We searched for and reviewed the self study guides that you requested and have determined that all except one of them may be released. They are on the enclosed disc. One of the guides is being released with excisions.

An enclosure provides information on Freedom of Information Act exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made excisions, the applicable exemptions are marked on each document. With respect to material withheld by the Department of State, you have the right to appeal our determination within 60 days. A copy of the appeals procedures is enclosed.

We have now completed the processing of your case. If you have any questions, you may write to the Office of Information Programs and Services, SA-2, Department of State, Washington, DC 20522-8100, or telephone us at (202) 261-8484. Please be sure to refer to the case number shown above in all correspondence about this case.

We hope that the Department has been of service to you in this matter.

Sincerely,



*for* Margaret P. Grafeld, Director  
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures:  
As stated.

**63934 Federal Register/Vol. 69, No. 212**  
**Rules and Regulations**

Subpart F – Appeal Procedures

§171.52 Appeal of denial of access to, declassification of, amendment of, accounting of disclosures of, or challenge to classification of records.

- (a) *Right of administrative appeal.* Except for records that have been reviewed and withheld within the past two years or are the subject of litigation, any requester whose request for access to records, declassification of records, amendment of records, accounting of disclosure of records, or any authorized holder of classified information whose classification challenge has been denied, has a right to appeal the denial to the Department's Appeals Review Panel. This appeal right includes the right to appeal the determination by the Department that no records responsive to an access request exist in Department files. Privacy Act appeals may be made only by the individual to whom the records pertain.
- (b) *Form of appeal.* There is no required form for an appeal. However, it is essential that the appeal contain a clear statement of the decision or determination by the Department being appealed. When possible, the appeal should include argumentation and documentation to support the appeal and to contest the bases for denial cited by the Department. The appeal should be sent to: Chairman, Appeals Review Panel, c/o Appeals Officer, A/GIS/IPS/PP/LC, U.S. Department of State, SA-2, Room 8100, Washington, DC 20522-8100.
- (c) *Time limits.* The appeal should be received within 60 days of the date of receipt by the requester of the Department's denial. The time limit for response to an appeal begins to run on the day that the appeal is received. The time limit (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) for agency decision on an administrative appeal is 20 days under the FOIA (which may be extended for up to an additional 10 days in unusual circumstances) and 30 days under the Privacy Act (which the Panel may extend an additional 30 days for good cause shown). The Panel shall decide mandatory declassification review appeals as promptly as possible.
- (d) *Notification to appellant.* The Chairman of the Appeals Review Panel shall notify the appellant in writing of the Panel's decision on the appeal. When the decision is to uphold the denial, the Chairman shall include in his notification the reasons therefore. The appellant shall be advised that the decision of the Panel represents the final decision of the Department and of the right to seek judicial review of the Panel's decision, when applicable. In mandatory declassification review appeals, the Panel shall advise the requester of the right to appeal the decision to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel under §3.5(d) of E.O. 12958.

## The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

### FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Withholding specifically authorized under an Executive Order in the interest of national defense or foreign policy, and properly classified. E.O. 12958, as amended, includes the following classification categories:
  - 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
  - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
  - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
  - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
  - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
  - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
  - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
  - 1.4(h) Information on weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
  - ARMEX Arms Export Control Act, 22 USC 2778(e)
  - CIA Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)
  - EXPORT Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 App. USC 2411(c)(1)
  - FSA Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4003 & 4004
  - INA Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f)
  - IRAN Iran Claims Settlement Act, Sec 505, 50 USC 1701, note
- (b)(4) Privileged/confidential trade secrets, commercial or financial information from a person
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Information that would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
- (b)(7) Information compiled for law enforcement purposes that would:
  - (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
  - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
  - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
  - (D) disclose confidential sources
  - (E) disclose investigation techniques
  - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

### Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request, excised with the agreement of the requester

# ETHIOPIA SELF STUDY GUIDE



NATIONAL FOREIGN AFFAIRS TRAINING CENTER  
School of Professional and Area Studies  
Foreign Service Institute  
U.S. Department of State

The **Self-Study Guide: Ethiopia** is intended to provide U.S. government personnel in the foreign affairs community with an overview of important issues related to Ethiopian history, geography, politics, economics, culture, religion, media, and international relations. The guide should serve an introductory self-study resource. The topic is far too complex to be covered in depth using only the text in this guide. The reader is encouraged to explore the questions and issues introduced using the Internet and bibliographic sources provided in the text and in the resource sections. Most of the referenced material can be found on the Internet or in Foreign Service Institute or Main State Libraries.

The first edition of this guide was prepared by Dr. David H. Shinn, US Ambassador to Ethiopia from 1996 – 1999. The views expressed in this guide are those of the author and attributable sources and do not necessarily reflect official policy or positions of the Department of State or the National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC). Staff members of the NFATC made final but minor edits to the draft study submitted by Dr. Shinn. All sources used for graphics and extended quotes are public domain, from sites that explicitly say "can be used for non-profit or educational use," or are from the author's own materials.

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First Edition  
August 2001

Cover credit: Photograph of Ethiopian processional cross finial owned by author.

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## ETHIOPIAN TIMELINE

### Prehistoric Hominid Discoveries

Australopithecus ramidus teeth and bones 4.5 million years ago

Australopithecus afarensis “Lucy” 2.9—3.4 million years ago

Man-made tools 2.5 million years ago

### Pre-Aksumite Period

Egyptian fleet sent to Punt on Red Sea Coast c. 2985 – 2946 BC

Beginning of contacts across the Red Sea c. 2000 – 1000 BC

King Solomon c. 974 – 932 BC

Founding of Yeha c. 800 – 500 BC

Ptolemaic expeditions to the Ethiopian interior c. 305 – 221 BC Aksumite Period

Founding of Aksum c. 100 BC – 100 AD

First minting of coins c. 270 AD

Conversion of King Ezana to Christianity c. 330 AD

King Kaleb expedition to South Arabia c. 525 AD

Arrival of first Muslims c. 615 AD

Decline of Aksum c. 800 – 1000 AD Medieval Period

Zagwe dynasty c. 1137 – 1270

Yekuno Amlak and the “Solomonic Restoration” c. 1270

Zara Yakob 1434 – 1468

First campaign of “Gran the Left-handed” against Ethiopia 1527

Arrival of Portuguese troops 1541

Defeat of Muslim troops and death of Gran 1543

Oromo migrations c. 1540 – 1600 Gonder Period

Emperor Fasiladas 1632 – 1667

Expulsion of Roman Catholic missionaries 1632

Founding of Gonder as capital 1636

Influence of Oromo on Gonder c. 1600s

Decline of Gonder’s power c. 1730 – 1755 Beginning of Modern Period

Emperor Tewodros II 1855 – 1868

Napier Expedition and attack on Maqdala 1868

Menelik (King of Shoa) 1865 – 1889

Opening of the Suez Canal 1869

Emperor Yohannes IV 1871 – 1889

Ethiopians defeat Egyptian forces 1875 – 1876  
Ethiopians defeat the Mahdist forces at Battle of Metema 1889  
Emperor Menelik II 1889 – 1913  
Treaty of Wuchale with Italy 1889  
Ethiopians defeat Italians at Adwa 1896  
U.S. establishes diplomatic relations with Ethiopia 1903  
Ethiopia joins League of Nations 1923  
Italy signs treaty of friendship with Ethiopia 1928  
Coronation of Haile Selassie 1930  
Fascist Italy invades Ethiopia 1935 -- 1936  
Ethiopia, Britain and others defeat Italy 1941  
British military administration of Ethiopia 1941 – 1944 Post World War II Ethiopia  
Founding member of the United Nations 1945  
Ethiopia sends troops to fight with UN in Korea 1950 – 1953  
Federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea 1952  
U.S. and Ethiopia sign Mutual Defense Agreement 1953  
Revised constitution approved 1955  
Beginning of Eritrean independence movement 1958  
Failed coup d’etat against Haile Selassie 1960  
Ethiopia incorporates Eritrea as a province 1962  
Organization of African Unity puts HQ in Addis Ababa 1963  
Conflict with neighboring Somalia 1964  
Serious famine in Ethiopia 1972 – 1974  
Haile Selassie deposed by left-wing military officers 1974  
Mengistu Haile Mariam leads socialist regime 1974  
Beginning of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) 1975  
Ogaden war with Somalia 1977 – 1978  
“Red Terror” Campaign against political dissidents 1977 – 1978  
Serious drought in Ethiopia 1984 – 1985  
Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front forms 1989  
EPRDF and Eritreans force Mengistu into exile 1991  
Meles Zenawi leads EPRDF in Ethiopia 1991  
Isaias Afwerki takes charge of Eritrea 1991  
Eritrea opts for independence 1993  
EPRDF wins national elections 1995  
War breaks out between Eritrea and Ethiopia 1998  
EPRDF wins national elections 2000  
Ethiopia defeats Eritrea on battlefield 2000  
UN forces monitor Eritrea-Ethiopia border 2001  
Schism develops within TPLF 2001



Totems from the Konso ethnic group.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this self-study guide is to provide basic background information on Ethiopia for persons being assigned there. The guide tries to present the information in a way that individuals can obtain a better understanding of the country and, as a result, have a more productive and pleasant tour of duty. You are encouraged to think about the questions raised at the end of each section and pursue those that interest you, drawing on resource materials cited in the paper. Various websites that contain current information relevant to many of the questions raised below follow at the end of the paper.

## GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

### MEANING OF NAME

Ethiopia takes its name from the Greek meaning “the land of burnt faces.” The name was in use by the Greeks as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC when Ptolemy II made hunting expeditions to Ethiopia. Inscriptions on monuments in northern Ethiopia suggest that the Ethiopic syllabic writing system is at least 3,000 years old. There are numerous references to Ethiopia in the Bible, but it is not always clear that they refer to what is present day Ethiopia. In the eyes of early foreign writers, Ethiopia sometimes served as a reference point for people who lived in many parts of Africa far from Ethiopia’s current borders.

Common use in earlier times of the term Abyssinia for Ethiopia also tends to confuse the issue. Abyssinia comes from a corruption of the Arabic word *habesh*, which means “mixed breed.” The Habeshat people from the southwest coast of Arabia and Yemen colonized the west coast of the Red Sea, now Eritrea and northern Ethiopia. Abyssinia makes its first appearance in a European work in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a book by an English writer. Strictly speaking, Abyssinia applies only to the ethnic population roughly coincident with the former Aksumite State discussed under the history section. Ethiopia is a more suitable term for all of the language groups living within the present borders of the country.

## LOCATION AND SIZE

At the center of the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia shares a boundary with five countries—Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan. The borders with Somalia and Sudan are about 1,000 miles long while those with Eritrea (567 miles), Kenya (512 miles) and Djibouti (209 miles) are considerably shorter. The back door to the Persian Gulf and an area of frequent conflict, the Horn of Africa is of more than passing strategic interest to the United States.

At 435,000 square miles, Ethiopia is larger than California and Texas combined. It also has a diversity of topography that rivals these two states. California and Texas have, however, one extremely important feature missing in Ethiopia—a coastline and access to the sea. Ethiopia lost its Red Sea coastline in 1993 when Eritrea became de jure independent. Until the outbreak of war with Eritrea in 1998, Ethiopia was largely dependent on the Eritrean port of Assab and the port of Djibouti for the movement of its imports and exports. Since 1998 and the closure of the border with Eritrea, Ethiopia has relied on Djibouti and looked into the possibility of increasing trade through ports in Somaliland and Sudan.

## IMPORTANT PHYSICAL FEATURES

Ethiopia’s bedrock constitutes part of the earth’s first continent of Gondwanaland, of which Africa is the largest intact remnant. There are several distinctive features about Ethiopia’s topography. Starting at Lake Stephanie, now a dry lakebed on Ethiopia’s southern border with Kenya, and continuing northward to the Danakil Depression bordering Djibouti and Eritrea, the Great Rift Valley dissects the country. A massive highland plateau covers most of Ethiopia to the north and west of the Rift. A smaller highland plateau extends into a significant part of Ethiopia south and east of the Rift. Lakes punctuate the Rift Valley in the south and center while the Awash River and Danakil Depression are the main features in the north. Most of Ethiopia’s periphery to the west, south and east is an area of low altitude, hot temperatures, minimal rainfall and sparse population. As a result of this situation, it is common to refer in a very general way to two Ethiopian cultures constituting a variety of ethnic groups—one living in the highlands and the other in the bottom of the Rift and the lowlands on the periphery of the country. The northernmost part of the highland plateau is Ethiopia’s historical core.

Ethiopia’s geographical diversity manifests itself in many ways. Returning to the comparison with California and Texas, Mt. Dashen, located in the Simien mountains northeast of the zonal capital of Gonder, rises to 15,158 feet and is the fourth highest mountain in Africa. Mt. Whitney, the highest

mountain in the lower 48 states, has an altitude of 14,494 feet. Ethiopia has more than 20 mountains with an altitude of at least 13,000 feet. The Danakil Depression, one of the hottest places on earth, is also the lowest point in Ethiopia at a minus 410 feet. The lowest place in Death Valley, California, is minus 282 feet. The Danakil is a large triangle-shaped basin with numerous volcanoes and well known for its lack of water and inhospitable climate. Ethiopia has more spectacular escarpments than those found in Texas or perhaps anywhere else in the United States other than the Grand Canyon. At the end of the long rains, they are verdant and give rise to thousands of beautiful waterfalls. Ethiopia hosts one of the world's larger lakes, Tana, and a small part of another, Rudolph also known as Turkana, most of which is in neighboring Kenya.

Ethiopia is blessed with rivers, not surprising in view of its high escarpments and mountains that capture the moist air coming from the Atlantic and equatorial Africa to the west and especially evaporation from the huge swamp in Southern Sudan known as the Sudd. The most important of these rivers is the Blue Nile, locally called the Abay, which flows for 1,000 miles through Ethiopia and Sudan before joining the White Nile at Khartoum, capital of Sudan. By comparison, the Rio Grande, which originates in Colorado and forms the border between Texas and Mexico, is almost 1,900 miles long. From its source at Lake Tana until it joins with the waters of the White Nile and reaches the Mediterranean, the Blue Nile flows for 2,750 miles. The Blue Nile and several other tributaries originating in Ethiopia contribute 86 percent of the water that ultimately reaches the Aswan Dam in Egypt. The importance of this fact will be noted later. This powerful river also contributes one of Ethiopia's most important tourist attractions, the Blue Nile Falls where water from Lake Tana drops over the edge of a lava flow, creating a spectacular sight at the end of the rainy season. Ethiopia's other major rivers are the Awash, Omo and Wabe Shebele. The Awash flows east and literally disappears in the saline lakes near the border with Djibouti. The Omo feeds into Lake Rudolf and the Wabe Shebele flows into Somalia, where it dissipates in the hot sand before reaching the Indian Ocean.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES AND LAND**

Not particularly blessed with natural resources, Ethiopia does produce modest quantities of gold and has small reserves of platinum, copper and potash. There are large reserves of unexploited natural gas located in the politically unstable and isolated Ogaden Region, inhabited by Somalis. Some of the rich oil fields now being exploited in neighboring Sudan may extend across the border into Ethiopia. Ethiopia does have significant hydropower potential. As a result of many years of poor agricultural techniques, deforestation and over-grazing, heavy rain in the highlands has severely eroded much of Ethiopia's soil. Only an estimated 12 percent of the land is arable. Some 40 percent are permanent pasturage of varying quality and 25 percent consists of generally sparse forests and woodland. The remainder has minimal productive value.

## **CLIMATE**

Befitting its large size and varied topography, Ethiopia has many different climates. As Ethiopia lies just north of the equator, the longest days are in June and July when there are about 45 minutes more daylight

than in December and January. The capital of Addis Ababa, which is about 8,000 feet above sea level, has a temperate climate throughout the year. The annual low temperature is about 40 degrees and the annual high is about 75 degrees. There is usually very little rain in the capital from October through May. The rain is normally heavy and occasionally continuous for several days at a time from June through September. But even during the rainy season, there are sunny and clear days.

Temperatures are icy cold in the high Simien and Bale mountain ranges where there are occasional frosts and even snow. Much of the highlands experience a temperate climate like that found in Addis Ababa while some of the lowlands have torrid temperatures. Differences in rainfall are equally dramatic. During the primary rainy season there can be torrential downpours in the highlands while the lowlands usually experience minimal precipitation and sometimes go an entire year with virtually no rain. As one climbs from the lowlands to the highlands, of course, the temperature and rainfall change accordingly. The difference between a good crop year and a bad one often depends as much on the timing of the rain and its location as it does on the annual amount. In fact, some of the crop growing areas located at the highest altitudes of the country occasionally have a bad year because there is too much rather than too little rain.

## **VEGETATION, NATIONAL PARKS AND TRAVEL**

Ethiopia's vegetation is as varied as its topography and climate. The southern and western highlands still have some impressive indigenous forests. Towards the end of the heavy rains, wild flowers blanket parts of the central highlands. The northeastern highlands of Tigray are drier and thinly vegetated. The Rift Valley south of Addis Ababa is dominated by grasses and acacia trees. The western lowlands have lush vegetation after the rains. The vast eastern and southern lowlands inhabited by the Somali, Afar and Boran constitute a brown, thinly vegetated desert during most of the year.

Although there are ten national parks in Ethiopia, most of them are poorly administered and disappointing as compared to parks in East Africa. Simien and Bale National Parks are the most interesting. The rare Simien fox and mountain nyala can be seen in both and Simien National Park is the home of Ethiopia's rarest endemic herbivore, the Walia ibex. The bird life is spectacular in many parts of Ethiopia. Although a variety of other animals can be seen, their numbers are generally small. There has been too much human encroachment, civil war and lack of funding for park maintenance.

The bottom line is that Ethiopia's geography is among the most diverse, interesting and beautiful on the African continent. It changes dramatically from the dry season to the rainy season and from the lowlands to the highlands. Anyone who is assigned to Addis Ababa for more than a few months and does not see some of the rest of Ethiopia misses a unique opportunity. In order to fully appreciate the diversity of the topography, flora and fauna, trips by road are recommended over those by air whenever possible.

### **Self-Study Questions for Further Exploration**

- What are the political and economic implications for Ethiopia now that it is landlocked and no longer controls access to the sea?

- What problems do Ethiopia's Rift Valley and high escarpments pose for economic development of the country?
- Looking back historically, were the Ethiopian highlands a plus or minus in ensuring independence of the country?
- To what extent has Ethiopia's climate been the cause of its periodic famines?

### **Resource Materials for Further Study**

(Note: The Ethiopian first name is the family name; these sections list Ethiopian authors by first name.)

- Mesfin Wolde Mariam. The Geography of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa. Berhane Selam Press, 1972.
- Wuhib Muluneh. "Land-lockedness and Dependency on Coastal Countries: The Case of Ethiopia." Geopolitics and International Boundaries. Vol. 2, No. 1 (1997): pp. 56-68.
- Nicol, Clive W. From the Roof of Africa. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.
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- Alemneh Dejene. Environment, Famine, and Politics in Ethiopia. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990.
- Clay, Jason W. and Bonnie K. Holcomb. Politics and the Ethiopian Famine 1984-1985. Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival Inc., 1986.
- Marsden-Smedley, Philip. A Far Country: Travels in Ethiopia. London: Century, 1990.
- Henze, Paul B. Ethiopian Journeys: Travels in Ethiopia 1969-72. London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1977.
- Gordon, Frances Linzee. Lonely Planet Guide to Ethiopia, Eritrea & Djibouti. Melbourne: Lonely Planet Publications, 2000.





Ethiopian Orthodox religious material.

## HISTORY

Ethiopia may be the origin of humankind. The earliest hominid teeth and bones found to date come from the Afar-inhabited section of the northern Rift Valley.

Ethiopia has the longest history as an independent country of any in Sub-Saharan Africa and one of the longest in the world. Unlike the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia also has a rich written history as a result of early church records and accounts from numerous travelers and explorers who passed through the country. Together with Liberia, it is the only country in Sub-Saharan Africa never to be colonized; Italian military occupation from 1936-41 hardly qualifies as colonization.

## CRADLE OF HUMANKIND

Recent discoveries in the Rift Valley's Central Awash region of hominid, i.e. erect-walking human ancestors, teeth and bone fragments date back about 4.5 million years. This takes the human chain further back than any other discoveries to date and suggests, until contrary evidence is found, that Ethiopia leads the search for the origins of humankind. These discoveries during the 1990s are known as *Australopithecus ramidus*. The partial skeleton of the more famous "Lucy," whose name comes from a Beatles' song popular at the time of her discovery in 1974, is known scientifically as *Australopithecus afarensis* and dates back 2.9 to 3.4 million years. Lucy's diminutive skeleton resides in a safe in Addis Ababa; interested persons can view a replica plaster cast at the National Museum. Paleoanthropologists found Lucy in the Rift Valley just north of the more recent discovery of *ramidus* material. This search area has become the most exciting in the world for paleoanthropologists seeking the earliest hominid evidence. Once a lush, tropical valley, there are layers of hominid teeth, bones and tools in the Awash dating from at least 4.5 million years until several thousand years ago.

## PRE-AKSUMITE CIVILIZATION

Linguistic evidence suggests that both Cushitic and Omotic speakers were living in Ethiopia by about 7,000 BC. These two linguistic families spawned a number of languages still spoken in Ethiopia today. Cushitic gave rise to Agew in the central and northern highlands and, to the east and southeast, Saho, Afar, Somali, Sidamo and Oromo. Omotic led to Wolaita and Gemu-Gofa. The Cushitic and Omotic-speaking peoples collected wild grasses and other plants for thousands of years before cultivating those they liked best. The descendants of these peoples came into contact with migrants from Arabia. Northern Ethiopia probably established contact with southwestern Arabia across the Red Sea by 2000 BC. Persons from Arabia began to arrive in Ethiopia by the first millennium BC, bringing with them Semitic speech, writing and a stone building tradition. From these contacts the Ge'ez language, a forerunner of Amharic and spoken to this day by Ethiopian Orthodox priests, developed. The newcomers joined with indigenous inhabitants, producing a pre-Aksumite culture. The most significant structure remaining from this period is the stone temple of Yeha located just north of Aksum. Believed to date from between 800 to 500 BC, it may have been Ethiopia's first capital. The exterior shell can be visited today; the interior walls, floors and roof have disappeared.

## THE AKSUMITE STATE

A unique African civilization emerged at the beginning of the first millennium AD in the northern highlands of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Aksum, located in present day Tigray Region, flourished for almost seven centuries and became one of the most powerful kingdoms of the ancient world. The port of Adulis in Eritrea was also an important Aksumite trading center with the Mediterranean and India. Even pre-Aksumite Yeha continued to be influential. Aksum thrived on trade. It exported frankincense, grain, animal skins, rhino horn and ivory. It imported from Egypt, Arabia and India cloth, glassware and iron and wine and olive oil from Syria and Italy.

The Aksumite State was strongest between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries; the kingdom extended across the Red Sea into southern Arabia and west into the Nile Valley of Sudan. Aksum was rich, well organized and technically and artistically advanced. It produced coinage in bronze, silver and gold and erected extraordinary monuments, some of which stand today. Christianity came to Ethiopia during Aksumite rule and helped to transform society. It not only shaped spiritual and intellectual life, but also influenced its culture, social life, art and literature.

Islam from the Arabian Peninsula had a significant impact on Aksum during the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Members of the Prophet's family are believed to have taken refuge in Aksum in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, leading to cordial relations between Aksum and Islam. The Arabs considered the Aksumite state as an equal with the Islamic state, Byzantine Empire and China. But the expansion of Islam in Egypt and the Levant reduced the influence of Aksum and hastened the isolation of its church. Trade and the economy declined and hard times set in. After the mid-seventh century, Aksumite and Muslim fleets skirmished in the Red Sea; Islam gained the upper hand. To the present day, however, Aksum remains a religious and spiritual capital for many of Ethiopia's Orthodox population.

## THE ZAGWE DYNASTY

Following the decline of Aksum in about the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century, power in the region shifted southward. Military colonies drawing on Aksumite culture, the Semitic language and Christianity began to develop around the Agew population. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, a post-Aksumite Christian kingdom emerged in the central northern highlands and extended to the Red Sea ports of Adulis and even Zeila in present day Somalia. During the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, this culture expanded throughout that part of Ethiopia inhabited by the Amhara people. A new dynasty known as the Zagwe and based in the Agew district of Lasta came to power in about 1137. Strong Christians, the Zagwe focused on the construction of new churches and monasteries. The Zagwe kings built the amazing rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, a must stop for anyone assigned to Ethiopia. Perhaps because the center of power was farther from the coast, less is known about Zagwe than Aksum. From the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church emphasized the Old Testament and the Judaic roots of the church. This differentiated it from European Christianity and even from the faith of other Monophysites such as the Copts. Unhappiness with rule from Lasta developed in Eritrea, Tigray and among the Amhara. An Amhara noble, Yekuno Amlak, overthrew the last Zagwe leader about 1270 and proclaimed himself as king. More than 130 years of Zagwe rule came to an end.

## THE “SOLOMONIC LINE” AND RISE OF THE AMHARA

Yekuno Amlak “restored” the “Solomonic” dynasty because it claimed descent from both Aksum and King Solomon in ancient Israel. According to Ethiopian tradition, the lineage of Aksumite kings originated with the offspring of an alleged union between Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The belief developed that royal legitimacy derived from descent in a line of Solomonic kings. All subsequent Ethiopian kings traced their ancestry to Yekuno Amlak and, consequently, to Solomon and Sheba. Shoa province became the geographical and political center of the Christian kingdom. Internecine family conflict during Yekuno Amlak’s reign and immediately after was resolved about 1300. In order to avoid these difficult succession problems, future monarchs had all of their sons imprisoned except for the designated heir.

A succession of Amhara leaders expanded the territory under their control. One of the most important was Zara Yakob, who reigned from 1434 to 1468. He conquered several neighboring Islamic territories, strengthened central control over what was previously a highly decentralized administrative system, sponsored a reorganization of the church and encouraged the flowering of Ge’ez literature. The unity of the state depended on an emperor’s ability to control the governors of individual kingdoms. Zara Yacob moved this process forward. The early 15<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed the arrival of the first official European delegation and Ethiopian visits to Europe.

## THE ISLAMIC AND OROMO CHALLENGES

Islamic raids on Christian Ethiopia from the Somali port of Zeila plagued the country during the

1490s. The Ethiopians put them down, but early in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al Ghazi, known as “Gran the Lefthanded” by his Christian enemies, rallied a diverse group of Muslims in a jihad designed to end Christian power in the Ethiopian highlands. Gran defeated the Ethiopian emperor and by 1532 had overrun most of eastern and southern Ethiopia. At the request of the emperor, Portugal sent a force of 400 well armed soldiers to deal with Gran. The Portuguese army and the Ethiopians experienced defeat near Lake Tana. A new emperor, aided by the remnant of the Portuguese force, raised a large army, defeated the Muslim army and, in the process, killed Gran in 1543. Thousands of people lost their lives in the Christian-Muslim wars, which were also a setback to earlier cordial relations between Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia. Already weakened by the Muslim attacks, the Christian kingdom became pressured to the south and southeast by migrations of the pastoral Oromo people. In a series of massive population movements during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Oromo penetrated much of the southern and northern highlands as well as the lowlands to the east seeking new land and pastures. Many Oromo mixed with the Amhara, became Christians and developed a stake in the system. The Oromos generally retained, however, their language and sense of identity. The Oromo migrations weakened both Christian and Muslim power. The effect was to leave the Ethiopian state fragmented and much reduced in size, with an alien population in its midst. The Oromo are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia today; the Amhara and other ethnic groups are still coming to terms with the political implications of this situation.

## **THE GONDER STATE**

Portuguese Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in Ethiopia in the mid-1550s. Following their failed efforts to convert the Ethiopians from their Monophysite beliefs, Emperor Fasiladas, who reigned from 1632 to 1667, expelled all the Roman Catholic missionaries. The problems caused by the missionaries, especially the Jesuits, left a deep hostility toward foreign Christians that continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fasiladas sought to reassert central authority and to reinvigorate the Solomonic monarchy and the Orthodox Church. Ruling from Gonder, the state experienced a flowering of architecture and art that is still visible today. Successive Gonder kings relied upon Oromo military units to counter challenges to their rule. At one point, Oromo became the primary language at the court and Oromo leaders reached the highest positions in the nobility.

Gonder became consumed with court intrigue and faced a serious challenge from Tigray. The central government self-destructed and emperors became little more than puppets in the hands of rival feudal lords and their armies. From 1769 until 1855, the central kingdom ceased to exist as a coherent entity. Autonomous nobles engaged in constant warfare.

## **EMPEROR TEWODROS II**

Crowned emperor in 1855, Tewodros II is the first leader of what is generally known as modern Ethiopia. Ruling from the natural fortress of Maqdala, Tewodros established a national army, arms factory and road network. He worked to reform the land system, abolish slavery and promote Amharic as the national language in place of Ge’ez. His reforms met strong opposition from the clergy and rival lords. Fanatical in his response, Tewodros solicited British support for his modernization programs.

When this failed, he imprisoned some British functionaries in his court at Maqdala. In 1868 Sir Robert Napier led a British military force of 32,000 men to confront Tewodros. An American journalist, Henry Stanley, accompanied Napier to Maqdala. Having superior numbers and far better equipped, Napier freed the hostages at Maqdala, looted its royal treasure and torched the stronghold. Tewodros committed suicide; he left a disorganized kingdom. His defeat weakened Ethiopia, giving other potential European colonizers ideas.

## **EMPEROR YOHANNES IV**

A battle for succession followed the death of Tewodros. A Tigrayan prevailed and was crowned Emperor Yohannes IV in 1872. He supported the church and encouraged a form of federalism. He required local lords to recognize his power and pay taxes to the state. After obtaining the support of his subjects, Yohannes proved that he was also a good soldier. Egyptian forces advanced into Ethiopia from Eritrea. Yohannes drew them into battle and defeated them convincingly in 1875 and 1876. Several retired American officers from both sides of the American Civil War served as advisers to the Egyptian troops in Ethiopia.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 increased the strategic value of the Red Sea and European interest in Ethiopia. Italy took control in 1885 of the port of Massawa in Eritrea and stopped all arms destined for Ethiopia. On the west side of Ethiopia, the forces of the Mahdi filled the void left by Egypt and overran Sudan. A large Islamic army of Mahdists arrived in Ethiopia in 1888, sacked Gonder and burned many of its churches. The following year Yohannes met and defeated the Mahdist forces at the Battle of Metema on the Sudanese border. Yohannes died in the battle.

## **EMPEROR MENELIK II**

Menelik II claimed the throne in 1889. Some ten years later he established control over much of present-day Ethiopia and gained recognition from most of the European colonial powers of the empire's boundaries. Menelik established his royal encampment at Addis Ababa, which means "new flower" and became the country's capital. A forward-looking leader, Menelik authorized a French company to build a railroad from the port of Djibouti to Addis Ababa. He embarked on military conquests to the south that more than doubled the size of the empire. He consolidated his power by awarding newly conquered land to his soldiers and those he appointed to office.

The European powers, however, were casting an increasingly covetous eye on Ethiopia. Menelik considered Italy the greatest threat and in order to forestall imperial designs on Ethiopia signed the Treaty of Wuchale with the Italians in 1889. Disagreement over the meaning of the treaty, of which there were versions in Amharic and Italian, caused Menelik to renounce it later. Relations became further strained after Italy established a colony in neighboring Eritrea and penetrated Somali territory. Great Britain agreed that Ethiopia should fall within the Italian sphere of influence while France encouraged Menelik to oppose the Italian threat. Italian forces invaded Tigray from Eritrea late in 1885. During a pitched battle the following year near the Tigrayan capital of Adwa, Menelik humiliated the Italian forces, inflicting the

first defeat on a European power by an African army. Italy then recognized Ethiopian independence and Ethiopia accepted the Italian colony in Eritrea. By 1908 the European powers had accepted Ethiopia's borders except for those with Italian Somalia. Menelik had a debilitating stroke in 1906. A Council of Ministers assisted in the management of state affairs.

## **EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I**

Following Menelik's death in 1913, his grandson briefly held power, to be replaced soon after by Menelik's daughter. Ras Tafari, later to become emperor, served during this period as the prince regent. He achieved a major diplomatic success in 1923 when Ethiopia gained entry to the League of Nations. Ras Tafari took effective control of the government in 1926. He signed a twenty-year treaty of friendship with Italy two years later. He established the Bank of Ethiopia in 1930 and signed the same year an agreement with Britain, France and Italy that gave Ethiopia the right to procure arms for use against external aggression. Crowned emperor in 1930, Ras Tafari took the name Haile Selassie I. The following year he introduced Ethiopia's first written constitution. He encouraged reforms aimed at modernizing the country and decreasing the authority of the nobility. He established reliable provincial rulers throughout the territory inhabited by the Amhara as well as most of the rest of the country. The only traditional leader capable of challenging his authority was the leader in Tigray.

## **MUSSOLINI'S INVASION AND ITALIAN OCCUPATION**

Italy reaffirmed its 1928 treaty of friendship with Ethiopia as late as 1934. But Italy wanted to colonize Ethiopia and the international climate of the mid-1930s suggested that Italy could get away with aggression. Italy provoked an incident in 1934 at Walwal in Ethiopia's Somali-inhabited Ogaden region bordering Italian Somalia. A relatively minor fight ensued between Ethiopian and Italian military units. The following year, the League of Nations exonerated both parties in the Walwal incident. Mussolini decided, however, that he had enough of an excuse to attack Ethiopia and did so without a declaration of war in 1935, from both Eritrea and Italian Somalia. The League of Nations declared Italy an aggressor but took no effective action. Superior Italian armaments and chemical weapons overwhelmed the Ethiopians, who had difficulty obtaining adequate weapons. Some Tigrayan and Oromo units defected to the Italians. In spite of significant disadvantages, Ethiopian forces fought on for seven months. Haile Selassie went into exile in early May 1936 and Italian forces entered Addis Ababa. The Emperor made a powerful speech before the League of Nations the following month where he declared two choices before the world: support for collective security or international lawlessness. Following occupation, Italy merged Ethiopia with Eritrea and Somalia to create the new colonial territory of Italian East Africa. It quickly removed and transported to Rome the Aksum stele, which Italy recently agreed to return to Aksum. About 60,000 Italian workers entered Ethiopia to improve the country's infrastructure. One of the legacies was a much improved road system. Ethiopians strongly resisted Italian rule; Mussolini's response was brutal. After an attempt on the life of the Italian viceroy in Addis Ababa in 1937, the Fascists conducted a three-day massacre in the city that killed several thousand Ethiopians. The Ethiopian patriotic movement drew support from all parts of the country while Haile Selassie remained in exile. Although Italy controlled all of the major towns, it never conquered the entire country. The outbreak of World War II in 1939 changed

the course of events in Ethiopia. Italy's declaration of war against Britain led the latter to offer assistance to Ethiopian patriots operating on the Sudan-Ethiopia border. By the beginning of 1941 Britain launched three major attacks on Italian East Africa, including one led by Haile Selassie. The emperor and his forces entered Addis Ababa victorious on May 5, 1941. The Italian occupation was over although the Italians were not entirely pushed out of Ethiopia until early the next year. There was a British military administration in Ethiopia for the remainder of the war, but it left responsibility for internal affairs with the emperor. An Anglo-Ethiopian agreement in 1942 confirmed Ethiopia's status as a sovereign state.

## **POST-WAR ETHIOPIA**

There was considerable post-war reconstruction and reform in the 1940s and 1950s. American assistance grew rapidly. Ethiopia established a new government bank, a national currency and the first national airline, Ethiopian, which became one of the most successful in Africa. Ethiopia built new schools and opened its first institution of higher education, Haile Selassie I University now known as Addis Ababa University.

Efforts at reform met with mixed success. The emperor was not able to implement significant land reform, much of which remained in the hands of the nobility and the church. The emperor put in place a revised constitution in 1955. It made provision for an elected Chamber of Deputies while the emperor continued to appoint the members of the Senate. The government remained autocratic and real power remained with the emperor. The patriarch in Alexandria, Egypt, had traditionally named the patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Haile Selassie changed the system in 1956, naming the patriarch himself.

Serious efforts at modernization did not stem dissatisfaction in some quarters over the slow pace of reform and the autocratic rule of the emperor. Taking advantage of a state visit to Brazil in 1960, the emperor's Imperial Bodyguard staged a coup d'etat. Initially successful in Addis Ababa, the rebels seized the crown prince and more than twenty cabinet ministers and other government leaders. The stated intent of the coup makers was the establishment of a government that would improve the economic, social, and political position of the general population. They failed, however, to gain widespread popular support; army and air force units remained loyal to the emperor, who quickly returned to Ethiopia. But the unsuccessful coup did put into question the ability of the imperial system to withstand the political changes sweeping through Africa.

## **COPING WITH CHANGE**

The two regions posing the greatest challenge to the empire were Eritrea, which after the defeat of the Italians was under British military administration until 1952, and the Somali-inhabited Ogaden. The United Nations installed in 1952 an autonomous Eritrean government linked to Ethiopia through a loose federal structure under the emperor's sovereignty. From the beginning, Ethiopia took steps to incorporate Eritrea more fully into the empire. The Eritrean Assembly, many of whose members had been accused of taking bribes, voted unanimously in 1962 to change Eritrea's status to a province of Ethiopia. This decision energized Eritrean groups that already opposed incorporation into Ethiopia. An armed conflict

between these groups and Ethiopian forces plagued Haile Selassie and his successor until the Eritreans achieved military victory almost 30 years later.

After the British left the Ogaden in 1948, Ethiopia moved back with its administrators. Inhabited by nomadic Somalis in a region where borders are not clear, the new Republic of Somalia, which became independent in 1960, immediately claimed the Ogaden and Haud areas of Ethiopia. This Somali policy, supported by some Somalis living inside Ethiopia, led to periodic conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia that continues up to the present.

In addition to confronting problems in Eritrea and the Ogaden, Haile Selassie experienced growing opposition in the fourteen years of his rule after the failed 1960 coup. His efforts at major tax reform ended largely in defeat. Some parts of society wanted more rapid reform while others strongly resisted any change. Student demonstrations became more common. Inflation and corruption persisted at a time when Haile Selassie was growing old and was less in control of the situation. The final straw was a famine in 1972-74 causing the death of as many as 200,000 peasants. The government botched its handling of the famine and even tried to hide it from the outside world. The pieces were in place for dramatic change.

## **THE 1974 REVOLUTION AND THE DERG**

Taking advantage of a deteriorating situation in the country, a group of left-wing military officers known as the Derg or Committee seized power in 1974. They held the emperor under house arrest for about a year before murdering him. An internal power struggle and clashes over ideology haunted the revolution initially. Before the end of its first year, one faction killed the first leader of the Derg and more than fifty other prominent individuals. Major Mengistu Haile Mariam emerged as the leader of the Derg. He embarked on a socialist path and made preparations to launch a new offensive against the growing threat of Eritrean secession. The Derg also deposed the patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The Derg's ultimate goal was the creation of a one party system. It nationalized all land, abolished tenancy and put peasants in charge of enforcement. The Derg laid little groundwork for this radical change and strong opposition developed in some areas. Internal political groups began to challenge Mengistu for control of the revolution. He dealt severely with his opposition. The most infamous campaign, known as the "Red Terror," occurred in 1977-78 and resulted in the death of perhaps 100,000 political opponents.

The radicalization of the regime coincided with a growing threat from an indigenous Somali liberation group supported by neighboring Somalia. Mengistu turned in desperation to the Soviet Union for support having given up on the United States, which had had close ties to the emperor. Soviet military assistance and advisers together with Cuban troops poured into Ethiopia and stopped the Somali threat. In the process, however, Mengistu became a hostage to the Soviet Union. In the meantime, Eritrean groups stepped up their opposition to the regime and a serious, new threat developed in Tigray—the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Other dissident groups among the Somali and Oromo also put increasing pressure on the Derg.



As Ethiopia became more closely tied to the Soviet Union, it announced that its single political party was a genuine communist party and the government took on the trappings of a Marxist-Leninist state. A horrific famine followed the drought of 1984-85 in which hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians died. Failed government resettlement campaigns, communal farms, “villageisation” programs and war with the Eritreans and TPLF aggravated the disaster. Locust and grasshopper plagues followed the drought. Food production continued to decline. The economy was in a free fall by the late 1980s. The Eritreans and TPLF steadily gained territory in the north. By 1988 Ethiopia had lost most of Eritrea and the TPLF controlled most of Tigray.

The various opposition groups in Ethiopia united to form the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1989. Pressure by the EPRDF throughout much of the country, including the vicinity of Addis Ababa, and the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front left Mengistu in a precarious military position. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and changes in Eastern Europe left him without allies. With the economy in shambles, Mengistu fled in 1991 to Zimbabwe where he remains to the present day. The EPRDF entered Addis Ababa days later and took control of the government.

## **THE EPRDF GOVERNMENT**

Meles Zenawi emerged as the leader of a transitional government in Ethiopia while Isaias Afwerki assumed control of Eritrea and established a provisional government. The provisional government administered Eritrea until 1993 when Eritreans voted overwhelmingly for independence. Ethiopia accepted the new government in Eritrea. Meles pledged to oversee the formation of a multi-party democracy in Ethiopia, which had again become a land-locked country with the loss of Eritrea. Ethiopians elected a constituent assembly in 1994; the same year it adopted a constitution for the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Elections for Ethiopia’s first popularly chosen national parliament and regional legislatures took place in 1995. Most opposition parties chose to boycott them, ensuring a landslide victory for the EPRDF.

The EPRDF government of Prime Minister Meles has promoted a policy of ethnic federalism, devolving significant powers to regional, ethnically based authorities. Ethiopia has nine semi-autonomous administrative regions that have the power to raise and spend their own revenues. The economy has performed reasonably well under the EPRDF in spite of periodic drought conditions. It restored cordial relations with the West and its neighbors. Opposition to its rule continues, however, from political parties such as the Oromo Liberation Front and the All Amhara People’s Organization. Human rights organizations continue to criticize the EPRDF’s record. Ethiopia faced a major challenge following the outbreak of conflict along the border with Eritrea in 1998. After much loss of life and financial expense, it only came to an end following an Ethiopian military victory in 2000. The United Nations has a monitoring force in place in the area of conflict, preparatory to delimiting and demarcating the border.

### **Self-Study Questions for Further Exploration**

- Do Ethiopians today give much thought to the fact that Ethiopia may be the origin of humankind?

- How does Ethiopia's long and proud history affect domestic politics today?
- How constant have Ethiopia's borders been over the millennia?
- What has been the impact of Ethiopia's early contacts with Islam on its current relations with the Islamic world?
- What is the impact of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Oromo migrations on Ethiopian politics today?
- In view of Italy's checkered historical relationship with Ethiopia, what do you think is the nature of relations between the two countries now?
- Did the close American relationship with Emperor Haile Selassie complicate its links with successor governments?
- Disagreement over ownership of land has been a theme in Ethiopian history. Where does it stand today?
- Ethiopia has never completely pacified Somali inhabited areas and irredentism remains a potential threat from Somalia. What are the prospects for bringing real peace to Somali Region of Ethiopia?

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## POPULATION AND CULTURE

### POPULATION

Ethiopia had an estimated population in 2001 of more than 64 million people, making it the third most populous country on the continent after Nigeria and Egypt. There is some disagreement over the current population growth rate, due in no small part to the imprecise impact of the growing number of HIV/AIDS cases on the death rate. The World Bank put the growth rate at 2.4 percent in 1999, down from 2.9 percent in 1995. On the other hand, the CIA World Factbook suggests the growth rate for 2000 was 2.76 percent. Whatever the actual percentage today, it is probably safe to assume that it is declining. The World Bank believes life expectancy at birth dropped from 44.1 years in 1995 to 42.4 years in 1999. Again the CIA World Factbook uses a higher figure of just over 45 years for 2000. About 17 percent of

Ethiopia's population now lives in an urban setting, still a relatively low figure even for a developing country.

## LANGUAGE GROUPS

Ethiopia has a more complicated language and ethnic composition than most countries in Africa. This is perhaps not surprising in view of the fact that it is the third most populous country. It has been further complicated by a considerable amount of intermarriage in certain areas. There are at least 70 languages spoken as mother tongues, a few by many millions and some by only a few thousand persons. The number of distinct social units exceeds the number of languages because some separate communities speak the same language. More than 50 of the languages spoken in Ethiopia fall within three families--Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic--of the Afro-Asiatic super language family. The remainder speaks languages found in the Nilo-Saharan super language family.

Most speakers of Ethio-Semitic languages live in the highlands at the center and north of the country. Persons who speak East Cushitic languages tend to be located in the highlands and the lowlands of the center and south while other Cushitic speakers live in the center and north. Omotic speakers are concentrated in the southern part of Ethiopia, especially in the area north of the western part of Kenya. The Nilo-Saharan speakers live in the southwest and west along the border with Sudan.

Amharic is the most important of the Ethio-Semitic languages. The official language of the empire, it continues to be used widely in government and business and serves as the lingua franca of the country. There are, however, parts of Ethiopia where the indigenous people speak little if any Amharic, especially in Somali and Afar regions and other peripheral areas. Tigrinya, spoken by the Tigray people, is the second most important Ethio-Semitic language. There are seven Ethio-Semitic languages spoken by the Gurage people. Relatively small numbers of Ethiopians speak Tigre, which is related to Tigrinya. The most numerous are the Beni Amir, who live in the north and west near the Sudan border. Two other groups that speak Ethio-Semitic languages are the Harari, concentrated in the town of Harar, and the Argobba, who live on the slopes of the Rift Valley and southwest of Harar.

Oromiffa, also known as Afan Oromo, is the most important Cushitic language in Ethiopia. The Oromo live in a large crescent shaped area stretching from the Kenya border through Harar and Addis Ababa and continuing to the Sudan border. Many Oromo also speak Amharic. The Oromo live in both the highland and lowland sections of Ethiopia. Several Cushitic-speaking groups live in the far south, the most numerous being the Konso. The Somali, Afar and Saho, all Cushitic-speaking peoples, share a pastoral tradition. The Somali predominate in the southeast while the Afar live along the Djibouti and lower part of the Eritrean border. The Saho are found along the central part of the border with Eritrea. Saho is a linguistic rather than an ethnic category. Sidama is often used to describe a group of languages, the most important of which are Sidama and Hadya-Libido. There are six groups of Central Cushitic (Agew) speakers. Relatively small numbers of persons speak these languages. One of the groups, the Beta Israel or Falasha Jews, has received a huge amount of publicity. Virtually all of them have immigrated to Israel. The only Cushitic-speaking group in the far north is the Beja.

Many small groups that speak languages of the Omotic family live between the lakes of southern Ethiopia's Rift Valley and the Omo River. There are as many as 80 different groups, although some of them speak dialects of the same language. The Wolayta-speakers are the most numerous followed by those who speak Gemu-Gofa. Some 40 individual groups speak a variant of Gemu-Gofa. Two separate groups speak Kefa-Mocha. Nilo-Saharan speakers to the west and Cushitic speakers to the east have influenced the Omotic languages.

Of the four language groups represented in Ethiopia, the smallest number of people speaks a Nilo-Saharan language. The most important of these languages are Nuer and Anuak, spoken by people who live along the border with Sudan in the southwest. The Kunema and Nara speakers are located in western Tigray. The Berta and the Gumuz, who together are called the Benishangal, live along the central part of the border with Sudan. Several groups of Koman speakers live in the same general area near the border with Sudan.

## **ETHNIC GROUPS**

Ethiopia's ethnic groups correspond roughly to the language groups reviewed above. Many of the ethnic groups are small and wield minimal political power. As a result of intermarriage and questionable statistics, information on population totals and percentages for the various ethnic groups are only educated guesses. The most numerous are the Oromo at about 40 percent of the population. Amhara account for perhaps 25 percent, Tigrayans about 8 percent, Somali 6 percent and Afar 4 percent. The various Sidamo peoples probably constitute about 9 percent and the Gurage about 2 percent. Many small groups make up the remainder. Historically, the Amhara have held a disproportionate amount of political power while the Oromo have been under represented. Today, however, Tigrayans are in a particularly strong position in the central government. Opposition political parties in Ethiopia tend to draw their support from a particular ethnic group or coalition of closely related groups.

## **RELIGION**

Throughout most of Ethiopian history, there has been a close link between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the state. The 1955 constitution made clear that it was the established church of the empire. The church was a central part of the power structure during Amhara and Tigrayan rule. The Oromo are divided among Ethiopian Orthodox, Islam and Protestantism. Islam tended to spread among ethnically diverse and geographically dispersed groups at different times. It failed to provide the same degree of political unity as the Orthodox religion. Traditional belief systems were strongest in the lowland regions, but they developed elements of both Islam and orthodoxy. The arrival of protestant missionaries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from Europe and North America gave rise to a significant number of followers, particularly in the western and southern parts of Ethiopia. The largest Protestant churches are Kale Hiwot and Mekane Yesus.

The long history in Ethiopia of relations between Muslims and Christians has left a mixed legacy. Islam

still remembers that Ethiopia gave refuge to members of the Prophet's family in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, Ethiopians have not forgotten the Muslim-Christian wars, especially the 16<sup>th</sup> century attacks by "Gran the Lefthanded" and the 19<sup>th</sup> century invasion by the forces of the Mahdi. The imperial regime officially tolerated Muslims. It permitted Muslim courts to deal with family and personal issues according to Islamic law. But the imperial authorities gradually took over Muslim schools and discouraged the teaching of Arabic. The close association between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the state tended to alienate Muslims.

The left-wing revolution in 1974 resulted in a major change in the official status of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and other religions. The Mengistu regime disestablished the Orthodox Church and removed the patriarch. It declared all religions equal and a number of Muslim holy days became official holidays in addition to the Christian holidays. Divisions persisted, nevertheless, between Muslims and Christians. Following defeat of the Derg in 1991, the Meles government repaired relations with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church but went to considerable lengths to maintain harmonious relations with both Muslims and Protestants. Key members of the EPRDF are not thought to be particularly religious, but they seem to be tolerant of all religions.

Ascertaining the percentage of Ethiopians who subscribe to a particular religion is about as difficult as ascribing percentages to ethnic and language groups. The Amhara and Tigrayans are almost entirely Ethiopian Orthodox. The Oromo are mainly Muslim, but have significant numbers of Orthodox and Protestant followers. The Somali and Afar and smaller related groups are almost entirely Muslim. Many of the Omotic-speaking peoples in the south are followers of indigenous practices, but Protestant missionaries have made significant inroads. The small ethnic groups along the Sudan border tend to be Muslim. There are also a few pockets scattered around Ethiopia where Roman Catholicism has taken hold. Ethiopian Orthodox and Muslims probably account for slightly less than 45 percent each of the population. Protestantism may have reached almost 5 percent of the population while animists account for the remainder.

## **ART, MUSIC, LITERATURE AND FOOD**

Ethiopia has a wonderful tradition in art, which until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, drew primarily on religious and historical motifs. Only in recent years has Ethiopian art begun to attract the attention that it deserves. Modern Ethiopian artists are also making their mark in the world of art. Afewerk Tekle, known for his Meskel Flower painting and stained glass in the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity, is the most famous, but some younger artists are following close behind. Zerihun Yetmgeta is another of the older artists who has left a significant legacy.

Because Ethiopia is so large and diverse, there are many forms of music and dance. Most are confined to particular ethnic areas. The variety of music and dance common to the Ethiopian highlands is the best known and can be heard and observed regularly in Ethiopian nightclubs and bars. Now that there are so many Ethiopians living in the diaspora, the music has also developed a following outside the country. Aster Aweke, for example, is well known in Ethiopia and in the diaspora.

Ethiopian literature has a long and proud history. Until recently it was rarely written in any language other than Amharic or one of the indigenous languages and seldom translated. This is particularly true in the case of poetry. As a result, Ethiopian authors are generally not well known outside the country. This is beginning to change as more literature is being written in English and other world languages. Sahle Sellassie and Daniachew Worku are examples of modern Ethiopian novelists.

The traditional food from the Ethiopian highlands deserves a special note. Again, the ethnic diversity of the country has resulted in a variety of diets. But “Ethiopian food” is traditionally associated with that common for centuries in the highlands. It consists of the national bread, *injera*, which resembles a huge, spongy pancake with a slightly sour taste. Made from a local grain known as teff, it is traditionally served on a communal mushroom shaped basket known as a *mesob*. It is accompanied by *wat*, a variety of stew like condiments made of both meat and vegetables. You tear off small pieces of *injera*, combine them with the *wat*, and eat the delicious combination without utensils. The rise of the Ethiopian diaspora has resulted in the establishment of many Ethiopian restaurants throughout Europe and North America. In the Washington area they are concentrated in Adams Morgan.

## NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

Ethiopia has many national holidays, most of them related to major Ethiopian Orthodox festivals although key Islamic holidays have been added. The dates of some of the holidays, especially the Islamic ones, vary slightly from year to year, depending on the sighting of the moon. The most colorful Orthodox holiday is *Timkat* or the celebration of Christ’s baptism. It is a three-day event in January. Another popular Orthodox ceremony is *Meskel* or the finding of the true cross, a two-day holiday in September. Holidays celebrating political events include the victory over the Italians at Adwa (March 2), liberation of Ethiopia from Italian fascist rule (April 6), international labor day (May 1) and the overthrow of the Derg (May 28). Regular business is conducted in Ethiopia Monday through Friday.

### Self-Study Questions for Further Exploration

- Even if one accepts an annual population growth rate as low as 2.4 percent, can Ethiopia cope with the growing population in the coming decades?
- Has Amharic been a unifying language in Ethiopia?
- What will the official policy of ethnic federalism do to the development of languages in the country?
- What is the effect of ethnicity on Ethiopian politics?
- What are the prospects for religious harmony in Ethiopia?
- Are Ethiopian art, music and literature, much of which is of a very high quality, likely to receive

greater recognition outside the country?

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Basket from Harar

## **SOCIAL ISSUES**

### **CLASS STRUCTURE**

Class structure in Ethiopia throughout its imperial history resembled a feudal regime. Nobles and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church controlled much of the land; the peasants worked the land for the nobility. Social status during imperial rule depended on one's landholdings, which provided the basis for class formation and social stratification. The 1955 constitution, which was approved during the reign of Haile Selassie, had as an underlying theme the power of the monarchy. The first chapter dealt with the pomp and glory of the imperial institution and the rules of "Solomonic" succession to the throne.

This system came to an end with the overthrow of the imperial regime by the Derg in 1974. The Mengistu government instituted a constitution in 1987 based on the principles of scientific socialism. According to the constitution, Ethiopia was "a state of working peasants in which the intelligentsia, the revolutionary army, artisans, and other democratic sections of society participate." It committed the state to central planning and the owner of the means of production. It described the family as the basis of society. Social stratification based on landholding largely disappeared. But as the Derg sought to build a classless society it, in fact, created one based on pure political power and influence.

The EPRDF approved a new constitution in 1994. An egalitarian document with numerous provisions concerning human and individual rights, it is based on the principle that all citizens have equal access to publicly funded social services, including education. It also asserts that all people are equal before the law. The preamble to the constitution calls for "full respect of individual and people's fundamental freedoms and rights to live together on the basis of gender equality and without any religious or cultural

discrimination.” The constitution covers so many rights and freedoms that it is not surprising some are honored in the breach. In practice, there is a very small wealthy class and relations are generally cordial among individuals from the various economic strata. Considerable controversy surrounds, however, the EPRDF’s policy of ethnic federalism.

## **FAMILY LIFE**

Daily activity in Ethiopia revolves around the extended family as is true for most African societies. To some extent individual ethnic group characteristics determine the way in which families function internally and interact with other families and society at large. Because Ethiopia is comprised of so many different ethnic groups, it is difficult to generalize about the nature of family life. There are significant differences, for example, in the way families function in a rural setting as compared to an urban one. Likewise, families living a pastoral existence will have different patterns than those who are settled agriculturists.

Generally speaking there is a much greater willingness to assist and care for members of the extended family than is the case in the West. Consequently, a family member will usually care for the sick and the elderly rather than expect a governmental institution to accept this responsibility. Family members with a steady income or greater degree of wealth normally assist those, including cousins, in-laws, etc., who are in financial need. Children whose parents can not afford to pay for school fees will routinely request help from a member of the extended family who is perceived to be in a better financial position. This can become a tremendous burden for salaried employees, even relatively low paid ones, who are seen by family members as an unending source of assistance. Family bonds tend to be stronger than is the case in the industrialized world. This is starting to break down, however, in urban settings.

Although there are growing urban-rural differences, most Ethiopians live with their families until marriage. In rural areas, the parents of the couple usually arrange the marriage and a long engagement often follows. Several days of feasting cap the ceremony. The financial burden of weddings has become huge, especially in the cities, and some Ethiopians are beginning to question whether these enormous expenses are a good way to launch a life together. After marriage in rural areas, the couple usually joins the household of the husband’s parents. The couple eventually requests a plot of land from the village in order to build a house. Increasingly in urban areas, marriage resembles the Western model where an individual seeks a partner of his/her choice.

Divorce is a relatively easy process in Ethiopia and marriages can be dissolved at the request of either party, depending on religious affiliation. Adultery is the most common reason given. Each partner theoretically retains the property he or she brought to the marriage. Allowances may be made in favor of the “wronged” partner.

## **GENDER**

Although the 1994 constitution calls for gender equality, it will take many years to change millennia of

tradition. The fact is that Ethiopian women, as is the case in so many traditional societies, have unequal status to men. The overwhelming majority of women live in rural conditions where they experience daily physical hardships throughout their lives. This involves carrying heavy loads such as water over long distances, manually grinding grain, collecting firewood, raising large families and even helping the men in the fields. Ethiopian women have traditionally suffered various kinds of discrimination and have had fewer opportunities for personal growth, education and employment. The custom of many Ethiopian societies is to require female circumcision in spite of the fact that the government and some NGOs are trying to stop the practice.

Ethiopians measure a woman's worth in terms of her role as a mother and wife. Rural women are an integral part of the agricultural economy, most of which is at the subsistence level and highly labor intensive. Combined with giving birth to large numbers of children, such an existence takes a high physical toll. Rural Ethiopian women tend to look older than their actual age. Ethiopian women employed in urban areas are concentrated in the service sector. Women factory workers generally earn a lower wage than their male counterparts. At the same time, there are signs of progress for women living in towns and cities. Education, health care and employment outside the home have become more available. Although nationwide illiteracy remains high, it is not significantly higher for women (about 68 percent) than for men (about 57 percent) and it is declining at a faster rate for women.

## **HEALTH AND WELFARE**

Missionary doctors, nurses and midwives brought modern medicine to Ethiopia during the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They had little success, however, in decreasing the effects of acute and endemic diseases that debilitated large segments of the population. The creation of the Ministry of Public Health in 1948 began the process of confronting national health problems.

A number of factors contribute to the continuing poor state of health in Ethiopia. Rivers and lakes are the sources of water for most Ethiopians. This water is often unsafe; it is estimated that only 25 percent of the rural population and 75 percent of the urban population have access to safe water. Malnutrition is widespread in much of Ethiopia even during a good crop year. Periods of drought and famine magnify the problem. Health services are concentrated in the urban areas. Only about 60 percent of the population have access to any kind of health service and it is often of low quality. There is one doctor for every 40,000 Ethiopians and 87 hospitals with only 12,000 beds for more than 64 million people. The health care infrastructure has been crippled by more than three decades of conflict, underfunding and neglect. Efforts to improve the situation are underway, but it will take decades to overcome the challenge. Government expenditures on health care as a percentage of total expenditure, for example, increased from 3.5 percent in 1986/87 to 4.9 percent in 1995/96.

The major killing diseases in Ethiopia are perinatal-maternal conditions, acute respiratory infection, malaria, nutritional deficiency for children, diarrhea, AIDS and tuberculosis. There is wide regional variation in the pattern of diseases. Malaria, for example, is endemic in at least 70 percent of Ethiopia but does not generally occur in the higher altitudes. Schistosomiasis and yellow fever also tend to be

concentrated at lower altitudes. Venereal disease is more common in urban areas where prostitution contributes to the problem. HIV/AIDS is increasing at a rapid rate; as many as 4 million people may be infected. Because of its large population, Ethiopia now has the third highest number of HIV positive persons in the world. Between seven and ten percent of the sexually active population is HIV positive. Infection rates are considerably higher in urban areas and along major transportation routes than in the rural parts of the country. Although the basic cause of AIDS is now understood by nearly all Ethiopians, there is still a huge stigma attached to the disease and a reluctance to discuss it at the personal level. The government, assisted by churches, partner countries and numerous NGOs, has belatedly undertaken a major effort to deal with the pandemic.

It is very difficult to define poverty in a country as poor as Ethiopia. One government study done in the early 1990s suggested that more than 50 percent of the population suffered from chronic poverty. Welfare programs are largely non-existent in Ethiopia. The extended family is expected to provide for those in need. Churches, mosques and NGOs contribute, however, to the well being of many Ethiopians. The government focuses primarily on health care and education.

## EDUCATION

Religious instruction organized by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was the only formal education in Ethiopia until the early 1900s. The first public school opened in Addis Ababa in 1907; by the mid-1930s there were still only about 8,000 students in 20 public schools. The number grew to 60,000 students in 400 primary schools by 1952, supplemented in the 1960s by 310 mission and privately owned schools with an enrollment of 52,000. The Derg regime expanded significantly primary school enrollment, which grew to 2.5 million in the mid-1980s. It crept up to 2.7 million by the mid-1990s. This constituted about 28 percent of the total primary school population; the percentage for girls was about 21 percent. Junior secondary schools increased from 1000 in the mid-1980s to over 1200 in the mid-1990s while senior secondary schools grew from 260 to 330 in the same period.

There has been less success in improving the quality of primary and secondary education. Schools are generally understaffed and poorly equipped. Laboratories are virtually non-existent in some secondary schools. The physical infrastructure of many schools, especially in rural areas, is well below standard. Perhaps most important, many educators believe the quality of teachers has deteriorated in recent decades. The policy of ethnic federalism permits the regions to determine the principal language of instruction in primary school. Oromia, Afar, Somali and Tigray regions have selected the predominant local language. The others continue to rely on Amharic. All schools teach English at a certain point, but the quality of instruction has declined due to the significant increase in the number of students in school and the decrease in organizations like the Peace Corps that made a major contribution to the teaching of English.

The educational system has long been a manufacturer of an unemployable cadre of students rather than provider of skilled manpower. It tends to be theory focused and is not designed to link theoretical knowledge to practical problems. Civic education has not traditionally been an important part of the

curriculum, although this is changing. Nor is the system designed to develop openness, assertiveness and creativeness among students. The number of vocational and technical schools in Ethiopia remains low but is finally beginning to show signs of growth. The government is also devoting a greater share of its budget to education. It increased from about 10 percent in the mid-1980s to 15 percent in the mid-1990s.

Although some question the quality of higher education today, the government has devoted significant resources in recent years to expanding it. The government reorganized the system, creating several regional centers for higher education that are autonomous from Addis Ababa University, the largest campus. All universities are under the authority of the Ministry of Education. Relative lack of autonomy from the Ministry has led to occasional problems such as the nationwide boycott of classes by students in 2001 following disagreements over policy issues. Each university campus draws students from throughout the country; this policy allows them to mix with other ethnic groups, thus offsetting the more parochial implications of ethnic federalism at the primary and secondary school level. Higher education enrollment grew from about 4,500 in 1970 to more than 18,000 in the mid-1980s. The number has increased well above that today.

## **LABOR FORCE**

The overwhelming majority of the labor force is engaged in agriculture, usually at the subsistence level, although the percentage has declined from about 88 percent in the mid-1980s to 70 percent in the mid-1990s. In the urban labor market, a higher proportion of females engages in sales and service related activities while men dominate the craft related occupations. Women are much more likely to be self-employed and men are found in far greater numbers in the government. Unemployment is high in urban areas. The Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) represents the different guilds at the national level. Compared to the American labor system, CETU is an obliging organization in its relationship with the government. Peasant associations and cooperatives are important institutions in the agricultural sector. They focus primarily on improving the well being of the farmer through collective purchases of agricultural inputs and collective sale of farm products. They have minimal impact on agricultural policy.

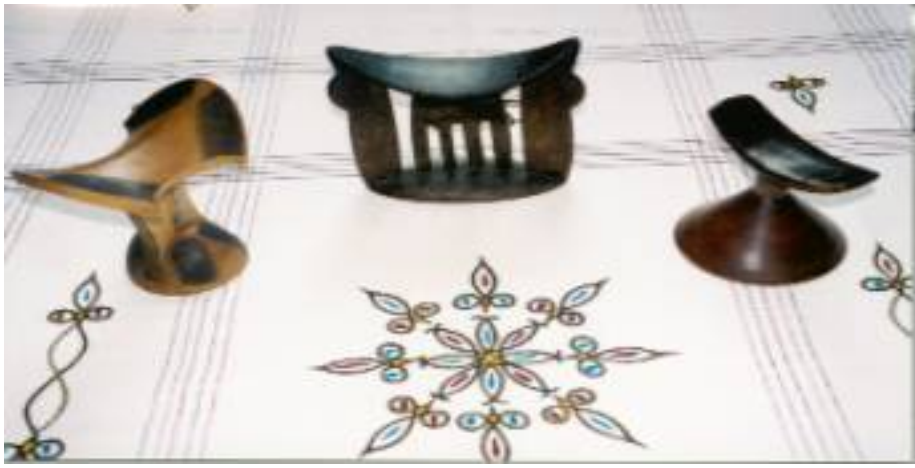
### **Self-Study Questions for Further Exploration**

- Are class differences still an important issue in Ethiopia?
- Is the growth in the percentage of Ethiopians living in urban areas generally a healthy development for society?
- What measures can be taken to improve gender equality?
- What realistic steps can Ethiopia take to improve the health care system and expand it to areas where there now is no care?
- To what extent will the HIV/AIDS pandemic threaten Ethiopia's economic development?

- Is the answer to Ethiopia's future development to put more students through school, improve the quality of the existing curriculum or thoroughly revise the current educational system?
- Why does the union movement play such a modest role in social change?

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Head rests from different parts of Ethiopia

## ECONOMY

### EPRDF ECONOMIC POLICY

When the EPRDF came to power in 1991, it brought with it some Marxist-Leninist economic baggage. This socialist ideology combined with a more recent willingness to implement market reforms makes it difficult to categorize EPRDF policy. It seems to have grudgingly accepted market economics as the only option for Ethiopia but still has a tendency towards government intervention and control. Some of the EPRDF economic theorists are probably not convinced that capitalism will provide the rapid and sustainable economic development that Ethiopia desperately needs. The EPRDF seems committed, however, to taking those steps that it believes will most effectively energize the population to contribute to the economy in a way that will benefit all regions of the country.

The EPRDF believes that the agricultural sector should be the driving force for the rest of the economy. Both land and labor productivity in this sector is exceedingly low. The goal is to improve productivity by introducing new technology, fertilizer, improved seed and extension services. To achieve this goal, however, the EPRDF believes the government must intervene on a massive scale by orchestrating the distribution of fertilizer and improved seed and overseeing the extension system. In urban areas the EPRDF sees itself as the provider of social and physical infrastructure, including housing. This, in turn, will in its view stimulate the private sector to invest in productive enterprises leading to more employment. The EPRDF is also committed to some regional balance in its economic development program. Although government budget allocations are designed to encourage this process, it has been difficult to achieve development in areas where the infrastructure is poor and the number of educated and skilled people are few.

Other basic EPRDF economic policies include improved tax administration, especially broadening the base on the revenue side and reducing expenditures to less than that of nominal GDP. It intends to minimize the tendency of government to crowd out the private sector by reducing government borrowing

from domestic sources. It plans to create an environment that will permit the establishment of a competitive financial system. It is trying to increase private investment by speeding up privatization, improving the investment code, increasing dialogue with the private sector and ensuring an adequate supply of urban land for investment purposes.

Ethiopia, in on-going discussions with the IMF, has made clear that its mid-term economic strategy includes a focus on poverty reduction by fostering rural development, expanding and improving a comprehensive food security program and building conditions for high and sustainable growth. The goal over the short term is real annual GDP growth of seven to eight percent and consumer price inflation at no more than five percent. The primary fiscal policy objectives over the short term are to redirect resources from defense-related expenditures toward poverty-reducing outlays and to lay the foundation for better tax revenue mobilization. Monetary policy is also aimed at keeping inflation in the low single digits. Structural reforms include modernizing monetary management, improving interbank operations, strengthening the soundness of smaller banks and upgrading the management of the state-owned Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. It also intends to further liberalize the foreign trade and exchange regimes, allow market determination of the exchange rate and promote export development.

## **EPRDF ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE**

The structure of Ethiopia's economy has changed little since the EPRDF came to power. Agriculture continues to contribute more than 50 percent of GDP. The average share for agriculture over the last 20 years has been about 55 percent. Industry's contribution to GDP has remained relatively static at about 10 percent. The service sector, on the other hand, has increased to about 25 percent of GDP from 20 percent during the Derg. The contribution of the distributive sector has remained static at just over 10 percent.

Ethiopia's real GDP under the EPRDF has grown on the average at a rate of about 4.5 percent annually. The per capita GDP growth rate has been about 2.6 percent, which compares favorably with a 1.9 percent rate during the last ten years of the Derg. Ethiopia's economic situation deteriorated sharply in 1999/2000 as a result of a severe drought, the 1998-2000 border war with Eritrea, a major worsening of its terms of trade associated with lower coffee export prices and the steep rise in petroleum import prices. In spite of this situation, the IMF reported that real GDP growth reached 7.5 percent in 2000/01 while inflation turned negative, reflecting a bumper cereal crop and large inflows of food aid. This strong showing occurred in spite of an expenditure of \$3 billion by Ethiopia to finance the conflict with Eritrea. The Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute offers a more dismal picture of the economy, citing a sharp drop in foreign investment, a reduction in tourism, the high cost of the war, costs associated with rerouting imports and exports and higher debt. Ethiopian reserves dropped from about a half billion dollars in 1997 to well under \$400 million in 2000. The Institute concludes, however, that Ethiopia continues to have a reasonable GDP growth rate. The IMF believes the debt-service ratio will fall from 19 percent in 1999/2000 to 15 percent in 2002/2003 and 9 percent by 2009/10. It further expects the ratio to drop to an average of 7.5 percent beyond that. Gross domestic savings averaged 7.2 percent during the Derg and 6.9 percent during the EPRDF. There is a steady trend, however, suggesting that some of the measures taken by the EPRDF to encourage savings are beginning to work. While gross fixed capital



formation as a percent of GDP declined sharply during the last 11 years of the Derg, it has made a healthy recovery under the EPRDF, averaging over 15 percent and doing best in recent years. Because the low savings ratio could not finance this increase in investment, the resource gap widened from an average of 7.1 percent of GDP during the Derg to about 8.7 percent under the EPRDF. This resulted in an increase of debt burden during EPRDF stewardship. The Ethiopian economy has performed modestly under the EPRDF. Its successes stem from the positive effect of the dismantling of the most suffocating anti-private sector policies of the Derg regime and generous support from the donor community. High growth rates in industry and services are largely due to the recovery made from the unusually low level during the last years of the Derg. The agricultural sector did not perform as well as expected. This is not surprising in view of several bad harvests due to drought and, in some high altitude locations, an excess of rain. Perhaps the biggest surprise, however, is the fact that the economy has done as well as it did in spite of a \$3 billion expenditure on a war with Eritrea.

## AGRICULTURE

Ethiopia is divided into two major agricultural zones—the highlands and the lowlands. The highlands constitute about 40 percent of the land area and the lowlands 60 percent. About 25 percent of the land area are intensively or moderately cultivated. Animals graze on most of the remainder, although some areas are so steep, eroded and/or lacking in water that they serve virtually no agricultural purpose. Ethiopia may have the largest livestock population in Africa. Farming practices vary somewhat according to vegetation zones and the tradition of different ethnic groups. The most common way of tilling the field is by oxen or cattle. Mechanized plowing is rare. It is not uncommon to see farmers working small plots using hoes or even sharpened sticks to break up the soil. Oxen and cattle pull a crude wooden plow fitted with iron tips. The farmers then spread seeds and plow them under in the same manner. Increasingly, farmers are using fertilizer. In the final analysis, the rains or lack thereof determine the size and quality of the crop. There is very little irrigated agriculture in Ethiopia. When the crops fail, farmers kill off their livestock to survive. When the livestock are gone, they are dependent on foreign assistance and vegetation such as wild plants and roots. Commercial farming began in the 1960s. Following a brief period of modest growth, the Derg nationalized the commercial operations and converted them to state farms. Most of these efforts performed poorly and the EPRDF handed some of them over to local farmers and privatized others. Of the original 26 state farms, there are now only 13 remaining. They raise wheat, corn, cotton, coffee and tea. The EPRDF is encouraging large-scale commercial farming, but the results have been modest. Access to good land is the main obstacle. Investors must identify land that is not already being used by others. This forces them to the low, hot, disease-ridden parts of Ethiopia where there is still unoccupied land. The major cereal crops are teff (used in the national bread *injera*), wheat, barley, corn, millet and sorghum. Pulses are the second most important element in the national diet and a principal source of protein. Niger seed, flaxseed and sesame are widely cultivated. Castor beans, rapeseed, peanuts, safflower and sunflower seeds are a less significant part of the diet. Ensete, also known as the false banana, is an important food source in the southern and southwestern highlands. Fruits and vegetables grow well in parts of Ethiopia but consumption tends to be low because of their high cost. Common vegetables include onions, green beans, peppers, squash and cabbage. Ethiopia produces a variety of citrus, bananas, mangoes and papaya. The most important cash crop is coffee. In fact, arabica coffee may have originated in Ethiopia. As many as 15 million Ethiopians depend on the production,

processing, trade and transport of coffee for their livelihood. More than 90 percent of the country's coffee production comes from smallholder farmers. A significant amount grows wild. The major foreign exchange earner, some varieties of Ethiopian washed coffee earn a premium in the world market. Starbucks usually carries at least one variety of Ethiopian coffee. Coffee prices rise and fall quickly, making it difficult to estimate the impact of the crop in any given year on Ethiopia's foreign exchange income. Other cash crops include cotton, sugar, tea and tobacco, most of which are consumed domestically. Ethiopia grows chat, fruit and vegetables for export. Chat, a mild stimulant that is illegal in the U.S., is becoming increasingly popular in Ethiopia. Livestock contribute an estimated 30-35 percent of agricultural GDP and about 15 percent of overall GDP. Cattle account for 70 percent of this value, sheep and goats 14 percent and poultry 13 percent. Camels, mules and horses constitute the balance. Their value includes the provision of draft power, meat and milk. In addition, they have a high export value for hides and skins. Ethiopia may have as many as 80 million head of livestock and 60 million poultry.

## INDUSTRY

Prior to the 1974 revolution, foreigners established and/or owned most of the 273 manufacturing enterprises in Ethiopia. The Derg nationalized virtually all of these companies. The EPRDF is slowly returning them to private hands. The three-percent contribution of Ethiopia's manufacturing sector to GDP is among the lowest in the world. In fact, the contribution of all industry to GDP slipped from 12 percent in 1980 to 10 percent in 1995. The total number of "manufacturing" establishments in the mid-1990s was well over a million but only 642 of this number employed 10 or more persons and used power machines. The remainder constituted cottage, informal, small-scale and handicraft industries.

About 40 percent of all small-scale, cottage and handicraft enterprises are in the food and beverage sector. One-third of the cottage and handicraft industries involve textiles while about one-third of the small-scale activities are in metal working and weaving. Enterprises that employ 10 or more persons focus primarily on food and beverages, furniture and fixtures, non-metallic mineral products and leather goods. All of the small-scale, cottage, handicraft and informal industries are privately owned. About one-third of the large-scale industries are owned by the government. Approximately 45 percent of all the value added originates from manufacturing in Addis Ababa. Oromia Region accounts for another 37 percent.

## TRANSPORTATION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ethiopia has a relatively underdeveloped road system although there have been significant improvements in recent years thanks to the European Union and World Bank. It is expensive and difficult to build and maintain roads in much of the country because of the mountainous topography and heavy seasonal rains. Nevertheless, most cargo and passengers travel by road. Ethiopia has about 18,000 miles of roads. Since the closure of the Ethiopia/Eritrea border in 1998 and the loss of the port of Assab, the most important route for commerce is the one between Addis Ababa and the Gulf of Aden port of Djibouti. Most of the roads are not paved, but virtually all of them are passable year round except in unusually heavy rain. There are many more miles of tracks that are only passable in dry weather. Some of the roads

built during the Italian military occupation are still in use today.

The only railroad in Ethiopia connects Addis Ababa and the port of Djibouti. Construction on the narrow gauge track, which runs for 423 miles in Ethiopia, began in 1897 and reached Addis Ababa in 1917. Ethiopia tried to become less reliant on the railroad in the 1960s. When it closed during the Ogaden War with Somalia in 1977-78, Ethiopia realized it needed to improve the road to the Eritrean Red Sea port of Assab. Following the outbreak of hostility with Eritrea, the closure of the border and the loss of access to Assab, Ethiopia realized again how important the railroad was to its survival. As a land-locked country, Ethiopia has no port. Its reliance on Djibouti during the war with Eritrea and the tendency of Djibouti to be overtaxed caused Ethiopia to consider other alternatives until such time as Eritrean ports again become available. As a result, Ethiopia is making increased use of the Gulf of Aden port of Berbera in Somaliland and is exploring with Sudan the use of Port Sudan on the Red Sea. As a legacy of the period when Ethiopia controlled Eritrea and had ports on the Red Sea, it still has a merchant marine of 12 ships, including 7 cargo vessels, 1 container ship, 1 petroleum tanker and 3 roll-on/roll-off ships. Ethiopian Airlines (EAL) is one of the largest and most efficient in Africa. It is a government-owned operation that began in 1946 with guidance from TWA. An all-Boeing wide-bodied fleet, EAL provides service throughout Africa and has flights to Asia, Europe and the United States. Ethiopia has also developed an extensive domestic network of flights and airports. It has 11 airports with paved runways, many of them recently completed or expanded. It has 74 other airports with unpaved runways. Due to its size, mountainous topography and limited road network, air travel is an important way to get around Ethiopia. The telecommunications system in Ethiopia is rudimentary. It remains under government control. There are under 400,000 telephones in the country and several thousand cellular phones, mostly in Addis Ababa. The government domestic phone system relies on open wire and microwave radio relay. The international system has an open wire to Sudan and Djibouti and microwave radio relay to Kenya and Djibouti. There are three Intelsat satellite earth stations, 5 AM radio broadcast stations, two short wave and 25 television broadcast stations, all under government control. There are about 400,000 television sets. All Internet service comes over the government-controlled telephone line. There are several thousand Internet subscribers, nearly all of them in Addis Ababa.

## FOREIGN TRADE

The value of Ethiopian exports totals almost a billion dollars, a figure that has risen steadily in the 1990s. The increased value of exports has been greater in services than in merchandise, although the latter still constitutes more than half the total. Five products—coffee, hides and skins, oil seeds, pulses and fruits and vegetables—account for about 80 percent of export earnings. Coffee alone provides about two-thirds of the merchandise export earnings. The export of manufactured goods accounts for only about four percent of the total by value and has been declining in recent years. Most Ethiopian exports go to Germany, Japan, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, France, UK and Italy. As a percent of GDP, imports are running at over 20 percent and the trend was upward during the 1990s. Capital and consumer goods account for two-thirds of the total and semi-finished products for most of the rest. The dollar cost of imports is about 1.25 billion if the extraordinary military purchases during the conflict with Eritrea are excluded. Major imports include fuel, fertilizer, vehicles, machinery, electrical products, metal and metal products and cereal. The principal sources of supply are Saudi Arabia, Italy, United States and Japan. Russia and the

former Soviet Republics were important sources of military equipment during the conflict with Eritrea.

### **Self-Study Questions for Further Exploration**

- To what extent has the EPRDF followed its economic policy precepts?
- How completely has the EPRDF accepted free market mechanisms?
- How would you rate the EPRDF's economic performance over the last ten years?
- What will be the likely impact on its future economic performance of Ethiopia's \$3 billion expenditure on the conflict with Eritrea?
- What are the prospects for diversifying the production of cash crops?
- Why is there so little industrialization in Ethiopia?
- Why does the government continue such tight controls over telecommunications, thus limiting its expansion by the private sector?
- Why does so little of Ethiopia's trade occur with neighboring countries?

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## **POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT**

### **THE 1994 CONSTITUTION**

Following the overthrow of the Derg regime in 1991, transitional authorities created a constitutional commission and promulgated the new federal constitution late in 1994. It formally became the law of the land in 1995 after approval by newly elected representatives. This constitution is a sharp departure from previous Ethiopian constitutions. It creates a federal multi-party system of government and accords extraordinary importance to the ethno-linguistic groupings in the country. Chapter 2 states that “all sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia.” It goes so far as to allow the right of secession by any Nation, Nationality or People of Ethiopia. This possibility is the most controversial part of the constitution. Some argue that this concept will permit disparate groups to live together while others believe it constitutes the seed for the disintegration of Ethiopia.

The handling of land ownership was one of the most hotly contested aspects during the deliberations of the constitutional commission. The constitution declares that “the right to ownership of rural and urban land . . . is exclusively vested in the state and the Peoples of Ethiopia.” As a result, land is not considered a market commodity. It is seen as the common property of the extended family, ethnic group, clan, etc. This has become an especially controversial issue in urban areas where private individuals and investors

often prefer to own land. It is possible to obtain long-term leases, but not outright ownership. Another important change in this constitution is the provision that mandates the equality of Ethiopian languages. This provision has led to the use of several languages other than Amharic in the school system, as a medium on radio and television and in the written press.

Interpretation of the constitution is left not to the courts but to the House of Federation in the legislative branch. The process includes a Council of Constitutional Inquiry consisting mostly of legal experts that submits its findings to the House of Federation for a final decision. A process that originates at the regional or federal level can amend the constitution. When the initiative comes from the regions, a third of the regional councils must support a proposal by majority vote. In addition, either of the federal houses of Parliament can initiate a constitutional amendment by a two-thirds vote. Ordinary constitutional amendments then require a two-thirds vote in a joint meeting of the federal houses as well as a majority vote in two-thirds of the regional councils. The constitution permits the declaration of a state of emergency by the Council of Ministers followed by approval of the House of Peoples' Representatives.

## **EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND EPRDF**

National legislative elections take place every five years. They were held in 1995 and 2000 and are not scheduled again until 2005. They elect members of the bicameral Parliament, which consists of the House of Peoples' Representatives (lower chamber) and House of Federation (upper chamber). The House of Peoples' Representatives nominates the President, who is then elected by a two-thirds vote during a joint session with the House of Federation. The nominee does not have to be a Member of Parliament. The President, Negasso Gidada since 1995, holds office for six years in order to serve as a bridge from one five-year Parliament to another. Although the President serves as chief of state, his role is largely ceremonial. President Negasso is from Oromia.

The Prime Minister is the head of government and, together with the Council of Ministers, holds the highest executive powers. The Prime Minister is a member of and elected from the House of Peoples' Representatives for a five-year term. Meles Zenawi has held this position since 1995. The Prime Minister is the chief executive, chairman of the Council of Ministers, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The Prime Minister appoints most senior officials to the federal government and is in charge of the country's foreign policy. There is a Deputy Prime Minister who has no constitutionally specified task except to carry out responsibilities specifically entrusted to him by the Prime Minister. Prime Minister Meles is from Tigray Region and Deputy Prime Minister Tefera Walwa is from Amhara Region.

Upon nomination by the Prime Minister, the House of Peoples' Representatives appoints the members of the Council of Ministers or cabinet. The Council of Ministers is responsible to both the Prime Minister and the House of Peoples' Representatives. Each minister is in charge of a government ministry such as justice, education or foreign affairs and is, therefore, responsible for routine government business under the purview of that ministry. The key task of the ministers is the formulation of the federal budget. The ethnic background of ministers and deputy ministers generally reflects the ethnic composition of Ethiopia.

Real executive power on key policy issues lies with the ruling political party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). It is an umbrella organization for a number of essentially ethnic-based political parties, most of which played a role in overthrowing the Derg regime. The major parties that comprise the EPRDF are the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). There are numerous other smaller parties in the EPRDF. Neither the decision-making process nor the deliberations of the secretive EPRDF are well understood by outsiders. What is clear, however, is the preponderant role played by the TPLF, the Ethiopian organization most responsible for the fall of Mengistu Haile Mariam. Although many Ethiopians resent the heavy influence of the TPLF in determining government policy, there is grudging appreciation for the fact that the TPLF more than any other group ridded the country of the Derg.

It is apparent that the policies of the EPRDF and, especially, the TPLF have been adapting to new circumstances, especially in the area of economic policy. As noted earlier, the EPRDF has slowly moved away from some Marxist-Leninist concepts to a greater willingness to embrace market economics. Simmering policy differences within the EPRDF, particularly the TPLF, came into the open in 2001. There was a split in the TPLF with Prime Minister Meles leading the group remaining in power and another group of senior TPLF officials leaving the party. There were several reasons for this schism. From the beginning of the conflict with Eritrea, there were policy differences on how tough to be towards Eritrea. Meles tried to be more conciliatory; others took a harder line. Meles is thought to be more willing to institute liberal economic policy reforms than were those who broke with the TPLF. There are also differences in the amount of transparency and openness that the two factions are willing to allow in the TPLF and EPRDF. The faction that has the support and loyalty of the security forces will ultimately come out on top—at least over the short term.

## **OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES**

Political parties that are not part of the EPRDF have existed in Ethiopia since the fall of the Derg in 1991. In fact, one important group, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), initially aligned itself with the EPRDF but broke away after about a year. Its leadership is now in exile and the OLF is trying to overthrow the EPRDF government. Other parties have continued to operate inside Ethiopia. They include the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO), Coalition of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy (CAFPD), Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) and Ethiopian National Democratic Party (ENDP). There are a number of other smaller parties, some of which come and go. Most of the opposition parties boycotted the 1995 and 2000 elections.

Although Ethiopia's constitution specifically calls for a multi-party state, it is a difficult environment for an opposition party to succeed. The EPRDF is in firm control of the government, radio, television and much of the written media. There are opposition papers, some of which are outspoken in their criticism of the government. But the opposition parties are not allowed to compete on a level playing field and are often subject to harassment by local officials. It is equally true, however, that the opposition parties are weakly financed, usually poorly led and almost always disorganized. Nor is there any unity among the

opposition groups. This situation does not bode well for the development of a meaningful and vibrant multi-party system.

## PARLIAMENT

The people directly elect the 548 members of the House of Peoples' Representatives (lower house) from single member districts for five-year terms. Ethiopia has universal suffrage for persons 18 and over. State assemblies choose the 117 members of the House of Federation (upper house) for five-year terms. In the 2000 elections, EPRDF candidates won 483 of the 548 lower chamber seats. Regional parties won 46 seats, independents 8 seats and the remainder is not specified. Members of Parliament are immune from any legal or administrative action based on an opinion expressed or vote cast. They also have partial immunity from arrest. The House of Peoples' Representatives is the more important of the two organizations. It can enact laws dealing with utilization of land, natural resources and interstate commerce; interstate roads, postal and telecommunication services; enforcement of constitutionally established political rights; nationality, asylum and other specified issues. The constitution also assigns it a variety of other responsibilities. The House of Federation is designed to represent the many different ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Its most important function is its power to interpret the constitution. It has a mandate to promote equality among the various ethnic groups in the country and determines the amount of subsidy the federal government gives to the regional governments. The principal law emanating from the House of Peoples' Representatives is the proclamation. The only requirement is that it not contradict the constitution. Proclamations can originate in the Council of Ministers or internally in the House. The House also publishes the official gazette of Ethiopia known as the *Negarit Gazeta*. Many observers of Ethiopian politics are quick to dismiss Parliament as a "rubber stamp" of the Council of Ministers and the EPRDF. Although it clearly is not a strong legislative organization, it is too facile to conclude that it is unimportant. There are some outspoken members, particularly independent Somalis, who do not shrink from criticism of government policy. The Lower House has initiated controversial investigations. It is also questionable whether a truly unpopular policy could be forced through Parliament. Everything considered, however, it is not yet a very exciting body.

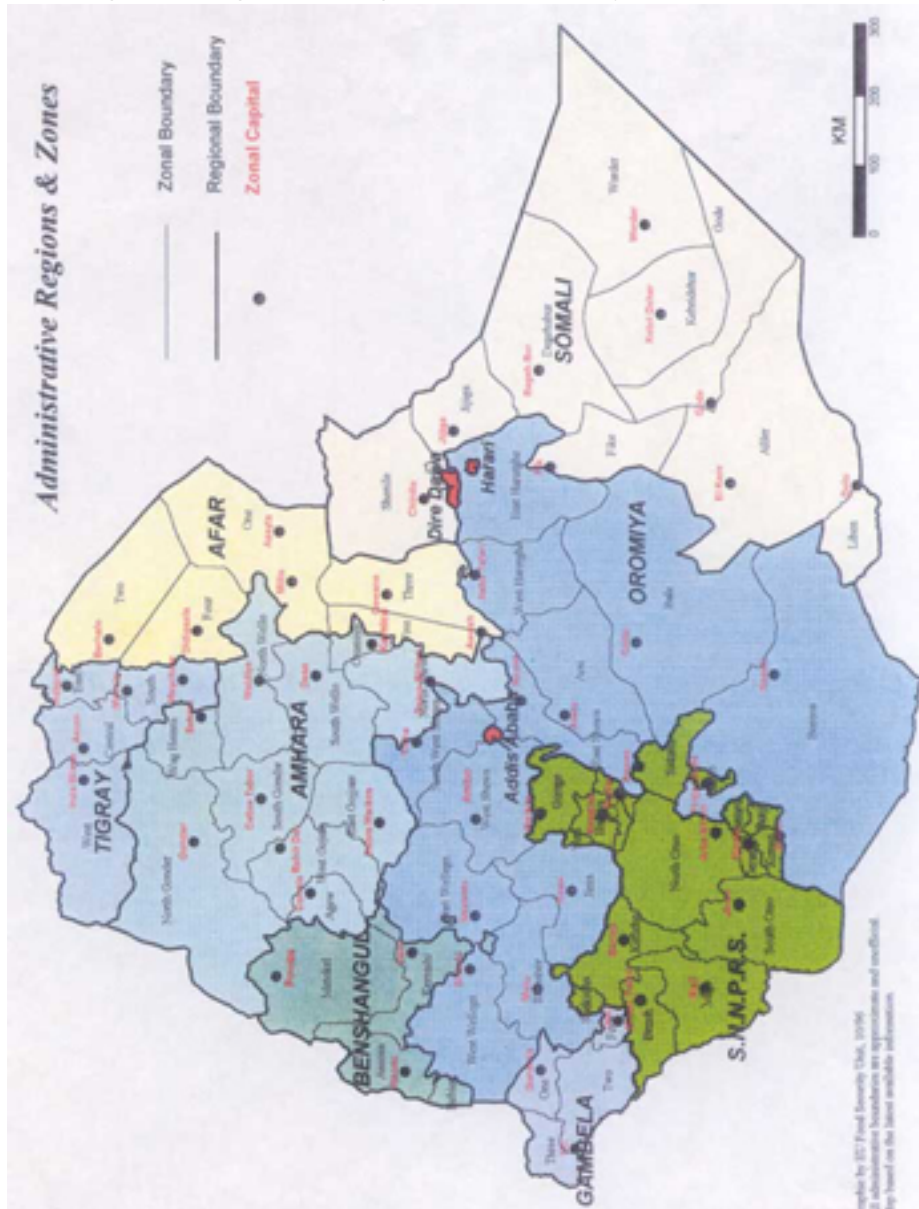
## JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Ethiopia's federal system of government has two sets of courts and jurisdictions. There is a three-tiered federal system. At the bottom are the Federal High and Federal First Instance Courts, which are established as necessary by the House of Peoples' Representatives. At the top of the structure is the Federal Supreme Court, which is established automatically by the constitution. Each region or state also has a three-tiered system of State Supreme, High and First Instance courts. Unlike the federal courts, the constitution automatically constitutes all three of these courts at the regional level. The intention is to create Federal High and Federal First Instance Courts in areas of high population density and intense economic activity where it may be necessary to supplement the regional courts. Ethiopia established a special system and proceeding for trying persons accused of crimes during the Derg regime.

The Federal Supreme Court has the highest and final jurisdiction over federal matters and the State



Supreme Court has similar jurisdiction over state matters. The Federal Supreme Court has the constitutional authority to review and correct any decision of a “basic error of law.” The State Supreme Court has the same authority for matters that fall under its purview. The Prime Minister nominates the President and Vice President of the Federal Supreme Court. The House of Peoples’ Representatives approves them. Except for violation of disciplinary rules or gross incompetence, federal judges cannot be removed from duty until they reach the mandated retirement age. The judiciary is generally independent. The greatest problems facing the judicial system are a shortage of judges and prosecutors, inadequate funding and huge backlogs in the court system.



## ETHNIC FEDERALISM

Ethnic federalism is the most radical and controversial policy instituted by the current government. The EPRDF created ethnic federalism in part to ensure that Ethiopia not continue the policy of “Amhara domination.” (The Amhara have not always dominated in Ethiopia, but they have been in control throughout much of Ethiopian history.) Ethnic federalism has important implications for all aspects of

social and political development in the country. Each region or state has its own executive branch headed by a president and supported by functional department heads. There are also regional legislatures and a judicial system. Perhaps unique in Africa, regional governments can raise their own revenue.

For administrative purposes, Ethiopia is divided into nine ethnically based regions or states and two chartered cities. The regions are Afar, Amhara, Benishangul/Gumuz, Gambela, Harar, Oromia, Somali, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) and Tigray. The two chartered cities are Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. (See map of administrative areas.) The residents of Afar, Somali and Tigray Regions are almost exclusively of the Afar, Somali and Tigrayan ethnic groups respectively. Amhara Region and Oromia are populated 85-90 percent by Amharas and Oromos respectively. The remaining administrative units contain a wide mix of smaller ethnic groups, especially SNNPR. It is a mistake, therefore, to suggest that the regions represent a single ethnic unit.

The regions are, in turn, divided into 64 zones, which are roughly equivalent to American counties. Each zone has its own administrative apparatus that reports to the regional government. The zones are subdivided into 550 districts, known locally as *weredas*, which also have administrative responsibilities. The districts are further subdivided into thousands of *kebeles* or neighborhood/rural organizations. The *kebeles*, a holdover from the Derg period, create and monitor the local militias. Ethiopia is a very large and populous country; it has created an elaborate and expensive federal structure of government. The advantage, if one assumes that it provides good government, is that it brings administration directly to the people. It has been a huge challenge, however, to fund adequately this infrastructure and to find sufficient numbers of trained and honest bureaucrats to fill the local government positions. It is too soon to tell if this grand experiment will succeed. It is a Herculean and innovative undertaking.

### **Self-Study Questions for Further Exploration**

- Are there reasons to believe the 1994 constitution will hold up longer than the 1955 and the 1987 constitutions?
- To what extent do the political parties that make up the EPRDF have strong support among the people they claim to represent?
- What keeps the opposition political parties from uniting in common cause?
- What will it take for Parliament to become a powerful force in Ethiopian politics?
- How can Ethiopia ensure there are enough judges and prosecutors to fill positions in the judicial system?
- Do the different ethnic groups have different views on the desirability of ethnic federalism?

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Ethiopian crosses



Painting of Ethiopian man

## **NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY**

### **NATIONAL SECURITY**

Ethiopia has faced attacks from outside for many centuries. Islamic forces from the Somali lowlands in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, “Gran the Lefthanded” from the Sudan in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and Egyptian troops and then the Mahdist forces from the Sudan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century all tried to overrun the Ethiopian highlands. The Italians made an unsuccessful effort in the late 1800s and finally succeeded in the 1930s. The last attempt by outsiders to seize a large part of the country occurred in the 1970s when the Somali government

briefly occupied most of the Somali inhabited part of Ethiopia. Ethiopia has learned from these experiences and, as a result, maintains a strong national security force. Ethiopia also benefited, especially in earlier times, by the fact that the core of the country is located in topographically inhospitable highlands. Foreign invaders paid a high price whenever they entered the rugged mountains.

Eritrea caught Ethiopia off guard when it occupied in 1998 a tiny piece of Ethiopian-administered territory near Badme on the border between the two countries. The previous Derg regime had kept at least 250,000 Ethiopians under arms. The EPRDF significantly downsized the force level after it defeated the Derg in 1991. It probably had at the outbreak of the conflict with Eritrea less than 100,000 regular military personnel, few of whom were anywhere near the border with Eritrea. During the two-year war with Eritrea, the Ethiopians built up their forces to about 350,000 and significantly increased military expenditures. Now that the war has ended, Ethiopia is demobilizing some of these troops, but it is a safe bet the numbers will not go down to the pre-conflict levels. Following the military defeat of Eritrea, Ethiopia has shown that it has one of the largest and most powerful military organizations on the continent today, including a modern air force. But the senior level of the defense force underwent a purge following a split in the TPLF. It remains to be seen how this will affect the overall efficiency of the military organization.

## NEIGHBORS

Ethiopia is located in a tough neighborhood and, from time to time, has been a tough neighbor itself. The Horn of Africa has been one of the most conflicted parts of the world for the last 50 years. There is constant pressure on finite arable land. Water is scarce in the lowlands. Strategic materials such as minerals and oil are in short supply throughout the region. (Sudan is now producing a significant amount of oil.) The people who live in this part of Africa are proud, familiar with adversity and not reluctant to take up arms against a neighbor. National boundaries divide ethnic groups on virtually every section of Ethiopia's frontier. It should come as no surprise that the end of colonial rule in the region resulted in a significant number of conflicts. They probably would have broken out earlier were it not for the presence of colonial troops.

Somalia became an independent state in 1960, created by the amalgamation of British Somaliland and Italian Somalia. Somalia announced at independence that it intended to incorporate into its territory Somali-inhabited areas in neighboring Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia. This policy has resulted in periodic conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia ever since. There were full-scale wars in 1964 and in 1977-1978, when Somalia occupied most of southeastern Ethiopia. What was previously known as Italian Somalia has been a failed state since 1991. There have been a few incidents near the border but there has been no large scale fighting between the two countries since 1991. In the meantime, Somaliland broke away from Somalia and established cordial relations with Ethiopia.

An even more troubling relationship is the one with Eritrea. Ever since Eritrea became a province of Ethiopia in 1962, some Eritrean groups have fought to achieve independence. This effort succeeded when the EPRDF and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front toppled the Mengistu government in 1991. The

new EPRDF government accepted Eritrean independence. Relations were cordial until conflict unexpectedly broke out in 1998 after Eritrea invaded a small piece of territory administered by Ethiopia. An all out war ensued that ended in an Ethiopian military victory in 2000. In spite of the fact that Ethiopia was once heavily dependent on the Eritrean ports of Assab and Massawa for handling its imports and exports, it may be many years before relations return to normal.

Ethiopia's thousand mile border with Sudan has the advantage of passing through territory which is isolated from their respective capitals and, until the recent discovery of oil in Sudan, is not strategically important. As a result, occasional problems between Sudan and Ethiopia have not developed into serious border conflicts. Perhaps because the border is isolated, however, groups whose goal is to overthrow the government on the other side periodically use the territory as a base. Consequently, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement has for many years operated from inside Ethiopia while various anti-Ethiopian organizations periodically use Sudan as a base. Ethiopia's greatest current concern with Sudan is that it might serve as a base to export Islamic fundamentalism. For the moment, however, relations are good and Ethiopia intends to purchase oil from Sudan and make use of Port Sudan for its commerce.

Since achieving independence in 1963, Kenya has had cordial relations with Ethiopia. The only surprise is that the relationship has not been closer than it is. This is partly explained by the nature of the Kenya-Ethiopia border. As in the case of Sudan, it is far away from both capitals and not particularly strategic. Land transportation links between the two countries are poor, thus limiting trade. Kenya and Ethiopia have traditionally cooperated in countering the irredentist threat from Somalia. But there is also occasional conflict along the border, which divides the Boran ethnic group in both countries. Cattle raiding is a serious problem among the Boran and results in occasional incursions by Ethiopian forces into Kenya. Ethiopia has also had a generally good relationship with tiny Djibouti, although that border divides the Afar and Somali tribes in both countries. Djibouti port is important for Ethiopian trade and was critical during the Ethiopian-Eritrean war.

As the major source of water for Egypt, Ethiopia is a key player in the nine nation Nile Basin Initiative. The Blue Nile and other rivers originating in the Ethiopian highlands provide 86 percent of the water reaching the Aswan Dam. Ethiopia would like to use more of its water for hydropower and irrigation than is currently the case. This requires careful discussions with Egypt and the other Nile Basin countries. If not handled appropriately, there is a potential for conflict with Egypt. Ethiopia is also a member of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), which brings together Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda. As a result of the governmental breakdown in Somalia and the Ethiopia-Eritrea war, IGAD has been relatively inactive in recent years.

## **AFRICA**

When the nations of Africa created the Organization of African Unity in 1963, they located the headquarters in Addis Ababa. Following suit, the UN Economic Commission for Africa established its headquarters in the Ethiopian capital. Until his overthrow in 1974, many Africans looked to Emperor Haile Selassie as the "symbol" of independent Africa. Ethiopia has played a less prominent role in Africa-

wide politics since 1974. Neither the Derg regime nor the EPRDF government has chosen to emphasize Africa-wide activities. They have focused instead on internal issues and the immediate region described above. Because of its long independent history and large population, however, Ethiopia remains a major figure in African politics. Nearly every African country has a resident embassy in Addis Ababa today.

## **WESTERN EUROPE**

Ethiopia has a long relationship with many Western European countries and a major assistance link with the European Union. Catholics from Portugal were among the first Europeans to develop close ties with Ethiopia. Explorers and emissaries from Great Britain, France, Spain, Italy and Germany were not far behind. There is a rich history of European contact with Ethiopia, a surprising amount of which is documented in written works. In the early 20th century, important advisers from Sweden, Switzerland and Austria joined other Europeans by taking positions in Ethiopia. Businesspersons and emigrants from Greece also arrived. Although the European presence, except for the period of Italian occupation, was never large, Europeans were instrumental in certain aspects of Ethiopia's development.

Today, the countries of Western Europe are primarily partners in trade and economic development. The most important ones are Italy, Germany, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland and France. Ethiopia has put behind it the hostility that existed during the occupation of the country by Fascist Italy. Most of the West Europeans have an embassy in Addis Ababa and relations are generally cordial with all of them. There was considerable friction in some of the relationships during the Eritrean-Ethiopian war and many of the Europeans, especially the Scandinavians, remain concerned about Ethiopia's policies on human rights.

## **RUSSIA, CHINA AND JAPAN**

Imperial Russia began contacts with Ethiopia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, driven in part by the desire of the Russian Orthodox Church to establish relations with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Russians persisted in spite of friction with the Italians. The Russians had a legation in Addis Ababa during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of prominent explorers and scientists visited Ethiopia until the Bolshevik Revolution; the last Imperial Russian charge d'affaires in Addis Ababa mortgaged the legation in 1919 to raise funds to leave the country. The Soviet Union returned to Ethiopia as a major force in the 1970s during the Marxist-Leninist Derg regime; Ethiopia effectively became a Soviet satellite. Moscow provided the Derg with about \$3.5 billion in military assistance during this period. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia returned to a normal relationship with Ethiopia although it was a major supplier (for cash) of military equipment during the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict.

China has managed to maintain a cordial relationship with Ethiopia since the end of World War II. Although the amount of its assistance is not huge, it has been appreciated. China has a significant diplomatic presence in Addis Ababa and, in its quiet way, seems to be influential with the current government. Ethiopian diplomatic contact with Japan began in the 1920s at the League of Nations. The Japanese sent a delegation to the coronation of Haile Selassie in 1930 and exchange visits began soon

after. There were important trade ties and camaraderie between the emperors of both countries. The outbreak of World War II again interrupted the relationship, which was renewed when Haile Selassie made an official visit to Japan in 1956. The overthrow of Haile Selassie set back the relationship, although trade and assistance links blossomed after the EPRDF took power.

## UNITED STATES AND CANADA

As compared to Western Europe, the U.S. link with Ethiopia is relatively recent although unofficial ties go back to 1868 when New York Herald journalist Henry Stanley accompanied the Napier Expedition to Maqdaia. Retired American officers from the Civil War in the service of the Egyptian Khedive joined Egyptian forces in an unsuccessful attack on Ethiopia in the 1870s. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the U.S. sold most of the cotton cloth imported by Ethiopia. The official relationship began in 1903 when Robert Skinner, then American Consul General in Marseilles, led an official delegation to Addis Ababa where he established diplomatic relations and signed a Treaty of Commerce.

The U.S. tried to maintain a continuous diplomatic presence in Addis Ababa after 1903 but there were numerous interruptions. The U.S. mission in Aden followed Ethiopian affairs on those occasions when no one occupied the U.S. legation. The U.S. never recognized the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1936-41 and withdrew its diplomatic mission soon after the Italians took over. The apex of the U.S.-Ethiopian relationship occurred in the post World War II period and until the overthrow of Haile Selassie in 1974. The US signed a Mutual Assistance Agreement with Ethiopia in 1953 and established a huge and important communications station outside Asmara, now capital of Eritrea. During the 1950s and 1960s the largest U.S. official presence anywhere in Africa was in Ethiopia. At one point, Ethiopia had the largest Peace Corps program in the world.

The fall of Haile Selassie and rise of the Marxist-Leninist Derg regime in the mid- 1970s put a quick end to this extensive and important relationship. During much of the Derg period, the U.S. downgraded its small embassy to the charge d'affaires level. Military assistance stopped and economic aid, except for emergency humanitarian support, came to an end. This situation reversed itself soon after the EPRDF came to power. Although U.S. programs did not return to the levels of the Haile Selassie government, Washington did institute a significant aid program and reinstated a small military assistance program. The Peace Corps returned briefly, only to depart after the outbreak of conflict with Eritrea. The U.S. continues to provide the single largest amount of emergency assistance in times of need. Policy disagreements with Ethiopia as it pursued the war with Eritrea temporarily set back the relationship. There are also concerns on human rights issues. But American-Ethiopian ties at all levels are strong; more than a quarter million Ethiopians now live in the United States.

The Canadian relationship with Ethiopia is of fairly recent origin. Ethiopians perceive Canada as a non-threatening source of advice and assistance. Canadian aid to Ethiopia as compared to American aid is not large, but it is significant and Ethiopia is one of Canada's aid concentration countries. Many Ethiopians have immigrated to Canada and many others have studied there. Canadians are well respected in Ethiopia.



## Self-Study Questions for Further Exploration

- With one of the strongest defense forces on the African continent, should neighboring countries fear Ethiopia?
- Alternatively, will Ethiopia's defense forces be put to greater use in African peace keeping operations?
- What can be done to reduce conflict in the Horn of Africa?
- Should U.S. programs in the region put more emphasis on conflict prevention?
- Once stability and a national government return to Somalia, will there likely be a revival of Somali irredentism?
- With Ethiopia providing 86 percent of the Nile water reaching the Aswan Dam, what does this mean for Ethiopian-Egyptian relations?
- What is keeping Ethiopia from playing a more important Africa-wide role today?
- With a history of attacks against Ethiopia, how has Rome managed to maintain cordial relations with Addis Ababa?
- Which country will have the most enduring relationship with Ethiopia—Russia, China or Japan?
- What are the most important American interests in Ethiopia?
- What effect does the Ethiopian-American community have on U.S. policy towards Ethiopia?

## Resource Materials for Further Study

- Tekeste Negash. Eritrea and Ethiopia: The Federal Experience. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997.
- Tekeste Negash and Kjetil Tronvoll. Brothers at War: Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.
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- Korn, David A. Ethiopia: The United States and the Soviet Union. London: Croom Helm, 1986.
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- Varnis, Steven L. Reluctant Aid or Aiding the Reluctant? U.S. Food Aid Policy and Ethiopian Famine Relief. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990.
- Schraeder, Peter J. "US Foreign Policy toward Ethiopia and Somalia." In Peter J. Schraeder. United States Foreign Policy toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994: pp. 114-88.



Ethiopian silver jewelry



Ethiopian hand made chair

## USEFUL WEB SITES

### ETHIOPIA SPECIFIC

- [www.telecom.net.et](http://www.telecom.net.et) (links to business, government, NGO and college web sites in Ethiopia).
- [www.ethioindex.com](http://www.ethioindex.com) (Ethiopia news search index for various papers).
- [www.ethiozena.net](http://www.ethiozena.net) (utilization of world wide web for Ethiopic script).
- [www.ethiopiafirst.com](http://www.ethiopiafirst.com) (news from Ethiopia).
- [www.ethiopianembassy.org](http://www.ethiopianembassy.org) (web site for Ethiopian Embassy in Washington).
- <http://pressdigest.phoenixuniversal.com> (English language digest of articles from the Ethiopian press in all languages).
- [www.ethiopians.com](http://www.ethiopians.com) (news stories about Ethiopia).
- [www.addistribune.com](http://www.addistribune.com) (articles from the Addis Tribune newspaper published in Ethiopia).
- [www.mcc-reporter.com](http://www.mcc-reporter.com) (articles from the Reporter newspaper published in Ethiopia).
- [www.waltainfo.com](http://www.waltainfo.com) (digest of Ethiopian news service).
- [www.ogaden.com/index.htm](http://www.ogaden.com/index.htm) (information about Somali issues in Ethiopia).
- [www.ethiospokes.net](http://www.ethiospokes.net) (official statements from the office of the government spokesperson in Ethiopia).
- [www.ethiopar.net/index.htm](http://www.ethiopar.net/index.htm) (web site for the Ethiopian Parliament).

- [www.tourethio.com](http://www.tourethio.com) (information about tourism in Ethiopia).
- [www.eprdf.com](http://www.eprdf.com) (web site for the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front).
- [www.eprp.com](http://www.eprp.com) (web site for the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party).

## EAST AFRICA AND HORN OF AFRICA

- [www.eastafricanforum.com](http://www.eastafricanforum.com) (press articles on East Africa and the Horn of Africa).
- [www.nilebasin.org](http://www.nilebasin.org) (news and background information on Nile water issues and the nine countries that make up the Nile Basin).

## AFRICA

- [www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com) (Africa wide news).
- [www.africabib.org](http://www.africabib.org) (extensive bibliography of periodical articles on Africa).
- [www.africanconflict.org](http://www.africanconflict.org) (conflict related news about Africa).
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa> (BBC news about Africa).

## GENERAL

- [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) (includes policy and background information on Ethiopia).
- [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov) (includes USAID related material about Ethiopia).
- [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov) (includes background information on Ethiopia).
- [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) (includes information on Ethiopia).
- [www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org) (includes IMF related information about Ethiopia).
- [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) (includes World Bank related information about Ethiopia).
- [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int) (includes information on humanitarian issues in Ethiopia).
- [www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch) (includes information on refugee issues involving Ethiopia).
- [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org) (includes information on human rights issues in Ethiopia).
- [www.accord.org.za](http://www.accord.org.za) (includes information about Ethiopia).
- [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) (includes news about Ethiopia).

