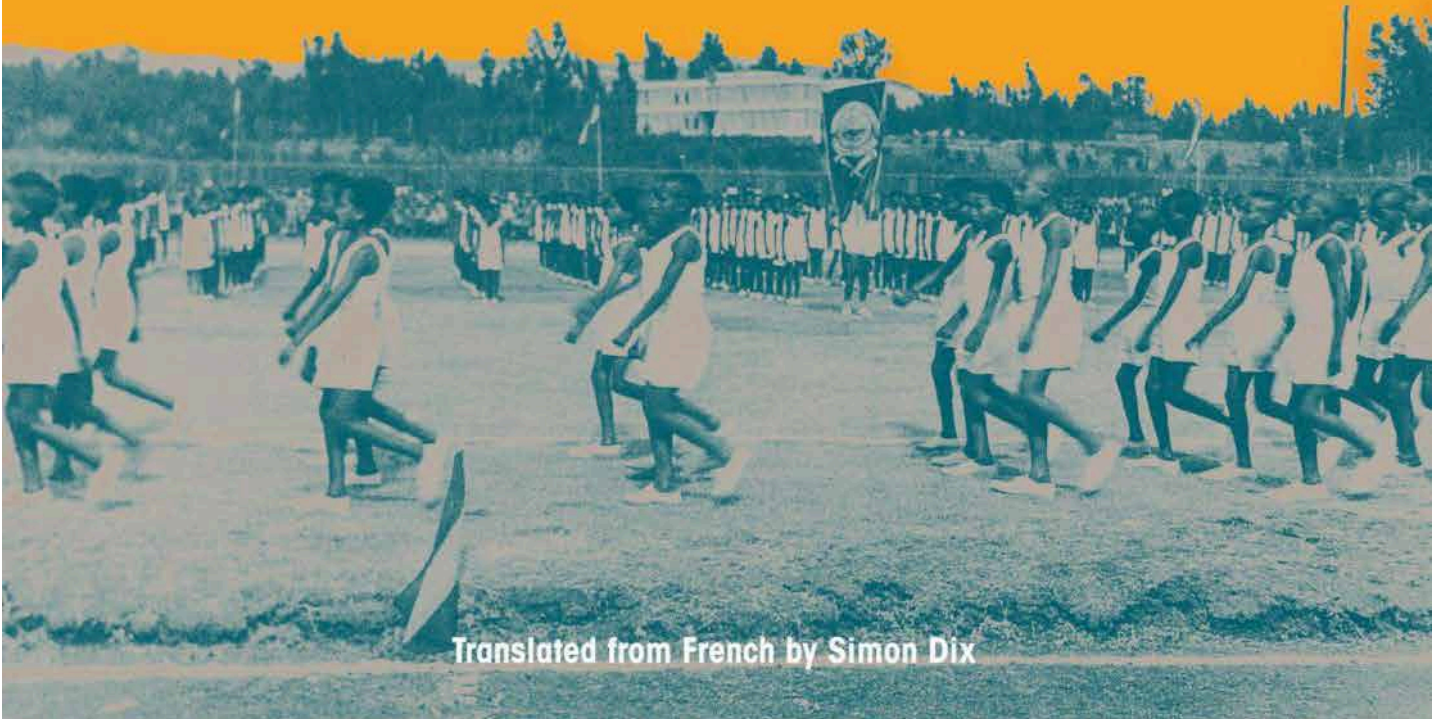PIERRE GUIDI

EDUCATING THE NATION IN ETHIOPIA

State, Society and Identity in Wolaita
(1941–1991)

Translated from French by Simon Dix

Centre français des études éthiopiennes

Educating the Nation in Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

In analysing the educational dynamics of the Wolaita region in Ethiopia, this book traces the history of the nation-state from the perspective of its margins, between 1941 and 1991. From Haile Selassie's divine right monarchy to the Derg's Marxist-Leninist military regime, it looks at the ways in which the inhabitants of a region incorporated at the end of the nineteenth century reacted to their dominated position within the national structure by negotiating with schooling—its successive ideologies, its knowledge, its languages of instruction, and its practices of power—in order to take their place in the national political community. By focusing on everyday feelings of belonging and ordinary nationalism as manifested in school dynamics, this book bears witness to the way in which nations are constructed and reshaped in the interaction and tensions between various social groups and the state. The ways in which the Ethiopian governments appropriated the North American and then Soviet schooling models offer a special insight into Ethiopia's changing positions vis-à-vis the outside world in the context of the Cold War as well as the forms of translation at work right down to the local level. Featuring a wide range of actors—women and men, urban graduates and peasants, national and local civil servants, North American Peace Corps workers and East German advisers, Catholic and Protestant missionaries—this book will appeal to a much wider audience than Ethiopia specialists alone.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This book is the English translation of: Guidi, Pierre. 2020. *Éduquer la nation en Éthiopie. École, État et identités dans le Wolaita (1941-1991)*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes; Montpellier: IRD Éditions. https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pur.159562.
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PIERRE GUIDI

Pierre Guidi is a researcher at the Ceped (université Paris Cité, IRD). His current research focus is on the history of education, women's education and women's activism in Ethiopia, on which he has published a number of articles and chapters. Guidi recently coedited (with Ellen Vea Rosnes and Jean-Luc Martineau) the book *History through Narratives of Education in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 2024 and (with Jean-Luc Martineau and Florence Wenzek) *L'école en mutation. Politiques et dynamiques scolaires en Afrique (années 1940-1980)*, Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 2024.

Educating the Nation in Ethiopia

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Jean-Nicolas Bach

Pierre Guidi

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To Weyzero Etenat Fekadu,
Ato Tesfaye Belay
and their wonderful family

Rebecca Rogers
Professor in History, Université Paris Cité.

Foreword: Deciphering Education at the Heart of the Nation

In 2018, at a time when educational issues are constantly being debated in the public arena, it is easy to understand that school policies are fundamental issues for a society. In France, the link between education and politics has evolved over a long period. The Ferry Laws (1879–86) responded to the revolutionary projects of the 18th century by introducing free, compulsory and secular primary education, outlining a vision of citizenship in which school played a fundamental role. During the 20th century, schools were invested with democratic hopes and perceived as actors of social transformation. In the post-war period, education lay at the heart of leaders' concerns, as human capital had to be trained for the needs of a booming economy. On the international side, both UNESCO and NGOs proclaimed the importance of education for development, and the voices of humanists and feminists responded to these technical and economic objectives. Education is understood to be a resource capable of transforming individuals, encouraging the dominated—be they women, children, people with disabilities or from other minorities—and helping them to become more self-reliant. Educational issues have been taken up in a multitude of discourses on political, economic, social and even identity-related issues, encompassing issues that go beyond the nature of school curricula, who attends school or the characteristics of teachers. The school has become a prism for understanding how a state functions, revealing not only the objectives of its leaders but also the hopes of its citizens. For historians, education is a precious laboratory for understanding how our modern states are constructed.

Pierre Guidi's book opens with the public debate in southwestern Ethiopia generated by the promulgation in 1999–2000 of a new administrative and school language, WoGaGoDa, which was supposed to reconcile the four languages spoken in the surrounding regions. The petitions sent to the government drew upon the region's history, its marginalisation under Haile Selassie's regime (1930–74) and its gradual integration under the Marxist-Leninist Derg regime (1974–91), followed by the federal regime of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front. According to the petitioners, being educated

and able to address the administration in the Wolaita language, a privilege that had only been obtained six years earlier, was a hard-won right that did not endanger the existence of both a Wolaita and an Ethiopian identity. The book moves back in time to discuss this process of identification with the nation and the educational dynamics that accompanied it. It seeks to understand how schools and aspirations to an education contributed to the integration of a peripheral region into the "Amhara" culture of the centre. Finally, it considers how the marginalised and voiceless have participated in the creation of the modern Ethiopian nation, even when they spoke in the Wolaita language in order to do so.

In France and French-speaking Switzerland in recent years, the history of education has attracted talented historians who have taken the promises of education to heart, launching investigations in areas that have been worked on less extensively than the development of schooling in Metropolitan France. The French colonies are the subject of new research; within Europe, studies explore the transnational circulation of school models, and the history of progressivism in the United States is enjoying renewed interest[1]. Pierre Guidi's book on Ethiopia complements this scholarship, offering not only a pioneering educational study of the country, situated within its tormented political trajectory, but also a fine example of the role played by schools in shaping national identities. By approaching this history through the "peripheral" region of Wolaita, Pierre Guidi brings to light school dynamics, similar to those seen in revolutionary France and the Third Republic; these dynamics reveal how education participated in power politics, while also offering a space where individuals and groups constructed an imaginary and identities that were the "matrix of the nation."

The relationship between the construction of a sense of national belonging and the school experience is addressed in this book using tools forged in historical communities that have nourished the emergence of a new world history attentive to the voices of the weak. Through his numerous interviews

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[1] To mention just a few recent publications: Luc Capdevila, *Femmes, armée et éducation dans la guerre d'Algérie. L'expérience du service de formation des jeunes en Algérie* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2017; https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pur.154622); Thuy Phuong Nguyen, *Écoles françaises au Vietnam, de la mission civilisatrice à la diplomatie culturelle 1945-1975* (Amiens: Encrage, 2017); Sébastien-Akira Alix, *L'éducation progressiste aux États-Unis. Histoire, philosophie et pratiques (1876-1919)* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 2017); Damiano Matasci, *L'école républicaine et l'étranger. Une histoire internationale des réformes scolaires en France, 1870-1914* (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2015; https://doi.org/10.4000/books.enseditions.3851); Joëlle Droux and Rita Hofstetter (eds.), *Globalisation des mondes de l'éducation. Circulations, connexions, réfractions (XIXᵉ et XXᵉ siècles)* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015; https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pur.89995).

with actors in the school system, former pupils and peasants with low literacy skills, Pierre Guidi gives voice to their vision of the past, the school, its rituals, and its messages. His sympathetic and nuanced portrait of the effects of schools and their "national pedagogy" reveals how education participates in relations of domination in terms of language, class and gender: his study also shows, however, how the lessons of school can mitigate, or even challenge, this domination. During the literacy campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s, the poor learned to read, and especially to sign, in Amharic. The testimonies in the book reveal how important this mastery was for the people concerned, allowing them to cope with the demands of a paper-based administration. Although the Derg regime (1978–91) was not especially sensitive to democratic rights, it nevertheless promoted schools and schooling, which led one farmer who was interviewed to say: "It is the Derg that opened the door to freedom among humans. […] It made humans equal; it made the small and the big equal."

This exploration of the dynamics of schooling poses questions about a period that was rife with political turbulence, where the question of equality resonated differently according to gender or social groups in Wolaita. From 1941 onwards, Haile Selassie sought to impose a national school system. Pierre Guidi opens a broad window on the differentiating effects of this unifying policy. As one reads, one discovers some remarkable figures, such as Bogale Wallelu, who contributed greatly to an ideal of assimilation into the culture of the political centre in the 1940s. As in many colonial contexts, Wallelu wanted to use educated elites capable of countering the hold of an aristocratic class in order to fight "the power of darkness." After him, the Governor Germame Neway—a young aristocrat who was educated in the regime's elite institutions, and later in the United States at the Universities of Wisconsin and Columbia—arrived in Wolaita in 1958. A zealous reformer, he set up hundreds of literacy centres and left a deep imprint on the local collective consciousness as the first high-ranking official at the centre to promote the interests of the dominated against the local elite. He was succeeded by Wolde-Sema'et Gebre-Wold from 1963 to 1972. Working with the Swedish International Development Agency, he financed school buildings and promoted a sense of national unity in order to compete with Protestant schools. At the time of the fall of the regime in 1974, progress in schooling was undeniable but, as Pierre Guidi writes, schools still remained a male-dominated space.

The years of the Red Terror (1974–78) had repercussions in Wolaita, with the Maoist-inspired *zemecha* movement that mobilised tens of thousands of revolutionary university and high school students in literacy and land reform campaigns. Oral histories reveal the educational convictions of these young men and women, and the way girls' schooling gradually became a stake in school policy alongside that of boys. The Marxist-Leninist Derg regime that

imposed itself in 1974 promoted schooling of the masses, brought girls into the school system, made school a way of life and placed the state at the heart of communities. Through a policy of building schools and literacy campaigns, the Amharic language spread among peasants on the periphery, despite the violent manner in which it was imposed; in the process, schools participated in the construction of national identities.

There is no retrospective angelism in Pierre Guidi's analysis, even though his assessment of the utopian dimension of the Ethiopian socialist project is very powerful. The dictatorship's pedagogy was exercised through the vertical transmission of knowledge, which was supposed to contribute to autonomy. The teachers' memories are uncompromising. For Elias Damtew, a teacher, school headmaster and civil servant in the Wolaita Zone Cultural Development Offices, communication was one-way, pupils had to listen and there was no room for discussion. In the socialist school in Wolaita, girls were much more present—they made up 40% of the pupils in both primary and secondary schools at the end of the Derg regime—but female teachers were still a very small minority: in 1990, 26% of the primary teaching staff and 6% of the secondary teaching staff were women. The school environment remained dominated by men, and there was gender-based violence, as the respondents testify, ranging from verbal insults to physical aggression. And yet, schools provided the tools that enabled adult women to organise themselves subsequently. Pierre Guidi offers the example of the "girls' clubs" run by female student teachers in the 1990s–2000s as proof of this.

One of the great successes of this study is that readers are taken into schools and the agricultural countryside when urban youth from the capital arrived during the literacy campaigns. In this way, school policy is portrayed at ground level. The reader watches the day begin with the raising of the flag, or discovers theatrical productions under Haile Selassie. Guidi describes the *zemach*'s "literacy kits" in the 1970s and the school gardens the Derg instituted to promote education through production. The dynamics of schooling are understood by the materiality of the school space, by the rituals that punctuate it and by the authority relationships that are established.

History as a school subject is referred to in particular in order to gain an understanding of how a sense of national belonging was forged. Under Haile Selassie, unsurprisingly, the regime's discourse made a hero of the enlightened monarch, but it also used textbooks imported from England or the United States because of a lack of resources. Other textbooks conveyed moral lessons. For young girls, the British nurse Florence Nightingale was held up as a model of female devotion. In spite of this openness to foreign models, the discourse vaunting the imagined Semitic and Christian nation constructed as well its own bogeymen, notably Muslims. The Derg's rise to power transformed the national representation, and the past was reviewed

through a teleological historical materialism that justified the choice of socialism and the power of the Derg. The Amharic textbooks, which promoted integration through language, spoke of equality, fraternity and openness (or transparency?); however, even in the regime's educational tools, this "egalitarian" world remained marked by gender representations in which women were subordinated to men and confined to the roles of mothers and wives. As historians have shown in the case of European socialist countries, the Ethiopian socialist revolution did not succeed in erasing the hierarchy of the sexes.

Always sensitive to differences in social origin and gender, Pierre Guidi shows how the different groups accommodated, appropriated or resisted the sirens of a schooling method that tended to integrate the Wolaita into the Ethiopian nation through the Amharic language, history lessons or working in the fields. The book reveals the complexity of the relationship between different groups and the requirements of a central power, analysing how young Protestants adhered to the educational project under Haile Selassie, or girls under the Derg regime. By going to school, obtaining teaching posts and acquiring positions in hospitals, the administration or commerce, the people of Wolaita participated in the redefinition of the Ethiopian nation. By encouraging us to look closely at this school system, with all the ambiguities surrounding its imposition from above, Pierre Guidi tells a masterful story from below and from the margins. May his method and message win over more disciples, allowing our history libraries to grow with studies that reveal the richness of education as an entry point into society.

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Colleagues and friends have read and criticised early drafts of this book, enabling me to renew my questions and overcome the obstacles that have marked this work. I want to thank them for their advice and friendship: Pierre Boilley, Rebecca Rogers, Bernard Schlemmer, Pascale Barthélémy, Shiferaw Bekele, Françoise Blum, Ayda Bouanga, Emmanuelle Bouilly, Marie-Laure Derat, Hélène Charton, Étienne Gérard, Henri Médard, Fabrice Melka, Sabine Planel, Ophélie Rillon, Alexis Roy, Elena Vezzadini, and Anaïs Wion.

I would also particularly like to acknowledge all the people in Wolaita who took the time to share their experience, knowledge and analyses with me. The final analyses remain my own, but I owe them a great deal. I cannot list them all here, although their names appear in the sources section at the end of the book. I would like to make a special mention here of Desalegn Tanga and Euel Heramo from the Wolaita Cultural Association, Abebe Fola, the late Gebre-Mikael Kuke, Zebdewos Chama, Yemesrach Alula, Habtamu Lemma and Asela Gujubo. Thank you all!

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Finally, many thanks to Simon Dix for translating this book from French into English, and to Bastien Miraucourt and Rosebelle Otieno for their editing work.

List of acronyms

AAU: Addis Ababa University
BBC: British Broadcast Corporation
CELU: Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions
CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
COPWE: Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of
    Ethiopia
CSA: Central Statistic Authority
CSO: Central Statistic Office
EDU: Ethiopian Democratic Union
EOTC: Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
EPLF: Eritrean People Liberation Front
EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP: Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party
EWLP: Experimental World Literacy Programme
GDR: German Democratic Republic
HSIU: Haylä Sellasé I University
IES: Institute of Ethiopian Studies
IEG: Imperial Ethiopian Government
LTPCEE: Long Term Planning Committee for Ethiopian Education
ME'ISON: Amharic acronym for the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement
MOE: Ministry of Education
MOEFA: Ministry of Education and Fine Arts
MOI: Ministry of Information
NALE: National Archives and Library of Ethiopia
NDRE: National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia
NOE: National Organization for Examinations
PMAC: Provisional Military Council
PMGE: Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia
POMOA: Provisional Office of Mass Organizational Affairs
PRDE: Popular Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
REWA: Revolutionary Ethiopian Women Association
SIDA: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIM: Sudan Interior Mission
TGE: Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF: Tigray People's Liberation Front
TTC: Teacher Training Center

TTI: Teacher Training Institue
UNDP: United Nations Development Program
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US: United States
USAID: United States States Agency for International Development
USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WADU: Wolaita Agricultural Development Unit
WPE: Workers' Party of Ethiopia
WZEO: Wolaita Zone Education Office

Note on transliteration

Instead of the academic transliteration system, I have chosen to use a simple transliteration system for ease of reading. Therefore, I have thus used "e" for both the first and sixth orders, and I have not indicated the glottalized syllables.

As for the names, I have chosen to use the forms applied by the Ethiopians themselves. For instance, **ወልደ ሰማዕት ገብረ ወልድ** is written "Wolde-Semaet Gerbre-Wold," and not "Wäldä Säma'et Gäbra-Wäld." **ሠለጠነ** is written "Seletene," and not "Sälätṭänä."

The important concepts in Amharic whose meaning is discussed are all written directly in the Amharic syllabary, as are the quotations.

The translations from Amharic to English are mine. They have been checked and corrected by Kidane-Mariam Wolde-Giorgis and Brook Beyene.

The translations from Wolaita to English are from Asela Gujubo, who worked with me as a translator and assistant for the interviews with farmers. I would like to thank him sincerely for his invaluable help in contextualizing and interpreting the information gathered. Of course, I take sole responsibility for the final interpretations.

General Maps

Figure 1. Provinces of imperial and revolutionary Ethiopia

Figure 2. Wolaita and its *wereda*

General Introduction

1. Wolaita at the edge of the nation?

In 1999 and 2000, the inhabitants of the Wolaita region of southwest Ethiopia rose up against the introduction of a new administrative and school language, WoGaGoDa, a form of "Esperanto" created from the four languages spoken in northern Omo. WoGaGoDa is an acronym of Wolaita, Gamo, Goffa and Dawro. The reform came after the Wolaita language had been in use in administration and schools for six years, in the wake of the new language policy established by the 1994 Federal Constitution. The movement started in the cities, which were the first to receive textbooks printed in the new language, and spread very rapidly across the school network to reach the majority of the population (Data 2006). Petitions sent to the government at the time emphasised respect for the new constitution, which guaranteed every "nation, nationality and people of Ethiopia" the right to promote their culture; they explained that the introduction of WoGaGoDa was a step backwards in history, as the Wolaita had only recently finally gained their rightful place in the nation after a century of oppression (Guidi 2012). They highlighted the violence of the conquest of their kingdom in 1894 by the armies of Ethiopian Emperor Menilek II (1891–1913) and the oppression and marginalisation they had experienced under Haile Selassie's regime (1930–74). Their status had only been improved very recently: first under the Marxist-Leninist military regime of the Derg[1] (1974–91), and then under the federal regime of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The authors of the petitions noted that despite these decades of oppression, the Wolaita had always served Ethiopia.[2] They thus reaffirmed their belonging to the nation, while recalling that this belonging also required respect for their identity. Building on the evolution of their status since integration into Ethiopia in 1894, and affirming both an Ethiopian and a Wolaita identity, they posed the question of how their group might exist in present-day federal Ethiopia.

This sense of dual belonging was formed over a fifty-year period between Haile Selassie's 1941 policy of centralisation and the fall of the Derg in 1991.

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[1] The Derg ("committee" in Geez, an ancient Ethiopian language) was the military committee that gradually came to power during the popular revolution that overthrew the Haile Selassie regime in 1974. By extension, it also refers to the military government led by Mengestu Haile-Mariam (1974–91).

[2] Wanna Wagesho, **የወላይታ ሕዝብ ታሪክ** (*History of the Wolaita People*) (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Selam Printing Press, 2003), 172.

Relations between the Wolaita and Ethiopia—its central state, its local administration and its dominant culture—were constructed out of convergences, divergences, hesitations and negotiations, and there are at least three main reasons why it is difficult to see how the big picture emerged: firstly, because a "nationality" is always structured by internal distinctions and hierarchies, even though its elites may present it as homogeneous for the purposes of promoting their claims; secondly, because the policies of the various governments have been less than unambiguous; and, finally, because Wolaita society has been reshaped in multifaceted ways over the course of fifty years. The social hierarchies and relationships of domination within local society have been transformed under the effects of external constraints and their own tensions, and these transformations have changed the ways of representing, being and acting within the national political community.

By treating school education as a meeting place between state policies and societies, and by analysing how reconfiguring the school acts on the structuring of power (Gérard 1997), this book seeks to understand how local identities have been reshaped within local, national and international dynamics since the first government school in Wolaita opened in 1941. It makes a contribution to the history of national construction as seen from the peripheries, and poses the question of how they play a part in redefining the nation.

2. The nation and its "modernity"

The protean idea of nationhood is at the heart of this work because nation-building has been the object of incessant tensions, as well as a challenge for successive governments, since the expansion of Ethiopia's borders at the end of the 19th century, a process that strengthened the diversity of an already heterogeneous kingdom. How does it stay together? On what material and imaginary basis should its existence be based? Under Haile Selassie, being Ethiopian meant speaking Amharic, adopting the Christian faith of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church[3] and recognising oneself in the myths of northern Ethiopia. The Derg relaxed the cultural criteria for belonging to the nation, claiming that it wanted to put an end to the "oppression of nationalities." Declaring itself to be Marxist-Leninist, it redefined the country in the direction of egalitarianism. Language, religion, culture and "nationality" were no longer discriminatory elements, at least in theory. The nation was to be developed in "masses" united by class solidarity and the struggle against internal and external enemies. The two regimes used two different strategies to cement the population horizontally and aggregate

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[3]Tewahedo means "unified" in Geez, a reference to the unity of the nature of Christ.

it vertically to the state. Centralisation increased, but the way the centre dominated the peripheries changed.

Historians who have attempted to theorise the concept of "nation" have always come up against its evanescent nature, which defies any attempt at a definition that might offer an exhaustive meaning. As Eric Hobsbawm says, it is impossible to provide a universal definition based on "objective" criteria such as language, territory, history or cultural traits, as these criteria are themselves vague, and never fully overlap (Hobsbawm 1992, 5–6). Therefore, in the absence of a clear definition, approaches based on representations appeared to be the most functional. The most famous example was proposed by Benedict Anderson: nations are "imagined communities," "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 2006 (1983), 6). This perspective invites us to think of nations as entities in perpetual construction. How are national imaginaries formed and reproduced? Needing to be alive in the minds of its members, and taking shape in individuals, the nation is then the object of constant political education.

The history of education proposed here is absolutely consistent with Anderson's perspective when it comes to understanding the sources of a national imagination, but two reservations must first be applied to both Anderson's and Hobsbawm's positions. A concept of the nation as eminently "modern"—without ever really knowing what the word "modern" means—has led both these authors to situate its birth in the supposed cradle of "modernity"—Europe—to which Anderson adds the "Creole States" of America. Anderson's point of departure is that "nation-ness, as well as nationalism are cultural artefacts" that "became 'modular,' capable of being transplanted" (Anderson 2006 [1983], 4). For his part, Hobsbawm argues that "the modern nation, as a state or as a set of people aspiring to become one, differs in number, extent and nature from the communities with which human beings have identified over almost all historical time;" its "fundamental characteristic… is precisely its modernity" (Hobsbawm 1992, 91, 35). Two things stand out here: the first is the Eurocentric perspective of these claims, and the second is the rapid and confusing use of the term "modernity." It is unclear whether it describes a historical period—the contemporary era—or whether it is an analytical category, in which case, what does "modern" mean, and why would the nation be "modern?"

First of all, it will be helpful to mention Partha Chatterjee's reservation about Anderson's theory: "If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain 'modular' forms already made available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine?" (Chatterjee 1993, 5). The British historian Christopher Bayly adds

that "the most vigorous stirring of nationality in the late 19th century was a global phenomenon. It emerged contemporaneously in large parts of Asia, Africa and the Americas, rather than first in Europe, later to be exported 'overseas.'" This is why "in future, the theorists of nationalism will have to bring the extra-European world into a central position of their analyses, rather than seeing it as an 'add-on bonus.'" (Bayly 2007, 327) Those of us who study Ethiopia can only agree with Bayly's suggestion.

The Ethiopian case goes even further. Not only did 19th century Ethiopia experience a burst of nationalism as a reaction to European imperialism, but national sentiment based on a common imagination also already existed. Marie-Laure Derat has shown how as early as the 15th century, the state used the network of churches to homogenise the population under its authority by creating, cementing and renewing a collective imagination (Derat 2002, 45). Two people living at opposite ends of the kingdom were aware that they had the same sovereign, and that they shared the same myths and the same sense of historical continuity; in short, they belonged to the same political community.[4] This is why, after recalling with Perry Anderson that no European medieval state was founded on nationality, Donald Donham stresses the fact that "whatever else can be said about Abyssinian society, it was founded upon a nationality" (Donham 2002, 13). This was because the correspondence between a government, a territory and a population was established; because a national imagination existed, rooted in Ethiopian history, which owed nothing to European "modernity."

It is true, however, that, from the beginning of the 20th century, and more particularly from 1941 onwards, the schools opened by the Ethiopian government were places where European knowledge was imported for the purpose of centralisation, which was presented as "modernisation" leading to "development." Until 1974, the Western capitalist world (the USA was the main supporter of Haile Selassie's government) was an inspiration to the Ethiopian elites. After the 1974 revolution, however, the Derg turned to the Eastern Bloc. The USSR, the GDR and to a lesser extent Cuba became the regime's main allies, and school objectives and curricula were changed accordingly. Capitalism and the Soviet form of socialism were both presented as models for attaining "modernity." Although it can in no way be used as a category of analysis for research, "modernity"—and its corollary modernisation—was therefore a powerful framework for interpreting the world that determined the actions taken by the actors. The state lent itself legitimacy by claiming to be the custodian of the "modern," and therefore of the future of the nation.

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[4]Drawing on discussions with Marie-Laure Derat, I take the liberty of crossing the line between the state's desire to unify and the reality of a popular feeling of common belonging.

The governed appropriated this concept as an aspiration for a better life. Both the opposition to Haile Selassie's regime in the 1960s and the revolution of 1974 were staged in the name of progress and conceptualised by discourses that contrasted backwardness with modernity. The word "modernity" should therefore be understood as a set of representations that were understood by actors in a plurality of ways.

Like the idea of "modernity," the idea of nationhood was not advanced by the state alone. Based on Stalin's theory of nationalities, the Ethiopian student movement, which developed in the 1960s, proposed the idea of a multicultural, multilingual and multiconfessional nation in opposition to Haile Selassie's homogenising vision. The definition of the nation and its criteria for inclusion and exclusion lay at the heart of tensions over the legitimisation or contestation of power, membership of the national political community or marginalisation. The aim here is not to study the formation of the "Ethiopian nation" based on a case study, but to question the multiple and changing relationships of the inhabitants of a region within the national whole. This involves looking at the various ways in which the idea of nation has been interpreted, questioned, negotiated, contested and redefined. In Wolaita, this process has been deeply rooted in the lived experience of integration in Ethiopia, and has been especially embodied in school education.

A history of education that looks at school dynamics in relation to the normative definitions of the nation and the realities of the national imagination cannot be properly accomplished by analysing discourses and representations alone, which are inextricably linked to modes and relations of production, as well as to the distribution and practices of power. The educational historian Carl Kaestle has recalled two essential methodological elements: the social structure and its transformations are an essential starting point for explaining educational dynamics and the trajectories of school systems; and the confrontation between the dominant ideology and those of subgroups provides a conceptual support for understanding how educational processes function (Kaestle 2000, 121).

3. The school: imaginary and materiality of the nation

School actors are located at the point where local, national and international dynamics converge. State school education is an iconic instrument of the political and cultural practices of a government *vis-à-vis* its citizens, as well as a place of negotiation where the symbolic and material aspirations of those who govern and those who are governed, and their respective interpretations of what the social world is and should be, meet, confront and transform each other. The school as an instrument for the legitimisation of power and normalisation that applies itself to shaping ways of thinking and being is used by the state to ensure that its concept of the nation materialises. First, as Pierre

Bourdieu has pointed out, "the major mission of educational institutions is to build the nation as a population endowed with […] the same common sense" (Bourdieu 2003, 142). Second, a school education imposes linguistic and cultural criteria that give the nation a defined identity. Finally, it ensures that students become future governed people living in the time of the nation: it teaches a common past that has been reorganised or invented to make the political community a long-term reality, and it seeks to inculcate the idea of a community of destiny by conveying the myth of progress. From this perspective, receiving a school education in many ways means receiving a baptism of "modernity." The school carries the binary division between tradition and modernity within it, and therefore the separation of the nation into two parts, one of which is "modern" and the other to be "modernised." The "modern" and the "traditional" polarise the lack of agreement on what the nation should be as a community in the making.

After making the point that the nation is an act of imagination, Anderson adds that "all communities larger than the primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (Anderson 2006 [1983], 6). The history of education suggests that while this idea should be retained, it should be somewhat reworked, or at least that the exclusivity of imagination should be reduced. Christine Chivallon has noted that while Anderson provides a remarkable demonstration of the fact that the creation of the imaginary is based on various types of material support—books, newspapers, museums, monuments and so on—he does not include the materiality of the nation according to its theoretical definition (Chivallon 2007, 131–72). However, looking at the link between the school as an institution and nation-building tells us that the imaginary and materiality are not dissociated from each other. The school is an instrument for shaping the imagination through the teaching of history, myths and knowledge in general. It is also endowed with great materiality through its books, its classes, its enclosed spaces and its entry and exit times. It exerts pedagogical actions and constraints on the minds and bodies of its pupils that are far from being imaginary. Its buildings, which are inscribed into the landscape, mark the physical presence of the state and the nation at points scattered across the governed territory. Finally, while the sense of common belonging is based on the imagination, entry into the nation is not a purely imaginary act. The relationship to the nation and the school is deeply rooted in the psychologically and physically experienced concrete social reality of power relations. The "real" and the imaginary cannot be separated.

It is through schools that increasing numbers of Wolaita have forced their way into the nation. Schools are one of the instruments by which the centre asserts power over its peripheries, but they are also a tool that enables the dominated to mitigate the most glaring aspects of domination by adapting to the structures imposed on them. Major state projects also do not have

the same meaning in the centre as they do in the context of a local area: perceptions change as the scale changes. The same is true of the polysemic categories that support these projects—such as nation, progress, development and civilisation—which actors invest in and operate in multiple registers of their own. There can therefore be a wide gap between the homogeneity of a school policy and the heterogeneity of the uses made of it by social actors, between the major projects of the former and the "everyday politics" of the latter. For the state, progress is conceived at a macro level: it may, for example, mean a centralised and efficient administration or an increase in national wealth. For an individual, a family or a social group, on the other hand, it may mean access to employment and a way out of a miserable agricultural life and of a status of domination. Others may embrace larger-scale collective projects, which may or may not be those proposed by the state. The relations a society maintains with the central power and the national political community are understood through these differences, and the school is a privileged place from which to observe them. The ways in which school discourses and practices are received and interpreted must therefore be investigated and analysed in detail, as they reflect the diverse and evolving ways in which people view state policies.

4. School dynamics in Wolaita in the light of power relations
Drawing on the work of the historian Maurizio Gribaudi, one of the main proponents of microhistory, Jean-Hervé Jézéquel has shown that, during the colonial period in French West Africa, the logic of schooling eluded linear explanations, and that approaches in terms of macro-variables were not enough to account for it. This is why he set out to "restore the role of local configurations—i.e. the local fabric of social relations and affiliations—in the explanation of global historical processes" (Jézéquel 2003, 422). It is in line with works on the sociology, anthropology and demography of education, which gave new impetus to educational research on Africa from the second half of the 1990s by refining the analysis of the demand for school and the specific logic underlying it (Pilon & Yaro 2001). For her part, Hélène Charton has shown how schooling was a form of resistance that enabled some Kenyans to "appropriate the tools of domination" and thus gain a foothold in the new social and political space imposed by British colonisation (Charton 2002, 3). These two perspectives invite us to consider social structures and power relations as central determinants of schooling strategies. How have the different positions in the distribution of power in Wolaita helped determine the school practices of different individuals and social groups? The relationship with school provides information on the way in which the actors question social structures and the position they occupy within them.

   In the manner of Michel Foucault's "resistances," school pedagogy acts as a revealer. It makes it possible "to highlight power relations, to see where

they fit in, to discover their points of application and the methods they use" (Foucault 1994, 225). On the one hand, the forms of power inherent in "school culture"—a set of *norms* that define the knowledge to be taught and the behaviour to be inculcated, and a set of *practices* that enable the transmission of this knowledge and the incorporation of these practices (Julia 1995, 354)—are a part of, and reveal, the power relations that prevail in the social environment. On the other hand, because "forms of power—generally the more microscopic ones—generate the social" (Dussel 2001, 208), school culture spreads beyond school walls. From both perspectives, the history of education makes it possible to understand how individuals and groups experience power relations, how they relate to them and how they transform them, knowingly or unknowingly.

The political, social, economic and cultural realities in Wolaita in the 20th century justify this approach. Wolaita is a crossroads region 300 kilometres south of Addis Ababa that was conquered by Emperor Menilek II in 1894. At the time, it was a powerful kingdom surrounded by vassal states, and occupied a position of regional hegemony (Planel 2008, 131–40). When it was forcibly integrated into Ethiopia, it lost its sovereignty and declined from a central to a peripheral position. Resistance to the Ethiopian army was severely punished. According to Bahru Zewde, Wolaita was incorporated after one of the bloodiest campaigns of the entire expansion process (Bahru 2001, 64). What had previously been a kingdom now came under the direct control of the Ethiopian administration. Land was distributed to Menilek II's soldiers, together with the right to impose tributes and profit from the work of peasants. These soldiers did not own the land: they were concessionaires with extensive political and judicial powers, and exercised power on behalf of the government. Armed settlers sent from the north assisted them with controlling the conquered populations. This group of new masters was assisted by Wolaita personnel at the lower levels of the administration. Under the close control of the conquerors, they were responsible for collecting taxes and ensuring justice and policing at village level. Finally, the new system rapidly integrated the large local families, including the royal family, who, like the conquerors, enjoyed rights to huge estates (Planel 2008, 159). Following liberation from the brief Italian occupation between 1936 and 1941, the government launched a land privatisation movement. Some of those who were entitled to the proceeds of the land and the people who worked it gradually became landowners, while others remained concessionaires. Nevertheless, this movement did not significantly change the distribution of power or the way it was exercised. According to Sabine Planel, the situation of the peasants actually worsened: on the one hand, it was they who bore the brunt of most of the new taxes created by the government to rationalise property taxes (Planel 2008, 152), while on the other, they had no legal ties to the land, as had been the case before, and could

be evicted by the owner at any time (Bahru 2001, 192). In short, they became more vulnerable, while remaining just as miserable.

The society of settlers diversified after the Italian occupation. In Soddo, the military garrison founded by the conquerors that gradually became the capital city of Wolaita, and in smaller towns, small traders and civil servants gradually joined the armed settlers and the new landlords. A small number of Wolaita also slowly settled there. As the city was integrated into the national space, it gradually became a place where people mixed in an "Amhara melting pot": in the city, Amharic was spoken and the townspeople joined the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The settlers who came to try their luck in the south travelled from all over the country, not only from the north, but also from Gurage and Oromo and their neighbours the Kambatta and Hadiya (Almaz 1984, 24). Nevertheless, in the eyes of the rural inhabitants—who made up the overwhelming majority of the population—the city remained the territory of the conquerors, the location of the "Amhara" power. This complexification of urban society, and the very fact that many landlords were Wolaita, did not truly prevent a binary interpretation: actors on both sides of the great power divide reified the categories "Amhara" and "Wolaita" (Planel 2008, 162). The divisions between conqueror and conquered and between "Amhara" and "Wolaita" overlapped, and formed a reading grid according to which the actors interpreted the power relations under which they lived. Therefore, speaking of this binary opposition should not prevent finer divisions from being taken into account.

Political, economic and military domination was accompanied by a cultural domination of northern Ethiopia based on Christianity, awareness of a history dating back to antiquity, an emperor chosen by God, the Amharic language and the practice of writing. When taken together, these elements delimited a "civilised" space in the eyes of the conquerors, and at the same time legitimised the subjugation of the conquered populations. The Wolaita language and religion, and its identity in general, were relegated to a place outside this space of civilisation, and were denied or humiliated. In short, Wolaita corresponded to John Markakis' definition of periphery: it was a situation—and not a place—in which "powerlessness, economic exploitation and cultural discrimination add up to a severe form of marginalisation, the defining feature of the periphery" (Markakis 2011, 7). Periphery is therefore defined less by geographical distance than by a position in the distribution of the power and resources originating from the centre. Thus, while the rural areas of Wolaita were in a peripheral position, this was much less true of the city of Soddo: Wolaita society was itself crossed by the dividing line that separated the centre from the periphery.

The issue here, based on a historical analysis of educational dynamics, is therefore to place the formation of the national imagination within the

materiality of social life and the political, economic and cultural relations of domination. Almost thirty years ago, Donald Donham recalled that while the 20th century history of Ethiopia as seen from the centre was relatively well known at the time:

> Another story remains untold, for there were many "others" who helped make twentieth-century Ethiopia. These other Ethiopians lived their lives mostly in the periphery rather than at the political center; they were governors sent from Addis Ababa, northern settlers out to seek their fortunes at the frontiers and, most of all, they were the common peasants, tenants, and slaves created in the wake of Menilek's expansion into the south. (Donham 2002, 3)

His interpretation is still relevant today. The historiography of southern Ethiopia suffers from a limited number of works and is caught up in weighty political stakes. A history based on a "multi-centred" and "inclusive" narrative of the nation's past is struggling to emerge (Triulzi 2002, 276). On the one hand, academic history is having difficulty moving away from the national level (Clapham 2002a, 37–38), while on the other, the history of the south is currently dominated by nationalist authors, notably Oromo, who write history according to their own plans for political independence. The history of education we propose here has been placed as close as possible to the lived experience of individuals and groups, and is sensitive to the effects of power relations, as well as to micro-phenomena linked to national and international dynamics. It contributes to rediscovering the history of these silent actors, these "others" whom Donham speaks of, away from the great simplifying schemes.

This research is based in particular on some forty oral interviews conducted in Wolaita and Addis Ababa, which have made it possible to go back as far as the opening of the first school in 1941. Administrators, teachers, former students from various social backgrounds and peasants with very little schooling granted interviews as witnesses, actors or individuals with specific knowledge of one field or another. Finally, the interviews reveal how the actors interpret their history, and that of their group, their region and their country. The interviews were semi-directive, relatively free discussions on themes or events I proposed to the people I consulted. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan reminds us that the course of an interview depends "on the strategies of the two (or more) partners in the interaction," "on their cognitive resources" and on the context within which the relationship is situated (Olivier de Sardan 2008, 56). I therefore paid particular attention to the interactive nature of the interview and its knowledge effects. This oral history was collected in the particular context of struggles for the recognition of minority cultures and access to the centre's resources in federal Ethiopia. Ten years after the revolt against WoGaGoDa I referred to at the beginning, the school question, and especially the issue of the languages of instruction, continued to crystallise

powerful political stakes between cultural recognition through the Wolaita language and national integration through Amharic, against a backdrop of social mobility and struggles for a monopoly of legitimacy (Guidi 2015). The views of the people I consulted guided their perceptions of the past, and invited me to be cautious about my own interpretations. However, the political issues that constitute my data collection also allowed me to add new elements and greater detail to the questions I was asking about the past. My hope is that this historical perspective will help us to better understand the present by both adding to and shedding new light on the research on "ethno-linguistic"[5] federalism.

These oral sources explain and complete a varied corpus of written sources. The official curricula and reports produced by the Ministry of Education illustrate the aims of the school system, the ways in which the government included education in its political projects. The organisation of teaching, the general objectives and the more specific purposes of each subject reveal the knowledge, skills and values to be inculcated. The school literature, especially on history, geography, civics, political education and reading, shows how the Haile Selassie and Derg regimes, respectively, shaped the nation's past and projected its future, and how education legitimised their power and political projects, defining the criteria for joining the nation as well as the values and behaviour to be adopted. Finally, school songs were collected orally and from the press. Singing was a very present activity in the pupils' daily lives throughout the period being studied. Written especially to be accurately memorised, these songs bear detailed messages with a direct political impact and a considerable power of incorporation. All these oral and written sources make it possible to approach the school system from multiple perspectives: from those of the Ministry of Education officials to the inhabitants of the villages, including teachers and pupils, from the small towns and the provincial capital. Comparing them reveals the different ways in which actors at various levels of the school system interpret and appropriate knowledge, representations, values and behaviours to be inculcated, and bear witness on how meaning is constructed and how imaginations are forged.

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[5]Ethiopian "ethno-linguistic" federalism is based on the Nationalities Report produced by Stalin at Lenin's request. It was translated into Amharic, and served as the basis for the studies of the Institute for the Studies of Ethiopian Nationalities (ISEN), which was established under the Derg in 1983. the EPRDF regime, which came to power in 1991, also adhered to Stalin's theory of nationalities, considering the mother tongue as the main marker for defining a nationality, and divided the country into regions established according to language.

Part 1

The contradictions of the Assimilating School under Haile Selassie (1941–1974)

Between the establishment of the national school system in 1941 and the 1974 revolution that overthrew Haile Selassie, the official aims of education were to train the personnel needed for centralisation, to create a homogenous nation and to bring about "progress." The Ethiopian state, its partner, the United States, and the Wolaita local education authority considered these aims from a variety of angles. The emperor aimed to build his autocracy by creating a loyal administrative staff. The United States wanted to train Ethiopian elites to defend its model of society in the context of the Cold War. The pioneer of education in Wolaita, Bogale Wallelu, sought to promote his marginalised region within the nation through education (Chapter 1). For their part, the members of Wolaita's local society—the priests of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the local political elites, the Wolaita farmers, men and women—welcomed the new institution in different ways and for different reasons. The dynamics of education were shaped by local power relations: some wanted to retain their power, others wanted to escape marginalisation through social advancement (chapter 2).

The teaching, particularly history, conveyed and tended to impose a conception of the nation established according to the criteria of belonging defined by northern Ethiopia: its language, its religion and its founding myths. Particular attention was paid to the cult of Haile Selassie's personality as the embodiment of the nation and its future. There was a strong emphasis on dedication and a sense of duty in the context of a teleology of progress, represented by centralisation and capitalist industrial society (chapter 3). In the school environment, the pedagogical relationship, rituals and forms of socialisation generated a socialisation in tension, made up of contradictory messages. Pupils' and teachers' experiences of schooling were marked by discrepancies between a discourse of assimilation and practices of distinction between classes, nationalities and genders (chapter 4).

As schools were at the interface between local and national spheres, the political effects of school education and socialisation could be understood in terms of both local power relations and national political movements. The generation educated in the 1940s and 1950s believed in the virtues of assimilation and were loyal to the regime. While the regime could still harbour aspirations for progress, the national space was seen as a resource for escaping marginalisation. The next generation, educated in the 1960s and 1970s, became increasingly anti-establishment. As the regime entered a phase of stagnation,

the school network became a place where revolutionary ideas inspired by Marxism were disseminated, reaching the pupils of Wolaita. Placed at the heart of a contradiction between school discourse and the social realities of their region, these students conceived their protest activities at the junction of the local and national spheres (chapter 5).

Thinking about the Purposes of the National School System: The Ethiopian State, the USA and Wolaita

Following a timid investment in education at the beginning of the 20th century, the Ethiopian government established a national school system in the 1940s and 1950s, following the Italian occupation (1936–41). Understanding the objectives of school education involves looking at the reformist logic at work. At the end of the 19th century, an intensification of colonial pressure accelerated the movement towards the centralisation of power that had been initiated a few decades earlier by Emperor Tewodros II (1855–68). First Menilek II (1889–1913) and then Regent Tefari (1917–30), who became Emperor Haile Selassie in 1930, decided to reform the government by importing European administrative, fiscal and repressive techniques. The centralisation process was temporarily interrupted by the Italian occupation, but experienced an unprecedented acceleration after the liberation, and required the construction of a national school system. The role of the United States was central to this process: the US wanted a reliable ally in the Horn of Africa as part of its policy of containing communism, and was Haile Selassie's main supporter.

   Government schools did not emerge in an educational vacuum. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church had a large school network that had trained the kingdom's scholars for centuries. Catholic and Protestant missionaries had also begun to open schools at the end of the 19th century, but in the 20th century, the state was in increasing need of education as a response to its new political projects. School education was embedded in national, international and local issues. The aim of this first chapter is to understand how the actors at the various levels of the school system thought about its aims. I analyse the objectives assigned to schools by the state and its American advisers based on official documents (including reports, school programmes, brochures published by the government and speeches) and press articles. The educational thinking of the local school administrator, Bogale

Wallelu, is approached through official letters, his literary work, the press and oral sources.

1. School education before the Italian occupation of 1936
Until secular power became involved in education, literacy training was provided by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (Haile Gabriel 1994, 617). There were also Muslim schools in Ethiopia, notably in Harar and Wello (Hussein 1986), but they were left on the margins because of their lack of ties to the central power of the Christian kingdom.

   1.1. *Schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church*
The origin of literacy education provided by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church can be traced back to the introduction of Christianity in Aksum in the 4th century, but it was particularly developed and codified between the 13th and 15th centuries, when the Christian kingdom was strengthened after the so-called Solomonic Dynasty came to power (Teshome 1979, 10). The monasteries that had the largest libraries and the most prestigious teachers gradually became points of reference that gave a sense of homogeneity to the education on offer. The fact that there was a multi-level curriculum and a hierarchy of education centres also makes it possible to speak of a real system. Its political function was threefold. Firstly, it trained priests and clerics in the service of secular power. Secondly, because of how religious and political power were interwoven, Christianity and the network of religious institutions were used by the emperors to ensure the cohesion of the kingdom by having them communicate imperial directives and by using preaching and teaching as an ideological cement (Derat 2002). Finally, the advance of the frontiers of the Christian kingdom was accompanied by the building of churches to maintain and strengthen the links between the centre and the newly-conquered peripheries (Deresse 2011).
   Pupils, most exclusively male, began their education in the village church, where they learned to read and write in the liturgical language, *Geez*, before memorising passages from the Epistle of John and the Symbols of the Apostles (the "creed"). The end of this first stage, which lasted between two and four years and made it possible to pursue a career in the lower clergy, was marked by memorisation of the Psalms of David. This was the point at which the vast majority of students ended their studies (Teshome 1979, 13). Those who wished to continue entered monasteries, where *zema*, music and liturgical dances, were taught, as well as an even higher level, *qené*, a poetic art that cultivated the art of double meaning and mystical mystery. The highest level of study was called *Metseaft Bet* (House of Books), and students, who were considered by society as scholars and by their masters as peers, specialised in interpreting the Old or New Testaments, dogma, law and philosophy.

The reference works they used were the *Metsahafe-Felsafe Tabiban* (Book of the Wise Philosophers), which consisted of excerpts from figures such as Plato, Aristotle and Cicero (Paulos 1976, 81); *Tarike Negest* (History of the Kings), which included royal chronicles; *Kebre Negest* (Glory of the Kings), the Ethiopian national epic; and *FethaNegest* (Law of the Kings), the legal code that was in force from the 13th century to the middle of the 20th century.

The study of philosophical, historical and legal works at a higher level testifies to a concern for training men whose areas of ability stretched beyond the religious framework. Those who had completed advanced studies were in demand from kings, princes and the great aristocracy (Paulos 1976, 85). The written word had various functions in the practice of power: literate men were responsible for producing and distributing historical and ideological texts such as royal chronicles; the exercise of justice was partly based on texts; transfers of property were recorded in charters and donations; the incomes of the large royal and feudal estates were reported in writing; and the transmission of royal directives was ensured by exchanges of letters, as were diplomatic communications with foreign powers. This varied set of writing practices exercised by a learned elite does not, however, make it possible to think in terms of a bureaucracy: those who made their skills available to the political powers were neither organised into a constituted body nor "inscribed in a solidly established hierarchy of function" (Weber 1971, 294) as, for example, Chinese mandarins might be.

The aim of the socialisation process at work in these schools was to inculcate devotion to the church, the emperor and the country (Messay 2010, 27), and the teaching of *Kebre Negest* was a characteristic example of this. This text, which was produced by the church to give legitimacy to the Solomonian Dynasty, and is commonly thought to date from the 15th century, supported the two founding myths of Ethiopia's Christian national imagination and political power. It referred to Ethiopian Christians as the chosen people because Menilek I, son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, brought the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia by an order of God. It also claimed that the same Menilek I founded the dynasty of Ethiopian emperors that descended from King Solomon in a direct line. In addition to spreading these nationalist myths, religious education instilled respect for social norms and hierarchies. The pedagogical relationship and school and religious rituals were intended to incorporate the deference, obedience and reserve that was expected by the authorities (Paulos 1976, 80).

Marie-Laure Derat has clearly highlighted the unifying role of the church by showing how in the 15th century, King Zara Ya'eqob used the network of religious establishments to disseminate his political theology for the purposes of doctrinal, religious and political unity, while also legitimising his own power, in order to unify his kingdom (Derat 2002, 45). Deresse Ayenachew

showed how, again in the 15th century, the army and the church were the two key institutions responsible for establishing the power of Ethiopian kings in the southern peripheries. As outposts of faith in a "pagan" territory, religious institutions were to promote Christianity while strengthening the links between the centre and the conquered region (Deresse 2011, 54). This practice was taken up again by Emperor Menilek II during the conquests of the late 19th century.

Government schools gradually supplanted the Church as the national educational institution. From the end of the 19th century, the state allowed European and American missionaries to establish schools before it invested in education itself. This process was linked to a desire to reform the country's government in the colonial context.

1.2. *Strengthening the state and avoiding colonisation*

The state's investment in education from the beginning of the 20th century was the result of the emperors' policy of centralisation, an endogenous dynamic that was accelerated by colonial pressures. The Ethiopian government undertook reforms of a kind commonly labelled with the polysemic term "modernisation" to protect the country's independence. To this end, from the beginning of the 20th century, and more particularly from the 1920s onwards, a section of the Ethiopian political and intellectual elites militated for the state to become an agent of social transformation.

The victory of Menilek II's armies over the Italian colonial troops at Adwa in 1896 had prevented the colonisation of Ethiopia, but the country was still surrounded by European possessions. From the reign of Menilek II, and even more during the regency period (1917–30), the aristocratic elites were divided on the position to be adopted towards Europe. In the 1920s, a first group, gathered around Empress Zeweditu, who exercised little power but was surrounded by powerful figures such as the *fitwerari*[1] Habte Giyorgis, advocated for an isolationist foreign policy and opposed European-inspired reforms: it was only by maintaining its identity intact—a guarantee of its strength—that Ethiopia would be able to resist foreign threats as it had in the past. The second group, gathered around Regent Tefari, was open to reforms and the establishment of relations with the European powers (Addis 1975, 62).

To these two forces must be added a third group, which was allied to the second, and whose early representatives appeared at the turn of the 20th century: the reformist intellectuals (Bahru 2002). Prolific and influential in the 1920s and early 1930s, they defended their ideas in the columns of the weekly newspaper sponsored by Regent Tefari, *Berhanenna Selam* (Light and

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[1] The highest military rank, the leader of the vanguard.

Peace). They had received their school educations in missions, neighbouring colonies, Europe or the first schools opened by the Ethiopian government, and were strongly advocates of the establishment of state-run schools; for them, education and independence went hand in hand. In order to be able to resist the colonial threat, they believed, the state needed to reform its administration and therefore pay attention to education. In this respect, they saw Europe as both a threat and a model, but given the urgency of the situation, it was vital to draw on it, as Gebre-Hiwot Baykedagn argued in his 1924 treatise *Mengestenna YeHezbAstedadder* (The Administration of the State and the People) (Bahru 2007, 243).

Like Japan, Ethiopia needed to borrow know-how and techniques from Europe if it was to be able to stand up to it. Although it has been shown that the intellectuals of the 1920s had only a rudimentary knowledge of Japan (Bahru 1990), the country was nonetheless considered to be a source of inspiration. In the international context of the race between nations, where the most learned was also the strongest, acquiring the knowledge of the dominant seemed to be a matter of survival. On the opening day of the Tefari Mekonnen School in 1925, Hakim Workneh Eshete[2], the school bursar and a regular contributor to *Berhanenna Selam*, summed this idea up very clearly before an audience of pupils, parents, teachers, high-ranking dignitaries and foreign diplomats:

የፍጥረት ሕግ ነውና ማናቸውም ሰው ወይም ሕዝብ ባለው አኳኋን ብዙ ጊዜ ሊቆይ አይችልም ወይ ወደፊት ይገፋል ወይም ወደኋላ ይቀራል። ወደኋላ የቀረ እንደሆነ ግን ከርሱ የበለጠ ሥልጣን ባለባቸው ሰዎች ይሰጥማል። [...] የጃፓንን ሰዎች የሕዝባቸውን ሕይወትና ነፃነት ከጥፋት ያዳን ይህንን ዋና የሚያሻቸውን ነገር በጊዜ ስላወቁት ነው። ስለኑሮአቸውም ታግለው ድል ለማግረግ ቢፈለጉ የኤሮጳችን እውቀት ማወቅ እሱም በቶሎ ማወቁ ግጽ እንደሆነ ተረጅተው በተጋታ መሥራት ጀመሩና በዓለም ታሪክ ሌሎች ሕዝብ ለመድረሱ ብዙ ዘመን ወዳስፈለጋቸው ደረጃ እርሳቸው በ፷ ዓመት ደርሱበት ዛሬ ጃፓኖች እንደማናቸው የአውሮፓ ሕዝብ ያህል ወደፊት ያሉ ኃያለኞች የሠለጠኑ ናቸው ።

It is a natural law: neither an individual nor a people can remain passive for long; they must either go forward or stay back. But if they stay behind, someone more powerful than them will bring them down […]. The men of Japan have saved the lives and freedom of their people by understanding this imperative necessity in time. In order to emerge victorious from this fight for their survival, they had to assimilate European knowledge quickly. They set to work with effort and, where other people took centuries to reach the level they wanted, it took them sixty years. Today, the Japanese are as powerful as the most advanced of the European peoples.

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[2]An important political and intellectual figure of the 1920s, Hakim Workneh Eshete, who was also known as Dr Charles Martin, was educated in India and Scotland, where he qualified as a surgeon (Bahru, 2002: 37).

In terms of European learning, the intellectuals of the 1920s referred to the knowledge and know-how that made it possible to build and maintain a strong economy and state. Logically, the school lay at the heart of the project, and through it, it was possible to give Ethiopians the skills needed to run a centralised administrative apparatus, a professional army and a capitalist economy. Gebre-Hiwot Baykedagn warned his contemporaries that if Ethiopia decided to transform its economy into a market economy without qualified people, it would fall prey to imperialism. If the Ethiopians themselves were not able to hold the reins of the national economy, Europeans would do so, and they would undoubtedly bring the country under their control. This was why the education of young Ethiopians had to form the "basis of government."[3]

Finally, these reforms had to be undertaken from the top down. Reformist intellectuals believed that only an authoritarian state could lead the country along the path of progress. The right emperor for Ethiopia therefore had to be "a friend of progress and absolutism" (Caulk 1978, 572–73). Seeing Tefari as an enlightened monarch who would be able to implement their reform programmes, they allied themselves with him. Thanks to them, Teferi, who was already shaping his progressive image and presenting himself as the future of Ethiopia in the face of a dangerously conservative aristocracy, had the intellectual support necessary for his march towards absolute power. In concrete terms, the establishment of schools directly administered by the government would make it possible to train new elites who would be more loyal than the aristocratic elite and have fewer ties to regional powers than clerics trained under the less centralised religious system. In the shorter term, it was essential to train Ethiopians in European languages in order to maintain diplomatic relations with the colonial powers that encircled the country, thereby protecting its independence (Tekeste 1990, 1). Indeed, it even seemed essential not to have to depend on foreign translators, because on the one hand, they were often suspected of being not only translators but also spies, while on the other, no one had forgotten how Italy had made a biased use of the translation of the Treaty of Wechale to justify its attempted invasion in 1896 (Bahru 2002, 75).

In this context, Regent Tefari and reformist intellectuals saw the education provided by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church as anachronistic and unsuited to the challenges posed by European expansion. It was not, however, a question of abolishing the teachings and precepts of religious education: advocates for the establishment of government-run schools were thinking of a mixed education, both Ethiopian and European, that would allow Ethiopia

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[3]Gebre-Hiwot Baykedagn, **ምንግስትና የሕዝብ አስተዳደር** (*The State and People's Administration*) (Addis Ababa, *Berhannenna Selam*, 1953 EC [1916 EC]), 67.

to reform without losing its identity. European tropism was obvious, but the "European spirit" that Gebre-Hiwot Baykedagn called for was aimed at regeneration, not elimination. Ethiopia's future had to build on its past, and these intellectuals emphasised the ancient greatness of Ethiopia, a once powerful nation that needed to revitalise itself (Tekeste 1990, 2).

1.3. *Missionary schools*

Although the role of Catholic and Protestant missionaries was less important in Ethiopia than in other African countries, it should not be underestimated. Catholic Lazarist and Capuchin missionaries established schools from the second half of the 19th century (Teshome 1979, 27–28). Protestant missionaries from the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) moved to Addis Ababa in 1904 (from Eritrea, where they had been active since 1866) and opened a school there in 1905 (Norberg 1977, 69). By 1935, 119 missions of all faiths were operating in the country, with 6,717 students attending missionary schools (Teshome 1979, 82). During the 1920s, the missionaries expanded their activities, and were able to enjoy the support of Regent Teferi, who was occupying the role to ensure continuity after Emperor Menilek II. The relations of the two monarchs with the missionaries were similar to those they had with Europeans in general: they were welcome if their intentions were to serve Ethiopia and not to subjugate it (Teshome 1979, 81–82). Missionaries were allowed to establish schools to impart academic knowledge and teach European languages. Teaching was carried out separately from evangelisation, which was subject to serious restrictions. Missionaries were only allowed to convert non-Christians, so that they would avoid competing with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and did not undermine the official religion, which was considered a pillar of national identity. Schools provided primary education centred around reading, writing and arithmetic (Norberg 1977, 68). The teaching of English and French also had an important place, reflecting a desire to have government staff trained in the languages of the colonial powers. Finally, the missionaries instilled respect for the king, the country and religion, values that were appropriate for training those who would carry out the work of a monarchy along the road to absolutism (Tekeste 2006, 13). In short, the missionaries were involved in the creation of the new elites the Ethiopian government needed.

1.4. *Secular power invests in education at the beginning of the 20th century*

The first school to be directly controlled by the government was founded by Emperor Menilek II in 1908 and named after him. In 1925, Regent Teferi also established a school named after him: the Tefari Mekonnen School. In 1936, on the eve of the Italian invasion, there were twenty schools across the country, most of which had been opened in the 1930s (*Ethiopia Observer* 1958, 130).

Between 1908 and 1936, the Menilek II School alone is estimated to have taught about 3,000 pupils (Tekeste 1990, 1). In a speech given on 8 July 1933 at the end-of-school-year ceremony, the headmaster of the Menilek II School recalled that many of the ministers in office at the time had sat on the benches of his school.[4] At the opening ceremony of the Tefari Mekonnen School at the beginning of May 1925, Regent Teferi recalled its purpose:

ለኢትዮጵያ ነጻነትና ጽናት ወሰንዋን ጠብቆ አሳፍሮ አስከብሮ ለማኩራትና የሕዝቧ ልብ የታመነ ኃይል እንዲኖረው ለማድረግ መሣሪያው ትምህርት መማር ነው። [...] በዚች ተማሪ ቤት ያቆምኩት የውጭ ቋንቋና ጥበብ ብቻ አይደለም፤ የሀገራችንም ቅዱሳት መጻሕፍት ወልድ ዋህድ ሃይማኖት የሚነገርበት ናት። የሀገሩንም ትምህርት ጽሕፈት ቋንቋ እንድሚገባው የማያውቅ የውጭውን አግራልሁ የሚል ምሳሌው ቀዛፊ እንደሌለው ታንኳ ነው።

Education is essential to safeguard Ethiopia's independence, to ensure that its borders are respected and made inviolable, to make it proud and to make the people aware of its strength. [...] It is not only to teach foreign languages and sciences that I founded this school but also to teach the holy books of our country and faith in the only son of God. Anyone who wants to learn foreign education before learning enough of the literature and language of his country is like a boat without oars.[5]

The pedagogical teams and curricula of the Menilek II and Tefari Mekonnen schools reflected this desire to impart knowledge without a loss of identity and without being educationally dependent on a particular colonial power. The headmaster and teachers at the Menilek II School were Copts who had been educated in Egypt under British rule. The fact that the Egyptian and Ethiopian churches were theologically close and institutionally linked—the Patriarch of Ethiopia was appointed by the Patriarchate of Alexandria—reduced the fear that foreign teachers might engage in religious propaganda (Teshome 1979, 31). The subjects taught were French, English, Italian, Arabic, Amharic, history, geography, mathematics, drawing and physical education (Bahru 2002, 4). The team at Tefari Mekonnen School was highly cosmopolitan. From 1925 to 1936, it was administered by French headmasters and Ethiopian stewards, while the teachers were of various nationalities: Ethiopians, Armenians, Indians, Egyptians, Syrians, Russians, English and French,[6] a diversity that reflected both the effects of opportunity and a desire to counterbalance different foreign influences.

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[4]*Berhannenna Selam*, 3 August 1933.

[5]*Berhannenna Selam*, 7 May 1925.

[6]Henri Rebeaud, a teacher at Tefari Mekonnen School, reported: "Mr Aïntaplian, the Armenian English teacher, is riding his mule. Mister Bombay, the Hindu master of carpentry [...] passes in turn. Then Captain Ditrich, the Russian drawing teacher. Then Mr. Raphael, the Egyptian professor of Arabic. Then French, English, Swiss and Syrian professors. With its teaching staff, our school is a bit like the Tower of Babel." (Rebeaud 1934, 139)

In the first year, the subjects taught were French, English, Amharic, Geez, drawing and music. Between 1925 and 1930, arithmetic, science and history were gradually added.[7] However, it was the learning of European languages that received the most attention. At Tefari Mekonnen School, pupils chose between the "French" and "English" curricula (Seid 1983, 15–16). In general, the teaching provided in these schools reflected a desire for a more outward-looking approach than Ethiopian religious education, so that government officials would be adapted to the new international environment in which Ethiopia found itself. After learning to read, write and acquire skills in English or French, former students moved on to the widely-available jobs as interpreters, clerks or civil servants (Bahru 2002, 33).

Children from aristocratic families attended these schools alongside young people of more humble origins. In his memoirs, Emmanuel Abraham, the Director-General of the Ministry of Education from 1950 to 1955, recalls the competitions that made him, a peasant child from Wellega, a pupil at Tefari Mekonnen School.[8] The opening of the school to children from modest backgrounds corresponded to the idea of training new kinds of men. Some were sponsored by local dignitaries or directly by Regent Teferi, while others were left to their own devices. Emmanuel Abraham experienced all three situations in succession. Many of these figures thus occupied important posts for which birth had not predestined them. Before the Italian occupation, the embryonic school system was beginning to transform the means of access to power, initiating a process at the heart of the politics of centralisation: the replacement of aristocratic elites who owed their power to their ability to levy taxes and raise an army by civil servants who had gone through schooling.

Creating new elites meant an intensive process of political socialisation in order to instil loyalty and dedication. In this respect, the pre-Italian occupation schools were laboratories for the official propaganda that marked Haile Selassie's entire reign. While he was not yet emperor, Regent Teferi had speeches and practices ready that combined the ancient Ethiopian imperial ideology—the chosen emperor of God and the incarnation of an invincible and eternal Ethiopia—with the themes and techniques of 20th century authoritarian regimes: a personality cult, patriotism, the myth of progress and disciplinary training within a state institution. The transmission of ideology was ensured by daily, annual or more occasional school rituals that marked the life of the school: flag-raising, national holidays (such as the Feast of

[7]Merse-Hazen Wolde-Kirkos Fund, 18.06, NALE. Merse-Hazen was a teacher of Amharic at the Tefari Mekonnen School from 1925 to 1930 and then held various government posts. He collected many documents about the school, which are now in the National Archives of Ethiopia.

[8]Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscences of my Life* (Oslo: Lunde forlag, 1995), 16–24.
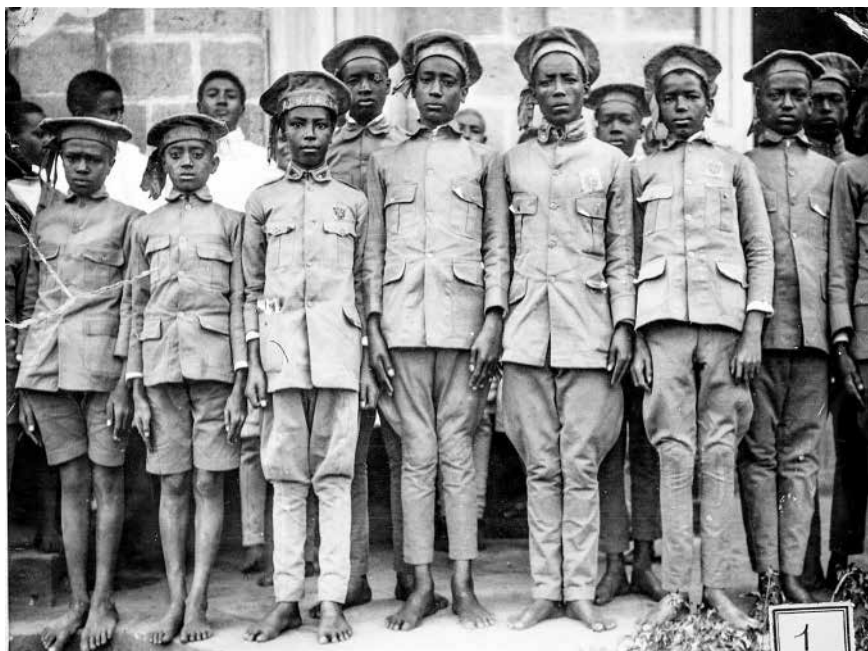
Figure 3. Students before the Italian occupation, probably in the 1920s

the Cross, Epiphany, Easter, the celebration of the victory at Adwa and the birthdays of the emperor and empress) and visits by foreign dignitaries. Each of these occasions involved military parades and song, which instilled a sense of sacrifice and helped create an esprit de corps. Song was a favoured didactic tool for at least two reasons. The first was its social significance: songs occupy an important place in oral cultures, and this is very much the case in Ethiopia. The second was "its triple characteristic of brevity, density and coherence," which facilitated memorisation (Kita K. Masandi 2003, 200).

Every morning, at the flag ceremony, the children sang the national anthem, which had been written in the mid-1920s on the orders of Regent Teferi. These pupils were the first Ethiopians to sing it.[9] The king, aided by divine power and enjoying the unconditional support of his united and heroic people, was the protector and guarantor of the country's freedom:

ኢትዮጵያ ሆይ ደስ ይበልሽ ፡ በአምላክሽ ኃይል በንጉሥሽ
ተባብረዋል አርበኞችሽ ፡ አይነካም ከቶ ነፃነትሽ
ብርቱ ናቸው ተራሮችሽ ፡ አትደፈሪም በጠላቶችሽ
ድል አድራጊው ንጉሣችን ፡ ይኑርልን ለክብራችን

[9]Merse-Hazen Wolde-Kirkos Fund, 18.06, NALE.

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O Ethiopia, Rejoice! By the might of your God, by the sovereignty of your king,
Your heroes stand united, your freedom enduring, beyond reach.
Unyielding are your mountains, fear not the encroaching foes.
Our King shall lead you to triumph, may He thrive for our honor![10]

On 20 May 1927, the pupils of the Menilek II School welcomed the Duke of Abruzzo (at a time when Italy's aggressive intentions towards Ethiopia were well-known) with a song that ended with a call to sacrifice oneself for the freedom of the country. The visit continued at the Tefari Mekonnen School with a song that condensed the nationalist emperor-motherland-progress triptych, the sense of sacrifice and the fundamental role of education:

ዘላለም ያኑርልን
የነጻነት አምባችንን አምላክ ያጠብቅልን
ለሶስቱ ቀለሞች ዕናት ላገር ለሕዝባችን ልማት
እውቀት እውነት ሊነግሡብን ተፋሪ ያኑርልን
የተፋሪ መኮንን ትምህርት ቤት ተማሮች
ለኩራታችን ሶስት ቀለሞች
ለነጻነት ብሎ መሞት ይህ ነው የኛ ምኞት

May God preserve our King for eternity.
God protects the high plateau of our freedom.
For the strength of our three colours, for the progress of our country and people,
For the reign of wisdom and truth, may He keep Teferi alive for us!
We, pupils of the Tefari Mekonnen School
Dying for the dignity of our three colours and for freedom
Is our greatest aspiration.[11]

Freedom, knowledge and progress converged in the person of Tefari, who was the cornerstone of the whole ideological edifice. The cult of personality was transmitted both through sacredness and proximity: the protector, saviour and bearer of the national future, Tefari Mekonnen was also a benevolent father. Indeed, he endeavoured to create a filial bond between himself and his future elites through the practice of paternalism. Pupils' food was prepared in the palace kitchens and he regularly visited the schools at mealtimes, sitting at the end of the table to give advice to the pupils.

There are a number of elements that postulate the effectiveness of this political socialisation. School ideology has been based on endogenous traits that are open to restructuring, and which it has reactivated and inflected. The first is the political imagination of Christian Ethiopia. The Christian kingdom's society was politically integrated, with a common sense of belonging based on religion, a myth establishing a common origin and the idea of a shared

[10]Ibid.
[11]*Berhanenna Selam*, 26 May 1927.

historical continuity of which the emperor was the symbol. The young pupils from the aristocratic families of the Shewa and from the north in general had already incorporated national myths and imperial mysticism, which were transmitted through their family upbringing, as a shared sense. The nationalism deployed in schools had therefore not been imported: it was a reapplication of the discourses and content of a sedimented national ideology with considerable historical depth. The time was also ripe for nationalism to be intensified: colonial encirclement had reactivated patriotic fervour and an urgency for unity, tightening the bonds around the person of the emperor.

The idea of progress could be based on the hierarchy of peoples as developed by Christian Ethiopia. As Emperor Menilek II's letter of 1891 to Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia revealed, Ethiopia saw itself as a Christian, "civilised" island surrounded by "pagans." It was therefore unnecessary to create a neologism to express the idea of progress as a race among nations, as Amharic already had similar concepts that could be mobilised. ሥልጣኔ (*seltané*), from the verb ሠለጠነ (*sälätänä*), which means "to be civilised" or "to police oneself," but also "to take power" or "to gain power," can be translated as "civilisation" and "progress," while its derived form ሥልጣን (*seltan*) means "power" or "authority." By being extended to society, the term ልማት (*lemmat*) from the verb ለማ (*lemma*), "to be fertile," which applies to the growth of plants, made it possible to convey the idea of social progress and then "development" from the 1940s. The notion of እድገት (*edgät*), from the verb አደገ (*adägä*), "to grow," and also "to rise up the hierarchy" (Kane 1990), applied to both humans and nations. Finally, the metaphor of knowledge dispensing a light that dispels darkness, that awakens and invigorates, circulated from religious knowledge to school knowledge. The Amharic language has a rich and precise vocabulary concerning the acquisition and use of knowledge: መማር (memmar) symbolises the learning process; ትምህርት (*temhert*) means education and its content; እውቀት (*ewqät*) means knowledge, the knowledge of እውነት (*ewnät*), truth or world order; and መርመራ (*mermera*) means curiosity, questioning and investigation (Maimire 2010, 80).

While school was perceived as foreign, the ideology of schools was not entirely new to Ethiopian students. It brought new knowledge such as foreign languages or history and geography lessons that were not confined to Ethiopia, but the school also provided a form of socialisation that was close to family, community and religious socialisation.

2. The establishment of the national school system from 1941

The educational objectives of the 1920s and 1930s were taken over by the central government in the new national and international post-war context. The emperor-unity-progress trinity remained the ideological foundation of the school system that was constructed in the 1940s and 1950s. Returning

to the imperial throne in 1941 after five years of exile in England, Haile Selassie immediately resumed his autocratic project, which reached its apex in the mid-1950s. The school system was to serve a political purpose by supporting the training of a controlled administrative staff and homogenising the various populations of the empire by disseminating the Amharic language, the political model and "Amhara values" (Girma 1984, 65). English remained the central language, however—although officially it was in second place after Amharic—as it was believed that knowledge of English gave access to most of the world's literature.[12] Implementation of the autocratic centralisation project was carried out in close cooperation with the United States, which provided Haile Selassie with resources for his policy. In the context of the Cold War, this provided the US government with a strategically positioned and stable client state. The strengthening of an Ethiopian nation-state and the mobilisation of modernisation and development concepts to this end were in the interests of both sides.

2.1. *Education, nation and progress in the service of autocracy*

The first emergency to be dealt with was reconstruction. As the Ethiopian pedagogue Maaza Bekele wrote in 1966, competent people had to be trained as quickly as possible for the administration, industry, transport, commerce, the army, the police, etc. (Teshome 1979, 56.) The first step was to rebuild the country. The central government's earliest aim was to reaffirm its authority, and the army was reorganised as early as 1941 (Bahru 2002, 207). In 1942, a decree was issued that set out the powers of the regional governors, who were no longer lords of their domains but representatives appointed by the emperor. They lost the right to levy taxes other than those ordered by the central government, could no longer appoint, move or dismiss an official and could not form their own police or armed forces. Finally, they had to submit a monthly report to the Ministry of the Interior, under whose authority the provincial administration was thereafter placed (Markakis 1974, 290–91). In 1943, two imperial orders announced the creation of eleven ministries (Bahru 2002, 203). As a sign of the crucial role of the establishment of the school system in this process of institutional strengthening, the Ministry of Education was established as soon as the emperor returned to Addis Ababa in 1941.[13]

Haile Selassie attempted to transform the multilingual and multi-denominational empire under his care into a homogeneous national state (Abebe 1992, 98–99). The construction of a national school system enabled him to envisage this homogenisation in concrete terms, including in the long term. Amharic

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[12] MOEFA, *Curriculum for Ethiopian Schools Years 1–8* (1947), 113.
[13] MOI, *Ethiopia Today: Education* (1973), 12.

was the preferred language vehicle for uniformity. As the first school curriculum developed in 1947 stated: "The Ministry of Education wishes to help unify the Empire by means of the one language accepted by the Imperial Ethiopian Government as the authoritative and official language of the country. Emphasis must first be placed on Amharic, which, it is hoped, will eventually be the language of the whole of Ethiopia."[14] Seven years later, in 1954, the authors of the *Basic Recommendations for the Reorganization and Development of Education in Ethiopia* recalled that universal basic education was a necessity to consolidate the social and political unity of the empire through the mass spread of Amharic.[15] Moral education had the task of transmitting the religious values of the Christian North. The 1947 curriculum specified:

> Bible and Morals has been given a prominent place in the curriculum because of its importance for building up the fundamentals of a good national life, and its need in the life of the individual for true happiness and real prosperity. This curriculum in Bible and Morals is taught on the authority of a special committee appointed by His Imperial Majesty. It is a responsibility of the committee to see that the Bible is taught without partiality towards any particular group or sect, and that a child makes his own interpretations in accordance with his own conscience and will.[16]

This excluded Ethiopian Muslims, however, as it meant that the school system was that of a Christian nation. Furthermore, the insistence that a child should be able to interpret the Bible according to her or his own beliefs, which on the surface appeared to defend an ecumenical view of religion, was in reality deceptive: it was the moral and political precepts of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church that were being taught (Yallew 1970, 1). Abebe Fisseha made it clear how the regime's universalist discourse obscured its particularist conception of citizenship, as was evident from the Education Council, which was established in 1947. During its thirty-seven years of existence until 1974, its main activities were the battle against Muslim schools and the role played by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in the regime's homogenisation project. Its members were exclusively followers of the church (with the exception of the Protestant Emmanuel Abraham, who only served for six months), despite the fact that about 40 percent of Ethiopians were Muslims (Abebe 1998, 168–74).

In common with the school histories produced by all nation-states, the history of Ethiopia as taught in its schools sought to disseminate the great

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[14]MOEFA, *Curriculum for Ethiopian Schools Years 1–8* (1947), 89.

[15]MOEFA, *Basic Recommendations for the Reorganization and Development of Education in Ethiopia—The First Report of the Long-Term Planning Committee for Ethiopian Education* (1954), 7–8.

[16]MOEFA, *Curriculum for Ethiopian Schools Years 1–8* (1947), 91.

national myths, to inscribe the present within a glorious past and to embody the continuity (and the eternality) of Ethiopia. In the 1947 programmes, history began with Haile Selassie and moved back into the past.[17] The 1958 programmes also presented a history of Ethiopia dating back from the reign of Haile Selassie to the founding myth of Emperor Menilek I, son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, who is said to have founded the dynasty of Ethiopian emperors in the 10th century BC.[18] In line with the aim of inculcating loyalty to the emperor, the story proposed a mythical, linear evolution of the political community that culminated with the reign of Haile Selassie.

Those who received their education in this school system had to be able to perform the typical functions of a "progressive," "developing" nation.[19] In line with the pre-war period, the emperor's entire political project was placed under the banner of progress, the ideological driving force of centralisation and homogenisation. As he recalled in a speech in 1963: "More and more of the young men and women to whom the task of directing their nation along the path of progress and enlightenment will one day pass are today receiving formal education."[20] Ethiopia was no exception to the rule that the idea of progress lay at the heart of the teleologies of nation-states, and centralisation and homogenisation were seen as appropriate steps in this direction. Heterogeneity, on the other hand, which was synonymous with disunity and dispersion, was seen as detrimental. Hence, we see on the one hand the normalising function of national school systems and on the other the fact that they were rooted in the myth of continuous progress. This was the theme of a booklet on education published by the Ethiopian Ministry of Information in 1964:

> This booklet is intended to give a brief picture of the progressive unfolding of this revived post-liberation reform, which has done more than any other single factor to change Ethiopia. […] Through the Emperor's initiative and unflagging support, education has been accepted by everyone as the key to development.[21]

Education was presented as a gift from the emperor to his subjects, as another brochure produced by the Ministry of Information in 1973 shows:

> Ethiopia owes a great debt to Emperor Haile Selassie I […] Throughout the pre-war and post-war development of a modern education system in Ethiopia,

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[17]Ibid., 116.

[18]MOEFA, *Elementary School Curriculum Years I-VIII* (1958), 109.

[19]MOEFA, *General Information on Educational Policy, Legislation, and Administration* (1968), 2.

[20]MOI, *Education in Ethiopia* (1964), 1.

[21]Ibid., 2.

> His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I has played a key role. He has promoted the development of some of the first of these new institutions and paid their expenses from his own purse. He has himself retained the Education portfolio […] for many years, which is testimony to the importance he attaches to the question.[22]

It appeared that Haile Selassie was the sole craftsman of education. Christopher Clapham was correct, however, when he interpreted the fact that the emperor had reserved the post of Minister of Education for himself between 1947 and 1966 as an act aimed at perfecting his image as a moderniser and nurturing his cult of personality. In fact, he showed no particular interest in the post (Clapham 1969, 56). Education was thus used in at least two utilitarian ways: on the one hand, to provide the human means of centralisation, and on the other to create Haile Selassie's public image as a progressive, selfless benefactor.

2.2. *The United States: modernisation against communism*

The United States provided material and technical resources, advisors and unwavering political support. The school system was established, developed and consolidated under the auspices of first British and then American advisers in an international context that was marked by declining colonisation and the Cold War. Ethiopia had been liberated from Italian occupation with the help of the British army, and two treaties signed in 1942 and 1944 had made Ethiopia heavily dependent on Britain. The rapprochement with the United States was initiated by Ethiopia because the emperor wanted to break free of Britain's grip, and he considered the United States a more appropriate ally in the construction of his autocracy (Bahru 2002, 179–84). The transition of education from British to American supervision began in 1945 when two American educationists, Messrs Hambrook and Rucknick, were appointed school superintendents at the Ministry of Education (Paulos 2006, 80). From the early 1950s, US influence on Ethiopian government education through funding, curriculum design and administrative and teaching staff had no rivals. In 1952, Ethiopia and the United States signed the Point IV Program, a broad technical and economic assistance programme that included educational cooperation. Its objective was to solve economic problems through assistance with a long-term development project.[23]

It is important to understand the ideology and geopolitical strategy on which this programme was based. It took its name from the fourth point of President Truman's inauguration speech on 20 January 1949, which marked the beginning of the United States' involvement in international development.

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[22] MOI, *Ethiopia Today: Education* (1973), 4.
[23] "Point IV: Its Concept and Development," *Ethiopia Observer* (February 1959), 3–9.

The president justified assistance for development by explaining that "half the people of the world [were] living in conditions approaching misery" and that "poverty [was] a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas."[24] Aid was part of the US's policy to contain communism. Helping a country by proposing a capitalist model of development meant placing it in the bosom of the "free world." This is why the White House envisaged "orderly political, economic and social evolution" in Ethiopia that would contain the revolutionary push in the Horn: Addis Ababa was a strategic location not only in Africa, but also for the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean (Marcus 1995, 1). This explains the substantial military aid the United States gave Ethiopia, which was separate from the Point Four Program, which instead emphasised humanist values. Education was part of the cultural component of this containment policy. Washington became intensively involved in Ethiopian education with a view to training future elites who would be oriented towards the United States and defend its interests. Like the American Universities in Cairo and Beirut in their respective regions, Addis Ababa University was to be a centre from which the culture and political ideology of the United States would spread (Paulos 2006, 89).[25]

The team of educational advisers in the Point IV Program arrived in Addis Ababa in 1953 (Teshome 1979, 105). In November of the same year, the Long Term Planning Committee for Ethiopian Education (LTPCEE) was established within the Ministry of Education. Its duties were to analyse and make proposals on curricula and materials, teacher training, school organisation and educational objectives. In short, it was the body that decided on the direction of the entire school system. It comprised personnel from the Ministry of Education, Point IV Program advisers and school headmasters. In 1954, out of its nine members, four were Ethiopians, four were Americans and one was Canadian (Lucien Matte, the leader of the team of Jesuits that was running the University College at the time).[26] In June 1955, the committee issued the "First Ten-Year Plan for the Controlled Expansion of Education in Ethiopia." This document was drawn up by fourteen people, only four of whom were Ethiopians: the Deputy Minister of Education, the Director General of the Ministry of Education, the headmaster of the Amha Desta school and an Ethiopian member of the Point IV Program. The remainder, who were all Americans, were school headmasters and experts from the

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[24]"Inaugural Address of Harry S. Truman" (Thursday, January 20, 1949. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/truman.asp [archive]).

[25]Paulos Milkias further cites a 1963 letter from the US ambassador in which he states that one of the tasks of US teachers should be to introduce the history, culture, and customs of the United States to the people of Ethiopia (Paulos 2006, 89).

[26]MOEFA, *Basic Recommendations…*, 4–5.

Point IV Program team and the Ministry of Education. In addition, fourteen "helpers and advisers" collaborated in the development of the plan, including only one Ethiopian.[27] Through the LTPCEE, American expatriates exerted considerable power over the direction of the national school system. How did they see the role of education?

In the preface to the official curriculum of 1947, the American Robert W. Hambrook, who was an "Educational Adviser to the Imperial Government of Ethiopia," wrote that the school system should provide an education that was adapted to the needs of the modern world, arguing that no nation could now live in isolation.[28] The uniqueness of the world lay in "modernity," as represented by the industrial society, and regions outside this sphere had to adapt to it, as difference was seen as backwardness and inadequacy. Similarly, the authors of the first report for the LTPCEE published in 1954 recalled that the time when Ethiopia could live in isolation was over and that its survival as an independent nation required increasing international integration, knowledge of the "outside world" and technical skills.[29] This view mirrored the theory of modernisation that was in vogue in the 1950s, which "seemed to spontaneously accept that American society […] was the *telos* towards which the whole world was converging" (Cooper 2010, 158–59).

Modernisation theory postulated that well-articulated cultural, political, social and economic transformations would bring progress by ensuring a transition from "tradition" to "modernity" (Cooper 2010, 162). Official documents of the Ministry of Education and scholarly articles by intellectuals at Addis Ababa University show that the goal of the education system was to make this transition: "The MOE envisages […] helping the students to adapt to the changing socio-economic pattern, from an agricultural to an industrial way of life, from the traditional to the more modern."[30] A 1974 text by Ethiopian pedagogues testified to the spirit that prevailed at the time: "The most important service that an educational system can render is to change those basic attitudes prevalent in our traditional society that are inconsistent with the modern society that we are aspiring toward." A few lines later, the same authors explained that there were two types of attitude that corresponded to two types of men: the "traditional" man, who was resigned and superstitious, and the rational and scientific "modern" man (Girma, Abraham & Abba Samuel 1974, 3).

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[27] MOEFA, *A Ten Year Plan for the Controlled Expansion of Education in Ethiopia*, suggestions prepared by the Long Range Planning Committee attached to the Imperial Government of Ethiopia (1955)), 1–2.

[28] MOEFA, *Curriculum for Ethiopian Schools Years 1–8* (1947), 86–87.

[29] MOEFA, *Basic Recommendations…*, 1.

[30] MOI, *Education in Ethiopia* (1964), 8.

A text from the Point IV Program published in the journal *Ethiopia Observer* in 1959 also testifies to the adherence of American advisers to human capital theory. The authors wrote that education was an investment in people.[31] Human capital theory is, as its name suggests, an economic conception of education as a present investment that should bring future gains. It was developed in the United States after the Second World War, in particular by the economist Theodore W. Shultz, and postulated an organic link between education and increased wealth (Shultz 1961, 1–17). The theory was exported internationally by agencies such as UNESCO. Finally, the article by the economist Assefa Bequele, "The Educational Framework of Economic Development in Ethiopia," published in 1967 in the journal *Ethiopia Observer*, testifies to the adoption of the human capital theory by Ethiopian academics. After recalling "the pivotal role that investment in human capital plays in the development process," he explained:

> For those underdeveloped countries which have committed to […] "industrialism," it becomes incumbent upon them to consider the educational framework, which has certainly a great deal to do with the mental and intellectual transformations and economic ethos that underly the dynamics of development. (Assefa 1967, 49)

In short, the conditions under which the national school system was set up and the different purposes attributed to it by the Ethiopian and American actors from the central government serve to explain its hybrid nature. On the one hand, the plan to centralise power through the administrative and repressive techniques practised in Western countries, the dependence on American aid and the idea that progress should follow the example of the capitalist industrialised countries led to the education provided being modelled on the American system. On the other hand, centralisation and homogenisation through Amharisation, which were the nationalist goals of the school system, gave it its "Ethiopian" character.

3. Bogale Wallelu in Wolaita: assimilation against oppression

While at the national level the school system was designed and built in accordance with the Ethiopian state's major projects and the geopolitical interests of the United States, understanding educational dynamics from the periphery involves looking at the perspective of local school actors. Compared to Addis Ababa and the central regions, the south was a latecomer to schooling. However, Wolaita was an exception to this rule. A school was opened in Soddo as early as October 1941, after the liberation, on the initiative of Bogale Wallelu, a native of Wolaita who had developed close links with the centre

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[31] "Point IV: Its Concept and Development," *Ethiopia Observer* (February 1959), 5.

Figure 4. Bogale Wallelu

through his educational career. Born in the village of Shanto in 1909, son of a priest from the "indigenous" Wolaita religion, he received his early education at a local Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church school.[32] In 1925, he left for Addis Ababa, where his uncle lived (he had been taken as a slave by Menilek II's soldiers), to continue his education. From there, he went to the Debre Libanos Monastery, a very well-renowned centre of religious education, before finishing his schooling at the Menilek II School on the eve of the Italian occupation.[33] Having been educated and socialised in two of the country's most prestigious religious and governmental institutions, Bogale Wallelu was both a product and bearer of their educational traditions in a peripheral region.

His thinking provides an illuminating entry point for articulating the local and national dimensions of education. It can be reconstructed from official letters written in his own hand in the early 1940s, extracts of which were published in two newspaper articles in the 1980s, from his history of Wolaita published in 1964 (Bogale 1964) and from statements attributed to him by former colleagues and pupils. As an education activist, he often spoke in public, at school ceremonies and at public gatherings such as weddings and religious festivals, where he used to convince families to send their children to school. Bogale Wallelu is an absolutely central figure: as a school builder, school administrator and teacher, he was a mentor to the school generations of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

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[32] Fancho Fanta (lecturer in the Department of History and Heritage Management, Wolaita Sodo University), interview by the author, Soddo (Wolaita), 10 May 2016.

All the interviews quoted in this book were conducted by the author. They were conducted in English, Amharic or Wolaita—in the latter case Asela Gujubo was responsible for the translation. For full details, see the "Sources" section at the end of this book, subsection "Interviews."

[33] *Addis Zemen*, 31 May 1985.

3.1. *School education in Wolaita before the Italian occupation*

The first schools in Wolaita belonged to the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Churches and monasteries had been established since the conquest in 1894, and they numbered about forty at the time of the Italian invasion in 1936.[34] The church had two particular political roles. The first was to convert the aristocratic families of Wolaita in order to assimilate them into the new power, and the second was to legitimise the conquest. To this end, priests spread the story that appeared in the hagiography of Saint Tekle Haymanot, which had been produced in the monastery of Debre Libanos in the 16th century. According to this text, in the 13th century, the saint evangelised the people in the south of the Christian kingdom, in particular in a kingdom called Damot. By resuscitating this myth and equating Wolaita with Damot, Emperor Menilek II justified the conquest by claiming to restore Christianity to a region that had been lost to paganism for six centuries (Balisky 2009, 33–35).[35] However, the priests who travelled down from the north did not seek a mass evangelisation of the population of Wolaita: the religious services they held were for the families of settlers and converted Wolaita families. They did, however, implant the educational tradition of the Tewahedo Church.

The first Catholic and Protestant missionaries arrived in Wolaita in the late 1920s. The French Capuchin Father Pascal de Luchon opened a school in 1929 that was teaching about 20 students by the early 1930s. This teaching consisted of literacy in Amharic and French for evangelisation purposes. The American Protestant missionaries from the Sudan Interior Mission arrived in 1930 and opened a school where they taught literacy in Amharic and Wolaita in order to teach the Bible to the first converts. Both schools were closed in 1937 during the Italian occupation (Demeke 1985, 1). In the decades after liberation, Catholic and Protestant missionaries played important but distinct educational roles, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

3.2. *National unity and Haile Selassie cult*

In his book *YeWollamo Hezb Tarik* (The History of the Wolaita People) published in 1965, Bogale Wallelu took up the official discourse of legitimisation of the conquest, according to which the churches established up to Gamo—"the southernmost limit of evangelization in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,"

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[34]Merigeta Tesfaye (a priest of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church), interview by the author, Soddo, 20 October 2010.

[35]This narrative was also used by Menilek II to justify the conquest of kingdoms other than Wolaita; see Bouanga (2013).

according to Jacques Burreau (Bureau 1976, 295)—attested to the ancient Ethiopianness of Wolaita, Gamo-Goffa and Sidamo:

በአቡነ ተክለ ሃይማኖት ዘመን ከቡልጋ ከመንዝ ከተጉለት ከጐንደር ከጐጃም ፥ ከትግሬ ከወሎ ፥ ከሌሎቸም ከኢትዮጵያ አውራጃዎች ወደ ወላሞና ወደገሙ ጐፋ ወደ ሲዳሞም የገቡት በመምህርነትና በሰባኪነትም አገሪቱን ያሳመኑ የነበሩት በብዙ ወራሪዎች በመቄረት መገናኛ በማጣት አስተማሪዎችና ካህናት በጠላት ስለተገደሉባቸው የሚያስተምራቸው አጥተው በቋንቋ መለወጥና በባህልም ተረሳስተው ነበር። ዳሩ ግን ቀደም ብሎ እንደተነገረው ፤ ቤተ ክርስቲያኑና ንዋየ ቅድሳቱ እንደ ነበረ ስለ ተገኘ ፤ በአጼ ምኒልክ ዘመነ ምንግስት እንደገና ተቋቋመ።

Those who in the time of Abune Tekle Haymanot came from Bulga, Menz, Tegulet, Gondar, Godjam, Tegre, Wello and other regions of Ethiopia to Wollamo, Gamo-Goffa and Sidamo, and who were converting the locals through teaching and preaching, were separated and deprived of communication [with Ethiopia] by many invaders. The teachers and priests having been killed by the enemy, [the inhabitants of the converted areas] lost what they had learned, changed their languages and forgot their culture. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, remnants of churches and artefacts endured, and governance was reinstated during the reign of Emperor Menilek. (Bogale 1964, 21).

Although the presence of churches does not necessarily indicate any significant Christianisation of the area (Deresse 2011), Bogale Wallelu presented these regions as formerly Christian, and hence Ethiopian. The territorial expansion carried out by Menilek II was not a series of conquests, but a reunification. He also wrote that the centuries spent outside the bosom of Ethiopia had been a dark period. The conquest of Menilek II had ushered a return to civilisation after centuries of oblivion. This was the framework within which he defended the unifying role of education, which was responsible for restoring the unity of the empire's peoples under the enlightened, sacred leadership of Emperor Haile Selassie:

እኛም ልጆቻቸው እንደሳቸው እንድንሆን ያስፈልገናልና ለአገራችን ለምንግሥታችን በግርማዊ ቀዳማዊ ኃይለ ሥላሴ መሪነትና ሐዋርያነት ትምህርት በመላ ኢትዮጵያ እንዲዳረስና እንድናስተዋውቅ አንድነታችንንም በፍቅርና በመረዳዳት እንደንገልጽ እኛ እኛን እንድንሆን እኛነታችን ያስደደናል ።

And we, the children of [Tekle Haymanot], must act like him for our country and our government. We must, under the guidance and apostolate of His Majesty Haile Selassie I, spread and publicize education throughout Ethiopia, and remind people of the proof of our unity, in love and mutual aid, to restore our true selves. (Bogale 1964, 21)

The purpose of education was to enable Wolaita to regain her lost Ethiopian identity. The affiliation with Saint Tekle Haymanot bestowed a sacred character on this goal of assimilative education. Teachers and administrators were to unconditionally support Haile Selassie in his effort to establish schools

and continue Tekle Haymanot's temporarily interrupted work. As a journalist from the official weekly *Berhannenna Selam* wrote in 1941: "The teaching troops [were] bearers of the apostolic spirit" (**የሐዋሪያነት መንፈስ ያደረገበት የአስተማሪ ሠራዊቱ**).[36] But the messiah to whom these new apostles were to speak was Haile Selassie, and schools were the new churches. Based on the story of Tekle Haymanot, Bogale Wallelu translated the objectives of centralisation, assimilation and progress assigned to the national school system for local use. In addition, not content with merely developing a discourse, he located his educational work in the wake of Tekle Haymanot. After working in Wolaita, he was school administrator for the Sidamo region from 1944 to 1954 and then for the Gamo-Goffa region until 1961.[37] He built schools in all the areas where, according to his hagiography, the medieval saint had erected churches. The story that legitimised the incorporation of the south was the inspiration and the driving force behind his educational action.

3.3. *Education for emancipation*

For the central government, the story of Tekle Haymanot's ancient evange-lisation of the south served to justify the domination it exercised over the conquered peoples. For his part, Bogale Wallelu used it for the emancipation of people who had been marginalised and exploited. To defend this idea, he put forward his own example of a submissive Wolaita who became free through education:

> እኔ ባሪያ ነበርሁ ። እራሴ የተመለጠው ለመልከኛ እህሉን፣ ማሩንና ፤ እና ቅቤውን ስሸከም ነው ። አሁን ግን ስለተማርሁ ከባርነት ወጥቼ በደመውዝ ተቀጥሬ በደስታ እኖራለሁ ። እናንተም ብትማሩና ብትሠለጥኑ እንደኔ እንደኔ ትሆናችሁ። ነፃነት ታገኛችሁ።

> I was a slave. I am bald because I have carried cereals, honey, and butter from the *melkegna* on my head. But now I am educated. I am out of slavery, I am paid a salary and I live happily. You too will become like me if you go to school, if you become more learned and skilled. You will attain freedom.[38]

Bogale Wallelu did not merely design the school according to its official objectives of centralisation and unification. He saw its role in the context of the power relations that were at work in the local society. Following the capture of Wolaita, the soldiers of the Ethiopian army were given the conquered land in the form of the right of *gult*. The *melkegna* was the grantee of this right, which gave the power to collect a tribute that was paid in kind and through menial labour by the peasants who lived on the land (Donham 2002, 9), the

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[36]*Berhanenna Selam*, 24 July 1941.
[37]*Addis Zäman*, 31 May 1984; *YeZareitu Ethiopia*, 19 March 1989.
[38]*Addis Zäman*, 31 May 1984.

vast majority of whom had been reduced to the status of *gebbar*, people who paid tributes and were obliged to do drudge work. The conditions experienced of a *gebbar* and a slave, both of which were characterised by extreme political and economic dependence, were objectively very similar. In fact, the victors viewed the Wolaita as slaves. For Bogale Wallelu, the access to paid work made possible by schooling meant breaking the *gebbars'* dependency on the conquerors. For their part, by virtue of their own representations of the status of individuals and the slave-like nature of their society before the conquest, the Wolaita who had been subjected by force considered themselves slaves (Planel 2008, 162). Defeat and dependence were accompanied by a strong sense of collective decay (Baliski 2009, 101). In this context, Bogale Wallelu believed that the power of education enabled not only material emancipation but also psychological reconstruction. When he said "If you want to become somebody or a human being (*sew*), learn at school!"[39], he was not only talking about social uplift. In 1980, a Wolaita confided to the researcher Jacques Bureau that "for the 'Amharas' of Shewa," the Wolaita were "not men; they were cattle at best" (Bureau 1987, 94). Remembering the first third of the 20th century, a 94-year-old peasant testified in 2010 that "30 to 40 families worked for a single *melkegna*" and that they were "forced to obey, like a herd."[40] Consequently, when he said that education made it possible to become a *sew*, a human, Bogale Wallelu was talking about regaining dignity and lost humanity.

Social uplift, psychological reconstruction and regaining control of one's own existence: Bogale Wallelu expressed the means available to a school to move an individual away from slavery (ባርነት, *barnet*) to freedom (ነጻነት, *netsanet*) through the verb ሠለጠነ (*seletene*). On both sides of the Italian occupation, Ethiopian intellectuals used this term and its derivatives to signify the idea of achieving a higher level of civilisation through political, social, economic and cultural reforms.[41] However, if it is simply translated as "civilising" or "modernising," it loses its semantic richness. ሠለጠነ (*Seletene*) which can be applied to an individual or a society, means "to be or become competent, capable, efficient; to become famous, known; to become powerful, to prevail; to be empowered, to be invested with the authority to govern or lead; to know how to learn or do something quickly; to be acculturated, to be refined in clothing and/or eloquence" (Kane 1990). All these attributes are considered

[39] *YeZareitu Ethiopia*, 19 March 1989.

[40] Anjulo Agago (farmer), interview, Dubbo (Wolaita), 10 December 2010 (in Wolaita; translation by Asela Gujubo).

[41] Before the occupation, the term was used very frequently in the columns of the newspaper *BerhannenaSelam*. After the occupation, see for example Kebede Mikael, ጃፓን እንዴት ሰለጠነች (*How Japan Modernized*) (Addis Ababa, Berhannenna Selam Printing Press, 1946), 128 p.; Kebede Mikael, የሥልጣኔ አየር (*The Breath of Civilization*) (Addis Ababa, Aynalam Editor, 2008 [1958]).

those of a ruler and an honourable man. By transmitting these technical, cognitive, political, social and cultural skills and characteristics, schools could enable the Wolaita to revitalise themselves and take their place in the nation's space.

Improving material lives and restoring dignity was achieved by integrating into the society of masters, victors and free people. Although Bogale Wallelu did not share the northerners contempt for the Wolaita, he was nevertheless a fervent nationalist who believed in the superiority of the Christian North, and therefore in the virtues of national unification and assimilation. It was not by rebuilding its own identity but by returning to the cultural melting pot of Christian Ethiopia that Wolaita society would be regenerated. The Wolaita had to go to school in order to become the equals of the "Amhara."

3.4. *Uniting against opposition from the local aristocracy*
This political potential of education was very quickly perceived by the "settlers" and Wolaita state employees. In a letter to the Ministry of Education dated 10 November 1942, Bogale Wallelu wrote of their opposition, just one year after he opened the first government school:

የሕዝቡን መሬት ቀምተው የሕዝቡን ጉልበት ግጠው ያልጠገቡ ባላባቶች መሳፍንትና መኳንንት ሕዝቡ እንዲማር አልፈለጉም። በአገራችን አንዱ ለሌላው ባሪያ ሆኖ እንዲያገለግል ሕዝቡን በጭቆና ለመግዛት ለመንዳት የሚያስቡ ባላባት ሞልተዋል ። [...] ይህም ይታወቅ ዘንድ ፉጋም ፤ ባሪያም ፤ ቀጥቃጭም ፤ ሸማኔም የመሳሰሉት ሁሉ ልጆቻቸውን ተማሪ ቤት እያስገባን በማስተማራችን ባሮቻችንን ነፃ አወጡብን ከድንቁርና ወደ ብርሃን መሩብን እያሉ ሪቂቅ በሆነ ነገር በአንድነት ያብራሉ። ገበር ሁሉ ከተማሪ ደንቆሮ የት ይገኛል ፤ ጥቅማችን መቅረቱ ነው እያሉ በጥብቅ ይቃወሙኛል ።

After having ravaged their land and ruthlessly exploited their workforce, the *ballabat*, princes, and aristocrats now resist the idea of educating the people. Our country is replete with *ballabat* who believe in maintaining a hierarchical structure where one is subservient to the other, and they advocate for governing the people through oppression. To articulate their stance, they collectively assert: "If we admit the children of potters, slaves, blacksmiths, weavers, and all their peers into schools, our own knowledge will emancipate them from our control; they will transition from ignorance to enlightenment, to our disadvantage. If peasants acquire knowledge, where will we find a pool of ignorants?" They staunchly oppose my efforts, claiming it is not in their interest. (*YeZareitu Ethiopia*, 19 March 1989)

Balabbat, princes and aristocrats all opposed the education of craftsmen and, by extension, of dominated classes. Balabbat were local chiefs who had been co-opted by the conquerors in order to associate them with the system of political control and economic extraction (Markakis 1974, 106). They received land and titles, and served as intermediaries between the provincial administration in the cities and the predominantly rural populations. They were indispensable

cogs in the conquerors' power structure. The families that had benefitted from incorporation into the Christian kingdom were keen to maintain the social hierarchies as they were. The "princes and aristocrats," on the one hand, were members of the northern aristocracy and descendants of the soldiers of the armies of Menilek II who had been rewarded for their military service with *gult* and titles. They had been sent by the central government, and they were all representatives of the state who enjoyed substantial political and economic benefits. From the conquest in 1894 to the Italian invasion in 1936, the settlers and *balabbat* monopolised the exercise of power. They practised politics almost exclusively on the basis of force and, as Bogale Wallelu's letter shows, they did not see an alternative. At the time of the liberation in 1941, they had a vested interest in ensuring that the social hierarchies and modes of government that had prevailed before the war continued.

Their opposition to educating the dominated shows that they viewed the issues of education from a political standpoint. What kind of knowledge were the dominant referring to when they spoke of "their" knowledge? Since they were opposed to its being transmitted to the dominated, what ties did it have to the forms of domination they exercised? The settlers were convinced that their domination was not merely based on their material and military supremacy: they saw themselves as proponents of a superior civilisation with a long and glorious history. According to their national epic, *Kebre Negast* (Glory of the Kings), their government was sacred and their emperor, who was God's chosen one, was a descendant of Solomon. They considered themselves a people descended from Israel who enjoyed divine election. They believed that their religion endowed them with superior humanity. As a religion of the book, Christianity also meant several centuries of literate culture. As the historian Teshale Tibebu puts it, the north displayed the superiority of its civilisation, Christianity and writing over the "barbarity" and "paganism" of the "others," and felt that these "others" lacked a history (Teshale 1995, 14). This legitimised the granting of a right of conquest and domination over the *dar ager*, the "surrounding countries": that is, populations who were viewed as savage and lacking a history, whose ignorance and "paganism" allowed them to be subjugated. This idea was spread in the capital's elite schools before the occupation. In 1925, Hakim Workneh Eshete, the intendant of Tefari Mekonnen School, explained to the pupils the reasons that had made expansion of the empire and domination over the peripheral populations possible:

የጋሎች እና የወላሞዎች እንዲሁም በዙሪያችን ያሉ የሌሎችንም ጥቁሮችን ምሳሌ እስቲ እንመልከት። በምን ምክንያት ነው ልንገዛቸው የተቻለን ፤ የኛን ያህል ብልሆች የኛን ያህል ኃይለኞች የኛን ያህል የሠለጠኑ ባለመሆናቸው ነው።

"Let us take the example of the Galla [sic], Wollamo [sic] and other Blacks around us. Why can we govern them? Because they are not civilized as we are."[42]

The fact that a cultivated and humanist mind such as Hakim Workneh Eshete would put forward these arguments attests to the fact that they were a part of the shared view of the Ethiopian elites.

In addition to being the ideological justification for power itself, the written word as an instrument of government was superimposed on it. Although various procedures, such as leases between the *melkegna* and the *gebbar*, were oral (Lefort 1981, 23), the new masters immediately began to use the written word to administer the conquered territories. The proclamations (*awaj*) read in the markets by civil servants, which had the force of law, were written down first. In disputes, testimonies were recorded in writing before the judge reached his decision. The power of the written word impressed the Wolaita, who neither used it nor knew it before they were conquered (Balisky 2009, 86–87). With the unprecedented acceleration of centralisation after 1941, the written word became increasingly present. Under Ethiopian rule, Wolaita society became a place where the written word represented the attributes and monopoly of power exercised over an illiterate population. Reading and writing also gave access to the Amharic language. Expressions such as "Amharic, the language that punishes you!" or "the language that keeps making you pay taxes"[43] leave no doubt about how the Wolaita perceived it: Amharic was a language of domination. They also testify to the link established by the Wolaita between power, the written word and Amharic: judgments and the payment of taxes were always accompanied by a document written in Amharic. Furthermore, as an official language, Amharic in its oral or written form was required for all communication with the authorities. Alain Gascon stressed "the fear of peasants who [entered] the city," where "nothing good could await them: payment of taxes, fees and rents, summons and approaches to civil servants who [affected] not to understand them" (Gascon 1989, 440). A failure to master Amharic meant exclusion from the order of legitimate communication. The opposition between oral and written, Amharic and Wolaita, civilised and wild, and dominant and dominated all overlapped. The ruling class in Wolaita was well aware that the loss of a monopoly over the written word and Amharic would erode its power.

Bogale Wallelu's letter also shows us that as early as 1942, the local political elites were conscious of the fact that education would replace membership of

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[42]*Berhanenna Selam*, 15 May 1925. "Galla" and "Wolamo" are derogatory terms used to describe the Oromo and Wolaita respectively; these are the terms used in the source.

[43]Zebdewos Chama (teacher, missionary school director, district governor), interview, Soddo, 3 November 2010.

the nobility as a route to power. The local aristocracy, which represented the central government, was in regular contact with it and was informed of its decisions, knew that the political transformation towards bureaucratisation that had begun at the beginning of the 20th century would accelerate. It also understood that the skills needed to gain access to power would become more demanding, and that schools were the places where they were acquired. A school-educated Wolaita, Bogale Wallelu was an example of these newly-educated men who were competing for power with the aristocracy for the first time.

3.5. *Guiding the people towards unity and progress*

Bogale Wallelu believed that the school-educated elites needed to coordinate their efforts against the class interests of the aristocracy. In a second letter written to the Governor of the Sidamo region on 10 February 1942, he urged his superiors to join him in advancing the educational cause. He saw schools as the outposts of a progressive power in a region where people's ignorance, division and oppression went hand in hand. He emphasised unity and progress as two major goals:

ሕዝቡን እርስ በራሱ እያሟገተን የልማት ሥራ መጐተት ለዚች ኢትዮጵያ አንዳችም ጥቅም የለውም ። ይልቅስ ሁላችንም ሕዝቡን ከጨለማ ወደ ብርሃን እንምራው ። የብርሃን ጮራ እስከወላይታ ድረስ ወጋጋኑ ይታያል ። መልካም ለሚሠራ መልካም ዋጋ እንዳለው የታወቀ ነው ። ይህም የታወቀ ዝንድ እኛ ከዚህ ወደናንተ እናንተም ወደኛ ኩራዝ ኩራዣችንን ይዘን የጨለማውን ኃይል ብንታወመው ማሸነፋችን አይቀርም ።

People quarrel with each other and show absolutely no interest in working for Ethiopia's prosperity. Let us instead lead the people together from darkness to light. The light of dawn can be seen all the way to Wolaita. It is known there is good reward for the ones who do good. Knowing that, if we fight the power of darkness getting closer to each other, carrying our torches, we will not fail to win.[44]

The expressions "lead the people together from darkness to light" and "carrying our torches" expressed a forceful idea that was pervasive in schools from the 1930s until the revolution in 1974—that the school-educated elites had a mission to lead the country towards progress. This goal acquired a whole new dimension after the end of the Italian occupation. It was no longer a question of defending the country against colonisation, but of rebuilding it. For this task, the right to leadership unquestionably lay in the hands of those who had had the privilege of being exposed to an education in government schools. Bogale Wallelu adhered to the vision of those Ethiopian intellectuals who blamed Ethiopia's stagnation and backwardness on the incurable conservatism of the aristocracy. They believed that the aristocracy should be politically

[44]*YeZareitu Ethiopia*, 19 March 1989.

neutralised in favour of the educated elite (Messay 1999, 288–89). While the metaphor of light translated the aspiration for a better future without defining it, Bogale Wallelu also saw the role of the school, to be associated with other institutions, in a more concrete way:

ትምህርት ቤቶች ፤ ገበያዎች ፤ የእርሻ ጣቢያዎች ፤ ክሊኒኮች የአስተዳደር መ/ቤቶች ጉሳዎች ግጭት በሚያደርጉበት ቀበሌ እንዲቋቋም ፤ የየጉሳዎች ልጆች አንድነት ተሰብስበው ካንድ ክፍል ሲማሩ ቢውሉ ፤ ቢሠሩ ፤ ቢገበያዩ ከጊዜ በዋላ አስከፊውን ባህል ሲተዉ ይችላሉ።

Schools, markets, agricultural centres, clinics and administrations need to be set up in districts where tribes are in conflict. If children from different tribes are brought together in a classroom to learn, if they spend their days together, if they work, if they exchange, the harmful practices of fighting each other can later disappear.[45]

Here, he proposed a pragmatic vision of the role of the school as a federating institution that would help calm the discord among the various populations of southern Ethiopia. School was one of the institutions that would mark the presence of a peacemaking government and make people aware of their common interests. Schools would be responsible for transmitting habits of collective activities, knowledge and shared values from childhood. It was by proposing a common socialisation to children whom they considered educated with hostility towards their neighbours that schools would be the key institutions of the unification policy.

Conclusion

The national school system that was set up after 1941 was conceived as a continuation of the types of schooling that had existed before the Italian occupation. Like those of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, government schools were responsible for spreading national myths. They were to inculcate devotion to the king, God and homeland and in common with the schools set up by the government before the occupation, their function was to exalt patriotism, to spread the cult of the emperor's personality and to instil the myth of progress. After 1941, however, the project took on a completely different purpose. The education system was there to enable Haile Selassie to complete his project of autocratic centralisation and continue the cultural homogenisation of the southern regions that had been conquered at the end of the 19th century. The aim was to build a nation unified by the Amharic language, the values of the Christian kingdom, loyalty to the emperor and a belief in a common future of progress.

Beginning in the 1950s, US support and influence were instrumental in the establishment of the national school system. The concept of progress was

[45]*Addis Zemen*, 31 May 1985.

redefined by the theory of modernisation, which provided the framework for the thinking and action proposed by the American advisers. It was adopted by the Ethiopian pedagogues who were working in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. By taking up the idea of a transition from the traditional to the modern, they advocated a type of education that would enable Ethiopia to enter a phase of modernity that took the form of a capitalist industrial society. Importing a foreign development model was not incompatible with Haile Selassie's ambition to legitimise his power through education by fuelling his image as a progressive monarch. It could therefore draw its legitimacy from both a past of national myths and a future represented by modernisation.

These educational aims were interpreted differently by those who were crafting education at the local level, who placed it at the crossroads of the local and national spaces. For Bogale Wallelu, the opportunities for social advancement offered by schooling would enable children from peasant families to escape the system of oppression that had been established in Wolaita after its incorporation into Ethiopia. Moreover, Bogale Wallelu was convinced that the central government represented emancipation and progress against oppressive and reactionary local elites, and advocated assimilation into the culture of the centre. It is interesting to see how his own path informed his opinions. He was a Wolaita who owed everything to his school-education. He adhered to the cult of Haile Selassie's personality and believed in the progressiveness of his regime. This is why this Wolaita school administrator's thinking combined loyalty to the state and the emancipation of the dominated Wolaita.

Chapter 2

From Homogeneity to Diversification of School Pupils in Wolaita: Classes, Genders and Generations (1941–1974)

The first school in Wolaita, the Wollamo Soddo Elementary School, opened its doors in October 1941, just six months after the liberation (Demeke 1985, 2); this was quite early if one considers that the school system did not begin operating until February 1942 (Teshome 1979, 55). Forty pupils attended on the first day. They were at varying levels—some had been educated at Orthodox Tewahedo Church schools or the Italian School during the occupation—and so they were immediately divided into four separate classes, which were known as grades 1-4 (Demeke 1985, 4–6). In 1950–51, the school provided a complete elementary curriculum up to Grade 8, at the end of which the first national examination was held. At that time, the school had 500 pupils, a number that had risen to 1,300 by 1963–64 (Demeke 1985, 20). In 1964–65, the creation of a Grade 9 class marked the beginning of secondary education. After Grade 12 opened in 1969–70, pupils were able to take the Ethiopian Secondary School Leaving Certificate. Two thousand students were enrolled at that time (Demeke 1985, 32–33). In the 1940s and 1950s, 14 government primary schools were established in the small urban centres of Wolaita.[1] Rural areas were neglected until the late 1950s, when Protestant primary schools tied to the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) were established in villages. There were 140 of these schools in 1974 (Elias 2004, 13). From the mid-1960s, the Wolaita school system thus consisted of a secondary school in Wolaita Soddo, government primary schools in the little towns and Protestant schools in the countryside. There were links between governement and Protestant schools, which resulted in a relatively tight school network. The data, which on the surface show significant development, actually conceal a far more mixed reality. Enrolment rates remained low: they were 13.5 percent nationally in 1973 (Teshome 1979, 170), and probably a little higher in Wolaita because of the missionary schools. It took some time for the institution of schooling to take hold. In the 1940s and 1950s, the first to engage with it were urban families, settlers

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[1] WZEO, **የትምህርት ተቋማት ዝርዝር ፤ ፤ መቼ እንደተሠሩ የሚገልጽ መረጃ** (*List of schools and construction dates*) (2010).

and Wolaita state employees, a situation that was transformed from the late 1950s onwards by the ambitious policies of two governors, Germame Neway and Wolde-Samaet Gebre-Wold, and by the spread of Protestant schools. Schooling for girls, on the other hand, remained extremely marginal in both urban and rural areas until the end of the regime.

Schooling a child means looking to the future. It depends on what the social world allows and what we believe we can expect from it. Actors have developed their uses of schools within both local power configurations and national political transformations. This does not mean, however, as Maurizio Gribaudi points out, that it is appropriate to postulate that "each group secretes a coherent and widely-shared model which guides the overall behaviour of its members" (Gribaudi 1996, 117). It is simply a matter of circumscribing the reasons for schooling embedded in power configurations that constitute both constraints and resources. This chapter examines the driving forces behind the transformations that have taken place in the social composition of schoolchildren as a group.

1. Resistance

From acceptance to hostility or indifference, there was a broad spectrum of representations and attitudes towards the new school institution. In western countries, universal, free and politically-controlled education developed with the nation state. While this particular type of school has since taken on a natural force, it is not at all self-evident. This methodological precaution is mentioned here a priori so as to avoid positive or negative value judgments of the various representations and attitudes towards school. In particular, distrusting or refusing to attend school must not be treated as an anomaly. In 1941, the state school was a novelty in Wolaita. The churches and monasteries that had been established after the conquest had a monopoly over transmission of the written word, which they exercised very sparingly. The missionaries who arrived in the late 1920s had opened literacy centres to teach the Bible, but they were a marginal presence. Social actors in Wolaita perceived school from their own social position.

1.1. *Wolaita peasants against the school of the conquering power*

The distance between peasant farmers and schools was a wide one, due on the one hand to the economic constraints imposed by subsistence farming and the high level of taxation, and on the other to the negative representations brought about by the close relationship between the written word and power:

በኛ ጊዜ ወደ ትምህርት ቤት የሚመጡ ልጆች ብዙ አልነበሩም። እና ሲመጡ "ለምን ትምህርት ትማራላችሁ" ይባሉ ነበር ። እኔ አሁን ለምሳሌ ወደ ሳባተኛ ክፍል በምደርስበት ወደ ቤት ለመሄድ ጥያቄው ይሰለቸኝ ነበር። እዛ ስፍራ በምንገድ ያለው

ሁሉ አያስኬደኝም። ሰላም ይለኛል "ደህና ነህ ከየት ነው የምትመጣው?" ከትምህርት ቤት። "ሆሆ ትልቅ ሰው ሆነህ እስካሁን ትምህርት ተማራለህ እንዴ! ለምን ወደ አባተህ መሬት አትመለስም? ለምን ሚስት አግብተህ አትቀምጠም? ምን አንተ? ልብህ እንደ ሰው አይደለም!" ይሉኛል።

In our time [the early 1950s], only a few children used to come to school. And when they did, they were scolded, with people asking, "Why do you go to school? What's the use?" For example, when I was in grade 7, every time I returned from school, I grew weary of hearing the same question. Those I passed on my way home wouldn't let me go in peace. They would greet me with a "hello," to which I would reply, "hello." Then they would inquire, "How are you? Where are you coming from?" "From school," I would answer. Following that, they would remark, "Uh-oh! You're all grown up and still going to school? Why don't you go back to your father's field? Why don't you get married and settle down? Who do you think you are? Your heart is not a man's heart."[2]

Schooling was initially viewed as an unnecessary luxury, a waste of time at the expense of agricultural work. For peasants who were subjected to the necessities of an economy of scarcity, schooling was incongruous, and the top priority was to ensure subsistence for the family. What was taught at school was too far removed from the future social obligations expected of young men, which were to marry, have children, feed their families and help their parents. Going to school was perceived as an abandonment, and the demonstration of an amoral attitude. If in the eyes of the former school actors the peasants of the time "did not know the usefulness of school,"[3] it was because they did not perceive it as a possible means of social advancement. The peasants' hostility to school was also based on political arguments, however: their experience of the written word was limited to the administrative and fiscal practices of the conquering power. Dominated peasants could therefore only look with suspicion on a literate civil servant produced by a school. To know how to write was to participate in domination. This is a dialogue between Desalegn Tanga and Gebre-Mikael Kuke, both pupils in the early 1950s. It is taken from the same interview and follows on immediately from the previous excerpt:

Desalegn: **ሌላ ደግሞ የሀያ ጸሐፊ ልትሆን ነው ወይ!**
Gebre-Mikael: **አዋ! እሱ እንዳለው የሀያ ጸሐፊ ማለት መጻፍ እና ማንበብ የሚችሉ ልጆች ትልቅ ገበያ ሄደው ገበሬዎች ከብት ሲገበያዩ ውል ያፈራርማሉ፤ ያቺን ውል አፈራርመው ከገገርም ከሻጭም ሀያ ሀያ ሳንቲም ይወስዳሉ። ያቺን ሳንቲም ለመውሰድ ገበያ ለመሄድ ነው ይላሉ ።**

[2]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga (retired teacher and agricultural engineer respectively), interview, Soddo, 12 November 2010.

[3]Wanna Wagesho (founder of the first government school in Wolaita, teacher and school administrator), interview, Soddo, 3 November 2010; Girma Bekele (retired teacher), interview, Bedessa (Wolaita), 9 December 2010; Abraham Worku (teacher), interview, Gesuba (Wolaita), 2 January 2011.

Desalegn: And on top of that, you're going to become "one who writes 20!"
Gebre-Mikael: Yes! When he says "one who writes 20," he is talking about young people who knew how to read and write, who used to go to the big market and made farmers sign contracts to trade cattle. And they took twenty cents from both the seller and the buyer. They said, "You go to the market just to earn that 20 cents."[4]

The insulting expression "one who writes 20" expresses the idea that the written word taught at school was used to exploit the fruits of peasant labour. When construction of a bureaucratised administration began in the 1940s, civil servants gradually replaced the armed settlers, but their task was still to maintain order and collect taxes, and they may also have had the right to collect the fruits of peasant labour. Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that an educational institution organised by the government to train these people—the civil servant viewed as a predator—might arouse suspicion. Schoolchildren would fall into the same camp as the new masters. In the particular context of the Wolaita, hostility towards school overlapped with a rejection of the occupying authority and its practices.

Figure 5. Ligaba Beyene School

[4]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

1.2. *Priests of the National Church against the "Catholic" school*

Another criticism, this time from the Orthodox Tewahedo Church priests, was primarily religious in nature. The suggestion here was that the government school was a roundabout way of introducing Catholicism:

ዘመናዊ ትምህርት የኮቶሊክ ትምህርት ነው ይባል ነበር። "የኮቶሊክ ትምህርት ትማራላችሁ? ሀይማታችንን ለማጥፋት ነው አይደለም? ሀይማኖት ለመተው እኮ ነው"። መጀመሪያ ላይ ማህበረሰቡ በተለይም ሀይማኖተኞች ዘመናዊ ትምህርት እንዲስፋፋ አይፈልጉም ነበር። ምክንያቱም ዘመናዊ ትምህርት ከተስፋፋ ወጣቶች ሀይማኖት ይተዋሉ ብለው ስለሚያስቡ ነው።

It was said that the modern school was a Catholic school. Do you go to Catholic school? Isn't it to destroy our religion? It's to abandon your religion. In the beginning, people and especially the religious people did not want the modern school to expand. They said that young people were going to abandon religion.[5]

Until the 1974 revolution, Tewahedo Christianity enjoyed its status as the official religion, and was a pillar of the identity of the Christian kingdom. The accusation of Catholicism levied against government schools was aimed at its exogenous character as a school of the *farenjoch* (whites) that would undermine the cultural foundations of Ethiopia. Did the priests really believe that a government school might be able to destroy Ethiopian identity? Certainly, some of the knowledge was imported, the English language was important and the stated aims were not religious. But in Wolaita, as in other schools in the country, what was taught in the first three years was almost exactly the same as what was taught in religious schools, and moral education was provided by priests of the Tewahedo Church. In short, Tewahedo Christianity had the status of a state religion in state schools. It is more important to draw attention to the fact that the government school appeared to threaten the political balance that ensured the position of the church in the apparatus of power, a position that was based on a monopoly over the use and transmission of the written word, with which the government schools competed.

In all the regions that had been incorporated by the end of the 19th century, churches and monasteries symbolised the cultural domination of the (Christian) conquerors over the conquered ("pagan") peoples. Priests also feared that schooling the conquered populations would call the distribution of power into question:

ሰዎቹ ይህንን የኮቶሊክ ትምህርት ከተማሩ ሀይማኖት ይተዋሉ የሚል ስጋት ነበርባቸው ። በተለይ በአግሮቹ ላይ። ኢትዮጵያ 85 ብሔረሰብ እክ ነው ሥልጣኑ በአግራ እጅ ነበር። ባለሥልጣኑ አግራ ብቻ ነው። እስክ ቀበሌ ባለሥልጣን አግራ ነው ። ሌላ ሰው ሥልጣን አይሰጥም ነበር።

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[5]Lemma Didana (retired teacher), interview, Soddo, 14 December 2009.

They were afraid that people would abandon [their] religion if they learned in this Catholic school. Especially the "Amhara." Ethiopia is 85 nationalities! But the power was in the hands of the "Amhara." The one is power was only the "Amhara." They didn't give power to other people.[6]

Within the societies of the south, priests were also members of the group of settlers whose domination over the defeated populations was legitimised by the assertion of their cultural superiority. In the long run, educating the dominated meant that they would no longer be able to justify their subjugation from an ideological standpoint. The clerics' opposition to government schools was thus to some extent similar to that of the civilian settlers and their Wolaita employees, as we saw in the previous chapter.

1.3. *A girl's place is not at school*

Similarly, the attitude towards schooling girls oscillated between indifference and hostility.[7] Between 1941 and 1945, there was a boys' school and a girls' school in Soddo. The girls learned the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic and household management—cooking, sewing and hygiene. Since the knowledge and skills being taught were already being passed on within the family, why send a daughter to school? As a future wife and mother, she learned everything she needed to know by helping her mother at home, and mothers had no interest in depriving themselves of valuable support for the many tasks in daily life. In this respect, therefore, schooling was considered unnecessary and counterproductive. In addition, the co-educational school established in 1945 conflicted with the rules of male and female socialisation. School was a public space where by being with boys and men all day, girls would undoubtedly develop bad habits, and suspicions and accusations of prostitution were frequent until the 1970s.[8] While girls were expected to be virtuous, they were also considered to be weak and vulnerable.

Many mothers shared this general opinion, including Ayelech Tekle-Mariam's mother, who sent Ayelech to school after refusing to send her eldest daughter because "it [was] not right to go to school with the boys."[9] School was no place for a respectable young girl. Ayelech went on to say that it was thanks to the pugnacity and authority of her father, who was a teacher, that the second daughter and her younger sisters went to school. Some mothers who were in favour of their daughters having a school education were not happy with the pressure exerted by the community. They worried about gaining reputations

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[6]Ibid.

[7]Wanna Wagesho, interview, November 2010.

[8]Belaynesh Antonios (teacher, in charge of women's affairs at the Soddo town hall), interview, Soddo, 2 November 2009.

[9]Ayelech Tekle-Mariam (teacher), interview, Soddo, 19 November 2010.

as bad mothers as much as their daughters as bad girls. It was they, rather than their husbands, who were blamed. Belaynesh Antonios, who was also at school in the 1960s, remembers the criticism levelled at her mother about her schooling. She reports that when her mother went to the river to wash clothes, the other women would tell her: "Your daughter goes to school. What is a girl worth who spends all her days walking the streets surrounded by boys?"[10] This attitude stemmed not only from the most widely-shared opinion on the harmful effects of coeducation, but also from the disconnection between school and society. Within the school walls, the teachers were attentive to the morality of their pupils, and discipline was strict, but the population had a very distant relationship with the school as an institution: the reality of what was happening there was then turned into fantasy by imagining the worst. In addition, a school education had a reputation for making girls arrogant, lazy and temperamental, thus socialising them in a way society would not expect. Once at school, they would no longer be discreet and obedient, they would no longer want to carry out the burdensome daily tasks of a wife and mother and they would have expensive tastes. A proverb that was very widespread at the time bears vivid witness to this idea: "An educated woman and an overly well-fed mule develop bad habits" (ሴት ከተማረች በቅሎ ከተገበች አመል አወታች ሴት ከተማረች በቅሎ ከተገበች አመል አወታች) (Seyum 1986, 9). Finally, in the context of a school system designed to train civil servants, being educated meant gaining access to a position of power, which was unthinkable for a woman.

2. The first generation: the children of settlers and Wolaita state employees (1941 to the mid-1950s)

In the 1940s and 1950s, as a result of the peasants' negative perceptions of state schools, opposition from local elites to schooling the dominated and the very presence of schools in urban centres, the pupils who attended were from families which were a part of the power structure. Alula Anjiyo, who belonged to the first generation of schoolchildren in the early 1940s recalls: "*Kegnazmach*[11] Wadelo Merid came on a mule […] escorted by his servants. And there was also one called *Kegnazmach* Lemma. They were *balabbat* sons, with all the typical behaviour of spoiled children."[12] Alula Anjiyo came from a Wolaita family, and his father was a judge. Gebre-Mikael Kuke, who is himself a Wolaita son of a *cheqa shum* (village chief), remembers that at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, the pupils were "children of the town, some of

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[10] Belaynesh Antonios, interview, November 2009.
[11] A military title meaning "commander of the right wing."
[12] Alula Anjiyo (retired teacher), interview, Soddo, 15 December 2009.

them children of civil servants, some of them children of *balabbat* and some of them children of high officials."[13]

For these groups, schooling was part of a strategy of reproduction, or upward social mobility. From the time he came to power, and especially from 1941 onwards, Haile Selassie's plan was to replace the feudal lords with educated civil servants. For the aristocrats, not taking over the school meant losing their social status. Teshome Wagaw is only partly right when he writes that the nobles considered school to be useless for their children, who were destined for power by birth (Teshome 1979, 31): in fact, some members of the aristocracy adapted to the changes in policy and engaged with schools in order to remain in power. Christopher Clapham showed that aristocrats still made up the majority of senior central government officials in the 1960s (Clapham 1969, 72). They had gone through the capital's elite schools, and some had studied abroad. The same practices were followed in the provinces. Many pupils from the very first generation were members of the aristocracy, and as in the schools of Addis Ababa before the Italian occupation, they went to school with all the pomp and circumstance of their class, with a mule and an escort (Rebaud 1934, 138).

Those civil servants who were not members of the aristocracy owed their status solely to their education, whether it was government or religious. Since their functions necessarily implied mastery of the written word, transmission of their social status required that their children attend school. This was even more imperative for the children of village chiefs, who had auxiliary status, and had not attended school.[14] They were appointed by the local elites, and depended on them entirely. Lacking the ties of kinship from which the aristocracy benefitted, and deprived of the educational capital of civil servants, their position was all the more precarious, and was subject to the goodwill of their superiors. Schooling allowed these families to free themselves from this situation by becoming civil servants rather than mere auxiliaries. In this way, they secured their position of power upon the more solid foundations of educational capital.

Efforts of the school administration to enrol children from poor families were not entirely in vain. Their numbers were small, but they were not totally absent from classes.[15] Wanna Wagesho, who helped Bogale Wallelu found the first school before becoming its principal, remembers the methods they used in the 1940s: "We set up the student police, we sent the student police to gather children they found in the market or in the fields, and then we taught them.

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[13] Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

[14] This is the case, for example, with Gebre-Mikael Kuke.

[15] Gebre-Mikael Kuke, interview, November 2010.

[…] We tried to convince their fathers, and that's how we did it."[16] They also encouraged poor children by donating clothes, soap and school materials:

በዚያን ጊዜ ድሆች ነበሩ ፡፡ ድህነታቸው ተመስክሮ ልብስ፣ ደብተር፣ እንዲሁም መጽሐፍ፣ ይሰጣቸው ነበር፡፡ አዲስ ልብስ ተሰጥቷቸው የለበሱትን ተማሪዎች ከተማም ገጠርም ሆነው የሚያዩ ልጆች ትምህርት ቤት ለመምጣት ይነሳሱ፡፡ ደብተር እና መጽሐፍ በነጻ በሚሰጣበት ጊዜ ልጆች ለትምህርት እንዲንጉ ያደርጋል ፡፡

During that period, there were impoverished individuals. Once we confirmed their poverty, they received donations of clothes, exercise books, and textbooks. Observing children, those who were not attending school, witness their peers adorned in new attire, their enthusiasm to enrol in schools surged. Offering exercise books and textbooks for free serves as a motivation for children to pursue education.[17]

This practice attracted poor children who saw a change in status, although they still needed to live in the city or close to one of the few schools in the small towns. Others owed their schooling to their own desire to go to school or to a combination of circumstances. The case of Lemma Didana, who entered the government school in 1949, is interesting in this respect:

ከ ዋንዳራ ለመጀመሪያ ጊዜ ዘመናዊ ትምህርት የጀመርኩት እኔ ነኝ። ምክንያቱም ታላቅ ወንድሜ ዲያቆን ስለነበር በሱ ምክንያት እኔም ቄስ ትምህርት ጀምሬ ነበር ። እሱ ከአንድ መሪጌታ ጋር ከ ዋንዳራ መጥቶ እዚህ ተክለ ሃይማኖት ገዳም የቤተክርስቲያን ትምህርት ጀመረ ። ከዛም ታላቅ ወንድሜ የመስቀል በአልን ለማክበር ወደ ቤተሰብ በመጣበት ወቅት ከሱ ጋር ጠፍቼ መጣሁ፤ ከዛም የቄስ ትምህርት ጀመርኩና ዲያቆን ለመሆን ዜጋ ጨረስኩ። አንድ ካሳው የሚባል ቄስ ሲቀድስ ዜማው ደስ ይለኝ ስለበር ቄስ ለመሆን እፈልግ ነበር በዚህም ምክንያት የግዕዝ ቋንቋን እወድ ነበር ። የቄስ ትምህርት ተማሪዎች እዛው ቤተክርስቲያን ነው የሚያድሩት። ወደ ቤተሰብ አካባቢ ከሄደ የስጋ ምኞት ያሳባል መንፈሳዊነቱን ይትዋል ተብሎ ይታሰባል ።ስለዚህ… በመቃብር ቤት እንዲያድር ይደረግ ነበር። እኔም ስድስት ወር በመቃብር ቤት አድሬአለሁ ። ወላጅ አባቴን በሞት ያጣሁት ነፍስ ሳላውቅ በመሆኑ እናቴ ብቻዋን ነው ያሳደገችኝእኔቴ ዲቁን ለመማር ወደ አዲስ አበባ መሄዴ ነው ብዬ ነገርኳት ። "ወደ አዲስ አበባ ልሄድ ነው" ብዬ ስነግራት "ለምን?" አለችኝ "ዲቁና ለመማር" አልኳት "አትሄድም" ብላ ተቃወመች "አትሄድም እዚህ ዘመናዊ ትምህርት ተከፍቷል እዚህ ዘመናዊ ትምህርት አለ አይደለም?" አለች። በመጨረሻም አዲስ አበባ ሄጄ ድቁና መማሩን ትቼ ዋንዳራ አሳላ ትምህርት ቤት ሄጄ ትምህርት ጀመርኩ።

I am the first person from Wandara to have attended a modern school. I initially began my education at the priests' school because my older brother held the position of a deacon. He arrived in Wandara with a *merigeta* (head of religious singing) and started attending Kes TemhertBet (a religious non-formal school) at the Tekle Haymanot monastery. During the Meskel holiday, when my brother returned home, I decided to run away with him and come here. I enrolled in Kes Timihrt

[16]Wanna Wagesho, interview, November 2010.
[17]Gebre-Mikael Kuke, interview, November 2010.

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Bet and progressed to a level where I could graduate as a deacon. There was a priest named Kassaw whom I admired for his rendition of religious songs, and he inspired me to become a teacher. He also instilled in me a love for the Geez language. Students attending Kes Timihrt Bet stayed overnight in the nearby church. It was believed that if a student returned to their family, they might be tempted by worldly things and forsake spiritual life. Therefore, students were compelled to sleep in small houses or caves built in the church cemetery. I spent six months sleeping in one of these cemetery houses. Since my father passed away when I was a young boy, my mother raised me as a single parent. When I informed her of my intention to go to Addis Ababa to study and become a deacon, she objected, stating that a new modern school had opened locally, questioning the need to travel so far for education. Faced with her opposition, I abandoned my plan to go to Addis Ababa and instead enrolled in the modern school in Wendara Alala.[18]

Lemma Didana, a future teacher with a Master's degree in English, went to the government school because it was close to his family home, and his mother refused to let the last child she still had living with her go to study in a faraway monastery. He was attracted to religious school because of his fondness for the liturgy, and ended up going to the "modern" school by default, for lack of anything better, because it was not far from his home. Ultimately, however, few children from poor families attended school until the end of the 1950s. It was not until the administration of Governor Germame Neway that a large-scale education campaign aimed at the children of peasants took place.

3. The educational action of Governor Germame Neway (1958–59): schooling the dominated

Known in contemporary Ethiopian history for organising the failed coup against Haile Selassie in 1960 with his brother Mengestu Neway, Germame Neway was the first governor of Wolaita. Because the collective memory, which is still very vivid today, made him a local hero, it is not easy to separate the myth from the reality (Guidi 2013). His educational work remains very much alive in the collective memory:

Germame Neway came, appointed by the emperor. He was a very educated person and he came […] to the very remote countryside. Even at that time […] he tried to change the country. He was a very good person, and he tried to change by education. Education was the means. […] He rearranged the structures of the whole of Wolaita and in each village, he created a non-formal education centre. There were about three hundred of them throughout Wolaita. The education centre means that he employed young people with a third and fourth grade education as teachers for thirty *ber* [the Ethiopian currency]. And… the people made this kind of room from grass and wood. Everything was done by the people,

[18]Lemma Didana, interview, December 2009.

and they were very happy. "This is for your children to learn, to be educated," and the people came… they did it quickly. And then, one teacher for… no number was decided because there could be a hundred or fifty or whatever, children from the village. They learned the Amharic alphabet.[19]

It would be helpful to take a look at Germame Neway as a character. He arrived at his post as governor at the age of 34, and was a young intellectual and a progressive administrator (Bahru 2007, 237). Born into the high Shoan aristocracy, he was first educated at the Tefari Mekonnen and Haile Selassie I schools in Addis Ababa. He then moved to the United States, where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin and a Master of Arts degree in Social Sciences from Columbia University in 1954. The pan-African atmosphere there had a lasting influence on him (Bahru 2007, 241), and he came to believe that the educated elites had a duty to guide the nation along the path of progress (Greenfield 1965, 340–41). Three years after his return to Ethiopia, he was appointed governor of Wolaita (1958–59), and then of Jijiga[20] (1959–60). In both these assignments, his reformist ambitions aroused opposition from the local elites and led to his being dismissed by the emperor. These disappointments led to the attempted coup d'état and his suicide after the coup failed. In 1958, governors of this type
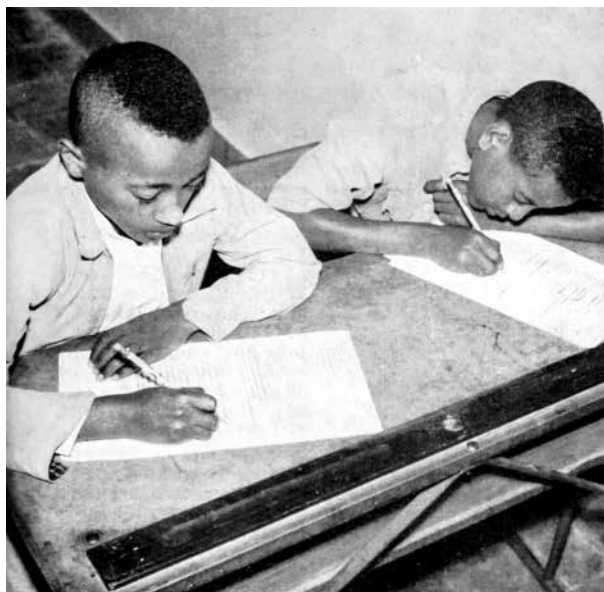
Figure 6. School children at work in the 1950s

አዲስ ፡ ትምህርት ፡ ጀግሪዎች ፡ በትምህርታቸው ፡ ላይ ፡

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[19] Abebe Fola (teacher), interview, Soddo, 18 November 2009.
[20] A city in the east of Ethiopia, on the border with Somalia.

were rare, and it seems that the emperor deliberately gave him the mission of reforming Wolaita in order to better integrate it into the central state.

Germame Neway's actions in the education field were therefore part of a more general project to rationalise local government. He initiated reforms in the areas of political representation, infrastructure, access to land and education. At his first meeting with about a hundred local leaders, he announced that elections would be held so that the villagers would be able to choose their representatives, with whom he would hold regular meetings (Wanna Wagesho 2003, 140–41). There were various reasons behind this: to bypass the *balabbat* and the village chiefs, whose arbitrary practices were all too well-known, to acquire a good knowledge of the region, to be in direct contact with its citizens and to organise reforms as efficiently as possible. These regular meetings were accompanied by daily tours throughout the province. This showed a willingness to put an end to abuse of power, as well as to centralise in order to ensure enhanced control, in the tradition of authoritarian modernisation under state control. His second action was to settle day labourers on vacant government-owned land in the less-populated Wolaita lowlands. His 1954 Columbia paper on the Kikuyu land grab by English settlers in Kenya demonstrates his great interest in the links between land issues and social justice (Greenfield 1965, 341–42). The policy involved breaking the peasants' dependency on their lords without paying them any compensation. In the truck used to take them to their new place of residence, the peasants sang a song, dreaming of an inverted world: "Oh my master, shave off your hair and go to your field. Oh my mistress, take off your beautiful dress and prepare *kotcho* to feed your husband."[21] This action contributed greatly to his great popularity in Wolaita. Finally, he set up hundreds of literacy centres where the Amharic alphabet and arithmetic were taught. Young people with a primary education were employed as teachers. Equipped with a blackboard and chalk, they had to go to villages and bring children together in churchyards, in small, rapidly-built thatched wooden houses or in the shade of a tree to teach their classes. The aim was to provide education to as many people as possible at the lowest possible cost. It seems that at first the children were taken to literacy classes against the wishes of their parents, who did not see the point of a school education when they needed help to support the family. Abraham Worku, who later became a teacher, remembers how he entered the classroom:

> When children reached school age, they entered […] every home. […] They looked at the boys and girls, mostly boys, who should be taken to school, they said. The parents did not want to send their children to class because they had no idea about

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[21] Zebdewos Chama, interview, November 2010.

education at that time. So the government school forced them. […] I myself went to class in this way.

Question: Your parents were not happy…

Abraham: They were not happy!

Question: Because they wanted you to work there, on the farm…

Abraham: They wanted me to help them.[22]

It is hard to know how much authoritarianism and how much voluntary participation by the population was involved, but at least Germame Neway's policy left a very positive memory among the peasant population: "Germame was the first official to enter each village… He pushed us to be partners. Everyone contributed by working on roads, bridges and schools…. Even though he stayed for only a few years, it made us aware, gave us a social and moral conscience. It was a mass mobilisation."[23] The reforms it brought were seen to benefit the most marginalised sections of the population, whose lot was to be improved through greater integration into central government, as shown by its educational policy of spreading Amharic. In fact, it was against the interests of the local holders of power, who led a campaign in Addis Ababa, accusing him of acting against the government and seeking to stir up the population, and succeeded in having him removed from office.[24]

Despite the short period of time of a year and a few months, Germame Neway left deep traces in the local collective consciousness. He is seen as the first senior civil servant from the centre to have carried out reforms that favoured the dominated against the local elites. For the first time, a representative of the central government included the exploited rural population in a political project. His popularity reflects the ambiguous relationship of marginalised groups with the central state, which is perceived as both an oppressor and a resource, and which both attracts and repels. Germame Neway was also a source of contradiction in Haile Selassie's government, which combined the semantics of progress through bureaucratic rationalisation with maintaining the feudal structures of local power. In the end, after sending a governor to integrate Wolaita more effectively into the central state, the emperor agreed with the competing local potentates.

How was this school experience sustainable? First of all, there were links between these centres and formal education. Literate people equipped with a certificate could enter government schools. According to Abraham Worku, of

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[22]Abraham Worku (teacher), interview, Gesuba, 2 January 2011.

[23]Mana Madibo (farmer), interview, Gesuba, 6 December 2010 (in Wolaita; translation: Asela Gujubo).

[24]Wanna Wagesho, **የወላይታ ሕዝብ ታሪክ** (*History of the Wolaita People*) (Addis Ababa, Berhanenna Selam Printing Press, 2003), 147–48. Abebe Fola, interview, November 2009; Zebdewos Chama, interview, 3 November 2010.

the approximately one hundred pupils who went to school with him, about fifteen went on to continue their education.[25] Access to education was also encouraged very soon thereafter by the policies of Governor Wolde-Samaet Gebre-Wold between 1963 and 1973, to which we shall return. But the main driving force behind rural schooling was the missionary schools linked to the Sudan Interior Mission, which multiplied from the late 1950s onwards.

4. Protestant schools, the alternative path for the dominated

The spread of Protestantism under Haile Selassie's regime was a peculiar phenomenon in southern Ethiopia. In 1960, the Sidamo, Arsi and Wellega regions alone accounted for 7,829 of the 10,090 pupils enrolled in missionary schools across the country.[26] Wolaita, from where Protestantism spread to Sidamo, had nearly 140 missionary schools in 1974 (Elias 2004, 13). It was through these schools that rural children entered the school system. Because of their geographical proximity—they were the only schools in rural areas—and because of the religion's greater cultural proximity, Protestantism represented an element of identity regeneration in the face of the domination exercised by the conquerors. They were rural schools and the schools of the dominated at a time when government schools were in cities and were an expression of power, and they played the role of bridges to the government schools. In fact, the network of Protestant schools was not completely separate from the government system, and it provided an important part of primary education.

4.1. *Wolaita Protestantism: moral and political regeneration*

Barbara Cooper, who has studied the activities of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in southern Niger, recalls that it belongs to the "fundamentalist" branch of North American Protestantism (Cooper 2006). As its name suggests, the SIM's objective was to evangelise the people of "Sudan," which as far as missionaries were concerned was an area covering the vast African region between southern Sahara and the equator. The first team arrived in Addis Ababa in 1927, and in Wolaita in 1929. Its leader, Dr Lambie, had been in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan since the end of the 19th century, entering Ethiopia via the Wellega in 1919 and arriving in Addis Ababa in 1922. There, armed with his medical knowledge and determined to use it to gain the trust of the authorities, he forged close ties with the future emperor, Haile Selassie, who was then Regent Teferi. Wishing to make the best use of the missionaries' skills, the regent entrusted Lambie with the task of raising funds to build a hospital, which opened in 1926 with the name Teferi Hospital (Tibebe 1999, 33). In exchange, following bitter negotiations with the Ethiopian

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[25] Abraham Worku, interview, January 2011.
[26] MOEFA, *Government, Mission, Private, Community and Church Schools 1959–60* (1961), 6.

Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the SIM missionaries obtained permission to establish posts in the "pagan" regions of the south.

Leaving Addis Ababa for Jimma, the missionaries arrived in Wolaita in April 1928 and decided to settle there (Elias 1987, 21). The number of conversions they made between the time they arrived and their expulsion from Ethiopia by the Italian occupiers in 1937 was limited: just 48 Wolaita were baptised. But a major surprise awaited them on their return in 1943: according to the missionary and academic John Spencer Trimingham, at the time of the liberation, 20,000 people claimed to be Protestant and between 150 and 200 village communities had been formed, out of a Wolaita population he estimated at the time to be 50,000 (Trimingham 1950, 34–36). In the absence of the SIM missionaries, the new religion had spread at an impressive rate, and conversions continued to multiply thereafter.

How can we explain these rapid conversions, which were the result of the actions of local actors, and not foreign missionaries? It is an undeniable fact that the decentralised concept defended by the North American missionaries facilitated the new converts' move towards religion. In accordance with SIM policy, local churches functioned autonomously. A convert who had been baptised and trained in the basic precepts of Christian faith and practices formed a church, of which he then became the leader. The missionaries ensured that the doctrine was not distorted and that the converts were sincere, but they were not involved in organising or financing the parishes. Who were these converts? According to Tibebe Eshete, the SIM focused exclusively on the rural population (Tibebe 1999, 39–40). Missionaries were forbidden to compete with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church or to attempt to convert the settlers or Wolaita families who lived in the cities, most of whom had converted to the official religion (Elias 1987, 27). To do so would have been viewed as a serious provocation, and would most certainly have led to the missionaries being expelled. On the other hand, the politically dominated, economically exploited and culturally despised peasant communities, who were also considered by the missionaries to be followers of demonic cults, were a formidable breeding ground for evangelisation. It is therefore more than likely that the first converts came from the poorest groups in Wolaita society (Elias 1987, 36), who would have liked this new teaching, which inspired strength and confidence.[27]

The adoption of Protestantism by the Wolaita is an example of the appropriation of an external cultural element that is then reinterpreted by local actors for whom the Protestantism brought by the missionaries was a resource that enabled them to thwart Abyssinian cultural domination. In this

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[27] Asela Gujubo, recorded discussion between him and Zebdewos Chama, 2 November 2010, Soddo.

respect, it is interesting to note that in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Lambie and his colleagues were a long way from achieving similar success. There, the religion they offered to the colonised was that of the colonial power, while in southern Ethiopia, the religion of the "colonial power" was that of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (Donham 1999, 91). As the former Wolaita teacher Bogale Gesamo points out: "The people were very much oppressed and humiliated. Therefore […] [they] hate Christianity and the "Amhara." They consider it as the Christianity of the "Amhara," and the oppressed and the oppressor cannot worship the same God […]. A chance to overcome was […] Protestantism."[28] Ironically, "it took some time before the first converts realized that their religion had some relationship with that of their conquerors" (Donham 1999, 91). For the SIM missionaries, conversion implied a "rebirth," which meant an individual transformation and liberation from the past (Tibebe 1999, 40). For the dominated Wolaita, "rebirth" meant a psychological break from a situation of moral decay and ridding themselves of the "psychology of the vanquished".[29] As Elias Awato explains: "The social, political and cultural subjugation seems to have made the people seek for a release in [the] spiritual realm" (Elias 1987, 52). Donald Donham goes further: "What Christianity offered to [the peoples of] southern Ethiopia was a way of […] repositioning themselves in relation to local and global forces, a way of becoming Ethiopian with links to a powerful world religion—but without adopting the religion of their conquerors" (Donham 1999, 95). Wherever it sent its missionaries, the SIM's goal was the establishment of industrious and self-sufficient local churches (Cooper 2006, 8). In Wolaita, the adoption of Protestantism was accompanied by the reorganisation of communities around local churches, providing an alternative to the past social structures that had been destroyed by the conquest. As a new kind of community cement, its appropriation allowed rural Wolaita to regenerate their identity, culture and politics based on foundations other than those of a conquering power. Since everyone was equal before God, it was possible to obtain a dignified place in Ethiopia by affirming one's own identity and dignity without falling into the mould of the conquerors. At the same time, the converts never failed to remind the missionaries of the need to respect the autonomy of their churches. While the missionaries were among the organisers of the national conferences of Ethiopian Protestant churches until the early 1960s, they were mere spectators at the Wälliso conference in 1965 (Tibebe 1999, 50).

The adoption of a religion based on the Bible, and therefore on writing, was to have a significant impact on the relationship of the Wolaita with

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[28] Bogale Gesamo (a retired teacher, was a student in missionary schools in the late 1950s), interview, Soddo, 3 December 2010.
[29] Ibid.

school. From the mid-1950s, Protestant primary schools represented the first step into the national space for hundreds of rural Wolaita youth. In many ways, this change in attitude towards school from indifference or hostility to tactical engagement reflects a transformation in the relationship with the central government and its official language.

4.2. *The rural population goes to school*

As soon as they arrived in 1928, the missionaries set about translating the passages from the Bible that needed to be known for conversion purposes into the Wolaita language. This led to the publication in 1933 of a pamphlet titled *Tosay Yotis* (God has spoken), which contained 140 quotations from the Bible (Balisky 2009, 113). In the early 1940s, 900 gospels translated into the vernacular and 100 translated into Amharic were distributed in Wolaita (Fargher 1996, 171, 272–73). The missionaries taught the leaders of the converted communities a rudimentary level of literacy that was sufficient to enable them to read a biblical text and transmit it orally. Although literacy was not a prerequisite for baptism (Fargher 1996, 113), Protestantism led to an unprecedented spread of the written word in the Wolaita countryside. Hundreds of texts circulated and gave rise to collective readings, and tens of thousands of people were in direct or mediated contact with the written word. This time, however, it was no longer the instrument of an external power but the vector of an intimate conversion and collective reconstruction.

Evangelisation in vernacular languages had been authorised by the central government before the Italian occupation, but it was banned after liberation because of the official policy of Amharisation (Abebe 1998, 170). From the 1940s, only Amharic was tolerated, and from then on, converts were literate in the national language. Familiarisation with Amharic in its written form had effects that went beyond its strictly religious use. It led to a broadening of the political imagination by opening up the national space, although the extremely limited distribution of national media in the provinces, and even more so in the countryside, suggests that this phenomenon should not be exaggerated. While knowledge of the official language may not have been be enough to enter the national imagination with a single step, it did confer a cultural capital that made it possible to be less powerless when moving into the place of the dominant. Also, because of the material constraints that hampered the construction of the school system, Haile Selassie's government decided to make use of missionary societies, and as early as 1944, an official decree established a ministerial committee to oversee the educational activities of foreign missions (UNESCO 1971, 425). Permits to establish missions were made contingent on the construction of primary schools that had to follow the official curricula of the Ministry of Education while being financed by the churches. Although they were reluctant to engage in a task that was not directly related to

evangelism, the missionaries were obliged to comply with these conditions. The policy began to bear fruit at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s, "Government schools […] were limited to certain small towns and urban centres. But these church schools are available here and there at that time."[30] Until the 1974 revolution, primary education was shared between government schools and missionary schools: in the cities, it was government schools that taught the children of families close to the government, and in rural areas, the church schools were responsible for educating rural youth. However, it was not enough for schools to be available in order for them to be automatically populated with pupils; families also had to decide to engage with them, and the birth of rural school dynamics was gradual. In the 1940s, the literacy courses in Amharic organised by missionaries and converts had no official character. Institutionalisation arrived with the creation of the Soddo Bible School in 1947 (Elias 1987, 45). At that time, literate people were content with the rudiments of Bible reading. As Talemos Mana, a student at Protestant schools between 1967 and 1975, recalls:

> Being educated is beneficial for reading the Bible and becoming a leader in [the] local church area. So, with this in mind […] our fathers, tried to, at least, attend up to grade 2, until they were able to read the Bible […]. Their goal was mainly to be able to read the Bible, in Amharic, to interpret the Word, to preach the Word, to read the Word. So it did not go beyond that; most of them just quit their education from grade 3, grade 4.[31]

It was members of the next generation, first and foremost the children of these first literates, who were educated in the SIM schools. The process was therefore completed over two generations. The first learned to read and write for two years or just a little longer. Biblical mediators acquired a local reputation in the newly-structured communities around the Protestant churches as an alternative to that of the central government. From this newly-acquired social position, strengthened by the prospects opened up by familiarisation with the school concept and knowledge of Amharic, they pushed their children to attend school:

> The older people, […] our fathers were highly oriented towards the advantages of modern education. […] So later on, our fathers, our […] grandfathers encouraged us [to] create awareness, to attend class and to go further, until we completed primary education, and so on. Some of them [the students] are from educated families, I mean… when I say "educated" it is relative. I said earlier that most of them have been educated up to grade 3 or grade 4 […]. So some are from educated families and some from non-educated families. But most of the students

[30]Talemos Mana (teacher and school administrator), interview, Soddo, 9 November 2010.
[31]Ibid.

who have been attending class were from an educated family. For instance, my father attended up to grade 4 at the Christian Academy here. During their time, there was not even grade 1 or grade 2 in the local areas. Then he came to Soddo, the Ottona Christian Academy, and attended from grade 1 up to grade 4 in Ottona. So that is why you see, he motivated me, pushed me to go to school.[32]

Fathers and grandfathers were able to become aware of what school made possible, and to measure the possibilities offered by the acquisition of educational capital. The prospect of being able to escape dependency on the peasant condition through access to wages meant emancipation from domination; after a spiritual liberation through the adoption of Protestantism came material liberation through school. Abebe Fola, who entered a Protestant school in 1956, gives two reasons to explain why his father sent him to school: firstly, he came from a Protestant church family, and secondly, his father said that those who knew how to read had become their oppressors.[33] Since the conquerors dominated because they knew how to read and write, his son had to do the same. Abebe Fola generalised his situation to cover the whole of Wolaita:

> Why did our people become more conscious about education? The ruling class that came from the Shawa government to administer or govern the Wolaita people knew how to read and write. That was a miracle for our people. And everybody became eager to write. They could easily understand Amharic without writing or reading, and they spoke it. But they couldn't write or read. Because the Amhara were reading and writing, our people became angry, and wanted to educate their children, and everybody wanted to send their children.[34]

This generalisation seems excessive: not everyone understood or spoke Amharic, and not everyone wanted to read and write. But Abebe Fola undoubtedly points to a key argument about mastering the official language in its written form as a resource and a way of obtaining a stake in power for oneself. Speaking Amharic was one of the indispensable criteria for "becoming Ethiopian," with complete assimilation being characterised by the simultaneous adoption of an Amharic first name and membership of the national church. Although rural children who attended school had "Amhara" first names whether they wanted them or not, they did not adopt the official religion. They entered the nation in their own way, without fully complying with the conditions of the conqueror. Protestantism as an alternative endowed them with a strong, regenerated collective identity that gave them the confidence and foundation they needed to advance within the political and

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Abebe Fola, interview, November 2009.
[34] Ibid.

cultural framework that had been imposed on them without feeling lost. Paradoxically, it seems that the schools that were run jointly with missionaries were not perceived as being foreign: the missionaries were seen as allies in a context in which the direct dominant power was the Ethiopian central government.

On the path from villages to the town's secondary school and on to obtaining paid employment in the service of the state, Protestant schools represented an intermediate place. Because the curriculum was the same, it was easy to move from one school to another.[35] The only difference was moral education, which was based on Ethiopian Christianity in government schools and was taught by priests from the national church, whereas in missionary schools it was the morality of Protestant fundamentalism that was taught.[36] The missionary schools also had other specific attributes, however. Although they were officially controlled by the government, they still enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. They were jointly financed by the local, regional and national churches, but had limited means, which meant that they had to use all available resources. Thus, as was the case in the literacy centres set up by Germame Neway, the teaching staff was made up of young people who, after completing the early grades in towns, had to interrupt their studies to go back to teach in the villages for a while. It took Abebe Fola nine years to complete grade 6: six years of study interspersed with three years of teaching.[37]

5. Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold: education, planning, integration

Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold has become a true local personality, and he is a complex character. A tireless and authoritarian worker with an almost total devotion to both the regime and the people, and convinced of the merits of uncompromising assimilation and the need for top-down reforms, he has worked hard to provide Wolaita with new infrastructure. In his recent detailed testimony in a collective book edited by Shiferaw Bekele, the former governor explains that the emperor entrusted him with the task of "making the Wolaita Ethiopians" (Wolde-Semaet 2013, 421). He places particular emphasis on the notions of unity, prosperity, security and justice. The policy he implemented to achieve these objectives can be summarised under three headings: rationalisation, centralisation and mobilisation, all used as levers for authoritarian development.

Before taking office, Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold visited Wolaita anonymously, observing and interviewing the population so that he would be able to

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[35] Paolos Sorsa (civil servant at the Ministry of Justice), interview, Addis Ababa, 21 December 2010.

[36] Talemos Mana, interview, November 2010.

[37] Abebe Fola, notes taken during a conversation, Soddo, 2 November 2010.

develop an action plan. Once in office, he had a map of the area drawn up with the support of the national mapping body, the Central Mapping Authority, and conducted a statistical survey to find out the number of households living in Wolaita. In the same spirit of rationalisation, he imposed an orderly administrative culture. As soon as he arrived, he had the administration offices reorganised so that everything could be archived. Civil servants were required to put everything in writing, otherwise they would have to pay fines. Convinced that centralisation and development went hand in hand, he established administrative centres in each canton and had roads built to connect them to Soddo. To bring Wolaita closer to Addis Ababa, he brought in the telephone and improved the airstrip for aircraft. In the economic sphere, he established banking services and settled farmers on vacant land to develop cash crops (Wolde-Semaet 2013, 451–52, 458–62).

This structural work was accompanied by a great mobilisation effort. For Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold, the population had to be encouraged to participate in the reforms initiated by the government:

> They participated in kind. For example, when we built a school, they brought the timber. They worked as day labourers. In addition, each family contributed 1 ber. When they paid their taxes they also paid 1 ber as a contribution to development. Within two years, all the cantons were connected by roads. Not built by the government, but by the people themselves! When they saw a lorry pass by their house selling bananas or coffee… there was no need to go to Soddo… They were volunteers… even the children, even the women… Everyone contributed to the construction of the roads.[38]

The governor imposed this mobilisation and it is difficult to understand the actual level of public support for these compulsory working days. Nevertheless, Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold was driven by the idea of working for the people. Like Bogale Wallelu and Germame Neway before him, this represented a break from the practices of previous governors, who had been content to maintain order and punish the population. With him, the Wolaita discovered governmentality. Indeed, he made "a major change in the conception of power. It no longer stemmed from domination by war and the capacity to levy taxes on the dominated territories," but rather was based "on the development of wealth through activities structured by the political authority" (Lascoumes 2004, 4).

In his recent written testimony and in an interview he gave me, he insisted on the idea that the administration must be at the service of the population, and not the other way round. He therefore wanted the population to have

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[38]Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold (Governor of Wolaita from 1963 to 1973), interview, Addis Ababa, 15 January 2011.

confidence in the state and the administration so that they could be better integrated into the projects of power and in order to facilitate centralisation. To this end, he fought against wrongful imprisonment and took complaints by the population against representatives of the authorities seriously:

> When I arrive in a *wereda*, the first thing I do is visit the police station. I take their book, I look at it. When someone makes a complaint to the police, they file it. But sometimes they don't… they put anyone in jail. The first thing I do is go to the prison and count people, then I go back to the book and I check. Counting and checking. If there is even one person in the prison whose name is not written down, I take action immediately. And if someone comes to my office to complain to the canton governor or the village chief or the police, I immediately take him with me, and we go there and I check.[39]

If a police officer or member of the administration was found to be at fault, the governor would send a letter to Addis Ababa asking what action should be taken against him, and would suspend him from duty pending a reply (Wolde-Semaet 2013, 436).

He paid a great deal of attention to school education as a tool for integration and discipline. As soon as he arrived in Wolaita, he undertook the construction of schools in the new administrative centres he created in the various cantons. In order to do this, he collaborated with the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), which is very active in financing school buildings throughout Ethiopia. The SIDA's financial contribution amounted to 50%, with the rest being paid for by the population.[40] Fourteen new schools were established in this way.[41] On the other hand, Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold's nationalism and a desire for unity led to arm-wrestling with the Protestant schools:

> They had schools up to grade 4, to learn to read the Bible. So I said to them, 'Teach your religion, that's fine, you have the right, but don't just teach reading the Bible, teach how to read and write!' The students couldn't even write properly. So, every year, add a grade: grade 5, grade 6 etc. or else I told them, I'll close your schools, everywhere![42]

The Protestant schools were academically limited, and were mostly too independent in the eyes of the governor. By pushing them to open higher grades, he required them to align themselves with the curriculum of the

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[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid.

[41]WZEO, **የትምህርት ተቋማት ዝርዝር ዝርዝር ፡ ፡ መቼ እንደተሠሩ የሚገልጽ መረጃ** (*List of schools and dates of their construction, 2010*).

[42]Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold, interview, January 2011.

Ministry of Education, and worked to implement the official policy of the central government.

There is an evident continuity between Bogale Wallelu in the 1940s and 1950s, Germame Neway in the late 1950s and Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold between 1963 and 1973. All three embodied the advance of the state and the idea of progress through centralisation, assimilation and "enlightened authoritarianism." All three men were promoters of Amharisation through education. Their work, together with that of the Protestant communities, provided the Wolaita with an educational seedbed that made it possible for a section of the dominated population to appropriate a legitimate culture. Rural youth completed the first two, three or four grades in their village schools before going to the school in the nearest administrative centre established by Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold or to the missionary school in Ottona, and then received their secondary education at the government school in Soddo. The school in Ottona, a familiar place because it was Protestant, is situated on the edge of the town of Soddo, and was often a link between the countryside and the town, and between the small village schools and the secondary school in the capital of Wolaita.

6. The timid dynamics of schooling for girls

In the 1943–44 school year, about 20 girls were enrolled in Soddo, compared with 240 boys (Demeke 1985, 6), about 10% of the total. This was roughly in line with the national average of 9.9 percent of female enrolment in 1944–45 (Teshome 1979, 68). Until the late 1950s, the number of girls in school remained negligible, and none finished primary school,[43] but a new, very timid, dynamic emerged in the final decade of Haile Selassie's regime. The first generation of girls who completed secondary school had entered primary school in the early 1960s. In 1959–60, national female enrolment was 22% in primary school and 7% in secondary school;[44] in 1974, on the eve of the revolution, it was 27% and 17%, respectively.[45] These figures show a relative stagnation in primary school enrolment, but indicate that more girls were attending secondary school. However, while enrolment rates show that one-quarter of secondary school students were girls, very few left with a Grade 12

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[43]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

[44]MOEFA, *Government, Mission, Private, Community and Church Schools 1959–60* (1961), 7.

[45]World Bank, *Education in Ethiopia: Strengthening the Foundation For Sustainable Progress* (2004), 117. http://hdl.handle.net/10986/7434. The figures used by the World Bank for this period are the same as those produced by the Ethiopian government.

diploma: in Soddo in 1974, only 4 out of the 350 students who completed twelfth grade were girls.[46]

In small provincial towns, the first girls to finish secondary school in the mid-1970s were part of a relatively homogenous and newly-formed social group: they were mostly daughters of teachers or civil servants from the first generation of men who had attended school in the 1940s and 1950s. These fathers were educational activists at a time when school was far from being a mainstream institution.[47] The 1940s and 1950s were a period when the political socialisation taught at school that linked education to progress was functioning. But fathers did not just want to educate their daughters for specifically political reasons: they were thinking about their futures, and they subscribed to a discourse of individual emancipation that linked social promotion and the rebalancing of gender relations within the couple and the family. By acquiring a job and financial autonomy, their daughters would not be dependent on their future husbands. The development of education in the second half of the 20th century was aimed at training people to take on new functions in the tertiary sector. Within this movement, "women's occupations" (Perrot 1987) emerged in Ethiopia, particularly teaching and nursing, which, together with secretarial work, were almost the only outlets for women graduates (Tsehai 1984, 18).

Fathers working as priests or teachers in Catholic schools also schooled their daughters. This was a condition laid down by the Capuchin missionaries so that they would be able to carry out their duties. Thus, Belaynesh Antonios and his sisters attended school although neither their mother nor their father, who was a priest and teacher in a Catholic school, were particularly in favour of it. However, Wolaita Catholic priests and teachers were few in number, and the number of girls taking classes in Catholic schools was not significantly higher than it was in government schools. Belaynesh Antonios recalls that she was the only girl in her class when she started school in the early 1960s.[48] There were also very few girls in rural Protestant schools.[49] The first converts, who had been summarily taught to read and transmit the word of the Bible in their communities, sent their boys to school rather than their girls. In this respect, they were no different from the rest of society, especially since the form of Protestantism conveyed by the SIM, which sought to preserve

[46]Kassech Mulugeta (pupil from 1960 to 1974, teacher), interview, Soddo, 31 December 2009; Yemesrach Alula (teacher), interview, Soddo, 15 December 2009. Both were among the first four female secondary school graduates.

[47]Tsehai Zerihun (civil servant at the Ministry of Agriculture, school principal), interview, Addis Ababa, 7 January 2011.

[48]Belaynesh Antonios, interview, November 2009.

[49]Talemos Mana, interview, November 2010.

and recreate "ideal" patriarchal-type structures (Cooper 2006, 22), did not particularly encourage them to send their daughters to school.

The positions taken by mothers varied: some were in favour of their daughters' education, others less so. The first argument put forward by the latter group, as we have already mentioned, was the loss of valuable help with domestic labour. This was also why girls whose fathers were teachers were able to continue their education. Although working conditions and wages deteriorated later on, the generation that began their education in the 1950s were paid good wages. As a result, their daughters were very much released, if not actually excused, from domestic chores by the presence of female servants in their families. Other mothers were outspoken in their support for their daughters' schooling. Tsehai Zerihun, for example, remembers her mother saying to her: "If you are not educated, you will be someone's wife. They will beat you and insult you, and your life will be dark."[50] Mothers who had never been to school themselves supported the emancipation of their daughters from unequal gender relations within the couple and the family. They were the daughters of teachers, civil servants and willing mothers—the sociological profile of this generation of female pupils closely resembles that of the first girls who had attended school three decades earlier in French West Africa, whose trajectories have been well analysed by Pascale Barthélémy (Barthélémy 2010).

At the end of the regime, from the mid-1970s, society was slowly becoming used to girls going to school and, through the value of examples, negative prejudices were gradually fading. Women were beginning to tell young students how lucky they were to be able to go to school, so that they would not have to share their own lives later on. This is what Tsehai Zerihun says about a neighbour: "You are lucky, a lucky girl. You're successful, you go to school, at least you'll be able to defend yourself. When you grow up, when you get married, nobody will beat you. If he suits you, you'll stay together, if he doesn't suit you, you'll feed yourself, because you'll have a job, you'll be educated."[51]

So it seems that on the eve of the revolution, the idea that education did not make "bad girls" but less dependent wives, and therefore less vulnerable, was slowly gaining ground. But it was a timid phenomenon, and until the revolution, the schooling of girls remained extremely insignificant, and was condemned by the community.[52] In 1974, schools were still a male space.

[50] Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010.

Conclusion

Between 1941 and 1974, the sociology of pupils was gradually transformed. The first to attend school were children from the towns where government schools were concentrated. Most were the children of notables, settlers or Wolaita auxiliary workers who had already been assimilated into the culture of the centre to varying degrees. Because of their connections with the government, their families were aware of the bureaucratic centralisation of the state, of which schools were a key instrument. Being from families from the north or simply having grown up in a city, these children were closer to the school culture. Their knowledge of Amharic and their inclusion in the national collective imagination gave them a sense of belonging that brought them politically, culturally and emotionally closer to school. For these children, educational capital complemented this inherited cultural capital; it consisted in learning the administrative and technical skills that had become necessary in order to maintain or develop within positions of power. For the local elites, schooling meant adapting to political transformations, to the development of the administrative state and to these written practices. Rural people began to attend school later, through the literacy centres set up in the countryside by Governor Germame Neway and the SIM schools. Because they lacked the cultural capital the urban dwellers had inherited, schooling also meant first bridging the gap (political and cultural) that separated them from school. However, although school sociology diversified in terms of social classes, it remained openly masculine, even though a new movement was beginning to emerge in the early 1970s.

Chapter 3

History, Civic Education and Literature: Defining the Nation's Identity and Projecting its Destiny

A study of history, civic education and literature helps us to identify, classify and prioritise the political aims of a school. School-based knowledge must be compared with curriculum requirements and the knowledge produced outside, from which a school partly differs by virtue of its pedagogical function (Chervel 1988). The aims of education as defined in the school curriculum were "to foster in children the traditional values of loyalty, unity, and devotion to emperor and country, which have sustained the nation for a thousand years"[1], "to fit them to contribute as fully as possible to the spiritual, cultural, social and, economic progress of his country," and "to participate efficiently in the productive work of the world".[2] Emphasis was placed on patriotism and a future of progress, both nationally and for humanity in general.

Making "choices of historical sequences" according to "a citizenship projected for the pupils" (De Cock 2009, 2–3) meant that the history taught in the classroom was about teaching the nation. Civic education legitimised power, the moral values to be adhered to and a certain type of model citizen. Finally, the literature reflected concerns that linked moral and political issues. Ethiopian literature of the 1940s and 1950s was produced to be used by the minority who had passed through the school system, if not by the pupils themselves. It reflected the aspirations of a generation of nationalist, progressive writers whose loyalty was to the regime (Molvaer 2008). This chapter seeks to understand how teaching expressed moral formation with building the nation and citizenship.

Two separate periods can be distinguished as far as textbooks are concerned, whereas the same literary works were used throughout the period between 1941 and 1974. During the 1940s and 1950s, Ethiopian textbooks were developed to teach Amharic and Ethiopian history, and many non-school textbooks were also used, especially Amharic novels. The authors were

[1] MOEFA, *Elementary Schools Curriculum, Years I-VI* (1971), 1.
[2] MOEFA, *Secondary School Curriculum, Book I* (1963), vi-vii.

Ethiopian scholars or expatriate development workers.[3] Owing to lack of funds, world history courses were based on textbooks that had been brought in from England and the United States. In the 1960s and 1970s, teaching materials for all subjects were produced specifically for Ethiopia, and were written by Ethiopian or Western scholars from Addis Ababa University, reputable secondary schools or the Ministry of Education with expertise in the country.[4] The authors tried to adapt knowledge to the local environment as much as possible while maintaining an international perspective.

1. The Semitic and Christian nation

The *Tariḳenna Messale* (Stories and Fables), which were written in the early 1940s, have accompanied generations of children as they learn to read. Before discovering the short stories, poems and tales with their moral content, children opened the *Tariḳenna Messale* to paragraphs that explained the official political philosophy, which was presented in the form of four definitions: country, people, flag and king. The definition of "country" emphasised the historical, linguistic, cultural and religious unity of the empire: "A country is a part of the world inhabited by a unified population, bound by history, language, religion, customs, hopes, joys and misfortunes" (**አገር በታሪክ በቋንቋ በሃይማኖት በልማድ በተስፋ በደስታ በመከራ ተሳስሮ የሚኖር አንድ ወገን የሆነ ሕዝብ የሚኖርበት የዓለም ክፍል ነው**).[5] Implicitly, and yet clearly, the identity of all of Ethiopia was that of the Christian North, and everyone had to recognise themselves in this identity, regardless of their mother culture, region of origin or schooling.

1.1. *Myths of origins*

The history that was taught established the existence of a Semitic and Christian Ethiopia that was several thousand years old. It was bordered approximately

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[3]The works of the writer Kebede Mikael were school classics. Tekle Tsadik Mekuria, a pupil at Tefari Mekonnen School before the Italian occupation, wrote books on the history of Ethiopia for use in schools in the early 1940s that were still in use in the early 1960s; MOE, *List of Books and Equipment for Academic Secondary Schools* (Addis Ababa, 1960).

[4]Kiros Habte Selassie and Mazengia Dina, authors of the 1969 *Short Illustrated History* textbook. Bairu Tafla, author of the grade 10 history textbook published in 1974, was one of the historians at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies. To mention only a few examples of foreign authors: Roland Turenne from Quebec, author of several geography textbooks in the early 1970s, was a teacher at Tefari Mekonnen School; Patrick Gilkes, author of "Teaching Notes" for Ethiopian history courses in secondary schools, worked at the Ministry of Education; and British historian Richard Pankhurst, founder of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, was involved in the production of history and English textbooks.

[5]MOEFA, **ታሪክና ምሳሌ ፩ኛ መጽሐፍ** (*Stories and Fables, Book 1*) (1942).

by the Red Sea to the north and east (as far as the coasts of present-day Somaliland), the Nile to the west and the borders of present-day Kenya to the south. In school textbooks, the term "Ethiopia" was used to describe both this territory, which went far beyond the jurisdiction of the Ethiopian state, and the Ethiopian state itself.

The story began with the Asian origins of the settlement. The Ethiopian people migrated from southern Arabia and Israel several thousand years before Christ. The immigrants, who were the sons of Shem, mixed with the native inhabitants, the sons of Cham, thereby giving them a superior civilisation. The second stage was the story of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. In around 1000 BC, the Queen of Sheba ruled over Ethiopia and Yemen. One day, she decided to undertake a great journey to King Solomon to be inspired by his administration and wisdom. After a lengthy stay in Israel, she returned to her kingdom pregnant with the future Menilek I, the son of Solomon and the mythical founder of the line of Ethiopian emperors. As he became a man, and shortly before inheriting the throne, the young prince decided that he wished to meet his father. He went to Jerusalem, from where he returned with the Tablets of the Law. At this ancient stage of their history, the Ethiopians were a Semitic people, a depository of divine law, governed by a dynasty descended from the wisest of the biblical kings, of which Haile Selassie was the last descendant.[6] These two myths, of the sons of Shem and the Queen of Sheba, were included in the textbooks of the 1950s, as well as in those published in the early 1970s. These books were based on a mythical past that did not correspond to the academic history of the same period. This is a reflection of the nationalist function of school history, not the dissemination of a "simplified state of knowledge" to be used by children.

Ethiopia prospered under the Aksum Empire until the 6th century AD. During these centuries of greatness, it welcomed Jews fleeing Babylon and Greek traders. The former brought their religion, the latter their culture and wisdom. The kingdom attained a high level of civilisation.[7] The kings and merchants of Aksum maintained diplomatic and commercial relations with the Byzantine Empire, Persia and India, and Aksum was one of the most powerful kingdoms in the world.[8] It was during this period that Ethiopia officially converted to Christianity, which was introduced in the 4th century AD by two young Greek Christians, Sidracos and Frumentos, who had accompanied a merchant whose ship had been wrecked on the Ethiopian coast. Gathered at the king's court, they were committed to the education of the

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[6]MOEFA, *A Modern History for Ethiopia, Grades 6–12* (1952), 7–11.
[7]MOEFA, **የኢትዮጵያ ጥንት ታሪክ ፬ኛ ክፍል** (*Ancient History of Ethiopia, Grade 4*) (1970), 20.
[8]MOEFA, *History For Young Ethiopians, Grade 10, Book 4* (1974), 88.

heir to the throne, the future king, Abrehä, to whom they taught Christianity, and so the dynasty descended from Solomon became Christian.[9] With the Semitic origins of the settlement and the Solomonian descent of the emperors, Christianity placed Ethiopia definitively on the side of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern civilisations.

This system of arranging the history of the nation associated it with a prestigious past, in an international context in which the civilisation of reference was Western, and Ethiopia was among the so-called "underdeveloped" nations. In the patriotic context of the years following liberation from Italian occupation, this national history placed the only uncolonised country in Africa among the great nations of world history. It had existed since biblical times, and its past was inscribed in the prestigious Mediterranean antiquity, whose legacy Europe had captured for its sole benefit.

1.2. *Muslims, pagans and "Galla": repulsive figures*

The definition of a specific identity implies a gesture of distinction. This meant that the history that was taught at school left out the societies that fell under the authority of the Ethiopian state at the end of the 19th century, or else represented them negatively. The Christian kingdom had survived thanks to its centuries-long resistance to aggression from its pagan and Muslim neighbours, who had been integrated by the conquests of Menilek II. In the 1940s and 1950s, pagans and Muslims were portrayed in particularly unflattering ways. The 1952 handbook referred to the "great Muslim threat," and described Muslims as cruel people who only cared about war. The same textbook, which told of the victory of Emperor Amdä Säyon over the Sultan of Yifat in the 13th century, described the latter as a "foolish sultan."[10] The Oromo, one of the largest (albeit very diverse) populations in the country, were presented as pagan intruders, and were seen as a threat, and as repellent. The famous Ethiopian story of Tekle Tsadik Mekuria, which was recommended as a reading book for students and as a reference book for social science teachers,[11] contained this passage:

ጋሎች ሕግና ሥርዐት የላቸውም ፥ አንድ ወንድ እስክ ዐሥር ሴት ያገባል ፤ እንዚህም በዙ እየወለዱ ይረባሉ ። ክርስቲያኑ ግን ተመጻዳቂ ስለ ሆነ ግማሹ ድንግላይ እኩሉ ቄስና መነኮሴ ቄራቢ እየሆነ በመኖሩ አይረባም ፤ ቁጥሩ እያደረ ያንሳል ፤ በዚህም ላይ ከክርስቲያኑ ወገን ጦርነት ከሚሄደው የማይሄደው ይበልጣል ፤ ይኸውም ባላገርና ነጋዴ ቄስና ደብታራ ነው ። [...] *ከሄደው ውስጥ ንዝና ሰፈር ጠባቂ ይሆናል ። ጋሎች*

[9] MOEFA, **የኢትዮጵያ ጥንት ታሪክ ፬ኛ ክፍል** (*Ancient History of Ethiopia, Grade 4*) (1970), 24.

[10] MOEFA, *A Modern History for Ethiopia* (1952), 10.

[11] MOEFA, *List of Books and Equipment for Academic Secondary Schools* (1960), 2; MOEFA, *Textbooks Production Program 1956–1960* (1960), 24.

ግን ከመካከላቸው ድንግላይ ቄስ መነኩሴ ደብታራ ባላገር ነጋዴ አልጋ ጠባቂ ንዝ ጠባቂ የላቸውም። ሁሉም በነፍስ ወከፍ ለሞርነት ይሰለፋሉ።

The Galla lack both law and discipline. A man can marry up to ten women, resulting in multiplication through the birth of numerous children. However, the Christian community is sanctified; some members are ascetics, others are priests, monks, or communicants. They do not focus on multiplying, and the [Christian] numbers remain insufficient. Furthermore, within the Christian community, those who abstain from going to war outnumber those who participate; these include peasants, merchants, priests, and scholars. [...] Among those who engage in warfare are porters and aides-de-camp. Contrastingly, the Galla lack ascetics, priests, monks, scholars, peasants, merchants, aides-de-camp, and porters among them. All of them align themselves in battle for war.[12]

Tekle Tsadik Mekuria attributes these words to a high 16th century Christian dignitary. However, readers were not offered any critical distance. The Oromo were identified, as they were in all textbooks, by the derogatory term "Galla." They were an imaginary counter-model against which Ethiopian identity was defined. They did not practice agriculture or trade. They had no priests or scholars, and so had no religion or culture. Characterised by a strong propensity to proliferate, their main concern seemed to be to wage war on the Christians so that they could take away their territories. They were described as an inferior population, a society without morals and lacking any form of social differentiation. Ultimately, their paganism and savagery stood in opposition to the religion and civilisation of Christian Ethiopia. The term "Galla" was first used to describe the Oromo, but it also applied to other more minority populations who had been incorporated by the conquests of the late 19th century. In the testimony he left of the final expedition of Menilek II's armies against the Wolaita kingdom in 1896, the traveller Vanderheym spoke of the "Gallas of the Wolaita."[13] The name might also include the Hadiya, the Kambatta and the Sidama.

Textbooks from both the 1950s and 1970s summed up the historical role of Muslims and "heathens" as a threat. The kingdom of Aksum remained powerful until the 7th century: that is, until the birth of Islam. As the Red Sea became a Muslim lake, Aksumite trade declined, ushering in a long period of isolation and decline. It was at this time that a queen from the south, Yodit, invaded Ethiopia. She reigned for a few years, during which she burned books and destroyed churches. According to the Grade 4 textbook of 1970, she would

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[12]Tekle Tsadik Mekuria, **የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ታሪክ ከሀፃ ልብነ ድንግል ድንግል እስከ ሀፃ ቴዎድሮስ** (*History of Ethiopia from Emperor Lebnä Dengel to Emperor Tewodros*) (1964), 96.

[13]J. G. Vanderheym, *Une expédition avec le Negous Ménélik (vingt mois en Abyssinie)* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 1896).

have been a "Falasha," a term used to describe Ethiopian Jews.[14] In the 1974 Grade 10 textbook, she was described as either Jewish or pagan.[15] In both cases, she was an enemy of Christianity, and therefore of Ethiopia. She destroyed the cultural heritage of the kingdom of Aksum and hastened its downfall.

Although the Christian kingdom had regained its strength since the 13th century and the restoration of the Solomonian Dynasty, a new phase of decline was about to begin, once again due to Islam. In the 16th century, Imam Ahmed, who was called Ahmed Gragn ("the left-handed one") by the Christians, invaded the kingdom. Like Yodit centuries earlier, he burned churches and "killed many Christians."[16] Ethiopia survived thanks to the tenacity of Emperor Gelawedewos and the help of troops sent by the King of Portugal, an episode that is told as an act of solidarity between Christians. From the second half of the 16th century, Ethiopia had to face the Oromo migrations. In the 1974 Grade 10 manual, they were described thus:

> First, they invaded the provinces of Dewaro and Fatagar. Another branch invaded Harar at about the same time. Those who invaded Dewaro and Fatagar occupied the plateau of Shoa. From this region, different groups of Galla invaders conquered Welega, Illubabor, Jimma, Wollo, Gojjam, Dembia and Tigre.[17]

It was then said that the emperors Sertse-Dengel and Susneyos had saved the Christian kingdom from destruction by the "Galla" by fighting them and settling them down. This vision was not unique to textbooks. The author of these quotations, Bairu Tafla, was a historian at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, where the elite of the Ethiopian academy could be found, and he was merely echoing a common opinion among historians. The point here is not to suggest that the Christian kingdom did not have to fight against the Muslim kingdoms, which were then its neighbours, or that the settlement of the Oromo people went smoothly, but rather to point out that history was taught exclusively from the point of view of the Christian kingdom, and presented entire constituent parts of the nation in an entirely negative way.

The textbooks that were produced in the 1960s and 1970s, however, offered a less caricatural view. In the Grade 7 textbook published in 1970, for example, pupils could read that Islam, like Christianity, was one of the world's major religions, and that Ethiopia had many Muslims.[18] These passages suggested that they could be seen as members of the national community, and not only

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[14]MOEFA, **የኢትዮጵያ ጥንት ታሪክ ታሪክ ፬ኛ ክፍል** (*Ancient History of Ethiopia, Grade 4*) (1970), 34.

[15]MOEFA, *History For Young Ethiopians, Grade 10, Book 4* (1974), 91.

[16]Ibid., 118.

[17]Ibid., 120.

[18]MOEFA, *History for Young Ethiopians, Grade 7* (1970), 11 and 24.

as enemies. This did not reflect a radical change in perspective, however: although the Grade 10 textbook published in 1974, in the very last year of the regime, no longer included the crude caricatures of the 1952 textbook, Muslims were still the historical enemy. In addition, some of the old textbooks in which Muslims and "Galla" were blatantly denigrated continued to be used. Ethiopian civilisation was defined in comparison with them, and the idea that Ethiopia was made in spite of them still persisted. As time went by, however, the messages became more ambiguous: they were sometimes still hostile and contemptuous, but on occasion more open. The fact remains that these "Others" were not the inhabitants of distant countries, or even neighbours. While the expansion of the borders of the empire by conquest had made them subjects of the emperor, history textbooks reduced them to second-class subjects, beyond the legitimate scope of the nation. This symbolic violence echoed that exercised by the representatives of power in the societies of the south.

Historical links with Africa were depicted as being extremely tenuous. In the Grade 4 textbook, one short line was devoted to the African provenance of the gold and ivory exported by Aksum, compared with several paragraphs and repetitions on the Semitic origins of the settlement. The ancient Semites who had crossed the Red Sea had mixed with the indigenous inhabitants to form the Ethiopian people, but the latter had played no historical role in terms of civilisation, and it was from them that the "Galla" were descended. In an empire that had become extremely multi-religious and multicultural, the history of the nation imposed a Semitic and Christian framework in which pretenders to a political and social existence had to blend in. For the pupils from the defeated populations, the school curriculum left no other choice than to deny their own culture and accept the identity of the power that had subjugated their grandfathers.

2. The deified emperor

2.1. *Solomonian legitimacy*

The mythical account that established the Solomonic descent of the emperors came from the official historiography that had been drawn up by the state and the church since the 13th century, followed by the academic history of orientalist influence. It was presented as historically proven in the first history textbook written especially for Ethiopian schools in 1952 and in the Grade 4 textbook published in 1970.[19] The secondary school textbook for grades 9–12 published in 1969 offered a more nuanced view, without daring to actually question it. The authors pointed out that this story could not be proved.

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[19]MOEFA, *A Modern History for Ethiopia, Grades 6–12* (1952), 7–11; MOEFA, **የኢትዮጵያ ጥንት ታሪክ ፤ ፬ኛ ክፍል** (*Ancient History of Ethiopia, Grade 4*) (1970), 9–19.

However, because they were not able to question the origin of the dynasty of which Haile Selassie was the last representative, they preserved the myth by performing a somewhat confused pirouette, writing: "The story of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon may *well be* true but there is practically no *historical* evidence for it. Even if the story is not true it does not mean that the emperors were not descended from Solomon."[20] The Constitutions of 1931 and 1955 only affirmed the legitimacy of the Shewa Dynasty, which had appropriated the myth of the Solomonian origin of the emperors for its sole benefit. A fundamental element of the official ideology, it was recalled in civic education classes, which especially cited Article 2 of the 1955 Constitution, which stated: "The Imperial Dignity shall remain perpetually attached to the line of Haile Selassie I, descendant of King Sahle Selassie, [which] descends without interruption from the dynasty of Menilek I, son of the Queen of Ethiopia, the Queen of Sheba, and King Solomon of Jerusalem."[21]

The history that was taught at school clearly confirmed the hegemony of the Shewa Dynasty *vis-à-vis* the other royal lineages of the northern provinces. It was the only authentic heir of Aksum. The ambiguous approach adopted towards the Zagwe Dynasty, which reigned in the 11th and 12th centuries, is significant in this respect. While devoting a few lines to King Lalibela's remarkable architectural achievements—the eleven churches cut into the rock—the 1970 Grade 4 manual stated that the Lasta Dynasty had forcibly removed a Solomonian Dynasty that had been weakened by Muslim encirclement and Yodit invasions. It also reported that these emperors came from an indigenous population—Zagwe or Agaw—and were therefore non-Semitic.[22] The Grade 10 manual published four years later attributed a more respectable status to them, describing a pious dynasty that had left a magnificent legacy to Ethiopia and to the Christian world in general. However, it remained a second-rate dynasty, appearing as a parenthesis before the return of the Solomonians in the 13th century. This return was presented as a rebirth after the "Dark Ages" that had followed the decline of the kingdom of Aksum. However, the author of the Grade 10 textbook, the historian Bairu Tafla, proposed replacing this term with "Early Middle Age" because of the discoveries that had been made from new sources. However, the chapter devoted to the "Ethiopian medieval civilization" only covered the 13th and 15th centuries, those of the restoration of the Solomonian Dynasty. It showed how power had been strengthened through a reorganised and fortified administration, and how religion and culture had flourished and spread through the construction

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[20]MOEFA, *Ethiopia. A Short Illustrated History, Grades 9–12* (1969), 23.

[21]MOEFA, *History For Young Ethiopians. Part 2, Civics, Book 2, Grade 8* (1974), 139.

[22]MOEFA, **የኢትዮጵያ ጥንት ታሪክ ፤ ፬ኛ ክፍል** (*Ancient History of Ethiopia, Grade 4*) (1970), 38.

of numerous churches and monasteries, the translation of Arabic works and the production of new Ethiopian works. As part of the same movement, education had developed through enriched and codified teaching. The Ethiopian emperors had regained an authority that enabled them to maintain respect for, and even control, the neighbouring Muslim powers.[23] Ethiopia had emerged from its period of retreat and entered a phase of fulfilment, one that lasted until the "Era of Princes" (1755–1855), when imperial power gave way to that of the great regional lords, and an Oromo Dynasty, the Yajju, appointed and dismissed the emperors.

The advent of Emperor Tewodros II in 1855 brought an end to this period of fragmentation and ushered in what is commonly referred to as the history of modern Ethiopia. The school curriculum characterised this phase by three interdependent phenomena that came together in the person of Haile Selassie: the restoration of unity through the centralisation of power, the safeguarding of independence in the colonial context and Ethiopia's commitment to progress.

2.2. *Haile Selassie: from mythical hero to enlightened monarch*

The last of the definitions presented at the beginning of the *Tarikenna Messale* reading books was titled "The king: source of power and dignity." There was no lack of attributes and metaphors to describe and justify the nature of his power:

> **የሕዝብ እረኛ፤ የፍርድ ሚዛን ፤የሃይማኖት ጠባቂ የአስተዳደር መሪ የአንድነት ማሰሪያ የጦር ሠራዊት ጠቅላይ የአገር ኩራት የታሪክ መገኛኛ፤ የጀግንነትና የበጎ ሥራ ሸላሚ ንጉሥ ነው። ንጉሥ በመቀባቱ ሕዝብን ለማጠበቅ ሕግና ሥርዓትን ለማስፈጸም ከእግዚአብሔር አደራ የተቀበለ አባት ነው። [...] ንጉሥን ማክበር ማፍቀርና ትእዛዙን መፈጸም ለኢትዮጵያ ልጆች ሁሉ የተቀደሰ ሥራ ነው።**

> The king serves as the shepherd of his people, the embodiment of justice, the protector of religion, the leader of the administration, the source of unity, the commander of the armies, the pride of the country, the focal point of history, and the one who recognizes and rewards heroism and charitable acts. Endowed with divine authority, the king acts as the father to those attached to him, entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing law and order to safeguard the people. [...] Respecting and loving the king, as well as carrying out his orders, is a sacred duty for all the children of Ethiopia.[24]

As a political and religious leader, it was from God that the emperor had received his appointment of political, administrative and legal power,

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[23]MOEFA, *History For Young Ethiopians, Grade 10, Book 4* (1974), 86–101.

[24]MOEFA, **ታሪክና ምሳሌ ፩ኛ መጽሐፍ** (*Stories and Fables, Book 1*) (1942), first pages unnumbered.

without which there was no community. It was therefore as much a mission as a prerogative. The emperor was the guardian of religion as the basis of the identity of the nation, and of the territory as a holy land. He was the shepherd without whom the people would have been lost, the protective father to whom obedience was owed and, in the image of God, the great retributor, who bestowed rewards or punishments. He was the focal point of history and the source of unity, and was the metaphor for Ethiopia, the symbol and guarantor of its existence. Ultimately, the emperor was the cornerstone of the entire nationalist ideological edifice. This was not a general, disembodied theory: these functions and attributes were specifically intended for Haile Selassie. A succession of Solomonian emperors had been the backbone of three millennia of Ethiopian history, but Haile Selassie was its culmination, the final outcome from which history had to be understood. Arguing pedagogical necessities, school curricula were very clear on this subject:

> The long history of Ethiopia creates the problem of giving the child an adequate picture of his country's past without burdening him with too many details, all of which are important but not possible to include. The history as outlined, therefore, begins with His Imperial Majesty and His Family before going into the remote past.[25]

Haile Selassie was omnipresent. At primary school level, two textbooks, **የቀዳማዊ ኃይለ ሥላሴ ታሪክ** (*YäQädamawi Haile Selassie Tarik*, History of Haile Selassie I, 1930–41) and **አዲስ ዘመን ታሪክ** (*Addis Zäman Tarik*, History of the New Era, 1941–57), were exclusively devoted to him, while just one, **የኢትዮጵያ ታሪክ ከንግስት ሳባ እስከ ደግማዊ ምኒለክ** *YäEthiopia Tarik KäNegest Saba eskä Dagmawi Menilek* (History of Ethiopia from the Queen of Sheba to Menilek II) covered three entire millennia.[26] The 1952 textbook, which dealt with the whole of Ethiopian history since the Queen of Sheba, devoted 43 pages out of 75 to Haile Selassie. The narrative was organised in such a way that each reign since Emperor Tewodros II (1855–68) was a step towards his own, marking progress towards final fulfilment. It was an account of the transition from the old to the new, from feudalism to centralisation, from the traditional to the modern.

Tewodros II was the first emperor who sought to put an end to the fragmentation of the "Era of Princes" in order to restore imperial power. He repaired all the churches that had been destroyed by the "Gallas" and tried to bring all the provinces under his authority to make the country powerful again: "So Tewodros aimed at political reunification of the country under a

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[25]MOEFA, *Curriculum for Ethiopian Schools 1–8* (1947), 116; MOEFA, *Elementary School Curriculum Years I-VIII* (1958), 107.

[26]MOEFA, *Textbook Production Program, 1956–1960*, 22.

strong central government. He wanted to put an end to the feudal characters of the central government and the army, and to confer on the people the blessings of unity, peace and safety."[27] But he had to face opposition from the princes and the church, who were firmly attached to their privileges. He was the emperor who failed because he was ahead of his time. The reign of Yohannes IV (1871–89) was one more step in the same direction, a more effective period of transition from the "old" to the "new."[28] Tewodros II had revived the idea of political unity, but Yohannes IV began to realise it. Both acted against centrifugal forces in order to strengthen national unity through religious unity.[29] By a process of unification, Yohannes IV enabled the country to resist Egyptian attacks and the first attempts at colonisation by Italy.

It was with the pivotal figure of Menilek II (1889–1913) that Ethiopia truly entered a new phase in its history. He was both a great unifier, the saviour of independence and the initiator of "modernisation." He first expanded Ethiopia by uniting the provinces under his authority.[30] The regions that were conquered by force at the end of the 19th century were treated as provinces under the domain of the Ethiopian kings. The conquest movement was therefore presented as reunification. Menilek II was also the commander of the Ethiopian troops who defeated the Italian colonial army at the Battle of Adwa, the founding gesture of independence. Once the empire had been rebuilt and independence had been secured, "Menilek had a great desire to modernise his country. He realised that modernisation was necessary to strengthen Ethiopia and defend its independence." By "modernisation," the authors of the textbooks meant steps such as the creation of the first Council of Ministers in 1907—which was described as the first move towards parliamentary democracy—the construction of the first government schools and hospitals, the introduction of telephones and the first cars. Menilek II set in motion the work that bore fruit during the reign of Haile Selassie.[31]

Haile Selassie's accession to power was reached under the aegis of providence. In the 1952 textbook, it was in the form of a true mystic who was concerned above all with captivating children. From an early age, the young Teferi was destined to assume imperial office: "It is evident that he was born to be the Emperor of Ethiopia in spite of all adverse circumstances."[32] It was he to whom the "Hand of God" had given birth at a crucial moment when

[27] MOEFA, *A Modern History for Ethiopia* (1952), 12.

[28] A. C. Fernando, M. T. Chako, *Intelligent Exercises. History (World and Ethiopia). For Senior Secondary Schools, 8* (Addis Ababa: Progress Unity Friendship, MAS Co-operative Society, , vol. II, date not given), 3.

[29] Ibid., 21.

[30] MOEFA, *Elementary School Curriculum Years I-VIII* (1958), 110.

[31] A. C. Fernando, M. T. Chako, *Intelligent Exercises…* (date not given), 31.

[32] MOEFA, *A Modern History for Ethiopia* (1952), 32.

Ethiopia needed a man who would be capable of administering in peace and wisdom a territory conquered by force:

> "If Menilek II was the King David of Ethiopia, then Haile Selassie I can certainly be said to be her King Solomon. When his country required a wise ruler to strengthen and reform the empire which Menilek had won with his sword, the Hand of God had raised the son of Ras Mekonnen to the ancient throne of Ethiopia."[33]

Haile Selassie's march to power was presented in terms of selflessness and dedication. In 1917, he had not accepted the office of Regent, as if in spite of himself, to save Ethiopia from the destruction orchestrated by Lej Iyassu, Menilek II's successor, who was sympathetic to Islam. Feeling the Hand of God guiding him, Teferi then assumed leadership of the revolt against this apostate emperor, saving the country from Islamic domination.[34] Portraying the darkest possible image of Lej Iyassu to both justify the revolt of the Shewan nobility against this young man from Wällo and perfect his own image was a tried and tested practice Haile Selassie used throughout his reign.

His role as a saviour was once again highlighted in the chapter on liberation titled *The Lion of Judah Has Conquered*.[35] No other protagonist was mentioned—neither the English army nor the Ethiopian resistance, whose respective actions had been decisive—except God, who sent a sign from heaven: "The rain came down this afternoon […] to leave the capital clean for its victorious Sovereign."[36] Liberation was like the epic story of a legendary hero. The 1969 textbook presented a more realistic version of his role, attributing the regained independence to his diplomatic skills:

> "Yet the emperor's decision to leave the country was certainly right. During his exile he was able to interest the British in the case of Ethiopia sufficiently to get help in 1941. […] It was the emperor's international reputation which kept Ethiopia independent after the war."[37]

Now restored to his throne, the emperor had to justify his exile, and faced with the men who had remained behind to lead the struggle during the five years of occupation, he needed to take credit for his country's regained independence. A few short lines were devoted to the resistance fighters in the same book, but they remained marginal actors.

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[33] Ibid., 38.
[34] Ibid., 35.
[35] The Lion of Judah was the emblem of the Solomonic Monarchy.
[36] MOEFA, *A Modern History for Ethiopia* (1952), 55.
[37] MOEFA, *Ethiopia. A Short Illustrated History, Grades 9–12* (1969), 150.

Haile Selassie was then able to turn his attention to the progress of his country and inaugurate the "New Era."[38] From a very early age, his political action had been motivated by the goal of progress. He was the representative of this ambition in the face of a powerful conservative group. From his accession to the regency to his coronation as emperor in 1931, he had to share power with Empress Zewditu, the daughter of Menilek II. But Zewditu was conservative, as was her ally, the powerful Habte Giorgis: "[They] distrusted foreign innovation because they were foreign and feared that the growth of a centralised state and civil service would lessen their feudal powers." In contrast, "Tefari was liberal in outlook and progressive."[39] His coronation as emperor therefore meant the victory of the progressives over the conservatives, of the advocates of the future over those of the past. He was then able to bring Ethiopia definitively into the era of modernity.

This notion of progress was not presented as an imitation of Europe or the United States. Rather, the reform-minded intellectuals who participated in the production of school knowledge called for a renaissance, a restoration of the old power through the re-establishment of past links with the outside world. In his famous novel *Araya* (a first name meaning "model"), which was part of the secondary school syllabus, the writer Germachew Tekle Hawariat explained this concept:

ጥንታዊት ኢትዮጵያ በብዙ ሺሕ ዘመን ልማዶች ታሰራ ፡ ከጎንደሮች ተለይታ ወደ ጓላ ቀርታ በመንገታገት ስትኖር የልማድ ሰንሰለቲን ለመፍታትና ወደማይቀረው ወዳዲስ ሥልጣኔ ለመራመድ ፈቃዲን የገለጸችው በዳግማዊ ምኔልክ ዘመነ ምንግሥት ቢሆንም እርምጃዋ የታየውና አካሄዱ የተረጋገጠው በቀዳማዊ ኃይለ ሥላሴ መሪነት ነው።

The customs of ancient Ethiopia have remained steadfast for millennia. Isolated from her allies, she endured and had to contend [to survive]. Though the prospect of breaking the chains hindering her customs and advancing towards a new civilization emerged during the reign of Menilek II, her progress became evident and its momentum confirmed under the leadership of Haile Selassie.[40]

In both history syllabuses and the literature, the convergence of history in the person of Haile Selassie was complete: he saved Ethiopia's thousand-year-old independence, restored its past splendour and guided it towards the future.

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[38] See the title of the textbook **አዲስ ዘመን ታሪክ**, *1933–1949* (*History of the New Era, 1940–1957*). After the liberation, the government organ, the weekly *Berhannenna Selam* was replaced by the daily *AddisZemen*, which means "New Era."

[39] A. C. Fernando, M. T. Chako, *Intelligent Exercises…* (n.d.), 37.

[40] Germachew Tekle Hawariat, **አርአያ** (*Model*) (Addis Ababa; Berhannenna Selam, 1941 EC [1948]), 124.

3. Rulers to admire, governed to imitate

It was possible to find some justification for Haile Selassie's authoritarianism in progressive clothing in the history of "great men." A textbook imported from Great Britain, *The March of Time*, presented the great moments of a Eurocentric world history through their achievements. Similarly, Ethiopian books such as ታላላቅ ሰዎች (*Talallaq Säwoch*, Great Men) by Kebede Mikael, or የታላላቅ መንገድኞች ታሪክ (*Yätalallaq Mängädägnoch Tarik*, Stories of the Great Travellers) by Ma'aza Bekele, were short biographies of an edifying nature. The Ethiopian authors were inspired by a practice they had experienced as students during their studies in Europe or the United States, as well as by Ethiopian hagiographical tradition. Curriculum developers, both Ethiopians and expatriates, had clearly identified the contradictions between the use of imported textbooks and the nationalist aims of the school system. The authors of the 1947 curriculum, for example, pointed out the difficulties of teaching history with imported textbooks, because: "Most history books are written with bias, usually in favour of the country for which the history is written."[41] However, linking the great Ethiopian emperors with the "great statesmen" of world history made it possible to justify autocracy in the name of progress.

3.1. *Great statesmen*

Emperor Tewodros II had a prominent place in history textbooks. A play taught in the Amharic courses was entirely devoted to him. It made him a figure of bravery, heroism and patriotism. In his 1973 study of Amharic textbooks, Asfew Melaku explained how Tewodros II was used to encourage nationalism, defend centralisation and encourage cooperation with the monarch:

> An Ethiopian student cannot help feeling genuine pride for the life and work of the emperor, his attempt to unite the fragmented Ethiopia of this time. Of what use are the qualities of a leader if the people—the chiefs, the clergy, the bishop and the masses—do not cooperate? […] The student learns early in his life to respond to the nationalistic qualities and aspirations of Theodore [Tewodros] and these are very well presented in this book. (Asfew 1973, 38)

Among foreign heads of state, Napoleon Bonaparte featured prominently in both imported school textbooks and Ethiopian books. *The March of Time* told the story of a child born into a modest background who owed his brilliant career to his assiduous studies, hard work and military skills. Like the great soldier, the wise head of state was particularly highlighted: "He built many buildings, drew up a new code of laws, and gave all poor children the chance of a good education." The British textbook was less complimentary about the rest of his career: blinded by his desire for power, the French emperor had spilled

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[41]MOE, *Curriculum for Ethiopian Schools 1–8* (1947), 116.

too much blood.[42] But everywhere else it was praise that dominated. Kebede Mikael—who had studied in France—wrote a chapter on him in **ታላላቅ ሰዎች** (*Talallaq Säwoch*, Great Men), beginning with the French meaning of the word "genius" and ending with the affirmation that history would grant him eternal life. He was compared to Alexander the Great, and all his actions were portrayed as having been motivated by the common good of Europe. The author discussed the literature that was critical of him and gave him credit before refuting it: although the wars of Napoleon Bonaparte might be criticised, his legislative and legal actions placed him in the patrimony of humanity, on the same level as Moses and Solon.[43]

Generally speaking, the intention behind their glorification was to nurture respect and veneration. This in turn helped perfect the image of the "modernising" Ethiopian emperors Menilek II and Haile Selassie. Could Napoleon Bonaparte's imperial project, which had been so highly praised by Kebede Mikael, and that of Menilek II, the builder of the Ethiopian Empire, not be brought together? Did Haile Selassie's legislative and legal activity not echo that of the French emperor? This link was directly established by Tekle Tsadik Mekuria in his moral treatise **የሰው ጠባይና አብሮ የመኖር ዘዴ** (*YäSäw Täbayenna Abro YäMänor Zädé*, Human Behaviour and the Art of Living Together), which was part of the secondary school curriculum. The characters who illustrated his depiction of "great minds" (**አሳበ ሰፊ**, *asabä säfi*) were Napoleon, Menilek II and Haile Selassie. The three statesmen were wise rulers who sought new solutions when their countries faced new problems. Coming to power at decisive moments and forced to face difficult situations that required a strong spirit of initiative, they took the right decisions at the right time, sometimes against the advice of the majority. As great administrators and legislators, they left a strong and lasting legacy for their successors. With political vision, they looked to the future rather than just dealing with what they had inherited from the past.[44]

In his novel *Araya*, Germachew Tekle Hawariat drew another parallel, that of the reigns of Menilek II and Haile Selassie with those of Frederick William I and Frederick II of Prussia:

ፍሬዲሪክ ዊልሂም የፕሩስን ምንግስት ለማጕልመስ በታላቅ ትግሥቱና በልዩ ስጦታው ያደራጀውን ጦርና ያከማቸውን ገንዘብ ቁም ነገር ለማ ሲያገዝ ፍሬዲሪክ ሁለተኛ (ትልቁ) ባልጋው ተተክቶ ያባቱን ሥራ ባያከናውነው ኖሮ ጀርመን የዛሬውን ደረጃዋን አታገኝም

[42]E. C. T. Horniblow, J. J. Sullivan, *The March of Time*, *Book IV. Makers of Our Modern World* (London: The Grant Educational Co., 1953), 113–24.

[43]Kebede Mikael, **ታላላቅ ሰዎች** (*Great Men*) (Addis Ababa: Mega Printing Press, 1999 EC [1st edition 1950]), 97–126.

[44]Tekle Tsadik Mekuria, **የሰው ጠባይና አብሮ የመኖር ዘዴ** (*Human Behaviour and the Art of Living Together*) (Addis Ababa: Berhannenna Selam, 1959 [1951 EC]), 69–82.

ነበር። እንዲሁም ዐፄ ምኒልክ ያቀዱትንና የወጠኑት ሥራ ሁሉ ለመከተልና ለመፈጸም ቀዳማዊ ኃይለ ሥላሴ ባይተኩ ኖር ኢትዮጵያ በዚህ ባለቸበት እርመጃ አትገኝም ነበር። ስለዚህ ሕዝቦች የሚመሩ ሰዎች ቢሆኑም ሰዎቹን ደግሞ የሚመርጥና አሳሳቢያቸውም እግዚአብሔር ነው ለማለት የሚቻል ነው ።

To fortify the Prussian state, Frédéric-Guillaume took a significant initiative to organize the army and accumulate funds with remarkable patience and unique talent. If Frederick II (the Great), who ascended to the throne, had not continued his father's efforts, Germany would not have achieved its current level of development. Similarly, Ethiopia would not have reached its present state of progress if Haile Selassie I had not succeeded Emperor Menilek II to carry on and fulfill the work he had envisioned and initiated. Thus, it can be asserted that when there are individuals leading nations, their selection and diligence are divinely ordained.[45]

The "great men" owed their historical role to providence, which was the source of their genius and visionary qualities. Through these comparisons, the Ethiopian authors justified the authority of an "enlightened despot," of whom Frederick II was the archetype. The characters they highlighted were always authoritarian and progressive. Since the 1920s, this model of head of state had been favoured by Ethiopian reformist intellectuals, and it was perfectly suited to the image Haile Selassie wanted to project of himself.

3.2. *Models of governance for girls and boys*

Imported and Ethiopian textbooks contained instructions on how to behave and examples to justify them. The introductory pages of the *Tarikenna Messale* explained that the existence of the nation was renewed by the common work of its members. It was based on the heritage of the past, but could only be reproduced in the present through the work of each and every one. Pupils were warned that no action could be taken without consequences for Ethiopia. Members of the nation should act for the common good and not for their own personal interests.

ሕዝብ ፤ በአንድ መንግሥት በአንድ ሰንደቅ ዓላማ በአንድ ሕግ ጥላ ተሰብስበው የሚኖሩ ሰዎች ማለት ነው። [...] በአስተዳደሩም በልዩ ልዩ ሥራ የተሳሰረ ። [...] እኛ ኢትዮጵያውያን የምንሠራው ሥራ መልካም ቢሆን አገራችን ኢትዮጵያ እንደምትከበር የምንሠራው ሥራ መጥፎ ቢሆን ግን እንደምትዋረድ አትርሳ ። [...] ብዙ ገንዘብና በዙ ርስት ከማግኘት ይልቅ ለአገሩ ትልቅ ሥራ የሠራላት ሰው ስሙ ለዘለዓለም በታሪክ ሲጠራ ይኖራል ።

The term "the people" refers to individuals united under the same government, sharing a common flag, and protected by the same laws. [...] They are also connected through a unified administration and engagement in various collective

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[45]Germachaw Tekle Hawariat, **ኦርኢያ** (Addis Ababa: Berhannenna Selam, 1941 EC [1948]), 124.

endeavors. […] It is crucial to remember that the outcomes of our endeavors as Ethiopians, whether positive or negative, reflect on the glory or detriment of our country, Ethiopia. […] History will eternally recall the name of someone who has accomplished great deeds for their nation, as opposed to someone who has amassed wealth and acquired extensive land.[46]

While this particular advice was imbued with an abstract morality, other textbooks gave it a concrete content, citing figures who were not statesmen but who had dedicated their lives to the common good. One of these was Robert Owen, who was presented as a model of a philanthropic employer who, contrary to the most common practices of his time, improved the lot of his workers.[47] He came from a poor family, but was lucky enough to have had an education. He was very serious about his studies, and won the goodwill of the school headmaster, the priests and the town doctor, who lent him books. Forced to support himself, he found a job in a cloth shop at the age of ten. There, "Robert Owen was happy […] for he was quick at his work and pleased his master." In his spare time, he read. At the age of 19, he became a workshop manager in a cotton mill. This experience gave him the ambition to own machines of his own, not only to enrich himself but also to improve the lot of the workers. Indeed, "Robert Owen believed that if working people were paid better wages, had better homes and were able to send their children to school, they would not only be happier, but they would do better work." Later, when he owned his own mill in New Lanark, he found that his first workers were "poor," "ignorant," "dirty," "thieves" and "violent." Believing that these men and women behaved badly because they were mistreated, he built houses separated by clean streets, a school and shops where workers could find quality products at honest prices. While the other spinning mill owners laughed at his experiments and predicted his ruin, the workers became happy, loved him and therefore worked as hard as they could. As a result, he became very rich and highly respected, and when he died at the age of 87, he left behind a better world than the one he had found.

The example of Robert Owen showed that seriousness in his studies, a taste for work and respect for his masters allowed him to improve his lot and even to become very rich. One had to obey one's superiors and respect one's subordinates in order to be respected and loved in return. Robert Owen was, in reality, a utopian socialist. The textbook reduces New Lanark's utopian project to a form of paternalism, which is a model of virtue.

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[46]MOEFA, *ታሪክና ምሳሌ ፩ኛ መጽሐፍ* (*Tarikenna Messale*, *book 1*) (1942), first pages unnumbered.

[47]E. C. T. Horniblow and J. J. Sullivan, *The March of Time…* (1953), 146–54.

Florence Nightingale was a second edifying example, this time aimed at girls.[48] This feminist icon was presented as a model of female devotion. Born into a family of rich merchants, she had a pampered childhood. Very early on, her favourite game was playing nurse. As she grew up, she felt the need to make herself truly useful. As her father was rich, she did not need to work, but she felt it was her duty to help those who were not as fortunate as she was, so she trained as a nurse. After reading in the press that men wounded in the war in Crimea were not being properly cared for, she decided to travel there. Accompanied by thirty-four other nurses, she took charge of the military hospital, which was in a deplorable state, dirty and without resources. They immediately cleaned and equipped it before taking over the care. Thus,

> This wonderful woman brought about great changes in the hospital […]. She went from bed to bed, tending the wounded, washing their wounds and binding them with clean bandages, at the same time soothing the pain of these poor soldiers with kind words. The men, who were suffering so much and were so far from home, came to look on her as an angel.

But Florence Nightingale had to face opposition from officers and doctors who did not appreciate her strength of character and her volunteer spirit. Ultimately, however, "they saw all the good she was doing […]. In the end, there was nothing they would not do for Florence Nightingale." Back in Europe, she continued to fight for clean hospitals and well-trained nurses throughout her life. This biography ended with an address to the students: "Whenever you see a bright, clean hospital, with its clever, well-trained nurses, think of 'The Lady with the Lamp,' who spent most of her life with the sick and the wounded and helped to make these things possible."

Nightingale highlighted the maternal qualities of devotion to caring for and comforting one's neighbour, as well as the benefits of courage, perseverance and determination. However, as with Robert Owen, whose utopian socialism had been overlooked, nothing was said about the fact that Florence Nightingale was also a feminist figure. All that needed to be remembered was that the dedication and altruism of one individual had consequences for the society as a whole. The last chapter of the manual called on students to follow the example of these people, who were dedicated to making the world a better place:

> One day, you and all the other boys and girls like you, all over the world, will be men and women and you will then be history makers yourselves. You will want to make the world a better and happier place to live in. You can help to do this *now* by learning as much as you can of the March of Time and trying to understand how

[48]Ibid., 154–61.

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our present ways of living have grown out of the past. […] So, work as well as you can, always think of others and help them when you are able, and study carefully The March of Time in your own lifetime. Eventually you will make this world a better place to live in.[49]

In the end, these model lives summoned pupils to take on their future social role with a spirit of morality. It was by adopting an altruistic moral code and respecting the established order that everyone could make the world a better place. The collective destiny was placed in the hands of those in power and the good morals of graduates, with each person's role being strictly respected. It was a type of organisation of society that corresponded perfectly to the authoritarian regime that combined conservative morals and the ethics of progress desired by Haile Selassie.

4. Progress or capitalist industrial society

The nation united behind the emperor had to be progressive. In order to achieve this, everyone had to act in concert, and all efforts had to converge in this direction. The introductory pages of the *Tarikenna Messale* remind the reader of this:

ሌሎቹ የዓለም ንግሥታት ከደረሱበት የሥልጣኔ ደረጃ ላይ አገራችን ኢትዮጵያ በቶሎ እንደትደርስ እኛ ኢትዮጵያውያን ሁሉ ማሳብና መጣጣር ይገባናል። ድካማችንና ትጋታችንም በተለየ ለዚሁ ዐሳብ ብቻ እንዲሆን ያስፈልጋል ። […] ማንኛውም የውጭ አገር ሰው ለተወለደባት አገሩ የሚያስብላት መልካም ዐሳብ ፤ የሠራላት መልካም ሥራ ሲነገር በሰማህ ፤ ወይም ተጽፎ ባየህ ጊዜ ፤ አንተም ደግሞ እንደዚሁ ይህንኑ ያህል ላገርህ ለኢትዮጵያ ልታስብላትና ልትሠራላት የሚገባህ መሆኑን ዕወቀው።

We Ethiopians need to fortify ourselves and strive to ensure that our country, Ethiopia, swiftly attains the level of progress seen in other nations worldwide. Our endeavors and persistence should be dedicated to this singular goal. […] If you come across or read about a commendable idea or undertaking by a foreigner for their homeland, recognize that you too should contemplate and act similarly for your own country…[50]

Ethiopians had to be united and open to the outside world. In the face of those who feared that Ethiopia would be lost if it drew inspiration from foreign countries, schools conveyed the contrary idea that it was a necessity if the country was to regain its strength and occupy a respectable place among other nations. The Ethiopian intellectuals of the 1940s and 1950s who engaged in the production of school knowledge were both resolutely nationalistic and fascinated by Europe and the United States. For their part, American

[49]Ibid., 226.
[50]MOEFA, ታሪክና ምሳሌ ፩ኛ መጽሐፍ (*Stories and Fables, Book 1*) (1942), first pages unnumbered.

advisers to the Ministry of Education, who were imbued with the theories of modernisation, were convinced of the universal character of their political, economic and social model. In teaching, this was reflected by the idea that the whole of humanity was converging towards a capitalist industrial society. This was the purpose of the textbooks on "world history." In the 1940s and 1950s, the histories of Ethiopia and the world were the subject of separate books. From the mid-1960s onwards, however, textbooks were created that aimed to include the history of Ethiopia in world history. As the teacher's notes in the Grade 7 textbook published in 1970 put it:

> It is appropriate, and very good training, to present the topics *as part of a very long story*, the story of man in many lands, and to stress interdependence and continuity in the development of history. While at work on this book, the students should occasionally be reminded of the general structure of the whole history programme. In elementary school, they have had a first initiation to the history of their own country. Later on, the Senior High School curriculum will offer them an entire programme of connected history. They will learn plenty more about their own country, about the African continent, and the world at large.[51] [Italics in the original]

Pupils had to understand the history of Ethiopia in relation to the histories of Africa and the world. The secondary school textbooks of the 1960s consisted of three main chapters on the history of the Mediterranean and European worlds, the history of Ethiopia and the history of Africa. There was a corresponding period for each grade: ancient in Grade 9, early Middle Ages in Grade 10, late Middle Ages in Grade 11, and contemporary in Grade 12. Within this approach, which was based on "interdependence" and "connected history," Europe was the matrix of world history, as well as the reference point from which the history of other regions was to be read and understood. As Abebe Fisseha pointed out, "The syllabus [was designed] on the basis of the assumption that the students would understand better what happened in the rest of the world (including Ethiopia) if they learned world history by reference to major events in Europe" (Abebe 1992, 104). Ultimately, it was a question of integrating Ethiopian history into a vast convergent movement, of which Europe was the point of reference.

Europe, and by extension the United States, was the model to be followed as a core region in world history. Industrial society was presented as the result of the linear progress of humanity. It was endowed with a character that was both desirable and inexorable, which made its spread natural and indisputable:

> The industrial revolution *started in England* […] After some time, *other countries started to do like England.* The first countries to do so were France, and Germany,

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[51] MOEFA, *History for Young Ethiopians*, *Grade 7* (1970), 10.

and Belgium, and the United States of America. Later on, other countries of the world did the same. The industrial revolution has not finished spreading. There are many countries in the world where it is just starting, for example, in Africa and Asia.[52] [Italics in the original]

The Grade 7 manual went on to describe industrialisation as a virtuous circle. By allowing goods to be produced more quickly and in larger quantities, it had brought about an abundance through which humans housed, dressed and cared for themselves better, and moved and communicated more quickly. It was also credited with the progress made in education by the production of pens, notebooks and books. Since the Industrial Revolution, what had once been reserved for the richest now benefitted the greatest number. Finally, no actor seemed to be harmed, and the whole process of production, distribution and consumption was a win-win situation:

> The countries that had the machines became rich, because they could sell a lot of finished goods to other countries. Other countries had a lot of raw materials. They sold these materials to the countries that had factories, and became rich in this way. Big merchants carried goods from one country to another, and little merchants sold them in the shops. Thousands of workmen were needed in the factories. A lot of poor people had no land in the countryside, or no jobs in the town. The new factories gave them a chance to work and earn money. And with the money they earned, they could buy some of the useful things made in factories.[53]

The countries producing finished products and the countries exporting raw materials, large international traders and small local traders, industrialists and workers, producers and consumers: each was a beneficiary. No grain of sand seemed to disturb the circle of abundance.

A short paragraph was devoted to the negative aspects of the Industrial Revolution, but they were a thing of the past. Its early stages had been characterised by low wages for workers in European factories and the countries supplying raw materials, long working hours and the employment of women and children. But things had improved since then. Bosses had understood the need to help the workers. Governments had passed laws to protect them. Unions were allowed and they secured better wages, shorter working hours and an end to child labour so that children could go to school, and bosses paid for medical costs incurred by accidents at work. The authors of the handbook concluded that: "In the world of today [1970], the factories make huge amounts of useful things for people everywhere. At the same time, the workmen who make those things lead much better lives than before."[54]

[52]Ibid., 107.
[53]Ibid., 108.
[54]Ibid., 110–12.
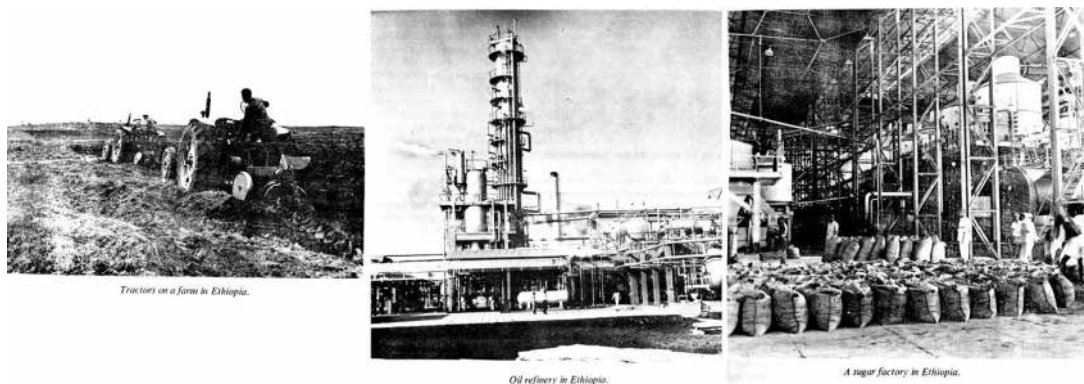
Figure 7. Promoting industrialisation and mechanisation

The Industrial Revolution was on its way to improving the lives of people all over the world. It was now reaching Ethiopia, and the four photographs in this chapter of the textbook showcased the achievements of an industrialising country: tractors working a field, a sugar factory, an oil refinery and the Koka Dam south of Addis Ababa, which was producing electricity. By enabling integration into a burgeoning global economy, this progress would improve the lives of all Ethiopians.

The manual ended with a chapter on colonisation titled *How Great Nations Became powerful in Africa and Elsewhere*.[55] The author explained that powerful countries had historically always conquered or dominated others. The specific aspect of European imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries was its links with the Industrial Revolution. Europeans had to find raw materials and outlets for their products, which eventually led to colonisation, and the textbook concluded by cataloguing its good and bad sides. On the positive side of the balance sheet were the end of slavery, the end of the internecine wars and the construction of roads, railways and hospitals. The negative side included land grabs and forced labour, the violence inflicted on the colonised and the dependence of Africans, who were obliged to obey foreign masters.

But did pitting uncolonised Ethiopia against this record not solve the problem of imitating the West posed by some of Haile Selassie's detractors? Was Ethiopia not only concerned with the "good things"? It was building roads, factories, schools and hospitals—progress—while at the same time remaining in control of its own destiny.

[55] Ibid., 125–33.

Conclusion

Within the national school system, "history teaching is thought of as a tool for building a 'national imagination,' with facts following a smooth, fluid trajectory carried by the dynamics of progress" (De Cock 2009, 7). The history taught in Ethiopian schools was organised on the basis of a dual teleology. There was the three thousand year old history of Ethiopia, with its Semitic and Christian identity, of which Haile Selassie was the culmination, the symbol of continuity and the figure of eternity, and then there was the "world history" imported from Great Britain and the United States, which postulated the convergence of human societies towards an industrial capitalist society. What history classes seemed to be saying was that with its prestigious past and its independence during colonisation, Ethiopia had a solid basis for moving forward along the path traced by the western industrialised countries without suffering from any type of complex, all the more so as it was guided by an enlightened monarch who was worthy of the greatest of the men who were portrayed in imported history textbooks. In a way, the West could show the way towards progress, but it was actually seen from a nationalist perspective, and students were invited to be progressive and patriotic.

Finally, the teachings testify to the particularistic way in which citizenship was thought about. This was far removed from what the authors of the 1971 article "*Educational Aims and Objectives*" proposed. These Ethiopian pedagogues recognised the diversity of the country's cultures and argued: "The aims of education are to bring about such a blending of indigenous cultures into a rich national culture" (Girma et al. 1974, 9). On the contrary, however, the definition of nationhood that emerged from school education was a radical process of inclusion and exclusion that rejected anything that was not Christian and supposedly Semitic as inferior or on the side of historic enemies. Pupils who did not meet these criteria suffered from an inferior identity and were encouraged to transform themselves in order to achieve full citizenship. The teachings reveal that the school was an instrument for transforming individuals so that they would be able to adapt to a highly restrictive definition of the nation.

Chapter 4

The State Homogenisation Project
and Social Heterogeneity:
The School Space in Tension

We will now attempt to understand how the encounter between the national school project and local social realities was translated into practice in the school space, and to analyse the forms of social interaction and the tensions they generated by looking as closely as possible at the actors and their school experience. School "sociability" implied power relations between teachers and pupils, males and females, urban and rural, Orthodox and Protestant Christians, and "Amhara" and "Wolaita." These tensions lay at the heart of the contradictions in the school institution, which simultaneously assimilated and differentiated, and levelled and prioritised. In the first place, the pedagogical and disciplinary practices through which the knowledge, values and behaviours expected by the state were transmitted were put into practice by a very diverse teaching staff, whose composition changed between the 1940s and 1970s, at a time when the process of inculcation was not just at work in the classroom: school life was punctuated by rituals and animated by associative activities aimed at political socialisation. Finally, the daily coexistence of pupils from social groups that maintained adversarial relationships—the children of regional dignitaries, *melkegna* or landowners and the children of peasant farmers—was a sometimes violent source of tension.

1. The diversity of the teaching staff

When schools opened in 1941, Ethiopia was desperately short of teachers. While Addis Ababa was privileged, the 1940s were years of improvisation in the provinces. In the absence of trained Ethiopian teachers and teaching materials, the Ministry of Education recommended the use of all directly available resources.[1] Before teacher training institutes were established in the mid-1950s, anyone who could read and write could teach at primary level: they included priests, former students of the national church schools and people educated in the few government and missionary schools that had been open before the occupation (Teshome 1979, 85). Teaching in all schools was

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[1] MOEFA, *Elementary Schools Curriculum, Years I-VI* (1971), 4.

therefore dependent on the respective skills of available teachers. Secondary education, on the other hand, relied heavily on expatriate teachers, who were primarily Indians and Americans.

1.1. *Priests and people who received their education before the occupation*

The pedagogical team of the first school to open in Wolaita in 1941 consisted of Bogale Wallelu, director of the Wolaita Provincial Education Office and occasional teacher; Wanna Wagesho, school headmaster and English teacher; Telahun Welde-Berhan, mathematics teacher; Basha Dinkneh, a priest of the national church, and *Qegnazmach*[2] Seyum, both of whom taught Amharic (Demeke 1985, 5). For a short time, between 1941 and 1944, girls were taught at a separate school by teacher AsKale Seyfe-Gabriel. Bogale Wallelu and Wanna Wagesho had been educated before the war in national church schools and the Menilek II government school, the latter even doing a short stint at the Swedish mission in Addis Ababa. Given the subjects they taught, it is very likely that Telahun Welde-Berhan attended a government school and *Qegnazmach* Seyum received religious training. Finally, the subjects that were taught at the girls' school—cooking, sewing, childcare and basic reading, writing and arithmetic[3]—suggest that AsKale Seyfe-Gabriel was a former pupil of a missionary school or of Empress Menen Girls' School, which was the only government institution offering education for girls before the war (Guidi 2016).

In addition to languages and mathematics, boys learned geography and history (Demeke 1985, 7). The latter two subjects were taught by Amharic teachers, who taught biblical history and official national myths, as evidenced by the 1947 curricula, which took note of what was being practised rather than prescribing new teaching.[4] In the early 1950s, grades 1 to 4 were taught by priests, who took over teaching from the national church schools.[5]

1.2. *Graduates of the teacher training institutes*

Teacher training became a priority for the Ministry of Education in the mid-1950s.[6] The previous decade had only seen an early stage. In 1944, an accelerated training course was set up at Menilek II School in Addis Ababa

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[2]*Qegnazmach* is an Ethiopian military title meaning "commander of the right wing," which has become a civilian title by extension.

[3]Wanna Wagesho, interview, December 2010.

[4]A reading of these early official curricula shows that they were developed from available teaching materials, and not the other way round; MOEFA, *Curriculum for Ethiopian Schools 1–8* (1947), 91–110.

[5]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

[6]MOEFA, *The Controlled Expansion of Ethiopian Education—a special report to the Long-Term Planning Committee* (1954–55), 2.

in collaboration with the British Council. The curriculum included Amharic, religion, English, arithmetic, science, history and geography. Apparently there were no pedagogy courses. The training centre was transferred to Harar in 1952 and became a teacher training institute; a second centre was created in Kotäbä, a suburb of Addis Ababa, and a third in Debre Berhan in 1957 (Teshome 1979, 127). A four-year programme was established, with courses in child development and pedagogy being added to the academic subjects.[7] After Grade 8, one year of training was required to teach up to Grade 4, and four years to teach grades 5-8.[8] The first graduating class in 1947 consisted of 33 people. Ten years later, there were 4,627 graduates.[9] The Ministry of Education did not consider the training of secondary school teachers a priority, preferring to leave it to expatriates; it did have a plan to gradually replace expatriates with trained Ethiopians, however, but it provided no further details.[10]

In 1965, the teacher education programme was reduced to two years after Grade 10. It placed special emphasis on social sciences and moral and civic education, with objectives that focused on the individual and his or her responsibilities towards fellow citizens, family, community, profession and society. Home economics courses were set up for girls. The first year was devoted to the role of the individual in the family, the role of the family in the community and the upkeep of the home. The second was devoted to "nutrition, child care, health and hygiene."[11] Primary schools were gradually staffed with trained Ethiopian teachers. In 1962, 62% were not graduates, but this figure had been reduced to 5% by 1971 (Teshome 1979, 162). The teaching force remained predominantly male until the end of the regime. The proportion of women in teacher training institutes increased from 2% to 18% between 1960 and 1970; in 1970, women made up only 10% of teachers (Teshome 1979, 164).

1.3. *Foreign teachers: Indians and American Peace Corps volunteers*
In secondary education, the Ministry of Education employed Indian and American teachers. In the 1950s, almost all teachers in grades 9 to 12 were foreigners, and in 1966 they still made up 60% of the workforce.[12]

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[7]MOEFA, *Teacher Education in Ethiopia* (1965), 7–8.
[8]MOEFA, *The Controlled Expansion of Ethiopian Education…* (1954–55), 54 and 8.
[9]MOEFA, *Teacher Education in Ethiopia* (1965), 7.
[10]MOEFA, *The Controlled Expansion of Ethiopian Education…* (1954–55), 19.
[11]MOEFA, *Curriculum Policies and Standards. Teacher Training Institutes* (1965), 41–45.
[12]MOEFA, *Report on the Current Operation of the Education System in Ethiopia* (1966), 56.

The idea of employing Indian teachers preceded the Italian occupation. The reason behind the interest in them was twofold: they had had a Western-style education but did not come from a colonising country, and they were cheaper than European expatriates. The first initiative in this direction came from Workneh Eshete, the first bursar of Tefari Mekonnen school, who had himself been educated in India in his youth. In 1930, he hired 16 Indians for the Ethiopian government, two of whom were teachers (Bahru 2002, 40). By the 1950s, most provincial schools had Indian teachers from Grade 7 upwards, many of whom were headmasters. Between 1950 and 1960, for example, all the headmasters of the Soddo school were Indians (Demeke 1985, 62). The arrival of American Peace Corps volunteers in numbers in the 1960s reflected a change in the United States' policy on Ethiopia. The State Department was very concerned about the East-West geopolitical struggle, and pushed for the expansion of cooperation programmes. After USAID was established in 1961, thousands of volunteers went to Ethiopia to work in government, the military and education (Marcus 1995, 7). In Wolaita, the first Peace Corps volunteers arrived in 1964, when the secondary school curriculum was initiated with the first Grade 9 class. In the same year, classes began with five Ethiopians, two of whom were qualified teachers, four Peace Corps volunteers and three students from the Ethiopian University Service (Demeke 1985, 32).

1.4. *Students of the Ethiopian University Service*

The Ethiopian University Service was a project set up by Addis Ababa University after students had repeatedly enquired how they could make themselves useful to their country (Balsvik 2007, 21). In 1962, Mesfin Wolde-Mariam[13], Dean of the Department of Geography, submitted a proposal to the university hierarchy for a one-year civil service period in the provinces during which students could use their knowledge and skills to serve peasant communities. Two years later, the final project was developed jointly by the administration, teachers and student representatives. Between their third and fourth years of study, all students were required to complete a compulsory period of service, which was needed for validation of their diploma. In principle, the aim was for students to apply the knowledge they had acquired in their higher education to activities such as literacy, health and engineering. The objective was to provide a response—albeit a limited and temporary one—to the lack of graduates in rural areas, as well as to improve the participating students' knowledge of the country (Korten & Korten 1966, 482). Because of the severe shortage of teachers and the high cost of employing expatriates, the Ministry of Education soon took a keen interest in the

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[13]Mesfin Wolde-Mariam (1930–2020) was a very famous intellectual and political activist in Ethiopia.

project (Balsvik 2007, 142). Of the 134 students who left in the first year, 114 taught, most of them at grades 7 and 8 (Korten & Korten 1966, 482), with primary and secondary levels well-staffed by professional Ethiopian and expatriate teachers, respectively. The number of participants increased rapidly, reaching 685 in 1969. From then on, they were redistributed to higher grades in secondary schools due to the gradual departure of the expatriates (Peace Corps volunteers because of the United States' disengagement and Indians because better opportunities were opening up elsewhere in Africa).

In the 1960s, there was a wide range of priests, qualified and unqualified Ethiopian teachers, Indians and Americans in teaching positions. This variety of profiles meant a division among both levels and disciplines. The authors of a 1966 report commissioned by the Ministry of Education noted that a high proportion of the Ethiopians who were teaching grades 7 to 12 were being assigned to sports, morals, home economics and handicrafts, while the academic subjects were being assigned to expatriates.[14] The school system became more and more Western as the curriculum progressed; proficiency in the English language assumed a central importance, and teachers and teaching became increasingly foreign to the Ethiopian world.

2. Teachers: social status and working conditions

The objectives of the Teacher Training Institutes Programme developed in 1965 included the encouragement to make sacrifices and to live in difficult conditions.[15] The educationists on the editorial board saw teaching as a particularly difficult profession, and in the 1960s, it had deteriorated sharply in terms of salary, living conditions and social status.

According to two former students, teachers in the early 1950s were viewed as "gods," and were respected by everyone—students, parents and notables alike. They also enjoyed good salaries. Particularly indicative of the high esteem in which they were held was a wedding song that went: "Our bride, what pride! The teacher took her [in marriage]!" (እኛ መሿራ ኩሪ ኩሪ ወሰዳት አስተማሪ)[16] This situation deteriorated from the mid-1950s onwards, however, as an increase in teacher numbers and the rising cost of living, coupled with stagnating wages, caused a decline in teachers' living standards. A new progressive scale based on qualification and experience was adopted in 1955, but it was too burdensome for the Ministry of Education's budget, and was never implemented (Lipsky 1962, 95).

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[14]MOEFA, *Report on the Current Operation of the Education System in Ethiopia* (1966), 56.
[15]MOEFA, *Curriculum Policies and Standards. Teacher Training Institutes* (1965), 21.
[16]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

Their social status diminished greatly, especially in the case of rural teachers. The authors of the 1966 report noted:

> The widespread feeling among teachers is that they are given a low status in society. They are ignored by provincial government officials. For example, it appears that they are often not invited to official functions and public celebrations, although other civil servants are given invitations.

They were alarmed by the fact that:

> Teachers in rural locations, who are few in number, feel isolated. […] They regard service in [remote] areas as a banishment, entailing serious economic and often physical hardship, and they are disenchanted with their Ministry, which appears to have abandoned, neglected and forgotten them.[17]

All in all, it seems that the glory days of the teaching profession were short-lived. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the designers of the Teacher Training Institutes Programme insisted on a spirit of sacrifice as a required quality.

Germa Bekele arrived in Wolaita in 1965. He was 20, and had just finished high school. Originally from Dilla, one of the larger towns in the Sidamo region, he was sent by the Ministry of Education to Walisho, a remote canton. From the Ministry of Education to the District Education Officer, no one had informed him of where he was to go or what his future living and working conditions would be. He remembers the anguish he felt along the way, the shock of his arrival and then his despondency. This episode was still very much on his mind 45 years later, in 2010:

> ሶዶ እንደመጣሁ የወላይታ አውራጃ ሥራ አስኪያጅ አቶ ዋና ዋገሾ የሚባሉ ወደ ቦዲቲ ላኩኝ ። ለቦዲቲ ትምህርት ቤት ርዕስ መምህር ታምራዬ ሲማ የሚባል ደብዳቤ ሰጡኝ ። ደብዳቤው "ይህን አዲስ አስተማሪ ወደ ዋሊሾ ተማሪዎች እንዲፈልግ ላከው" አለው ። እኔ አገሩን ንእኳን አላውቅም የወላይታን ቋንቋ አላውቅም። አሁን ታምራዬ ሲማ "ወደ ዋሊሾ ሂድና ተማሪዎችን ፈልግ!" ብሎ አዘዘኝ ። ከዚያም ለየሹ ሚባል ልጅ "ወደ ዋሊሾ ወስደው" አለው። በበቅሎ ወደ ዋሊሾ ሄድን። እና ልንሀድ ስንል "ቅርብ ነው ከቦዲቲ 15 ደቂቃ ነው" አለኝ። ስንሄድ ስንሄድ አንደርሰም ። በመጨረሻ ዋሊሾ ስንደርስ መሽ። ወላይታ ቤት ያለው ሣር ቤት ቁጭጭ አልኩ አለቀስኩ ። እዛ ሕዝብ አልነበረም፣ ጫካ ብቻ፣ እባብ ብቻ ነበር።

When I arrived in Soddo, Wanna Wagesho, the school administrator of Wolaita, sent me to Boditi. He handed me a letter addressed to Tamraye Sima, the headmaster of the school in Boditi, instructing, "Send this new teacher to find pupils in Walisho." Unfamiliar with the region and the Wolaita language, Tamraye Sima commanded me, "Go to Walisho and find students quickly." He

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[17]MOEFA, *Report on the Current Operation of the Education System in Ethiopia* (1966), 46 and 49.

then said to a young man named Yeshu, "Bring him to Walisho." We journeyed to Walisho on mules. During departure, they mentioned it was close, just 15 minutes from Boditi. However, we continued walking without reaching our destination. By the time we finally arrived, it was dark. I sat in a thatched house in Wolaita and cried. No one was there, just the forest, and the snakes.[18]

The next day, he travelled in the opposite direction on foot to ask to be allowed to leave, but the administration refused his request. In the early years he was seriously ill with malaria. Then, while he was desperately waiting for his transfer, he ended up getting married and settling down for good. Many of the teachers of his generation stayed for years, if not for their entire lives, in their first place of employment, without any substantial salary increase or possibility of promotion.

The situation was rather different in other branches of government, where regular increments based on experience were the norm (Mordechai 1970, 52). Under these conditions, the best-trained people taught in Addis Ababa, or chose another career. By the 1960s, when job opportunities were becoming scarcer, the teaching profession was no longer seen as a path to social success. Many embraced it as a career for lack of anything better. According to the authors of the 1966 report, it was a major reason for the limited efficiency of primary schools.[19] After all, qualifications could be secondary: with experience and an interest in the job, a person who had completed seven or eight years of education could make a very good primary school teacher. Discouragement and a loss of self-esteem caused by poor living conditions and low social status were far more problematic.

The students of the Ethiopian University Service brought a breath of fresh air to this situation. A study carried out by an evaluation committee set up within the university provides insight into student attitudes towards the programme. They were given two questionnaires: one before they left for the countryside and the second a few months later, when they had completed their period of service. The first revealed a rather mixed reception (Korten & Korten 1966, 487). The initial problem was that the service was compulsory, and was a requirement for validation of their diplomas. This coercive aspect bothered them, and they viewed the long year of service as a sacrifice. In the second place, many of them only knew only Addis Ababa and the place where they had been born. They were extremely unaccustomed to travelling, and were anxious about their ability to adapt to the country's great linguistic and climatic diversity (Balsvik 1985, 141–42). Finally, those who did not want to become teachers did not see why they should serve in schools. On the other hand, the

[18]Germa Bekele (retired teacher), interview, Bedessa, 9 December 2010.
[19]MOEFA, *Report on the Current Operation of the Education System in Ethiopia* (1966), 46 and 49.

opportunity to gain better knowledge of the country and a first experience of leadership attracted their support (Korten & Korten 1966, 482). Finally, the proposed monthly salary of 175 *ber* (Balsvik 1985, 142) was a pleasant surprise, especially for students from modest backgrounds (at the time, a primary school teacher earned about 200 *ber*).[20] In the end, the experiment proved successful, and in 1965, as the year of service was coming to an end, the second questionnaire distributed to students showed that 87% of the respondents thought the programme should be extended (Balsvik 1895, 144).

Statements collected in Wolaita from former students testify to a high level of engagement on the part of the students from Addis Ababa.[21] However, it is more difficult to evaluate the level of commitment of the Indian teachers. Their working conditions in the provinces were not especially comfortable. Those who went to Wolaita stayed no longer than two years. One even interrupted his service in February, during the school year (Demeke 1985, 62). During a field trip to Lalibela in northern Ethiopia in 2007, I was told that two Indian teachers had left very soon after they arrived. They had not been able to adapt to the living conditions in this mountainous region, which was several hours' drive from the nearest urban centre.[22] In 1958, 64 expatriate contract teachers left Ethiopia to work elsewhere where far better conditions were available. By 1965, expatriate salaries had not increased for 20 years. Those who remained were often forced to supplement their income with other activities.[23] It is difficult to imagine much enthusiasm for teaching under these conditions.

On the other hand, it seems that the Peace Corps volunteers were energetic and conscientious in their teaching. They clearly wanted to do a good job during their two-year stay in Ethiopia. They showed an interest in their students, even outside school hours (Balsvik 1985, 198). On the whole, however, the expatriates were only passing through, and they remained out of touch with their students' real lives.

3. The authoritarian and martial school space

Teaching practices and discipline in Ethiopian schools were adapted to Haile Selassie's politically authoritarian and morally conservative regime. The pedagogical power that was applied was pastoralist in nature. According to Inès Dussel's definition: "Pastoral power is exercised as the rule of the shepherd over his flock. The shepherd guides the flock to salvation, which

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[20]Ibid., 48–57.

[21]For example Wanna Dea (civil servant), interview, Soddo, 11 December 2010; Saol Akamo (civil servant), interview, Boditi (Wolaita), 15 November 2010).

[22]Tesfaw Derebe (former pupil), interview, Lalibela (Lasta), 15 February 2007.

[23]MOEFA, *Report on the Current Operation of the Education System in Ethiopia* (1966), 61–62.

requires sacrifices at times, and has to watch over it all the time, looking after each individual to guarantee that it does not follow the wrong track." (Dussel 2001, 218). This pastoral power was based on paternalism: in theory, teachers were to be extensions of Haile Selassie, the father figure to whom obedience, devotion and affection were due. Life in schools was regulated by rituals that inculcated the cult of the sovereign's personality, nationalism, devotion and sacrifice. Other activities outside the classroom, such as the "pupil police," scouting and physical education gave the school space a disciplinary and martial character.

3.1. *Paternalism and pastoral pedagogy*

Textbooks had a photograph or drawing of the emperor on the first page. On the one hand, he was shown in all his majesty, in his ceremonial costume, with his head held high, his gaze stern, turned slightly upwards and not looking at the lens. This image expressed a figure of authority characterised by distance, which inspired fear and respect. On the other, he also appeared as a benevolent father, with a short beard that one might guess was slightly grey, affectionate eyes looking at the children, a smile; an image of closeness and warmth. These two complementary aspects were also found in the teaching method.

Figure 8. Haile Selassie in majesty and as a "benevolent father"

The authority of the teachers was indisputable. Corporal punishment for disobedience could be very severe, and it was inflicted with the hands or a cane. Blows were also inflicted on students who were slow or did not study, or simply

when they made a mistake. In Wolaita, the priests who taught lower classes used to beat pupils every time they committed an error.[24] These practices were an integral part of the pedagogy, and were socially accepted (Ayelew 1996, 199).

While the young people who passed through the teacher training institutes from the late 1950s onwards did not avoid these practices, they probably made less use of them. The fact that they experienced this pedagogical method and received it as a model does not mean that they totally inherited it: they were also exposed to other teaching practices in the course of their training. The teacher training institutes provided instruction on respect for the integrity of the students[25], which inevitably had some impact, albeit a limited one. While former students from the 1940s and 1950s mentioned physical violence spontaneously, those from the generation that followed did not. There is also reason to believe that the students from the Ethiopian University Service made far less systematic use of corporal punishment, and that it was alien to the Peace Corps volunteers. For these reasons, and in view of the greater generational closeness between teachers and students, pedagogy in secondary schools was becoming gentler.

The educational relationship based on a paternal image also had an emotional component that was inseparable from its authoritarian aspect. Some teachers saw their paternal role as involving helping their pupils. Voluntary tutoring outside school hours and material help for the poorest in the form of donations of clothes, food or supplies were not uncommon: "The teacher was a father at that time. If a pupil had problems, he would help him, set him up in his house, help him with his lessons, dress him" (**ያኔ አስተማሪ አባት ነበር። የተቸገረም ተማሪ ካለ ይረዳል ቤቱ አስቀምጦ ያስተምራል ያለብሳል**). This help was usually provided in exchange for services: "In addition, if the teacher ran out of water, he would say, 'Please my children, go and get me water with a canister.' The pupil would fetch water with the canister […] and would come back, the teacher would give a reward. It was a pleasure for us" (**አስተማሪ ደግሞ እንዳንድ ጊዜ ውሃ ሲያጣ እባካችሁ ልጆቼ ውሃ በበርሚል አምጡልኝ ይላል ። ተማሪም ከዳሞታ በበርሚል ገፍቶ ውሃ ለመምህሩ ያመጣል አስተማሪውም በምትኩ ማበረታቻ ምክር ለተማሪው ይለግሳል ፥ ምስጋናም ያቀርባል**).[26] The Indian teachers helped the pupils from the countryside in the same way:

> At that time, our biggest help, those who supported us the most, were the Indian teachers. There were a lot of Indian teachers here. If you are an Indian teacher, before you arrive in Soddo, we are waiting for you at the bus station and "I arrived first and I'll carry your suitcase and come with you and…" That's why, you see? "'I'll take your kitchen, you take the big house, you don't use the kitchen, so we

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[24]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.
[25]MOEFA, *Teacher Education in Ethiopia* (1965), 3.
[26]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

live in the kitchen. If I take your kitchen, I'll call my friends, three, four, five, like this." […] They were good friends, good teachers for us. They helped us, even by giving their kitchen away. It was a good opportunity for us.[27]

Children stayed with Indian teachers in exchange for multiple services that might be seen as a form of domestic help. This was consistent with the usual role of children in Ethiopian families, however, and ultimately, the relationship between teachers and students was a mixture of coercion, protection and affection, and respect, fear and a specific devotion to paternalism.

In the classroom, the transmission of knowledge was based on memorisation. In religious schools, pupils learned and then recited entire passages of the Bible in Geez, a liturgical language they did not even understand until they had reached an advanced level in their studies. Priests imported this practice into government schools. Until the end of the regime, Ethiopian pedagogues deplored memorisation, accusing it of not stimulating the imagination and suppressing children's curiosity. It was explained that the legacy of Ethiopian religious education was responsible for this pedagogical "delay." In its most rudimentary formulation, a "good" modern "education" could not flourish properly because it bore the burden of the practices inherited from the "bad" traditional "education."[28] Although it might have enabled one educational system to be rehabilitated cheaply to the detriment of another, this is not a satisfactory explanation. As early as the 1960s, Germa Amare pointed out that the almost exclusive practice of memorisation in Ethiopian government schools was due to the languages of instruction. English was the language of instruction from Grade 4 until the end of the 1950s, and then from Grade 7 from the 1960s. The distance that separated Amharic and English made it difficult for young children to understand the concepts that were being taught. If they wanted to pass their examinations, therefore, they were faced with the need to memorise their lessons without understanding them (Girma 1963, 30). The barriers were even greater for students whose mother tongue was not Amharic, who had to learn two new languages. Moreover, while Ethiopian teachers who were fluent in English were able to translate the concepts that were used in Amharic, Indians and Americans were not.

The central focus on memorisation was accentuated by the examination method set up by the American experts from Addis Ababa University. In the mid-1950s, they replaced the writing exercise for the national primary school leaving examination with a multiple choice questionnaire. This was done despite opposition from Ethiopian and British educationists, who rightly

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[27] Abebe Fola, interview, November 2009.

[28] This simplistic interpretation was so tenacious that it was still to be seen in 2001 (Teklehaymanot 2001, 9–15).

saw the intellectual impoverishment that would inevitably follow. This type of examination left no room for self-expression or the formulation of ideas (Paulos 2006, 81). In 1972, the authors of the Education Sector Review—a major study commissioned by the Ethiopian government to reform the school system—found an overemphasis on rigid examinations (Paulos 2006, 150).

3.2. *Rituals and theatre: cult of personality, patriotism, morals*

The school space was highly ritualised. Every morning, pupils stood in a row to sing the 'Our Father,' an affirmation of Ethiopia's Christian identity. This was immediately followed by the raising of the flag, which was accompanied by a song that exalted the model of the hero and sacrifice for the homeland:

**ደሙን ያፈሰሰ ልቡ እየነደደ ባርበኝነት ታጥቆ ጠላት ያስወገደ ፤
ንጉሡን አገሩን ክብሩን የወደደ ነጻነቱን ይዞ መልካም ተራመደ ፤
ገነነው ክብራችን ስንደቅ አላማችን ያኮራሻል አርበኝነታችን**

In fervent heart, blood spilled, armed with patriotism, the foe repelled.
He who cherishes his king, his land, his honor, strides with glory toward freedom's
[stand.
Our flag, a beacon of abundant glory, our pride in patriotism, the tale of our story.[29]

Another flag ceremony was held every evening and an hour a day was devoted to songs that were written in their hundreds. Here is another example:

**ከአምስት አመት በፊት ጠፍተህ የነበርህ እሰይ የምስራች የኛ አለም ተገኘች ፤
ፀሐይ ወጥቶልናል እልል በሉ ሰዎች ፤
ጨለማን የሚያርቅ የሚሞቅ ለደሆች ሕዝብህን ጠባቂ ተብቃይ ሌቦችን ፤
ያላንተ ማን አለን ለኛ ለሁላችን**

Five years away, congratulations on your return to our land.
The sun has risen, and joy radiates across the strand.
Dispelling darkness, warming the poor, guardian of the people true,
You've punished those who robbed us, our gratitude to you.
Without you, who would stand? For us, for all, our heartfelt demand.[30]

This song evoked Haile Selassie's five years of exile during the Italian occupation before giving him all the credit for independence, as the history textbooks did. Other songs compared him to a father, to an apostle, to the daylight that illuminated the country, and always to a providential figure. They were a vehicle for a form of propaganda that appealed to the emotions, where history and civic education programmes inculcated nationalism from

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[29]MOEFA, **የፊደል መማሪያ** (*Writing Manual*) (1956), 97.

[30]A song from the 1960s reported by Yitbarek Abebe (teacher and school administrator), in interview, Lalibela, 26 February 2008.

a rational standpoint. The same power can be given them that Benedict Anderson attributes to the daily ritual of reading the national press: "a mass ceremony […] performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull" (Anderson 2006 [1983], 35). When Ethiopian students sang in a group, they knew that at the same time, in every school in the country, thousands of other students were lined up like them, singing the same song. The simultaneous celebration of the rite contributed to the emergence of the nation as an imagined community.

Theatre also played an important role in schools. Plays were performed on national holidays and at end-of-year ceremonies, both inside and outside the school. At first sight, the content appeared to be less political and more moral than that of the songs. *Temherté Yä'ayné Berhan Mästawäté* (My school education: the light that illuminates my eyes) is a play written in 1957 by a teacher in Dässé, Wällo. The pupils' performance was so successful that the governor of the region immediately decided that it should be published (Em 1958, 10). The story begins in a small, isolated village that has no school. Kenfu's father, a wealthy peasant, is dying. As the whole family is illiterate, he calls on a friend to write his will. But this friend turns out to be a sad character who robs the heirs by committing forgery. The widow and her two fatherless children (Kenfu has a sister) are ruined. Kenfu's mother decides to send him to school, believing that they were victims of the fraudster because they were illiterate. Kenfu goes to the town alone and meets a policeman who decides to help him by offering him lodging. Kenfu always behaved in an exemplary fashion with everyone; he is loved by his host and held up as an example by his teachers. His academic career is brilliant and he even studies abroad. While he is at school, he finds a surrogate father in Haile Selassie, whom he did not know existed when he was in his remote village: what would have become of him without the emperor, who had schools built for the good of his people? On his return from abroad, instead of taking up the high office he had been promised, he chooses to return to his village to found a school named after the emperor. Rather than thinking about his personal career, he decides to devote himself to the well-being of his community, to bring school education, the figure of Haile Selassie and awareness of belonging to a nation to the mountains.

3.3. *The bodies of autocracy*

To ensure discipline outside the classroom, staff relied on the "pupil police" (Demeke 1985, 27). In the early 1940s, they were made up of groups of pupils whose most important role was to attract young people who were not working to come to school.[31] They were also in charge of discipline in the schoolyard, a function they later retained. The "pupil police" were an element

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[31] Wanna Wagesho, interview, December 2010.

of the pastoral power, the surveillance of every individual at all times. By making the schoolyard a policed area, the administration acquired a means of increasing its ability to control. Above all, through peer-to-peer surveillance, the "pupil police" gave adult supervisors access to a level of involvement that was otherwise forbidden to them. It opened up spaces that children and adolescents typically reserved for themselves and from which adults were excluded. The breaking down of this boundary meant that no place was safe from power, thereby instilling a political culture of control of everyone by everyone, and of denunciation.

Scouting, which instilled obedience, discipline, respect for religion and love of country, was introduced into the Wolaita Soddo school by an Indian teacher in 1954 (Demeke 1985, 27). A flagship activity of schools in the capital since the 1940s, it spread to several provincial schools in the 1950s. According to Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, a pupil at Tefari Mekonnen school in the late 1940s, scouting was one of the ways of instilling a sense of responsibility and hard work, all in a joyful atmosphere.[32] The oath to do one's duty to God and the emperor, to help one's neighbour at all times and to obey the Scout Law was perfectly in accord with the political and moral conduct expected by Haile Selassie's autocratic regime. It was a question of taking responsibility, but within a precise framework: service. At the same time, the playfulness and pomp—the uniforms and the parades—were highly attractive to children. In Wolaita, it was a very popular activity with pupils, about 200 of whom were scouts in the second half of the 1950s.[33] With scouting, children learned not only to obey but also to command. The future elites of the nation also developed an esprit de corps based on a sense of distinction. Scouts were in charge of the flag-raising ceremony, where they stood in front of the other pupils.[34]

In physical education classes, children learned to march in orderly rows, in rhythm, with their chests out and their heads held high. In the 1940s and 1950s, these classes were for boys only. Sports formed virile and martial bodies, and it would have been considered shameful for girls to engage in sporting activities in public, so they were given lessons in domestic work instead. Physical education classes became coeducational in the 1960s, but the nature of the classes did not change. Girls had to adopt a masculine dress code, with shorts—at a time when showing off one's legs was considered particularly

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[32]Mesfin Wolde-Mariam (pupil at Tefari Mekonnen from 1945 to 1949, geographer, celebrated academic and influential public figure in Ethiopia), interview, Addis Ababa, 11 August 2009.

[33]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

[34]Getachew Kassa (pupil at Tefari Mekonnen School from 1967 to 1971, teacher), interview, Addis Ababa, 8 August 2009.

Figure 9. Scouts students

indecent—and virile bodily attitudes. The ideal of virility, which was initially associated with being masculine, ended up applying to female bodies as well.

Ultimately, schools were places with outside classroom activities with a political function. They imposed the cult of Haile Selassie's personality and the homeland, and instilled obedience and devotion. Surveillance, coercion and propaganda combined to shape individuals with the morals and political conduct developed by the authorities.

4. School sociabilities: the violence of assigned identities

If we examine Wolaita more closely, it becomes possible for us to understand how the objective of homogenisation also impregnated social relations within the school space. The gender and class relations that governed the social order outside were transposed within it in specific forms.

The hierarchy between Wolaita and "Amhara"—categories that were understood as metaphors of positions of power—tended to reproduce itself. The point here is not to posit a binary conflict between essentialised identities, but rather to understand how the imposition of a dominant "national" culture affected scholastic sociabilities. The definition of an exclusive Ethiopian identity in the official curricula—Semitic, Amharic-speaking and 'orthodox' Christian—drew a boundary line along which pupils occupied distinct positions. The precise role of the school was to fit the future elites of the nation into

ወጣት ፡ ተማሪዎች ፡ በአንድ ፡ ታላቅ ፡ የዕስፖርት ፡ ትርኢት ፡ ላይ ፡

ልጃገረዶች ፡ በስውነት ፡ ማጠንከሪያ ፡ ትምሀርት ፡ ጊዜ ፡
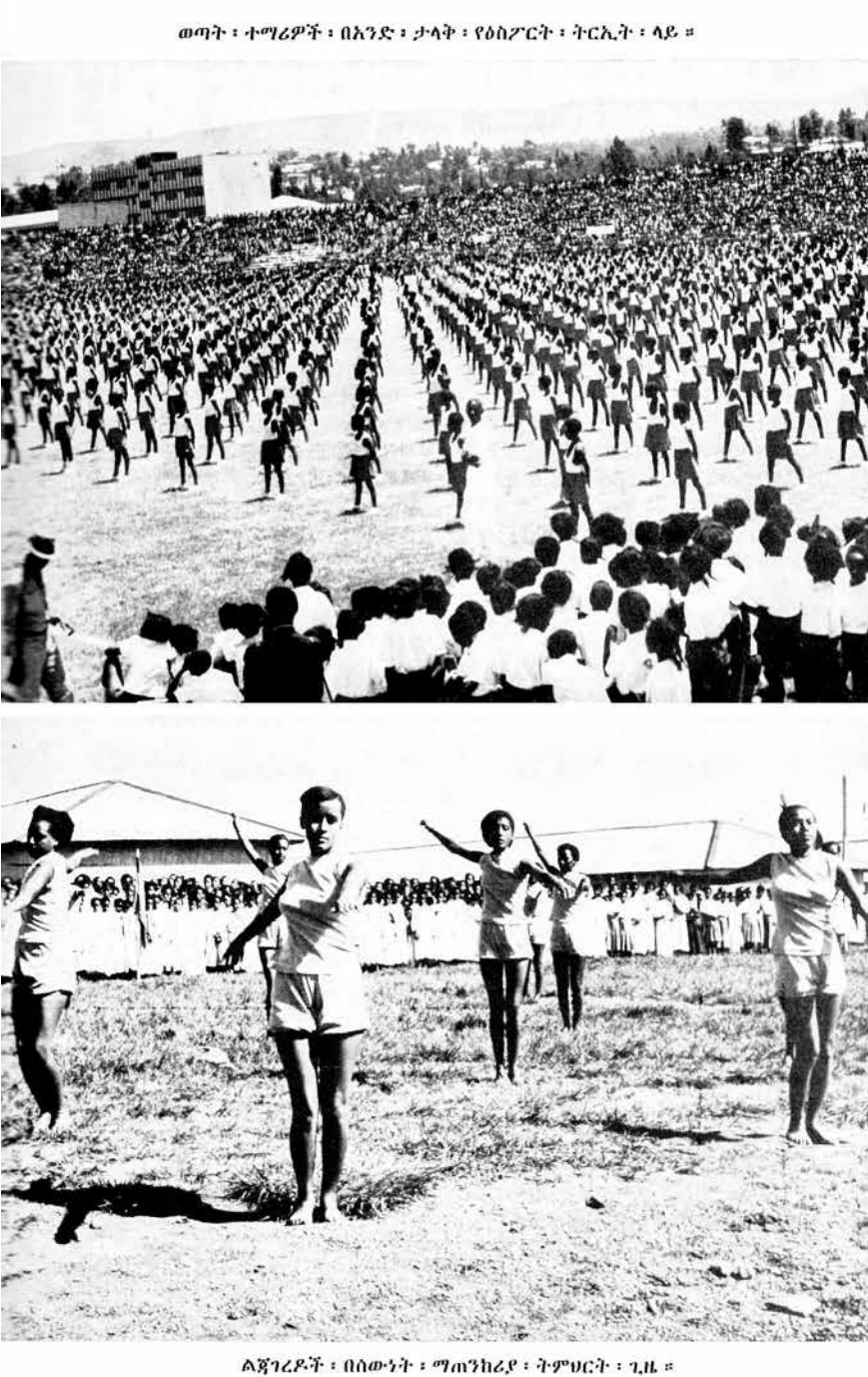
Figure 10. School sports ceremonies for boys and girls

this unique mould. For their part, girls, being a tiny minority, faced multiple forms of gender oppression and had to fight for their legitimacy. The school was therefore a place of identities in tension. From humiliation to open conflict, these tensions were expressed in symbolic, psychological and physical violence, but although they were restricted by these power relations, and in spite of everything, spaces for solidarity still existed.

4.1. *The schoolgirl fighter's journey: forging oneself against the norm*
There were very few female students, and very few female teachers. In 1959–60, one-quarter of primary school students were girls, and they made up one-tenth of secondary school students.[35] By 1974, on the eve of the revolution, these figures had only increased slightly (27% and 17%, respectively) (World Bank 2004, 117). In Wolaita, of the 428 students who sat for the national primary school leaving examination (Grade 8) in 1973, only 54 were girls.[36] A year later, only 4 girls took the national secondary school leaving examination (Grade 12), compared with 350 boys.[37] Those girls who completed their studies owed it to their willpower and the tenacity of their families. Both female students and their parents needed to be prepared to face social disapproval, and there was also no protection from gender violence inside the school.

Differences also appeared in the pedagogical relationship, with some teachers nursing prejudices that devalued girls' intellectual abilities. They attributed the poor results of boys to their lack of work, and of girls to their lack of ability, without questioning the girls' added burden of domestic work, which was not compatible with success at school. This resulted in discouraging comments, humiliation and even insults. Tsehai Zerihun, a pupil in the 1960s, recalls how his classmates were treated when they answered questions poorly:

> The teacher said: "You girl, you are old enough to have a baby now, you are studying in grade 4 and still you don't know this!" The teacher used to talk like that. There were insults for two or three girls. I don't know why they insult them. Most of the time they insult. They were sitting at the back, because they are a bit tall, a bit older. The insult is in gender condition? I think so.[38]

This testimony also highlights the role of age, as it was from puberty that the problems really started. On the one hand, it seemed incongruous that a girl of marriageable age should be attending school. Marriage was a social obligation, and a girl who had reached puberty no longer had a place in school.

[35]MOEFA, *Government, Mission, Community and Church Schools* (1959–60), 7.

[36]*Lists of the National Examination, grade 8, 1973* (Archives of the Ligaba Beyene school, Soddo).

[37]Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010.

[38]Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.

Also, from that age, girls were subject to pressure from teachers who wanted to "get married" to them.[39] Such a request, which was part of the teacher-pupil hierarchical relationship and made in a social context of male domination, obviously placed the pupil in a particularly difficult situation. How could she refuse if her success at school depended on it? How could she not fear reprisals?

Relationships were no less tense with male students. Yemesrach Alula, one of the first four girls to complete secondary school, recalls: "At that time, since very few men believed in equality, boys freely sexually assaulted girls on the way to and from school. Because of this, many girls stopped going to school." (በዚያን ጊዜ በእኩልነት የሚያምኑ ወንዶች ጥቂት ስለነበሩ ወንዶች ልጆች ሴቶቹን በመንገድም ሆነ በትምህርት ቤት ይደበድቡቻዋል ከዚህም የተነሳ ብዙ ሴቶች ትምህርት ያቋርጡ ነበር).[40] Aggressive proposals for sexual relations were frequent. Being old enough to have sex and spending their days in the company of boys, even in a classroom, made teenage girls feel very immoral. In the end, female students were routinely confronted with violence by male teachers or students. According to Yemesrach Alula, only a few particularly experienced girls would defend themselves.

This difficult school experience had a considerable impact on the construction of the individual and collective identity of women who completed the secondary school curriculum. They were led to think differently about women's social norms and stereotypes. Faced with the weight of social determinism and their limited room for manoeuvre, they adopted an attitude of particular resistance: in the face of the teachers' low appreciation of their intellectual abilities, they worked assiduously to be the best; and to combat their alleged immorality, they adopted a model code of conduct and kept as far away from boys as possible. Being in tension with the norm made them realise the extent of its power, as well as its constructed nature. The school experience gave them the will to influence this state of affairs from their adolescence onwards. One of the means at their disposal was to be role models, so that other girls would follow suit.[41] They had to be strong and exemplary to complete their schooling. Indeed, the four "pioneers" who graduated from secondary school in 1974 were heroines to their younger sisters. Ayelech Tekle-Maryiam remembers: "Yemesrach, Kassech, her sister and Nehasse were my models. Seeing them gave me strength to continue. They were so strong!"[42] A young teenager's classic admiration for "grown-ups" was reinforced by the strength of the grown-ups' character and their determination, which were essential traits given the harsh studying conditions for girls.

[39]Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010.
[40]Ibid.
[41]Ibid.
[42]Ayelech Tekle-Mariam, interview, November 2010.

4.2. *Putting homogenisation to the test*

School was also sometimes a hostile space for pupils from the countryside. Homogenisation was achieved primarily through two practices: changing one's name and making Amharic the only language worthy of being spoken. This cultural supremacy of the north, which justified its domination over the south, was a particularly sensitive point of tension.

The adoption of "Amhara" names as a way of integrating was widespread among conquered peoples: it was partly a strategic decision and partly an obligation. Having an Oromo or Wolaita name, for example, led to discrimination. The practice began at the beginning of the 20th century among people who had adopted the "orthodox" Christian religion, and was accentuated by schooling after the Italian occupation. Wolaita pupils were required to adopt an "Amhara" first name if they wanted to go to school. Changing one's first name was a common and valued feature of "Amhara" society, and the same person might have one first name in their family, another for friends, another at work, etc. While this may explain that this practice was used for members of the conquered peoples, in this context it nevertheless became an act of symbolic violence.

The names of the former schoolchildren who allowed me to interview them are revealing in this regard. Lemma Didana, Abebe Fola, Gebre-Mikael Kuke, Desalegn Tanga, Bogale Gesamo etc., all have "Amhara" first names followed by their father's Wolaita first name.[43] Similarly, the lists of candidates for the national exams include only "Amhara" first names,[44] and Wolaita pupils are only identifiable by their surname. According to Abebe Fola, who switched from a missionary school to a government school in the early 1960s: "We have to change, we can't come with our Wolaita name to the school, we have to change at the gate. When we give our registered name, the registrar changes it."[45] Zebdewos Chama, who started going to the government school ten years earlier, says the same thing with a mixture of resentment and humour:

> I was myself asked to change my name! My name is Zebdewos, my father was named "Chama." "Chama" is a Wolaita name. "Chama" means "nasty," nasty for who? For the enemy. If "Chama" is called, the enemy runs. They asked me to change my name: "Don't say your father's name Chama but Choma." Choma means "fat" [the fat of animal meat in Amharic].[46]

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[43]There is no such thing as a "family name" in Ethiopia. People use their first name followed by their father's first name.

[44]*Lists of the national examination, grade 8, 1973* (Ligaba Beyene school archives, Soddo, Wolaita).

[45]Abebe Fola, interview, November 2009.

[46]Zebdewos Chama, interview, November 2010.

The change in meaning was humiliating. Meat fat is certainly appreciated in Ethiopia in general and in Wolaita in particular, but being a brave warrior who makes an enemy flee is far more rewarding than being a "good piece of meat." In the vast majority of cases, however, young people adopted or were given a common "Amhara" first name.

The requirement to master the Amharic language posed two types of problems: the first was the sometimes painful learning process, and the second was passing the exams. The teacher training institutes prescribed that future teachers should develop a tolerance of different languages, religions and groups,[47] but it seems that mockery and humiliation were frequent:

> The attitude of the teachers in the school… When you speak, you might not be able to pronounce the Amharic letters properly. For example, the first letter of "b" is "bä" and a Wolaita calls it "baa." "Baaaaaa!!!" Don't say "baa," "baa" is the language of sheep! […] So as soon as he comes, he points to that student and stands and says "baa," demoralizing the students. […] They are mocked. So that type of many thousands of words like that demoralize the people, and students sometimes hide from the teacher. […] And hence, we were feeling shy towards "Amhara" teachers.[48]

Some teachers taught Amharic by reducing the language of their Wolaita students to the level of an animal, to an incomplete level of humanity. Although it is likely that not all Amharic teachers did so, even if only some of them practised this form of humiliation, the memory that remained very present in the former pupils is testimony to its traumatic nature.

Students whose mother tongue was not Amharic were further penalised by the rule that made Amharic an examination subject that might lead to disqualification: "During the reign of Haile Sialassie, in the Grade 12 National Examination, a student who failed in Amharic was not admitted to university. Even if he or she had received an A in mathematics and other subjects" (በኃይለ ሥሳሴ ጊዜ የ12ኛ ክፍል ብሄራዊ ፈተና በአማርኛ ትምህርት ተማሪ ቢወድቅ ወደ ዩኒቨርስቲ አይገባም ነበር። በአንድ የትምህርት አይነት በአማርኛ ስለወደቀ ብቻ ሂሳብን ጨምሮ በሌሎቹ የትምህርት አይነቶች A ቢኖረውም እንኳን ዩኒቨርስቲ አይገባም ነበር).[49] Failure to pass the Amharic exam was a persistent problem, despite years of schooling. The authorities had imposed a sanction that reminded students that despite their efforts, they did not meet the criteria required to be fully Ethiopian. As a result, the Amharic examination was "terrifying."[50] This rule, the main objective of which was homogenisation

[47]MOEFA, *Curriculum Policies and Standards. Teacher Training Institutes* (1965), 41.

[48]Zebdewos Chama, interview, November 2010.

[49]Lemma Didana, interview, December 2009.

[50]Zebdewos Chama, interview, November 2010.

through the official language, created a harsh hierarchy among the pupils. If it had been based on pedagogical considerations, it should have been English, which was the language of instruction at the university, that might result in possible disqualification. In many ways, for young Wolaita students from rural areas, entry into the government schools system meant entering the "other world," one in which they were at a disadvantage.

Those whose mother tongue was not Amharic were even more heavily penalised because the school system valued students' language skills first and foremost (Paulos 2006, 150). As a result, English had a powerful pull for Wolaita students. At the end of the 1960s, Paolos Sorsa left the government school for two years to return to the missionary school because the English classes were better:

> By then, what I thought was that the government school's English teaching method and English teachers were not very good. […] Two children of my uncle were learning at the Ottona missionary campus. Weekly, on Fridays, we were meeting in Bekolo Senio and visiting our family together. They were conversing in English. By then, I was not clever enough to talk in English as they talked in English. So I thought they were educated in a better education and better school, and this Ottona Missionary School was a better school. So I have to join that school just to speak English language as they speak. […] My first intention was to speak English fluently. You know our society… recognizes one who speaks a language very fluently, Amharic or English, with no other education. If you speak the language fluently, if you write that language in a good manner, our society considers you to be an educated person. So by then my intention was that, so I started to study English.[51]

English was politically more neutral and enjoyed greater prestige in their eyes than Amharic, and was therefore a potential alternative. By learning English, Wolaita students gained access to a prestigious international language spoken by distant nations that did not directly dominate them.

While forms of solidarity existed with some teachers and students, Wolaita students resented receiving their education from an institution where they were constantly reminded that they remained second-class Ethiopians.

4.3. *The difficult transgression of social hierarchies: the dismissal of Leul-Selassie Temamo in 1953 and the brawl of 1971*

Those who wanted to help rural pupils had only limited room for manoeuvre. In 1953, in Soddo, Teacher Leul-Selassie Temamo—who was well-known for later becoming the Minister of Culture—obtained permission to set up a self-help association for pupils of modest means. The idea was to raise money

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[51] Paolos Sorsa, interviews, Addis Ababa, 14 and 21 December 2010.

to distribute school clothes and supplies. As he noticed that pupils from the countryside were dropping out of school because of the long journeys and the impossibility of finding accommodation in the city, he undertook to build accommodation at the school. It did not take long to build mud houses with thatched roofs (Demeke 1985, 21). However, his initiative soon met with opposition from the city notables, who were not particularly supportive of education for the peasants' children. Leul-Selassie Temamo refused to give in, and the resulting conflict led to his dismissal. On the day he left, the students who were not children of notables abandoned their classes to gather outside the school entrance. In tears and with song, they showed their support for him and their opposition to the authorities' decision. On the one hand, this event testifies to the fact that social hierarchies must not be disobeyed. Leul-Selassie Temamo had crossed the line between charity and the promotion of peasants' children, and the call to order came immediately. On the other hand, it was the first demonstration by Wolaita pupils against the school management, and also against the power of the local aristocracy.[52]

Relations were particularly strained with students from neighbouring provinces who came to Soddo to complete their secondary education. They were all from "settler," *melkegna* or landlord families; children from modest families could not afford to study away from home. One day in the second semester of 1971, a violent conflict broke out after a pupil from Gedeo insulted a Wolaita. In response, Wolaita students armed themselves with sticks and stones to attack the group from which the person who had launched the insults was found. The teachers and administration could do nothing. The fight lasted more than half an hour before being dispersed by the police. Two Wolaita students and four others were seriously injured and rushed to hospital. Tensions had risen to a level that had not been anticipated by either the school or the provincial authorities. Governor Wolde-Sama'et Gebre-Wold took the initiative to close the school for 25 days to find a solution. The same day, he contacted the governors of the provinces of Gedeo and Sidamo, and the three of them decided to convene a committee made up of students' families. Those who had taken part in the confrontation were suspended for one year (Demeke 1985, 40–41). According to Wolde-Sama'et Gebre-Wold, it was a simple dispute that had no consequences, and was caused by banal competition between young people from different places, a "War of the Buttons" in short:

> The people who came from Sidamo and some Wolaita they were some… a little fight. […] Sometimes you see students are envious: "Look, they come from Dilla and they study here, maybe their grade is higher." And sometimes when the grade

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[52]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

is higher, the Wolaita students' grade is higher: "ha! Because he is Wolaita he is getting a higher grade because of this." This is all over the world.[53]

These kinds of opinion must be taken into account, of course, but other interviews reveal that the conflict had deeper causes than mere jealousy between students, and that they were embedded in the relations of domination specific to southern Ethiopia:

> The Soddo town "Amhara" children and also those who come from Dilla and Yirgalem […], they said to the people here: "Wolamo." They say it again and again. "These Wolamo became educated and they look down on us. Now they have to eat their potatoes." The young potatoes… the young potato eaters … they are *injera* eaters and these Wolaita were young potato eaters. So they insulted like that and then one day […] the Wolaita students […] talk together and […] there happened a great struggle inside the compound of the school […] 'What is education for you' they say. "You have to eat your potatoes and you have to serve the 'Amhara,' education is no need for you" they said.[54]

These insults had a powerful political dimension. "Wolamo" was the name the conquerors had given to the Wolaita after defeating them. This pejorative term was rightly perceived as an insult by those concerned: it meant subjection. The potato was considered by northerners to be a degrading type of food. It grows underground, which is the domain of the devil and worms. It symbolises animal food, whereas the *enjera*, a wafer made from *tef*, was human food.[55] These insults were based on the idea that one group of humans was superior to another and on the legitimate submission of the Wolaita, hence the opposition to their being educated, which might emancipate them from servitude. The aristocracy opposed the assimilation the school system sought to achieve because homogenisation, which included a significant amount of violence, also implied a levelling off of inequalities. Pupils reproduced the discourse of the "*balabbat*, princes and aristocrats" that had been denounced by Bogale Wallelu in 1942 in his letter to the Ministry of Education, which basically said: "If the peasants are educated, who will serve us?" In 1971, as in 1942, the survival of the aristocracy as a class depended on its ability to exploit the peasants. On the contrary, the rural children who went to school showed an eagerness to study that evoked a real struggle to escape the condition of the overtaxed and exploitable peasant: living in the kitchen of an Indian teacher in a group of five, running errands in exchange for a little money or food, or enduring the humiliations experienced in school.

[53] Wolde-Samaet Gebre-Wold, interview, January 2011.
[54] Zebdewos Chama, interview, November 2010.
[55] I thank Thomas Guindeuil, specialist in food history in Ethiopia, who gave me this information.

Conclusion

The nationalist discourse of inclusion and exclusion in education led to powerful contradictions for those pupils who were furthest away from the dominant culture. The humiliating practices used by some teachers made them feel that they were developing in an environment in which they were not welcome. There was an evident paradox between a school that defended and imposed assimilation while also reproducing practices that reanimated marginalisation outside its walls. It was the school experience of those students who were candidates for assimilation that lay at the heart of this tension.

Compared to the large, partly idealised state projects, this phenomenon bears witness to the deep-rooted involvement of schools in local power relations. The national school system claimed that it wished to assimilate the heterogeneous components of the nation into a homogeneous political community, but in Wolaita, relations of domination were based precisely on difference. The upward social levelling implied by assimilation meant that social hierarchies would eventually be disrupted, leading to tensions within the dominant group, and threatening its position. This was reflected in the tensions between pupils from the "settler" group and those from the countryside who were seeking social ascent through assimilation, as well as in the humiliation inflicted by teachers from the dominant culture on pupils born on its fringes. The heterogeneity of the components of the nation was one of the conditions for safeguarding the system.

The system created by the knowledge taught and the pedagogical practices welded the figure of the emperor and the concepts of nation and progress into one single symbolic system. However, the tensions between the state's project and the realities of practice led to distinct forms of reception, in which the workings of this system were to be dismantled and rebuilt. School discourses were reinterpreted because of the identity tensions generated by the school and because the regime promised a future of progress that appeared to students in the 1960s to be far less feasible than it had in the 1940s.

The Nation's Leaders:
From Fidelity to Revolt

It is important to study the political roles played by the generations of pupils and graduates who attended school between 1941 and 1974. This involves looking at the effects of the socialisation—official and dissenting—that was underway in schools, and questioning how schoolchildren interpreted the discourses that were instilled into them there. The political attitudes of the pupils of Wolaita reveals how they understood the nation, its social hierarchies, the power practices that were played out in it and the role they were expected to have in it.

The transition from loyalty to contesting the regime at the turn of the 1960s and the radicalisation of the Addis Ababa students have been the subject of detailed studies (Balsvik 1985; 2007; Messay 2008; Bahru 2010; 2014). The most visible events leading up to the 1974 revolution took place in Addis Ababa. Because the organs of power were concentrated in the capital, the role of the provinces had been largely neglected or considered only marginally. The fact that it was students in Addis Ababa who spearheaded the revolution and gave it its first impulses and ideological weapons reduced the political experience of secondary school pupils in the provinces to a distant whisper. This faint echo gives the impression that they were just following in the footsteps of their elders. The case of Wolaita must be used as a contribution to a decentralised history of the years prior to the 1974 revolution.

In Wolaita, as in Addis Ababa, it is possible to distinguish between a loyal generation educated in the 1940s and 1950s and a dissident generation educated in the 1960s and 1970s. In the first two decades after the Second World War, schooling offered important opportunities for upward social mobility. The national space was a resource for young Wolaita who wanted to free themselves from the vagaries of subsistence farming and the violence of political domination. Those who went to school nurtured hopes for Haile Selassie's regime. From the 1960s onwards, however, it became increasingly difficult for schools to keep their promises, the political system became rigid and the unceasing progress that had been promised was desperately lacking: young people in Wolaita who were attending school saw their families in a situation of domination that seemed not to be changing. Increasingly critical students became politicised alongside the student movement at Addis Ababa

University. In 1970, Wolaita was the scene of the "eradication of thieves" campaign, which stands as a testimony to the way their political consciousness was forged both in the dissemination of dissident ideas through schools and their experience of local power structures. A focus on the ties to students in the capital makes it possible to draw comparisons in order to distinguish between the shared and specific features of the politicisation process that played out in the development of local and national spaces.

1. The loyal generation of the 1940s and 1950s

Following liberation, schools were made responsible for training the staff that was required at all levels of the administrative apparatus that was under construction. Until the late 1950s, graduates enjoyed unrestricted access to public employment (Markakis 1974, 183), in the capital as well as in the provinces. The emperor wished to create assimilated elites from all over the country, and so he encouraged the principals of provincial schools to send their best students to the elite schools in the capital, where they were taken in as boarders at the government's expense. Some of Soddo's first generation of students enjoyed a meteoric social rise to very senior civilian and military positions: Leul-Selassie Temamo and Zewde Gebre-Medhin at the Ministry of Education, Abate Mengeste at the Ministry of Defence, Chabude Gebre at the Bank of the Republic, Gebre Emmanuel Teka at the Ministry of Health, Agriculture, Industry and Development, and Asafa Tebebu and Antonio Worku in the army, where they rose to the rank of colonel,[1] to name but a few examples.

In order to ensure the development of schools, people with only limited education were encouraged to become teachers, at a time when the profession represented a real social promotion.[2] As late as the 1950s, Bogale Wallelu sent people who had completed their primary education in Wolaita to teach in the neighbouring Gamo-Goffa region, where he was the Regional Director of Education.[3] He preferred to hire them rather than better-trained teachers who were sent from Addis Ababa. An anecdote that was reported in the *YeZareitu Ethiopia* newspaper provides an illustration of his concept. One day in the 1950s, three qualified teachers appointed by the Ministry of Education arrived in Gamo-Goffa. A few days later, Bogale Wallelu received the budget needed to pay their salaries. He reportedly sent a letter to the Ministry in which, after conveying his obligatory gratitude, he announced that he was dismissing the teachers but keeping the money. This enabled him to employ nine teachers

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[1] Wanna Wagesho, **የወላይታ ሕዝብ ታሪክ** (*History of the Wolaita People*) (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Selam Printing Press, 2003), 161.

[2] Alula Anjiyo, interview, December 2009.

[3] Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview November 2010.

who were less well-qualified but spoke the local language and were better suited to rural life.[4] In the same decade, pupils who had performed well in the final primary school examination and wished to continue their studies were allocated to their choice between an agricultural school, a technical school or a teacher training institute. They were provided with government support and guaranteed employment upon graduation.[5]

School met the expectations of students and their families, which fostered confidence in the regime. Because of its proximity to the centre of government, this was even more pronounced in Addis Ababa. Comparing his generation with the next generation attending school in the 1960s, writer Tesfaye Gessese, who first went to school in the 1940s, recalls: "Our generation of students and graduates was really not revolutionary. They had good positions, they were given responsible jobs and good salaries, and that was the end of it."[6] The school system was fulfilling its nationwide role of integration into the state apparatus at various levels of government.

Willingness to help their country was also an important motivation for students and graduates. School socialisation based on the inculcation of patriotism and dedication was an effective tool, but it must be understood in the specific context of the 1940s and 1950s, as Mesfin Wolde-Mariam reminds us:

> That was after the war, after independence. Ethiopian patriotism was very high, songs… everything was about Ethiopian patriotism, and so we were filled with that. And we… if you asked anybody, he would say: "I am going to school to help my country." It's not to make money, it is not like now, to become this or that, it was "to help my country."[7]

Children and adolescents were all the more receptive to the incorporation of devotion, as they were steeped in the nationalistic atmosphere that had survived the joy of liberation. Haile Selassie immediately directed this nationalistic enthusiasm towards his autocratic project. Propaganda was very intense in Addis Ababa, where there were numerous vehicles for disseminating it. The press, radio, art, literature and schools were all mobilised. In a province such as Wolaita, where the media were almost non-existent, schools were the favoured locations for propaganda, and pupils were among the first to be reached, through both teaching and school rituals. My interviews reveal that pupils harboured strong patriotic feelings and an attitude of veneration towards Haile Selassie. This same feeling was shared by a large section of

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[4]*YeZareitu Ethiopia*, megabit 2, 1981 EC (19 March 1989).

[5]Gebre-Mikael Kuke and Desalegn Tanga, interview, November 2010.

[6]Tesfaye Gessese (student at Tefari Mekonnen School from 1948 to 1955, novelist, poet and playwright), interview, Addis Ababa, 18 August 2009.

[7]Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, interview, August 2009.

the local population from all social backgrounds. He was not only the sacred emperor of the settlers and the faithful of the national church, but also—and this was far less obvious—of Wolaita. According to former teacher Lemma Didana:

> በዚያን ጊዜ ንጉሡ እንደአምላክ ነው የሚታዩት። ሰው ተጣልቶ እንኳን ለማስታረቅ ሽማግሌና የሚቀመጡ የወላይታ ሽማግሌዎች ለንጉሡ እረጅም እድሜ በመመኘት ነበር ስራቸውን የሚጀምሩት። ኦርቶዶክሱም ፕሮቴስታንቶችም ለእሳቸው የተለየ ክብር ነበር የሚሰጠው።

> They regarded him as divine. In gatherings of elders to resolve disputes among the people, the proceedings commenced with wishes for the king's long life. Regardless of whether they were Protestant or Orthodox, they shared a belief in the king and elevated him to a divine status.[8]

The same witness reported that the peasants also sanctified Haile Selassie. Obviously, the dominated Wolaita did not equate the emperor with the local aristocracy. He was not seen as the head of a political system that presided over coercion and the draining of resources to the capital. On the contrary, he was seen as a just king, while the multiple forms of oppression inherent in domination by the centre were attributed solely to the settlers and their Wolaita allies. In-depth studies of peasant political consciousness in southern Ethiopia would certainly add nuances to this phenomenon, which James Scott calls "naive monarchism" (Scott 2008, 111–17); it is nevertheless confirmed in several interviews.

The idea that Haile Selassie was the source of the benefits, while coercion and exploitation were the work of his subordinates, was undoubtedly shared in the school environment. Pupils and locally-trained teachers were custodians of Bogale Wallelu's design.[9] In his letter to the Ministry of Education in 1942, he denounced the local aristocracy, portraying them as his determined enemy, firmly opposed to educating the poor, whose upward mobility they rejected for fear of having no one left to exploit. There are many anecdotes about his intense efforts to make school accessible to everyone, especially the dominated. Alula Anjiyo, who was part of the first generation of students, remembers a morning when a child from an aristocratic family went to school accompanied by a servant carrying his belongings. Seeing the servant leave just as his master entered the school, Bogale Wallelu grew angry: "If the servant doesn't come here to learn, what is the use to bring him along?" (**አሽከሩ የማይማር ከሆነ እሱን አስከትሎ *መምጣት* ለምን አስፈለገ?**).[10] He saw school as a means of promoting the dominated section of society and levelling the top of the social hierarchy, a

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[8] Lemma Didana, interview, December 2009.
[9] Abebe Fola, interview, November 2009.
[10] Alula Anjiyo, interview, December 2009.

concept that left a powerful impression on people's minds. While school and its homogenising role might devalue their identity, the power of the centre was viewed by Wolaita pupils and graduates as emancipatory in the face of the power of the settlers and their local auxiliaries. The struggle for an Ethiopia united behind Haile Selassie was conceived to oppose the arbitrary power of the local aristocracy. The national space offered a way out, leading to a belief in assimilation and the benefits of unity. From then on, the sense of belonging to the nation was encouraged both by schools' position in local power relations and by the propaganda deployed in them. In the 1940s and 1950s, the upward mobility offered by school and a belief in the progressive nature of power combined to produce a loyal generation of graduates.

The situation gradually changed from the mid-1950s onwards. The Ministry of Education's 1954 report titled *Basic Recommendations for the Reorganization and Development of Education in Ethiopia* stated that having met the needs of reconstruction, the school system had to be reformed in order to meet the country's wider needs.[11] The elites needed for reconstruction and the growth of the administration had been trained, and the focus now needed to be on the development of basic education for the greatest possible number of people. At the same time, the capacity of the state apparatus to absorb graduates was beginning to run out, while employment opportunities in other sectors were almost non-existent (Tekeste 2006, 15). The future direction of the school system was extremely unclear. A letter attached as an appendix to the *Basic Recommendations* bore witness to a certain amount of disarray among educationists in the Ministry of Education about the lack of clearly-defined policy perspectives:

> Through a nationally controlled system of education, Ethiopia can make Ethiopia any kind of Ethiopia it may want to be. […] The problem of "what kind of Ethiopia does Ethiopia want to be?" will not be decided by educators. It will be decided by those in positions of leadership […] who control the development of Ethiopia. […] The educator must depend upon others to make decisions with reference to the kind of Ethiopia that is to be […]. The Long-Term Planning Committee for Ethiopian Education is seriously handicapped by the fact that it is attempting to plan an educational program without knowing what the objectives of a total overall planning programme are.[12]

This situation revealed the limitations of Haile Selassie's political project. The peak of his power, which was crowned by the 1955 Constitution, was followed by a blocking of the system (Bahru 1994, 32). The consequences of

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[11] MOEFA, *Basic Recommendations…* (1954), 3.
[12] Letter attached as an annex to the MOEFA report, *Basic Recommendations…* (1954). Fonds Merse-Hazen Wolde-Kirkos, 21.07, NALE.

this political stalemate, which eventually led to the school system running out of steam, were soon felt in Wolaita, just as rural demand for schooling had begun to emerge in the late 1950s. By 1958–59, Germame Neway had established literacy centres in even the most remote villages, and the Sudan Interior Mission missionaries followed suit. At the same time, paths for upward social mobility through schooling had emerged in the most remote townships of Wolaita. Although it was extremely marginal, this phenomenon was a good example. According to Abraham Worku, who lived in the rural *wereda* of Offa: "People understand when some people in this area went to the government school and complete it. They become higher officials."[13] School education was slowly beginning to attract people in rural areas at the same time as structural obstacles were appearing.

2. A hijacked school space: the circulation of dissident ideas

2.1. *The pupils: a potential political force in the heart of the city*

Germame Neway did not stay long enough for its literacy centres to become permanent establishments. It was under the direction of Wolde Samaet Gebre-Wold between 1963 and 1973 that government education began to take hold more openly in Wolaita. Six new towns were founded so that each *wereda* had an administrative centre connected to Soddo (Almaz 1984, 25) and primary schools were established in each of them: 14 more were added to the 15 that had existed before.[14] Under his administration, the seeding of government schools was thus distributed across the territory of Wolaita more effectively. The primary schools that were built in the new towns attracted students from rural missionary schools, some of whom continued their studies at the secondary school in Soddo. As a result, enrolment there increased significantly: in 1965, it had 1,613 pupils (Demeke 1985, 33) in a town of 10,430 inhabitants.[15] In contrast to the previous generation, when many of the pupils were children of settlers or government workers, the newcomers were mostly from modest social backgrounds, and from exploited and marginalised rural areas. They were much further away from the centre, both politically and culturally.

This rapid growth of the school phenomenon from the 1960s was in itself a source of social tension. Young people from rural areas arrived at secondary school motivated by the hope of leaving their miserable and oppressed life in the countryside at a time when the system's capacity for integration was weakening. They were soon to make the bitter discovery that there was a wide gap between the progressive discourse of power disseminated by the school and the prospects that were actually on offer to them. In the secondary school

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[13]Abraham Worku, interview, January 2011.
[14]WZEO, **የትምህርት ተቋማት ዝርዝር** (*List of Establishment of Schools*) (2010).
[15]CSO, *Ethiopia Statistical Abstract* (1965).

in Soddo, which was far better connected to the national space than the rural towns, they also discovered that the emperor's aura was crumbling, and that the regime was beginning to suffer from serious disrepute. The increasing contacts with students in Addis Ababa from the mid-1960s onwards were essential to this awareness.

2.2. *The circulation of revolutionary ideas in the 1960s and 1970s*

In the 1960s, a student movement that was increasingly critical of the political system developed at Addis Ababa University, at a time when the circulation of dissident ideas and opposition practices was intensifying internationally. As the former activist Asfew Damte testifies, students from other African countries, notably Kenya and Nigeria, who came to study in Addis Ababa in the late 1950s brought with them the political culture of anti-colonial movements (Bahru 2010, 19–23). Ethiopian students were also sent to continue their studies in the United States and Europe. For many of them who had grown up convinced that they were living in a country that had been set on the path to progress by an enlightened emperor, their journey was a source of bitter disillusionment. In the collection of oral sources on the student movement compiled by historian Bahru Zewde in 2010, Ethiopian academic Dessalegn Rahmato recalls the shock he felt during his North American experience:

> For most of us (relatively speaking) it came as very frightening experience to realise how backward Ethiopia was. When we were in Ethiopia, we would sometimes read foreign newspapers and occasionally listen to foreign radio broadcast and watch fatuous films. This revelation, I believe, may be one source of our disillusionment. […] [One] thing I came to realize at that time was the great amount of influence exerted on visitors from such African countries as Ethiopia when they travel abroad. Although I never analysed the concept, I had heard of imperialism and colonialism. I got a true picture of how much we were underprivileged not only in such significant areas as arms technology and the economy, but even in such rudimentary areas as thought process, […] creation of ideas and their propagation. (There were times when I—and by extension my country—felt small). At times like this, such questions as "Where is our place on the international scale?," "Where can we perceive our progress?" would resonate loudly in my mind. (Dessalegn, in Bahru 2010, 35)

Trips to and exchanges with foreign countries revealed the purely rhetorical aspect of the Ethiopian authorities' discourse on progress of which the school space was saturated. The integration of students into international left-wing movements began at the same time as Haile Selassie's regime entered a phase of inertia. The encounter with the literature and the great international figures of the revolution was therefore decisive, and there was no turning back. From the beginning of the 1960s, Ethiopian student associations in Europe, the USA and Addis Ababa became politicised and kept up constant exchanges.

On the Ethiopian university campus, student newspapers became more and more radical—the shift from titles such as *News and Views* to *Struggle* is sufficiently evocative of this—as did militant practices. Pan-African, anti-imperialist international solidarity and national issues were both the focus of student political activity.

Representatives were sent to the pan-African conferences in Uganda in 1957 and Sierra Leone in 1959, and to the Eighth International Student Conference in Peru in the same year (Balsvik 1985, 85). In the 1960s, a pan-African sensibility developed, and students made their voices heard against the regimes in South Africa and Rhodesia (Idem, 207–9). In 1966, students from Addis Ababa wrote to the National Union of Vietnamese Students to express their support for the "sacred struggle against U.S. imperialist aggression," while the slogan "Yankee Go Home" appeared on banners at demonstrations in Addis Ababa (Idem: 200–201). In this movement, the students questioned the condescension of their elders towards other Africans. Nationalism based on distinction, on pride in being the only independent African country, gave way to pan-African solidarity. Within a closed country subjected to intense propaganda, the university was a place for the circulation of information and openness to the world.

Radicalisation and the break with the regime can be observed through a few milestones. The 1960 coup d'état, which took place at a time when students were just beginning to be politically active, generated enthusiastic support. The rapid crushing of the coup and Germame Neway's suicide after the execution of the 17 dignitaries he had taken hostage left them stunned. On his return from Brazil, where he had been on a diplomatic visit, the emperor, like a wounded father who still showed understanding towards his prodigal sons, forgave "his" students for their confusion. Everything temporarily returned to normal. Nevertheless, during the few days the coup had lasted, a space had been opened up for freedom of expression. Students were able to express dissatisfaction for the first time, the political and social realities of Ethiopia were brought into focus and the government was openly challenged (Idem, 100). All of this had a considerable impact on students' political consciousness. As Bahru Zewde points out: "The failure of Germame and his companions was not followed by docile submission but by even greater mistrust. Immediately after the failure of 1960, subversive leaflets sprouted like mushrooms in the capital. […] It can be said that this new opposition set the tone for future events" (Bahru 2007, 254).

In 1965, while parliament was debating land legislation, students took to the streets to demonstrate behind the slogan "Land to the Tiller," claiming that the land system was the source of the population's misery and the country's economic gridlock. This demonstration was a pivotal moment that initiated an intensification of criticism of the regime, which was now described as

"feudal." In May 1966, another important demonstration took place, whose call was: "Is poverty a crime?" The students wanted to draw attention to the barbed-wire fenced camps around Addis Ababa, where beggars and invalids were "picked up" from the streets on the occasion of international conferences (the Organization of African Unity had had its headquarters in Addis Ababa since its formation in 1963) and visits by foreign heads of state. Until then, the student movement had claimed the right to be an opposition integrated into the political system, increasingly critical but still loyal. Subsequently, the clear goal became to dismantle the imperial regime (Balsvik 1985, 25–27). In 1969, the assassination of the student leader Telahun Gizew by the authorities completed the rupture. The opposition then won over the students of the capital's secondary schools, who finally joined their elders from the university. Getachew Kassa, who was a student at Tefari Mekonnen School at the time, recalls: "When Telahun Gizew died, for the first time I went to the university, to oppose. It is Haile Selassie's regime which killed him. From then, the attitude of the students completely changed. We realized that he was a backward ruler."[16]

Addis Ababa University was pivotal in the expansion of the fight against the regime to secondary schools. It was at the centre of an international network for the development and circulation of political ideas and activist practices, which it redistributed in provincial secondary schools. From the second half of the 1960s onwards, dissident ideas circulated through the school network between the provinces, Addis Ababa and Ethiopian students abroad, with Addis Ababa University as the nerve centre. The role of the Ethiopian University Service, through which students from Addis Ababa completed a compulsory one-year period of teaching in the provinces, was essential to this process. When it was established in 1964, student politicisation was already well under way. By 1969, when students doing this service were redistributed to secondary schools on a massive scale following the departure of the Peace Corps volunteers, the movement had entered its radicalisation phase, and was armed with a powerful anti-imperialist and anti-feudal message. The student activists soon decided to use this opportunity to promote the ideas of the movement and provide information on the social realities of the country in order to feed their political discourse (Balsvik 1985, 145).

2.3. *The politicisation of pupils in Wolaita*

The case of Wolaita shows that pupils were particularly active, and partly belies the view that the impetus came primarily from Addis Ababa. Although they were connected to the national space, the struggle of the Wolaita pupils

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[16]Getachew Kassa, interview, August 2009.

was deeply rooted in local realities. The political influence of the students in the capital was essential, but so was the social experience of the Wolaita students.

In order to spread the movement throughout the country's schools, students sent from Addis Ababa as part of the Ethiopian University Service were instructed to use existing student associations, or if necessary to create new ones, as a channel for politicisation. Their position as teachers would allow them to do this without arousing the suspicions of the administration, at least initially. The first students arrived in Wolaita in 1963 and the first student association was established there at Soddo Secondary School in 1966, with the approval of the authorities. Its official powers were strictly academic. It had a president, a vice president, a secretary and six permanent elected members (Demeke 1985, 45). It seems that the school administration did not interfere in the selection and election of candidates, probably because of the presence of teacher members. This type of organisation ensured a certain degree of discretion in the dissemination of political activities. Political activities were carried out alongside the official functions of the association in informal meetings held outside the school.[17] Until the first public political activities in the early 1970s, the second half of the 1960s was restricted to the dissemination of the ideas and demands of the student movement to a limited number of students:

የተወሰኑ በእድሜ ትንንሽ ከፍ ያሉ ተማሪዎች ከአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርስቲ ተማሪዎች ጋራ እየተመካከሩ መሬት ላራሹ ይሰጥ፤ ትምህርት ለሁሉም ይደርስ ይሉ ነበር፤ ከዚያ ደግሞ የነበረውን አስተዳደራዊ በደል ይቃወሙ ነበር ።

Slightly older students exchanged ideas with their counterparts from the university of Addis Ababa. They advocated for land to be granted to those who cultivate it, called for education to be accessible to all, and stood against administrative abuses.[18]

Political exchanges took place through discussion, and there were links with the university through letter-writing. Letters and writings arrived in Wolaita frequently enough to be mentioned by several witnesses:

የአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ተማሪዎች የተቃውሞ ሰልፍ በሚያደርጉበት ጊዜ መረጃው ለእኛም እንዲደርስ በደብዳቤ አደርገው በድብቅ ይልኩልን ነበር ። ሚስጥራዊው ደብዳቤ ወደ እዚህ በሚመጡ ሰዎች አማካኝነት ይደርሰን ነበር ።

During the opposition demonstrations they held in Addis Ababa, students would clandestinely send us letters to keep us informed. We received these covert messages through individuals who were coming to our location.[19]

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[17]Saol Akamo, interview, November 2010.
[18]Ibid.
[19]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.

The discussions focused on concrete elements rather than ideology. The main slogans were discussed in the light of the local situation and the concept of social justice.[20] It was an exchange of ideas: as well as politicising the pupils, the students gathered information about the provinces and took it back to Addis Ababa. Students from rural areas were key informants.

The priority was to raise awareness of the fact that collective action was possible and to disseminate slogans to mobilise. During the 1972–73 school year, secondary school students in Soddo began to involve pupils from schools in the *wereda*. In the same year, a new students' association was established throughout Wolaita that also brought together teachers and some of the few farmers who were parents of students (Demeke 1985, 47). During the demonstrations of the time, the pupils' political consciousness was not based on any precise ideological knowledge. Before the 1974 revolution, students in Wolaita had not known about Marxism or the international icons of the revolution. Paolos Sorsa, who was one of the most active students, remembers the three years before the revolution:

> We were just propagating in the society, to the peasantry or all elementary schools in the nation. And the main motto at that time was just to send all the youth and the school students and teachers against the government. And, it was just to bring social transformation to the country. And we were saying socialism. Actually, at the beginning of the time when we were demonstrating in the school, our question was not socialism, we don't know about the ideology. Just the only thing what we were questioning is just we were with… we were looking to change society. The old government of the Haile Selassie regime could not administer society. The contradiction between the ruling class and the ruled was very sharp. The land tenure system in the country was… it was the main source of contradiction. Poverty was very acute, the poor were getting poorer, the rich were getting richer and richer.[21]

Not "knowing about the ideology" obviously did not mean that there was not an acute awareness of social realities and the political issues at stake. The slogans "Land to the tiller" and "Education for all" and the struggle against "the oppressive administration" made particular sense in view of the relations of domination in which the students had grown up, and which represented their daily lives and those of their families.

3. The campaign to eradicate thieves

The "campaign to eradicate thieves," which was led in Wolaita by a hundred or so pupils between January and April 1970, is particularly enlightening in

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Paolos Sorsa, interview, December 2010.

this respect. Their reasons and motivations make it possible to understand the many sources that fed their political consciousness. One day in January 1970, a farmer returned from the market with a sum of money that would enable his family to live for a long time: he had just sold two fat cows that had taken him several years of work to raise. On the way, he was robbed by a gang of thieves, among whom he recognised some people he knew to be connected by client ties to a wealthy lawyer in Soddo. When he returned home completely devastated, he told his relatives about his misadventure. One of them was his son, a pupil from the secondary school in Soddo who spent Sundays with his family in his village. As soon as he arrived at school the next morning, he told his friends what had happened to his father. They decided to meet after school to talk about it some more.[22] That same evening, the 20 students who were present decided to discreetly spread the information to their friends in other schools in the province to decide jointly what to do. Eighty-four participants from every *wereda* in Wolaita attended the next meeting, which was held a few weeks later, in early March.[23] It was then that they came up with what they called the "Campaign to eradicate thieves": they would take advantage of the school holidays in April when everyone returned to their villages to take action. Their approach was to travel around the countryside and ask farmers to tell them which thieves to punish by "beating them severely on their feet and hands."[24] But events took a different turn: in the space of four days in April 1970, 12 "thieves" were killed with stones, spears and sticks, four were severely injured and 87 houses were burned.[25] Faced with the inability of the local police to stop the movement, troops were deployed in Wolaita on the fourth day of the campaign. More than 168 people were imprisoned, including students and peasants who had joined them. A high court of justice was temporarily established in Soddo. Accused of crimes and of attempting to overthrow the government, six people were sentenced to 1 year in prison each, three people to 5 years each and twenty-seven to 15 years each. Three others were sentenced to death before their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment.[26]

Starting with a robbery committed against a peasant, a violent movement that brought together about a hundred people was initiated and led by pupils, with beatings and house fires as its modes of action. The speed of their reaction,

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Saol Akamo, interview, November 2010.

[24] Zebdewos Chama, unpublished manuscript. It is a history of Wolaita that has not yet been published, which he kindly allowed me to photocopy. The passage on the "campaign to eradicate thieves" is based on the minutes of the trial obtained from the Ministry of Justice, oral testimony and the author's own recollections.

[25] Ministry of Justice, Case no. 1035/64, May 3 1965 EC.

[26] Zebdewos Chama, unpublished manuscript.

their methods and the radical nature of the movement invite us to ask the reasons that led them to act in this way and the identity of their targets. Saol Akamo was a member of the first group of students who started the movement:

ትልልቅ ስልጣን ላይ የነበሩ ባለስልጣናት ሌቦች ሆኑ። ከመሬት ከበርቴዎች ጋር በመሆን ተራውን ዜጋ ይዘርፉ ነበር። የድሃን ንብረት ከመቀማት አልፈው ሚስትም በጉልበት በጎይል ይደፍራሉ። የሚሰራው ስራ በጣም አስከፊ ነበር። ንብረቱን የተዘረፈ ሰው ተዘርፌያለሁ ብሎ ከተናገረ የባስ ይንገታል፤ ይደበደባል ከዛም አልፎ የሶር ጎጆውም ሊቃተል ይችላል። ያ ሁሉ ያንገሻግሸው ተማሪዎች ተነቀስቀሱው። ሌባ መጥፊያ ዘመቻ እንግዲህ ትልቁ የአስተዳደር በደል ለማታወም ነው። የአስተዳደር በደል ምንድን ነው? ዳኞች በጉቦ ስለሚሠሩ ነው። ሌቦችን እንዲሁም የሀሰት ምስክሮች መብዛቱን ለመታወም ተማሪወች ተንቀሳቅሰዋል ።

The thieves held positions of significant power, some of them being high-ranking officials. They colluded with landowners to exploit and pillage citizens, not only confiscating their possessions but forcibly taking away their wives. The actions taken were deeply repugnant. When a victim of robbery dared to demand the return of their property, they faced physical violence. If the victims had thatched houses, the accused thieves would even set them ablaze. These egregious acts fueled the discontent among the students, prompting them to take action. The campaign against thieves was, in essence, a campaign against maladministration, rooted in a judiciary system tainted by bribery. The students rose up to confront not only the thieves but also the corruption embedded in the judiciary, where judges were known to operate with bribes and false witnesses were prevalent.[27]

Peasants were regularly robbed and assaulted by pillagers, who were the protégés of important figures among the local political elites. The thieves' impunity was guaranteed on the one hand by the fear they inspired and their political support, and on the other by the corruption of judges and false witnesses. In his history of Wolaita published in 2000, the former teacher, school headmaster and school administrator Wanna Wagesho describes the system, which one witness, Zebdewos Chama, calls "the chain of oppression":[28]

በዚህ ልማድ በመጠመድ […] ከስለጠኑ በኋላ ግንዘብ ማግኛ ዘዴ እየፈለጉ በጫካ የተሰማራውን ከብት እየወሰዱ በሌላ ስፍራ በመሸጥና ከዚያም ወደ ሚኖሩበት ስፍራ የሌላውን ከብት አምጥተው በመሸጥ በሌብነት ተሰማሩ። በሌሊት […] ከቤትም ከውጭም የተገኘውን በመውሰድ አንዳንድ ጊዜ ሲከሰሱ ሐሰት አልሰረቅሁት በማለት በሙጣት ድል እያደረጉ በሰርቆት የተገኘውን ገንዘብ ለሹሞች ጢምር በመከፋፈል ሌብነትና ሐሰት በዚህ ምልክ ተስፋፉ።

Having effectively exercised control, they sought ways to amass wealth. They confiscated cattle grazing in the woods, selling them or appropriating others' cattle to steal and then sell. During the night, they plundered whatever they could find, both inside and outside houses. When occasionally brought to court on accusations,

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[27]Saol Akamo, interview, November 2010.
[28]Zebdewos Chama, unpublished manuscript.

they resorted to lies, claiming innocence with assertions like "I didn't steal." They profited through perjury, utilizing the ill-gotten gains to bribe officials, thus perpetuating a cycle of theft and deceit.[29]

Thefts were not isolated acts and corruption was not a marginal phenomenon; they were common practices. There was an organised system of extortion that united cattle thieves and the administrative and judicial authorities.[30] Paolos Sorsa recalls that corruption of judicial administration personnel was common, and practised in plain sight. It was simply the norm: "At that time, it was very easy to find the house of a judge. If you saw a line of people waiting in front of a house with sheep, honey, butter and so on, it was a judge's house, you can't believe it!"[31] In a judicial system like this, the poorest were always the losers. The peasant world was subjected to a form of domination in which the legal and illegal spheres were intertwined. Tenant farmers were impoverished by the multiple taxes levied by the state, as well as by the *melkegna* and landowners, when they were not required to work for free for one or the other. A system of illegal but well-organised extortion combining banditry and corruption was superimposed on these official structures.

The "campaign to eradicate thieves" was as much a result of the peasant revolt as it was of the student movement. Its organisers acted as both the children of peasants and students. In addition, although it appeared at first glance to be a simple reaction against a situation of oppression, it was nourished by precise concepts shared among the students of how the political system should function. In rural areas, the memory of the political experiment conducted by Governor Germame Neway was always very present. The reform programme he had sought to implement was a central source of inspiration for the students:

እንግርማሜ ንዋይ በ1953 ሞቱ ። የእነሱ ሐሳብ ምንድን ነው ጥሩነት መሬት ላራሹ፤ አስተዳደራዊ በደል ይቁም ፤ ትምህርት በየቦታው ይኑር፤ ትምህርት ለሁሉ ይደርስ። እነሱ ቢሞቱም የነሱ ታሪክ ስላልሞተ የነሱ አርአያን በመከተል ያው ስንቀሳቅስ የነበረው ግልጽ ወጣ ።

Those associated with Germame Neway perished in 1960, yet their ideas endure. Advocating for goodness, land distribution for the tiller, an end to the oppression of power, and the establishment of schools everywhere with education accessible to all. Though they may have passed away, their narrative lives on. As we embarked on our movement, it became evident that following their example was a path we should tread.[32]

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[29] Wanna Wagesho, **የወላይታ ሕዝብ ታሪክ** (*History of the Wolaita People*) (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Selam Printing Press, 2003), 88–89.

[30] Paolos Sorsa, interview, December 2010; Zebdewos Chama, unpublished manuscript.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Saol Akamo, interview, November 2010.

In many ways, the students wanted to use violence to break the system the young governor had wished to transform through reforms. He not only redistributed vacant government land to landless peasants, but also established literacy centres in every village. He had the villagers elect representatives who were responsible to him alone to compete with the power of the *balabbat* and the aristocracy. He also transferred cases of theft or disputes between landlords and tenants from the official judges to judges elected from among the peasants.[33] His public denunciations of the corruption of judges and false witnesses in his capacity as president of the court left a lasting impression throughout Wolaita (Guidi 2013). His attempts at reform were exemplary. They had opened up a breach, a field of opportunities in the political system. The "campaign to eradicate thieves" therefore emerged from rural Wolaita for at least three reasons. First, it was organised by peasant children who had grown up in the villages and had firsthand experience of oppression. Secondly, it tackled practices that were rife in the countryside and that had reached an unbearable level for those who were subjected to them.[34] Young people felt vehemently that their parents were dispossessed, abused and powerless. Finally, the "campaign to eradicate thieves" was based on the desire for emancipation that had secretly but surely been stirring in rural areas since the experience of Germame Neway[35].

For other reasons, it was a students' revolt. For them, going to school represented a way to help their families later on thanks to access to employment, which would offer a certain degree of security in an economic and political situation marked by uncertainty and vulnerability. The individual social advancement of a sibling was a family investment, sometimes a sacrifice. Wolaita former student Wanna Dea recalls that: "[Their] parents used to sell their cattle so [they] could study."[36] Pupils, who were using hard-earned money without being able to contribute to the household themselves, felt indebted to their families. How could they not react when their families' meagre possessions were taken away? The political socialisation they received at school, whether it was anti-establishment or official, could also make them predisposed to rebel. The university students encouraged them to act as they did in Addis Ababa, and made them aware that others were taking part in social movements at the same time. Saol Akamo recalls that the pupils turned to action not only out of "disgust," but also because of their contacts with the students, which provided them with a window to the outside world. Knowing that others were fighting elsewhere for greater justice set an example:

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[33]Paolos Sorsa, interview, December 2010.
[34]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.
[35]Paolos Sorsa, interview, December 2010.
[36]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.

ሌሎቹ በየአካባቢያቸው ለአገራቸው ሲታገሉ እኛ እዚህም በወላይታ አካባቢ ለምንድን ነው የማንታገለው? ሌባው ዘራፊው ቀማኛው ለምን ይበድላል? አባቶቻችን ለምን ይበደላሉ? ለምን ይጨቆናሉ? በሚል ወጣቱ ተነሳሳ።

Why is it that while others were fighting for their countries, we weren't doing the same in Wolaita? Why do thieves, looters, and robbers mistreat us? Why do they mistreat our fathers? Why do they oppress? These questions stirred the youth, prompting them to rise up.[37]

Instilling obedience to authority and loyalty to the regime were among the very first aims of school socialisation; however, students were also constantly reminded of their responsibilities as future leaders of the nation. School taught them that they had to be faithful servants of a just power: the country was ruled by law and not by force, and civil servants had to be honest and loyal, and devoted to the emperor, the country and society. The reality of Wolaita seemed to them to be totally contrary to these precepts. Power was exercised through force and arbitrariness, the local notables were accomplices of the thieves, the corruption of judges was so commonplace that they did not even bother to hide it and civil servants only served their own interests. In a word, the representatives of power betrayed their offices. Saol Akamo insists that the "campaign to eradicate thieves" "was not aimed at overthrowing the government but the false people in power."[38] It was to cleanse the administration of its corrupt, arbitrary and oppressive practices; to restore what should have been. In this sense, the revolt was not just a reaction to a situation that had become unbearable: it could be rationally legitimised by the education received at school. The pupils were inspired by the idea of an honest, fair and caring administration: the one the school showed them as an example, the one Germame Neway had tried to set up in Wolaita, the one that the students of Addis Ababa defended, the one they wanted for the future of their region and their country. In this respect, it seems that the movement should not have taken the violent turn it did. According to one of the actors in the movement, Wanna Dea, what was a "good idea turned into other crimes." The leaders, who wanted to impose "moderate punishments," were overwhelmed by events.[39]

Stressing that the campaign was not conceived as an act of disloyalty to the regime is essential to being able to understand it. The pupils of 1970 still nourished the faint hope that central power and national space might be a resource against local practices of power. They were inclined to believe that the emperor would take their side once he became aware of his subordinates' illegal activities, so to be judged as criminals was a source of great disappointment. They received harsh sentences, while the "thieves" were not disturbed.

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[37]Saol Akamo, interview, November 2010.
[38]Ibid.
[39]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.

The regime, if not the emperor, had just proved that it showed solidarity for illegal practices. While some doubts might have remained, the trial proved once and for all that the Addis Ababa regime and the local aristocracy were one and the same.

Militant activities continued under the leadership of the students' association. During the election of *dagna* (judges and village representatives responsible for collecting taxes) in 1972, the association succeeded in bringing together enough people to campaign in all Wolaita. The aim was to encourage farmers to choose their representatives freely by resisting pressure from the *melkegna* and landowners only to elect people from their own clientele group. The campaign was a success in many parts of the province. The two-year period between 1972 and 1973 before the revolution was devoted to actions aimed at mobilising the population. School was closed several times due to strikes organised by the students. A demonstration was held in Areka, a Wolaita town on the road to Addis Ababa, in May 1973. Joined by the townspeople, students, teachers and a few peasants who were parents of pupils, they demonstrated in front of the office of the governor of the *wereda* with slogans such as: "Land to the tiller," "Incompetent administrators out" and "Bread for the hungry" (Demeke 1985, 48).

4. Wolaita students, the nation and the revolution

In a book published in 2008, the philosopher Messay Kebede takes stock of the factors that led to the political radicalisation of Ethiopian students. He argues that it was not Ethiopia's political and economic conditions that resulted in the infusion of revolutionary ideas, but the prior adoption of Marxism-Leninism, which led to an alteration in how problems were perceived (Messay 2008, 15).

According to Messay Kebede, the students came from privileged backgrounds. Because they were not directly faced with economic problems, they were not socially predisposed to adopt revolutionary ideas. If students were ready to embrace Marxism-Leninism, it was because they were in a state of "psychological disorientation." The fault lay with the imported school system and its Western values, which would eventually lead students to reject their country and heritage and choose a total break with the past. This analysis may not be totally inaccurate, but it is far too partial, and Messay Kebede (too) draws radical conclusions, to say the least. Why not rather think of the process in terms of a system in which social realities and political theory feed into each other to lead to political dispositions, rather than choosing between the chicken and the egg? Is it not possible to come from an affluent background while also being disgusted by the black misery ravaging one's country, and to opt for a radical transformation without being "psychologically disoriented"?

The pupils in Wolaita were exposed to the imported school system but their radical criticism of Haile Selassie's regime and the socioeconomic realities of

their region was not the result of mental disorders caused by a state of cultural alienation. They were critical before they knew what Marxism-Leninism was because they were facing political oppression, cultural discrimination and economic problems. Their analysis was based on their own experiences. Moreover, to assume that an imported system necessarily leads to alienation ignores the complexity of the processes of reappropriation of school education. Pupils knew that some of the knowledge taught to them was imported; they were not passive recipients. Although they are attracted by distant societies and cultures, social actors use their capacity for reinterpretation. Finally, pupils are subject to multiple socialisations, at school, in their family and in their community, and school socialisation is not all-powerful. The political dispositions of the Wolaita pupils were the result of their immersion in these different socialising universes. Competing, and even contradictory, socialisations did not necessarily lead to identity crises and psychological disorders. Although this may happen, actors also know how to mobilise diverse embedded patterns of thought and action, depending on the situations in which they find themselves (Lahire 2011, 392). Ultimately, the case of the Wolaita pupils raises serious questions about analysis based on alienation, and invites a careful examination of the processes of appropriation at work in school education in the context of an imported system.

What was the level at which the Wolaita pupils who entered the struggle conceived their fight? Did they fight nationally against Haile Selassie's regime or locally against the system of domination implemented by the settlers, the Wolaita government employees and agents sent by the state? Measuring their testimonies against the "question of nationalities"—even though they had not yet formulated it in these terms—provides some elements of the answer, and allows us to look at the reality of their sense of belonging to the Ethiopian nation at the time. The "question of nationalities," which has been a major issue since the establishment of federalism from 1991 onwards, has its origins in the student movement at the end of the 1960s. This movement was the scene of the emergence of a discourse that combined a class struggle and a struggle for equality of nationalities, not without sometimes virulent debate. The problem is a complex one, and it gave rise to long-lasting and sometimes very violent divisions, the effects of which are still being felt today (Bahru 2007). It is true to say that class and nationality partly overlapped to form the structure of domination in southern Ethiopia, and the 1971 brawl between Amhara and Wolaita students at Soddo Secondary School was part of this dual relationship of domination. The "campaign to eradicate thieves" that had taken place a year earlier was more complex, as the people who were attacked by the students were part of a system of extortion that combined the shared interests of settlers and members of rural Wolaita society.

Because of the importance this issue has had since the 1990s, it is not easy to draw conclusions about the views of pupils in the 1970s on the basis of oral interviews conducted today. As a methodological precaution, the witnesses were not directed towards the question of social classes or nationalities. The aim was not to smooth out a complex reality or to caricature their concepts, but simply to establish the spectrum across which they unfolded. Abebe Fola, for example, says that when he was a secondary school pupil in the early 1970s, the problem he shared with his classmates was not the imperial regime but the "Amhara of Soddo." He and his friends were not very much influenced by the students from the Ethiopian University Service who took advantage of their teaching year to politicise the pupils of Wolaita: "These teachers, not all but some serious politicians, were agitating us. […] Not many of us accepted their agitation. Why? It was secondary for us. Our serious problem was with the Amhara of Soddo town."[40] According to Abebe Fola, the activist teachers from Addis Ababa were not paying attention—or were not paying enough attention—to the issue of nationality. In turn, the attention he paid to the political system the student movement described as "feudal," which located the struggle in the entire national space while also recognising specificities in the south due to the cultural domination by the north, was secondary. His concept of domination dissociates local and national spaces.

For his part, Zebdewos Chama frequently interprets the struggle of the Wolaita students as being directed against the "Amhara." For him, the central issue at the time was "to be freed […] from the bondage of Amhara." But he immediately adds: "When I say 'Amhara,' this means 'Menilek's Amhara.' […] Not all the Amhara people…"[41] He therefore refers specifically to the system of domination set up in Wolaita—and by extension in the south—following the conquest by the Ethiopian army in 1894. Zebdewos Chama uses the formulations "Haile Selassie regime" and "Amhara regime" interchangeably. Although his dissociation of spaces appears to be less clear-cut than Abebe Fola's, he seems to favour, through his past opposition to the imperial regime, the question of the oppression exercised by the north over the south. Ultimately, Abebe Fola and Zebdewos Chama situate social injustices within a perspective of the oppression of nationalities. Do they believe this today, in the context of federalism and the current government's emphasis on "nationality rights," or did they already believe it in the 1960s and 1970s? It seems that the latter version is correct: apparently they felt more marginalised as Wolaita than they did as peasant children. They consistently and emotionally emphasise the humiliations and daily struggle involved in living in a social world—that of the school and the city—in which their identity was denigrated.

[40] Abebe Fola, interview, November 2009.
[41] Zebdewos Chama, interview, November 2010.

Others, on the contrary, seem to view the "nationality issue" as secondary, or as not even a part of their struggle. Saol Akamo says that he committed himself to the "campaign to eradicate thieves" in order to put an end to the oppressive situation in which the peasants lived, which was considered unbearable. He speaks of an oppressive and corrupt administration without blaming the "Amhara," a term he never uses. He also says that he wanted to fight "as others did elsewhere," and so does not individualise Wolaita as a place of oppressive power practices. For their part, Paolos Sorsa and Wanna Dea also do not utter the word "Amhara" at any time. They do not place the Amhara and the Wolaita in opposition to each other, but rather young people and the regime, the *melkegna* and the landlords. They do not seem to believe it is significant whether one or the other was Amhara or Wolaita. The vocabulary they use is one of social classes. For them, the lot of the Wolaita peasants was the same as that of all peasants in Ethiopia. They fought against a feudal power that was exercised on a national scale. The fact that they were the most heavily engaged in the student movement is certainly not insignificant, however. They were, therefore, members of a movement whose goal of overthrowing the regime suggested the entire country as a field of action. While the student movement was divided on the issue of nationality and social classes, it is the latter that seems to have had the greatest influence on the Wolaita student activists of the 1970s. It provided an opportunity to oppose oppressive practices at a local level by projecting the goal of social transformation to the whole country. Thinking about and acting for a different future at a national level meant locating oneself in the time of the nation. As was the case with the faithful generation of the 1940s and 1950s, the national space was conceived as a resource against local forms of domination. This time, however, it was not a political space that was merely to be integrated into: the aim was to transform it.

Conclusion

The generation that was educated in the 1940s and 1950s was generally loyal to the regime. The extensive opportunities for social mobility and the patriotic climate of regained independence invited adherence to school propaganda based on nationalism and a personality cult—the atmosphere was one of trust in the school, and the regime and Haile Selassie. National integration and assimilation were also encouraged. In contrast, the generation educated over the following two decades was anti-establishment. Nationally, the administration and the economy were no longer able to absorb all the graduates. In Wolaita, the number of students increased significantly, particularly as a result of the increasing enrolment of young people from rural areas, at a time when opportunities were becoming scarcer. This revealed the limitations of the emperor's political project, whose autocracy proved to be an end in itself despite the tireless preaching about progress in the school space. In the 1960s, the discrepancy

between the assimilationist and progressive discourse of the state on the one hand, and the misery of the peasant world and the oppressive practices of the local administration on the other, was revealed in all its violence.

There can be no question that the political actions involved only a minority of pupils and teachers—about a hundred during the "campaign to eradicate thieves" out of more than 1,500 pupils in the town of Soddo—but it was a powerful minority: a hundred or so people in contact with the national student movement through the school network and linked to the surrounding countryside by family ties represented a political force in a town of 10,000 inhabitants. This was just an incubation phase, however, and a more intense politicisation process was to take place in the early years of the revolution, during the struggle against the establishment of the Derg military regime between 1974 and 1978.

Schools and the Nation
in the Mid-1970s: Negotiated Identities

In the 1940s and 1950s, schooling in Wolaita was a uniquely urban phenomenon that mainly involved the children of political elites from the north and children of Wolaita who were co-opted and assimilated by the authorities. From the end of the 1950s, the idea that school education might be an instrument of integration through assimilation and social uplift began to make its way, very modestly, into rural areas, although the feeling of mistrust towards the dominant culture of the north did not disappear. One section of the population of Wolaita viewed the national space as a resource for emancipating themselves from the relations of domination that governed local society. The administration remained the main provider of employment for graduates. Social mobility worked well in the years of reconstruction and centralisation between 1941 and the early 1960s, but once the administration had been built and autocracy achieved, bottlenecks emerged. A timid demand for education arose in the Wolaita countryside just as the system's capacity to absorb graduates was shrinking.

At the same time, from the beginning of the 1960s, tensions arose in Soddo as more and more rural children arrived in schools. These rural young people were seen as a threat by the dominant minority, who lived off the exploitation of peasants. The school system's objective of assimilation ran up against the local organisation of power. In addition, these pupils did not only come from economically exploited, politically dominated and culturally marginalised rural areas: the overwhelming majority came from Wolaita families who had converted to Protestantism. They had their first schooling in the education centres that had been temporarily set up by Governor Germame Neway in 1958–59 or in the Protestant schools that dotted the countryside from the late 1950s onwards.

In people's memories of rural Wolaita, Germame Neway embodied the defence of the oppressed against an arbitrary power. As for Protestantism, it had been appropriated by the Wolaita as a source of identity and moral regeneration in the face of the power that was oppressing them. The pupils from the Protestant countryside were determined to make themselves a place in the nation without, however, fully complying with the criteria of belonging

imposed by the central government. They were willing to take an Amharic name and speak Amharic, but abandoning Protestantism to join the national Tewahedo Church would have cost too much. Thanks to their schooling, they had the ambition of becoming Ethiopians while also remaining Wolaita, of entering the national space without totally losing their identity and of taking their place in the nation, even if it meant having to force the door open. For the central government and Wolaita's urban society "orthodox" Christianity was a pillar of national identity. It was just a short step to come to doubt the patriotism of those who refused to adopt the national religion, who were pouring into government schools in large numbers from rural Protestant schools that were difficult for the government to control.

While students from rural areas can be seen to have been a privileged minority compared to the overwhelming majority, who remained apart from the movement towards schooling, their experience of school was not without violence. Teaching content and practices reminded them constantly that they were moving into the world of the "other", a world in which they were not particularly welcome. Sarcasm and hostility from both teachers and students from the dominant class were often the response to their desire to move up the social ladder. Schools, which were supposed to encourage them, also put obstacles in their way. Nevertheless, the school system succeeded in creating an esprit de corps among the pupils, so that it was possible to speak of graduates as a social group in their own right. This was the result of the limited number of pupils who attended school, as well as the pedagogical arrangements in schools, which had specific political socialisation objectives. The students learned that they were to be the leaders of the nation, that their efforts were to be devoted to serving king and country for the common good, with the whole process being labelled under the category of "progress." This discourse burdened them with heavy responsibilities, and this socialisation had the opposite effect for Haile Selassie's regime: to its advantage in the 1940s and 1950s, and to its disadvantage in the two decades that followed.

Between 1941 and 1974, the discourses and forms of political socialisation at work in schools remained unchanged. The emperor was still the man who had saved Ethiopia from Italian colonisation, the father who watered the country with his benefits, the enlightened guide who embodied the future. Students of the 1940s and 1950s wanted to serve their country by being loyal to the regime. Nationally, the two decades following the liberation from Italian occupation were a period of intense patriotism and a belief in a future of progress. Pupils in Wolaita were particularly exposed to this atmosphere, which strongly permeated the school space. The pupils of the 1960s and 1970s, like their elders, wanted to serve their country, but the context was now very different. The patriotic fervour of the 1950s and 1960s had faded, and nationalist pride in being the only uncolonised country in Africa gave way in the early 1960s to

a bitter sense of being one of the poorest countries on a now largely liberated continent. This was blamed on the inertia of the regime. In Wolaita, the regime did not seem ready to reform a power system, an economic structure and forms of cultural discrimination that kept the vast majority marginalised. The rhetoric of progress to which students were constantly exposed had not been followed up. The regime had not kept its promises, and the pupils were no longer able to believe in Haile Selassie.

However, they had absorbed the belief that they had to lead and serve the nation in the name of progress. Some were therefore inclined to reformulate the school discourse in terms of the discrepancies between it and the social realities of their region. This requirement presented itself to them at the same time as students in Addis Ababa, with whom they were in contact, were adopting the Marxist ideas that were circulating in university campuses internationally. As adapted to the Ethiopian situation, these ideas gave rise to demands expressed in the slogans "Land to the tiller" and "Education for all". While these slogans may not appear very original at first glance, they could not fail to be invested with precise content by the students of Wolaita, and in 1970, school propaganda about the emperor and progress seemed to be a pallid notion in the face of students and pupils who had rubbed shoulders with Marxism, and who were convinced that they had to guide the nation.

Part 2

Education under the Derg: Emancipation and Encadrement (1978–1991)

In April 1976, the new government promulgated the programme of the National Democratic Revolution, which set out the broad directions of the new national policy. The Derg declared that "scientific socialism" had been officially adopted, and committed the nation to the construction of a "socialist Ethiopia." This political project implied a new way of thinking about the nation, its future and consequently its education system. Together with the disappearance of the aristocracy, the Derg announced the emancipation of those who had been oppressed in the past: peasants, marginalised populations in the south and women. These objectives required mass education with the objective of building a new society. The new education policy was developed with the participation of East German pedagogues, who replaced North American expatriates in the wake of the changes in alliances brought about by the revolution.

The feudal system was considered responsible for the fact that Ethiopia was one of the most "backward" countries in the world.[1] This was why the programme of the National Democratic Revolution announced that the objectives of the revolution were: "To completely abolish feudalism, imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism from Ethiopia and, with the united effort of all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces, build a new Ethiopia and lay a strong foundation for the transition to socialism."[2] Although the term seems strange, "bureaucratic capitalism" referred to the alliance of the Ethiopian "feudal class" and US imperialism as the particular system used for the oppression of Ethiopians under Haile Selassie's regime.[3] Breaking away from "backwardness" meant fighting those who had made this system work. The notion of the "class enemy" (የመደብ ጠላት) then appeared in official rhetoric. The nation was redefined on an egalitarian basis, and would be cemented by class consciousness, and united in the construction of the new society. The programme of the National Democratic Revolution announced the promotion of nationalities that had been oppressed in the past.[4] It was, the "monarchy of divine right" that had divided Ethiopians along national, regional, religious, linguistic and sectarian lines.[5] The Derg

[1] MOI, *Ethiopia in Revolution* (1977), 6.
[2] PMGE, *Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia* (20 April 1976), 1.
[3] MOI, *Ethiopia in Revolution* (1977), 20–21.
[4] PMGE, *Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia* (1976), 5.
[5] MOI, *Ethiopia in Revolution* (1977), 20.

proclaimed the abolition of the cultural domination of the Christian North over the Muslim and "pagan" south, and in so doing, the new regime proposed a form of secular nationalism that would be free from the religious, social and cultural discrimination of the past (Clapham 1988, 195). But any idea of self-determination was excluded. The definition of common enemies and the equality of nationalities was intended to create a nationwide sense of class solidarity that transcended particular identities. Finally, under the overthrown regime, Ethiopian women had been subjected to the dual oppression of class and gender.[6] But the programme of the National Democratic Revolution declared that this would no longer be the case in socialist Ethiopia: "There will not be any sort of discrimination among […] sexes. No citizen will be accorded special privilege in his or her political, economic and social undertaking on the basis of […] sex."[7] The Derg announced that women's liberation was an integral component of national policies. The three categories to be mobilised in the service of the egalitarian redefinition of the nation were ranked in descending order of importance: class, nationality and gender. Only in a united Ethiopia cemented by class consciousness could nationalities and then women achieve emancipation.

The school system, which had hitherto been oriented towards a capitalist industrial society, was to be pointed in the direction of socialist countries. More generally, the official adoption of "scientific socialism" meant a change in international alliances. Between 1976 and 1989, six work plans were established between the Ethiopian ministries of Education, Culture and Health and their East German counterparts. The Ethiopian government was interested in educational cooperation with East Germany because its school system was considered one of the best among the socialist models. For its part, the GDR sought to orient the Ethiopian school system towards its own model through the design of educational policies and curricula, and the training of administrative and teaching staff (Haile-Gabriel 2006, 74–76). The school system of Haile Selassie's regime was accused of having been aimed exclusively at creating a loyal administration in order to ensure that the same class remained in power. The limited spread of school education was the result of a deliberate choice by the monarchy, [which] had kept the population in ignorance in order to better be able to oppress it.[8] The National Democratic Revolution, on the contrary, announced that "There will be an educational programme that will provide free education, step by step, to the broad masses. Such a programme will aim at intensifying the struggle against feudalism,

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[6] Ibid., 39.
[7] PMGE, *Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia* (1976), 6.
[8] MOE, *Education in Socialist Ethiopia…* (1984), i.

imperialism and bureaucratic capitalism. All necessary measures to eliminate illiteracy will be undertaken."[9]

The eradication of illiteracy was a priority because it was understood that illiteracy, poverty and marginalisation overlapped. A literate population was the first step towards a general education, which would ensure the mobilisation of everyone for the common good, a prerequisite for a collective escape from poverty. Under Haile Selassie, the school system had provided an elitist education, based on the argument that a minority of enlightened people would guide the nation towards progress. The Derg announced a general basic education for development from below. In 1980, the Ministry of Education specified the three general objectives of the new school policy in a document titled *General Objectives for Ethiopian Education: education for scientific consciousness, production and a socialist consciousness*.[10] While the National Democratic Revolution's programme included major educational principles that were common to all socialist regimes, the *General Objectives for Ethiopian Education* are strongly reminiscent of the pedagogical discourses of the GDR. Like its East German counterpart, Ethiopian pedagogy envisaged the formation of a complete personality, a "new man" who would build a "new society" through a polytechnic education linking theory and practice.[11] Building a socialist society implied an integrated education that was concerned with the political awareness and the technical, scientific and intellectual skills of individuals, while also paying special attention to ethics and moral qualities.

In the 1980s, the Ministry of Education also mobilised the concept of the "learning society," which had been in vogue in international institutions such as UNESCO since the 1970s. In the preface to the booklet *Education in Socialist Ethiopia: Origins, Reorientation, Strategy for Future Development*, the Minister of Education, Bililign Mandefro, explained: "We believe that education in Ethiopia has now been set on a course which will result in the creation of a LEARNING SOCIETY. Through the generations to come, that learning society will transform Ethiopia."[12] Based on a recognition that contemporary societies were undergoing permanent change and that education must be adapted to this situation, the notion of a "learning society" emphasised education for all throughout a person's life, which must extend beyond schools to children and adults alike. Its first theorisations were developed by liberal education researchers in the late 1960s (Jarvis 2000). Their aim was to adapt the circulation of knowledge to transformations in the market and the capitalist economy, and to enable people to live in a world of increasingly rapid change.

[9]MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 3–4.
[10]MOE, *General Objectives for Ethiopian Education* (1980).
[11]MOE, *Education in Socialist Ethiopia…* (1984), 15.
[12]Ibid.

In the concept of the "learning society," Ethiopian school decision-makers did not mean an education that was adapted to the market, but rather a society in which teaching and learning would be integrated into daily activities, in which communities would be the actors of their education within a dynamic of social transformation.

In order to achieve this educational project, the Derg implemented an ambitious school policy that extended to non-formal and formal education alike. Before that, however, the strengthening of its power went through an extremely violent and striking revolutionary moment (Chapter 6). The regime launched a national literacy campaign, which lasted from 1979 until the fall of the regime in 1991, with the aim of totally eradicating illiteracy (Chapter 7). This campaign was carried out in conjunction with a major extension of schooling to rural areas (Chapter 8). Lesson content was modified to correspond to the new political project, and transmitted the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism and advocated planning, collectivisation and industrialisation on the Soviet model (Chapter 9). Power relations within the school space were transformed. Discrimination based on cultural criteria diminished, while the violence of the pedagogical relationship intensified sharply alongside the Derg's violent practice of power (Chapter 10).

Chapter 6

The School Environment
and The Revolution: From Political
and Educational Mobilisation
to the Red Terror (1974–1978)

The four years between 1974 and 1978 saw the overthrow of Haile Selassie, followed by the gradual takeover of central power by the Derg military regime. This process ultimately led to a dictatorship by one man: Mengestu Haile-Mariam. Marxism-Leninism was adopted as the official doctrine of the state. The old political class—the landed aristocracy and high-level members of the administration of Haile Selassie's regime—was replaced. The country's economic structures were radically transformed by a wave of nationalisations, in particular the land reform of March 1975, which brought all land under state control. The class of *melkegna* and landowners was destroyed, which had a major impact in the south, where large estates and tenant farming were widespread. The education system was at the heart of the revolutionary processes in different ways. The new regime entrusted it with the mission of bringing the revolution to rural areas through literacy, political education and the implementation of agrarian reforms: it was the vector of the revolution that connected the peripheries with the dynamics of the centre. However, a significant number of revolutionaries did not accept replacement of the "feudal" system by a military dictatorship. In Addis Ababa, as in the provinces, high school pupils, university students and teachers fought for the establishment of a civilian government. This chapter looks at the dynamics at work in Addis Ababa and Wolaita, and examines these four years of social transformation through the experience of the school community and the position it occupied between the central power held by the Derg and the rural world.

1. Revolutionary events and the seizure of power by the Derg
After the end of the 1950s and the completion of the process of centralising power, Haile Selassie's regime entered a phase of inertia (Clapham 2007, 125) while the social expectations of large sectors of the urban population became more pressing. By the early 1970s, the ideas formed within the student

movement had spread among the urban population. Members of the urban middle classes had graduated from university or secondary schools, which were the main places for the development and dissemination of social criticism. The regime's rigidity stood in stark contrast to the political and social expectations of large sectors of Addis Ababa's population. The disengagement was also apparent in the provinces. In the 1960s, violently suppressed revolts shook rural areas both in the north and south of the country (Gebru 1991). As the history of schools in Wolaita from the late 1960s shows us, there was a glaring gap between a regime that gave legitimacy to its existence through the idea of progress and the structural reality of oppression and misery that seemed destined to last forever. In the south, the contradictions between the imposed Amharisation project and the class interests of the local elites, who wished to maintain cultural distinctions in the name of reproducing social hierarchies, led to an impasse.

While the number of unemployed graduates was multiplying in the cities, power was monopolised by a class that was barely changing at all. Because Haile Selassie only envisioned obedient civil servants, the ruling class was distinguished by a lack of imagination and political courage. As a result, it never earned the esteem of the population (Markakis & Nega 1978, 77). The example of Germame Neway in Wolaita, among others, revealed that no one who showed any initiative remained in office for long. The political elites in the south were a group of *melkegna* and landowners who were primarily concerned with maintaining control over their tenants. In short, those in positions of power worked to maintain a status quo that was crumbling on all sides. Meanwhile, the old emperor seemed to be in a state of weightlessness. While a terrible famine ravaged Tigray and Wello in 1972, and another decimated the peasants on his own estate a few kilometres north of Addis Ababa, Haile Selassie continued with his routine of making diplomatic visits, distributing diplomas to university and secondary school students in the capital, handing out official titles and rewarding loyal subjects.

1.1. *Civilians: against the educational reforms and the rising cost of living*
It was in the context of these structural impasses that a series of sector-based demands converged and led to a revolutionary state of affairs at the beginning of 1974. The education issue was one of the causes of discontent that came together to precipitate the fall of the regime. In 1971–72, a vast project to review and reform the school system was begun by the Ministry of Education with a view to addressing the problems of widespread illiteracy and unemployment among young graduates (Tekeste 2006, 16). Called *The Education Sector Review*, it was funded by the World Bank, and began operating in early 1972. Its mission was to analyse the education system and its capacity to promote Ethiopia's economic, social and cultural

development, and to suggest avenues for reform (Teshome 1979, 184). More precisely, its primary task was to control access to secondary education so that there would not be an excessive number of young people in the labour market. The second was to develop a policy specifically directed towards rural areas that had been neglected until then.

There was opposition to *The Education Sector Review* from the outset because of its elitist composition: key actors within the system such as teachers were not consulted. The Education Sector Review Report, which was completed two years later, in 1974, was classified as "secret," thereby turning mistrust into hostility. Disclosure of the selected proposals quickly led to a strong feeling of discontent within the school community (Paulos 2006, 171). In particular, the proposal for the strict regulation of access to secondary education was seen as directly affecting the poorest, as the rich could go to one of the many private schools. On 18 February 1974, strikes and demonstrations broke out in the capital. Events turned confrontational when taxi drivers announced on the same day that they would be striking against the government's decision to ban a fare increase, even though the 1973 crisis had led to a significant rise in the price of petrol. Students joined them, and luxury cars and public buses, the latter being the personal property of the emperor, were stoned (Bahru 2002, 231).

On 22 February, the government suspended implementation of the Education Sector Review Programme. On 28 February, Prime Minister Aklilu Habte-Wold announced his resignation and that of his government, and Endalkachew Mekonnen, an aristocrat known for his liberal ideas, was appointed in his place. On 1 March, 5,000 students demonstrated, singing the Ho Chi Minh march. On 3 March, the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU), the official trade union, joined the protesters. On 5 March, a tired and overwhelmed Haile Selassie announced a reform package on the radio, but by then the movement had spread too widely and the government was too discredited to satisfy the protesters. The general strike, which was already a *de facto* reality, was declared on 7 March. No sector of urban society remained outside the movement (Lefort 1981, 84).

1.2. *The military: against their living conditions and the contemptuous attitude of officers*

Events were moving quickly in Addis Ababa as a result of the civilian population's actions, and the military barracks had already begun to move. On 12 January 1974, the soldiers of the Fourth Division of the Negele military camp in southern Sidamo mutinied in protest against poor food, lack of water and the master-servant relations imposed by their officers. Shortly thereafter, it was the turn of the airmen at the Debre Zeyt Base to protest against their low wages. In February, the Second Division based in Eritrea mutinied,

taking events to a higher level. On the night of 25–26 February, officers were arrested before the soldiers seized public buildings. A communiqué broadcast on Asmara radio made their demands known and called for a change of government (Lefort 1981, 82; Bahru 2002, 230). Between January and March 1974, these protest movements, which shook streets and barracks alike, set the revolutionary dynamic in motion. By the end of February, the military had begun to organise to coordinate their demands. On 28 June 1974, they publicly announced the existence of the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, the Police and the Territorial Army, the official name of the Derg. It was a form of military parliament made up of a few hundred people, with representatives from every unit in the country (although the units quickly lost control over their representatives). The Derg set up a provisional military government, with Lieutenant-General Aman Mikael Andom as president and Mengestu Haile-Mariam and Atnafu Abate as vice-presidents (Bahru 2002, 233–34). State power was temporarily shared with the civilian government of Prime Minister Endalkachew Mekonnen (Andargachew 1993, 170), but on 22 July, he was dismissed from office. On 15 and 16 August, the Derg dismantled the Ministry of the Pen and the Crown Council, which were key institutions of imperial power, and in the weeks that followed it confiscated the enterprises belonging to the emperor and his family (Lefort 1981, 100). The coup de grâce came on September 11. A BBC documentary revealing the hidden famine of 1973 was broadcast on national television, interspersed with images showing the luxury in which the emperor lived. The next day, Haile Selassie was deposed (Bahru 2002, 235). On the same day, the Derg adopted the name Provisional Military Administrative Council and issued the first proclamations in its own name. On 24 November, it announced to a stunned population that President Aman Mikael Andom and 57 dignitaries of the former regime had been executed (Clapham 1988, 44).

1.3. *Military power and civil opposition*

The civilians and military personnel who took part in the revolution must not be considered as homogenous or antagonistic blocks in all respects. First of all, there were links between the students and non-commissioned officers. Unlike many armies in which officer recruitment was voluntary, the growth of the Ethiopian army in the 1950s and 1960s was ensured by students selected from among the best in secondary schools being forced into a military career. Army officers stationed in the capital attended evening classes at Addis Ababa University and were permeated by the political atmosphere there (Clapham 1988, 34). There were also divisions within the military itself. The seizure of power by Mengestu Haile-Mariam thus involved the physical elimination of his Derg rivals.

For their part, in the early months of 1975, civilians were divided over the correct attitude to be adopted towards the military. Both positions were represented by the two main parties from the student movement, the Meison (the Amharic acronym for the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement) and the EPRP (the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party). The former adopted a strategy of a "critical alliance" with the Derg to form the intellectual component of the regime and strengthen its position through control of key organs of power (Bahru 2008, 434–35). For its part, the Derg was in dire need of civilian allies. Members of the Meison held ministerial positions and controlled important civilian institutions during the early years of the revolution, including the Yekatit '66 Political School for the training of cadres and the Provisional Office of Mass Organizational Affairs (POMOA), which was responsible for organising the masses (Clapham 1988, 53). For the EPRP, on the other hand, a military government could only lead to the establishment of a dictatorship, and in its members' views, the students had not fought against Haile Selassie's regime for two decades to achieve this.[1] It was the party with by far the largest number of members and supporters.

1.4. *The adoption of Marxism-Leninism by the Derg and the revolutionary reforms*

Holding power but lacking a defined political line, the Derg adopted Marxism-Leninism within a few short months. The *Ethiopia Tikdem!* (Ethiopia First) Declaration of July 1974 was no more than a vague slogan, with only patriotic content and no coherent programme (Addis 1975, 109). On 20 December of the same year, the Ten-Point Programme was launched. Point 1 stated that Ethiopia would remain united, without "ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural differences." The first message, Ethiopia's inalienable unity, was clear and was addressed directly to the Eritrean secessionists (Prunier 2007, 141). "Without differences" meant that the cultural domination of the Christian North was officially abolished. Point 3 announced a "specifically Ethiopian socialism," using the neologism *hebretesebawinet*. The Ethiopian economy would be placed in the hands of the state in the name of the people (Lefort 1981, 122–23). The political content of the revolution had been defined by the student movement, and in order to assume power, the Derg had no choice but to adopt the discourse and the reforms demanded by the movement, which had provided the ideological weapons for the struggle against Haile Selassie's regime (Bahru 2002, 244). The revolution was born out of intense aspirations for progress, and once in power following the violent elimination of its rivals, the Derg had to very rapidly commit itself to lifting Ethiopia

[1] Paolos Sorsa, interview, December 2010.

out of exploitation and misery. By appropriating the socialist discourse and the project of the civilian opposition, the military was equipping itself with consistent intellectual weapons, a progressive discourse and a programme to be implemented—in a word, it was giving meaning to its seizure of the revolution (Donham 1999, 25). In this way, the Derg made all opposition to its power unwarranted by moving ahead of the civilians on the left, and turned itself into the spearhead of the revolution.

On 1 January 1975, banks, insurance companies and all other financial institutions were nationalised. On 3 February, it was the turn of factories and private companies. In March, land reform, which the students had been demanding since the 1960s, was announced. This measure would conclusively transform the country's social structures. All agricultural land was nationalised and the land returned "to the tiller," which meant the destruction of the aristocracy, which was now deprived of its political and economic base (Clapham 1988, 46–47). By early 1975, Ethiopia was on the road to revolution. However, while the new government was able to implement reforms in the cities, this was not the case in the countryside, where its control was far from assured. This was to be the task of the National Development Through Cooperation Campaign, which is better known by its Amharic name *zemecha* (campaign), which was launched in December 1974.

2. The *zemecha* experience: the revolution in the provinces

Inspired by the major campaigns in socialist countries, China and Cuba in particular, the *zemecha* was also based on the logic of the Ethiopian University Service, but on a very different scale: consisting of 48,000 students, secondary school students and teachers, the *zemach* (those who campaigned) were sent to the provinces to teach literacy, to win people over to the revolution and to implement land reforms (Lefort 1981, 144). The Derg saw at least two advantages in launching the *zemecha*. On the one hand, as a mobilising force, the school community would be far more devoted to socialism than provincial civil servants would be, while on the other it helped to move away from Addis Ababa a social group that was overwhelmingly hostile to a military government (Clapham 1988, 49). Indeed, their departure took place in an atmosphere of jubilation. During the parade organised for the departure on 22 December, those who had considered Mengistu a fascist a few weeks earlier now sang his praises (Donham 1989, 29). The *zemecha* is an absolutely central moment in Ethiopia's recent social history. Students and teachers from Addis Ababa joined an equally numerous group of about 50,000 secondary school students from the provinces (Balsvik 2007, 52). The school community was given the central role of involving the whole country in the revolutionary process by teaching, working and sharing the daily lives of the peasants. The

Participants of the "Zemecha" program at a Rally before leaving for the countryside to educate and organize the oppressed peasantry.

Figure 11. Departure for the zemecha

actors were profoundly impacted by this moment, and their experience of it merits examination.

Although provincial schools took part in the revolution, attention was focused on Addis Ababa, where issues involving the entire country were at stake. Between the emperor's removal on 12 September and the announcement of the *zemecha* at the end of December, Addis Ababa was in turmoil. In Wolaita, on the other hand, the atmosphere in schools was visibly expectant. As former student Tsehai Zerihun remembers:

When I reach[ed] adolescent age, Ethiopian revolution came. That was Derg's regime. At that moment all schools in Ethiopia were closed and everybody was

forecasting the future, what will be the future, and we were expecting from Derg what policy will be given to the schools. Later on, they declared the *zemecha*.[2]

For two years, young pupils from the provinces who were at least in Grade 9 participated in the *zemecha* alongside teachers and students from Addis Ababa.[3] The youngest were 16 years old, and the oldest were just over 20. For two years, schools were closed and the school community was mobilised in the countryside. Nationally, the *zemach* were spread over 51 centres and 397 stations (Lefort 1981, 144). Yemesrach Alula, a young woman from Wolaita, had just started attending the teacher training centre in Debre Berhan in northern Shewa when the revolution broke out. It was there that she was assigned as a *zemach*. She remembers that 100 boys and 28 girls slept in the same station as her, in separate barracks. They slept on mattresses on the floor and shared three meals a day with the farmers who fed them.[4] There was one station per *wereda*, from which the hundred or so *zemach* were deployed daily to the villages. Their presence greatly transformed the atmosphere of the countryside. In Wolaita, Tsehai Zerihun remembers:

> Fieldworkers were working during Majesty [Haile Selassie] also […] but they were not so many, like during the campaign. During Haile Selassie regime, you saw one fellow, in motorbike, in one *wereda*, like that. But after the campaign what do you see? In every *wereda*, 100, 200 youngsters were running here and there teaching the modern things.[5]

The mission of the *zemecha* was to change people's mentality and improve material conditions in the countryside; this is what must be understood by the term "modern."

2.1. *Teaching*

In order to teach reading, writing and arithmetic, the *zemach* were provided with "literacy kits" containing an Amharic alphabet and the exercises to be suggested. The alphabets were designed to be hung on a tree or nailed to a wall. The kits also contained three booklets. The first was made up of sentences to be read on topics relating to health and agriculture, the second consisted of exercises in oral Amharic and the third was a course in basic arithmetic, with exercises based on examples from rural life covering simple transactions such as carpentry and work in the field (Paulos 1980, 21). This basic education was aimed at the largest number of people, and was intended

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[2]Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.
[3]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.
[4]Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010.
[5]Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.

to be an initiation, a first step towards a general education that would support future social transformations.

> We worked for the basic education campaign because we were secondary school students. Those who couldn't read or write, who couldn't sign, had to acquire this knowledge for the future, to raise their children. To have access to all kinds of technology, we have to learn. We taught a lot so that they would have the chance to learn. […] At that time, we were teaching reading to the peasants. When someone knows how to read, we can share information with them: what should we leave behind? What is the use of learning? At least read and teach it to your children. If the father knows how to read, if he knows the usefulness of school, he can make his child learn. When a child is educated, it is the family that is educated.[6]

Literacy was the first step towards creating an enabling environment for education in rural societies. Once families came into contact with education, they would ensure its renewal. Reading was seen as an essential prerequisite for social renewal, the lever on which future progress would rely. In a literate population, access to information and the circulation of ideas and techniques would be facilitated. Peasants would abandon those values and practices that were seen as obstacles to progress. Bringing education into the heart of families was particularly important for women, at whom the teaching by female students was more specifically directed. As mothers (or mothers-to-be), women needed to view their children's schooling as normal practice. The *zemach* girls had to make sure that women sent "the children they gave birth to school. The Derg sent us to teach this."[7] In 1980, five years after the *zemecha*, the Ethiopian academic Paulos Milkias accurately summed up the prevailing view:

> The Alphabetization Program of the *zemecha* was perhaps the most important single project of the campaign, since it is only through a literate enlightened citizenry that the pace of social and economic development in Progressive Ethiopia could be enhanced and broadened. (Paulos 1980, 20)

The campaign required graduates and school pupils to participate in a programme of political and social construction (Paulos 1980, 23) aimed at peasants, who were perceived as being indistinctly conservative. This raised the ambiguity at play between a form of condescension and a sense of solidarity, a tension that had its origins in the school myth of progress and the binary reading it implied of a social world between modernity and tradition. Education gave those who had benefitted from it the right to lead those who had been "left behind." According to the aims of the *zemecha* as proclaimed

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[6]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.
[7]Yaluse Mita, interview, November 2009.

in the press, as many people as possible had to learn to read and write in order to close the gap between the illiterate and the literate. However, the *zemecha* inaugurated a form of pedagogy in which educated people left their ivory towers to make education a truly common activity that was open to everyone, regardless of age, gender, nationality or class (Paulos 1980, 19–23). While some authors have stressed the sense of superiority of certain *zemach* over the ignorant masses (Donham 1999, 45–58), solidarity and respect for the peasants was also widespread.

Education had to be at the service of social transformation in accordance with a path of socialist development: first and foremost, the concept of equality had to be spread throughout society. The *zemach* had good reason to believe that they had been sent to announce equality for all (Balsvik 2007, 58). They believed that following centuries of feudal rule, peasants had incorporated the social order and naturalised their subjugation. In addition, the forms of discrimination and segregation suffered by artisans, who were considered impure (Pankhurst 1999), had to be brought to an end, the status of women had to be improved and the equality of all the nationalities who made up the Ethiopian nation had to be promoted. Donald Donham, who did fieldwork in Maale during the *zemecha*, witnessed speeches by *zemach* in which they exhorted peasants to learn how to recognise their true enemies, who were the lords and *balabbat*, not the blacksmiths and potters (Donham 1999, 46, 57). In Wolaita, Tsehai Zerihun put these ideas into practice. At the age of 16, she took part in the *zemecha* as part of an already well-established French Catholic association called *Agri-Service Éthiopie*, which agreed to follow the official guidelines. Within this framework, together with an expatriate from Belgium, Tsehai Zerihun organised a women's cooperative. They both wanted to make the women farmers collaborate with the women artisans.

> I remember we start this cotton spinning association. We made that cotton association purposely to make all mothers come together, discuss together. In Embecho, it is after Dubbo, there were pottery people, the pottery ladies were not allowed to join the other ladies. They have superstitions, they say… evil eye, *buda*, they call it *buda*. So we went to […] those they assume to be evil eye with Kami, the Belgium lady.
>
> These ladies said: "Don't go, especially don't take the white lady, the *buda* will eat her, the spirit will make her sick."
>
> "We will see, we will check," I said, "if the spirit makes her anything, if that spirit exist we will check," I said.
>
> When we entered the potters' compound, they were wondering.
>
> "What makes you wonder?" I said.
>
> "Before you nobody came to us outside our society," they said.
>
> "Now we came to tell that you will have a cotton spinning association where you have spinning work together with those ladies living in this cooperative."

"Oh! They may think that we will eat them, how can we go to there?" they said. They were wondering.

"No, we will put you together in such a big hall, you will work together, from now on this type of things will be avoided."

So we brought them on the programme, we went again, we brought them, we brought the other ones. We started teaching them together, spinning cotton together, again selling together, getting benefit together. So, this was simply suspicion. We checked that there was nothing, nobody eats nobody.[8]

Tsehai Zerihun says she does not know what the long-term impact of this initiative was, but reports that it worked well during the two years she was in charge of the cooperative. The young *zemach* also explained to the women that relationships within a couple had to be balanced.[9] In Wolaita, this was particularly relevant to the practice of polygamy.

They were raising that their husbands had wives, three, four at the same area, one here, the other one here.

"They make us wild," they say. So they were laughing and said, "Our life is very hard."

The husband get[s] children from three wives, around 20 children. And they said, "He doesn't suffer." Why doesn't he suffer? Because she works herself, she thinks for her children.

"Later, I will think for the children," he said. So if it's possible: one husband, one wife, family responsibility, to make him feel family responsibility.

Once in a month, we asked the women their convenient time and we go there, we collected all of them under a tree, under shade, and we discussed. First of all, we have to have family planning. Having birth for too many children and making suffering, disease suffering, food suffering, clothes suffering, suffering for everything is not good.[10]

The Ethiopian student movement had shown little interest in the gender issue (see Netsanet, Zenebework, Original, and Yeraswork testimonies in Bahru 2010). Unlike other social concepts promoted by the *zemecha*, these ideas on how a family unit should function did not come from the socialist concepts that had been developed during the struggle against Haile Selassie's regime. They corresponded, line by line, to those in the home economics textbooks used in Ethiopian secondary schools in the five years before the revolution.[11] No change in gender relations was promoted: the aim was to try to mitigate the abuse, caused by male domination by encouraging couples to maintain balance and peaceful relationships.

[8]Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.
[9]Yaluse Mita (teacher), interview, November 2009.
[10]Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.
[11]For example: MOEFA, *Home Economics for Grade 9, Book One* (1974 [1969]), 15–21.

The different "nationalities" that made up the "nation" also had to be equal. On the occasion of the *zemecha*, after three decades of Amharic being imposed on schools, teaching materials were created in several different languages. The regime disclosed the attention it dedicated to the "nationality question" that had been so much a part of the student movement since the late 1960s. If Amharic was to be taught as a national language, literacy was also to be taught in vernacular languages. The first official evaluation, which was announced a year after the start of the campaign, reported that 4.5 million books had been published in Amharic, Tigrigna, Oromo and Wolaita languages (Lefort 1981, 144). However, Yaluse Mita, who taught in Wolaita throughout the campaign, does not recall any teaching materials in Wolaita language, although it was in constant use, for obvious pedagogical reasons.

> There was no Wolaitigna at that time. When we went to teach in the countryside, there was nothing written in Wolaitigna. But we taught by translating, we are local children, we speak Wolaitigna. So we are Wolaita and with us there were others who came from all over Ethiopia who didn't know Wolaitigna, but they taught and we translated. It was organized in Amharic and we translated.[12]

As the young people from the capital did not speak the local language any more than the peasants spoke Amharic, local pupils, being bilingual, were indispensable to the teaching process. Educated Wolaita, young people, taught directly in the local language or served as translators. This was not the first time Wolaita peasants had been educated in their own language, of course. Protestant missionaries had taught the Bible using it in the 1930s, but local language education had almost disappeared as a result of the intensification of the central government's Amharisation policy from the mid-1940s, clashing with the missionaries and local churches and banning vernacular teaching (Abebe 1998, 167–73.). But this was now a distant memory, and the differences were considerable: this time it was a large-scale policy, and the central state was promoting it.

Along with literacy, the health programme was one of the campaign's priorities. It included an educational component and a vaccination campaign. Education was entrusted to women in particular. *Zemach* girls taught courses on diet, hygiene, childcare and household management.[13] The idea of transforming family practices and—by extension—society through women had been brought to Ethiopia by missionaries in the late 19th century, and had spread through the government school system from the 1930s, notably at Empress Menen's Girls' School (Guidi 2016). However, it was from the 1960s

[12]Yaluse Mita, interview, November 2009.
[13]Ibid.

that home economics began to be developed as a subject in all primary and secondary schools throughout the empire. Courses in hygiene, childcare and home economics were specifically designed for girls.[14] But the low level of girls' schooling meant that it did not resonate very strongly. In the logic of mass education promoted by the *zemecha*, the minority of girls who had had a school education had to pass on the education they had received to women as widely as possible. According to official figures, almost one million people received health education. The programme also included the training of village health workers and a vaccination campaign: 1,500 midwives were trained, 224,028 people received the BCG vaccine and 965,806 people were vaccinated against smallpox and 63,856 against tuberculosis (Paulos 1980, 21, 28).

The aim of bringing the revolution to the countryside through basic education was to transform society from below, starting from the family and the peasant village. Fundamental though it may have been, it was not teaching but collective work that occupied the bulk of people's days.

2.2. *Work*

The purpose of this work was to provide the countryside with an infrastructure and forge a cooperative and egalitarian spirit between those educated at school and the peasants, and then among the peasants themselves. In order to create a society in which the educated elites and the peasant masses would work together, and in which everyone would eventually have a literate education, their two worlds also had to understand each other. The condescension of the "learned" towards the "ignorant" and the peasants' mistrust of the urban literate elite both had to be broken down so that they would give way to a horizontal sense of community. By working together, the *zemecha* aimed to shrink the boundaries between intellectuals and producers. In terms of infrastructure, an impressive amount of work was done. According to official figures, 155 schools, 296 clinics, thousands of health centres, 5,981 latrines and 2,452 waste pits were built; 2,269 wells and springs were scoured and cleaned; two million trees were planted; and 300,000 animals were vaccinated (Paulos 1980, 21). The regime's use of the *zemecha* to glorify the revolution and give itself legitimacy may seem exaggerated, but there can be no doubt about the scale of the achievements and the effectiveness of collaborations. The interviews I carried out in Wolaita revealed that the *zemach* and the farmers were working together effectively and enthusiastically,[15] and that the "basic

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[14]MOEFA, *Curriculum Policies and Standards. Teacher Training Institutes* (1965), 41–45; MOEFA, *Elementary School Curriculum Years I-VI* (1970 [1963 EC]), see part 1, chapter 4.

[15]Kassech Mulugeta, interview, December 2009; Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010.

development" was changing the face of the countryside.[16] This confirms work done in other regions of Ethiopia, such as that by Ahmed Hassan Omer in the north of Shewa (Ahmed 2002).

2.3. *The organisation of land reform: a break between the zemach and the Derg*
The literacy activities and shared work were in line with both the policy of the Derg and the wishes of the *zemach*. However, the implementation of the land reform gave rise to important differences. The Derg did not have the administrative means to implement a reform that would attack the rural ruling class directly, and so for this reason, the task was entrusted to the *zemach* (Clapham 2002, 15). At the beginning of 1975, government members at the local level were a long way from joining the revolution. By entrusting the *zemach* with the role of implementing the reform without giving precise directives, the Derg invested them with significant powers. In this period of transition, when there was relative absence of central authority in the provinces, the *zemach* had a great deal of room for manoeuvre. And, "the student activist wing [...] had assigned objectives to the *zemach* that [went beyond] those of the Derg, and had given the *zemecha* a role that was not included among the Derg's intentions and could not be found anywhere in their writings." (Lefort 1981, 144) Many among the *zemach* considered that a real revolution had to be organised from below (Donham 1999, 33). It also seems that, emboldened by their education and their group's militant past, they saw themselves as the legitimate leaders of the revolution.

Events in local areas brought the peasants, the settlers and *balabbat*, the local administration and the *zemach* into conflict (Lefort 1981, 144). The last found themselves at the centre of power relations and local tensions. The events in Wolaita between the announcement of the land reform in March and the end of 1975 show how local contexts and national dynamics interacted to shape specific local situations. First of all, Wolaita may have been in a peripheral position nationally, but it enjoyed a level of regional centrality that was due in particular to its educational situation: there were only two secondary schools for the Sidamo and Gamo-Goffa regions, Yirgalem and Soddo, so Wolaita was a regional capital of education. The presence of secondary school students was an important factor there, and gave the *zemecha* a special colour.

The campaign to eradicate thieves in 1970 and the campaign for the election of peasant judges in 1972–73 had revealed the Wolaita pupils' aversion to *melkegna*, landowners and *balabbats*, whether they were from settlers or local families. The same was true of the peasants. As in most of the southern provinces incorporated at the end of the 19th century, which were

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[16]Yaluse Mita, interview, November 2009.

characterised by particularly harsh power relations for the peasants, land reform was very well received in Wolaita. The disappearance of landlords meant the end of heavy taxation and the ousting of an elite that, from the villages to the province, had extensive political and judicial powers it often used in a discretionary and arbitrary manner. In a word, with the landlords, the power structure set up after the conquest of Wolaita in 1894 by Menilek II's army disappeared, which meant the end of a situation that was perceived as a form of slavery. The desire to bring an end to a system that had been put in place by the central government and the settlers led to a regionalist drive (Lefort 1981, 162), a convergence of the class struggle to drive out the "rich" and a nationalist struggle to drive out the "foreigners" who had arrived from the north. But even though it may be true that the fall of the Haile Selassie regime and the agrarian reforms awakened nationalist feelings in the south, it is very difficult to disentangle or attribute priority to the two strands of class and nationality. The question of "nationalism" in the political consciousness of pupils and peasants needs to be tested against the facts. The property of the wealthy in Soddo was looted on 16 June 1975 by peasants and *zemach*. Their leader, Solomon Wada, was executed by the Derg in July. Nationwide, the autumn of 1975 saw mass desertions by *zemach* due to the proliferation of local conflicts with the regime's cadres. At the same time, the EPRP ordered the *zemach* to return to Addis Ababa to overthrow the Derg. It was also from there that the EPRP spread out on a broad scale among the pupils of Wolaita. René Lefort points out that among the *zemach* who were working in the south, the students from Addis Ababa were hostile to the Derg, while local students were in favour of it (Lefort 1981, 141). This was not the case in Wolaita.

The lack of precise directives from the government initially led to differences of interpretation concerning the political reorganisation of the countryside. According to Wanna Dea, a former Wolaita *zemach*, the regime sent schoolchildren to rural areas with the message to: "Go to the peasants, teach them and mobilize them, after that they can ask for their power, or they can form a party."[17] However, the Derg was thinking of integrating the peasant masses into a single party led from above, which would be a tool for control, whereas the *zemach* were thinking of a party created by the peasants so that they would be able to organise and represent themselves. The statutes and powers of the peasants' associations, the new administrative units created by the agrarian reform, were not clear. The students wanted to turn them into a means of self-government, with judicial powers that would deprive the police and the judiciary of their roles in rural Ethiopia (Markakis & Nega 1978, 134–35). Numerous localised conflicts broke out as a result of the tensions

[17]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.

between the Derg's desire for leadership and the *zemach*'s dream of a rural democracy.

Radicalisation in opposition to the regime began in Wolaita in the summer of 1975. The arrest of Solomon Wada played a central role in the break between the *zemach* in Wolaita and the regime. Those who had come from Addis Ababa left, while the Wolaita secondary school pupils stayed and continued to fight. The Wolaita EPRP committee was immediately formed under the leadership of Melaku Markos, an Addis Ababa University student from Dire Dawa, a city where the EPRP was a powerful force. Former Wolaita EPRP member Paolos Sorsa remembers:

> It was mainly centred on the high school students and high school teachers. So I was among the firsts to organize the Party Committee, the Wolaita Party Committee […] in 1975, in the summertime. So, we were five, one professional from Addis Ababa University, he was the forty-ninth member of the EPRP central committee […] Melaku Markos […]. Melaku Markos being a high school teacher […], his main mission was to promote the ideas or the motto of EPRP to the Wolaita students. So the full organisational structure took place in 1968 Ethiopian Calendar [1975–1976] when we formed the regional party committee.[18]

The EPRP spread gradually. Some of those who became involved had participated in the campaign to eradicate the thieves, while others had become involved in the movement against Haile Selassie's regime in Wolaita shortly afterwards, in the early 1970s. They had already been in contact with the students in Addis Ababa before the revolution, but the militants were very few in number. From September 1975, the EPRP began recruiting in the villages, and from then on, the politicisation process intensified: "After that, we joined the EPRP. There was an EPRP base in the northern part, in the southern part, it was not the same […]. But after the *zemecha*, all was widely distributed in the southern part, especially in Wolaita. The EPRP had great power in Wolaita."[19] The EPRP membership structured opposition to the Derg, and also enabled the widespread distribution of brochures and newspapers. It was there that the pupils in Wolaita, who had mobilised against Haile Selassie's regime "without knowing the ideology"[20], became familiar with Marxism-Leninism. The EPRP magazine *Democracia* was particularly widely read and discussed in reading groups, which multiplied, as they had in the capital.[21] Specific

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[18]Paolos Sorsa, interview, December 2010.

[19]Abraham Worku, interview, January 2011.

[20]Paolos Sorsa, interview, December 2010.

[21]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.

emphasis was placed on the need to fight the establishment of a military regime. According to former member Abraham Worku:

> At that time, we agreed with the EPRP's option, it gives democracy to the people. At that time, there is no democracy. So, we heard the history of military governments, history from Nazi Germans, from Italian Fascists. And, in that time, military governments spread in Africa, most African countries were ruled by the military. This military government had no democracy. So, we struggle for the provisional popular government.[22]

Students spread the demands for a civil government to rural communities. Discussions with farmers took place at secret meetings organised within the framework of farmers' associations that were separate from those organised by the Derg: "We have set up farmers' associations. Not the 'peasants' associations' of the government. We, on the other hand, inside, secretly, with the peasants, those who were aware were all with the EPRP."[23] This was the same technique that had been used in Addis Ababa, where the state closely-monitored organisations that were clandestinely reproduced and affiliated to the EPRP (Markakis & Nega 1978, 155). In the clandestine farmers' associations, the students tried to convince the peasants to organise outside the framework defined by the military. Abraham Worku recalls: "We told them, 'If you organise your state, you will be free, you will have democracy rights. If you stay for the future with this state, you will see great oppression, there is no democracy, you will get the result for the future.'"[24]

The term "your own state" must be interpreted to mean a democratic state organised from below, and not autonomy for Wolaita, let alone independence. Based on interviews with former students, Wolaita nationalism does not appear to have been a driving force in their struggle. The last generation of pupils in Haile Selassie's school system did not think of themselves as being outside the Ethiopian political space. They were not questioning the nation as such, but rather the definition of the criteria for membership of it, and the relations of domination within it. It was a question of reformulating the nation, not of extracting oneself from it. While the EPRP defended different nationalities' right to self-determination, it believed that an Ethiopian nation based on the will of all people to live together would reduce the risk of secession. The Wolaita pupils wanted to affirm the presence of their region and their people in the national political space. By joining the EPRP, the largest national political party at the time, they were taking their struggle from a local to a national level.

[22] Abraham Worku, interview, January 2011.
[23] Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.
[24] Abraham Worku, interview, January 2011.

2.4. *Farmers, the* zemach *and the Derg*

But what of the peasant world, whose consent was an essential element of the power struggle between the Derg and the *zemach*? Initially, the welcome given by the peasants to the *zemach* depended on how they conducted themselves. The pupils were imbued with the idea of progress. The idea was that they would take it to the countryside through education, by attacking forms of behaviour (conservatism, superstition and submission to authority) that were attributed to the peasant world indiscriminately and a priori. They shared the idea that knowledge acquired at school was the key to progress and that possession of knowledge conferred the right to lead (Tekeste 1990, 54). Nevertheless, studies in different regions have shown that the attitudes of the *zemach* varied widely. Different aspects such as their degree of politicisation, their social backgrounds and their level of knowledge of the society in which they found themselves explain this variety of attitudes towards and relations with the peasants. Donald Donham witnessed the arrival of *zemach* in Maale. Here is what he recorded in his field notebook:

> Today, market day, for the first time, four *zemecha* students came to Bala… The leader of the group—a smiling, self-assured, almost arrogant young man about twenty—"lectured the people" as he said. […] With Mao's red book in his hand, this handsome young man addressed the crowd at the market [in Amharic] in great oratorical style […] (Donham 1999, 45).

A young man empowered by his education, his Marxist culture and the mission entrusted to him appeared to want to establish a vertical relationship with the population of a peripheral region, whom it seems he had everything to teach. He spoke in Amharic to a predominantly non-Amharic-speaking population. A few days later, the same group of *zemach* desecrated the sacred tomb of the kings of Maale and burned the bones before breaking the sacred objects and depositing them in the middle of the marketplace, a profane place par excellence (Donham 1999, 52–53). Members of the community went to the *zemach* to express their distress. The *zemach* had knowingly committed a grave desecration. They regarded the local religion as obscurantist, as a collection of superstitions that led to submission to religious authorities who deceived the population (Donham 1999, 57). Donald Donham witnessed an arrogant, childish and authoritarian attitude on the part of *zemach* who wanted to eradicate the past in defiance of what the population might think. Imbued with a sense of certainty that is a feature of messianic actions, they possessed the truth and the peasants only had to submit to their "new law" for their own good. Those who had complained left, and reluctantly accepted the decision of the *zemach*. In Kaffa, the local community's response to a desecration committed by the *zemach* was not of the same tenor: *zemach* were killed (Lefort 1981, 162–63). The struggle for progress against obscurantism thus

gave rise to acts the local population found unacceptable. Alexander Naty, in contrast, did not observe this type of attitude on the part of the *zemach* in Gamo-Goffa, not far from Maale (Naty 2002), and nothing like this seems to have happened in Wolaita either.

There are several reasons for this. Wolaita had nearly a thousand secondary school pupils. The *zemach* from Addis Ababa joined the young people who were on their home territory. The local leader of the campaign was a teacher from the area (Lefort 1981, 162). The students who arrived from elsewhere in Ethiopia depended on the local pupils, who were indispensable translators, in all their daily activities. And many of these pupils were from rural families. Although they believed that peasants should be educated, they did not commit errors based on ignorance of local realities and condescension towards illiterate peasants: these peasants were their parents or the parents of their schoolmates. In this case, would the Wolaita pupils have allowed an attitude of contempt on the part of their elders from Addis Ababa? It is also true that because of its greater proximity to the centre, the relatively important development of education and the spread of Protestantism in the countryside, the realities in Wolaita were not the same as they were in the Maale studied by Donald Donham who wrote about the students' sense of superiority derived from their school education as well as the contempt Christians in the north held for the "heathens" in the south (Donham 1999, 33). These two sources of condescension were greatly diminished in Wolaita.

Yaluse Mita remembers very good relations with the peasants:

በእድገት በሕብረት የትምህርት ዘመቻ ወቅት ወደ አርሶ አደሩ በመዝለቅ ተቀባይነትን አግኝተን ነበር ፤ ደስተኛ ነበሩ ። በዚህም አርሶ አደሩ ሴቶችና ወንዶች በሁለት አመት ውስጥ ማንበብና መጻፍ ችለዋል።

During the education campaign, as we went among [the peasants] to teach, there was joy. The pupils were warmly welcomed, and within two years, both women and men among the farmers had acquired the ability to read and write.[25]

Tsehai Zerihun's experience of her work with women shows that women viewed the *zemecha* as a resource. The initiatives of the young *zemach* seem to have been adhered to by the women farmers, whether they were literacy activities, home economics classes or cooperative activities in the cotton mill.[26] The interviews underline the fact that the literacy activities, the health programme and the collective work were an enriching encounter, and that as a result, the relationship between the *zemach* and the farmers was a warm one.[27]

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[25]Yaluse Mita, interview, November 2009.
[26]Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.
[27]Kassech Mulugeta, interview, December 2009; Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010.

The analysis becomes more complex when one looks at the consequences of the implementation of the land reforms and the political conflict between school educated young people and the Derg. In general, the reforms were enthusiastically welcomed by the peasants in the south, who found themselves freed from the yoke of the *melkegna* and landowners. In a fine text published by the academic journal *Afrique et Histoire*, Demissé Tsiggé, a former student activist and now a writer, recalls: "As the land had been returned to the peasants, and the buildings and the tools of production now belonged to the 'people,' the Derg confiscated the support of the workers from us" (Demissé 2004, 369). The beneficiaries of the reforms would thus have been won over to the cause of the military regime. The case of Wolaita bears witness to a more complex, and above all more evolving, reality. Initially, as seen from the periphery, it was the *zemach* and not the Derg who brought land reform to the countryside. The Wolaita who were former members of the EPRP tell of strong support from the farmers:

> The relations between the *zemach* from the Campaign for Development Cooperation and the farmers were very good. Let me explain. Those who were able to bring about this change were the students, the schoolchildren. Because when we arrived in the countryside, we chased away the *melkegna* from the time of Haile Selassie. "Let the land be shared among those who don't have it, in the future you will eat what only the oppressor used to eat."[28]

For the first three months, from March to June, there can be no doubt that the *zemach* and the farmers were united against the former *melkegna* and landowners. The night of 16 June 1975, when 60,000 peasants accompanied the *zemach* led by Solomon Wada to plunder the homes of the wealthy, should be interpreted as an insurance taken out against their eventual return rather than as an act of revenge. The main objective was to disarm them in order to make their dispossession final after the redistribution of land that had begun in March. René Lefort testifies to the fact that the disarming of the *zemach*, the prohibition against leaving their camp and the subsequent arrest and execution of Solomon Wada by the Derg led to the peasants being unable to understand a regime that finally seemed not to fully support them (Lefort 1981, 162).

Relations with the peasants were transformed with the changing balance of power between the military regime and its civil opposition. During the course of 1975, with a view to limiting opposition to the land reforms by former local elites, university graduates and teachers were appointed to administrative positions in the provinces, and in 1976, in order to put an end to the turmoil in the southern countryside, the Derg decided to take a firm grip of the situation. One of the measures was to renew the administration of the provinces once

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[28]Wanna Dea, interview, December 2010.

again by appointing military or civilian personnel who supported the regime (Markakis & Nega 1978, 150–51). The *zemach* lost all support from the administration, and found themselves isolated. In addition, the Derg was gradually able to strengthen its grip on the rural population by packing the farmers' associations with its supporters, just as it was able to do in the cities through the neighbourhood residents' associations, the *kebele*. The Derg was then able to expand its propaganda and repression against the opposition into rural areas. According to Abraham Worku: "The farmers appreciated, they cooperated with us. But after the state propagated, 'EPRP members are members of the previous state. They want to bring back the previous life conditions to Ethiopia.'"[29]

Oral sources point to a rapid decline in the ties with the peasantry. Propaganda worked because it was essential for the peasants to ensure that the gains made by land reform were sustained. However, once the *melkegna* and landowners had been driven out and the Derg had regained control, the students had few guarantees to offer compared to the regime (Lefort 1981, 163). They had ideas, but they did not have the resources the state did. This, together with their young age, which upset the hierarchies who exercised authority, meant that the *zemach* lost credibility. Finally, the Derg armed the farmers' associations whose members it had won over to its side in order to eliminate all forms of opposition. The young Wolaita from the EPRP then tried to set up an armed movement, but it was a resounding failure. Paolos Sorsa was in charge of organising it: "From organising the *awraja* party committee I shifted to the military side. And I had military organisation in Wolaita Kindo, in Bolosso Sore, two sites. The two guerrilla fighting units failed and we lost so many youngsters, and we didn't carry out any operation of any sort."[30]

After the depletion of the *zemecha* and the Derg's propaganda, repression completed the process of separating the peasants from the students and their rallying behind the regime, whether they wanted to or not:

> Especially in Offa *wereda*, in Boloso Sore *wereda* we had very large and wide contacts with the peasantry. You see, all armaments or munitions for the guerrilla was transported by peasants and by the transportation means of the peasantry. So, the Wolaita peasants were very supportive [of] the EPRP. Because of the Derg's massacres and oppression, finally they betrayed or they couldn't resist the fascistic aggression. So except that, the Wolaita peasantry were very supportive [of] EPRP.[31]

[29] Abraham Worku, interview, January 2011.
[30] Paolos Sorsa, interview, December 2010.
[31] Ibid.

2.5. *The Red Terror*

The years from 1976 to 1978 saw bloody clashes between the military government and its civilian collaborators on the one hand, and the students and teachers organised within the EPRP on the other. The split, which was already well under way in the summer of 1975 during the *zemecha*, only grew worse. Disillusioned students deserted en masse. At the end of 1975, of the 60,000 who had set out a year earlier, only 18,000 remained at their posts. Many returned to the city to swell the ranks of the EPRP. Despite their defections, they left behind them rural areas that had been liberated from the former landlords, and peasant associations that had been organised. They had done their job (Donham 1999, 34). What now remained to be done was to establish a civilian government.

The plans to move students away from the capital in order to silence the opposition had failed. They returned to Addis Ababa more determined than ever as a result of their encounters with the misery of the countryside and united by their shared experience. Launched in the days following Haile Selassie's deposition, the campaign for the establishment of a civilian government, which had never truly stopped, was forcefully reactivated at the end of the *zemecha*. As a result, in early September 1976, the Derg denounced the EPRP for counter-revolutionary activities, imprisoned hundreds of people and carried out executions (Bahru 2008b, 437). By the end of the month, the EPRP had launched its campaign of targeted assassinations of members of the Meison who were participating in the Derg government (Balsvik 2007, 79). In October, the Derg announced that the life of a revolutionary was worth a thousand "anti-people" lives (Bahru 2008b, 437), heralding the mass killings that culminated in May 1977, which impacted the EPRP as well as the Meison. In 1977 and 1978, the columns of the government newspaper *Addis Zemen* increased the number of articles calling for "anti-revolutionary" and "anti-people" anarchists to be tracked down and eliminated. For two years, teachers, students and secondary—and even primary—school pupils were hunted down, murdered and tortured horribly. The figures vary between 10,000 and 150,000 deaths, depending on the sources (Bahru 2008b, 441). These are the recollections of Tsehai Zerihun, who was not an activist but a young student from Wolaita who had recently arrived in Addis Ababa at the height of the Red Terror:

> I completed grade 12 and I left for Addis Ababa. At that moment, it was very hard to me to exist in Addis because it was Red Terror. I tried to join Addis Ababa University. But Addis Ababa University was […] every time under a hard campaign by the military. The teachers were taken, they were killed in front of the schools. The students were taken from their bed at night, and we hear that they were killed.

So, I left Addis Ababa University and I joined Commercial College, because I was afraid for my life. It was a free execution moment. Even, I almost died […]. One day, I was going from Commercial College to the hostel I was living in […]. Two people came in a car and they stopped the car. They ask me to show them my ID card.

I said: "I don't have ID card, I am new to this place, to Addis."

"From where are you?" they said.

"I am from Sidamo province."

"Ok, what's your name?" I told them my name.

"Ok, sorry we were going to kill you because you look like someone we are looking for from a photograph, but you are lucky."

I was afraid from that day to go on foot on the road in Addis, because they gave them free chance of killing anybody whom they suspect, or whom they think that he is EPRP, or somebody anarchist, against the government. Later on, I was in the hostel, when I was trying to study I cannot study, at night, because I hear bullet shots and everything. When I went in the morning, I saw peoples' bodies… I see the blood… That makes all fear with all that I passed, especially in 1977. That moment was a very harsh moment, to me especially, to my existence even, to study, to live my day to day life was always… with the suspicion. I may go out in the morning but I don't know if I may go back to my home. When we go to the school also, in the class sometimes we missed friends. That means that they were taken in their area. They don't come back *beqa*! [finished!] We were in the class around 40 before, and around February we became around 20 in Commercial College. And the teachers too. Whom we see in November, we don't see them in February. Nobody knows, they were taken or killed. […]

So, it was a very suffering time. So many intellectuals were killed, I know. So many youngsters even. If they make a mistake, they could put them in a jail, give them lesson and they could [bring] them back into the society. Age of 15, age of 10, age of 12 were all in the jail. Taking a child age of 10… what do you think? "Because he was distributing papers in the society," they say. And even age of 10 were in the jail and tortured. Later on, I just want to leave from Addis but… I want to go back to Wolaita but Wolaita also was not good conditions. I heard that in Wolaita, the children, the youngsters were taken, even they were thrown in the Omo River, into the water to be eaten by crocodiles. Also in Abela… to the lions, wildlife place, they cut their tongue and hands and feet and throw them for the wild lions. Even my batch in Wolaita, grade 11, with me, *zemecha* students, most of them were killed. So, I didn't go back to Wolaita. Finally in 1978 the conditions became a bit cooler, because they finished almost all the youngsters and the intellectuals group, the doctors, the teachers and so on.[32]

Tsehai Zerihun was terrified by what she was experiencing in Addis Ababa and could not return home to Wolaita, where repression was also rampant. As early as December 1976, the official government daily newspaper *Addis Zemen* had launched the first call for the creation of revolutionary defence committees

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[32]Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.

in two neighbouring provinces of Wolaita, Hadiya and Kambatta (Bahru 2008, 438). These committees have remained famous for the role they played in the Red Terror. In the Sidamo region of Wolaita province, 4,000 rifles were distributed to 61,000 militiamen (Lefort 1981, 282). And the testimony of Tsehai Zerihun shows that being armed with a rifle was not necessary for massacres. Father Gino, a Capuchin missionary responsible for the educational activities of his congregation in Wolaita since 1970, also testifies to this:

> "So imprisonment, killing… very bad. Here, I still remember what happened to one of my students, a girl. […] When somebody wants to insult somebody here, they say in Wolaitigna "*bita*, *bita*" that means "eat the earth, eat the earth." What they use to do to those who were accused to be EPRP? I saw my girl, my student, it was during the rainy season with the mud and everything, she was lying in the mud and she had to eat this mud, and all the other students they gathered and they can spit on her, they can kick her… so there were this kind of… there was no freedom at all, no freedom at all. Today you go, and you couldn't live in peace, because you suspect that always somebody may accuse you. […] There was mass graves, even here, which I went… because after this revolution, some people talked… and we went to take out the mass grave where nineteen students, nineteen youngsters were buried alive. So many people disappeared."[33]

Father Gino's testimony reveals that students beat up one of their classmates who had been accused of being from the EPRP. Like Tsehai Zerihun, he highlights another essential aspect of the Red Terror: the violence inside schools themselves as soon as they reopened in 1977. While the vast majority of EPRP members came from the school community, and while the EPRP was by far the party with the largest number of supporters, some students and teachers were also defenders of the Derg. Schools were the scene of political conflicts between the EPRP and the Meison (Kiflu 1998, 189). They were also a privileged place for hunting down opponents of the Derg. In 1977 and 1978, self-denunciation meetings were organised: pupils were rounded up and "suspects" were called on to come forward to deny that they had betrayed the revolution and affirm their support for the Derg. Those who refused were taken away (Kiflu 1998, 191).

Several thousand young graduates left the country. Those who did not and who survived were severely affected psychologically, and sometimes physically disabled. This is how Demissie Tsigge remembers the situation:

> Almost all the survivors of the first massacres fled to Europe or the United States. […] We who had stayed behind seemed to be alive but we were the living dead, hopeless, on our knees, crushed by the boot of the Derg. […] Five years after the fall of the Emperor, after I was released from prison, it seemed to me that there was

[33] Abba Gino (Capuchin missionary), interview, Soddo, 12 December 2009.

nothing left of my life. All my friends were dead or abroad, and our organisations had dissolved. (Demissie 2004, 340)

Paolos Sorsa, one of the founders of the Wolaita branch of the EPRP, testifies to a strong feeling of failure and bitterness, but also identification with the revolution:

The Derg […] highly oppressed the youth and the generation from the 1960s, the modern political thinkers, […] educated in foreign countries, educated in the country. It was a very strong generation. […] And I am one of them, I remained from that generation. First, I told you that I have been in prison for 10 years during *Derg*. And so the Ethiopian Revolution was my revolution. […] The main Ethiopian revolution, the first social transformation happened in the country. The first and the worst massacre happened in the history of the country […]. It is mainly heart and part of my history, and it is written with blood. When one mention[s] about that part of this history, I don't know what sort of feeling I feel, I can't tell you. It is very bitter."[34]

In August 1977, once the EPRP had been annihilated and its members were either dead or in prison or exile, the Derg turned against the Meison, whose members suffered the same fate.

Conclusion

The four years during which the Derg regime stabilised its position and major reforms were implemented were extremely intense. Thanks to land reform and the *zemecha*, relations between the centre and the periphery reached a previously unknown depth. First of all, by destroying the intermediary class of *melkegna* and landowners, the state strengthened its grip, but it also broke a lock that had closed the doors of the national space to the peasants of the south. Then, by bringing the revolution to the countryside, the state and the *zemach* involved the peasants in a movement that spread across the whole country. The opportunities for creating a national imagination increased. The encounter between the school community in Addis Ababa, the small provincial towns and the peasant world represented an unprecedented decompartmentalisation. Never before had schools and farmers shared their daily lives in such a way, and never before had they had as much political room for manoeuvre as they did during the first months of the *zemecha*. Although its impact on the political and social representations of the *zemach* is relatively well known, the effect of this experience on those from the peasant world deserves the greatest attention.

For the students, the *zemecha* was a moment of intense politicisation, due to both the confrontation with the misery of the countryside and the widespread

[34]Paolos Sorsa, interview, 14 December 2010.

dissemination of the Marxist political culture that had been maturing at Addis Ababa University and abroad since the early 1960s. For pupils in provincial secondary schools, the politicisation that had begun before the revolution experienced an unprecedented acceleration. Finally, the *zemecha* constituted a massive extension of the educational phenomenon, one that laid the foundations for future policies. As students and teachers emerged from the Red Terror divided by grudges, broken by violence and subjected to the Derg, the regime, which had finally stabilised its power, was in a position to launch its policy of educating the masses in the service of "Ethiopian socialism."

Chapter 7

The Literacy Campaign: A Matrix for the New Society? (1979–1985)

In order to give birth to a "learning society" aimed at nurturing scientific awareness, encouraging socialist attitudes and increasing production, the Derg implemented a national campaign in 1979 with the objective of completely eradicating illiteracy by 1987. It was a flagship action of the regime, and was envisaged to be the primary impetus that would set the population on the road to a widespread and sustainable education that would transform society. This chapter will show how this campaign was conceived as a powerful vector of mobilisation and offer an update on the educational, social and political dynamics it generated. By analysing the ways in which a mass project decided from above was engaged in by the population, it will be possible for us to understand how the various actors—peasant communities, women and members of marginalised nationalities—wanted to live within the national political community.

The literacy campaign began in 1979 and lasted until the fall of the Derg in 1991. This chapter focuses on the years between 1979 and 1985, a short period of relative calm when the regime became institutionalised in the countryside. 1985 was marked by a great famine, which was followed by forced population displacements and the villagisation policy. The second half of the 1980s also saw an intensification of the war against Eritrea. The period between 1985 and 1991 was one of increased pressure on the population, and will be discussed in Chapter 10.

1. Eradicating illiteracy: the method
To implement its campaign, the regime drew on the literacy experiments that had been carried out on a smaller scale since the 1960s.

1.1. *Building on past literacy experiences*
In the 1960s, the Ethiopian government, UNESCO, UNDP and the Lutheran Church carried out functional literacy projects, the aim being to equip their target populations with the appropriate knowledge and skills to increase productivity and serve development. A first proclamation on literacy issued by Emperor Haile Selassie in 1955 called on adults to work towards literacy on their own initiative using their personal means and locally-available

educational resources.[1] The government did not announce any action on its part. The first significant step was taken in 1961 with the establishment of the "National Literacy Campaign,"[2] a misleading name, as it was an institution and not a campaign. The emperor was the head of the organising committee, the crown prince was its president, and the patriarch and prime minister were honorary members, "to show the importance that the government and the people of Ethiopia [accorded] to such an organisation."[3] In 1966, a Department of Adult Education was established within the Ministry of Education.[4] By the summer of 1962, 13,280 people had attended literacy classes. This number rose to 27,000 in 1964, and then fell back to 7,500 in 1969, before the project collapsed (Gudeta 1982, 206).

The most important work done on literacy before the revolution was the Yemesrach Dems Literacy Campaign (YDLC), which was implemented between 1962 and 1975.[5] It was initiated by the Mekane Yesus Evangelical Church, an Ethiopian affiliate of the Lutheran World Federation. Although the church was established in the southwest of the country, especially in Wellega, the campaign was carried out in 12 of the 14 provinces of the empire, with a focus on remote rural areas. In the northern regions with an "orthodox" Christian majority, schools were established in Muslim villages so as not to compete with the official Tewahedo Church (Sjörström & Sjörström 1983, 69–71). The YDLC had evangelistic aims coupled with a functional literacy project. Amharic, arithmetic and the Bible were taught, with the addition of courses on agriculture, nutrition and health (Sjörström & Sjörström 1973, 17). By 1973, it had reached 375,000 people, half of whom were members of the Ethiopian evangelical churches. From 1975, the YDLC literacy centres were gradually transferred to the newly-established farmers' associations (Sjörström & Sjörström 1983, 11–14). The teachers, Ethiopians with limited training who accomplished a great deal with very limited means, then joined the Derg literacy campaign as instructors and inspectors (Sjörström & Sjörström 1983, 184).

The third initiative was the Adult Literacy and Vocational Training Project, which was implemented between 1968 and 1974. It was part of the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) that was conducted and funded by UNESCO and the UNDP in 11 countries between 1967 and 1973. In Ethiopia, four zones were selected: Wolaita, Arsi, Kaffa and Methara

[1] MOE, *Every Ethiopian Will Know How to Read and Write and Forever* (1981), 10.
[2] MOI, *Ethiopia Today: Education* (1973), 23.
[3] MOE, *Every Ethiopian Will Know How to Read and Write and Forever* (1981), 11.
[4] MOI, *Ethiopia Today: Education* (1973), 23.
[5] *"Yemesrach Dems"* means "The Voice of Good News" in Amharic.

Ribbon.[6] The planning and management of the project was the responsibility of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Industry. UNESCO was responsible for the financial assistance provided by the UNDP.[7] Its objective was to test the functional literacy method that had been officially adopted by UNESCO in 1965 at the Tehran Conference. Kaffa, Wolaita and Arsi were selected on the basis of their estimated potential for "rural development."[8] In Methara Ribbon, which is in the industrialised zone southeast of Addis Ababa, literacy was linked to technical education and the safety standards to be applied in factories.[9]

The adult literacy and vocational training established in Wolaita was integrated into the Wolaita Agricultural Development Unit (WADU), which started in 1970, funded two thirds by the World Bank and one third by the government. It aimed to enhance food security through the introduction of chemical fertilisers, better seeds and pesticides, the development of credit for farmers and the creation of cooperatives (Dassalegn 2007, 30). Reading, writing and basic arithmetic were taught using appropriate vocabulary and applications for agriculture, hygiene and nutrition.[10] The instructors were local students from grades 6 to 12 who had received a brief training in literacy teaching.[11] On the eve of the revolution in 1974, 43,440 people in the four areas selected for the project had become literate, with 13,960 in Wolaita alone.[12]

By 1970, across the country and across all projects, one million people had become literate. According to the Director of the Department of Adult Education, the "problem" had "only been touched on."[13] In 1974, the illiteracy rate was 93%.[14] However, the country had people with experience of literacy methods, notably functional literacy for health and agriculture. Textbooks had been produced that could serve as models. Finally, the Mass Literacy Campaign that began in 1979 could count on the momentum generated three years earlier by the *zemecha*.

1.2. *The organisation*

First of all, the Department of Adult Education was given a new lease of life. Made up of 18 staff members in 1974, its initial work was to review past

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[6]MOI, *Ethiopia Today: Education* (1973), 24.

[7]UNESCO, *Ethiopia. Work-Oriented Adult Literacy Pilot Project* (Paris: UNESCO, 1975), 1.

[8]Ibid., 2 and 5.

[9]Ibid., 3.

[10]Ibid., 4.

[11]Ibid., 6–7.

[12]Ibid., iv.

[13]MOE, *Every Ethiopian Will Know How to Read and Write and Forever* (1981), 11.

[14]MOE, *Information Paper on the Education System in Ethiopia* (1982), 10.

experiences and develop teaching materials.[15] This is how Gudeta Mammo, Director of the Coordinating Committee of the National Literacy Campaign, describes the process of developing the literacy campaign:

> Before the actual launching of the National Literacy Campaign […] all those who were to be involved were invited to discuss it. Top government officials in the Revolutionary National Development Campaign and Central Planning Supreme Council met to discuss ways and means of launching the campaign. Once the programme was approved, a National Seminar was conducted involving all Regional and Provincial Administrators, Peasant Association members, Production and Political Cadres, Urban Dwellers Association members and Women and Youth Associations members. The participation of officials together with the members of the different associations was to control the consolidation of the plan and facilitated the mobilization and participation of the masses. (Gudeta 1985, 108)

In May 1979, the Coordinating Committee for the National Literacy Campaign was established and then expanded to the various levels of government.[16] The policy was developed and driven by the Coordinating Committee at the Ministry of Education, and then descended in stages to the peasant and urban neighbourhood associations to reach the masses. The literacy campaign was a good example of the regime's ability to carry out large-scale action in a limited timeframe through the effective articulation of the various administrative levels. The key structures for linking government and communities were the peasant associations, which were responsible for all logistics and monitoring at a local level (Dassalegn 1984, 96).

1.3. *Using all available means*
The effort was jointly financed by international institutions, UNICEF, UNESCO and the European Development Fund, by foreign countries such as the USSR, Japan and the GDR, by the Ethiopian government and by the population directly.[17] The population was heavily involved: 65% of the financial resources obtained locally were used at a national level, while 35% were held back for local use (Gudeta 1985, 118). Implementation of the campaign would have been impossible without the wide-scale involvement of the population, however. People who were able to read and write were mobilised on a massive scale. The vast majority of the literacy teachers were students, accompanied by teachers and civil servants from the administration or the army. Candidates for selection had to be healthy, single and childless (Gudeta 1990, 5). In 1979, they numbered 241,501 and in 1980, 57,993.[18] Logically, as literacy progressed,

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[15]MOE, *Every Ethiopian…* (1981), 19
[16]Ibid., 21.
[17]Ibid., 43–44.
[18]Ibid., 41.

the number of enrolments decreased, as did the number of students. Service was compulsory, and all pupils who had passed the Grade 12 final examination had to teach for at least four months. It was a prerequisite for further study and employment. Demeke Melesse, an instructor in 1989, recalls that he received 60 *ber* per month—a relatively symbolic sum considering that the salary of a primary school teacher at that time was 400 *ber* per month—and a uniform, and was housed and fed by the peasants.[19] In turn, in order to make the best use of available resources, literate farmers gradually became instructors in their own communities. These local literacy instructors were sometimes temporarily assisted by young Grade 12 graduates sent by the Ministry of Education (Pankhurst 1990, 66).

"Schools, town association centres, factory workshops, commercial premises, military camps, prisons, private homes, offices, churches and mosques, youth centres, state farms and meeting rooms" became literacy centres for a few hours a day (Gudeta 1982, 208). In rural areas where these buildings were not available, thatched earthen buildings in the style of peasant dwellings were put up by the villagers, or literacy classes were held in the shade of trees. The basic school materials consisted of a blackboard, an alphabet poster and sometimes beginners' books. The reading books were produced in Addis Ababa and transported by truck to the last place accessible by road before being brought to the villages by mule by farmers (Gudeta 1985, 120). Lack of paper and pens was a major problem in rural areas at the beginning of the campaign, but small village traders quickly acquired them before they were distributed by consumer cooperatives.[20]

1.4. *Rhythm and timing*

The established objective was the total eradication of illiteracy by 1982 in urban areas and by 1987 in rural areas.[21] The campaign was organised as a series of "stages," at a rate of two per year. The main session began at the end of the school year, when students, young graduates and teachers were available. Literacy teaching was provided for four to five months, for three hours a day, five days a week (McNab 1990, 69). Specific targets were set for each stage to spread literacy from the cities to the countryside, and from one stage to the next. The first two stages, from June to October 1979 and October 1979 to June 1980, respectively, were "a concerted attack in urban and surrounding areas." In the third stage, from May to October 1980, action was extended to rural areas selected by the provincial coordinating committees. The aim of the fourth stage, from November 1980 to April 1981, was the final eradication

[19] Demeke Melesse (teacher), interview, Lalibela, 20 February 2008.
[20] MOE, *Every Ethiopian Will Know How to Read and Write and Forever* (1981), 39.
[21] MOE, *Information Paper on the Education System in Ethiopia* (1982), 9.

of illiteracy in urban areas and an extension to other rural areas. From these fully literate "safe bases," the stages would be launched towards "the vast rural areas," until illiteracy had been totally eliminated.[22] For the military regime, this was a "campaign," a progressive conquest of the territories of illiteracy.

2. Teaching: knowledge and languages
The knowledge that was disseminated and the languages that were used were a reflection of the Derg's development policy and its redefinition of the nation.

2.1. *Knowledge: organising communities along socialist lines and improving living conditions*
The basic literacy teaching materials consisted of a syllabary, a reading book, an arithmetic book and a political education book (McNab 1990, 75). Other textbooks were produced specifically to be used by new readers as part of a post-literacy scheme. The aim was to ensure that the skills acquired were maintained, and that they would be directed towards functional knowledge that could be used directly to improve material living conditions and transform community organisation. The themes of the textbooks were health, hygiene, childcare, agriculture and political education. By 1982, the Coordinating Committee of the National Literacy Campaign had built 4,300 "community reading rooms" and produced 50 titles to be used by newly-literate people.[23] Two examples of textbooks, one on the role and functioning of cooperatives and the other on health, child care, hygiene and milking, show the knowledge that was disseminated and how it was presented.[24]

The first textbook *Worker Cooperatives* had openly political objectives. As the authors stated in the introduction:

> **መጽሐፉ በሶሻሊስት ኢትዮጵያ የሚቋቋሙትን የኅብረት ሥራ ማኅበራት ዓይነቶች ይገልጻል ። […] የሰፊው ሠርቶ አደር ሕዝብ ኑሮ መሻሻል ለሚደረገው ጥረት ከፍተኛ አስተዋጽኦ እንደሚያበረክቱ ለማሣየት ነው። […] ዝግጅቱም ለጎልማሶች እንደሚስማማ በቃላ ቃላት ፥ በአጫጭር አረፍተ ነገሮችና አንቀጾች ለማቅረብ ጥረት ተደርጓል።**

This book offers explanations regarding the cooperatives established in socialist Ethiopia. It aims to highlight the efforts they undertake and their significant contributions to enhancing the lives of the working masses. To ensure its accessibility for adults, an endeavour has been made to use simple words, short sentences, and paragraphs in its organization.[25]

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[22] MOE, *Every Ethiopian…* (1981), 23–24.

[23] MOE, *Information Paper on the Education System in Ethiopia* (1982), 10–11.

[24] MOE, **የኅብረት ሥራ ማኅበር ትምህርት ትምህርት ፥ ሁለተኛ መጽሐፍ** (*Worker Cooperatives, book 2*) (1979); MOE, **ሙያ ነክ ምንባብ ምንባብ ፥ ፫** (*Book of Reading on Skills, Book 3*) (1983).

[25] MOE, **የኅብረት ሥራ ማኅበር ትምህርት ትምህርት ፥ ሁለተኛ መጽሐፍ** (*Worker Cooperatives, Book 2*) (1979), introduction.

The manual presented four types of cooperatives: service cooperatives, producer cooperatives, savings and credit cooperatives, and housing cooperatives. It went on to explain how they operated, their usefulness and their objectives in terms of production and spreading socialist ideas and practices, technology and development: their "multiple contributions to the construction of the new society" (**ለአዲስ ሕብረተሰብ ግንባታ የሚያበረክቱት አስተዋጽኦ**).[26] They lay at the heart of the workings of a society based on solidarity, in which the population's economic, political and social rights would finally be guaranteed. Their advantages in terms of development were then highlighted. An organisation of production based on cooperatives would allow better transmission and use of "modern technology" than a system based on the private ownership of production resources; along the road to development, socialism was a "superior form" to capitalism. In the space of just 30 pages, therefore, the manual offered some basic notions of Marxism-Leninism and some explanations of the functioning and rationale of a collectivised society.

In the introduction to the book on health, hygiene and agriculture, the authors explained that:

መጽሐፉ ለአዲስ አንባቢያን ችሎታ ተስማሚ እንደሚሆን ታስቦ ቀለል ባለ አቀራረብ ሥዐላዊ መግለጫዎች ታክለውበት ተዘጋጅቷል። ስለሆነም ጎልማሶች መጽሐፉን አንብበው ያገኙትን ዕውቀት ለኑሮአቸው መሻሻል እንደሚጠቀሙበት እምነታችን ነው።

Recognizing the need for this book to align with the skills of new readers, it has been meticulously crafted with clear and engaging illustrations. We are confident that adults, while reading this book, will discover valuable knowledge to enhance their lives.[27]

The book depicted a familiar world from the first glance. Many of the didactic illustrations depicted Ethiopian peasants in their local environment. There was no comparison between the peasant world and a distant "modernity" that was viewed as superior. Women's and men's activities were presented separately, even though they were combined in the same book. The illustrations on childcare and hygiene in the domestic sphere featured women, while those on agriculture featured men.

The book was divided into five sections. The first focused on the most common contagious diseases that affected children, such as whooping cough, tonsillitis and smallpox. Symptoms were described in such a way that they could be detected by everyone, and the existence or lack of a vaccine was specified in each case. Vaccinations for children were the subject of the second chapter, and readers were strongly encouraged to visit health centres. All the

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[26]Ibid., 12.

[27]MOE, **ሙያ ነክ ምንባብ ምንባብ** ፥ **፫** (*Book of Reading on Skills, Book 3*) (1983), introduction.

illustrations depicted a woman and her child at a doctor's clinic. This was an attempt to familiarise readers with medical institutions in a rural society where there was little or no medical care. The third section was titled *Let's be careful disease doesn't spread* (በሽታ እንዳይዛመት እንጠንቀቅ). It dealt with bodily hygiene and diet, and how diseases spread through breathing and mucous membranes. Several pages were dedicated to "pests": rodents such as mice and rats, and insects such as flies, fleas and mosquitoes. The fourth chapter presented techniques for managing waste and human excretion. Simple and inexpensive building techniques were suggested using materials that were directly available in the countryside, such as wood, earth and stones. The text was illustrated with plans showing the dimensions to be used when building latrines, a hole for burning domestic waste and a sink system to filter wastewater using layers of stones of different sizes. This section presented a series of practices aimed at family and community maintenance of the living environment without the costly collective infrastructures the state would not be able to provide. On the other hand, the previous incentives to accustom people to visit medical facilities implied that infrastructure would be available close to each village community, which was far from being the case, but they were part of the long-term project to establish one. The fifth chapter, on milking methods and clean milk, is a good example of what government educators and planners meant by "technology transfer." It presented methods that required relatively large amounts of equipment compared to the scarce resources available to the majority of farming families: a room entirely devoted to milking, several buckets and other metal containers requiring the use of chemical disinfectant and a weighing scale. The weighing scale had to be used for the rational monitoring of production. One illustration shows a peasant dressed in a shirt, trousers and boots—a "modern" peasant–, instead of the cotton cloth and sandals worn by the peasants on the previous pages, communicating the status of his production on paper. Of course, the peasants already knew the amount of milk their animals were producing from their specially adapted containers, but this chapter called for a type of monitoring that was viewed as rational in contrast to customary farming practices. It implied the use of the written word for long-term evaluation and its inclusion in the daily routine of productive practices. This raises the question of how the majority of farmers might obtain the equipment illustrated. Here again, it was a question of anticipating the future planned by the authorities. The authors probably thought that this work would be carried out within the framework of cooperatives, or that cooperatives would be able to provide this equipment to farmers in the future.

2.2. *The languages of nationalities*

As well as promoting grassroots development based on everyday practices and socialist cooperatives, the literacy campaign was the principal place for implementing the policy of promoting nationalities through the choice of teaching in languages other than Amharic. Vernacular languages were written down specifically for the purposes of teaching literacy. From the early stages in 1979 and 1980, materials were printed in five languages: Amharic, Oromo, Somali, Tigrigna and Wolaita. In 1981 it was the turn of Gedeo, Hadiya, Kambatta, Kunama, and Tigre.[28] The total number was later increased to 15, thereby including the languages spoken by 95% of the total population (Bahru 2008a, 88). The language policy represented a decisive break with the past exclusive recognition of Amharic. The intention of the literacy campaign was to "promote the revival of the cultures of different nationalities in all their diversity and, as far as possible, to teach illiterate people in their mother tongue" (Gudeta 1982, 207). From a pedagogical point of view, this statement echoed the arguments that UNESCO had been proposing since the 1950s: that a person who is literate in his or her mother tongue is more likely to assimilate the knowledge that is being transmitted.[29] From a political perspective, the choice of a national or local language was a matter of nation-building. The aim was to combat the marginalisation of minority groups and build national unity at the same time. For UNESCO, the concern for minority cultures and state interest in unity were both considered legitimate. One of the key challenges of the literacy campaigns was to respect and encourage minority cultures while also providing new readers with the means to break out of their marginalisation. This involved the promotion of vernacular languages and the dissemination of a national or international lingua franca at the same time. The Derg's language policy was a part of these debates. Educationists in the Ministry of Education believed that literacy and the transmission of an ideology that accompanied it would be more effective in the mother tongue. They claimed that they wanted to end the cultural oppression of the southern nationalities while at the same time being viscerally committed to the creation of a unified nation. From this dual perspective, the development of local languages *and* Amharic as vehicles of education was a major concern.

Ethiopia has a rich linguistic context. Estimates vary, but it is possible to make the claim that there are at least 70 languages in the country. They include Amharic, Oromo and Tigrigna, which at the time of the campaign were the mother tongues of 31%, 27% and 14% of the population, respectively. Numerically, they dominate the other languages; next on the list is Wolaita, which is the mother tongue of 3.6% of the country's population, followed

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[28] MOE, *Every Ethiopian…* (1981), 29.

[29] UNESCO, *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (Paris, 1953).

closely by Sidamo (3.4%) (MacNab 1990, 68). The work of compiling and editing the languages was carried out by the Institute of Language Studies before the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities (ISEN) took over after its creation in 1983. As early as 1976, the *zemecha* had provided an opportunity to catalogue languages and begin the development of written forms. By 1978, the institute employed 21 linguists working in three teams devoted to the compilation of lexicons, literature and linguistics, respectively. In the first instance, the literature team had to bring together two sets of texts: those in the languages of the ancient written tradition, mainly Geez, Amharic and Tigrigna, and those of the missionaries written in the languages of the peoples of the south whom they had attempted to evangelise. The second team had to collect and study stories, proverbs and tales, and write reports on the socioeconomic and philosophical ideas they conveyed. The third team had to conduct phonological studies before writing, conduct comparative studies and enrich the vocabulary of the various languages to embrace science, technology and Marxist concepts (Bender 1985, 274–76). Everything was to be transcribed into the Geez syllabary in order to facilitate the transition from the mother tongue to the national language, Amharic, the dissemination of which remained an essential objective for unification purposes.

ISEN worked in collaboration with Addis Ababa University and employed academics from a variety of disciplines, including law, political science, sociology, history and economics. It accumulated a significant amount of information on the different nationalities. Its very existence marked a significant change from the previous regime. In this sense, it is testimony to the fact that the recognition of nationalities was not mere rhetoric. Of course, its intended function was to be unifying. The institute was supposed to contribute to "resolving minor contradictions between nationalities" by eliminating "chauvinism" (Clapham 1988, 200). In a way, it reflected in Marxist-Leninist terms the position of the authors of the article titled "Aims and Objectives of Ethiopian Education" in the *Journal of Ethiopian Education* published on the eve of the revolution in 1974. Instead of a uniformity based on the imposition of the language and identity of the Christian North, these academics and senior officials from the Ministry of Education argued that cultural diversity could be a strength rather than a weakness, and that education should combine a mixture of cultures into a rich national culture (Girma, Abraham & Abba Samuel 1974, 9). It seems that this was also the vision of the cultural committees that were created in the regions following the revolution. This, at least, is the position defended by Abraham Babanto, the chairman of the Wolaita Cultural Committee, in his history of Wolaita published in 1979. In his introduction, he states that he wrote his book to promote the history of his region with the aim

of unity, equality and exchange with the other nationalities of the country, from a nationalist perspective.[30]

3. Mobilising the masses

The government made significant efforts to fill the literacy centres. Although it was encouraged by a small urban intelligentsia, social demand from the peasant world was virtually non-existent. The use of the written word in the countryside was limited to specific acts relating to religion or communication with the administration. The population also practised "delegated writing": they were able to use men of the church to access religious written culture, and used public writers to produce legal documents.[31] The written word was not integrated into daily practices in any way. This being the case, attending literacy classes was far from an obvious step. Zerihun Anebo, a Wolaita teacher who was an instructor in the neighbouring Kaffa region, recalls that at first, literacy seemed strange to the peasants.[32] It was an odd kind of education that produced nothing that would satisfy one's basic needs, and hours of sitting down were required to learn to master a practice that was not a part of daily activities. Were the few people who knew how to read and write, the "professionals" of the written word, not enough to provide what was needed? Under conditions where scepticism needed to be overcome, the regime combined incitement, persuasion and coercion.

The Derg was sure of its direction, and placed literacy at the heart of its plan for social transformation. It was one of the most iconic aspects of its general policy. Its extremely ambitious educational project had been widely announced, and considerable efforts had been made to organise and implement it: literacy had to be achieved quickly, whatever the cost. Since peasants "did not know the usefulness of education," the regime opted first for pedagogy.

3.1. *Explaining*

The mass media, gathering places such as markets, social events such as weddings and funeral ceremonies and, of course, popular associations were used to explain and convince.[33] Mobilising the population for the literacy campaign was an important task of local cadres, and they received short training courses for this purpose.[34] Regional and provincial officials also took

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[30] Abraham Babanto, **ጥንታዊት እና እና ዘመናዊት ዎላይታ** (*The Ancient Wolaita and Contemporary Wolaita*) (1979), 7–10.

[31] Anjulo Agago, interview, December 2010. On delegated writing, see Gérard (2002).

[32] Zerihun Anebo (teacher), interview, Soddo, 5 December 2010.

[33] MOE, *Every Ethiopian…* (1981), 25.

[34] Zerihun Anebo (teacher), interview, Soddo, 5 December 2010.

part in the efforts to convince people. More rarely, visiting senior officials made sure to speak out on the subject. The gatherings organised by the *kebele* and farmers' associations were times for exchanging opinions, both between officials and participants and among the participants themselves. According to a senior official of the Ministry of Education, Gudeta Mammo, the debates that took place at such gatherings, which enabled the masses themselves to practice the art of persuasion, often had a greater impact on the participants than months of effort by educators (Gudeta 1990, 111). However, other less biased and more frequent witness accounts paint a different picture. Researcher Dessalegn Rahmato found that the exchanges were very uneven and could sometimes turn into a "hammering," especially if someone important was there (Dessalegn 1984, 93). Nevertheless, it is very likely that real exchanges did take place, especially in the countryside, during meetings held when important people were not present, and only peasants had gathered. But the farmers' associations were conveyor belts between central government and local communities, not institutions aimed at encouraging proposals from local communities. Free discussions or not, in the end it was the policy that had been decided upon that had to be implemented.

3.2. *Staging: departure and award ceremonies*

A second means of mobilisation was through the ritualisation of milestones. The departure of the instructors was an occasion for large public ceremonies. Twice a year, at the beginning of each "stage," thousands of people gathered in the streets of Addis Ababa and other major cities to celebrate the instructors' departure. These mass gatherings were covered by the national media. The size of the ceremony had to be commensurate with the action being celebrated, and the population was therefore able to assess the extent to which the literacy campaign was a national priority. The speeches were once again designed to convince, the music to create an atmosphere of jubilation and the slogans to stimulate a sense of communion. These ceremonies were not unlike departures for war: families and friends were there to say goodbye to their loved ones, who were leaving for the "rural adventure" to fight illiteracy, in a clearly patriotic atmosphere. Like all mass ceremonies of a political ilk, they were addressed to both reason and emotion, to encourage determination, enthusiasm and fervour. The young people who were leaving could feel that they had the support of the entire nation in the accomplishment of a historic mission. The instructors' interest in their task was essential to the quality of their work: the success of the campaign depended to a large extent on their attitude. It was therefore of the utmost importance to create a collective momentum, to instil in everyone a feeling that they were participating in a common project and to develop a spirit of solidarity between the instructors and their future students.

The instructors' departure rituals were matched by the welcome ceremonies in the places they had been assigned to. On their arrival, the "heroes of the literacy campaign" were greeted by an assembled crowd, regional government officials and the leaders of popular associations.

> On their arrival, these heroes of the literacy campaign are expected by a crowd that in addition to many local residents includes personalities from various organisations, such as the president of the peasant associations, the president of the youth associations, the president of the women's associations and the president of the teachers' council. Officials, community elders and the presidents of the various associations give welcoming speeches, after which one of the teachers' representatives, preferably a woman, as this serves as an example and encouragement for rural women, takes the floor in turn to try to explain the objectives of the campaign. The launch of a literacy campaign in a designated area is a landmark and spectacular event. It is announced through the national media, such as radio and television, and the press. It takes place on the same day throughout the country. (Gudeta 1990, 6–7)

Here again, the ceremony had a stimulating, explanatory and demonstrative function. First of all, it reminded the instructors of their responsibility. Secondly, experiencing the material hardships of rural life for several months was not without its inconveniences for young people from the towns. The aim of the welcome was to create an engaging atmosphere in order to motivate them to work with enthusiasm. Once again, the ceremony provided an opportunity to explain the aims of the campaign and to praise the benefits of education (we will return to the question of specific incentives for women later on). Finally, gathering in large numbers in the presence of important personalities was intended to show that the literacy campaign was taken seriously by the institutions, and the local population was encouraged to do the same. The simultaneous nationwide coverage of these local events accompanied by the occasional presence of the media signified the national dimension of what was happening in their locality to those present.

A third ritual took place when certificates and prizes were awarded on International Literacy Day, 8 September (Gudeta 1985, 116). By holding these ceremonies at the same time in different official places and institutions, the government was once again showing that they needed to be given the appropriate amount of attention. The chosen date placed the ritual in an international perspective. In the tradition of school prize-giving ceremonies, these public ceremonies were an opportunity to encourage by example and to motivate by emulation. Last but not least, their symbolic significance should be appreciated: they ritualised the entry into the world of the literate. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu, anthropologist Marc Abélès emphasised that consecration rites show how "societies classify, distinguish, differentiate between categories

of individuals in relation to the objective oppositions, the relations of domination and subordination that in fact exist between men" and women. The ritual is performative: it is "the symbolic *coup de force* by which a group fixes and freezes divisions and hierarchies" (Abélès 1990, 242–43). The award of a literacy certificate might be interpreted as the crossing of the border that separated the literate from the illiterate. Given the representations attached to these two categories, access to the world of the literate symbolised entry into a new life. In concrete terms, since writing and the exercise of power were indissolubly linked, the award of the certificate signified promotion into the group of people who had the ability to administer and command.

3.3. *Theatre and songs*

Culture was also mobilised to exert continuous action on the population. This aspect is still vividly remembered by witnesses, who recall many songs and travelling plays to support intense proselytising in favour of education.[35] Some of these plays were produced locally by members of popular associations or school theatre clubs. Others were national, such as the piece titled የጨለማግ ጉዞ (*Journey into Darkness*), which was broadcast on radio and television and performed by travelling theatre groups in local languages in rural areas.[36] This form of popular culture reached a very wide audience. The plays usually featured an illiterate person and a literate person in order to compare the harmful effects of illiteracy with the benefits of education, or to recount the dramatic misadventures of an illiterate person. One famous story featured an illiterate man who travels to the city to see a doctor for his sick daughter. After asking him for the symptoms of her illness, the doctor gives him some medicine. Before returning to his village, the illiterate man decides to buy rat poison to get rid of the rodents infesting his house. Seeing that he has medicine in his hand, the salesman asks him if he can read. When he answers "no," the salesman warns him not to confuse the two boxes. He then finds a solution to help him: one box is green, and the other is blue. The two men practice together—"blue, medicine; green, rat poison"—for enough time to give the scene comic effect. On the way to his village, to make sure he does not forget, the man rehearses. But then, by repeating and repeating, he reverses the colours. The comic effect disappears and the spectators worry about the predictable end: back home, he involuntarily kills his daughter by giving her the rat poison instead of the medicine. The moral of the story is that if he had known how to read, his daughter would not have died through his fault.[37]

[35] Abraham Worku, interview, January 2011.

[36] Asela Gujubo (recorded discussion with Abraham Worku, 2 January 2011, Gesuba).

[37] This story is reported and commented on by Solomon Maereg, who was a pupil under the Derg (interview, Lalibela, 7 February 2007).

The aim of these plays was to show that knowing how to read can improve one's daily life (reading is desirable) and prevent disasters (reading is necessary). It is highly likely that by overstating the point in this way, by proposing a stereotypical vision, the Ethiopian authorities were seeking to draw attention to it for educational purposes. Nevertheless, the pieces conveyed weighty value judgments. The spectator might laugh at the illiterate man, feel sorry for him, or deplore or condemn his behaviour. He was sometimes ridiculous, sometimes the victim, sometimes the "villain" of the story. This poor peasant who killed his daughter out of ignorance was to be pitied, but also blamed: his ignorance caused a death. Voluntarily or inadvertently, illiterate people were always to blame in one way or another. The objective of provoking awareness through shock led to these characters being portrayed in a truncated manner, defined by their defects, and resulted in considerable symbolic violence towards illiterate people. At the beginning of the campaign, less than 10% of the Ethiopian population was literate, with an even lower percentage in the countryside. The overwhelming majority of the spectators were illiterate. The image that was conveyed claimed to speak about them, and imposed an identity on them whose attributes it is doubtful they could accept.

However, the way the pieces were presented also helped provoke discussion. It provided basic elements for reflection that invited nuances, additional elements and debate. The drama format is very popular in Ethiopia, and is commonly used to illustrate social events. The audience played an active role, commenting on and discussing what they had seen, which was one of the objectives of this popular art form. The return from the market was an important collective moment—people walked in groups and discussed the news they have learned. There is no doubt that the pieces they saw animated their conversations, were commented on and interpreted, and were related to those who had not seen them. The impact of these plays cannot be measured quantitatively, but it is an indisputable fact that they made a powerful impression. The population still remembers them 30 years later: today, everyone over forty can tell a story about a play he or she remembers. They have become a part of popular culture.

Songs expressed the joy of learning. The star singer Tsehaye Yohannes had a hit in the early 1980s called **ማንበብና መፃፍ** (*Reading and Writing*). The song was broadcast extensively on radio and television, and also circulated in the countryside. In the TV clip, the singer holds a letter in his hand and complains that he cannot read it. A literacy class is being taught in the background. The verses—a lament—are interspersed with a chorus sung by the pupils of the literacy class that expresses their joy at learning. Finally, the singer, a tearful, powerless illiterate, comes across a passerby, who reads his letter to him before pointing towards the literacy class. They exchange a few words. The spectator

understands that the passerby has told the illiterate man that he can learn to read if he wants to, thanks to the literacy centres. The illiterate man's face lights up, and the passerby accompanies him to the class, where the instructor welcomes him with open arms and the other pupils step aside to make room for him.[38] The clip shows the ease with which it was possible to learn, and the opportunity represented by the literacy centres. For the hero, entering the world of the pupils is a joyful event, and the learning universe is supportive. Just as the teacher and the other pupils welcome the illiterate character with kindness, the world of readers must not be intimidating; it is hospitable and warm.

3.4. *Control and coercion*

The new regime was not content just to change people's attitudes towards education through explanation, example and persuasion. The Derg stated that it wished to free people from illiteracy and "sometimes it forced them to learn."[39] The government used various methods of control, pressure and coercion. For illiterate people, enrolment in courses was compulsory. The first method of control was the certificate of enrolment issued by the local administration. It was also possible to register in the workplace, where lessons were given in the evenings. In theory, the certificate could be requested by the administration at any time (Gudeta 1985, 116). During the early years of the campaign, agents sent by neighbourhood and farmers' associations visited the homes of people who were not attending classes to check why they were absent or simply to collect them.[40] What powers did the local administration have to force people to come to school? In a 1984 field study, Susan Hoben noted tough measures to attract students, indicating that not all participants learned of their own accord (Hoben 1994, 634). Various punitive measures were employed, including monetary or labour penalties, threats of imprisonment and, more rarely, a few days of actual imprisonment.[41] Another method used was blackmail over the distribution of land. With the agrarian reform, land management had been entrusted to peasant associations. In the context of subsistence farming, which in many ways meant that families were constantly having to deal with shortages, this gave the administration considerable leverage. A farmer who was absent too often risked seeing the amount of land allocated to him or her each year drastically reduced.

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[38]The clip is available on the internet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xi9UQrNiDY; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQjxZ8ZgYOo (http://www.ethiotube.net/video/23254/Oldies–Tsehaye-Yohannes–Mambeb-Ena-Metsaf

[39]Demissie Minamo (teacher), interview, Soddo, 5 December 2010.

[40]Anjulo Agago, interview, December 2010; Assefa Wolde-Giorgis (public writer, miller, merchant), interview, Lalibela, 7 February 2007.

[41]Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010.

Although imprisonment and land confiscation, which were particularly severe punishments, seem to have been little used in the literacy campaign, financial penalties and compulsory labour were common practice.

Coercive practices need to be understood in several different ways. One argument is to explain coercion as part of the Derg's general authoritarian practices. The campaign was decided from above and was not a response to popular demand, other than that of an urban intelligentsia. Large-scale mobilisation had to be driven, and a mass movement had to be created. The stakes were extremely high for the regime: since literacy was seen as a prerequisite and matrix of progress—the raison d'être of the revolution and the principal argument for legitimising power—the future of the country depended on it. To put it more prosaically, the literacy campaign was a key tool for capturing the peasant world. The state's progress in rural areas took its materiality from the peasant associations, and the literacy campaign had to achieve ideological integration. Finally, it was possible to justify these authoritarian practices through the figure of the illiterate man and woman, who lived in a vicious circle of ignorance and misery, lacked political consciousness and had trouble perceiving the benefits of education and understanding what was in their interest. It was therefore legitimate and necessary for others to force them to learn, for their own benefit.

4. Educational dynamics: the masses arrive on the scene

What was the position of rural people vis-à-vis the literacy campaign? What were their perceptions, practices and modes of appropriation of this national policy? Rather than focusing on their supposed ability or inability to "understand" the benefits of education (which would mean taking the politically-useful construction of the "illiterate" for granted), it is more profitable to look at their disposition to adhere to the literacy project. In the first place, these dispositions formed a part of the general relationship of the peasant population with the new regime. Secondly, they can be understood through the peasants' relationship with the political, religious and cultural manifestations of the written word. More specifically, they depended on what the campaign made possible, on what could be expected of it, on whether or not the knowledge taught was deemed appropriate and on what it could be used for. Finally, the question of how much room for manoeuvre the population enjoyed must be mentioned. Were they able to refuse, and if so, what means did they have at their disposal to avoid it?

4.1. *Attitudes towards education at the heart of political and social transformations*

The attitude of the peasants towards the new political power depended first of all on their appreciation of the economic and social transformations that had

taken place. During the first four years of the revolution, the regime was able to aggregate peasants through the land reform. This is the general context within which Mana Madibo, a Wolaita peasant from Gesuba, includes education. For him it was part of a comprehensive policy that was perceived as emancipatory and egalitarian: "The Derg succeeded in leading us to political power as equal citizens, and then to equal access to resources, the nationalisation of land, the right to vote and to be elected. With this, every household received education in a very widespread way."[42] For Mana Madibo, education was to be included within a set of reforms that were seen as leading to the overall promotion of the peasantry: economic, with access to land; political, with the right to vote in peasant associations; and cultural, with access to education. As a member of a marginalised nationality and an exploited class, he was sensitive to the egalitarian discourses of the new regime. He interprets the Derg's education policy as a confirmation and future guarantee of economic and political reforms. Anjulo Agago, a peasant from Dubbo, explains that education was not accepted as such but because the population appreciated the regime: "The literacy campaign was imposed by force, some liked going to school and some disliked it. But the government at the time was seen as an ally or supporter of poor peasants. So in the beginning, everything the cadres said was considered to be a blessing."[43] While pointing out that the taste for studying was not unanimous, Anjulo Agago confirms that the perception of the education policy was understood within the context of a positive attitude towards the Derg's general policy. The land reform gave rise to a feeling of confidence in the regime. In spite of the use of coercion on a population with mixed views on education, the feeling of trust created a bridge between the peasant communities and the literacy centres. Mana Madibo goes further:

> The Derg is very highly regarded, and is remembered for mass education. My first eldest son died on the northern front[44] after dropping out of secondary education. But I am not sorry because the Derg freed the tenant farmers and provided access to resources for the peasants. Poor farmers felt equal and that they were citizens, and they abandoned share-cropping and submission to the lords. So no matter what sacrifice we made, I appreciate the Derg for mass education, for mass liberation.[45]

This statement is particularly evocative. First of all, by contrasting personal tragedy with collective progress, Mana Madibo states that he still appreciates the Derg. He testifies to a sense of political dignity won by the peasants, to

[42] Mana Madibo, interview, December 2010.

[43] Anjulo Agago, interview, December 2010.

[44] In the second half of the 1980s, as the war against the Eritrean independence movement intensified, young people were a pool for soldiers, and they paid a heavy price for the regime's stubbornness.

[45] Mana Madibo, interview, December 2010.

a collective liberation within which he places education. If he categorises the terms "mass liberation" and "mass education" as part of the same movement, it is because in his opinion, "the merit of education is to bring equality and self-confidence." On several occasions and at different points in the interview, referring to the period before the Derg, he explains: "We were illiterate, so we bowed down." In spite of the terrible years that followed, which were marked by the 1984 famine, the policy of forced villagisation, the intensification of the civil war on the northern front and the increasingly heavy material and human cost, the peasants Mana Madibo and Anjulo Agago believe that the policies of 1974–84 were finally achieved. They transformed the living conditions of the countryside and the status of its inhabitants. They were groundbreaking in that in the collective memory, they separated a "before" of oppression and misery from an "after" of liberation, despite the hardships of life under the Derg.

In spite of the farmers' feelings of goodwill towards the Derg in those early years, learning to read and write was not to everyone's liking. In the face of an obligation to be literate, resisters used avoidance tactics: "In the beginning, people who did not like it found excuses not to go to the literacy centre. They would say 'I'm sick' or even hide. 'He's not there, he's gone to the market.'"[46] The campaign's national director Gudeta Mammo was aware of this avoidance phenomenon. As he wrote in a 1985 article: "Some people may waste time by explaining that they learn at the *kebele* centre or at their workplace, without going to any centre" (Gudeta 1985, 115). But this was not possible in rural areas where there was only one literacy centre. There, one had to go to the classes, willingly or unwillingly.[47] Support for the regime and coercion cannot explain everything, however. Some seized the opportunity offered by education as such: "Some people managed to write and read. […] Those who continued with perseverance went to [formal] school, completed their education and are now employed by the government in administrative jobs…."[48] Some, seeing the doors that mastery of the written word could open, decided to take advantage of the opportunities for social advancement offered by literacy.

4.2. *Women engage with the literacy centres*

For different reasons, women engaged with the literacy centres more than men. In the name of its policy to promote women, the Derg wanted to give them equal access to education. Enrolment rates for girls in schools under the Haile Selassie regime were extremely low. The Derg wanted to

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[46] Anjulo Agago, interview, December 2010.
[47] Assefa Wolde-Giorgis, interview, February 2007.
[48] Anjulo Agago, interview, December 2010.

encourage women to go to the centres so that they could become literate, but also so that families would gradually acquire the habit of sending their daughters to school. The woman teacher Yaluse Mita recalls that the Derg sent female teachers to the countryside, insisting that they should teach women in particular.[49] She also testifies that women were enthusiastically involved as early as the *zamecha*. Tsehai Zerihun, who was also a young *zemach*, says the same.[50] Later on, women joined the literacy campaign in greater numbers than men. During the first phase, 70 percent of students were women and girls (Sjörström & Sjörström 1983, 40). This is highly significant if one bears in mind the fact that just four years earlier, rural women and girls were being kept away from schools. At the very end of the campaign, in 1990, anthropologist Helen Pankhurst found that women made up the majority of students attending the literacy centre in the village of Gera (Pankhurst 1990, 66). How can this engagement by women with the literacy campaign be explained? Women were no less busy with daily chores than men were. Perhaps the fact that they were already in the village due to the important role of domestic work in their daily activities made it easier for them to attend classes. However, women were also responsible for fetching water and carrying wood for domestic use, activities that kept them away from the village for several hours, and exhausting tasks that also left them with little energy for studying.

The reasons why women attended more frequently must be sought somewhere other than in greater availability. First of all, they seem to have seized the opportunity to acquire knowledge that would prove useful in their everyday activities. In 1984, the anthropologist Tsehai Berhane Selassie noted that the literacy programme had enabled women to communicate more widely and to be approached by the Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association (REWA), which also provided education on nutrition, family planning, motherhood and basic hygiene, which were lessons adapted to daily life (Tsehai 1984, 18). It has often been pointed out that women's associations were subordinate to the farmers' associations and at a national level to COPWE, of which they were appendices (Clapham 1988, 138). That said, they were also places where women came together. They could exchange ideas and express themselves in public, something that was reserved for men in mixed spaces. In rural Ethiopia, women rarely met at all, let alone in a group (Poluha 2002, 71). Literacy classes and women's associations were spaces where they could spend time outside the home, and they opened the door to more extensive sociability. They also provided opportunities for women farmers to spend time with the few women graduates who lived near them. This brought them into contact with a different model of femininity, which may have attracted them.

[49]Yaluse Mita, interview, November 2009. See Chapter 6.
[50]Tsehai Zerihun, interview, January 2011.

Tsehai Zerihun, who was involved in literacy training and the organisation of women's cooperatives in the Wolaita countryside during the *zemecha*, recalls that the women farmers talked to her, a young graduate from the city, a great deal about their condition. She testifies to a palpable sense of injustice based on an acute awareness of the inequity of gender relations. Tsehai Zerihun, and other women graduates with her, reinforced these feelings, and showed that one could be a woman and still be freer and more independent, albeit within the constraints of a patriarchal society.[51]

It is therefore possible to conclude that women seized the opportunity offered by the literacy classes to expand their space of freedom. More generally, did they not see the new structures created by the Derg—literacy classes, women's associations and cooperatives—as an opportunity for emancipation through a greater inclusion in collective social activities? Moreover, Tsehai Berhane Selassie recalls that women's associations were involved in political awareness-raising (Tsehai 1984, 18). It would therefore be interesting to stop looking at the phenomenon from above and discover what was actually going on inside these non-mixed spaces. Although the new political structures undoubtedly became increasingly restrictive, to the point where they led to a sense of dislike in the second half of the 1980s, this does not mean that women did not invest them with their own aspirations for a time. Did they not see these changes as beneficial to them? Although men remained at the helm of the political apparatus, did the large number of women attending literacy centres not show that women had begun to move?

5. What does reading and writing mean?

How did farming communities appropriate the written word? What use did they make of it? Rather than understanding it "as a technology that has the same effect everywhere," it is better to "grasp the way in which writing is always taken in particular cultural contexts and power relations, forbidding any generalisation about its effects, whether cognitive or social" (Fraenkel & Mbodj 2010, 13). It is therefore necessary first of all to look at the history of writing practices in Wolaita and the particular power relations in which writing was embedded.

By 1984, the nationwide illiteracy rate had fallen from 90% to 50% compared to 1974. Since the beginning of the campaign, 12 million people out of a total population of about 30 million had received their literacy certificate (Hoben 1994, 633–34). In view of the high failure rates in the final literacy examination reported in the official documents—two thirds in the first phase and one third in the third phase —it does not seem that the certificates

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[51]Ibid.

were distributed in order to boost statistics.[52] Indeed, it must have been very tempting to sacrifice quality for quantity in the programme (Clapham 1988, 152). Nonetheless, the literacy campaign is rightly considered by several authors to be the regime's most impressive achievement (Balsvik 2007, 96), and Ethiopia was awarded the Literacy Prize by UNESCO as early as 1980.[53] Nevertheless, the figures that appear in the 1994 national census suggest that the impact of the campaign should be played down. In the capital city of Wolaita, 73% of men and 61% of women were declared literate; in the surrounding countryside, the rates were 46% and 23% respectively. In the mountainous *wereda* of Kindo Koysha, the figures were 56% and 39% in the city of Bele, and 24% and 6% in rural areas.[54] These are much lower than those announced by the Derg at the end of the 1990s. However, while the Derg may have been tempted to exaggerate the results, the EPRDF, which replaced it, may have been tempted to minimise them—EPRDF liked to claim that its own educational work started out from a catastrophic situation. Beyond these possible liberties taken with the statistics, this draws attention to the phenomenon of the loss of literacy skills, which has been particularly strong in rural areas due to the lack of a favourable literary environment for practising reading and writing. Anjulo Agago is one of those who have, as he puts it, forgotten: "I was one of those who read and wrote but with time I forgot, I moved backwards."[55]

In the Wolaita countryside, the written word was intimately linked to Protestantism on the one hand, and to communications with the authorities and the production of legal documents on the other. The biblical texts in Wolaita and Amharic owned by the Protestant churches made up the entirety of literary resources in the countryside. In 1950, missionary Trimingham counted between 150 and 200 Christian communities, each gathered around a church with one or two gospels written in vernacular (Trimingham 1950, 34). Brian Fargher, who worked from the SIM archives, provides a higher figure; he reports that 900 copies of the Gospel of St John translated into vernacular were distributed in Wolaita in the 1940s (Fargher 1996, 169). While it is difficult to know the exact number of texts in circulation on the eve of the revolution, Tibebe Eshete recalls that Bibles translated into Amharic circulated abundantly from the 1960s because of their low price (Tibebe 2009, 375).

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[52] MOE, *Every Ethiopian…* (1981), 10.

[53] Ibid., iii.

[54] CSA, *The Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, Results from the southern Nations,' Nationalities' and Peoples' Regional State. Statistical Report on Education and Economic Activity* (1995), 74.

[55] Anjulo Agago, interview, December 2010.

Although each Christian community had texts, contact with the written religious culture was, as mentioned above, by delegation. In Wolaita, tens of thousands of the faithful had access to the Bible through the mediation of a few hundred local church leaders. Rural communities also used delegation in the administrative field. The tiny minority of literate people in the countryside were all occasional public writers who were called upon to produce legal documents, but the need for these documents was too irregular for the written word to be included as a part of daily life. Finally, domestic writing practices were non-existent. In short, the written word had a real role in the Wolaita countryside, but it was not considered necessary for everyone to be able to read and write. A few community members—writing "professionals"—were enough to ensure that the largest numbers of people had access to written culture through delegation, this "collective and collaborative understanding of literacy" (Fraenkel & Mbodj 2010, 20). Anjulo Agago does not seem to be saddened by having "backed down," by "forgetting" how to read and write. For him, the literacy campaign led to an advance in writing that still persists, despite the losses: "From four villages, if we were lucky, we would find one person who could write a legal document. We had to go a long way to find someone who knew how to read. Now it is available."[56] Three years after the end of the literacy campaign in 1994, the literacy rate in Dubbo, where Anjulo Agago lives, must have been close to that of the rural areas of Soddo canton, which was 40% (due to the proximity of the well-school-educated town of Areka).[57] Compared with the rates in 1974, when less than 1% of the rural population knew how to read and write, literacy had made great progress. In the rural context, almost one in two people in the countryside could write—a significant proportion. Thus, the quotation above should be understood within the logic of the delegation of writing applied by peasants. Delegating writing has been radically simplified since the literacy campaign. It has not "eradicated the scourge of illiteracy," but it has entrenched the presence of the written word in the countryside. In a context in which the written word was the attribute of power, the literacy campaign reduced the vulnerability of peasants vis-à-vis the administration. Having an official document written by a member of the community, by a neighbour, rather than by an unknown public writer does not have the same meaning in terms of power relations. Whether or not everyone knows how to read and write, the advance of the written word has led to a *collective* empowerment of peasant communities. In individual terms, those who claim they have "forgotten" also say that they still know how to write their names. Being able to sign one's name is crucial in all Ethiopia's rural areas. According to Abeje Mammo, who was a teenager in a village in Lasta, in the

[56]Ibid.
[57]CSA, *The Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia…* (1995), 74.

north, during the campaign: "It was very interesting for the farmers. Before, to sign, they were afraid to point their finger… it is better to write, it is very important."[58] The peasants thought it degrading to sign with a fingerprint (Pankhurst 1990, 64). For Baye Maereg, a farmer in Lasta, signing is the most important thing the literacy campaign brought him.[59] The Wolaita peasant Mana Madibo says the same. If signing is so important, it is because it is an act of communication with power and gives a measure of dignity to a relationship of domination. No longer signing with a fingerprint also means being able to understand what one is signing and therefore to feel politically less vulnerable.

The second consequence of the literacy campaign is that it brought education to the villages in a sustainable way. For the first time, no family was left out. Teacher Girma Bekele's recollections testify to the visibility of the campaign, to its inclusion in the rural landscape: "The Derg arrived and decreed basic education. […] They recited: 'hä hu hi, lä lu li, mä mu mi, rä ru ri' that's it! All of them! In every place, in the whole *wereda*! In the other *wereda* it was the same."[60] This educational activity was added to other activities to give a rhythm to the life of the communities. It helped make school-type education a part of the life of the population. For some, this was a first step towards further education. Only a small minority of adults attended the training centres organised as part of the post-literacy process. Most of those who wished to continue studying went to school, where evening classes were introduced for newly literate adults (McNab 1990, 70). The literacy campaign was then used as a gateway to formal education in a context of social advancement.

> When basic education came, at that time, I was in grade 8. It was the Derg who brought it, by imposing it, they taught the peasants by force. […] Some of those who received basic education by being forced have good positions. There are some who work in the administration for the region, the zone, the canton, there are some who work in many places. There are also some in the Education Office. And they worked during the Derg. It was the Derg that opened people's eyes. After the arrival of the Derg, people made progress. Schools were established everywhere. The Derg also made people equal. It was the Derg that opened the door to freedom between people. First of all, it made people equal, it made the weak and the strong become the same."[61]

This witness believes that through its educational actions, the Derg "opened the eyes" of the population to education as a means of social promotion and

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[58] Abeje Mamo (employee of the NGO Plan International), interview, Lalibela, 14 February 2008.

[59] Baye Maereg, interview, February 2008.

[60] Germa Bekele, interview, December 2010.

[61] Arjo Anjulo (university graduate), interview, Dubbo, 10 December 2010.

collective progress. Like Mana Madibo, he believes that it was well worth using force.

5.1. *Vernacular or Amharic?*

With the written word, the literacy campaign led to an unprecedented advance in Amharic. It was necessary to wash away the injustices of the past oppression of nationalities *and* to continue the national unification work of the previous regime, to promote local languages *and* to spread the national language. In 1985, the linguist Lionel Bender wrote that the military regime had continued the policy of promoting Amharic (Bender 1985, 277). On the contrary, according to the Wolaita teacher and school headmaster Zebdewos Chama: "All books were prepared in the Wolaita language, there were no Amharic at all in the literacy campaign."[62] On the other hand, Susan Hoben points out that in the later years of the campaign, there were increasing demands to learn in Amharic, and textbooks in other languages were being sent back to Addis Ababa (Hoben 1994, 637). These contradictions reflect a complex and ambiguous phenomenon provoked by both technical and political issues.

Firstly, putting languages into a written form implied a process of codification and standardisation that posed serious problems because of the dialectal differences among vernacular languages (McNab 1990, 75). While linguists at the Language Academy in Addis Ababa were working to put the dialects in order to develop teaching materials, students in the provinces who were learning with the same materials no longer recognised their language. In addition, some languages contained sounds that were foreign to the Amharic alphabet. This meant that adaptations had to be made that were not always obvious to readers. For example, it was reported that local instructors, who were literate in Amharic but in contact with their mother tongue in its written form for the first time, had difficulty reading textbooks (Hoben 1994, 635). Second, learning in vernacular was too limited for those who wished to continue their education or simply use their reading skills. Proficiency in Amharic was essential for entry into formal schools, where instruction was always in the national language. Apart from a few rare translations of religious texts, the only books that existed in local languages were the booklets and reading manuals produced by the Ministry of Education for the literacy campaign. The possibilities offered by literature in Amharic were far wider. One of the aims of literacy was to provide access to texts on national issues. However, apart from one magazine in Oromo and another in Tigrigna, newspapers and magazines were all written in Amharic (Sherr 1989, 438). In short, to emerge

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[62]Zebdewos Chama, interview, November 2010.

from marginalisation into the national space on a full footing meant knowing Amharic.

Finally, as elsewhere, knowledge of the national language was part of the relationship with power and the nation. No one could be a fully-fledged citizen without speaking Amharic. The language of power remains a language of oppression for as long as it has not been mastered. Amharic was the language used for dealing with the administration, which was a key literacy issue for both the government and the people (Clapham 1988, 153). The government wanted to provide literacy in vernacular languages, but local governments always worked in Amharic. It was also local governments that provided employment opportunities, and thus upward social mobility, for newly-literate people. In addition to these factors driving people towards Amharic, there was also a question of identity: southern nationalities had less reason to reject Amharic if their own language was no longer devalued. Why not become part of a nation that no longer despises us? In short, the relationship to the languages of instruction was played out in an overlapping of affiliations—local and national, Wolaita and Ethiopian—which could be complementary or in opposition, depending on the context.

In southwestern Ethiopia, this language policy raised another issue, which would later prove to be fraught with consequences: that of competition among peripheral societies for their place within the national space.

5.2. *Language issues on the periphery: Gamo intellectuals against literacy in the Wolaita language*

Wolaita is an Omotic language, a characteristic it shares with the neighbouring languages spoken by the Gamo, Goffa and Dawro. But it was the language with the largest number of speakers among the minority languages. Many Gamo, Goffa and Dawro spoke it. For all these reasons, the Derg decided that the Wolaita language would be used to teach literacy to all the populations who spoke Omotic languages.

Gebre-Mikael Kuke was an important player in the literacy campaign in Wolaita. Known as the host of the literacy programme on radio, he was author and editor of the Wolaita language textbooks used during the campaign. He recalls that a meeting was held at the Ministry of Culture in Addis Ababa in 1984 on the design of a future Amharic-Wolaita dictionary. The Gamo intellectuals in attendance made the point that the dictionary should not only be in Wolaita, as it was to serve as a basis for textbooks for Gamo, Goffa and Dawro people too. They proposed the creation of a new language, a compound of the four Omotic languages that they suggested to name WoGaGoDa. The Wolaita refused, claiming that it was not a "historical" or "cultural" language. The Ministry of Education sided with them and ordered the textbooks to be prepared in Wolaita. A year later, Gebre-Mikael Kuke went to Gamo to

present the new literacy textbooks in Wolaita and train the instructors. They raised the same issue again, saying that they wanted the WoGaGoDa and that they would not teach in a language called Wolaita because they were not Wolaita. Gebre-Mikael Kuke reported the discussion to the Ministry of Education and to the Ministry of Culture. In 1986, a meeting was held at the Curriculum Department to decide on the matter. The order was once again given to teach the whole region in the Wolaita language.[63]

These debates took place in the context of the historical hegemony of the Wolaita in the region and heralded an identity competition among the peripheries for better representation in the Ethiopian space. The language of instruction was seen as a means of visibility, and therefore of recognition, in the national cultural field. It was the place of the first mobilisation of identity to establish a political existence in the nation as a group. The WoGaGoDa question was to resurface in 1999–2000 (Data 2000; Vaughan 2006; Guidi 2012).

Conclusion

The issue is not whether the literacy campaign "kept its promises"—of development, emancipation, spreading socialist consciousness and so on—but to try to grasp the multiple social dynamics that converged around it. Motivated by a resolutely voluntarist policy, the government made considerable efforts to design it and mobilise the population. On the other hand, the people's movement towards literacy centres, between coercion and voluntary action, makes it possible to detect an appropriation process that is the outcome of a varied repertoire of motivations. First, the years between 1979 and 1985 saw the rural population trying to adapt to the new regime by engaging with the transformations it was driving. Rural communities viewed literacy as part of a policy for their benefit. Second, the advance of the written word has reduced vulnerability to the administration, which exercised its power through it: it has contributed, in a small but real way, to transforming the relationship with political power. Third, literacy has been the subject of strategies for social uplift enabled by the growth of the administrative apparatus out to the local fabric of the countryside. As the state moves forward, it controls and represses, but at the same time it can become less alien by being engaged with increasing numbers of local community members. For their part, rural women, who had always been excluded from the exercise of political power, took advantage of the literacy campaign not only to acquire knowledge that was directly useful to their daily lives but also to broaden their scope for autonomy. Did this movement of the Wolaita countryside alongside the advance of the state take place in the context of the emergence—albeit a timid one—of a new

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[63]Gebre-Mikael Kuke, interview, November 2010.

national imagination? There was a clear desire for integration within peasant communities. The literacy campaign was seen as a gesture of promotion within the national space. While land reform represented an emancipation of the peasants as a class, the recognition of vernacular languages promised an end—at least in theory—to the symbolic violence exercised by the north over the south; it constituted promotion as a nationality. The literacy campaign was conceived as a medium-term mass action, combined with an extension of the primary school network as a long-term strategy.

Chapter 8

The Movement Towards Schools: Between Coercion and Social Demand (1978–85)

From stabilisation of the regime to the famine in the mid-1980s, the period between 1978 and 1985 saw an unprecedented convergence between rural Wolaita society and the state. This was unheard of, in the sense that previous relations between the administration and the peasant communities in southern Ethiopia could be summed up as extraction and repression. The reasons behind this convergence are a hard-to-disentangle web of voluntary movements, incitement and coercion, some aspects of which we revealed in the previous chapter. A look at formal education, especially primary schools in rural areas, will now allow us to drive our analysis forward. In 1985, a senior official of the Ministry of Education, Gudeta Mammo told UNESCO:

> In Socialist Ethiopia, universal primary education has not yet been achieved. So once the literacy programme is over in a village, the people in the area are encouraged to keep the centre as a primary school, until the government finally agrees to build a school. (Gudeta 1985, 119)

The literacy campaign was a first step towards widespread formal education under the responsibility of the farming communities, in partnership with the government. It was seen by the state as a first step in the construction of a symbiotic cultural and ideological link between the state and its citizens—an aspect of social control that went alongside supervision and repression—that formal education was intended to perpetuate. The various strands of educational policy were conceived on the basis of distinct, well-defined time-frames as parts of the same policy of mobilising the masses through education. The *zemecha* (1975–76) had been a major short-term point of contact aimed at responding to the political acceleration of the revolutionary years. The objectives of the national literacy campaign were medium-term. Formal education structures would ensure the permanence of the state's educational actions in the countryside.

This chapter seeks to understand how the people of Wolaita positioned themselves vis-à-vis the formal education policy driven by the regime, and the ways in which they engaged with it. This means looking at the increase in the

school network, the management and administration of the schools and the driving forces at work in school dynamics.

1. Increasing the school network: a state move to conquer rural areas?

In 1974, in addition to the low enrolment rate, there was also an unequal geographical distribution of educational facilities. Nationwide, 50% of primary school students were in towns, where only 11% of the population lived.[1] In a document published in 1977, the Ministry of Education announced the following objectives:

> a) to promote universal primary education within the shortest period of time commensurate with available resources and with the need to satisfy demands from other aspects of education; b) to reduce inequalities in access to second level education and eventually to eliminate these discrepancies, in particular, redressing the imbalance between rural and urban areas. (Ayelew 2000, 45)

In 1982, the proposals put forward in preparation for the 1984–94 ten-year plan provided that universal primary education would be achieved up to Grade 6 by 1992, along with the eradication of illiteracy, which remained the priority.[2] The Ministry of Education's aim was to establish one primary school for every three peasant associations (each association covered 800 hectares and had about 600 inhabitants), one school up to Grade 9 per *wereda* and one school up to grade 12 per province. Nationally, the number of primary schools more than doubled from 2,754 to 6,600 between 1974 and 1983. During the same period, the number of secondary schools increased from 113 to 194.[3] In 1972–73, 588,868 pupils or 13.5% of the 7–12 age group, were enrolled in primary schools nationwide (Teshome 1979, 170), and by 1989 this figure had risen to 3,926,700, or 35% of the 7–16 age group (Tekeste 2006, 19). This expansion reduced inequalities between urban and rural areas, as the government's efforts were focused particularly on small towns and the countryside. In 1983, 40% of primary school enrolments were in urban areas, compared with 50% in 1973 (Legesse 1984, 334). In short, the first ten years of the Derg saw an unprecedented increase in school networks throughout the country, especially in the countryside. In Wolaita, the increase in the number of schools was greater than that observed nationwide. Between 1974 and 1983, the number of primary schools tripled from 36 to 108, and many of the older schools that had been operating up to Grade 4 now expanded to include Grade 8.[4]

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[1]MOEFA, *Report on Educational Development in Ethiopia: 1973–74 and 1974–75* (prepared for the 35th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva), 2.

[2]MOE, *Information Paper on the Education System in Ethiopia* (1982), 6.

[3]PMGE, *Ten-Year Perspective Plan, 1984/85-1993/94* (1984), 136.

[4]WZEO, የትምህርት ተቋማት ዝርዝር ፤ መቼ እንደተሠሩ የሚግልጽ መረጃ (List of establishment of schools, clarifications on their date of construction, 2010).

The primary schools in the *wereda* towns Areka, Boditi and Bedessa became secondary schools. With the school in Soddo, the total number of secondary schools in Wolaita thus increased to four.

1.1. *Building schools*

However, the post-revolutionary period did not see a significant increase in the share of the national budget devoted to education (Tekeste 2006, 19). As with the literacy campaign, the population was called upon to contribute. The ten-year plan published in 1984 stated as follows:

> The institutionalisation, on the basis of democratic centralism, of the active participation of the broad masses on matters pertaining to the provision, administration and management of general education has been the most important achievement during the last ten years.[5]

Participation by communities was seen as a democratic step towards involving them, making them actors and giving them a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their own schools. Before the revolution, the education tax had been a weight on peasant families, while it was the urban population who were the beneficiaries of education.[6] The aim was to redress this injustice by making schools not only available to communities, but also their property. Finally, the school system under Haile Selassie's regime was considered unsuitable because it was too centralised. Cooperation between the government and communities would allow decentralisation to better adapt education to local conditions. This unprecedented collaboration began with a mobilisation of village communities to build schools for themselves. The frequent emphasis on "democratic centralism" implied, in theory, that the administration should centralise the aspirations of the "grassroots" before formulating its policies. In reality, the collaboration methods were decided at the top, as teacher Zerihun Anebo reminds us:

> There were contributions, but that contribution could not take place voluntarily. It was decided by certain individuals who were highly authorised. And there was no discussion regarding school fees, constructions, academic purpose. And they bring the decision to the community to involve it in working contribution when they are building a school. […] The communities lacked money. Due to this situation, they cannot bring money as they were ordered. So they changed money into work.[7]

The regime viewed this as an inevitable constraint on the growth of the school system. The degree of community voluntary participation is hard

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[5]PMGE, *Ten-Year Perspective Plan, 1984/85-1993/94* (1984), 136.

[6]MOE, *Information Paper on the Education System in Ethiopia* (1982), 3.

[7]Zerihun Anebo, interview, December 2010.

to measure. Girma Bekele, who was at the same time a teacher, a school headmaster and a member of a peasants' association, recalls that at the beginning of the regime, farmers "worked voluntarily for development and schools." As he recalls, the school in Bedessa, of which he was the headmaster, was expanded to provide grades 7 and 8 following a request from the population. His task was to be an organiser and an intermediary between the governor of the region and the community. The governor came to visit the school and ordered new classrooms to be built as a condition for his consent. Girma Bekele arranged for each household to contribute a small amount of money.[8] He does not say whether the construction work was carried out with contribution of labour from the villagers. However, when listing the expenses, he only mentions the cost of materials and not the wages of any masons. It is therefore likely that it was the villagers who put up the buildings, and a Ministry of Education document published in 1982 stated that almost all primary school construction was carried out by local communities. In this way, it was possible to build up to 500 new schools a year nationwide, instead of the 200 built before the revolution.

1.2. *The stranglehold over Kale Hiwot's structures*

In Wolaita, the progress of the government school network was based on the phased confiscation of the structures belonging to the Protestant *Kale Hiwot* Church. Proclamation number 54 of 1975 on the nationalisation of private schools specified that missionary schools were outside its scope, and Proclamation number 103 of 1976 on the "Administration and Control of Schools by the People" said the same thing. However, it said nothing about Ethiopian religious schools such as those of *Kale Hiwot*, which had become independent from SIM in the 1960s. But as Talemos Mana recalls: "The Derg came to power and the missionary schools were handed over to the government. All the church schools were closed."[9] When Talemos Mana speaks of "missionary" schools, he is referring not only to those that were actually run by the missionaries but also to the hundreds of primary schools that were organised, financed and operated by local Protestant churches. In terms of closures, these were requisitions. From the very beginning of the literacy campaign, as Girma Bekele recalls, Protestant churches were transformed into places of study: "The Derg arrived and decreed a basic education. Basic education was decreed and all the churches were closed. Every place of prayer became a school."[10] This was part of the general policy of the literacy campaign: these religious buildings could be used as

[8]Germa Bekele, interview, December 2010.
[9]Talemos Mana, interview, November 2010.
[10]Germa Bekele, interview, December 2010.

classrooms just like any other building, especially as they were widespread and the communities were organised around their churches. They were perfectly appropriate places for placing education at the heart of communities. Then, as the literacy centres became primary schools, the temporary use of these buildings became permanent.

Initially, the *Kale Hiwot* Church faithful supported the revolution. They believed that the reforms were more in line with the word of the Bible than the policies of the overthrown regime had been (Eide 2000, 169). In order to become institutionalised in the countryside, the new regime was able to rely on the large numbers of Protestant settlements as well as the support of the faithful: many of the early leaders of peasant associations were Protestant (Donham 1999, 151–76). Relations began to deteriorate in 1979–80, when young followers refused to chant slogans like: "we must destroy our enemies," "religion is the opium of the people" and "God is dead." In response, the government imprisoned hundreds of *Kale Hiwot* members in Gamo-Goffa and Kambatta. The situation was no better in Wolaita, where the congregation decided to hold their annual Bible study conference in 1983 despite being refused permission by the authorities. It was attended by 10,000 people. On the third day of the conference, the police arrested the ministers, some of whom remained in prison for over a year. The most severe actions were taken in 1984–85, however, when the government closed more than half the local churches (1,700 out of 2,791) without giving a reason. This move affected all 748 churches in Wolaita, and all the SIM's property was confiscated (Eide 2000, 169–70).

In order to be able to understand these measures, one must look at the Derg's general policy towards religions, which was based on political rather than religious considerations. Despite professing to be atheist, the Derg pursued different policies towards the religions practised in Ethiopia. As a member of *Qalä Haywät* recalls: "Selassie Church in Addis Ababa celebrated *Temqat* every year and the government participated in the programme. But for us, *Kale Hiwot* or *Mekane Yesus*, they closed it."[11] "Selassie" (Trinity) is one of the main churches in Addis Ababa where national ceremonies organised by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church are held. Why this ambivalent attitude of the Derg towards religions? Although the Derg was quick to proclaim the equality of religions and freedom of worship, its attitude towards the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Islam and Protestant churches was far from identical.

On 10 August 1974, it separated the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church from the state, causing it to lose its status as the official church, and thus its

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[11] Abebe Fola, interview, December 2009.

political role. The most serious attack came after the land reform. When it lost its land, which passed under government control, the national church also lost its main source of income. A strategy of control followed these attacks. Patriarch Tewoflos was arrested in February 1976 (and eventually executed on 28 July 1979), and many archbishops who were opposed to the revolution were imprisoned. Under pressure from the government, the Holy Synod elected Tekle Haymanot II, a clergyman loyal to the Derg, as the new patriarch (Eide 2000, 111–12). The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church was a key player, and the Derg needed to secure its collaboration if it wanted to govern Ethiopia. Thus, although the state was officially secular, the former official religion, while being subject to the regime, enjoyed a privileged status (Eide 2000, 162, 166). Furthermore, as the historian Stéphane Ancel has shown, the church managed to "meet the immense challenge" posed by the revolution by reforming itself to "consolidate its financial base and improve its mode of operation" (Ancel 2015, 687–88). At the same time, the Muslim authorities were also brought into line. In 1977, one of the sons of Imam Hadji Mohammed Sani Habib of the Anwar Great Mosque in Addis Ababa was assassinated, and the other was imprisoned. From then on, the imam appeared at official ceremonies alongside Mengestu Haile-Mariam, having been forced into docility (Eide 2000, 113).

Before the revolution, the central government had believed that religious and national unity were inseparable. Professing Tewahedo Christianity was seen by the political and ecclesiastical authorities as an indivisible part of the Ethiopian identity. Protestantism, on the other hand, was an imported religion, and its proponents were suspected of not being entirely loyal citizens. The Derg inherited the previous regime's view that Protestantism might create a distinct identity and prejudice national cohesion, but it conceived the idea differently: owing to their links with European and North American churches, the Protestant churches were accused of being agents of imperialism and enemies of the revolution (Eide 2000, 200). And, by April 1976, the NDRE's programme made it clear that the new education was to liberate Ethiopia from imperialist cultural domination.[12] This reveals a certain ambivalence around the issue of nationalities. The Derg claimed that it gave an equal place to each of them, and respected and defended their cultures, and Protestantism had been incorporated by the people of the south, whose identities it had helped to rebuild after the integration into Ethiopia. *Kale Hiwot* was an Ethiopian Church, and was financially independent of foreign missions. No followers of *Kale Hiwot* were part of any separatist movement. However, suspicions of disloyalty were supported by the old idea of the connection between Tewahedo

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[12] *Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia*, in MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 4.

Christianity and nationhood, while at the same time being reactivated by more recent views on the dangers of Western imperialism (Donham 1999, 145).

According to a member of *Kale Hiwot*, the Derg attacked Protestant churches because they had educated the people of the south and made them fit for positions of power: attacks on their religion had the aim of marginalising them. This is in line with the view that the Wolaita always had to fight for their place in the nation under adverse conditions in which those in power, both locally and nationally, tried to prevent them from doing so.[13] Did the Derg wanted to prevent people who had been educated by missionaries or in Ethiopian Protestant churches from taking up important positions because it doubted their patriotism? While it may be true that the Protestant churches had educated the rural people of Wolaita, and that this had enabled them to improve their status within the nation by partially emancipating themselves from their dominated position, the sociology of government members under the Derg does not enable us to make the claim that the Wolaita, or any other member of a southern nationality, were prevented from holding positions of power because of their identity. The attacks on *Kale Hiwot* are much better understood in terms of the advance of the state and its hold over the population. In 1975, SIM missionaries were operating 40 schools, and *Kale Hiwot*'s education network included 280 village primary schools in Wolaita, other parts of the Sidamo region, Kambatta and Gamo-Goffa (Fargher 1996, 301). Given its school project, it is hard to imagine the Derg leaving so many schools outside its control. Taking over *Kale Hiwot*'s schools and churches enabled the Derg to eliminate an important competitor in the field of education and to take possession of a network whose reach extended into the heart of village communities. In Wolaita, at the time of the revolution, the city was the domain of the state, while the countryside was a Protestant domain. The functions of the network of churches were worship, education and supervision of the converted populations. With more than 700 churches, which were also organised village communities, it had a continuing coverage of rural areas. The Derg systematically relied on the structures of the Protestant churches and their social seedbed to gain a hold in the countryside. Instead of the distant control of Protestant churches imposed by Haile Selassie's regime, the Derg simply took their place. This is why the 748 churches in Wolaita were closed in 1984 and 1985 and their schools confiscated. Some were destroyed, while others were converted into government schools or premises for peasant associations and other mass organisations (Balisky 2009, 320).

[13] Abebe Fola, interview, December 2009.

1.3. *The ambivalent attitude of Protestants*

How did Protestants, and teachers in particular, react to this policy? The teachers were the educated elite of the countryside, and many of them were true educational activists who wanted to uplift their community spiritually—reading gave direct access to the word—and politically within the nation. In order to understand their attitude towards the Derg, one has to take its double-edged policy—anti-religion and pro-education—into consideration.

According to a former teacher and school headmaster, Protestants harboured a deep aversion to the form of Marxism-Leninism professed by the regime, due not only to its atheism, but also, and above all, because of the Derg's aggressive policy towards their churches.[14] At the same time, however, the Derg's educational policy meant an end to the administrative inconveniences involved in opening schools in rural areas. Abebe Fola, a devout member of the congregation at the *Kale Hiwot* Church and a tireless campaigner for rural schooling, makes a clear distinction between the repression of churches and the removal of obstructions to school-building. After explaining that the Derg had been very hard on the Protestants, he recalled that unlike its predecessor, it had allowed them to spread education as far as they were able, and that they had seized this opportunity.[15] Yaluse Mita, a member of the first generation of Wolaita women who attended school, and a fervent Protestant, makes the same observation: "Concerning school, nothing was forbidden, the Derg did not forbid anything."[16] In spite of the repression of their church, Protestant teachers were very active in the field of public education during the entire time the Derg was in power.

Yaluse Mita's journey is a good illustration of this. She completed Grade 8 at the SIM missionary school, the Soddo Christian Academy. After temporarily interrupting her studies to marry and have children, she completed Grade 12 at the government secondary school in Soddo before moving to Addis Ababa to attend the Kotebe Teacher Training College. With her diploma in hand, she returned to Wolaita to teach at Soddo Secondary School from the 1977–78 school year, as soon as the school reopened following the Red Terror. She taught at the government secondary school throughout the Derg period, and also worked in the countryside outside working hours, teaching literacy to peasant women.[17] The example of Zebdewos Chama is also symbolic. He attended the Soddo Christian Academy from 1954 to 1961 and then taught mathematics there. He completed Grade 12 in 1972 by attending summer

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[14]Elias Damtew (teacher, school headmaster, expert at the Department of Culture of the Wolaita area), interview, Soddo, 11 October 2009.

[15]Abebe Fola, interview, December 2009.

[16]Yaluse Mita, interview, November 2009.

[17]Ibid.

school at Addis Ababa University. In 1973, he was appointed headmaster of the junior high school in Alete Wondo, about 100 kilometres south of Wolaita. The following year, the year of the revolution, he was appointed director of the Ottona School, the former Soddo Christian Academy, which had just been transferred to the government. From 1983 to 1988, he was vice-principal of Soddo Secondary School. During the last 18 months of the Derg he was administrator of the Konta *wereda*.[18]

In fact, Protestants were pivotal actors of the educational field in Wolaita. The Soddo Christian Academy offered a good level of education, and many former students went on to careers in the education sector. According to Yaluse Mita: "those who were educated there were brilliant. They did a great deal for education in Ethiopia."[19] Admittedly, teaching was an unpopular career route, which many chose for lack of better alternatives (Tekeste 1990, 26). However, interviews in the field reveal that teaching could be a real vocation. It was as if the Protestant work ethic had been invested in education with a view to promoting the people of the region.

1.4. *Catholics: the choice of cooperation*

In 1974, Catholic missionaries were running five schools in Wolaita, led by an Italian Capuchin missionary, Abba Gino.[20] Unlike the case of the Protestants, these were not a multitude of primary schools teaching the first four grades at best and living on a shoestring of contributions from the faithful, but rather a limited number of schools financed by the Catholic Church, with adequate resources and usually better-trained Ethiopian teachers than in government schools. The Catholic School in Dubbo, which provided education up to Grade 8, was one of the three prestigious schools in Wolaita, the others being the Ligaba Beyene Government School and the Soddo Christian Academy. Wolaita and Hadiya were united in the vicariate of Soddo-Hosa'enna, which had 18,000 followers in 1970. Catholic schools were attended by children of all faiths. Under Haile Selassie's regime, relations between the Catholic missions and the administration were very good: the Catholic Church was much less independent than the Protestants and worked in symbiosis with the government. What was the state of relations between the Derg and the Catholics at the local level? This is what Abba Gino has to say:

> It was hard, but… for us, for the Catholic Church […], though it was difficult, we preferred to remain here, and not to oppose the Derg system, or socialist system. Anyway, nobody forced us to teach socialism, or to teach something against our

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[18]Zebdewos Chama, interview, November 2010.

[19]Yaluse Mita (teacher), interview, Soddo, 2 November 2009.

[20]Catholic Vicariate of Soddo, *Details of Schools under Soddo-Hosanna Catholic Church Diocese*.

believing. […] But we started with this principle: any system has got its own good and is even bad. Even in the system of socialism, I found place for good things, for a good cooperation. And I know that so many schools were closed, even the Protestant or other people because they wanted to oppose. I myself was one of the individuals of the committee of the revolution, because I was responsible for all the youth and the sport in the *wereda*. I preferred to work with the government in these things which are important for us, like helping the poor. Even the socialism is concerned about that. […] There is a room for a good cooperation. And we did that, and that's why our school continued and still, even during the Derg, we were quite well appreciated by the government. And we always, I myself always tried to be in a good collaboration with the authorities.[21]

The Ethiopian Catholic father Wolde-Yesus Wolde-Giorgis paints a similar picture. He maintains that there was no tension between the Catholics and the Derg. No schools were confiscated by the government, which even encouraged them to establish new ones. In his view, the Derg did not oppose their religious teachings because they conveyed a moral sense of obedience. They were not encouraged to teach Marxism-Leninism, except by local officials who wanted to be well thought of by their superiors. In fact, special political education classes were held on Saturdays and Sundays, whereas in government schools they were a daily event.[22]

Why these collaborative relationships? First of all because the local Catholics were accommodating and showed a desire to cooperate with the revolutionary regime. But the Protestants had done the same before they were subjected to the regime's discriminatory measures, and if the concern was about the patriotism of the faithful, the Catholic Church was also a foreign church, after all. Indeed, two decades earlier, had allegations of Catholicism not been the main accusation levelled at government schools and their imported programmes by those who opposed them? But this mistrust was linked to Europe's colonial expansion and the threat it had posed to Ethiopia in the first half of the century. In the 1970s, the enemy was no longer European colonialism but American imperialism, with which Protestants might be associated. Above all, the Catholic Church was not viewed as a competitor by the administration. It did not have the leadership capacity *Kale Hiwot* had in the countryside that the Derg wished to conquer. With their elite schools working hand in hand with the administration, the educational work of the Catholics was obviously not seen in the same light as the hundreds of Protestant educational centres scattered throughout the countryside, which often shunned the administration's gaze, and which were to be used by the poor, the "masses," whom the Derg wished to be certain to capture.

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[21] Abba Gino (Capuchin missionary), interview, Soddo, 12 December 2009.
[22] Abba Wolde-Yesus Wolde-Giorgis (Catholic priest), interview, Soddo, 10 October 2009.

In short, the school network grew steadily in the first decade of the Derg's rule. Catholic schools remained in place, and collaboration with the government continued smoothly. On the other hand, the rural schools run by the local Protestant churches were requisitioned by the government in a genuine state takeover of local school structures. At the same time, Protestants remained active in education by teaching and running schools. Rural Protestant communities took advantage of the Derg's school expansion policy to build schools under the authority of the government, something that had been far more difficult under the previous regime, which had often refused to grant their schools legal status. In general, as elsewhere in the country, peasant communities were given the responsibility of building new schools.

2. Community participation

In order to understand the relationship between rural communities and schools, it is necessary to look at the structures put in place by the regime to ensure long-term cooperation with the inhabitants above and beyond the construction of school buildings. In a brochure published in 1984 by the Ministry of Education to mark the tenth anniversary of the revolution, educationist Geoffrey Last wrote:

> The new attitude towards education and the new role of education imply new relationships between the community and educational services. Ensuring free, step-by-step education for all the masses requires a high level of cooperation between communities organised in peasant associations and the government, hence the creation of committees.[23]

By the time this booklet was published, the school committees that were established in each school from 1976 onwards had over the course of a decade or so become the key institutions for the functioning of schools and their relationship with communities.

2.1. *School committees: school management and administration*

Proclamation number 54 of 1975 on the nationalisation of private schools specified that every school was to establish a committee responsible for internal administration, and that this administration was to be in accordance with the directives of the Ministry of Education.[24] But it was in Proclamation number 103 of 1976 on "The Administration and Control of Schools by the People" that the tasks and duties of school committees were defined in detail. They were aimed at "the integration of education into the life of the

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[23] MOE, *Education in Socialist Ethiopia …* (1984), 16.
[24] "Public Ownership of Private Schools, Proclamation no. 54/1975", in MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 14–15.

people."[25] Officially, the objective was to integrate the activities of schools into those of the communities while also ensuring close ties with the school and political authorities; in other words, it was to involve the local population and coordinate all the schools in the system. As a result, the remit of each school committee was:

> to supervise generally the running of the school in accordance with the directives issued by the Minister; […] to advise and assist the school to reflect in its programmes the culture of the people; […] to co-ordinate the school and village with a view to ensuring that education is not confined to the classroom and that it is integrated with practice.[26]

The pivotal function assigned to school committees applied in the first place to finance. They had to manage the budget allocated by the Ministry of Education, encourage a school to generate its own income and coordinate communities to contribute financially to the running of the schools. As teacher Afework Ayalew recalls: "There were many schools in the countryside. At the time, the government opened various schools, and considering its budget, I don't think it could afford them all, so it handed over the expenses to the communities." He also recalls the way expenses were shared between the government and the communities:

> Under the Derg, the government didn't give a penny to the school; it only paid the teachers' salaries and paid for the books. But we needed pens, notebooks to prepare lessons and the annual plan. For these different expenses, it was the community, the people who paid, the families of the pupils. [27]

However, it could happen that the communities paid the teachers' salaries where they were employed locally, without being assigned by the Ministry of Education. The committees had the power "to employ teachers and other workers using money allocated by the government or any other income generated."[28]

In reality, the state was broadly responsible for most of the expenditure. In 1989–90, the school budget for the whole of Wolaita totalled 7,502,513 *ber*: 6,672,283 *ber* from the government, 280,365 *ber* from student contributions, 78,659 *ber* from community cash contributions, 128,166 *ber* from estimated labour contributions, 134,448 *ber* generated by the school and 208,592 *ber*

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[25]"Administration and Control of the Schools by the People Proclamation no. 103/1976"; in ibid., 27.

[26]Ibid., 29–30.

[27]Afework Ayalew, interview, February 2007.

[28]"Administration and Control of the Schools by the People Proclamation no. 103/1976"; in MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 29–30.

classified as 'other'—probably international aid.[29] The state thus provided almost 90% of the region's school expenditure, but this does not mean that the contributions were not a burden for communities.

The multiple functions assigned to the school by the government converged in the committees. A reading of their attributions and duties immediately reveals tensions that can give rise to different interpretations. On the one hand, it was necessary, to ensure that village communities took ownership of the school so that it would no longer be an alien body in society.

> In the old reactionary socio-economic order, […] the creativity of the broad masses was neglected, administration was centralised with the result that the schools were made responsible to far-off administrative set-ups and teachers and students were detached from the broad masses.[30]

For education to take root in the lives of the population, the committees had to involve the communities in the definition of school activities, which would both link education to production and "democratise" education. At the same time, they needed to ensure that the Ministry of Education's guidelines were implemented. They were at the service of highly vertical top-down institutional integration. As the discourse went, this was not a contradiction in terms. In theory, the "democratic centralism" adopted by the regime assumed that information, ideas and proposals should come from the bottom up, before top-down decision-making and centralised implementation. However, the proclamations establishing the school committees were silent about any possible two-way vertical circulation or joint development of school programmes and activities by village communities and the central government. The two dynamics, democratic and authoritarian, were presented in a disjointed manner.

2.2. *Educational structures: territorial coverage and social control*

The tensions that arose between the democratic and authoritarian potential of school committees were resolved in favour of the latter to make schools one of the structures of the administrative network that were set up throughout the country. In a 1986 article, education historian Teshome Wagaw referred to a gradual shift of school committees towards authoritarianism (Teshome 1986, 39). However, when we read about their composition and powers rather than their attributions and duties, we have to wonder whether school committees were ever thought of in any other way than as instruments of social control. First of all, there was their make-up: the committees consisted

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[29]Soddo Zurya wereda, **የወላይታ አውራጃ የትምህርት የትምህርት ስታትስቲክስ ማጠቃላይ ጥራዝ** (*School Statistics of Wolaita Awraja, 1989–1990*).

[30]"Administration and Control of Schools by the People, Proclamation no. 103/1976," in MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 25.

of representatives of the peasants' association or the urban dwellers association, a teacher's representative elected by his peers, the school headmaster and, in secondary schools, a student representative aged over 16, elected by his schoolmates.[31] The committees were therefore composed of members of the local administration and school stakeholders. From the outset, one cannot help but note the absence of members of the "community," unless one believes that the members of the peasants' associations were sufficient to represent it. Surprisingly, parents were not mentioned in the article on the composition of school committees. A short article on parents stated that parents' representatives could be members of a committee if there was no peasants' association or residents' association.[32] The interviews revealed the absence of parents of pupils who were not leaders of peasant or mass associations. Those who sat on the school committees were all regime officials, and representatives of the school's pedagogical team were in the minority.[33] In short, schools appeared to be in a close partnership with the local administration rather than the community. The eligibility requirements meant that candidates were supporters of the revolution, and were not among the "privileged members" of the overthrown regime. They had to support the programme of the National Democratic Revolution, not have owned more than 10 hectares of land before the land reform, and not have owned any additional houses before the nationalisation of urban land.[34] Finally, the committees were subject to the authority of non-educational government departments: "The peasant associations of the cantons and provinces and the central associations of the neighbourhood associations coordinate the activities of the committees within their jurisdiction."[35]

The proclamations of 1975 and 1976 defined the powers of school committees in two stages. Article 7 of Proclamation number 54 of 1975 on the nationalisation of private schools stated as follows:

> The school committee shall have legal personality and the power to: 1) enter into contracts; 2) open bank accounts and draw money therefrom; 3) sue and be sued in its own name; 4) employ, administer and dismiss its own staff; 5) determine school fees; 6) operate, expand and maintain the school handed over to it; and 7) receive assistance in accordance with directives issued by the Ministry.[36]

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[31] Ibid., 27–28.

[32] Ibid., 29.

[33] Tesfaw Derebe, interview, February 2007; Mantagosh Eshete (teacher), interview, Lalibela, 14 February 2007.

[34] "Administration and Control of Schools by People's Proclamation no. 103/1976", in MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 33–34.

[35] Ibid., 34.

[36] "Public Ownership of Private Schools Proclamation no. 54/1975", in MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 15.

They were incorporated as legal persons for administrative acts and provided with specific powers to administer schools. They appeared to be endowed with a certain degree of autonomy. However, in Article 9, the Ministry of Education reserved the right to determine fees, which meant an overlap with the powers of the committees. In practice, by virtue of their financial powers, the committees had real room for manoeuvre, which allowed each one to adjust tuition fees to balance the needs of the school and the resources of the community.[37] One year later, Article 10 of Proclamation number 103 of 1976 on "The Administration and Control of Schools by the People" greatly expanded their powers:

1) The committee shall have the following powers with regard to school workers, teachers and students: a) to give warnings; b) to suspend either from work or school for not more than fifteen days; c) to impose fines not exceeding two months' pay; d) to dismiss from the school anyone who fails to be corrected after repeated warnings and punishments; e) to have any damaged property of the school reinstated or made good.

2) Before taking measures pursuant to its powers under sub-article (1) of this article, the committee may give every opportunity to wrongdoers to criticize themselves and to improve their behaviour;

3) The committee shall have its decisions executed by the public welfare committee of urban dwellers' associations or by the defence squads of peasant associations or by the police, as the case may be.[38]

A clear definition of an institution's powers gave it authority while also establishing its limits, which might avoid the arbitrary practice of power. The ability to define wrongdoing and punish it was specific to the established authorities, and schools were among them. In practice, the repressive powers of the committees were very extensive. While suspensions and exclusions for misconduct were a part of the customary attributions of any institution with employees, deductions from wages—which were very extensive in this case—were rarer. In addition to being made up of a majority of members from local government bodies, the committees had the right to call on the militias to enforce their sanctions. These characteristics and powers of the committees placed schools between the ideological and repressive apparatus. This is still the case—pedagogy always involves repression to a greater or lesser extent—but here the position occupied by the repressive function was particularly extensive. School committees were endowed with significant coercive resources that made them instruments of social control associated with

[37] Afework Tadesse (teacher), interview, Lalibela, 10 February 2007.
[38] "Administration and Control of the Schools by the People, Proclamation no. 103/1976," in MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 30–31.

peasant and mass associations, three institutions that enabled a tightly-woven network of social control and multiplied their effects.

Paragraph 2 on self-criticism and the correction of conduct immediately brings to mind individuals' public acknowledgment of their supposed "deviations" as practised in dictatorships claiming to be Marxist-Leninist.[39] It was a question of repressing political rather than professional faults. By virtue of the ideological function assigned to education and the desire to educate all the masses with a view to shaping them, it was essential to closely monitor what was happening within the school walls, to limit the relative autonomy of the school space. By placing a majority of people from outside the school and members of the local administration on the committees, the state gave itself the opportunity to look inside the school. Schools had been the main areas of contention under the previous regime, and between 1976 and 1978, during the Red Terror, the struggle for control of the school space had been a political issue of prime importance. The preamble to Proclamation number 103 of 1976 stated that the reactionary forces in schools had to be fought against, a declaration that targeted the civilian Marxist opposition to the military regime at the dawn of the Red Terror.[40] Once the opposition had been crushed, this proclamation was maintained in order to prohibit any criticism of the regime in schools, which were to remain under state control at all costs.

The repressive powers of the committees greatly limited teachers' room for manoeuvre. It was essential to control the knowledge and attitudes transmitted by the men and women who had been entrusted with the task of educating future generations. It was largely through the circulation of young teachers in the country's schools that the culture of political opposition had spread before the revolution. It was also those who had a school education that had opposed the military regime most fiercely in its early years: the teachers had experienced their schooling in a situation of political turmoil that the Derg needed to tame. An event that occurred at a school in Addis Ababa in 1983 gives an idea of the pressure placed on teachers.[41] Bealu Germa's novel *Oromay*—which rapidly became a success, and a major classic of Ethiopian literature—had just been published. During a class, a teacher of Amharic urged his students to read the new work by the famous novelist. The book was critical of the regime's uncompromising policy towards Eritrea, however, and a few days later, the government banned the novel and ordered its withdrawal from sale. The very

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[39] A scene of public self-criticism can be found in Ethiopian director Haile Germa's film ጤዛ (*Téza*), released in 2008, which looks back at the early years of the Ethiopian revolution.

[40] "Administration and Control of the Schools by the People, Proclamation no. 103/1976," in MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 25.

[41] An anecdote reported by Minale Sissay, who was an eyewitness of the event as a pupil (interview, Addis Ababa, 18 November 2010).

next day, the teacher, visibly tense, told his pupils that he had taken the wrong book and that he had intended to talk about another work by Bealu Germa, *KeAdmas BeShager*. Some months later, on 14 February 1984, Bealu Germa was abducted on the street and disappeared.

3. The drivers of demand for schooling

In the space of five years, between the 1977–78 and 1982–83 school years, the number of students attending Wolaita's primary and secondary schools increased from 42,665 to 131,268.[42] The constraining and oppressive effects of forced participation in the construction and maintenance of schools, as well as the social control exercised by the schools, were mitigated by the communities' desire for schooling.

3.1. *Affirmation of demand for schools*

To explain this movement towards schools, teacher Yemesrach Alula begins by linking the literacy campaign to the people's investment in formal schooling:

በደርግ ጊዜ ወላይታ ላይ ትምህርትን ለማስፋፋት ብዙ ጥረቶች ተደርገዋል። በመሰረተ ትምህርት ማእቀፍ የመማር እድል ያላገኙ የማህበረሰብ ክፍሎች ለምሳሌ የቤት እመቤቶች፣የአርሶ አደር ልጆች፣ የጠቅተኛ ቤተሰብ ልጆች፣ እንዲሁም ጎልማሶች ትምህርት እንዲያገኙ ተደርጓል ። ትምህርት በሕዝብ ውስጥ የሰረጸበት ውቅት ነበር። […] በተለይም በሂደት የትምህርትን ጥሞም ማህበረሰቡ እየተገነዘበ ሲመጣ ወጣት አዛውንት ሳይል በራሱ ተነሳሽነት ወደ ትምህርት ቤት መሄድ ጀመረ ።

During the Derg era in Wolaita, significant efforts were dedicated to the expansion of schooling. In the realm of basic education, segments of society previously deprived of learning opportunities—including housewives, farmers' children, and those from economically disadvantaged families, including adults—were provided with educational opportunities. This marked a period when education began to take root within the population. […] Notably, as awareness of the benefits of education spread throughout society, both the young and the elderly initiated their own attendance at schools.[43]

Yemesrach Alula is discussing a variety of intertwined subjects here, some of which have already been discussed at length in the chapter on the literacy campaign: the regime showed the greatest interest in providing education for all and education affected social profiles that were thought to be definitively excluded from any educational action. In so doing, she rightly connects the literacy campaign with formal education. When she recalls that "the young and the elder" went to school, she is referring to both literacy centres and

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[42]WZEO, ከ1967ዓ. ም እስከ 1975ዓ. ም ድረስ በወላይታ በወላይታ አውራጃ የተማሪዎች ብዛት (Number of pupils in Wolaita Awraja from 1974–75 to 1982–83).

[43]Yemesrach Alula, interview, December 2009.

formal schools. She thinks of education as a general phenomenon. On the other hand, while mass literacy and the large-scale construction of primary schools happened at the same time, the literacy campaign had to last for a finite period. The final goal to be achieved, beyond the eradication of illiteracy, was universal primary education. It was necessary to "equip adults with the knowledge needed to build a new society and economy, and educate young people to continue this work."[44] For some, literacy was a first step towards formal education. A literacy certificate allowed direct entry into grade 3 or 4. Many children, as well as adults, took advantage of this opportunity. More importantly, in the longer term, the pedagogues at the Ministry of Education believed that literate families would be more likely to enrol their children in primary school. Indeed, the interviews testify to the fact that thanks to the literacy campaign, families became accustomed to school education and integrated it into their social practices. Schools lost their strangeness.

While the literacy campaign and the expansion of primary schooling were conceived jointly by the government, they did not imply the same level of commitment on the part of the population. Sending one or more children to school for long-term schooling was a far greater constraint than literacy classes, which took place for three to four months a year over one or two years. Formal education took up entire years and dramatically limited a child's participation in a family's economic activities. One more step needed to be taken in the investment of government policy: a more profound transformation in attitudes towards schooling, despite the economic constraints on peasant families.

It seems that this step was taken. Although universal schooling was not achieved, as religious teacher Afememeher Allebachew recalls, "those who did not go [to school] could not … All farmers saw an interest in their children studying, even those who did not send them to school. […] But there were problems, the cows, the goats, and no one to look after them."[45] To cope with the overcrowding caused by the rapid growth of the school system, the Ministry of Education had to introduce a rotation system: half the pupils went to class in the morning, and the other half in the afternoon. This made it easier to enrol the children of peasants, who were available for half the day to fulfil their roles in their family's economic life.

Teacher Yemesrach Alula confirms the transformation of school representations and practices by placing the population right at the heart of the educational dynamic. This makes it possible to make further advances in an analysis of the appropriation of education by the population. In her words, communities were no longer simply "awakened" after having been "forced."

[44]MOE, *Education in Socialist Ethiopia…* (1984), 16.
[45]Afememeher Allebachew (history teacher in the school system of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church), interview, Lalibela, 9 February 2007.

The progress of education was made possible because the population wanted it, through a convergence between voluntary state action and a social dynamic, without which no education policy can function (Prost 1992). Yemesrach Alula uses a formula in Amharic—*temhert behezb west yeseretsebet weqt neber*—which, for want of a better term, is translated here as "it was a time when education took root within the population," but its evocative force is difficult to transpose. The term *seretse* refers to a specific sociocultural process: a phenomenon that grows within a group as the effect of collective action by its members until it becomes a regular, collective and commonly shared "social fact."[46] Yemesrach Alula therefore describes the advance of education as the result of a social and cultural fermentation in farming communities as much as state action. What were the driving forces behind this social dynamic towards education encountered by the Derg policy?

In actual fact, the Derg's proactive school policy reinforced and accelerated a fundamental movement towards schooling that dated back to the early 1960s, with a gap between the city and the countryside. The way some rural families began to move towards schools before the revolution has been described above. The initial impetus for this process was the increasing numbers of village schools brought about by Governor Germame Neway in 1958–59, the rise of Protestantism and the aspirations for social ascension of young Wolaita who wanted to leave the marginalisation of the countryside. In the mid-1960s, rural society began to see young people leaving their villages to study and become salaried civil servants, liberated from both the uncertainties of the harvest and the extractive and repressive violence of the state. As a result of these examples, schooling gradually began to attract more attention. While opportunities for upward social mobility began to diminish from the mid-1960s, the effects on school practices lagged behind. Anjulo Agago was an illiterate peasant who became moderately literate during the literacy campaign. However, when the campaign arrived in his village of Dubbo, his son Arjo was already in Grade 8.[47] This poor peasant family—who had not converted to Protestantism, which was one of the main driving forces behind schooling—enrolled at least one of their sons in school in the early 1970s. This shows that demand for schooling was in the making in the countryside before the revolution, and was beginning to include non-Protestants. These were the embers on which the Derg's literacy campaign, school-building and education propaganda began to blow.

This increased ownership of schools must also be understood in the light of the transformation of power structures. Power had always been exercised

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[46]I am grateful to Kidane-Mariam Wolde-Giorgis who clarified for me the meaning of this expression.

[47]Arjo Anjulo, interview, December 2010.

in an authoritarian manner, but it had changed its face. Institutions were no longer seen as instruments at the service of the lords, whose lands had been expropriated by the agrarian reform. Greater proximity to the organs of power, of which schools were a part, was achieved—at least temporarily. While the policy of bringing rural people in closer contact with schools by mobilising them was achieved with a certain amount of coercion and school committees were instruments of social control, feelings towards the institutions changed, and they became less alien. In addition, the discourse around the promotion of peasants and nationalities, which was based on a broader and more inclusive vision, initiated a shift in the way rural communities viewed the nation. School was still the school of power, but it was no longer the school of the "Amhara" alone. The boundary that delimited the legitimate space of belonging to the national political community became easier to cross, as did the doors of the school.

Finally, it does seem that schooling was encouraged by the broader spread of an aspiration for progress. Teacher Abraham Worku testifies to this:

> The general feeling [that education was important] came in the reign of the Derg. The Derg established a school in every village. […] So, at that time, everybody sent their children. There were literacy courses, there were formal schools. Formal schooling was highly developed during the Derg. And people stood for education. They were away from technology and other worlds. Here, there was no communication, after we learned… your country has gone through many developments… European countries… we learned. We didn't see but in our minds, we learned about Europeans, Western countries and Eastern countries. What are we? What are we this time? We are too late![48]

It was a desire to improve living conditions more than just an aspiration to imitate the "Europeans." Abraham Worku is, of course, a teacher who has been around schools since the 1960s. However, he seems to be bearing witness to an expansion of this idea to a wider section of the population. It had been promoted by Governor Wolde-Samaet Gebre-Wold, albeit with less intensity, as early as the 1960s. The Derg then carried out an unprecedented intensification of the discourse on "development," in which education occupied a central place. The advance of schools and the speeches that accompanied it showed possibilities for improving living conditions and attractive prospects for escaping poverty that had not been envisaged until then. Before the famine of 1985, these prospects seemed accessible, even though their contours may have remained blurred.

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[48] Abraham Worku, interview, January 2011.

3.2. *The more problematic schooling of girls*

In 1977, the Ministry of Education announced that one of its priorities was to significantly increase participation in the school system by girls and women (Ayelew 2000, 45). Nationally, between 1978 and 1988, girls increased from 32% to 38% of primary school enrolments, and from 24% to 38% of secondary school enrolments, revealing a limited increase at the primary level compared to the regime's announced policy of promoting girls' education. The increase was more significant at secondary level, although the statistics collected in Wolaita are difficult to interpret because of apparent inconsistencies. Firstly, the percentage of girls enrolling appears to be slightly below the national average. In 1977–78, girls accounted for 20% of primary school students.[49] In 1989–90, the rate was higher, at around 35%, but still slightly below the national figures. For the same school year, the statistics are more precise: they distinguish between towns and rural areas, and show important differences. In the *wereda* of Soddo Zuria, girls made up 46% of the school population in the cities, against 29% in the countryside. The same percentages are found in the neighbouring *wereda* of Damot Gale.[50] Conversely, the number of girls taking the primary school leaving examination appears to be much higher than the national average. In 1985–86, at the school in Soddo Ber, 264 girls out of 545 pupils took the national examination, comprising 48% of the candidates. This was a significant increase, as in 1978–79 only 21% of the candidates were girls. The rate in 1985–86 was higher than the national rate of 38% (Gennet 1991, 92).

In spite of some inconsistencies, these statistics allow some general trends to emerge. During the first five years of the Derg, the increase in the number of girls attending school was significant throughout Wolaita. During the 1980s, the differences between urban and rural areas remained noteworthy; however, almost a third of pupils in rural areas were girls, a significant proportion compared to the pre-revolutionary situation, when girls were simply not a presence in schools. Teacher and headmaster Girma Bekele recalls that in the small town of Bedessa, the first girls came to school in the late 1970s. Even though there were only a few of them, it was a major precedent. For teacher Kassech Mulugeta, the Derg period saw a marked improvement in girls' schooling, as "there was nothing under Haile Selassie's regime." Her

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[49]WZEO, በ1970ዓ. ም የትምህርት ዘመን በየአውራጃው በየአውራጃው በምንግስት በሚስዮን በሕዝብ በቤተክህነት አንደኛ ደረጃ ትምህርት ቤቶች የተማሪዎች ብዛት (Number of pupils in government, missionary, community and national church primary schools in Ethiopia, school year 1977–78).

[50]Soddo Zurya wereda, የወላይታ አውራጃ አውራጃ የትምህርት ስታትስቲክስ ስታትስቲክስ ማጠቃለይ ጥራዝ 1982EC (School Statistics of *Wolaita* Awraja, 1989–1990), not paginated.

colleague Zeritu Buche says the same.[51] For her part, Yemesrach Alula adds some nuances:

> በደርግ ጊዜ ይሻላል፤ ሴቶች ይማራሉ ፤ እኩልነት ፤ ብዙ ነገሮች ነበሩ። ሴቶች በደርግ ጊዜ የተሻለ የትምህርት እድል ነበራቸው። ሴትና ወንድ እኩል ናቸው ይባል ስለነበር ብዙ ሴቶች ወደ ትምህርት ቤት ይሄዱ ነበር፤ ችግራግን በየደረጃው ቁጥራቸው እየተመናመነ ይሄዳል። ያም የሚሆነው በተለየ ጎጂ ባህሎች ምከንያት ትምህርታቸውን እያቋረጡ ትዳር ውስጥ ስለሚገቡ እና በማህበረሰቡ በሚደርስባቸው ጫና ነው።

> During the Derg era, there was an improvement; girls were receiving an education, promoting equality, among other positive aspects. Girls had enhanced opportunities for learning under the Derg. The principle of gender equality encouraged many girls to attend school. However, a significant issue arose as, at each educational level, the number of girls dwindled. This decline was attributed to the interruption of their education due to certain harmful customs, early marriages, and the societal burdens placed upon them.[52]

While girls and women were strongly affected by the literacy campaign, where they made up half of the students, the transition to formal education was more difficult. The main problem was continuing with their studies. Like Yemesrach Alula, Belaynesh Antonios, who was a teacher at Soddo Secondary School during the Derg, explains that while girls were more easily able to attend primary school, the issue of marriage was an obstacle to secondary education. She illustrates this by relating that secondary school students were being challenged with these words: "Where are you going to find a husband? Get married instead!."[53] Long-term schooling ran counter to the envisioned future social role of girls as wives and mothers, a widespread phenomenon that has been observed and studied in many parts of the world (Lange 1998; Rogers 2007; Barthélémy 2010). For this reason, a significant number of girls dropped out of school between grades 9 and 12, at an age when marriage was the norm. In 1989–90 in Wolaita, 47% of Grade 9 students were girls, but only 21% in Grade 12.

Conclusion

The case of Wolaita offers an interesting and original example of the progress of the state in the countryside through its schools. As in the case of the literacy campaign, the available means were exploited by using preexisting structures—the network of Protestant churches—and mobilising the population. This time, however, the aim was to create sustainable cooperation through permanent structures at the heart of village communities. Schools

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[51]Zeritu Buche (teacher), interview, Soddo, 7 December 2010.

[52]Yemesrach Alula, interview, December 2009.

[53]Belaynesh Antonios, interview, November 2009.

found themselves in a pivotal position at the crossroads of state and societal dynamics, the bearers of potentialities under tension, a space where convergent and contradictory objectives and aspirations intersected. In many respects, a combined analysis of the expansion of the school network and the movement towards schools makes it possible to identify part of the complexity of these early years of the Derg. Schools were one of the instruments of the policy of social control deployed by the new regime, but they were also a place that seemed to offer a way out of marginalisation, a legitimate place within the nation and a better future. How long did this political and educational convergence between the new regime and the rural population of Wolaita last? Enthusiasm quickly gave way to weariness as authoritarianism became more and more apparent and it seemed that the regime's promises would not be fulfilled. Famine, villagisation, displacement and civil war brought the momentum to a halt in the second half of the 1980s. However, the brief period between 1978 and 1985 is essential for understanding the history of education in Ethiopia, and more broadly the country's contemporary history. It saw an unprecedented acceleration in the appropriation of schooling by rural populations, which was the result of a true collective effervescence.

The relationship to school is a relationship to political power, but also to schooling as such: to the knowledge, values and behaviour it transmits and the aspirations it conveys. School representations and practices partly reflect the relationship to power, but they are equally independent of it. Society distinguishes between what is inherent in a school itself and what makes it an extension of the state. In fact, the Derg's first reforms and egalitarian discourse met the aspirations for recognition and progress that nourished schooling. It remains to be seen whether this improved appropriation of schooling could survive disaffection with the regime. Before the last chapter attempts to answer this question, it is now a matter of looking at the "black box" in the history of education: the school space. How did the Derg's political and economic project translate into a school culture? What were the curricula and pedagogical practices? What activities took place in the schools, and how were they effectively linked to the community?

Chapter 9

Teachings: Breaking with the Past and Projecting the Future

The educational revolution that was to lead to the transition from a "feudal" to a "socialist" Ethiopia engaged quantitative and qualitative aspects of the school system. Both the existing social structures and the organisation of the economy had to be transformed. The identity of the nation was to be extended to the nationalities of the south, who had been oppressed by the overthrown regime. As part of the same movement, individuals needed to be equipped with new ways of seeing the world, living in society and projecting themselves into the collective future: school had to work to inculcate socialist beliefs and behaviour so that the new Ethiopia could be built.[1] From the perspective of the march towards socialism, it was also necessary to create a new way of perceiving the nation's past and future. The Derg officially adopted scientific socialism in the programme of the National Democratic Revolution in April 1976. Three years later, in 1979, the first new textbooks were published. In the meantime, several thousand members of the administration received political and ideological training at the Yekatit 66 School, which opened in May 1976. The East German development workers attached particular significance to training Ministry of Education officials and guiding the design of the new curricula (Haile Gabriel 2006, 76), which were rewritten from the standpoint of Soviet Marxism-Leninism.

The new textbooks were developed with relative urgency and insufficient resources, and the growth of the school system was not followed by a commensurate increase in the production of teaching materials. Textbooks, which had already been scarce in Haile Selassie's schools, were even scarcer under the Derg. Although they were little used by pupils, however, they still formed the basis of what was taught in the classroom. In the absence of teachers' guides, teachers took their lessons from the textbooks alone (Tekeste 1990, 34). Specific tasks were assigned to the different humanities subjects. The succession of modes of production was the new key to understanding, and the class struggle was the motor of human destiny. Feudalism, which was responsible for Ethiopia's historical "backwardness," came under heavy fire, while the "masses" became the new central actor in national history.

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[1]MOE, *The Ethiopian School Syllabuses* (1984), 41.

Emperors became enemies of the people and the Derg their representative. The geography textbooks presented the regime's great project by extolling the virtues of planning and collectivisation. The Amharic textbooks, on the other hand, offered useful knowledge that could be applied to everyday life. Finally, if efforts were made to educate girls and women, how was the discourse on their emancipation translated into teaching?

1. Rereading history: modes of production and the class struggle

The history textbooks show how the nation's past was rewritten to meet the objectives of the revolution. From grades 1 to 6, history and geography were brought together within a single subject called "social studies," before being dealt with separately from Grade 7 onwards. The textbooks for grades 4 and 6 identified the perspectives from which the national past was to be approached. The first of the two chapters on history in the grade 4 textbook was titled *The History of the Ethiopian People is the History of the Masses*.[2] It was explained that the history that had been taught until then needed to be called into question: before the 1974 revolution, most of the literature had confused the history of Ethiopia with that of its ruling classes, while the living and working conditions of the oppressed had been ignored. It was therefore necessary to cast light on the history of the peoples of Ethiopia by looking at the class struggles that had been waged since the kingdom of Aksum (1st century BC–10th century). The second chapter devoted to history was titled *The History of the Ethiopian People is an Ancient and Long History*.[3] The authors pointed out that although the archives consisted mainly of documents that reflected the views of the oppressors, a combination of oral sources, archaeology and written records would make it possible to write a history of the oppressed going back to ancient times. The nation's past had to be re-founded on the history of the masses.

The second perspective adopted in the approach to history was to study modes of production. The Grade 6 textbook explained the stages in the evolution of human history. After the primitive society came the slave system, feudal society, bourgeois society (which included capitalism and imperialism) and finally socialism, with all these periods being termed the "calendar of historical periods."[4] The term *aqotatär* (calendar), which used to describe the sequencing of modes of production and social organisations,

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[2]MOE, **የኅብረተሰብትምህርት 4 ኛ ክፍል** (*Social sciences, grade 4*) (1979 [1972 EC]), 66. Ethiopian Marxists translated the Marxist notion of "masses" as "*Yä sefiw hezb*," "all the people," a term that can be found in school textbooks.

[3]Ibid., 73.

[4]MOE, *An Outline of the Social Sciences Syllabi* (1984), 26.

implied a mechanical and invariable arrangement of historical periods—just as Monday comes before Tuesday—and was a form of reductionism of historical materialism.

1.1. *The same national antiquity?*

The history of Ethiopia began with settlement. Like the textbooks used under Haile Selassie, the Grade 7 history textbook, which was devoted to antiquity, explained that Ethiopians came from Africa, the Mediterranean and Asia. They were very quick to unify: "Ethiopians have an ancient and solid unity that was not forced on them."[5] However, while the old textbooks had claimed that migrants from Asia had brought with them a superior civilisation—that of Mesopotamia and the biblical Near East—which lay at the origins of Ethiopian culture, the new books did not establish any kind of hierarchy among the different "original" cultures. The "African" component of the settlement was no longer downgraded to a lower status. As under Haile Selassie, the history textbooks of the Derg began with the antiquity of settlement in order to support the myth of a nation that was several thousand years old. However, the textbooks engineered a major shift in how the nation was defined: instead of a hierarchy, they established the primary equality of the components that were to constitute "nationalities" over the centuries and emphasised their unity despite their differences, which were considered secondary. Wolaita and all the regions that were incorporated at the end of the 19th century were saved from the inferiority that had been assigned to them.

The Grade 7 history textbook then focused on the "ancient civilisations." The Ethiopian state always dated back to the prestigious kingdom of Aksum, which was placed alongside the "great civilisations" of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea: Egypt, Greece and Rome. On the other hand, the legend that the founder of the dynasty of Ethiopian emperors, Menilek I, was the son of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon quite logically disappeared. In addition to legitimising the dynasty that had been overthrown by the revolution, this myth based the identity of the nation on a direct link to the Israel of biblical times. Its removal from the school curriculum challenged the idea of a strictly Semitic identity of the nation. In the same vein, a single paragraph was devoted to the introduction of Christianity, which was presented in a non-discriminatory manner with reference to non-Christian Ethiopians. In the textbooks used under Haile Selassie's regime, Christianity had drawn a line between civilisation and barbarism. The Derg's school history offered a neutral interpretation of the adoption of Christianity, and no longer gave it the "civilising" function that had previously been attributed to it.

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[5] MOE, **ታሪክ 7 ኛ ክፍል** (*History, grade 7*) (1979 [1972 EC]), 26.

The Middle Ages and feudalism were the subject of the Grade 8 history textbook, which provides a good example of a re-reading of the classical sequences of Ethiopian history in light of the succession of modes of production: Aksum, which the textbook returned to for one chapter, corresponded to the mode of production of slavery. The fall of Aksum, and more particularly the seizure of power by the Zagwe Dynasty in the mid-12th century, saw the beginning of the feudal mode of production. Initially, as had been the case in the textbooks used under the previous regime, the fall of Aksum was explained by the closure of the Red Sea trade routes due to the expansion of Islam. However, Muslims were no longer represented in a negative light: indeed, "having become free, reorganised and endowed with a new state of mind with the adoption of Islam, those who had been governed by Aksum began to establish their own government."[6] The same applied to the attacks by Queen Yodit at the end of the 10th century: previously presented as a "pagan" or *falasha* (Jewish) aggression against the Christian kingdom, with no apparent motives other than a desire for plunder or blind violence, they became the legitimate revenge of a peripheral population (the Agew) that had been oppressed by Aksum's slave state.

However, the main reason for the fall of Aksum was the necessary transition to another mode of production.[7] This kingdom, whose power was based on slave-like relations of production, had to fall because of the internal contradictions that led to feudalism. The productive forces had been transformed, and corresponding production relationships needed to be created. Impoverished by the decline in trade, the state could no longer pay its soldiers and had to replace the money it owed with donations of land. The new landowners became rich by taking profits directly from Aksumite trade[8], and their rise weakened the centre even further. The dispersal of power from a strong centre to various regional actors took place from the 7th to the end of the 11th centuries, and led to the feudal system. The most powerful of the regional lords, the Zagwe, gradually imposed themselves, until they seized the crown in the middle of the 11th century. The textbooks produced under Haile Selassie portrayed the Zagwe as usurpers, as a parenthesis between the fall of Aksum and the return of the legitimate Solomonian Dynasty to power in the middle of the 12th century. The Grade 8 textbook in the Derg schools used a political and historiographical explanation to attack the myth of the Solomonian Dynasty once again. First of all, it was explained that the concept of the Solomonian Dynasty was a myth of the legitimisation of a power its holders viewed as an end in itself: "Our history bears sufficient witness to the fact that the ruling

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[6]MOE, **ታሪክ 8 ኛ ክፍል** (*History, grade 8*) (1980 [1973 EC]), 60–61.
[7]Ibid., 62.
[8]Ibid., 61.

classes are thirsty for power. There is not an ounce of truth in the belief in lineage" (የጎጡ *መደቦች የሥልጣን ስግብግብነት እንደሆን እንጂ በሐረግ ማመን ቅንጣት እውነት እንደሌለበት የሀገራችን ታሪክ ራሱ በቂ ምስክር ነው።*).[9] The authors went on to explain that there was a lack of written sources for the history of the Zagwe because the Solomonian Dynasty was supported by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The clergy had no written record of the Zagwe Dynasty, which they considered "illegitimate."[10]

The return of the Solomonians in the 13th century had been presented in the old textbooks as the beginning of a period of greatness marked by political centralisation, economic growth and cultural dynamism. According to the Derg textbooks, on the other hand, this period ushered in the militarisation of politics and society and the establishment of a permanent state of war that weighed heavily on the people.

ቶሎ እየተጠናከረ የሄደውና ጠንካራ የጦር ኃይል የነበረው ማዕከላዊ *መንግሥት ዘማች ጦር* [...] በመላክ አመጾቻቸን ለመቆጣጠር ችሎአል። ዘማቹ ሠራዊት እዚያው እንዲሠፍርና ሀገሩንና አመጸኛውን ሕዝብ ረግጦ ለመግዛት የወሰደው እርምጃና የአገዛዝ ጭነት በብዙሀኑ ሕዝብ ላይ ከፍተኛ ስቃይ አድርሶ እንደነበር ይታወቃል። ጠንካራ የፊውዳል ጦር ሠራዊትና አስተዳደር በኢትዮጵያ በሰፊው *መንሥራፋት የጀመረውም* በዚህ ዘመን አንሥቶ እንደሆን ይገመታል።

The central government, rapidly bolstering its strength, successfully quelled insurgents by deploying troops. The measures implemented by these troops, stationed in the country to suppress rebellious populations, and the weight of the occupation, inflicted considerable suffering on many people. The establishment of a robust feudal military government in Ethiopia can be traced back to this period.[11]

This was also the time when the state and the church sealed an alliance in their common interest. They legitimised each other in order to share the benefits of the economic resources available to the country, ensuring a jointly-held stranglehold on political, economic and spiritual powers.

መንግሥቱ ሥልጣን ሲይዝ ያፀደቃቸው ውሎች ፈውዳሊዝም የበለጠ የሚጠናከሩ ነበሩ። [...] *የኦርቶዶክስ ቤተ ክርቲያን በበኩሉ ለሰለሞናውያን ለዋለው የማይረሳ ውለታ ሰፋፊ መሬቶችን ከያለበት በርስትነት አግኝቶአል።* [...] *ከዚህ ጊዜ አንስቶ ቤተ ክህነትና ቤተ መንግሥት ከማንኛውም ጊዜ ይበልጥ ጣምራ ኃይሎች ሁነው ለግዛት ማስፋፋት ፤ ሕዝቦችን ለማስገበርና ለማጥመቅ ለእጅ ተያይዘው ተነስተዋል።*

When the government seized power, it further reinforced feudalism by entering into a contract to ensure its sacredness. The Orthodox Church for its part obtained vast fiefdoms for its imprescriptible oath with the Solomonians. Since then, the Church and the government have become unprecedented twin forces, joining

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[9]Ibid., 63.
[10]Ibid., 63.
[11]Ibid., 70.

hands to amplify their influence, working together to subdue and baptise the people.[12]

The period that began with the reign of Amde Tseyon (1314–44), which had previously been described in terms of boom and rebirth, was now depicted through his exactions, violence and looting. The expansion of the borders of the Christian kingdom that was underway at the time was interpreted from the perspective of the peripheral populations under subjugation.

ይኸውም ቅኝ ተገዢ ሕዝቦችን በሚመለከት ረገድ ፈውዳላዊው ወራሪ ነገሥታት ይከተሉ የነበረው ፖሊሲ ጥካኔ የበዛበት መሆኑን ነው። አዲስ ግዛት በኖር ኃይል ከተያዘ በኋላ ሰው፤ መሬቱ፤ ከብቱ፤ በጠቅላላው በወራሪ ንጉሥ ሙሉ ሥልጣንና ቁጥጥር ሥር ይደረጋል፤ የነፃነት ተዋጊዎች ታድነው ይመታሉ። የኖር ምርኮኞች ወደ ባርነት ይነዳሉ። ወራሪዎች መንደሮችን በማቃጠል ፣ ከብቶች፤ ፈረሶችና ሌሎች ንብረቶችን ሁሉ በመዝረፍ ይዘታቸው ያጠናክሩሉ… […] በአጠቃላይ የወራሪዎቹን በላይነት አምኖ አለመቀበል ምህረት የለሽ በሆነ በትር ያስመታል።

Considering the perspective of the subjugated peoples, the policy of the feudal kingdom was exceedingly cruel. In forcefully conquered new territories, everything—people, land, livestock—fell under the dominion and control of the invading king. Those who fought for freedom were hunted and subjected to beatings. Prisoners of war were enslaved. The invaders solidified their control by burning villages and pillaging all cattle, horses, and other possessions. […] In general, there was no mercy, only the stick for those who did not acknowledge the superiority of the conquerors.[13]

It seems that the authors had the theory of the "oppression of nationalities," which had been developed by the Ethiopian student movement in the 1960s and 1970s, in mind here. From this perspective, the conquests of Menilek II would find a precedent as early as the Solomonian "restoration." It was therefore part of the very logic of the Christian kingdom to conquer, submit and subjugate in the name of its belief in its superiority. This link between the expansionist policy of the 13th century and the conquest of the south by Menilek II at the end of the 19th century was highlighted three pages later.

በዐምደ ጽዮንና በወራሾቹ ዘመን የዳሞትና የሐዲያ መንግሥታት ተገፍተው ወደ ደቡብ አፈግፍገዋል ። እንደዚሁም በገቤ፤ በጉጀብና በኦሞ ወንዞች ዙሪያ የነበሩት የሲዳማ ሕዝቦችና በሌሎቹ ግዛቶች የነበሩት ማንበረሰቦች የክርቲያኑን መንግሥት ጥቃት መቅመስ ጀምረዋል ።

During the era of Amde Tseyon and his successors, the governments of Damot and Hadiya faced unjust attacks, compelling them to retreat to the south. Consequently, the Sidamo peoples residing around the Gebe, Gojeb, and Omo rivers, as well

[12]Ibid., 70.
[13]Ibid., 78.

as communities in other territories, began to experience persecution under the Christian kingdom.[14]

The imperial regime had created an affiliation between the two expansionist policies of the 13th and 19th centuries to justify the conquests as a reunification: Ethiopia regained its past greatness and Menilek II reconnected with the most powerful medieval emperors. The idea of this affiliation was retained in the textbooks written under the Derg, but this time to denounce the intrinsically oppressive nature of the "feudal system," and to acknowledge the oppression suffered by the southern populations under the overthrown regime.

The conquests of Imam Ahmed in the middle of the 16th century, a key moment in Ethiopian historiography, were no longer described as invasions and destruction (*werara*) but as combat (*wegiya*).[15] According to the historical atlas authored by the historian Lapiso Dalebo and published by the Ministry of Education in the final year of the regime, they were a revolt (*amets*). This was a significant change: in the previous historiography, this had been the period when Muslim hordes had descended on Christian Ethiopia with the aim of destroying it, while in the atlas, the author explains that a study of this period had made it possible to lift the veil on the long and complex history of the Ethiopian Muslims, a part of the nation whose past had been ignored. Since the 19th century, the sultanates of Eastern Ethiopia in Shewa, Yefat and Adal had developed their civilisation through centralisation, trade and culture. The Muslims wanted to regain power after being vassals who paid tributes to the Christian kingdom. It was now their turn to regain power.[16] Their revolt had a rational explanation, and was therefore justified. The new school history presented two competing powers rather than a legitimate Christian power to which Ethiopia had belonged for all eternity, and which was opposed by an illegitimate Muslim power that intervened in the nation's history in the shape of a devastating force.

This rebalancing did not prevent the Christian kingdom and the Muslim sultanates from being equally blamed at the end of the chapter, however.

በክርቲያኑም ሆነ በእስላሙ ክፍሎች የነበረው የነብረተሰብ ሥርዓት ግን እንደ የአካባቢው የምርት ስምሪት የግብሩሩ ዓይነት የተለያየ ይሁን እንጂ፣ ከሥር ያለው ጭቁን መደብ ተጭነውት የነበሩትን የገዥ መደቦች በመርቱም ሆነ በጉልበቱ ተሸክሞ ኖርኣል። […] ምርት የሚያመርተው፣ ግብር የሚከፍለው፣ ለባርነት የሚወጣው፣ የፈውዳሉን ጦር የሚመግበው፣ ለቤተ ክህነት ወይም ለጃሃድ የሚገብረው፣ የሚዘረፈውና ሔሎችም ሥርዓቱ የጣለበትን ብዝበዛዎች ተሸክሞ የኖረው ጭቁን ሰፊ ሕዝብ ነው።

[14]Ibid., 81.
[15]Ibid., 84.
[16]MOE, **ኢትዮጲያ የታሪክ መነሻ** (*Historical Atlas of Ethiopia*) (1990 [1983 EC]), 24.

> While the organization of society, distribution of production, and modes of taxation varied between Christians and Muslims in different locations, the oppressed class at the bottom—the governed classes—lived burdened lives, ensuring production and providing labor power. […] Those who produced, paid taxes, were enslaved, fed feudal armies, were taxed for the Church or Jihad, were sacked, endured detestable orders of plunder, and supported all these activities were the oppressed masses.[17]

From the Christian kingdom to the Muslim sultanates, the masses had been shamefully exploited everywhere. This version of history was part of the new definition of nationhood produced by revolutionary Ethiopia. The masses were to be united across religions and nationalities by a class identity. National sentiment should be based on pride in belonging to the oppressed masses, who had been liberated at last. In this movement, the peoples who had been conquered at the end of the 19th century, including the Wolaita, found a dignified place in the nation.

1.2. *Contemporary Ethiopia (1): the parasitic feudal class and the decline of the emperors*

The Grade 10 history textbook consisted of 201 pages on world history from the mid-19th century to World War I, as seen from the perspectives of the workers' movement and anti-imperialism. Like the grade 11 and 12 textbooks, it resembled a translation of a Soviet book.[18] To this section were added 122 pages devoted to Ethiopia from the reign of Tewodros II (1855–68) to the first four years of the revolution (1974–78). Some fundamental elements emerge, two of which especially support the entire story.

> In the long history of Ethiopia, there are two dominant features that stand out clearly. The first is the ability of the country to maintain her age-old independence and territorial integrity by turning back the periodic waves of foreign aggression that were directed against her. The second is the subjugation of the broad masses to the scourges of poverty, disease and ignorance due to the socio-economic backwardness of the country. As the history of the various foreign-instigated wars […] demonstrates, the former was made possible primarily because of the determined struggle and epic sacrifice the broad Ethiopian masses have made. The basic factor that accounted for the second was the feudal system that had reigned supreme in Ethiopia for over many centuries.[19]

It was the masses who had protected Ethiopia for millennia; they embodied its existence, even though the feudal system had kept them in misery. Later,

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[17]MOE, **ታሪክ 8 ኛ ክፍል** (*History, grade 8*) (1980 [1973 EC)], 87.

[18]The textbooks for grades 11 and 12 were translations of a Russian book: A. Z. Manfred, *A Short History of the World* (Moscow: Progress Publishers); MOE, *History Grade 11* (1979), ii.

[19]MOE, *History Grade 10* (1979), 262.

the textbook gave details of the country's "backwardness," which was blamed entirely on feudalism and its ruling class:

> The feudal system that had dominated the social scene of the country over many centuries had made the people of Ethiopia remain at a shamefully low level of development by arresting their socio-economic and political advance and thereby shutting off their creative spirit. Consequently, when Ethiopia's level of development is examined today in terms of the various scales measuring growth, it is invariably found that she holds last place in all respects. In economic development, she is one of those countries which are classified as the poorest in the world. In terms of health, she is one of the most disease-ridden countries in the world. In terms of education, she is one of those countries where mass illiteracy reigns supreme. The same holds true in other areas as well. As has been pointed out earlier, the sole factor that accounted for this miserable social condition was the feudal system that had reigned supreme in Ethiopia for a long time.[20]

Figure 12. The ravages of the feudal system in a Derg school textbook

Fig. 56

While the members of the feudo-bourgeois ruling class were leading a life of luxury, the broad masses of Ethiopia were condemned to lead a life of squalor . . .

How did Ethiopia arrive in the last quarter of the 20th century to such a pitiful state? In the textbooks published under the overthrown regime, the succession of emperors Tewodros II (1855–68), Yohannes IV (1872–89), Menilek II (1889–1913) and Haile Selassie (1930–74) was presented as an ascending phase in a teleology of progress. In the Derg textbooks, this perspective was reversed: the sequence of the four emperors was a process of decadence that was brought to a logical conclusion by the revolution. The reign

[20]Ibid., 263.

of the first of these emperors, Tewodros II, was thus treated in a favourable light. After the "Era of the Princes," which was presented in terms of political fragmentation and incessant wars, his reign was seen as a welcome restoration of central power: "For the first time in several generations of supreme authority in the Ethiopian state […], military and political power were united under the same person."[21] In order to neutralise the apparent contradiction with the way the centralisation of the Middle Ages had been analysed—as the rise of a reviled "feudal system"—the Grade 10 manual stated: "There was a strong emphasis on reunification, restoration, reconstruction in what he said and did. This does not imply, however, that his government policies, seen from the perspective of Ethiopian history, were retrogressive"[22] He had placed his reign at the service of the people of Ethiopia:

> By adopting Tewodros as his throne name, he sought the legitimacy and support of a cherished myth, for this was the name of the eagerly awaited prince without which the masses thought the time of happiness, righteousness, peace and prosperity may not come. This reflects the high degree of feudal oppression and exploitation […] that prevailed during that time. Kassa by taking this throne name appealed to the support of the masses promising them that he would lead them to a better and new life.[23]

This search for legitimacy was based on a real willingness to keep his promises, which were part of an actual political project. From this perspective, centralisation was a requirement in order to bring peace, morality and progress in the service of independence:

> Tewodros perceived as did none of his predecessors among the feudal war lords that the political anarchy, moral laxity, and technological backwardness of his people threatened national survival. […] He aimed at nothing less than a national revival combined with the transformation of his country into a centralised, strong, modern feudal Empire state, which the European imperialists did not want at that time […].[24]

Tewodros II had envisaged bringing about order in the name of nationalist ambitions, and not in such a way as to dominate and exploit the people. The centralisation process he led had acted as a barrier to European expansion.[25] Finally, he was firm in his vision and governed in a determined manner, but kept his people informed.

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[21] Ibid., 204.
[22] Ibid., 207.
[23] Ibid., 206.
[24] Ibid., 214.
[25] Ibid., 251.

Tewodros was hardly the kind of person who allowed himself to be easily influenced by others. On the other hand, he did not govern in secret. There is no lack in contemporary accounts of references to public meetings and trials, to councils and occasionally a nationwide assembly of chiefs or governors. Whether Tewodros called this primarily to seek advice, educate his people, or simply make his own will known, the fact remains that he put the issues to his people.[26]

This last sentence is particularly reminiscent of the Derg's mode of government: establishing directives in an authoritarian manner, making them known—the "proclamations" of the Derg—and educating the people. Tewodros II remained the same nationalist hero he had been under the previous regime.

After the reign of Yohannes IV, which was approached from the standpoint of his wars against the Mahdists and the Italians to defend the integrity of the Ethiopian territory, came Menilek II. The great victor at the Battle of Adwa, who had saved Ethiopia from Italian colonisation, the unifying emperor who had restored the borders of the great medieval Ethiopia, the enlightened monarch who had paved the way for "modernisation," was now presented in a rather unattractive manner. His first trait was that he was only interested in his own power rather than in the unity of Ethiopia:

> It was not until late in 1878 that Minilik submitted to the overlordship of Emperor Yohannis and Shawa was made part of Yohannis' Empire. However, Minilik was allowed to retain the title of kingship over Shawa. To seize the imperial throne and title from Yohannis remained the most important objective, however.[27]

He was so focused on this objective that safeguarding Ethiopia's independence, the central issue of the period, was the least of his concerns:

> The death of Emperor Yohannis finally presented Minilik with the opportunity he had been waiting for almost 25 years. He had been a reluctant vassal, and his contributions in defence of Ethiopia's territory and independence had so far been quite marginal; in fact, they had consisted mainly of his refusal to involve himself on the side of Ethiopia's enemies. This attitude was facilitated, and to some extent dictated, by the fact that he had his main power base at a safe distance from both the western and northern frontiers. Only the Egyptian occupation of the Bab-el-Mandab and Gulf of Aden ports and of Harar had been of immediate concern to him as king of Shawa. In the very last year of Yohannis's reign, however, Minilik came perilously close to allying himself with Ethiopia's potentially more dangerous enemy, Italy.[28]

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[26]Ibid., 217.
[27]Ibid., 225.
[28]Ibid., 230.

He had been prepared to jeopardise independence out of personal ambition. The link between his power-building, his accession to the throne and the protection of independence, which was a key element of Ethiopian national history under Haile Selassie's regime, had simply disappeared to make way for the activities of an opportunist. Unlike Tewodros II and Yohannes IV, Menilek II was torn from the pantheon of heroes of the independent nation.

Haile Selassie's reign marked a peak. He was cynical, megalomaniacal and totalitarian:

> He inculcated absolute submission, complete fanaticism and total imperial control. 'I am Ethiopia,' was the way his mind worked, and he tried to make all Ethiopians think the same way. Haile Selassie was a feudal Mussolini who aspired to be a demigod.[29]

The reign of the last emperor was reduced to its most conservative aspects. He even deliberately hindered the country's progress:

> In social terms, Ethiopia experienced no substantial changes during the half century of Haile Selassie's totalitarian rule. He was a sort of Bismark, but without abandoning the class positions of feudalism. He became as petit-bourgeois as possible. He feared, and rightly so, that capitalist economic development would lead to the development of the working class; open the country to revolutionary ideas; and further the growth of the intelligentsia, who would first wonder at but later find repugnant his deification and greed for riches, power and personal glory.[30]

The passage on Haile Selassie thus consisted of a collection of sweeping statements, value judgments and meaningless comparisons. He was alternately compared to Bismarck and Mussolini, sometimes feudal, sometimes petit-bourgeois. If we add to this the disorganised nature of the account, it is hard to imagine that pupils could have drawn anything constructive from this passage of the textbook. The objective of discrediting the overthrown regime was too obvious and the method used too crude. As Tekeste Negash has remarked about the passages on the 19th century, it seems that the author of the textbook had not read the works on the period (Tekeste 1990, 64). However, it would have been possible to provide students with a much more credible and well-argued critical reading of Haile Selassie's reign. When the textbook was written in 1979, there was no shortage of critical works by left-wing intellectuals. If the overthrow of the "feudal regime" was to be justified by a Marxist analysis, the one proposed by Addis Hiwot in his *Ethiopia: From*

[29]Ibid., 251.
[30]Ibid., 251–52.

Autocracy to Revolution, published in 1975, might, for example, have equipped pupils with a much more effective background (Addis Hiwot, 1975).

In the end, the national history of the 19th and 20th centuries was turned upside down. In the pre-revolutionary textbooks, Haile Selassie appeared as the last of a series of monarchs, each of whom represented a step further along the path of the project of unification, independence and progress. The teleological account of "modernisation" was developed around successive reigns. Haile Selassie was the culmination of this, the man who had finally taken Ethiopia into the 20th century. In the post-revolutionary textbooks, this same succession of reigns represented a downfall that symbolised the decadence of the feudal system, and the process of deterioration had reached a point of no return that left no other choice than revolution.

If one looks at the history textbooks as a whole, one notes a certain ambiguity around the concepts of centralisation and unity that makes the overall logic difficult to grasp. In medieval times, the strengthening of central power was viewed negatively as the work of an oppressive feudal state. The political fragmentation of the "Age of Princes" was considered the same way, as the result of feudal egoism. In the 19th century, on the other hand, the process of centralisation adopted by Tewodros II was seen in a positive light, as it served independence and unity. Tewodros II's glorious reputation was retained because after the 1950s it became the symbol of political voluntarism in the name of a project that was guided entirely by patriotism and not by personal interests. It was essential for the Derg to be able to benefit from reliance on the past, to be able to hold on to a historical precedent at the head of the state. It needed to position itself both as a break with the "feudal" regime and as the continuity of the Ethiopian state. It had to justify its centralisation and could not afford not to be able to offer examples from the past. On the contrary, Menilek II and, above all, Haile Selassie represented a system that needed to be brought down. It was they who had failed to make a 20th century Ethiopia: a country free from poverty, disease, illiteracy and political oppression; a "modern" nation in a "modern" world. It was up to the revolution to take on this task.

Tekeste Negash wrote that this perception of national history carried with it a contempt for Ethiopia and its past, and was incapable of creating any kind of patriotic feeling (Tekeste 1990, 65–66), and it is true that the history textbooks included few elements that might give any colour to a past that was presented in a dark light, except—and this was a major novelty—for the glorious history of the masses. From the end of the 19th century, the masses became the real driving force of history and the matrix of national pride.

1.3. *Contemporary Ethiopia (2): the glorious history of the masses*

The grades 10, 11 and 12 history textbooks dealt with the history of the 19th and 20th centuries in terms of the consolidation of capitalism and imperialism, international revolutionary culture and anti-imperialism, revolutions and anti-colonial liberation struggles. The Grade 10 textbook made a special effort to reintegrate the masses into the history of the Ethiopian 20th century. The battle of Adwa in 1896, when the Ethiopian army repelled an attempt at colonisation by Italy, and the occupation of 1936–41 were the two key moments.

The title of the chapter on the Battle of Adwa titled *Adwa: the anti-imperialist triumph of the masses* immediately made it clear that those who deserved credit for the victory were the troops and not the aristocracy. Indeed, the victory was explained by the patriotism of the masses.

> The broad masses of Ethiopia have proved their utmost devotion to the defence of the motherland. It was this that led to the resounding victory of an ill-armed and ill-equipped African country over a major imperialist European power of the time.[31]

Devotion to the motherland was the only evidence given to explain the rout of the Italian colonial army. Of course, the motivation of the troops is an important factor in a battle, but this argument is not enough. The fact, for example, that Italy completely underestimated the Ethiopians' capacity for mobilisation and that the Italian troops were literally overwhelmed by the Ethiopian numbers was not mentioned. Moreover, Italy was not a major imperial power. It is not a question here of debating the reasons behind the Ethiopian victory, but only of stressing that the intention behind emphasising the bravery of the Ethiopian masses alone—which cannot be denied—was to exalt the nationalist sentiment of the pupils by inviting them to liken themselves to the masses.

The manual then recalled Ethiopia's long resistance to external aggression.[32] In Haile Selassie's schools, as under the Derg, the idea of independence was a true nationalist matrix. Ethiopia's endurance always lay at the heart of the discourse. Anyone who had tried to subdue Ethiopia had come up against a rock. The country's invincibility under Haile Selassie was explained by the divine protection and sanctity of the emperor. The idea of independence was nourished by a mystical imagination. Under the Derg, Ethiopia was impregnable thanks to the masses, who were united by their courage and by their love for their homeland. The exalted masses, endowed with a collective spirit, were the matrix of a new nationalist mysticism.

[31]Ibid., 237–38.
[32]Ibid., 238–39.

In Adwa, their courage and self-sacrifice were matched by the inconsistencies of the feudal class, which, under the leadership of Menilek II, committed a very grave historical error. Once victory had been achieved, the Ethiopian high command decided not to chase the Italians to the Red Sea, thereby missing the chance to liberate the northern coast. As long as the Italians were still a presence, Ethiopia's freedom remained under threat.[33] The Italian colony of Eritrea would also have ceased to exist, and its territory would have been reintegrated into the domain of the Ethiopian monarch. This version of the past implied the Ethiopianness of Eritrea, a country whose existence was the fruit of imperialist machinations and the failure of the Ethiopian feudal class to exploit the favourable situation created by the victory at Adwa. The handbook concluded by arguing that the task of liberating the northern coast from Italian imperialism had fallen upon the shoulders of the oppressed masses.[34] This justified the radical rejection of any negotiated solution with the Eritrean independence fighters and the war waged against them by the Derg. Eritrea was Ethiopian, and any concession on this point implied acceptance of the outcome of imperialist actions.

The emperor and the feudal class completed their delegitimisation decades later, during the Italian occupation between 1936 and 1941: "In the attempt to glorify legends and fables about itself in order to camouflage its evil deeds, the archaic system has gone as far as usurping the heroic history of the broad masses, which they wrote in their blood."[35] This usurpation needed to be corrected.

> Thus, the Ethiopian broad masses were forced into another war in defence of the motherland. Although our people were not new to the challenges of war, they were temporarily overcome by the sophisticated arms of the enemy. […] Thus, they organized themselves into guerrilla units and prepared for a protracted war. At this juncture, it is worth-mentioning the steps taken by the monarch, the aristocracy and the nobility of the now-defunct feudo-bourgeois regime, who fled the country at such a decisive point in history. This action, while exposing the self-interested nature of the former ruling class, also testified to the devotion of the broad masses to the motherland.[36]

The masses and the feudal class were thought of as opposites: one noble, patriotic, supportive and selfless, and the other cowardly, selfish and irresponsible. It was the masses that had built the national grandeur and it was on them that the very existence of the nation as an independent entity rested. Before the revolution, the concepts of unity, sovereignty and integrity had

[33] Ibid., 241.
[34] Ibid., 242.
[35] Ibid., 253.
[36] Ibid., 256.

converged in the figure of the emperor. He was the keystone, the person through whom the nationalist symbolic system developed. The reorganisation of history through revolution brought about a substitution. The essentialised masses became the collective actor that symbolised the past, present and future of the nation. Their legitimacy was all the greater because the Ethiopian masses were recognised throughout the world by the socialist countries.[37] Their struggle for independence was a part of the global struggle for emancipation.

Fig.55 Anti-Fascist and Anti-Imperialist
Patriotic Elements.

Figure 13. Ethiopian partisans in a school textbook

Some "feudalists" had fought to drive out the Italian occupiers, in fact, but from a completely different standpoint from that of the masses.

During the liberation struggle waged by the Ethiopian people, the feudalists alongside with the peasants and other toiling people also participated but saw the war from a different perspective. To the exploiting class, it was a struggle for the re-attainment of a territory and immense property it used to own. It was a life or death struggle on the side of the big landowners, because the war meant the reconquest of thousands of vassals and serfs to manipulate without engaging in any sort of production whatsoever. On the other hand, poor peasants and other oppressed sectors of the society fought fiercely out of pure nationalism and love for

[37]Ibid., 254.

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their motherland. It was an anti-imperialist and anti-fascist war fought to save the people from inhuman foreign racist rule.[38]

The ruling class had therefore fought in order to regain its former privileges. The masses, by fighting for their freedom, had participated in the international struggle against imperialism and fascism. After five years of exile, the emperor and those who had gone with him had returned to Ethiopia and immediately set about repressing the people who were involved in the struggle and stealing the benefits of victory from them. Those who had made the greatest sacrifices were dispossessed by those who had fled in such a cowardly way.

> After five years of such heroic struggle, the Ethiopian broad masses were able to hoist the tri-colour Ethiopian flag, the symbol of their independence. A month later, the feudal monarch, accompanied by his allies, the nobility and aristocracy including imperialist agents and troops returned to the country. They soon began to hunt the patriots. […] The absconders named themselves patriots and turned the true patriots into traitors. […] Following the victory of the liberation struggle, the nobility and the aristocracy committed a number of atrocious crimes against the Ethiopian people.[39]

But the masses were not fooled; having driven out the Italian occupier did not mean the end of the struggle. The conquest of their freedom also meant fighting the feudal class.

> However, for the Ethiopian masses the struggle for total independence from all forms of exploitation and oppression was not over. The struggle against the feudo-capitalist system and against imperialism, the development of which was intensified, especially after the Italian fascist invasion and occupation (1936–41), continued and resulted in the popular democratic revolution of 1974.[40]

Classifying the resistance against the Italian attempt at colonisation as an anti-fascist and anti-imperialist struggle made it possible to situate the Ethiopian masses within the class struggle that was being played out on a global scale. The battle being fought by the Ethiopian masses against the Italian occupier and the revolution were placed in the same struggle for emancipation. For the first time, those "without a history" were bursting into the national history to occupy a prominent place in it, and efforts were being made to place their actions within the framework of the international struggle of the oppressed classes and peoples.

[38]Ibid., 257–58.
[39]Ibid., 258–59.
[40]Ibid., 260.

1.4. … *captured by the Derg*

The past was ordered in such a way as to present a linear movement in which the masses were the actors, a logical sequence that gave full meaning to the revolution. The chapter devoted to the revolution then showed that the arrangement of history based on the masses had been seized by the Derg for its own ends:

> Before the feudo-bourgeois regime could succeed in subverting the revolutionary uprising of the broad Ethiopian masses, the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army was established on June 28, 1974. The responsibility for coordinating and leading the struggle of the broad masses for the time fell upon the shoulders of this Coordinating Committee. This Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army, by taking the revolutionary demands of the broad masses and the men-in-uniform as its guiding principles, began to pave the way for the intensification of the struggle […]. The Coordinating Committee had the active support of the broad masses in all the revolutionary measures it was undertaking.[41]

The Derg had taken charge of the revolution to become the sole representative of the aspirations of the Ethiopian people, a responsibility that had fallen on it more than it had chosen it for itself; it had fulfilled a necessary historical mission. It had made the demands of the masses its own, and the masses had recognised their expression in it. Once it had been established that the masses and the Derg were one, the term "mass" could be substituted for "Derg." All the decisions taken by the Derg then became those of the masses, and from then on, all the Derg's enemies became enemies of the masses, sometimes as defenders of the old regime, and sometimes as agents of imperialism. They had deliberately acted against the Derg, and therefore against the people and against Ethiopia. The Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Unions (CELU), the official grouping of trade unions, which had played an active role in the revolution before being dissolved by the Derg, began to be funded and controlled by the CIA.[42] The Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU), which was made up of former leaders in Haile Selassie's regime who favoured a parliamentary regime, became anti-popular and fascist. The longest explanations and harshest invectives were directed at the EPRP, which had posed the greatest challenge to the Derg before it was annihilated by the Red Terror:

> In this anti-Ethiopian revolution campaign, the primary role was played by the so-called EPRP. This counter-revolutionary organization of the right wing section of the petty bourgeoisie did its best to subvert the Ethiopian revolution by wearing

[41]Ibid., 284–85.
[42]Ibid., 294.

a Marxist-Leninist garb and by claiming to have stood for the interest of the broad Ethiopian masses, by advancing […] a reactionary slogan which called for the establishment of a "provisional people's government" […]. And when it realized that such a counter revolutionary slogan could not strike a responsive chord among the broad Ethiopian masses, it attempted to lead astray those Ethiopian workers whose political consciousness was rather low. By exploiting the low level political consciousness of those workers, it made them engage in such counter revolutionary activities as work stoppages, labour strikes, destruction of industrial machines, and numerous other counter revolutionary crimes. It also attempted to lead astray the Ethiopian youth and especially the students by agitating them not to continue their schooling unless its so-called "provisional people's government" was established. In addition, it did its best to dismantle the *Zemecha* program— a program designed to help improve the political, economic, social and cultural conditions of the broad Ethiopian masses. […] It became imperative to take a decisive revolutionary measure against this counter revolutionary organization. And as a result of the strong measure that the broad masses of Ethiopia took against this counter revolutionary organization not only was the Ethiopian revolution protracted but in the processes quite a number of innocent youth and students who were victimized by the reactionary politics and ideology of this anti-people organization were freed and were brought in the camp of the revolution as well."[43]

There was no need to go back over the EPRP's political positions and actual activities. These passages justified the extreme violence that the Derg had deployed against the organisations that had not opposed the revolution (and still less the "masses") but government by the military. It was a distortion of a very recent past that everyone still remembered.

2. The masses: instruments of "socialist" progress

While history sought to delegitimise the old ruling class, to make the masses the new anchor of national sentiment and to justify the Derg's seizure of power, the geography textbooks showed the way forward.

2.1. *Presenting the socialist project*

The Grade 10 geography textbook provided a map of the country's economic activities, its potential production capacity and a lesson on planning the national economy.[44] It was both a geography textbook and a presentation of the government's project, alternating descriptions of Ethiopia with theoretical explanations. Its focus was on the production of material life, the level of technical development and the organisation of production. At its heart lay the question of how humans could best produce their material lives in relation to their environment. Finally, it constantly compared "traditional"

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[43]Ibid., 301–3.
[44]MOE, *Geography Grade 10* (1981).

and "modern" methods of production on the one hand, and capitalist and socialist countries on the other. This textbook should be compared with the Grade 12 version, which alternated geographical descriptions (on topography, climate, agriculture and population) with national development programmes and praise for the revolution.[45]

2.2. *Humans and their environment: mode of production, productive forces, production relationships*

The key concepts of Marxist political economy lent support to all the descriptions. The introduction to the Grade 10 geography textbook announced that its purpose was to analyse the relationship between humans and the natural environment. The decisive factor affecting the life of a society was the production of its material life. The extent to which the environment was used related to the level of technology achieved. Humans therefore sought better control over nature and improvements in their standards of living through better production methods, which in turn depended on the improvement of productive forces.[46] Finally, production relations were the relationships among the different social classes: who owned the means of production and what did this imply in terms of the exploitation and the redistribution of production?[47]

The concept of productive forces was then mobilised to explain the wealth gap and the division of the countries of the world into two categories. On the one hand, there were the "developing" countries, which were largely dependent on agriculture, and where 70 percent of the world's population lived, while on the other, there were the "developed," industrialised countries, where 30 percent of the world's population lived. The "developing" countries were not using their natural resources properly. They were employing old, unprofitable methods, because of the low level of development of their productive forces. Unemployment was high, illiteracy and malnutrition were widespread, people were in poor health and life expectancy was low. The working capacity of the population was severely limited. Economic growth was therefore limited because the productive capacity of each individual person was low. In "developed" countries, conversely, individual productivity and economic growth were high.[48] The future of "developing" countries was therefore to improve their productive forces. This would necessarily involve a process of rationalisation of economic activities and control over nature. As humans made scientific and technological advances, they became capable of

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[45]MOE, *Geography Grade 12* (1981).
[46]MOE, *Geography Grade 10* (1981), 1.
[47]Ibid., 5–6.
[48]Ibid., 2–3.

learning the laws governing the development of nature and society. They could then consciously act on their environment to improve their lives. Students were asked to keep this in mind when studying the Ethiopian geographical environment.

2.2.1. *Socialist development versus capitalist development*

By relying on the context of a bipolar world on the one hand, and the "laws of history" which defined a given succession of modes of production on the other, the geography textbooks made the claim that a rational and efficient organisation of production could only come from a "socialist" system, which was opposed to the feudal and capitalist systems.

The first issue to be raised related to ownership of the means of production, which determined both the relations of exploitation and the efficiency of economic activities. In capitalist societies, the bourgeoisie owned the means of production and exploited the proletariat; in socialist societies, the means of production belonged to society as a whole and the exploitation of man by man had ceased.[49] How did social relations based on the private ownership of the means of production, or on privileges monopolised by a few over them, influence agricultural production in "developing" countries with primarily rural economies? In a feudal system such as Ethiopia's, land was owned by a tiny minority. Farmers lived in a precarious situation, and had no incentive to improve production. This echoed the interpretation of left-wing Ethiopian intellectuals in the 1970s: the arbitrary nature of state and feudal levies left the peasants with barely enough to survive, no matter how much they produced, and they therefore had no incentive to improve their productivity. The agrarian reforms initiated in Asia, Latin America and Africa were a response to this type of problem.[50] In "developing" regions, any rationally thought-out social and economic transformation needed to break up old feudal and capitalist production relations and create new ones for the equitable distribution of resources.[51]

Capitalism and socialism were also opposed to each other due to the irrationality of the former and the rationality of the latter. In capitalist countries, the sole objective of industrial production was profit. Production was therefore market-oriented. In socialist countries, on the other hand, "economic laws" were applied in the interest of society as a whole, which was why the governments of the socialist countries drew up plans.[52] In a capitalist economy, production and means of transport were distributed irrationally.

[49] MOE, *Geography Grade 10* (1981), 6.
[50] Ibid., 14–15.
[51] Ibid., 147.
[52] Ibid., 67–68.

Some areas were highly equipped and developed, while others remained "backward."[53] Socialism, on the other hand, left no one on the margins of the progress it enabled. This is why a country like Ethiopia embarked on a socialist path of development with the aim of creating an independent and self-sufficient planned economy.[54]

Planning according to the "laws of the economy" was founded especially on the "law of population distribution." The Grade 12 textbook was based on the work of Marx and Engels on the territorial distribution of the population according to the mode of production. This again allowed a comparison between capitalist and socialist societies. The former, on the one hand, had population surpluses. This maladjustment led to problems such as poor housing conditions and unemployment. The latter, on the other hand, organised a rational distribution of the population according to production. As a result, unemployment had disappeared. This rational distribution of the population was the result of a planned, proportionate development of the national economy. The distribution of the branches of the national economy had to determine settlement by the population and, conversely, the availability of labour power had to decide the distribution of production. Population density in certain places could lead to the cultivation of new areas.[55]

In the end, these textbooks defended a scientific and radically rationalist position. They demonstrated a profound belief in the administrative management of nature and society, and the project claimed to conform to scientifically established laws. It makes one think of the "assumption of infallibility" of totalitarian regimes referred to by Hanna Arendt, "based not so much on superior intelligence than on a correct interpretation of the essentially reliable forces in history or nature" (Arendt 1973 [1951], 349). The future was predictable if the right method was used. It was a powerful tool for legitimising a power that could not go wrong. One should not postulate the simply cynical use of an ideology that justified governing by authoritarianism, however. It is certainly undeniable, as Christopher Clapham has pointed out, that this doctrinaire version of Marxism-Leninism has been an important instrument at the service of the "nationalist and statist objectives" of power (Clapham 1988, 220), but did the state not also believe in progress made possible by the construction of a socialist Ethiopia? Authoritarianism and progressivism are not systematically mutually exclusive. As James Scott has also noted, advocates of large projects based on science and reason—even if they were authoritarian and devastating—were often motivated by a sincere belief in progress (Scott 1998, 89).

[53]Ibid., 123.
[54]MOE, *Geography Grade 12* (1981), 56.
[55]Ibid., 62–63.

2.3. *Ethiopia's plan for the future*

After laying out the theoretical foundations, the geography textbooks pre-sented the future the Derg was planning for Ethiopia. It was modelled on the idealised project of the Soviet Union, the pillars of which would be a collectivised agriculture linked to the development of industry. A socialist society had to provide itself with the necessary material foundations, otherwise it would be nothing more than a utopia: it was "impossible to think of a socialist society without developed industry."[56] However, the transformation of the agricultural production system had to remain the priority in the first instance: it was the basis on which future developments would be built.[57] Ethiopian planners based their project on the realities of a country in which the overwhelming majority of producers were farmers. Agriculture was at the heart of the project because Ethiopia was experiencing food shortages and famine, and agriculture was an important resource for foreign trade and the primary source of employment. Once the agricultural productivity had increased, it would be possible to transfer the necessary workers to other branches of the economy. Finally, agriculture and industry would work in conjunction so that the economy could "walk on both its legs": industry needed agricultural raw materials, and agriculture needed industry (tractors, fertilisers, etc.) and could be a source of capital for industrial development.[58]

The Grade 12 textbook quoted Lenin in order to compare Ethiopia to Russia. Lenin had said: "In this country of peasants, it was the peasantry as a whole that was the first to have to gain, that gained the most and gained immediately from the dictatorship of the proletariat." This was also true of Ethiopia. The revolution had started a new life for the masses by liberating the peasants from oppression and feudal exploitation. For the first time, the working masses had become masters of the means and results of production. Their income had "increased immensely," but much remained to be done. How could agriculture be transformed? First of all by making better use of the country's land resources, which were considered underexploited: "Cultivated land is […] about 10% of the total area. This is, of course, very small […] However the size of the cultivated land of the country can be increased, for there are many areas which have not yet been settled."[59] In 1981, the geography textbooks anticipated the population displacements that would be implemented after the great famine of 1984–85. It was necessary to convince the pupils, and through them the population, of the validity of this project that

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[56]Ibid., 113.
[57]Ibid., 78.
[58]Ibid., 79–80.
[59]Ibid., 83.

was being developed, knowing that populations do not allow themselves to be displaced willingly.

The next step was to convince the population to join cooperatives. According to the Grade 12 textbook, they would have a dual role: to provide technical training for the peasants and to develop their socialist consciousness.[60] However, the authors pointed out that the transition to a socialist agricultural economy would take time: the level of awareness of members of cooperatives and their willingness to work together would only come gradually, and cooperatives would serve as a model once the farmers had proved their efficiency. As a result, peasant agriculture would remain dominant for many years, even though the size and performance of state farms increased rapidly. Therefore, as a first step, any serious growth in agricultural yields would have to be achieved by improving the productivity of peasant agriculture.[61] It was facing serious problems, however; the productive forces were "backward," erosion was at a high level, storage conditions were poor, and farmers did not use fertilisers, insecticides, pesticides or herbicides.[62] State farms, on the other hand, used machinery, scientific cultivation methods, fertilisers and selected seeds. A systematic comparison of the productivity of non-mechanised intensive and extensive mechanised methods, which were classified as "traditional" and "modern" respectively, followed these statements.[63] As an educator, the state was to take the lead in transforming the "traditional" rural way of life.

The textbook then went on to present a line of argument on the development of heavy industry and mining. On the one hand, systematic prospecting was necessary in order to discover the country's mineral wealth, and its extraction had to be organised and its benefits placed at the service of the national economy. On the other hand, the metal industry, shipbuilding and cement production should be developed, as should the production of leather, rubber, fertilisers, medicines, tobacco, glass and ceramics. The growth of the printing industry was essential for both the economy and culture. These activities had already existed under the overthrown "feudal-bourgeois" regime, but they were marginal and at the service of private interests. Private individuals who had invested in these activities had not sought to develop them beyond their objectives of personal enrichment. Revolutionary Ethiopia had nationalised them in order to develop and operate them for the benefit of the entire nation.

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[60]Ibid., 86.
[61]Ibid., 88–89.
[62]Ibid., 102.
[63]MOE, *Geography Grade 10* (1981), 21.

2.4. *Concrete knowledge that can be applied on a daily basis*

Unlike the geography textbooks, which designed social change at a macro level, the Amharic reading manuals explained that their role was to show the way to a reorganisation of daily life. On the one hand, the extensive demonstrations yielded to actual knowledge that could be applied by everyone, similar to the kind disseminated during the literacy campaign, but the way the messages were conveyed was far more flexible. The Amharic textbooks did not so much state indisputable truths as they did the ways and means of living together. The Grade 11 textbook explained that the ideas pupils heard, expressed, read and wrote in their language classes should provide knowledge that would be generally useful in their social lives. They could then pass on these ideas outside school, through practice. This was a translation into school learning of the objective of integrating the school into village life, of making it an open institution that kept up exchanges with its social environment so as to transform the world from below through everyone's cumulative actions. In class, pupils had to learn to exchange opinions so they would be able to develop ideas collectively; this practice would then be spread throughout society to give rise to dynamic communities. The textbooks were organised into a series of short chapters of no more than ten pages that could be grouped around three themes: production techniques, education for citizenship and the opening up of rural life to the national space.

The chapters on production were devoted to activities practised in the context of peasant agriculture. They dispensed facts acknowledging that every peasant family was a unit of production that needed to improve its own productivity. The passages on agriculture and animal husbandry presented so-called "modern" techniques. They dealt with soil maintenance and fertility through ploughing methods and planting trees on slopes and grasses on the borders of fields to combat erosion.[64] Others invited improvements in the production of marketable agricultural products such as coffee: how to avoid diseases, how to choose the most suitable locations and how to adapt the soil. The chapters on livestock explained that each farmer should seek to improve it by learning how to combat animal diseases and by selecting breeds that were suited to different climates, and about their role in production (milk, meat or ploughing).[65] It was also necessary to monitor the production of each animal so that the most productive ones would be kept.[66] In the case of both agriculture and animal husbandry, it was always advisable to study the state of the market so as to be able to sell products in the correct way. In short, the Amharic manuals called for the rationalisation of peasant farming practices using simple

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[64]MOE, **የአማርኛ መማሪያ 8 ኛ ክፍል** (*Amharic textbook grade 8*) (1976 [1968 EC]), 1.
[65]Ibid., 20–21.
[66]Ibid., 24.

techniques, so that families would have surpluses to sell. The first step towards progress was to free a fragile family economy from the vagaries of subsistence farming.

A series of chapters was then devoted to the creation of "socialist behaviour." This implied, first of all, a sense of morality characterised by a spirit of unity, equality, fraternity and frankness.[67] Secondly, members of socialist Ethiopia had to be politically aware so they could defend their rights, fight against exploitation and act for the construction of the new society. The role of culture was essential here. In a society that had chosen socialism, literature, for example, should no longer be aimed at a minority of intellectuals but at the oppressed masses. It had to talk about everyday life and its problems, and propose solutions.[68] Finally, these chapters, which sought to inculcate social and political attitudes, were complemented by other, more theoretical ones, which spread a basic Marxist political culture and encouraged a critical reading of the world: short biographies of Marx and Engels[69]; outlines of the dialectical method for understanding the world and societies[70]; a defence of the planned economy[71]; and a general analysis of the "bourgeois system" and imperialism and their internal contradictions.[72]

Finally, the reading manuals sought to integrate pupils and their communities into the space and time of the nation. While the history textbooks attempted to inculcate a new national imagination through a reinterpreted past, the Amharic textbooks were concerned with the material aspects of the nation. They invited pupils to appropriate the multiple vectors of shared belonging scattered across the country. The functions of administrations, health services and cooperatives were described, and it was explained that these institutions were shared assets that belonged to the masses. The idea of belonging to a wider community was developed in the chapters on means of communication (such as letters, telegrams and telephones, which allowed contact from a distance) and brochures, newspapers, radio and television (through which the state disseminated national news and revolutionary culture). Finally, to bring the masses into the space of the nation, there was a presentation of means of transport, the different types of roads and the ways tracks were maintained.[73] The aim of this last topic was both to decompartmentalise the country and encourage villagers to maintain their infrastructures themselves.

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[67]MOE, **የአማርኛ መማሪያ 11 ኛ ክፍል** (*Amharic textbook grade 11*) (1977 [1969 EC]), iii.
[68]Ibid., 31.
[69]Ibid, 67–77.
[70]Ibid., 86–95.
[71]Ibid., 133–39.
[72]Ibid., 13–20 and 24–28.
[73]Ibid., iii.

To sum up, the teachings disseminated by the Amharic textbooks reflected a concern to integrate the school into the life of the population and to transmit a basic political and moral culture to the pupils. They aimed at short-term objectives, where the geography textbooks had a long-term projection. The major projects implemented by the state and the creation of a new socialist personality, the macroscopic transformations undertaken on a national scale and the dissemination of new daily practices complemented each other. The revolution could not succeed if one of these elements was missing.

2.5. *Women of the socialist nation*
The National Democratic Revolution's programme, which was announced in April 1976, paid lip service to the gender issue. It included a short passage that declared that no one would have privileged access to employment because of their religion or sex any longer.[74] The booklet *Ethiopia in Revolution*, which was published by the Ministry of Information a few months later, devoted two pages to the status of women in Ethiopia—they were subject to both class and patriarchal oppression—and announced that an emancipation process was under way in socialist Ethiopia.[75] The Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which came into effect in 1987, declared: "The state shall give special support to women, especially in their education, training and employment, to enable them to participate with men in the economic, social and cultural fields on an equal footing."[76] How were these statements translated into school textbooks?

The Grade 11 Amharic textbook explained the theory of the dual gender and class oppression experienced by women. The chapter began by pointing out the responsibility of religions, Christianity and Islam, and the bourgeois order. The Christian holy book said that woman was created after man from one of his ribs[77], that she was not a finished creation and therefore that she could not be considered as his equal. This is why God ordered that a woman should be "an object at the service of man."[78] The Muslim religion made the same claim. It "advised that women should be beaten," that a man could marry up to four women, and that women had to cover themselves with a veil.[79] The bourgeois order had not improved this situation: on the contrary, it defended the idea that nature had made men powerful and women weak, and therefore inferior. This is why men had to give orders and women had to obey them.

[74]PMGE, *Programme of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia* (1976), 6.
[75]MOI, *Ethiopia in Revolution* (1977), 37–39.
[76]PRDE, *Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Negarit Gazeta*, 47th year, Proclamation No. 1 of 1987 (12 September 1987).
[77]MOE, **የአማርኛ መማሪያ 11 ኛ ክፍል** (*Amharic textbook grade 11*) (1977 [1969 EC]), 121.
[78]Ibid., 121.
[79]Ibid.

In short, the inferiority of women was sometimes justified by religious beliefs and sometimes by nature. Scientific socialism, on the other hand, had shown that whether they belonged to the class of the oppressed or the class of the oppressors, women were always in a position of inferiority. This situation of oppression had to cease: in a socialist society, women were equal to men.[80]

This was followed by an explanation based on historical arguments taken from Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Matriarchy had existed in "primitive societies," where the oppressed and oppressors did not exist, where community life was based on equality and where goods were shared equally. Then, over the centuries, humans multiplied, and by working to improve their living conditions they increased and diversified production. A division of labour between men and women had emerged, with the former going out to fetch food and the latter taking care of children and domestic work. As production and trade in goods increased, men took control of trade and assumed ownership of goods, while women only had access to material goods within the household. The development of private property had thus benefitted men but excluded women.[81] With the slave society came the classes of oppressors and oppressed, and women suffered the dual oppression of class and gender. The chapter concluded with the essential role played by women in the history of the revolution. Women had to fight the oppressive class alongside oppressed men. Once classes had been abolished and the means of production had become collective, women became men's equals, and it was then possible to speak of a socialist society.[82] This chapter therefore presented the question of the oppression of women in line with the Soviet version. The question of gender relations was included in the process of historical materialism, and the liberation of women was subordinated to the construction of socialism.

However, while this passage affirmed gender equality in a socialist society, the study titled *Gender Analysis of Primary School Textbooks* published by the Ministry of Education in 1989 revealed strong male dominance and the prevalence of gender stereotypes. The authors carried out a textual and iconographic analysis of fifty textbooks from grades 1 to 8. They looked at the vocabulary used, the types of activities in which women were represented and the main character traits attributed to them. In the first place, 71% of the proper names used were male, which led girls to take the view that the textbooks were not addressed to them (Gennet 1991, 97). In history, 99 percent of the names were male, while in home economics, 100 percent

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[80]Ibid., 122.
[81]Ibid., 123.
[82]Ibid., 124–25.

of the names used were female.[83] Common nouns defined men as "soldiers," "workers" and "citizens," and girls as "mothers" and "sisters." This all gave legitimacy to the public and private roles reserved for men and women, respectively, while the Amharic Grade 11 manual called them into question. In all the textbooks studied, the most-used female adjectives were "pregnant," "fertile," "pleasant," "pretty" and "decent." "Pregnant" and "fertile" appeared 30 times, while "oppressed woman" and "revolutionary intellectual" were only mentioned twice and once, respectively. Conversely, "workers' leader," "revolutionary leader," "battlefield companion," "hero" and "freedom fighter" came top of the male descriptions.[84] Gender stereotypes therefore persisted. Considering that textbooks are an indirect experience of the world, this way of representing weak, dependent and inferior women on the one hand and courageous, independent and superior men on the other could only contribute to the reproduction of gender relations (Gennet 1991, 97).

Textbooks represent one of the practical applications of the discourse on women's emancipation. The discrepancies noted between official statements and how they were translated into what was to be taught reveal serious limitations, reflecting the government's lack of interest in women's emancipation. In the project to build a new society, women were always first mothers and wives who were subordinate to men. No effort was made to translate the discourses on gender equality into the knowledge that was taught. They reflected common sense representations of women. Under the previous regime, school education had not brought about a break from common sense—far from it—and the student movement had shown very little interest in gender issues. This shows that the concept of a "mass" that was constantly mobilised to redefine a homogeneous nation unified by class solidarity was not successful when it came to concealing other distinctions. Gender remained a powerful criterion of hierarchisation.

Conclusion

The teaching shows in the first place how the Derg caused the past to be reinterpreted in the light of the class struggle and the fight to maintain independence. It was a question of giving new life to national sentiment by basing it on a sense of pride in belonging to heroic masses who had freed themselves from oppression, who had become the mythical representation of the past, present and future of the nation in place of the emperor. Women, peasants and the people of the south found a special place in this discourse. The past was also revisited through a teleological historical materialism to legitimise the choice of socialism and the power of the Derg. On the one

[83] MOE, *Gender Analysis of Primary School Textbooks* (1989), 17.
[84] Ibid., 21.

hand, the Derg claimed to be the only legitimate representative of the masses. On the other hand, the Derg claimed to have knowledge of the rules for the development of societies thanks to a form of Marxism-Leninism that had been elevated to an exact science. It thus developed a grand project that had been borrowed from the Soviet Union, a future planned on the basis of reason, on a scientifically-established truth that could not be challenged. It is interesting to note that the policies that were carried out expeditiously after the great famine of 1984–85 had already been presented in the textbooks that were published in 1979. The forced displacement of people from densely-populated areas affected by the famine to areas to be cultivated, accompanied by a policy of villagisation to provide the countryside with infrastructure and implement the collectivisation of agriculture, was presented to school pupils six years before it was implemented.

In the end, the knowledge that was taught was not recast solely in accordance with a new ideology that promoted other ways of viewing the world, imagining the nation and projecting its future. The new teachings and the way they were communicated testified to the close ties between the transformations in school knowledge and in the ways power was exercised. Teachings were based on an "exact science," a categorical mode of transmission and an authoritarian practice of power.

Chapter 10

School Experiences: Openness and Violence

By looking at the classroom and the schoolyard as places where curriculum requirements and pedagogical recommendations are developed through social relations, we can identify some of the concrete effects of educational transformations (Dams, Depaepe & Simon 1999). The objective here is to understand how political and educational transformations were developed, and to reveal the gaps and tensions that were created so that we can shed light on how educational practices and discourses were received. In the first place, what were the new relationships between schools and their social environment in a context in which social hierarchies and power relations were reshaped by the regime's agrarian reforms and egalitarian discourse? Secondly, what forms did the power relations between teachers and pupils—and among pupils themselves—take in the light of the social divisions of identity, class and gender? Finally, how were the aims of educating "for political consciousness" and "for production" translated into action in the school space?

1. The end of the cultural domination of the north?

1.1. *Going to school: mitigating cultural barriers?*

Under Haile Selassie's regime, the government school was an urban reality. Rural people had to move from the countryside to the city and leave their familiar Protestant village schools, which were founded and run by their communities, to attend a state institution. The obstacles they encountered were due as much to the characteristics of the city as they were to those of the school. The city was a projection of the centre into the periphery; it was the place of power, where government departments held sway, where the settlers from the north gathered, where resources from the countryside converged, and where the Amharic language was *de rigueur*. In the cities, the Wolaita felt the full weight of their marginalisation. For their part, schools ranked the various groups that governed the nation according to the culture of the north, and sought to bend identities into the "Amhara" mould. In Wolaita, and in the south in general, going to secondary school meant that rural people had to adapt to the dominant culture, and not everyone was equally well-equipped to do so. It was not, in fact, a particularly welcoming world:

"The "Amhara" regime just… until Derg's time… never accepted our people as citizens, in the educational area specially, and to give positions as administrator, police commander and like that. And that was our problem. Even to live in the town. […] At this time […] 95% is Wolaita. At that time 99% was not Wolaita but other peoples, the opposite."[1]

Abebe Fola makes the link between schooling, having to travel to the city to study and the employment opportunities that were available after graduation. He recalls that before the Derg, these three components formed a system that caused serious problems when it came to achieving full membership of the national political community. He emphasises that the city changed its face after being taken over by the Wolaita: 50 percent of the urban population was Wolaita in 1967 and 60 percent in the early 2000s (Planel 2008, 205). In demographic terms, the transformation was therefore not that straightforward. However, Abebe Fola's testimony is indicative of the fact that the city lost its "Amhara" pre-eminence and that Wolaita from rural origins no longer felt alienated from it. As Sabine Planel has underlined, this appropriation of the town by the Wolaita began under the Derg. It was not so much a radical transformation of urban sociology as a change in power relations. Those from the settlers and their descendants who had been the masters under Haile Selassie's regime could no longer assert the same authority under the Derg, and from that time on, the city was opened up to the marginalised sections of the local population. This phenomenon was part of the Derg's discourse on the equality of nationalities.

The Derg also attempted to reform regional government by appointing regional and local administrators from the region (Clapham 1988, 202). With particular regard to the Wolaita, Jacques Bureau noted in the early 1980s that they had "gained control of their political machinery since they [held] almost all the key positions in their administration" (Bureau 1982, 225). This was the educated minority, who were able to become integrated into the power structures much more easily than had been the case under the previous regime. But, as the peasant Mana Madibo testifies, this process had a wider impact:

"We were frustrated by the administrator of Shewa who was walking armed. He could even reduce someone he met on the road to servitude. Now we are in a good position, little by little our children have gone to school. They are magistrates, policemen and occupy all sorts of positions in the government. With the Shewa man, we used to hide in the woods. Now we have moved from the shadows into the light. This is the merit of education, it gives equality and self-confidence. In front of the judge or the police, we walk normally, we no longer bow down."[2]

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[1] Abebe Fola, interview, November 2009.
[2] Anjulo Agago, interview, December 2010.

Mana Madibo evokes a movement that evolved over a long period, from Haile Selassie's regime to the current federal government. However, he insisted throughout the interview that it was during the Derg period that the process was actually initiated. Because school was the route to administrative jobs, the mass education promoted by the Derg, together with the broadening of the criteria for nationhood, played a central role.

Under the Derg, school undoubtedly remained an instrument of assimilation. The expansion of the school system contributed to the intensification of centralisation and the integration of the population into state structures. Within schools themselves, the forms of violence associated with the assignment of an inferior identity to the southern populations undeniably diminished.

1.2. *Discrimination in schools diminishes: status of the Amharic language, pedagogical practices and sociability*

This twofold movement of accelerated assimilation and a softening of identity-based violence is perceptible in the change in status of the Amharic national language in both teaching practices and relations among pupils.

While local languages were used during the literacy campaign, Amharic, along with English, remained the language of formal education. The requirement to master it became less inflexible, however, and Amharic lost its status as a subject that could lead to elimination in national examinations (Bahru 2008a, 88). Witnesses underline the importance of this reform. The fact that Amharic had been a subject that could lead to elimination from exams was seen by Wolaita students, who were at a disadvantage compared to pupils whose mother tongue was Amharic, as a profound injustice. The way the examination procedure was experienced was part of a complex relationship with the national language. Amharic, which was both an instrument of domination and a means of enabling people to escape marginalisation if it was mastered, attracted as much as it repelled. The eliminatory status of the Amharic examination was a barrier to its being appropriated by an affective relationship. It was a high-stakes examination for pupils, who were therefore extremely fearful of it. The fact that it was possible to fail the entire examination because of this one subject alone could destroy all the hopes that had been invested in school. As a consequence, because school was the best way to access the national space, the reform was a very important gesture of integration.

Did the function of Amharic as a vehicle and integrating factor thus gain ground at the expense of its attributes as a "language of oppression?" Amharic certainly became more influential during the Derg period. The literacy campaign and mass schooling played a key role, of course. The literacy campaign used local languages transcribed into the Amharic syllabary, which

facilitated the transition from one language to another. The great advance in formal schooling that accompanied the literacy campaign meant daily contact with the national language for thousands of children and adolescents in the south. Having become just one subject among the rest in the examinations, it ceased to be a threat. Being able to speak Amharic was therefore more widely seen as an opportunity. In this regard, it is revealing that under the Derg, no demands for a formal education in the local language were made in Wolaita or elsewhere in southern Ethiopia (Abbink 1998, 69). These demands did not emerge until 1991 and the introduction of federalism by the EPRDF.[3] The language-related claim that appeared after the fall of the Derg was in the first place the work of local intellectual elites, and to assert that such a claim was universally shared would be tantamount to thinking of nationalities as homogeneous groups cemented together by a perfect community of interests. This vision is fiction. The only people who had the capacity to express themselves in the nation's political arena were those who had gone through school. They had incorporated the codes that governed participation in national politics, and they were fluent in Amharic and English. They therefore had a power of representation that was disproportionate to their numbers, and became the essential representatives of their respective nationalities. Similarly, the national struggles, which were a nightmare for the Derg and led to the establishment of federalism after its fall, were primarily fought by minority educated elites (Abbink 2000, 159–60).

Not all nationalities rose up together to advance linguistic and cultural claims. What of those who were deprived of the educational capital that was available to the local intellectual elites? Was the opportunity to learn Amharic not at the heart of the schooling movement that was born in rural areas? Did the peasants ignore the opportunity to seize an instrument of power? Mastery of Amharic was a sine qua non for the longed-for social ascension that schooling offered. Today, some peasants deplore the fact that education in the Wolaita language closes the doors of the national space to their children (Guidi 2015). The issues of centralisation and cultural assimilation are not simply a matter of support or opposition; rather, they raise the question of the terms for access to the national space and its economic, political and symbolic resources. The greater opportunity to speak, read and write Amharic offered by the Derg's school policy was a way out of marginalisation, and there is little reason to believe that it was not perceived as such by those who were the most marginalised.

This was all the more true because the practice employed by some teachers under Haile Selassie's regime of belittling and humiliating pupils who had

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[3] Habtamu Lemma (teacher at the University of Soddo, student under the Derg), interview, Soddo, 17 December 2009.

a poor command of Amharic was apparently no longer applied in Derg schools. It is true that it had begun to diminish in the final years of the overthrown regime, and the generation of teachers trained from the late 1960s was more aware of social issues and the "nationality question" than their elders had been, but under the Derg, the movement to end discrimination in schools accelerated. Wolaita society changed radically with the revolution, and the old hierarchies on which political and cultural discrimination had been based collapsed: the "Amhara" were no longer the "masters." Relations of domination based on identity were part of the "feudal" behaviour that needed to be banned.

It is also very likely that the transformation of the sociology of the teaching profession played a role in this phenomenon. The statistics available in Wolaita offer details on the education level, gender and age of teachers. In 1990, the overwhelming majority were between 25 and 35 years old, which means that there was a high turnover in the 1980s.[4] It had been necessary to train teachers to ensure that the school system would expand, and the thousands of foreign teachers who had taught at secondary schools before the revolution but had left the country also needed to be replaced. Unfortunately, the statistics provide no information on the social origins of this new generation of teachers. However, considering the ever more significant numbers of rural Wolaita who attended school from the 1960s and the fact that the teaching profession represented one of the main opportunities for graduates, one might suppose that the proportion of teachers from rural and poor urban origins increased. The social proximity between teachers and pupils was greater under the Derg than it had been under Haile Sellasie's regime.

What were the relationships among pupils like? In 1971, there was a brawl at the secondary school in Soddo in which children of settlers from the neighbouring region and young Wolaita children clashed violently, with children of *melkegna* and landlords on one side and children of peasants on the other. The former did not recognise the latter's right to study: they had to stay in their place, which was to serve. The situation was quite different in the 1980s. A former pupil recalls that pupils of several nationalities—Wolaita, Amhara, Gurage, Oromo, Sidamo, among others—lived together at the secondary school and communicated with each other in Amharic, and that their origin was not a criterion for determining their sociability.[5] Class and nationality no longer overlapped in the structuring of social hierarchies. In short, although school was still a place where the language and values of the centre were learned, nationality was no longer a criterion on which power

[4]Soddo Zurya wereda, **የወላይታ አውራጃ የትምህርት የትምህርት ስታትስቲክስ ማጠቃላይ ጥራዝ** (*School Statistics of Wolaita Awraja, 1989–1990*).
[5]Habtamu Lemma, interview, December 2009.

relations were based. School, this stepping stone to the national space, had become more welcoming. When combined with the policy of mass education, this process led to a greater appropriation of the school by broader segments of the population, by those whose culture was a very long way from that of the centre.

2. The pedagogy of the dictatorship

Although discrimination and bullying on the basis of nationality diminished under the Derg, the educational relationship became far more rigid, a phenomenon that was linked to the political violence that marked the Derg period.

2.1. *The vertical transmission of knowledge*

The official 1984 curriculum stated that a school education should help students develop self-confidence and autonomy.[6] The new school system should produce an open-mindedness to scientific debate, new ideas and working together.[7] This was reflected, for example, in Amharic textbooks by an emphasis on discussion and collective decision-making. The school should encourage creativity, a mingling of ideas and the circulation of practices leading to a dynamic community life. Building a new society involved active and autonomous individuals taking initiatives. However, as a study of the geography textbooks has revealed, the path was entirely mapped out in advance. The 1984 curriculum summed up the Ministry of Education's pedagogical approach very well. Students were expected to:

> be deeply convinced that revolutionary Ethiopia is proceeding to the bright future. They should also be convinced that the guidelines given by the revolutionary forces are the necessary precondition for the achievement of the better living condition of man. This will help them grasp the discipline of working class to study hard, and participate in social activities and contribute to building the new society.[8]

The contradiction between autonomy and discipline was only an apparent one. The concept of autonomy was absolutely central to 20th century pedagogical thinking across the political spectrum. Regardless of how power was exercised and how the economy was organised (whether it was the aim of education to reproduce an existing system, reform it gradually or transform it radically), autonomy was always thought of as a way of asserting discipline, of "governing souls" through "reason and responsibility" (Nóvoa 2002). From

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[6]MOE, *The Ethiopian School Syllabuses* (1984), 8.
[7]Ibid., 18.
[8]Ibid., 112.

this perspective, self-discipline is a corollary of autonomy, and the educational aims of the Derg were no exception in this respect. The ideal type of autonomous individual would follow the path traced by the "revolutionary forces" without the need for coercion. He would be fully conscious of the fact that the project of power was of benefit to him and the society as a whole, he would have incorporated the objectives of the revolution and he would work towards their realisation of his own free will. Aside from the project, what was the most common pedagogy used in the classrooms in practical terms? In former teacher Elias Damtew's opinion:

> According to the pedagogical aspects [...] there was no group working... the great emphasis was given to one-way communication. The students were listeners, they listened what the teacher said. So there was one way of communication based on theoretical aspects, with no practical works. The only important person in the campus was the teacher. Less emphasis was given to the students. So, aspects at that time was not initiating the students. No place for discussion.[9]

There were neither discussions among students nor exchanges with teachers, only inculcation. Vertical transmission, which was nothing new, was reinforced. According to this former teacher, the main reason was the objective of ideological transmission. In the official texts, "education for a socialist consciousness" included "the development of a political consciousness, an understanding of the nature of the change of the transition to a socialist society and the role of the individual and the masses in bringing about these changes."[10] The aim was to get society as a whole moving behind the government's project. In the discourse, this project, the future of Ethiopia, was based on knowledge as an exact science, knowledge that had been fully developed, a closed knowledge. The ideological orthodoxy adopted by the Derg and the categorical tone of the textbooks left little room for doubt.

Bernard Lahire reminds us, without postulating a purely mechanical relationship, that: "School is a central institution of socialisation. It is therefore particularly sensitive to the most important changes from the point of view of the configuration and conception of the exercise of power at a level of social formation." (Lahire 2005, 324). Politics operated on the basis of the omnipotence of the state, and pedagogy on that of the teacher. One former pupil believes that "[The teachers] should have set the pupils free and allowed them to clarify their ideas. The educational situation did not invite this at all. [The teachers] should have made sure at the time that the students expressed their needs."[11] The educational situation could not be separated from the

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[9]Elias Damtew, interview, October 2009.
[10]MOE, *Education in Socialist Ethiopia…* (1984), 11.
[11]Habtamu Lemma, interview, December 2009.

political situation. Why solicit the opinions and autonomous initiatives of students if those who were governed were not allowed to question the discourse and policies implemented by the state? The indisputable nature of knowledge, the way it was articulated and the regime's power practices all contributed to reinforcing the vertical mode of transmission that was already under way in Ethiopian schools.

However, the political context and the practices of the teachers, who had themselves received an education based on authoritarian transmission, did not explain everything. The political context potentially left teachers room for manoeuvre, especially in the classroom, and their habits could change. Teachers had access to the pedagogical theories of the student-actor, notably through the pedagogical journal published by the teachers' association, *YeMemerhan Dems* (The Voice of Teachers), which was available at local branches of the national association. Therefore, the idea of an active pedagogy as stressed in official curricula and textbooks was relayed and explained to teachers. Of course, it cannot be assumed that the magazine was read by everyone, but other channels existed, such as pedagogy courses in teacher training colleges and shorter, seminar-based training courses, of which there were many at the time of the Derg. There is no reason to believe that teachers did not, at least in theory, adhere to forms of active pedagogy. Tekeste Negash rightly identified classroom overload as the main cause affecting teacher practice (Tekeste 1990, 29–30). Indeed, in its ten-year plan announced in 1984, the government emphasised that:

> The single most important challenge which the expansion of formal education has entailed relates to the significant increase in the teacher-student ratio. The latest information available reveals that the teacher-student ratio has increased from 48 to 62 in primary schools, from 31 to 74 in junior secondary schools and from 21 to 44 in senior primary schools in the last 14 years. The ratio could range between 90–150 students in some urban areas. These ratios compare very unfavourably to the standards of 50, 35, and 30, for elementary, junior and senior secondary schools, respectively. The negative implication of this trend on the quality of education is obvious and therefore there is a need for elaboration.[12]

Under these conditions, it is difficult to imagine an active pedagogy based on intense exchanges between teachers and pupils. First of all, the class had to be "held" and somehow, a minimum amount of knowledge had to be transmitted. Teachers' working conditions were further aggravated by a lack of teaching materials and low salaries:

> Another development with similar implication is the falling of the cost per student which should be interpreted in terms of the low salary payments for teachers and

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[12]PMGE, *Ten-Year Perspective Plan, 1984/85-1993-94* (1984), 137.

the inadequacy in the provision of teaching materials and other supplies. This is particularly so for technical and vocational education where the cost per student has fallen from 1,816 Birr in 1974 to 830 Birr in 1983. The cost per student in primary schools has also fallen from 81 Birr in 1974 to 57 Birr in 1983 and in junior secondary schools from 185 to 137 Birr. Similarly, although the budget for elementary teacher institutions has been increased from Birr 3.7 million in 1974 to Birr 6.5 million in 1983, the cost per student has gone down from Birr 1,213 in 1974 to Birr 1,093 in 1983.[13]

In many schools, pupils simply did not have textbooks; only the teachers had them.[14] The lack of teacher motivation was considerable under these conditions, as evidenced by the ERGESE report (Evaluative Research of the General Education System in Ethiopia: A Quality Study) carried out by the Ministry of Education between 1983 and 1986. More than half of secondary school teachers would have preferred to have a different job, and felt trapped in a profession that did not suit them. As state employees, they were assigned to their posts by the Central Planning Commission and there were very limited opportunities for changing profession. The issue of pay was not the main reason given by teachers for feeling discouraged: only 20% did so, and 70% said they had an "average" standard of living. More serious was the low esteem in which they felt their profession was held (Tekeste 1990, 26–27).

In summary, the vertical, authoritarian pedagogy was explained by both the political context and the conditions under which teachers worked. Those who would have liked to apply another method other than vertical teaching would not have been able to do so, both because of political pressure and because of the material situation in which they were forced to teach.

2.2. *The harshness of punishments*

The Ministry of Education's 1981 Handbook on School Administration provided guidance on how to deal with disciplinary problems. These were graduated provisions based on discussion and self-criticism. The regulatory measures were as follows: a discussion with the pupil to make him or her aware of the error, and writing a self-criticism to be placed in the files; a warning from a counsellor or, in the absence of such a person, teachers close to the pupil; a report to the parents; a discussion with the pupil in the presence of the parents, a counsellor, a teacher and a member of the pupil's association; suspension; and finally expulsion.[15] Corporal punishment was excluded in theory, but in fact it was at the heart of the pedagogical relationship.

[13]Ibid.
[14]Habtamu Lemma, interview, December 2009.
[15]MOE, *Handbook on School Administration* (1981), 81–87; Shibeshi (1996, 201).

> What I myself saw in primary school was that the punishments were very harsh. In Grade 1, a teacher who hits… very painful, he hits you there, your buttocks. The fault is not serious, but he thinks that if a pupil is beaten he will learn, it seems to me to be poor psychology! And the beating on the hands for being late. If a pupil is late, he just stands there "bam! bam!" [The teacher] hits harder and harder. What was the method? They thought that he who is punished learns! And I remember… something I heard… [someone] seriously injured… he was hit in a bad place when he was beaten up…. Do you know what a teacher was doing? He used to have people who came in late pull up tree stumps. Those who were late for school, who didn't arrive on time, he made them work, and the work was very hard.[16]

Teachers inflicted very severe corporal punishment and were convinced of its pedagogical virtues. Some forms of discipline, such as beating the palms of the hands with a stick, were particularly widespread. Another form of punishment involved a pupil being made to keep still in an uncomfortable position. The one that left the most mark on former pupils was having to crouch for the entire lesson (40 minutes) with their arms behind their knees and their heads down between their hands. The effects were felt rapidly: back pain, exhausted thigh muscles, severe headaches and a feeling of vertigo. A pupil who could not maintain this position would be hit. In addition, as under Haile Selassie's regime, it was common for a student who answered a question incorrectly to be insulted. The most common insult was *dädäb*[17] (stupid, obtuse, slow-minded). Although not all teachers used violent corporal punishment, the fact that former teachers and pupils mentioned it spontaneously is testimony to how commonplace it was. Former student Telahun Ayele also emphasises the gender aspect of punishment, noting that female teachers were more interested in explaining than insulting. They did not impose a position any more painful than kneeling, and only hit the palms of the hands in a measured way, whereas the men hit all areas of the body indiscriminately, and did not always try to control their strength.[18]

There are several factors that help us interpret this intensification of pedagogical violence. The first is the socially accepted character of corporal punishment, which had already been practised under Haile Selassie in family education, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church schools and government schools. There was a widespread view among teachers that physical punishment allowed students to make amends. However, the intensity of punishment under the Derg was unprecedented because it was linked to the transformation of the way power was exercised. By talking spontaneously today about the harshness and arbitrariness of punishments, by rejecting these past methods

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[16]Habtamu Lemma, interview, December 2009.

[17]Tesfaw Derebe, interview, February 2007.

[18]Telahun Ayele (pupil under the Derg and EPRDF, teacher), interview, July 2014.

while fully assuming that they themselves practised them, teachers contextualise pedagogical violence as an intrinsic social fact of the Derg period. Under Haile Selassie, pedagogical practices were part of a paternalistic relationship. Emotional relationships were bound to develop between pupils and teachers, who had the authority of the father. Under the Derg, this relationship seems to have disappeared, giving way to a style of pedagogy based on an anonymous authority. State violence was an assumed, organised and institutionalised form of government. This led to constant violence, which spread throughout society to the point where it left its mark on pedagogical practice.

Finally, families had no right to supervise what was happening in schools: "The parents did not intervene in this matter [corporal punishment] because they considered that the pupil was subject to the school rules. This was widely accepted."[19] Two issues can be identified here. The first concerns the relationship society had with school as an institution, and the second relates to the fact that disciplinary practices were socially accepted. Members of society considered a school's internal rules to be sovereign. The idea that the school was a closed space of power, governed by its own rules, in which there was no question of intervening, seemed self-evident. It was seen by families as a place where political power was deployed, a place outside their sphere of competence. In this sense, the fact that corporal punishment was socially accepted does not mean that the degree of violence of punishment inflicted in schools under the Derg regime was socially accepted. The school experience was a painful one for pupils, but their families had no leverage to counter these practices. Solomon Maereg, a pupil in the 1980s, recalls that some developed a real aversion to school, mixed with disgust: "After these punishments, you first hate your teacher, then you hate the class… even the walls, and then you hate your books…."[20]

2.3. *A hardening of gender relations*

What was the specific school experience of girls in this general educational context? The power discourses and textbooks claimed that socialism would free Ethiopian women from the dual oppression of class and patriarchy. Education was presented as an essential tool for women access to equality in the political and economic spheres: it would allow them to participate fully in the construction of the new society. School textbooks reproduced the empire of men, however. Women were very little represented and, when they were, they were wives and mothers whose character traits were things such as decency and discretion. Nevertheless, the regime encouraged schooling for girls.

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[19]Habtamu Lemma, interview, December 2009.
[20]Solomon Maereg (pupil under the Derg), interview, Lalibela, 7 February 2007.

The school experience of girls was, first of all, part of a demography. In 1991–92, the number of girls exceeded 40% at each level.[21] Between 1974 and 1988, the percentage of female teachers in primary school rose from 14% to 24%, while in secondary schools, their numbers dropped from 14.9% to 9.9%.[22] In Wolaita, in 1990, at the very end of the Derg period, women made up 26% of primary teachers and 6% of secondary teachers.[23] Teachers were thus overwhelmingly men. In this demographic context, what was the experience of girls in school? What gender relations existed in the school space? The prejudices that devalued the intellectual capacities of girls—who were considered to be less capable of academic success—which were widespread among teaching and administrative staff in the 1960s, still persisted. In her 1989 study on girls' education, Gennet Zewdie highlighted teachers' negative perceptions of the academic abilities of their female pupils (Gennet 1991, 96). This meant that girls did not receive as much support, and had less incentive than boys to persevere with their studies. Girls did, in fact, perform less well, and their failure rate in national examinations was extremely high. Between 1978 and 1987, 40% of girls who took the national Grade 8 examination failed it. In 1988, the share of girls in Grade 12 graduates was 6%. Pedagogical staff attributed this to their supposedly lower abilities, while the failure of boys was attributed to a lack of study. The success differential between boys and girls was actually due to the much more difficult study conditions. The workloads imposed on girls in the home became much heavier as they became older compared to the workload of boys. This left them with very little time for schoolwork outside school (Gennet 1991, 91–92).

Girls also interrupted their studies much more quickly and in far greater numbers than boys. The journey to school was a major obstacle in this regard. Families were reluctant for girls to continue their education at secondary schools in the city, a long way from home.[24] Except for trips related to household work, such as carrying water and wood, which were made in groups of women, it was not considered appropriate for young girls to make long journeys on foot. Families also feared that their daughters would become victims of abduction, which was a common marital practice. Ayelech Tekle-Mariam, a secondary school pupil in the early 1980s, says that she was able to continue her studies because she went to school accompanied by male pupils whom her family trusted.[25] However, in general, it was the urban dwellers,

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[21]TGE, *Ethiopia Statistical Abstract 1992*, 271.

[22]PRDE, *Basic Education Statistics*, (1988), table 4.

[23]Soddo Zurya wereda, **የወላይታ አውራጃ አውራጃ የትምህርት ስታትስቲክስ ስታትስቲክስ ማጠቃለያ ጥራዝ** 1982 EC (*School Statistics of* Wolaita *Awraja, 1989-1990*), not paginated.

[24]Belaynesh Antonios (teacher, responsible for women's affairs at Soddo Town Hall), interview, Soddo, 2 November 2009.

[25]Ayelech Tekle-Mariam (teacher), interview, Soddo, 19 November 2010.

those who lived close to the secondary schools, who were more easily able to continue their education. Finally, many girls interrupted their studies because of the social pressure to marry.

Various forms of male domination manifested themselves in the school space. Several witnesses highlighted the practice of blackmailing girls into marriage. Teachers used their position of power to propose mariage to students, whose acceptance or refusal was immediately reflected in their academic performance.[26] Teachers were generally assured of silence from students who were ashamed to talk about it, or who, if they dared to do so, were not listened to or were even accused of using this pretext to harm them.[27] This phenomenon existed under Haile Selassie's regime, but it was less widespread, and less pressure was exerted.[28] It therefore appears that it began to spread in the time of the Derg. In fact, this sort of pressure and blackmail was far riskier under Haile Selassie's regime, when there were very few girls at school, and most were the daughters of teachers or notables, a status that gave more weight to their word. Under the Derg, female pupils were more numerous and of more modest social origin, and were more anonymous and vulnerable.

On the other hand, girls were beaten less than boys. Beatings were very rare because "they were discreet and less disturbing to the class." However, their discretion was so socially expected that mere laughter from a teenage girl could provoke terrible insults. The most common were *berenda adari* (you sleep in the street) or *shermuta* (slut/hooker).[29] Belaynesh Antonios speaks of "unspeakable insults."[30] In short, teachers were able to abandon all sense of decency for trivial reasons and take the liberty of aiming extremely vulgar and violent insults at female pupils. Problems with male pupils, also, arose during adolescence. Again according to Belaynesh Antonios: "In school, they faced problems, inappropriate jokes, intimidation and a variety of insults from the opposite sex."[31] Girls who went to school were at risk of pregnancy. Whether the sex was consensual or not (with all the nuances of the term "consent" for someone in a subordinate position), it was they alone who had to bear the consequences.

> During adolescence, the problems they faced… no girls were counselled, nothing was set up for that, those who were not counselled got pregnant, so they had the biggest problems. There were no female teachers. Today, if they have any

[26]Zewde Wolde-Giorgis (teacher), interview, Lalibela, 10 February 2008.
[27]Belaynesh Antonios (teacher), interview, Soddo, 2 November 2009.
[28]Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010.
[29]Telahun Ayele, interview, July 2014.
[30]Belaynesh Antonios, interview, November 2009.
[31]Ibid.

problems, women teachers give them advice. There was none of that. The teachers were all men. So no one saw their difficulties.[32]

In general, due to the negligible number of female teachers, girls had very little recourse in the face of all the pressures and violence they experienced. Despite the higher enrolment of girls in school, the school space was still a male-dominated environment.

To sum up, under the Derg, education for girls was a two-pronged movement. On the one hand, even though few girls completed studies that led to a paid job, more were able to benefit from a school education. Most were urban girls who moved into nursing and secretarial jobs (Gennet 1991, 97). Even if they were confined to "women's occupations," this meant in the long term that they had a greater presence in educational, medical, administrative and commercial institutions. In spite of the pressures and violence suffered at school, girls were on the move, all the more so if the effects of the literacy campaign are taken into account. On the other hand, as had been the case under Haile Selassie, the experience of the specific forms of gender violence experienced by girls in school forged adult women who were determined to set an example, to push girls to go to school and to fight in the school space to improve their conditions of study.[33]

3. "Educating for a socialist consciousness" in action

The transmission of ideology was central to everyday school life. What did a "socialist consciousness" mean in detail? What channels was it transmitted through? Can the degree to which it was appropriated by the pupils be calculated? The pedagogical and disciplinary practices we have analysed above were not standardised in school policies. These practices, which on occasion contrasted with the official educational discourse, formed part of these specific forms of school culture, which were secreted through the interactions between the school and its social environment. The pedagogical system was the result of relations among actors locked in power relationships deployed outside the school framework—between the governors and the governed, between different social groups, between the sexes—and modified or reinforced by the pedagogical relationship. Although a desire to put a non-authoritarian pedagogy into practice did not appear to be manifested, the ideological transmission function assigned to education was the subject of careful attention on the part of the school institution. Political education was considered to be a foundation for the construction of a socialist society, and it was an integral

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[32]Ibid.

[33]Yemesrach Alula, interview, January 2010; Belaynesh Antonios, interview, November 2009.

part of the daily lives of the pupils through multiple media: special classes, songs and theatre. By "socialist consciousness," the Derg's pedagogues meant knowledge of the theoretical foundations of Marxism-Leninism, moral and disciplined behaviour, an investment in the construction of the new society and feelings that were both patriotic and internationalist.[34] These educational goals were similar to those of countries in the socialist bloc, especially the GDR, which played a key role in the design of Ethiopian school policies and curricula through bilateral agreements, which were renewed between 1976 and 1989, and large numbers of development workers (Haile Gabriel 2006, 76).

3.1. *Selected and trained political education teachers*

The first task was to select and train political education teachers. They had to be known for their loyalty to the regime and they needed to cooperate closely with history and geography teachers (Giday 1992, 15). In practice, the vast majority of those responsible for political education were themselves history and geography teachers.[35] More rarely, some might be from other subjects if they were known for their political involvement. Teaching political education always involved selection.

> They select the appropriate person, regarding his class background. Is he from feudal or royal family, or from poor family? Even if the teacher is from royal or feudal family, if he denied, if he ignored his class… […] For the theory, by itself it was the known theory at that moment… So the teachers were teaching but not all the teachers. Those who deny their royal family class, those who were next to fight for communism, socialism, would teach this. The other will never do this. They will never accept.[36]

It was certainly impossible to oppose Marxism-Leninism publicly, as this would have meant opposing the Derg. This was all the more true for teachers who, being responsible for the intellectual and ideological training of future adults, were controlled especially closely by school committees. However, according to Elias Demtaw, teachers were not forced to teach political education if they did not accept the ideology of the authorities. Afework Ayalew, on the other hand, says: "We were obliged to teach Marxism-Leninism. It was not good for people who did not like it."[37] The school authorities forced some teachers, but were careful to select the most convinced among them as far as possible. This shows a desire for efficient ideological transmission on the one hand, and the need to entrust it to people loyal to the

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[34] MOE, *The Ethiopian School Syllabuses* (1984), 112–20.
[35] Elias Damtew, interview, October 2009.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Afework Tadesse, interview, February 2007.

regime on the other. The teachers who were selected then undertook several types of training.

> They have short time of training and long period of training. The long term of training, they use Yekatit 66 School in Addis Ababa. […] For short term of training, they use Awassa. The training was given in TTC [Teacher Training Centre] at that time. The TTC teachers prepare the training for the elementary teachers and for the others. Based on Marxism-Leninism. So the teachers know something about Marxism-Leninism.[38]

Like regime officials, political education teachers attended political and ideological training at the Yekatit 66 School in Addis Ababa that lasted for between three and six months. A proclamation issued in July 1977 placed the school under the direct control of the Derg, after it had previously been a territory of its former ally, the Meison political party. From there, it came under the control of East German advisers, who played a central role in the training of Ethiopian administrative and teaching staff (Haile Gabriel 2006, 76). Yekatit 66 School had branches at regional, provincial and in some places local levels (Clapham 1988, 66–67). Teachers also received specific training at teacher training centres. Teachers from Wolaita received their training at the teacher training centre (TTC) in Awassa, the capital of the Sidamo region. Unlike Yekatit 66, the TTC training was specifically tailored to teachers and was more pedagogically oriented. In all likelihood, the TTC teachers themselves had attended training at the Yekatit 66 School, which was virtually a compulsory step for all civil servants.

In addition to this training, teachers had various materials to support them: not only textbooks, but also literature produced by the regime to spread Marxism-Leninism among officials, teachers and the masses. Political education courses started at Grade 4 and continued up to Grade 12. The textbooks dealt first with what the revolution had brought and the future it promised to the masses in general, and to children and young people in particular.[39] The short- and long-term objectives of the revolution were explained in detail. The books stressed the participation of young people in the revolutionary process and the construction of socialism, inviting them to become involved in the common collective project. They then described the political and administrative institutions of socialist Ethiopia and explained how the adoption of democratic centralism had placed the state at the service of the masses, whereas it had hitherto been an instrument of oppression in the hands of the ruling classes. The process of social change was the subject of several chapters: every social advance was a result of the class struggle and after

[38] Elias Damtew, interview, October 2009.
[39] MOE, *The Ethiopian School Syllabuses* (1984), 93.

the imperialist phase of capitalism, the inevitable process of world revolution was under way, and the times proved the accuracy of Marx and Engels' analyses of the transition to socialism. It was then necessary to develop an internationalist attitude among students: "An internationalist attitude based on mutual cooperation and solidarity between the world progressive forces"[40], i.e. the Eastern Bloc and especially Russia. Ethiopia had to be inspired by the example of the revolutionary struggle of the Russian proletariat and its allies. Particular attention was devoted to the struggle against the enemies of the revolution and Ethiopia: the internal enemies who had opposed the Derg and the external enemies, which were Somalia, the Eritrean independence fighters and imperialism. Finally, the grades 11 and 12 textbooks were devoted to political economy, historical materialism and dialectical materialism. In short, the political education courses were a breviary, a compendium of what a citizen of socialist Ethiopia should know and think.

The official curricula also specified that revolutionary writings, newspapers and magazines were to be used by students (Giday 1991, 15). Although they were never, or only rarely, circulated in classrooms, they were available to teachers.

> In addition to this there was a newspaper which is called *Serto Adder*, and there was also the book called *Political Economy*. *YeMemerhan Dems* (The Voice of the Teachers) was available. Because there is association of teachers from the grassroots. At elementary level, in each school there was an association of teachers, at the *wereda* level and the zone level. So the book was distributed to all teachers. So it created awareness for the teachers about Marxism-Leninism.[41]

The weekly newspaper *Serto Adder* was founded in 1980. It was the official organ of COPWE (The Commission for Organizing the Party of the Working People of Ethiopia) and then the WPE (The Workers' Party of Ethiopia) when it was established in 1984. With a print run of 100,000 copies, its aim was to spread Marxism-Leninism among the masses. In addition, the monthly theoretical journal *Meskerem*, which was also published by the single party and had a print run of 200,000 copies, circulated through the urban network and most likely also reached Wolaita. The editorial staff of these two official publications were familiar with the party publications of socialist countries (Sherr 1989, 438). *Meskerem* dealt with topics such as: the faces of current anti-communism, American imperialism before the revolution, the revolutionary role of intellectuals, the history of Ethiopian unity and Eritrean separatism;[42] or ideological deviation and its channels of dissemination,

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Elias Damtew, interview, October 2009.

[42] መስከረም, issue 6, September 1981.

industrial technology in Ethiopia, population growth and development.[43] They were in-depth articles for adults on themes that were covered in the school curriculum.

As Elias Demtaw recalls, teachers also had access to the monthly magazine published by the national teachers' association, *YeMemerhan Dems*, which was available in every school. The magazine contained articles on various general and pedagogical issues. For example, the August 1987 issue dealt with the global spread of HIV, sex education in schools and the role of languages in education and development.[44] The July 1988 issue dealt with homework, the organisation of learning tests, a description of the school system in the Soviet Union and an analysis of writing and language.[45] Each issue contained a section titled *Teachers and Creativity* which consisted of interviews with teachers who had written songs or plays or created works of art. They told of their backgrounds, described their activities and presented their views on the role of art in the service of a "pedagogy of the revolution." The last page of each issue was devoted either to a famous person (the July 1988 issue contained a short biography of and a translation of a text by Bertolt Brecht) or to a political poem written by a teacher. The themes were broad and open-ended. This reveals a tension between the authoritarian practices analysed above on the one hand, and the real concern of the national teachers' association to work towards an open pedagogy based on a living Marxist culture, far removed from the dogmatism of the official curricula and certain school textbooks, on the other hand.

From the point of view of the state, the distribution of these journals, and the fact that the school curricula called for their use in the classroom, revealed a desire to include teachers and students in a national community of readers. It had an integrating function, reading shared at a national level, creating a political culture and similar themes of reflection. Did the Grade 12 geography textbook not state that the development of printing was essential to the development of a new national culture? Through teachers and students, the idea was to gradually familiarise the governed with reading these newspapers and magazines. This major interest on the part of the state in creating a common culture through the writings it produced was also one of the main objectives of the literacy campaign. Although the magazines were a long way from circulating as far as villages, schools could become centres for the dissemination of ideas and themes developed at the national level.

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[43] **መስከረም**, issue 35, September 1988.
[44] **የመምህራን ድምጽ**, vol. 3, issue 2, August 1987.
[45] **የመምህራን ድምጽ**, vol. 4, issue 1, July 1988.

3.2. *Lessons, songs and plays*

According to the official curricula, political education classes were taught in forty-minute periods twice or three times a week, depending on the level.[46] The frequency was no greater than it was with other subjects. However, the inculcation of political ideas and behaviour permeated the school space to a considerable degree. It was achieved through the knowledge taught in the humanities and social sciences as well as all the school rituals. As had been the case under Haile Selassie, the days were punctuated by songs. Pupils sang two songs every day that had been written specifically for the raising and lowering of the flag, as well as the national anthem:

> ኢትዮጵያ ቅደሚ ፤ በጉብረተሰባዊነት አብቢ ለምላሚ ፤
> ቃልኪዳን ገብተዋል ጀግኖች ልጆችሽ፤
> ወንዞች ተራሮችሽ ድንግል መሬትሽ ፤
> መስዋዕት ሊሆኑ ለክብር ለዝናሽ ፤
> የጀግኖች እናት ነሽ በልጆሽ ኩሪ ፤
> ጠላቶችሽ ይጥፉ ለዘለዓለም ኑሪ!

Ethiopia, the ancient! Thriving and fertile through socialism,
Your heroes and children pledge unto you a promise.
Your rivers, your mountains, your untouched lands,
Demand sacrifice for your dignity and prestige.
Mother of heroes, take pride in your children.
May your enemies perish, and may you live forever.

As a national anthem, this song took up the great themes of nationalism in general and Ethiopian nationalism in particular. However, the imperial mystique and divine protection that were sung of during the Haile Selassie regime had disappeared in favour of socialism, which, instead of the emperor, watered the country with its benefits and symbolised prosperity. The flag-raising song was along the same lines:

> ያንድነት የህብረት የትግላችን አርማ ፤
> የድል የጅግንነት የነፃነት ግርማ ፤
> የህብረተሰባዊነት መሪ ኮከባችን ፤
> ትውለብለብ ዘላለም ስንደቅ አላማችን!
> ያገራችን ውበት ፤ የወንዝ የተራራ ፤
> የተስፋችን ብርሃን ፤ የማለዳ ጮራ ፤
> የታሪክ ቅርሳችን ፤ የደም ያጥንታችን ፤
> ትውለብለብ ዘላለም ፤ ስንደቅ አላማችን!

Emblem of our unity, cooperation, and struggle,
Grandeur of victory, heroism, and freedom.
Our guiding star towards socialism,

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[46]MOE, *The Ethiopian School Syllabuses* (1984), 247.

Fly forever, our flag!
Beauty of our country, of rivers and mountains,
Light of our hopes, ray of dawn.
Our historical heritage, our blood, our bones,
Fly forever, our flag!

Once again, the metaphor of the dawn had already been used under Haile Selassie. But the source of the light was now socialism, not the emperor who had been replaced as the guide of the nation by the flag, the emblem of the union of the members of the political community. Socialism added cooperation to unity, and the struggle to defend the country was linked to the construction of the new society. The projection into the future, which was also present in the past, was more marked. Socialism gave progress a more precise content. Finally, here is the song that accompanied the lowering of the flag:

ወዛደር ገበሬ ህፃን አዛውንት ፣
መለዮ ለባሹ ተራማጅ ወጣት ፣
ቃል ኪዳን አለበት የቆየ ከጥንት ፣
ለሰንደቅ አላማው ሊሰዋ ሊሞት፣
ለፍትህ ለእኩልነት ለሰብአዊ መብት ፣
ለሰላም ለፍቅር ለሀገር እድገት ፣
ለኢትዮጵያ ነፃነት ለልጆቿ ክብር ፣
ሰንደቅ አላማችን ዘላለም ትኑር!

Workers, peasants, young children, the elderly,
Wearers of the battle helmet, progressive youth.
An oath sworn since antiquity,
To sacrifice and die for our flag.
For justice, for equality, for human rights,
For peace, for love, for the progress of our country.
For the freedom of Ethiopia and the dignity of its children,
Live forever, our flag!

While the themes of sacrifice, the oath of allegiance and the eternity of Ethiopia were repeated, this last song placed more emphasis on socialism. It was the goal to be achieved, and its components—justice, human rights and equality—were better defined. It emphasised solidarity among members of the working class and different generations. Finally, its nature as a school song is clear from its direct appeal to students as members of a youth with a specific mission. Young people were progressive, and had to engage in the struggle to build the socialist society in the face of adversity, just as one goes to war. Finally, it is remarkable that the character of Mengestu Haile-Mariam does not appear in any of these three songs. He was a dictator and there was a cult of personality, for example in the many portraits and statues that adorned the cities. However, while Haile Selassie's presence was omnipresent in all the

school songs, the figure of the new head of state faded behind nationalism and socialism.

Plays were another form of pedagogy. They staged social realities with political implications:

> The focal need of the drama was… if it is a class of civics, or history, or political education class, they bring two classes: the feudal class and the tenants class. How the feudal oppress the tenants and how the tenants obey for the feudal or for the landlords, such dramas. […] At the beginning of the class, the beginning of the academic year, during the closing ceremony, the dramas were prepared.[47]

The plays portrayed the exploitative relationships that had existed before the revolution. While the songs spread aspirations, and sought to touch the emotions and ensure the incorporation of a patriotic attitude based on tendencies that leaned more towards belief than reason, the plays illustrated practical realities. On the basis of these realities, the pedagogical objective was to encourage a vision of social organisation that would overcome exploitation. This new organisation would reap the benefits of the revolution and encourage the building of a different future. The plays heavily involved the students, who participated in them by acting and contributing to the creative process, and through them, the ideals of the revolution were also to be spread in society: the beginning of the school year and the closing ceremony were the two times of the year when the pupils' families came to the school.

How was the ideology received by the students and by society? According to Elias Damtew:

> So, the students were very interested to learn this political education. Also the teachers were very interested… because the students were singing and in the same time learning the points of Marxism-Leninism. So generally speaking, it penetrates the minds of the students. It creates the outlook of Marxism-Leninism theory.[48]

According to Habtamu Lemma, political education was a popular subject for students, not because of its content, but because it allowed them to achieve good grades without much effort. The knowledge to be acquired was written in simple language, the lessons were repetitive and easily retained, and the teachers were lenient with their grading. From then on: "Everyone got an A or B."[49] In his opinion, this was a strategy implemented by schools to make the subject attractive. He remembers: "We were learning with no interest. The exam came, we took the exam and that was it, we forgot about it."[50] It would seem that students did not really take the subject very seriously.

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[47]Elias Damtew, interview, October 2009.
[48]Ibid.
[49]Habtamu Lemma, interview, December 2009.
[50]Ibid.

This reveals a discrepancy between the importance the regime attached to political education and the way students viewed it. Putting it into a wider context, teacher Demissie Minamo explains that Marxism-Leninism made very little sense to the population. According to him, set in the imported international context of the Cold War, it was imposed and decontextualised.[51] Perhaps the omnipresence of slogans ended up by provoking a certain weariness. For his part, Dessalegn Rahmato (1984, 93) noted that the jargon-filled speeches made by officials in endless meetings "bored" the inhabitants. Similarly, it is quite possible that weariness took over in the end, as happened with Solomon Maereg: "At school, songs, lessons, and on Sunday morning at the Youth Association, I got fed up with Marxism-Leninism."[52] Did pupils nor perhaps also see a certain irony between a discipline that spoke of equality and the liberation of all, and young people in particular, on the one hand,[53] and a school space where an authoritarian and violent form of pedagogy was practised on the other?

When discussing how political education was received, Afework Ayalew offers a contradictory answer:

> Obviously, they were taught and as children, their minds are quick. If you put something in a child's head at that age, it stays. But when the government changed, that education got disqualified and maybe they forgot some of it… maybe something was put in their minds, but almost 90% was lost.[54]

More than an inconsistency, this contradiction highlights the difficulty teachers experienced when it came to assessing the impact of Marxism-Leninism on their students. When they placed political education in the wider context of society as a whole, teachers laid great emphasis on class background, the position in the old power structure and the experience of oppression as determining whether or not to accept Marxism-Leninism. This is what Demissie Minamo says on the subject, for example: "Some were volunteers, the farmers, those who toiled under the feudal government under Haile Selassie. Honestly, they were very oppressed."[55] Elias Demtaw says the same thing. For her part, Mantagosh Eshete, a former leader of a women's association, considers that some people accepted it because they thought it could change their lives.[56]

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[51] Demissie Minamo, interview, December 2010.

[52] Solomon Maereg, interview, February 2007.

[53] MOE, *The Ethiopian School Syllabuses* (1984), 112 and 117.

[54] Afework Ayalew, interview, February 2007.

[55] Demissie Minamo, interview, December 2010.

[56] Mantagosh Eshete, interview, February 2008.

To pose the question in terms of "Marxism-Leninism" in the strict sense of the term can be misleading, however, because the teaching, dissemination and appropriations of an ideology lend themselves to various registers of interpretation. It is at least necessary to distinguish between the great general principles (equality, freedom, etc.) and theory (historical materialism, dialectical materialism, etc.). While the theoretical lessons may have seemed decontextualised, this was not the case with the plays, which portrayed actual situations of exploitation experienced by many Ethiopians.

This is why it is difficult to assess the degree to which the ensemble of ideas, ways of seeing the world and thinking about society conveyed under the heading of Marxism-Leninism were accepted. It seems, however, that the egalitarian and emancipatory discourse was relatively well received. Is it necessary to be versed in Marxist-Leninist theory to aspire to escape from an exploited condition by accepting the idea of a more egalitarian society, especially where school was presented by the authorities as a tool for creating equality and was seen as such by students and families in many ways? Indeed, aspirations for social advancement should not be interpreted as mere strategies for individual promotion: they can simultaneously signify a desire on the part of a group for access to equality. This was undoubtedly the case with the Wolaita who had been marginalised under the Haile Selassie regime. The Derg, its Marxism-Leninism and its school policy trivialised the ideas of equality and justice through the promotion of peripheral groups within the nation. In this respect, the Derg government was a turning point: its ideas spread throughout society, regardless of the registers in which the governed appropriated them, and whether or not they formulated them in Marxist-Leninist terms.

4. Education through work: school gardens

How was the objective of "education for production," which was intended to give birth to a socialist mode of production and instil a love and respect for work, translated?[57] The school curricula emphasised the need to put an end to the disdain and contempt for manual labour. Pupils should develop a positive attitude towards practical activities.[58] The ERGESE report, commissioned in 1983 by the Ministry of Education and completed in 1986, stated that youth associations should join with schools to lay the foundations for a new culture based on education for production (Tekeste 1990, 42). Education for production, and consequently education through work, lay at the heart of socialist pedagogical thinking. Intellectual work and productive activities were both to be part of an education aimed at the formation of a complete human

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[57] MOE, *Education in Socialist Ethiopia…* (1984.), 20.
[58] MOE, *The Ethiopian School Syllabuses* (1984), 36.

being: an integral education. An educational programme such as this should also put an end to the division of labour on which a class society was based. Finally, it was through work that humans acted on the world to transform it. This concept can be found in Marx—who himself inherited it from the utopian socialists – in Lenin, in the workers' movement and in the regimes that claimed to be Marxist in the 20th century. In addition, from the 1960s onwards, the idea of linking education to productive work became an important part of the international education policies advocated by UNESCO, on this occasion not to transform the world, but to increase productivity in "developing" countries. The Derg's goal of "education for production" drew from both sources. As the representative of the Ethiopian delegation to the UNESCO conference in Nairobi in 1976 put it:

> Indeed, when we look at the major planks in UNESCO platform we find that they are not very different from those in our Program of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia. The expert group […] recommended that certain aspects of UNESCO's work be strengthened […]: the linking of education with productive work […] A greater development of the non-formal and informal components of our educational systems.[59]

The school system was no longer intended to train "office workers," as had been the case under the Haile Selassie regime, but rather producers integrated into the rural economy, useful to their community and active in a socialist organisation of production.

> It is now possible […] to move towards a system of learning which is relevant to the life and work of the society within the school is operating, and to lay the cultural and technical foundations for real change in the countryside. The new rural economy and its new forms of social and economic organization is now more able to absorb the products of the education system and to utilize skills and knowledge which can be developed in the schools and other educational activities.[60]

Schools were therefore to be at the heart of the transformations in the rural economy, in constant interaction with their social environment, through productive activities that inserted them into the economic life of the communities. They were to serve communities, and communities were to support the schools. According to the 1984–94 ten-year plan: "Participation has led the community organisations to actively assist their schools in developing practical programmes of work, by providing seed and land for agricultural projects and working with school students in the reafforestation of eroded

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[59]MOE, *Basic Information on Education in Ethiopia* (1977), 56.
[60]MOE, *Education in Socialist Ethiopia…* (1984), 11.

hill sites."[61] Finally, productive activities were aimed at enabling schools to be partly self-financing. As a report by the Ministry of Education prepared for the International Conference on Education in Geneva in 1981 noted, the income generated by school gardens and production units in secondary schools was used for school operations.[62] In the previous chapter, we showed how the goal of education for production was translated into the knowledge taught, especially in Amharic textbooks, but how was it translated into the daily life of schools?

Girma Bekele, a teacher in Gesuba, remembers with enthusiasm: "I started growing crops! I brought in 42 bags of maize [seed], planted *tef*, that's it! The farmers came and ploughed."[63] Evidently, the teacher coordinated activities, the farmers took care of the tasks that required their specific skills and the students were in charge of regular maintenance. However, it does not appear that the farmers shared their skills with the students as the school policy developed by the Ministry of Education intended. They ploughed without them, and do not seem to have stayed behind once the work that required their presence had been completed. Production activities were organised collectively in "clubs".

> There are clubs: agriculture clubs, home economics clubs, handicrafts were producing there, gardens with different vegetables. Even the subject of agriculture was given at that time in the school level, from grade 1 up to high school. It was initiated at that time. […] [The vegetables were] not eaten in the school, they was sold and the income is for the school.[64]

The interviews in Wolaita thus confirm that the schools had agricultural and craft production units. It was the same in Lalibela, in northern Ethiopia. As teacher Afework Ayalew recalls: "There were cultivated fields, we prepared them, we planted vegetables with the students, we grew them and then sold them for the community."[65] This was possible in the countryside or in small towns, where schools had sufficient space to grow crops. In the city, however, as Tekeste Negash has noted, there was a wide gap between theory and practice because of the lack of space in schools (Tekeste 1990, 32). Productive activities had to be adapted to the environment. In the city, the lack of space did not allow for agricultural activities, or even, as should in theory have been the case, craft or micro-industrial activities. There were already not

[61] PMGE, *Ten-Year Perspective Plan, 1984/85-1993-94* (1984), 136.
[62] MOE, *Report on Educational Developments in Ethiopia, 1978-1981* (prepared for the 38th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva) (1981), 6.
[63] Germa Bekele, interview, December 2010.
[64] Elias Damtew, interview, October 2009.
[65] Afework Ayalew, interview, February 2007.

enough rooms to accommodate the students in good conditions: how, then, could space be freed up for workshops?

Another problem was the lack of skills among the teachers, who were neither farmers nor craftsmen or labourers, and who could not devote the necessary days to cultivation, which would require sustained work. This did not work for Girma Bekele. Monkeys were ravaging the fields and the other activities at the school left no time to deal with them.[66] The farmers, who knew how to deal with problems such as these, were already too busy with their own farming activities to give time to the school by working with the students, which was of no benefit to them as the school would then sell the produce itself. Furthermore, the school was not able to provide any kind of exchange of knowledge to enable the farmers to improve their own crops. The schools had neither the skills nor the means to be centres of agricultural expertise. Afework Ayalew in Lalibela does not mention any farmers being involved in production with students. In the end, the inclusion of schools in the productive activities of communities, the establishment of dynamic relationships between schools and farmers to increase the farmers' productivity and train future producers of goods at schools barely worked at all. It is true, however, that the experiment was conducted over a short period of time and in a difficult economic context marked by a fall in the peasant economy. For this reason, the productive activities consisted of vegetable crops which were simpler to grow and could be more easily taken charge of by students and teachers.

Moreover, despite the desire to lay the "foundations of a new culture" based on "love and respect for work," productive activities remained disregarded by the students: "[The students] were growing the vegetables and others but not by their interest, forcibly, to obtain marks."[67] Education for production was therefore a constraint for students, who worked unwillingly. Owing to a lack of motivation and resources, productive activities were a marginal part of daily school life. In the end, "Education was [always] for office work."[68] It did not train producers who were adapted to the local economy and who would transform society from below through collective work.

> The quality of education, with no exaggeration, it would never bring a student who can stand by himself. There is no such a technical school to develop his mind with his abilities. Only theoretical. […] When they leave the school, they couldn't do anything, they are waiting for the government work. If they are not employed, […] they couldn't exist. They are not farmers, because they ignore farming […]. Farming is not a good work. This is the mind of the students at that time. Being

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[66] Germa Bekele, interview, December 2010.
[67] Elias Damtew, interview, October 2009.
[68] Afework Ayalew, interview, February 2007.

carpenter is not a good work. […] You see the workless who were moving there and here were the product of the Derg school policy.[69]

The wage economy was not able to absorb the products of the school system, who were not trained or willing to work in other types of jobs. This reveals a profound discrepancy between the project of education through work to create productive citizens and the hopes placed by the population in schooling. Why go to school to remain a peasant or a carpenter? Why sacrifice years of schooling for a job whose skills were best learned outside school, through practice? Education for production conflicted with the imagined success associated with schooling. For pupils and their families, completing their studies meant leaving agriculture and emancipating themselves from a life of subsistence thanks to access to salaried work, which was more remunerative, more socially valued and less demanding. Education for production seemed to take away schools' indispensable function of a rise in social status and economic security, a phenomenon that was also widely observed elsewhere (Gamble 2009; Deleigne 2010).

Conclusion

The forms of power relations in the Derg schools reveal two movements in tension. With the broadening of the criteria for nationhood, schools opened up to sections of the population that had been marginalised by reducing cultural discrimination. The centralising function of the institution was strengthened, but by minimising the hierarchy of nationalities, its integrating function became more open. The reduction in discrimination allowing schools to be used more effectively, and made it possible for them to contribute to a stronger sense of collective belonging. Assimilation could then be experienced not just as a form of violence but also as an opportunity. However, the level of pedagogical violence intensified; it was no longer based on cultural criteria but was closely associated with the violence of state power. The social control of schools and the working conditions of teachers also contributed to this hardening of the pedagogical relationship. The Derg's rhetoric on the emancipation of women and the encouragement of schooling for girls was not followed by a transformation of gender relations in the school space. On the contrary: more than ever under the Derg, schools found themselves combining emancipatory and oppressive features.

Finally, a study of the process of transmitting the objectives of "education for socialist consciousness" and "education for production" reveals the limitations encountered by the project to transform individuals. The desire to inculcate Marxist-Leninist ideology came up against the weariness of students as well

[69]Elias Damtew, interview, October 2009, Soddo.

as the rest of society, because of the way it was communicated by incessant repetition. It would be wrong to claim that it had no effect, however; students just adopted it selectively. Even if they did not become Marxist-Leninists, the ideas of social justice and equality spread widely during the period of the Derg as a result of its investment in the political education of the governed.

School and the State in 1991: Identities Reconciled?

The famine of 1984–85 represented a break in the Derg's government, and ushered in a new period for it. The second decade of the 1980s was marked by severe economic, political and military convulsions that "overtook" the school movement. The famine, forced displacement and villagisation that followed, the regime's intransigence towards Eritrean independence, which led to a constant intensification of the war, and the armed struggle led in the north by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) had a profound effect on the population. In this context, education was no longer as much of a priority for the government as it had been a few years earlier. Moreover, famine, war and major state projects had cumulative effects that had a powerful impact on the population's living conditions, on its relationship with the state, and on the social dynamics of schooling. Because schools were so sensitive to their environments, daily school life was also particularly affected. What became of the movement of society towards schooling that had begun in the early 1980s?

A comparison between our analysis of school dynamics and that of the upheavals that took place from 1984 on will enable us to question the connections between the appropriation of school, the relationship with the state and the degree of sedimentation of the national imagination in Wolaita at the time of the fall of the Derg.

1. Dropouts: Famine, war and education (1984–91)

When Dessalegn Rahmato conducted his survey in 1984 in four cantons in Kaffa, Gojjam, Wellega and Wolaita, he noticed that the population's enthusiasm for organisational activities was beginning to wane. In the aftermath of the land reform, the rural population had shown great interest in the establishment of farmers' associations and collective work, and had actively participated in them. Eight years later, this participation had become less than lukewarm (Dessalegn 1984, 92). Promises were slow to be kept, and doubts about whether they would be fulfilled in the future grew. Over the previous decade, both the urban and rural populations had been bombarded with speeches on progress through education and collectivisation: during the land reform, during the literacy campaign, in mass associations, in schools, in the

media and on walls decorated with slogans. Contrary to what the government claimed about the peasants' gains, their incomes had fallen and their situation had become more fragile (Planel 2008, 176–77). In short, in 1984, the actual situation was far from living up to the hopes that had been raised and the discourse that had been disseminated by the regime's propaganda.

At the very moment when Dessalegn Rahmato was noticing a certain disenchantment among the peasantry and while the regime was celebrating the tenth anniversary of the revolution with great pomp, a drought broke out that was to cause the greatest famine experienced by Ethiopia in the 20th century. In 1984 and 1985, between 500,000 and a million people died (Dessalegn 2007, 292). Teacher Germa Bekele recalls that in Wolaita, the high mortality rate among humans and livestock was aggravated by a cholera epidemic. Under these conditions, most students left school to try to survive, while the better-off went to the city to flee the shortages and disease. For three months, the school was used as a hospital for cholera patients, and when it reopened, only a few children whose parents had salaries turned up.[1] The famine precipitated the launch of the villagisation project that had been planned since the late 1970s (Clapham 1988, 175). This was the flagship project of the rural transformation programme, and consisted in grouping farmers who had hitherto been living in scattered settlements together in planned villages. The aim was to simplify access to infrastructure such as health centres, schools and mills, to facilitate access to water and roads and to collectivise agriculture. A 1985 UNESCO report illustrates how this project sought to establish restructured and self-sufficient communities after the ravages of the famine.[2] Farmers had to leave their homes, often against their will, to settle in the new villages they themselves had built. By 1989, 14 million peasants (40% of the rural population) had been "villagised," but the project was carried out in haste, without adequate preparation, and it does not seem that similar past experiences, such as that of Tanzania, were taken into account. At an agricultural level, the project was a failure: the farmers found themselves far from their fields, the inhabitants did not have enough room to grow vegetables around their houses, and there was a lack of pasture. Animal mortality increased due to contagious diseases, and the water supply, schools and clinics were delayed (Tadesse 2002, 117, 123–25). In a context in which the population had been forced to comply with a large project without seeing the compensation they had been promised, the political constraints seemed to be more burdensome and the government more alienated.

Generally speaking, in the second half of the 1980s, state policies lost the support of those who had supported land reform and the school policy a few

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[1]Germa Bekele, interview, December 2010.
[2]Unesco, *Ethiopia, Education and Training Projects for Self-Reliance* (1985).

years earlier. As Germa Bekele testifies with regard to the Wolaita: "The Derg took, it couldn't give, it was painful."[3] Similarly, in the Menz area in the north, Helen Pankhurst collected a proverb in the second half of the 1980s that expressed the idea that the aid provided by the Derg was drowned out by the costs it imposed: "The state has a good side and a cruel side; cruel side has become too hard for us" (**ምንግስት ባንድ ፊት ደግ ባንድ ፊት ክፉ ነው ክፉነቱ በዛብን እንጂ**; Pankhurst 1990, 78). Education was affected by this situation. Exhausted by famine and state policies that constantly solicited their participation in cash, kind or labour, communities were less and less able to provide the required schooling effort. Community participation in the management of schools became an additional constraint on the family economy. Schools were among the Derg's multiple tax and labour levies. An extreme example of the way rural areas were used without restraint can be seen in the fact that between 1985 and 1987, farmers in Wolaita had to pay a drought tax, even though they themselves had suffered the consequences of famine (Planel 2008, 177).

Finally, the intensification of the civil war between the state and the guerrillas in the north, which was waged jointly by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Tigray People's Liberation Front,[4] definitively confirmed the split between the population and the Derg. In addition to the deprivation caused by the depletion of resources for the war effort, the brutality with which young people were used as a breeding ground for soldiers led to an irremediable aversion to the regime. Teacher Yaluse Mita remembers:

> It was war, so it was a time of pain, a time of tears. Some families, at an age when children were still dependent… many people went to Eritrea, […] where the battlefield was. Under the Derg, the most frightening thing was the war. Many young people disappeared… many young people were taken away, loaded on to trucks. Those who were loaded on to trucks and sent from south to north numbered in the thousands. This was the most horrible period in Ethiopia. As a result, everyone hated the Derg. […] For other things, for development, for education, for girls' education, the situation was good. […] Once, at the end… the pupils who were at school… in the last moments… it was at the time of the feast… when the Feast of the Cross is celebrated in Wolaita… the pupils who were at school… they were waiting for them to come out… when they came out, they caught them. They came to the houses and took many young people. They came to the houses at night, they took them, it was horrible. After that it was enough, the Wolaita refused the Derg.[5]

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[3]Germa Bekele, interview, December 2010.

[4]The former now leads Eritrea and the latter dominates the EPRDF, which has ruled Ethiopia since the fall of the Derg.

[5]Yaluse Mita, interview, November 2009.

When conscription was no longer sufficient, the methods used to "recruit" became particularly forceful. Young people were taken from their beds at night, when their presence was guaranteed and their capacity for resistance diminished. Yaluse Mita also testifies that in Wolaita, schools were targeted. In the north of the country, in Lalibela, a small town a few kilometres from the front, teachers were encouraged to carry out forced conscription directly in schools. Some lined up students and selected the strongest ones to be conscripted. The youngest were 13 or 14 years old.[6] Teacher Mantagosh Eshete estimates that a quarter of teachers actually did this.[7] This did not happen in Wolaita, however;[8] instead, students were picked up after school.

As a result, young people chose to flee. Former student Habtamu Lemma recalls "hiding for two days to avoid going to war, [because] they would come at night to pick up recruits from the houses."[9] Zerihun Anebo says others fled for longer and were hunted down.

> When the war became serious, they prepared and they selected people for the front. The children were not volunteers, the parents were not volunteers to go to the war front […]. Because of this, they wanted to escape, they even changed their living place. […] They left their parents and the place they were living and they went somewhere else. The military living there […] suspected them, they arrested them […]. When I was teaching, only girls were attending the classroom, no boys, no men, that was very very very… that makes […] feeling, and we felt much. All were chased. […] Even these girls learning in classrooms, there were… In their black clothes… which is a sign of what? Sorrow! Educationally, the impact at that time was that. We were not learning, that created hate upon the government by the people. Communities disliked it.[10]

This excerpt from an interview bears witness to stalking practices that demonstrate a regime that used its population without restraint, as a mere material resource.[11] The sacrifices asked of young people in school songs was not simply rhetoric used to instil a sense of common belonging and a desire to work together: it was a reality. The only means available to boys was to desert their school benches and, for some of them, to flee their homes. Only girls dressed in mourning clothes showed up for class. Bearing in mind that

[6]Solomon Maereg, interview, February 2007; Allebachew Fantew (pupil under the Derg, teacher), interview, Lalibela, 14 February 2007.

[7]Mantagosh Eshete, interview, Lalibela, 16 February 2008.

[8]Zerihun Anebo, interview, December 2010.

[9]Habtamu Lemma, interview, December 2009.

[10]Zerihun Anebo, interview, December 2010.

[11]In his film *Teza* (*The Dew*), which was released in 2008, Ethiopian director Haile Gerima depicted members of a farmers' association shooting on sight at teenagers fleeing forced conscription.

the Derg forbade families of missing opponents from mourning, this gesture can be interpreted as a way for girls to show their disapproval.

In view of this violence, what remained of the reforms and school policy implemented by the Derg? A posteriori, the testimonies give a picture of a two-faced hydra, with the balance sometimes tipping towards progress and sometimes towards the unbearable, depending on the interlocutors, or even during the same interview. The point of view expressed by the peasant Mana Madibo, quoted previously on the subject of the literacy campaign, is worth recalling. Despite the loss of his son, who died at the front, he says that he appreciates the Derg because of the lasting nature of the reforms which, in his view, finally freed those who had been oppressed. By educating and liberating the peasants, the Derg made a break with the past that opened up a new era.[12] Teacher Zerihun Anebo leans towards criticism: while he agrees that the Derg made beneficial changes, he argues that it should have done things differently: "Actually, in all aspects, academic, economic, social, and political, there was change. But the bad implementation made them collapse. With no negotiation, with no discussion, with no base on agreement."[13]

Unlike Mana Madibo, Zerihun Anebo considers that the progress cannot compensate for the means that were employed. Like most of the teachers we interviewed, he agrees with the substance but criticises the form. Authoritarian practices and violence ruined a project that had been seen as being positive. This is also the opinion of Yaluse Mita: "The Derg came by two paths, working for development, opening roads, stimulating education. […] But even though the Derg did a lot, its objectives were based on war."[14]

2. The appropriated school?

In this particular historical context, how can school education, the national imagination, perceptions of "progress" and the relationship to the state be explained? Can a distinction be made between the appropriation of school on the one hand, and the conflictful relationship to the state on the other? This implies knowing whether in Wolaita, the spread of a sense of belonging to Ethiopia driven by land reform, the literacy campaign and the progress in schooling was eroded by the rejection of the Derg's violence.

At first glance, education seems to fall on the "positive" side of the scales. Peasants and teachers alike believe that liberation from serfdom and education went hand in hand, and they all inseparably link education and emancipation. In their view, this emancipation cannot be separated from integration into the national political community. Through education, the state sought to promote

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[12]Mana Madibo, interview, December 2010.
[13]Zerihun Anebo, interview, December 2010.
[14]Yaluse Mita, interview, November 2009.

the marginalised in the nation, to provide opportunities for the greatest number and to work for collective progress. In short, the actors dissociate the government's authoritarian practices from its educational policy. The idea of a beneficial education is put forward independently from the structural obstacles (such as the lack of opportunities for graduates or the deterioration of the economy) and cyclical disasters (such as famine and war), which, whether provoked by the state or aggravated by it, did not allow schools to fulfil their promise. However, not everything about schooling was viewed as positive. It was not spared from the arbitrary and violent practices of power the population experienced outside its walls. At the end of the 1980s, there was a wide gap between the content of the textbooks and songs praising the revolution and promising a bright future on the one hand, and the school experience, which was that of a model dictatorship, on the other. As the decade progressed, school became a dangerous place that was best to keep away from. More than ever, schools were in a state of tension between emancipation and oppression. Families were not mistaken: they sent children to school as never before, but even in the early 1980s, they stayed away from its internal workings. School as an institution was a closed space governed by its own laws, a place of power that was impossible to discuss, let alone challenge. In this sense, local society did not appropriate the school.

After the famine, however, schools were gradually repopulated, and while boys were kept away from classes at the height of forced recruitment, the underlying trend towards schooling continued, beyond the aversion to the regime. In the early 1980s, taking literacy classes and sending children to school had been accepted, for better or for worse, because the regime enjoyed popular support for a time. A decade later, however, the Derg was rejected, but the social dynamics of schooling that had accompanied its education policy had lasting effects. In this sense, schooling had been appropriated this time. It was the school of society, not just the school of power, and it had begun to take root. Schooling was appropriated because of its promise of individual and collective advancement within the Ethiopian nation. By the end of the 1980s, despite the Derg's extractive policies, "Ethiopia" was no longer just seen as the predatory power it had been under Haile Selassie's regime, but as a political space and resource that was perceived to be accessible, which had been far from the case before the revolution.

It was not the particular education system of the Derg—"education for the construction of socialism"—that worked, but the school form in general that made advances in society. Actors took the knowledge and ways of being in schools inculcated outside their walls. Whereas until the end of Haile Selassie's regime it was normal not to have attended school, the situation had been reversed by the fall of the Derg. Mass literacy had entrenched the idea that one had to be able to read and write, and that one had to go to school. It was

no longer considered normal to reserve mastery of the written word to a body of specialists. Being illiterate was now a sign of ignorance and an inability to be a complete political being. On the basis of the Derg, is it possible to speak of a situation in which everyone, whether or not they have been to school, recognises, accepts and actively consents to the fact that going to school is the yardstick for measuring political ability and legitimate membership of the nation? It seems that it is. Marginalisation of the illiterate increases all the more as the school culture advances, as society becomes, to use Ivan Illich's expression, a "schooled society," a political community in which it seems to be self-evident that only school really educates (Illich 1971).

However, just as practices of "literacy delegation" (Fraenkel & Mbodj 2010, 20) exist, there are also practices of "delegation of school culture." For example, whereas a peasant from Lasta asked me, "Why do you come to me, I who am only a donkey?" implying that his illiteracy and distance from a school culture did not make him a valid interlocutor for a researcher, Mana Madibo from Wolaita explained that as long as his group has enough "educated" people, the entire group is promoted within the nation. There are therefore collective and collaborative understandings of educational capital and the dignity it provides to the group.

This also calls for a re-evaluation of the supposed "alienation" of the products of an imported school system if one wants to think about the relations between the "educated" and the illiterate, in all their different types and transformations. The products of the Ethiopian school system were not only people who believed themselves to be the depositories of progress, and wanted to guide the ignorant masses in an authoritarian manner; the "infallible demigods" mentioned by Tekeste Negash (Tekeste 1990, 54); and the "uprooted" in a state of acute psychological crisis, potential dictators, described by Messay Kebede (Messay 2008). The Ethiopian philosopher studied a section of the student elite in the capital: the same elite that radicalised the Ethiopian student movement in the 1960s and 1970s (Messay 2003). We have shown previously that even in the 1970s, not all products of the school system shared these same characteristics. They were also minor local government officials or village teachers on the periphery, who were involved in the daily lives of their fellow citizens, and who could bring their language and writing skills, and knowledge of the codes governing the nationwide political arena, to the community. They had been a rare sight in rural areas before the revolution, but they became a familiar presence as a result of the Derg's mass education policy.

In short, the seven years between the Red Terror and 1985 were decisive. The years between 1985–91 slowed the school movement down, but did not stop it: the distance between the regime and the population increased, but schooling had become a matter of course. The step back from schools because

of famine and forced recruitment was merely temporary. The idea that school was to be used by the vast majority and not just a small group of specialists in the written word had spread throughout society, which had not been the case before the early 1980s. Despite disaffection with the Derg, the war and the unfulfilled promises of development, there remained the idea of justice between the nationalities that made up the nation and, in Wolaita, the feeling of being Ethiopian. Wolaita was already incorporated in the national space through taxation and forced submission to the central government, but under the Derg, the idea of nationhood made its way into the local imagination. It was no longer only urban dwellers who could think of themselves as part of the national space, and the role of education was a central factor of this identification process.

General conclusion

This history of education in Ethiopia's Wolaita province has attempted to hold together the official purposes of government education as they were defined by the state and its international supporters; the social dynamics of schooling; the knowledge and conduct to be inculcated and the way in which they were communicated; and finally, the effects of education on students and society. We have looked at the changes in the school system in terms of their ties to the transformations in social structures and means of exercising power. Finally, we have approached the question of schools on the basis of the position of schools at the confluence of national and local spaces, as a meeting point between the state and local society. These approaches have been brought together from the perspective of a history of the integration of a peripheral region into the nation as a consequence of the ways in which the population adapted to school. The forms of social appropriation of a state structure responsible for education reveal the different ways in which individuals and groups think and feel in the nation. The outcome is not a homogenous, linear history, but a series of intertwined processes.

The integration of the Wolaita into Ethiopia began with its conquest in 1894 in the form of political control and taxation. Despite the central government's dreams of a unified empire, the question of cultural assimilation did not become an issue in the first third of the 20th century. The process began in 1941 with the government schools, but until the revolution in 1974 the government school system was a purely urban phenomenon. These schools were located in the small towns that were the administrative centres of the Wolaita *weredas*. It was not the central government but the Protestantism brought in by the missionaries from the Sudan Interior Mission that was the driving force behind schooling in rural areas from the late 1950s. The 1940s and 1950s saw a massive conversion of the Wolaita countryside. The local churches rapidly became independent, and the Protestant schools that had initially been established in the countryside for religious ends served as a springboard for rural young people to attend government schools. This led to important transformations in the sociology of schooling. In the 1940s and 1950s, most pupils attending school were the children of notables: they were the offspring of settlers from the north or of Wolaita with connections to the government. From the 1960s, young people from rural areas who had converted to Protestantism began to arrive in urban government schools from rural Protestant schools in increasing numbers. On the other hand, while the sociology changed in terms of social

backgrounds, schooling remained an almost exclusively male phenomenon, and girls did not go to school in significant numbers until after the revolution.

The period of the Derg was one of unprecedented progress in education in the countryside. The literacy campaign created an unprecedented form of contact between the state and farming communities, and the network of schools intensified beyond the towns and cities. The Derg's educational advances in the countryside took two directions: a takeover of the Protestant church buildings and the construction of new schools through community participation, through a mixture of voluntary cooperation, encouragement and coercion. In the 1980s, school education became a part of everyday life in the countryside. Although not all children went to school, it became a commonplace phenomenon, and lost the image of strangeness it still retained in the 1960s.

1. Young Protestant Wolaita: the conditional nation

School dynamics were driven in part by state education policies. Some pupils were enrolled at school, willingly or unwillingly, as a result of various incentives. In the 1940s, the "pupil police" tried to persuade young people to go to school, before Bogale Wallelu and Wanna Wagesho went round to people's homes to convince parents. Others were coerced into school, like Abraham Worku, who began his education at a basic education centre set up by Governor Germame Neway. Officials knocked on his door one day in 1958 to tell his parents that from then on Abraham would spend several hours a day learning to read, write and count, much to the chagrin of his family, who deplored the daily absence of the young man who was in charge of the family's herd. Other families and students came to schooling by observing the government's educational policies, and seizing them as an opportunity. Between the two poles of compliance and coercion there was a whole spectrum of different attitudes. The literacy campaign is one good example of this. It gave rise to various forms of state practice, from incitement and coercion, and to a wide range of social attitudes towards education: observance or disagreement, enthusiasm or reluctance and conviction or ambivalence, and to reversals along the way.

Later, school dynamics developed out of strategies for adapting to the transformations that affected the organisation of power and the way it was exercised. An expansion of bureaucratisation gradually led to schools becoming the route to positions of responsibility. The groups that held power in Wolaita were the first to send their children to school. As early as 1941, they were aware of the fact that if they wanted to maintain their position, they would have to take over this new institution. It was with this in mind that they opposed the education of peasant children so that they could reserve schools for their own children for the purposes of social reproduction. On the

other side of the distribution of power, schooling was a tactic for escaping marginalisation by making a place for oneself in the nation through social ascension, which was represented by access to a salaried job. At school, rural people learned the codes and skills that legitimised membership of the political community. Here, the construction of the network of rural Protestant primary schools reveals a dynamic that is relatively independent of government policy. These schools developed outside state structures: they were an endogenous social dynamic, a resource for people who wanted a school education despite the lack of government schools. It was a roundabout route. From the end of the 1950s, the political dimension that had been expressed since the time of the earliest conversions to Protestantism in the 1930s began to be articulated through schooling. All of it involved a strategy of psychological, identity, political and material reconstruction within Ethiopia. The objective of these marginalised rural inhabitants was to find a place without bending completely to the mould imposed by the conquerors by exploiting an alternative religion to the official Christianity. The fact remains, however, that the movement of rural Protestant youth into schools in the 1960s was a clear sign of their desire for integration. It is of no small significance that the three heroes of the Wolaita "pantheon of dignity," Bogale Wallelu, Germame Neway and Wolde-Samaet Gebre-Wold, were all great educators who worked in the name of integration. These figures, of whom Wolaita who were educated between the 1940s and the 1960s always speak with a mixture of pride, esteem and affection, wanted to make Wolaita Ethiopian.

The changes in the school culture had a major impact on pupils' experience and the formation of their identities. The problem of adaptation to the culture did not arise in the case of urban, Amharic-speaking and Tewahedo Church followers' children, but the same was not true of rural pupils, for whom school undoubtedly made it possible to cross the border between marginalisation and belonging to the nation, but also raised new obstacles. School assimilated and discriminated, levelled and ranked, standardised and distinguished. It provided the codes and skills necessary to develop within the national space, but it was also in itself the world of the "other", especially under Haile Selassie's regime. School was a social space in which acquisition of the criteria for integration into the nation (through an Amharic name, the Amharic language and, if possible, the Tewahedo Christian religion) was achieved by debasing one's own identity. This was a less bitter experience for the generation of Wolaita students who attended school in the 1940s and 1950s than it was for those who went to school in the 1960s. The former were few in number and came from the city or its immediate surroundings, their fathers worked for the government and their families, most of whom had converted to the official religion of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church; they were already partially assimilated. The latter arrived from the countryside in their

thousands, their fathers did not work for an administration and they were Protestant, but they still wanted to be fully Ethiopian.

In fact, while the state imposed strictly-defined criteria of nationhood in its schools, the Wolaita youth who went to school in the 1960s did so on their own terms. They wanted to enter the nation as they wanted to, and not necessarily as the central government dictated. A study of school dynamics reveals a link among the various identifications. Sabine Panel has shown how the "two dynamics of spatial identification (individuality of nationalities and Ethiopian unification) are not exclusive and act in concert to build territories" (Planel 2003, 44). Wolaita and Ethiopian identifications achieved the same thing to build feelings of belonging. In many respects, the way in which the Derg redefined the criteria of belonging to the nation by declaring that nationalities were equal within a political community united by class solidarity was in line with the Wolaita's expectations. The school culture, which remained assimilative, also became less discriminatory. School was still the world of the other, but it was a world that was more easily appropriated. Under the Derg, pedagogical relationships and discipline were stricter, and even extremely violent, but cultural discrimination diminished. Imaginations and identities were shaped in this web of tensions.

2. Girls, education and the nation

The arrival of rural youth in government schools in the 1960s marked the first renewal of the sociology of the students in Wolaita. The second renewal took place from the late 1970s, with the arrival of girls. Under Haile Selassie's regime, the state had made little effort to enrol girls in school, and it was not until 1974 that the first girls took the Grade 12 examination, although there were only four of them out of 350 students, and they were all teachers' daughters. Their fathers sent them to school—sometimes against their mothers' wishes—without any particular type of encouragement from the government. This schooling of girls was relatively independent of the state's education policy, and these few girls entered a school space that was difficult to conquer. They were very much in the minority, accused of not conforming to the social norms of femininity, suspected of having loose morals, subjected to sexual pressure, intellectually discredited by some teachers and unrepresented in school textbooks: girls' school experiences were built out of adversity.

If they moved towards "women's jobs," it was not so much because the other paths were closed to them as it was because they themselves wished to. Adolescent girls at school wanted to develop skills that they saw as being specific to women, as their own qualities. They saw secretarial work, nursing and teaching as opportunities, not as forced careers. These were ways in which they could increase their space of freedom. One of their objectives was to

gain their independence through a salaried job so that they would be able to have a balanced relationship with their future husband. This first generation of girls who attended school under Haile Selassie found themselves caught up in specific power relations that guided their concerns. Because they were from Amhara or assimilated Wolaita families, they were faced with patriarchal domination much more than with cultural discrimination. As a result, they were less concerned with the promotion of Wolaita than the advancement of girls and women in local society, and thus in the nation. Since the late 1970s, this generation of women graduates has worked hard for the education of girls and women.

It was under the Derg that the state really began to take an interest in girls' education. Armed with the discourse of dual oppression of Ethiopian women, feudal and patriarchal, the new regime declared that they would be promoted in the nation, and that it wanted to end discrimination in access to employment and positions of power. If this was to be achieved, women needed to be provided with educational capital. While power remained in the hands of men, the Derg encouraged the education of girls and women. Women were more involved in the literacy campaign than men were and in the 1980s girls also gradually occupied school benches. Although they received far more encouragement from the regime's rhetoric to attend classes, their school experience was no easier than that of their elders had been. Prejudices around their supposedly lesser intellectual abilities still persisted. Girls and women barely figured in textbooks, or else they were presented in a stereotypical manner. Gender violence also increased in schools. Girls were more numerous and more anonymous, and they came from less privileged social backgrounds than their elders, who were the daughters of notables. Therefore, they were more vulnerable. In spite of these forms of violence, girls and women began to move into a social space that had until then been almost exclusively reserved for boys and men.

Fifty years of school education have contributed to continuous transformations in social structures, sometimes in conjunction with the general transformations taking place at the national level, and sometimes by upsetting the relationships with local authorities.

3. Language and the written word: the battleground of the fight for legitimacy
School education was the space where the Amharic language and the written word, both of which were at the heart of serious power issues, were acquired. For the state, language and the written word were two key tools for unifying the nation. The network of schools was where written production was distributed on a national scale, and at an unprecedented level. However, while Haile Selassie's regime was hostile to any expression of a culture other than that of the north, the Derg, in line with its "equality of nationalities" policies,

adopted a more open stance, including teaching in local languages during the literacy campaign. However, the position of Amharic strengthened during this period because the population took advantage of government education to take up the national language. The Wolaita had developed an aversion to Amharic—"the language that punishes you" and "makes you pay taxes"—since the time of the conquest. Contact with Amharic was part of a relationship of domination: with the tax collector, with the lord, and in official situations marked by feelings of dispossession, submission and humiliation. The same was true of writing. The conquerors had conquered with their weapons, but then ruled with their pens. Here again, contact with writing represented a drain on resources, or judicial acts or administrative documents that often brought bad news. At the end of the 1940s, young Wolaita who were attending school were accused by peasants of wanting to become tax collectors in the future. In the late 1950s, Abeba Fola's father sent his son to school, telling him that their teachers dominated them because they could write. In their peripheries, empires provoke feelings of repulsion and attraction, but the two phenomena are not always clearly discernible. They are also extremes between which a multitude of positions emerge. In Wolaita, this tension manifested itself in Amharic and writing. They were objects of aversion and mistrust, but mastering them was tantamount to appropriating the instruments of domination in order to make a place for oneself in the nation. The school was at the heart of power issues because it was the place where these two tools were acquired. From the year the government school first opened, the ruling classes of Wolaita wanted to retain a monopoly over it. Thirty years later, in 1971, the children of the great *melkegna* and landowners, who were descended from settlers from the north, insulted their Wolaita classmates, telling them that they did not belong at school because they were born to serve. On both sides of the frontier that separated the world of the dominant from that of the dominated, everyone was aware of the political stakes of schooling.

4. Margins redefine the nation?

With the advancing of a school culture and the capital it provided, the margins helped redefine the nation. Even in the case of authoritarian systems, movements take place behind the scenes. Gradually, and especially under the Derg, people from southern Ethiopia who had gone to school moved into different levels of government, or worked as teachers, in hospitals, in commerce and so on. They pushed for a redefinition of the political community simply by their presence, by their more complex way of viewing the nation and acting within it. Wolaita is an example of a drive from below. This bottom-up movement can be observed in schools from the 1960s onwards, and it accelerated under the Derg, when graduates entered the world of work in large numbers and took up positions of power. This was a different political

dynamic, one that is less well known than the student movement and the armed struggles on the margins, which have been studied far more extensively.

The Derg did not adopt the notion of equality of nationalities simply because it had been permeated by Stalin's theory of nationalities that had been brought in by the student movement: it took note of a social reality that was certainly not found in Wolaita alone—that of millions of Ethiopians who aspired to a different definition of Ethiopia. The list drawn up by Donald Donham, which we cited in the introduction, therefore needs to be completed. To the "peasants, landlords and slaves created in the wake of Menilek's expansion in the south" who "helped to make twentieth-century Ethiopia" (Donham 2002, 3) must be added the multitude of graduates. Since the time the first government schools were founded in the south in the 1940s, people gradually emerged, members of marginalised groups or women, who contributed, often silently, to redefining the Ethiopian nation.

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"EC" stands for the Ethiopian Calendar which is based on the Coptic and Julian calendars. Depending on the month of the year, the Gregorian calendar is seven to eight years longer than the Ethiopian calendar. The first month of the Ethiopian year corresponds to September in the Western year.

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Em Daniel, **ትምህርቴ የዓይኔ ብርሃን መስታወቴ** (My school education: the light in my eyes). 1957 (1950 EC). Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press.

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Tekle Tsadik Mekuriya, **የሰው ጠባይና አብሮ የመኖር ዘዴ** (Human nature and the art of living together). 1959 (1951 EC). Addis Ababa: Berhannenna Selam.

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በጉባኤ ተናገሩ" ("Speech delivered on 2 May 1925 by His Imperial Highness Teferi Makonnen, Heir of Ethiopia and Regent of the Empire, at the ceremony for the solemn handover to the Ethiopian Nation of the School which She had built at Her own expense").

15 May 1925, "ልዑል የኢትዮጵያ ምንግሥት አልጋ ወራሽ ተፈሪ መኮንን ያቆሙት ተማሪ ቤት በተመረቀ ጊዜ ሓኪም ወርቅነህ የተማሪ ቤቱ ሹም የሚከተለውን ቃል ተናገሩ" ("Speech given by Doctor Workneh, Intendant of the school founded by His Highness the Regent Tefari Mekonnen, on the day of the graduation ceremony").

26 May 1927, "ልዑል ዱክ ዴዝ አብሩዝዞ የደግማዊ ምኒልክ ተማሪ ቤት እንደጎበኙ" ("Visit by His Majesty the Duke of Abruzzo to the Menilek II School").

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31 May 1985, "ቦጋለ ዋለሉ 1902–1958" ("Bogale Wallelu, 1907–1965").

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Abba Gino, Capuchin missionary. Soddo, 12 December 2009. In English.

Abba Wolde-Yesus Wolde-Giorgis, Ethiopian Catholic priest. Soddo, 10 October 2009. In English.

Abraham Worku, teacher. Gesuba, 2 January 2011. In English and Amharic.

Alula Anjiyo, retired teacher, father of Yemesrach Alula. Soddo, 2 January 2010. In Amharic.

Anjulo Agago, 94, farmer. Dubbo, 10 December 2010. In Wolaita. Translation: Asela Gujubo.

Arjo Anjulo, university graduate, unemployed at the time of the interview. Dubbo, 10 December 2010. In Amharic.

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Ayelech Tekle-Mariam, teacher and civil servant in the Wolaita Zone. Soddo, 19 November 2010. In English.

Belaynesh Antonios, teacher, responsible for women's affairs at Soddo town. Soddo, 2 November 2009. In English.

Bezabeh Milkias, teacher, school headmaster, school administrator. Soddo, 10 October 2009. In English.

Bogale Gesamo, retired teacher. Soddo, 3 December 2010. In English.

Demissie Minamo, teacher. Soddo, 5 December 2010. In English.

Desalegn Tanga, agricultural engineer. Group interview with Gebre-Mikael Kuke. Soddo, November 2010. In Amharic.

Elias Damtew, teacher, school headmaster, official at the Wolaita Zone Culture Office. Soddo, 11 October 2009. In English.

Fancho Fanta, lecturer in the Department of History and Heritage Management, Wolaita Sodo University. Soddo, 10 May 2016. In English.

Germa Bekele, 74, retired teacher. Bedesa, 9 December 2010. In Amharic.

Gebre-Mikaél Kuke, retired teacher. Soddo, group interview with Dessalägn Tangaon 12 November; individual interview on 16 November 2010. In Amharic.

Habtamu Lemma, university teacher and researcher. Soddo, 17 December 2009. Amharic and English.

Kassech Mulugeta, pupil from 1960 to 1974, teacher. Soddo, 31 December 2009. In Amharic.

Lemma Didana, retired teacher. Soddo, 14 December 2009. In Amharic.

Mana Madibo, 75, farmer. Gesuba, 6 December 2010. Wolaita. Translation: Asela Gujubo.

Merigeta Tesfaye, a priest of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Soddo, 20 October 2010. Amharic.

Paolos Sorsa, civil servant at the Ministry of Justice. Addis Ababa, 14 and 21 December 2010, . In English.

Saol Akamo, Tobacco Monopoly official. Boditi, 15 November 2010. In Amharic.

Talemos Mana, teacher and school administrator. Soddo, 9 November 2010. In English.

Tsehai Zerihun, civil servant at the Ministry of Agriculture, school principal. Addis Ababa, 7 January 2011. In English.

Wolde-Semaet Gebre-Wold, governor of Wolaita from 1963 to 1973. Addis Ababa, 15 January 2011. In English.

Wanna Wagesho, founder of the first government school in Wolaita, teacher, school headmaster, school administrator. Soddo, 15 December 2009 and 3 November 2010. In Amharic.

Wanna Dea, civil servant. Soddo, 11 December 2010. In Amharic.

Yaluse Mita, teacher. Soddo, 2 November 2009. In Amharic

Yemesrach Alula, teacher. Soddo, 2 January and 22 October 2010. In Amharic.

Zebdewos Chama, teacher, school headmaster, district governor. Soddo, 3 and 10 November 2010. In English.

Zeritu Buche, teacher. Soddo, 7 December 2010. In Amharic.

Zerihun Anebo, teacher. Soddo, 5 December 2010. In English.

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Abeje Mamo, employee of the NGO Plan International. Lalibela, 14 February 2008. In English.

Afememeher Allebachew, teacher at the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Lalibela, 9 February 2007. In Amharic.

Afework Ayalew, teacher. Lalibela, 10 February 2007. In English.

Afework Tadesse, teacher. Lalibela, 10 February 2007.

Allebachew Fantew, teacher. Lalibela, 14 February 2007. In English.

Assefa Wolde-Giorgis, public writer, miller, shopkeeper. Lalibela, 7 February 2007. In Amharic.

Baye Maereg, farmer. Lalibela, 14 February 2008. In Amharic.

Demeke Melesse, teacher. Lalibela, 20 February 2008. In English.

Mantagosh Eshete, teacher. Lalibela, 16 February 2008. In Amharic.

Solomon Maereg, student under the Derg. Lalibela, 7 February 2007. In English.

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Yitbarek Abebe, teacher and school administrator. Lalibela, 26 February 2008. In Amharic.

Zewde Wolde-Giorgis, teacher. Lalibela, 10 February 2007.

7.3. *Addis Ababa*

Getachew Kassa, pupil at Tefari Mekonnen School from 1967 to 1971, teacher. Addis Ababa, 8 August 2009.

Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, student at Tefari Mekonnen from 1945 to 1949, geographer, famous academic and influential public figure in Ethiopia. Addis Ababa, 11 August 2009. In English.

Minale Sissay, a student from the early 1980s, holds a higher diploma in commerce and is now a bank employee). Addis Ababa, 18 November 2010. Many informal discussions. In Amharic and English.

Tesfaye Gessesse, student at the Tefari Mekonnen school from 1948 to 1955, novelist, poet and playwright. Addis Ababa, 18 August 2009. In English.

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